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REPORT NO. 32
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)

ARMY HEADQUARTERS

2 Nov 50

THE CONCLUDING PHASE OF OPERATIONS
BY THE FIRST CDN ARMY

PART I

The Operations of First
Cdn Army, 2-11 Apr 45

AMENDMENT NO. 1

CANCELLED
~~RESTRICTED~~
DECLASSIFIED
AUTHORITY: DHD 3-12
BY ape FOR DHIST NDHQ
DATE: NOV 10 1986

1. Page 16, para 38, line 7, after Bde delete under command
2. Page 18, para 43, line 3, after 28 Mar 45, insert but which had reverted to command of 5 Cdn Armd Div at 0900 hrs 31 Mar 45,
3. Appendix "C", Map, Operation "DESTROYER", in title delete under command

G. W. Nicholson Lt. Col.
for (C.P. Stacey) Colonel
Director Historical Section

DECLASSIFIED

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10 Dec 49

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PART I

The Operations of First
Cdn Army, 2-11 Apr 45

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RESTRICTED

R E P O R T NO. 32
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

10 Dec 49

The concluding phase of
operations by the First
Canadian Army 2 Apr - 5 May 45

Part I: The Operations of First
Cdn Army, 2-11 Apr 45

Reference Maps: G.S.G.S. 2541, Holland, 1:100,000
Sheets 1A, 2A, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

G.S.G.S. 4416, Germany, 1:100,000
Sheets L1, L2, L3, M1, M2, M3, N1,
N2, P1, Q1, and all corresponding
maps of scales 1:25,000 and 1:50,000.

1. This narrative continues the series of official reports dealing with the operations of the First Canadian Army in North-West Europe. It describes the last phase of the campaign from 2 Apr 45, at which time General H.D.G. Crerar's Headquarters assumed control of Canadian operations east of the Rhine, to the signing of the instrument of surrender by plenipotentiaries of the German High Command at Field Marshal Montgomery's Tactical Headquarters on 4 May, resulting in the cease fire order which became effective at 0800 hours on the following day. This report is a direct sequel to Report No. 19 and is written with particular reference to the operations and activities of the divisions under Lt-Gen G.G. Simonds' command. There is no break in chronology. The maps (G.S.G.S. Sheets) which especially apply to the various parts of the narrative are noted with the section headings throughout the report. Appendices "A" to "G" are attached to this Report and cover the operations described.

THE SITUATION OF FIRST CDN ARMY, 2 APR 45

2. On the morning of 2 Apr 45, the Army Commander addressed a group of War Correspondents at his Headquarters and summed up for them the story of the attachment of 2 Cdn Corps to Second Army and its subsequent return to his own command.

Last night the 2 Cdn Corps which up to that time had formed part of Second Army, returned to my command. The reason for this detachment of 2 Cdn Corps for the Rhine crossing was the same basically as put many British formations under my command in "Veritable" and at the outset of that operation put 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs under command of 30 Brit Corps,

i.e., the influence of terrain or topography and that of availability of communications on the grouping of forces. Until 2 Cdn Corps could clear Emmerich, having worked downstream from Rees, and until Canadian Army could then bridge and establish its own trans-Rhine communications at Emmerich, I could not effectively maintain or command 2 Cdn Corps. The bridge and its approaches were completed at 2100 hrs yesterday evening, thirty-two hours after the word "go" was given to the chief engineer, a highly creditable job of work. Another bridge should be completed by tomorrow.

(W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, April 1945: Appx "A", Remarks to Warcos, 2 Apr 45)

3. Of the tasks which lay ahead General Crerar explained that his main and most immediate responsibility was to secure the line Almelo - Deventer. Thereafter he must force the Ijssel river from the east and clear as far west as the line Apeldoorn - Otterloo - Renkum so that the very important road and railway communications of Nijmegen, Arnhem, Zutphen, and Hengelo might be developed and used. As the G.O.C.-in-C. pointed out, this operation, away from Berlin instead of towards it, might seem a strange one, but upon its success would depend the Army Group's future progress into Germany proper, for the communication and maintenance possibilities that these centres afforded were essential to Field Marshal Montgomery's intentions. (Ibid). While Lt-Gen Simonds' 2 Cdn Corps attacked westwards across the Ijssel along the Deventer - Zutphen front; 1 Cdn Corps was to undertake an assault crossing of the lower Rhine near Arnhem, capture that place and secure a bridgehead about it. General Crerar also explained that if this operation was successful it would speed up the start of the rail and road bridges at Arnhem and he concluded "... for that very reason it is also important to the Army Group as a whole". (Ibid, para 11)

4. Besides the Ijssel crossing, 2 Cdn Corps would have another onerous task; that of developing an armoured thrust into north-east Holland to clear the enemy from that area in preparation for the advance of the Army into northern Germany. To accomplish all this would require a large force and so the Army Commander assigned to 2 Cdn Corps 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, and by way of extra fast moving fire power, the two Canadian armoured car regiments (1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) and 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt). This formidable mass constituted, in General Crerar's own words, "a very strong corps". (Ibid, para 12). With most of the available Canadian fighting formations operating under Lt-Gen Simonds' command the greater part of the other Canadian Corps would, for the time being, be composed of British troops. Lt-Gen C. Foulkes now had 5 Cdn Armd Div and 49 (W.R.) Inf Div, and in another few days 5 Brit Inf Div was to be placed at his disposal.* (Ibid).

* Actually 5 Brit Inf Div never came under command 1 Cdn Corps as previously planned (General Crerar's Despatch, 27 May 45, op cit).

5. In his directive to Generals Foulkes and Simonds on 2 Apr, General Crerar reiterated his plans for the two corps which he had set out in his previous directives on 10 Mar and 24 Mar 45. (Sec Report No. 186, paras 182, 183). He also added that Lt-Gen Simonds would have prior call on the resources which could be made available by First Cdn Army and 84 Group R.A.F. With these immense resources behind him Lt-Gen Simonds' intention for 2 Apr was to send 4 Cdn Armd Div to the north-east to the area of Bornic and Delden, which he had taken over from 30 Corps, to relieve elements of 43 (W.) Div there. His two infantry divisions were to continue northward, 2 Cdn Inf Div "positioning" a brigade group about Doetinchem, then one further north about Hengelo and Vorden and finally level with Zutphen and to the east, (about Almen - Veldwijk - Warken). 3 Cdn Inf Div was intended to keep up a parallel progress on the left flank of the corps. It was to hold the area from Beek to Elten with one brigade, and try to push out toward Zevenaar. The second brigade would be centred around Wehl; the third brigade was to get to the area immediately south of Zutphen, including Baak, Toldijk and Steenderen. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945: Appx 5, Intentions, 2 Apr 45)

6. Early on 2 Apr these plans began to take shape, and as 2 Cdn Corps exerted pressure to the north Lt-Gen Foulkes' troops also swung into action to clear the "island" between Nijmegen and Arnhem, thus ensuring the security of Lt-Gen Simonds' left flank.* At this time the dispositions of 2 Cdn Corps were as follows. On the extreme left 9 Cdn Inf Bde together with elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt and 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt were holding a line from the village of Elten north-eastwards to the area of Loerbeek. 7 Cdn Inf Bde was holding Kilder and pressing close on Wehl with Regina Rif, while 8 Cdn Inf Bde had its battalions in rear of 9 Cdn Inf Bde's positions with R. de Chaud moving up to pass through Wehl with the object of forcing the Oude Ijssel near Laag - Keppel. Between 7 Cdn Inf Bde and the Oude Ijssel the divisional reconnaissance regiments were in full control with 7 and 8 Cdn Recce Regts in contact south of Wijnbergen. In the centre the forward troops of 2 Cdn Inf Div (R.H.C. and R. de Mais of 5 Cdn Inf Bde) were strongly established north of Doetinchem, which had been taken by Calg Highrs with the assistance of 8 Cdn Recce Regt. 6 Cdn Inf Bde was at this time some 6000 - 7000 yds to the rear, with S. Sask R. in Terborg, Camerons of C. near Etten and Fus M.R. around Veldhunen and Ulft. South-west of Ulft, but ready to move up, was 4 Cdn Inf Bde with orders to advance on the axis Terborg - Zelhem - Hengelo - Vorden and secure a bridgehead over the Twente Canal. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes and Units, 1-2 Apr 45; AEF: 45/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/H,

* This operation, known as "Destroyer" called for a two phase attack, the first by 49 (W.R.) Inf Div on the right commencing at 0600 hrs 2 Apr; the second by 11 Cdn Inf Bde on the left and timed to start at 1730 hrs or later. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Corps/C/F, Docket I, folio 1: Summary of Ops 1 Cdn Corps, 1-14 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H, Docket V: April 1945: Liaison Officers Reports, 01200 A).

Docket I: Ops Log, April 1945, Serial 2619; also see map "A" attached to this report, "Situation of 2 Cdn Corps and Flanks" at 0200 hours, 2 Apr 45). The present task of 2 Cdn Armd Bde was to provide immediate support for the advance northward. To this end 10 Cdn Armd Regt was supporting 2 Cdn Inf Div, 27 Cdn Armd Regt was supporting 3 Cdn Inf Div, and 6 Cdn Armd Regt was still west of the Rhine but under orders to cross the river shortly. (W.Ds., 6, 10, and 27 Cdn Armd Regts, 1-2 Apr 45)

7. On the right between Doetinchem and Ruurlo "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt had been roaming freely for the past twelve hours and, together with the Royals of 8 Brit Armd Bde, had secured most of the vital points as far as the outskirts of Lochem, which troops of 30 Brit Corps (129 Bde of 43 (W.) Inf Div) were investing. (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1-2 Apr 45). The remainder of 43 (W.) Inf Div was occupied in sweeping eastwards along the south bank of the Twente Canal past Diepenheim. On the extreme right Gds Armd Div were fighting in Oldenzaal and east of Enschede. Behind the Guards, in the area of Groenlo, 3 Brit Inf Div was concentrated and ready to follow up the armoured advance. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I). The intention of 30 Brit Corps was to continue its thrust to the northeast using Gds Armd Div, with 3 Brit Inf Div in close attendance while the Wessex Division would, on relief by 4 Cdn Armd Div, advance to seize Hengelo and safeguard Lt-Gen Horrocks left flank. (Ibid).

8. 4 Cdn Armd Div was by this time divided into two strong battle groups. Lion group (Brigadier J.C. Jefferson, D.S.O.), consisted of H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 21 Cdn Armd Regt, Alq R., A. & S.H. of C., 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy, 9 Cdn Fd Sqn R.C.E., 15 Cdn Fd Amb and 14 Cdn A. Tk Bty. The task of this group was first to establish itself in the Ruurlo - Lochem area, relieving whatever units of 43 (W.) Inf Div remained there, and then seize crossing places over the Twente Canal to the east and west of Lochem. Tiger group comprising H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde (Brigadier R.W. Moncel, D.S.O., O.B.E.), 22 and 28 Cdn Armd Regts, Lake Sup R. (Mot), Linc and Welld R., as well as 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.), 96 Cdn A. Tk Bty and 12 Cdn Lt Fd Amb, was to pass through Lion Group and advance eastwards against Delden. (AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket I: Folio 13, "The Final Punch", Ops and Activities of 4 Cdn Armd Div, 30 Mar - 5 May 45). From their first concentration area east of the Rhine at Speldrop and Bienen the battle groups were allotted another more advanced concentration area about Westendorp (0975), and early on the morning of 2 Apr Lion Group began its move northward; meanwhile Tiger Group stayed back some distance waiting for developments ahead. (Ibid, and W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div and Bdes, 1-2 Apr 45).

9. Thus the advance of 2 Cdn Corps against the **Twenty-fifth German Army** was to be made in echelon formation, with Second British Army on its right plunging deep into the Reich along the axis Hengelo - Nordhorn - Lingen. On the eastern flank of 2 Cdn Corps would be 4 Cdn Armd Div directed on objectives many miles ahead. In the centre 2 Cdn Inf Div's

* 4/Summ: C.I.G.S./2/6, C.I.G.S. War Office Summary No. 302, 0715 hours 3 Apr 45, Map "A" attached.

modest aim was to cross the Twente Canal, while to the west and working up along the Ijssel River the "Water Rats" of 3 Cdn Inf Div would be directed on Zutphen. The advance of the armour would be, it was estimated, 48 hours ahead of 2 Cdn Inf Div and 72 hours ahead of the "Water Rats". This difference in time would keep the three formations in their relative positions in the echelon. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945; Appx 8, notes on forthcoming Ops, 3 Apr 45, see also Hist Sec Report No. 19, Operation "Plunder" 145-148 inclusive for enemy picture, 1 Apr 45)

7 CDN INF BDE'S ATTACK ON WEHL AND
THE EXPLOITATION WESTWARD, 2-3 APR 45*

10. Meanwhile on 3 Cdn Inf Div's front the operation to seize Wehl had begun. At 0400 hours Regina Rif sent two companies forward, each with a section of Wasps under command. The plan of attack was based on the information gained by the battalion's patrols during the past few hours. The attack went in after a heavy artillery and mortar concentration, "B" Coy on the right of the main road into the town, "A" Coy on the left. The objective of these two sub-units was the southern portion of the village. Once it was in our hands the remaining companies would take on the northern half. On account of the darkness it was not deemed advisable to use armour for the initial phase. Opposition to the advance was fairly stiff, but by 0600 hours "A" and "B" Coys were consolidating and the second phase went in supported by tanks from 27 Cdn Armd Regts. "C" and "D" Coys met determined resistance but, by 0930 hours, had gained their objectives. An official account of the attack states:

The methods of the enemy in this particular rearguard were effective. A few average troops with stern N.C.O. leadership, well supported by S.P. guns and mortars meant a serious delay and caused at least one brigade to deploy and one bn to attack.

(AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F,
Docket V: Folio V, Op "PLUNDER"
(Capture of Wehl) prepared by
Regina Rif, 31 May 45 and Report
No. 26: Op "PLUNDER" by 7 Cdn Inf
Bde)

The success of Regina Rif at Wehl was most commendable, since in about five hours fighting the Reginas had trounced a force of over 200 enemy and taken over 70 prisoners. (*Ibid*, also W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and Regina Rif, 2 Apr 45).

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheet 40 - Arnhem.
G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 4002 - Zevenaar and 4003 - Doetinchem.
Also Appx "B".

11. By this time 1 C. Scot R. had been ordered forward with instructions to dispatch a company battle group (with tanks, carriers and mortars) to capture the bridge across the Oude Ijssel at Laag Keppel (9678). These orders however were soon changed and the entire brigade was switched westwards in the direction of Zevenaar and Didam. The thrust northwards now became the responsibility of 8 Cdn Inf Bde. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Report No. 26, as above). The first unit to move west from Wehl was R. Wpg Rif led by "C" Coy and supported by tanks and some self-propelled 17 pr guns, but the enemy was apparently not in any way awed by the sight of this war column. The advancing troops were met with a hail of fire as soon as they left the village, and deployment became necessary. The battalion Commander, Lt-Col L.R. Fulton, D.S.O., now ordered "C" Coy to hold its ground, "A" Coy to clear the woods to the left of the main axis, "B" Coy to continue along the road, and "D" Coy to swing out to the right to secure the right flank. For the next few hours small arms fire hindered progress but by midnight "D" and "B" Coys had cleared their allotted areas and "C" Coy had reached the crossroads 1,000 yards east of Loil (9074). Casualties so far had been light and prisoners few. At about 0100 hours 3 Apr, "A" Coy pushed on through to occupy Loil followed by "D" Coy. The occupation here was of short duration for at 0400 hours orders were received to move on to Zevenaar. The R. Wpg Rif pushed off at 0530 hours, passed through Didam which was now held by 1 C. Scot R., and by 0800 hours were in the town. The remainder of the day passed without incident except for routine patrols, one of which, by "D" Coy, travelled about 1200 yards up the north-west road from Zevenaar but found no sign of the enemy. Meanwhile "A" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which had for the past twelve hours been working along the flank Wehl - Loil, worked boldly to the north and by the morning of 3 Apr was tapping the southern approaches to Doesburg. (W.Ds., R. Wpg Rif, 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 2-3 Apr 45; also Op "PLUNDER": 7 Cdn Inf Bde Report No. 26 as above).

12. 1 C. Scot R's. advance on Didam was carried out in the best traditions of the military text books. Having gathered forty prisoners* in the original task from which they were recalled earlier on 2 Apr, the Scottish had set out for Didam at about 1800 hours and had advanced cross-country between the Winnipegs' axis and the railroad to the south. The first sign of opposition in the woods bordering the railway line was quickly dealt with by "C" Coy, which was leading, and after a short fierce fight the infantry gathered another twenty prisoners for the loss of four men. The move continued but after a while "C" Coy was again fired upon. This time the flame-throwers were whipped into play and the enemy crumbled. No longer hampered, the battalion consolidated near Holthuizen (9173) and patrolled to contact, bagging a further thirteen demoralized enemy soldiers. The next step westwards was Didam and "A" and "D" Coys were instructed to press on by way of Loil to the north, while the other two companies took the shortest direct route from Holthuizen. Shortly after midnight Lt-Col L.S. Henderson set out to follow "B" and "C" Coys and by 0500 hours 3 Apr 1 C. Scot R. were solidly settled in Didam having collected yet another twenty-five prisoners en route. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 C. Scot R., 2-3 Apr 45).

* 858 Grenadier Regt, 346 Inf Div, AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/L/F, Docket I: 3 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 93, 2 Apr 45.

13. Regina Rif had, so far, not moved from Wehl, but early on 3 Apr Lt-Col A.S. Gregory was asked to clear the woods south-west of the village and along the roads leading to the north-west, this being but a part of the brigadier's plan to ensure that the complete area between the river Ijssel on the north and west, the River Oude Ijssel on the east, and the Pannerdensche Kanaal and the Rhine on the south was free of the enemy. A good portion of this ground was already known to be clear, but the balance was sub-divided so that each battalion and the supporting squadron of the Reconnaissance Regiment had definite zones of responsibility. This task was completed on the morning of 4 Apr. (W.D., Regina Rif, 3 Apr 45; also 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Op "PLUNDER", Report No. 26, as above).

8 CDN INF BDE REACHES THE OUDE IJSSEL, 2-3 APR 45^{*}

14. While Brigadier T.G. Gibson's formation had been employed west of Wehl, 8 Cdn Inf Bde had struck out for Laag Keppel and the bridging sites across the Oude Ijssel. This advance began at 1300 hours on 2 Apr with Q.O.R. of C. leading the way. "C" Coy on the left did not have much trouble in covering the first thousand yards of the main road but the supporting tanks had a few tense moments in disposing of an enemy self-propelled gun which took our troops on as they crossed the start line. By 1400 hours both "C", and "B" Coy which was operating on the right, had gained sufficient ground to allow the other sub-units to pass through; "A" Coy took up the attack left of the road and "D" Coy went past "B" Coy on the right. The enemy here did not seem to be too well organized; certainly he showed no stomach for close quarter fighting; he would snipe until the Canadians closed in, then surrender (W.Ds., N. Shore R., Q.O.R. of C., 2-3 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 30: Op "PLUNDER", Q.O.R. of C., Phase 2).

15. The next few hours saw "A" Coy blast its way beyond Eldrik (9577). The tanks had pressed on ahead of the infantry, "brewing" everything in their path and setting a fast pace for the foot soldiers. An enemy mortar position was overrun intact and by the end of the day seventy-five prisoners had been taken. N. Shore R. had by this time also moved up to attack westwards. At midnight "A" Coy was firm around the crossroads at Eldrik (north of Vogelhorst (9576)) with "D" Coy around the farm some 600 yards east of Eldrik. To the rear "B" and "C" Coys held the road from Fokkenkamp (9575) to Kelder (9675). (Ibid). The advance by Q.O.R. of C. was resumed at 0130 hours 3 Apr when "B" Coy was launched through "A" Coy to attack the southern half of Laag-Keppel (9678). The troops found the bridge across the river demolished but firmed up near it until relieved by R. de Chaud, at 0630 hours (Ibid).

16. The venture by N. Shore R. west from Eldrik was highly successful; by 2359 hours the battalion was firmly astride the road about 1500 yards west of Eldrik and patrolling

* Reference maps: As for para 10. Also Appx "B".

west towards Bevermeer (9178) (although this area had been reported clear by 7 Cdn Recce Regt) and north to the Oude Ijssel. (W.D., N. Shore R., 2-3 Apr 45). Later, on the morning of 3 Apr, N. Shore R. swung on to the northern route, having received orders to concentrate prior to attempting a crossing of the river. (Ibid, also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, Serials 10, 25). As soon as Brigadier J.A. Roberts heard that the bridges on his front were useless, he ordered R. de Chaud up to relieve Q.O.R. of C. whose patrols to the waterway had been driven back. This relief had hardly been completed however when R. de Chaud was hastily embussed and directed to move back around and through the 2 Cdn Inf Div positions above Doetinchem with the object of entering the eastern part of Laag Keppel from the north. (Op "PLUNDER", Q.O.R. of C., Special Report No. 30, Phase 2).

THE OUDE IJSSEL IS CROSSED BY 8 CDN INF BDE, 3 APR 45*

17. As R. de Chaud set out on its long journey, N. Shore R. managed to get a platoon across the river which is approximately twenty-five yards wide at a point south-west of Hoog Keppel (9479). (Map G.S.G.S. 4414, Sheet 3903 - Steenderen). This bridgehead was established without undue trouble and the reinforcement of it began immediately while engineers started a bridge. Q.O.R. of C. on the right also crossed the river unopposed early that afternoon and settled comfortably in the north-west section of the town. (Ibid: and W.Ds., Q.O.R. of C., 5 Apr; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, Serials 33, 56). At this point, R. de Chaud made its appearance north of the Oude Ijssel only to find that Brigadier W.J. Megill's 5 Cdn Inf Bde had bounded forward with great dash from its positions north of Doetinchem and were in solid occupation of most of the area previously allotted to R. de Chaud. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 2-3 Apr 45).

18. It may do well at this time to point out that the exploitation of 5 Cdn Inf Bde was not part of any co-ordinated effort with Brigadier Roberts' troops. It came about purely from initiative on the part of 5 Cdn Inf Bde, which appreciated the immediate needs of the flanking formation and having carried out its own task successfully proceeded to exploit solely to assist its neighbour. It can be placed on record as a first class example of unstinted co-operation by troops who were already weary from several days fighting but who nevertheless had an ever-open eye toward the common object. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945, Appx 3, Ops Log, 3 Apr, Serial 13). Both N. Shore R. and R. de Chaud lost no time in going forward; by 1900 hours R. de Chaud had reached Drempt (9180) and N. Shore R. was firmly consolidated on either side of the highway south of Hoog-Keppel. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, Serials 80-85)

* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4414, 1:25,000, Eastern Holland, Sheet 3903 - Steenderen. Also Appx "B".

19. The security of the line Hoog-Keppel - Wehl - Zevenaar - Didam freed 9 Cdn Inf Bde from further duty south of the Oude Ijssel, and at 1230 hours on 3 Apr Brigadier J.M. Rockingham's battalions, led by "B" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt and S.D. & G. Highrs, began the trek which was to carry them along the axis Doetinchem - Hummelo - Toldijk - Baak and on to Zutphen. Maj-Gen R.H. Keefler's intention was for 9 Cdn Inf Bde to establish a firm base north of Baak (9788) preparatory to a set-piece attack on Zutphen. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to hold Laag-Keppel with one battalion, the high ground north-west of Laag-Keppel with a second, while the third unit took on Doesburg. Brigadier Gibson's formation was to complete the clearance of its present area. 7 Cdn Recce Regt was to protect the divisional flank. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H, Docket V, April 1945: Liaison Officer Reports, 031500).

3 CDN INF DIV ADVANCES TO SECURE THE LEFT FLANK:
THE APPROACHES TO ZUTPHEN, 3-4 APR 45*

20. The S.D. & G. Highrs had had no trouble securing their first objective on 3 Apr - the bridge (9582) across the stream north of Hummelo was captured intact without opposition and by 1650 hours the Glengarrians had consolidated with their forward troops at Toldijk. Nth N.S. Highrs then passed through their "A" Coy and by following the highway north reached the road junction (9687) near Baak. Since opposition was non-existent, the other three companies quickly covered the intervening ground to consolidate to the right and rear of "A" Coy. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, S.D. & G. Highrs, Nth N.S. Highrs, 3-4 Apr 45). Patrols were immediately sent out in all directions; one carrier section contacted troops of 2 Cdn Inf Div on the right flank, another journeyed westwards to Bronkhorst, which was found clear of enemy, and "D" Coy moved through that village to guard the river crossings beyond it. At this point a short, sharp action occurred when "D" Coy, in conjunction with the carriers, cleared the dykes. While "D" Coy was thus employed, "B" Coy exploited to the north-west of Baak. (Ibid).

21. By midnight the brigade was generally firmed up except for "D" Coy of Nth N.S. Highrs, which had an uncomfortable time under heavy shellfire on the left and suffered several casualties. (Ibid). H.L.I. of C. having passed through the North Novas earlier got as far as De Elter (9691), a tiny hamlet on the east bank of the Ijssel river, but here the enemy was encountered in greater strength and the leading elements of H.L.I. of C. dug in on the line which ran roughly from De Elter eastwards to a point some 800 yards north of De Zwaan (9791). Patrols were laid on for the night and the battalion probed the enemy's line. (W.Ds., H.L.I. of C., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 3 Apr 45). The many long stretches of open ground which the infantry themselves could not explore were well taken care of by "C" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, whose small scout cars roamed far and wide on either side of the advancing foot soldiers. (W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 3 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, as above, 3 Apr, Serials 59, 63, 4 Apr; Serials 8, 9, 10, 13).

* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4414, 1:25,000, Eastern Holland, Sheet 3803 - Zutphen. Also Appx "B".

22. On the following day, Brigadier Rockingham's men went forward again. As H.L.I. of C. made slow but steady progress on the left, S.D. & G. Highrs were swung around them to the right, their objective being the area of Leesten (9793). With "B" and "C" Coys leading, the troops slugged their way forward all day, meeting fanatical resistance from young Germans, who, according to one prisoner, had only recently arrived from central Germany. By 1700 hours, however, "C" Coy was across the road north-east of Leesten, with "B" Coy at Overkamp (9793) to the west. Opposition was extremely tough and crocodiles were requested in order to induce the enemy to give ground. In due time "A" and "D" Coys supported by crocodiles, were committed, with the result that by 2135 hours, the battalion was well settled on the stretch of road above Leesten. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 4 Apr 45). Meanwhile the Nth N.S. Highrs had gone into action on the right of the Glengarrians, and were on the way towards Warnsveld (9694). After a short delay due to the absence of armour, "A" and "B" Coys commenced their advance along the west side of the Vorden - Zutphen railway. (Ibid).

23. The leading troops debussed in the small woods astride the highway near Heekendaal (0092), then moved forward on foot at 1730 hours, accompanied by some tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. "A" Coy followed the highway, "B" Coy the road to the right of it. Of the two routes, the left-hand one provided the more difficulties, for the houses along it harboured many a determined sniper, and each building had to be carefully approached and cleared. The resultant delay complicated matters, especially since "B" Coy had met hardly any resistance and was well ahead on the right. The right column therefore was ordered to hold until the left caught up. By 2300 hours, "A" Coy was able to report that its position was "slightly south-east of the hospital" near Groot Graffel (9794), and that 18 fanatical young prisoners had been taken. At this stage the rear companies were ordered to close up and, as soon as they had done so, the advance was taken up again. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 4 Apr 45). But, as we shall see, the sealing off of Zutphen by way of Warnsveld was to be a long, trying and bloody business. (Ibid).

8 CDN INF BDE DRIVES NORTH TOWARDS ZUTPHEN, 3-4 APR 45*

24. While 9 Cdn Inf Bde covered the southern routes towards Zutphen 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been extremely busy. Having reached the northern bank of the Oude Ijssel on 3 Apr, all these battalions were able to enjoy a short rest. R. de Chaud was at Drempt (9280) probing the defences of Doesburg which lies to the west; N. Shore R. was firm west of Hoog Keppel and the "Queen's Own" occupied the woods

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, 1:25,000, Eastern Holland, Sheets - 3902 - Doesburg, 3803 - Zutphen, 4003 - Doetinghem, and 3903 - Steenderen. Also Appx "B".

between that place and Laag Keppel to the south-east. The period of respite however was not to be a long one; for on the morning of 4 Apr, N. Shore R. was directed to the north to relieve Nth N.S. Highrs of 9 Cdn Inf Bde. The New Brunswick infantrymen moved off and by 1200 hours were occupying a quiet position (963868) astride the highway half way between Baakschemark (9786) and Covik (9486). From this position standing patrols of "A" Coy were placed far to the west near Bronkhorst and "C" Coy went some distance forward to relieve elements of H.L.I. of C. Here the N. Shore R. remained until relieved by C.H. of C. (M.G.) on the next day. (W.D., N. Shore R., 4-5 Apr 45).

25. Q.C.R. of C. had also journeyed further north. At 1300 hours 4 Apr, the rifle companies set out, "A" to occupy Eekhoorn (9285), "B" to Zwaarte Schaar (9283), "C" Coy to Rodenburg (9284) and "D" along the Hoefkenschestraat (9383). "A" and "C" Coys were the only ones to have any trouble; an enemy self-propelled gun engaged the advancing troops from the other side of the Ijssel river and each sub-unit suffered four casualties. The night came and passed without further incident, apart from a few moments of heavy shelling which did no damage. The general inactivity of the past twenty-four hours was to be appreciated all the more before the clearance of the river-bound area ahead would be complete. (W.D., Q.C.R. of C., 4 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45; Serial 1). Further to the south, west of Drempt, R. de Chaud having patrolled boldly towards Doesburg, reported the old city strongly held by elements of 951 Grenadier Regt of 361 Inf Div: (Ibid), also First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary No. 280, 6 Apr 45).

THE INTENTIONS OF 7 CDN INF BDE, 4 APR 45*

26. The tasks which awaited 7 Cdn Inf Bde were dictated mainly by the fanatical resistance from 3 Para Trg Regt which 9 Cdn Inf Bde was meeting on the road to Zutphen. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket I: Intelligence Summaries; No. 278 Para 3; 279, Part II, Para 3 (a)). In order to relieve the pressure in that area, it had been decided to send Regina Rif across into 4 Cdn Inf Bde's bridgehead (on the Twente Canal) and attack westwards, clearing that area between the canal and the railway as far as the railroad junction west of Eefde (9677) and also with the object of seizing the bridge site east of Eefde. Another unit (R. Wpg Rif) was to thrust out from the present area held by Camerons of C. west of Almen, (0196) and would secure the line of the road running north and south from the bridge west of Huize de Voorst (9796). This road, it was planned, would be the start line for a later assault on Zutphen by 8 Cdn Inf Bde. 1 C. Scot R. would be in reserve but prepared to carry out a crossing of the Berkel stream (9895) from the Nth N.S. Highrs area north-east of Warnsveld. H Hour for Regina Rif's attack through 2 Cdn Inf Div was set for dawn 5 Apr. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units,

* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4414, 1:25,000, Eastern Holland, Sheet 3803 - Zutphen.
Also Appx "B".

4 Apr 45). With the new operation at hand, Brigadier Gibson's battalions moved from their positions between Wehl and Zevenaer during the afternoon of 4 Apr and darkness found them concentrated south-west of Vorden (0390) preparing for the next day's battle. (Ibid).

OPERATIONS BY 2 CDN INF DIV, 2-4 APR 45^x

27. Probably the most spectacular Canadian effort during the first few days of April was that of 2 Cdn Inf Div, which now began a long period of incessant movement along various and widely separated axes. From the very beginning a hot pace was set by Maj-Gen A.B. Matthews' troops, and as time passed the advance provided a parallel to the celebrated pursuit through France during the previous year. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket II, Monthly and Weekly Summary of Ops, 1-2 Apr 45). The columns set out at about 0700 hours and passed through Doetinchem led by "B" Sqn 8 Cdn Recce Regt, followed by the R. Regt C's. battle group. Progress was good; only odd batches of enemy were met and these were quickly bypassed. Hengelo^{**} (0384) was declared clear during the morning. The advance continued up to the bridge south of Vorden, but here there was some delay for the enemy had carried out a successful demolition. The "Recce", however, had found another means of crossing (0390) to the east and, as the engineers began to repair the bridge on the main axis, the infantry column followed the diversion. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Apr 45). date?

28. By noon the leading troops had reached the Berkel river (some 1500 yards south of the Twente Canal) to find that our armoured cars were guarding the single usable bridge (0297). Over this small structure the column was able to approach the main canal opposite Harfsen (0199). Fortune was not on our side however; the bridge over the Twente Canal, though intact, was obviously prepared for destruction, and the enemy on seeing the reconnaissance cars began a fire fight which was to last for over two hours. During all that time he was prevented from blowing his charges, and it appeared that with reinforcements our troops might be able to safeguard the crossing place. But this was not to be; as the advance elements of R. Regt C. came up to thicken the fire of the "Recce", the Germans blew up the bridge literally in their faces. Despite this disappointment, the Commanding Officer of R. Regt C. at once ordered extensive patrolling to determine whether other means of crossing existed. Against stiffening opposition, R. Regt C. deployed along the Canal bank while

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, 1:25,000, Eastern Holland, Sheets 3903 - Steenderen, 3804 - Lochem, 3803 - Zutphen, 3703 - Bathmen, 3704 - Holten. (Also Appx "B").

** This is a small village south of Twente Canal. It is not to be confused with the town of Hengelo (3607) near Enschede.

Brigadier Cabeldu formulated his plans for the crossing. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Apr 45).

29. At 1700 hours the brigade commander outlined his plan. R. Regt C. was to make the assault at 1830 hours and clear as far as the line of the railway 600 yards to the north of the canal. While this was being done the engineers would commence bridging operations. R.H.L.I. was to concentrate as reserve battalion north of Vorden but was required to provide a company to reinforce the main effort by R. Regt C. Essex Scot was to position its men southwest of Almen (0296) so as to counter any threat from Zutphen where the enemy was believed to be in considerable strength. The task of the reconnaissance squadron was to remain at Almen until after dark, then to act as right flank protection. The tanks were to be in direct support of R. Regt C. for the attack (*ibid*). Later, as R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot vacated their positions to assist in the expansion of the bridgehead, the battalions of 6 Cdn Inf Bde would come forward to take over from them. (*Ibid*; also W.Ds., 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 2-3 Apr 45)

30. At 1830 hours, R. Regt C. began crossing the Twente Canal against moderate opposition and the engineers started to erect a bridge (0197) (near the one which had been demolished). By 2300 hours "D" Coy R.H.L.I. had joined Lt-Col R.M. Lendrum's four companies on the northern bank of the obstacle. By this time, however the enemy had recovered his balance somewhat and had begun to mortar and shell the proposed bridgesite so heavily that our sappers were forced to take cover and abandon their work temporarily. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Apr 45). While Brigadier F.N. Cabeldu's infantry was settling its claim in the new bridgehead, 6 Cdn Inf Bde was allotted the task of tapping the approaches to Zutphen on the divisional left flank, as well as filling the great gap in the line of communication left by 4 Cdn Inf Bde's spectacular advance during the past morning. S. Sask R. arrived first to take over from R.H.L.I. while that unit prepared for its move into the bridgehead; the change over being complete by 1800 hours. (W.D., S. Sask R., 2 Apr 45). Following this Fus M.R. took up positions just west of Hengelo while Camerons of C. established themselves around Keienburg (0083) further south. (W.Ds., Fus M.R., Camerons of C., 2-3 Apr 45).

31. During the night 2/3 Apr, R. Regt C. continued to firm up its gains despite the shelling and the proximity of the enemy, who persisted in harassing our troops with small arms fire. By daylight the small bridgehead was quite secure, the shelling had almost ceased and the engineers were working fast to provide a means by which the supporting weapons might cross the Twente Canal. A class 40 raft was finished at 1000 hours, whereupon the builders turned their hands to the erection of a class 40 bridge. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, *op cit*, 3 Apr, Serial 2811). 6 Cdn Inf Bde had spent the hours of darkness in patrolling towards the west; in these sorties some prisoners* fell into our hands and gave sufficient information to indicate that the way to Zutphen was by no means open yet (*ibid*: Serials 2790, 2792, 2795, 2798).

* 361 Inf Div; 1 Para Trg Bn. (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary No. 277, 3 Apr 45).

32. The immediate intention, however, was to get the rest of 4 Cdn Inf Bde into the bridgehead, and to bring 5 Cdn Inf Bde up to concentrate near Hengelo (8284), leaving Brigadier J.V. Allard's battalions to contain the western flank until such a time as 3 Cdn Inf Div could move up some of its troops into that area. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, Serial 16: W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 2-3 Apr 45). Actually, the general delay, though caused to some extent by the bridging restrictions, was also due to the fact that neither R.H.L.I. or Essex Scot **could move into the bridgehead until fully relieved** by 6 Cdn Inf Bde; while the latter formation would not be free for that task until 8 Cdn Inf Bde had advanced sufficiently to take over the operations against Zutphen. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 & 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 2-4 Apr 45).

33. By midday on 3 Apr the enemy had begun to react against the R. Regt C; first with patrols, then at 1400 hours with heavy bombards over the entire front. This was followed by several counter-attacks aimed at the right flank of R. Regt C., but these were effectively dispersed by the supporting artillery with considerable loss to the enemy. During the afternoon all the battalion's "F" echelon vehicles managed to get over the canal, together with "B" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt and a squadron of 8 Cdn Recce Regt. The enemy, however, continued to shell the area, concentrating mainly on the rafting and bridging sites; all this caused a great deal of delay in getting fresh troops over to the northern bank of the canal. At about 2000 hours a company of R.H.L.I. was ferried over, and for a while it appeared that at last the operation would go on unhindered; but at 2100 hours the German guns were lucky enough to register on the rafts. Fire then became so heavy and so accurate that it forced the engineers to stop work, thus bringing about another delay, for the rafts had to be repaired before any further ferrying was possible. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3-4 Apr 45)

34. After an effective counter-bombardment by our own artillery and the supporting tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt, the damaged ferry was refitted, enabling the remaining sub-units of R.H.L.I. (now relieved by S. Sask R.) to cross the canal and take up positions on the left of R. Regt C. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.L.I., R. Regt C., 3-4 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, serials 2902, 2907, 2917, 2923, 2929, 2941, 2942). In the early hours of 4 Apr, Essex Scot **also crossed the water barrier and, although the troops were subjected to fairly heavy small arms fire and some shelling, Lt-Col J.E.C. Pangman was able to report "on objective" at 1118 hours.** (W.D., Essex Scot, 3-4 Apr 45). Essex Scot **now held the most forward position, centred on Harfsen** (0199), with R.H.L.I. on the left astride the railway facing west and R. Regt C. on the right facing east and north-east from Groot Asselt (0298) to Jude Horst (0298). (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, serial 2966, 4 Apr, serial 3061)

35. 4 Cdn Inf Bde with 19 tanks and one squadron of 8 Cdn Recce Regt was now holding a firm bridgehead covering an area over 2000 yards long and 1500 yards deep. Behind the infantry brigade was a newly built class 40 bridge quite capable of handling the heavy traffic rapidly accumulating for the proposed "break out" to the north. The priority for crossing the Twente Canal was, first, the balance of 10 Cdn Armd Regt, and second, the balance of 8 Cdn Recce Regt preceding the infantry of 5 Cdn Inf Bde. In the meantime Brigadier Cabeldu's instructions were to patrol vigorously to the north and east with the object of ascertaining the enemy's strength and of preventing him from stabilizing his positions. The brigade commander's intention was to use 8 Cdn Recce Regt to seize the bridge sites over the Schipbeek Canal on the roads from Laren (Bridge 0706) to Holten (1010) and Laren (Bridge 1105) to Markelo (1504) so that 5 Cdn Inf Bde could advance northward to capture Laren (0600) and Holten. At this same time the possibility of passing a brigade over the canal at Lochem was being explored. (First Cdn Army Liaison Officers Reports, as above, April 1945, 41300B)

36. By midday, 4 Apr 45, the fighting columns of 5 Cdn Inf Bde were on the move to the wooded concentration area near Klein Dochteren (0695) about 5000 yards north-east of Vorden (0290). (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 4 Apr 45). 6 Cdn Inf Bde's activities for the past twenty-four hours had been confined to patrols, long moves by road and short-term reliefs of other units--not exactly interesting operations for hardened infantry fighters, but nevertheless essential to the maintenance of continued pressure up forward and the long vulnerable lines of supply to the rear. At approximately 1930 hours on 3 Apr, after a day of incessant patrolling to test the approaches to Zutphen (during which Camerons of C. seized the town of Steenderen) the greater part of 6 Cdn Inf Bde moved north again. Camerons of C. established themselves between the Berkel stream and the Twente Canal some 1500 yards west of Almen, Fus M.R. took over the old Essex Scot positions along that part of the road Zutphen - Lochem which extends east from the road and railway junction (001947) towards Het Werksche (0195). This position is in the angle formed by the Berkel stream and the railroad leading south to Vorden. S. Sask R. was not shifted from their positions (just north-east of Veldwijk (0192)) astride the Vorden-Almen road. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 Apr 45). The open section of the flank east of Almen and between the waters of the Berkel and Twente Canal was still the responsibility of 8 Cdn Recce Regt, which was in the process of being passed into the bridgehead. Below Almen, in the woods, the remainder of 10 Cdn Armd Regt waited for an opportunity to join in the battle ahead. (W.Ds., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 3-4 Apr 45)

37. The latter part of 4 Apr saw 5 Cdn Inf Bde begin to pass through Brigadier Cabeldu's bridgehead. The leading battalion, R. de Mais, crossed the bridge north of Almen late in the afternoon and struck out along the main axis to Laren, to be followed by Calg Highrs and R.H.C., who were closing up to concentrate in 4 Cdn Inf Bde's forward area. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 4 Apr 45).

Brigadier McGill's intention was to take Laren that night and then drive on to seize Holten. As soon as Laren fell, one battalion of 4 Cdn Inf Bde would move east along the canal to establish a bridgehead so that a class 40 bridge might be built north of Lochem. Following this 7 Cdn Inf Bde would cross the canal and push out westwards from 4 Cdn Inf Bde's sector. (First Cdn Army Liaison Officers Reports, op cit, O41930B; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 4 Apr 45, serials 3059, 3061, 3071, 3075, 3085, 3087, 3091)

1 CDN CORPS OPERATIONS TO SECURE THE LEFT FLANK
OPERATION "DESTROYER", 2-4 APR 45[†]

38. Before continuing the story of the Canadians' headlong advance further northward into Holland and finally into Germany itself, it is necessary to describe what had taken place on Lt-Gen Simonds' western flank, where 1 Cdn Corps had been given the responsibility of clearing the remainder of the "Island" west of Nijmegen. This attack, which involved 49 (W.R.) Inf Div with 11 Cdn Inf Bde ~~under command~~, began ^{Auth: Amdt No. 1 2/2} early on 2 Apr.^{‡‡} (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, ^{Nov 50 by O.D.H.S.} Appx 5, Report on operations, 28 Mar - 5 Apr 45)

39. The front line of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div was at that time being held by 56 Inf Bde, whose troops covered the soggy ground from Aam (7170) on the left to an area which included Heuvel (7369), Baal (7568) and the eastern outskirts of Haalderen (7569) on the right. It was from Haalderen that the initial attack was made by 7 D.W.R. of 147 Inf Bde. The British troops went forward at 0400 hours and made good progress against moderate opposition. By 0900 hours, 7 D.W.R. was established on the secondary roads and among the orchards west of Gent En Kapel (7965) and an hour later 11 R.S.F. passed through directed on Flieren (7867) and the Angeren (7770) - Hulhuizen (7966) road beyond. Meanwhile 7 D.W.R. patrolled vigorously to the west and south to occupy the factory (7863) at the bend of the river Waal (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H, Docket I, Ops Log, 2 Apr 45, Serials 10, 23, 32, 49). As the advance of 11 R.S.F. swung north along the road to Angeren, 1 Leicesters made a double thrust out from Gent En Kapel at 1300 hours. On the left 1 Leicesters followed the road to Doornenburg (8067) but the right hook was more spectacular in that one company loaded into L.C.A.'s. at Kommerdijk, (7765) took to the river and attacked Hulhuizen from the south. While the Leicesters went about their task of clearing the area of Doornenburg, 4 Lincolns, the leading battalion of 146 Inf Bde, was brought forward

† Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, 1:50,000, Holland, Sheets 39 - Rhenen and 40 - Arnhem.

‡‡ See Appx "C".

on the left and at 1600 hours passed through 11 R.S.F. to continue the drive on Angeren. (Ibid: Serials 73, 77, 91, 96). After offering some resistance on the outskirts of the village, the enemy gave ground and by 2000 hours 4 Lincolns were past the town and reaching towards 'tZand (7571). An hour later some of the British troops were around the road junction north-east of 'tZand while others pressed on in the direction of Huissen (7672). (Ibid: Serials 140, 145)

40. Success on the right flank now enabled 1/4 K.O.Y.L.I. to take the offensive at 1930 hours. At that time the Yorkshiresmen moved through 56 Inf Bde's front line north of Bommel (7367) and began to advance on 'tZand from the south. Progress was slow however, and by midnight the troops were still some distance short of 'tZand and out of contact. While the K.O.Y.L.I. consolidated about the road junction (7570) west and north of Weertsburg (7569) 4 Lincolns were busy mopping up in Huissen. (Ibid). Up to this time the bag of prisoners was not large; only one officer and 103 other ranks had been taken*. (Ibid: April, 1945, serials 2, 73). The intention was now to secure the areas of Huissen, 'tZand and Rijkerswaard (7272) with 146 Inf Bde so that fresh troops could be passed through to Elden (7375) and Malburgen (7575) to the north.*** 147 Inf Bde was entrusted with the task of crossing the Neder Rijn east of Doornenburg at 1000 hours on 3 Apr with the object of seizing Pannerden (8267) and linking up with those other elements of the Canadian Army which were operating west of Emmerich. So that juncture might be facilitated, a squadron of 49 Recce Regt was dispatched with orders to cross the Rhine via the Emmerich bridges and to probe westwards from the Canadian positions around Elten. (Ibid: 3 Apr, serial 12).

41. During the morning of 3 Apr, 146 Inf Bde made good progress. On the right, 4 Lincolns firmed up at Huissen and patrolled eastwards to the river while further to the west 1/4 K.O.Y.L.I. cleared 'tZand and resumed the advance unhindered except by mines and a few road obstacles. At 0730 hours the "Light Infantry" had reached the road leading from Huissen to Elden and were ready to push on to Malburgen. West of 'tZand, the Hallams, mounted on tanks, were advancing on Rijkerswaard, which fell without much trouble before noon. (1 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, serials 799, 806). By that time on the southern flank 1 Leicesters had forced the river east of Doornenburg and captured Pannerden unopposed. (Ibid, serial 828). It seemed that the enemy had vanished, for the advance was not contested at any point for the rest of the day. The Hallams entered Elden in mid-afternoon and immediately extended their holdings north and west of that place. 1/4 K.O.Y.L.I. got into Malburgen and to top off the operation the Lincolns also crossed the eastern water barrier at the ferry site east of Huissen and together with elements of 49 Recce Regt took Hoogeind (7873) and Westervoort (7875). Once that area was clear the Lincolns withdrew to Huissen,

* For these operations 11 R. Tks came under divisional control from 1 Cdn Corps. (Ibid: 2 Apr, serial 161).
* 952 Grenadier Regt: 361 Inf Div: (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary No. 276, 2 Apr 45).

leaving the Recce in charge at Westervoort. (Ibid: serials 833, 839, 845, 848)

42. As nightfall drew near, the situation all across the 49 (W.R.) Inf Div front was most satisfactory. On the far right 1 Leicesters of 147 Inf Bde, having contacted 7 Cdn Recce Regt of 3 Cdn Inf Div as well as their own Recce east of Pannerden between Geitenwaard (8566), and Kruisdijk (9665), had returned to Doornenburg. 11 R.S.F. remained in Angeren flanked by 4 Lincolns in Huissen. 1/4 K.O.Y.L.I. was firm on the road Huissen - Malburgen while on the extreme left Hallams were in full control of the area Elden - Kronenburg (7274) with strong company positions facing to the northeast. 56 Inf Bde's positions had not changed, although all its units patrolled to contact forward, especially along the left divisional boundary from Aam to the northern exits from Rijkerswaard. The lengthy open space however was closely watched over by S.W.B. (Ibid)

11 CDN INF BDE'S PART IN OPERATION "DESTROYER",
2 - 4 APR 45*

*Auth: See Amdt No. 1 item No. 2
2/2 Nov 50 by D.A.H.S.*

43. \ Meanwhile on the left flank of 1 Cdn Corps, 11 Cdn Inf Bde, ** under command 49 (W.R.) Inf Div since 0800 hours 28 Mar 45, ✓ had been moving forward. At about 2130 hours, 2 Apr, Ir R.C. advanced from the area of Zetten (6172), C.B. Highrs from Homoet (6672) and Perth R. from Snodenhoek (6971). One Squadron of 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.) supported each of the battalions in the attack, which was a silent one, although 17 Cdn Fd Regt and 1 Cdn Med Regt were on call to supply artillery concentrations when required. The open flank south-west of Zetten was under the eye of elements of 49 Recce Regt, which had orders to exploit westwards along the line of the railway, thus preventing any interference to the effort of Ir R.C. (W.D., G.S. H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 2 Apr 45). Simultaneously Ir R.C. launched "A" Coy to take the road junction above Indoornik (6173); C.B. Highrs sent "C" and "D" Coys northwards astride the Homoetsche Straat (7272) to secure the junction (736733). Perth R. went forward using two parallel axes; "A" Coy along the Hollander - broeksche Straat (7373) and "D" Coy along the Groote Molen (7271), to firm up about one thousand yards up the road. No opposition was encountered by any of the units; by 2300 hours all these first objectives had been reached. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 2 Apr 45)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, 1:50,000, Holland, Sheets 39 - 'aHertogenbosch, and 40 - Arnhem.

** See Appx "C".

44. The advance was resumed in the darkness. On the left the Irish led off with "C" and "D" Coys, the latter passing through "A" with Randwijk (6075) as the objective while "C" Coy approached the village from the west. It was at this point that the first signs of resistance appeared; but the troops were not to be stopped easily. With the aid of an anti-tank gun the position was carried and eight prisoners captured. The right-hand thrust was equally successful and by 1030 hours 3 Apr both companies were on their objectives in Randwijk having suffered no loss. (W.D., Ir R.C., 2-3 Apr 45). In the centre C.B. Highrs were held up for a time while a bridge was put across the deep ditch (7372) (the Eldensche Zeeg) intersecting the Homoetsche Straat, but at about 2350 hours a way over the obstacle was completed by the engineers and "A" Coy pushed through on the left directed on Heteren (6375). At the same time "C" Coy was ordered to move up along the centre line and the carrier platoon was then placed in rear of "A" Coy to protect the left flank. Both sub-units made rapid progress and by 0330 hours 3 Apr the two forward companies were on the selected objectives, "B" lining the south bank of the Neder Rijn at Hoogeweide (653752) and "A" in Heteren. The only opposition came from a small group of Germans on the outskirts of Heteren and this was quickly disposed of. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 2-3 Apr 45)

45. The Commanding Officer's next action was to get his supporting weapons up to "B" Coy and to close up the gaps between his rear and foremost troops. All this was accomplished by 0630 hours by which time a troop of tanks had positioned itself near to the battalion Command Post to provide close support in any emergency. The first sign of enemy retaliation appeared at 1100 hours when a section of Germans came in toward "A" Coy but they were badly shot up and forced to retire. The rest of the day passed quietly. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 2-3 Apr 45). On the right Perth R. pushed forward to take Driel. In the house clearing operations which followed "A" Coy suffered some casualties but was able to capture a prisoner* who spoke of the havoc which our gun fire had wrought among his comrades. With "D" Coy firm on the eastern flank by 0630 hours, "A" Coy went about its task of rooting out the remaining resistance, supported by the tanks of 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt. (Ibid)

46. Driel was consolidated by 1400 hours but the Germans seemed reluctant to leave the area. First "D" Coy was counter-attacked, then "A". Expressing their wrath, the enemy shelled the area heavily and raked our positions with machine-gun fire from the opposite bank of the river. The Perths, however, were able to reduce the distant opposition considerably with the aid of their F.O.O., who established himself in the tower of the local church and repeatedly called down heavy concentrations of fire on the offending weapons across the river. Before the day ended a further adjustment of positions took place; "C" Coy was brought up to settle in the vicinity of Baarskamp (6875) slightly to the rear of "D" while "B" Coy swung to the far right to man the dike north of Vogelenzang (6976). (W.D., Perth R., 2-3 Apr 45). Thus by

* 361 Inf Div: (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary No. 277, 3 Apr 45).

midnight 3/4 Apr, 11 Cdn Inf Bde had completed its operation to close up to the Neder Rijn. (W.Ds., Perth R., C.B. Highrs, Ir R.C., 4-5 Apr 45; and AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II; folio 10, Report on Operations 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Mar - 5 May 45)

4 CDN ARMD DIV CROSSES THE TWENTE CANAL, 2-4 APR 45*

47. While the infantry divisions had been advancing against solid resistance, 4 Cdn Armd Div** had rolled up to the Twente Canal. By first light on 2 Apr, 10 Cdn Inf Bde's Lion Group was concentrated in and around Ruurlo and in due time Brigadier Jefferson was instructed to take over Lochem from 129 Brit Inf Bde, which had been clearing the town. While waiting for the order to move up however, the Brigadier had dispatched reconnaissance patrols up to the water obstacle to determine the state of the bridges. Of these patrols, one reported that the two bridges across the Berkel stream and the Twente Canal above Klein Dochteren (0496) were still intact. The Brigadier at once ordered a force of infantry and tanks to proceed to them, but again the enemy was too quick; as the troops arrived at the bridges, both were blown up and rendered useless. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Apr 45). By this time the change-over with the British troops in Lochem was under way and by 1630 hours the Canadians were settled in their new locations. A. & S.H. of C. and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt occupied Lochem while Alq R. concentrated around the water tower (0995) on the high ground to the south. It was estimated that about 300 of the enemy were in position on the north bank of the canal and during the late afternoon and evening, the area was enlivened considerably by both machine-gun and shell fire from that direction. (Ibid). The extensive patrol program which was kept up overnight failed to contact any opposition on either flank and as the hours passed the harassing fire from the north decreased. Then at midday, 3 Apr, the Brigadier was told that no bridge-head would be attempted at Lochem; instead, 4 Cdn Armd Bde with Linc & Welld R. under command was to cross at Delden (3007) (a small town about 13 miles north-east of Lochem) that night and Lion Group would be relieved by elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt in order to allow the infantry brigade to move east to concentrate near Geesteren (1794) behind the Armoured Brigade. (Ibid, 3 Apr 45)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, 1:25,000, Eastern Holland, Sheets 3804 - Lochem, 3904 - Zelhem.
G.S.G.S. 4083, 1:50,000, Holland, Sheet 34 - Gronenlo, Sheet 28 - Almelo, Sheet 22 - Coevorden.
G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheet N1 - Almelo, P1 - Bochoit.

** See Appx "D".

48. The task of 4 Cdn Armd Div in the northward sweep was fourfold. Maj-Gen Vokes' first task was to get across the Twente Canal. Then he must build up his force in the region of Borne (3312) and Delden, before carrying out the second part of the operation - the seizure of Almelo and the turning of the whole Delden - Borne - Almelo triangle into a firm base. The third stage would be to push mobile columns out to Neuenhaus, (4733) and Emlicheim (4045), in the little corner of Germany which projects into Holland north of Almelo, and to Coevorden in Holland at the north-western corner of this projection. The fourth stage of the operation would be a two-pronged thrust on two axes; on the right from Meppen (7055) to Papenburg (7798) and Leer (8015), and on the left from Emmen (4363) to Nieuwe Schans (6409). But the first essential for 4 Cdn Armd Div was a bridgehead over the Twente Canal. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945; Appx: Notes on forthcoming Ops, 3 Apr 45)

49. With this particular task in mind, Brigadier Moncel's armour had been closing up to the waterway. The column passed through Terborg (0570) at 1030 hours, 2 Apr, and shortly after midday, having left Lt-Col R.C. Coleman to garrison the market town of Ruurlo with Linc & Welld R., the tank formation was ordered to proceed to Diepenheim (1801), relieve the troops of 43 (W.) Inf Div which were in the town and then to position itself to dominate the Canal crossings south of Goor (2105). There was little information to be had regarding the enemy. An officer's scout car patrol which Brigadier Moncel had sent on ahead the night before to explore the routes and to size up the situation, reported that the Germans had pulled back across the canal and that bridges over the obstacle were demolished. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-2 Apr 45, AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket I, folio 1, Memorandum No. 7: The Final Punch. Operation and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 30 Mar - 5 May 45)

50. The journey to Diepenheim though unopposed, was a difficult one. In the first place not all the bridges on the route were capable of bearing the weight of the mighty Shermans; secondly the echelons of the British Division ahead cluttered the roads and liaison officers had to search for openings in the congested traffic to get the column through; and finally our troops had to accept the wrath of the local British commanders and provost who demanded an explanation of why their centre line was being used. By night-fall the administrative and movement crises had blown over however and the armoured brigade was in its allotted area around Diepenheim, where the take over from 43 (W.) Inf Div was effected. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, 2 Apr 45)

51. At 2325 hours on the night of 2 Apr, Maj-Gen Vokes sent a message to Brigadier Moncel, the commander of 4 Cdn Armd Bde, and advised him that 43 (W.) Inf Div (on the right) would endeavour to clear Delden, Borne and Hengelo, and the north side of the canal. 4 Cdn Armd Bde would then bridge the waterway, and proceed northward. In the event of the operation by 43 (W.) Inf Div not proceeding quickly enough, Brigadier Moncel would be responsible for forcing a crossing and establishing his own bridgehead. For this essentially infantry task, Maj-Gen Vokes would send him Linc & Welld R. to make the assault. Thirty-six assault boats would be available for the crossing. (W.D., G.S., H.Q.

4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945: Appx 7, Message, 2 Apr 45, G.O.C. to Comd H.Q., 4 Cdn Armd Bde). Progress by 43 (W.) Inf Div was steady, but so very slow that Maj-Gen Vokes decided that the attack should be launched at 1900 hours, rather than wait for further progress by the British, or the original deadline of 2100 hours. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 Apr 45)

52. The original conception of the operation was a single crossing on a battalion frontage, but Brigadier Moncel decided that it would be worthwhile to attempt another crossing with a company of Lake Sup R. (Mot) at the lock gates a thousand yards west of the main effort which would take place near the large bridge south-west of Delden. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units; and Linc & Welld R., 3 Apr 45). At 1900 hours, with the support of the whole divisional artillery, bolstered by 19 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) and a medium regiment, Linc & Welld R. sent two companies across the canal; "C" Coy on the left, "A" Coy on the right. Within fifty minutes both companies were on their first objectives on either side of the wood between the canal and the railway. Resistance on the right was light, but on the left "C" Coy was sternly treated as it was consolidating. At about 2100 hours "D" Coy was passed through "A" to secure the line of the railroad. But no sooner had it done so than the enemy began to retaliate heavily on both flanks. "C" Coy was counter-attacked from the north, but the enemy was not able to stand up to the violence of the gunfire which was called down; "A" Coy was also finding it hard to follow up on the right. Nevertheless by 0215 hours 4 Apr, the assaulting battalion's positions were firm, and while the flanking sub-units held and "D" Coy exploited beyond the railway line towards Delden, Lt-Col Coleman committed his fourth company to assist in the exploitation northward and to ease the pressure on "C" Coy which was still having trouble. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 3-4 Apr 45)

53. Meanwhile the motor battalion had been carrying out operations which may well be placed on record as classic for this type of unit. Having been relieved of its local responsibility by a battery of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, "A" Coy, Lake Sup R. (Mot) commanded by Maj R.A. Colquhoun began crossing the Twente Canal 500 yards west of the locks at approximately 2300 hours, 3 Apr, supported by two medium machine-gun platoons, the mortar platoon, a section of Wasps and one squadron of 22 Cdn Armd Regt. The assault, which went with clocklike precision, was heavily supported by our artillery. The first platoon to cross the obstacle lined the dike and took on the enemy's sniper posts which were providing most of the opposition; the second and third platoon then crossed and fanned out to the east, their objective being the locks themselves. The locks were taken against light opposition and the first platoon over the canal was passed through to contact Linc & Welld R. west of Delden. This was not possible however owing to the heavy small arms fire, and the contact force returned to assist in consolidating the approaches to the locks. At about the same time engineers set about the task of bridging the waterway behind them. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 2-3 Apr 45). The bridge was completed at 0600 hours

4 Apr, by which time Lake Sup R. (Mot) had reconnaissance elements working their way north, while the remainder of the battalion concentrated in readiness to exploit from the bridgehead. It will be seen that the capture and completion of this bridgehead had momentous consequences. (Ibid; W.D., 8 Cdn Fd Sqn, R.C.E., 3 Apr 45)

THE ARMoured BRIGADE BREAKS OUT TO THE NORTH, 4 APR 45*

54. At approximately 0830 hours "B" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) moved across the canal and swung eastwards towards Delden, which was firmly under control of Linc & Welid R. From here the motor company set out in the direction of Almelo. Shortly after "C" Coy also moved up, passed through Delden and headed for Borne and having reached that place without trouble (see para 57) continued its advance. In quick time Zenderen (3114) was entered and the company firmed up and began patrolling northwards. At about this time "A" Coy was sent forward along the left flank to occupy Bornebroek (2612). The operation went on apace during the day, the build-up proceeded favourably over the only available bridge at the lock-site. At 1300 hours 22 Cdn Armd Regt crossed the Canal to support "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) on the left flank of the operation; an hour and a half later 28 Cdn Armd Regt followed the "Grenadiers" and drove on to the area of Borne to the assistance of "C" Coy. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, 4 Apr 45). Thereafter the speed of the advance was so swift that most of the bridges to the north were seized intact, the Delden - Borne - Almelo triangle was quickly swept over, and by nightfall a good sized force of infantry and tanks had entered Almelo which, with the exception of a few snipers, was reported clear. (R.A. Spencer, History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment, p. 241)

55. The opportunity for a large-scale breakout was at hand and, in order to assist the armoured brigade in consolidating its base, Maj-Gen Vokes had put A. & S.H. of C. under Brigadier Moncel's command to clear out the wooded areas bounding the Schipvaart stream directly north of Delden. Later in the evening, 21 Cdn Armd Regt reverted to command from Brigadier Jefferson's formation and by 2230 hours was crossing the main bridge which the engineers had built at Delden that afternoon. In addition to the advance of the main force, great progress was made by "B" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, which had also been placed under command 4 Cdn Armd Bde. Crossing the canal at 1600 hours, the armoured cars went north-eastwards to the Almelo - Nordhorn Canal, searching for crossings over which the division could pour on its northward course. Four miles to the east of Almelo they found what they wanted, (bridge 3318) and guarded it all night for exploitation in the morning. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 4 Apr 45)

* Reference maps: As for para 47.

56. By midnight 4/5 Apr 4 Cdn Armd Bde was conveniently disposed for the widespread operations about to follow. Elements of 22 Cdn Armd Regt together with "B" and "C" Coys Lake Sup R. (Mot) held Almelo, "A" Coy of the motor battalion, having been transferred from the left flank, was now firmly astride the main road on the south-eastern outskirts of Almelo supported by two squadrons of 28 Cdn Armd Regt. A. & S.H. of C. after clearing the woods north of Delden was on the way to complete the mopping up in Almelo while Linc & Welld R. had assumed control of the Brigade's left flank and was now ensuring the security of the bridges over the Twente Canal against interference from the west. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, A. & S.H. of C., Linc & Welld R., 4 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Bde Comd Net Telephone messages, 4 Apr 45, serial 102). The intention of 4 Cdn Armd Bde for 5 Apr was to thrust light motorized forces preceded by the armoured cars north to the hamlets of Neuenhaus and Emlicheim, and on to the larger town of Coevorden with a view to building up each place with an armoured regimental group (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945: Appx 81, A.C.V. 1 Log, 4 Apr 45, serial 71). But there was some disappointment ahead for it was soon discovered that the bridge secured by the armoured cars was not strong enough to bear the thirty-ton weight of the Shermans. (Ibid, A.C.V. 1 Log, 5 Apr 45, serial 11; W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 5 Apr 45)

LT-GEN DEMPSEY'S OPERATIONS ON THE RIGHT FLANK, 2-4 APR 45*

57. The good going experienced by the Canadians up to and beyond the Twente Canal was being similarly enjoyed by the British formation on our immediate right flank and by the American Armies to the south. In Lt-Gen Dempsey's sector, ** 30 Brit Corps, while handing over the ground south of the Twente Canal and west of Hengelo to Lt-Gen Simonds' troops, discovered that Hengelo itself was too strongly held to permit a direct crossing of the Canal into the town. This being the case, 43 (W.) Inf Div launched 130 Inf Bde supported by some tanks of 8 Armd Bde through Enschede (recently taken by the Guards Armd Div). On the night of 2/3 Apr, Maj-Gen G.I. Thomas' infantry then turned left to attack Hengelo from the north-east and south-east. By early evening, after hours of bitter fighting, 7 Hamps and 5 Dorsets were established in the north and southern parts of the old town and while these two units mopped up the remnants of the garrison, 4 Dorsets passed on to the north-west to capture Borne by last light. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I; also W.D., H.Q., G.S. First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 13, folio 39, Sitrep 040900B; & folio 48, sitrep No. 508)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets P1 - Bocholt, P2 - Munster, N1 - Almelo, N2 - Osnabruck.

** See Appx "G".

58. In following the order to drive onto the Dortmund - Ems Canal, Gds Armd Div had passed through Oldenzaal (4413) on the morning of 2 Apr, bridged the Almelo - Nordhorn Canal during the afternoon of the same day and attacked Nordhorn (5426) that night with 32 Gds Bde. Occupation of the town went on far into the night and the Brigade reached the Vochte River which runs through the northern outskirts. The main bridge was, of course, demolished; but some distance to the north another structure was discovered by the guardsmen, who took quick advantage of it. The Brigade then went on to Lingen, (7136) where, as before, the main bridge over the Ems River was out of commission. Again the guardsmen located an alternate route over which it was intended to pass 3 Brit Inf Div (which so far had been following the armoured division and had been taking over its newly-won areas). Meanwhile the right flank thrust by Gds Armd Div, echeloned slightly to the rear, had been having a hard time. After meeting fierce opposition all through 2 Apr in Gildehaus (5710), 5 Gds Armd Bde lunged on to Bentheim (6011). Bentheim had for some time been the home of a German Officers Training School and naturally enough the fanatical members of it put up a terrific fight which stopped the guardsmen "cold", for the time being at least. The situation clearly demanded an infantry assault, and this task was passed on to a brigade of 3 Brit Inf Div, (Ibid: Appx 8, folio 116; Appx 13, folio 62, Ops Summary 289A; also AEF: 45/Second Army/L/F, Docket I, 31 Mar - 4 May 45: Second Army Intelligence Summary, No. 304)

59. As 3 Apr drew to a close, therefore, operations had developed in such a way that the front was echeloned on a general east-to-west line from Osnabruck (2107) to Riesenbeck (9206) with 8 Brit Corps, Rheine to Gronau (5102) with 12 Brit Corps, and from Enschede to the Canadian right flank with 30 Brit Corps. On the far right opposition as a whole was loose and unco-ordinated, progressively increasing in quality and co-ordination towards the left. In that part of the front, the enemy's fighting spirit showed no sign of giving way before our superior numbers and greatly superior equipments, in fact at most of the vital points resistance was fanatical in the extreme. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I)

60. A major task for Lt-Gen Dempsey at this stage was to occupy some additional advanced airfields in order to provide immediate close air support and speedier reconnaissance, these were especially needed for 8 Corps, which was operating far to the east. These badly needed airstrips were mostly in the 12 and 30 Corps areas, but on the enemy's side of the fence and denied to our use by the intense opposition being offered to those two formations. Thus this situation would only be rectified when either Lt-Gen Horrocks or Lt-Gen Ritchie or both, broke through the left. (Ibid)

61. With the American Armies events were also moving with dramatic rapidity. By 3 Apr forward elements of Lt-Gen Simpson's forces, driving hard towards Hanover and the Elbe, had penetrated to the Weser south-east of Minden (AEF: 45/21 Army Group/C/F, Docket II, Notes on Operations of 21 Army Group, p. 52). On the same day Ninth U.S. Army reverted

to 12 Army Group, which was to clear up the area of the Ruhr and then turn to the south-east, directed on Leipzig and Dresden. Ninth U.S. Army had been ordered by General Bradley, however, to protect Second British Army's right flank as far as Hanover, and for this purpose to establish its own left flank firmly in the Der Deister hills to the south-west of the city. Lt-Gen Dempsey would thus be enabled to secure the line of the Weser to include Minden and Bremen. He would then advance his right to the rivers Aller and Leine. Holding firmly on to Bremen, he was to force bridge-heads over the three rivers preparatory to making a further advance to reach and cross the Elbe. His left boundary with General Crerar took in the line of communications through Hengelo, Nordhorn, Lingen, Haselunne, Bremen and Hamburg, (G.O.C.-in-C. file 1-0, Directive M567, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Group, 5 Apr 45)

GENERAL CRERAR'S TASK AND APPRECIATION, 5 APR 45

62. In view of these developments Field-Marshal Montgomery visited General Crerar's Headquarters on 5 Apr to discuss the future course of his operations as they were affected by the turn of events. The outcome of the conference is thus set forth by General Crerar in his Despatch:

In priority, the tasks set for the Canadian Army were to open the route between Arnhem and Zutphen, to clear the northeast Netherlands, then northwest Germany to the line of the Weser to be prepared to take over Bremen from the Second British Army and, advancing eastward to the Elbe, to protect the left flank of the Second British Army and clear the Cuxhaven peninsula. Our penetration into the western Netherlands was also to be maintained.

In the course of his operations northeastwards to clear the coastal belt of Germany, including all naval establishments, as far as the river Weser, Lt-General Simonds was to direct one armoured division on the axis between Almelo, Neuenhaus, Meppen, Sogel, Friesoythe and Oldenburg, in order to afford the necessary measure of security to Lt-General Dempsey's left flank. It followed that I should be responsible for establishing a central control in the west and northeast Netherlands as soon as these districts were cleared, for which purpose Headquarters, Netherlands District, was to maintain close liaison with my Headquarters and to provide Civil Affairs detachments for deployment under my command to ensure continuity when Netherlands District eventually took over from First Canadian Army.

(General Crerar's Despatch, op cit, paras 19 and 20; see also W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, April 1945: Appx 2, Directive, 7 Apr)

63. General Crerar explains the implications of his commitment in the Netherlands in the following terms:

I appreciated that the Germans could not now withdraw their forces from the western Netherlands where they appeared to have chosen to fight a separate battle, standing first along the Ijssel and then on the Grebbe and New Water lines farther to the west. For such a contest the Commander of the Twenty-Fifth Army would have the combined resources of the troops still remaining in the country as a garrison, and the formations now falling back across the river as a result of my offensive to the north. It was to be assumed that his total forces would number about 100,000 men. Not all of his formations were experienced in battle, nor at full strength, but with the varied water obstacles which they were evidently prepared to exploit without regard to the further devastation by flooding of large areas of the country at this stage of the war, they were capable of putting up a strong defence. At the same time, I held only a low priority on the special resources necessary to carry my operations westward to the North Sea.

While I still thought it possible that the enemy might try to delay my northern advance on Groningen, I did not expect this part of the Netherlands to be heavily defended, with the exception of the coastal areas opposite the naval base of Emden.

(General Crerar's Despatch,
op cit, paras 21 and 22)

THE EXPLOITATION BEYOND THE TWENTE CANAL,
OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 5 APR*

64. The order for 5 Apr was "drive on to the north" and from first light of that day on Maj-Gen Vokes did not waste any time in carrying it out. Leaving the A. & S.H. of C. to complete the house-clearing in Almelo and the remainder of 4 Cdn Armoured Bde to gradually build up its strength, Lake Sup R. (Mot) started away early in the morning. First "D" Coy moved up from Delden at 0600 hours towards Borne, thus bringing up the tail of the battalion, which was about to press on to the north; then, at 1000 hours the rest of the motor battalion, now relieved of its responsibility at Almelo (by A. & S.H. of C. of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, under command since 1400 hours 4 Apr) struck out over the small bridge which 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt had seized the night before. Even

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, 1:50,000, Sheets 28 - Almelo, 22 - Coevorden.
G.S.G.S. 4416, 1:100,000, Central Europe, Sheet N1 - Almelo; also Appx "D".

while this bridge was being strengthened the lighter vehicles were able to cross, and soon the armoured half tracks and carriers of the motor battalion were pushing to the north and north-east at "amazing speed". (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde; Lake Sup R. (Mot), G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945: Appx 15, Message 0413 BB, 5 Apr 45)

65. By mid-day 5 Apr Lt-Col R.A. Keane had motor companies in Neuenhaus, Emlichheim and Ulsen (4233); thus the small flap of Germany projecting out towards Coevorden was rapidly falling into our hands (Ibid). Meanwhile 8 Cdn Fd Sqn was working furiously to produce a bridge fit for tanks. The succeeded at 1315 hours and the armour roared across. (W.D., 8 Cdn Fd Sqn R.C.E., 5 Apr 45; W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 5 Apr 45) Soon the tank regiments were rolling in the wake of the motor battalion, and as the brigade diary states:

Thus commenced one of the most successful armd dashes which the brigade has ever made. Original objectives were overrun in a matter of a few hours and plans were changed on the move and the whole force proceeded on until at last it we curled our tail up into a bde fortress area prepared for anything which the enemy might throw at us...

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde,
5 Apr 45)

That night when the group halted, brigade headquarters, A. & S.H. of C. (freed of their task in Almelo), and 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) were set up in a position between Ulsen (4233) and Wilsom (4083). 28 Cdn Armd Regt was in Neuenhaus, 22 Cdn Armd Regt was to the west of Ulsen near Achterrener (3633). 21 Cdn Armd Regt, together with "D" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) and 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt was at Emlichheim where "B" Coy of the Superiors was soon due to arrive. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, 5 Apr 45). "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was at the gates of Coevorden, but the most northerly element of the force was "C" Coy of the motor battalion which had reached Hebelermeeer (5660) on the Sud-Nord Kanaal just inside the German border, and about ten miles from Meppen. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 5 Apr 45).

66. The responsibility for the Delden - Borne - Almelo base had by this time been taken over by Brigadier Jefferson's "Lion" Group, which was soon to become involved in a sort of private war miles behind the racing armoured group. The Brigade's History presents the situation in this way:

Meanwhile the north-south arm of the Twente Canal from Delden to Almelo seemed to be the right flank of a German defensive system created to allow the escape northward of the troops trapped in from the west by the 2nd and 3rd divisions and on the east by ourselves.

The line was held by the Lincolns in Delden, the NBRs and SARs along the centre and the Algonquins in Almelo to the north. It was an odd situation for 4 Brigade was miles away... as was divisional Headquarters and the Brigade was left so far behind that any wireless or line communications was out of the question.

(R.A. Paterson, A Short History of Tenth Canadian Infantry Bde, p. 64)

On 5 Apr the Algonquins took over the town of Almelo from A. & S.H. of C. amid a riotous reception from the burghers and burghesses. (W.D., Alq R., 5 Apr 45). The next morning the first of many attempts was made to dislodge the Hun from his pivot position in Wierden (2218), about two and a half miles to the west of Almelo. (Ibid, 6 Apr 45). Several miles to the north of Almelo, elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt were fanning out freely and had already occupied Venebrugge (2741) while other elements held a small bridgehead on the western bank of the Overisselsch Canal at Daarlerveen (2127 - 2128). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 5 Apr 45)

67. During the night 5/6 Apr "C" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was ordered to move from Hebelermeer to seize Meppen and dominate a crossing of the River Ems. Simultaneously one squadron of 28 Cdn Armd Regt was also ordered to Meppen to assist in this task. The motor company, which had received their order to move at 2300 hours, found their way through the intense darkness to the outskirts of the town by 0400 hours, 6 Apr, but met fierce resistance and could do little else but firm up where they were to wait for the tanks. At the same time there had been some progress on the left, for patrols of "A" Coy had found bridges across the Overijsselsch canal which were used to approach Coevorden from the south-west. The enemy put up stern resistance but the town fell at noon to Lake Sup R. (Mot) with under command "A" & "C" Coys of A. & S.H. of C. and elements of 21 Cdn Armd Regt. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, 5 Apr 45)

68. With troops scattered across the front from Coevorden to Meppen some doubt arose as to going on north, or swinging east through Meppen. However at 1300 hours the G.O.C. saw Brigadier Moncel and ordered him to force his way across the Ems, (perhaps as a result of knowing that the 1st Polish Armoured Division would be available within 48 hours to take over the thrust to the north). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde; A. & S.H. of C., 6 Apr 45; AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/F, Locket I, Folio 10: 2 Cdn Corps Summary of Ops and Activities, 1 Apr to 7 Apr 45 incl, para 7). Maj-Gen Vokes was also justified in this decision by the intention of 2 Cdn Corps issued the night before: "Second to thrust out light forces to open the axis towards Meppen..." (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945: Appx 5, Intentions 2 Cdn Corps, 6 Apr 45). The divisional commander, having seen for himself with satisfaction how his effort was progressing, returned to his headquarters just in time to meet the Army Commander who, as was his custom, had flown up in his

Auster aircraft to size up the situation. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 6 Apr 45; W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 6 Apr 45). Meanwhile A. & S.H. of C. had been ordered forward to Meppen.

69. The Commanding Officer of A. & S.H. of C. received his orders to proceed to Meppen in the early afternoon, and, in spite of bad road conditions, had his battalion (less the two companies at Coevorden) in Kl.* Fullen (6554), two miles from the town, by 2100 hours (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Apr 45). On his arrival in the Meppen sector, however, Lt-Col F.E. Wigle, O.B.E., found things not going too well, and immediately dispatched a note to Brigadier Moncel reporting the situation and setting out his plan for dealing with it. The note reported that the situation was not good at the moment but that the outskirts of Meppen should be in his hands very shortly. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 6 Apr 45). The Lake Sup R. (Mot) company in this area had been driven back by small arms, machine gun and 20-mm fire, with the loss of their company commander; furthermore the north-western outskirts were "lousy" with snipers, and 105 and 88-mm guns were reported lurking about ready to open fire. An attack by the motor company, plus five "Shermans" and two "Honeys" of 28 Cdn Armd Regt, was going in to clear this sector when the commanding officer of A. & S.H. of C. arrived, and his plan was that on completion of this attack, his companies would relieve the motor company and patrol forward. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde & units, 6 Apr 45). Later that night another situation developed on the left. After "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) had left Coevorden to the Argyles and returned to concentrate around Emlichheim, a report came in from A. & S.H. of C. that a body of enemy was moving towards Coevorden. The armoured brigade's flank position in this area was not yet free of danger, therefore "B" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was immediately dispatched to ensure the security of the bridges west of the town. Later this flank was strengthened by the scout platoon of the motor battalion which arrived to hold the village of Gramsbergen (2840) until relieved on the following day by a Belgian S.A.S. unit. (W.Ds., Lake Sup R. (Mot), A. & S.H. of C., 6 Apr 45)

70. Thus midnight 6/7 Apr saw 4 Cdn Armd Div poised to crash across the Ems river as soon as sufficient artillery support could be made available. The fast pace of the last 48 hours had resulted in a wide dispersal of units and many regiments often found themselves completely out of contact with their higher headquarters. The extended battle front with its left flank under constant threat made it impossible for the gunners to provide fire support for our far flung companies in such distant places as Meppen and Coevorden. As one of the Artillery historians explained:

That morning recce parties from the 15th Field were ordered to prepare positions opposite Meppen to support a crossing of the Dortmund-Ems Canal. The long trip over bad roads required

* Kl., the abbreviated form of "Klein", or "little".

several hours. By dusk positions had been selected and guides posted to meet the guns, but in view of the stiff opposition encountered throughout the day at Wierden recce parties were ordered to return to Almelo the following morning. The regiment was then informed that the guns would be required to remain in action at Almelo until this flank was secure.

(R.A. Spencer; History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regt,
op cit, p. 245)

71. The opposition[#] encountered by 4 Cdn Armd Bde at Meppen and 10 Cdn Inf Bde at Wierden (west of Almelo) was actually the first serious resistance to the armoured thrust. Wierden itself had all the appearances of being a flank strong point on which the enemy placed a temporary diversionary value; while, north of Almelo, along the Overijsselsch Canal, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt reported scattered but determined groups of German infantry, all of this suggesting some regulated plan for keeping our troops away from the line of the canal northward from Almelo. Certainly, the struggle which the enemy was putting up against Lt-Gen Simonds' infantry divisions to the west might indicate that he still had forces in Western Holland that were to be withdrawn for use in Germany proper. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div & 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 & 6 Apr 45; also Appx 79, 4 Cdn Armd Div Intrep No. 133 & 134). A glance at the map of the Almelo sector is sufficient to show the significance of the little village of Wierden. It stands astride the main Almelo - Nijverdal (1319) road and railway and is the logical pivot of a flank protection screen to the main route Rijssen (1713) - Nijverdal to the west. To break this screen would mean partial domination of the rear of those enemy troops facing 2 Cdn Inf Div and to this task Alq R. of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, (supported by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt and whatever guns of 15 Cdn Fd Regt could be brought to bear), bent itself. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 5 Apr 45)

72. The first attack went in early on the morning of 6 Apr, but made no headway against heavy small arms fire, and while it was in progress, civilians reported infiltration into our extended lines of communication north along the line Delden - Bornebroek. A small battle group made up of elements of Linc & Welld R. (reverted to Comd 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1030 hours, 5 Apr) and 29 Cdn Recce Regt tanks was sent to deal with it, and by late afternoon had succeeded in pushing the enemy back across the canal west of Bornebroek with severe losses. This minor success, however, was offset by that of the enemy against the Algonquins, whose second attack by "D" Coy along the axis Almelo - Wierden had been repulsed with considerable casualties. North of Almelo around Aadorp (2420)

* 38 Para Regt (7 Para Div)
32 Para Regt (8 Para Div)
2 Tp, 267 Flak Bn, (AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/L/F, Docket
I: Folio 23, Intrep No. 136, 8 Apr 45).

our troops had better luck; for here the Alq R. carrier platoon went into action with machine gun and flame-thrower to wipe out an entire enemy out-post, killing 25 Germans and capturing 12. (W.D., H.Q. 13 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Apr 45)

73. All through the night of 6/7 Apr the Northern Ontario regiment continued to probe the approaches to Wierden, but with small measure of success. The enemy in the village were well placed to cover the road from Almelo and had enough heavy support to discourage any movement against them; moreover, across the eastern edge of Wierden ran the Hollandergraven Canal over which the Canadian infantry must cross to enter the village. It was the old story of a few fanatical defenders choosing a vital point as their stronghold, a repetition of any of a dozen or more of the delaying actions with which our troops had had to contend earlier in the campaign. The quality of the enemy's choice of ground was to prove itself during the next two days. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde; Alq R., Linc & Welld R., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 6 Apr 45; also G.S. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945, Appx 79, Intreps No. 134, 135)

THE ARMY COMMANDER'S DIRECTIVE, 7 APR 45

74. The following morning, while Maj-Gen Vokes' armour waited outside Meppen for the moment to force a crossing of the Ems and his infantrymen tested Wierden, General Crerar sat down in his caravan at Army Headquarters to prepare a new directive to his Corps Commanders. He wrote:

The tasks of First Canadian Army are as follows:

- (a) To open up and secure for use the route Arnhem - Zutphen.
- (b) To clear North-east Holland.
- (c) To clear North-west Germany up to the line of the Weser.
- (d) To be prepared to take over Bremen from Second British Army and advance eastwards to the Elbe protecting the left flank of Second British Army and clearing the Cuxhaven Peninsula.
- (e) Simultaneously with (b) above to operate westwards to clear west Holland.

(W.D., G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, April 1945: Appx 2, Directive, G.O.C.-in-C., 1-0-4/1, 7 Apr 45)

The share of 2 Cdn Corps was a trident thrust, with western, and northern and north-eastern lines:

Simultaneously, but without detriment to the preparation and early execution of Operation "CANNONSHOT" - which has as its object the crossing of the Ijssel from the east, and the capture of the high ground between that place and Arnhem - 2 Canadian Corps will operate Northwards to clear North-east Holland.

Without prejudice to the speedy carrying out of the responsibilities indicated in paragraph 7 above and on a lower priority, 2 Canadian Corps will also proceed to operate north-eastwards to clear the coastal belt of Germany, including all naval establishments, up to the line of the R. Weser. During such operations 2 Canadian Corps will direct our armoured division on the axis Almelo - Neuenhaus - Meppen - Sogel - Friesoythe - Oldenburg, so as to afford a measure of security to the left flank of Second British Army.

(Ibid)

This latter task, as we shall see, fell to 4 Cdn Armd Div.

2 CDN INF DIV'S OPERATIONS, 5-7 APR 45^x

75. The example set by the armoured division in its brilliant break-out on the right had been followed with almost equal success by the two infantry formations further to the west. In the centre of Lt-Gen Simonds' front on the morning of 5 Apr Brigadier Megill's 5 Cdn Inf Bde continued their push towards Laren. From their original objectives on the left of the Groot Dochteren - Laren Road which they had occupied during the night before, R. de Mais supported by "A" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt pushed to their final objectives astride the main road south-west of Laren, reaching them before dawn on 5 Apr. Behind the French-Canadians, the Calgary Highlanders had moved up to take over the left flank, while well to the front "A" Sqn 8 Cdn Recce Regt felt out the approaches to Laren and the flanks. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 5 Apr 45)

76. Shortly after daybreak 6 Cdn Inf Bde arrived in the line and Fus M.R. relieved the Calgaries, who swung to the right directed onto the stretch of road connecting Laren and Lochem. Meanwhile as R.H.C. prepared to pass

x Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets 34 - Groenlo, 28 - Almelo, 22 - Coevorden, 33 - Zutphen. Appx "E".

through to attack Laren, R. de Mais was ordered to side-step to the north-west to secure the left flank, and Calg Highrs began advancing on the right on a line parallel to the railway track. (Ibid)

77. The Black Watch went forward at 0745 hours, 5 Apr, led by "C" and "B" Coys mounted on the tanks of "A" Sqn of the Fort Garry Horse (10 Cdn Armd Regt) and on the carriers of the battalion's support company. The enemy, however, was not prepared to let the armoured column get too far ahead, and just before the Canadians reached their forming up place a terrific hail of fire forced the infantry to dismount and go to ground. A second bombardment of shell, rocket, and mortar followed, causing many casualties to "C" Coy, and two of the missiles unfortunately landed right on top of the Black Watch tactical headquarters. The officer in temporary command of the unit, Maj E. Motzfeldt, the Scout Platoon Commander, the Intelligence Officer and several others were wounded, and the task of getting the troops forward fell to Maj A. Traversy, the senior company commander. There was a little delay but a new plan was formed and at 1115 hours the advance was resumed. The first objectives in Laren were overrun without much trouble and by mid-afternoon the town and its approaches were firmly controlled by R.H.C. (Ibid). Contact patrols were then dispatched on either flank. (Ibid; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 2199, 3173, 3177; W.D., R.H.C., April 1945, Appx 13; Ops Log, serials 225, 286, 290, 295, 300, 320, 321). Fortunately, neither the R. de Mais to the west nor the Calg Highrs to the south had as much opposition in reaching their allotted objectives. Both units were able to report their new positions by 1500 hours, and spent the remainder of the day establishing flank contacts and patrolling. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 5 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 3177, 3183)

78. Neither of Maj-Gen Matthews' other brigades had been particularly active during 5 Apr. On 4 Cdn Inf Bde's front, an overall readjustment of dispositions took place when R. Regt C., temporarily freed of responsibility by Brigadier McGill's advance towards Laren, sent two of its companies over to the left flank to relieve R.H.L.I. The Hamilton unit, at the time holding a base from which 7 Bde of 3 Cdn Inf Div had struck out westwards, turned over its area to R. Regt C. and began moving eastwards along the railway to seize the bridge sites above Lochem. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 5 Apr 45). The advance of R.H.L.I., while not greatly opposed by "bodies on the ground", was seriously hindered by extensive minefields. By last light however; after all objectives had been heavily engaged by artillery and flame, the battalion consolidated near the hamlet of Exel'tol (0898) thus filling the gap between Calg Highrs of 5 Cdn Inf Bde and the highway bridge north-west of Lochem. (Ibid; and 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 2212, 2220, 2227, 2236, 2238, 2224). The position of Essex Scot R., holding the northern end of the rapidly expanding bridgehead area, remained unchanged and thankfully allowed the Scottish to rest before the next move. (W.D., Essex Scot R., 5 Apr 45)

79. After moving up Fus M.R. to the left side of the Almen - Laren road, headquarters 6 Cdn Inf Bde spent the rest of the day getting its other battalions forward. By last light both Camerons of C. and S. Sask R. were concentrating to the south-west and south of Laren digesting the orders for the next attack. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 5 Apr 45). The intention was that 6 Cdn Inf Bde should form a bridge-head over the Schipbeek Canal. This obstacle extends eastwards from the town of Deventer and cuts the two roads leading from Laren (0600) to Holten and Markelo before curving southwards to join the Twente Canal west of Diepenheim. The method of attack was to be dependent on the opposition encountered south of Laren. If it was light, S. Sask R., mounted on tanks of "C" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt and Kangaroos of 1 Cdn Carrier Regt, would attack north along the main road Laren - Holten preceded by two squadrons of 8 Cdn Recce Regt. Following the main effort would be Fus M.R. on the left flank and Camerons of C. on the right, clearing both sides of the main axis. If the resistance was heavy, then the assault was to be made on a two-battalion front with Fus M.R. and Camerons of C. forward and S. Sask R. in reserve, while a squadron of 8 Cdn Recce Regt patrolled each flank. In their respective concentration areas, the infantry units proceeded to "marry up" according to the prescribed groupings* (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 5 Apr 45; also W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx 5, Intelligence Log, 5 Apr 45, serial 61**).

80. During the night 5/6 Apr minor advances were made by Fus M.R. and Camerons of C. against light opposition indicating that the enemy had pulled back. This meant that Brigadier Allard's alternative plan could be put into operation.

* GROUPINGS:-

The following groupings will be carried out in conc areas NORTH of br in 0197:-

In sp Fus MR	- 1 tp C Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt 1 tp (towed) 17 pdrs - 23 A Tk Bty 1 MMG pl - C Coy Tor Scot (MG).
In sp Camerons of C	- 1 tp C Sqn 10 Armd Regt, 1 tp (towed) 17 pdrs - 23 A Tk Bty
In sp S. Sask R.	- 2 tps C Sqn 10 Armd Regt, 1 sqn Kangaroos, 1 Scissors br sec (?) 1 Sherman dozer, 1 Engr Recce Party (7 Fd Coy RCE), A Coy Tor Scot (MG) 1 Pl C Coy Tor Scot (MG), 1 tp (SP) 23 A Tk Bty.

CONC:-

Fus MR in present location, Camerons of C in present location of R. de Mais - 043001. S Sask R SOUTH of Calg Highrs - 066982.

** (Ibid).

(W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Apr 45). Shortly after midnight "A" Coy Camerons of C. was mounted on carriers and directed on the bridge over the Shipbeek canal 4000 yards north of Oolde (0401), with the object of preventing the enemy from demolishing it and establishing a bridgehead there. (Ibid: Appx 5, Intelligence Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 83, 90, 6 Apr 45, serials 2, 3, 5). If the Camerons succeeded in this, then S. Sask R. was to be passed through to the east to capture the main bridge site south of Holten. By "building up" their patrols, the Camerons were able to seize the village of Oolde early on 6 Apr and allowed 8 Cdn Recce Regt to move on seeking contact. There was little sign of the enemy to be found and by 0700 hours Lt-Col A.A. Kennedy, D.S.O., E.D., had his men concentrated between Dorth (0404) and the bridge, which was already in shambles but over the wreckage of which it was possible to move marching troops. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 6 Apr 45). At 1300 hours the commanding officer gave his orders for the crossing, and within three and a quarter hours "A" and "B" Coys were on the north bank with "C" Coy about to cross. (Ibid)

81. The good fortune which our troops had enjoyed thus far, however, was not to last much longer, for immediately after consolidation by the Camerons' three rifle companies, the German guns and mortars opened up impeding communications by causing several casualties among the regimental signallers. (Ibid). There was no let up in the enemy's retaliation against the bridgehead force, which by nightfall was firmly dug in with its flanks south of the canal protected by "D" Coy on the right and a composite company of Calg Highrs (5 Cdn Inf Bde) on the left. Similarly, Brigadier Allard's other battalion had moved up and the end of the day found Fus M.R. holding the area of Bekmansbroek (0804) and S. Sask R. concentrated astride the main road just south of the Fusiliers. (Ibid). The intention for the morrow was to expand the holding north of the Schipbeek Canal and, as Camerons of C. continued to draw the enemy's attention towards their bridgehead on the left flank, S. Sask R. made hasty preparation for its journey to the other side of the obstacle. (W.Ds., Camerons of C; S. Sask R; 6 Apr 45)

82. While Brigadier Allard's men had been facing up to the Schipbeek Canal, 5 Cdn Inf Bde had held Laren and exploited further eastwards along the Twente Canal with Calg Highrs, who covered another 800 yards eastwards to settle along the track from the buildings at Huurneman (0799) to Hiddink (0799) (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, serial 23, W.Ds., Calg Highrs and 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Apr 45). Brigadier Cabeldu had also readjusted his positions to suit the situation created by 6 Cdn Inf Bde's advance to the north. On the right R.H.L.I. were ordered to move to the east to secure the other bridge site near Lochem station as the railroad bridge in their present area was not satisfactory. By 1500 hours Lt-Col H.C. Arrell had his companies consolidated in their new positions. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 6 Apr 45, serials 2291, 2336). Simultaneously Essex Scot had been moving northwards: and by 1800 hours had covered another 3000 yards to enter the area covered by 8 Cdn Recce Regt in its sweep to contact. (Ibid: serials 2358, 2366; also W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 6 Apr 45)

83. Nightfall saw the Essex firmly holding the wooded area north of Harfsen with the forward troops on the highway and strong company positions on either flank. Under Lt-Col Pangman's command at that time was "A" Coy R. Regt C., which became responsible for the line of supply to Harfsen. The other companies of R. Regt C. remained south-east of Harfsen (with elements of 10 Cdn Armd Regt) acting as a mobile counter-attack force for R.H.L.I. far on the eastern flank. (Ibid: serials 2358, 2366, 2377; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 6 Apr 45)

84. Maj-Gen Matthews' intention for 7 Apr was to build up his bridgehead over the Schipbeek Canal along the axis Laren - Holten. 8 Cdn Recce Regt was to tap out Holten and, if resistance allowed, was to reconnoitre both the high ground to the north and the Holten - Rijssen road. The capture of Holten was entrusted to 5 Cdn Inf Bde. By way of additional and highly mobile fire power, 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) less one Squadron, (under General Matthews' command since the morning of 6 Apr), was to grasp the first opportunity to carry out medium reconnaissance ahead of the advancing infantry along the road Raalte - Zwolle. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serial 3148; 6 Apr 45, serial 2403). To 4 Cdn Inf Bde was left the task of securing the firm base the division had created on the northern bank of the Twente Canal and thereby preventing any interference with the bridging operations north of Lochem. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H; Docket V, April 1945, Liaison Officers' Reports 061500B)

OPERATIONS BY 3 CDN INF DIV, 5-7 APR 45*

85. Meanwhile, on Lt-Gen Simonds' left flank, 3 Cdn Inf Div, although forced to contain several local centres of resistance along the east bank of the Ijssel River, had moved 7 Cdn Inf Bde northwards in conformity with 2 Cdn Inf Div on its right. On the morning of 5 Apr, 9 Cdn Inf Bde exerted further pressure on the southern and south-eastern approaches to Zutphen and 8 Cdn Inf Bde continued to maintain a series of "containing" outposts along the eastern bank of the Ijssel from the area of Doesburg northward to Steenderen (9386), Bronkhorst (9387), Baak (9788) and Wichmond (9889); while the other brigades were thus employed, 7 Cdn Inf Bde ordered its first battalion (Regina Rif) to cross the Twente Canal. (See para 22). The Reginas, their open flank protected by a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, struck westwards from the line held by 4 Cdn Inf Bde at 0530 hours, using "B" and "C" Coys up

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets 33 - Zutphen, 27 - Hatten.
G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 3903 - Steenderen, 3803 - Zutphen, 3702 - Deventer, 3703 - Bathmen, also Appx "E".

on the left and right respectively. The leading troops met only light opposition, which was effectively smothered by the supporting fire of tanks, and reached the eastern part of Eefde by 0820 hours, whereupon "A" and "D" Coys passed through. By 1400 hours Regina Rif had consolidated its objective. A similar thrust towards Zutphen by R. Wpg Rif along the south bank of the canal was equally successful. After the initial break-out from the area held by 6 Cdn Inf Bde at 0540 hours "A" and "C" Coys had no trouble in getting to the railway between Huize de Voorst (9796) and Veldkamp (9896). At that point the two other companies passed on to secure the line Den Dam (967966) to the circular roadway west of Huize de Voorst (975967). By 1630 hours both units with their supporting tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt were firm; 1 C. Scot R., the reserve battalion, had been ordered to stand down for the time being. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, H.Q. 7, 8, 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, Regina Rif, R. Wpg Rif, 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 1, 5, 22, 23, 42, 45, 51)

86. The progress of 7 Cdn Inf Bde was sufficient to enable the engineers to get on with their job of bridging the canal south of Eefde. The sappers plied their trade with great enthusiasm even though the site at Eefde was still under fire from the unsubdued Hun in Zutphen. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Apr 45; AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V: Special Report No. 22, R.C.E.). In the short space of three hours the sappers of 6 Cdn Fd Coy completed a 70-foot Bailey bridge over the gap - "an exceptionally fast job". A smoke screen laid between the bridge builders and Zutphen gave some protection against observed fire, but it was by no means a mere routine job:

Work commenced at 1500 hrs and there were no further interruptions until 1730 hrs when the last riband bolts were being tightened and the finishing touches put to the bridge. At this time a sniper opened up on the bridge with a Schmeisser and although his aim was bad it was most unpleasant. The bridge was opened for traffic at 1800 hrs.

(AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F,
Docket V: Report No. 22, R.C.E.;
45/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket II,
Vol 1, Report on Smoke Screens
Carried Out by First Cdn Army,
p. 34)

Thus another route to the north was now available.

87. On the southern approaches to Zutphen 9 Cdn Inf Bde had not been idle. The early hours of 5 Apr had found Nth N.S. Highrs and "A" Sqn 27 Cdn Armd Regt still battling hard for the right to enter Warnsveld (9694). After a rough time spent in clearing the hospital area on the left, "A" Coy held its ground to allow "C" Coy to pass through. On the right, however, "B" Coy could not get past the road junction east of the hunting lodge (976949). Here the chief cause of trouble came from the woods between the two axes; in these woods were

many well placed snipers who harassed every move the infantry made to press on. Soon after first light two troops of crocodiles reported for duty and these were sent forward, but as the flame-throwing monsters edged their way up the woods, they too ran into serious opposition. "B" Coy was then ordered to switch to the south to assist the supporting vehicles through. This was done at grievous cost, one platoon officer being killed and the company commander wounded. A short delay followed while a replacement officer came up to take over. A fresh effort by "B" Coy cleared the woods and once this was done, "B" Coy returned to the northern axis. From there on the advance was totally successful; two 20-mm guns which had been pouring a volume of shells eastwards were speedily overrun by the flame-supported thrust and "D" Coy was launched through along the main northern route into Warnsveld. At the same time "C" Coy came in from the south from Bieshorst (973944). By 1830 hours 5 Apr Warnsveld was clear, Nth N.S. Highrs being in firm control of the town with "C" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt settled on the northern flank along the tramway. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Nth N.S. Highrs, 5 Apr 45, also 3 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 10, 13, 19, 26, 28, 63, 80, 85)*

88. While the North Novas had been blasting a path into Warnsveld, Brigadier Rockingham's other two highland units had conformed on the left and made minor gains to ensure the complete enclosure of Zutphen from the south-east. Nightfall saw the brigade in contact all across the front after a day of sharp skirmishing and constant patrols. A particular highlight was a sortie by "B" Coy S.D. & G. Highrs which assaulted an enemy strong-point around the hamlet of Brinke (965934) killing over thirty-four Germans.** (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs, H.L.I. of C., 5 Apr 45). Further to the south, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, apart from keeping a watchful eye over its extended sector, had been busy formulating new plans. The brigade, presently under the guidance of Lt-Col S.M. Lett, was given the task of assaulting the fortress of Zutphen. The attack was to be carried out by N. Shore R. and R. de Chaud. Q.O.R. of C. with under command "B" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, and elements of C.H. of O. (M.G.) and 3 Cdn A.Tk Bty were to assume responsibility for the line east of the Ijssel river from Doesburg to Bronkhorst. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde & units, 5 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, 6 Apr 45; serial 26; also 235Cl.013 (D5) Ops 3 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 6 Jun 44 - 5 May 45)

* War Diary and other sources inadequate. The Ops Log explains the full story more clearly.

** 3 Bn, 3 Para Trg Regt: 3 Para Rft Regt (3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summaries, op cit, Folio 33, ISUM No. 111, 6 Apr 45)

THE START OF THE ASSAULT ON ZUTPHEN BY
8 AND 9 CDN INF BDES, 6 APR 45*

89. The attack on Zutphen began at 0430 hours 6 Apr with N. Shore R. on the right, R. de Chaud on the left, going through R. Wpg Rif's positions between the Nth N.S. Highrs and the Twente Canal. R. de Chaud was able to make good progress against steady resistance but N. Shore R. was literally stopped in its tracks by well-directed crossfire. At 0900 hours the brigade commander decided that the best thing to do was to reinforce the success achieved so far by R. de Chaud and he ordered the New Brunswick unit to pull back, swing left and pass through the R. de Chaud's right flank which now faced the moat on the north-eastern sector of Zutphen. Accordingly at 1300 hours "A" and "C" Coys N. Shore R. moved into the new position. Both units then settled to consolidate the ground won and reorganize for a fresh attack. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, N. Shore R., 6 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 29, 8 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945; Appx 1, Sitrep No. 550)

90. On the southern approaches to Zutphen 9 Cdn Inf Bde was also experiencing difficulty in closing in on the town. There were still several mutually supporting strong points to be cleaned out but as the average operational map will show, the numerous streams and rivulets west of the line Ooierhoek (9693) - Warnsveld made any large organized advance dangerously impractical. Brigadier Rockingham could do little else besides harass the enemy's southern outpost defences leaving the reduction of the canal-bound fortress to 8 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 6 Apr 45)

91. The operations against Zutphen on 6 Apr were really overshadowed by another smaller yet much fiercer battle still further to the south. Q.O.R. of C., left to contain the line Doesburg - Bronkhorst since the previous day, had not been content to sit idle, and on the afternoon of 5 Apr launched a three-company attack towards the river line. The attack commenced at 1600 hours (5 Apr). "D" Coy, striking south from the village of Emmer (9285) to capture the farm at t'Huis Weerd (914857) north of Rha (9185), completed the task at 1700 hours without opposition but under difficult conditions, having to advance on its objective through a network of muddy and waterlogged trenches. Neither "A" Coy, (which had the task of reaching Rha from the east), nor "B" Coy (whose objective was the hamlet of Pipelure (9083)) had an easy time. At 1730 hours "B" Coy was nearing its objective when the two forward platoons were pinned down. The situation deteriorated with the passing minutes, and lacking the necessary heavier support the infantrymen could not advance further. The reserve platoon had to be quickly employed to enable the other battered sub-units to withdraw. "A" Coy had an even rougher time, the leading platoon (No. 9) used the water filled trenches to reach the outskirts of Rha

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 3803 - Zutphen,
G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets 33 - Zutphen, 40 - Arnhem, also Appx "E".

without much trouble, then the second platoon moved through into the open towards the town while the last platoon swung to the right into the village. At this point the enemy began pounding the riflemen from three sides, then counter-attacked viciously and as one report puts it "a nightmare battle began". (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 5 Apr 45)

92. In the darkness Canadian fought German hand to hand and very soon the situation became hopeless against the enemy's numerical superiority. In the dwindling light from the burning houses, our infantry retired eastwards again, taking five of their wounded with them, but they left five dead and six others were unaccounted for. The hazardous trip back to Eekhoorn (9285) completed, "A" Coy, depleted and weary, turned its area over to "C" Coy and moved back into reserve for reorganization and rest. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 5 Apr 45; also Appx 52, Operation "PLUNDER" Phase II, 5 & 6 Apr 45). An "all out" effort to wreak vengeance took place the next day when the fire power of the entire battalion and its supporting arms was turned on Rha and the neighbouring farms. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 6 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serial 90, 6 Apr 45, serial 8, 24, 32)

7 CDN INF BDE SWINGS TO THE NORTH, 6 APR 45*

93. As soon as 8 Cdn Inf Bde passed through to attack Zutphen Maj-Gen R.H. Keebler ordered 7 Cdn Inf Bde to build up its strength north of the Twente Canal and to clear a divisional axis from Zutphen to Deventer (9207). This advance began at 0750 hours 6 Apr, 1 C. Scot R., supported by a squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt, led the way with a squadron of reconnaissance cars working to the front and on the right flank. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Apr 45). The Scottish were directed on Gorssel (9501), a small community some five thousand yards north of the recently completed bridge at Eefde. The Reginas were to follow up keeping slightly to the west until ordered to pass on to Epse (9404), while R. Wpg Rif travelled up the line of the railway beyond Joppe (9702), the immediate object being to position the brigade for the coming assault on Deventer. (Ibid)

94. The leading battalion made good progress and by 0840 hours "B" Coy (1 C. Scot R.) was at the road junction south of Gorssel. Lt-Col L.S. Henderson was then instructed to take advantage of the slackening resistance and not to stop in Gorssel but to press on to the village of Epse about two and a half miles further on. Upon receipt of this order,

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets 33 - Zutphen, 27 - Hattem.
G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 3803 - Zutphen, 3703 - Bathmen;
also Appx "E".

1 C. Scot R. proceeded northward, but left one company to clear the wood at Eester Loo (9300) on the left flank, where some enemy had been reported. At about this time R. Wpg Rif began to move along the railway on the right. By 1230 hours, as the Scottish pushed on to Epse, R. Wpg Rif were past Joppe and around the highway and railroad junction one thousand yards to the north. Regina Rif was now directed on Gorssel and became responsible for mopping up the sector vacated by 1 C. Scot R. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V; folio 17, Special Report No. 26, Operation "PLUNDER", prepared by 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Part II).

95. During the afternoon of 6 Apr Brigadier Gibson's battalions were urged to press on as fast as possible. R. Wpg Rif were to occupy the area of Oxe (9704), Regina Rif were to swing over to the right flank and take over Joppe, and 7 Cdn Recce Regt, of which two squadrons were now operating under Brigadier Gibson, was directed to send one north-east of Oxe to Darterhoek (0005). Once there the reconnaissance men must try to cross the Schipbeek canal. The other reconnaissance squadron was based at Gorssel and had the task of "swanning" about that place, clearing to the south-west and north as far as Epse whatever of the enemy's troops had been missed by the infantry units. (Ibid). Lt-Col L.R. Fulton, D.S.O., had his companies in the new area by 1600 hours, but not without a few casualties mainly caused by sniping and mortar fire. The Winnipeg positions at this time formed a protective semi-circle just north of Oxe with three companies, "D" on the left, "C" slightly forward in the centre astride the road and "B" on the right near Vesterbosch (9805). "A" Coy was in Oxe itself with battalion headquarters occupying what had been the local gaol. (Ibid). As a matter of interest it was in that building that the "Riflemen" were again reminded of the devilish treatment which on special occasions the fanatical German was wont to mete out to his unfortunate prisoners; and to use the words of the unit War Diary

A dismal sight awaited us when some of the tps discovered a brick firing bay. On this brick wall was smattering of blood and flesh. The earth at the base of the wall was extremely soft and one of the men was curious enough to start digging. In a few minutes time the battered body of a middle-aged man appeared. This was only part of the dismal and gruesome sight for after a few hours ten similar bodies lay on the surface. The bodies were identified the following day by a member of the Dutch Underground. He told us that the German Gestapo had held these people as prisoners for they were suspected to be members of the Dutch Underground. We were also informed that when the Gestapo heard that we were coming they murdered their prisoners and evacuated the camp.

(W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Apr 45)

It was but another atrocity to be credited to the enemy for future retribution.

96. R. Wpg Rif did not linger long at Oxe; the bridge across the Schipbeek north-west of the village was demolished but not enough to prevent the Pioneer platoon from improvising a way for "D" Coy to get over to form a perimeter at about 2100 hours. They were quickly followed first by "B" Coy which passed through to consolidate on the right then at 0300 hours the following morning by "A" and "C" Coys, which went on to dig in along the east west track south of Colmschate (9806). Thus by the morning of 7 Apr, 7 Cdn Inf Bde had R. Wpg Rif north of the canal firmly holding their bridgehead under heavy mortar fire, Regina Rif between them and Joppe to the south flanked by a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, and 1 C. Scot R. on the left near Epse with another reconnaissance squadron along the southern lines of communication based on Gorssel. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 6 Apr 45, serial 93, 7 Apr 45, serial 3, 7 Cdn Inf Bde Special Report No. 26, Cp "PLUNDER", Part II). During the night 6/7 Apr the staff at H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde completed a careful listing of possible air support targets on the approaches to Deventer and on the west bank of the Ijssel River in that area. This list was passed to Maj-Gen Keebler's Headquarters and, early on the morning of 7 Apr, the air contact car reported for duty. As the narrative of the next few days action will show, the air support, aided by perfect weather, was both considerable and successful. (Ibid)

THE SITUATION OF 2 CDN CORPS, 7 APR 45*

97. Lt-Gen Simonds' battle map at this time presented a strange yet satisfying picture. It showed his Corps stretched out across a long straggling front from Maj-Gen Vokes' rapidly strengthening position at Meppen, westwards to Coevorden then south through Almelo to the north bank of the Twente Canal west of Delden, whence the Canadians dominated the canal as far west as Lochem. From there the front swung north again through Exel'tol and Laren to Maj-Gen Matthews' new bridgehead over the Schipbeek Canal south-west of Holten. The line of forward troops then edged westwards along the southern bank of the Schipbeek to the left flank as represented by the Ijssel River. Along this flank Maj-Gen Keebler's men were threatening Deventer from the south, attacking Zutphen from the north-east, east and south-east, and containing the enemy's last remnants east of the river down to Doesburg. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/G, Trace No. 274, 7 Apr 45)

98. The area south-west of Doesburg bounded by the oude Ijssel on the right, the Ijssel River to the front and the Neder Rijn on the left, and which included such places as Loil, Didam, Zevenaer and Westervoort was now under Corps control. A composite force made up of "A" Sqn 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt and the dismounted 103 and 74 Btys of 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheet N1 - Almelo.

took over the sector at 1830 hours 4 Apr and was supplemented by a troop of medium guns of 83 Fd Bty R.A. the next day. The remainder of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) (under Lt-Gen Simonds' direction since the 2 Apr) then went under command 2 Cdn Inf Div (6 Apr) and proceeded to concentrate at Laren (0600). (W.Ds., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) 4 - 6 Apr 45; also Appx 6B "Map showing dispositions", 4 - 6 Apr 45; 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 4 - 6 Apr 45). Another unit introduced into the current operations was 2 Cdn Corps Def Coy (P.E.I.L.H.) which took over a portion of the front along the Twente Canal on 5 Apr. The Prince Edward Islanders were given the task of holding and patrolling from the road bridge (1097) near Lochem eastwards to the junction of the Twente and Schipbeek canals (1500) after it had been reported that some of the enemy's troops were attempting to infiltrate. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/F, Docket I, Folio 10, Summary of Ops, 1 - 7 Apr 45, p. 2, para 7)

PLANS OF 2 CDN CORPS, 7 APR 45*

99. Lt-Gen Simonds' intention for 7 Apr was for 4 Cdn Armd Div to retain its firm base in the triangle Almelo - Borne - Delden while Brigadier Moncel secured a crossing over the Ems at Meppen. Following that, Maj-Gen Vokes' armour was to leave a force to protect the bridgehead and to thrust out towards Sogel (8472). 2 Cdn Inf Div was to complete its crossing of the Schipbeek Canal, capture Holten and exploit eastwards with its reconnaissance regiment to contact 4 Cdn Armd Div's firm base. For a similar exploitation in the opposite direction, Maj-Gen Matthews was given 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.). 3 Cdn Inf Div was to press on to Deventer with 7 Cdn Inf Bde and then to advance on Zwolle, while 8 and 9 Brigades cleaned out Zutphen and mopped up to the Ijssel River south of that town. "A" Sqn of the Royal Canadian Dragoons with its two batteries of 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt would continue in its present role, while along the Twente Canal between the bridgeheads of 2 Cdn Inf and 4 Cdn Armd Div, the Corps Defence Company (P.E.I.L.H.) supported by a detachment from 6 Cdn Armd Regt besides 30 Fd Coy, R.C.E., would establish its own bridgehead with the object of erecting a class 40 bridge near Goor (2104). (W.D., G.S., H.J. 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945, Appx 5, Intention 2 Cdn Corps, 7 Apr 45)

100. Besides his normal array of strength Lt-Gen Simonds also had had **under command** since 2 Apr 1 Cdn Inf Div, which was commanded by Maj-Gen H.W. Foster. The "Red Patch Devils" who had been concentrating west of the Rhine near Cleve, were now ordered to prepare for Operation "CANNONSHOT", the attack westwards across the Ijssel River, by moving their leading assault elements over the Rhine into the area of Baak

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets N1 - Almelo, N2 - Osnabruck, M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg.

and Hummelo. (Ibid). Thus, for his forthcoming operations, Lt-Gen Simonds was to have all three Canadian infantry divisions, 4 Cdn Armd Div, and, as the Army Commander had informed Lt-Gen Simonds on 5 Apr, their old armoured partners, 1 Polish Armd Div. In addition he had 2 Cdn Armd Bde, both the Canadian armoured car regiments, as well as 2 Cdn A.G.R.A. He would, however, only have control of 1 Cdn Inf Div for Operation "CANNONSHOT". When the Ijssel had been successfully crossed from the east that formation would revert to 1 Cdn Corps. The Poles were to be available on 7 Apr, and there was a chance that a British Division, 5 Inf Div, would join him on 15 Apr. (Ibid: also AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/R/F, Docket II, Personal War Diary Notes, Brigadier N.E. Rodger, C.B.E., 5 Apr 45)

THE ENEMY'S POSITION, 7 APR 45^{*}

101. Even if the enemy had known the size of the force which was about to be hurled against him, it does not seem at all likely that he would have withdrawn from north-western Holland. His every action of the past few days on our left flank and in some cases in the centre made clear that he intended to stand on the banks of the Ijssel, resisting stubbornly at Zutphen, Doesburg and in small pockets between these two places. By contrast to this dogged defence effort his organized resistance on the right had literally collapsed. Now the only serious obstacle to an Allied advance further into north-western Germany lay in the Ems River. In the centre also the German troops had begun to fall back. (Ibid; First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary No. 280, 6 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summary No. 53, 6 Apr 45)

102. The importance of the lightning thrust northward on the right flank cannot be overestimated, for it was the cause of greatest confusion to the enemy, and even that unpleasant but efficient little man General Eugen Meindl, Commanding 2 Para Corps, appears to have been vague as to the course of events on his side. Later, when General Meindl was questioned, his interrogators explained that while he had given much information about the campaign up to April 1945, he had done so by referring to a set of personal notes. (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary, No. 280, 6 Apr 45). But as the interrogating officers stated in their report:

From April 1 to April 11 he was apparently much too busy to keep up this account. He only knew that it was a period of complete confusion in which each commander acted on his own initiative without reference to higher authority. As far as he knows there was no great strategical plan for the withdrawal north to Germany. The only order he received was the desperate and oft-repeated invocation to "Hold on at all costs".

* Reference maps: As for para 99.

The boundary between 88 Corps and 2 Para Corps was roughly the Dutch border. With 6 Para Division on the right flank and 7 and 8 Parachute Divisions taking over the rest of the corps front to the Ems River, 2 Parachute Corps began its slow retreat. But a sharp armoured thrust early in April resulted in the capture of Almelo, Hengelo and Nordhorn and split 2 Para Corps from its right hand neighbour, 88 Corps. The speed of this attack cut off 6 Parachute Division from 7 Parachute Division. As a result 6 Parachute Division was taken from under Meindl's command and placed under 88 Corps. This latter Corps, a part of Twenty-Fifth Army, was then ordered to retire behind the Ijssel River and defend Eastern Holland from attack.

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F,
Docket III, Special Interrogation
Report - General Eugen Meindl)

The armoured attack referred to by Meindl was the good job done by Maj-Gen Vokes' 4 Cdn Armd Div after the crossing of the Twente Canal.

103. The story is now taken up by Lt-Gen Hermann Plocher, whose formidable 6 Para Div, after attempting to hold the shore of the Rhine between Emmerich and Rees, had suffered the unique fate of being chased out of Germany into Holland. After this humiliation the first line he attempted to hold was from Terborg to Aalten, but this was broken by the British and by 2 Cdn Inf Div, as we have seen. Having lost contact with 8 Para Div, Plocher withdrew with an open left flank. When the Twente Canal had been crossed, the division retired once more:

It was at this stage that Plocher received his orders to swing his defence line back into Holland. He now understood his task to be a withdrawal over the River Ijssel and the defence of the west bank of that river. Establishing a bridgehead position at Deventer, and slowly falling back in a northwesterly direction he carried out this curious tactical move. Once back to the Ijssel, part of the division crossed over to the west bank at Wijhe, while the balance of it took up another bridgehead position at Zwolle... Plocher attributes his ability to carry out this rather complicated manoeuvre to the same slow and planned allied tactics which had enabled him to fall back in the Reichswald. The tactics, he says, always followed the same pattern. First there was a reconnaissance, then a tank attack, then infantry widened the penetration and then there was a consolidation. Each step took about three days and each time Plocher was able to regroup and consolidate his front.

(Special Interrogation Report,
op cit, Lt-Gen Hermann Plocher)

104. Interrogation of prisoners at that time indicated that even the tough men in the ranks of the parachute divisions were beginning to lose heart:

Morale: not very good, because they always have to fight against armour and because they never get their promised rest. PW explained that where they have to fight as infantry against infantry they usually "enjoy" this and fight on.

(W.D., First Cdn Army G. Int
Files, 40-6-4/Int Vol 3: 6
Para Div, 1-1776, 071730 hrs)

Of another of Flocher's men the interrogator reported:

PW was a typical example of a former tough paratrooper who had had enough. He was terrified of our flamethrowers which had launched the final attacks on his position.

(Ibid, Intrep Lt E.E.
Sorenson 062200 hrs)

Nevertheless it was still expected that most of the parachutists would fight to the end, for in the Nazi way of life there seemed to be no place for capitulation.

AIR SUPPORT, 2-7 APR 45

105. An important factor in the enemy's present state of confusion could be attributed to the widespread air effort in support of First Cdn Army. From the morning of 2 Apr up to 0930 hours 7 Apr, 84 Group R.A.F. flew 961 sorties over General Crerar's Sector, mostly on Armed Reconnaissance in varying types of weather which became more unsettled during the last two days of the period under review. The claims of damage, however, were impressive. A telephone exchange was destroyed near Utrecht on 2 Apr; so were many vehicles including locomotives and tanks. The plan of destruction went on throughout 3 Apr, when "Meteor" jet fighters went into operations for the first time with 84 Group, and continued apace over the next three days with fair success. There was hardly a sight of the Luftwaffe, which until 5 Apr had seemingly been confining its attention to the area of Kassel on the American front. On that day, however, an increase in German air activity became noticeable in 21 Army Group's sector. 83 Group R.A.F. ran into several Luftwaffe sorties and destroyed several German fighters. This switch in attention by the enemy to the Hanover - Lingen area was probable proof of his sensitiveness to the threat imposed to the crossing places over the River Weser by Lt-Gen Dempsey's advance. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket I, 84 Group R.A.F. Intelligence Summaries Nos. 235, 239, 6 Apr 45)

SECOND ARMY OPERATIONS, 4-7 APR 45*

106. The Weser was first reached by Lt-Gen E.H. Barker's 8 Brit Corps. On the extreme right, 6 Airborne Division, advancing on the axis Osnabruck - Lubbecke (6012) - Minden, got to the river on 5 Apr with orders to bridge the river either at the historical town of Minden or at Petershagen (8420) to the north. Meanwhile, 11 Brit Armd Div, with instructions to protect the Corps' left flank on the line of the Weser, had entered Stolzenau (9135) another town on the same river. Here Maj-Gen G.P.B. Roberts proceeded to quickly establish a bridgehead, using 1 Cdo Bde to reinforce it. Events took a bad turn however at Stolzenau. The enemy proved very sensitive to the British thrust and the bridgehead was subjected to some of the heaviest shelling and air attacks ever experienced. This, moreover, was the penalty which 8 Corps had to accept for advancing far beyond the limits which could be covered by our air support. The necessary landing grounds were still not available to us. It was on account of this unforeseen air opposition which wrecked the bridge-site, that the abandonment of the proposed bridgehead by 11 Brit Armd Div resulted early on 7 Apr. The Commander of 8 Corps had little alternative but to order the armoured formation to swing south and pass through 6 Airborne Division's bridgehead at Petershagen. From there Maj-Gen Roberts was directed to keep his flank along the Elbe - Weser Canal and strike out for the River Leine between Wunstorf (1527) and Neustadt (1736). (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I; also First Cdn Army, Liaison Officers' Reports, op cit, 051530B, 071500B, G Ops Second Army; First Cdn Army Ops Log, 5 Apr; serials 53, 96, 122)

107. With 8 Brit Corps and the American Ninth Army on the right thrusting deeper into the heart of Germany, Lt-Gen Dempsey's centre formation, 12 Brit Corps under Lt-Gen Ritchie, which had 7 Armd Div on the right, 52 (L.) Inf Div in the centre and 53 (W.) Inf Div on the left had swung its eastern flank north from Osnabruck and sent the "Desert Rats" through Halen and Bramsche (1623) to secure a bridge over the Ems - Weser Canal early on 5 Apr. From there the Division made hasty progress north-eastwards and by mid-day 6 Apr had captured Diepholz (4346) and Wagenfeld (5840) by an armoured thrust directed around the south of the Dummer Sea, whence the spearheads swung north again to reach the banks of the Weser near Hoya (9568) on the next day. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I). Behind the Armd Div both 52 (L.) and 53 (W.) Div took over the newly won ground and followed up. (Ibid)

108. On the left flank of Second Army Lt-Gen Horrock's 30 Brit Corps, which had been advancing with Gds Armd Div on the right and 43 (W.) Inf Div on the left,

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets M3 - Bremen, N3 - Minden, N4 - Hanover, N2 - Osnabruck. Also Appx "G".

(followed by 3 Brit Inf Div) had regrouped. Maj-Gen Whistler's Div had taken over the left to clear the town of Lingen (which stands at the junction of the Ems River with Dortmund - Ems Canal). The objective of 30 Brit Corps was the city of Bremen, and the plan was for 3 Brit Inf Div to swing south after clearing Lingen to secure two suitable bridges for the armour to use on 6 Apr. Over these the "Guards" were to plunge forth with 43 (W.) Inf Div on the left, leaving Maj-Gen Whistler the task of covering the northern flank next to the Canadians. (Ibid)

109. The assault across the Ems River opposite the garrison town of Lingen had originally been timed for 2000 hours 3 Apr, but just after the commanding officer of 2 K.S.L.I. (185 Inf Bde) had given his orders for a boat-crossing south of Lingen, the cheering message arrived from Gds Armd Div to say that they had seized a bridge intact over the Ems River three miles to the north of the town and west of Altenlingen (6938). The plan of attack was therefore changed, and at 0430 hours 4 Apr, after some hard marching 2 K.S.L.I. reached the bridge. From here the attack went with clock-like precision. The regiment advanced once more eastwards to the outskirts of Altenlingen, the assault boats were brought forward, and at 0530 hours the crossing of the Dortmund - Ems Canal was under way. The slight resistance encountered made it clear that the element of surprise had been achieved. The enemy had been expecting an assault further to the south and no doubt he had been influenced by the fact that the divisional artillery had been carrying out deceptive firing on targets south of Lingen. By the time that the enemy realized his error, the assault had gained the required momentum and 2 Warwick were passed through into Lingen itself followed in turn, first, by 1 Norfolk later in the day; then by 2 Lincolns of 9 Brit Inf Bde at 2000 hours. (Ibid).

110. A night and a full morning of the fiercest street-fighting followed in which the British troops were enthusiastically and effectively supported by Crocodiles. During the afternoon of 5 Apr the enemy threw in his first counter-attack, supported by more than half a dozen self-propelled guns, against 2 Warwick. Four of the offending guns got into the town and caused much trouble. However, by the greatest of combined effort the enemy's attack was broken up and all four guns were captured. Finally, 9 Brit Inf Bde arrived in full strength to establish itself in the southern part of Lingen, followed by 8 Inf Bde which settled down to cover the northern and north-eastern approaches to the town. The flank between the Ems River and the Canal was taken over by the divisional support battalion, 2 M.X. Thus, by 7 Apr, Lingen was secure, 350 prisoners had been taken and a great part of the enemy's garrison had been killed. The Guards Armd and 43 (W.) Divs could now resume the advance eastwards to Bersenbruck (1940) and Haselunne (8353). (Norman Scarfe, Assault Division, p. 235-239; also First Cdn Army Liaison Officers reports, op cit, 041600B; 051530B, 061600B; First Cdn Army Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, serial 165, 4 Apr 45, serials 30, 37, 120, 125, 5 Apr 45, serials 59, 115, 6 Apr 45, serial 5)

PLANS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF S.A.S. TROOPS
28 MAR - 6 APR 45^{**}

111. The present state of confusion among the enemy's forces facing 21 Army Group was very soon to be increased; and in a manner far from his liking. Daily air reconnaissance indicated that, behind the determined rearguards and demolitions which were delaying the Canadian advance northward, much enemy transport and many troops were starting to head for the east. The enemy had apparently made up his mind to face up to our advance westwards along the line of the Ijssel River, but it appeared that he was withdrawing what elements he could spare from Northern Holland. His chosen action was being forced upon him for he could not hope to survive long under the pressure being applied by 2 Cdn Corps from the south. Furthermore, he must pull out eastwards quickly for, even after extracting himself from the corner under pressure by the Canadians, he still had to travel fast to escape the long tentacle of 30 Brit Corps reaching towards Bremen at the mouth of the Weser River. The nature of the country in Northern Holland lent itself to defensive action; its many streams and rivers became severe obstacles once the bridges were demolished and as such were wont to cause considerable delay unless the destruction of the bridges could be prevented and the defensive strong points shaken loose by attack from the rear. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/F, Vol II, Docket III folio 1A, Report by Brigadier J.M. Calvert, D.S.O., Comd S.A.S. Tps, Operations "AMHERST", May 1945, Appx "A" attached Appreciation by Brigadier J.M. Calvert, 30 Mar 45, and attached, "Notes on the Enemy in North-East Holland"; also First Cdn Armd Intelligence Summaries No. 276, 2 Apr 45, Para "Intentions"; No. 279, 5 Apr 45, para "Intentions"; No. 280, 6 Apr 45, para "Intentions").

112. A plan to do this had been under consideration since 28 Mar, when a proposal was made by 21 Army Group for the use of Special Air Service troops in north-east Holland. Two days later an outline plan of operation was approved by the G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, after discussion with Brigadier J.M. Calvert, D.S.O., Commander S.A.S. Troops.^{**}

* Reference maps: HOLLAND: 1:50,000, Sheets 7 - GRONINGEN, 12 - ASSEN, 17 - BEILEN.

** Brigadier Calvert had the rare distinction of having a brigade named after him (77th Infantry Brigade (Calvert's Brigade)). He commanded this formation in the Chindit Division under Maj-Gen O.C. Wingate, D.S.O., in Burma, 1943-44.

These troops had four main tasks allotted to them -

- (i) To cause maximum confusion in the area and thus prevent the enemy from taking up fixed positions.
- (ii) To try and prevent demolition of bridges by destroying the demolition charges, in order to hasten the advance of our ground forces.
- (iii) To try and preserve Steenwijk airfield.
- (iv) To raise the resistance in the area.

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/F,
Vol II, Docket III, Folio
3, H.Q. No. 38 Gp R.A.F.,
Report on Operations "AMHERST"
and "KEYSTONE")

The plan actually divided itself into two distinct operations:

- (i) Operation "AMHERST" which provided for the dropping of Nos 2 and 3 Regiments de Chasseurs Parachutistes, with jeeps under British command.
- (ii) Operation "KEYSTONE" which called for the dropping of No. 2 S.A.S. Regt with jeeps preceded by 2 Jedburgh (Wireless) teams to carry out reconnaissance.

(Ibid: folio Ia, Report by
Brigadier Calvert, D.S.O.,
Comd S.A.S. Tps, Operation
"AMHERST", May 1945)

113. The area of operations for Operation "AMHERST" was to be along the important axis Zwolle - Groningen, while Operation "KEYSTONE" would be carried out above ARNHEM and west of Apeldoorn. In the former's area there were listed two airfields (Steenwijk (9869) and Leeuwarden (6815)) and eighteen road and railway bridges, while in the latter area one airfield (Teuge (8406)) and seven bridges were earmarked for attention. No. 38 Group R.A.F. was to be responsible for conveying the parachutists and their equipment to their correct zones of operations. It was calculated that operation "AMHERST" would go in on the night 6/7 Apr 45; "KEYSTONE" was to follow two nights later. However, since everything depended on the weather, their timings were subject to change. (Ibid: Folio 3, H.Q. 38 Gp R.A.F., Report on Operations: Operation "AMHERST" May 1945)

114. Meanwhile the exodus of Germans continued along the line south-west to north-east behind their defence line. The enemy had little choice, however, other than to move under the cover of darkness, for daylight movement in these days of fast declining German air power invariably invited quick annihilation by marauding Allied

* In 1 Cdn Corps' Area.

aircraft. Now, with the scourge of S.A.S. Troops in their midst, the enemy would find that even the darkness had lost its protective shroud. A new terror was about to strike, this time by night and out of the shadows along the roads and tracks leading east to Germany.

115. As events already related have shown, for manifold reasons operation "AMHERST" did not take place on the night 6/7 Apr. On the evening of 5 Apr a message came from Headquarters First Cdn Army to Headquarters S.A.S. and Headquarters 38 Group R.A.F. announcing the first postponement. This however was followed on the night 6/7 Apr by another more heartening message stating that "AMHERST" would take place on the night 7/8 Apr. (Ibid)

OPERATIONS OF 3 CDN INF DIV, 7-11 APR 45[#]

116. Early on 7 Apr, while the S.A.S. troops awaited their signal to emplane, Lt-Gen Simonds' men resumed the offensive to the north and east. On the left flank 3 Cdn Inf Div was pressing toward Deventer with R. Wpg Rif of 7 Cdn Inf Bde; and girding itself for the final effort against Zutphen with 8 Cdn Inf Bde while preparing to withdraw 9 Cdn Inf Bde for use further to the north on the right of Brigadier Gibson's formation. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7, 8, 9 Cdn Inf Bdes and Units, 7 Apr 45) During the day while R. Wpg Rif strengthened their bridgehead over the Schipbeek Canal, Typhoons on 84 Group R.A.F. softened up the approaches to Deventer with considerable success. Regina Rif were now moved up to new positions on the right flank between the Canal and main road some 2500 yards west of Dorsterhoek (0005). They now became responsible for Maj-Gen Keebler's right flank contact, already established by 7 Cdn Recce Regt, with 2 Cdn Inf Div. 1 C. Scot R. also moved closer to the canal. After relief by "B" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, the Scottish concentrated south-west of Oxe with the object of being employed to clear Bathmen (0060) should the divisional axis be swung over to pass through that place. The day was marked by heavy mortar and gun fire against the leading battalion, which took about 30 prisoners. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units and 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 7 Apr 45)

117. The extension of the bridgehead enabled the engineers, who had so far been subjected to heavy fire, to erect a bridge. This was done during the night 7/8 Apr and the Reginas passed over it shortly after midnight. Their task was to keep to the right of the R. Wpg Rif and clear the woods east of Colmschate (9606). Led by "A" Coy, the Reginas were soon on the objectives and in control of the road running through the woods. From here Lt-Col A.S. Gregory was ordered to change direction again, this time to the west. The Reginas were now faced with the task of securing a firm base along the eastern bank of the Zijkanal directly east of

Reference Maps: G.S.G.S. 4085, Holland, 1:50,000
Sheets 27 - Hatten, 33 - Zutphen,
G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000
Sheets 3702 - Deventer, 3703 - Bathmen,
also Appx "E"

Doventer. At the same time R. Wpg Rif were instructed to establish a company position on the left flank at the railway junction (949071) about 1000 yards to the west. This effort was successful and by 1445 hours the company held the railway junction and had thirteen prisoners, mostly from the Flieger Horst Battalion. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and Units, 8 Apr 45). By that time Regina Rif's attack was underway. With a screen of 7 Cdn Rocce Regt on their right flank and ably supported by corcodiles and tanks, the first two companies reached the Zijkanal at 1615 hours. The other two companies were not long in following. By 1700 hours, Regina Rif. had completed their task, they had taken 115 prisoners and captured two "eighty-eights", one intact, and two 20-mm cannons, both in good order. The enemy was by no means subdued, however, at least at a distance; his mortars and guns put down terrific volumes of fire "bottling up the area to some degree". (Ibid) Later that night an engineer's reconnaissance party appeared at the headquarters of the Reginas to determine the possibility of erecting a bridge over the Zijkanal that night (Ibid).

118. The position of 7 Cdn Inf Bde was by this time quite favourable, for during the afternoon 1 C. Scot R. had entered the area held by R. Wpg Rif., cut to the east, and at 2100 hours had advanced with "A" and "C" Coys. Progress was slow, for the wooded area provided ideal cover for the German infantry manning his well-sited machine-guns. By midnight 8/9 Apr, however, the two leading sub-units were about one-quarter of the way to their objective, (the east-west road above Gooiermars (9707)). It was the brigade commander's intention to attack Doventer by way of Schalkhaar (9409) and in order to carry this plan out 1 C. Scot R. was urged to press on to its objective along the Krodden Dijk (9708 - 9908). Regina Rif was to get a company across the canal as soon as possible to cover the bridging operation. (Ibid: also 3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report: No. 26 OP "PLUNDER", 7 Cdn Inf Bde, as above).

7 CDN INF BDE CLOSES IN ON DEVENTER, 9-10 APR 45*

119. The Reginas did not have an easy time in getting a company over to the western bank of the Zijkanal, but by 0700 hours 9 Apr, the job was accomplished. Following this a further advance in the afternoon expanded the Regina's holding from the bridge-site south to the canal's junction with the Douweler Kolk (9507), a small half-moon-shaped lake on the left. 1 C. Scot R. was also able to secure its objective by 1100 hours but only after a brisk fight. It had been hoped to build a bridge at the original site north-east of the Douweler Kolk (9507), but snipers were so active in that area and mortar fire so heavy that the plan had to be changed. Instead the bridge would be erected at the junction (960088) of the main road and the canal on the right flank of Regina

* Reference maps: As for para 116, also Appx "E"

Rif. Readjustments in disposition now took place. R. Wpg Rif. placed one company on the Roginas' left to prevent infiltration and the Scottish were directed westwards to secure a lodgement over the canal north of the Roginas' position. Additional strength was lent to the brigade by the arrival of Q.O.R. of C., which came under command and after taking over from R. Wpg Rif. were ordered to exploit 7 Cdn Inf Bde's left flank towards another possible crossing place at Snippeling (945070). R. Wpg Rif. retired temporarily to concentrate. (Ibid, and W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, Q.O.R. of C., 9 Apr 45).

120. 1 C. Scot R. began crossing the canal early that evening, and after a hard struggle managed to establish two of its companies on the other side. In doing this, great use was made of the wreckage of the bridge which, though it allowed fair passage for foot soldiers, was under continuous mortar fire -- not the best of working conditions for the engineers. Nevertheless, the building of the bridge commenced. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Apr 45). Meanwhile R. Wpg Rif. relieved Regina Rif in preparation for the "all-out" assault on Deventer. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report No. 26, as above). Midnight 9/10 Apr saw 1 C. Scot R. firm in their bridgehead and under orders to journey north-eastwards to capture Schalkhaar, a suburb of Deventer. The advance was resumed at 0100 hours 10 Apr. Opposition was negligible and within five hours the Scottish infantry was consolidating around the main road junction west of Brinkgreve on the north-eastern outskirts of Deventer. Brigadier Gibson was quick to take advantage of the situation and he ordered R. Wpg Rif., who were in the process of occupying their new area, to move up their two reserve companies over the bridge to 1 C. Scot R's sector, thus thickening up our positions around Schalkhaar (9409) prior to the coming attack (9409). (Ibid and W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45). By that time Q.O.R. of C. had also made its bid to advance westwards, and at 0800 hours 10 Apr H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde heard that the Queens Own's leading troops were almost at Snippeling, but at a heavy cost to "A" Coy, which was counter-attacked and had to be assisted into its allotted area. (Ibid and Q.O.R. of C., 10 Apr 45)

121. All this time the northern and eastern flanks had been watched over by "C" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt which was really doubling in duty since it had gone under command 9 Cdn Inf Bde on 8 Apr. These "reccemen" distinguished themselves particularly on 9 Apr when, besides killing 25 Germans and capturing 37 in a sharp skirmish, they overran a V-2 site about two miles north of Bathmen. The mass destructive weapons base was in shambles, however. The R.A.F. had been there before the "Recce". (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report, No. 20 Op "PLUNDER" 7 Cdn Recce Regt, also W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt 8-9 Apr 45) On 10 Apr the squadron crossed the Zijkanal and, as one troop probed to the east to contact the flanking formation, other patrols explored the area north of Schalkhaar. It was here that the enemy engaged our troops heavily with mortar fire, causing both the squadron commander and his second in command to become casualties. "A" and "B" Sqns were still in position along the Ijssel river but eagerly awaiting the order that would send them to join their comrades east of Deventer. (Ibid)

122. Deventer had been an awkward place to approach. The canals radiating from it created major water obstacles, none of which were fordable, and, apart from the Schipbeek Canal which is more winding than usual, our troops had been forced to cross the Zijkanal, which runs straight from the north-east to join the circular sluice south of the town. Deventer itself was divided by smaller canals and basins which made it a miniature Calais. It could be well appreciated that the defenders, those tough parachutists of Lt-Gen Plocher's 6 Para Div, would seize every opportunity of delaying our advance. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket I, Intelligence Summaries Nos. 280, 281, 6-7 Apr 45).

123. Success in the attack on Deventer was essential, for the start of operation "CANNONSHOT" (the assault across the Ijssel by 1 Cdn Inf Div)[¶] depended upon the early capture of the town. Once Deventer was in our hands Maj-Gen Foster need have no further worry about his right flank. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report: No. 26 as above). Throughout the morning of 10 Apr both 1 C. Scot R. and R. Wpg Rif. sorted themselves out in preparation and at 1230 hours the infantry moved forward. Simultaneously the divisional guns, supplemented by the artillery resources of 1 Cdn Inf Div, opened fire in support of the attack. (Ibid: also 3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report, op cit No. 21). The battalions advanced on either side of the road Schalkhaar - Deventer. On the right 1 C. Scot R. with "B" and "D" Coys forward pressed on with great dash. On leaving the woods near Brinkgreve where the unit had formed up, the troops supported by tanks from 27 Cdn Armd Regt were confronted by a 500-yard stretch of open ground intersected by an anti-tank ditch which skirted the eastern portion of the town. Moreover, enemy machine guns raked the fields with well co-ordinated cross-fire. It had been planned to wait for the obstacle to be breached before employing the flame throwers, but one company commander, Maj E.G. English, sensing the urgency of the situation, called for them at this time. This proved to be the turning point, for the opposition collapsed. Once the ditch was crossed the pace of the advance increased and, by 1500 hours, the Scottish were on their objective lining the railroad track north of the station (9207) and around it. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 C. Scot R., 10 Apr 45).

124. The "Winnipeg" had an equally rough time in the first stage of the battle, as the unit's War Diary explains:

....A and C Coys were to be the two leading coys into the town. 1230 hours arrived and in went the two coys with tks and flame-throwers in sp. The Germans were waiting for no sooner had the tps reached the open ground into the City

¶ See para 187 to this report.

when all hell seemed to break loose. Our tps were met with everything the Jerry had. Our tks retaliated, the Crocodiles swept the area with flame and the mortars and arty blanketed the approach of the town. The rugged riflemen overran the Hun with every step and shortly after the first assault almost 200 PWs were ours. The tks and Crocodiles were halted by an enormous anti-tk ditch which surrounded the city. Precious minutes were lost awaiting a bulldozer to fill in the ditch but the tps dashed on. Finally the first buildings were reached and the tough half of the battle was won. Fresh and eager B and D Coys now entered the fray. Once again the tks and flame-throwers were at their side. Opposition was still met and obstacles were many but all this was overcome in a very few hours.

(W.D., R. Wpg Rif., 10 Apr 45).

125. By 1730 hours R. Wpg Rif were lining the railway south of the station and had well over 200 prisoners. Learning from patrols that the path ahead was clear, Brigadier Gibson ordered his men to push on into the main part of the town. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div, Special Report No. 26 as above). At midnight 10/11 Apr the greater part of Deventer was ours. One item of the account however was still outstanding - the cement works on the river at the south-western corner of the town - and, to get at it, it was necessary to cross the circular sluice into which the two main canals flowed on route to the Ijssel. This crossing was carried out at Snijpening against light small-arms fire by "C" Coy Q.O.R. of C., between 0001 hours and 0115 hours, 11 Apr was safely across. Elements of Regina Rif then passed through at 0300 hours to capture the cement works. By first light on 11 Apr Deventer was completely under the control of 7 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid, also W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, Q.O.R. of C., 10-11 Apr 45). Since noon 9 Apr over 500 prisoners had fallen into Canadian hands in Deventer alone. It became evident, after the flamethrowers went into action, that the majority of the German garrison had had enough. Some, however, attempted to escape westwards by boats, but to no avail, for 1 Cdn Inf Div's artillery, which being in the area, was at Maj-Gen Keebler's disposal, put several discouraging concentrations down on to the escape route, thus devaluating greatly that means to exit from the battle. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Apr 45).

126. The task of thoroughly securing the town was now developed with the able assistance of a well organized Dutch Resistance group. This work continued throughout the morning as patrols scoured the entire brigade area. R. Wpg Rif and 1 C. Scot R. were ordered to patrol northwards astride the railway. Regina Rif, who had captured six 88-mm guns during their clearing operations, covered the southern portion of the town and contacted 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which was working from the south out of Epse (9404).

Needless to say the people of Deventer were overcome with joy at their relief from the Nazi grasp. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Apr 45) But events elsewhere had taken too important a turn towards final victory to allow all the soldiers to spend much time among the people they had liberated. Headquarters 3 Cdn Inf Div ordered Brigadier Gibson to turn the town over to Q.O.R. of C. and to concentrate to the north-west for a short rest, re-equipment and more fighting. By last light 11 Apr the three rifle regiments were in their new areas, R. Wpg Rif at Vrieswijk (9411) an estate on the west side of the main road leading north from Schalkhaar, Regina Rif were on the other side of the road about 1500 yards to the east, and 1 C. Scot R. was astride the road between them but slightly further north. Q.O.R. of C. was left to reap the victor's reward in Deventer. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf and units, also Q.O.R. of C., 11 Apr 45). 7 Cdn Inf Bde was thus able to get its much needed rest, its bivouac area having been well combed by the roaming vehicles of "C" Sqn of the Reconnaissance Regiment, who by the evening of 11 Apr were well ahead to the north and on the left flank (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report, op cit, No. 21).

OPERATIONS OF 8 CDN INF BDE, 7-11 APR 45^{*}

127. Left with the task of reducing Zutphen 8 Cdn Inf Bde had set about the job with considerable enthusiasm and with good result. The assault on the fortress started at 1300 hours 7 Apr. On the right N. Shore R. crossed the moat (between the Berkel stream and the railway) at a point about 250 yards south-east of the railroad track. At 1530 hours, after making good progress, one company was reported consolidating south-east of the track and near the pond (9495) which extends north from the Berkel into the main part of Zutphen. From here a platoon was pushed across the railway line towards the area of the gas works, but to no advantage, for the enemy's increasingly heavy fire drove it back. On the southern flank R. de Chaud experienced similar difficulties in getting forward in a sector which, as the map of Zutphen will show, restricted manoeuvre considerably. The close fight for freedom of action went on all through the last half of the day and even by 2200 hours very little gain had been made. By this time the enemy had seemingly mustered his defensive resources. Not only was his machine-gun fire very deadly, his artillery fire and mortar fire from the west bank of the Ijssel was also heavy. It was evident that before N. Shore R. could break out of the narrow corridor (947955) formed by the pond and the railway track (and presently held by "C" Company) some effort would have to be made west of the track in order that "A" and "B" Coys could work out towards the main river. (W.D., N. Shore R., 7 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, Serials 41, 52, 79).

* Reference maps: as for para 116. Also Appx "E"

128. A similar situation prevailed with R. de Chaud, whose troops were committed to a strenuous programme of house-clearing between the pond and the Berkol Stream. The only exits southwards from this area lay over the small bridge (952952) west of the water tower (953951), but this was well covered by the enemy. In order to pry loose this opposition R. de Chaud sent "C" Coy through N. Shore R's lines with the object of patrolling down the west side of the pond (9495). (Ibid). North Shore R. eventually succeeded in getting some of its Wasps and "A" Coy across the railway track, and by midnight 7/8 Apr the company was firm west of the railway line. (Ibid: Serials 79 and 80). Meanwhile "C" Coy R. de Chaud was probing southward from the North Shore's positions at the other end of the pond (Ibid:)

129. During the night R. de Chaud's patrol penetrated into the main section of the town meeting no opposition and Lt-Col G.O. Taschereau quickly seized the opportunity to exploit by ordering his remaining companies forward. The process of searching the lower half of the town went on well into the next morning but by 1100 hours R. de Chaud was in full control as far west as the Ijssel River and as far south as the "Y" shaped (9494) canal joining the river and the tramway. (Ibid: 8 Apr 45, Serials 3, 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36). N. Shore R. also succeeded in its task. Its operations for the day began at first light with "A" and "C" Coys leading, supported by Crocodiles and some tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. All went well, the companies being leap-frogged through each other until (at about 1300 hours) the northern part of Zutphen was declared clear of enemy. Patrols which were dispatched north towards the Twente Canal met no resistance. (Ibid: serials 96, 102, 107; W.D., N. Shore R., 8 Apr 45). Having completed its job, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was now given the responsibility of holding the area of Zutphen, along the line of the Ijssel river as far south as 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt's holdings. (First Cdn Army Liaison Officers reports, op cit, O81330B). On the following day, however, R. de Chaud was withdrawn from Zutphen and placed in reserve at Warnsveld, leaving N. Shore R. in sole possession of the ancient town. (W.D., R. de Chaud, 9 Apr 45)

THE HIGHLAND BRIGADE TURNS NORTH, 7-10 APR 45^x

130. Having contributed greatly to the success of our arms at Zutphen by compressing the south-eastern defences for several days, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was given new orders on 17 Apr. H.L.I. of C. and Nth N.S. Highrs were to be withdrawn from their present positions. The North Novas moved away first at 1600 hours to a concentration area in the woods (9699-9799) beyond the railway east of

^x Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083 Holland, 1:50,000
Sheets 33 - Zutphen, 27 - Hattem.
G.S.G.S. 4414 Eastern Holland,
1:25,000 Sheets 3803 - Zutphen,
3703 - Bathmen. Also Appx "E"

Huize do Voorst (9796). Later in the day, after their relief by "C" Coy C.H. of O. (MG), H.L.I. of C. followed, accompanied by one squadron from 27 Cdn Armd Regt. S.D. & G. Highrs alone remained on the outskirts of Zutphen, where they continued to harass and box in the southern approaches by another series of advances which carried them up to the tramway running south on the left and past the moated estate (953942) into the south-eastern tip of the town on the right (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Apr 45). The brigade held these positions until mid-day 8 Apr. At that time Nth N.S. Highrs and H.L.I. of C. resumed their journey north to a forward assembly area around Dorterhook, from which Brigadier Rockingham intended to cross the Schipbeek canal south of Bathmen. S.D. & G. Highrs joined the brigade there after handing over their responsibilities to elements of Q.O.R. of C. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 8 Apr 45).

131. Once in the new area Nth N.S. Highrs were given the orders for the crossing of the Schipbeek Canal. The plan was to assault with "C" Coy on the left of the main road and "D" Coy on the right. "D" Coy was to seize the small wood five hundred yards east of the demolished bridge, cross the obstacle and firm up on the high ground just beyond the canal line. "C" Coy would cross at the bridge-site and together with "D" advance to capture Bathmen. (Ibid). The attack on the right went in at 1445 hours, but the difficulties mounted with each passing minute, "D" Coy being completely pinned down. Lt-Col D.F. Forbes then launched his left hand effort, assisted by artillery, direct tank-fire support and smoke laid across the front north of the canal by the battalions mortars. "A" Coy was then sent after "C" Coy along the same axis, but with instructions to swing east and clear out the enemy holding up "D" Coy's advance. At the same time "B" Coy was ordered to follow "C" and patrol the right flank. (Ibid). A stiff struggle for mastery of the bridgehead followed, but by 2300 hours Nth N.S. Highrs were consolidating their objectives around Bathmen and waiting for H.L.I. of C. to come forward to secure the brigade's left flank. (Ibid)

132. By midnight 8/9 Apr H.L.I. of C. had begun to cross the canal and within three hours the entire unit was over. Further strength to the effort was soon to be added, for at 0400 hours the engineers commenced bridging operations which resulted in the structure being completed by 0815 hours. (Ibid) The advance continued throughout the morning against light resistance and at 1550 hours S.D. & G. Highrs followed brigade headquarters across the bridge. S.D. & G. Highrs were not kept idle long: the "Glengarrians" were pushed through H.L.I. of C. and by 1630 hours held a circular position astride the main road from Lettele (0009) in the north to the high knoll (002092) 900 yards south of the village. Extensive patrolling was carried out but little sign of the enemy could be found. (Ibid) During the night S.D. & G. Highrs shifted its line of advance north-westwards and daylight on 10 Apr found the

regiment strung out precariously from Lettel to the region of Daggenvoorde (9811). Meanwhile H.L.I. of C. redispersed its companies along the main road directly north of Bathmen. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 9 Apr 45). The brigade's operations were assisted further by "C" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, whose armoured car patrols provided a running stream of highly valuable information from the flanks and from far ahead. (W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 8-10 Apr 45).

133. Events took a bright and unexpected turn during the next twelve hours, when S.D. & G. Highrs forced their way across the Zijkanal. This enabled Nth N.S. Highrs to move westwards over the bridge across the Zijkanal at a point 2700 yards west of Lettele and thence proceed north to contact the Glengarrians. This contact was made shortly after 1430 hours 10 Apr, and Nth N.S. Highrs continued on up the west side of the Zijkanal with the object of taking the village of Wezepe (9615). Opposition was very moderate all the way; the companies were leap-frogged one through the other, and by last light the North Nevas were within 2500 yards of their objective with elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt well out to the front and flanks. Progress in the darkness was extremely slow but by 0500 hours 11 Apr the battalion was preparing to take over Wezepe. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10-11 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log 10 Apr 45, serials 55, 57, 64; 11 Apr 45, serials 4, 13, 18). The absence of resistance to our advance in this sector indicated that the enemy's line was crumbling fast. If this was the case, then speed in following up was vital. In their position west of the Zijkanal, all three of Brigadier Rockingham's battalions waited for fresh instructions which, as we shall see, would send the brigade rolling on, far past Zwolle and Meppel, to Leeuwarden. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report op cit, No. 32, Operation "PLUNDER" by 9 Cdn Inf Bde).*

* Note The operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div as described in paras 116 - 133 have also been checked with the following First Cdn Army Sitreps and Ops Summaries as contained in AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H, Docket III: March and April 1945, Sitreps and Ops Summaries.

Folio	70	Sitrep	No.	516	072400B	-	081200B
"	69	"	"	517	081200B	-	082400B
"	67	"	"	518	082400B	-	091200B
"	65	"	"	519	091200B	-	092400B
"	60	"	"	520	092400B	-	101200B
"	59	"	"	521	101200B	-	102400B
"	57	"	"	522	102400B	-	111200B

OPERATIONS OF 2 CDN INF DIV, 7-10 APR 45*

134. Meanwhile the instructions issued on 6 Apr by Maj-Gen Matthews for the enlargement of the bridgehead over the Schipbeek Canal had been acted upon with all possible speed. At 0325 hours 7 Apr the first company of S. Sask R. crossed the Canal on the right of Camerons of C; the other sub-units followed and at 0730 hours both battalions were linked in contact. An hour later the engineers began bridging the canal at the Cameron's bridge-site north-east of the village of Zuidloo (0304), and rafting operations were started at Wippert (0705) behind S. Sask R. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 7 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, serials 2418, 2420, 2422, 2426, 2428). During the morning Fus M.R. were ferried over the canal with orders to expand eastwards, but progress was slow due to mines and well directed small arms fire. By 1930 hours however the French-Canadians held a firm line slightly forward and to the right of S. Sask R. from a point on the road 800 yards above Vrijbroeken (0806) eastwards to Fort Jan (090065) thence to the canal north of Bloemendaal (092059). (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, serials 2442, 2446, 2457, 2516). Having completed its allotted task 6 Cdn Inf Bde now held its ground pending the capture of Holten (1010) by 5 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid)

135. Brigadier McGill's task was to capture Holten and his plan called for a three phase attack. First Calg Highrs were to move across the bridge in S. Sask R's area as soon as it was completed, to take up positions astride the main road to Holten some 2000 yards ahead of 6 Cdn Inf Bde's forward positions. Once the Calgaries were firm on their objective, R. de Mais and R.H.C. were to move through. R. de Mais' task was to settle astride the road and railway leading east from the town while R.H.C. took the outskirts of the built-up portion of Holten. In the second phase Calg Highrs was to go across the railroad and into the small woods north of Bekken (0910), leaving R. de Mais to swing east to the main rail and road junction. After clearing the woods Calg Highrs would cover another 1000 yards to the high ground between the two roads leading north from Holten. On the third and last phase R.H.C. would pass to the west of R. de Mais while that battalion turned south to mop up the town and occupy the south and south-eastern approaches to it (Ibid: serial 2456)

136. The bridge at Wippert (0706) on the Schipbeek Canal was ready for use at 0600 hours 8 Apr and the fighting columns of 5 Cdn Inf Bde rolled over it into battle. On the way across Calg Highrs (having picked up its "B" Coy which had been employed on 6 Cdn Inf Bde's left flank for the past day) led off the attack with "C" and "D" Coys forward. By 0900 hours Calg Highrs had the first objective and the other two battalions passed through to the line of the railroad and the western outskirts of the town without

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 3704 - Holten, 3604 - Nijverdal, 3605 - Almelo, 3504 - Lemelerveld, 3404 - Ommen. G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheet 28 - Almelo, 22 - Coevorden, also Appx "E".

interference. Calg Highrs then passed on and sent "A" and "B" Coys on to the high ground, which the artillery and the heavy mortars of Tor Scot R.(M.G.) had been pounding. Behind the westerners, the third phase began without much trouble, and by 2000 hours house clearing operations in Holten were under way. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 8 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 8 Apr 45, serials 2563, 2578, 2624, 2632, 2664, 2666, 2669). It now remained for 4 Cdn Inf Bde to pass through with the Reconnaissance Regiment, in preparation for which task, Brigadier Cabeldu had his formation concentrated halfway between the bridge in S. Sask R's area and Laren. (Ibid: 2623, also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 8 Apr 45)

137. Despite the fact that the main battle was well ahead, 6 Cdn Inf Bde had not remained totally idle. During the past day Fus M.R. had patrolled eastwards to find Markelo (1404) clear, S. Sask R. had swung to the north-west flanking 5 Cdn Inf Bde to consolidate the high ground north of Pieriksmars (0509), while Camerons of C. cleared the woods bordering the Oude Schipbeek stream to their front and patrolled westwards to contact 9 Cdn Inf Bde in the region of Bathmen. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 8 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 8 Apr 45, serials 2637, 2643, 2644, 2653, 2654, 2663, 2879, 2889). The intention for 9 Apr was to push 8 Cdn Recce Regt out along two axes ahead of two mobile columns of 4 Cdn Inf Bde with the object of cutting the road Raalte (0022) - Nijverdal (1319). Brigadier Allard's battalions would regroup and be prepared to clear the wooded areas north of Holten. 5 Cdn Inf Bde was to remain behind to sweep along the axis Holten - Markelo and to contact 1 Pol Armd Div, which had just made its appearance on the battlefield. In addition to these plans 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (less the two squadrons presently employed by 2 Cdn Corps and 3 Cdn Inf Div along the IJssel river further to the south-west was to commence its long range patrol programme along the axis Raalte - Zwolle. (Ibid: serial 2870)

138. The bright sunny morning of 9 Apr saw 4 Cdn Inf Bde's battle groups cross the Schipbeek Canal and pass into concentration. They did not have long to wait. At 0800 hours G.O.C. 2 Cdn Inf Div gave the "go ahead" signal to Brigadier Cabeldu and half an hour later, as word came from 8 Cdn Recce Regt that it had "bumped" the enemy some two miles ahead near Nieuwheten (0514), both columns crossed the start-line - Essex Scot . . . going through S. Sask R. and R.H.L.I. through 5 Cdn Inf Bde north of Holten. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 9 Apr 45). Progress varied, slower on the left than the right, but resistance was not heavy. By midday R.H.L.I., after spending some time clearing the woods south-east of Nieuwheten (0514), had begun to break away, and the brigade commander ordered Lt-Col Arrel to drive on as fast as possible, by-passing all opposition. R.H.L.I. pressed on; R. Regt C. was brought forward to curl up around Nieuwheten in order to provide a pivoting base for the brigade. To the west Essex Scot . . . was then given orders to disengage and swing east to follow R.H.L.I. (Ibid). The advance continued against scattered resistance, many prisoners were collected and shortly after dark R.H.L.I. was consolidated north-east

of Haarle (0718). Essex Scot . had travelled fast to cut the road Raalte - Nijverdal and the railway, and R. Regt C. had also swerved eastwards to firm up on the south-western side of the wooded heights of Haarler Berg (0917 - 0918). (Ibid)

139. In the meantime 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes had been equally busy. Early that day Brigadier Megill had put his three battalions to work; R.H.C. pushed out to the south of Holten to sweep the woods bordering the road Holten - Markelo, simultaneously Calg Highrs drove north to clear the cover north of Holten, while R. de Mais supported by "A" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt thrust east towards Rijssen (1713). (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Apr 45). The capture of Rijssen proved no problem; R. de Mais sailed into the town and were firm there by 1600 hours. Lt-Col J. Bibeau was then instructed to take his unit on to the small industrial town of Nijverdal. After an uneventful journey the town was entered without interference and the French-Canadian infantrymen consolidated. By that time R.H.C., having completed its allotted task in the woods, had moved up to settle in Rijssen. Calg Highrs remained at Holten. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Div and units, 9 Apr 45)

140. Part of the 6 Cdn Inf Bde's original intention had been to follow up 4 Bde and clear the many small pockets of enemy it had by-passed; pending a suitable time to do this, Brigadier Allard's battalions were ordered to proceed to a forward concentration area, mopping up en route. Thus to Fus M.R. fell the task of clearing the forest lands of the Holter Berg (0914). Lt-Col J.A. Dextraze dispatched his carrier platoon to do this and mounted his rifle companies on T.C.Vs. to follow up. The objective, centring on the spot-height ((10111637) (75.3 metres)) at the northern end of the heights, was occupied by last light with the capture of twenty-four prisoners. (W.D., Fus M.R., 9 Apr 45). Neither of the other units in 6 Bde had much to do. During the early evening of 9 Apr Camerons of C. moved to concentrate north of Nieuwheten before relieving Essex Scot W. of 4 Bde, while S. Sask R. also concentrated in the woods between Holten and Nieuwheten to await developments. (W.Ds., S. Sask R., Camerons of C., 9 Apr 45)

141. In the early hours of 10 Apr,^{*} Camerons of C. took over the Essex Scot positions west of Nijverdal; this allowed Lt-Col Pangman's men to exploit further north, and by 0600 hours the Essex were firm on the Hellendoornsche feature (1024 - 1025) south-west of Hellendoorn (1222). At the same time R. Regt C. moved up to the northernmost part of the feature, which on occupation was discovered to be one of the largest "V" weapon launching sites ever seen. The third unit, R.H.L.I., remained near Haarle (0718) and patrolled northward

* See Appx "F".

beyond the road Raalte - Nijverdal. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serials 3102, 3108, 3109, 3116, 3149). Meanwhile on the right 5 Cdn Inf Bde had carried out a most successful advance. In quick order R.H.C. passed through R. de Mais at 0700 hours, entered Hellendoorn, and reached the Overijsselsch Canal west of Hankate (1227). Here the Black Watch did not waste time; Lt-Col S.W. Thompson, D.S.O., M.C., passed three rifle companies over the rubble of the demolished bridge and went on to take the village of Lemele (1029). Behind R.H.C., while Dutch civilians were organized to operate a light ferry service for the battalion's heavier weapons and the engineers prepared to erect a class 40 bridge over the canal, Calg Highrs advanced to concentrate south of the obstacle and west of the main road to Hankate (1227) (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45).

142. Assisted by members of the Dutch underground, the engineers began work on the bridge at Hankate (1227), guaranteeing to have the supporting tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt over within a few hours. While this work progressed, the Black Watch pressed on to the next barrier, the Regge River, a tributary of the Vecht. "B" Coy led the way up the main road but on arrival at the river found the bridge (1033) in the usual state of demolition. While the carrier platoon probed the wooded areas of Achterveld (0735 - 0835) on the left, "B" Coy scrambled across the river at the bridge-site, and was soon joined by the other sub-units which crossed by a footbridge situated east of the road and carelessly overlooked by the German demolition parties. In addition, another undamaged bridge was found south-east of Archem (1131), making it possible for the battalion's vehicles and the forward elements of 8 Cdn Recce Regt to move up. Brigadier McGill then ordered R. de Mais to get on from Nijverdal, and directed Calg Highrs to follow the route used by the Black Watch's vehicles. By 1840 hours Calg Highrs were consolidating in the village of Bestmen (1134) and R. de Mais took over the task of securing the right flank, establishing itself about Eerde (1233). (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serials 3223, 3251, 3279, 3286, 3294). The remarkable progress made by 5 Cdn Inf Bde was brought to a halt as the day ended however, for the enemy decided to defend Ommen (1036), at least for a time. "C" Coy R.H.C. was heavily engaged by small arms fire on the approach to the railway line south of Ommen, and the brigade commander, fully appreciating the defensive value of the ground ahead, the danger of extended lines of communication, and the bridging difficulties as well as the fact that the objective ahead of him called for a set-piece attack halted for the night. His three battalions therefore held their ground and patrolled. (Ibid)

143. While 5 Cdn Inf Bde had been carrying out its spectacular advance towards Ommen, 4 Bde had sent R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot forward at 1400 hours with the object of seizing the high ground north of the Overijsselsch Canal and left of the main road Lemele - Ommen. This advance was quite uneventful. By 1900 hours both R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot were firm in their allotted areas and R. Regt C. had come up to settle west of (and around) Lemele astride 5 Cdn Inf Bde's line of communications which was also the main divisional axis.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serials 3228, 3231, 3238, 3239, 3242, 3247). 6 Cdn Inf Bde, having completed the clearing of its areas, had stood by all day awaiting fresh instructions. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Apr 45).

144. At 2100 hours 10 Apr Maj-Gen Matthews issued his plans for the next day's work. 2 Cdn Inf Div was to continue the pressure on Ommen with 5 and 4 Cdn Inf Bdes. 6 Bde was to form itself into a battle group and start off on a long journey around the right flank through the area through which 1 Pol Armd Div was advancing to the north. The brigade concentration was to be made at Gramsbergen (2846), whence a thrust was to be launched westwards by Camerons of C. led by a squadron of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) to establish a firm base at Balkbrug (0946), the object being to cut off the enemy facing 4 and 5 Cdn Inf Bdes. S. Sask R. was to follow up and position itself south of Balkbrug with the task of dealing with Ommen from the rear. Fus M.R. were to settle on the firm base prepared to support either S. Sask R. or drive north to Groningen. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serial 3299). Just before midnight 10/11 Apr, Brigadier Allard's brigade group started to roll and, whatever course events might take, 6 Cdn Inf Bde's part appeared sure of having significant consequence. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Apr 45)

145. To the men of the reconnaissance and armoured car regiments the past few days had been days of fulfilment. As the enemy loosened up ahead of our infantry, so the opportunity had arisen to ply their trade "according to the book". This was specially the case with Canada's senior cavalry regiment, The Royal Canadian Dragoons (1 Cdn Armd C. Regt), which had long been bursting with eagerness to do a real "armoured car job". In Italy this regiment had fought in many strange roles, a necessary yet bitter experience for men who had been trained for the classic cavalry task - the mad dash into the enemy's territory to heighten the confusion of the break-through. Of the prospects which arose when the unit went under Lt-Gen Simond's command, the regimental historian wrote with great enthusiasm:

It was felt that now or never The Royal Canadian Dragoons would establish their reputation as the truly great Regiment they knew themselves to be and to a man the Regiment hoped and prayed that here at last after the bitter memories of the Liri, Gothic Line, Marrechia, Savio and all the other rivers and canals where they had fought and crossed, the golden opportunity of a proper armoured car role would present itself. Subsequent events proved that such indeed was to be the case...

(The Royal Canadian Dragoons, 1939-45, p. 156)

146. For the Dragoons therefore 9 Apr was an historic day. On that day, the regiment went into its first real action in north-west Europe. Leaving "A" Sqn in a holding role east of Doesburg, "C" and "D" Sqns flung themselves

into the fifty-mile square which had been a paratroop training ground of the German Air Force. Here lurked many remnants of the once proud parachute formations, and during the first day the Dragoons made their presence felt. By nightfall Okenbroek (0312) had been passed, the village of Heten (0116) was within small arms range and 91 prisoners had been taken. **These prisoners came from an assortment of rapidly deteriorating parachute, engineer, flak and training units at present under command of 88 Corps: On the following day exploitation commenced along the route Raalte - Zwolle, with "B" and "C" Sqn up. Raalte was tapped and contained from the east and by midnight 10/11 Apr the armoured cars were maintaining a flank screen to the south-west of 2 Cdn Inf Div from the railway north of Haarle (0718) past Luttenberg (0623) to Lemelerveld (0428). (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 9 - 10 Apr 45; First Cdn Army Int Summaries Nos 2837, 9 Apr 45; 284, 10 Apr 45)**

147. 8 Cdn Recce Regt, commanded by Lt-Col B.M. Alway, had likewise been operating widely dispersed and well to the fore, yet always very closely co-ordinated with the movements of the main thrust. One squadron worked the left flank in contact with 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, while a second squadron, besides spearheading the advancing infantry, covered the right flank, where contact was later established with 1 Pol Armd Div. By the evening of 10 Apr the "reccemen" were roaming freely, and it appeared that a complete collapse of the enemy's line was imminent. As if to encourage this belief, the squadrons were issued with fresh maps that night. The sequence of the maps alone was enough to convey a thrilling message, for they covered many miles to the north, straight through to the sea. (W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 9-10 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, serials 2909, 2916, 2929, 2983, 3015, 3027, 2040, 3056; 10 Apr 45, serials 3131, 3143, 3177, 3183, 3219, 3221, 3222, 3225, 3253, 3254)*

148. However, with the attacking forces situated as they were at this time, it provided an item of speculation as to who might reach the coast first, for by this time 4 Cdn Armd Div had crossed the Ems River at Meppen and was now some sixty miles to the north-east. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 10-11 Apr 45)

THE CROSSING OF THE EMS RIVER BY 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 7-10 APR 45*

149. The crossing of a water obstacle is never the choicest of operations. Even under favourable conditions of

* War Diary sources are not adequate. It is necessary to follow this Operations Log to get the full picture of Reconnaissance Operations.

** Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets L1 - Emden, L2 - Wilhelmshaven, M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg, N1 - Almelo, N2 - Osnabruck.
G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany, Sheets 3309 - Meppen, 3209 - Haren, 3210 - Kl. Berssen, 3109 - Lathen, 3110 - Wahn, 3111 - Sogel, 3112 - Werlte, also Appx "D".

ground, weather, and amount of resistance, the task involves careful preparation to meet the countless difficulties which invariably arise. The attack by 4 Cdn Armd Bde across the Ems River proved to be no exception. On the morning of 7 Apr Brigadier Moncel set about the clearance of the western half of Meppen with A. & S.H. of C. in order to secure the left bank of the River. Opposition at first was not heavy, but as the Argyles closed up to the river the enemy on the east bank became very active and engaged our troops with 20-mm gun fire. During the afternoon, however, the Germans received some extremely heavy punishment as thirty-two Typhoons appeared (at 1430 hours) and, although the aircraft ran into a good deal of light anti-aircraft fire, each dived repeatedly to rocket and strafe the offending positions. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, A. & S.H. of C., 7 Apr 45)

150. While these activities progressed an even rougher treatment of the enemy was being planned at divisional headquarters. There Brigadier Moncel received from Maj-Gen Vokes the orders for the brigade to assault across the Ems at Meppen, and then break out and advance along a new centre line Meppen - Sogel (8571) - Friesoythe (0692) - Oldenburg. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 7 Apr 45). The Argyles were to secure the bridgehead. The battalion plan was to attack on a front of two companies, supported by the fire of artillery and tanks. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 7 Apr 45). When the bridgehead had been established, Lake Sup R. (Mot) would lead the brigade through, followed by the Linc & Welld R. embussed, then Brigade headquarters (protected by a squadron of armoured cars), 12 Cdn Lt Fd Amb, 22 and 21 Cdn Armd Regts, and 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 8 Apr 45). The decision to advance to the east instead of to the north made a complete regrouping necessary. The full weight of the Canadian armour was to be flung across the Ems into the North German plain. The Coevorden sector was to change hands and become another firm base for the advance of 1 Pol Armd Div. The Poles were at the time concentrating further to the south-west near Geor. (Ibid).

151. The forthcoming attack was obviously going to demand speedy execution in the initial stage and heavy support in its exploitation. It therefore became most imperative that all available forces be marshalled close at hand to reinforce the first signs of success. To facilitate the regrouping, a Belgian S.A.S. Regiment had been placed under Maj-Gen Vokes' command. He now used it, supported by a battery of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, to take over the armoured brigade's positions at Coevorden, thus freeing those elements of A. & S.H. of C. and Lake Sup R. (Mot) which had been holding that area. There were many staff and technical problems to be settled before the plan of operations could be put into effect, and the units had to be concentrated and made ready for battle. The movement along the centre line which passed through the hamlets of Neuenhaus (4733) - Esche (4738) Gr.* Ringe (4544) - Twist (5449) - Ruhle (6752) - to hastily selected concentration areas, without the advantage of previous reconnaissance, was made more difficult by the state of the roads. The brigade's

* Gr. (Gross or Grosse) i.e., Great.

armoured column (in order 21, 22, 28 Cdn Armd Regts) began to move up at 1500 hours and the armour rolled slowly northward without mishap until early evening, but by that time the weight of traffic (represented by 21 Cdn Armd Regt leading the column and the Engineer and Service Corps lorries full of bridging equipment) had severely damaged the roads. This was unfortunate, especially for Lake Sup R. (Mot) which, having been previously slated to trail the column into Meppen, was suddenly ordered to leave its area at Emlichheim (4046) and move east to relieve A. & S.H. of C. (presently supported by "A" Sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt). The Argyles were to be pulled back to prepare for the attack across the river. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units and A. & S.H. of C., 7 Apr 45)

152. The C.O., Lake Sup R. (Mot), Lt-Col R.A. Keane, led his men about half way to Meppen, where the battalion was forced to stop. The brigade diarist explained the situation in these words:

... The cobble stone rd which suffered heavily from the passage of the first armd regt and the by bridging lorries finally at about 2000 hrs gave up the ghost completely and the cobble stones disappeared into the peat bog and in places the rd ceased to exist. Mov came to a complete halt and our position was not enviable.

The Lake Sup R (Mot) were required urgently in the area MEPPEN and it was of importance that they should get through. Finally a diversion previously used by the A. & S.H. of C. and one coy of the Lake Sup R. (Mot) was cleared of some suspected bazooka opposition and in complete darkness over sandy trails and a class nine br the Lake Sup R. (Mot) finally worked themselves into the outskirts of MEPPEN.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde.,
7 Apr 45)

Meppen was reached at about 0400 hours 8 Apr; once there "B" and "C" Coys relieved A. & S.H. of C. while "A" Coy firmed up at Kl. Fullen (6554) with elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt. (W.D.; Lake Sup R. (Mot), 7 Apr 45)

153. By far the most strenuous task of the moment was that of getting the remaining armour and Linc & Welld R. forward. As the Brigade diary explains further,

This still left half of the 22 Cdn Armd Regt, all of the 28 Cdn Armd Regt, all of the Linc & Welld R. and all of the Echs stranded along the rd which for all practical purposes had ceased to exist.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde.,
7 Apr 45)

Under these adverse conditions the dispositions of 4 Cdn Armd Bde at midnight 7/8 Apr were somewhat scattered. However by 0600 hours 7 Apr the situation showed marked improvement, although part of the armour was still not in the position required for the coming attack. Forward in Meppen itself were "B" and "C" Coys of the motor battalion supported by "A" Sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt. Preparing for the assault in Kl. Fullen

were A. & S.H. of C. together with "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) and elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt. The remainder of the brigade was more dispersed according to the peculiar conditions of terrain in that area. 21 Cdn Armd Regt was concentrated on the north-western outskirts of the woods north of Meppen, while the Grenadiers were situated north of Gr. Fullen (6556). The last three squadrons of 28 Cdn Armd Regt were still far back around the hamlet of Twist where the roads had become impassable to the heavy Shermans. Farther back still along the road from Neuenhaus Linc & Welld R. (now under Brigadier Moncel's command) was also delayed by the condition of the route, and it was to be some hours before this regiment reached its concentration area outside Meppen. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, Linc & Welld R. and A. & S.H. of C., 7-8 Apr 45, AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/H, Docket I: Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, serials 73, 87; 8 Apr 45, serials 1, 3, 9). In immediate support of the brigade was 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) which had moved up to the region of Ruhle (6652) where it deployed its guns and awaited the time of assault. (W.D., 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.), 7 Apr 45).

154. As the tail of the armour extricated itself from the peat bogs west of Meppen, A. & S.H. of C. had completed preparations for their assault. The boats were ready. "C" and "A" Coys were to lead the way across the river on the left and right respectively; "C" Coy was to secure the left flank from the river to the railway about Altmepperhof (9656); "A" Coy was to seize the area of the crossroads (703558). On the successful completion of this phase, "D" Coy would pass through "C" on the left to consolidate astride the road south of An der Radde (7056), while "B" Coy would swing south from "A" Coy's holding to the built-up position of Meppen north of An der Hutte (7055). Thereafter "A" Coy was to go through "B", cross the footbridge over the Dortmund - Ems canal just south of its Y-shaped junction (7055) with the Ems River, and swing in to capture the southern end of the town. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 7 Apr 45)

155. Despite some delay caused by one company which lost its way, the Argyles succeeded in crossing the small river at 0600 hours 8 Apr. Thereafter the operation progressed rapidly, strictly according to the plan, and luckily without casualties. By 0700 hours the two leading companies were established on the east side and two hours later the whole battalion was on the way to its final objectives, all of which were secured without difficulty or casualties and cleared by mid-afternoon (Ibid). In the words of the divisional diarist:

Opposition broke quickly and clearing proceeded with little difficulty. PW provided the answer to this almost bloodless crossing. NO reputable unit was available to def the town. Two days ago, Lt-Col Schieber, who comd the recruiting depot in the dist, was deputized to assemble a force from such stragglers as he could lay hand to. The result, one weak Bn which compounded some 2 Cm guns of 276 Flak Bn, could NOT be said to constitute a formidable force.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div,
8 Apr 45)

Three 20-mm guns had been knocked out and 47 prisoners captured so far. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, and A. & S.H. of C., 8 Apr 45). With the consolidation of Meppen well under way, the engineers of 9 Cdn Fd Sqn with a troop of 8 Cdn Fd Sqn and 40 odd pioneers worked on the construction of a bridge. This project commenced at about 1130 hours and the 215-foot length of Bailey pontoon bridge was opened to traffic shortly after 1930 hours, much earlier than had been expected. It was now time for the main body of the armoured brigade to cross the Ems River and break out to the north. Brigadier Moncel planned to have Lake Sup R. (Mot) lead off to feel out the route towards Sogel (8571) by following the road and railway eastwards from Meppen to the crossroads south of Lohe (7857). At that point Lt-Col Keane's men were to turn north, followed by an armoured column. (Ibid).

156. Since early that morning Lake Sup R. (Mot) had been busy. At 0700 hours "A" Coy had journeyed north to Haren (6666), where another demolished bridge littered the river banks, and here a short skirmish which resulted in two casualties took place. Shortly after noon however this company was brought back to Meppen, where orders were given for the continuation of the advance. The motor battalion was to follow the road Lohe (7857) - Kl. Berssen (8163) - Sogel (8571) with "B" Coy leading. By this time an energetic platoon of the Superiors had ferried itself across the river and was already probing the eastern exits from Meppen. (Ibid). West of the river, the brigade column had formed up and was waiting for the signal to cross and begin its advance. The order of march called for Linc & Welld R. (embussed) to follow Lake Sup R. (Mot), followed in turn by Brigade Headquarters (and the units shown in para 150). 28 Cdn Armd Regt was to remain in Meppen to go eventually under command 10 Cdn Inf Bde, when that formation should reach the east bank of the Ems River. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units; and Linc & Welld R., 8 Apr 45)

157. At 2030 hours the main body of Lake Sup R. (Mot) crossed the river and started out towards Kl. Berssen. It met resistance on the route, whereupon the Officer Commanding asked permission to switch the weight of his attack along another more northerly route through Lathen (7174) and Tinnen (7267). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 8 and 9 Apr 45). The brigade commander quickly consented to this change in plan, for he had been instructed to break out with all possible speed. This decision was well justified. A break-through was effected and the motor battalion made excellent progress. At 0315 hours 9 Apr Linc & Welld Regt crossed the bridge in the wake of the Lake Superiors. The brigade war diary describes the events which followed thus:-

At first it the tail of the Linc & Welld Regt was just clearing the obstacle and Bde H.Q. was to follow. The Coy of Lake Sup R. (Mot) working along the old CL had been withdrawn and it was decided to push B Sqn of 18 Cdn Armd Car Regt out along that axis and inf sp was arranged for them through the A & S H of C.

From a staff standpoint there then followed one of the most satisfactory operations imaginable. Comms were excellent. An adequate supply of LOs was available and it was relatively easy to effect changes in the course of the battle and to exercise control. By 0645 hrs leading elements of the Lake Sup R. (Mot) were clearing the town of Lathen and immediately on the completion of this they had orders to push NORTH towards the KUSTEN KANAAL and east towards SOGEL.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde,
9 Apr 45).

To Lt-Col Keane's "B" and "C" Coys, Lathen yielded about 100 prisoners, all very surprised at the sudden appearance of our troops. A further short, sharp attack on the railway station on the north side of the town by "A" Coy resulted in the capture of 59 more prisoners. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 9 Apr 45)

158. North of the Lathen station the enemy engaged our troops heavily and no further advance was possible in that direction, but to the east the Superiors carried everything before them. Sogel was cleared by "C" Coy, which pushed on to Werpeloh (8475) then to the edge of Borger (8679), where again the enemy reacted with considerable violence and forced the Canadian infantry to withdraw slightly. By this time Linc & Welld R. had taken over temporary duty in Lathen and the rest of Lt-Col Keane's battalion was firmed up around Sogel with elements of 22 Cdn Armd Regt. "B" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, which had remained on the original centre line (see para 156) to tap the opposition, had also found the going anything but easy, and it too was forced to explore other side-routes in order to get ahead. Aply assisted by a small force of A. & S.H. of C., the armoured cars managed to gain ground slowly and at 1300 hours had contacted the 30 Brit Corps' left flank formation (43 (W.) Inf Div) south of Lohe. At this stage, however, the infantry returned to Meppen, leaving the armoured cars to continue alone. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde & units; A. & S.H. of C., Linc & Welld R., 18 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Apr 45)

159. The momentum of the advance was kept up, and by evening 4 Cdn Armd Bde had taken places twenty-five miles away from the starting point which it had left eighteen hours before. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Apr 45). As the leading troops made ground, Brigadier Moncel had brought forward more of his men and by last light held a strong fortress-like position covering the Ems bridgehead. Sogel was held by 21 Cdn Armd Regt, together with the Linc & Welld Regt and a company of the motor battalion. Another motor company held Werpeloh, to which they had retired after being driven back from Borger (two miles to the north) by bazooka and small-arms fire. Far on the left "A" Coy had resumed its advance north along the railway through Beckusen (7382). Lathen on the Ems was garrisoned by the remainder of 22 Cdn Armd Regt, and the Argyles were still concentrating at Meppen. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H, Docket 1: Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, and W.D., G.S., 2 Cdn Coys, April 1945, Appx 3, Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serial 7). In addition, the armoured car squadron which had been approaching Sogel from

the south, had, in spite of road blocks, mines and craters, reached Sogel to report the existence of a good class 40 bridge south of the town. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Apr 45)

160. Inspired by the rapid progress of the first few hours, Brigadier Moncel contemplated pressing on to Werlte (9672), Lorup (9380) and Breddenburg (9184), but it was apparent that his troops were much too tired; orders were therefore given to halt the advance and dig in while artillery harassing fire tasks were laid on to soften up the enemy's positions ahead. (Ibid). After a quiet night, at 0600 hours 10 Apr Linc & Welld R. commenced the move towards Werlte against moderate opposition and by 0945 hours Lt-Col . . . Coleman had his men (less the company garrisoning Sogel) deployed outside the village ready to assault. "B" Coy led the way but was soon pinned down and "A" Coy was committed to carry out a right hook. Opposition was still heavy, but by 1335 hours the three companies of Linc & Welld R. had cleared the southern half of the village. Fresh instructions were then received to the effect that Linc & Welld R. was not to go beyond Werlte, for at this particular stage neither of the routes from Sogel to Werlte nor from Sogel to Werpeloh (8475) was secure. (Ibid).

161. Evidence of the enemy's determination was plentiful; already that morning Sogel had been counter-attacked by members of 31 Para Bn who fell upon the garrison (comprising elements of Linc & Welld R., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 8 Cdn Fd Sqn and 12 Cdn Fd Amb), causing numerous casualties. It was only after an all out effort by these units that the place was clear. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde & units, 12 Cdn Fd Ambulance, 8 Cdn Fd Sqn, 10 Apr 45). To the medical men, especially, it was by far the most exciting event in their unit's history, as their diary shows

They [the enemy] pressed an attack of approx 30 men right down the street on which we were situated. Our men had to take up arms. Some of the enemy were killed within 10 yds of the ADS entrance. Naturally a great deal of excitement ensued. After about one hour a troop of tanks arrived who blasted houses from which enemy were sniping. When the attackers were finally wiped out we realized that we had been holding a small portion of the front. If we had not taken up arms we would have been shot up and the enemy would have gained access to the main street of the town. We had 5 of our personnel wounded, one seriously. Personnel of an Engineer and an RCASC unit who had been over-run in the early dawn were killed or wounded. All ranks of the unit did very well. ADS personnel continued working even with small arms fire coming through the windows. S.Bs. were working under direct fire. Two were wounded.

(W.D., 12 Cdn Fd Amb,
11 Apr 45)

162. In order to prevent any further local interference with our plans, it was decided to firm up along the two axes, Sogel - Werlte and Sogel - Werpeloh. To assist in this task, two companies of A. & S.H. of C. began the journey eastwards from Meppen in Kangaroos. At the same time 22 Cdn Armd Regt occupied Oostenwalde (8971), where the tanks awaited preparatory to the continuation of the advance on Lorup (9381). The brigade's position was strengthened further by the arrival of "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot), which had been operating far on the left flank (area Lathen - Beckusen). During the afternoon "B" Sqn of the armoured car Regiment probed the open right flank and at 1700 hours an Argyle company reported to each of 21 and 22 Cdn Armd Regts. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, A. & S.H. of C., 10 Apr 45). Ahead of 4 Cdn Armd Bde and all across the present front 84 Gp R.A.F. took full advantage of the good weather. With 72 fighter bombers aided by another ten in a tactical reconnaissance role, the group blasted away freely at every sign of enemy movement in the path of the advance. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Apr 45)

136. During the night 10/11 Apr the two armoured regiments used their guns to great effect on the woods in the triangle Sogel - Werlte - Lorup and on the villages and farms nearby, and when dawn came the brigade was ready to resume its advance on Borger. Other immediate tasks were the clearance of the woods within the triangle by Lake Sup R. (Mot) and the mopping up of Werlte by Linc & Welld R. By 0830 hours all three operations were under way, the capture of Borger being allotted to 21 Cdn Armd Regt. (Ibid)

164. While the armoured brigade was scoring conspicuous success in its dash to the north-east, 10 Cdn Inf Bde had carried on its private war with the stubborn garrison of Wierden.* Supported by the guns of 15 Cdn Fd Regt, Alq R. had fought a series of engagements with the stubborn defenders from 5 Apr on, without taking the place. This sore of enemy resistance was a constant menace to the main route north over the Twente Canal west of Delden, and many vehicles were shot up and their drivers killed or wounded when they were many miles behind the "front":

Because of infiltration east of the subsidiary canal and the enemy fire directed at the area west of Delden, the main supply route which crossed the Twente Canal just west of this town was actually in the front line. L. of C. traffic which poured over the bridge throughout the night was frequently sniped at and occasionally mortared or shelled. The down route through Delden was not well marked and from time to time vehicles instead of turning west along the Goor road until stopped by fire at the subsidiary canal. Short of this canal was a graveyard of vehicles which had been shot up by the enemy from the west bank.

(R.A. Spencer, History of the Canadian Field Regiment, p. 243)

* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheet 28 - Almelo. Also Appx "D".

165. This unhappy situation along our lines of communication only ended when Alq R. patrols worked their way into the village on 9 Apr, to find it empty. This easy entry, however, was no gauge of what had gone before. Several well supported attempts had been made by the Algonquins, some with serious loss. Only the day before a strong infantry patrol had penetrated as far as the church in Wierden but had been driven back by heavy small arms and 20-mm fire. The first cue for a general loosening up of resistance on this lengthy flank came late on 8 Apr, when 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt entered Goor at the base of the flank west of Delden. Here civilians reported a hasty exodus by the enemy towards the north. The enemy had evidently only held Wierden as long as it acted as a covering position for his withdrawal; when the strong point had served its purpose, the Germans literally vanished, and quick contact was made with 2 Cdn Inf Div at Rijssen (1713), thus solidifying the front. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde & Alq R., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 8-9 Apr 45; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945, Appx 81: Ops Log serial 43; 2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, serials 25 and 36). 10 Cdn Inf Bde, though at present consisting only of the Algonquins and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, was now available to move to the north-east to Meppen with the rest of the division. (Ibid)

166. With the end of the German resistance at Wierden, the Shermans of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, the guns of 15 Cdn Fd Regt, and the T.C.Vs. carrying the Algonquins rolled away to the north-east. The new role of the brigade necessitated some regrouping. A. & S.H. of C. returned once more under command, and additional armour was added by placing 28 Cdn Armd Regt under command of the infantry brigade. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, entry 9 and 10 April 1945, and Appx 26 and 27). The task set for 10 Cdn Inf Bde was to relieve the squadron of 22 Cdn Armd Regt and the motor company in Lathen, "then proceed on and capture in succession, Papenburg and Leer". The armoured reconnaissance unit and A. & S.H. of C. were to remain at Meppen pending developments. (W.Ds., 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 9 Apr 45, W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945, Appx 81: Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, serial 80)

167. As has been noted, "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) had first felt its way north from Lathen along the axis of the road and railway against fair opposition. This had decreased, and when Alq R. and elements of 28 Cdn Armd Regt (under Lt-Col R.A. Bradburn) took over the responsibility on the left flank, it was with the intention of crossing the Kusten Canal in that area. But when the troops reached the obstacle, the bridges were found to be demolished and well covered by small arms fire from the north bank. Reconnaissance of the possible crossing sites continued until shortly after noon, when Maj-Gen Vokes ordered Brigadier Jefferson to turn over his present positions to 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt and to reconnoitre in force to the east towards Neuborger (8184), Borgerwald (8586) and Breddenburg. By 1800 hours the Algonquins' vanguard company, supported by tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt, reported the community of Neuborger clear. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Apr 45). There followed the dispatch of a second company-squadron group to Borgerwald which was also found unoccupied at 0400 hours 11 Apr. From Borgerwald patrols were to be sent south to Borger itself, where it was hoped that 10 Cdn Inf Bde

and Brigadier Moncel's formation would make contact. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10-11 Apr 45). Maj-Gen Vokes' intention was to press his advance on to the new main objective, Oldenburg, along the axis Friesoythe - Bad Zwischenahn, by capturing Lindern (0373), Vrees (0377) and Lorup as quickly as possible. (First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports op cit, 101600). The tasks of capturing Leer and Papenburg had been passed to 1 Pol Armd Div. (Ibid)

1 POL ARMD DIV ENTERS THE BATTLE, 8-11 APR 45*

168. By the morning of 11 Apr the situation on the extended flank of 4 Cdn Armd Div had undergone a considerable change, for 1 Pol Armd Div had been fully committed on 10 Apr, with orders to advance north on the axis Coevorden - Emmen - Nieuwe Schans (6409). The Poles were to build a class 40 bridge at Haren (6666) (north of Meppen) and drive all out for Leer (8118) and Papenburg (7798), the original objectives of 4 Cdn Armd Div. (Ibid, Maj-Gen Maczek's famous fighters had first appeared on the scene on 8 Apr, when the division began its concentration in 2 Cdn Corps' area, taking over the line of the Twente Canal opposite Goor (2104) from a detachment of 6 Cdn Armd Regt. On 9 Apr the Poles, then fully concentrated around the region of Goor - Borculo (1691), sent their motor battalion to Coevorden, where the S.A.S. Regiment holding that area came under command. The task allotted to the division at that time was for 1 Pol Inf Bn Gp to advance north from the Twente and contact 2 Cdn Inf Div at Rijssen, while 8 Pol Inf Bn Gp moved up on the left to contact 4 Cdn Armd Div's 10 Cdn Inf Bde at wierden, the capture and security of both these places being in high priority if still held by the enemy. 9 Pol Inf Bn was to remain in Goor and the Polish Armour was to concentrate near Markelo. As we have already noted, the capture of these places by the Polish troops proved to be unnecessary, (see paras 137 - 138 to this report) and the division pressed on to the north. (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, serials 90, 91, 106, 108)

169. While the main body of the division moved up, the Polish motor battalion (with the S.A.S.) maintained contact north of Coevorden and carried out a rapid dash to the north-west which resulted in the bridge over the small canal south of Oosterhesselen (3162) being seized intact. Throughout the early morning of 10 Apr the Polish armour and infantry crept steadily forward and by midday, as 8 Pol Inf Bn headed north to occupy Hardenberg, 9 Pol Inf Bn took over left flank protection from "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt to hold the line Den Ham (1530) - Daarle (1827) - Hooge-Hexel (2023) - Het Loo (2119). At the same time 10 Pol Armd Recce Regt was advancing north-west astride the road Coevorden - Dalen (3356) - Wezup (3168) - Westerbork (2473), while the motor battalion pushed north-east to capture another good bridge at Holsloot (3759). (Ibid: 10 Apr, serials 21, 31, 44, 53)

170. During the afternoon of 10 Apr the pace of the operation increased and by nightfall the Pol Armd Recce Regt had swept forward to the area of Westerbork with strong

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets N1 - Almelo, M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg, also Appx "D".

reconnaissance forces on either side of the main axis. On the eastern flank, the motor battalion had reached the Oranje Canal west of Emmen (4466). But more significant than the ground gained was the fact that contact was made with the hard pressed men of the S.A.S. who had been harassing the enemy's rear areas for the last two days. (Ibid: serials 100, 103, 132, 133, 160; also 2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serials 28, 34, 50, 61). Progress continued during the night 10/11 Apr; on the right Emmen was entered and work commenced on reinforcing the bridges over the Oranje Canal so that Maj-Gen Maczek's main effort to the north-east might be launched. (Ibid: 11 Apr 45, serial 11)

18 CDN ARMD C. REGT OPERATIONS, 7-11 APR 45^x

171. Mention has already been made of the relief of some of the S.A.S. troops by the Poles, but they were not the only ones who contacted the red-bereted skymen. Originally the task of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt had been to provide left-flank cover for Maj-Gen Vokes' push towards Leer, but, with the change of axis for the armoured division, the prospective arrival of the Poles and the dropping of S.A.S. troops in the north, the plan for the armoured cars was drastically altered. By 11 Apr only "B" Sqn remained with 4 Cdn Armd Div, the remainder of the unit having reverted to under command 2 Cdn Corps. Up to 6 Apr these three squadrons had been employed along the then extended left flank of Maj-Gen Vokes' formation, but on that day "A" Sqn was directed to work towards Meppel out of Coevorden while "C" and "D" Sqns watched the western approaches to the Overijsselsch Canal, the east to west grid line 28 being set as the dividing line of responsibility. These operations of "C" and "D" Sqns continued with good result until 9/10 Apr, when the Polish infantry took over and Lt-Col P.C.R. Black's entire effort was shifted to the north, where "A" Sqn had been roaming far and wide from Lutten (2146) past Balkbrug (0845) towards Meppel (9956). At that time "D" Sqn took up its position at De Wijk (0154), with the task of cutting the main roads leading north-east from Meppel, and "C" Sqn applied itself to the job of watching the approaches to the south along the Balkbrug (0845) - Gramsbergen (2647) road. It was during its operations along the road Meppel-Assen (2189) that "D" Sqn contacted a group of S.A.S. troops, who needless to say were delighted to be among friends again. Meanwhile "A" Sqn had turned south-west to feel out the routes from Meppel to Zwolle. The number of prisoners taken during these far flung excursions was large, over 370 had fallen into our hands. (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 6-10 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/D, Docket II: Report on Ops of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 5-11 Apr 45)

172. The threat to his most recent line of resistance by 2 Cdn Inf Div's attack on Ommen was to prove its worth, for throughout 10 Apr the enemy, beset by Maj-Gen Matthews' men from the south, by the roving armd cars in his midst and the S.A.S. armoured at his back, gave ground readily. But alas, the novel joy of working within a good network of firm roads and of encountering

* Reference maps: As for para 168, also Appx "D".

disorganized groups of German troops who gave in quickly, was not to last much longer for 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt. Operations to the north-east were developing fast and the armoured division badly needed extra help to cover the flanks of its advance to Oldenburg. Late in the afternoon of 11 Apr, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt was relieved by the Royal Canadian Dragoons and moved eastward to protect the left of 4 Cdn Armd Div and maintain contact with the Poles. (Ibid: also W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 10-11 Apr 45)

173. As a craftsman takes pride in his own particular trade, so the men of the armoured car regiment were fully appreciative of the recent achievements which had called for the employment of their unit in the actual task for which it had been trained. The regimental history makes special note of the operations in this way.

... Patrols of the regiment were engaged in mobile recce of an area more than twenty-five miles in width. Obviously it was impossible to cover all the roads in such an area. The only course was to run patrols from town to town and bridge to bridge. The situation became somewhat confused at this point. Troop leaders would call up on the wireless and report contacting the enemy and either disposing of him or looping around the flanks. Roads that were free of the enemy when troops went one way on them would be covered by the enemy when the return journey was attempted. The enemy in his frantic efforts to find out what was going on would wander hither and yon. This the armoured car patrols were doing too but with a difference. They knew what they were doing, and had a field day killing or capturing the enemy. It is impossible to capture in words the spirit of the chase that prevailed.

(XII Manitoba Dragoons,
Regimental History of the
18th Canadian Armoured Car
Regiment, p. 75)

174. The whole hectic period from 6 to 11 Apr, when the regiment, in the words of its own history, was "out on a limb", is described:

They had been a most interesting few days - the sort of thing one dreams about but which one never dares to hope will be. It is a difficult story to get in one's mind even when one knows what went on. If one can visualize four divisions moving generally north with the one furthest to the east well ahead of the others, and then take the exposed flank of that division as a base for the operations of an armoured car Regiment, one has a fair picture of the situation. With the whole emphasis of the advance to the north and to the east the regiment was called upon to work in a westerly direction in an effort to expedite the link-up of these divisions. This had been done and the patrols had an almost free hand in fanning out to the west, south-west, and north-west. To say these patrols had run amuck or run wild would not be far from the truth, for with enough roads to operate on and only scattered remnants of a disorganized and retreating enemy to bar the way and to assist in making the days exciting the time had passed.

...hundreds of the enemy had been captured:
there is no need to worry about how many had been
killed.

(Ibid: p. 79)

THE S.A.S. DROP, OPERATION "AMHERST", 7-11 APR 45*

175. It must be remembered, however, that much of the confusion from which the armoured cars benefited, was in fact directly caused by the daring S.A.S. operation which had taken place several days before. Accordingly, in order to get the full picture of the enemy's reaction to this airborne attack, it is necessary to trace the operation from its beginning on the night 7/8 Apr. At that time 47 aircraft left England to drop troops, equipment containers, and detonating simulators on 19 specially picked dropping zones in northern Holland.** Due to bad weather conditions the "jeep drop" had to be cancelled. Instead, these vehicles were driven overland into the area of operations on 8 Apr. Of the 47 aircraft, 46 got their loads off over the appointed areas, one other plane did not take off and postponed its drop until the following night. In all, that first night, 690 men came down to earth and organized themselves to cover six definite areas. The first group, dropped in the region of Meppel (9556), Hooegeveen (1559) and Ommen (1036) were, as already related, quickly joined by the Canadians and Poles. The second group, under Lt-Col Bollardiere, operated around Beilen (1874) and Spier (1470), ambushing the enemy and generally creating havoc. A third group under Maj P. Samson dropped near Westerbork (2473), attacked the police headquarters and accounted for a German general among those killed. Westerbork, however, had to be given up when the enemy brought in reinforcements from Assen. Nevertheless the parachutists did capture and hold several good bridges of which the Poles later made excellent use. (Report by Brigadier J.M. Calvert D.S.O., Comd S.A.S. Troops - May 1945; Operation "Amherst", op cit; (Op AMHERST) 3, H.Q. No. 38 Group R.A.F. - Report on Ops AMHERST and KEYSTONE, 7 Jul 45, op cit)

176. Another party had fair success in the areas of Gieten (3490), Borger (3681) - Assen (2189) and Rolde (2688). Ambushing was the order of the day, and with the help of the Dutch Resistance the enemy was beset from all sides, and roads and bridges were "demined" and guarded until the Canadian Army reached them days later. On the other two zones, around Assen and Groningen, and around Smilde (1080) and Appelsga (0785), the S.A.S. had a much stickier time, one party of our men being betrayed by a Dutch farmer. Still the parachute troops maintained the offensive and caused tremendous damage. Regarding the enemy's losses Brigadier Calvert wrote later:

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets M1 - Groningen, N1 - Almelo.
G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheet 17 - Beilen, also Appx "D".

** Some of these DZ had to be changed at the last minute as First Cdn Army had already overrun several of those originally selected.

It is difficult for the Bns to assess the material damage they did, but the following figures give some idea and are probably about midway between the most optimistic and the most pessimistic claims. In the dark it is impossible to assess for certain what damage has been done. 2 RCP^x claim the following enemy losses:-

Killed	177
Wounded	70
Prisoner of War	85
Motor transport destroyed	13
" " captured	1
Railway cut	3 places.

3 RCP^x claim the following enemy losses:-

Confirmed killed	92
Killed or wounded, but not confirmed	150
Prisoners	102
Material destroyed or captured	15 vehicles.

(Ibid, para 13, p. 10)

177. In his report on the operations Brigadier Calvert described the damage inflicted on the enemy's communications.

The actual destruction of vehicles and men was a means to an end, the main end being to cause the maximum confusion amongst the enemy. A number of bridges were prevented from being blown and others were blown prematurely before the enemy could retire over them. We cannot for certain claim the success of preventing the destruction of STEENWIJK airfield although, indirectly, this might have been achieved. The roads MEPEL - ASSEN, BEILEN - ASSEN, ASSEN - GIETEN, ZUIDLAREN - GIETEN were practically forbidden to all night convoys from 8 Apr onwards. The enemy was pinned down and given no chance either to form a line of resistance in the good defensive country along the canal, in which positions had already been dug and wired, nor was he able to retire in comfort. Thus like a net the French entangled the enemy for the thrust by 3 Canadian Div, which took it in a very short time to the North Sea.

(Ibid)

Contrary to previous reckoning approximately fifty percent of the paratroops were not overrun by First Cdn Army within 72 hours; yet those men did not consider themselves as utterly lost. The calibre of the average S.A.S. trooper is high and, even without the prospect of immediate relief, he did not seek a place of hiding unless he was wounded. On the contrary as

x Régiment Chasseurs Parachutistes.

events proved, each man went on about the business of raising the resistance, killing or capturing Germans galore and thus giving heart to the sorely pressed Dutch people in his immediate area. (Ibid)

178. Against these gains, the losses must invariably be measured: 29 men were killed, 45 wounded and 17 unaccounted for when the whole S.A.S. force was eventually overrun by the Canadians and Poles, some eight days after the initial drop. Most of the wounded were luckily evacuated safely with the aid of the armoured jeeps of 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt, which on arrival in General Crerar's sector was routed to Coevorden to operate out of that place, first under command of 4 Cdn Armd Div and later under Maj-Gen Maczek. (Ibid: Report on Op "AMHERST" by 2 and 3 RCP in N.E. Holland). Among the points of interest which arose from the operations, three stood out. First there was the employment of Typhoon aircraft in a novel supply dropping role. Secondly there was the successful use of the "Gee fix" a radar navigational aid system. The third point of note was the communication enjoyed by the troops in enemy held areas, among themselves and direct with S.A.S. H.Q. in England. This was accomplished by the use of Jedburgh sets. The ground troops were continually in contact through their own pack sets and a firm liaison was maintained with the Belgian S.A.S. Regt at the Coevorden base as well as with the Canadian armoured cars in the area. (Ibid: p. 5)

THE SITUATION OF 2 CDN CORPS, 0800 HOURS, 11 APR 45*

179. On the morning of 11 Apr Lt-Gen Simonds' front line ran in straight solid fashion from the northern outskirts of Deventer north-east across the Regge River and on past Coevorden to Emmen. This western part of the front was represented on the left by 3 Cdn Inf Div along the Ijssel River; in the centre by 2 Cdn Inf Div about to cross the Vecht River, and on the right but west of the Ems River by the Pol Armd Div operating out of Coevorden. To the north-east across the Ems River and flanking the allied drive into Germany was 4 Cdn Armd Div, before which the enemy was giving up ground rapidly. But it was really on the eastern side of the Ems River that the state of the enemy (between our forces and the old town of Groningen) presented the possibility of a quick dash to the North Sea coast. Lt-Gen Simonds' intention, as issued late on 10 Apr to his divisional commander, called for quick expansion towards the sea and towards the coastal objective to the north-east. From left to right the orders were

- (a) 3 Cdn Inf Div to go for Wezepe (with 9 Cdn Inf Bde leading)
- (b) 2 Cdn Inf Div to open up the route Ommen-Hoogeveen-Beilen (6 Cdn Inf Bde was already on its way to assist by hooking in behind Ommen from the east)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets N1 - Almelo, M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg.

- (c) Pol Armd Div to establish a firing base about Weeringermopd so that it might first move on Weede and secondly tie up its right flank with 4 Cdn Armd Div at Haren and Dorpen.

(First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit,
11 Apr 45, serial 3)

4 Cdn Armd Div was to press its effort towards Oldenburg.
(Ibid)

180. It was here on the right that the Army Commander's chief concern lay, for although the enemy was being forced back, he was, to quote,

... falling back on Friesoythe and the line of the Kusten canal, beyond which, on the left, the defensible low-lying ground of the Sater, Ober Ledinger and Rheider lands extended towards Leer and the mouth of the Ems. In this marshy and confined region, offering only limited accessibility along inadequate roads off which the deployment of fighting vehicles and artillery was difficult, if not impossible the 2nd Parachute Corps was prepared to cover the East Frisian naval bases along the lines of the canal and the approaches across the Vehne-Moor offered similar disadvantages for an assault northward across the Kusten canal...

(General Crerar's Despatch,
op cit, para 29)

181. Apart from the disadvantages of terrain with which his armoured thrust to the north-east had to contend, the Commander of 2 Cdn Corps had another worry; one which, in this land of canals, might well prove critical. It was the shortage of Bailey and Pontoon bridging equipment. This had resulted from the number of canals, rivers and other anti-tank obstacles which our troops had been committed to cross in pursuit of the current operations. At this time Brigadier N.E. Rodger C.B.E., the Chief of Staff of 2 Cdn Corps, noted the urgency, as an entry in his personal war diary shows:

Shortage of Bailey and Pontoon bridging becoming a critical factor in ops though up to now CEs of 2 Cdn Corps and First Army have managed to meet all demands by furiously lifting brs on other than main routes behind Divs and by agile manipulation of the slender resources of bridging and tpt.

(AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/K/F,
Docket II: War Diary Notes
by Brigadier N.E. Rodger, C. of
S. 2 Cdn Corps, 11 Apr 45)

As things turned out the so-called "agile manipulations" by the Chief Engineers concerned met all requirements.

THE ENEMY, 7-11 APR 45

182. The shortage of warlike stores and equipment was not, however, confined to our own needs. The enemy also was having a bad time in this respect. Comment on the current German supply problem was made in the SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for 1 Apr:

In the present rapidly changing situation EAST of the RHINE and with Allied forces penetrating deep into GERMANY, apparently restricted only by their own supply problems, and with increasingly large numbers of prisoners falling into our hands, evidence of equipment shortages and the poverty of the once well-to-do supply branches of the Wehrmacht daily becomes more apparent.

The results of the enemy petrol shortage were seen in the speed with which Allied break-throughs WEST of the RHINE were exploited and in the number of prisoners and amount of equipment taken in the process, in the reports of abandoned and enemy-destroyed artillery and AFVs, and in the almost total inability of the German command to regroup its forces with sufficient speed in the face of a fast moving situation.

(Hist Sec File 205 S 1.023
(D3) SHAEF Weekly Intelligence
Summary, No. 54)

Moreover the record "low" in fuel production and the increased demands upon alternate means of transportation, which, incidentally, the Allied air effort was rapidly canalizing had forced the enemy to a position which only a tremendously high state of transport efficiency could save from utter chaos. (Ibid)

183. As it was, transport losses were making supply of ammunition extremely difficult, and a captured document showed that even as early as 21 Jan 45 the Germans had felt the pinch acutely:

Ammunition supplies for 105-mm and 150 howitzers are rapidly decreasing; for heavy infantry weapons still sufficient on hand. 120-mm mortar ammunition presents a severe bottle neck. 75-mm anti-tank ammunition is critical. For Nebelwerfers there will be no further supplies for the time being...

There will be no further supplies of mines of all types for some time to come. It will be necessary to improvise mines. Stocks of explosives as used by Army engineers are entirely insufficient. Only commercial dynamite is on hand.

(Ibid)

A poor state of affairs indeed for an Army that had once boasted a model system of provision for its troops.

184. On the Canadian Army's front the daily intake of prisoners and the multitude of units identified were in themselves conclusive evidence of the difficulties the enemy was having. The situation was thus stated by 2 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summary for 10 Apr:

It would not serve any useful purpose either to enumerate the staggering multitude of units identified during our advances in the past forty-eight hours or to discuss their precise place in the enemy's complex order of battle. Today's bag of prisoners has been exceptionally large, its diversity bewildering. The final count should exceed fifteen hundred while the completed list of identified units will run to several pages. Yesterday's take of between three and four hundred, although less impressive, was equally diverse.

(215C1.98 (D376) Int Summaries
2 Cdn Corps/Vol 8: No. 155
10 Apr 45)

As for the troops opposing the Canadians, it was pretty clear that their main opponent, 6 Para Div, had withdrawn west to the line of the Ijssel River, where it was now being reorganized with units which had no previous connection with it, such as 31 Para Regt, 3 S.S. Police Regt, Battle Fuchs, 30 M.G. Bn and a wide variety of training elements, either infantry, engineer or signals. Our troops had met all of these between the Ijssel and Ommen. East from the latter place to the Ems River the order of battle was not completely known, although at Meppen prisoners had appeared from a Battle Group Schneeber, which our Intelligence Staff presumed to be controlled by 7 Para Div, last located about Lingen opposing 43 (W.) Inf Div of 30 Brit Corps. (2 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summaries, Nos 154-155, dated 8-10 Apr 45)

185. But what of the enemy's intentions? The stubborn 6 Para Div had begun to give way in the centre, and the breaking of contact before the armoured thrust to the east implied that the enemy on that flank, (63 Para Regt of 21 Para Div, identified near Borger) was seeking new positions on which to put up an organized fight. In the western flank, his intention to stand on the Ijssel River was, as the First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary for 9 Apr put it,

...the only clear one. He may possibly defend GRONINGEN with the troops already in NORTH EAST HOLLAND. The most valuable targets are EMDEN and WILHELMSHAFEN because the Allied advance on BREMEN is cutting off the forces in NORTH WEST GERMANY from operating further WEST.

(First Cdn Army Intelligence
Summaries, Nos 283 & 284, 9-10
Apr 45)

The coastal forces alone were certainly not large enough to hold any long line or cover more than a few vital points, but if some concentration of them could be achieved and they could be supplied from coastal depots, then General Crerar's troops might well be forced into another set-piece battle. (Ibid)

LT-GEN SIMOND'S TASK IN WESTERN HOLLAND, 10-11 APR 45*

186. Meanwhile, as the battle for North-east Holland had been taking shape, the elimination of the enemy's forces along the east bank of the Ijssel River up to Deventer had prepared the way for 2 Cdn Corps to undertake the preliminary assault in the battle for the western Netherlands. (See para 187). With Deventer cleared by 3 Cdn Inf Div, the last obstacle had been removed which might delay the launching of the first attack mounted by 1 Cdn Inf Div in the North-western European theatre, the assault across the River Ijssel. The river presents a formidable water barrier and for some time 21 Army Group had thought enough of the problem to prepare a study of an assault crossing from east to west. The planning staff had decided that the best crossing sites were astride Zutphen, for in that area there was no high ground on the enemy's side close enough to the river to give him good observation. It was also the logical site for a bridge to take advantage of the main road. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/B/I, Docket II: The Assault Crossing of the River Ijssel from East to West, 26 Mar 45)

187. The River Ijssel is, in fact, one of the mouths of the Rhine and flows north into the Ijsselmeer, a non-tidal inland sea. **Since it flows through fairly flat land, the pace of its current is only two to three knots but its width is 350 feet.** Under normal conditions the banks rise about 6 to 10 feet above the water, which is from 10 to 12 feet deep. But even in summer the Ijssel is prone to flooding. The best crossings were therefore thought to be those astride Zutphen, where a bridge would be needed in any event to take advantage of the good main road. But as early as 26 Mar when the study was made, it had been foreseen that Zutphen "may be a tough nut to crack", a view justified later by the trouble 3 Cdn Inf Div had in routing the parachutists out of the place. On the other hand,

Assault crossing sites in the Zutphen area are better than further south and the going is likely to be better than elsewhere. Enemy observation of the crossings in the Zutphen area is not so easy as further south, and, by securing Zutphen early, time will be saved in the construction of the main bridges in the town.

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/B/I, Docket II: The Assault Crossing of the River Ijssel from East to West, 26 Mar 45)

188. The Chief Engineer, First Cdn Army, Brigadier G. Walsh, had also made a study of the crossing, particularly with reference to the possibility of using that old Canadian favourite, the Buffalo or L.V.T. It was determined that L.V.Ts. could enter the water at most places in the area between Zutphen and Deventer, but that in most places they would have to unload their infantry passengers at the river's edge as they would be unable to climb the far bank themselves.

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets
39 - Rhenen, 40 - Arnhem, 33 - Zutphen,
27 - Hatten.

Accompanying sappers would, it was thought, be able to make exits within about one hour of landing. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 122). These exits would be needed by the L.V.Ts., which would ferry the anti-tank guns and other supporting weapons across, for these things were too heavy to be unloaded on the river bank. Because of the long rough carry necessary to get boats to the water, Brigadier Walsh recommended the use of assault boats rather than the more capacious but unwieldy storm boats. (Ibid). The plan finally evolved by the C.R.E. 1 Cdn Inf Div (Lt-Col E.H. Webb) was as follows:

The C.R.E.'s plan for the crossing was based on the construction of a class 9 FBE bridge, and two 'A' type class 40 BPB rafts. The staff of Brigadier Black, C.E. 2 Cdn Corps, under whose command we came for the operation afforded us invaluable assistance in the procurement of stores. A platoon and a half each of FBE and Bailey Bridge, plus all the paraphernalia pertaining to an operation, such as ours was to be, were obtained without difficulty.

(AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F,
Docket III: Outline accounts
of Supporting Arms and Services)

MAJ-GEN H.W. FOSTER'S PLAN TO CROSS THE IJSEL*

189. On 10 Apr the Divisions operation order was issued, giving as the intention that 1 Cdn Inf Div would establish a bridgehead in the great bend of the IJssel south of Deventer, and then advance and capture Apeldoorn. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was to carry out the assault crossing and establish the bridgehead. A great smoke screen, created both by artillery and mobile generators, was an essential part of the assault plan especially to cover the bridging and rafting operations. 6 Cdn Armd Regt was the armoured unit detailed to support the operation. One squadron under command 2 Cdn Inf Bde, with the rest of the regiment under 1 Cdn Inf Bde, was the initial allotment. The Shermans would be ferried across as soon as the two class 40 rafts were completed. The assaulting troops were to be ferried in L.V.Ts manned by 4 R.T.R. of 79 Armd Div, a versatile formation and old friends of 2 Cdn Corps since D-Day but new to the men from Italy. L. Edmn Regt called them "Buffalo Herders". (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket III: 1 Cdn Inf Div Ops Order No. 1, Op "CANNONSHOT"). Artillery resources in addition to the divisional artillery, consisted of 7 Cdn Med Regt, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, two British heavy batteries equipped with 7.2s, and a British Medium Regt. In addition, there was 33 Bty of 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt and a troops of search lights. (Ibid)

THE IJSEL SMOKE SCREEN

190. It was considered necessary that the river-bend near Gorssel, where the crossing was being made, should be screened as much as possible from enemy observation. The C.R.A.

* Reference maps: As for para 186.

and C.R.E. of 1 Cdn Inf Div jointly laid down the requirements:

- (a) In conjunction with the artillery, to form a smoke box around the prepared bridgeheads until the assaulting troops were firm on the ground.
- (b) To protect bridging operations and subsequent traffic over the bridge from observed enemy fire after the fire-plan outlined in "a" had stopped.

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/RCA/C/F,
Docket III, Vol 1, Report on
Smoke Screens Carried out by
First Cdn Army, 15 Jul 45)

For 2 Cdn Corps this was the first time that artillery and generator smoke had been used together to form the one screen, and only very close co-operation between the two branches* could make a success of it. The necessary close liaison was achieved by having a chemical warfare officer at headquarters R.C.A. (Ibid)

ARMoured AND ARTILLERY SUPPORT

191. The fire-plan devised by C.R.A. 1 Cdn Inf Div, in consultation with the commanders of 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes, provided for a series of concentrations. These were to be fired at known defence positions whose locations had been established from aerial photographs or by our Intelligence. The artillery's share in the smoke screen was to begin at H - 30, and at H - 10 a hail of high explosive was to start falling on the far side of the river. At H - hour this was to be replaced by concentrations fired on the enemy positions further back. The guns of 1 Cdn Inf Div had been placed in support of 7 Cdn Inf Bde on 7 Apr and at that time the detachments had their first experience of building gun pits instead of digging them, for in the sodden soil of this part of Holland any hole soon filled with water. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket III: folio 8: 1 Cdn Inf Div, Operation "CANNONSHOT". Outline Account of Supporting Arms and Services, p. 1). Air support was provided by "Cab Rank" fighter bombers, on call. Armed reconnaissance was provided to make life miserable for German road traffic, and to ensure that adequate information came back. There was also an aerial counter battery programme by medium bombers. They would engage known enemy batteries from H-hour onwards. H hour was set at 1630 hours 11 Apr 45. (Ibid, Docket III: folio I, Appx I, 1 Cdn Inf Div, Op Order No. 1, Op "CANNONSHOT")

1 CDN INF DIV MOVES UP TO MEET THE ENEMY, 3-10 APR 45^R

192. On 3 and 4 Apr 1 Cdn Inf Div had moved from its concentration area outside Brussels to the Reichswald, where it

* R.C.A. and chemical warfare.

** Reference maps: As for para 186.

came under command of 2 Cdn Corps. The men of the division were once more allowed to put up their red patches and units flashes, which had been removed from their battledress as a security measure during their journey from Italy. On 7 Apr the division moved across the Rhine, and on 9 Apr Maj-Gen Foster, who now commanded the division, brought his men into a concentration area north-east of Zutphen. On the afternoon of the 10 Apr, when 7 Cdn Inf Bde took Deventer, the stage was set for 1 Cdn Inf Div to make its debut in North-west Europe. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket III, folio I, operation "CANNONSHOT" op cit). Although the German troops now facing east from across the Ijssel were a very mixed lot, there was no reason to look forward to the coming battle with too much complacency:

Although the terms "hodge-podge", "odds and sods", "scraping", etc., are accepted epithets for such an order of battle as he now discloses on our front the skill and fighting spirit of individual units has often been up to the standard of elite troops. Even though the soldiers are often youths from the training centres, they are fanatical and brave. Officer instructors from training units have provided the highest standard of leadership.

(AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/L/F,
Docket I: 2 Cdn Corps Int
Summary No. 153, 6 Apr 45)

193. When the division moved into the area from which it was to assault, 7 Cdn Recce Regt of 3 Cdn Inf Div was placed under command to watch the river line from Zutphen to Deventer. At this time, the division's own reconnaissance regiment, 4 P.L.D.G. was in process of being reconverted from infantry to reconnaissance. (Ibid). Men of 1 Cdn Inf Div had already been across the river; as early as the evening of 8 Apr a small reconnaissance group from L. Edmn R., consisting of the scout officer, two scouts and two Dutch civilians, had been across and determined that the enemy held many well-dug-in positions along the western dyke. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket III, 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Report on Ops 11 Apr 45 - 23 Apr 45: The Loyal Edmonton Regiment, Report of Ops, 7 Apr 45 - 23 Apr 45)

194. At the same time as 1 Cdn Inf Div was preparing to cross the Ijssel, under General Simonds' direction, 1 Cdn Corps was itself planning the assault on Arnhem. The original proposal for the capture of Arnhem involved an attack from the south-west across the Neder Rijn. This plan had to be revised, mainly because it was appreciated that the roads across the "island" between the rivers to the north of Nijmegen were only likely to bear the weight of heavy traffic at the cost of intensive effort on the part of the sappers. It was decided, therefore, to attack across the upper Ijssel from the south-east, where the approaches were more favourable. Accordingly, under cover of a smoke screen, 49 (W.R.) Inf Div was relieved on the "island" by Westmr R. (Mot) with some Belgian troops under command, and shifted to the east of the Pannerdensch Canal with orders to cross the River on 12 Apr.* (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Corps/C/F: Draft outline of Ops of 1 Cdn Corps in Clearing of Western Holland, April 1945)

* This operation, which was carried out under 1 Cdn Corps, is described in a subsequent report.

THE SITUATION OF SECOND BRIT ARMY, 10-11 APR 45*

195. The possibilities of progress in this part of the Netherlands, however, were limited by the extent and requirements of the great advances being made elsewhere along the front of 21 Army Group. Second Brit Army had considerably expanded the wings of its thrust between the Ems and Weser Rivers. On the left, flanking the Canadians, Lt-Gen Horrocks's 30 Brit Corps, whose objective was the city of Bremen, had made slow progress. By 9 Apr Gds Armd Div and 43 (W.) Inf Div had after some severe fighting reached the areas of Furstenau (9635) and Haselunne (8353) respectively, but against well organized opposition, craters, and road blocks. Behind them 51 (H.) Div had the task of holding the area of Lingen, which had been handed over to them by 3 Brit Inf Div on its transfer to Lt-Gen Ritchie's 12 Corps on 8 Apr. The armoured and infantry advance went on throughout 10 Apr, and on the following day 51 (H.) Div was brought forward with orders to capture Quakenbruck (1542), while 43 (W.) Inf Div took Cloppenburg. (AEF: 45/Second Brit Army/C/D, Docket I; also First Cdn Army Liaison Officers Reports, 111620A)

196. In the centre of 12 Brit Corps' sector much greater progress had been made, mostly by 7 Armd Div with under command 155 Inf Bde (52 (L.) Div), 9 Inf Bde (3 Brit Inf Div), and 160 Inf Bde of 53 (W.) Inf Div). The town of Hoya on the west bank of Weser was captured by 22 Armd Bde on 8 Apr, while to the north-west more of the armour advancing up from Diepholz secured Bassum. Far to the rear, on the left flank of 12 Corps, 52 (L.) Div (less 155 Inf Bde) was still having trouble on the axis Bramsche (1624) - Diepholz (4346), north-west of the Dummer Zee, while 3 Brit Inf Div looked after the base of the flank farther back, thus freeing 53 (W.) Div to follow up the armour now driving on with the object of seizing Delmenhorst (6095). Progress north-west of the road Bremen - Diepholz was slow however, and on 10 Apr 131 Inf Bde took over the attack from 22 Armd Bde. Meanwhile 160 Inf Bde slid over the Weser at Hoya and firmed up a bridgehead from which 53 (W.) Inf Div was ordered to expand eastwards first, towards Rethem, then up between the rivers Aller and Weser to Verden (0182), then south to Nienburg (0050). For this operation 4 Brit Armd Bde, which had been operating with 52 (L.) Div, came forward to assist 53 (W.) Inf Div. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I)

197. The Lowland Division, after much hard fighting finally broke up the enemy before them and captured Ankum (0938) and Bersenbruck (1440). They went on the next day to secure the area of Damme (3136 - Holdorf (2643) - Neuenkirchen (2235), this latter advance being made possible by the situation loosening up on 30 Brit Corps front. The resistance against our troops had stiffened so much, however, that it was clear that Bremen could not be taken from the south without a major attack. The orders that the Corps now prepared to follow therefore, called for a strong effort to the east, while the containing of the southern approaches to the city was turned over to 3 Brit Inf Div. Maj-Gen Whistler was instructed to

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets M3 - Bremen, N2 - Osnabruck, N4 - Hanover, N3 - Minden, M4 - Soltau, also Appx "G".

maintain offensive patrolling in the direction of Delmenhorst. 7 Armd Div was to make use of the 53 (W.) Inf Div's bridgehead and debouch to the north-east towards Soltau and Luneburg. (Ibid)

198. Meanwhile 8 Brit Corps, with its right flank resting along the Elbe-Weser Canal, had struck out from its Weser River positions between Petershagen (8420) and Minded (8010). 6 Airborne Div headed for the Leine River on the right, circling to the south of the Steindhuder Meer (0630), and reached the river at Bordenau (1831) south of Neustadt (1736). To the north of the Steindhuder Meer 11 Brit Armd Div maintained a very strong thrust through Rehburg (0232), having previously detached part of its force to deal with Stolzenau (9136) from the south-east. Maj-Gen Roberts' troops bridged the Leine River at Neustadt and drove all out along the main road north to Essel. While these operations proceeded, 15 (S.) Inf Div was being concentrated preparatory to the breakout towards the Elbe River. By 11 Apr, 8 Brit Corps therefore was correctly positioned to resume its advance to the river Elbe with full speed, with 15 (S.) Inf Div on the right directed on Uelzen (9089), and on the left 11 Armd Div directed on Ebstorf (7995). (Ibid)

199. The main theme of present speculation was how long the enemy would continue to resist. Half of Germany was now in Allied hands. South of Field Marshal Montgomery's sector, powerful American armoured columns had run wild. Ninth U.S. Army had taken Hanover and was threatening Brunswick, First U.S. Army was closing on the main route from Brunswick to Nurnburg, besides besieging the Ruhr Pocket, now far behind the front. The other U.S. Armies and the French Army were making equally good progress. Third U.S. Army under General Patton was at the gates of Erfurt, Seventh U.S. Army commanded by General Patch was within 30 miles of Nurnburg, while the French troops under General de Lattre de Tassigny, having crossed the Rhine near Karlsruhe, were poised ready to strike at Stuttgart. (4/Summ CIGS/2/6, Summary No. 310 and Map "B", attached)

200. From the east, the Russian Armies had swarmed forward, and were now building up their forces on the Oder River east of Berlin, Breslau had long been taken, the east part of Czechoslovakia had been entered, and Vienna was being stormed. The Russian front line ran well into Austria south of its capital, then on further south into Croatia, where a juncture had been effected with Marshal Tito's partisans, who had been pinning down countless numbers of the enemy's troops. (SHAEP Weekly Intelligence Summary as above, No. 56, Map attached, Dispositions of the Divisions of the German Army as at 14 Apr 45)

NEW DECISIONS BY THE SUPREME COMMANDER, APRIL 1945

201. The result of the current operations had been envisaged earlier by General Eisenhower as a cleaver to cut Germany in two. As he explained in his official report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff,

Once the process of eliminating the enemy forces in the Ruhr had reached a stage when they presented no potential threat to our security, three main avenues by which we could thrust deeper into Germany lay before us.

(Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force, 6 Jun 1944 to 8 May 1945, p. 105)

There was the northern route across the north German plain to the Baltic and Berlin, the latter being, as the Supreme Commander added:

...the symbol of victory before the eyes of every Allied soldier from the day we set foot in Normandy; but other gains would spring from an advance to the northern sector, gains which were at least as important as those to be derived from capture of the German capital. By a thrust to the Baltic, we should cut off from the main armies those elements which were located in Denmark, Norway, north-west Germany, and Holland, at once depriving them of supplies and preventing their coming to the assistance of the forces in the centre of Germany. Furthermore, we should gain the north German ports and thus deny the enemy use of his naval bases and ship-building yards, bringing to an end the activities of the submarines and other craft which had for so long preyed upon our supply routes. Finally, we should link hands with the Russian forces sweeping across Pomerania to the north of Berlin.

(Ibid)

202. The gap in the enemy's line left by the now trapped Army Group "B" laid open the central route to us:

An easy advance was thus offered from Kassel, through Erfurt and Leipzig, to Dresden. This would again bring our forces to an important industrial area, the richest still left to the Germans after their loss of the Ruhr and Silesia. There also we should be able to meet the advancing Red Army, and in so doing we should cut in half what remained of Hitler's Reich.

(Ibid)

203. The southern route, which ran through Nurnburg and Regensburg, through the Danube Valley into Austria also had possibilities and General Eisenhower had pointed out that:

A thrust on this axis would also enable us to isolate, and then penetrate, the Redoubt in western Austria into which we now knew the enemy intended eventually to withdraw as many of his forces as possible. The prevention of such a withdrawal was a major objective in any operations which we might execute in the south.

(Ibid, p. 106)

204. From this calculation the decision had emerged:

Weighing the relative advantages which would accrue from an advance in strength in either north, centre, or south, I decided that an offensive first in the centre would prove the most effective. With Germany once cut in two, the enemy remaining in each portion could then more economically be eliminated. Such a central thrust, moreover, would afford us the maximum degree of flexibility for future operations, as we could subsequently switch forces rapidly to the north or to the south as the situation should indicate.

(Ibid)

General Bradley had accordingly been ordered to put his central group of Armies on the offensive. (Ibid)

205. The Supreme Commander, anxious to co-ordinate his plans with our Russian Allies, explains the liaison in the following words:

I therefore informed Marshal Stalin of my general plan to strike first in the centre and subsequently to effect a link-up with his forces in the Regensburg-Linz area with a view to neutralizing the Redoubt. Marshal Stalin replied that this scheme coincided entirely with the Russian plans in respect to both the central and southern sectors.

The decision to concentrate first upon a major thrust in the centre nevertheless gave rise to some misgivings. The desirability of bringing the U-boat war to an end, of opening up supply lines through the north German ports, of acquiring the use of Swedish shipping, of relieving the Dutch, and of occupying Denmark and Norway, and the political and psychological effects of an early entry into Berlin were all advanced as reasons in favour of early operations in the 21 Army Group sector.

Our reply pointed out that we had not forgotten the important advantages to be gained by the conquest of north Germany. It was merely a question of timing that was at issue. Our plan for an advance in the centre was itself intended to facilitate such a conquest which, I was convinced, could more easily be achieved once Germany was cut in two. It was vital that we should concentrate for each effort in turn rather than allow our power to be dispersed by attempting to undertake too many projects at once.

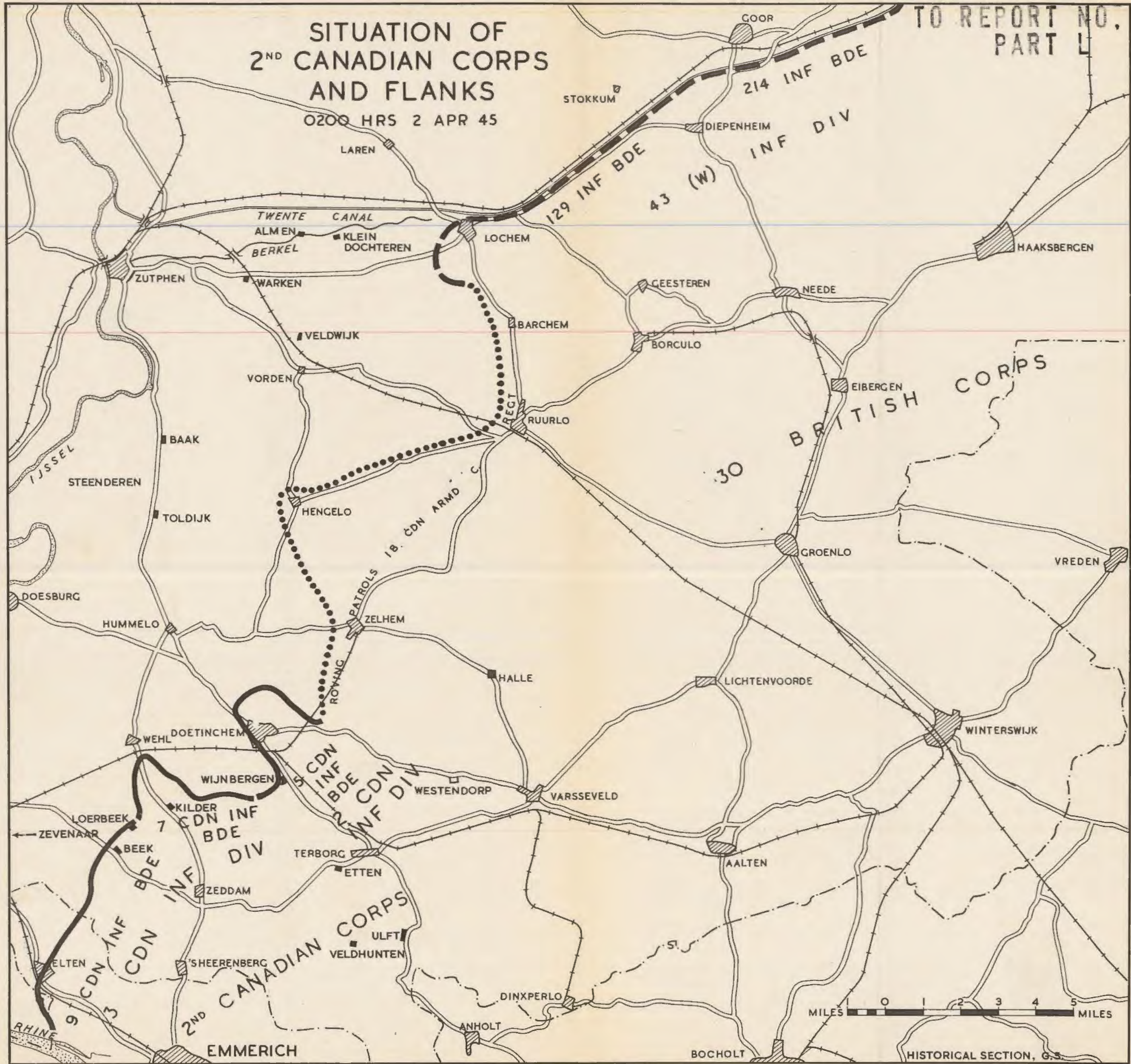
(Ibid)

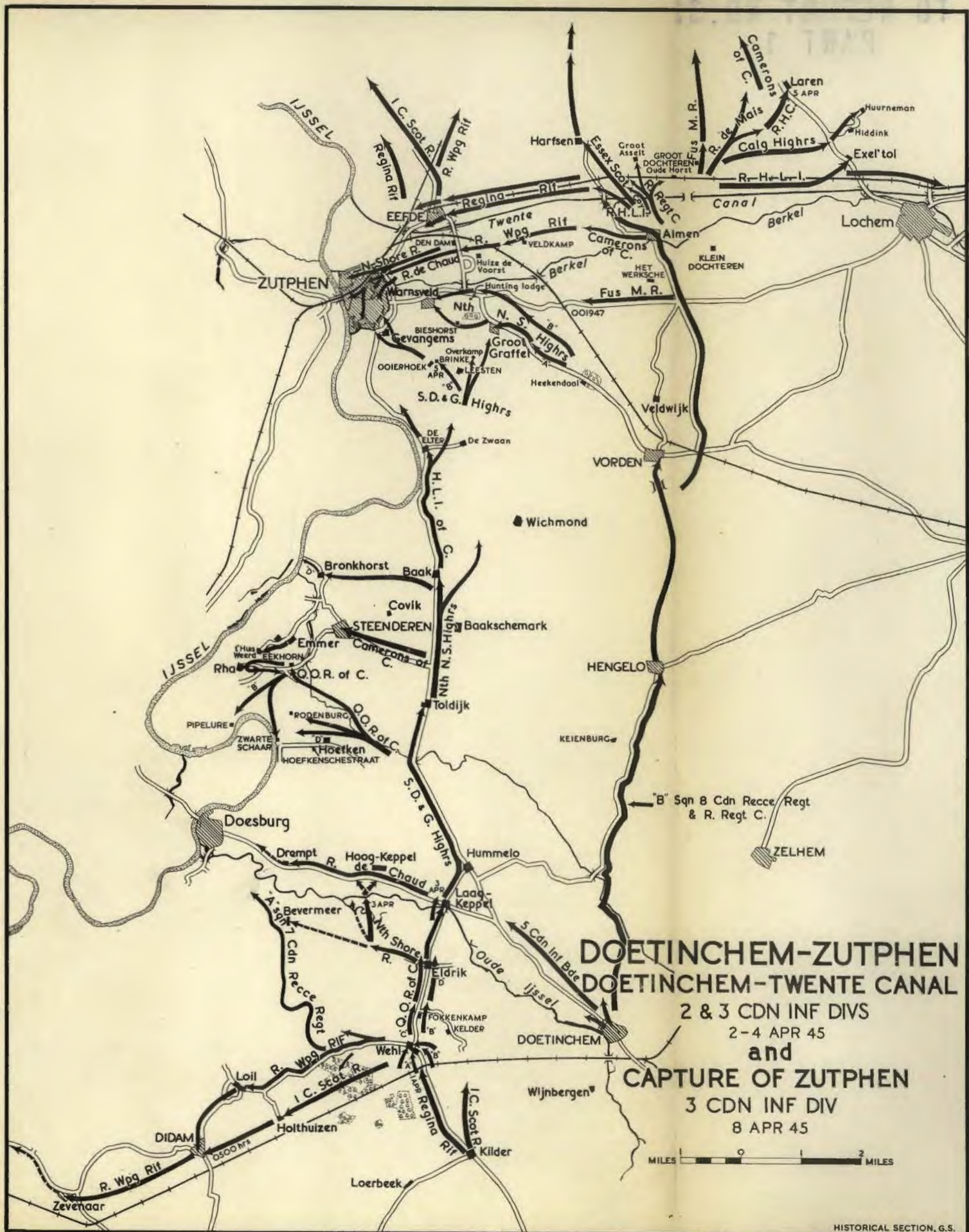
By 11 Apr the value of General Eisenhower's appreciation and the justification of his decision were evident to all.

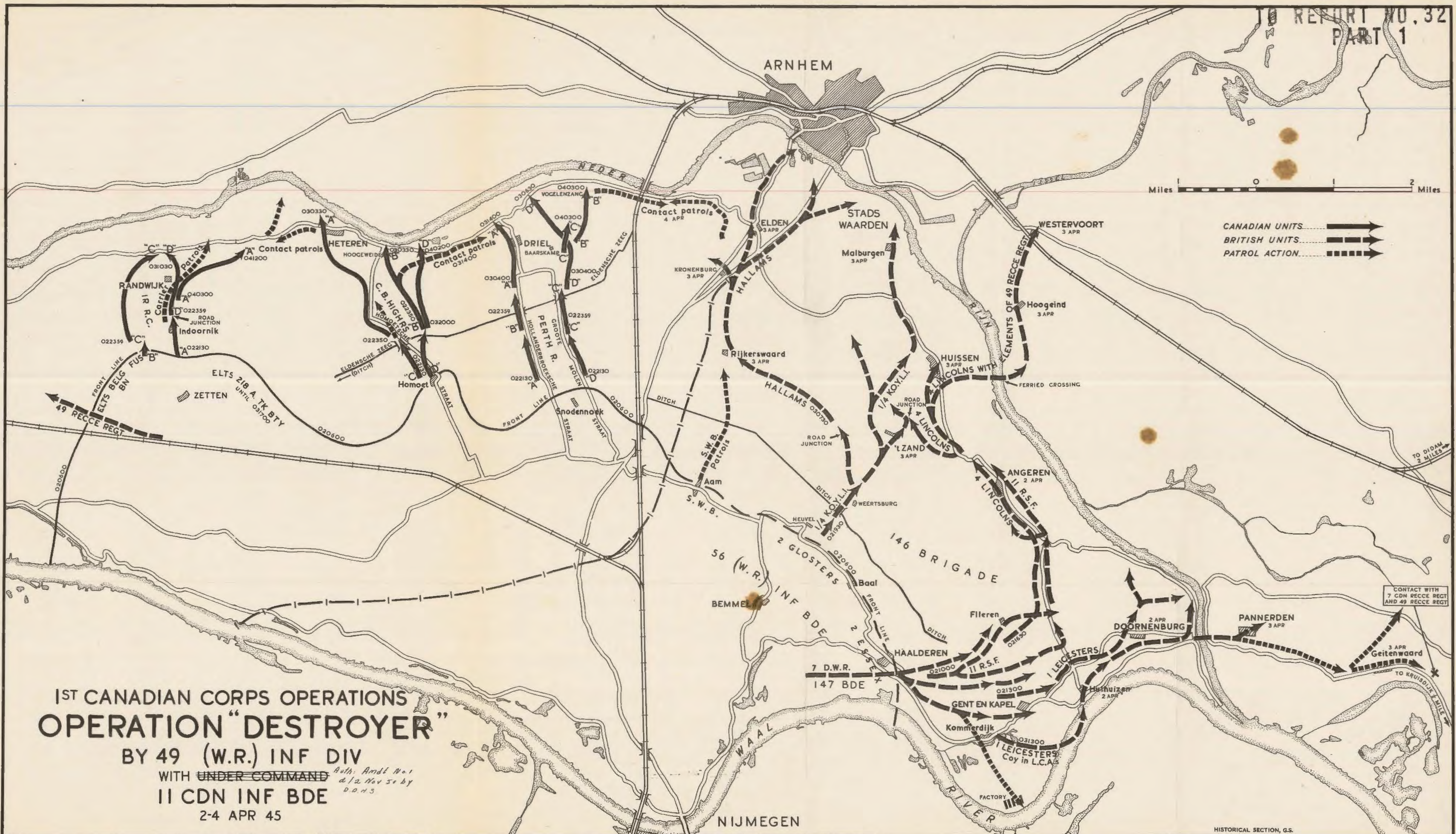
TO REPORT NO. PART I

SITUATION OF 2ND CANADIAN CORPS AND FLANKS

0200 HRS 2 APR 45



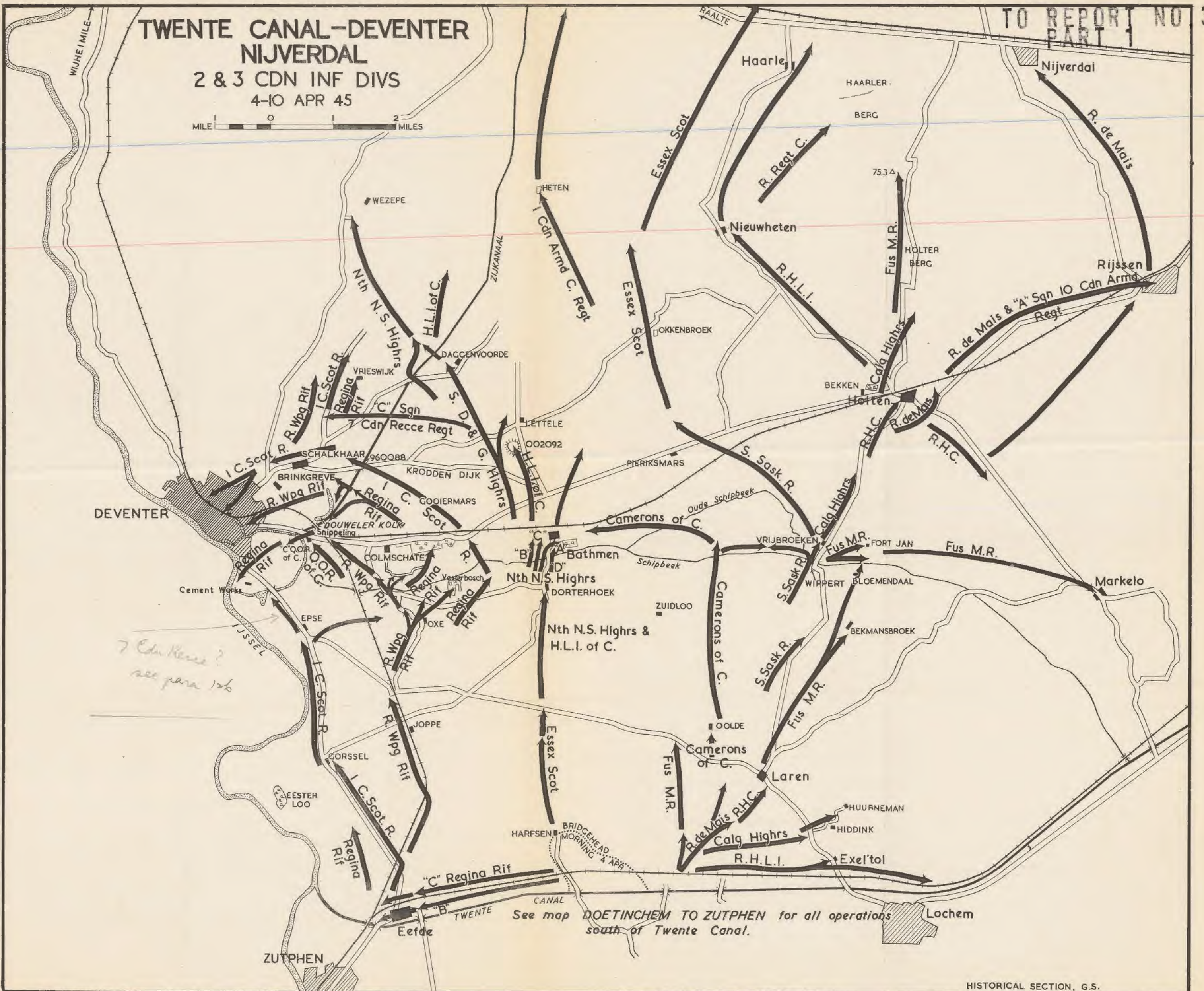




**1ST CANADIAN CORPS OPERATIONS
OPERATION "DESTROYER"**
 BY 49 (W.R.) INF DIV
 WITH ~~UNDER COMMAND~~ AUTH: Amdt No. 1
 2/2 Nov 50 by
 II CDN INF BDE
 2-4 APR 45

TWENTE CANAL-DEVENTER NIJVERDAL

2 & 3 CDN INF DIVS
4-10 APR 45



*7 Cdn Recce?
see para 126*

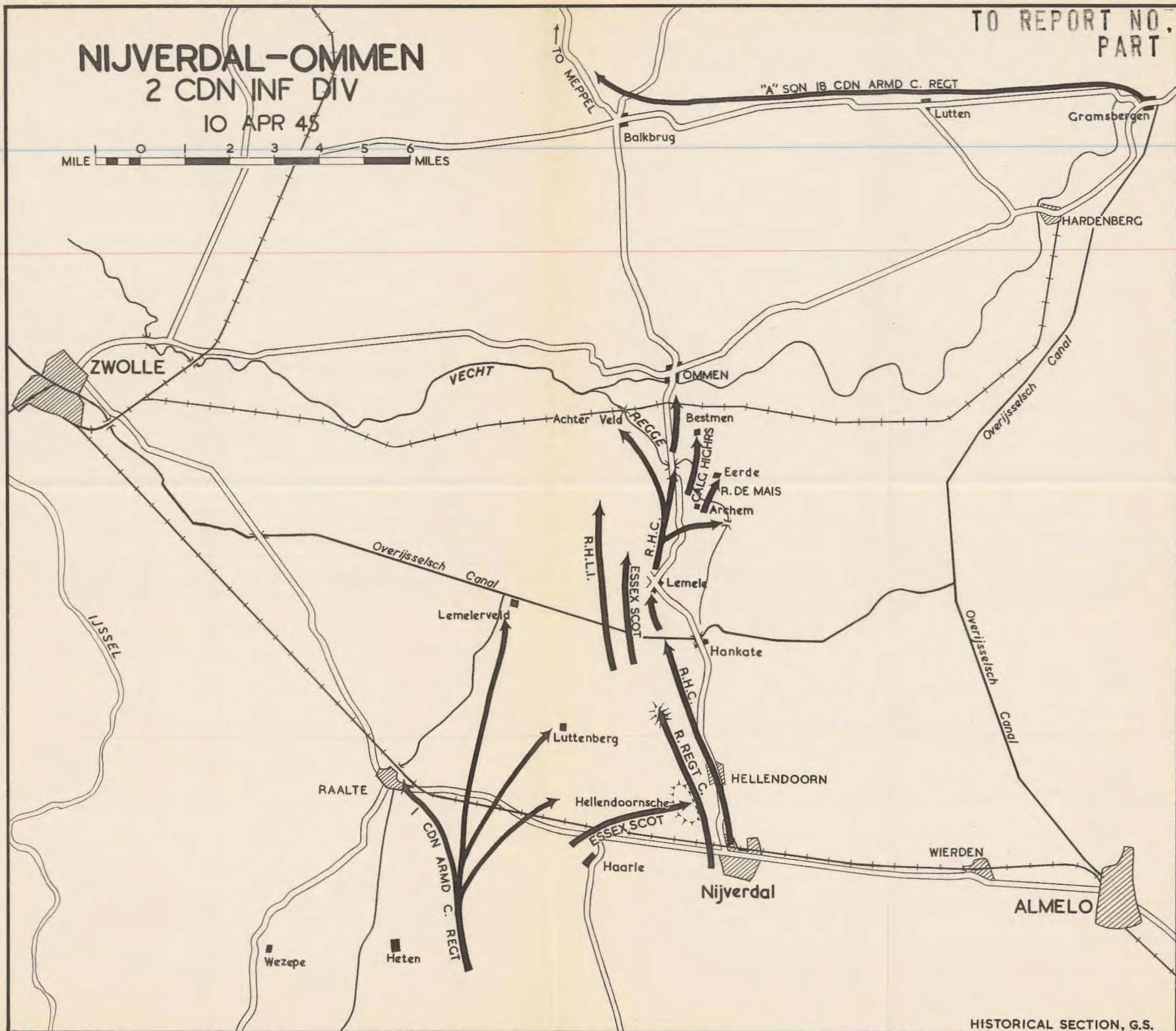
See map DOETINCHEM TO ZUTPHEN for all operations south of Twente Canal.

NIJVERDAL-OMMEN

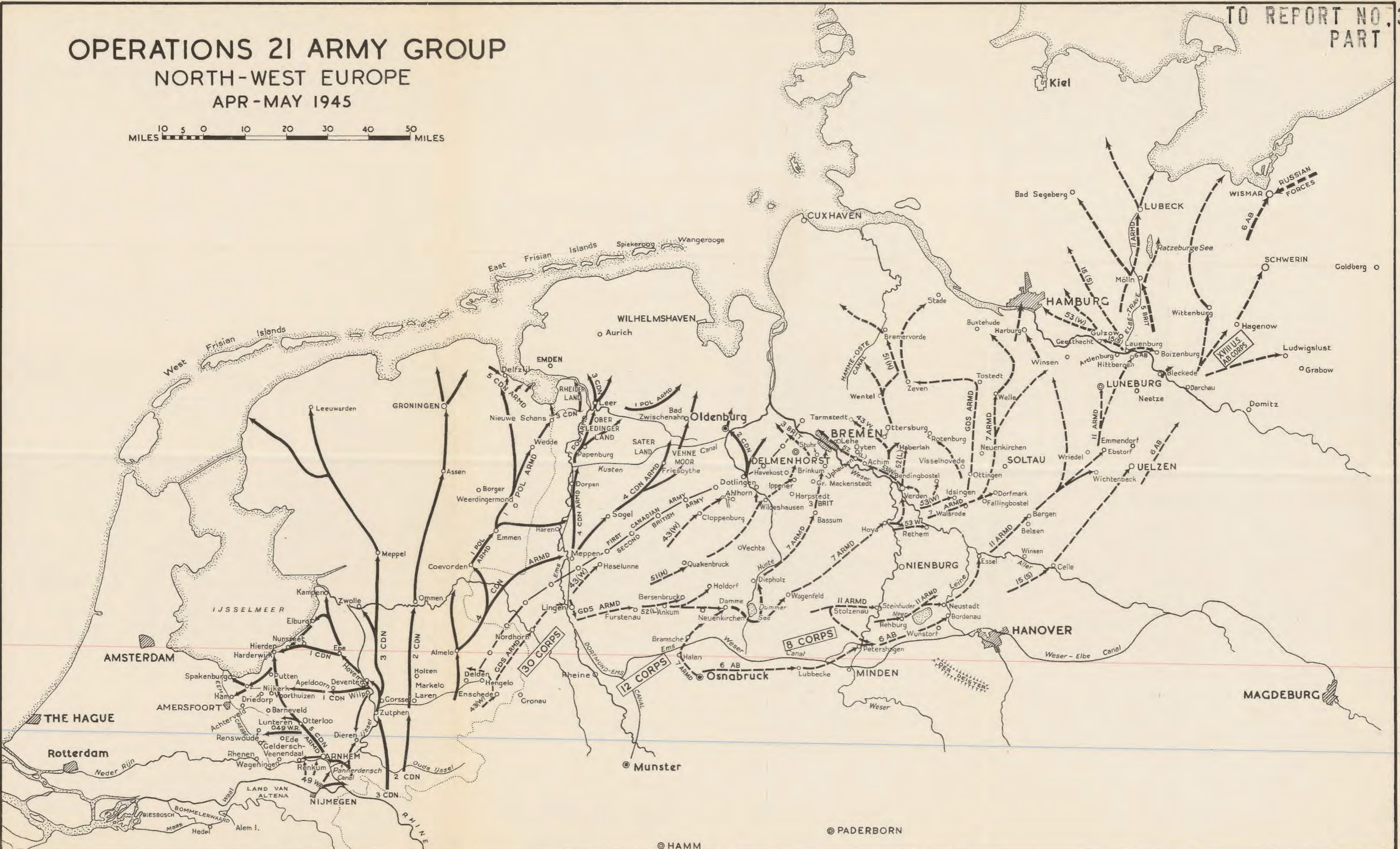
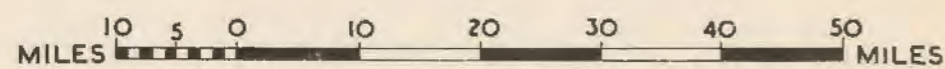
2 CDN INF DIV

10 APR 45

MILE 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 MILES



OPERATIONS 21 ARMY GROUP NORTH-WEST EUROPE APR - MAY 1945



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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
CANCELLED

PART II

THE OPERATIONS OF FIRST
CDN, ARMY, 12 - 19 APR 45

DECLASSIFIED
AUTHORITY: DHD 3-12

BY QAC FOR DHIST NDHQ

DATE: NOV 10 1986

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DATE: NOV 10 1986

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April - May 1945.

PART II

The Operations of First
Cdn Army, 12-19 Apr 45.

GENERAL CRERAR'S TASK, 11 APR 45

206. The task now assigned to First Cdn Army may be described in Field Marshal Montgomery's own words.

The aim of 21 Army Group remained to reach the line of the Elbe in our sector, and to reduce the ports of Bremen and Hamburg. Now that the Allies would not be so relatively strong in the northern sector, it was to be anticipated that these tasks would take longer than I had previously hoped, and Second Army would require to watch for the security of its southern flank. I decided to establish an intermediate phase in our advance to the Elbe on the line of the Weser, Aller and Leine rivers. While Second Army advanced to this line, Canadian Army was to clear north-east Holland and the Emden-Wilhelmshaven peninsula.

(Montgomery: Normandy to the Baltic as above, p. 210-211)

As has already been seen, the intermediate phase by Second Army had been completed. (See paras 195-198 to Part I of this report.) General Crerar's part, however, though well advanced, was to require another three weeks of full-hearted effort, and some of it was to include some very bloody fighting indeed.

207. The morning of 11 Apr found the staff at Canadian Army Headquarters busier than usual, for on this day the first offensive into the western Netherlands was to be launched as a prelude to the full scale employment of Lt-Gen Foulkes' 1 Cdn Corps. It was also to be a significant day for Lt-Gen Simonds, whose 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Div's were advancing towards the North Sea between the Ijssel and Ems Rivers. For the armour, the day was notable too, but in an adverse way; both Maj-Gen Maczek and Maj-Gen Vokes (the latter especially) were finding themselves in country which offered little in the choice of tactical routes. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/F; Docket I: 2 Cdn Corps Summary of Ops & Activities 8-14 Apr 45, paras 3, 4)

THE ASSAULT ACROSS THE IJSSSEL RIVER BY 1 CDN INF DIV,
11 APR 45*

208. Exactly at 1630 hours 11 Apr the first Buffaloes slithered down into the waters of the Ijssel carrying the

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000 Sheet 33 - Zutphen, Sheet 40 - Arnhem: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheet P1 - Bocholt, also Appx "D".

Seaforths and the P.P.C.L.I. on the left and right respectively.* The enemy artillery reacted immediately, shelling Gorssel (9501) and the nearby loading areas, but it appeared that until the actual moment of the attack the enemy had suspected nothing, perhaps being led astray by the simulated attacks staged by 3 Cdn Inf Div north of Deventer and south of Zutphen. After short engagements with the enemy three out of the four assaulting companies were on their objectives very quickly. The right company of P.P.C.L.I. had some difficulty but overcame it, capturing some prisoners and one German tank. By 1800 hours the initial stage of the operation was completed, and both battalions were beginning to exploit forward from the bridgehead. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 11 Apr 45)

Shelling during this period was not as heavy as that experienced in previous battles in Italy, but the bridge site had been accurately registered and the left Buffalo ferry service was under observed fire. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Docket III: Op "CANNONSHOT", 11 Apr-8 May 45, Folio 2 "2 Cdn Inf Bde report on Ops", para 13)

By 2100 hours the infantrymen had enlarged the bridgehead** but were meeting heavy resistance from determined Germans who were in no mind to yield the dyke, which runs north parallel to the river through the villages of Wilp (9104) and Hoven (9009). The engineers, bothered considerably by shelling, were working furiously at the bridge site. At 2330 hours they had the bridge open for traffic, and the searchlight troop followed by 2 Cdn Inf Bde headquarters were the first troops across. The first tanks crossed by class 40 raft at 0300 hours. (Ibid: Folio 1, Summary of Operations from R. Ijssel to R. Ems). L. Edmn R. joined the rest of the brigade in the bridgehead at midnight (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit).

209. During the night P.P.C.L.I. met considerable resistance from infantry supported by tanks and artillery, especially around Wilp, but this resistance was beaten down, and at 0530 hours the battalions of 1 Cdn Inf Bde were on the way across the river. By 0830 hours the Canadians had twenty-three tanks on the west side of the river and some of the smoke-screen vehicles had also crossed. At 0900 hours the bridgehead was considered well and truly established and at 1015 hours 1 Cdn Inf Bde started the second phase of the attack. At this time there were thirty-five tanks in the bridgehead ready to help the division forward. (1 Cdn Inf Div, Summary of Ops from R. Ijssel to R. Ems, op cit, p. 3)

210. The first troops of 1 Cdn Inf Bde to move forward were 48 Highrs, who advanced through P.P.C.L.I., and by noon were five kilometres inland from the original crossing. (ibid). R.C.R. were close behind, and Hast and P.E.R. were in reserve in the bridgehead. At this stage, with 1 Cdn Inf Bde fanning out north and west and 2 Cdn Inf Bde striking southwest, it was necessary to bring over Carlt & York R. to fill in the gap so created, and to make the bridgehead secure. Crossing the river

* See Para 190 to Part I of this Report.

** See Appx "D".

at 1400 hours the Carletons were held up until Seaforth of C. had used Wasps to clear the wooded estate south of Wilp. Carlt & York R. relieved Seaforth of C. and P.P.C.L.I.'s companies in the vicinity of Wilp. Meanwhile, L. Edmn R. had passed through P.P.C.L.I. and moved south with tank support. By midnight, 1 Cdn Inf Bde had pushed out to Twelloo (8805) on the Deventer - Apeldoorn railway, about three miles west of Deventer. This was the brigade objective for the second phase of the attack. (Ibid)

1 CDN INF DIV PASSES FROM LT-GEN SIMONDS' COMMAND,
13 APR 45*

211. At 0600 hours on 13 Apr the Division passed from Lt-Gen Simonds' command back to 1 Cdn Corps, but it is necessary to follow its fortunes a little further in order to understand its task while with 2 Cdn Corps. In the Divisional Commander's own words:

On the night 13/14 Apr a change in plan was necessary. The original plan visualized 49 (W.R.) Inf Div crossing to the west of Arnhem, but they crossed east of the city (and caught the enemy off balance thereby). I received orders to link up with 49 (W.R.) Div and to open the road down the west side of the river Ijssel, so that a bridge could be built from Zutphen. This additional job was given to 2 Cdn Inf Bde, though my original intention had been to keep 2 Cdn Inf Bde in reserve, since they would have done enough by making the assault crossing and establishing the bridge-head...**

... with the committing of 2 Cdn Inf Bde on this task, we were facing three ways at once. 1 Cdn Inf Bde on the right with an exposed northern flank, was moving to Apeldoorn; 3 Cdn Inf Bde in the centre was moving up to the canal, south of the town, with their eyes on the main objective; 2 Cdn Inf Bde was clearing south and linking up with 49 (W.R.) Inf Div.

(AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket II: Comment on operation "Cannon-shot" by Maj-Gen H. Foster)

This left General Foster in the unenviable position of having all three of his brigades fully committed, and no reserve for emergencies on his northern flank. Fortunately the enemy was equally extended and unable to take advantage of the situation. (Ibid)

* Reference maps as for para 208.

** 49 (W.R.) Inf Div crossed the Ijssel at 2240 hours 12 Apr assisted by landing craft of Naval Force "T" AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/F Docket II: Folio I, Lectures, Brig C.C. Mann, C.B.E., D.S.O.

THE DASH TO THE NORTH SEA BY 3 CDN INF DIV,
11-18 APR 45^x

212. Having passed the responsibility of his effort into Western Holland to 1 Cdn Corps, Lt-Gen Simonds was now able to turn about and devote his entire attention to the continuation of the armoured advances on Oldenburg and Leer and the clearance of the coastal areas on his northern flank. On the morning of 11 Apr, a new operation instruction had been sent out to the brigades and supporting units of 3 Cdn Inf Div. 7 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to concentrate in the area then held by 9 Cdn Inf Bde north of Deventer, leaving the town to Q.O.R. of C. The brigade was to be prepared to pass through 9 Cdn Inf Bde to take Zwolle (8835), or at least to regain contact with the enemy. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to hold the Zutphen area until released by the establishment of 1 Cdn Inf Div's bridgehead across the Ijssel. Then it would concentrate and prepare to pass through 7 Cdn Inf Bde to continue the advance. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to lead the division up to the line Wijhe (9122) - Raalte (0022), with a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt scouting ahead of the brigade. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, April 1945, Appx 5: 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 4). The plan met with great success: the reconnaissance, working ahead of the brigade, met with little opposition, and in the afternoon carriers of Nth N.S. Highrs clattered into Raalte (0022). With the enemy showing no sign of trying to hold up the advance, conditions were ripe for a dash northward like that just made by 4 Cdn Armd Bde. The brigade was ordered to regroup and form the divisional advance guard for a dash to Leeuwarden (7013). (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Apr 45). A squadron of twenty Rem gun-towers borrowed from 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt acted as Kangaroos to help lift the infantry forward, and those not able to squeeze aboard hitch-hiked on the tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt and the vehicles of 14 Cdn Fd Regt. The battalions were to advance in the order S.D. & G. Highrs, Nth N.S. Highrs and H.L.I. of C. (Ibid; AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 32, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, and Regimental History 6 Cdn Anti-Tank Regiment; p. 29)

213. At 0830 hours on 12 Apr the cavalcade rolled out to the north^{xx} with a screen of the reconnaissance regiment exploring the main axis and sweeping out a mile on either side. Craters and blown bridges made progress slow at first; just south of Heino (9727) a blown bridge halted the advance until Brigadier Rockingham himself found a light bridge to the east of the main road. This he hastily ordered strengthened with planks and a tank was ordered to try it out. "Very gingerly" the crew commander eased his massive vehicle out on to the span, and across the stream. Soon the whole squadron was across and advancing on Heino with S.D. & G. Highrs, who had scrambled over in typical infantry manner. Together tanks and infantry cleared the town. (Ibid). With Heino taken the brigade resumed its advance toward the next possible obstacle, the Overijsselsch Canal. Giving Zwolle a wide berth, the troops went up the

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000
Sheets P1 - Bocholt, N1 - Almelo, M1 -
Groningen; G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000
Sheet 6 - Leeuwarden. Also Appx "A".

xx See Appx "A".

secondary road which runs north from Heino. The bridge had been demolished but by 1640 hours one company of S.D. & G. Highrs crossed on the broken remains. Soon a substantial bridgehead had been created. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 12 Apr 45; and Appx 5, Marked Map No. 8). Then the enemy had a final fling:

Before any supporting arms could be brought over, the enemy counter attacked in a most determined manner, supported by armour. An hour's most confused fighting ensued in the growing darkness before the attack was repulsed.

(AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 19, p. 6)

Subsequent examination of the tracks left revealed that the attacking vehicles were a scout car, an armoured car and a self-propelled gun. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 13 Apr 45)

9 CDN INF BDE CROSSES THE VECHT RIVER, 13 APR 45*

214. Next morning H.L.I. of C. took the lead, passing through S.D. & G. Highrs and advanced toward Dalfsen (9935) (which the reconnaissance regiment had already entered) on the Vecht river, about three miles further north. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and S.D. & G. Highrs, 13 Apr 45). The only bridge (9935) across the Vecht proved to be blown, but this was not allowed to delay the unopposed advance. The men of the rifle companies crossed the river on a barge which was placed to fill the gap in the bridge, while anti-tank guns, carriers and jeeps were ferried across on civilian barges at a point a thousand yards downstream. The Dutch civilians gave the liberators a rousing reception, complete with brass band. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and H.L.I. of C., 13 Apr 45). No further advance was practical that day, for the engineers had great difficulty in bridging the river. However, sappers of 16 Cdn Fd Coy succeeded in finishing this 185-foot bridge at 2359 hours, so that the advance could go on in the morning. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 22, R.C.E.)

215. The following day, 14 Apr, the brigade started north again from Dalfsen, H.L.I. of C. acting as vanguard. Orders were to by-pass any opposition, leaving it to be dealt with by the other brigade following up. (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs, 14 Apr 45; H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Apr 45). The advance was described thus by the diarist of Nth N.S. Highrs:

There was no fighting. The enemy was retreating from northern Holland in headlong flight and the 9 Canadian Infantry Brigade was rolling through. The Dutch people were nearly going crazy, lining the route and cheering and waving. There was orange bunting everywhere.

(W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 14 Apr 45)

* Reference maps: As for paragraph 212 and G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets 3503 - Heino, 3403 - Dalfsen, 3303 - Meppel. G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000 Sheet 11 - Heerenveen, Sheet 6 - Leeuwarden, Appx "A".

Brigade headquarters recorded the following:

The reception we are now receiving is greater than any we have met in any previous experiences in Holland. The whole countryside is blurred with orange flags, banners and designs. In some cases the people are so anxious to greet you it is impossible to pass traffic through.

(W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Apr 45)

S.D. & G. Highrs were particularly impressed by the number of people wearing the traditional costume:

The countryside shows little evidence of warfare (sic) apart from a few burning buildings. South of Meppel we were intrigued to see groups of girls and women wearing the native costume affected by girls in the Province of Friesland. They, and the men dressed in blue jeans and jackets represent what our Primers at School encouraged us to expect to see throughout Holland. Nevertheless such a sight in the wake of battle struck us as looking somewhat incongruous and anachronistic: they looked like groups of Hollywood extras relaxing from work in a period film.

(W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 14 Apr 45)

No sign of the enemy was seen except the usual demolished bridges. Meppel (9556) had been passed, and the Nth N.S. Highrs who had taken over the task of advance guard entered Heerenveen (7886). The enemy still covered the main bridge in town. As the Canadians appeared they fired one burst, before withdrawing, and "D" Coy crossed and established a bridgehead without trouble. The bridge was not destroyed, and although the machinery which swung it had been damaged, the civilian bridge-tender succeeded in closing it by hand. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and Nth N.S. Highrs, 14 Apr 45)

216. Meanwhile, the Dutch were helping their liberators. As recorded by S.D. & G. Highrs:

...Two civilians turn up at this H.Q. wishing to speak with Col Gemmel. They are representatives of the local underground, and we learn from them that they had received a telephone call from the leader of the underground in Leeuwarden who wishes to speak as soon as possible to the first British Officer to arrive in this area. Col Gemmel, as a result, takes his jeep to a power station, directly opposite from "D" Coy Headquarters where a secret line to Leeuwarden is disclosed. Here after much endeavour Col Gemmel fails to contact Leeuwarden. At 2100 hrs he tries once again this time with success. The underground is able to reveal much interesting information: the conditions of the roads and bridges, and the disposition of the troops remaining on Leeuwarden. From this secret telephone communication Col Gemmel is enabled to supply Bde with information pertinent to this Bde's attack on the city.

(W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs,
addenda to entry, 14 Apr 45)

217. The next morning the brigade group got under way again, led by H.L.I. of C. Once again no resistance was encountered but the column was brought to a halt by a blown bridge (749916) outside Haskerdijken (7491). While the Engineers were at work, the G.O.C. ordered Brigadier Rockingham to send S.D. & G. Highrs around to the west on a route discovered by the reconnaissance regiment. Passing through Joure (6987), the Glengarrians rejoined the main road at Akkrum (7296). Meanwhile the brigade commander, the C.R.A.'s representative and the brigade I.O. had gone around to the east in search of a route and reached Drachten (0002) (in spite of "the cheering populace of each town and village"). Here the Brigadier instructed the local underground leader to telephone every village on the road to Leeuwarden and find out if the route was free of blown bridges. "This was completed very quickly, a credit to the underground organization." North N.S. Highrs were sent northward on this eastern route and entered the town about midnight to find that elements of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt were in occupation. Brigadier Rockingham had already proceeded into town, to be greeted by a "mass of madly cheering people". (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Apr 45). The following day a carrier patrol of H.L.I. of C. located a last pocket of over 300 enemy at Harlingen (4411), which is situated on the coast west of Leeuwarden. The attack on this town was launched with tank support at 2000 hours, and by 0430 hours the next morning the town was in our hands. Only a few of the garrison got away westwards over the Ijsselmeer Causeway (0102). At the cost of two casualties H.L.I. of C. had taken the town and 400^x odd prisoners. (Ibid, 16 and 17 Apr 45)

OPERATIONS OF 7 CDN INF BDE, 11-18 APR 45^{xx}

218. Meanwhile as 9 Cdn Inf Bde had rolled on up the Leeuwarden road, followed by 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Brigadier Gibson's troops attended to the task of mopping up. From the concentration area occupied north-east of Deventer on 11 Apr, 1 C. Scot R. was ordered to relieve H.L.I. of C. and Nth N.S. Highrs on the following day and to hold the line Kletterstraat (8913) - Hengvorden (9014) Beeste Mars (9416) north of Deventer. This the Scottish did by 0930 hours. Next R. Wpg Rif was ordered to occupy Raalte after 9 Bde had left it. All this time the squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt was sweeping the triangle Deventer - Raalte - Zwolle, and from these probings it was established that the enemy still occupied Olst (8917) and Wijhe (9122). (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde & units, 11-12 Apr 45). These two places, however were not to hold up our progress long, for on 13 Apr R. Wpg Rif was told to take Wijhe while 1 C. Scot R. cleared Olst. The Winnipegs sent two companies onto Wijhe and by 1300 hours were firm in the place. Against Olst, 1 C. Scot R. had little difficulty except for mines. At this point Regina Rif were brought up to take positions between Raalte and Wijhe and then to move on Zwolle. (Ibid: 12-13 Apr 45)

* 246 Naval Flak Bty, 223 Airforce Sigs Regt (3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 98, 18 Apr 45)

** Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheet N1 - Almelo; G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000 Sheet 27 - Hatten; G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets 3602 - Wijhe, 3603 - Raalte, Appx "A".

219. It is obvious that the enemy in Zwolle must have appreciated the new danger which he faced once 9 Cdn Inf Bde had by-passed the town to the east. As a result, he thinned out his troops rapidly, and by the morning of 14 Apr Regina Rif and R. de Chaud, which had been placed under command for this attack, found that their patrols into the town were not being opposed. Much of the credit for the easing of resistance in the old town may be given to a single intrepid soldier of R. de Chaud. This man's intervention was probably the reigning factor in the German's decision to get out of Zwolle. Pte L. Major had volunteered during the previous night to enter the town in order to locate the enemy positions, with a view to avoiding the further loss of Dutch lives. His sole companion on the venture was killed; but Pte Major spent six hours in the town, established contact with the local resistance, and led patrols of these underground fighters against the enemy, with the result that by morning the enemy garrison, menaced from inside and from outside, were forced to withdraw as their position became untenable. Posting patrols of his newly acquired Dutch friends at strategic points he returned to his unit at 0500 hours on 14 Apr, carrying the body of his dead companion. In the words of the citation for his Distinguished Conduct Medal: "His gallant action was instrumental in enabling the mopping up on 14 Apr, 1945, to be done successfully without a shot being fired". (Citation for D.C.M., D.106190 Pte Major, L., Le Regiment de la Chaudière: Canada Gazette, 11 Aug 45; C.A.R.O. No. 5953, 11 Aug 45). With Zwolle safely in our hands, R. de Chaud returned to 8 Cdn Inf Bde while Regina Rif moved into the area between the town and the River Ijssel. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report No. 26, op cit; also W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Apr 45)

220. The unanticipated piece of good luck in getting into Zwolle so easily, naturally made some changes in the brigade's plans necessary. R. Wpg Rif was instructed to immediately send two of its companies to occupy the area vacated by R. de Chaud, and 1 C. Scot R. was moved up to the southern outskirts of Zwolle. (Ibid). Now as the task of the brigade was becoming more clearly defined, an operation order was produced by brigade headquarters. The intention was that the brigade group should clear and deny to the enemy the line of the Ijssel and the Ijsselmeer from Deventer to Blokzijl (7860), which is on the east shore of the Ijsselmeer west of Meppel. For the purpose the area was divided into four sectors under separate commands, with a mobile brigade reserve. A battalion group took over each sector, and a mobile reserve was established in the area of Raalte. This consisted of one company of 1 C. Scot R., a battery of 12 Cdn Fd Regt (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx 7: 7 Cdn Inf Bde O. No. 1, and Appx 8 Amendments thereto). The gap between Deventer and Zwolle was filled by "Ross Force", a mixed bag of warriors under command of Lt-Col R.M. Ross, commanding officer of C.H. of O. (M.G.). His command consisted of his own unit and three anti-tank batteries, as well as a squadron of armoured cars of 1 Cdn Armd Car Regt. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V: Report No. 26, Operations, 7 Cdn Inf Bde: and W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Apr 45)*

221. The enemy at this time showed little sign of active interest in our doings. A few nuisance patrols crossed the Ijssel between Deventer and Zwolle, only to be severely checked by our counter patrols. The next four days saw continued

* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheet 1A - Leeuwarden.

sweeping patrol action. On 15 Apr as R. Wpg Rif took over Hasselt (8846) to the north of Zwolle, Regina Rif occupied Steenwijk (9066) leaving 1 C. Scot R. at Zwolle. Each of the battalion sectors was carefully swept by fast mobile patrols, and by the night of 17 Apr things were so quiet that Brigadier Gibson's headquarters had turned to a less warlike routine of daily parades, of arms drill and the general cleaning up of equipment. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 15-17 Apr 45)

8 & 9 CDN INF BDE'S OPERATIONS, 14-18 APR 45*

222. To Brigadier J.A. Robert's group (following in the tracks of 9 Cdn Inf Bde as far as (Heerenveen) had fallen the task of clearing the enemy from the area westwards to the river and as far north as the causeway between Makkum (4298) and Zurig (4204). The first village on this axis was Sneek (6095), but once again the advantage of working in a country with brave and friendly inhabitants became apparent:

8 C.I.B. was in possession of the most recent defences of Sneek, as well as information as to the telephone communications and the water supply. This valuable information, which was provided by the Dutch underground, is only one example of the assistance given by them to the Canadians throughout the fighting in Holland.

(The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment 1940-1945, Royal Canadian Artillery, p. 126)

For the clearing operation the infantry battalions operated separately, each with the support of a battery of 13 Cdn Fd Regt. On the evening of 15 Apr, patrols of R. de Chaud entered Sneek and found the underground in control. The next morning, N. Shore R. pushed through the cheering populace of Sneek, and advanced on Bolsward (5198). (W.D., N. Shore R. 16 Apr 45). Here it was the same story - the underground was in control; the Hun had fled:

Under the bright warm sky, the picturesque town of canals and simple buildings was a pleasant background to crowds of happy citizens.

(Ibid, p. 127)

223. Q.O.R. of C. were not as lucky. After spending a restful night in Heerenveen, the Queen's Own embussed in its T.C.Vs. and headed for the causeway which runs across the Ijsselmeer. The trip was uneventful until "B" Company hit the enemy at Wons (4501). After a brisk fire fight, however, the Germans gave up that village and "A" Coy was passed through. Real trouble was not long in starting. The infantry soon came under another hail of fire and, despite the assistance provided by tanks and flame throwers, the troops could not make much headway towards Zurig (4204). Things were slightly easier on the flanks. "D" Coy took Witmarsum on the right and "C" Coy on the left was able to take Kornwerd (4201). All through the night individual companies were in action against small groups of enemy, many of whom were trying frantically to escape. On 17 Apr, Gooium (4402), Pingjum (4604) and Zurig all fell, but only after a good

* See Appx "A".

deal of fighting in the course of which more than a few Germans fell under the fire of our resolute infantry and tanks. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 16-17 Apr 45). The fire from the artillery battery (22 Cdn Fd Bty) also accounted for a good number of our opponents and in this area the battery had the opportunity of doing crash action, an enlivening bit of routine so assiduously practiced in training but scarcely ever used for actual combat to date. (The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment, op cit, p. 127-128)

224. All this time the newly liberated Netherlanders, were having the time of their lives:

Nearly all the gun positions had a similar story to tell about the crowds of people who invaded the area to look in wonderment at the equipment, to ask for cigarettes and chocolate or just to be near activity. It was the people's first daze of liberation and they made the best of it. Baker Troop was a typical example. Here the crowds around the guns and the command post were so great that BSM Hooper was forced to rope off restricted areas so that the troop could function properly. Even at that some pretty "young thing" was sure to trip over the tannoy wire and break communications to one of the guns. Of course the kitchen was a great attraction. To see what the men ate and perhaps obtain some of it! Many had not seen white bread for five years nor tasted the weird and wonderful dishes which were just another monotonous meal to the soldiers. Two of the feature events for the spectators were the firing of the guns and the rides in the exchange crew carrier. The firing of a gun meant a chance for the braver ones to pull the firing lever and, also, meant another cartridge case for the souvenir hunter to take home. The rides in the carrier were shared by all the teen-aged kids of the district. With flags flying and arms waving the carrier would run regular trips along the road to the nearest town.

(Ibid, p. 128)

225. Meanwhile most of the Germans not yet rounded up were still trying to escape by boat or raft from the small port of Lemmer (6374),* upon which R. de Chaud advanced from Sneek. N. Shore R. sent patrols to Stavoren (4098) and over the stretches of land to the southeast, but encountered no enemy. The following day saw the end of operations in that area when Makkum (4398) was liberated and the last German retreated to fortified positions far out on the Causeway connecting Friesland with North Holland. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 16-18 Apr 45). The fight for Makkum which began at 1400 hours 18 Apr was short but spectacular. Two farms on the eastern outskirts were known to be well defended and against these N. Shore R. quickly laid on a set piece attack, supported by tanks and wasps. It was completely successful with only very light casualties to our infantry, but the enemy's loss was considerable. Eleven Germans were killed and 186 taken prisoner. Having completed its task N. Shore R. pulled back its main force to Sneek, leaving two companies to patrol the coastline. (W.D., N. Shore R., 18 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summaries op cit, Isum No. 122, 19 Apr 45)

* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000
Sheet 2A - Den Helder

226. The resistance of the past few days had mostly been localized to the west coast. Although Q.O.R. of C. had had to fight to reach the coast and H.L.I. of C. had met some resistance at Harlingen (4411), on the whole these posts had been quickly cleaned up. In so far as 3 Cdn Inf Div was concerned, operation "PLUNDER" was over for that formation on the evening of 18 Apr. At that time 7 Cdn Inf Bde was directed eastwards towards Groningen to relieve 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Cdn Inf Bde assumed responsibility for the south-west section of Friesland, with a northern boundary along the Harlingen - Leeuwarden road, the eastern boundary being the Leeuwarden - Heerenveen road. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was detailed to watch the coast-line north of the Harlingen - Leeuwarden - Buitenpost (9318) Railway. (W.Ds., 7, 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 17-18 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report No. 19, Op "PLUNDER", op cit)

THE WORK OF THE SUPPORTING ARMS, 2-18 APR 45

227. It is only fitting that special mention be made of the work of some of the units which supported Maj-Gen Keebler's infantrymen during this brilliant advance from Zutphen to the sea. Certainly the divisional reconnaissance unit had excelled itself in terrain which, though well intersected with fair roads, was also crisscrossed with dykes, ditches and canals. Yet, despite these obstacles, 7 Cdn Recce Regt had carried out its task of forward and flank reconnaissance to the tremendous advantage of the general advance northward. The divisional artillery had also maintained its usual high standard of efficiency. The "mediums"* especially had scored notable success against the German armour and on one occasion when the "five-fives" engaged three enemy tanks, one was hit directly and destroyed, another was disabled while the third lost heart completely and fled from the scene. The anti-tank and light anti-aircraft regiments had not been so often confronted with chances to ply their trade. The absence of the Luftwaffe overhead and the fast diminishing threat of German armour in Maj-Gen Keebler's sector robbed these specialists of additional "bags". They were, nevertheless, not kept idle. On various days one could find anti-tank and light ack-ack troops holding vital points as infantry and guarding the long lines of communication occasioned by the rapidity of the advance. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report, No. 19, as above)

228. By far the busiest of the supporting arms were the engineers, who had been kept constantly busy erecting bridges so that our attacks could pass on. Regardless of the fact that the enemy had loosely sown hundreds of thousands of mines along the east bank of the Ijssel river, ninety per cent of the sappers' time had been spent on bridging operations. Most of their work had been carried out under fire, although after the capture of Zwolle, much of this interference ceased. The engineers' record of achievement is set down thus:

Between the 29th of Mar when the formation built its first bridge west of the Rhine, and the 17th Apr when the last bridge of the operation was completed, the Divisional Engineers built 40 bridges, 29 Bailey bridges of which a third were 80 feet or over including a 200 foot Bailey pontoon bridge, and 11 improvised

* Attached to the Divisional Artillery.

bridges. There was, as well, in the same period, a good deal of work to be done on filling craters, clearing mines and other normal routine engineer tasks.

(Ibid)

229. It would take many pages to describe fully the contribution of the other supporting arms and services (the C.H. of O. (M.G.), the Signals, R.C.A.S.C., R.C.O.C., R.C.E.M.E., R.C.A.M.C., and the Provost Corps.). C.H. of O. (M.G.) had special cause for regret. During the initial operations across the Rhine, the expenditure of Mk VIII* and 4.2 ammunition had been so heavy, that as an official report states:

...the allotment for the month of April was reduced to 90 rounds per gun per day and 10 rounds per mortar per day. This allotment later proved to be so scanty that forward Companies were unable to shoot Germans seen moving about on their front.

(Ibid, p. 10)

On the other hand the R.C.A.S.C., whose tasks are always so strenuous and exacting, had more than enough work. Additional tasks arose with the ever lengthening supply lines;

The transportation of prisoners of war took many vehicles. The fact that the momentum of the advance was maintained implies not only long hours of driving, but also of maintenance, to keep vehicles roadworthy.

(Ibid)

230. Ordnance difficulties had not existed to any great extent. Dumps placed well forward had been able to cater to all needs. In fact, so well organized was the business of equipment supply far back that stores were rarely lacking. Good basic organization can also be put down as the reason for successful operation by the R.C.A.M.C. Evacuation of casualties, as our troops pushed on to the north, was a long and slow business, but never at a morale-breaking standstill that the Germans had experienced for so long. Equally hardworking in its contribution towards the clearing of Friesland was the Provost Corps, who rarely failed to solve traffic problems despite the numerous bottle-necks, detours around demolitions and other such obstacles. Their main difficulty had been on account of the large numbers of prisoners; although on more than one occasion the divisional cages had brimmed over capacity, efficiency of the work at hand had not suffered. (Ibid, p. 11-12)

* Mark VIII - a special "streamlined" bullet for use only with medium machine guns.

2 CDN INF DIV BREAKS AWAY, 11 APR 45

231. It may safely be assumed that on 11 Apr the enemy opposing 2 Cdn Inf Div still had four choices. He could:

- (a) Join the garrison in Western Holland.
- (b) Surrender on the spot.
- (c) Be driven back into the sea.
- (d) Head westwards to Germany.

The pace set by the advance of Maj-Gen Keebler's division from the very beginning was soon to cut short the first choice and many Germans adopted the second choice rather than accept the third. Those who remained on 2 Cdn Inf Div's front and had hopes of getting back to Germany under whatever withdrawal programme might have existed began to cast fearful glances over their left shoulder, only to find that the Poles were closing on the mouth of the Ems River. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Maj-Gen Matthews troops were able to cover considerable territory, much of it against a totally disorganized enemy who apparently, after reviewing the present situation, decided that there was not much point in putting up a fight. (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summaries, op cit, Nos 285, 286, dated 11-12 Apr 45)

232. 2 Cdn Inf Div had not been held up long at Ommen (1036). Early on 11 Apr 5 Cdn Inf Bde tapped the defences of the village and, though most of the bridges into the place were out of commission, R.H.C. had no trouble moving in. At that point Maj-Gen Matthews conferred with Brigadier McGill and ordered him to form a firm base around Ommen while 6 Cdn Inf Bde, which was coming in from the right, took Balkbrug (0845) and swung north towards Groningen. The Commander of 5 Cdn Inf Bde then moved R.H.C. into Varsen (0836) to the west of Ommen, R. de Mais into Arrien (1237) to the east, and placed Calg Highrs in Ommen itself with orders to follow elements of 8 Cdn Rocce Regt and 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt up the axis Ommen - Balkbrug and to take the town if they reached it before Brigadier Allard's men. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde 11 Apr 45). The Calgary companies were briefed and ready to move off by 0900 hours but obviously could not do so until the battalion's wheeled and tracked supporting vehicles were in position. Thus the infantry was forced to wait until the river was bridged. The engineers pushed their efforts the limit and at 1130 hours a Class 40 structure was ready for the "F" echelon vehicles and tanks to cross the Vocht. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 11 Apr 45)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083 Holland 1:50,000 Sheets
22 - Almelo, 17 - Beilen, 12 - Assen, ; -
7 - Groningen: G.S.G.S. 4416 Central Europe
1:100,000 Sheets N1 - Almelo, M1 - Groningen,
G.S.G.S. 4414 Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets
3404 - Ommen, 3304 - Kerkenbosch, 3204 -
Hoogeveen, 3104 - Dwingelo, 3004 - Kloosterveen,
2904 - Veenhuizen, 2804 - Roden,
2704 - Zuidhorn, 2605 - Beilen, 3005, Assen,
2905 - Zeien, 2805 - Haren, 2705 - Groningen,

** See Appx "A"

233. At 1400 hours 11 Apr "B" Coy Calg Highrs mounted on the carriers of its Support Company, began its journey north while the other rifle companies followed on foot. Balkburg was reached without incident and found clear, whereupon the carriers deposited their loads and turned about to shuttle in the rest of the battalion. The move was completed by 1700 hours and the brigade settled down to hold and wait for the next order, for by that time 6 Cdn Inf Bde's advance from the Gramsbergen area had carried Brigadier Allard's battalions into the spearhead position. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 11 Apr 45)

*
6 CDN INF BDE CROSSES THE ORANJE CANAL, 11-12 Apr 45

234. Led by Camerons of C., 6 Cdn Inf Bde got to Balkbrug (shortly after the Calgaries had entered the place) and from there the columns swung to the north while the recce squadrons raced ahead. With fair promise of a break-through, Brigadier Allard urged the Camerons of C. to go all out past Kerkenbosch (1154) on to Terhorst (1772), a small village south of Beilen (1874). From positions at Terhorst, Lt-Col A.A. Kennedy sent out his patrols to reconnoitre the bridgesite over the Linthorst Homan Canal (1773), which lay across the line of advance. (W.D., Camerons of C., 11 Apr 45). Meanwhile both Fus M.R. and S. Sask R. had closed up to the centre line and by 2200 hours were bivouaced along the main road west of Terhorst and around Spier (1469) where elements of the French S.A.S. were contacted and given assistance in rounding up prisoners and collecting their wounded. Out on the flanks 8 Cdn Recce Regt had its scout cars probing the enemy's local line of resistance. The immediate problem was the capture of Beilen so that the canal south of it could be bridged, thus allowing the advance to continue. In order to do this Brigadier Allard's plan called for Fus M.R. to establish the initial bridgehead west of the village and push east to seize the place. Once this was accomplished Lt-Col V. Stott would lead the S. Sask R. through to form up on either side of the centre line and hold the base from which Camerons of C. were to thrust out for Hijken (1678). (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 12 Apr 45, serial 3548; also W.Ds., 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 11 Apr 45)

235. During the night 11/12 Fus M.R. assaulted across the canal and, having gained complete surprise, captured Beilen, but not without a sharp fight. The enemy had occupied the buildings covering the approaches to the village and there he met our men with machine guns and bazookas. It took the added support of the flame throwing Wasps to shift them out, but even then house-to-house fighting went on for well over two hours before the opposition was overcome. Some two hundred prisoners were taken by the French Canadians in the vicinity of Beilen. (W.D., Fus M.R. 12 Apr 45). Following this action, S. Sask R. pushed through and proceeded up the main axis to the next canal south of Halerbrug (1877), but here the bridge was found demolished. S. Sask R. at once set about finding another crossing place, this time about 4000 yards to the east (2277) in the area of Zwiggelter Veld (2277) where "A" & "B" Coys began crossing at 0730 hours. Within 90 minutes all its companies were safely over the water barrier against very light opposition. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, S. Sask R., 12 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, Apr 1945, 12 Apr, serial 3552)

236. Lt-Col Stott now decided to expand his bridgehead westwards towards the original main axis with all possible speed.

Reference maps as for para 231

The enemy had aroused himself however and before our troops could move forward some heavy support from the guns and mortars became necessary. As the hours passed and the infantrymen gained ground steadily, the engineers built a bridge (225773) at the crossing site. This was completed at about 1700 hours, by which time "B", "C" and "D" Coys had, after some hard fighting, reached their respective objectives. "B" now held a firm position astride the railway a thousand yards north of Halerbrug (1878), "C" Coy was around the main road junction (2178) in Werklust (214784), while "D" Coy, which had swung directly left from the crossing place, had followed the canal's northern bank to settle finally in Halerbrug itself. (W.D., S. Sask R., 12 Apr 45; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1945, Appx 5 Int Log 12 Apr, serials 100, 103). This last manoeuvre was assisted largely by the fact that the medium machine guns of Tor Scot R. (M.G.) had been supporting the infantry from positions on the south bank of the Canal. (Ibid Serials 60, 72, 75, 82, 93, 95)

237. Now that S. Sask R. was established across the obstacle, Fus M.R. were instructed to hold Beilen, while Camerons of C. (having also entered Beilen from the south) proceeded northwards to take over the village of Hijken (1678) from the men of Tor Scot R. (M.G.) who had seized the place earlier in the day. This take-over was completed by 2150 hours. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Camerons of C., Tor Scot R. (M.G.), 12 Apr 45). The day had been marked by scattered opposition and a series of delays caused mainly by blown bridges, yet despite all this the pace of the advance had not slackened to any extent. The build-up of the formations and units which were detailed to pass on through went on unhindered and by mid-afternoon 12 Apr Brigadier Cabeldu's 4 Cdn Inf Bde was concentrated near Westerbork (2473). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 12 Apr 45). At the same time, on either flank and well ahead of the main body, 8 Cdn Recce Regt and 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt felt out the routes. On the right Lt-Col B.M. Always's scout cars had contacted the Poles east of Westerbork, while on the left the armoured cars (Staghounds) had crossed the Assen-Meppel canal and surged on north-west to cut the main road to Steenwijk, a left jab which produced an unpleasant shock for the enemy. (W.Ds., 8 Cdn Recce Regt; 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 11-12 Apr 45; also History of The Royal Canadian Dragoons, p. 164-165-166; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log as above, 12 Apr 45, Serials 3634, 3641, 3644)

x

THE CAPTURE OF ASSEN BY 4 CDN INF BDE, 12 Apr 45

238. Brigadier Cabeldu's first objective was the town of Assen (2189). For the approach march Essex Scot was placed in the lead. At the same time R. Regt C. and R.H.L.I. were ordered to follow up along the main road Halerbrug - Assen and to be prepared to support the attack. It was during this move up that "D" Coy R.H.L.I. was temporarily detailed and assigned the novel role of guardians over a Jewish women's concentration camp (2480), which 8 Cdn Recce Regt had overrun some 4000 yards east of Hooghalen (1981). (Ibid, Serials 3643, 3647; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 12 Apr 45). First resistance was met at Hooghalen. The enemy was operating in small bazooka teams which would appear along the heavily mined road, release their deadly missiles at our vehicles, and then retire during the commotion which followed. It became a slow but costly journey.

x Reference maps as for para 231.

The supporting squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt lost two tanks and the Essex a jeep and several carriers. Late in the afternoon Brigadier Cabeldu ordered R.H.L.I. to relieve Lt-Col Pangnan's battalion at Hooghalen. Essex Scot was urged to press on following the main axis while R. Regt C. swung to the right in a wide hook calculated to take the defences of Assen from the right and rear. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, April 1945, serial 3668, also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 12 Apr 45; also 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 12 Apr 45)

239. A running fight continued all the way up to the southern outskirts of Assen, the enemy using his weapons skillfully at each obstacle. By carefully co-ordinated manoeuvres, however Lt-Col Pangnan secured a foothold on the edge of the town and began clearing the woods on his flanks. Meanwhile the "Royals", in Kangaroos, swept forward to the east of Assen, where 8 Cdn Recce Regt had reported little opposition. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Apr 45). During the night brigade headquarters found it difficult to keep in contact with the right hook. Communications were bad and added to this many of the vehicles (including 12 Kangaroos) broke down or became mired along the marshy roads. Nevertheless, the column worked its way past Anen (2483) and on to Rolde (2788). At Rolde Lt-Col R.M. Londrum stopped a while, while reconnaissance groups went out to explore to routes north and west of the town. (Ibid, 13 Apr 45) Leaving one company to hold Rolde, "A" Coy was sent on to seize Loon (2491). Here the enemy fired on the column but to no avail, the leading vehicles crashed on into the village with Brownings blazing. It provided a spectacular sight, the Kangaroos going in at 30 miles an hour with all guns in action. Opposition crumpled rapidly and the infantry scrambled out to consolidate. (Ibid)

240. There now occurred an incident which was to have considerable influence on the situation. West of the village of Loon (2491) there is a bridge (2391) across the Noord-Willems canal (this canal is the main water route leading north from Assen). This structure was fortunately seized intact enabling a force to cut the main axis at Leelo (2191), while another struck south towards Assen itself. It was at the main road - bridge north of the town that our troops and the enemy made a dramatic encounter, for as the Canadians appeared the Germans were about to blow up the bridge. In a short but heated action the enemy's engineers were "cut down" and only just in time, some of the enemy troops being killed at the switches they were about to throw. The bridge was thus saved and R. Regt C. entered the town to mop up. (Ibid, 13 Apr 45; also R. Regt C., 13 Apr 45). By this time Essex Scot was also well into the built - up section of the town and between them and the two infantry battalions netted a profitable dividend of 600 prisoners. It had been a good example of simple tactics; the German force completely surprised and beaten and many of the enemy whose task it had been to withdraw and fight other delaying actions, were out of the war. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Apr 45)

241. When Brigadier Cabeldu and his intelligence officer drove into Assen, liberation festivities were already under way:

The population literally were crazy with happiness over their liberation. Crowds cheered every vehicle. Women danced in the town parks and threw flowers to the passing troops. Those of the Bde bent on the more

* Refer to G.S.G.S. 4414 1:25,000 Sheets 3005 - Assen,
2905 - Zeien,

serious business of clearing the town had difficulty to keep a mind on the job in such surroundings.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Apr 45)

Those among the civilian population who had "backed the wrong horse" were now called on to pay their debts of dishonour, and members of the underground set about rounding up the collaborators and herding them off to gaol. (Ibid)

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THE APPROACHES TO GRONINGEN, 13 APR 45

242. The road to Groningen now lay open and it was decided to bring R.H.L.I. forward to take the lead. By 1100 hours 13 Apr, Lt-Col H.C. Arrell had his fighting companies in Assen, but it was 1215 hours before the forward elements were able to get clear of the cheering populace. The situation looked promising; on the left flank, "B" Sqn of the Royal Canadian Dragoons was "beating up" everything in sight and gathering in large numbers of prisoners; on the right the divisional reconnaissance cars were applying increasing pressure, while in the centre of the broad stretch of concrete road to Vries (2298) and Groningen the light infantrymen formed up to resume the journey north. (W.Ds., R.H.L.I., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 13 Apr 45)

243. Within one hour R.H.L.I. was in Vries and, resistance being negligible, the troops pressed on to the main highway junction at Ide (2202). At this point, the Hamilton unit was ordered to follow the western route through Eelde (2105) past the Paterswolder Lake (2108) and into the south-western corner of the city. The brigade commander had carefully appreciated the possibilities of each line of advance and decided that the left route presented fewer natural obstacles than the eastern route beyond the Noord-Willems Canal. Besides, on that flank 8 Cdn Recce Regt was making quite good progress against scattered opposition. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 13 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 13 Apr 45, serial 3924)

244. Along this western route R.H.L.I. met only slight opposition, and by 1600 hours tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt reported the the leading troops were about to enter the city. Brigadier Cabeldu ordered Lt-Col Arrell to seize all road and rail bridges in the western half of Groningen, adding that R. Regt C. would pass through to capture similar objectives to the east. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Apr 45). The enemy, however seemed reluctant to give up the city so easily, and, after about two hours of house fighting, it was clear that a set piece attack would be necessary. The brigade commander immediately came forward to size up the situation and after conferring with Lt-Col Arrell decided to put in a planned assault. It was appreciated that if this outer defensive crust could be broken through quickly, then the main defences might collapse and allow the original brigade plan to be carried out. (Ibid)

* Refer to G.S.G.S. 4414 1:25,000 Sheets 2805 - Haron,
2806 - Hoogezaand, 2705 - Groningen,
2706 - Woltersum, 2905 - Zeien, Appx "A"

245. At about 2000 hours 13 Apr, R.H.L.I. commenced its attack with the help of engineers of 2 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., whose task it was to clear the road of blocks and other obstruction. By darkness two companies had consolidated the south-western edge of the city and two others were pressing on toward the bridges. Resistance was by this time extremely heavy: there were snipers everywhere and together with the German machine gunners they took a severe toll. The street fighting continued all night -

...fierce hand to hand encounters - with our men having to clear every room of 4 storey apts and even then the snipers would come back again because our tps could not occupy so much space.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Apr 45)

Quite obviously greater pressure was needed to rout the defenders of Groningen and during the evening the brigadier told R. Regt C. to prepare for an assault across the canal on the right of R.H.L.I. the object being to seize the railway station and clear the canal banks. Meanwhile Essex Scot was moved up to the area of Eelde airport (2204), where, as reserve battalion, it awaited commitment. (Ibid and units, 13 Apr 45)

THE BATTLE OF GRONINGEN, 14 APR 45

246. Shortly after midnight 13/14 Apr R.H.L.I. reported that, although they had captured a bridge (214136) on their right, little progress was possible towards the canal north of the railway; for in that area resistance was extraordinarily heavy. As a result, R. Regt C. was ordered to use the recently won bridge instead of attempting the boat crossing previously arranged. At approximately 0200 hours the Royals got their leading infantry over the bridge and began to clear the railway yards and the station area. It was slow work, but by 0930 hours the bank of the main canal had been reached. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 13 Apr 45). At that time Maj-Gen Matthews came forward to confer with his brigadiers, and the plan for clearing the city was revised and discussed. 4 Cdn Inf Bde was given a limited area of responsibility which consisted of all of the built-up portion of Groningen south of the main canal. Brigadier McGill was to bring up his men and advance into the city from the west while the eastern part would be taken care of by 6 Cdn Inf Bde, which would come up on the following day through Haren (2409) and Helpman (2312) (Ibid). Accordingly Brigadier Cabellu readjusted his objectives. While R. Regt C. continued clearing the railroad area, Essex Scot would move to pass through eventually to the east, cut the Haren - Groningen road and link up with 6 Bde (Ibid).

247. By midday 14 Apr the areas occupied by R.H.L.I. and R. Regt C. were becoming quieter and the prisoners were literally pouring in. The Royals now dominated the main highway bridge north-east of the station yards but there still appeared to be much activity around the southern suburb of Helpman (2212). Shortly after midday Essex Scot began to pass through Lt-Col Lendrum's forward line of troops with "A" Company leading. Lt-Col Pangman's orders were to strike north across the bridge and then south towards Helpman where the enemy, who seemed to be

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414 Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets 2805 - Haren, 2705 - Groningen, Appx "B"

well established, was facing the proposed advance of 6 Cdn Inf Bde from the south. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 14 Apr 45). There now followed an intense bombardment of the area of Helpman, which lasted until approximately 1400 hours when "C" Coy Essex Scot and elements of 10 Cdn Arm'd Regt began to clear southwards. Meanwhile "A" Coy reinforced by "D" and "B" Coys contained the enemy around the bridge to the north. (Ibid)

248. The positions of Essex Scot around the bridge improved rapidly and by early evening Lt-Col Pangman's men were ready to rush the structure, which, so far, was undamaged. His plan was a most daring one. Three Kangaroos laden with infantry were to crash across and clear the German machine guns covering the bridge; these guns had already driven back a singularly brave effort by a section of "A" Coy with severe loss. The plan went astray however in that the Kangaroos arrived prematurely and attempted to cross the canal alone - a costly gesture which resulted in the loss of one of these valuable vehicles. Nevertheless two of the Kangaroos returned safely and within a short time had loaded the men and were seen roaring across the bridge. At 2000 hours the Essex reported that they had two platoons across. At this stage opposition was heavy but Lt-Col Pangman proceeded to reinforce his gains so that the engineers might check the bridge site for possible demolitions. This proved to be a lengthy task due to the hail of fire which descended upon the area, but within two and a half hours, Essex Scot reported the bridge clear and the bridgehead firm. (Ibid). Patrols were then dispatched into the centre of Groningen. At the same time, further south, "C" Coy stated that it had cleared the Sterre Bosch (2212), taken thirteen prisoners and had isolated another large group near the prison (2212). For the brigade and the Scottish it had been a day of proud achievement; the main route into the city had been forced open, a valuable springboard was ready for 6 Cdn Inf Bde coming up from the south, and a secure right flank had been provided for 5 Bde's entry from the west. (Ibid; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, April 1945, 12 Apr, serial 3185)

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5 CDN INF BDE MOVES IN FROM THE WEST, 14 APR 45

249. Brigadier McGill's advance had begun at 1230 hours when Calg Highrs moved to Hoogkerk (1713) with orders to capture the bridge over the canal there. Once Hoogkerk was firm the brigade commander's intention was to launch R. de Mais against the Stadspark (2012) and the factory (1913-2013) on the right; R.H.C. was to reinforce whichever effort was the most successful. If Hoogkerk proved "soft enough" the Calgaries were to go on to Groningen supported by R. de Mais from the factory. On the other hand, if the seizure of Hoogkerk involved too much fighting then the Black Watch would pass through Calg Highrs to take over the attack on the western part of the city. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 14 Apr 45). As it happened, by 1530 hours Calg Highrs were complete in Hoogkerk and had captured the Class 18 Bridge (174143) there intact. No opposition had appeared thus far. Calg Highrs were therefore instructed to keep going and R. de Mais' attack against the factory area commenced. (Ibid)

250. This attack went in at 1500 hours. "D" Coy's objective was the crossroads at Rozenburg (1912), "A" Coy's, the

* Reference maps as for para 246

rail and road junction some 600 yards to the north. Once these had been taken "C" Coy was to capture the factory (1913) along the canal and "B" Coy would seize the railway bridge (2013) further east. The first phase of the attack progressed well in spite of some delay on the left, where "A" Coy found the approaches to its objective blocked by an obstacle. "D" Coy however had no trouble getting to Rozenburg (1912). While "A" Coy cleared its way forward, "C" Coy, supported by tanks of the Fort Garry Horse, advanced into the factory area. (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Apr 45). Here the enemy had several well-sited 20-mm guns, but these were neutralized by the tanks. In the mopping up which followed "C" Coy captured one officer and forty-nine other ranks. Once the factory was clear, "B" Coy, which had passed through "A", swung eastwards past the factory to the railway bridge. The machine guns and snipers which barred the way were quickly disposed of with excellent result. The bridge was taken intact together with the two 20 mm guns which had been protecting it. The enemy tried to blow it up but were foiled in their effort by well directed small arms fire which killed or wounded all five of the demolition party. At about 1815 hours, Lt-Col J. Bibeau, D.S.O., was able to report success on all his objectives. (W.D., R. de Mais, 14 Apr 45). R. de Mais could now turn its efforts to supporting the Calgaries' attack, and in order to relieve Lt-Col Bibeau of any bother on his right flank, R.H.L.I. were ordered to sweep that area with carrier patrols. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 12 Apr 45 serial 4164)

251. Calg Highrs did not waste much time in Hoogkerk. At 1630 hours, after a quick reorganization, "D" Coy set out for the western edge of Groningen. Supported by artillery and mortar fire the infantry covered the ground steadily and within two hours had a firm foothold on the western outskirts of the city. The situation improved rapidly, "A" and "B" Coys were sent up to exploit and by last light the battalion had consolidated its positions south of the railroad bridge (202147). W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and Calg Highrs, 14 Apr 45). From here Lt-Col W.D. Hoyland was urged to press on to the bridge and put a company across if it was still intact. "C" Coy was detailed to this task and shortly after midnight 14/15 Apr it reported that a small bridgehead had been established. (Ibid, 15 Apr 45). It was now the turn of R.H.C. to cross the canal, build up the bridgehead and begin clearing to the north-east. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 14/15 Apr 45)

252. The fate of Groningen^x was just about sealed. On either flank the armoured cars of the Dragoons and the scout cars of 8 Cdn Recce Regt were rapidly cutting the enemy's last routes of escape from the city and there was fair indication that the compression caused by the advancing infantry on the north-west and from the south-east would soon force the German garrison to surrender or flee in disorder along the few remaining roads to the north. The southern approaches were completely shut off. This had been accomplished by 6 Cdn Inf Bde which had launched Camerons of C. northwards from Haren (2409) at 1600 hours the previous afternoon. Little resistance was encountered by the Camerons of C. until they reached the southern part of Helpman. There the enemy, although pressed hard from the north by the Essex Scot, decided to show fight. His efforts however, were not to last. The four infantry companies (Camerons of C.) went about the task of clearing out and capturing Germans with great enthusiasm and shortly before 2300 hours Lt-Col A.A. Kennedy reported to Brigade Headquarters that Helpman was clear and that "C" and "D" Coys Camerons

^x See Appx "B"

of C. were ready to enter Groningen (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 15 Apr 45) as soon as contact was made with Essex Scot, S. Sask R. and Fus M.R. were warned to be prepared to move up. These two battalions were to pass through 4 Cdn Inf Bde and clear the centre of the city. (Ibid)

253. In the early hours of 15 Apr, while R.H.C. of 5 Cdn Inf Bde passed through Calg Highrs to commence clearing operations on the north-western part of Groningen, Fus M.R. crossed the bridge previously captured by Essex Scot and struck out to sweep the right section of the centre of the city. Lt-Col V. Stotts' battalion soon followed the Fus M.R. and swung west. The clearing of a large built-up area is always a difficult task but our infantry went at it in a most determined manner. Fighting was very stiff throughout the day, many prisoners were taken but among the defenders there were still a fair number of fanatics who refused to give up and had to be driven from their hiding places. By evening, the centre of Groningen (which is surrounded by the canal) was clear of Germans. During the day 112 prisoners fell into the hands of Fus M.R. while S. Sask R's bag totalled 181. These figures included an uncommonly large proportion of officers. Brigadier Allard's other battalion, the Camerons, had also experienced some heavy fighting that morning especially around the power plant to the east of Helpman. However, they collected 140 prisoners and by night reported their area of responsibility free of all resistance. Thereafter, "B", "C" and "D" Coys carried out a systematic search of the sector while "A" Coy moved north to relieve Essex Scot around the bridge over which Fus M.R. and S. Sask R. had passed (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 15 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log 15 Apr 45, serials 4239, 4247, 4246, 4288, 4290).

254. On the western flank, R.H.C. entered Groningen in a novel manner. After a brief reconnaissance by "B" and "C" company commanders, a barge was swung across the canal. In this way all but a few feet of the obstacle was bridged and the two leading companies were able to cross to the east bank without undue trouble by 0600 hours. An hour later "A" and "D" Coys moved up from Hoogkerk and also started to cross. "A" Coy went first, meeting only sniper fire from the Water Tower (206145), but only a few men of "D" Coy had got safely across when a hail of 20-mm gun and machine gun fire raked the barge and made things extremely hot for the infantry. At this point, however, some Dutch barges came to our assistance. They had acquired another barge with decks much lower than the first one and proceeded to lash both together so that the higher barge afforded a measure of cover against the heavy fire. Once on the east bank the battalion sorted itself out and with "A" and "D" Coy leading drove on towards the park (2111-2115). Meanwhile, efforts were being made to swing the railroad bridge into its proper place. This was at last accomplished by the carriers pulling the structure into position (W.Ds., 5 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.C., 15 Apr 45). This meant that both wheeled and tracked support could now join the assault elements. The diary of the Black Watch gives a colourful description of the fight for this park:

On approaching the park it became necessary for all the coys to take cover and edge their way forward through the back gardens until they reached the houses facing the park itself. Here a pitched battle ensued, lasting over two hours, with our men using PIATs and brens, rifles and grenades, as well as 2" mortars against an enemy dug in in bunkers and slit trenches, returning our fire from 20mm, m.g. and s.a.. The opposition encountered at this stage was by far the heaviest encountered

so far in this operation. At 1555 hrs. all the 2" mortars in the coys. laid down heavily on the park and the flame sections fired a few bursts. Then the rifle coys assaulted the park. The enemy gave ground reluctantly, but upon being convinced that we meant to oust him from his prepared defences fled, or capitulated.

(W.D., R.H.C., 15 Apr 45)

255. The next move was for R. de Mais to go past R.H.C. and swing south and east. This occurred at about 2000 hours, the two leading companies going forward with the tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt. Some machine gun and 20 mm fire met our troops but did not stop them. The two remaining companies were then launched and by 2200 hours, R. de Mais had completed the task and taken over 100 prisoners. These together with the 247 already seized by R.H.C. made an impressive total for Brigadier Megill's formation. (W.Ds., R. de Mais, R.H.C., 15 Apr 45). By midnight the area held by 5 Cdn Inf Bde had quietened somewhat and most of the troops were able to get some sleep in order to be fresh for the next day's work. The final clearance of Groningen was thus left to the two brigades already in the city. The greater part of 4 Cdn Inf Bde had moved back to a concentration area near Haren leaving only "C" Coy, Essex Scot in the southern part of Groningen to protect the right flank of 6 Bde by taking up positions about the small wood north-east of Helpman. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes, R. de Mais, Essex Scot, R. Regt. C., R.H.L.I., 15 Apr 45)

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THE SURRENDER OF GRONINGEN, 16 APR 45

256. 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes resumed the business of clearing in the city at first light. Brigadier Megill's men were particularly keen to get the job over with, for Maj-Gen Matthews had told the Brigade commander that as soon as Groningen and its northern approaches were clear the troops would have a day's complete rest. In the north-western section R.H.C. and R. de Mais had swept up to the main canal by 1230 hours; behind them Calg Highrs patrolled from Hoogkerk to the west and north to Dorkwerd (1818). (W.Ds., Calg Highrs, R.H.C., R. de Mais, 16 Apr 45). In 6 Cdn Inf Bde's area the enemy situation had deteriorated completely and by 1230 hours all resistance had ceased; Camerons of C., who were moved into the eastern sector of the city, met no opposition. Within this lovely city the spirit of joy of liberation was felt and shown by young and old alike, and the Canadians were treated royally wherever they went. Groningen had fallen, and with it vanished the enemy's last main centre of communication in Northern Holland. There was still much to be done however; the place had to be secured, the sea to be reached and all means of escape denied to the scattered Germans. Therefore, while 6 Cdn Inf Bde consolidated and scoured the eastern outskirts for prisoners to add to its grand total of 1052 for the past two days, Brigadier Megill was preparing to continue his journey north-eastwards. R.H.C. was now ordered to cross the Groningen Canal and seize a bridgehead. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes and units)

257. This task fell to "A" Coy R.H.C., but owing to the fact that the engineers were not in favour of bridging at the old bridge site, the operation was postponed for a time. Meanwhile, during the afternoon one officer on a reconnaissance to the west discovered the village of Drachten as well as the ground between it and Groningen had been well searched by the Royal Canadian Dragoons. This made any further move westwards by 5 Bde

* Reference maps as for para 246, Appx "B"

unnecessary. Early that evening "A" Coy's task was reconsidered and begun, barges were lashed together to make a bridge and attack on Noorderhoogebrug (2216) went in supported by the weapons of the carrier platoon. Before darkness set in the Black Watch was firm around Noorderhoogebrug but quite suddenly there was a change of plan and 5 Bde was ordered to withdraw from its present positions and return into Groningen. (W.D., R.H.C., 16 Apr 45). 5 Cdn Inf Bde now settled down to forty-eight hours of comparative relaxation during which the area occupied was given a final sweep over. The next two days were put to good use, the troops rested up their equipment and waited for the order that was to send them eastwards again, this time into Germany. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 16-18 Apr 45)

258. On assuming responsibility for the sweep to the coast 6 Cdn Inf Bde formed its plan. Each battalion would form a base from which strong patrols could operate in all directions covered by elements of 8 Cdn Recce Regt, which (on the right flank) already had some scout cars of "A" and "C" Sqns roving in the area of Delfzijl (4527) on the Ems estuary: (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, April 1945, 16 Apr serials 4465, 4469, 4493). On the left and closing to the sea 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (in assisting 3 Cdn Inf Div) had also made a large contribution towards the completion of Maj-Gen Matthew's task. The Dragoons were at present holding such places as Baflo (1830), which is directly north of Groningen. Some glimpse of the adventures experienced by the R.C.D. may be caught from a message which the Dragoons sent to Headquarters 2 Cdn Inf Div. It arrived at 1710 hours and read as follows:

Fwd tps now at Baflo. Meeting pockets of resistance 15-20 men. Some guns reported but none encountered. Still some of our tps 3 Cdn Inf Div area tying in with 3 Cdn Inf Div. Estimate we have killed and captured over 2000 (conservative estimate) in last 48 hours. Were unable to handle all PW - turned them over to 3 Cdn Inf Div. Handed over 200 to 3 Cdn Inf Div this morning. Op last two days has been a successive slaughter of the enemy. Would like 48 hours to refit vehs after present commitment and before next op.

(Ibid; serial 4498)

259. Early on 17 Apr 6 Cdn Inf Bde began its trip north. Camerons of C. went first and established themselves at Ten Boer (3020). Next S. Sask R. firmed up between Zuidwolde (2319) and Bedum (2423); Fus M.R. tailed along to settle around Thesinge (2719). The move was completed by 1200 hours and all three units detailed their outpost positions and patrols. There being no sign of the enemy, the men were able to rest and refit (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 16-17 Apr 45). In completing its task, 2 Cdn Inf Div had pretty well established a record of which history must obviously approve. In the 20 days from 29 Mar to 17 Apr the division had advanced 120 miles from their crossing of the Rhine at Rees to the proximity of the North Sea. Nearly 5000 prisoners had been taken, the divisional engineers had erected eighteen bridges including sixteen Class 40 Baileys and a total of 1540 miles of signal cable had been laid. These achievements, however, were not gained without a great sacrifice; the division had lost 44 officers and 768 other ranks in killed, wounded and missing since 29 Mar.

(AEF: 45/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket II: Monthly Summary of Ops and Activities, H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 1 Apr 45 - 30 Apr 45; Appx "A"; Statistical record of mileage covered and prisoners taken; Appx "B"; Brs constructed by R.C.E. 2 Cdn Inf Div after crossing R. Rhine; Appx "D" Casualties 2 Cdn Inf Div 30 Mar - 16 Apr 45)

OPERATIONS OF 1 POL ARMD DIV, 11-18 APR 45*

260. All the time that the infantry divisions had been reaching out for the sea coast to the north, the parallel armoured thrusts by 1 Pol and 4 Cdn Armd Divs were making steady progress against a gradually stiffening resistance over country which was ideally suited to German defensive tactics. Maj-Gen Maczek's troops had the following tasks:

- (a) To advance NORTH on axis COEVORDEN V3252 - EMMEN V4467 - NIEUWE SCHANS Q6410
- (b) To construct a class 40 br at HAREN V6768 and adv NORTH on axis HAREN - PAPENBURG V7899 - LEER Q8116 and patrol to EMDEN Q6531
- (c) To develop class 40 Route from LEER to NIEUWE SCHANS

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H, Docket V: April 1945, Liaison Officers Reports 101600 B, S02 Liaison 2 Cdn Corps, para 2)

Aided by the Belgian Special Air Service troops who were holding the area of Coevorden and patrolling the western flank towards 2 Cdn Inf Div's sector, the Polish armoured reconnaissance regiment and motor battalion, situated at Oosterhesselen (3162) and Emmen (4366) respectively, started to probe forward on the morning of 11 Apr. The routes to the north, however, were not easy ones to travel over and the going was very slow. Nevertheless by the evening of 11 Apr, while 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp was moving up to the main line of resistance, the armoured reconnaissance regiment was patrolling in force towards the western flank (2473) on the left while on the right the motor battalion had struck out from Emmen (4466) to reach Valthe (4372), Odoorn (4073) and Exlo (4176). (Ibid, G.O. 4 of 111100B, also) (AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/H, Docket I: Ops Log 11 Apr 45, serials 49, 67, 78, 80; 12 Apr 45, serial 38)

261. During the night 11/12 Apr 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp moved past Emmen and headed east and by 0900 hours (12 Apr) held a fairly secure line astride the route Weerdinggermond (5175) - Haren (6665), but at this point several obstacles in the form of blown bridges were discovered and it became clear that no armoured advance would be possible until these bridges were repaired. Throughout 12 Apr the infantry brigade group held its ground and patrolled northwards. Further to the west both the armoured reconnaissance regiment and the motor battalion managed to edge forward during the day and their movement continued slowly but steadily throughout the night and the early hours of the following day. By 0700 hours 13 Apr the armoured reconnaissance regiment was on its way up the left flank to Rolde (2788) where it was eventually to contact troops of 2 Cdn Inf Div. At the same time, in the centre, one group from 10 Pol Mot Bn was meeting stiff opposition on either side of Borger (3681) which it was trying hard to take out so that some assistance might be rendered to the hard pressed French paratroops (SAS) around Gasselte (3686) further south. On the right 3 Inf Bde Gp had made by far the most progress. Onstwedde (5393) had been taken by a detachment of the Special Air Service regiment operating under Maj-Gen Maczek's command, Vlagtwedde (5793) had been seized and the approaches to Rhede (6896) were being secured. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 13 Apr 45; serials 15, 16; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 13 Apr 45; serial 23)

* Reference maps; G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000 Sheet 22 - Coevorden, also G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheets M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg. See also Appx "A".

262. The general situation improved rapidly as the hours passed. Although 10 Pol Armd Bde Gp was still unable to move eastwards until the route to Haren was repaired, the security of the route was strengthened and operations to the north and north-west were kept moving. On the western flank, the Poles contacted elements of 8 Cdn Recce Regt at Rolde (2788), took Gieten (3590), and relieved the French (S.A.S.) at Gasselte (3686). In the centre elements of the Belgian S.A.S. having forced the canal at Veele (5794) had secured Wedde (5597) and were moving on Blijham (5601); at the same time, on the right, Boertange (6390) was being threatened. Further south along the road to Haren the Polish sappers were working feverishly in order to provide a road for the impatient armour. It was a slow, trying process but finally the work was completed and Maj-Gen Maczek sent a message to the Commander of 2 Cdn Corps saying that all would be ready for 10 Pol Armd Bde Gp to advance at 0815 hours on the following morning. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 14 Apr 45, serials 3, 11, 12; 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 13 Apr 45, serial 44; First Cdn Army Ops Log op cit, 14 Apr 45, serial 20)

263. The Polish armour crossed the Ems early on 14 Apr and turned north. Progress was very slow throughout the day for deployment was difficult and there were more than a few obstructions along the northern road. However, by nightfall the leading troops of the armoured brigade group were within 3000 yards of the Kusten Canal but were being held up by a blown bridge around which the enemy had established a strong defensive position. West of the Ems River 3 Pol Inf Bde had 8 Inf Bn thrusting out of Boertange (6390) in a wide pronged effort north towards Rhede (6896) and south in the direction of the line Dersum (6885) - Dorpen (7185). The enemy in this region occupied particularly good positions and took such good advantage of the defensive characteristics of the terrain that a slugging match ensued. Very little headway could be made towards the river itself. In Blijham (5502) the S.A.S. were similarly being held up by obstacles rather than by resistance. Moreover, since these airborne warriors were at present deprived of the use of their armoured jeeps (their only means of transport), they could not move on Winschoten (5306). The most successful operations for the day were on the left, where 1 Pol Inf Bn had spread out its line of advance to take Veendam (4201) and to capture a bridge at the road junction 4000 yards north of that place. It now held the surrounding hamlets of Nieuwepekelá (4696), Meeden (4605), Westerlee (4805) and Heiligerlee (5006), thus securing the western approach to Winschoten (5306). On the far left a firm contact was being kept with the scout cars of 8 Cdn Recce Regt. The intention now was to capture Winschoten with 3 Pol Inf Bde and to advance on Papenburg with the armoured brigade while elements of the motor battalion swung north from Haren to follow the west bank of the river and clear northwards. (2 Cdn Corps Op Log op cit, 15 Apr 45, serials 1, 10, 20; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 15 Apr 45, serial 4)

264. Offensive operations continued all across the Polish front on 15 Apr. On the right, the armoured brigade's effort met with little success. An attempt by 9 Pol Inf Bde to force the Kusten Canal* failed and Maj-Gen Maczek asked that he

* Polish troops had taken over this area from 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, who had previously relieved troops of 10 Cdn Inf Bde.

be given the support of ["] Crocodiles. As these weapons were not to be available for some time, additional support in the form of 4 Cdn Med Regt was dispatched to assist in creating the bridgehead. Along the west bank of the river Ems 10 Pol Mot Bn succeeded in clearing up to the Dutch-German frontier and in so doing liberated a number of prisoner of war camps; because of the demolished bridges part of this advance was made on foot. By far the best news came from the Headquarters of 3 Pol Inf Bde, which stated that the enemy's line of resistance east of Boertange (6390) had been broken (but only after the Poles had repelled several German counter-attacks) and that the area south of Rhede was in our hands. Besides this Winschoten and the village of Beerta (5608) to the north-east had fallen to a combined assault by 8 Pol Inf Bn and the S.A.S. Further to our northern flank Eexta (4809) and Oostwolde (5312) had been occupied, the road between these two places being firmly held by 1 Pol Inf Bn. The next task was to reduce the village of Nieuwe Schans (6409), and with this aim in mind 3 Pol Inf Bde started to re-group. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log op cit, 14 Apr 45, serials 38, 42; 15 Apr 45, serials 1, 10, 20, 23, 33, 39, 41; 16 Apr 45, serials 1, 4, 13)

265. On 16 Apr, while the armour on the east side of the Ems River continued to probe the enemy's positions covering the Kusten Canal, the left flank made good gains. The motor battalion cleared up to Rhede from the south, another battle group which had travelled north to seize Stapelmoor (7204) was within two miles of the larger community of Weener (7408), which from all accounts was heavily defended. The advance on Nieuwe Schans (6409) had also gone well; the outskirts of the village were reached and a start made on rebuilding the bridge. The place itself appeared to be deserted. Further to the north-west Polish patrols were closing on Wagenborgen (4617) but in this area the enemy was reacting with some violence. Apparently he still had in the vicinity several good artillery pieces with which he harassed the Polish soldiers continually. These guns were in all probability part of the outer flak defences of Emden. There still were many small but well organized pockets of Germans and the wiping out of them was to take up a good part of the next 48 hours. (Ibid, 16 Apr 45, serials 13, 16, 21; 17 Apr 45, serials 1, 10, 17; 18 Apr 45, serial 4)

266. Widespread activity by strong fighting patrols and small battle groups was the order for 17 and 18 Apr. On the left the road junction of Siddeburen (4211) was consolidated from Eexta (4808) and Oostwolde (5411) 8 Pol Inf Bn pushed on east to Finsterwolde (5711). Local encounters were numerous. Rhede was captured after a stiff fight and the troops pressed on to Midwolda (5111) while the motor battalion swept up from the south to cover the area of Borsum (6993). To the south of Borsum a squadron of the Polish Armd Recce Regt went in to mop up Heede with orders to consolidate this hamlet, which had long been a local stronghold for the enemy. By 2030 hours 18 Apr Borsum and Heede were declared clear. At about this time it became evident that to advance further would be to tempt the main defences of Emden with its long range naval guns and it was decided that the weight of the division was to be thrown behind 10 Polish Armoured Brigade's effort on the Kusten Canal. A regrouping was at once ordered to make this possible and the motor battalion and one armoured regt took over responsibility for all ground west of the Ems to its contact boundaries with 2 Cdn Inf Div. 10 Pol Armd Bde, now faced with the task of assaulting across the Kusten Canal, was reinforced with extra

infantry. The tentative timing for the attack was 1030 hours 19 Apr, but there was a chance that this operation might have to be delayed until the promised crocodiles arrived to add their support. (Ibid, 18 Apr, serials 14, 16, 20, 21; also 2 Cdn Corps Liaison Offrs Report op cit, 171800B, G Ops, H.Q.; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log as above, 18 Apr 45, serials 1, 23, 70)

267. The reasons for the relative slowness of Maj-Gen Maczek's operations must be sought in the prevailing conditions of ground, weather, resistance and of that most important factor, morale. In dealing with these factors in that order it can be safely stated that the ground is not in any way the best an armoured formation could hope for. The acres north of Coevorden bounded by the Ems River on the east and the Dollart to the north are low lying and intersected by thousands of minor canals and deep drainage ditches. The land is generally flat with little cover; the roads are good only in dry weather but, rain or shine, there is no deviation from them for the purpose of manoeuvre by military vehicles. Across the vast expanse of waterlogged country, the condition of the roads dictated the tactics, and in so doing restricted the use of armour on the only three routes northward. On the left travel was possible from Oosterhesselen (3162) then to Borger (3681) along two inferior roads; through Schoonoord (3472) or through Emmen (4366) and Odoorn (3973). Passage through Emmen was also necessary to get on to the other two routes, the eastern through Ter Apel (5676) and Haren (6665) to follow the west bank of the Ems. The nearer route must also pass through Ter Apel (5676) in order to reach Boertange (6390) - Heede (6697) and larger places like Winschoten (5306) which barred the way to the sea. Only when the line Rolde (2788) - Gieten (3590) - Onstwedde (5393) was secure could there be any larger choice of lines of advance.*

268. The enemy's task was to delay and his answer was the defence of vital points, crossroads, bridge sites, and railway embankments. He did not require any defensive armour, only the odd infantry-gun** or anti-tank gun, a few men at each vital point and an arrangement for mutual support in his delaying action and the withdrawal which followed. The manner in which the German soldier applies his weapons to the ground has always been admirable. It did not fall short of its usual high standard in opposing the Poles. Perhaps his best example of the relation of defensive outposts to his plan and the situation were the positions in the hamlets of Rhede (6896), Borsum (6984) and Heede (7188). These three little places which lie along the west bank of the Ems River east of Boertange (6390) were actually a light flank protection screen to the Germans who faced 9 Pol Inf Bn (10 Pol Armd Bde Gp) on the Kusten Canal east of the Ems. All three hamlets were ideally located for flank defence, being almost unapproachable from the west or south. However, this temporary invulnerability lay not only in their choice locations but in the excellent adoption of the principle of security by demolition. Similarly, in many other outposts the enemy was able to delay us by blowing the bridges and culverts and forced the infantry to retain the initiative without close support. For the enemy these tactics meant valuable hours, for the Poles they meant casualties and dispersal on ground which, soggy and exposed as it was, did not invite individual effort.

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheets M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg, N1 - Almelo.

** A German short range weapon (75-mm How) specifically designed for the close support of infantry. Six of these pieces are normally found in the heavy weapons company of a German regiment.

269. Such trying conditions invariably result in a severe set-back to morale, but added to this the Polish officer and soldier had another worry. The area of Maj-Gen Maczek's activities was known to contain several concentration camps in which there languished hundreds of Polish women. Many of these were wives of men serving in the Polish formation. The first camp (6172) was overrun by 2 Pol Armd Regt on the evening of 12 Apr in a small wooded area some 7000 yards north-east of Haren and just off the Weerdingermond (5173) - Haren Road. At this place of horror over 1700 Polish females were found in dire need of help. The Poles, though overjoyed at the prospect of reunion with members of their families, also experienced the utter sorrow of seeing how their countrywomen had been treated. It only remains to say that with each liberation the hatred for the nation responsible increased. (G.S.G.S. 4416, Map Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheet M1-GRONINGEN; First Cdn Army, Ops Log op cit, 12 Apr 45, serial 157)

OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 11-19 APR 45*

270. While Maj-Gen Maczek's Polish troops had been battering away at the enemy's defences astride the Ems River, Lt-Gen Simonds' other armoured thrust by 4 Cdn Armd Div had made spectacular progress against some fanatical resistance and all under the most trying of ground conditions. It had been a continued struggle against Germans and the mud, but these endeavours were made to show considerable profit for by 18 Apr Maj-Gen Vokes' men were across the Kusten Canal. However, in order to prove the significance of the effort it is necessary to trace the operations of the "green patch" division from 11 Apr. On that day Maj-Gen Vokes' men struck out from the line of Borgerwald (8486) - Borger (8679), Sogel (8571) - Werlte (9672) with 10 Cdn Inf Bde on the left and 4 Cdn Armd Bde on the right. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 11 Apr 45)

271. Brigadier Jefferson's group, which was now composed of Alq R. and 28 Armd Regt, had the task of securing the division's left flank as represented by the line of the Kusten Canal. With this aim in view, a battle group made up of "A" Coy Alq R. and "A" Sqn of the armoured regiment was hurled against Breddenburg (9184), where the enemy was located on a strong defensive position. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde; Alq R., 11 Apr 45). Meanwhile another company ("B"), together with "B" Squadron of 28 Cdn Armd Regt, held Borgerwald (8586). At this time "C" Company and "C" Squadron were located around Neuborger (8184) while "D" Company remained further to the west astride the original centre line (the road to Papenburg). The attack on Breddenburg which began at 1000 hours was carefully planned, and just as well that it was, for "A" Company and the tanks met with terrific opposition. The fierce fight, which lasted until 1400 hours, was, however, totally successful. The Algonquins killed thirty-two Germans and captured fifty-four, thus accounting for the entire enemy force in that area. Our own losses were four killed, including an officer from the supporting armour,

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 3209 - Haren, 3210 - Kl. Berssen, 3111 - Sogel, 3112 - Werlte, 3001 - Esterwegen, 3012 - Neuarenburg, 2913 - Friesoythe; G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheet M2 - Oldenburg. See also Appx "C".

and eight wounded. It was a remarkable feat which could only have been accomplished by troops thoroughly imbued with the spirit of battle. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Apr 45)

272. As soon as our position at Breddenburg was consolidated, Lt-Col R.A. Bradburn (Alq R.) sent his carriers through to cut the main road leading to the north-east from Lorup (9380) and a strong fighting patrol north towards Esterwegen (9388), where it settled for the remainder of the day. On the northern flank around Borgerwald (8585) and Borger (8679) things were quiet; neither "B" nor "C" Companies had much to report except routine patrols to ensure the security of their respective areas. (W.D., Alq R. 11 Apr 45)

273. Although the infantry brigade had been gaining ground steadily, the limelight on 11 Apr was held mainly by Brigadier Moncel's troops, who had begun widespread operations at first light. First to move was Lake Sup R. (Mot), which had the task of clearing the wooded areas north-east of Sogel (8571). Then at 0810 hours the brigadier ordered 21 Cdn Armd Regt with "A" Coy A. & S.H. of C. to take Borger (8679). This did not prove to be a hard task and by 1100 hours the place was ours. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot); 21 Armd Regt; A. & S.H. of C., 11 Apr 45). The tactics involved were simple - one squadron formed up on the reverse slope of the hill south of the town, while another squadron moved to the right flank. Suddenly the southern force cleared the crest of the hill and dashed toward Borger with all guns firing; at the same time the right hook came in to mop up. The enemy was in no mood to put up any struggle against such forceful tactics. (W.D., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Apr 45)

274. With Borger clear and with the "Superiors" firm at Spahn (8974) and advancing on Harrenstatte (9275) (after clearing the wooded area north-east of Sogel), the right flank force of Linc & Welld R. in Werlte (9672) was busy sweeping through the village. By 1100 hours only a few snipers remained in Werlte (9672). While the rifle companies dealt with these Lt-Col Coleman had his carriers patrol north along the road to Lorup (9380). That route was reported clear of enemy but well obstructed by a road block about half way up; this, however, was soon tackled by the pioneers. Then, at 1345 hours, the general plan for Linc & Welld R. was changed, the battalion being ordered to move towards Lindern (0732). For this task "C" Company was recalled from Sogel (8571) and within a short time the new advance was under way with "A" Company on the right and "C" Company on the left. Led by some reconnaissance tanks of 21 Cdn Armd Regt the column went forward, but not very far; the tanks came under heavy fire and one was hit. The volume of fire made it clear that the enemy was lying in wait and, after a tactical reconnaissance plane had confirmed that the bridge on the main road was demolished, the attack was called off. The infantry returned to Werlte where another change in plan awaited them. Meanwhile A. & S.H. of C. had arrived in Werlte to take over the town and Linc & Welld R. was ordered to march north to occupy Lorup (9380) by first light on the following day. (W.Ds., Linc & Welld R., A. & S.H. of C., 11 Apr 45)

275. The advance on Lorup from Sogel had involved some interesting manoeuvre and clearly displayed the value of movement by mutually supporting battle groups. A glance at the map is sufficient to convey the ground picture. From Sogel to Lorup a centre line runs over fairly high country through two small built up areas (Spahn and Harrenstatte) and several large woods.

The well wooded left flank provided a marked danger as did the open right flank until the dominant spot heights were seized. Brigadier Moncel fully appreciated that Lorup might prove a centre of heavy resistance if it were not soon taken and in his orders he stressed the necessity for speed. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Apr 45)

276. By midday 11 Apr Harrenstatte (9275) had been left behind and the advance on Lorup was under way. On the right along the main road was 22 Cdn Armd Regt (commanded by one of Canada's youngest and most brilliant commanding officers, Lt-Col E.A. Amy, D.S.O., M.C.) with elements of A. & S.H. of C. and Lake Sup R. (Mot). At the same time "C" Company of Lake Sup R. (Mot) swung out to the left flank from Spahn to follow the secondary road which runs over the high wooded area west of the road Harrenstatte - Lorup. On the main axis, "D" Coy of Lake Sup R. (Mot) moved first, advancing on the left of the road while the main armoured column travelled straight for the high ground astride the road Werlte - Lorup which dominated Lorup itself. By 1600 hours "D" Coy was overlooking the open area south-west of the town and the armour was in an equally favourable position, having established itself on the woody heights immediately south of Lorup. At this point, while the main armoured force and "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) consolidated the dominating ground, Lt-Col Amy ordered "D" Coy A. & S.H. of C. to assault the town from the firm base. Within the hour the Highlanders had secured the southern part of Lorup and had taken over twenty prisoners; "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was then ordered to move in. Lorup was reported clear at 1825 hours and Lt-Col Amy was instructed to firm up for the night on the wooded hills to the north-east. This was finally accomplished but only after some fairly heavy fighting by the tanks and the Superiors around the northern outskirts. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 22 Cdn Armd Regt, Lake Sup R. (Mot), A. & S.H. of C., 11 Apr 45; 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 11 Apr 45, serials 40, 46, 63, 57, 60 and 85)

277. The basic plan for 12 Apr was for Lt-Col Keane's troops (Lake Sup R. (Mot)) to press on to Neuvrees (0396) and for 21 Armd Regt to capture Vrees (0276). To this end the Foot Guards handed Borger over to troops of 10 Cdn Inf Bde and began their journey south towards Werlte. In the meantime the companies of A. & S.H. of C. which had recently been brought forward in "Kangaroos" to Werlte, had deployed to rest and reorganize for the next days work. That same night Linc & Welld R., also under new orders, sent its "D" and "B" Companies on to the area of Lorup. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units; also A. & S.H. of C., Linc & Welld R., 11-12 Apr 45). At first light 12 Apr the battle group of Foot Guards and Argyles commenced its advance on Vrees (0276) by way of Bockholte (9874). There was no opposition, but a road block forced the armour to by-pass Bockholte (9874), which was left in flames for the infantry to clear. Although progress was mostly slow, by 0900 hours elements of A. & S.H. of C. were in Vrees. Two hours later, after sweeping through the town, the infantry were given the task of clearing the Forst Klemenswerth (0481) which lies north of the town. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 21 Cdn Armd Regt and A. & S.H. of C., 12 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 12 Apr 45, serials 10, 11, 15 and 30)

278. Meanwhile Lake Sup R. (Mot), working ahead on the proposed divisional centre line (Lorup - Neuvrees - Friesoythe), had reached Neulorup (9987) and had patrols probing north-west to Neuscharrel (0290). By that time Linc & Welld R.

had also arrived in Lorup and Lt-Col Coleman was instructed to move his troops forward to Neuarenburg (0186) and then to advance on Markhausen (0683) accompanied by elements of 22 Cdn Armd Regt with a view to forcing the river west of that place. Darkness found Linc & Welld R. positioned in the woods less than 1500 yards from their objective; a reconnaissance of the route to it had been completed and patrols reported Markhausen (0683) clear but the area very heavily mined. On the northern flank Lake Sup R. (Mot) had been luckier; Lt-Col Keane's patrols had crossed the water obstacle east of Neuvrees and, since no contact with the enemy had been made, Brigadier Moncel ordered that a motor company be pushed forward under cover of darkness to a position around the second road junction south-west of Friesoythe (0892). "B" Company was selected for this job and at 0200 hours 13 Apr the infantrymen crept forward. The advance met no resistance and before first light "B" Company had dug itself into a firm position from which the enemy's movements in Friesoythe could be observed. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Linc & Welld R., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 21 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 12 Apr 45 serials 63, 13 Apr 45, serial 12)

279. The measure of resistance already met in such places as Lorup indicated to Brigadier Moncel that Friesoythe, the next large town and itself a road centre of some importance, would probably be well defended. Furthermore, elements of 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt which were operating south-west of the town had earlier sent Maj-Gen Vokes the following message:

Infm re FRIESOYTHE as at night 11/12 Apr. Fifty amb
in town. Also eight 20-mm quadruple AA guns HD.
4 HD 88-mm guns along road TERBROK - FRIESOYTHE
twelve 20-mm guns also four trees ready to be felled
as rd blocks. Estimates str in town of enemy all ranks
five to six hundred. CCS appears to be in town. Feel
that if proper attack put in enemy will get out.

(4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log as above,
12 Apr 45, serial 64)

In anticipation of the need of extra weight of fire power, air support had been requested and one of the high-lights of the days operations had been provided by the smooth co-operation between the A.S.S.U.,* the Contact tank and the men in the air. Between them they smashed much of the opposition which confronted the armoured brigade. (W.D, H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 12 Apr 45)

280. The provision of close air support is always a difficult problem, for it is apt to be both dangerous to our own troops and wasteful. For a long time it had been felt that some definite contact between ground and air was needed to correct any instructions which may have been given in the demand for air support submitted earlier. To quote Brigadier Moncel:

What we needed was an Air FOO - a man who could talk to the aircraft in their own language and who could, above all, live with and get to know the ground troops that he was supporting.

(AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket II:
folio 6, The Contact Tank, some brief notes
on its origin and employment by Col R.W.
Moncel, D.S.O., O.B.E.)

* Air Support Signals unit

At the beginning of the second week in April, 1945, an aerial F.O.O. did, in fact, make his appearance at Headquarters 4 Cdn Armd Bde, bringing with him a tank which the brigade had been instructed to send back many months before to be fitted with V.H.F.* wireless equipment for use as a contact tank. Although at the time of its departure few members of the Brigade headquarters had ever hoped to see it again, on that spring day Brigadier Moncel was surprised to see the faithful machine reappear, but with a strangely assorted crew.

The tank was commanded by an R.A.F. pilot officer who felt very much out of his element and appeared to be decidedly unhappy. He announced that he was "Longbow Nan", for such was his call sign and needless to say that became his name for all time.

(Ibid)

281. . It must be noted that the operations at this time were of a widespread fluid nature, the brigade operating in four different battle groups. Hence it became imperative to have a means of aerial contact well forward with the main effort in order to get the fighter-bombers onto the target quickly and accurately. The enemy operating around such pivots as Lorup and Friesoythe was delaying us considerably while he built up the canal defences to the rear. The approaches to Friesoythe were typical of the average stronghold in this area. There were only three roads leading into the town from the west and south and, although they were all in fair condition, the enemy had deployed a series of defensive outposts (some of these mutually supporting) which our infantry would have found extremely costly to overcome. Furthermore, the ground bordering these roads did not lend itself to manoeuvre by armour since it was too soft nor by infantry since it was more or less devoid of cover. The arrival of the Contact Tank therefore opened "new fighting horizons" for the armoured brigade. Its commander stated:

We had a new weapon, one that could move at a tremendous speed, could observe the enemy, could be directed, and could strike with devastating effect. It did not take long for the old fear of the Tiffies to disappear and by the time we had captured Friesoythe, Longbow's fame had spread throughout the entire organization. During this battle, Longbow was operating from Brigade Headquarters directing aircraft on pre-arranged targets - it was difficult country and the condition of the ground made deployment impossible - tanks were limited to the main roads. Energetic patrolling under cover of darkness and smoke had uncovered most of the enemy strong points and, with the coming of light, it was an easy matter to direct the aircraft onto known targets.

(Ibid)

Small wonder that 4 Cdn Armd Bde placed such high value on its "Longbow".

282. Throughout 12 Apr 10 Cdn Inf Bde guarded the line of the Kusten Canal from Borgerwald to Esterwegen (9338). During the afternoon one of the Alq R. - 28 Cdn Armd Regt battle groups

* Very high frequency

found its way into Neuscharrel (0290), around which elements of 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt were also operating as a flank link with the armoured brigade. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 12 Apr 45). On the division's southern flank a squadron of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt was maintaining contact with troops of 43(W) Inf Div. These armoured cars had entered Lindern (0372) and were continuing to probe to the north, east and south. (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 12 Apr 45; also Appx 12, map depicting routes of squadrons 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 12 Apr 45, serials 13, 19, and 40). With his flanks thus secured, the commander of 4 Cdn Armd Bde now planned to seize Friesoythe and reach the canal to the north. But some regrouping was necessary and late on 12 Apr, 21 Cdn Armd Regt and "A" Coy A. & S.H. of C. were ordered to move from Vrees to Neuvrees to reinforce the main effort. By this time, however, the route through Lorup was too heavily burdened with traffic and the route running through the Forst Klemenswerth was blocked by obstacles. Some time therefore had to be devoted to reconnaissance of other roads over which the column could pass. Finally, late on 12 Apr the Foot Guards column began to plod its way to Neuvrees over the route which runs due north-west of Vrees then swings right to follow the western edge of the Forst Klemenswerth and thus approaches Neuvrees from the south-west. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and 21 Cdn Armd Regt, A. & S.H. of C., 12-13 Apr 45)

283. Early on the morning of 13 Apr 4 Cdn Armd Bde opened the attack on Friesoythe with Lake Sup R. (Mot) moving on the town from Ellerbrok (0487). At the same time further to the south Linc & Welld R. was to strike out from Markhausen (0683) to the east to cut the road Friesoythe - Cloppenburg. At 0900 hours "A" Company Lake Sup R. (Mot) pushed out from the battalion's forward line and, accompanied by the scout platoon, approached the town on foot. The advanced elements got within small arms range of the town's outskirts when suddenly they were engulfed in a hail of fire - rifle, machine gun and mortar. Finding it impossible to proceed any further, the infantrymen dug in on the left of the nearest road junction south-west of the town. Casualties were heavy; two men were killed and nineteen others wounded including the company commander. Nevertheless, Major R. Colquhoun refused to leave his men in such dire straits and he remained at his post until the battered company was ordered to withdraw later. At 1430 hours "C" Coy relieved "A" Coy and spent the remainder of the day in observing and shooting up the enemy's positions. After dark Lt-Col Keane re-adjusted his company areas in order to be able to support A. & S.H. of C. in their attack on the following day. "C" Coy was moved forward to within 500 yards of Friesoythe astride the main road and "B" Coy was then shifted to the right of "C" Coy to overlook the Cloppenburg road. From these positions, the Argyles were to be given close support when they assaulted the town. (W.Ds., 4 Cdn Armd Bde, units; A. & S.H. of C., 13 Apr 45)

284. While the Superiors manoeuvred for position south-west of Friesoythe, Linc & Welld R. and 21 Cdn Armd Regt made great progress on the right. The sappers bridged the stream west of Markhausen and shortly after first light two of Lt-Col Coleman's companies were in the village, which was found to be well mined. The engineers immediately set about "delousing" the area and a patrol from Linc & Welld R. was dispatched to contact the Superiors at Ellenbrok (0587). The advance then continued eastwards towards Mittelsten - Thule (1285) with "B" Coy leading. Late that afternoon Linc & Welld R. was ready to enter the village but, since the bridge was out, no close supporting arms could be brought up. Nevertheless the infantry

set about clearing the buildings, and while this went on the engineers started to work on the bridge. It was hoped that this bridge would be completed by first light so that the advance northward to link up with the forces attacking Friesoythe could be resumed. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Linc & Wellb R., 13 Apr 45)

THE ASSAULT ON FRIESOYTHE, 14 APR 45^{*}

285. The direct assault on Friesoythe went in at first light 14 Apr. The plan of attack was one of the boldest ever drawn up. In order to facilitate the problem of communications the heavy 19 sets of the Argyles, normally carried in vehicles, were to be taken along strapped on stretchers and man-handled by the assaulting troops. Now that the Lake Sup R. (Mot) threatened the south-western approaches along the main highway, it was hoped that the better part of the enemy's strength would be pre-occupied in that direction. An opportunity would thus be provided for carrying out a surprise out-flanking move from the right. At 1800 hours 13 Apr Lt-Col F.E. Wigle, D.S.O., O.B.E., outlined his plan. The scouts would first tape out a route to the south-eastern outskirts of the town. Then at 2330 hours the rifle companies and Tactical headquarters would be taken by T.C.V. to a debussing point on the main highway some two miles from Friesoythe. From there the troops would move on foot to the east, cross the main road Friesoythe - Cloppenburg and form up south-east of the town between the road and the railway. The forming-up place was to be occupied by 0200 hours 14 Apr. (W.D., H.Q. A. & S.H. of C., 12 Apr 45). Lt-Col F.E. Wigle moved to the head of his troops and at the appointed hour led them off in single file into the darkness on their urgent journey; the noise of the movement being covered partly by an artillery programme fired by the divisional guns. (R.A. Spencer, History of the Fifteenth Canadian Regiment, R.C.A., p. 251.)

286. As the morning of 14 Apr dawned, the weather became cold and a bitter north wind blew down upon the Highlanders, but they had not long to wait; the signal was given and in the gloom of the early light three infantry companies rose up and headed for Friesoythe. It soon became apparent that the bold plan was working, for by 0700 hours the troops were well into the town and not meeting heavy opposition. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde; A. & S.H. of C., 14 Apr 45). The house-clearing operations continued but it must be assumed that certain bodies of the enemy had been by-passed for quite suddenly Lt-Col Wigle's tactical headquarters was heavily counter-attacked. The enemy appeared without warning and the Argyle's controlling staff was soon involved in a terrific fire-fight. The enemy, obviously elated to find such a prize unattended, closed in and some fierce hand-to-hand encounters took place. It was during this close-quarter fighting that the German paratroopers sprayed machine gun fire into the very building from which Lt-Col Wigle was conducting the battle. Amid this hail of fire Lt-Col Wigle walked calmly from one position to another encouraging his men, then suddenly as he crossed the hallway he was struck down. Thus a gallant officer died. (Ibid)

* Refer to map 1:25,000 Sheet 2913 - Friesoythe

287. The enemy's attack did not last long. The Highlanders fought like madmen and held their own until "A" Coy was pulled back from the centre of the town to reinforce the headquarters group. By 1030 hours the town of Friesoythe was clear and soon afterwards the engineers had completed a bridge (0891) so that the tanks of 22 Cdn Armd Regt could enter the town to assist in the consolidation. (Ibid: and W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Apr 45). Meanwhile some assistance had been given to A. & S.H. of C. by the Lake Superiors, who had initially contributed to the main attack by giving fire support from the western outskirts and then moved into the town. Actually some of Lt-Col Keane's troops had got forward in time to join in the battle around the Argyle's headquarters, supported by two tanks of the Canadian Grenadier Guards. The action west of the town had started at first light when "C" Company (Lake Sup R. (Mot)) crossed the water obstacle and cleared the area bounded by the railway on the north and the canal on the west. This secured the necessary bridgehead to allow the sappers to start work on the bridge. Unfortunately, the equipment was not readily at hand, but, rather than wait, Lt-Col Keane used a scissors bridge tank to span the gap. This enabled "C" Company, its vehicles and its armoured support, to get on. After the enemy's efforts against the Argyles had subsided, the motorized infantrymen passed through to the north-east to attack and capture the area south of the school (094927) and thereby secure the left flank of Linc & Welld R's objective on the high ground at Altenoythe (0992-1092). (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 22 Cdn Armd Regt; Lake Sup R. (Mot) 14 Apr 45)

288. Since there was a good possibility that the Kusten Canal could be reached before dark, fresh orders were given to Lt-Col Keane's other companies. "B", which had been holding the right flank and patrolling towards Linc & Welld R., was ordered to go through "C" Coy. The Commanding Officer's scout platoon (No. 13 Pl) was to follow up and had special instructions to pass through "B" Coy at the first opportunity and rush ahead to seize the bridge at Edwechterdamm (137994). "D" and "A" Coys were to remain in Friesoythe with battalion headquarters and would await developments. If the bridge was taken, it was Lt-Col Keane's intention to put his entire battalion across the Kusten Canal. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot) 14 Apr 45)

289. At 1800 hours "B" Coy began its advance along the centre line but against strong opposition. While it did so the rest of the unit mounted vehicles and waited north-east of Friesoythe, ready to make a run for the Canal. Finally the leading elements reached the first objective (the houses south of Pirgo (114948)) and the scout platoon took up the task. The scouts got to the small bridge (122960) over the Lahe stream and three of their carriers crossed it; the fourth vehicle was not so lucky for the enemy suddenly blew the bridge. Of the Three Germans involved in this incident one was killed and the others taken prisoner. Undaunted by this unfortunate event, the scouts sought a way around the demolition. They found one on the right flank, where another bridge existed across the Lahe, north of Wolfstange (125949). It was over this route that "B" Coy was directed, but here again the mud and bad "going" forced many of the vehicles to a standstill and the infantrymen were obliged to go ahead on foot. "B" Coy finally firmed up due north-east of the bridge around a large crater which blocked the main road. An attempt was now made to move the rest of the battalion around to the right, but in a short time the light bridge (1295) over the Lahe collapsed and the advance bogged

down once more. Until a suitable road across the crater could be made further advance was impossible. "B" Company and the scouts therefore proceeded to consolidate what ground had been gained. A covering force then established itself astride the main road east of the wrecked bridge, thus allowing the engineers to work. The remainder of Lake Sup R. (Mot) could do little else but return to the main axis, remount on what vehicles were available, and wait for the sappers to open the route. (W.Ds., 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot) 14 Apr 45)

290. The armoured brigade's southern effort by Linc & Welld R. had also been successful. By 0630 hours the bridging task west of Mittlisten - Thule (1185) was finished and the rifle companies were all firm in that village with "C" Coy on the main road ready to start clearing the way north. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 14 Apr 45). An hour later the advance began against moderate opposition which was suitably disposed of by the supporting tanks of 21 Cdn Armd Regt. Progress was slow, mainly on account of several obstacles, but by 1430 hours Lt-Col Coleman's leading troops were within 3000 yards of Friesoythe. Since this town was already in our hands the brigade commander ordered Linc & Welld R. to switch its line of advance eastwards to a final objective on the high feature at Altenoythe (0992). Thence the surrounding ground could be dominated and a perfect seal would be established across the escape route from Friesoythe. Led by "A" Coy, the Linc & Welld R. pressed on throughout the afternoon and evening, but the water-logged fields prevented the tanks from following and they had to remain on the original axis until another route could be found for them. Nevertheless, the infantry made the best of it and by 2230 hours were firmly established on the Altenoythe feature. (Ibid and 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 14 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 14 Apr 45, serials 15, 17, 41, 83 and 87; also AEF 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D Docket II: Folio 5, Operations of Linc & Welld R., 31 Mar - 6 May 45, by Lt-Col R.C. Coleman)

291. On the following morning, while Linc & Welld R. sorted itself out prior to moving further east towards Kronsberg (1390) and Bosel (1490), Lake Sup R. (Mot) was instructed to maintain pressure towards the Kusten Canal. At the same time A. & S.H. of C. and one squadron of 22 Cdn Armd Regt took on the responsibility of the left flanking areas towards Schwaneburg (0695) and Kampe (0699). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 15 Apr 45). Advanced elements of the Lake Sup R. (Mot) began moving slowly at first light; "B" Coy rose out of its positions around the crater and after a short march was able to see the canal. The enemy was observed and engaged; in turn he retaliated to delay the Canadians and, as if to signify his grand finale in that sector, he blew up the bridge which spanned the Kusten Canal. It now rested with Lake Sup R. (Mot) to close up to the water obstacle and consolidate. This it accomplished but only after being severely mauled by shell and mortar fire on the way up. Finally by mid-day "B" and "C" Coys were in new positions on either side of the road and within a few yards of the canal itself. It was clear at this point that the remainder of the motor battalion could not be immediately fitted into the narrow salient leading to the canal because the road was too narrow and vehicles could not be deployed. The two sub-units employed at present were considered sufficient to hold the axis, and so Lt-Col Keane was ordered to move back his motor column, which had been waiting patiently on the road for several hours. This move, which entailed turning the entire motor column around on a road which showed every sign of collapsing, was completed with great difficulty, but some compensation was forthcoming to the

weary soldiers. When the troops reached their new concentration area around Altenoythe they were told that the present task of the armoured brigade was over. A. & S.H. of C. and Linc & Welld R. were to revert to command 10 Cdn Inf Bde at 1800 hours. Later that evening the Argyles would relieve the motorized infantrymen who now held the approaches to the Kusten Canal. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, 15 Apr 45)

292. Meanwhile the operations on the flanks by A. & S.H. of C. and Linc & Welld R. had also produced some measure of success. North of Friesoythe two companies of Highlanders together with elements of 22 Cdn Armd Regt had pushed along the roads of Kampe (0699) and Schwaneburg (0695) and swept the area to secure the left flank. (W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C.; 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 13 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 15 Apr 45, serials 19, 43, 50). South of Friesoythe Lt-Col Coleman's men had followed up their patrols towards Kronsberg (1390) and linked up once again with tanks of 21 Cdn Armd Regt, which had found a route up from the road Mittelsten-Thule - Friesoythe. After Kronsberg was consolidated by "A" Coy, orders were issued for a full-scale attack on Bosel (1490) and Osterloh (1690). This advance began at 1620 hours with the infantry going forward against light opposition. "A" Coy still led the way along the centre line, forcefully knocking out any resistance it met, while on the flanks "B" and "C" Coys mopped up. As the day ended the leading troops found themselves in Osterloh (1690), and there "A" Coy firmed up. Behind it and between Kronsberg and Bosel "C" Coy occupied a good position on high ground and patrolled northward in strength. Further south "B" Coy consolidated between the main road and the railway and despatched patrols towards Sudkamp (1488). By that time "D" Coy had also been brought forward to settle astride the main road at the southern edge of the Kronsberg feature. With this much accomplished in so short a time Linc & Welld R. now awaited new instructions from 10 Cdn Inf Bde, who had reassumed control of its senior infantry battalion. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Linc & Welld R., 21 Cdn Armd Regt, 15 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log as above, 15 Apr 45, serials 16, 19, 54, 73, 99)

10 CDN INF BDE TAKES OVER THE ADVANCE, 15-16 APR 45*

293. The take-over by Brigadier Jefferson's headquarters implied that the current phase of operations was over in so far as the armoured brigade was concerned. A pause for regrouping and rest was in order. The armoured units (less 28 Cdn Armd Regt, which remained with 10 Bde) were therefore ordered to concentrate for reorganization and refitting. Rarely was a relief so welcomed by all ranks. Throughout the past two and a half weeks the battle had been continuous, especially so for the motor battalion whose operations had bordered on the spectacular. It remains only to add that if and when tactical investigators are called upon to select a model operation and one which will provide a multitude of valuable lessons for future wars, there can be no doubt but that the work of Lake Sup R. (Mot) during that fortnight will stand out above all others. Brigadier Moncel's troops could now take their well earned rest knowing that they had accomplished a tremendous task in a magnificent manner. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 16 Apr 45)

* Map reference: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2913 - Friesoythe, 2813 - Edeweicht.

294. 10 Cdn Inf Bde had already begun to concentrate near Friesoythe some hours before the command of the sector changed hands. The role of flank protection along the Kusten Canal was handed over to 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt by Alq R. and 28 Cdn Armd Regt who were soon to be given the task of assaulting across the water obstacle at Edewechterdamm (1399). Once this relief and that of the 4 Bde's forward localities was completed, Brigadier Jefferson and his staff took stock of the brigade's situation and began to plan for the crossing. The enemy's defences were tested on the main axes leading north of Friesoythe (Kampe and Edewechterdamm) but, after careful consideration had been given to the ground condition of each route, it was decided to attack on the right (at Edewechterdamm). (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 13-15 Apr 45 incl). In order to soften up the German positions north of Kusten, Maj-Gen Vokes promised the commander 10 Cdn Inf Bde a full programme of air support for the next day and sent him the Contact tank which Brigadier Moncel had used to such good advantage. (Ibid)

OPERATIONS ON MAJ-GEN VOKES' RIGHT BY
29 CDN ARMD RECCE REGT, 14-16 APR 45^z

295. While the enemy was being driven back to his canal defences by the armour, Maj-Gen Vokes' armoured reconnaissance unit had broken out from Vrees (0276) on the right flank and was scattering the enemy in all directions. Under the command of Lt-Col G.D. Wotherspoon, D.S.O., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (The South Alberta Regt) had the task of seizing Garrel (1984), forming up there, and then swinging over to Friesoythe. For this operation the armoured reconnaissance regiment was to co-operate with a squadron of 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt. At 1130 hours 13 Apr "C" Squadron moved out of Vrees and headed in a north-easterly direction to Neu Markhausen (0779). After a considerable amount of reconnaissance a bridge-site was selected at Neu Markhausen and, with the help of "B" Squadron, "C" began to cross at 1800 hours. The commanding officer then decided to build another bridge east of Vrees; this was completed at 0400 hours 14 Apr and a short while later "A" Squadron was over. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 13 Apr 45). Only scattered resistance was encountered. The tanks went through Gronheim (0976) at 0700 hours and by mid-day "A" Squadron was well beyond Dwergte (1076) heading for the bridge across the Soeste Stream north-west of Resthausen (1576). At about this time "B" Squadron also crossed the obstacle and swung to the north-east of Dwergte (1076) into a position equidistant between "A" and "C" Squadrons, which had been ordered to proceed to the bridge which Linc & Welld R. was building at Mittelsten - Thule (1185) to cross the stream there. As darkness fell "A" Squadron, having bridged the obstacle at Neumuhlen (1477), was firm on the rising ground between Resthausen (1576) and Stedingermuhlen (1474), "B" Squadron was in the area of two projected bridge sites north of Neumuhlen while "C" Squadron waited at Mittelsten - Thule (1185). (Ibid: 14 Apr 45)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000
Sheets 3013 - Markhausen, 3014 - Garrel,
3015 - Grossenkneten, 3112 - Werlte,
3113 - Molbergen, 3114 - Cloppenburg.

296. During the night 14/15 Apr the engineers completed a bridge in "B" Squadron's area north of Neumuhlen (1477); the tanks crossed the river at 0300 hours (15 Apr) and at once began to expand the bridgehead. By 1000 hours the South Albertans had taken some fifty prisoners, and, shortly after, "A" Squadron passed through towards Varrelbusch (1877). Varrelbusch fell at about 1300 hours after a sharp fight and the tanks rolled on north towards Garrel (1984). During the afternoon Lt-Col Wotherspoon regrouped his force. "B" Squadron which had so far not ventured from the bridgehead, was ordered to guard the left flank and approach Garrel from the south-east. "C" Squadron, which had spent most of the morning in shooting up the heavily wooded areas south-west of Garrel, was directed to swing around the southern part of Varrelbusch (1877), then turn north to seize first the airfield which lies east of the Battel - Cloppenburg railway and then the community of Amerika (2081). "A" Squadron would press its attack towards Garrel. In accordance with these orders "C" Squadron passed through Varrelbusch at 1730 hours and quickly turned to the north. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 14-15 Apr 45)

297. The airfield was captured without too much trouble, but at approximately 2000 hours, as the armour plunged on towards its final objective, the enemy showed his hand. Two self-propelled guns and a heavy tank engaged our troops and a bitter exchange of shot followed. The lighter German vehicles were soon put out of action; the tank, however, continued to put up a terrific fire fight until darkness came. A spectacular attack was then launched under parachute flares, but the Germans withdrew under cover of the smoke from the burning buildings nearby. The squadron ("C") now firmed up together with a troop of the Special Air Service and laid on its patrols, one of which contacted the British troops of 43(W) Inf Div presently employed in combing out the country north of Cloppenburg. West of the railway line "A" Squadron had also run into serious difficulties. Many craters obstructed the road from Varrelbusch to Garrel and, after several attempts had been made to approach Garrel along this route, the Commanding Officer decided to pull his tanks back to harbour. A properly co-ordinated attack on Garrel was clearly necessary and to this end Lt-Col Wotherspoon began to arrange his plans. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 14-15 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II: Folio 3, Memorandum of Interview given by Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, to Hist Offr 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 May 45)

298. The attack on Garrel was launched at first light 16 Apr. "B" Squadron was directed toward the north-west section of the town; "A" Squadron was to cut the road leading out to the north-east; and "C" Squadron was ordered to secure first the crossroads at Amerika (2081) and Tweel (2183), then press on to seal off the town from the east. At 1100 hours, just as "A" and "B" Squadrons gained the first objectives, the civil authorities in Garrel offered to surrender. Lt-Col Wotherspoon's reply was that he would cease offensive action against the town providing his tanks were allowed to enter Garrel unmolested. As things turned out the first tank to enter the town was set aflame by bazooka fire and from then on the South Albertans wasted no time in either making or accepting peace overtures. Wherever a sign of opposition appeared, our tanks swamped it with fire. By early evening most of Garrel was clear but the existence of many mined areas right in the town prevented the Canadians from retaining physical control of the place. Therefore the squadrons were pulled back to the laagers occupied throughout the previous night. During the night, while Garrel was being heavily shelled by the enemy, our tank crews lingered outside of the town. Besides refitting and replenishing their

vehicles, they managed to recover eight other tanks and armoured recovery vehicles which had bogged down earlier. (Ibid). Garrel itself was to be swept out on the morning of 17 Apr and for this task "D" Coy Line & Welld R. came under command of the armoured reconnaissance regt. (Ibid)

299. In every operation there occurs some incident which causes speculation. The operations by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt on 16 Apr produced one which might well have had startling results for all concerned. In the afternoon reconnaissance patrols had disclosed the presence of two companies of German infantry deployed along the line of the Aue stream east of Garrel. These troops, with a fair sized gun area to their rear, held positions to the north and south of the bridge 1800 yards east of Dannenkamp (1983). Lt-Col Wotherspoon appreciated that if his men could cross this obstacle and push through the gap in the Hintern Esch (2084) the way to Oldenburg would be clear. Alas, the only scissors bridge available at this time was some distance back at Varrelbusch. This was immediately sent for, but unfortunately the bridge-vehicle ran over a mine whilst crossing the airfield and blew up. But for this piece of bad luck, the river would have been crossed, the last defence line west of Oldenburg would probably have been broken, and Lt-Col Wotherspoon might well have entered Oldenburg on the following day. The incident shows clearly how the fortunes of war are (like the puppet) governed by the manipulation of many strings, and, should even the smallest of these strings snap, then the show must be stopped until suitable repairs are made. (Ibid)

10 CDN INF BDE CROSS THE KUSTEN CANAL, 17-18 APR 45*

300. The next step in Maj-Gen Vokes' operations was quite obvious; an assault must be made across the Kusten Canal. For this task he nominated 10 Cdn Inf Bde. In turn Brigadier Jefferson handed over responsibility for the attack to Lt-Col Bradburn's Algonquins, who, together with 28 Cdn Armd Regt, had been operating along the division's left flank. There was no doubt but that the enemy had sensed our intentions and was ready to offer considerable resistance in the defence of the Kusten Canal. Once crossed, there would be an unhindered passage to the great naval base at Wilhemshaven. From prisoners taken lately at Esterwegen (9390) it was learned that part of the canal line was held by marine battalions, ** probably fortress troops from the naval bases further north. Other identifications at Bosel (1490) and Kampe (0698) lent weight to the belief that 7 Para Div, which had so far been delaying our advance, had pulled back to cushion positions behind the Marines, who were to hold the canal line. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div; 10 Cdn Inf Bde; Alq R., 16 Apr 45)

301. At approximately 1630 hours 16 Apr the commanding officer of Alq R. summoned his orders group and, in the presence of Brigadier Jefferson, outlined the plan of attack. The

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000
Sheets 2913 - Friesoythe, 2813 - Edeweicht.

** AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/L/F Docket I: Intelligence Summaries
Intreps Nos 143, 14 Apr 45; No. 146, 17 Apr 45; No. 147,
18 Apr 45.

battalion was to cross to the west of the main road; three companies ("B", "C" and "D") were to take part in the actual assault while "A" Company held the south bank secure and provided close fire support. As related beforehand elements of Lake Sup R. (Mot) had been first to reach the canal banks and had reported the bridge blown. The approaches to the bridge were not the choicest; the road itself was of secondary class and its foundations soggy from the spring thaw. On either side of it the "going" for armour was impossible, the area being mostly peat bog. Lt-Col R.A. Bradburn's plan was to move "A" Coy up to the south bank of the obstacle late on 16 Apr to deploy astride the main road. Later, under cover of darkness, a boat-erecting point would be established slightly to the rear of the forward troops on the east side of the road and the infantry would proceed there to pick up their boats. Having been allotted their collapsible craft, the companies would then be guided over a previously taped route to a forming up place west of the road where the troops would wait for H hour. At that time the companies would be formed up in extended line west from the bridge in the following order, "B", "D" and "C". "B" Coy, commanded by Major P.A. Mayer, was given the responsibility of seizing the initial bridgehead by establishing its platoons astride the old bridge-site and thrusting forward some 400 yards to the first group of buildings. While this was being done the other two companies would be sorting themselves out on the north bank of the canal. As soon as "B" Coy reported success, "D" Coy would move over to the east side of the road and "C" Coy would pass through to firm up further north along the main axis. "B" Coy, relieved of its tasks east of the road and ahead, was to use its free platoons to extend its holding westwards along the canal. For support, a timed artillery programme was laid on and in addition the heavy machine guns of 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy (N.B.R.) were brought forward to the south bank of the Kusten to provide close overhead fire for the crossing. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Apr 45; also Appx 5, The Assault Across the Kusten Canal - Personal Account by Major P.A. Mayer, Offr Comd "B" Coy: Alq R. 25 Apr 45; (also W.D., Alq R., 16 Apr 45))

302. The difficulties of the assault crossing of a canal at night are too numerous to mention. Success depends entirely upon the initiative of the men who paddle across the water, very often under a hail of fire against which their canvas craft offers no protection whatsoever. If caught by small arms fire in mid-stream, the soldier therefore must fire his own weapons from the boat and neutralize the opposition before he can land. Once he has landed, he must plunge into the darkness beyond to seek out and destroy his enemy in close combat. Such is the lot of the infantrymen. But, before he can launch his boats, the commander on the spot has much to plan - the forming up, local protection, supply of ammunition, communications, and a thousand and one other things. In consideration of the many intricate details of the plan which one of the assaulting companies followed, the company commander later wrote -

My plan was to form up the coy with its even boats in single file at the rear FUP. I would then go up to recce the south bank of the canal just to make sure of the ground ahead. Upon my return the boats were to be guided forward to the south bank, on approaching which the coy was to execute a RIGHT FORM. This meant that the boats would be in line abreast facing the canal. The line of boats would then move forward until the boat guides reached the road which runs parallel to the water; at this point the boats were

to stop. Each boat crew would lay its craft down quietly to the ground and lie down beside the boat. At H Hour (defined by the firing of the MMGs of 10 Cdn Indep MG Coy) each boat would be pushed into the water, loaded and paddled across. During the journey over the Brens in the bow of each boat were to fire at the crest of the opposite bank. We were to work along the lines of a definite drill. At H Hour as soon as the M.M.G. fire started each boat would head for the opposite bank. On the touch down the point man would get off to fasten the boat while the remainder of the boat load did a Right Form on him and went to ground. This would put the attacking force in line on the north bank.

(The Assault Across the Kusten Canal, op cit).

303. At 2130 hours that night the T.C.V's picked up the three assaulting companies and took them forward to a point some 2500 yards from the canal. From there the troops marched, following the road which was already under shell and mortar fire. There were frequent stops to take cover. The enemy knew that the attack must come along this road, for it was the only good one in the area. At that time it was crowded not only with marching troops but with R.C.A.S.C. lorries, heavily laden with bridging equipment. Besides all this, engineers' vehicles with other materials needed for the proposed bridge waited patiently for the attack to go in. H Hour was timed for 2400 hours. The commander of "B" Coy Alq R. can best relate what followed:

Owing to the slowness by personnel at the Boat Erecting Point, the attack, originally slated to go in at 2400 hours, was postponed until 0100 hours. This change in time gave us ample opportunity to get assembled and by 0045 hours the company was lined up in complete silence a few yards away from the south bank of the canal. The enemy who could be heard on the far bank apparently realized that something was afoot and a good deal of rifle and machine gun fire was directed onto the ground on which we were lying. A tribute to the discipline of the troops here is evident from the fact that although 4 men were hit, not one cried out to give our intention away. Finally at 0100 hours the MMGs began to fire, our shells started to pass over and as one man the company rose, picked up its boats and, having loaded up, pushed off across the darkened waters. The 15 yards width of canal was covered against fairly heavy fire which some of the enemy, standing on the north bank, poured onto us; but our own Brens in the bows of the boat replied and neutralized the opposition long enough to allow us to disembark. Our plan then proceeded without a single hitch.

(Ibid)

After a brief period of reorganization by the water's edge, the regimental war-cry resounded through the night and the infantrymen rushed forward to the assault. Twenty minutes of brisk hand-to-hand fighting and house-clearing followed, at the end of which the leading company was on all its objectives and had taken twenty-one prisoners. (Ibid)

304. In quick order "D" and "C" Coys passed through and adjusted themselves according to plan. The enemy had realized the importance of Maj-Gen Vokes' effort and began to rake every inch of the bridgehead with shell and mortar fire. As a result of this, bridging operations could not proceed and it was now up to the infantry to hang on until the tank support could be passed over the canal. (Ibid: and W.D., Alq R., 17 Apr 45). The battalion's position was poorly suited for defence, the centre line being bordered by many trees and crossed at right angles by numerous drainage ditches which were in turn lined by thick hedge-rows. The ground itself was very marshy and slit trenches reaching a depth of more than twelve inches immediately filled with water. In short, it was ideal terrain from the enemy's standpoint. He was soon to make excellent use of it. (AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II: Folio 4, "Ops and Activities of Alq R." - Apr-May 1945, by Maj L.C. Monk, 2 i/c)

305. The morning light failed to bring any physical form of retaliation, but it did reveal the tremendous toll taken by our artillery support and by the Vickers machine guns of the New Brunswick Rangers. The chatter of these guns had been most heartening during the original crossing and much of its success may be attributed to their presence on the south bank. The enemy had been so occupied by this stream of fire that he had not been able to stop the Canadian boats. Tribute to the machine gunners is paid by the Alq R. historian, who states:

The presence of these guns so close up attracted all the enemy's attention, as soon as he had recovered from his initial shock, he proceeded to pour mortar and shell fire among them. The crews took a terrible beating during those minutes, but their guts and determination was of the greatest value to the crossing.

(G.L. Cassidy: Warpath, p. 312)

THE ENEMY'S COUNTER-ATTACKS, 17-19 APR 45*

306. As the hours of 17 Apr passed it became clear that our normally superior mobility was not going to count for much in this peat bog and our troops had to accept battle on the enemy's terms. Infiltration on a large scale began at about noon. It commenced on the left flank, where "B" Coy was being harassed by hidden snipers. Then, in the centre, "C" Coy, well forward on the main axis, was soon being counter-attacked by fire on three sides. Reports stated that the enemy was closing in. There now commenced a terrific fire fight in which our ground troops were supported not only by the divisional guns but by all available mortars and a squadron of Typhoons. By last light the situation was becoming critical; line communications were being severed as fast as they were repaired. Company headquarters were in many cases under direct small arms fire; then at 2000 hours, just after Lt-Col Bradburn had reinforced his position to the left of the bridge site, the German counter-attack came in. "C" Coy was overrun and had to withdraw. As it did so the artillery poured heavy volumes of fire into the area, which became a veritable hell for Canadians and Germans alike. The enemy led by a self-propelled gun actually got within fifty yards of the bridge site before he was forced back by our overwhelming gunfire. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., 17 Apr 45; Ops and Activities of Alq R. op cit, para 16; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Intrep No. 147 as above.)

* Reference maps as for para 293

307. A pause for breath during which the Algonquins took stock of the situation followed the enemy's withdrawal; but still the infiltration on the flanks continued. There was every indication that the enemy had lost heavily for, apart from 76 of his dead which were buried during the day, many other corpses in the field gray of the Wehrmacht and the dark blue of his Marine battalions littered the ditches. Throughout the day Brigadier Jefferson reinforced his canal positions; A. & S.H. of C. were moved across onto the western flank, relieving "B" Coy Alq R., which was thrust forward to regain the ground lost earlier along the centre-line. Added to this a company of Linc & Welld R. was pushed across the canal and directed towards the railway on the right flank. Back at the bridge shelling still prevented the engineers from spanning the obstacle, but, undaunted by their own mounting casualties, the sappers had managed to build a raft to ferry across ammunition, food and more anti-tank guns to the hard pressed foot soldiers. (Ops and Activities Alq R. op cit, para 17)

308. By last light 18 Apr the situation had improved considerably, thanks to the concentrated effort of the Typhoons sweeping down continually to rocket and strafe everything that moved ahead of our positions. These air attacks quietened the enemy mortars and guns sufficiently to allow bridging operations to proceed slowly and it was hoped to have the structure completed by dawn the following day. At this time Brigadier Jefferson's dispositions were as follows. Alq R. held the centre line from the bridge northwards for about 600 yards. On the left A. & S.H. of C. (commanded by Lt-Col A.F. Coffin) held the area to the left of the main road westwards to the first road and dyke junction and northwards as far as the first east-west track some 900 yards from the canal bank. On the right Linc & Welld R. (recently relieved at Bosel by the armoured brigade) had passed its "C" Coy through to the east to secure the line of the railway, but this force was now heavily involved in trying to reach the tracks so that "A" Coy could push on through to the north. Both flanks were difficult to keep secure, especially the left where the Argyles beat off no less than three sharp counter-attacks. As darkness descended on the battlefield the forward troops, tired though they were, settled down in their wet slits to watch and wait. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 18 Apr 45)

309. From the prisoners already taken the intelligence staff at Maj-Gen Vokes' headquarters was able to piece together a fair summary of the opposing forces in the Kusten bridgehead. It was established that the large counter-attack of the previous night had been launched by marine troops of 364 Marine Fortress Battalion, which had been rushed down from Wilhelmshaven and committed with special orders to force the Canadians back.

The bn was supported by a pl of paratps and three aslt guns, the parent units of which had NOT yet been identified. Apparently the marines were persuaded fwd by the paratps at the pistol pt. Cas are reported to have been very hy, one Sgt insisting that he was the sole survivor of his coy and another PW describing how from his weapon pit he could count fifty dead in a circle of thirty yds radius.

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. 4
Cdn Armd Div, 18 Apr 45)

These prisoners' reports represented a high tribute to the Canadian gunners, who, when informed, generously passed their

praise on to those stalwart friends of the infantry, the FOOs.* Capt R.A. Spencer in his History of the 15 Cdn Fd Regt made special note of their work when he wrote:

Thus much of the credit for holding this bitterly contested bridgehead throughout these three days of almost incessant attack goes to the FOOs who coolly directed the devastating concentration of fire on the fanatical attacking infantry advancing in the open. Never before was the effect of shell fire so noticeable on the ground. The few houses along the road north of the canal into which the enemy had infiltrated were beaten into a mass of match-wood and rubble; trees were torn to gaunt skeletons; fields were covered with masses of shell holes; even the road was badly cratered as a result of the weight of bursting shells.... Throughout the 18th the guns spent a busy day. Gunners and command post staffs, spurred on by reports of the critical situation in the bridgehead, worked with a will and the response was never better. They had the satisfaction of knowing that it was their work which made it possible to retain a foothold over the canal.

(R.A. Spencer, History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regt, R.C.A., as above, p. 257)

310. But the canal line was even yet not secure. Realizing all too well the significance of this bridgehead, the enemy at about 0100 hours 19 Apr made his final bid to expel the Canadians. Unknown to the latter he had been infiltrating steadily for some time and suddenly, as the line of the canal was being subjected to the fiercest of bombardments, the forward companies felt the full impact of his savage assault. For the Algonquins it was a particularly bad moment. "B" Coy and its headquarters found itself beset from all directions and soon were being forced back along the main road.

The enemy attack was directed down the main axis and from the front Right flank. His supporting fire was very intense, but our own SOS, arty and mortar fire was maintained from 0100 hours until approx 0800 hours 19 Apr with telling effect. "B" Coy was, however, forced back some 300 yds into the "C" Coy area.

("Ops and Activities" Alq R.
op cit, para 18)

Gradually the enemy's effort made itself felt all across the front. Both A. & S.H. of C. and Linc & Welld R. fought hard to hold their gains, but once more the power responsible for checking the German onslaught came from the artillery. At the gun pits the crews sweated to comply with orders for gun fire on the many choice targets which the FOOs observed. At the front the infantrymen also sweated in close combat with countless numbers of Germans who appeared as if by magic out of the night's haze. Casualties were heavy on both sides but by 0600 hours (19 Apr) the enemy had obviously had his fill. He could not dislodge the infantry, nor could he reach the Kusten Canal. His powerful march forward was now turned into a most bloody withdrawal and, as he pulled back, our guns blasted the very paths beneath him. (Ibid.: also W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 19 Apr 45)

* Forward Observation Officers: one is normally attached to each forward company.

THE BRIDGEHEAD IS SECURED, 19 APR 45^{*}

311. Once the German attacks began to waver, Maj-Gen Vokes' engineers were urged to press their task. Throughout the last few hours, these men had worked under intense fire to complete the bridge. They suffered a good many casualties but persisted for they realized that now as never before armoured support was urgently needed by the infantry ahead of them (W.Ds., H.Q., R.C.E., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Apr 45; also 9 Cdn Fd Sqn, R.C.E., 18-19 Apr 45). South of the canal, two squadrons of 28 Cdn Armd Regt awaiting the signal to move up also took a severe pounding. They had not long to wait:

At about eight in the morning the lead tank of the B.C.Rs inched its way across. Just as it reached the far bank and started to slew over to the right side of the road, it was hit dead on by an 88-mm gun firing straight down the road. It did not brew up, however, and managed to get clear of the roadway. Colonel Bradburn ordered a medium artillery concentration, and under its cover the next tanks came across full tilt, firing directly up the road. In a few minutes the first troop was successfully across and into fire positions in among the grateful infantry.

(Cassidy, Warpath op cit, p. 315)

312. The arrival of the tanks gave new life to the troops in the bridgehead. The commander of 10 Cdn Inf Bde now made his plans for the exploitation and that morning the infantry began to move ahead once more. The reasons for the apparent slowness in the advance to date had been basically an organic one, and the G.S.O. 1 of the division later offered his explanations:

We were an armoured div fighting in what was, properly speaking, inf country and, early in this battle, we began to feel our shortage of inf. Only so much effort could be expected from the inf resources at our cond, and for one short period the G.O.C. was reduced to fighting on a one or at the most a two-bn front. Further, the div was definitely road-bound - a fact of which the enemy was entirely aware, and not only were we road-bound, but it was constantly necessary to rebuild the rds over which the Div had to adv or actually to construct new roads to permit further advances.

(AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/F,
Docket II: Folio 3, op cit,
Part II, Para 4)

The G.O.C., himself an engineer, had quickly appreciated the situation regarding his one route, and at an early stage in the battle he decided to concentrate his engineer resources and all available vehicles within his information to maintain the route. Thus it was kept open, but only by the greatest of co-operative effort on the part of the divisional engineers. (Ibid, Part I, para 11)

313. As the build-up of our effort in the bridgehead continued, the flanks of the division were being constantly watched by Brigadier Moncel's motor battalion. To quote the Divisional Historical Officer:)

* Reference maps as for para 300.

4 Cdn Armd Bde assumed op control of the triangle 1790 - FRIESOYTHE - KAMPE. The Lake Sup R. (MOT) which had taken over the commitments of the A. & S.H. of C. in the KAMPE area, also relieved the fwd coy of the Line & Welld R. in the area 1790. The Lake Sup R. (MOT) were thus responsible for the immediate right and left flanks of our front. 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt continued to operate on the extreme right, with elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt patrolling the south bank of the Kustcn Canal on our extreme left from below Kampe to the inter-div bdy of 1 Pol Armd Div.

(Weekly summary of ops and activities;
4 Cdn Armd Div, Apr-May 45 by Hist
Offr op cit, Part I para 9)

On 19 Apr a further regrouping released other forces for employment in the bridgehead:

3 and 65 A Tk Btys were moved up from the areas 0783 (MARKHAUSEN) and 0797 respectively and came under comd 10 Cdn Inf Vde for employment in the br-head in a ground role. The Bty formerly at 0797 was relieved by sqn of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, while a second sqn of the same regt move fwd PEHEIM 0676 to garrison GARREL.

(Ibid)

Garrel had been cleared by 29 Cdn Armd Rocce Regt and "D" Coy Line & Welld R. on 17 Apr. The South Albertans had also contacted Lt-Gen Dempsey's troops on the right. After this the armoured reconnaissance troops advanced east** along the road Garrel - Bissel (2984) - Sage (3183). Progress along this route was slow because of the many mines encountered, but by 1500 hours 19 Apr Bissel and Sage (3183) were in our hands and plans were adjusted for a new advance north from these two places. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 17-19 Apr 45)

314. It now remained for the infantry brigade to enlarge the bridgehead sufficiently to allow the armour room enough to deploy and manoeuvre. Unfortunately the scope of resistance and condition of ground did not make for speed and it was to be almost another week before Brigadier Moncel was given his orders to move northwards. However, the intervening time was not spent in idleness. The armoured regiments were kept busy supporting Brigadier Jefferson's men by tank-gun fire. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 19, 20, 22 Apr 45). Coupled with this support and that of the divisional field artillery and three medium regiments, a spectacular programme of close air support had contributed greatly to the results achieved thus far north of the canal. Ninety-seven sorties were flown on 17 Apr, followed by another ninety-four on 18 Apr and eighty-seven more on 19 Apr; all achieved great success and brought heavy loss to the enemy. (Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 14-21 Apr 45 op cit, para 11). An adequate tribute to the aircraft and pilots is contained in the War Diary of 4 Cdn Armd Div for 19 Apr which reads:

* Osterloh

** Refer to map 1:25,000 Sheet 3016 - Dotlingen.

4 Cdn Armd Div freely acknowledges its debt to air sp during 18-19 Apr, without which it is felt the brhead could NOT have been successfully held.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div,
19 Apr 45)

OPERATIONS ON GENERAL CRERAR'S WESTERN FLANK, 12-18 APR 45 ^x

315. While Lt-Gen Simonds' men had been liberating north-eastern Holland and staking further claims on German soil to the east, the incursions of 1 Cdn Corps into the western Netherlands had met with strenuous opposition. Col-Gen Blaskowitz, the General Officer Commanding the Twenty-Fifth German Army and various subordinate formations of the enemy's beleaguered garrison, was under orders to dispute our passage to the last. (W.D., G.S. (Int), H.Q. First Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx 5, First Cdn Army Intelligence Periodical No. 1). Nevertheless, the effort to thrust his forces back from the line of communications running north-east from Arnhem was pursued with good success. On the night of 15/16 Apr 1 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes fought their way to the east bank of the canal at Apeldoorn where it passes through the suburbs and to the south of the town itself. On the Division's left 2 Cdn Inf Bde cleared southwards and on 16 Apr linked up at Dieren (8784) with elements of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div which had pushed out from the bridge-head at Arnhem to cross the high ground north of the road to Zutphen. (Ibid: AEF: 45/1 Cdn Corps/C/F, Draft Outline of Ops of 1 Cdn Corps on Clearing Western Holland, Apr 45)

316. These encouraging developments were to be exploited by a swift attack north and north-westwards from Arnhem with 5 Cdn Armd Div directed on the Ijsselmeer at Nijkerk (4605) with the object of cutting off the enemy's forces opposed to Maj-Gen Foster (Ibid). On the morning of 15 Apr 5 Cdn Armd Bde began to advance northwards through the woods above Arnhem and across the sandy heath-land beyond and that night occupied Otterloo (6591). On the following morning the armour turned westwards in the direction of Lunterèn (5589) and on the same day (16 Apr), bypassing Barneveld (5245), cut the Apeldoorn - Amersfoort railway. On the right Voorthuizen (5401) was captured, our tanks being thus astride the main way of escape for the enemy troops holding Apeldoorn, from which they were forced to withdraw on 17 Apr. So rapid was our advance that on the night 16/17 Apr a rabble of the defenders, attempting to break through the exposed right flank of 5 Cdn Armd Div, threatened to overrun Maj-Gen Hoffmeister's Headquarters. A vigorous local defence by all units in the area of Otterloo drove off the enemy with many casualties and brought in a couple of hundred prisoners. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket II; History of Operations, 5 Cdn Armd Div, North-West Europe.)

317. During the same night our troops at Voorthuizen beat off an attack by elements of 6 Para Div trying to get through to the west. Although the enemy held grimly on to Putten (5409) and the road thence to Nijkerk, the only escape route to landward still open to the disconfited enemy, 5 Cdn Armd Regt reached the Ijsselmeer at noon on 17 Apr. By this time 11 Cdn Inf Bde was moving up towards the coast to clear the woods of scattered fugitives.

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083 Holland 1:50,000 Sheets
27 - Hattem, 33 - Zutphen, 40 - Arnhem,
G.S.G.S. 2541 Holland 1:100,000, Sheet -
2 - Utrecht.

Taken at a sudden disadvantage by the speed of the armoured thrust to the north, the Germans had lost over 7,000 prisoners, including a large part of the 346th and 361st Infantry Divisions (General Crerar's Despatch 5 May 45, op cit, Para 31)

318. To the south on Lt-Gen Foulkes' left flank, further gains by 49 (W.R.) Inf Div along the Neder Rijn westward from Arnhem, established the line by dusk on 19 Apr through Renkum and Ede (5885), whence it ran through Barneveld to the small port of Harderwijk (5519). The enemy troops caught in the area between the lower Ijssel and the coast were rounded up, and patrols began to test the defences of the Grobbe Line, in the easily flooded country watered by the Eem, Luntersche Beek and Grobbe streams and centred on the important railway junction of Amersfoort (Outline of Ops of 1 Cdn Corps, op cit). 1 Cdn Corps had completed its task; the line of communications through Arnhem and Zutphen had been secured and could now be developed to maintain the final stages of the advance of 2 Cdn Corps into north-western Germany (Ibid)

THE ARMY'S PLANS ARE READJUSTED - 17-19 APR 45

319. In his dispatch to the Minister, General Crerar has explained how the facts which governed the operations of 21 Army Group were put before him by the C.-in-C. on 12 Apr.

...The second British Army, continuing its advance to the Elbe, was developing two main thrusts along the axis between Ulzen and Domitz, Soltau and Luneburg. On Lt-Gen Dempsey's left the 30th British Corps was to drive on with all possible speed to capture Bremen. Should this object not have been achieved before the arrival of First Canadian Army in that area, it was possible that the completion of this task might then devolve upon me. In such circumstances, it was expected that one, or possibly two British Infantry divisions in the vicinity would come under my command. Operations to clear the west Netherlands, the primary task of the 1st Canadian Corps and the securing of the left flank of the Corps area to the west of the Ijssel and south of the Zuider Zee, would only proceed to the extent that they were within the scope of the limited resources which Lt-Gen Foulkes had available to him. For as soon as it could be released without detriment to the completion of the operations intended to give us the route through Arnhem and Zutphen, the 5th Canadian Armoured Division was to relieve the formations of the 2nd Canadian Corps, then in the process of clearing the north-east Netherlands, and would come directly under command of First Canadian Army. Lt-General Simonds would then keep the weight of his forces on the right and be prepared for a possible assault on Bremen. After the capture of the city, it was intended that the 2nd Canadian Corps would clear the enemy from the Wilhelmshaven - Emden Peninsula before thrusting beyond the Weser below Hamburg, cutting off the enemy's escape route to the sea and closing the Cuxhaven peninsula.

(General Crerar's Despatch, 5 May 45; op cit, para 28; see also W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, April 1945: Appx 3, Directive to G.O.C's, 1 and 2 Cdn Corps, 13 Apr.)

320. These further objectives were on the point of being attained on the left by the clearing of the provinces of Groningen and Friesland by 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs, on the right by Maj-Gen Vokes' progressive attempt to carry the line of the Kusten Canal, and in the centre by the parallel armoured effort of 1 Pol Armd Div. But with affairs standing to such advantage in both Gelderland and the northern provinces, it was possible by regrouping forces to improve the prospects of coming to an early conclusion with the enemy in Germany. On 17 Apr Field-Marshal Montgomery had informed General Crerar that the Canadian Army would not capture Bremen, but that this task would be left to Lt-Gen Dempsey (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C. file 1-0, op cit, Message from C.-in-C., 17 Apr). The situation is described by General Crerar as follows:

On my right flank substantial advances were being made by the forces of Lt-General Dempsey along the whole of their front. The enemy was being forced to withdraw his salient in front of Cloppenburg, the Elbe had been reached and advance elements were within eight miles of Harburg. In view of the existing situation, the C-in-C decided that the Second British Army would now capture and hold Bremen irrespective of the arrival of Canadian elements in the area. It followed that I would not now be required to take over the city until I had completed the task of clearing north-west Germany up to the line of the Weser. It was still the intention, however, that I would then assume responsibility for Bremen and develop operations to clear the Cuxhaven peninsula. In the meantime, Lt-General Simonds was to continue to give protection to the left flank of the Second British Army up to the Weser and to overrun the coastal lands to the north.

(General Crerar's Despatch, 5 May 45, op cit, para 33)

321. In order to improve the situation for Second British Army in its assault on Bremen, the C.-in-C. directed that 2 Cdn Inf Div be transferred to Lt-General Simonds' right flank over towards Oldenburg (Ibid., para 35; W.D., Hist Offr, H.Q. First Cdn Army, 20 Apr). Several days were required for this lengthy move, the brigades travelling eastwards in succession to their new area during the period 18 to 21 Apr (2 Cdn Inf Div, Monthly Consolidated Summary of Ops, op cit, 1-30 Apr). Stronger forces would also be brought to bear against the enemy's line of defence across the Wilhelmshaven - Emden peninsula, where pressure had hitherto been sustained by the two armoured divisions only. The advent of 5 Cdn Armd Div into the northern Netherlands (319) would release 3 Cdn Inf Div for the task of destroying the enemy still resisting west of the Ems. The resulting relief of 3 Pol Inf Bde would enable Maj-Gen Maczek to concentrate his forces on the right bank of the Ems for his armoured thrust through the fen country to Papenburg and the River Leda. When 3 Cdn Inf Div had completed its task west of the Ems, Maj-Gen Keebler would be prepared to take the port of Leer by an assault across the Ems and the Leda. (W.D., G.S. H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 21 Apr)

322. The tasks of First Cdn Army were to be limited still further. In a message to General Crerar dated 19 Apr, Field-Marshal Montgomery explained that the allotment of an American force to 21 Army Group would enable the pace of our operations to be quickened considerably. In the light of this

development, it would no longer be necessary for First Cdn Army to cross the Weser and clear the Cuxhaven Peninsula (G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, file 1-0, Vol II op cit, folio 36 Message C.-in-C., 19 Apr). Instead General Crerar was to assume the alternative responsibility of clearing the islands at the eastern end of the Frisian group (ibid, Directive M 574 from C.-in-C., 22 Apr).

323. The actual directive reads:

The right wing of Canadian Army will operate strongly against OLDENBURG, and south of it, in close touch with the left wing of Second Army which is advancing on BREMEN.

As soon as that portion of BREMEN on the south bank of the Weser has been captured by Second Army, the right wing of Canadian Army will operate northwards to capture EMDEN and WILHELMSHAVEN and clear all enemy from the peninsula between the rivers WESER and EMS.

Canadian Army will study the problem of capturing those islands at the eastern end of the FRISIAN group from which the enemy could interfere with the free use of the WESER estuary e.g. WANGEROOG, and possibly also SPIEKEROOG.

(Ibid, folio 39)

*
SECOND BRIT ARMY'S OPERATIONS, 11-19 APR 45

324. Before considering the enemy's situation at this time, it is necessary to review the activities of Lt-Gen Dempsey's troops on 21 Army Group's right flank during the past week. (See Part I Para 198). On 10 Apr, 8 Brit Corps had received orders to secure Celle (5951), and the line of the River Aller, and then press on to capture Uelzen (9189) at the same time keeping firm contact with Ninth U.S. Army. These tasks were sub-allotted in the following manner. 15(S) Inf Div was responsible for the capture of Celle and Uelzen and for providing a class 40 bridge over the River Aller. Meanwhile 11 Brit Armd Div was given the task of advancing at maximum speed to seize Bergen (5171) thus protecting the left of 15(S) Inf Div. In addition Maj-Gen G.P. Roberts' (11 Armd Div) must bridge the Aller at either Essel (3056) or Winsen (4755). Lt-Gen E. Barker's third formation (6 Airborne Div) was to follow up and clear out any enemy bypassed by the armoured division (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I; also First Army Liaison Ops Reports, op cit, 111620B, G Ops, Second Army)

325. Class 40 bridges across the Aller were established at Celle on 11 Apr and at Essel (where 1 Cdo Bde had made its crossing) on the following day. By the morning of 12 Apr the Scottish Division had one brigade over the Aller and in the town of Celle (5951) and, in short order, the Scots were off towards Uelzen (9187) 25 miles away. Uelzen was reached on 14 Apr but

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416 Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheets
M2 - Oldenburg, M3 - Boromen, M4 - Soltau,
N3 - Minden, N4 - Hanover, L4 - Hamburg,
L5 - Lauenburg, M5 - Salzwedel,
W5 - Braunschweig

there the enemy reacted violently. While 15 (S) Div made preparations to capture the town 11 Arm'd Div, having captured Bergen and the notorious concentration camp at Belsen, came up on the left. (Ibid: 121400B, G Ops, Second Army: also First Cdn Army Ops Log op cit, 12 Apr 45, serials 49, 73, 104)

With opposition loosening in front of 11 Armoured Division as it got away from the R Aller, 3 R Tks battle group sped on and at 1700 hrs on 16 Apr entered Ebstorf. 15/19 H battle group was moving on a Southern axis and that same evening reached WICHTENBECK, some six miles to the South West.

15(S) Division objectives on the R Elbe were at the same time moved further north to Lauenburg 8734 and Boizenburg 9835. The division had instructions to ignore its right flank, for 5 Division, which had arrived from another theatre, had meantime been placed under command of 8 Corps, and was to concentrate South West of Uelzen between 18 and 20 Apr. This division and 6 Airborne Division together could deal with the corps right flank.

(AEF: 45/ Second Army/C/D Docket I, p. 376)

326. On 17 Apr General Dempsey informed the Commander of 12 Brit Corps that the Russian offensive towards Berlin had begun on the previous day. The opinion expressed, at this time, was that since the German strength in the east was further to the south, the Russians might be able to make good progress. If this were the case thousands of refugees fleeing before Marshal Stalin's troops would be driven towards General Dempsey's area. This would complicate matters greatly and it was emphasized that Second Army must reach the west bank of the Elbe to stop any mass crossings by these refugees. Plans were therefore completed for the immediate encirclement of Uelzen so that the advance eastwards might continue unimpeded. The divisional tasks were thus defined;

15(S) Division - Be prepared to assault Uelzen not before 1200 hrs 17 Apr

6 Airborne Division - To establish itself East of the town as early as possible and to make contact with 11 Armoured Division at Emmendorf 9095.

11 Armoured Division - To establish itself firmly in the area Ebstorf-Wriedel 7296 with active patrols to the North. To cut the road Uelzen-Luneburg and to make contact with 6 Airborne Division

(Ibid)

The operations continued with 15(S) Inf Div applying co-ordinated pressure against Uelzen.

About midday on 17 Apr the defenders of Uelzen began to reconsider the situation, and 15(S) Division reported signs of withdrawal northwards. During the afternoon 11 Armoured Division cut the road Uelzen-Luneburg, and 15(S) Division entered and began to clear the town. With contact established between 11 Armoured Division and 6 Airborne Division, this task was completed on 18 Apr and arrangements were made for the division to extend East of the town, relieving elements of 6 Airborne Division and 11 Armoured Division.

11 Armoured Division made immediate preparations to move North on Luneburg. Light elements had entered the town by 1600 hrs on 18 Apr and had seized the bridges intact. At the same time an equally forceful thrust to the west of the town had brought armoured elements to a point about four miles almost due North of it and on the east a battle group had captured Nectze 9322 by the evening before midnight the river Elbe had been reached at Hitzbergen 9031, ten miles North East of Luneburg.

(Ibid)

327. On 19 Apr, covered by an armoured car screen (provided by the Royals) working deep on the southern flank, the Airborne troops then began clearing over a wide area to the east and north-east of Uelzen. At the same time 15(S) Inf Div went into concentration areas between Uelzen and Luneburg (7122). On that day Lt-Gen Barker issued fresh instructions designed to establish the corps firmly on the Elbe. (First Cdn Army Ops Log op cit: 18 Apr 45, serials 32, 73; also AEF 45/21 Army Group/C/F, Docket II: Notes on the Operation of 21 Army Group, 6 June 1944 - 5 May 1945, para 204)

5 Division - To be prepared to advance to the R Elbe on 20 Apr on a front between Blockede and Darchau.

15(S) Division - To advance as soon as possible to the R Elbe. On the left relieving certain elements of 11 Armoured Division in the Lauenburg area and extending south east to Darchau.

11 Armoured Division - To establish itself on the R Elbe from opposite Lauenburg to inclusive Winsen 6532 and to protect the corps left flank on a general line southwards from Winsen.

6 Airborne Division - To remain in its present situation with reconnaissance tasks and to be responsible for the protection of the corps Right flank.

(Ibid, p. 377)

328. In the centre 12 Brit Corps had had great difficulty around Rethen (1167), but by midnight 12/13 Apr 53(W) Div had almost cleared the town and had a light bridge over the River Aller. Meanwhile, as 52 (L) Inf Div had moved to the area east of Diepholz, 3 Brit Inf Div was transferred to under command 30 Brit Corps. From 13 to 15 Apr the bridgehead held by the Welsh division across the Aller was subjected to heavy bombardment and several fierce counter-attacks, but the enemy could not make any headway. Subsequently on 15 Apr, 7 Armd Div took over control of the bridgehead with the intention of clearing the area Rethen - Walsrode in conjunction with 155(L) Inf Bde.

Progress during the initial stages of the break-out was not rapid, but in the afternoon the thrust began to meet with more success. Walsrode with bridges intact fell to 7 Armoured Division late on 15 Apr. Considerable trouble was still being experienced from air attacks on the Rethen bridge. A number of demolished bridges and carefully-sited craters was also encountered

and these considerably affected the speed of the advance.

The thrust of 4 Armoured Brigade under command 53 (W) Division on the left of 7 Armoured Division also began to make good progress. One regiment had captured Idsingen, some six miles north-west of Walsrode by midnight 15 Apr.

By midnight 16 Apr, 4 Armoured Brigade had reached Bendingbostel, 1285, against slight opposition. At the same time 158 Brigade was turning left-handed to Verdon, followed by 71 Brigade, which was prepared to pass through to capture the town.

On 16 Apr the Army Commander ordered Guards Armoured Division to join 12 Corps forthwith. It was to move via Nienburg-Rethen and Walsrode, concentrate about Rethen and was to be directed on to the Zeven area.

This required a right hook, but the Army Commander considered that greater advantage would result by advancing as far North as possible towards Hamburg, before swinging left. It was appreciated that this might involve the capture of Rotenburg.

After reaching Fallingbostelearly on 16 Apr, progress by 7 Armoured Division was again checked by demolitions and craters, but by evening Dorfmark had been captured.

(Ibid, p. 378; also First Cdn Army Ops Log; op cit, 12 Apr serials 83, 135, 16 Apr serial 130)

329. At this point as it was appreciated that the town of Soltau would be strongly defended, the following plans were formulated. 7 Armd Div was to screen Soltau (4190) with 8 H while 155 Inf Bde assaulted the place from the south. The remainder of the armoured division was to by-pass Soltau and go on towards the Elbe River. At the same time Gds Armd Div was ordered forward to advance on the axis Walsrode (2575) - Visselhovede (2489) - Stade (1557), while 53(W) Inf Div captured Verdon and Rotenburg (1102) if possible, prior to following the Guards. 52(L) Inf Div less 155 Bde (at present under command 7 Armd Div) was to pass to command 30 Brit Corps. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D Docket I p. 378). These changes themselves called for reallocation of tasks especially so since it was now known that First Cdn Army would not operate east of the Weser River. The new divisional tasks for 12 Corps were:

7 Armoured Division - Advance to R. Elbe on frontage Winsen-Buxtehude 3144.

Guards Armoured Division - Advance to seize Rotenburg 1102 (unless already captured by 53(W) Division) starting at first light 18 Apr. Thereafter to capture Zeven 0323 - Bremervorde 9444 and Stade 1557.

53(W) Division - Capture Verdon.

Capture Rotenburg if the situation loosened, using 4 Armoured Brigade. Pass one brigade group 52(L) Div to screen the eastern approaches to Bremen. Follow Guards Armoured Div.

52(L) Division - Less 155 Brigade (still under command 7 Armoured Division) to pass through and screen Bremen from the east.

(Ibid, p. 379)

330. After a rapid advance on 17 Apr 7 Armd Div was in Welle (3818) some twenty miles due north of Soltau (4190), which at that time was being invested by 155 Inf Bde. By midnight Soltau was clear and 53(W) Div reported success in Verden.

With Verden clear and bridging under construction 156 Brigade, still under command 53(W) Division, started on 18 Apr to advance north west along the east bank of the R Weser, towards Achim 8791. The same morning the Guards Armoured Division started to move north from Walsrode, directed initially on Visselhovede 2489.

At midday 2 HCR reported the road Soltau-Neuenkirchen 3294 clear. With one battle group working due north, having reached Ottingen, about two miles south east of Visselhovede, a second battle group swung east to cut road Visselhovede-Neuenkirchen.

5 Guards Armoured Brigade took a wider sweep to the East, moving on 7 Armoured Division's routes as far as Tostedt 3222 and then turning almost due west towards Zeven. In effect, therefore, the Guards were carrying out a wide pincer movement from the East.

With Neuenkirchen captured during the evening of 18 Apr, the Coldn Gds Groups turned south-west towards Visselhovede.

(Ibid, and p. 380)

After twenty-four hours hard fighting, the Guards reported Visselhovede clear during 19 Apr. Further north another of the division battle groups was closing in on Zeven (0323) from the east. (Ibid)

331. Meanwhile on the left of Maj-Gen Adair's guardsmen

4 Armoured Brigade was thrusting towards Rotenburg from the south, and by last light was some three miles short of the town. With Verden becoming the responsibility of a brigade of 52(L) Division, 71 Brigade passed to command Guards Armoured Division and 160 Brigade to command 7 Armoured Division on 19 Apr. This was to enable 155 Brigade to be released to re-join 52(L) Division.

52(L) Division, with 4 Armoured Brigade, less one regiment, passed to command 70 Corps during the night 19/20 Apr

(Ibid)

Thus ended a most satisfactory day, especially for 7 Armd Div which that night contacted 11 Armd Div of 8 Brit Corps four miles south-west of Winsen (6070). (Ibid)

OPERATIONS OF 30 BRIT CORPS, 11-19 Apr 45^{*}

332. Along the boundary between First Cdn and Second Brit Armies, Lt-Gen B.G. Horrocks's 30 Corps had similarly made good progress but against very stiff resistance on the line Cloppenburg - Quakenbruck (1553) - Vechta (3759). Up to 14 Apr 30 Corps had managed to take Quakenbruck, but the other two places were still being strongly defended. New orders were therefore issued:

3 British Division

To seize in succession the following areas with the object of screening Bremen from the south-west.

- (a) Tolkenbruck 6592 - Brinkum 7091 GrossMackenstedt 6589
- (b) Havekost 5388-Hongsterholz 5387.
- (c) Delmenhorst.

51 (H) Division

To complete the capture of the area Vechta-Wildeshausen. To be prepared to relieve 3 British Division on the left portion of their present sector and to be prepared to protect the left flank of 3 British Division for its attack on Delmenhorst.

Guards Armoured Division

To complete occupation of the high ground west of Cloppenburg.
To be prepared to operate in a counter attack role north-east or north-west.

43 Division

To complete the capture of the area Cloppenburg - cross roads 3177.

Opposition in front of 51 (H), Guards Armoured and 43 Divisions loosened considerably during 14 Apr, so that 51 (H) Division came up rapidly on the left of 3 British Division. Guards Armoured Division cleared the area north of Vechta and west of 51 (H) Division without difficulty. On the left 43 Division entered Cloppenburg early in the day.

(Ibid, p. 381)

333. Opposition loosened during 14 Apr. The Highland Division advanced rapidly on the left of 3 Brit Inf Div, the Guards cleared north of Vechta and 43 (W) Inf Div entered Cloppenburg. However

Opposition to any move North West by 3 British Division was strong. In consequence 3 British Division had to be put on to a narrower front before substantial progress could be expected. In accordance with Army's

* Reference maps as for para 324

first priority, i.e. the capture of Bremen, 30 Corps issued orders for completion of the clearance of the area west of the R Weser within the corps boundaries.

While 3 British Division continued to operate towards Delmenhorst, 51 (H) Division was to make local improvement of positions and to relieve 9 Brigade (3 British Division) on 16 or 17 Apr having handed over to 43 Division its own left Brigade sector (152 Brigade). 43 Division was to capture the cross roads 3177 and to maintain contact with 4 Canadian Armoured Division which was at that time directed on Oldenburg on an axis parallel with that followed by 43 Division. Guards Armoured Division concentrated and came into corps reserve.

(Ibid)

By the night of 15 Apr the Wessex Division had taken the Cloppenburg crossroads and proceeded to relieve 152 (H) Bde on its left. (Ibid)

334. On the same day 185 Bde of 3 Inf Div attacked the villages of Leeste and Brinkum, but opposition, mainly from SS troops, was extremely strong and it was appreciated that the assault on Delmenhorst, one of the main defensive outposts to Bremen, would require a well supported and concentrated effort.

During 16 Apr, both 51 (H) and 43 Divisions improved their positions. 51 (H) Division captured Dotlingen while 153 Brigade and 43 Division pushed east from the cross roads 3177 to capture Ahlhorn. The attack by 3 British Division had resulted in the capture of Brinkum, save for a small corner north west of the town, and also in that of Grosse Mackenstedt 6589, where only light opposition was encountered.

(Ibid)

335. In his instructions to his divisions on 17 Apr Lt-Gen Horrocks announced his intention to continue the thrust towards Mittels-Huchting (6696) - Stuhr (6892) with 3 Inf Div while the Highland formation pressed on to Harpstedt and Delmenhorst. Additional tasks allotted were:

43 Division

To take over from 153 Brigade and to move off the route Haselunne-Cloppenburg to allow 2 Canadian Corps unrestricted use of it from the morning of 19 Apr.

Guards Armoured Division

To pass to under command 12 Corps.

As a result, during 17 Apr

51 (H) Division advanced about three miles, reaching Ippener 5985. Both these attacks i.e. 3 British and 51 (H) Division continued on 18 Apr, against stiff opposition and had limited, but nevertheless steady progress.

52 (L) Division was already attacking towards Bremen. along the north bank of R Weser, having been passed

through 53 (W) Division by 12 Corps. The time has now come for the Bremen operation to be co-ordinated under 30 Corps. 52 (L) Division therefore passed to command 30 Corps on 19 Apr. Both 51 (H) and 43 Divisions had also been warned to be prepared to assist in the capture of Bremen, from the West and East respectively.

(Ibid, p. 382)

On the afternoon of 19 Apr, 51 (H) Div had its forward troops in Adelheide (5891) at a place about three miles south of Delmenhorst. Further on the right, a brigade of the Wessex was shifted to cover the east bank of the River Weser. There it came under command of the Lowland Division, which had itself recently arrived under Lt-Gen Horrocks' control and was thrusting northward from Verden. (Ibid)^x

THE ALLIED SITUATION, 19 APR 45

336. The Allied situation at this time could scarcely have been better. As if to crown our efforts in grand fashion, the forces in the Ruhr had capitulated. General Eisenhower describes the last moments of the great industrial area in these words:

The eastern half collapsed on 16 April, when 80,000 prisoners were taken in the 24 hours, and on 18 April the pocket was finally liquidated. The total bag of prisoners reached the immense figure of 325,000, including 30 general officers. Originally we had estimated that only 150,000 could be taken. Twenty-one divisions were destroyed, including three panzer, one panzer grenadier and three parachute divisions, and enormous quantities of booty fell into our hands. What Hitler may have expected to prove a fortress to hold us back from central Germany had given way after 18 days, and by now the main front was over 100 miles distant to the east.

(Eisenhower, op cit, p. 105)

337. Again there arises the difficulty of explaining why the Germans hung on for so long in the Ruhr when they should have pulled their forces back. The Supreme Commander suggests

x Paras 324 - 335 have been written mainly according to the account of Second Army operations contained in AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D Docket I, and checked by the following references:

(1) AEF: 45/Second Army/C/H Docket III. Second Army Sitreps for April 1945 as received at H.Q. First Cdn Army:

Nos	523 & 525	for period	110001B	-	120001B
Nos	525 - 526	" "	120001B	-	130001B
Nos	527 - 528	" "	130001B	-	140001B
Nos	529 - 530	" "	140001B	-	150001B
Nos	531 - 532	" "	150001B	-	160001B
Nos	533 - 534	" "	160001B	-	170001B
Nos	535 - 536	" "	170001B	-	180001B
Nos	537 - 538	" "	180001B	-	190001B
Nos	539 - 540	" "	190001B	-	200001B

that the enemy preferred to follow the policy of fighting where he stood regardless of the odds. Moreover, General Eisenhower adds:

The enemy may have entertained ideas of holding out in the Ruhr for some time and thus constituting a threat in our rear which would prevent our further progress while his remaining armies regrouped. If so, he had seriously miscalculated. Events were to show that the Ruhr could not support its defenders, despite its armament works and fuel production plants, while the armies to the east were in no condition to regroup and reform any sort of effective line. Each of them was hard put to maintain its own position, and there was no hope of filling the gap in the center of the front created by the trapping of the 21 divisions of Army Groups B and H. Through that gap the Allied armies were shortly to pour eastward, since the German troops which should have been barring their path were, instead, on the march to Allied prison camps.

(Ibid)

338. Continuing the General states that

Immediately the encircling move had been completed, operations were instituted to render innocuous the forces in the pocket. The densely built-up Ruhr area offered many advantages to the defence, and it was my intention, should the enemy continue to resist firmly, to content myself with compressing him into a small area where only a few divisions would be needed to contain him, and there to starve him into surrender. Even if the Ruhr itself could supply its garrison with adequate means of defence, it was clear that so populated an area, containing many hungry civilian mouths, could not also feed indefinitely the huge armies which it suddenly found in its midst.

(Ibid)

339. For some time after the jaws of the trap closed, the enemy attempted with great spirit to break out, first from Hamm, then from Siegen:

These attempts, however, like the cooperating counter-attacks by the enemy armies outside the pocket, were abortive, and were forced back everywhere except along the bank of the Rhine. Meanwhile the ammunition factories ceased production, and what little was available could not be transported to the front. Fuel and food likewise could not be supplied where they were needed; the rail system was ineffective for this purpose since, apart from the damage it had suffered, the network was thinnest where the fighting was hottest, in the southern Sauerland. Shortage of weapons was as grave as elsewhere in the German armies, rear echelons were stripped to arm forward ones, but even then the latter often lacked ammunition of the correct calibers.

(Ibid)

340. By mid-April, the end of opposition in the Ruhr was in sight:

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(Ibid)

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Signs of disintegration were evident, resistance becoming scattered and the enemy giving themselves up in such numbers that the disposal of the prisoners constituted a difficulty. It was clear now that there would be no question of starving a stubborn remnant into submission. The main industrial towns in the north were cleared, and on 14 April the pocket was split into two at Hagen.

(Ibid)

This event dictated but one personal course to the German Commander in the Ruhr and on 16 April Field Marshal Model committed suicide. (First Cdn Army Int Summaries op cit, 10 Apr 45, No.290)

341. Meanwhile the American and French Armies to the south had run wild. Seventh U.S. Army had reached Nurnburg on 16 Apr and proceeded to clear that city. The French had seized Baden-Baden and Kehl and the way was soon clear for bridging operations at Strasbourg to commence. The enemy in this sector was retreating in some haste and Stuttgart was about to fall to converging pincers from the north-east and south-east. (Eisenhower, op cit, p. 111) (First Cdn Int Summaries, op cit, No. 293, 19 Apr 45)

342. Next in line of the victorious plunging forces was Third U.S. Army. After seizing Weimar and clearing Erfurt on 11 and 12 Apr, Patton's men went on to Jena where Napoleon had long ago crushed his enemies. By 13 Apr Jena was clear and the armour was at the gates of Chemnitz. While XX U.S. Corps swept on along the northern frontier of Czechoslovakia, General Patton's other formations pushed on through Neustadt towards the mountains of Bohemia. (Eisenhower, op cit, p. 107; also First Cdn Army Int Summaries, op cit, Nos 287-288, 289, dated 16-18 Apr 45 incl)

343. North of the Third Army sector, General Hodges' troops had started an offensive south of the Harz Mountains by 11 Apr and made such great progress that within a week the enemy's forces in the mountains were encircled. Efforts to reduce this large pocket at first met with strenuous opposition, but by applying steady pressure the American soldiers succeeded in weakening the defenders. Last organized opposition, however, did not actually disappear until 21 Apr. Meanwhile an important gain was made in the occupation of Leipzig, a bitterly defended stronghold which fell to the famous Rainbow Division (69 U.S. Inf Div) on 19 Apr. (Eisenhower, op cit, p. 107; also First Cdn Army Intelligence Summaries, op cit, Nos 292-293, 18-19 Apr 45)

344. Still further to the north, Ninth U.S. Army, having reached the Elbe River south of Magdeburg on 11 Apr, went on to seize Brunswick on the following day and at the same time to establish a bridgehead over the Elbe. A second bridgehead, south of Wittenberge on 13 Apr, was made by XIII U.S. Corps. Magdeburg itself fell on 18 Apr to XIX U.S. Corps. Meanwhile the two bridgeheads east of the Elbe River had received such drastic punishment that our troops had been forced back but as General Eisenhower relates

A third at Barby held firm as enemy attempts to destroy the bridge by floating mines down the river proved abortive. So rapid had been the thrust to reach the Elbe that a number of German pockets had been bypassed on the way. The forces in these, before being mopped up, attempted to harass the Allied lines of communication, but with little success.

(Eisenhower, op cit, p. 107)

THE ENEMY, 19 APR 45

345. As for the enemy, he had little left with which to dispute Allied aims. In the east the Russian avalanche had taken on gigantic proportions and was steadily gaining momentum in the all-out drive to meet the American and British Armies. For the western task forces the battle was now made up of a series of drills which followed the monotonous pattern of pursuit, encirclement and mopping up. At the western extremity of the front, the Ijssel position, on which the enemy had formed such high hopes, had been broken by General Crerar's men. On the Canadian right in Germany proper a similar type of hopeless struggle was being waged and everywhere the Germans were being driven back. The approaches to the sea which now provided their only exit were no longer the responsibility of the soldier alone. Sailors and marines had been brought forward from the naval stations to stem the tide. These last remnants had held strongly along the Kusten Canal, but now the infantry bridgeheads over that obstacle were being enlarged and soon the Canadian armour would be reaching out to Emden and Wilhelmshaven. (First Cdn Army Int Summaries op cit, Nos 291-292, 17-18 Apr 45)

346. On General Dempsey's front, the main opposition came from odd Wehrmacht, marine and other hastily assembled assortments of so-called fighting men under General Gunther Blumentritt. According to a later interrogation report

Blumentritt's staff contained only a few operational officers and there was practically no means of communication. The General purposely organized his new command so that he would always be facing the Second British Army.

(First Cdn Army Interrogation Report op cit, No. 20, General Gunther Blumentritt, p. 13)

At his interrogation Blumentritt recalled the final tactical order he had received from Berlin:

It was that the Armoured Division "Clausewitz" was to be pushed through from the area Soltau X 49 and make for the Harz Mountains "in order to cut off the communications of the Americans advancing on Magdeburg Y 60, and to enable the Twelfth German Army to move out of the Harz". This so called division consisted of about two or three infantry battalions, about eight guns and some twenty tanks of various types.

(Ibid)

Actually this division got only as far as Gifhorn (X 93). There it was swamped by the strong American Forces it was attempting to push aside. (Ibid and AEF: US/Second Army/4F, Docket I; Second Army Intelligence Summaries 31 Mar - 5 May 45, op cit, Nos 320 of 19 Apr 45, 315 of 17 Apr 45)

347. The opposition on the approaches to main German ports remained fairly stiff. South of Bremen the Germans showed no indication to give up easily. In this area Corps Ems was trying desperately to ward off the British thrust which was about to cut the Hamburg - Bremen autobahn and threaten Bremen from the rear. (First Cdn Int Summary, op cit, No. 294, 20 Apr 45). On the extreme left, however, at Delmenhorst (6096) the enemy had slackened off slightly and prisoners taken on 19 Apr stated that this relaxation of effort was due to the fact that Delmenhorst

was a hospital area and was to be abandoned. (First Cdn Army Int Summary, op cit, No 293, 19 Apr 45)

348. Since the Western Allies had crossed the Rhine five weeks previously the battle of Germany had completely altered its course. The Allies had swung into terrific stride, exploiting their mobility to the full. At the same time both the Reich and the German Army were being cut up into pockets which for reasons of supply alone could not hold out much longer. Facing the Canadians was an enemy who had two choices; surrender or death, the latter either by fire or by water, for the sea offered nothing in the way of escape. (First Cdn Army Int Summaries, op cit, No. 293, 19 Apr 45). But the Canadian task was not to be an easy one. As our Intelligence staff observed:

The soldiers, parachutist and sailors...have received their orders. They fight because they have been told to do so and because for so long as they can remember they have done nothing but obey orders.

(Ibid, No. 294, 20 Apr 45)

THE SITUATION OF FIRST CDN ARMY, 1200 HRS 19 APR 45

349. It had been intended earlier that General Crerar's troops would go past the River Weser as far as Hamburg, and then clear the Cuxhaven peninsula as well as the area of Emden - Wilhelmshaven; additional responsibilities were Frisian Islands, exclusive of Heligoland. But as the situation developed fresh instructions indicated that our first priority lay in North-west Germany. Thus on this date we see the Canadian right wing making steady yet not rapid progress along its active front, which stretched from the positions presently held by Maj-Gen Vokes' armoured reconnaissance regiment (29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt) out of Garrel and north of Cloppenburg westwards to 10 Cdn Inf Bde's new bridge-head over the Kusten Canal at Edewechterdamm (north of Friesoythe). From this point the position ran west again following the canal line to its junction with the Ems River, where 1 Pol Armd Div, in operating astride the river, was now applying its strength particularly along the east bank. (W.D, G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Apr 45; also First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports op cit 191600B G Ops 2 Cdn Corps; also First Cdn Army/C/H Docket III: Sitreps: Folios 28 & 30, Msgs G.O. 158, 19 Apr 45, 162, 19 Apr 45)

350. West of the Ems River 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp held a broken line facing Weener (7408) and Bunde (6810) from the south. Further west the front had been stabilized from Nieuwe - Schans (6409) through Oosterwolde (5412) on to the area of Siddeburen (4216), where contact was being maintained with elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt of 3 Cdn Inf Div (First Cdn Army Ops Log op cit, 18 Apr 45; serials 92; 19 Apr 45, serials 104, 109; 20 Apr 45, serials 30, 40; also W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 19 Apr 45). The presence of 7 Cdn Recce Regt in this sector was the result of certain modifications in the allocation of responsibility to Maj-Gen Keefer's troops. When last mentioned (17 Apr), 3 Cdn Inf Div's consolidated areas were as follows:

7 Cdn Inf Bde were given the area from STEENWIJK West to the river IJssel and South to ZWOLLE. 8 Cdn Inf Bde were given the area South of the HARLINGEN - LEEUWARDEN railway, and the intervening sector including the coast line west of the LEEUWARDEN - HEERENVEEN road. 9 Cdn Inf

Bde were given the task of consolidating North of the HARLINGEN - LEEUWARDEN - ZWAGERVEEN railway, and guard-in the coast line.

(Weekly Summary of Ops, 3 Cdn Inf Div, op cit, 15 Apr - 21 Apr 45)

351. This allocation, however, had been modified somewhat on 18 Apr. On that date as the official summary of operation states:

The area as far East as Groningen became a 3 Cdn Inf Div responsibility. 7 Cdn Inf Bde turned over most of their responsibility to the Dutch Resistance and moved to the new area. 8 Cdn Inf Bde somewhat enlarged their sector to include some of that vacated by 7 Cdn Inf Bde.

(Ibid)

The only real change in 3 Cdn Inf Div's present disposition was on the right. 7 Cdn Inf Bde was now facing north-east on the line Hoogezand (3408) - Weltersum (3420) - Fraamklap (2527) (First Cdn Army Op Log, op cit, 20 Apr, serial 32; also W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units); In order to give a more detailed picture of the positions held by Brigadier T.G. Gibson's men, the Rifle Brigade's war diary is quoted

R. Wpg Rif were positioned on the outskirts of GRONINGEN covering the NORTH-EASTERN approaches to the town while Regina Rif 8 miles to the NORTH controlled re junc, villages of WINSUM, 1827, ONDERDENDAM, 2327, and MIDDELSTUM, 2628. I G Scot R some 9 miles SOUTH-EAST of GRONINGEN moved into the towns of HOOGEZAND, 3408 and KOLHAM, 3310. A sqn 7 Recce Regt and a sqn of RCD were put under bde comd and a tp of 27 Armd Regt was working with R. Wpg Rif. During the afternoon R. Wpg R. were ordered to move up on the rt flank of Regina Rif.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Apr 45)

352. The previous occupant of this sector, as has already been related, was 2 Cdn Inf Div, but now that formation was in the act of moving (on the direct order of the G-in-C.) to Lt-Gen Simonds' right flank (General Crerar's Dispatch 5 May 45, op cit, para 35). The divisional summary of operations for the week, 15-21 Apr records this important move in these words:

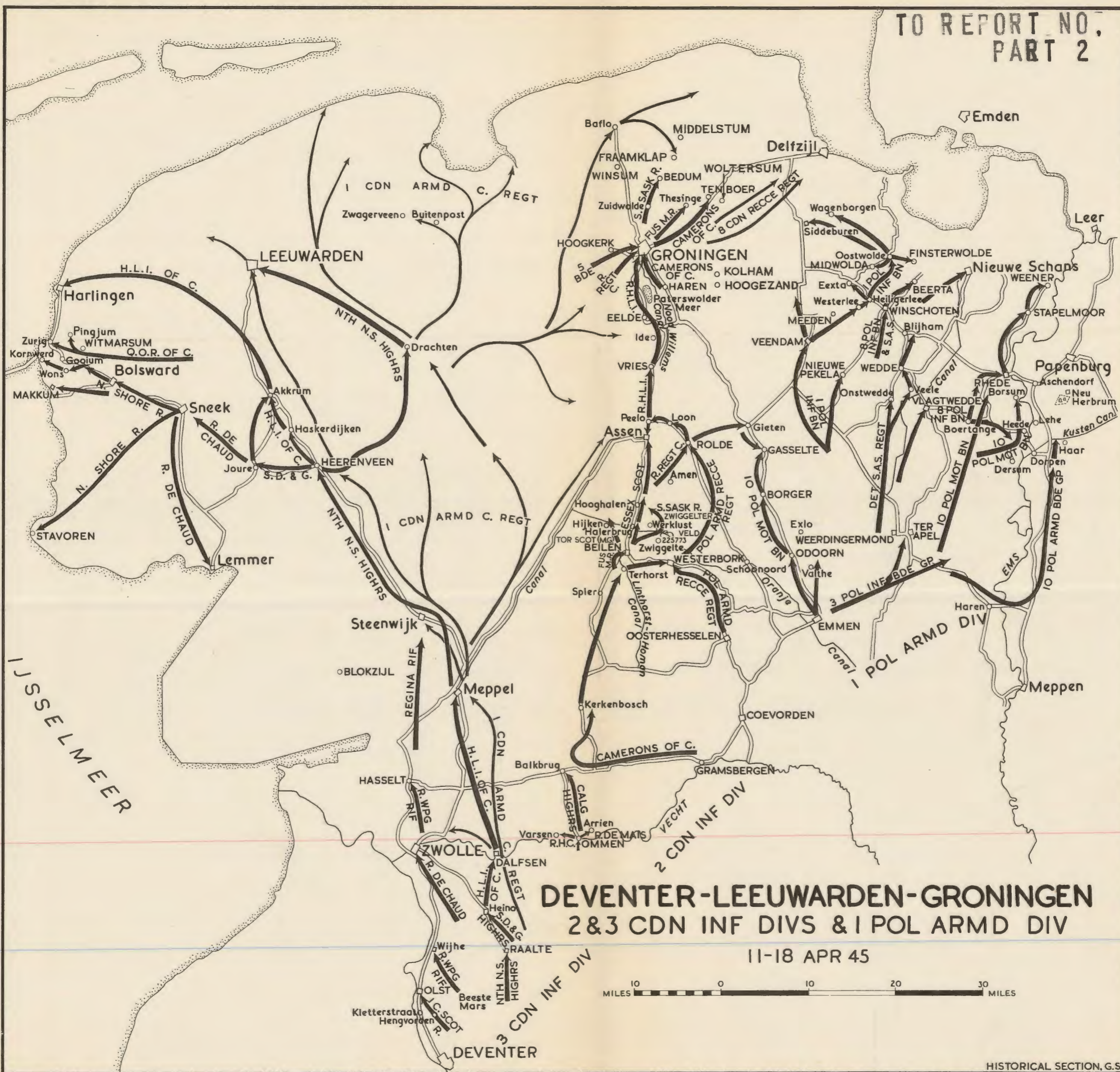
On 18 Apr, HQ 2 Cdn Inf Div proceeded south through ASSEN, HOOGEVEEN and BALKBRUG before turning east through HARDENBURG, over the OVERIJSELSCH Canal, and across the Dutch-German frontier in square 2840. Up to this point, the roads had been lined with the Dutch people, who gave a very enthusiastic welcome to the troops.

Continuing eastwards over the frontier, HQ 2 Cdn Inf Div passed through EISEN, NIENHAUS and NORDHORN. The River Ems was crossed east of LINGEN and the first stage of this long journey from GRONINGEN ended, after 110 miles near HASELUNNE. On the following day (19 Apr), HQ 2 Cdn Inf Div traversed the remaining 37 miles from HASELUNNE, through IONINGEN, to a position in square 2676 approximately 5 miles north-east of Cloppenburg (square 2072).

(Weekly Summary of Ops, 2 Cdn Inf Div,
op cit, 15-21 Apr 45)

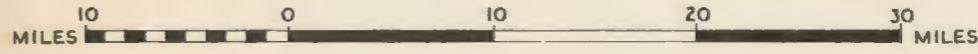
As soon as the Divisional headquarters arrived in its new area on 19 Apr, the commander and his staff began planning for the next offensive against Oldenburg (ibid)

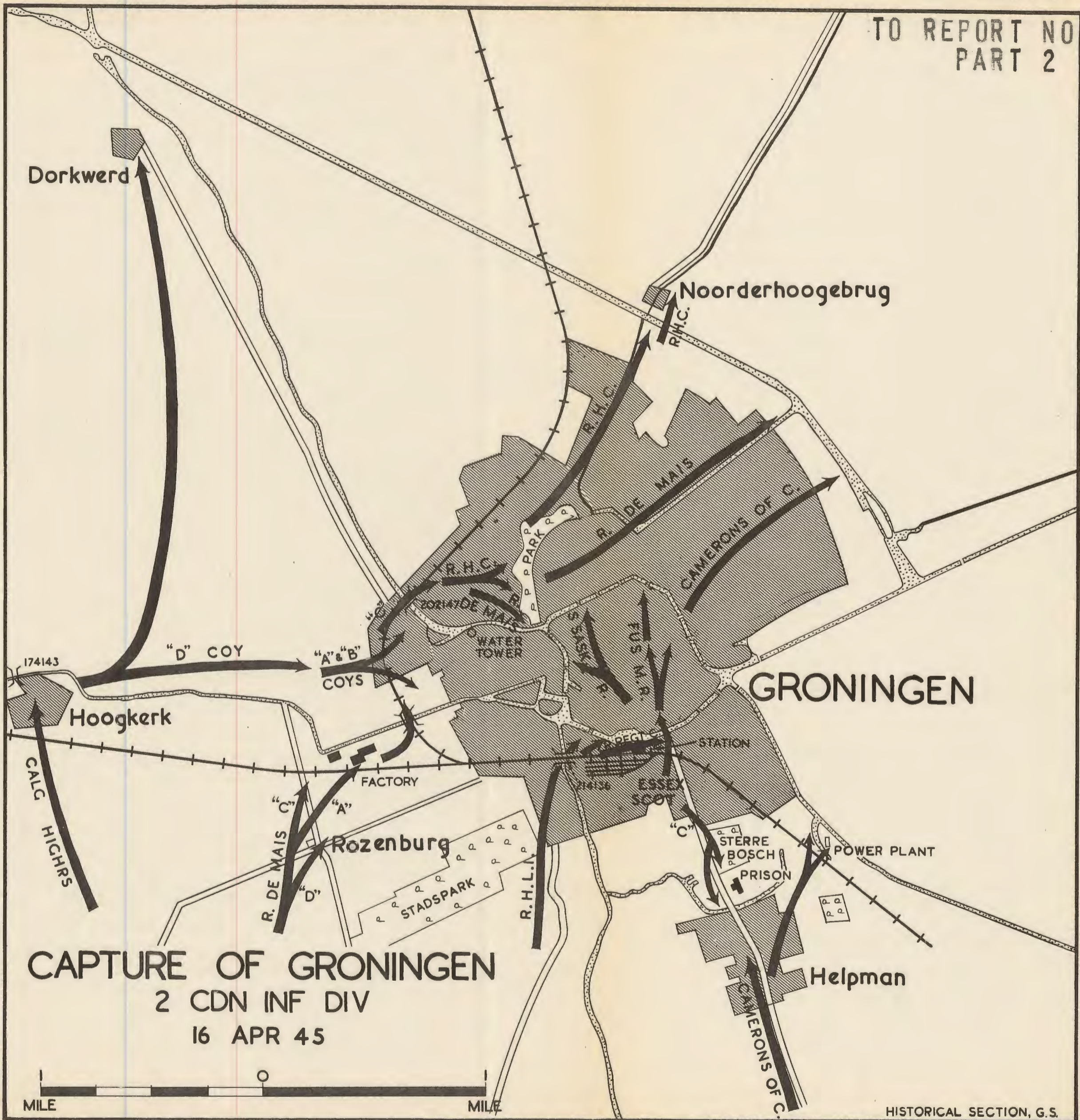
END OF PART II



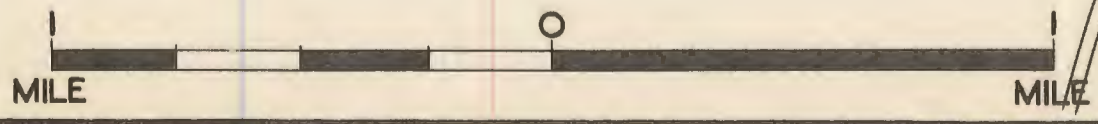
DEVENTER-LEEUWARDEN-GRONINGEN 2 & 3 CDN INF DIVS & 1 POL ARMED DIV

11-18 APR 45



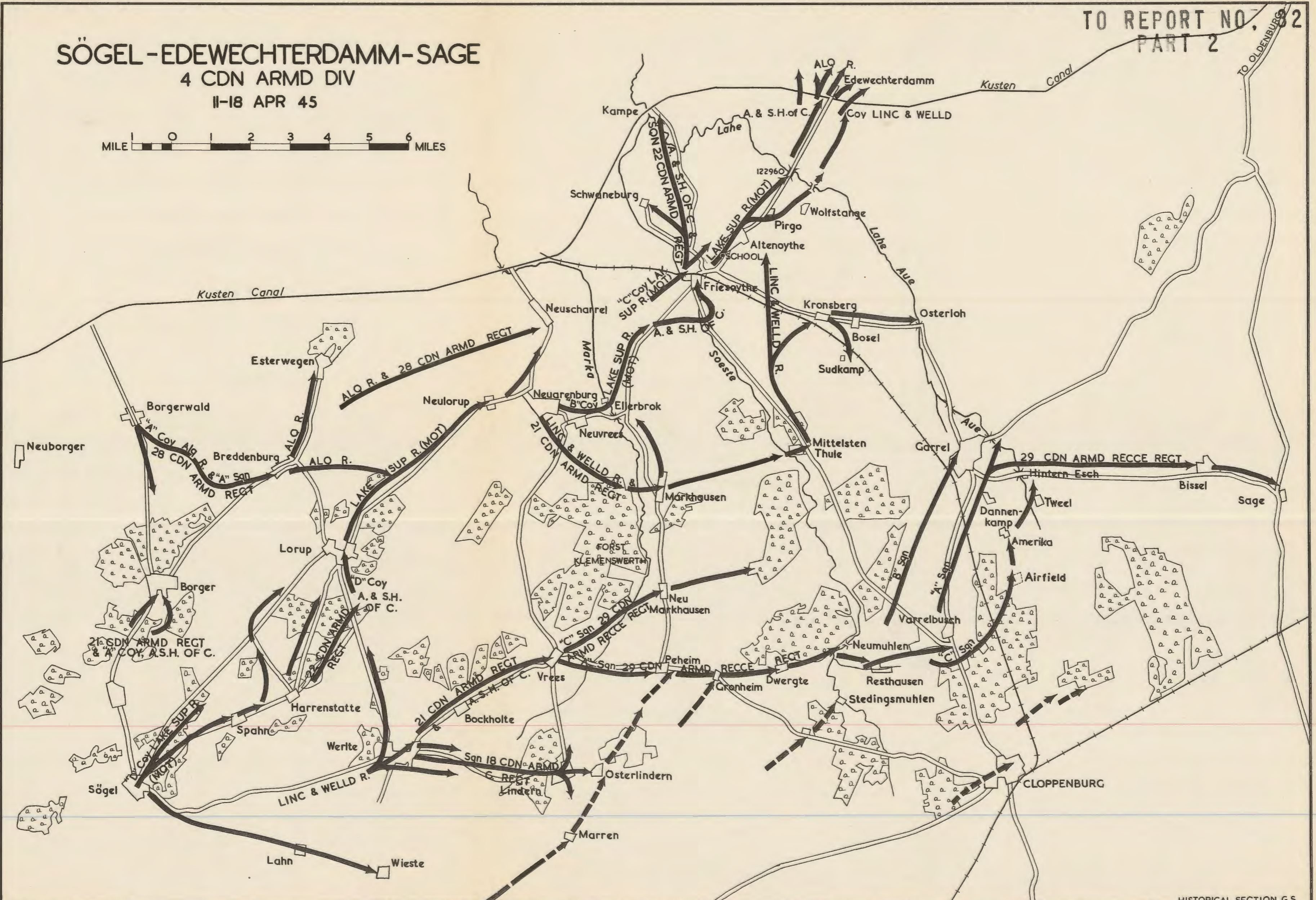
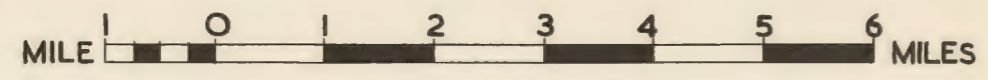


CAPTURE OF GRONINGEN
 2 CDN INF DIV
 16 APR 45

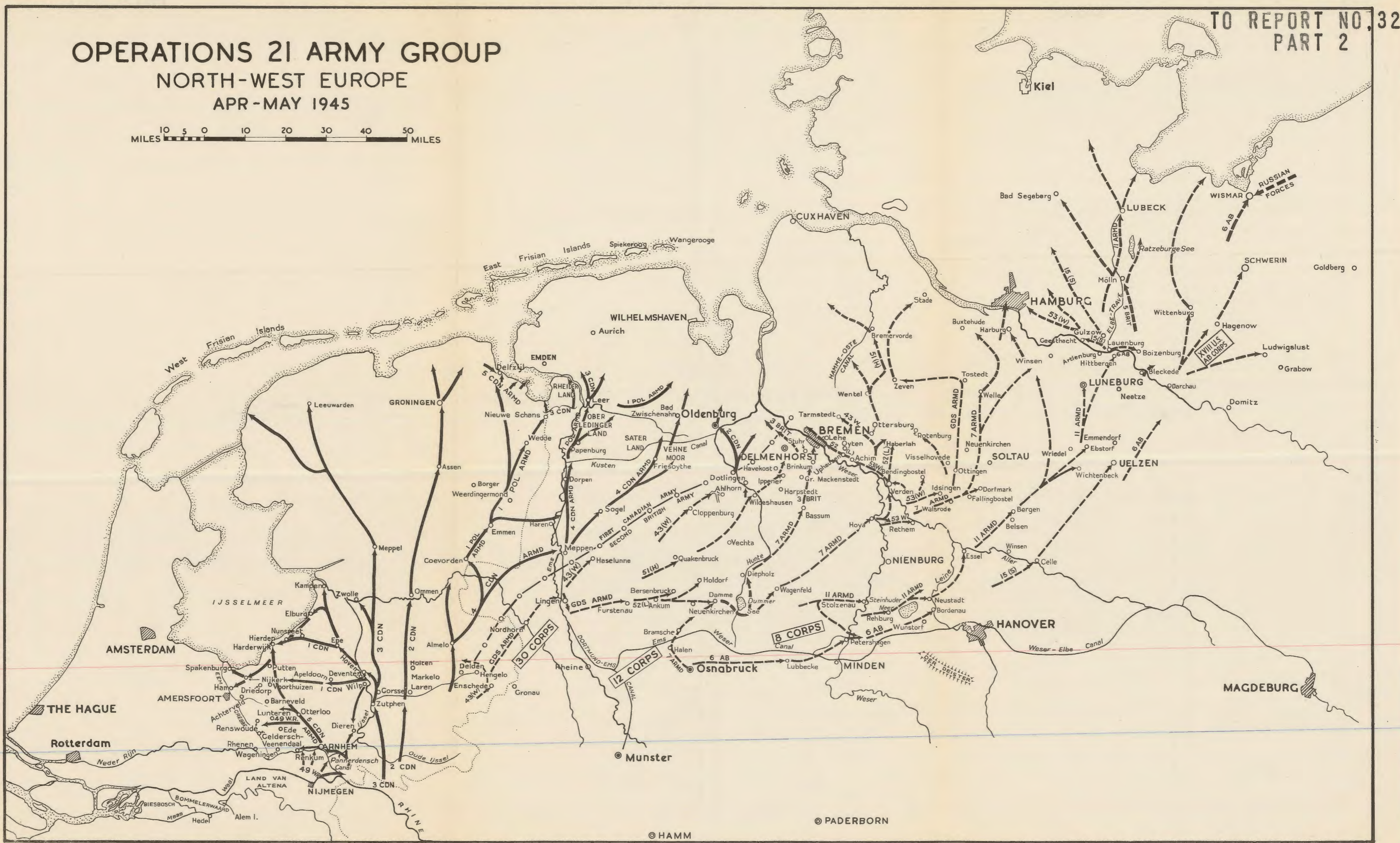
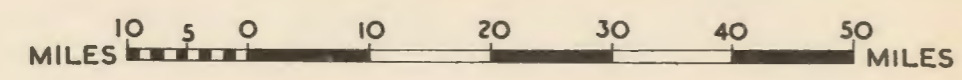


SÖGEL - EDEWECHTERDAMM - SAGE

4 CDN ARMD DIV
11-18 APR 45



OPERATIONS 21 ARMY GROUP NORTH-WEST EUROPE APR - MAY 1945



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PART III

THE OPERATIONS OF FIRST
CDN ARMY, 20 APR - 5 MAY 45

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PART III

The Operations of First
Cdn Army, 20 Apr-5 May 45

353. The topography of the area through which the main Canadian advance was moving lent itself to defence and as General Crerar states in his dispatch

The enemy was able to block the approaches to his positions through the surrounding peat bogs with barriers and mines and to cover these with concentrated fire. Notwithstanding the collapse of the German armies elsewhere on the western front, the 2nd Parachute Corps was still maintaining good control. In part the troops available to defend this territory and the ports lying on the sea coast were composed of naval units. These nautical elements showed more spirit than dexterity in their unaccustomed role as infantry. But in the bitter struggle being waged between the lower reaches of the Weser and Ems the parachutists still fought with their accustomed fanaticism and skill at arms.

(General Crerar's Dispatch,
5 May 45, op cit, para 34)

True enough, the awkward nature of the terrain had slowed up operations into North-Western Germany, but, even coupled with fanaticism and skill at arms, it was not enough to divert the deluge which was steadily engulfing the enemy's forces.

POLISH OPERATIONS NORTH OF THE KUSTEN CANAL,
19-21 APR 45^{*}

354. 10 Pol Armd Bde Gp established a bridgehead across the Kusten Canal west of Haar (7639) at 1030 hours on 19 Apr. Progress was good for by 1350 hours a bridge had been completed and a squadron of armour was over the canal. (First Cdn Army Liaison offrs reports, op cit, 191600B G. Ops, 2 Cdn Corps). It was expected that the opposition would soon crumble and that the two brigade groups would proceed northwards unhindered. (Ibid). Having no wish to give up ground so easily however, the enemy contested the advance towards Aschendorf (7395) more heavily, although the Poles managed to capture Lehe (7289). (First Cdn Army Ops Log, April 1945, op cit, 19 Apr 45, serials 104, 107, 108, 20 Apr 45, serial 2)

355. Shortly after midnight 19/20 Apr, one of the Polish armoured groups (1 Pol Armd Regt and 1 Pol Inf Bn) reported that the woods south-west of Neu Herbrum (7592) were clear and that the attack on the village Aschendorf (7595) would follow. A great deal of pressure was required along this route and numerous skirmishes with the German rear guards took place

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000
M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg, L2 -
Wilhelmshaven; also Appx "A".

before Aschendorf (7395) was finally captured by 1830 hours 20 Apr. Meanwhile a report had arrived at 2 Cdn Corps Headquarters stating that 24 Polish Lancers had broken away to the right of Aschendorfer Kampe and were heading for the Borgerwald-Papenburg road. An armoured group thereupon thrust forward, leaving two companies of 9 Pol Inf Bn to clear Aschendorf. The roads leading from this small community to the bridges over the Ems on the west and north were quickly secured by consolidating the main road Aschendorf-Rhede (6896) and seizing the village of Tunxdorf (7199). (First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Report, op cit, 201630B, SO 2 Cdn Corps; also First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit, at 20 Apr 45, serials 29, 38, 51, 63, 85, 94, 104)

356. The advance continued during the night 20/21 Apr, and on the morning of 21 Apr 3 Pol Inf Bde (partially relieved of its commitments west of the Ems River by 3 Cdn Inf Div) crossed the Kusten to reinforce the main effort. This group assumed the task of clearing the area immediately north of the canal in the triangle Neulehe (7789) - Wildes Moor (8193) - Borgermoor (8391) and of opening the route Borgermoor - Papenburg. Meanwhile the armoured brigade, having reached the outskirts of Papenburg, had passed its infantry through to clear the way. It was understood that a regrouping would take place as soon as the Poles were fully relieved west of the Ems. At that time the armoured brigade group would take over the responsibility of the entire area bounded by Papenburg - Borgermoor - Bockhorst (8991) - Rhaudermoor (8805) while the infantry group would press on eastwards to secure the next main route north of the canal from Sedelsberg (0093) to Bollingen (9604). (First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports, op cit, 211300B, G. Ops 2 Cdn Corps; also First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit, at 21 Apr 45, serials 34, 88)

INTENTIONS OF 2 CDN CORPS, 20 APR 45*

357. Lt-Gen Simonds had on 20 Apr told the Polish Commander that his immediate tasks (after Papenburg was clear) would be to probe for a crossing of the Leda river on the road to Leer, but, if this route proved to be too strongly held, then the main weight of the Polish effort must be transferred towards Varel. On the same day the G.O.C. 2 Cdn Corps had conferred with the commanders of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div to impress upon them the importance of the complete relief of 3 Cdn Inf Div by the troops of Maj-Gen B.M. Hoffmeister's formation. This would free the infantry division for its task of first mopping up west of the Ems River and then following the Poles with its object of taking on Leer if that place called for an infantry attack. The war diary of 2 Cdn Corps outlined the tasks as follows:

- (a) 3 Cdn Div to relieve 1 Pol Armd Div complete WEST of R EMS and clear enemy from pockets in that area, also to prepare for inf bde assault across R Leda into Leer and open WEENER - LEER rd, then to advance via AURICH on to EMDEN.
- (b) 4 Cdn Armd Div to complete crossing of KUSTEN KANAL, advance on ZWISCHENAHNER MEER, strike EAST to OLDENBURG and if it is too strongly held for an armd div to capture, to capture and seal off northern exits and close up to R WESER.

* Reference maps as for para 354.

(c) 2 Cdn Div - to protect LEFT flank of 30 Corps and advance to VEGESACK.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 20 Apr 45)

In addition a special light force was to be formed composed of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1 Belgian S.A.S. and 1 Brit S.A.S. all under the command of Headquarters 2 Cdn Armd Bde. This force was to be prepared to pass through the left of 4 Cdn Armd Div or later (as opportunity offered) through the Polish formations to harass the enemy in Ost Friesland. (Ibid)

THE ADVANCE OF 1 POL ARMD DIV CONTINUES, 22 APR 45*

358. Throughout 22 Apr the advance northward was carried out by two parallel columns. 1 Pol Armd Regt and elements of 9 Pol Inf Bn followed the line of the railway towards Ihrhove (8108) while on the right 24 Polish Lancers paced the main thrust by moving along the road Vollener-Konigsfehn (8000) - Flachsmeer (8102). At 1000 hours Ihrhove (8108) had been passed and the right flanking force (24 L) had swung eastwards to explore the areas west of Rhaudermoor (8805). By the end of the day the armoured group had taken the villages of Breinermoor (8411), Bakemoor (8610) and Kollinghorst (8607) and had cleared most of the ground south of the Leda river. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 14, 20, 24; 23 Apr 45, serial 1). Meanwhile a portion of the infantry group had gone into action along the north bank of the Kusten following the line Neulehe (7789) - Borgermoor (8391); it had taken Bockhorst (8992) and was sweeping to the north. (Ibid)

359. By this time there had occurred two changes in plan. First, the state of the roads was so bad that Maj-Gen Maczek decided to call in his Lancers from the right flank and push them north through Ihrhove (8108). Secondly, the pressure against the Canadian armour further east was so heavy that the Polish general was ordered (see para 357) to switch his main axis towards Varel (2733) and ease the situation for Maj-Gen Vokes' hard pressed troops. (First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 18, 27). While the armoured brigade cleared its way northwards, 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp (2 Pol Armd Regt and 10 Pol Mot Bn) concentrated at Kollinghorst (8607) and by 1300 hours 23 Apr this column was ready to proceed eastwards. At the same time 8 Pol Inf Bn was working its way up from the south in the direction of Langholt (9002). (Ibid, 23 Apr 45, serial 17, "Intentions"; First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Report, op cit, 231500B, SO 2)

360. During the night 23/24 Apr, 8 Pol Inf Bn made good progress and by 1000 hours held the cross roads (915050) east of the water obstacle and north of Langholt (9002). Simultaneously, further south a small reconnaissance group followed the northern bank of the Kusten Canal, clearing as it went. On the northern flank strong patrols journeyed to Driever (7811) and Esklum (8013) to find the enemy in possession there. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45; serials 1, 7, 20). The advance now began to show signs of dragging, for the roads were disappearing on every axis along which the Poles were travelling. Moreover,

* Reference maps as for para 354; also Appx "A".

water obstacles abounded and a seemingly endless series of bridging operations had to be carried out. (Ibid, serials 23, 33). Nevertheless, where physical contact was not possible, pressure was kept up by fire. The night of 24 Apr found the Polish troops holding a scattered line which stretched from the outskirts of Driever (7811) on the left eastwards through Brienermoor - Bakermoor - Schatteburg (8609), then in a south-easterly direction past Holte (8908) to the proposed bridge east of the Langholtermeer, where the position had been sufficiently strengthened by the Polish medium machine guns to secure the southern flank. Along the north bank of the Kusten Canal, the light reconnaissance group had reached a point a few hundred yards short of Sedelsberg (0093), but here considerable opposition was encountered and no further headway was possible. (Ibid, 25 Apr, serial 3)

361. Very little progress was made on 25 Apr, mainly because of the bridging and water difficulties. On the following day, however, 10 Pol Mot Bn, having secured the area of Potshausen (9210), assaulted across the stream north of that place and, supported by fighter bombers, pressed on towards Stickhausen (9313). (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 2, 17). Some 3000 yards to the south, 1 Pol Inf Bn moved towards Bokelesch, where it became involved in a woods clearing operation, while on the immediate right flank 8 Pol Inf Bn went for Bollingen (9604). In all sectors progress was slow for the enemy was ideally placed to conduct his defence. (Ibid, 27 Apr, serial 2; also First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit; 26 Apr 45, serials 74, 75). On the morning of 27 Apr a message received at Headquarters First Cdn Army explained the very great difficulties which Maj-Gen Maczek's men had to face in their attempt to break out to the east:

G.S.O. 2, 1 Pol Armd Div 0940 hrs, 3 Pol Inf Bde. 1 Pol Inf Bn cleared wood 9507 during night. 10 Pol Mot Bn report six 60 ft craters on dyke rd between Q923110 - 925114 with ground both sides flooded. CRE states all craters must be bridged. One 30 ft span br under constr at 921106 but work held up by hy mortar and arty fire. Two pontoons sank during night.

(Ibid, serial 26)

362. Under such trying conditions of ground and resistance it was small wonder that the Polish soldiers could not move on more quickly. However, by persistent effort throughout 28 Apr the line edged its way eastwards. During the afternoon Bokelesch (9507) was cleared; while Bollingen (9603) fell and was held despite the enemy's frantic efforts to recapture the village. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serial 1). Further south, out of Langholt, 10 Pol Armd Recce Regt had swept south to the area of Ramsloh (9500), whence it proceeded along the main road as far as the hamlets of Hollen (9799) and Scharrel (9777). There at 1500 hours 28 Apr contact was established with the Polish light reconnaissance group coming up from Sedelsberg (0093). (First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 55, 63). Meanwhile, on the northern flank beyond Ihrhove (8008), 9 Pol Inf Bn had cleared up to the southern banks of the Leda river and was preparing to enter the small town of Nettelburg (8313). (Ibid, serial 88)

363. The struggle for the opportunity to manoeuvre went on all through 29 Apr. 3 Pol Inf Bde continued to develop the route from Potshausen (9100) to Stickhausen (9313), at the same time maintaining a firm contact with the Germans to its front.

10 Pol Armd Bde, not being able to operate successfully in this boggy area, was gradually being pulled out of the line for a new task - that of passing through the town of Leer, which had been recently captured by 3 Cdn Inf Div, and striking out to the north-east in the direction of Wilhemshaven, that proud bastion of the German Navy. (Ibid, 29 Apr 45, serial 69, 71). But before that story can be told it is necessary to trace the operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div, whose capture of Leer was to make the Polish advance possible.

3 CDN INF DIV'S OPERATION WEST OF THE EMS,
21-29 APR 45[#]

364. According to the instructions issued by Headquarters 2 Cdn Corps on 20 Apr (see para 357 to this report) control of the area between Groningen and the Ems River had completely passed to Maj-Gen Keebler's command by the evening of 22 Apr.

On the right flank, based on the West bank of the river EMS, 8 Cdn Inf Bde with R. de Chaud on the right and Q.O.R. of C. on the left faced up to the WEENER (7408) NIEUWE - SCHANS (6410) railway. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was concentrated in WINSCHOTEN (5305) with Divisional Headquarters. 7 Cdn Inf Bde held the left flank with 1 C. Scot R. in the vicinity of WAGENBORGEN (4618), R. Wpg Rif in the vicinity of APPINGEDAM (3125), and Regina Rif in the area of SPIJK (4033).

(3 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly
Summary of Ops and Activities,
op cit, 22 Apr - 28 Apr 45)

In this area west of the Ems, the Canadians must now reduce the remaining enemy strongholds on the left bank of the estuary and east of Groningen. (Ibid)

365. The first matter to be attended to was the elimination of the German stronghold at Delfzijl, a task which fell to the rifle brigade. The Reginas were thus directed to the north and north-west of Groningen; R. Wpg Rif had to take out the large town of Appingedam (4125) while the 1 C. Scot R. was launched against Wagenborgen (4618). (Ibid, also W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Apr 45)

366. On the right 1 C. Scot R. had deployed its companies suitably. On the morning of 21 Apr "B" Coy was stationed on detachment duty at Finsterwolde (5712) (where it had relieved the Poles), "C" Coy held Nieuwolda (4917), while "D" Coy was

Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, Western Germany, 1:25,000 Sheets 2907 - Nieuwepekela, 2908 - Onstwedde, 2909 - Aschendorf, 2807 - Veendam, 2808 - Winschoten, 2809 - Nieuwe Schans, 2810 - Weener, 2811 - Westrauderfehn, 2707 - Siddeburen, 2711 - Nortmoor, 2709 - Ditzumer Verlaat, 2710 - Leer, 2708 - Woldendorp, 2611 - Hesel, 2610 - Neerhoor, 2609 - Emden, 2607 - Delfzijl; also Appx "B".

firm east of the road and railway junction at (442181); "A" Coy was still in Groningen on guard duties. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 21 Apr 45). Early on 21 Apr, "D" Coy was sent in to attack the village of Wagenborgen (4618) from the south-west. Throughout the morning the troops made one effort after another to advance against the heavy fire covering the several obstacles along the route. The enemy put up tremendous resistance. During the afternoon the Scots had some success, but it was short-lived. Counter-attacks and accurate fire began to take toll, and by the end of the day "D" Coy had only forty-five fighting men* left. Realizing that he was up against stern opposition and that a co-ordinated effort would be necessary, Lt-Col L.S. Henderson ordered "D" Coy to retire to its former positions east of the railway. Reinforcement was essential but this would take time, for the battalion was well dispersed. Orders were therefore quickly sent out to both "A" and "B" Coys to come forward in TCVs to strengthen the battalion's sector. (Ibid)

367. As soon as the fresh troops arrived, "B" Coy was sent to re-occupy "D" Coy's old position on the road south of Wagenborgen (in the built up area (4517)). "A" Coy lined the railroad to the north of "D" Coy. From these positions, a strong patrolling programme commenced. By 1800 hours the commanding officer felt that he had sufficient information upon which to base a concentrated attack. Within a short space of time the required support had been laid on and at about 2130 hours, "A" and "B" Coys attacked from the west and south while "C" Coy began to push towards the high dyke which protects the eastern part of the village. (Ibid). The assault was pressed home in the darkness against scattered opposition and at midnight, 22/23 Apr, the Scottish had "A" and "B" Coys in Wagenborgen. Simultaneously "C" Coy had established itself firm on the dykes to the east. (Ibid)

368. The enemy's reaction to our capture of Wagenborgen was mainly confined to harassing fire with small arms and self-propelled guns. The morning of 23 Apr saw "B" Coy firm in the southern portion of the village and "A" Coy well established in the northern part. Both sub-units had some trouble with isolated strong points, but accounted for a good number of Germans who were identified as members of 350 Marine Fortress Bn. Over on the dyke east of the village, "C" Coy, though well positioned, was subjected to fierce volleys of well-aimed rifle and machine gun fire and was thus pinned temporarily, being unable to contact the soldiers within the village itself. (Ibid, 22 Apr 45)

369. The enemy launched his counter-attack against the Canadian Scottish at about 1130 hours. "A" Coy saw the German infantry forming up and asked for reinforcement. This soon arrived in the form of several carriers (from "D" Coy's position to the rear) and a troop of tanks, the latter being warned to proceed with caution. This warning they totally disregarded. As the War Diary of 1 C. Scot R. states:

...they romped through the southern part of the village; and, as they reached the area between "A" and "B" Coys, three were knocked out by Panzerfausts (Bazookas). The enemy had infiltrated through the positions held by our coys and had met the tanks as they came.

* Normally a fighting company in action musters about 65 - 75 all ranks.

Artillery was brought to bear on the infiltrating force causing them to go to ground and evacuate the area.

(Ibid, 23 Apr 45)

By the close of day, thorough sweeps certified that the greater part of the area was clear. Small enemy groups, however, were still trying hard to penetrate the Canadian positions and, as the night wore on, the "Scottish" remained alert. (Ibid)

370. On the following day 1 C. Scot R. was relieved by Ir R.C. of 11 Cdn Inf Bde and Lt-Col Henderson's men concentrated around the village of Eeksta (4808). There, mobile bath units were available, hot meals were served and the troops were able to rest. However, any outlook or promise for an easier time was shattered that evening when the battalion was ordered to be at Nieuwe Schans (6409) by first light 25 Apr. There the "Scottish" would come under command 8 Cdn Inf Bde and would assist Brigadier Roberts' men to clear up the west bank of the Ems River. (Ibid, 24 Apr 45)

371. Meanwhile the other rifle regiments had also contributed towards the sealing of the Delfzijl pocket. In the centre sector R. Wpg Rif had begun to move on Appingedam (4125) on 20 Apr and by last light on that day Lt-Col Fulton had his troops deployed and ready to assault. "D" Coy was then holding Loppersum (3426), "A" Coy was established in Wirdum (3625), "B" Coy occupied Leermens (3728) while "C" Coy watched the battalion's right flank from the area of Wirdumerdraai (3625). On the northern flank a troop of 7 Cdn Recce Regt was feeling out the routes towards the coast north of Appingedam (4125). (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 20 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket VI, Folio No. 17, Special Report No. 34, prepared by R. Wpg Rif; Phase I, 18-24 Apr 45 - Holland)

372. 21 Apr dawned, a cool, showery day. At 0800 hours the "little black devils" received the order to advance.

"B" and "C" Coys were to push on towards APPINGEDAM (MR 4227). The 7 Recce were also to proceed towards MARSUM (MR 4227).

(Ibid)

On the left "B" Coy was aided by the scout cars of 7 Cdn Recce Regt. From Leermens (3728) the reconnaissance troops, finding all the bridges leading to Appingedam demolished, swung north to occupy the farming village of Godlinze (3831) at 1130 hours. On the right "C" Coy followed the main road leading into the objective from Wirdum (3625) and reached the woods east of Eekwerderdraai (3724) to overrun a small enemy gun position. While "C" Coy resumed a cautious advance because of the various obstacles and many mines, "B" Coy worked out of Leermens (3728) to see what routes might still be open. At the same time "A" Coy was brought forward into Leermens. (Ibid). At about midday one good (but very light) bridge was found between Leermens and the tiny hamlet at Oosterwiltwerd (3827) and "A" Coy was told to push on through. In Oosterwiltwerd (3827) "A" Coy stopped to organize for its attack, and at 1500 hours Lt-Col Fulton ordered the advance on Appingedam to commence. (Ibid)

373. Lack of bridges as well as the numerous ditches and small pockets of enemy resistance made progress very slow. "A" Coy made little headway for the rest of the day, but early

on the morning of 22 Apr the village of Jukwerd (4027) was entered and thus a start line was secured for the final effort. "D" Coy was brought up behind "A" for a coordinated attack in conjunction with "C" Coy's thrust along the southern axis. The two companies went forward at 0800 hours but again progress was extremely slow and both our artillery and mortars were kept busy helping the infantry to move on. In addition, most of the roads and tracks were heavily mined. Obstacles were so numerous that some considerable time was required before the way to Appingedam was clear enough to permit safe passage. It was a day of continuous trial and effort against bad conditions of ground and well-sited defences, but operations on the next day proved that the end was not far off. (Ibid)

374. After a night of steady patrolling, the advance was resumed in the early hours of 23 Apr and by 0600 hours both "D" and "C" Coys were inside the small town. Meanwhile "B" Coy had been moved up behind "D" to seize the brickyards (4126) on the northern outskirts. The enemy was not in any great strength, true, but he put up a stiff fight whenever encountered and it was midday before the Canadians were in firm control of Appingedam. "D" and "C" Coys held the main portion of the place, "B" was consolidated around the brickyards, and "A" Coy held its ground at Jukwerd. North of "A" Coy, Lt-Col Fulton had placed his anti-tank platoon as infantry near Nije-Klooster (4028) to watch the left flank. Later in the afternoon "B" Coy was sent through "C" to mop up the south-eastern section of the little town beyond the river. This was accomplished without much trouble before last light. (Ibid)

375. The relief of R. Wpg Rif by Perth R. on the following morning was heartily appreciated, for, although the opposition had never been of a dangerous nature, the troops had had to work hard to gain ground. Now, having successfully completed the task allotted, Lt-Col Fulton packed his men into the Kangaroos which had brought Perth R. up to the front and started off towards the area of Oostwolde (5312). (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and R. Wpg Rif, 22-24 Apr 45)

376. On the northern flank Regina Rif had not had much fighting to do. Their main object had been to get as close as possible to Delfzijl from the north. Having a very large area of responsibility did not make this an easy task, since in this sector there were many routes which the enemy could have used to infiltrate and disrupt activities. Thankfully enough the enemy (it seems) had only one idea, to withdraw into his perimeter at Delfzijl and deny that place for as long as he could. To the east of the line Uithuizen (2935) - Middelstum (2628), the villages of Roodeschool (3536), Garshuizen (3131), Zandweer (2933) and "tZandt (3530) were all found clear and occupied by midday 21 Apr. Thereafter Lt-Col Gregory moved his headquarters up to Godlinze (3831) to direct the advance of Spijk (4033), by "B" Coy. At about the same time "D" Coy moved on to Losdorp (3931), the idea being to form a line facing Holwierde (4229) from the north. Very little was seen of the enemy, the main opposition being from the long-range guns on the coast above Emden and the few pieces which were defending Delfzijl. The Regina's positions remained unchanged throughout 22 Apr, and whatever ground had been given up on the left in order to close in to the south was taken over by elements of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt. Late that night the battalion, like the others in the brigade, received orders to move and hand over to Perth R. of 5 Cdn Armd Div. (W.D., Regina Rif, 21-23 Apr 45)

7 CDN INF BDE SHIFTS TO THE RIGHT, 23 APR 45*

377. From the areas of Oostwolde (5312) eastwards to the region of Nieuw-Beerta (6111), R. Wpg Rif and Regina Rif now took on the work of clearing up to the Dollart coast. The onus of this task fell mainly on Regina Rif together with a special battle group composed of a company of R. Wpg Rif, a troop of L.A.A. guns, a platoon of medium machine-guns and a platoon of heavy mortars, the last-named sub-units from C.H. of O. (M.G.). This battle group was to act as a left flank pivot for the Reginas, who were to mop up the last few of the enemy's gun positions on the coast line. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Apr 45). "A" Coy moved first at 1230 hours to seize the community of Kostverloren (6113); the Winnipeg's company group then brought up the left, occupied Gandzendijk (5812) and pressed on to Hongerigewolf (5913), despite some very heavy shelling. Meanwhile the Reginas' advance was progressing well, the enemy being driven from his defences by the successive bombing and strafing attacks of a dozen supporting Spitfires. Drieburg (6212) fell at 1550 hours and Lt-Col Gregory laid on the necessary patrols to cover the preparations for a full attack later on along the Reiderwolder Polder Dijk (625155-640157). "A" and "D" Coys were to secure the dyke, whereupon "B" Coy would pass on through to the west to take the canal and dyke junction 2000 yards north of Hongerigewolf (5913). (Ibid, also W.D., Regina Rif, 24 Apr 45)

378. The Regina Rif's effort started at 0130 hours 25 Apr; although opposition was fairly heavy, within the hour "A" and "D" Coys reported success on the first objectives along the Reiderwolder Polder dyke. As daylight approached the open nature of the ground prevented much movement. For a while it appeared that the attack might have to be postponed, but, as the brigade's War Diary relates:

...the situation was not quite as grim as it might have been especially when the R. Wpg Rif reported the cheering news that a white flag was flying at 598163 - this is the 4 gun bty position which during the last few days caused us so much trouble. The Reginas following this report quickly moved up and captured the position - total bag 4 x 10.5 cm guns - two intact and two destroyed (by our arty) and approx 165 PW. The German offrs in charge of the bty had escaped the previous night via boats to EMDEN. The Reginas then consolidated their positions along the line 598164 - 643137 - 588149 - 639156 and then sent the recces NW along th roads to contact the Westminster Regt on our LEFT flank.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Apr 45)

379. This short operation ended the rifle brigade's task in this sector. It was now decided that 5 Cdn Armd Div should extend its lines eastwards to cover Brigadier Gibson's area, thus freeing the infantry battalions for their part in the assault on Leer. On 26 Apr the rifle brigade moved across the Ems river over 1 Pol Armd Div's routes to concentrate north of Papenburg, taking with them 16 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., "B" Coy, 14 Cdn Fd Amb, "C" Sqn, 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 A.Tk bty and the 4.2 mortars of C.H. of O. (M.G.). (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 26 Apr 45)

* Reference maps as for para 364; also Appx "B".

THE OPERATIONS OF 8 CDN INF BDE, 21-27 APR 45*

380. 8 Cdn Inf Bde's efforts to clear the west bank of the Ems River (and secure one of the start lines for 9 Cdn Inf Bde's assault on Leer) began on 22 Apr, shortly after elements of 1 Pol Armd Div in the area south of Weener (7407) and Bunde (6810) had been relieved. Having formed a base of operations at Rhede (6996) with N. Shore R., the brigadier sent Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud, adequately supported by crocodiles together with one squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt and a large amount of artillery, to close up to the railway Bunde (6810) - Weener (7407) late on 22 Apr. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 22 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 27, 36). Both battalions moved forward by leap-frogging their companies along the selected routes. Although neither unit was able to travel very fast, by 0830 hours 23 Apr R. de Chaud was up to the line of the railway some five hundred yards east of Bunde (6810). Similarly, Q.O.R. of C. on the right had crossed several formidable craters to reach the railway tracks south of Weener. (7407). (Ibid, 23 Apr 45, serials 12, 15)

381. N. Shore R. then passed through Q.O.R. of C. at about 1100 hours and advanced towards Weener supported by the tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. (Ibid, serial 23). Sniper fire met the New Brunswick men as they plodded forward and craters barred the road, making it impossible for the armour to keep up, but by sheer perseverance Lt-Col J.N. Gordon kept his soldiers moving on. Weener was entered and all companies had consolidated by 1800 hours. The prisoners totalled one hundred and three.** (W.D., N. Shore R., 23 Apr 45). While N. Shore R. had been thus occupied the Chaudieres entered Bunde. Elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which had struck out from the region of Nieuwe Schans (6510) to probe the brigade's left flank, reported that a fair number of the enemy were withdrawing to the north. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit; 23 Apr 45, serials 45, 57, 60)

382. After a night of strenuous patrolling the advance was resumed on 24 Apr. Opposition remained stiff and some bitter encounters with the enemy rearguards took place. On the right N. Shore R. took Kirchborgum (7711) and Bingum (7814). On the left R. de Chaud had travelled north from Bunde and approached the road junctions (7013 and 7016) some two thousand yards west of Bohmerwold (7215). At this stage, Brigadier Roberts ordered the Queen's Own to pass through R. de Chaud., but, fearing for his open left flank, he asked Maj-Gen Keebler whether a battalion of 7 Cdn Inf Bde could be made available on that flank. As a result of this request, 1 C. Scot R. was placed under command 8 Cdn Inf Bde. As will be seen, however, the reconnaissance troops did their work too well and the Scottish were not needed much. (Ibid, 25 Apr 45, serials 4, 6, 11; W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde & units, and 1 C. Scot R., 24-25 Apr 45)

383. On the night 24/25 Apr Q.O.R. of C. began its tedious journey towards Ditzumer Verlaat (6819) to contact 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which had come up very quickly on the left. The Queen's Own were then left to continue on to reach Oldendorp (7023), Ditzum (6924) and Pogum (6824). That these tasks involved

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, 1:25,000 Sheets 2709 - Ditzumer Verlaat, 2710 - Leer, 2809 - Nieuwe Schans, 2810 - Weener; also Appx "B".

** Marine Security Bn (3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 100, 23 Apr 45).

more than idle routine is illustrated by an official account of the operations.

...at 0730 hrs a group of the enemy were observed forming up for an attack on the right of Charlie Coy. Before any assault could materialize however, Charlie Coy took effective counter-action. Twenty-five casualties were inflicted and five others taken prisoner. Charlie Coy suffered no casualties in this action, but shortly after two casualties were suffered under a severe concentration of shellfire.

(AEF: 45/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D,
Docket II, Folio I, 1st Bn,
Q.O.R. of C., 24 Apr - 25
Apr 45)

384. Beyond Ditzumer Verlaat (6818) the riflemen crossed a small stream and established a bridgehead through which "B" Coy was passed to capture Dijksterhusen (6722) and Pogum (6824) on the left and "D" Coy went on to seize Ditzumer (6820) on the right. (Ibid). These attacks did not, however, go well. The account relates:

Baker Coy, committed at 1730 hrs, was forced to withdraw because of resistance and rising water on the southern approaches to POGUM. Dog and Charlie Coys were also withdrawn and a Bn "O" group was held. Under a different plan of attack Dog Coy at 0100 hrs in the morning was committed first to take DITZUMER.

(Ibid)

Both objectives were found to be well manned, but the enemy, sensing that it was too late to put up any effective resistance, gave up without much ado. Approximately five hundred prisoners were taken by Q.O.R. of C. (Ibid, and W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 24-26 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 25 Apr 45, serials 60, 26 Apr 45, serial 61)*

385. Meanwhile R. de Chaud had been redirected over to the right and on that flank the French-Canadians seized Jemgum (7619), Midlum (7521) and Neudorp (7124) without much trouble. (Ibid, 26 Apr, serial 61, 27 Apr, serials 2, 4, 6, 8). South of the Chaudieres the stretch of road covering the villages of Holtgaste (7515) and Soltborg (7715) and leading from Bingum to Jemgum were left to the reconnaissance squadron, which cut eastward across the rear of the two forward battalions. (Ibid, serial 5). On 27 Apr, 8 Cdn Inf Bde completed its task, Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud linked up, and it was arranged that the area would be taken over by 103, 74 and 52 Cdn A.Tk Btys with elements of C.H. of O. (M.G.). (Ibid, serial 11). The three infantry battalions would then concentrate near Nieuwe Schans. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Apr 45)

386. This last phase of operations by 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been characterized by day and night action during which resistance was spasmodic and casualties were suffered mainly by reason of well-concealed mines and the shelling from the guns of the fixed defences of Emden (6531). The Rheider-Land peninsula consists of flat farm land with dyke roads, the

* Elements of 361, 363, 366 Marine Fortress Bns; 6 Alarm Bn, 18 Rft Unit (4, 7, 9 Convalescent Coys) 126 Marine Arty Bn. (3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 101, 26 Apr 45).

surrounding ground being usually impassable to vehicles of any sort. Consequently it had been necessary to "plug away" along the available roads. Craters had been filled or bridged under the most unpleasant conditions, for the enemy knew his ground well and most of the passable routes had been fully registered by his heavy coastal guns. The task of 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been well done and now the troops were told that they might enjoy a few days well-earned rest. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket VI: Special Report No. 38 by H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde - Battle Narrative, 18 Apr 45 - 5 May 45)

DISPOSITION AND PLANS OF 3 CDN INF DIV,
27-28 APR 45*

387. Maj-Gen Keebler's troops were now about to undertake a most important operation, the assault on Leer. It was estimated that this large town, which lies east of the Ems River and is protected on the south by the Leda River, was held by well-organized portions of 361, 363 and 366 Marine Fortress Battalions, supported by anti-aircraft and coastal defence guns from the area of Emden. 3 Cdn Inf Div was to establish a bridgehead north of the junction of the Ems and Leda waterways and to secure first Leer (8115), then the smaller town of Loga (8215). The divisional plan called for an attack in three phases. In the first instance 9 Cdn Inf Bde (Brigadier Rockingham) was to carry out three simultaneous thrusts across the Ems and Leda Rivers and secure the bridgehead, which included the town of Leer. In the second phase 7 Cdn Inf Bde was to pass through the highland brigade and swing east to capture Loga (8215) (a suburb of Leer east of the town itself) and the neighbouring woods (8216). Thereafter 9 Brigade would strike northwards to enlarge the lodgment. In support of the attack the Canadians had 12, 13 and 14 Fd Regts, which comprised Maj-Gen Keebler's divisional artillery, 11 Cdn Army Fd Regt and 7 Cdn Med Regt. In addition, they had 4 Brit A.G.R.A., which at the time consisted of four medium regiments, two heavy regiments and one sub-unit of super heavy (9.2 inch) guns. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/RCA/C/E; R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 2, Op "DUCK", dated 28 Apr 45, and Task Table No. 1, Op "LULU", 27 Apr 45, attached)

388. Brigadier Rockingham's intention was to assault with two battalions in storm boats** and one company of his third unit in assault boats*** as follows. On the right one company Nth N.S. Highrs, having assembled at and embarked from the curved (8113) dyke west of Heerenborg (8112), was to cross the Leda River and capture the small peninsula which guards the entry to the harbour of Leer. In the centre H.L.I. of C., with under command one platoon of "C" Coy C.H.O. of O. (M.G.) and in support

* Reference maps as for para 364.

** Storm boats - small powered craft provided, supervised and operated by R.C.E.

*** Assault boats - collapsible boats normally provided by R.C.A.S.C. direct to the infantry who operate them. (Infantry Training, Part V, Appx F, p. 58 and amendment No. I attached; and Field Engineering & Mine Warfare, Pamphlet No. 8, Part I, "Assault River Crossing" 1948, Reprinted in Canada 1949, Appx "A").

one section of 18 Cdn Fd Coy, was to assemble at and embark from Langeniepe (7710), proceed up the Ems River, and sail in 30 storm boats against the area of Leerort (7913). On the left S.D. & G. Highrs, with almost identical units* to those which H.L.I. of C. had under command, would assemble at Bingumgaste (7713) and embark at Bingum (7814), cross the Ems north of the Leerort bridgesite, and seize the western outskirts of Leer. In reserve the brigade commander had Nth N.S. Highrs (less one company), with under command one platoon of medium machine guns of C.H. of O. (M.G.) and one section of 18 Cdn Fd Coy (20 assault boats). The task of the reserve was to cross the Leda River from the village of Esklum (8012) as soon as the situation elsewhere permitted, and strike at the centre of Leer from the south. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx I; 9 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 1, Op "DUCK").

SUPPORT FOR OPERATION "DUCK", 28 APR 45

389. Apart from the extremely heavy artillery support (already mentioned in para 387), 9 Cdn Inf Bde had the assistance of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. The armour was allotted these tasks:

- (a) "B" Squadron, 27 Cdn Armd Regt would concentrate in the area of Mittelsten Borgum (7710) and await orders to be ferried across the obstacle.
- (b) "A" & "C" Squadrons, 27 Cdn Armd Regt were to take positions on the west bank of the Ems and south bank of the Leda rivers and would give direct support to the assaulting troops.

(Ibid)

390. The bridging and rafting programme is of particular interest. A Class 40 bridge would be constructed after dark at the ferry site north of Esklum (8013). Three Class 40 rafts, previously constructed at Langeniepe (7710), were to be floated downstream to operate at the two ferry sites. One near the proposed bridgesite (803133) north of Esklum, the other west of Leerort (792137). In addition storm boat ferries would convey jeeps and the battalion anti-tank guns across the water. Each battalion was allotted four storm boats for this purpose. The heavier equipments, such as the guns of 94 Cdn A.Tk Bty and the heavy mortars of two platoons of C.H. of O. (M.G.), were to be allotted to the forward battalions as soon as a bridge was completed. H hour for the attack was set for high tide on the afternoon of 28 Apr and would be made known by the code word "WHISKY". (Ibid, paras 6-10 inclusive; paras 12-15 incl)

391. It is now necessary to review the activities of 7 Cdn Inf Bde for the past twenty-four hours, mainly because it was Brigadier Gibson's (Lt-Col Gregory was, in fact, acting Brigade commander at the time) task to clear the south bank of the Leda River. The Polish troops which had been operating in this area had been swung over to the east, leaving several small pockets of enemy along the river bank. It was against these that the commander of the rifle brigade now turned his attention. Shortly after midday, 26 Apr, R. Wpg Rif and Regina Rif settled once more within the German border to occupy concentration areas

* 20 storm boats instead of 30.

north of Flachsmeer (8102). Here the two units carried out some intensive house clearing. Meanwhile, (on 26 Apr) 1 C. Scot R. had attacked and secured the riverside hamlet of Kloster Mudhe (7812), from which the Scottish went on to occupy Esklum (8013) by 1630 hours. According to the brigade's war diary, the situation at Esklum (8013) was quiet.

However, this state of happiness did not last for any length of time for the Boche suddenly decided to stage a counter-attack in the form of an assault with boats from the North bank (i.e. Leer side) of the Leda River.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf
Bde, 26 Apr 45)

This attack was quickly broken up by fire from the guns of 12 Cdn Fd Regt. 1 C. Scot R. then proceeded to sweep along the south bank of the water barrier. While this was going on R. Wpg Rif were put on short notice to occupy Ihrhove (8008) early on the following day in order to set up a marshalling area for the assaulting troops of 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid)

392. Throughout the night 26/27 Apr, Lt-Col Henderson's men consolidated their gains and even exploited eastwards to seize the village of Heerenborg (8112). By 0500 hours thirty prisoners had been taken and over three hundred mines lifted. Shortly after first light the brigade commander ordered 1 C. Scot R. to secure the road leading from Ihrhove (which was now controlled by R. Wpg Rif) to the river.

The 1 C. Scot R. acting on these orders sent out a recon party to the area first, then occupied the position around 1800 hours. From the start it was not exactly a health resort - Jerry laced them with arty, mortars and M.G. fire and at approx 1900 hrs counter-attacked the coy there from the NE. Tanks from the Polish Arm'd Div who are in this area were rushed to the scene, and in conjunction with "D" Coy 1 C. Scot R. repelled the attack. Even at that our casualties were not light.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf
Bde, 27 Apr 45)

393. The trouble in this sector was gradually overcome and the divisional flank made secure, although no firm contact could be established with 1 Pol Arm'd Div on the right. On the morning of 28 Apr arrangements were made to allow Nth N.S. Highrs to concentrate at Esklum in preparation for the assault across the river. This according to the Brigade's war diary

...meant that two coys of the 1 C. Scot R. were forced to pull back. However the move was completed satisfactorily with no undue excitement. Trouble was caused by some German civilians in the 1 C. Scot R. area so the peoples of all the towns there were evacuated some miles to the SOUTH.

(Ibid, 28 Apr 45)

THE ASSAULT AGAINST LEER BY 9 CDN INF BDE,
28 APR 45*

394. The operation, known by the codeword "DUCK", was to be launched in daylight. Lt-Gen Simonds' headquarters had insisted that the bridgehead be firm by last light, so that the engineers could start building a bridge. The daylight assault necessitated a powerful supporting programme** to neutralize the enemy's observed fire. This had already been arranged as well as a smoke screen to cover our approach. Leer is situated at the confluence of the Ems and Leda rivers and covers the roads to the famous naval base at Emden (6470). The town itself is well protected by water on three sides and marshy ground on the north. Other than by boat, it could not be approached, since all bridges leading to it had been demolished. An official account of operation states:

An opposed landing was anticipated, as air photographs showed weapon slits dug along the dykes surrounding the Leer peninsula.... The Ems is a tidal river, at this point about 300-350 yards wide. The assault in storm boats could only be made during the period of "Slack Water". Suitable landing sites were only available at high tide.

(AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D,
Docket I, folio 1; Memorandum
No. 13, Memo of Interviews
with Brigadier J.M. Rocking-
ham, D.S.O., Comd 9 Cdn Inf
Bde and other officers,
given to Hist Offr, 3 Cdn
Inf Div, 4 May 45; Operation
"DUCK")

395. The hour of high and low tide were ascertained with considerable patience by the intelligence officer of S.D. & G. Highrs, who spent some twenty-four hours observing the river. H. Hour was finally set for 1500 hours 28 Apr; at that time the tide would be high and, with a certain amount of good fortune, the brigade could cross and secure the lodgment by nightfall. (Ibid)

396. The afternoon of 28 Apr was sunny and clear enough that "Our close support aircraft were able to attack Leer in the initial softening up stage". (Ibid). Then at 1425 hours the artillery programme commenced. The concentrations were fired in excellent fashion and one burst after another was seen to land along the dykes amongst the enemy's entrenchments. Added to this a "Pepper Pot" shoot, co-ordinated by Lt-Col R.M. Ross (C.O., C.H. of O. (M.G.)), saturated the assault area and did much to keep the enemy's heads below ground level. At the various embarkation points, the troops awaited the signal: once it was given the soldiers launched the boats, loaded up, and sailed off for the enemy's shore. (Ibid, also W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 28 Apr 45)

* Particular reference should be made to maps G.S.G.S. 4414
1:25,000 Sheets 2810 - Weener, 2710 - Leer, 2711 - Nortmoor;
also Appx "C".

** This included support from 84 Gp R.A.F.

397. On the right the Nth N.S. Highrs attack was led by "D" Coy whose first task was to capture the long point of land guarding the approaches to Leer from the south. This crossing was no easy problem for the enemy's positions were so close that our guns and mortars could not effectively engage them. Furthermore, the artillery and mortar smoke plan on this flank could not be carried out because of the strong breezes. In order to aid his assault, therefore, the company commander employed his 2" mortars to fire smoke bombs and made arrangements with 1 C. Scot R. to have all available small arms fire brought to bear on the enemy positions. This fire, in addition to that of a platoon of machine guns of C.H. of O. (M.G.), was calculated to dominate the north bank of the Leda and thus ensure a safe passage for the attacking troops. (AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket I, Memorandum and Docket II, Account of the battle of Leer, "D" Coy No. 13, op cit, also W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 28 Apr 45). "D" Coy then was responsible for the brigade's right flank. Later, after the centre and left-hand battalions had consolidated the remainder of Nth N.S. Highrs would cross to the area east of Leerort and advance with "A", "B" and "C" Coys abreast to clear the main built-up portion of Leer. (Ibid, 27 Apr 45)

398. At H. minus five minutes, while the Allied guns hammered the outskirts of Leer, the officer commanding "D" Coy Nth N.S. Highrs waved his hand in signal and his two forward platoons each with three boats moved over the crest of the dyke. An eye-witness has said:

It was a good show to see, these boats being hauled very quickly over the dyke and along a 30 yard watery marsh and touching the water at the same time.
(Account of the battle for Leer; op cit, 28 Apr 45)

Despite the strong current the platoons touched down without mishap and one section of each at once took up a fire position. Taken completely by surprise, the enemy was still in his slit trenches when "D" Coy charged in to capture about thirty prisoners, three machine guns intact, and various other equipments. The company commander then ordered his reserve platoon to cross. The infantry moved with enthusiasm and speed from one dugout to another, capturing more prisoners and killing those who were reluctant to give in. Within half an hour of landing "D" Coy had consolidated and had added to their booty four 20-mm guns which the enemy had sited on the dykes. (Ibid & W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 28 Apr 45)

399. In the meantime the centre and left-hand efforts of H.L.I. of C. and S.D. & G. Highrs had also met with success. H.L.I. of C., having embarked at Langeniepe (7710) in order, "D", "C" and "A" Coys sallied forth:

The power driven storm boats brought them down stream where they beached at 1515 hours. The landing was happily unopposed as the flotilla was an easy target. Unforeseen circumstances had delayed the landing, thus depriving it of the timed artillery fire plan. However, artillery and mortar fire was repeated as well as additional smoke to cover the approach. "D" Coy landed on the right, C Coy in the centre and A Coy landed on the left. B Coy assembled at 782119 from whence they were carried by storm boats to assist in consolidating and expanding the beachhead. (AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket I, Memorandum No. 13, op cit)

Opposition was not stiff and after the companies had formed up the attack continued towards the town's edge without much interference. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 28 Apr 45)

400. The S.D. & G. Highrs attacking on the left were not as lucky as the others. Assaulting with "C" Coy on the right and "A" Coy on the left, the first wave crossed successfully although the enemy "reacted with considerable violence" once the troops were on shore. The second wave ("D" Coy right, "B" left), however, was subjected to terrific fire while still on the water and three of the boats sank. One was fortunately near the river bank, but the other two, full of soldiers weighted down with battle equipment, vanished and were not seen again. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 28 Apr 45). The fighting on land was quite heavy, the enemy being especially active on the left of Lt-Col N.M. Gemmell's battalion. Nevertheless, the battle swung rapidly in favour of the Canadians and at 1630 hours the brigade commander ordered the remainder of Nth N.S. Highrs to cross the Leda River from Esklum. Within thirty minutes "A" Coy Nth N.S. Highrs was on the way over. (Account of the battle for Leer, op cit, "A" Company)

401. "A", "B" and "C" Coys of Nth N.S. Highrs had landed in succession by 1830 hours (28 Apr) and moved forward to pass through H.L.I. of C. "C" Coy on the right found the causeway to the island unguarded and quickly rushed over to clear that area. While "A" and "B" Coys pressed on north-eastwards to secure the built-up portion of the town immediately north of the island, the S.D. & G. Highrs, having edged in from the west, sent its "C" & "D" Coys directly to the north, thus safeguarding the brigade's left flank. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 29, 41; also W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs, 28 Apr 45). Late that evening, after Nth N.S. Highrs had cleared their allotted section, H.L.I. of C. was ordered to pass two companies through towards the line of the railway. At about the same time, "D" Coy of Nth N.S. Highrs (which had taken part in the first wave of the attack) relinquished its responsibility on the southern flank to join the rest of the battalion in Leer. The southern approaches were turned over to a company of C.H. of O. (M.G.). (Account of the battle for Leer, op cit, "D" Coy; also W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 28 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 43, 44)

402. Throughout the night of 28/29 Apr a great deal of confused fighting took place:

The enemy took advantage of his local knowledge and at times fought with the greatest dash and bravery. Our positions were not clearly defined and great care had to be taken to avoid shooting friendly troops.

(AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D,
Docket I; Memorandum No. 13,
op cit)

Lt-Col R.D. Hodgins' men soon realized that house-to-house fighting at night is a costly business; as a result of this, and because of infiltration against Nth N.S. Highrs, clearing operations were called off until daylight. (Ibid, also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log; op cit, 29 Apr 45, serial 2; also W.D., H.L.I. of C., 29 Apr 45)

403. At first light the fight was taken up once more, with snipers and isolated posts forming the main opposition, it took H.L.I. of C. until 1630 hours before the objectives along the railway line were reached. It was time again for Nth N.S. Highrs to move forward. Lt-Col D.F. Forbes' battalion went past H.L.I. of C., and (using H.L.I. of C's position as a firm base) swung to the south with its left flank along the railway to occupy the ground bounded on the east by the railway and on the south by the Leda River. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 29 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 10, 11, 23, 28)

404. The task of 9 Cdn Inf Bde in operation "DUCK" was thus accomplished. On the left S.D. & G. Highrs were firmly astride the main road leading west from Leer, and facing north. In the centre H.L.I. of C. was secure in the north-eastern portion of the town, presenting a solid northern flank, and consolidated to the east up to the railroad, was well situated to go to the north or east. On the right Nth N.S. Highrs now faced east along the track from the H.L.I. of C's right flank down to the main railway bridge over the Leda. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Apr 45). In view of the results, the costs to Brigadier Rockingham's battalions had not been overly heavy. Total casualties amounted to fifty-nine all ranks, killed, wounded and missing. (AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde, Memorandum No. 13, op cit)

*Actually
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405. The build-up which was to have been carried out by ferries and rafts until the proper bridge was ready had not come up to expectations.

Two class 40 and two class 9 ferries were established across the EMS, while one class 40 was established across the LEDA. Despite untiring efforts on the part of the RCE personnel running these ferries, less was carried over than anticipated. Wind, tide, breaking approaches and engine trouble were the chief difficulties.

(Ibid)

Up until 1700 hours 29 Apr only twenty-four vehicles had been ferried over. Some storm boats capsized, including one containing a jeep. The task of ferrying the tanks proved to be most iddifficult and only three found their way to the other bank. (Ibid, para 11)

406. Like every operation of this size, the attack by 9 Cdn Inf Bde produced its valuable lessons. Two extremes appear in this operation; as the official account states: "An unopposed landing with no casualties and an opposed landing with many casualties". (Ibid). Any such marked contrast is always worth noting for future reference in the study of operations. While the first offered no lessons, the second bore examination, for some 20 soldiers had vanished into the murky depths of the Ems. All these had on life-belts and their equipment had been worn correctly so that in an emergency the man had only to unbuckle his waist belt to free himself from his heavy assault gear. It could only be presumed that many of those who perished had been struck by the enemy's fire before they reached the water. Another lesson well brought out was that in order to maintain the momentum of an attack at night in a built-up area the strictest control should be imposed; specified units must work within carefully selected boundaries and the closest liaison must prevail between adjoining units. Last, but certainly not least of all, there was the administrative factor. In any operation across a tidal river, the administrative problems must

be thoroughly appreciated. Those concerned must make a conservative estimate of the capabilities of the raft and ferry services over which the initial build-up will travel, so that the force of the attack does not lag for want of supply or close support. (Ibid, paras 13-14)

407. The capture of the town of Leer opened the way to the north. Ahead lay the towns of Emden and Aurich (8341) and the great naval base of Wilhemshaven, but, before any complete break-out could be carried out, the bridgehead had to be enlarged to the east. Once this was done, Maj-Gen Keebler's men could turn again towards the northern coast and the Polish armour would be able to push through to Wilhemshaven. This job of enlarging present holdings was given to 7 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid, W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Apr 45; also W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 29 Apr 45)

7 CDN INF BDE CROSSES THE LEDA RIVER, 29 APR 45*

408. 9 Cdn Inf Bde's operation had been satisfactory enough on the morning of 29 Apr to allow Brigadier Gibson's forward battalion to start moving across the river. As the bridge was not quite ready, it was decided to get Regina Rif over by using storm boats. Lt-Col Gregory's four rifle companies were across the Leda by midday and immediately marched on to their forming up places in H.L.I. of C's area west of the railroad. (W.D., Regina Rif, 29 Apr 45). A great deal depended on the time at which the bridge would be finished; the engineers toiled continuously under severe shelling and against the changing tide until eventually at about 1900 hours the structure was ready. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 3, 6, 26, 30). Naturally the first vehicles to cross were those of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, for Brigadier Rockingham's battalions had not yet collected all their supporting arms. Then, as 7 Cdn Inf Bde War Diary relates:

The word was given to our bns to get cracking - Regina Rif vehs were first on the priority list, followed by the R. Wpg Rif and finally 1 C. Scot R. The bde less bde HQ was across by 2100 hrs.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Apr 45)

Meanwhile the Reginas, long settled within the town and awaiting the order to attack, had been subjected to some heavy mortaring. As the brigade's diarist notes

The only thing they could do was to dig deeper and keep ducking.

(Ibid)

409. 7 Cdn Inf Bde's attack was to start at 2130 hours, preceded by half an hour's intense artillery bombardment. The effort was to consist of four phases. In the first Regina Rif, with under command a platoon of medium machine guns (C.H. of O. (M.G.)) and supported by a troop of tanks from "C" Sqn 27 Cdn Armd Regt and a half squadron of crocodiles ("A" Sqn 141 R.A.C.), was to capture the area (beyond the railway) immediately

* Reference maps as for para 395. See also Appx "C".

west and south of Julianen Park (8216). In the second phase R. Wpg Rif, also with medium machine guns under command but with the added support of "A" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, would clear along the road to Loga (8315), to secure Julianen Park and all the ground north of the road up to and including the line of the railway and as far east as the eastern edges of the small woods north of Loga (8315). In this phase the reconnaissance squadron would be used to take over and thus safeguard the northern flank along the bend of the railway after its capture by the infantry. The next phase called for the assault on Loga by 1 C. Scot R. from the R. Wpg Rif area. The last phase required R. Wpg Rif (on the northern flank) to exploit along the line of the railway and consolidate north-east of Loga while on the right the Reginas swung southwards to clear down to the banks of the Leda River. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx 10, 7 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 2, 28 Apr 45)

410. As soon as the artillery fire plan started "B" and "C" Coys (Regina Rif) were ordered to move up to the line of the railway, which represented the battalion's start line. It seemed, however, that 9 Cdn Inf Bde had not established full control in this area, for the Reginas met unexpected opposition while still 400 yards west of the railway. "C" Coy especially was heavily engaged and it all resulted in considerable delay. Finally the situation was adjusted, enabling all four companies to move on without further interference. By 0030 hours 30 Apr Lt-Col Gregory's men had seized all their objectives. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Regina Rif, 29 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serial 54, 30 Apr 45, serial 2). The R. Wpg Rif's attack which followed at 0200 hours was equally uneventful except for some light shelling, and by 0615 hours the situation was well enough in hand to allow the Scottish to begin their assault on Loga. 1 C. Scot R. advanced at 0700 hours. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde; 1 C. Scot R., 30 Apr 45)

411. Led by "A" and "C" Coys the Scottish thrust into the rubble piles of Loga, meeting only scattered opposition but taking quite a number of prisoners. It took the troops about two and a half hours to complete a thorough sweep of the area, whereupon the battalion laid on its contact patrols and settled down to consolidate. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 30 Apr 45). Meanwhile, at Brigade Headquarters it had been appreciated that the enemy was definitely on the run and, even while 1 C. Scot R. was still mopping up in Loga, the brigade commander had ordered R. Wpg Rif to go ahead with the last phase of the operation. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 30 Apr 45). The Winnipeg's effort was most successful. Leaving the squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt to line the railway and protect the northern flank, the infantry moved, pacing the Scottish attack on Loga, and by 0930 hours were well-positioned directly north of Loga, with strong patrols probing towards Logabirum. (Ibid, also W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Apr 45)

412. At this time (0930 hours) our affairs on the left were in such good order that the Reginas were sent in to do their part of the fourth phase. This involved an attack by "B" and "D" Coys on the left and right respectively. When it began no one anticipated much opposition, according to an official account.

Information re enemy in this area was NIL, but in view of the light opposition encountered by our Bde generally, NO one, least of all the comds of either "B" or "D" Coys figured on any sort of a fight. This was to be the usual methodical check-up on houses in the area for

hidden and scared PSW. Each Coy had under comd 1 Sec of WASPS and 1 Sec of Pioneers for booby traps and mine clearing plus 1 6 pr a tk gun.

(AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F
Docket VI, Folio 13, Battle
Narrative 1st Bn The Regina
Rifle Regiment, 29-30 Apr 45)

The enemy had no intention of giving up without a fight, however, and as soon as the Canadian infantry appeared met them with intense small arms fire (ibid).

413. The supporting Wasps were immediately brought into play and the initial result was satisfactory for twenty-five prisoners fell into our hands. Most of the resistance came from the barracks area (8214). There a good number of well-sited machine gunners and snipers were, so prisoners reported, ready to fight to a finish. Aided by their six-pounder anti-tank guns and by the hard-working flamethrowers, the two Regina companies fought all morning from house to house. By 1300 hours, however, most of the enemy had been either killed or captured, with the exception of one strong point. There, according to the battle narrative:

...the enemy had set up a fortress defence by manning both the basement and upstairs sandbagged windows with machine guns and PANZERFAUST. The Wasps were too vulnerable to this overhead fire to be successfully committed against this point nor could a good shot be got at it with the A. tk gun....

(Ibid)

Tanks would have proved useful at this stage but, until some arrived, improvised methods had to be adopted. The answer was soon found; PIATs were employed against the strong point at short range and the explosions of the hollow charges soon set the place afire. There was little else the enemy could do then but capitulate. One officer and thirty-four German soldiers surrendered here (ibid). This brought the total of prisoners which the Reginas had taken to over 200, making a grand total for the brigade of over five hundred prisoners. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summaries op cit, Isum Nos 129 and 130, 2 May 45)

414. Meanwhile, as 7 Cdn Inf Bde consolidated the newly won ground east of Leer, Brigadier Rockingham's battalions had ventured northwards to enlarge the lodgment. On the left S.D. & G. Highrs moved freely up the dyke road bordering the east bank of the Ems River. The Glengarrians met no opposition but captured many prisoners. (Ibid). In this advance Lt-Col N.M. Gemmell, D.S.O., had the assistance of "B" Squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which forged on ahead during the late afternoon to see whether any good bridges existed on the northern routes. At 2000 hours the reconnaissance men reported that they were at Thedingaer Vorwerk (7819), that the road up to that point was clear of obstruction, and that all the bridges over the creeks which flowed eastwards from the river were in good repair. It is worth noting that during the move the reconnaissance men took over sixty prisoners. As night descended the infantry was ordered to remain dug in on the dyke road opposite Jemgum (7619) while the recce squadron watched the recently acquired bridges some 1500 yards further to the north. (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs,

30 Apr 45, 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 30 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit: 30 Apr 45, serial 69; also AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Docket VI, Special Report No. 42, Battle Narrative 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 15 Jun 45)

415. In the centre of 9 Cdn Inf Bde's sector H.L.I. of C., moving along the road to Nuttermoor (8018) since first light, was not able to report such an easy advance as its flanking neighbours. As the War Diary reads:

"A" Coy ran into the enemy in considerable strength and put on a classic demonstration of Inf and tank tactics. The Inf edged forward in front of the tanks and the armour blasted enemy posns with HE and AP.

(W.D., H.L.I. of C.,
30 Apr 45)

However, once this opposition was cleared, there was little else to do, Lt-Col Hodgins therefore leapfrogged his sub-units along the battalion centre line and "C" Coy reached the outskirts of Nuttermoor (8018) by last light. With their task completed, H.L.I. of C. firmed up and sat tight in widely separated but well chosen company strongholds on the Leer-Nuttermoor road. (Ibid)

416. On Brigadier Rockingham's right flank the Nth N.S. Highrs spent an uneventful afternoon.

The Battalion advanced quickly meeting little opposition except for the odd sniper and schmeisser fire.

(W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs,
30 Apr 45)

"C" Coy took over fifty prisoners without suffering any casualties itself while "B" Coy gathered up another fifteen. The main job was a sweep through the village of Heisfelde (8117) and the woods to the north. Accomplishing this in quick order, the unit consolidated around Heisfelde for the night. (Ibid)

1 POL ARMD DIV PASSES THROUGH TO THE
NORTH-EAST, 30 APR 45*

417. Thus, by the late afternoon of 30 Apr, Maj-Gen Keebler held a lodgment area sufficiently large to allow Lt-Gen Simonds to go ahead with his plans for pushing 1 Pol Armd Div through towards the naval base at Wilhelmshaven. The opportunity for large-scale exploitation had arrived and the Commander of 2 Cdn Corps did not lose time in seizing it. Lt-Gen Simonds now ordered Maj-Gen Maczek to pass one of his Polish battle groups through the newly won bridgehead to thrust north-eastwards towards the German naval bastion. At the same time he directed that 3 Cdn Inf Div continue the advance on Emden and Aurich. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 30 Apr 45, 2 Cdn Corps Weekly Summary of Ops, op cit, 29 Apr - 5 May 45). 10 Pol Armd Bde Gp crossed the Leda River at about midday (30 Apr). 2 Pol Armd Regt led the way and by nightfall had its forward elements astride the road (8719) north-east of Brunn (8618). At that time 1 Pol Armd Regt was at Logabirum awaiting its turn to advance.

* Reference maps as for para 395.

Maj-Gen Maczek's infantry was still heavily committed in the regions of Bollingen (9604) and Stickhausen (9313). (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 1 May 45, serial 2; also AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/H; Docket III, 2 Cdn Corps Sitreps, May 1945 - Sitrep No. 600, dated 0102245B)

THE ADVANCE ON EMDEN AND AURICH BY 3 CDN INF DIV,
1-4 MAY 45*

418. Having allowed the Polish armoured brigade group to pass through on 30 Apr, 3 Cdn Inf Div was about to take up a new task. On the morning of 1 May 9 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to establish itself in the area Terborg (7722) - Veenhusen (8121) by last light and to clear the community of Neermoor (8023), if time permitted, on that day. At that time 7 Cdn Inf Bde was continuing the process of firming up in the vicinity of Loga (8315) while Brigadier J.A. Roberts battalions still remained in concentration west of the Ems River. Traffic having become very heavy over the bridge south of Leer, it did not seem possible that Maj-Gen Keebler's entire formation would be able to concentrate for its advance on Emden and Aurich until the engineers of 2 Cdn Corps finished their work on the long bridge west of Leer. The completion of this structure was expected to take place at 2359 hours 1 May. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H; Docket V, Liaison Officers Reports, May 1945, G. Ops 2 Cdn Corps; 011000B, para 5)

419. Throughout 1 May 9 Cdn Inf Bde did little except patrol northward, it was a tedious business for the enemy had cratered the roads in numerous places and distributed his mines carefully. Nevertheless, the infantrymen went about the task of finding new routes and collecting the odd German straggler. At the end of the day all three units had made good advances to occupy Terborg (7622) with S.D. & G. Highrs, Neermoor (8027) with N.S. Highrs, and Veenhusen (8021) with H.L.I. of C. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 1 May 45). New orders were then issued; the brigade was to form mobile groups consisting of infantry, engineers, tanks and reconnaissance elements, and would strike northwards to open the routes to Aurich and Emden. (Ibid)

420. Of the other two brigades, only Brigadier Gibson's men had been busy. Their activities were mainly due to the fact that the Poles had passed on through to the north-east and reached the towns of Hesel (9023) and Holtland (8920) without much trouble. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 1 May 45, serials 11, 13). The corps commander felt that these areas must now be taken over at the earliest moment in order to free the Poles for further advances; as a result Maj-Gen Keebler was ordered to move some of his troops to relieve Maj-Gen Maczek's men north of Hesel (9023). This task fell to R. Wpg Rif, which was already widely deployed near Loga after taking over some of 1 C. Scot R.'s area when that unit had moved into 9 Cdn Inf Bde's sector north of Leer. Nevertheless during the late afternoon R. Wpg Rif and one squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt set out to occupy Holtland (8920) and Brinkum (8819). The Loga sector passed to the control of C.H. of O. (M.G.), who had on previous occasions demonstrated

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland - Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2610 - Neermoor, 2611 - Hesel, 2510 - Aurich, 2710 - Leer, 2711 - Nortmoor, 2511 Holtrop; also Appx "C".

their ability to carry out a plain infantry role as efficiently as their normal one. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, C.H. of O. (M.G.), 1 May 45). The "Winnipegs" groups were in position at Holtland and Brinkum (8819) by 1900 hours and half an hour later N. Shore R., who had come under Brigadier Gibson's command earlier, reported that it was in occupation at Hesel (9023). (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, R. Wpg Rif, N. Shore R., 1 May 45). Meanwhile the Reginas, who had been sent west to take over the areas vacated by 9 Cdn Inf Bde, had settled at Nuttermoor (7918) with "A" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt and 4 Cdn A.Tk Bty in attendance on the flanks left open by Brigadier Rockingham's advance. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, and Regina Rif, 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 1 May 45)

421. The readjustments in position, however, were but a prelude to more important events, and on the evening of 1 May fresh orders were issued to 3 Cdn Inf Div. The advance on Emden and Aurich was about to begin. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 May 45). Simultaneous with the news of a fresh task came other news of a startling yet joyous nature when the troops heard the B.B.C. announcer tell the world that Adolph Hitler was dead. To weary men who must go ahead on the morrow and again face death this news gave more than a little encouragement, for it meant that the end of the war might well be very close. (Ibid)

422. The details for the continuation of the advance were given out to the brigades on the evening of 1 May. The intention, as stated by Maj-Gen Keebler's headquarters, was to capture Aurich. The task was to be carried out in three phases. In the first, while 7 Cdn Inf Bde concentrated in the large woods (9223) east of Hesel, 8 Cdn Inf Bde would occupy the areas of Mitte-Grossefehn (8833), Schirum (8538) and Holtrop (8837). At the same time Brigadier Rockingham's battalions would sweep forward on the left to establish a battalion group around Oldersum (7325) - Tergast (7527) and secure the line Oldersum (7325) - Simonswolde (7730) - road junction (8038). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, May 1945, Appx 2, 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 9, 2 May 45; also W.Ds., H.Q. 7, 8, 9 Cdn Inf Bdes and units, 1-2 May 45). In the second phase 7 Cdn Inf Bde would move through 8 Bde to settle in the area north-east of Aurich; here Brigadier Gibson's troops were to prepare for a direct assault on the divisional objective. At the same time 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to cut the Aurich-Emden road and secure the brigade's flanks. On the left 9 Cdn Inf Bde would conform by pivoting on Oldersum (7325) and swinging its right nearer to Emden. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Instr No. 9, 2 May 45, op cit, para 4)

423. The second phase is worth noting for its careful allotment of supporting arms. It called for the special employment of C.H. of O. (M.G.), 3 Cdn A.Tk Regt, and part of 7 Cdn Recce Regt. One medium machine gun company was placed in support of 9 Bde and another under command of the divisional anti-tank unit. Each of 7 and 9 Brigades had a heavy mortar platoon to assist it; Brigadier Roberts' formation had two heavy mortar platoons. The remainder of C.H. of O. (M.G.) (with an anti-tank battery under command) had the the task of maintaining a right flank guard while, beyond this outpost line to the east and north, 7 Cdn Recce Regt would move along, destroying any enemy driven northwards from Aurich. In the third phase 7 Cdn Inf Bde was to capture Aurich; 8 Bde would seal off the routes westwards from the town while 9 Cdn Inf Bde moved up on the left to screen Emden. For this phase each brigade was allotted one squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. "A" Sqn of 141 R.A.C. (flame-thrower "crocodiles") would support the brigade. (Ibid)

424. In 8 Cdn Inf Bde's sector the activity on 2 May was mainly confined to N. Shore R.'s advance, which began at about 1130 hours. The commanding officer had already sent his carriers and elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt to find a route over the badly cratered roads. At 1200 hours the leading company ("B") contacted the reconnaissance unit at the bridge (915276) south of Bagband (9128). A bridgehead was quickly established by "B" Coy, which went on into the village, surprisingly enough, with hardly a shot being fired. The other companies followed with all possible speed and by 1600 hours the battalion was firm on all its objectives around the road junction at Bagband. In all, N. Shore R. took twenty-four prisoners. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serial 20; W.D., N. Shore R., 2 May 45). In their newly won positions the New Brunswick men waited for R. de Chaud to pass through. Meanwhile, far to the right, Lt-Col C.A. Baerman's reconnaissance cars had reached Neudorf (0127). (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serial 60)

425. R. de Chaud's first sub-units ("A" and "B" Coys) went through the small town of Bagband (9128) at 2115 hours 2 May. The advance was not hindered in any way and within five hours the entire battalion was consolidating at Ulbargen (8931). (Ibid, serial 62, 3 May 45, serial 4). All this time Q.O.R. of C. had remained concentrated at Hesel (9023) awaiting the orders to proceed northward. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 2 May 45). Probably the best effort on this sector was made by 7 Cdn Recce Regt, whose "A" Sqn was in support of 8 Cdn Inf Bde. By noon on 2 May the squadron had cleared Firrel (9426) and Schwerinsdorf (9524) and secured the bridge (9127) over which the N. Shore R. had travelled to Bagband, besides aiding the infantry in its sweep through Bagband (9128). (7 Cdn Recce Regt Special Report No. 42, op cit, entry for 2 May 45)

426. Over on the left flank, "B" Sqn working with 9 Cdn Inf Bde was similarly active. In conjunction with strong patrols from the highland battalions, the areas of Hatshausen (8329), Oldersum (7426) and Rorichum (7625) were all explored, but little was to be seen of the enemy. Contact was made with Brigadier Roberts' men on the right early in the afternoon. (Ibid, also W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 2 May 45). By the end of the day, 9 Cdn Inf Bde had H.L.I. of C. strung out between Veenhusen (8121) and the main crossroads (8525) in Bock-Zeteler-Fehn (8426-8525). Nth N.S. Highrs were then deployed along the road Neermoor (8023) - Hatshausen (8329), meanwhile S.D. & G. Highrs had advanced its forward line of troops to the village Rorichum (7425). (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, May 1945, op cit, 2 May serial 69)

427. The following morning was marked by a single surprise (although of short duration) when a group of the enemy sallied forth to counter-attack S.D. & G. Highrs. The attack came in after a short mortar bombardment and was supported by concentrated machine gun fire. For a brief time the area was thick with shot and shell. The Canadian gunners, however, played havoc with the German infantry, which soon withdrew, leaving behind twelve prisoners and many dead. One of these prisoners stated that the attacking force, which was 130 strong, had moved to the battle from Tergast (7526). (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, May 1945, op cit, 3 May 45, serial 27; also W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 3 May 45). Although by mid-morning the front had quietened considerably, there were no prospects of any rest for the highlanders as new instructions called for the continuation of the advance northward. Nth N.S. Highrs were to take Timmel (8630); H.L.I. of C. were to pass through and cut eastwards to seize Ihlowerfehn (7934). Once H.L.I. of C. were firm there, Nth N.S. Highrs would take up the task and press on to capture

Riepe (7433). Meanwhile S.D. & G. Highrs would occupy Tergast (7526) and Oldersum (7326) in turn. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, serial 27, as above)

428. During the afternoon Nth N.S. Highrs moved forward and crossed the canal south of Timmel (8530) without interference. By 1640 hours tow companies were in the village and the following report was sent to Maj-Gen Keebler's headquarters.

Two coys in TIMMEL and two coys crossing canal at 8429. Leading coy is well into the town and second coy is about to go through to centre of town.... many felled trees and craters along rd to TIMMEL delayed progress but are being cleared now.

(3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, May 1945, op cit, 3 May 45, serial 42)

At this time the leading companies of H.L.I. of C. were moving up to pass on once the North Novas were secure in the new position. S.D. & G. Highrs, still being heavily shelled in Rorichum (7425), had not changed positions. (Ibid)

429. Further to the east 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been well occupied and showed substantial gains for its efforts. N. Shore R., having seized Strackholt (9330), passed control of this area into the capable hands of 52 Cdn A.Tk Bty and returned to concentrate in Bagband (9128), where Q.O.R. of C. had recently arrived in preparation for their attack through R. de Chaud's positions at Ulbargen (8931). (Ibid, 3 May 45, serials 20, 31, 35, 40). Lt-Col S.M. Lett's responsibility included the clearance of Ostersander (8536) and Holtrop (8837), the line between these two places being the start line for 7 Cdn Inf Bde's assault on Aurich. The Queen's Own moved its "D" Coy over the battalion's start line at 1815 hours; it got as far as the bend in the road (886347) above Mitte-Grossefehn (8933) before the enemy decided to react. Here, according to an official account:

The leading platoon was pinned down by MG and SA fire from both flanks. The flat terrain afforded no cover and the coy was forced to remain in this position and neutralize the enemy by fire.

(AEF: 45/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II - folio I, Day by day account of operations, Q.O.R. of C., 3 May 45)

The battalion commander immediately called for artillery and mortar support to cover his men while they dug in. No further move forward was to be made until well after dark. (Ibid)

430. Shortly after midnight Q.O.R. of C. moved on once more, this time without trouble, for it appeared that the enemy had withdrawn completely. Ostersander (8536) was entered and patrols were dispatched towards Holtrop (8837). As the day passed N. Shore R. was brought up to Ostersander (8536), whence company groups travelled south-westwards to Westersander (8435) and north towards Schirum (8538). (Ibid, also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, May 1945; 4 May 45, serials 3, 19, 37). Meanwhile, on the left, R. de Chaud had eased its way forward from Ulbargen (8931) to the next community along the main road, at the same time maintaining contact with 9 Cdn Inf Bde troops north of Timmel (8530). The situation in Brigadier Rockingham's sector

had not altered much; the highland troops were secure around Tirmel (8530), still holding the region of Neermoor (8023) and probing the approaches to Tergast (7527) on the extreme left. Here, in the area occupied by S.D. & G. Highrs, the shelling, which had been so heavy for the past two days, had lessened considerably. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 4 May 45; also First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports; op cit, May 1945, 502 (L) 2 Cdn Corps 041330B, para 4)

431. For 7 Cdn Inf Bde the past forty-eight hours had been quite uneventful. The rifle brigade moved into Staatsforst Friedeburg on 3 May and remained there until 1500 hours on the following day. At that time receiving an order to move, R. Wpg Rif travelled on to Holtrop (8837) and Regina Rif to Wrisse (9037) while 1 C. Scot R. took over Aurich-Oldendorf (9135). (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 and 4 May 45)

432. These last days had also been ones of furious activity for the divisional reconnaissance unit; its scout cars could be seen on every side road or track, guarding the infantry's flank or probing the opposition, securing a bridge here and there or guarding a vital point. On 3 May 7 Cdn Recce Regt ("A" Sqn) in helping the Polish troops on the far right overran two prisoner of war camps near Auricher Wiesmoor II (9733). Then on 4 May "A" Sqn occupied Wiesmoor (9935) and took twenty prisoners. Later, on approaching the bridge (9840) south of Wieseder-Meer (9942), one patrol of the reconnaissance men had the bridge blown up "in their faces", yet another patrol collected thirty-seven more prisoners. "A" Sqn had by 1530 hours on 4 May not only thoroughly swept Maj-Gen Keebler's right flank but had good observation over a length of the Ems-Jade canal (from 8839 to 9440 to 0033). On the left the Sqn had been equally active in maintaining a firm reconnaissance line some distance south of Schirum (8538) - Ludwigsdorf (8135). (7 Cdn Recce Regt - Special Report No. 42, op cit; also W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 3-4 May 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, May 1945, op cit; 3 May, serial 58; 4 May, serials 18, 20, 25, 40)

433. Despite the fact that 3 Cdn Inf Div was fully prepared to carry out its operations against Aurich and Emden, there were signs by the evening of 3 May that our troops might be spared any further action. It all began when German civilian representatives in Aurich sent an envoy to 8 Cdn Inf Bde headquarters with the request that it be declared an open town.

At 2300 hours a German schoolmaster accompanied by a German Red Cross worker arrived in the R de Chaud lines and asked to be taken to the comdr. to discuss the poss surrender of AURICH, MR 8341 Sheet 2510. Lt COL Taschereau brought them to this HQ where they met Brig J.A. Roberts. The civilian stated that the civilian population and about 90% of the soldiers in the area were willing to surrender but that the military authorities would not allow it. Brig J.A. Roberts decided that as it was an entirely military matter concerning surrender there was nothing that he could do about it unless the military comd personally agreed.

(W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 May 45)

Brigadier Roberts also informed the civilian envoy that he would cease offensive action against Aurich until 1200 hours 4 May; furthermore, he suggested that the mayor persuade the military authorities to surrender.

It was agreed that if the plan was successful a military representation would come out of AURICH under a white flag before 1200 hrs to meet the Brig Comd who would then accompany them back into the town to discuss the terms of surrender with the military comd. The civ agreed to try and put the plan into effect.

(Ibid)

It has been seen, however, that the movement of the Canadian troops forward was not stopped altogether. The battalions of both 8 and 7 Brigades kept edging northward so that if Aurich did not put up the white flag they would be in a position to carry through their threat of a concentrated assault. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes and units, 4 May 45)

1 POL ARMD DIV'S OPERATIONS,
29 Apr - 4 May 45^{xx}

434. Once Maj-Gen Maczek had passed the responsibility of the sector Holtland-Hesel to 3 Cdn Inf Div, the Polish commander turned his attention to his new task of pushing on with all possible speed towards Wilhemshaven. By that time, on the right, 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp had entered Stickhausen (9313) from the south and gone on eastwards to secure Detern (9512) (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, May 1945; 1 May 45, serials 2, 11, 13, 18, 2 May 45, serial 5). A little later it was reported that the Polish armoured reconnaissance regiment, working ahead of 10 Pol Armd Bde's main northern thrust, had reached the village of Remels (0123) after a perilous journey over cratered roads and around prepared demolitions at the several bridge-sites along the route. (Ibid, also 1 May, serial 20). On the morning of 2 May, while 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp sent strong patrols northwards from Detern (9512) and eastwards to Bokel (0013), the armoured group (on the northern flank) regrouped behind its armoured reconnaissance screen, which reported some of its troops as far forward as Meiners-fehn (0724) and past Grossander (0422). (Ibid, 2 May 45, serial 22). There was little activity on the Polish sector for the remainder of the day. Obstacles of various types and sizes abounded on the routes, and it was at one of these that the armoured reconnaissance unit lost five tanks to a well concealed anti-tank gun firing from the flank. To the south around Bokel (0013) the infantry group was occupied in overrunning the rapidly weakening opposition. (Ibid, 3 May 45, serial 5)

435. By 1000 hours on 3 May, Bokel (0013) was clear; most of the craters on the road through the place had been filled by the energetic Polish engineers and two companies of infantry were firm in the village. (Ibid, 3 May 45, serial 12). Further to the north-east opposition was disappearing fast. The Polish motor battalion supported by tanks of 2 Pol Armd Regt reached the larger centre at Westerstede (1218) during the afternoon and later contacted a patrol of the Royal Canadian Dragoons.^{xx}

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland - Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2711 - Nortmoor, 2712 - Apen, 2812 - Barssel, 2713 - Westerstede, 2612 - Remels, 2611 - Hesel, 2613 - Neuenburg; also Appx "E".

** 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt operating with 2 Cdn Armd Bde under command 4 Cdn Armd Div.

Another contact was established later in the evening by 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp with troops of 4 Cdn Armd Div south of Apen (0413). As darkness descended other gains were reported. 1 Pol Armd Regt entered Halsbek (1224) and took up defensive positions there while one of its squadrons swung first south-eastwards then to the north to occupy the area of Bredehorn (1526). (Ibid, 3 May 45, serials 24, 26; 4 May 45, serial 6)

436. Maj-Gen Maczek's sector was clearly not one of choice for an armoured division. There was not an adequate amount of ground solid enough for armoured manoeuvre and the roads began to disappear fast under the weight of the heavy tanks. By the evening of 3 May all engineer resources of the division had been put to work on the roads to recondition them so that the tanks might pass on to the east. (First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports, op cit, May 1945; 031700B, SO 2, Liaison, 2 Cdn Corps). The intention then was to establish a firm base of operations at Westerstede (1218) with 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp and to pass the rest of the armour through Moorborg to the north-west. (ibid).

437. The night of 3/4 May was taken up by a series of re-groupings and concentrations. It has been seen that Maj-Gen Maczek's right flank was now secure for some distance ahead, the contacts made with 4 Cdn Armd Div proved that; and this implied that the Poles would now shift the weight of their attack northwards. Bridges on the main roads were speedily erected over the craters and the Polish field artillery regiments brought forward into a gun area between Eggeloge (1323) and Grafenfeld (1523) (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, May 1945; 5 May 45, serial 6). Meanwhile 10 Pol Armd Recce Regt plodded on up the main road past the road junction (1528) south of Grabstederfeld (1629), but only to be stopped by a group of Germans who were in well dug positions south of Linderner Busch (1530). The armoured brigade group attempted vigorously to overcome this resistance, but the craters and other obstacles proved too much for the unwieldy tanks. As in many other instances in the past, the offensive was held up while additional artillery support was brought up to blast a way through. This took up considerable time but, by the night of 4 May, 11 Cdn Army Fd Regt, 53 Pol Med Regt and 1 Cdn Med Regt had arrived to participate in the attack. (Ibid). In preparation for his fresh thrust, Maj-Gen Maczek^x ordered an extensive programme of patrolling. While this was being carried out, however, important messages began to arrive at the Polish and other headquarters indicating that the guns and tanks might be robbed of a last chance to engage the old enemy (ibid). (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/F Docket I, Folio 3, 2 Cdn Corps Summary of Ops and Activities, 29 Apr - 5 May 45)

* Maj-Gen K. Rudnicki had (since 2 May) been appointed to command 1 Pol Armd Div and Maj-Gen Maczek had been appointed to command a Polish Corps. This change did not take place however until much later. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., 2 May 45)

OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 20 APR - 4 MAY 45*

The Enlargement of the Kusten Bridgehead
by 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20-24 Apr 45

438. The enemy's efforts thus far had been characterized by determined resistance and a skilfully coordinated defence on ground which was completely unfavourable for armoured attack. Relying largely upon mined roads and demolished bridges to slow down the Canadian advance, the Germans had succeeded (in such places as Garrel and Friesoythe (0891)) in forcing Maj-Gen Vokes' men to deploy fully and participate in pitched battle. Now, in the compressed bridgehead over the Kusten Canal, 4 Cdn Armd Div again found itself facing savage opposition backed by the same sort of defences, demolitions, craters and ground, beyond which every yard gained must be paid for very dearly. (AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket I, Folio 4; Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities of 4 Cdn Armd Div, 14-21 Apr 45). The enemy had organized his order of battle with keen intent. Following the capture of Friesoythe (0891) the fanatical parachute units had been relieved by an assortment of Marine battalions. These, the enemy calculated, would serve as a cushion for our first penetration beyond the Kusten canal. The marines had more than served the purpose; not only had they acted as the cushion, they also had been used as a battering ram in the first attempts to expel us from the Kusten bridgehead while the tougher paratroops regrouped further back. By the morning of 20 Apr, however, the Marines had received a great deal more punishment than had been intended for them in their battle inoculation and both 20 and 21 Para Regts were placed once more in the front line (ibid).

439. By the early hours of 20 Apr, the situation of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, which had so recently been close to desperate, had improved. Alq R. held firm at the base of the bridgehead, A. & S.H. of C., though extended along the left flank, were ready to push on northwards, while the Line & Welld R., which had been brought in originally to secure the line of the railway on the right, had not only established a strong flank facing east but had also passed some of its companies straight up the main road to clear several road and track junctions (141999 - 142002). (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 19-20 Apr 45). Added to this, the bridge over the canal, though under fairly heavy shell fire which rendered it useless for a time, was complete. Over it, at varying intervals, had passed most of the fighting vehicles of the three infantry battalions beside the supporting tanks of "B" Sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt. (Ibid, also W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 19-20 Apr 45; also W.D., H.Q. R.C.E., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Apr 45)

440. Throughout 20 Apr Line & Welld R. had A. & S.H. of C. moved forward slowly over the soggy fields and cratered roads. On the right flank the railway track was ripped up to create a suitable line of advance for the advancing armour. Lt-Col Coleman's troops began to move forward at 1100 hours with air support from a Typhoon "cab rank" and under cover of an artillery barrage as well as concentrations from 4.2 and 3-inch mortars. "B" Coy led the way up the main road and reached the

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000
Sheets 2913 - Friesoythe, 2914 - Littel,
2915 - Wardenburg, 2813 - Edeweicht, 2814 -
Bad Zwischenahn, 2815 - Oldenburg; also
Appx "D" and "E".

road (and lane) junction (148017) without much trouble. "C" Coy then went on to try to force a way across the Vehne stream. At this stage, however, the main advance of Linc & Welld R. stopped, for large craters on the centre line blocked further progress. Patrols were sent on and later in the day reached the shallow river over which the road passed, but finding the enemy's fire too heavy, they were forced to pull back into the battalion area. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 20 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II, Folio 5, Operations of the Linc & Welld R., 31 Mar - 6 May 45, by Lt-Col R.C. Coleman)

441. Over on the left A. & S.H. of C. (Lt-Col A.F. Coffin) had been plodding through the soggy flat land since about midday. At that time "B" and "C" Coys took advantage of the aerial "cab rank" overhead and the flanking thrust northwards by Linc & Welld R. to gain fresh ground. The going both for infantry and armour was most difficult; the two leading rifle companies reached the area of the crossroads (134013) but there the enemy's fire forced them to deploy and hold. Lt-Col Coffin now ordered his other sub-units to get on. "A" Coy pushed ahead to the banks of the Aue river south of Osterscheps (1402) and "D" Coy managed to secure a good flank position some 500 yards further to the south-west. Fortunately, the supporting tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt, by this late hour, had succeeded in working their way forward to help the men on the ground. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C. and 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 20 Apr 45)

442. Back at Brigade headquarters, Brigadier Jefferson appreciated that after the day's aerial effort the front would soften up considerably. He therefore issued instructions to A. & S.H. of C. to get across the water obstacle before first light and capture Osterscheps (1402); at the same time he ordered Lt-Col Coleman to press on. In order to make fuller use of the infantry at present north of the canal, the brigadier was now given several troops of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt (under command) to take over the exposed flanks as the next phase of the operations progressed. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 20 Apr 45)

443. On 19 Apr the divisional anti-tank regiment was made responsible for both flanks of the bridgehead.

The 3rd and 65th Batteries crossed, taking two guns each, and deployed as infantry on the left and right respectively, each relieving a weary infantry battalion and covering a front of about 1000 yards.

(The History of the 5th
Canadian Anti-Tank Regt,
p. 65)

A similar role was given to 96 A.Tk Bty on 20 Apr. (Ibid)

444. During the night 20/21 Apr all three battalions were heavily shelled and mortared. Naturally enough, our own guns, mortars, and medium machine guns were kept busy on H.F. tasks covering all probable approaches into the Canadian line, and this covering fire enabled the units to carry out certain readjustments of position in preparation for the continuation of the advance. (W.Ds., 15 Cdn Fd Regt, 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy and units to 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20-21 Apr 45). It was the Argyles' turn to move forward and shortly after first light "Jock"* patrols

* A familiar term meaning Highlander, used within the Highland Regiments.

began to edge up to the south bank of the water obstacle. The enemy was fully alive to the threat on this flank, however, and plastered the area of the demolished bridge severely throughout the morning of 21 Apr. Lt-Col Coffin's first attempt to cross with "A" Coy at 1500 hours was driven back by a murderous cross-fire, but the second try was successful. At 1615 hours "B" Coy got over the river and consolidated a small bridgehead around the old bridgesite. Lt-Col Coffin then ordered "A" Coy to follow "B". This proved to be anything but easy, according to the unit War Diary.

"A" Company came under a terrific enemy barrage and suffered very heavy casualties before establishing themselves on the other side.

(W.D., A. & S.H. of C.,
21 Apr 45)

445. Despite this opposition, by 1825 hours all four companies were across the stream, and a little later "D" Coy reported that it was in the southern part of Osterscheps (1402). (Ibid, also AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/H, Docket I, Ops Log, April 1945, 21 Apr 45, serials 36, 38, 46). The German guns and mortars obviously had this area well registered and the Canadians lost a good many men in the inferno of shell fire which descended on them. Because of this, and because his troops were already over-extended, thus leaving a wide open left flank, the commanding officer requested "D" Coy to withdraw to form a tighter battalion position. Before this order could be carried out, however, the inevitable happened - the enemy counter-attacked. A fierce fight followed in which the Argyle company commander, Major W.J. Whiteside, was severely wounded together with several of his men. "D" Coy nevertheless succeeded in beating off the enemy's attack and in falling back according to instructions (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 21 Apr 45)

446. For both Linc & Welld R. and Alq R. 21 Apr provided a certain amount of disappointment. Linc & Welld R., held up on the main road because of a large crater, had to wait until the engineers bridged it. Once this was done "C" Coy settled itself south of the bridge (153023) and patrolled forward to recce the crossing place. Several of these attempts were not only unsuccessful but very costly as the enemy ceaselessly shelled and mortared the bridge site. Added to this, numerous well-sited machine guns and the odd self-propelled gun kept the road well covered. It was not until mid-afternoon that patrols were able to reach the bridge, which they reported blown. Meanwhile the German missiles continued to rain down on the area, thus preventing any further movement forward. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 21 Apr 45). The only moves made by Alq R. (ordered by brigade headquarters to ensure the security of the bridgehead) took place without incident. "C" and "D" Coys, with attendant portions of the New Brunswick Rangers (10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy) and 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, took positions along the line of the railway on the right flank. The regiment's other company positions at the base of the bridgehead on the centre line remained unchanged. (W.Ds., Alq R., 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy, 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 21 Apr 45)

447. By the morning of 22 Apr it appeared that the enemy had withdrawn some of his troops, and so the Argyles were able to get onto their objectives without interference. All four rifle companies made good gains. The bridge over the river was completed, allowing the battalion's vehicles to join the troops in the bridgehead. The responsibility for the bridgesite now

fell on "D" Coy Alq R., which was placed under Lt-Col Coffin's command. By noon the infantry firmly held the road leading into Osterscheps (1402) and the two main crossroads in the village each with one company. Later, a third sub-unit ("D" Coy) was moved into Osterscheps, while "A" Coy remained in rear to secure the line of communication to the bridge. Patrolling increased as the day went on; although little reconnaissance was possible to the west and north, the battalion's scouts did manage to contact Linc & Welld R. on the right and look over the ground to the east. The first bridge between Osterscheps and the railway was found undamaged but the main crossing place over the Aue stream was demolished, although it was reported that infantry would be able to cross. This, in itself, was important news, and it all made considerable difference to 10 Brigade's plans. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, A. & S.H. of C., 22 Apr 45)

448. Linc & Welld R. spent the first half of 22 Apr patrolling, probing the enemy's line and getting "C" Coy across the large crater which blocked the road ahead of it. Then, at 1100 hours, the commanding officer received orders from Brigadier Jefferson to attack and capture the high ground at Sud (1502). The battalion at once began preparations for this task, which was due to start at 1655 hours. At H hour, the divisional artillery opened up together with the machine guns and heavy mortars of 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy, and "A" Coy moved eastwards from "C" Coy's positions towards the Vehne river. Immediately the infantry got into the open it came under a terrific volume of fire; a thick smoke screen was put down in the hope that it might ease things but it proved useless and "A" Coy suffered very heavily. "B" Coy was then sent in on the right to take out the offending opposition but was itself pinned to the ground. A serious situation now developed, both sub-units were completely neutralized and no further movement either back to the shelter of the railway line or forward was possible until after dark. The enemy stepped up his fire fight as night descended and then launched a fierce counter-attack. This was dealt with favourably by artillery and the medium machine guns of the New Brunswick Rangers, but it became clear that operations on that particular flank would not be at all easy. Lt-Col Coleman therefore ordered "A" and "B" Coys to withdraw back to the railroad tracks. (W.Ds., Linc & Welld R.; H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Apr 45; also Operations of Linc & Welld R., 31 Mar - 6 May 1945, op cit, para 20)

449. An extensive patrol programme was laid on for the next day and long before first light contact with the enemy was established at several points across the front. As the hours passed, however, it became apparent that the Germans were thinning out their line, for "B" Coy found the road and railway crossing (151021) undefended. This fact urged Lt-Col Coleman to attempt a crossing of the stream on the main axis and at about 1620 hours a platoon of "B" Coy dashed over the obstacle against light opposition, taking 27 prisoners. A small bridgehead was quickly formed and engineer parties were rushed up to clear the many obstacles on the route. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 23 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 16, 57, 60, 66, 69, 70, 81, 85; 23 Apr 45, serial 2)

450. Meanwhile, over on the left flank, A. & S.H. of C., though depleted in numbers (after the heavy casualties suffered during the past two days) had held its ground around Osterscheps and probed out from its firm base to the west, east and north. The Alq R. company under Lt-Col Coffin's command was brought up and pushed eastwards from the main Argyle positions to seize the demolished but still usable bridge. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 23 Apr 45). Luck was on the Canadians' side, for "D" Coy Alq R.

managed to cross the partly broken bridge and firm up on the east side. (W.D., Alq R., 23 Apr 45). The time had arrived for a readjustment of plans and at a brigade orders group later that evening Brigadier Jefferson told his battalion commanders what was required of them. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 23 Apr 45). The Argyles were to strike to the north to capture two road junctions (142037 and 145036) approximately 1000 yards above Osterscheps (1402). The Algonquins, having moved up into the eastern end of Ostercheps, were to drive through "D" Coy's present bridgehead and head eastwards. Simultaneously Lt-Col Coleman's troops would continue to exert pressure up their original axis and against the right flank. Each thrust would have the support of the tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt besides a goodly portion of the divisional artillery. (Ibid, and W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C., Alq R., 23 Apr 45; 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 23 Apr 45, serial 56)

451. Shortly before midnight 23/24 Apr Alq R. and Linc & Welld R. moved in to attack. The Algonquins were not particularly lucky at first for they ran into their own artillery fire and suffered 12 casualties. This caused a great deal of confusion but by first light the attack proper got under way. In short order the men from Northern Ontario had secured the bridge, the road and rail crossing east of the river, a second bridge over a smaller stream east of the railway, and the houses in Edeweht beyond the next road fork (1502). (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., 24 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serials 4, 5, 8, 9, 10; AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II, Folio 4, "The Final Punch", Ops Apr-May 1945, Alq R. by Maj L.C. Monk, para 25). Without trouble Linc & Welld R. was able to contact Alq R. before 0600 hours. Thereafter "B" Coy went about consolidating its new gains along the main axis on the Algonquin's southern flank. At this stage a strong force of Linc & Welld R. was sent to tap out the right flank but to no good purpose; the enemy again brought down a hail of fire to halt any further advance in this direction. Lt-Col Coleman's next step was to order "A" Coy to pass through as soon as "B" Coy had formed a solid front. During the afternoon the Typhoons took advantage of the clear weather and added their weight to our side of the battle. Excellent results were obtained, two German self-propelled guns being knocked out. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 24 Apr 45). A fierce exchange of shell and mortar fire continued well into the late evening. By that time "B" Coy had swung to the south-east along the northern bank of the Vehne stream and, with the help of a tank which Alq R. had available, managed to drive the Germans from their positions in the houses (155020) along the banks of the obstacle. (Ibid). There now followed a series of patrols to probe the routes to the north and east. This programme terminated at about midnight when "A" Coy was thrust forward to reach its objective (158025) on the high ground at Sud (1502) by 0100 hours 25 Apr (ibid). The infantry rested here and at first light, 25 Apr, a section of carriers was sent up for exploitation along the right of the main road (ibid).

452. By far the sternest opposition on this day was encountered by A. & S.H. of C. Lt-Col Coffin's troops ("B" Coy) experienced a fairly heavy counter-attack shortly after dawn on 24 Apr when the enemy, taking full advantage of the thick mist, infiltrated into "B" Coy's position. For a while the situation appeared grim, but steadily the "Jocks" cleared out the intruders and restored peace within the area. The enemy, however, was loth to let our troops off so easily and proceeded to drench the battalion sector with shell and mortar fire, using, among other

missiles, 21-cm shells. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 24 Apr 45). Nevertheless, despite this retaliation "B" Coy began its advance northwards at 1015 hours, supported by a troops of Sherman tanks. The regiment's War Diary tells us that progress was very slow due to consistent machine gun fire, but by 1420 hours the leading troops were some 800 yards up the east road parallel to the Aue river. Here the infantry was subjected to a very severe bombardment and Lt-Col Coffin ordered his men to pull back slightly rather than accept too many casualties. Meanwhile "A" Coy had sallied out from Osterscheps (1402) towards the first crossroads west of the village. They too ran into terrific opposition and were forced to dig in and hold around the first bend (136030) in the main west road. "D" Coy, under continuous fire for most of the day, also tried to leave the village, but it too was stopped while only a short distance along the road to Danikhorst (1305), (ibid, also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serials 25, 66)

453. It must be noted that for the past few days the enemy's shelling and mortaring had generally been out of all proportion to the strength of his infantry on the ground. There is, of course, a natural explanation for this, and Major G.L. Cassidy, D.S.O., gives a very fair account of it in his history of the Algonquins.

As he fell back on his supply dumps his ammunition was ample, and rather than lose it, he kept up a ceaseless rain of shells and bombs. Mines of a new type made their first appearance, taken from the naval arsenals around Wilhelmshaven, the port we were by now gravely threatening. These mines consisted either of the warheads of torpedoes or of the large-calibre naval shells, deeply buried in the soft shoulders of the roads, and exploded by the customary pressure devices. The same mechanisms were used for cratering roads, and a real crater they made indeed. As we advanced, one noticed that almost every roadside tree had been prepared for demolition, with a deep notch already cut. In some instances, the gun-cotton packages were already wired near the notch, ready to explode and bring the trees crashing down over the roadway.

(Cassidy, Warpath, op cit, p. 322)

454. But apart from these nuisances, the enemy was handling his self-propelled guns with diabolic skill.

In the close country, these creatures could be manoeuvred quite close up to our forward troops. Surprise fire from an 88-mm. gun at short range inevitably halted the unprotected infantry and caused some disorganization. Our tanks fell constant victims to mines, bazookas and ubiquitous 88s. Flank manoeuvre was still badly restricted, so that piece-meal slogging was still the only tactics available.

(Ibid)

455. The Canadians were fortunate in possessing several weapons ideally suited to the type of fighting now taking place. Each battalion used its "Wasps" with the greatest confidence and daily found new value in these terrifying equipments. There was also the everlasting "cab rank" of Typhoons on call at any time

*Had purely
neutralizing
effect.*

to shake up the German resistance. Lastly, but certainly not of least importance, there was the Land Mattress, that awesome contraption which frightened the life out of friend and foe alike. With it any large target was crushed by an overwhelming blanket of hellish fire. Its fire effect was equal to the power of twelve medium artillery regiments and it invariably left the enemy upon whose area it had descended, in a dazed condition, ripe for capture. Unfortunately it was not a tremendously accurate weapon and could only be used well in front of the forward positions. (W.D., 1 Cdn Rocket Bty, R.C.A., 23-25 Apr 45; also Cassidy, Warpath, op cit, p. 322; also W.Ds., 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 23-25 Apr 45)

456. The situation on 4 Cdn Armd Div's front took on a changed appearance on the morning of 25 Apr. Maj-Gen Vokes, having kept a keen eye on the developments of the past five days, decided that there were now sufficient exits from the bridgehead to attempt a breakout with his armoured brigade. Therefore on the previous evening he had ordered Brigadier Moncel to take A. & S.H. of C. under his command, move into the Osterscheps sector, and thrust northwards. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 24 Apr 45). As has been previously mentioned, the bulk of the armour (21 and 22 Cdn Armd Regts) had been employed in supporting the bridgehead operations with gun fire from their tanks. Lake Sup R. (Mot), had also been well occupied. It had, since 22 Apr, been clearing a way eastward along the banks of the Kusten Canal. The Superiors met some opposition and considerable shellfire but by the evening of 23 Apr were at the road junction (172990) 1200 yards south of Sud Edewechtermoor (1600-1700). Certain divisional troops were then settled in this area and "C" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was able to swing north on the following morning. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot), 22-24 Apr 45). The road to Sud Edewechtermoor was not an inviting one, being thickly sown with mines and well covered by small arms fire. The mines prevented any supporting vehicles from venturing forward to help the infantry and the small arms fire greatly hindered the troops. Therefore it was not with any feeling of regret that Lake Sup R. (Mot) received its movement orders. At Osterscheps the Argyles would continue to exert pressure and thus screen the concentration of the armoured brigade. Eventually Lake Sup R. (Mot) would relieve A. & S.H. of C. and take over the main attack to the north itself. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot), A. & S.H. of C., 24 Apr 45). The area vacated by the Lake Superiors along the canal was taken over by 70 L.A.A. Bty (8 Cdn L.A.A. Regt), which came under command of 10 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 22-28 Apr 45, para 8; also W.D., 8 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 24 Apr 45)

29 CDN ARMD RECCE REGT'S INDEPENDENT ROLE,
19-25 APR 45*

457. Although 10 Cdn Inf Bde's main drive was directed to the north, it would not do to lose sight of the very valuable contribution made by Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon, D.S.O., and his 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt. Together with "D" Coy Line & Well R., elements of the British S.A.S., "A" Sqn, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt,

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland - Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2914 - Little, 3013 - Markhausen, 3015 - Dotlingen, 2915 - Wardenburg, 3014 - Garrel, 3016 - Grossenkneten; also Appx "D".

and a troop of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, the South Albertas had been pounding the enemy from pillar to post all the way from Friesoythe to Garrel, then on towards the road Oldenburg-Cloppenburg along which 2 Cdn Inf Div was operating. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 19-20 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II, Folio 3, Memorandum of Interview given by Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt). With its main base at Garrel (1984), Lt-Col Wotherspoon's unit, by 20 Apr, occupied Haast (3184) and Bissel (2984) with "A" and "B" Squadrons. "C" Sqn was settled in harbour between these two places while "D" Coy of Linc & Welld R. occupied a defended locality west of Bissel on the right bank of the river Lethe which cut the road Garrel (1984) - Bissel (2984) (ibid).

458. The seizure of the positions on which this force rested at present had involved much complicated manoeuvre and constant cooperation with the engineers responsible for the maintenance of the numerous small bridges over which the troops had passed on their way eastwards. Bissel, Haast and Sage all fell on the morning of 19 Apr, and "A" Sqn continued on as far as Dohlen (3486) to shoot up this village. The fact that the regiment was literally out on a long limb made strenuous and lengthy patrols necessary, and good use made of the nobility of "A" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt and the fast-moving S.A.S. jeeps. During the night 19/20 Apr the main body of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt had little to do, but the elements of A2 echelon, comfortably situated near Garrel, were severely tested when a strong German patrol attacked it. However, the members of the echelon acquitted themselves nobly, and an official account states:

The attempt was a costly one for the enemy as he was driven off with the loss of eight bazookas, two schmeissers, and a great deal of blood.

(Memorandum of Interview, Lt-Col G.D. de S. Wotherspoon, op cit, para 21)

459. The day of 20 Apr passed without any unusual occurrences; patrolling continued and was particularly successful, contact being established with several enemy groups along the roads leading north from Sage (3283) and Bissel (2894). On the southern flank, the S.A.S. under Lt-Col Wotherspoon's command roamed over a wide area to reach the road Cloppenburg-Bremen, picking up some fifteen prisoners en route. As the day ended however the red-bereted paratroops departed to other employment elsewhere (ibid). The reconnaissance to the north was resumed on the following day. "A" Sqn and "D" Coy Linc & Welld R. supported by fire from "C" Sqn's tanks travelled up the west side of the Lethe stream to reach and clear the area of the main crossroads (2588) near Nicolausdorf (2388). At the same time "B" Sqn attempted to enter the village of Littel (2892) but met with serious opposition and was ordered to turn back. By last light all the patrolling forces were withdrawn into a tight regimental area around Bissel and Sage. (Ibid, para 23; also W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 21 Apr 45)

460. The operational programme was to be livened considerably on 22 Apr, for on that day 2 Cdn Inf Div commenced its drive northwards to Oldenburg. 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt was now in a good position on the left flank of Maj-Gen Matthews' troops to assist in this attack and Lt-Col Wotherspoon was given a task to be carried out as part of 2 Cdn Inf Div's main effort. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 21 Apr 45, serial 48). "C" Sqn, teamed

up with "D" Coy Line & Welld R., was directed on the crossroads (313872) south of Hengstlage (3188).

The sqn-coy gp encountered some opposition some 1000 yds south of its objective, dealt with it satisfactorily, by-passed several large craters and had secured the objective by 1200 hrs. "B" Sqn, plus a coy of R. de Mais. which had been borrowed for the occasion, then passed through according to plan, and seized its objective, the village of Hengstlage 3188, at approx 1500 hours.

(Memorandum of Interview,
Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon,
op cit, para 24)

Strong patrols were quickly sent out and contacted the enemy along the ditch line south of Westerburg (3292). Progress in this direction stopped but "A" Sqn was pushed on to the west of the road where it made little headway and took fourteen more prisoners. Content with these limited gains, the unit once again withdrew out of contact for the night (ibid, also W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 22 Apr 45)

461. The enemy was quite active during the hours of darkness and boasted fair strength along the obstacle ahead of the South Albertas. Nevertheless, "B" Sqn and the sub-unit of R. de Mais attacked straight up the road during 23 Apr and, after a long drawn out battle (lasting all afternoon), seized the road at the point where it crosses the ditch, capturing thirty prisoners from 61 Para Regt and the Gross Deutschland Div. Having successfully aided 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt in gaining a considerable amount of ground, the Line & Welld R. and R. de Mais' companies received a warning order that night that both would soon be withdrawn to join their parent units. "B" and "C" Sqs concentrated in squadron harbours for the night and "A" Sqn was given several harassing fire tasks. For these the armoured cars of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt acted as forward observation posts, in addition to keeping the left flank along the road Garrel - Beverbrok (2690) secure. The right flank, for which the Manitoba Dragoons were also normally responsible, was further strengthened by the arrival of a battery of 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt (ibid, 23 Apr 45).

462. Contact was maintained all across the front on the following day, especially over on the left flank, where "C" Sqn fought an all day battle just south of Beverbrok (2690) and bagged 35 prisoners.

In the course of this battle an interesting incident occurred while one tp of "C" Sqn was engaged in shooting up an enemy coy area. One enemy BAZOOKA team had been "bothering" the Tp Sgt during the greater part of the afternoon. Due to the close proximity of the enemy it was impossible for him to posn his tk to deal with this particular opposition so the Sgt half-filled an empty 75 shell casing with petrol, climbed out of his tk and crawled to the enemy slit trench, dropped the shell casing into the trench and fired a Veray pistol into the petrol. The BAZOOKA team promptly surrendered. This started a "rot" in the enemy pl and its remaining str soon surrendered.

(Memorandum of interview,
Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon,
op cit, para 26)

463. The orders for 25 and 26 Apr were to keep contact, patrol, fill the craters, lift the mines, and adjust the bridging requirements within the regimental sector. These tasks took up most of the time, although some of the squadrons carried out some very effective harassing shoots. "C" Sqn alone enjoyed a brief encounter with a party of Germans. In its wanderings the squadron found itself suddenly in the midst of one of the enemy's company localities; a vigorous "shoot" followed from which the Canadians emerged happily, having routed the major part of the German company and taken another thirty prisoners (ibid). That evening "D" Coy Line & Welld R. and "A" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt received instructions to report back to their respective headquarters. Their departure was to curtail offensive action to some extent, although, as 2 Cdn Inf Div's attack on Oldenburg progressed, Lt-Col Wotherspoon took advantage of every opportunity to keep abreast of Maj-Gen Matthew's troops on his right. (Ibid, and W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 25-26 Apr 45)

4 CDN ARMD BDE TAKES THE LEAD, 25 APR 45*

464. Brigadier Moncel's formation took over control of 4 Cdn Armd Div's main drive at 0700 hours 25 Apr. At that time "A" and "B" Coys Lake Sup R. (Mot), each supported by a troop of tanks from 22 Cdn Armd Regt, passed through the forward defended localities of A. & S.H. of C. In addition to the armour, each sub-unit had with it two flame throwing sections and a section of engineers. The first objective was the main crossroads (131031) some 1500 yards west of Oosterscheps (1402). Contact with the enemy was established in short order; a hail of small arms fire greeted Lt-Col Keane's men and for a time the Canadians and Germans at the crossroads exchanged volleys. The Wasps and Badgers** were then brought into play; the flame turned the scales quickly and the first objective was occupied by 1100 hours. Before the advance could continue, however, the engineer section was forced to clear the roadblock which barred the route to the north. Once this was done, the infantry started off again. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 25 Apr 45)

465. During this next stage of the journey the men received most valuable aid from Typhoon rocket-firing aircraft answering the call of "Longbow Nan", the armoured brigade's now famous contact tank. From a position with the forward company headquarters, the R.A.F. officer in charge of the vehicle kept the fighter-bombers circling like hungry buzzards overhead. Aided by the O.C. "A" Coy, the artillery F.O.O. and a liaison officer from brigade headquarters, he formed an ad hoc air support element which according to the armoured brigade's war diary

proved its worth NOT only by successfully engaging targets within 300 yds of fwd tps but also by imbuing those fwd tps with a much stronger faith in the efficiency of aircraft as a wpn.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 25 Apr 45)

* Reference maps as for para 438; also Appx "E".

** Badger: A flame throwing equipment mounted on a Ram tank chassis. It has no turret.

466. Early in the afternoon "B" Coy, attended by a troop of 2 Sqn 22 Cdn Armd Regt, some Wasps and engineers, passed through "A" Coy.

Rd blocks and mines slowed up progress considerably, all rd blocks were covered by enemy fire in most cases mortar fire as well...

(W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot),
25 Apr 45)

No organized line of resistance was encountered until just before dark; at that time the infantry ran into a German defended locality, the approaches to which were well mined. The attack that followed was quite successful and the troops dug in around the road junction (136054) at Danikhorst (1305). Owing to the mines and road blocks, it was not practical to continue the advance during the hours of darkness; patrols therefore were ordered out. Meanwhile, in preparation for the morrow, Lt-Col Keane instructed "C" Coy to move out at 0530 hours 26 Apr from "B" Coy's present position to seize the T road junction (147073) north-east of the woods (1406) beyond Danikhorst (1305). The day had been a busy one for the battalion's support company, the mortars, medium machine guns and "flame" all having made fair contribution to the success of the motor battalion's advances. (Ibid). All through the day A. & S.H. of C. remained in Osterscheps enjoying relative comfort but always ensuring the security of the firm base by patrolling. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 25 Apr 45)

467. 10 Cdn Inf Bde was also able to report limited success. On the eastern flank (see para 459) Alq R. and Linc & Welld R. had made contact along the brigade's axis during the morning. They reported light resistance only, but that the road blocks and craters were still mainly responsible for the slowness of the advance. During the afternoon some readjustment took place within the brigade's area to allow the two infantry battalions greater freedom for the move north. A section of medium machine guns (10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy) and elements of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt were brought up to fill in certain gaps on the flanks which the forward troops had been forced to watch. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., Linc & Welld R., 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy, 25 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 25 Apr 45, serials 19, 32, 45, 49, 66)

468. Opposition stiffened greatly as the day closed. Nevertheless the troops forged ahead, the Linc & Welld R. patrolling vigorously to the east of the right axis while Alq R. controlled the main thrust along the road. By midnight 25/26 Apr the Algonquins had companies firmly settled on the main route west of Vor dem Moor (1703). Shortly after the positions were expanded eastwards and to the north but progress was slow due to the heavy small arms and mortar fire which hampered every movement. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 25 Apr 45, serial 87; 26 Apr 45, serials 1, 3, 6)

469. Further changes in command were announced by Maj-Gen Vokes on the evening of 25 Apr. Brigadier Moncel's effort on the left was to be carried out along two axes and for this reason he directed that Linc & Welld R. go under command of the armoured brigade. The infantry brigade, consisting of Alq R., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy and assorted anti-tank and light anti-aircraft detachments, was to assume control of the divisional firm base (Osterscheps-Edeweicht), paying particular

attention to the right flank. The necessary reinforcement for Brigadier Jefferson's formation was provided by the arrival of 27 R.M. battalion. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 25-26 Apr 45)

470. In addition, the full resources of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt were now available to Maj-Gen Vokes for his renewed attack. This was made possible by the fact that "A" Sqn had been taken away from 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt and "D" Sqn was freed of its commitment along the western end of the Kusten (1 Pol Armd Div having taken over that responsibility). The Manitoba Dragoons were thus given the task of providing reconnaissance for the left and right flanks of 4 Cdn Armd Div's thrust northwards. In his orders Lt-Col P.C.R. Black explained that "D" Sqn was to operate on the right towards Oldenburg and that "C" Sqn would be on the left working in the direction of Bad Zwischenahn (0609). "A" and "B" Sqns, having no tasks at present, were to remain in reserve.* (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 25-26 Apr 45)

471. Breakout operations were resumed with the first streaks of daylight on 26 Apr when "C" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) took up the task of pushing along the centre line, which in this area was bounded on either side by wooded land. It was at the edge of these woods that the infantry first came under fire. Mortars and "Moaning Minnie" rained down, causing several casualties.

The task of clearing the woods was a slow and tedious job and the Coy was subjected to constant enemy fire. When the adv reached MR 142067 they found a large crater in the rd. The carriers and tks could not be taken any further until such time as the crater could be bridged. It was decided to use the diversion from rd and track junc MR 142067 EAST through the woods, again this was impossible as the enemy had cut the trees on either side and dropped them on the rd.

(W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot)
26 Apr 45)

Once the various obstructions were cleared the tanks of 22 Cdn Armd Regt moved on. But, as this force nosed its way out of the wood's northern edge, the enemy's self-propelled guns opened up. Two of these vehicles were observed sitting menacingly at the road junction (147073) some 800 yards north-east of the woods. This in itself was most discouraging as the junction represented the company's objective. The combination of heavy fire and lack of suitable covered approach made further move from the wooded areas impossible, and for a time "B" Coy's offensive bogged down. (Ibid: also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 16, 21, 32)

472. This show of force by the Germans came at a time when it was imperative to retain the momentum of the advance and unless quick action was taken it seemed probable that the attack would be stopped altogether. Lt-Col Keane realized this and decided to reinforce his drive to the north, at the same time he reorganized his tactical plan. At 1700 hours he ordered "A" Coy forward. "A" Coy's task was to swing to the east, seize the bridge (151064), clear the small wood (146068) astride the

* Positions of Squadrons as of 260600, R.H.Q. 148991, "A" Sqn 022902, "B" Sqn 152021, "C" Sqn 153991, "D" Sqn 109038.

road on the north-west of it, and finally establish a strong company position on the curved road (152063) west of Querenstede (1506). While "A" Coy set about this work, "B" Coy was to follow the dirt track eastwards through the woods and pass through the area cleared by "A" Coy, thereby attacking the company's final objective from the south-east. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 26 Apr 45). "A" Coy approached the bridge by sending its scout platoon along the main road. Meanwhile the motor platoons crossed the soggy fields and came in from the west. The enemy repeated his favourite performance of blowing the bridge just as our troops came within sight of it, and Lt-Col Keane's men had to be content with a few prisoners - a poor substitute for a bridge which, if intact, would have aided the advance of tanks considerably. Over on the left "C" Coy had by this time experienced some success. Led by Capt H. Bird, M.C., the attack was pressed home against terribly heavy fire which caused many casualties before the road junction (146073) was secure. The company had lost so many men in its latest effort that the commanding officer ordered the greater part of "A" Coy to move into "C" Coy's area and assist it to consolidate. (Ibid)

473. Before following the activities of the motor battalion any further it is necessary to examine the situation in the centre and along the right flank. A. & S.H. of C. had little to do apart from moving some of its troops ("D" Coy) up to take over the crossroads area (129039) from Lake Sup R. (Mot) and establishing standing infantry and armoured patrols on the roads leading to Hemeler (143039), Schmaars (152042) and the lateral road north of Auf den Linden (1304). The western route from Osterscheps (1402) to Westerscheps (1103) was turned over to "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, which had its instructions to probe westwards. The Staghounds had great success and by the end of the day were firmly established along the road west of Westerscheps (1103). (W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 26 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 24, 27, 30, 43, 49, 50, 55, 65, 75, 85)

474. Line & Welld R. (under command 4 Cdn Armd Bde since 0800 hours that morning) turned over its positions to 27 R.M. Bn shortly after dawn on 26 Apr and prepared itself for new adventure. Lt-Col Coleman's men now had a squadron from 21 Cdn Armd Regt to support them. The intention was to push company groups of Line & Welld R. through the Algonquin's forward localities. (Ibid, 25 Apr 45, serial 78, also W.D., Line & Welld R., 25 and 26 Apr 45). Line & Welld R. was not able to do much until 1000 hours. At that time however Alq R. reported that it was in possession of its objective south-east of the small wood (166043), and this indicated that Lt-Col Coleman's "B" Coy could move on. Line & Welld R., now free of its rear commitments (having handed over to 27 R.M. Bn), moved its "A" & "C" Coys up nearer the front line; "D" Coy, which had to date been under command 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, had returned and stood ready to take its part in the battalion's main effort. (Ibid)

475. "B" Coy's attack was well supported by a rocket battery, 4.2 mortars and medium mortars in addition to the usually heavy assistance from the field and medium guns. Yet, despite all the high explosive which showered him, the enemy put up a very hard fight, using self-propelled guns to advantage. Every building along the route was well defended and the Canadians found their task far from easy. Not only were they heavily engaged from the front, they were also subjected to fierce and terribly effective fire from the railway on the left. This necessitated the employment of one of "A" Coy's platoons to

neutralize it. Once this was done the slow advance continued. "B" Coy got over the stream (168047) by 1630 hours, but here a short halt was called so that the engineers could bridge the obstacle. Meanwhile, along the railway, the flanking force (platoon of "A" Coy now relieved by platoon of "C" Coy) observed and harassed the line of the tracks with mortar fire and blinded the enemy posts with thick layers of smoke. Throughout the evening "B" Coy pressed on and at 2200 hours was at the road junction (170050) north-west of Laje (170046). Engineer work on the craters and at the stream to the rear was now completed and "A" Coy was passed on through. (Ibid; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 28, 40, 46, 50, 60, 78, 89)

476. The active role of 10 Cdn Inf Bde on 26 Apr fell largely on Alq R., supported by the tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt. Naturally enough, after Linc & Welld R.'s push up the axis of the road east of the railway had got under way, some effort had to be made to the east to secure that flank. This was the task assigned to Brigadier Jefferson, and it involved the clearing of the large woods between Vor dem Moor (1703) and Portsloge (1805). With "C" Coy (Alq R.) firm on the crossroads (174035) at Vor dem Moor (1703), "D" Coy was sent in to follow the narrow road north. The move began late that evening but little progress was possible. The enemy's self-propelled guns raked every inch of the path and, coupled with his mortars and small arms fire, made the going hazardous. It was not until 0400 hours 27 Apr that "D" Coy was able to report itself at the southern tip of the large woods selected for the forthcoming clearing operations. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde; Alq R., 26 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serials 6, 11)

4 CDN ARMD DIV REGROUPS, 26/27 APR 45*

477. Meanwhile, in order to employ the full resources of his armoured division and to protect his rapidly lengthening lines of communication, Maj-Gen Vokes had carried out an important regrouping. First he assigned to 27 R.M. Bn the responsibility of making the rear of the right flank secure and of garrisoning the Osterscheps base. Secondly, he ordered 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt to assume a full role in the breakout to the north.

"B", "C" and "D" Sqns 18 Cdn Armd C Regt were then directed, "B" to the RIGHT along the rd JEDDELOH - FRIEDRICHSPFEHN, "C" and "D" to the LEFT along the rds WESTERSCHEPS - GODENSHOLT and DANIKHORST - OLLENHARDE. RIGHT and LEFT flank protection in the immediate area of the crossing was provided by 5 Cdn A Tk and 8 Cdn IAA Regts.

(Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 22-28 Apr 45, para 13)

478. The above-mentioned additions were, however, but a small portion of the powerful allotment made to the "Green Patch" division. On 27 Apr, so the G.O.C. was informed, H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde with 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt and 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt under command, would be at his

* Reference map: G.S.G.S 4414, Eastern Holland - Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2813 - Edeweicht, 2812 - Barssel, 2814 - Bad Zwischenahn, 2712 - Apen; also Appx "E".

disposal. This force, together with 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 27 R.M. Bn, 19 Cdn Armd Fd Regt (S.P.), and an extra medium regiment, a battery of 7.2 heavy guns, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt and 1 Cdn Rocket Bty, R.C.A., created an order of battle that was both orthodox and complex. An extremely powerful array to be sure but with a dangerous weakness in that its engineering resources were drastically limited to the armoured division's normal R.C.E. components. (Ops & Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 30 Mar - 5 May, Lt-Col W.G.M. Robinson, op cit: Part III, para 1)

479. The 2 Cdn Armd Bde Gp was to develop operations between Maj-Gen Vokes' formation and the Polish armour on the left. It was allotted the following tasks:

- (a) to establish a firm base at GODENSHOLT 0509, (b) to patrol vigorously to OCHOLT 1012, APEN 0413, and BARSEL 0008, (c) to seize and hold BARSEL and to make contact with 1 Pol Armd Div at BOLLINGEN 9604, (d) to create a firm base in the triangle GODENSHOLT - OCHOLT - APEN, and (e) to patrol to MANSIE 1415, TORSHOLT 1312 and ROSTRUP 1611.

(Weekly Summary Ops Log
& Activities 4 Cdn Armd
Div, op cit: 22-28 Apr 45,
para 13)

THE ADVANCE CONTINUES, 27 APR 45*

480. 4 Cdn Armd Bde continued its advance slowly during the night 26/27 Apr. To quote the War Diary of that formation:

"...there was no rest for either bn. The Line & Welld R. in particular had to deal with every type of enemy fire, mines, rd blocks and craters, and also experienced comn difficulties between tks and pls due to the thick hedges resembling those found in the bocage country in Normandy..."

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd
Bde, 27 Apr 45)

One by one these nuisances were overcome and by 0900 hours (27 Apr) "A" Coy (Line & Welld R.) had reached the bend in the road (176064) 800 yards west of the hamlet of Eschhorn (1806). Further progress from this point was hampered severely by snipers covering a roadblock of felled trees, and so "A" Coy dug in and held. Meanwhile, "C" Coy continued patrolling the line of the railway on the left. Lt-Col Coleman next sent "D" Coy forward 1030 hours; it by-passed the obstacle facing "A" Coy, leaving with the latter a group of engineers to clear the route. Then, as "D" Coy forged its way ahead, the sappers began to work and "A" Coy sent out strong patrols to the flanks. The enemy made numerous attempts to interfere with the advance by counter-patrolling, but to no good effect; Line & Welld R.'s mortars engaged him furiously whenever he was observed. (Ibid; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serials 10, 14, 15, 21, 31, 34, 38)

* Reference maps as for para 478.

481. As the day closed "D" Coy was reported in possession of the rail and road crossing (175070), but here again the ingenious foe had cratered the road to such an extent that Lt-Col Coleman had to establish a bridgehead beyond the obstacle deep enough so that his engineers could repair the damage. "D" Coy was now given the task of journeying further up the axis. "C" Coy was to position itself in rear of "D" Coy by 2300 hours and then swing left to move towards the hamlet of Ekern (1607). At H hour (2300 hours) both sub-units went forward, supported by the fire of tanks from 21 Cdn Armd Regt in addition to the battalion's mortars and a generous portion of Maj-Gen Vokes' artillery. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 27 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serial 75). It was slow business for the infantry groping their way in the darkness, but within three hours both companies were on their objectives and hastily consolidating behind a patrol screen. Work on the craters was completed by 0430 hours, thus enabling the tank squadron of 21 Cdn Armd Regt to move forward. (Ibid, 28 Apr 45, serials 5, 13, 20; also W.Ds., 21 Cdn Armd Regt; Linc & Welld R., 28 Apr 45)

482. On the left the rate of progress by the motor battalion was, by force of local circumstances and the heavy casualties suffered so far, not spectacular. Nevertheless, sufficient pressure was exerted on this flank to keep the enemy moving back steadily. Throughout the day "A" Coy held its ground south-east of the woods (1507) below Ohrwege (1508), patrolling constantly forward and to its flanks, while to the rear "C" and "B" Coys reorganized. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 27 Apr 45). Lt-Col Keane made his next major move shortly after 2000 hours. "B" Coy was passed through "A", being given the road junction (154086) between Ohrwege (1508) and Ohrwegerfeld (1509) as its objective. (Ibid)

483. This infantry group, commanded by Maj T.H. Murray, D.S.O., crossed the recently-completed bridge over the crater behind "A" Coys line and commenced the tedious job of clearing every building along the route. There was little active resistance and before midnight 27/28 Apr the motor battalion reported that "B" Coy was starting its consolidation. Hoping that the decreasing opposition meant a withdrawal by the enemy, the motor battalion quickly dispatched "A" Coy to exploit what appeared to be a favourable situation. The time was 0130 hours 28 Apr (ibid). Before long, however, the fresh troops made contact. The rumble of German tanks was clearly heard and almost immediately the leading tank of the supporting Canadian Grenadier Guards received a direct hit and was set afire. As if on a signal, the entire locality suddenly became alive with flying shot and shell as a terrific fire fight ensued between the Grenadiers' tanks and the German's self-propelled guns. But it did not last long; as usual the enemy pulled back once more and the Canadian infantry settled in to firm up on the southern edges of the triangular wood (1609) south of Altenkamp (162098). (Ibid; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 80, 83)

484. But what of the centre of Brigadier Moncel's sector - that portion of ground between the left and right arms of his thrust for which the Argyles were responsible? In order to get a full, clear picture of 4 Cdn Armd Bde's situation it is necessary to explain what had befallen Lt-Col Coffin's troops. The order to move came from the Brigadier at midmorning. "B" and "C" Coys were sent off up along the left axis to the bridge-site over the Aue River (previously reached by "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot)), with the object of crossing the stream and driving

eastwards to clear the woods (1506-1606) between the Superiors and Linc & Welld R. At the same time "D" Coy was moved to a new location north of Hemeler (1403). By late afternoon both "B" and "C" Coys, having crossed the Aue River in boats, were not only holding the western and southern edges of the wood but had strong patrols well into the cover. Meanwhile "D" Coy had again shifted its location, this time to the road junction (142069) area at the base of Lt-Col Keane's sector, where it assumed responsibility for the security of the flank left open by the motor battalion's recent advance northward. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 27 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serials 50, 53, 60, 64, 83)

485. 10 Cdn Inf Bde's activities on Maj-Gen Vokes' right flank were limited to clearing through the large wooded area between Vor dem Moor (1703) and Portsloge (1805). In order to simplify this task, the objective was divided into five parts.

The woods themselves, now given the code name "Mattress", and divided into numbered squares for methodical clearing, were attacked first by "B" Company on the 27th. It was necessary to cross a wide open space before the wood fringe was hit, and enemy fire slackened the advance. Two "Wasps" were rapidly briefed, moved up under cover of some buildings, and then made a mad dash across the open field. Just short of the wood fringe they stopped dead and proceeded to spray the edge of the wood for several hundreds of yards with searing, semi-liquid flame. The infantry followed in close behind, and in a moment the first bite of the wood was ours.

(Cassidy, War Path,
op cit, p. 323)

The operation which had begun at 1430 hours continued throughout the afternoon and evening until a halt had to be called. Woods fighting is not, even in broad daylight, a profitable occupation; at night it becomes an open invitation to disaster. (W.D., Alq R., 27 Apr 45)

486. In the dull light of a cold and wet morning, 4 Cdn Armd Div's front line troops once more moved out of their cover to resume the advance on 28 Apr. On the right 10 Cdn Inf Bde wasted no time in setting about its business in the wooded area. Lt-Col J.F.R. Akehurst D.S.O., (Lt-Col Bradburn had returned to England) kept leapfrogging his Algonquin companies one through the other until by mid-afternoon his men had swept all his sector south of Portsloge (1805). "C" Coy was then relieved of its responsibilities east of Vor dem Moor by part of 27 R.M. Bn and ordered to complete the regiment's task by securing the remaining woods to the north. However, "A" Coy, at present fighting along the north-eastern edges of the woods south-west of Portsloge, were being bothered so greatly from German posts along the lateral road (west of Portsloge) that "C" Coy's task was changed to that of clearing this route across the entire battalion front. At about the same time "D" Coy, supported by a troop of tanks from 28 Cdn Armd Regt, was shifted westwards to straddle the main road, thus sealing the western end of "C" Coy's new objective. The road was reported clear of enemy forces by nightfall and "C" Coy consolidated along it, facing north in readiness to take out the northern woods on the following day. (W.D., Alq R., 28 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 29, 47, 57)

487. Whereas the opposition encountered by Brigadier Jefferson's troops had begun to slacken, the enemy's reaction to the armoured brigade's thrust was most violent. Linc & Welld R.'s "B" Coy (without the benefit of close armoured support) had a difficult time getting on to its objective (172081), a piece of high ground just north of Ekern (1707). Once this left flank position was in our hands, Lt-Col Coleman ordered "D" Coy to go on up the main axis and relieve some of the pressure the enemy was exerting against "B" Coy. The new advance was so bitterly opposed by well-directed mortar fire and the fire of several German tanks that a heavy artillery programme had to be carried out before the Canadians were able to move on. It was, as one officer related later, "very rough going". However, shortly after noon the engineers completed work on all craters leading up to the forward area, and the tanks (21 Cdn Armd Regt) and anti-tank guns, together with a section of carriers, were sent in to help the hard-pressed infantrymen. (Memorandum of Interview, Lt-Col Coleman, op cit, para 25; W.D., Linc & Welld R., 28 Apr 45)

488. "D" Coy's main difficulty was in getting past the windmill (177078). This was an enemy strong point where even the tanks could not make the Germans give ground. Such fanatical resistance met our troops all across the battalion front that a full-scale battalion attack was organized. The divisional artillery again was the saving factor. The guns opened up at 2215 hours; following this 1 Cdn Rocket Bty poured its lethal loads on the German positions while 3" mortars pounded all other suspected defensive points. By 2340 hours "B" Coy had consolidated the first objective on the north-eastern slope of the high ground overlooking the left side of the main axis, but "D" Coy could not break the enemy's hold at the windmill (177078). Lt-Col Coleman now decided to reinforce his success on the left, and at 0230 hours 29 Apr he launched "A" Coy on to the high feature above Speckenerfeld (1709 - 1808). Its route, which cut the main axis and led towards the railway, was not a good one; mines lay everywhere, but the task on hand was so important (it would cut off the enemy facing "D" Coy at the windmill (177078)) that the company commander decided to continue his advance without the tanks of the Footguards. "A" Coy firmed up at the Specken feature at 0415 hours, having captured five prisoners. No time was wasted in hurling "C" Coy through to the east with the object of securing a defensive position astride the road and railway beyond the higher ground. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 28-29 Apr 45; 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 13, 20, 42, 51, 66, 75; 29 Apr 45, serials 5, 14, 26, 28; also Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col R.C. Coleman, op cit, para 27)

489. The motor battalion did not gain any ground on 28 Apr. "A" and "B" Coys spent the day patrolling and tank hunting with PIAT teams in the hope of bagging some of the enemy's self-propelled guns. This venture did not, however, meet with any success. "C" Coy, still recovering from the battering received two days before, had filled in the day completing its reorganization, then at night sent some of its men up to strengthen the forward positions. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 28 Apr 45). In the centre A. & S.H. of C. had been quite equally inactive. During the day Lt-Col Coffin's "A" and "B" Coys, presently stationed along the left axis behind Lake Sup R. (Mot), were relieved by elements of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt and joined the balance of the battalion on the northern edges of the woods above Querenstede (1506). From these positions contact was established with Linc & Welld R. on the right. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 28 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials

34, 42, 45). Darkness found the Argyles firm along the road Aschwege (160070) - Ekern (170073) with three companies ("A", "B", "D") while the fourth ("C") remained at the south-western tip of the woods just north of Brokhorst (1505). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, April 1945, Appx 8, Ops Log, 28 Apr 45, serials 50, 53)

490. Resistance, equal to that met during the past day by Maj-Gen Vokes' frontal effort, was also being maintained by the enemy on the left flank, between 4 Cdn and 1 Pol Armd Divs. This, in itself, was rather surprising, because both armoured divisions were likely at any time to turn their attacks inward to cut off the few resolute who remained in that area. The remaining Germans, however, must have been imbued with a high standard of discipline, for when 2 Cdn Armd Bde began to advance early on 28 Apr it discovered that in addition to the mines, craters and road blocks the enemy also had left a fair number of well-armed groups to discourage any curiosity. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 28 Apr 45). "Frank force", as the newly-formed group was called, had started off at 0700 hours (28 Apr) from Westerscheps (1103). This force consisted of elements of the following units: 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 6 Cdn Armd Regt, and 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serial 24; also Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities; 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 22-28 Apr 45 para 13)

491. As was expected, no sooner had our troops begun the journey up the road to Godensholt (0905) than extensive cratering and demolitions stopped the advance and it was some time before the brigade's bulldozer tanks were able to make a passage. Meanwhile the odd German infantry group, supported by the ever present self-propelled guns, harassed the column as it waited to clear the obstacles. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 28 Apr 45). Shortly after noon one of the tanks from 6 Cdn Armd Regt got in a lucky shot at one of these offending vehicles and set it afire, but not before the German gunners had scored a hit on a Sherman and disabled it. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serial 56). The land bordering the road offered no chance for manoeuvre and getting ahead was a slow business. By 2230 hours the armoured force reported that it had almost reached Rothenmethen (0807) but that no further progress would be possible until a large crater on the road had been bridged. The engineers were at that time working on the project and it was hoped that the move might be resumed at 2400 hours (28/29 Apr). As it was, fifty men from 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt were beyond the crater, forming a small bridgehead through which elements of 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt and other squadrons of 1 Cdn Armd Regt would pass on the morrow. (Ibid, serials 84, 85)

492. It must be noted here that as the week 22-28 Apr 45 ended Maj-Gen Vokes had every fighting unit under his command fully employed in the breakout operations. Even his miscellaneous supporting units such as anti-tank and anti-aircraft artillery were all being kept busy filling in the gaps that appeared daily in the lengthening lines of communications. The advance, however, was being continually complicated by demolitions which, covered as they invariably were by well-sited self-propelled guns, represented formidable obstacles. Moreover, the weather had not been totally favourable to the Canadians. There had been a liberal rainfall during the past few days to further hamper the movement off the roads, and the air support which had dealt out so many telling blows previously had not been available. Thankfully enough the bolstering of the division's artillery resources had offset this discrepancy of air support to some extent. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 24-28 Apr 45;

also Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 22-28 Apr 45, op cit, para 15)

493. As for the enemy, there had been no important changes in his order of battle.

...although the appearance of a cavalry sqn, the only one of its kind known to have operated on the WESTERN FRONT, aroused some interest. At the end of the week we were opposed by: on the RIGHT, 2 bns of 19 Para Regt; in the CENTRE 2 bns and 62 Flak Bn, 20 Para Regt, and 2 Bns of 21 Para Regt; and on the LEFT by Bn JUNGWIRT (21 Para Regt) and 3 bns of Marine R West 2.

(Ibid, para 17)

The German losses in prisoners alone between 22-28 Apr were 10 officers and 909 other ranks mainly from 7 Para Div. His dead and wounded were estimated at about 1000 all told. The armoured division's own losses for the same period were, in proportion quite heavy, numbering 414. (Ibid)

THE FINAL STAGES, 29 APR - 5 MAY 45*

494. The assortment of prisoners questioned by Maj-Gen Vokes' intelligence officers had not given out sufficient information to establish the enemy's real intentions. It seemed still that the main object of the Germans was merely to delay in the dismal and desperate hope that someone either in Berlin or in more intimate command of forces facing 21 Army Group would produce some fantastic plan or some secret weapon to turn the tide of events. This belief was not so much expressed in words as by the expressions on the faces of the prisoners. According to them, all available odd units were being hurled into the fray with whatever equipment could be mustered. To quote the War Diary of 4 Cdn Armd Div;

Several new units have been identified in today's fighting, of which the most formidable is 556 GHQ Tk Bn. A PW from 3 Coy, taken at OHRWEGE 1508, credits his coy with 10 JAGDPANTHERS, each having in addition to its crew an escort of 6 men on the ground. 1 and 2 Coys, still uncommitted in the area of TORSHOLT 1312, are said to have a number of Mk IV eqpts mounting the long barrel 7-5 cm. The unit came a week ago from KIRCHATTEN 4191 on 2 Cdn Inf Div's front and spent the interval refitting. 5 Tp Para Flak Bn was identified at 173072, under comd of 1 Bn 20 Para Regt and fighting as inf; it was evidently made up of men surplus-to-guns personnel in the Bn. The remainder of the bn can muster two tractor-drawn, 8.8 cm dual-purpose guns and three 3.7 cm, now reported in the BAD ZWISCHENAHN area. There was also a 62 Flak Bn, totally de-gunned and amounting to 120 bodies.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 28 Apr 45)

Such then was the opposition against which the advance was resumed on 29 Apr.

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2813 - Edewecht, 2814 - Bad Zwischenahn, 2714 - Wiefelstede, 2715 - Rastede; also Appx "E".

495. By 1000 hours Linc & Welld R. was in full possession of the high feature at Specken (1808) with three rifle companies supported by the Shermans of 21 Cdn Armd Regt. Shortly after this "D" Coy smashed through the opposition at the windmill (176078) and consolidated there. Patrolling was then ordered all across the battalion front. Lt-Col Coleman's troops were now within full view of Bad Zwischenahn, whence came a large quantity of small arms and 88-mm gun fire. (W.Ds., Linc & Welld R., 29 Apr 45; H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 29 Apr 45). Meanwhile, Brigadier Moncel's sapper in the centre had opened the lateral route along which the Argyles faced northwards, waiting for another order to push on. (Ibid; W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 29 Apr 45)

496. Over on the left flank the motor battalion had a more active time. Having discovered that no enemy occupied the triangular wood (1609), "A" Coy led by Major R. Middleditch was ordered to go on to the line of the railway. This effort began in a steady downpour of rain at about midday. No sooner had the attack started than the German defenders opened up with every type of fire imaginable. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 54, 50, 74). Momentum was lost for the time but, seeing that his troops were already at the railway, Lt-Col Keane dispatched strong patrols to tap the German positions beyond. Within a short time reports came back to confirm the presence of enemy around the road junction (167103), also that all approaches to this area were under well-directed and very heavy fire. The patrols then returned to join "A" Coy along the railway track. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 29 Apr 45)

497. Meanwhile "C" Coy had taken over "A" Coy's former position near the triangular wood. "B" Coy had also gone into action. Commanded by Maj T.H. Murray, D.S.O., this company had journeyed north-westwards from the main axis to firm up about 300 yards south of the tracks north of Ohrwegerfeld (1409). Consolidation here was completed by 1900 hours. The plan was to proceed north, cross the railway, and capture the factory (161003) beyond it. At about 2300 hours Maj Murray pulled his troops back a short distance to allow the artillery to carry out the necessary bombardment. For a few minutes the earth shook as the high explosive shells descended; then as the firing line lifted the assault went in, supported by Wasp flame-throwers. It was soon over; six prisoners were taken and the position, though still under small arms and mortar fire, was consolidated. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 29 Apr 45)

498. Mention must be made here of the rôle played by 22 Cdn Armd Regt (Canadian Grenadier Guards). The "Guards'" task had not been an enviable one. Ever since the advance began on 25 Apr the tanks had been more or less roadbound. The ground away from the surfaced routes being quite useless for tank manoeuvre, wherever the enemy had blown his demolitions the armour was forced to stop until the way was cleared again. Thus it had been difficult for Lt-Col Amy's Shermans to give Lake Sup R. (Mot) the usual type of support. Nevertheless, whenever the chance arose the Grenadiers rolled forward, shooting up the opposition. On 29 Apr much valuable close support was given to "A" Coy early in the day. Later, as Major Murray's forces worked their way towards the factory, the "Guards'" light tanks swung left from the main axis and followed the road to Ohrwegerfeld (1409). The Grenadiers met some very heavy fire, both anti-tank and small arms, but used their own fire power to great effect and managed to secure the road junction (146098). Beyond this point movement was restricted due to the shortage of

infantry. This problem, however, was solved by sending back (to "A" Echelon) for a group of odd riflemen and bren gunners to supplement the section of the motor battalion in the area. Having been reinforced in this manner, the armour ventured on towards the railway line to take up a defensive position at the next crossroads (148101). Here a short fire fight took place during which 17 pounders gave covering fire to allow the soldiers to form a defensive strongpoint. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 86, 88)

499. 4 Cdn Armd Bde was now in a favourable position to commence the attack on Bad Zwischenahn. The Brigade commander therefore ordered A. & S.H. of C., with under command a squadron of the Grenadier Guards, to prepare to pass through Lake Sup R. (Mot) with the object of creating a wedge between the town and the airfield to the north-west. The time of the attack was set at 0600 hours 30 Apr. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 29 Apr 45; A. & S.H. of C., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45). Prior to this, starting at 2200 hours 29 Apr, Line & Welld R. was to carry out a series of company moves calculated to seal off the eastern end of Bad Zwischenahn. (W.D., Line & Welld R., 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serial 91)

500. Throughout 29 Apr 10 Cdn Inf Bde pursued its task of flank protection. From the well-established line north of Portsloge, Lt-Col Akehurst (Alq R.) sent "B" Coy straight through the woods (1806) to secure the road running along the northern fringe. This operation was completed by 1130 hours. While it progressed, "C" Coy dispatched a small force of infantry with two tanks (28 Cdn Armd Regt) to picquet the right flank from a position on the road north-west of Portsloge. The north-south road west of Ekernermoor (1807) was the next objective. This was the responsibility of "A" Coy. The task did not take long; by 1330 hours its platoons were digging in near the crossroads (187073). Also in this area were some armoured cars of "C" Sqn, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt. Since the enemy so far had not shown much sign of earnest opposition, "C" Coy was ordered to hand over its flank outposts to the Royal Marines at 1800 hours and then to strike north to seize the peat farm (192087) just above Speckenermoor (1808). This move, when completed, would place the Algonquins on the immediate right of Line & Welld R.'s troops. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde; Alq R., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 53, 69, 78, 81)

501. "C" Coy Alq R. began its advance after dark on 29 Apr. The company passed through "A" Coy's position on the road west of Ekernermoor and struck eastwards, the plan being to cover approximately 1100 yards of their route before turning north. But fortune was not with the Canadians on this venture and shortly after 0230 hours, 30 Apr, the soldiers found themselves pinned to the ground by devastating fire from German small arms. (Ibid, 29 Apr 45, serial 100, 30 Apr 45, Serial 6, 10). The company headquarters group (Capt D. Dymond) decided to reconnoitre the situation and perhaps find a way around the opposition, but this effort too had a disastrous ending.

By extreme bad luck, this small group ran head-on into what later turned out to be a German battalion reconnaissance party, reconnoitring to take up a position along the flank we were threatening. Both sides hit the ditch simultaneously, and a fierce firefight broke out. Capt Dymond hit the same ditch as the Germans

and was our only casualty, being killed instantly. All the Germans were killed or wounded, the senior officer, a captain, among them.

(Cassidy, Warpath, op cit,
p. 324; W.D., Alq R., 30
Apr 45)

In the confusion following this incident command of the company was taken over by the artillery F.O.O., who ordered the infantry to consolidate around the road junction (194073) east of the Ekerneermoor. This order was carried out by first light. (W.D., Alq R., 30 Apr 45)

502. There was little other action for the rest of the day. The main issue depended upon 4 Cdn Armd Bde's actions which, having begun at 2200 hours on the previous night, were aimed at cutting off Bad Zwischenahn and enveloping the lake above it in a wide, pincer movement. The order issued to 10 Cdn Inf Bde at 2000 hours 30 Apr decreed that Alq R. should clear all the ground between it and Linc & Welld R. on its left and probe eastwards. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serial 75). In order to sum up the furious battles fought during the last twelve days, it is well to quote the Algonquin historian.

It had taken our infantry brigade, liberally supported with tanks and other weapons, fourteen days to fight up a matter of 12000 yards. The enemy's fanatic resistance had cost him sorely. Observers later said that the first three hundred yards north from the Kusten canal had been the bloodiest sight they had seen anywhere, Falaise Gap included. There was little doubt that the German Command felt that the holding of this flank was vital to their whole plans at the moment, plans which, of course, were shortly to go up in smoke. Whether the whole bloodbath was an attempt to gain time to extricate the top men, the S.S. and the Gestapo, and tuck them away somewhere in the Kiel Peninsula, we do not know, but the fact remains that he threw in with utter coldbloodedness the Marine forces drawn from the Wilhelmshaven area. None too well trained, and probably with no battle experience to speak of, they had only numbers in their favour, and these were expended ruthlessly.

(Cassidy, Warpath, op cit, p. 324)

503. While 10 Cdn Inf Bde had been bringing up the extreme right, the armoured brigade had made good progress since 2200 hours 29 Apr. At that time, Linc & Welld R. went forward slowly with "C" Coy leading. Some opposition was encountered but this eased off, and "D" Coy was ordered up on the right of "C" Coy, which was operating west of the railway. By 0300 hours both sub-units were on the lateral tracks, but at this stage Lt-Col Coleman's troops had to withdraw a short distance to enable the artillery to deal with four German tanks which, supported by some infantry, were lurking north of the railway line. The order was to dig in, hold, and allow the bombardment to proceed while the plan of attack to deal with the opposition was readjusted. While the guns showered the approaches to the objective with tons of high explosive, it was decided that "D" Coy should feed its platoons across the tracks to form up at the

small wood (193099) west of Kayhausen (1909). After this "A" Coy would pass through to the main road junction (198097) at Kayhausen (1909) while "B" Coy settled at the rail and road crossing (189097), thus setting the seal on the one good route out of Bad Zwischenahn to the east. (Memorandum of Interview, Lt-Col Coleman, op cit, para 29; also W.D., Linc & Welld R., 29-30 Apr 45)

504. The attack was resumed at 1150 hours against stubborn resistance. Nevertheless, all companies gained ground steadily. Craters were by-passed, houses were cleared one by one, and the German defenders continually harassed by our artillery, mortars, and flamethrowers. Against this combination the enemy could do little else but give up - or die where he stood. The Canadian infantryman, a resolute fighter, did not let any chance slip by; whenever the enemy wavered the full fury of the attack fell upon him and drove him back. Throughout the evening and the following night Lt-Col Coleman kept up the pressure. By 0315 hours 1 May he had "D" Coy firmly astride the main axis east of Kayhausen, with "C" Coy (which had been pulled off its original axis further west) in the act of passing through to swing in on the eastern end of the town, while "B" Coy moved in from the south. "A" Coy at the same time was pressing on to the Kayhausen crossing against moderate opposition. By 0700 hours the situation for Linc & Welld R. was favourable indeed, for the engineers by opening the routes northward over or around the various craters had allowed the tanks of 21 Cdn Armd Regt to join in the fray and the battalion's own supporting anti-tank guns to come forward. (Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col Coleman, op cit, para 30; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 8, 56, 68, 79, 80)

505. On Brigadier Moncel's left success had also crowned our endeavours. A. & S.H. of C., having passed through Lake Sup R. (Mot) at first light, made good progress. The battalion was not hindered much, thanks to very effective artillery support (given out by 19 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.)), which was itself preceded by a bombardment from 1 Cdn Rocket Bty (R.C.A.). (Regimental History, 19 Cdn Army Fd Regt (S.P.), R.C.A., p. 115). The village of Rostrup fell to "A" Coy before noon, then "D" Coy went on towards the airport. Meanwhile at the base of the Argyles' position, 65 Cdn A.Tk Bty filled in the gaps along the line of the railway left vacant by the infantry's advance. The southern fringe of the airport was reached by 1615 hours (30 Apr) but at this time Lt-Col Coffin's battalion was so stretched out that he ordered a slight withdrawal in order to tighten its position. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 30 Apr 45). The remainder of the day was spent in "tidying up" the lines of communication from the railway to the forward positions. This was done with the aid of "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot), which, together with another squadron of the Grenadiers, screened the left flank closely from the railroad to the north where it joined A. & S.H. of C. south of Rostrup (1611). (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 30 Apr 45)

506. Now that both ends of Bad Zwischenahn were virtually sealed, the brigade commander decided that he would try to capture the town intact, for the famed summer resort offered great possibilities as a headquarters area. The services of the intelligence officers were therefore enlisted and they produced the terms of an ultimatum which was to be delivered to the mayor of Bad Zwischenahn by a local priest.

The time for del of the ultimatum was set at 1930 hrs and at that time the B.M. took the priest to the fwd pl of the Lake Sup R. (Mot) whence a patrol took him to the edge of the town...he was to return in two hours.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 30 Apr 45)

There was several hours delay in the proceedings, but in due course the German Commander replied:

- (i) That he would not surrender the town or his tps
- (ii) that he guaranteed to have no tps in the town by the time his msg reached our H.Q., and
- (iii) that he would give no guarantee not to shell the town if our tps moved in.

(Memorandum of Interviews, Brigadier R.W. Moncel, op cit, para 14)

These terms were accepted, but with a stern warning that for every shell the enemy dropped on Bad Zwischenahn, we would respond with a hundred: Bad Zwischenahn surrendered at 0730 hours 1 May 45. (Ibid, also Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 29 Apr - 5 May 45, op cit, para 3)

507. The past 36 hours had also seen the situation of 2 Cdn Armd Bde greatly improved. Once the bridge (086063) halfway between Westerscheps and Godensholt was completed early on 29 Apr, the tanks of 6 Cdn Armd Regt crossed the stream and in company with men of the S.A.S. began the journey to the north-west. (W.Ds., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 19 Apr 45, serials 4, 16, 27). As the advance up the main road to Godensholt progressed, "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt and another troop of 6 Cdn Armd Regt's tanks swung off to the right of the axis to determine the resistance on that flank. (Ibid, serial 29). "B" Sqn (of the Manitobas) was at this time attempting to find a route to the north from Danikhorst (1305) along the western side of 4 Cdn Armd Bde's main axis. (Ibid, serial 40). On all routes of exploration the story was the same - roadblocks and craters barred the way. (Ibid, serial 43). Shortly after midday 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt and another squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt arrived to relieve the Belgian Paratroops, and the advance continued against varied resistance. A few prisoners, mostly very young specimens, were taken, and the armour accounted for one of the enemy's self-propelled guns. (Ibid, serial 49, 63, 77). The troops pushed on slowly all afternoon, reaching another demolished bridge (072080) just beyond Rothenmethen (0807), but here again engineer work was necessary before any more ground could be covered. While the sappers plied their trade, "D" Sqn's Staghounds out on the right persisted in the effort to reach the road Godensholt-Ocholt (0912). The road to Godensholt was reported open once more at about 2040 hours. Elements of 1 Brit S.A.S. then pressed on with the tanks to secure the bridgehead while plans were being drawn up for the assault on Godensholt itself. (Ibid, serials 87, 93, 94)

508. The heavy mist which hung over the new bridgehead on the morning of 30 Apr made any immediate resumption of the advance impractical, good visibility being essential for 2 Cdn Armd Bde's movement along this narrow axis. The enemy decided

to take advantage of the mist however, and launched a short though spirited counter-attack against the small bridgehead. There ensued a fierce fire fight in which as usual the combined fire power of the Shermans and the S.A.S. drove the attackers off. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, April 1945, Appx 1, Ops Log, 30 Apr 45, message L.O. 4, 0700 hours). Patrolling took up the rest of the morning while the final touches were put to the next plan of attack. One squadron Belg S.A.S., together with a squadron of its British counterpart and elements of 6 Cdn Armd Regt, struck out to the north-west at about 1330 hours. By that time "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt accompanied by some tanks had already cut the road Godensholt-Ocholt at a point south-west of Ocholt (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 42, 43, 45)

509. The bridges leading into Ocholt from the south being demolished, the force turned its attention to the main road running south-west to Godensholt and to the railway line parallel to it. (Ibid, serial 43). Meanwhile, the southern force of the S.A.S. having reached Godensholt and finding the opposition light, entered the place and swung west and north. (Ibid, serials 49, 51). Back at Westerscheps the Royal Canadian Dragoons had also begun offensive patrolling to the south-west and were standing guard at the bridge areas near Harkebrugger Mark (0903) and Langer (0805). (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 30 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Armd Bde Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, message 1 CACR Ops, 1400 hours)

INTENTIONS 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 1 MAY 45*

510. Now that Bad Zwischenahn had fallen, plans were put into effect for a business-like take over of the resort by provost, military government and its associated technical experts. The armoured division, however, was not to be allowed to rest on its laurels, for on this first day of May Lt-Gen Simonds decided that Maj-Gen Vokes' troops must reach out even further north to seize Varel (2361). On the left and right, 1 Pol Armd Div and 2 Cdn Inf Div were to occupy themselves with the tasks of capturing Wilhelmshaven and Oldenburg respectively. (Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col W.G.M. Robinson, O.B.E., G.S.O. I, 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, para 15). It was the G.O.C's plan to move against Varel on two axes with 10 Cdn Inf Bde going directly north and the armoured brigade striking first east, then north when it reached the road Oldenburg - Varel. (Ibid)

OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 1-4 MAY 45**

511. The switch in direction called for in the new Corps plans demanded certain readjustments within 4 Cdn Armd Div's dispositions. These were settled at the Divisional commander's conference at 0900 hours 1 May and divulged to the units in the following message:

* Reference maps as for para 494.

** Reference maps as for para 494; also Sheets 2815 - Oldenburg, 2614 - Varel, 2615 - Jaderberg; also Appx "E".

- ... (3) 4 Cdn Armd Div is directed on VAREL 2733;
- (4) Objectives - 4 Cdn Armd Bde
 - (a) WESTERSTEDT 1218; (b) SPOHLE 1223; HEUBULT 2826; (d) SEGHOORN 2132; (e) VAREL 2733;
- (5) Objectives - 2 Cdn Armd Bde, (a) APEN 0413; (b) WESTERSTEDT 1218; (c) NEUENBURG 1432; (d) BOCKHOORN 1833; (e) Open rd GODENSHOLT 0509-OCHOLT 1012;
- (6) Objectives - 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, Sweep RIGHT flank up to WESER opposite BREMERHAVEN;
- (7) Objectives - 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, Op on LEFT flank 2 Cdn Armd Bde.
- (8) (a) Grouping - Initial Phase - Area ZWISCHENAHNER MEER upon a time to be arranged between bde comds (i) LINC & WELLD R reverts to comd 10 Cdn Inf Bde and (ii) ALQ R comes under comd 4 Cdn Armd Bde; (b) Bdeys - LEFT side of lake - 4 Cdn Armd Bde and RIGHT side of lake 10 Cdn Inf Bde.
- (9) Later Phases - (a) 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt will revert to comd 4 Cdn Armd Bde; (b) 4 Cdn Armd Bde leading - 10 Cdn Inf Bde to take over and relieve behind; (c) After capture of ELMENDORF A & S H of C revert to comd 10 Cdn Inf Bde.
- (10) Adv will re-commence first lt 2 May 45.

(AEF: 45/4 CDN ARMD DIV/C/H,
Docket I, May 1945, Ops Log,
1 May 45, serial 34)

512. Pending the completion of the regrouping for the next phase of the attack, pressure was kept up all across the divisional front. Opposition continued heavy in the region of Kayhausen (1909) as well as on the west side of the lake, where A. & S.H. of C. were threatening the area of the airport. (Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 29 Apr - 5 May 45, op cit, para 3). Our patrol actions retained contact throughout the day. (Ibid). Linc & Welld R. returned to Brigadier Jefferson's command at 1630 hours 1 May, at the same time Alq R. passed to under command 4 Cdn Armd Bde. The infantry brigade commander's orders were for A. & S.H. of C. to keep moving along the west side of the lake; simultaneously Linc & Welld R. was to skirt around the eastern shore with the object of meeting Lt-Col Coffin's troops somewhere along the northern shore. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, A. & S.H. of C., Linc & Welld R., 1 May 45)

513. Linc & Welld R.'s operation was timed to begin at 0700 hours 2 May and Lt-Col Coleman's men spent a greater part of 1 May patrolling out of the battalion position, filling the craters within the perimeter, and harassing the suspected enemy posts with artillery and mortar fire. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 1 May 45). Then, shortly after midnight, 1/2 May, "C" Coy set out along the road leading north from Kayhausen (1909) with the task of crossing the stream between that place and Aschhauserfeld (2010). At the same time "A" Coy ventured directly eastwards (on the main route). The northern effort was not able to make much headway; the enemy seemingly had the area "taped" with his mortars and it took a good deal of counter-bombardment before the situation permitted any advance. By 0600 hours "C" Coy was on its objective north-east of the water obstacle but under such heavy small arms and self-propelled gun fire that Lt-Col Coleman ordered a slight withdrawal to allow the artillery to "plaster" the opposition. The shells came down and the infantry went on

again to resume the advance, enclosed in a half circle of artillery and mortar fire which cleared the way ahead and swept the flanks tightly. As the infantry pushed on the engineers worked on the road to the rear, and at about 1000 hours a troop of tanks from 28 Cdn Armd Regt arrived at the forward positions to give support. (Ibid, 2 May 45)

514. Meanwhile "A" Coy had reached the road junction (204096) east of Kayhausen, but only to find its path blocked by felled trees. However, enough ground had been gained in this direction and a company of Alq R. was dispatched by 4 Cdn Armd Bde to take over from "A" Coy Linc & Welld R. so as to form a base from which Brigadier Moncel's effort could be launched. (This attack incidentally was supposed to have begun at 0700 hours). When in due course the Algonquins arrived on the scene the position was being so heavily shelled that the turn-over had to be postponed. (Ibid, also W.D.s., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 2 May 45)

515. The next phase of the advance northwards commenced at 1530 hours when "B" Coy (Linc & Welld R.) swung through "C" Coy's tiny bridgehead with the crossroads (205108) as its objective. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 2 May 45). Success here was mainly due to the magnificent artillery support. According to the history of 15 Cdn Fd Regt:

[This] ...was one of the last of the campaign and one of the most successful. It was planned by the CO who came to the battalion orders group to pass the details to the company commander, and targets were registered by the air OP. The fire came down exactly as wanted. The infantry commander led his men onto the objective close behind the fire and thus they had little fighting to do. So swift was their advance that they literally raced to the objective.

(Spencer - Fifteenth Canadian Field Regt,
op cit, p. 266)

"B" Coy (Linc & Welld R.) took 39 prisoners in this attack. (Ibid)

516. The next few hours were taken up in the adjusting of positions and patrolling. The left flank was turned over to an "ad hoc" group consisting of scouts, drivers and batmen ordered to insure that "B" Coy was not interfered with from the direction of the lake. On the right "A" Coy was eventually relieved by Alq R. All this time the road into "B" Coy's area hummed with activity as Lake Sup R. (Mot) wended its way to a forming up place, whence it would strike east along the narrow road south of Aschhauserfeld (2010). The motor battalion's leading troops turned to the east at 2230 hours; once they were off his axis, Lt-Col Coleman quickly passed his own "D" Coy on to the north. (Ibid)

517. On the other side of the lake A. & S.H. of C. had also made good progress. In the late morning of 1 May "D" Coy had begun to cross the airfield under heavy shell and mortar fire.

The airfield itself paid glowing tribute to the thorough work done by the Allied Air Force. It was literally sprinkled with bomb craters, all its hangars

were 100% destroyed as were the few German planes and 2-man submarines that were housed therein.

(W.D., A. & S.H. of C.,
1 May 45)

Then, after a quiet day and night (1/2 May), A. & S.H. of C. reverted to under command of its parent formation at 0700 hours 2 May. During the day no major move took place but shortly after dark "C" Coy went forward to occupy the woods (184130) south of Elmendorf (1813). Since the enemy did not venture to oppose this gain, "A" Coy was sent on to capture the cross-roads (183135) in Elmendorf itself. Resistance remained weak and the Argyles, whose line of communication to the south had been strengthened by the arrival of 3 and 14 Cdn A.Tk Btys, had no trouble in consolidating early on 3 May. After this a programme of patrolling was ordered; "B" Coy was sent westwards, "D" Coy was sent north as far as Helle (1814), while "C" Coy had the task of swinging to the east along the road bordering the northern shore of the lake. (Ibid, 3 May 45; 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serials 50, 52, 70, 82, 85; 3 May 45, serials 6, 14, 39)

518. Meanwhile Linc & Welld R. had rolled on to the north; "D" Coy established a bridgehead over the Halfsteder stream north-west of Aschhauserfeld (2010) through which Lt-Col Coleman passed "A" Coy with instructions to seize the next road junction (203125) some 1200 yards further up the axis. The Canadian mortar and artillery kept up a continuous bombardment all along the route and by 1000 hours 3 May "A" Coy reported its objective secure. From here the company commander dispatched a fast patrol towards the Argyles. "C" Coy A. & S.H. of C. and the patrol from Linc & Welld R. joined hands on the road south of Meyerhausen (1913) at about 1030 hours. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Linc & Welld R., 3 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serials 7, 19, 35, 48). From the south-western flank still more good news came from the Marines, who had struck out from Vor dem Moor to clear Sandberg (1803) and occupy Jeddelloh (1903). (Ibid, serials 15, 23)

4 CDN ARMD BDE TURNS EAST, 2 MAY 45*

519. At the same time as the infantry brigade was encircling the lake, 4 Cdn Armd Bde turned its attention eastwards. It has already been mentioned how this armoured attack was delayed because of the opposition encountered by Linc & Welld R. in the region of Kayhausen. By the early morning of 3 May however, Brigadier Moncel had Lake Sup R. (Mot) firmly settled astride the road north of Richt Moor (2312) and half-way between Gristede (2114) and Neuenkrug (2512), all this after a hectic cross-country trek from Lt-Col Coleman's positions west of Aschhauserfeld (2010). Success here may be attributed to a small-scale deception programme carried out by the artillery during the previous night. The guns had been purposely laid to engage the area north of Linc & Welld R; the searchlights also had been turned to illuminate the northern route towards Gristede (2114). The ruse had worked to perfection, for while the enemy focused his attention towards the artillery's target areas the men of the motor battalion had crept across the fields with great

* Reference maps as for para 511; also Appx "E".

stealth to reach their present position. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot) 2 and 3 Apr 45)

520. The route across the soggy fields was not a perfect choice for the Grenadier Guard's Shermans, and neither "C" nor "B" Coy, which followed up, was able to retain its tank support; the mud claimed most of the vehicles of 22 Cdn Armd Regt and they had to be left behind. Nevertheless, the infantry forged ahead and by mid-morning was at the village of Neuenkrug (2511-2611). "A" Coy then went through and, still keeping to the main road, got into Borbeck (2712) without any trouble whatever. (Ibid, also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 18, 21, 23, 38)

521. Good results were similarly obtained along the armoured brigade's southern axis from Kayhausen - Hartenstroth (2209) - Wehnen (2608) - Ofen (2708), where Lt-Col Akehurst's battle group had been gaining ground steadily since the evening of 2 May. By midnight 2/3 May the Algonquins were in possession of over 2000 yards of the road east of Kayhausen and from first light on the advance progressed without interference. (W.D., Alq R., 2-3 May 45). In the words of Brigadier Moncel's War Diary:

Thus began the last "mad rush" the bde gps carried out. Pts were reported clear in bewildering rapidity...

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 May 45)

As time passed it became evident that the enemy had made some sort of withdrawal from the area Bad Zwischenahn - Oldenburg (soon to surrender to 2 Cdn Inf Div) - Rastede. The operations which later developed showed that the Germans were in fact attempting to screen the town of Varel - probably with the idea of pivoting on it since that place straddled the direct approach to Wilhelmshaven. (Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 29 Apr - 5 May 45)

2 CDN ARMD BDE BREAKS AWAY TO THE NORTH, 1-3 MAY 45*

522. The enemy's decision to try to re-establish another co-ordinated defensive line may be attributed in part to the recent activities of Brigadier G.W. Robinson's flying columns of tanks, armoured cars, and the fast-moving S.A.S. These various mobile groups had already accounted for a fair number of mutually-supporting defended localities wedged in between the Polish thrust on Maj-Gen Vokes' left and the Canadian armoured push to Bad Zwischenahn. On 1 May, while the main body of Brigadier Robinson's troops probed the routes out of Godensholt, the Royal Canadian Dragoons first patrolled west from Westerscheps to report Harkebrugge (0502) clear, then south to the area of Kampe (0699) situated on the northern bank of the Kusten Canal. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1-2 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 1 May 45, serial 65, 2 May 45 serial 71). On the following day "B", "C" and "D" Sqns were warned of the impending move to Rostrup (which had been already cleared by A. & S.H. of C.). That day however, only "B" Sqn

* Reference maps: 1:25,000 Sheets 2613 - Neuenburg, 2614 - Varel, 2713 - Westerstede, 2714 - Wiefelstede; also Appx "F".

actually reached the new area, where it prepared for the next task - a dash through to Westerstede (1218). Here it was hoped that the staghounds would contact 1 Pol Armd Div. For this job Lt-Col K. Landell had one squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt and part of the Belgian S.A.S. allotted to him. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 2 May 45). "A" Sqn remained around Westerscheps and extended its patrols to cover the east bank of the Elisabethfehn Canal west of Kampe. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serials 79, 81)

523. Early on 3 May the dragoons began their journey to Westerstede accompanied by Sherman tanks (of 6 Cdn Armd Regt), elements of 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt, and some engineers to deal with any obstacles which might be barring the way. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 3 May 45). At the same time to the north and east of the ZwischenshnerMeer, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, (under orders to sweep on from the Lake and pace Maj-Gen Vokes' advancing brigades), was concentrating its squadrons for the work ahead. This concentration was not easily arranged, for the routes to the forward areas were cluttered with all sorts of traffic and fighting equipment following in the wake of the armoured division's spearheads.

THE SOUTHERN FLANK, 25 APR - 3 MAY 45*

524. Before continuing the story of the final punch which was soon to end the war in north-west Europe, some mention must be made of the operations south-east of the Kusten Canal by 4 Cdn Armd Div's armoured reconnaissance unit. In this section, mainly due to the fact that the enemy force deployed against 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt now appeared to consist of a full German parachute brigade (Gross Deutschland Div had, so prisoners stated, been withdrawn), and since it was not possible or practical for the regiment to carry out offensive operations without infantry support, Lt-Col Wotherspoon's task was given over to maintaining contact and at the same time trying to keep pace with 2 Cdn Inf Div's advance on his right:

From 27 Apr until...contact was maintained wherever possible. When the GERMANS pulled out, the Regt advanced against a mass of mines, booby-traps, and craters. "A" Sqn advanced to Wardenburg 3096 and OBERLETHE 2997, which it reported clear, during the morning of 1 May.

(Memorandum of Interview,
Lt-Col G.D. de S. Wotherspoon,
op cit, para 27)

Road blocks and craters again stopped the advance however, at the main road junction (307967) in Wardenburg (3096). On the same day "B" Sqn, tailing the leading squadron but on the left of the main road, was at that time still 1500 yards short of the line Oberlethe (2997) - Wardenburg (3096). Meanwhile "C" Sqn remained near Halenherst (2888), unable to reach Littel (2892) because of the wide craters and other obstacles across the route. (Ibid)

* Reference maps: 1:25,000 Sheets 2814 - Bad Zwischenahn, 2815 - Oldenburg, 2914 - Littel, 2915 - Wardenburg, 3015 - Grossenkneten; also Appx "E" and "F".

525. Early on the evening of 1 May the leading tanks of "A" Sqn were at Zwischenlethe (3099) but came under such heavy shellfire from the north banks of the Kusten Canal that the troops were pulled back into Wardenburg (3096). On the following morning another attempt to move up was successful and the tanks worked their way through Zwischenlethe (3099) to Hundsmuhlen (3001). Contact with the enemy vanished at this point and civilians reported that all German troops had gone north. Over on the left flank "C" Sqn's advance also made fair headway on 2 May. The tanks moved without much interference through Littel (2892), went on up to Oberlethe (2897), constructed a bridge there, and continued on to the north. There was little fighting to be done, for Oldenburg surrendered to Maj-Gen Matthews' troops on 3 May. At that time Lt-Col Wotherspoon had his squadrons deployed as follows: "A" Sqn near Hengstlagerweg (3090), "C" Sqn at Westerholt (2797), and "B" Sqn south at Wardenburg (3095). Elements of 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, working under command of the South Albertas, were at the time holding the hamlet of Tungeln (3099). (Ibid)

526. Patrolling continued and during the afternoon an extensive reconnaissance was made of the south bank of the Kusten Canal. The enemy had done a good job in his withdrawal. All the roads leading north were badly cratered and not one single bridge remained intact. Normally the situation might have proved discouraging, but events all across the allied front had taken such a turn for the best that the South Albertas were content to hold what gains they had and wait for the order which would soon send them north again to join their own formation in the last battle. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 27-30 Apr 45, 1-2 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div, Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 79, 84, 92, 102; 30 Apr 45, serials 29, 38, 50, 53, 65; also Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col G.D. de S. Wotherspoon, op cit, para 26-27)

CONCLUDING OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV,
3-4 MAY 45*

527. The morning of 3 May will long be remembered by Maj-Gen Vokes' troops. With the encirclement of Zwischenahner Meer completed, the armoured brigade away to a good start in the direction of Oldenburg, and 2 Cdn Armd Bde's forces heading for Westerstede to meet the Poles, the staff at divisional headquarters anticipated that it might well be a day of notable achievement. Actually it turned out to be much more than that. As the morning hours passed so many things happened with such amazing rapidity that soon, to quote the War Diary of 4 Cdn Armd Bde, "Everyone could now see the handwriting of the wall". (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 May 45)

528. Once the fall of Oldenburg was announced, the pace of 4 Cdn Armd Bde's advance was stepped up in order to join hands with Maj-Gen Matthews' troops now picquetting the northern exits from that city. Contact with 2 Cdn Inf Div was made at about noon 3 May. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot), 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.), 3 May 45). This contact was actually made by the Commander of 4 Cdn Armd Bde accompanied by Lt-Col Amy of the Grenadiers and Lt-Col Hogarth of 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.). These officers with

* Reference maps as for para 494; also Appx "E".

an escort of carriers of Lake Sup R. (Mot) made the hazardous journey south-eastwards from the armoured division's forward areas to meet troops of Maj-Gen Matthews' formation. Thereafter the battle groups lost little time. "C" Coy group of Lake Sup R. (Mot) passed through "A" Coy at Borbeck (2712), dashed past Borbeckerfeld (2913) and consolidated the crossroads area south of Leuchtenburg (2914). Within a short time "B" Coy was brought up to push on to the north and at 1510 hours settled at Hostemost (2916), a small farm community west of the railway flanking the town of Rastede (3117). From here strong armoured patrols were sent to the railway. Meanwhile Lt-Col Keane had his other companies mobile and ready to press on. "A" Coy swung to the west of "B" to secure Nuttel (2716), then at 1900 hours "C" Coy followed up and, having reached Nuttel (2716), struck northwards to the woods north of Wemkendorf (2718). Here the infantry met a little resistance at a road block, but after a short fight took 20 prisoners and dug in around the obstacle. As darkness fell, "B" Coy shifted its position once more. From Hostemost (2916) Maj T.H. Murray ("B" Coy) was instructed to side-step to the west, follow the secondary road leading north from Bokelerburg, and capture the high feature astride the railway south of Rehorn (2919). At 2155 hours the attack went in; 43 prisoners were taken and the objective secured. The entire advance on 3 May had been a fine example of speed and mobility hindered solely by craters, mines, and roadblocks. But, as already shown, these obstacles caused only the slightest delay to the enthusiastic Canadian soldier. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 3 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 72, 73, 79, 101, 104, 111)

529. The advance of Alq R. on 4 Cdn Armd Bde's southern axis was equally spectacular. The villages of Ofen (2708) and Metjendorf (2910) and the area of Neu Sudende (3013) all fell in quick succession. There was little of the enemy to be seen. Leaving "A" Coy at the airfield, the other sub-units with tanks of 21 Cdn Armd Regt in close attendance moved on steadily in battle formation and by last light were situated as follows: "C" Coy had a strong position at the southern tip of the Park Hagen (the woods south of Rastede), "B" Coy was consolidated on the eastern edge of Rastede, "D" Coy remained between Metjendorf (2910) and Ofenerfeld (3011) on short notice to follow the main thrust north. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 78, 111; W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Alq R., 3 May 45). In dealing with the operations of 3 May the unit War Diary states:

In the past 24 hrs the unit has advanced about 12 miles, picking up the defeated Jerries in their stride. Jerry is to all appearances, completely beaten in this area. All sign of any further organized resistance has vanished. Our men are quite elated at the turn the battle has taken - and why not? To-day's 12 mile advance represents a larger territorial gain than the combined work of the previous 16 days.

(Ibid)

530. In the meantime, while Brigadier Moncel's infantry and tank columns had been reaching out towards Rastede, 10 Cdn Inf Bde had complied with the divisional commander's instructions to swing east and follow the main effort. After the encirclement of the lake, A. & S.H. of C. back-tracked through Bad Zwischenahn and came up through Linc & Wellld R. to advance on Gristede (2114). As darkness fell Lt-Col Coffin's leading troops entered Gristede, meeting no active opposition but finding that the enemy had mined

the route heavily and had also blocked the road in many places by cutting down trees. A bulldozer was sent for to remove the obstacles and the advance continued. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 3 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serial 85)

The companies set out the same evening to capture Wiefelstede, sq 2518, Sheet 2714, some three miles North-East of our position, on the main road. We were also advised that the Argylls' final objective was the village of Spohle, sq 2123, and that we were to reach this objective with as little delay as possible.

(W.D., A. & S.H. of C.,
3 May 45)

531. The journey to Wiefelstede proved an easy one; apart from occasional sniper fire and light mortaring, the Germans did not show their hand. However, no sooner had the Argylls begun to consolidate in the village than a heavy concentration of mortar fire descended upon them. This mortaring continued throughout the night but luckily did not interfere with Lt-Col Coffin's strenuous patrolling programme, which was laid on to screen the work being carried out by Maj-Gen Vokes' engineers on the road back to Gristede (2114). (Ibid; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 112, 116)

532. Linc & Welld R. had not been in contact since midday. The area to the north had become the responsibility of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, and when the Argylls passed on to Gristede Lt-Col Coleman was left in position on the east bank of the lake. This period of unemployment was not to last long, however, for at 1430 hours orders for the next move were issued. Linc & Welld R. was to relieve Alq R. at Ofen. After a slow, uninteresting trip, the battalion arrived at Ofen at 1900 hours. Here the unit was dispersed so that all approaches to the village from the east, north, and south were well covered. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 3 May 45). In the light of events, it did not seem possible that the troops would remain here for long, but as will be seen, the Linc & Welld R. had really fought its last battle. (Ibid, 4 May 45). The positions it vacated were taken over by 27 R.M. Bn, which, having successfully cleared a good portion of the road Jeddelloh - Oldenburg, handed over the responsibility of the area between that road and the Kusten Canal to elements of 8 Cdn L.A.A. Regt (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 May 45; Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 29 Apr - 5 May 45, op cit, para 10; also W.D., 8 Cdn L.A.A. Regt R.C.A., 3 May 45)

2 CDN ARMD BDE CLOSES THE LEFT FLANK,
3 MAY 45*

533. Despite the demolitions and other obstructions encountered on the road to Westerstede (1217), Brigadier Robinson's effort towards the north-west progressed very favourably. "B" Sqn 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt led the way.

* Reference maps as for para 522; also Appx "E".

...road blocks on the centre line were numerous. These were dealt with by the extensive use of civilian labour. WESTERSTEDE was reached at approx 1600 hrs by 2nd tp and the Sp troop. Elements of 1 Pol Armd Div were encountered there.

(W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C.
Regt, 3 May 45)

During the thorough reconnaissance of the town which followed the troops discovered a large German hospital containing several Allied wounded, including a few Canadians. A further sortie to the north beyond Linswege (1620) took place without incident. (Ibid). Meanwhile, as other forces under command of 2 Cdn Armd Bde cleared Lindern (0914), Mansie (1114) and Westerloy (0916) and established another contact with the Poles at Apen, "D" Sqn of the Dragoons struck out from Rostrup towards Langerbrugge (1715). North of the airfield, however, the Staghounds ran into a small pocket of enemy troops who were well dug in and showed a willingness to fight it out. Bypassing this resistance, one troop of armoured cars and its S.A.S. attendants was able to reach the road junction (174153) at Langebrugge (1715). "B" Sqn with R.H.Q. and "A" Sqn remained at Westerstede, while "C" Sqn, having passed through "D", was on its way to Hullstede (1418). (Ibid; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 64, 49, 70, 77, 92, 113)

534. The movements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt were considerably more restricted during 3 May, as the unit War Diary states:

We counted up to 42 obstacles of various sorts that our tps met while endeavouring to carry out recce on the div front during the day. They ranged from rd blocks, rd craters, mines, to rds impassable to Staghounds.

(W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C.
Regt, 3 May 45)

Nevertheless, after a trying time spent in sidestepping craters and obstacles, "A", "B" and "C" Sqns began moving forward in their allotted areas. On the left "B" Sqn followed the Elmen-dorf - Hullstede road as far as Langebrugge, then swung to the right to complete a wide reconnaissance of the wooded sector as far north as Garnholterdamm (2020-2019). "A" and "C" Sqns, having moved on to the axis Neuenkrugge (2512) - Bokel (2715) and Nuttel (2717), explored the side roads between 10 Cdn Inf Bde and 4 Cdn Armd Bde, at the same time aiding whichever of the two formations it contacted. (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 3 May, 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 56, 59, 65, 74, 75, 90, 108). "D" Sqn, which did not have a task during 3 May, was moved late that evening to a concentration area in the woods north of Neuenkrugge (2512) and stood by in readiness for the morrow. (Ibid, serials 81, 103, 114). At 2100 hours orders for the next day's work by the armoured car units were received.

18 Cdn Armd C. Regt and 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt explore NORTH within limits of Div bdy RIGHT, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt LEFT - 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt bdy incl to 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt SPOHLE 2223 thence rd to rly 2330 thence rly to rly junc 2333 thence NORTH to 2438.

(Ibid, Serial 110)

Even a casual glance at the map will indicate that if these instructions were followed both regiments would spend, to say the least an interesting day.

THE LAST FEW MILES -
OPERATIONS 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 4 MAY 45*

535. Maj-Gen Vokes' troops remained in contact throughout the evening of 3 May but made no great effort to press on in the darkness. During the night there occurred an interesting incident worth mentioning. The civilian telephones in this area were even yet in good working condition and one of the interpreters managed to place a call through to the Burgomeister at Wilhelmshaven. A conversation followed during which the Germans holding the great naval station were given a chance to send an emissary to the Canadians in order to discuss the terms of surrender. The Germans were not willing to give up however, and the Burgomeister declared that "he would fight to the last man and the last bullet". Little did the enemy guess that the events of the next 24 hours would deny him this doubtful honour. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 3 May 45)

536. On the following morning each brigade moved off again to join in what was fully expected to be one of the last battles. The armoured division's front was now solid all the way across from 1 Pol Armd Div's right flank to the area south-east of Rastede, where 2 Cdn Inf Div had joined hands with the "Green Patch" formation on the previous day. At 0930 hours the intention for the day were passed on to the commanders concerned.

4 Cdn Armd Bde - Intention to clear CL with Alq R. and 21 Cdn Armd Regt to swan out to LEFT coming back to CL at intervals. PW report about 400 enemy on about line of 22 northing. 10 Cdn Inf Bde - A. & S.H. of C. to seize rd junc 231218 and SPOHLE 2123. A. & S.H. of C. complete and firm in WIEFELSTEDE 2518 with fwd elements at 251189.

(4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log,
op cit, 3 May 45, serial
25)

537. Brigadier Moncel's immediate intention was to capture Lehmden (2821). Lake Sup R. (Mot) supported by 3 Sqn of 22 Cdn Armd Regt would approach the objective from the south-west, while the Algonquins and the Foot Guards would move up from the south along the line of the railway. The major portion of the Grenadiers was to remain between the two forward battalions, while on the far right a battle group composed of "B" Coy Alq R. and a squadron of 21 Cdn Armd Regt maintained a base from which 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt would work out to the north-east. (Ibid, serial 27). "A" Coy Alq R. had handed over its positions on the airfield north-west of Oldenburg to a company of Linc & Welld R. at 0800 hours and then proceeded to join the main body of the battalion around Rastede. Here Lt-Col Akehurst was told to hold his men in readiness to push on north and mop up in the wake of the motor battalion. But Lake Sup R. (Mot) met bitter fighting and did not get far during the morning. "B" Coy on the right came within sight of Lehmden (2921) and "C" Coy on the left moved another thousand yards towards Nethen (2720), but no farther

* Reference maps as for para 511; also Appx "E".

for the enemy had turned and met the Canadian advance with heavy volleys of small arms fire. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 4 May 45). "B" Coy particularly experienced some excitement.

Only 300 yds ahead of them they could see the enemy working feverishly to fell trees across the rd. Consequently the coy and its tp of tks from 2 Sqn of 21 Cdn Armd Regt did much destruction.

(W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd
Bde, 21 Cdn Armd Regt,
4 May 45)

538. In the early afternoon, Lake Sup R. (Mot) was instructed to press on to Lehmden (2291). At the same time the Algonquins were given a patrol task, that of circling the woods on the east side of Rastede. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 4 May 45, serials 47, 53, and 54). Progress towards the north was slow, yet by 1700 hours "B" Coy (Lake Sup R. (Mot)) was at the outskirts of Lehmden (2921), although held up by several road blocks which the armour could not by-pass because of the soft ground. Since for the time being no further advance was possible along the main axis, Lt-Col Keane swung one of his companies off the route to clear the woods on the left. Support for this operation was provided by tanks from both 21 and 22 Cdn Armd Regts. (Ibid, serial 67; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 4 May 45). While the woods were being swept, a platoon of "B" Coy managed to get across the road block and some carriers edged around the obstacle to resume the attack (ibid).

539. Several anti-tank guns **still** lurked about and many small battles took place before these fearful pieces were neutralized and their fanatical crews killed or made prisoner. Typical of these actions is the one so well described in 22 Cdn Armd Regt's War Diary:

...force was held up by a road block. After engaging it with tank and carrier fire, the tank bulldozer came up and cleared the block but almost immediately a loud explosion was heard and L/Cpl Long reported another big tree down across the road 400 yds ahead. A section of the Scout Pl moved up peppering it with fire. The Badger then flamed the block bringing out many prisoners. The bulldozer then moved up and cleared the road block under heavy sniping...

(W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt,
4 May 45)

540. Opposition remained heavy until steady pressure and a consistent drenching with artillery and mortar fire forced the resistance to crumble. "B" Coy finally reached the village of Hahn (2822), where 150 prisoners were taken. Once Hahn was clear, the infantry and tanks pressed on to consolidate at the north-western end of the woods between Hahn and Bekhausen (2823). "A" Coy, having completed its work in the woods west of the centre line, finally followed "B" Coy to settle in the village of Hahn. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 4 May 45). For the Grenadiers the later part of 4 May provided plenty of action. It is always something of a test to follow and support a motor battalion. But when infantrymen see victory within their grasp and are bent on going ahead regardless of ground or resistance, the role of the supporting armour becomes

twice as fiery and exciting, and the outcome of every move depends upon the ability of the individual crew commander to "read" the battle. The tankmen were not found wanting and the fury of their attack proved overwhelming. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 May 45). The day's effort was a wholehearted one, several tanks being lost and with them many of their crews. But not only the fighting men suffered, the Padre of the Grenadiers was killed while carrying out one of his many missions of mercy. (Ibid)

541. The enemy also put up a stiff fight against the Argyles, who (under command of 10 Cdn Inf Bde) had the job of getting through Wiefelstede (2518).

At first light A and B Companies proceeded to push North of the town, advancing towards the objective: Spohle. They found the going quite a bit stickier during the morning, encountering 20 mm fire as well as AP shells from an enemy SP gun!

(W.D., A. & S.H. of C.,
4 May 45)

Despite the fanatical show of force, however, Lt-Col Coffin kept his men moving forward and by midday the "Jocks" with some tanks from Lt-Col A.G. Chubb's 28 Cdn Armd Regt were within 750 yards of Mollberg (2520). The prisoners gathered on this venture presented an interesting assortment.

They belonged to various "battle-groups", but this fancy term by no means put them in the Commando class of fighters. According to their statements - and the bedraggled appearance of this motley crew confirmed these statements - a battle-group was formed by some ambitious German officer, who gathered various stragglers off the roads, added some convalescent cases from a nearby hospital, honoured the group with his own name and proceeded to lead them into battle for "Vaterland und Fuhrer":

(W.D., A. & S.H. of C.,
4 May 45)

542. Regardless of the physical state of his subordinates, the German commander in this sector still appeared capable of causing the Canadians considerable grief. A change in plan was therefore carried out. "C" and "D" Coys were allotted some of the supporting armour and sent to the west in the hope that the village of Dringenburg (2222) would fall an easier prey and thus cut off the retreat of the stalwarts defending Mollberg (2520). Lt-Col Coffin's guess proved wrong, for although some ground was gained, the going, against heavy and continuous enemy fire, was slow. (Ibid, also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 4 May 45, serials 31, 35, 45, 50, 57, 80; also W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 May 45)

543. Line & Wellld R. did not participate in active operations on 4 May. The unit remained at Ofen (2708) and Metjendorf (2910); from here Lt-Col Coleman planned to move soon to occupy more comfortable quarters in the barracks (2508) south of Wehnen (2608). Another new arrival was 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, which used the routes opened up by 2 Cdn Inf Div through Oldenburg to get closer to the scene of operations. The move

was no doubt inspired by the fact that Lt-Col Wotherspoon had recently been placed in temporary command of the infantry brigade. (W.Ds., Linc & Welld R., 29 Cdn Recce Regt, 4 May 45)

544. Before he left his unit Lt-Col Wotherspoon informed his officers at an orders group held late on 3 May that although he believed the regiment had fought its last battle, a move to the north was imminent. On the next morning 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt formed up in one long column and departed on a long journey that was to take it back over some of its old battle grounds such as the village of Sage. After a six-hour journey through Ahlhorn crossroads (3178), Wildeshausen (4778), Oldenburg and Ofen (2708), the unit arrived in its selected concentration area north-east of Oldenburg near the villages of Westerholtsfelde (2610), Metjendorf (2910) and Ofen (2708). (These lie to the west of the Oldenburg airfield). (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 27-30 Apr 45, 1-4 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 79, 84, 92, 102, 30 Apr, serials 29, 38, 50, 53, 65; also Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col G.D. de S. Wotherspoon, op cit, para 27)

545. The operations of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt for the past two weeks, especially between 13-25 Apr, are worthy of mention for a number of reasons. In the opinion of the commanding officer it was the first time (and the last) that the opportunity occurred for the regiment to be used to its best advantage. It had been able to deploy on a wide front, fighting during the day and pulling back out of contact for the hours of darkness. The mobility and fire power of the armoured vehicles had been employed to the fullest extent. As one official account put it:

The most effective method of dealing with the enemy in his village posns was to pin him down with one tp or sqn, to cover one flank with a second, and to attack from the other flank with the third.

(Memorandum of Interview,
Lt-Col G.D. de S. Wother-
spoon, op cit)

546. Intercommunications with the artillery had proved somewhat of a problem. The field guns had mainly been out of range. Even with a F.O.O. of the medium artillery at the regiment's headquarters, the task of relaying, made necessary by constant screening of wireless sets, had not been fully solved. However, the fire power of individual squadrons had often been put to good use to replace this discrepancy and many novel forms of employment were discovered for the various weapons at the disposal of the armoured reconnaissance regiment. In summing up the unit's duties, the account of operations states:

AA tks, supported by heavier types, were found especially effective against an entrenched enemy armed with SA and BAZOOKAS. It was estimated that, with such sp, two AA tks would be more effective against an enemy in woods and copses than a full sqn of tks.

(Ibid)

547. The value of an accompanying infantry component proved its worth, for without "D" Coy Linc & Welld R. not much headway could have been made. Progress would also have been even slower had it not been for the engineers (8 Cdn Fd Sqn R.C.E.) and their ingenious pieces of equipment. After 13 Apr

the two troops of engineers built over a dozen class 40 Bailey bridges, filled between 30 and 40 craters (some of which were over 150 feet wide) and checked more than 100 miles of road for mines and booby traps. A glance at the engineer reconnaissance maps contained in Lt-Col Wotherspoon's war diary will show the extent to which the Germans cratered and mined and obstructed the routes travelled by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt. (Ibid; also W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, May 1945: Appx 5, Details of Engineer work by S.A.R. and R.C.E. party during advance from Vrees to Oldenburg; also Appx Nos 6-10 inclusive, "Maps & Traces")

548. In all, the men of the South Alberta Regiment made a splendid showing and captured 300 prisoners. The cost, however, was anything but light.

During ops from 13 Apr until the cease fire on 5 May, the Regt lost some 30 tks on mines, four to SP guns and four to BAZOOKAS. Our personnel cas were 6 killed and approx 30 wounded.

(Memorandum of Interview,
Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon,
op cit)

549. The operations of 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt on this last day of action are also worth noting. Movement was both fast and widespread and quite fulfilled the hopes raised by the orders of the preceding day. From Westerstede (1218) 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt carried out a swift patrol to Hullstede and discovered the place clear. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 4 May 45, serial 13). Simultaneously the squadrons of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt set out for Zetel (1536) and Spohle (2123). At many points the Dragoons found the road impassable for Staghounds, but with their usual energy they kept going. "B" Sqn with elements of the S.A.S. entered Grabstede (1730) at about 1330 hours; "C" Sqn, working on two axes, reached Grunenkamp (2028) on the left, while on the right Petersfeld (1921) was entered. Beyond these points the enemy was found waiting behind each obstacle, however, and he was well armed with machine guns and mortars. Many skirmishes took place in the course of which more than one armoured car was disabled or destroyed. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 4 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 4 May 45, serials 30, 63, 73)

550. The Manitoba Dragoons (18 Cdn Armd C. Regt) spent an equally active day. Lt-Col P.C.R. Black's troopers operated on a wide front with "B" Sqn on the left, "A" Sqn in the centre, and "C" Sqn on the right. The first bit of good news came from "C" Sqn at about 1000 hours when it reported that eighty prisoners and three guns of various calibres had been captured north-east of Rastede. (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 3-4 May 45; 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 4 May 45, serial 29). "A" Sqn, working out to the north-west of Wiefelstede, spent much of the time trying to find diversions around the roadblocks but managed to capture a few prisoners and immediately put them to work lifting mines (ibid, serial 59). The Argyles were in action in this area too and during the latter part of the day some of the Staghounds worked in co-operation with Lt-Col Coffin's men (ibid). "B" Sqn also had trouble finding a good route directly north of the lake, where most of the obstacles and craters were well covered by small groups of the enemy (ibid, and serial 74). All these squadrons reported the presence of anti-tank guns, and this lent truth to the belief that the Germans were in the process of establishing yet another line of defence. The day ended well

with 115 prisoners seized, and all squadrons withdrew into selected concentration areas for the night. (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 4 May 45)

551. The "Intentions for Tomorrow" message usually published before the forward troops settled down for the night was issued by Maj-Gen Vokes' headquarters at 2050 hours; but in a somewhat slightly different style. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt were merely told to "Sit tight where you are now for tonight - be prepared to push on tomorrow". (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 4 May 45, serial 82). The last part of the message indicated that no chances would be taken, for the armoured brigade particularly was still in deadly contact. If the Germans in this sector decided to ignore the order to lay down their arms and preferred to fight it out, then Maj-Gen Vokes' men were prepared to force their submission by a further onslaught and by the repeated application of generous quantities of high explosive. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 4 May 45)

552. There was, however, (to quote 10 Cdn Inf Bde's War Diary) "...a general feeling everywhere that the end was in sight and that a mass surrender might come at any moment". (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 May 45). Rumours heard on the battlefield are numerous and sometimes quite fantastic, and rumour was rampant on the evening of 4 May. A startling broadcast by the B.B.C. at 2000 hours raised everyone's hopes to a new high but yet, until the news was confirmed through the regular Army channels, the battle-weary soldier could not quite be expected to forget the words of the latest official message - "Be prepared to push on tomorrow -". Nevertheless the B.B.C. had said that it was all over. Was it over? Would he "push" on tomorrow? The soldier little guessed that in a matter of another five minutes the official happy verdict was to be given to him personally. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 4 May 45, serials 82 and 84)

553. For the armoured division the advance from the Kusten Canal to the very threshold of victory had meant two weeks of concentrated effort which had been both tiring and bloody. Nevertheless,

all requirements of the fighting tps were met, and at no time was the adv either impeded or delayed by the lack of any essential supplies.

(Memorandum of Interview, Lt-Col W.G.M. Robinson, O.B.E., op cit, Part II, para 5)

The work of R.C. Sigs in maintaining line communications and in making intelligent use of the civilian communications resources was outstanding. In addition, the employment of "Y" Section of the "signals intercept" unit provided excellent results.

Through this service the Div Int services, for the first time in their history, became really tactical in their effect.

(Ibid, para 8)

This made it frequently possible for us to know the enemy's immediate intentions and thus allowed effective counter-action to be taken. (Ibid)

554. Throughout the course of operations, Maj-Gen Vokes' men had been hindered by the enemy's steadfast refusal to fight on ground suitable for armoured deployment.

The by track pressure of our tks not only made it impossible for us to fight our armour over soft ground, but it consistently proved too much for the type of rds over which we had to move.

(AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/F,
Docket I - Folio I: Operations
and Activities 4 Cdn Armd Bde,
30 Mar - 5 May 45, Part II,
para 1)

One important factor which did, in fact, make much of the progress possible was air supremacy (ibid, para 3). As the commander of 4 Cdn Armd Bde later stated:

The fact that we enjoyed so great a degree of air supremacy made it possible for us to take advantage of certain moves and groupings which were entirely unorthodox, but which were entirely to our advantage under the circumstances.

(Ibid)

But, in considering all factors, it must be remembered that the morale within the armoured division was always extremely high. It bore out the age-old axiom that if men are well supplied, well supported, well informed, and have confidence in their leaders, they will, as Brigadier Moncel so aptly worded it, "Respond to almost any demands made on them". (Ibid, para 3)

THE OPERATIONS OF 2 CDN INF DIV, 19-30 APR 45*
SITUATION & PLANS, 19-20 APR 45

555. All this time the Germans had maintained an equally stubborn resistance on Lt-Gen Simonds' right flank, where 2 Cdn Inf Div supported by 10 Cdn Armd Regt had been fighting since 19 Apr. On that day 4 Cdn Inf Bde arrived to relieve 129 Inf Bde (of the famous 43 (Wessex) Inf Div). As the formation (Brigadier F.N. Cabeldu) moved up, reconnaissance parties of each battalion looked over the area and unit intelligence officers gathered all possible information about the enemy, terrain, mines, and patrolling. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Apr 45). The ground along the Ahlhorn-Wildeshausen road, presently held by 129 Inf Bde, stretched across nearly 15,000 yards of rather wild country containing few farms and many wooded areas. The brigade's war diary for that day (19 Apr) passed the following comment.

Very few roads in the area have been checked. All not checked must be considered mined and all lane ways to woods and farms and any likely turning places.

(Ibid)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 3015 - Grossenkneten, 3016 - Dotlingen, 3017 - Harpstedt, 2916 - Kirchhatten; also G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheets M2 - Oldenburg, M3 - Bremen; also Appx "F".

It was reported that the enemy had not been overly aggressive during the past week, but this was no indication of his future intentions. Shortly after midday on 19 Apr the three battalions arrived, and by 1500 hours the take-over was completed. (Ibid). Essex Scot had relieved 1 Worc, on the right R.H.L.I. now occupied the centre sector vacated by 5 D.C.L.I., while R. Regt C. held the left facing the village of Sage (3283) towards which 7 S.O.M.L.I. had been patrolling. (W.Ds., R. Regt C., R.H.L.I., Essex Scot, 17 Apr 45)

556. After a careful tour of the forward defended localities, Brigadier Cabeldu decided that an attempt should be made to expand northwards, contact the enemy, and thus provide greater security for the main lateral highway route on which the brigade was based. Accordingly, Essex Scot pushed up into the little settlement of Griesenmoor (3930) on the right and sent out fighting patrols from there towards Moorbeck (3983) and Glane (4182) out on the eastern flank. "B" Coy soon reported that it was within 500 yards of Moorbeck (3983) and not being engaged, although some of the enemy could be seen ahead. Lt-Col Pangman at once ordered "D" Coy to occupy Moorbeck. Shortly after this the hamlet of Glane was declared clear and a platoon of "C" Coy remained there as a flank guard. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde; Essex Scot, 19 Apr 45). By that time both of Brigadier Cabeldu's other battalions had gone forward. In the centre a patrol from "A" Coy R.H.L.I. found Grossenkneten (3583) clear and by 2000 hours it was occupied by "A" and "D" Coys. The rest of the battalion followed and 2230 hours found R.H.L.I. firmly settled around the village. (W.D., R.H.L.I., 19 Apr 45). On the left R. Regt C. (led by "D" Coy) was moving towards the community of Sage without the slightest interference by the enemy. (W.D., R. Regt C., 19 Apr 45)

557. During the night R. Regt C. completed the occupation of Sage and established contact with patrols of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt which had ventured east from the regimental firm base at Garrel. Meanwhile, as Essex Scot and R.H.L.I. patrolled vigorously far to the front, the divisional engineers laboured in heavy rain to repair and maintain the routes leading into the forward area. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 19-20 Apr 45). Brigadier Cabeldu's position was not a particularly happy one. His positions were very exposed in what he termed excellent tank country but there were no tanks available to support him. Besides this, the whole sector was so liberally strewn with mines and booby traps that it was small wonder that the enemy preferred to remain out of contact in these tricky surroundings. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/H, Docket I, Ops Log, 19 Apr 45, serial 4820). The intention of 2 Cdn Inf Div for 20 Apr was as follows:

4 Cdn Inf Bde to tap out area Grossenkneten (3584) Sage (3283). 5 Cdn Inf Bde to conc area Ahlhorn (3377). 6 Cdn Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Recce Regt (14CH) to move from Groningen to conc area Cloppenberg (2072). Elements 2 Cdn A tk Regt and 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt to provide W.W.P. as detailed.

(Ibid, Serial 4822)

W.W.P. was a new abbreviation, it stood for "Werewolf protection". In the light of recent events this was considered a necessary measure, for it was believed that certain groups of Nazi fanatics would undoubtedly attempt to disrupt Allied operations if the opportunity arose. (Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 2 Cdn Inf Div, op cit, 15-21 Apr 45, para 8)

558. 20 Apr passed without any unusual occurrence. The forward troops patrolled and tried to establish flank contacts, the engineers still slaved at their tasks along the main roads, and "C" Sqn 8 Cdn Recce Regt kept a keen watch on the left flank from the northern edges of the Cloppenburg Forest (2581). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 19-20 Apr 45). The enemy made his appearance all across the front, especially north of Sage, where the South Albertas were continuing to harass the area with fire from their Shermans. (2 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, op cit, 20 Apr 45, serial 4899; also W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 20 Apr 45). This kept the enemy fairly busy and allowed Brigadier McGill's 5 Cdn Inf Bde to sort itself out without interference in its bivouac south-east of Ahlhorn. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Apr 45). The following daybreak, however, produced a sinister warning when it was discovered that five men (almost an entire section post) of R. Regt C. were missing. It certainly looked like the smooth working of the Werewolf organization and Lt-Col Lendrum ordered an exhaustive search of his area to be made. Since it was not the first time that this had happened, the wrath of both officers and men reached a high pitch and dark thoughts of swift vengeance filled the minds of all. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, R. Regt C., 21 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit; 21 Apr 45, serial 4914)

DIVISIONAL PLANS, 21 APR 45*

559. At Maj-Gen Matthews' conference later that morning, the Intelligence Staff outlined the enemy's situation. It was pointed out that resistance had softened up greatly in the past few days, especially in the region of Bremen. This port was expected to fall soon. But it was also expected that 7 and 8 Para Divs and 15 Panzer Grenadier Div, which at present formed the bulk of the opposing forces, would retire slowly to defend the other North Sea ports. The G.O.C. explained that 2 Cdn Inf Div's present role was to provide left-flank protection to Lt-Gen Horrocks' 30 Brit Corps and that the real Canadian offensive operation in this sector would commence on the morrow. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Apr 45). The plan was for 5 Cdn Inf Bde to pass through Brigadier Cabeldu's present positions to capture Huntlosen (3688) and Hosune (3588) and to clear the woods between Hosune and Hengtslage (3138). At the same time 6 Cdn Inf Bde (which was now en route to the divisional sector) would do a wide flanking movement on the right from the line presently held by 43 (W) Inf Div. Brigadier Allard's battalions were to seize Neerstedt (4586) and Ostrittrum (4087) and then exploit to Kirchhatten (4191). Sometime later 4 Cdn Inf Bde would be given a task on the right. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 21 Apr 45, serial 4974)

560. On receipt of these orders the forward troops stepped up their patrolling, battalion areas were put in order and large numbers of civilians were gathered together to be given the job of clearing debris and fallen trees from the roads in rear of the units. In addition, many displaced persons, including Russian prisoners and Belgian slave labourers (from farms recently overrun by the Canadians), were evacuated to special camps to the rear. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Apr 45). Meanwhile, at headquarters of 5 Cdn Inf Bde detailed instructions were issued for the forthcoming attack. Calg Highrs

* Reference maps as for para 555; also Appx "E".

would move off at 0600 hours 22 Apr and advance up the main axis Dohlen (3485) - Huntlosen (3688), followed at 0800 hours by R.H.C. Then, at 0900 hours, on the left axis, running north through Sage, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt was to clear a way with a company of R. de Mais. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and Units, 20 - 21 Apr 45)

561. Before the day ended the mass of fighting troops and supporting artillery were either in position or concentrated, ready for the task ahead. 6 Cdn Inf Bde had completed its long journey from Groningen and was settled in rear of 129 Inf Bde astride the road Wildeshausen - Neerstedt (4586). 8 Cdn Recce Regt, less "C" Sqn which had already begun to reconnoitre the forward area in front of 129 Inf Bde, was gathered at Holtinghausen (2674). (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes and units, 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 21 Apr 45). The Fort Garry Horse (10 Cdn Armd Regt), which was to supply the armoured support for the attack, remained in Lethe (2978), west of the Ahlhorn (3379) crossroads, refitting for the work at hand (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 21 Apr 45; also Vanguard: A History of the Fort Garry Horse, p. 117)

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THE ADVANCE BY 5 CDN INF BDE, 22 APR 45

562. At 0600 hours on the damp, raw morning of 22 Apr, Calg Highrs, supported by elements of "A" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt, left their concentration and moved through the positions held by R.H.L.I. at Grossenkneten. The advance carried the troops in to Dohlen (3486) and then on through the rising ground just north of the village. There was no sign of resistance. The Black Watch with "D" Coy in front followed up at 0800 hours along the same route as the leading battalion and, having passed through Dohlen, swung north-eastwards to occupy the area of the railroad junction at Huntlosen (3688). At this stage the enemy began to hurl over mortar and shell, whereupon our troops lost no time in replying. As most of this fire seemed to come from the hamlet of Sandhatten (3990) across the Hunte river, the 4.2 mortars of Tor Scot R. were put on to this area. Soon the target areas were being smothered by heavy mortar and tank-gun fire of "A" Sqn, 10 Cdn Armd Regt working with R.H.C. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 22 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 4982, 4984, 5006). This discouraged the enemy to some extent and Lt-Col S.W. Thompson, D.S.O., M.C., pushed on towards the Hunte river. The west bank of this obstacle could not be reached, however, as several minor streams and rivulets projected from the main waterway to form a complicated barrier. In any case the troops could see that all bridges in this part of the country were beyond repair and so R.H.C. firmed up to form a defensive semi-circle bounding the western, northern and eastern approaches to Huntlosen (3688). (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Apr 45).

563. All this time the woods on the left of the main areas had been occupying the attention of Calg Highrs and three companies of R. de Mais. The clearance of this area was completed by mid-afternoon against very light opposition. There were the usual stragglers, all of whom seemed happy enough to give up, but no firm contact was made with any of the enemy's fighting groups. (Ibid, also W.Ds., Calg Highrs, R. de Mais. 22 Apr 45). Over on

* Reference maps as for para 555; Also Appx "F".

the far left a small battle group composed of a Sqn of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt and a company of R. de Mais exerted fair pressure along the road to Hengstlage (3188) but could make no headway beyond that place because of the many mines and craters. (Ibid, also W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 22 Apr 45).

564. Night-fall found 5 Cdn Inf Bde well established in its allotted area. R.H.C. held on at Huntlosen with strong out-posts as far east as the Hunte River. Calg Highrs had withdrawn into a firm battalion base to the south-east of R.H.C., while R. de Mais dug in on a westward line from Calg Highrs left flank to join hands with its fourth Coy presently situated east of Hengstlage (3188). Contact with the South Albertas on the left was laid on for the night as well as with Essex Scot further to the south of R.H.C. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde & units, 22 Apr 45). The War Diary of 5 Cdn Inf Bde records that it was really NOT a very satisfactory day - no fighting and no score of Huns. We were really a day too late from all reports. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Apr 45). The last entry was quite correct, for earlier in the day civilians had reported that the enemy had pulled back to the east bank of the Hunte River. (2 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serial 5044)

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THE ATTACK BY 6 CDN INF BDE, 22 APR 45

565. Maj-Gen Matthews' right-hand effort also made good progress since its start at 1300 hours. Brigadier Allard's task was to capture Neerstedt (4586), Ostrittrum (4087), and Kirchhatten (4191), and gain control of the roads leading north from that place. The attack was done in three phases. The first began at 1300 hours when Fus M.R., commanded by Lt-Col J.A. Dextraze, struck out through the front line held by 129 Brit Inf Bde. With Neerstedt as the objective, the Fus M.R. had instructions to exploit up the axis as far as possible so that the engineers of 11 Cdn Fd Coy could sweep all the mines and other obstructions from the route. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Apr 45, Ibid, Appx 5, Ops Log, Sub Appx "A", Notes on Comds "O" Gp held at H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde - 0900 hours, 22 Apr 45). The attack was well supported; "A" and "C" Coys Tor Scot R. (M.G.) were on hand to provide heavy mortar and medium machine gun fire, a troop of 23 Cdn A.Tk Bty was allotted for each phase, and 6 Cdn Fd Regt fired a timed fire programme. 3 Cdn Med and 5 Cdn Fd Regts were on call for targets of opportunity. (Ibid, also W.Ds., Tor Scot R. (M.G.), 23 Cdn A.Tk Bty, R.C.A., 5 and 6 Cdn Fd Regts, 22 Apr 45)

566. Lt-Col Dextraze's men found the going very difficult; mines lay everywhere and the tanks of "C" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt could only crawl along the precarious and narrow lane cleared by the sappers. There was practically no opposition but it was almost five hours before the leading battalion finally consolidated on the northern outskirts of Neerstedt. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 5, Ops Log, 22 Apr 45, serials 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 27, 28, 30, 44; also W.D., Fus M.R., 22 Apr 45). Meanwhile the South Saskatchewan, who had been waiting for Neerstedt to fall, had come forward and swung left from the rear of Fus M.R. at about 1600 hours. Lt-Col J.V. Stott's part in the brigade plan was to consolidate in Ostrittrum.

* Reference maps 1:25,000, 3016 - Dotlingen, 3017 - Harpstedt, 2915 - Wardenburg, 2916 - Kirchhatten; also Appx "F".

The C.O. decided to do the attack in two phases; the first being the capture of GEVESHUSEN, MR 424873; and secondly the capture of the bn objective, the town of OSTRITTRUM, MR 405873. These phases were to be done on coy bites; phase one being completed first, consolidated, and then followed by phase two.

W.D., S. Sask R., 22 Apr 45)

Here again there was no resistance and by 1900 hours the first phase of the advance was completed. "B" Coy was firm at Geveshausen (4287), "A" Coy held a dominating position to the south (4286) while "C" and "D" Coys were well settled astride the road Geveshausen - Neerstedt centred at the hamlet of Ohe (4387). Patrols were immediately dispatched towards Ostrittrum. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, S. Sask R., 22 Apr 45)

567. Whereas the advances of both Fus M.R. and S. Sask R. were unopposed, that of Camerons of C. ran into trouble as soon as the leading Cameron companies left the northern outskirts of Neerstedt. The Camerons of C. began their task with "D" and "C" Coys on the left and right of the main road respectively. Both sub-units were soon busy side-stepping the mines and craters which confronted them. The clearance of any area other than the road and the verges was prohibited by time, for by 2000 hours "C" and "D" Coys had only gone as far as the northern edges of the wooded ground at Braker Sand (4389). From here on the obstacles were fewer and "A" Coy was passed through against very light resistance mainly shelling. The road fork at the base of the Hatterholz wood (4291) was the next objective, and "A" Coy managed to reach it before mid-night. Past this point, however, the enemy engaged our infantry with small arms and mortar fire. This sudden revival of resistance indicated that the Canadians were going to have to fight for Kirchhatten. Brigadier Allard now ordered the Camerons to hold until first light rather than risk any confusion in the darkness. While the Canadians dug in the artillery harassed the town, providing good cover for the scouts sent in to determine the enemy's strength. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Camerons of C., 22-23 Apr 45)

568. Throughout the hours of darkness there was increasing patrol activity to the front on the left flank (where Brigadier McGill's troops were firmly based west of the Hunte River and off to the right) by patrols of Fus M.R. towards the positions held by 129 Inf Bde, (43 (W.) Inf Div). (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 5068, 5976). At the apex of 6 Cdn Inf Bde's spearhead the Camerons' scouts probed carefully to gain contact. By 0500 hours the Camerons had a new attack laid on and at 0530 hours "B" Coy, supported by one troop of the Fort Garry's tanks and the fire of a regiment of field guns, went through "A" Coy to clear along the left of the road in the direction of Kirchhatten. (W.D., Camerons of C., 23 Apr 45). Despite the fact that its commander soon became a casualty, "B" Coy pressed forward against severe shelling and on through a mine field to reach the southern fringe of the little town, taking twenty-four prisoners. There the troops consolidated briefly to allow "C" Coy to take up the advance on the right of the axis. It was here that a lone enemy plane swooped down to strafe the Canadians in their shallow "slits". (Ibid).

569. After a short pause "B" Coy went on once more, pacing "C" Coy, and at 0900 hours reported that it had reached Kirchhatten. At the same time, on the right "C" Coy was fast approaching the built-up area. Shelling and mortaring had by now

become heavier and some infiltration was noticed on the right. The Commanding Officer therefore ordered the medium machine guns of ~~Tor~~ Scot R. (M.G.) to lay a "blanket" of harassing fire into the woods east of the axis to discourage any further interference. The medium guns at Brigadier Allard's disposal were also employed to engage a concentration of German tanks and infantry reported to the north of the town. By mid-day two of the Camerons' companies were firmly settled in Kirchhatten, but the other companies were having a hard time getting on because of heavy small arms fire from the flanks. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Camerons of C., 23 Apr 45)

570. The situation remained unchanged for some time. Then, quite suddenly, at 1500 hours a deluge of shell and mortar fire engulfed the battalion's sector. The bombardment finished as quickly as it began and the Canadians, veterans of many such experiences in the past, did not have long to wait for the inevitable counter-attack to come in. The full fury of this effort fell upon "C" Coy at Kirchhatten. (W.D., Camerons of C., 23 Apr 45). As the War Diary of Camerons of C. relates:

Enemy ~~launched~~ counter-attack on Tac Hq and "C" Coy sp by hy shelling from 155 mm guns. Resistance on both sectors was very hy but was repulsed by 1640 hrs. About 40 enemy put in attack against Tac Hq and 200 against "C" Coy. "D" coy was also counter attacked by a strong force and one Pl was pushed back. A counter attack sp by tks and arty was launched immediately, and they succeeded in regaining this posn and driving the jerries into the woods.

(W.D., Camerons of C., 23 Apr 45)

571. Luckily, the Canadian troops did not suffer much, although all company commanders reported that the artillery had dealt out drastic punishment to the German force. The battalion's snipers enjoyed particular success and tallied up a good score from well-concealed positions on the flank approaches to the ~~Regimental~~ Headquarters. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 23 Apr 45, serials 5156, 5157, 5158, 5168,)

572. As the afternoon passed opposition decreased, mainly due to the fact that extra pressure was being applied on Brigadier Allard's right. On this flank "B" Sqn 8 Cdn Recce Regt was now overlapping the position held by 129 Brit Inf Bde along the railway leading north-east from Brettorf (4885) and was in the process of tapping out the regions of Immer (5191) and ~~Bur~~stel (5292). (Ibid, serials 5160, 5169, 5181, also W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 23 Apr 45). Brigadier Allard had also strengthened his left flank by moving S. Sask R. into Sandhatten (3990). Having moved up behind the village of Kirchhatten shortly after the Camerons had entered it, S. Sask R. from there struck westwards along a road which, like all others in the area, was well mined and cratered. There was little active resistance, however and by 2100 hours Lt-Col Stott's companies were dispersed as follows: "A" Coy in Sandhatten itself, "B", "C" and "D" Coys in line from north to south covering the left flank, while the support company spread itself along the road from the main battalion position east wards towards Kirchhatten. (W.D., S. Sask R., 23 Apr 45). Additional precautions were taken by placing standing patrols along all possible lines of approach. (Ibid)

573. Fus M.R., with the exception of two companies, remained at Neerstedt until late evening. These sub-units were then shifted to a point some 1500 yards further north along the road to Kirchhatten to secure that part of the lines of communication to

the forward battalions. Later, when 4 Cdn Inf Bde moved into the area, all four companies journeyed to take up a flank-guard position north-east of Kirchhatten. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, serial 5166 and 5168, 23 Apr 45). In all it had been a fairly successful day for 6 Cdn Inf Bde. S. Sask R. reported that it had captured 15 prisoners and killed 40 Germans, Camerons of C. captured another 40, while Fus M.R. gathered in five. In proportion our own casualties were fairly light. (W.Ds., S. Sask R., Camerons of C., Fus M.R., 23 Apr 45, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, Serial 5204)

574. Originally the divisional intention was to provide left flank protection for 30 Brit Corps to advance on Bremen, but by the evening of 23 Apr it was apparent that 2 Cdn Inf Div would be given the additional task of taking the important city of Oldenburg (3205). Just before midnight 23-24 Apr the following message was issued by Maj-Gen Matthews' headquarters:

intention 2 cdn inf div 24 Apr 45 (.) 6 cdn inf bde to remain area KIRCHHATTEN 4191 SANDHATTEN 3990 (.) 4 cdn inf bde to cut rd GANDERKESEE - OLDENBURG area FALKENBURG 5095 (.) 8 cdn recce regt (14CH) to tap out axis GANDERKESEE - GRUPPEN-BUHREN 5399 and GANDERKESEE - BERGEDORF 4992 (.) 3 cdn LAA regt to relieve 5 cdn inf bde area HOSUNE 3588 (.)

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div,
April 1945, Appx 8, "Intentions"
Msg GO - 9 232300B)

575. It was anticipated that mines and craters would continue to constitute the enemy's main power of defence in his withdrawal to the north if Maj-Gen Matthews' persisted in following the main axis. An operation was therefore planned for 4 Cdn Inf Bde to swing east and across country from the firm base at Neerstedt and parallel to the line at present held by 129 Inf Bde. But Neerstedt had to be well secured first. As already related, Brigadier Allard's men had done just this, and it was now possible to launch 4 Cdn Inf Bde into the attack. Extensive preparations for the new effort had been going on all day with both of the other brigades receiving fresh orders. (Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities - H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, op cit, 22 Apr - 28 Apr 45 - para 2 - 3)

576. Brigadier Cabeldu's tactical headquarters moved into 6 Bde's area shortly after midday 23 Apr. The remainder of the brigade group followed in order - R. Regt C., Essex Scot, R.H.L.I., one sqn of tanks from 10 Cdn Armd Regt, and 11 Cdn Fd Amb. The guns of 4 Cdn Fd Regt detailed to support the attack were already in their new gun area, having moved earlier that morning. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units and 4 Cdn Fd Regt, R.C.A., 23 Apr 45). In the brigade's new area south-east of Kirchhatten the units were given the plan for the attack, which was due to begin at 0630 hours 24 Apr. It was to be a two battalion effort. The object, as the brigades diary stated being to:

get astride the main OLDENBURG - DELMENHORST rd in the area of KIRCHKIMMEN and FALKENBURG. R Regt C are to lead on the left axis KIRCHHATTEN and go as far as DINGSTEDT; RHLI are to move on the right axis NEERSTEDT to FALKENBURG. Essex Scot and Bde HQ are to follow on right axis.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
23 Apr 45)

"B" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt would provide armoured support. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 23 Apr 45, serial 5165)

577. Maj-Gen Matthew's left flank remained generally quiet throughout the day. One company of R. de Mais repeated its efforts of the previous day and in the face of heavy mortar fire cleaned up several farms near Henstlage in cooperation with 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt. (W.D., R. de Mais, 23 Apr 45). The remainder of the brigade continued to sweep its surroundings and to patrol, bringing in several prisoners and deserters. However, the information divulged at the G.O.C.'s conference prophesied a change, and word soon arrived that 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt with under command one troop 108 A.Tk Bty would relieve Brigadier McGill's troops before first light on 24 Apr. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 23 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 23 Apr 45, serial 5145)

578. The enemy's order of battle against 2 Cdn Inf Div presented a very sketchy affair at best, and it was appreciated that no fuller picture of German strength would be available until the next pitched battle took place. Certainly no definite change had been discovered since 19 Apr, when the following information was given out by Maj-Gen Matthews intelligence staff:

Opposite this div are elements of 8 Para Div NORTH of the FORST CLOPPENBURG with 24 Para Regt on the enemy's right and some of 22 Para Regt left...North of WILD-ESHAUSEN 115 PGR has been identified and SOUTH of DELMENHORST 104 PGR has been met - both belonging to 15 PG Div. All these divs and other miscellaneous units in the BREMEN - ODEENBERG - KUSTEN CANAL area are believed to be operating under the comd of Maj-Gen ERDMANN, GOC 7 Para Div.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, April 1945, Appx 3, 2 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 79, 19 Apr 45)

As on other fronts, it was obvious that most of the local German headquarters continued to control troops of assorted formations -

a miscellany of odd units and hurriedly gathered rfts. Other units of which nothing is known yet will almost certainly turn up, but are likely to be under one or more of the fms mentioned above.

(Ibid)

579. The enemy's intention, so it seemed, had not changed. He still clearly intended to sacrifice men and material in the now somewhat hopeless attempt to save the larger of the German North Sea ports. (Ibid). In summing up the sort of resistance encountered, another divisional intelligence review states:

Enemy opposition has been slight consisting mainly of SA fire from small parties of inf, mine laying and felling of trees across the rds...The enemy is selecting woods and villages from which to put up a resistance evidently intended to delay rather than halt our advance in a sector which is relatively unimportant compared with the approaches to WILHELMSHAVEN, BREMEN, HAMBURG, or BERLIN.

(Ibid, No. 81, 23 Apr 45)

Such folly as the costly attempt to recapture Kirchhatten from Camerons of C. while the very heart of Berlin was being bombarded seems typical of the enemy's overall suicidal efforts, which in this sector could do little else but cover another minor withdrawal to another obstacle. (Ibid)

580. Two points however do deserve some comment. First, from all reports and recent experience, 2 Para Corps was not making any real attempt to halt the Allied advances on the line Bremen - Oldenburg with its best troops.

the latter task is left to less select naval units and odd battle groups under two low grade div staffs. Second, 8 Para Div appears disposed to guard OLDENBURG, and it is possible that the enemy appreciated a drive by us NORTH to OLDENBURG along the main rd, and located one of his better (but not so good now) fms accordingly.

(Ibid)

Secondly, whatever the main concern of 2 Para Corps might be, one thing was certain, the physical and material resources of the Corps were quite inadequate. Thus we could expect to be delayed further by the means so much in evidence at present. (Ibid)

4 CDN INF BDE CUTS THE ROAD *
DELMENHORST - OLDENBURG, 24 APRIL 45

581. Brigadier Cabeldu's attack began at 0630 hours 24 Apr. On the right was R.H.L.I., on the left R. Regt C., each battalion being supported by one troop of Shermans from 10 Cdn Armd Regt. Essex Scot lingered in rear with orders to follow up whichever of the infantry units met the least resistance. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, Serial 5221). Making fair progress against light resistance, the leading troops ("B" and "C" Coys) of the Hamilton unit reached the village of Nuttel (4691) and there seized fifteen dejected prisoners. These unfortunates stated that they were part of a company group and that they had been left as a rearguard while the main body withdrew to the north (Ibid, Serials 5223, 5228; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.L.I., 24 Apr 45). On the left R. Regt C. had much more to do. Although by 0900 hours Lt-Col Lendrum's men were barely clear of the Camerons of C's. positions in Kirchhatten, they were already heavily engaged by German infantry positioned in the small copses and farm houses in order to dominated the intervening pasture lands with rifle and machine-gun fire. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Apr 45).

582. R.H.L.I. pressed its advance throughout the morning and by noon Lt-Col Arrel's troops were past Nuttel (4691). It was reported that elements of 8 Cdn Recce Regt were closing in from the South to protect the right flank. Yet, despite this good news, it became unceasingly urgent to extricate R. Regt C. from the unwanted battle on its start line so as to reroute the left-hand effort. All artillery resources were diverted to this task but the enemy persisted stubbornly, making every yard of ground costly. (Ibid, W.Ds., R. Regt C., 4 Cdn Fd Regt R.C.A.,

* Reference maps as for para 563; also Appx "F".

also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serials 5226, 5236, 5244, 5252, 5253, 5255). It was at this stage that Brigadier Cabeldu decided that....

as progress on right was so much faster than on left the RHLI must be firmed up and Essex Scot sent in to ease pressure on R. Regt C. It became apparent especially in the light of captured maps that our adv was carrying us right across the 90 degrees to the enemy defs, his FDLs along the woods being full of tps.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
24 Apr 45)

583. Accordingly, R.H.L.I. was told to firm up as soon as possible north of Bergedorf (4993) and Lt-Col Pangman's Essex Scot was urged to follow the R.H.L.I. axis as far as Nuttel (4691), form a base of operations there, then strike northwards to Dingstede (4694). At the same time R. Regt C. was given a limited objective west of Dingstede to reach as best it could, depending upon opposition. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serial 5352)

584. The Essex lost no time; with "B" and "C" Coys leading, the unit reached Nuttel, firmed up a base there and swung north. No easy passage was anticipated but it turned out that the enemy was by now becoming disorganized, not so much by reason of the Canadian's superiority of fire as by the variety of directions from which the troops were advancing. The weather, too, was favourable, and Typhoon and Spitfire fighter bombers were up over the local battle area paying particular attention to places which, as some captured maps indicated, were enemy headquarters localities. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Apr 45). As the Scottish forged ahead to Dingstede a steady stream of prisoners flowed back into the brigade collecting posts; many of these Germans were questioned on the spot and willingly gave out information. All told the same story, of various small battle groups fighting in many cases under ad hoc divisional staffs. The brigade's diary thankfully noted:

The paratps are conspicuous by their absence - probably back OLDENBURG way preparing one of their characteristically fanatical receptions and leaving some other poor dog to do their dirty work out here.

(Ibid)

585. The brigade order issued during the early afternoon called for the consolidation of Dingstede by Essex Scot. From there Lt-Col Pangman was to patrol eastwards towards Steinkimmen (4794), which was his final objective. R. Regt C.'s limited objective (mentioned earlier) was centred on the hamlet of Grashorn (4493), and it was expected that once Essex Scot was firm it would be an easy matter to pass the Royals on through to the northern part of the Kimmerholz feature (4895) to cut the main thoroughfare at the road junction (4896). (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serial 5257). Both infantry battalions ran into the usual nuisance of mines, deep craters, and some accurate sniping, but by 2000 hours R. Regt C., ably aided by some of the Fort Garry's tanks (whose progress had been hastened by the R.H.L.I.'s threat from the south), was past the road running south from Grashorn (4493) on a wide front. At the same time Lt-Col Pangman reported his leading troops settling in at Dingstede. (Ibid, serials 5288, 5293, 5300, 5306, 5311; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, R. Regt C., Essex Scot, 24 Apr 45).

586. Both R. Regt C. and Essex Scot continued their progress until darkness descended. At 2255 hours 4 Cdn Inf Bde sent divisional headquarters a message which placed the Royals in company positions as follows; "B" Coy was north of Grashorn facing north, "A" Coy was astride the main road to Dingstede about 1200 yards north-east of Grashorn, and "C" Coy, having swept through the woods on the right of the axis, was firm near Im Hau (458935). "D" Coy tailed the battalion and was occupying the region of the crossroads south of Grashorn. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serial 5332). Lt-Col Pangman held Dingstede with "A" Coy, he had "D" Coy to the west waiting to contact R. Regt C., while "B" and "C" Coys had moved on to firm up around the farm and road fork at Bei der Bake (472949) on the left and the length of the road to Steinkimmen (4794) as far east as Im Horn (4794). (Ibid). R.H.L.I. was reported in full control of the Bergedorf crossroads which dominated the main part of the village from the north-west. Fully expecting a link-up with Essex Scot, Lt-Col Arrel placed "B" Coy on the knoll 500 yards north-west of the vital crossroads and had strong carrier patrols watching the ground below Im Horn (4794). "D" and "A" Coys formed the main base while "C" Coy was consolidated for the time to the north-east along the track above Boddensbrok (4993). (Ibid)

587. Meanwhile Maj-Gen Matthews had been keeping a close watch on the development of the attack. After he had conferred with Brigadier Cabeldu the units of 4 Bde were given their tasks for the following day.

The intention is to push on to original objectives area of FALKENBURG and KIRCHKIMMEN to get astride the main rd. This is to be done by RHLI pushing to FALKENBURG on the right and R Regt C passing through Essex Scot posns on the left. Plans were laid incl arty and fire programme tentative H hr being set as 1030 hrs in the morning.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
24 Apr 45)

In preparation for this venture an intensive programme of patrolling was to be carried out. (Ibid)

588. The relation of 4 Cdn Inf Bdes advance to the larger divisional plan can best be explained by quoting a portion of the intention issued late on 24 Apr.

when 4 cdn inf bde firm astride rd 5 cdn inf bde to seize RETHORN 5499 STENUM 5598 and cut rd GANDERKESE - MDOR 5300 area GRUPPEN BUHREN 5399 (.) 6 cdn inf bde to round out present posns area KIRCHHATTEN 4191 SANDHATTEN 3990 (.) 8 cdn recce regt to maintain contact (a) between 51 (H) div and 4 cdn inf bde (b) between 4 cdn inf bde and 6 cdn inf bde (.)

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div,
April 1945, Appx 8, Intentions
msg GO - 9 dated 242230B)

589. To this end 5 Cdn Inf Bde had already concentrated. This move having been completed by 1300 hours 24 Apr, Brigadier Megill had Calg Highrs at Brettorf (4885), R.H.C. around the road junction 2500 yards to the east, and R. de Mais on the rising ground west of Hockensberg (4882). (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf

Bde and units, 24 Apr 45). The ground vacated by 5 Bde was now being watched over by 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, which, with one troop of 108 A.Tk Bty under command, specially established a line of mutually defended outposts to maintain a secure left flank west of the Hunte river. (W.D., 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 24 Apr 45, also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serials 5243, 5246)

590. The situation of 6 Cdn Inf Bde at Kirchhatten had not changed much, although the occupants of this area did experience some bitter fighting in trying to expand northwards. Enemy activity, which began by a spirited though unsuccessful attack against Camerons of C. at first light, increased gradually, but the initiative remained with the Canadians. During the day Camerons of C, and Fus M.R. improved their positions to form a defensive semi-circle extending north and east of Kirchhatten. The Camerons particularly had a hard time and were furiously engaged time after time. This indicated to Lt-Col R.L. Rutherford that more serious trouble was about to appear, and he therefore laid on special artillery tasks to deal with it. The enemy's counter attack came in at 2210 hours and was a most fierce effort. "B" Coy, upon which the full brunt fell, was soon in dire straits, and all supporting arms were at once diverted to its aid. Then, having repulsed the enemy with heavy loss, the Camerons set about securing their area by establishing observation posts over all probable approaches to the front line and by dispatching strong fighting patrols. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Fus M.R., Camerons of C., 24 Apr 45, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serials 5329, 5338)

591. Fus M.R., who had been employed in a role of right flank protection for both the base at Kirchhatten and the attack of R. Regt C. to the east, were moved at about mid-day to new positions extending from the Camerons right on the north-eastern fringe of the town along the paved road to Dingstede as far as the road fork directly south of Schmede (4393). (Ibid, serial 5251). The right-hand company was thus on the axis used by R. Regt C., where it was able to some extent to protect the rear of Lt-Col Lendrum's position. Fus M.R. took several prisoners, some of whom were discovered wearing civilian clothes over their uniforms. (Ibid, serial 5287, 5304). S. Sask R. stayed at Sandhatten throughout the day and sent out strong patrols to probe the opposition, who by heavy small arms fire made it quite difficult for our patrols to advance. Yet 6 Cdn Inf Bde's task, though tedious and sometimes costly, was a most important one, for it represented the security of the left upon which the entire division was to pivot later when the main effort was directly aimed at the city of Oldenburg. For another four days this same work continued. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, S. Sask. R., 24 Apr 45)

592. Amid these reports of fierce company battles and long gains by the infantry battalions, against determined opposition it would be a grievous fault to lose sight of the valuable assistance rendered by 8 Cdn Recce Regt to the current operations. True! only "B" Sqn was committed along the right flank of the division, but the operations carried out by it from the area of Immer and Burstel towards the thrust made by R.H.L.I. on Bergedorf had great influence on the enemy's reactions to 4 Cdn Inf Bde. Working north-westwards from the line of the railway (which 51 (H) Inf Div held), the reccemen exerted enough pressure to cut the road Bergedorf - Ganderkese (5493) south of Zu Thionfelde (5193). (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serials 5226, 5236, 5238, 5252, 5255, 5263)

593. A few snipers were met and dealt with by scout cars, advancing warily because of the mines. The troopers were experts in their business, however, and whenever the advance was forced to

a halt they left the shelter of their cars to lift the mines and mark them. Engineer aid was requested but, in view of the number of mined areas which the other fighting units had found, it was some time before the C.R.E. could release any to Lt-Col Alway's men. "B" Sqn moved forward slowly all afternoon and gathered in several dozen prisoners. (Ibid, serials 5263, 5274, 5283; also W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 24 Apr 45, incl Appx 14, Message Log, 24 Apr 45, timings 0910, 1010, 1115, 1425, 1430)

*
OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN INF BDE ON 25 APR 45

594. The night of 24/25 Apr was spent in feeling out the enemy's line to the north-east. Both Essex Scot and R.H.L.I. took a number of prisoners from whom it was learnt that Falkenburg (5095), the small town selected as the main objective of R.H.L.I. was well occupied by the Germans. (Ibid, 25 Apr 45, serial 5342). H hour had already been set for 1000 hours, but early in the morning Essex Scot reported that work on a large crater on the left axis would not be completed unless the engineers lent a hand. The Brigadier therefore ordered his sappers up and at the same time sent his brigade major to size up the situation at the crater. The obstacle was a formidable one and there was considerable delay, but at 1112 hours Lt-Col Lendrum stated that R. Regt C. would be ready to attack at 1130 hours. (Ibid, serials 5365, 5371, 5373; also W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 25 Apr 45)

595. At H hour the artillery programme began and the two infantry battalions sprang forward. On the right R.H.L.I. with "A" and "D" Coys up, on the left R. Regt C. led by "B" Coy passed through the Essex Scot front line east of Dingstede. The enemy met the attack with well-coordinated fire, but with efficient cooperation by the artillery and the tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt the troops gained ground slowly. Towards noon opposition decreased, in fact almost vanished, and by 1235 hours R.H.L.I. had reached the outskirts of Falkenburg (5095). On the left the Royals could not make such good progress because of several self-propelled guns covering the various craters on their axis. Furthermore, the enemy on this flank appeared well-equipped with 20-mm guns which were hard to knock out. However, with the aid of a dozen odd rocket-firing Typhoons, the attack was pressed home on both flanks and by 1600 hours R. Regt C. and R.H.L.I. were firm on their objectives. R.H.L.I. consolidated at Falkenburg with "C" Coy protecting the northern flank, "B" on the south, "D" Coy to the east and "A" Coy on the western side of the town. (W.D., R.H.L.I., 25 Apr 45). R. Regt C., having settled "B" Coy at the crossroads (4896) north-east of Steinkimmen (4794) and then having passed "C" Coy on to the north of the main road, had brought up "A" and "D" Coys on the left to occupy the hamlet of Vor den Holze (4896) astride the highway and the Kimmerholz woods south of it. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 25 Apr 45, serial 5424)

596. Now that his men had a good hold on the road from Ganderkesee to Oldenburg, Brigadier Cabeldu made certain readjustments to secure his position and ensure a firm brigade base so that 5 Cdn Inf Bde's effort might be launched without delay. "D" Coy of Essex Scot was given the task of consolidating along the left (4796) of Kimmerholz woods (4896), patrols were laid on for contact between R. Regt C. and R.H.L.I., and "B" Coy Tor Scot R. (M.G.), was positioned on the rising ground (5093 - 5094) between Bergedorf and Ohrt (5094) to guard the brigade's right flank. The forward battalions themselves initiated a wide programme of patrols for mutual

* Reference maps as for para 563; also 1:25,000, Sheet 2917 - Delmenhorst, 2815 - Oldenburg; also Appx "F"

contact and security; amongst these was one carrier force which R.H.L.I. sent to cover the bridge (518948) south-east of Falkenburg. During all this time and well into the night the artillery air O.P. planes rendered valuable assistance to the general consolidation of 4 Cdn Inf Bde by engaging all likely target areas. This did much to keep down the fire of the enemy's guns although all three battalions areas received severe attention throughout the night. (Ibid, serials 5420, 5436, 5456, 5447, 5448; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 25 Apr 45)

597. Meanwhile, at divisional headquarters arrangements had been completed for a fuller employment of Maj-Gen Matthews' reconnaissance regiment. The recce situation in so far as it concerns "A" Sqn can best be explained by quoting a liaison officer's report which reached divisional headquarters.

A Sqn will relieve 5 CAMERONIANS after which will endeavour to contact RHLI. Rds between RHLI and GANDER-KESEE 5493 seems to be heavily mined. Sappers from A Sqn will accompany A Sqn. If rd heavily mined only way to make contact will be with aslt pl and Col ALWAYS feels distance is too great for such a small body of men. 25 Apr 45 - A Sqn will endeavour to maintain contact from 5 Bde to 4 Bde.

(2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit,
25 Apr 45, serial 5422)

"B" Sqn, which held a good position in the area Immer (5191) - Burstel (5292), was to continue to operate there for the time being, while "C" Sqn was entrusted with the task of maintaining contact between 4 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes on the left. (Ibid, serial 5421)

PATROL ACTION AND REGROUPING *
OPERATIONS 5 and 6 CDN INF BDES, 25 APR 45

598. By the time that 4 Bde had consolidated its positions along the road Ganderkesee - Oldenburg, Brigadier McGill's 5 Cdn Inf Bde having been alerted earlier, had regrouped and moved its headquarters nearer to Delmenhorst, whence it expected to be launched into the attack on 26 Apr. Since it was planned to shift the entire brigade by T.C.Vs to its assembly area early on the following day none of the infantry units moved. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 25 Apr 45). For 6 Bde it was another day of intense patrol activity against an enemy who, though not strong in numbers, had small groups well placed at mutually supporting vital points. Prisoners continued to come in after each successive treatment by the Canadian guns and mortars but identifications were so numerous that it could be clearly seen that the German commanders were literally pressing every single man they had into front line service. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 25 Apr 45)

* Reference maps as for para 589, also G.S.G.S. 4416 - Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets M2-- Oldenburg, M3 - Bremen; also Appx "F"

THE ATTACK CONTINUES, 26 Apr 45^{*}

599. In the chill, wet dawn of 26 Apr Brigadier Megill's battalions embussed and were transported from their concentration areas to the north-western fringes of Delmenhorst. Here the units shook themselves out and at 0735 hours R.H.C. went forward with "B" Coy leading. This advance was not contested in any way and within ninety minutes "B" Coy was firm at a point where the main axis joins the southern road to Almsloh (5596). "C" Coy then passed on and, after some slight delay at a large crater near Steenhafé (5597), reached its objective on the eastern slope (548976) of the Mittel Hoop (5498), feature. Still there was no opposition. Lt-Col Thompson then ordered "D" and "A" Coys to carry on the advance and by 1030 hours these two sub-units occupied positions on the west and east of Stenum (5598). (W.D.s., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.C., 26 Apr 45, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 5479, 5480, 5484, 5489). While "A" Coy pressed on along the eastern edge of Stenum Holz, "C" Coy was sent through "D" to seize the road junction (545986) on the western side of the large woods. Once this was done "B" Coy passed through to capture Rethorn without trouble by 1315 hours. Lt-Col Thompson was quick to follow up his success on the left with "D" Coy, with which he aimed to occupy the factory area alongside the railway some thousand yards further to the north. (W.D., R.H.C., 26 Apr 45)

600. Apart from a slight amount of badly-directed mortar fire, "D" Coy's move to the factory was not opposed. While this sub unit dug itself in, "C" Coy swung to the north-east from Rethorn to consolidate at the road and railway crossing site south of Nutzhorn (5500). In all cases the tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt swept every foot of the road with "co-axial" fire, thus running a fine bit of interference for the infantry. During this advance the Fort Garrys lost one tank. (Ibid, also W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 26 Apr 45)

601. Meanwhile "A" Coy had not been having such an easy time. As soon as they left the shelter of the eastern tip of the woods, a murderous fire met the highlanders, and considerable initiative was necessary to lead them past this "hot spot". Well-placed artillery fire crushed the resistance and at 1640 hours R.H.C. reported itself firmed up on the battalion objective, "A" Coy having swept on to occupy the gap in the woods west of Schierbrok (5699). (W.D., R.H.C., 26 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serial 5550). The R.H.C.'s position, based on the small town of Rethorn, was by no means an isolated one for "B" Sqn 8 Cdn Recce Regt taking a hand had travelled up from the area of Burstel (5192) to commence operations on the left and right of 5 Cdn Inf Bde. Furthermore, Lt-Col Alway's "A" Sqn had moved up from Ganderkessee to reach the demolished bridges at Almsloh (5596) and Bookhorn (5395). (Ibid, serials 5482, 5491, 5495, 5508, 5510, 5537, 5542)

602. R. de Mais' part in the operation called for a wide patrol effort to the west and, as soon as Brigadier Megill saw that the Black Watch was safely through its first phase, he ordered the Maisonneuves to strike out. Lt-Col Lalonde's attack began before midday and was totally successful despite some heavy shelling from 88-mm guns and the direct fire of several 20-mm weapons, which were especially active on the right against "A" Coy. Nevertheless, the assault was pressed home. "A" Coy swept through the Mittel Hoop woods to capture the built-up area at Gruppen Buhren (5298), while "B" Coy crossed the open land further south to settle at Brandewurth (5397). Shortly afterwards "D"

* Reference maps as for para 593.

Coy lunged out from "B" Coy's position to consolidate the cross-roads at Bissen (523967) on the left and "C" Coy followed "A" Coy to straddle the road between Bulterei (525976) and Westerloge (519974). Patrols were at once dispatched in all directions and one of these (from "D" Coy) contacted 8 Cdn Recce Regt at the river Bookhorn. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx 13, Msg Log - serials 822, 831, 832, 833, 834, 836, 839, 843, 844, 857, 849, 854, 860, 865; also W.D., R. de Mais, 26 Apr 45)*

603. The time was ripe now for the launching of Calg Highrs, whose allotted objective was the stretch of road north from Gruppen-Buhren (5398) to the line of the railway. It was the brigadier's intention to use R. de Mais' position as a firm base from which to attack, thus Lt-Col W.D. Heyland had been forced to keep his battalion concentrated on the main axis south of Stenum until such a time as R. de Mais was consolidated. Gradually, as the French-Canadians gained ground to the west, Calg Highrs moved up behind them, and shortly after 1800 hours, Lt-Col Heyland's leading company ("A") with supporting elements from the Fort Garry Horse, began its attack along the right side of the road. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 26 Apr 45). The first 500 yards were hard to traverse for the ground was open and under very thick fire from medium mortars and 20-mm guns. Nevertheless, "A" Coy gallantly led by Major F.H. Clarke pressed home the assault and consolidated the area of the road junction (533996) north of Brummelhoop (5399). West of the axis "B" Coy (under Major "Sandy" Pearson) had to contend with similar conditions but also managed to reach its objective at the crossroads (520995) south of Hohenboken (5199). (5 Cdn Inf Bde Msg Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 866, 872, 877 inclusive)

604. "C" and "D" Coys lost no time in following up the initial assault. By that time opposition had slackened off and both sub-units were able to proceed without difficulty. As the enemy could be observed in positions beyond the line of the railway, the commanding officer decided that "D" Coy should stop and dig in around Bookholzeberge (5300), thus allowing the artillery a good margin for its fire tasks. "C" Coy, however, went directly to the chosen objective at the hamlet (524002) east of Hohenboken (5099). (Ibid, also W.D., Calg Highrs, 26 Apr 45). By 2350 hours the battalion was firm. While patrols were sent out to scout around the farm at Ohlebusch (537994) and to determine whether any enemy remained in the open land between Calg Highrs and the Black Watch, the guns of 5 Cdn Fd Regt and the heavy mortars of Tor Scot R. (M.G.) laid down harassing fire on all lines of approach to the brigade's positions. (Ibid, also W.Ds., Tor Scot R. (M.G.); 5 Cdn Fd Regt R.C.A., 26 Apr 45)

605. The situation of 4 Cdn Inf Bde had not altered much. On 26 Apr contact was maintained with the enemy's outposts just beyond the brigade perimeter. The Canadian guns harrassed the Germans continually although the enemy's guns and mortars were themselves fairly active. The main tasks however for 4 brigade were first, to clear the routes within its area; **this was no small task -**

Engrs worked all night clearing rd blocks and filling craters; hundreds of trees are down and great craters

* The story of this attack is clearly indicated in the message log of 5 Cdn Inf Bde, it is NOT clearly told in W.D., R. de Mais, (April 1945)

up to 120 ft across are blown in the main highway; the work is tiring the resources of our engrs.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
26 Apr 45)

--- secondly to make sure that no German soldiers or civilians were still at large in the sector. To ensure this a wide-spread sweep was arranged by the brigade-major, who allotted the specific areas to be cleared to R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot south of Falkenburg on the main highway, the R.H.L.I.'s patrols joined with Lt-Col Alway's 8 Cdn Recce Regt working out of Ganderkesee (5993). (Ibid). But the big job of the day fell to the sappers and, in order to get additional information as to engineer requirements for the immediate future, patrols were ordered to cover as great a length of the main highway as possible. (Ibid)

606. Brigadier Allard's battalions also spent a quiet day, although the troops continued to carry out active patrolling. Much valuable information was gained about the enemy's positions to the north and a few prisoners were brought in for questioning. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 26 Apr 45, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 5536, 5543). For 8 Cdn Recce Regt, however, the day's work produced greater results. Lt-Col Alway, having placed "C" Sqn as a link between 4 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes, had "A" Sqn based at Ganderkesee, whence the scout cars roamed to the north and west to cover the length of the Welse river. "B" Sqn, which had previously been successful in contacting 4 Cdn Inf Bde north of Burstel, was later moved over to the divisional right flank to operate between the forward localities of 152 (H.) Inf Bde (now formed along the north-western outskirts of Delmenhorst) and the line Almsloh (5596) - Wiedau (5696) - Schierbrok (5699). (Ibid, serials 5504, 5508, 5529, 5542, 5552, 5571, also W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 26 Apr 45)

607. The intention of 2 Cdn Inf Div for 27 Apr was as follows:

5 cdn inf bde to round out present posn and tap out towards HUDE 4802 (.) 4 and 6 cdn inf bdes to regp present areas (.) 8 cdn recce regt (14 CH) to screen RIGHT flank of 5 cdn inf bde and maintain contact between 4 and 6 cdn inf bdes (.)

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div,
April 1945, Appx 8 "Intentions"
GO 11 dated 262130B)

From this directive Brigadier Megill formed his own intentions. He ordered Calg Highrs to complete consolidation and then to exploit with one company to straddle the line of the railway (517009) 1000 yards directly north of Hohenboken (5199). Once this was done R. de Mais could clear the thick woods to the north and west. R.H.C. were thus to rest in reserve. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serial 5614)

608. The exploitation carried out by Calg Highrs and R. de Mais encountered only light resistance. Lt-Col Heyland first sent out strong patrols supported by the guns of 5 Cdn Fd Regt, then built these up to full company strength to consolidate a length of the railway line for 3000 yards west of Bookholzberge (5300). Similarly, on the left R. de Mais swept through the high woods and westwards to firm up along the road Hohenboken - Kirchkimmen.

From these positions patrols were organized to maintain contact with each other, with 4 Cdn Inf Bde on the left and R.H.C. on the right. Although not actually committed, the Black Watch had cleared the intervening ground to the Calg Highrs area at the same time keeping close contact with "A" and "B" Sqns of 8 Cdn Recce Regt which spent some time in probing to the north end east. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units; 27 Apr 45; W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 27 Apr 45, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serials 5638, 5639, 5640, 5644, 5645, 5647, 5648, 5650, 5656, 5669, 5670, 5681, 5687, 5705, 5711)

609. With the exception of Essex Scot the major part of Brigadier Cabeldu's formation continued to enjoy the pause in operations. Lt-Col Pangman's men patrolled north from Dingstede with fair success, and this resulted in one of the companies being moved to a position on the highway east of R. Regt C.

A number of mines were encountered heavily booby trapped, some AA fire....Enemy resisted this quite strongly but some very accurate observed arty fire plus direct fire from some of the sp tks of Fort Garry Horse soon discouraged him and Essex Scot edged fwd another 1000 yds.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
27 Apr 45)

This was a good move, for it gave the brigade commander control of **still another stretch of this valuable route.** Brigadier Cabeldu lost no time in putting his engineers to work on it. (Ibid). It must be understood, however, that the other battalions were not completely idle; they too patrolled with vigour to contact and gain whatever ground of value was found vacant. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serials 5655, 5666, 5677)

x

PLANS FOR THE ATTACK ON OLDENBURG, 27 APR 45

610. By the late afternoon of 27 Apr the divisional sector had taken on the appearance of a gigantic yet most suitable spring-board for the **forthcoming thrust** on Oldenburg, and Maj-Gen Matthews called together his brigade commanders to discuss and coordinate the plan. At the orders group an intelligence officer in reviewing the present situation stated:

In the local area captured documents and PW have yielded a very comprehensive picture; our opposition is mainly from battle gps - RHODE, WEISE, GEISLER, SEIFERT THEIME LIER, von ALBERT plus 358 Marine Unit, these mostly under comd of 490 and 471 inf div staffs. 8 and 7 Para Divs formerly in the battle seem to have made themselves scarce.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
27 Apr 45)

Once again it seems that 7 and 8 Para Divs had withdrawn to form yet another line of defence further to the north. (Ibid)

x Reference maps: 1:25,000 Sheets 2915 - Wardenburg, 2916 - Kirchhatten, 2917 - Delmenhorst, 2815 - Oldenburg, 2816 - Derne, also Appx "F"

611.
time:

As the G.O.C. 2 Cdn Inf Div pointed out at the

there was no change in the original task allotted to the Division, and the objective was still to get as near to the WESER as possible along the existing axis of advance. The task of clearing the area south of the WESER as far north and west as HUDE became the responsibility of 5 Cdn Inf Bde with 8 Cdn Recce Regt (less one sqn) in support. The rest of 2 Cdn Inf Div was to turn its attention to that portion of OLDENBURG south of the canal running through the town.

(2 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly Summary
of Ops and Activities - op cit,
22 - 28 Apr 45, para 8)

Maj-Gen Matthews had little choice in the way of routes:

there were two possible axes of advance in the direction of OLDENBURG. One followed the main road running into the town from the south-east, and the other, which had the advantage of some cover, led northwards through the Forest OLDENBURG.

(Ibid, para 9)

612.

Accordingly, the following plan was laid down:

- (a) 4 Cdn Inf Bde was to be positioned along main axis around Moorhausen (4099).
- (b) 5 Cdn Inf Bde was to first clear Hude, then sweep on northwards to the Weser river.
- (c) 6 Cdn Inf Bde would capture Munderloh (4194) and join up with 4 Cdn Inf Bde, then
- (d) 6 Cdn Inf Bde was to commence its attack through the wooded area west from Kirchhatten and (either by itself or with 4 Cdn Inf Bde depending on the situation) eventually build up its effort into a fully developed main attack on that part of Oldenburg south of the river.

(Ibid, also W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn
Inf Bde, 27 Apr 45, also
AEF:45/2 Cdn Inf Div/C/F,
Docket II, Special report No.
5, Plans for the Capture of
Oldenburg)

613.

The artillery bombardment of Oldenburg was to be confined to the southern part of the town, except for any counter-battery and pin-point targets with which it might be essential to deal. The brigade commanders were told that with the exception of hospitals and hutted camps they could "beat up" the town freely. As if to add conviction to this permission, the G.O.C. announced that, apart from a good deal of close support that was to be available from fighter-bombers and a mass of field and medium

guns, each brigade was to have a squadron of crocodiles, flails, and Kangaroos under command. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, op cit, 22 - 28 Apr 45)

614. One particular feature of the impending operation stands out. Maj-Gen Matthews' formation was in fact approaching the town from the east in a rather unusual and slightly unorthodox manner. This peculiarity may seem difficult to fathom yet it is really quite simple when one considers that the original task of 2 Cdn Inf Div had been to provide flank protection for Lt-Gen Horrock's 30 Brit Corps. As an official report states,

...the unusual approach had probably confused the enemy and had certainly denied him the use of two important lateral roads.

(Special Report No. 5, Plan for the capture of Oldenburg, op cit, para 6)

It was not, however, intended to develop the final attack on Oldenburg as one immediate operation. The most immediate need was to secure "limited objectives and to get into positions from which the momentum of the final phase could be maintained without interruption". (Ibid)

*
THE APPROACHES TO OLDENBURG, 28 APR 45

615. The next move towards Oldenburg was made by R.H.C. at 0700 hours 28 Apr 45. Advancing in the bright sunshine, the Black Watch, supported by elements of "A" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt, moved westwards through Calg Highrs. There was a little resistance, but, by advancing on two axes and by pivoting one company on the position gained by another, Lt-Col S.W. Thompson soon had his battalion firmly settled on the northern, western and south-western slopes of the kidney-shaped feature (4800 - 4999) which overlooks the road running through Vielstedt (4899). The total of prisoners was well over fifty. (W.Ds., R.H.C. 28 Apr 45; 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 28 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 5742, 5745, 5751, 5755, 5761). Simultaneously, on the right Calg Highrs took advantage of Lt-Col Thompson's attack to improve their own positions. Using all available artillery to pound the line of the railway and any suspected enemy posts on the northern flank, the Calgaries were by late evening firmly astride the tracks within 2500 yards of Hude (9802). Lt-Col Heyland also held several points commanding the approaches from the north. All this time R. de Mais kept a steady hold on the left, maintaining contact with 4 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.Ds., Calg Highrs, 28 Apr 45; also 5 Cdn Inf Bde Msg Log, op cit, R. de Mais, 28 Apr 45, serials 926, 941, 946; also W.D., Calg Highrs April 1945, Appx 3, Sitreps dated 296045B)

616. No major changes were reported by either 4 or 6 Cdn Inf Bdes during 29 Apr. The day was spent in patrolling and in preparation for the next phase of the advance to the north-west. The details of the tasks were issued to the brigade commanders, who in turn informed their respective units that night.

Intention 2 Cdn Inf Div 29 Apr 45. 4 Cdn Inf Bde to posn itself area DRECKORT 4399 FUCHSBERG 4397 SANDERFELD

4597. 5 Cdn Inf Bde to seize HUDE 4702. 6 Cdn Inf Bde to seize MUNDERLOH 4195, 8 Cdn Recce Regt (14CH) to (a) screen RIGHT flank 5 Cdn Inf Bde and tap out towards R WESER (b) maintain contact between 4 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes.

(2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 28 Apr 45, op cit, serial 5794)

617. In view of the above intention, however, certain readjustments were necessary and these also took place on 28 Apr. With the Second British Army in possession of Bremen it was felt that, in order to step up the pace of the Canadian advance and to maintain equal pressure on that flank, while 2 Cdn Inf Div turned to Oldenburg, reinforcement was required on Lt-Gen Simonds' right. 3 Brit Inf Div was therefore allotted to 2 Cdn Corps with orders to relieve 2 Cdn Inf Div (5 Cdn Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Recce Regt in particular) of all responsibility east of the road Ganderkesee - Bookholzberge and to probe to the north. (Ibid, serial 5750; also Stacey, The Canadian Army 1939-45, p. 269; also AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/K/F Docket 1, Folio 2, G.O.C.'s Activities, 28 Apr 0800)

618. In accordance with these instructions 185 Inf Bde of 3 Brit Inf Div took over the new area by 0600 hours 29 Apr. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx 17, Op Order 185 Inf Bde No. 14, 28 Apr 45). 1 Norfolk settled astride the railway south of Bookholzberge, 2 K.S.L.I. were dug in along the railway from the right of 1 Norfolk up to and including the road and rail junction at Schierbrok (5699), while 2 Warwick occupied a position just west of the road Bookhorn (5395) - Gruppen-Buhren (5398). Elements of 3 Brit Recce Regt relieved 8 Cdn Recce Regt on the immediate flanks. (W.D., Calg Highrs, April 1945, Appx 3, Msg dated 290045B). Over on the extreme left of Maj-Gen Matthews' sector, west of the Hunte River, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt held its ground and reported no changes apart from the usual patrol actions. (Ibid)

THE THRUST TO OLDENBURG COMMENCES, 29 APR 45

619. Although it was a day of widespread activity, 29 Apr did not produce any particular problems for 2 Cdn Inf Div. All three brigades made favourable gains against very light opposition indeed. Contact with the enemy was difficult to establish and even more difficult to maintain since the majority of the German soldiers facing 2 Cdn Inf Div were loth to fight for any length of time. Surrender and quick evacuation from the battleground seemed to be the chief thought in the minds of those who were left behind as rearguards. (Ops and Activities of 2 Cdn Inf Div, op cit, 29 Apr - 5 May 45). On Maj-Gen Matthews' left (while 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt continued its patrols west of the Hunte river) 6 Cdn Inf Bde attacked at 0900 hours towards Munderloh (4194). This task fell to Fus M.R., who went forward with the support of a troop of Shermans, a troop of Crocodiles and a flail. The companies took their time in covering the distance to the objective, for mines abounded, but by 1600 hours all of Lt-Col Dextraze's sub-units had consolidated and taken up position for all-round defense on the oblong feature which takes in the village (4194) and the ground to the east of it. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and Fus M.R., 29 Apr 45)

* Reference maps as for para 604: also Appx "F".

620. The relative inactivity of Brigadier Allard's other units can well be understood if the situation is viewed from a divisional level. Fus M.R.'s action at Munderloh (4194) was merely an exploitation of the left pivot on which 4 Brigade was swinging to the north-west. The task of the remainder of the Brigade was to hold and attempt to shake loose the opposition by continuous patrolling. This programme was carried out quite successfully and by the end of the day the Germans facing Camerons of C. and S. Sask R. had become keenly aware of the threat of being out-flanked from the north-east first by the Fus.M.R., then in a wider sense by 4 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.Ds., S. Sask R., Camerons of C., 29 Apr 45)

621. 4 Cdn Inf Bde's attack was marked by total success despite the most deplorable weather, which especially hampered the movement of the tanks. Shortly after first light R.H.L.I. which had earlier been pinched out of the front line, took over R. Regt C's. positions around Kirchkinmen. This left the Royals free to assemble in the area presently occupied by Essex Scot on the left and it was from here that Lt-Col Lendrum launched his attack to the north-west. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 28, 29 Apr 45). The heavy rain and muddy roads did not encourage the "going", but R. Regt C. made good progress against very light resistance and by 1030 hours reported that it was in full possession of the four farms* north of Hesterort (4496). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 5831, 5834, 5844)

622. As soon as R. Regt C. was firm, Essex Scot received the signal to advance. Lt-Col Pangman's companies moved through the Royals and, having reached the main highway on a front of two companies, passed on to consolidate on the northern side without trouble. At this point the brigadier, realizing that he must "grab off" as much of the main axis as possible in order to allow for the repair and clearance of the road, ordered R.H.L.I. to thrust on between the two forward units. (Ibid: serials 5809, 5862, 5869, 5875; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.L.I., 29 Apr 45). Having an easy time, the Hamilton Battalion travelled straight up the highway and established a strong position astride the axis centred on the crossroads (420030) 2000 yards west of Dreckort (4499). (Ibid). This did not mean, however, that the road itself was completely clear. There were many large craters and felled trees along the way and the enemy had left an unusually large number of buried bombs and mines to delay the Canadian's advance. (Ibid)

623. On the right flank opposition was equally light against Brigadier Megill's battalions. Of these R.H.C. had swung north in the morning to cross the railway between Hude (4802) and Delmenhorst. The only interference came from a 20-mm gun around which a platoon of Germans were dug in, but this resistance did not last long against the intense fire of 10 Cdn Armd Regt's Shermans. By 1605 hours the Black Watch was strongly entrenched on either side of the railway south of Hude, and at that time R. de Mais went through to attack the town itself (4802). The enemy was totally unable to stand up to the withering fire directed at him by R. de Mais. Within three hours Lt-Col Lalonde reported that Hude was clear and that his patrols were

* Fuchsberg (4397)
Hurrelhausen (4497)
Krahenhoop (4398)
Schoolaber (443981)

out in strength. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.C., R. de Mais, 29 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 5933, 5935, 5945). During all this time, Calg Highrs had remained in their positions north of Hohenboken (5199) but had allowed a portion of 8 Cdn Recce Regt to pass on to the north-west and follow the right side of the railway. In this area, however, the enemy had cratered his roads well. Although some measure of protection was afforded to the Black Watch and to R. de Mais for their attack on Hude, progress was slowed up by the many obstructions. (Ibid, serials 5888, 5895, 5929, 5942)

624. Maj-Gen Matthews immediate problem was to get his brigades in proper line-up for the assault against Oldenburg. For the past twenty-four hours 6 Cdn Inf Bde had held the pivot position while the other two formations swung in from the east. The actual movement for position was not yet completed, and thus on the evening of 29 Apr the orders issued to these brigadiers implied a continuation of the plan until such a time as the General Officer Commanding felt that his line was sufficiently secure to commence what was to be 2 Cdn Inf Div's final attack of the European war. In the centre 4 Cdn Inf Bde was instructed to clear the woods (3900-3999) astride the highway some 3000 yards ahead of the area occupied by R.H.L.I. and also to assume responsibility for the Munderloh sector. On the right 5 Cdn Inf Bde was first to sweep through the forest west of Hude then commence a second sweep northwards towards the Weser River. Brigadier Allard was given the task of clearing that part of Staats Forest Oldenburg which lies north-west of Sandhatten, while on the far left flank 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt advanced in concert with 6 Bde to seize the road junction (3194) west of Astrup (3194) and the farms at Hoven (3393). (Ibid, serial 5953)

625. The operations continued accordingly throughout 30 Apr. On 6 Bde's front Fus M.R. handed over the village of Munderloh to 8 Cdn Recce Regt and then went back to form up within the perimeter held by Camerons of C. north of Kirchhatten. From here the advance was carried north-westwards without opposition. By night-fall Lt-Col Dextraze had occupied all the road and rail crossings (3495) east of Strook (3395) and also held a dominating position overlooking the open ground to the east. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Fus M.R., 30 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 5989, 6000). Meanwhile, S. Sask R. and Camerons of C. had also improved their holdings. S. Sask R. moved north from Sandhatten through the heavily-mined and wooded land to fill in the gap between Fus M.R. and the river to the west. (W.D., S. Sask R., 30 Apr 45). On the other flank Camerons of C. went straight up the brigade's axis from Kirchhatten. By maintaining a fairly heavy curtain of artillery and mortar fire along the open eastern flank, the highlanders were able to make good progress and overrun several small groups of Germans, who, though somewhat reluctant, had been left to cover the obstacles. (W.D., Camerons of C., 30 Apr 45). By the end of the day the Camerons were consolidated firmly astride the main road Kirchhatten - Oldenburg with one company at the crossroads (389958). The other three companies were situated further north and to the left, tying in to complete the brigade's front line with Fus M.R. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 6015, 6019, 6097)

626. The best results of the day were achieved by Brigadier Cabeldu's battalions. Their advance was made over soggy ground, around countless demolitions and craters and through a raze of mines which, like the obstacles, seemed to increase as the Canadians approached Oldenburg. Fortunately the enemy was not

present in any strength, for the state of the ground considerably hampered the movement of most of the Canadian tanks and crocodiles. Only R.H.L.I. were permitted to retain a few tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt on the harder surface of the main axis. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 30 Apr 45). After a morning of patrolling to determine the best routes westwards, all these units moved off; R.H.L.I. in the centre, R. Regt C. on the left following the line Fuchsberg (4397) - Tiefegrund (4197) - Sandtange (3898), while Essex Scot came over the western slopes of the Lintel feature (4300-4400) from the area of Dreckort (4399) and Heiligen (4499). Behind the forward elements of each fighting company the sappers toiled unceasingly to repair and maintain the roads so that the supporting arms and administrative sections of each unit might follow up to do their share in the work at hand. (Ibid, also W.Ds., 2 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 29-30 Apr 45, 11 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 29-30 Apr 45)

627. The enemy was observed on several occasions behind his various road blocks and craters, but whenever the slightest sign of resistance appeared each battalion commander brought his mortars and artillery into play with such good effect that no direct assault was ever necessary. On the right Essex Scot having reached the road leading north from the main axis to the railway line at Wusting (4102), swung towards that place with two companies, while the others kept to their course westwards and (keeping parallel to R.H.L.I.) began to cross the Hennelsberger Moor (3701-3801). Simultaneously, as the R.H.L.I. slowly approached the important road centre (3601) (about 6500 yards south-east of Oldenburg), R. Regt C., having, already cut the road Oldenburg - Kirchhatten (376983) at a point about 2200 yards from 6 Cdn Inf Bde's northern outposts, was now turning north to join hands with its sister battalion. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Apr 45; also serials 6011, 6025, 6039, 6078, 6095, 6100, 6101)

628. Meanwhile the operations by 5 Bde to secure the right flank had gone on despite the appalling ground conditions. R. de Mais completed clearing its area at Hude, then sent a company group on to the north-west to capture Pfahlhausen (4603) while patrols swept west along the railway line to insure the position. With the fall of Pfahlhausen Lt-Col Lalonde organized a battalion stronghold based on Pfahlhausen and the road leading south to the prominent feature in the angle of the railway. This was to provide a protective left screen for Calg Highrs later as well as the start line for 8 Cdn Recce Regt's patrols to the open flank. In due course 8 Cdn Recce Regt fanned out south-westwards to contact 4 Cdn Inf Bde and to secure a further length of the railway leading to Oldenburg. (Ibid, serials 5985, 5986, 5988, 5999, 6003, 6027, 6041, 6064; also W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and R. de Mais, 30 Apr 45)

629. Calg Highrs and R.H.C. began their own extensive sweeps to the north and north-east at about the same time. One company of the Black Watch struck out on a long patrol from the railway south-east of Hude and followed Calg Highrs. It was Lt-Col Thompson's intention to check the parallel roads on his immediate front from his present base, while the northern task force went about its own work. The operation progressed without interference. "B" Coy R.H.C. tailed Calg Highrs as far as the village of Neunuhlen (488054), then turned east in the direction of Hekelermoor (5004). Here the troops established standing patrols while bridges and routes over the canal to the north were checked. This work was completed by late afternoon, whereupon "B" Coy, wet and bedraggled after its long journey over the

water-soaked land, returned to settle within the regimental base on the southern edges of Hude. (W.D., R.H.C., 30 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 5986, 6070)

630. Calg Highrs were the only unit to meet any sort of opposition. The highlanders having passed through R. de Mais at Hude went directly north, following the railway and leap-frogging strong patrols of platoon and company strength one through the other.

At 0900 hrs, "C" Coy headed for their objective some 3000 yds ahead but were halted to protect sappers called up to fill craters and remove road blocks all along the axis. Indeed, during the whole day, heavy explosions indicated that the enemy was denying us the use of all roads in the area; and since the soggy fields criss-crossed with a multitude of ditches, made cross-country vehs movements impossible. It soon became apparent that the advance was to be slow with little close support from the tanks.

(W.D., Calg Highrs, 30 Apr 45)

By 1100 hours, however, "C" Coy, assisted by concentrations of artillery and mortar fire, was consolidating at Ochholt (478053). During the early afternoon, the remaining companies moved up with some Shermans of 10 Cdn Armd Regt to occupy the crossroads (4806) east of Neuenkoop (4706-4806), the road fork at Neunuhlen (4905), and the ground between these two places. At these points the infantry came under long-range small arms and mortar fire, but did not suffer any casualties. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 5986, 5990, 6023, 6032, 6064)

631. Thus, as the last day of Apr ended, Maj-Gen Matthews was able to survey the scene with considerable satisfaction. On the far left the prodding attacks by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt up the road to Wardenburg had enabled 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt to improve its own positions west of the Hunte River. (Ibid, serials 6022, 6031, 6105). On the immediate left 6 Bde was firm in the area of Sandkrug (3595) and ready to thrust northward. In the centre 4 Bde held a threatening position astride the main divisional axis, while on the right Brigadier McGill's battalions were soon to be so strongly placed at Hude that they too would well able to converge on Oldenburg, directly from the east. The immediate object, however, was to regain firm contact and maintain it while the routes to the forward areas were being repaired. This need governed the intention issued to the brigade at 2115 hours 30 Apr, which read as follows:

4 Cdn Inf Bde using area woods 3900 3999 as firm base to open axis and regain firm contact with enemy. 5 Cdn Inf Bde form firm base area HUDE to continue sweep NORTH to R WESER and R HUNTE. 6 Cdn Inf Bde form firm base area SANDKRUG to exploit towards OLDENBURG and regain firm contact. 8 Cdn Recce Regt (14CH) with one sqn to tap out to R WESER remainder in Div res. 3 Cdn LAA Regt to continue adv NORTH.

(Ibid, serial 6088)

632. It is plain to see at this point that much of Maj-Gen Matthews' plan depended upon the work of the engineers. It was strictly a question of time - how much could the sappers do and how long would they take to do it. Certainly the past

week might be correctly termed a sapper's nightmare, and all three field companies of the division were almost exhausted from the continuous labour. Never before had the engineers and infantry worked so intimately for such a long period. (W.Ds., H.Q. C.R.E., 2 Cdn Inf Div; 2 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 7 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 11 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 27-29 Apr 45)

633. Showing considerable cleverness the enemy had challenged Canadian engineers with all sorts of diabolical contraptions: aerial mines wired to bridges, aerial torpedoes buried under the roadbeds, and many other forms of practical hate. All these had been met and mastered without serious injury. But the novelty of the enemy's equipments passed quickly into the mental file of each sapper, for there was little time to spare for study of them. There were craters to be filled, gaps to be bridged, mines to be lifted, and buildings to be "deloused" of any of a thousand and one booby traps. The bulldozers crews did not spare themselves in their effort. These monster machines worked from dawn till far into the night without pause. The engineers knew too well that the infantry needed close support, and only by filling-in the successive craters or by creating a diversion for them could the tanks be kept moving forward. The night 30 Apr/1 May was no exception. On each route one could hear the roar of the Diesels, the clank of shovels and picks, and the sure-toned voices of those directing the work. There were roads to be made so that the division could attack. (W.Ds., 2 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 7 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 11 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 29-30 Apr 45)

THE FALL OF OLDENBURG

Operations 2 Cdn Inf Div, 1-4 May 45^{*}

634. Opposition to the advance of 2 Cdn Inf Div, though somewhat lighter, continued on 1 May. On the main route leading north-eastwards to Oldenburg Brigadier Cabeldu's battalions kept up the pressure, moving forward whenever opportunity presented itself. Rapid movement was out of the question since both the main road and its immediate flanks required much work by the divisional engineers, who laboured long after dark under the glare of searchlights brought forward to illuminate the area. (2 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, op cit, 29 Apr - 5 May 45; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, May 1945). On the right 5 Cdn Inf Bde was kept busy clearing the region about about Hude (4802), which was scarred by mine craters and littered with road blocks. Working northwards along the Hude (4802) - Berne (4910) railway, Calg Highrs encountered a group of enemy and heavily engaged them with medium gun fire; neither R.H.C. or R. de Mais reported any worth-while contact with the enemy during their clearing and patrolling activities. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 1 May 45)

635. The busiest by far of Maj-Gen Matthews' brigades was Brigadier Allard's, which had the task of bringing up the left flank between the Hunte River east of Wardenburg (3096) and the left of 4 Cdn Inf Bde. It was no easy job, for the ground was densely wooded and there were but few roads. Nevertheless, both Fus M.R. and Camerons of C. pressed forward with great determination. By last light Fus M.R. had expanded their positions

* Reference maps as for para 604; also Appx "F"

some 2500 yards north of Streek (3396) to reach the edges of the forest and thus dominate the southern approaches to Bummerstode (3199), while on the right Camerons of C., having swept northwards between the railway and the road Kirchhatten - Oldenburg, now held a strong position in full contact with 4 Cdn Inf Bde, southwest of the main road fork (3601) above Tweelbake (3699 - 3799 - 3899). S. Sask R. rested in reserve throughout the day. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 1 May 45)

636. So ended another day of the chase, with the enemy still hastily withdrawing behind his screen of craters and blown bridges and the Canadian troops working feverishly to brush aside these obstacles in order to close with him. Up to this time there had been a possibility that the enemy's whole scheme of demolitions and retirement would eventually lead to his organized defence of Oldenburg and a last stand based on this ancient city. This theory must now be dispelled, for not only was Oldenburg being outflanked by 4 Cdn Armd Div[≠] from the west but the only troops deemed capable of such a defence were those of 8 Para Div, and these according to a prisoner, had been pulled back much further to the north several days before. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, May 1945, Appx 3, 2 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 83, 1 May 45). The daily intelligence summary states:

It is now clear that the civilian element in **OLDENBURG** is unwilling that the town should be defended. Several PW and linecrossers have reported that the Burgomaster has attempted to have the place declared an open city as it contains at least a dozen medical installations and many wounded incl some Allied personnel. It is not believed that the military commander will be influenced by civilian pressure but there are some indications that the defence will be half-hearted, and two offr PW have stated that the town will not be held.

(Ibid)

637. However, in order to persuade the inhabitants of Oldenburg as to the folly of further resistance, Maj-Gen Matthews ordered his staff to prepare some propaganda leaflets. These were printed at Delmenhorst during the evening of 1 May and at 0900 hours on the following morning a shower of propaganda filled shells was loosed onto the city of Oldenburg. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 2 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, 2 May 45, serial 6870)

638. Meanwhile the movement towards the city went on without interruption other than halts called to allow the sappers to clear the obstruction on the various routes. The rain made the going difficult and roads within the divisional sector soon began to deteriorate. Yet, despite all this, 2 Cdn Inf Div pushed on. On the left 6 Cdn Inf Bde advanced shortly after 1100 hours. S. Sask R. passed through Camerons of C., being preceded by flails thrashing at the road bed to detonate the mines. There was only the slightest resistance, and in a matter of hours S. Sask R. had reached the southern outskirts of Oldenburg. At this point some brisk house to house fighting took place but the main portion of the city was in sight and Lt-Col V. Stotts' men pushed on towards the river. The companies deployed along the water

≠ 4 Cdn Armd Div were out of contact with 7 Para Div.

barrier and covered the demolished bridge site. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and S. Sask R., 2 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May, serial 6977)

639. As the S. Sask R. pressed on the the north, Camerons of C. swung west from their positions towards the railway. "A" and "B" Coys reached the tracks without trouble and it appeared for a time that Lt-Col Rutherford's men would soon be settling along the river on the left of S. Sask R. Brigadier Allard changed his plan, however, and ordered Camerons of C. to disengage and concentrate at Bummerstede (3299) north of Fus M.R. at present positions. Camerons of C. entered Bummerstede (3299) and were consolidated by 2000 hours. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and Camerons of C., 2 May 45). Over on the extreme left both 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt and 29 Cdn Armd Regt (of 4 Cdn Armd Div) also made good progress. In conjunction with Lt-Col Wotherspoon's tanks, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt occupied Tungeln (3099), Zwischenlethe (2999), and Wardenburg, thus securing the left of 6 Bde and freeing Fus M.R. for other employment. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serials 6881, 6894; also W.D., 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 2 May 45)

640. East of the main road (Kirchhatten - Oldenburg) 4 Cdn Inf Bde had also edged forward to enter Oldenburg. The advance began at about mid-morning. R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot both made good gains, for opposition was almost non-existent. R.H.L.I. followed the south side of the railroad (Oldenburg - Hude) and made for the railway bridge (3305). At the same time Essex Scot followed the road north of the tracks to reach the bridges (3405 - 3504) over the Neuer Canal (3503). The Scottish overran the area of Neuenwege (3604) and exploited northwards with strong patrols to sweep the Blankenburger Holz woods and to search out the Kloster Blankenburg estate (3606), which housed a large hospital. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot, 2 May 45)

641. By late afternoon the two forward battalions were firmly holding the south-eastern exits from the city and pouring great volumes of harassing fire on the eastern exits north of the Hunte River. But further operations could not be developed owing to the state of the roads along which the advance had been carried. There was much work for the engineers as the War Diary of 4 Cdn Inf Bde relates.

The principle concern at the moment is engr resources. There is still considerable work to be done on the main highway to make it a good two way axis. Maj Nelson, OC 2 Cdn Fd Coy RCE reported his men would be working all night (again) to complete work. Recces at all br sites were going on and recce boats and bridging material was being rushed fwd so that br ops could begin as soon as practicable.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
2 May 45)

Since nothing more could be accomplished for the time being, Brigadier Cabeldu ordered R. Regt C. into a concentration area in rear of R.H.L.I., (ibid) and while the remainder of 4 brigade firmed up, the divisional artillery moved in bounds to new positions in preparation for the attack on Oldenburg proper. (Ibid)

642. Now that the major part of 2 Cdn Inf Div had turned in towards the city, the part played by 5 Cdn Inf Bde about Hude and by 3 Brit Inf Div on Maj-Gen Matthews' right flank

should be noted. From the firm base at Hude, which was in turn protected on the left by R. de Mais' positions at Pfahlhausen (4603) and on the high ground immediately north-west of Hude, Brigadier McGill's* other battalions probed to the north and north-east. Calg Highrs went straight up the railway for about 3000 yards, then turned westwards past Neuenkoop (4706 - 4806) to explore the country around Koterende (4607). In this area the enemy was contacted and heavily engaged by artillery. At the same time other patrols moved to the right of the railroad tracks towards Hiddigwarden (5105), calling down gunfire freely whenever any suspicious movement was observed. As it was tiring work the Commanding Officer spelled off his companies in rotation and allowed each a period for rest and refitting. (W.D. Calg Highrs, 2 May 45)

643. The Black Watch operated in a similar manner. Early on 2 May "A" Coy was moved out to Hekelermoor (5103) with instructions to establish a base there and patrol through the villages of Hiddigwarden (5107), Hekeln (5207), and Harmenhausen (5306 - 5406). The company reached Hekelermoor (5103) without incident, but had considerable trouble in finding a way across the canals to the north-east. Finally, after wide-spread search, a footbridge was located and the patrols set out. Harmenhausen (5107) and Hekeln (5207) were found clear of enemy but when the Canadians approached Hiddigwarden they were heavily fired upon and were forced to disengage. A withdrawal was then ordered and a smoke screen laid down to cover the troops as they crossed the open fields back to "A" Coy's firm base. The enemy's reaction was not taken lightly and, in order to ensure the safety of the foremost position, "C" Coy was dispatched to Hekelermoor to reinforce the holding of that place until the following day. (W.D., R.H.C., 2 May 45). It was now decided to attack Hiddigwarden, and the brigade commander asking for Weasels to transport his assault force across the soggy fields. (Ibid)

644. 185 Bde of 3 Brit Inf Div, still based along the railway to the north of Stenum (5598), was equally active with its patrols. Its actions can best be described by the paragraph contained in report produced by General Crerar's liaison officer at headquarters of 2 Cdn Corps.

2. 3 Brit Inf Div: 8 Brit Inf Bde. Now cleared river bank as far WEST as 6004. 185 Brit Inf Bde have cleared up to rd DEICHSHAUSEN 5806 - BUTZHAUSEN 5406. NO further adv is possible until the highground around VEGESACK has been cleared.

(First Cdn Army: Liaison Offrs Reports, op cit, May 1945, dated 021700B)

A glance at the map of the area of Vegesack (5809) will indicate the importance of the high feature. This does not mean, however, that the British were stalemated. Observation posts already set up by 185 Bde proved most useful, and whenever movement was seen it was quickly attended to by the guns at the British brigade's disposal. The positions of this brigade remained unchanged until the cease fire on 5 May. (Scarfe, Assault Division, op cit, p. 268)

* Brigadier McGill, D.S.O., went on course to U.K. on 1 May and his place was taken by Lt-Col S.W. Thompson, D.S.O., M.C.

THE CROSSING OF THE KUSTEN CANAL AND
HUNTE RIVER BY 2 CDN INF DIV, 3 MAY 45. ^x

645. Maj-Gen Matthews' main task now was to get into Oldenburg, clear the city and push through to the north. Plans for this operation were drawn up before dusk on 2 May. There were actually alternative plans, one to be carried out if Oldenburg was not defended while the other would be put into effect if any sign of resistance to the river crossings arose.

Plan (a) if OLDENBURG abandoned. 4 Cdn Inf Bde to cross KUSTEN canal and sweep to NE of inter bde bdy. 6 Cdn Inf Bde to cross KUSTEN canal and sweep to NW of inter bde bdy. 8 Cdn Recce Regt (14CH) be prepared to pass through OLDENBURG directed on axis OLDENBURG - MEERKIRCHEN 3819. Plan (b) if crossings opposed. 4 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes to take up posns along canal to recce and prepare for crossings. 5 Cdn Inf Bde to continue sweep NORTH to R WESER and R. HUNTE. 3 Cdn LAA. Regt to continue adv NORTH to OLDENBURG.

(2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit,
2 May 45, serial 6965)

646. During the night 2/3 May each of forward battalions laced the northern bank of the river with small arms, tank and artillery fire. At the same time the southern bank was carefully swept over by patrols, who gathered in many prisoners as well as a considerable number of slave labourers, some of whom were immediately put to work improving the Canadian axes. (Ibid, serials 6993, 7003, 7005, 7008; also W.Ds., Fus M.R., R.H.L.I., Essex Scot, Camerons of C., S. Sask R., 2 May 45). Meanwhile, Brigadier Allard had ordered Fus M.R. to move up to the river line on the left of S. Sask R. Accordingly, Lt-Col J.A. Destraxe had his first company at the river bank by 0400 hours 3 May and, using whatever assault boats the engineers could provide, soon established the full company on the north bank. There had been no opposition. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 May 45; also W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1945, Appx 4, Ops Log, 3 May 45, serials 7, 8, 10). (Ibid, serial 9)

647. Shortly after Fus M.R. reported their success, a further message from Lt-Col Destraxe indicated that the enemy was under orders to leave the town. His message read:

Infm from civs and PW. Enemy just received orders to get out of town. Would suggest harassing fire on rd centres going out of town, also air OP to be in action Approx str of enemy 800.

(Ibid, serial 16)

A sustained fire of every sort was soon raining down on the noted avenues of escape. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2/3 May 45, serial 7028)

648. Meanwhile the build-up by Fus M.R. went on without interruption. Assault boats ferried most of the troops across, although others crossed the water barrier over a bridge which had been first located by air observation planes. Originally this structure (320037), which lies directly south of

^x Reference maps as for para 604; also Appx "F".

Oldenburg, was found to be ready for demolition, but the ever-quick engineers soon remedied this and put the bridge in working order. (Ibid, serial 7027, 7030). By 0930 hours Fus M.R. were all across the obstacle and working deeper into the city towards the inter-brigade boundary as indicated by the line of the railroad. (Ibid, serial 7031)

649. Once the French-Canadians had expanded their lodgment, Brigadier Allard moved his tactical headquarters across the canal and set about arranging for the advance of his other battalions. Camerons of C. had long since been warned to move up into the area occupied by S. Sask R., and during the morning final details were discussed for exploitation. Camerons of C. crossed into the main portion of Oldenburg at 1415 hours, and first swung westwards to a line of outposts on the left flank of Fus M.R. (who were by this time clearing the business section of the city), then further west towards Bloherfeld (2705). Later in the day S. Sask R., accompanied by its armoured support from 10 Cdn Armd Regt, also crossed the canal and moved swiftly through to take up a position just east of Ofen (2808). Similarly, Fus M.R. also shifted to the north-eastern outskirts of the city to occupy the area south of the Airfield (2908, 2909). The movement of 6 Cdn Inf Bde was mainly made for security purposes to ensure that none of the enemy could re-enter the city. While the infantry battalions adjusted themselves, a troop of "A" Sqn 8 Cdn Recce Regt ventured further north to regain contact. (Ibid, serial 7097; also W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 May 45; 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 3 May 45). All in all it had been a day of real achievement. The western portion of Oldenburg was clear, 4 Cdn Armd Div had been contacted, and the troops had not suffered in the venture. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and S. Sask R., 3 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, 3 May 45, serial 7104)

4 CDN INF BDE MOVES INTO OLDENBURG, 3 MAY 45^{*}

650. Over on the right in 4 Cdn Inf Bde's sector, our troops enjoyed similar success. After a night of exchanging volleys of small arms fire with a few diehards of the enemy's rearguard, the commanding officer of R.H.L.I. got in touch with the mayor of the city, who volunteered to guide the Canadians across the river to take over the city. Actually this misguided civilian could do little else since 6 Bde already had some of its troops inside the citadel. Nevertheless, Lt-Col H.C. Arrell decided to act quickly and ordered all his companies to cross the obstacle at once in the assault boats which had recently arrived.

These were manned most enthusiastically by Polish and Russian ex-PW who soon had all R.H.L.I. rifle Coys across and moving through the town.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
3 May 45)

651. At this stage Brigadier Cabeldu called an "Orders Group" to outline his plan for the occupation of the eastern and northern sections of the city and for the pursuit. Since the enemy, in true will-o-the-wisp fashion, had vanished from the scene, R. Regt C. was to cross immediately followed by Esse* Scot. (Ibid)

* Reference maps as for para 604; also Appx "F".

During the morning there were fantastic scenes in the city - one or two Cdn offrs armed only with pistols marching back with 50 or 60 enemy tps armed to the teeth. Most of the citizens kept in doors greatly assisting the checking. The Burgomaster proved very helpful particularly in organizing the local police to help in the patrolling. In a very short time all houses had been checked and the citizens had posted up their lists of household personnel.

(Ibid)

The Royals and Essex Scot crossings encountered no difficulty.
(Ibid)

652. While the infantry units searched out the houses and patrolled the city streets, intensive reconnaissance of the canal and river banks were carried out to locate a good bridge-site so that the supporting vehicles might follow up. At first the situation appeared discouraging but as the brigade's diary states -

Fortunately, shortly after noon the engr in blowing away part of damaged br on the main entrance in 6 Bde S Sask R area blew the br flooring right into posn. It was one chance in a million for within half an hour there was a solid 40 br capable of two way t/c with excellent highway approaches on both sides-----
---At once Div gave this bde vehs priority of passage and even before the other brs were completed our vehs were streaming across to follow up the rifle coys on foot.

(Ibid)

653. By mid afternoon 4 Cdn Inf Bde was firmly consolidated on the northern outskirts of Oldenburg. Having completed a sweep through the city, R.H.L.I. were settled in the angle formed by the railway and the road bounded by the villages of Hoheheide (3308) - Gr. Bornhorst (3508) in the region of Ohmstede (3408 - 3505). This position represented the right flank of 4 Cdn Inf Bde. In the centre Essex Scot held strong company areas astride the road Haseln (3309) - Nadorst (3308), while on the left R. Regt C. faced north along the road south of Beim Weissen Moor (3109 - 3209). None of these units encountered any opposition on the objectives which they now occupied. In these areas the three fighting regiments were to pass a quiet night. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, 3 May 45)

654. There was little change for the rest of the division. 5 Cdn Inf Bde on the far right flank put in another day of patrolling towards the Weser river. 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, now pinched out of the battle by the converging advances of 6 Cdn Inf Bde and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, was ordered to stand down but to be prepared to move on short notice, while Maj-Gen Vokes' armoured reconnaissance unit, having completed its long semi-circular journey from its original base at Garrel (1984), was now given a priority of passage over the bridges south of Oldenburg so that it could rejoin its parent formation west of the city. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 3 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, 3 May 45, serials 7074, 7095, 7107, 7125, 7128). But the one group of tired

troops who most deserved a rest was not allowed any such luxury - these were the engineers, whose long hours of toil for the past several days and nights had mainly been responsible for the success achieved so far. There were still many bridges to be built, mines to be lifted, and craters to be filled in so that the build-up for the next advance might be completed. (W.Ds., 2 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., 7 Cdn Fd. Coy, R.C.E., 11 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., 3 May 45)

655. Apart from the general movement forward of supplies and supporting weapons, there was little other activity in the night 3/4 May. The intention was for 4 and 6 Inf Bdes to regroup in their present areas. 5 Cdn Inf Bde was to continue its vigil on the eastern flank. The Corps intention stated nothing more than that 2 Cdn Inf Div would continue its advance northwards in due time. (Ibid, 4 May, serial 7144). The bridging situation at the moment governed all movement and, until the build-up was completed and the guns could come further forward, the pursuit had to wait. On the morning of 4 May Maj-Gen Matthews in his remarks on the continuation of the operation stated that little was known as to how far the main German force had withdrawn. (2 Cdn Inf Div - Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, op cit, 28 Apr - 5 May 45, para 5 and 6). 2 Cdn Inf Div at this time was completely out of contact. The reconnaissance troops (8 Cdn Recce Regt) were out all across the front, but so far, even they had little to report apart from the usual road blocks, craters, mines, and felled trees. Later in the day, when it appeared that the advance towards the North Sea would be resumed, a change in dispositions was ordered. 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt was instructed to take over from 5 Cdn Inf Bde so that the latter formation might be free to move on up the Nordenham "thumb" north of Oldenburg. Maj-Gen Matthews' object, as announced on the afternoon of 4 May, was to

to get astride the road and railway running south-west across the "thumb" from BRAKE (square 4296). 8 Cdn Recce Regt was required to recce across the entire front of 2 Cdn Inf Div.

(Ibid)

The plan called for a thrust on a front of one brigade led by 5 Cdn Inf Bde, with 4 Cdn Inf Bde clearing the flanks and 6 brigade in reserve. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 May 45)

657. The order group held at headquarters 5 Cdn Inf Bde left no doubt as to the Canadian's intentions for the morrow if further aggressive action was necessary. (Ibid). But, as was the case in other sections, rumour of the enemy's capitulation was also circulating among Maj-Gen Matthews' men. (Ibid)

658. By midday of 4 May 45 the situation all across Lt-Gen Simonds' front was completely favourable. Oldenburg had fallen to 2 Cdn Inf Div; 4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Pol Armd Div, with improved roads behind them and fair going promised to the north, were girding themselves for the final dash to the coast; while 3 Cdn Inf Div was accepting the surrender of large numbers of the enemy on the road to Emden, at the same time closing in steadily on that port. The story of each of these advances has already been told, but in order to complete the picture of 2 Cdn Corps Operations it is essential to note the part played by 5 Cdn Armd Div while under Lt-Gen Simonds' command. (See Paras 319, 357, 370, 375, 376 to this report with regard to the relief of 3 Cdn Inf Div by 5 Cdn Armd Div)

OPERATIONS OF 5 CDN ARMD DIV

The Move From Western Holland to the Groningen Area

20 Apr 45

659. 5 Cdn Armd Div's operations during this period may be conveniently divided into two phases. Phase I began on 20 Apr 45 and lasted until 26 Apr 45. This included the move up from Western Holland to the Groningen (2215) area, the relief of 3 Cdn Inf Div, and the regrouping prior to the fully-developed attack designed to eliminate the Delfzijl (4526) pocket. As these moves were of a non-tactical nature and involved occupying areas which had been previously cleared, it is considered that a more coherent story would result if they were described before Phase II, which involved the actual assault on the Pocket beginning on 24 Apr 45. This plan will be followed in the narrative below.

660. On 20 Apr 45 5 Cdn Armd Div was operating in Western Holland under 1 Cdn Corps. Divisional headquarters was located at Barnevelde (5295), 5 Cdn Armd Bde at Putten (5408) and 11 Cdn Inf Bde at Veldwijk (5413). (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 5 Cdn Armd Bde, and 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Apr 45). In the morning Maj-Gen B.M. Hoffmeister, C.B.E., D.S.O., E.D., went to H.Q. First Cdn Army for a conference with the G.O.C.-in-C. at which the passing of his division to 2 Cdn Corps and its future movements were outlined. (W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Div op cit, 20 Apr 45; AEF 45/1 Cdn Army/C/H Army Ops Log, serial 69, 20 Apr 45). Later in the day Lt-Gen Simonds held an orders group at his headquarters and gave the details of his plan for the employment of 5 Cdn Armd Div. As a result, 5 Cdn Armd Div was to take over from 3 Cdn Inf Div in the provinces of Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe, in order to allow that division to move further right and continue operations east of the Ems river. The area assigned to 5 Cdn Armd Div was bounded by the coast of Holland from Zwolle (8936) to the line of the Groningen (2215) - Delfzijl (4626) canal, inclusive, representing a distance of some one hundred and fifty-three miles. 5 Cdn Armd Div's functions in the new area were to be; one, the guarding of the coast of Holland against any attempted German landing from the still-occupied Frisian Islands, and two, to prevent any enemy escaping from the pocket of Western Holland via the IJsselmeer through Friesland. (W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 20 Apr 45; AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket II: Folio I, 5 Cdn Armd Div History of Ops, 31 March to 5 May 45, Part III; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Apr 45; AEF: 45/11 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D Report on Ops 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 April - 2 May 45)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083 Netherlands 1:50,000 Sheet 7 - Groningen, G.S.G.S. 4416 Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheets 11 - Emden, 11 - Groningen West, 1A - Leeuwarden, 2A - Denhelder, G.S.G.S. 4414 Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets 2607 - Delfzijl, 2507 - Vierhuizen, 2707 - Siddeburen, 2506 - Uithuizermeeden, 2606 - Westeremden, 2706 - Woltersum, 2608 - Loquard, 2705 - Woldendorp, 2605 - Warfum, 2705 - Groningen; also Appx "G"

661. For this task 5 Cdn Armd Div was organized into two brigade groups, called originally Cumberland Force and Johnston Force after the names of the respective commanders of 5 Cdn Armd Bde and 11 Cdn Inf Bde. A divisional reserve was also formed. This designation was of very short duration, for an order issued by Divisional H.Q. in the evening of 20 Apr gave instructions that the Commanders' names would not be used and that the brigade groups would be known by their respective numbers. (W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Div op cit, Appx 36, Message 20 Apr 45). The composition of the brigade groups were as follows:

5 Cdn Armd Bde Group

H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde
2 Cdn Armd Regt (Ld S.H. (R.C.))
9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.)
Westmr R. (Mot)
Perth R.
8 Cdn Fd Regt
88 Bty 5 Cdn L.A.A. Regt
1 Cdn Fd Sqn

11 Cdn Inf Bde Group

H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde
C.B. Highrs
Ir R.C.
3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.)
4 Cdn A Tk Regt
17 Cdn Fd Regt
41 Bty 5 Cdn L.A.A. Regt
10 Cdn Fd Sqn

Divisional Reserve

5 Cdn Armd Regt (8 N.B.H.)
5 Cdn L.A.A. Regt less two batteries

(Ibid: appx 34, Op Instr
No. 1, 19 Apr 45)

662. 5 Division's move north began on 21 Apr, with headquarters and 11 Cdn Inf Bde Group leading. Divisional headquarters staged overnight in Heerenveen (7886) and reached Groningen (2215) on 22 Apr 45. The infantry brigade had all but one unit in the new location by 2359 hours on 21 Apr. Brigade headquarters set up at Heerenveen. C.B. Highrs were centred on Dokkum (3427) and occupied the ground enclosed by Holwerd (7732), Nieuwe Bildijk (6125), and Engwierum (9326), in a coast defence role. Ir R.C. made their headquarters at Joure (6987) with companies at Sneek (6059), Makkum (4398), Lemmer (6374), and Stavoren (9326). 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt, with under command 11 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy (The Princess Louise Fusiliers), was organized into two battle groups and situated at Franeker (5312) and Harlingen (4411). It was given the task of securing the eastern end of the Causeway (421026) running across the Ijsselmeer. 41 Cdn L.A.A. Bty was responsible for clearing stragglers from the Zwolle area and maintaining contact with 1 Cdn Inf Div across the Ijssel river. 17 Cdn Fd Regt was deployed in support, its battery areas being near Harlingen (4411) and opposite the island of Ameland (6841). 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.) did not travel with the brigade convoy but moved independently in two groups, wheeled first and tracked second. The wheeled party arrived in the brigade sector on 22 Apr and concentrated at

Oudeschoot (8083). A further change on the same date was the occupation of Ijsselmuiden (7843) by 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt. The second portion of G.G.H.G., completing its move on 23 Apr, went into position with Regimental Headquarters and "A" Sqn at Oudeschoot, "B" Sqn at Akkerwoude (8223), and "C" Sqn at Joure (6987). Later in the day "C" Sqn moved to Sneek (6059). Since 3 Cdn Inf Div had started leaving the area before 5 Cdn Armd Div arrived, there was no formal hand-over. The change was completed without incident. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/C/H Ops Log, serial 210, 21-22 Apr 45; AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA/C/F, Folio 1, Reports on Ops, 20 Apr to 2 May 45, 17 Cdn Fd Regt, 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt and 5 Cdn L.A.A. Regt; W.D., 2 Cdn Armd Recce Regt 22-23 Apr 45)

663. The main body of 5 Cdn Armd Bde Group left the Putten (5408) area at 1700 hours 21 Apr 45. After the start a change of route to a more direct one caused some confusion, and the units did not arrive in a body. The diarist of the armoured brigade wrote:

Units kept coming in all night, some of the Arty getting into the old route and not arriving until the morning of 22 Apr 45.

(W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde,
21 Apr 45)

On the night of 21 Apr and morning of 22 Apr locations of the brigade group were; Brigade headquarters, 2 Cdn Armd Regt and 9 Cdn Armd Regt in the vicinity of Vries (2298); 5 Cdn Armd Regt at Assen (2190); Westmr R. (Mot) at Tolbert (0709); Perth R. at Zuidlaren (2900); 88 Cdn L.A.A. Bty in area (2697); and 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.), wheeled convoy only, at Eelde (2105). (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 22 Apr 45; AEF: 5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA, op cit, 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.)). The above moves brought the bulk of 5 Cdn Armd Bde group into north-western Holland ready to carry out its part of the divisional relief of 3 Cdn Inf Div.

664. Later on 22 Apr 5 Cdn Armd Bde began its take over. Brigade headquarters was established at Bedum (2423) along with battalion headquarters of Westmr R. (Mot), which placed companies at Warffum (2133), Uithuizen (2935), Winsum (1827), and Onderdendam (2327). The Westministers thus took up position on the left flank of the brigade. Perth R. relieved the Regina Rif, setting up headquarters at (387337) and companies at Losdrop (3931), (402343), Bierum (4132), and Godlinze (3831). All the above was completed by 2300 hours 22 Apr 45. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, Westmr R. and Perth R., 22 Apr 45)

665. In the afternoon of 23 Apr a conference between the G.O.C. 5 Cdn Armd Div and 3 Cdn Inf Div was held. Plans were made for the further relief of Maj/Gen Keefer's formation. The Armoured Division was to take over as far as practicable toward the Dutch-German border. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div 23 Apr; 5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, serial 245, 23 Apr 45). 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) deployed in support of 5 Cdn Armd Bde in the area of Wirdum (3625) (5 Cdn Armd Div RCA, report on Ops, op cit, 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.)). 2 Cdn Armd Regt proceeded to the Westmr R. (Mot) area to be ready to take over from the motor battalion. (W.D., 2 Cdn Armd Regt 23 Apr 45). By 2330 hours, 9 Cdn Armd Regt, with "A" and "B" Sqns dismounted as infantry, relieved the R. Wpg Rif in Appingedam (4125). The relief was completed satisfactorily although movement was hampered by heavy shelling from the German

coast batteries around Delfzijl and Marsum (4227). (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt 23 Apr 45). Meanwhile Ir R.C. had come under command of 5 Cdn Armd Bde and were situated around Siddeburen (4217). They were to take over from 1 C. Scot R. as soon as the Scottish had captured Wagenborgen (4517). W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde and Ir R.C. 23 Apr 45)

666. Further changes took place on 24 Apr. On this date a final settlement of the boundary was made between 5 Cdn Armd Div and 3 Cdn Inf Div. The Dutch - German border, inclusive to 5 Cdn Armd Div, from Coevorden (5853) to the Dollart (2060) was defined as the dividing line between the two divisions. (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, serial 296, 24 Apr 45). H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde went to Ten Boer (3020), handing over command of its sector to G.G.H.G. The Horse Guards occupied Leeuwarden (6914) with R.H.Q. and "A" Sqn. (W.D., 11 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 7, Ops Log, serial 7, 24 Apr 45, W.D. 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt 24 Apr 45). 2 Cdn Armd Regt took over from Westmr R. (Mot), which then moved to positions on the division's right flank, which had been open up to this time. By 1600 hours it was situated in the area of Oostwolde (5312). Meanwhile Ir R.C. had completed in the early morning a successful relief of 1 C. Scot R., locating headquarters at Siddeburen (4217), "A" & "B" Coys in Wagenborgen (464184 and 459175), "C" Coy in Nieuwolda (4817), and Support Coy at (414176). Two troops of tanks from 5 Cdn Armd Regt were placed in support of the Ir R.C. stood by at battalion headquarters awaiting the infantry advance. 17 Cdn Fd. Regt, less one battery, deployed in rear of the Irish in its usual supporting role. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 2 Cdn Armd Regt, Westmr R. (Mot), Ir R.C., 24 Apr 45)

667. At 0900 hours on 25 Apr 11 Cdn Inf Bde was given command of 5 Cdn Armd Brigade's sector, and the inter-brigade boundary was set as follows; (all inclusive or exclusive to 11 Cdn Inf Bde) a line from, exclusive Noorderhoogebrug (2217), to exclusive Zuidwolde (2319), to inclusive Westeremden (3128), to Kolhol (3634) and (420380). (W.D. H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, page 16 and Appx 9, serial 1273, 25 Apr 45). More regrouping in the division saw the C.B. Highrs concentrated at Loppersum (3226) in the role of 11 Cdn Inf Bde reserve. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 25 Apr 45)

668. On 26 Apr 31 Brit A.A. Bde, with under command 98 Cdn A. Tk Bty and in support 342 Brit H.A.A. Regt, took over the left sector of 5 Cdn Armd Div area from G.G.H.G. The boundary between the Anti-Aircraft Brigade and 5 Cdn Armd Bde was; all inclusive to 5 Cdn Armd Bde, from (949259), along the road to Kollum (9421), to the road junction (954195), to Buitenpost (9218) and the line of the road south-east to the road junction (962135). (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, serial 1294, 26 Apr 45). After the relief G.G.H.G. moved into 5 Cdn Armd Bde area, and located R.H.Q. at Kollum (9421), "A" Sqn at Kollumerpomp (9724), "B" Sqn at Dokkum (8427), and "C" Sqn at Grijpskerk (0419). (W.D., 2 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 26 Apr 45). A composite group formed of dismounted gunners from 16 Bty and self-propelled guns from 82 Bty 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt was given a right-flank protection task. It took up position between Finsterwolde (3711) and the canal on the Dutch-German border, where it remained until the end of operations. Apart from picking up a few stragglers, there was no activity on this part of the Divisional front. (5 Cdn Armd Div RCA, report on Ops, op cit, 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt, 20 Apr to 2 May 45). From this date to the end of hostilities, 5 Cdn Armd Bde and 31 Brit A.A. Bde carried out a passive coast-watching function,

with nothing of importance to report. * (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 26 Apr to 3 May 45)

THE DELFZIJL POCKET: TOPOGRAPHY

669. Before going on to an account of the fighting involved in the clearing of the Delfzijl pocket, it is proposed to give first a brief description of the ground over which 5 Cdn Armd Div had to advance and secondly an estimate of the German forces involved. When taken over by the Armoured Division, the Delfzijl pocket could be said to be contained by the Ems estuary and a line running from Hoog-Watum (433335) on the coast through Bierum (4132), Krewerd (4029), Appingedam (4125), Wagenborgen (4618), and Oostwolde (5312) to the Dollart at (582172). This represented a perimeter of approximately 19 miles in length. On the 24 Apr units of 5 Cdn Armd Div held this perimeter, having taken over from 3 Cdn Inf Div. Any subsequent advances resulted in enemy reaction; therefore this area has been selected as the extent of the "Delfzijl Pocket" when the assault began.

670. A glance at the map will show that the area was divided into two sectors, one in the North and the other in the South. They were separated by a flooded region roughly wedge-shaped with its apex reaching the town of Delfzijl and its sides bounded on the left by the Damster river and on the right by the Afwatering canal. Military operations in the flooded region were so difficult that a frontal advance on Delfzijl was not considered feasible. Generally, there was very little cover in the area, the ground being flat and woods non-existent. Vehicle traffic, tracked or otherwise, was restricted solely to roads. Although the fields (polders) were too soft to bear the weight of any transport, they could be crossed by infantry on foot. The effect of artillery fire on troops in the open was considerably lessened because the shells tended to penetrate into the ground before exploding, thus reducing the number and range of lethal fragments. Two railway lines ran into Delfzijl from Loppersum (3426) and Slochteren (3713). Their embankments provided a measure of cover in that they were about four feet above the rest of the ground. Delfzijl itself was the only fairly large built-up area, being about 1200 yards in length and 300 yards in width. It was well isolated from the right sector by a river and two canals converging to the south-west of the town, which cut it off from the land to the west. Small villages were scattered throughout the whole area, but the houses, unlike those in Italy, provided very poor protection. Due to the flatness of the terrain visibility was very good thus making movement in daylight extremely hazardous. (Maps: Eastern Holland 1:25,000, Sheets 2606, 2607, 2608, 2706, 2707, 2708).

THE DELFZIJL POCKET: ENEMY STRENGTH

671. The backbone of the enemy's defensive strength in the pocket was built around three Naval Fortress Battalions, Nos. 359, 360 and 368. As their title implies, these battalions were trained for defence of fortifications and had little or no experience in conducting operations in open warfare. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Army/I/F Int Summary No 300, para 3). The exact number of enemy troops opposing 5 Cdn Armd Div is rather hard to estimate because no count of their dead is given. However, 3821 prisoners of war were taken by

* No further mention will be made of these formations during the story of the battle to follow.

11 Cdn Inf Bde Group and 39 by 5 Cdn Armd Bde. (W.D., 11 Cdn Inf Bde., 3 May 45 and W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Bde Appx 9, Ops Log serial 1175, 24 Apr 45). A prisoner captured by the Westmr R. (Mot) stated that a force of approximately 300 were manning the guns on Reider spit. This figure cannot be checked as all Germans were evacuated before these guns were overrun. (W.D., Westmr R. 30 Apr 45). Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the total enemy strength was well over 4,000. As in all pockets of this nature, it was filled with remnants of field formations together with all sorts of base and lines of communication troops. They were organized into small battle groups, which proved to be comparatively ineffective due to the inexperience of many of the men in infantry fighting. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/L/F Int Summary No 131, Part 1, 25 Apr 45)

672. Field works and digging were on an extensive scale. A continuous trench system, bounding the landward side of the pocket, was constructed more or less parallel to the coast and about 2000 yards inland. It was roughly 20,000 yards in length, beginning at (439306) and ending in the area of the Reider Spit (5624). (Map: Eastern Holland, Delfzijl 1:25,000, Def overprint 20 Apr 45; W.D. 9 Cdn Armd Regt, Air Photos, dated 19 Apr 45). It was, of course, impossible to occupy these trenches in their entirety; therefore the defensive system was a series of prepared localities based on the various built-up areas. These were centred on Nansum (4329), Holwierde (4229), Biesum (4327), Uitwierde (4427), Delfzijl (4526), Farmsum (4625), Weiwerd (4724), Woldendorp (5320) and the Reider Spit (5623). Mines were encountered in some numbers, mainly in the Nansum-Holwierde area, north of Appingedam, and across the neck of Reider Spit. (W.D. Perth Regt, B.C.D., & Westmr R., April 1945). This was the general picture of enemy strength, dispositions, and prepared defences. (W.Ds., Perth R., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, IN R.C., Westmr R., C.B. Highrs, 23 Apr to 3 May 45)

673. The weapons available to the Germans were a varied lot. The artillery in the pocket was not numerous only 18 guns of 75-mm or over being captured. (AEF: 11 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D Docket I, Report on Ops 20 Apr - 3 May 45, Appx "A"). This comparatively small number of guns at first made it difficult to reconcile the many reports of severe shelling sent in by all units. However, this was clarified somewhat when it was realized that 28-cm Batteries on Borkum fired ten to fifteen rounds per gun daily into the Delfzijl area, and heavy coast guns in Emden were also active. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Army/L.F. 1 Cdn Army Int Summary No 300 and No 305). The main enemy batteries within the pocket were located around the Nansum (5426) area and the Reider Spit. The former were 105 Millimetre and the latter 12.8-cm flak guns used in a ground role. Both were in concrete emplacements and very difficult to neutralize. In fact, none of these guns were knocked out by counter-battery fire throughout the operation. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA Folio I, 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) Report on Ops 20 Apr - 2 May 45). Two self-propelled guns were captured but there is no evidence of any tanks. 20-mm Flak guns were plentiful, and there were sufficient light machine guns to equip the rifle companies of about eight battalions. 81-mm mortars were surprisingly few, only six being found. The rest of the weapons included the normal infantry types such as rifles, grenades, rocket launchers, and light mortars. It would seem that the Germans never carried pistols, or at any rate their presence never seemed to be reported. This operation was no exception in that respect. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops Appx "A" op cit)

THE CLEARING OF THE DELFZIJL POCKET: PHASE I, 23 APR 45 [#]

674. To tell the story of the actual clearing of the Delfzijl pocket it is necessary to go back to 23 Apr 45. On that date the regrouping of the assaulting units had been completed and the attack began. Although the end of German resistance was expected in the near future, it was decided to start the attack at once for the following reasons: one, the length of the perimeter meant that three of the four battalions available would have to be kept deployed at all times in order to maintain the necessary pressure on the enemy forces; two, the weather was miserable; and three, the German shelling was accurate and was taking a steady toll of Canadian troops. The plan adopted was divided into two phases; Phase I called for a reduction of the perimeter and Phase II a direct assault on Delfzijl. To carry out the details of Phase I, Perth R. was to seize and consolidate the line of Holwierde (4229) - Nansum (4329). B.C.D. were to face up to the enemy east of Appingedam (4125), but not to get involved in a formal attack. Ir R.C. was to investigate the flooded area south of Appingedam, push forward to the coast in the vicinity of Oterdum (5024) - Termunterzijl (5323) and, as soon as relieved by Westmr R. (Mot) in this area, swing left and attack towards Farmsum (4625). Westmr R. (Mot) was to move to Termunterzijl (5323) and then turn right to clear the Reider Spit. Finally, C.B. Highrs were to remain in reserve with tasks to be allotted later. (AEF: 45/11 Cdn Inf Bde, Report on Ops 20 April - 2 May 45). Tank support was supplied by 5 Cdn Armd Regt (8 N.B.H.). One squadron was attached to Perth R. and two troops to each of Ir R.C. and Westmr R. (Mot). (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, Appx 9 Ops Log, serial 1190, dated 24 Apr 45). No details were given originally regarding the details of Phase II. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit)

675. Phase I of the operations to clear the Delfzijl pocket began on 23 Apr with Perth R. advancing to the attack on Holwierde (4229). From the account to follow, it will be seen that this area produced the most severe fighting, because any advances here more directly affected the defences of Delfzijl than elsewhere. At 1600 hours 23 Apr Lt-Col M.W. Andrew held an Orders Group and outlined the plan for his battalion. This called for a simultaneous occupation of Groote Nes (424315) and Kleine Nes (420312) by "C" Coy and Krewerd (4029) by Sp Coy, to begin after last light. On the successful completion of these moves, elements of "A" Coy were to take Katmis (420300) and Olde Klooster (4113304), and "B" Coy, reinforced by a platoon from "D" Coy, were to seize Holwierde. The action began well. Krewerd was occupied without opposition at 0045 hours and "C" Coy was on its objectives by 0200 hours. The enemy began to react with accurate shelling. The effectiveness of his fire may be judged when it is realized that he had guns on the coast at (439302) and therefore was able to reach the whole of the Perth's area at a range of only about 3000 yards. One platoon of "B" Coy reached (420302) by 0505 hours, followed by a sub-unit of "A" Coy on Katmis by 0525 hours. "B" Coy reported opposition and called for artillery support, which was promptly given. Enemy guns continued to give trouble, but by 1015 hours "B" Coy was firm on the north edge of Holwierde. The main resistance came from artillery fire, and the day's fighting resulted in the Perth's having one officer and seven other ranks killed, one officer and twenty-three other ranks wounded, and one other rank missing. They took 22 prisoners. (W.D., Perth R. 23-24 April 1945; W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Bde Appx 8, Ops Log serials 1151, 1159, 1160, 1217, 1310, 1810, 1925, 1231, 24 Apr 45)

Reference maps as for para 659; also Appx "H".

676. Meanwhile, "A" and "B" Sqns, B.C.D., dismounted, with two troops of tanks from "C" Sqn in support, had relieved R. Wpg Rif in Appingedan by 2310 hours 23 Apr and had occupied positions already described. Two bridges in the immediate area were checked, and a troop of tanks sent from "C" Sqn to Jukwerd (4027) on picket duty to prevent any enemy from infiltrating between B.C.D. and Perth R. A patrol of three Reconnaissance tanks was sent to Heekhuizen (415278) to clear out any Germans who might be there, but no contact was made. Accurate and heavy enemy shelling continued throughout the day. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 23-24 Apr 45)

677. As described before, Ir R.C. had relieved 1 C. Scot R. in area Wagenborgen on 24 Apr. Light shelling, the gathering up of a few enemy stragglers from 368 Fortress Battalion, and the arrival of two troops of tanks from 8 N.B.H., concluded the activities of the Irish on that date. (W.D., Ir R.C., 23-24 Apr 45; 5 Cdn Armd Bde Ops Log, op cit, serials 1152, 1169, 1217, 1620, 1945, 24 Apr 45)

678. Westnr R. (Mot) began moving in the morning of 24 Apr to take over the right flank of the pocket. As related before, they proceeded to area Oostwolds (5212) with intentions of pushing on to the north on the same date. The Battalion plan, as outlined by Lt-Col G.C. Corbould, D.S.O., was to push two companies forward "C" Coy right and "A" Coy left. The axis was to follow the road running north through Oostwolderpolder from (542130) to (543150), thence along the dyke to a point one mile south of Woldendorp. "C" Coy was to follow "A" Coy to the bridge north of Oostwolderpolder at (543150), turn east and make its way over the dykes to the sea, and then swing north-east. "B" Coy was ordered to relieve "C" Coy of Ir R.C. at Nieuwelde (4917) after dark. (W.D., Westnr R. (Mot), 24 Apr 45). Two troops of tanks and six 105-mm Shermans from 8 N.B.H. were allotted in support. The 105's were under control of 17 Cdn Fd Regt and fired by them as artillery on call. (JEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA, op cit, 17 Cdn Fd Regt). At 1800 hours "A" Coy crossed the start line and made its way to (543150), with no contact and only occasional rounds of shell fire falling in the vicinity. "C" Coy then pushed on and joined it at the same location. "A" Coy called for fire on some suspected enemy positions; this was supplied by the 105 millimetre tanks. No casualties were suffered and nothing more was reported on 24 Apr. (W.D., Westnr (Mot) 24 Apr 45; 5 Cdn Armd Bde Ops Log op cit, serial 1235, 24 Apr 45)

679. During 25 Apr Perth R. did not make any further advances. A few prisoners of war were picked up by "B" Coy in Holwierde (4229). On "C" Coy reporting that they were being shelled accurately by four self-propelled guns, 8 Cdn Fd Regt replied. At 0900 hours 11 Cdn Inf Bde took over command of the sector from 5 Cdn Armd Bde and directed the remainder of the operations from Ten Boer (3020). An attack by fighter-bombers on the enemy guns along the dyke at (439302) was planned for 1420 hours. The artillery was to fire smoke shells as markers, but the aircraft arrived early and bombed without target indication, therefore causing very little damage. A large German patrol near the southern outskirts of Holwierde at (423296) and suspected positions at Uiteinde (428312) and (430312) were engaged by artillery and mortars. At 2330 hours an enemy patrol was driven off by "B" Coy Perth R. leaving seven dead. (W.D., Perth R., 25 Apr 45)

680. B.C.D. were again subjected to heavy shelling in their holding positions. Continuous line patrols were necessary to keep communications open. As the enemy were systematically

knocking down the houses with accurate, heavy-calibre fire, Lt-Col H. Angle, D.S.O., ordered the evacuation of civilians from Appingedam. This was carried out. During the afternoon a patrol of reconnaissance tanks went out and contacted Perth R. at Krewerd (4029). (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 25 Apr 45)

681. Patrolling occupied the attention of the Irish Regiment during the night 24-25 Apr. One patrol made contact on the Weer Dijk at (478175), and another returned without seeing any enemy. "C" Coy was relieved by the Westminsters, and moved around to some buildings on the Wold Weg at (406199). "B" Coy passed through "A" Coy and dug in at Schaapbulten (4621) without incident. "D" Coy reached a point 500 yards north of Wildehof (444204), unmolested by the enemy. The day's activities were concluded by a reconnaissance patrol to Tjuchem (428208), which found the area flooded and the bridge over the Afwaterings canal destroyed. (W.D., Ir R.C., 25 Apr 45)

682. Westmr R. (Mot) continued their advance during the early morning of 25 Apr. By first light, "A" Coy reached the junction of the Polderweg and the Lipskerweg at (544151) and "C" Coy the junction of the Lipskerweg and the Nieuwe Dijk at (561156). Progress was slow due to the lack of cover and a very brilliant moon. "B" Coy completed the relief of "C" Coy of the Irish and took up position in Nieuwolda (4917), with a platoon pushed forward to a group of buildings 400 yards south of Kopaf at (480180). At 1130 hours further progress was made and "A" and "C" Coys were established 200 yards south of the junction of Nieuwe Dijk and Dwars Weg at (545172) by 1300 hours. Tactical B.H.Q. moved to Munnikeveen (548161) in the early afternoon, and almost immediately drew enemy shell fire, as did "C" Coy H.Q. No casualties were suffered. Movement was restricted during daylight and nothing further occurred during 25 Apr. (W.D., Westmr R., 25 Apr; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde Appx 7, Ops Log, serial 1, 25 Apr 45)

683. Perth R was relatively inactive on 26 Apr. The delay was caused by cratering in the roads, especially at (399313) on the Godlinze - Holwierde road, which prevented the supporting 8 N.B.H. tanks from getting forward. Plans were made to clear the line of the dyke from Hoogwatum (433335) to (435324) and from there to the road at Uiteinde (428312). The operation was to take place in two phases. In Phase I, "D" Coy with one troop of tanks from 8 N.B.H. was to clear as far as Hoogwatum while a platoon from "C" Coy cut the dyke at (435324). On the successful completion of this action, Phase II was to see the advance of "D" Coy, through "C" Coy's Platoon, to secure the road at Uiteinde. (W.D., Perth R., 26 Apr 45). 8 Cdn Fd Regt was to provide, on call, concentrations on all known enemy positions. 109 Brit H.A.A. Regt, which had just come under command 5 Cdn Armd Div, was to engage the guns in the Nansum (4329) area from 2200 hours to 0200 hours. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 62, 26 Apr 45). Poor visibility caused the cancelling of a bombing attack on the coastal guns north of Delfzijl. Shelling continued throughout the day over most of the Perth sector, resulting in one killed and seven wounded. (W.D. Perth R., 26 Apr 45)

684. Throughout 26 Apr B.C.D. carried on in their holding role. They continued a plan of rotating the dismounted personnel they had on the ground in Appingedam and reported heavy shelling over their whole area. This shelling from large calibre guns from Borkum or Emden was very effective in flattening houses completely. (W.D. 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 26 Apr 45). To assist 11 Cdn

Inf bde in its battle for Delfzijl additional artillery support arrived. This consisted of six (105-mm) tanks from G.G.H.G., which deployed in 8 Cdn Fd Regt's area and went under its command. It was intended to use these guns, with hollow charge shells, against the enemy concrete emplacements. In addition, other (75 millimetre) tanks, also from G.G.H.G., concentrated near Groningen to await orders to move up also for employment as artillery. The remaining battery of 17 Cdn Fd Regt arrived in the regimental area and went into action. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serials 25, 29 and 68)

685. Patrolling occupied the attention of Ir R.C. during the early morning of 26 Apr. Contact was made on the Slochteren - Delfzijl railway at (478226), and Meedhuizen (4421) was found to be clear. Later in the morning Lt-Col L.H.C. Payne held an orders group in which he detailed the plans for the day's fighting. All companies except "B" Coy were to advance. At 1400 hours "C" Sqn, 8 N.B.H. joined the Irish, and half an hour later "A" Coy moved off. In spite of opposition and heavy shelling, it reached its objective, Zomerdijk (487200), by 1630 hours. "C" Coy followed "A" Coy, and while passing through came under fire and suffered casualties, but gained its new position, buildings on the Nieuwe Kloosterlaan, 1500 yards north of Zomerdijk at (485215), by 1800 hours. "D" Coy then started out and, although running into considerable opposition, was firm in its allotted area, the railway crossing over the Wester Weg at (470221), by 2300 hours. Shelling continued throughout the battalion locality, but, the situation being in hand the companies were dug in securely by midnight. (W.D., Ir R.C., 26 Apr 45)

686. While continuing across the open fields towards the sea, "C" Coy Westmr R. (Mot) became involved with a strong German patrol 500 yards north-west of the intersection of the Dwars Weg and Hoofd Weg at (549179) in the early hours of 26 Apr, and a short fight ensued. The enemy was driven off in disorder, leaving four prisoners behind. A reconnaissance patrol, ordered by brigade, made their way to Scheeveklap (488178) to investigate a crossing at this point. They returned with the report that it was strongly held and that the site was not suitable for bridging. At a morning conference at brigade headquarters, permission was granted to withdraw "B" Coy from Nieuwolda (4917) as the projected Irish advance would take them across this Coy's front. The Brigadier's plan directed that Lt-Col Corbould get two sub-units North of Woldendorp (5220) as soon as possible. During the afternoon "C" Coy then pressing on towards the sea, was shelled and suffered some casualties in area (5518). The commanding officer then made his plan as follows. "A" Coy was to move into Woldendorp from the south, "C" Coy was to come back from the exposed right flank and follow "A" Coy, and finally "B" Coy was to get around Woldendorp from the north-west and so outflank it. Support was to be supplied by 17 Cdn Fd Regt and a troop of 8 N.B.H. The attack got under way during the afternoon, and "A" Coy occupied positions on the Oostwolde - Woldendorp road 300 yards north-west of the Middendijk at (534186), waiting there until joined by "C" Coy at 2300 hours. The day ended with heavy firing from the 12.8 centimetre flak guns on the Reider Spit (5623), but casualties remained suprisingly light. (W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 26 Apr 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serial 25, 26 Apr 45)

687. At 0035 hours 27 Apr Perth R. began to carry out the plan as outlined (para 675). "D" Coy reached its objective on the dyke at (433334) at 0220 hours. Forty minutes later the platoon from "C" Coy dug itself in firmly at (434320) and was supported by one anti-tank gun and a Wasp flame thrower, thus

successfully completing Phase I of the operation. Phase II was got under way immediately, "D" Coy passing through the "C" Coy platoon towards its objective. At around 0515 hours the enemy became more active. From then on small arms fire grew more intense. 8 N.B.H. tanks were called on for support; with their help Perth R. reached Uiteinde by 0618 hours. Resistance in the area did not cease, one tank being knocked out. The company commander asked for more armour, and called down artillery fire on a self-propelled gun north east of Nansum at (439297). The enemy continued to react very strongly and between 0900 hours and 1000 hours 71 prisoners were taken by our troops. 8 N.B.H. tanks in the area of Uiteinde and between Kleine Nes and Bierum (417316) were subjected to heavy shell fire. This fire was kept up and one tank was eventually destroyed. The tank commander stated that he might have to withdraw to save his vehicles, which were very exposed. "D" Coy again called artillery fire on some 50 Germans seen forming up around the dyke north-east of Nansum at (440301), but it failed to disperse them. At 1145 hours Lt-Col Andrew called an orders group to formulate another plan as Phase II was now complete. Enemy shelling continued the rest of the day and was particularly heavy in "D" Coy area, where the Artillery Observation post was set on fire. (W.D. Perth Regt, 27 Apr 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serials 2, 11, 18, 22, 27 Apr 45)

688. Meanwhile, Brigadier Johnson had outlined further tasks for Perth R. The regiment was instructed to seize the line Holwierde (4229) - Nansum (4329) in order to prepare the way for the direct assault on Delfzijl. C.B. Highrs were informed that they would be given the latter task. This represented Phase II of the Brigade Plan (see para 674). C.B. Highrs were told to be ready to pass through the Perth R. as soon as the Nansum - Holwierde line fell. (Ibid, serial 19, 27 Apr 45)

689. In the early morning of the 27 Apr a patrol from the Recce Tp and "C" Sqn, B.C.D. proceeded to (416282) on foot. It reported enemy movement around the tile works at (417282) and 8 Cdn Fd Regt was called on for fire, which was put down at 0345 hours. Shelling in Appingedam continued spasmodically during the day. A patrol to Marsum (4227) was ordered, and at 2130 hours it set out. Without enemy interference it reached a position close to the village where it was able to observe and hear movement. The serenity of the night was rudely disturbed by the sudden descent of a counter-mortar concentration in the vicinity of Marsum. Ignorant of brigade's intention in this matter the patrol made a hurried withdrawal in some exasperation. There were, however, no casualties. Enemy shelling ceased at midnight. (W.D., B.C.D., 27 Apr 45)

690. Ir R.C. was inactive during 27 Apr and made no further moves. All companies were shelled. Lt-Col Payne gave out his plans for continuing the battalion's advance, which was to begin at 000 hours 28th. (W.D., Ir R.C. 27 Apr 45)

691. At 0240 hours 27 Apr the **Westminster**s once again drove forward to complete their task of seizing Woldendorp (5220). Under cover of an artillery programme and the fire from a troop of 8 N.B.H. tanks, "A" Coy, its scout platoon engaging with rapid fire, swept across the remaining 1500 yards of open ground in brilliant fashion. So completely did it surprise the enemy, he did not realize what was happening, and before he could recover, "A" Coy was firmly established in the northern part of the town (529203). The score was many German dead and 30 prisoners taken, to no casualties for our troops. One company, however, had insufficient numbers to occupy the whole of the town, so the

Germans returned and got back into Woldendorp, thus cutting off "A" Coy for some time. Meanwhile, "B" Coy had established itself at (512195) the junction of the Heem Weg and Munsterlaan. The Commanding Officer then ordered "B" Coy to continue north-west of the town and "C" Coy to join "A" Coy and assist it in mopping up. Because the Westminsters were now under fire from the heavy flak guns on Reider Spit at a range of only from four to 5000 yards movement by daylight was extremely hazardous. Therefore, nothing further happened during daylight hours. At about 2030 hours all companies reported counter-attacks coming in, but only on "A" Coy did one actually develop. After a busy half hour, the attack was broken up, "A" Company using every available weapon including some captured ones. Great assistance was given by 17 Cdn Fd Regt and the supporting troop of 8 N.B.H. (W.D., Westmr R., (Mot) 27 Apr 45)

692. Meanwhile, Brigadier Johnson came up to the Westminster headquarters to outline the progress of the rest of the Brigade. Casualties had been heavy and progress very slow, especially in the Perth area. The Westminsters were told that it was imperative that they get on to the sea as quickly as possible, and try to knock out the guns on the spit which were now within deadly range. It was also desired to prevent any large-scale evacuation from Termunterzijl (5323), and, by squeezing the pocket from the right to take some of the pressure off the units working on the left. Consequently, "C" Coy began its attack on Woldendorp at 2220 hours. The Germans fought well from good positions and at midnight the Westminsters were still fighting their way forward to try to join "A" Coy. (W.D., Westmr Regt, 27 Apr 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops log, op cit, serial 12, 19, 28, 44, 48, 27 Apr 45)

693. In the early hours of 28 Apr the Perths pushed out once more into the wet darkness to carry out their part of the completion of Phase I of the Brigade plan (see para 685). Company tasks were as follows; "C" Coy was ordered to take out the enemy guns north-east of Nansum at (439299), "D" Coy to dig in around some buildings south-east of Klein Wierum (436307), "A" Coy to attack and hold Nansum (4329), while "B" Coy maintained a firm base in Holwierde (4229). Some of the difficulties of ensuing operations can be appreciated when it is realized that the three attacking companies were now working within 1000 yards of the German guns on the coast, which were well protected by small arms and strongly emplaced in concrete. Once sighted by these guns there would be very little possibility of taking cover. "C" Coy started out, but by 0300 hours was in trouble as a mine field had been encountered in the area of Gaarbindeweer (432318). Several anti-personnel mines exploded, wounding the company commander and killing one of the platoon commanders. A patrol sent forward to try to discover a gap returned at first light, unsuccessful. "C" Coy was then ordered to withdraw. With the coming of daylight enemy shelling became severe, as anticipated, and several casualties resulted. "D" Coy began its advance at 1515 hours to take positions east and south-east of Kleinwierum at (440310) and (435307), meeting slight opposition at first. The company called for artillery fire and got on. By 1630 hours opposition had stiffened and enemy gun fire became intense. Artillery was asked for again, and was given. "D" Coy was now approaching its objective practically under the muzzles of the enemy coast battery, but smoke brought down by the mortars provided cover. At 1750 hours "D" Coy had one platoon at (435307), which took 20 prisoners. More smoke was called for at 1815 hours, and the final objective (439310) was reached at 1945 hours. "D" Coy now firmed up and dug in. (W.D., Perth R., 28 Apr 45)

694. Meanwhile, "C" Coy had been ordered to follow "D" Coy, and now was instructed to pass through and carry out its original task. (W.D., Perth R., 28 Apr 45). This was not an easy one, because it was found very difficult to knock out the German guns. These could be neutralized by artillery fire only as long as the guns were actually firing. Thus, when the fire had to lift in order to allow the infantry to get on to the objective, they could retaliate. "C" Coy solved this however, literally "leaning on" an artillery concentration on the enemy battery, thus appearing amongst the enemy gunners before they had time to make use of their numerous small arms. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA Folio I, 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) Report on Ops, 20 Apr - 2 May 45). By 2245 hours it had overrun the guns and taken 177 prisoners. This operation was carried out with dash and skill, and a very sticky position fell with comparatively few casualties. "A" Coy, which had concentrated in Bierum (4132), was ordered to advance through "D" Coy and attack Nansum (4329). They were pushing on as 28 Apr came to a close. (W.D. Perth R., 28 Apr 45)

695. B.C.D. spent 28 Apr preparing for their attack on Marsum (4227) which had been ordered at the Brigadier's conference in the morning. This was to go in as soon as the Perths had completed their operations for the day. Enemy shelling eased off somewhat, and, apart from a routine patrol to Krewerd (4029), and calling down artillery fire on targets on their front, there was nothing further to report. (W.D., B.C.D., 28 Apr 45)

696. After a day's inactivity, Ir R.C. moved on again with the intention of seizing the town of Oterdum (5024). (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 17, 27 Apr 45). Lt-Col Payne decided to advance with two companies up, "A" Coy to move up along the dyke of the Ternunter Canal, and "C" Coy directed toward Heveskes (4824). "C" Coy proceeded according to plan, and, in spite of meeting considerable opposition and having to pass through some wire, reached (488234), 500 yards from Heveskes at first light, taking 23 prisoners. (W.D., Ir R.C., 28 Apr 45). "A" Coy on the other hand, was not so successful. Proceeding along the dyke, between 0445 and 0530 hours it became involved in a serious small arms battle with the Germans. The company position at this time was obscure but was reported in a general area (520220), 500 yards south-west of Wartumerklap. The enemy were occupying positions dug in behind wire obstacles which had not shown up on the air photographs. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serials 12 and 18, 28 Apr 45). In fact, the opinion of Ir R.C. was that the Germans had allowed "A" Coy to come in close, and had then sprung a prepared trap. One platoon escaped the encirclement and fought its way back to the original company position, but it was apparently unable to give any coherent picture of what was happening. (W.D., Ir R.C., 28 Apr 45). By 0800 hours there began to come in reports which indicated that "A" Coy had run into the main German defensive line. It was engaged by mortar and heavy machine gun fire, as well as the smaller infantry weapons, from the vicinity of the canal at Wartumerklap (524226). Enemy light machine guns were active on both sides of the canal, and "A" Coy could make no further headway. Meanwhile, "C" Coy had firmed up and reported a large crater in the road at De Pomperij (487225), on which the pioneer platoon got busy. "A" Coy was finally located at (522225), 200 yards south-west of Wartermerklap at noon, but communications were unsatisfactory due to wireless batteries running down. In the afternoon a patrol with new batteries was sent forward. Due to the heavy machine gun fire, it could not make contact, indicating that the company was still surrounded. A feasible route for tanks having been

discovered, 8 N.B.H. prepared to go forward to support "C" Coy. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Lof, op cit, serials 24, 41, 63, 70, 28 Apr 45)

697. At the Brigade morning conference Ir R.C. was told to get assistance to its "A" Coy and to organize a reserve. (Ibid, serial 30). In consequence of these instructions Lt-Col Payne ordered "A" Coy to remain where it was and "B" Coy to pass through and go on to Borgsweer (5123). The platoon which had got back from "A" Coy was to go along with "B" Coy and drop off at its own sub-unit on reaching that area. (Ibid, serial 69). "B" Coy got ready to make its advance and was to move off sometime between 2300 hours and midnight. However, news of counter-attacks against "A" Coy came in as the day ended, and since the situation was not cleared up until later, it became necessary for the Irish to make a new plan and regroup. (Ibid, serials 83 and 86)

698. In the early hours of 28 Apr, the two Westmr R. (Mot) companies had joined in Woldendorp (5220), "C" reaching "A" at 0600 hours. Together they began the task of clearing the town. This was delayed by a counter-attack, which was beaten off with heavy casualties to the enemy in killed, wounded and prisoners. The job of clearing the town went on all morning and was not complete until 1200 hours. (W.D., Westmr R., (Mot) 27 and 28 Apr 45). Once again, the nearness of the enemy guns and lack of cover postponed movement until after last light. Shelling was severe in Woldendorp (5220), many houses being completely razed. At 2115 hours "B" Coy left its old location and began the task of outflanking Woldendorp. The troop of 8 N.B.H. tanks and the Wasp flame-throwers accompanying the infantry found the muddy tracks very difficult to move over. Craters and blows caused considerable delay, holding up the advance until they could be filled or by-passed. "A" Coy had been ordered to strike out north of Woldendorp to take buildings and the road junction at (536217). It tried to do this, but every attempt was blocked by extremely accurate fire from the heavy flak guns on Reider spit. Because they were beyond the range of 17 Cdn Fd Regt's 25-pounders, nothing much could be done to neutralize them and the only guns capable of reaching them were the six 105-mm tanks of 8 N.B.H. These weapons were unable to fire rapidly enough to produce a concentration sufficiently heavy to prevent the German gunners from working their pieces. 28 Apr came to a close with "B" Coy pushing on slowly, and "A" Coy pinned down at the North edge of Woldendorp. (W.D., Westmr R., 28 Apr 45; 5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA, Report on Ops; op cit, 17 Cdn Fd Regt)

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CLEARING THE DELFZIJL POCKET: PHASE II, 29 APR 45

699. At the morning conference of 29 Apr 45 the unit representatives received from Brigadier Johnston orders to begin Phase II of the Delfzijl operations. Perth R. was to continue its job of consolidating the line from Holwierde to Nansum. C.B. Highrs were told to stand by, ready to relieve the Perth R. as soon as the latter had completed its task. When this relief had been carried out, the Cape Bretons were instructed to launch an attack to seize Uitwierde (4427) as a jumping off place for their assault

Reference maps as for para 659; also Appx "H".

on Delfzijl. This assault was to take place on the night following the fall of Uitmierde. B.C.D. were ordered to capture Marsum in order to allow the sappers to conduct bridging operations at Holwierde. The timing of this attack, like that of C.B.H., was to depend on the Perth's seizure of their objectives. There was no change in plans for Ir R.C. or the Westmr R. (Mot). The Squadron of 8 N.B.H., now with Perth R. was to continue with C.B. Highrs when they began their attack. Finally, G.G.H.G.'s 105-mm tanks were instructed to carry out neutralizing shoots against the flak guns on Reider spit. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Op Log, op cit, serial 36, 29 Apr 45)

700. The morning of the 29th dawned fair and the Perth's continued on towards Nansum (4329). At 0145 hours "A" Coy was engaged about 800 yards ahead of "D" Coy's position, by small arms fire from north of the town. But reported that it would deal with this and get on. During this, the company reached Bosch (433300) and took 70 prisoners. At this point, however, ammunition ran low, whereupon the company commander decided to hold his present position until stocks could be replenished. About 15 minutes after this decision had been made there developed an enemy counter-attack which, under the circumstances, could have been very serious. In spite of these difficulties, the company held its ground by the use of captured enemy weapons and the help of close support fire by 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.). At 0145 hours a large number of Germans were sighted on the Nansum - Holwierde road and "A" Coy, remaining alert and aggressive, called down artillery fire on them with good results. After 0900 hours, "A" Coy went off the air and its situation became obscure. In order to maintain contact, a patrol was sent from "D" Coy to find out what was happening. Around midday "C" Coy observed enemy south of Nansum and along the coast north-east of Uitmierde and asked for air burst. This was brought down effectively. By 1430 hours, a new supply of ammunition had been got forward to "A" Coy, which pushed on again. Aided by artillery fire on Nansum, it entered the village against some opposition. In the meantime, "D" Coy, with tank support, began the job of clearing the area between Nansum and Holwierde. The day's action came swiftly to a close. "D" Coy completed its task and by 1700 hours contacted "A" Coy in Nansum the latter being firm by this time. Starting around 2145 hours, C.B. Highrs began their relief of the Perth R. with the two "C" Coys exchanging positions. Perth R. withdrew into brigade reserve, carried out a regrouping, and ended the day with the companies as follows: "C" Coy at Bierum, "A" Coy at Losdorp, "D" Coy at Holwierde, and "B" Coy at Spijk. (W.D., Perth R., 29 Apr 45)

701. B.C.D. in Appingedam received their usual amount of shelling during the day. At 2015 hours they left their area to take Marsum (4227). For this job they formed a small battle group composed of the reconnaissance troop supported by two troops of tanks from "C" Sqn. After shelling the village liberally with tank guns, the group entered Marsum and discovered that it was already clear of enemy. As the attackers began to dig in about the perimeter, the enemy started to shell them quite heavily. This continued, and at 2100 hours the open-topped light tanks were sent back to Oosterwijtwerd (3827) in order to preserve them from possible damage. Later, dismounted personnel from "A" and "B" Sqn's were sent to Marsum to help the reconnaissance troop firm up. A troop of tanks from "C" Sqn proceeded to Holwierde and contacted the company of the Perth R. at 2157 hours, remaining there with the infantry during the night to strengthen their defences. Although enemy harassing fire continued until midnight,

no further action was reported for the day. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45)

702. By midnight on 29 Apr Ir R.C.'s situation had cleared up somewhat. "A" Coy, after two enemy counter-attacks, had withdrawn to its former area at Zomerdijk (491200). Lt-Col Payne made a new plan, which was as follows: "B" Coy was directed to take the Wartumerklap area (524226) followed by "D" Coy, which would then pass through to seize Borgsweer (5122) and (518233), and "A" Coy was to take over "D" Coy's position. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serial 6, 29 Apr 45). By 0700 hours, "B" Coy had reached (522224), without casualties and took 12 prisoners. (W.D. Ir R.C., 29 Apr 45). At 0630 hours the Westminsters reported contact with the Irish at (524229), and soon after the Irish stated that they were sending a platoon forward to (522224). (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serials 26, 27, 29 Apr 45). At 1050 hours "D" Coy reported a body of enemy troops about 300 strong moving on the Weiwerd (4724) - Heveskes (4824) road. The Germans were engaged by artillery and machine gun fire with some results. (Ibid, serial 46). In the early afternoon civilians reported that Oterdum (5024) had been abandoned and that the garrison had gone to Termunterzijl (5323) to wait evacuation to Emden (6530). Consequently, fire was brought down on both of these places and "C" Coy despatched a platoon to investigate Oterdum. (Ibid, serials 52, 53 and 63). In the meantime, "A" Coy had moved off to relieve "D" Coy in accordance with the battalion plan as detailed earlier in this paragraph. (Ibid, serial 46). Due to the opposition being less than expected, "B" Coy with one platoon of "D" Coy under command was ordered to take Borgsweer (5122). The last report from the Irish on 29 came in at 2400 hours and stated that "D" Coy had begun moving at 2230 hours to follow up behind "B" Coy. (Ibid, serials 63 and 81).

703. During the early morning hours of 29 Apr, "B" Coy (Westminsters) kept moving slowly, taking 42 prisoners and a number of enemy weapons (W.D., Westmr R. (Mot) 29 Apr 45). By 0100 hours it had reached a point 500 yards south of Botterij (516205); there a tank, a flame thrower and a carrier bogged down, causing further delay. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serial 5, 29 Apr 45). "A" Coy was still pinned down at the northern edge of Woldendorp (5320), the 105-millimetre tanks being unable to neutralize the flak guns on the spit. By 0410 hours "B" Coy had passed through a wire obstacle at (518213) and firmed up just south of Wartumerklap, whence it contacted "B" Coy of the Irish at 0630 hours. (Ibid, serials 17 and 26). The Commanding Officer made a new plan entailing a two-company attack with "A" Coy on the right and "B" Coy on the left. "A" Coy was to pass through "B" Coy, swing right to (536218) and on to Termunten (5422). "B" Coy, meanwhile, was to capture Termunterzijl (5323), and "C" Coy was to remain firm in Woldendorp and patrol to the east as far as possible. (Ibid, serial 82; W.D., Westmr R. (Mot) 29 Apr 45). By midnight, "A" Coy had passed through "B" Coy and was well on its way. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 82)

704. During the night of 29 Apr C.B. Highrs completed their relief of Perth R. and prepared to launch their attack on Delfzijl. "A" Coy was the first to move and took up position at (423309) at 0245 hours. The day was quiet but the pioneers were kept busy clearing mines and doing general road repair in the vicinity of "A" Coy. (W.D. C.B. Highrs, 29 Apr 45). By 2300 hours the remainder of the battalion came into the line. "C" Coy took over at (439302), and "D" Coy at Holwierde, while "B" Coy remained in Bierum (4132). (Ibid, Apr 9, 28 and 29 Apr 45).

In his plan for the battalion attack Lt-Col R.B. Somerville had divided the operation into four phases. Phase I was to consist of an advance, with "A" and "B" Coys up, to seize the dyke area at (445282) and Uitwierde (4427) respectively. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit, Docket III, C.B. Highrs; W.D. C.B. Highrs, Appx 9, 30 Apr 45). In Phase II, "C" Coy was to pass through "A" and "B" Coys and capture the gun positions at (455279). When this was completed, Phase III was to consist of "D" Coy going through "C" Coy and taking more guns at Delfzijl harbour (463270). In Phase IV, the railway station (549270) was to be taken and the town mopped up. The start line was detailed as the road running from Holwierde to Nansum in square (4329); H hour was to depend on the completion of the Perth's relief. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit)

705. At 0110 hours 30 Apr the attack began, "A" and "B" Coys passing through "D" Coy. "B" Coy reported slight opposition at 0200 hours shortly afterwards taking approximately 200 prisoners. At 0245 hours, it arrived on its objective (445282) without much trouble. "A" Coy had an equally easy time; it reached Uitwierde (4427) at 0300 hours, capturing 40 prisoners on the way. The total morning count was about 400. The Commanding Officer then proceeded with the consolidation by sending two guns from the anti-tank platoon to each of the forward companies and ordering 8 N.B.H. tanks forward. No. 3 Tp from "A" Sqn arrived at Uitwierde in time to be of assistance to the infantry. The following excerpt from an 8 N.B.H. report on operations, describing an engagement involving No. 3 Tp, serves to illustrate the strength of the German positions.

During the firming up a large pill box was engaged by a 17 pr tank. Though many hits were scored by AP the firing continued. After one round of SABOT ammunition was used, the white flag was shown and no further firing was observed to come from the pill box, Subsequent examination showed the AP rounds had penetrated a distance of $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet and still had not broken through the reinforced concrete walls. The SABOT round had hit high on the pill box and had caused the concrete to break loose on the inside of the 7 foot thick walls.

(AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Bde/C/D, Folio 5, Report on Ops 5 Cdn Armd Regt, 25 Apr 45 to 5 May 45)

"A" and "B" Coys were instructed to patrol forward to try to regain contact. Two patrols came back in at 0600 hours, reporting that they had gone some distance without being able to find any enemy. Word was received from Brigade headquarters that the C.B. Highrs were to wait until dark before beginning the remaining phases of the operation. During the morning the Pioneer Pl, supported by the carriers, set out to sweep the road to "B" Coy but mistook the route and found themselves in Biesum (4427), being somewhat disturbed to discover that it abounded with grey-clad soldiery. They recovered quickly, however, and, after an exchange of unpleasantness, withdrew in triumph with 23 prisoners for the loss of one killed and two wounded. Phase II began at 2200 hours, when "C" Coy crossed the start line. It very shortly ran into a mine field and the pioneers got to work immediately to clear a path. This was a tedious task, and some shells began to fall in the area. At 2300 hours contact was again made with the enemy. A quick attack resulted in 49 more prisoners being added to the Cape Bretons' bag. At midnight 30 Apr "C" Coy was still advancing slowly. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 30 Apr 45)

706. On 30 Apr B.C.D. were ordered to extend right and left of their present position and to hold the line from a point (425244), on the Eemskanaal south of Opwierde, through (423262), Marsum (4227), to the road junction (423292), 500 yards south of Holwierde. They were also instructed to clear the part of Appingedam south of the Damster river. The starting time for this task not being given, it did not take place until 31 Apr. As shelling in Appingedam continued "B" Sqn's dismounted troops were moved to try to avoid it. There was nothing else of importance to report for the day. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 30 Apr 45)

707. At dawn on 30 Apr "B" Coy Ir R.C. went into Borgsweer (5123) against no opposition. "D" Coy then passed through and occupied Oterdun (5024) by noon, again finding that the enemy had withdrawn. At 1630 hours "C" Coy struck out for Heveskes (4824) and by 1800 hours established itself in the village, still without enemy reaction. The Germans were moving as quickly as they could towards Delfzijl, and the pocket was rapidly shrinking in area. "A" Coy having been reorganized joined "C" Coy in Heveskes (4824), and both were consolidated by last light. So ended the day's activities for the Irish. (W.D., Ir R.C., 30 Apr 45)

708. In the early hours of 30 Apr "B" Coy Westminster set out into wild rainy darkness towards the port of Termunterzijl (5323). As the fields had become very marshy, the going was not easy, and in the first light of dawn "B" Coy found itself about 1000 yards from its objective. A determined dash across the open ended with the company quickly establishing itself in the town and sending patrols forward to the beach. "A" Coy had somewhat more trouble, running into a strong enemy position at (536217). It quickly dealt with this, however, and reached Termunten (5422) shortly after "B" Coy had got on to its objective. By 0600 hours a troop of 8 N.B.H. tanks had made its way forward to the leading troops and the task of mopping up began. Termunterzijl (5323) yielded a large haul of enemy troops and equipment. It had been set up as an evacuation point, and small boats had been gathered for that purpose. There was no fighting and the Germans surrendered in groups of 30 or more. By noon the town was clear, as was also Termunten (5422). The day's bag amounted to over 500. Meanwhile, "C" Coy had started its patrolling activity. A carrier patrol was sent to investigate the Johannes Kerkhoven Polder (5520) and then work north on foot towards Reider Spit. Foot patrols left Woldendorp at the same time to follow a parallel axis to the same objective. By 1600 hours "C" Coy had moved up to area (555224) and was preparing to advance against Reider Spit. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 59, 30 Apr 45). It took six prisoners but it soon became apparent that one company could not take the spit unaided. From its positions "C" Coy was practically peering down the muzzles of the 12.8 centimetre flak guns, being within 1000 yards of them. The only approach was narrow, well wired, and mined. In the words of the Westminster's diary:

In these positions the troops were less than 1000 yards from the German guns and were even able to watch the gunners loading and firing.

(W.D., Westmr R., 30 Apr 45)

Artillery support was limited to the six 105-mm tanks and one 7.2-in howitzer. These guns were insufficient to put down enough neutralizing fire. In view of this and the exposed position now occupied by "C" Coy, Lt-Col Corbould decided to cancel its attack and withdrew it to the line of the canal and dyke in (5521).

There the Westminsters concluded the day's action. (W.D., Westmr R. 30 Apr 45)

709. Early morning of 1 May found "C" Coy C.B. Highrs moving slowly in the cold and wet. It cleared area (452276) and went on to its final objective (455278). Being firmly established by 0109 hours, the company had taken 50 prisoners. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 1 May 45). As this action completed Phase II of the attack on Delfzijl, Lt-Col Sommerville ordered the beginning of Phase III. "D" Coy set out accordingly, picking up flame-throwers as it went through "A" Coy. The Wasps had to be left behind in "C" Coy area as the track along the top of the dyke was impassable to vehicles. After proceeding about 200 yards, the company met enemy resistance in the form of mortaring, shelling, and small arms fire from the vicinity of Delfzijl harbour. (Ibid). Artillery fire was called down, thus enabling "D" Coy to get on and eventually reach a point about 100 yards from its objective. Once again enemy resistance flared up, and in the ensuing fire fight the Cape Bretons began to run short of ammunition. "C" Coy was instructed to organize a party to take some to "D" Coy, but this failed to get through and "D" Coy's position rapidly became worse. The C.O. then decided that the best way to assist was to proceed with Phase IV, and so outflank the enemy position. Consequently, "B" Coy was ordered forward to seize the railway station in Delfzijl (463271). Meanwhile, "C" Coy had reported enemy small arms and mortar fire coming from (452274). Since this position was on the proposed route of "B" Coy the information was passed to it with orders to clear up the opposition before advancing beyond this point. "D" Coy's situation deteriorated still further. Once again more ammunition was requested and a second party was ordered forward. In the meantime "B" Coy's attack, supported by a troop of 8 N.B.H. tanks and liberal use of smoke, got underway. Some trouble was experienced as it was now daylight. One tank was knocked out by anti-tank fire, but those remaining were able to destroy one of the guns. By 0720 hours "B" Coy were on its objective, clearing it up against some opposition. The smoke now permitted a platoon from "C" Coy to reach "D" Coy with ammunition and its situation was restored. (Ibid, 11 Cdn Inf Bde, Ops Log, op cit, serial 27, 1 May 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit). "B" Coy Perth R. was sent to take up a firm base position in Uitwierde (4327) in order to release "A" Coy C.B. Highrs for further moves. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 26, 1 May 45)

710. The final stage of C.B. Highrs attack on Delfzijl was rapidly concluded and saw the wholesale surrender of the German garrison. At 0950 hours "B" Coy set out on the tanks and by going flat out reached its objective, the Railway Station (463271). As soon as the tanks entered town, white flags appeared and all organized resistance ceased. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 27, 1 May 45). "B" Coy's Commander advised Lt-Col Sommerville that the presence of an additional company in Delfzijl would likely secure the complete surrender of the garrison. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 1 May 45). Accordingly, the latter ordered "A" Coy to pass through "B" Coy and begin the mopping up. It reached the town by 1120 hours and pushed forward to the canal, shortly afterwards getting one platoon over into the southern part of town. Some slight resistance was met, but by early afternoon enemy action had ceased. As soon as "B" Coy entered the station the pressure on "D" Coy had been relieved, and the latter moved forward to take the gun area in Delfzijl harbour (463271). It reported enemy troops attempting an evacuation by sea in small boats and artillery fire was brought down on them, sinking some. The Scout Pl was sent to Biesum (4427) and reported it clear. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 1 May 45). By 1600 hours the company positions

were reported as follows: "A" Coy (458270), "B" (457270), "C" (455278) and "D" Coy, (463273). This concluded C.B. Highrs fighting in the Second World War, as certain routine patrols, taking place at a later date, produced no enemy reaction. (Ibid, 1 May 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 45, 1 May 45)

711. During 1 May B.C.D. carried out various tasks which included supporting fire for C.B. Highrs' attack on Delfzijl and some local patrolling. "C" Sqn carried out the fire tasks, engaging targets at a factory (442263), railway embankment (454269), and Delfzijl (456267). At 1230 hours "A" Sqn was ordered to check the road and railway from Appingedam to Delfzijl. A patrol went out and reported back at 1530 hours with the information that there were two demolitions and some mines. A second patrol from "A" Sqn proceeded to a factory at (423256), finding it clear, and on to houses (433252), where some opposition was met. It then returned with 24 prisoners, suffering two wounded. Further parties went out between 1700 hours and 1845 hours, checked buildings in the Appingedam area, and returned with a few more prisoners and captured enemy small arms. A group composed of dismounted personnel from "A" Sqn and a troop of tanks from "A" Sqn supplied a covering force for sappers constructing a bridge at (432259). Shelling had been severe until 1200 hours, but tapered off and was only occasional throughout the night. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 May 45)

712. In Ir R.C. sector nothing of importance occurred on 1 May. The battalion remained with its forward companies in Heveskes (4824) awaiting the scheduled attack on Weiwerd (4724), which was planned for 0001 hours on 2 May. Shelling continued throughout the day and "C" Coy suffered a few casualties. (W.D., Ir R.C., 1 May 45)

713. Westmr R. (Mot) concluded its last action of the war on the 1 May, with no fighting. Severe shelling from both light and heavy calibre guns from the area of the Reider Spit continued until 0300 hours, when all guns became silent. A Russian ex-prisoner who made his way from the German gun positions stated that the guns were to be destroyed and the positions evacuated during darkness. This was proved to be true when a patrol from "C" Coy found the place deserted at 1300 hours. Thus ended the war for the Westminsters. They had taken over 700 prisoners and much enemy equipment for the total cost of four killed and 15 wounded. (W.D., Westmr R., (Mot) 30 Apr 45)

714. After the reported surrender of the Commander of the Delfzijl area to Ir R.C., C.B. Highrs were ordered to clear the area between the Damster river and the Eems canal as far as the north - south road from (430245) to (433254). As German communications were known to be very poor it was anticipated that certain enemy positions would not have heard of their commander's surrender. Therefore "C" Coy, the clearing group, was given Wasp flame-throwers and tanks as support. Although, it was found impossible to get the vehicles over the canal, this precaution proved to be unnecessary, for no opposition was met. The company returned at 1355 hours, having contacted Ir R.C. and B.C.D. (W.D., Ir R.C., 2 May 1945)

715. B.C.D. carried out further patrolling on 2 May without encountering any enemy reaction. The C.B.H. were contacted during the afternoon and the regiment's active operations ended. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 May 45)

716. Ir R.C.'s attack for the 2 May 45 was planned as follows. "A" Coy was to pass through "C" Coy to take the west half of Weiward (4724), then "C" Coy would follow on and take the east half; after this was completed, "D" Coy would move up along the dyke from Oterdum (5024) and take Farmsum (4625); "B" Coy was to be in reserve. At 0001 hours the advance started. "A" Coy moved quickly behind an artillery barrage and entered the town at 0025 hours, taking the enemy by surprise. Before the Germans could recover they had made their way through and seized the bridges on the west intact. "C" Coy followed as planned, and the two companies proceeded to clear the town. Opposition was fairly stiff, but by 0300 hours the job was finished and many prisoners had surrendered. "D" Coy, meanwhile, had been advancing along the dyke, but was held up by a minefield north of Heveskes losing four killed. The Commanding Officer therefore altered his plan and committed his reserve through Weiward directed on Farmsum. At 0500 hours "B" Coy struck through "A" Coy, supported by tanks. A fire fight ensued, and at first it looked as if the enemy intended to continue resistance. A sudden collapse put an end to these intentions and the German commander asked for surrender terms. The Ir R.C. diarist wrote:

at 0640 hrs the German commander sent an Officer to "B" Coy HQs under a flag of truce with a request for terms of surrender. He was told the only terms were unconditional surrender of the whole German Garrison in the area. He agreed and at 0700 hrs the COMMANDING OFFICER LT. COL. L.H.C. PAYNE received the surrender of the GERMAN GARRISON from the GERMAN COMMANDER., COL. WALTERS at GERMAN HEADQUARTERS, FARMSUM (MR. 463257 Sheet 2607 1/25,000).

The enemy prisoner count amounted to 1,386, and a good deal of enemy equipment of all kinds was taken. The attack cost the Irish five killed and 16 wounded, indicating its determination and skill. The Second World War was now over for the Ir R.C. (W.D., Ir R.C., 2 May 1945)

717. The German surrender in Delfzijl marked the end of fighting for 5 Cdn Armd Div. The period 0700 hours 2 May to the end of the war, was spent in regrouping and uneventful guard duties along the northern coast of Holland. It will be seen from the foregoing account that the battle for Delfzijl was really a brigade operation, with assistance and general direction from Divisional Headquarters. (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May - 5 May 45)

OPERATIONS OF 1 CDN CORPS 19-27 APR 45[⊠]

718. Meanwhile the operations by 1 Cdn Corps in Western Holland had been concluded in dramatic style.

While the successful thrust of 5 Cdn Armd Div had practically destroyed the enemy forces EAST of the Grebbe line there was still considerable territory to be "walked over" before it would be safe to prepare an assault on the second line of def. Moreover the

⊠ Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 2541, Holland 1:100,000 Sheet 2 - Utrecht: also Appx "J".

higher comd had decided that 5 Cdn Armd Div should be withdrawn from under comd 1 Cdn Corps and used by 2 Cdn Corps. It was therefore decided not to assault the GREBBE LINE immediately. 49 (WR) Inf Div excl 49 Recce were to clean up the NORTH bk of the NEDER RIJN for a limited distance.

(Outline of Ops 1 Cdn Corps
in clearing Western Holland,
Apr 1945, op cit)

49 (W.R.) Inf Div had already occupied Ede, Bennekom (5880) and Wageningen (5776) with 147 and 56 Inf Bdes and by 21 Apr had strong company positions based all along the line Barneveld - Lunteren - Ede - Wageningen. Patrols were pushed out to the water defences of the Grebbe line without any substantial contact and, beyond occasional clashes with German patrols, no further activity occurred in this sector. (Ibid)

719. However, there still remained a large area bounded by the Ijssel River, the Ijsselmeer, and the line Deventer - Harderwijk, where the Allies had not penetrated. Therefore, on the morning of 19 Apr, 49 (Brit) Recce Regt was positioned to the north of Apeldoorn together with tanks of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, a company of 1/4 K.O.Y.L.I., and some self-propelled artillery, with orders to clear up any enemy found north of Apeldoorn. (AEF: 1 Cdn Corps/C/H Docket I: 1 Cdn Corps Ops Log 18 Apr 45, serial 26). At the same time 1 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by the light tanks of 12 Cdn Armd Regt was directed to sweep the wooded areas (5809) to its front. While these actions progressed the troops of 2 Cdn L.A.A. Regt who had been holding the right flank enlisted the aid of some two hundred Dutch Nationals and cleared the densely wooded land north-west of Arnhem, successfully reaching Epe (8118), Nunspeet (6721) and Harderwijk. (Ibid, also W.Ds., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 and 12 Cdn Armd Regts, 2 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 19-21 Apr 45)

720. By this time the 49 Recce Regt Group had swept on between the woods and the Ijssel River to clear Kampen (7742) at the mouth of the river and then swung south to occupy the villages of Elburg, Nunspeet (6721) and Hierden (5919)

Amazingly little opposn remained and the civs confirmed the report of the sea evacuation of the elts who had retired from APELDOORN. The GERMANS who were encountered offered little resistance and over 1,000 PW were acquired during the day. J Cdn Inf Bde also carried out their part of the programme and retired into div res.

(Outline of Operations, 1 Cdn
Corps in the clearing of West-
ern Holland, April 1945,
op cit).

721. Meanwhile on the left Maj-Gen H.W. Foster's brigades completed the relief of 5 Cdn Armd Div and faced west, with 3 Cdn Inf Bde on the right and 2 Cdn Inf Bde on the left. The West Novas who took over at Putten continued to press on down the main coastal road with flanking elements along the shores of the Ijsselmeer. (Ibid)

By the morning of the 21st they were firmly est in the wooded area in square 4706 on the Eastern edge of the

flooded section and were sending out patrols of carriers and inf to circle the inundations and approach the outer def's of the GREBBE LINE. On their left CARLT & YORK R occupied NIJKERE while R 22e R had fwd coys in DRIEDORP Z4804. Both the latter units maintained vigorous patrols fwd and contacted enemy outposts just in front of the water barrier EAST of AMERSFOORT E3897. 2 Cdn Inf Bde had L. EDMN R RIGHT and PPCLI LEFT with SEAFORTH of C in res. L EDMN were astride the main highway around rd jct E509994, the PPCLI were conc around the WEST of BARNEVELD.

(Ibid)

Both battalions maintained aggressive patrols to dominate the open ground between their forward areas and the Grebbe Line. (Ibid; also W.D.'s, H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, L. Edmn R., P.P.C.L.I., 20-21 Apr 45)

THE LAST ADVANCE TO THE GREBBE LINE, 21-27 APR 45 [¶]

722. Throughout this last week of operations, Lt-Gen Foulkes' men kept on pushing patrols further forward towards the Grebbe line.

WEST NSR sent a patrol around the Southern edges of the flooded area which extended about 2,000 yds from the ZUIDER ZEE between Eastings 40 and 43. The patrol reached SPAKENBURG Z3909 during the night 21 Apr. A Coy posn was est there next day but this was finally turned over to Dutch Resistance units while the rest of the bn remained conc around WULLENHOVEN Z4705 till they adv to relieve the CARLT & YORK R on 26 Apr.

(Outline operations of 1 Cdn Corps in the clearing of Western Holland, April 1945, op cit)

The latter unit made a series of spectacular patrols in carriers to sweep over the ground between the inundations and Amersfoort. The battalion followed up these patrols and by the morning of 25 Apr had three of its forward companies on the 38 easting from northing 04 to northing 01, occupying Ham (3800) with the fourth company. (Ibid; also W.D., Carlt and Y.R., 23-25 Apr 45)

723. R. 22e R. made a parallel advance on the left and finally established companies between Ham (3800) and the railway junction (403996) to the south. As for Brigadier M.P. Bogert's formation:

2 Cdn Inf Bde adv from their conc area around Barneveld with L EDMN R RIGHT, PPCLI CENTRE, SEAFORTH of C LEFT. Their fwd posns were as follows: L EDMN R from HOEVELAKEN E 4399 to the woods in square 4397, PPCLI HQ in ACHTERVELD E4695 and fwd coys astride the highway at

¶ Reference maps as for para 727; also Appx "J".

Eastings 455, SEAFORTH of C astride the 46 Easting from Northings 94 to the div bdy.

(Outline operations of 1 Cdn Corps in clearing of Western Holland, April 1945, op cit)

724. 49 (W.R.) Inf Div also made limited advances, particularly on its right, where the battalions of 147 Inf Bde had edged forward to within two miles of the line Scherpenzeel (4589) - Renswoude (4988) - De Klomp (5285)

On the LEFT 1/4 KOYLI relieved S.W.B. during the night 23/24 Apr and adv to posns about 1,000 yds short of GELDERSCH VEENENDAAL E5083. The remainder of 56 Inf Bde remained in BENNEKOM and WAGENINGEN.

(Ibid)

Lt-Gen Foulkes front had thus been brought up to a line from Spakenburg on the Ijsselmeer to Wageningen on the Neder - Rijn. Those positions remained the same during the process of negotiations which resulted in the feeding of the Dutch and the final surrender of the Germans in 25 Army Group. (Ibid)

THE MAAS RIVER LINE, 22 Apr - 4 MAY 45[¶]

725. Much further to the west along the soggy dykes lining the Maas River towards the sea, Headquarters Netherlands District^{¶¶} (under General Crerar's command) kept constant watch for the Army Commander had received persistent reports that the enemy was vacating the Bommelerwaard, the Land van Altena, and the Biesbosch. Patrols which crossed the river during the night 22/23 Apr had confirmed this. (First Cdn Army Liaison Officers Reports op cit, April 1945, dated 2314445B). In commenting on this development General Crerar stated:

I consider it to be desirable, therefore, that our forces should patrol aggressively up to the line of the Waal, and in order that this should be done as part of a co-ordinated plan of operations against the enemy north of that river, Headquarters Netherlands District, came under my command at midnight on 23 Apr. The enemy's ability to establish himself temporarily on the Grebbe line, however, encouraged him to retain his hold on the Bommelerwaard and the line of the Maas, and the positions established by the Royal Netherlands Brigade at Hedel

¶ Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 2541, Holland, 1:100,000 Sheet 5-- 'SHertogenbosch, Sheet 4-- Rotterdam.

¶¶ The story of the activities of H.Q. Netherlands District and of the many units which came under its command may be found in the following documents:

- (a) First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit April - May 1945.
- (b) First Cdn Army Liaison Officers Reports, op cit, April - May 1945.

These activities were confined mainly to patrolling and observation.

were attacked by elements of the 361st Infantry Division. The enemy was repulsed, but as it was not my intention to become involved with only limited resources in the unfavourable terrain between the rivers, the Netherlands troops, and those of the 116th Royal Marine Brigade which had taken possession of Alen Island, were withdrawn.

(General Crerar's Despatch,
op cit, para 37)

Many troops other than those of 116 Inf Bde, R.M., and Royal Netherlands Bde, spent long hours in watching over this flank; these included men of 4 Cdo Bde, 33 Armd Bde Gp, 1 H.C.R., 1 Belg Fus Bn., 1/3 Dutch Lt Inf Bn, several Dutch Independent Infantry companies, and 62 A. Tk Regt R.C.A. Support was provided by elements of 90 Fd Regt (S.P.), 7 Med Regt, 112 H.A.A. Regt (all of the Royal Artillery) and a Dutch 25-pounder battery. (First Cdn Army Liaison officers report, op cit, G. Ops H.Q. Netherlands District, April 1945, dated 061430B, also Trace "P" attached, situation Trace as of 45, also report dated 081200B)

TRUCE IN THE WESTERN NETHERLANDS, 28 Apr 45 [#]

726. Actually, from 27 Apr on, beyond the activity of patrols no further offensive action was taken against the enemy in the western Netherlands. Everywhere else the German military position was collapsing and the will of the garrison of "Fortress Holland" to hold out in so isolated and hopeless a situation depended only on the precarious existence of the central authority of the Reich. That the local command was willing to accept the inevitable when the time came, meanwhile preserving a posture of defence, was made known to Allied Intelligence through the agency of the Dutch Forces of the Interior. A representative of the Dutch Commander, infiltrated into enemy territory, had succeeded in entering into conference with Hitler's representative, the Reichskommissar, Dr Seyss-Inquart, with the object of finding some basis of agreement between the German forces and the Allies. (W.Ds., Chief of Staff and G.Plans, H.Q. First Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx 5, serial 1, SFO/46, 16 Apr 45, Memorandum on Negotiations between Dutch Forces of the Interior and Seyss-Inquart in Amsterdam)

727. The Dutch Government had long been most anxiously concerned about the fate of the inhabitants of the western provinces. There two-fifths of a population of over 9,000,000, largely concentrated in the great cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, still lay under German domination. These people were normally supplied with food from the surpluses of the eastern parts of the country from which they were now cut off. The general strike on the Dutch railways beginning in September 1944, the resultant refusal by the Germans to move supplies themselves, the subsequent flooding of some 500,000 to 800,000 acres of arable land, together with the Wehrmacht's own inroads upon existing resources had produced a situation of acute shortage. As early as the beginning of Oct 44 "it was evident to SHAEF that the food relief problem in Western Holland would be the most critical one yet faced in North-Western Europe". (Ibid)

Reference maps as for para 727.

728. In these unhappy circumstances, political, military and humane considerations were all involved. The urgency of rescue or sustenance, objects of continuous effort on the part of the Dutch cabinet and the Queen, had been drawn to the personal attention of the heads of the governments of Great Britain and the United States and referred also to the Supreme Commander. (AEF: 45/SHAEF/O/F Docket II, (Hist Sec File 205sl-043(1)) (Relief for the Netherlands - a Monograph prepared by Hist Sec. G-5 Division, SHAEF: 60 Histories, Monographs and Sketches, SHAEF/G-5/INFO/4800, Jun 45, page 1 et passim). Before the end of October 1944 General Eisenhower, "on the grounds of humanity", had already accepted proposals to grant safe-conduct for three neutral vessels bearing supplies to enter Dutch waters, a plan in which the Germans concurred. The arrival of the ships was delayed, the relief inadequate, and by the end of March 1945 conditions in the heavily-populated areas north of the rivers had still further deteriorated.

...Adults had received no milk since January; children under three and nursing mothers no more than three-quarters of a litre per week. No fats, no sugar, no vegetables were to be had. Complete lack of coal had almost entirely stopped the production of gas, electricity and steam. Without gas, no cooking or heat was possible. Without electricity, the sewage system had broken down and sanitary conditions were critical. Deaths from tuberculosis, diphtheria, diarrhoea and enteritis had tripled.

(Ibid, p. 39)

729. As has been seen, it had not proved possible to attempt to relieve the Dutch of their privations by further offensive operations. A cable sent from SHAEF on 27 Mar to the Combined Chiefs of Staff informed them that "so long as the enemy continues cohesive resistance in Western Holland it is militarily inadvisable to undertake operations West of Utrecht" (ibid). The fact was emphasized that such an operation would not only interfere with the major allied effort against the enemy in Germany, but would in itself cause great suffering to the civil population (ibid). The Dutch government was thus forced to turn to the alternative of sending in supplies, if necessary by dropping them from the air, while the enemy still remained in occupation. It was to this end that the Reichskommissar was approached through the agency of the forces of the Interior.

730. Before the conversations began, the Dutch emissary made it clear that they would not in any way prejudice the principle of unconditional surrender. Seyss-Inquart replied with candour. He said that he had been ordered to hold out under all circumstances, and, if necessary, to cause such demolitions and inundations as would bring utter disaster to the western provinces and probably render them for years uninhabitable. He suggested that if the Allies were to bring their advance to a stop short of the Grebbe Line, it would be unnecessary for him to have such harsh recourse, while at the same time he would save face with Berlin. He intimated further his willingness to relax the stern measures hitherto enforced against the civilian population, and to render any assistance needed for opening the port of Rotterdam in order to afford entry to barges bringing in supplies of food and coal. It was admitted that the food available in the occupied territory could barely last three weeks. "In the eyes of the German Government, however, this would not be an excuse to surrender or to withdraw the order for the demolitions and inundations

as laid down by this government". Nevertheless, both parties to these negotiations felt that some agreement could, and indeed must, be reached in order to avoid widespread starvation and disease. (W.Ds., Chief of Staff and "G" Plans, H.Q. First Cdn Army, May 1945; as above).

731. Being apprised of Seyss-Inquart's reception of these proposals, the Dutch Prime Minister, Dr. Gerbrandy, then on the Continent, returned to England to confer with his cabinet, and thereafter the matter "was taken up at the highest governmental levels in San Francisco", although it was recognized that the immediate decision lay with SHAEF. Here again humanitarian considerations prevailed, and on 23 Apr General Eisenhower cabled the following message to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the British Chiefs of Staff:

...The situation is so bad that something must be done to arrange for the introduction of food into Holland by free dropping and by every other possible means even though the best we can do may be a small contribution in comparison with the widespread destitution which now exists.

(Relief for the Netherlands, SHAEF Monograph, op cit, p. 40)

The Supreme Commander proposed to send a "very strongly worded message" to Col-General Blaskowitz ordering him, under threat of treating him and each responsible member of his command as violators of the laws of war, to cease opening the dykes and to be ready to assist in distributing the food to the starving people for whose welfare he was held to be answerable. (Ibid)

732. In order to implement the plan to drop food from the air, SHAEF requested Bomber Command and the Eighth U.S. Air Force to have 200 aircraft ready. On the same day (23 Apr) Brigadier C.C. Mann, General Crerar's Chief of Staff, conferred with the Deputy Director of Military Government and senior staff officers to determine the approximate tonnage which the First Cdn Army could begin to move at short notice by road and rail into occupied territory. The Canadians were also called upon to make arrangements for a conference to be held with the enemy on 28 Apr. On that day a truce came into effect, Lt-Gen Foulkes' troops being ordered not to fire on the enemy unless they were attacked. The meeting, held in the school house at Achterveld, a village just within the Canadian lines and about five miles from Amersfoort, was attended on behalf of the Allies by representatives from SHAEF, the Netherlands authorities (Prince Bernhard and his Chief of Staff), 21 Army Group, First Cdn Army, Netherlands District, and the U.S.S.R. (watching the interests of the Soviet Government). Preliminary talks with delegates of the Reichskommissar were concluded satisfactorily and it was arranged for a further discussion to take place two days later. (Memorandum of Negotiations with German Authorities in Western Holland op cit, W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps and H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 28 Apr 45)

733. The delivery of supplies by air was to have taken place for the first time on 28 Apr, but owing to bad weather had to be postponed until the following day. On that occasion, 239 aircraft took part and 510 long tons, comprising 550,000 rations, were dropped into the western provinces. Thereafter, the operation was to continue very effectively until the Germans capitulated. (Relief for the Netherlands, SHAEF Monograph, op cit, p. 41)

734. The second conference met in Achterveld on 30 Apr, the Allied delegation being led by Lt-Gen W. Bedell-Smith, Chief of Staff to General Eisenhower. Dr. Seyss-Inquart brought a group of experts composed of high-ranking officers of the three services and the Dutch Director General of Food. In a state of high excitement, the villagers gathered in the street to watch portentous comings and goings, convinced that they held a promise of release from danger, hunger and oppression. (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary op cit, No. 308, Appx "D": Food for the Dutch, 4 May 45; also Hist Sec file 229C1 (12) Op "Faust" The Feeding of the Dutch)

735. When agreement had been reached on the general arrangements for taking the food in, the conference divided into sub-committees which dispersed to the classrooms to consider the details. It fell to the lot of Lt-Gen Foulkes to discuss with Lt-Gen Plocher, commander of 6 Para Div, the conditions under which the convoys carrying food might pass freely through the lines. Their conversation made no progress, however, since Plocher's command covered only a part of the front, nor had he been empowered to enter into any agreement on behalf of Col-Gen Blaskowitz, the Army Commander. Ultimately, another meeting was arranged for the next day, on the understanding that Col-Gen Blaskowitz would either be present himself or would send an officer with full authority to act on his behalf. In the meantime, the truce was to continue. The Naval and Airforce delegates with Seyss-Inquart were fortunately more definite in negotiation, and in full conference the work of the sub-committees was co-ordinated without further difficulty. (Ibid)

736. It was agreed to open the road from Wageningen to a dump behind the enemy's lines at Rhenen on the Neder Rijn from 0700 hours on 2 May. At that time H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps would become responsible for sending in 1,000 tons of food a day from an advanced stock pile already set up at Ede. The work of distribution was to be undertaken by the Dutch civil authorities, whom, the Allies were to provide with 200 lorries and the necessary petrol for the purpose of ensuring as rapid a dispersal as possible throughout the country. (W.Ds., C. of S. and "G" Plans, op cit, May 1945: Appx 5, serial 8, Notes taken by Chief of Staff, First Cdn Army, at the Second Meeting of Allied Representatives with German Representatives in Regard to the Feeding of the Dutch in Western Holland, Monday 30 Apr 45, paras 25-28; W.D., S. & T. Branch, Rear H.). 1 Cdn Corps, 1-2 May 45)

737. At the subsequent meeting on 1 May Lt-Gen Foulkes and Lt-Gen Reichelt, Chief of Staff to Col-Gen Blaskowitz, agreed upon a corridor to be established between the opposing forces from the railway line through Arnhem and Utrecht south to the Waal at Ochten. Pending a further communication from the German C.-in-C., Lt-Gen Foulkes undertook to carry out no offensive operations along the whole of the front between the IJsselmeer and Walcheren. (W.Ds., C. of S. and "G" Plans, op cit, May 1945: Appx 5, serial 9, Meeting between Lt-General C. Foulkes, Comd 1 Cdn Corps, and Lt-General Reichelt, Chief of Staff to Col-General Blaskowitz, 1 May 45)

OPERATIONS OF SECOND BRITISH ARMY, 20 APR - 4 MAY 45 [≠]

738. While Canadian operations leading to the truce in Western Holland and resulting in such vast successes west of the Weser River had been in progress, Lt-Gen Dempsey's Second British Army had flung the enemy out of one position after another with amazing rapidity and little loss to itself. On 19 Apr Second Brit Army had 8 Corps on the right. In this sector 11 Arm'd Div was fast approaching the Elbe River from the north-west of Uelzen (W9089), while to the north-east 6 Airborne Div fulfilled its task of flank protection and flank contact along the Army group boundary. In addition, Lt-Gen Barker (commanding 8 Corps) had 5 Brit Inf Div and 15 (S.) Inf Div ready to close up to the Elbe River between Bleckode and Tarchau and to fill the gap between 11 Arm'd and 6 Airborne Divs. (See para 327 to this report and notes on the operations of 21 Army Group, op cit, para 204)

739. In the centre 12 Brit Corps (commanded by Lt-Gen N. Ritchie) had Gds Arm'd Div in Visselhovede, in Tostedt, and closing on Zevon (0323); 53 (W.) Inf Div having taken Verden was about to pause (to allow 52 (L.) Inf Div to pass through towards Achim and then onto Bremen from the south-east^{≠≠}) before going on itself in the wake of Maj-Gen Adair's guardsmen. 7 Arm'd Div, on the corps' right flank, was at Welle and nearing Winsen but was in flank contact with 11 Arm'd Div (see para 331 to this report, also notes on Operations 21 Army Group, op cit, also AEF: 45/Second Brit Army/C/D Docket I)

740. Along the Canadians' eastern boundary was 30 Brit corps (under Lt-Gen Horrocks), with 43 (W.) Inf Div, 3 Brit Inf Div and 51 (H.) Div approaching Bremen from the south and south-west. (See para 335 of this report). Since the evening of 20 Apr, 51 (H.) Div had its forward elements established due west of Belmenhorst. On 21 Apr further directions were issued as follows:

52 (L) Division
Continue operations towards BREMEN.

3 British Division
Hand over LEFT sector to 51 (H) Division (West of road MACKENSTEDT 6589 - HUCHTING 6696) and prepare to assault BREMEN West of the R WESER.

51 (H) Division
Re-organise and hold present front in contact with 3 British and 43 Divs

≠ Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4346 Germany 1:250,000 Sheets L53 - Hanover, L54 - Hamburg, M53 - Magdeburg, M54 - Schwerin; also Appx "J".

≠≠ 52 (L.) Inf Div was to pass to Lt-Gen Horrocks command on 19/20 Apr for the assault on Bremen.

43 Division

To be prepared to move from 22 Apr to concentrate South of ACHIM.

(AEF:45/Second Brit Army/C/D
Docket I, op cit, p. 382)

741. Despite limited advances on 21 Apr, the main Corps effort, which was to be made on the right by 52 (L.) Inf Div, did not develop until early on 22 Apr. By first light the heavy night bombing attack on Achim seemed to have had the desired effect, and by 0900 hours elements of 52 (L.) Inf Div, having captured and cleared Achim, were pushing on to Uphuisen some three miles beyond. The attack continued on 23 Apr when 43 (W.) Div developed a thrust to cut the autobahn north-east of Achim before turning towards Bremen.

UPHAUSEN was reported clear of enemy soon after midday on 23 Apr, while on the RIGHT 157 Brigade had reached the autobahn at OYTEN 8696. During the afternoon reconnaissance elements cleared two villages respectively two and four miles east of OYTEN. 155 Brigade continued the advance throughout the night 23/24 Apr and had secured MAHNDORF, their objective for the night, by first light. Opposition was fairly light, with the exception of artillery fire. 43 Division had meanwhile captured HABERLAH 9993, on the right flank, against moderate opposition and pushed on to AHAUSEN. By the evening it had reached HELLWEGE 0098. 129 Brigade moved over to rejoin 43 Division late on 24 Apr. 43 Division relieved 52 (L) Division in the OYTEN area in preparation for an attack North-West on 25 Apr.

(Ibid)

742. Following another heavy bombing attack, 52 (L.) Inf Div secured the built-up area on the southern edges of Bremen by 25 Apr.

Medium bombing of BREMEN continued on 25 Apr for five hours at 30 minute intervals. The attack through the heavily built up area continued well, with rubble and demolished buildings the main difficulties. By 1600 hrs 156 Brigade had penetrated some two miles along the main railway line, with 155 Brigade still close behind. The leading battalion of this brigade passed through at 1930 hrs. The division's intentions for that night and 26 Apr was to complete the clearance of BREMEN between the railway and the river.

(Ibid)

3 Brit Inf Div had by this time reached that part of Bremen south of the Weser, while 43 (W.) Inf Div, working along the northern sector of the city, had similarly forced the opposition to loosen up and was now making fair progress. (Ibid, p. 383)

743. Progress by all the three infantry formations continued satisfactorily throughout 26 and 27 Apr until the city was clear. Then certain readjustments took place. 51 (H.) Div, which had been operating around Dolmenhorst, was now on the east bank of the Weser, and with 43 (W.) Inf Div (which in its turn was freed of its responsibilities in Bremen by 52 (L.) Div) was given a new task. At the same time 3 Brit Div extended its

holdings westwards to pass under the command of First Cdn Army.
(Ibid)

30 Corps operations were now directed towards clearing the CUXHAVEN peninsula, striking North with 51 (H) and 43 Divisions. 51 (H) Division was to advance on the axis OTTERSBURO 9402 - WENTEL 9420 and make contact with Guards Armoured Division, then operating North from the Zeven area towards BREMERVORDE. Guards Armoured Division passed to command 30 Corps early on 29 Apr.

43 Division axis of advance was LEHE 7601 - TRUPERMOOR 8008 - TARMSTEDT 8915.

(Ibid, p. 383)

744. On 29 Apr Gds Armd Div, moving on Bremervorde, stopped short of the town and swung away to the east to isolate Stade. On the same day, 51 (H.) Div, having previously relieved the Guards on the high ground west of Zeven, followed up and took over the task of capturing Bremervorde. Further to the west 43 (W.) Div took Tarmstedt, then set about relieving the Gds Armd Div west of Zeven. From here Maj-Gen G.I. Thomas was to secure crossings over the Hamme - Oste Canal. Thus Lt-Gen Horrocks' formation was left to clear the Cuxhaven peninsula. (Ibid)

745. In the meantime, the remainder of Second British Army, was occupied in following the army plan for the advance to the Baltic.

- (a) 8 Corps (11 Armd Div, 6 Guards Armd Bde, 1 Cdo Bde, 5 and 15 Inf Divs, and 6 Airborne Div earmarked for XVIII US Corps later). To establish bridgehead over R Elbe near LAMNENBURG and advance NORTH to capture LUBECK and clear SCHLESWIG - HOLSTEIN.
- (b) XVIII US Corps (7 US Armd Div, 8 US Inf Div, 82 US Airborne Div and later 6 Brit Airborne Div). (From 12 US Army Group) To cross the ELBE about 8 miles EAST of 8 US Army Corps, advance NE and protect RIGHT flank Second Army.
- (c) 12 Corps To cross ELBE in 8 Corps bridgehead, swing NW, protect LEFT flank of 8 Corps by masking HAMBURG and later to capture HAMBURG.

(Notes on the operations of
21 Army Group, 6 Jun 44 - 5 May
45, op cit, p. 53)

At that time Lt-Gen Dempsey was facing the elements of about 15 German divisions besides a varied collection of units mustered from local depots and from the German forces occupying Denmark. (Ibid)

746. 8 Corps was lined up to the west bank of the Elbe River by 25 Apr; two days later 12 Corps had also reached the river and was investing Harburg, the large town to the south of Hamburg.

The advance to the river had been extremely rapid and the communications of the corps were now strung out over a great distance from the roadheads and dumps.

The river itself was a wide obstacle which could not be tackled by means of a hasty scramble landing.

(AEP: 45/Second British Army/
C/D Docket I, op cit, p. 393)

A period of several days was necessary, therefore, to allow for the regrouping of formations and for the moving up of stores and equipment. (Ibid). As will be appreciated:

The crossing of the R ELBE was a major river crossing and although a stage of the war had been reached in which extreme risks could be willingly undertaken, an operation of this kind could not be carried out without a limited amount of planning.

(Ibid, p. 393)

747. In accordance with the Supreme Commander's instructions, XVIII U.S. Airborne Corps left 12 U.S. Army Group to join Lt-Gen Dempsey's army. The main assault was to be carried out by 8 Corps, and the object as laid down by the Army Commander was to capture a bridgehead over the River Elbe to allow 12 Corps and XVIII U.S. Corps to pass through. The target date was set at 1 May 45 and as H hour approached 12 and 30 Corps continued to keep the enemy on Lt-Gen Dempsey's left occupied. (Ibid, p. 393)

748. The fighting up the River Elbe had shown only too clearly that the enemy was unable to produce anywhere near a sufficient number of properly controlled formations to delay the progress of Second British Army. It was not anticipated that any large or even well trained enemy groups could oppose the crossing of the Elbe or halt the Allied drive to the Baltic.

The line of the R. ELBE on the front of Second Army East of HAMBURG was held largely by "ersatz" battalions, including naval troops, police battalions and Landeschutzen battalions. These totalled approximately 20 and had a combined approximate strength of 6,000.

In addition, there were 100 heavy Anti-Aircraft guns, approximately 160 light Anti-Aircraft guns and a very few field pieces. There was also the possibility that somewhere in the area lay 245 Division. No organised defensive positions had been prepared on the line of the river or behind it.

(Ibid, p. 393)

749. At 0200 hours 29 Apr, 15 (S.) Inf Div of 8 Corps began its assault across the River Elbe. Opposition was light on the right but negligible on the left, and by 0630 hours the two leading brigades were complete on the east bank. As the morning passed resistance stiffened, particularly at Lauenburg

... but by midday this town had been captured and a second bridge seized over the ELBE-TRAVE Canal. 44 Brigade held the original bridgehead, with 46 Brigade striking North to Krusen and 227 Brigade starting to pass through the LEFT of the bridgehead towards the North West. Bridging had started at both LAUENBURG and ARTLENBURG, although the construction of the class 40 bridge at the latter site was slightly delayed by enemy artillery fire.

(Ibid, p. 395)

750. The highlight of the day, however, was the short though spectacular display of initiative by the seemingly dying Luftwaffe which, to quote an official account,

using groups of about twelve aircraft, made a series of bombing attacks on the bridging sites.

(Ibid P. 395)

Ground opposition remained light however, and

by midnight the three brigades of 15 (S.) Division had expanded the bridgehead to the line BASEDOW - JULIUSBURG - GULZOW - GRUNHOF. Combined patrols of 15 Reconnaissance Regiment and Special Air Service troops had confirmed that LATAU was still occupied by the enemy and appeared to be held more strongly than the other villages in the sector. This village was accordingly attacked by 46 Brigades and cleared on the morning of 30 Apr.

(Ibid)

751. By the morning of 30 Apr the enemy's air attacks had decreased, mainly because of the counter air effort put up by 83 Gp R.A.F. Thus, under these improved conditions, both the class 9 bridge at Lauenburg and the class 40 structure at Artlenburg were completed. 6 Airborne Div had by this time begun to cross the obstacle and by the close of 30 Apr -

was approaching its objective on the ELBE-TRAVE Canal, while 3 Parachute Brigade had moved rapidly East to reach BOIZENBURG.

(Ibid)

752. The break from the bridgehead began at first light 1 May. 11 Arm'd Div passed through the Scottish formation. At the same time 6 Airborne Div and 1 Cdo Bde came under command XVIII U.S. Airborne Corps. During 1 May and throughout the following day 11 Arm'd Div made good progress, being delayed only by the deteriorated state of the roads. 5 Brit Inf Div which joined 11 Arm'd in the journey northward, met with equal success. By midnight 2/3 May Maj-Gen Roberts' armour had cleared the city of Lubeck and reached the Baltic beyond, while on his right 5 Inf Div was north of the Ratzeburger See, having captured Molln en route. On 3 May 5 Div relieved 11 Arm'd Div in the Lubeck sector and the armour swept north unopposed. (Ibid, p. 396)

753. Meanwhile 15 (S.) Div had turned left from the bridgehead to secure Geesthacht[⊗] (7541), passing the first bridge of 53 (W.) Inf Div (158 Inf Bde) through towards Hamburg. A second brigade (71 Inf Bde) crossed the Elbe on 2 May. 15 (S.) Inf Div reported incredible scenes in the wake of the two divisions which had gone on to Lubeck and beyond (11 Arm'd and 5 Inf Div)

⊗ This town, around which the enemy had several large dumps of Gas-filled projectiles, surrendered without trouble. (Ibid, p. 396).

Tens of thousands of German troops, their numbers swollen by those fleeing from the Russians, were surrendering. Long columns of enemy transport and horse-drawn vehicles were passing South down the Lines of Communication with no other intention than that of crossing the R. ELBE to what seemed safety.

(Ibid, p. 396)

754. Despite the fact that some of the troops (158 and 71 Inf Bdes of 53 (W.) Div) were already on the way towards Hamburg from the east, 12 Brit Corps was not yet ready to start its attack against this large fort. It was just as well since negotiations for the surrender of Hamburg were already afoot.

These were stopped temporarily to allow the start of discussions for the surrender of the entire German Army Group, but the local conditions for the occupation of HAMBURG were completed during the morning of 3 May and the city was entered, without incident, by 7 Armoured Division.

(Ibid)

7 Armd Div crossed the Elbe over bridges north of Harburg for the specific purpose of occupying Hamburg. (First Cdn Army Op Log, 3 May 45, serial 113)

755. The right flank attack across the Elbe by XVIII U.S. Airborne Corps had similarly achieved good results. From 0100 hours 30 Apr, the time at which the first American troops crossed the Elbe at Bleckede, everything went according to plan, and by the evening of 1 May contact with 8 Brit Corps had been established east of Boizenburg. On the following day Hagenow and Wittenburg fell.

From now on there was no hindrance to the forward movement of the corps other than the vast numbers of enemy pouring down roads in disorganised retreat from both the front of Second Army and from the East. LUDWIGSLUST and SCHWERIN were occupied by 82 Airborne Division and 8 Division. WISMAR was captured and the BALTIC coast reached by 3 Parachute Brigade.

(Ibid, p. 397)

756. The confusion of the enemy was by now supreme:

As a yardstick to measure the disintegration of the German Armies caught between the Russians and Second Army, it was estimated that approximately 100,000 prisoners were taken during 2 May on this corps front alone.

(Ibid, p. 397)

The end was very near. At 1605 hours on 2 May our tactical reconnaissance planes on this front reported that Russian tanks were in Goldberg. At 2100 hours of this memorable day elements of 6 Brit Airborne Div met the Russian forces at Wismar. Then,

* This formation, which included 1 Cdn Para Bn, was part of 6 Brit Airborne Div.

at 1032 hours on the following day, further contacts with our Eastern Allies were established at Grabow, south-east of Ludwigslust. (Ibid)

757. On 3 May the Army Commander, being aware that high level talks of peace were in progress, issued the following directive to his corps.

1. 8 Corps and 12 Corps will not advance beyond SEGEBERG - HAMBURG without orders from me.
2. XVIII Corps is established on the line DOMITZ - LUDWIGSLUST - SCHWERIN - WISMAR. There will be no further advance in an Easterly direction from this line. Contact has already been made at WISMAR and GRABOW with the Russian Army.
3. A delegation from Admiral DCENITZ and Field Marshal KEITEL passed through my headquarters this morning; they are now at Tactical Headquarters 21 Army Group. Representatives of the Supreme Commander will meet them tomorrow morning. The delegation appears to have full authority to negotiate surrender.
4. The Commander of the HAMBURG Garrison surrendered HAMBURG this morning, and 12 Corps is occupying it today.
5. The main problem facing us at the moment is the organization and feeding of the vast number of prisoners, displaced persons and German refugees within the area NEUSTADT - WISMAR - DOMITZ - HAMBURG.
6. All German prisoners of war will be placed in areas selected by you and kept there for the time being. Officers should remain with their men. No further evacuation of prisoners of war will take place for the present.
7. Displaced Persons and German civilians should, so far as possible, be made to stand-fast in the areas in which they already are. In any event they must not be allowed to cross the ELBE - TRAVE Canal from East to West nor the R ELBE from North to South.
8. British and American ex-prisoners of war should be evacuated to Lunenburg at once".

(Ibid, p. 398)

758. Staff officers at Lt-Gen Dempsey's headquarters estimated the number of prisoners taken in the last four days at 580,000, with a further 40,000 enemy considered killed, wounded or missing. In comparison the British losses since April were given as 679 officers and 8371 other ranks. (Ibid) But, when losses are mentioned, contributions made by the air force towards ultimate success must be counted.

From 30 Apr to 3 May 83 Group had taken tremendous toll of enemy movement fleeing West in front of the Russian advance. Enemy aircraft of all types were shot down

without difficulty and in great numbers. Claims, on the ground and in the air, were difficult to assess, but the following figures are approximate:-

	<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
Mechanical Transport	1,500	2,750
Enemy aircraft	150	80

(Ibid, p. 396)

It is also of interest to note that on 3 May

the main air effort was switched to attacking the exodus of craft, mainly from the KIEL area, which tried to make their way North across the BALTIC. Some 60 ships of all types, including submarines were damaged or destroyed

(Ibid, p. 396) *

* Paras 747 - 767 have been written mainly according to the account of Second Brit Army's operations as contained in AEF: 45/Second Brit Army/C/D, Docket I, but all statements have been checked with the following references.

1. AEF: 45/Second Brit Army/C/H, Docket III Second Army sitrep for April and May 1945 as received at Headquarters First Cdn Army.

Sitrep Nos.	541 - 542	for period	200001B - 210001B
"	"	"	"
"	543 - 544	"	210001B - 220001B
"	"	"	"
"	545 - 546	"	220001B - 230001B
"	"	"	"
"	547 - 548	"	230001B - 240001B
"	"	"	"
"	549 - 550	"	240001B - 250001B
"	"	"	"
"	551 - 552	"	250001B - 260001B
"	"	"	"
"	553 - 554	"	260001B - 270001B
"	"	"	"
"	555 - 556	"	270001B - 280001B
"	"	"	"
"	557 - 558	"	280001B - 290001B
"	"	"	"
"	559 - 560	"	290001B - 300001B
"	"	"	"
"	561 - 562	"	300001B - 010001B
"	"	"	"
"	563 - 564	"	010001B - 020001B
"	"	"	"
"	565 - 566	"	020001B - 030001B
"	"	"	"
"	567 - 568	"	030001B - 040001B

2. AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H; Docket IV and V, April and May 1945, First Cdn Army Liaison officers reports from G Ops, Second Brit Army dated

April 1945	dated	210600B
"	"	221400B
"	"	251400B
"	"	281430B (Paras 4 - 9 incl)
"	"	301700B
May 1945	dated	011000B
"	"	631300B

759. Even these momentous events were not, however, by any means the most important of the times. Everywhere the enemy's once proud forces were involved in spectacular collapse. Hitler had been reported as dead on 1 May, on 2 May the Russian ring about Berlin closed in and, after a bloody battle, the capital fell. On the same day the German Army Group "C" surrendered to Field-Marshal Alexander in Italy. Elsewhere French and American Armies had all been reporting endless success for the past ten days. General de Lattre de Tassigny's First French Army had long since swung east from Stuttgart to skirt the northern edge of the Black Forest and seal the Swiss Border from Lake Constance to Basle. Lt-Gen Patch's Seventh U.S. Army had turned south from Nurnburg to seize, first Ulm and Augsburg, then Munich, Salzburg and Hitler's famous retreat at Berchtesgaden, before making a final thrust towards the Brenner Pass. (Report by the Supreme Commander: op cit, p. 108 - 109, 115; also SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summaries, op cit, No. 303 dated 29 Apr 45, 304 dated 30 Apr 45, 306 dated 2 May 45 and 307 dated 3 May 45)

760. The gains made by the far-flung spearheads of Lt-Gen Patton's (Third U.S.) Army had in turn exceeded all expectation.

the thrust of the Third Army down the Danube Valley began on 22 April and made rapid progress against a tottering enemy. Although the defenders held out at Regensburg until 26 Apr, XX Corps established bridgeheads across the Danube east and west of the city on the 25th, and then advanced southeast down the right bank while XII Corps did likewise north of the river. By 2 May, the north bank had been cleared of the enemy as far as Passau, and the 11th Armoured Division shot ahead to receive the surrender of Linz on 5 May. With this lengthening of the XII Corps line, the Third Army took command of V Corps, from the First Army, for operations into Czechoslovakia on its northern flank. By an attack eastwards across the frontier, Pilsen was captured on 6 May.

(Report by the Supreme
Commander, op cit, p. 115)

761. On the left of Lt-Gen Patton's fast-moving columns, First U.S. Army had particularly distinguished itself by being first to contact the Russian forces at Torgau along the upper reached of the Elbe river. There Lt-Gen Hodges had consolidated to cut Germany in two. Thereafter Lt-Gen Simpson's Ninth U.S. Army soon set about severing the northern portion of the Reich by thrusting through Brunswick to reach the Elbe at Magdeburg. (Ibid)

762. The last two days (3 and 4 May) saw the linking up of several armies as the enemy pockets either surrendered or were annihilated. First French Army and Lt-Gen Patch's Seventh Army met up in the Ill and Kloster Valleys of south-western Austria, while at about the same time other troops of Lt-Gen Patch's Army entered the Brenner pass and pressed through to contact forces of the Allied Armies in Italy. Further contacts between Third U.S. Army and the Russians along the borders of Czechoslovakia was reported hourly. (Ibid, also SHAEF, Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 59, op cit)

763. These operations were carried out in full co-ordination with the Russians approaching from the east.

The American troops advanced to the line Budejovice - Pilsen - Karlsbad, but were there halted while the Red Army cleared the east and west banks of the Moldau River and occupied Prague. South of Czechoslovakia, the agreed provisional line of junction ran down the Budejovice - Linz railroad and thence along the valley of the Enns, where contact was effected in due course.

(Report by the Supreme Commander, op cit, p. 115)

RUSSIAN OPERATIONS ON THE EASTERN FRONT, 1-4 MAY 45

764. While operations on the western front were being concluded against the dwindling enemy pockets, the Russian armies had been striking staggering blows at German Army Group Vistula as it fell rooling back through Northern Germany.

Shifting the bulk of its efforts to Western POMERANIA and Northern BRANDENBURG, the Red Army drove a hundred miles to the WEST and by 4 May, troops of Marshal ROKOSSOFSKY's Second White Russian Front and Marshal ZHUKOV's First White Russian Front had closed up to the positions held by the Western Allies, contact being made roughly along the line WISMAR - GRABOW - LENZEN - WITTENBERGE. Several pockets, notably at SWINEMUENDE, were created by these rapid advances but most of them, including the above, had been cleaned up by 5 May.

(SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary, op cit, Part I, para 3)

765. Berlin had fallen. In street fighting that was as bitter as any ever, the ruined capital, defended step by step from its outer suburbs to the very core of the city, fell on 2 May. 135,000 prisoners were taken that day - but the man who was responsible was not included among them, Hitler was dead.

The day on which the Red Army flag was raised above BERLIN also marked the end for the large enemy force surrounded Southeast of the city; between 24 April and 2 May over 120,000 Germans were captured there and half that number killed.

(Ibid)

766. West of Berlin, Brandenburg also fell and

Russian forces drove on against the pocketed remnants of the German Ninth and Twelfth Armies, their backs to the ELBE and their flanks little more than 40 miles apart. By the end of the week the pocket had practically vanished, much of it disappearing over the ELBE as large numbers of Germans turned themselves in to the Allies.

(Ibid)

GERMANY'S POSITION WITH REGARD TO SEA AND AIR POWER, 4 MAY 45

767. In the following words General Eisenhower has summed the enemy's air and sea picture as it existed at this time.

Of enemy offensive activity in the air there was no sign. As the area left to the Germans decreased, the congestion of planes on the remaining airfields grew worse, and the number of aircraft destroyed on the ground mounted in proportion. The demoralization of the German Air Force personnel was too far developed for any suicidal effort to be made with the jet aircraft squadrons left in Austria and Czechoslovakia, and by the beginning of May practically the only flights undertaken were for the purpose of desertion.

(Report by the Supreme
Commander, op cit, p. 116)

768. Of the German Navy, the Supreme Commander says:

The end of the German Navy was even more unspectacular. Having put to sea only on rare occasions throughout the war, then invariably to be hounded to their destruction or driven crippled back to their bases where Allied air forces repeatedly undid any repair work attempted, the heavy units lay helpless in the northern ports as these fell into the hands of the advancing armies. Only three of the larger ships were in anything approaching a condition for effective action when the last naval bases surrendered. The coastal craft had ceased to operate during April, and it was left to the submarine forces - the only truly successful naval weapon of which the enemy had enjoyed the use -- to carry on the fight to the end.

(Ibid, p. 116 - 117)

769. By comparison in these concluding stages of the war, General Eisenhower goes on to state that

the allied air forces continued to afford the invaluable support which had been such a vital factor in insuring our successes throughout the entire campaign. As the Eastern and Western Fronts closed together, however, the opportunities for employment of the strategic bomber forces grew more and more limited, former strategic targets having now become tactical ones. The chief occupation of Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force by the beginning of May consequently consisted of flying food supplies to the Dutch civilian population and of evacuating casualties and liberated Allied prisoners.

(Ibid, p. 116)

770. The work of the Tactical Air Forces in close support of the Allied Armies was particularly worthy of the highest praise for their operations were restricted

by the danger of hitting advanced Russian elements and the large bodies of prisoners who, having broken loose from their camps, were streaming westward along the roads. The last major offensive by the tactical planes

was in the south, where attacks were concentrated ahead of the Third Army down the Danube Valley, destroying the enemy's remaining dumps of fuel and other supplies in that area, and cutting the few communications still available for their distribution.

(Ibid)

THE SURRENDER IN THE SOUTH, 2 - 5 MAY 45

771. By the beginning of May 1945 the majority of the principal objectives of the Allies had been reached. The war in Europe was virtually at an end, and, to quote the Supreme Commander:

Nowhere on the Continent was there still in existence a German army capable of continuing to fight.

To the east, the armies under my command were joining hands with their Russian Allies from the Baltic to the Alps. To the south, they had linked with their comrades in Italy, where already the enemy had made formal surrender. Of the Nazi "fortresses", the national Redoubt had been penetrated while its intended garrison lay dispersed and broken outside its walls; Norway was isolated and doomed; Dunkirk, the Brittany ports, and the Channel Islands were helpless;

(Ibid, p. 117)

772. Now the German forces in Holland and Denmark were on the verge of capitulating. The Germany which sought to dominate the world and plunge humanity back into the dark ages was crushed and the time had arrived for it to acknowledge defeat. The first attempt (in March 1945) to make a separate peace with the West had failed. A second attempt by Himmler later was similarly ignored. However, on the Italian front there were men who realized all too well the futility of continuing the fight. The capitulation of the German Armies in Italy was quickly followed by further mass surrenders of the German forces facing south in the Alpine section, thus put the German First and Nineteenth Armies out of the war. (Ibid, p. 118)

THE SURRENDER IN THE NORTH, 2 - 5 MAY 45

773. Rumor of capitulation in northern Europe also reached the Allies in mid-April 1945.

Field Marshal Busch, commanding the Hamburg area, was stated to be anti-Nazi and willing to surrender, but unable to do so until the Western Allies reached the Baltic and cut him off from the possibility of the arrival of die-hard SS formations from central Germany. General Lindemann, the commander in Denmark, was also understood to be ready to yield at the same time as Busch, and on 30 Apr an emissary appeared in Stockholm to confirm this. It was urged that the British Army should make all speed to reach the Baltic before the Russians did so, for the Germans would under no circumstances surrender to the Red Army.

(Ibid p. 118)

774. The capture of Lubeck by Second Brit Army on 3 May severed Denmark and North-West Germany from the remainder of the Reich. At that time, as General Eisenhower states:

...more important figures came within our reach. As the Red Army had drawn nearer to the Western Allies, Admiral Doenitz, upon whom the mantle of the Fuhrer had now fallen, had instructed his armies which had been facing east to turn about and surrender to the Anglo-American forces.

(Ibid, p. 118 - 119)

775. Now, with hundreds of thousands of his country-men in full flight before the advancing Russians, Admiral Friedeburg, newly appointed head of the German Navy, (because of Admiral Doenitz's doubtful promotion to the tottering post of Fuhrer), approached the Western Allies through the headquarters of 21 Army Group.

They asked to be allowed to surrender the Third Panzer, Twelfth, and Twenty-first Armies, which had been fighting the Russians, and to be permitted to pass refugees through the Allied lines into Schleswig - Holstein. Their sole desire was to avoid the necessity of surrendering to the Russians. Field Marshal Montgomery, however refused to discuss capitulation with them on these terms, though he informed them that individual soldiers who gave themselves up would be treated as prisoners of war.

(Ibid, p. 119)

faced with another rebuff, the German representatives sent back to Field Marshal Kietel, their chief, for further instructions. (Ibid)

776. The next day Admiral Friedeburg made an important announcement:

...he had received permission from his superiors to make unconditional surrender of all German armed forces, land, sea, and air, in the north-west Germany (including the Frisian Islands, Heligoland, and all other islands), Holland, Schleswig-Holstein, and Denmark.

(Ibid)

According to instructions issued by the Supreme Commander, the capitulation in these areas were to be regarded as a tactical matter[⊗] and as such must be dealt with by Field Marshal Montgomery. It was arranged, however, that a Russian representative should be present to accept the submission on behalf of the Soviet Union. (Ibid; also Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, p. 220)

⊗ This was actually but one flank of the Allied effort, the surrender of which merely meant the neutralization of one portion of the European battlefield.

CEASE FIRE FOR THE CANADIANS, 4 MAY 45

777. With mass surrenders taking place in every part of the front, it came as no surprise when at 1255 hours on 4 May General Crerar received a message by telephone from the Chief of the Staff, 21 Army Group, informing him of the negotiations then being conducted between Field Marshal Montgomery and the representative of Grand Admiral Doenitz concerning the unconditional surrender of the remaining German forces in North-West Europe (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army 4 May). In the light of this development, the C.-in-C. agreed with General Crerar on the advisability of not pressing the demands for the delivery of Jever to the Poles and Aurich to 3 Cdn Inf Div, and Lt-Gen Simonds was therefore directed to withhold direct assault against these towns (ibid; General Crerar's Despatch, para 44).

778. Later that evening General Crerar was informed that the B.B.C. had just broadcast a special announcement, issued by Supreme Allied Headquarters, that the end had come. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 4 May). A few minutes later official word to this effect was communicated by a message from 21 Army Group.

All offensive ops will cease from receipt this signal. Orders will be given to all tps to cease fire 0800 hrs tomorrow Saturday 5 May. Full terms of local German surrender arranged today for 21 Army Gp front. Emphasize these provisions apply solely to 21 Army Gp fronts and are for the moment excl of Dunkirk...

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First
Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx 12)

779. This was followed by a second message containing a digest of the instrument of surrender signed by the C.-in-C. and German representatives.

The German Comd agrees to the surrender of all German armed forces in Holland, in N.W. Germany incl the Frisian Islands and Heliogoland and all other islands, in Schleswig-Holstein, and in Denmark to the C-in-C 21 Army Gp. These forces to lay down their arms and to surrender unconditionally.

All hostilities on land, on sea or in the air by German forces in the above areas to cease at 0800 hrs E.B.S.T. Saturday 5 May 1945.

The German Comd to carry out at once and without argument or comment all further orders that will be issued by the Allied Powers on any subject.

Disobedience of orders or failure to comply with them will be regarded as a breach of these surrender terms and will be dealt with by the Allied Powers in accordance with the accepted laws and usages of war.

This instrument of surrender is independent of, without prejudice to and will be superseded by, any general instrument of surrender imposed by or on behalf of the Allied Powers and applicable to Germany and the German armed forces as a whole...

(Ibid, Message GO 412A,
From 21 Army Group)

780. General Crerar at once communicated these facts to the formations under his command, issuing the following message to be read to all ranks.

From Sicily to the River SENIO, from the beaches of DIEPPE to those of Normandy, and thence through Northern France, Belgium, Holland and Northwest Germany, the Canadians and their Allied comrades in this Army have carried out their responsibilities in the high traditions which they inherited. The official order that the offensive operations of all troops of First Cdn Army will cease forthwith and that all fire will cease from 0800 hours tomorrow, Saturday, 5 May, has been issued. Crushing and complete victory over the German enemy has been secured. In rejoicing at this supreme accomplishment, we shall remember the friends who have paid the full price for the belief they also held that no sacrifice in the interests of the principles for which we fought could be too great.

(W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First
Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx
"D")

781. On 5 May Brigadier J.A. Roberts, Commanding 8 Cdn Inf Bde, met the German commander of the WILHELMSHAVEN - EMDEN area, General der Infanterie Straube (formerly commanding 86 Corps) and escorted him to Bad Zwischenahn, where Lt-Gen Simonds was to accept his surrender (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 May). The newly formed Armee Abteilung Straube had assumed command of the sector between the Weser and the Ems, including the Frisian Islands, about 2 May. Such was the enemy's disorganization that the precise order of battle was unknown even to the German staff. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, May 1945: Appx 3, 2 Cdn Corps Int Bulletin No. 2, 11 May). A diarist gives the following account of the meeting:

...With all divisional comds and Brigadiers of Corps HQ present, the Corps cmd dealt with Gen STRAUBE by first reading the terms of the surrender to 21 Army Gp and then going through in detail the orders which Gen STRAUBE was to carry out in the area opposite 2 Cdn Corps...

At the conclusion of the meeting a champagne toast was drunk by the allied officers present.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn
Corps, 5 May)

782. The orders given to General Straube (as issued by H.Q. First Cdn Army) required him to ensure that no unauthorized movement of his troops took place and to submit a detailed order of battle of his command. All enemy personnel were to be disarmed and all war material dumped and guarded. The German Commander was, moreover, to be responsible for the maintenance of his own troops. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Corps/C/F: Brief Historical Outline of the Occupation of North-West Holland by 1 Cdn Corps, Appx "A")

783. A like ceremony was enacted in 1 Cdn Corps' sector at Wageningen, where on the same day Lt-Gen Foulkes accepted from Col-Gen Blaskowitz the surrender of the German forces in the Western Netherlands. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Corps, May 1945: Appx 43, 1 Cdn Corps Post Mortem No. 5)

784. Following the local surrenders to Lt-Gen Simonds and Lt-Gen Foulkes, on 6 May General Crerar sent a directive to Col-Gen Blaskowitz concerning the surrender of all his existing command and defining his responsibilities and chain of command. This reads in part:

1. By virtue of the powers vested in me, I authorize Lt-Gen Charles Foulkes, General Officer Commanding 1 Canadian Corps, to accept your surrender and signature on behalf of your present command. Your area of responsibility extends to the NETHERLANDS and that part of GERMANY lying WEST of the River WESER, including the FRISIAN Islands as far EAST as inclusive ALTE MELJUM and WANGEROOGE, and NORTH of the general line...
DELMENHORST - CLOPPENBURG - NORDHORN - LINGEN...
2. The General Officer Commanding 2 Canadian Corps has already accepted the surrender of all the German Forces within that portion of GERMANY lying within your area of responsibility as defined in paragraph 1 above.

(W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First
Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx "E")

This directive was given to Col-Gen Blaskowitz on the same day at a meeting held by Lt-Gen Foulkes (W.Ds., Chief of Staff and "G" Plans, op cit, and G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 6 May)

THE SITUATION OF FIRST CDN ARMY AT 0800 HOURS 5 MAY 45 ^{*}

785 For the Canadians in Europe the war was over. Most of General Crerar's troops had been in action until the last moment. An example of this may be taken from the operations of 4 Cdn Armd Div, on whose front the Canadian Grenadier Guards (22 Cdn Armd Regt) had been fighting their way forward throughout 4 May. The Grenadiers proudly record this in words that any other regiment might have echoed - "the end came when we were out in front pushing on". (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 4-5 May 45)

786. From other localities along the Canadian front came similar stories of heated action right up to the last. Some units of formations such as 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf and Pol Armd Div could be found in concentration preparing for another attack. Everyone had heard rumours of capitulation but no one allowed even the strongest of these to interfere with the thought of and preparation for more offensive action. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs, 2-4 May 45)

787. The troops themselves took the news of victory calmly. Major G.L. Cassidy, D.S.O., the historian of the Algonquin Regt, recounts how the message to stand down reached him -

By the dim dash-bulb light of the carrier, the words seemed to dance before one's eyes. Down the road, the tanks, motors rumbling throatily, were crowded with men waiting to ride up to a battle that was not to come off. How appropriate to walk down the column in the gathering darkness and to give, with more meaning than it ever had before, the "washout" signal. "Climb down, lads. It's all over. All over".

(Cassidy, Warpath, op cit, p.328)

* See Appx "K"

There were no cheers. There was little sign of emotion.. One could hear the motors of tanks in their laagers and the clink of shovels as the men dug into the black earth. Few words were spoken.

788. The morning of 5 May dawned bright and clear. Urged by the news of the previous night, most of the Canadians had taken advantage of the situation to get their first night's untroubled sleep in months. But when they woke they found that the victory called for further efforts, and as the morning passed each divisional headquarters received fresh instructions which in turn were passed to all units. These directions dealt mainly with:

- (a) Local surrender problems.
- (b) Establishment of communications.
- (c) Disarmament of enemy soldiers' personal weapons.
- (d) Similar disarmament of unit and formations weapons, such as mortars;
- (e) the surrender of guns, tanks, and SP equipments;
- (f) the surrender of technical stores;
- (g) the movement of enemy troops and their future administration within a prescribed area.

(2 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly
Summary of Ops and Act-
ivities, op cit, 6 -
12 May 45)

789. With the exception of those of 2 Cdn Inf Div the forward positions across 2 Cdn Corps front had not changed much during the twenty-four hours preceding the "cease fire". 4 Cdn Inf Bde and its battalions moved up to concentrate on the wooded areas south-east of Rastede. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 May 45). 5 Cdn Inf Bde, having handed over to 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, also moved into unit concentration areas on the northern fringes of Oldenburg. (W.Ds., R.H.C., Calg Highrs, R. de Mais, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 4 May 45; also W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde May 1945, Appx 13, Message log, serials 1058, 1059, 1060). 6 Cdn Inf Bde remained in the western side of the city. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 4 and 5 May 45). 8 Cdn Recce Regt, however, was one unit which was in action to the very last moment. Working on the road Oldenburg - Meerkirchen (3819), "A" and "C" Sqns met stiff opposition and suffered quite heavy losses in men and scout cars. (W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 4 May 45)

790. Neither of the brigades of 4 Cdn Armd Div nor 2 Cdn Armd Bde carried out any tactical moves forward after last light on 4 May. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 4 May 45). The Poles, however, had started to feel their way forward once again, and were in contact with German infantry and self-propelled guns north and south-east of Asterderfeld (1329 - 1429) when news of the "cease-fire" reached Maj-Gen Maczek. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/H, Docket III, May 1945, folio 48, sitrep No. 610 dated 050001B from H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps to H.Q. First Cdn Army). Our lines south-east of Emden and on the approaches to Aurich remained unchanged. (W.Ds., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div; 7, 8, and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 4 - 5 May 45)

791. The surrender to Field Marshal Montgomery was actually but one in a dramatic succession. On 5 May Nineteenth German Army, and on the following day the whole of German Army Group "G", ceased resistance to 6 Army Group. On 7 May the war

in Europe came to an end when all German land, sea and air forces were unconditionally surrendered at Rheims to the Allied Expeditionary Forces and the Soviet High Command. The instrument was signed in Berlin shortly after midnight on 8/9 May. (Report by the Supreme Commander, op cit, p. 119 - 120)

CONCLUSION

792. Reviewing the campaign as a whole, General Crerar has given an approximation of the number of enemy prisoners captured by First Cdn Army. 35,355 were taken in April 1945*.

Excluding the considerable German forces in the occupied Netherlands and on the German coastline between the estuaries of the Ems and Weser, of which more than 185,000 remained to be taken under my control as capitulated troops, the number of prisoners taken during this period was over 50,000. The total number captured since 23 Jul thus exceeded 190,000. In ten months of continuous fighting, always on the left and vital flank of the allied armies and over the most difficult military country, First Canadian Army had encountered and defeated no fewer than fifty-nine divisions of the German Wehrmacht. These divisions had ranged from the fanatical SS and tenacious Paratroopers to the mediocre "Training" formations and others drawn from the German navy and air force. But throughout the campaign we had always been opposed by the best forces available to the German High Command.

(General Crerar's Despatch,
op cit, para 46)

793. The casualties** suffered by First Canadian Army from 0600 hours 1 Apr 45 to 0600 hours 6 May 45 amounted to 388 officers and 5455 other ranks killed, wounded and missing. Of these numbers 314 officers, and 4461 other ranks were Canadians. For the whole of the campaign in North-West Europe from 6 Jun 44 to 5 May 45 (inclusive) our losses totalled 3680 officers and 44,272 other ranks. In comparison, the enemy's casualties proved to be much greater; besides the vast counts of prisoners, his dead and long-term wounded ran into many thousands. (Ibid: Appx "K" to this Report; also AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F Docket V, Enemy Casualties; also Hist Sec file 215C1.98(D301) POW Evacuation reports)

794. In this last phase, the Army's operations from the Rhine to the Weser, the North Sea, and the Ijsselmeer differed considerably in their nature from such heavy and deliberate actions as those which had carried 21 Army Group's winter offensive through the Reichswald. Movement was swifter, the end more clearly in view. General Crerar's formations were more divergently and variously employed. There was width and depth to the battlefield, the offensive covering distances greater than a hundred and fifty miles from north to south, and from east to west.

* First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary, op cit, No. 307 dated 3 May 45, Part II, "Enemy Strengths"

** See Appx "B" to this Report.

Whereas these forces had previously been concentrated for the main onslaught against the enemy between the rivers south-east from Nijmegen on a front scarcely twenty miles across, they were here spread out over great tracts of territory. Once the crossing of the Rhine had been effected by Second British Army, there developed a running fight carried on between lines and centres of resistance hurriedly improvised by enemy forces, a large proportion of whom only the most agile and ingenious staff work was able to bring and hold together.

795. After the Rhine no barrier of any comparable importance remained to block the march eastwards. The numerous minor waterways of this part of Europe, such as the Ijssel and the Kusten canal were among the more formidable of obstacles encountered and they presented tactical hindrances. These were overcome in due course, but only as the result of the most determined contest by the Canadians, for the enemy never fell into such a state of disorganization as to be unable or unwilling to defend himself. On the contrary, the paratroops fought well and bitterly to the end. That their defeat had become only a matter of time was in itself sufficient testimony to the devotion and bravery of all ranks engaged under General Crerar's command in those last angry battles across stream and bog, the outcome of which was to press the Germans always closer to the sea. Happily, the casualties sustained were proportionally fewer than in other more closely fought phases of the campaign.

796. With the arrival of the 1st Canadian Corps from the Mediterranean the Army had become predominantly Canadian in composition, but it still comprised certain British and Allied formations and units. Among these the 49th (West Riding) Division had been under command for nearly six months, and the 1st Polish Armoured Division from the early days in Normandy. This honourable and valiant association, so easy and natural as between the nations of the British Commonwealth, had thus been proven no less effective where troops of other nationalities were involved. That the Army under his command made an international entity was a circumstance which General Crerar was apt to remark upon as having wider significance for the future.

797. Again, the support of the R.A.F.* provided the ground troops both with continuous and accurate information on the movement and observable intentions of the enemy, and with a weapon which on many a notable occasion they were able to bring to bear with most satisfying results. The intimate association between General Crerar's Headquarters and the Headquarters of Air Vice-Marshal E.C. Hudleston, C.B., C.B.E., the Air Officer Commanding the 84th Tactical Group, remained as one of the distinguishing characteristics of both.

798. From the calculated risk of 6 Jun 44 to the day of victory in Europe, the Canadians and their Allies fought for three hundred and thirty-three days. The Canadian soldier could now look back upon eleven months of hard fighting, most of it very bloody. That he had done his share, no man can doubt, and in due course, the Supreme Commander was to write as follows:

In attempting very briefly to assess the factors underlying the Allied success in this campaign, I would stress the importance of three episodes as being the most decisive in insuring victory. The first of these was the battle of the Normandy beaches...The second vital battle was that of the Falaise pocket...The third

* See Appx "L".

decisive phase in the campaign consisted of the battles west of the Rhine during February and March...

(Report of the Supreme
Commander, op cit,
p. 121)

799. Canadian soldiers had played a main part in all three of these episodes. Near the Normandy beaches, around Falaise, and in the Rhineland, as well as at many points between these places, the proof of the unflagging effort of Canada's soldiers towards the complete and final victory will be found. It is there for all men to see.

800. This report was prepared by Capt P.A. Mayer, R.C.I.C., who fought as company commander with the Alq R. throughout the operations described. Capt J.C. Newlands, P.P.C.L.I., R.C.I.C., also contributed to this work, and was responsible for producing paras 659 to 717.

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

CONSOLIDATED CASUALTIES
from 0600 hours 1 Apr 45-0600 hours 6 May 45

<u>Formation</u>	<u>Killed, Wounded, Missing</u>	
	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other Ranks</u>
<u>3 Cdn Inf Div</u>		
7 Cdn Inf Bde	28	434
8 Cdn Inf Bde	15	262
9 Cdn Inf Bde	15	221
C.H.of O. (M.G.)	1	13
7 Cdn Recce Regt	4	20
3 Cdn Inf Div Tps	<u>6</u>	<u>100</u>
TOTAL	69	1050
 <u>2 Cdn Inf Div</u>		
4 Cdn Inf Bde	16	334
5 Cdn Inf Bde	21	353
6 Cdn Inf Bde	20	211
Tor Scot R. (M.G.)	1	13
8 Cdn Recce Regt	4	39
2 Cdn Inf Div Tps	<u>10</u>	<u>50</u>
TOTAL	72	1000
 <u>4 Cdn Armd Div</u>		
4 Cdn Armd Bde	21	310
10 Cdn Inf Bde	35	813
29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt	3	20
4 Cdn Armd Div Tps	<u>15</u>	<u>105</u>
TOTAL	74	1248
 2 Cdn Armd Bde	12	84
18 Cdn Armd C. Regt	5	17
2 Cdn Corps Tps	<u>4</u>	<u>27</u>
TOTAL	21	128

<u>Formation or Unit</u>	<u>Killed, Wounded, Missing</u>	
	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other Ranks</u>
<u>1 Pol Armd Div</u>		
10 Pol Armd Bde	25	178
3 Pol Inf Bde	6	274
Pol Armd Recce Regt	3	26
1 Pol Armd Div Tps	<u>3</u>	<u>65</u>
TOTAL	37	543
<u>Cdn Army Tps</u>	2	29
<u>1 Cdn Inf Div</u>		
1 Cdn Inf Bde	10	145
2 Cdn Inf Bde	13	191
3 Cdn Inf Bde	9	176
Sask L.I. (M.G.)	1	9
4 Cdn Recce Regt	0	0
1 Cdn Inf Div Tps	<u>2</u>	<u>27</u>
TOTAL	35	548
<u>5 Cdn Armd Div</u>		
11 Cdn Inf Bde	14	232
5 Cdn Inf Bde	17	89
3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt	3	7
5 Cdn Armd Div Tps	3	68
11 Cdn Armd Regt	0	3
Westmr R. (Mot)	<u>2</u>	<u>49</u>
TOTAL	39	448
1 Cdn Armd Bde and 98 Fd Regt R.A.	2	22
1 Cdn Armd C. Regt	<u>2</u>	<u>13</u>
TOTAL	4	35
1 Cdn Corps Tps (incl 1 Belg Inf Bde 2 Belg Fus Bn)	3	70

<u>Formation or Unit</u>	<u>Killed, Wounded, Missing</u>	
	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other Ranks</u>
<u>49 (WR) Inf Div</u>		
146 Bde	12	128
147 Bde	7	103
56 Bde	3	74
2 Kens (M.G.)	0	8
49 Recce	3	5
49 Inf Div Tps	<u>8</u>	<u>46</u>
TOTAL	33	364

<u>Cdn Divs and attached formations and units</u>	<u>Killed, Wounded, Missing</u>	
	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other Ranks</u>
1 Cdn Inf Div	35	548
2 Cdn Inf Div	72	1000
3 Cdn Inf Div	69	1050
4 Cdn Armd Div	74	1248
5 Cdn Armd Div	39	448
1 Cdn Armd Bde	1	14
2 Cdn Armd Bde	12	84
1 Cdn Armd C. Regt	2	13
18 Cdn Armd C. Regt	5	17
1 Cdn Corps Tps	3	70
2 Cdn Corps Tps	4	27
First Cdn Army Tps	2	29
49 (WR) Inf Div	33	364
1 Pol Armd Div	<u>37</u>	<u>543</u>
TOTAL	388	5455
Canadian Casualties only	314	4461

(W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 8, Consolidated C. and S. States as of 0600 hours 1 Apr 45 - 0600 hours 30 Apr 45, Sheets 252 - 281 inclusive; also April - May 1945, Appx 6, Consolidated C. and S. States as of 0600 hours 1 May 45 - 0600 hours 6 May 45, Sheets 282 - 287 inclusive).

THE ENEMY AND AIR PICTURE FROM DAY TO DAY

(EXCERPTS FROM H.Q. FIRST CDN ARMY PRESS CONFERENCES)

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/E: Docket III)

This summary explains the day to day changes in the enemy's situation and gives the logistics of air support provided by 84 Group R.A.F. from 0930 hours 3 Apr 45 to 0930 hours 4 May.

April 1945

030930B hours

ENEMY

No great change. Civ sources infm us enemy tps are thinning out along the line of the MAAS in NORTH HOLLAND. There is NO indication as to how great this mov has been. 361 Div which was identified in the NIJMEGEN island area yesterday has also been identified between WEHL and ZEVENAAR. Enemy counter attacked at areas of IBBERBURG and RHEINE, believed to be by tps moved SOUTH from area of GRONINGEN.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 272 sorties. Attacked the main tele exchange for all HOLLAND SOUTH of UTRECHT. Black smoke was observed coming from the building after attack. Claims were MT 37 destroyed 69 damaged, locos 5 damaged, rail truck 6 damaged, HDT 1 destroyed 10 damaged, AFV 1 destroyed 1 damaged, tanks 2 damaged. Own cas 1 Spitfire, pilot safe.

040930B hours

ENEMY

Elements of Para Trg Units have been indentified on the RIGHT of First Cdn Army and on the LEFT of Second Brit Army.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 189 sorties. Meteors were in op for the first time. Claims were: MT 45 destroyed 40 damaged, HDT 9 destroyed 2 damaged. Rd mov was slight but these was by barge tfc in the GRONINGEN - MEPPHEL area and on canals EAST of ZWOLLE. Own losses 2 Spitfires 1 Tempest.

050930B hours

ENEMY

On 2 Cdn Corps front 31 Para numerous Para Regt has been indentified, also numerous Para Trg Units. 346 and 361 Divs have been identified as well in the area between ZUTPHEN and ARNHEM. In the American sector, further enemy attempts have been made to break out of the RUHR pocket without success.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 291 sorties. Claims were: MT 48 destroyed 64 damaged, also several locos, AFVs, HDT and petrol tankers.

060930B hours

ENEMY

The enemy picture on First Cdn Army front is slowly being sorted out. It is believed that DUTCH SS tps occupy front area TIEL to escl ARNHEM. 346 Inf Div is believed to be in control of area from ARNHEM to probably DOESBURG and 361 Inf Div from there to ZUTPHEN. 6 Para Div plus elements of Para Trg units and assorted gps are defending line of TWENTHE canal from ZUTPHEN to the EAST. 7 and 8 Para Divs have been identified on the Second Brit Army front. It now appears that 2 Para Corps has been split in two by the rapid adv of 4 Cdn Armd and Gds Armd Divs.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 157 sorties. Ops were hampered by bad weather. Most of the missions were armd recce over eastern and northern HOLLAND. NO hy mov was seen. Claims: MT 31 destroyed 68 damaged, HDT 3 destroyed 12 damaged, Locos 14 damaged, Rail trucks 12 damaged, Tankers 20 damaged. Cas one Spitfire and pilot NOT yet returned.

070930B hours

ENEMY

There is further evidence that tps holding the line of the MAAS are being sent to the line of the IJSSEL. Yesterday two identifications were made in the ZUTPHEN area of tps who were previously known to be in the area WEST of TIEL. PW from 6 Para Div stated they were to withdraw NE to COEVORDEN. With the thrust of 4 Cdn Armd Div already in that area it is quite possible they may next be located in the area ZWOLLE and WEST of the IJSSEL.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew only 52 sorties owing to bad weather. A waggon and trailer attacked near RIJSSEN blew up with great force after being strafed and were assumed to be carrying amn. Own losses: 1 Tempest, 1 Spitfire and pilots failed to return.

080930B hours

ENEMY

NO particular change. Tac R and air recce has shown NO great mov into or out of HOLLAND. Indications now are that the enemy will continue the fight with what forces he presently has at his disposal. Enemy are now repairing and improving their two def lines at present time, one being the GREBBE and the second one being the "NEW WATERLINE" to the WEST.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 625 sorties. Claims were 42 MT destroyed 58 damaged, also a number of locos, HDT, barges, as well as 12 trucks completely destroyed by bomb hits. 22 rail cuts were made in the AMERSFOORT - ZWOLLE and APELDOORN - ZWOLLE - MEPPEL areas, plus close sp to ground forces. Own cas 4 aircraft and pilots NOT yet returned.

090930B hours

ENEMY

NO change. Further indications are that the enemy withdrawal behind the IJSSEL line is practically completed. The polder area NW of ZWOLLE has been flooded. On the American front 16 SS Pz Div has been identified. It was last reported on the RUSSIAN front and represents the first identification of a fm which moved from the RUSSIAN to the western front.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 489 sorties after a late start due to bad weather. Claims were: MT 47 destroyed 59 damaged, also numerous rail trucks, HDT, locos and barges destroyed or damaged.

100930B hours

ENEMY

NO startling changes. A battle gp has been identified on the LEFT of 6 Para Div and appear to be pulling back across the IJSSEL SOUTH of ZWOLLE. SAS tps report gps of GERMANS have been withdrawing NORTH and NE. There are NO indications of large scale def preparations in GRONINGEN area and it is believed they will make a determined stand at OLDENBURG as it is the main comn centre with the coastal areas.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 431 sorties after another late start owing to weather. Sorties covered a wide area to beyond BREMEN. Claims were; MT 59 destroyed 74 damaged, locos 1 destroyed 17 damaged, rail trucks 7 destroyed 43 damaged. Own cas 5 aircraft and 4 pilots missing.

110930B hours

ENEMY

NO changes

AIR

84 Gp RAF flew 596 sorties over a wide area from AMERSFOORT to EAST and BREMEN, mainly on armd recce. Rd mov was scattered. Claims: MT 57 destroyed 99 damaged; locos 4 destroyed 24 damaged; rail trucks 25 destroyed 43 damaged. In area BREMEN attacked 70 trucks loaded with pet and amn, smoke rose 3000 ft after the explosions. Off the northern tip of HOLLAND, a 400 ton seagoing barge was destroyed. Own losses, 5 aircraft and 4 pilots.

120930B hours

ENEMY

219 Marine GR identified area CANNONSHOT
brhead. PW count on 1 Cdn Inf Div front yesterday 120, 2 Cdn
Corps 729, 3 Cdn Inf Div 583, total since 1 Apr 6022.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 563 sorties, Six GERMAN
airfds were strafed, 16 EA destroyed and 9 damaged on the
ground. There was increased MT mov. Claims were: MT 96
destroyed 91 damaged, locos 1 destroyed 21 damaged, rail trucks
12 destroyed 30 damaged. Typhoons attacked a train near
VERDEN and smoke rose to a height of 6000 ft after the attack.
OWN cas 3 aircraft and pilots NOT yet returned.

130930B hours

ENEMY

361 Div were identified area of CANNONSHOT
brhead.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 620 sorties. Claims incl: 74
MT destroyed 110 damaged, locos 6 destroyed 21 damaged, rail
trucks 43 destroyed 120 damaged, EA on ground 1 destroyed 1
damaged 4 probables, EA in the air 3 destroyed 2 damaged.

140930B hours

ENEMY

Two identifications made in 1 Cdn Corps sector:
46 MG Bn, 856 GR Regt.

AIR

Owing to bad weather got off to a late start:
309 sorties flown. Claims: 7 rail cuts; 11 MT destroyed, 28
damaged; numerous locos, HDT, etc.

150930B hours

ENEMY

Organized resistance continues on 1 Cdn Corps
front. Enemy reported withdrawing to SW from ZWOLLE, that
coupled with lt opposn in ARNHEM area and determined resist-
ance at APELDOORN is indicative of an intention to est another
def line to the WEST. The pivot for the withdrawls appears
to be APELDOORN. Whether the intention is to withdraw slowly
to the GREBBE line or to est a line to the EAST of it, re-
mains to be seen.

AIR

Bad weather delayed flying until late after-
noon. 141 sorties flown in close sp of ground tps and against
pre-arranged targets. Claims: MT 5 destroyed, 17 damaged;
locos 9 damaged; AFVs 2 damaged.

160930B hours

ENEMY

In GRONINGEN, tps were identified as 226 Marine Bn. It is now quite clear that enemy intends to hold APELDOORN as the pivot for his withdrawal from the NORTH and SOUTH. The thrust by 5 Cdn Armd Div to OTTERLOO threatens APELDOORN and will soon make the enemy's plan untenable.

AIR

84 Gp RAF flew 5 sorties, all abortive due to bad weather.

170945B hours

ENEMY

Field Marshal MODEL is reported to have committed suicide. Enemy mov reported towards HARDIJWICK, it is believed evac is being carried out by sea. Considerable shipping activity has been seen in the port.

It is estimated approx 2000 tps are in APELDOORN area consisting of 261 Div, 6 Para Div, and assorted battle gps. GAF Flak tps have been identified in the BARNEVELD area. It is quite apparent the enemy intends to hold along the line of the KUSTEN KANAL to protect OLDENBURG and the ports to the NORTH. Tps in this area have been identified as from 7 and 8 Para Divs. It is quite probable that one of the Para Regts has been given the task of defending OLDENBURG.

AIR

NO large scale mov seen, good results obtained due to diligent searching and attacking each target seen. One conc of 20 HDT carrying tps area AMERSFOORT successfully attacked. Total sorties 538. Results: 14 rail cuts in the OLDENBURG area; MT 80 destroyed 150 damaged; rail trucks 23 destroyed, 53 damaged; plus numerous HDT, locos, AFVs etc.

180930 hours

ENEMY

Marine bns, str 400 - 500, are fighting well in Pol Armd Div area. It is expected that similar opposn will be met in the OLDENBURG area assisted by paratps.

2 Cdn Corps captured 1400 PW yesterday, and in the past few days 1 Cdn Corps have taken 2500 PW. The enemy forced out of APELDOORN by 1 Cdn Inf Div ran into the gun areas and Div HQ of 5 Cdn Armd Div. In the ensuing action, when the arty engaged the enemy over open sights, some 500 PW were taken and a goodly number killed. Considerable mov of shipping in and out of the port of HARDERWIJK was reported yesterday. It is believed the tps were being evac and others ldg not being aware that the area was dominated by our tps.

181700B hours

ENEMY

It is estimated that there are 110,000 enemy still in HOLLAND. This is purely guess work and is NOT

an official report. 1 Cdn Corps have taken between 5000 - 6000 PW since start of their op.

AIR

Air recce shows that the port of HARDERWIJK is completely blocked. It is NOT known whether this has been the work of the HUN or of the DUTCH resistance mov.

190930B hours

ENEMY

Most of the opposn to 1 Pol Armd Div and 4 Cdn Armd Div is being put up by German Naval Units under comd Def Comd EMDEN and comprises three regts; bn str being 400 - 500. These bns are org on army lines and are using army eqpt. They are being backed up by elements of paratps. 2 Cdn Corps has identified 18 separate bns. A pocket, approx str 1500, is holding out in area DELFZILL. Are in tele comn with comd who refused to surrender; attack to be launched. 1 Cdn Corps have taken 7000 PW since the start of their op.

Flooding has started; in the NORTH the sector of the GREBBE line; WEST of AMSTERDAM, and in the vicinity of the causeway across the ZUIDER ZEE where the sea wall has been blown and the water is pouring in at a fast rate.

Enemy shipping, between the coast and the FRIESLAND Islands, coming into the EMS Estuary was attacked yesterday; 3 ships were sunk and 11 damaged, were of 400 - 500 tons.

AIR

Flew 455 sorties. Claims: EA on the ground 6 destroyed, 12 damaged; ships 3 destroyed, 11 damaged; MT 32 destroyed, 66 damaged; locos 1 destroyed, 5 damaged; rly trucks 40 destroyed, 44 damaged; Numerous guns, posns, and strong pts were attacked, amongst which were buildings in PAPENBURG.

200930B hours

ENEMY

Lot of shipping seen between coast and FRIESLAND Islands going both ways. This is thought to be additional sups, arm, fuel, etc being brought into Fortress Holland.

AIR

674 sorties flown. Very good air sp given to attacks by 4 Cdn and 1 Pol Armd Divs. Claims: MT 40 destroyed, 82 damaged; HDT 10 destroyed, 48 damaged; rly trucks 12 destroyed, 28 damaged; TIGERS 3 damaged, tugs 5 damaged, ships 4 destroyed one of which was believed to have been 1500 tons, 4 damaged; EA 5 destroyed one in the air, 4 damaged. It is also thought that HQ Comd Defs EMDEN was destroyed.

210930B hours

AIR

Flew 437 sorties. Claims: MT 27 destroyed 41 damaged; rly trucks 9 destroyed, 16 damaged; locos 1 destroyed; 1 complete train destroyed; 1 2000 ton ship destroyed;

2 mine sweepers damaged; 1 motor launch damaged; destroyed 5 EA on the ground with a probable 18 more.

211700B hours

ENEMY

2 Para Corps has been identified as forming the main opposn between the R EMS and the R WESER.

220930B hours

ENEMY

Resistance on the northern front still remains org and under control. In the SOUTH, the Americans and French advs appear to have disorg the up to now well controlled resistance.

The resistance on 4 Cdn Armd Div brhead remains fanatical, whereas in the PAPENBURG area it appears to have lessened considerably.

AIR

Restricted due to bad weather. 87 sorties flown, mostly over area SOUTH of the ZUIDER ZEE. Claims: MT 5 destroyed, 17 damaged; HDT 2 damaged; locos 2 damaged; rly trucks 12 damaged.

230930B hours

ENEMY

The enemy appears to have recovered from our op which drove him off the line of R IJSSEL and is firmly est along GREBBE line. It is probable that 6 Para Div is holding the NORTH sector, 346 Div the CENTRE, 361 Div the SOUTH and 34 SS probably in res. A considerable increase in enemy patrolling is taking place and he seems very anxious to determine disposns and intentions.

AIR

Bad weather resulted in only 70 sorties being flown. Claims: MT 4 destroyed, 10 damaged; 6 locos damaged; 5 rail trucks damaged; 1 HDT damaged; 1 tug damaged; 1 barge damaged.

240930B hours

ENEMY

No new identifications, their intentions appear to be unchanged. On the 3 Cdn Inf Div front considerable shelling from EMDEN area believed from the enemy Coastal guns defending the port. Some enemy shipping was seen to the NORTH. Total PW taken on this side of the RHINE by First Cdn Army is 28000 and an average of 1 - 1500 PW are being taken daily.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 551 sorties, Claims were: EA on ground 17 destroyed 25 probables, rly trucks 46 destroyed 71 damaged, MT 11 destroyed 42 damaged, also a number of HDT,

locos, AFVs, destroyed or damaged. Also claim 2 - 3000 ton ships damaged plus 1 small ship destroyed and 10 damaged. Own cas 7 aircraft and 6 pilots NOT yet returned.

250930 hours

ENEMY

NO change.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 427 sorties. Claims were: MT 19 destroyed 41 damaged, petrol tks 12 destroyed, rail trucks 6 destroyed 43 damaged, also a number of locos, HDT, tks and ships destroyed or damaged. EA destroyed on the ground 9 and 39 probables. Close sp and pre-arranged targets successfully attacked on Army front.

260930B hours

ENEMY

For 24 hr period up to noon yesterday, 2 Cdn Corps had taken 2000 PW. The RUSSIANS stated that BERLIN is completely surrounded. Gen DITTMAR was captured somewhere along the ELBE yesterday and he states that HITLER is still in BERLIN. BERTCHESGADEN was heavily attacked yesterday by the Airforce with excellent results. Enemy resistance consists mainly of remnants of 7 and 8 Para, Naval personnel and WEHKREIS X, all under comd 2 Para Corps.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 427 sorties. Claims were; EA 9 destroyed, 39 damaged; locos 3 destroyed, 9 damaged; petrol tks 12 destroyed; rail trucks 6 destroyed, 41 damaged; HDT 2 destroyed, 3 damaged; tks 2 destroyed, 3 damaged; ships 4 damaged and 3 rail cuts.

270930B hours

ENEMY

In BERLIN fighting continues on TEMPLEHOF Aerodrome, also captured one of the largest wrls broadcasting stas. Many suburbs have been captured but there is NO confirmation of link up between US and RUSSIAN forces. There are indications that the enemy will fall back on a new def line centred on LEER to OLDENBURG. Photo cover of WILHELM-SHAVEN showed 50 submarines, reason for their presence NOT known but believe may for an evac to DENMARK. GOERING has been relieved of all his various comds. In ITALY, VERONA has been captured. Negotiations continue concerning the dropping of food sups to DUTCH civs.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 476 sorties. Claims were: MT 40 destroyed 78 damaged, locos 5 destroyed 20 damaged, rail trucks 13 destroyed 88 damaged, rail cuts 1, EA on ground and in air 1 each, also attacked gun posns, HQs and mortar posns.

280930B hours

ENEMY

Army Gp BLUMENTRITT comd by Gen GLUMENTRITT, have under comd 86 Corps who are responsible for area excl OLDENBURG to astride R WESER, 2 Para Corps excl 8 Para Div has disappeared, believed to be positioned around OLDENBURG, has been replaced by 22 GR. On their RIGHT is 7 Para Div and on the right of them again are the NAVAL tps, who are comd by Col GERICKE, a paratp offr from ITALY. The entire force is under comd 2 Para Corps.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew only 60 sorties owing to inclement weather. Claims were: MT 12 destroyed 7 damaged, HDT 7 destroyed 6 damaged, locos 2 damaged, rail trucks 13 damaged, rail cuts 2 damaged.

290930B hours

ENEMY

Armour was encountered yesterday for the first time area NORTH of OLDENBURG in the form of JAGD PANTERS, a further twenty Mk IVs converted into SP guns are reported to be lying back.

291700B hours

ENEMY

Seventh US Army took 36,000 PW yesterday. 3 Cdn Inf Div had taken 1200 PW up to 0800B hrs this morning.

300930B hours

ENEMY

2 SS Pz Div which was recently identified fighting on the RUSSIAN front, suddenly appeared against the Americans.

AIR

No flying owing to weather.

May 1945

011000B hours

ENEMY

Rumours have been circulated that OLDENBURG, instead of being a strong pt as was expected, is a hosp town and for this reason is NOT likely to be def vigorously. This rumour is however offset by PW statements that 22 GR is deployed SOUTH of OLDENBURG for its def, and that 7 Para Div is further WEST and that they will contest the capture of OLDENBURG. However now that LEER has been definitely captured and the report of tps moving NW as described by 3 Brit Inf Div would indicate the enemy realize that their original def line is NO longer tenable and they are withdrawing closer to WILHELMSHAVEN.

AIR

NO flying owing to weather.

020930B hours

ENEMY

7 and 8 Para Divs have NOT been identified during the past 24 hrs. The ferries are known to be busy and "Y" intercepts heard orders being issued to certain flank units to be issued with more pet. It is believed the enemy's best fighting tps will be withdrawn, replaced by poor ones who will def EMDEN and WILHELMSHAVEN. There has been an increase of locally arranged surrender of tps and towns, possibly due to the news of HITLER's death, to whom a personal oath of allegiance had been sworn.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 12 sorties. Claims were:
M1 1 destroyed, 1 damaged.

030930B hours

ENEMY

On own sector, it is NOT known what the enemy intentions are. The alternatives open to them are: (a) withdraw to WILHELMSHAVEN and EMDEN to make a stand or (b) capitulation. C-in-C SW has surrendered unconditionally to Fd Marshal ALEXANDER. On Second Brit Army front C of S, Army Gp BLUMENTRITT, came over to discuss terms of surrender with 15 (S) Inf Div who redirected him to HQ 8 Brit Corps. Army Gp BLUMENTRITT has comd of sector extending from the BALTIC to excl WESER, 1 Para Army comd area from there to EMDEN, occupied HOLLAND is believed to be a separate comd.

040930B hours

ENEMY

Area still in GERMAN hands is under active consideration. Occupied HOLLAND is the main problem and what will happen there NOT yet known. GERMAN tps in this sector are dreading they will be sent to RUSSIA as slaves which is the reason they have elected to fight to a bitter end.

AIR

84 Gp RAF, flew 198 sorties. Claims were:
EA 4 destroyed and MT 32 destroyed 90 damaged.

In all 84 Gp RAF flew 9152 sorties.

Note by Narrator. A warning - it must be remembered that claims by pilots cannot be accepted as fact, but must await confirmation. In some cases claims were not confirmed until several weeks later. The enemy picture, number of sorties and statements with regard to weather may be considered authentic.