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General Simonds Speaks: Canadian Battle Doctrine in Normandy

Guy Simonds

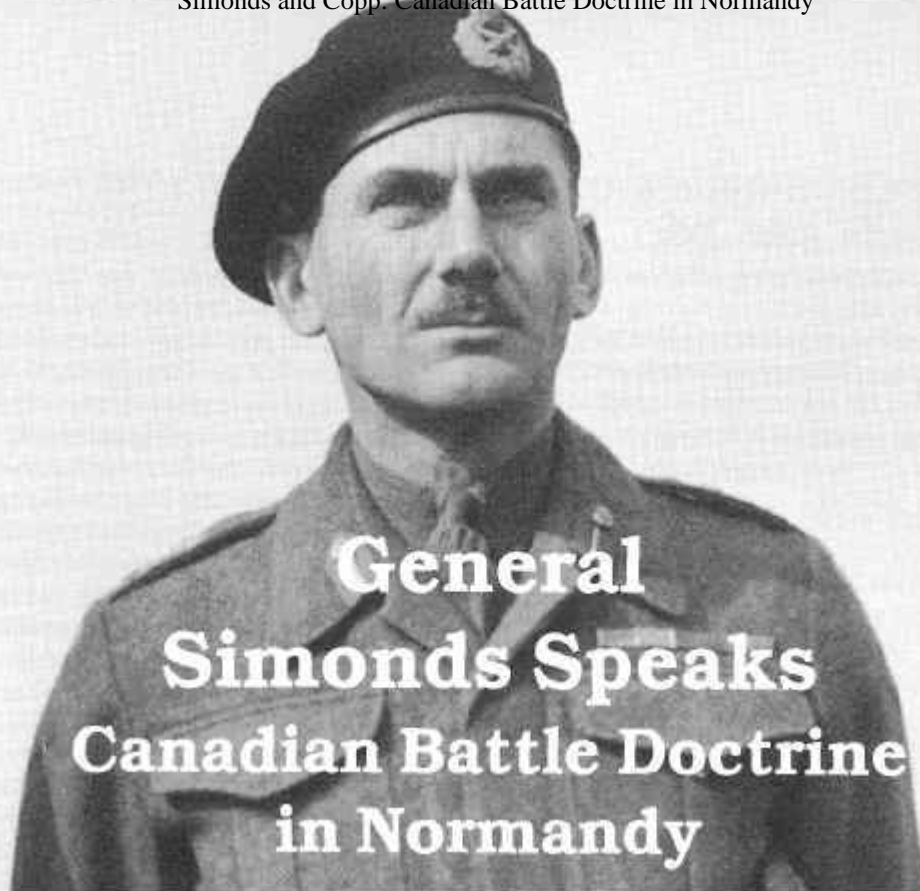
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General Simonds Speaks Canadian Battle Doctrine in Normandy

On the afternoon of 11 July 1944, a Canadian Corps HQ once again became operational on the soil of France. Lieutenant-General Guy Granville Simonds assumed responsibility for 8,000 yards of front in the Caen sector. There was little time or inclination to mark this event or link it with the memory of the vaunted Canadian Corps of World War 1 fame- there was too much to be done. Elements of the newly-arrived 2nd Canadian Infantry Division would take over part of the line and acquire some badly needed experience. Plans for the Corps' role in Operation "Goodwood" had to be elaborated while Simonds met with his Divisional and Brigade commanders.

Guy Simonds emerged from the battlefields of the Second World War with a reputation as a brilliant, innovative commander. To his staff officers, Simonds was more than a consummate professional soldier, he was little short of a god. His Chief of Staff, Brigadier N.E. Roger, wrote of Simonds:

Never have I worked for anyone with such a precise and clear and farseeing mind - he was always working to a plan with a clear cut objective which he took care to let all of us know in simple and direct terms....He reduced those problems in a flash to basic facts and variables, picked out those that mattered, ignored those that were side-issues and made up his mind

and got on with it. No temporizing or bad decisions either.

Not every soldier who served with or under Simonds would share this enthusiasm. The General's cool, detached, analytical mind was accompanied by an overwhelming self-confidence and a degree of arrogance which could make life very difficult for those, who in Simonds' view, failed to live up to his standards. Simonds did not attempt to lead, he sought only to command.

An army of volunteer citizen-soldiers, with an officer corps of widely varying experience and ability certainly needed solid professionalism at the top, but it also needed something more - a type of leadership which could raise it above a collection of fiercely independent and proud regiments and Simonds, like Crerar, could not provide this.

The following documents are reproduced from the War Diaries of the 2nd Field Historical Section, July 1944 (National Archives of Canada RG24 Volume 17506). Major A.T. Sesia, who commanded the unit, tried to record Simonds' words in the first extract, but settled on a summary of the General's views in subsequent reports.

— Terry Copp

Address by Lieut.-General G.G. Simonds, CBE, DSO

General Officer Commanding 2nd Canadian Corps, to Officers of 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade at the Chateau near Cairon (962744, Sheet 7F/1) on 16 July 1944
(reported by Major A.T. Sesia)

I have called this conference first to get you together and to welcome 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Arm'd Bde into 2 Cdn Corps, and secondly to say how proud I am to have them in this Corps after their fine performance during the past month since D-Day. I am sorry to say that of the Divisions in the Canadian Army your Division is the one that I know the least. In all my previous contacts with the Canadian Army there was not a formation with which I was not closely associated, but your Division was the one with which I had had the least contact. I wanted to get around to see the troops and I had intended to do so yesterday, but unfortunately circumstances prevented me from doing so. However, I expect

that I shall be able to get out to see them in a very short time.

I wanted to take this, the first opportunity that I could, to put before you my policy in the tactical handling of troops and in administration generally. First of all, I would like to say a word or two on just where we stand. The Russian offensive in the East is going extremely well. From the latest reports the Russians are some thirty to forty miles from the East Prussian frontier. Here in the west, the German formations are all committed including two which arrived recently from Russia. As far as we can determine, the Germans are short of men and equipment, and we have not so far encountered any fresh formations, nor do there seem to be any in sight. Opposite us is the "works" so to speak. I think you remember General Montgomery's remarks when he spoke to all formations prior to D-Day and said that we had the war "in the bag" if we made an all-out effort. My view is that we will have the war "in the bag" this summer or at least in a matter of weeks if we pursue the advantage we now hold. I cannot stress too highly what effect

General G.G. Simonds in his command vehicle.

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this all-out effort will have on the enemy and its advantages to us particularly from the point of view of our own troops. If the war drags out, normal wastage will ensue and casualties will mount up. On the other hand, by making use of an all-out effort our casualties may be initially high, but in the long run they will be less. I think that it is safe to compare the enemy in his present situation to a boxer who is groggy on his feet, and needs but the knockout blow to finish him off. I ask all Commanders here present to put first and foremost into their minds the idea of the all-out effort. You must always remember that if you rest, so does the enemy; and the final outcome takes considerably longer. You must therefore call on your troops for this all-out effort.

I want it to be absolutely clear in your minds that occasions will arise when I will make heavy demands from you at a time when your troops are tired, but the enemy is groggy. This produces great results and saves casualties. There is always a tendency on our part to look at our troops after a particularly stiff engagement and consider them tired without appreciating, at the same time, that the enemy is more so. I think that the German's position as a whole is not far from the point of cracking up unless he produces fresh formations. His prospects of producing fresh formations from Russia are at present very slim although he may produce some from Italy. There is no doubt that he may have a certain amount of reinforcements to draw from but these cannot materially alter his present position.

OPERATIONAL POINTS

I would now like to mention a few operational points which I consider essential. First, we must have the Offensive Spirit. This is absolutely essential, and the drive must always come from the top. It has always been written that the Commander inspires his troops. With us Canadians it is different. Our Commanders are inspired by the troops. I have always found the troops tired when the commander is tired, yet one has only to mingle in with the troops themselves to find that the Offensive Spirit and the will to carry an all-out effort is always present with the Canadian soldier, and it should not be destroyed by the flagging spirit of a Commander who is tired. The Offensive Spirit does not mean running up against a stone wall. If a Commander

finds himself up against stiff opposition he must keep finding a way to break through the enemy. It is fatal to stop. He must never sit down. He must always be doing something.

Secondly, once you are committed to an offensive operation there is no holding your hand, regardless of casualties. As a Commander you must consider at the outset whether the losses incurred are going to be worth the final assault. You must determine whether these losses are going to be the minimum you can afford in relation to the value of the objective.

We can't fight the Boche without incurring casualties and every soldier must know this. My point of view is that if I can't embark upon an operation to take a certain feature, for example, unless it will be useful to me later, the operation is not worthwhile. But if the operation is worthwhile and I call it off with 50% casualties incurred, then I have achieved nothing but a waste of lives; if I continue, and incur a further 20% casualties and bring the operation to a successful conclusion, then the operation is worthwhile. I speak of casualties in grossly exaggerated figures. In no operation yet have I participated where casualties were not between 15% and 25% and, even at that, 25% is still a grossly exaggerated figure. You must have realized by now, after your experience during the past month, that it is inevitable in infantry warfare that casualties become greatly exaggerated. In the fog of battle communications become disrupted and units become separated, and when the "survivors" start coming in they report that their section, platoon or company has been wiped out. It must always be realised that when a soldier is separated from his comrades he feels that he is the sole survivor, and it is only after reorganization, possibly three or four days later, that one realizes that casualties have been far lower than at first feared.

PATROLLING

Another very important point in connection with the Offensive Spirit is the question of patrolling. Before the war and even during its early days the doctrine of patrolling varied between the advantages of a recce patrol and a fighting patrol. Since that time the definition of both has become confused. From experience I say that both types of patrolling must be clearly



"Rece patrols should be small and made up of experts who know how to creep about in the dark and in daylight, without being observed. They must consist of men who are individualists and who enjoy the work." Canadian soldiers from the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment set out for a patrol in Normandy.

defined. A rece patrol goes out to get information and bring it back. Rece patrols should be small and made up of experts who know how to creep about in the dark and in daylight, without being observed. They must consist of men who are individualists and who enjoy the work. Obviously the type of man required must be one who possesses personal courage. But courage is not all that he must have. You may have a man who possesses considerable courage but who, when he crawls five feet in the dark, cannot do so without cursing. There are also men who possess great courage if they are in company with others but are ineffective if they become isolated. On the other hand, there are men who like to play alone or with a companion or two. Fighting at the present time is not confined on a continuous front - both sides have wonderful opportunities for good scouting. We must always bear in mind that the Boche keeps very still in daytime. For the experienced there are all sorts of outward signs which scouts learn to interpret. When, for instance, all movement has ceased in a village we can accept it that the Boche is there. When civilians are seen to be returning to the village, then it is a pretty fair indication that the Boche has gone.

A word on fighting patrols. In no sense should a scouting platoon be used as a fighting platoon. In no sense should fighting personnel be allowed to be held above others in your command. This is bad for morale. Fighting patrols go on definite missions to take prisoners, and they go in on information picked up by the rece patrol. When

the fighting patrol is working, the rece patrol should be either resting or seeking further information in another sector. Under no circumstances should you have your scout platoon at work when fighting is in progress for they should be working hard when you are sitting down. Each company should have two scouts in each platoon who are experts, and whose job it is to keep you informed at all times as to what you are likely to run into. In this connection I would like to say that the teaching in the battle schools is, to my mind, wrong. Briefly, when a company is going into the attack and thinks it is bumping into opposition, the forward platoon sits and another is sent on a left or right flanking move. The Boche sits down and lets the platoon come in and withholds his fire when withdrawing but the first thing the forward platoon knows is that it has run into machine gun fire from 1000 yards behind. Scouts should precede the platoon and be on the alert at all times to prevent their platoons from walking into this Boche trick. I warn you not to fill yourselves with apprehensions of the enemy's tactics, because you should not have apprehensions at all. If you are aware of the Boche's tactics, and I realize that you have all been in battle, you will also know that although the Boche is a very good soldier he is no match for the Canadian soldier. Our troops have been brought up with a different mentality, are individualists and imaginative and it is up to you not to kill these qualities. The Boche, on the other hand, follows a set drill in his tactics and seldom deviates from it.

An important phase in patrol activity which must never be lost sight of is the accurate interrogation of the patrol when it comes in. Patrols at the present time should be organized at least on a Brigade level and preferably on a Division level. The handling of these patrols and their interrogation when they return must in some respect be the same in which an RAF Intelligence Officer interrogates air crews when they return from a mission. This interrogation must be complete in every respect. An example of an incomplete interrogation occurred last night when one of our patrols reported that a Boche was seen to throw away his rifle and run when he was approached by a patrol from 7 Cdn Inf Bde. As far as I am concerned I do not know that the man who threw down his rifle was a German. He may well have been a frightened farmer. The patrol had not brought back the rifle in question. I say that if this patrol was close enough to see the man at night, and also to see that he had thrown down his rifle, then it should have retrieved that rifle.

GENERAL REMARKS

I am of the opinion that troops underestimate the effect of artillery fire. I will admit that only 5% of artillery fire has a material effect, and that 95% has an effect on morale; but it is in following up this effect on morale that the benefit from artillery fire is derived. In my experience I would say that the Boche recovers easily from a barrage in approximately ten minutes. With the Italian it was different. It took at least three quarters of an hour before he would show up his head and look around after a barrage. It is vitally important that the leading assault troops must follow closely on the heels of the firing. During the last war it was always said that full use of a barrage was not made unless our troops suffered casualties from it. In other words, unless we follow closely behind a barrage and take advantage of its effect upon the enemy its value is worthless. We must, therefore, be prepared to accept casualties from shells falling short.

"...unless we follow closely behind a barrage and take advantage of its effect upon the enemy its value is worthless. We must, therefore, be prepared to accept casualties from shells falling short." Crew fusing shell before firing, 9 Canadian Infantry Brigade, Normandy, 28 June 1944.



NAC PA 131413

The essence of German defence is the counter-attack. You should never be surprised when he counter-attacks. You should be surprised if he fails to counter-attack. The Boche, is very effective with his mortar. Without his mortar he is not effective and it has been proven time and again. I have known instances where a hundred bodies, by actual count, of German dead were found lying about a small position most of whom were killed by small arms fire. The Boche usually sites his mortar 3,000 to 4,000 yards behind his FDLs [Forward Defensive Lines]. In the attack, the initial assault wave should go through at 3,000 or 4,000 yards behind his FDLs, in order to break up the mortar organization. This can be done with speed of movement on the part of the assaulting troops and will thereby cost the Boche very heavy casualties and break up his counter-attack. To achieve this the leading troops must go through without bothering about mopping up and also by side-stepping opposition. However, the Boche who has been sidestepped must not be left alone for he can be a source of considerable annoyance. Mopping up must be done as quickly as possible behind the assaulting wave. The two requisites, therefore, for this type of engagement are: (1) Speed in the assault wave, and (2) cleaning up in the mopping up wave. These requisites are the only method by which speed is obtained and access into the depth required. Between both requisites a gap will inevitably follow, and this gap should not be large. The moppers-up should be organized in section columns so that one can deal with a pocket while the others go on. They should be supplied with plenty of grenades and small arms. I am convinced that attacks in short phases of 1,000 to 1,500 yards each are not effective and become very heavily mortared.

With the increase of high velocity ammunition, armour, especially when working with infantry, should not be employed unless behind good covering fire and clear of minefields. It is all-important that when moving alone tanks should cover the movement of other tanks. If a regiment is moving in bounds, one squadron should always be employed to cover the movement of the others against the possibility of well-sited 88 mm guns. As far as the infantry is concerned the tank assists the infantry with fire from its gun. It is essential that the closest possible contact between both arms exist and I suggest that representatives from both arms with

18 sets should be interchanged. The infantry officer with the armour could then say what he wants, and the tank officer with the infantry could decide how to do it.

My final point concerns Battle Stamina. A "flash in the pan" formation is useless. It has to be good to the end. This will only be the case if the Commander down to the platoon commander or the equivalent will nurse Battle Stamina. This hinges on two factors: (a) Physical and (b) Morale.

(a) Physical Factor - Good unit administration must be exercised at all times to keep out sickness. Commanders should be careful to leave behind selected personnel as LOBs [Left out of Battle]. This becomes most important particularly in the case of heavy fighting. It is a vital mistake for a Commander to LOB an officer or a man of whom he is not certain. He must find out once and for all in battle whether or not a man can prove himself favourably or otherwise. Not to do so is the worst mistake that can be made to encourage malingering or the tendency to go easy hoping to be left out. By placing such a man into battle it is possible that he will prove himself a worthy soldier, or if not, he will crack up or become a casualty. From the psychological point of view this must be kept in sight at all times.

(b) Morale Factor - Morale is hinged to discipline. There is no substitute for discipline. Just prior to the war wild ideas on discipline were let loose. The present form of discipline existing in the British Army has withstood the test of battle, for centuries, and is suited to our temperament. The worst thing a Commander can do is to relax on discipline. The Guards Battalions have a form of discipline which is unique in itself, but it must be realized that the Guards are not much different than other men except that they have been chosen for the number of inches between their heads and feet. The methods employed to achieve this discipline among the Guards is not, however, suited to the Canadian temperament but the evidences of results obtained should be the same.

If you explain to the Canadian soldier what is required of him and give him a good reason for it he will produce the goods every single time and do it twice as well as any other individual. From the national point of view we must look



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"If you explain to the Canadian soldier what is required of him and give him a good reason for it he will produce the goods every single time and do it twice as well as any other individual." Privates Eddie Feltham (left) and John Cote of the Highland Light Infantry advancing towards Caen, 9 July 1944.

to our contribution in this war in every respect. We must ask ourselves what, from the national point of view, will Canada get out of this war materially? The answer is: Nil. In fact, when the war is over we will probably have to dig down deeper than ever before into our pockets to pay for it. On the moral side, however, what do we get out of it? The answer is: A great deal. We not only increase our own self-respect as a Nation, but we also increase the respect for Canada from all other nations who have come to realize her greatness. The opinion formed of Canada and Canadians by peoples in Europe and in Britain will be based upon the impression created by the Canadian troops they see about them. It is a fact that we are ordinarily judged by the external appearance and conduct of our troops. Hence their importance.

Every effort must be made to ensure that the discipline and deportment of our troops is kept up to the highest standard. I made it a strict rule in the Mediterranean, and I intend to carry it out here, that any cases of offences against the civil population will not be dealt with by the soldier's CO, but by Court Martial. Every unit has its "bad eggs" and it is they, (fortunately less than 1 % of the total number of troops involved), who commit these offences and they must be dealt with in no uncertain terms. This will have its effect on other troops who might be inclined to commit the same offences. One of the offences that is likely to be met up with is that of looting. Many cases of looting are due to misunderstanding on the part of the troops. There has not been much of it, but when it has occurred it was generally due to troops passing by a wrecked building



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or house and, seeing that its occupants had fled, thought nothing of picking up items more in the way of souvenirs than anything else. This misunderstanding must be dispelled by the officers.

It is very important that when things are bad the reins should be kept tight. Don't do nothing. Commence smartening up, holding, parades, etc. Discipline among the officers and NCOs should always be at its highest. It must always be borne in mind that troops are inclined to get morbid after hard fighting, especially in the winter months. I hope that this war will be over before the winter months set in. Bad weather is bad for troops.

One point that I insist upon and which you may consider eccentric is that I place great stress on saluting. First of all, I think that in any formation we should act as a team, and it is inconceivable that in any other form of team, members should walk by each other and not give some form of recognition. As with everything else, salutation in the Army is regulated by a universal method. Personally, I hate passing by a group of troops without giving them some form of salutation. There are, perhaps, some reasons why saluting drops off. In some units it is likely that troops do not salute because they resent it. It is up to the officers and NCOs in that unit to seek out the cause for this resentment and remove it.

"I lay stress on what seems to be little things. Little things are important in battle. In battle men risk lives. You can't get them to do the big things if they are not made to do the little things."

Another reason is that troops sometimes just don't bother saluting. They follow the line of least resistance. Some say: "The hell with it! I saluted three officers this morning and that's enough for the day!" A third reason for not saluting is that soldiers do not see when officers pass by. They will not see if they walk with their heads down. An alert soldier walks with his head up. It is the business of officers to see that their soldiers are alert. A fourth reason is that officers never take the trouble to explain the custom of saluting and why it is done. Officers should gather their troops about them at least once a week and explain to them these and other points which soldiers either forget or have not known. I think that we publish far too many orders and never enforce them. One reason why these orders are neglected is because officers lose sight of the fact that in their unit there may be a heavy turnover of new people who are not informed on these things. In theory, everybody is supposed to know what is published in orders, but in fact, it is not so. Officers must keep their troops in the picture at all times. The Canadian soldier does not give his best when he is not in the picture.

It is a peculiar fact, but it is true, that usually troops in the forward areas are far more meticulous about saluting than those at the Base. In the Middle East it has invariably been found that the standard of saluting was 100% in the Forward Areas, and at Base no one bothered about it. It is an indication of a lack of morale and the fighting spirit. Saluting will be continued in the field except in certain cases. Soldiers when not actively employed or when not engaged in battle, will salute. Officers will return the salute and speak to soldiers. On the line of march officers will salute seniors while ORs will continue to march at ease. If, for instance, a party of engineers are working on a roadside, I do not expect that every time an officer passes they will throw down their tools and salute. My experience is that troops like saluting if it is done properly and if the custom is properly explained to them. I lay stress on what seems to be little things. Little things are important in battle. In battle men risk lives. You can't get them to do the big things if they are not made to do the little things.

Resume of Remarks by Lieut.-General G.G. Simonds, CBE, DSO

GOC 2nd Canadian Corps, at "O" Group Conference held at 2nd Canadian Corps Conference Room, The Chateau, Cairon, on 30 July 1944 at 1000 hours (reported by Major A.T. Sesia)

The conference was attended by the Heads of Arms and Services 2 Cdn Corps, and the GOsC 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs, and 4 Cdn Armd Div and their Brigade Commanders and principal staff officers. The GOC's opening remarks referred to two policy letters which he issued down to formations and units. The first of these dealt with leadership and quoted the citation which described the deeds which won the Victoria Cross for Major J.K. Mahony, the Westminster Regiment (Motor) in Italy. The other dealt with training and the reorganization of formations. Referring to the former, General Simonds said that in view of coming events it was essential that all officers were impressed with the sense of leadership which should be of the highest order in the carrying out of their duties.

General Simonds then told the assembled officers that he proposed to review the position of the campaign in Normandy up to date, and that he would deal with the present and attempt to forecast the future. He said that the war situation in general is very favourable and that it is doubtful if a more favourable situation will arise for us. The enemy are disorganized on the Eastern Front and it looks as though they will not be able to pull themselves together. He expressed it as his personal opinion that he felt that the enemy was making a determined stand here in Normandy because there was a possibility that Hitler had in the back of his mind a faint hope of dicker for a separate peace with Russia, and for that reason, the will to fight still existed among his troops who face us.

Reviewing the recent battle South of CAEN where we were forced to give ground to the enemy, General Simonds emphasized that it will be most difficult for Commanders to put across to front line soldiers who are constantly being shot at the notion that the Boche is groggy, and also that our task in this recent battle was successful in its primary end despite the losses entailed. It must be realized that the German soldier,

regardless of what he is up against, has always continued to be a good soldier right to the bitter end. It depends upon our officers to put the idea across to the men that, however fluid the situation may seem on the Russian front and even on the present American front, here in Normandy the Boche, although well on the way to defeat, will still put up a determined resistance.

Repeating what he had said on previous occasions General Simonds pointed out that if the war is prolonged normal wastage will continue, and in the long run our casualties will be much higher. He said that at present 2 Cdn Corps is suffering casualties at the rate of 100 per day. These casualties arise from such causes as shelling, mortaring, sniping and patrol activity. If we sat as we are doing for twenty days our casualties would amount to approximately 2,000 which are more, if not equal, to the normal casualties sustained by a Corps in a stiff battle. Our present situation has got to be exploited to the fullest extent no matter how tired our troops are. When it is physically possible to do so opportunities must be given to the troops for rest, and General Simonds emphasized that he realized how much reorganization of the fighting units and formations under his command was required. But the second best must be accepted and battle-tired troops must be pushed to the bitter end if need be. He would make no promises for rest, nor the duration of such rest, and it was up to the Commanders to give their best until the war finishes - in this theatre, in any case.

General Simonds then reviewed the strategic situation in Normandy. He said that it was the Commander-in-Chief's original intention to use Second Army in a holding role to draw onto itself as much of the enemy's armour and reserves as possible to enable the Americans to secure the Cherbourg Peninsula, and then to swing hard with a right wing and clear Brittany of the enemy.

Since 2 Cdn Corps has been in operations, we have had two tasks. The first of these, General Simonds continued, was to clear FAUBOURG DE VAUCELLES and put up bridges across the River ORNE in the CAEN sector. This was carried out and the casualties sustained were very light. The second task was to draw into the area as many German troops as was possible. General Simonds said: "On the evening of the day of 2



"As a Commander you must consider at the outset whether the losses incurred are going to be worth the final assault.... We can't fight the Boche without incurring casualties and every soldier must know this." A Canadian soldier killed in action at Tilly-la-Campagne, 9 August 1944.

Cdn Inf Div's attack down to FLEURY SUR ORNE, I am certain that we went nearly through the enemy's lines. We had achieved our first objectives and we had, in particular, all the air support required and the exact targets for them. Unfortunately, the weather closed down on us cutting off our air support, and the enemy took advantage of this by putting in two counter-attacks, and drove us back from the ground we gained. In the intervening bad weather which followed, he heavily reinforced."

General Simonds said though we failed to secure territorial gains, we did achieve our primary object and every available enemy SS Div was concentrated in front of us, and at that stage the US attack in the ST LO sector commenced and succeeded. He emphasized that it should be stressed to the troops that their contribution made for that success.

When the counter-attacks stopped it was decided that no advantage would be gained to launch 7 Armd Div and the Guards Armd Div who were under his command at the time, unless the flanks FONTENAY LE MARMION in the LA BRUYERE feature (0756 - 0856 - 0757 -0857, Sheet 7F/4) had been secured. The operation advanced with all 2 Cdn Inf Div battalions

employed and part of one battalion of 3 Cdn Inf Div. 7 Armd and the Guards Armd Divs were practically intact. General Simonds said: "I had ample reserves available and had the opportunity presented itself I could have pushed home a concerted drive against the Boche. But since we had achieved the primary object of the operation, and there was no purpose in committing my forces any more than I had done. I therefore resumed my holding role and commenced reorganization to wait for an opportunity for another full-scale operation. Second Army was in entire agreement with this policy, and did not want me to commit additional forces because what could have been achieved by so doing did not warrant the scale of forces involved."

General Simonds said that he wanted every Commander to understand that at the present time the task of 2 Cdn Corps is a holding one and certainly not the type that Commanders and troops look forward to. Our next operation will probably be a breakthrough and when that operation has been mounted no division will stop until every reserve has been employed. There will be no holding back whatever. Naturally, continued the GOC, such an operation would not be mounted unless the prospects are more than good but he told the assembled officers

to bear in mind that he will not stop because the forward battalions are stopped, nor will he stop until every reserve has been employed and used up. General Simonds explained that he took this view because he has felt that the time has now come when we must consider that if we are going to put an end to this war at all it can only be done by a knock-out blow. The enemy, weakened as he is on all fronts, can still resist for a long time with the resultant unnecessary loss of lives to us. He said that we must be prepared to accept initial casualties but that in the long run it would pay much higher dividends in (a) finishing the war, and (b) reducing the overall wastage of casualties that would normally ensue from a war of attrition.

General Simonds then went on to discuss the strategic picture as it affected 2 Cdn Corps on its immediate front. He commenced by likening the Germans position in the CAEN sector to that of the situation he had found himself last winter in Italy when the main pivot of his defensive role lay in PESCARA. He said that the CAEN pivot is the enemy's PESCARA of Normandy. The defence of ROME rested with the "Rome Line" which extended laterally across the Italian Peninsula to PESCARA. If he were denied the laterals from ROME to PESCARA he would either have to denude his stronghold in PESCARA to reinforce ROME, or fall back on both fronts. Here in Normandy the main pivot of his defences and the determining points between an orderly withdrawal or a rout rested with the strength with which he held the CAEN sector. A glance at the map revealed that so long as he held CAEN in spite of his weakening position on the American front he was still able to swing back northeastwards in an orderly fashion and later, if need be, commence a gradual withdrawal to the North keeping control at all times. This explained his sensitivity in this particular sector, and it was more important to him to keep concentrated as much armour and heavy weapons as he could. The position that he holds by occupying the high ground in front of us places him in the same advantageous situation that PESCARA did for him. He can't let go unless the situation deteriorates, and it will continue to be his pivot back behind the River ODON.

Our immediate task is to make the threat to this pivot so serious that he will not dare to reduce the strength of the force which he now

holds there. For that reason it is up to us to continue to make a show of force and, if necessary, from time to time to move armoured brigades in daylight down to the forward areas and trickle them back under cover of darkness. General Simonds said that it is his task to watch for the opportunity when the Boche weakens that pivot and then crack through. Once this takes place his whole position in Normandy collapses. This is the time when there will be no holding back, because it will be the finish of the enemy as far as this phase of the war is concerned, unless he decides upon a general withdrawal.

General Simonds said that from his experience in fighting the Boche he has found that if we attack him on a narrow front he recognizes it as a holding attack and lets it spend itself out, and then counter-attacks in his own time. By far the greatest contributing factor in a holding role is to contain a large concentration of armour and guns. This is at present being achieved and so far there has been no indication that he has moved any of his better Panzer divisions from the Corps front.

General Simonds said that effective 1730 hours this evening 4 Cdn Armd Div will have completed their take-over from 3 Cdn Inf Div who are going back to rest, and that to ease this Division gradually into the "feel of things," he is contemplating a small-scale operation to recover TILLY LA CAMPAGNE. He considered that it would be advantageous for us to dominate the feature on which this town stands and it would minimize enemy observations of our movements.

For the future, the GOC said that if all continues to go well on the American front to look for instructions for a break-through to FALAISE. He considers that for this operation he should employ not less than three infantry divisions and two armoured divisions with an armoured brigade with each infantry division, and possibly a third armoured brigade in reserve. He said that he would not mount the operation without complete air support. The main problem which we are going to be up against is how to get our armour through the gun screen. It was possible in the past for our medium guns to knock out and "brew up" enemy armour and gun emplacements. But now he has anti-tank guns and tanks with long effective fields of fire. One



"...it will be most difficult for Commanders to put across to front line soldiers who are constantly being shot at the notion that the Boche is groggy, and also that our task in this recent battle was successful in its primary end despite the losses entailed." Canadian infantry on the move at dawn, south of Vaucelles, 25 July 1944.

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or two effectively concealed 88 mm guns could knock out a whole regiment of tanks before discovered. Our mediums can still knock out the old Mk IV but the Panther and Tiger tanks are a different proposition. At the present time the solution seems to rest in the employment of heavy four-engined bombers and rocket-bearing Typhoons. A 4,000-lb "block buster" will turn over a Panther or Tiger tank on a direct hit or near-miss. Our rocket-bearing Typhoons have proved very effective during recent days, but it must be realized that in employing air support in this manner that there is a definite time-lag which gives the Boche an opportunity to recuperate from the effects of the attack by the time either our armour or the infantry get through.

General Simonds said that he was certain in his own mind that the best solution to this problem would be to employ armour at night, although he knew that the armour people themselves were reluctant to attempt this. He felt that if effectively carried through, it could be possible at night to bring armour up forward at least 5,000 yards. He realized the disadvantages such as the enemy's effective

flares for spotting, the difficulty in keeping direction and the dust raised by air bombing which would make it almost impossible to see ahead. He thought, however, that by employing this armour at night and using moonlight or artificial light from searchlights, if there was cloud cover, the tanks will get up to the gun screen, and he wants the armoured formations to practice moving forward to objectives in the dark. He said that our light AA could deal with enemy flares and, of course, artillery support would be available to shoot up the area where the flares came from. He was not minimizing the risk of such an operation but risks had to be accepted if armour was to be brought to the line of guns. For air support, he would call for a heavy bomber force such as that used in the attack on CAEN and this would be employed at dusk. He would then arrange for these bombers to make a return trip and resume their attack as early after first light as it was possible for the bombers to refuel and return. The whole bomber effort would depend a great deal on this "turn around."

General Simonds then reiterated some of his main points and the conference ended.