

1994

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### Recommended Citation

Bechthold, Michael "Air Support in the Breskens Pocket: The Case of the First Canadian Army and the 84 Group Royal Air Force." *Canadian Military History* 3, 2 (1994)

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# Air Support in the Breskens Pocket

## The Case of First Canadian Army and 84 Group Royal Air Force

**Mike Bechthold**

Operation "Switchback" was conceived to capture the Breskens pocket and liberate the south bank of the Scheldt Estuary leading to Antwerp. As the Allies moved out of Normandy in the late summer of 1944, their primary supply line remained over the invasion beaches. The logistical situation became critical as the distance from the beachhead lengthened. The British scored a major coup in early September when they captured the port of Antwerp. Not only was this the largest port in Europe, it had been taken with its port facilities intact.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, there remained one problem; Antwerp lay some 50 miles from the Sea. The only approach to the port lay along the Scheldt Estuary. The Germans controlled both banks of this channel and were determined to hold out to the last. Until the land on either side could be liberated, the port of Antwerp was useless to the Allies.

"Switchback" opened on 6 October when the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade launched an assault across the Leopold Canal near Strooibrug. Though a foothold was achieved, it was tenuous at best. The pressure was relieved three days later when the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade hopped across the Braakman Inlet in amphibious vehicles and landed on the eastern edge of the pocket. This put the Canadians behind the main line of German resistance and allowed the pocket to be slowly cleared from the east. The operation was planned to take a week, but took nearly a month. Operations in the

pocket were not declared over until 3 November.<sup>2</sup>

The Breskens area was known by the Germans as "Fortress South Scheldt." It was ably defended by the 64th Infantry Division, a reconstructed unit that had at its disposal a wealth of extra weapons and supplies acquired from the retreating German 15th Army. In total, German forces in the pocket numbered 11,000 men including Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe units. The Germans were aided in their defence by the fact that the Breskens Pocket was essentially an island. It was bounded by the North Sea, the Braakman Inlet and the Leopold Canal on all sides with only a narrow, but heavily defended, land bridge in the southeast corner. To complicate matters, this was polder country (fields below sea level). The Germans could mount a very stout defence by defending the junctions of the dykes and roads which criss-crossed the area. Moving across muddy and flooded fields proved to be difficult for the infantry and impossible for vehicles, even those with tracks. Travel on the raised roads was tantamount to suicide. Conventional infantry attacks could not succeed without prohibitive casualties.<sup>3</sup>

The terrain of the Breskens Pocket was unlike anything the Canadian army had encountered and presented a number of significant challenges. Major R.G. Hodgins, second-in-command of the Highland Light Infantry, related that:



*Canadian carriers move through the wet, muddy, flat ground near Breskens, 28 October 1944.*

*Photo by Lt. Grant, NAC PA 131252*

Dyke warfare, or "polder-fighting", requires entirely new tactics and poses many problems in consequence. Troops had seldom encountered such continuous and difficult fighting. Movement is restricted to dykes and heights of land are unknown. The enemy is afforded excellent opportunity to use his many automatic weapons.<sup>4</sup>

As a result, operations in the Breskens Pocket took on the appearance of siege warfare. The German defenders, well armed with automatic weapons of various calibre, and with a virtually unlimited supply of ammunition, enjoyed a decided advantage over the Canadian attackers. The infantry alone could not overcome the defences—they required substantial support from a variety of sources. Flame-throwers, medium machine guns and M-10 tank destroyers were all used to good effect during the operation, but it was the artillery that was most often singled out for the support it rendered. The slow-moving nature of operations allowed the artillery to

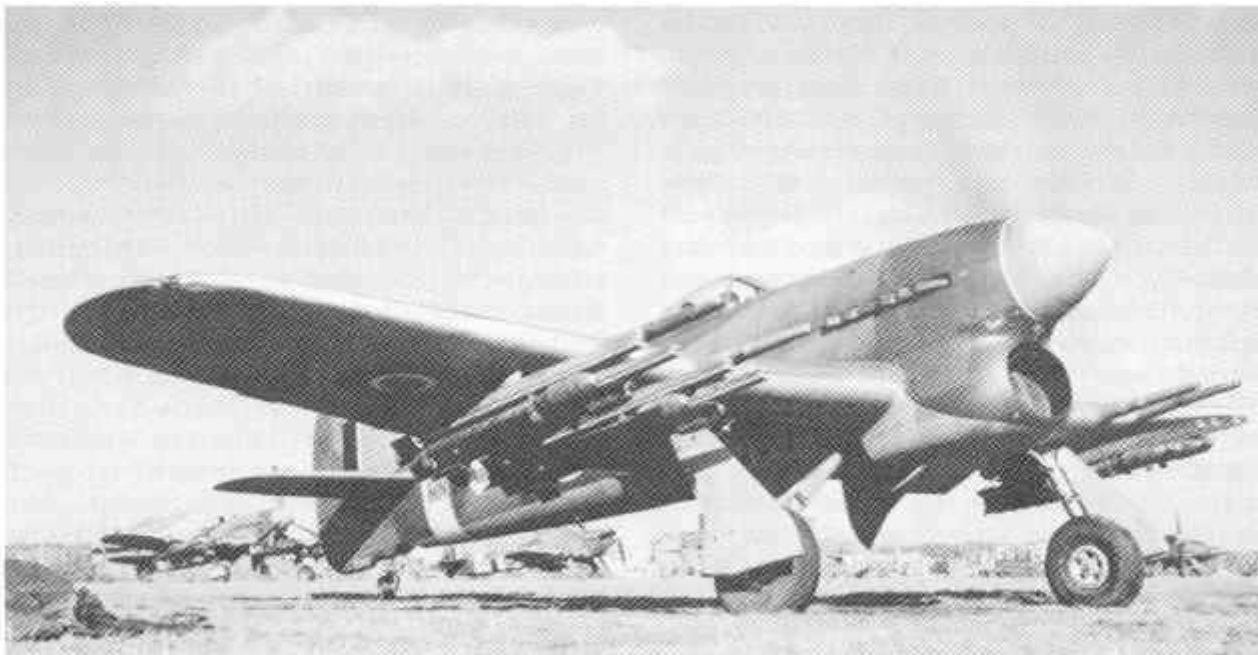
prepare fire plans for "every potential source of opposition" which were available at very short notice through the use of codenames. The infantry felt the artillery was used very effectively to support their attacks and repulse enemy counterattacks.<sup>5</sup> However, there was one other source of support that was of great assistance to the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division in helping them clear the pocket: close air support.<sup>6</sup>

**B**y October 1944, a sophisticated system for arranging air support had developed between the British Army and the Royal Air Force. The genesis for this organization developed out of the planning for the invasion of Europe. It was recognized that the army and air force would need to form a close working relationship to ensure success. As a

result, Second Tactical Air Force was formed to work with 21 Army Group. At the core of 2nd TAF was the composite group, a powerful formation composed of fighters, fighter-bombers and rocket-firing Typhoons. It was designed to accomplish a multitude of roles crucial to the army including the maintenance of air superiority, the conduct of armed, photographic and tactical reconnaissance sorties, artillery spotting as well as close and direct support missions.<sup>7</sup> Two composite groups were formed; 83 Group which worked with Second British Army and 84 Group which was paired with First Canadian Army. Formed in June 1943, 84 Group remained under the operational control of 83 Group until mid-August 1944. During this time the majority of its missions involved fighter sweeps and armed reconnaissance. It was not until 12 August that 84 Group became a fully operational, and independent, command. From that point, 84 Group and First Canadian Army formed a close relationship that endured until the end of the war. In many ways, 84 Group has never received the attention it deserves. British historians have been most interested in 83 Group due to its pairing with Second British Army and the primacy of their role during the battle of Normandy. Canadians have also concentrated on 83 Group due to

| <b>No.84 Group</b>                                   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>35 Reconnaissance Wing</b>                        |  |
| 2, 4, 268 Squadrons - Mustang, Spitfire              |  |
| <b>123 Wing</b>                                      |  |
| 198, 609 Squadrons - Typhoon                         |  |
| <b>131 (Polish) Wing</b>                             |  |
| 302 (Pol), 308 (Pol), 317 (Pol) Squadrons - Spitfire |  |
| <b>132 (Norwegian) Wing</b>                          |  |
| 66, 331 (Nor), 332 (Nor) Squadrons - Spitfire        |  |
| <b>133 (Polish) Wing</b>                             |  |
| 129, 306 (Pol), 315 (Pol) Squadrons - Mustang        |  |
| <b>134 (Czech) Wing</b>                              |  |
| 310 (Cz), 312 (Cz), 313 (Cz) Squadrons - Spitfire    |  |
| <b>135 Wing</b>                                      |  |
| 222, 349 (Belgian), 485 (RNZAF) Squadrons - Spitfire |  |
| <b>136 Wing</b>                                      |  |
| 164, 183 Squadrons - Typhoon                         |  |
| <b>145 (French) Wing</b>                             |  |
| 329 (Fr), 340 (Fr), 341 (Fr) Squadrons - Spitfire    |  |
| <b>146 Wing</b>                                      |  |
| 193, 197, 257, 266 Squadrons - Typhoon               |  |
| <b>Air Observations Posts</b>                        |  |
| 660, 661 Squadrons - Auster                          |  |
| <small>(RNZAF - Royal New Zealand Air Force)</small> |  |

*A rocket-firing Typhoon of the Second Tactical Air Force warming up for a mission.*





*Major-General Dan Spry (right) talks with Field Marshal Montgomery at 3rd Canadian Infantry Division Headquarters on 24 October 1944.*

*Photo by H.A. Barnett, NAC PA 142115*

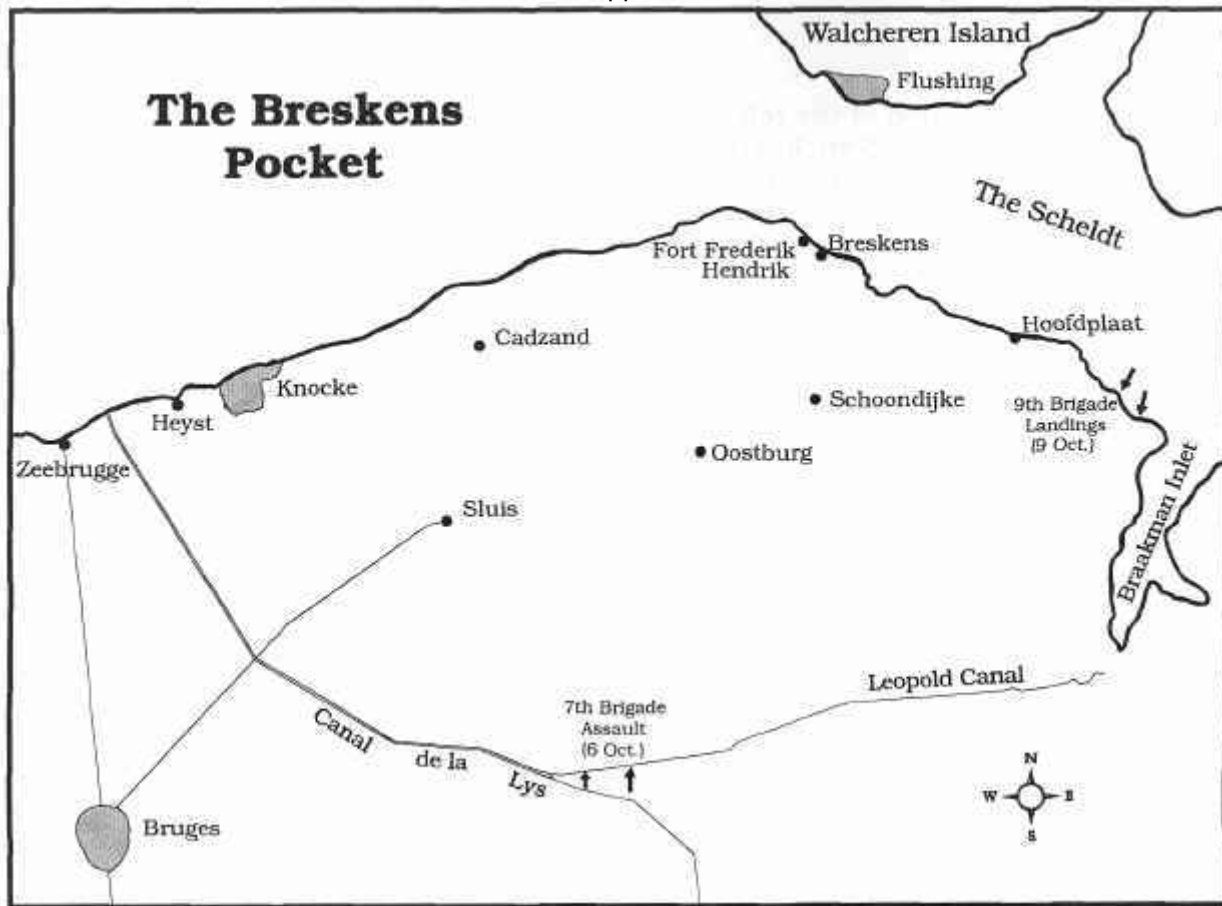
the fact that half its squadrons were supplied by the RCAF. The fact that 84 Group worked largely with First Canadian Army and was thus engaged in operations away from the "spotlight" has contributed to the minimal attention paid to 84 Group.

A unique aspect of the First Canadian Army-84 Group partnership was the co-location of their respective headquarters. This enabled the air support request system to be substantially streamlined due to the physical proximity of the two staffs. It was here, in the Joint Battle Room and Army Operations Room that all decisions affecting operations were made. This control centre acted as the dissemination point for all information going to the various Wings and Corps under the Joint HQ. Decisions concerning the missions to be flown the next day were made at the Evening Joint Conference held daily between senior representatives of each service. Requests for air support originated from the various staff sections at headquarters First Canadian Army. In addition to this pre-arranged support, requests which originated at the battalion and brigade levels were forwarded by the Air Support Signals Units (ASSU) and the Forward Control Posts (FCP) located near the front.<sup>8</sup> Under ideal

conditions, this support could be requested and delivered in as little as 15 minutes through the ASSU and FCP nets. In such a case the requests would be sent directly from the forward lines to aircraft orbiting over the battlefield, bypassing the joint headquarters. This system had received constant fine tuning since its baptism of fire in June. By the fall of 1944 the system was operating most efficiently.<sup>9</sup>

**S**hortly after the conclusion of "Switch-back," Major-General D.C. Spry, General Officer Commanding 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, wrote a report examining air support in the operation. Spry began by stating, "The co-operation and effective support rendered by the Air Force contributed greatly to the fall of the Breskens pocket. 3 Canadian Infantry Division received the maximum air support during this period and except when weather conditions made flying impossible, allied planes were constantly overhead."<sup>10</sup>

According to Spry, the direct results of the air support were quite substantial. Towns such as Breskens, Ijzendijke, and Oostburg were destroyed largely by air attack. R/P Typhoons were responsible for the destruction of enemy HQs, forward artillery batteries, observation posts, and various other defensive positions. In particular, the fighter-bombers were quite successful in their attacks on Fort Frederik Hendrik and the heavy artillery that was shelling the Breskens area from across the Scheldt in Flushing. Tactical reconnaissance had been very successful in providing the Army with information on enemy movements and concentrations. The German communication system was severely harassed by air attacks, in particular through "Winkles".<sup>11</sup> Air support was also responsible for the breakdown of enemy morale and the raising of Canadian morale. As Spry said, "The visible results are perhaps of NO greater importance than the encouragement given our own troops."<sup>12</sup> In addition to the reconnaissance and attacks carried out by 84 Group, the medium bombers of 2 Group and the heavies of Bomber Command conducted over 500 sorties in support of 3rd Division.<sup>13</sup>



A substantial portion of 84 Group's effort for October was committed to Operation "Switchback." A total of 9,782 sorties were flown during the month by 84 Group. This figure includes missions in close support of the Army such as pre-arranged and immediate support, and artillery reconnaissance; direct support such as armed reconnaissance, and interdiction; as well as photo reconnaissance, fighter sweeps and weather sorties.<sup>14</sup> Of these missions, a total of 1,653 were flown in close support of 3rd Division in the Breskens Pocket.<sup>15</sup> Almost one-third of those sorties were handled by the FCP while a fraction of the remainder would also have been impromptu missions arranged through the ASSU. This shows that 3rd Division had a significant amount of air support available to it at short notice and were willing to use it.<sup>16</sup> The air support given to 3rd Division amounted to 25 per cent of the total sorties flown by 84 Group in close support of First Canadian Army in October.<sup>17</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the other divisions of First Canadian Army were involved in operations of their own that also required the support of 84 Group.

The amount of air support provided by 84 Group is quite remarkable considering the foul weather that characterized October. On 12 of the 27 days of Operation "Switchback" 84 Group was unable to participate due to adverse weather conditions. Even on days when flying was possible, weather restricted operations. Typical weather reports on those days showed the commitment of the pilots to their assigned tasks: "Low cloud and poor visibility made flying and pinpointing difficult . . . Weather terrible, between storms pilots made valiant attempts to attack targets and had some success...Weather was again bad but in spite of it air support must go on . . ."<sup>18</sup> Since good weather was such a valuable commodity, 84 Group had to take advantage when it was available. Twice during the month of October they set new records for the total number of sorties in a day. These totals of over 700 sorties per day even exceeded the effort put forth during the closing of the Falaise Gap. The effort devoted to 3rd Division alone exceeded an average of 100 sorties per day during flying weather.<sup>19</sup>

An excellent indication of the role of air support during Operation "Switchback" can be derived from the battalion war diaries. During October there were repeated references to aerial attacks. Early in the operation, on 8 October, when the Canadian Scottish were engaged in a fierce struggle to expand their small bridgehead, the battalion war diarist found cause for optimism. "If a gun position still gives us trouble [after artillery counterbattery fire] he is attacked by Typhoons. That makes the gun members wish they had no Feuhrer! [sic]"<sup>20</sup> On 12 October the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders (SDGs) reported, "Typhoons working in close co-operation, 'dead on,'"<sup>21</sup> while the next day the North Shores launched a successful attack in which "The air and artillery support was a very great factor."<sup>22</sup> In addition to the accounts of air support directly helping a battalion, the war diaries recorded many instances where the battalion watched attacks nearby. On 13 October the Queen's Own Rifles witnessed a Typhoon attack which destroyed two houses believed to be ammunition dumps. Similar instances were recorded in the war diaries of the Canadian Scottish, Highland Light Infantry, SDGs, Regina Rifles, and the North Shore Regiment.

The frequent mention of air support in the battalion war diaries gives an excellent indication its importance during "Switchback." An examination of battalion war diaries for other periods during the war reveal a dearth of entries on close air support. Even during the campaign in Normandy, where air support operations received a great deal of attention and credit for the Allied success, there were few instances when close air support was mentioned in battalion war diaries. Operations in the Breskens Pocket had a number of special features such as the flatness of the terrain and the slow, deliberate nature of the fighting. These helped to make the support more visible to the infantry, but in the end, the frequent war diary entries are a clear indication of the importance air support played in the operation.

Air support played a major role in "Switchback" from the beginning. Right from the first assault on 6 October, while 7th

Brigade was clinging to its foothold over the Leopold Canal, 84 Group flew 190 sorties in support of the bridgehead. Targets included mortar and machine gun positions, troop concentrations and buildings in the immediate battle area. In addition, armed reconnaissance flights were conducted to interdict the flow of reinforcements to the front. The Typhoon squadrons of 123 Wing were sent a message of congratulations by First Canadian Army for their attacks on targets immediately in front of the Canadian positions.<sup>23</sup>

The Operations Record Book of 84 Group gives a good description of a typical day's air support during Operation "Switchback":

84 Group aircraft will cause and maintain interdiction at the main centres of movement of SCHOONDIKE [sic], SLUIS and OOSTBURG, at the same time carrying out Armed Reconnaissance on the main roads leading from BRESKENS, CADZAND and OOSTBURG. In addition to this, continued offensive action against known enemy concentrations of guns will be carried out; a "free lance" squadron will be operated solely against mortar and field gun positions on the front of 7 Bde, and the V.C.P. will operate "Cabrank" against immediate support targets. Heavy bombers of Bomber Command have been requested to destroy the gun positions East of FLUSHING, which are directed against 9 Bde. Bombers of 2 Group have been requested to attack known 17 cm gun batteries in the area of CADZAND.<sup>24</sup>

The value of the air support conducted by 84 Group can be seen in the outcome of the three attacks by the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade during the period 21-25 October. The brigade was given the task of capturing three of the strongest positions in the Pocket: the towns of Breskens and Schoondijke, along with Fort Frederik Hendrik.<sup>25</sup> The first assault was made on 21 October by the SDGs against Breskens. The weather that day was typical for the operation; overcast with intermittent rain showers. The assault was to be well supported by the artillery resources of 3rd Division, 59th Division, and 9 Army Group Royal Artillery (AGRA). As well, medium bombers and Typhoons were to strike the German batteries across the Scheldt at Flushing and 84 Group was to attack Breskens and Schoondijke immediately before the ground assault. As might be expected, the



*Artillery shells landing in Breskens, 22 October 1944. Note the Churchill AVKE at the left side of the photo.  
Photo by Donald I. Grant, NAC PA 138437*

events did not go exactly as planned. A mix-up between 9th Brigade and 3rd Division delayed transmission of the final air plan to 84 Group. This delay was compounded by poor weather and soggy landing grounds at the airfields. As a result, the Typhoons began their Winkle 25 minutes late. Lieutenant-Colonel Roger Rowley, commanding officer of the SDGs, was quite critical of the initial air effort. The battalion war diary recorded his belief that the Winkle was a "farce." He had expected a greater effort and was disappointed when only cannon fire was employed in the attack with no use of rockets or bombs. In spite of the disappointing start, the war diaries of both the SDGs and 9th Brigade record that Typhoons, available on immediate call through ASSU channels, provided effective support throughout the day. By nightfall, the town of Breskens, a cornerstone of the German defences, had fallen to Canadian troops and patrols were beginning to probe Fort Frederik Hendrik.<sup>26</sup> In total, 84 Group flew 196 sorties in support of 3rd Division that day while the medium bombers of 2 Group contributed an additional 192 sorties.<sup>27</sup>

On 22 October, the weather turned nasty and flying operations were suspended for the next six days. This meant that the planned

assaults on Schoondijke and Fort Frederik Hendrik would have to go ahead without air support. After Breskens had been secured the Highland Light Infantry were sent to capture Schoondijke. Along with Breskens, Oostburg and Sluis, Schoondijke had become an anchor in the enemy's secondary defensive line following the 9th Brigade landings. Since early October the town had been subjected to continuous air attacks, by both fighter-bombers and medium bombers. General Spry reported that Schoondijke had been almost totally destroyed by the combination of bombing and artillery.<sup>28</sup> The HLI attack on the afternoon of 22 October met stiff resistance and heavy shelling. This was overcome partially through the use of flamethrowers and the town was largely secured by nightfall.<sup>29</sup>

The first attempt to capture Fort Frederik Hendrik was made on the morning of 22 October by two companies of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders supported by artillery and medium machine guns. The old fort had been heavily pounded by Second TAF and the Royal Artillery in the past but the Germans had constructed new concrete positions inside. Initially the North Novas made good progress but they were met by heavy fire when troops attempted to infiltrate the outer





H B O O R D R E O I



perimeter of the fort. Because of the stiff opposition, the decision was made to withdraw and prepare a set piece attack well supported by the RAF. Fortunately, before that could occur, a deserter from the Fort was captured. He was sent back with the message that "the whole weight of available resources would be brought to bear" on the garrison the following morning if they failed to surrender. The threat of another major bombardment by the joint resources of the RAF and artillery was sufficient to spur the remaining Germans to surrender.<sup>30</sup> These examples give an indication of the role that air support can play in a battle. The direct effects of air support are devastating, but the cumulative and psychological effects cannot be easily dismissed. Air support was not a miracle weapon. It will not turn a defeat into a victory or take the place of the infantry but it did help to achieve limited objectives at a great saving in lives and time.

As was seen in the case of Fort Frederik Hendrik, air power can affect the battlefield in an indirect manner. On a number of occasions the battalion war diaries recorded instances where air attacks led directly to the surrender of large numbers of prisoners. The impact on-German morale was also noted. In one amusing incident, a prisoner captured by the SDGs reported that an air attack had destroyed his company's field kitchen. This particular attack had a serious effect on the unit's morale because, "as a result they get cold food as a steady diet."<sup>31</sup> On a more serious note, the Queen's Own Rifles war diarist commented on the effects of the support they received: "With the first clear day in a

*Opposite—*

*Top: The town of Schoondtjke was one of the cornerstones of German defences in the Breskens Pocket and as such was subjected to repeated air and artillery bombardment. It can be seen from this photo, taken on 18 October, that the town was virtually levelled. It was finally captured by the Highland Light Infantry on 22 October. WW Air Photo 22313013*

*Bottom, left and right: Fort Frederik Hendrik, on 11 September, before Operation "Switchback" commenced, and on 18 October, four days before it finally fell to the SDGs.*

*WLU Air Photo 162/4123 & 223/4031.*

while [28 October], we got lots of air support. Typhoons started out early and made things pretty hot for Jerry. According to PWs [prisoners of war] they are a great morale breaker as well as doing a lot of damage."<sup>32</sup> These effects were also noticed by the RAF. A report by 84 Group stated that German artillery stopped firing when Allied aircraft were in the vicinity. The mere threat of air attack was sufficient to put the German guns out of action.<sup>33</sup> A similar conclusion was arrived at in a joint report prepared by the operational research sections of Second Tactical Air Force and 21 Army Group:

With the exception of G.A.F. anti-aircraft gunners, P. W.s stated that they always took cover immediately [when] the Typhoons started to attack and remained there for times varying from 1 to 10 minutes afterwards; they expected planes to circle round and strafe again. It seems that a succession of attacks suitably timed have a very great effect on morale . . . It has even been found that the very presence of our aircraft over the battlefield is sufficient to cause the enemy to remain under cover.<sup>34</sup>

This effect was confirmed during the interrogation of the commander of the German division in the Pocket. According to the report, "General Eberding said that our air support had caused him some casualties but that its greatest effect was to prevent movement by day and limit the activity of his artillery."<sup>35</sup> These are not direct effects of air power but spin-offs derived from enemy knowledge of the *potential* power of air attack which is backed by a constant presence in the skies.

Air power was definitely not the decisive factor in determining the success of Operation "Switchback." No amount of air support could replace the job of the common soldier who had to fight his way from dike to dike across each succeeding polder. What air power did accomplish, however, was to make that job somewhat easier. Major-General Spry credited air operations with bringing Operation "Switchback" to a quicker conclusion by materially assisting in the victory.<sup>36</sup> In this sense, the support rendered to 3rd Division was crucial to the success of the operation because the quicker the Scheldt was cleared, the sooner the port of Antwerp could open and the faster the war would end.

## NOTES

1. C.P. Stacey. *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe, 1944-1945* (Ottawa, 1960), p.301.
2. Stacey, pp.392-400.
3. Terry Copp and Robert Vogel. *The Maple Leaf Route: Scheldt* (Alma, 1985), p.78 and Jeffrey Williams. *The Long Left Flank: The Hard Fought Way to the Reich, 1944-1945* (Toronto, 1988), pp. 115,124.
4. "Dyke Warfare: Account by Major R.G. Hodgins, 2IC, HLI of C, given to Historical Officer, 26 October 1944," quoted in Copp and Vogel, pp.99-100.
5. "Artillery in Operation Switchback: Account by Brigadier P.A.S. Todd, Commander, Corps Royal Artillery, 2 Cdn Corps (Formerly Commander Royal Artillery 3 Cdn Inf Div) given to Historical Officer, 9 December 1944," quoted in Copp and Vogel, pp. 113-114; "Operation Switchback - Study Period: Dyke and Polder Fighting." HQ 3 Cdn Inf Div., 20 November 1944, National Archives of Canada [NAC] RG24 Vol. 10,947 249C5 (D58); and "Dyke Warfare: Account by Major R.G. Hodgins, 2IC, HLI of C, given to Historical Officer, 26 October 1944."
6. Many sources, both contemporary and historical, overlook the role played by air power during Operation "Switchback." One post-mortem on the operation, held in November 1944, covered in great detail the various types of support and their effect without once mentioning close air support. This oversight has continued in recent accounts of the operation; see Williams, *The Long Left Flank* and Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, *Tug of War: The Victory that Opened Antwerp* (Toronto, 1984), among others.
7. Direct support refers to attacks made by aircraft on lines of communications and concentrations of men and material outside the battle zone. Close support refers to attacks made by aircraft on targets located in the immediate battle area.
8. *From Normandy to the Baltic: A History of 84 Group*, n.a., n.d., Public Records Office [PRO] AIR 37/987; T.C. Braitwaite and W.B.G. Reynolds. *Air Support in Second British Army and First Canadian Army*, 31 May 1945, PRO WO 233/61; and First Canadian Army Air Support Instruction No. 1., 3 August 1944, NAC Crerar Papers, MG30 E157, Vol.3.
9. Major-General D.C. Spry. "Air Support in Operation Switchback." HQ 3 Canadian Infantry Division. 20 November 1944, NAC RG24 Vol. 10,672 215C1.099 (D160), also RG24 Vol. 10,913 235C3.093(D2). [hereafter, Spry report]
10. Spry report.
11. "Winkle" was the codename for a mission where the artillery would outline a target, such as a town or a troop concentration, with smoke. Aircraft would then be free to attack anything within that box.
12. Spry report.
13. Spry report.
14. War Diary [WD], G Air Branch, First Canadian Army, October 1944, NAC RG24 C3, Vol. 13,654 (microfilm reel T-7088).
15. Spry report. [The report states a total 1733 sorties were flown, but the figures in the column add up to only 1653.]
16. H. W.Thomas. *Offensive Air Support of First Canadian Army During Operations in North-West Europe*. Report No.74 Historical Section (G.S.) Army H.Q. 5 July 1955. p.26.
17. WD, G Air Branch, First Canadian Army, October 1944; and Spry report. These figures do not include the reconnaissance sorties (armed, tactical, photo, and artillery), the medium or heavy bomber sorties or the attacks made against the guns in Flushing that were also made in support of 3rd Division.
18. WD, G Air Branch, First Canadian Army, October 1944.
19. WD, G Air Branch, First Canadian Army, October 1944.
20. WD, 1st Battalion, Canadian Scottish Regiment, October 1944, RG24 C3, Vol. 15,039.
21. WD, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders [SDG], October 1944, RG24 C3, Vol. 15,272.
22. WD, The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment, October 1944, RG24 C3, Vol. 15,128..
23. ORB, HQ 84 Group, October 1944; ORB, 198 Squadron, RAF, October 1944, PRO AIR 27/1170; ORB, 609 Squadron, RAF, October 1944, PRO AIR 27/2103.
24. Operations Record Book [ORB], HQ 84 Group, October 1944, Director General History, PRO AIR 25/709 mfm.
25. Williams, p.125.
26. WD, SDG, October 1944; WD, 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade [9CIB], October 1944, NAC RG24 C3, Vol. 14,154 (microfilm reel T-12333); ORB, HQ 84 Group, October 1944; 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade Operational Instruction No.1, "Operation Switchback," 20 October 1944.
27. Spry report.
28. Spry report. It was suggested that this reference to total destruction of the towns be removed from the final version of the report.
29. WD, 9CIB, October 1944; WD, Highland Light Infantry [HLI], October 1944, NAC RG24 C3, Vol. 15,077.
30. WD, 9CIB, October 1944; WD, HLI, October 1944; and Stacey, p.398.
31. WD, SDG, October 1944.
32. WD, Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, October 1944, NAC RG24 C3, Vol. 15,169.
33. ORB, HQ 84 Group, October 1944.
34. "Rocket-Firing Typhoons in Close Support of Military Operations." Joint Report No. 3. ORS 21 Army Group and ORS Second Tactical Air Force., May 1945, contained in M.M. Swann, éd., *Operational Research in Northwest Europe: The Work of No.2 Operational Research Section with 21 Army Group June 1944-July 1945*. AORG 1945, 217 pages. PRO WO 291/1331. A copy may also be found in NAC RG24 Vol. 10,438.
35. "Conversation GOC 3rd Canadian Infantry Division with Major-General Eberding, GOC 64 German Infantry Division." 1 November 1944, NAC RG24 Vol. 10,911, 235C3.02KD1).
36. Spry report.

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