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BY Joe FOR DHIST NDHQ

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ARMY HEADQUARTERS

10 Dec 49

Operations of 1 Cdn Corps, 28 Oct 44 to 27 Feb 45:
The Capture of Ravenna, the Advance to the Senio
and the Winter Line

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1. This report deals with the activities of 1 Cdn Corps following its withdrawal into reserve at the conclusion of Operation "OLIVE", i.e., the period in reserve and the operations of Porterforce; then in December the winter offensive, when 1 Cdn Corps in nearly a month of hard fighting advanced from the 5 Corps' Montone bridgehead over numerous water barriers to the Senio; and finally the two months of static warfare on the winter line that preceded the withdrawal of the Canadians and their departure for North-West Europe. Non-Canadian troops under command 1 Cdn Corps during this period included 21 (Brit) Tk Bde, 2 (Brit) Armd Bde, 9 (Brit) Armd Bde, British components of Porterforce, and the Cremona Combat Group (Italian) (see Appendices "A"-1 and "A"-2).

2. As in the earlier reports on the Canadian operations in Italy the basic sources have been war diaries of the units and formations concerned. Of equal importance, when available, have been the immediate reports on operations and the reports prepared by the divisional historical officers based on interviews with commanding officers and other participants. Once again the larger picture has been obtained from the volumes prepared by the British Historical Section, Central Mediterranean, - Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces in Italy, 3 September 1943 to 2 May 1945, Part III, The Campaign in the Northern Apennines, 10 August 1944 to 1 April 1945, Sections A to I.

EIGHTH ARMY PLANS FOR A WINTER OFFENSIVE

3. The approach of winter brought to the Allied Armies in Italy no protracted respite from offensive operations. The Supreme Allied Commander in the West, General Eisenhower, had decided that it would be necessary to fight a winter campaign on that front in order to bring about directly a German collapse or to ensure that result in the spring. (see Eisenhower, Dwight D. "Crusade in Europe", pp 321-3). To attain the full effect of this strategy it was necessary that the Armies in Italy make a similar effort during the winter months. Field Marshal Alexander considered four possible courses:

...to transfer troops from Italy to the West, to employ troops from Italy in Yugoslavia, to continue the offensive on the Italian front at full stretch to the limits set by exhaustion and material shortage or to halt the offensive now and build up for a renewal in greater strength at some later date. All these courses were judged solely by the criterion of which

would have the greater effect on operations in the west. The first was rejected because there was, on the current programme, no need for extra troops in France and none from Italy could be accepted as yet; to transfer troops to Yugoslavia would have no effect on the Western front and would only begin to have one on the Eastern front next spring. Of the two courses which involved continuing the fight in Italy with undiminished resources the one which General Eisenhower considered most advantageous was for the continuance of the offensive.

(Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces, op cit, Section A, Allied Strategy, p. 18)

For this reason, despite all the difficulties of climate and terrain, of deficient manpower and material, the offensive continued to be pressed forward in Italy.

4. By the end of October, as we know, the enemy had succeeded in bringing to a halt the Fifth Army's advance toward Bologna, although he was still withdrawing under pressure on the Eighth Army front. By that time the weight of the Allied offensive was practically spent and it was necessary to call a halt in order to rest, reorganize and train our greatly depleted forces. As the momentum of our October offensive decreased, it became apparent that the enemy would endeavour to stabilize his front on a line covering Bologna and Ravenna or, under pressure, he might fall back on his left flank to a shorter line running from his positions south of Bologna along one of the many river lines to the Valli di Comacchio.* Any further withdrawal was not expected, unless under pressure of another powerful Allied offensive, as the Fuehrer's policy in Italy had been to hold every inch of the Peninsula as long as it was tenable. The Allied commanders, however, considered that once Bologna fell the enemy would withdraw to a line based on the Rivers Po and Ticino abandoning North-West Italy, and it was likely that he would not long delay on that extended line but under pressure would again withdraw to the Adige and the Alps. In this area between the Alps and the Adriatic work was going ahead on the enemy's so-called "Venetian Line." Once back on this line, because of the reduced frontage, he would be able to spare several divisions from Italy for his other fronts. (Ibid, Appx "D"-6: Future Plans; Appx "D"-8: Future Operations)

5. The Allied Commander-in-Chief, therefore, looking ahead to such a future possibility considered the advisability of finding other employment for the forces which would be released on our side as a result of the enemy's occupation of a shorter line in Italy. General Alexander's objective ever since the fall of Rome had been to force an entry into Austria. With his greatly reduced armies, the result of the invasion of Southern France, it seemed likely that this object could not now be achieved by the destruction of the German Army in Northern Italy. With this in mind he had considered making a two-handed attack up the two opposite coasts of the Adriatic. This would undoubtedly tie down more German forces than a frontal attack in the north of Italy and give more scope for generalship and a greater chance for a decisive success. Had his armies met with success in the

* See Map "Florence - Rimini - Bologna Sector"

Apennines in October operations over the Adriatic would have been planned for early in 1945. Fifth Army would have contained the enemy in Northern Italy while Eighth Army would have undertaken the Balkan operation. A great deal of detailed planning was carried out for this proposed operation in Yugoslavia (which was given the code name of "GELIGNITE"), but it was never carried out. The main reason was the failure to capture Bologna, which meant that we continued to keep the enemy in Italy stretched to the maximum extent. A further reason was the withdrawal in early 1945 of the whole of the Canadian Corps and its diversion to the command of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force. (Allied Strategy, pp. 16-18)

6. During November, Headquarters Allied Armies in Italy began plans for the resumption of a full-scale offensive for the capture of Bologna. In an appreciation made by Lt-Gen Harding, Chief of the General Staff, as a basis for a conference of Army Commanders to be held on 26 Nov, tentative plans for a winter campaign were put forward. As previously stated, its object would be to give the greatest possible support to the Allied winter offensives on the western and eastern fronts. An advance to Ravenna and Bologna would deprive the enemy of winter quarters and at the same time would provide a base for Allied operations in 1945. In this appreciation it was suggested that Eighth Army prepare for a full-scale attack with the object of driving the enemy over the Montone and Lamone rivers in one continuous operation. If this offensive was successful it would force the enemy out of Ravenna. Continuing the attack, Eighth Army would advance to the Santerno, after which a combined offensive by both armies would be launched, with the main effort of Fifth Army directed on Bologna. (Ibid, p. 22, and Appx-"D"-9, CGS Appreciation, 19 Nov 44)

7. Following the Army Commanders' conference* held at Florence on 26 Nov, H.Q. A.A.I. issued the operation order launching the winter campaign. Eighth Army was ordered to (a) continue its present operations to drive the enemy west of the Santerno and secure bridgeheads over the river, (b) develop its main thrust on the general axis Imola - Budrio, with a subsidiary thrust on Ferrara by way of Argenta, if the condition of the ground on that axis were found to be favourable. Fifth Army would (a) develop operations on their right flank to assist Eighth Army's advance to the Santerno, (b) plan and prepare their main thrust on Bologna by the axis of Route 65. This latter operation was to be ready to be launched on the order of the C.-in-C., A.A.I., at three days' notice from 7 Dec. There were two limiting factors however to the operation - a shortage of artillery

* The authors of Allied Strategy state that the Minutes of this conference were not obtainable. (p. 23)

ammunition[¶] and the uncertainty of the weather at this time of the year. (Ibid, p. 22, and Appx "C"-3: A.A.I. Operation Order No. 4, 28 Nov 44)

8. The Eighth Army Operation Instruction passed to 1 Cdn Corps on 29 Nov again stressed the importance of the campaign:

The primary task of the Allied Armies in Italy is to ensure that the enemy is afforded no opportunity to withdraw divisions from Italy to reinforce his armies on either the Western or Eastern fronts.

This object cannot be achieved by a purely defensive attitude. In consequence it has been decided that the Allied Armies are to mount a major offensive on a wide front in early December. The immediate object of the operation is the capture of BOLOGNA and the formation of a junction between Eighth Army and Fifth Army ... A subsidiary object of the operation is the capture of RAVENNA.

The success of the forthcoming operations is largely dependent on fine weather so that the Allies can use their superiority in the air and in armour with the maximum effect.

Fifth Army will be ready to launch an attack from 7 December onwards. The actual date of the attack by Fifth Army will be determined by weather

¶ To a force relying so much on artillery superiority, the only effective superiority the Allies possessed for a campaign in an Italian winter, this factor was of the very greatest importance. It was not merely an isolated phenomenon, but a world-wide shortage both on the British and on the United States side. The situation in Italy had, however, been made more serious by heavy expenditure in the Gothic Line battles. The result was not only that current operations would be severely limited but that there was even a danger of insufficient stocks being on hand for the spring offensive. The conclusions are drawn by General Alexander... "As far as I am able to forecast I have just enough British ammunition for the current operations of Eighth Army and for an all-out offensive in December lasting about fifteen days. American ammunition is, however, only sufficient for about ten days intensive fighting between now and the end of the year. Deliveries in the first quarter of 1945 in the case of both British and American types are so limited that it will be necessary to exercise the strictest economy for several months to build up large enough stocks to sustain a full-scale offensive in 1945."

(Allied Strategy, para 50)

conditions and the progress made by Eighth Army during the operations now in progress. The main effort by Fifth Army is to be made in a Northerly direction astride Route 65 with the object of capturing BOLOGNA.

((H.S.)214B8.016(D2): Eighth Army Operation Instruction No. 1443, 29 Nov 44)

9. Previous to the Army Commanders' conference Eighth Army began plans for the coming winter offensive. On 18 Nov H.Q. Eighth Army issued an operation instruction providing for the regrouping of the army at the end of the month. It was decided that the December offensive should be on a broad front of three corps with the Canadian Corps returning to the line again after being in reserve all the month of November. The Army plan forecast that 1 Cdn Corps would take over the right flank of the army from Porterforce, while 5 Corps would remain along the axis of Route 9 and 2 Pol Corps on the army left flank. (Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces op cit Section B, Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp. 80-1)
10. At this stage (18 Nov) Eighth Army front had moved forward to a position where the two important cities, Faenza and Ravenna, were almost within its grasp. Ravenna had not fallen because the forces needed to undertake operations against it could not be spared. Porterforce, however, was nearing the Fiumi Uniti directly south of the city, but the enemy had strengthened his position and the line in this area remained static during the remainder of the month. South-west of Ravenna this line followed the Ronco for a short distance and then hinged back toward the Montone near S. Pancrazio. From this point 5 Corps held the east bank of the Montone south-west to Route 9. Forli had been captured on 9 Nov and elements of the Corps were across the Montone south of the town. 5 Corps thus held the vital sector along Route 9 west of the Montone between Forli and Faenza. On the army left flank the Polish Corps held the line along the foothills of the Apennines between the Montone and the Lamone rivers (Ibid, pp. 72-4)
11. It was now apparent to the Eighth Army Commander that an attack by three corps on a broad front would have the advantage of a third natural axis of advance. Following the capture of Rimini two highways, 9 and 16, led to the north-west. The operations that took place during November brought Eighth Army to within striking distance of Russi (4333), through which a third route ran to the north-west to Bagnacavallo, Lugo, Massa Lombarda, and Budrio, the latter place being only a few miles north-east of Bologna. This new route would present few of the tactical and engineering difficulties likely to be encountered on Route 16. The going on either side of this third axis was difficult, being typical of the central belt of the Romagna where the major rivers are canalized between very high flood banks connected by a large number of canals, making it easy for the enemy to flood the intervening country if he chose. Against these disadvantages could be set the facts that the enemy was weak in this sector and that the leaves were now off the vines which had so greatly impeded our tanks in the early autumn; moreover a

thrust at this point would bring about the rapid fall of Ravenna (Eighth Army etc op cit p. 80).

12. During the last fortnight of November, while plans were being completed for the start of the Allied winter offensive, Eighth Army embarked on a two-corps attack designed to secure Faenza and the high ground to the south-west of the town as a starting point for the coming operations. 5 Corps along Route 9 and 2 Pol Corps on the army left flank were ordered to secure these objectives. This two-corps attack was timed to begin on 20 Nov and to be completed by the end of the month in time for regrouping for the winter offensive. Preceded by a heavy aerial bombardment the attack began on the 20th and for some time both corps made considerable progress. On the extreme right of 5 Corps, 10 Ind Div forced the enemy back to the west bank of the Montone but could find no weak point in the defences of the river north of the main axis. But the Indians were not halted long; one brigade crossed the Montone by a flanking attack from Route 9, and made progress in its advance between this river and the Lamone. In the vicinity of Albereto (4028), however, they were held up by fierce enemy resistance. Meanwhile, west of Route 9, both the Poles and 5 Corps reached the east bank of the Lamone on a broad front extending as far north as Scaldino (3626), but heavy rain, which began on 26 Nov, put a stop to further operations. With the time of the winter offensive drawing near it became clear that no further advance could be made and that the main operation would have to be launched from this position and not from the more advantageous position to the west that had been planned (Ibid, pp. 75-7).

13. The limited success of Eighth Army in the ten days' fighting between 20 Nov and the end of the month did not change the original plan for the December offensive. The Eighth Army Operation Instruction issued on 29 Nov detailed the plan as set out in the A.A.I. Operation Order of 28 Nov (see para 7). Eighth Army was ordered to attack with three corps, right 1 Cdn Corps, centre 5 Corps, left 2 Pol Corps. 1 Cdn Corps was ordered (i) to capture Russi, (ii) cut Route 16 in the area of Osteria (4942) in order to cut off and capture Ravenna, (iii) establish a bridgehead over the River Santerno in the general area of Massa Lombarda (2742), with a view to a further advance to the north and west. To carry out this operation the corps would be required to cross the Lamone, Senio and Santerno Rivers. 5 Corps was ordered to advance on the general axis of Route 9 with a view to seizing bridgeheads over the same three river barriers. 2 Pol Corps, on the left, was ordered to advance with the object of protecting the left flank of Eighth Army. Weather conditions permitting the operation would commence on the night 1/2 Dec. Maximum air support from all available resources would assist Eighth Army (Eighth Army Operation Instruction No. 1443, 29 Nov 44).

1 CDN CORPS IN RESERVE, 28 OCT - 25 NOV 44

14. When 1 Cdn Corps passed into Eighth Army Reserve at the end of October there was a general feeling that it might be withdrawn from the Mediterranean theatre to join First Cdn Army in North West Europe, and the appointment as

Minister of National Defence of General McNaughton (who had always strongly favoured unification of Canadian forces overseas) strengthened this opinion. Other rumours however were rife, and one went the rounds that 1 Cdn Corps was on the move to Burma. (W.D., 1 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, October 1944: Appx 2: Personal Diary Capt R.T. Currelly, 28 Oct 44). On 5 Nov Lt-Gen Burns* relinquished command of the Corps and returned to England. Maj-Gen C. Vokes, C.B.E., D.S.O., G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div acted as temporary commander until 16 Nov, when Lt-Gen C. Foulkes, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., formerly G.O.C. 2 Cdn Inf Div, arrived as the new Corps Commander. Maj-Gen Vokes went to take over 4 Cdn Armd Div in North West Europe, leaving Brigadier J.D.B. Smith, C.B.E., D.S.O., B.G.S. 1 Cdn Corps, temporarily commanding 1 Cdn Inf Div, in an acting capacity. Early in December, Maj-Gen H.W. Foster, C.B.E., D.S.O., formerly G.O.C. 4 Cdn Armd Div in France, arrived to assume command. Brigadier G. Kitching, D.S.O., replaced Brigadier Smith at Corps as B.G.S. Brigadier E.C. Plow, D.S.O., C.C.R.A., went to First Cdn Army as B.P.A., and was replaced by Brigadier H.A. Sparling, D.S.O., from C.F.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div.

15. Since 25 Aug 1 Cdn Corps had been continuously employed in operations. During this period they had advanced from the Metauro River to the Ronco River, breaking through the Gothic Line and reaching the long sought, if somewhat disappointing, Romagna plains. Throughout this advance the weather and the terrain had proved the most serious obstacles. Torrential rains had made most of the operations practically amphibious along a front that was a succession of rivers draining down from the Apennine Mountains into the Adriatic Sea. Hard fighting had greatly reduced the number of buildings capable of keeping out the rain and now that the Corps was slated for reserve the finding of accommodation fit for the battle-weary troops presented serious difficulties. Practically every building of any size, if standing at all, was roofless and windowless, and this applied not to any one particular town or village but to the whole rear area through which the battles had been fought. In order to get any semblance of concentration for divisional formations and units it was necessary to reshuffle G.H.Q. and L. of C. units to make room for the troops coming into reserve for rest, leaves and training. While this redistribution was taking place most formations had to remain in their forward positions for several days awaiting word of their new locations. (W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 25-31 Dec 44)

16. Main Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps moved from Cesenatico and into its new location at Riccione on 6 Nov, Rear Headquarters remaining at Rimini (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 6 Nov 44). 1 Cdn Inf Div moved its Headquarters from Cesena on 30 Oct, and concentrated in Riccione in the same buildings it had occupied three weeks previously (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Oct 44). The Division was fortunate in having 1 and 2 Cdn Inf Bdes located in the Riccione area and 3 Cdn Inf Bde in Cattolica, only a few miles to the south; on the other hand 5 Cdn Armd Div, after finally establishing its headquarters in San Giovanni on 4 Nov, found its brigades widely scattered. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Nov 44). 5 Cdn Armd Bde remained in Cervia

* Overseas R.O. 5310, 8 Dec 44.

nearly 30 miles north up the Adriatic Coast; 12 Cdn Inf Bde was in and around San Giovanni and Morciano; and 11 Cdn Inf Bde settled in Urbino, where they were further isolated by the Army policy of closing secondary roads by the removal of Bailey bridging material for use further forward. Civilian repair of the gaps thus created proceeded very slowly, and traffic from Riccione to Urbino had to be routed via Fano and Fossombrone - a 60-mile detour. (Summaries by Historical Officers, 1 - 15 Nov 44)

17. With units and formations settled in their new locations there was time for relaxation and recreation. Riccione - where the bulk of Corps troops and 1 Cdn Inf Div were concentrated - proved an ideal rest area with two cinemas, a theatre, a senior and junior officers' club and two large recreation centres for other ranks. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 6 Nov 44). Normally its situation on the sea front would have been an asset, but November in this climate is not a month for sun or sea bathing. Units were also warned that during the last low moon period the enemy had carried out minor raids by sea on installations in rear areas. Swimming saboteurs had been identified in the Ravenna area and it was more than possible that these operations might be repeated with pipelines, vehicles or installations near the shore as objectives. (See para 31). To guard against such eventualities, units and formations located near the sea were ordered to pay particular attention to "coast watching" in their areas. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, November 1944, Appx 5; Sabotage, 8 Nov 44). Other recreational facilities were soon made available in Riccione by the Auxiliary Services, who opened two picture shows for 1 Inf Bde and another one for 2 Inf Bde; needless to say they did not lack attendance. The Canadian Army Shows also made the rounds of the reserve areas and were well received at each performance. 1 Cdn Inf Bde opened a Shopping Centre in Riccione for its troops which included a photo studio, tailor shop and souvenir shop. Canteens did a thriving trade. Showers were available in the town for all ranks every day.

18. In Urbino, 11 Cdn Inf Bde organized and published a brigade newspaper, "The Coriano Courier" the first edition appearing 18 Nov, on a sheet about 14 by 18 printed on both sides. It had a quaint appearance as the Italian alphabet did not include the letters "w" or "y", and "v" and "i" were substituted for them. It was a newsy, well edited little sheet which attained a good circulation in a short time. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, November 1944, Appx 9; Copy "Coriano Courier"). Urbino had an opera house and two theatres, which were used for Army shows and movies for the entertainment of all ranks, and an officers' club, "The Coriano", as well as a transit hotel which was opened by 11 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Nov 44). The town stadium in Urbino, used for carrying out the brigade's sports programmes, was renamed "Johnston's Field" after the Brigade Commander (*ibid*, 7 Nov 44).

19. In Cervia 5 Cdn Armd Bde had the services of the R.C.E. Band, which played at several concerts, and free picture shows, a number of which were put on for civilians as a kindly gesture; a club was opened for other ranks. In each brigade sports were fully organized, including softball,

soccer, volleyball, horseshoes and tabloid sports with the Auxiliary Services supplying equipment. Educational lectures on rehabilitation were given to all ranks. An Art Exhibition was opened in Rimini on 9 Nov, sponsored by 1 Cdn Corps and 86 Sub Area, with 159 items displayed. These included not only contributions from the official British and Canadian war artists, but from artists in the British, Canadian and American services as well. (W.D., 1 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, 9 Nov 44). 3,649 all ranks visited the Exhibition in the nine days it was open at Rimini. (Ibid, 21 Nov 44). On 22 Nov the Exhibit was shown in Morciano and well attended. (Ibid, 22 Nov 44). Regimental officers' messes were soon in operation, the first opportunity for such luxury that some of the regiments had had for several months, and mess dinners, dances and recreation were thoroughly enjoyed. Although the dancing partners seldom spoke the same language, this would appear to have been no obstacle to the enjoyment of the dance. The West N.S.R. diarist records:

2030 hrs: The dance at the Officers' Mess was well under way at this time. The special guests were 15 Polish Nursing Sisters. Conversation was somewhat restricted due to the language difficulties, but with the use of words of various languages and the gestures of international recognition intercommunication was carried on. In all it was a most successful party and the end of the evening found Canadian-Polish relations considerably strengthened.

(W.D., West N.S.R., 11 Nov 44)

No effort was spared to give the troops all the recreation and amusement possible during the rest period and the Auxiliary Services rendered their usual excellent service by supplying necessary equipment and canteen facilities.

20. As soon as the units were settled leaves were granted of seven days to Rome or Florence, with an allotment of 190 reservations each to 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div. (W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 1 Nov 44). Commanders of units and formations were warned that their personal leaves should be completed by 25 Nov. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, November 1944, Appx 14; H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div O. 51). Second Echelon was requested to reduce its leave quotas for two weeks during the reserve period to allow the maximum accommodation to be made available in leave centres for the Corps troops. Probably the most welcome news of the whole Italian campaign was received on 12 Nov when it was announced that Canada leaves were to be instituted. Qualifying condition was five years' continuous overseas service; time spent in a theatre of operations to count double. Vacancies for 200 all ranks were allotted to 1 Cdn Corps. The leave period was 30 days in Canada free of travelling time. This matter was given priority attention and a conference was held on 20 Nov to settle all details. (W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 20 Nov 44). Nominal rolls of personnel proceeding on the first quota were soon made up, and the fortunate departed by road from Riccione to Avellino on 27 Nov, sailing from Naples on 30 Nov. It was expected that they would be home for Christmas. (Ibid, 30 Nov 44).

21. Extensive training was carried on during the rest period and several new types of equipment were introduced. The Crocodile flame-throwing tank arrived, and 12 R.T.R. visited each regiment in 5 Cdn Armd Bde to put on demonstrations. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 13 Nov 44). Another flame-thrower to arrive was the carrier-mounted Wasp, and training courses were immediately established to familiarize crews in its handling. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Nov 44). Four Wasps were issued per infantry battalion (W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 22 Nov 44). The Lifebuoy flame-thrower, a smaller man-handled type, was issued on the basis of two per unit. These also required well-trained personnel to be handled efficiently. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 14 Nov 44). Another new delivery was the Weasel, a tracked amphibious carrier with good performance in mud, originally designed for use in Russia. The Transport Officer of 3 Cdn Inf Bde, however, soon found that the Weasel had its limitations.

The TO, Capt A.B. Edgar, has already lost faith in the amphibious Bren carriers which he procured this morning. On crossing the CONCA river, he found the traction was not sufficient to overcome the current and he was drifting rapidly toward JUGOSLAVIA when his "infernal machine" fortunately grounded on a sand-bar, 100 yards at sea.

(W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Nov 44)

22. Training films were shown throughout the Corps, while Engineers gave courses in mines and booby traps, road care and maintenance and bridging demonstrations. Brigades ran their N.C.O. schools, and infantry regiments paid particular attention to river crossing and assault boat training, with anti-tank platoons taking courses in rafting guns across rivers. Gas equipment and training was not overlooked. Field firing and mortar ranges were allocated to brigades and put to good use. The armoured regiments of 5 Cdn Armd Bde carried out an indirect fire programme during the period 10 - 25 Nov with a threefold object in view: (a) to practice the armoured regiments in indirect fire; (b) to soften up the enemy defences south of Ravenna along the Fiumi Uniti; (c) to form part of the deception plan for Exercise "CHUCKLE" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, November 1944: Appx 5, Armd Regts' Indirect Fire, 9 Nov 44). The following is an account of one such shoot carried out by B.C.D. in conjunction with an air attack:

"A" Sqn 9 Cdn Armd Regt ... went to fire posns at 546264 and put on a very successful shoot for the Westmr Regt (M). One rpm was fired throughout the night and two rpgpm for ten mins at 0920 hrs and again at 1025 hrs. The ten min periods were for the purpose of silencing enemy AA guns while our planes went in to bomb the last br over the F. MONTONE. Ranges were 4400 to 8800 yds. Air OP stated that the shoot was very accurate.

(W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 12 Nov 44)

23. Engineer training during the month placed particular emphasis on bridging and rafting, including the use of F.B.E. rafts and bridging, close support rafts and

Class 40 Bailey Pontoon rafts.* One important engineer development of the period was the "BROWN BRIDGE", which was produced under the direction of Capt B.S. Brown, of 4 Fd Coy R.C.E.

Briefly, this bridge is carried on two tanks and is capable of doing an 80 ft gap Class 40 on an assault basis, or the delivery to bank-seat rollers of 140 ft DS bridge complete with launching nose. This bridge differs in many ways from the PLYMOUTH bridge, the most important being that no tank is lost as is the case with the latter bridge.**

((H.S.) 224Cl.3013 (D2): History Royal Canadian Engineers 1 Cdn Corps covering operations in Italy 1 Oct - 15 Jan 45, Part II, p. 3)

A new development was the "OLAFSON" bridge. Acting on a suggestion made by the Commander 3 Cdn Inf Bde,*** Capt E.A. Olafson, R.C.E.M.E., Officer Commanding 3 L.A.D., after several trials succeeded in producing a light portable infantry footbridge. The bridge was constructed by welding together lengths of half-inch pipe into sections 15-ft long and 18-inches wide. Each section weighed 200-lbs and was capable of being linked to other identical sections to form a 45-ft span. On 22 Nov the Corps Commander attended a demonstration of the Olafson bridge held by Headquarters 3 Cdn Inf Bde. On this occasion infantrymen and a jeep crossed on a 60-ft span placed over the Ventena River at a place where the water was 6-ft deep. Following this demonstration General Foulkes ordered the construction of sections of this bridging for each battalion of 1 Cdn Inf Div. (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Nov 44)

24. On 4 Nov Eighth Army Headquarters issued instructions that since jeeps, jeep trailers and 15-cwt vehicles would likely be in short supply, wastage in these vehicles must be reduced to a minimum in order to conserve them for later operations (W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, November 1944: Appx 3, Eighth Army Vehicles - Care and Maintenance). As a result of this order, Jeep platoons were formed from the resources of each division to operate

* For a short note on military bridging see Appx "C" to Historical Section (A.H.Q.) Report No. 25.

** The "PLYMOUTH" was used in the crossing of the Gari River in May 1944 (see The Tiger Triumphs, H.M. Stationery Office, London, 1946, p. 74)

*** A letter dated 29 Oct 44, written by Brigadier Bernatchez, to H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div called for the construction of such a bridge to aid the infantry in assault crossings (W.D., H.Q. R.C.E., 1 Cdn Inf Div, December 1944: Appx 5, Crossing of Obstacles).

with brigades. In 5 Cdn Armd Bde this unit consisted of 20 jeeps, nine trailers and 26 drivers (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 28 Nov 44). On 19 Nov H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div instructed each of its infantry battalions to form anti-tank companies, using for the purpose personnel, weapons and vehicles from their support companies. The object of this company was outlined as follows:

In operations in which this division will take part in the near future, the type of ground which will be encountered is such that the arrival of heavy equipment to support the infantry is likely to be a comparatively slow procedure. Infantry must be able to hold ground gained against enemy counter-attacks until the heavier A. Tk weapons can be brought forward. In this country it is the enemy's custom to use his tanks in "Penny-Packets", therefore some mobile form of A. Tk defence must be made available to forward companies.

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, November 1944: Appx 22, Inf Bn A. Tk Coy)

The strength of the company as suggested by 1 Div was 62 all ranks under a company headquarters organized with two (tank hunting) platoons armed with the P.I.A.T., each consisting of platoon headquarters and two sections, and one (2-pr) anti-tank platoon, also consisting of a headquarters and two sections, each equipped with a 2-pr gun.* At this time, also, divisional headquarters instructed regiments to turn in to Ordnance their present holdings of 6-pr equipment, which in future would be supplied to brigades as required by the divisional anti-tank regiment.** In the same directive it was stated that the division held two Littlejohns ***

* This establishment was only suggested by Divisional Headquarters and brigades were told to draw up and put into effect their own establishments. Only two of the infantry battalions (Seaforth of C. and Carlt & York R.) of 1 Cdn Inf and 5 Cdn Armd Divisions make mention in their War Diaries of the formation of anti-tank companies and neither of these give any details of organization. Most of the infantry units appear to have set up single tank hunting platoons formed from personnel drawn from their A. Tk and/or carrier platoons. There is little detail to be found in the diaries of the strength or equipment of these platoons, but the November 1944 War Diary of P.P.C.L.I., however, contains an organization table for a "Tank-busting Platoon" formed in that unit. This gives the strength of the platoon as 1 offr (Lieut) and 27 OR, and the main weapons as 9 PIATs plus 17 T.M.Cs. (W.D., Seaforth of C., 21, 23 Nov 44; W.D., Carlt & York R., 21 Nov 44; W.D., P.P.C.L.I., November 1944; Appx 26, Organization of Tank-busting platoon; in addition the diaries of the two division Headquarters, the infantry brigades and infantry battalions of 1 and 5 Divisions were examined).

** This order was changed the following day and Brigades were instructed to grease 6-pr equipment and store them in "X" area (a static "B" Echelon). (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, November 1944: Appx 1, 2 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 20 Nov 44)

*** A 2-pr gur with an attachment to increase the muzzle velocity. They made their first appearance on the Canadian front at the Savio River in October 1944 (see Historical Section (A.H.Q.) Report No. 25, para 145).

with another ten expected shortly, when the 12 guns would be formed into a battery of three troops each of four guns. This 2-pr battery would form part of the divisional anti-tank regiment as an additional battery. Control of the 2-prs would be vested in the C.R.A., and they would be allotted to brigades in accordance with their operational requirements. (Ibid)

25. At Riccione on 10 Nov 1 Cdn Corps held a study period dealing with the application of artillery fire in battle. On this occasion five playlets were presented by staff officers of 1 Cdn Inf Div, 5 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Cdn A.G.R.A., dealing with the following: (a) design of fire plan; (b) mechanics of drawing up a fire plan; (c) counter-battery and counter-mortar fire; (d) control of a fire plan; (e) support by F.O.Os. Discussion of problems involved brought out no changes in policy but did stress the necessity for an extremely flexible fire plan with concentrations preferred to barrages. It was also pointed out that infantry control of artillery might be delegated to company command level. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 10 Nov 44).

26. An event of great moment for 1 Cdn L.A.A. Inf Bn (89/109 Inf Bn) occurred in November when the unit was formally notified of its redesignation as the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment (W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 7 Nov 44). At a parade of the regiment on 11 Nov the Commanding Officer, A/Lt-Col W.H. Buchanan, officially announced the new title. In recording this event the regimental War Diary says

...that we were now the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment of Canada. He told us that we had a tradition to live up to and knew that we would do it and that we were now affiliated with the Black Watch and would wear their tartan... In the evening at the Officers Mess dinner the C.O. gave a short talk on the better known points in the history of the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish and also passed on the praise of the Corps high officials pertaining to the good work the 89/109 Infantry Bn has done in the past... The toast to the King was drunk at 1948 hrs... immediately following the King came the toast to the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish at 1950 hrs. The toast was "Gentlemen I give you the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment of Canada"...To the knowledge of everyone concerned it is the first time in Lanark and Renfrew history that a toast was drunk to the unit by the Bn in the field in an operational theatre of war.

(Ibid, 11 Nov 44)

OPERATIONS OF PORTERFORCE, 28 OCT - 30 NOV 44

27. On 28 Oct 12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales') under 5 Corps took over the part of the former 1 Cdn Corps sector lying between the Rimini - Cesena railway and Bagnolo (4818), while Porterforce, under direct command of Eighth Army, assumed responsibility for the remainder of the front from Bagnolo to the coast. (Eighth Army etc. p. 69). Initially Porterforce consisted of 27th Lancers, 3 Cdn Armd

Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 2 Fd Regt R.C.A., 24 Fd Regt (S.P.) R.A., 5 Med Regt P.C.A., 151 A. Tk Bty R.A. and 12 Fd Coy R.C.E. ((H.S.) 224Cl.013 (D.12); W.D., Porterforce, 26 Oct 44). The whole force was commanded by, and named after, Lt-Col A.M. Horsbrugh-Porter, D.S.O., Commanding Officer 27 L. Although for operations Porterforce came under direct command of Eighth Army, for purposes of administration it was under Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps (ibid: Appx 2, Porterforce Op Instr No. 1, 28 Oct 44). An operation instruction issued by Eighth Army on 27 Oct assigned to Porterforce the following tasks:

- (a) Protect RIGHT flank of 5 Corps
- (b) Capture and occupy RAVENNA[✱]
- (c) Subsequent to the occupation of RAVENNA, push on NORTH and WEST continuing to open up ROUTE 16.

(Eighth Army etc: Appx "A"-5, Eighth Army Operation Instruction No. 1439)

From Bagnolo the boundary between 5 Corps and Porterforce would be the line of the River Ronco, inclusive Porterforce, to the road junction 564356. Enemy forces in this sector consisted of 114 Jaeger Division sitting astride Route 16 between the coast and the 57 Easting with armoured patrols from possibly 26 Pz Div from there to the Ronco. (Porterforce Op Instr No. 1. See Map 4 appended to this report)

28. At this time Porterforce had G.G.H.G., with elements across the Bevano, ready to move north on Route 16, and 27 L. patrolling between them and 12 L., the right-flanking unit of 5 Corps. Artillery support was allotted as follows: 24 Fd Regt (S.P.) R.A., less one battery, was in support of 27 L.; 2 Fd Regt P.C.A. in support of G.G.H.G. had one battery in Cervia with the remaining two batteries to move forward and west of the Savio when directed by Porterforce; 5 Med Regt R.C.A. had one battery supporting each of G.G.H.G. and 27 L.; 151 A. Tk Bty had one M. 10^{✱✱}

✱ Of this assignment the narrative of the British Historical Section, Central Mediterranean states:

With the limited resources at its disposal this force ... would clearly be unable to bring heavy pressure to bear on the enemy, nor could it undertake the capture of Ravenna unaided. But an advance up Route 9 would outflank the obstacles before that important town and create opportunities for a drive parallel with them to cut in behind it. Accordingly it was decided that, once the Ronco had been crossed, 5 Corps would make a subsidiary drive northwards between the rivers Ronco and Lamone, if conditions at the time permitted. (This is based on a statement of G.S.O. I (Plans) H.Q. Eighth Army from memory. He said he could not vouch for it absolutely.) The boundary between 5 Corps and Porterforce was accordingly fixed as the right boundary of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division as far as the Ronco, thence northwards along that river, and crossing it only five miles southwest of Ravenna.

(Eighth Army, etc. p. 69)

✱✱ A three-inch self-propelled gun.

troop under each of the two armoured regiments and a 17-pr troop in reserve. The engineers, 12 Fd Coy R.C.E., would develop the "Stuttgart" road (that running north from cross roads 5719) but would keep one section available for use where needed. Casualties would be evacuated by 5 Corps if British, by 1 Cdn Corps if Canadian. (Ibid)

29. During the afternoon of 29 Oct R.C.D. took over the right sector of Porterforce front from G.G.H.G., upon which the latter unit reverted to under command Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div. At the time of their relief G.G.H.G. had reached a point on Route 16 about 2000 yards beyond the Bevano River, leaving R.C.D. about as far again to travel to reach the crossing of the road over the Fosso Ghiaia (610308). It was not a cheerful prospect.

The enemy had opened the dykes of the Savio River and flooded the area so that the road was under water in places and in others ran like a causeway across the drowned countryside. Troops and vehicles moved on that highway like the targets in a penny shooting gallery, and the German wasted no time in taking full advantage of this fine opportunity for target practice. He was sitting quite snug across the Ghiaia river, whose dykes were still intact, with this great sheet of water in front of him, its surface broken only by the road and a few houses built up high beside it. In its worst dreams the Regiment had never seen itself advancing in such a position.

(Landell, Lt-Col K.D., D.S.O., et al
The Royal Canadian Dragoons 1939-1945,
p. 123)

By the end of the month, however, R.C.D. had cleared the enemy from south of the Fosso Ghiaia and established a firm position there. Further inland 27 L. were operating under slightly better conditions. For there the ground although muddy, was not flooded and a more elaborate network of roads existed. By the 31st this unit had occupied San Stefano (5526) and San Pietro in Vincoli (5225), while its armoured car patrols, pushing north from the former place and along the "Stuttgart" road, were nearing the general line of the 28 Northing. To the west 27 L. patrolled towards the Ronco in the vicinity of Borgo Sisa (4822), Cocolia (4924) and to the west of San Pietro in Vincoli. ((H.S.) 214B8.013 (D.8): Eighth Army Situation Reports, 29 Oct to 1 Nov 44; W.D., Porterforce 29-31 Oct 44)

30. On 1 Nov Popski's Private Army (P.P.A.)^{*} came under command Porterforce and was placed in the coastal area to the right of R.C.D., with the task of making a close

* Popski's Private Army, a band of volunteers never more than 120 strong, was organized and commanded throughout its operations by Lt-Col Vladimar Peniakov, D.S.O., M.C., Belgian born son of a Russian engineer. At the outbreak of the war he was running a sugar factory in Alexandria, but his command of Arabic coupled with his knowledge of

reconnaissance of the wooded area near the sea and of probing more deeply in this area. On this same date Porterforce received full authority over the Partisans in its sector and by 3 Nov had 170 of the latter based on Campiano (5625) operating under its direction. Due to their thorough knowledge not only of the area but, in many cases, the actual location of enemy positions, they were of considerable assistance to the patrols of R.C.D. and 27 L. (W.D., Porterforce, 3 Nov 44)

31. During early November Porterforce units continued their slow advance. Small pockets of enemy offered resistance. The task of the force was to continue cleaning these up, and at the same time prevent the Germans from infiltrating back across the rivers into the rear areas. Much-needed weight was added to these operations by the attacks of the Desert Air Force and the always-available and accurate support of the artillery. Behind the advance the Engineers cleared the roads of mines and replaced or repaired demolished bridges. On 30 Oct, while working on a bridge over the Bevano on Route 16, the Engineers made an unusual capture.

At 1000 hours, some R.Es. ...captured one of a group of four Germans who were swimming downstream towards the sea, clad in black rubber suits with special face-pieces. He proved to be a member of Abteilung Gama (Schwimmer), a force organized to do reconnaissance of bridges and possibly demolitions in our rear.

(W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.),
30 Oct 44))

Quick work by a platoon of 12 Fd Coy R.C.E. on 1 Nov in bridging a small stream north of San Pietro in Vincoli paid dividends, when armoured cars of 27 L. pushing over the stream "as the last bolt was being tightened" surprised and wiped out a small enemy post (W.D., 12 Fd Coy R.C.E., 1 Nov 44). Enemy mines, liberally sown at key points on roads and around farmyards and buildings, were the source of many engineer casualties. The following extract from a field company's war diary is illustrative of the difficulties

* (footnote continued from p. 15)

the desert soon led him into the British Army. He formed a band of 12 Arabs and with them worked at distances of from 30 to 300 miles behind the enemy lines in the desert. As a result of his successes in this venture he was ordered to form a larger and more elaborate force. When it was suggested that this new group should have a name, someone jokingly suggested "Popski's Private Army" and the name stuck. In Italy Popski, as he was commonly known, and his army continued to operate behind the enemy's lines, harassing him at every opportunity, collecting vital information, and organizing the Partisans. They used heavily armed jeeps, appearing in the most inaccessible places until the Germans became fearful of them. In all its operations the P.P.A. suffered comparatively few casualties. Popski himself lost a hand in the fighting around Ravenna in December 1944. In September 1945 the force was disbanded. (Hist Sec C.M.H.Q. Newspaper Clippings: London News Chronicle, 9 Oct 46 and the Daily Telegraph, October 1946)

encountered in this type of work:

No. 1 Platoon continued clearing mines and did good work in close proximity to the enemy. Spr. Francis ... became a casualty losing a foot, when he stepped on a schumine... Cpl Gold, R.I., the commander of this section carried on the work and cleared the remainder of the area with a stag-hound in support firing over their heads at the enemy who were reported in houses only one hundred yards distant.

(W.D., 13 Fd Coy R.C.E., 19 Nov 44)

32. The forward positions of R.C.D. had changed but little when the first of the reliefs that brought that regiment out of the line occurred. On Route 16 the unit still controlled the south bank of the Fosso Ghiaia but inland lay some distance south of that stream with posts on the lateral road running from 575286 to 550286. On 7 Nov a company of 1st/4th Battalion The Essex Regiment relieved the R.C.D. squadron on Route 16, and on the 9th Westmr R. (Mot) assumed the remaining responsibilities of R.C.D. on "Stuttgart" and north of San Stefano. Another company of 1/4 Essex relieved the right-hand squadron of 27 L. on 7 Nov and took up a firm position at 523274 about a mile to the south-east of the village of Gambellara (5128). Facing west towards the Ronco the remaining squadrons of 27 L. continued to cover the rest of the Porterforce front to the boundary with 5 Corps. During this period although the enemy had withdrawn to the north bank of the Ghiaia in the right sector he continued to maintain defended points to the south astride the "Stuttgart" road and north of San Stefano. Further west 27 L. patrols made contact with him south of Gambellara and east of the Ronco. (Eighth Army Sitreps op cit, 2-8 Nov 44; W.D., Porterforce, 1-9 Nov 44; W.D., R.C.D., 1-9 Nov 44)

33. Meanwhile 5 Corps, held up during the first week of November by bad weather and a stubborn enemy, had mounted on 7 Nov a two-division attack against the enemy switch-line between the Ronco and the Rabbi south of Forli. Although strongly opposed the 5 Corps attack made headway, and on the 9th Forli fell into their hands. By the 14th the Corps had reached the Montone along its whole front. But the river and the enemy's extensive preparations for defence proved to be too great an obstacle for anything except another full-scale attack, and by the 16th the advance had come to a complete halt. (Eighth Army etc, pp 71-3)

34. These successes by 5 Corps forced the enemy to draw back between the Ronco and the Montone towards Ravenna. This was accompanied by a similar northward movement of enemy troops to the east of the Ronco. On 10 Nov a force known as River Force, consisting of one squadron 27 L., one company 1/4 Essex, P.P.A. and Partisan elements,

was organized to operate under direct command of Porterforce Headquarters in the Route 16 sector, now known as River Sector. On the 12th a River Force patrol made the first crossing of the Fosso Ghiaia, surprising an enemy patrol on Route 16 and taking 14 prisoners. Westmr R. patrols reached the Ghiaia during this period and engaged in fire fights with a still vigilant enemy. To left of Westmr R. on the 11th, 1/4 Essex attempted to reach the village of Gambellara, but a demolished crossing over a small water course south-east of the village covered by mines and strong enemy fire, brought its advance to a halt. On the following day the Essex resumed their attack and this time reached their objective without difficulty. Meanwhile, along the Ronco, 27 L. had contacted 12 L. of 5 Corps at Borgo Sisa (4823). As the 5 Corps unit drove northwards the enemy gradually disappeared from the east side of the river south of Gambellara. On 15 Nov patrols of 1st King's Dragoon Guards, which unit had replaced 27 L. in this sector on the 13th, reached the Ronco to the west of Gambellara without contact. (Eighth Army Sitreps, 10 - 16 Nov 44; W.D., Porterforce, 10 - 15 Nov 44; W.D., Westmr R., 10 - 15 Nov 44).

35. On the 14th Westmr R., which had handed over its positions on the "Stuttgart" axis to K.D.G. on the previous day, relieved the Essex in and around Gambellara. On the same day 2721 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment took over from the Essex sub-unit with River Force. As a result of the progress of 12 L. to the west Westmr R. was now ordered by Porterforce to commence moving forward. During the next two days the western unit made a series of moves, impeded only by mines and demolitions, and by the night of the 16th held firm positions covering the road from the "Y" junction (519296) south of Ghibullo (5130), to the "T" junction (547308) south of Molinaccio (5531). In the centre of the Porterforce front K.D.G., operating on Stuttgart, established a firm position north of the Ghiaia on the 16th. On the same day a patrol of K.D.G. and partisans reached the southern edge of the Ravenna aerodrome without sighting the enemy. That night another patrol from this same unit pushed north-west to the village of Molinaccio. Encountering opposition at this place they called upon Westmr R. for assistance. During the following morning (17 Nov) a company of Westminsterers went into Molinaccio and by midday had cleared the area up to the Canale del Molino. During this period River Force moved its forward posts north of the Ghiaia and its patrols struck out frequently and boldly towards the enemy positions still remaining south of the Fiumi Uniti. On the 14th a P.P.A. patrol went out to an enemy post (at 621345), only 1000 yards from the Uniti returning with six prisoners. In a somewhat more formal attack on the 19th, River Force, supported by artillery fire, cleared and occupied the sugar factory near route 16 (5933) taking nine prisoners in the process. (Eighth Army Sitreps, 14 to 18 Nov 44; W.D. Porterforce, 14 to 17 Nov 44; W.D., Westmr R., 14 to 17 Nov 44).

36. On 18 Nov Westmr R. sent a patrol of one officer and 20 men over the Ronco (area 5129) to feel out the enemy between that river and the Montone. The patrol made very good progress for a time but at about 1000 yards beyond its crossing-place was halted by strong enemy fire. After a brief fire fight the Westminsters withdrew a short distance and called down artillery fire. Following this the patrol moved up to the Scola Lama canal where it again came under enemy fire and took shelter under the near bank. There it was under rifle grenade and light mortar fire and suffered casualties. As the enemy was well dug in the patrol's small arms and L.M.G. were of little value while the distance was too great for the accurate use of the 36 grenades. With the officer badly wounded, the patrol finally managed to evacuate its wounded and fight an orderly withdrawal. Once the area was clear of our troops the artillery "stonked" it with every available gun. At a cost of four dead and eight wounded the patrol had gained important knowledge of the enemy dispositions in the area. (W.D., Westmr R.(Mot), 18 Nov 44).

37. Porterforce continued the process of eliminating the now few and scattered enemy posts south of the Fiumi Uniti and by last light on the 30th had cleared practically the whole of the sector. On the 25th the force came under direct command of 1 Cdn Corps, continuing, however, to operate as a single command and subsequently playing an important part in the capture of Ravenna. Lt-Col A. Horsbrugh-Porter, D.S.O., the Force commander, addressed the following message to the units that had served under him:

Now that the operations originally assigned to the Force bearing my name have nearly concluded, I would like to thank most sincerely the Commanding Officers of units which had served with me.

The majority of them have had more battle experience than myself, many have had staff experience of which I am lacking; yet I have been accorded wonderful support and co-operation on all sides.

I think the operation has been a success. Our aim of clearing the Hun from the area bounded by R. RONCO and GHIAIA was achieved, and an additional and most difficult, belt of country between the GHIAIA and UNITI Canal has been similarly deloused.

The net bag has been 171 PWs, and probably a similar number of casualties. Our own casualties have amounted to 56 British and 30 Canadian.

I have been favoured by Fortune in the selection by 1 Canadian Corps and 8th Army of the units detailed for the operation.

I think that all the "assault" troops who have been in this Force will agree with me that their success in inflicting casualties and taking PWs has been made possible mainly through the daring work of the Sappers, and the unremitting attention towards Hotting up the Hun of the R.H.A., the R.C.H.A., the R.A., the R.C.A. and the A. Tk gunners with their M.10s.

In effect, I reckon every single man in this Force has had a damned good crack at helping the war effort, and although it has been a strenuous time for a simple soldier, I have had things made easy by your generous support.

(W.D., Westmr R., November 1944:
Appx 11, Circular Letter on
Operations dated 24 Nov 44)

38. To permit 10 Ind Div to concentrate on securing the area of the bridge at Casa Bettini (4328), a necessary preliminary to the Canadian offensive (see para 44), Porterforce now took over the northern part of that division's sector between the Montone and the Ronco. On 25 Nov 27 L. relieved Westmr R. of its commitments east of the River Ronco. On the following day the Westminsters moved across the Ronco and took over a 7000 yards front extending from near Longana (5231) to the R. Montone, west of San Pancrazio (4731) at 460304, relieving in the process 2nd Battalion 6th Gurkha Rifles and two companies of 2nd Battalion 10th Gurkha Rifles. At the same time a squadron of G.G.H.G., now under command of the Westminsters, took over from a squadron of Skinner's Horse (1st Duke of York's Own Cavalry), at Longana. (W.D., Westmr R., 25-26 Nov 44).

39. The intention of the Westminsters in this sector was to press the enemy back to the Montone and, if at all possible, secure a crossing. On both sides of the river, however, the enemy occupied excellent dug-in positions and his strong reaction on all parts of the front to pressure by the Canadians revealed that he was determined to stand fast. About this time the weather, which had been fairly dry, broke and rain fell heavily and steadily, causing the rivers and canals to rise and overflow their banks. To supply forward posts lying north of the Scola Lama canal, which ran in an east-west direction through the Westmr R. sector, assault boats and footbridges were used. In spite of the weather and ground conditions, both sides continued to patrol actively. The last day of the month the Westminsters were in action on the near bank of the Montone, east of San Pancrazio.*

...On 30 Nov 44, a platoon attack was put in on a number of enemy occupied houses at 483317. Two groups of houses had been cleared when heavy machine gun fire from dug-in enemy positions on the EAST bank of the river made it impossible to go further in daylight. Enemy mortars and SP guns shelled the positions and infantry continually harassed them with bazookas and small arms fire from very close range until 1400 hours when a counter attack was made. This was driven off with casualties.

((H.S.)145.2W1013(D.4): The Westminster Regiment (Motor) Report on Operations for Period 7 Nov 44 to 30 Nov 44).

* The G.S.O. 3 (Ops) 1 Cdn Corps in his notes on "CHUCKLE" states that the object of this attack was to divert attention from the operations of 10 Ind Div on the same day ((H.S.) 224C1-013(D.18): "Chuckle" Introduction p 7).

In the early evening the enemy made a fresh attempt to re-take the houses but again failed to budge the defenders. That night fresh supplies of ammunition and rations were sent forward to the new position and it was reinforced by an additional platoon of infantry. This was the only significant change of position during the brief period (26-30 Nov) that Westmr R. held this sector under command Porterforce. On the following day, 1 Dec, responsibility for this part of the Corps front passed from Porterforce to Headquarters 12 Cdn Inf Bde (see footnote para 96). (W.D., Westmr R., 25-30 Nov 44)

40. The last day of November was also the last day of Canadian participation in the operations of Porterforce. As already noted Canadian armoured and infantry units taking part in these operations were 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) and Westmr R. (Mot). In addition, several Canadian artillery and engineer units, apart from those included in the original order of battle (see para 27) also shared in the activities of the Force. Engineer units included 12 Fd Coy R.C.E. until 7 Nov, and 13 Fd Coy R.C.E., 17 - 30 Nov. Five artillery regiments served with Porterforce during this period: 5 Med Regt R.C.A. until 11 Nov, when it was replaced by 2 Med Regt R.C.A.; and in turn 2 Fd Regt R.C.A., 28 Oct - 8 Nov, 3 Fd Regt R.C.A., 8 - 19 Nov, and finally 1 Fd Regt R.C.H.A., 19 - 28 Nov 44. The inclusion of R.C.H.A. in Porterforce brought about a unique event.

At 1000 hours we were visited by Lt-Col Bolton, C.O. of 1 R.H.A. who is acting C.R.A. Porterforce. He was very pleased that for the first time in history 1 R.H.A. and R.C.H.A. are fighting side by side. The right hand gun of the Canadian Army is beside the right hand gun of the British Empire (No.1 sub of Chestnut Troop).

(W.D., 1 Fd Regt R.C.H.A., 20 Nov 44)

In addition to the units mentioned above, certain R.C.A.M.C., R.C.A.S.C. and C. Pro C. elements also served with Porterforce. (W.D., Porterforce: Appendices 3-5, Operation Instructions Nos 2-4). Like the units comprising the force, the Headquarters included both British and Canadian officers:

All worked well together in forming an efficient staff organization owing to the fact that a clear cut division of responsibility was allotted each officer beforehand...

(Ibid, Appx 1, Staff Comments as a Result of the Ops of Porterforce, 26 Oct to 10 Dec 44)

Throughout the period the relationship and goodwill between the British and Canadian staffs and units was good.

Co-operation and cohesion were never found wanting; each and every individual "pulled his weight" in aiding the FORCE objective to be reached.

(Ibid)

PREPARATIONS OF 1 CDN CORPS FOR THE DECEMBER OFFENSIVE

41. Planning for the December offensive began at 1 Cdn Corps on 18 Nov, two days after General Foulkes assumed command of the Corps. In this early stage, the operation was designated Exercise "CHUCKLE".* Because of the uncertainty of the success of the two-corps attack along Route 9, which was to begin on the 20th of the month (see para 12), the exact position from which the Canadian Corps would launch operations was not known. For this reason the following three alternative plans were considered:

PLAN I - Assuming enemy hold line of R. MONTONE

(a) 1 Cdn Inf Div objectives -

- (i) force crossings over R MONTONE to secure RUSSI 4333 and EAST bank of R. LAMONE.
- (ii) area BAGNACAVALLO 3838 - COTIGNOLA 3634 - LUGO 3338.
- (iii) 5 Cdn Armd Div - after RUSSI has been secured will be directed NE to cut HIGHWAY 16 NORTH of RAVENNA and to clear town if still occupied by enemy.

PLAN II - Assuming enemy have fallen back to R. LAMONE

(a) 1 Cdn Inf Div objectives -

- (i) area BAGNACAVALLO 3838 - COTIGNOLA 3634 - LUGO 3338.
- (ii) MASSA LOMBARDA 2741.

- (b) 5 Cdn Armd Div will be directed NE to cut HIGHWAY 16, NORTH OF RAVENNA and to clear town if still occupied by enemy.

PLAN III - In the event of adverse weather conditions and areas of objectives in PLANS I and II becoming flooded, 1 CDN CORPS will remain in Army reserve until effort of 5 Corps is spent. It will then be passed through on axis of HIGHWAY 9.

(W.D., G.S. H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, November 1944:
Appx 47, Notes on Corps Comd's Conference 18 Nov 44)

* The original "CHUCKLE" was the name given to a proposed 1 Cdn Corps operation designed to capture Ravenna by the aid of an amphibious landing north of that city. This operation was cancelled after the decision of the Commander A.A.I. to co-ordinate an attack by both Fifth and Eighth Armies ("CHUCKLE" Introduction op cit, p.3)

42. It was Plan I that eventually became the basis of the Canadian Corps operation. On 21 Nov, when the attack of 5 Corps had just begun, General Foulkes outlined at a conference held at Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps the complete operation. This plan was to be flexible and provided for the reentry of 5 Cdn Armd Div to complete the operation if 1 Cdn Inf Div became exhausted before the final objective was reached. The Corps' final objective was extended to Medicina (1245) several miles to the west of Massa Lombarda. ("CHUCKLE" Introduction, p. 4)

43. At 0600 hours 25 Nov 1 Cdn Corps assumed command of Porterforce and became responsible for the right flank of Eighth Army in the area between the Ronco and the sea. On the following day, as previously noted (para 38), Porterforce took over that part of 10 Ind Div sector lying between the Montone and the Ronco south of Molinaccio thus extending the Corps boundary to the Montone west of the latter place. Across the Montone to the south-west 10 Ind Div was still engaged in operations preparatory to the Canadian Corps attack. (Ibid, p. 7)

44. 10 Ind Div continued, during the remainder of the month, its attacks between the Montone and the Lamone rivers in spite of adverse weather. Although initially the enemy had given ground in the area immediately north of Route 9, he clung to the line of the Montone in the area of the bridge at Casa Bettini and stubbornly held a switch line from this point through Albereto (3927) south-west to a point on the Lamone north of Scaldino. Since the bridge at Casa Bettini was at the first good bridging site on the Montone north of Route 9, it was urgently required for the Canadian offensive. It was not until 1 Dec, however, after the rain had ceased, that 10 Ind Div overran the place and the Canadian operation was able to begin (Eighth Army etc, p.76) (See Map 1.)

45. Meanwhile, plans for the main offensive went ahead. Eighth Army issued an operation order on 25 Nov designed to conceal the concentration of 1 Cdn Corps until operations actually began. The fact that Canadian troops formed part of Porterforce and that this battle formation covered almost the entire forthcoming operational front, was expected to make it easier to carry out the deception. In the early part of the attack he might easily be led to believe that only additional Canadian troops had been added. Such a deception might delay the enemy's call for reinforcements on this more or less static front and thereby give 1 Cdn Corps an initial advantage. ((H.S.) 214B8.016(D2): Eighth Army Operation Instruction No.1442, 25 Nov 44)

46. While Eighth Army wished to conceal the preparations of 1 Cdn Corps at the beginning, once the full scale army offensive was launched and a measure of success achieved the opposite effect was desired. To this end a cover plan was designed to lead the enemy to reinforce this front. This cover plan, known as Operation "SHELLAC"

was part of the A.A.I. overall deception plan designed to increase the apparent threat to the enemy's eastern flank, and decrease that threat in the Bologna sector. It was designed to draw off the enemy's troops barring the Fifth Army's advance to Bologna and aid in the successful capture of that city. The intention for Eighth Army was:

- (a) To increase the apparent strength of Eighth Army by disclosing the presence of 10 Corps with under command 46 Inf Div, 4 Inf Div and 9 Armd Bde in a forward concentration area behind 1 Cdn Corps.
- (b) When it is decided in which direction 1 Cdn Corps is to attack from the area of MASSA LOMBARDA 2742, to disclose that 10 Corps will operate in the other direction.

((H.S.)214B8.016(D2); Eighth Army Operation Instruction No. 1445, 30 Nov 44)

This might force the enemy to regroup his reserves in order to counter a two-pronged advance from Massa Lombarda while in fact only a single attack would develop. The method used in this deception scheme followed the general plan of previous ones used in Italy prior to an all out offensive. A limited number of personnel and vehicles from the major units of 10 Corps were to be employed to denote concentration of the whole Corps. Bogus wireless messages were to be passed and concentration areas marked with sign posts, etc. The Royal Navy and Air Force were to co-operate by simulating a threat of an amphibious landing in the Gulf of Venice (ibid).

47. Conferences to co-ordinate the operations of 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div were held at Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps on 28 and 29 Nov, and final arrangements for the attack were made. As 10 Inf Div had still not dislodged the enemy in the area of Casa Bettini, it was decided to have a crossing built a short distance to the south at 427277, within the 5 Corps boundary. Although the exact time of the relief of the Indian division was still undecided both 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div were prepared for the take-over about 1 Dec. One brigade group of 1 Cdn Inf Div was to move into the Indian bridgehead with one battalion of 5 Cdn Armd Div under command. When the attack commenced the 5 Cdn Armd Div unit would revert to under its own divisional command, and the remainder of the armoured division's brigade would move into the bridgehead on the right of 1 Cdn Inf Div. One squadron of Crocodile flamethrowers was to be under command 1 Cdn Inf Div until the crossing of the Lamone, when it was to pass to command of 5 Cdn Armd Div. To assist the latter formation in its operations, which included the capture of Ravenna, Porterforce passed to under General Hoffmeister's command at 0600 hours 29 Nov. In addition to its own artillery each division was allotted in support one medium regiment of 1 Cdn A.G.R.A.; the remainder of the Corps artillery was to be controlled by the C.C.R.A. ("CHUCKLE" Introduction, pp 6-7; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, November 1944: Appx 59, Notes on Corps Commander's Conference, 28 Nov; Appx 61, 1 Cdn Corps Operation Instruction No. 37, 29 Nov 44).

48. Air support for the operation was to be on as large a scale as possible in view of the fact that 5 Corps and 2 Polcorps were to begin operations at the same time. No close support bombing was called for during the early stage of the operation due to the fact that the enemy had not to any great extent constructed "emplaced" positions along his present front. However, six tentacles were available to the Canadian Corps operation from 29 Nov. "Rover David" would be available in the Corps area, with R/T links to both Divisional and Corps Headquarters. To obtain maximum effect, "Cabrank" attacks would be requested for a time to coincide as near as possible with that of the ground attack. Individual towns would not be blitzed unless there was proof that the enemy was occupying them in strength. A list of targets including houses and churches (possible O.Ps.) was submitted to Army Headquarters, but only to be bombed if the enemy was known to be actually occupying them. Since it was appreciated that the enemy would do all his moving by night, especially in the area of Route 16, the Desert Air Force was asked to harass these roads from last until first light, by flare dropping, bombing and strafing ((H.S.) 224Cl.096(D1): Air Plan for Operation "CHUCKLE", 28 Nov 44).

49. Destined to play an important part in the early stages of the coming operations was a group of some 900 Italian partisans from Ravenna and the area north to the Valli di Comacchio. This force was commanded by a partisan known as "Major Bulow."* On 20 Nov Bulow, who had reached Army Headquarters by boat the night before, visited Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps, where he gave the G.S.O.II (Int) valuable information of enemy activities in the Ravenna area. He was briefed by the G.O.C. as to the Corps' intentions for the December offensive. As a result of arrangements made at this meeting wireless reports on the movement, strength and activities of the enemy forces in the Ravenna area passed freely to Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps, and these were of great assistance in the operations subsequent to the capture of Ravenna ("CHUCKLE" Introduction, p. 9; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 20 Nov 44)

* Organized as the 28th Garibaldi Brigade by the Committee of Liberation in Ravenna Province and first under the command of an Italian officer Lieut Arrigo Boldrini (nom de guerre Major Bulow). Bulow's partisans first began working with Eighth Army early in September as the result of contacting an Italian Marine Commando detachment landed behind the lines at that time. They collected intelligence in Ravenna Province which they passed back to Army via an agent with a wireless set left behind for that purpose by the Commando detachment. In return Army supplied the partisans with arms and supplies. (Allied Strategy: Appx "G"-4, p. 98).

50. The ground over which the Canadian Corps operations were to be fought was low lying and characterised by its flatness and by its innumerable water courses. Between the starting line and the Corps final objective, Massa Lombarda, there were four main rivers to be crossed, the Montone, Lamone, Senio and Santerno. Between these rivers there were numerous streams and canals which formed a network over the whole area. In centuries past this low land had formed a great marsh. When the snow melted on the Apennines each spring immense torrents poured down through cliffs to the foothills, seeking the Adriatic. This spate spread across the plain engulfing large areas. As the countryside became populated it was found possible to contain these seasonal floods by raising the river banks with ramparts of earth. In the plains the water moved sluggishly to the sea tending to silt rather than to erode, and thus gradually raised the river beds above the level of the surrounding land. To confine the spring freshets the banks were built higher and higher until to-day the line of each river is marked by great dykes standing above the plain. When the threat to the Gothic Line became imminent the enemy began constructing thoroughfares along these dyked rivers. In places the flood banks were scooped out and underground accommodation provided for the garrisons. Tunnels were built and revetted with stout timbers with openings on the sides like port-holes in a ship. From these portholes protruded the ugly muzzles of the enemy guns. The lazy meanders of the rivers made the successive posts mutually supporting and allowed them to sweep a wide front with converging and enfilade fire. At the appropriate time all main bridges were destroyed; the garrisons of the near bank crossed on foot-bridges which when not in use could be swung back against the far bank. The narrow dykes offered a meagre target for artillery and bombs. Without bridging they were impassable for tanks and vehicles, and new bridges could only be built on the site of the demolished structures since the slopes of the banks were too steep for tracked or wheeled vehicles to surmount without approaching ramps. Thus, to reach these flood banks with mechanized arms presented a problem of extreme difficulty; to storm them a grim task indeed. In many areas, notably in the coastal strip, the ground is flooded during the autumn and early winter months and the movement of vehicles would be confined to the roads. With the exception of Routes 9 and 16 the numerous secondary roads were narrow and water-logged at this time of year. (The Tiger Triumphs, pp 173-4; "CHUCKLE" Introduction, pp 2-3)

51. Because of the nature of this low-lying area and the strong natural defences the enemy had only two divisions (under LXXVI Pz Corps) opposing Eighth Army in this sector. From the Adriatic to the vicinity of Albereto (4028) 114 Jaeger Division held the right or coastal flank and 356 Inf Div the left. The divisional boundary was approximately the 45 Easting just west of S. Pancrazio. 356 Inf Div which was bearing the brunt of 10 Ind Div attacks covered the front between the 45 Easting and Albereto. While the troops of the Jaeger Division were of poor quality and under strength, those of the 356 Division were much better and quite up to strength, as was shown by the latter's stubborn resistance before 10 Ind Div's attacks. There were practically no tanks immediately available, as the majority were in the Faenza area opposing 5 Corps.

Artillery of both these divisions was under strength. The enemy's tactics are also worthy of mention. His custom was to fight a stiff delaying action on each river line until our forces stopped to regroup, when he would break contact and withdraw to the next defendable line and await our attack. During the early evening of 1 Dec, 356 Inf Div, which had been resisting fiercely throughout the last week of November, once more adopted these tactics and disengaged on the front taken over that day by 1 Inf Div. ("CHUCKLE" Introduction, pp 9 - 10; C.I.G.S. Summary Italy, 30 Nov 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, November 1944: Appx 37, Int Summary No. 165, 29 Nov 44)

1 CDN INF DIV (3 CDN INF BDE) ADVANCE TO THE LAMONE,
2 - 5 DEC 44

52. At the Teatro Dante in Riccione, on 25 Nov, Brigadier Smith, the acting G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div, held a conference of the officers of his divisional staff and of brigade groups down to and including company and squadron commanders and discussed his plan for the forthcoming operations. The divisional plan called for the operation to be carried out in four phases. (See Map 1). In Phase I, 3 Cdn Inf Bde would launch an attack designed to capture Russi and force a bridgehead over the Lamone River. The start line for this phase of the operations would be flexible and would depend on the line reached by 10 Ind Div in its current operation west of the Montone River. On the successful completion of the 3 Cdn Inf Bde task, 2 Cdn Inf Bde would advance to capture Bagnacavallo (3938) and establish a bridgehead over the Senio River. The third phase, assigned to 1 Cdn Inf Bde, called for the capture of Cotignola (3634) and Lugo (3338) and exploitation to the line of the Santerno River. In the final stage 3 Cdn Inf Bde would re-enter the battle, capture Massa Lombarda (2742) and push north-west to Medicina (1245). Each stage of the attack would be supported by the divisional artillery and 1 Cdn A.G.R.A. Air support would include rocket-firing Thunderbolts, new to 1 Cdn Inf Div. Enemy reaction to the attack was expected to follow the pattern previously set, i.e., a small battle at a river line, a period of no contact, another bump at the next river line and so on. It was expected that he would continue these tactics until he reached the salt pan lying between Argenta and Bologna, when he would probably regroup and strengthen his position. On the conduct of the battle Brigadier Smith stressed the following points:

There must be an alternative plan for every action of every unit and sub-unit.

Get patrols up to the next river obstacle immediately after a bridgehead has been formed.

Do not worry about flanks. We can and must forget flanks right down to company and battalion level.

Avoid house fighting. Bring fire down before we reach them.

((H.S.224C1.016(D5): Historical Officer's Notes on G.O.C's Conference (Brigadier Smith's) 25 Nov 44)

53. On 28 Nov 3 Cdn Inf Bde moved north from the rest area near Riccione to a concentration area between the Montone and the Ronco north of Forli. At this time the brigade group consisted, in addition to its three infantry battalions, of two batteries from 1 A. Tk Regt R.C.A., "C" Coy Sask L.I. (M.G.), 3 Heavy Mortar Bty Sask L.I., 4 Fd Coy R.C.E., 9 Lt Fd Amb R.C.A.M.C., and "C" Sqn, 12th Battalion Royal Tank Regiment, now equipped with a number of "Crocodiles" (Churchill tanks equipped with flamethrowing attachments). On the following day Brigade Headquarters received word that R.C.D. would be placed under command to provide flank protection on the left. As yet there were no bridges over the Montone in this sector except for a Class 2 pontoon bridge and two suspension foot bridges.

This meant that all traffic into the bridgehead had to go SOUTH through FORLI and then up the WEST side of the MONTONE where the one available road was narrow and rapidly becoming broken up with the volume of traffic using it and the bad weather conditions. Owing to the shallowness of the bridgehead, the area was also very crowded with troops, vehicles, tanks and guns. All transport was road bound due not only to the muddy condition of the fields, but also to the fact that the majority of the entrances to farmyards across the deep ditches which lined either side of the road had been destroyed by the enemy. These physical factors were to render more difficult the task of passing the brigade through the Indians.

((H.S.)23401.013(D10): 3 Cdn Inf Bde
Operations in Italy, 2 Dec 44 to 6 Jan 45,
Part I)

On 30 Nov while 10 Ind Div made a final effort to secure the bridging site at Casa Bettini, a short distance upstream at 427277 the engineers commenced the construction of a Class 40 Bailey*. To allow time for the completion of these tasks, the move of 3 Cdn Inf Bde over the Montone, originally planned for the night 29/30 Nov was now set back to the morning of 1 Dec. (Ibid; Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces: Section C, 5 Corps Operations: Appx "B"-41))

54. At 2130 hours on the 30th, the Brigade Commander, Brigadier J.P.E. Bernatchez, called an "O" Group at his headquarters and gave out his plans for the take-over. At daylight the infantry would cross the river on the foot-bridge while the essential transport moved around via Forli. It was anticipated that the Bailey bridge at 427277 would be completed by 0800 hours, at which time the remaining transport would cross the Montone. The Brigade Group was to be enlarged still further by R.C.D. coming under command for left flank protection, and a British unit, K.D.G., coming in on the right. In addition it had now been

* Presumably the bridge referred to in the Three Brigade report as a Class 30 Bailey at 425274. The same source gives the time of completion of the bridge as 1000 hours 1 Dec.

decided to launch the initial 5 Cdn Armd Div attack from the Montone bridgehead, and for this purpose P.L.D.G. had been placed temporarily under command 3 Cdn Inf Bde. The Princess Louise would be the last unit to move into the bridgehead and would take up a position between West N.S.R. and the river. K.D.G., although under command 3 Cdn Inf Bde, would not pass into the bridgehead as that part of the 10 Ind Div sector which they were to take over lay east of the Montone. The 10 Ind Div supporting armour and anti-tank guns would remain in position until our tanks and anti-tank guns were able to cross the Bailey bridge. During the day (30 Nov) the Indian Division had pushed forward, and by the time the "O" Group was called had reached Casa Bettini. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde op cit; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Nov 44; W.D., 4 P.L.D.G., 29 Nov 44)

55. At first light on 1 Dec, the battalions commenced to move forward to the Montone. By 1000 hours the bridge over the river was ready and traffic at once began to pass over it. With one exception the change-over proceeded smoothly and at 1600 hours Brigadier Bernatchez took over command of the sector from 10 Ind Inf Bde*. West N.S.R., however, did not complete its relief of the Indians until early evening because of enemy counter-attacks during the day against the latter. The last unit to cross the river, 4 P.L.D.G., was in position by 1730 hours. Thus on the eve of the attack the units comprising 3 Cdn Inf Bde were positioned as follows: on the right K.D.G. in widely scattered troop positions (463292-445285) faced up to the east bank of the Montone between the left-flanking positions of Westmr R. in the area south of Molinaccio and the P.L.D.G. assembly area across the river near Casa Bettini; in front of P.L.D.G. the two forward companies of West N.S.R. lay respectively 700 yards north and 1000 yards north-west of Casa Bettini (434296 and 426293); about 1000 yards to the south-west of the latter unit just forward of the Scolo via Cupa from 420288 to 415285 was R. 22e R.; R.C.D. was covering the left flank with two squadrons about 1100 yards north of Albereto on the Russi road and a third to the west of Albereto near the Scolo via Cupa. Carlt & York R. remained in reserve east of the Montone. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Dec 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Dec 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, December 1944: Appx 72, Sitrep 020145)

56. With the completion of the relief of 10 Ind Inf Bde on 1 Dec by 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Cdn Corps assumed command of the whole right flank of Eighth Army from exclusive Albereto to the coast. As laid down in a 1 Cdn Corps message on 30 Nov** the boundary between 5 Corps and

* From right to left 1st King's Dragoon Guards relieved 2nd Battalion 10th Gurkha Rifles, the West Nova Scotia Regiment the 4th Battalion (Duke of Connaughts Own) 10th Baluch Regiment, The Royal 22e Regiment the 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry and the 1st Armoured Car Regiment (the Royal Canadian Dragoons) the 1st Battalion 2nd Punjab Regiment.

** The exact boundary was as follows: all inclusive 5 Corps 586169, 542183, 485210, 471213, 456220, 444220, 422245, 440275, 420285, 405295, 377312, 356325, 335338, 330349, 317357, 305355, 265378,

1 Cdn Corps ran from the Montone a few hundred yards south of Casa Bettini in a west-north-west direction and over the Lamone River 500 yards downstream from Le Tombe (3829). Forward of the Lamone it ran north-west crossing the Canale Naviglio about 300 yards north of Granarolo (3532) and on to reach the Senio River nearly 3000 yards above Cotignola (3634) (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, November 1944: Appx 62, 1 Cdn Corps G.O. 218). At 0145 hours 2 Dec, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps signalled H.Q. Eighth Army the following as the Corps intentions:

5 Cdn Armd Div, 12 Cdn Inf Bde, are attacking to cut Highway 16 area 4942...1 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf Bde will capture Russi and secure crossings over River Lamone...H hour both divisions 020900 hours...Partisans - 3 ambush parties will operate east and north east of Ravenna.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 136, G.O. 233)

The boundary between 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div for the first phase of the Corps attack followed the line of the Scolo Via Cupa (421291) as far as a point (461336) due south of Godo, then swung northwards, passing 1200 yards west of Godo (431377), to the Lamone River opposite Traversara (4237). In order to facilitate movement into the bridgehead the Corps boundary was moved temporarily approximately 2,000 yards to the south-west to include within the Canadian sector the bridge at 427277. (Ibid: Appx 3, 1 Cdn Corps G.O. 234)

57. At 2130 hours Brigadier Bernatchez held his Orders Group, and final details for the initial attack were prepared. H Hour was set for 0900 hours, 2 Dec. On 3 Cdn Inf Bde front West N.S.R. and R. 22e R. were ordered to advance north to the Lamone and establish a bridgehead over that river. West N.S.R. would advance to its first objective the Scolo via Cupa (4331) where it ran due south of Russi. From this position the battalion would by-pass Russi (on the battalion left), cross the railway and capture the crossroads on the Via di Pfangipane 600 yards farther north (at 448353). R. 22e R. was ordered to advance parallel to West N.S.R., by-pass Russi to the west, secure the line of the railway (area 4234) and advance west from there to the Lamone (area 4235). It was hoped that the "Van Doos" on reaching the river, might capture the railway bridge (416352) intact by getting in behind the enemy. Carlt & York R. in reserve, would be prepared for the Lamone River assault and was put on one hour's notice to move. At H Hour 4 P.L.D.G. and K.D.G. were to revert to command 5 Cdn Armd Div. The former unit was to take part in the armoured division's attack on the right flank. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., R. 22e R., December 1944: Appx 73, Battle Report on Operations from 31 Nov 44 to 10 Jan 45)

58. Artillery support was to consist of a series of concentrations on the immediate front with later targets on call. A number of specified air targets were on call from 0900 hours to be engaged by fighter bomber aircraft already circling the target area. Additional aircraft were to engage in bombing and strafing the immediate rear of the enemy lines for half an hour starting at H Hour. One troop of the North Irish Horse would support each battalion in the

initial phase and "C" Sqn 12 R.T.R. would be available in reserve. Flamethrowing "crocodiles" from the last-named squadron were on call, and each battalion was allotted anti-tank support. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde)

59. Both Canadian divisions went into the attack at 0900 hours 2 Dec. They met little opposition at the start, for, in conformity with his method of defensive fighting, the enemy had retired during the previous night to a position along the Scolo via Cupa. R. 22e R. was astride this canal at the beginning of the attack but soon encountered opposition along the network of roads and irrigation trenches on their front. On the right West N.S.R. got two platoons across the Scolo in the area of a blown bridge (432310) at 1345 hours, but because of a threatening enemy counter attack had to assume the defensive for several hours. At 1745 hours, however, this unit launched a two-company attack from its small bridgehead but meeting with very heavy opposition withdrew in a short time to the near bank of the canal. As night fell R. 22e R. to the west were also held up on the same general line, in spite of repeated company attacks. Thus, at the end of the first day's fighting the brigade had advanced less than 2,000 yards. (Ibid; W.D., R. 22e R., 2 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 2 Dec 44)

60. The Brigade Commander ordered both battalions to continue to press forward during the night. Shortly after 2100 hours information was received from Divisional Intelligence that the enemy on the left flank were preparing to withdraw to the Lamone. Just before midnight, opposition on that flank did slacken and both battalions prepared for a rapid advance during the remaining hours of darkness. Meanwhile on the left R.C.D. had moved strong patrols forward to cover the left flank of R. 22e R. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Dec 44; W.D., R.C.D., 2 Dec 44)

61. By midnight R. 22e R. advancing again and with two companies leading, by-passed the enemy's strongly prepared positions. By daylight one company had reached the line of the railway north of Russi (4333) where it waited for the remainder of the battalion to move up. The infiltration of the forward companies during the night made it possible for the rear companies and Carlt & York R. following up to capture a number of prisoners after daylight. During the remainder of the morning R. 22e R. firmed up their positions just short of the railway line in preparation for a final advance to the Lamone. Meanwhile West N.S.R. made another two-company attack across the Scolo via Cupa at 0215 hours (3 Dec). This time the Nova Scotians met little opposition and by daylight were on the outskirts of Russi and had taken the hamlet of Pezzolo. At 0700 hours one company advanced to Russi and found it free of the enemy. Immediately north of the town, however, the battalion was again held up by sniper and heavy mortar fire along the line of the railway. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., R. 22e R., 3 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 3 Dec 44)

62. Early on the morning of 3 Dec Brigadier Smith visited Brigadier Bernatchez's Headquarters and congratulated him on the achievements of his Brigade during the night. Both Commanders now hoped for a rapid advance to the Lamone and the establishment of a bridgehead on the other side. R. 22e R. was ordered to move forward and seize

the railway bridge and the road bridge (427365) a mile farther north. The battalion was urged to make every effort to capture these bridges intact and if possible to cross the river. Carlt & York R. would then pass through R. 22e R. and establish a firm bridgehead across the Lamone. By this time 12 R.T.R. had relieved N.I.H., and Carlt & York R. was in position close behind R. 22e R. West N.S.R. was ordered to continue its advance and cut the railway north of Russi in order to secure the right flank of the brigade. (Ibid)

63. The advance to the Lamone, however, was not to be an easy one. By 1000 hours it was obvious that the enemy intended to hold the line of the railway on both battalion fronts. West N.S.R. was again halted north of Russi while the R. 22e R. company, which had reached the railway during the night, was driven from its positions by heavy enemy fire. Brigade Headquarters now made arrangements for a fresh attack by the two battalions coordinated with an artillery fire plan to take place early in the afternoon. R. 22e R. were to secure the fork in the railway then swing left to the river between the two lines. On the right West N.S.R. would renew its efforts to get forward north of Russi while, in the rear, Carlt & York R. would have two companies standing by in readiness to pass through and exploit success. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Dec 44; W.D., R. 22e R., 3 Dec 44)

64. At 1400 hours R. 22e R. began its attack and quickly crossed the railway at 424341. The leading company then turned left towards the river in the triangle formed by the railway, but soon met stiff opposition and by the time it reached the centre of the triangle the enemy were attacking from all sides. Two companies, one on each flank, advanced to relieve the pressure on the forward company but without success. However, with the aid of artillery and mortar fire the battalion held its positions. On the right, West N.S.R. again was unable to get forward. The enemy were fighting hard to deny the Brigade the approaches of the Lamone. (W.D., R. 22e R., 3 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 3 Dec 44)

65. With his brigade stalemated several hundred yards from the river, Brigadier Bernatchez decided to use Carlt & York R. to complete the attack to the river line; for in the meantime on 5 Cdn Armd Div front 12 Inf Bde had reached and cut the railway east of Godo and were still advancing. With the enemy withdrawing on this flank a brigade night attack was set for 2130 hours. Carlt & York R. was ordered to advance through R. 22e R. and clear the river from the railway north to the road bridge (427365). West N.S.R. on the right flank was ordered to attack again across the railway and secure the area flanking Carlt & York R. advance. This night attack was to be supported by artillery concentrations laid down on the objectives prior to H Hour. On the brigade left R.C.D. was ordered to patrol forward as far as possible and to hold any ground it could acquire. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Dec 44)

66. By the time the attack started the whole battle area was covered with dense fog, but enemy opposition had lessened and the two battalions got off to a good start. Both Carlt & York R. and West N.S.R. prodded their way forward overcoming scattered resistance and capturing several prisoners. On the right West N.S.R. companies quickly

reached their objectives and consolidated their positions. At daylight Carlt & York R. with its right flank now protected continued to battle forward, coming under increasingly heavy enemy fire as it approached the river. Now however enemy posts east of the river were few in number, the main opposition coming from his positions on the far bank. Shortly after daybreak leading elements of the brigade reached both the railway and road bridges but found them demolished, with enemy M.Gs. on the far bank covering the approaches. During the remainder of the morning Carlt & York R. continued clearing the area between the two bridges and at the same time endeavoured to press northwards towards the inter-divisional boundary (see para 56). (W.D., West N.S.R., 3 and 4 Dec 44; W.D., Carlt & York R., 3 and 4 Dec 44)

THE REPULSE OF 1 CDN INF BDE AT THE LAMONE, 5 DEC 44

67. On the morning of 4 Dec the G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div ordered 1 Cdn Inf Bde to attack through the 3 Cdn Inf Bde positions and establish a bridgehead across the Lamone. Brigadier J.A. Calder, E.D., had already received advice of the possibility of this operation and had placed his units on short notice to move. The Brigade at this time was concentrated just west of the Montone in the vicinity of Casa Bettini. At 0900 hours Hast & P.E.R. and R.C.R. were moved forward to positions behind 3 Cdn Inf Bde while plans for the attack were being prepared. The Divisional Commander, anxious to get a foothold across the Lamone, ordered the assault to begin at 1250 hours along the river line between the road bridge and the railway bridge*. Hast & P.E.R. were ordered to make the initial attack, and the remaining battalions of the brigade were moved forward in order to exploit success. An artillery programme was prepared to cover the crossing, and a Timothy Target arranged to cover the area through which the advance beyond the river would be made. Carlt & York R. would assist the crossing with supporting fire on the flanks. ((H.S.) 234Cl.013(D10): 1 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Operations, December 1944)

* I took several photos of the Lamone at the railway bridge (417353)...The railway travels on a high embankment-level with the dyke tops and 20 feet above level of surrounding country. This gives commanding view of river. The river flood banks are the highest yet encountered (going north-west). 25 foot dykes on land side, 40 foot on river side - some canes at river level - but mostly grassy banks. Footpath and bicycle track on top of dykes. From the dyke **tops** Bagnacavallo is visible between the trees. Fields still small, with 12 inch thick poplars supporting the vines in the bridgehead.

((H.S.)903.003(Dz): Italy -
Topographical Notes by Lt-Col
G.W.L. Nicholson, September -
November, 1948, p.30)

68. At 1300 hours Hast & P.E.R. began moving forward from their start line, a ditch 150 yards east of the river, but when they were within a few yards of the Lamone they suddenly came under intense mortar and machine gun fire. The dyked river wall in this area was approximately 45 feet high and with the enemy apparently controlling this obstacle it seemed impossible for the battalion to advance further. However, with the support of our artillery one company attempted to climb the dyke, but was again held up by heavy fire. After this second attempt the C.O. of the battalion decided that it would be impossible without greater support to make the river crossing and accordingly ordered his men to withdraw. (Ibid; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 4 Dec 44)

69. Following the failure of the Hast & P.E.R.'s attack the Brigade Commander immediately called an "O" Group and laid plans for a fresh assault in the same area. He now intended to make a two-battalion attack, using Hast & P.E.R. on the right and R.C.R. on the left, during the hours of darkness. Behind the assault waves, the supporting engineers would be held in readiness to construct rafts and temporary bridges. H Hour was set for 0100 hours 5 Dec. Following the "O" Group both battalions began making their individual plans for the attack. Reconnaissance patrols went forward and with great difficulty climbed the dyke to gain information about the depth and width of the river. The R.C.R. patrol Commander was drowned in the icy water, when he attempted to swim the river, but his patrol got back with the information that the water was icy cold and running fast, with a depth of five feet and a width of 35. Meanwhile an artillery plan had been completed which included the fire support of four medium regiments in addition to that of the divisional field regiments. This plan called for a series of medium concentrations along the road on the far side of the river from H-10 until H Hour, with divisional field regiments on the same targets H-2 until H plus 10. At H plus 10 the divisional artillery would lift and until H plus 40 engage other pre-arranged targets, followed by targets on call. (Ibid; W.D., R.C.R., 4 Dec 44; ((H.S.) 234Cl.013(D10): Hast & P.E.R. Report on Operations, December 1944)

70. The R.C.R. plan called for an attack across the river just north of the railway bridge. Because of the depth of the river assault boats were to be used for the initial crossing. "D" Coy was to be in charge of the boats and to be responsible for passing the other three companies of the battalion over the river. "A" Coy on the battalion right was to cross and secure the road and track junction on the lateral road (417357) just north of the railway bridge while at the same time on its left "B" Coy would move over and take up a position just forward of the lateral road near the railway ombankment (415356). "C" Coy would then pass through to take an objective on the track about 500 yards forward of "A" Coy. "D" Coy after their ferrying duties were completed would cross and reinforce the bridgehead. At H Hour both "A" and "B" Coys were ferried across by "D" Coy under cover of the barrage. On reaching the other side they moved forward without opposition and reached their objectives. One platoon of "B" Coy, however, which tried to cross on the partially demolished railway bridge, came under a terrific mortar concentration and was practically wiped out.

"C" Coy then crossed without incident but, becoming confused in the darkness, took up a position some distance beyond its true objective. By first light "D" Coy had passed four anti-tank guns and a jeep across on a Class II raft and was preparing to move into the bridgehead. (W.D., R.C.R., 4-5 Dec 44; Appx 17, Battle Narrative Royal Canadian Regiment)

71. Up to this point the R.C.R. operation seemed to be developing into a marked success. Daybreak, however, brought a heavy fog and indications of impending disaster. For, in the course of the night, the enemy had withdrawn from the line of the river and had taken up a position along the railway embankment on the left flank of R.C.R. Supported by self-propelled guns firing through breaches in the embankment and by machine guns lining the top, the enemy counter-attacked "B" Coy and soon overran the company headquarters, taking the Company Commander and other personnel prisoner and dispersing the platoons. Leaderless and reduced to less than 30 men, the survivors, many of them wounded, withdrew to the dyke. In the meantime "C" Coy 500 yards beyond was receiving worse treatment. Completely dominated by machine guns on the railway embankment and not yet dug in, the company prepared to make a stand in a large stone house. But S.P. gunfire brought the house down on the defenders' heads and dispersed those of the company who had not fallen to the enemy machine gun bullets. Close behind the S.P. gunfire infantry debouched from a blow in the embankment and overran the remainder of the company. Only some 12 men of "C" Coy managed to extricate themselves and fall back towards "A" Coy. By 1000 hours there were only the reduced numbers of "A" Coy remaining in the bridgehead. "D" Coy in the meantime attempted to move forward in support but was unable to do so as the enemy had anticipated this move and brought heavy fire to bear along the top of the dyke. Shortly afterwards "A" Coy effected a withdrawal to the near side of the river, abandoning the anti-tank guns which had been ferried across during the night. (Ibid; Galloway, Major Strome, E.D., "55 Axis" With the Royal Canadian Regiment 1939-1945, pp 176-79)

72. Meanwhile on the right flank of the brigade, where the crossing was planned to take place just south of the road bridge, Hast & P.E.R. met an early reverse which delayed their attack three hours. The two assaulting companies forming up under the near dyke came under our own medium concentration and due to the resultant casualties and disorganization were for the time unable to proceed. Battalion Headquarters at once ordered a fresh company forward and set back H Hour until 0400 hours. Using an Olafson bridge* this company ("D" Coy) reached the far side of the river by 0500 hours, closely followed by "A" and "B" Coys. The three companies then moved off to the right toward their objective along the Via Albergoni. They were soon held up by the enemy, however, who began firing from

* For a brief description of "OLAFSON" bridge see para 23.

the houses along the river road. Then followed the counter-attack against R.C.R. on their left and with wireless communication cut off due to heavy interference the companies halted. At this time the battalion had no anti-tank guns across the river to meet the threat of enemy self-propelled guns and tank attack. Conflicting information passed from company to company but finally at 1100 hours all three withdrew to the east side of the river. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 5 Dec 44)

73. By midday both R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. were consolidated on the east bank of the Lamone. Both battalions had lost heavily, having suffered over 150 casualties between them in the short engagement.^{*} It was a serious setback to the 1 Cdn Inf Div plans. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Dec 44). Of the factors contributing to the failure of the venture the report of R.C.R. says:

The fact that the enemy had superiority in numbers in infantry, was supported by armour in his attack, had a covered approach to within a few hundred yards of our LEFT position by means of the railway embankment, enabled him to smash the bridgehead completely. On the other hand our infantry had very little support of any kind, also, due to the fog could not employ their PIAT's to the best advantage.

((H.S.)234C1.013(D10); R.C.R. Report on Operations, December 1944)

5 CDN ARMD DIV ADVANCE TO THE LAMONE, 2-5 DEC 44

74. While the units of 1 Cdn Inf Div were carrying out their four-day operation (2-5 Dec) between the Montone and the Lamone, 5 Cdn Armd Div, assisted by the Partisans and with Porterforce under command, had accomplished a more spectacular operation on the right flank of 1 Cdn Corps. By nightfall on 5 Dec they had cleared the Lamone from the right boundary of 1 Cdn Inf Div as far north as Mezzano on Route 16, cut off and occupied Ravenna and pushed the retreating enemy back towards the water-soaked fringe of the Valli di Commacchio.

75. In the 1 Cdn Corps plan (see para 41), 5 Cdn Armd Div was given the task of cutting Route 16 north-west of Ravenna and capturing the city. The operation was to be carried out in five phases:

Phase I - Securing a bridgehead over the MONTONE R in the area S. PANCRAZIO - MOLINACCIO 4731.

* R.C.R. casualties on 5 Dec numbered 29 killed or died of wounds, 46 wounded and 31 prisoners of war while Hast & P.E.R.'s were 15 killed or died of wounds, 36 wounded and seven prisoners of war. In addition the latter unit had one killed and six wounded on 4 Dec. ((H.S.)133.065(D345); War Records (D.V.A.) Casualty Statistics for the Campaign in Italy, 3 Sep 43 to 8 May 45)

- Phase II - Capture of GODO (4635).
- Phase III - Capture of PIANGIPANE (4738)
- Phase IV - Curring of Highway 16 and securing of the bridge over the Canale GORETTI (4942) and the bridge over the R. LAMONE (4744).
- Phase V - Capture and clearing of Ravenna

((H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): History of Ops
5 Cdn Armd Div - Capture of Ravenna)

12 Cdn Inf Bde, with "C" Sqn of 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), two companies of Ir R.C. and 16 A.Tk Bty R.C.A. under command, was given the task of carrying out Phases 1 - 4. If this was accomplished without heavy fighting the Brigade would also clear Ravenna, otherwise 11 Cdn Inf Bde would undertake Phase V. 12 Bde's plan was co-ordinated with that of 1 Cdn Inf Div (see para 54). Simultaneously with 3 Inf Bde, 12 Inf Bde was to attack from the bridgehead along the north bank of the Montone toward S. Pancrazio. * The Brigade start line was situated in the La Miseria area, with H Hour set at 0900 hours on 2 Dec 44. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 1 Dec 44)

76. The original plan for the first phase of this operation was to launch a night assault crossing on a two-battalion front opposite S. Pancrazio with that town as first objective and Godo as the second. Later the plan was changed and it was decided to secure the bridgehead east of S. Pancrazio at Molinaccio by an advance from the 10 Ind Div bridgehead to the south to be co-ordinated with the 3 Cdn Inf Bde attack. This flanking drive along the west bank of the Montone would dispense with the need for an assault crossing of the river. ((H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-6 Dec 44)

77. On 1 Dec 12 Cdn Inf Bde received from Porterforce, Westmr R. and G.G.H.G. (W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx 3, 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 1 Dec 44). This resulted in the Brigade's taking over the sector of the front between the Ronco at Longana and the Montone immediately west of S. Pancrazio. On this same date 4 P.L.D.G. was placed temporarily under command 3 Cdn Inf Bde for the purpose of co-ordinating its move into the assembly area in the Montone bridgehead. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, December 1944: Appx 49, 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 1 Dec 44). Prior to the attack Lan & Ren Scot R. and "C" Sqn B.C.D. moved into concentration areas near the Montone about 2 miles south of Casa Bettini. Placed in direct support of 12 Cdn Inf Bde were 11 Fd Regt

* Country north towards S. Pancrazio (seen from 432285) small fields of grain divided by well treed vines, elms and poplars 20 ft apart in rows. From the road on top of the west dyke one looks across these fields to the scattered houses of La Miseria. The dyke tops are the only points of vantage in this otherwise featureless terrain.

(Italy - Topographical Notes, op cit, p. 29)

R.C.A., 1 Med Regt R.C.A. and 10 Fd Sqn R.C.E. During the night 1/2 Dec G.G.H.G. extended its frontage to the left when it relieved "B" Coy Westmr R. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report op cit)

78. 12 Cdn Inf Bde attack towards San Pancrazio and Godo was to start (2 Dec) one hour after 3 Cdn Inf Bde opened its offensive towards Russi. At H Hour G.G.H.G. would revert to command H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div and 4 P.L.D.G. to command 12 Cdn Inf Bde. As originally planned the 5 Cdn Armd Div attack was to have been launched from the line of the road running south-east from Pezzolo to the Montone, about 3000 yards beyond Casa Bettini, on a 1000 yard front. Due to the failure of the Indian Division to gain all its objectives, however, the divisional plan had to be altered somewhat, and the attack mounted on a much narrower frontage about 2000 yards farther south.* The amended plan was for P.L.D.G. to commence the attack at 0900 hours on a one company front and as they progressed, and the 5 Cdn Armd Div area west of the Montone widened, to broaden out on a two-company front until they reached the area of the original start line. At this point Lan & Ren Scot R. was to come in on the right of 4 P.L.D.G. and secure S. Pancrazio while P.L.D.G. headed north-east for Godo. As soon as the west bank of the Montone in the Molinaccio area was cleared by Lan & Ren Scot R., bridging operations were to start there and Westmr R. (Mot) was to cross in assault boats and push across country with all possible speed towards Piangipane (4738). Finally the two companies of Ir R.C. under command were to cross the Montone and form a firm base around S. Pancrazio. As soon as a Class 9 bridge just south of Molinaccio (at 471308) was completed, supporting arms would be moved up to join the attacking battalions. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log 2 Dec 44)

79. At 0215 hours 2 Dec, 12 Cdn Inf Bde received 5 Cdn Armd Div G.O. No. 9 which read as follows:

Intentions. Cut Highway 16 area 4942. 12 Cdn Inf Bde to attack. Centre line S. Pancrazio 467320, Godo 4635, X-roads 497422. Objectives (1) S. PANCRAZIO 467320 (2) Area road junction 477325 - GODO - PIANGIPANE 4738 - Highway 16 inclusive bridges 499421 and 475441. H Hour 020900A.

(12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log op cit, 2 Dec 44)

80. On 2 Dec the enemy had four battalions of an average strength of 250 each facing 12 Cdn Inf Bde. The western enemy battalion belonged to 356 Inf Div and held the Montone as far east as the Pezzolo road which was the approximate boundary between 356 Inf Div and 114 Jaeger Div.** The remaining three battalions belonged to 114 Jaeger Div, which, with seven battalions, was responsible for the whole front from that road to the sea - a distance of about 12 miles.

* The final start line lay on a track running from 433294 to R. Montone at 435290, a front of about 600 yards.

**The road originally intended for the divisional start line (see para 78).

As supporting arms the enemy had an estimated 24 field guns of 10.5-cm or 15-cm calibre plus five Italian self-propelled assault guns, six self-propelled 8.8-cm anti-tank guns, and several Panther tanks. Already the enemy had taken preparatory steps in anticipation of a possible forced withdrawal from the Ravenna area. Demolitions had been prepared and he had evacuated certain of his base installations. But in spite of this and the fact that his right flank was already insecure due to our advances beyond the Montone farther south, he made it abundantly clear that he would not give up Ravenna without a fight. He continued to maintain outposts and to patrol aggressively south of the Montone against G.G.H.G. and Westminsters, while his artillery and mortars, directed from good observation posts behind his forward defences on the north bank of the Montone, greatly restricted Canadian movement south of the river in this area. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

81. Like 1 Cdn Inf Div's area, the ground over which 12 Cdn Inf Bde operated between 1-6 Dec was bounded to the south-east and north-west by two main waterways, the Montone and Lamone. Here the rivers average 30 feet in width and are bordered by embankments 25 feet high. Between, and running parallel to them are several smaller canals and drainage ditches of which the Scolo Via Cupa was the largest. These are narrow and shallow without embankments and did not form serious obstacles. The many second class roads cross numerous water courses which afforded the enemy opportunities for demolitions. The ground is flat and soft, with few trees. Cover, therefore, existed only in buildings, drainage ditches and embankments. (Ibid)

82. The night 1/2 Dec found 4 P.L.D.G. disposed in 3 Cdn Inf Bde area with two companies forward between Casa Bettini and the start line and the remainder of the battalion about 1000 yards farther upstream.* (Ibid; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 1 Dec 44). At 0900 hours the leading P.L.D.G. company moved into action, immediately coming under heavy machine gun fire, as did a second company which commenced edging forward shortly after the attack started. (W.D., 4 P.L.D.G., 2 Dec 44). By 1030 hours advanced elements reached the Pezzolo road where they encountered some enemy opposition. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 2 Dec 44). Shortly after as the front broadened out, P.L.D.G. began to advance with two companies up. As the afternoon wore on, despite persistent enemy machine gun fire, they gradually strengthened their positions astride the Pezzolo road. During this time no assistance was forthcoming from the tanks, which were held up completely by mines and craters in the road. Enemy resistance increased, especially on the right flank where he made a strong effort to maintain his hold on the river and by 1715 hours the unit had made no further gains. In the eight hours since the commencement of the attack P.L.D.G. had advanced about 2500 yards. (Ibid; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Dec 44; W.D., 4 P.L.D.G., 2 Dec 44).

83. Meanwhile at 1200 hours Ian & Ren Scot R. crossed the Montone over 1 Cdn Inf Div's bridge and by 1620 hours was concentrated in rear of P.L.D.G. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Dec 44). In the afternoon the Brigade

* Companies at 433288, 428286, 433273 and 422270.

Commander, Brigadier J.S.H. Lind, D.S.O., visited the forward area to gain a first hand impression of the situation and before leaving made plans for an attack to start at 1800 hours. Lan & Ren Scot R. were now moved up on the P.L.D.G. right flank and the two battalions were put in readiness for a push forward - P.L.D.G. north to Godo and Lan & Ren Scot R. north-east to S. Pancrazio. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Dec 44)

84. In the meantime a subsidiary attack mounted by Westmr R. against the German left flank on the Montone had achieved a fair measure of success. Early in the morning H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, with the intention of diverting some of the enemy strength from the area of the main attack, ordered Westmr R. to cross the Montone opposite S. Pancrazio. At 1000 hours, under cover of a heavy fog which hung over the river flats throughout the morning, elements of one company commenced to infiltrate to the opposite bank.* Initially the passage of the river was made in assault boats manned by drivers and batmen. Later, however, a number of these boats were fastened together to form a bridge. As recorded in the following passage from their War Diary the Westminsters encountered comparatively light opposition.

Enemy snipers were active during the early stages of the crossing and mortaring continued all day. Some casualties were inflicted on "C" and "A" Coys, chiefly by mortar and shell fire. A number of enemy were killed and 21 prisoners taken. The N.C.O. who was responsible for the defence of the sector said that our attack had been quite unexpected and before they could muster their defence they were beaten.

(W.D., Westmr R., 2 Dec 44)

Stiffer opposition developed in the vicinity of S. Pancrazio, but despite this the Westminsters made good progress and by 1855 hours had one company in the built-up area at the western end of the village with a second closing in farther to the right. During the night (2/3 Dec) the engineers erected a Class 9 F.B.E. (at 471308) about 600 yards above the road at Molinaccio. This was ready for use at 0930 hours 3 Dec and the unit transport and battalion headquarters were moved across the river. Ir R.C. took over the areas south of the Montone vacated by Westmr R. (Mot). (Ibid, 3 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log 3 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Dec 44).

85. The 4 P.L.D.G. and Lan & Ren Scot R. attack started at 1800 hours and by midnight the two units were about 2000 yards south-west of San Pancrazio. At this time Westmr R. was closing in on that village from two sides. At 0525 hours Lan & Ren Scot R. contacted the left flank of Westmr R. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 2-3 Dec 44). On the brigade left, at this time, P.L.D.G. was within 500 yards of the Russi - San Pancrazio road. At 0800 hours elements of both Lan & Ren Scot R. and Westmr R. were in San

* The crossing was made at 470308 (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Dec 44).

Pancrazio, the first-named unit continuing through the village north towards Godo. Opposition during the morning proved light and shortly after midday leading elements of the Scottish Regiment reached the line of the Scolo via Cupa, which was found to be a small drainage canal with dykes only five feet high. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

86. During the early afternoon Brigadier Lind visited all units in the brigade and issued orders for the next stage of the attack. Lan & Ren Scot R. was to advance along the axis of the San Pancrazio - Godo road with Godo as its objective. 4 P.L.D.G. was to move across country around the right flank of the Lanarks and cut the Ravenna - Godo road about 1000 yards east of Godo. For the time being Westmr R. would be in reserve, but the unit would eventually pass through 4 P.L.D.G. to capture Piangipane. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

87. P.L.D.G. had its two forward companies at the Scolo via Cupa a few hundred yards west of the Godo road by 1445 hours. Shortly after these passed over the canal and turned east to cross the smaller Scolo Pisinello just above its confluence with the via Cupa. By 1545 hours P.L.D.G. was 1000 yards beyond the line of the Pisinello. Under only light mortar and machine gun fire the leading company now made a rapid cross-country march and by 1605 hours had cut the main road to Ravenna just east of Godo (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Dec 44). By 1730 hours all four squadrons were across this road and astride the railway where they consolidated awaiting further orders. Meanwhile Lan & Ren Scot R. had not made quite as rapid progress as its sister unit and, at 1545 hours, was still south of the Scolo via Cupa held up by mortar and machine gun fire. By 1730 hours, however, all companies of the Lanarks had finally crossed the canal while the lead sub-units were about 1200 yards south of Godo. During the following two hours the Lanarks brought the remainder of the battalion forward to the vicinity of Godo and firmed up with two companies in the eastern built-up sector and two just south of the railway. (Ibid; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 3 Dec 44). It had been a most successful afternoon for 12 Cdn Inf Bde.

...for the speed and suddenness of our advance had carried it through the enemy's delaying line EAST of R.LAMONE (which was in fact the line of the railway running through GODO). RAVENNA itself became badly outflanked and the enemy manning the R. MONTONE EAST of SAN PANCRAZIO and SOUTH of the GODO - RAVENNA railway line was faced with the choice of a very hasty and disorganized withdrawal, or the near certainty of being completely cut off. Later events proved that he chose the former course.

(12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

88. With a view to increasing the threat to enemy troops in the Ravenna area and of facilitating the drive north of Westmr R. to Piangipane, Brigadier Lind at 1830 hours ordered P.L.D.G. to seize a position astride the Piangipane - Russi road north of Godo and be prepared to exploit to Piangipane. Unfortunately P.L.D.Gs. were unable to complete this task that night (3/4 Dec), most of which they spent in company with Lan & Ren Scot R. in mopping up Godo and consolidating the brigade holdings north and east

of this town, in the course of this activity having several light skirmishes with the enemy. (Ibid)

89. During the afternoon the Westminsters remained in the S. Pancrazio area, and at 1600 hours moved off directly across country towards Piangipane. They were heavily loaded, for they faced a seven-mile move totally on foot with little prospect of transport being able to follow immediately. In spite of a thick fog and the absence of landmarks they made good progress, and by 1930 hours had crossed the Scolo via Cupa and reached a point only a few yards short of the road via del Godo. There they halted long enough to check their position and report it to Brigade Headquarters. Due to difficulties with the wireless this proved to be their last contact with brigade until 0600 hours the next morning (4 Dec). Another 3000-yard march over the flat, muddy ground brought them at 2330 hours to the Ravenna - Godo road, a mile east of Godo. From there two companies continued forward along the secondary road leading north to Piangipane. Battalion Tactical Headquarters and the balance of the unit remained behind in a house near the road junction. There shortly before midnight a sentry reported vehicles coming down the main road from the direction of Ravenna.

All lights were extinguished and everyone looked "to his arms". Major F. Shawcross was at the window counting them and reported 15 vehicles of all types accompanied by infantry on foot. The column passed by but some movement near the door drew the attention of three officers who were bringing up the rear. One of these came toward the house calling in German. The C.O. who was in the doorway to meet him, eased the bolt of his .30 carbine forward and pulled the trigger, but the weapon failed to fire. The officer grappled with the C.O., but several shots from other weapons quickly stopped him and he fell dead onto the floor. When this firing broke out the column of vehicles made off down the road towards GODO. The house was evacuated by TAC HQ who took up a position in the CANALETTA DEL GODO which ran north and south immediately behind the house. It was now about 2400 hours. At about 0010 the vehicles came back in our direction stopped a short distance down the road and shot the area up with 7.5 cm guns and M.Gs., causing several casualties. When they started to come past the house the first, a half-track got by, but the following five were all knocked out. Two of the vehicles (SEMOVENTE 7.5 cm Assault Guns...) continued to fire their machine guns, but no further casualties were caused. Otherwise the vehicles had been very effectively knocked out by the PIAT men of "B" and Sp Coys... then commenced "mopping up" operations, the final score being 10 killed, four wounded and 23 prisoners... Two tanks were knocked out and three half-tracked recce vehicles were taken. Three of our men were killed and four wounded.

(W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 3 Dec 44)

Meanwhile the two leading companies, on hearing the sound of fighting behind them, had halted and taken up a firm

position in some houses about a half-mile to the north. On contacting Battalion Headquarters they received orders to remain where they were until morning when they were to resume the advance to Piangipane. (Ibid; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3-4 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 3-4 Dec 44).

90. During the day Ir R.C., given the task of guarding the right flank and picqueting the area between S. Pancrazio and Godo to intercept enemy troops attempting to escape to the west from the positions south of Ravenna, moved over the Montone into the area vacated by the Westminsterers. Early on 4 Dec the Engineers opened the San Pancrazio - Godo road and much urgently required unit transport, two squadrons of tanks, and a battery of anti-tank guns, proceeded to Godo. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

91. The morning of 4 Dec found Lan & Ren Scot R. in full control of Godo and the northern and western approaches to it. Just east of the town 4 P.L.D.G. was still in position astride the road connecting Godo and Ravenna, while to the North-east Westmr R. was advancing towards Piangipane. The whole of 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.) was now under command of the brigade, with two squadrons in Godo and another in support of Westmr R. Brigade now ordered P.L.D.G. to move east along the road to Ravenna, consolidate in and around S. Michele (4936), and patrol towards Ravenna. After meeting some enemy resistance the battalion consolidated at S. Michele. At this place the unit received information from partisan sources that the enemy had cleared out of Ravenna during the night 3/4 Dec and that 27 L. were advancing from the south into that city against little opposition. 4 P.L.D.G. therefore sent two of its squadrons and a squadron of B.C.D. tanks to enter Ravenna from the north-west and link up with 27 L. P.L.D.Gs. advanced rapidly along the road meeting with no opposition until they were within a few hundred yards of the railway crossing on Route 16 when they encountered a Panther tank. This was quickly dealt with by the guns of the B.C.D. squadron and the advance continued. Shortly after the infantry and their supporting armour parted company when a blown bridge over the Scolo via Cupa barred the way forward to the latter. P.L.D.G. continued into Ravenna on foot and at 1700 hours linked up with 27 L. in Garibaldi Square. The senior squadron commander 4 P.L.D.G., Maj D.J. Burke, was appointed Garrison Commandant, and the two squadrons of this unit, after securing the town, moved into its outer edges in order to avoid needless casualties from the many mines and booby traps the enemy had left in his withdrawal. Earlier that afternoon the Westminsterers supported by tanks of B.C.D. entered and cleared Piangipane. The enemy ensconced in houses along the approach road and backed by mortar and S.P. fire had put up a stiff fight. In the fighting, one enemy S.P. was destroyed and another captured while one tank belonging to B.C.D. was knocked out. (Ibid; W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 4 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 4 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log 4 Dec 44)

92. With the fall of Ravenna and with the right flank of 12 Cdn Inf Bde clear, apart from small enemy pockets and groups of stragglers, 5 Cdn Armd Div was able to concentrate its attention on the Lamone between Route 16 and 1 Cdn Inf Div boundary, particularly on the bridge over this river at Mezzano (4743). By 1600 hours 4 Dec, 12 Cdn Inf Bde

had consolidated on a triangle formed by Godo, Piangipane and S. Michele: Lan & Ren Scot R. were in the Godo area, Westmr R. at Piangipane with advanced elements at Borgo Fusara, a hamlet a mile to the north of Piangipane, where they were in contact with the enemy while 4 P.L.D.G. was at S. Michele with two sub-units in Ravenna. A squadron of B.C.D. was with each of the battalions in their respective areas. At this stage 11 Cdn Inf Bde passed through Westmr R. with Perth R. on the right headed towards Osteria (4942) on Route 16 and Ir R.C. on the left directed on Mezzano. The inter-brigade boundary between 11 and 12 Cdn Inf Bdes ran from just north of Piangipane along the Via Maccalone to the cross roads at 474398 thence along the Via della Canala to opposite Borgo Villanova (443406) on the Lamone River. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

93. This left 12 Cdn Inf Bde with a front of over 3000 yards facing the Lamone between 11 Cdn Inf Bde on the right and 1 Cdn Inf Div on the left. The brigade task now was to mop up this area to the west bank of the river. Little difficulty was experienced in this final stage of the operations which was carried out by Westmr R. on the right and Lan & Ren Scot R. on the left. In the rear of the brigade sector 4 P.L.D.G. and 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt assisted by groups of local partisans cleared out enemy remnants which had been by-passed in the advance. By 6 Dec Brigadier Lind had one company of Westmr R., right, and two of Lan & Ren Scot R., left, along the lateral road east of the Lamone in the sector opposite Borgo di Villanova and Traversara. The remaining elements of these units and P.L.D.G. were still in the Piangipane - Godo - San Michele area. Thus disposed the brigade was able to rest one unit and portions of two others* (Ibid)

94. On 5 and 6 Dec 12 Cdn Inf Bde had a quiet time, with only light shelling and mortaring. There were no more enemy troops east of the Lamone in its area and normal patrol activity along the near bank was all that was necessary. In four days (2 - 5 Dec) the brigade had fought its way from the Montone to the Lamone over ground that was difficult and in weather that was for the most part very inclement. The Brigade Report shows 160 prisoners and a large amount of enemy equipment captured against own casualties of slightly over 100.** (Ibid)

* Brigade Headquarters was at 469357; 4 P.L.D.G. Headquarters 493365 and companies at 476358, 517382, 495368; Westmr R. (Mot) Headquarters 474378 and companies at 449394, 481387; Lan & Ren Scot R. Headquarters 478363 and companies at 435382, 448387, 446377, 454365. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

** The following figures reveal an interesting similarity between the casualties suffered by the infantry units of 12 Cdn Inf Bde and those of 3 Cdn Inf Bde during the three days 2-4 Dec.

	12 Cdn Inf Bde	3 Cdn Inf Bde
Killed or		
Died of Wounds	23	28
Wounded	83	76
Prisoner	1	-
Total	107	104

(Casualty Statistics - Italian Campaign op cit)

95. Meanwhile on 3 Dec 11 Cdn Inf Bde had commenced to move forward from its reserve position in Cervia. The plan was for 11 Cdn Inf Bde to concentrate in rear of Westmr R. and when that unit had secured Piangipane to pass through on a two battalion front, on the right Perth R., directed along the Via di Piangipane to Route 16, and Ir R.C. on the left, headed north towards the town of Mezzano on the Lamone River. Shortly after midday on the 4th the Brigade Commander, Brigadier I.S. Johnston, issued his orders to his unit commanders and at 1730 hours his two leading battalions began to pass through the Westminsters. One troop of tanks of 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.) was placed with each of the advancing battalions. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 4 Dec 44). On the Brigade left Ir R.C. advanced against machine gun and mortar fire along the route Via Maccalone, Via Mantraversa and Via delle Ammonite to Mezzano. The bridge at Villanova (4541) was blown on their approach as was the bridge at Mezzano. By first light on 5 Dec the regiment was firm in the area of Mezzano and facing up to the Lamone on a 2,000 yard front south of the town. Meanwhile Perth R., encountering only moderate resistance along Via di Piangipane, made similarly good progress and at 0100 hours, 5 Dec, reached Osteria on Route 16. At 0500 hours 5 Dec the unit reported all companies established in the area of Osteria and the road back to Piangipane open to traffic. (5 Cdn Armd Div Report, op cit; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 5 Dec 44). During the same morning C.B. Highrs advanced and took up positions on the lateral road Via Delle Ammonite between Ir R.C. and the inter-brigade boundary (see para 92). (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx 8, Report on Operations 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 2-27 Dec 44; W.D., C.B. Highrs, 5 Dec 44). In these positions 11 Cdn Inf Bde spent the balance of 5 and 6 Dec patrolling, improving its positions and, in so far as possible, resting in preparation for the impending attack over the Lamone River.

THE FALL OF RAVENNA, 4 DEC 44

96. Although on 1 Dec Ravenna had not yet been captured it was being closely threatened. Less than three miles to the south, Porterforce was engaged in mopping up the last enemy remnants south of the Fiumi Uniti. Between the Ronco and Montone rivers, south-west of the city, 5 Cdn Armd Div was making final preparations to launch 12 Cdn Inf Bde into an attack designed to cut Route No. 16 to the north-west and enter and clear Ravenna itself. On this date Porterforce, now operating under direct command of 5 Cdn Armd Div, was disposed with P.P.A. on the right near the coast, 2721 Sqn R.A.F. Regt and 27 L. in the centre astride Route 16 about a mile south of the Fiumi Uniti, while elements of 27 L. covered the near bank of the Ronco River to the left boundary. Across the river, near the village of Longana, lay the now right flanking unit of 12 Cdn Inf Bde, G.G.H.G.* (W.D. Porterforce, 29 Nov 44; (H.S.) 224Cl.013 (D16): 1 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 1 Dec 44) (See Map 7.)

* Three units had passed from under command Porterforce that morning (1 Dec); K.D.G. to 1 Cdn Inf Div, Westmr R. and G.G.H.G. to 12 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., Porterforce, 1 Dec 44; (H.S.) 224Cl.015 (D2): 1 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 1 Dec 44)

97. Between 1 and 3 Dec Porterforce continued to patrol actively over the mile or so of country lying between its forward positions and the Fiumi Uniti. During the late afternoon of 1 Dec a squadron of 27 L. had a sharp fire fight with enemy troops in houses (533317) along the east bank of the Ronco some distance downstream from Longana. Subsequently the enemy shelled the Lancers and succeeded in hitting an armoured car and killing the squadron leader. In addition he shelled and mortared the sugar factory throughout the day. On the following day (2 Dec) a combined P.P.A. - partisans patrol to the mouth of the Fiumi Uniti flushed an enemy outpost (at 661344) killing two and taking 12 P.W. The enemy made his last effort in this area on 3 Dec when his patrols appeared near the mouth of the Uniti and east of the Ronco near its junction with the Canale del Molino. In both cases he suffered losses in wounded and P.W. (Porterforce, op cit, 1 to 3 Dec 44). There was little change in Porterforce positions during these first few days of the month. (1 Cdn Corps Sitreps, 30 Nov - 3 Dec 44)

98. The intention of Porterforce for 4 Dec was to seize the junction of the Uniti and Ronco, commence an enveloping movement with P.P.A. from the mouth of the former river and at the same time demonstrate in the centre up Route No. 16. That night (3/4 Dec), however, personnel of Porterforce heard heavy explosions from the direction of Ravenna, and early in the morning 27 L. received a report from partisan sources that the Germans had evacuated the city at 0700 hours. By 1100 hours Porterforce patrols across the Fiumi Uniti had reached the Scolo Lama on Route 67 without sighting the enemy. Shortly after 27 L. began crossing the Uniti near Route 16 in assault boats, while other 27 L. elements and P.P.A. commenced moving up both banks of the Uniti from its mouth. Meanwhile the patrols had continued their advance into Ravenna and at 1500 hours arrived in Garibaldi Square, where they received a good welcome from the populace. There at around 1700 hours they were joined by the two squadrons of P.L.D.G., whose march to the city was mentioned earlier (para 91). By this time the main body of Porterforce was in the city. As a result of the efforts of the partisans after the German withdrawal, the regular forces found the city quiet and orderly. (Porterforce, 3 and 4 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 4 Dec; (H.S.) 22401.013 (D14); 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No. 42, 4 Dec 44). On the other hand the enemy left Ravenna well mined and booby-trapped, roads blocked with felled trees, and in addition had demolished every bridge leading into the city.

99. The fall of Ravenna, one of the oldest towns in Italy and the capital of Romagna province,* to forces

* Ravenna was originally a lagoon-city and a seaport, like Venice, and is now connected with the sea by a canal six miles long. It was enlarged by Augustus as a harbour for the Adriatic fleet. The prosperity of Ravenna began in 402, when the Imperial court, converted to Christianity, transferred its seat from Milan to this safer lagoon-city. During the stormy times of the barbarian migrations, under Honorius there was great building activity at Ravenna, and the art of mosaic decoration was zealously practised.

(Baedeker's Italy - from the Alps to Naples, pp 137-8)

under command 1 Cdn Corps drew considerable attention. General H.D.G. Crerar, G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, sent a personal message of congratulations:

Desire you convey all ranks 1 Cdn Corps the interest, support and congratulations of all ranks First Cdn Army on results of 1 Cdn Corps recent operations vicinity of Ravenna. Keep it up. Drive on and finish him off.

(W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps,
17 Dec 44)

As a provincial capital, the city was important politically and was expected to present many unusual security problems. In view of this a special security force, known as "Basforce", took over Ravenna from P.L.D.G. and Porterforce early on 5 Dec. Basforce consisted of two field security sections, one port security section, two field security reserve detachments, C.L. and P.W.B. representatives, a guard force of 20 O.Rs from 522 Italian Guard Battalion, and 90 Carabinieri. In command was Capt Basil Foreman, G.S.O. 3 I(b), of 1 Cdn Corps. (Ibid, 5 Dec 44 and Appx 70, Basforce Security Operations in Ravenna, 16 Dec 44)

100. One of the first tasks of Basforce was to organize the local partisans to man check points and assist in the movement of supplies. Until late on 6 Dec, when the bridges on Route 16 to the north and over the Uniti to the south were completed, all supplies had to be ferried into the city. For this purpose the local partisans, although "short on discipline and long on exercise of their own judgment" provided "willing porters for rations which had to be ferried in to the tune of about two tons" (Basforce Operations op cit). With the arrival of the partisan leader, Major Bulow, and Major D.M. Healy of 1 Cdn Corps on 6 Dec the discipline and usefulness of the partisans greatly increased. On the following day Major Bulow addressed a parade of all partisans as a result of which the "irregulars" turned in their arms or left them at home thereafter. In the meantime Navy representatives had examined the port facilities and found that the Allied bombing and the German demolitions had rendered them practically useless. It was not until 9 Dec that an A.M.G. Refugee Centre was in operation, and as a result the Basforce Collection Centre, set up for the interrogation and sorting of persons stopped at control points, found itself with a large number of civilian refugees on its hands and no feeding facilities. The civilians of Ravenna were generally friendly and helpful to Basforce, while the early arrival of provost personnel guarded against looting and misbehaviour by the troops, and in the first week only one complaint was lodged by a civilian. By 10 Dec when Basforce was dissolved about 60 political prisoners had been dealt with, half of whom would have to be released for lack of evidence. (Ibid)

101. In the days immediately following its arrival in Ravenna Porterforce patrolled widely to the north and north-west. The enemy had destroyed the bridges over the waterways north of the city but by 6 Dec a pontoon bridge for jeeps was in place across the multiple canal system (at 575420) on the road that runs north into the marshlands. During 7 Dec P.P.A. patrols pushed along this road to within two miles of the village of Mandriole (5852) on the Canale di Bonifica. They found that although the enemy had not

mined the road he had demolished two of its bridges. The last fighting within the city took place on 5 Dec when P.L.D.G. and Porterforce in a joint action liquidated an enemy force in a fort. (1 Cdn Corps Operations Log, 5-7 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No. 43, 5 Dec 44; W.D., Porterforce, 5-7 Dec 44)

102. On 7 Dec, the conduct of operations over the whole of the area between Route 16 and the sea became the responsibility of H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde and at 1400 hours Porterforce passed to under command that Headquarters. On the same day Lt-Col Horsbrugh-Porter lost 2721 Sqn R.A.F. Regt to under command Lt.S.H. Although Porterforce now consisted of only 27 L. and P.P.A., it continued to exist as a separate force until 10 Dec and to play an important part in the protection of the extensive and thinly-held right sector of 1 Cdn Corps. (W.D. Porterforce, 7 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 7 Dec 44, 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 7-8 Dec 44)

OPERATIONS OF GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HORSE GUARDS,
1-5 DEC 44

103. Meanwhile on 1 Dec, 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), with the task of covering the divisional right flank between 12 Cdn Inf Bde and Porterforce, relieved Westmr R. in the sector between Longana on the Ronco and Molinaccio on the Montone. As will be remembered (para 38) "C" Sqn G.G.H.G. had held the Longana position since 25 Nov. It now extended to the left along La Canala^{*} as far as the Via Pugliese while at the same time a second squadron established troop positions covering the north bank of the canal as far as the road running south-east from Molinaccio. (1 Cdn Corps Operations Log, 1 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 1 Dec 44; Regimental History 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), Chapter VIII Winter Offensive, November 26 - December 28 (ms))(See Map 7)

104. Between 1 and 3 Dec the Horse Guards, although employed in a dismounted and static role, maintained close contact with enemy positions immediately north of them on the near bank of the Montone River. During the night 1/2 Dec enemy guns and mortars were active and on the following morning he showed signs of activity in the vicinity of an advanced G.G.H.G. post located near the Montone about 1,000 yards east of Molinaccio. Eventually he made two attempts to knock out this position:

They were repulsed on both occasions, but continued to fire rifle grenades until engaged with a Piat, when they withdrew behind the bank. They effected their retreat under the cover of two cows and despite the fact that the troop brought all their fire to bear on this exploit they managed to reach the bank. One of the cows was killed, but unfortunately none of the Germans.

(Ibid)

* A small irrigation canal which in this area parallels the Scolo Lama 100-200 yards to the north.

That night enemy patrols were very aggressive and their line-cutting activities compelled G.G.H.G. to revert to the use of wireless. The enemy continued to hold to his positions south of the Montone until the night 3/4 Dec when he withdrew across the river between Molinaccio and San Marco (5232). (Ibid; 5 Cdn Armd Div Report)

105. During the night 3/4 Dec the Divisional Commander ordered G.G.H.G. to despatch a mounted squadron to sweep the area behind the enemy troops still holding the north bank of the river in the armoured regiment's sector. On the following morning the engineers completed a Class 40 floating Bailey bridge near Molinaccio and G.G.H.G. despatched a mounted squadron over the Montone to carry out this task. The tanks moved through San Pancrazio and along the road to Godo until they reached the cross-roads south-east of that town when they turned back towards the Montone along the Via del Godo. Enemy demolitions brought the squadron to a halt, however, just north of the Scolo via Cupa. Nevertheless a patrol proceeded from there on foot to San Marco where it contacted enemy troops in some strength. (5 Cdn Armd Div Report; G.G.H.G. History op cit; W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 4 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 4 Dec 44)

106. It was by this time apparent that these were the only enemy troops still remaining in the G.G.H.G. sector. Accordingly, the regiment, with the exception of "A" Squadron, pulled out and moved north to a new position in the vicinity of Godo. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 5 Dec 44). A heavy fog had now settled over the land and under cover of this, "A" Sqn made repeated attempts to cross the Montone and enter the village of S. Marco.

They were able to reach the opposite bank without particular difficulty, but the Germans commanded the top of the dyke with machine guns and prevented all efforts to climb it. At 0600 hours, they eventually managed to cross, six hundred yards south-west of the town, wheeling around to the north, to cut off the German retreat. They then pushed south and after a house to house check, discovered to their embarrassment that the enemy had slipped through their hands. We later learned that they had fallen easy prey to the P.L.D.Gs. and the B.C.D., two thousand yards to the north, being forty-eight all ranks, including an officer.

(G.G.H.G. History)

On the following day (6 Dec) the regiment was placed under command 5 Cdn Armd Bde. (W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 4 - 6 Dec 44)

* 5 Cdn Armd Div Report states: "These German troops were subsequently captured by B.C.D. and Perth R. on the 5th of Dec in the area of Osteria 4942 and turned out to be from 13 Coy III/741 JR".

OPERATIONS OF THE PARTISANS NORTH OF RAVENNA,
23 NOV - 9 DEC 44

107. As previously mentioned, on 20 Nov, Major Bulow, leader of the partisans operating between Ravenna and the Valli di Comacchio, visited Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps at Cervia (see para 49). The purpose of this visit was to co-ordinate the partisan operations with the main actions of the regular forces. At an evening conference, the Corps Commander informed Major Bulow of the Corps intentions and in return requested him to harry the enemy and if possible force him to withdraw troops from the Ravenna area. Arrangements were also made for Capt (A/Major) D.M. Healy, an Italian-speaking officer of the Corps Intelligence staff, to accompany the Partisan leader on his return. To Maj Healy was assigned the task of gathering military intelligence behind the enemy lines and in the capacity of Corps Commander's representative to co-ordinate the partisans' effort as closely as possible with that of the Canadian Corps. ((H.S.)224Cl. 013(D18); G.S.O.3 (Ops) 1 Cdn Corps "Chuckle Introduction"; (H.S.) 224Cl.013(D12); Report on an Attachment to the Partisans of the Province of Ravenna by Maj D.M. Healy)

108. On two successive nights the row-boat, in which Healy and party hoped to reach the partisan camp, was forced back into Cervia by heavy squalls, but the third attempt on 23 Nov was successful.

After tossing for seven hours on a lonely sea, the din of battle began to die away in the distance. We were well behind the enemy lines and the captain of the craft turned in towards shore. At 2310 hours we sighted the coast and about half an hour later made a successful landing NORTH of PORTO CORSINI, at M.632491. Owing to a misunderstanding, there were no signals; we waded ashore with weapons cocked, ready for action. No sooner had we beached our craft than the shrill cry of a night hawk rang out 200 yds to our right. One of our oarsmen replied and we were soon surrounded by a band of armed cut-throats who spirited our cargo away into the night and lifted our craft onto an awaiting ox-cart. No word was passed. A few minutes later, we were threading our way through the dunes towards the Partisan camp which lay in a marsh nearby.* A rear party worked until one hour before dawn covering the tracks we had left, then women and children from the neighbourhood went down at first light and finished the job.

My first impressions of the camp were confused. We lacked so many essential things that I doubted whether we could be effective as a harrying force unless supplies could be sent in before we were ordered into action. We had weapons but insufficient ammunition and no lubricant other than Brillantine, which proved unsatisfactory in our first action. We had no means of caring for the sick and wounded and no means of evacuating them. The men were half naked and it looked as though the cold and damp would greatly reduce our fighting strength unless warm clothing and blankets could be provided.

(Ibid)

* Presumably the Pialassa della Baiena (6249)

After consulting with Major Bulow, Healy sent off a request to 1 Cdn Corps on 25 Nov for the most urgent needs; ammunition belts and magazines and "most important 4 gallons of gun oil and cleaning fluid". Unfortunately there now occurred a spell of bad weather and it was several days before either the Navy or the Air Force could deliver the supplies. Both services made repeated attempts and in the end some of the stores arrived by the sea route and some by air. (Ibid; (H.S.) 224Cl.013 (D12): Messages 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans, 25 Nov 44)

109. Soon after his arrival Maj Healy took steps to improve the local defences of the partisan camp. As this was situated on a small island surrounded by flat marshland it offered good fields of fire. Should the enemy discover the position, however, he would undoubtedly bring down artillery or mortar fire upon it. Herein lay the greatest danger for the partisan defences would be extremely vulnerable to this form of attack.

The day after I arrived I asked that orders be given to dig crawl and slit trenches all over the island and that steps be taken to improve our defences. The Partisans muttered darkly about "regular soldiers nonsense" but complied with the request.

(Healy op cit)

Although the discipline of these people in action was of the highest order at all other times it was very poor. In camp the hardest rules to enforce were those concerning blackout and going down to the water's edge by day. (Ibid)

110. On 24 Nov 1 Cdn Corps informed Healy of an apparent German withdrawal towards Faenza and behind the Lamone River and requested him to watch for a conforming movement on the Montone and Uniti. If the enemy in this sector started going back the partisans were to harass his columns particularly in the area north-west of Ravenna and between that city and Porto Corsini. (See Map 7). At this time the Germans were holding the area east and north of Ravenna with infantry companies split up into small groups. The partisan method was to ambush and destroy these isolated elements wherever and whenever possible. One such ambush occurred on the night 24/25 Nov when the partisans attacked a German patrol, which operated regularly on the road Ravenna - Porto Corsini - Punta Marina - Ravenna, inflicting two fatal casualties. (Messages 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans, 24 and 25 Nov 44)

111. In order to discover the strength of the enemy mobile reserves in the Ravenna area, the partisans planned an attack on a German post on the Ravenna - Porto Corsini road near La Fabbrica Vecchia (6245). It was considered that the reaction of the enemy would be to send reinforcements from Ravenna and elaborate preparations were made to ambush these as they approached Porto Corsini. This was the first partisan action in which Maj Healy took part, and he describes it in his report.

After dinner three companies, total strength 150 men, set off for PORTO CORSINI. We went through a maze of canals in small boats and finally landed at a point where we could hear the Germans singing in their billet some 500 yards away. The Partisans crawled forward over a stretch of flat ground to within 150 yards of the bridge at 622451. The

first volley cut down the sentries and our little action developed according to plan for almost a minute, then three enemy MG's opened fire from the left flank. BULOW directed our fire onto the M.Gs. We managed to silence two of them but the third continued to fire sporadically and, as it were, without conviction. Soon it became apparent that we would have difficulty inflicting more casualties because the enemy had got into his prepared positions. BULOW then gave the order to withdraw. We moved back in good order, under cover of fire, leaving the ambush party in position at 611437. Our only casualty was an officer who had been shot through the shoulder.

The most impressive thing about our little action was the fire control which was good, by anybody's standards. I rather question the advisability of having all the officers in one group 150 yards from the enemy but in Partisan operations it may be necessary for the leaders to be further forward than any of their men.

(Healy)

The only information available, concerning the results of the attack, is contained in the following messages:

- 29 Nov Enemy force...estimated 50 reacted to our attack. We silenced two machine guns and inflicted casualties. Details not yet available.
- 30 Nov Troops still leaving Ravenna. Some went north-west some moved to reinforce Porto Corsini after partisans attack.

(Messages, 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans)

As to the ambush no mention as to the outcome of this has been found.

112. Apart from direct action against the enemy of the type noted above, the partisans provided valuable information to the regular forces on his strength, dispositions and movements in the rear area. Of this phase of his activities, Healy has this to say:

No task is more trying than that of attempting to obtain accurate military intelligence from untrained observers. It required the patience of an angel, an inexhaustible supply of cigarettes and a fund of good humour. No matter how skeptical the intelligence officer is, no matter how carefully he sifts his information before passing it, absurdities occasionally slip through.

(Healy)

Getting the information through in time was a constant problem. Since young Italians were naturally an object of suspicion to the vigilant enemy, it was necessary to make considerable use of the aged and infirm and the very young as runners:

When one is obliged to use the aged and infirm as runners to deceive the enemy's vigilance, it is difficult to pass certain types of information in time for effective action to be taken. Come wind come weather, our runners invariably got through bringing, concealed about their persons, marked maps, sketches, drawings and reports. Considerable use was made of Partisan observers but the restrictions on civilian movement were such that they could only travel by night in areas they knew intimately. The result was that a man would go out one night, lie up all the following day in some house, using every female and small boy he could find as observers, sort out his information and then come racing back to camp as soon as night fell.

(Ibid)

These missions were not without risk and on several occasions the partisans failed to return.

113. Typical of the information passed on by Healy to Eighth Army and 1 Cdn Corps is that contained in the following message:

Believe enemy has withdrawn most of his forces to positions west of Lamone River along which he is building field fortifications. Most of his field and medium artillery appears to be sited in the area Alfonsine 445480 Fusignano 380440 Bagnacavallo 390385. Heavy concentration of Ack Ack area Bastia 310570 San Biagio 308578 which is most vulnerable point on his line of communication very heavy traffic by night area San Biagio, Bastia and thence south. Enemy left flank guarded by estimated one battalion Infantry companies in small groups east and north of Ravenna. Partisans will harry and destroy isolated elements wherever ambush is possible.

(Messages, 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans,
24 Nov 44)

In addition they watched for and reported targets of opportunity for the attention of the artillery and/or the Air Force:

26 Nov Urgent 40 guns halted area 580390
Bomb or shell now

(Ibid, 26 Nov)

Apparently, G.S.I Eighth Army questioned the accuracy of this latter message bringing this tart reply from Healy:

My message abundantly clear. Artillery column of 40 guns was halted 580390 moved west presumably. Did you engage. Do you want opportunity targets or not.

(Ibid, 27 Nov)

Eighth Army assured him that they had engaged the target with artillery and tank fire on the afternoon of 26 Nov, going on to say that they were "always grateful opportunity targets and very pleased with your other information" (ibid, date - stamped 28 Nov 44). * On 2 Dec Healy's observers brought him information of a parade of some 300 German troops scheduled to take place on the square in front of Ravenna railway station at 1000 hours the following day. At the appointed hour all available guns of the Corps Artillery engaged this most unusual target, with results described by observers on the spot as "effective and terrifying". (Messages 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans, 2-3 Dec 44; (H.S.)224C1.023(D11): 1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 169, 3 Dec 44)

114. On 2 Dec, in co-ordination with the Corps attack commencing that morning, the Partisans began an all-out effort against the enemy's lines of communications. For the purpose of this offensive the partisan forces were divided into two groups of three hundred, each with the following tasks:

Group A To occupy SAN ALBERTO and LA CILLA south of LAKE COMACCHIO blow the bridge at 512513, and then move in small groups towards ALFONSINE and MEZZANO to ambush the enemy withdrawal on Route 16.

Group B This was to be the main effort. To occupy or block the enemy in MANDRIOLE and PORTO CORSINI then move south to ambush the enemy withdrawing between the sea and 5541.

(Allied Strategy: Appx "G"-4, p. 99) **

* Up to this point Healy's wireless link was with G.S.I. Eighth Army. At this time, however, Eighth Army advised him that a rear link was being established for direct communication with G.S.O.2 (Int), 1 Cdn Corps.

** In a subsequent paragraph of the report mentioned above (Allied Strategy: Appx "G"-4, p.100) it speaks of "some nine hundred irregulars", and Healy, in his report, states that on 2 Dec "about 900 partisans went into action". Thus it would appear that the activities of Groups A and B although they constituted the main part did not constitute the whole of the partisan actions in this sector.

On the first two nights (1/2 and 2/3 Dec) partisan bands attacked at a number of places on Route 16 north of Mezzano, inflicting several casualties on the enemy. On 4 Dec two to three hundred of Bulow's men laid siege to the German garrison of Porto Corsini. By last light they had surrounded the port, blocking all attempts of the enemy to escape, although a few may have effected a withdrawal by sea. By the 5th they had cleared and occupied that part of Porto Corsini lying south of the canal. (Ibid; Healy)

115. To the north between the Canale di Bonifica and the Valli di Comacchio, the partisans went into action early on the 5th. At first light they attacked San Alberto (5352) and by afternoon had overwhelmed the German garrison and occupied the village. During the same morning they attacked and cleared the villages of La Cascina (6054), La Cilla (5151) and Mandriole (5852). At Mandriole nearly half of a German force of about 30 men surrendered without a fight, the rest dispersed. About this time, however, the weather deteriorated and the enemy possibly anticipating a halt in the Canadian offensive, launched a counter-attack on Group A. Late in the afternoon of 5 Dec an enemy force consisting of about five self-propelled guns, a few armoured cars, and some lorried infantry commenced a drive to the east between the Bonifica and the Valli di Comacchio. By the following morning the partisans, armed only with Stens, rifles, and a few machine guns, had suffered severe casualties and were in a state of some confusion. Nevertheless Bulow, who was personally directing the operations in this area, succeeded in making an orderly withdrawal to the line of the Scolo via Cerba. At the same time, to avoid reprisals, he ordered the evacuation of the civilian population of the villages north of this canal. (Healy; Allied Strategy: Appx "G"-4, p.100)

116. On the same day, 6 Dec, Majors Bulow and Healy went to Ravenna, where, on the following day, they attended a conference held by the G.S.O. 2 (Int) 1 Cdn Corps. As a result of this meeting arrangements were made to assemble Bulow's men during the following few days in Ravenna. There, under Corps or Corps-delegated direction, they were to be clothed, equipped and trained for possible future employment in operations between Ravenna and the Valli di Comacchio. In the War Diary of the G.S. Branch 1 Cdn Corps the completion of the programme of re-equipment and concentration is noted:

The last group of Maj BULOW's Partisans has been issued with new underwear, socks and boots in RAVENNA today. The first of these 800 Partisans, whose activities SOUTH of the VALLI DI COMACCHIO greatly assisted...in the capture of RAVENNA, came through our lines early 9 Dec. All have now been through the mobile bath at CERVIA and have had medical and dental inspections. Each man has been issued with a waterproof cape or a ground sheet. Arms have been turned in for issue to Partisans further NORTH, but about fifty Partisans have been re-equipped with new weapons and are fighting with 5 Cdn Armd Bde fwd tps. Transportation is provided so that Partisans may visit relatives who live within 30 km of RAVENNA. During their stay in RAVENNA, the Partisans have been fed on Army rations, which they cook themselves. The

assistance of FS personnel was required the first day to interpret the cryptic abbreviations on the cans. "M & V" for example. Music with their meals has been provided by P.W.B. loudspeaker van.

(W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps,
11 Dec 44)

117. The most successful of the partisan engagements were those in which a sudden and violent attack by 40 or 50 men was followed by a quick withdrawal. On those occasions on which they attacked the enemy in prepared positions or seized ground and attempted to hold it, their equipment and training proved to be inadequate. In his report Maj Healy claims these achievements:

- (a) We pinned down and destroyed part of the enemy garrison in PORTO CORSINI, preventing certain final demolitions from being carried out.
- (b) We destroyed a number of German outposts and so harried the enemy that he took to the swamps in small groups in an attempt to escape westward. These groups we destroyed wherever we found them.
- (c) We dominated the area in which we had been ordered to operate for a number of days and so infuriated the enemy that he saw fit to do us the honour of a counter-attack with tanks, SP equipments, infantry and mortars at a time when he could ill afford any punitive expedition.
- (d) We inflicted the following casualties:
 - Killed - between 75 and 125
 - Wounded - between 30 and 50
 - Prisoners - 23

(Owing to the "hit and run" nature of the Partisan operations, exact data is never available. These figures are conservative.)

(Healy)

118. One of the difficulties of partisan warfare was that of maintaining proper reserves - "everybody wants to be on hand when the fun starts and once they have started in dead earnest they carry on until they drop in their tracks of weariness and fatigue" (*ibid*). Healy attributed much of the success of the partisan operations to the following things:

- (a) Almost a fortnight before the attack, the Commander made his intention perfectly clear to both the Partisan leader and to me.
- (b) The Commander explained exactly what he wanted the Partisans to do.
- (c) The Commander left the Partisan leader entirely free to work out the method of carrying out his instructions.

- (d) Immediately before the attack, G (Int) gave a lengthy sitrep which enabled the Partisan leader to act en connaissance de cause.

(Ibid)

Whilst talking to a party of British Members of Parliament in January 1945, a senior Canadian officer is reported to have paid this tribute to the work of the partisan forces in Italy, "Without their efforts, big and small, our task of defeating the enemy in Italy and liberating the country would have been doubly difficult and three times as costly in men and materials". (Allied Strategy: Appx "G"-2, p. 92)

ACTIVITIES OF 5 CDN ARMD BDE ON THE
RIGHT FLANK, 6 - 10 DEC 44

119. 5 Cdn Armd Bde - apart from 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.) which was under command 12 Cdn Inf Bde - had shared in the initial stages of the December offensive in an artillery role only. The original Corps plan had called for the armoured brigade to take over and hold the sector along the Lamone River north of Route 16, while Porterforce shifted left and relieved 5 Cdn Armd Div on the same river south of the main highway.* Now, however, 5 Cdn Armd Div intended to force the crossing of the Lamone in the area of Villanova using 11 Cdn Inf Bde for the purpose while 5 Cdn Armd Bde with Porterforce under command would take over the whole of the right flank from inclusive Mezzano to Porto Corsini. (See Map 7).

120. On 6 Dec Ld S.H. moved forward to the Mezzano area and by nightfall had completed without incident the changeover with Ir R.C. At last light the Strathcona's had one squadron in that part of Mezzano lying east of the Lamone, with another covering the lateral road south of Route 16 as far as the village of le Ammonite (4742) and a third at the sugar factory (4843) south-east of Mezzano facing north towards the river. During the same day G.G.H.G. came under command 5 Cdn Armd Bde and took up positions on Route 16 near Osteria. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Dec 44)

121. At an Orders Group held on 7 Dec, Brigadier I.H. Cumberland, D.S.O., E.D., informed his unit commanders of his intentions. These were, first, to clear out any enemy remaining south or east of the Lamone River, secondly to cut the lateral road running east from San Alberto along the north bank of the Canale di Bonifica to the sea. 2 Cdn Armd Regt (Ld S.H.) would close up to the Lamone River and provide right flank protection for 11 Cdn Inf Bde. In the centre 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.) with 5 Cdn Assault Tp C.A.C. was to move up to the lateral road on the north side of the Canale di Bonifica and consolidate facing left. At the same time Porterforce was to advance to the same road and face up to the right. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 6-7 Dec 44; (H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): 5 Cdn Armd Bde Account of Ops from 30 Nov to 14 Jan 45)

* See outline of Corps plan in 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Operations 1 Dec to 6 Dec 44 ((H.S.) 244C5.013(D4) and entry in W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Dec 44)

122. On the same day both Ld S.H. and G.G.H.G. patrolled actively on their respective fronts. Patrols from the latter unit moved along the tramway and crossed the canal Fossa Carlina. There enemy machine gun fire from the railway bridge over the Lamone, sweeping across the flat open country, prevented any further movement in that direction. Farther east on the Fossa Carlina, at the Strada Antica del Bosco crossing, G.G.H.G. patrols contacted a P.P.A. post and learned that the latter had suffered casualties in attempting to reach the Lamone in that sector. Patrols from the Lord Strathcona's covered the 4,000 yard stretch of the Lamone between Route 16 and the point where the river bends to the east and reported it clear of the enemy. As Ld S.H. was now responsible for some 7,000 yards of river front, the Commanding Officer appealed to Brigadier Cumberland for assistance and received under command that afternoon (7 Dec) 2721 Sqn R.A.F. Regt. The latter unit was at once assigned to the sector from the river bend east to the railway crossing (5146). (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 7 Dec 44; (H.S.) 244C5. 013(D4); 2 Cdn Armd Regt (Ld S.H.) Account of Operations 27 Nov 44 - 16 Jan 45; W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 7 Dec 44)

123. In the course of the next three days all units strengthened their F.D.Ls. and patrolled widely across the front. On the right a P.P.A. patrol, along the road leading north from Ravenna towards Mandriole, worked to within a 1,000 yards of the Canale di Bonifica.

Here they were shelled by an SP and encountered a group of some thirty mixed Germans and Fascists. On sighting POPSKI'S men some of the enemy put their hands up and were beckoned in by POPSKI'S patrol. They (the enemy with the uplifted hands) immediately threw themselves on the ground and the remainder of the Germans opened fire. A brief exchange of small arms ensued, then both patrols withdrew.

(W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 8 Dec 44)

On the same day, 8 Dec, 27 L. established an advanced post on this road near the canal Il Fossatone (588480) (ibid).

124. Late on 7 Dec the Commanding Officer of G.G.H.G., Lt-Col A.K. Jordon, E.D., decided to develop the Strada Antica del Bosco as his forward axis and the following day established a troop position on this road at the Fossa Carlina. Throughout 8 Dec G.G.H.G. worked feverishly lifting mines and filling in craters in preparation for an advance along the Strada Antica. During the night however a joint G.G.H.G./R.C.E. patrol discovered that, although the Fossa Carlina and another small water obstacle to the north of it could easily be fixed for the passage of tanks, unfortunately the ground in the vicinity of the Lamone was flooded on both sides of the Strada Antica and the last 100 yards of the road itself was washed out. Accordingly the plan to push the regiment's armour over the Lamone via this route was abandoned. On the left by last light on 8 Dec Ld S.H. was in complete control of the east bank of the Lamone as far north as the bend in the river where 2721 Sqn was now established around Le Torri (4946). In this sector the task was now simply to hold and harass the enemy on the far bank with fire. ((H.S.) 244C4.013(D4): Operational History of Governor General's Horse Guards for December 1944 and January 1945; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 8 Dec 44)

125. Shortly after midday on 9 Dec enemy infantry attacked the 27 L. post, established the previous day, on the Mandriole road near Il Fossatone. Using the woods lying to the north and east of the position, the enemy succeeded in nearly surrounding the buildings occupied by the Lancers. Eventually elements of P.P.A. became involved in the fight and a request for assistance was sent to G.G.H.G. The latter immediately sent off a troop of tanks and an R.A.P. Stuart.

Lieut Murphy was despatched post haste from C Squadron, travelling down the Highway to the lateral road north of Ravenna, where he swung east to the 27th Lancers road. He arrived at the beleaguered position, which was then surrounded, at 1515 hours, and at point blank range demolished an enemy house, which was occupied by thirty German infantry. While the tanks were firing, the Lancers withdrew. Cpl Hoy, in his R.A.P. Stewart, moved up and evacuated the casualties, under intense machine gun fire and without any assistance, as the Lancers had left the position. Lieut Murphy continued to fire until they were firm a mile and a half to the south. He then retired to their new position and remained for the night.

(G.G.H.G. History, Chapter VIII)

In this action Porterforce suffered six casualties, among whom was Maj Popski (see footnote para 30), the enemy an estimated 25. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Dec 44)

126. On 9 Dec Bulow's partisans, as previously mentioned (para 116), began to concentrate in Ravenna. Although they were now under command of Brigadier I.H. Cumberland, due to the refit and rest programme arranged for them, they would not be available for use in operations for several days. To ensure good liaison Bulow moved to Brigade Headquarters from where he directed the operations of his force. Apart from the Ravenna group some 125 partisans from the Mezzano district were now working with Ld S.H. Due to a certain reluctance on the part of the majority of these latter to patrol into enemy territory, the Strathconas were employing them mainly as fatigues, kitchen duties, local sentries, etc. About 20 volunteered for patrol duty, of whom a few who went out on patrol, proved to be "pretty stout fellows" in the opinion of the unit officer concerned. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Dec 44; McAvity, Lt-Col J.M., D.S.O., O.B.E., Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) A Record of Achievement, p.168)

127. At 1840 hours on 10 Dec Staff Duties 1 Cdn Corps issued the following message:

PORTER FORCE is disbanded effective immediately Units under command excl 168 London Inf Bde Sig Sec and two secs 53 Mob BU pass under comd 5 Cdn Armd Div... Various att Offrs and ORs and tpt on loan will be returned to parent units. Ord Stores will be returned to 1 Cdn HQ Corps Tps Ord. All DUCKS held will be retained by 5 Cdn Armd Div.

((H.S.) 224C1.015(D2): 1 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 10 Dec 44)

At the time of disbandment Porterforce was holding on the right, Porto Corsini and, on the left, the line of the Scolo via Cerba to inclusive the Mandriole road. In over six weeks of operations it had advanced from the Ronco to Porto Corsini, a distance across country of about 13 miles. During this period Lt.-Col Horsbrugh-Porter's men had taken 220 of the enemy prisoner and killed or wounded at least that many more. Their own casualties were considerably less - as noted earlier in this report (para 37) for the period up to 25 Nov they numbered 56 British and 30 Canadians.

128. There was little activity apart from routine patrols in 5 Cdn Armd Bde sector during daylight on 10 Dec. In the afternoon the Air Force bombed and strafed Mezzano. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No. 48, 10 Dec 44). Maj-Gen Hoffmeister, who personally witnessed this attack, sent off the following message of appreciation:

From G.S.O.1, 5 Cdn Armd Div. GOC wishes to convey his thanks to the Air Force for the bombing and strafing of Mezzano. It was most satisfactory. Forward troops are very enthusiastic.

(1 Cdn Corps Operations Log, 10 Dec 44)

129. That night (10 Dec) 1 Cdn Corps attacked across the Lamone River on a two-divisional front. To divert attention from the 5 Cdn Armd Div assault, made in silence by 11 Cdn Inf Bde, the two flanking brigades of that division staged fire demonstrations. At Mezzano, 5 Cdn Armd Bde, using a variety of weapons put on an elaborate show.

Lord Strathcona's received orders to create a diversion, with as much firing as possible, especially of small arms, with a view to creating the impression that the main attack was to be at Mezzano. Accordingly, for one hour commencing at "H" plus 45", almost every weapon in the Regiment was firing: L.M.G's, dismounted Browning M.G's and rifles cracked off simultaneously all along the river dyke, while 9 troops of Shermans, only a few hundred yards from the river, fired on fixed lines on the roads leading away from the river on the enemy side, at suspected enemy H.Q's, mortar and gun positions - firing both 75 mm and .30-inch Brownings. The 105mm. battery fired "H.F." at rapid rate on Highway 16 beyond Mezzano. One troop of 40 mm. Bofors was attached to the Regiment for the night and they fired two streams of brilliant tracer - about 500 yards apart, parallel to the highway at Mezzano.

(McAvity, op cit, p. 169)

The enemy responded vigorously to the Ld S.H. fire - one squadron commander reporting that in one short session some 200 enemy mortar bombs landed in his squadron area (ibid; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No. 48, 10 Dec 44)

THE GENERAL SITUATION - EIGHTH ARMY, 2 - 10 DEC 44

130. Across the whole of the Eighth Army front, the winter offensive had made good progress during the first week of December. In three days 1 Cdn Corps had thrown the enemy back to the Lamone on a front of three miles and secured Ravenna, one of the main objectives of the offensive. This was a promising start but, due to the costly setback suffered by 1 Cdn Inf Div on the 5th and the advent of bad weather, the time gained by these initial successes was largely lost. During the same period both the central 5 Corps and the left-flanking Polish Corps had achieved limited successes. After a short postponement the offensive opened on that part of the front on the night 3/4 Dec.^R North of Route 9, 56 Inf Div made feints which drew the enemy's attention away from the main thrusts which went in on the higher ground to the south of the main axis. There 46 Inf Div, with its objective the Pideura ridge (2321), crossed the Lamone River at Quartolo (2520). Initially the 5 Corps attack developed without much interference, but as the attack reached the high ground on which the main defences of the German 305 Division lay, it met with increasing resistance. Moreover the broken nature of the ground made it difficult to manoeuvre and to deploy sufficient forces to dislodge the enemy, while the lack of suitable roads impeded the supporting tanks. By the 7th, however, the 46th Division had taken Pideura village although the enemy retained his grip on a ridge to the north of it. Meanwhile a Polish division which had crossed at San Ruffillo a mile upstream from Quartolo had made somewhat better progress. On the 4th the Poles had seized Montecchio (2219) and on the following day Monte San Rinaldo (2019) and the high ground to the south, thus securing the left flank of 5 Corps. (Eighth Army etc, pp 87-8)

131. Probably because he appreciated that a full-scale offensive by both Allied armies was imminent, the enemy showed a certain reluctance to commit his reserves against Eighth Army. By the 8th, however, he had decided that his Adriatic front stood in urgent need of reinforcements and brought in 90 Pz Gren Div from reserve to aid the hard-pressed 305 Inf Div. On the following day the panzer grenadiers began a series of attacks all along the line of the bridgehead, making a particularly violent and reckless thrust south of Celle (2725) against a recent extension of the 46 Inf Div bridgehead. Fighting with great skill and determination the 46th Division not only held the enemy attacks but by the end of the day (9 Dec) had so severely damaged the 90th and 305th German Divisions that neither was capable of further operations for the time being. But the victor was in no position to take advantage of his opponent's discomfiture. Clearly it was out of the question for 46 Inf Div to continue the attack unaided.^{RM} 5 Corps had, therefore, to halt the

^R The British Historical Section, Central Mediterranean, was unable to discover the reasons for this postponement. (Eighth Army, etc p. 88)

^{RM} Besides Eighth Army had now to release this division for service in Greece. One of its brigades has moved to that theatre in November and the division had fought its December actions with one brigade of 56 Inf Div under command. (Eighth Army etc p. 86; Allied Strategy, pp 16 and 23)

offensive and regroup. South of Route 9, the British Corps depended for communication chiefly on a single route seven miles in length from the point where it left the highway until it reached Quartolo on the Lamone, in places little more than a track and requiring 12 hours daily for maintenance. Barely sufficient before, it was utterly inadequate to bear the increased weight of traffic imposed by the reliefs. Not until 14 Dec did 5 Corps complete its regrouping. By that date 10 Ind Div had taken over the left of the bridgehead while 2 N.Z. Div held the right and the near bank of the Lamone east of Faenza. 56 Inf Div remained in the quiet sector north of Route 9. (Ibid, pp. 88-9)

PREPARATIONS FOR 1 CDN CORPS ASSAULT ACROSS THE LAMONE

132. With the British and Poles both across the Lamone and heavily engaged by the enemy, it was now more necessary than ever for the Canadian Corps to push forward with determination its attack. The failure of 1 Cdn Inf Bde to establish a foothold across the Lamone on 5 Dec did not alter the intention of the Corps Commander to get forward as quickly as possible. During the afternoon of the 5th, General Foulkes, in discussion with his divisional commanders, laid plans for a fresh assault on the river line. The operation was first planned for the night 6/7 Dec and was to be a coordinated attack by 11 Cdn Inf Bde and 3 Cdn Inf Bde on their respective divisional fronts. Both divisions completed plans for the assault during 6 Dec but, due to the state of the weather, neither attack took place. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 5 Dec 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 5 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Dec 44)

133. On the evening of 6 Dec meteorological reports indicated such bad weather in the mountains that the rivers might become impassable. Not only was there the danger of a rise on the Lamone River which might cause great difficulty in the attack, but there was a danger of roads and bridges over the Montone being washed out. Beyond the Lamone the water obstacles athwart the line of advance were more thickly concentrated than any others previously encountered. The strongly dyked canal Naviglio (which linked Faenza with the sea), flanked on either side by small drainage canals - the Fosso Vecchio and the Fosso Munio - and further to the northwest the formidable areas of the flood-banked Senio, all paralleled one another within a zone of three or four miles. The Army Commander, realizing these difficulties, decided to delay the attack until such time as the operation could be ensured of reasonable success. "The Army Commander had no intention of asking us to fight both weather and enemy". (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx 6, Message Comd 11 Cdn Inf Bde). On 7 Dec General McCreery visited General Foulkes at H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, and a conference, including the divisional commanders, took place later in the day at 1 Cdn Inf Div H.Q. It was decided that because the rain, particularly in the mountains, was causing the rivers to rise, thus increasing the difficulties of bridging, the operation would have to be postponed until the water level in the rivers had dropped. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 6-7 Dec 44)

134. During this period of waiting both divisions confined their efforts to active patrolling and reconnaissance along the river and small actions against the few enemy pockets still remaining to the east of it. On 6 Dec dismounted R.C.D. elements supported by tanks of 12 R.T.R. attacked an enemy pocket of infantry which was still holding out south of the river in the area of the Russi-Granarolo railway. After the supporting armour battered the houses in which the enemy was positioned a squadron of the R.C.D. occupied this last enemy-held position east of the Lamone. On both sides the mortars and guns were intermittently active. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 6 Dec 44; Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces in Italy, Part III, Sec "E", 1 Cdn Corps Operations, p. 74)

LAMONE AND NAVIGLIO ASSAULTS - 1 CDN INF DIV,
10 - 16 DEC 44

135. Following the repulse of 1 Cdn Inf Bde at the Lamone on 5 Dec several changes of command took place in 1 Cdn Inf Div. Maj-Gen H.W. Foster, who officially succeeded Maj-Gen C. Vokes, C.B.E., D.S.O., when the latter left this formation (para 14) arrived at Divisional Headquarters on 6 Dec. General Foster was no stranger to 1 Cdn Inf Div having held the appointment of G.S.O. 1 in England in 1942. He later commanded 7 Cdn Inf Bde in England and 13 Cdn Inf Bde Gp on its expedition to Kiska in the Aleutians in 1943. He returned to England and led 7 Cdn Inf Bde into Normandy on D Day and assumed command of 4 Cdn Armd Div two months later. Brigadier Smith, A/G.O.C., handed over command of 1 Cdn Inf Div to General Foster on the 9th and on the same day took command of 1 Cdn Inf Bde from Brigadier Calder. Lt-Col J.W. Ritchie also gave up command of R.C.R. on the same day to Lt-Col W.W. Reid, D.S.O., E.D.* (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 6-9 Dec 44; W.D., R.C.R., 9 Dec 44)

136. The period of waiting which began with the postponement of the Lamone assault on 6 Dec (para 133) came to an end on the 10th. At an "O" Group called at Div H.Q., at 1100 hours on 10 Dec, a divisional plan was presented, which called for an assault crossing of the Lamone with Bagnacavallo (3838) as the chief objective (see Map 2). The attack was to begin at 2130 hours with the assault crossing assigned to 3 Cdn Inf Bde and having as an objective a bridgehead about 2½ miles wide and 1½ miles in depth i.e. from Traversara to a point about 900 yards south of the Russi-Bagnacavallo railway crossing and in depth to include the bridge over the Fosso Vecchio.** After completion of this phase, 1 Cdn Inf Bde would pass through 3 Cdn Inf Bde,

* Enemy propaganda based on these changes in command may be found in W.D., Ir R.C., December 1944: Appx 14.

** The securing of a bridgehead across the R LAMONE between 429373 and 410345 extending to road and canal crossing 405375 by 3 Cdn Inf Bde Gp.

(1 Cdn Inf Div Operation Order No. 1,
10 Dec 44)

cross the Fosso Vecchio and advance north to gain a lodgment over Canale Naviglio below Bagnacavallo. In the third and final phase 2 Cdn Inf Bde would cross the Lamone and advance to the Senio on the left flank of the Division. The timing of the second and third phases would of course depend on the measure of success achieved in the preceding phases. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, December 1944: Appx 20, 1 Cdn Inf Div Op Order No. 1, 10 Dec 44)

137. At the conference held at H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div at 1100 hours on 10 Dec, final arrangements for artillery, armour, anti-tank, engineers, M.M.G. and mortar support were completed. The over-all Corps plan was the same as previously arranged for the night of 6/7 Dec and called for a simultaneous assault by both 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div; that of 5 Cdn Armd Div to go in the area of Villanova. A feint attack by 43 Ind Lor Inf Bde on the right of 5 Corps in area of the inter-corps boundary was to begin at 1900 hours and continue until 2100 hours. Artillery support for 1 Cdn Inf Div included the Divisional Artillery plus one or two medium regiments. In addition 12 R.T.R. would position tanks on the railway and engage targets west of grid line 40 during the first hours of the attack. The air plan included Timothy targets and the usual air support weather permitting. (Ibid)

138. Although the 3 Cdn Inf Bde assault would be made in the same area in which 1 Cdn Inf Bde had been routed on 5 Dec postponement of the operation to the night of the 10th gave the former time for a more careful reconnaissance of the area than the latter had been able to carry out. Apart from this 3 Cdn Inf Bde intended to cross the river on a three battalion front, holding a fourth battalion in readiness to go in and deepen the bridgehead. For that purpose 48 Highrs was placed under Brigadier Bernatchez' command on 6 Dec. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Dec 44). In the first phase of the brigade attack, Carlt & York R., on the right, would gain a lodgment 1,000 yards across centring on the Via Albergoni crossroads with, as a further immediate objective, a house on that road about 500 yards from the river; in the centre, West N.S.R. would secure the vicinity of the lateral road, between Carlt & York R. and the railway bridge, to a depth of about 700 yards; 48 Highrs, on the left, would seize the railway bridge and objectives at the 90° bend in the river, 1,000 yards to the south, and on the road paralleling the railway, some 800 yards from the river.* Upon the completion of the first phase, R. 22e R. would pass through, in the centre, to expand the bridgehead between the Via Albergoni and the railway as far as the south-eastern edge of the settlement of Borg di' Stecch (4137). At the same time, Carlt & York R. would take action to widen and deepen its holdings on the flanks. In the final phase, West N.S.R. would come up on the right of R. 22e R. and, acting in concert, the two battalions would secure the near bank of the Vecchio in the area of the Via Albergoni bridge. Assault boats and Olafson bridges were allotted to each battalion and sufficient Mae Wests to protect

* A detailed list of the objectives for all three phases of the Brigade operation is contained in 3 Cdn Inf Bde Operation Order No.1, 9 Dec 44, a copy of which is appended to the War Diary of 48 Highrs for December 1944.

the infantry during the crossing. Searchlights were to be used half light from 1830 hours until 2400 hours, full light from 0500 hours until first light, 12 R.T.R. would position one tank on railway at first light to engage targets by observation. (W.D., 48 Highrs, December 1944: Appx 8, 3 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No.1, 9 Dec 44)

139. The enemy units manning the defences along the Lamone in the area of the impending 3 Cdn Inf Bde attack came mainly from 356 Inf Div. An intelligence report issued late on 9 Dec placed the dividing line between this division and the neighbouring formation on its left, 114 Jaeger Division, as the Via Albergoni from the Lamone to Bagnacavallo. This would mean that the left-flank units of 356 Div would bear the brunt of the 1 Cdn Inf Div assault. The Carlt & York R. attack would actually go in along the German divisional boundary. (W.D., G. (Ops) H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, December 1944: Appx 18, 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 104, 9 Dec 44)

140. An unusual feature of the artillery plan for this attack was that the preliminary fire support was divided into two parts separated by a quiet period. As a result of the initial series of concentrations the enemy, in anticipation of an attack, would, it was hoped, commence moving forward his local reserves. If this occurred these would, on the resumption of the firing, be caught in the open and destroyed or disorganized. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Dec 44). A comment on this novel artillery plan is given in the account of these operations by 12 R.T.R.:

The fire plan for this operation was somewhat of a novelty. Very heavy concentrations were brought down about one hour before the assault took place for a period of 30 minutes; a gap of 20 minutes then elapsed and the attack went in with similar concentrations. There can be no doubt that the Germans suffered very heavy casualties. They had expected the first barrage to accompany the assault and were caught in the open by the second series of concentrations.

((H.S.) 234C1.013(D22): Account of Operations 29 Nov 44 to 11 Jan 45)

141. At 2025 hours on the 10th the artillery barrage began and within the hour the assault on the enemy's Lamone defences was underway. It would appear that the enemy had expected the attack in the area between the demolished railway bridge and the road-bridge as heavy enemy M.G. and mortar fire met the advancing companies of the West N.S.R. in this area. The right and left flanks received less attention, however, and the attacks of both 48 Highrs and Carlt & York R. met with success. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Dec 44)

142. 48 Highrs had prepared a plan of assault on 6 Dec and had selected two crossing points the first about 200 yards above the railway bridge (415352) and the second opposite their left objective at the river bend (411347). During the waiting period 6-10 Dec reconnaissance patrols had visited these proposed sites and on the 10th plans were completed for "A" Coy to cross left in the boats and "B" Coy right on an Olafson bridge. At H Hour 48 Highrs began crossing the river. They met with little opposition and in less than an hour had two companies complete on the far bank.

Since the Olafson bridge was found to be too short to span the gap both companies were ferried across in the assault boats. The speed of the attack combined with the artillery deception had apparently demoralized the enemy defenders of the dyke and within a short time boats returning for our own troops were bringing back prisoners. Shortly after midnight "A", "B", and "C" Coys were across and controlling the road junction south of the railway. (W.D., 48 Highrs, 6-10 Dec 44; (H.S.) 145.2H3013(D1): 48 Highrs, Extracts from "Report on Ops 29 Nov - 27 Dec prepared by Lt-Col D.A. MacKenzie")

143. On the right flank of the Brigade, Carlt & York R. were equally successful. Careful and detailed plans were rewarded by the battalion achieving a quick and decisive assault crossing. "B" and "D" Companies were ordered to cross at points (424363 and 422361) 400 and 700 yards respectively south of the road bridge. Both were to use assault boats while the pioneer platoon was ordered to erect an Olafson foot bridge as soon as possible. The artillery barrage, which was so effective in the 48 Highrs area, was equally successful on the Carlt & York R. front. At H Hour the companies began dragging the six boats allotted to each up the steep 30 foot dykes. The Support Company provided an officer, who acted as beachmaster for each assault company, and two paddlers for each boat. Ropes were used to pull the boats back to the near side of the river as soon as their occupants had disembarked. The river was only 30 feet wide but the current was very swift. Within 18 minutes of the beginning of the assault "D" Coy and its H.Q., including an artillery F.O.O., were established on the enemy side and 18 prisoners were rounded up. Although under mortar and S.P. fire "B" Coy on the left was only a few minutes behind "D" Coy. Again difficulties had been encountered in the erection of the Olafson bridge. Seven of the pioneers had been wounded as they carried it over the dyke, and later when it was put down one end sank, and it was not until the next morning that it was finally positioned. By 0215 hours the whole battalion had crossed the river and consolidated in the area of the crossroads. The battalion attack had not been unopposed but the swiftness of the assault quickly overcame the resistance. "D" Coy Commander remarked later "I have never seen so many wounded, maimed and dead Germans in another area of similar size. Most of these casualties were caused by our S.A. fire and grenades". In the battalion bridgehead a total of 84 prisoners were taken during the night at a cost of only 12 casualties. (W.D., Carlt & York R., 10 Dec 44; (H.S.) 145.2C6011 (D1): Account by Lt-Col J.A. Ensor, D.S.O., O.C. Carlt & York R., 10/11 Dec 44, and Account by O.C. "D" Coy, Carlt & York R., 10/11 Dec 44)

144. The West N.S.R. assault in the centre of the Brigade did not have the initial spectacular success of the two flanking battalions. There appears to be two reasons at least accounting for their ill-luck. First it would seem that this sector was more closely watched by the enemy as the unit experienced very heavy D.F. fire on its assembly area. Another apparent reason was the decision of West N.S.R. to depend wholly on the Olafson bridge for the assault crossing whereas 48 Highrs and Carlt & York R. had carried with them into the assault both bridge material and assault boats. As in the case of the flank battalions West N.S.R. had reconnoitered the river and located the crossing sites prior to the attack. The sites finally selected lay a few hundred yards below the railway at 419354 and 419355. When the second barrage began at 2100 hours the two assaulting companies began moving up accompanied by the Pioneer Platoon carry-

ing the Olafson bridge materials. On the right "C" Coy at once came under enemy D.F., sustained considerable casualties and became temporarily disorganized. "A" Coy, on the left, had better luck and reached the river, but the swiftness of the current demolished their bridge before it was completed, and the company was pulled back to await the arrival of assault boats which were immediately sent for. At this time, due to faulty communication as well as the initial failure of the two assaulting companies, confusion reigned at battalion headquarters. A patrol from "D" Coy attempted to cross the river near the site of the demolished railway bridge but was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, because of the immediate success of both 48 Highrs and Carlt & York R., the West N.S.R. plan was changed, and "D" Coy was ordered to cross left in the 48 Highrs area and "B" Coy right through Carlt & York R. These two would then advance toward one another along the far bank and strike the enemy on his flanks. At 0130 hours the companies began moving again. "D" Coy made slow progress being held up by mines at the railway crossing as they pushed north through 48 Highrs toward their objective. In the meantime, "A" Coy followed close behind "B" Coy through the Carlt & York R. bridgehead, and together they began clearing the dyke and lateral road to road junction 418357. This task they completed in short order taking 18 prisoners, killing a number of the enemy, and knocking out two of his S.P. guns. "B" Coy held up at the road junction, while "A" Coy pushed on and contacted "D" Coy at 0440 hours. The first phase of the brigade assault was now complete. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 10 Dec 44; (H.S.) 145.2W2011(D1): Account by O.C. "A" Coy West N.S.R. Action in Establishing a Bridgehead across River Lamone, 10/11 Dec 44)

145. To fully exploit the success of the initial assault it was essential that the bridging of the river for the passage of anti-tank guns, armour, and essential unit transport, go forward with as little delay as possible. Divisional Engineers had arranged for the building of three Class 2 crossings, one in each battalion assault area, and for the early replacement of at least one of these by a Class 9 F.B.E.* ((H.S.) 22401.3013(D2): History of Royal Canadian Engineers, 1 Cdn Corps, 1 Oct 44 - 15 Jan 45: Pt III, p. 3). Moreover, they were prepared to launch a "Brown Bridge" (see para 23) near the demolished road bridge (*ibid*, p. 6). 48 Highrs reported the Class 2 raft completed in its area at 0350 hours and Carlt & York R. their crossing at 0430 hours. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx 4, Int Log, 11 Dec 44). The "Brown Bridge", however, could not be used as the gap at the road bridge was found to be 160 feet. (History of Royal Canadian Engineers *op cit*, Part III, p. 6). Meanwhile, in preparation for the second phase of the operation, Brigadier Bernatchez ordered R. 22e R. to cross the river and pass through Carlt & York R. By 0430 hours (11 Dec) this move was completed, and H Hour for Phase II set for 0630 hours. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Dec 44). At the

* In actual fact the engineers put in Class 2 rafts in 48 Highrs and West N.S.R. sectors and a Class 1½ bridge in Carlt & York R. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, December 1944: Appx 4, Engineers Sitrep, 11 Dec 44)

same time anti-tank 2-prs and 6-prs were reaching the bridgehead on the Class 2 rafts. This last was a laborious task, for each gun had to be lowered down and pulled up the steep dykes. In addition the river area was receiving considerable attention from enemy mortars and artillery. With the coming of daylight, the hostile fire so increased that it held up the construction of the Class 9 bridge all day. However, a third Class 2 crossing was completed in West N.S.R. area by 0600 hours, and all three battalions were by then completing the move of their anti-tank guns into the bridgehead.^a (W.D., 1 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 11 Dec 44). Everything was now ready for the advance to the Vecchio.

146. At 0630 hours, 11 Dec, R. 22e R. began moving forward on a two company front supported by M.M.G., mortar, and artillery fire, on pre-arranged targets. In spite of determined enemy opposition the battalion made progress taking a number of prisoners each time the enemy yielded ground. "B" Coy, on the right, at 1013 hours had passed through Borg di' Stecch and were thus only 1000 yards short of the brigade's final objective on the Fosso Vecchio. On the left, however, enemy resistance had stiffened and, despite assistance from the artillery in knocking out M.G. posts and anti-tank guns, the pace of the advance had slowed. At 1440 hours Brigadier Bernatchez issued instructions for the final phase of the brigade operation. R. 22e R. would continue on its present axis and secure the area of the Via Albergoni bridge over the Vecchio. West N.S.R. in the centre would move over the railway and push on in a south-westerly direction towards the Vecchio. At the same time 48 Highrs would extend south from the line of the railway between West N.S.R. and the Lamone. (3 Cdn Inf Bde Int Log, 11 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 11 Dec 44). Supported by artillery fire R. 22e R. resumed its advance at 1600 hours. Although it immediately came under heavy enemy artillery and small arms fire it pressed on. By 1920 hours the battalion was within 500 yards of the Vecchio with one company on the Via Albergoni and another 500 yards to the left along a track leading forward to the stream. There, in the face of very heavy fire from the banks of the Vecchio, R. 22e R. was forced to halt its advance. Artillery D.F. tasks were then arranged against possible counter attacks and the battalion ordered to dig in for the night. (W.D., R. 22e R., 11 Dec 44)

147. In less than 24 hours 3 Cdn Inf Bde had achieved almost complete success. From his strong defensive positions along the Lamone the enemy had been driven back to a much less secure line along the low lying dykes of the Fosso Vecchio.^{aa} For this success some credit was due to the Air Force which throughout the day had closely supported the attacking ground force. Meanwhile the 5 Cdn Armd Div attack had also met with success, and 11 Cdn Inf Bde had reached the Vecchio. During the afternoon 1 Cdn Inf Bde moved forward in the area between the two Brigades. With his right thus protected Brigadier Bernatchez now placed the weight of

^a At daylight on the 12th the engineers had two Class 9 bridges operating in the bridgehead one at 415351 and the other at 425363 (History of Royal Canadian Engineers, Pt. III, p. 6)

^{aa} The Fosso Vecchio has slight dykes - 4 foot - although the ditch itself is 30 foot deep and 50 foot wide at the top of banks. (Italy Topographical Notes, p. 30)

his Brigade on his left flank and, during the night 11/12 Dec, directed West N.S.R. south to secure the road junction on the Via Boncellino (398355), midway between the railway and the Lamone River. Encountering only light opposition West N.S.R. reached its objective at 0355 hours, on the way taking several prisoners. During the same period 48 Highrs advanced west along the river road towards the hamlet of Boncellino which it secured by 0700 hours again meeting with little resistance. These night operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde conformed with General Foster's order at 2055 hours on 11 Dec, which assigned to 3 Cdn Inf Bde the task of protecting the left flank of 1 Cdn Inf Bde while the latter prepared to carry the divisional attack across the Naviglio. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Dec 44 and 3 Cdn Inf Bde Int Log, 11-12 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 12 Dec 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 12 Dec 44)

148. By midday on 11 Dec plans were being made at H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div for Phase II of the divisional attack. Brigadier Smith conferred with General Foster during the morning and 1 Cdn Inf Bde began at once to prepare for its attack on the right of 3 Cdn Inf Bde. For this purpose Carlt & York R. passed to command 1 Cdn Inf Bde at 1200 hours. Brigadier Smith intended to face up to the Vecchio on a two battalion front, Hast & P.E.R. right and R.C.R. left, between the Via di Traversara and the Via Albergoni, then, using R.C.R., establish a bridgehead in the area midway between the two roads. ((H.S.) 234Cl.013(D10): The Royal Canadian Regiment Report on Operations, December 1944 and The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment Report on Operations, December 1944). While 1 Cdn Inf Bde was assembling for this advance, both 3 Cdn Inf Bde and 11 Cdn Inf Bde were nearing the Vecchio, and Partisans had reported Traversara (4237) clear of enemy (ibid). By mid-afternoon both R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. were moving forward. As the former neared the Vecchio they encountered enemy fire and held up to await the arrival of their anti-tank guns. Hast & P.E.R. also met with little opposition until they reached the Vecchio. There they came under M.G. fire and suffered several casualties. Patrols to the Vecchio from both battalions after dark reported 15-30 foot dykes with depth of water three feet. Hast & P.E.R. also made contact with Ir R.C. on its right. (Ibid; R.C.R. Report, op cit; Hast & P.E.R. Report, op cit; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 11 Dec 44)

149. During the night 11/12 Dec 1 Cdn Inf Bde crossed the Vecchio on both battalion fronts. Apparently the enemy had already withdrawn in this sector, for although both units came under heavy mortar and shell fire they experienced little close contact with the enemy. Shortly after it crossed the Vecchio Hast & P.E.R. contacted Ir R.C. of 11 Cdn Inf Bde on the right. At 0830 hours leading elements of both these units reached the near bank of the Canale Naviglio (at 408399) about 2,200 yards north of Bagnacavallo. Anti-tank guns were brought up, and the balance of Hast & P.E.R. took up a defensive position behind the leading company. R.C.R. dug in on its left flank 500 yards short of the canal, and due east of the town (at 408392) having made no contact with the enemy. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 12 Dec 44; W.D., R.C.R., 12 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 12 Dec 44; R.C.R. Report; Hast & P.E.R. Report)

150. By midday on 12 Dec it was apparent that the enemy had withdrawn his main forces to the line of the Canale Naviglio along that part of the Corps front extending from Bagnacavallo north to Route 16 (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps December 1944: Appx 50, Ops Summary No. 50). On the 12th a new enemy unit, Field Marshal Kesselring's Machine Gun Battalion, made its appearance opposite 1 Cdn Corps. This battalion, believed to be heavily equipped with automatic weapons, consisted of four companies. Of these, three, each with an estimated strength of 100-110 men, were on the Naviglio in the area of the impending Canadian attacks. ((H.S.)244C5.023 (D1): 5 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 84, 13 Dec 44). Originally organized in the North of Italy as a bodyguard for the Field Marshal it was instead sent to the 1 Cdn Corps front with the order "Hold to the last man and last round" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 51, Int Summary No. 178). In addition, as a result of the counter-attack against 5 Cdn Armd Div on 11 Dec (see para 177), it was known that 190 Recce Bn of 90 Pz Gr Div, equipped with Tiger tanks, was on the Corps front (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, December 1944: Appx 27, Int Summary No. 105).

151. Although its two forward units were in position by daybreak and Carlt & York R. had moved up behind them by midday, 1 Cdn Inf Div's assault across the Naviglio did not take place during the daylight hours of 12 Dec. (W.D., Carlt & York R., 12 Dec 44). The lack of supporting armour on 1 Cdn Inf Div front coupled with the known presence of enemy armour was an important factor in causing this delay. Although 5 Cdn Armd Div had tanks in its bridgehead early in the morning of the 12th, the engineers did not complete a heavy bridge in 1 Cdn Inf Div sector until midnight 13/14 Dec. (History of Royal Canadian Engineers, Part III, p. 6). 51 Bty 1st A. Tk Regt, however, had their guns up with the 1 Cdn Inf Bde units and were available to support the assault. (W.D., 1 A. Tk Regt R.C.A., 12 Dec 44)

152. The task of making the initial attack over the Naviglio was assigned to Carlt & York R. which was ordered to cross the canal through Hast & P.E.R. on the night of 12 Dec.^{*} As the enemy were dug in on both sides of the dyke, a close reconnaissance was impossible but according to civilian reports the canal was dry, the enemy having stopped the water to provide a better water obstacle at Faenza.^{**} (1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 12 Dec). As a precautionary measure, however, a supply of Olafson bridging material was made available. A limited bridgehead was to be established by Carlt & York R. after which Hast & P.E.R. would cross and expand the right flank while the former would extend to the left. Artillery support would include a ten minute medium and field gun

* The crossing site was near a demolished bridge at 408398.

** The Naviglio has ceased to be a canal. From Bagnacavallo north it is now a weed-filled ditch - and bridges have been replaced by fills. Locals say there has been no water in the canal since the Germans dammed it below Faenza. (Italy-Topographical Notes, p. 30)

concentration on both sides of the Canal bank, after which the mediums would lift and the field guns would provide a creeping barrage for the infantry. One squadron of 5 Cdn Armd Div tanks would be available to 1 Cdn Inf Bde at daylight 13 Dec (*ibid*). With preparations complete Carl't & York R. moved up behind Hast & P.E.R. and at 2200 hours went into the attack. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 12 Dec 44; W.D., Carl't & York R., 12 Dec 44; Account by Lt-Col J.A. Ensor, D.S.O., O.C. Carl't & York R., 12-13 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Dec 44)

153. Artillery again played a very important part in establishing the bridgehead over the Naviglio. The canal, as previously reported, was dry and proved a negligible obstacle to the advance. Carl't & York R.'s two leading companies crossing close behind the barrage, and against what the battalion's C.O. called light opposition, soon overcame the enemy defences. From the dykes and nearby houses the battalion took 45 prisoners. By midnight with two companies across the canal in control of the west bank for several hundred yards on either side of the crossing site, Lt-Col J.A. Ensor, D.S.O., A.B.E., commanding Carl't & York R., was ready to start extending his flank of the bridgehead south towards Bagnacavallo. In succession he now passed his third and fourth companies across the Naviglio. The former reached the secondary road running from the dyke 700 yards south of the bridging site where they were cut off by some enemy who came in between them and the canal. Although shortly after the fourth sub-unit came forward to this road neither company was able to make any further headway and both began to dig in. Between 0300 hours and first light sounds of enemy troop and vehicle movements were heard on all sides of the bridgehead. (Account by Lt-Col J.A. Ensor; W.D., Carl't & York R., 12 - 13 Dec 44; (H.S.) 28101-013(D10): The Carl't & York R. Account of Operations in Italy, 1 Dec - 23 Dec 44)

154. Meanwhile shortly after midnight Hast & P.E.R. followed Carl't & York R. into the bridgehead. Meeting only light opposition they made gains of several hundred yards on the right flank. By 0415 hours the Brigade held a bridgehead some 1100 yards in width and in depth extending to the lateral road 700 yards west of the canal-bank where Hast & P.E.R. was then engaged in a fire fight with several M.G. posts.* (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 12 Dec 44). Behind Hast & P.E.R. four anti-tank guns of 51 Bty 1 A. Tk Regt R.C.A. were moved over the canal (W.D., 1 A. Tk Regt R.C.A., 13 Dec 44). At 0300 hours divisional Intelligence warned H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde of a "Possible counter attack by 190 Recce Regt may be with Tks from north" (1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 13 Dec).

155. Previous to the receipt of this advice, Brigadier Smith had taken steps to strengthen his bridgehead and at midnight had ordered two companies of R.G.R. to move forward to the Canal opposite the left flank of Carl't & York R. Now he asked Divisional Headquarters to arrange for an armed reconnaissance (air) to operate from first light

* Hast & P.E.R. locations as reported to Brigade Headquarters at that time were "H.Q. 403392 - Coys at 407405, 408400, 410403, other sub-unit engaged in SA fight with several M.G. posts at 403404" (1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 13 Dec)

over the area between the Senio and the Naviglio and north-east of the Bagnacavallo - Lugo railway. (1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 13 Dec). At the same time he instructed Hast & P.E.R. and Carlt & York R. to remain within limits of their bridgehead (ibid); - no doubt to await the arrival of 9 Cdn Armd Regt tanks. Meanwhile the divisional plan was changed. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, instead of attacking on the left flank of the division where enemy resistance had increased, was instructed to prepare to pass through 1 Cdn Inf Bde's bridgehead. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Dec 44)

156. At daybreak 13 Dec the expected counter attack was launched by enemy infantry on both flanks of the bridgehead. During the last hours of darkness the attacking force had closed in apparently using the dykes as cover for their advance and no doubt intending to cut off our infantry which had penetrated to a depth of several hundred yards. The force of the blow fell on the right flank where the enemy attacked supported by tanks. Artillery D.F. was brought down which dispersed the infantry for a time but did not affect the tanks. Within a short time, however, the enemy reformed his ranks and commenced a fresh round of attacks. This time he managed to penetrate between Hast & P.E.R. and Carlt & York R. where our artillery was less effective. 51 A. Tk Bty engaged two tanks and knocked one out, but the German infantry succeeded in surrounding "B" Coy Hast & P.E.R. and, at 0915 hours, overran it taking most of the company, including its commander, prisoner. After it became apparent that "B" Coy Hast & P.E.R. was cut off, the commanding officer of that unit ordered his remaining companies to drop back to the river line under cover of artillery fire and smoke. By 1005 hours this battalion had withdrawn behind the canal dykes. In the meantime, however, Carlt & York R. with artillery support had managed to beat off the attack with heavy losses to the enemy. (1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 13 Dec; W.D., Carlt & York R., 13 Dec 44; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 13 Dec 44; Account by Lt-Col J.A. Ensor)

157. There was now a lull in the fighting on Carlt & York R. front and ammunition was sent forward to the companies. Shortly after 1000 hours, however, following a heavy enemy barrage three tanks appeared at the north end of the secondary road on which lay Carlt & York R. left flank positions. These tanks, one of which was a Tiger, engaged "A" Coy and forced it to retire to the dyke. They then turned on "D" Coy and engaging the house occupied by Coy H.Q. brought it down on their heads forcing them to evacuate. Although now back to the dykes, Carlt & York R. with the help of heavy artillery D.F. managed to hang on. (W.D., Carlt & York R., 13 Dec 44). Meanwhile the squadron of tanks that had been assigned to assist the infantry in the bridgehead had been held up while the bridge over the Vecchio on the Via di Traversera was being completed. Difficulties in getting the bridging material forward and shell and mortar fire during the construction stage were the cause of the delay. Finally at 1030 hours, just as Carlt & York R. were being forced back to the Canal, the bridge was completed, and "A" Sqn B.C.D. moved up to the Naviglio. (W.D., 1 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 13 Dec 44; W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), 13 Dec 44)

158. With B.C.D. armour still east of the Naviglio, however, the situation of Carlt & York R. continued to be extremely precarious. At 1248 hours "D" Coy reported that the enemy tanks, two Panthers and a Tiger, previously observed at the north end of the secondary road were now moving

down towards the dyke. Under the direction of Capt. D.E. Smith, M.C., O.C. "C" Coy, a 6-pr anti-tank gun, with a mixed gun crew of Carlt & York R. and 51 A. Tk Bty, was towed by a jeep into "D" Coy's position where it engaged the leading Panther. As the gun was being positioned enemy infantry moved in across the fields towards the canal. While the companies along the dykes and the artillery engaged the advancing infantry, the anti-tank gun knocked out the Panther. At that moment the first Sherman entered the bridgehead, and again the enemy was driven off. (Account by Lt-Col J.A. Ensor, D.S.O.; W.D., Carlt & York R., 13 Dec 44; W.D., 1 A. Tk Regt R.C.A., 13 Dec 44). Shortly after Hast & P.E.R. were also counter attacked by tanks but artillery D.F. prevented any further penetration on that flank (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 13 Dec 44).

159. With the entry of B.C.D. into the bridgehead the situation was somewhat relieved but both Carlt & York R. and Hast & P.E.R. were by this time unable to muster sufficient strength to regain the lost ground. During the day the two battalions had repulsed in all 13 counter attacks, the combined effort of 190 Recce Regt and Kesselring's M.G. Bn. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, December 1944: Appx 39, Int Summary 107; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Dec 44). The brunt of the enemy attacks had been against the left flank where his armour had a direct approach down the short road to the dyke. Only the fierce resistance put up by Carlt & York R. kept the German from reaching the canal fording place. Later, from the narrow lodgment retained by the New Brunswick unit, 1 Cdn Inf Div launched its attack to regain the original bridgehead. From the Army Commander, Lt-Gen R.L. McCreery, next day came the following congratulations to both battalion commanders:

My best congratulations on the splendid achievement of your Bn in capturing and holding a bridgehead over the CANALE NAVIGLIO against repeated infantry and tank counter attacks. Great gallantry, endurance and determination by all ranks won this important success. The fierceness of the enemy's resistance clearly shows the importance of this ground to the enemy. Well done indeed.

(W.D., Carlt & York R., December 1944: Appx 18;
W.D., Hast & P.E.R., December 1944: Appx 5)

160. Immediate action was taken at H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div when word was received that 1 Cdn Inf Bde had been forced back to the canal dyke. Gen Foster placed L. Edmn R. under command of 1 Inf Bde at 1100 hours, and this battalion was ordered to enter and regain the original bridgehead. (1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 13 Dec 44). Upon the completion of L. Edmn R. task 2 Cdn Inf Bde would then take over from 1 Cdn Inf Bde and continue the advance (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Dec 44). The whole of B.C.D. would be available in support. By midday plans were completed at H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde for the L. Edmn R. attack which was set for 1600 hours with "C" Sqn B.C.D. in support. The enemy was now putting up fierce opposition all along the Canadian Corps front. On the right 12 Cdn Inf Bde had been driven back across the Naviglio while 3 Cdn Inf Bde, in front of Bagnacavallo, had identified a new formation, 98 Inf Div, on its front. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 57, Int Summary 179)

161. With the aid of artillery, mortar, and M.M.G. fire, the Edmontons got away to a good start. Smoke was used to help conceal the movement of the tanks. Within half an hour the company on the left reached the area of the junction at the north end of the secondary road (40C398), but without close tank support as B.C.D. was unable to get around the Panther knocked out earlier by Carlt & York R. Eventually, however, the tanks by-passed the obstacle and joined the infantry at the road junction. On the right the Edmontons met stiff opposition from infantry and an S.P. gun holding some houses on the dyke road 300 yards below the bridging site. One of the B.C.D. tanks was knocked out by the S.P. gun, but the western infantry outflanked the houses and after a six hour fight drove off the enemy and secured the position. In the centre of the bridgehead L. Edmn R. advanced to the lateral road west of the canal by 1915 hours, taking 19 prisoners in the process. By midnight the original bridgehead had been regained and consolidated with two squadrons ("A" and "C") of B.C.D. in the area. The C.O., L. Edmn R., reported "Support from tanks, M.M.G., mortars and artillery was excellent". ((H.S.) 145.2E2011(D1) Consolidation of 1 Cdn Inf Bde Bridgehead over the Naviglio Canal by Lt-Col J.R. Stone; W.D., L. Edmn R., 13 Dec 44; W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), 13 Dec 44)

162. At 2100 hours, 13 Dec, L. Edmn R. returned to under command H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde. Brigadier Bogert had now completed his plans to take over the bridgehead, and had moved Seaforth of C. up to the Naviglio. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Dec 44). By midnight the latter unit was moving across the canal through L. Edmn R. Enemy artillery fire in the area of the crossing was the only form of opposition encountered, and by 0600 hours on 14 Dec the two leading companies were in position along the road 200 yards west of the road junction on the left flank secured earlier by L. Edmn R. (see para above). There they anxiously awaited the armour which was due to join them at first light. For enemy tanks were still in the vicinity scouting through the vines for a convenient shot. At daybreak L. Edmn R. and Seaforth of C. were holding a firm bridgehead, in approximately the same positions as those occupied by Hast & P.E.R. and Carlt & York R. 24 hours before. This time, however, the infantry had two squadrons of tanks as well as anti-tank guns with them, and in addition one company of the Edmontons was lying in reserve behind the dyke. A hot reception would now meet any counter attack the enemy might launch. (W.D., Seaforth of C., 14 Dec 44: Appx A, Op Report; W.D., L. Edmn R., 14 Dec 44; W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), 14 Dec 44; W.D., 1 A. Tk Regt R.C.A., 13-14 Dec 44)

163. But the enemy launched no counter attacks during the morning, although his tanks continued to lurk about the bridgehead. All our anti-tank resources including armour, medium artillery, and anti-tank guns, were used to good effect. One 6-pr of 57 A. Tk Bty scored a hit on a Tiger, but it made good its escape. Although 2 Cdn Inf Bde made no attempts to move forward during the morning, at 1000 hours Westar R. accompanied by one squadron of Ld S.H. passed through L. Edmn R. and proceeded north to clear the west bank of the canal on 5 Cdn Armd Div front (see para 188). By this time, Carlt & York R. and Hast & P.E.R. had been withdrawn into reserve. Generals Foulkes and Foster visited Brigadier Bogert's Headquarters during the morning and discussed the situation with him. Following this meeting the

latter made plans to push out his right flank behind Westmr R., advance for about 800 yards, send the Seaforths forward slightly, and bring P.P.C.L.I. into the bridgehead to expand it to the west. Before he could put his plan into execution, however, the enemy made a fresh move. Shortly after midday the forward companies of both battalions came under very heavy artillery fire, and soon after enemy tanks were heard moving in from the north. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Dec 44)

164. At 1330 hours the enemy launched a strong attack on L. Edmn R. and at the same time commenced to move in on the Seaforths from the south. Under a heavy artillery concentration covering the whole bridgehead, four enemy tanks with strong supporting infantry began moving down on the Edmontons right flank in the area of the dyke road. The ensuing action lasted for two hours but the Edmontons with strong support from the mortars, M.M.Gs., and, eventually, artillery from both divisions, held firm, and the enemy finally withdrew. It was an expensive success for L. Edmn R. which suffered some 28 casualties, but according to prisoners, who said their reserve company in particular was badly knocked about by our artillery D.F., an equally costly failure for the enemy. Meanwhile, the Seaforths had driven off similar, but less determined, attacks. There a single Tiger tank supporting the German infantry reached within 60 yards of a Seaforth position. Although the tanks and anti-tank guns were unable to get a shot at it, the infantry got one PIAT bomb hit, and a rifleman shot the tank commander. The tank then withdrew. By 1550 hours the enemy seemed to have had enough, and withdrew out of range. A number of prisoners were captured all being from 98 Inf Div which was now moving in on both sides of Bagnacavallo. During the attack our air force gave very close support to both battalions. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 14 Dec; W.D., Seaforth of C., 14 Dec 44 and Appx A, Report on Ops)

165. With the cessation of the counter attacks, Brigadier Bogert put into motion his plan to expand the bridgehead. At 1630 hours the Patricias moved through the Seaforths and began advancing south along the dyke road, and the next lateral road to the west, and by 2015 hours were within 800 yards of Bagnacavallo.^{*} By 0230 hours they had taken an enemy post on the lateral road 200 yards farther south, and on the left cleared an additional several hundred yards of the west bank. This advance netted the Patricias the five-man crew of a Panther tank and 11 enemy infantry as prisoners. (W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 138, Midday Sitrep, 15 Dec 44; W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 14 and 15 Dec 44). On the right flank, meanwhile, L. Edmn R., taking advantage of the gains made by the Westminsters, considerably improved their positions. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 15 Dec 44). At this time the bridgehead was several hundred yards in depth and extended from near the outskirts of Bagnacavallo north-east for nearly two miles.

* "A" Coy right at 395394 and "B" Coy left at 397390.
(W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 14 Dec 44)

166. Brigadier Bogert now began planning for a general advance by all three battalions. Enemy activity, however, during the daylight hours of 15 Dec was sufficient to delay the plan until late in the afternoon. At 0830 hours three enemy tanks were reported moving in on L. Edmn R. A heavy stonk was laid on the approach area and the attack repulsed with one Panther disabled on one of our protective mines laid by the pioneers.* The infantry then attacked the disabled tank with PIATs, killed the crew and captured its commander. Although the hostile armour continued to lurk about on the brigade front during the rest of the day, keeping the units of the brigade in a state of tension, there were no further attacks.** During the morning P.P.C.L.I. lost four men, and an officer, in a clash between one of their patrols and an enemy post at a road junction north of Bagnacavallo. Late that afternoon Brigadier Bogert ordered all three battalions forward to secure a very limited expansion of the bridgehead. The Seaforths were to make the first move followed by L. Edmn R. at 2000 hours and finally P.P.C.L.I. before daylight on 16 Dec. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Dec 44; W.D., L. Edmn R., 15 Dec 44; Consolidation of 1 Cdn Inf Bde Bridgehead op cit; W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 15 Dec 44; W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), 15 Dec 44; W.D., Seaforth of C., 15 Dec 44)

167. Seaforth of C. objectives lay on the lateral road, lo Stradello, at the crossroads (393399) a mile north of Bagnacavallo, and at Casa Zaboni (394403) a building 500 yards farther north on the same road. At nightfall the two forward Seaforth sub-units made an uneventful advance to these objectives, while to their rear the remaining two companies took over the positions they had just vacated. The supporting tanks were unable to reach the right forward company, but anti-tank guns were, however, brought up, and mines laid covering the road approach to the company's position. (W.D., Seaforth of C., 15 Dec 44 and Appx A, Report on Ops). In between Seaforth of C. and Westmr R. left flank (see para 195), L. Edmn R. attempting to reach the road junction at 403408 experienced some opposition. Finally a company attack including tanks and with light artillery and mortar support was arranged. Although its

* Of the laying of these mines, the War Diary of H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde states:

Another outstanding feature of the operation has been the use of British Mk V A Tk mines. This is the first time that the infantry of 2 Cdn Inf Bde have laid the mines during battle and without sapper help. The experiment has been most successful.

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Dec 44)

** The War Diary of B.C.D. on this date (15 Dec 44) makes the following comparison between the German and the Allied tanks:

His armour is definitely superior in cross-country performance and his tanks are able to move about almost at will whereas ours, although greatly superior in numbers, are very largely road-bound.

(W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), 15 Dec 44)

supporting tanks were unable to get forward due to a knocked-out enemy tank obstructing the road, the Edmontons successfully rushed the position, capturing several prisoners. The enemy continued to be very active in the vicinity but by midnight the tanks and a Wasp flamethrower had joined the Edmontons, and the latter had firmly consolidated the area. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 15 Dec 44; Consolidation of 1 Cdn Inf Bde Bridgehead). The final move in accordance with the Brigade Commander's plan took place in the early hours of the 16th. At 0500 hours in a short and very successful action P.P.C.L.I. seized and occupied a number of buildings (392395) lying about 500 yards due south of the cross roads on lo Stradello. In this attack the Patricias suffered no casualties against the enemy's five killed and 23 prisoners. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 16 Dec 44 and Appx 44, History of "A" Company, 15-16 Dec 44)

168. Throughout the 16th the enemy armour was in evidence on the perimeter of the bridgehead but was kept at a safe distance by the guns of the medium artillery. The divisional commander had now decided to shift 2 Cdn Inf Bde to the quieter sector east of the town of Bagnacavallo held by 3 Cdn Inf Bde, and to bring the latter formation into the Naviglio bridgehead in its place. That night between 1800 hours and 0140 hours the changeover took place. Of the period spent in the Naviglio bridgehead, the report of 2 Cdn Inf Bde states "...never before has the shelling been heavier or his counter attacks stronger". ((H.S.) 234C1,013 (D10): 2 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Operations, 1 Dec 44 to 8 Jan 45)

5 CDN ARMD DIV, THE CROSSING OF THE LAMONE, AND
THE ADVANCE TO THE FOSSO MUNIO, 10 - 15 DEC 44

169. It is necessary at this point to turn our attention to 5 Cdn Armd Div, and examine the manner in which that division planned, prepared, and executed, its share of the Corps offensive over and beyond the Lamone River. As will be remembered the corps plan was for simultaneous assaults by both divisions on single-brigade fronts. 5 Cdn Armd Div intended to cross the river in the vicinity of Villanova (4541) and exploit in a north-westerly direction. The divisional plan issued on 6 Dec directed that 11 Cdn Inf Bde, with under command B.C.D. and 16 Bty 4 A. Tk Regt R.C.A., would carry out the operation. In support would be 10 Fd Sqn R.C.E., 14 Fd Sqn R.C.E., Mortar Coy 12 Cdn Inf Bde Sp Gp (P.L. Fus), and the divisional artillery. Timed originally to commence at 2030 hours 6 Dec, the brigade assault would take place in silence on a two battalion front, C.B. Highrs on the right and Perth R. on the left. Crossing the river in assault boats the two units would seize a bridgehead extending, on the right to the area of Macello (460424), on the left to Borgo di Villanova (4440), and in depth to the Via Aguta, which lay parallel to, and 1000 yards beyond, the river. In the second phase, according to the divisional plan, 11 Cdn Inf Bde would:

Phase II - exploit towards FUSIGNANO
3744 via x rd 4341 rd junc 421426

towards BAGNACAVALLO 3838 via rd junc
440401 - rd junc 412393

((H.S.) 244C5.015(D3): 5 Cdn Armd Div
Operations Log, 6 Dec 44)

that is along the Via Cocchi towards Fusignano and the Via Cogollo towards Bagnacavallo. To divert the attention of the enemy from the area of the main action, two flanking brigades, 12 Cdn Inf Bde and 5 Cdn Armd Bde, would stage fire demonstrations at Borghetto di Traversara and Mezzano respectively. In addition 5 Cdn Armd Bde would relieve Ir R.C. and Perth R., and 12 Cdn Inf Bde would place one battalion on one hour's notice from 0600 hours 7 Dec to come under command 11 Cdn Inf Bde. For the river passage each unit would receive 12 assault boats and one Class 2 raft. The handling of the former would be the responsibility of the infantry, and of the latter that of 16 Battery. 200 yards upstream from the demolished bridge at Villanova, the divisional engineers planned to erect a Class 9 F.B.E., and a Class 40 raft. The estimated time of completion of these was to be 16 and 24 hours respectively after "H" hour. As the initial attack was to be a silent one there would be no artillery concentrations fired, except for certain harassing tasks along the line of the Fosso Vetro. If surprise were lost, the codeword "BEDLAM" would be passed, and the artillery and mortars would open up on pre-arranged targets along the perimeter of the proposed bridgehead. In brigade reserve Ir R.C. and B.C.D. would be prepared to pass through either Perth R. or C.B. Highrs. ((H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): History of Operations 5 Cdn Armd Div, 2 Dec 44 to 12 Jan 45, Part II; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx 5, 11 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No. 10, 6 Dec 44)

170. Between the Lamone and the Senio Rivers, the country has much the same physical characteristics as that covered previously by 5 Cdn Armd Div in its operations at the beginning of the month (see para 81), except that the water courses west of the Lamone are dyked and embanked and would be more difficult to cross. Within the space of one mile four of these, Fosso Vetro, Fosso Vecchio, Canale Naviglio, and the Fosso Munio, ran across the divisional front. Due to the height of the embankments, especially in the case of the Canale Naviglio, and the seasonal lack of cover, the enemy had a commanding view of the ground on this sector. West of the Naviglio cover was more plentiful. Although east-west roads to the Senio were not plentiful in the 5 Cdn Armd Div zone of operations, lateral communications were somewhat better, some four routes running in a north-easterly direction across the front to link up with the Via Reale (Route 16). Since the enemy would undoubtedly endeavour to demolish the bridges carrying the forward routes over the several water barriers engineering tasks would be heavy. ((H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): Report on Operations 12 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 to 21 Dec 44)

171. Intelligence reports, at this time, named 114 Jaeger Division as the formation opposing 5 Cdn Armd Div, with 741 Jaeger Regt holding the sector from south of Route 16 to Borghetto di Traversara. Prior to the attack the intelligence staff at Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div gave the following as the probable disposition of this regiment:

South of Highway 16 no further PW have been taken and can only assume that 741 has taken up posns in a like manner to its MONTONE dispositions, that is with III/741 to the NORTH then I/741 and II/741 to the SOUTH. However, 11 Bn has suffered heavily in losses and could be taken out for reorganizing and reinforcing. I/721 which came quickly over several days ago to stop-gap NE of RUSSI, has not been identified since crossing the river and may well be soon destined again to rejoin its own regt.

Certainly if the weather remains bad for a few days the German will take full advantage of any quiet period to reshuffle his formations. 114 Recce is believed to be still the right-flanking bn of the Div.

((H.S.) 244C5.023(D1): 5 Cdn Armd Div
Intelligence Summary No. 78, 7 Dec 44)

The three battalions of 741 Jaeger Regt were estimated to have a total strength of between 425 and 475 men. (Ibid) 5 Cdn Armd Div Intrep No. 27, 7 Dec 44; (H.S.)224C1.023(D11): 1 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summary No. 173, 7 Dec 44)

172. During the day, 6 Dec, 5 Cdn Armd Bde relieved Perth R. and Ir R.C. along Route 16 between Osteria and Mezzano. On the left elements of both Lan & Ren Scot R. and Westmr R. were up to the Lamone opposite Borghetto di Traversara. In the morning Brigadier I.S. Johnston, Commander 11 Cdn Inf Bde, held an orders group at which he briefed his unit commanders and the representatives of the supporting arms. However, late that afternoon, as noted earlier in this report (para 133) the operation was postponed; in the event for several days. In the intervening period 5 Cdn Armd Div activity along the river was limited to reconnaissance and fighting patrols. During the night 5/6 Dec patrols of C.B. Highrs submitted the following reports on the Borgo di Villanova and Villanova sites respectively:

- (1) Recce patrol 1 offr 2 Ors plus covering party of 6 to river at 448408. Heard half track vehicles moving into Borgo Villanova and along road on opposite bank of river. Height of river bank 35-40 ft. Work parties heard along river bank. Width of river approx 50 ft, depth over 6 ft. Current slow drift. Reported as inf obstacle - A. Tk guns could not be man-handled across.
- (2) Same composition as above, to river at 453415. Report voices from opposite bank and mov vicinity demolished bridge. Height of river bank 20 - 25 ft, width 70 ft. 4 Tk guns cannot be manhandled across at this point.

(5 Cdn Armd Div, Operations Log,
6 Dec 44)

R.C.E. patrols to the Lamone the same night reported the width of the river as 40 - 60 ft, with dyke approaches 15 foot high followed by a sharp drop to the river bed (ibid). Patrols of Perth R., which unit was now in position on the left of C.B. Highrs east of the hamlet of Santerno (4540), made similar findings. During the night 9/10 Dec C.B. Highrs evacuated a number of civilians, who had been living in caves along the river bank, to a safer area. Early in the morning of 10 Dec the Divisional Commander visited Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde where he had a final discussion with Brigadier I.S. Johnston on the operation which was now set to take place at 1930 hours that night. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report op cit; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 6-10 Dec 44, and Appx 10: 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 10 Dec)

173. Shortly before "H" hour on 10 Dec the guns and mortars of 5 Cdn Armd Bde and 12 Cdn Inf Bde began hammering the enemy positions on their respective fronts (see para 129 for description of the 5 Cdn Armd Bde demonstration). Midway between the two in the comparatively quiet Villanova sector infantry of C.B. Highrs and Perth R. began moving forward to their respective crossing places. At the appointed time the first boats slipped silently into the water, and the operation began. Although the leading sub-units of both battalions completed the passage of the river without difficulty, Perth R. reporting complete surprise, C.B. Highrs very quickly reported that surprise had been lost. At 1952 hours Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde received the signal "BEDLAM" from this unit, and, as a result, the full weight of the divisional artillery began coming down on the perimeter of the bridgehead. Before the enemy in Villanova had time to get properly organized, however, C.B. Highrs were in the midst of his defences. By 2140 hours the village and some 43 prisoners of war were in their hands. During the next hour the Highlanders pushed through Villanova and along the Via Chiesa towards its junction (447423) with the lateral Via Aguta. Advancing at a steady rate, clearing small groups of the enemy from the houses on either side of the road as they went, the company made good progress, and at 0030 hours reported that it was on the objective. Enemy S.P.s. firing from the Via Aguta withdrew to the north as C.B. Highrs reached the road. These continued to be a source of trouble, however, so the Highlanders despatched their tank hunting platoon to hold the road junction 500 yards to the north on the Via Aguta. At 0200 hours C.B. Highrs elements on the right reached a point midway between Macello and Villanova on the road skirting the west bank of the Lamone and shortly after the unit reported all initial objectives secured. During the night Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde directed Westmr R., now under its command, to cross the Lamone at 0600 hours and take over the positions then occupied by C.B. Highrs. By 0900 hours this relief was complete and the latter unit withdrawn for a rest to Borgo di Villanova. (5 Cdn Armd Div History Part II; (H.S.) 145.205013(D1): Operation of C.B. Highrs for period 2 Dec to 27 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 10-11 Dec; (H.S.) 244C5.015(D3): 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 11 Dec; W.D., Westmr R., 11 Dec 44)

174. As already mentioned, in Perth R. sector the initial assault achieved almost complete surprise. By 2035 hours the unit had one company on the river road (448413) 500 yards north of the village of Borgo di Villanova, while a second which had passed through the village was advancing up the Via Cocchi towards the Via Aguta crossroads. In succession the remaining two companies of Perth R. then moved into the bridgehead, the first into Borgo di Villanova to mop up enemy parties by-passed in the original assault, the second to push across country to cut the Via Aguta (at 443417) midway between the Via Cocchi and the Via Chiesa. This latter objective was reached without serious opposition by 0200 hours 11 Dec. On the left the leading company, in the vicinity of some houses on the Via Cocchi (at 440412), was still 400 yards from the crossroads, and under heavy enemy fire from the line of the Via Aguta. The Perths continued to make progress, however, until 0335 hours when they were within 100 yards of the crossroads. There despite several attempts to get forward, increasing opposition brought the advance to a halt. ((H.S.)145.2P1011(D2): Operations of the Perth R. for Period 2 Dec to 27 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 10-11 Dec; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 11 Dec)

175. In the meantime Brigadier Johnston had committed his third battalion on the left of the bridgehead. At 2315 hours he placed Ir R.C. on one hour's notice to move, and shortly after issued final instructions to the Irish commander, Lt-Col R.C. Clark. Colonel Clark's battalion was to cross the Lamone at Borgo di Villanova, and thrust south along the river road towards its junction with the Via Cogollo (440401) then, with the Via Cogollo as the unit axis, exploit south-west towards Bagnacavallo. At the same time Perth R., with its rear and left flank covered by the move of Ir R.C., would make a strong effort to reach the crossing of the Via Cocchi over the Canale Naviglio. The Irish began crossing the Lamone at 0200 hours, and by 0535 hours its leading sub-units on the river road were within 200 yards of the Via Cogollo. There was some fighting at the road junction but by 0615 hours the Irish had consolidated this objective and taken nine prisoners. Without pausing the battalion continued its advance moving now along the Via Cogollo. By 0805 hours after a sharp action, which cost the enemy 10 killed and 20 prisoners, the Irish reached and captured intact the Via Cogollo bridge over the Fosso Vetro (428398). Shortly after a second sub-unit arrived at the Vetro 300 yards to the north of the main axis in time to gain possession of a second undamaged bridge (427402). About this time the enemy put in two small counterattacks against Ir R.C., one in the area of the Fosso Vetro the other at the northern end of the Via Cogollo. Both attacks were repulsed and a further ten prisoners taken. At 0900 hours the 11 Cdn Inf Bde unit crossed the Vetro, and at 1335 hours, under a hail of small arms and S.P. gun fire, reached the demolished bridge over the Fosso Vecchio. At this point Ir R.C. halted and consolidated its gains in preparation for a further advance. Since it crossed the Lamone that morning the unit had advanced some 3,000 yards, in the course of which it had done considerable fighting, taken 50 prisoners, and inflicted at least that many casualties on the enemy. (W.D., Ir R.C., 11 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 10-11 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 11 Dec)

176. By this time Perth R. had secured the last of its initial objectives. During the morning an enemy tank and an S.P. kept the unit under fire until they were finally driven off by a heavy artillery concentration. Later that morning Lt-Col M.W. Andrews, commanding officer Perth R., came forward and after a rapid appreciation of the situation decided to make another attempt to seize the crossroads using two companies supported by artillery. At 1200 hours, this attack supported by mortars and small arms fire went in. By 1425 hours, having met only moderate enemy resistance, the Perths had consolidated on the objective, and taken five of the enemy prisoner. Towards evening supplies came up, and the troops received a hot meal. (W.D., Perth R., 11 Dec 44; Operations Perth R., op cit; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 11 Dec)

177. Commencing that morning and continuing into the late afternoon the enemy made a series of strong but ineffective attempts to break through Westmr R. and roll up the bridgehead from the right flank. The first of these attacks developed at 1000 hours when his infantry supported by 15-20 tanks and S.P. guns* came in on the Westminster's

* According to intelligence sources the enemy unit involved was 190 Recce Bn of 90 Pz Gr Div (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, December 1944; Appx 27, Int Summary No. 105)

positions from the direction of Route 16 down the two lateral roads paralleling the Lamone. Although supporting aircraft early appeared over the fighting zone, due to the closeness of the action, their activities were restricted to strafing attacks on the hostile armour. At the cessation of the attacks four enemy tanks remained on the field, victims of the Westminster's PIATs. Before the end of the day the enemy made two further attempts to break through the Canadian defences. At 1500 hours field and medium artillery fire broke up the first of these before it could get under way. Five hours later the infantry repulsed the second, and last, attack. Unfortunately, in spite of the intensity of the artillery fire directed against him, the enemy managed to recover the four tanks damaged in the first engagements. Several Littlejohns were available in the bridgehead by early morning, and at least two of these were with the forward troops of Westmr R. (W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 11 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 11 Dec 44; (H.S.) 24405.023(D1); 5 Cdn Armd Div Int Summary, No. 83, 12 Dec 44). An entry in the regimental history of 4 A.Tk. Regt, R.C.A., however, describes these as probably having more effect on the morale than on the tanks of the enemy:

Daylight found four "Littlejohn" equipments in position in the bridgehead. An enemy counter-attack directed at the right flank of the bridgehead and supported by "Tiger" and "Panther" tanks, was successfully repulsed, more by virtue of the presence of high velocity weapons in the area than by the effectiveness of the 2 pounders which gun was soon to be abandoned.

((H.S.)142.7A4003(D1): History of 4 Canadian Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery 1940-1945)

178. In accordance with the engineer plan for the assault over the Lamone River work began early on the night 10/11 Dec on the construction of two crossings, 200-300 yards upstream from the demolished bridge at Villanova. These were a Class 9 F.B.E. (at 450415) and a Class 40 Bailey Pontoon bridge (at 452415). Work on the Class 9 commenced a few minutes before midnight on 10 Dec, that on the Class 40 about 0200 hours 11 Dec. From the start hostile fire continually interrupted operations. 10 Fd Sqn, constructing the Class 9 Bridge, were unable to bulldoze on the river dyke until 0400 hours when they received an armoured bulldozer. The experience of this unit, as described in the following passage from its War Diary, was typical of the difficulties encountered by the engineers:

Enemy fire was spasmodic until daylight came when the enemy could then observe the activities on top of the dyke and throughout the entire morning, frequent heavy mortaring of the site was encountered. One stonk lasted for three quarters of an hr. Although the work was held up for short periods, Lt. Young continually rallied his men back to the job and continued work. At one stage, a sniper became quite troublesome and was effectively dealt with by a spr party. By 1400 hours mortar fire had died off considerably although the area was being shelled spasmodically but accurately. It was only Lt. Young's grim determination that work be completed and his apparent contempt for danger, that he was able to hold his men, who were by this

time very tired and considerably shaken, on the job. In spite of this shelling and occasional MG bursts from downstream, the work was pressed on, and finally completed at 1845 hours.

(W.D., 10 Fd Sqn R.C.E., 11 Dec 44)

At 1932 hours the head of a column of wireless vehicles, jeeps, and carriers, taking ammunition, rations, and anti-tank guns, forward, began moving over the Lamone on this bridge. Not until 0510 hours 12 Dec, however, when 14 Fd Coy R.C.E. completed the Class 40, were the heavier vehicles such as the tanks able to make the passage of the river. (W.D., Headquarters R.C.E., 5 Cdn Armd Div, December 1944; Appx 2, Engineer Sitreps 11-12 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 11 Dec 44)

179. By evening of 11 Dec Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div was ready to send 12 Cdn Inf Bde into the bridgehead. Orders were accordingly issued for the brigade to take over that night the right sector from inclusive the line of the Via Chiesa to north-east exclusive Route 16. Relieved of responsibility for the open right flank of the bridgehead 11 Cdn Inf Bde would press forward on the axis of the Via Cocchi and endeavour to seize crossings over the Canale Naviglio at Osteria (4242). Additionally, once the engineers had completed the Class 40 raft, 5 Cdn Armd Bde would send a squadron of tanks and two dismounted squadrons of 5 Cdn Armd Regt (8 N.B.H.) to cut the Via Reale north of Mezzano. The squadrons of B.C.D. would be assigned one to each of the two infantry brigades of 5 Cdn Armd Div and one to under command of 1 Cdn Inf Div. At 1940 hours 12 Cdn Inf Bde assumed command of its new sector. At that time two of Brigadier Johnston's battalions were already holding positions on the perimeter of the bridgehead; Westmr R., which now reverted to under his command, and P.L.D.G., which had earlier relieved C.B. Highrs in Villanova and the right-flanking company of Perth R. on the Via Aguta. By 2020 hours Lan & Ren Scot R. had crossed the Lamone and concentrated in Borgo di Villanova. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 11 Dec 44; (H.S.) 244C5.016(D1): 5 Cdn Armd Div Intentions, 11 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944; Appx 3, 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 11 Dec 44; W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 11 Dec 44; W.D., 4 P.L.D.G., 11 Dec 44; Report on Operations 12 Cdn Inf Bde op cit)

180. During the night 11/12 Dec Ir R.C. crossed the Vecchio, and in conjunction with Hast & P.E.R. (see para 149), pushed forward to the Naviglio. In the course of the morning and afternoon Lt-Col Clark's companies attempted without success to drive out the enemy still remaining east of the Naviglio north of the line of the Via Cogollo. (W.D., Ir R.C., 12 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 12 Dec 44). During the night Perth R. resumed its advance up the Via Cocchi, and shortly before daybreak, reached the Fosso Vecchio. There the Perths halted and consolidated. For the enemy from positions on the high dykes of the Naviglio commanded the whole area forward of the Vecchio, and it was apparent that any further advance during the hours of day-

light would be most costly.* (Operations of Perth R. op cit; W.D., Perth R., 11-12 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 12 Dec 44)

181. In 12 Cdn Inf Bde sector at first light on 12 Dec Westmr R. commenced clearing the west bank of the Lamone in the direction of Mezzano. Shortly after dismounted elements of Ld S.H. crossed the river into Mezzano and finding no signs of the enemy turned south along the river road to link up with the Westminsters. The latter, meanwhile, having encountered little opposition had made good progress and at 1200 hours contacted Ld S.H. at the edge of the built-up area of the town. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 12 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 12 Dec 44)

182. While the Westmr R. and Ld S.H. were thus engaged, 5 Cdn Armd Regt (8 N.B.H.) and P.L.D.G. had commenced operations intended to extend the right flank of the bridgehead to the north and north-east. Early that morning 8 N.B.H. crossed the Lamone and passing through Villanova moved north along the Via Aguta towards Route 16. In the latter part of the morning the Hussars reached the main highway where for a time they were under heavy artillery fire. Patrols north along the highway reported it clear of the enemy as far as the Fosso Vetro. To secure the area 8 N.B.H. now established a firm position astride the Via Reale a few hundred yards north of the Via Aguta junction and in addition put out a standing patrol near where Via al Conventello forks to the north-east. In the meantime P.L.D.G., which had commenced to move forward once the armoured regiment had passed through, had reached the Fosso Vecchio. The advance of the infantry unit took it along the Viazza Nuova, the road running from the Via Aguta over Canale Naviglio roughly midway between Via Cocchi and Route 16. P.L.D.G. met with no opposition, and at midday a patrol reached the near bank of the Naviglio where it observed enemy troops digging in on the far side. In the course of the afternoon the battalion faced up to the Fosso Vecchio with two companies, one on either side of the Viazza Nuova. Thus, last light on 12 Dec found 5 Cdn Armd Div on the general line of the Fosso Vecchio and actively patrolling forward to the Canale Naviglio along the greater part of the front which now extended from Route 16 at Mezzano to the line of the Via Cogollo. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 12 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 12 Dec 44; W.D., P.L.D.G., 12 Dec 44)

183. The general plan now was to assault over the Canale Naviglio during the night 12/13 Dec on a two divisional front. On the right 12 Cdn Inf Bde would put in two battalion attack over the Naviglio and firm up on the near bank of the Fosso Munio. At the same time 1 Cdn Inf Bde would cross the river and seize a bridgehead on the far side about 2000 yards north-east of Bagnacavallo. Intelligence reports

* Between the Vetro and Vecchio, north of Via Cocchi is a bare grainfield - no vines or trees...almost a half mile square. On the south of the road is the usual pattern of small fields. The Vecchio is crossed by a 70 foot Bailey bridge. Dykes here are 8 foot high. The ditch is 15 foot deep. From its banks the much higher banks of the Naviglio are visible across open fields on both sides of the Via Cocchi.

on 12 Dec indicated that the enemy recently had bolstered the strength of 114 Jaeger Division by the addition of the newly formed M.G. Bn Field Marshal Kesselring (see para 150).

184. The 12 Cdn Inf Bde plan called for Lan & Ren Scot R., on the left, and P.L.D.G., on the right, to attack over the Naviglio, using as their axis of advance the Via Cocchi and Viazza Nuova respectively. West of the canal each battalion would establish a bridgehead opposite its crossing place, facing up to the Fosso Munio; along the brigade front the distance between these two water obstacles varied from 300 yards on the right to 700 yards on the left. Once they had secured the covering position, P.L.D.G. would turn south-west, and conduct operations to clear out the enemy between the Munio and the Naviglio and link up the two bridgeheads. Lan & Ren Scot R. would secure the near bank of the Munio from (418431) roughly opposite Osteria to inclusive the Via Chiara bridge (412424), a distance of about 900 yards. In support of the operation the divisional artillery would have a series of concentrations available to the attacking units on call. Engineering problems raised by such an advance promised to be difficult and the C.R.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div informed the Divisional Commander that he "was very worried as to the success of the operation due to the fact that the sites were DF tasks of Jerry". (W.D., H.Q., R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 12 Dec 44). He stated, however, that he might have the first two obstacles passable to tanks by first light on 13 Dec, if there were no delays and no shelling. During the evening of 12 Dec Lan & Ren Scot R. moved up from Borgo di Villanova, and at 2115 hours both battalions crossed the start line on the Fosso Vecchio. (Ibid; W.D., H.Q., R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 12 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

185. As there was only one usable crossing over the Fosso Vecchio in their sector, P.L.D.G. companies experienced a slight delay in passing the start line. Despite this, the initial attack achieved surprise, and for a time all went well. At 2225 hours the forward sub-units reached the Canale Naviglio. During the next hour, according to reports received at Battalion Headquarters P.L.D.G., both companies crossed the Naviglio. From then on, however, the situation deteriorated rapidly. Stragglers, bearing alarmist reports of the action, began to arrive at the start line. At 2305 hours one company was in position on the far side of the Naviglio, 400 yards south of the site of the Viazza Nuova bridge, with the second to the right of the bridge on the near bank. The last-mentioned company had also crossed the canal, but an enemy counter-attack forced it to withdraw leaving behind one officer and 35 men, with whom it lost all contact. Due to the lack of cover and the weight of the enemy fire, coming down all over the area, the battalion reserve was unable to move more than a few hundred yards ahead of the start line. Early on 13 Dec, at 0140 hours, Battalion Headquarters ordered all companies to withdraw to the start line. There by 0250 hours Battalion Headquarters had reformed one company and portions of two others, but the remainder were still out of touch. Of these latter one large party, consisting of an officer and 43 men, turned up at 0655 hours. A company of Westar R. now came under command P.L.D.G. and took up a covering position on the east bank of the Fosso Vecchio. Shortly after P.L.D.G. withdrew into a concentration area south of the Fosso Vetro for rest and refitting. In this action, according to Headquarters 12 Cdn Inf Bde, P.L.D.G.

suffered 88 casualties of all types, the greater number of whom were missing believed prisoners.* ((H.S.)224C1.015(D2) 1 Cdn Corps Operations Log, 13 Dec; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 12-13 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 12-13 Dec 44; W.D., P.L.D.G., 12-13 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

186. In the meantime the left arm of the 12 Cdn Inf Bde attack, although failing to reach its final objectives, had, at least, achieved partial success. During the evening of 12 Dec Lan & Ren Scot R. moved through Perth R. and at 2115 hours crossed the start line. Unit dispositions at this time were two companies forward, one in immediate rear mopping-up and the fourth in reserve ahead of, but in the vicinity of, the start line. Although enemy troops on the Naviglio kept the flat ground lying between the Vecchio and the canal under heavy small arms and mortar fire, the Lanarks made good progress and at 2220 hours the leading companies reached the near bank of the Naviglio. There, however, despite several attempts made during the hours of darkness to gain a footing on the far bank, the advance came to a halt. The situation at 0500 hours was that the Lanarks were facing the Naviglio on a 700 yard front (from 422421 to 424427) in positions astride the Via Cocchi between the canal and the ditch lying 200-300 yards to the east. Early in the morning enemy resistance began to take a more positive form and at 0740 hours counter-attacks came in on the flanks of the Lanarks position. In both cases the battalion threw off its attackers, although on the right stiff fighting continued for the better part of an hour. Although by 1100 hours the bridge over the Vetro was ready for the passage of tanks, that over the Vecchio was not opened to traffic until four hours later. From 0500 hours on, however, B.C.D. engaged targets in Osteria from fire positions along the Vetro. By mid-afternoon 13 Dec, Lan & Ren Scot R. had had casualties amounting to 31 killed and 20 wounded, while the remainder, after nearly 24 hours in an exposed position, were suffering from lack of food and rest.** Both flanks were still wide open, P.L.D.G. having withdrawn behind the Vecchio, while on the left renewed attempts of 11 Cdn Inf Bde to clear the Naviglio west bank met with little success. By last light, however, the situation had considerably improved. At that time a troop of Ld S.H., which unit had earlier relieved B.C.D., and jeeps carrying food, ammunition, and supplies, reached Lan & Ren Scot R. Due to the shortage of personnel the Lanarks now formed strong points using the remnants of three companies around two houses (423426) lying near the canal bank 150 yards north of the Via Cocchi. The reserve company remained well back near the Fosso Vecchio on the left of the centre line. In these positions, apart from shell and mortar fire, the unit spent a quiet night. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; (H.S.)244C5.013(D4); The Lanark & Renfrew Scottish Regiment Report on Operations 26 Nov 44 - 22 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 12-13 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 13 Dec; W.D., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 13 Dec 44; W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 13 Dec 44)

* War Service Records (D.V.A.) give the same total, showing 21 killed or died of wounds, 21 wounded and 46 prisoners ((H.S.)133.065 (D345): Casualties - Italian Campaign)

** Lan & Ren Scot R. casualties during the three days, 12-14 Dec were 38 killed and 73 wounded (Casualties - Italian Campaign op cit)

187. On 13 Dec Ir R.C., strengthened by a company of C.B. Highrs, made a fresh effort to secure the area forward of the Vecchio between Lan & Ren Scot R. and the 1 Cdn Inf Div bridgehead. During the morning the Irish seized Generale (415407), a group of buildings lying midway between the Vecchio and Naviglio and about 1,500 yards north of the 1 Cdn Inf Div crossing. These they held despite repeated enemy attempts to drive them out. On the right C.B. Highrs in the face of stiff opposition reached Casa Salvadori (417416), a building on the Naviglio about 1000 yards south of Lan & Ren Scot R. There, under constant pressure, they remained until last light, when they withdrew leaving behind a standing patrol. Although subsequently surrounded by the enemy this patrol held out until its relief 24 hours later by its own unit. (W.D., Ir R.C., 13 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 13 Dec 44)

188. By midnight on 13 Dec the 1 Cdn Inf Div bridgehead over the Naviglio, after facing near extinction during the hard fighting of that day, was firmly established (para 161). Use was now to be made of this break in the enemy's Naviglio defences to weaken the grip of his forces still holding the line of the canal opposite Lan & Ren Scot R. The plan was for Westmr R. to advance north through 1 Cdn Inf Div and roll back the enemy right flank. When this advance neared Lan & Ren Scot R. the latter unit would attack over the canal, and linking up with Westmr R. form a firm bridgehead. On the same day, 14 Dec, 11 Cdn Inf Bde, using Ir R.C. and C.B. Highrs for the purpose, would mop-up the enemy remaining east of the Naviglio on the left flank of 12 Cdn Inf Bde (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 14 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 14 Dec 44)

189. During the morning of 14 Dec Westmr R. moved south into the 1 Cdn Inf Div bridgehead. By 1245 hours the 12 Cdn Inf Bde unit, advancing north along the road which follows the west bank of the canal to Route 16, was nearly 1000 yards beyond the bridge. For a time they were without their supporting armour, Ld S.H. being still east of the canal, held up by one of its tanks, which, knocked out by a direct hit with a heavy calibre shell, was blocking the road. Once this obstacle was cleared, however, the tanks quickly joined the infantry, and the combined force continued the advance clearing the enemy from houses along the axial road and taking a number of prisoners in the process. At 1430 hours light elements heading the column halted under fire from enemy holding the junction of the Via Pozzarda and the Naviglio road (413413). Preceded by a medium artillery concentration Westminsters attacked and cleared this junction by 1700 hours. By 2130 hours Westmr R. sub-units had secured the junction of the Via Chiara and Naviglio road, and were nearing the Via Chiara bridge over the Munio. In addition they had established a covering position on the Via Pozzarda about 400 yards west of the canal. Already sufficient progress had been made to permit 12 Cdn Inf Bde to launch its attack, and within a short time Lan & Ren Scot R. began crossing the Naviglio. Casualties suffered by Westmr R. in this action were light, while the enemy, apart from his

killed and wounded, lost 106 as prisoners of war.* (W.D., Westmr R., 14 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 14 Dec 44). This was a most successful operation and the unit was highly commended by both its Brigade and Divisional Commanders:

Brig J.S.H. Lind phoned to commend the Westminsters for the good job done on the previous day. The advance had relieved the pressure on the L & Rs who were on the east bank of the NAVIGLIO. Maj-Gen B.M. Hoffmeister told the CO that the whole army plan had been aided by this success.

(W.D., Westmr R., 15 Dec 44)

190. Meanwhile Ir R.C. and C.B. Highrs had finally secured the east bank of the Naviglio on 11 Cdn Inf Bde front. Between 1335 hours and 1640 hours (14 Dec) Ir R.C. driving north between the Vecchio and the Naviglio had cleared the sector as far as Casa Liverani (414411) a house on the canal 2000 yards downstream from the 1 Cdn Inf Div bridge. Once the Irish had consolidated at Casa Liverani, C.B. Highrs, accompanied by tanks, passed through them and continued the advance. At 1900 hours the Highlanders reached Casa Salvadori where in one of the houses they discovered a corporal and nine men of the unit who, although surrounded by the enemy and under heavy fire, had held the place since the previous night (see para 187). This brought to an end the enemy resistance east of the Naviglio in this sector. In the course of the day's operations the 11 Cdn Inf Bde units killed a number of the enemy and took 35 prisoners. On the following day both battalions came out of the line for a few days rest, Ir R.C. going to Mezzano, C.B. Highrs joining Perth R. in the Borgo di Villanova area. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 14-15 Dec 44; W.D. Ir R.C., 14-15 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 14 Dec 44)

191. During the morning and early afternoon the D.A.F. heavily bombed and strafed enemy positions along both banks of the Naviglio on 5 Cdn Armd Div front. This no doubt partially accounted for the lightness of the opposition encountered by Westmr R. and the 11 Cdn Inf Bde units. Ir R.C. expressed their appreciation of the air support in the following message to Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde:

Air attack quite successful and very helpful. Next time will be more than glad to play.

(11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 14 Dec 44)

* Taken from war diary of Westmr R. The 5 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summaries show that between 1900 hours 13 Dec and 1800 hours 15 Dec 133 enemy passed through the divisional PW cage ((H.S.) 24905.(D49); 5 Cdn Armd Div Int Summaries Nos. 86-7, 15-16 Dec 44). Since the divisional figure included those taken by C.B. Highrs and Ir R.C. on the 14th and at least some of those captured on the 15th, the Westmr R. figure is probably too high.

192. As a result of these operations the situation of Lan & Ren Scot R., after an uncomfortable night (13/14 Dec) spent within grenade-throwing distance of enemy troops dug in on the reverse slope of the canal bank, eased somewhat during the following day. Harassing fire from the tanks, a considerable artillery programme, combined with the extensive air effort, greatly restricted the activity of the enemy in this sector. In addition he had now to look to the south-west where the operations of Westmr R. were gradually uncovering his right flank. The Lanarks took advantage of their improved position to replenish their supplies, and that night received a number of reinforcements which brought the depleted companies nearer to full strength. At 2000 hours the Westminsters reached the Naviglio end of the Via Chiara, and at 2005 hours Headquarters 12 Cdn Inf Bde sent out a warning order to Lan & Ren Scot R. The current plan called for the battalion to cross the Naviglio at Osteria and establish a bridgehead extending forward to the ditch lying midway between that place and the Fosso Munio. Following this P.L.D.G. would pass through them, and exploit forward to and, if possible, cross the Munio. On the heels of the Lanarks assault, the Divisional Engineers would move up and commence the construction of a crossing over the canal at Osteria. To assure the early presence of armour in the bridgehead, an additional squadron of Ld S.H. moved into harbour in rear of the Westminsters shortly after last light (14 Dec). (W.Ds., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, Lan & Ren Scot R., 2 Cdn Armd Regt (Ld S.H.), P.L.D.G., 14 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 14 Dec 44)

193. At 2145 hours on 14 Dec Lan & Ren Scot R. began its final assault on the Naviglio line. Within ten minutes of the start of the attack the left forward company reached the lateral road on the far side of the canal. In the centre, and on the right, the attacking troops, meeting with stiffer resistance did not reach the opposite bank until 2220 hours. At this time the battalion was holding a shallow lodgment 500 yards in width, centred on Osteria, and extending only slightly forward of the lateral road. To thicken up the bridgehead, battalion headquarters, at 0245 hours, ordered the reserve company to move over the canal. All the while the S.P's., machine guns and mortars of the enemy pounded the Lanark positions. To the north and north-east, small parties of the enemy remained in close contact until shortly before first light, and in the early hours of the morning enemy troops attempted to infiltrate into the centre of the bridgehead but withdrew after an exchange of fire. By 0830 hours Lanarks had extended their bridgehead to the line of the ditch and consolidated. At 1000 hours a Ld S.H. squadron, after a successful dash up the Naviglio from Westmr R. area, linked up with the 12 Cdn Inf Bde unit. In the course of this drive the armoured troops flushed several enemy posts, killing a number of Germans manning them, and taking 13 prisoners. Shortly after, the Engineers, who had been unable to operate during most of the night due to enemy small arms and mortar fire, completed an assault crossing over the Naviglio at Osteria. By this time the second phase of the operation, the exploitation of the bridgehead by P.L.D.G. to the line of the Fosso Munio had commenced. (W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 14-15 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 14-15 Dec 44; (H.S.) 24405.013(D4); 2 Cdn Armd Regt (Ld S.H.) Account of Operations, 27 Nov 44 - 16 Jan 45)

194. By 0930 hours P.L.D.G. had crossed the Naviglio and was advancing through Lan & Ren Scot R. towards its objectives on the Munio. Although enemy fire coming from east of the bridgehead restricted movement on the right flank for a time, the battalion reached the ditch on the perimeter of the bridgehead shortly after 1000 hours. Within the next 30 minutes leading elements on the right reached the near bank of the river. On the left, however, the P.L.D.G. company had gone to ground under heavy enemy fire when 100 yards from its final objective. Not until 1445 hours did the situation improve sufficiently for this company to resume its advance. By 1520 hours, however, P.L.D.G. had a firm grip on the east bank of the Munio from exclusive the Via Chiara bridge to opposite the southern end of Via San Antonio (415426 to 419435). The unit then had two companies forward and two in reserve to the right and left rear. On the left the battalion was in contact with the Westminsters. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., P.L.D.G., 15 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 15 Dec 44)

195. Although the Westminsters reached the Munio bridge at first light that morning (15 Dec) due to small arms fire of the enemy on the opposite bank they were unable to directly observe the bridge, which lay below the level of the river bank. As a result it was not until 1320 hours that they were able to confirm its destruction. During the day the Westmr R. company on the Via Pozzarda continued to probe slowly forward and by last light was in the vicinity of a road and track junction (406414) nearly 1000 yards from the Naviglio. Earlier in the day, Headquarters 12 Cdn Inf Bde received a report from intelligence sources stating that the enemy was withdrawing from the Munio and that the fields between that river and the Senio were full of retreating Germans. At the time General Hoffmeister was visiting Brigadier Lind's Headquarters and he at once ordered a pursuit force, consisting of Ld S.H. and two companies of Perth R. mounted on carriers, to be formed. The continued determined resistance of the enemy on the Munio line, however, soon revealed this report to be without foundation and the force accordingly stood down. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 15 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 2 Cdn Armd Regt Account op cit)

196. During the morning (15 Dec) Maj-Gen Hoffmeister ordered G.G.H.G. to push north from Osteria along the Naviglio to its junction with the Fosso Munio. Shortly after midday the Horse Guards, after an uneventful move from east of the Naviglio, passed through the bridgehead:

...and advanced along the road, shooting up enemy houses until the advance was halted, two miles north east of the bridgehead, by an 88 S.P., which was firing from north of the Munio and knocked out the Sherman commanded by Cpl Chalmers. The S.P. was engaged and destroyed by the artillery and the advance was resumed along the narrowing pocket. The canal junction was reached with great speed, but the bridge was blown and further progress was therefore impossible. The whole operation was very successful, having caught the enemy by surprise, and as our tanks advanced, with their guns blazing, they could observe the Germans taking to their heels in all directions. They rounded up eleven prisoners and killed at least thirty.

(G.G.H.G. History, Chapter VIII)

Since the squadron was now some distance from its base, with no room to manoeuvre, the commanding officer of G.G.H.G., at 1530 hours, ordered it to withdraw to the junction of the Naviglio road and the Viazza Nuova (4344). There, by last light the squadron, supported by a company of Lan & Ren Scot R., established a firm defensive position covering the divisional right flank against possible enemy counter-attacks from the north-east. The only activity on the brigade front during the evening, apart from sporadic artillery and mortar fire, and occasional exchanges of small arms fire, was opposite P.L.D.G. There an attempted enemy counter-attack over the Munio was quickly broken up by defensive artillery and 3" mortar fire. (W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 15 Dec 44; W.D., P.L.D.G., 15 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 15 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

197. Meanwhile 5 Cdn Armd Bde continued to hold the extensive but fortunately quiet sector between the Viazza Nuova and the coast. On the 15th, 9 Brit Armd Bde took over that portion of the brigade front lying east of Route 16. At the same time three units ceased to be under command 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 2721 Sqn R.A.F. Regt and 27 L. going to 9 Brit Armd Bde, and G.G.H.G., less one squadron, to Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div. On the Lamone (4846), north of Mezzano a unit of 9 Brit Armd Bde relieved one squadron of 8 N.B.H., while the squadron of G.G.H.G. still under 5 Cdn Armd Bde command took over the Hussars positions on Route 16, and the latter unit then withdrew to Mezzano. On the following day the G.G.H.G. squadron reverted to under command its parent headquarters, and H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde thereupon passed into reserve. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 15-16 Dec 44)

THE SWITCH LINE, 12-18 DEC 44

198. Although north of Bagnacavallo the enemy more or less voluntarily withdrew to the line of the Naviglio, no such withdrawal developed to the south of that town. Instead he established a switch line extending from the eastern suburbs of Bagnacavallo south to the inter-corps boundary on the Lamone. During the same period 98 Inf Div came in to replace the weakened 356 Inf Div from inclusive Bagnacavallo to the Lamone. Thus although 5 Cdn Armd Div, and the right wing of 1 Cdn Inf Div, successfully established bridgeheads over the Canale Naviglio, the efforts of 3 Cdn Inf Bde, and later 1 Cdn Inf Bde, during the same period to break through the enemy defences south of Bagnacavallo met with little success. ((H.S.)234C1.013(D5): Summary of Ops by Div Hist Offr, 1-15 Dec 44; W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 63, Intelligence Summary No.180)

199. While 1 Cdn Inf Bde carried the main attack over the Naviglio, 3 Cdn Inf Bde maintained steady pressure on the enemy still east of the canal in front of Bagnacavallo and along the "Switch Line" between that town and the Lamone. By the morning of the 12th the brigade was disposed with R. 22e R. along the Vecchio from the Via Albergoni to the road bridge 300 yards south-west of the railway, West N.S.R. from left of R. 22e R. to road junction on Via Boncellino 1200 yards south-west of the railway; 48 Highrs along the same road between West N.S.R. and the Lamone River. Enemy mortar and shell fire was heavy throughout the day, particularly in R. 22e R. sector, where he was directing his fire from the towers of Bagnacavallo. (W.D., R.C.D., December 1944: Appx Map 8b, W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Dec 44;

(H.S.) 234C1.013(D10): 3 Cdn Inf Bde Operations in Italy, 2 Dec 44 to 6 Jan 45, Part II; West N.S.R. Report on Operations in Italy 1944-1945, Part II)

200. During the afternoon of 12 Dec R. 22e R. elements effected a crossing of the Vecchio and advanced about halfway towards the next unit objective, a brickworks (399378) on the Via Albergoni about 800 yards west of the stream. There the advance was halted for the night, for the brickworks was found to be strongly held by the enemy. At 2300 hours a second R. 22e R. company crossed the Vecchio, and meeting with only light resistance, reached a position at a track junction (402381) 400 yards north of the brickworks three hours later. (W.D., R. 22e R., 12-13 Dec 44)

201. Meanwhile West N.S.R. had made an unsuccessful attempt to establish itself west of the Vecchio in its area. During the night (12/13 Dec) the unit relieved the left flank company of R. 22e R. at Casa Peli (398368) opposite the demolished road bridge on the left of the railway. Only light opposition, mainly S.A. fire from the far bank, opposed them in this position. At midnight "West Novas" prepared to cross the Vecchio but found the canal 20 ft wide and too deep to ford.* As they had no bridging material on hand with which to bridge the gap the West N.S.R. company withdrew and moved to the right to explore the possibility of crossing near the railway bridge (399370). There one platoon managed to cross on the rubble of the bridge. Despite heavy enemy fire it pushed south along the far bank towards the enemy-held houses opposite Casa Peli. As the "West Novas" neared the houses, however, they came under fire from enemy tanks concealed in the area, and only by swimming the canal were they able to effect their escape. (W.D., West N.S.R., 12 - 13 Dec 44; Raddal op cit, pp 255-6; (H.S.) 234C1.013(D10): West N.S.R. Report on Operations in Italy, 1944-1945)

202. Although it continued to maintain pressure on the enemy south-east of Bagnacavallo, 3 Cdn Inf Bde made no further gains until late on 14 Dec. During the night 13/14 Dec R. 22e R. attempted to capture the brickworks on the Via Albergoni but met with no success. About the same time West N.S.R. attacked, for a second time, the enemy positions on the west bank of the Vecchio opposite Casa Peli. Again, however, the presence of enemy armour in the area proved decisive, and the Nova Scotians were driven back over the Vecchio. Although by 14 Dec the situation in the Naviglio bridgehead had greatly improved, it continued to be most important for 3 Cdn Inf Bde to close up as near as possible to the canal on the 2 Cdn Inf Bde left flank. Accordingly, during the day, 3 Cdn Inf Bde laid plans for an attack by R. 22e R. to capture the brickworks and exploit to the canal. Tanks from 12 R.T.R. would now be available to support R. 22e R., for, during the previous night the engineers had constructed a 90 ft D.S. Bailey over the Vecchio at the Via Albergoni crossing. The artillery programme called for the medium artillery to

* West N.S.R. diarist states:

This came as somewhat of a surprise as no bridging arrangements had been made due to the fact that information received stated that it would not prove a serious obstacle.

(W.D., West N.S.R., 13 Dec 44)

block the roads leading to the brickworks, while the field artillery brought heavy concentrations down on the objective. One hour before the attack the armour crossed the Vecchio under cover of a smoke screen laid by the artillery and the noise of low-flying aircraft strafing the town approaches. Just before "H" hour the tanks saturated the objectives with Besa and 95 mm fire, and at 1530 hours the attack went in. By 1700 hours R. 22e R. had cleared the brickworks, captured 30 prisoners and a quantity of arms and equipment, and exploited south-west about halfway to the bend in the railway. At the same time an R. 22e R. sub-unit at a track junction to the north of the brickworks moved several hundred yards forward along the track towards the Naviglio, capturing several more prisoners. (W.D., R. 22e R., 13-15 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 13-14 Dec 44; 12 R.T.R. Account op cit; (H.S.) 234Cl.013(D10); Royal 22e Regiment Report on Operations, 31 Nov 44 - 10 Jan 45)

203. The enemy quickly reacted to the R. 22e R. attack and early in the evening began moving tanks and S.P. guns down the road from Bagnacavallo. At 2100 hours, while his armour contained R. 22e R. elements to the south of the brickworks with fire, his infantry made a strong but unsuccessful attempt to drive in the battalion right flanking company. An hour later the enemy infantry came in a second time on this sub-unit but again failed to dislodge it. For several hours longer, however, there was fighting in this area, and a company of West N.S.R. was put in readiness to move forward in the event of a breakthrough. But from midnight onwards the situation of R. 22e R. improved steadily. The Pioneer platoon mined the junction on Via Albergoni west of the brickworks, while the tanks moved into position for more effective support of the infantry. Anti-tank guns and M.M.G.'s. were also brought forward and by daylight the battalion was in a position to repulse any further counter-attacks that might develop. (Ibid)

204. On 14 Dec General Foster issued orders designed to bring 1 Cdn Inf Bde into the line to the south of Bagnacavallo. 1 Cdn Inf Bde was to take over the centre and left battalion sectors of 3 Cdn Inf Bde but the latter formation would retain control of the area east of Bagnacavallo between the railway and the Naviglio bridgehead. R.C.R. was to relieve West N.S.R. upon which the last-named unit would take up new positions in the area, previously held by R.C.R., on the right of R. 22e R. 48 Highrs was to revert to under command its parent brigade but continue in its present positions. Carlt & York R., then resting at Traversara (4338), would return to under command 3 Cdn Inf Bde. Thus disposed the division would be in a position should the opportunity occur to exploit either right or left of Bagnacavallo. Re-grouping took place that night (14/15 Dec). At 1200 hours the following day R.C.D. came under command 1 Cdn Inf Bde, and on the 16th handed over one of its two remaining squadron sectors on the east bank of the Lamone to a squadron of 145 Regt R.A.C. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 15 Dec 44; Summary of Ops by 1 Cdn Inf Div Hist Offr, 1 to 15 Dec 44, p. 4; (H.S.) 234Cl.013(D10); 1 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops; 3 Cdn Inf Bde Report Part III)

205. There was little activity on either R. 22e R. or West N.S.R. front on 15 Dec. Proof of this is provided by an incident which occurred in the R. 22e R. area around midday, when one of the unit lorries drove through the F.D.Ls.

on the Via Albergoni and into the enemy's lines, where the driver was at once taken prisoner. Fortunately the vehicle was destroyed by our anti-tank guns before the enemy had time to seize it. Both battalions patrolled forward during the day and found the enemy alert and holding their positions in strength. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Dec 44; W.D., R. 22e R., 15 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 15 Dec 44)

206. The intentions of 3 Cdn Inf Bde for the night 15/16 Dec were for R. 22e R. to establish a platoon post near the bend in the railway (which was the inter-bde boundary between 1 and 3 Bdes) and send a standing patrol to the road junction (395380) west of the brickworks.* At the same time West N.S.R. was to place a platoon (at 394385) on the Naviglio opposite P.P.C.L.I., and send its left flanking company as far forward as possible. In the event, however, the strength of the enemy on its front prevented West N.S.R. from making any gains at all, while the efforts of R. 22e R. came to a similar but more costly end. For the enemy allowed R. 22e R. platoon to reach its objective on the railway and then opened on it with S.A. and S.P. fire at close range from the embankment. Severe casualties were inflicted on the platoon which was forced to retire. Daylight, therefore, found the positions of both battalions unchanged. (Ibid)

207. Meanwhile 1 Cdn Inf Bde, which had taken over the "Switch Line" from the railway to the Lamone, continued to probe the enemy positions in preparation for a proposed advance to the Naviglio on that flank of the Division. Should 1 Cdn Inf Bde succeed in reaching the Naviglio, the Divisional Commander, in addition to the advantage of being closer to the Senio, would also have the choice of attacking simultaneously on both flanks or of making a single thrust on either flank. Moreover an advance by 1 Cdn Inf Bde to the Naviglio might force the enemy to evacuate Bagnacavallo, where the buildings would provide observation posts for our artillery, just as they were at present providing those facilities for the enemy.

208. Activity on 1 Cdn Inf Bde front on 15 Dec was limited to patrols and artillery fire on enemy positions. Both R.C.R. and 48 Highrs were ordered to begin vigorous patrolling during the night 15/16 Dec and to take advantage of any weakness in the enemy defences by moving forward where possible. Very limited gains were made, however, as the enemy apparently were determined to hold the so called "Switch Line". On the 16th 1 Cdn Inf Div main effort shifted to 1 Cdn Inf Bde front, as that Brigade opened a full scale "nibbling" attack with the object of advancing toward the Vecchio as carefully as possible so as not to alarm the enemy who had not as yet destroyed the Vecchio bridges (at 386358 and 383347) to the west of Via Boncellino. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 15, 16 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Inf Div Report on Operations 28 Nov 44 to 6 Jan 45, p. 5)(See Map 3)

* During the same night (15/16 Dec) H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde passed two partisans through the enemy lines to gather information. They returned through 1 Cdn Inf Bde the following night and reported that (a) there were 300 enemy troops in Bagnacavallo (b) these had little or no transport (c) all road junctions were mined (d) a number of light guns were continually moving near the town (e) the bulk of the enemy artillery had already withdrawn behind the R. Senio. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 16-17 Dec 44)

209. The 1 Cdn Inf Bde objective was the line of the Naviglio south of Bagnacavallo, and Brigadier Smith at this time had a strong force with which to begin the attack. Although R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. had suffered heavy losses in the fighting at the Lamone and Naviglio, the latter regiment had received a goodly number of reinforcements while at its rest area in Traversara. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 15-16 Dec 44). The third unit of the brigade, 48 Highrs, although it had been in close contact with the enemy from the night of the 10th on, had had little hard fighting. With a substantial number of tanks, 12 R.T.R. (less one squadron with 3 Cdn Inf Bde) and two squadrons of R.C.D., to support his attack, Brigadier Smith had good reason to be hopeful of success. As part of a Corps plan, the Divisional Commander intended, if the 1 Cdn Inf Bde attack was successful, to pass 2 Cdn Inf Bde through the former brigade and push on towards the Senio, linking up with 5 Cdn Armd Div west of Bagnacavallo. In preparation for this eventuality, he ordered 3 Cdn Inf Bde to take over the bridgehead north of Bagnacavallo on the night 16-17 Dec. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 15, 16 Dec 44; W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D), 15 Dec 44). At this time the attack by 5 (Brit) Corps on the Faenza front was threatening the Senio crossing on Route 9. 43 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade had cleared Faenza and, south of Route 9, both 10 Ind Div and 2 N.Z. Div were up to the Senio. From the outskirts of Faenza north to the inter-corps boundary the enemy still held the line of the Lamone. British and Canadian pressure on both flanks of the enemy salient would, it was hoped, bring about its abandonment. (Eighth Army, etc. pp 91-2).

210. On the morning of 16 Dec R.C.R. and 48 Highrs commenced their attacks. Although R.C.R. at this time had its right forward coy just short of the Vecchio at Casa Peli, where it had relieved West N.S.R., the Bde F.D.L's from this point extended south at an increasing angle with this water obstacle to where they reached the Lamone in 48 Highrs sector at Boncellino. Therefore, as a preliminary, the greater part of the brigade front would have to advance approximately 1500 yards to reach the Vecchio. (W.D., R.C.R., 14-16 Dec 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 12-16 Dec 44). No set piece attack for either battalion was arranged. They were ordered to advance toward the Vecchio bridges from which positions, if they were successful, a full scale assault would be made to the Naviglio. During the day the artillery kept both bridges under bombardment in the hope of preventing their destruction by the enemy. Preparations were made by R.C.E., however, to bridge the Vecchio if it should prove necessary. As the action progressed, the determined stand of the enemy proved how groundless were the hopes entertained of encountering only lightly-held defences or of inducing the Germans to withdraw. For the latter, as the patrols had indicated, held strong positions covering the vital points all across the front. Moreover they were well supported by tanks and S.P. guns, as well as by accurate artillery and mortar fire. Added to this the enemy had blown tank traps on both the roads leading forward to the bridges. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Dec 44; 1 Canadian Infantry Brigade Reports on Ops December 1944: pp 15 and 16)

211. At first light on 16 Dec R.C.R. opened its attack with an assault supported by an S.P. gun against an enemy position (at 395362), on a track leading to the Vecchio about 700 yards south of Casa Peli, which it cleared, taking eight prisoners. There the battalion was within 200 yards of the Vecchio at a point 1000 yards downstream from the nearer of the two bridges. This marked the limit of R.C.R. advance for the day, however, all further attempts to get forward proving fruitless. On R.C.R. left, 48 Highrs launched its attack on a two-company front with one company on each of the two roads leading directly to the Vecchio bridges, from the junction on Via Boncellino and from near the hamlet of Boncellino respectively. On these routes a surprise advance might well have placed the bridges in the hands of the Canadians before the German had an opportunity to effect their destruction. The latter reacted very quickly, however, and counter-attacked the right-hand company (at 397357) with infantry supported by two tanks only a few hundred yards from its starting place. Fortunately for the Highlanders a Churchill arrived and kept the enemy armour at a distance, later putting one out of action. Enemy S.P.'s also appeared in the area, and battered the house occupied by the Canadian Company Commander, while heavy artillery and mortar fire prevented our infantry from continuing the advance. Meanwhile the left sub-unit, after great difficulty in getting its supporting armour around a crater in the road, had suffered a like repulse shortly after it commenced advancing on the southern unit axis, and as a result had withdrawn slightly to reorganize. At 1600 hours this company again moved forward supported by two tanks against stiff resistance. At 1800 hours the tanks, accompanied by only six infantrymen, reached some buildings about 800 yards from Boncellino (at 394345). This concluded the day's action, of which the chief gain was 42 enemy captured, including three officers. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Dec 44; W.D., R.C.R., 16 Dec 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 16 Dec 44)

212. That night (16/17 Dec) 48 Highrs, preceded by patrols to feel out the enemy, resumed its advance. Both the leading companies made substantial gains before contacting the enemy; the right moving to within 400 yards, and the left to within 1000 yards, of the Vecchio. On the right, by first light, the Highlanders were within a few hundred yards of the Vecchio, and the Brigade Commander ordered them to make a strong attempt to cross and form a bridgehead. Strengthened by the Scouts and Snipers platoon, and with two tanks and two S.P.'s in support, the right-hand Company attacked at 1600 hours. But in half an hour, during which time it reached the Vecchio and attempted to pass the "Scouts" over, it had given up the attempt. The whole company area was under almost continuous shell and mortar fire, and the road leading to the canal so heavily mined that it was impossible for the tanks and S.P.'s to get forward. On several occasions during the afternoon and early evening the enemy counter-attacked on 48 Highrs left flank, but the latter supported by fire from the supporting artillery and M.M.G.'s held its ground. Meanwhile Hast & P.E.R. had moved into position in rear of 48 Highrs right flank in readiness to launch an attack through the latter unit should it succeed in crossing the Vecchio. (W.D., 48 Highrs, 16-17 Dec 44; W.D., R.C.R., 16-17 Dec 44; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 17 Dec 44)

213. Meanwhile, on the night 16/17 Dec, 2 Cdn Inf Bde and 3 Cdn Inf Bde had exchanged sectors. Since five of the six battalions concerned were in close contact with the enemy, great care had to be taken so as not to reveal that the division was regrouping. The reliefs commenced at 1900 hours, when Carlt & York R. moved into the P.P.C.L.I. positions. The latter battalion then relieved R. 22e R., which in turn relieved L. Edmn R., the latter moving into reserve (area 4338). At the same time West N.S.R. and Seaforth of C. exchanged areas, and shortly after midnight the two brigades assumed command of their new sectors. There was no change, however, in the dispositions of the support weapons. The move was designed to make 2 Cdn Inf Bde, which would now have one battalion in rest and two less actively engaged, available to pass through 1 Cdn Inf Bde, if expedient, or to take part in any fresh thrust on the right flank of the Division. (3 Canadian Infantry Brigade Operations in Italy, 2 Dec 44 - 6 Jan 45, Part III, pp 5 and 6; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 and 17 Dec 44)

214. Late in the afternoon of the 17th, when it was realized that 48 Highrs could not establish its bridgehead unassisted, the G.O.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div ordered 1 Cdn Inf Bde to prepare a set piece attack, using R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. A heavy artillery plan was prepared, and "H" hour set for 0400 hours 18 Dec. On the right, R.C.R. was to assault over the Vecchio on its front, and continue, if the initial attack met with success, to the Naviglio. Hast & P.E.R. was to pass through 48 Highrs right forward sub-unit, cross the Vecchio, secure the crossroads (384359) 200 yards beyond the bridge, and, using its two reserve companies, exploit to the Naviglio. Tank support for the attack was to be provided by 12 R.T.R. R.C.D. would continue to operate in a covering role on the brigade left flank. During the night 17/18 Dec the enemy was very active both in the area of the bridge opposite 48 Highrs and along R.C.R. front. Later in the night R.C.R. patrols to the Vecchio located a knee deep fording place. (1 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Operations; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Dec 44)

215. The attack went in as planned at 0400 hours 18 Dec and for a time appeared to be succeeding well, particularly in the R.C.R. area. The right assault coy ("A") of R.C.R. crossed on the rubble of the bridge opposite Casa Peli and quickly rounded up over 30 prisoners including part of a battalion headquarters* (1 Bn 289 GR). On the left, however, R.C.R. ran into enemy D.F. at its crossing point and became disorganized. Although the unit succeeded in passing a second company into its bridgehead at Casa Peli during the night, it was unable to get anti-tank guns forward to them. At daybreak the enemy counter-attacked with tanks, and by 0900 hours all R.C.R. companies were back in their original positions east of the Vecchio with only their prisoners and a score of one enemy tracked vehicle destroyed to show as gain. (W.D., R.C.R., 18 Dec 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 82, 1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 184)

* The reason for a bn HQ remaining in such an exposed position is revealed by a Regimental Order "Die For The Führer" dated 14 Dec 44 (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 82, 1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 184).

216. Meanwhile on the left flank of the Bde, Hast & P.E.R. and 48 Highrs had met with a like repulse. Here again intense enemy D.F. on the forming up place disorganized one company of Hast & P.E.R., and it reached its crossing place with only 18 men. The remaining assault company also got into difficulties (the Coy Comd described it as low morale), and failed to get forward. In the intervening period elements of 48 Highrs reached the north bridge and at 0715 hours reported it in their hands and intact. Brigade Headquarters at once ordered Hast & P.E.R. and the tanks to go to the assistance of the Highlanders with all possible speed. Unfortunately the two leading tanks got into difficulties on the narrow rain-soaked road and completely blocked the way forward. Elements of both infantry units succeeded in crossing the bridge but, in the face of a strong enemy infantry and tank counter-attack, withdrew shortly to the near side of the stream. There, as the enemy tanks made no attempt to cross the bridge in pursuit, they were able to consolidate. By 0900 hours the situation was stabilized with both sides continuing the fight from opposite sides of the canal. Shortly after the enemy demolished the bridge and no further attempt was made to continue the advance. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 19 Dec 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 18 Dec 44)

217. Thus early on the 18th the full scale attack by 1 Cdn Inf Bde had come to an end with the Vecchio and Naviglio still firmly held by the enemy. In less than six hours the latter had demonstrated in a convincing manner his determination to hold on this flank. That morning General Foulkes in conference with his divisional commanders laid plans for a co-ordinated thrust by 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div at the junction of the inter-divisional boundary. There on the 19th both divisions applied their weight in a hard hitting attack which eventually carried them through the stubbornly-held enemy defences to the Senio. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Dec 44)

OPERATIONS OF 5 CORPS, 14 - 17 DEC 44

218. As the advance of the Canadian Corps came to a halt on the general line of the Canale Naviglio, the British 5 Corps and Polish 2 Corps commenced a fresh attack south of Route 9. On 5 Corps front the main task, assigned to 2 N.Z. Div and 10 Ind Div, was to clear the Pergola - Pideura ridge and the slopes between that ridge and Route 9. Although Faenza was expected to fall easily once the chief objectives were gained, a special task force was formed out of 43 Ind Lorried Inf Bde to clear the town. As final objectives 5 Corps intended to gain bridgeheads over the Senio. On the British Corps' left flank the Poles were to cross the River Sintria and close up to the Senio. Supported by the fire of more than 400 guns, the New Zealanders and Indians launched their attack on the night 14/15 Dec. In the early stages of the advance, 10 Ind Div, on the left flank, encountered minefields covering Pergola and daylight on 15 Dec found it pinned to the ground by heavy defensive fire. The New Zealand division was then in the area of Celle (2724) where for some time it was involved in bitter close-quarters fighting. All the while the enemy heavily and repeatedly counter-attacked the flanks of the advance. The struggle went on throughout the day, and by the end of it the 90 Pz Gr Div, now alone since the withdrawal of 305 Div following the disastrous affair of 9 Dec, had lost 200 killed and 300

prisoners to the New Zealanders. On the enemy right 715 Division had suffered similarly heavy losses in opposing the Polish Corps. At this point 2 N.Z. Div was in firm possession of Celle and the surrounding area, while 10 Ind Div, although it had failed to capture Pergola, had pushed forward, on the left, north-west of Pideura and seized the next ridge beyond. Thus the enemy, by-passed and seriously weakened by his losses, could no longer hope to defend his position and accordingly withdrew that night (15/16 Dec). (Eighth Army etc, pp 91-2)

219. On the following day, 16 Dec, the Indian Division secured Pergola, and the New Zealanders closed up to the line of the Senio. Throughout the day the Poles on the left continued to experience hard fighting west of the Sinitria as they drew level with 5 Corps. North of Route 9, the enemy still remained firm on the Lamone, with a switch-line running past the north-eastern outskirts of Faenza along the Scolo Cerchia canal and thence along the Rimini-Bologna railway to the point where it crosses the Senio. 43 Ind Lorried Inf Bde had entered and cleared Faenza on 16 Dec, but when on the 17th it attempted to seize a crossing over the Scolo Cerchia it met with a strong enemy counter-attack that threw it back to the south bank. To the south on the 17th 10 Ind Div managed to establish two small bridgeheads over the Senio on either side of Tebano (2324). No attempt was made to exploit these, however, for 5 Corps was obliged, for administrative reasons, to halt its offensive at this point. (Ibid, p. 92)

ARMY GROUP AND ARMY INTENTIONS

220. Once again, Eighth Army was temporarily halted before another of the numerous water obstacles of the Romagna. Although 13 Corps on the right flank of Fifth Army, whose operations were intended to facilitate the crossing of this obstacle, the Senio, was stalemated in front of the Vena del Gesso feature, the prospects of launching a successful combined drive by both armies seemed promising.* For finally the long continued pressure on the enemy's Adriatic flank was beginning to show results. As previously noted (para 131) on the 9th he brought 90 Pz Gr Div from reserve and threw it into the battle against 5 Corps with great haste. Again, shortly after the successful Canadian attack over the Lamone, the enemy had had to take 98 Inf Div from the Fifth Army front, and rush it across to bolster the crumbling 356 Inf Div. By the 19th 29 Pz Gr Div had arrived on the Eighth

* While 5 Corps was advancing towards the Senio, 13 Corps had undertaken a limited operation astride the Santerno directed toward Route 9 at Imola. Initially the Corps had some success, but by 15 Dec had come to a halt after attacks on the village of Tossignano (0823) and against Monte Maggiore (0525) had failed. East of Tossignano the Corps was up against the Vena del Gesso, a large and steep escarpment. This position the Corps Commander felt could only be overcome by the Polish Corps attacking on his right, and turning the enemy defences. This suggestion was not acceptable to Eighth Army, however, as it required the Polish attack to precede that of 13 Corps whereas the Army plan called for simultaneous attacks by the two corps. In the event these operations did not take place until the following spring. (Eighth Army etc, p. 92). (See Map Florence - Rimini - Bologna Sector)

Army front where it replaced 26 Pz Div on Route 9. Thus the battles of the first 18 days of December had compelled the enemy to relieve two of the divisions opposing Eighth Army and bring in one additional division all at the expense of the front south of Bologna. (Ibid, pp 92-3)

221. In the meantime an important change had occurred at Headquarters 15 Army Group. On 12 Dec Field Marshal Alexander replaced Field Marshal Sir Henry Maitland Wilson as Supreme Allied Commander, Central Mediterranean. Lt-Gen Mark Clark, formerly commanding Fifth Army, replaced Field Marshal Alexander as Commander Allied Armies in Italy.

Headquarters Allied Armies in Italy, now became a strictly operational headquarters once more, the British administrative staff which had joined Army Group Headquarters early in 1944 shortly after its move to Caserta being removed to rejoin Allied Force Headquarters at Caserta. Beyond this change, an alteration in the designation of the Headquarters to "Headquarters 15 Army Group", and the fact that the Army Group staff was now reorganized on the American model with a British element...the change in command involved no fundamental change either in the organization of the Army Group as a whole or in strategy.

(Ibid, p. 93)

222. During a conference with his Army Commanders on 19 Dec, General Clark made plain his intention to proceed on the general lines of the existing plan:

The time is rapidly approaching when I shall give the signal for a combined all-out attack of Fifth and Eighth Armies. The primary mission of the attack is to bring to battle and destroy German forces in Italy and thereby prevent the withdrawal of major enemy elements to other theatres. It is evident that the mission can be accomplished only by an all-out offensive by both armies. The specific military objective of our coming battle is the city of Bologna.

The factors which fix the date on which my decision to launch the attack is made are three: favourable weather, the disposition of the enemy forces, and the location of the main forces of Eighth Army. Eighth Army...has drawn to it from the Fifth Army front and from reserve positions in the Bologna area sufficient enemy forces to permit Fifth Army reasonable chances of success in its attack.

It is my desire that Eighth Army clear up the area between the Lamone river and Senio river and be prepared to launch its attack across the Senio river at the time Fifth Army launches its attack.

(Ibid: Appx "I"-2)

Accordingly the Army Group Commander directed General McCreery to:

proceed with current operations with the object of launching an attack to force a crossing of the Senio river in conjunction with Fifth Army's attack.

(Ibid)

Lt-Gen Lucian K. Truscott Jr., now commanding Fifth Army, would be prepared to launch his attack on 48 hours notice after 22 Dec but immediately, using 13 Corps, would make subsidiary thrusts down the Santerno and Sillaro valleys, that is on either side of the Vena del Gesso, to assist the progress of Eighth Army. An all-important factor in the selection of the date for the combined offensive would be a reasonable likelihood of good flying weather. (Ibid, p. 92)

223. These orders involved no change of plan for Eighth Army since General McCreery had already completed his preparations to close up to the Senio. The Canadian Corps was to extend its Naviglio bridgehead to the Senio by a two division attack, and clear the ground on either flank subsequently. This was a straightforward problem, and rather less complicated than that confronting 5 Corps. For the enemy switch-line north of Route 9 was fairly extensive and divided into two distinct sectors by the Canale Naviglio and would require two divisions to clear it. Before both these formations could be deployed, however, it would be necessary to clear the outskirts of Faenza. The 5 Corps plan, therefore, was for the 2 N.Z. Div with 43 Ind Lor Inf Bde to carry out this first task, and then work north to the west of the Naviglio as fast as its limited resources would permit, for this division already had responsibility for a long front which included a portion of the Senio south of Faenza. Once the New Zealanders had made room for its deployment, 56 Inf Div would come in and clear the enemy from east of the canal. These operations opened on both Corps fronts on the night 19/20 Dec. (Ibid, pp 93-4)

OPERATIONS OF 5 CORPS NORTH OF FAENZA,
19 - 31 DEC 44

224. At the beginning the 5 Corps attack met with only scattered opposition for the enemy had apparently decided to give ground. An area extending two miles north of Faenza was quickly cleared and room provided for 56 Inf Div to deploy. On the second day that Division, which had crossed the Lamone east of Faenza, commenced its drive to the north-east. At that stage, however, the enemy began to contest bitterly each step of the advance, fighting for every ditch and house. In addition the weather deteriorated, and on 23 Dec snow fell in the plains. By the end of the month the division had cleared all the ground between the Naviglio and the Lamone south of the inter-corps boundary at Granarolo, except at Granarolo itself, and advanced its left wing across the Naviglio to relieve 2 N.Z. Div of part of its increasing frontage along the Senio. The northward advance of the latter formation had stopped just short of a strong enemy position covering the road bridge at Felisio (3031).^{*} Meanwhile on the left flank of 5 Corps, 2 Pol Corps had completed mopping-up to the Senio and on 22 Dec had

* See Map Florence - Rimini - Bologna Sector

extended its left boundary westwards to reduce the commitments of the tired and weak 13 Corps*. (Ibid, pp 93-4)

THE ADVANCE OF 1 CDN INF DIV TO THE SENIO RIVER,
19 to 21 Dec 44

225. The plan for the Canadian Corps attack was presented and orders issued at a Corps Commander's Orders Group held at H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div on the morning of 18 Dec. It called for a two brigade attack by 2 Cdn Inf Bde and 11 Cdn Inf Bde on the night 19/20 Dec. 11 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to attack across the Fosso Munio just north of the Via Chiara bridge, where Westmr R. was holding a small bridge-head. 2 Cdn Inf Bde at the same time would launch an attack through Westmr R. positions between the bend in the Munio and the right flank of 3 Cdn Inf Bde. When both brigades had achieved an advance of several hundred yards, 2 Cdn Inf Bde would turn south across 3 Cdn Inf Bde's front and endeavour to cut off Bagnacavallo, while 11 Cdn Inf Bde would continue west to the Senio. This new plan, now that 1 Cdn Inf Bde had failed to get forward on the left flank, was well received, and Brigadier Bogert and his battalion commanders were confident of its success. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Dec 44). For the purpose of the operation the Fosso Munio from just east of the Via Chiara to the Via Casalino (410424 - 388145), and the line of that road between the Munio and the Senio would constitute the inter-divisional boundary. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 79, Message G.O. 79) (see Map 3)

226. Brigadier Bogert intended to carry out his advance to the Senio in three stages. In Phase I, L. Edmn R., right, and P.P.C.L.I., left, would seize the crossings over the Fosso Munio on Via Casalino (at 388415) and Via Bigarano (at 387408). Then would follow Phase II, when Seaforth of C. would push through P.P.C.L.I., and secure the crossroads on Via Bigarano (380410) about 700 yards west of the Munio. In the final phase Seaforth of C. and P.P.C.L.I. would move south from their respective positions to cut the road (at 375393 and 382391) leading west from Bagnacavallo to the bridge over the Senio at S. Polito (3540). The artillery plan was for a series of concentrations on call, with the initial attack going in silence. Armoured support was to be supplied by two squadrons of B.C.D. To detract the enemy's attention from the main front, both 3 Cdn Inf Bde and 1 Cdn Inf Bde would stage fire demonstrations, while in the latter brigade's sector during the first stages of the attack a psychological warfare detachment would broadcast battle noises of tanks etc to simulate an impending assault. "H" Hour was set for 2000 hours, 19 Dec. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 18-19 Dec 44). During the night 18/19 Dec two squadrons of R.C.D. came forward and relieved Seaforth of C. and P.P.C.L.I. in their positions in front of Bagnacavallo. Both infantry battalions then moved to the rear for a brief rest in preparation for the coming attack. (Ibid)

* 13 Corps lost 8 Ind Div to under operational control 92 U.S. Inf Div when the German threat in the Serchio Valley began to develop (Fifth Army History, Part VIII: Annex No. 1-C).

227. The 19th was a quiet day across the 1 Cdn Inf Div front although very close contact was maintained with the enemy particularly in the right sector. At 2000 hours 3 Cdn Inf Bde Commander called an "O" Group and issued preliminary orders for the capture of Bagnacavallo by Carlt & York R. This attack would commence when 2 Cdn Inf Bde reached its final objective. R. 22e R., which would be by-passed by P.P.C.L.I. in the initial stage of the 2 Bde attack, would be available to assist if required. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Dec 44; W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.), 19 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Dec 44)

228. At nightfall L. Edmn R. and P.P.C.L.I. moved forward to their F.U.Ps. in rear of Westmr R., and at 2000 hours went into the attack. Almost at once they ran up against well placed enemy defences, and began a battle which lasted all that night and the next day. On their right the initial assault of 11 Cdn Inf Bde was repulsed and the attacking troops thrown back to the Munio. It was apparent that the enemy had woven a stout defence across the whole front of the Corps attack, and that until this system was penetrated or destroyed piecemeal there was little likelihood that he would retire behind the Senio.

229. On the brigade right L. Edmn R., advancing on a two company front, encountered their first opposition from two enemy-held houses, C. Tasselli (408420) right and C. Argelli (407417) left, lying on the lateral track between the Via Chiara and the Via Pozzarda. An artillery concentration on C. Tasselli, followed by an infantry assault, quickly brought about its capture and that of several prisoners. C. Argelli, however, proved to be more stoutly defended with four M.M.Gs. in position around it. As the Edmontons moved in on the latter place across the open fields they came under heavy mortar and artillery defensive fire including S.P. gunfire from the vicinity of C. Peli (400417), a group of buildings at a crossroads 600 yards due west of C. Argelli. The sub-unit concerned continued, nevertheless, to press its attack until 0330 hours (20 Dec) when, with its effective strength down to 25 men, it withdrew slightly and consolidated. In the meantime at 0100 hours Lt-Col J.R. Stone, the Commanding Officer L. Edmn R., directed a fresh company to by-pass C. Argelli on the right, and clear the crossroads at C. Peli. Again, however, because of the weight of the enemy fire, the Edmontons failed to make headway. In the interim an enemy counter-attack on C. Tasselli was driven off with the aid of the artillery and several more prisoners taken. By 0300 hours Lt-Col Stone had decided to make a fresh attempt to seize the C. Peli crossroads, this time with heavy artillery support. At 0600 hours after hard fighting the Edmontons company reached the crossroads. By 0700 hours it had secured the C. Peli area, while a second sub-unit had taken up a firm position (404419) a few hundred yards to its right rear on the track leading back to C. Tasselli. The enemy, however, was still in close contact across the battalion front with his tanks and S.P. guns controlling both the forward and lateral roads. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 19-20 Dec 44)

230. Meanwhile P.P.C.L.I. was meeting with the same stubborn resistance on the left. As they approached their first objective, the road junction (402412) at the western end of the Via Pozzarda about 200 yards from R. 22e R. right flank, the Patricias came under intense machine gun fire from the direction of C. Argelli. Nevertheless the company

continued to advance and, after overcoming several enemy machine gun posts barring the way forward, reached its objective. While it was in the process of consolidating an enemy S.P. gun fired eight rounds through the house occupied by Company Headquarters wounding the O.C. and destroying the wireless set. Heavy mortar fire on the area killed one platoon comd, then two counter-attacks developed one after the other, but the Patricias held their ground, and eventually drove the enemy off, killing and wounding many of them. Several prisoners were also taken. The position was finally secured at 0430 hours on the 20th when a second sub-unit moved up in support. At 0500 hours a P.P.C.L.I. sub-unit pushed west from the Via Pozzarda junction towards the crossroads on Lo Stradello (397412) 600 yards distant. For a time the company proceeded without opposition. When it was less than 100 yards from its objective, however, the enemy suddenly opened fire with machine guns and an S.P. Pinned to the ground by this fire, the Patricias had no alternative but to call for artillery cover under which they withdrew to the Via Pozzarda junction. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 19-20 Dec 44)

231. During the morning both battalions held firm under heavy fire while the sappers worked feverishly to clear the mine fields. At 1100 hours an enemy tank and S.P. gun began systematically shooting up the houses occupied by L. Edmn R. at C. Peli. As a result L. Edmn R. withdrew slightly while the artillery and mortars laid a defensive screen of fire across its front. Shortly after midday the enemy eased his fire, and the battalion, under cover of an artillery concentration, reoccupied the C. Peli positions. For several hours after this, however, fighting continued in this area. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 20 Dec 44). Although during this time P.P.C.L.I. suffered no counter attacks, the intensity of the enemy machine gun and S.P. fire indicated the continuing presence of strong enemy forces across its line of advance. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 20 Dec 44)

232. At 1430 hours, to relieve the pressure on his leading company, the Commanding Officer of P.P.C.L.I. despatched a company supported by a troop of B.C.D. through R. 22e R. under a smoke screen cover to seize the Lo Stradello - Via Bigarano crossroads (394407). But the enemy surprised the leading platoon and forced it to retire suffering several casualties. Nevertheless, the company managed to consolidate a position only a few hundred yards short of its objective. At 2100 hours the Patricias with strong artillery support again attacked the Lo Stradello crossroads, and this time after a brief fight cleared the position, capturing an undamaged S.P. gun in the process. Two tanks were then brought forward and the objective secured. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 20 Dec 44). Meanwhile L. Edmn R. had also improved its position. In mid-afternoon Lt-Col Stone went to Brigade Headquarters and there made arrangements to put in a flanking attack through P.P.C.L.I. against the enemy still holding out along the lateral road between the two battalions. This attack commenced at 1600 hours, when one platoon of L. Edmn R. and a troop of B.C.D. passed through the Patricias and under cover of a smoke screen moved along the road, the tanks firing as they advanced while behind them the infantry cleared the houses. Fifty minutes later they reached C. Peli with a bag of 25 prisoners. Others of the enemy, attempting to escape, came under mortar and artillery fire called down from the crossroads.

(W.D., L. Edmn R., 20 Dec 44). By nightfall, considerable progress had been made with the mine lifting, and the tanks and support weapons were moved forward. The day had seen hard fighting on both divisional fronts, and as a result the enemy had lost a number of important strong points and had suffered numerous casualties. The events of the coming night were to show that he had now had enough.

233. During the night 20/21 Dec both L. Edmn R. and P.P.C.L.I. made steady progress. By midnight it was apparent that the enemy was withdrawing on both 2 Cdn Inf Bde and 1 Cdn Inf Bde fronts. Contact was lost before midnight and not regained until 0300 hours. No determined opposition developed, however, and both 1 Cdn Inf Div units continued to push forward. At daylight they reached the objectives laid down for Phase I of the Bde attack, which lay along the upper limits of the Fosso Munio, L. Edmn R. consolidating at Pte. Casalino, and P.P.C.L.I. at the Via Bigarano crossing. Everywhere much evidence of a hasty enemy withdrawal was found. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 20-21 Dec 44; W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 20-21 Dec 44)

234. At daybreak Seaforth of C. with "A" Sqn B.C.D. passed through P.P.C.L.I. towards the cross-roads on the next lateral road to the west (380410). Little resistance was anticipated for the enemy units were reported by deserters to have commenced withdrawing westwards at 0100 hours. Our tanks encountered difficulty with mines but the infantry pressed onwards without hindrance, and at 1030 hours occupied the battalion objective as well as the crossroads to the right of it (382416) at the inter-divisional boundary. At this latter place the battalion was only slightly more than 1000 yards from the Senio, and a recon patrol was sent forward to the river. (W.D., Seaforth of C., 21 Dec 44). P.P.C.L.I. meanwhile had moved south along the Munio, and taken up a position at the crossroads (382391) in the hamlet of Pieve near the north-west edge of Bagnacavallo. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 21 Dec 44). With all its objectives practically occupied, and the enemy apparently safe from further pursuit behind the high dykes of the Senio, H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde ordered L. Edmn R. to remain in its present area for the balance of the day. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 21 Dec 44). The patrol sent forward by the "Seaforths" confirmed the enemy withdrawal, and immediately General Foster ordered that battalion forward to the Senio. By 2200 hours 21 Dec Seaforth of C. was holding positions covering the line of the Senio from the 5 Cdn Armd Div boundary south to the former bridge at Pte della Chiusa (360385).^H (W.D., Seaforth of C., 21 Dec 44)

235. At last, after ten days of very heavy and stubborn fighting, the enemy had given way and during the night 20/21 Dec between the 35 and 45 Northing had fallen back on his prepared defences along the Senio. On 1 Cdn Inf Div front, and particularly in the area north of Bagnacavallo, where he was not protected by any natural water barriers, his

^H Seaforth of C. companies were at 364413, 363407, 362400 and 368385.

resistance was spectacular. The enemy formation, 98 Inf Div,* which was brought into the line from the Fifth Army sector on 13 Dec to stem the tide of the Canadian advance on the Bagnacavallo front, lived up to its Crimean tradition of fighting to the last man, and regained for itself some of the prestige lost during the Rimini battle. Information received from many of the 140 prisoners taken during the 24 hours battle indicated that the order to withdraw came as a welcome surprise to the forward troops, who thought they would have to fight to the death or surrender. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Corps, Dec 44: Appx 93, 1 Cdn Corps Int Summary 187). All three regiments were committed across the front opposite 1 Cdn Inf Div with 289 G.R. along the "Switch Line", 290 G.R. in Bagnacavallo and north of the city, and 117 G.R. north of the latter covering the remaining 1 Cdn Inf Div area and overlapping into 5 Cdn Armd Div sector. (Ibid: Appx 63, 67 74, 77 and 82, 1 Cdn Corps Int Summaries)

236. In the activities preceding the advance to the Senio, 2 Cdn Inf Bde had played an important part. Since their entry into the narrow bridgehead so tenaciously held by Carlt & York R. on 13 Dec, all three battalions of the brigade had fought stubbornly against an equally determined foe (excepting only the brief interlude in front of Bagnacavallo), and it was fitting that they should have the credit of breaking the enemy position, and leading the 1 Cdn Inf Div advance to the Senio. The Brigade Commander in reviewing the action gives credit to the invaluable assistance provided by B.C.D. and all supporting arms, and particularly to the artillery for their timely assistance in breaking up the many counter attacks. Casualties to the enemy in both phases of the battle were "(a) prisoners four offrs, 314 ORs; (b) confirmed killed and wounded 330 (c) equipment seven tanks or S.P. guns K.O'd and six damaged." During the period 13-21 Dec 2 Cdn Inf Bde suffered 289 casualties of all types, of whom 60 were killed, 215 wounded and four taken prisoner. ((H.S.)234C1.013(D10): 2 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Operations, 1 Dec 44 - 8 Jan 45; Casualties - Italian Campaign op cit)

* The original Div was more or less destroyed on the Russian front. The remnants were evacuated from the CRIMEA to CONSTANZA in May 1944 and arrived in ZAGREB in Jun. During Jun and Jul the Div was reformed in CROATIA. At the beginning of Aug it moved down to the CESENA area and on 29 Aug the first units were committed in the Gothic Line. After a disastrous fortnight in which the Div lost 2,050 prisoners it was withdrawn and reformed again, most of the rfts being drawn from the B Regt of the draft div SELESIA. The Div was committed anew in the M BATTAGLIA sector on about 1 Oct and it has since fought on Fifth Army front tenaciously and well.

(W. D., G. S., H. Q. 1 Cdn Corps,
December 1944: Appx 63, 1 Cdn
Corps Int Summary 180)

237. As 2 Cdn Inf Bde neared the Senio west of Bagnacavallo, the enemy evacuated the town, although he continued to maintain a firm hold on his salient to the south of it between the Canadians and 5 Corps. His anxiety to retain ground in front of Cotignola probably arose from a fear of a Canadian drive across the Senio in that sector aimed at outflanking Lugo. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 93 and 96, 1 Cdn Corps Int Summaries Nos 187, 188)

238. During the initial stages of the 2 Cdn Inf Bde advance, both 1 Cdn Inf Bde and 3 Cdn Inf Bde remained in their holding and defensive role, but on the morning of the 21st, when word of the enemy withdrawal reached them, both brigades joined the advance. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Dec 44). The rapid departure of the enemy on the 3 Cdn Inf Bde front eliminated the necessity of a formal attack by that brigade on Bagnacavallo, and spoiled any chance of cutting off and destroying its garrison. At 0115 hours on the 21st bren-gun fire from the Carlt & York R. forward coy on the northern outskirts of the town drew enemy fire, but similar activity at 0745 hours brought no response. Sounds of heavy demolitions heard from the enemy rear also pointed towards an evacuation. During the morning elements of Carlt & York R. went forward and found the town free of the enemy. Shortly after midday the whole battalion moved forward and took up position to the west of the town (3838). In the late afternoon, (21 Dec), as 2 Cdn Inf Bde took over the Senio front from the railway north to the 5 Cdn Armd Div boundary, divisional headquarters placed 3 Cdn Inf Bde in tactical reserve. All three units were ordered to secure billets in their present area and to bring forward their "F" Echelon. Hot meals and other luxuries of which this brigade had been deprived during their three weeks period in the line now became available. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Dec 44; W.D., Carlt & York R., 21 Dec 44)

239. On 1 Cdn Inf Bde front the main enemy body (289 G.R.) withdrew during the night 20/21 Dec leaving behind small rear guards and engineer parties to destroy the many bridges over the Vecchio and Naviglio. On the brigade right, R.C.R. began moving forward at daybreak, when patrols across the Vecchio on its front, confirmed that the enemy had withdrawn. The battalion advanced steadily throughout the day, crossing the Naviglio about one mile south of Bagnacavallo and consolidating before midnight 500 yards east of the Senio. There it found the enemy occupying dug in positions on both sides of the river. Hast & P.E.R. likewise moved forward, and by midnight had crossed the Naviglio and consolidated near the Senio about a mile to the north of Cotignola. The only resistance encountered by 1 Cdn Inf Bde during the day was in 48 Highrs sector. There an enemy rearguard holding the Vecchio bridge on the road running east from Boncellino kept the Highlanders east of the Vecchio until late afternoon. When it halted for the night 48 Highrs was still nearly 1000 yards from the Naviglio. (W.D., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Dec 44; W.D., R.C.R., 21 Dec 44; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 21 Dec 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 21 Dec 44)

240. Throughout this period 1 Cdn Inf Bde seemed fated to participate chiefly in costly and unrewarding actions. In particular Hast & P.E.R. had had quite a bad time of it, for it failed twice at the Lamone (4 and 5 Dec), lost heavily again in the Naviglio bridgehead on 13 Dec, and

* took part in the abortive "Switch Line" attack on 18 Dec. On at least two of these occasions Hast & P.E.R. had R.C.R. for a companion in misfortune. In these actions, these two units alone lost six officers and 116 other ranks as prisoners.* (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Dec 44; C.M.H.Q. Records Office Casualty Card Index, Hast & P.E.R. and R.C.R. (now in possession of Historical Section, A.H.Q.))

THE FOSSO MUNIO FIGHTING AND THE PURSUIT TO THE SENIO,
5 CDN ARMD DIV, 16 - 21 DEC 44

241. Before considering the operations of 5 Cdn Armd Div during the three days 19-21 Dec., it is necessary to go back to the morning of 15 Dec, when Lt-Gen C. Foulkes, commanding 1 Cdn Corps, and Maj-Gen B.M. Hoffmeister, commanding 5 Cdn Armd Div, visited Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde to discuss with Brigadier I.S. Johnston a plan to launch a new attack using his brigade, with the object, firstly of driving the enemy back to the Senio in the area north of Fusignano, and secondly of linking up with the troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div west of Bagnacavallo and cutting off its garrison. The second stage of the operation was to be dependent on the success of the attacks about to be launched by 1 Cdn Inf Bde against the enemy "Switch Line" south of Bagnacavallo (see para 209).

242. At a conference of his unit commanders held in the early morning of 18 Dec, Brigadier Johnston issued a detailed plan for the forthcoming attack. At 2000 hours that night 11 Cdn Inf Bde would cross the Fosso Munio on a two battalion front and advance along the Via Chiara and the Via S. Antonio to objectives on the lateral road lying east of the Senio. In the next stage, timed to commence early in the morning of 19 Dec, one battalion would move south and clear the lateral road as far as the road junction (3843) opposite Fusignano. Finally, in coordination with the progress of 1 Cdn Inf Div, the reserve battalion would swing left along the west bank of the Fosso Munio and link up west of Bagnacavallo with the troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div. The plan included an artillery fire programme and armoured support, while the engineers were to construct crossings over the Munio, and sweep the main axis of advance. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Dec 44 and Appx 7, 11 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 11, 18 Dec 44)

* A rather high proportion of the casualties suffered by 1 Cdn Corps during this period of operations were "Missing", that is 22 officers and 420 other ranks out of a total of 2000 casualties (this was the picture as known at Corps Headquarters on 31 Dec 44). In an address given to the officers of the Corps of the rank of Lt-Col and above at Ravenna on 31 Dec, the Corps Commander laid the blame for this condition to faulty junior leadership and/or poor morale. General Foulkes stated that it was imperative that steps be taken during the coming weeks to improve morale and leadership. He suggested that if casualty figures were analysed, particularly the "Missing" and "Exhaustion" categories and compared with battle achievements, it would be found that the units achieving the most have the fewer casualties.

243. To provide 11 Cdn Inf Bde with a firm base from which to launch its attack, 12 Cdn Inf Bde took steps during 16 Dec to clear the west bank of the Fosso Munio.* At 1600 hours two rifle platoons of Westnr R. supported by four Wasp flamethrowers crossed the stream in the vicinity of the demolished road bridge. Following a short artillery barrage, the Wasps, which had moved up to the near bank, began to flame the enemy positions on the far side. Immediately after the flame attack, the infantry assault went in. When they reached the enemy's positions, the Westminsters found the occupants:

...so surprised by the Flame-throwers that they either throw down their arms and ran or surrendered as prisoners.

(W.D., Westnr R., 16 Dec 44)

In little more than a quarter of an hour, the company had seized its objective and was digging in around some houses (414424) a few yards beyond the river bank. (This was the first reported use in action of the flame throwers by troops of 1 Cdn Corps). Shortly before midnight, the enemy counter-attacked the tiny bridgehead, but the Westminsters, calling on the artillery and mortars for assistance, drove off the assault at a cost to themselves of only one killed and four wounded. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 16 - 17 Dec 44; W.D., Westnr R., 16 Dec 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 17 and 25 Dec 44; (H.S.)244C5.083(D2): H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div Memo "Use of Wasp", 25 Dec 44)

244. On the same day (16 Dec) elements of P.L.D.G. also established a foothold west of the Munio. Elements of one company reached the far bank in the first hours of darkness, and attempted, without success, to contact Westnr R. Shortly after midnight a second company formed up to cross the river but at once came under heavy mortar fire which pinned it to the ground. Although P.L.D.G. continued throughout the night its efforts to strengthen its hold on the far bank, by 0755 hours it had only 65-70 men across the stream, holding a narrow position about 400 yards to the south-west of the Via S. Antonio (417432-416429). (W.D., P.L.D.G., 16-17 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 16-17 Dec 44)

* Across the canal to the north and north-west is a wide flat, treeless expanse of plowed ground (and in Italy they plow deeply - a good 18" making a very soft soil bed). A line of trees crosses the front 500 yards to the north-west. Two houses on right of road (407432) and on far right at 416435 - all command the open field with fire. The tracks marked on 1/50,000 map crossing to S. Antonio in square 4143 are not apparent. Possibly plowed up.

(Italy - Topographical Notes, p. 32)

245. There was little change in the situation of either Westmr R. or P.L.D.G. during 17 Dec. Both units engaged in patrolling and complained of the "murderous shelling". On the night 17/18 Dec a company of Lan & Ren Scot R. came under command of P.L.D.G. and took over on the right of the tiny bridgehead. On the following morning P.L.D.G. patrolled the far bank of the Munio as far as Westmr R. area without difficulty. Late on 18 Dec the unit was relieved by Lan & Ren Scot R., and with the exception of one company which remained under Lanark command, withdrew into reserve at Villanova. That night the Lanarks increased their strength west of the Munio, using a foot bridge (417431) over the Munio which the engineers had now erected. On the 19th, on orders from Brigadier Lind, Lan & Ren Scot R. tried without success to place a platoon astride the ditch running into the Munio (at 419434) from near the end of the Via San Antonio. At last light the P.L.D.G. company on the near bank drove the enemy from the vicinity of the ditch with flame and small arms fire. At 1800 hours the German artillery, possibly in retaliation, began firing, and during the next half-hour heavily shelled the whole area to a depth of 700-800 yards. (W.D., P.L.D.G., 17-19 Dec 44; W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 18-19 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 17-19 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 17-19 Dec 44)

246. As will be remembered, it became apparent early on 18 Dec that 1 Cdn Inf Div was unlikely to achieve a breakthrough in the sector south of Bagnacavallo. At 1000 hours that morning the Corps Commander held a conference of his commanders at Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div to consider a new plan. From this meeting a plan emerged for a coordinated two brigade attack along the inter-divisional boundary. This called for 2 Cdn Inf Bde to attack between the bend in the Munio and the right flank of 3 Cdn Inf Bde, moving first west along the Munio, then south across the 3 Cdn Inf Bde front in an endeavour to cut off Bagnacavallo. At the same time, as in Phase I of its original plan, 11 Cdn Inf Bde would cross the Fosso Munio on a two battalion front, and advance west to the Senio. As noted earlier (para 225), the boundary between the two divisions was now moved north to roughly the line of the Fosso Munio. H hour for both brigades was set at 2000 hours 19 Dec. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944; Appx 79, Message G.O. 79)

247. At 0900 hours, 19 Dec, Brigadier I.S. Johnston held a coordinating conference, at Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde, of his unit commanders and representatives of supporting arms. The new plan called for an advance on a two battalion front followed by an expansion southward between that river and the Fosso Munio to the line of the inter-divisional boundary. The operation was to be carried out in three stages. In Phase I the brigade would attack, with Ir R.C. right and Perth R. left, from the line of the Fosso Munio along the twin axes Via S. Antonio and Via Chiara. Final objectives for both battalions lay at the junctions of their respective advance roads with the Via Rossetta, the lateral road running along the near bank of the Senio River. Intermediate objectives, were in the case of Perth R., the road junction, 1000 yards from the start line, of Via Chiara and the first lateral road running south over the Munio, and second the junction of Via Chiara and the transaxial Via Grattacoppa. Ir R.C. would secure the junction at the opposite end of the latter road. C.B. Highrs would follow

Perth R. as far as the first road junction then swing left to the Munio and along the lo Stradello which here runs west towards the Senio. During Phase II the brigade would extend its Senio front south, Perth R. covering the near approach to the former Fusignano bridge while C.B. Highrs came up on their left to the junction of lo Stradello and the lateral Via Masiera. Then in the final stage elements of Perth R. and G.G.H.G. would relieve Ir R.C. and the latter unit would then move south to the inter-divisional boundary and seize the crossroads on Via Casalino 600 yards east of the Senio. Should the situation be such that Ir R.C. was unable to disengage then C.B. Highrs would carry out Phase III. At the conclusion of the first phase, a squadron of G.G.H.G. would take over from Ir R.C. on the Via Rossetta and with infantry from Perth R. provide right flank protection. The attack would commence in silence, and there would be no artillery fire until surprise was lost. Upon receipt of the loss of surprise codeword, Headquarters R.C.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div would order a pre-arranged 30 minute counter battery programme to begin, and make the divisional artillery available to engage targets on call. Ld S.H. would provide armoured support for all three phases of the operation. The engineers would construct a crossing over the Munio for the tanks near the Via Chiara as well as foot bridges for the infantry. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 19 Dec; W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div, December 1944: Appx 10, Fire Plan "Turkey", 19 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 19-20 Dec 44)

248. By 1900 hours, 19 Dec, both attacking battalions had moved into their forming-up places in rear of the Fosso Munio, and at 2000 hours, as planned, the leading companies began crossing the start line. During the first half hour because of the surprise gained by the silent attack all went well, but then both units ran into heavy machine gun fire and intense mortar and shell fire. Between the Munio and the Senio the enemy had set up a system of mutually supporting "nests of resistance", organized in depth to prevent a quick breakthrough. In an operation order issued on 18 Dec, Lt-Gen Reinhardt, the commander 98 Inf Div, had laid down the method of defence to be followed:

Def in our present posn means NOT holding to the last man in one Main LINE of resistance, but the prevention of a breakthrough through a deep Main SECTOR of resistance. Therefore every man must not be rammed into the foremost posns, rather must defence in the greatest possible depth be organized through the conversion of all hy weapon posns, HQs, etc., into nests of resistance.

Counter Attack Reserves are to be held close to the FDLs, in order to exploit soonest the enemy's weakest moment i.e. on canal and river crossings, and during the early stages of a breakthrough into the MLR.

In gen, no counter attacks must be made by bns in closed coy-fms, with enemy air superiority such attacks cost too much blood. Several simultaneous attacks on fighting patrol lines are much more certain of success.

((H.S.)244C5.023(D1): 5 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 93, 22 Dec 44: Appx A, 98 Inf Div Order for Coming Ops as translated by Intelligence Staff H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div)

For 24 hours the enemy pinned 11 Cdn Inf Bde, apart from one company of Perth R. which managed to seize and retain a position 1000 yards forward of the river, to the line of the Munio. Then our efforts began to tell, the enemy's fire diminished and our line moved rapidly up to the Senio.

249. On the right Ir R.C., using the footbridge mentioned earlier in this report (para 245), made an uneventful crossing of the Munio at "H" hour, and immediately pushed off towards its initial objective. This was a small group of buildings (416435) situated near the lower end of the Via S. Antonio and about 500 yards north of the footbridge. Initially the Irish made good progress, then when the forward platoon was almost on the objective, the enemy opened up

...with many M.G's firing from well dug in positions cutting off the leading platoon on the objective and covering the open spaces with withering fire from enfiladed M.G's inflicting some casualties and stopping the company at M.R.418433 89 III NW. A guide from the leading platoon returned and "D" Company attempted to send a second platoon onto the objective only to be stopped by the heavy fire. Heavy enemy mortaring blasted the area and Captain CHARETTE withdrew his company, regrouped and tried to assault from the right. The company was again stopped by heavy fire and after taking some casualties it became obvious that the position was strongly held.

((H.S.)244C5.013(D4): Report on Operations, the Irish Regiment of Canada, period 29 Nov 44 to 27 Dec 44)

Under cover of an artillery concentration, a second Irish sub-unit made a final attempt to get forward at 0515 hours (20 Dec). It also failed to make any headway, and by 0730 hours both companies were digging in on the start line (416428 - 418433). Under heavy mortar fire and constant sniping they hung onto these positions during the remaining hours of daylight. In fact it would appear that they had no alternative but to stay where they were. For at 1019 hours when Brigadier Johnston ordered them to cancel previous instructions and prepare to come into reserve, Ir R.C. replied that they were "unable to pull back into reserve till dark due to flat country and present situation" (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 20 Dec 44). Finally, as darkness fell, the companies effected their withdrawal, and by 1945 hours the unit had arrived in an assembly area behind the Naviglio (4241). There it was on one hour's notice to move forward over the more successful Perth R. crossing. According to the unit report on the operations, this was the first time in 12 months of fighting that Ir. R.C. "had failed to get onto its objective" (Ir R.C. Report op cit). ((W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 19-20 Dec 44; W.D., Ir R.C., 19-20 Dec 44))

250. Meanwhile, Perth R., after an initial setback, had gained a precarious footing in the midst of the enemy defences. Crossing the Fosso Munio at 2000 hours, the leading company of Perths immediately moved off along the Via Chiara towards its first objective. When within about 200 yards of the junction it came under a deadly hail of fire from machine guns positioned to its front and on both flanks.

Lacking cover of any sort - the enemy automatics were even firing down the ditches on either side of the road - the company suffered heavy casualties and shortly after midnight returned to the area of the start line. To prepare the way for a fresh attempt the fire of two regiments of artillery, the M.M.G's of the support company, and the battalion's 3" mortars, was then directed on the enemy positions. At 0050 hours a second company of Perth R. took up the attack, this time moving across country several hundred yards to the right of, and parallel to, the Via Chiara. By 0215 hours it was at Casa Rasponi (413428), a building about 400 yards north of the Via Chiara bridge, which it occupied without opposition. From there the Perths pushed on towards the Casa della Congregazione (407431), a group of buildings lying 200 yards to the right of the original objective. During this stage of the advance they overran several enemy posts, taking two prisoners and inflicting an estimated 30 casualties on 98 Fus Bn.* By 0325 hours they had cleared Casa della Congregazione and consolidated. ((H.S.) 145.2P1011(D2):Report on Operations of the Perth R. for period 2 Dec to 27 Dec 44; W.D., Perth R., 19-20 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 19-20 Dec 44)

251. By this time the enemy had concentrated the main weight of his fire power on the bridging site - one observer gave the rate of fall as 150 shells a minute. At 0140 hours Perth R. sent off a company to dispose of one particularly troublesome gun, an S.P. firing from Casa Taroni (405425), a farmhouse near the north bank of the Munio about 700 yards distant. Although leading elements reached the farmhouse, the reaction of the enemy was so strong that the company withdrew without accomplishing its task. All the while the engineers continued operations, and by 0600 hours they had placed an Ark bridge in position near the Via Chiara. Daylight, however, revealed it to be askew and unsuited for the passage of vehicles. At once, R.C.E. commenced work on a second crossing near the first, and this, a bulldozed fill, they had ready for use by 0945 hours (20 Dec). In spite of a continuous smoke screen maintained over the crossing site by the artillery and armour, the intensity of the enemy fire continued to make all activity hazardous and difficult; in the forenoon a Sherman and two M.10s. attempting to move up to the Munio were knocked out by direct hits. For this reason it was not until several hours after the completion of the crossing by the engineers that the first armour moved over the Munio. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Dec 44; W.D., Perth R., 20 Dec 44; 2 Cdn Armd Regt Account op cit)

252. Although the enemy thus held the main forces of 5 Cdn Armd Div in check on the Munio, his strenuous efforts to smash the stoutly resisting Perths at Casa della Congregazione proved not so successful. For by 0827 hours (20 Dec) the latter had driven back two counter attacks and increased their prisoner total to 20. Nevertheless to the anxious observers on the Munio the eventual overwhelming of the position seemed certain:

* The reconnaissance battalion of 98 Inf Div.

Armed with nothing more powerful than Brens and PIATS, and greatly reduced in numbers after their heroic advance through the plague of machine gun lead during the night, the Perth company at "MEASURE" was surrounded by infantry and tanks. Their plight seemed hopeless. From his little Auster plane, a flying O.P. at one time reported five enemy tanks on our side of the Senio in this sector; two of them were in positions on the straight road that was our Centre Line and these fired continuously into the bridge site; an S.P. gun was firing from a farm near the bridge known as "PETROL"; machine guns dug in all over the open field, some of them nearer than the "lost" company, raked the dyke with streams of whining bullets. It seemed as though the enemy was intent, for the moment, on preventing reinforcements from coming forward. It seemed certain that, before long, they would set about the obviously simple task of over-running that company.

(McAvity, Lt-Col J.M., D.S.O., Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians)
pp 174-5)

Shortly after midday, 25-30 men of 98 Fus Bn, led by their battalion commander, made their last desperate effort to drive the Canadians out. But the Perth commander was ready for them. As the Germans closed in, he gave a signal that brought down a prearranged "box barrage" around them cutting off their avenue of retreat. In the killing ground so formed, small arms fire of the Perths cut the enemy force to pieces. Seven of the Germans survived the action, as prisoners, the rest including the commanding officer were slain. The tide of the battle was now turning, for the armour had finally broken through the curtain of fire along the Munio. (Perth R. Report op cit; W.D., Perth R., 20 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 20 Dec 44)

253. At 1400 hours two tanks of a troop of the Strathcona's successfully crossed the Munio via the bulldozed fill - a third tank bogged down and blocked the passage. Some 15 minutes later both tanks wheeled into the farmyard at Casa della Congregatione. At the same time close-support aircraft began strafing enemy transport and guns up to the Senio. Just before last light, in spite of continuing enemy fire, the engineers completed their third assault crossing, an Ark bridge, over which a second troop of Ld S.H. at once began to move forward. By 1800 hours the situation had eased considerably, and at 2000 hours a second company of Perth R. reached the Casa della Congregatione. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Dec 44; W.D., Perth R., 20 Dec 44; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 20 Dec 44; Perth R. Report; 2 Cdn Armd Regt Account)

254. Sometime during the night 20/21 Dec Headquarters 98 Inf Div ordered the units still opposing the advance of the Canadian divisions to fall back to the line of the Senio. Although this order, according to prisoner reports, came as a surprise, the enemy units wasted no time in carrying it out. Consequently, in contrast to the virtual stalemate of the previous day and night, the pace of the advance greatly quickened, and by early morning (21 Dec) the

Canadians were closing in on the Senio from north of Fusignano to south of Bagnacavallo. By midnight 11 Cdn Inf Bde was moving forward on a two-battalion front. On the left, by 2300 hours, C.B. Highrs was moving south from Via Chiara towards the first bridge (402435) over the Munio west of the brigade crossing-place. By 0515 hours they had secured this and the next bridge (399426) to the west intact, and gathered up a number of stray enemy personnel as prisoners. With the capture of the second bridge, the supporting tanks from Ld S.H., hitherto held up by the lack of a suitable forward route, were able by a detour into 1 Cdn Inf Div territory to rejoin the infantry. Shortly after 0600 hours the Highlanders reached the road junction (396427) on lo Stradello at the bend in the Munio, which they cleared, after a brief action, taking several more prisoners. Through this point C.B. Highrs now pushed three companies, in quick succession, towards its final objectives on the lateral Via Masiera. By midday the battalion was firmly established along the latter road between the lo Stradello (384431) and the Via Casalino. On the left, one sub-unit continued beyond Via Masiera to a road junction on Via Casalino (375419) about 500 yards east of the Senio. There was some fighting on the unit right during the morning when C.B. Highrs elements attempted to clear some enemy posts in the built-up area near the Senio opposite Fusignano. During this advance C.B. Highrs took 32 prisoners. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 20-21 Dec 44; (H.S.)145.2C5013 (D1); Report on Operations of C.B. Highrs for period 2 Dec to 27 Dec 44; 2 Cdn Armd Regt Account)

255. On the right Perth R. commenced moving forward on the Via Chiara shortly after C.B. Highrs passed through to the left flank. At 0048 hours (21 Dec) the battalion reached the junction of the Via Chiara and the Via Grattacoppa - a lateral road linking the Via Chiara and the Via San Antonio - where it halted its advance and consolidated. In mopping up this area Perths captured over 20 prisoners and a 28 cm Nebelwerfer battery. Brigade Headquarters, meanwhile, had brought Ir R.C. forward, and at 0225 hours the leading companies of the latter unit began to pass through Perth R. Two of the Irish sub-units advanced northeastwards along the Via Grattacoppa, and at 0625 hours these, after a light brush with a retreating party of enemy, reached the Via S. Antonio. Without pausing they continued their movement north along the latter road towards the Senio. They encountered no opposition, and at 0705 hours faced up to the river at the junction of the Via S. Antonio and the Via Rossetta. On the left the other companies of Ir R.C. reached the Senio slightly earlier, at 0645 hours, after an uneventful advance up Via Chiara. By midday the situation was that 11 Cdn Inf Bde had two infantry battalions supported by a squadron of tanks and anti-tank guns facing up to the Senio along a 4000 yard front. Still, however, the enemy from positions on the near bank dominated the approaches to the river at a number of places along this front. During the following few days the brigade was engaged in attempts to clear the east dyke, and to improve its open right flank between the Senio and Munio. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 20-21 Dec 44; W.D., Perth R., 20-21 Dec 44; Ir R.C. Report). On 21 Dec 12 Cdn Inf Bde, which had remained on the Munio as a firm base for the 11 Cdn Inf Bde operations, withdrew into reserve at Ravenna. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

256. Of these operations between 10 and 21 Dec, the Report compiled by Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div has the following to say:

The whole of the action from the LAMONE to the SENIO had been characterized by particularly heavy mortar and shell fire. The country was very open, little cover other than canals and ditches being available. This made accurate fire on the part of the enemy comparatively simple. Enemy MGs enfiladed the ditches and other cover was accurately registered by his mortars and artillery. There were very few routes forward and all of these with their defiles were well known to the enemy who kept constant harrassing fire on them. Throughout most of the time he had good observation of the area, in many localities movement by day being almost impossible. Coupled to this was the fact that the forward troops had to remain in slit trenches in ground that would have been wet even without the rain that accompanied us throughout the operation.

The enemy had intended holding this particular piece of ground at all costs. This has been proved by enemy orders captured. He yielded only after having been thoroughly defeated by troops who fought for many days under every disadvantage of ground and weather against an enemy whose supporting weapons provided him with an amount of supporting fire almost equal to ours. Ground and weather combined to reduce the effectiveness of our superiority in armour and air to a small portion of its normal effect.

(5 Cdn Armd Div History of Operations)

During this 11 day period the division had advanced slightly more than four miles, crossed five separate water courses and taken 514 prisoners. ((H.S.)2/4C5.023(DL): 5 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summaries Nos 83, 12 Dec 44 and 93, 22 Dec 44).

There was, by this time, one accepted characteristic of these December battles - they always had a definite beginning and a definite end; they began at one water obstacle and ended on the near bank of the next. Never was a fresh brigade committed simply to exploit between rivers.

(McAvity, op cit, pp 176-7)

257. Thus by midnight 21 Dec, the situation on 1 Cdn Corps front had considerably changed since the start of the main operations on 10 Dec. Bagnacavallo had been occupied and the enemy severely handled in the 10 days fighting from the Lamone to the Senio. As a result of the efforts of both its divisions, 1 Cdn Corps could claim a score of three Tigers, nine Panthers, and seven enemy assault guns,

knocked out and a prisoner bag of 13 officers and 1219 ORs.* But still the enemy, aided by the nature of the terrain, had retained the initiative, and on ground of his own choosing, the high and commanding dykes of the Senio River, awaited the next battle.** But before this occurred, however, much remained to be done on both flanks of the Corps. Between 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Corps the enemy was still up to the Naviglio and to the north he still controlled the area south of the Valli di Comacchio. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 96, 1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 188)

CHRISTMAS RELIEFS - 1 CDN INF DIV, 22-25 DEC 44

258. During the ten day period between 22 Dec and the end of the year a series of reliefs gave all units of 1 Cdn Inf Div a short period of rest and an opportunity to share the Christmas rations out of range of the enemy artillery and the noise of battle. While these reliefs were in progress units on the left flank of the Division continued to press forward against heavy enemy opposition on the Cotignola front. Combined pressure on the salient between 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Corps succeeded in forcing the enemy from the Lamone but he continued to hold, first at the Vecchio and, later, on the Naviglio in the area of the inter-corps boundary. It was not until the first week in January that the enemy defences in this latter area were broken, and units of both Corps reached the Senio. (Summary of Ops, by Div Hist Offr, 22-31 Dec 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 22 Dec 44)

259. On 22 Dec, H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div was confronted with the double task of arranging relief for its tired units and of carrying on, at the same time, the operations to clear the enemy from its left flank. While the complicated schedule of reliefs was being worked out 1 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to patrol vigorously to determine the enemy's F.D.L's. and the engineers to complete the removal of mines and open up routes for armour and other support arms. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 22 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Dec 44). Both R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. reported the enemy on their front still holding the near bank of the Senio (W.D., R.C.R., 22 Dec 44; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 22 Dec 44). On the left flank, where our F.D. L's followed roughly the line of the Via Madrara between the Naviglio and the Lamone, 48 Highrs and R.C.D. were also in contact with the

* Prisoners taken since the beginning of the campaign on 30 Nov totalled 14 officers and 1653 Other Ranks, and of that total 1 officer and 434 Other Ranks were taken prior to December 11th. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944, Appx 42: Int Summary No. 176)

** The onerous flood bank is 35 feet high, 150 feet from bank top to bank top. River a dirty, muddy stream. One ledge is 10 yards wide, then the banks slope straight down to river.

{Italy - Topographical Notes, p. 31}

enemy. On the right flank of the Division, where Seaforth of C. was holding the line of the Senio from 1 Cdn Inf Bde right flank north to the 5 Armd Div boundary, there was little activity on 22 Dec. With the exception of a few pockets on the near side of the river, the bulk of the enemy was licking its wounds behind the high river dykes. Patrols went out during the day, and minor clashes occurred between them and isolated enemy elements on the near side of the river. No attempt was made, however, to climb the dykes or reconnoitre the river area. (W.D., Seaforth of C., 22 Dec 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 22 Dec 44). Nearly three miles to the south, elements of 5 Corps meeting with only light opposition, reached Pieve di Cesato (3729) during the day. Throughout the day our artillery and aircraft engaged numerous targets west of the Senio. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 95, Ops Summary No. 60; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Dec 44)(See Map 6)

260. During the night 22/23 Dec active patrolling on the Seaforth front confirmed that the enemy still held firm positions on the near side of the Senio in the area of S. Polito (360401) (W.D., Seaforth of C., 23 Dec 44). On the left flank of the division 1 Cdn Inf Bde put in a "Crocodile" attack on a group of houses near the Senio about one mile north of Cotignola. This attack, carried out by an R.C.R. platoon and one flamethrower from "C" Sqn 12 R.T.R., was the first crocodile attack in Italy.

At about midnight the crocodile moved forward, picked up the infantry platoon on the way and proceeded into the little village. The effect was stupendous; the midnight sky was lit up for miles around and the houses blazed furiously.

((H.S.)234C1.013(D22): Account of Operations
29 Nov 44 to 11 Jan 45 by 12 R.T.R.)

The infantry platoon, no doubt a bit wary, was slow in following up the attack, and the enemy (if there were any)* escaped across the river. Leaving behind a standing patrol, the remainder of the platoon withdrew from the area, then under heavy mortar fire from the enemy side of the river. (W.D., R.C.R., 22 Dec 44)

261. During the morning of 23 Dec R.C.D. attempted to establish contact with 9 R.F.** of 56 Inf Div, which was then at the inter-corps boundary on the Lamone opposite Le Tombe, but was stopped just south of the Russi - Granarolo railway bridge by strong machine gun fire. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 23 Dec 44). At this time the pattern of enemy opposition encountered by

* No bodies, referred to as "Roasts", were found in the burnt out area. Possibly the arty fire, prior to the attack drove the enemy off before the flame thrower reached the houses. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx "A", Ops Summary, 23 Dec 44)

** 9th Battalion Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)

R.C.D. and by patrols from 48 Highrs indicated the presence of a new "Switch Line" a short distance forward of the 1 Cdn Inf Bde F.D.Ls. (W.D., 48 Highrs, 23 Dec 44). West of the Naviglio in the course of the same day Hast & P.E.R. succeeded in extending its left flank southward to the line of the Via Madrara. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 23 Dec 44)

262. Meanwhile, at Divisional Headquarters, a lengthy programme of reliefs, scheduled to take place during the Christmas season, had been drawn up (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Dec 44). The first step towards carrying out this programme took place during the morning of 23 Dec when 3 Cdn Inf Bde withdrew into reserve. Brigade Headquarters was established in a house on the outskirts of Godo but, due to the shortage of suitable accommodation, its three battalions were scattered over an area extending as much as four miles to the north and N.E. The weather was clear and cold and an occasional snow flurry gave a Christmas atmosphere to the new surroundings. To the survivors of the "Ortona Crossroads and Casa Berardi" battle this Christmas season presented a striking contrast to that of the previous year when, after hurriedly consuming their festive fare in the battle area, they had gone forward to complete the bloody Ortona job. Here, a year later, away from the noise of battle, the whole brigade entered into the Christmas festivities with the feeling that it would be their last away from home, and everything possible was done to make it a happy one. In this area the tired infantry were able to find shelter and share the fire of the Italian villagers (R. 22e R. was billeted in Piangipane, Carlt & York R. at Santerno and West N.S.R. at S. Michele), while Christmas mail and parcels brought news and bits of Christmas cheer from loved ones thousands of miles away. Cocktail parties in the officers' messes started the festivities on Christmas Eve, followed by midnight Mass for the R.C. personnel. Early morning services for the Protestants on Christmas Day followed by a turkey dinner for all and a C.W.A.C. concert party in the evening completed the festive round. No doubt the Italian "Vino" helped to cheer many of the "old timers", and accounted in part for the frequency of such remarks as "my best Christmas in five years" reported by the diarist of Carlt & York R. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 23-25 Dec 44; W.D., R. 22e R., 23-25 Dec; W.D., West N.S.R., 23-25 Dec 44; W.D., Carlt & York R., 23-25 Dec 44)

263. But the troops of 3 Cdn Inf Bde were not the only ones to enjoy a happy Christmas. For, by careful manipulation of the remaining units in 1 Cdn Inf Div, General Foster was able to bring three other battalions out of the line for the holiday season. R.C.D. was reorganized as two forces of two squadrons each, known as VICTOR FORCE and SUGAR FORCE, and ordered to take over the 2 Cdn Inf Bde sector. Each force had the equivalent of one infantry company, formed from personnel of 2 L.A.A. Regt, under command, while Regimental Headquarters R.C.D. had one squadron of 12 R.T.R. and one coy Sask L.I. available in support. R.C.D. took over the front during the night 23/24 Dec with "Sugar Force" on the right and "Victor Force" on the left. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 23 Dec 44). P.P.C.L.I. and L. Edmn R. then passed into reserve, and Seaforth of C. shifted left and relieved R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. of 1 Cdn Inf Bde. One company of R.C.R. remained in the line on the extreme left flank of the Division, where it had taken over from R.C.D. Thus by 24 Dec the 1 Cdn Inf Div had regrouped so as to leave a minimum of troops in the F.D.Ls. (W.D., H.Q.

2 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Dec 44)

264. During the night 23/24 Dec L. Edmn R. moved by T.C.V's all the way to the sea-side town of Cervia where they remained until 26 Dec when they returned to the line and relieved the Seaforths. P.P.C.L.I. moved back a much shorter distance to Borg di Stecch (4137) on the morning of 24 Dec where they were soon relatively comfortably situated. Although Bagnacavallo was out of bounds to all troops, and the area provided no local places of amusements, the battalion organized its Christmas on a grand scale. A conducted theatre party visited Bagnacavallo on Christmas night, and the "Sally Ann" organized a sing-song in the battalion area. Like L. Edmn R., Hast & P.E.R. spent their Christmas well out of the battle area in Cattolica where they enjoyed the more varied recreational facilities of the Adriatic coastal towns. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 23-25 Dec 44; W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 23-25 Dec 44; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 23-25 Dec 44)

265. On 24 and 25 Dec there was little activity on 1 Cdn Inf Div front. The enemy made no effort to disturb our positions, and our forces in view of their reduced numbers made little effort to provoke him. During the night 23/24 Dec an R.C.R. patrol contacted 9 R.F. (at 378315) between the Vecchio and the Lamone about a mile south of the railway but saw no sign of the enemy.* (W.D., R.C.R., December 1944: Appx 17, Battle Narrative "D" Company). At this time 48 Highrs, like R.C.R., had only one company in the line with the remaining companies in the rear (but within the Bde area) where they were able to get a good night's sleep and have their Christmas dinner with some degree of comfort. In the case of 48 Highrs, the forward company's dinner was carried in to them before daybreak in hay-boxes. (W.D., R.C.R., 24-25 Dec 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 24-25 Dec 44). Seaforth of C. and R.C.D., however, whose companies were widely extended and in close contact with the enemy, made arrangements to have their Christmas dinner at a later date. R.C.D. reported on Christmas Day a complete lack of shell and mortar fire, as if a planned truce had been arranged. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.), 24-25 Dec 44; W.D., Seaforth of C., 24-25 Dec 44)

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDER 1 CDN CORPS

266. On Christmas Day personal messages from both the Army Commander and the Commander 1 Cdn Corps were distributed to all ranks. Gen Foulkes, in his message, congratulated his men for their part in bringing certain victory within sight, and reviewed their accomplishments during the recent campaign. His message in part follows:

A year ago, the end of the war with Germany seemed remote. Today, the fight has been carried into Germany itself, and we can feel reasonably certain that on Christmas Day 1945 the war with Germany will be over. You who have been fighting for a year and a half in Italy may think that your part in bringing a certain victory within sight has been overshadowed by more spectacular fighting on the Western front. I can assure you that your comrades in Belgium and Holland realize how much

* See Map 6

you have contributed to the defeat of the Hun. The Fifth and Eighth Armies are containing more than twenty-five German divisions, divisions which Hitler desperately needs to defend Germany itself. Since the bitter Christmas Day at Ortona, you have smashed through two strong prepared German defence lines, the Hitler and the Gothic Lines, and have carried the fighting onto the plains of Lombardy, making it possible for allied aircraft to bomb Germany from Italian bases.

You have now completed your part in the first phase of the present operation, under adverse weather conditions and over water-logged terrain. Since 1 Dec you have cleared the enemy from more than 145 square miles of Italian territory - sufficient for a two and one-half acre allotment for each Canadian soldier in Italy. You have forced the enemy from three strong natural defence lines, liberated a city, Ravenna, four towns, thirty villages and nearly one thousand smaller inhabited places, and you have materially assisted 5 Corps in the capture of Faenza. You have forced the enemy commander to withdraw a division from another part of the front in order to reinforce this sector and you have now severely mauled this new division.

You have taken more than 1,600 prisoners and have killed or wounded probably twice that number of enemy. All arms and services have done their part in this task. The gunners have smashed the enemy's defences with over 1200 3-ton lorry-loads of shells -- 184,000 rounds -- and on more than one occasion have broken up enemy counter-attacks. In addition to opening more than 200 miles of road, the sappers have erected more than a half a mile of bridging. Many of the twenty-nine bridges were completed under hostile mortar and artillery fire. The Signals have laid down some 2600 miles of field cable, providing communications without which control of the battles would have been impossible. Despatch riders have delivered since 1 Dec no less than 28,000 packets.

(W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, December 1944: Appx 14)

5 CDN ARMD DIV ON THE SENIO, 21-31 DEC 44

267. The closing days of the old year saw 5 Cdn Armd Div engaged in a number of small-scale operations designed to clean-up its front along the Senio, and at the same time extend its right flank north-east between the Senio and the Naviglio towards Route 16 and Alfonsine. At this time considerable gaps existed in the line while the enemy still dominated the approaches to the east dyke, and in addition controlled the whole of the area on the right flank, north-east of Ir R.C. and Lan & Ren Scot R. F.D.L's along the Via San Antonio and G.G.H.G. advanced troop on the Naviglio (see para 196). Steps to roll back the enemy on the flank were taken that morning when two squadrons of G.G.H.G. moved into position on the Via San Antonio, one at the junction with the Via Rossetta, the other at that with

the Via Grattacoppa, and commenced to probe forward towards the next road, the Via Bellaria. In the afternoon, as 12 Cdn Inf Bde withdrew into reserve, Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div placed two companies of Lan & Ren Scot R. temporarily under command 11 Cdn Inf Bde as additional flank protection. By 1805 hours the Lanark sub-units had taken position near the south-eastern end of the Via San Antonio (413437 - 419433). (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 21 Dec 44; (H.S.) 244C5.016(D5): 5 Cdn Armd Div Intention, 21 Dec 44)

268. The only activity worthy of note during the afternoon of 21 Dec took place on the right flank, where G.G.H.G. made some progress. There, the right ("B") Squadron of the armoured regiment pushed forward to the vicinity of the Via Bellaria, where they occupied a number of buildings, Casa Bastogi (418446) and Casa Baldi-Randi (417448). At both these places the enemy was in evidence but withdrew without a fight as the tanks approached. A similar thrust by "A" Squadron to the east along the Via Rossetta, however, drew a spirited response from the enemy. There, he was not only dug in along the dykes on both sides of the river, but was actually occupying houses along the road itself. From all of these poured forth a heavy volume of small arms, mortar, and bazooka fire as the G.G.H.G. tanks moved up the road. Despite a close engagement of the enemy posts, the tanks were unable to silence them, so, after advancing several hundred yards, they withdrew late in the afternoon into their original positions. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 21-22 Dec 44; G.G.H.G. History Chapter VIII)(See Map 3)

269. On the following day, 22 Dec, 11 Cdn Inf Bde effected certain changes in unit dispositions along its front. On the left, between Fusignano and the inter-divisional boundary, C.B. Highrs advanced its F.D.L's slightly (to the line 381431-377425-373420). In the centre, Perth R. relieved Ir R.C. of responsibility for the sector between the Via Chiara and Fusignano. The latter unit took over the right flank of the brigade along Via San Antonio, and at 1615 hours relieved Lan & Ren Scot R. near the Fosso Munio. The Lanarks then ceased to be under command 11 Cdn Inf Bde and moved back to Ravenna. By the night 22/23 Dec the enemy had apparently considerably strengthened his posts on the east bank of the Senio. For, along the whole front, the patrols ran into heavy M.M.G. and mortar fire and suffered a number of casualties. Despite this C.B. Highrs established an advanced post on the floodbank in the area of its left sub-unit. In this sector alone the enemy had 12 M.G. posts on the near bank of the river. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 22-23 Dec 44; W.D., C.B. Highrs, 22 Dec 44; W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 22 Dec 44)

270. In the meantime, on the morning of 22 Dec, Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div had assigned to G.G.H.G. the task of clearing the east bank of the Senio from the right flank of 11 Cdn Inf Bde up to the line of the railway. To assist the armoured unit in driving the enemy from the built-up areas along the Via Rossetta, "B" Coy Ir R.C. was placed under its command. This combined infantry-tank force was known, from the name of its commander, Lt-Col A.K. Jordan, E.D., commanding officer of G.G.H.G., as "Jordan Force". The ground over which "Jordan Force" was to operate during the several days of its existence is described in the following passage from the G.G.H.G. history:

...bounded by the Senio on the north and the Naviglio on the south, forming a quadrilateral running four miles to the north-east, and narrowing from a width of two miles along the Via Chiara, to less than a mile at Highway 16. At each end of the Via Chiara, a main lateral road ran out to Highway 16. The Via Naviglio, along the bottom, ran north of the Canal which bore the same name and closely followed its course, but the Via Rossetta followed the Senio for only a third of the way, when it swung off at a sharper angle, reaching Highway 16 one hundred yards north of the Via Naviglio. A minor track continued below the bank. These two main laterals were joined and the area criss-crossed by a variety of tracks and footpaths, but the Fosso Munio, which ran parallel and north of the Via Naviglio was a complete tank obstacle. On the top right hand corner, the town of Alfonsine sprawled across both sides of the Senio, west of Highway 16. The whole area was flat, but the trees and hedgerows provided some cover and the ground was sufficiently firm to allow cross country manoeuvre. The weather was dry throughout most of the period, so we were seldom confined to roads.

(G.G.H.G. Regimental History Chapter VIII)

271. During the same morning (22 Dec), one troop of "A" Squadron made a cross country run to the Via Bellaria and north along this road to the vicinity of the Via Rossetta, where they engaged in a fire fight with the enemy. When they had exhausted their supply of ammunition, the tanks withdrew south along the Via Bellaria to Casa Bastogi. In view of the spirited reaction of the enemy, Lt-Col Jordan decided to put in an infantry assault along the Via Rossetta that night under cover of darkness. As yet, however, the enemy, opposite "B" Squadron, had shown little inclination to hold his ground. There G.G.H.G. advanced east from the Via Bellaria and seized C. Fuschini (421443), a house on the right 400 yards from the Munio, and Casa Granaroli (422447), a building 400 yards east of Casa Bastogi. In the afternoon the D.A.F. took advantage of a slight improvement in flying conditions to put in "PIG"^x attacks along the Via Rossetta and Via Naviglio east of the forward troop positions:

These were not the succulent, little animals, looted from the Itie farmyards, but a new form of tactical air support, which involved a low level strafing

x This type of attack was improvised during the last period of ops and is best described as a "bad weather TIMOTHY". When low cloud made bombing impossible, necessity once more became the mother of invention, and attempts were made to carry out strafing attacks at under 1,000 ft. These attempts proved so successful that this method of attack became generally adopted.

((H.S.)249C5.(D15): Report on Air Operations in Support of 1 Cdn Corps, 2 Dec 44 - 5 Jan 45)

expedition on enemy targets, in extremely close proximity to the line of our forward troops. The first Pig strafed the dyke along the Via Rossetta with its cannon and machine guns, A Squadron having laid down red smoke ... to guide the planes in, and mark our forward positions. The second Pig was subject to much less preparation and came in very suddenly on the house along the Naviglio a mile north east of C Squadron. The forward troops were nicked by the beginning of the fire, and for a terrified moment, we thought the aircraft was going to attack our own troops. Fortunately no damage was done and the Pig got the enemy position.

(G.G.H.G. Regimental History)

That night the Ir R.C. company near the Munio advanced and took up new positions between Casa Fuschini and the crossing of the Via Bellaria over the Fosso Munio (423439). Thus, as "B" Coy Ir R.C. prepared to launch its attack, the only remaining enemy positions west of the Via Bellaria were those facing it astride the Via Rossetta. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 22 Dec; W.D., G.G.H.G., 22 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 22 Dec 44)

272. At 2220 hours (22 Dec) Ir R.C. supported by "Wasp" flamethrowers opened its attack along the Via Rossetta. As they advanced eastwards the Irish encountered increasingly heavy opposition and eventually they called the "Wasps" forward to clear the way. "The horrified screams of the Germans bore loud and eloquent witness to the effectiveness of the flamethrowers" (G.G.H.G. History). In the face of this attack, the enemy had no alternative but to fall back, and by 0300 hours the Irish had reached the junction of the Via Bellaria and the Via Rossetta and established a firm position. Unfortunately as the flamethrowers had by this time exhausted their supply of fuel, the enemy were able to reestablish themselves on the dyke. Tanks of G.G.H.G. on the Via Bellaria attempted to give fire support, but so close was the fighting in the darkness that they were able to render only limited assistance. During the night, however, a G.G.H.G. squadron moved into fire positions on the Via Bellaria and the two tracks lying respectively 400 and 700 yards east of it, and after first light kept the enemy on the dyke under heavy fire. The latter replied with bazooka and mortar fire, and succeeded in knocking out one Stuart belonging to the left-hand troop. In spite of a steadily increasing fall of snow which gradually reduced the range of vision until it was almost zero, the tanks continued to fire until just before last light. At that time, although the Irish "B" Company held the road junction, the enemy had regained control of the Via Rossetta between the Via Bellaria and the Via San Antonio. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 22-23 Dec 44; W.D., G.G.H.G., 23 Dec 44; W.D., Ir R.C., 23 Dec 44)

273. On the following morning (23 Dec) Lt-Col Jordan received a second Ir R.C. company ("C") under command, and made plans to resume the attack that night. This time Lt-Col Jordan intended to by-pass the strong enemy positions along the Senio by an advance across country to the Via Utili, 700 yards to the east of the Via Bellaria, then north along it to the Via Rossetta, and along the last-named road to its junction a mile farther to the east with the Via Bastogi.

This attack, which began at midnight, made good progress until 0215 hours when three of the tanks struck mines. The force was at that time within a few hundred yards of the Via Utili-Via Rossetta junction, and Lt-Col Jordan ordered them to consolidate for the night while the Irish pioneers found a way through the minefield. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 23-24 Dec 44; G.G.H.G. Regimental History, Chapter VIII; W.D., G.G.H.G., 23-24 Dec 44). On the following morning, 24 Dec a second squadron of G.G.H.G. left its harbour area on the Via Bellaria and struck off across country towards the Via Bastogi. By 1000 hours it was on this road and moving south towards the Fosso Munio. In the vicinity of the Munio the squadron was for a time under artillery fire, and the assault troop accompanying it encountered anti-personnel mines which caused some casualties. During the afternoon Jordan Force took up firm positions covering the line of the Via Bastogi between the Via Rossetta and the Canale Naviglio. That night the Engineers, after constructing a barrel culvert over the Munio and sweeping for mines, opened the Naviglio - Bastogi route for traffic. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 24 Dec 44; H.Q., R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 24 Dec 44; G.G.H.G. Regimental History Chapter VIII). During the day Ir R.C., using "Wasps" and with a troop of tanks in support, attacked east along the Via Rossetta, and shortly after last light linked up with its company at the Via Bellaria junction. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 24 Dec 44)

274. During the intervening period Perth R. and C.B. Highrs continued to mop-up enemy positions along the east bank on their respective fronts. During 23 Dec, C.B. Highrs, supported by the tanks of Ld S.H., cleared the enemy from east of the Senio between the Fusignano bridge and the boundary with 1 Cdn Inf Div. In Perth R. sector, however, the enemy proved somewhat harder to budge. By 1950 hours, 23 Dec, the Perths had secured the river line between the Via San Antonio and the Via Chiara, and, on the following day, moved against the enemy positions on their left. At 0555 hours on 24 Dec one platoon reached Casa Tesselli (391441), where it encountered heavy machine gun and mortar fire. Bringing down mortar fire on the buildings, the Perth platoon, supported by a troop of tanks, put in an attack, and by 1350 hours had occupied the place and reached the dyke behind it. But an enemy post in another house (398439) on the Via Rossetta several hundred yards west of Casa Tesselli barred further progress that night. On Christmas Day, in the afternoon, the Perths seized this latter place, and that night faced up to the Senio near the Fusignano bridge. Between them the three units of 11 Cdn Inf Bde now controlled nearly 6,000 yards of the east bank of the Senio, from the inter-divisional boundary to opposite the Via Rossetta - Via Bellaria junction. In these positions until their relief by units of 12 Cdn Inf Bde on 27 Dec, they occupied a holding role only, patrols, sniping duels and interchanges of mortar and artillery fire being the chief activities. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 23-24 Dec 44; W.D., C.B. Highrs, 23-27 Dec 44; W.D., Ir R.C., 23-27 Dec 44)

275. At Headquarters, 5 Cdn Armd Div, and in the unit lines of 12 Cdn Inf Bde, the divisional artillery and most of the armoured units, Christmas Day 1944, the sixth of the war, was celebrated in the usual fashion. Typical of the unit dinners was that of Ian & Ren Scot R., at which, according to the unit diarist:

Each man received 2 bottles of beer, chocolate and punch as he came through the meal line. The meal consisted of turkey and other fowl, the usual vegetables with plum pudding and sauce for dessert. At the tables there were oranges, nuts, fruit cake and mince pie for everyone. Though it was crowded the first Christmas party of the Lanark and Renfrews was a success. The plentiful supply of beer and punch made the situation very fluid.

The C.B. Highrs pipe band was pressed into service for the men's dinner and later appeared at the Sergeant's and Officer's dinners.

(W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 25 Dec 44)

The Headquarters and battalions of 11 Cdn Inf Bde, however, spent the day in the line. There, although the men enjoyed the traditional Christmas fare, the surroundings were not so pleasant. At H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, in fact, officers were warned "to wear their flannel long underwear in case sufficient heat is not obtained in the Mess by dinner time". (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 24 Dec 44). The food came forward in the ration trucks, and was consumed mainly in company lines. This was 11 Cdn Inf Bde's first Christmas so spent and, for this reason, was accepted as their due - the unit diarist of C.B. Highrs records:

This, our second Christmas in a theatre of operations and our first in the line, will certainly be the least celebrated we've had yet, but it is hoped it will pass without much enemy activity, and no doubt it will. However, we have to take our turn at these things and all ranks are taking it in good part.

(W.D., C.B. Highrs, 25 Dec 44)

Certainly C.B. Highrs had no intention of disturbing the peace on the 25th, and their commanding officer gave orders that the artillery and mortars in that sector would not fire except in retaliation (*ibid*). In the event, except on the Perth R. front, all unit areas remained quiet during the day, as both sides made the most of this, at best, cheerless Christmas.

276. On the evening of 27 Dec, at 2200 hours, 12 Cdn Inf Bde relieved 11 Cdn Inf Bde of all its commitments along the east bank of the Senio between the boundary with 1 Cdn Inf Div and the line of the Via Bastogi. At the same time Ld S.H. and 82 A. Tk Bty R.C.A. (plus one 17 pr tp) passed from under command the latter to under command the former brigade. Unit takeovers - Lan & Ren Scot R., 4 P.L.D.G., and Westmr R. relieving C.B. Highrs, Perth R. and Ir R.C. respectively - were in all cases completed without incident by 2300 hours. At this time all three battalions of 12 Cdn Inf Bde were organized on a three company basis, for P.L.D.G. and Lan & Ren Scot R. had not as yet received sufficient replacements to make up for their losses in the December fighting - Westmr R. of course was normally so organized. Thus, while 11 Cdn Inf Bde had had 12 rifle companies with which to hold the line and form unit reserves, 12 Cdn Inf Bde had only nine with which to carry out the same tasks. Accordingly certain changes had to be made in unit sectors. On the left, Lan & Ren Scot R., by forming a

reserve from their support company, were able to take over, company for company, from C.B. Highrs. In addition, they extended to the right to occupy the former Perth post near the Fusignano bridge.* P.L.D.G. also shifted right to include 1,000 yards of the Senio bank to the north-east of the Via San Antonio within its sector. On the right flank Westmr R. moved into the positions previously occupied by the three Irish companies at the Via Rossetta - Via Bellaria road junction and at the opposite ends of the Via Bastogi. Upon completion of the relief, the Headquarters and units of 11 Cdn Inf Bde moved back to Ravenna into the former billets of 12 Cdn Inf Bde for a well-deserved but, in the event, short period of rest. ((H.S.)244C5.013(D4): Report on Operations 12 Cdn Inf Bde period 27 Dec 44 to 8 Jan 45; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 27-28 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Dec 44; (H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): Lan & Ren Scot R., Report on Operations, 27 Dec 44 to 8 Jan 45)

277. During its first two days in the line, 12 Cdn Inf Bde made a special effort to obtain fresh identifications of the enemy troops in this sector. For German activity on the night 26/27 Dec had led to the belief that he was carrying out reliefs. Intelligence 1 Cdn Corps felt that:

Something odd is going on in our Northern sector. This evening at 1900 hours heavy vehicle movement including tracks was heard ... on the lateral roads N of the SENIO. At 2000 hours heavy mortar fire, MG and arty fire, opened up NE of Fusignano. The general impression was that this was a well tied in fire plan designed to hide vehicle movement. Last night, similar tactics were used on a smaller scale.

It may be that a relief is going in 114 Jaeger Div's sector, but the only very skimpy clue, apart from the very heavy traffic reported both by day and night, was the employment of phosphorous projectiles fired at 4145. This may be significant, as phosphorous had not been used on our front until now.

(W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 114, 1 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summary No. 191, 26 Dec 44)

Further support was lent to this belief on 27 Dec by a civilian report received by "A" Squadron G.G.H.G. that S.S. troops had moved into La Margharita (439463), a house on the Via Rossetta 700 yards to the northeast of them. In an attempt to confirm this report, a Westmr R. company, supported by the guns of "A" Squadron, put in an attack on this place on the following day (28 Dec). This attack, in which the Westminsters suffered eight casualties, proved unsuccessful, due to the minefields and the strong opposition encountered. That night, although all units patrolled extensively in an effort to obtain prisoners, they failed to make contact. Finally on the night 29/30 Dec an enterprising Lan & Ren Scot R. patrol killed two enemy in a slit trench and brought back their uniform and documents. From these a battalion of 16 S.S.Pz Gr Div Reichsfuhrer was identified in the sector opposite the brigade left flank. Although this indicated that the new division had relieved 98 Inf

* Upon the completion of the reliefs the three battalions of 12 Cdn Inf Bde were located as follows: P.L.D.G. at 396435, 395439 and 402445; Lan & Ren Scot R. 371421, 384423 and 384428; Westmr R. 434459, 438452 and 414452. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 27 Dec 44)

Div, it did not entirely discount the earlier civilian report of S.S. troops on the brigade right flank, and it remained possible that the S.S. division had also replaced 114 Jaeger Div south of Alfonsine. If this was so, the Jaeger Division, with a shorter line, would be in a position either to thicken up its more vulnerable areas or provide an immediate reserve. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report, op cit; 1 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summary No. 195, 30 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 100, 31 Dec 44; W.D., Westmr R., 28 Dec 44)

278. Late on 28 Dec a squadron of Ld S.H. replaced the G.G.H.G. sub-units with Westmr R., and the Horse Guards then withdrew into reserve and rest at Piangipane. Then on the following day at 2200 hours Westmr R. moved out, handing over its positions to 1st Battalion Welch Regiment of 9 (Brit) Armd Bde. Westmr R. then concentrated near Villanova, where they were on short notice to go forward, in the event of an enemy attack, and establish a firm base on the Fosso Munio. Command of the sector lying north-east of the Via San Antonio now passed to 9 Armd Bde, leaving 12 Cdn Inf Bde a greatly reduced front. Still, however, the Canadian brigade remained very thin on the ground in the forward sector. Through the consequent gaps between unit and sub-unit areas, the enemy infiltrated to reestablish weapon posts on the east dyke, and harass the scattered Canadian positions. During the afternoon of 30 Dec, P.L.D.G., using portable flamethrowers (Life-buoys) and with tank support, knocked out four such M.G. posts on the east bank near Casa Tesselli. That night enemy fighting patrols crossed to the east bank in two places and attacked platoon positions of Lan & Ren Scot R. Both these attacks, which came in on the brigade left flank between the Lanarks and R.C.D., were beaten off with loss to the enemy. On the next night (31 Dec) the Germans struck at the left forward company of P.L.D.G. This attack was preceded by a 20 minute artillery concentration on the company area and caused battalion headquarters, in anticipation of a stronger enemy effort than proved to be the case, to order all companies to stand-to. Then at 2200 hours, just as the attack came in, an enemy demolition party blew down one wall of the company headquarters burying the line set and wireless set and cutting all communications. The situation became quite obscure, and Brigade Headquarters alerted Westmr R. placing them on immediate notice to move forward. Actually the P.L.D.G. sub-unit concerned had restored the situation by 2240 hours, and driven the enemy, estimated to be about 28 in number, back across the river. (W.D., G.G.H.G., 28 Dec; (H.S.) 274B9; 008(D1); W.D., H.Q. 9 Armd Bde Gp, 29 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., P.L.D.G., 30-31 Dec 44; W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 30-31 Dec 44; W.D., Westmr R., 31 Dec 44)

279. As the old year came to a close both sides put on an artillery display; the enemy firing anti-aircraft tracers and flares into the air, the Canadians artillery shells into the German positions. On 30 Dec Army Group Headquarters decided to call off the offensive, and ordered Eighth Army to halt on the line of the Senio for the winter months. On the same day, Headquarters 12 Cdn Inf Bde ordered its units to construct a defensive lay-out by sandbagging, wiring, and laying minefields. (W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 31 Dec 44; W.D., P.L.D.G., 31 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 1 Jan 45)

MINOR OPERATIONS AGAINST THE ENEMY SALIENT ON THE LEFT FLANK
1 CDN INF DIV, 26 - 31 Dec 44

280. Although the enemy withdrew on 21 Dec in the central sector of the front, he retained two important salients on either flank of 1 Cdn Corps. That in the 1 Cdn Inf Div sector ran from just north of Cotignola, where the Naviglio runs only 800 yards from the Senio, along the canal to the Via Madrara bridge then east to the Fosso Vecchio and south to the inter-corps boundary. (See Map 6). The enemy forces holding this salient were believed to be from 278 and 356 Infantry Divisions. At Christmas the possibility of a Canadian attack across the Senio still existed and a safe left flank was thus of vital importance to 1 Cdn Inf Div.* Accordingly Headquarters 1 Cdn Inf Div ordered 1 Cdn Inf Bde to take immediate steps to clear the salient. (W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 123, Intelligence Summary No. 193; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Dec 44)

281. On Boxing Day, 1 Cdn Inf Bde, using R.C.R. supported by a troop of tanks, thrust south between the Vecchio and the Naviglio in an attempt to turn the enemy's Vecchio defences from the rear. At first light, R.C.R. attacked and, at 0800 hours, reached the track 500 yards south of the Via Madrara. There, after a stiff fire fight in which both sides suffered casualties, Lt-Col Reid's men cleared a number of enemy-held houses (at 368341) lying about 200 yards from the Naviglio. At 0930 hours the enemy, preceded by artillery and mortar fire, counter-attacked and retook the position. R.C.R. then withdrew to the Via Madrara. (W.D., R.C.R., 26 Dec 44). During the same morning 48 Highrs moved into position south of the railway and due east of Granarolo. In the afternoon the Highlanders probed forward towards the crossing of the Naviglio and Vecchio** but came under heavy small arms fire and, after two attempts to continue had failed, withdrew. It was apparent that the enemy was determined to hold all along the 1 Cdn Inf Bde front, and that, if he was to be driven back, a more powerful attack would be necessary. At once Brigade Headquarters made plans for the two battalions, supported by tanks and flamethrowers and artillery and mortar fire, to put in a strong attack that night. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 26 Dec 44; W.D., 48 Highrs, 26 Dec 44). R.C.R. was to open the attack with one sub-unit accompanied by tanks directed against the houses at the scene of the morning's action. Following this a second company using flamethrowers would move up the west bank of the Vecchio and strike the enemy there on the flank. Once R.C.R. was underway 48 Highrs would advance to the Vecchio on its front. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx "A", 1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 26 Dec 44)

* The plan of an intended attack across the Senio in the Cotignola area is given in the War Diary of 48 Highrs (W.D., 48 Highrs, 25 Dec 44).

** The upper reaches of the Fosso Vecchio lie west of the Canale Naviglio but a few hundred yards north of Granarolo it passes under the latter canal and thereafter follows a course to the east of it.

282. The attack began at 2300 hours and met with misfortune from the beginning. The tanks moving up on the Via Madrara had difficulty in getting across an ARK (378341) spanning the Vecchio. While the R.C.R. company was awaiting the arrival of the armour in its F.U.P., it came under enemy D.F., became disorganized, and suffered considerable casualties. Enemy S.P. guns, apparently moved into the area prior to the attack, controlled the woods, and the tanks and flame-throwers were able to give very little support. Although R.C.R. endeavoured to get forward without support, the opposition proved so strong that it made no headway. On the left, 48 Highrs again encountered stiff resistance at the Vecchio, and sustained 15 casualties. By daybreak both battalions were back in their former positions. Apart from more clearly defining the enemy F.D.Ls., the attack had achieved nothing. (W.Ds., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, R.C.R., 48 Highrs, 27 Dec 44)

283. At Divisional Headquarters, several plans for continuing the advance across the Senio were being discussed but, due to the uncertainty at Army level (see para 325), no single plan was firm. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 27 Dec 44). On 26 Dec, L. Edmn R. relieved Seaforth of C., the latter regiment going into reserve in the town of Russi for its "Christmas" rest. On the 27th, after the failure of 1 Cdn Inf Bde attacks, H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to prepare a full scale attack in this sector, but no definite date was set for its beginning. Regrouping in preparation for the intended attack began almost immediately. That night, 27/28 Dec, 3 Cdn Inf Bde commenced the relief of 1 Cdn Inf Bde - from right to left Carlt & York R. and West N.S.R. relieving R.C.R. and 48 Highrs - and, at midday on the 28th, assumed command of the sector from the Russi - Lugo railway crossing over the Senio, where R. 22e R. took over from L. Edmn R. of 2 Cdn Inf Bde, to the inter-corps boundary on the Lamone. On the completion of the relief, 1 Cdn Inf Bde moved into reserve with its headquarters at Godo. The divisional intention was that in its new sector 3 Cdn Inf Bde would operate in a holding role only, while preparations were made for 2 Cdn Inf Bde to attack through it against the enemy salient. The latter formation was now resting, with its headquarters at Bagnacavallo, the Seaforth of C. and L. Edmn R. in the Russi area, and P.P.C.L.I. at Borg di Stecch. The last two units, however, were kept at one hour's readiness to move forward in the event of an enemy attack. For the divisional front was still thinly held, especially on the right where R.C.D. continued to hold an extensive sector. Fortunately activity in that area was confined to patrol clashes and artillery exchanges. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 27-28 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 26-28 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 27-28 Dec 44; W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.), 26-27 Dec 44)

284. Immediately on taking over the left divisional sector, Brigadier Bernatchez ordered active patrolling on all battalion fronts. On the left, during the night 27/28 Dec, West N.S.R. contacted the Royal Fusiliers. Enemy vehicle movement on 3 Cdn Inf Bde front during the day indicated the possibility of an enemy counter attack, and caused 1 Cdn Inf Div to take steps to meet any such eventuality. For purposes of defence, the divisional front was now organized in two sectors, right R.C.D. and R. 22e R., and left Carlt & York R. and West N.S.R., while, as noted above, two units of 2 Cdn Inf Bde were available on short notice to act in a counter attack role. In addition the bridges over the Vecchio and

Lamone were prepared for demolition. For at this time the German offensive in Northwest Europe was in full swing, while on Fifth Army front the enemy had penetrated the American defences to a depth of several miles. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 27-30 Dec 44). The forward units made careful preparations to fight a defensive battle; from battalion headquarters R. 22e R. the following message went out to all companies:

There has been a considerable amount of enemy vehicle movement on our front today and it is believed the enemy may put in a counter attack at any time. In the past few days 5th Army troops have fallen back a distance of nine kilometers in the face of strong German counter-attacks; so a counter attack on our front is also very probable. All companies will be on the alert at all times. Fire plans for 2" mortars and LMGs will be laid down and platoon defences organized. Each company will keep one platoon in reserve to be used as a counter attack reserve. An additional 2,000 rds SA Ammunition, 1 box 36 grenades, flares illuminating and 50 HE 2" mortar bombs will be sent to each company. The Anti-tank platoon is now being used as an infantry company. If at any time the enemy starts a heavy bombardment on our front, every one will take up positions in slit trenches ... Breakfast will be served at first light only. Arty, 4.2" Mortars 3" Mortars and MMG DF tasks have all been laid down. Under no circumstances will there be any retreat. The P.P.C.L.I. is now formed up as counter attack reserve.

(W.D., R 22e R., 28 Dec 44)

285. During the last three days of the old year, although 3 Cdn Inf Bde carried out no full scale attacks on its front, all three battalions kept up pressure on the enemy by organized coy attacks and fighting patrols. On 29 Dec, Carlt & York R. extended its battalion front to the right, and relieved the left coy of R. 22e R. Brigade Headquarters then ordered the latter battalion to take up positions on the east dyke of the Senio, and dominate the river in its area. Using flamethrowers R. 22e R. drove the enemy from a number of his weapon pits along the dyke, but, due to the aggressive nature of the enemy defence, found the captured positions almost untenable. By using under-water foot-bridges the German continued to have access to the east dyke, and clashes between patrols and defended posts, in which both sides suffered prisoner losses, were comparatively frequent. Meanwhile Carlt & York R., despite attacks at company strength on the 29th and 30th, had failed to dislodge the enemy on their front. West N.S.R. activity was limited entirely to active patrolling during this period. Contact with 5 Corps was maintained, and tanks in the brigade sector made daily shoots on enemy positions in Granarolo. (W.Ds., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, R. 22e R., Carlt & York R., West N.S.R., 28-31 Dec 44)

286. In the right divisional sector R.C.D. made no effort to occupy the Senio dykes, but its fighting patrols clashed with the enemy daily on the narrow "No-Man's Land" along the approaches to the east dyke of the river. The odd

prisoner was acquired during day and night forays into the enemy outposts, and interrogation of these confirmed the presence of units of 16 S.S. P.G. Div Reichsfuhrer (see also para 277). By continuing to use R.C.D. and 2 L.A.A. Regt in an infantry role with responsibility for nearly half the divisional front, 1 Cdn Inf Div was able to give its tired infantry component a much greater opportunity to rest. R.C.D. was by this time quite accustomed to operating as infantry, for it had had considerable experience of dismounted action since the beginning of the month.* 2 L.A.A. Regt., on the other hand, had been drafted into an infantry role as recently as 24 Dec. An excerpt from the unit war diary indicated, however, that the unit reacted favourably to the new assignment:

Major C S MacKay is called to Div Arty and comes back with the news that we are going into the line tomorrow as infantry to relieve our 1 Div Infantry who deserve a rest more than we do.

A and B Coys are formed up on parade and inspected by Major C S MacKay and it was a very impressive parade to see. All the boys with their rifles and tommy guns, web eqpt and steel helmets looking as tough as old infantrymen and still wearing a smile, determined to hold the line against anything the Germans can put up.

(W.D., 2 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, December 1944:
Appx 6, 54 Lt A.A. Bty, 23-24 Dec 44)

287. As the year 1944 came to a close it became known that the original 1 Cdn Corps plan to cross the Santerno and capture Massa Lombarda and Medicina had been cancelled. H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div on 30 Dec records that "The very near plan calls for this fmn to close up to the Senio and consolidate there for the winter". This was no doubt welcome news to the division that had fought from Ortona through three strongly defended lines (Gustav-Hitler-Gothic) almost to the valley of the Po. At this time, however, it was not foreseen that the Lamone assault was to be the last important operation in Italy, and that their next campaign would be with their fellow Canadians in Northwest Europe. The final entry in the Divisional War Diary of December sounds a note of confidence, and gives a picture of the determination and spirit of Canada's veteran Division:

So ends 1944, the fifth year of the war and as the clock strikes twelve, proud of its achievements 1 Cdn Inf Div faces 1945 with hope and confidence.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 31 Dec 44)

288. Looking forward to the campaigns of 1945, Gen Foulkes called together at Ravenna on 31 Dec all officers of the Corps down to, and including, unit commanders. In a prepared address he pointed out very frankly some of the mistakes made by officers under his command during the past

* For details on R.C.D. dismounted organization see Report on R.C.D. Dismounted Ops, 30 Nov 44 - 7 Jan 45 appended to W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, January 1945.

month. He first referred to the fact that the Corps had sustained over 2,000 casualties in a little over three weeks of fighting, and that 22 officers and 420 O.Rs.* of that total were "missing". This he pointed out was out of all proportion, and concluded that there must be something wrong with leadership. This part of General Foulkes' remarks "hit home" to 1 Cdn Inf Div (R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R., both having sustained severe losses on 5 Dec). The following extract from a condensation of the Corps Commander's address is of interest:

Forcing a river crossing necessitates having a carefully teed up plan. Every detail should be teed up...Our assaults go well, but get supporting weapons across fast. Part of every Comd's plan should be to get A. Tk guns across river within two hrs of crossing...A. Tk mines should be carried to posn in front of F.D.L's...Coy comds must ensure that tps when well started on objective, do not 'come back'. Make sure that sp arms are with them and tps available to back them up and Canadian troops will not come back.

(W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps,
December 1944: Appx 131, Corps Comd's
Address at Ravenna, 31 Dec 44)

THE CLEARING OF THE RIGHT FLANK UP TO THE FIUME RENO -
5 CDN ARMD DIV, 2 - 6 JAN 45

289. On 28 Dec Lt-Gen Foulkes received advice from Headquarters Eighth Army of the postponement of the Fifth Army offensive - abandoned altogether a few days later (see para 325) - and the consequent setting-back of the date for a fresh offensive by Eighth Army. For the present 1 Cdn Corps was to concentrate on the elimination of the German salients on its right and left flanks. There, at the close of the December offensive, the enemy remained east of the Senio in two places; one to the north of Ravenna, where the line ran from Porto Corsini, on the coast, across the marshes to cross the Lamone south of Conventello (4846), thence to the Senio west of Alfonsine (4547), making use of the several water obstacles south of the latter town; the other forward of the Senio between Cotignola and Granarolo and resting on the Canale Naviglio. Of first importance to Eighth Army should it resume the offensive, or, as subsequently proved to be the case, establish a winter defence line was the clearing of the first of these two areas. For

* Statistics provided by War Service Records D.V.A. in July 1949 give the casualties suffered by the Canadian Component A.A.I. during the period 1-21 Dec 44 as 32 officers and 516 other ranks killed or died of wounds, 108 officers and 1713 other ranks wounded and 13 officers and 199 other ranks prisoners of war, a total of 2,581 all ranks. Casualties of 1 Cdn Armd Bde, included in these figures, for the same period were 25 other ranks wounded. (Casualties - Italian Campaign)

the enemy sector north of Ravenna, although garrisoned only by the weak 114 Jaeger Division, covered the southern shore of the Valli di Comacchio, and afforded him a potential base from which to launch an attempt to recapture Ravenna; the bulge in the line on the Corps left was smaller and less useful to the enemy as a base for a counter-offensive or a spoiling attack. (See Map Florence - Rimini - Bologna Sector). (W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 28 Dec 44; pp 95-96)

290. The lie of the ground on the right flank favoured an attack launched in a north-easterly direction against the German switch line south of Conventello between the Lamone River and the Fosso Vecchio. Only one water obstacle, the Canale di Bonifica, lay lateral to an advance in this direction. Whereas the alternative route north from Ravenna passed through semi-inundated country, criss-crossed by numerous canals and ditches. On the other hand an operation mounted between the Lamone and the Vecchio would face the risk of an enemy counter-attack from the Alfonsine area against its left flank and rear. The risk was accepted, however, and an attack launched along this axis by 5 Cdn Armd Div on 2 Jan 45. (Ibid)

291. In preparation for the coming operation 5 Cdn Armd Div carried out considerable regrouping during the last week of December. As mentioned earlier in this report (para 276) on 27 Dec 12 Cdn Inf Bde relieved 11 Cdn Inf Bde, and the latter formation then withdrew into reserve at Ravenna. In the course of the following two days 9 Armd Bde, which, since 15 Dec, had held under Corps command the quiet sector between the railway and the coast, extended west of the Via Reale, and took over the larger part of the divisional front. The first of these reliefs took place on 28 Dec when 1 K.R.R.C.* replaced 5 Cdn Armd Asslt Tp and sub-units of 8 N.B.H. east of the Fosso Vetro between Route 16 and the Viazza Nuova. On the succeeding day 1 Welch relieved Westmr R., and the inter-brigade boundary shifted west to the line of the Via San Antonio. At 0600 hours, 30 Dec, 9 Armd Bde came under command 5 Cdn Armd Div, and the latter formation then assumed responsibility for the whole of the Corps front from the boundary with 1 Cdn Inf Div to the Adriatic. Thus the end of the year found 5 Cdn Armd Div deployed as follows: on the left 12 Cdn Inf Bde, with two squadrons of Ld S.H. in support, held the line of the Senio, with two of its battalions forward, and one in reserve behind the Munio; 9 Armd Bde held the remainder of the divisional front from the Via San Antonio to Porto Corsini; in rear, preparing for the coming attack were Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde and its three infantry units at Ravenna, and Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Bde, B.C.D., 8 N.B.H., and the remainder of Ld S.H., in the vicinity of Mezzano; in divisional reserve at Piangipane was G.G.H.G. ((H.S.)274B9,008(D1): War Diary 9 (Brit) Armd Bde, 29-30 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 28 Dec 44; W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 28-29 Dec 44)

292. In the early afternoon of 27 Dec, Maj-Gen Hoffmeister visited Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Bde where he conferred with Brigadier Cumberland on operations to clear the right flank. At this meeting Brigadier Cumberland learned:

* 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps.

that the task of advancing NORTH from MEZZANO to LAKE COMACCHIO and SAN ALBERTO had been given to the brigade. For the operation the CBH will come under command and it is expected that the job will be done by 5 Cdn Armd Bde (8 NBH) and CBH.

(W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 27 Dec 44)

By 29 Dec, however, possibly because of the changed situation resulting from the postponement of Fifth Army offensive, divisional headquarters had changed the plan. The revised plan called for a two-phase attack using two brigade headquarters and more than double the original strength of armour and infantry. In Phase I, 11 Cdn Inf Bde would capture Conventello, and break the enemy switch line between the Lamone and the Vetro. Phase II, in which 5 Cdn Armd Bde would pass through the infantry brigade and complete the task, would follow immediately. The divisional object, to clear the enemy from east of the Fosso Vetro and south of the Fiume Reno, would remain the same. (see Map 5). (Ibid, 29 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div History Part III)

293. From information received up to midnight 1 Jan 45, the intelligence staff at Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div was able to confirm that the enemy forces in the Conventello area consisted of III Bn 721 Jaeger Regiment. In so far as could be determined, this battalion, with an approximate strength of 250 men, was disposed with two companies manning a line of resistance running along the tracks between the Via al Conventello (at 475469) and the bend in the Lamone (4846), and from there covering the north bank of this river as far as the demolished bridge (497467) about 700 yards farther east. A third company of III Bn, positioned in Conventello, provided an immediate reserve. On the right of III Bn, in position behind the Vetro south and east of Alfonsine, was II Bn of 721 Regt. I Bn held the rest of the divisional front to the coast at Porto Corsini. An identification made by 1 Welch on the same day (1 Jan 45) confirmed an earlier report (para 277) that a unit of 16 S.S. P.G. Div had relieved 741 Jaeger Regiment in the sector south of Alfonsine. Although the new position of 741 Regt was not definitely known, reports from civilian sources indicated that it might now be in divisional reserve somewhere between Conventello and the Fiume Reno. It was considered that the morale of 114 Jaeger Division should be high, due partly to the long quiet period they had experienced on this part of the front, and partly to the recent enemy successes on other fronts. ((H.S.) 249C5.(D49): 5 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 101, 2 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, December 1944: Appx 6, 5 Cdn Armd Bde O.O. No. 5, 1 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx 9, 11 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 12, 31 Dec 44)

294. Working in close conjunction with each other and with 9 Armd Bde, 11 Cdn Inf Bde and 5 Cdn Armd Bde completed their plans of attack, and, on 31 Dec 44 and 1 Jan 45 respectively, issued their orders. The 11 Cdn Inf Bde plan called for an attack "on a 2 bn front and will be NOISY" (ibid). During the night 1/2 Jan 45 the assaulting battalions of 11 Cdn Inf Bde were to assemble in the area (464461 - 486462) between Route 16 and the Lamone River about a mile to the north of Mezzano. Then, in the early hours of the morning, the brigade, with Ir R.C. on the right

and Perth R. on the left, would launch its attack. Initially the 11 Cdn Inf Bde units would assault the III Bn 721st Regt switch-line, mentioned earlier in this report (para 293), then, pressing on, seize these following objectives: on the right, a group of houses lying just beyond the Lamone Abbandonato^{*} and immediately north of the bend in the river, and the road junction about 200 yards south of the village of Conventello; on the left, a building on the Via al Conventello opposite the south-eastern end of the Fosso Basilica, and then firm-up about 1,000 yards west of Conventello along a farm track leading from Casa Stasiol (483478) to the north side of the Fosso Basilica.^{**} Under command for this operation 11 Cdn Inf Bde would have one squadron of 8 N.B.H., two troops of crocodiles, and in addition one S.P. troop and one 17 pdr troop of 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt. The crocodiles would remain east of the Lamone until after H-hour, when they would move up, and go one troop under command each of the leading units. Similarly the squadron of tanks would not join the forward troops until first light. Working on a timed programme commencing at H-hour, the divisional artillery would bring down concentrations on the initial objectives until H plus 10. It would then lift, and engage arranged targets on the final objectives until the infantry were ready to assault them. Beginning at H plus 10, a 20 minute counter-mortar and counter-battery programme would be fired, after which all support of this type would be on call. Also included in the divisional artillery programme were, weather permitting, a smoke screen on the left flank; harassing fire on the Fosso Vetro bridges north of Conventello by two squadrons of Ld S.H., being employed as artillery; full searchlight illumination of the battle area, and directional fire by 5 L.A.A. Regt R.C.A. on the flanks of the attack. 10 Pd Sqn R.C.E. would prepare two assault up-routes from Route 16, on the left the Via al Conventello to the road junction (483474) south of the village, and, on the right, the track along the west bank of the Lamone to Conventello. On the Senio, 12 Cdn Inf Bde and 1 Cdn Inf Div would carry out diversionary disturbances from H plus 30 on. 1 K.R.R.C. of 9 Armd Bde would secure the area of the start line during the night 1/2 Jan 45. (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 5 Cdn Armd Div, January 1945: Appx 7, R.C.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div Fire Plan, 31 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, December 1944: Appx 6, 5 Cdn Armd Bde O.O. No. 5, 1 Jan 45)

* The former bed of the Lamone River. (See also footnote para 295)

** Unit objectives as detailed in the brigade operation order were as follows:

Initial Objectives	- Right	- group of houses 487467
	Left	- groups of houses 475469 - 477469 - 481468
Final Objectives	- Right	- Conventello road junction 486473 and group of buildings 491472
	Left	- road junction 483474 and buildings 481476 - 483478

(11 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No. 12, 31 Dec 44)

295. Immediately on the completion of Phase I by 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Cdn Armd Bde would commence the second phase of the attack. Using the Via Lamone as its axis,* 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), supported by C.B. Highrs, would push through Ir R.C. at Conventello, and advance at the best possible tank speed to secure the bridge (513513) over the Canale Di Bonifica. For their part, C.B. Highrs would have one company mounted on carriers, and a second prepared to mount the tanks, for the dash forward if opposition along the centre line failed to develop. When this force reached the Canale di Bonifica, the infantry would cross and seize a lodgment on the far side in the vicinity of the bridge mentioned above. At the same time, 8 N.B.H. would move up on the left and concentrate south of the canal, ready to pass through the bridge-head and capture San Alberto. Less one company, left behind to guard the crossing, C.B. Highrs would follow the latter unit into San Alberto and mop-up the town. In the final stage, 8 N.B.H. would provide left flank protection between the Bonifica and the Reno, while B.C.D. covered the right and exploited towards the sea. In the rear, 11 Cdn Inf Bde would cover the remainder of the Vetro flank, and clean out enemy pockets by-passed by 5 Cdn Armd Bde. In addition to C.B. Highrs, 5 Cdn Armd Bde would have under command one battery (less one troop) of 4 A. Tk Regt R.C.A. This unit would move in rear of 8 N.B.H. with the particular task of covering the Vetro crossings south of the Canale di Bonifica. The engineers would open a route along the centre line, and have assault boats ready for use by C.B. Highrs if necessary. From first light on 2 Jan 45 close air support would be available to 5 Cdn Armd Bde, and low level attacks ("PIGS") would be made on the centre line and on the roads leading west from it over the Fosso Vetro. Other weapons and equipment, such as Valentine bridge-laying tanks and crocodiles, would be available if required. (5 Cdn Armd Bde O.O. No. 5)

296. During the early hours of 2 Jan, Perth R. and Ir R.C. completed, without incident, the move forward into the F.U.Ps. At 0500 hours, as the artillery opened fire on the initial objectives, the two units, each with two companies up, crossed the strat line (487465 - 470467) - this lay roughly 300 to 400 yards south of the German F.D.Ls. By 0545 hours Perth R. elements had reached the lateral track near its junction with the Via al Conventello (476469), and shortly after an Ir R.C. company cleared the houses (482468), on the track, midway between the Perths and the river. Both units had met with opposition, the Irish killing 10 and taking four prisoners from III/721 Jaeger Regt. On the right near the river, the Irish sub-unit came under heavy artillery fire as it crossed the start line, suffered a number of casualties,

* ...the Via Savarna (or Via Lamone). It follows the course of the abandoned Lamone Canal - the river having turned eastward (488467) to cross the Lamone flats. The road - a wide secondary one - runs on top of a 20 foot embankment overlooking the first vine-bound fields and - south of La Cilla - the broad treeless fields crossing to Via Bosco. West of the road, the canal bed has been planted with poplar rows. They look about 15 years old.

and became slightly disorganized. It quickly reformed, however, and advanced to the houses at the river end of the lateral track. There by 0800 hours after heavy fighting it consolidated. In the meantime the second company of Perth R. had encountered stiff resistance, and for a time made little headway. At 0835 hours, however, this company, supported by a troop of 8 N.B.H., achieved success. With the enemy defences along the lateral track broken, both battalions launched their follow-up companies onto the final objectives. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, January 1945: Appx 12, 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 2 Jan 45; W.D., Perth R., 2 Jan 45; W.D., Ir R.C., 2 Jan 45)

297. Supported by tanks of 8 N.B.H., and with Tactical Air Force giving close and effective aid, the attackers made good headway. By 1050 hours, Perth R. had cleared the junction of the Via al Conventello near the small stream, Fosso Basilica, and captured 11 prisoners. Advancing against moderately heavy opposition from the enemy, they moved to the north of the Fosso Basilica, where by 1305 hours they had seized and occupied Casa Stasiol and the houses to the south of it near the Fosso Basilica (481476 - 483478). In the meantime the Irish, on their right, had cleared the Lamone dyke to just north of the bend in the river (4846). In addition Ir R.C. now held the line of the Via al Conventello to the south of the village with leading elements of one company in the village itself. By 1445 hours, after a stiff fight in the course of which a Panther tank was destroyed by the fire of the artillery and mortars directed by the Irish company commander, Ir R.C. had consolidated at the northern edge of Conventello. This completed Phase I of Operation "SYRIA",* an eight hour action which had cost III/721 Jaeger Regt 73 prisoners plus a not inconsiderable number of killed and wounded. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 2 Jan 45; W.D., Perth R. 2 Jan 45; W.D., Ir R.C., 2 Jan 45)

298. From Mezzano, where they had harboured the previous night, the lead squadrons of 5 Cdn Armd Bde moved into position along the lateral track in rear of 11 Cdn Inf Bde late that morning (2 Jan). Shortly after midday, with the success of Phase I assured, 8 N.B.H. on the left and B.C.D. on the right commenced the advance. By 1337 hours 8 N.B.H., following a north-north-west course across country, had reached Casa Stasiol, the most advanced position of Perth R. From there forward the rate of progress was fairly slow for, although the ground was flat, it was close

and enemy opposition was being met from both flanks as well as from the front. This consisted for the most part of S.Ps. and tks firing from behind buildings and from the dykes of the Bandonato (sic) which commanded our whole sector from the right.

((H.S.)244C5.013(D4): History of Operations
5 Cdn Armd Regt (8 N.B.H.) from 2 Jan 45 to
14 Jan 45)

On the right flank B.C.D. encountered a minefield south of Conventello which they had difficulty in by-passing, and it was 1400 hours before the unit reached the north end of the village. By that time 8 N.B.H. had reached a point only 300

* The code name assigned to the 5 Cdn Armd Div operation.

yards south of the Strada Molinazza - a road running from west of the Fosso Vetro across the brigade front to a junction with the Via Lamone. As they attempted to cross this road, the tanks encountered a ditch along its near side, which, defended as it was by "numbers of S.Ps. and Panthers firing from the north" (*ibid*), proved to be an anti-tank obstacle. As darkness approached 8 N.B.H., now two squadrons strong, consolidated south of the Strada Molinazza about 400 yards east of the Fosso Vetro. ((H.S.)244C5.015(D6): 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Jan 45; (H.S.)244C5.013(D4): 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.) Account of Ops, 1-6 Jan 45)

299. In the meantime at 1640 hours, B.C.D., "having engaged all houses, barns and haystacks on the way" (B.C.D. Report *op cit*), had arrived at the junction of Strada Molinazza and the Via Lamone. There the unit halted its advance and awaited the arrival of C.B. Highrs, now ordered forward by Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Bde. Apart from a few isolated machine gun posts, which had to be cleared from the houses on both sides of the road beyond Conventello, the move north of the Highlanders was uneventful. At 1930 hours the infantry unit linked up with B.C.D., and disposed for the night in square formation with two companies echeloned on either side of the Abbandonato, 400-600 yards north of the Strada Molinazza. Using a crossing over the latter discovered by the infantry, a troop of tanks crossed and harboured for the night with the right forward company. Later that night, to provide additional protection for 8 N.B.H., a rifle platoon of C.B. Highrs took up position with that unit. During the advance so far, 8 N.B.H. had taken 29 prisoners and C.B. Highrs 19, while B.C.D. claimed two enemy S.Ps. and a Panther knocked out. Casualties suffered in both equipment and personnel by these units were almost negligible. (B.C.D. Report; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Jan 45; (H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): Report on Operations of the C.B. Highrs for period 2 Jan to 13 Jan 45)

300. For the night 2/3 Jan 45, Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde ordered Perth R. to put out protective patrols on the left flank, while on the right Ir R.C. was directed to work east along the north bank of the Lamone River, and secure the ground in the vicinity of the demolished road bridge. There also the Irish would contact 7 H.* of 9 Armd Bde coming up from the south, and establish a protective screen behind which the engineers would construct a bridge. Since patrols had reported enemy posts in the vicinity of the bridge, the Irish Commander decided to put in a noisy attack using one rifle company and a troop of 8 N.B.H. with additional fire support on call from a squadron of B.C.D. and the divisional artillery. At 0100 hours the Irish pushed off with the tanks moving along the dyke on their right in close support. Meeting only light opposition the attack made good headway, and by 0320 hours Ir R.C. had secured the immediate vicinity of the crossing. At 0535 hours the Canadians contacted 7 H., and shortly after engineer reconnaissance parties arrived. By early morning of 4 Jan 45, the latter had completed the construction of a Class 30 Bailey at this place. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 2-3 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 3 Jan 45)

* 7th Queen's Own Hussars.

301. At 0500 hours on the morning of 3 Jan, the enemy commenced shelling heavily along the Lamone Abbandonato between Conventello and the church of S. Maria (498495) to the north of C.B. Highrs. This fire continued until 0630 hours, and was followed by a series of counter-attacks launched against C.B. Highrs. From the north-east down the dry river bed an enemy force, equipped with faustpatronen and with an estimated strength of 50, put in the heaviest of these attacks against the right forward company. The fighting continued until 0800 hours, by which time C.B. Highrs had beaten off all attacks, and inflicted considerable casualties on the enemy. In these actions the Canadian losses in personnel were slight, while equipment losses included an infantry jeep and a B.C.D. tank, the first destroyed, and the second put out of action, by faustpatronen fire. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 3 Jan 45; Report on Operations of C.B. Highrs, op cit; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Jan 45)

302. But these attacks failed to stop, or even to slow appreciably, the advance of 5 Cdn Armd Bde. For, shortly after the fighting ceased, both armoured units were again on the move towards the Bonifica. On the left during the night, 8 N.B.H. had discovered a crossing over the tanks obstacle on its front, and by 0830 hours had two troops across. Half an hour later the leading squadron was underway. The country, according to the unit report on these operations, was

if anything, rather worse than before. The fields were lined with rows of low pollarded trees, between which the grapevines were supported by steel wires stretched about six to nine feet above the ground. Not only was the visibility extremely bad, and limited in many places to 40 yards between rows of trees, but the wires were forever catching in the turret flaps and restricting the free traversing of the turrets.

(Operations 5 Cdn Armd Regt, op cit)

Nevertheless the tanks continued to make steady progress, and by 1349 hours had advanced some 2,500 yards north of Strada Molinazza to the track crossing at Casa Giozoi (494511). On the right, B.C.D. was now advancing on both sides of the Lamone Abbandonato. The right-hand squadron, which had participated in the Ir R.C. engagement during the night, moved off from its harbour near the Lamone at 0800 hours, and at 1005 hours reached the Abbandonato and contacted C.B. Highrs. From there the squadron followed a cross country course, for the road on the east side of the Abbandonato ran along the top of the dyke in full view of the enemy to the north and west. On the opposite side of the Abbandonato the second B.C.D. sub-unit was also making progress but against heavier opposition:

During the advance to PIGNATTA,* "C" Squadron encountered five separate groups of enemy armour, which included self-propelled guns, anti-tank guns and tanks...

(W.D., B.C.D., January 1945: Appx A,
Recommendation for the immediate award
of the M.C., 14 Jan 45)

* A building near the Abbandonato (at 502504) about 1,500 yards to the north of the Strada Molinazza junction.

By 1400 hours both squadrons had reached their immediate objective for the day, a line at right angles to the Abbandonato running through the road junction (501503) at Pignatta. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Jan 45; Operations 5 Cdn Armd Regt; B.C.D. Report)

303. Early in the afternoon, the enemy armour on the 5 Cdn Armd Bde front began to move north towards the Bonifica, and the advance quickened in pace. On the left 8 N.B.H. decided to make a dash for the Via Lamone bridge over the Canale di Bonifica by-passing any opposition which might remain. Shortly after 1400 hours the leading tanks of this unit arrived at the canal;

As C Sqn came near the bridge they saw a large number of the enemy on the far bank, some of them dug in but others standing in the open and clearly caught by surprise. C Sqn inflicted heavy casualties on them. While the rest of the sqn covered the approaches and the far bank from the SOUTH-WEST, one tp of tks and a sec of Reece Tp looked for a suitable place to get up from the low ground to the highway and to adv to the bridge. When they found a suitable place a tp of tks adv for the br but just as the first tk was about to drive on the br, the br was blown leaving gaps of 50 and 20 feet.

(W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 Jan 45)

304. Upon receipt of the news of the destruction of the bridge, Brigadier Cumberland quickly altered his plan, and ordered B.C.D. to start eastwards at once, and seize intact if possible the bridge carrying the Strada Antica del Bosco over the Bonifica. As the low ground to the east was no longer passable to tanks, B.C.D. was compelled to continue forward along the Abbandonato as far as the road junction (509509) 400 yards south of the Bonifica, and there turn along the road running south-east towards the railway. At 1615 hours the squadron was at some buildings (517503) midway between the Abbandonato and the railway. There, after a short fight with enemy infantry in which it took 11 prisoners, B.C.D. halted its advance. Following a conference with General Hoffmeister, Brigadier Cumberland disposed his command for the night with two squadrons of 8 N.B.H. and C.B. Highrs south of the Via Lamone bridge; Perth R., now under his command, the remaining 8 N.B.H. squadron, and a squadron of B.C.D., covering his left and rear from the area of Pignatta; and the main body of B.C.D. along the road between the Abbandonato and the railway. In addition he ordered C.B. Highrs to attempt to infiltrate across the Canale di Bonifica during the night. (B.C.D. Report; Operations of 5 Cdn Armd Regt; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 Jan 45)

305. Earlier on 3 Jan, to fill the gap on the left flank which the intended move north of Perth R. would create, H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div placed Westmr R. under command H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde.* Westmr R. arrived in the Brigade area that

* At the same time R.C.R. came under command 12 Cdn Inf Bde to replace the Westminsters as brigade reserve at Villanova (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1945: Appx 75, 1 Cdn Inf Div Operations Log, 3 Jan 45)

afternoon and at once relieved Perth R. The positions taken over lay about 700-900 yards back from the Fosso Vetro, and extended from the Strada Molinazza to just south of the Fosso Basilica. Three companies of 1 K.R.R.C. and elements of 12 L.* held the line of the Via al Conventello between Westmr R. and Route 16. (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, 3 Jan 45; W.D., Westmr R., 3 Jan 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, 3 Jan 45)

306. Early in the morning of 4 Jan the enemy finally launched his long expected attack against the vulnerable left flank of the 5 Cdn Armd Div advance. At about 0430 hours two enemy battalions, preceded by a half-hour artillery concentration, moved in on the 11 Cdn Inf Bde and 9 Armd Bde F.D.Ls. to the west and north-west of Conventello. Along most of the front the attackers failed to make headway, but, between the flanking companies of Westmr R. and 1 K.R.R.C., succeeded in cutting the Via al Conventello, and driving through along the track leading west to within 500 yards of the bend in the river. By then, however, the gap had been sealed off by the defensive fire of the divisional artillery, and the enemy was prevented from reinforcing his success. From the sides of the penetration Westmr R. and 1 K.R.R.C. kept up a steady volume of fire, and at 0745 hours a force composed of one company of Ir R.C. and a troop of 8 N.B.H. commenced to clean up the pocket. By 0900 hours the fighting had ceased, and the situation had returned to normal. (W.D., H.Q., R.C.A. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Jan 45; W.D., 9 Armd Bde, 4 Jan 45; W.D., Westmr R., 4 Jan 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 4 Jan 45)

307. To carry out this operation, for which he had entertained great hopes, the enemy had set up a comparatively substantial force consisting of three infantry battalions - 1 Bn 36 S.S. P.G. Regt, 16 S.S. Recce Bn and 26 Recce Bn, under the Commanding Officer of 36 S.S. P.G. Regt, Major Maier. The first two units named actually took part in the attack, but the third, which was held in reserve to exploit a breakthrough, was never committed. The weak point in the plan, as S.S. officer prisoners admitted, was the difficulty of passing forward supporting arms over the multiple canal obstacles east of Alfonsine. This difficulty was greatly increased by the D.A.F., which from 0815 hours onwards continually bombed and strafed between the Vetro and the Senio. In the main, however, it was the skill and steadiness of the defending infantry coupled with the devastating defensive fire of the artillery that broke the attack. In this action some 200 of the enemy were taken prisoner and at least that many more killed or wounded. The defence, on the other hand, got off with very light losses; Westmr R., to give an example, reported only seven wounded. (W.D., Westmr R., 4 Jan 45; 5 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 103, 4 Jan 45; (H.S.) 214B8.023(D18); Eighth Army Intelligence Summary No. 862)

308. During the night 3/4 Jan, C.B. Highrs sent reconnaissance patrols to the south bank of the Canale di Bonifica on either side of the blown bridge. These reported a bank to bank gap of 80 ft with a water gap of 25 ft and some ice. Enemy troops in some strength were holding the far side. In view of this information which appeared to rule out the possibility of a quick crossing of the canal in this area, Brigadier Cumberland at 0600 hours ordered B.C.D. to resume

* 12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales).

its advance towards the Strada Antica del Bosco bridge. At once B.C.D. despatched a squadron along the road to the south-east with orders to cross the dyked irrigation canal, il Canalone, and follow the railway north to the objective. The tanks reached il Canalone without difficulty but, due to the failure of two Ark bridge tanks to arrive, were unable to get across it. Accordingly at 0715 hours Headquarters B.C.D. ordered a second sub-unit to proceed to the area of the bridge via a more direct route along the south side of the Bonifica. The latter made good progress, and by 0850 hours its leading troops were within sight of the bridge. This they reported to be still intact but prepared for demolition, with enemy defences covering the approaches from the east and south but not from the west. Although unable to reach the bridge because of the obstacle of il Canalone on their front, the tanks engaged its defences in a fire fight. When the firing had died down somewhat, a dismounted party crossed il Canalone, removed most of the detonators, and cut the wires leading from the bridge. Shortly after an engineer party arrived to complete the task, and at 1210 hours declared the bridge safe for traffic.* By this time two companies of Perth R., now under command B.C.D., were moving forward on the tanks of the reserve squadron, while the first squadron had commenced to cross il Canalone via a set of undamaged sluice gates (521497). By 1400 hours two squadrons of tanks and the Perths had reached the Strada Antica crossing. Accompanied by a squadron of tanks, a company of Perth R. at once moved over the bridge, and at 1500 hours occupied the road junction (546509) 400 yards to the north, taking nine prisoners and two horses in the progress. B.C.D. then consolidated for the night, with one infantry company and one tank squadron north of the Bonifica, and a second company and tank squadron on the near side covering the approaches from the south. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 4 Jan 45; B.C.D. Report; (H.S.)145.2P1011 (D2): Report on the Operations of Perth R. for period 2 Jan to 13 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 4 Jan 45; W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), 4 Jan 45)

309. In the meantime, in the left sector, C.B. Highrs, which at 1100 hours had returned to under command 11 Cdn Inf Bde, had finally established a crossing over the Bonifica. Earlier two deserters had entered the Canadian F.D.Ls., and reported that their comrades on the north side were in a very demoralized condition. On the strength of this information, a C.B. Highrs patrol of eight men crossed the Bonifica, and at

* To secure a bridge intact in the face of the enemy was a notable achievement, but this time, according to the following extract from an R.C.E. report, luck was with the Canadians:

The two of them worked for 1½ hours and removed approximately one ton of explosives. During the operation their attention was drawn by an infantry officer to the fact that their every action was being watched by a German soldier sitting in a slit trench practically beside the bridge. He had apparently been detailed to blow the bridge but a lucky shot had cut the main leads from his exploder.

((H.S.)244C5.3013(D1): Report on Work Done by R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Division on Exercise "SYRIA" from 020500 to 071800 hrs)

midday returned bringing with it 28 prisoners. At 1410 hours, Brigadier Johnston ordered the Highlanders to take immediate steps to form a bridgehead. By last light, despite strong enemy fire in the vicinity of the demolished bridge, the unit had three companies with anti-tank gun support holding a firm lodgment astride the Lamone Abbandonato. At that time also a squadron of B.C.D., which had crossed on the Strada Antica bridge, linked up with the 11 Cdn Inf Bde unit. Both bridgeheads remained on the alert for enemy counter-attacks, but the night passed uneventfully. Before first light a patrol of C.B. Highrs returned from San Alberto with a report that the enemy had withdrawn from the town. ((H.S.)145.2C5013(D1): Report on Operations of C.B. Highrs; W.D., C.B. Highrs, 4 Jan 45; W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), 4 Jan 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 4 Jan 45)

310. During the following two days (5 and 6 Jan), 5 Cdn Armd Div easily completed the clearing of the enemy troops from south of the Reno and east of the Fosso Vecchio. For when the Canadians pushed out from their Bonifica bridgeheads, in the early morning of 5 Jan, their chief opponent, 741 Jaeger Regiment,* was already on the move back to the Reno. On the left, during the morning, C.B. Highrs, assisted by a squadron of B.C.D., cleared and occupied San Alberto taking 40-50 prisoners and a considerable quantity of equipment. On the right the main body of B.C.D. tanks swept east, against negligible resistance, along the north bank of the Bonifica as far as the road junction (605540) one and one half miles to the east of Mandriole. There at last light, together with the supporting company of Perths, they consolidated for the night. Meanwhile the B.C.D. squadron, which had supported C.B. Highrs during the morning had returned to under its parent headquarters, and at 1400 hours headed out of San Alberto across country near the south bank of the Fiume Reno. Meeting with no opposition, and coming under only desultory shell-fire, the squadron made good progress, and, by 1600 hours, when it halted for the night, had advanced about three miles. It was then at a track junction (579538) a few hundred yards from the Reno and north-north-west of Mandriole. During the same afternoon, C.B. Highrs took up firm positions north of San Alberto and west of the Abbandonato between the town and the Canale di Bonifica. These positions they retained with minor changes until their relief on 13 Jan. Earlier the divisional engineers had completed a Class 40 bridge at the Via Lamone crossing, over which elements of 8 N.B.H. had then moved in support of the Highlanders. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 5 Jan 45; Operations of C.B. Highrs; B.C.D. Report: W.D., H.Q. R.C.E., 5 Cdn Armd Div, January 1945: Appx 1, Engr Sitreps as at 1800 hrs, 5 Jan)

* That the enemy intended to hold the line of the Canale di Bonifica is revealed by the presence in the area of elements of his latest acquisition to the Italian theatre. To support 741 Jaeger Regt he sent the heavy company of III Bn 740 Grenadier Regiment down the isthmus from Comacchio. This was one of the two infantry regiments of 710 Inf Div which, according to prisoners, arrived in Italy on 15 Dec, after a non-stop move from Norway. (5 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summary No. 106, 7 Jan 45)

311. During the night (5/6 Jan), a Perth R. patrol probed to within 500 yards of the coast without contacting any enemy. Before first light the following morning, Perths and B.C.D. moved from their harbour, near the canal, along the road leading north to the Reno ferry (614558). About 600 yards south of the river, however, the column encountered a large demolition in the road beyond which the tanks were unable to proceed. Continuing the advance alone, the Perths reached the river at 1000 hours. There they found a large quantity of enemy equipment, including 60 pack horses and mules, but no sign of the enemy. Further evidence of the enemy withdrawal was received during the morning, when a Perth patrol reached Casal Borsetti (6352) on the coast, and found it unoccupied. To the south during the same day patrols of 12 L., operating under 5 Cdn Armd Bde command, swept the narrow coastal strip from Porto Corsini to within a mile of Casal Borsetti without sighting any enemy. Operation "SYRIA" was now finished, and at 1400 hours Perth R. and B.C.D. were relieved in the right sector by 12 L., command then passing to 9 Armd Bde. The two Perth R. companies then rejoined their unit on the Abbandonato in the area of Pignatta, while B.C.D. moved south of the Bonifica into reserve. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Jan 45; Perth R. Report op cit; B.C.D. Report; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 6 Jan 45)

312. Throughout Operation "SYRIA" full use was made by the ground forces of the air support available. On the first day 176 aircraft supporting the attack of 11 Cdn Inf Bde, and the follow-through advance of 5 Cdn Armd Bde, dropped 76 tons of H.E. During the succeeding three days, in 570 sorties, they dropped a further 200 tons of H.E. Despite the fact that the targets were frequently very close to our own troops - at times less than 100 yards distant - the latter suffered no casualties during these attacks. ((H.S.) 244C5.013(D10); Report on Air Operations for 5 Cdn Armd Div for period 26 Dec 44 to 11 Jan 45)

313. The A.O.Ps. proved particularly valuable during this operation, for the F.O.Os. found it difficult to operate, due to the lack of satisfactory O.Ps., in this flat close country; at a Press conference held at Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div on 8 Jan, Maj-Gen Hoffmeister paid special tribute to the work of the flying O.Ps., while 8 N.B.H. in their report on the operation recommended that in the future, weather permitting, an A.O.P. be always in the air on the regimental axis. The Crocodiles followed in the wake of the tanks throughout the operation but were never used. The report of their parent unit, 12 R.T.R., speaks of the flame-throwing tanks share in Operation "SYRIA" as an "abortive visit", and complains that among various other tasks the crocodiles were told "to be prepared to engage a TIGER tank and to thaw the R. Reno" ((H.S.) 234C1.013(D22); 12th Bn Royal Tank Regiment Account of Operations 29 Nov 44 to 11 Jan 45). R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, on the other hand, made an important and considerable contribution to the operation. In slightly less than six days, the engineers opened 46 miles of roads, erected six Bailey bridges totalling 450 feet in length, placed four ferries in operation, filled five craters, and built a barrel culvert. Among other tasks, they located and reconnoitred numerous minefields, in the process lifting nearly 300 mines of various types, and removed almost a ton of explosives from the Strada Antica del Bosco bridge. ((H.S.) 244C5.013(D3); Notes by Hist Offr 1 Cdn Corps taken at a Press Conf held at H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div at 1400 hours, 8 Jan 45; Operations of 8 N.B.H.; (H.S.) 244C5.013(D3); Notes on Operation "SYRIA", 8 Jan 45)

314. The enemy's determination to smash the Canadian thrust cost him heavily in personnel and equipment. From eight enemy battalions, elements of three divisions, committed against them, 5 Cdn Armd Div and 9 (Brit) Armd Bde took over 600 prisoners. His losses in killed and wounded were equally large; 310 enemy dead were counted in the area of operations. In contrast to this, Canadian killed numbered only 30 and wounded were in proportion of 1-3 to German prisoners. The considerable quantity of German equipment which was destroyed or captured included eight Panther tanks, 20 anti-tank guns, four self-propelled guns, four infantry guns and one 88 mm gun. (Notes on Operation "SYRIA"; Notes at a Press Conference, op cit)

CLEARING THE GRANAROLO SALIENT - 1 CDN INF DIV, 3-5 JAN 45

315. While 5 Cdn Armd Div was carrying out its successful advance to the Valli di Comacchio, 1 Cdn Inf Div was engaged in eliminating the enemy salient on the Corps left flank. (See Map 6). There, on 3 Jan, 2 Cdn Inf Bde launched an attack from within the 5 Corps sector designed to outflank the enemy defences along the Naviglio at Granarolo.* As these operations were part of a general Eighth Army plan to straighten its line along its whole front, 5 Corps sent its 56 Inf Div forward to the river west of Granarolo in conformity with the Canadian advance.

316. During the first two days of the New Year, while plans for the 2 Cdn Inf Bde attack were being completed, there was little activity on 1 Cdn Inf Div front. The first two days of January were clear and cold, and our air force kept up a constant attack on enemy targets west of the Senio. On 2 Jan, 1 Cdn Inf Div Artillery and Mortars carried out a diversionary shoot across the front in aid of the 5 Cdn Armd Div attack then going in on the right of the Cdn Corps. But the German failed to react and the front remained quiet with very little retaliatory fire. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945: Appx 9, Int Summary No. 198; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-2 Jan 45)

317. Meanwhile on 1 Jan Lt-Col Bogert called together his unit commanders and representatives of supporting arms and issued his orders for the 2 Cdn Inf Bde attack, which was to take place in three phases as follows:

Phase I - P.P.C.L.I. was to attack over the Naviglio several hundred yards southwest of Granarolo and form a bridghead between the canal and the Fosso Vecchio.

* On 4 Jan the following temporary tactical boundary between 5 Corps (56 Inf Div) and 1 Cdn Corps (1 Cdn Inf Div) was brought into effect: all inclusive 1 Cdn Corps 385288 - 380292 - road junction 375301 - line of road to 351315 - 348317. The new boundary would be reconsidered on the conclusion of the current operations. (W.D., G(Ops), H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1945: Appx 5). This boundary change placed Granarolo but not the area of the initial 2 Cdn Inf Bde attack within 1 Cdn Inf Div sector.

Phase II - Seaforth of C. would pass through P.P.C.L.I., cut off Granarolo, and clear the left bank of the Naviglio north to where it passes over the Fosso Vecchio.

Phase III - L. Edmn R. was to advance directly against Granarolo from a start line east-south-east of the town with the task of clearing and occupying it.

The first phase was timed to commence at 1900 hours 3 Jan and phases two and three on orders from the Brigade Commander. An artillery barrage^x was to be laid down on the line of the canal and also along the approaches to the town to give the impression of a frontal attack during Phase I. Artillery for the other two phases was to be the normal concentrations of groups of targets. Tanks of 12 R.T.R. were to be used to thicken up the artillery shoot. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Jan 45; 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Report on Ops, 1 Dec 44 - 8 Jan 45)

318. At 1200 hrs on 3 Jan R., 22e R., supported by Wasps and Lifebuoy flamethrowing equipment, staged a two coy assault on its front, which no doubt succeeded in drawing the attention of the enemy off the main attack. This action, although supported by artillery, mortar and L.M.G. fire, failed in its main purpose, which was to gain control of the near dyke of the Senio along a 1,000 yd front just south of the Russi-Lugo railway crossing. Under cover of smoke laid by our mortars and the added protection of an artillery concentration on both banks, seven Wasps fired the river bank with good results. But the enemy were not easily routed from their strong positions on the dyke, and although driven out by the flamethrowers would return before our infantry could climb the steep banks. The action continued all afternoon, the Wasps returning to re-fuel at intervals, but it was found impossible to dislodge the enemy, and at nightfall both coys with the exception of a few outposts returned to their original positions. The battalion suffered considerable casualties, and, according to the unit diarist, the survivors of one platoon that reached the top of the dyke were taken prisoner.^{xx} Anti-personnel mines among the dyke defences

x The 2 Cdn Inf Bde Report says

...this was the first time anyone in the division had used a barrage since the days of ORTONA. In this case we had a well defined SL - perfectly flat country and very little knowledge of the enemy's position all of which appeared to make a barrage the answer. The only hitch to the plan was that none of the infantry had ever in training or in operations followed a barrage.

(2 Cdn Inf Bde Report op cit)

xx War Service Records (D.V.A.) show only two R. 22e R. personnel taken prisoner on this date but five killed or died of wounds and 18 wounded (Casualties - Italian Campaign)

accounted for a goodly number of the casualties. (W.D., R. 22e R., 2-3 Jan 45)

319. Almost as soon as the noise of battle died down in the R. 22e R. area, the barrage began on 2 Cdn Inf Bde front. During the previous night all three battalions had reconnoitred their start line which was in the F.D.L's. of the 6th Bn Cheshire Regt approximately 500 yds east of the Naviglio. Everything was done to keep the enemy in ignorance of the impending assault. There was as little vehicle movement as possible, and an extensive camouflage covered the routes leading forward from the rear. (For an account of the camouflage scheme see W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945; Appx 83.) All the attacking units remained under cover during the day in concentration areas near the Lamone in rear of the battle area where they had assembled the previous night. Barely 15 minutes before the artillery barrage commenced at 1900 hrs, P.P.C.L.I. began moving forward. When the barrage started the two leading companies followed close behind it, and at 1930 hours reached the Naviglio having met with no opposition. Both companies crossed the Canal with little difficulty, for the intensity of the barrage had driven the enemy to the refuge of houses in the area, which lay on a track about 600 yards farther west (346315 to 344312). The Patricias surrounded the houses and quickly forced their occupants to surrender taking over 50 prisoners. The attack apparently caught the enemy completely by surprise, for the Patricias sustained scarcely any casualties in the initial assault. P.P.C.L.I. now consolidated the area of houses, and at 2130 hours sent its follow-up company through to the bridge over the Vecchio (346319), on the road leading to the Senio at S. Severo (3233). There, by a flanking attack, the Patricias succeeded in capturing an S.P. gun, a staff car and five more prisoners. The bridge was taken intact. By midnight three coys were firm in the bridgehead while the reserve coy was busy assisting the pioneers to clear the road up to the bridge of mines. As these were frozen firm in the mud lifting them was a slow and difficult task. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Jan 45; W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 3 Jan 45; 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Report op cit)

320. At midnight Seaforth of C. started moving into the bridgehead, and shortly after began advancing north to cut off Granarolo from the rear. Leading elements of the battalion encountered stiff opposition at once from the area of the blown bridge (351316) on the Naviglio just south of the town, but after heavy fighting succeeded in driving the enemy back and capturing an S.P. gun. As they continued the advance north from the bridge, the Seaforths again had stiff fighting with enemy holding the houses along the canal bank. At 0500 hours, however, the leading company reached the bridge into Granarolo (354321) which it found demolished. At this time Seaforth of C. brought forward its follow-up companies, and broadened the front of its attack. One sub-unit was directed west towards the bridge near the sharp bend

in the Vecchio (350324), while another was ordered to continue north along the Naviglio bank. The westerly thrust made good progress and, by daylight, the company had reached its objective and consolidated. Along the Naviglio, however, Seaforths advanced slowly, aided by artillery fire, against stubborn opposition.* About this time German infantry supported by two S.P. guns twice counter-attacked the P.P.C.L.I. positions on the Vecchio. Thrown back on both occasions he then struck at the more recently arrived Seaforth of C. where he suffered a similar repulse. Shortly after, anti-tank guns and tanks of 12 R.T.R. arrived in the bridgehead, and both units were soon in a position to withstand any further enemy attacks. At daylight L. Edmn R. moved into Granarolo where they found that the enemy had already departed. Finally at 1100 hours the right-hand company of Seaforth of C. arrived at the crossing-place of the Vecchio and the Naviglio (358326), the last of the brigade objectives. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 Jan 45; W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 4 Jan 45; W.D., Seaforth of C., 4 Jan 45; W.D., L. Edmn R., 4 Jan 45)

321. Thus by midday on 4 Jan 2 Cdn Inf Bde had achieved a quick and complete success. During the morning, when 167 (London) Inf Bde on the left started to advance it met with very light opposition. P.P.C.L.I. contacted 9 R.F. at 1115 hrs, moving forward on their left, and from that time on the "Pats" were practically out of direct contact with the enemy. Opposite Seaforth of C., at the bend in the Vecchio, however, the enemy mustered another strong counter-attack, but the supporting tanks of 12 R.T.R. accounted for approximately 30 of the attackers with their Besa M.Gs. This was the enemy's final effort against the 2 Cdn Inf Bde bridgehead, although heavy shelling lasted all afternoon and caused several more casualties. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

322. On 3 Cdn Inf Bde front, the enemy gave way very reluctantly. Throughout the morning of 4 Jan, while 2 Cdn Inf Bde was consolidating its bridgehead, enemy mortar and artillery fire across both West N.S.R. and Carlt & York R. front, prevented any move forward by these battalions. In the afternoon, although the enemy shelling decreased somewhat, patrols from both battalions found him still holding positions mainly in houses both along the Vecchio on the West N.S.R. front and on the Naviglio opposite Carlt & York R. West N.S.R. made two attempts to get forward in the early afternoon but made no headway. Brigade Headquarters then arranged for a formal attack to take place at 2030 hours. At that time, West N.S.R. and Carlt & York R. advanced, each on a two company front, and supported by an artillery programme. The attack met with little opposition, for the

* On one occasion during the fighting a Seaforth platoon commander approached a house covered by a Bren and with a section posted on either side. Kicking the door with a loud bang he ordered any occupants to come out immediately. A very frightened girl of about twenty years threw herself on the gallant officer with the words "Are you afraid Tenente - I am".

enemy had withdrawn from their forward positions at nightfall. At midnight both battalions were across the Naviglio. Patrols were then sent forward, and on Carlt & York R. front reported the enemy completely back to the Senio dyke, but opposite the West N.S.R. contacted them in defensive positions east of the river. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 4-5 Jan 45; W.D., West N.S.R., 5 Jan 45; W.D., Carlt & York R., 4-5 Jan 45)

323. During the night 4/5 Jan the enemy facing 2 Cdn Inf Bde also withdrew. At daybreak (5 Jan) 167 (Lon) Bde reached the road between Borghetto (343329) and S. Severo. At 0930 hrs Seaforth of C. moved one company across the Vecchio to the crossroads (353331) east-north-east of Borghetto without contacting the enemy. It was now quite certain that he had retired to the Senio dykes all along the 1 Cdn Inf Div front. By this time the advances on its flanks had squeezed 2 Cdn Inf Bde, with the exception of Seaforth of C., out of the line. During the day Brigade Headquarters ordered P.P.C.L.I. back to a reserve position near the Lamone, but kept L. Edmn R. as close support in rear of Seaforth of C. The operation on the left flank of the Division was thus completed in less than 48 hrs. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Jan 45; W.D., Seaforth of C., 5 Jan 45). In this action 2 Cdn Inf Bde had taken 75 prisoners, killed and wounded over 60 other enemy, captured two S.P. guns, five anti-tank guns, and one staff car, at **relatively light** cost to itself.* The Brigade Report on Operations calls it "One of the neatest battles that this brigade has ever had" (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report).

324. The quick and successful conclusion of the operations to clear the flanks of the Canadian Corps, by 5 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Cdn Inf Div respectively, brought messages of congratulations from both the Allied Army Commander, Gen Mark Clark, and the Eighth Army Commander, Gen McCreery:

From Gen Clark:

"My sincere congratulations on the successful attacks by your troops during past few days. The operation was thoroughly planned and executed. Despite strong enemy resistance and counter-attacks Cdn Corps and 5 Corps pressed forward taking heavy toll of enemy dead and many prisoners"

* War Service Records (D.V.A.) report the casualties suffered by the infantry units of 2 Cdn Inf Bde during the period 3-5 Jan 45 as two officers and nine other ranks killed or died of wounds and four officers and 42 other ranks wounded. (Casualties - Italian Campaign)

From Gen McCreery: "My heartiest congratulations to you and your Corps on the very successful operations on both flanks which has driven the enemy back over the SENIO and secured valuable objectives on the right up to LAGO COMACCHIO. The operation of both divisions had been carefully planned and executed with splendid fighting spirit and great skill. Heavy casualties have been inflicted on the enemy in killed and prisoners and you have destroyed or captured many AFVs. Well done indeed."

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945:
Appx 26, G.O.C. 6-0-1)

In passing these messages down to divisions for conveyance to all troops, Lt-Gen Foulkes added the following personal message:

I wish to add at this time my sincere congratulations to all ranks of the Cdn Corps and the 9 Armd Bde who have fought so well during this stage of the operations. You have shown what can be achieved by careful planning and speedy execution of a sound plan. I appreciate much the way that all soldiers have conducted themselves during these operations. (Ibid)

THE WINTER LINE - PLANNING

325. Immediately following the completion of the operations to clear the Senio from the inter-corps boundary (335338) to the Valli di Comacchio, 1 Cdn Corps commenced the preparation of a line of defence upon which to halt during the winter months. For the combined Winter Offensive which had been planned at the Army Commanders' Conference on 26 Nov (para 7) had now, after several postponements, been finally abandoned. Although German activity in the Serchio Valley was the immediate cause of the postponement on 28 Dec 44 of the Fifth Army offensive,^{*} Lt-Gen McCreery had several

* Whatever the enemy's intent had been in his Serchio Valley attack, it contributed to conditions which influenced the decision further to postpone the projected push against Bologna. On 28 December Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 38 announced postponement of the assault and placed all Army troops on a 9-day alert for resumption of offensive operations.

(Fifth Army History, Part VIII: p. 19)

days earlier, in a letter to the Commanding General 15 Army Group, requested that the timing for the coinciding attack by Eighth Army be reviewed. The Eighth Army Commander pointed out that "the ammunition position of the Eighth Army has deteriorated steadily during the month of December as a result of the heavy fighting during the first half of the month" (Eighth Army etc: Appx "J-3", Lt-Gen McCreery to CG 15 Army Group, 25 Dec 44). Only 612,000 rounds of 25-pr ammunition would be available for operations between 25 Dec and the end of January. During the intensive period of operations in the first half of December 500,000 rounds of this calibre were expended. In the season of the year now at hand it would be impossible to count on air support on more than one day out of three with the result that an increased demand for artillery support might be expected. In view of these facts Gen McCreery advised Gen Clark:

I am fully aware of the importance of the forthcoming operations and the issues at stake but feel it my duty to warn you that large scale operations beyond the Santerno river will not be practical unless the enemy carries out a withdrawal in front of Eighth Army.

(Ibid)

Further the original target date set for the Fifth Army attack was 7 Dec, but since then Eighth Army had had three weeks fighting thus automatically reducing its capacity to fight simultaneously with Fifth Army by that length of time. In consideration of this situation and with regard to the ammunition position previously set out, Gen McCreery put forth the suggestion that the Eighth Army attack be timed to take place some days later than the attack by Fifth Army. (Ibid). Further consideration, however, brought the decision on 30 Dec to abandon the offensive until the spring.

326. By mid-January the enemy was holding a main defensive line^{*} behind the Senio along the whole of the Eighth Army front, with the exception that from Alfonsine north to the Reno he continued to hold a strong salient forward of the river. Although the enemy defensive works on this line were in an advanced state of preparation, he apparently lacked confidence in his ability to hold it. In reaction to the Canadian drive towards Comacchio, which he interpreted as the prelude to a further full-scale offensive, the enemy increased his efforts to strengthen his Adriatic flank. To replace the disorganized remnants of 114 Jaeger Division, 42 Jaeger Division moved into the sector between the F. Reno and the Valli di Comacchio, and a regimental group of the newly-arrived 710 Infantry Division (footnote para 310) took over in the narrow isthmus between the lagoon and the sea. South of Route 16, 362 Infantry Division came into the line also opposite 1 Cdn Corps. By the middle of January he had eight and a half divisions, of which five and a half were fresh, opposing Eighth Army, whereas at the beginning of December he had had only six, none of them fresh. But the double advantage of ground and numbers had been insufficient to save him in the recent fighting, in which he had lost 4000 men as prisoners and probably at least an equal number in killed and wounded against the Eighth Army's total casualties of just under 6,500. (Eighth Army etc, pp 98-99)

* Named by the Germans the "IRMGARD LINE"

327. Although the enemy's reserves would hardly permit a counter-offensive on the lines of von Runstedt's thrust in the west, the possibility of some form of an attack being launched could not be disregarded by Eighth Army Headquarters. Such an attack down the axis of Route 16, where the Lamone River was the only major obstacle, might result in the loss of Ravenna, and enable the enemy to swing down on Forli, cut the Via Emilia and close Route 67.* (See Map Florence - Rimini - Bologna Sector). On 9 Jan, Gen McCreery held a conference of Corps Commanders to discuss the matter and lay down a defensive policy. Three days later the policy decided upon at this meeting was published by Eighth Army as Operation Instruction No. 1447. As defined in this instruction the intention was to defend the existing line and prepare to resume the offensive.**

* The account prepared by the Historical Officer at Headquarters Eighth Army suggested that such a possibility was very seriously considered by Corps, as evidenced by heavy demands for demolition materials, but that this anxiety was not shared by Headquarters Eighth Army, since the German reserves appeared weak. (An estimate of German reserves was six divisions; 162nd (Turcoman) and one Italian Republican, both practically valueless; 98th, 114th, and 26th Panzer, all badly in need of rest and below strength; one division only recently raised to first-line status).

(Eighth Army etc, footnote p. 99)

** One of the principal problems of the defensive phase was to keep the enemy in a state of nerves as to our intentions. One method which had early been decided upon and ordered was to prepare a number of local offensive operations to be mounted at short notice. In fact, apart from a few small raids, only a small number of operations took place that did not contribute directly to the mounting of the Spring Offensive; those that were undertaken were almost all designed to clear the enemy from the eastern floodbank of the Senio. This was hardly enough to achieve the object desired; accordingly on 18 January Headquarters 15th Army Group produced a plan, going by the code name "Oakleaf", intended to induce in the enemy more positively a state of anxiety. This required not only aggressiveness on the part of forward troops, but that they should be informed that the offensive would be resumed in the near future; that leave parties should be spread over all formations to conceal the fact that some of them were resting; and that formations leaving the Army area should do so in wireless silence, while the same level of wireless traffic was maintained within the Army area. There were many difficulties in complying with this order, however, if formations were to get the rest and training they required. The dearth of accommodation, in particular, made it necessary, to send many formations out of the Army area for rest and training in that of No.1 District. Representations were therefore made to Headquarters 15th Army Group, who agreed to relax their requirements to such a degree that little remained of the plan; but every effort was made to ensure that the level of wireless traffic should fall as little as possible below what was customary.

(Eighth Army etc, pp 101-2)

On 18 Jan 13 Corps would come under command and Eighth Army would then have three Corps in the line, left to right 13 Corps, 5 Corps and 1 Cdn Corps, and 2 Polish Corps in reserve.

The defensive tactics to be employed were to hold the line with as few troops as possible and to rely on immediate counter-attack. Although the defence was based primarily on the obstacle presented by the River Senio, in most cases the most advantageous forward positions would be some little distance back from the eastern floodbank, enabling a reasonable field of fire to be obtained, casualties to be avoided, and economy in men to be effected; but these positions would have to be close enough to prevent the enemy building up across the river with impunity. Should penetration occur, there would be no withdrawal on the flanks, and to seal it off two stop lines were to be prepared on the lines of the Rivers Lamone and Montone with switchlines between them. Forward of these two lines was to be a primary belt of prepared demolitions, and between them a subsidiary belt for which the charges were to be stored locally. Later on 23 January, the demolition policy was altered in view of the diminished likelihood of enemy attack, only one demolition belt, forward of the Lamone, being kept with the charges in position, except for the important bridges over the Fiumi Riuniti Ravenna.*

(Ibid, pp 100-1)

With the assumption of the defensive, the control of all stocks of artillery ammunition passed to Allied Force Headquarters. At the same time (8 Jan 45) a drastic reduction was made in the allotment of artillery ammunition to Corps, fixed at 10 rounds per gun per day for field artillery and five for medium artillery. Out of these allotments the Corps had to make provision for such local offensive operations as they might wish to undertake. (Ibid, p. 101)

328. Unfortunately these restrictions on the use of artillery coincided with a similar reduction in the amount of air support available. As part of their preparations to rest and train for the spring offensive, the Air Force proposed to reduce the number of daily sorties. This saving to be effected mainly by a reduction in the number of those made in close support of the Ground Forces. As a result of this proposal the two services entered into prolonged and at times heated negotiations. Finally, however, towards the end of January an agreement was reached which called for all direct support targets to be closely scrutinized by the Air Force before acceptance.

These differences, however, had no effect whatever on the spirit of co-operation between the two Services, which resulted during the defensive phase in useful advances in the technique of air support and in the final offensive in a closer integration of effort than had ever before been achieved.

(Ibid)

* Should read "Fiumi Uniti south of Ravenna". The second of the two demolition belts followed the line of the Fiumi Uniti and Montone River.

329. Preliminary planning for the defence of the Winter Line was already under way at Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps. On 4 Jan Corps Headquarters received word that an Italian Combat Group, the Gruppo Cremona,* would be placed under command in the near future. Gen Foulkes intended to use the Italian formation to hold the right sector between the railway and the coast, and to divide the rest of the front into two sectors with 9 Armd Bde in the centre and one of the Canadian divisions on the left. This would enable him to withdraw the remaining Canadian division into reserve for rest and training. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945: Appx 23, 1 Cdn Corps Operation Instruction No. 38, 5 Jan 45). On 12 Jan Corps Headquarters issued a detailed instruction for the occupation of the Winter Line. This differed slightly from the original plan in that it placed the whole of the front left of the railway under 1 Cdn Inf Div with 9 Armd Bde remaining in the centre sector but under command 1 Cdn Inf Div. As laid down in this instruction the defensive battle would be fought in the F.D.Ls., and each unit would maintain in readiness a local counter-attack force, including tanks, for immediate use in the event of any localities being over-run by the enemy. In addition each division would have available one battalion and a squadron of tanks as divisional counter-attack force. To ensure that forward units could hold out for at least 24 hours they would store additional ammunition, rations, and water, in company positions. In case of penetration by the enemy in neighbouring sectors, divisions would prepare switch lines to cover their flanks. Similar steps would be taken to isolate penetrations within divisional areas. In Corps immediate reserve would be one brigade of 1 Cdn Inf Div, one regiment of 21 Tk Bde, and R.C.D., in main reserve 5 Cdn Armd Div. To build up a complete picture of the enemy's dispositions and intentions formations were ordered to adopt a vigorous and energetic patrol policy

* The two regiments which made up the infantry component of the Gruppo Combattimento "Cremona" were first founded as volunteer units from Lombardy and took part in the War of Independence of 1848. Eventually they became the Brigata "Cremona" and following the wars of 1866 became a part of the regular army losing their local associations but not their name. The formation continued as part of the regular forces and in 1939, with the addition of a field artillery regiment and other units, became the "Cremona" Division. In September 1943 the division was stationed in Corsica, and following the armistice succeeded, with the aid of the civil population, in expelling the German and Fascist troops from the island. In September 1944 the division moved to Southern Italy. Here it was reformed as the Cremona Combat Group and equipped with British weapons and transport.

((H.S.)224C1.011(D1): Account of the
History and Operations of the Gruppo
Cremona)

for the winter months. Formation commanders would carefully plan a series of small offensive operations on the scale of one operation per sector each two weeks, each attack to employ one or two companies adequately supported by artillery fire. In addition to keeping the enemy in a state of anxiety and destroying his more troublesome positions these operations would serve to keep the troops offensively minded, and practice the staffs in the planning of operations. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 4 Jan 45 and Appx 55, 1 Cdn Corps Operation Instruction No. 39, 12 Jan 45)

DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS OF 5 CDN ARMD DIV, JANUARY 1945

330 To return now to 12 Cdn Inf Bde which, although it had had no part in the offensive carried out by 5 Cdn Armd Div during the first days of January, had nevertheless been in daily close contact with the enemy in the course of improving and maintaining its defensive positions along the Senio. These positions remained basically the same as those taken over on 27 Dec from 11 Cdn Inf Bde although some improvements were effected. On 2 Jan 45 Lan & Ren Scot R., supported by the combined fire of the tanks, mortars, and artillery, attempted to clear a particularly strong enemy lodgment on the east bank in the vicinity of the demolished Fusignano bridge. The Lanarks succeeded in gaining control of an additional stretch of the dyke at the bulge in the Senio south of the bridge (382434), but so strong was the enemy fire from the vicinity of the bridge itself that they were unable to complete their task. This constituted the principal effort of the brigade during the remainder of its stay in the line. Both sides carried out patrols while the mortars and artillery had no dearth of targets. The snipers were very active; those of P.L.D.G. claimed 17 kills and 12 probables, Lan & Ren Scot R. 30 kills and 50 probables. Although the troops on the dykes did not have to undergo the mortaring and shelling which their comrades farther removed from the enemy had to endure, they were continually engaged in bitter, close, fighting. The 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report states that:

Fierce grenade duels were frequent and as a novelty our tps rolled bangalore torpedoes down the bank and threw 75 grenades with 36 grenades attached. In retaliation the enemy rolled fused teller mines down our side of the bank.

(12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

On one occasion, according to the diarist of Lan & Ren Scot R.:

...a German dug through our dyke right into one of our slits. The German then threw a grenade which shook our lads up considerably.

(W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 3 Jan 45)

The patrol activity of the Canadian units was confined in the main to contact and standing patrols, the latter providing protection for the large parties which were continually at work laying mines, trip wires, defensive wire and generally improving defences. On several occasions, however, enemy fighting patrols raided platoon and section localities. Due to the determined stand of the troops on the spot and the quick

counter-action of supporting weapons, however, these attacks failed to dislocate the defence to any extent. (W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jan 45; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., Lan & Ren Scot R., 1-8 Jan 45; W.D., P.L.D.G., 1-8 Jan 45)

331. 12 Cdn Inf Bde remained in the line until 8 Jan, when as part of the plan for preparation of the Winter Line, it was relieved and withdrawn into reserve at Ravenna. On that day Seaforth of C. took over the positions held by Lan & Ren Scot R., and at 2322 hours command of the sector passed to 2 Cdn Inf Bde. P.L.D.G., however, remained where they were, coming under command the 1 Cdn Inf Div brigade until 14 Jan. R.C.R., which had replaced Westmr R. as 12 Cdn Inf Bde reserve in Villanova on 3 Jan, now reverted to under command 1 Cdn Inf Bde. Westmr R. remained with 11 Cdn Inf Bde until the relief of that formation on 12 Jan by the Gruppo Cremona. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; W.D., G(Ops), H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1945; Appx 75, 1 Cdn Inf Div Operations Log, 3 and 8 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, January 1945; Appx 3, 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 8 Jan 45)

332. East of the railway, 5 Cdn Armd Div continued to hold the line until 14 Jan. Over most of the front during this period there was little contact with the enemy. Unit diarists of the four infantry battalions comprising 11 Cdn Inf Bde - the fourth Westmr R. under command since 3 Jan 45 - record only two instances of patrol clashes. On the first occasion a fire fight which occurred between patrols ended without casualties, on the second an enemy fighting patrol overran a Perth standing patrol killing the corporal and taking the two men prisoners. On the right, however, in the sector east of San Alberto between the Canale di Bonifica and the Fiume Reno, where G.G.H.G. had taken over from 12 L. on 7 Jan, there was considerably more activity. To hold this large area, the reconnaissance unit had two squadrons (the third had remained in Mezzano) one disposed along the north bank of the Bonifica between Mandriole and the Strada Antica bridge, the other based at the Bonifica astride the road leading north to the Reno ferry. Later the third squadron moved up from Mezzano to form a regimental reserve. Late on 7 Jan an enemy force crossed in assault boats near the Reno ferry, drove in a G.G.H.G. listening post and for a few hours, until driven back by artillery and tank fire plus the efforts of dismounted personnel of G.G.H.G., dominated the area of the near dyke. At this time G.G.H.G., because of mines, had no defensive positions on the south bank of the river. Following a second enemy raid in the early morning of 8 Jan, however, G.G.H.G. manned the dyke with a full troop, and since the near bank overlooked the far bank was then able to command the whole area. Thus when on 9 Jan the enemy made a third assault over the river, he met with such a fusillade of fire from the defenders, that he broke and

withdrew in utter confusion.* During the morning of 10 Jan a group of some 30 partisans, then operating with G.G.H.G., accompanied by a Stuart tank to provide a wireless link and give support, attempted to investigate the narrow neck of land lying between the sea and the Reno River. When the Italians reached the base of the spit, however, enemy troops in some houses commanding the area opened fire, and within a short time the partisans were streaming south in some confusion. Two days later G.G.H.G. sent a force consisting of an assault troop and a troop of tanks to clear the enemy from the spit. This attack achieved complete surprise, due partly no doubt to the fact that one of the first rounds of H.E. destroyed the enemy's communications centre and killed their company commander. Following a one-sided fight in which they killed a number of the enemy and took 48 prisoners, the Horse Guards destroyed all the habitable buildings in the spit and withdrew. (Ibid; W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 7-12 Jan 45) (See Map 7)

333. In 11 Cdn Inf Bde sector, preparations for a line of defence for the winter months had now commenced. In an operation instruction issued on 7 Jan, entitled "Defence of the Lamone Abbandonato", Headquarters 11 Cdn Inf Bde informed its units that:

The sector now held by this brigade will be prepared for static defence forthwith. As the area will be taken over from time to time by various formations with different establishments, the area will be treated as one sector. The sector will be defended by a back stop along the line of LAMONE ABBANDONATO, a series of nodal points about 500 yards in front and outposts maintained about 200 yards in front again with roving patrols working to the RENO - PIGNATTA - VECCHIO - VETRO respectively. There will be two reserve bodies - one NORTH and one SOUTH of the BONIFICA.

(W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, January 1945:
Appx 5, 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operation
Instruction No. 1, 7 Jan 45)

* The performance of the Germans in this attack, according to the Regimental Historian of G.G.H.G.:

...smacked of gross amateurism, as they had begun firing wildly, as soon as they landed, and appeared to have a very hazy idea of what they were trying to do. After first light, we began rounding up the stragglers, who had not been able to return, one of them being a Norwegian, who claimed to have joined the Wehrmacht in order to escape to our lines and seemed to be genuinely bona fide. He gave us a picture of the lack of experience of the Norway Division, by relating the story of his German companion, who had begun shooting hysterically as soon as he disembarked and in answer to the Norwegian's demand to know at what he was firing, made the classic and rather pathetic reply, "I don't know. I'm just scared".

((H.S.)141.4A1013(D3): Regimental History of 3
Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), Chapter IX
(ms))

At this time the units of 11 Cdn Inf Bde were disposed as follows: on the right, north of the Canale di Bonifica, in positions covering the bridge over the canal and San Alberto, was C.B. Highrs, in the centre, between the Strada Molinazza and the canal were on the right Perth R. and on the left Ir R.C., while the left flank position was still held by Westmr R. During their remaining few days in the line, in the absence of enemy activity, apart from periodic shelling and mortaring, all units were able to concentrate on strengthening and improving these positions. Defended localities were wired, occupied buildings fortified, and a number of tanks supplied by 5 Cdn Armd Bde dug-in as pillboxes. The engineers laid minefields, prepared the bridges over the Lamone for demolitions, improved existing routes, and prepared the road north from Ravenna to San Alberto, as an alternative route to the more exposed Via Lamone.

334. In the meantime arrangements for the relief of 5 Cdn Armd Div by the Cremona Battle Group went forward. On 9 Jan Italian reconnaissance parties arrived in the brigade area, and a few days later the first of the reliefs commenced. During the morning of 11 Jan, 27 L. took over from 1 K.R.R.C. in the sector along the Via al Conventello to the left of Westmr R., and simultaneously came under command 11 Cdn Inf Bde. The boundary between 11 Cdn Inf Bde and 9 Brit Armd Bde then shifted south to the line of the railway. On 12 Jan units of 21 and 22 Regiments Cremona Battle Group (Gruppo Cremona Combattimento) took over the brigade defended localities south of the Canale di Bonifica, I and II Battalions 21 Regiment relieving Ir R.C., Westmr R., and 27 L., and II Battalion 22 Regiment relieving Perth R. Early on 13 Jan the Perths moved off to Cattolica, the Westminsters to Villanova, and the Irish across the Lamone River to Le Torri (4946). Until 16 Jan when it also moved to Cattolica the latter unit remained at Le Torri in support of the Italians but under Corps command. At 0600 hours 14 Jan command of 5 Cdn Armd Div sector passed to H.Q. Gruppo Cremona. During the afternoon of 15 Jan the remaining two battalions (I and III) of 22 Regiment relieved C.B. Highrs and G.G.H.G.; the infantry battalion moving to Cattolica that night, the reconnaissance regiment to Cervia on the following day. Between 12 and 14 Jan the North Irish Horse relieved 8 N.B.H., and the latter then pulled back to Cervia. Thus by 16 Jan 5 Cdn Armd Div had withdrawn all its troops out of the line and had all but a few odds and ends back in 1 Cdn Corps Reserve Area on the Adriatic coast; the Headquarters at Riccione, 5 Cdn Armd Bde and the armour at Cervia, 11 Cdn Inf Bde at Cattolica and 12 Cdn Inf Bde at Camerino. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945; Appx 125, 1 Cdn Corps Operations Log, 14 Jan 45; W.Ds., G.G.H.G., H.Q. R.C.E. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 7-14 Jan 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 10 Jan 45; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 13 Jan 45; see also W.Ds., H.Qs. and Units of 5 Cdn Armd Bde and 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 7-16 Jan 45)

THE OPERATIONS OF 1 CDN INF DIV IN THE WINTER LINE,
6 JAN - 27 FEB 45

335. Although 5 Cdn Armd Div had now completed, as it turned out, its operational tour in Italy, 1 Cdn Inf Div continued to hold for some weeks longer a large section of the Eighth Army front. During the period 6-15 Jan, the division consolidated its positions along the Senio, at the same time, gradually extending its right flank to the north. Prior to the relief of Lan & Ren Scot R. by Seaforth of C., the

latter unit was relieved in its positions on the divisional left flank by a unit of 56 Inf Div, and the inter-corps boundary moved north to the line of the Granarolo - Cotignola railway. On the 6th and 7th P.P.C.L.I. and L. Edmn R. took over the right and left halves of the R.C.D. sector respectively, and on the following day 2 Cdn Inf Bde assumed command of this and the 12 Cdn Inf Bde sector on the right, taking 4 P.L.D.G. under command at the same time (see also para 331). 3 Cdn Inf Bde, now the left flanking brigade, remained in the line until 11 Jan, when it handed over its sector to H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde - R.C.R., Hast & P.E.R. and 48 Highrs relieving R. 22e R., Carlt & York R. and West N.S.R. respectively. Following its relief 3 Cdn Inf Bde concentrated in the Russi - Godo area with the role of Corps immediate reserve. On 10 Jan H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps placed 9 Armd Bde under command H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div thus extending the divisional front north to the line of the railway. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 6-14 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 6-14 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 6-14 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 6-14 Jan 45)

336. Except along that part of the front which lay between the Fossio Vecchio and the Senio south of Alfonsine, the line which 1 Cdn Inf Div had to defend during the coming weeks followed closely the east bank of the River Senio. The system of defence followed was as laid down in a divisional operation instruction issued on 11 Jan.

Def system will consist of -

- (a) Where possible properly wired-in strong outposts along EAST bank of SENIO which will be fully manned at night but may be occupied as OPs by day.
- (b) FDL to run approx 300 yds from SENIO with killing ground to front and between coy localities. Coys will be capable of all round def and pls mutually sp.
- (c) Areas between coy localities not covered by observed SA fire will be mined with anti-personnel mines.
- (d) On that portion of the front not facing up to the SENIO, a thick minebelt will be laid in front of FDL.
- (e) A high degree of alertness will be required particularly at night. Full use should be made of illuminating flares incl trip flares.
- (f) Initially bn sub sectors will be held three coys up. Res coy with in sp one tp tks to be held as an immediate counter-attack force.

There will be no WITHDRAWAL on the part of any tps in the FDL.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div,
January 1945; Appx 19, 1 Cdn Inf
Div Op Instr No. 3, 11 Jan 45)

Holding the 13-14 miles of divisional front were three brigades.* Apart from the local reserves mentioned in sub-para (f) above all three were fully committed. In the case of the two Canadian brigades each had in support two squadrons of tanks, one company of M.M.Gs., a 4.2" mortar company and an anti-tank battery. A fourth brigade plus R.C.D. and a regiment of tanks from 21 Tk Bde constituted the Corps immediate reserve, less one infantry battalion and one squadron of tanks available as divisional immediate reserve. (Ibid; W.D., G.S. H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1945: Appx 20, 1 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No.4, 11 Jan 45)

337. "Nothing of importance goes on", a diarist at H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div writes on 10 Jan, adding "no doubt lower formations, particularly units in the line will be able to fill their diaries with small incidents, to them full of meaning" (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Jan 45). The nature of these small incidents is revealed in the following extract from the L. Edmn R. report on operations:

The days were much alike here. Any enemy movement drew fire. The bn snipers accounted for many Germans seen digging along the dyke top. The Arty F.O.O. and all the mortar F.O.Os. engaged small targets regularly. In the right forward posn PIATs and 36 grenades and 2" mortars were used effectively. Contact patrols were frequent and wire was extended and improved. Movement by day at the fwd pls was avoided. Enemy harassing fire with mortars and guns was regular.

((H.S.)145-2E2013(D2): The Loyal Edmonton Regiment Report on Operations from Granarolo to the End of the Italian Campaign)

In many cases opposing outposts lay within grenade range of one another. Seaforth of C., whose F.D.Ls. were in places only 15-20 feet from the enemy, found that employment in such close quarters had quite a different effect on unit morale than they had anticipated:

It was thought that extreme proximity to the enemy over a period of time would be both costly and wearing to the morale. Exactly the reverse has been found to be the case. With a fifteen foot "No mans land" on the R. SENIO dyke, the strangeness soon wore off our men. They became increasingly bold until gradually, the Canadian inability to take war seriously turned the whole thing into a joke. Improvisations ranging from grenades tied together up to bicycles and even a motor car loaded with HE have been costly to the taxpayer but probably damaging to Hun morale and undoubtedly of greatest possible value to our own.

* Roughly the three sectors were (1) from the railway Ravenna - Alfonsine to the Via San Antonio (2) from Via San Antonio to railway crossing 3638 and (3) from there to the inter-corps boundary, the railway crossing 3533.

The end of the SENIO tour will find the regiment in better spirit than for a long time.

((H.S.)145.2S5013(D1): The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Operational Report Capture of Granarolo and the Senio Winter Line)

Enemy positions on the east bank, linked with the opposite side of the river by footbridges, enabled him to dominate with observed fire large areas of the flat ground leading up to the river. This, coupled with his defensive alertness, greatly handicapped Canadian attempts to establish new positions on the dyke.*

339. Canadian and German activities during the first half of January consisted chiefly of patrolling, small scale raids, and further improvement of defence works. Apart from contact patrols, all patrol activity was coordinated at Brigade Headquarters level, and followed normally a certain pattern. In the first place a reconnaissance patrol went out to establish the presence or otherwise of the enemy and to reconnoitre routes. This was followed by either an ambush patrol to waylay enemy traffic to or from the post or a fighting patrol to drive him out of the position. During the early hours of 6 and 7 Jan enemy patrols attacked and drove in outposts of R. 22e R., inflicting some casualties. On the evening of 8 Jan a slightly larger German force surprised a West N.S.R. forward position, capturing six men and a portable flamethrower equipment. Two nights later a West N.S.R. fighting patrol attempted to take out enemy positions in the vicinity of the railway bridge south of Cotignola (357339), but withdrew in the face of strong enemy small arms and mortar fire. Late on 11 Jan the enemy made a fairly strong effort to clear and occupy the left forward positions of P.L.D.G. According to prisoners captured in this fight the enemy plan had been to make a three-pronged assault, each 25 strong, against the 5 Cdn Armd Div unit. In the event only one of these thrusts penetrated the P.L.D.G. defences. This came in over the dyke near Casa Tesselli where the enemy succeeded in surrounding some buildings occupied by a troop of P.L.D.G. setting them on fire and forcing the latter to withdraw. On the following day, after a counter-attack by infantry and tanks had failed to restore the situation, Lt-Col Bogert approved a plan to set up a new defensive line in rear of the former dyke positions. In this action enemy killed were estimated to number 25-30 while P.L.D.G. casualties of all types were about half that number. Late on 14 Jan 1 Welch relieved P.L.D.G., and command of that unit sector passed to 9 Armd Bde. A sharp action took place in L. Edmn R. sector on 15 Jan, when that unit attempted:

* Commenting on this problem, the Brigade Major 3 Cdn Inf Bde (Major W.G. Robinson, O.B.E.) stated:

In establishing positions on the dyke our experience has been that the position can be established without much trouble by blasting our way in with lots of fire power. But right behind the assaulting party must be a party to do digging mining and wiring. Jerry is so active that he will flush the position out if this is not done.

((H.S.)234C1.013(D4):
Summary of Operations 1 Cdn Inf
Div, 1 to 15 Jan 45)

...to wire the foot of the dyke bank, well in front of the left and centre coys for 800 yards, to prevent enemy patrols entering the area easily by night. The plan involved a covering force of two pls occupying the near bank of the Senio. Sp coy provided **six wiring parties**. The two pls of D coy got onto the bank easily in a silent adv and took two prisoners. The dumps of barb and concertina wire were carried up and spaced below the bank at 2030 hours, but by 2200 hours the German reaction was considerable. Rifle grenades showered the near face of the dyke, and an MG to the left of the covering force opened up on the main wire dump. A Hun patrol came into the left fwd coy at 2220 hours but was driven off. At the same time B coy's pl on the bank at the right of the bn sector reported an effective German counter-measure. Four enemy carrying explosive popped up over the dyke bank, ran to the house where the fwd section was in posn and blew a large explosive charge. This put the section temporarily out of action and was followed by a small attack to clear the covering party from that area of the dyke. The wiring was proving unduly costly for 10 casualties had been inflicted on the bn by 2300 hours. The plan was therefore abandoned...

(L. Edmn R. Report, op cit)

In the left divisional sector where 1 Cdn Inf Bde on 11 Jan had taken over from 3 Cdn Inf Bde (see para 335) there was, during the remainder of the half-month, very little enemy activity east of the river. ((H.S.)234Cl.013(D4): Summary of Operations 1 Cdn Inf Div, 1 to 15 Jan 45; W.D., R. 22e R., 6-15 Jan 45; W.D., West N.S.R., 7-15 Jan 45; W.D., P.L.D.G., 7-14 Jan 45; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945: Appx 52, 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No. 80, 11 Jan 45)

339. During the second half of January 1 Cdn Inf Div sidestepped to the right to take over a regimental sector of the Cremona Battle Group, later handing over its left brigade sector to 56 (Brit) Inf Div of 5 Corps thus shortening the Canadian Corps front by several thousand yards. Reliefs within 1 Cdn Inf Div permitted all brigades to obtain several days rest in the reserve role. On 16 Jan Carlt & York R. concentrated near the sugar factory east of Mezzano replacing Ir R.C. as tactical reserve behind the Cremona Gruppe. During 18 and 19 Jan 3 Cdn Inf Bde took over from 2 Cdn Inf Bde in the Fusignano sector (roughly between the 38 and 44 Northing); R. 22e R. relieving P.P.C.L.I., Carlt & York R., Seaforth of C., and West N.S.R., L. Edmn R. After only three days in reserve in the Russi-Godo area, 2 Cdn Inf Bde on 22 Jan relieved 21 Regt Cremona Battle Group in the sector between Pignatta and the Ravenna-Alfonsine railway. Dispositions of 2 Cdn Inf Bde in the new sector were two units forward, L. Edmn R. right, and Seaforth of C. left, and one unit, P.P.C.L.I., in reserve east of the Lamone. At this point 1 Cdn Inf Div was holding a greatly increased frontage with all its resources committed. On 29 Jan, however, 56 Inf Div took over from 1 Cdn Inf Bde, thus releasing that brigade for use as Corps immediate reserve. The inter-corps boundary was then moved north to the line of the Bagnacavallo - Lugo railway. During this period the F.D.Ls. of 9 Armd Bde were held by 1 K.R.R.C., 7 H.,^x 27 L. and 1 Welch.

x 7th Queen's Own Hussars.

On 27 Jan 12 L. passed from under command 9 Armd Bde to under 56 Inf Div, and, on 29 Jan, 2721 Sqn R.A.F. Regt replaced 2788 Sqn R.A.F. Regt, then operating under command 1 Welch.* 9 Armd Bde was due to be relieved early in February by 2 (Brit) Armd Bde, and for this purpose the latter formation on 30 Jan was placed under command 1 Cdn Inf Div. Tank support continued to be provided by two regiments of 21 Tk Bde for the Canadian infantry brigades and by 4 H** for 9 Armd Bde. (Summary of Operations 1 Cdn Inf Div, 16 to 31 Jan 45; (H.S.)274B9.008(D1): War Diary, 9 Armd Bde, 27-29 Jan 45; W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, and Canadian formations and units under command, 16-31 Jan 45)

340. The weather during most of January was clear and cold, the ground firm. The rivers had not frozen over, but by the end of the month had increased in depth and swiftness. Very little rain fell but there were several light falls of snow, traces of which remained to the end of the month. During the second half-month patrols of both sides were again active, and clashes between them were numerous. In the new sector on 1 Cdn Inf Div right flank, the enemy had, in operations against the Italians, seized and occupied as strong points a number of houses east of the Fosso Vetro on L. Edmn R. front. Against these buildings the Edmontons put in two strong patrol attacks and one raid at company strength. One of the former went in on 24 Jan against an enemy party occupying a ruined building (481490) 300 yards west of the battalion forward posts. On this occasion the Edmontons made use of the Wasp flamethrower for the first time.

At 1945 hours, with a pl following, the Wasp worked up within 30 yards of the ruin and put light hot-shots into it. The fire was completely satisfactory. The Wasp withdrew when through firing, and mortar smoke was put down to avoid silhouetting our tps as they closed in against the burning building. Unfortunately the enemy had withdrawn from the posn.

(L. Edmn R. Report)

The company attack was made against a troublesome enemy position at Casa Baronio (487500), several hundred yards to the west of the right forward Edmonton company, which had been waging propaganda warfare against the neighbouring battalion of the Cremona Gruppe. At 0600 hours on 28 Jan two platoons of

* Concerning the relief of 2788 Sqn the war diary of H.Q. 9 Armd Bde states:

Nothing was known either at this H.Q. or the H.Q. 1 Welch about this relief. It must have been a private RAF arrangement.

((H.S.)274B9.008(D1):
War Diary, 9 Armd Bde,
29 Jan 45)

** 4th Queen's Own Hussars.

L. Edmn R., under cover of a short but heavy artillery and mortar concentration, rushed the houses of Casa Baronio. Both reached their objectives without casualties or opposition from the enemy. After firing PIAT bombs into both houses and generally shooting up the surrounding area, the platoons withdrew. During the withdrawal, unfortunately, one platoon came under machine gun fire from the Fosso Vetro dyke behind Casa Baronio, and suffered several casualties. Although the number of enemy killed in this action was not known, enemy stretcher-bearers were observed to take away, during the morning, ten wounded personnel. Against this L. Edmn R. total casualties numbered ten, including two killed and three prisoners. (1 Cdn Inf Div Summary of Operations; W.D., L. Edmn R., 23-28 Jan 45; W.Ds., G.S. H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div and Canadian formations and units under command, 16-31 Jan 45)

341. The enemy followed an aggressive policy of defence throughout this period (16-31 Jan). Between 16 and 20 Jan he was particularly active against the Italians, and on 19 Jan overran a Cremona outpost, and penetrated to a depth of about 500 yards. The Italians were unable to regain all the ground lost, and the captured positions were later the scene of a number of minor attacks by L. Edmn R. (see para above). The heaviest enemy effort of the period was made against 9 Armd Bde on the night 16/17 Jan, when a company of 36 S.S. Pz Gren Regt, broke through 1 Welch positions on the Via Rossetta (4044). Although by early morning this attack had spent its force, brisk fighting continued throughout the day. It was not until late on 18 Jan that the Welch and the tanks of 4 H., with strong support from the artillery, cleared out the last of the enemy pockets. It was a relatively costly affair for 16 S.S. Pz Gren Div whose losses were estimated to have totalled 109 of all types. On the other hand the British suffered comparatively few casualties. Actions on the scale of those noted above were exceptional, however, the German continuing to expend most of his energy in raids at platoon or lesser strength. On one of these smaller raids he used a flamethrower against our troops; the diarist of 48 Highrs recorded that on 25 Jan:

At 0500 hours "D" Coy's outpost was fired on by rifle grenades from the opposite side of the SENIO, following which 4 shots were fired from a flamethrower from the river bed. One of the outposts was temporarily knocked out by the blast effect, but the men retaliated with 4 boxes of 36 grenades and some 77 grenades, causing the enemy to withdraw.

(W.D., 48 Highrs, 26 Jan 45)

By the use of footbridges and rubber boats, the enemy retained, throughout the month, considerable freedom of movement over the Senio; an Air O.P. on 21 Jan reported some 16 footbridges in existence over that river between Cotignola and Alfonsine. The Canadian outposts along the dyke spent considerable time and material in attempts to destroy these bridges. Seaforth of C., to give an example, took five days and used a variety of weapons, including a barrel filled with explosives and rolled over the top of the dyke, to destroy one near Fusignano. R.C.R., however, found that a PIAT fired at high angle was a most effective weapon, and claimed to have destroyed several bridges in one day (18 Jan) by this method. (1 Cdn Inf Div Summary of Operations; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945: Appx 72, 74 and 80, 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summaries Nos. 85, 86 and 88; W.D., 9 Armd Bde op cit, 16-18 Jan 45; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1945: Appx 51, 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 118, 19 Jan 45)

342. During the month mysterious explosions to the west of the Senio, led to the belief that the enemy might be preparing to withdraw, but were later found to be associated with his preparations to defend the Senio Line. The enemy divisions facing 1 Cdn Corps remained very much the same throughout January. On the German right was 362 Inf Div overlapping into 5 Corps front and extending north to opposite S. Polito, from there to the railway at Alfonsine was 16 S.S. Pz Gren Div, between the latter and the Valli di Comacchio was 42 Jaeger Div, and lastly, astride the narrow neck of land between the lagoon and the sea were elements of 710 Inf Div. Reports received from partisan sources towards the end of the month indicated that possibly 114 Jaeger Division had again come into the line replacing the inexperienced 710 Inf Div. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January 1945: Appx 116, 1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 225, 29 Jan 45; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1945: Appx 54, 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 119, 21 Jan 45)

343. Early in February Headquarters Eighth Army informed Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps that, in the near future, the Canadian formations in Italy would leave that theatre for North-West Europe and an operational role with First Cdn Army. This move would be a "Top Secret" matter and in correspondence would be referred to as Operation "GOLDFLAKE".* On 8 Feb, as part of the cover plan for Operation "GOLDFLAKE", Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps issued Operation Instruction No. 41 according to which the Corps would "move into Army Gp Res during Feb and early March to train for ops in spring" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, February 1945: Appx 24). This was followed on the 9th by a meeting in Ravenna between General McCreery and senior officers of Corps Headquarters and 1 Cdn Inf Div at which the details of the plan were discussed. (W.D., 1 Cdn Fd Hist Sec, 9 Feb 45). On 10 Jan at 1800 hours command of the Corps sector passed to 1 Cdn Inf Div, Cremona Gruppe and 1 Cdn A.G.R.A. at the same time passing from under Corps to under divisional command. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1945: Appx 41, 1 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Feb 45). The first "GOLDFLAKE" moves took place this same day when 5 Cdn Armd Div commenced moving its tracked vehicles by rail from Riccione, and its wheeled vehicles by road from Cattolica. Corps Headquarters despatched its first road flight from Ravenna on 13 Feb. (Historical Section C.M.H.Q. Report No. 181: Operation "GOLDFLAKE", the move of 1 Cdn Corps from Italy to North-West Europe, February-March 1945, pp 9, 11))

344. For a short period 1 Cdn Inf Div, swollen almost to Corps size - it now had, apart from its normal complement of artillery, engineers, M.M.G., and not including the A.G.R.A. and the Partisans, some 22 units under command - held under direct command Eighth Army over 20 miles of front. Fortunately there was little activity and for the "G" Staff at any rate little to do; the G (Ops) diarist complained that "The Ops Room remains dull and the day seems long" (W.D., G.S.,

* The planning and execution of this move is covered in some detail in Historical Section C.M.H.Q. Report No. 181: Operation "GOLDFLAKE", the move of 1 Cdn Corps from Italy to North-West Europe, February - March 1945.

H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 14 Feb 45). On 16 Feb 5 Corps took over the former 1 Cdn Corps sector, and the two separate commands which had existed prior to 10 Feb again came into being; 1 Cdn Inf Div (with under command 2 Armd Bde) on the left and the Cremona Gruppe on the right. During this same period a number of changes of lesser importance took place in the 1 Cdn Inf Div sector. On 3 Feb 2 (Brit) Armd Bde, with under command the Bays, 9 L., 10 H., 27 L., 1 Buffs, 1 Welch, 1 K.R.R.C., and support and service elements, relieved 9 Armd Bde.* On this same day 1 Cdn Inf Bde took over from 2 Cdn Inf Bde; R.C.R. relieving P.P.C.L.I. in the right forward position, Hast & P.E.R. taking over from Seaforth of C. on the left, and 48 Highrs replacing L. Edmn R. as brigade reserve. After six days as reserve in the Russi - Godo area, 2 Cdn Inf Bde again went into the line on 10 Feb, relieving 3 Cdn Inf Bde in the Fusignano sector; from right to left Seaforth of C., L. Edmn R., and P.P.C.L.I., relieving Carlt & York R., West N.S.R., and R. 22e R. Until the final relief of 1 Cdn Inf Div by 8 Ind Div, which commenced on 23 Feb, there were no further changes in divisional dispositions. ((H.S.)224Cl.013(D6): Summary of Ops 1 Cdn Corps February and March 1945 by Maj L.A. Wrinch, Hist Offr, 1 Cdn Corps; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 1-16 Feb 45; Summary of Ops 1 Cdn Inf Div, 1-15 Feb 45)

345. Rain and milder weather, which set in at the end of the first week of February, caused the Senio to rise and ground conditions to deteriorate. Movement of traffic to and from the forward positions became very difficult, particularly in the right sector of 1 Cdn Inf Div where at least one sub-unit was supplied by mule and cart transport. Patrols, sniping duels, artillery exchanges, mortar and M.M.G. fire, constituted the chief activity of both sides during the period. In the left sector, where the opposing posts were in close proximity to one another, there was again a prolific use of grenades.** 1 Cdn Inf Div mounted only one raid at more than

* Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards), 9th Queen's Royal Lancers, 10th Royal Hussars (Prince of Wales' Own), 27th Lancers, 1st Battalion The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

** Being so close to the enemy provided the troops with an opportunity to try out a number of novel ideas. Two of the more successful of these inventions are described in a report of Seaforth of C.

The "V-2" is a slingshot made from a crotch of a tree and an inner tube. The stem of the crotch is placed in the ground and allowed to turn. This gives it a 360° traverse. By putting seven second 36 grenades in the pouch and firing it the job of an EY rifle is achieved with very good effect. The "V-2" has a range of approximately 100 yds with 36 grenades and 50 yds with 75 grenades. The "Dagwood" is a 36 grenade sandwiched with two 75 grenades contained in a sand-bag. The sack is swung around and when released the 36 grenade is detonated, thus setting off the 75 grenades. The resulting explosion was terrific, and reports state that they had a bad effect on the morale of the enemy.

((H.S.)145.2S5013(D1): The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Operational Report, The Capture of Granarolo and The Senio Winter Line)

platoon strength in February. This action occurred early on the 3rd when two platoons of P.P.C.L.I. raided enemy positions at Casa Baronio - the scene of an earlier raid by the L. Edmn R. (see para 340). Although "a good plan was made with arty, M.3", M.4.2", MMG, and 95 mm's giving supporting fire" the raid was not a success. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 2 Feb 45).

For four minutes the arty laid down a well placed concentration on the objective and then lifted to the canal bank, as the two assaulting pls moved up from their firm base at 492499. At 0204 hrs 14 pl under Lt. Lewis, and 15 pl led by Sgt Sansom, made the assault on the building with one pl to the right and the other making a flanking attack from the left. The counter mortar fire and counter battery were good, keeping enemy fire to a minimum. As the pls approached the buildings the enemy pulled out on the double, and as a sec of 14 pl was clearing the forward house of the group, a prepared charge was set off by the enemy and most of the section were buried in the debris. The remainder of the pl started to dig them out but a well placed mortar crump caught them and many casualties were inflicted.

(Ibid, 3 Feb 45)

Casualties suffered by P.P.C.L.I. in this action - recorded by the unit diarist as six killed, 30 wounded and one missing - were disproportionately high considering the relative unimportance of the task and the number of troops involved.* (Summary of Ops 1 Cdn Inf Div, 1-15 Feb 45 and 16-25 Feb 45; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div and formations and units under command for February 1945)

346. Enemy patrols during the period had fair success in surprise attacks on Canadian posts. Two such raids on R. 22e R. cost them 14 casualties. The first of these took place on 4 Feb when a wiring party was ambushed and lost five men as prisoners. Again early on 7 Feb an enemy raiding party surprised an R. 22e R. platoon headquarters, killed a sentry and took the officer and seven other ranks prisoner. (1 Cdn Inf Div Summary of Ops, 1-15 Feb 45 and 16-28 Feb 45; W.D., R. 22e R., 4 and 7 Feb 45). R.C.R. was the next to suffer from these surprise tactics. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, February 1945: Appx 8, 1 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 16 Feb 45). On 16 Feb enemy raiders penetrated an R.C.R. company defended area and took 17 prisoners without a fight. In his book "55 Axis" Major Strome Galloway, E.D. gives the following account of this incident:

The raid was cleverly conceived and daringly carried out. "B" Company was in a square formation, each corner being in a farm building. Two platoons were forward, whereas the reserve platoon and Company HQ formed the rear corners of the square. Between was an Artillery O.P. protected by a section detached

* War Service Records give P.P.C.L.I. casualties on this date as seven killed, one died of wounds and 28 wounded (Casualty Statistics - The Campaign in Italy)

from one of the forward platoons. On the second floor was a section of Medium Machine Guns. At 3 a.m. the four corners of the company position were pounded with shells, the concentrations continuing for almost forty minutes. During this time the enemy raiding party, estimated at twenty-five, overcame the sentry posts to the front and rear of the building and then rushed into the ground floor where three-quarters of the garrison were resting. These men were overcome without the chance of fighting back and were frog-marched into the inky blackness towards the German lines...Upstairs the men on the M.M.Gs. were helpless, for to sweep the barnyard with fire would like as not have killed friend as well as foe.

(Galloway, Major Strome, E.D., "55 Axis", pp 189-90)

347. During the night 24/25 Feb the enemy, making his strongest effort of the month on the 1 Cdn Inf Div front, twice attacked the 2 Cdn Inf Bde positions near the river bank south of Fusignano (map square 3742).

At approx 1815 hrs extremely heavy mortar and shell-fire came down on the rt fwd coy of the LER and the two left fwd coys of the SEAF of C. Mortar and Arty DF tasks were called for and fired but twenty minutes later the enemy attacked with two coys of inf and a pl of pnrs. The attack was directed on the LER rt flank and the SEAF of C. left and centre coys evidently aimed at penetration between the two bns to eventually seize control of the EAST bank of the river. The situation remained slightly obscure for a short time as both line and wireless comm to the LER pl was knocked out but contact was finally est by patrol. The shelling which had ceased when the attack came in commenced again at 1900 hrs but quietened down after half an hr. Although the situation was not completely restored, as small gps of enemy had managed to work through the FDLs and in rear of the fwd pls, it appeared as though the main danger was past. Strong fighting patrols from the SEAF of C. and LER scoured the coy areas and by 2100 hrs the situation was completely restored. A total of five PW were taken, three of these passing through med channels as they were wounded. It was believed that the attacking force suffered high cas, our mines and booby-traps inflicting several.

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Feb 45)

Casualties suffered by the two Canadian units involved in this affair amounted to three killed and 16 wounded. Apart from a short fire fight, when a small patrol attempted unsuccessfully to infiltrate between L. Edmn R. and P.P.C.L.I., there was no further activity on the brigade front until early the following morning. Then, from 0300 hours to 0330 hours, there was again very heavy shelling on Seaforth of C. Following this an enemy raiding party, with an estimated strength of 30, came in on both sides of a company of Seaforths opposite Fusignano. But the fire of the Seaforths caught the enemy as he was sky-lined on top of the dyke inflicting a number of casualties on him, and quickly forcing him to break off the action. Unit

reports of the night's fighting give casualties of L. Edmn R. as four killed and 10 wounded, and Seaforth of C. as one killed and 16 wounded.* Known enemy casualties were seven prisoner and six killed. In addition German stretcher bearers were busy throughout the night evacuating their wounded. For the Canadians, this minor defensive battle marked the end of the fighting in Italy. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 24-25 Feb 45; Seaforth Report; L. Edmn R. Report)

348. A particularly annoying enemy practice, during this period of static warfare, was that of sending over personnel in the guise of stretcher bearers and Red Cross workers into the area of our advanced posts in an alleged search for German wounded, sometimes in places where no action had occurred. To give an example, during the morning and afternoon of 11 Jan, white-clothed enemy bearing a large white flag possibly with a Red Cross on it made their way into houses opposite the P.L.D.G. sector. From observation of the activities of these personnel the conclusion was reached that they were not Red Cross personnel, but combat troops assembling for a raid (see para 338). Again on 16 Jan three enemy stretcher bearers walked **along top of the east dyke in front of Seaforth of C.**, openly taking note of the layout of the latter's F.D.Ls. When intercepted they were found to be without Geneva cards, and accordingly were taken prisoners. As a result of this incident pamphlets were prepared in German warning the enemy that in the future enemy Red Cross personnel would not be tolerated on our side of the dyke at any time under any circumstances. Two days later the enemy produced Geneva cards for the alleged stretcher bearers, and requested their release. Their emissary was told the matter was closed, relieved of the cards, and escorted back to his own lines.** Another incident, involving suspected enemy misuse of the Red Cross emblem, concerned a hospital in Fusignano.

In FUSIGNANO, opposite the Seaf of C sector is a large three story building marked with red crosses, presumably a hosp, however the Seaf of C, having noticed considerable mov in the upper floor felt positive that an enemy OP located in the building was responsible for the accurate fire that has been directed on them of late. Upon the Bde Comd's recommendation a request to shell the building, after having given the enemy notice to vacate, was fwd to HQ EIGHTH ARMY and received approval.

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Jan 45)

* War Service Records give the following figures for 24-25 Feb 45: Seaforth of C. two other ranks killed, one died of wounds, and two officers 18 other ranks wounded; L. Edmn R. four other ranks killed, two died of wounds, and eight other ranks wounded (Casualty Statistics - The Campaign in Italy)

** An Italian medical officer, a deserter, interrogated on 7 Feb, revealed that the Geneva cards in question were made out two days after the capture of the stretcher bearers. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, February 1945: Appx 20, 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 126, 8 Feb 45)

A leaflet was prepared, for delivery by PIAT, throwing or patrol, giving the enemy until 1400 hours the following day (11 Jan) to evacuate the hospital. At midday on the 11th, however, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps issued orders forbidding the shelling of the building. In the meantime, at the request of a German medical officer, a Seaforth stretcher bearer had investigated the hospital, and returned reporting no signs of military occupation. This was as expected. The matter was concluded with a message to the enemy to the effect that should it again be suspected that the hospital was being used as an observation post it would be shelled and suggesting that the evacuation of the patients begin as soon as possible. (W.D., P.L.D.G., 11 Jan 45; W.D., Seaforth of C., 16-18 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 10-11 Jan 45)

349. As might be expected both sides devoted considerable attention to propaganda and "sonic warfare" during this period. Printed matter was delivered chiefly by air or artillery, although patrols, mortars, and PIATs, were also used. Still another method used was that of recording the messages and projecting them through loudspeakers placed in the F.D.Ls. German propaganda, directed mainly at the Italians, included appeals to desert, safe conduct passes, sentimental music, the threat of new weapons, and the old theme of fighting to the last anglo-american bullet, and the last drop of Italian, Indian, etc., blood. One enemy pamphlet contained detailed instructions on methods of artificially inducing or simulating various ailments, including among many others paralysis, heart disease, and tuberculosis. Allied propaganda concentrated on bringing up-to-date news on German reverses to the front-line soldiery, and on placing safe conduct passes in the hands of would-be deserters. These latter appealed in the main to non-Germans serving in the enemy armies. Front-line news broadcasts seemed to meet with the approval of the enemy, for on several occasions he stopped the fire of his M.M.Gs. and mortars in order to listen. The equipment used for the news broadcasts was also utilized for the broadcasting of faked operational noises; recordings of patrol noises, tank and vehicle movements and reliefs. "Sonic" warfare, as this type of activity was called, was intended to attract enemy fire, lure his patrols into ambush, or cover current or pending operations. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, January and February 1945; 1 Cdn Corps Int Sums and Ops Sums, January and February 1945; Summary of Operations 1 Cdn Corps by Maj L.A. Wrinch, 16-31 Jan 45; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 3-4, 6 Feb 45)

350. Meanwhile arrangements had been completed for the relief of 1 Cdn Inf Div by 8 Ind Div. The handover commenced on 23 Feb when 2/12 F.R.R., 1 R.F. and 1/5 R.G.R. of 17 Ind Inf Bde relieved R.C.R., Hast & P.E.R. and 48 Highrs respectively, command of the sector passing from 1 Cdn Inf Bde to 17 Ind Inf Bde at 2250 hours.* At first light on 25 Feb units of 21 Ind Inf Bde commenced taking over the positions occupied by 2 Cdn Inf Bde in the Fusignano sector; 1/5 Mahratta L.I. relieving Seaforth of C., 5 R.W.K. taking over from P.P.C.L.I., and 3/15 Punjab R. replacing L. Edmn R.**

* 2nd Battalion 12th Frontier Force Regiment (P.W.O.), 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment), 1st Battalion 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles.

** 1st Battalion 5th Mahratta Light Infantry, 5th Battalion Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, 3rd Battalion 15th Punjab Regiment.

Apart from one incident - the wounding of three Mahrattas in the Seaforth of C. area by enemy mortar fire - the reliefs proceeded smoothly and efficiently. At 2140 hours H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div issued the following message:

0188 SECRET comd of 1 Cdn Inf Div sector passes to 8 Ind Div 252130 hrs. 3 Cdn Inf Bde comes under comd 8 Ind Div wef 252130 hrs. all infm

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, February, 1945; Appx 1, Ops Log, 25 Feb 45)

At this time the division had already commenced to move south, and the first convoys had arrived in the temporary concentration area around Fermo, a town near the Adriatic coast about 150 road miles distant. At 1800 hours on the 27th 3 Cdn Inf Bde, the last Canadian formation to hold an operational role in Italy, handed over its responsibilities as divisional reserve to 19 Ind Inf Bde, and joined the trek southward. (Ibid, Ops Log, 25 Feb, and Appx 33, 1 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 6, 19 Feb 45; 1 Cdn Inf Div Summary of Operations; W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Feb 45; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Feb 45; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Feb 45)

AIR OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF 1 CDN CORPS,
DECEMBER 1944 - FEBRUARY 1945

351. During the period 2 Dec 44 to 5 Jan 45, out of 35 days, only 13 provided good flying weather. Of the remaining 22 days, almost 50% were unsuitable for any type of air operations, and flying was seriously restricted on the remainder. Total sorties flown by the Desert Air Force (D.A.F.) in support of 1 Cdn Corps during this period numbered 2625.

Of these, 2403 were fighter-bombers, and 222 were lt and med bombers. CABRANK, operated by ROVER DAVID made 122 attacks in close sp, using 635 aircraft. There were 190 sorties against brs on the Corps front and 130 arty R missions were flown of which 106 were effective.

BEAUFIGHTERS of 600 Sqn operated 74 night patrols claiming 2 Ju 87's destroyed and one damaged, and a MOSQUITO night-fighter destroyed one Ju 188 (or 1 Me 410) on the night 3/4 Jan 45.

Almost exactly 25% of the entire DAF effort in all theatres of ops was directed in close sp of 1 Cdn Corps and well over one half of this effort was directed on targets within 1,000 yds of our own troops. Considering the time of year and the state of the weather, these are surprisingly high proportions.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps,
January 1945; Appz 89, Report
on Air Operations in Support
of 1 Cdn Corps, 2 Dec 44 to 5 Jan 45)

352. On several occasions CABRANK was used to assist the ground forces in breaking up enemy counter-attacks. In the course of these actions, according to reports by ground observers the aircraft obtained several direct hits on enemy armour. Certain prisoners, who had experienced CABRANK attacks under these circumstances gave as their opinion:

...that even though it may be impossible for the aircraft to attack more than one part of the enemy's counter attacking front at one time, the presence of aircraft will send all tps to ground, and even if this is for a limited period only, the momentum of the counter attack is lost.

(Ibid)

TIMOTHY and PIG attacks accounted for 312 of the total D.A.F. sorties. From the point of view of the ground troops this type of attack, in which fighter-bombers operating usually in conjunction with a ground attack "blitzed" a selected area close in front of our own troops, had two main features:

It not only destroys various houses in which the enemy may be lodged, but its chief value is in keeping down the heads of the enemy during the initial stages of an adv over comparatively open ground. The moral effect on the enemy is fully as great as the material effect, but this demoralization does not last indefinitely. It is essential, therefore, that the ground attack be thoroughly tied in with the aerial blitz, and that the tps move fwd so as to get the greatest possible advantage from the air attack.

(Ibid)

The PIG or bad-weather TIMOTHY, differed from the TIMOTHY in that it was a strafing attack made at under 1,000 feet, and at times, as close as 100 yards from our own troops. In this form of attack, the limiting factor was that the aircraft was exposed to the fire of all types of anti-aircraft weapons, including small arms.*

* The following incident will serve to demonstrate the effectiveness of small arms fire against attacking aircraft.

A bombing attack was made by 4 Mustangs on a strong pt and after bombing the aircraft returned to straff the target. This was very thoroughly done, but in the process, 3 of the 4 aircraft were hit, the pilot, in one case, being struck in the eye. Although none of this was seen by the ground tps, who probably wondered why the aircraft flew away apparently intact, one of the planes later crashed, and the other two had to undergo repairs which kept them out of the air for 4 or 5 days.

(Report on Air Operations in Support of 1 Cdn Corps, op cit)

353. During this period, the D.A.F. destroyed six bridges on the Corps front and damaged five others, two of them badly. To achieve this result, the D.A.F. carried out 198 sorties, 144 of them being Kittyhawks carrying 1000-lb bombs. Over 30% of the air effort, however, was directed against hostile batteries, a total of 171 of these being attacked.

Due to the excellent camouflage and the use of houses and farmyards as gun areas, in only 17 of the attacks were guns seen. In a further 18, possible pits were located, but the bulk of the reports were "no guns seen". When no signs of arty are visible, the mission is forced to bomb the arbitrary pinpoint on which they were briefed. In spite of the fact that 8 figure map refs are usually given, guns are sometimes 100 yds away, and consequently the bombing, although accurately on the pinpoint, may have little or no effect on the guns. This lack of visual confirmation of the target reduces the feeling of accomplishment to the pilot concerned.

(Ibid)

Although an immediate assessment of the results was thus difficult to make, reports from prisoners indicated that these attacks, frequently achieved success. In one case, so reported, three out of four enemy guns were destroyed in an attack by four Spitfires. (Ibid)

354. By early January, with the main offensive operations of the ground forces completed, the battle area presented fewer worthwhile targets for the Air Force. It was evident that the tactical squadrons would be more profitably employed in attacks against the enemy's rear communications, dumps, supply installations, and rear establishments. As a result the Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force (M.A.T.A.F.) reduced to a minimum its activity over the battle area. (See also para 328) By the end of January the D.A.F. had lapsed into relative inactivity on the Eighth Army front. The only air operations worthy of note during February were on the 23rd and 24th when the D.A.F. flew well over 100 sorties in support of an attack by 56 Inf Div in the Cotignola sector. During this latter month the M.A.T.A.F. flew only slightly more than 1600 close-support sorties over the Fifth and Eighth Army fronts, or about three fifths of the number flown in support of 1 Cdn Corps alone during December 1944. (R.A.F. Mediterranean Review No. 10; The Invasion of Italy Part VI - Italian Finale, pp 9-10)

RECAPITULATION

355. Allied offensive operations in December were almost entirely confined to the Eighth Army front. The enemy during this phase showed great stubbornness in defence, and was prepared to stand and fight where he found himself rather than, as he had done in the autumn fighting, fall back voluntarily to the next river line as soon as he was at a disadvantage. The offensive opened with a certain air of optimism^x and some early successes gave hopes of a more rapid

x Statement by Historical Officer of H.Q. Eighth Army (Eighth Army, etc., p. 87)

advance than had hitherto been the case. On 2 Dec 1 Cdn Corps launched its attack on the enemy switch-line between the Montone and the Lamone. After some hard initial fighting 1 Cdn Inf Div by the 3rd was in Russi, while 5 Cdn Armd Div on its right had cut the Russi-Ravenna road. This advance which threw back 356 Inf Div's left placed its neighbour 114 Jaeger Div in a difficult position. With an open right flank 114 Jaeger Div quickly withdrew to the north, and by the end of 4 Dec the Canadians had cleared Ravenna, and secured the line of Route 16 as far as Mezzano on the Lamone. In the hope of gaining the full advantage from the enemy's discomfiture 1 Cdn Inf Div immediately prepared an assault across the Lamone. On the night 4/5 Dec 1 Cdn Inf Bde crossed the river on a two-battalion front. But the enemy proved better prepared than was thought, and in a few hours fighting the following morning inflicted heavy losses on the Canadians, and threw them back to the east bank.

356. 5 Corps attacked on the night of 3 Dec, in conjunction with the Polish Corps on their left, to secure the high ground west of Faenza. The attack met with strong resistance along a ridge of high ground running through Pideura and the latter place was not taken until 7 Dec. The enemy reacted strongly and promptly to the British advance. On the 9th he launched 90 Pz Gren Div, which he had brought over from Fifth Army front into a violent counter-attack against 5 Corps. The attacks cost the enemy heavy casualties and failed to bring about any improvement in his situation. Furthermore he was to discover that he had needlessly committed his 90th Div, for 5 Corps, at that point, due to maintenance difficulties and the necessity to regroup, called a halt to its offensive until 14 Dec.

357. In the meantime 1 Cdn Corps, chiefly because of bad weather conditions, had ceased its attacks following the repulse of 1 Cdn Inf Bde on 5 Dec. By 10 Dec, however, the weather had improved, and that night the Canadian Corps attacked across the Lamone with two divisions on a wide front. The attack made good initial progress, and during 11 Dec both divisions reached the Fosso Vecchio. That night the Canadians easily crossed the Vecchio and resumed the advance, 1 Cdn Inf Div to the Canale Naviglio and 5 Cdn Armd Div to the intermediate Fosso Vetro. The enemy, however, rallied at this stage, and endeavoured to stabilize his position. He brought 98 Inf Div from opposite Fifth Army and put it in alongside the weakened 356 Div, strengthened his Naviglio defences, and established a strong switchline between Bagnacavallo and the Lamone River. Both divisions of 1 Cdn Corps attacked across the Naviglio during the night 12/13 Dec but only 1 Cdn Inf Div on the left succeeded in establishing a bridgehead. The enemy struggled hard to destroy the Canadian lodgment on the 13th, and at one point was on the verge of achieving his aim when the timely arrival of the armour tipped the balance against him. With the 1 Cdn Inf Div bridgehead firmly established, 5 Cdn Armd Div renewed its efforts to get across the Naviglio on its front. To prepare the way for a fresh assault the division sent Westmr R. supported by tanks through 1 Cdn Inf Div and north along the west bank of the canal. That night, with the pressure on its front greatly lessened as a result of the rapid progress of Westmr R. the division crossed the Naviglio. During the 15th it faced up to the Fosso Munio, and extended its bridgehead to the south to link up with that of 1 Cdn Inf Div. Although the enemy no longer had a river obstacle between him and 1 Cdn Inf Div, he showed no signs of an intention to withdraw.

358. During the night 14/15 Dec 5 Corps renewed its offensive south of Route 9. The two attacking divisions made slow but effective progress on the 15th, 2 N.Z. Div secured the area of Celle (2724), and 10 Ind Div by-passed the enemy's main positions on the Pergola ridge to secure the high ground beyond. The enemy, weakened in numbers as he was, now had little hope of continuing to hold the Pergola ridge, and accordingly withdrew that night. On the following day (16 Dec) the Indian Division secured the ridge, and the New Zealanders closed up to the Senio. Troops of 5 Corps entered and cleared Faenza on the same day, but came to a halt on the northern outskirts of the town against an enemy switchline which ran from the Lamone along the Scolo Cerchia and Rimini - Bologna railway to the Senio. Supply difficulties and losses in personnel sustained in the recent fighting prevented 5 Corps from making an immediate attempt to cross the Senio or to continue against the switchline.

359. Eighth Army intention was now to complete closing up to the Senio so that it might be prepared to launch an assault over that river in conjunction with a Fifth Army offensive. Accordingly 1 Cdn Corps was instructed to advance to the river from its Naviglio bridgeheads, while 5 Corps cleaned up the enemy still holding between the Lamone and the Senio. The Canadians attempted on 18 Dec to break out to the Senio through the switchline south of Bagnacavallo, but the attack made so little progress that it was abandoned within a few hours, and the decision taken to concentrate the weight of the Corps in attacks from the Naviglio bridgeheads. The battle commenced on the night 19/20 Dec, and continued through the following day, the enemy defences having to be virtually destroyed piecemeal before he gave way. On the night 20/21 Dec he finally withdrew, and both Canadian divisions swept up to the Senio. 5 Corps, meanwhile, had commenced driving northwards between the Lamone and the Senio. The British attack made a good start but a deterioration in the weather and stiffening enemy resistance gradually slowed the pace. By the end of the year 5 Corps advances and smaller gains by 1 Cdn Corps had pressed the enemy into a salient extending, on 5 Corps flank from Felisio (3031) on the Senio south of Granarolo to the Lamone, and opposite 1 Cdn Corps from Cotignola along the Via Madrara to the Lamone.

380. Although the abandonment of the plans for a combined offensive by both armies had relieved the urgency of operations east of the Senio, Eighth Army was still concerned with clearing its front up to that river in preparation for the winter halt. Accordingly, early in the new year, 1 Cdn Corps undertook operations to tidy up the ground on its flanks. 1 Cdn Inf Div launched the attack on the Granarolo salient on the night 3/4 Jan and within 48 hours had completed its task. On the right 5 Cdn Armd Div in four days (2-6 Jan) advanced to the Fiume Reno and the Adriatic coast, in the process so badly battering 114 Jaeger Div that it had to be withdrawn immediately after the battle. This attack on his extreme left wing so alarmed the enemy that on 4 Jan he made a violent and costly counter-attack using in vain a battle group from 16 S.S. Pz Gren Div in an attempt to cut off the Canadian division from its base. Although these were the last offensive operations carried out by the Canadians in Italy, Canadian troops continued to hold for some weeks thereafter a substantial portion of the Eighth Army Winter Line. In the middle of January 5 Cdn Armd Div was withdrawn and nearly a month later H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps. The last week in February saw the relief of 1 Cdn Inf Div and the completion of the last

operational task of the Canadians in Italy. Between 29 Oct 44 and 28 Feb 45 the Canadian ground forces in Italy suffered 5,318 casualties, including 61 officers and 826 other ranks killed or died of wounds (see Appx "B"). Between 1 Dec 44 and 7 Jan 45 troops operating under command 1 Cdn Corps took 25 enemy officers and 2,080* other ranks prisoners, and during the static period up to 10 Feb** a further three officers and 111 other ranks. (W.Ds., A. & Q., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944, January 1945 and February 1945: 1 Cdn Corps Adm Sitreps, 2 Dec 44 to 10 Feb 45)

CONCLUSION

361. Operation "GOLDFLAKE" commenced in effect on 10 Feb, when the first 5 Cdn Armd Div convoys left Riccione, and continued through March into May. Movement to the ports of embarkation in Italy was in the case of the wheeled vehicles by roads and the tracked vehicles by rail. Embarkation commenced in mid-February when 5 Cdn Armd Div began loading at Leghorn. Also shipborne at Leghorn were 1 Cdn Inf Div commencing 3 Mar, and 1 Cdn Armd Bde on 7 Mar. H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps embarked at Naples on 22 Feb. With the exception of 4 Bn 1 C.B.R.G., which was phased in early, the administrative units began moving later in March. "GOLDFLAKE" was completed on 29 May. Considering the size of the force involved, and the distances covered, the move of the Canadian Corps to North-West Europe was carried out with a minimum loss of operational time. To give an example only 45 days elapsed between the date on which 1 Cdn Inf Div relinquished its final operational role in Italy and the date on which it commenced operations in Holland. (Report No. 181, op cit)

362. Thus on the eve of its greatest victory the Canadians left Eighth Army. For 20 months they had served with it, and had had a considerable share in its many battles. In his farewell message the Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean wrote:

You have played a distinguished part in our victories in Italy, where you leave behind a host of friends and admirers who will follow your future with the liveliest interest.

(Historical Section C.M.H.Q. Report No. 143 -
Canadian Operations in Italy, 4 Jun 44 - 23 Feb 45;
Appx "B")

The cost had not been small. Behind them they left the 423 officers and 5,341 other ranks who would sleep forever in Italian soil.

* Due to a possible error in 1 Cdn Corps Adm Sitrep of 8 Dec a total of 2,060 other ranks is probably a more correct figure.

** After 10 Feb figures for the Canadian prisoner intake are not available as 1 Cdn Inf Div adm Sitrep was submitted to 5 Corps, and copies were not placed on the divisional war diary.

363. This report was drafted in part by Maj E.A. Haines and Capt M.B. Huffman, and completed by Maj D.H. Cunningham.

for *H.C. Cunningham Major*
(C.P. Stacey) Colonel,
Director Historical Section.

ORDER OF BATTLE
1 Cdn Corps
(as at 0800 hrs 15 Dec 44)

H.Q. Headquarters 1st Canadian Corps

ARTY 7th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
(less one bty)
1st Survey Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
657 Air OP Sqn
422 S.L. (Indep) Bty Royal Artillery

1st Canadian Army Group Royal Artillery
1st Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
2nd Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
5th Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
3rd Medium Regiment Royal Artillery
61st Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery (two btys)

21st (British) Tank Brigade (under command 1 Cdn Corps)
Headquarters 21st Tank Brigade
North Irish Horse
145th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps
272 Forward Delivery Squadron

1st Canadian Infantry Division
Headquarters 1st Canadian Infantry Division
1st Canadian Armoured Car Regiment (Royal Canadian
Dragoons)
12th Royal Tank Regiment
9th Canadian Armoured Regiment (British Columbia
Dragoons) (less one sqn)

Royal Canadian Artillery 1st Canadian Infantry Division
1st Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
2nd Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
3rd Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
1st Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian
Artillery
104th Battery 7th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal
Canadian Artillery

The Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.)
1st Canadian Infantry Brigade
The Royal Canadian Regiment
The Hastings & Prince Edward Regiment
48th Highlanders of Canada

2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada
The Loyal Edmonton Regiment

3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade
Royal 22e Regiment
The Carleton & York Regiment
The West Nova Scotia Regiment

5th Canadian Armoured Division

Headquarters 5th Canadian Armoured Division

3rd Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment
(The Governor General's Horse Guards)

5th Canadian Armoured Brigade

2nd Canadian Armoured Regiment (Lord Strathcona's
Horse (Royal Canadians))
5th Canadian Armoured Regiment (8th Princess
Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars);
"B" Squadron 9th Canadian Armoured Regiment
(British Columbia Dragoons)
5th Canadian Assault Troop Canadian Armoured Corps
"G" Squadron 25th Armoured Delivery Regiment (The
Elgin Regiment)

Royal Canadian Artillery 5th Canadian Armoured Division

8th Field Regiment (Self-propelled) Royal Canadian
Artillery
11th Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
17th Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
4th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
5th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian
Artillery

11th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Headquarters 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade
11th Canadian Independent Machine Gun Company
(The Princess Louise Fusiliers)
The Perth Regiment
The Cape Breton Highlanders
The Irish Regiment of Canada

12th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Headquarters 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade
12th Canadian Independent Machine Gun Company
(The Princess Louise Fusiliers)
The Lanark & Renfrew Scottish Regiment (1st Light
Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery)
4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards (4th Canadian
Reconnaissance Regiment)
The Westminster Regiment (Motor)

9th (British) Armoured Brigade (under command 1 Cdn Corps)

Headquarters 9th Armoured Brigade
4th Queen's Own Hussars (less two sqns)
7th Queen's Own Hussars (Dismounted)
12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's)
27th Lancers

24th Field Regiment (Self-propelled) Royal
Artillery
310th Anti-Tank Battery (Self-propelled) Royal
Artillery

1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps
2721st Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment

BULOW FORCE (Partisans)

(Extracted from Order of Battle 1 Cdn Corps, 15 Dec 44 (W.D.,
G.S. H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 64))

ORDER OF BATTLE
1 Cdn Corps
(as at 0800 hrs 6 Feb 45)

H.Q.

Headquarters 1st Canadian Corps

7th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
(less three self-propelled batteries and two
17 pounder troops)

1st Survey Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
422nd Search-Light (Independent) Battery Royal
Artillery

1st Canadian Army Group Royal Artillery

1st Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
2nd Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
5th Medium Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
3rd Medium Regiment Royal Artillery
56th Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery

Headquarters Royal Artillery Cremona Group

7th Artillery Regiment
Four field batteries
One anti-tank battery
One light anti-aircraft battery
24th Field Regiment (Self-propelled) Royal
Artillery
7th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
(one self-propelled battery and one battery
(less one troop)(less guns))
5th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian
Regiment (one battery)

BULOW FORCE (Partisans)

Cremona Combat Group (under command 1 Cdn Corps)

Headquarters Cremona Combat Group

21st Infantry Regiment (Cremona Group)

Mortar Company (3 inch)
Anti-tank Company (6 pounder)
1st Battalion
2nd Battalion
3rd Battalion
Headquarters 21st Infantry Regiment

22nd Infantry Regiment (Cremona Group)

Headquarters 22nd Infantry Regiment
Mortar Company (3 inch)
Anti-Tank Company (6 pounder)
1st Battalion
2nd Battalion
3rd Battalion

1st Canadian Infantry Division

Headquarters 1st Canadian Infantry Division

1st Canadian Armoured Car Regiment (Royal
Canadian Dragoons)

Royal Canadian Artillery 1st Canadian Infantry Division

1st Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
2nd Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
3rd Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
1st Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
11th Royal Horse Artillery
142nd Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Self-propelled)
7th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery (one self-propelled battery, one troop (less guns) and two 17 pounder troops)
310th Battery 60th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery
5th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery (one battery)
The Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.)

BULLOW FORCE (Partisans)

1st Canadian Infantry Brigade

Headquarters 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade
The Royal Canadian Regiment
The Hastings & Prince Edward Regiment
48th Highlanders of Canada

2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade

Headquarters 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada
The Loyal Edmonton Regiment

3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade

Headquarters 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade
Royal 22e Regiment
The Carleton & York Regiment
The West Nova Scotia Regiment

21st (British) Tank Brigade (under command 1 Cdn Inf Div)

Headquarters 21st Tank Brigade
North Irish Horse
12th Royal Tank Regiment
48th Royal Tank Regiment
272nd Forward Delivery Squadron

2nd (British) Armoured Brigade (under command 1 Cdn Inf Div)

Headquarters 2nd Armoured Brigade
Queen's Bay (2nd Dragoon Guards)
9th Queen's Royal Lancers
10th Royal Hussars (Prince of Wales's Own)
27th Lancers
278th Forward Delivery Squadron

1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps
1st Battalion Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment)
1st Battalion The Welch Regiment

5th Canadian Armoured Division

Headquarters 5th Canadian Armoured Division
3rd Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (Governor General's Horse Guards)

5th Canadian Armoured Brigade

Headquarters 5th Canadian Armoured Brigade
2nd Canadian Armoured Regiment (Lord Strathcona's
Horse (Royal Canadians))
5th Canadian Armoured Regiment (8th Princess
Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars)
9th Canadian Armoured Regiment (British Columbia
Dragoons)
5th Canadian Assault Troop Canadian Armoured Corps
"G" Squadron 25th Canadian Armoured Delivery
Regiment (The Elgin Regiment)

Royal Canadian Artillery 5th Canadian Armoured Division

17th Field Regiment (Self-propelled) Royal Canadian
Artillery
11th Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
4th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery
5th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian
Artillery (less two batteries)

11th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Headquarters 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade
11th Canadian Independent Machine Gun Company
(The Princess Louise Fusiliers)
The Perth Regiment
The Cape Breton Highlanders
The Irish Regiment of Canada

12th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Headquarters 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade
12th Canadian Independent Machine Gun Company
(The Princess Louise Fusiliers)
The Lanark & Renfrew Scottish Regiment (1st
Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Canadian
Artillery)
4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards (4th Canadian
Reconnaissance Regiment)
The Westminster Regiment (Motor)

(Extracted from Order of Battle 1 Cdn Corps, 6 Feb 45 (W.D.,
G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, February 1945: Appx 16))

CASUALTY STATISTICS*

COMPILED FROM WAR SERVICE RECORDS, D.V.A., "CASUALTY STATISTICS"
 THE CAMPAIGN IN ITALY"

Table 1.

Casualties Canadian Component ~~AAA~~ for period 29 Oct 44 - 27 Feb 45

FORMATION OR UNIT	KILLED*		WOUNDED		PRISONERS*	
	Offr	OR	Offr	OR	Offr	OR
29 Oct - 30 Nov 44	6	29	20	403	-	4
1 - 21 Dec 44	32	16	108	1,713	13	199
22 - 31 Dec 44	4	72	26	395	-	49
1 - 6 Jan 45	11	81	22	429	-	12
7 Jan - 27 Feb 45	8	128	30	959	2	47
Total	61	826	206	3,899	15	311

Table 2.

Casualties Headquarters and units 1 Cdn Armd Bde 29 Oct 44-27 Feb 45

29 Oct - 30 Nov 44	2	4	4	38	-	1
1 - 21 Dec 44	-	-	-	25	-	-
22 - 31 Dec 44	-	1	1	7	-	-
1 - 6 Jan 45	-	-	3	5	-	-
7 Jan - 27 Feb 45	-	1	1	37	-	-
Total	2	6	9	112	-	1

Table 3.

Casualties Canadian Component Eighth Army for period
 29 Oct 44 to 27 Feb 45**

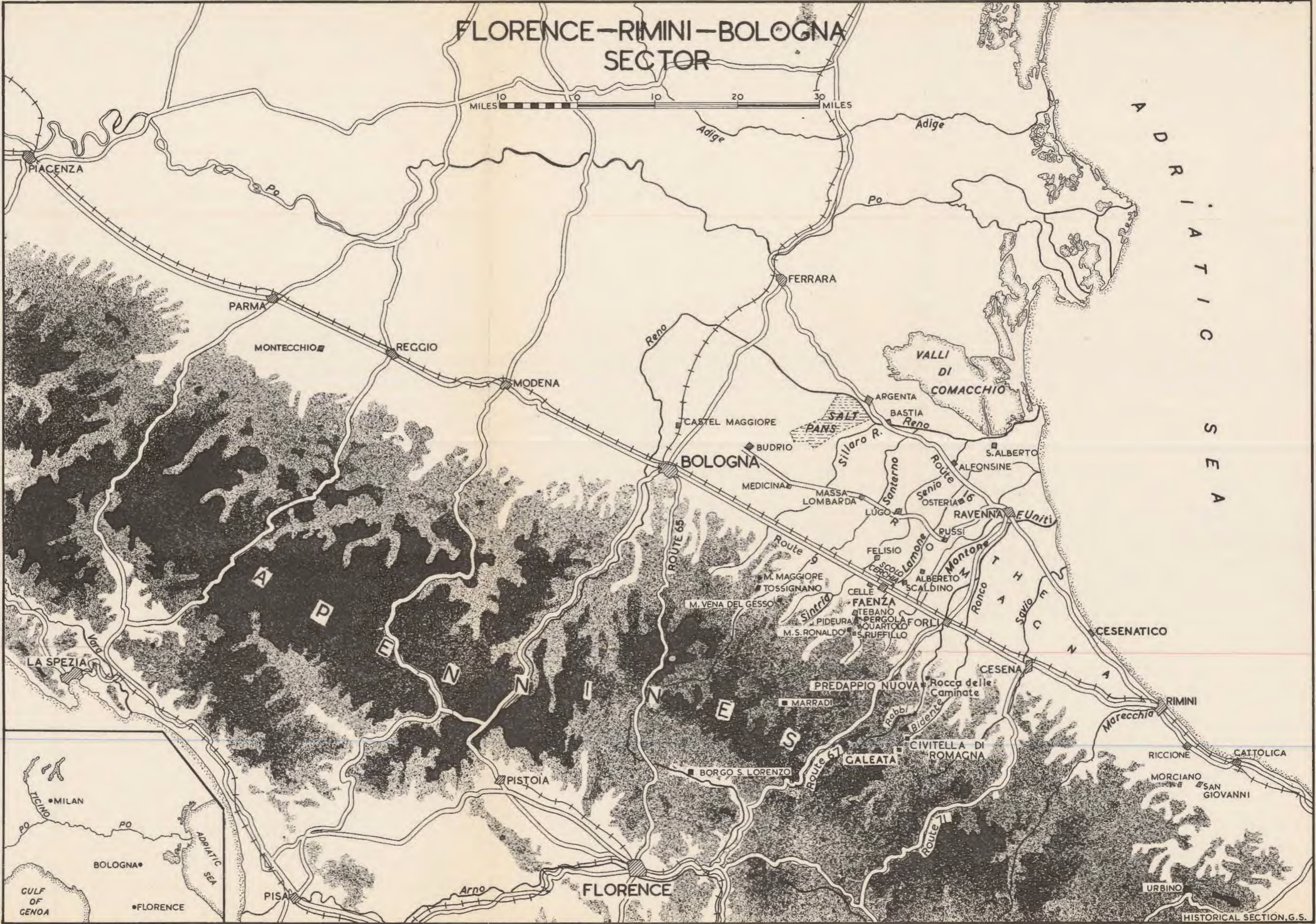
29 Oct - 30 Nov 44	4	25	16	365	-	3
1 - 21 Dec 44	32	516	108	1,688	13	199
22 - 31 Dec 44	4	71	25	388	-	49
1 - 6 Jan 45	11	81	19	424	-	12
7 Jan - 27 Feb 45	8	127	29	922	2	47
Total	59	820	197	3,787	15	310

* KILLED includes "Died of Wounds"
 PRISONERS includes wounded prisoners

** Includes as well casualties of base units and "Canloan"
 personnel.

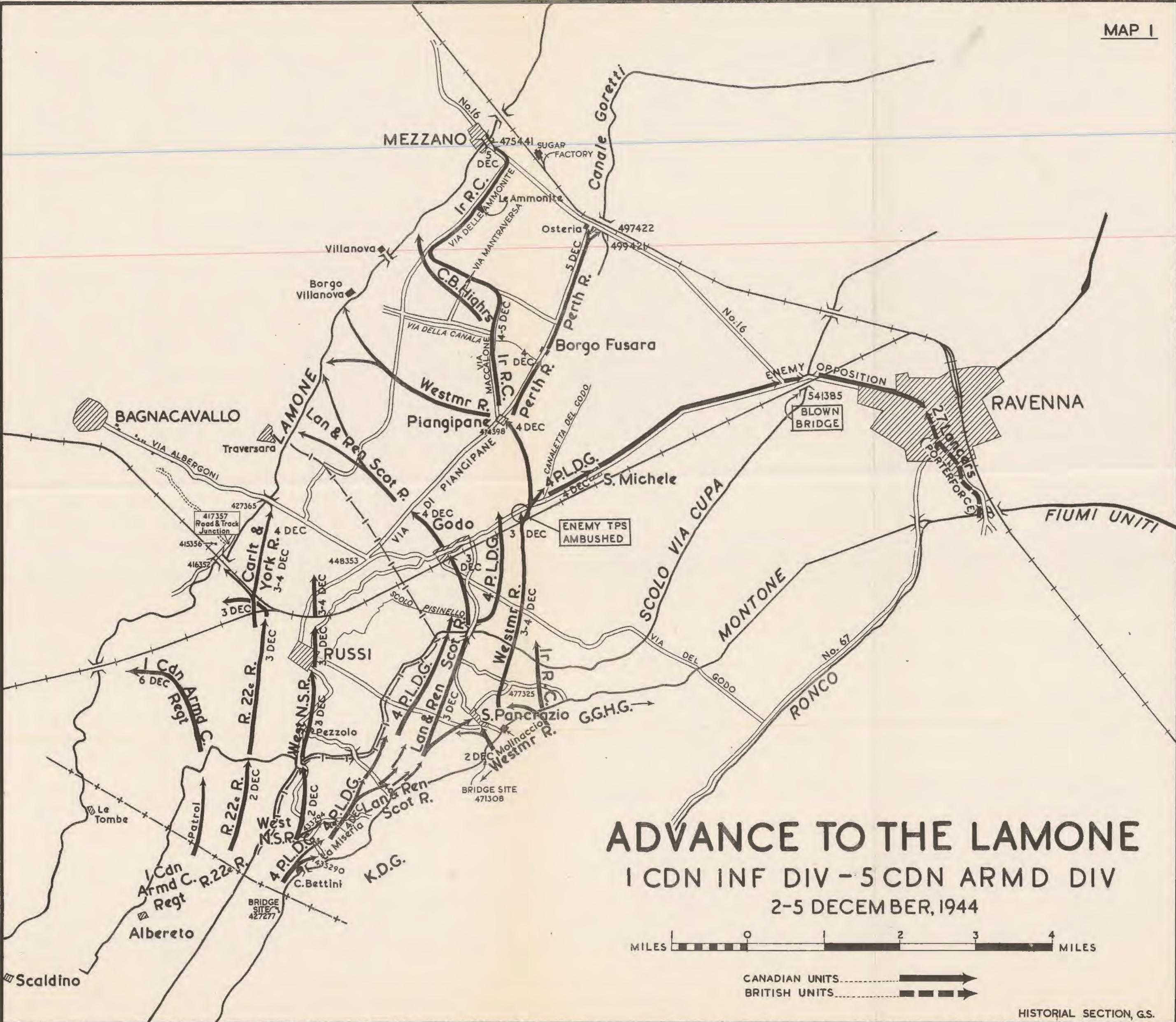
FLORENCE-RIMINI-BOLOGNA SECTOR

MILES 10 20 30



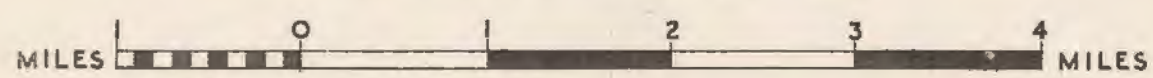
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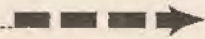
MILAN
BOLOGNA
FLORENCE
PISA
GULF OF GENOA
ADRIATIC SEA



ADVANCE TO THE LAMONE

I CDN INF DIV - 5 CDN ARMD DIV
2-5 DECEMBER, 1944



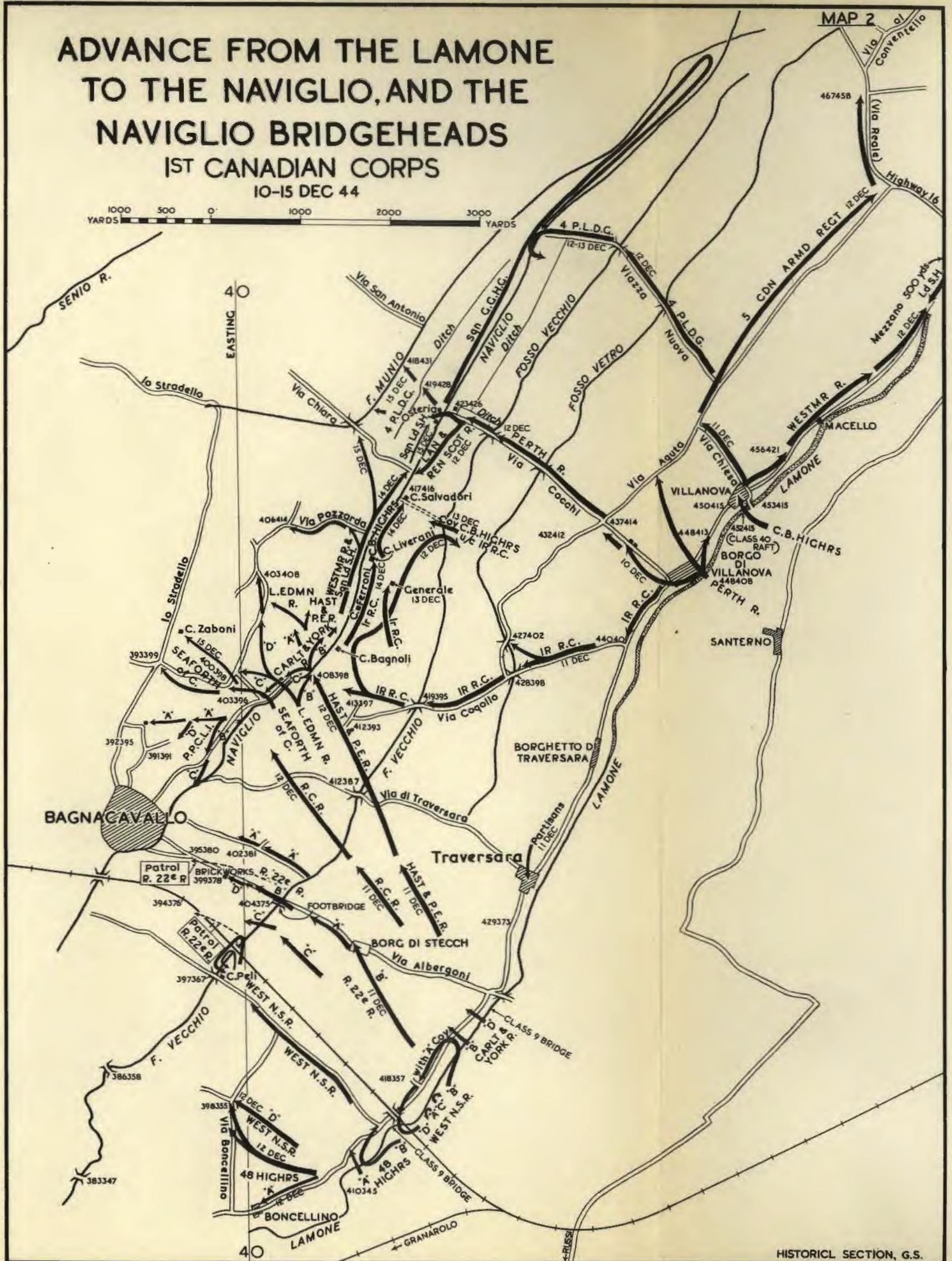
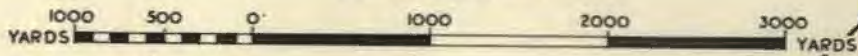
CANADIAN UNITS 
 BRITISH UNITS 

ADVANCE FROM THE LAMONE TO THE NAVIGLIO, AND THE NAVIGLIO BRIDGEHEADS

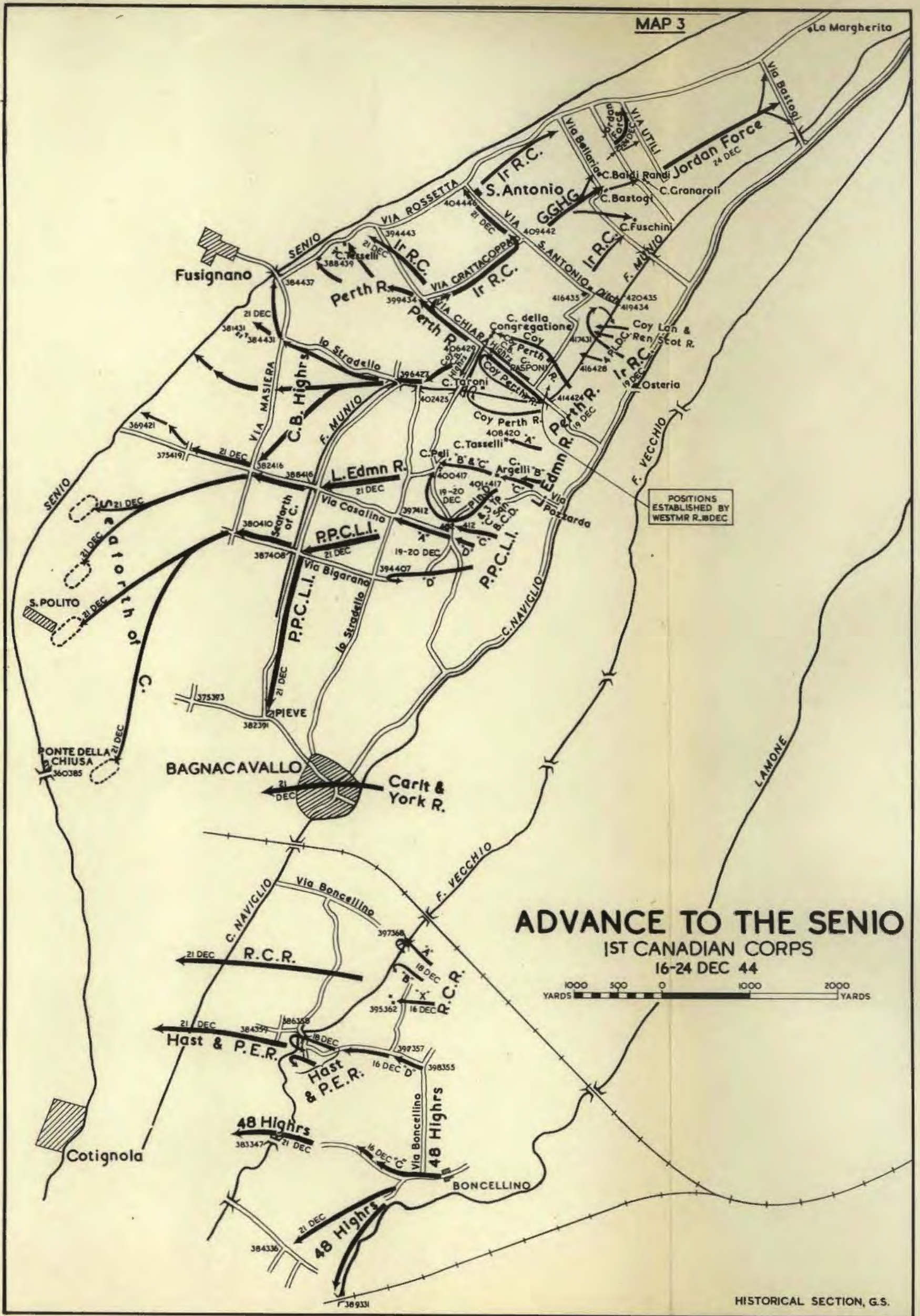
1ST CANADIAN CORPS

10-15 DEC 44

MAP 2



HISTORICAL SECTION, G.S.



ADVANCE TO THE SENIO
1ST CANADIAN CORPS
16-24 DEC 44



ADVANCE TO THE RENO

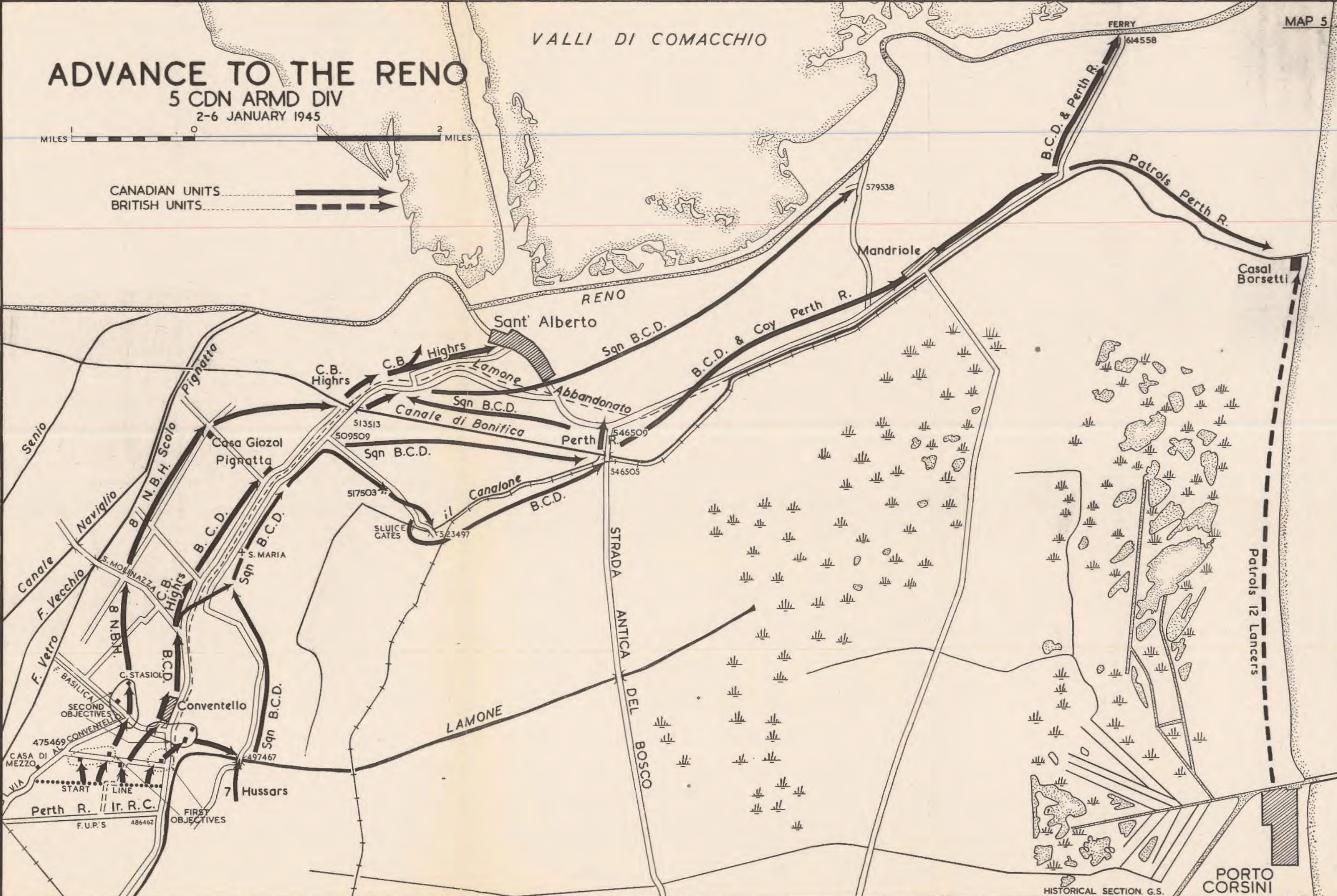
5 CDN ARMD DIV

2-6 JANUARY 1945

VALLI DI COMACCHIO



CANADIAN UNITS
BRITISH UNITS



Casal Borsetti

Patrols 12 Lancers

PORTO CORSINI

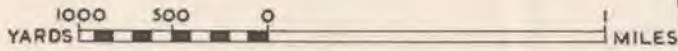
HISTORICAL SECTION, G.S.



GRANAROLO SALIENT

I CDN INF DIV

22 DEC 44 - 5 JAN 45

MAP 6



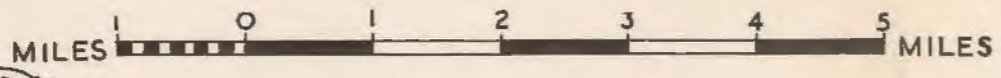
CANADIAN UNITS 
BRITISH UNITS 



OPERATIONS 1ST CANADIAN CORPS

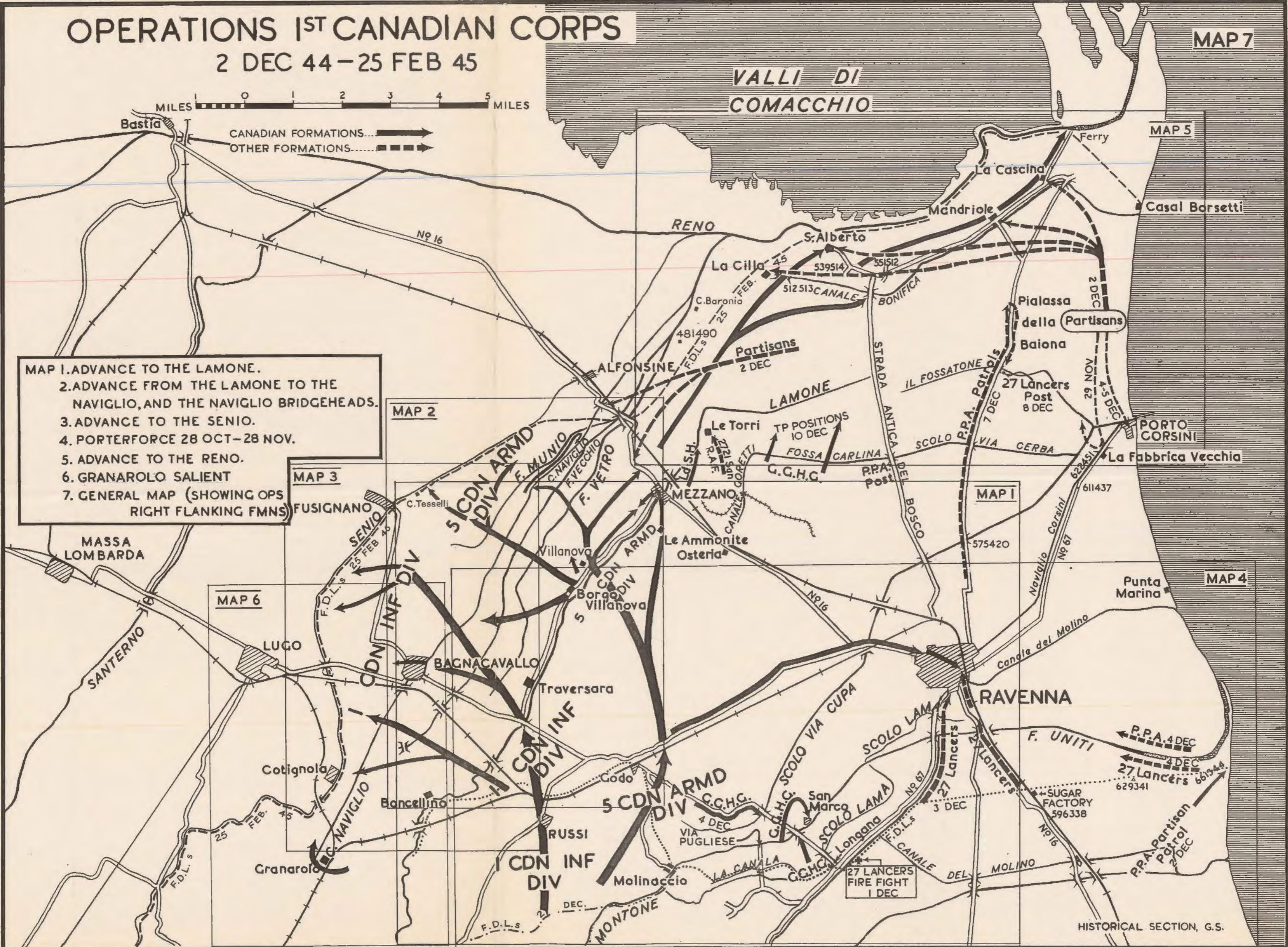
2 DEC 44 - 25 FEB 45

MAP 7



CANADIAN FORMATIONS... (solid arrow)
OTHER FORMATIONS... (dashed arrow)

- MAP 1. ADVANCE TO THE LAMONE.
- 2. ADVANCE FROM THE LAMONE TO THE NAVIGLIO, AND THE NAVIGLIO BRIDGEHEADS.
- 3. ADVANCE TO THE SENIO.
- 4. PORTER FORCE 28 OCT - 28 NOV.
- 5. ADVANCE TO THE RENO.
- 6. GRANAROLO SALIENT
- 7. GENERAL MAP (SHOWING OPS RIGHT FLANKING FMNS)



MAP 2

MAP 3

MAP 6

MAP 1

MAP 4

MAP 5

HISTORICAL SECTION, G.S.