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COMMANDING
THE GREEN CENTRE LINE IN NORMANDY:
A CASE STUDY OF DIVISION COMMAND IN THE
SECOND WORLD WAR

by

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DISSERTATION

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Doctor of Philosophy in History

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2009

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the experiences of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division as it prepared for and carried out its role in the battle of Normandy and the liberation of France in 1944. The factors that limited opportunities to practice the formation in large – scale exercises are noted as are the methods used by the General Officer Commanding, Major-General George Kitching, to compensate for the limitations. The thesis argues that through the development of an effective commander-staff dynamic Kitching, his staff and his subordinates commanders ,were able to meet the challenges and chaos of combat in the final stages of the Normandy campaign and in the subsequent pursuit phase of operations into Belgium.

PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to advance our understanding of the role played by the 4th Canadian Armoured Division in the first stages of the campaign to liberate western Europe in 1944. While many historians have commented on the division's performance in Normandy this thesis is the first study focused on the division in both the training and combat periods. The argument of this thesis may be briefly summarized. During the preparatory stage factors beyond the control of the division commander severely limited opportunities to practice the formation in large-scale exercises at the divisional or brigade level. Major-General George Kitching, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) was forced to concentrate on unit-level training (infantry battalion, armoured and artillery regiments) relying on Tactical Exercises Without Troops (TEWTS) and skeleton command and communication exercises to prepare for co-ordinated action in the field. Kitching, it is argued, was successful in developing a commander-staff dynamic that permitted division and brigade staff officers to function effectively in Normandy despite exceptionally challenging conditions. A close examination of combat operations and their logistical basis demonstrates that the division was a far more effective force than the current literature suggests.

The thesis is based upon archival records from the Library and Archives of Canada (LAC) especially Record Group 24. This basic body of source material is supplemented by interviews, interview transcripts and personal correspondence. The thesis begins with a review of the secondary literature followed by a discussion of a theoretical construct, the commander –staff dynamic which the author has worked with and developed as a professional military educator. The subsequent chapters on the

training and combat periods are organized chronologically and include a chapter on the “pursuit” phase of the division’s history a heretofore entirely neglected subject.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of this dissertation is due to the help and support of a great number of people. I would like to start with my co-supervisors Professor Terry Copp and Dr Roger Sarty. They not only helped me through this dissertation but were also instructors on my courses. Dr Sarty always provided insightful and constructive comments on my work that made me a better writer. Prof Copp pushed me beyond my comfort zone in many seminars and in the writing of this dissertation. He forced me to grow as a historian in two key areas: the quality of my analysis and in the critical thinking necessary to make sense of the presented facts. I will be forever indebted, and forever thankful that I was given the opportunity to study and learn from these two distinguished Canadian historians.

I would also like to thank Dr David Monod and Dr Geoff Hayes my two other PhD instructors for their patience and guidance in broadening my skills and knowledge. Geoff was kind enough to take me along on his 4th Canadian Armoured Division battlefield tour in 2005 allowing me to once again walk the battlefields of Normandy.

The research for this dissertation would never have been achieved had it not been for the outstanding support I received from Cathy Murphy the Chief Librarian at the Canadian Forces College Information Resource Centre and members of her staff. Cathy is simply one of the most remarkable individuals I have every met! Her knowledge and resourcefulness continues to impress me each day. I have yet to meet anyone else who has a greater breadth of knowledge or understanding of military history. I would also like to recognize Janine Eakins, Jeff Creighton and Sabrina Cheng, members of Cathy's team. They were remarkable in fulfilling a plethora of information and resource requests.

I'm indebted to Dr Reginald Roy and Dr Robert Fraser for allowing me access to their collection of correspondence and extensive interviews. Dr Roy was quite willing to provide copies of the extensive correspondence he had with many of the key veterans of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division in researching and writing his book *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*. Some of these letters held invaluable clues and information in trying to unlock why certain events happened the way they did. The extensive interview collection that Dr Fraser has in the Argyll Museum in Hamilton was instrumental in bringing to light the character of many of the key individuals involved in this study.

Many thanks to Colonel Randall Wakelam my boss at the Canadian Forces College for being completely understanding with my prolonged absences from my desk as I worked in the library and for allowing me a flexible work schedule to complete this dissertation. I would also like to thank Mike Bechthold for providing advice and access to maps, photographs and diagrams from the resources of the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies.

To the ladies in the Distribution Centre Katie Blackbird, Grace Maione and Kathy Lang thanks so much for all of your help in photocopying and reproducing much of the material and maps I used which turned my office into my war room. Thanks also to Ralph Lang for reproducing the many maps I used. Without these resources I would not have been able to make sense of the movements of the different formations.

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My parents Grazietta and Rocco Caravaggio and my in-laws Donna and Bill Dorris have always been loving and extremely supportive of my work. They have always been on hand to offer encouragement and strong moral support. I offer a heartfelt thank you to each! Unfortunately, while I was finishing this dissertation, we lost two very special and loving individuals when both Bill and Donna passed within months of each other. Their passing has been deeply felt by all those lucky enough to have known them.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not thank the late Major-General George Kitching himself. It was he who planted the seeds for this dissertation during the Heidelberg officer’s battlefield tour in May 1990. I was quite impressed with him and was amazed that he was able to talk about his experiences with his then foe Hubert Meyer with a frankness that transcended their bitter rivalry of 1944. Thanks sir for starting me on a journey.

The greatest thanks and love go to my lovely wife Karen and my wonderful daughter Rachel who have unselfishly given me the time and space needed to complete this work. To them I am eternally thankful.

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Photography of Major-General George Kitching, Air Vice-Marshal Johnnie Johnson and Oberst Hubert Meyer, Normandy Battlefield Tour May 1990.



Meyer

Kitching

Johnson

Introduction

*War is essentially chaos, and the line between control and sickening confusion is paper-thin. If one takes care, the violence applied can be focused with precision, yet even when care is taken, it can easily degenerate into wild and formless mayhem.*¹

General Chuck Horner

A general's foremost duty is to win his nation's battles, no matter when or where they might take place. To this end, a general must prepare himself and his men as best he can in the periods that precede conflict. It has been a frequent criticism by historians and contemporary writers that generals have performed the latter poorly. When it came time to fight, they found it was not the battle for which they had prepared and, as a result, many generals were deemed to have failed either to prepare their men or to win.²

Among this group of generals was Major-General (Maj Gen) George Kitching, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 4th Canadian Armoured Division (4 Cdn Armd Div) in the battles of Normandy in August 1944. Kitching was relieved of his command by Lieutenant-General (Lt Gen) Guy Simonds, commander of 2 Canadian Corps (2 Cdn Corps), on 21 August after 21 days of combat, 14 of which involved heavy fighting to break out of the Normandy bridgehead and trap the remnants of the German Army in Normandy in the area around Trun, St Lambert-sur-Dives and Chambois, known as the Falaise Gap. The story of Kitching and the 4th Cdn Armd Div in Normandy, as portrayed by current literature, is not a positive one.

Each commander is bound by a unique set of situational and organizational constraints that must be taken into consideration before any valid evaluation of a unit or its commander's performance can be rendered. The current body of literature concerning

¹ Tom Clancy and Chuck Horner, *Every Man A Tiger* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1999), 234.

² Alistair Irwin, "The Buffalo Thorn: The Nature of the Future Battlefield," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 19, no. 4 (December 1996), 227.

the 4 Cdn Armd Div is missing three very important examinations relevant to any discussion of the performance of the division:

- There is no clear description of the division command environment and how Kitching and his staff interacted to create the operational tempo required in operations
- There has been no comprehensive examination of the training of the division to ascertain whether the division was properly prepared for its role in Normandy, and if not, why not? and
- There has been no comprehensive examination of how the administrative/logistical processes within the division either facilitated or hindered the operational tempo of the division. Simply discussing the operations of the division, as has been done to date, does not provide the fidelity of information to determine whether the division was capable, from a material perspective, of actually carrying out the operations ordered.

The division, its leadership cadre and the methods through which the division operated throughout the Normandy campaign must therefore be scrutinized.³ In so doing, this dissertation will establish that, despite entering battle for the first time during one of the most challenging phases of Allied operations in August 1944, the 4th Armoured Division, under Kitching's leadership proved resilient and adaptive in overcoming the volatile and unpredictable nature of warfare in Normandy. The combat operations of August 1944 transformed the division into a battle-hardened combat formation that would distinguish itself through its ability to generate a sustained drive across France out of the chaos and destruction of the Normandy battles. Geoffrey Hayes' assessment of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at that time is pertinent in describing the rest of the division: "It was

³ Eliot Cohen, A. and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1990), 246.

an organization far different from the one which had landed in France not one month before.”⁴

Armoured forces feature in this dissertation and their origins and early development form a subject of immense historical importance. There has been considerable debate concerning the defeat of British armoured forces in May 1940 and the “poor” performance of British and Canadian armour formations in Normandy. The historiography involved in this debate is substantial with the many factors involved given widely varying weight. One view has emphasized the economic and strategic aspects of British (and Canadian) rearmament to explain operational and tactical factors that influenced the effectiveness of the armoured forces.⁵ Another view contends that the Allies won through the massive application of resources, artillery and air power and that this material superiority compensated for the “poor” combat performance on the part of the Anglo-Canadians.⁶ Some authors, supported in part by the reflections of some Canadian generals such as Maj-Gen Charles Foulkes and Maj-Gen Harry Foster, have developed the notion of a hierarchy of operational and tactical effectiveness, placing the Germans first, followed in order by the Americans, the British and finally the Canadians.⁷

⁴ Geoffrey Hayes, *The Lincs: A History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at War*. (Alma: Maple Leaf Route, 1986), 40.

⁵ Williamson Murray, “Armoured Warfare: The British, French, and German experience,” in *Military Innovation In the Interwar Period*, ed. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7. See also Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press 1980), Harold, Winton, “Tanks, Votes, and Budgets: The Politics of Mechanization and Armoured Warfare in Britain, 1919-1939.” In *The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities, 1918-1941*, ed. Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets, 74-107. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

⁶ C. Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*. (London: Collins, 1952), 477. Other sources supporting these views include C. D’Este, *Decisions in Normandy*. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), Martin Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, (Washington, Department of the Army, 1961).

⁷ John Buckley, *British Armour in the Normandy Campaign* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 2.

Foulkes, the GOC of 2nd Canadian Infantry Division (Cdn Inf Div) stated that the Canadians were “no match” for the battle-hardened German troops and Canadians would not have been successful “had it not been for our air and artillery support.”⁸ Foster’s assessment is even more compelling when he stated that Canadians were “no match for the Germans once they were dug in.”

It could be argued that everything being equal, defenders always hold an advantage over attackers. But in Normandy everything wasn’t equal. We held the advantage in the air, at sea and on the ground. Yet every time our troops got beyond the range of supporting artillery or our weather grounded our fighter-bomber cover, the Germans stopped us cold.⁹

The blame for this tactical ineffectiveness has usually been focused on how the forces were employed or operational technique.

In *Raising Churchill’s Army*, David French argued that three years of setbacks finally taught the British how to fight and that from 1942 onwards the army discovered how to make its system work, emphasizing its strengths and masking its weaknesses.

French highlights the British techniques by citing a report from Italy in 1943:

Our tactical methods are thorough and methodical but slow and cumbersome. In consequence our troops fight well in defence and our set-piece attacks are usually successful, but it is not unfair to say that through lack of enterprise in exploitation we seldom reap the full benefit of them. We are too flank-conscious, we over-insure administration, we are by nature too apprehensive of failure and our training makes us more so.¹⁰

Constrained by a finite supply of manpower, but supplied with an abundance of resources, the British, and in particular General B.L. Montgomery, developed an operational policy that avoided manoeuvre in favour of set-piece attrition battles

⁸ Foulkes was the GOC of the 2nd Cdn Inf Div from 11 Jan 44 to 9 Nov 44. C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Volume III, the Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe 1944-1945* (Ottawa: The Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1960), 276.

⁹ Tony Foster, *Meeting of Generals* (Toronto: Methuen, 1986), 366.

¹⁰ David French, *Raising Churchill’s Army: The British Army and the War Against Germany, 1919-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 273.

conducted according to a “master plan” designed to conserve manpower.¹¹ French concluded that this system served the needs of the British Army “remarkably well.”¹²

In *British Armour in the Normandy Campaign, 1944* John Buckley argued that any assessment of the employment and effectiveness of British armour, and by extension Canadian armour, during the Normandy campaign must be viewed in the light of 21st Army Group's operational technique. He stated that

...early expectations placed on British armoured forces were quite at odds with the realities of warfare in 1944 and demonstrated an unrealistic view of the capabilities of armour. Moreover, the balancing of 21st Army Group's operational techniques with the employment of armour did not always take place effectively. The consequences of firepower reliance, narrow front attacks, and close control and its impact on the use of armour were not fully appreciated by British planning and operations staff. The impact of this was that at times commanders and planning staff called upon armour to fight in a quite unsuitable manner in northwest Europe in 1944, and this has provided the yardstick by which British armour has come to be measured.¹³

While it remains unlikely that the discussion over the effectiveness of Anglo-Canadian armoured forces will ever be definitively settled two deductions can be made from the debate. While Canadian armoured divisions were never as potent as those of the German Army, through the efforts of the officers and men who made these divisions a fighting force, they would become good enough to do their part in winning the war.

Criticism of the Canadian Army efforts in Normandy has centered on the argument that the 2nd Cdn Corps operations designed to trap the German forces in Normandy were not pressed forward with sufficient resolve, resulting in the escape of some quarter million German soldiers.¹⁴ The expectation was that the Canadians should

¹¹ Ibid., 246.

¹² Ibid., 272.

¹³ Buckley, *British Armour*, 67-68.

¹⁴ J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War*, (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 169-170.

have been more successful in operations TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE and that 4th Cdn Armd Div, as the spearhead for the Canadian advance, should have closed the Falaise Gap sooner to prevent the escape of those German soldiers. C.P. Stacey expressed his thoughts as follows:

It is not difficult to put one's finger upon occasions in the Normandy campaign when Canadian formations failed to make the most of their opportunities. In particular, the capture of Falaise was long delayed, and it was necessary to mount not one but two set-piece operations for the purpose at a time when an early closing of the Falaise gap would have inflicted grievous harm upon the enemy. And might even, conceivably, have enabled us to end the war some months sooner than was actually the case. A German force far smaller than our own, taking advantage of strong ground and prepared positions, was able to slow our advance to the point where considerable German forces made their escape.¹⁵

Stacey concluded that "Dissatisfaction with the division's operations south of Caen was reflected, almost inevitably, in a change of command..."¹⁶ Consequently statements such as "Major-General George Kitching was dismissed following what Simonds considered 4th Canadian Armoured Division's poor performance in Totalize and Tractable," populate the current literature.¹⁷

Kitching receives tepid support in Reginald Roy's book, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, (1984) which provided a detailed re-examination of the Canadian actions highlighting many of Kitching's troubles. Nonetheless, Roy leaves readers to decide whether or not Kitching was fairly treated. Donald Graves' *South Albertas: A Canadian Regiment at War* (1998) and John Marteinsen's *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps:*

¹⁵ Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 276.

¹⁶ Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 276.

¹⁷ Paul Douglas Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 321. Kitching's dismissal was used by the Somali Inquiry as an example of replacing ineffective commanders. Pg 10 of 15. Somalia Commission, "Report of the Somalia Commission of Inquiry, Defining Leadership," Government of Canada, <http://www.dnd.ca/somalia/vol2/v2c15e.htm> (accessed 09/25, 2006).

An Illustrated History (2000) have cast different lights on the events of August 1944 but offer no real assessment of Kitching's generalship.

The harshest Canadian criticism of Kitching comes from John English in *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign* (1991) who argued that the "less than successful performance of Canadian formations" can be explained by the inability of Canadian commanders to leverage the strengths of British/Canadian doctrine to achieve success on the battlefield.¹⁸ He argued that Simonds' plans for TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE were "essentially sound" and that the "lacklustre showing of Canadian arms in Normandy must be laid at the feet of division commanders."¹⁹ English concluded that they were at best "mediocre performers."²⁰ In particular, English characterized Kitching as "youth without knowledge" and implied that his actions "compromised" the operations of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division during these two operations.²¹

Terry Copp in *Fields of Fire* (2003) has conducted the most recent re-evaluation of the Canadian Army's contribution to the Allied campaign in Northwest Europe. Copp offers a new balance sheet for the Normandy campaign concluding that the Canadian Army that fought in the Normandy "played a role all out of proportion to its relative strength among the Allied armies."²² The conclusion that one takes away from this book is that the combat environment was much more complex than the typical operations-

¹⁸ John English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 313.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 306.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 307.

²¹ While Kitching was a young Maj Gen at 33 years old, he had considerably more military experience than the average Canadian general from his previous service with the British Army, his continuous employment with Simonds as his General Staff Officer 1 (GSO 1) in the Sicilian and Italian campaigns and in his brief time as commander of the 11 Cdn Inf Bde. The "youth without knowledge" moniker for Kitching is therefore misleading. *Ibid.*, 308.

²² Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire the Canadians in Normandy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 267.

focussed narrative would have you believe and that the Canadian Army deserves greater credit than the current histories have been willing to offer.

Commenting on Canadian generalship in Normandy, Copp concluded that it was not possible "... to argue that any of the three Canadian divisional commanders passed the test of battle [at Falaise]," but at the same time stating that it was "not clear how much this failure of leadership at the divisional level mattered"²³ since the command decisions of Montgomery and General Omar Bradley were more instrumental in the final outcome at Falaise. Commenting on Kitching, Copp stated that "assigning major responsibility for the events of 17-21 August to the senior commanders [Montgomery and Bradley] does not explain or excuse the command failures that marred the record of 4th Armoured Division during this crucial period."²⁴ He asserts that during TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE Kitching "functioned as little more than a spectator," and remains critical of Kitching's decision to advance "his entire division on a single axis to the Falaise-Trun road" during the advance to close the gap on 17 August.²⁵ These statements are representative of the assessments of Kitching's performance.

The official reason given by Simonds for Kitching's dismissal was that he [Kitching] "while possessing many excellent military characteristics and a most attractive personality maj gen KITCHING has not shown in operations that grip of a situation and that power of definite decision so requisite in a DIVISIONAL COMD."²⁶ In fact, Kitching fails to come to his own defence in his book *Mud and Green Fields*. Operations

²³ Ibid., 266

²⁴ Ibid., 236

²⁵ Ibid., 236

²⁶ Message Crerar to Stuart [Kitching Dismissal], 211900B August 44. Crerar Papers MG30 E 157 Vol 3 File 958C.009 (D178) GOC-in-C File 5-0-3, HQ First CDN ARMY. Higher Command- Canadian Army Overseas Period 29 May44 to 22 Dec 44.

TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE are not discussed in any great detail although he does highlight many of the key issues that he had to deal with during these operations and during the closing of the Falaise gap.²⁷ Kitching concluded this portion of his book by stating that, given the circumstances within which he had to command he doubted that anyone could have done any better.²⁸

Since military organizations are built on strict hierarchical lines of rank and authority it has been natural for many writers to focus their evaluations and conclusions of fault on the generals who were in charge. In *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (1990) a detailed examination of failure on the battlefield, Eliot Cohen and John Gooch concluded that blaming defeat in battle on any one individual commander was typically inappropriate and that closer examination of the organization was needed.²⁹ They concluded that any "... view that ascribes all fault or praise to a commander is the equivalent of concentrating only on operator error when highly complicated machines malfunction."³⁰ Blaming the commander alone for the lack of success on the battlefield without an equivalent examination of the structures through which he worked and how these structures stood up to the stressors they encountered provides only a partial answer.

Since this dissertation is concerned with division command a fundamental understanding of the command environment within a division is necessary. Command has been defined as the "authority vested in an individual for the direction, coordination and

²⁷ During discussions with Kitching on a 1990 tour of the Normandy battles, I learned that the manuscript for his memoirs was actually much larger and that Kitching had a number of difficulties with the original publisher. Given Kitching's close association with Simonds that lasted until their deaths I believe Kitching would have never criticized Simonds in any way had there been further discussions of these battles.

²⁸ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields: The Memoirs of Major-General George Kitching*, (St Catherines: Vanwell Publishing, 1993), 206.

²⁹ Cohen and Gooch, *Military Misfortunes*, 2-3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 232

control of military forces.”³¹ In its purest form, the role of the commander is to decide on a course of action, allocate specific tasks to subordinate commanders and the resources necessary to accomplish those tasks. In accepting a command position, the commander accepts the additional burden of accountability to his superiors for the outcome of his actions and those of his subordinates. This accountability can never be shared nor delegated.³²

Unlike command, leadership is not rank or function specific. Any member of the military can display leadership qualities or characteristics at any time. Three elements can be characterized as central to leadership. It is a process, it involves influence within a group context and it is focussed towards the attainment of a common objective or goal.³³ Leadership, for the purposes of this dissertation, is, therefore, defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals for the attainment of a common goal.”³⁴

Military staffs evolved over time as a means of helping commanders manage the growing complexity of warfare. The function of the staff was to provide the commander and his subordinate commanders with the information, recommendations and coordination required for them to make informed and timely decisions.³⁵ A Second World War Canadian division had two types of staffs: the general staff, which was concerned with the planning, co-ordinating and execution of operations; and the special staff, which provided the commander and general staff with advice and assistance in

³¹ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Command* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1996), 1-4.

³² *Ibid.*, 1-6

³³ Peter Northouse, *Leadership Theories and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oakes: Sage Publications, 2004), 2-3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁵ Kevin L. Smith, "The Bold and the Restless: Leadership and Staff Experience," *Marine Corps Gazette* 90 (May 2006), 59.

specific professional or technical areas.³⁶ A consequence of the increased complexity of warfare during the Second World War was that the staff came under enormous stresses that could cause the division to fail, especially if the staff was not properly trained and led. This study will therefore focus on the two key leaders of the general staff, the General Staff Officer 1 (GSO 1) and the Assistant Adjutant & Quarter Master General (AA&QMG) and evaluate how they functioned in leading their respective staffs in supporting the division commander.

Kitching inherited a staff team that for the most part had been together since 1943 but there has been no clear assessment of their effectiveness prior to Kitching taking command. The staff teams in the GSO and AA&QMG branches would remain intact throughout the timeframe examined in this dissertation and would become as Kitching described “a powerhouse of talent”³⁷ that would provide exceptional service to the division in Normandy and beyond. As a testament to their talent and abilities, many would become senior leaders in Canadian industry and in the Canadian military after the war.³⁸

In *The Art of War* Sun Tzu identified doctrine as one of the five “fundamental factors” of war.³⁹ Doctrine attempts to bring order to the chaos of battle by advocating standard ways of operating among the people, units and organizations of a military force.

³⁶ Specialists held designated appointments in general staff branches by virtue of their expertise in specific subject areas such as medicine, law or religion. Canada, DND, *Command*, 5-7

³⁷ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 186.

³⁸ For example, Capt Clarence Campbell would become Commissioner of the National Hockey League, Major Mike Dare would become a future Vice-Chief of Defence Staff and Capt Clarence Shepard would become the Chairman of Gulf Oil Canada. Ibid.

³⁹ The other four fundamental factors are moral influence, weather, terrain and command. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 63-65.

It articulates “what shall be employed” and “how it shall be employed.”⁴⁰ The challenge in the formulation of doctrine was the development of standard operating procedures that balanced the requirement for uniform and predictable action with the need to maintain flexibility and freedom of action on the battlefield.⁴¹ The challenge for commanders was finding a delicate balance between these two imperatives.

The Canadian Army initially lacked any comprehensive training or experience on how to command, lead or operate armoured forces in battle before the start of the Second World War. What did exist was almost exclusively based on the knowledge, efforts and ability of Maj Gen Frank Worthington, the recognized founder of the Canadian Armoured Corps.⁴² With the outbreak of war, the Canadian Army had a considerable task ahead in deciding how its armoured formations would be trained, equipped and led. As a member of the Commonwealth, the Canadian Army turned to the British Army, resulting in the Canadian adoption of British theories and practices.

In the British and Canadian armies, doctrine was established through a series of publications and pamphlets. These pamphlets provided the detailed information on the composition, training and tactics to be used by the British and Canadian armies and they also provided the information on how armoured formations were supposed to operate.⁴³

Military Training Pamphlet No.41: The tactical handling of the Armoured Division and

⁴⁰ Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the Wars*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 13.

⁴¹The ingredients of doctrine include “the nature of weapons technology, the influence of formative experiences, organizational and institutional interests, ideology, national culture and the political/strategic situation.” Doctrine also analyzes recent conflicts in order to learn from them. Both the British and Canadian armies would struggle with armoured doctrine throughout the war. John Gooch, “Military Doctrine and Military History,” in *The Origins of Contemporary Doctrine: Papers Presented at a Conference Sponsored by the Director General of Development and Doctrine*. Camberley, The Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1997, 6.

⁴²John Marteinson and Michael McNorgan, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps: An Illustrated History*, (Kitchener: The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps Association, 2000), 85-86.

⁴³ Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940-1944 from Dunkirk to D-Day* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 8.

Its Components was the key document.⁴⁴ The main pamphlet, *The tactical handling of Armoured Divisions (Part 1)*, detailed the characteristics, structure and roles of an armoured division across the spectrum of tactical operations. This pamphlet was supported by two other pamphlets, which detailed the characteristics and tactics for an armoured regiment (Part 2) and the motor battalion (Part 3) in greater detail.

Timothy Harrison Place has argued that British armour doctrine was issued “too casually”, and “too late” and was “too vague and imprecise to resolve the problems generated” by three years of confusion over the proper structure and employment of armoured forces.⁴⁵ This argument, however, is moot since the British War Office gave local commanders considerable latitude to use and operate armoured forces differently from the official doctrine.⁴⁶ How an armoured division operated therefore became a reflection of the personality of the commander and his leadership style. No two commanders would command or run the same division in the same way. Each commander would establish a unique command environment. Consequently, understanding the structures, working relationship between the GOC, his subordinate commanders and the key division staff members is vital to understanding how and why an armoured division operated as it did.

Since the 4th Cdn Armd Div was a subordinate unit of three higher formations, 2nd Canadian Corps (2nd Cdn Corps), First Canadian Army (First Cdn Army) and 21st Army Group, the operational policies of the three commanders, Simonds, General (Gen) Harry Crerar and Montgomery, respectively, must be examined to see if their operational

⁴⁴ Great Britain, War Office, *The Tactical Handling of the Armoured Division and its Components: Military Training Pamphlet no. 41, Part 1, The Tactical Handling of Armoured Divisions, 1943* (Ottawa: The War Office, July 1943).

⁴⁵ Buckley, *British Armour*, 72.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 81.

policies on the employment of armoured forces differed, and, if so, how, from the official doctrine. Of particular interest are a series of pamphlets issued by Montgomery during his appointments as commander 8th Army and as Commander 21st Army Group. The pamphlets, *Eighth Army: Some Brief Notes for Senior Officers on the Conduct of Battle*, 1942⁴⁷ and *Notes on the Employment of Tanks in Support of Infantry in Battle* (1944) outlined his thoughts on a wide range of topics, including command and leadership.⁴⁸ While Montgomery's writings extolled the need for initiative on the battlefield events would show that his leadership and command style rarely allowed his subordinates much room for either innovation or initiative on the battlefield.⁴⁹

Simonds' approach to operations and training has been described as "pragmatic" and "analytical."⁵⁰ His "Operational Policy" for 2 Cdn Corps, 17 February 1944, and his thoughts on "Command Efficiency" were issued to all formation commanders of 2nd Cdn Corps on 19 Feb 44. In his operational policy Simonds outlined how he expected to fight the battles in Normandy. Two points were stressed: when the Germans decided to stand and fight a defensive battle, success could only be achieved with proper reconnaissance and preparation. The second point was that success of the offensive battle hinged "on the defeat of the German counter-attacks..."⁵¹ These two principles would guide the conduct of Simonds' planning and operations in Normandy.

In his "Efficiency in Command" directive Simonds articulated his thoughts on commanding Canadian soldiers, the removal of officers and promotions. In an annex to

⁴⁷ B.L. Montgomery, *Eighth Army: Some Brief Notes for Senior Officers on the Conduct of Battle* (London: Great Britain, War Office, 1942).

⁴⁸ Great Britain, 21st Army Group, *Notes on the Employment of Tanks in Support of Infantry in Battle* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Officer, February 1944).

⁴⁹ Buckley, *British Armour*, 58

⁵⁰ Terry Copp, *Guy Simonds and the Art of Command* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), ix.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 14

his directive Simonds addressed what he considered the essential qualities of a leader under the headings of “Moral”, “Mental” and “Physical” qualities. Of particular importance to this dissertation are Simonds thoughts on “youth.” Simonds stated that a man was never too young for a job, but he may well be too old, for “age reduces speed of mental and physical reaction.”⁵² Experience was only useful insofar as it represented knowledge acquired or knowledge confirmed by practical application.⁵³ This emphasis on youth over experience is the most common explanation listed in the current literature to explain Simonds’ decision to replace Worthington with Kitching as the commander of the 4 Cdn Armd Div in February 1944.

In trying to understand the context within which Canadian and British commanders developed their ideas about “generalship,”⁵⁴ two publications stand out, the first, *Generals and Generalship*, the Lee Knowles Lectures delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1939 by Gen Sir Archibald Wavell, and the second, *Generalship: Its Diseases and Their Cure: A Study of the Personal Factor in Command* (1936) by Maj Gen J.F.C. Fuller, a noted proponent of armoured warfare during the interwar period. In the three lectures of the Lee Knowles Lectures series, “The Good General”, “The General and His Troops” and “The Soldier and the Statesman,” Wavell viewed the true crux of “generalship” as administration, understanding what he called the “true mechanisms of war” as most important, with tactics and the handling of troops second. He viewed robustness and the ability to stand the shock of war as the key character trait of a general since all decisions in war involved men’s lives. Wavell provided two simple rules for a

⁵² Ibid., 24

⁵³ Ibid., 24

⁵⁴ Information was restricted to those books or sources that would have been reasonably available to British and Canadian officers during the inter-war period up to 1944 when Kitching took the Division into France.

general when commenting on command: never try to do your own staff work and never let the staff get between you and your troops.⁵⁵

Fuller viewed “generalship” as having three pillars: courage, described as being up front, being seen by your men and experiencing the same hardships; creative intelligence, described as originality of thought, doing the unexpected and always thinking ahead; and physical fitness, since good health and a robust constitution were invaluable to a general.⁵⁶ Almost all the texts on command and leadership reviewed, including those by Montgomery and Simonds, mirrored Fuller’s three pillars in one form or another. The recurring characteristics were courage, mental agility and physical fitness.

The issue of primary sources for this dissertation proved problematic. James Jay Carafano in his book, *After D-Day: Operation Cobra and the Normandy Breakout* (2000), stated: “We do not write the history of what happened but the history of the records that remain.”⁵⁷ This statement holds true for the history of the 4th Cdn Armd Div and is responsible in part for its current reputation.

No two war diaries within the division contained the same level or type of information or supporting documentation in the appendices. Most of the war diaries of the units and regiments of 4th Cdn Armd Div during the month of August 1944 are incomplete when compared to the war diaries of other divisions and brigades. The level of detail varies greatly among units and between months, ranging from single sentences

⁵⁵ General Sir Archibald Wavell, *Generals and Generalship, the Les Knowles Lectures Delivered at Trinity College Cambridge, in 1939* (London: The Times Publishing Company, Limited, 1941), 11.

⁵⁶ Major-General F. C. Fuller, *Generalship: Its Diseases and their Cure: A Study of the Personal Factor in Command* (Harrisburg: Military service Publishing Co., 1936), 21-35.

⁵⁷ James Jay Carafano, *After D-Day: Operation Cobra and the Normandy Breakout* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 267.

to complete paragraphs for entries on the same day by units that were fighting in close proximity to, or in support of, each other. Typically, documents listed as appendices in the war diaries were missing altogether and copies of exercise and training reports, which one would expect to be filed in the months in which they occurred were found as appendices in the war diaries months later!

Of specific concern is the state of the war diary for Headquarters (HQ) G Branch 4th Cdn Armd Div. The evidence would suggest that the existing documents for July and August were rebuilt after the fact. This suspicion comes from the incompleteness of the July and August 1944 diaries when compared to the diaries before and after those months and by the fact that Foster signed off the diary for July 1944 even though he did not take command of the division until 21 August. Kitching had signed the 4th Cdn Armd Div war diary entries from February 1944, when he took command, to June 1944 and his signature should, therefore, have appeared on the July 1944 entry. Generally, the August war diary is complete with respect to daily situation reports, operation orders for TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE and intelligence reports, but vital evidence such as map traces and the operations log (ops log) were missing completely from the material reviewed. The war diaries of units that fought with or adjacent to 4 Cdn Armd Div proved invaluable in filling in this missing information.

The crucial documents that could have provided insight into the actions and thoughts of the division commander are the armoured command vehicle logs, operation orders and Summary of GOCs O[rders] Groups. Unlike the daily entry in the war diary, which may have been written at any point after the fact, the armoured command vehicle logs are essentially transcripts of the dialogue between the division commander and his

subordinate commanders. These logs reported real-time information and facts that can be assumed to be the most accurate information available at the time of transmission.⁵⁸

Without these logs, it is difficult to track what was going on among the different commanders. Unfortunately, the armoured command vehicle logs for the division are missing for the month of August 1944.⁵⁹

The surviving command vehicle logs from the two brigades of the division, the available “Summary of GOC O Grp” and formal operation orders do provide insight into the character of the commander. These documents allow the researcher to develop an understanding of the subject’s problem-solving abilities and the way he used his staff. Formal orders, for example, represent the commander’s solution to his assigned military problem. They are framed around a number of different criteria but involve an assessment of intelligence information, forces available, geography, weather and a host of other important factors. An assessment of the plan, therefore, can answer such questions as: Is there innovation and resourcefulness in the formulation of the plan or was there stringent adherence to doctrine? Did the commander clearly understand the mission he was assigned? Was he given the proper resources to carry out his assigned mission? The ops logs, on the other hand, can provide insight into the cognitive flexibility, fortitude and emotional character of the commander as they unveil how he reacted to the chaos, uncertainty and volatility of the events of the battle once joined.

⁵⁸ Donald Graves, *South Albertas: A Canadian Regiment at War* (Toronto: Robin Bass Studio, 1998), 14.

⁵⁹ For example, Reginald Roy commented in his book *1944: The Canadians in Normandy* (1984) on the lack of source document information when discussing the performance of the 4th Cdn Armd Div. He specifically cites 15 August 1944. He concluded that as a result of the lack of the wireless logs of Headquarters, 4th Cdn Armd Div, and the general lack of communication between the armoured regiments and brigade headquarters itself during that day, that it was virtually impossible to provide an accurate accounting of the movements and actions of the three armoured regiments of the brigade during the day Reginald Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1984), 275.

Two other pieces of vital primary source material seem to have been largely ignored by previous histories. The first is the Administration & Quartermaster Branch (A & Q) war diary from the Division. These records proved invaluable in providing information on the preparation of the division for Normandy. Once in theatre, the available daily administrative reports (ADREPs) provided a daily snapshot of the state of the division from a material perspective, and hence a useful tool for measuring whether the operational tempo was being influenced by the resources or lack thereof in the supply system. As with the other major pieces of evidence the ADREPs are missing from 17 to 30 August and for the month of September 1944.

The second piece of vital information is the summary of the commander's intentions. At the corps level Simonds' intent for operations were issued as a daily memorandum typically titled "Intentions" or "Intent" personally signed by Simonds. This document outlined the proposed operations and the assigned tasks for each unit under command of 2nd Cdn Corps for the next day. There was a significant gap in the "Intent" documents from 16 -21 August making it difficult to determine exactly what Simonds wanted accomplished over those days. This may be explained in part by the fact that after 16 August, Simonds apparently stopped issuing written orders, instead preferring to tell his divisional commanders what he wanted done. His intent during this timeframe, therefore, must be extracted from other sources such as message logs.

Simonds' intent and tasks formed the basis for the division commander's orders for the same time period. The GOC's intentions were usually briefed at the commander's orders group and then formally recorded and issued by the GSO 1 to subordinate formations as "Summary of the GOC O Group." These documents are vital in

understanding what was supposed to happen as opposed to what actually happened. Much of the current narrative on operations in Normandy has been written on what actually happened. Division summaries are unfortunately missing from 14-21 August. Within the war diary of the 18 Canadian Armoured Car Regiment (18 Cdn Armd C Regt), however, were found hand written notes summarizing Kitching's intent for operations on 11-13 August bringing new light to the proposed conduct of operations after TOTALIZE stalled on 10 August.

To augment the war diaries, the "Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) Reports" 1940-1948 and "Army Headquarters Reports (AHQ)" provide detailed, extensively referenced information from writers who had generally open access to the primary sources, key figures and commanders involved in the training and execution of operations in northwest Europe. These reports were authored by the personnel, including Field Historical Officers, who gathered material at the corps and divisional headquarters during the campaign.

A comprehensive history of the 4th Cdn Armd Div as a division has yet to be written. All of the regiments/battalions have published official histories that deal with their respective actions during August 1944 but they varied greatly in quality and utility. An interesting find not in general circulation was a book called *Some Reminiscences of the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment and the Governor General's Foot Guards*. (December 1984), by Lt Col A.B. French. The book provided detailed information on the workings of the regimental supply system and how the processes were modified within the regiment to meet the demands of the pursuit across France.⁶⁰ The extent of the supply

⁶⁰ French was the Quartermaster of the Governor General's Foot Guards during the timeframe in question and French maintained extensive notes including map references of the echelon forces and tanks from the

crisis resulting from the Allied pursuit is portrayed in great detail in the *Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group on the Continent of Europe: 6 June 1944-8 May 1945* (1945), an invaluable resource to this dissertation.

It is interesting to note that when one reviews the literature on Canadian military history that the names of certain individuals come up time and again either as authors or as those listed in the acknowledgements as having contributed to the publication of various books. The task of recounting the Canadian experience in war was championed by a small group of Canadian historians such as C.P. Stacey, Desmond Morton, George Stanley and J.L. Granatstein, to name a few. Most of the authors, at one time or another were either sponsored or mentored by C.P. Stacey or worked in the history directorate in National Defence Headquarters. Consequently, the post 1945 to early 1970s literature has perpetuated many of Stacey's conclusions about the Canadian record in the Second World War.⁶¹

It was not until the late 1980's and early 1990s that a resurgence in the publication of military-oriented topics occurred. Historians embarked on a campaign of intense research and investigation to reappraise the Canadian Army contributions and actions during this period. Within the secondary sources a number of books were

time the regiment landed to the end of the war. The book was found in the Governor General's Foot Guard Museum in Ottawa.

⁶¹ The case of Stacey, however, is an interesting one. Stacey wrote, co-wrote or edited some 32 books involving Canada and its military including the official history of the Canadian Army in World War II and his own memoirs *A Date With History: Memoirs Of A Canadian Historian*. In his memoirs he explains the problems of creating official military history. Stacey was brought into the Active Service force by Crerar in order to gather its history. He was faced, however, with two seemingly insurmountable problems. First, he was writing too close to the events in which he himself had been a peripheral player and he had a close personal association with many of the generals including Simonds that he needed to assess. Secondly, for much of the time that he was writing *The Victory Campaign*, Guy Simonds was the Chief of the General Staff. Under these circumstances it was easier to criticize and blame failure on regimental officers, which is what he tended to do. Dickson also alludes to interference from General Crerar in recounting the initial problems between Crerar and British general LGen Crocker GOC of 1 Br Corps. Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 285.

instrumental in providing the framework necessary before the detailed analysis of the primary sources could be conducted. In addition to the books already mentioned Dr. Geoffrey Hayes *The Lincs* (1986, republished in 2007), Dr R. Fraser's *Black Yesterday's: The Argyll's War* (1996) and Brian Reid's detailed analysis of operation TOTALIZE in *No Holding Back: Operation Totalize* (2005) were valuable resources. In addition, having access to the personal correspondence between Dr. Reginald Roy and many of the individuals discussed herein during the writing of his book and to the interviews that Dr R. Fraser conducted for his book provided details of events missing from many of the current histories.

Canadian generals of the Second World War published few memoirs. Kitching wrote *Mud and Green Fields* (1993), which is his account of his career to the end of the war and Tony Foster, the general's son, wrote *Meeting of Generals* (1986), a biographical work on his father's military career. Research for this dissertation revealed that both Kitching and Foster had extensive notes and personal records that survived. Kitching had an extensive private collection of correspondence that was correlated by historian Dr. R. Roy and returned to the family. Tony Foster wrote his book essentially from a journal that his father kept. Attempts to gain access to these documents for this dissertation proved unsuccessful.

A full biography on General H.D. Crerar, Commander of the First Canadian Army, who had been called Canadian military history's "most famous nobody" is now available.⁶² Paul Dickson's 1993 doctoral dissertation⁶³ on Crerar has finally been

⁶² Dean F. Oliver, "In the Shadow of the Corps: Historiography, Generalship and Harry Crerar" in *Warrior Chiefs*, eds. Bernd Hornd and Stephen Harris (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 91.

⁶³ Paul Dickson, "The Limits of Professionalism: General H.D.G. Crerar and the Canadian Army, 1914-1944." (PhD, University of Guelph).

published as *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar* (2007). Crerar is one of the few Canadian generals to have his “papers” and wartime correspondence deposited in the Library and Archives Canada and they contained detailed information of immense importance to any evaluation of the Canadian Army. Simonds’ biography *The Price of Command: A Biography of General Guy Simonds* (1993) by Dominik Graham was of limited use in this examination because of the lack of a detailed examination of Simonds actions and decisions particularly during the closing of the Falaise Gap. Of greater utility and importance was Terry Copp’s *Guy Simonds and the Art of Command* (2007) which is a compilation of directives, letters and orders issued by Simonds on the topics of command and leadership. Jack Granatstein’s valuable study *The Generals* (1993) provides important background on eight Canadian general’s but does not address training or operational history in any detail.⁶⁴ Douglas Delaney’s study of major-general Bert Hoffmeister, *The Soldier’s General* (2005)⁶⁵ includes a discussion of his command style at the divisional level which is helpful for comparative purposes but the circumstances under which 5th Canadian Armoured Division trained and fought were significantly different from those experiences by 4th Armoured Division.

Despite the considerable volume of literature on the Normandy campaign and the Canadian Army this dissertation will focus on an area that has received little dedicated effort- the organization, people and structures that comprised the division command environment of the 4 Cdn Armd Div. More specifically, this dissertation will analyze the effectiveness of the command and control of the 4th Cdn Armd Div during two specific

⁶⁴ These generals are Guy Simonds, Kenneth Stuart, Maurice Pope, Bert Hoffmeister, Bruce Mathews, E.L.M. Burns, Harry Crerar and A.G.L. McNaughton. Kitching is mentioned but not discussed in this book. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army’s Senior Commanders in the Second World War*, Toronto: Stoddart, 1993.

⁶⁵ Douglas E. Delaney. *The Soldiers General: Bert Hoffmeister at War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005.

types of operations – “the breakout battles” exemplified by operations TOTALIZE, TRACTABLE and the operations designed to close the Falaise Gap, under Kitching and “the pursuit” exemplified by the actions to pursue the retreating German Armies across France and Belgium ending with the attack on Moerbrugge on 8 September 1944 under Foster. The investigation will centre on the effectiveness of the interaction between the GOC, the 4th Cdn Armd Div unit commanders, and the two key division staff members, the GSO 1, and the AA&QMG. The goal is to determine how well they facilitated the operational tempo of the division in the breakout and pursuit operations while withstand the stressors of combat.

The selection of these operations is deliberate. The closing of the Falaise Gap and the pursuit were specifically chosen because they each represent a period of time where the division commander was able to operate with a certain amount of autonomy. In each case, the GOC was not under specific direction from Simonds at 2nd Cdn Corps. Conversely, TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE provide examples of the opposite where Kitching was operating within the direction of a deliberate operational plan. The evidence will reveal that nature of the command environment operated differently in each scenario. While the command influence was prominent in the breakout battles, it was the effective work of the staff in managing division logistics that ensured that the resources were available to sustain the division’s operational tempo in the pursuit across France. This feat was accomplished at a time when the availability of vital supplies and resources was falling rapidly across the entire theatre and entire Allied divisions were grounded for lack of transport and supplies.

The framework required to examine the commander –staff effectiveness of the division during the stated operations will include elements from other disciplines. It will involve discussions and analyses of such topics as leadership, command and organizational dynamics; both the art and science, military operations and, most importantly, the human element involved in these areas. This dissertation will begin by providing a fundamental understanding of what an armoured division was, how it was organized and equipped and how it was to be employed. It will then introduce the key individuals and examine the unique roles, duties and responsibilities required to provide a greater understanding of how and why decisions were made and executed. Collectively, the men, institutions and structures of the Division will be examined to explore how they operated and how they stood up to the stresses encountered in combat to determine how effective they were in generating combat capability.

Two measures will be used to assess performance. Operational tempo has three elements: speed of decision, speed of execution and the speed with which a force transitions from one activity to another. This assessment will determine how well the commander-staff dynamic worked. The second performance measure will be a subjective assessment of the quality and effective execution of the decision(s) made, measured against the possible and reasonable alternatives available.⁶⁶ Key questions will include: what were the critical tasks? how were they completed? and what key events determined the outcome? The goal of this assessment will be to determine the effectiveness of the

⁶⁶David S. Alberts and Richard E. Hayes, *Understanding Command and Control* (Washington: CCRP Publications, 2006), 157.

commander and his staff in performing their implied and assigned tasks in the execution of the mission.⁶⁷

The current body of literature concerning the 4th Cdn Armd Div has concentrated on the outcome of operations and has drawn conclusions on division and leadership effectiveness without a true understanding of the human effort required to facilitate, execute and sustain the operations. This dissertation will challenge the current reputation of Kitching as an ineffective division commander, and will argue that Kitching's contribution to the legacy of the 4th Cdn Armd Div was significant and lasting. It was he who effectively trained the divisional staff who, after five months of training in England and two weeks of continuous combat under his guidance and direction, had figured out how to operate and sustain the division effectively in combat operations. This dissertation will also evaluate the fighting effort of the division as a whole, place their effort in proper context within the Normandy campaign and establish a reputation for the senior staff officers of the division as skilled and innovative leaders of combined arms staffs. This dissertation will demonstrate that the 4th Cdn Armd Div was a well-led and well-managed division that was responsive, adaptive and resilient to the internal and external forces inherent in war that could have rendered the division ineffective.

⁶⁷ Cohen and Gooch, *Military Misfortunes*, 52.

Chapter One: The Division Command Environment

The effective use of an armoured division in battle required the coordinated interaction of thousands of men and machines in time and space against an assigned objective. The key to this interaction was intellectual rather than physical and occurred through a process that will be called the commander-staff dynamic (CS dynamic). The CS dynamic refers to the cognitive interface between the commander and his staff that processes the multitude concepts and information generated in the normal operation of a division. The elements of the CS dynamic include the commander, his subordinate commanders, the staff, and the leadership environment. Each element has a crucial role to play in generating situational awareness thereby ensuring coordinated action on the part of the division in the attainment of its assigned objectives. The measurable output of this process is operational tempo or the ability of the formation to carry out sustained combat operations against an equally determined foe that is also trying to achieve his assigned objectives. A well functioning CS dynamic will facilitate success in combat while a dysfunctional CS dynamic will lead to failure in operations. Understanding the effectiveness of the CS dynamic and all of its elements in the 4 Cdn Armd Div is vital, therefore, to understanding the combat performance of the Division in Normandy.

A commander exists as both a position and a person. The GOC of 4 Cdn Armd Div had known duties and functions within the accountability framework of 2nd Cdn Corps. Kitching was deemed to have had the appropriate skills and competencies necessary to realize his potential as commander of an armoured division when he was appointed to the position. Kitching was entrusted with the authority to direct, coordinate and control the military forces placed under his stewardship and if need be to “commit

Canadians to battles from which they may not return or may return permanently maimed, incapacitated, or disfigured.”⁶⁸

Kitching had the authority to issue lawful orders to those individuals and formations under his command and he expected in return, their cooperation, loyalty and energy in the execution of his orders. He had the right to delegate to subordinate commanders a portion of his overall authority commensurate with the assigned task or mission. While Kitching had the right to hold a subordinate commander responsible for the successful completion of a mission, Kitching remained responsible and accountable to Simonds for the effective execution of the mission entrusted to him. The tracing of accountability was, therefore, relatively straightforward and proceeded through the respective commander at each level of command.⁶⁹

The commander had the ultimate responsibility for achieving his assigned mission objectives. In most cases, the commander made decisions in battle where a climate of volatility, uncertainty, confusion and disorder existed and where risk, violence, fear and danger were prevalent. He may be further challenged by deficiencies in his own forces, poor equipment and discontinuities among such factors as strategy, doctrine, tactics, enemy forces and the training or experience level of his own forces. The commander could also be constrained by orders so specific that he could not shape ways, ends and means to achieve his objective.⁷⁰ Whatever the challenges, the successful division commander was expected to overcome them to achieve mission success.

⁶⁸ R.R. Crabbe, “The Nature of Command,” in *The Human in Command: Exploring the Modern Military Experience*, Carol McCann and Ross Pigeau (eds), (New York: Klumer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2000), 11.

⁶⁹ Commission, *Report of the Somalia Commission of Inquiry, Defining Leadership*, 2

⁷⁰ Yoji Koda, “A Commander's Dilemma: Admiral Yamamoto,” *Naval War College Review* XLVI, no. 4 (Autumn 1993), 63.

The division was considered the highest formation within which a commander could retain personal contact with the soldiers under his command. Some commanders chose to be very directive, overseeing every detail of their operations, while others were content to give general guidance and allowed the staff to work out the details. The division commander was completely accountable for the training and leadership of the troops under his command and for the efficiency of their support. Montgomery outlined two tasks for the commander: first, “to create the fighting machine, and to forge the weapon to his liking,” and to “create the HQ organization, or setup that will enable the weapon to be wielded properly and to develop its full potential.”⁷¹ Consequently, the attitude, confidence and fighting efficiency of the division was significantly influenced and moulded by the personality, leadership style and abilities of the commander as a leader, tactician and trainer. The division, therefore, given time and the resources to train, became a reflection of the leadership style and character of the commander.

The function of the divisional commander in operations was to synchronize the resources and capabilities of his forces to produce maximum combat power at the decisive point at the required time.⁷² In this case, Kitching would inherit a mission, set of tasks or objectives and conditions from Simonds. He would then translate the mission into tasks for his own forces including defining and assigning roles, resources and the nature of the interactions that should and should not take place within the units of the division.⁷³ Next he would consider the level of risk that was acceptable in pursuing the objective before issuing orders. With this guidance, his subordinate commanders worked

⁷¹ B.L. Montgomery, *High Command in War*, (Germany: 21 Army Group, June 1945), 21.

⁷² DND, *Command*, 4-10.

⁷³ An example of an interaction would be placing a company of the motor battalion with one of the armoured squadrons to form an ad hoc battlegroup. Alberts and Hayes, *Understanding Command and Control*, 33-40.

out their own respective plans.⁷⁴ Once the operation was initiated, the experienced commander would retain a secure hold over the basic operational aspect of the battle but try to allow his subordinate commanders the latitude to achieve their assigned tasks.⁷⁵

One of the key issues faced by a commander was where to position himself on the battlefield to influence ongoing operations. The commander had to consider his position in relation to the forces he commanded and his mission. The decision as to where he positioned himself could have important consequences, not only for the command organization but also for the conduct of operations. If a commander was too close to the action, he ran the risk of becoming a casualty or being caught up in a “side-show” that distracted him from maintaining an appreciation of the situation over the entire battlefield. If he was too far from the battlefield, he could compromise his ability to read the battle and take advantage of opportunities as they presented themselves. The commander, therefore, had to choose a position for himself that would allow him to assess progress, interact with staff and subordinate commanders and to influence, in a timely manner, events on the battlefield.⁷⁶ The experienced commander would typically sense where the critical point or battle would be fought and would place himself, in a position where he could bring divisional resources to bear to influence that crucial battle in his favour. Kitching’s decisions with respect to his position on the battlefield would play an important role in the examined battles.

Normal practice was to have the division commander direct operations with a very small staff from a tactical headquarters well forward in the battle area. This practice

⁷⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁷⁵ Great Britain, War Office, *The Infantry Division in Battle: 1950*, (London: War Office Publications, 1950), 20.

⁷⁶ Canada, DND, *Command*, 4-15.

was very much personality driven and this is how Kitching operated.⁷⁷ Control was exercised by personal visits to brigade commanders and by conferences, when needed, with divisional staff and commanders of the supporting arms.⁷⁸ Liaison officers were often used to convey orders and provide “eyes and ears” in higher headquarters and neighbouring formations so that the commander could maintain an awareness of what was going on above him in the chain of command and around him on the battlefield. In this way, Kitching retained situational awareness on the battle and kept his subordinate commanders and staff informed of his intentions, both immediate and future.⁷⁹ This was important since his focus would constantly be shifting between future plans to current operations as required by the tactical situation.

A superior commander may at times feel compelled to remove a subordinate commander when his performance was judged to be unsatisfactory. Both Simonds and Crerar made their views known on this subject through personal correspondence and directives. Simonds felt that it was the first duty of every commanding officer to ensure that the command of his subordinate formations was in “fit, competent and energetic hands.”⁸⁰ Simonds felt that a commanding officer who tolerated ineffective subordinates was himself, unfit for command. Simonds’ ideas were further amplified in a letter to Lt Gen Miles Dempsey, GOC-in-C of Second Army, when asked to assess the suitability of command of Maj Gen R Keller, GOC of 3rd Cdn Inf Div. After assessing the combat record of the division and present state of the division since landing on D-Day, Simonds

⁷⁷ Field Marshal B.L. Montgomery, *The Path to Leadership*, (London: Collins Publishing, 1961), 27.

⁷⁸ Normally attended by the GSO 1, AA and QMG, CRA, CRE CR Sigs and representatives of staff branches as required. Canada. Army, *The Armoured Division in Battle: 1952*, (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1953), 25.

⁷⁹ War Office, *the Infantry Division in Battle: 1950*, 10.

⁸⁰ Copp, *Guy Simonds and the Art of Command*, 18.

felt that a change in senior leadership would have an adverse effect on troop morale and that the removal of Keller would be regarded as censure on the efforts of the division. Simonds felt that it would only be appropriate to make a change after the division had had a success in battle. He concluded that the individual qualities of Keller were “unimportant at the moment in comparison with the bigger problem of maintaining morale” of the division.⁸¹ Simonds seemingly changed his position in this matter in dealing with Kitching a month later.

Crerar’s thoughts on the dismissal of a commanding officer are portrayed in a letter he wrote to Simonds on 29 Aug 44 after Simonds dismissed Brig J.E. Ganong from command of 4 Cdn Inf Bde. Crerar’s letter highlighted the negative effect that the removal of a commanding officer could have on a formation and stressed that the removal had to be based on the “soundest grounds.” He felt that frequent removal of commanding officers created a scapegoat mentality for non-success on the battlefield regardless of whether the tasks assigned were actually achievable. He also felt that repetitive dismissal of commanders would have a bad effect on other ranks since it could encourage them to not do their best leading to mission failure with the blame directed on the commanding officer. Crerar felt that obvious “inefficiency” was the measure by which the commander should be judged even though “inefficiency” is never defined. Crerar concluded by saying that frequent changes in command, as had happened in the Normandy battles of July and August can “otherwise have a most deleterious general

⁸¹ Letter Simonds to Dempsey, “Command Situation in 3 Canadian Division,” 27 July 1944. Crerar Papers MG30 E 157 Vol 3 File 958C.009 (D178) GOC-in C file 5-0-3 Vol I & II Higher Command-Canadian Army Overseas Period 29 May 44 to 22 Dec 44.

effect on the morale and cohesion of Canadian formations and units.”⁸² The evidence would suggest that when and why a commander was removed was not based solely on failure in operations but was a function of many variables.

A commander had a very real and often forgotten function of identifying and preparing those to succeed the current officers in key command and staff positions within the division including his own. The task was not only to identify possible candidates but to train them so that they were prepared to take over the assigned roles at a moment’s notice. Properly training future leaders was a critical task since officers would inevitably be lost either as casualties or through promotion and the division had to continue to function seamlessly. Kitching was cognizant of this important function and took steps to discuss and prepare his commanders for this eventuality during their training. The replacement of lost commanders would prove to be a serious issue for 4 Cdn Armd Div in August 1944.

Command and control is today defined as the formal structure by which a commander, assisted by his staff, plans, directs and coordinates the activities of his assigned forces. The purpose of command and control is to bring all available information and assets to bear towards the achievement of the assigned task, objective or goal.⁸³ A command and control structure is important to achieve co-ordinated action since the division, at times had units attached from outside the division for the execution of a particular operation.⁸⁴

The functions normally associated with command and control include:

⁸² General Harry Crerar, Letter GOC-in C 5-0-3 [Dismissal of Commanding Officers], 29 August 1944. Crerar Papers MG30 E 157 Vol 3 File 958C.009 D178. Higher Command- Canadian Army Overseas Period 29 May44 to 22 Dec 44.

⁸³ Alberts and Hayes, *Understanding Command and Control*, 32.

⁸⁴ DND, *Command*, GL-3.

- Establishing intent
- Determining roles, responsibilities and relationships
- Establishing rules and constraints
- Monitoring and assessing the situation
- Inspiring, motivating and engendering trust
- Training and education
- Allocating of resources and the search for additional ones⁸⁵

The Second World War division commander had a number of avenues available to control the movement of his assigned forces in relation to factors, both internal and external to the division. He could control the initial move of his forces by issuing timings at which formations would cross the start line. Control was achieved by giving various report lines astride the axis of advance, each of which had a code name. The use of report lines enabled the divisional commander to monitor and control his forward troops and the heads of his various columns. By comparing the location of the various prongs of his advanced guard, in conjunction with other information in his possession, the commander was able to obtain a picture of the rate of advance, the degree of opposition met or of obstacles encountered.⁸⁶

Once the operation was launched, the function of the commander was one of inspiring, motivating and continuously assessing the situation, responding with orders when needed to ensure the successful completion of the operation.⁸⁷ The whole procedure of command and control demanded situational awareness, clear-cut decisions, risk

⁸⁵ Alberts and Hayes, *Understanding Command and Control*, 47.

⁸⁶ Great Britain, War Office, *The Tactical Handling of the Armoured Division and its Components: Military Training Pamphlet no. 41, Part 1, the Tactical Handling of Armoured Divisions, 1943*, 32.

⁸⁷ Alberts and Hayes, *Understanding Command and Control*, 35.

management, mutual confidence among the command team and absolute congruence between the commander, his subordinate commanders and the divisional staff.⁸⁸

In any command system there is an inherent tension between centralized control and delegating authority, between a commander's desire to have firm control of all aspects of command and the initiative and latitude he was prepared to allow his subordinates. The British/Canadian command style that existed in 21st Army Group was one that emphasized a high degree of centralized control. The array of controls represented by report lines, intermediate objectives, bomb lines and strict timings were typical in operational orders originated from 2nd Cdn Corps.⁸⁹ This was a reflection of the command style preferred by Montgomery and Simonds, based on the philosophy that tighter control of the battlefield from the top would allow the matériel superiority of the Allies to be brought to bear to defeat the Germans.

The Canadian Army of the Second World War had a well-defined staff system. The staff organization at all levels was composed of three branches: the General Staff Branch (G), the Adjutant General's Branch (A) and the Quartermaster-General's Branch (Q). The G staff was lead by the GSO 1 at Main Headquarters. The G staff had primary responsibility for operations, intelligence, training and liaison, The G staff was responsible for confirming in writing or by signal all operational and movement orders; for issuing such staff duty and training directives as the commander may wish and for

⁸⁸ Canadian Army, *The Armoured Division in Battle: 1952*, 29.

⁸⁹ William J. McAndrew, "Fire Or Movement? Canadian Tactical Doctrine, Sicily- 1943," *Military Affairs* (July 1987), 141.

keeping the war diary.⁹⁰ The staff was primarily concerned with detail which Montgomery called the “providence of the staff.”⁹¹

The A staff was responsible for those services, which had a direct bearing on the morale of the troops. The A staff typically dealt with such issues as replacements, discipline, prisoners, military police, medical, pay, etc. The Q staff was responsible for all issues involving supply, transport, maintenance and technical services. The A and Q staffs were under the control of one individual known as the Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General (AA&QMG). There were three levels of support within the division, at division, brigade and battalion/regiment level, with each delegated specific responsibilities.⁹²

Administrative units, whose task in battle did not necessitate their being in the forward battle area, were formed into administrative groupings or echelons and positioned at various distances to the rear of the battle area. During the Second World War there were typically two echelons: A and B echelons. The A echelon consisted of all vehicles of headquarters and units required with, or to be available to join, the unit in battle. The A echelon was further divided into two sub-groups: A1 echelon and A2 echelon.⁹³

A1 echelon included the transport required to carry stores and equipment required in the immediate battle area. The battalion or regimental commander generally controlled this echelon. A2 echelon contained the transport required to carry equipment and stores

⁹⁰ Canadian Army, *The Armoured Division in Battle: 1952*, 26.

⁹¹ “No officer whose daily life is spent in considering details or who has no time for quiet thought and reflection, can make a sound plan of battle on a high level or conduct large-scale operations efficiently. It is for this reason that the plan must always be made by the commander and Not by his staff.” Montgomery, *Eighth Army: Some Brief Notes for Senior Officers on the Conduct of Battle*, 8.

⁹² John R. Grodzinski, *Operational Handbook for the First Canadian Army, 1944-1945: Formation Organization, Staff Technique and Administration* ([s.l.]: The Regimental Historian, 1996), 57-58.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 58

needed in the battle, but at a later stage. This echelon was normally controlled by the brigade and was centralized or "brigaded" with similar brigade units in one location. B echelon included the transport carrying stores and equipment not required until a pause occurred in the fighting. The B echelon was normally situated in the Divisional Administrative Area (DAA), which was located at the rear of the allotted division space.⁹⁴

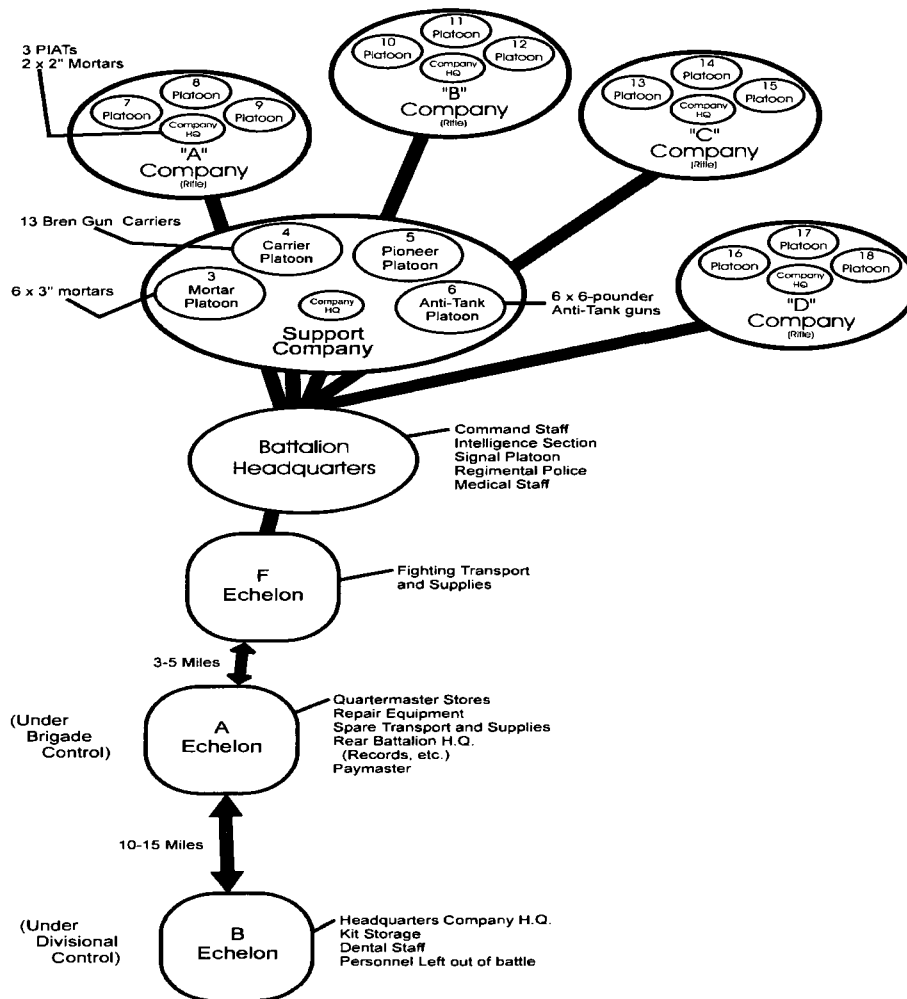


Figure 1-1 Infantry Battalion Support Structure. Copp, *The Canadian Battlefields in Normandy*, 146.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

The efficient and effective command of an armoured division depended to a large extent upon the relationships between the GOC, GSO 1 and the AA&QMG. Each had his duties to perform in controlling different components of the division. The key to an efficient and effective operating environment was a clear understanding of the commander's intent and a fundamental understanding of the strengths and abilities of the men who made up the command team. Teamwork at divisional headquarters had to be founded on mutual trust that started at the top and permeated throughout every branch.⁹⁵

Coordination was achieved by ensuring that operations had primacy and that all staff actions were arranged to support operations. In the absence of the commander, therefore, the GSO 1 provided decisions necessary to implement the commander's policy and intentions. Despite the primacy of operations, it was imperative that the administrative arrangements for operations were just as comprehensive to ensure that they facilitated the commander's intent and the tactical plan.⁹⁶

The staff structure of the division was mirrored at the brigade level with the Brigade Major (BM) responsible for operations and a deputy AA&QMG (DAA&QMG) responsible for the relevant A& Q functions. The BM prepared and issued all plans and operation orders within the brigade on behalf of the brigade commander and was also responsible for the transmission of information to the Div HQ and to neighbouring formations. The staff captain had a different role in each brigade. In the infantry brigade he was the staff officer responsible for personnel related issues while in the armoured brigade he was the assistant to the DAA&QMG.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Canadian Army, *the Armoured Division in Battle: 1952*, 25-28.

⁹⁶ Montgomery, *High Command in War*, 8.

⁹⁷ War Office, *Infantry Brigade Headquarters Standing Orders* (Ottawa: National Defence Headquarters, October 1940), Annex A.

In the conduct and planning of operations, the staff officer had the dual responsibilities of advising the commander on the one hand and passing on the commander's instructions on the other. Due to the nature of their work, staff officers became a conduit and sometimes a filter of information up and down the chain of command. They frequently had information of which the commander was not aware or they may have had ideas that did not coincide with those of the commander. In these circumstances, it was the duty of the staff officer to brief the commander and to provide honest advice. However, when the commander decided on a course of action, the role of the staff became one of translating the intentions of the commander into timely, complete and properly-related actions on the part of division units. Decisions were translated into plans or directives that informed the elements of the force of their tasks or objectives and how the assets of the division and accompanying forces would be coordinated in support. Resources or assets available were identified, boundaries and other control measures were de-conflicted and contingencies identified if plans had to be altered.⁹⁸

All staff coordination would take place within the three components (Tactical, Main and Rear) that comprised division headquarters. The commander usually operated from his tactical headquarters while the GSO staff was located in Main Headquarters where they provided oversight of operations. Rear Headquarters controlled the administrative functions and contained the commander and staff of the Adjutant General and Quartermaster-General branches, the heads of services and their staffs and administrative personnel attached to the division.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Canadian Army, *The Armoured Division in Battle: 1952*, 13.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

Staff officers were trained to deal effectively with a wide range of problems and were to be broadly employable in the full range of staff positions.¹⁰⁰ The Canadian Army, however, was plagued with a shortage of effective staff officers. Personnel movement brought about by the rapidly expanding army meant that officers had little time to learn a job before they were moved on, typically with a promotion. It was generally considered that a “good staff officer could not be trained in less than a year.”¹⁰¹

The last critical piece in the command environment is known as the chain of command. The chain of command is the structure by which command is exercised through a series of superior and subordinate commanders. It depicts the path of decision-making and authority within a military force. The staff was not part of the chain of command. The staff supported the chain of command but had no authority independent of the commander. Staff derived authority from the commander and exercised it in his name. Therefore, all of the activities were undertaken on behalf of the commander.¹⁰² If a commander within the division objected to direction being provided by a staff member, the subordinate commander would address the issue through the chain of command to the GOC and not through the staff.

An officer had to understand the characteristics and limitations of staffs in order to become an effective leader in a staff environment. Staffs were designed to provide commanders with the information, recommendations and coordination required for them to make informed and timely decisions.¹⁰³ The staff process provided a structured and

¹⁰⁰ C. P. Stacey, "The Staff Officer: A Footnote to Canadian Military History," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 20, no. 1, Special No. 2 (August 1990), 26.

¹⁰¹ English, *A Study of Failure in High Command*, 101.

¹⁰² Canada. Department of National Defence, *Operational Staff Procedures Volume 2: Staff Duties in the Field* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, National Defence, 1995), 1-1-1.DND, *Command*, 5-3.

¹⁰³ Smith, *The Bold and the Restless*, 59.

logical sequence to the thinking and planning within a division.¹⁰⁴ At various times the staff officer was negotiator, taskmaster and diplomat. At all times, he had to be energetic and boldly strive toward mission accomplishment.¹⁰⁵ A good staff could often save even the most incompetent commander but, given the complexity of modern war, a commander was no longer likely to prevail without a competent staff.¹⁰⁶

The importance of staff training was imprinted on Kitching very early in his tour as GSO 1 for the 1st Cdn Inf Div during the invasion of Sicily. Each morning during the transit to Sicily, Kitching asked Simonds to draw the names of three ships, which contained Canadian equipment and supplies from a hat. These ships were then considered sunk and the staff was then tasked to evaluate the impact of the equipment loss and provide Simonds with appropriate recommendations. During the transit the three ships carrying all of the divisional headquarters and communication vehicles were sunk. The landing proceeded on schedule but Kitching improvised processes and procedures that allowed Simonds to exercise control of the division until replacement vehicles could be acquired.¹⁰⁷ The headquarters was used to operating with a communication setup of twelve vehicles and an administrative backup of twenty-five. Kitching's improvisation allowed the division to effectively operate with four vehicles.

¹⁰⁴ Stacey, *The Staff Officer*, 21.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *The Bold and the Restless*, 59.

¹⁰⁶ English *A Study of Failure in High Command*, 90.

¹⁰⁷ The three ships were the *City of Venus*, *St Essylt* and *Devis*. Simonds initially remained on board the *Hilary* after the troops landed to take advantage of the communications equipment. Kitching was able to acquire an armoured command vehicle and three 3-ton lorries that were then converted into an operations room. Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 147-152.

Commander-Staff Dynamic

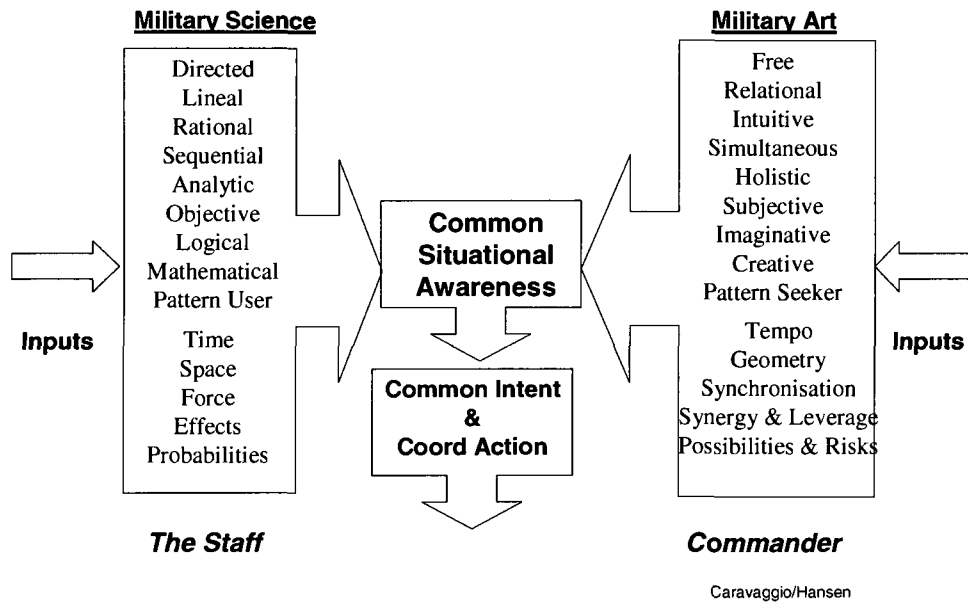


Figure 1-2 Commander-Staff Dynamic Caravaggio©

Decision making on the battlefield is a dynamic process. Decisions must be made in real time, which creates a state of fluid decision-making on the part of opposing commanders as they try to exert their respective will on their foe. Continuous evaluation and assessment of the battlefield conditions on the part of the commander and his staff becomes essential. Having the time needed to make decisions and being able to implement the corresponding action first is, therefore, crucial to any successful commander.¹⁰⁸

The commander and staff counterbalance each other. The commander is the creator of military art whose creative expression is balanced by the military science of the staff. In this relationship the commander would consider such elements as tempo, geometry, synchronization, synergy and risk in the formalization of his course of action.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Thunholm, "Planning Under A Time Pressure: An Attempt Toward a Prescriptive Model of Military Tactical Decision Making" In *How Professionals Make Decisions*, eds. Henry Montgomery, Raanan Lipshitz and Berndt Brehmer (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2005), 46.

The commander's thinking was therefore unconstrained in developing the solution to his assigned task. The staff provides the sober assessment of the commander's thinking through the application of military science. The staff considers such factors as forces, supplies, time and distance to determine whether the commander's desired course of action is feasible. This interactive dialogue between the desired and the possible is designed to balance ends (objectives) ways (operational design) and means (resources) resulting in a common situational awareness of what course of action was supportable. The ultimate decision on what action to take always rests with the commander. This constant interaction between commander and staff, art and science is critical however to an effective command team and success in battle.

In operations, the division commander will be in a continuous process of examining the external environment, known as an "appreciation." When presented with a new mission, the commander assesses his observations and assumptions against the new assignment and develops a shared awareness with higher and subordinate commanders and the staff. At this point the commander will be focusing the staff effort to gain a common understanding of the mission assigned and in creating common situational awareness of the operating environment.

Kitching provided an example of how the commander-staff process worked in the 1st Canadian Infantry Division (1st Cdn Inf Div) during the Allied campaigns in Sicily and Italy where Kitching was the GSO 1 for Simonds, the GOC of the division. In his memoirs, Kitching states:

General Simonds kept a regular schedule which allowed me to adjust my own activities to conform to his. He would be awakened before 6:00 a.m., given a briefing of the night's activities at about 6:30 a.m., and after a quick breakfast, visit the brigades. By noon each day he would have a fair

idea of the way he wanted to develop operations on the next day so I would meet him at some point in the forward area when he would give me advance warning of the probable course of the next day's operations. This allowed me to return to the headquarters and brief the senior members so that they could make the preliminary moves to ensure that their units were able to support the intended plans.¹⁰⁹

Kitching adopted a similar routine when he became the GOC of 4th Cdn Armd Div.

Success in operations depended largely upon the accuracy and speed of transition of information about both the enemy and friendly forces. Information was gained and conveyed through a number of different avenues such as visits, reports from liaison officers, situation reports, appreciations from a higher commander and intelligence information. The most common form of reporting in operations was through situation reports.

Situation reports, known as SITREPS, were transmitted from subordinate units to higher headquarters at specific times each day. SITREPs were to contain summaries of operations and movements during the period of the report. In 4 Cdn Armd Div, SITREPs were generated by the brigades twice daily to reflect the operational situation as of 1200 hrs (to reach Main Div HQ by 1400 hrs daily) and as at 2400 hrs (to reach Main Div HQ by 0200 hrs). Subordinate commanders reported important developments to Main Div HQ, usually by radio, and then confirmed through the appropriate SITREP.¹¹⁰

In addition to the operations oriented reports, there was a plethora of administrative reports that had to be completed in order to ensure that operations would

¹⁰⁹ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 153.

¹¹⁰ Sitreps included the following information: The main features of the enemy situation, Location of own units and brigades, including their HQ (as of what time), Information concerning adjacent formations including common boundaries (as of what time), The result of current operations, Weather and visibility. Fighting efficiency of own forces. The general situation described from right to left. War Diary, 4th Canadian Armoured Division-General Staff 1-30 June 1944, App 37 section 3.

be properly supported. Divisional units submitted Daily Administrative Reports, known as an ADREP, as of 1600 hrs daily and were to reach Rear HQ by 1900 hrs. This report was then forwarded to HQ Rear 2nd Cdn Corps. The ADREP was a short message sequenced from A to K with each letter representing a specific commodity.¹¹¹ Tracking these reports provided an important tool in assessing the matériel state of the division in Normandy.

In total, there were 24 returns required from A Branch that were reported to 2nd Cdn Corps. Of these, seven were due daily; seven, weekly; seven, monthly; and three, as required. In Q Branch, there were 45 different returns to be filed.¹¹² Many of the daily returns were required twice, typically at 0600 and 1800 hrs. The staff gathered information to produce over 20 daily reports.¹¹³ The administrative burden to sustain operations in the Canadian staff system was considerable.

During an operation, the higher commander (i.e., a corps commander) in the chain of command provided each of his division commanders with a mission, normally after a preliminary warning and an opportunity to discuss ways and means of achievement. The mission became the focus of the division commander's "appreciation" or estimate from which he with his staff formulated a plan. The division commander then issued a Warning Order that contained preliminary information, which allowed everybody to start thinking ahead to the coming operation. The division commander then issued full orders assigning tasks to his subordinate commanders, who then repeated this cycle within their

¹¹¹For example, A represented day's rations held; B, miles in Petrol Oil Lubricants (POL) held in 1st and 2nd line; C, ammunition expenditure in total rounds in previous 24 hours, and G represented the battle-worthiness of the fighting vehicles subdivided by tanks, armoured cars and scout cars. Item F identified those units that had fallen below 85 percent of their war establishment strength. War Diary, 4th Canadian Armoured Division-Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

¹¹² Broken down as follows: 13, daily; eight, weekly; 12, monthly; and 12, quarterly or as required.

¹¹³ Memorandum, Amended Schedule of A/Q Returns dated 22 Jun 44. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 May 1944, App 12.

own commands. This process facilitated continuous information-sharing from higher to subordinate formations. The result of this continuous process was that subordinate levels in the organization received early information on a future mission allowing two or more levels to plan for the same operation almost simultaneously.

To manage the military decision-making process, the British and Canadian Armies implemented a prescriptive, highly formalized step-by-step model in which decisions were developed linearly. The thought process for the execution of command in battle was founded on a recognized practice that divided the process into sequences of problem definition, course of action generation, refinement of course of action and selection.¹¹⁴ Commanders would vary their interpretation of the process, but the main elements remained constant.

The principle of “appreciating the situation,” and then issuing orders remained exactly the same whether the recipient had to execute those orders ten minutes or ten days after receipt.¹¹⁵ Whether written or verbal, appreciations followed the same logical sequence and considered the following factors:

- The objective to be achieved
- Factors which effect the attainment of this objective
- Relative strength—present dispositions, mobility, armament and morale of the enemy in relation to one’s own forces
- Terrain
- Time and space
- Weather

¹¹⁴ Thunholm, *Planning Under A Time Pressure*, 44.

¹¹⁵ Canada. Army, *the Armoured Division in Battle: 1952*, 23.

- Hours of daylight and darkness
- The need for operational security
- Communications
- Courses open to own troops, to the enemy
- The plan

A commander was involved in a constant process of appreciating the situation so that when an actual task or mission was received, he merely assembled the main factors and then proceeded to formulate the outline plan.¹¹⁶ Critical to the understanding of the commander's plan by subordinate commanders and staff members was the commander's description of the main factors and deductions which led him to his plan, and the level of risk that the commander was willing to accept in the execution of the plan.

There were two types of orders: orders given before a major operation or set piece attack and those given in the heat of battle.¹¹⁷ The former usually involved detailed coordination and collaboration and were typically written rather than verbal. The guiding principal for issuing orders was to convey to the concerned units only that information that they required to carry out their assigned task. The information was to be confined to essential information, as brief in subject matter, headings and appendices as was possible. The goal was to ensure that every man down to the lowest levels had a clear understanding of what he had to do and the part he was to play in the main battle.¹¹⁸

The Canadian Army pamphlet, *Aide Memoire for Orders: Corps Level*, provided the outline, headings and sequence of information to be given in seven different military

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 23-24.

¹¹⁷ Great Britain, War Office, *Infantry Training Part VIII: Fieldcraft, Battle Drill, Section and Platoon Attacks, 1944* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1944), 49.

¹¹⁸ Canada. Army, *GOC 1-1-3, Aide Memoire for Orders* (London: Adv H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 27 Nov 1942), introduction.

operations—advance, movement, attack (day), attack (night), river crossing, assault obstacle, withdrawal, and defence. Each operation was further divided into four headings—warning order, immediate, to follow and may be required. The warning order for each of the seven different operations varied in length but a core of information was common across all seven operations. These headings included: intention, direction, objectives, no move before (the start time for own troops to move), re-grouping of own troops, rendezvous (RV) and time for orders. This information helped to orient the formation to what was coming and allowed the troops to prepare for further action.¹¹⁹ The goal was to initiate the required action on the part of all formations and units involved with a minimum loss of time.

Immediate information was information that had to be issued to the formations as soon as possible. It included more detailed information on the enemy, including locations; more detailed information on own forces, including objectives; the allotment of troops under command; centre line of advance; boundaries; concentration and assembly areas; and the general support plans from the artillery, engineers and signals. The “to follow information” included more detailed information from the support plans and administrative information on the moves of HQs, and medical plans. The “may be required” information included more administrative information on such topics as supply and fuel plans, prisoner of war (PW) handling and traffic control information in the forward areas.¹²⁰

Understanding what type of information was going to be conveyed in a particular operation helped to streamline the transmission of information throughout the formation

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 5.

since everyone down the chain of command understood the process, what information was essential and what information would be conveyed next in the transmission. Standardizing the orders-process helped to facilitate the transmission and understanding of verbal orders issued during operations.¹²¹ Montgomery was a great proponent of verbal orders and wrote repeatedly of the requirement to have a staff and subordinate commanders who could work and act on verbal orders or instructions.¹²²

Operational tempo, for the purposes of this discussion, is the rate of activity or intensity of operations, relative to that of the enemy. Operational tempo was important because he who controlled the operational tempo retained the initiative and was able to dictate the where and when of operations, forcing the opponent into a continuous state of reacting. Operational tempo has three elements: speed of decision, speed of execution and speed with which a force transitions from one activity to another.

Success in operations was dependent on a formation's ability to generate and maintain operational tempo. Operational tempo was a function of effective leadership, training and esprit de corps of a formation. As illustrated in the commander-staff dynamic, each leader within the framework had to assimilate and understand inputs from different sources which when combined formed a common situational awareness among the key decision makers. Achieving a quicker decision cycle than ones opponent ensured that the commander maintained the initiative and was able to dictate the tempo to his opponent despite the challenges encountered on the battlefield.

The ability to seize and keep the initiative in battle by getting ahead of the opponent's decision cycle was, and still is, viewed as being of vital importance in

¹²¹ Ibid., 1-4.

¹²² Montgomery, *Some Brief Notes for Senior Officers on the Conduct of Battle*, 6.

combat. Trying to determine whether a decision was timely, correct or incorrect can only be judged truly in hind-sight when all of the second and third order consequences are known from both sides in the conflict.¹²³ The commander is left, therefore, to deal with what he sees and perceives of the battle immediately in front of him in order to carry on with his mission. It is left to the historian to determine the accuracy and validity of that decision.

The division command environment was a complex space both intellectually and physically that required the co-ordination of countless processes and thousands of men and machines to achieve the operational tempo required. Key among these processes was the forming of a common situational awareness and common intent among the commander, his subordinate commanders and the key staff officers within the division. This ensured that everyone understood the task at hand. Also of vital importance was battle procedure. If not conducted properly the division and its troops would be committed to battle lacking the proper preparations necessary to carry out their assigned mission. Breakdowns in common situational awareness, common intent and battle procedure would plague the 4 Cdn Armd Div in its first major battle.

¹²³ Thunholm, *Planning Under A Time Pressure*, 43-45.

Chapter Two: The Key Players

The typical Canadian battlefield general of the Second World War leading troops in action was in his mid-30s at the beginning of the war, with some ten–fifteen years service. He was a Permanent Force (PF) soldier, likely from the artillery or infantry, educated at the Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston and the British Army Staff College. At the beginning of the war, he was a junior officer (lieutenant or captain) and had risen with extraordinary speed through the ranks as the army expanded.¹²⁴ The Canadian Army was fortunate that it was almost four years before any of its divisions saw sustained action and five years before all were involved. This allowed for an extended time in training to help the new crop of Canadian generals learn their craft and at the same time weed out those who could not make the grade.¹²⁵

Kitching belonged to a small cadre of senior officers who had gained experience in Sicily and Italy before landing in Normandy. His military career encompassed service in both the British and Canadian Armies. He was accepted into Sandhurst in January 1929, graduated 35th out of 175 in July of 1930 and was commissioned into the 2nd Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment.¹²⁶ In the 1930's, he was a platoon and company commander with the British Army, initially in Singapore and later in India where he stated that he participated in a number of extensive manoeuvres involving as many as 20,000 men.¹²⁷ Kitching resigned his commission and immigrated to Canada in 1938. After the outbreak of the war, Kitching joined the Royal Canadian Regiment as a 2nd lieutenant in September 1939. He rose rapidly in rank serving in a number of staff and

¹²⁴ Granatstein, *The Generals*, 8.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹²⁶ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 31.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, preface.

command positions. In 1940, he attended the Staff College in Camberley for six months and in 1942, as a lieutenant-colonel, he was given command of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment. Kitching was appointed the GSO1 of the 1st Cdn Div Division in 1942 and participated in the invasion of Sicily. He was promoted to brigadier in 1943 and was given command of the 11th Cdn Inf Bde in Italy. In February 1944, Kitching was promoted Maj Gen and given command of 4 Cdn Armd Div without any further formal education or training but with a considerable amount of practical experience of combat operations from his time in Sicily and Italy under Simonds' mentorship.¹²⁸ By modern standards, this rise through the ranks represents a fantastic accomplishment but in the rapid expansion of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, this was not uncommon for those identified for higher level command.

The Canadian Army kept a detailed list of its senior officers, Lieutenant-Colonel and above, with notes on their potential for future assignments. The Canadian Army practice was to reward an individual with higher command, based on perceived potential, regardless of their arm of service.¹²⁹ For example, Crerar wrote, "I do not consider that previous armoured experience is essential but it is certainly an important factor."¹³⁰ This resulted in the selection of officers with infantry and artillery backgrounds to lead armoured divisions.

The report, *Recommendations for Promotion Officers*, 1st Cdn Corps, dated 14 January 1943, commented upon both Lt Col Harry Foster (Kitching's successor) and Lt Col Kitching. The report tracked the performance of these two officers from 5 June 1942

¹²⁸ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, Chapters 8-11.

¹²⁹ A component is armour, artillery, infantry or engineer.

¹³⁰ General Harry Crerar, Letter Crerar to Burns [Appointments Division Command], undated. Crerar Papers MG30 E 157 Vol 3 File 958C.009 D185 GOC-in-C File 6-1-1 Appointments Divisional Comds Period 20 Oct 43 to 11 Mar 45.

to 9 January 1943. The comments on Foster are extensive and highlight his diverse experience. He was viewed as a future commander rather than senior staff officer and his final report from this document stated he was “fit to be promoted to the rank of Brigadier” to command an infantry brigade.¹³¹ There is only one remark on Kitching dated 9 January 1943, which stated “Good prospect for Bde Comd with more experience.”¹³² This statement is a reflection of the assessment made on Kitching by Maj Gen H.L.N. Salmon in a letter to the corps commander, 1st Canadian Corps, dated 4 November 1942.¹³³ Kitching’s skill as a staff officer grew under Salmon, and Kitching recalled having learned much under his command.¹³⁴

Kitching’s strong performance as the GSO 1 of 1st Cdn Inf Div in the Sicilian and Italian campaigns brought him to the attention of the senior leadership of the Canadian Army. On 26 September 1943 a special meeting of the senior army leadership considered recommendations and appointments within the army command structure.¹³⁵ The minutes reflected that Lt-Gen A.G.L. McNaughton Commander of First Canadian Army was prepared to accept either Kitching or Lt Col B. Hoffmeister to command either the 9th or 11th Cdn Inf Bdes. In a message dated 27 September 1943, McNaughton informed Simonds that Kitching and Hoffmeister had been selected as Infantry Brigadiers in 3rd Cdn Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div. Crerar, in a letter on the following day to McNaughton,

¹³¹ During this timeframe he held positions as a brigade major (BM) of 1st Cdn Inf Bde, GSO 2 1st Cdn Div, OC 4 Cdn Recce Regt and GSO 1 of 1st Cdn Div Canada. Army, *Recommendations for Promotions* (London: 1 Cdn Corps, [14 January 1943]). Crerar Papers MG30 E 157 Vol 3 File 958C.009 D178 GOC-in-C File 5-0-3 Vol I & II Higher Command -Canadian Army overseas Period 29 May 44 to 22 Dec 44.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ The exact wording states, “The undermentioned officers are good prospects for Brigade Commanders, but require more experience:” Major-General H. L. N. Salmon, Letter Salmon to Corps Commander 1 Cdn Corps, Recommendation for Promotion, dated 4 Nov 42. MG 30 E 157 Vol 5.

¹³⁴ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 129.

¹³⁵ The committee included Lt Gens McNaughton, Crerar, Sansom and Maj-Gen Montague, Canada. Army, *Minutes Of Special Meeting Held At H.Q. First Cdn Army On Sunday 26 Sep 43* (London: HQ First Cdn Army, [1943]). Crerar Papers MG30 E 157 File 988.009 (D23) Report on Officers Feb 42 to Sep 43.

expressed his desire for a quick decision on who—Kitching or Hoffmeister—would be selected to command 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Crerar wanted the new brigade commander in place before the start of exercise “PIRATE,” scheduled to begin on 17 October 1943.¹³⁶

Events in Italy, however, worked to resolve the issue. Simonds was taken ill with jaundice, causing a ripple-down effect in the Canadian command structure. Maj Gen Vokes replaced Simonds as GOC 1 Cdn Div and Hoffmeister was designated to replace Vokes. Therefore, on 29 September 1943, Hoffmeister assumed temporary command of the 2nd Cdn Inf Bde.¹³⁷ Hoffmeister’s appointment and, coincidentally, the appointment of Kitching to command 11th Cdn Inf Bde of the 5th Armd Div, was authorized by message on 20 October 1943.¹³⁸

In January 1944, Simonds asked Kitching if he would consider returning to England to be the Brigadier General Staff (BGS) for 2nd Cdn Corps,¹³⁹ in effect, recreating the working relationship that they had established during their time in 1st Cdn Div. Kitching agreed to this suggestion, which meant that he would have to give up his much coveted brigade command. Simonds made the initial request to have Kitching appointed as his BGS to Crerar by telephone on 16 January 1944, and followed the request with a letter dated 17 January 1944. Simonds stated,

If I am to go back and take over 2 Corps, it would be of great assistance to me if Kitching could be spared as B.G.S. ... He knows my formula for the organization and functioning of a HQ. Thinking over the potential B.G.S.’s I know of no one with a better background and training.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ General Harry Crerar, Main HQ 1 Cdn Corps [Change of Employment], dated 28 Sep 43. Crerar Papers, MG30 E157 file 988.009 (D23) Report on Officers Feb 42 to Sep 43.

¹³⁷ Douglas E. Delaney. *The Soldiers General: Bert Hoffmeister at War*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 71.

¹³⁸ Brig D.G. Cunningham would eventually be appointed to command 9th Cdn Inf Bde. Lt-Gen A. G. L. McNaughton, Message 2589 27 Sep 43 [Recommendations for Promotion to Brigadier], Crerar Papers, MG30 E157 file 988.009 (D23) Report on Officers Feb 42 to Sep 43.

¹³⁹ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 174.

¹⁴⁰ Letter Crerar to Burns [Division Appointments], undated.

The fact that Kitching was prepared to give up a command to follow Simonds speaks to the deep admiration that Kitching had for Simonds. This admiration transcended the events in Normandy and continue until their respective deaths.

In an undated letter written to Lt Gen E.L.M. Burns, 1st Cdn Corps Commander in Italy, Crerar discussed the “slate” of commanders available to command either armoured divisions or armoured brigades. Kitching was third on the list with Brig R.A. Wyman at the top. The body of the letter indicated that Wyman, based on his long armoured experience in Italy, was best suited to replace Worthington. The letter revealed that Simonds was unhappy with Wyman and suggested Kitching. Foster’s name does not appear on either list for command of an armoured brigade or division.¹⁴¹ The underlying text in this letter is that finding the right individuals to command the two armoured divisions was weighing on the minds of both Crerar and Burns. The other interesting observation is that the decision had been made at the time the letter was written to replace Worthington.

In a follow-up letter from Burns to Crerar, dated 7 February 1944, Kitching was now the top selection for command of an armoured division because of his “active experience” and Brig L. Booth was listed at the top of the list for those slated to command an armoured brigade. Latter in the letter, in a paragraph interestingly starting with the phrase “ May I suggest the following solution to the concrete problem...,” Burns recommended Kitching for command of the 4th Cdn Armd Div with Brig J.D.B Smith to remain in command of the 4th Cdn Armd Bde. Burns left the final decision for command

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

of the 4th Cdn Armd Bde to Crerar.¹⁴² On 12 February 1944, Crerar informed Burns that official notification had been received appointing Kitching to command 4th Cdn Armd Div.¹⁴³

Did Kitching have the correct set of competencies to command an armoured division in Normandy? He had no previous armoured training or armoured command experience.¹⁴⁴ He was an infantry officer. While it was not uncommon to have armoured divisions commanded by officers from the other branches, a conscious decision was made, based on his proven ability, to appoint Kitching to command 4th Cdn Armd Div. Simonds must have felt him capable to command, otherwise he would not have recommended the appointment. Even with his unique combination of education and experience, Kitching would have been forced into a steep learning curve on armoured warfare when he took over command of 4th Cdn Armd Div. What he did have, however, was a practical sense on how the main elements of the division, armoured, infantry and artillery, and their supporting elements, should work.

While commanding the 11th Cdn Inf Bde, Kitching's men fought a bitter battle against the veteran German 1st Parachute Division in January 1944 in the Arelli area. Although the attack was repulsed, Kitching professed to have learned a number of important lessons, which he discussed in *Mud and Green Fields*. He summarized his

¹⁴² E. L. M. Burns, Letter Burns to Crerar [Division Appointments], 7 Feb 44. Crerar Papers, MG30 E157 Vol 5 file 958C.009 (D185) GOC-in-C File 6-1-1 Appointments-Divisional Comds Period 20 Oct 43 to 11 Mar 45.

¹⁴³ Lt-Gen Harry Crerar, Letter Crerar to Burns [Division Appointments], 12 Feb 44. Crerar Papers, MG30 E157 Vol 5 file 958C.009 (D185) GOC-in-C File 6-1-1 Appointments-Divisional Comds Period 20 Oct 43 to 11 Mar 45.

¹⁴⁴ By comparison, all of the five US armoured division commanders in Normandy had either previous armoured or cavalry experience. They were 2nd US Armd Div-MGen Edward H. Brooks, 3rd US Armd Div Leroy H. Watson, 4th Armd Div J.S. Wood, 5th US Armd Div Lunsford E. Oliver and 6th US Armd Div Robert W. Grow.

thoughts as follows: “The degree of co-operation between infantry and tanks, particularly in an armoured division, is frequently the measure of success or failure.”¹⁴⁵ There is also another interesting passage in his book in which he evaluates Canadian success in battle. He attributed earlier Canadian success to the fact that control of the battle was with the companies and battalions who were fighting it. Unit commanders were told what to do and were given the room in which to do it.¹⁴⁶ The fog of war, infantry-tank cooperation and mission-specific orders would become important elements in Kitching’s understanding of battle. The key question was whether he would have the opportunity and time to impart his knowledge, experience and will upon the units and leaders of his division.

Kitching inherited a staff whose members had been with the division since 1943. The GSO 1 for 4th Cdn Armd Div when Kitching took over command was Lt Col Ed Ganong. Little has been written about Ganong in secondary sources. He had been the CO of the 48th Highlanders of Canada prior to becoming the GSO 1 of 4th Cdn Armd Div.¹⁴⁷ The 1943 *Recommendations for Promotion* document stated that Ganong was a good prospect for brigade command with more experience.¹⁴⁸ When, as GOC of 4th Cdn Armd Div, Kitching provided recommendations for brigade command, he selected Ganong. The 27 May 1944 *Recommendation for Command* submitted by Kitching on Ganong stated that he was a sound and capable officer who had been previously recommended by Worthington for command of a brigade. Ganong had commanded the 10th Cdn Inf Bde satisfactorily in an acting capacity for a period of one month when the

¹⁴⁵ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 174.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁴⁷ Canada. Army, CMHQ Report No 96, *Situation of the Canadian Military Forces in the United Kingdom*, Spring, 1943. Part 1: Recent Changes in Command Staffs, para 28.

¹⁴⁸ Canada. Army, *Recommendations for Promotions*.

division was in Norfolk. Simonds' additional comments on the recommendation noted that when Ganong took over command of the 48th Highlanders, he (Simonds) was the commander of 1st Cdn Inf Bde. Simonds watched Ganong improve the tactical training and administration of the unit to a high standard of efficiency and it was largely as a result of this successful command that Simonds had recommended Ganong for Staff College.¹⁴⁹

Ganong was selected to attend the Senior Staff Course at Minley Manor from 3 December 1942 to 6 May 1943. He was one of only six Canadian officers to attend this course throughout the war.¹⁵⁰ Ganong was appointed GSO-1 of the 4th Cdn Armd Div on 7 May 1943 and would remain in that position until 3 August 1944 when he was selected to command the 4th Cdn Inf Bde.

Lt Col Fred Wigle replaced Ganong as the GSO 1 in August 1944 and soon established a system that Kitching described as bringing "more life to the general staff."¹⁵¹ Wigle was young, capable and full of enthusiasm. He was described by his subordinates and peers as a brilliant man, a fearless and inspirational leader who inspired trust from those with whom he worked. Before joining the army Wigle was a successful business man and athlete who had been the captain of the McGill University football and hockey teams.¹⁵² Wigle was renowned for his elaborate orders groups where he was

¹⁴⁹ George Kitching, Memorandum 4AD/6-1-15, Recommendation for Comd-Bde Lt-Col J.E. Ganong, 27 May 44. Crerar Papers, E157, Vol 3, File 958C.009 (D178) GOC-in-C File 5-0-3 Vol I & II, Higher Command-Canadian Army overseas Period 29 May 44 to 22 Dec 44.

¹⁵⁰ Kim Beattie. *Dileas: The History of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, 1929-1956*. (Toronto: The 48th Highlander of Canada, 1957), 177.

¹⁵¹ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 186.

¹⁵² Robert L. Fraser, *Black Yesterdays: The Argyll's War* (Hamilton: Argyll Regimental Foundation, 1996, 354.

known to be quite explicit in what he wanted and rarely did he invite discussion.¹⁵³

Wigle would remain GSO 1 until 29 January 1945 when he was appointed to command the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Argylls). The Regimental history of the Argylls, *Black Yesterday's*, is replete with concerns expressed by regimental members over the loss of Lt Col Dave Stewart as their commanding officer and the fact that he was being replaced by a staff officer from division. These concerns quickly faded but one of the noted remarks about his time in command was that "his [Wigle's] orders were complete right down to the last comma."¹⁵⁴ While Wigle's style was by the book, it is clear that he made an immediate impression on Kitching and the staff as a whole.

Wigle like Kitching inherited a cohesive staff that had been through an extensive training program conducted by Kitching in England. The members of his GSO II and GSO III ops staff joined the division either shortly before or shortly after Kitching took over command. This in part explains the successful transition of staff leadership from Ganong to Wigle during the first week of August 1944.¹⁵⁵

Lt Col J.W. Proctor was appointed AA&QMG of 4th Cdn Armd Div on 27 August 1943. Like Ganong, very little information exists about this officer. Prior to his appointment to 4th Cdn Armd Div, he had been the 2nd Cdn Inf Bde staff captain and then

¹⁵³ An interesting sidebar has emerged as to when Wigle actually took over as GSO 1. Stacey notes that Wigle took over as the GSO 1 on 3 August 1944, with the departure of Lt Col Ganong to command the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade. Kitching states that Wigle was posted to the Division in July. It is interesting to note that Wigle does not appear on any of the HQ 4th Cdn Armd Div strength returns for the month of August 1944, nor does any officer in the Division HQ appear as the GSO1. Wigle signature on 4th Cdn Armd Div correspondence does, however, appear as GSO 1 on the operation orders for TOTALIZE. Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, App G, 666.

¹⁵⁴ Fraser, *Black Yesterdays*, 404.

¹⁵⁵ Field Return of Officers 5 Aug 44, War Diary, Headquarters Squadron, 4 Cdn Armd Div, August 1944. Wigle was killed on 14 April 45 when his tactical headquarters was attacked by Germans in the town of Friesoythe. Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 558.

became the AQMG of 2nd Cdn Corps.¹⁵⁶ After taking command, Kitching soon realized that Proctor was the driving force in his headquarters. Kitching described him as having a good military grounding at RMC, physically strong and a hard worker who knew what was wanted.¹⁵⁷ Proctor was promoted to colonel on 13 March 1945 and was appointed commander, First Canadian Army Terminals.¹⁵⁸

The senior staff team of Ganong and Proctor would become a formidable combination in the training of the division in the run up to their entry into battle. The Wigle/Proctor tandem would become equally as impressive in the execution of operations in Normandy. Together, these men and their collective abilities nicely complimented those of Kitching producing a capable command team.

Supporting Ganong/Wigle and Proctor were the brigade majors of the two brigades. Wigle's counterpart in 10 Cdn Inf Bde was Major J.G. Armstrong. He joined the Brigade in August 1943 as did the majority of his subordinate staff. Proctor's counterpart was Maj E.W. Cowdry who joined the Brigade on 2 May 1944. The majority of Cowdry's officers joined the Brigade in 1943¹⁵⁹

Maj A.G. Chubb was the BM for the 4 Cdn Armd Bde. Chubb joined the Brigade in December 1943. The members of Chubb's subordinate staff were all with the division by March 1944 and the key senior staff officers remained in place throughout August 1944.¹⁶⁰ The majority of the staff at both brigade and division level that trained with the

¹⁵⁶ Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 380.

¹⁵⁷ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 180. Proctor was promoted to Colonel on 13 March 45 and was appointed Commander, First Canadian Army Terminals. Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 668.

¹⁵⁸ Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 668.

¹⁵⁹ Field Return of Officers, 3 June 44, War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944, App 8.

¹⁶⁰ Weekly Field Return of Officers 19 Aug 44, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, August 44, App 4.

division before entry into theatre would remain with the division during the timeframe examined herein.

On the surface, Kitching was seen to be lucky in having a number of commanders with combat experience posted to the division. 10th Cdn Inf Bde was commanded by Brig Jim Jefferson. Kitching viewed him as a quiet-spoken man who gave the impression he was slow on the uptake because he always mulled over a question before replying. According to Kitching, that period of thought and his slow spoken replies fooled many people. Jefferson, who had commanded the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and won a Distinguished Service Order (DSO) in Italy, was promoted to Brigadier to command the 10th Cdn Inf Bde while Lt Col Leslie Booth, who had commanded the Three Rivers Regiment in Italy, took over the armoured brigade. Brig Herm Lane took over command of the division artillery.¹⁶¹

While the concept of bringing back experienced regimental COs from Italy to command the brigades was viewed as a smart move, the reality was that not all officers could successfully make the transition to higher level command. Booth was viewed as one who did not make the transition. Chubb made this observation about Booth. While Booth was viewed as a fearless individual, Chubb later claimed that Booth was a poor brigadier and had no clear understanding of how to use his staff, which made it very difficult to achieve the synergy needed in battle. He also claimed that Booth's tactical knowledge was very limited as were his ideas for training.¹⁶² The other shortcoming was alcohol abuse, for which Kitching counselled him. Many of these shortcomings would

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 180.

¹⁶² A. G. Chubb, Letter Chubb to Roy, Dr Reginald Roy, Special Collections, University of Victoria, MacPherson Library, 23 Nov 1980.

come back to influence negatively the conduct of operations for the division in August 1944.

Brig Robert (Bob) Moncel made a successful transition from staff to brigade command. Like Kitching, Moncel had joined the RCR at the outbreak of war as a lieutenant and was promoted to captain one year later. He commanded the 18th Cdn Armd C Regt from 31 January 1943 to 26 August 1943 and was then selected as the GSO I 2nd Cdn Corps in August 1943. Moncel remained there until he took over command of 4th Cdn Armd Bde on 19 August 1944.¹⁶³ Simonds had recommended Moncel for command of an armoured brigade on 30 May 44¹⁶⁴ and on 8 August Simonds and Kitching agreed that Moncel would take over command of 4 Cdn Armd Bde on a permanent basis if Booth became a casualty.¹⁶⁵

Of the four regimental commanders of the 4th Cdn Armd Bde—Lt Col D.G. Worthington British Columbia Regiment (BCR), Lt Col M.J. Scott Governor General Foot Guards (Foot Guards), Lt Col W.W. Halpenny Canadian Grenadier Guards (Grenadier Guards) and Lt Col J.E.V. Murrell of the Lake Superior Regiment—none had previous combat experience. Most of these officers had taken over their regiments in 1943 and had had the time to gain familiarity with and train them in England. Of this group, only Halpenny would be in command of his regiment when Kitching was relieved on 21 August. Kitching judged Worthington to be the “most outstanding regimental

¹⁶³He had been the GSO III, 1st Cdn Army Tk Bde, then the Brigade Major of the unit and by 1943, the GSO II, HQ 5 Cdn Armd Div, LGen G. G. Simonds, Memorandum, Recommendation for Command of an Armoured Brigade, CP, E157, Vol 3, File 958C.009 (D178) GOC-in-C File 5-0-3 Vol I & II, Higher Command-Canadian Army overseas Period 29 May 44 to 22 Dec 44, 30 May 44.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 195.

commander in the armoured brigade” stating that he was young, “full of energy and quick to seize an opportunity.”¹⁶⁶

Lt Col Gordon Dorward de Salaberry “Swatty” Wotherspoon of the South Alberta Regiment (SAR), Lt Col Dave Stewart of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Argyll’s), Lt Col J.Q. McQueen of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment (Lincs), and Lt Col Don Hay of the Algonquin Regiment were the regimental commanders in 10th Cdn Inf Bde.¹⁶⁷ Kitching viewed Jefferson as an experienced, solid brigade commander. Wotherspoon claimed that Jefferson lacked the imagination needed to properly apply combined arms tactics and, as a result, he (Wotherspoon) and Stewart ran the tactics in the brigade. Wotherspoon had taken over command of the SAR in April 1943. Previously he had been a student and then an instructor at the Senior Officers’ School in Oxford where he is reported to have received one of the highest marks ever given a student. As a result, he believed his understanding of combined arms tactics was superior to Jefferson’s even though Jefferson had much more combat experience.¹⁶⁸

Stewart was recognized as the most competent of the infantry battalion commanders in the division and the Argyll’s were to gain a reputation as one of the better infantry regiments, well capable of executing the infantry-cum-tank tactics needed in Normandy and beyond. Lt Col D. Hay had held temporary command of the Argylls as a major from 10 July 43 –23 September 43 until Stewart took over.¹⁶⁹ He remained a member of Stewart’s Argylls before moving over to take command of the Algonquin

¹⁶⁶ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 187.

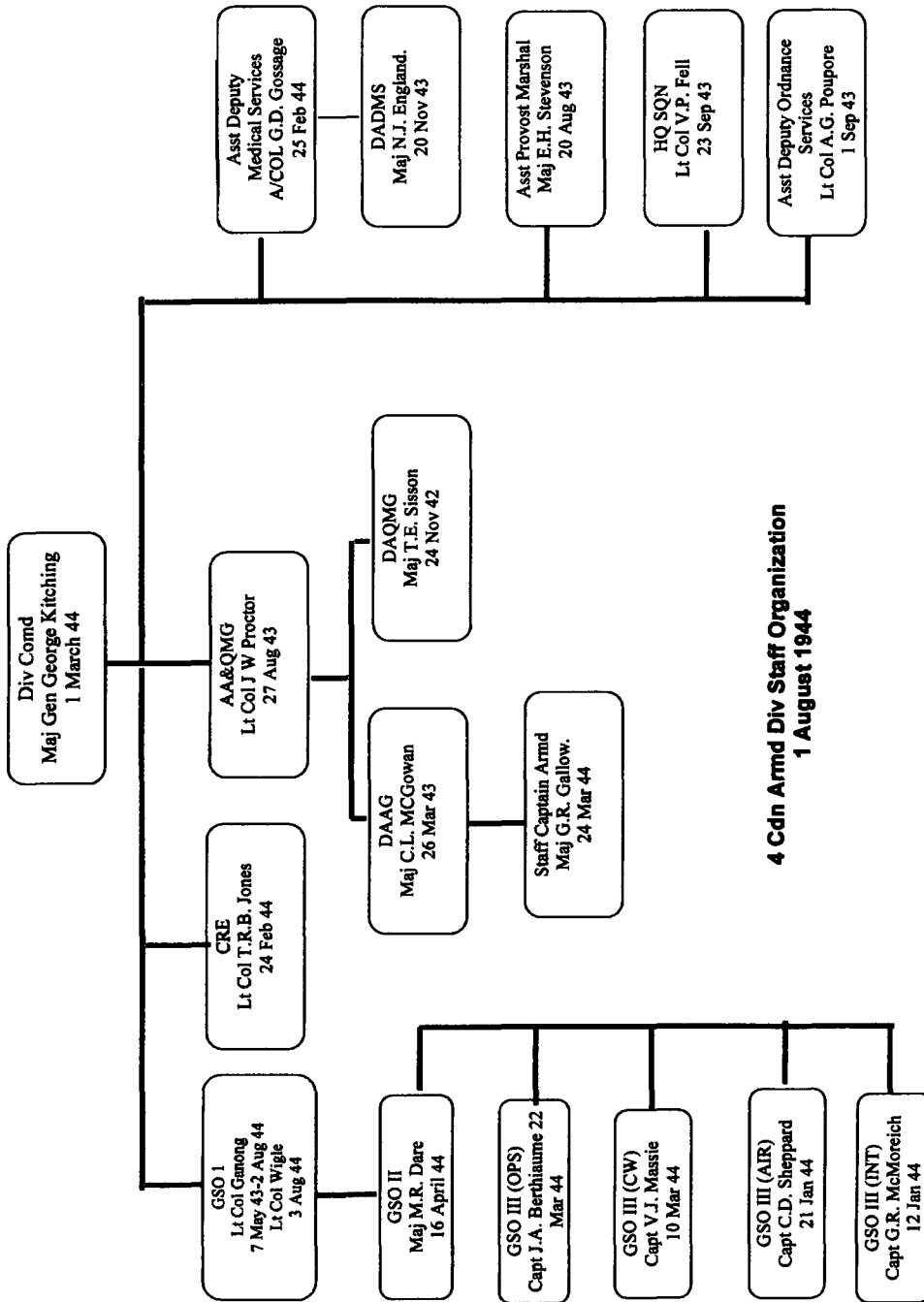
¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Bill Wiley and Robert L. Fraser, transcript of interview of Brigadier Gordon Dorward de Salaberry Wotherspoon for *Black Yesterdays*, 25 September 1986, n.p.

¹⁶⁹ H.M. Jackson, ed. *The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise’s) 1928-1953*. (Hamilton: The Regiment, 1953), 323.

Regiment in March 1944. Lt Col; J.Q. McQueen took over command of the Lincs on 2 January 1944. He had previously served with the Calgary Highlanders and in 1942 he had been the senior Canadian officer of the First Canadian Special Service Battalion.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Together the First Canadian Special Service Battalion and two American battalions were known as the First Special Service Force. Hayes, *The Lincs*, 16.



**4 Cdn Armd Div Staff Organization
1 August 1944**

Kitching inherited a division that had a reasonable mix of new and seasoned commanders and staff officers. Some were newly appointed but had recent combat experience in either Sicily or Italy, and others lacked combat experience but had been training with their respective commands for some time. It would be up to Kitching to mould these men into a cohesive team that was able to operate effectively in their assigned roles in Normandy and beyond. Kitching had a significant amount of experience to impart in preparing his division for the coming battle. The time available to train the division was to be short and filled with many challenges.

Chapter Three: The Formation of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division

Armoured forces significantly changed the nature of warfare during the Second World War. Understanding their origins and development during the inter-war years is crucial to understanding the outcome of operations during the war. Political imperatives, technological advances, and decisions on doctrine and training that were put in place before the start of hostilities determined in large part the outcome of the early battles.

David French stated:

Politicians must bear some of the blame for the defeats that the British army suffered between 1940 and 1942. Their decisions about the priorities to be given to defence and other spending programmes, and the low priority they accorded the army compared to the navy and air force, left the army woefully unprepared in the physical sense for the kind of war it faced after September 1940. But those defeats also stemmed from the army's own failures to develop appropriate concepts about how to fight the next war.¹⁷¹

The same can be said of the Canadian Government and Canadian Army during this same timeframe.

In Britain, armoured warfare and mechanization¹⁷² developed in four fairly distinct periods between 1919 and 1939. From 1919 to 1926, the army demobilized after the First World War and a small group of “thinkers” hypothesized over the nature, tactics and operational concepts of a future mechanized force.¹⁷³ Actual field trials with an

¹⁷¹ French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, 12.

¹⁷² Mechanization is defined as the substitution of mechanical power for human or animal power, mostly in the form of transportation. Armoured warfare, on the other hand, signified the development of army units in which the tank was the central element and around which the other arms (infantry, artillery, engineers) were organized.¹⁷² Harold Winton R., “Tanks, Votes and Budgets: The Politics of Mechanization and Armoured Warfare in Britain, 1919-1939” In *the Challenges of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities, 1918-1941*, eds. Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 74.

¹⁷³ The two most recognized “thinkers” in Britain were Major-General J.F.C. Fuller and Sir Basil Liddell-Hart whose debate on armoured warfare lasted for most of the inter-war period. J.P. Harris’, *Men, Ideas and Tanks: British Military thought and Armoured forces, 1903-1939* (1995), Robert Larson’s, *The British*

experimental force were conducted on Salisbury Plain from 1927 to 1928. From 1929 to 1933 the results of these trials were codified in army doctrine while trials continued to try and address questions of force structure and equipment. By 1933 the army, like all other British institutions, had to deal with the devastating impact of economic depression and experimentation was curtailed as financial resources dwindled.¹⁷⁴

During the period from 1934 to 1938 the army struggled with moving the development of armoured formations from the brigade level to the division level. The evolution of the Tank Brigade stalled from 1935 to 1937, until a decision was finally made to equip the British cavalry units with light tanks. The resulting Mobile Division was reduced in size and re-designated as the 1st Armoured Division. Despite progressive advances in engine designs, transmissions, turrets, tracks, radios and armaments that increased the combat potential of the tank, the British experienced no significant changes in armoured doctrine or organization from mid-1938 to the outbreak of war in September 1939.¹⁷⁵

The clearest example of the dichotomy between the Germans and the British exists in their armoured force manuals of 1940. The German manual of 1940 stated that panzer divisions were especially suited for rapid concentration of considerable fighting power, obtaining quick decisions by breakthroughs and deep penetrations on wide fronts that would disrupt the opponent's ability to organize and execute an effective defence. The offensive nature of German doctrine is evident. The British manual stated that

Army and the Theory of Armored Warfare 1918-1940 and Williamson Murray's chapter "Armored warfare: The British, French and German experiences" in *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (1996), effectively cover the evolution of British armoured forces and their doctrine during the inter-war period.

¹⁷⁴ Winton, *Tanks, Votes and Budgets*, 76.

¹⁷⁵ Harold R. Winton. *To Change an Army: General Sir John Burnett-Stuart and British Armoured Doctrine, 1927-1938*. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 224.

armoured divisions were designed for exploitation after the enemy's position had been broken.¹⁷⁶ This implied a supporting role for armour rather than the decisive role implied in German doctrine. These two positions represent fundamental different positions on the purpose of armoured formations.

The fundamental difference between the German and British experience was that the Germans had concentrated on the evolution of a combined arms armoured or panzer division while the British had concentrated on the evolution of the tank as a weapon of war.¹⁷⁷ The British inability to evolve their doctrine led to a split in the employment of tanks as either an infantry support weapon or as a breakthrough weapon. This indecision manifested itself in the manufacture of different tanks for each role.¹⁷⁸ Even as late as 1942, British operations in the African desert underscored the British struggling to rationalize a coherent doctrine for its armoured forces.¹⁷⁹

During the interwar period, the Canadian Army suffered from the same doctrinal confusion over the future roles of cavalry and the tank. Doubting the reliability of the current generation of tanks and motor vehicles, Maj Gen James H. MacBrien the Canadian Chief of the General Staff from 1920-27 argued that it "was unwise to alter

¹⁷⁶ R. M. Ogorkiewicz, *Armoured Forces: A History of Armoured Forces and their Vehicles* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1970), 21-22.

¹⁷⁷ In the German Army of the Second World War the German soldiers, NCOs and officers were all trained to understand the value of combination of tanks, infantry artillery and engineers. This not only allowed individual divisions to employ combined arms battle groups (Kampfgruppen) but also allowed panzer divisions to do this in concert with non-motorized infantry divisions. This doctrine and its practice had been stressed as the basic German armoured doctrine before the war. R. L. DiNardo, *Germany's Panzer Arm* (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 64. The extent of the influence of British armoured theory on German armoured development is discussed in Azar Gat, *British Armour Theory and the Rise of the Panzer Arm: Revising the Revisionists* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000)..

¹⁷⁸ This duality led to the development of different types of tanks: infantry tanks and cruiser tanks. The cruiser tank was fast and mobile with moderate protection while the infantry tank was slow, heavily armoured and designed to withstand punishment as it escorted infantry units to their objectives. This two-tracked organizational structure for armoured formations was one of the initial organizational controversies within the British army concerning armoured forces. Place, *Military Training in the British Army*, 80-81.

¹⁷⁹ Larson, *The British Army and the Theory of Armored Warfare*, 238-240.

organization and tactical doctrines in anticipation of technological change that might well fall short of expectations.”¹⁸⁰ Given the cost of mechanization, the lack of money, and the lack of an identified enemy this was not an unreasonable position.

While the materiel well being of the army was clearly an issue, the lack of equipment was no excuse for failing to produce an officer corps that was well versed in the art and science of war. This is the opinion expressed by Stephen Harris in, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army* (1988). Harris argued that the study of battlefield tactics did not require an army to possess every weapon system expected to be in use in the next war. “Critical reading” of foreign military journals could have provided insights into new technologies and methodologies that with imagination and ingenuity could have been incorporated into training programs and exercises. Harris has rightly argued, for example, that “it was better to simulate new tactics and doctrine by dropping flour bags from airplanes and to designate trucks and automobiles as tanks and armoured cars rather than to ignore air power and armoured warfare altogether.”¹⁸¹ He concluded that the Canadian Army was never “so poorly equipped, so starved for funds, that such measures were altogether impossible.”¹⁸²

Douglas How’s *The 8th Hussars: A History of the Regiment* (1964) is one of the few regimental histories that provides a glimpse into the Canadian struggle to come to grips with mechanization and armoured warfare. Keltie Kennedy, the Officer Commanding (OC) the Regiment in 1936, stated: “Remember our role and our tasks are the same as they were in the days of Genghiz Khan. Our mounts and weapons have

¹⁸⁰ Stephen Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860-1939*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988),199.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

changed and our job at present is to learn how best to use them.”¹⁸³ He listed their tasks as reconnaissance for information and for protection, distant action including raids, a role in major battles that might embrace seizure of tactical features and rapid intervention in crises, pursuit and covering withdrawals. The Hussars’ Lt E. W. George rendered an interesting insight into the complexity of armoured warfare when reflecting on the time element of tactics: “With a speed of 20 to 50 m.p.h., we will have to learn to have more respect for an enemy which has been reported seen about 100 miles east two hours ago.”¹⁸⁴ Of course, letting go of old traditions was never easy as expressed in this final selection from the Hussar’s official history of the Orders issued to the Regiment in July 1936: “Dress spurs will not be worn during periods of training when cars are being used.”¹⁸⁵ The Hussar regimental history outlines the attempts at experimentation and innovation using automobiles as tanks as suggested by Stephen Harris but in the end How perhaps said it best when he described the Canadian Army’s development of armoured warfare in the interwar period as the “great era of make-believe.”¹⁸⁶

The main Canadian source of intellectual debate on military issues was found in the pages of *Canadian Defence Quarterly (CDQ)*. There was the perception that the armour/mechanized debate was for the most part, non-existent in Canada; however, a detailed review of the articles published during the 1930s reveals a limited but healthy debate of the issues surrounding mechanization, tanks and armoured warfare. There is at least one article in each *CDQ* volume in the 1930s that deals with these topics either directly or indirectly. Canadian officers serious about their professional competence, as

¹⁸³ Douglas How, *the 8th Hussars: A History of the Regiment* (Sussex: Maritime Publishing Co. Ltd, 1964), 97.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

Harris suggested, should therefore have been aware of the emerging concepts on mechanization and armoured warfare and the implications they would have on the Canadian Army regardless of the financial constraints or size of the Canadian Army during this period.

The debate that garners the greatest attention in Canada over the use of the tank in combat occurred in a series of articles published in *CDQ* between 1934-1939 by then Maj E. L. M. Burns and Capt Guy Simonds; both of whom would briefly command armoured divisions in the coming war. The two could not agree on how to resolve the dilemma but neither was afraid to criticize current British doctrine or offer alternatives to it. In the end, the intellectual debate viewed tanks as a weapon to be used in co-operation with other arms rather than a weapon that could change the nature of future wars.¹⁸⁷ No clear evidence was found to suggest that this intellectual debate was the source of experimentation for the Canadian Army as was the case in Britain.

In 1936, the Canadian Militia was reorganized creating permanent tank battalions. To train and guide the newly formed tank battalions, the Canadian Tank School was created on 1 November 1936 in London, Ontario, under the command of Maj Frank Worthington of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). In May 1938 the school moved to Camp Borden and became the Canadian Armoured Fighting Vehicle School (CAFVS) with the first course conducted from 11 to 23 July 1938. Initial tactical training was rudimentary, since no one really understood how to move tactically with a group of armoured vehicles. This was not a significant problem since the doctrine of the

¹⁸⁷The Canadian Defence Quarterly ceased publication at the outbreak of war in 1939. James H. Lutz, "Canadian Military Thought, 1923-1939: A Profile Drawn from the Pages of the Old Canadian Defence Quarterly," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (Autumn 1979), 47.

day classified the tank as an infantry support vehicle meant to accompany the infantry in the assault on enemy positions at infantry speed.¹⁸⁸

Prior to the start of the Second World War, the common perception was that any tank units provided by Canada in time of war would be equipped with tanks produced in Britain.¹⁸⁹ When war broke out in September 1939, Canada possessed a total of only sixteen outdated British Light Mk VI tanks and 12 Carden-Loyd carriers. While four of the six established tank battalions had begun to master some of the basis tenets of armoured warfare through the improvised use of automobiles, progress was slow and uneven.¹⁹⁰ The Fort Garry Horse, as late as July 1939, was still conducting its annual training with horses despite being designated the 10th Armoured Regiment.¹⁹¹ The Lord Strathcona's Horse, another armoured regiment, received its first tank training in 1940 on two-man Renault tanks left over from the First World War and did not receive any true "modern" tanks until two Ram tanks arrived in the unit in the third week of March 1941.¹⁹²

The rapid success of German armoured forces in France in May 1940 convinced the Canadian government of the need to create armoured forces as a permanent component of the Canadian Army. General Order 250 formally created the Canadian Armoured Corps (CAC) on 13 August 1940 with a headquarters and "such other formations and units, which may later be authorized."¹⁹³ The formation of the 1st

¹⁸⁸ Marteinson, *Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 74.

¹⁸⁹ Canada. Army, *Army Headquarters Report no. 38, Tank Production in Canada* (Ottawa, 27 July 1950) para 1.

¹⁹⁰ Marteinson, *Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 78.

¹⁹¹ John Marteinson and G. T. Service, *The Gate: A History of the Fort Garry Horse* (Calgary: The Regiment, 1971), 57.

¹⁹² J. M. McAvity, *Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians): A Record of Achievement* (Toronto: Brigdens Ltd, 1947), 25.

¹⁹³ Marteinson, *Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 80.

Canadian Armoured Brigade occurred the same day under the command of Worthington, now promoted to Colonel (Col). Worthington was given broad authority for organizational matters and training standards for the whole CAC and he became the advisor to Ottawa on all matters concerning the equipping and training of armoured units.¹⁹⁴

Mobilized in September 1940, the 4th Canadian Division was originally formed as an infantry division and contained in its order of battle, the 10th, 11th and 12th Canadian Infantry Brigades.¹⁹⁵

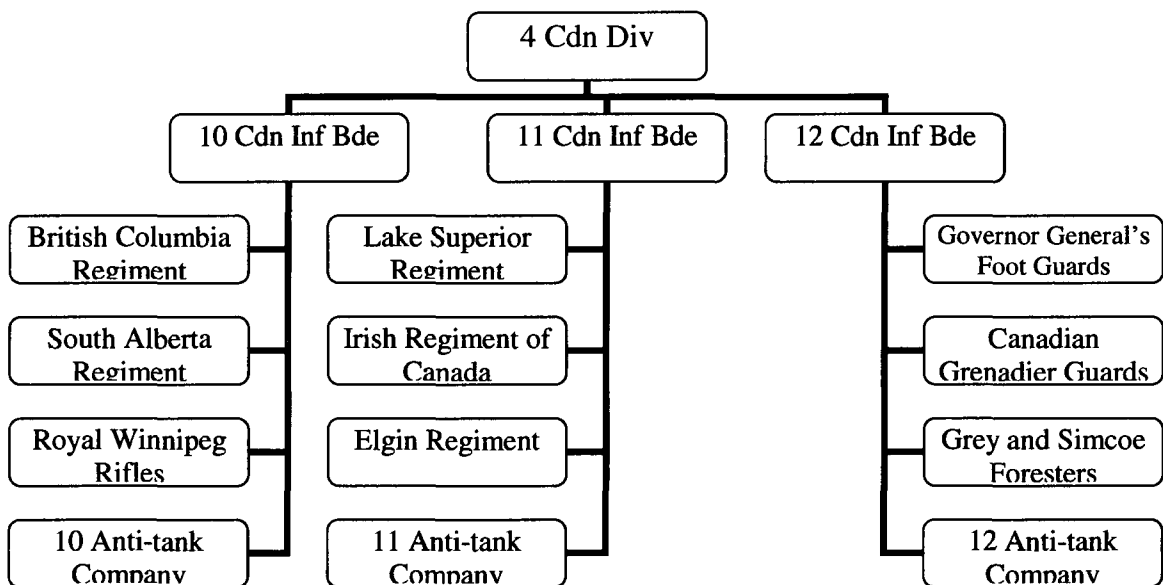


Figure 3-1: 4 Canadian Division Order of Battle from General Order 184 5 Sep 1940

Some regiments, such as the Grenadier Guards and the Foot Guards had long histories as part of the Canadian militia, while others, such as the South Alberta Regiment, were newly formed units. Four of the units the SAR, BCR, the Grenadier Guards and the Foot Guards began the war as infantry regiments. The Lake Superior Regiment was also an

¹⁹⁴ Canada. Army, *Army Headquarters Report No. 57, A Summary of Major Changes in Army Organization 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Canadian Military Headquarters, 1952), para 23- 24.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23. See also Order of Battle 4th Canadian Armoured Division. Grodzinski, *Operational Handbook* n.p.

infantry regiment but it was converted to a motorized infantry battalion. Few within the regiments had any clear idea of what the change from an infantry to armoured regiment really involved. In the case of the Foot Guards, the news of the conversion was met with mixed emotions since the unit had reached a high level of proficiency in infantry training and the conversion meant starting over again with basic level training in armour tactics and drills.¹⁹⁶

The start of the war triggered mobilization with all regiments reporting intakes of new recruits that surpassed their wartime-established strengths.¹⁹⁷ These unexpected numbers created considerable logistical problems, particularly in the areas of accommodation, feeding and in outfitting the troops with proper uniforms and weapons.¹⁹⁸ Training was rudimentary and concentrated on individual skills, soldier skills and physical training as the units waited for Canadian factories to produce the weapons needed to properly outfit the regiments and provide realistic training. New weapons were discussed but it was to be many months before they were actually seen or handled. The challenge was to keep the men busy. Route marches and sports competitions were stressed since “physical exhaustion” was seen as a “useful mental safety valve.”¹⁹⁹

The history for the division’s future regiments, for 1939 to 1941 can be summarized in one word— training! Endless weeks and months were spent familiarizing the men with new equipment and tactics. Unit proficiency was tested in progressively more complex exercises as potential leaders who could make the grade and those who

¹⁹⁶ G. T. Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards* (Ottawa: The Regiment, 1948), 64.

¹⁹⁷ For example the Grenadier Guards recorded an intake of 633 men over 46 days in June and July 1940. Fortescue A. Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1760-1964*. (Montreal: Gazette Printing, 1965), 242.

¹⁹⁸ George Stanley. *In the Face of Danger: The History of the Lake Superior Regiment* (Port Arthur: The Lake Superior Scottish Regiment, 1960), 53.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

could not were weeded out of the formations. Units struggled with coordinating forces in time and space as they sought to perfect battle procedure. While many knew the theory of battle procedure, “few had ever actually attempted to move, reconnoitre and issue orders, when time and space were real and urgent factors.”²⁰⁰ Officers studied the “*Notes from France*” which embodied the practical lessons derived from the fighting in France.²⁰¹ Selected officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) began rotations to formal training schools and to England and other battlefields in order to gain experience, which they then brought back to further educate the troops on new tactics and procedures.²⁰²

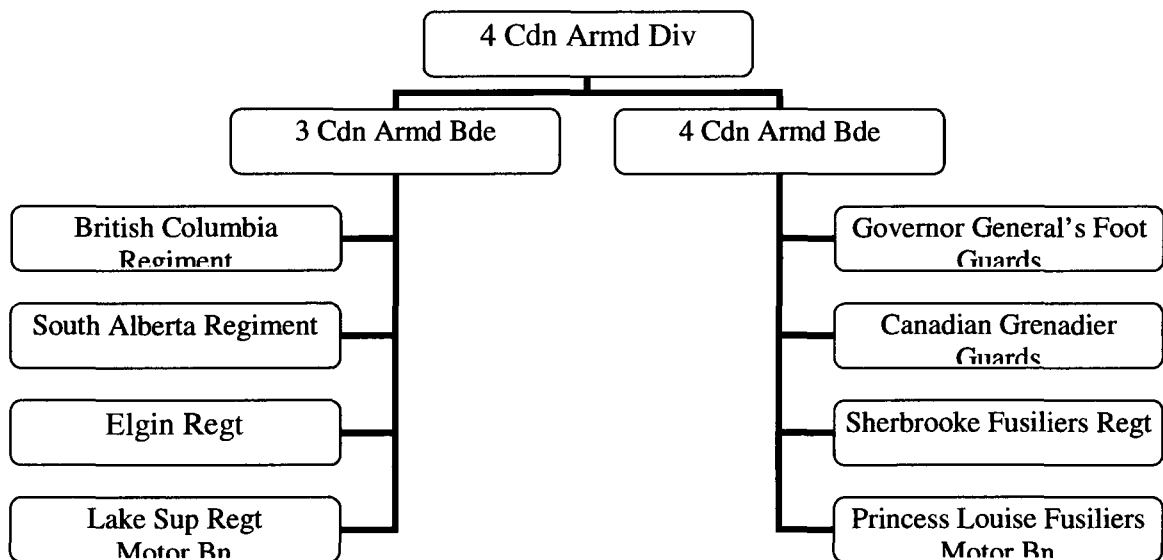


Figure 3-2: 4 Canadian Armoured Division Order of Battle January 1942

On 26 January 1942, the decision was made to convert the division to an armoured role, a move that required considerable re-organization and re-training. An armoured division at that time was composed of two armoured brigades and in the

²⁰⁰ G. L. Cassidy, *Warpath: From Tilly-La-Campagne to the Kusten Canal* (Markham: Paperjack Ltd, 1948), 39.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁰² Stanley, *In the Face of Danger*, 75.

restructuring of the division only six of the original nine infantry battalions became armoured regiments. The remainder were diverted to other formations.²⁰³

The problem of training the units of the division in armour tactics represented a considerable challenge since no one in the division had any experience with tanks or tank tactics. Worthington initially trained these units using a mixture of obsolete and in some cases First World War vintage tanks, gradually replacing them with Canadian Ram tanks,²⁰⁴ once the latter became available. The training of the division was considered more advanced because of its use of the Ram tank, which allowed for more realistic training. The conversion of the division from infantry to armour was accomplished in only five months and in August and September of 1942 the division crossed to England to complete its training in Aldershot.²⁰⁵ The 4th Cdn Armd Div was not, however, formally mobilized until the autumn of 1943 under Mobilization Order No. 91 on 7 October 1943.²⁰⁶

On 6 January 1943, the War Committee of the Cabinet approved the structure of the Canadian Army as two corps with three infantry divisions, each of three brigades, two armoured divisions, each of one infantry and one armoured brigade, and two independent tank brigades.²⁰⁷ The Canadian Army reorganization to reflect the new order of battle,

²⁰³ AHQ, Report No. 57, para 25. Marteinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corp*, 92.

²⁰⁴ In 1940 the Montreal Locomotive Works designed a tank based on the turret from an American M3 Lee with a cast steel hull. By June 1941 the first Ram prototype was completed and by the end of 1941, tanks were being shipped to Canadian units in England. These tanks were used by the 4th and 5th Cdn Armd Divs until they were replaced by Sherman tanks. Most of the tanks were used for training in Canada and Britain and many were converted to special tanks. Canada. Army, *Army Headquarters Report No. 38, Tank Production in Canada* (Ottawa, 27 July 1950) para 14-29.

²⁰⁵ Marteinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 92.

²⁰⁶ Canada, Army. *Canadian Military Headquarters Report No. 113, Situation of the Canadian Military Forces Overseas Winter, 1943-44: Part I: Progress in Equipment (Feb 1942-Dec 1943)*. (Ottawa: Canadian Military Headquarters, 25 January 1944), para 11.

²⁰⁷ Canada. Army, CMHQ Report No. 110, *Situation of the Canadian Military Forces Overseas, Autumn, 1943. Part II: Growth of the Canadian Army Overseas, October 1942-October 1943* (Ottawa: Canadian Military Headquarters, [1943]).

began on 11 January 1943. Mirroring the composition of British formations facilitated more effective cooperation between the armies of the two countries.

The units of the 4th Cdn Armd Div were organized as follows:

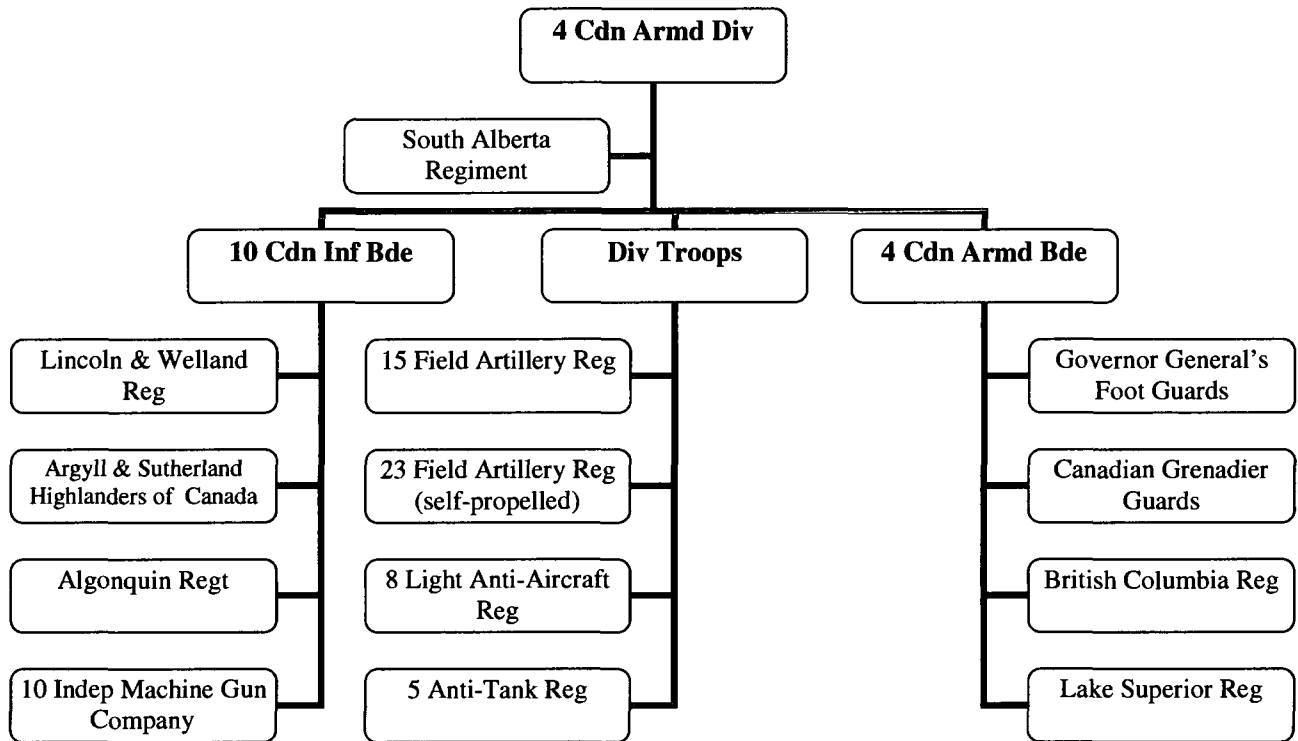


Figure 3-3: 4 Cdn Armoured Division Order of Battle January 1943

The adoption of British War establishments meant that the 4th Cdn Armd Div would now be composed of one armoured and one infantry brigade.²⁰⁸ In addition, the divisional artillery was increased with a field regiment to support each brigade. An armoured reconnaissance regiment mounted in tanks replaced the armoured car regiment. An independent machine-gun company was added to support the infantry.²⁰⁹ In keeping with this reorganization, the 10th Cdn Inf Bde replaced the 3rd Armd Bde and the South

²⁰⁸ The interesting dynamic that continued with the restructuring of armoured forces throughout the war was that armour steadily lost predominance as the war progressed. The unit ratio of armour to infantry to artillery shifted from 6:2:2 in 1939 to 4:4:4 in 1945. Place, *Military Training*, 97.

²⁰⁹ Grodzinski, *Operational Handbook*, 9.

Alberta Regiment became the division armoured reconnaissance unit. The formation retained the 4th Cdn Armd Bde as the division's armour brigade.

The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was officially created on 26 April 1943. It had no units under command and only four officers and four other ranks on strength when created. The only brigade unit that was in England at that time was the SAR. The remainder of the brigades' units would arrive in England between June and September 1943.²¹⁰ The division was fortunate that most of the units arrived in theatre with 75 to 100 percent of their scales of equipment.

The wartime establishment of a 1943-44 armoured division was 724 officers and 14,240 Other Ranks. The armoured division had a total of 3,414 vehicles. Among these were 246 cruiser tanks, 44 light tanks, 261 armoured tracked carriers, 100 armoured scout cars and 2,098 trucks and lorries.²¹¹ The armoured division was organized for employment as a single fighting entity under the direct control of a divisional commander.²¹² The defined roles of an armoured division were:

- co-operation with the main army in effecting the complete destruction of the enemy, usually by envelopment or by deep penetration through his defences after a gap has been made in his main position by other formations
- pursuit
- co-operation with other arms in the defence, usually by counterattack

²¹⁰ The Algonquin Regt arrived on Atlantic Transit (AT) Convoy 49 on 18 Jun 1943; 1 Battalion Lincoln and Welland Regt (Linc & Welland R), on AT 55 on 22 July 43; the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (A&SH of C) and the 23rd Cdn Field Regt, on AT Convoy 56 on 28 July 1943. The last unit to arrive was the New Brunswick Rangers on AT 64 on 19 September 1943. CMHQ, Report No. 110, para 17.

²¹¹ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 335-336 By comparison an American armoured division had 564 Officers and 10,052 enlisted men. The division was equipped with 83 light tanks, and 168 medium tanks. Steven J. Zaloga, *US Armored Divisions: The European Theater of Operations, 1944-45* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004), 18-19.

²¹² War Office, *MTP No. 41, Part 1*, 4.

- threatening the enemy and so force him to alter or disclose his disposition²¹³

It was an all-arms (infantry, artillery and armoured) formation designed to exploit the breeches in the enemy defence network by driving deep into the rear areas of the enemy defences and pursuing broken enemy formations.²¹⁴

Each arm or branch within the armoured division had a vital part to play in the execution of the division's mission and the effective co-operation of these arms was paramount to mission success.²¹⁵ The armoured brigade was designed as the striking power of the division and whenever possible, the armoured brigade would be employed as a concentrated force attacking over a narrow front of 500 to 1,000 yards to a depth of 3,000 to 3,500 yards.²¹⁶ An armoured brigade consisted of a brigade headquarters, three armoured regiments and a motorized infantry battalion representing a total of 220 cruiser and light tanks and 3000 all ranks.

The armoured brigade was not designed to attack organized defences and was subject to definite limitations with respect to how and when it could be employed. It required suitable ground over which to operate and, by itself, was not designed to hold ground. While it was possible to use the armoured brigade for operations at night, this was not the norm.²¹⁷ At night, the armoured regiments typically withdrew into a harbour for rest, replenishment and maintenance but even then they were susceptible to attack by enemy troops. The motor battalion was an integral part of the armoured brigade and was

²¹³ Ibid., 5

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

²¹⁶ Great Britain, War Office, *The Tactical Handling of the Armoured Division and its Components: Military Training Pamphlet no. 41, Part 3, the Motor Battalion* (London: The War Office, June 1943), 29.

²¹⁷ War Office, *MTP No 41, Part 1*, 7-10.

tasked with providing the armoured brigade with immediate infantry support; consequently, the motor battalion was organized for maximum mobility and flexibility.²¹⁸

The function of the infantry brigade was to enable the armoured brigade to come into action in favourable conditions. The infantry brigade consisted of a brigade headquarters, three infantry battalions and one support group consisting of 3500 all ranks. The normal roles of the infantry brigade involved, but were not restricted to, such tasks as:

- clearing and covering the advance of the armoured brigade in enclosed or difficult country
- attacking hastily prepared enemy positions which were covered by obstacles
- securing a “pivot”²¹⁹ or a series of pivots on which the operations of the armoured brigade would be based
- mopping up and in conjunction with engineers
- consolidate and hold areas of ground captured by the armour.²²⁰

The infantry in an armoured division normally moved in vehicles.²²¹ They possessed a wide range of weapons, could move quickly and could operate dismounted in support of the tanks or carry out all of the typical tasks associated with the infantry particularly at night.

The 1943 to 1944 timeframe witnessed the introduction of a host of new weapons systems that had to be learned and incorporated into Canadian doctrine. The anti-tank

²¹⁸ Terry Copp and Mike Bechthold, *The Canadian Battlefields in Normandy: A Visitor's Guide* (Kitchener: Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2004), 147.

²¹⁹ A pivot was a piece of ground from which further operations could be launched in any direction. A “bound” was a move by the attacking force between two tactically significant features on the way to the assigned objective

²²⁰ War Office, *MTP No. 41, Part 1*, 10.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

regiments of the armoured divisions were provided with the new 17-pounder (pdr) anti-tank guns and each regiment consisted of two 17-pdr batteries and two three-inch M-10 self-propelled batteries. Another change arose from the decision to provide one of the two field regiments in the armoured division with self-propelled 25-pounders. This weapon was called "Sexton" and was a 25-pdr mounted on a Ram tank chassis. The 23rd Cdn Field Regt of the 4th Cdn Armd Div had its full complement of 24 vehicles.²²²

The key equipment issue for the Canadian armoured formations was the Ram tank. By June 1943 enough Ram tanks (1,147) were in the hands of the Canadian Army in England to outfit the complete establishment of Canadian armoured regiments. However, an undated memorandum written in March 1943 identified a total of 113 major and minor modifications required to the tank.²²³ Increased protection and arming the tank with a 75 mm gun were identified as the top priorities. In order to equip the armoured formations with what was considered a battle-worthy tank, Canada either had to produce a new tank or undertake radical modifications to the Ram tank.²²⁴

Brig Wyman, commander of the 1st Cdn Tk Bde, carried out a detailed comparison of the Ram and American Sherman tanks since his unit had used both vehicles. Wyman's findings, detailed in a report dated 31 May 1943, stated that the Ram II did not meet the requirements of a first-line operational tank and that its disadvantages were far more numerous than its advantages in comparison with the Sherman.²²⁵ In November 1943, the decision was made not to employ the Ram as a cruiser tank. The

²²² CMHQ, Report No. 113, para 42 &46.

²²³ CMHQ, Report No. 113, para. 60.

²²⁴The tank question was the focus of a meeting on 3 June 1943 at HQ First Cdn Army. The initial decision was to modify 600 of the available tanks with a 75 mm gun and reserve these vehicles for one armoured division. Of the remaining vehicles, 100 would be rearmed with a 75 mm gun but all of these would be reserved for training purposes. CMHQ, Report No. 113, para 61.

²²⁵ CMHQ, Report No. 113, para. 64.

Sherman would equip all Canadian tank formations. The Ram tank would, however, retain its role in armour training while others were converted to specialty roles, including assault and recovery vehicles for the engineers.²²⁶

While the British and Canadian Armies had finally settled on a common organizational structure for their armoured divisions, the Canadian decision to equip all armoured formations with the Sherman M4 fitted with a 75 mm gun as their basic battle tank created a considerable problem. The Sherman was inferior, in almost every sense, to German tanks in the field.²²⁷ British intelligence had confirmed the existence of the Panzerkampfwagen (Pzkw)VI (Tiger) tank as early as September 1942 and captured tanks were examined after the German Afrika Corps surrendered in Tunisia. The Tiger had 102 mm of frontal armour and mounted an 88-mm gun. Furthermore, the Pzkw MK V (Panther) with a high velocity 75-mm gun and 100 mm of frontal armour was identified in early 1943. The British had also learned that the Germans were using anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns mounted on a variety of self-propelled chassis to augment their armour forces.²²⁸ The armour protection of the Sherman tank was insufficient to stop the shells from any of the guns on these tanks. Senior Allied commanders were sending their armoured forces into Europe with inferior tanks and doctrine. The hope, however, was that the considerable quantities of Sherman tanks would eventually overcome the qualitative German advantage. While this assumption was to prove true, it came at a terrible cost in lives and materiel.

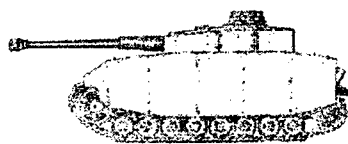
²²⁶ Ibid., 65.

²²⁷ The Sherman was considered to be a much easier vehicle to maintain and repair than the listed German tanks.

²²⁸ Terry Copp and Robert Vogel, *Maple Leaf Route: Falaise* (Alma: Maple Leaf Route, 1983), 24.

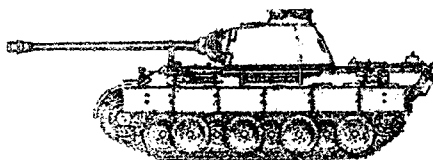
Panzer IV H/J

Crew: 5 **Weight:** 25 tons **Speed:** 24mph
Armour: front 50 to 80mm; side 30mm
Main Armament: 75mm L48
L: 19ft 4in **H:** 8ft 10in **W:** 10ft 8in



Panther

Crew: 5 **Weight:** 45 tons **Speed:** 28mph
Armour: front 80 to 120mm; side 50mm
Main Armament: 75mm KwK 42
L: 22ft 7in **H:** 9ft 10in **W:** 11ft 3in



Sturmgeschutz III

Crew: 4 **Weight:** 24 tons **Speed:** 24mph
Armour: front 80mm; side 30mm
Main Armament: 75mm Stik 40
L: 18ft 4in **H:** 7ft **W:** 9ft 9in



Tiger I

Crew: 5 **Weight:** 54 tons **Speed:** 18mph
Armour: front 100mm; side 80mm
Main Armament: 88mm KwK 36
L: 20ft 4in **H:** 9ft 5in **W:** 12ft 3in

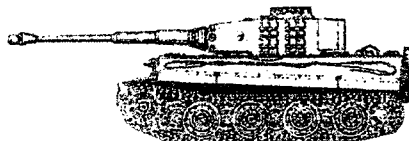


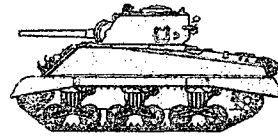
Figure 3-4: German Tanks. Buckley, *British Armour in the Normandy Campaign*, 117.

The British War Office solution to the “tank capability gap” was to install a 17-pdr gun in a portion of the Sherman tanks. These tanks were called “Firefly” and were initially allocated at fifteen tanks per armoured regiment. At the end of 1943, the 4th Cdn Armd Div was to have 271 cruiser tanks, 63 light tanks, 27 command tanks and nine recovery tanks. The division actually had on strength 44 Sherman and 266 Ram tanks, four light tanks and no command or recovery tanks. By early February 1944, the process of crew conversion from the Ram tanks to the Sherman tanks became the main focus of divisional training.²²⁹

²²⁹ CHHQ, *Report No. 113*, para 77.

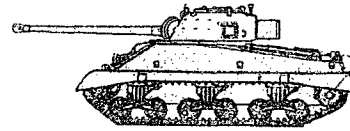
M4 Sherman

Crew: 5 **Weight:** 30 tons **Speed:** 24mph
Armour: front 50 to 80mm; side 45mm
Main Armament: medium velocity 75mm
L: 19ft 10in **H:** 9ft **W:** 8ft 7in



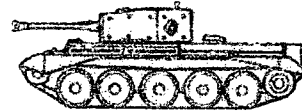
M4 Sherman Firefly

Crew: 4 **Weight:** 30 tons **Speed:** 24mph
Armour: front 50 to 80mm; side 45mm
Main Armament: 17-pdr
L: 19ft 10in **H:** 9ft **W:** 8ft 9in



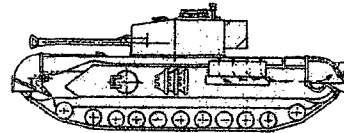
A27M Cromwell

Crew: 5 **Weight:** 30 tons **Speed:** 35mph
Armour: front 63 to 76mm - maximum later increased to 101mm; side 32 to 63mm
Main Armament: medium velocity 75mm
L: 20ft 10in **H:** 8ft 2in **W:** 10ft



A42 Churchill

Crew: 5 **Weight:** 40 tons **Speed:** 12mph
Armour: front 140 to 152mm; side 95mm
Main Armament: medium velocity 75mm, 6-pdr or close support weapons
L: 24ft 5in **H:** 9ft **W:** 10ft 1in



M3/5 Stuart or Honey

Crew: 4 **Weight:** 15 tons **Speed:** 40mph
Armour: front 40mm; side 25mm
Main Armament: 37mm
L: 15ft 10in **H:** 7ft 10in **W:** 7ft 6in

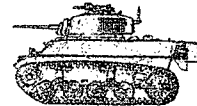


Figure 3-5. Allied Tanks. Buckley, *British Armour in the Normandy Campaign*, 110.

The 4 Cdn Armd Div spent the time from September 1943 to February 1944 absorbing new men and equipment in order to bring the division up to its established strength. Armed with common doctrine, organization and tanks, the hope was that British and Canadian armoured brigades and division would be inter-operable thereby increasing the operational flexibility available to Simonds, Crerar and Montgomery. Events would reveal that British and Canadian armoured units would eventually be equally able to support each other's operations but only after having gained crucial experience in combat. As the last Canadian division to enter the theatre the units of the 4 Cdn Armd Div would be injected into some of the most intensive fighting in Normandy. The men of the division and its commanders would have to learn on the go.

The Canadian Army was late entering the armoured warfare arena and Canadian armoured forces had much to learn before they could effectively challenge the Germans on the battlefield. How the forces were initially employed was a reflection in part of the Canadian experiences in the interwar period. German philosophy stressed quality in materiel, boldly used by their commanders who were trying to achieve quick victories. The Anglo-Canadian approach was more measured where materiel abundance and firepower were designed to save manpower and compensate for any possible shortfall in quality or experience. In the end, the British Army would lead the way for the Canadian Army in thought, experimentation and organization of armoured warfare but not in success on the battlefield. That honour would be equally shared.

Chapter Four: Preparation for Battle

Maj Gen George Kitching succeeded Maj Gen Frank Worthington as GOC, 4th Cdn Armd Div, on 29 February 1944. Kitching, on the basis of his experience in combat determined that the division required extensive combined arms training if it was to assume its planned role as a break-out formation in the liberation of France. Kitching also knew that he had a finite period of time to imprint his policies on how the division would function under his command. While Kitching embarked upon a comprehensive scheme of education and training for his division, external factors that included waterproofing,²³⁰ distinguished visitor visits, and the division's place on the priority list for training limited Kitching's training efforts.

John Marteinson lends support to Kitching's assessment of training priorities through his examination of the training conducted by the 4th Cdn Armd Div after its reorganization in January 1943. The division was given until early September 1943 to train itself to a point where it could conduct a series of division-level exercises in Norfolk. The first two weeks of these exercises were given to squadron operations, followed by regimental level, brigade level and finally divisional level exercises in GRIZZLY II on 22 October and BRIDON, which started on 2 November 1943.²³¹

Grizzly II was designed to practice the division in an advance-to-contact, the crossing of a river obstacle and a frontal assault upon an enemy position. While the

²³⁰Waterproofing involved a 3-step process of protecting vehicles against the corrosion involved in wading the vehicles ashore through salt water. Once the waterproofing process was complete, vehicles were restricted in how far and how fast they could travel. After stage "A" vehicles could be driven 200 miles, after Stage "B" they could move 10 miles and after stage "B2" they could not be driven. War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-30 June 1944, App 5.

²³¹ Marteinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 124.

exercise reached a successful conclusion, mistakes were plenty.²³² In an open letter to all of the officers of 4th Cdn Armd Bde after GRIZZLY II, Brig J.D.B. Smith, the 4th Cdn Armd Bde commander, was very critical of their collective performance. While the efforts of the other ranks drew high praise, Smith was clear in stating that the officers were the ones responsible for not getting food to the men when they should have had it, for getting them lost, for driving them extra hours in the rain and blackout; for the “damnable” business of men not knowing where they were at times; and for most of their discomfort which could have been avoided. He went on to state that, although their part in the exercise apparently satisfied a lot of onlookers, “you and I know quite honestly that we have done and can do much better.”²³³ He expected the lessons learned from GRIZZLY II to be applied in exercise BRIDON.

Exercise BRIDON pitted the 4th Cdn Armd Div in Canadian Ram tanks against the 9th British Armd Div equipped with the faster British Cromwell tank. Each division represented the forces of a fictitious nation bordering a neutral nation that possessed a mine that both countries desired. In the exercise scenario, negotiations broke down between the two nations, causing both to invade the neutral country in order to obtain the desired mine. The 4th Cdn Armd Div manoeuvred quickly and drove straight to the mine arriving before the British. The Canadians established defensive positions and awaited the British attack.

The 9th Br Armd Div attacked, and over the span of two days, ran into well-prepared anti-tank defenses that umpires declared had destroyed many of the British tanks. Ninety percent of the British tank kills were claimed by the guns of the 15th Cdn

²³² Stanley, *In the Face of Danger*, 125.

²³³ Letter 4 CAB/4-5-1 dated 26 Oct 43. War Diary, 28 Armoured Regiment (British Columbia Regiment), 1-30 March 1944.

Field Regt. British forces were judged to have been soundly defeated by the Canadians, forcing the early termination of the exercise.²³⁴ The 4th Cdn Armd Div was judged to have performed well in its first test as a full division.

Despite this seemingly convincing performance, Brig Pat Grieve, who at the time was a lieutenant with the Grenadier Guards, recalled that there was not much tactical realism in these exercises:

It was all this naval formation-type of manoeuvre. I can't remember any exercise where we worked in support of the infantry. On the final exercise we simply drove to the objective, everyone moving at once.²³⁵

Even though Worthington proclaimed that he had complete confidence in his division, the conditions under which it had been evaluated were questionable.²³⁶ After these exercises, the 4th Cdn Armd Div moved back to Sussex in November. Unfortunately, BRIDON proved to be the last division-level exercise ever conducted by the 4th Cdn Armd Div.

The First Cdn Army training directive No 18 dated 15 December 1943 warned that 1944 was the last opportunity for all commanders to make their men fighting fit. Individual training was to receive top priority. Collective training was to reach platoon level by January 1944; company and battalion levels, in February and March, except in the case of the 4th Cdn Armd Div, which would continue with brigade and division training in the latter part of January and early February. On 24 December 1943, the division issued training instruction No 18 which covered tactical training for armour

²³⁴ Robert A. Spencer, *History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment: Royal Canadian Artillery 1941-1945* (London: Elsevier, 1945), 49-50.

²³⁵ Marteinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 124.

²³⁶ As the Allies began to encounter more fixed German positions in Africa and Italy the reports from the field now put greater emphasis on closer co-operation between the arms, both in planning and in battle. The naval type of manoeuvre displayed in BRIDON was typical of the armoured thinking between the war on how armoured formations would operate. Graves, *South Albertas*, 83, 86.

during the period 1 January – 31 March 1944. This training instruction directed that tank-infantry cooperation was to be the subject of study in all units. It also directed that the 4th Cdn Armd Bde would train closely with 10th Cdn Inf Bde. After reviewing the respective war diaries, it does not seem that this portion of the directive was followed.²³⁷ By early February, the process of crew conversion from the Ram tanks to the Sherman tanks became the main focus of divisional training.²³⁸

Worthington had established a four-phase training scheme for the brigades. Phase I required the completion of all individual training. This entailed knowing, by heart, all of the individual tasks inherent in a soldier's position as either a trooper in an armoured regiment or soldier in an infantry battalion. Other requirements included first aid training, use of personal equipment and map reading. Phase II for infantry involved training at the sub unit level. Battle drill was emphasized during this phase. Phase III concentrated on company and battalion tactics, again using battle drill as the basis. Phase IV involved a concentration of the entire division in action.²³⁹ Woven throughout these phases was a one-day-a-week officers' study session where commanding officer's would concentrate on the training or professional development of their officers. The fundamental assumption in the training cycle was that the lower level components such as companies and platoons had to get the elements of combat down first before the higher level formations, the battalions and brigades could manoeuvre properly.

The emphasis in training in the armoured regiments was different. Phase I was common across the division. Phase II involved crew drill, crew control and fire orders,

²³⁷ The war diaries of both brigades were reviewed from December 1943 to February 1944. The training in March of 1944 changed completely under Kitching.

²³⁸ Marteinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 124-125.

²³⁹ Special Instructions from Major-General Worthington to Brig Gostling dated 10 May 43. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 March 1944, App 2.

vehicle decontamination, march discipline, the digging of weapons pits and the use of binoculars in searching terrain. Phase III involved formation tactics, including formations on roads and cross country, fire positions, orders, crossing obstacles, locating the enemy and dismounted patrols. This phase consisted of a progressive use of training aids and methodologies, which normally started with the use of blackboards and sand or cloth table lessons, advanced to tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs) where the crews would walk the ground and ended with mounted exercises and field fire exercises. The syllabus was designed to have troops and squadrons trained and ready for squadron and regimental exercises by 21 March 1944.²⁴⁰

A typical week of training included such topics as compass, map reading, studying French maps, cross country marches, maintenance, first aid training, 75 mm gunnery, range practice on personal weapons and lectures on German tactics. These topics were studied independently among the six sub units of the regiment (Sqn Adm, A/A trp, Recce trp and the three fighting squadrons). Each of the sub-units had its own training syllabus for the week built around these topics.²⁴¹

Saturdays were usually half days of work and, depending on the unit, Sundays had either mandatory or voluntary church parades. Leave was widely available and unit vehicles were typically tasked to take the troops into the local towns on Saturday and Sunday. Dances, movies and sports competitions were regularly scheduled to keep the troops occupied. Extended leave was not restricted until June.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Training Instruction No. 9 TP Trg: Feb –Mar 44.dated 4 Feb 44. War Diary, 29 Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (South Alberta Regiment), 1-29 February 1944, App IV.

²⁴¹ Training syllabus 24 Apr-30 Apr 44. War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-31 April 1944.

²⁴² In the GGFG, there was a practice of having a gasless day every Saturday while in garrison. On these days all vehicle movement was prohibited except for Regimental HQ vehicles. It is not known whether this was a regimental practice or was mandated for all units within 4th Cdn Armd Div. It is only mentioned in the GGFG war diary. War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-30 March 1944.

The routine in the field depended in large part on the type of unit either armoured or infantry and the type of training “scheme” being carried out. The infantry units would have more time to execute their schemes than the armoured units since the armoured units had to devote a portion of their time to vehicle maintenance, while the infantry soldier only had to worry about himself. The quality of training at the ranges for the armour units was largely dependent upon the weather and ammunition. Numerous entries in the war diaries for March and April indicate that squadron shoots were delayed or restricted by bad weather and by faulty ammunition.²⁴³

Any assessment of the training regime and readiness state of the division prior to its entry into theatre must start with an assessment of the impact that external factors, over which Kitching had little or no control, had on his ability to train the division to a standard he felt was acceptable. These external factors can be broadly grouped under three main areas: planning assumptions made in the design of the OVERLORD plan; planning decisions made at senior headquarters; and administrative decisions. Taken as a whole, these factors had a decidedly negative impacted on the division’s ability to achieve a high state of readiness prior to its entry into battle.

In the administrative category, three factors came into play: VIP visits, the reorganization of the armoured reconnaissance regiments and tank troop, and the policy of the incremental exchange of Ram tanks for Shermans and, in particular, Sherman Firefly tanks. The 4 Cdn Armd Div was tasked to perform a number of parades for distinguished visitors. These included King George VI on 9 March, Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King on 17 May, and Gen Eisenhower on 29 May. These visits absorbed a considerable amount of staff work, usually entailed rehearsals, which directly took away

²⁴³ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-30 March 1944.

from training time, and, in some cases, caused the postponement of exercises.²⁴⁴ In one case, one of the armoured regiments working with 6 Cdn Inf Bde was recalled from the field so that they could participate in a parade.²⁴⁵ The typical routine for visits was to notify the division of an impending visit but not to give them the name of who was coming nor a specific visit date. The division was then given 24 to 48 hours warning.

A case in point was the visit of the Prime Minister. On 24 April the division was placed on 48-hours notice for a visitor who turned out to be Prime Minister Mackenzie King. The entire division was to be paraded. The visit was initially scheduled for 13 May and a rehearsal of the march past was carried out on 4 May while the troops were in the training area.²⁴⁶ A full rehearsal was run on 11 May with Simonds as the reviewing officer. The visit was then postponed and then rescheduled and finally executed on 17 May 44. Four training days were lost preparing for this one visit.

The second administrative issue was the exchange of Ram tanks for Sherman tanks. The war diaries of the armoured regiments recorded receiving continuous allotments of small numbers of Sherman tanks between March and late May, with the regiments receiving their complete complement of Sherman Firefly tanks only in late June. The low numbers of available Sherman tanks with which to practice meant that available resources had to be widely shared and that tactics had to be practiced with mixed tank units; i.e., Sherman and Ram tanks, each with different performance and characteristics, a scenario that hampered realistic training. In addition to the already limited range time, the tank crews now had to become proficient in the 75 mm and 17 pdr guns on borrowed Sherman tanks. Not having an assigned tank and the limited number of

²⁴⁴ War Diary, Algonquin Regiment, 1-30 May 1944, entry 16 May.

²⁴⁵ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-30 May 1944, entry 4 May.

²⁴⁶ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-30 May 1944, entry 4 May.

days allotted to the regiments for range practice had a negative impact on gunnery accuracy.

The decline in gunner proficiency was of such concern that, on 1 May 44, the regimental adjutant of the Foot Guards issued a memorandum on gunnery training describing the quality of range results as “not at all satisfactory considering the previous high standard of shooting and the amount of initial training given...”²⁴⁷ The memorandum identified the education of the gunner as having been neglected during the “... long periods that elapse when he is not actually on the range and practicing his trade.”²⁴⁸ The memo viewed this problem not only as a gunner issue but also as a crew team training issue and directed that the training of a gunner would be given in his own tank, with his own crew, under the supervision of his own crew commander. As the memo pointed out, bad gunnery was not always the fault of the gunner. The Foot Guards was the only regiment to record taking its entire complement of Sherman and Stuart tanks to the ranges on two occasions, 19 and 25 May, to specifically give their tank crews practice in gunnery.²⁴⁹ Compounding the training problem was the fact that the regiment did not receive its first Sherman Firefly until 11 June.

The second issue was the ordered reorganizations of the armoured reconnaissance regiments and tank troops, which took place during March 1944. The reorganization of the armoured reconnaissance regiments resulted from a decision made by Montgomery that all armoured reconnaissance regiments in 21st Army Group were to organize on the war establishment of an armoured regiment. The regiments would retain their armoured

²⁴⁷ Memo Gunnery Training dated 1 May 44. War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-30 May 1944, App 5.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

reconnaissance designations but would now possess 78 tanks (61 Sherman, 11 Stuart and six Crusader tanks), and nine Humber scout cars.²⁵⁰

The second reorganization involved the tank troop. The war establishment of the armoured regiments changed from three to four Sherman tanks in each tank troop: three tanks with the 75mm gun and one armed with the 17 pdr.²⁵¹ This change meant that troop drills had to be modified, relearned and honed until the new required drills and actions became second nature. These decisions impacted the SAR more significantly than the armoured regiments of 4th Cdn Armd Bde since the SAR had to first reorganize as a regiment and then learn new tank troop tactics.

Concerning the planning assumptions in the OVERLORD plan, there are a number of significant decisions that must be noted. The first decision was the requirement to mandate waterproofing of all vehicles that were due to land up to D+42.²⁵² The expectation of 21st Army Group planners was an early and deep penetration to Caen on D-Day, consequently, there was an expectation that the 4th Cdn Armd Div would enter the theatre soon (within days) of the invasion. This expectation drove a requirement to have all the division vehicles waterproofed and ready for loading by early June 1944. To achieve this goal, the process of waterproofing vehicles was initiated at the beginning of May 1944.

This timetable created a considerable training challenge for the armoured regiments from May onwards since waterproofed vehicles were severely restricted with respect to how many miles they could be driven. Whenever possible, infantry companies

²⁵⁰ Graves, *South Albertas*, 87.

²⁵¹ Unit Circular Letter dated 20 Mar 44. War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-30 March 1944.

²⁵² 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group on the Continent of Europe; 6 June 1944-8 May 1945* (Germany: 21st Army Group, 1945), 6.

and tank squadrons combined their training in infantry-cum-tank tactics. Some units, such as the Grenadier Guards, decided to move into the training areas to reduce travel mileage on the tanks thereby facilitating more training with their tanks.²⁵³ With a diminishing number of vehicles available for tactical training within the armoured regiments, as May progressed, training became confined to maintenance, sports and “hardening” exercises.”²⁵⁴

If the OVERLORD plan unfolded as expected, the Allies were to be beyond the beaches and on their way to Falaise by D+20. If true, then the requirement to wade vehicles ashore through high surf or water conditions, as the invading forces were forced to do on D-Day, would have been minimal. Whether one considers the OVERLORD plan or the events as they actually unfolded, there was no reason to believe that the vehicles of the 4 Cdn Armd Div would have had to wade ashore under D-Day conditions. The reality was that practically all of the vehicles of the division landed dry. The entire waterproofing effort was largely wasted, along with all of the valuable time that could have been used training.

The immediate impact of the waterproofing directive, viewed in hindsight, was that Kitching had only two months (March and April) to train his division, utilizing the entire compliment of vehicles and equipment. The decision to waterproof all vehicles effectively eliminated any possibility of any large-scale training exercise after May 1944. When the incremental exchange of Ram and Sherman tanks was added to this situation,

²⁵³ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-30 May 1944

²⁵⁴ Hardening exercises usually involved physical fitness such as route marches, speed marches and sports days.

the division was forced to waterproof the very tanks on which they should have used for training almost upon receipt!²⁵⁵

The second planning decision that must be called into question was the lack of consideration for the fight beyond the beaches. The priority in training and on training resources was on those units that would be making the original assault. There is no doubt that this was viewed as the most critical part of the operation and rightly so. But viewed objectively, the fight on the beaches and the immediate vicinity of the beaches was going to be won or lost on the skill and determination at the sub-unit level, squad, platoon and possibly company level. These skills could have easily been acquired on the smaller training areas in Britain. The 4 Cdn Armd Div, as a follow-on force, was designated to fight the mobile battle beyond the beaches. This type of warfare required fast-moving, combined arms columns that could manoeuvre and fight at speed. To hone these skills required large training areas. Consequently, the allocation of training resources when compared to assigned roles was questionable.

The focus on the assault formations appears to have led to a conscious decision on the part of higher headquarters to sacrifice the internal cohesion and effectiveness of 4 Cdn Armd Div. During March there is evidence that there was joint training between the two brigades of the division with both the BCRs and Foot Guards recording training sessions with the infantry regiments in 10 Cdn Inf Bde. From April onwards, however, there is mention of the BCRs working with the Argylls during a week in May but no similar entries found in the war diaries of either the Foot Guards or Grenadier Guards. In fact, there are more references of the tanks of 4 Cdn Armd Bde working with 2 Cdn Inf Div than with 10 Cdn Inf Bde units. The Grenadier Guards, for example, reported

²⁵⁵ Monthly Summary, War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 April 1944.

working with the 4 Cdn Inf Bde in March and the 6 Cdn Inf Bde in April, May and June, with only one entry of a small scale exercise with the Algonquin Regiment during the same March-to-June timeframe.²⁵⁶ Based on the evidence, it is clear that the armoured resources of 4 Cdn Armd Bde were being used by 2nd Cdn Corps to enhance the readiness of 2 Cdn Div, at the expense of formation cohesion between the brigades of the 4 Cdn Armd Div.

While the 4 Cdn Armd Div arrived in theatre at almost full wartime establishment in both men and equipment, the waterproofing requirement combined with the premature declaration of codeword CORNELIUS on 8 June (which meant that from 15 June onwards the division was to be ready to move on six hours notice) effectively immobilized the division for the entire month of June. The six-hour notice to move was not altered until 28 June when it was increased to 36 hours.²⁵⁷ These two factors forced the division to concentrate on regimental and battalion training. In the three months prior to the division going into battle, little realistic combined arms training between the brigades could be done, thereby forcing the training effort into non-optimal activities such as TEWTs, map exercises, range firing and hardening exercises. While this training regime was effective in improving the readiness state of the individual soldiers and their units, it did little to provide realistic training for the command and control elements of the

²⁵⁶ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-30 May 1944, entry 3 May Attachments were as follows: GGFG—Fusilier Mont Royal, CGG—Cameron's of Canada, BCR—South Saskatchewan Regt. The training was to be progressive and began with lectures by the commanders where each would explain the characteristics and mechanisms of their particular service. This would progress to a tank squadron operating with a rifle company. The foundation portion of the training was focussed on the communication and indication of targets between the two elements. This was considered the key to successful cooperation between the two. Tactics would develop the quick drills between the infantry platoon and tank troop in support to destroy enemy MG, an anti-tank position. Infantry and tanks in the attack, cooperation in defence and tactical move from assembly areas to form up points were also stressed and practiced. Memorandum, 6th Brigade Training Instruction dated 27 April 1944. Canada. Army, *Army Headquarters Report No. 66, Training of 1st Canadian Army (Less 3rd Cdn Inf Div & 2nd Cdn Armd Bde), Dec 43-May 44* (Ottawa: Army Headquarters, 12 Jan 1954), para 5.

²⁵⁷ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-30 June 1944, entry 28 Jun.

division at any level. Most of all, these training methods failed to expose and condition officers and key decision makers to the uncertainty and chaos inherent in combat.

Had the planning consideration for the battle beyond the beaches been reviewed in earnest, it would have shown that the 4 Cdn Armd Div needed to be a cohesive fighting formation capable of speed, manoeuvrability and the application of firepower on a divisional scale. Consider, for example, an alternate scenario where 4 Cdn Armd Div vehicles were not waterproofed and the invasion unfolded as it did. Once it was recognized that the need for the division in France was delayed and with the bulk of available Allied combat units in France, the large training areas and the month of June would have been available for the division to carry out large scale divisional level exercises to bring it up to the highest possible level of proficiency with all its assigned equipment immediately prior to moving into theatre. Had the invasion unfolded as planned and the division employed in France in early June, the division would still have had all the training time and vehicles to train on that were lost in May because of waterproofing. In either case, the overall level of effectiveness would have been greatly enhanced.

The most significant planning mistake was not allowing Kitching to conduct at least one large-scale exercise to hone the skills of both the fighting and support elements of the division. While the training of the individual units was approaching a very high standard by March 1944, Kitching was particularly critical of the level of combined arms cooperation that was present in the division. Kitching noted that the brigade and divisional staffs had not been tested on exercises of a long enough duration that would

have taxed their resources.²⁵⁸ On taking command Kitching had pleaded with Simonds to be permitted to conduct a series of field exercises, similar to BRIDON and GRIZZLY, to hone the division's skills, to impart the lessons learned from his previous experience and to allow him to get to know the abilities of his subordinate commanders.

Simonds refused but it is quite unlikely that Simonds, as a corps commander would have had the authority to grant such a request. Kitching was told that there would be no large movement of troops and that the only exercises viable within the limited confines of Britain and its training areas were TEWTS and skeleton exercises. As a follow-on formation for the invasion of France, 4th Cdn Armd Div was not high enough on the priority list to gain access to the facilities that could accommodate large-scale exercises.²⁵⁹ In denying Kitching's request, it would appear that Simonds was forced to yield for administrative and political reasons rather than operational reasons.

Kitching later wrote:

We were not allowed to hold any divisional exercises with everyone participating and I think that was what was needed. Whilst the individual regiments had reached a good standard of training, the essential cooperation between the armour, infantry and artillery had not been practiced to the extent it should have been. Nor had the Brigade and divisional headquarters had enough experience of command and control, on exercise of some duration, that would have taxed their resources and taught them lessons. We rehearsed our communications on Corps map exercises and so improved our battle procedures but it was not possible to create the "fog of war; that engulfs a unit in its first actions."²⁶⁰

The lack of realistic training and the "fog of war" would play significant roles in the performance of the division's commanders in August 1944.

Another obstacle to training was the operational requirement for 4 Cdn Armd Div to provide a real time reserve for homeland defence. During April 44, First Cdn Army

²⁵⁸ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 180.

²⁵⁹ Graves, *South Albertas*, 87.

²⁶⁰ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 180-181.

was tasked to provide a Mobile Infantry Brigade Group (Inf Bde Gp) which was to constitute a real time District Reserve for Sussex. Effective 21 April, 10th Inf Bde was tasked to fill this role, coming under operational command of the British 45th Division. The Inf Bde Grp was to act as a reserve for the district against any enemy who might land by sea or air in the District but would only come under operational command in active operations. Liaison, however, was required between the assigned units at all other times. The immediate response units were required to be on four hours notice to move in daytime and two hours notice to move at night. The infantry battalions of 10th Cdn Inf Bde were rotated through this assignment and duty ran from 1200 hrs of one day until 1200 hrs of the next. Consequently, battalion training had to be scheduled around these assignments.²⁶¹

Given all of the challenges to the training program of the division, what was achieved in the training? Kitching implemented a number of changes to address shortcomings that he saw within the division. He began by interviewing and assessing the capabilities of all of his key staff officers. He initiated an extensive visit program that saw him visit all 4th Cdn Armd Div units on a rotational basis where he outlined his thoughts on how the division would fight and conveyed the lessons learned from his time in Italy. He personally supervised many cloth model exercises and TEWTs where he would walk the ground with the soldiers to explain what he expected out of the various scenarios being practiced.²⁶²

²⁶¹ The Bde Grp was to consist of an Inf Bde HQ 3 Inf Bns One Fd Regt, one Anti tank Bty and one LAA bty. One Fd Coy, One MG Coy One Inf Bde Coy RCASC one Fd Amb One Sec Provost. On 7 June, 10th Cdn Inf Bde was relieved of its responsibility of District Reserve in support of 45 (Br) Div in part because the brigade could no longer field the vehicles necessary, due to waterproofing, to respond in the time needed. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 June 1944, App 1.

²⁶² The Exercises were called SCREEN I & II and Exercise FIRM BASE.

Kitching also attempted to provide practical experience to his units by recruiting any veteran visiting England from other theatres to talk to his troops about their experiences. He cross posted senior officers with battle experience into his armoured regiments and moved officers temporarily from the infantry units to the armoured units and vice versa, in an attempt to have them better understand the operations of the other services. This policy of bringing in officers with previous experience in Italy would prove to be a double-edged sword since the lessons learned from Italy were not always relevant to the actual fighting in Normandy.

Kitching set about introducing as much realism into his staff training as he could. He ordered his staff out of their offices and into tents to give them a better understanding of the working environment they would meet in the field. He instituted a comprehensive series of exercises that tested the ability of the rear echelon units and headquarters units to move at any time while practicing march and convoy discipline and transitioning from convoys to harbour areas.²⁶³ They also practiced the proper transmission of information through the numerous administrative and operational reports required on a daily basis.²⁶⁴

These exercises stressed the importance of proper and timely administrative returns to higher HQ, having the right mix of personnel at the various divisional headquarters and the reporting of proper stocks and commodities through the supply

²⁶³The practice in armoured divisions was to call a 20-minute halt at the even clock hour. The units experienced problems transitioning from convoys into their harbour areas. The procedures for defence of the harbour areas were practiced with fundamental problems appearing there also. Sentries were not properly briefed, sentries were talking and smoking, some were not armed and, in other cases, sentries were not posted at all. A critical observation overall was that sleep organization was lacking in most participating units. Exercise ROLEM I Notes noticed by Umpire. War Diary, 4th Canadian Armoured Division-Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster, 1-30 March 1944, App 4.

²⁶⁴ For example see the details of exercises ROLEM, NITE, LAST I & II and JILL in the 4 Cdn Armd Div AA & QMG war diaries for the March to May 1944 period.

channels.²⁶⁵ The division staff learnt a critical lesson in communications during exercise LAST, 13-19 April. The division Q Branch could not communicate with Rear HQ 4 Cdn Armd Bde because the brigade had taken all of their cipher personnel to Main HQ. This meant that messages had to go through a lengthy process of being passed to Bde Main HQ for transmission to Bde Rear HQ. At one point in the exercise, the entire holding of second line ammunition for 4th Cdn Armd Div had been expended yet, this information had not been transmitted to the division's Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC) troops in a timely manner. This created unnecessary delays and forced re-supply to take place during the day instead of at night. These mistakes taught valuable lessons.

Realism was injected into training wherever possible. The Lake Superior Regiment began the practice of firing .303 rifles strapped to their anti-tank guns when working with armoured squadrons as a means of judging their shooting accuracy while providing realism in the training for both the gunners and the tank crews. The tanks were fired at on the move with tracer rounds. The war diarist of the BCR stated that the number of hits on the side armour of the tanks "proved the accuracy of the gunners," and the sound of the bullets hitting the tanks provided the "requisite realism" of combat for the tank crews.²⁶⁶

The policy within both brigades was to have the tanks work with the infantry battalions as much as possible. Every effort was made to get in as much training as the circumstances and availability of equipment and training areas would permit. The SAR was the most active of the armoured regiments during March, conducting weekly sessions with the battalions of 10th Cdn Inf Bde. Each 10th Cdn Inf Bde battalion was

²⁶⁵ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AA&QMG, 1-31 April 1944.

²⁶⁶ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-30 March 1944, entry 10 Mar 44.

assigned a specific SAR squadron to work with on a regular basis as a means of establishing a tighter integration of tank and infantry tactics and familiarity among the respective troops. Developing the same level of combined arms proficiency was attempted within 4 Cdn Armd Bde by assigning a company of the Lake Superior Regiment to each armoured regiment, but the requirement to have the armoured regiments train with the assault divisions meant that the armoured regiments were rarely available for combined arms training with the motor battalion.

On 14 May, the senior officers and COs of the division attended a lecture by Montgomery. Montgomery talked about the past and the present state of the war, the future prospects and tasks immediately confronting the Allies. He stressed the need for what he called “offensive eagerness.” He believed that, once on the beaches, success would depend on the Allied ability to concentrate armour and push strong armoured columns rapidly inland to secure important ground or communications centres. These columns would form the firm bases in enemy territory from which to develop offensive action in all directions.²⁶⁷ The speech foreshadowed the intended role for the division and created a sense of anticipation for the upcoming action.

Once into June, the scope and nature of division activities were restricted by waterproofing and the wait for the notice to move into theatre.²⁶⁸ From 6 June (D-Day) onward, all felt that it would only be a short time until the division left for France and spirits were high. The advance party for Exercise OVERLORD (the move into theatre) received word that it would be moving to the marshalling area on Tuesday, 20 June. This move was postponed but the advanced parties remained on one-hour notice to move. On

²⁶⁷ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 June 1944, App 2.

²⁶⁸ Waterproofing was essentially complete by 11 June for the fighting echelons and the soft skinned vehicles shortly thereafter.

11 June, the division was placed on six hours notice to move and on 12 June the division received its initial order for special duty overseas.²⁶⁹ Finally, on 23 June Kitching called a meeting of all division COs and informed them that the division would remain in its present area for at least a week. A new date for the move into theatre was given with the advance party moving on 27 June and the main body following on 1 July.²⁷⁰ It would take another five days (to 29 June), however, before the movement orders were rescinded and a two-week delay finally announced.

These delays threatened the morale of the troops and Kitching responded by ramping up the training cycle again and talking openly with the troops about their role and what they could expect once in theatre. He described their role as one in which the division would be required to strike deep into enemy territory, seizing an important objective behind his lines with all arms coordination as the key.²⁷¹ The reaction to these gatherings, as recorded in the war diaries, was uniformly positive with comments like: never before has the morale been so high and never before had there been greater cause for it to be so high. Of note was a meeting Kitching held on 26 June with his senior commanders where he laid down the policy for the taking over of command if he (Kitching) became a casualty.

²⁶⁹ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-30 June 1944, entry 11 Jun

²⁷⁰ In a meeting on the morning of 24 June at Montgomery decided that the requirement was for more infantry divisions in Normandy. The 4th Cdn Armd Div would now be the last Canadian division to be transported into the theatre for the Normandy operations. Canada. Army, *Canadian Military Headquarters Report No. 162, Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe, 1944. Part II: Canadian Operations in Jul.* (Ottawa: Canadian Military Headquarters, [8 Nov 1946]), 7.

²⁷¹ On 14 June, for example, Kitching addressed the CCG and spoke to the men from the traditional platform, his jeep. He emphasized the fact that 2nd Cdn Corps, though highly trained, lacked battle experience and that we “must not therefore rush into our first action too hard and bloody our nose. We must feel out the enemy for a fortnight and learn his methods, after we would be ready for anything.” War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1 to 30 June, 1944, entry 14 Jun.

Unit training focussed on hardening activities for the troops, which included route marches, tabloid sports and individual weapons training.²⁷² A new round of maintenance was also required for the vehicles since the waterproofing of the vehicles had started to dry out. The waterproofing process had to be reapplied on certain parts of every vehicle and the rest of the vehicle carefully checked to ensure that the waterproofing was still in place.

The 4th Cdn Armd Bde received its final allotment of Sherman Firefly tanks in late June. A conscious decision was made not to waterproof these vehicles right away so that they could be used on the ranges, allowing the tank crews to gain more experience with the 17 pdr gun. As noted by the war diarist of the Grenadier Guards, “our experience with the V Charlies has not been very extensive, every round fired is of tremendous benefit to the crews in showing them the power of their weapon and increasing their confidence in it.”²⁷³ On 23 June, 4th Armd Bde received orders to move all of its Sherman Fireflies to the Lydd Ranges where the units conducted range practice from 23 to 25 June.

In late June, Kitching ordered a combined-arms TEWT be run for all senior officers of the division. Exercise IROQUOIS was a three day exercise which began on 4 July and involved all senior division officers down to and including squadron and equivalent commanders. The officers were assigned to mixed (infantry, armour, artillery) syndicates and directed to discuss and solve a series of progressive problems associated

²⁷² The units of 4th Cdn Armd Bde were directed to carry out a series of 25-mile route marches during the period 29 June to 15 July. One way that the units tried to maximize the training value was by combining activities. For example, the GGFG carried out a series of two-day exercises that combined marches with tactical exercises. Points that were emphasized were use of ground, patrols, searching for speculative fire, fire orders and map and compass work. In this case, the squadron that arrived first on a pre-designated objective was to set up a defensive position that the other squadrons were then required to attack. War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-31 July 1944, App 7.

²⁷³ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1 to 30 June, 1944, entry 25 Jun.

with an armoured advance against a successful German invasion of England.²⁷⁴ Exercise IROQUOIS ended at 1700 hrs on 6 July and the consensus from the war diary entries was that it was an excellent learning experience.

The general notes of the Exercise Narrative reveal much about what Kitching felt it would take to succeed in Normandy. The narrative stated that in operations in Italy and in Normandy it was increasingly clear that the Germans were using combined arms battlegroups and against these groups the tank has little chance of success on its own. In order to combat these battlegroups successfully the Canadians would have to adopt similar tactics. Battlegroups would “beat the enemy by superiority in numbers and equipment, offensive spirit, initiative and most important of all-the closest possible co-op between the varied arms in the group.”²⁷⁵

On 11 and 12 July, it was the turn of the junior officers of the division. An Exercise IROQUOIS-modeled TEWT was run among the regiments of the brigades for troop leaders and platoon commanders. The morning of day one concentrated on the all arms capture and defence of a village. This was followed by a session in coordinating and sighting all arms for the defence of the village. The second day was concerned with the cooperation of infantry and tanks. Again, the learning experience was well received.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Problem I, involved an advance guard which was given the task of seizing an intermediate objective high ground and forming a firm base from which another battle group would advance on the final objective of the armoured brigade. Problem II involved a situation where the advanced guard was held up by an anti-tank screen of four or five guns supported by panzer grenadiers. In Problem III, the rear guard was successfully dealt with but reconnaissance elements, on moving forward, found the road strongly held. In Problem IV, the advance continued and the force reached the intermediate objective. At the same time, information was received that the enemy had withdrawn from an adjacent point. GOC 4th Cdn Armd Div ordered the establishment of a firm base on the high ground. Memo 4 CAB/4-5-1 EXERCISE IROQUOIS, 1 Jul 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 July 1944, App 9.

²⁷⁵ Memo 4 CAB/4-5-1 EXERCISE IROQUOIS, 1 Jul 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 July 1944, App 9.

²⁷⁶ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 Jul 44, entry 12 Jul 44.

It is interesting at this point to note the observations of Lt Col Halpenny from this exercise. In a debrief to his troops after the second IROQUOIS TEWT, he stressed the importance of having a Forward Observer for artillery (FOO) in the vanguard and the need to have artillery so positioned beforehand that continuous and immediate artillery support would be available throughout the advance. In the defence, he stressed the fact that the whole defensive scheme must be based on the anti-tank layout practiced by the division with the infantry positioned in such a manner as to protect the artillery and with the tanks arrayed in a supporting role able to conduct any necessary counter-attack.²⁷⁷

There was a concerted effort by Kitching to try and gain as much insight into the lessons learned from the battles that had already been fought in Normandy.²⁷⁸ On 13 July 1944, 4 Cdn Armd Bde received a lessons learned report from the operations of 2 Cdn Armd Bde in the Normandy bridgehead.²⁷⁹ Communications, all arms cooperation, the tactical employment of tanks and, in particular, the tactical employment of the Sherman Firefly and methods to counter German tactics were highlighted and discussed. While the memorandum was widely discussed there is no indication from the available records that any procedures were changed within the brigade, based on this information.²⁸⁰

On 14 July the code word CORNELIUS was received and on 16 July the advance party proceeded to their marshalling areas. By 20 July, the advance party had arrived in

²⁷⁷ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 Jul 44, entry 12 Jul 44.

²⁷⁸ On 14 July, Kitching asked the 2 i/c of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, Maj J. Cave, who was convalescing in England, to address his officers on his experiences in Normandy. In addition, Kitching asked the CO of the 12th Manitoba Dragoons if he would outline his lessons learned. Lt Col J.A. Roberts provided Kitching with a memorandum dated 27 July 44 entitled "Lessons Learned Whilst Acting In An Inf Role." Memo dated 27 Jul 44 entitled "Lessons Learned Whilst Acting In An Inf Role." War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div 1-31 July 1944.

²⁷⁹ 2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Op Overlord dated 26 Jun 44, War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944.

²⁸⁰ There was little that could be done to implement the recommendations beyond making the officers and NCOs of the armoured regiments aware of what had been learned. War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-31 July 1944, entry 17 Jul

theatre and had completed their reconnaissance of the reception area for the division and awaited the arrival of the main body. Between 22 and 27 July, the rest of the division units were loaded on board ships and moved to France, which, in some cases, took six days.²⁸¹

The offloading and concentration of division HQ was complete by 1600 hrs 28 July. Orders were received to move the fighting elements forward through CAEN to the south of the River Orne with the rest of the division prepared to move the next day. This gave them little time de-waterproof vehicles or perform any additional maintenance before being moved into their initial positions.

Division HQ moved off to set up in its newly-assigned area on the outskirts of Vaucelles at 1100 hrs on 29 July, Rear Div HQ was initially established at Thaon but was then ordered by 2nd Cdn Corps to a new area at Bitot. Each of these moves involved the relocation of over 2,000 vehicles.²⁸² On 29 July, 4 Cdn Armd Div came under command of 2nd Cdn Corps and the first division administrative report (ADREP) was submitted to 2nd Cdn Corps. At 0830 hrs, 30 July, the units of 10 Cdn Inf Bde were ordered to take over the positions of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 4 Cdn Armd Div HQ moved into the area previously occupied by HQ 3 Cdn Div on 30 July.²⁸³ The relief was to commence at 2400 hrs 30 July and was to be completed by 0400 hrs 31 Jul.²⁸⁴

The first division O Group in theatre occurred at 1330 hrs 28 July within which Kitching outlined the Corps plan. The division would relieve the 3 Cdn Inf Div in the line south of Caen. These orders, however, were changed that same evening. The 4 Cdn Armd

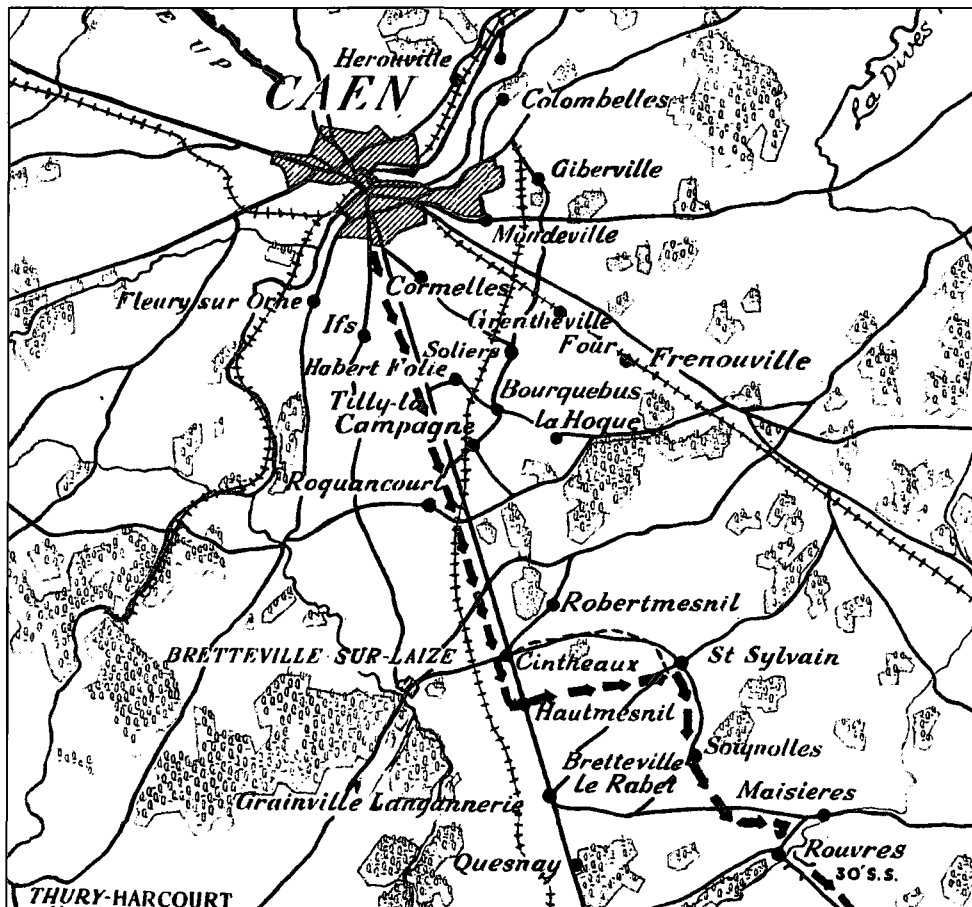
²⁸¹ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 July 1944, Monthly Summary.

²⁸² War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 July 1944.

²⁸³ The area was not laid out to the liking of the armoured division staff. Not all the vehicles could be properly dug in which hindered the initial set up and functioning of A Branch. *ibid.*

²⁸⁴ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 July 1944, entry 30 Jul.

Bde, which had been initially tasked to relieve 8 Cdn Inf Bde, was now tasked to relieve the 22 Armd Bde of the British 7 Armd Div. This move was completed on July 29. After a couple of days, 4 Cdn Armd Bde reverted to the original plan to relieve the 8 Cdn Inf Bde with the takeover designed to be completed by 0500 hrs 31 July. The 7 Cdn Recce Regt was to come under command of 4 Cdn Armd Bde at that time.²⁸⁵ These moves allowed the division to gain some familiarity with the ground south of Caen.



Map 1: Caen area, Rollefson, *Green Route Up*, 38.

The administrative tail of the division gradually began to sort itself out after the rushed move from the beaches to the area below Caen. The initial staff effort was focussed in settling supply and administrative problems, setting up in the designated

²⁸⁵ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 July 1944.

areas and becoming more accustomed to the new surroundings in France.²⁸⁶ The first 10 Cdn Inf Bde Administrative Instruction was issued on 31 July 44 and outlined the policy and procedures for logistical re-supply in the critical areas of ammunition, fuel and supplies. The timings for the Q returns, including the ADREP, Daily Tank Statistics and the Weekly Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) Return were set with the first two returns due at brigade HQ by 1800 hrs daily.²⁸⁷ With the training over, units deployed and the administrative and support arrangements clarified, Kitching and the 4 Cdn Armd Div units awaited their first action.

Kitching entered Normandy with a division composed of two brigades of vastly differing proficiency in their assigned roles. With the assignment of specific SAR armoured squadrons to specific infantry battalions within 10 Cdn Inf Bde combined arms effectiveness had been established through the familiarity and trust gained from constant sessions of working together. Likewise, in the 4 Cdn Armd Bde, the Lake Superior Regiment provided infantry companies to support the armour regiments of the brigade. The result was effective infantry/tank cooperation within the organic units of the brigades but since there was minimal training across the brigades the tactical proficiency did not necessarily translate to effectiveness in combined arms teams composed of units between the brigades.

The truth was that each armoured regiment and infantry battalion had its own peculiarities in how it operated. Training together, across brigades, would have made

²⁸⁶ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 July 1944, entry 31 Jul

²⁸⁷ The combat elements were to replenish ammunition from A echelon when required. A echelon was then to replenish from designated ammunition points. Vehicles were to be topped up after every move with A echelon replenishing F echelon vehicles. Units were to carry two days of ration reserves which were not to be consumed except in an emergency or when authorized by brigade HQ. Memo 10 CIB/5-8-2 10 Cdn Inf Bde Adm Inst No 1 dated 31 Jul 44. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 July 1944, App 6

these known to the different units and key players, allowing the critical element of trust to be built up before going into battle. The reality was that, once a combined arms mix was attempted across the brigades, the effectiveness and familiarity between the arms and the people trying to work together was absent. Since 4 Cdn Armd Bde was absent for much of the available training period, Kitching was forced to try and build cooperation and understanding between the brigades and regiments through TEWTS and map exercises, a less than satisfactory solution.

When the training regime is viewed as a whole, it is clear that the training constraints forced onto the division prevented it from attaining peak efficiency before entering Normandy.²⁸⁸ The responsibility for these constraints clearly lie with the external factors and decisions that shaped the division's training environment, factors over which Kitching had no control. Kitching, Ganong and Proctor used every method available to them to impart their knowledge and experiences to prepare the men of the division for the upcoming battles. On the eve of their first battle the members of the division considered themselves to be highly trained and motivated, ready for any of the expected challenges that the Normandy battlefields might bring. Geoffrey Hayes' assessment of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment is again illustrative of the mood of the entire division when he stated that, "Indeed, they had good reason to be enthusiastic: they were a well-conditioned, well-practised group of men who felt they had trained hard, some for four years. Few would have been aware of any deficiencies in their training and it is difficult to find evidence to suggest that they were not as well trained as any other Canadian infantry unit."²⁸⁹ The events to follow would test the division to a man.

²⁸⁸ Marteinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 126.

²⁸⁹ Hayes, *the Lincs*, 20.

Given the constraints that Kitching was forced to deal with in training his division for Normandy, the best that he could have realistically hoped to achieve in his training regime was proficiency at the regiment and battalion level with combined arms proficiency at the troop/platoon level. The events to come revealed that this level of proficiency was indeed achieved and was to prove itself under circumstances that could not have been foreseen in any training exercise. The strength of the division was that it was manned by competent and effective officers and men who were able to assimilate quickly the lessons learned from the battlefield and to make the necessary adjustments to their operating procedures. The division and its leadership would be tested in the most gruelling of circumstances. Some would falter but the time, effort and sweat invested in training the units of the division would pay dividends in the particular conditions of the Normandy battlefield.

Chapter Five: Normandy

On June 6 1944, the Allies launched the largest amphibious operation in recorded history, codenamed OVERLORD. The invasion plan consisted of two phases: during the first phase codenamed Operation NEPTUNE, the Allies made good their assault. In the second phase, the Allies were to penetrate inland twelve miles to take Caen, Bayeux, Isigny, Carentan and airfields in the vicinity.²⁹⁰ Canadian and British forces were then to exploit south to seize Falaise, 20 miles south of Caen. Anchoring their left on Falaise, the British and Canadians were to pivot, swing eastward and sweep the ground between Falaise and Argentan, 15 miles to the south, and also between Argentan and Alençon, 25 miles farther south. These actions would put them in position for a drive to the Seine River.²⁹¹ The ultimate objective would not be Berlin, which was deemed too far for the Western Allies, but the Ruhr, the industrial heartland of Germany.²⁹²

The German defence was fierce and effective and they had uncommitted reserves available from the German Fifteenth Army that could be thrown against the Allies.²⁹³

Allied air superiority and naval gunfire support made the concentration of large German forces impossible. German tactics turned to concealment and dispersion where armour was

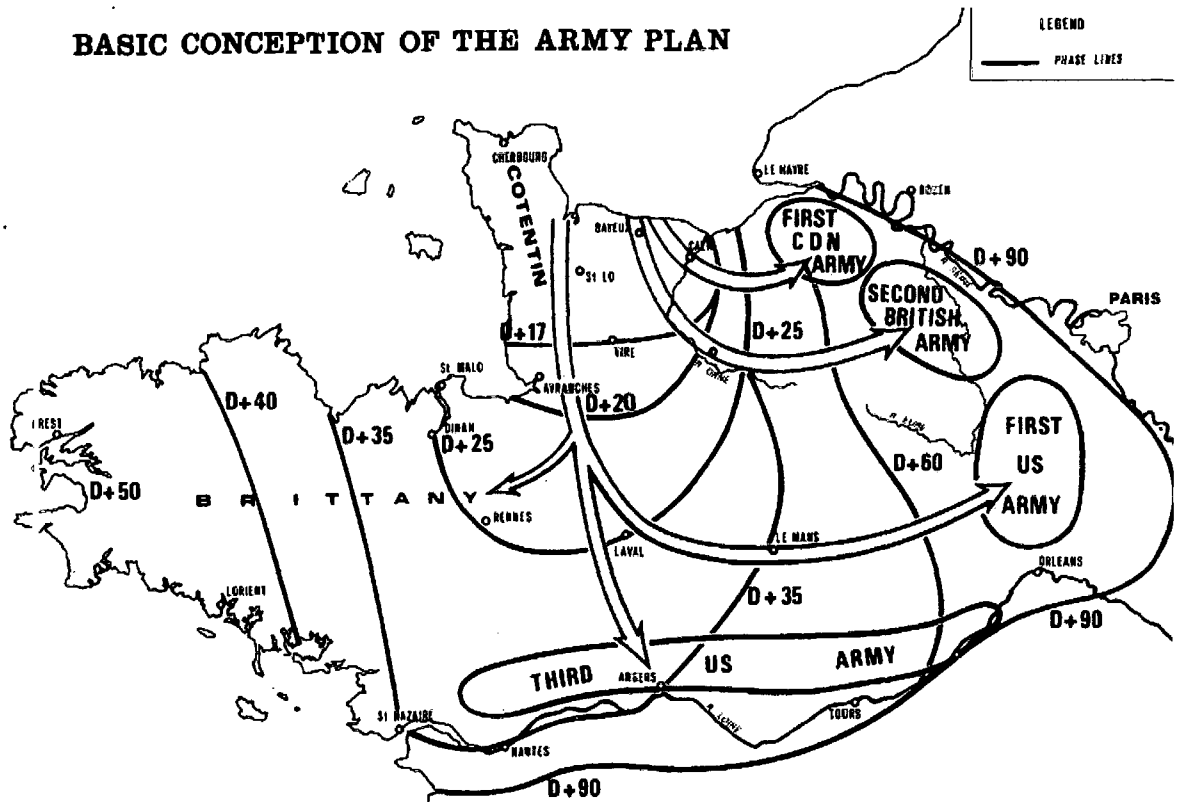
²⁹⁰ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 3.

²⁹¹ The best place to build air installations was the ground south of Caen and the terrain was excellent also for offensive efforts by the Allied mechanized forces. Within that territory the Allies would have sufficient ports to sustain their force, airfields to provide close air support, room to hold the organizations servicing the armies, and space in which to manoeuvre. Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 76-81

²⁹² The First Cdn Army, under Crerar, was to become operational at some point during this build-up. The plan was to have First Cdn Army cover the British left flank, then drive for Le Havre. The Third U.S. Army, under Lt Gen Patton, was to clear Brittany, seize St-Nazaire and Nantes on the Loire River and cover the First U.S. Army right flank on the march to Paris. *ibid.*, 71,81

²⁹³ The Allied deception plan was known as FORTITUDE. The plan was design to make the German's think that the Normandy landings were a diversion to the real landings, which would occur at the Pas de Calais. In order to do this a fictitious Army was build in England under the command of Patton, complete with dummy tanks, planes and trucks and mock radio traffic. Part of the FORTITUDE plan was to convince the Germans that the Pas de Calais was the real invasion site. The success of the plan kept the divisions of the Fifteenth Army at the Pas de Calais area. For a detailed examination of "Fortitude" see, Roger Hesketh. *Fortitude: The D-Day Deception Plan*. London: St Emins Press, 1999.

placed in “penny packets” to provide immediate support to the infantry at no more than squadron strength.²⁹⁴



Map 2: Plan for the exploitation of the Normandy Bridgehead. Meyer, *The History of the 12th SS Panzer Division Hitler-Jugend*, D-3.

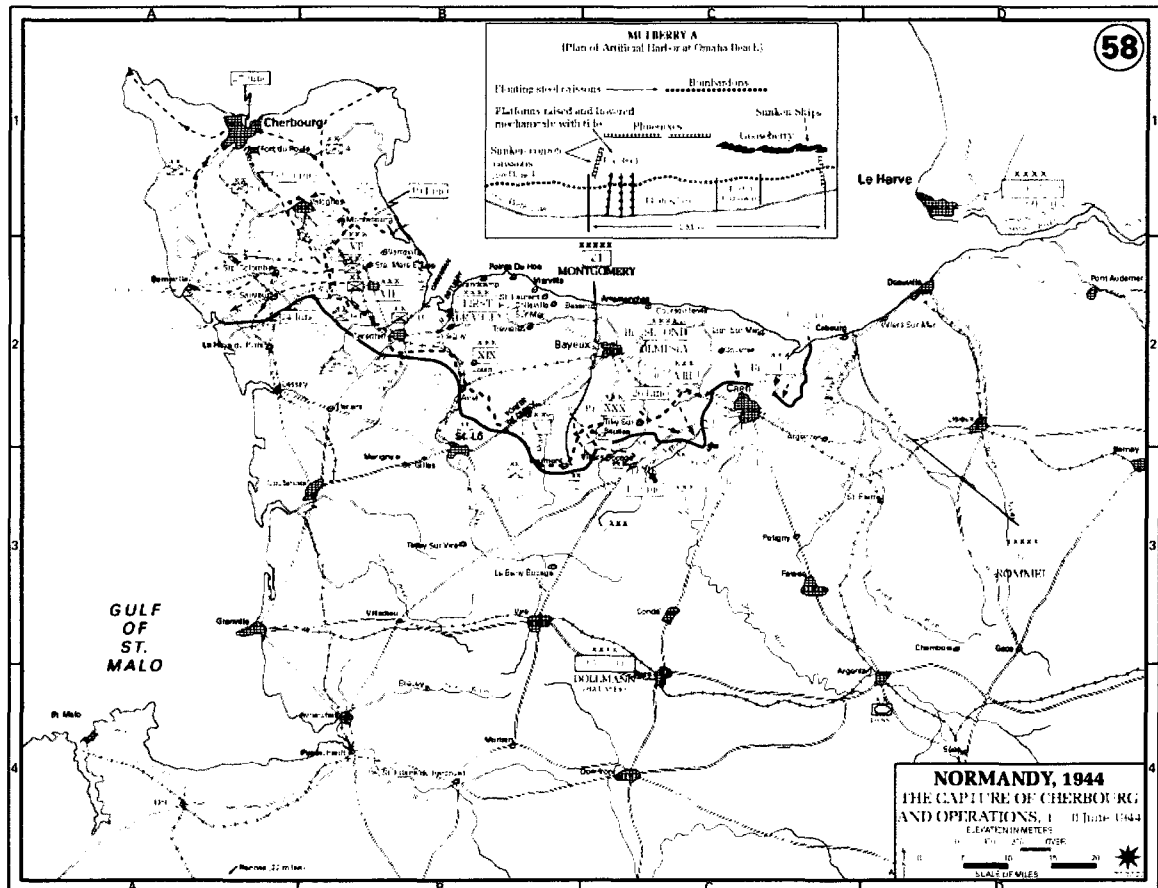
The outcome of the Normandy invasion remained in doubt for the first 45 days of operations. Progress off the beaches was slower than expected across the entire front. In the later half of June operations were directed towards the capture of Caen. By early July, St. Lô remained in German hands. The Germans had evacuated Caen on the night of 9 July but the Second Br Army had not been able to cross the Orne River. The German Army still controlled the eastern suburbs of Caen.²⁹⁵

By 11 July, the Allied bridgehead was still desperately small and extended roughly 65 miles from the Cherbourg coast, where the U.S. line reached the sea at the western

²⁹⁴ Copp, *Guy Simonds and the Art of Command*, 31.

²⁹⁵ Copp, *Maple Leaf Route: Falaise*, 6.

extremity of the front to just east of Caen. In some places, the bridgehead was less than ten miles deep, and nowhere did it extend for more than 20 miles. At this point in time, the Allies had expected to control an area ten times the actual size of the bridgehead. The lodgement was so small that the few airfields within the bridgehead were still within German artillery range and were essentially unusable.²⁹⁶



Map 3: Normandy Bridgehead 30 June 1944.

<http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlas/ww2%20europe/EuropeanTheaterGIF/WWIIEurope58.gif>

Meanwhile, the Americans found the going extremely difficult through the hedgerows and wooded "bocage" country of Normandy. Only the capture of Cherbourg was accomplished on schedule. The failure to capture Caen dramatically altered the design of the Allied campaign. Instead of provoking the Germans into costly counterattacks as

²⁹⁶ Great Britain, Air Ministry, *Air Support: The Second World War 1939-1945 Royal Air Force* (London: The Ministry, 1955), 159. Copp, *Maple Leaf Route: Falaise*, 9.

originally planned, British and Canadian forces were now obliged to go over to the attack themselves against well prepared and fortified German defensive zones. Montgomery's plan was to contain the bulk of the German forces in the Caen area so that the Americans could break out and sweep south and west breaking the stalemate.²⁹⁷ The Canadians played a significant role in the series of operations designed to first take Caen (WINDSOR and CHARNWOOD) and then in the drive southwards to Falaise in operation ATLANTIC: the Canadian phase of GOODWOOD and in SPRING, the 2nd Cdn Corps attack to take Verrières Ridge.

The Allies had expected high losses on the beaches but the planners had expected the casualty rates to fall, as mobile operations became the norm after the breakout from the bridgehead. The opposite, in fact, happened. In June alone, the U.S. suffered 40,000 casualties, while the British and Canadians suffered 38,000. Progress had been slow, the fighting remained difficult and gains became measured in yards and thousands of dead. As a result, considerable anguish and dissent developed within the senior Allied leadership. The need for a successful breakout became more and more imperative and Falaise, the original target of D plus 2, became the symbol for that success.²⁹⁸

The Germans concentrated their strength, particularly their panzer divisions (Pz Div), against the British-Canadian forces, who were trying to take the vital area in and around Caen.²⁹⁹ German success was based on two factors: sound defensive tactics and

²⁹⁷ It is within this stalemate that the debate over Montgomery's plan began. His supporters contend that the essence of the Allied strategy throughout July was to try and draw off the German armour from west to east so that the American First and the newly created Third Army could break out in the area of St Lô. Montgomery's critics insist that the general's pre-invasion master plan is a fiction and that the failure to take Caen and increase the lodgement area resulted in a makeshift campaign to make up for Montgomery's earlier failings. Robert A. Miller, *August 1944*. (Novato: Presidio, 1988), 8.

²⁹⁸ Copp, *Maple Leaf Route: Falaise*, 8.

²⁹⁹ By D-Day, there were ten Panzer or Panzer-Grenadier divisions in place in Normandy, of which only one (2 Pz Div) was up to strength and fully trained. The remainder suffered from some form of equipment,

superior weapons. German defensive doctrine was simple but effective. The object was “to destroy the enemy by fire” with the available firepower deployed in depth. The terrain south of Caen offered the Germans an ideal defensive position with easily concealed locations offering good fields of fire.³⁰⁰ Allied air superiority forced the Germans to become masters of camouflage.³⁰¹

An important element of the Normandy battles was the fact that the Heer had used France and the Low Countries as a training area where new divisions were formed, brought to strength and, when judged battle-ready, shipped to Russia. As a result, German commanders were very familiar with the terrain of the Normandy area. *Brigadeführer* Kurt Meyer, for example, stated “...I know the terrain [Normandy] in great detail as I was stationed here in the autumn of 1943 with my old reconnaissance battalion and carried out numerous exercises over it. I know, therefore, that the heights near Potigny control the

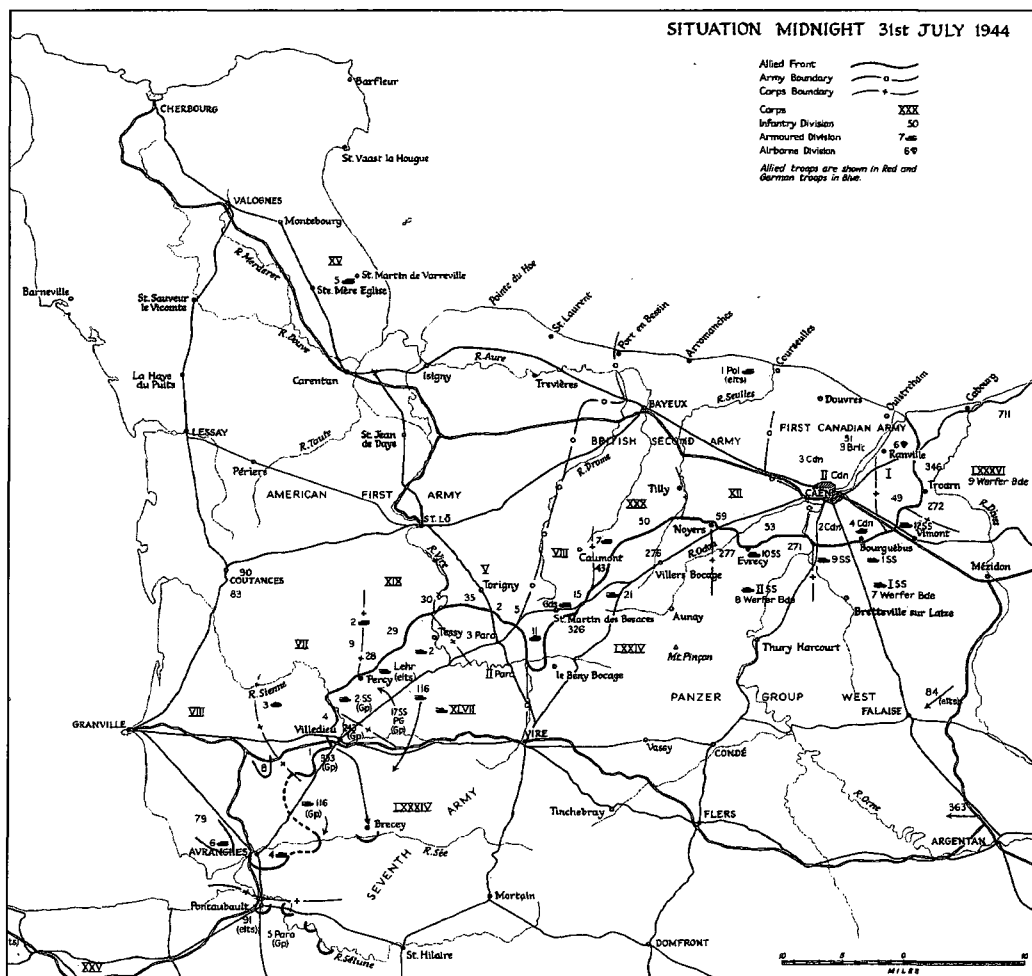
training or manpower shortages. The 21 Pz Div was up to strength and had time to train but it was equipped with modified captured, and mainly obsolete French armoured vehicles instead of panther tanks which reduced the combat power of the division. The 9, 11 and 116 Pz Div had recently arrived from the Russian Front and needed time to rest refit and reconstitute. The 1 and 2 SS PZ Div had received replacements but were short of transport and the 17 Pz Div was partially motorized and lacking in equipment. The Pz Lehr and 12 SS Pz Div had achieved a high state of readiness but were lacking certain components of their establishments. Niklas Zetterling, *Normandy 1944: German Military Organization, Combat Power and Organizational Effectiveness* (Winnipeg: J.J. Fedorowicz Publishing Inc, 2000), 105-106. The order of combat efficiency, most to least, for these units has been listed as 2 Pz Div, 9 SS Pz Div, 12 SS Pz Div, Pz Lehr Div, 11 Pz Div, 2 SS Pz Div, 21 Pz Div, 9 Pz Div, 17 SS Pz Gren Div, 116 Pz Div, 10 SS Pz Div, 1 SS Pz Div. von Schweppenburg, Freiherr Geyr, "Panzer-Type Divisions (Western Front)" In *the German Army at D-Day: Fighting the Invasion*, ed. David C. Isby (London: Greenhill Books, Lionel Leventhal Limited, 2004), 96.

³⁰⁰ Wherever possible, the Heer tried to deploy in three distinct lines or belts. Advance positions were placed on forward terrain features to deny the enemy observation and to force him to deploy unnecessarily early. Next was a line of battle outposts sited to act as a buffer in front of a defended area as well as to deceive the enemy as to the site of the main defensive belt. Finally, the main belt or line was defended primarily by means of the schematically planned fire of all arms. Any part of the main defensive line that was evacuated had to be “regained by immediate or deliberate counterattack.” Graves, *South Albertas*, 98-99.

³⁰¹ A German tank commander recorded that his crew erased the tracks their vehicle had made in an oat field lest they become a "clear signpost for any fighter-bomber" by laboriously rebending each disturbed blade of grain until it stood upright again." *ibid.*, 98.

terrain and that the Laison sector is a natural tank obstacle.”³⁰² The Canadians would eventually learn these same lessons but at a terrific cost in casualties.

The First U.S. Army, in a week of heavy fighting (Operation COBRA), broke through the German left wing and began to exploit its success. On 1 August, General Omar Bradley took command of the 12th Army Group, handing the First U.S. Army over to Lt Gen Courtney H. Hodges. Simultaneously, the Third U.S. Army, under Lt Gen George S. Patton, entered the battle on the right of the First U.S. Army and assumed responsibility for the main exploitation task.³⁰³



Map 4: American Breakout. Ellis, *Victory in the West*, 386.

³⁰² Kurt Meyer, *Grenadiers* (Winnipeg: J.J. Fedorowicz, 1994), 157.

³⁰³ Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 203.

Montgomery was convinced that the Germans would respond rationally to an American breakthrough in the west by staging an orderly withdrawal to the east while holding the hinge position in front of Caen. In his directive of 27 July (M515), Montgomery insisted that anything the Anglo-Canadian did elsewhere had to have the underlying objective of facilitating the breakout operations of the American forces to the west of St Lo.

³⁰⁴ The goal was the rapid capture of the whole Cherbourg and Brittany peninsulas and their vital ports.³⁰⁵

The American breakout to the east represented a considerable danger to the German position in Normandy. If left unchecked, or allowed to gather momentum, the breakout could force the withdrawal of German forces from France. With France lost, the Allied threat to Germany would become immediate. There were two possible German options to deal with the situation, one cautious and one bold. The cautious and expected course of action was to terminate the conflict in Normandy and, through a series of delaying actions, withdraw, initially to the Seine River, but eventually further east into stronger defensive positions established at other natural river lines along the Somme-Marne-Saone River line and the Albert Canal-Meuse River Line. This action would entail the withdrawal of Army Group G from southern France.³⁰⁶

The second possible option was much bolder and carried considerable risk: stop the Allied breakout and stabilize the front once again in Normandy. Keeping the fight in Normandy represented the best option for the Germans, but selecting this course of action meant moving German panzer forces, thereby exposing them to the very real threat posed

³⁰⁴ In late July at the time of the American breakthrough, there were six Panzer divisions (645 tanks) facing the Second Army and only two divisions (190 tanks) facing the Americans Miller, *August 1944*, 26.

³⁰⁵ Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 187.

³⁰⁶ Martin Blumenson, *The Duel for France, 1944: The Men and Battles that Changed the Fate of Europe* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000), 198-199.

by Allied tactical airpower. Hitler decided to try to recreate the conditions of static warfare that favoured German tactics and weapons. He ordered Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge to close the gap in the left portion of the German defenses, anchoring the left flank once more, this time at Avranches.³⁰⁷

On 3 August, von Kluge began moving his panzer divisions away from the Caen area to counterattack the American forces that had broken out with the intent of cutting them off from their supply lines. The plan required seriously weakening the German defensive strength around Caen. Von Kluge initially protested that any shift of armour from the British and Canadian sector would fatally weaken his defences south of Caen and expose his panzers to the waiting Allied air force.³⁰⁸ Hitler remained adamant.

During the nights of 6/7 August, four German armoured divisions attacked in the Mortain area. At first, they made good progress but, forewarned by ULTRA decrypts, the Americans had time to prepare for the attack and they eventually stopped it.³⁰⁹ Over a period of two days, the Americans destroyed much of the German armour remaining in Normandy and with it any hope the Germans had of a coherent, systematic withdrawal out of Normandy.

The 4 Cdn Armd Div relief of the 3 Cdn Inf Div was complete at 0430 hrs on 31 July.³¹⁰ The disposition of the units of the division was somewhat scattered, with the

³⁰⁷ Field Marshal von Kluge took over command from Rundstedt on 2 July 44. *Ibid.*, 199.

³⁰⁸ J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton. *Bloody Victory*. (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Denny's, 1984), 164.

³⁰⁹ Fluid combat operations forced German commanders to rely on their radio communication as the method of transmitting reports and orders instead of phone lines. This situation meant that German communication traffic was easier to intercept. Intelligence information gained through ULTRA gave accurate and timely warning of all the decisions and movements made by the Germans during the month of August. The intelligence obtained was described as "prompt and copious" with all major German decisions disclosed with little delay. F. H. Hinsley and others, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations, Volume III Part II* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 239, 254.

³¹⁰ "I spent three hours with General Keller when we took over from his division... We were also able to see plainly from the raised railway embankment the ruined hamlet of Tilly-la-Campagne occupied by soldiers of

infantry of the 10 Inf Bde forward at Cormelles and Bourguebus³¹¹ and 4 Cdn Armd Bde deployed along the left flank of the Corps. The Lake Superior Regiment was located between Four and Soliers and the Grenadier Guards occupied Grentheville. The other armoured regiments were deployed in reserve positions: the BCR at Mondeville, and the Foot Guards near Grentheville.³¹²

Moving into their allotted positions, the soldiers of the division traversed the battlefield over which GOODWOOD was fought. The battlefield had not changed and the carnage in both human life and tank casualties was clearly visible. Many of the entries in the various division war diaries comment on burned victims still in the tanks. The battlefield was evidence to the vulnerability of the Sherman tank and the killing power of the German anti-tank guns. The reaction by the tank crews was to seek added protection. This led to the practice of welding spare tank tracks to the side of the tanks in an attempt to thicken the armour protection.³¹³

The more lasting effect, however, was psychological. The images imprinted the need for caution vice bravado on the part of a number of key leaders of the division. In particular, Major Ned Amy, whose squadron would lead the division in TOTALIZE, stated that after viewing the battlefield he made a mental note to never put his squadron in the position where the same could happen to it.³¹⁴

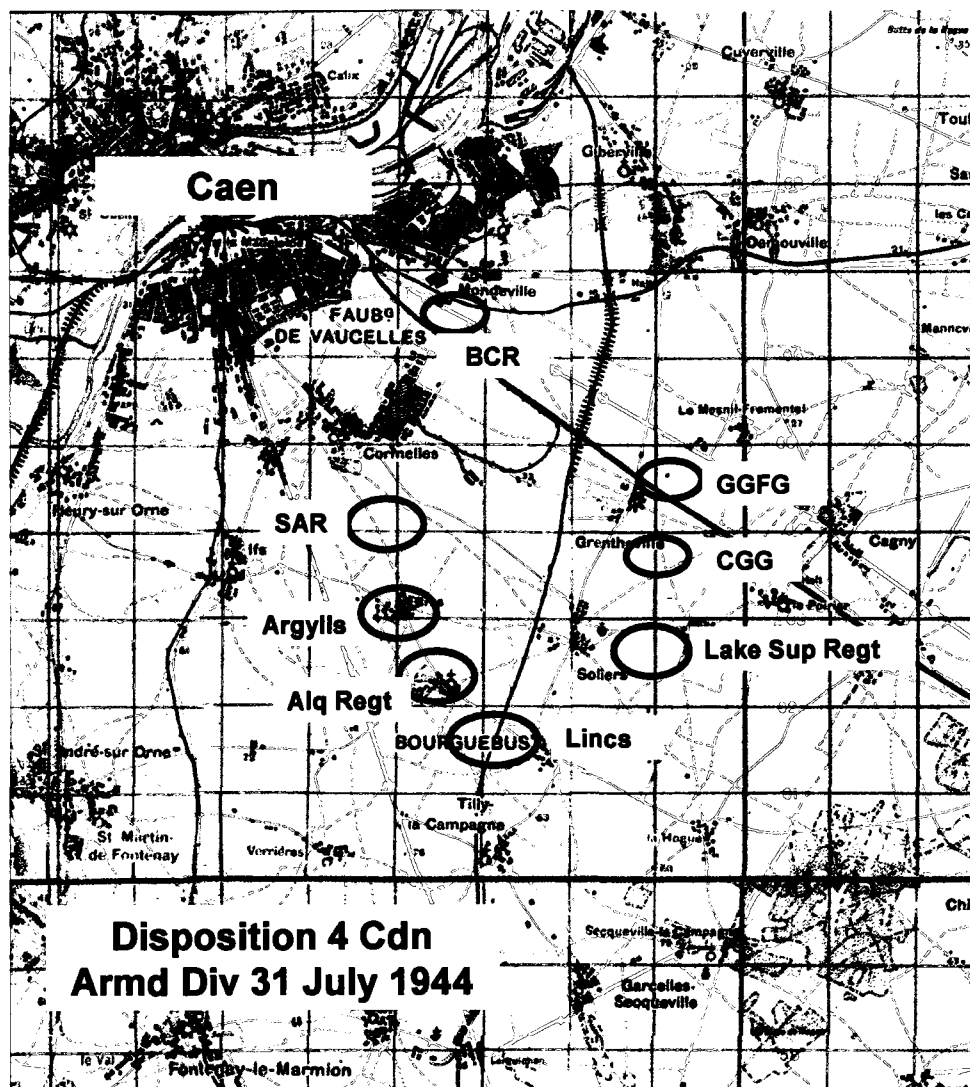
the 1st SS Division. Rod Keller's 9th Brigade had failed to capture Tilly and his advice to me at the time was to leave it alone and try somewhere else." Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 190.

³¹¹ The Lincs were at Bourgebus, Algonquin Regiment at Hubert-Folie, Argylls at Bras and the SAR was deployed on the reverse slope between Bras and Cormelles. Canada. Army, CMHQ Report No 146, Operations of First Canadian Army in North-West Europe, 31 Jul-1 Oct 44, Preliminary Report (Ottawa: Canadian Military Headquarters, 1947), para 19.

³¹² CMHQ Report No. 162, para 185

³¹³ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 4 Aug.

³¹⁴ Ned Amy, [Recollections on Normandy], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 10 Feb 1981.



Map 5: Disposition of 4 Cdn Armd Div units 31 July 1944. Modified Operation Totalize map, printed by 14 Field Survey Squadron R.E. Feb 1948.

During the first seven days of August, the division, for the most part, entered a period of static operations. Divisional orders required a state of readiness called a “stand to” was ordered from dusk to dawn. A “stand to” represented a state of preparedness by the units whereby a proportion, usually two-thirds of each unit was awake to guard against infiltration or attack. The corresponding “stand-down” was ordered after sun up, and all who did not have duties to perform would be allowed to get a few hours sleep.³¹⁵ Listening posts and patrols were established and guards and sentries posted. In the armoured units,

³¹⁵ War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 4 Aug.

guard tanks were designated and at least one gunner and one loader was on duty in each guard tank. When tanks were in harbour, other than the guard tank, at least one member of the crew was to remain in the turret of the tank while the remainder of the crew could sleep close to their tank ready to take their post on short notice.³¹⁶

Kitching's O Group was held at 1100 hrs each day to outline operations for the next day. Brigade and regimental O Groups followed with regimental O Groups typically being recorded around 1800 hrs each day. If an operation was planned more meetings would occur particularly between the CO of the unit conducting the attack, known as the supported commander, and the CO providing support in the attack – the supporting commander. It was up to the supported commander to develop the concept of operations for the attack with the supporting commander providing expertise on how best to employ his forces; for example how best to employ tanks in support of a proposed infantry attack.

During this period the 10th Cdn Inf Bde fought a series of actions designed to keep the Germans engaged, prevent them from moving forces to meet the Americans and to acquire important ground prior to the forthcoming operation towards Falaise. The first target was Tilly la Campagne. Tilly was located on a small rise on Bourguebus Ridge. The approach to the village was over flat open grain fields that rose gently to the hamlet which provided little to no cover to advancing infantry. Tilly consisted of eight houses, each turned into a fortress. The Germans had strengthened the basements of the houses to withstand heavy pressure from above and then dynamited the walls so that they collapsed inward creating a pyramid over the basements. The basements were prepared with weapon slits to cover any and all approaches. The village had the highest tactical importance since

³¹⁶ 4 Cdn Armd Div Provisional Operational Standing Orders Sec 2 Protection. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 June 1944, App 37.

the high ground upon which the village was located gave it observation and control over a vast area. Two previous attacks to take the village had failed.³¹⁷

The initial 10th Cdn Inf Bde task was a one company diversionary frontal attack from Bourguebus to support a Calgary Highlanders attack on the night of 31 July/1 August.³¹⁸ When this attack failed Simonds ordered Kitching to seize the objective the following night. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment was tasked with support from A Sqn SAR.

The brigade plan called for a brief barrage after which A and B companies from the Lincs were to proceed out of Bourguebus and take up positions between La Hogue and Tilly where they could intercept any German tanks which might try to counterattack. D Coy was to seize Point 63 and C Coy was to pass through D into the town, with D following up.³¹⁹ The tanks from SAR were to support from northwest of Bourguebus. If the infantry attack proceeded according to plan, the tanks were to protect the infantry against counter-attacks and to provide a mobile counter-attack force. Conversely, if the attack bogged down and did not succeed by first light, the tanks were to provide direct fire to help the Lincs onto the objective.³²⁰

Jefferson and McQueen listed the German strength as uncertain.³²¹ On the night of 1/2 August, nine companies of SS panzer grenadiers with six anti-tank guns, twenty tanks and twenty-two artillery pieces were located in and around the hamlet. This meant that a

³¹⁷ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 208.

³¹⁸ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 21.

³¹⁹ War Diary, The Lincoln & Welland Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 1 Aug.

³²⁰ War Diary, 29 Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (South Alberta Regiment), 1-31 August 1944, entry 1 Aug.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

force of over 500 Germans in well-prepared and supported positions opposed the assaulting Canadian companies.³²²

The attack began at 2345 hrs and came under immediate machine gun and mortar fire. The advance became disorganized when the commander of B Coy was killed. An attempt was made to reorganize the companies and resume the attack at 0200 hrs. These orders were not received by all of the sub-units and only two platoons proceeded to attack. They were stopped about 800 yards out of Bourguebus. At 0545 hrs McQueen informed Bde HQ that the attack had failed. The attack cost the Lincs 58 casualties, with 12 fatalities.³²³

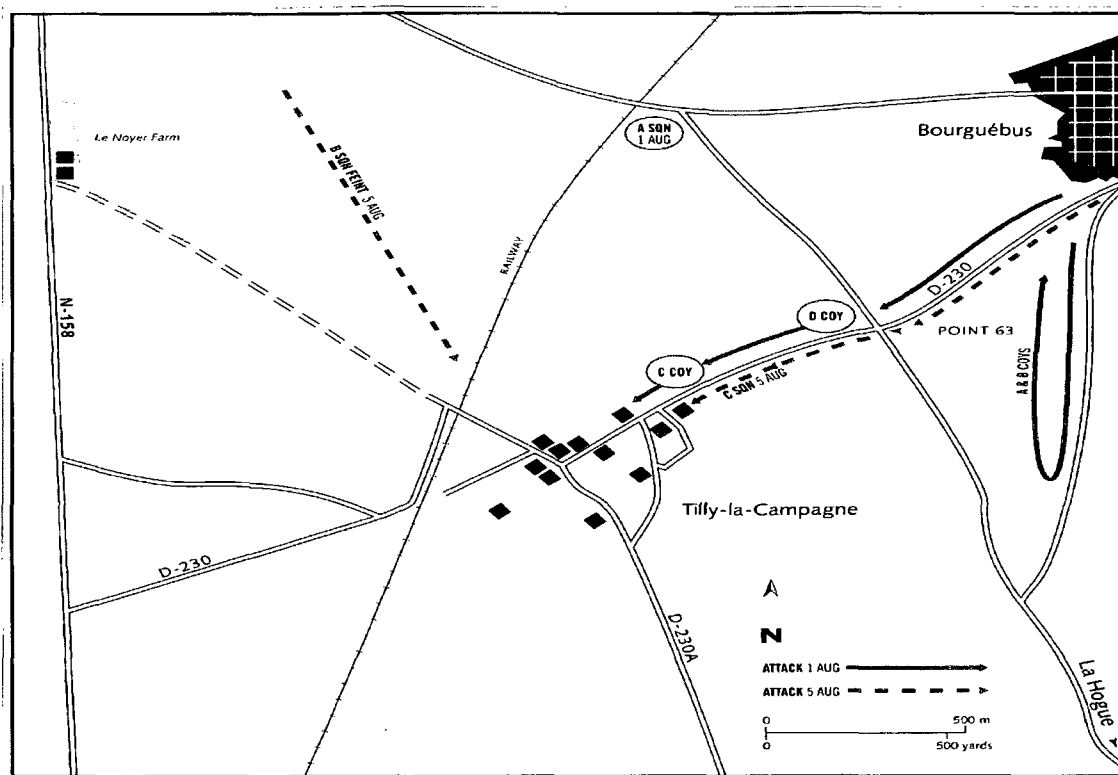
At 1030 hrs 2 August, Kitching visited 10th Cdn Inf Bde HQ. Kitching, Jefferson and McQueen conducted an after action review to try and determine what went wrong.³²⁴ A number of shortfalls were recorded in the performance of the troops. McQueen noted that he had received his orders late, that the orders were sketchy and this prevented proper battle procedure within the regiment. The troops were hesitant about returning fire for fear of causing friendly casualties; they became strung out along the line of advance as the head of the columns advanced; and those behind slowed down causing the advancing formation to disintegrate into a series of small advancing detachments, destroying any hope of cohesion or coordination. The men were also over burdened with excess equipment. These issues were fundamental mistakes in infantry tactics and battle procedure that should have been stressed and addressed in the training of the regiment.³²⁵

³²² The 5th and 6th companies of SS Pz Gren Regt 1 of 1 SS Pz Div were defending the town. The rest of SS Pz Regt 1 and the 7th and 10th Company of SS Pz Regt 1, as well as elements of 2 Company SS Sturmgeschuetz Abteilung 1 of 1 SS Pz Div, were in support. Graves, *South Albertas*, 105.

³²³ Hayes, *The Lincs*, 26-7. See also R. Rogers, *History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment*. (The Regiment, 1954), 136.

³²⁴ Rogers, *History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment*, 136.

³²⁵ Hayes, *The Lincs*, 27-28.



Map 6: Attacks on Tilly-la-Campagne 1-5 August 44 from Graves, South Albertas: A Canadian Regiment at War, 107.

The decision was made to withdraw the Lincs from the line and replace the unit with the Argylls. A harassing fire program was ordered to keep the defenders of Tilly occupied during the relief.³²⁶ Jefferson conducted a further after action review with the officers of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment on 3 August. His principal criticism was that “insufficient determination had been shown in attacking what should have been a two-company objective.”³²⁷ Jefferson followed this up with a discussion of the lessons learned from the Tilly attack with all of the other brigade units on 4 August.³²⁸

This battle was the first test of the leadership within 10 Cdn Inf Bde and there were mixed results. McQueen had been found wanting. Wotherspoon claimed that McQueen had cracked under the pressure of combat and recommended to Jefferson that McQueen be

³²⁶ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 2 Aug.

³²⁷ War Diary, The Lincoln & Welland Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 3 Aug.

³²⁸ War Diary, 10th Cdn Inf Bde 1-31 August 44, entry 4 Aug.

relieved immediately.³²⁹ It is not clear whether Wotherspoon's recommendation went any higher than Jefferson. If it did reach Kitching, it would appear that he was not prepared to remove McQueen after this engagement.³³⁰

Wotherspoon was also critical of Jefferson's plan for the employment of the SAR armour and recommended a number of modifications to Jefferson's plan after the Brigade O Group. Wotherspoon stated that he had just completed a forward reconnaissance prior to Jefferson's O Group and was cognizant of the German positions in and around Tilly. The content of Jefferson's orders lead Wotherspoon to question whether Jefferson had personally gone forward to conduct a reconnaissance. Jefferson's initial plan had the armour crossing open terrain without the cover of smoke. Wotherspoon argued with Jefferson and got the fireplan changed to address his concerns.³³¹

At the beginning of August, Lt Col Ganong was promoted and moved to command the 4th Cdn Inf Bde and Lt Col F Wigle took over the position of GSO 1.³³² Kitching would have had to weigh the impact of losing Ganong against denying him his promotion to Brigadier and the command of 4th Cdn Inf Bde. Accepting this move was a gamble on Kitching's part since there is no indication that Kitching knew or had worked previously with Wigle. Wigle, however, became a very effective operations officer and as Kitching states, brought more life to the general staff. The decision seems to have paid off since

³²⁹ Wotherspoon stated that McQueen became unsettled by the death of his soldiers and would not get out of his foxhole fearing for his own death. Interview with G.D. Wotherspoon by Bill Wiley on September 25 1986, n.p.

³³⁰ McQueen was officially removed from command on 13 August. War Diary, Lincoln & Welland Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 13 Aug.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² When Wigle actually became part of the staff is a bit confusing. Stacey states 3 August (App G, p666 *Victory Campaign*). Kitching stated that it was before the end of July 44, *Mud and Green Fields*, 186. Wigle does not show in any of the HQ 4th Armd Div strength returns in August 44. Neither is any officer designated as the GSO 1. However, Ganong leaving on 3 August is duly noted. Field Return of Officers, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944.

Kitching remarked on how happy he was with the staff work of his division in preparing for TOTALIZE.³³³

Losing the operations officer that Kitching had trained with for the past five months, on the eve of his first major battle must have been disconcerting for Kitching. Since the dynamic between a commander and his key staff members was personality-driven and required a working relationship based on trust, commanders normally selected the officers that they wanted to fill the key staff positions within their headquarters, particularly a position as important as the GSO I. Consequently, when important moves of key staff officers were contemplated there was usually consultation with the affected commander. Kitching made no mention of this in his memoirs with respect to the loss of Ganong or of having been previously consulted in having Wigle assigned as Ganong's replacement. These incidents were the first in a number of key personnel-related issues with which Kitching had to contend.

On 5 August reports began circulating that the Germans were withdrawing from the Tilly defensive line. At about 1530 hrs, word was received from 5 Cdn Inf Bde that the Germans had withdrawn and they were no longer in contact.³³⁴ Kitching ordered the Argylls to send out a fighting patrol, in platoon strength, to determine whether the Germans were still in Tilly: if so, in what strength? The initial assessment was that the Germans may have decided to begin an ordered withdrawal to the Seine. While the Argyll patrol was out, a battalion pursuit group was formed consisting of the Algonquin Regiment, two squadrons from the SAR with the usual complement of supporting arms. If

³³³ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 192.

³³⁴ The information originated from the Br 53rd Inf Div which had reported that German units facing them west of the Orne River had withdrawn. David O Keefe, "Pushing Their Necks Out" Ultra, the Black Watch, and Command Relations," *Canadian Military History*, Volume 15, No 1, Winter 2006, 34; War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 5 Aug.

Tilly was found empty, the pursuit group was to pass through to re-establish contact with the Germans.³³⁵ The Argyll patrol left at 1630 hrs and entered Tilly at approximately 1700 hrs. The Germans had waited until the patrol was within close range and then pinned them down with accurate fire. Stewart ordered artillery fire to help extricate the patrol. The patrol returned at 1800 hrs, losing seven men but returned with three prisoners from the 1 SS Pz Div.³³⁶

Simonds decided that reports from 2nd and 4th divisions were inconclusive with resistance coming with a rear guard force that was trying to gain time for the main force to withdraw. Kitching ordered Jefferson to capture the village and at 1900 hrs the Argylls were ordered to attack Tilly, “not using more than 2 companies” with two troops of tanks, a troop of 17 Pdr anti-tank guns and divisional artillery in support.³³⁷ Wotherspoon did not like the brigade plan and suggested that an armoured feint should be made west of Tilly to distract the defenders. He also requested a smoke barrage to cover the main attack.³³⁸ The armoured feint was to begin at 2145 hrs with the main attack at 2300 hrs. The Argylls made a determined effort to take Tilly. The forward elements entered the town but, when it became obvious that further progress was not possible, the commanders decided to withdraw. There was now no doubt that Tilly was still held in force. This attack cost another 24 casualties and four tanks were knocked out.³³⁹

Kitching had ordered Booth to seize La Hogue. At 1400 the Lake Superior Regiment received initial orders to take and, if possible, hold the village. The intelligence

³³⁵ The 4 Cdn Armd Div war diary reports these attacks on 3 August vice 5 August. *ibid.*, entry 5 Aug

³³⁶ The 15th Field Artillery Regt fired 2400 rounds of 25-pdr to extricate the patrol. Graves, *South Albertas*, 107.

³³⁷ War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entry 5 Aug; War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 5 Aug.

³³⁸ Graves, *South Albertas*, 107.

³³⁹ War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entry 5 Aug.

provided to Kitching and the attacking force from Corps was that the majority of the German forces had departed the town leaving only a small force. The attack went in at 1930 hrs and was halted by heavy fire 150 yards from the town with the loss of six killed and 15 wounded.³⁴⁰ It was now clear that the German defensive line was still being held in force. Kitching and his brigade commanders had responded to orders from Simonds with efficiency as well as loyalty but their confidence in corps intelligence reports was shaken.

During the 1 to 5 August timeframe, the armoured regiments of 4th Cdn Armd Bde were maintained in a counterattack role and saw little action.³⁴¹ The only significant activity on the part of the armoured regiments occurred on 5 August when B Sqn from the BCRs went on a “recce in force” in the area of Fours-Soliers. The Sqn passed through the positions of the Lake Superior Regiment and pushed forward in an attempt to provoke a German counterattack. The intent was to draw the Germans forward onto the remaining tanks of the BCRs who were set to ambush the counter attack. The Germans, however, did not respond. The same tactic was planned for the following night but Kitching cancelled the operation at the last minute.³⁴²

The command decisions for Kitching at this point were rather clear-cut. Choosing the 10 Cdn Inf Bde to carry out the attacks on Tilly was a straight forward decision for Kitching since the regiments of the 4 Cdn Armd Bde were being employed elsewhere and infantry were the logical choice to carry out the assigned attacks. The nature of the

³⁴⁰ War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 5 Aug. The 2nd Cdn Inf Div also carried out a series of similar attacks in response to the same intelligence information against St André and May sur Orne.

³⁴¹ On 3 August a conference was held at HQ 1st Br Corps to discuss the assistance that could be given to the British 49th Div on the 4th Cdn Armd Div left flank. It was decided to place one armoured regiment under command of 49th Br Div as an immediate counter attack force, and the remainder of 4 Cdn Armd Bde was to be on call if necessary. As a result, the Grenadier Guards moved to the area of Giberville to come under command of the 49th Inf Div, and the BCR was tasked to support the 147 Br Inf Bde. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 3 Aug.

³⁴² War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 5 Aug.

campaign forced Kitching to divide his attention between the conduct of current 10 Cdn Inf Bde operations and in the planning of future division operations.

The 4th Cdn Armd Div units were placed into the line south of Caen to acclimatize the men to the routine and conditions of combat. The key to these actions, as espoused by both Montgomery and Simonds, was to ensure that the tasks assigned were of such a nature that they would lead to success. Failure could lead to serious issues of morale.³⁴³ The 4 Cdn Armd Div attacks were of limited value beyond confirming the existence of a firmly held defensive German. The attacks cost the division a significant number of casualties for the intelligence gained and while there may have been an expectation that the setbacks may have negatively impacted morale, there is clear indication that the opposite effect happened. The war diaries convey an eagerness to take the Germans on again. The units felt that the lessons they had learned, and were learning daily, would serve them well in their next encounter.

While the effectiveness of the Tilly and La Hogue attacks as an introduction into battle can be debated, the time in this static environment allowed Proctor, Wigle and the brigade staffs to iron out their staff procedures. Upon moving into the Normandy bridgehead, the maintenance procedures for the division were reorganized. The units were divided into four maintenance groups, 10th Cdn Inf Bde Group, 4 Cdn Armd Bde Group, Div Tps & Arty Group and Adm Group. Rations and petrol for forward troops would be deposited at a point selected by division and notified to units through their respective brigade maintenance groups. This new policy went into effect 30 July 44.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Montgomery, *High Command in War*, para 34.

³⁴⁴ 4th Canadian Armoured Division ADM INSTR NO 3 dated 30 Jul 44. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div AA&QMG, 1-31 July 1944, app 3.

The static period proved to be anything but static for the 15th Cdn Artillery Regt which was supporting 4 Cdn Armd Div. The unit fired over 25,000 rounds of 25-pdr ammunition during this timeframe. This operational tempo challenged the division's supply system to keep the guns stocked since the guns were firing in excess of their daily-allotted rounds. Since transport and ammunition were the main issues Proctor devised a system of overloading the available supply vehicles in order to keep the guns supplied.³⁴⁵

G.L. Cassidy, a member of the Algonquin Regiment, in his book *Warpath*, best summarized this period when he wrote:

The task of learning the battle noises, and accustoming ourselves to patrols and to administration under fire had been successfully carried out. We had learned, as well how important a small thing like water becomes ... We had learned too the value of discipline, particularly in regard to movement in daylight.³⁴⁶

The members of the division as a whole were learning the important lessons of actual combat and how these differed at times with what had been learned in training. This period also provided Kitching with a first look at his commanders under combat conditions but it would take the intensity of battle of operation TOTALIZE to answer for Kitching the vital question over the suitability of his subordinate commanders.

³⁴⁵There are numerous other references of making changes to make operations work better such as optimizing trenches for vehicles, the set-up of charts in ops vehicles etc, War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944.

³⁴⁶ Cassidy, *Warpath: From Tilly-La-Campagne to the Kusten Canal*, 96

Chapter Six: TOTALIZE: The Plan

Conceptually, the idea for TOTALIZE began as early as 29 July, when Crerar advised Simonds to commence planning a thrust down the Caen-Falaise road "in about ten days time" to break through the German defensive positions with the objective of Falaise. The drive was to be carried out in "great strength" and with massive air support. The details Crerar left to Simonds.³⁴⁷ Frustrated by the outcome of both ATLANTIC and SPRING, Simonds saw this operation as an opportunity to establish his reputation as a corps commander.³⁴⁸

At 1000 hrs 30 July, Simonds briefed his division commanders and their senior staff on the strategic picture and his concept for the conduct of operations to carry out Crerar's directive. On 31 July, Simonds presented his appreciation and outline plan for TOTALIZE verbally to Crerar, asking for another infantry division, another armoured division and "total" air support for 48 hours.³⁴⁹ On that basis, he was convinced that the problem, though "tough", could be "well tackled."³⁵⁰

In the design of his plan, Simonds had to resolve three major problems: how to achieve surprise; how to neutralize the enemy's defensive fire; and how to effect a deep penetration of infantry beyond the enemy's screen of anti-tank guns, and machine-guns.³⁵¹ In addition, the terrain in the proposed operation area was a series of gradually rising gentle slopes and open grain fields, dotted with walled villages and surrounded by

³⁴⁷ Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 207, 210.

³⁴⁸ English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 263.

³⁴⁹ The 2 Cdn Corps already had under command the 2nd and 3rd Cdn Inf Divs, 2nd Cdn Armd Bde and the 4 Cdn Armd Div.

³⁵⁰ The additional resources were 1st Pol Armd Div and the British 51st (H) Div. While the 51st (H) Div had already had combat experience, the 1st Pol Armd Div was just as inexperienced as the 4 Cdn Armd Div. Brian Reid provides a detailed analysis of Simonds appreciation and plan in Chapter Four of his book. Brian A. Reid, *No Holding Back Operation Totalize Normandy, August 1944* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2005), 62-83.

³⁵¹ Canada. Army, CMHQ Report No 146, para 34.

small woods and orchards. It was called good tank country as cross-country movement was possible but what was good tank country was also good anti-tank country and the Germans were expecting an attack.³⁵²

Colonel-General Sepp Dietrich, Commander of 1 SS Pz Corps, recognized that sooner or later the Allies would try to break out towards Falaise. He, therefore, ordered the construction of three defensive lines to cover the approaches to Falaise that capitalized on the German knowledge of the excellent defensive features of the topography. The first line ran from St Andre sur Orne through Tilly la Campagne to La Hogue. This line crossed the road Caen-Vimont halfway between Vimont and Cagny. The second line was approximately 3,000 meters further south and included Pt 122, the dominating feature along the Falaise road, and Vimont. The third line ran from Bretteville sur Laize to Cauvicourt, north of St. Sylvain and along the River Muance.³⁵³

Simonds' plan for TOTALIZE required a coordinated and phased attack by three infantry and two armoured divisions, two armoured brigades, special armoured vehicles, two complete AGRA plus the support of two additional AGRA, and the entire available air support of both heavy and tactical bombers.³⁵⁴ The plan would be carried out in three phases. The first was designed to break in at night and seize the first line. The 2 Cdn Inf Div and 51 Br (H) Div, led by the 2 Cdn Armd Bde and the British 33 Armd Bde respectively, with specialized assault armour, engineers and anti-tank artillery, would roll

³⁵² For an explanation of "tank country" see William Murphy, "What is Tank Country?" *Canadian Military History* 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1998), 69-70.

³⁵³ The work was to be completed by the two SS Pz divs in reserve and elements of the 21st Pz Div. Britain, Army of the Rhine, *British Army of the Rhine Battlefield Tour: Operation Totalize: 2nd Canadian Corps Operations Astride the Caen-Falaise Road, 7-8 August 1944*. (London: His Majesty's Stationary Officer, n.d.), 5.

³⁵⁴ In all, 720 guns were available to support TOTALIZE. G. W. L. Nicholson, *The Gunners of Canada: The History of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery Volume II, 1919-1967* (Beauceville: Imprimere L'Eclaireur, 1972), 312-313.

forward at night in separate regiment-sized columns. Each column would contain an infantry battalion riding in the new armoured personnel carriers.³⁵⁵ The tanks and carrier-borne infantry of the leading brigades were to advance under cover of a quick medium artillery barrage straight for their first objectives. Follow-on formations would deal with any bypassed German troops.

There was to be no preliminary artillery bombardment during the first phase. At H-hour 2300 hrs, 1000 RAF Lancaster bombers were to bomb the areas of May sur Orne, Fontenay le Marmion on the right and La Hogue - Secqueville and the adjacent woods on the left. These bombing attacks were intended to destroy the enemy's main defensive line and tank harbours on the high ground.³⁵⁶

The second phase was designed to break through the Hautmesnil – St. Sylvain line and would occur twelve hours after the start of the operation. The task of the 4 Cdn Armd Div was to capture Hautmesnil itself and the high ground northwest of Bretteville le Rabet; thereafter, it was to be prepared to exploit forward west of the Caen-Falaise road. The 3 Cdn Inf Div, following up, was to protect the flanks of the armoured attack: on the right flank by forming a firm base in the area of Bretteville sur Laize and, on the left flank, by taking the woods located near Robertmesnil. The 3 Cdn Inf Div was subsequently to exploit from the Robertmesnil area to St Sylvain.³⁵⁷ The first drafts of the plan had been based on the assumption that the bulk of the German armour would be in position to support their defensive lines when the attack was launched. As a result,

³⁵⁵ Simonds had come up with the idea of converting American M7 105 mm self-propelled guns called Priests which were being taken out of service into armoured personnel carriers. The M7 was based on a Sherman tank chassis. The actual conversion entailed removing the gun, seats and ammunition storage and welding armoured plates over the openings. By 6 August, 76 vehicles had been converted to the new Kangaroos which could now carry a section of infantry. Reid, *No Holding Back*, 84-90.

³⁵⁶ CMHQ Report No 146, para 45.

³⁵⁷ 2 Cdn Corps Operation Instruction Number Four, Operation Totalize Dated 5 August 44. Copy 52 War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944.

Simonds had planned to use only 4th Cdn Armd Div in the second phase keeping 1st Polish Armd Div in reserve.³⁵⁸

The third phase would be the exploitation phase with the two armoured divisions, 4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Polish Armd Div, advancing towards Falaise. The 4 Cdn Armd Div was to advance on the axis Hautmesnil Pt 180, Pt 195, Pt 206 and once established on these features to patrol and maintain contact with the Germans in an arc with Fontaine le Pin on the left and Meslay on the right. The 1 Pol Armd Div was to advance on an axis that ran through Quesnay to Pt 165, Pt 159 and position itself on the high ground Pt 170 – Pt 159 just short of Falaise. The 3 Cdn Inf Div, once relieved by the 2 Cdn Inf Div and 51 (H) Div in Bretteville sur Laize and St. Sylvain, was to reposition its brigades forward to the line Hautmesnil, Bretteville le Rabet and the high ground of Pt 140.³⁵⁹ Each armoured division with one medium artillery regiment under command and the support of medium and fighter-bombers, on call, would deal with possible threats from armoured counterattacks.³⁶⁰

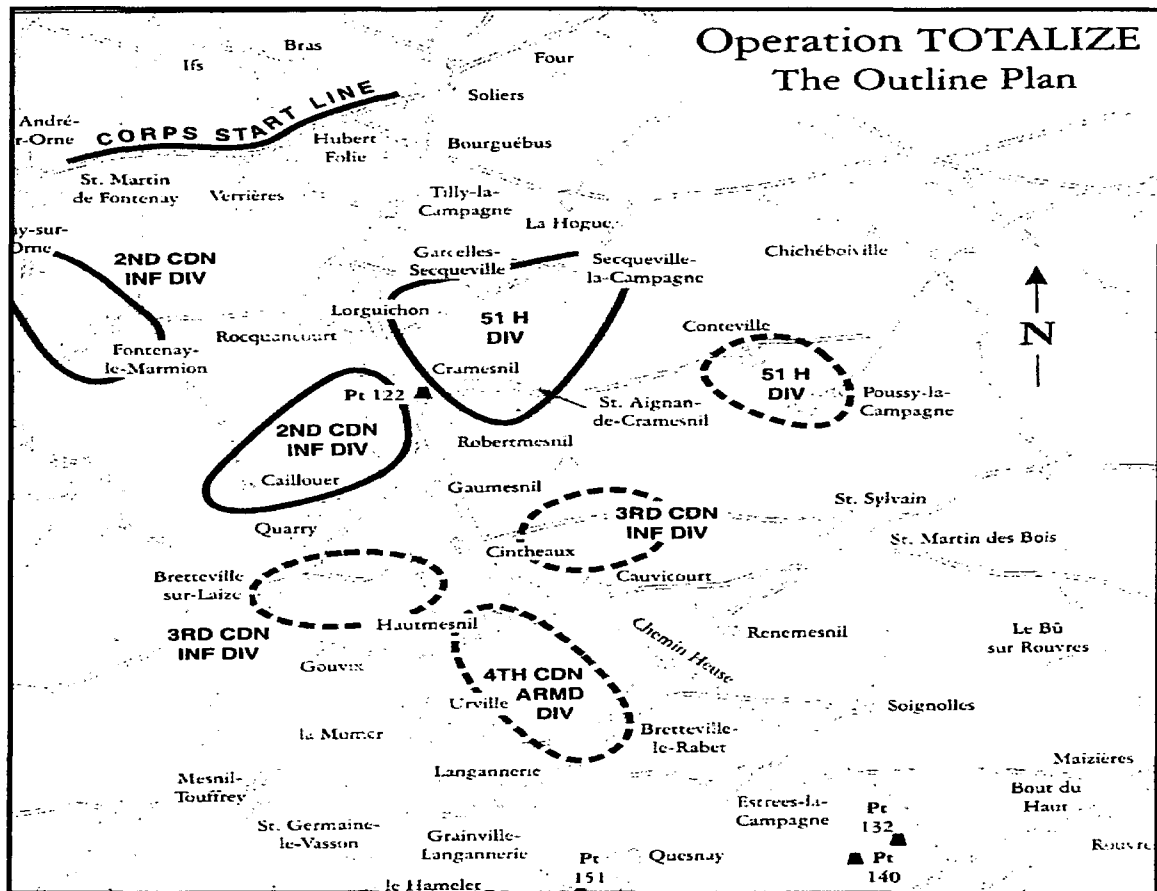
The third phase relied on very heavy air support, including heavy day bombers (B-17 Flying Fortresses), all available medium bombers and armed reconnaissance by fighter-bombers. From 1235 hrs to 1355 hrs on 8 August the 8th USAAF would bomb St Sylvain, Bretteville sur Laize and Gouvix with high explosive (H.E.) and fragmentation bombs. Simonds wanted to create a corridor down which his forces would attack and to have the air attack concentrate outside of both flanks of the corridor. A “fragmentation carpet” would be laid over the area bounded by Cintheaux – Cauvicourt – Hautmesnil. The purpose of this attack was to provide a wall of moving bombardment that would

³⁵⁸ Graves, *South Albertas*, 101.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ CMHQ Report No 169, para 36.

move southwards which would facilitate the armoured attack. High explosive and fragmentation bombs were planned to reduce the possibility of cratering the terrain in front of the advancing tanks.³⁶¹



Map 7: Operation TOTALIZE Outline Plan. Reid, *No Holding Back*, 80.

Simonds seized upon the employment of heavy bombers as part of the solution to his “break in” problem. He reasoned that if all available air support were used for the first “break in,” there would be little left for the second, which would also suffer from diminished artillery support unless a “pause” was incorporated to move artillery and ammunition forward. On the other hand, if the initial “break in” could be accomplished by “infiltrating through the screen in bad visibility” with limited air support, then the

³⁶¹ CMHQ Report No 146, para 47; also CMHQ Report No 169, Amendment No 4, para 21.

heavy and medium day bombers would be available to deal with the next zone while artillery support was moving forward into the recently captured German territory.³⁶²

This plan contained a number of new concepts and tactical innovation. These included: the intervention of heavy bombers in the ground battle during the hours of darkness; the use of modified self-propelled guns as armoured personnel carriers; and the use of tanks *en masse* at night.³⁶³ In different ways, each of these innovations should have been given time for experimentation, preparation and training in order to establish common operating techniques. The Phase I units received two days of planning and training: 4 Cdn Armd Div units received none.

The use of tanks *en masse* at night is commonly viewed as the most radical part of the plan. Brigadier Elliot Rodger, the Chief of Staff of 2nd Cdn Corps, stated that “jaws dropped noticeably” when Simonds notified the division commanders on 4 August that the operation would be conducted at night with armour.³⁶⁴ While using tanks at night as part of a set piece and co-ordinated attack plan may have been seen as radical, the armoured units of Phase I had time to prepare to mitigate the associated risks. Continuing the practice, as part of ongoing and developing operations, without the benefit of time and proper deployment procedures was to present serious challenges to 4th Cdn Armd Div in Phase II.

The most criticized part of this complex plan was the fact that the actions of the land forces were now locked into the heavy bomber strike timings, which supposedly,

³⁶² Miller, *August 1944*, 75.

³⁶³ Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 210.

³⁶⁴ Doctrine stated that tanks usually harboured at night. None of the armoured units in the 4th Cdn Armd Div had trained in operating tanks at night in combat conditions and a specific recommendation of Exercise SPARTAN was that night movements of armoured formations be kept to a minimum. Ex SPARTAN ran from 27 Feb to 12 Mar 1943 and was the largest Canadian manoeuvre ever conducted in England Reid, *No Holding Back*, 91.

could not be altered without 24 hours warning. The general consensus is that since the First Cdn Army lobbied, against considerable opposition, to get the bomber support in the first place, they dared not cancel it at the last minute. To compound the issue, the only link with Bomber Command was through First Cdn Army HQ.³⁶⁵ By insisting on bomber support for Phase II, Simonds opted for a more staged battle rather than a more fluid one where the follow-on forces were used to exploit the success gained in Phase I. Many historians believe this decision was to have a significant impact on the outcome of Phase II, and in turn, the progression of the whole Canadian Normandy campaign. This argument is succinctly expressed by John English's statement, "...its incorporation [the bombing] within the second phase, more than any other factor, promoted a degree of inflexibility that by allowing the Germans to recover foreordained defeat."³⁶⁶

Montgomery issued his formal order for TOTALIZE on 4 August. The stated intent for the operation was to smash the vital pivot of the German Armies in Normandy by breaking through the German positions to the south and southeast of Caen and gaining ground in the direction of Falaise that would cut off the German forces facing the Second British Army rendering their "withdrawal eastward difficult-if not impossible."³⁶⁷ Additionally, the attack was to destroy enemy equipment and personnel. The attack was to begin not later than 8 August and on 7 August if possible. At noon 5 August, Headquarters 2nd Cdn Corps issued *Operation Instruction No. 4: Operation TOTALIZE*, describing the operation in the three phases already noted. D-Day was to be Monday 7

³⁶⁵ English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 269.

³⁶⁶ English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 278.

³⁶⁷ Nigel Hamilton. *Monty: Master of the Battlefield 1942-1944*. (London: Sceptre, 1987), 358; Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 211.

August and H-Hour for Phase I was set as 2300 hrs. H-Hour for Phase II was set at 1400 hrs on 8 August.³⁶⁸

ULTRA decrypts revealed the German intention to launch Panzer Group Eberbach in a counterattack aimed at the American exposed left flank around Argentan.³⁶⁹ On the morning of 6 August Simonds received information from “various sources of intelligence” that indicated that significant changes had occurred within the German defensive alignment. Specifically:

- 272 Inf Div had side-stepped southwestwards to take over the front previously held by 12 SS Div, and 12 SS Div had stepped back to the area of Valmeray
- 89 Inf Div³⁷⁰ relieved 1 SS Div on the sector between the left flank of 272 Inf Div and the LAIZE, and 1 SS stepped back to the BRETTEVILLE SUR LAIZE-ST SYLVAIN position.³⁷¹

Based on this information Simonds decided that no change was required to the air plan because of this new intelligence but that modifications were justified in the ground operations.³⁷²

³⁶⁸D-Day represents the day the operation is to begin and H-Hour refers to the specific hour on D-Day that the operation is to commence. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 211.

³⁶⁹ This was General Wade Haislip's XV Corps. D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, 441.

³⁷⁰The 89th Infantry Division was activated in Norway in March 1944, left Norway on 12 June and arrived in the Rouen area around 10 July 1944. It had two regiments, numbered 1055 and 1056. The regiments were identified between May sur Orne and Tilly on the night of 5/6 August. Canadian intelligence listed the strength of the division as 10,550 men, 2,650 horses, 900 vehicles, 18- 75 mm anti- tank guns, 12-88mm anti-tank guns. 4 Cdn Armd Div Int Summary Number 4 Part II, 7 Aug 44, War Diary 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 15.

³⁷¹ Letter GOC 8-3, Simonds to Crerar, Operation “TOTALIZE” dated 6 August 1944, Crerar Papers, MG30 File E 157 Vol 2.

³⁷² The Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) summary for the week ending 6 August, stated that the Germans had managed to withdraw four panzer divisions (12th SS, 1st SS, 10th SS and Panzer Lehr) from the line and a fifth (116th Panzer) was due to be withdrawn during the night of 5 to 6 August. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, 132-134.

In the redesign, TOTALIZE went from a three-phased attack to a two-phased attack. Simonds believed that the Bretteville-sur-Laize line had been “thickened” with the withdrawn SS troops, which necessitated a widening of the frontage and increase in the weight of the attack in the second phase. Simonds decided to combine the second and third phases by launching 4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Pol Armd Div “ ... simultaneously and parallel directly through to their final objectives.”³⁷³ Both armoured divisions were untested but Simonds felt that, with this tactic, at least one of the two would achieve the desired breakthrough, which would facilitate the advance of the other.³⁷⁴ Simonds believed that the anti-tank guns on the second defensive line were still intact and that the Germans still had the 12th SS Pz Div in reserve.³⁷⁵ The redesigned plan was briefed to the division commanders at 1000 hrs 6 August.

If Simonds’ operational policy is used as a template, Simonds redesigned plan and the rationale he gave for changing the plan are hard to reconcile. If he expected that the second break-through might meet stronger resistance particularly through anti-tank guns than originally anticipated, infantry divisions should have been designated for this breakthrough. The 3 Cdn Inf Div was already part of Phase II and should have been used accordingly. Simonds knew that the 1 SS Pz Div was withdrawn from his front and was replaced with an infantry division, which represented a weakened second defensive line.³⁷⁶ He also wanted the armoured divisions to push directly to their final objectives. Armoured divisions, according to his operational policy, were to be used to exploit the

³⁷³Letter GOC 8-3, Simonds to Crerar, Operation “TOTALIZE” dated 6 August 1944.

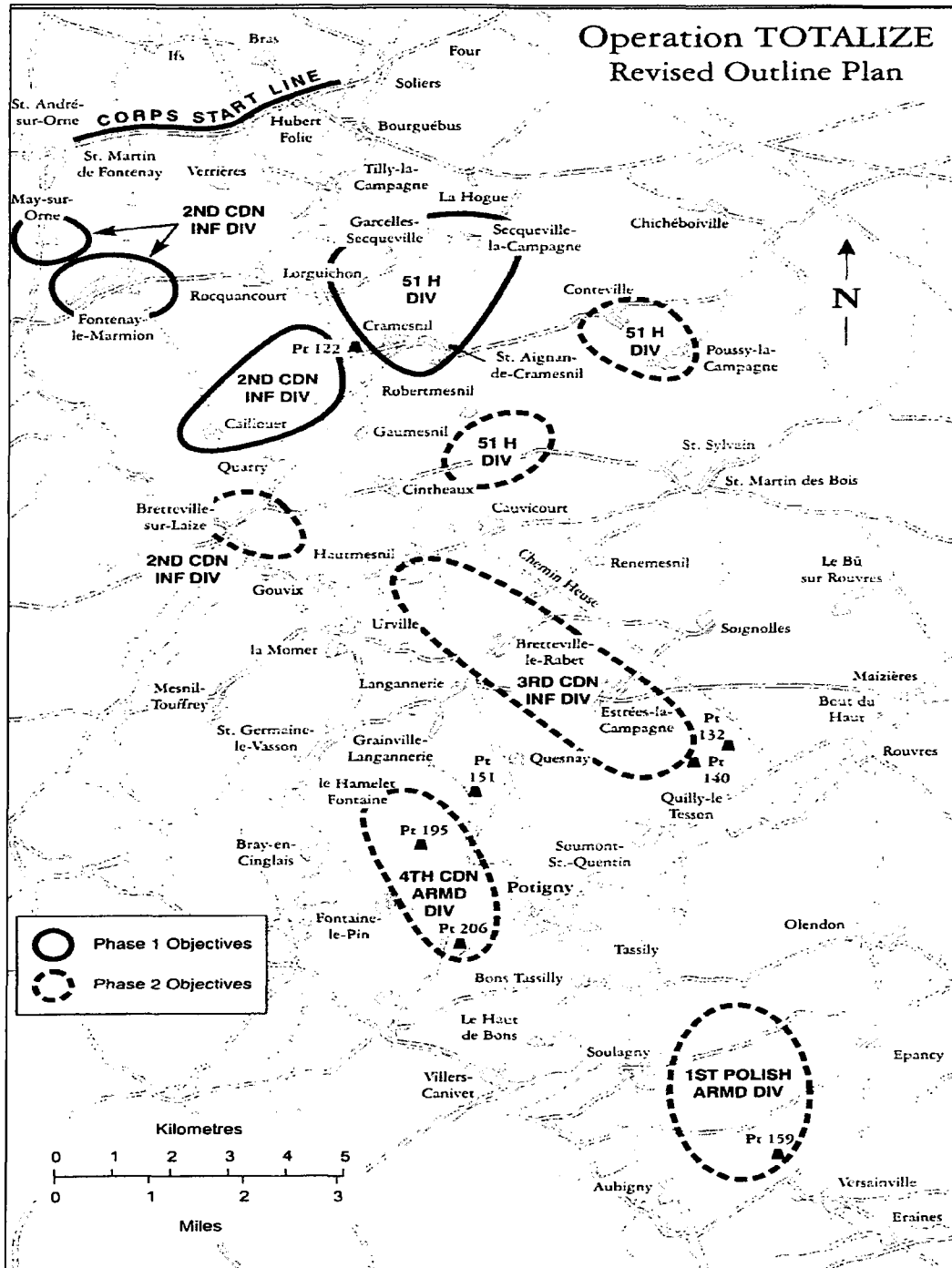
³⁷⁴ Marshall Stearns, Letter [Recollections on time with Montgomery], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 23 March 1981.

³⁷⁵ The estimated strength of the 1 SS Pz Div was 4 battalions of infantry with 600 per battalion, 20 Panther tanks, 45 Mark IVs panzers, 35 assault guns, 40 field artillery guns and 30 anti-tank guns over 50mm. 4 Cdn Armd Div Int Summary Number 4 Part II, 7 Aug 44, War Diary 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 15.

³⁷⁶Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, 200.

holes made by the infantry division, not make the holes themselves. Asking the armoured divisions to push on directly to their objectives suggests that he was expecting them to meet light opposition. A weaker second line would also explain why Quesnay Woods, a formidable natural obstacle to tanks and an excellent defensive position for the Germans was strangely absent from Simonds' appreciation. In trying to explain Simonds' plan the evidence would support two propositions: either Simonds was actually expecting an exploitation battle in Phase II or by August of 1944 he had modified his Operational Policy published in February 1944.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ Copp, *Guy Simonds and the Art of Command*, 10.



Map 8: Revised Outline Plan. Reid, No Holding Back, 99.

It is ironic that in what may have been an attempt to be reactive and spontaneous, Simonds changed a plan that might have brought him the ultimate success he and Montgomery were craving. Simonds was placing considerable trust in his two new armoured divisions to deliver the deep penetration he needed to capture the dominant

physical features that would help seal off the German forces facing Second British Army.³⁷⁸

Acting on Hitler's orders to counterattack the Americans at Mortain, German armoured divisions were withdrawing from the Caen sector in rapid succession. These moves dangerously weakened the strength of the German hinge at Caen. Only one panzer division remained in the area, the 12 SS Pz Div.³⁷⁹ The German armour was replaced with infantry divisions. The defensive line was anchored by the 89 Inf Div in position astride the RN 158 with the 272 Inf Div on the right and the 217 Inf Div on the left. The 89 Inf Div was recently arrived from 15th Army. It was well equipped with material and personnel, had a good cadre of experienced officers and NCOs had had the opportunity to train its men to an acceptable level of readiness prior to moving into the line south of Caen.³⁸⁰ The 272 Inf Div had already been involved in extensive operations in Normandy. It would be these two infantry divisions that would provide the majority of the opposition to the 2 Cdn Corps attack.

In support of these forces were two self-propelled (SP) anti-tank battalions of 1 SS Pz Corps that had been left behind to form a strong concentration of anti-tank guns, dug-in tanks and self-propelled guns.³⁸¹ The 12 SS Pz Div was split with half the division watching for a possible British breakthrough about ten miles to its left at Brieux and the remainder positioned astride the Caen-Falaise Road. The 12 SS Pz Div was not the same division that had first fought the Canadians on 7 June, but it was still a formidable

³⁷⁸ English's book *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, examines this change in detail. For the most recent examination of the plan see chapter 4 of Brian Reid's book *No Holding Back*.

³⁷⁹ Initially, 9th SS Pz Div, 21st Pz Div and the 503rd Heavy Tank bn left. On the nights of 4/5/6 August the 1 SS Pz Div slipped out of the German line and joined them. BAOR, *British Army of the Rhine Battlefield Tour*.

³⁸⁰ Colonel H. Neitzel, "Activity of the 89 Infantry Division" July 1946, Manuscript B 102. Copy provided by Professor Copp.

³⁸¹ CMHQ Report No 146, para 26.

force.³⁸² The 101st SS heavy tank battalion, equipped with ten Tiger I tanks, was attached to the division

The only other formation in the rear area was a Luftwaffe Flak Brigade equipped with 29 batteries of heavy dual-purpose (anti-aircraft, anti-tank) 88 mm guns and 40 light batteries of 50-mm anti-aircraft guns.³⁸³ General Pickard, the Luftwaffe commander, had refused army demands to move these guns forward and retained them in their assigned defensive roles. These units remained deployed mainly in the Bretteville – St. Sylvain line and further south.³⁸⁴

There are a number of specific issues dealing with the planned employment of the 4 Cdn Armd Div in TOTALIZE which need to be highlighted and examined in more detail. According to the new plan, two armoured divisions were now expected to breach by daylight a defensive position in depth that was ostensibly more heavily defended than the foremost zone. By forcing the armoured divisions to make their own breach in the German defences and then forcing them to hold certain objectives until relieved by 3 Cdn Inf Div, Simonds was denying the armoured division commanders the ability to

³⁸² Meyer states that the division had 39 Panzer IV's, one company of panzerjager IVs, one panzer grenadier battalion, the division and corps escort companies, three artillery battalions and a nebelwerfer artillery battalion. Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, (Winnipeg: J.J. Fedorowicz, 1992), 171. The estimated strength of the 12 SS Pz Div from Allied intelligence was 3 1/2 battalions at 600 men each, 35 Panther tanks, 45 Mark IV panzers, 30 assault guns, 30 field artillery guns, and 55 anti-tank guns over 50 mm. 4 Cdn Armd Div Int Summary Number 4 Part II, 7 Aug 44, War Diary 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 15.

³⁸³ A common claim in many texts is that the 88 mm anti-tank gun caused most of the Allied tank casualties when in fact the 75 mm anti-tank gun was proven to have inflicted more casualties. The 88 mm gun was not considered a good anti-tank weapon because its high profile made it hard to hide or dig in, made it susceptible to artillery fire and its weight made it difficult to move. Zetterling, *Normandy 1944*, 152-155. See also Terry Copp, "Report No 12-No. 2 Operational Research Section: Analysis of 75 mm Sherman Tank Casualties Suffered between 6th June and 10th July 1944," *Canadian Military History*, No. 1 (Winter 1999), 73-77.

³⁸⁴ Copp, *Maple Leaf Route: Falaise*, 89. Kurt Meyer claims that not a single gun from the Flak Corps operated against enemy tanks from the beginning of the invasion to the Falaise Pocket. Meyer, *Grenadiers*, 165. The assigned roles to the Flak Corps were air defense, indirect fire support to the ground units and anti tank but only if enemy tanks had broken through and were threatening the Flak units. III Flak Korps claimed 462 aircraft shot down, 92 tanks destroyed and 14 armoured cars destroyed. Zetterling, *Normandy 1944*, 153-155.

concentrate their total combat power to maintain the momentum of the attack into the depths of the German defences and beyond. As for exploitation of any breakthrough, once 4 Cdn Armd Div reached its objectives it was only required to patrol to maintain contact with the Germans. There were no orders for a continued and sustained advance towards an assigned objective such as Falaise.³⁸⁵ The capture of Pt 206 itself was not a deep enough penetration of the front to cut off the German forces facing Br Second Army as stipulated in Montgomery's orders. The capture of Falaise at this juncture would have compromised the entire German defensive position in Normandy.

The employment of the armoured divisions was complicated by the fact that they were now restricted to attacking on a very narrow front over terrain that maximized the advantage of German tactics and weapons. The issue of neutralizing the German advantage in defensive fire through reduced visibility or disguise seems to have been either overlooked or ignored in Phase II. There was no defined program or plan for example of providing a smoke screen to hide the advance of the two attacking armoured divisions. All of the effort and innovation for TOTALIZE went into Phase I, leaving the inexperienced armoured divisions on their own for Phase II.

While in the first plan the 4 Cdn Armd Div had the entire frontage of over 3,000 yards for manoeuvre, the divisional frontage allotted to Kitching in the revised plan was only 1,000 yards and, at one point, between Hautmesnil and a quarry to the west of the town, it narrowed to only 800 yards. The right side of the division boundary was restricted by an elevated railroad track that restricted any movement west and confined the attacking forces within a defined area. This embankment channelled the attacking

³⁸⁵ Outline of Instrs Issued By GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 071300B Aug 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 12.

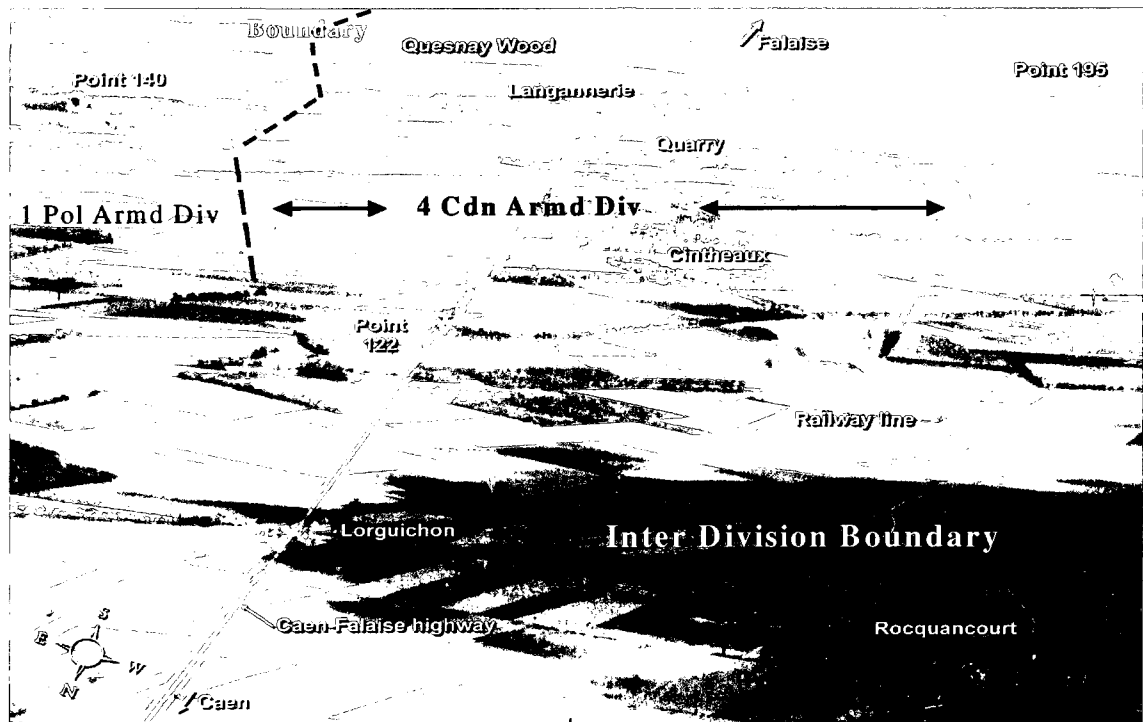
forces towards the first major obstacle, the quarry at Hautmesnil, and continued down towards the villages of Grainville-Langannerie, Langannerie and Bretteville le Rabet, which effectively sealed the channel shut, preventing any rapid unobstructed armoured drive.

The left side of the boundary ran southeast through a church located to the west of Cauvicourt, through Bretteville le Rabet to a point northeast of Quesnay Woods before heading south towards the Laison River. The division's area for manoeuvre became progressively smaller as the division advanced deeper into German territory. Quesnay Woods, a significant tank obstacle, was located inside the 4 Cdn Armd Div boundary and was largely ignored in Simonds' planning.

Once past Grainville-Langannerie, the manoeuvre space became greater to the southwest towards the Fontaine le Pin feature but the approaches were flanked by Quesnay Woods on the left flank and the woods at St Germain le Vasson plus the villages of le Londe, le Deffane and le Hamelet Fontaine on the right. The approaches to Fontaine le Pin itself were uphill and under complete observation of the German troops deployed there. The centreline of the advance was through the towns of Cintheaux, Hautmesnil, Langannerie and Grainville-Langannerie on a north-to-south axis. These towns had been fortified and were mutually supporting in defensive fire. The left flank was more open with Bretteville Le Rabet being the only obstacle before Quesnay Woods.

Quesnay Woods, as a geographical feature, was a major obstacle that rested squarely in the path of the two armoured divisions. It was a formidable feature measuring some 1500 yards by 1000 yards and clearly blocked any approach to Falaise. In fact, the Route Nationale (RN) ran through the southwest portion of the woods to Falaise. In both

TOTALIZE plans the woods were located within the divisional boundaries of the 4th Cdn Armd Div. Both armoured divisions would have to address the potential complications represented by the woods on the way to their objectives. Despite the importance of this feature, Simonds did not assign Quesnay Woods as an objective.³⁸⁶



Map 9: Inter Division Boundary Modified LCMSDS Air Photo 39/30. Copp, *The Battlefields in Normandy*, 99.

The only viable route for the 4th Cdn Armd Div to the final objectives of Pt 195 and Pt 206, some 10,000 meters deep in enemy territory, was through a piece of relatively open terrain that veered right, crossing in front of Quesnay Woods. This meant that Quesnay Woods would either have to be taken or masked off and bypassed. The available intelligence at that time was that the woods was not held in strength which may in part explain why it did not receive the serious consideration it deserved from either Kitching

³⁸⁶ Perhaps this was a conscious decision since Quesnay Woods was an infantry objective and would have required a considerable realignment of forces and phases. Simonds' decision to ignore Quesnay Woods must be viewed as a significant oversight in his appreciation of the terrain.

and Simonds.³⁸⁷ Kitching appears to have decided not to assign Quesnay Woods as an objective but to have Booth deal with it, as need be, according to the unfolding operation.

The frontage allocated to the 1 Pol Armd Div was roughly the same, though heavily wooded areas lay to its front and flanks. Having the two-divisions advancing in parallel reduced the room for tactical manoeuvre and for avoiding obstacles and enemy positions.³⁸⁸ Movement forward was further complicated by the fact that both axes of advance were dotted with small French villages and heavily wooded areas that allowed for mutually supporting defensive-fire. While the order was to bypass German resistance, this tactic became an unrealistic proposition when attacking in daylight through a fortified German defensive system and with the Germans having observation of the entire attacking area.³⁸⁹

During the August 2 to 7 timeframe, Kitching's main focus was operation TOTALIZE. He kept an eye on the operations of 10th Cdn Inf Bde to take Tilly and La Hogue but left the planning and execution of these attacks to Jefferson. Once the task of taking Tilly was assigned, it was up to Jefferson to decide whether he had the appropriate resources to undertake the assigned operation. If he decided he did not, then he should have asked Kitching for additional resources. There is no evidence to indicate that a request of this nature was made.

At 1500 hrs 3 August, Kitching attended the first of five conferences at HQ 2nd Cdn Corps to discuss the outline plan for Operation TOTALIZE.³⁹⁰ During the morning

³⁸⁷ Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 101.

³⁸⁸ Dominik Graham, *The Price of Command: A Biography of General Guy Simonds* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 150.

³⁸⁹ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 193.

³⁹⁰ At 1100 hrs 4 August, Kitching attended Crerar's conference on TOTALIZE. After this conference Kitching discussed his division's role in the forthcoming operation with Simonds. At 1800 hrs, Kitching held a conference and discussed the outline of TOTALIZE with his brigade commanders, CRA, CRE, OC

of 6 August, Kitching, the brigade commanders, Wigle, Proctor and other key staff members attended Simonds' conference for TOTALIZE. Kitching held his O Group in the late afternoon where he issued his final instructions for TOTALIZE.³⁹¹ At 1000 hrs 7 August, another conference was held at Corps HQ with GOC 1 Polish Armd Div (1 Pol Armd Div) Maj Gen Stanislaw Maczek, Kitching and Simonds. Kitching and Maczek expressed their concerns over the changed plan to Simonds. Both commanders realised the very real restrictions that Simonds was placing on their ability to bring the combat power of their divisions to bear and asked Simonds to extend the assigned frontages to give the armoured divisions more room for manoeuvre. Simonds refused³⁹² The inter-divisional boundary, particularly in the area of Cintheaux, was therefore agreed upon and finalized.

The two commanders also voiced their apprehension over the planned bombing and asked Simonds to call it off. If the first phase proved successful, further bomber support would not be required. Simonds disagreed. He stated that the bombers would be needed to neutralize the 1 SS Pz Div that was supposed to be supporting the second defensive line.³⁹³ Kitching stated: "Guy was convinced that we would meet heavy opposition ... and would not change his plan" and "there was also some doubt in his mind

Div Sigs, OC 18 Cdn Armd C Regt, GSO 1 and AA&QMG. Another TOALIZE conference was held at 1100 hrs 5 August. Kitching had another meeting with Simonds that day after lunch. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944.

³⁹¹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August, 6 Aug.

³⁹² German armoured doctrine allowed a frontage of 1500 yds for a deliberate attack by an armoured division.. Roger Edwards. *Panzer: A Revolution in Warfare, 1939-1945*. (London: Brockhampton Press, 1998), 69. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 271.

³⁹³ This statement by Simonds is at odds with intelligence information he received on 6 Aug. In fact, that division had been withdrawn on the nights of 4/5 and 5/6 August and was in action against the Americans on the seventh.

whether he would be able to call off the bombing mission in time.”³⁹⁴ Once Simonds decided to stay with his revised plan, the sequencing of Phase I and Phase II could not be significantly changed or altered.

The final written 4 Cdn Armd Div instructions for TOTALIZE were issued at 071300B August 44.³⁹⁵ The division would advance: with the two brigades attacking side by side. The armoured brigade would have about 500 yards in which to manoeuvre. This frontage was the normal operating room for a squadron of tanks. The potential combat power of an armoured brigade was being reduced to that of a single squadron of about 14 tanks.³⁹⁶ Given the frontage and terrain restrictions, did he have any other alternative(s)?

Currently there is no evidence available to indicate how Kitching worked his way through all of the factors necessary to arrive at his plan for TOTALIZE. Elements of his thinking can be, however, extracted from his final plan. His appreciation would have had to start with the following assumptions:

- a. Phase I would be successful
- b. The start line for Phase II would be secure
- c. The division would be able to successfully transit through the rear areas of the 2 Cdn Inf Div
- d. The attacking units would be able to deploy on the start line at 1400 hrs
- e. The Phase II bombing would be on time and on target
- f. The divisional artillery would be deployed in its assigned positions capable of supporting the Phase II drive

Unfortunately, only one of these assumptions, point “d” was to prove correct. The rest of the assumptions were to prove inaccurate, in whole or in part.

³⁹⁴The second portion of Kitching’s statement is probably closer to the truth. Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 193.

³⁹⁵“ B” time was one hour ahead of the time in England. All operational times were in B

³⁹⁶ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 194.

Kitching's most important decision would concern the utilization of his two brigades over the complex terrain allotted to the division to maximize the division's combat power against the requirement for a rapid advance through the second defensive line to the Fontaine le Pin feature. Kitching had a number of options to consider. He could attack in depth with the 10 Cdn Inf Bde leading and the armour in support; with 4 Cdn Armd Bde leading and the 10 Cdn Inf Bde in support, launching both brigades side by side, or by mixing the infantry and armour regiments of both brigades into new combined arms combat formations and assigning these formations specific objectives. Each option had its advantages and disadvantages.

Launching 10 Cdn Inf Bde first would have had infantry battalions each supported by a tank squadron of the SAR as the striking power of the division. This arrangement would have been in keeping with Canadian doctrine of using infantry formations to attack organized enemy defensive positions and villages. The pace of the attack would have been considerably slower but more easily supported by the division artillery. Terrain would not have been an issue but rate of advance would have been. The armoured brigade would have had to wait until the 10 Cdn Inf Bde had advanced beyond the barriers represented by the towns of Grainville-Langannerie, Langannerie and Bretteville le Rabet before the terrain was suitable for exploitation by the armoured brigade. In this scenario, speed and the momentum of the attack would have been sacrificed for a methodical approach based in large part on the available mobility of the infantry. Where speed of the advance was imperative, Kitching would have had a hard time justifying a decision to hold the striking power of the division in check while the infantry cleared out successive villages.

Launching the armoured brigade first would have forced the armoured regiments, each supported by a company of infantry from the Lake Superior Regiment, into the role of clearing the series of villages along the division's axis of advance, a role the armour was not ideally suited to perform. Alternatively, asking the armour to bypass the fortified villages and having the villages dealt with by a trailing 10 Cdn Inf Bde would have resulted in the armour regiments being shot to pieces by prepared German anti-tank guns and tanks as they passed each successive fortified village. The normal distribution of one company of infantry from the Lake Superior Regiment to each armoured regiment would not have represented sufficient force to take the villages, much less the large quarry at Hautmesnil. All of the advantages of speed, mobility and firepower offered by the tanks would have been siphoned off to take the villages. In this scenario, terrain and fortified villages on the axis of advance were the complicating critical issues.

In designing TOTALIZE, Simonds had continually stressed the need for speed and momentum in the advance. Neither of the one-brigade up scenarios offered a solution to this imperative. Combining the resources of the two brigades into two balanced, combined arms formations offered the best possible solution. While this construct had been discussed in TEWTs, it had not been practiced and represented a radical departure from how the units had been trained and exercised in England. Such a radical change would have required a significant reorganization of units, brigade headquarters and training but there simply was no time available to make this a viable option.³⁹⁷ The only realistic option for Kitching, where speed was a critical element of the plan, was to launch the two brigades side-by-side.

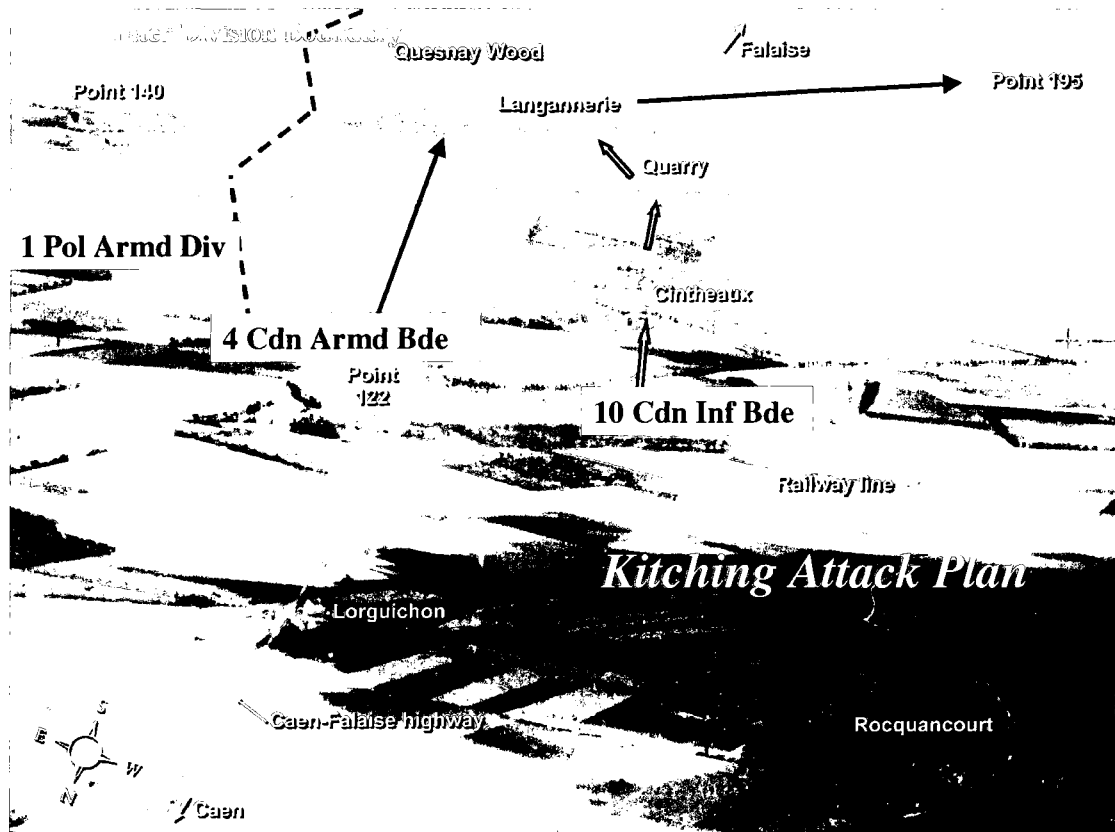
³⁹⁷ By this time both the 7th and 11th British armoured divisions had reorganized into two balanced armoured/infantry brigades rather than the infantry/armoured brigades established in doctrine. Buckley, *British Armour*, 40.

Kitching's plan of attack closely mirrored Simonds' concept of Phase II for TOTALIZE in form and function. Kitching's plan was to attack "two up" with the two brigades attacking on either side of RN 158—the 10 Cdn Inf Bde to the west and 4 Cdn Armd Bde to the east. The armoured brigade was to bypass the two towns of Cintheaux and Hautmesnil and any other opposition encountered in order to capture Bretteville Le Rabet. Once a firm base had been established in Bretteville Le Rabet, the brigade was then to advance south to capture the Fontaine le Pin feature. A special force composed of the Algonquin Regiment mounted in scout cars and half-tracks was under command of the armoured brigade and this force was tasked to help them establish the firm base at Bretteville Le Rabet, thus relieving the armoured brigade of the requirement to hold Bretteville Le Rabet after its capture. This move retained intact the fighting power of the armoured brigade.

It was the task of the 10 Cdn Inf Bde to protect the right flank of the armoured advance by capturing Cintheaux and Hautmesnil in succession, including the quarry adjacent to Hautmesnil. The infantry brigade was then to firm up the division position at Bretteville Le Rabet and take over responsibility for the town.³⁹⁸ This plan solved the problem of diluting the combat power of the armoured brigade by relieving it of the responsibility of taking two key fortified towns and of holding Bretteville le Rabet. The armoured brigade could advance quickly over the open ground east of the RN to its objectives, knowing that its flanks were protected. This option maximized the possibility

³⁹⁸Each of the 4th Cdn Armd Div brigades had a squadron from the 18 Manitoba Dragoons trailing the brigade columns. Their role was one of liaison between neighbouring formations and of gathering information and intelligence for Kitching. They were tasked with passing through the broken German line and gathering all available information about the rearward German positions in order to facilitate the drive south. Outline of Instrs GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 071300B Aug 44, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 12.

for speed, mobility and concentration of the armoured forces. The disadvantage to this option was that the armoured brigade did not have enough room to deploy properly, restricting the amount of combat power that could be brought to bear at the front of the division. Kitching had nonetheless devised a workable compromise.



Map 10: Kitching's Attack Plan, Modified LCMSDS Air Photo 39/30

TOTALIZE was a complex plan from a logistical standpoint. The constant flow of supplies arriving daily over the beaches ensured that the availability of supplies was not an issue. The division administration order for TOTALIZE directed that units were to hold supplies up to and including 9 August in addition to two days extra rations.³⁹⁹ An

³⁹⁹In total, units were to carry three days rations, and three days reserve rations with all tanks, armoured fighting vehicles and half-tracks carrying extra ammunition loads. The rationale for the extra supplies was to ensure that the attacking forces could maintain the momentum of the attack deep into German territory without being hampered by having to wait for the rear echelons to provide further supplies. 4 Cdn Armd

additional ready reserve of 50 miles of fuel and ammunition stocks were loaded on trucks for each armoured division and held within the 2 Cdn Corps administration area to support the mobile operations expected after the armoured divisions broke through the German defences.⁴⁰⁰ The expectation was that the units of the division could sustain themselves for at least two days without having to call forward additional supplies.

The true challenge, however, would be traffic control in passing one combat formation through another in the middle of a battle. The 4 Cdn Armd Div was required to move up through the rear areas of 2 Cdn Inf Div during Phase I. This manoeuvre was a practiced procedure but typically only involved the fighting echelons. Passing an entire division through another with the potential of combat at any time was creating an exponential level of difficulty in coordination and control. In particular, the potential traffic congestion should have been recognized and dealt with by the staff at 2nd Cdn Corps, but the evidence would suggest that the staff effort in resolving this problem was lacking.

Kitching's credibility has been called into question over two statements that he made in his memoirs *Mud and Green Fields*. The first deals with a statement he made to General R Keller GOC of 3rd Cdn Div about how Phase II in the original plan was to play out. The second involves his complaint about his allotted division frontage and his seemingly incredulous decision to further reduce the frontage of his attacking brigades by attacking in parallel (side by side) instead of having them attack in depth (one behind the

Div Adm Order No.1: Op TOTALIZE dated 7 August 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 2.

⁴⁰⁰ 2 Cdn Corps Adm Order Number 4 Op TOTALIZE 5 Aug 44 copy 152, War Diary, AG &QMG Branch, HQ 2 Cdn Corps, 1-31 August 1944, App 6.

other). Together, these statements and the apparent contradictions that they present have raised questions about the motive and validity of the statements in Kitching's memoirs.

Kitching stated that he was content with the original plan (of three phases) and told Keller how much he looked forward to working with him. In particular, Kitching stated that 3 Cdn Inf Div was to make the hole through which 4 Cdn Armd Div would pass.⁴⁰¹ Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence to support Kitching's statement. The TOTALIZE operation orders of 5 August state that 3 Cdn Inf Div was to "follow up" 4 Cdn Armd Div.

The "follow-up" statement is usually interpreted by historians as a tactical imperative, i.e., what the 3 Cdn Inf Div was supposed to do. There is, however, another interpretation of the phrase as simply a statement of fact. With all of the new armoured personnel carriers committed to the Phase I formations, there were few if any available to the 3 Cdn Inf Div for Phase II. The 3 Cdn Inf Div soldiers were foot bound so there was no way that they could do anything but "follow-up" behind the advancing motorized columns of the armoured division.

Brian Reid, in *No Holding Back*, is critical of historians to date for not analyzing the contradictions in Kitching's arguments.⁴⁰² Reid bases his assessment on a number of specific issues, namely:

- a. Despite the change in the number of phases, essentially there was no change in the route, tasks and the final objectives assigned to 4 Cdn Armd Div. It would have to control and cross the same piece of ground, no matter the number of phases.

⁴⁰¹ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 192.

⁴⁰² Reid specifically cites Reginald Roy, John English and the authors of the *Royal Canadian Armoured Corps History* for falling into the "same trap" of accepting Kitching's comments and calls them unfortunately mistaken.

- b. For the 3 Div there was no reference in the first plan to this formation advancing on the east side of Route Nationale and certainly not at the same time that the 4 Cdn Armd Div was attacking south along it.
- c. Nor was there at any time, as Kitching claims in his memoirs, a plan to use the 3 Cdn Inf Div to punch a hole in the German lines for Kitching's division to pass through. This is further supported by the fact that the initial orders stipulate that the 3rd Cdn Inf Div would follow in the rear of the 4th Cdn Armd Div in the tasks assigned to Keller and ⁴⁰³
- d. Simonds could not have known at 1000 hrs 7 August that the 1st SS Pz Div was moving west to join the Mortain offensive.⁴⁰⁴

While the fundamental premise of the first statement, at point “a” remains true, the “how” was significantly affected since the ground over which the division could operate was changed considerably under the revised plan. Kitching had a frontage of over 3000 yards within which to manoeuvre in the original plan. Unfortunately, what is not known is how Kitching intended to deploy his two brigades with the entire frontage, essentially from Bretteville sur Laize to Robertmesnil, at his disposal.

The statement in point “b” is incorrect. The tasks assigned to 3rd Cdn Inf Div were to secure the right flank by taking Bretteville sur Laize and the left flank by taking the woods at point 1054 – 1055, with the follow-on task of being prepared to exploit to St. Sylvain. Both the woods and St Sylvain lie clearly on the east side of RN 158. Having the 3rd Cdn Inf Div advance to St. Sylvain was a move designed to cover the left flank of the 4th Cdn Armd Div as it advanced deeper into German-held territory. The combat power of the 3rd Cdn Inf Div was split on both flanks of the 4th Cdn Armd Div and was being

⁴⁰³ Reid, *No Holding Back*, 252.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 254.

used to capture, secure and hold open the edges of the axis of advance of 4th Cdn Armd Div, in a way maintaining the hole through which the 4th Cdn Armd Div was advancing.

The last statement in point “d” is again clearly incorrect. The proof lies with the orders issued verbally by Kitching on 6 August and confirmed in writing on 7 August. The orders state, “There are definite indications that 1st and 12th SS Pz Divs are moving WEST, some elements already having crossed the R ORNE.”⁴⁰⁵ If Kitching knew this information on 6 August, then Simonds obviously knew. In fact, the information most probably came directly from Simonds.

The main criticism of Kitching’s plan is focussed on his decision to have the two brigades attacking side-by-side.⁴⁰⁶ This method was contrary to Simonds’ operational policy of attacking with one brigade up and further compounded the issue of frontage. It is hard, however, to see how Kitching could have attacked any differently. As discussed above, attacking in depth, in accordance with Simonds’ policy, would not have generated enough combat power and operational tempo to allow Kitching to attack deep into the German defences towards his objectives.

There are a number of other crucial command decisions made in the preparation of TOTALIZE that have not been adequately analyzed. It is clear from the number of meetings that Kitching had with his brigadiers and senior staff that a high level of consultation must have occurred between them prior to the operation.⁴⁰⁷ The fact that the

⁴⁰⁵ Outline of Instrs GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 071300B Aug 44, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 Aug , App 12.

⁴⁰⁶ Reid, *No Holding Back*, 256.

⁴⁰⁷ There are four noted meetings between Kitching and Simonds on TOTALIZE between 3 August and the “final” discussion at 2115 hrs 5 August. At 1500 hrs 3 August, Kitching attended a conference at HQ 2nd Cdn Corps to discuss the outline plan for Operation TOTALIZE. At 1100 hrs 4 August, Kitching attended Crerar’s conference on TOTALIZE. After this conference Kitching discussed his division’s role in the forthcoming operation with Simonds. At 1800 hrs, Kitching held a conference and discussed the outline of TOTALIZE with his brigade commanders, CRA, CRE, OC Div Sigs, OC 18 Cdn Armd C Regt, GSO 1 and

Algonquin Regiment was placed under command of 4th Cdn Armd Bde for Phase I is a decision that could only have been made by Kitching. The responsibility for other key command decisions remains obscure. Who, for example, picked Halpenny and the Grenadier Guards to lead the advance? Halpenny had no previous combat experience and on the surface appeared the least likely to have been given the assignment. Of the other two, Scott had previous combat experience in Italy and Kitching considered Worthington from the BCRs as the best of the armoured regimental commanders even though Worthington had no previous combat experience.

The lack of proper reconnaissance has been suggested as one of the reasons why the division ran into difficulties in moving forward.⁴⁰⁸ It is argued that the SAR should have been used in its stated role as a reconnaissance asset to explore ahead of the combined Brigade columns. Instead, the regiment was used in the role of an armoured regiment in support of an infantry attack. Any one of the three armoured regiments in the armoured brigade could have provided this support but only the SAR was specially trained in the reconnaissance role. In fact, each of the armoured regiments had a recon troop, which was used in its designated role. The issue during the Phase II advance was not identifying German defensive positions but arranging the means to suppressing them.⁴⁰⁹

AA&QMG. Another TOALIZE conference was held at 1100 hrs 5 August. Kitching had another meeting with Simonds that day after lunch. On the morning of 6 August, Kitching, the brigade commanders, CRA, CRE, OC Signals, Wigle and Proctor attended Simonds' conference for TOTALIZE. Kitching held his O Group in the late afternoon where he issued his final instructions for TOTALIZE.⁴⁰⁷ At 1000 hrs 7 August, another conference was held at Corps HQ with GOC 1 Polish Armd Div (1 Pol Armd Div) Maj Gen Stanislaw Maczek, Kitching and Simonds. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944.

⁴⁰⁸ John F. Wallace, *Dragons of Steel: Canadian Armour in the Two World Wars* (Burnstown: General Store Pub House, 1994), 232.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

A criticism of the battle procedure within the 4 Cdn Armd Div and, in particular, the 4 Cdn Armd Bde is that the orders were late in being issued on 7 August and in some cases were not issued at all.⁴¹⁰ These criticisms are generally valid but there were, however, a number of complicating circumstances in the preparation of the 4 Cdn Armd Div for the attack that have been, up to now, overlooked. The first point is that the 4 Cdn Armd Bde was not relieved from its position as the counterattack force for Crocker's Corps until late on 6 August. The Foot Guards, for example, did not revert to 4 Cdn Armd Div control until 2315 hrs 6 August.⁴¹¹ The transfer of the 4 Cdn Armd Div positions to the 51st Br (H) Div was not accomplished until the early hours of 7 August with the 10 Cdn Inf Bde reporting the task complete at 0500 hrs 7th August.⁴¹² The division units then had to move to their concentration areas south of Caen before any preparations for the coming battle could be undertaken. The division units had been in the line for a week and had less than a day to rest and prepare much less train and plan for their role in the upcoming operation. Conversely, the units of Phase I had almost two days of training and preparation before the start of the operation.

A significant and rarely discussed issue in the examination of the TOTALIZE plan was the decision to advance the date of the operation from 8 to 7 August 44, a decision that had a number of unintended consequences. Despite the severe mauling the German armoured forces had been taking in the Mortain offensive, von Kluge had no intention of disobeying Hitler's orders of moving all armour against the Americans and was preparing to reinforce the attack by committing the 12 SS Pz Div, the last armoured formation east of the Orne. At 2215 hrs 7 August, von Kluge told the commander of the

⁴¹⁰ Reid, *No Holding Back*, 257.

⁴¹¹ 4 Cdn Armd Div Sitrep Number 17, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 13.

⁴¹² War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 6 Aug.

Seventh Army that 10 SS Pz Div was moving to join him and that the 12 SS Pz Div was to follow suit.⁴¹³ Maintaining the original launch date of 8 August would have caught the 12 SS Pz Div on the move away from Caen and in no position to counter a two or three phase TOTALIZE plan. Given the available intelligence information, it is clear that Montgomery, who pushed for the earlier attack date, did not comprehend the intimate sequencing of operations that was unfolding in the Caen sector that would have facilitated the breakthrough so desperately sought. The bombing of 7 August alerted the 12 SS Pz Div to the coming attack. The division held in place and was, therefore, in position to reorganize and stiffen the German defenses on 8 August.

Having one more day of preparation or reverting to the original launch date of 8 August, may have given the commanders of 4 Cdn Armd Div and, in particular, the 4 Cdn Armd Bde the time necessary to prepare and brief their men in accordance with the procedures they had practiced in training.⁴¹⁴ One more day would have also made the issues of narrow frontages and waiting for the Phase II bombings irrelevant since there would not have been a 12 SS Pz Div in place to counter or obstruct the Phase II attacks. One more day would have resulted in very favourable conditions for a Canadian success.

The issue of late orders, particularly within 4 Cdn Armd Bde on 7 August, is viewed as evidence of the inexperience and or incompetence on the part of Booth and Halpenny.⁴¹⁵ The brigade commanders and key staff members of the division had accompanied Kitching to a number of the meetings held by Crerar and Simonds in the

⁴¹³ Amendment No 3. to para 118, CMHQ Report No. 169.

⁴¹⁴ Montgomery stipulated that the attack was to be launched as early as possible “and in any case not later than 8 August.” Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 211.

⁴¹⁵ Reid, *No Holding Back*, 257-260. The same charges have not been levied against 10 Cdn Inf Bde commanders. Jefferson’s O Group was at 1000 hrs 7 August, the same time that Kitching was meeting with Simonds. War Diary 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 Aug.

days prior to the launch of the operation. The general intent was, therefore, well known but the specific details may have been lacking. It is evident that work had started on brigade plans based on the initial instructions issued on 5 August. These were altered with the revised instructions issued on 6 August and further refined once the inter-division boundary was settled at the 1000 hrs meeting with Simonds on 7 August. Details could not have been finalized prior to then since the two armoured division commanders were seeking changes to the plan.

Booth held an initial O Group at 1100 hrs for all COs and Intelligence Officers (IO) within the brigade where the general outline of the Corps attack was explained. Booth presented his brigade plan as a three-phased operation. In Phase I, the brigade would take Bretteville le Rabet, Phase II would involve the capture of Pt 195, and Phase III the capture of Pt 206. Murrell of the Lake Superior Regiment and Halpenny held a meeting at 1430 hrs to discuss the composition of Halpenny Force.⁴¹⁶ Booth held a final O Group at 1800 hrs.⁴¹⁷ Halpenny followed with his O Group at 2200 hrs.

The Orders Group was late for proper battle procedure to be implemented and Halpenny tried to give his orders amidst the noise of the bombing and artillery fire in support of Phase I. Participants left in utter confusion, with little understanding of their roles in Phase II and no time to prepare.⁴¹⁸ Maj Ned Amy, as the Officer Commanding (OC) No 1 Sqn of the Grenadier Guards, stated that he did not issue orders because of the noise of the guns and the need to move almost immediately. He had difficulty finding his unit among the rubble and ruins of Caen and none of the supporting arms were able to

⁴¹⁶ War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 7 Aug.

⁴¹⁷ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 7 Aug.

⁴¹⁸ Stanley, *In the Face of Danger*, 159-160. Also recounted in Amy, [*Recollections on Normandy*], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria.

marry up with his group before his force moved forward. Confusion and traffic congestion reined.⁴¹⁹

The issue of maps was another complicating factor in proper battle procedure. The 4 Cdn Armd Div was being tasked to fight deep in enemy territory and properly detailed maps for the operation were not handed out to the units until the afternoon of 7 August. Subordinate commanders could not issue orders until they had at least a fundamental understanding of the terrain and boundaries within which they would be fighting. A formal reconnaissance was obviously impossible and only limited time was available for a map reconnaissance, a procedure that involved the study of the proposed route from maps and photographs in order to assess the terrain and its features before deciding on a course of action.

The records of the different armoured regiments provide conflicting information as to how the three phases of the 4 Cdn Armd Bde attack were to be carried out. The orders given by Halpenny as recorded in the Grenadier Guard war diary⁴²⁰ stated that all three phases were to be carried out by Halpenny Force—a combined arms unit composed of the Grenadier Guards, the Lake Superior Regiment, 96th Anti-Tank Battery and a squadron of flail tanks. The “intent” as recorded in the orders stated that an “advance Guard composed of 22 C.A.R., and supporting Arms U/C [under command] LCol Halpenny will cease [sic] and hold high gr. [ground] West side of PONTIGNY sq.0044 [sic 1044], Point 206.”⁴²¹ The method of attack was as laid out in Booth’s three-phased

⁴¹⁹The regiment was guided forward solely by provosts on duty at key points. Ibid.

⁴²⁰ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, App 14. The orders as expressed in the Lake Superior Regt war diary are identical. War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, App 6. Also reproduced in Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, App XI.

⁴²¹ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, App 14; Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 518.

attack with the added statement that Bretteville le Rabet would be held until relieved by the Algonquin Regiment. The Advance Guard was divided into three groups: the Van Guard (Amy Force), the Main Guard (Smith Force) and Advance Guard HQ which included Williamson Force, the reserve force.⁴²² Each group was composed of one squadron from the Grenadier Guards and one company Lake Superior Regiment with supporting anti-tank troops, flail tanks and artillery observers.⁴²³

The Foot Guards and BCR war diaries, however, have recorded a three-phased attack but the details are significantly different. In both of these war diaries, the Grenadier Guards are to capture Bretteville le Rabet at which point the BCR pass through to Pt 195, followed by the passing through of the Foot Guards.⁴²⁴ The obvious problem with this account is that all of the infantry of the Lake Superior Regiment had been allotted to the Grenadier Guards squadrons, and the infantry of 10 Cdn Inf Bde was committed to other tasks. In addition, neither the Foot Guards nor the BCR war diaries for 7 or 8 August 44 record any type of orders for these two regiments other than moving south along the accorded line of march in the allotted brigade marching order. If the Foot Guards diary was correct, a considerable amount of time and planning would have been needed to regroup and realign the Lake Superior Regiment infantry companies with the BCR and then the Foot Guards for the follow-on attacks. There is no evidence of any such plans or discussions.

⁴²² According to Canadian doctrine the tasks of an advanced guard were close reconnaissance, protection of the main columns drive back the enemy covering force, when the enemy is encountered in strength the formation was to form pivots on which the remainder of the armoured division could manoeuvre and give time to the divisional commander to form and to execute his own plan without interference. War Office, *MTP No. 41, Part 1 1943*, 29-30.

⁴²³ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, App 14.

⁴²⁴ War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 8 Aug.

Even though Booth developed the 4 Cdn Armd Bde attack plan, the plan itself would have had to have been approved in principle by Kitching because the Algonquin Regiment was a 10 Cdn Inf Bde asset that Kitching would have had to allot to Booth. Booth's plan was another example of insufficient forces allocated to an attack, especially one that was supposed to confront the 12 SS Pz Div. Believing that one armoured regiment and one motorized infantry battalion could carry the attack to a depth of over 7000 yards into German territory even with the supporting attacks from 10 Cdn Inf Bde and the Polish Armd Div, does not make any sense; especially after the experience gained in the attacks on Tilly la Campagne and La Hogue. The only way that the armoured brigade plan could be deemed adequate was if Booth was working on the assumption that Halpenny Force would not meet any sizeable opposition in its advance to Bretteville le Rabet or to Pt 195. If true, then Kitching and Booth were placing considerable faith in the effectiveness of the heavy bombing to disrupt and destroy the German defenses and in their intelligence information which stated that Quesnay Woods was lightly held.

It is striking to contrast the content of the orders given by Kitching and the orders given by Halpenny. It is interesting to note how two critical elements of Kitching's orders have been substantially altered in the content of Halpenny's orders. The first involves the intent of TOTALIZE, and the second issue involved the disposition of German forces facing the Canadians.⁴²⁵

Under the title of "Enemy" in the divisional orders, Kitching stated that the 2 Cdn Corps front was held by 89 Inf Div and 272 Inf Div, reinforced by one battalion from 711 Div. Kitching's orders continue with the statement that "There are definite

⁴²⁵A copy of Booth's orders has not been found but evidence revealed that Kitching sat in on Booth's orders group. War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 7 Aug.

indications that 1 and 12 SS Pz Divs are moving WEST, some elements already having crossed the R ORNE.”⁴²⁶ The enemy disposition in Halpenny’s orders was considerably different and based, inexplicably, on intelligence information from 5 August. The German disposition was thus given as right-49th (sic) Inf Div with the 9th and 10th SS Pz Divs in the rear; Centre- 89th Inf Div with the 1SS Pz Div in the rear; and on the left 272 Inf Div with the 12th SS Pz Div in the rear.⁴²⁷ Halpenny’s orders portray a substantially different and significantly stronger German disposition confronting the Canadian attack and, more significantly, the forces that 4 Cdn Armd Bde would have to contend with in the coming attack. Given Halpenny’s stated enemy disposition, it is hard to reconcile his belief that his squadron based combined arms groups could fight their way through this defensive network to take Pt 195.

In Kitching’s orders, the task of 2 Cdn Corps was to break through enemy positions astride the Caen-Falaise road. In Halpenny’s orders, under the topic of “Own Troops” the following information is recorded: 2nd British Army is driving east with the intention of destroying 9 & 10 SS PZ, 12 Corps on west bank of the ORNE will hold present position; Cdn Army is attacking Falaise with the intention of destroying 1 and 12 SS Pz Divisions.⁴²⁸ The task of breaking through a defensive line was considerably different from that of destroying two panzer divisions.

Halpenny’s concept of operations involved three phases as follows:

- a. Phase One. Seize and hold Bretteville-le-Rabet until relieved by Algonquin Regiment

⁴²⁶ Outline of Instrs GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 071300B Aug 44, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 12.

⁴²⁷ War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, App 6; Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 518.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 517-518.

- b. Phase Two. Seize and hold high ground area Aisy Point 195
- c. Phase Three. Ref Intention [to seize Pt 206].⁴²⁹

In his explanation of how Phase I was to occur, Halpenny stated that 4 Cdn Armd Div with the armoured brigade leading was to pass through Cintheaux with the intention of seizing Bretteville le Rabet in the first phase.⁴³⁰ At no time did Kitching order the armoured brigade to move through Cintheaux. In fact he was quite specific in stating that the armoured brigade was to bypass both Cintheaux and Hautmesnil on the way to Bretteville le Rabet.

Together, these discrepancies represent fundamentally different concepts between what Kitching wanted and what Halpenny was ordering his battlegroup to do. The evidence would suggest that there was neither a common situational awareness nor common intent between the division commander and the commander of his leading forces. Coordinated action may therefore have been impossible. Where the divergence between Kitching and Halpenny's orders happened is unclear since copies of the 4 Cdn Armd Bde orders were not found. Simply stated, 4 Cdn Armd Bde was going to execute a plan with insufficient force to meet the objectives set by Kitching given the size and disposition of enemy forces.

Deployment drills and procedures are an important part of the preparation process to ensure that the troops are launched into battle on time, properly briefed and equipped, rested to the maximum extent possible and ready and confident for the fight ahead. Such procedures are designed to eliminate confusion, minimize the effects of the fog of war and ensure the optimum use of the time available between receipt of the warning order

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 518.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

and crossing the start line. 4 Cdn Armd Div had such procedures and they had been well practiced in England. On the night of 7/8 Aug, there is clear evidence that a serious breakdown occurred at more than one level within the division in the application of these deployment drills.⁴³¹ There is no clear explanation as to why important preliminary planning information was not made available earlier at the lower levels to help prepare the troops adequately for their first battle or how the intent or common operating picture became distorted among the various levels of command. Kitching had done everything he was supposed to do to properly prepare his division but somehow the correct information became distorted as it flowed down through the chain of command.

Halpenny's plan for the capture of PT 195 and Pt 206 remains highly suspect. It is at odds with the direction given by Kitching with respect to bypassing towns and would never generate the combat power needed to carry the brigade through to its objectives. The plan of continually passing the armoured regiments through each other by phase offered the greatest potential for success but this plan would have required the reassignment of infantry within the division, adding further complexity to an already difficult deployment situation.

In TOTALIZE, Kitching was tasked with the execution of a plan he found to be fundamentally flawed. He did not have the manoeuvre room he felt he needed and felt that any level of operational tempo gained in Phase I would be nullified by having to wait for the bombing that was to begin Phase II. Kitching had delivered his orders to his subordinate commanders in a timely fashion and he had his key staff officers and commanders in all of the higher level meetings on the plan. They were well aware of what was expected and what was intended. Kitching's plan represented the best course of

⁴³¹ Amy, [*Recollections on Normandy*], *Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria*.

action given the imperative for a rapid breakthrough of the armoured forces. Kitching, however, did not know that the deployment procedures within the division had failed. The troops were not properly briefed, did not have time to adequately prepare and were about to be launched into their first major operation without understanding the plan or their role in it. It would be up to Kitching and his commanders to try and deal with the outcome.

Chapter Seven: TOTALIZE

Phase I of the attack started at 2300 hrs with a thousand heavy bombers releasing their loads on their assigned targets. The packed armour columns and marching infantry assigned to Phase I crossed the start line 30 minutes later and advanced on either side of RN 158. As the armoured columns felt their way behind the bombing, seven hundred guns sent a continuing storm of shells to give them further support. The tactic of an advance at night *en masse* to overwhelm the enemy by sheer weight, power and novelty of the attack held the promise of considerable success for Simonds and 2 Cdn Corps.⁴³²

The hundreds of vehicles raised dense clouds of dust, blinding drivers already struggling with the general obscurity and contrast glare from the searchlights. They were able to see little more than the taillights ahead of them. At first the weight of the attack shocked the Germans but they recovered quickly, compounding the visibility problem by laying down a smoke screen 45 minutes after the attack was launched.⁴³³ The difficulty in moving forward was evident in the fact that three of the four 2 Cdn Inf Div columns went astray, passing east of Roquancourt rather than all four columns passing west of the town as was planned.⁴³⁴

While 4 Cdn Inf Bde and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde had encountered little resistance on their way to their objectives, the other infantry brigades that had followed to clear the by-passed towns and pockets of resistance, met stiff opposition.⁴³⁵ The shelling and bombing

⁴³² CMHQ Report No. 169, para 49.

⁴³³ Op TOTALIZE AN ACCOUNT OF OPS BY 2CDN ARMD BDE IN FRANCE 5 to 8 AUG 44. War Diary, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁴³⁴ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 49.

⁴³⁵By first light, Caillouet, the quarry and Gaumesnil were still in German hands. The northern half of Fontenay le Marion and Roquancourt, which had been reported in Canadian hands at 0700 hrs on 8 August, were not completely cleared. The latter was only cleared shortly after noon. May sur Orne had not fallen. In the 51 (H) Div sector, "the 154 and the 33rd Armd Bde had captured Cramenil, St. Aignan de Cramenil and Garcelles-Secqueville with the woods to the south of St. Aignan still to be cleared. Lorguichon was

had initially stunned the Germans but they had prepared caves and tunnels to seek shelter only to re-emerge at daylight.⁴³⁶ These units became very active at first light in resisting the Canadian and British attempts to consolidate their gains. By noon, most of the Phase I objectives had been cleared but the western wing of the attack still lagged behind. 2 Cdn Inf Div became involved in a lengthy process of clearing out the pockets of by-passed Germans and getting the Essex Scottish onto its objective at Caillouet which hindered the passage of the 4 Cdn Armd Div through the 2 Cdn Inf Div areas.⁴³⁷ “Bitterly contested” and “casualty-causing” mopping-up operations continued until late afternoon.⁴³⁸

Phase I had been a success and the road to Falaise lay open—at least that was the opinion of Lt Col Mel Gordon of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers of 2 Cdn Armd Bde. His regiment was on its objective near the hamlet of Cramenil at first light. Gordon was certain that the road to Falaise was open and that an opportunity to exploit the success of Phase I was at hand. At 0630 hours, he requested permission to continue the advance down RN 158. His superior Brig Wyman refused two separate requests to advance, stating that his orders were quite clear and he was to establish a firm base for Phase II.⁴³⁹ They prepared their firm base west of the RN 158 between Roquancourt and Cintheaux.

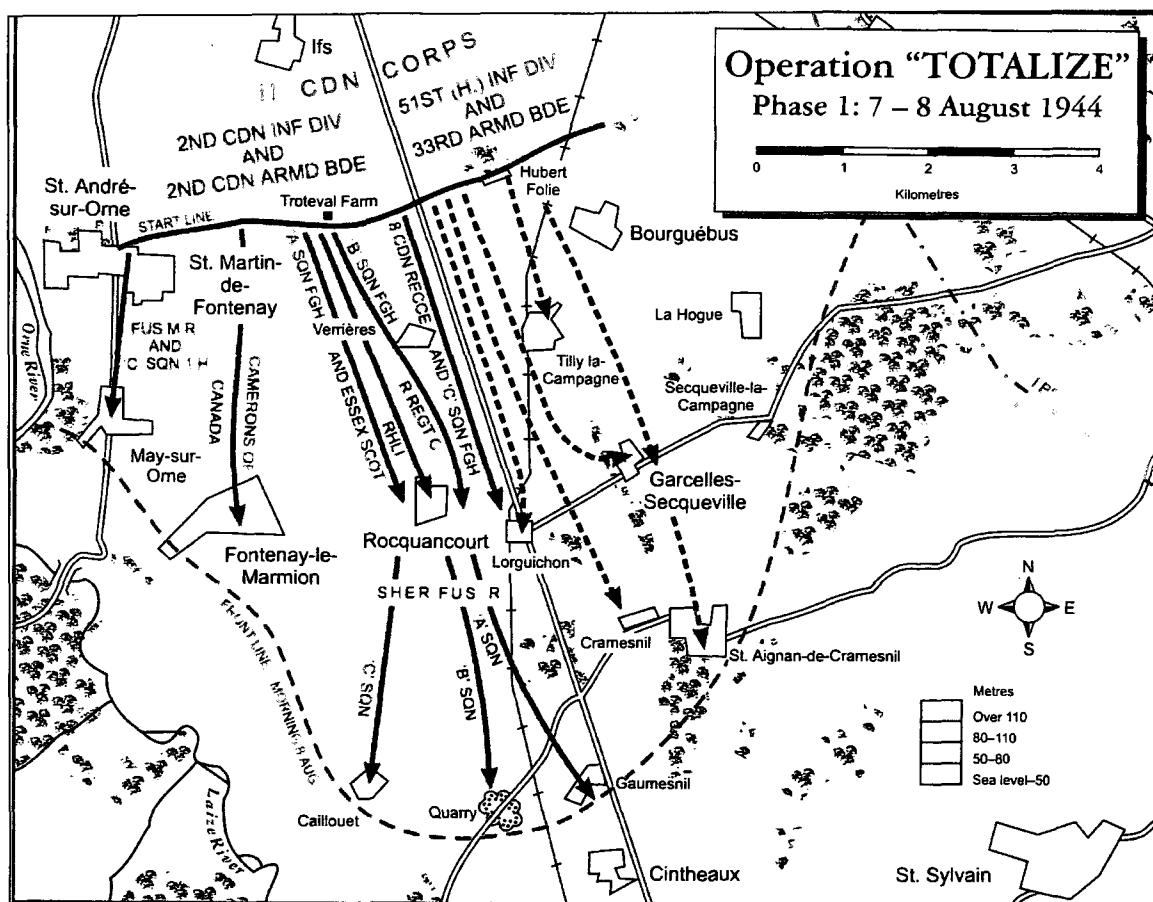
captured by the 152 (H) Bde but the Germans still firmly held Tilly la Campagne.” The first attempt to take Tilly la Campagne and La Hogue was repulsed. Resistance finally crumbled in Tilly when a squadron of tanks from the 148th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps appeared around 0700 hrs. “Section II, Attack on Areas By-Passed by Armoured Columns,” BAOR, *Battlefield Tour: Operation Totalize*.

⁴³⁶ Spencer, *History of The Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment*, 96-8.

⁴³⁷ Reid, *No Holding Back*, 260.

⁴³⁸ Granatstein, *Bloody Victory*, 170; English, *the Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign* 274.

⁴³⁹ Reid, *No Holding Back*, 221. See also CMHQ Report No. 146 para 56.



Map 11: TOTALIZE Phase 1. Marteinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 261.

Accounts as to the success of Phase I differed between the Allies and the Germans. Based on the accounts of the battle provided by Hubert Meyer of the 12 SS Pz Div, the German defenses had cracked but not crumbled. The German 89 and 272 Infantry Division, which had taken the full weight of the Phase I attacks, were able to put up determined resistance including launching local counter-attacks before staging withdrawals to their second defensive lines on both sides of St. Aignan for the former and to the line Chicheboville-Conteville for the latter.⁴⁴⁰ After St. Aignan was taken, British tanks attacked to the east but were repulsed.⁴⁴¹ Stacey however claimed that,

⁴⁴⁰ 89 Inf Div was able to launch counterattacks and inflict “hy [heavy] losses” against 51st Div at Tilly la Campagne forcing a temporary withdrawal. Ops Log 8 August serial 28, War Diary, Main HQ First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944. CMHQ Report No 146, para 55. Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 202.

⁴⁴¹ Meyer, *the History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 171.

Phase I of Operation TOTALIZE had been entirely successful. The novel use of tanks with infantry in armoured carriers at night had effected a penetration of five miles through strong enemy defences, and opened the way for extensive mopping-up and further offensive operations... The break-in had caught the enemy unaware. It remained to be seen how effectively we could pursue our initial advantage before he should have time to recover his balance and strengthen his rear defences.⁴⁴²

The truth lies in the middle. A penetration had occurred in the German defensive line but part of the task of Phase I was to establish successful conditions for the launch of Phase II. This included clearing the centre line of the advance of 4 Cdn Armd Div, clearing the areas for the division artillery and securing the start line for Phase II. German resistance throughout the day prevented the successful attainment of these Phase I objectives. The built in delay of eight hours became a necessity to give Halpenny Force the time it needed to work its way forward through the forward combat zone to its start line. A review of the operation logs has made it clear that an advance by 4 Cdn Armd Div could not have started any earlier even if the Phase II bombing had been cancelled.

The 1400 hrs launch time for Phase II gave the Germans the respite they needed to re-establish contact with isolated units, prepare their defenses,⁴⁴³ and gave them the opportunity to try and wrestle the initiative away from the Allies by launching local counter-attacks in accordance with German doctrine. Kurt Meyer had taken the precaution of attaching liaison officers to the divisions holding the front to ensure that he received early notification of any attack. As soon as information of the 2 Cdn Corps attack arrived, he ordered Kampfgruppe Waldmuller to move north to the west side of the RN 158 near the area of Bretteville-le-Rabet, initially to block the highway and then to

⁴⁴² CMHQ Report No. 146, para 56.

⁴⁴³ Colonel H. Neitzel, "Activity of the 89 Infantry Division" July 1946, Manuscript B 102.

launch a counterattack to recapture the hills south of St. Aignan.⁴⁴⁴ At 1130 hours, an hour before originally planned, Kampfgruppe Waldmuller, reinforced by the 1st Pz Bn and ten Tigers tanks counterattacked the heights south of St. Aignan.⁴⁴⁵ The counterattacks succeeded in disrupting the momentum and co-ordination of Phase II by stopping the Poles from advancing much beyond their start line.⁴⁴⁶

Kampfgruppe Wunsche, which had been detached the night of 7 August to assist in wiping out the Second British Army bridgehead north of Thury-Harcourt, was directed to disengage and move ten kilometres to occupy the heights west of Potigny. This move placed Wunsche's forces in an excellent position to defend the bottleneck between the "natural tank obstacles" of the Laison and Laize rivers.⁴⁴⁷ The flak regiment of the division was ordered to establish an anti-tank barrier astride the RN 158, in line with Bretteville-le-Rabet.⁴⁴⁸

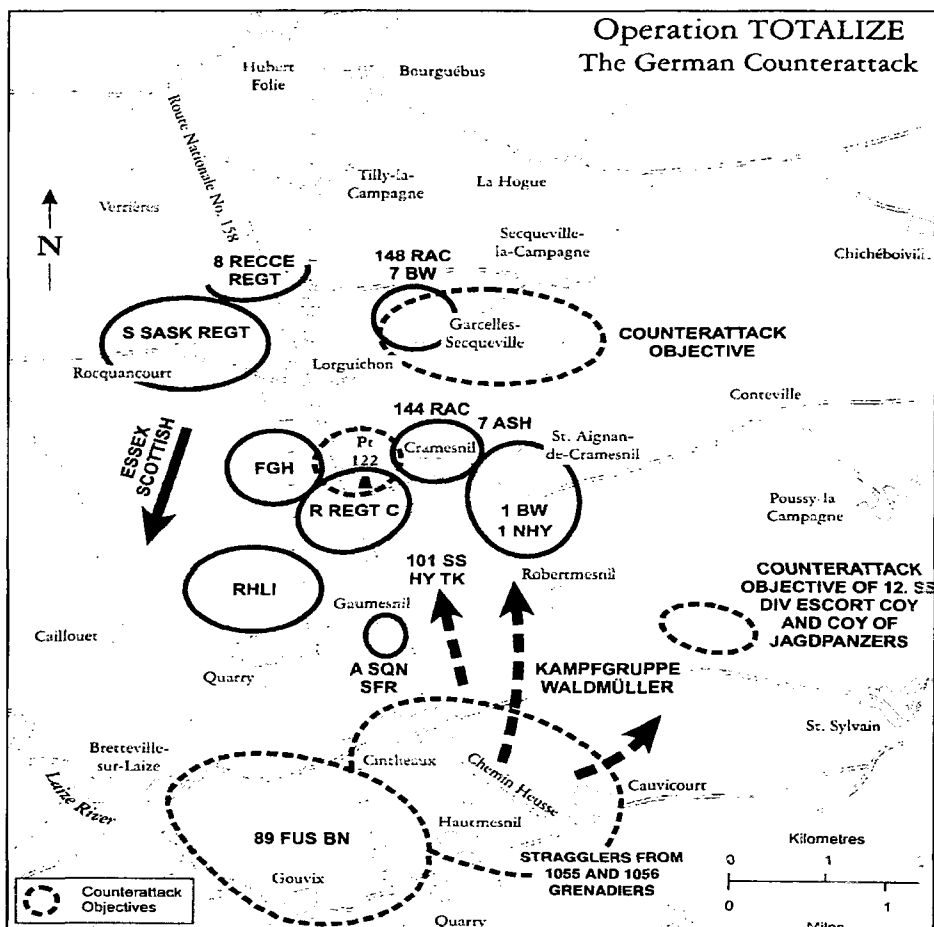
⁴⁴⁴ A Kampfgruppe or Battlegroup can be defined as the bringing together of miscellaneous and often disparate military units to undertake a specific and local operation. Kampfgruppe Waldmuller consisted of two panzergrenadier battalions with about 20 tanks, including 8 – 10 Tiger tanks from the 101st SS Heavy Tank Bn. This concept was also used to build new formations from the remnants of others that had been essentially rendered non-effective. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 221.

⁴⁴⁵ English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 274.

⁴⁴⁶ Meyer, *Grenadiers*, 158. The tasks given to the Poles was to seize the areas of Hill 170 and 159 north of Falaise. The attack was to be carried out in 2 phases: Phase I the Armd Bde would seize area south of Estrées la Campagne and Hill 140 upon relief by the Inf Bde, the Armd Bde would attack south and seize Hills 170 and 159 north of Falaise. Major-General Stanislaw Maczek, "The 1st Polish Armoured Division in Normandy," *Canadian Military History*, Volume 15, No. 2, Spring 2006, 51.

⁴⁴⁷ English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 274.

⁴⁴⁸ Meyer, *The History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 172.



Map 12: Operation TOTALIZE, German Counterattacks. Reid, *No Holding Back*, 224

During the night and early hours of 7/8 August, 10 Cdn Inf Bde and 4 Cdn Armd

Bde began their moves forward from Cormelles and Faubourg de Vaucelles to their designated concentration areas in the vicinity of Fleury sur Orne and Ifs. The majority of the units recorded moving off for their concentration areas between 0030 and 0130 hrs 8 August. The war diary for the Grenadier Guards recorded the traffic as “considerable” for the trip down to the forming up point (FUP) at Troteval Farm and called the trip “distressingly slow.”⁴⁴⁹ At 0545 hrs the road was still crowded with tanks from the 1st Cdn Hussars, and the traffic situation made further progress impossible. The radio traffic recorded in the operations log of 4 Cdn Armd Bde highlighted the frustration and urgency

⁴⁴⁹ Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 262.

in getting the attacking units forward. By sunrise, Halpenny Force had still not reached the FUP. At 0600 hrs traffic congestion forced a halt in the area southeast of Ifs where the vehicles dispersed and the soldiers dug in to await the order to begin the advance forward to the start-line for Phase II.⁴⁵⁰

The divisional artillery had a more constrained timetable in moving forward. The 4 Cdn Armd Div division artillery plan had the 15 Cdn Field Regiment in support of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, the 23rd Field S.P. Regiment supporting 4 Cdn Armd Bde with the 19 Army Field Regiment S.P., under the control of the C.R.A. Brig H. Lane, to answer calls from both brigades as needed. Halpenny Force had priority call on the supporting medium regiments supporting the attack.⁴⁵¹

Colonel Coristine of the 15th Cdn Field Regiment issued his final orders for TOTALIZE at midnight. While the operation bombardment and barrage finished shortly after midnight, the regiment continued to fire concentrations for the next three hours and was ordered to ceasefire shortly after 0300 hrs. At 0100 hrs reconnaissance parties had moved off to prepare the gun areas in support of Phase II. Meanwhile, the rest of the regiment proceeded to its concentration area south of Vaucelles near Ifs. The troops dug slit trenches and prepared a hasty breakfast before trying to get some sleep.⁴⁵²

Unfortunately, the area that had been allotted to the field regiments for Phase II was subject to mortar, artillery and small arms fire. "The whole area was being systematically shelled from three sides, snipers were everywhere, and anti-tank guns engaged any

⁴⁵⁰ 4 Cdn Armd Div Sitrep 20 for period 072400B to 081200B. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 17.

⁴⁵¹ Nicholson. *The Gunners of Canada*, 317.

⁴⁵² Spencer. *History of The Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment*, 96-8.

vehicle that moved over high ground.”⁴⁵³ In spite of the harassing fire, and the resulting casualties the gunners succeeded in deploying.

The traffic problem began to hinder the advance of 4 Cdn Armd Div. In practice, moving thousands of tracked and wheeled vehicles south through the incredible confusion of a battlefield demanded luck and experience. Kitching’s division had neither. Traffic jams, dense dust clouds hanging in the hot summer air, sniping and occasionally bitter fighting on the slopes of Verrières Ridge, where the 2 Cdn Inf Div attempted to clear the remaining pockets of German resistance, slowed the armoured division’s advance. Kitching described the situation as chaos resulting from “putting some 50,000 soldiers into an area approximately 2 miles by 4 miles ... particularly when there was a battle going on in the middle of it.”⁴⁵⁴ Repeated commands to keep moving and speed up the advance made little difference.

The units of 4 Cdn Armd Div spent a long, frustrating morning waiting, strung out north of Rocquancourt. As a result, the fighting elements of the division remained at a high degree of readiness for three-to-four hours, waiting for the clearance to move. At 0845 hrs, Halpenny Force was ordered to begin its move forward through 2 Cdn Div. Booth informed Halpenny at this time that Roquancourt had been taken by 2 Cdn Inf Div but determined fighting still continued in May sur Orne and Fontenay le Marmion.⁴⁵⁵

At 1255 hrs, nearly five hundred B-17s of the U.S. Eighth Air Force dropped 1,400 tons of bombs on their assigned target areas. Most aircraft hit their targets, the defended villages on either side of RN 158. A number of B-17s mistook their aiming

⁴⁵³The 15th Fd Reg was to set up near Rocquancourt and the 23 rd S.P. was deployed near Verrières. Ibid., 100. CMHQ, “Report No 169 Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-west Europe 1944, Part III: Canadian Operations, 1-23 Aug, para 63; Nicholson, *Gunners of Canada*, 317.

⁴⁵⁴ Granatstein, *The Generals*, 169.

⁴⁵⁵ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 8 Aug.

marks and dropped their bombs among Canadian and Polish troops, causing more confusion and many casualties.⁴⁵⁶

The Polish advance on Kitching's left was short-lived. They had suffered from the Allied bombing and the commander of their liaison unit (a group of British officers who helped them to work with English-speaking formations) was killed. This loss hampered communications with 2nd Cdn Corps and the other Corps units but, in particular, 4th Cdn Armd Div. Shortly after they crossed their start line, the Poles ran into Waldmuller's battle group which had been ordered to counterattack towards St. Aignan and St. Sylvain. In the space of 90 minutes, the two leading Polish armoured regiments lost 40 tanks and informed 2 Cdn Corps HQ that they were regrouping. The Poles would advance no further and were done for the day.⁴⁵⁷

At this point, it is important to address the issue of the hamlet of Gaumesnil. The hamlet was south of the bomblines established for Phase II therefore it could not be taken until after the Phase II bombing. In the 2 Cdn Corps Op order, Simonds had given the task of taking Gaumesnil to 2 Cdn Inf Div as part of its task of taking and clearing the area Caillouet-Gaumesnil- woods to the east of RN 158. It was then to reorganize in the area St Andre sur Orne-May sur Orne- Fontenay le Marmion-Caillouet –Gaumesnil-Verrieres to protect the right flank and form a firm base for launching of Phase II. Gaumesnil does not however show up as a task in the 2 Cdn Inf Div Op order for

⁴⁵⁶ Over 65 were killed and 250 wounded, including Maj Gen Keller. More than 50 vehicles, five heavy guns and many tons of ammunition were destroyed. One of the reasons why there were so many casualties was because the Allied troops were moving in vehicles or out in the open while the German troops, being on the defensive, were in trenches or in the basements of buildings. Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 194. The impact on 4 Cdn Armd Div was that the communication vehicles for 9 AGRA which was to support the 4 Cdn Armd Bde attack were destroyed leaving Halpenny force without immediate call on this artillery support.

⁴⁵⁷ Graves, *South Albertas*, 112; CMHQ Report No. 169, para 70. Maczek reported that his division was held up because of the narrow frontage and the areas left unclear by the Phase I attacks. Ops Log, 8 Aug serials 95 & 103, War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944.

TOTALIZE. In the 2 Cdn Inf Div Op order issued on 7 August, the division is to establish a line further north than that set out in the Corps orders. Specifically, Caillouet-Pt 122- Bretteville sur Laize. Conversely, there is no mention of Gaumesnil as a task for 4 Cdn Armd Div in either the Corps Op order of 5 or 6 August or in the 4 Cdn Armd Div instructions.⁴⁵⁸ Which formation was tasked to take the hamlet was therefore not entirely clear. The evidence would indicate that the task was that of 4 Cdn Armd Div since at 1445 hrs the division reported to 2 Cdn Corps that Halpenny Force had cleared the start line and that the infantry of 10 Cdn Inf Bde was attacking Gaumesnil. This was later substantiated by a further message from Phantom J which reported that “10 Cdn inf bde attacking GAUMESNIL at 081430B.”⁴⁵⁹ The first reference involving the Royal Regiment and Gaumesnil (codenamed LANDI) occurred at 1245 hrs when the regiment was told to “exploit LANDI and area.” At 1427 hrs Ganong ordered the regiment to “proceed to LANDI now.” This was followed by a further order at 1515 hrs to take LANDI at 1515 hrs. At some point, the task of taking of the village reverted to 2 Cdn Inf Div and the Royal Regiment of Canada was assigned the task.⁴⁶⁰

At 1355 hrs Halpenny Force, began moving southwards. Amy crossed the start-line on time, a considerable achievement given the conditions under which they had to advance, and headed towards Cintheaux. He intending to swing left across the Falaise

⁴⁵⁸ 2nd Cdn Corps Operation Instruction No.4 Operation TOTALIZE. BAOR, *Battlefield Tour*, App D & E.
⁴⁵⁹ Ops Log 8 August serial 72 & 75. War Diary HQ 2 Cdn Corps Main, 1-31 August 1944. There is no mention of 10 Cdn Inf Bde attacking Gaumesnil in any of the 4 Cdn Armd Div war diaries including the units of 10 Cdn Inf Bde. Since Kitching spent much of the morning at 2 Cdn Inf Div HQ it is possible that something was worked out between Kitching and Foulkes where Kitching would take on the task which was subsequently not approved by Simonds. An as of yet unexplained entry in the Corps ops log at 1530hrs from 3 Cdn Inf Div states” proposed plan of 9 Cdn Inf Bde and 4 Cdn Armd Div does not meet with approval of our sunray or of BIG BIG SUNRAY.” See Corps Ops Log 8 August serial 78. the 4 Cdn Inf Bde ops log only records a statement that Brig Ganong ordered R Regt C to proceed to Gaumesnil but there is no time reference. War Diary, 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944 entry, 8 Aug.

⁴⁶⁰ Ops Log 8 August serials 287, 299,305, War Diary 4 Cdn Inf Bde 1-31 August 1944. D.J. Goodspeed. *Battle Royal: A History of the Royal Regiment of Canada 1862-1962*. (Toronto: The Royal Regiment of Canada Association, 1962), 443.

highway, bypass Gaumesnil and proceed south. The armour was initially held up as the Royal Regiment moved forward to capture the position and then by a tactical air strike that had been called in to take care of a concentration of German armour. Gaumesnil was not taken until 1720 hrs at which point traffic congestion eased and the tanks of 4 Cdn Armd Div were able to move forward more freely.⁴⁶¹

As Amy advanced down the eastern side of RN 158, there was no sign of the Poles who were supposed to be moving on his left. In fact, there was no sign of anyone, friend or foe. With an open flank and no information on enemy locations other than those detailed the night before at the orders group, Amy decided that “a bold charge was not an option” and proceeded carefully.⁴⁶² Amy’s caution was justified. With the Polish attack stopped all available German resources on both sides of the RN 158 were now concentrated against Amy’s advance along a confined and easily predictable route.⁴⁶³

According to Simonds' plan, the advance of the two armoured divisions in the second phase of TOTALIZE was to be parallel, simultaneous and supported by hundreds of guns. Unfortunately, none of the elements of this part of the plan happened. In addition to the problems already noted, the artillery units experienced problems with their communications, suffered from the mistaken bombing and had difficulty properly preparing their positions because the hard and dry ground “made digging extremely

⁴⁶¹ Ops Log 8 August serials 320, War Diary 4 Cdn Inf Bde 1-31 August 1944.

⁴⁶² Amy was frustrated by the confusion caused by the regimental O group and the move forward where he lost his first tank to a minefield. Amy stated that it “seemed incongruous at that time, that an Armoured Division attack was about to be launched on a Squadron-Company group frontage with the entire division lined up in full sight behind it.” Amy, [*Recollections on Normandy*], Graves, *South Albertas*, 112.

⁴⁶³ According to one source the Germans brought as many as 60-80 anti-tank guns to bear against the narrow frontage of the armoured divisions. Canada. Army, *Publication RB/01/P Part 2: Realities of Battle Operations in Normandy* (Kingston: Government of Canada, National Defence, Canadian Forces Land Forces Command and Staff College, 1991), 7. Another source states that the Germans had approximately 90 88 mm guns in the anti-tank role. Op TOTALIZE AN ACCOUNT OF OPS BY 2CDN ARMD BDE IN FRANCE 5 to 8 AUG 44. War Diary, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

difficult, a pick or shovel barely making a scratch on the surface.”⁴⁶⁴ The result was that Amy initially had no artillery on call. As he moved deeper into German territory and began taking casualties from German fire, his caution only increased.⁴⁶⁵

It was now 1600 hrs Halpenny Force was attacking Cintheaux but both Kitching and Simonds were becoming impatient over what was seen as a prolonged delay in moving forward. Halpenny received orders to push on at all costs. He decided that Amy's squadron, after losing a number of tanks to anti-tank fire, was now too weak to continue against the defences around Cintheaux, and ordered No 3 Sqn to pass through No 1 Sqn while the latter provided cover fire. No 3 Sqn immediately ran into a cross-fire from the right front and left rear. Progress to the east of the highway was eventually considered impossible since it was open ground covered by anti-tank fire from both sides. Major Smith, the OC of No 3 Sqn, ordered No 4 troop under Lt Phelan to make an end run on the right. In the course of what has been described as a “ brief, brilliant and decisive action,”⁴⁶⁶ Phelan's troop knocked out 11 German anti-tank guns in as many minutes, tearing open the German defenses along the Cintheaux line. Phelan firmed up his position and awaited the passage of No 2 Sqn to complete the first phase by seizing Bretteville-le-Rabet. The Grenadier Guards had lost 17 tanks since the start of the operation.

⁴⁶⁴ Spencer, *History of The Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment*, 102.

⁴⁶⁵ The 23 Sp Regt reported itself ready at 1436 hrs. Ops Log 8 August serial 33, War Diary 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5. Two troops of self propelled artillery was required forward at 1255 hrs to fire the red smoke to indicate targets for the Phase II bombing. This group reported itself ready at 1240 hrs. Ops Log 8 August serial 69, War Diary, Main HQ First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944. Also serial 89 indicates that the 9 AGRA which was to support 4 Cdn Armd Div was not operational until 1553 hrs almost 2 hours late. This unit suffered from the bombing and had to be reconstituted from the remnants of other surviving artillery units. Nicholson, *Gunners of Canada*, 319.

⁴⁶⁶ Phelan initially tried to work his way through the Gaumesnil woods but found the going too difficult. Phelan worked his way along the southwest face of the woods and began engaging the German defenses around Cintheaux. Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 263-264.

The hazards of advancing over a narrow frontage continued to play out as Phelan's attempt to manoeuvre right towards Cintheaux resulted in the Grenadier Guards tanks running into the Argyll/SAR battle group trying to take Cintheaux.⁴⁶⁷ A Sqn from the SAR with A and D companies of Argylls successfully executed the attack on Cintheaux at 1800 hrs, capturing the village after what was termed an "action lasting but a few minutes."⁴⁶⁸ B and C companies pressed on to Hautmesnil two miles to the south, leaving Cintheaux garrisoned by the other two companies and a troop of tanks. This force took Hautmesnil but Stewart felt that the quarry, his next objective, was too large an objective for a night attack with the forces he had available. He, therefore, ordered B Coy to contain the quarry during the night and capture it at first light, which it did.⁴⁶⁹

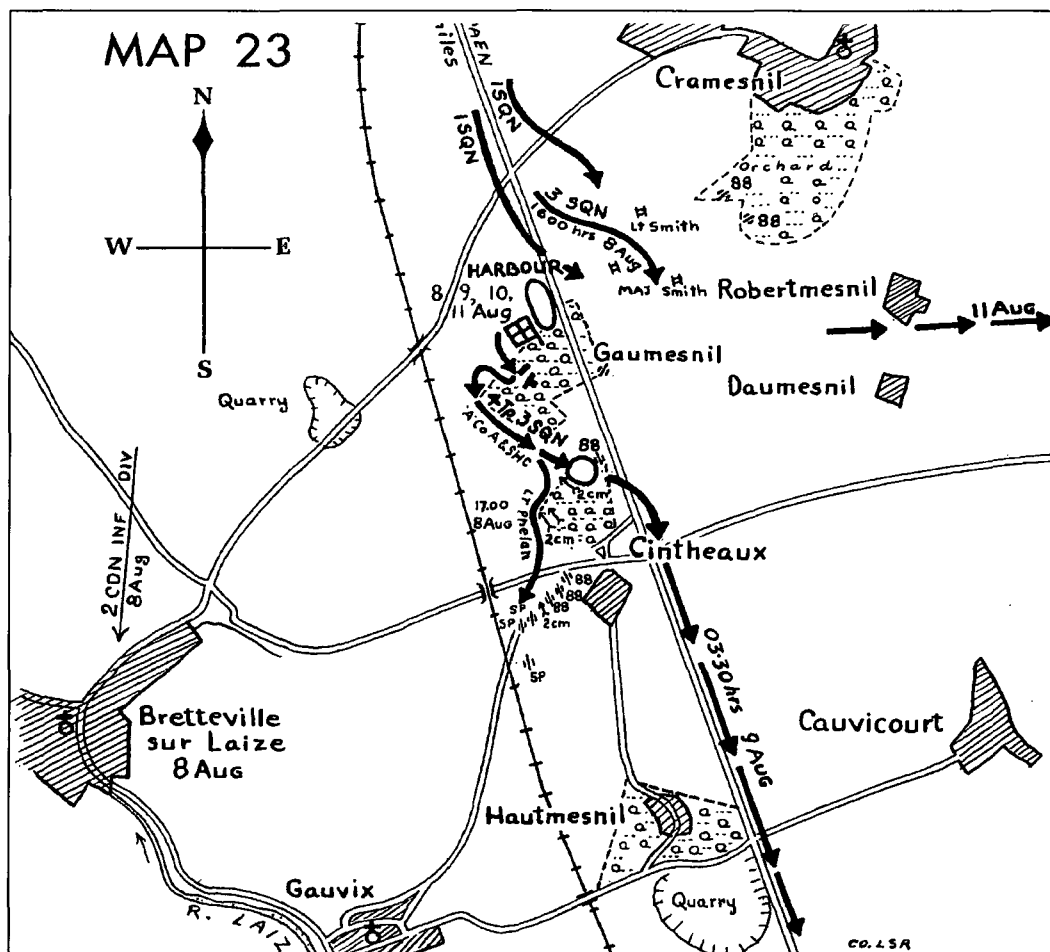
Kitching ordered Halpenny to push on at once and seize Bretteville le Rabet before darkness fell. Halpenny, appraising the situation at 2000 hrs, decided that it would soon be too dark to complete an attack on Bretteville le Rabet and that a dawn attack on the town offered the best chance of success. He, therefore, decided to withdraw to a harbour north of Gaumesnil.⁴⁷⁰ The occupation of Bretteville le Rabet would be the first task for the morning of 9 August.

⁴⁶⁷ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 66.

⁴⁶⁸ War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ H-hour for the advance was set at 0315 hrs. War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 8 Aug.



Map 3: Advance of Halpenny Force, Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, Map 23.

The 4 Cdn Armd Bde war diary recorded the actions of 8 August as going “OK but too slowly.”⁴⁷¹ Kitching, however, was not content with the rate of advance and was across the battlefield trying to get 4 Cdn Armd Bde moving. At 1825hrs, Kitching ordered the Manitoba Dragoons to make a right flanking attack on Bretteville le Rabet.⁴⁷² Originally the regiment was tasked with providing convoy escort for echelon vehicles moving forward to Pt 190 and to be prepared to exploit south and east on the general line

⁴⁷¹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 8 Aug.

⁴⁷² Ops Log 2nd Cdn Corps 8 August, serial 97 & 113, War Diary 2 Cdn Corps, 1-31 August 1944. While there are two references to this attack in the 2nd Cdn Corps Ops Log there is no corresponding reference to this order or attack in the Manitoba Dragoon war diary. The two sitreps for 8 August, numbers 21 & 22 are missing from the 4 Cdn Armd Div war diary and could not be found in the war diaries of division units..

Fontaine le Pin- Falaise- Argentan.⁴⁷³ Now they were being asked to carry the momentum of the division attack forward.

Disappointed with the results of 4 Cdn Armd Div advance, Simonds ordered Kitching to continue operations through the night to secure Pt 195, located a further four miles south.⁴⁷⁴ At the same time, the Poles were to feel their way forward and take Caucicourt at first light. The decision by Simonds to continue the attack into the night was perhaps correct from an operations point of view but he was asking his inexperienced armoured units to do something that they had not been trained to do, conduct an improvised armoured advance at night with little or no preparation. To make matters even worse, the weather forecast for the evening called for mist and local fog patches, especially in the valleys and towards dawn, with visibility less than 1000 yards.⁴⁷⁵

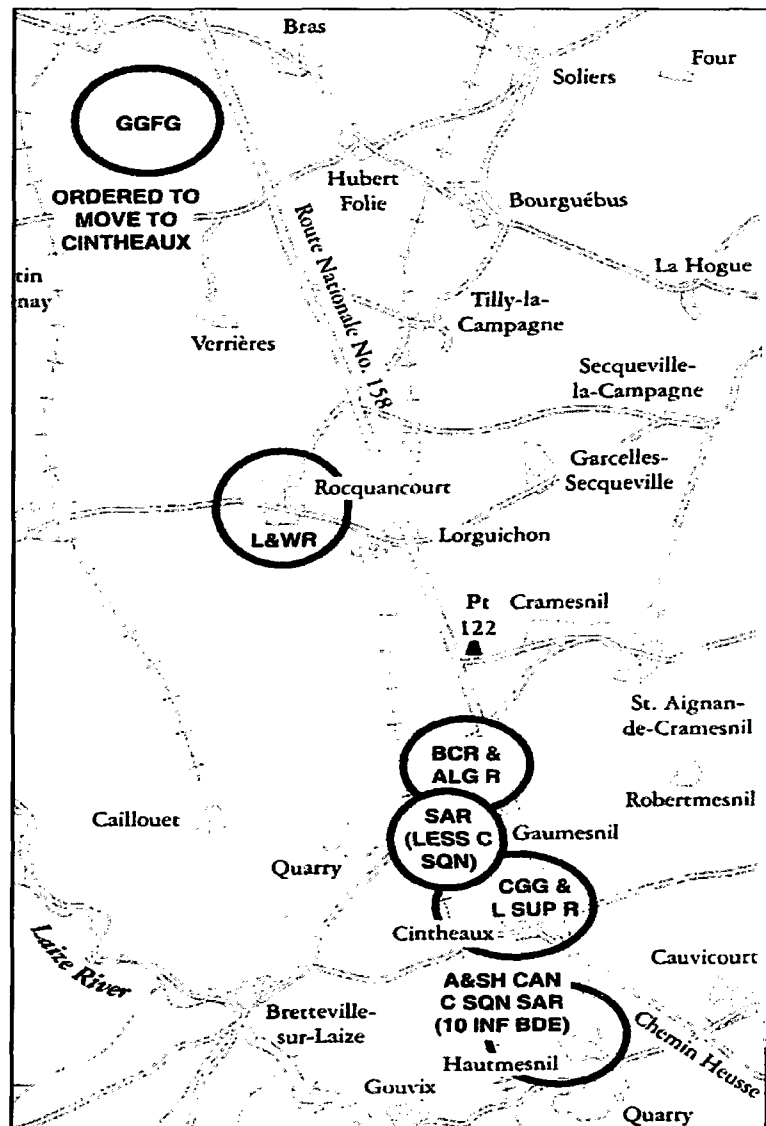
Kitching called an O Group at 1830 hrs. His orders for 10 Cdn Inf Bde remained unchanged. The orders for 4 Cdn Armd Bde remained the same but the execution changed considerably. Booth was ordered to push through the night, to capture the village of Bretteville le Rabet and then Pt 195. "Halpenny Force" was to capture and hold Bretteville to facilitate the advance of a new combined arms force to Pt 195. The Algonquin Regiment, which was originally ordered to relieve Halpenny Force in Bretteville, was now ordered to join the BCRs to create Worthington Force. Three companies of infantry from the Algonquin Regiment would now advance with the BCRs

⁴⁷³ Outline of Instrs Issued By GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 071300B OP TOTALIZER [sic] 7 Aug 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 12.

⁴⁷⁴ The 1st Cdn Army Ops log records Simonds intent to continue op TOTALIZE with the original plan remaining in force. 4 Cdn and 1 Pol Armd Divs will push straight on tonight. Ops Log: 8 August, serial 128. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, 8 Aug.

⁴⁷⁵ Ops Log: 8 August 44, serial 108. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, 8 Aug.

through the darkness to take Pt 195.⁴⁷⁶ In a supporting operation, the 18th Cdn Armd C Regt, was to occupy the two villages of Langannerie and Grainville astride the Caen-Falaise Road followed by an advance to Pt 180.⁴⁷⁷



Map 4: 4 Cdn Armd Division disposition early evening 8 August 1944. Reid, *No Holding Back*, 289.

The regimental history of the BCRs described the 8 August as a day of waiting and slow advance in immensely congested traffic.⁴⁷⁸ There had been little opportunity for

⁴⁷⁶ Ops Log: 8 August serial 135. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944. War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

⁴⁷⁷ It is not clear whether this order replaced the earlier order to attack Bretteville le Rabet. Ops Log: 8 August 44 serial 135. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944.

sleep or eating during the night of 7 August or during the advance on 8 August. Hastily snatched dry rations were the only sustenance during the day, even though attempts were made to bring hot food forward. The regiment was somewhere in the middle of the brigade column with the column halted for most of 8 August in open ground between Ifs and Verrières. At Verrières the BCRs took over the lead of the column. The regiment harboured at last light north of Cintheaux, refuelled and waited for orders. At 2130 hrs, Worthington proceeded to Bde HQ for Booth's O Group and, in anticipation of coming action, the regiment was placed on "five minutes notice to move."⁴⁷⁹ The opportunity for sustained sleep was again denied.

The contents of Worthington's subsequent O Group are interesting providing a snapshot in time of the perception of how the battle had progressed to that point and a measure of the fog of war that had set in. The orders began with the statement that the attack had gone well and that the Germans were disorganized.⁴⁸⁰ 2 Cdn Corps intended to take advantage of the situation by continuing the advance through the night. It was Booth's intention to seize and hold the high ground feature, "spot height 195, map reference 089461." Worthington pointed out that the force would be beyond the range of friendly artillery support but that air co-operation would be made available. The Algonquin Regiment was to be under command. Worthington outlined his plan of action as follows:

My intention is to seize and hold the feature until the rest of our troops can reach us. Method: we will move out of this harbour, cross the highway to the eastern

⁴⁷⁸ Douglas Harker, *The Dukes* (Vancouver: British Columbia Regiment, 1974), 237.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 237-238.

⁴⁸⁰ The likely source of this statement would have been Simonds' O Group at 1630 hrs. Both Kitching and Booth in their respective O Groups would have repeated it. The situation between Simonds' O Group and Worthington's had changed considerably with Worthington's statement showing much more optimism than the actual tactical situation warranted. The rebuilt German defences would have been unknown to the attacking 4 Cdn Armd Div forces.

side go through the Lake Superiors who are dug in at that point, advance south on the east side of the highway, taking advantage of ground until opposite the objective, then re-cross the highway and assault the hill from the south-east.⁴⁸¹

Friendly forces were listed as the Polish division, which was to be moving on Worthington's left.

The new plan was briefed at 2130 hrs. The BCR Sqn O Groups were held at 0230 hrs 9 August. Worthington Force was assembled at 0400 hrs and preceded south. The force received fire from the woods north of Bretteville but Worthington decided to press on and not wait for the Grenadier Guards to take Bretteville.⁴⁸² The force swung to the east to avoid the battle going on at Bretteville le Rabet. As Worthington continued to swing southeast he must have crossed a road which he believed to be the main Caen-Falaise highway. He continued on until he saw high ground ahead and assumed it was his objective, Pt 195. The force pushed on to the high ground to their front shooting up enemy soft-skinned vehicles en route and at 0650 hrs the BCR reported that they were on their objective with no evidence of enemy occupation. Worthington reported that he was holding until friendly forces could come forward to relieve him. Worthington immediately ordered defensive positions prepared.⁴⁸³

In 24 hours of fighting, the 2 Cdn Corps had driven a wedge 10,000 yards deep through both German defensive lines covering the Falaise road pushing the German defenses to the brink of defeat.⁴⁸⁴ Both Phases had been launched more or less as planned. The planned wait for the bombing in support of Phase II had allowed the

⁴⁸¹ Cassidy, *Warpath*, 98.

⁴⁸² This pairing of the Algonquin Regiment with the BCRs was the first time that these two units had worked together since February 1944.

⁴⁸³ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug Stacey has determined that Worthington Force ended up at map reference 143490 about one-and a half miles east of Estrées and not on Hill 140 as is commonly stated. Note 3 pg 91. CMHQ Report No. 169, note 3, p 91.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Germans to recover, improvise further defensive positions and marshal all available resources along the very predictable Allied axis of advance. The success or failure of the operation would now depend on the ability of the armoured division commanders to improvise and innovate as well as the abilities of their subordinate commanders to carry out the new plans to push through the last layers of the German defenses.

The Germans used the evening of 8/9 August to rebuild and augment their defensive positions. Battlegroup Wunsche arrived in Potiny at 0300 hrs and was moved to Quesnay Woods. It was reported to have 39 Panthers and was awaiting the arrival of 13 Tiger tanks from 102 SS Heavy Pz Bn from the II SS Panzer Corps. Battlegroup Waldmuller was ordered to new positions around Pt 140 and was augmented with 1 SS Panzerjager company. Battlegroup Krause was to defend the line from OUILLY to the RN158 and Battlegroup Olboeter was to position itself on Pt 195.⁴⁸⁵

On the morning of 9 August, Kitching must have been filled with relief and optimism. The Grenadier Guards attack on Bretteville le Rabet was going very well and Worthington was reporting that his force was on Pt 195. At 0825 hrs, 2nd Cdn Corps was notified that 4 Cdn Armd Div had one armoured regiment and one infantry battalion disposed on the high ground Pt 180 and Pt 195. This was followed by a further message at 0840 hrs stating that the above positions were firmly held and that resistance in Bretteville le Rabet was being dealt with.⁴⁸⁶ Such was the fog of war.

Operations for the 18th Cdn Armd C Regt began early on 9 August as the regiment sent its squadrons off to provide a clearer picture of the German defensive disposition.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁵ Michael Reynolds. *Steel Inferno: 1 SS Panzer Corps in Normandy*. (New York: Sarpendon, 1997) 238.

⁴⁸⁶ Ops Log, 9 Aug serials 21 and 22. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944.

⁴⁸⁷ B Sqn was sent east to gain and maintain contact with the Poles. D Sqn was sent southwest to gain a greater awareness of the German disposition in advance of the move of the armoured regiments. C Sqn was

4 Cdn Armd Div operations for the day started successfully enough when the Lake Superior Regiment, supported by the Grenadier Guards, attacked Bretteville le Rabet. The town was captured by 1200 hrs and, during the afternoon, the remainder of the battalion moved into the town to firm up the position. Bretteville was cleared by 1500 hrs.⁴⁸⁸

While Bretteville le Rabet was captured, the units of the division were scattered, exposed and unsupported by other Corps units. Worthington Force was lost on the battlefield deep within the Polish sector. His night advance had taken him almost into the assembly area of battle group Wünsche, the remaining striking power of Meyer's available forces. As the morning passed, it became clear to 4 Cdn Armd Div HQ that Worthington's force was not where it should be, and desperate attempts began to locate it.

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Kitching's initial action was to send elements of the 18th Cdn Armd C Regt south to the area of Pt 195 to determine whether Worthington Force was actually on the feature. The patrol reached the objective and ascertained that Worthington Force was not on Pt 195 and that the high ground was clear. Brig Lane the division CRA, went up in a small spotting aircraft to see if he could locate the group but without success. Kitching stated: "We heard the thunder of gunfire over to our left, but we assumed it was connected with

sent south to try and push as far forward as possible but both C and D Sqns were stopped by German anti-tank positions. War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

⁴⁸⁸ No 2 Sqn moved to a position between the quarry of Hautmesnil and Bretteville le Rabet to assume a counter-attack role. War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

⁴⁸⁹ Between 0808 hrs and 0841 hrs, the BCR reported to Brigade, "have run into enemy and lost ten tanks" and requested artillery support. At 0849, Bde HQ asked for the location of the opposition to which the BCR replied, "same as 2 hrs ago, approximately 500 yds southeast." The brigade arranged for fire support on the identified location and at 0907 hrs asked if the artillery support was falling on target. No answer came and thereafter there was silence from Worthington Force. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 227.

the Polish armoured division who were supposed to be keeping up with our left flank.”⁴⁹⁰ Typhoons had been supporting the BCRs for hours but this information was never conveyed to 2 Cdn Corps or to 4 Cdn Armd Div.⁴⁹¹ The first clear indication of what had happened came at 1500 hrs when the Liaison Officer (LO) of 4 Pol Armd Bde reported that he had spoken with “sunray minor” (the code name for the second-in-command) of the BCR who had seven tanks left and was withdrawing.⁴⁹²

Meanwhile, the 18th Cdn Armd C Regt had carried out a reconnaissance of routes from Vielle Langannerie to Pt 180 and found the routes clear of the enemy. Upon hearing that Pt 195 was clear, Kitching ordered a new composite force built around the Foot Guards and A Sqn of the 18th Cdn Armd C Regt to take St. Hilaire Farm and Pt 195.⁴⁹³ The Foot Guards had moved little during 8 August and were finally ordered to follow up the rest of the brigade at 2300 hrs. The regiment completed an all-night move to reach the concentration area at 0700 hrs. At this point, everyone believed that Worthington Force was fighting in the vicinity of Pt 195.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁰ The tragedy was that 4th Cdn Armd Div did not know Worthington’s location. Worthington insisted he was on Point 195 but they knew from observation he was not there. They fired artillery smoke shells onto the real Pt 195 and asked him to tell them where he was in relation to the smoke but he said he could not see it. Kitching then thought that he must have swung behind the enemy's main position towards the town of Potigny. Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 196.

⁴⁹¹ Roman Jarymowycz, "The Quest for Operational Maneuvre in the Normandy Campaign" (PhD, McGill University, 1997), 219.

⁴⁹² The Worthington Force fight on 9 August has been recounted in great detail in Stacey’s *The Victory Campaign*, Dr Reg Roy’s *1944, Canadians in Normandy*, and Brian Reid’s, *No Holding Back*. Isolated and unable to call upon the resources of the division for support, Worthington Force was gradually whittled down throughout a long and bloody day. Most of the BCR tanks were shot up and casualties were heavy including both Worthington and Hay. The BCR lost 47 of 55 tanks; 40 men were dead; 38, wounded; and 34, prisoners. The Algonquin Regiment, lost 128 men, 45 of them dead—all for what has been called little tactical gain. Ops Log, 9 Aug 44 serial 61-65, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁴⁹³ War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug; Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 196.

⁴⁹⁴ Under command were A Coy Algonquin Regiment, and supporting arms. War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

Booth ordered Scott to bypass all opposition and make for Pt 195 with all speed.⁴⁹⁵ Scott decided to approach the target by looping left around Grainville-Langannerie. The Foot Guards were quickly briefed and hardly had this been completed when at 1430 hrs the order was given to move. Scott initiated his attack despite the fact that some of the attached forces had not yet been able to reach the forming-up area.⁴⁹⁶

Scott was not aware that Pt 195 was empty when he started his advance. The 4 Armd Bde Ops Log recorded a radio message from Scott to control at 1605 hrs asking control to notify BCR of the Foot Guard approach to Pt 195.⁴⁹⁷ Scott was operating under the impression that he was conducting a rescue-relief type mission instead of a deliberate attack to take Pt 195. In the former, the objective is held by own forces and you are advancing to link up with troops already there. In the latter, you have to take the objective on your own.

The Foot Guards left the RN 158 and advanced cross-country, meeting little resistance until No 1 Sqn reached a defile between Bretteville le Rabet and Langannerie some 500 yards from Quesnay Woods. The intelligence information available at this point still indicated that Quesnay Woods was lightly held but the Foot Guards had, in fact, encountered the heart of the German anti-tank defenses.⁴⁹⁸ As the day wore on, it became obvious that they were within easy range of the German defences and Scott decided that a further advance would be too costly. All squadrons were ordered into a defensive position in the open, facing Quesnay Woods. The baptism of fire for the Foot Guards had been bitter: No 1 Squadron was reduced from 19 to seven tanks, while No 2

⁴⁹⁵ Ops Log, 9 Aug 44 serial 66, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁴⁹⁶ War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-31 August 1944, 9 Aug.

⁴⁹⁷ Ops Log 9 August serial 67, War Diary 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁴⁹⁸ Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 102-103.

and No 3 squadrons had lost a combined total of 14 more tanks. The attitude of the men however was described as “one of deep resentment, buoyed by a determination to push on.”⁴⁹⁹

In the early afternoon, Kitching ordered 10 Cdn Inf Bde to clear the adjoining areas of Langannerie and Granville-Langannerie. In order to avoid command and control confusion, Kitching placed the Lake Superior Regiment, which was still fighting in Bretteville le Rabet, under Jefferson’s command.⁵⁰⁰ Kitching’s realignment of forces allowed each of his brigade commanders to focus on specific tasks. Jefferson was to establish a firm base at Bretteville and Booth was to get forces on Pt 195.

Shortly after noon, 9 Cdn Inf Bde took over the villages of Cintheaux and Hautmesnil, easing the strain on the infantry resources of 4 Cdn Armd Div. Jefferson ordered the Argylls to take over Vielle Langannerie and they moved forward at 1700 hrs. The Argylls, assisted by a squadron of tanks from the SAR, cleared part of the village while the Lincs cleared further west. The village was secured by 1800 hrs but minor opposition continued until 2300 hrs.⁵⁰¹ At 1800 hrs, the Lincoln & Welland Regiment took up defensive positions to hold the town for the night.

Meanwhile, A Squadron of the Manitoba Dragoons had proceeded to the high ground near Pt 195 and stayed there to cover the expected advance of Scott’s force until

⁴⁹⁹ Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 104.

⁵⁰⁰ At 1600 hrs, Maj R.A. Keane was ordered to take over command of the Lake Superior Regiment. Murrell had reportedly been wounded by a blast from an exploding shell. War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

⁵⁰¹ C Sqn SAR spent the morning mopping up the quarry. B Sqn took over the defences of Cintheaux from C Sqn. A Sqn spent the morning organizing an attack on Langannerie with the Linc & Welld R scheduled for later that day. During the afternoon C Sqn and the Argylls launched an attack on Bretteville-le-Rabet and succeeded in capturing the town. A Sqn with the Linc & Welld R passed through C Sqn and the Argylls and attacked Langannerie from the east. CMHQ Report *No. 169*, para 82; War Diary, 29 Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (South Alberta Regiment), 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

last light when it withdrew.⁵⁰² When Kitching was informed of the fate of Scott's force and that the routes from Granville-Langannerie to Pt 180 were still clear of the enemy he decided to take decisive action. Kitching convened a formal O Group and issued orders designed to achieve the following by 0300 hrs 10 August:

- 4 Cdn Armd Bde less the Lake Superior Regiment was to be prepared to attack south with objectives Pt 195 (if necessary) and Pt 206.
- 10 Cdn Inf Bde with under command Lake Superior Regiment was to have the Lincoln & Welland Regiment on Pt 180, the Algonquin Regiment in the wooded area and buildings of St. Hilaire Farm, the Argylls on Pt 195 and the SAR arrayed in support as required by the Bde commander.
- The 18 Cdn Armd C Regt was to be positioned in the rear and to the north of 4 Cdn Armd Bde and was to be prepared for two alternate courses of action depending on the outcome of operations. If the armoured brigade was required to capture Pt 195, the regiment was to exploit south in the direction of Potigny, Falaise and the line of the River Ante to the west and east of Falaise. If the Armd Bde was only required to capture Pt 206, the regiment was to exploit south to Falaise and west to contact elements of the Second British Army advancing from the west.⁵⁰³

The execution of the plan was dependent on the ability of 10 Cdn Inf Bde to capture Pt 195. If the hill was captured during the operations designed for that evening, then the armoured brigade was to attack south at first light and capture Pt 206. If Pt 195 was not captured by first light, then 4 Cdn Armd Bde was to attack south and capture in succession Pt 195 and Pt 206.

The war diary of the Manitoba Dragoons stated that Kitching took immediate action on receiving the reconnaissance information. A search was conducted to see if any

⁵⁰² War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

⁵⁰³ Summary of GOCs plan for 10 Aug. War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, App VIII.

conversation or message traffic was recorded in the respective war diaries between Kitching and Simonds or 4 Cdn Armd Div or 2nd Cdn Corps where Kitching was given orders or requested approval of his plan from Simonds. None was found. The conclusion reached was that Kitching issued these orders under his own initiative operating within the intent of Simonds orders to take Pt 195.

At 1900 hrs, Jefferson ordered the Lincoln & Welland Regiment to seize the ridge near PT 180 in a night assault. Scouts were sent out to recon the route to the objective while the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada relieved the regiment in Langannerie. The move began at 2030 hrs and proceeded smoothly until the Lincs encountered machine gun fire from orchards at Le Hamlet Fontaine. The guide from D Coy took a wrong turn, which resulted in the company entering St. Germain le Vasson where it was cut off and had to remain for the night. C and A companies were led onto the northern slope of the battalion objective where they picked up part of B Coy and, together with the mortars and the anti-tank platoon, firmed up their position as well as could be expected in the dark.⁵⁰⁴ A troop of 17-pdr guns was added to the defense late into the evening.

At 2200 hrs 9 August, Jefferson ordered Lt Col Stewart of the Argylls to attack and capture Hill 195. As far as Stewart knew, one attack by the combined force of the BCR and Algonquin Regiment had been repulsed with heavy casualties. After studying the problem, Stewart decided to try a different tactic: a silent attack. Stewart gambled on a circuitous route to the east and north-east of the feature, since the area to the west was known to be occupied by Germans. He briefed the proposed route to his scout platoon and they went out ahead of the battalion to mark the route. The advance began at 0001 hrs and by 0430 hrs the advance elements of the battalion were within a few hundred

⁵⁰⁴ War Diary, The Lincoln and Welland Regiment 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

yards of the hill and had not detected any Germans to that point. Pickets had been left along the route to guide the troops who marched to the hill in single file with Stewart leading.⁵⁰⁵ The company positions on the feature had been picked out by Stewart prior to the advance and briefed to the respective company commanders. Once on the hill, the troops were instructed to search the area for Germans and then “dig like hell.”⁵⁰⁶

Although the Argylls had reached Pt 195 with little time to spare, by sunrise they were well dug in and prepared for the expected German reaction. The Argylls had also managed to get a troop of 17-pdr guns and a platoon of 6-pdr guns into position and dug in before the Germans realized that the hill had been taken.⁵⁰⁷ Stewart knew that German counterattacks would include tanks and he needed to establish an anti-tank gun screen as soon as possible. At 0620 hrs, 10 Cdn Inf Bde reported that Pt 195 was taken.⁵⁰⁸ Kitching’s initiative and the ability of the division to successfully execute a number of short notice assaults at night are a testament to the quality of unit training, growing skill, confidence and professionalism of the division.

Reports from the eastern side of the Falaise road on 9 August had indicated that the Pol Armd Div was meeting strong opposition and was not making much progress. At 0925 hrs, the Polish Armd Regt reported itself only as far as Robertmensil, fighting against stiff opposition.⁵⁰⁹ Maczek made what he termed a unilateral decision to alter course by 90 degrees and attack due east towards St. Sylvain with the intent of looping

⁵⁰⁵ Interview of J. D. Stewart, for *Black Yesterdays* by Dr Robert Fraser, 4 October 1989.

⁵⁰⁶ Lt Col Stewart had no real confidence in the ability of the battalion to take Pt 195 and considered the assignment a suicide attack. In his words, he “wrote the battalion off and wrote me [Stewart] off.” Stewart called his plan an Indian style attack: silent, without a word spoken and at night. Ibid. War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entry 11 Aug. Note: The events of the 9/10 August are mistakenly recorded on the 11 August entry date in the Argyll war diary.

⁵⁰⁷ C and D, companies were arrayed forward, supported by A and B companies. RHQ was slightly to the rear under cover of an orchard. *ibid.*,

⁵⁰⁸ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 9 Aug.

⁵⁰⁹ Ops Log 9 Aug serial 24. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944.

back down towards Soignolles and Estrées la Campagne.⁵¹⁰ By noon the Poles were reported to have reached Estrées la Campagne and taken Soignolles. At this point, the Polish armour ran into the same anti-tank screen that was engaging Worthington Force but were unable to come to Worthington's relief. At approximately 1700 hrs, the members of Worthington Force saw friendly tanks approaching from Soignolles but the Poles pulled back to safer ground. By nightfall the Poles had captured St. Sylvain and the village of St. Martin des Bois.⁵¹¹

By the morning of 10 August, the Lincoln & Welland Regiment held Hill 180 on the right, the Argylls occupied Hill 195, and two companies of the Algonquin Regiment in St. Hillaire farm provided depth to the defences on the ridge. The position was further strengthened at 0500 hrs with the arrival of the SAR which was posted south of Langannerie.⁵¹² The Foot Guards and the Lake Superior Regiment remained under the command of 10th Cdn Inf Bde and the 18th Cdn Armd C Regt continued to conduct reconnaissance missions in support of the division.⁵¹³

The 4 Cdn Armd Bde units were arrayed in a defensive posture in and around Pt 195 with the Grenadier Guards on Pt 195 and the Foot Guards immediately to their rear,

⁵¹⁰ Stanislaw Maczek, *Op Podwody do Czolga: Wspomnienia Wojenne 1918-1945*. (Waszawa: Ossolineum, 1990), 132-133. See also Maczek, "The 1st Polish Armoured Division in Normandy," 55.

⁵¹¹ The Poles finally provided definitive information on Worthington Force, reporting that the regiment was badly shot up with only seven cruiser tanks, six recce tanks and five A/A tanks left. Canada. Army, CMHQ Report No. 169, para 87.

⁵¹² At 0500 hrs 10 Aug, the SAR moved forward B Sqn in front RHQ C Sqn in the village of Langannerie and A Sqn to the right. B Sqn sent two troops of tanks to St. Hillaire which was occupied by the Alg Regt with the task of guarding the left flank of the position. A reinforcement troop took a wrong turn and was completely knocked out by fire from Quesnay woods. A Sqn was sent to the right flank of the Linc & Welland R. The SAR tanks remained in place in the area of St. Hillaire until relieved on the evening of the 11th Aug. Ibid.; War Diary, South Alberta Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entries 10-11 Aug.

⁵¹³ 4 Cdn Armd Div SITREP No 25 from 10 1200B to 102400B Aug 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 20.

ready to push forward if the opportunity presented itself.⁵¹⁴ Counterattacks and a heavy concentration of fire from self-propelled, anti-tank guns prevented any further advance. Kitching ordered the Grenadier Guards to stand fast and hold Pt 195 with the Argylls.⁵¹⁵ Organizing of the defense of PT 195 remained difficult because of the accurate and heavy volume of fire that the Germans focussed on the hill. This problem was compounded by a general lack of accurate information concerning the disposition of both friendly and enemy forces.

The German defensive line had stiffened with anti-tank guns disposed on an arcing front around the forces positioned on Pt 195.⁵¹⁶ The initial German response to the Canadian presence was heavy mortar fire followed by a series of counter-attacks. Close air support and artillery fire helped relieve the pressure on the Argylls throughout the day.⁵¹⁷ The tables had been turned on the Germans who were now forced out of their prepared positions to attack dug-in Canadians properly supported by armour, artillery and close air support. At 1930 hrs, the Germans launched a major counter-attack with significant force but withdrew under heavy fire.⁵¹⁸

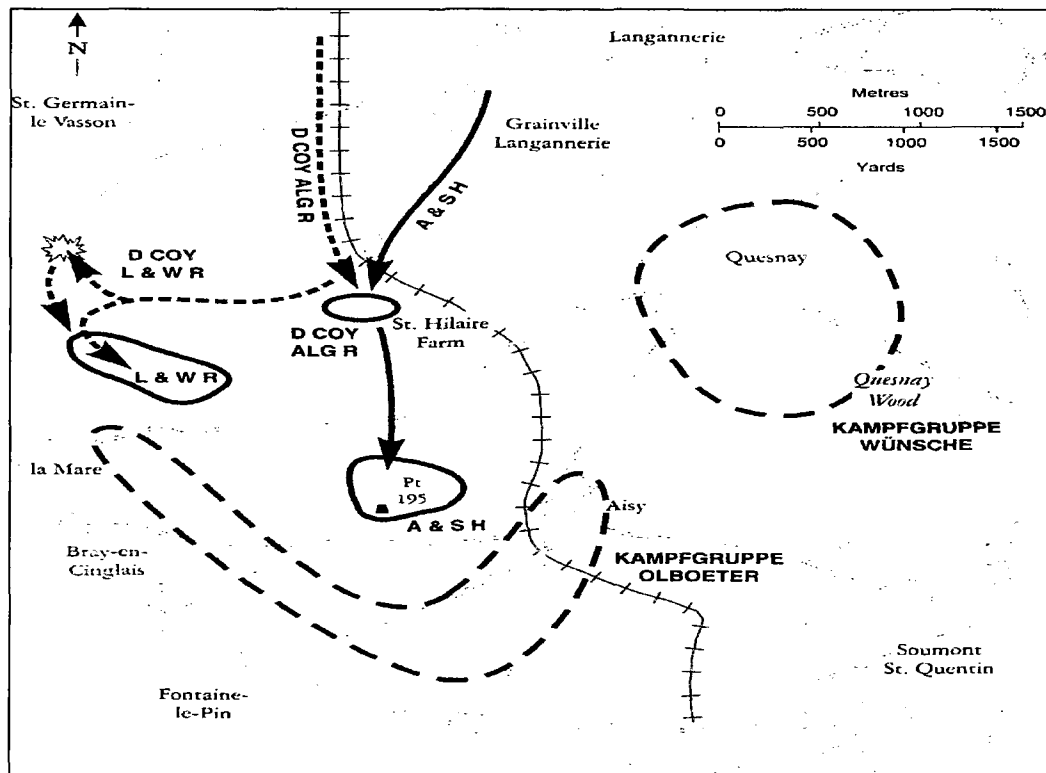
⁵¹⁴ At 0906 hrs, the GGFG reported that their forward elements were on Pt 195 but being engaged by the enemy. No 2 Squadron deployed hull down on the crest of the hill while No 3 Squadron took up supporting positions in their rear allowing the remnants of the CGG to disengage. Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 105.

⁵¹⁵ The artillery Forward Observation Officer is quoted as saying that he counted as many as twenty-four self-propelled anti-tank guns. CMHQ Report No. 169, paras 92-96.

⁵¹⁶ 4 Cdn Armd Div SITREP No 24 from 10 0000B to 101200B Aug 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 19.

⁵¹⁷ Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 106.

⁵¹⁸ War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entry 11 Aug.



Map 13: Operations 10 Cdn Inf Bde 10 August 1944. Reid, *No Holding Back*, 336

The Lincoln & Welland Regiment position around Pt 180 was shelled

continuously during the day. At 1400 hrs, a forward artillery observer reached the regiment, increasing the accuracy of the Canadian defensive artillery fire against the German counterattacks. German artillery fire was intense enough to prevent the evacuation of casualties and the movement forward of food and ammunition.⁵¹⁹

Eventually, a squadron of tanks from the Grenadier Guards reached the Lincs position around 2100 hrs and helped reduce the volume of enemy fire with speculative fire of their own.

All efforts by the armoured divisions to exploit to the Laison River had been stopped by fire from Quesnay Woods and both Kitching and Maczek appreciated that

⁵¹⁹During 11 August, the regiment's carriers were organized into a convoy to run rations into the forward positions and to get casualties out. The North Nova Scotia Highlanders eventually relieved the Lincs that evening and they began their withdrawal on foot at 2200 hrs. War Diary, The Lincoln and Welland Regiment 1-31 August 1944, entries 10-11 Aug.

until the woods were taken their divisions could advance no further.⁵²⁰ At 1000 hrs, Simonds held a conference with his division commanders and issued orders that he hoped would restore the momentum of the attack. The 3 Cdn Inf Div was given the task of clearing Quesnay Woods and pushing towards Soumont St. Quentin, thereby clearing the flanks of both armoured divisions and facilitating the attack on Pt 206 by 4 Cdn Armd Bde.⁵²¹ The 3 Cdn Inf Div attack went in at 2000 hrs but by 0300 hrs 11 August, the attack had made very little progress and was called off with 3 Cdn Inf Div suffering heavy casualties.

Kitching remained focussed on his objective of striking south towards Falaise and developed an ambitious plan which would resort the momentum of the Canadian drive and cut off the German forces facing Second Br Army. Kitching's plan for 11 August involved an advance by the division south with the 18 Cdn Armd C Regt exploiting beyond Falaise. The plan was based on the assumption that the 3 Cdn Inf Div attack would be successful. The plan was also dependent on the acquisition of Priests to transport the Argylls in the attack. Kitching wanted the following disposition for his units for last light 11 August:

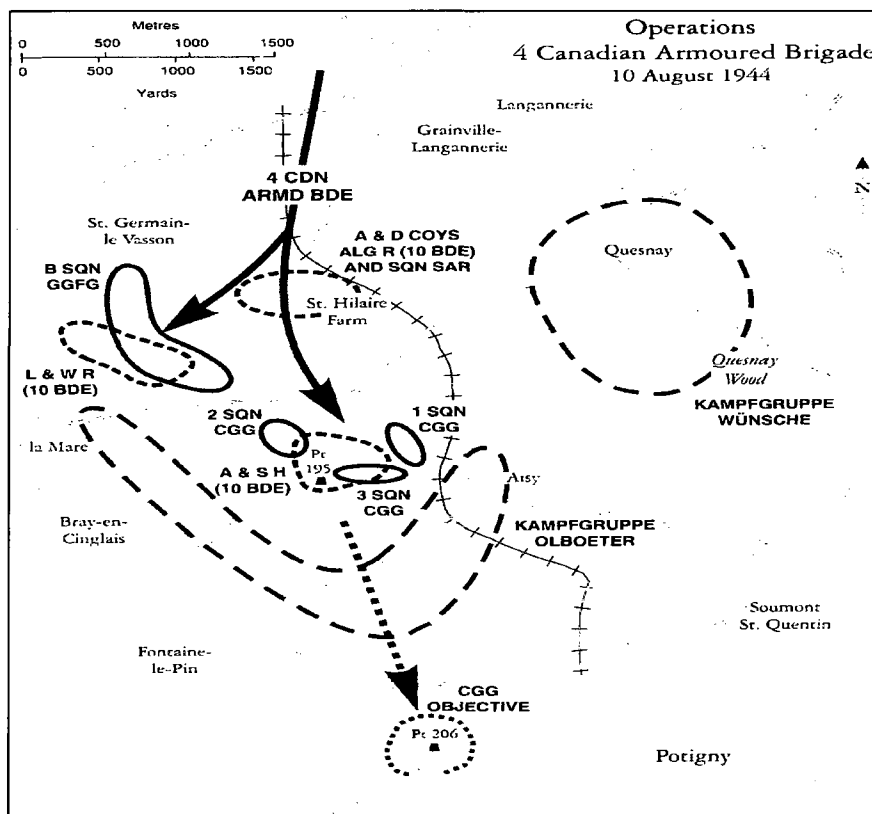
- The 4 Cdn Armd Bde would be in the general area of Ussy and Pt 195 (located near Ussy).⁵²²
- The 10 Cdn Inf Bde would be in the general area Pt 180, Pt 195, Pt 206.
- The 18 Cdn Armd C Regt was to have elements south of Falaise and elements protecting the division right flank between Urville and Pt 180.⁵²³

⁵²⁰ At one point, Maczek proposed a combined attack on the woods using both armoured divisions but Simonds had another plan. Maczek, *Op Podwody do Czolga*, 133.

⁵²¹ The 3 Cdn Inf Div attack was divided into two phases: Phase I, seize Quesnay Woods; Phase II, seize general feature La Grange de Mine, Aisy and Soumont St. Quentin. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 10 Aug.

⁵²² There are two Pt 195 on the road south to Falaise, one located at grid 0846, St. Hilaire Farm and one located at Grid 0840 near Ussy.

This plan represented a further drive of some 3,000 yards deeper into the German defenses and, if successful, would have opened the way to Falaise.⁵²⁴ At 2110 hrs 4 Cdn Inf Bde was placed under Kitching's command to support the operation. The attack was called off at 2339 hrs in part because of the lack of progress of the 3 Cdn Inf Div attack on Quesnay Woods.⁵²⁵



Map 14: Operations 4 Cdn Armd Bde 10 August 1944. Reid, *No Holding Back*, 340

⁵²³ Summary of GOCs [Kitching] plan up to 102300B. War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, App IX.

⁵²⁴ The execution of the plan was as follows: 4th Cdn Armd Bde less GGFG and Lake Sup R was to remain in its current position with the CGG prepared to move forward to hold Ussy with the GGFG once the town was captured. 10th Cdn Inf Bde with under command GGFG and Lake Sup R was to capture Pt 206, Ussy and Pt 195 (grid 0840). The attack was to be carried out in two phases. In Phase I, the A & SH of C, riding in Priests and supported by the GGFG under the cover of artillery smoke, were to capture Pt 206. H-Hour for this phase was 0100 hrs on 11 August. In Phase II, the GGFG and Lake Sup Regt were to capture Ussy and Pt 195. On completion of this task, the GGFG and Lake Sup R, less one company, were to revert to 4th Cdn Armd Bde control. The armoured brigade was then to firm up the Ussy position. The 18th Cdn Armd C Regt was to sweep west, south and east on the general line Barbery, Meslay, Martigny and the high ground south of Falaise and was to move west to meet up with the Second British Army. Summary of GOCs [Kitching] instrs up to 111500B. War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, App X.

⁵²⁵ Ops Log 10 August serials 4721 & 2305, Main HQ 2 Cdn Inf Div, 1-31 August 1944 and Ops Log 11 August serial 477, War Diary 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

TOTALIZE had succeeded in breaking through the German defensive lines and in driving the Germans back nine miles achieving the intent established by Montgomery. It failed however to take Falaise as required by Crerar's guidance issued on 7 August. The formal part of the operation came to an end at 1100 hours on the morning of 11 August when Simonds ordered 3 Cdn Inf Div to take over the positions of the two armoured divisions. The 4th Cdn Armd Div was to withdraw north to Robertmesnil to rest and prepare for a new attack; The 1 Pol Armd Div was to take over the St. Sylvain sector and to patrol aggressively towards Maizières in an effort to obtain a crossing of the Laison River.⁵²⁶ 9 Cdn Inf Bde would relieve 10 Cdn Inf Bde.⁵²⁷

Until the withdrawal could be effected, the 4 Cdn Armd Div had to hold on to its positions during 11 August under continuous shelling throughout a long, clear day which afforded the Germans excellent visibility. The Germans continued to counterattack the Pt 195 position and early in the morning they were able to infiltrate into the Canadian position. Some German soldiers reached to within 50 yards of Foot Guards tanks before being stopped. The position remained precarious because of the lack of sufficient infantry to cover the tanks and the ground properly.⁵²⁸ At 1939 hrs 4 Cdn Armd Bde was ordered to disengage in preparation for a new attack.⁵²⁹

Simonds decided to have one more try at salvaging the advance to Falaise. The absence of opposition to patrols by 18 Cdn Armd C Regt on 10 and 11 August over the

⁵²⁶ Ops Log, 11 Aug 44, Serials 54 and 56. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, App 50.

⁵²⁷ The relief began at last light on 11 August and was completed by 0600 hrs on 12 August War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 11 Aug.

⁵²⁸ Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 108

⁵²⁹ The Grenadier Guards withdrew first through the east flank, losing three tanks in the withdrawal. No 1 Squadron was given the job of smoking off Quesnay Woods to cover the final withdrawal. The Foot Guards reconstituted itself at Gaumesnil and then moved to a concentration area at Cintheaux. The Grenadier Guards lost ten tanks pulling back from the area of Point 195, while the Foot Guards had to use a heavy smoke screen to avoid similar losses. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 11 Aug.

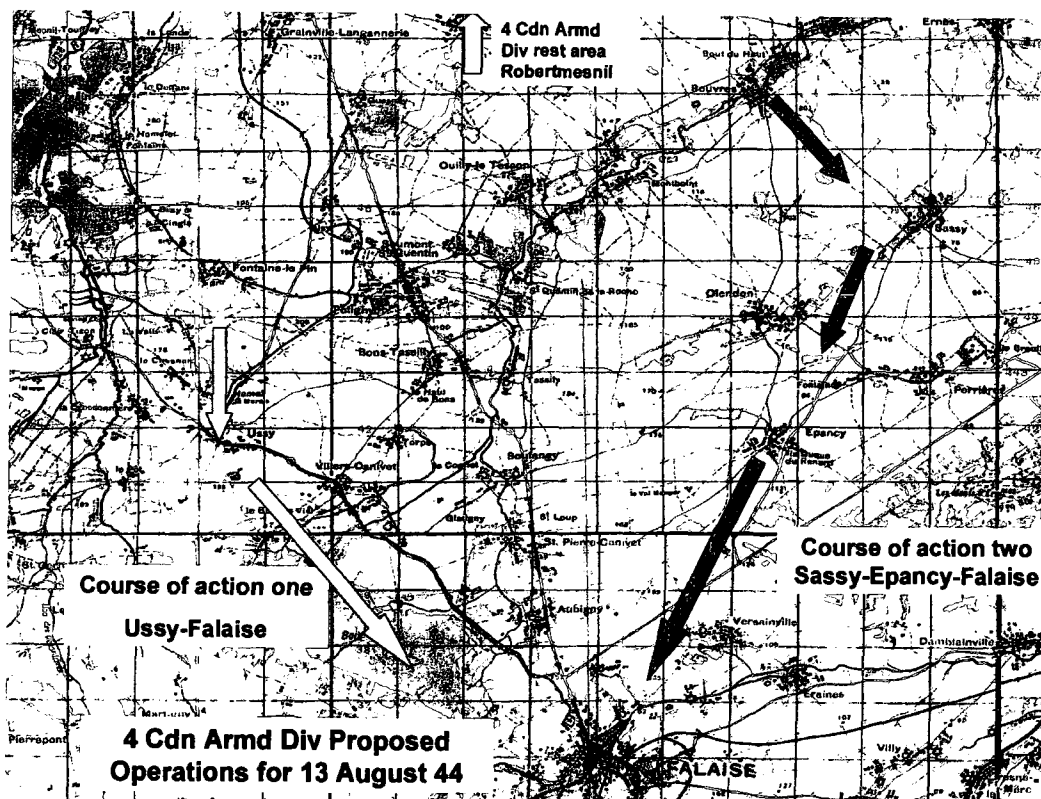
Laize River resulted in Simonds ordering 2 Cdn Div to send one brigade and one armoured regiment from 2 Cdn Armd Bde across the river at Bretteville sur Laize to move immediately south. The 4 Cdn Inf Bde crossed the river on the evening of 11/12 August in what was initially considered a reconnaissance in force. Before noon on 12 August, Simonds changed the operation to the main effort of the Corps and allocated all available artillery and the 2 Cdn Armd Bde, less one regiment, in support.⁵³⁰

Even though the 4 Cdn Armd Div was withdrawn to a position in the rear of 3 Cdn Inf Div for rest and repair, the division was placed on one-hour notice to move after 1200 hrs 12 August to support the 2 Cdn Inf Div operation. 4 Cdn Armd Div was given three tentative courses of action in support, dependent, in large part, on the success of the 2 Cdn Inf Div drive. The division would follow 2 Cdn Div, pass through in the area of Ussy and advance with the objective of Falaise; or would follow the 18 Cdn Armd C Regt across the River Laize and advance on the axis of Sassy, Epancy with the objective of Falaise. Both of these tasks would commence at first light on 13 August. The third option was to participate in the upcoming operation TALLULAH in conjunction with 3 Cdn Inf Div.⁵³¹ The 2 Cdn Inf Div advanced as far as south as Clair-Tizon and was able to get a small bridgehead across the Laize River. Attempts to expand the bridgehead failed and the 2 Cdn Inf Div advance on this axis came to a halt on 13 August.⁵³² With all obvious courses of action expended, Simonds was forced to concede that a second deliberate Canadian thrust towards Falaise would be necessary.

⁵³⁰The axis of advance was Barbery, Moulines and Clair Tizon to capture the high ground Pt 195 and Ussy. CMHQ Report No. 169, para 108.

⁵³¹ Summary of GOCs instrs up to 121200B, War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, App XI.

⁵³² CMHQ Report No. 169, para 111.



Map 15: Proposed 4 Cdn Armd Div Operations 13 August 1944. Modified Operation Totalize map, printed by 14 Field Survey Squadron R.E. Feb 1948.

The question as to whether *TOTALIZE* was either a successful or unsuccessful operation will probably never be definitively settled and depends very much on one's perspective. Since much of the criticisms of those who view the operation as unsuccessful are levelled at the two armoured divisions, the key decisions that impacted the outcome of Phase II and, in particular, the 4 Cdn Armd Div will be examined. Within this context, three points remain dominant in the discussions of Phase II: the inexperience of the two armoured divisions and their senior commanders, the narrow frontage allocated to the armoured division attacks and the bombing associated with Phase II.

The typical analysis of *TOTALIZE* as a failed operation is reflected in the following often cited statement; "Despite overwhelming air and artillery superiority, five divisions and two armoured brigades comprising upwards of 600 tanks could not defeat

two depleted German divisions, mustering no more than 60 panzers and tank destroyers.”⁵³³ This statement represents an oversimplification of the execution and results of a very complex operation. The reality of combat and warfare is that a preponderance of combat power in an operation is useless if it is not applied at the right place and time and under the proper conditions. In TOTALIZE, the critical elements were time and conditions. Both Maczek and Kitching agreed that their formations were inexperienced but both insisted that their difficulties were due mainly to the fact that the enemy had ample time to establish a new defensive line on the morning and afternoon of 8 August. There is little argument over this analysis.

The debate over the bombing in Phase II revolves around two key issues: whether the bombing was actually needed and whether there was time for the bombing to be called off, based on the success in Phase I. The argument that the timing for the bombing attack was inflexible does not stand. The evidence would suggest that there was more flexibility than is commonly acknowledged. The following message is recorded between First Cdn Army and 83 Group R.A.F. at 0700B (0800 hrs local) 8 August:

This msg confirms that bombing for Phase II is acceptable any time that it can be done having regard to weather but it is preferred that it should conform to the programme based on the revised H hr as 1300 hrs. If this is possible it will be of considerable advantage to the ground forces. If however it is necessary for weather reasons to bomb earlier or not at all it is of course acceptable to bomb earlier and the ground forces will try to take advantage of the situation. That is to say there is freedom of action to 8 USAAF.⁵³⁴

Although obscure in the text, it appears that a cut-off time for a decision was established as 0900 hrs local time. By 0900 hrs, the results of Phase I were known, with many of the Phase I attacking units reporting that they were on or near their objectives. While the text

⁵³³ English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 289.

⁵³⁴ Ops Log, 8 Aug 44, Serial 37. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, 8 Aug.

of the above message makes it clear that the scheduled bombing was preferred, it is also evident that there was the flexibility to cancel the bombing. The decision to cancel belonged to Simonds. Had he decided to do so, it is unlikely that Crerar would have overruled him, regardless of the cost in getting the bombing missions in the first place.⁵³⁵

The bombing debate revolves around the argument that the fixed timings of the bombings neutralized any tactical advantage gained in Phase I by giving the Germans time to re-establish their defenses. This fact must have been known to Simonds when he decided on the timings of the two phases. Simonds believed that the time was needed to move supporting artillery forward to support the Phase II attacks. If anti-tank guns were the primary threat to Phase II then the bombing and artillery seemed the logical answer to these threats.

In fact the last opportunity to change the construct of TOTALIZE was at the 1000 hrs meeting on 7 August between Simonds, Kitching and Maczek. Once Simonds decided to stay with his plan and the Phase II bombing any discussion of a continued advance from Phase I or an early advance of Phase II is simply speculative. Events showed that not only was the time needed to move the artillery forward but the delay was also required to get the two armoured divisions forward. Halpenny reached the start line at exactly the required time. Given the challenges encountered in moving forward it seems doubtful that Phase II could have started any earlier than planned. The only unit from Phase I that appeared capable of a continued attack was 2 Cdn Armd Bde. Based on the status of the Allied formations in the early morning of 8 August, if the armoured brigade had continued, it would have done so with little artillery and infantry support. It is also

⁵³⁵The Americans were able to call off the bombing in support of COBRA within hours of the attack because of bad weather.

clear that it would have run into the already prepared anti-tank defensive positions at Cintheaux.

The problem, as Simonds saw it, was not the plan, weapons or machines; but, rather, the lack of proper handling of resources within the armoured divisions. Simonds had expressly urged his armoured commanders not to wait for infantry divisions to take out final objectives or get involved in probing before calling down artillery fire or fighter-bombers. Simonds felt that leadership and the failure to keep “cracking” when the opportunities were there were the reasons why TOTALIZE ground to a halt. In addition, Simonds felt that the lack of communication, liaison, wireless, from formation to formation and leading units to leading units, had much to do with the failure of the armour to get going as planned. Misinformation and the inability to maintain direction were, in his mind, crucial.⁵³⁶

Most of the assessments of the performance of the armoured divisions agree with Simonds. The assessment of Carlo D’Este is typical, “Unfortunately, Simonds’ exploitation divisions, the Canadian 4th Armoured and the Polish 1st Armoured, were inexperienced and fell into the usual consequent errors; particularly that of pausing to deal with strong-points rather than bypassing them.”⁵³⁷ These and other similar assessments have been made without a true understanding of the context and conditions within which the 4 Cdn Armd Div was forced to advance into its first battle.

The first issue was the plan. It is questionable whether the 2 Cdn Corps staff actually conducted a thorough assessment of the logistical and, in particular, the time and distance problems associated with the revised TOTALIZE plan. A poor evaluation of the

⁵³⁶ Stearns, *Letter [Recollections on Time with Montgomery]*, *Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria*

⁵³⁷ D’Este, *Decision in Normandy*, 426.

time and space calculations had two dramatic effects: narrow frontages for the advance which compounded the second problem, no room to deploy the rest of the division in support or to bypass the defenses.

The narrow frontage assigned to the armoured divisions had a significant bearing on their tactical flexibility in the initial stages of the battle by reducing a division attack to a squadron frontage. In its first battle, 4 Cdn Armd Div tried to feel its way around the blocking force, looking for a hole. When it found enemy strong points, its regiments attacked them. It has been suggested that the inexperience of the division resulted in these actions rather than masking them and moving on. In fact, there was no room to do this as long as Simonds held them to their boundaries.⁵³⁸ There was no open flank for the units to exploit by saturating the enemy with direct or indirect fire, smoking them off and then moving around an open flank as prescribed by doctrine.⁵³⁹ When viewed objectively, 4 Cdn Armd Div was at a numerical disadvantage as long as it had to continue to attack on a squadron frontage because the combat power of the division could only be brought to bear sequentially, one squadron at a time, instead of through massing numerous squadrons at once over a wide frontage.

In order to understand why the advance of the 4 Cdn Armd Bde attack was “slower” than anticipated, it is important to understand the mindset and orders received by Amy, who led the advance.⁵⁴⁰ Amy stated that the intelligence information he received was not updated at any point from the time he received his orders to the time he

⁵³⁸ Jarymowycz, *The Quest for Operational Maneuvre in the Normandy Campaign*, 210.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.210.

⁵⁴⁰ Amy had only taken over command of No 1 Sqn some six weeks before Normandy and, given the paucity of armoured training in the division during that time frame, he would have had to rely on the training imparted by the squadron’s previous commander. Amy reports, however, that he inherited a slate of very capable officers and NCOs in charge of well-trained and disciplined tank crews. The squadron was, therefore, capable even though Amy had not had the opportunity to actually test it under his command and direction. Amy, [*Recollections on Normandy*].

crossed the start line. His intelligence was over 12 hours old and he felt that the time spent waiting during the long, frustrating advance could have been well spent in more detailed briefings for the troops and, particularly in providing an up-to-date intelligence picture on the 4 Cdn Armd Div front.⁵⁴¹ This action, however, did not take place. In leading the advance, therefore, Amy believed that he would be encountering the 1st and 12th SS Pz Divisions along his line of advance.

The operations logs for the 4 Cdn Armd Div provided a deeper understanding as to what was happening with the units as they moved forward. Forced to advance on a complex narrow frontage, with the possibility of two German panzer divisions to his immediate front, Amy decided that urgency was secondary to an orderly advance in which the troop leaders could get a feel for the battle and where the ground and the enemy would dictate the course of the advance. Incessant demands to get moving or bypass resistance are generously strewn throughout the operation logs for 8 August. The telling exchanges however occurred just prior to the launch of Halpenny Force.

At 1324 hrs, Control issued a warning that 20 Panther tanks were operating in the Cintheaux area. Halpenny Force crossed the start line at 1402 hrs. During the advance, Amy continued to ask for more information concerning the Panther tanks with one call at 1447 hrs and another at 1504 hrs. At 1507 hrs, the 10 Cdn Inf Bde reported 15 German tanks moving south from Cintheaux. At 1522 hrs Amy received a report that 17 German Tiger tanks were located moving south from a position which placed them to the left and rear of his advancing formation.⁵⁴² At 1526 hrs, Amy reported seeing four burning

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² The grid reference corresponds with an area between Conteville and St. Aignan de Cramesnil. In addition, the advance was delayed from 1530 hrs to 1554 hrs as an air strike was called in to deal with the reported tanks.

German tanks, which reinforced the validity of the reports he had been receiving on the Panther tanks. The mental picture in Amy's mind was one of a strong force of Panther tanks in front and a more potent force of Tiger tanks in the rear combined with an open flank with no obvious signs or support from the 1 Pol Armd Div.⁵⁴³ Amy's reluctance to storm the German defence with a rapid advance to Bretteville le Rabet is better understood within this context.⁵⁴⁴ Amy may have irritated Kitching and Booth by his slowness but he did keep his troops alive to fight another day.⁵⁴⁵

The records indicate that Kitching was on the move during the morning of 8 August, trying to gain an appreciation of what was happening on the battlefield. There was no point in sitting at a wireless set urging people on when things bogged down so he decided to go and see the battle for himself in order to obtain some semblance of situational awareness. He visited the tactical headquarters of 2 Cdn Inf Div HQ at 0700 hrs 8 August to get a better picture of what was happening in Phase I. Then he visited HQ 10 Cdn Inf Bde and returned to Main Div about 1200 hrs to meet Simonds.⁵⁴⁶ In the

⁵⁴³ Amy's caution seemed justified in his own mind when he started receiving fire from the Polish front, where he expected the 1st SS Pz Div to be located. Amy had little information on the success or failures of the Phase I attacks or the disposition of the units from these attacks. In addition, he had little information as to what was happening on his flanks and his tank troops were starting to take casualties. Ops Log 8 Aug 44, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁵⁴⁴ A. B. French, Letter [Comments of draft Chapter VII], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 16 January 1981.

⁵⁴⁵ Amy stated that he took three very important and fundamental military lessons away from this experience: first, never commit troops to battle who are not well briefed on all aspects of their part of an operation. Second, commanders must ensure that the details involved in facilitating or staging a battle, including the deployment, are closely monitored. The last point that stuck with Amy was the requirement for the commander to be up front, particularly when the momentum of an attack had slowed. Amy believed that more often than not, this action could restore the momentum of the attack. Amy, *[Recollections on Normandy]*.

⁵⁴⁶ It is possible that the Gaumesnil issue was discussed by Kitching. If Foulkes had agreed to Kitching taking Gaumesnil then his visit to 10 Cdn Inf Bde makes sense since he would have then passed on the task/change of plans to Jefferson. Simonds could have been briefed at 1200 hrs on the change at which point he may have cancelled the Kitching plan and ordered 2 Cdn Inf Bde to take on the task. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div 1-31 April 1944, 8 Aug.

afternoon Kitching appears to have concentrated on trying to find out what was going on with 4 Cdn Armd Bde.

The lack of consistent communications from the front played a key role in keeping senior officers in the dark. Inexperience in battle and German expertise in jamming appear to have been the main factors. Wigle reprimanded the brigade majors for not passing back timely information to keep the GOC informed about hourly events occurring in their brigades and among the artillery regiments.⁵⁴⁷ Even though communication discipline was thought to have been generally good, the communications between the regiments and battalions during 8 August and, particularly in the evening of 8 August, was difficult. Reports of jamming and heavy interference were reported consistently throughout the night of 8/9 August and would continue throughout the operation.⁵⁴⁸

Simonds levelled considerable criticism at Halpenny for withdrawing his tanks into a harbour on the night of 8 August. His actions must, therefore, be placed in context. Harbours usually happened about 800 to 1000 yds behind the forward infantry. The tanks were close enough to render assistance if needed but far enough away to carry out essential work. The reality of armoured warfare was that the lives of the tank crews depended on properly working machinery, particularly the guns, radios and engine. The cleaning routine was continuous and inspections frequent, especially on optical equipment and weapons. Tank tracks also required maintenance every night in harbour. Engine maintenance and any other repairs were also done at night in more distant safe

⁵⁴⁷ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div 1-31 April 1944, entry 10 Aug; Roy, 1944: *The Canadians in Normandy*, 230

⁵⁴⁸ At 2200 hrs, Control reported that interference was "very heavy, cannot make out speech of stations" and at 0045 hrs Booth reported from his command tank that he could not hear "control." War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

harbours. Occasionally engines had to be hoisted out of the tank or completely replaced and this required heavy lifting gear. Heavy recovery vehicles and maintenance trucks had to be brought up at night and kept away from the front line. Recharging tank batteries to maintain power for the radio and engine required noisy equipment. Ammunition and fuel required daily replenishment, depending on the distance travelled and whether the tanks had been in action. Refilling ammunition bins and refuelling was done by hand. In the case of fuel, jerricans were used to fill the 300-gallon fuel tank on the Sherman. As long as tank ammunition had to be loaded manually into the tank there was no other option than to withdraw to a place where all of this activity could be conducted safe from German observation.⁵⁴⁹ Harbours at night was what the units had been trained to do. This procedure had been practiced during exercises in England and no changes had been made to armoured doctrine as a consequence of the early fighting in Normandy. Halpenny's actions are therefore understandable.

Closer examination must also be given to the orders Simonds gave to the two armoured divisions in continuing the attack into the night of 8/9 August. Simonds ordered Kitching to continue operations through the night to secure Pt 195 a further four miles south.⁵⁵⁰ At the same time the Poles were to "feel" their way forward and take Cauvicourt at first light. This was a relatively modest objective for the Poles and represents a puzzling decision when the relationship between the location of Pt 195 and Cauviourt are considered. If all went according to the new plan and the Poles captured Cauvicourt and the 4th Cdn Armd Div captured Pt 195, the tactical situation at first light would have

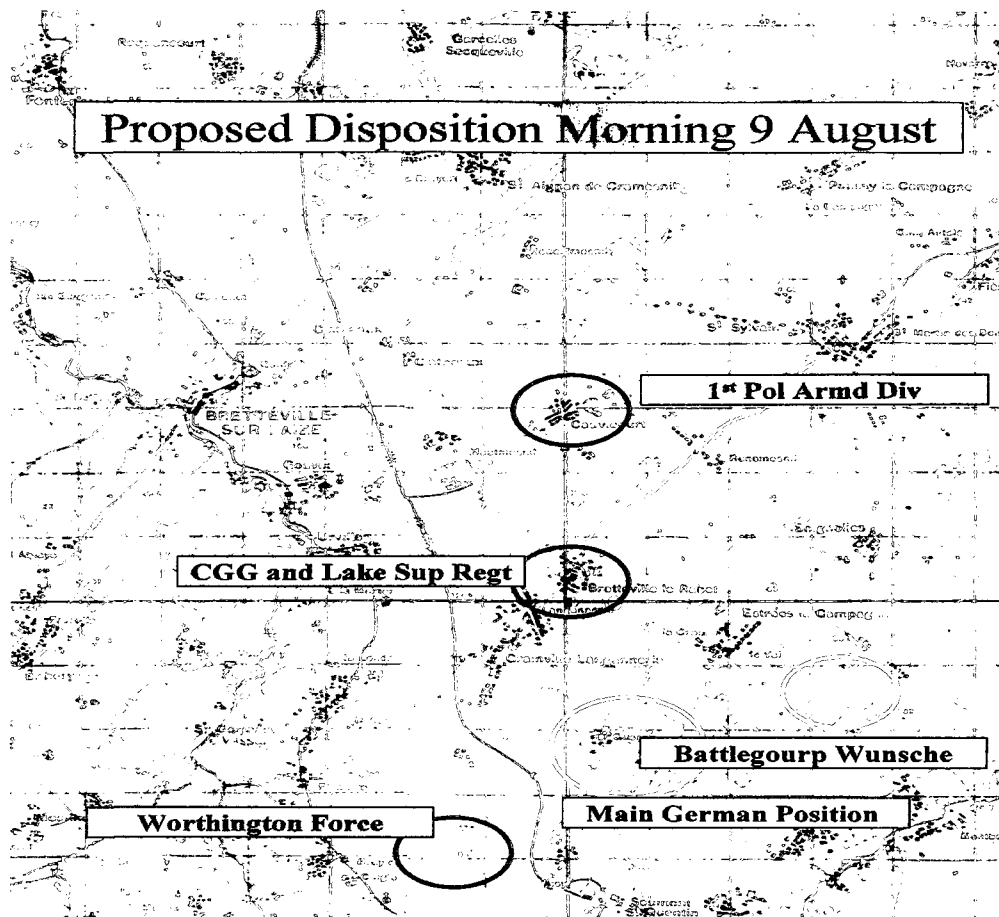
⁵⁴⁹ John Timothy Alfred Claydon, "Green Flash: Tanks and 4th Canadian Armoured Division, Normandy 1944" (Masters of Arts, Carleton University), 110-112.

⁵⁵⁰ The 1st Cdn Army Ops log records Simonds intent to continue op TOTALIZE with the original plan remaining in force. 4 Cdn and 1 Polish Armd Divs will push straight on tonight. Ops Log, serial 128, War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff , 1-31 August 1944, 8 Aug.

found the entire left flank of the 4th Cdn Armd Div unprotected from Cauvicourt to Quesnay Woods (a distance of some 5,000 yards) with battle group Wünsche arrayed in Quesnay Woods. Bretteville le Rabet, at that point, was under attack by the Grenadier Guards and the Lake Superior Regiment. A counter-attack by the Germans against Bretteville by Wünsche's forces would have cut off Worthington Force on Pt 195. The difference between what actually happened to Worthington Force and what might have happened had the operations for that evening been executed as planned may have been minor. The main difference, however, between the two scenarios is that Kitching would have known where Worthington was and the arranged support would have fallen on target to support him. The tactical objectives given to Kitching and Maczek by Simonds on the evening of 8 August raise serious questions as to Simonds' own situational awareness and tactical acumen.

Given what is now known about the German disposition on the evening of 8 August, the actions of Worthington Force must be re-assessed. The outcome must be examined within the totality of the actions of 9 August. Worthington's mistake presented Meyer with a significant problem. Quesnay Woods was the centre of the German defensive position and the Germans now had Canadian instead of German forces in the middle of their main defensive line. If Worthington Force was reinforced and allowed to push forward, the German defensive position would have been compromised, forcing them to withdraw. The Germans had to react to this situation decisively and ordered battle group Wünsche with the support of battle group Krause to counter-attack.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁵¹ Wünsche's battle group was concentrated in Quesnay Woods and had the support of German artillery and anti-tank guns. Meyer states that five Tiger tanks and 15 Panther tanks were used to attack the force with the Tigers taking up positions on the western flank to shoot in the Panthers attacking from battle group Krause's firm base on the ridge north of Assy. Reynolds, *Steel Inferno*, 240.



Map 16: Proposed Disposition morning 9 August 1944, Modified Operation Totalize map, printed by 14 Field Survey Squadron R.E. Feb 1948.

The important point in the Worthington Force story is that this Force tied up the remaining German mobile striking power for almost the entire day of 9 August making them unavailable elsewhere to counter-attack either the renewed 4 Cdn Armd Div attacks on Bretteville and Pt 195 or the Polish advance to Estrées la Campagne. The 3rd company 26th Pz Regt along with stragglers from 89 Inf Div were main to occupy and defend themselves on Pt 195.⁵⁵² Leaving the high point of Pt 195 unoccupied was a significant tactical mistake on Kurt Meyer's part. It can be argued that the 2 Cdn Corps success of 9 August can be directly attributed to Worthington Forces' prolonged and determined fight on Hill 140. The initiative was taken away from the Germans who were placed in a reactive

⁵⁵² Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 176.

status until the Worthington threat had been eliminated. The failure of the Poles to relieve and or, more importantly, reinforce Worthington's breakthrough is therefore more compelling.

Kitching expressed his frustration with the Polish effort during the first two days of combat:

I don't know what went wrong with the Poles on those two days, 8 and 9 August, but they certainly were no help to us. They hardly moved an inch on the eighth, so much so that General Rennie of the 51st Highland Division complained to General Simonds about their inactivity and the fact that they continued to pour vehicles and men into his area without making any moves forward to ease the congestion. They were not much better on the ninth when Worthington captured one of their objectives at 7:00 a.m., thinking he was on his objective, Point 195.⁵⁵³

Kitching formed a very poor opinion of the Poles from this point on. Although never overtly stated, Kitching likely held the Poles responsible for the destruction of Worthington's force. If the Poles had of been as aggressive as Worthington on 9 August, they should have been in a position to come to the relief of Worthington Force. Given the terrain, the Poles should have been in a position to identify or at least deduce an attack on friendly forces ahead of them, particularly after they had taken Estrées la Campagne.⁵⁵⁴ If they could not have physically reached Worthington Force, they should have been in a position to supply artillery support and provide 2 Cdn Corps with information regarding the possibility of friendly troops in a location ahead of them. No evidence was found to indicate that either of these two possibilities occurred until members of the BCR found their way into Polish lines. By this time, however, it was too late.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 196.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Crerar's assessment of the Poles mirrored Kitching's. The "bog-down" of the 2 Cdn Corps attack, as Crerar saw it, was mainly due to the "dog fight" that developed between the 1st Pol Armd Div and German units in Quesnay Woods. Had the Poles smoked off and contained the enemy there and pushed on with the bulk of their strength, they would have widened the front and increased the depth for a tactically decisive

An important command decision for Kitching on 8 August was what to do about Booth. In his book, Kitching discussed his attempts to find Booth and stated that he found Booth asleep in his tank two miles from the battlefield. Kitching also stated that he “dressed him down” and “got him going.”⁵⁵⁶ Kitching later revealed that Booth was in fact drunk. The fact that he was drunk in the face of the enemy was dereliction of duty and represented one of a number of offences under which he could have been charged. Reid, in *No Holding Back*, suggests that Kitching felt that it would not be quite “on” to subject a senior officer to the public humiliation of a court martial.⁵⁵⁷ When pressed during an interview with Donald Graves in 1998, Kitching replied that Booth had not yet done anything to warrant his relief.⁵⁵⁸ Kitching recounts the incident as follows:

When his brigade was held up at the beginning of our Phase II, I looked for him to hear what was wrong. I had the greatest difficulty locating him and he would not answer calls on the radio. When I finally found him he was nearly two miles away from the battle and fast asleep in his tank. I personally had to climb up on the tank to wake him and tell him to go and see what was happening. I was so angry that I ordered him out of the tank and gave him a tongue-lashing for five minutes. He was almost in tears when he went forward.⁵⁵⁹

Being drunk in the face of the enemy is clear cause for relieving an officer of his command. Kitching’s action and statements are, therefore, hard to reconcile. The first issue that has been assumed but not necessarily proven, is that the event happened during the combat portion of Phase II. Most estimates, based in part on the armoured brigade’s message traffic, place the event in the late afternoon, probably between 1500 and 1800

advance. As it was, when darkness came, they had advanced "not more than a few hundred yards." English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 290.

⁵⁵⁶ Kitching, *Mud and Green Field*, 195.

⁵⁵⁷ Reid, *No Holding Back* 302.

⁵⁵⁸ Kitching also admitted that on at least two occasions, neither in action, he had seen Booth totally incapacitated, but that Booth had reassured him that he never drank in the field. Kitching added that he was taken aback when Simonds suggested that Booth take command of 3rd Cdn Inf Div when he first heard that Keller had been wounded. Donald Graves interview with Kitching 23 May 1998. Reid, *No Holding Back*, 464 note 4 to Chapter 15.

⁵⁵⁹ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 195.

hrs. A liberal translation however of the text “beginning of our phase II” could apply to any portion of the 4th Cdn Armd Div advance on 8 August. Had the event occurred before the 1400 hr launch of the division in Phase II, then Kitching’s statement that Booth had not yet done anything to warrant his relief could in part be rationalized. Kitching could have argued that he had straightened Booth out and when the brigade launched, Booth was, in fact, at the helm commanding the brigade.

If the traditional time line of late afternoon is accepted, Kitching had a number of options with respect to his actions towards Booth. Do nothing and allow him to continue, relieve him on the spot or allow him to continue for that day and relieve him at the earliest possible opportunity. Kitching decided to allow Booth to continue.

Each of these options carried a considerable amount of risk and it is difficult in hindsight to judge a commander’s decision made in the heat of battle. There is value in examining Kitching’s options since the second and third order effects of the decision he made that day would shape the command and leadership circumstances that played out over the next two weeks. Relieving Booth on the spot meant finding a replacement. There is no way of knowing whether the conversation with Simonds over a replacement for Booth would have already taken place and it would have taken time for Moncel to be notified and brought forward. An interim commander would have had to come from within the division. Worthington, Kitching’s first choice, could have been brought forward at this point, but there would have been a time lag as Worthington gained situational awareness over the battlefield. Keeping Booth in command offered the advantage of continuity of command with the promise of maintaining the momentum of the attack. The reality of the situation however, was that the tactical battle under the

control of Halpenny was not going well and Booth's actions were not having the desired effect. A fresh perspective from a new brigade commander may have provided a new course of action that could have restored the momentum and speed of the attack.

If Kitching considered relieving Booth on 9 August, the available candidates from within the division were all committed or had vanished. Worthington was lost on the battlefield and locked in a desperate battle; Scott had been ordered to Pt 195 to Worthington's relief; and Halpenny was locked in a fight for Bretteville. Given Halpenny's cautious nature on the 8 August, it is probable that Kitching may not have instinctively looked to him. The other options were Wotherspoon of the SAR or Roberts of the Manitoba Dragoons. Roberts was not really part of 4th Cdn Armd Div since his unit was only on loan to Kitching for the operation. Wotherspoon represented Kitching's only real choice. Once it was clear, however, that Worthington Force was not on Pt 195, any thoughts of relieving Booth would have been superseded by the requirement to find and help the BCR. Changing the brigade commander at this point may have created more problems than it solved.

There is little doubt that, had the true location of Worthington's Force been found during 9 August, Kitching would have faced quite the dilemma. Any attempt to send relief forces required the approval of Simonds, since 4 Cdn Armd Div forces would have had to cross into the Polish sector and any such force would have had to contend with the German defenses in Quesnay Woods. The greatest impediment to any relieving action with respect to Worthington Force was the fact that radio communication had been lost with the group early in the morning. This fact narrowed the possible options available to Kitching since coordinated action between the two groups would have been difficult. The

conservative course of action would have been a withdrawal, covered by smoke and air cover. The more aggressive approach would have been reinforcing Worthington's force in an attempt to break through on the east side of Quesnay Woods and not through Pt 195.

The length of time that the Foot Guards took to launch their relief operation on 9 August has also been the subject of scorn. Michael Reynolds states, in *Steel Inferno*, that it took, "an extraordinary seven hours to reach the area of Bretteville le Rabet."⁵⁶⁰ The Foot Guards actions, therefore, must be placed in context. They reached Roquancourt at 0700 hrs after an all night move. At 1000 hours, the regiment was ordered to move on to Gaumesnil, a distance of three miles, which it reached at 1100 hrs. Scott had been called to Bde HQ at 1030 hrs and returned to Gaumesnil shortly after 1100 hrs with orders from Booth. Four hours later, at 1500 hrs, they were some three miles further down the Falaise road at Bretteville-le-Rabet. In that four-hour timeframe, Scott had to await the arrival of his attached troops. He then had to brief his squadron and attached commander, make final preparations for the move and move the three miles to Bretteville-le-Rabet, the start point for their advance.⁵⁶¹ As it was, Scott began the attack without elements of his supporting force who had failed to marry up with the main attack force.

While operations had faltered, TOTALIZE demonstrated that the training of the echelon troops in England had paid dividends when it came to supporting the fighting echelons under the most hazardous conditions. In response to the need to get fuel and ammunition forward, elements of the A-1 echelon troops left the rear areas and moved

⁵⁶⁰ Reynolds, *Steel Inferno*, 240.

⁵⁶¹ These were A company from the Alq R, a medium machine gun platoon, a troop from the 96th Anti-Tank Battery, a troop of flails tanks and the remaining three-inch mortars from the Algonquins. French, *Letter [Comments of Draft Chapter VII], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria*; Ops Log 9 Aug serials 54-56, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

their operations closer to the fighting forces. This move facilitated quicker re-supply, recovery and repair of vehicles. The Foot Guards, for example, found it necessary to detach half a dozen ammunition and fuel lorries to provide more immediate support to the tanks. This initiative resulted in a number of disabled tanks being repaired and put back into service in short order. This practice became very important since, by 10 August, operating tanks were becoming a rare commodity within the division.⁵⁶²

Improvisation became the new routine for re-supply. At 1100 hrs 10 August, the A-1 Echelon of the Foot Guards received word that the fighting squadrons were running low on fuel and ammunition. It was evident that the supply trucks could not move forward to re-supply the formations under the normal practice. In this case, Proctor established a supply point in the rear of the regimental position. Three armour recovery vehicles were loaded with supplies and moved forward from the rear echelons to the supply point. The tanks of No 2 Squadron picked up the supplies from this point and brought forward the fuel and ammunition on their back decks to positions in the rear of No 3 Squadron's positions on the hill. This activity invariably attracted the attention of German artillery and mortar fire resulting in a number of fatal casualties; however, this method proved successful in re-supplying the forward positions on Pt 195 and Pt 180.⁵⁶³

The high number of tank casualties sustained by the division put a severe strain on the replacement system. The Forward Delivery Squadron delivered its entire holdings to the division. This, plus the repair of the tanks in the workshops, provided a stopgap

⁵⁶² This group was renamed Battle Lorry Group. As operations progressed in Normandy, the A Echelons of armoured units were provided with five to six Kangaroos (de-turreted Ram tanks) which permitted re-supply to take place either on the run or at least without the necessity of withdrawing very far from the front. This tactic, however, was not the case on the evening of 8 August and the needed re-supply of the tanks had to be conducted under the practiced methods from Britain. Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 107; A. B. French, *Some Reminiscences of the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment and the Governor General's Foot Guards* (Ottawa: n.p., December 1984), 66.

⁵⁶³ Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 107.

solution. RCEME was instructed to try and repair approximately 20 tanks where they were. They were told specifically not to try and recover the vehicles because 51st Div carrying out recovery work on their vehicles had blocked the roads. A release of three M10 and 19 Sherman 17-pdrs was received from 2 Cdn Corps resources but a serious shortage of tank crews was making itself felt throughout this period, further restricting the tank strength of the regiments.⁵⁶⁴

The policy with respect to tank crew replacement came to a head during Proctor's daily A/Q conference on 11 August. 4 Cdn Armd Bde wanted to reconstitute tank crews from surviving members of a regiment. Kitching's policy was that the armoured regiments had to accept replacement crews. In Kitching's view, if salvaged crews were used again, the original cadre of the regiments would be used up and the regiments would be composed of only reinforcement personnel. By having surviving crew members without tanks returned to the reinforcement units, the process of incorporating and indoctrinating new replacements into the regiments would be made easier. In this conference, 4th Cdn Armd Bde was directed to comply with the GOC policy.⁵⁶⁵

Infantry reinforcements became a critical issue within 2 Cdn Corps and had an important impact on 4 Cdn Armd Div. A Branch had been working for two days to secure an allocation of reinforcements to replace the losses of the Tilly battles. 2 Cdn Corps had

⁵⁶⁴ The other factor that exacerbated the availability of tanks was the sanitization process that a tank had to undergo when a crew member was killed within the tank. The process required the cleaning of the internal part of the tank. According to the required process, the tank could not be returned to service for 24 hours. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 10 Aug.

⁵⁶⁵ When the GGFG first went into action, one troop, as well as the regimental 2 i/c and the 2i/cs of the squadrons, were left out of battle and these personnel moved with B Echelon. But one troop per squadron LOB was no longer feasible after about 55 tanks were lost in the first few weeks of battle. Thereafter, LOB consisted principally of the unwounded survivors of destroyed tanks and personnel returning from hospital. This group was incorporated with new tanks and new crews into the Armoured Delivery Squadron and prepared as replacements for the fighting echelon. French, *Some Reminiscences*, 68; War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 11 Aug.

given 2 Cdn Inf Div the priority in reinforcements and supply demands.⁵⁶⁶ Getting the reinforcements that had been finally secured forward to the echelons was another matter, since the roads had been closed to northbound traffic, which prevented Proctor from sending transport to get them.⁵⁶⁷

The realities of combat challenged the normal administrative routines. Many portions of the division “Q” staff complained that ADREPS were late and incomplete due in part to faulty communications with the brigades.⁵⁶⁸ Despite the frequent moves, traffic jams, faulty trucks and the fact that they were in their first major battle, the A & Q Branch of the division were able to keep the supply of essential quantities of fuel and foodstuffs moving forward within the divisional supply system.⁵⁶⁹ Critical deficiencies however began to register in 6-pdr and 17-pdr sabot anti-tank rounds that continued through to the start of the next operation.⁵⁷⁰

The first complete ADREP from 2 August recorded the following strength for 4th Cdn Armd Div: 333 tanks, 103 armoured cars, 140 scout cars, 868 officers and 15,516 ORs. According to the division ADREPS, the division entered TOTALIZE on 8 August with 328 tanks, 75 armoured cars and 138 scout cars. At 0245 hrs 10 August, the returns highlighted the enormous attrition in soldiers and tanks resulting from TOTALIZE. The

⁵⁶⁶ The issue of reinforcements and in particular the state of infantry general duty was the subject of two letters from Simonds to Crerar, the first on 7 Aug and the second on 8 Aug. Letters Simonds to Crerar dated 7 Aug 44 and 8 Aug 44 respectively, Tac HQ 2 Cdn Corps. War Diary, AG & QMG Branch, HQ 2 Cdn Corps, 1-31 August 1944, app 11 & 14.

⁵⁶⁷ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 8 Aug.

⁵⁶⁸ 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 10 Aug.

⁵⁶⁹ Each commodity had a desired level within the system. The goal was to have five days of rations and 190 miles of fuel available in the system each day. On 8 August, the division reported five days of rations and this level was maintained throughout TOTALIZE. There were 180 miles of POL in the Division supply system on 8 August. The level dropped to a low of 150 miles on 10 August but rebounded to 175 miles for the period 11 to 14 August. ADREPs 8-14 Aug 44. 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁵⁷⁰ ADREPs 8-14 Aug 44. 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

division was reporting 247 battle-worthy tanks, 78 armoured cars and 97 scout cars.⁵⁷¹

The strength of the division on 8 August was 869 officers and 15,383 ORs. Two days later, the division strength was recorded at 824 officers and 14,248 ORs.⁵⁷²

10 Cdn Inf Bde reported 15 officers and 265 other ranks as casualties; 4 Cdn Armd Bde listed 56 officers and 472 other ranks as casualties. When these figures are added to the casualties suffered by the divisional troops, the total casualties were 83 officers and 921 other ranks.⁵⁷³ Included in this total was the loss of four regimental commanders: Worthington, Murrell, Hay and Monk.⁵⁷⁴ The fighting strength of the infantry battalions were all recorded as less than 85 percent. The Lincoln & Welland Regiment was the worst at 72 percent, the Algonquin Regiment and Argylls at 82 percent and the Lake Superior Regiment at 85 percent.⁵⁷⁵

The assigned “rest area” for the division was described as anything but, since it was under German shellfire and some areas were under direct German observation.⁵⁷⁶ The two days spent out of the line by the division were put to most profitable use in rest, reinforcement and preparation. Lessons learned had to be assimilated. The range and hitting power of the German Tiger and Panther tanks in Normandy was a shock and threw Canadian tactics into disarray.⁵⁷⁷ All the tank crews in the division worked at getting the vehicles in shape and truckloads of Tiger and Sherman tracks salvaged from burnt-out tanks were welded on to thicken the armoured skins for the next attack.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷¹ ADREPs 8 to 11 Aug 44. 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁵⁷² ADREPs 8 to 11 Aug 44. 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁵⁷³ Casualty and Strength Return, 12 Aug 44. War Diary, HQ 1st Canadian Army- A & Q, 1-31 August 1944, App 12.

⁵⁷⁴ Stanley, *In the Face of Danger*, 163.

⁵⁷⁵ ADREP 11 Aug 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div –AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁵⁷⁶ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 11 Aug.

⁵⁷⁷ Graham, *The Price of Command*, 169.

⁵⁷⁸ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 12 Aug.

During these days in the reserve positions, shelling was unceasing and severe. Added to this nuisance, the twin plagues of Normandy—dysentery and vermin— though not so lethal, inflicted miseries on many.⁵⁷⁹

The general level of physical fatigue experienced by tank crews and front-line soldiers was profound. The tanks were often on the move before dawn and, when called into action, tanks were often moved out just as soon as the infantry could begin mopping up. By the time that the men of Halpenny Force went into battle on 8 August, most had had little to no rest for the previous 24-hour period. The rest situation was worse for the Foot Guards and BCR's who had left the concentration area at midnight and had had little opportunity to acquire any meaningful rest the entire day of the advance south. The expectation would have been that the regiments would harbour and rest that evening for operations the following day. The Grenadier Guards was the only regiment that was able to harbour and rest the first night. Both the Foot Guards and the BCRs carried out night moves leading to action the following day, with no appreciable time to rest the troops prior to battle or to conduct proper battle procedure. The inexperienced soldiers soon learned that sleep had to be managed like any other logistical commodity.

The division had trained on the premise of limited objectives, thorough reconnaissance, careful briefings and some way of identifying the objective.⁵⁸⁰ Establishing a “firm base”, flank guards, gun lines and sticking to a plan were essential elements in the framework of British and Canadian attacks. Battle procedure prescribed an ideal concept for preparing troops for battle but this was not how the 4 Cdn Armd Div was introduced into its first major battle. Deployment drills and procedures were

⁵⁷⁹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, entry 12 Aug.

⁵⁸⁰ Robert Moncel, Letter [Comments of draft Chapter VII], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 6 May 1981.

designed to eliminate confusion, minimize the effects of the fog of war and ensure the optimum use of the time available between receipt of the warning order and crossing the start line. The division had such procedures and they had been practiced in England. On the night of 7/8 August, however, there was a serious breakdown at more than one level within the division in the application of this deployment drill.⁵⁸¹ There is no clear explanation as to why some information was not made available earlier at the lower levels to help prepare the troops adequately for their first battle or why essential elements of Kitching's plans, such as the enemy situation and the intent of the attack, were altered. The result of this breakdown was that the leading elements of the division were launched into their first battle with less than 14 hours' notice, not properly briefed and lacking proper rest.

The results of TOTALIZE were less a product of troop inexperience—for Canadian soldiers had performed well when correctly employed— than the result of a flawed concept. The soldiers were well-trained and responsive to anything that was asked of them and the argument that success was lost because of green troops represents an attempt to shift the focus from a flawed plan. Kurt Meyer considered TOTALIZE an example of “inflexible, time wasting method”, whereby staff planning and preparation “succeeded in burying the enemy under several thousand tons of explosives.”⁵⁸² Never once did speed, which he considered to be the most powerful weapon of armoured warfare, appear to have been a paramount concern.⁵⁸³ Meyer is wrong in this assessment

⁵⁸¹ Amy, [*Recollections on Normandy*].

⁵⁸² According to Meyer every opening phase of a Canadian operation was a complete success and the staff work a mathematical masterpiece but Canadians never followed up their opening success to reach a complete victory. DHIST81/104: Interview Kurt Meyer, Canadian Chaplain's Report. 3 Sep 50. Jarymowycz, *The Quest for Operational Maneuvre in the Normandy Campaign*, 218.

⁵⁸³ Meyer, *Grenadiers*, 158

since speed was the overriding imperative of Phase II. In order to have speed, however, the units and their commanders would have needed training on improvisation, initiative and flexibility. This was not the Anglo-British way of war and simply demanding speed in the attack did not make it happen. These competencies can only be acquired through intensive and realistic training, which challenged the leadership of the division at all levels. An effective commander understands the limitations of his troops and uses them accordingly until they have developed the expertise and confidence to carry out more challenging tasks. Under ideal conditions, this experience can be acquired in training. Unfortunately for the leaders and soldiers of the 4 Cdn Armd Div, this knowledge had to be acquired in combat.

The revised Phase II, combined with the continuation of the attack through the night, demanded more than either the Polish or 4th Cdn Armd Div could deliver in their first battle. Jack English postulated that it might have been better had Simonds committed the 3 Cdn Inf Div supported by the 2 Cdn Armd Bde to the "second break in" rather than the Poles. This proposal would have at least alleviated communications difficulties, due to language, and seen two additional experienced infantry brigades in action.⁵⁸⁴ Better yet Simonds should have kept to his original plan since it had the greatest potential for success against the anticipated and the actual German defences encountered.

In its first operation, the 4th Cdn Armd Div made the furthest penetration by 2 Cdn Corps into the German defenses. While TOTALIZE, as an operation, may have been halted by the failure to capture Quesnay Woods, the possibility of getting to Falaise based on the tactical situation still existed in Kitching's mind. The operation, however, had

⁵⁸⁴ English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 290.

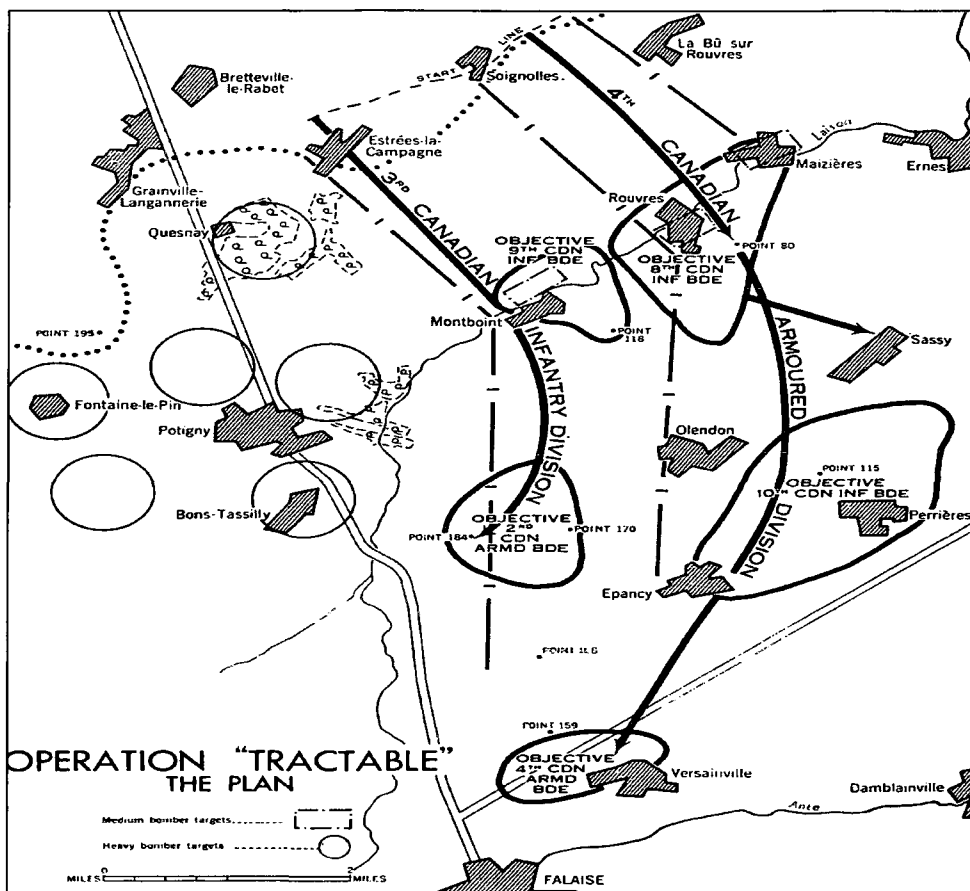
taken a heavy toll among the senior leadership ranks of the division. The BCR and the Algonquin Regiment had to be reconstituted and new men and lessons learned assimilated. There are clear indications, however, that the soldiers of 4th Cdn Armd Div had overcome the apprehension of being in their first battle, had survived their baptism of fire, had learned some very hard lessons but were ready to take on the Germans again. Their opportunity would come a few days later with a new operation codenamed TRACTABLE.

Chapter Eight: TRACTABLE

The Americans had executed a successful breakout of the Normandy bridgehead through the successful execution of Operation Cobra and in late July their forces were swinging south and east into the French countryside. The bulk of the German forces in the west were now dangerously overextended as a result of operations against the Americans in the Mortain area. This situation presented the Allies with the unique opportunity to entrap the remaining forces of the German Fifth Panzer Army, the Seventh Army and Panzer Group Eberbach. With the First Cdn Army and the Second Br Army pressing down from the north and west, and the First and Third U.S. Armies sweeping in from the west and south, the major concentration of German forces in Normandy could be encircled. The only potential escape route for the Germans ran through Falaise in the north and Argentan in the south. The movement of German troops clearly indicated that they were moving east through this gap. It was, therefore, imperative that the Allies close off the escape route as quickly as possible.

Based on this evolving situation, Montgomery issued his directive M 518 on 11 August in which he stressed the importance of closing what was called the Falaise-Alençon Gap. He now ordered First Cdn Army to capture Falaise. This action had the highest priority and was to be done quickly. Once this was accomplished, strong armoured and mobile forces were to secure Argentan. A secure front was to be held between Falaise and the sea, facing eastwards. The 12th Army Group would then swing its right flank forward from the Le Mans area up to Alençon and then on to the general line Sees-Carrouges.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁵ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 125.



Map 17: Plan for Op TRACTABLE . Roy, 1944, 234.

To accomplish this task, it was necessary for 2 Cdn Corps to advance across the Laison River, and to capture the villages of Olendon, Epancy and Perrières, which dominated the route to the northeast. This move would also seal off the exit towards Jort on the Dives River. It was also of the utmost importance to secure the road and bridges between Falaise and Damblainville. This action would allow 2 Cdn Corps to either capture or dominate Trun and link up with Third U.S. Army. The 1st Br Corps would conform on the northern flank and present a firm front as far as the sea, while Second Br Army on the right continued to advance towards Falaise from the west.⁵⁸⁶ The physical occupation of Falaise was not to be carried out by First Cdn Army, as originally ordered,

⁵⁸⁶ Outline of Instructions issued by G.O.C. 4 Cdn Armd Div, Op "TALLULAH", 13 Aug 44. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 23.

but by Second Br Army.⁵⁸⁷ This reflected a realistic approach based on the disposition of the two armies.

The Canadian gains in TOTALIZE represented a serious threat to the German lines of communications which had to be kept open at all costs in order to allow the six German armoured divisions trapped at Mortain to withdraw. Unfortunately for the Germans, withdrawal of these forces had been left until the last minute based mainly on Hitler's refusal to accept the failure of the Mortain offensive. In an attempt to buy time, available German forces were cobbled together and were injected into the line to try and shore up the German defences around the northern edge of the pocket around Falaise.⁵⁸⁸

The German forces facing 2 Cdn Corps were controlled by I SS Pz Corps and consisted of the 85th, 89th, 271st and 272nd Inf Divs, supported by elements of 12 SS Pz Div. The enemy disposition as depicted in Canadian orders for TRACTABLE stated:

It appears that 271 Div is being moved to the east to thicken up def posn on line of LE LAISON RIVER EAST of CAEN_FALAISE. 85 Div is also reported in this area backed up by three battle gps[groups] of 12 SS Div. These battle gps probably consist of a bn of inf and sqn of tks (some MkI and MK II Tiger). Enemy def on this front is made up of a lt[light] inf screen backed up by large numbers of 88 mms along gen line of river. Behind these SOUTH of river on rev[erse] slope are Nebelwerfers.⁵⁸⁹

The enemy disposition concluded with the statement "It is Not considered that the enemy def posn is in depth."⁵⁹⁰ The expectation was that, once the initial crust of the defensive network was breached, the advance would be lightly opposed.

⁵⁸⁷ This change appears to have been arranged at Crerar's meeting with Montgomery and Dempsey at 12th Corps H.Q. on 12 August. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, entry 12 Aug and App 5.

⁵⁸⁸ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 127.

⁵⁸⁹ 8 Cdn Inf Bde OO[Operation Order] No 17 OP TALLULAH, dated 14 Aug 44. W.D.9 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 Aug 44.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

At 1000 hours on 13 August, Simonds held a conference with his division commanders on Operation TALLULAH. It was obvious to Simonds that Quesnay Wood and the hills south of it represented the shortest route to Falaise. It was also the area easiest to defend. In the formulation of his plan Simonds considered the following:

- Preliminary bombardments warned the Germans of the frontage of an attack and enabled him to bring heavy fire onto the follow-on formations thus preventing a penetration in depth
- The infantry rate of advance of 100 yds in 3 minutes in deep attack provided the Germans with time to react and concentrate their anti-tank guns and heavier weapons on the advancing forces
- The proper employment of armour was to position it so that the Germans had to drive it out in order to regain their freedom of manoeuvre
- The existing German gun screen had to be penetrated under cover of darkness or smoke.⁵⁹¹

Simonds decided to launch a powerful attack that would sweep around Quesnay Woods and Potigny with the goal of gaining “command” of the important road network that ran through Falaise. The specific intent of the operation was to seize and hold the high ground in the area of Versainville followed by an assault on Falaise.⁵⁹²

Instead of attacking Quesnay Woods and Potigny directly, Simonds decided to neutralize these areas with attacks by heavy bombers during the advance towards the Laison River by the ground forces.⁵⁹³ The intervening ground to the southeast was rolling and bare affording only sparse cover to any defenders. On the other hand, the open fields baked firm by the August sun, allowed a convenient freedom to deploy. Simonds decided

⁵⁹¹ OP TALLULAH, NOTES OF CORPS COMD’S OUTLINE TALK 131000B hrs 13 Aug 44.W.D. 3
Cdn Inf Div Rear AQ Branch, 1-31 August 1944, App 10.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy* 234.

to use the same general technique as in TOTALIZE, but with significant variations. Two divisions would attack side by side, the 4 Cdn Armd Div on the left, the 3 Cdn Inf Div on the right. TRACTABLE was to be a massive armoured thrust that would take place in broad daylight after a short but heavy bombardment by all available artillery, supported at strategic moments by medium and heavy bombers.⁵⁹⁴

Simonds decided to launch TRACTABLE⁵⁹⁵ in daylight since he believed that the Germans were anticipating another night attack. He felt that this tactic would avoid the confusion that occurred on the night of 7/8 August and would help in the crossing of the Laison River. To screen the attacking force against German anti-tank and artillery fire, Simonds planned to use smoke in front and on either flank of the advancing columns, especially during the first phase. The theory was that the enemy anti-tank gunners could not hit what they could not see.⁵⁹⁶ The smoke barrage was another lesson learned from TOTALIZE when the armoured divisions were forced to advance without the cover of smoke.

In TOTALIZE, the armoured breakthrough in Phase I had not stopped the bypassed German positions from hitting the follow-on infantry. The problem in this operation was to get the infantry forward and have their clearing operations in progress while the tanks were still breaking through. Simonds' solution was a "phalanx type" formation, consisting of two divisional columns. The columns would storm across the river, each on a front of roughly 800 yards, finally converging on the high ground at

⁵⁹⁴ CMHQ Report No. 169, 131.

⁵⁹⁵ TRACTABLE became the new code name for the operation although it is not clear why and who decided to change the name

⁵⁹⁶ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 235.

Orme des Gresles and Versainville and the low ridge between.⁵⁹⁷ An armoured brigade would lead each column; a brigade of infantry mounted in “Priests” would follow with another infantry brigade bringing up the rear to clear the area of any remaining German forces. On the right, 3rd Cdn Inf Div, with 2nd Cdn Armd Bde under its command, would strike straight to the river's edge at Montboint, with 9th and 7th Cdn Inf Bdes following in that order.⁵⁹⁸ The left-hand column would include 4th Cdn Armd Bde, with the 8th Cdn Inf Bde under command for the first phase of the operation. The 10th Cdn Inf Bde would follow.⁵⁹⁹ On the left, 51st Highland Div of 1st Br Corps was to advance from the St. Sylvain sector and capture La Bu-sur-Rouvres, directly to the east, thus protecting the flank of the operation.

Kitching was given command of a sizable force for Phase I of TRACTABLE.⁶⁰⁰ In addition to the extra infantry brigade, 4th Cdn Armd Div was given control over the 18th Cdn Armd C Regt and was also allotted the 19th Army Field Regiment from the 2nd AGRA. This regiment, with its own self-propelled artillery regiment together with the 23rd Field Regiment would provide supporting fire as the armour and infantry pushed steadily further into enemy territory. This tactic redressed the problem of lack of artillery support encountered by 4th Cdn Armd Div in its advance during Phase II of TOTALIZE.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁷ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 14 Aug; War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, App 66.

⁵⁹⁸ Ops Log, 13 Aug 44, Serial 27. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944, App 3.

⁵⁹⁹ Instr of G.O.C. 4 Cdn Armd Div. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army-General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, App 62.

⁶⁰⁰ Even though the name of the operation was changed from Tallulah to Tractable it is referred to as both in the war diaries with some units not being informed of the change.

⁶⁰¹ Outline of Instructions Issued by GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 131230B Aug 44. OP TRACTABLE. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 23.

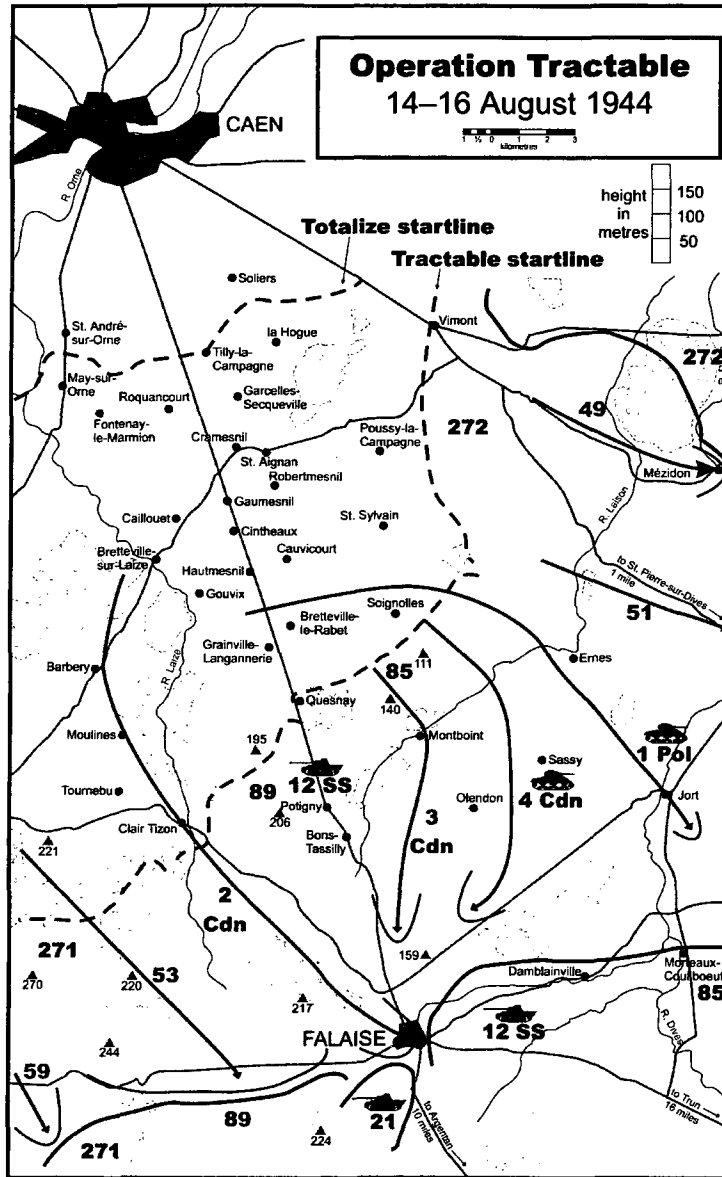
TRACTABLE was to be carried out in three phases. In Phase I the attacking forces were to cross the Laison River and seize the high ground area Pt 118 and Pt 103 southeast of Montboint. Phase II involved a push south and southwest to capture the high ground northeast of Falaise with 3rd Cdn Inf Div tasked with capturing Pt 170 and Pt 175 (a dominating hill roughly mid-way between Potigny and Falaise) and 4th Cdn Armd Div tasked with capturing the area ring contour 160 located northwest of Versainville, approximately 2.5 km northeast of Falaise.⁶⁰² Phase III involved the capture of the bridges at Eraines and Damblainville preparatory to an advance southward on Trun to link up with the 15th U.S. Corps.⁶⁰³

The method of attack was devised and formally dictated by Simonds. The armoured brigades were to lead each division's attack and were to advance at a rate of 12 mph. On the right, the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde would charge down from Estrées la Campagne and cross the Laison River near Montboint. Without pausing, it was to swing south to capture its objective Pt 184. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde was to lead the division the two-mile distance to the Laison River, crossing between Rouvres and Maizières. Once across, the Brigade would swing past Rouvres, Olendon and Epancy, by-passing all opposition, and seize the high ground above Versainville.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² At grid reference 1438, Operation TOTALIZE map, printed by 14 Field Survey Squadron R E Feb 1948.

⁶⁰³ The specific tasks given to 4th Cdn Armd Div were to capture the high ground northeast of Falaise, capture the bridges at Eraines and Damblainville and to be prepared to exploit south and southeast to meet 15th U.S. Corps. Outline of Instructions Issued by GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 131230B Aug 44. OP TRACTABLE. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 23.

⁶⁰⁴ OP TALLULAH, NOTES OF CORPS COMD'S OUTLINE TALK 131000B hrs 13 Aug 44.W.D. 3 Cdn Inf Div Rear AQ Branch, 1-31 August 1944, App 10.



Map 18: Operation TRACTABLE, Copp, *The Battlefields in Normandy*, 108.

The 8th Cdn Inf Bde with two battalions riding in Priests, half-tracks and carriers was to seize the high ground at Pt 103. The remaining battalion, moving on foot, was to mop up the Laison valley and take care of any bypassed German units. Once Pt 103 was captured, 8th Cdn Inf Bde reverted to control of 3rd Cdn Inf Div and was to move and capture the town of Sassy.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁵Ibid.

The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to pass through 8th Cdn Inf Bde, capture the village of Olendon, take over Perrières from the Lake Superior Regiment, then press on to Epancy. If required, 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to be prepared to push forward to link up with the armour moving to the final objective at Versainville. The 18th Cdn Armd C Regt was ordered to reconnoitre in force, protect the divisional left flank between St. Sylvain and Maizières and act as flank liaison with 51st Highland Div.⁶⁰⁶ Once across the Laison River, the regiment was to provide flank security on the left for the division and was to be prepared to conduct a reconnaissance in force of the wooded area south of Epancy and Perrières while holding one squadron in reserve for the exploitation south and east of Eraines on orders from Kitching.⁶⁰⁷ Bombers would be used once again to support the ground attack. Between H-20 and H-5, medium and fighter-bombers were to engage enemy tank, gun and mortar positions up to the Laison valley along the line Montboint-Rouvres-Maiziers. Two hours after the start of the operation, heavy bombers were slated to strike Quesnay Wood, Potigny and German defences astride the Falaise road.⁶⁰⁸

Kitching had little input into the tactical disposition or utilization of his division in TRACTABLE. His division orders mirrored the corps orders since Simonds had already dictated the brigade tasks. Kitching did however provide his assessment of the tactical situation and stated that he expected the main opposition to be an anti-tank screen along the line of the Laison River held by elements of the German 85th Div and 12 SS Pz

⁶⁰⁶ The Regiment was to follow 8 Cdn Inf Bde across the Laison and extend its flank protection to Sassy, and after reconnoitring the wooded areas between Epancy and Damblainville, exploit to both those places. War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, entry 14 Aug.

⁶⁰⁷ Outline of Instructions Issued by GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 131230B Aug 44. OP TRACTABLE. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 23.

⁶⁰⁸ CMHQ, Report No 146, para 79.

Div.⁶⁰⁹ While Kitching's flexibility was limited he was careful to only assigned tasks to his brigades allowing his brigade commander the latitude they needed in deciding who would accomplish which objectives within those tasks.

The phalanx formation forced Kitching to abandon the battle group formations he had used in TOTALIZE. Once the armour and infantry became separated in the drive forward, as was inevitable with the number of obstacles that had to be overcome, the tanks would be on their own without the support of either artillery or infantry.⁶¹⁰ The net result of the operational plan was that Kitching was once again forced to enter into a major operation without having much input as to how his brigades were to be employed and with little flexibility to influence the tactical battle once the armoured phalanxes crossed the start line.⁶¹¹

The plan itself has received considerable review from historians and has been called everything from a sound plan, imaginative, well-thought-out and one that carried a powerful blow, to a plan few coffee table strategists would use, even in desperation.⁶¹² Jack English has called TRACTABLE, "TOTALIZE in smoke" since the two operations bore an astounding resemblance to each other in concept.⁶¹³ Foster, the commander of the 7th Cdn Inf Bde, described TRACTABLE as "certainly one of the strangest attack

⁶⁰⁹Outline of Instructions Issued by GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 131230B Aug 44. OP TRACTABLE. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 23.

⁶¹⁰ Op Tallulah instruction, copy No.12 dated 13 August 44. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944.

⁶¹¹ A search through the Operational orders for OP TALLULAH has revealed that Simonds dictated the objectives for the Division (which was his responsibility to do) but he also mandated the composition and alignment of the Brigades, and the tasks for each brigade (which should have been Kitching's prerogative). Since 8 Cdn Inf bde was only allotted to Kitching for Phase I there was little latitude to assign it a role other than the capture of the high ground between Pt 103 and Pt 81. See "Notes Given Verbally by C of S 2 Cdn Corps to GSO 1 Ops First Cdn Army" at Hq 2 Cdn Corps 122300B Aug. OP TALLULAH, 13 Aug 44, Ops Log , Main HQ First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944.

⁶¹² Granatstein, *Bloody Victory*, 173.

⁶¹³ If the disposition of the 3rd Inf and 4th Armd Divisions is reviewed, TRACTABLE resembles the original Phase Two of Totalize where elements of 3 Inf Div are split protecting the left and right flanks of 4 Armd Div axis of advance. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 293.

formations anyone ever dreamed up and without a hope in hell of succeeding as planned.” In his judgment, what “looked good to Guy’s precise engineering mind on paper seldom worked in practice once the human element was added.”⁶¹⁴ Among the units of the armoured brigade, it was referred to as an “unusual tactical concept” by the BCR’s, “slightly unorthodox” by the Grenadier Guards while the Grenadier Guards recorded it as an “impressive sight” of “parade ground order.”⁶¹⁵

Massing the units solved the staff problem of getting hundreds of armoured vehicles to the start line in good order but did little to facilitate the combat effectiveness of the formations once they rolled forward and particularly when they had to fight. Not anticipating the huge amounts of dust that would be generated by massing the vehicles and the associated control and movement problems over the projected terrain was an extraordinary oversight on the part of 2nd Cdn Corps, especially when one considers the problems with visibility created by dust in the execution of TOTALIZE. A smoke screen as a tactical weapon could be designed and executed to blind the enemy. Dust however blinded all equally and added another level of complexity to the execution of the plan.

Other opinions state that Simonds was learning from his past experience, especially the complaints of narrow frontages since he now gave the 4th Cdn Armd Div a divisional front that ran over a mile from Estrées la Campagne to Soignolles. While the frontage may have been greater, the phalanx type formation compacted the formations, which negated any possible advantage gained from a wider front and eliminated any thought of tactical manoeuvre. The rationale for the phalanx formation was based on the premise that speed equalled success. The use of smoke would help achieve surprise and

⁶¹⁴ Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 368.

⁶¹⁵ See the respective war diary entries for 14 August 1944.

hide the advancing formations from anti-tank fire. Since smoke would only be provided for 30 minutes it was essential to advance in close intervals to get the fighting formations forward as fast as possible. Simonds even went as far as to stipulate an advance of 300 yards per minute and 15-yard marshalling intervals between tanks, which was a level of detail appropriate for a squadron commander to ponder and certainly not the level of detail that Simonds, as a Corps commander, should have even contemplated.⁶¹⁶

On 13 August, Simonds summoned every senior officer to his headquarters and issued verbal orders for the upcoming operation. No written orders were issued. Following his Orders Group at 1000 hours, Simonds spoke to the assembled commanding officers of every armoured regiment. He made known his extreme displeasure with their performance in TOTALIZE. He stressed his belief that armour must be prepared to go forward during night or day and that any thought of armour requiring infantry protection for harbouring at night or not being able to move at night was to be dismissed immediately. He also stated that with the tremendous importance of the operation there would be cases where armour would be misemployed but this was to be no excuse for a lack of success in the upcoming operation.⁶¹⁷ Kitching was appalled by Simonds' comments and told him so afterward.⁶¹⁸ Simonds probably paid little heed to Kitching's criticisms. The implications of what Simonds was asking and the fact that the armoured regiments of 4th Cdn Armd Div had only been in action for less than a week were lost on Simonds. He was interested in results, not explanations.

⁶¹⁶ 8 Cdn Inf Bde OO[Operation Order] No 17 OP TALLULAH, dated 14 Aug 44. W.D.9 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 Aug 44.

⁶¹⁷ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, entry 13 Aug.

⁶¹⁸ Graves, *South Albertas*, 120-121.

On the evening of 13 August, a Canadian officer of 8 Cdn Recce Regt lost his way and was captured by the Germans along with Copy No. 8 of a 2 Cdn Inf Div Instruction which outlined the entire Corps plan. The Germans initiated a number of moves during the night of 13 August but these were focussed on eliminating the 2nd Cdn Inf Div position near Clair-Tizon. It is important to note that these moves weakened the defensive lines along the projected axis of TRACTABLE and that the units assigned to attack 2 Cdn Inf Div were not recalled after the Germans gained access to the TRACTABLE information.⁶¹⁹

The apparent German inaction in response to the TRACTABLE information can be understood given the fact that German units could only travel at night and that there were no additional units or formations available to I SS Pz Corps.⁶²⁰ One could conclude that it was too late to recall the attacking units which had already begun to move to their new positions. This left the Germans with one course of action which was to focus the

⁶¹⁹ Kampfgruppe Krause was moved from Olendon to Villers-Canivet 6 km northwest of Falaise and parts of Artilleriregiment in support of 85 Inf Div and III/26 were brought in to attack the Clair-Tizon bridgehead. Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 184.

⁶²⁰ Ten hours after the assault began a captured German soldier provided details of the captured documents to the Canadians. Based on this captured German's opinion, had it not been for the captured documents the Canadians would have made a clean break through to Falaise. In a letter to all officers Simonds stated that the captured documents "enabled the enemy to make quick adjustments to his dispositions which undoubtedly resulted in casualties to our troops ... and delayed the capture of FALAISE for over twenty-four hours." Simonds Letter, SD 58-1 Main Headquarters 2nd Cdn Corps dated 23 August 1944. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps Main, 1-31 August 1944, App 35. There is conflicting information as to whether any specific German realignment actually occurred as a result of this information. A Canadian Post Op report stated that captured German documents revealed that the Germans were given 12 hours notice of the attack and were able to dispose an additional anti-tank battery of 88 mm guns along the forward wooded slope of the river valley directly on the axis of the Canadian attack. Op TRACTABLE AN ACCOUNT OF OPS BY 2 CDN ARMD BDE IN FRANCE 14 to 16 Aug 44, War Diary, 2nd Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944 App 7. Probably citing this report, Stacey states that the information allowed the Germans to make "quick adjustments" including the addition of an anti-tank battery above the Liaison River on the line of advance. Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 238. Hubert Meyer confirms the capture of the documents but suggests that no reinforcements were sent into the projected area of attack. Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 184.

available resources along the expected axis of advance.⁶²¹ The German disposition was listed as 85th Inf Div holding the right sector of the 1 SS Pz Corps front along the line of the Laison valley from Ernes to east of the Falaise road, 89th Inf Div in the central sector and 271 Inf Div holding the left portion of the front.⁶²² It was also reported that the Germans had deployed between the main Caen-Falaise road on the west and the town of Mezieres on the east as many as 90 88mm guns in anti-tank positions.⁶²³ The battlegroups of the 12 SS Pz Div were held in reserve as a counterattack force. The 4 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summary based on information up to 2200 hrs 13 August listed the following German disposition:

At least 3 divs are in part on our immediate front. In Quesnay Wood 1047 is III/1054 GR [grenadier] of 85 Inf Div, sp by tks believed to be 12 SS Pz Div. In the area 1549 is I/1053 GR of 85 Div. PW statements have located elements of a battle gp of 12 SS in this area. Further left in LA BU SUR ROUVRES 1651 are two unknown bns of 980 GR of 272 Inf Div. A def line extends NE from there. Away on the RIGHT are the remnants of 89 and 271 Inf Divs, with again tk sp thought to be 12 SS.⁶²⁴

The missing information was the depth of the German defensive line. The report stated, “Should the screen be linear, our job will be easy and inexpensive. If it is deeply echeloned, the fight may be costly.”⁶²⁵ The stage was set for the next Canadian offensive.

⁶²¹ On the morning of 14 August Kurt Meyer, together with Max Wunsche, scouted the terrain north of Falaise to determine where to set up rear positions to meet the expected Canadian attack. They concentrated the establishment of their rear defensive positions on Hill 159 and along the southern portions of the road St Pierre sur Dives. These positions would only be manned when specifically ordered. Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 184.

⁶²² Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 248. The hand written notes for the operation from 7 Cdn Inf Bde state that the 85 In Div had reinforced the 89 Inf Div Bde in positions between Soignelles and the Caen-Falaise road. 7 Cdn Inf Bde Confirmatory Notes OPERATION TALLULAH, War Diary, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁶²³ Op TRACTABLE AN ACCOUNT OF OPS BY 2 CDN ARMD BDE IN FRANCE 14 to 16 Aug 44, War Diary, 2nd Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944 App 7.

⁶²⁴ 4 Cdn Armd Div Int Summary Number 6, 9Based on infm up to 2200 hrs 13 Aug 44, War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, App 6.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

The battle procedure within 4th Cdn Armd Div for TRACTABLE was deliberate and in concert with what had been practiced in England. Kitching held his final orders group for TRACTABLE at 1230 hrs on 13 August. New maps and aerial photographs were issued to all units, providing subordinate commanders the crucial information they needed to do their own estimates and reconnaissance. Orders groups were given early enough to allow plenty of time for preparation at subordinate levels. At 1800 hrs, Wigle held a conference for the brigade majors and adjutants to discuss the final details for the assembly and forming up of the division and its attached units.⁶²⁶ In less than 24 hours, Kitching and his staff officers had once again been called upon to change their operations plans. They did an outstanding job of refocusing and preparing the division from a possible advance in support of the drive of 2 Cdn Div in the area of Ussy on the extreme right of the 2 Cdn Corps boundary to its new role in TRACTABLE on the extreme left of the 2 Cdn Corps attack.⁶²⁷

Booth held his orders group at 1600 hrs 13 August and the commanders of the armoured regiments held their orders groups between 2000 and 2200 hrs. The troops were then given plenty of time to rest. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde advance would happen in three phases;

- Phase I, crossing the Laison River
- Phase II, firming up and regrouping
- Phase III, advancing to the high ground northeast of Falaise

⁶²⁶ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 14 Aug.

⁶²⁷ Recall that the 4 Cdn Armd Div was placed on one-hour notice to move after 1200 hrs 12 August to support the 2 Cdn Inf Div operation with three possible courses of action in support; follow 2 Cdn Div, pass through in the area of Ussy and advance with the objective of Falaise; follow the 18 Cdn Armd C Regt across the River Laize and advance on the axis of Sassy, Epancy with the objective of Falaise; or participate in TRACTABLE in conjunction with 3 Cdn Inf Div.

The German situation, as detailed in the Brigade orders group noted that the 12th SS Pz Div was “probably split up into battle groups covering the entire front.”⁶²⁸ The major opposition was expected to come from the 85th and 272nd Inf Div and flak units used in the anti-tank role.⁶²⁹

Jefferson held his O Group for 10th Cdn Inf Bde at 2200 hrs. Battalion orders groups occurred generally one hour later. The SAR was to lead the 10th Cdn Inf Bde advance in extended line, followed by the infantry battalions in lorries. The advance for 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to begin at 1300 hrs, one hour after the 2nd Cdn Corps H-Hour.⁶³⁰

The division would go into battle with a number of new Commanding Officers. Maj R.A. Keane was promoted to Lt Col and was given command of the Lake Superior Regiment. Maj W.T. Cromb, formerly second in command (2 I/C) of the Argylls, took over command of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment and Maj R.A. Bradburn from the SAR was promoted and given command of the Algonquin Regiment. Major Parish remained in command of the BCR.⁶³¹

Monday, 14 August, was another hot, sunny day. Visibility was good. Booth held a final conference at 0900 hrs 14 August to clear up any last details of the operation. Simonds visited Kitching at 1000 hrs to ascertain if there were any last minute problems. At 1100 hrs Kitching left for his command post in the area of Cintheaux with both brigade commanders and Brig Lane, to await the start of the operation.⁶³²

⁶²⁸ War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 13 Aug.

⁶²⁹ The 4 Cdn Armd Div Intel Summary for 13 August also noted the presence of at least one and possibly more heavy tank battalions of Tiger tanks. 4 Cdn Armd Div Int Summary Number 7 dated 13 August 1944, War Diary 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 25.

⁶³⁰ War Diary, South Alberta Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 13 Aug.

⁶³¹ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 13 Aug.

⁶³² War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 14 Aug.

The 4th Cdn Armd Div was lined up on the left of the Corps. Kitching had almost a division and a half under his command but his objectives lay deeper in German territory than those of the 3rd Cdn Inf Div. In front were the flail tanks of 1st Lothians from 79th Armd Div, whose task it was to clear the way of mines. Behind were the tanks of Grenadier Guards and Foot Guards who were leading 4th Cdn Armd Bde. Each regiment was formed up in four lines. In the rear were the BCRs and Lake Superior Regiment filling in the rear of the column. In all, about 150 tanks were drawn up in three ranks of about 50 in each rank and only 15 yards between tanks. Each of the two blocks of 150 tanks (4th Cdn Armd Bde and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde) represented a solid phalanx of armour 1000 yards wide and 200 yards deep.⁶³³

As the tanks entered into the smokescreen and the tremendous dust cloud created by explosions and the tracks of hundreds of heavy vehicles, unit cohesion began to break down and drivers were forced to navigate by the sun. The smoke screen that was put down was not as effective as had been hoped. In some sectors the tanks were completely blinded by the smoke while in others the phalanx advanced over open ground with little concealment.⁶³⁴ In less than an hour, the almost ceremonial array of the forenoon had degenerated into a mass of vehicles pouring down the smoke-filled valley against a current of prisoners streaming to the rear. Most of the 4 Cdn Armd Bde vehicles gravitated towards the left or east as drivers could only navigate by looking to the sun.⁶³⁵ Despite the confusion the reports from Wigle to 2nd Cdn Corps as recorded in the

⁶³³ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 216.

⁶³⁴ Op TRACTABLE AN ACCOUNT OF OPS BY 2 CDN ARMD BDE IN FRANCE 14 to 16 Aug 44, War Diary, 2nd Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944 App 7.

⁶³⁵ The regimental history of the Grenadier Guards states that driving into the sun caused the axis of advance to move left because of the two hours advance for daylight savings. The location of the sun deflected the axis thirty degrees east of the designated bearing which was due south. Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 272. Canada. Army, CMHQ Report No. 169, para 138-139.

Corps operations log indicate a steady move forward as start lines and report lines were continually crossed on the drive to the Laison River.⁶³⁶

The forward German positions were located approximately 1500 yards in front of the Laison River. The Germans response to the Canadian attack was immediate with artillery and anti-tank fire but it was not long before the forward German positions were overwhelmed by the mass of the advancing formation. Once past the initial infantry outposts, the advancing formations began to encounter German strong points composed of anti-tank guns, tanks and dug in infantry arrayed behind minefields. These strong points began to take their toll on the armoured formations. Once into the Laison valley, the formations began taking fire from the heights beyond the river.⁶³⁷ The leading units of 4th Cdn Armd Bde reached the river around 1430 hrs to find all of the bridges blown. Some units, such as No 3 Sqn Grenadier Guards, utilized their position on the extreme left of the formation to move unhindered to Ernes where they crossed against light opposition and, once across, provided flank cover for the crossing regiments.⁶³⁸ Others waited for their attached engineering units to erect bridges over the river before proceeding.

Confusion reigned on the banks of the river as units tried to get their vehicles across. Some of the armoured units became impatient and split up, moving along the river to find a viable crossing. By 1530 hrs, the leading armour had reorganized itself as best it could on the south bank beyond Rouvres and begun the advance towards Olendon.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁶ Ops Log 14 August serials 39,42,44,46,47, War Diary HQ Main 2nd Cdn Corps 1-31 August 1944.

⁶³⁷ In a post op report Lt Col J.C. Spragge acting brigade 8 Cdn Inf Bde reported that the enemy had his inferior troops in the forward areas as infantry and his better troops manning 88mm, nebelwurfers and other special equipment. Report Op "Tallulah", War Diary, HQ 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, app 8; Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 111-113.

⁶³⁸ Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 272.

⁶³⁹ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 141.

Many troops and individual tanks had become detached from their squadrons but ingenuity and determination resulted in the creation of improvised battlegroups, which fought their way forward to their assigned objectives.⁶⁴⁰

The BCR and Lake Superior Regiment arrived at the Laison River while the other regiments were crossing and, rather than wait their turn, they improvised their own bridge made from rubble. Despite being heavily shelled and mortared, they finished the work and continued with the advance. The Lake Superior Regiment pressed on to the high ground north of Perrières.⁶⁴¹ In what was called a “show of how effectively mechanized infantry can act,” the Lake Superior Regiment sped past the milling tanks dismounted from their carriers, deployed at the double and, moving with “swift assurance,” swept into the attack against a large column of Germans near Sassy, effectively neutralizing the anti-tank and mortar positions and taking 250 prisoners.⁶⁴²

The 8th Cdn Inf Bde reached the river at 1520 hrs and cleared Rouvres, Maizières and both banks of the river while the armoured forces were crossing. The brigade then pushed on to the wooded hill, Pt 103 half way to Olendon. The North Shore Regt continued the advance on Sassy, which fell at 2000 hrs. In accordance with the plan, 8th Cdn Inf Bde now reverted to 3rd Cdn Inf Div control.⁶⁴³

Meanwhile 10th Cdn Inf Bde, moving in soft-skinned vehicles and led by the tanks of the SAR, arrived at the river at 1600 hrs. The troops dismounted, crossed the river and advanced to Olendon on foot. The Lincs and Argylls passed through Olendon to

⁶⁴⁰ For example, at one point on the drive to the river a composite force of A troop No 3 Sqn GGFG was working with a mixed force of tanks from the CGG, BCRs and the 2 Cdn Armd Bde. Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 113.

⁶⁴¹ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 141.

⁶⁴² Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 273.

⁶⁴³ CMHQ Report No. 169, para , 142.

enter and consolidate in Perrières. The Algonquin Regiment, supported by elements of 10th Indep M.G. Coy, concentrated in the fields south of Rouvres. The SAR, which had become disorganized in crossing the Laison River, regrouped prior to sending its tanks in support of the leading infantry. Meanwhile, one company of the Lake Superior Regiment penetrated to the high ground directly east of Epancy and took up a position overlooking the road running from Falaise to St. Pierre sur Dives, where it was able to engage retreating German troops.⁶⁴⁴ Kitching's firm base was now established. It was now up to the 4 Cdn Armd Bde to drive to the division's final objective, Pt 159.

The planned air strike on selected targets in the area of Potigny and Quesnay Wood, scheduled for 1400 hrs, proved to be another catastrophic attempt at air-to-ground support using heavy bombers. Out of 811 heavy bombers that took off to take part in the attack, 77 aircraft dropped their bombs short, including 44 aircraft from No.6 (R.C.A.F.) Bomber Group. Bombs meant for the Aisy-Ussy-Potigny area crashed down on Canadian troops around St. Aignan and the Hautmesnil quarry. The bombs landed from two to five miles inside the Canadian lines cutting a path of destruction among Canadian and Polish forces.⁶⁴⁵

At Main Headquarters of the 4th Cdn Armd Div, "all Hell seemed to break loose" when the bombing started. Looking south from their location, it appeared to the staff "that the command post had been in the centre of the bombing and fears were expressed that it had been hit."⁶⁴⁶ Bombs landed all through the area occupied by Kitching's Tac HQ. The division artillery and 10th Cdn Inf Bde immediately reported that their troops were being bombed and frantic calls went back to Corps to stop the bombing. The 4th Cdn

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 216.

Armd Div HQ area was overrun with troops from 1st Pol Armd Div and 51st (H) Div A echelons rushing north from the bombed areas. Kitching noted that, although there were no casualties among his Tac HQ staff, the radios in the tanks and on the jeeps were badly affected, knocking out communications between Kitching and his brigades. All line communication to the command post had also been cut.⁶⁴⁷

The bombing was part of a series of events that now combined to destroy the cohesion of the command and control structure within the division. The cumbersome attack formation, combined with the reduced visibility, marginalized brigade control over the forward armoured formations in the mad dash to get to the Laison River. This situation was compounded by the fact that the Foot Guards reported that two command tanks were “out” with one in a minefield. A mine had disabled Scott’s tank and he had broken his ankle. Despite his injury, Scott continued to command his regiment from a scout car.⁶⁴⁸ The bombing further complicated the situation by disrupting the communication between Kitching and his brigade commanders at a crucial moment—approximately 1400 hours when the regiments of the 4th Cdn Armd Bde were crossing the Laison River. The worst, however, was yet to come!

While his forward units were fighting their way through and over the defences of the Laison River, Booth and the small group of armoured vehicles which constituted his Tac HQ had travelled forward and were not far behind the leading formation. While conducting a forward reconnaissance, Booth’s group came under accurate German fire from a self-propelled anti-tank gun.⁶⁴⁹ Most of the HQ tanks, including Booth’s tank,

⁶⁴⁷ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August, entry 14 Aug.

⁶⁴⁸ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

⁶⁴⁹ A version of the events not often cited comes from the Lt Ditchburn the engineer recce officer who was travelling in the Tac Hq. In the dust and confusion caused by changing the hollow square formation Tac

were destroyed. Booth was mortally wounded and evacuated and his intelligence officer was killed leaving the Brigade Major, Maj A.G. Chubb, essentially in command with no way of communicating the fate of Booth to Kitching or of coordinating any of the activities of the Brigade or its units.⁶⁵⁰

At 1430 hrs a message was broadcast over the 4th Brigade net that “sunray” (Booth) was hit but there was no clarification as to what that meant. The next recorded transmission over the Brigade net was at 1615 hrs where Chubb reported that Booth had been hit and taken away by ambulance. Temporarily out of contact, but for the moment acting as senior officer of the remnants of the brigade's tactical headquarters, Chubb sent liaison officers out to the regiments and set about trying to rebuild the tactical headquarters. The calls for Scott to report to the Bde Tac HQ began at 1622 hrs. At 1623 hrs the Brigade operations officer Capt James tried to re-establish the brigade command link. He was eventually able to report that all stations were on net, with each reporting their positions as either at Rouvres or on the Laison River.⁶⁵¹ Meanwhile a liaison officer from division HQ arrived with orders for Chubb to report to Div HQ.⁶⁵²

At approximately 1415 hrs, Kitching left his Tac Hq in an attempt to contact 4th Bde HQ. At 1530 hrs Simonds arrived at Kitching's headquarters looking for Kitching

Bde became separated and headed towards Estrées la Campagne and Hill 111. En route they passed the destroyed tanks of the BCR. Booth led the way down Hill 111 in a south south-westerly direction when the formation was engaged by anti-tank and machine gun fire. W. O. Rollefson, ed., *Green Route Up: 4 Canadian Armoured Division* (The Hague: Mouton & Cy, November 1945), 31-32.

⁶⁵⁰ With Brig Booth on the rear deck of the sole surviving tank from headquarters Chubb and the liaison officer went back for help. They met with a jeep ambulance and transferred Booth to it. While he was being evacuated in the jeep ambulance Booth died and his body was placed by the side of the road by the crew when they came on two more wounded men who needed speedy attention. Booth, dressed in the black coveralls of a tank crewman without the red tabs of a brigadier, lay by the road for some time before his body was collected and identified on the following day. Until that time, Booth was believed to have been wounded and evacuated through medical channels. Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 255-256

⁶⁵¹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁶⁵² A. G. Chubb, Letter [Recollections on Normandy], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 20 December 1980.

but instead found Proctor. Proctor briefed Simonds on the tactical situation and Simonds chastised him for losing contact with 4th Cdn Armd Bde. By 1530 hrs, the Div Hq had re-established contact with Scott and the Foot Guards but still had no contact with Halpenny and was unaware that Booth was a casualty. When Kitching heard what had happened to Booth, he immediately ordered Chubb to take command of the brigade until further notice.⁶⁵³

Between 1600-1630 hrs, Chubb arrived at Main Div Hq and, since Kitching had not yet returned, reported what had happened to Booth and the Bde Hq to Proctor. Proctor reoriented Chubb, gave his operator all the necessary frequencies and the location for Scott and Chubb took off to find him.⁶⁵⁴ Unfortunately, reconstituting the Tac Hq was a significant challenge. There were no spare command tanks and getting what they did have into operation would take time. Scott was on the other side of the Laison River in the midst of a raging battle, attempting to reorganize his own regiment which compounded the problem.⁶⁵⁵ Chubb had to find Scott, which did not happen until the next morning, and Scott now had to reorient himself to the larger task of commanding the brigade.

At 1732 hrs there was another call to the Foot Guards informing them that Scott was to take over command of the brigade. For the next several hours messages flew back

⁶⁵³ Ibid. Foster claims that Montgomery was with Simonds but this is not recorded in the Div war diary. In Foster's book, Montgomery is quoted as saying, "Get rid of him. He's obviously lost control of the situation. Why, he isn't even at his own headquarters," even though Proctor had explained to Simonds and Montgomery that Kitching was forward trying to sort out what was happening with the armoured brigade. Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 369-70.

⁶⁵⁴ The timings tend to conflict between the various accounts. It appears that some of the times were recorded in B time instead of the actual time which represented a one hour difference. John Proctor, Letter [Recollections on Normandy], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 15 April 1981.

⁶⁵⁵ The general practice was to replace a commander at any level when a casualty in the midst of an action by someone on the spot rather than bring in a new commander who will not have the immediate feel of the battle. Robert Moncel, Letter [Comments of draft Chapter VII], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 18 May 1981.

and forth but it was not until late in the evening before Scott was contacted directly and told to communicate with Kitching at his command post near Estrées la Campagne at 2100 hrs. There is no evidence, however, that this personal meeting took place.

According to the Ops Log, the Bde Tac Hq was still trying to ascertain the location of Scott as late as 2129 hrs.⁶⁵⁶

Sometime late in the afternoon, Major A.G.V. Smith was summoned to Bde HQ , and was told to take three LOB tanks and go and find the regiments and re-establish communications with the Bde HQ. Smith found the brigade early the next morning which he recalls consisted of a total of 14 tanks from both the Foot Guards and Grenadier Guards and Scott in his tank. After providing Scott with the proper radio frequencies for the brigade net, Smith proceeded to try and re-establish the brigade headquarters.⁶⁵⁷

In a hand written note to Scott, Kitching expressed his confidence in Scott's ability to "fight the brigade." Kitching ordered Scott to continue the advance during the evening until dark, and regroup the armour for a big effort the following morning.

Kitching stated that Jefferson was to capture Olendon, high ground at grid 182438 (Pt 115), unless already taken by the Lake Superior Regiment on the way to Perrières and Epancy. Kitching stressed the point that Falaise had to be captured on 15 August.⁶⁵⁸

There is no indication however as to when Scott actually received these orders.

With the thoughts of the fate of Worthington Force still fresh in their minds it is likely that neither Kitching nor Scott relished another armoured advance through the

⁶⁵⁶ Ops Log 14 August. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁶⁵⁷ Baylay, *the Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 113. A. V. M. Smith, Letter [Recollections on Normandy], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 8 December 1980.

⁶⁵⁸ It is possible that this note was taken by Chubb to Scott in which case Scott would not have received it until next morning. George Kitching, Hand-written Note to Scott [Commander's Intent for Operations on 15 Aug], undated.

night. Scott held a conference with the commanding officers of the BCR and Grenadier Guards at 1945 hrs during which they decided to advance a further 1000 yds to the high ground west of Sassy between the villages of Olendon and Pt 115. Scott then ordered the Brigade to harbour for the night.⁶⁵⁹ Scott did not have control of the brigade and considered it too late to push the armour the additional three miles to the high ground overlooking Falaise. Scott sensibly concluded that a coordinated attack at daybreak offered the best odds for success on following day.⁶⁶⁰

For six critical hours on 14 August there was no effective control of 4th Cdn Armd Bde either from the Brigade or division level. Regardless, the brigade attack continued with three different regiments fighting three separate battles toward their assigned objectives. This is where the training and skill of the officers and men of the division was tested and where the countless hours of investment in training, education and lectures paid off. Despite the loss of its senior leadership, the regiments were able to achieve all of the Phase II objectives before they ran out of daylight which effectively prohibited any further advance by the armoured regiments.

The 10th Cdn Inf Bde fought a more cohesive battle towards its objectives. At 1600 hrs the Lincs and Argylls crossed the Laison River and began their advance on Olendon, which they succeeded in capturing by last light. The Algonquin Regiment, which had firmed up on Pt 103, was ordered to patrol to Epancy and, if possible, seize the village and firm up there by first light. The Argylls sent their scout platoon to investigate Perrières and reported the town free of the enemy. C and D companies were sent ahead to

⁶⁵⁹ War Diary, Governor General's Foot Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 14 Aug.

⁶⁶⁰ Graves, *South Albertas*, 122.

occupy the town and the high ground immediately to the northwest of the town. At 0600 hrs 15 August, the rest of the battalion moved in and the position was firmed up.⁶⁶¹

The first-day operations of TRACTABLE had ripped a five km gap in the German line with deep penetrations into their defensive zone forcing them to withdraw to their rearward defensive positions where possible.⁶⁶² The SITREP from 4th Cdn Armd Div for the period ending midnight 14 August recorded the following disposition for the units of the division: 4th Cdn Armd Bde had the Foot Guards south of Olendon; the Grenadier Guards was in the area of Pt 103; the BCR, north of Olendon; and the Lake Superior Regiment, east of Olendon with one company southeast of Olendon. The 10th Cdn Inf Bde had the Lincoln & Welland Regiment the Argylls and two squadrons of the SAR firmed up in Olendon, with one squadron SAR still in Rouvres. The Algonquin Regiment had made the deepest penetration of all 4th Armd Div units and was advancing towards Epancy.⁶⁶³ The division experienced a very successful day given the significant challenges it had to overcome.

The Canadian attack had taken its toll on the German forces around Falaise. Most of the German defensive positions could only be manned as a series of strong points rather than a continuous defensive line. The combat strength of the four divisions (85th, 89th, 271st and 272nd) may have been reduced to 50 percent of their established strength but “their respective headquarters still exercised effective control over their divisions.”⁶⁶⁴ This situation facilitated the coordination of a new line of resistance across the Canadian front. On the left, the positions of the 272nd Inf Div ran from the western edge of Vieux-

⁶⁶¹ The Argylls handed the town over to the Highland Light Infantry of Canada at 2300 hrs and moved back to Olendon. War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entries 14-15 Aug.

⁶⁶² Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 185.

⁶⁶³ SITREP 33 for period 141200B to 142400B. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 26.

⁶⁶⁴ Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 230.

Fume via Magny la Campagne- Favieres, Hill 79, western edge of the forest northwest of Vendeuve. Contact with the right wing of the 85th Inf Div was near Hill 80, one km southwest of Vendeuve.⁶⁶⁵

The 271st Inf Div was able to set up a fairly cohesive main line of resistance from Leffard via Pierrepont to Trepreland and to man it with three battle groups. The artillery went into position with three *Abteilungen* in the area Noron-St Martin de Mieux-Fourneau le Val and with one *Abteilung* around Rapilly. An anti-tank front was set up in the Noron area along the road from Falaise to Pont d'Ouilly, using the remaining anti-tank guns. A *tigerkompanie* of *Schwere SS Pz Abteilung* 102 with several panzers was also designated for action in this sector.⁶⁶⁶

The 12th SS Pz Div had pulled back its *panzergruppe* to previously explored positions north and northeast of Falaise. The two companies of *Panzerjagerabteilung* 12 were split into several small units, on the northwest slopes of Monts d'Eraines and in the woods southeast of Epaney. They formed the anti-tank element in support of 85th Inf Div, which had established a line of strong points. The panzers of *Panzerregiment* 12 set up ambush positions on Hill 159.⁶⁶⁷ The Germans had deployed their artillery and mortars in the woods of Mont d'Eraines. This tactic ensured that their main anti-tank weapons could be brought to bear on the flank of any Canadian advance southwards towards Falaise and would be particularly effective in the open country below Epancy.⁶⁶⁸

While TRACTABLE was in progress, Crerar received new instructions from Montgomery. First Cdn Army and not Second Br Army was to capture Falaise with the

⁶⁶⁵ Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 185.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ Meyer makes no mention whether these moves were tied to the information revealed in the captured documentation. Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 184.

⁶⁶⁸ Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 230.

least possible delay. According to Montgomery's direction, this new task was not to interfere with the larger and more important plan of driving southeast to capture Trun and to link up with the Americans who were now turning north.⁶⁶⁹ Simonds assigned the additional task of taking Falaise to Kitching. This new requirement forced Kitching to modify the intent of his operations for 15 August. The general outline of his plan was to clear the Olendon-Epancy-Perrières area by first light, followed by an advance by 4th Cdn Armd Bde to Pt 159. These actions were to be followed by a thrust through to Falaise by the Lake Superior Regiment. The SAR was to secure bridges at Eraines and Dámblainville.⁶⁷⁰ These orders were again modified at 1200 hrs to have one squadron of 18th Cdn Armd C Regt lead the attack on Falaise while the other two squadrons of the regiment were to capture the bridges at Eraines and Damblainville instead of the SAR.⁶⁷¹

At 0655 hrs Scott received orders to get the brigade moving. He was to press on to the final objective and was told that fuel and ammunition would follow. The Lake Superior Regiment moved off immediately to support the Algonquin Regiment attack at Epancy. An hour later the Foot Guards had still not moved, stating that they were waiting for fuel and ammunition, which were in route. Kitching at this point intervened directly, ordering Scott to get moving.⁶⁷² Just as Scott was about to resume the advance, the supply vehicles from the Grenadier Guards A-echelon arrived. Scott decided to distribute these supplies among the regiments and, as a result, the brigade did not start to advance

⁶⁶⁹ Ops Log, 14 Aug 44, Serial 75. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army-General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, App 74.

⁶⁷⁰ Specifically, the 10th Cdn Inf Bde, less the Linc & Welld Regt, was to clear the Olendon-Epancy-Perrières area while the 4th Cdn Armd Bde, with Linc & Welld Regt under command and mounted in Priests, were to take the divisions original objective the contour feature 160 and Pt 159. The Linc & Welld Regt was to form a firm base on the high ground which would then facilitate the last phase of the operation which was an advance by the Lake Sup Regt passing through the Linc & Welld Regt to take Falaise. Ops Log 15 August serial 9, 42, 60. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army-General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, App 74.

⁶⁷¹ Ops Log 15 August serial 62. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army-General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, App 74.

⁶⁷² Ops Log 15 August, serials 1-23. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

towards Versainville until approximately 0930 hrs.⁶⁷³ This two and a half hour delay would have a ripple on effect on the events of the day. Scott decided to try and control the battle from his tank which was moving in close proximity with the Foot Guards.⁶⁷⁴ Maj Chubb, as control, received his orders from Scott over the command net and then relayed them to the appropriate units.⁶⁷⁵

In a move designed to ensure the information flow back to Div HQ, liaison officers were now assigned to accompany each regimental headquarters of the armoured regiments. These officers were given the task of reporting information directly back to Div Hq providing a second source of tactical information to Kitching and his command team.⁶⁷⁶ This represents another example of the learning and improvisation that was happening consistently within the command team as operations progressed.

In advancing south, the Grenadier Guards and BCR battle groups encountered a German anti-tank gun screen north of Epancy. The battle group successfully smoked the area off before continuing the advance without incurring any casualties. D Company of the Algonquin Regiment was assigned the task of taking Epancy which they did early in the morning after hand-to-hand fighting. Half of the town was taken but snipers kept the Company from occupying the rest of the town.⁶⁷⁷ While the Algonquin attack was in progress, the 4th Cdn Armd Bde was advancing to the west of Epancy. Scott left A Company of Lake Superior Regiment and one squadron of the Foot Guards to assist in

⁶⁷³ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

⁶⁷⁴ Of all of the movement among the regiments, the actions of the GGFG on 15 August has been the most difficult to reconstruct.

⁶⁷⁵ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

⁶⁷⁶ This system was used by both Montgomery and Simonds and was known as Phantom. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August, entry 14 Aug.

⁶⁷⁷ Ops Log 15 August serials 40, 50 & 56. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 Aug, App 5.

the capture of Epancy in a move designed to secure his left flank as the remainder of his force moved on to Versainville.

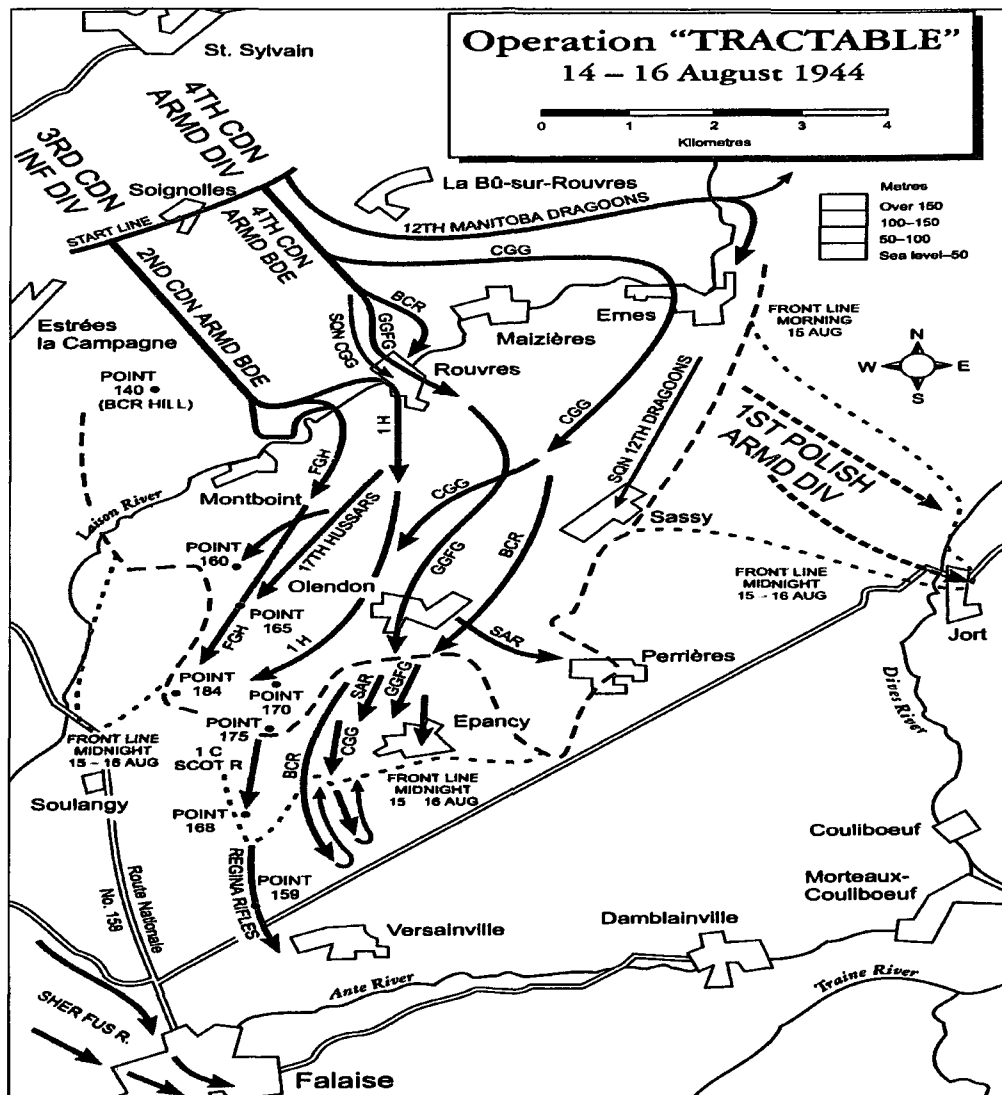
Initially, the Lake Superior company only managed to secure a foothold on the western edge of Epancy but, with the aid of the Foot Guards, they helped clear out the few remaining pockets of resistance before taking up a position in the orchard nearby. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde reported that they were firm on “Toad” (Epancy) at 1014 hrs. The town, however, was not firmly in Canadian hands. The Algonquin Regiment was twice forced out before finally taking and clearing the village with a battalion attack during the afternoon. The Algonquin Regiment remained in the town during the night while the company from Lake Superior Regiment was withdrawn to Olendon in preparation for their planned advance to Falaise.⁶⁷⁸

At 0900 hrs, the Lincoln & Welland Regiment with A and B squadrons SAR placed under command were ordered to follow the armoured brigade and be prepared to seize the bridges at Versainville for an advance on Falaise.⁶⁷⁹ This battle group fought several brisk actions on their way to join the armour, especially at the woods directly west of Epancy where two companies of infantry had to be left behind to deal with the enemy. The Germans held strong positions southwest of the village and, as the column tried to pass Le Val Mauger, another fire-fight ensued before the column could move on.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁸ War Diary, Algonquin Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

⁶⁷⁹ The third squadron SAR, C Sqn was operating with the A& SH of C in Perrières.

⁶⁸⁰ War Diary, The Lincoln and Welland Regiment 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug; Canada. Army, CMHQ Report No. 169, para 148.



Map 19: Operation TRACTABLE 14-16 August 1944. Martinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 275.

At 1207 hrs, Halpenny conducted a forward reconnaissance for the continued advance south and at 1234 hrs he initiated an all-out attack on the high ground designated Hudson Bay (area between Pt 117 and Pt 129) with the main thrust right of the centre line which was the road leading south from Epancy. The attack was initially held up pending confirmation of whether Canadian troops were on the high ground. Halpenny was told that Canadians were indeed in the area and was also told that they needed support

quickly. An immediate advance was ordered and the BCRs advanced over the feature moving down the right side with the Grenadier Guards providing covering fire.⁶⁸¹

Operating on the left flank of 4th Cdn Armd Bde were the squadrons of 18th Cdn Armd C Regt. A troop was reporting Eraines clear of Germans and not yet occupied by Canadian troops. Another squadron was operating south of Eraines.⁶⁸² Kitching held one squadron in reserve for exploitation towards Falaise if the opportunity presented itself.

At approximately 1321 hrs, the armour regiments began calling for the re-supply of fuel and ammunition. In another example of battlefield innovation, Kitching and Proctor made the decision not to withdraw the regiments but to move the re-supply columns forward. A guide from the BCRs was sent back to bring the echelon forces forward. The re-supply was conducted from Priests, which proved their worth in this function and would now become the primary tool for battlefield re-supply.⁶⁸³

Unfortunately, the process was hurried since the re-supply point was on a bomb line of an incoming tactical air strike. Once re-supplied, the armoured regiments had to withdraw from their forward positions until the air strike was completed.⁶⁸⁴ The successful completion of this action is indicative of effective command and control of the division's actions during the day.

At 1455 hrs, 4th Cdn Armd Bde was reported regrouping south of Epancy.⁶⁸⁵ The 4th Cdn Armd Bde units continued to fight their way slowly up to IDAHO.⁶⁸⁶ The

⁶⁸¹ Ops Log 15 August serials 56, 59, 60, 62, 68. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁶⁸² Ops Log 15 August serial 83. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army-General Staff, 1-31 August 1944.

⁶⁸³ Priests were used to transport 8 Cdn Inf Bde into the operation. On arrival at their objective the Priests reverted to command of 4 Cdn Armd Div and were used for maintenance of forward troops and the evacuation of casualties. Op Log 15 August serial 98. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁶⁸⁴ Ops Log 15 August serials 102-115. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August, App 5.

⁶⁸⁵ This report was submitted by Phantom. Ops Log 15 August serial 89. War Diary, HQ 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

armoured brigade progressed as far as the northern slope of Pt 159 before it ran into a German anti-tank screen. After suffering severe losses, the BCRs and Grenadier Guards were forced back and waited for the arrival of the Lincs-SAR battle group.⁶⁸⁷

Halpenny held an impromptu orders group on the battlefield at 1624 hrs with the commanders of the three armoured regiments (BCR, CGG and SAR) and the squadron commander of the 18th Cdn Armd Car Regt. Observation of the objective revealed that the approach would be over open and flat terrain with no cover and it was felt that an approach without infantry and artillery support would be disastrous. A plan was worked out between the commanders whereby they would advance after an artillery concentration on the woods to their front and left. The artillery support failed to arrive and the attack was not executed.⁶⁸⁸ When the Lincs & SAR arrived, the decision was made to consolidate the gains to that point and the Lincs dug in among the tanks at the foot of the slope.

On the right flank of the 4th Cdn Armd Bde attack, 3rd Cdn Inf Div was advancing towards the same general objectives as 4th Cdn Armd Bde. At 1000 hrs, an attack was launched by Canadian Scottish Regiment with the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde in support against PT 168.⁶⁸⁹ At 1515 hrs, 4th Cdn Armd Div was informed that the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde had reached Pt 168 and that the Canadian Scottish Regiment had joined them and was digging in.⁶⁹⁰ At 1600 hrs a new plan of attack was initiated by 7th Cdn Inf Bde down the Caen-

⁶⁸⁶ IDAHO was the 4 Cdn Armd Div codeword for Pt159.

⁶⁸⁷ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 153.

⁶⁸⁸ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

⁶⁸⁹ At 1556 hrs Chubb informed the GGFG that "friends are in Jaguar" or that troops from 3 Cdn Inf Div are in Aubigny located west of Pt 159. This report is almost certainly wrong since 7 Cdn Inf bde units did not advance that far south. The 2 Cdn Armd Bde was at Pt 168 codenamed Jackal. It is possible that the codewords "Jackal" and "Jaguar" had been mixed up. Ops Log 15 August serial 112. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁶⁹⁰ War Diary, HQ 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

Falaise highway with the objective of Falaise. The 7th Cdn Recce Regt, followed by the Royal Winnipeg Rifles on the right, would attack down the highway while the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde with the Regina Rifles on the left would attack through the Canadian Scottish Regiment to take Pt 159.⁶⁹¹ H-hour for the 7th Cdn Inf Bde attack was 2015 hrs. In planning the attack, a reduced artillery barrage had to be planned since elements of 4 Cdn Armd Div were reported on Hill 159. The armour and infantry had trouble marrying up for the attack and, once across the start line at St. Pierre Canivet, heavy anti-tank fire cost the attacking regiments ten tanks, causing the attack to stall. The attacking units withdrew to the area of Pt 175.⁶⁹²

A successful second day turned sour for Kitching, who had his Tac HQ at Pt 103 north of Olendon. As his armoured brigade battled its way to IDAHO in the late afternoon, he was at Jefferson's headquarters. Standing on a jeep, the two officers tried to see what was going on ahead and it appeared to them that the tanks of the armoured regiments were almost on IDAHO. Kitching returned to his headquarters and was, in turn, elated when he received news that IDAHO had been taken.⁶⁹³

At some point late in the day, Scott had decided that he could no longer carry on in command of the brigade. He disappeared off the brigade net around 1600 hrs without seemingly establishing contact with Halpenny. It was on the way back to his headquarters that Kitching met Scott and was surprised at the severity of his injury. Kitching had no

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² Ops Log 16 August serial 14, 2 Cdn Armd Bde Sitrep 161010B. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944.

⁶⁹³ Roy, 1944: *The Canadians in Normandy*, 275 An important note when reviewing the plan is that the objective of 4th Cdn Armd Div Pt 159 is given the code word MERMAID in the operation instruction. IDAHO was not found anywhere in the list of 4 Cdn Armd Div code words. The only reference to IDAHO as the codeword for the final objective of 4 Cdn Armd Div was found in the operation orders for 8 Cdn Inf Bde. 8 Cdn Inf Bde OO No 17 OP TALLULAH dated 14 August 44. War Diary, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 44.

idea that Scott's injury was so serious and, indeed, when he reported to Kitching's command post, he thought Scott's injury was very recent.⁶⁹⁴ Kitching was once again forced to call upon the next senior officer, Halpenny, to take over as acting brigade commander. Halpenny took over command of the Brigade at 1800 hrs.

At 1800 hrs Kitching left for Simonds' headquarters firmly convinced that his units could hold IDAHO. Simonds was delighted to hear that 4th Cdn Armd Div had captured its objective and, based on this information, Simonds tasked Kitching to get the Lincoln & Welland Regiment into Falaise.⁶⁹⁵ After he had issued his orders for the next day's operations, Simonds invited Kitching to stay for dinner. Kitching continued to press Simonds to appoint Moncel to assume command of the armoured brigade as they had agreed. Kitching stated that he now had to appoint Halpenny to command and that this was the Brigade's third commander in two days.⁶⁹⁶

When he returned to his headquarters later that evening, Kitching learned that 4th Cdn Armd Bde had not captured the ridge at all but "had turned back to wait for additional support."⁶⁹⁷ He immediately telephoned the news to Simonds, who did not take it at all well. Simonds was extremely disappointed over another example of faulty

⁶⁹⁴ Scott was in considerable discomfort and until early afternoon he had tried to direct the battle from his own command vehicle. His Regiment's medical officer had been killed and there was no one to tend to his painful foot. He was determined to carry on but his injury became so aggravating that by that afternoon he had to be driven to Kitching's headquarters where he asked to be relieved of his temporary command. Roy, *1944: The Canadians In Normandy*, 275.

⁶⁹⁵ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

⁶⁹⁶ Unfortunately for Kitching, Moncel would not arrive until 19 August. The, as of yet unexplained, five day delay in his arrival was to play a critical role in the events to follow and is a crucial element in Kitching's dismissal. Reflecting on the situation in his book Kitching stated that he had a capable officer in his commander of artillery, Brigadier Lane and he should have sent him forward to command the brigade on a permanent basis. Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 206.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

communication and misinformation.⁶⁹⁸ Kitching assured Simonds that the division was preparing to attack again the next morning.

Kitching called an O Group to prepare for the capture of IDAHO the following morning. Plans for the renewed attack were developed that night. Under the cover of smoke, the armoured brigade would rush the hill and plunge among the anti-tank guns while they were still “blind”. The Argylls, mounted in Priests, would follow immediately behind the tanks while the Algonquin Regiment mopped up on the right and the Linc & Welld Regt mopped up on the left. The brigade O Groups for the attack were carried out at 0500 hrs 16 August.⁶⁹⁹

Kitching’s plan would be carried out only with the approval of Simonds. During the evening of 15 August events changed. The 9th Cdn Inf Bde was assigned to relieve 10th Cdn Inf Bde. The 2nd and 3rd Cdn Inf Divs began a slow advance towards Falaise from the west and north.⁷⁰⁰ The 7th Cdn Inf Bde assumed the task of taking Pt 159 and the 2nd Cdn Inf Division was given the task of taking Falaise. TRACTABLE was at an end.

The final SITREP for August 15 from 4th Cdn Armd Div for the period noon to midnight reported that the BCR and Grenadier Guards had reached the objective but were driven out by heavy anti-tank fire. The final disposition of the division units, according to this report, had the Foot Guards, Grenadier Guards and BCR located on the high ground at Pt 175. The Lincoln & Welland Regiment was dug in near le Val Mauger with one squadron of SAR under command. The Algonquin Regiment was firmed up in Epancy

⁶⁹⁸ News from the 3 Cdn Inf Div was also bad. They had advanced to Point 168 in a costly action that afternoon but the assaulting 7th Brigade troops were thrown out of Soulangy before dark. Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division, 186*; Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 231.

⁶⁹⁹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, entries 15 & 16 Aug.

⁷⁰⁰ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 158.

and the Argylls were firmed up in Perrières with one squadron of SAR under command. The remainder of the SAR and the Lake Superior Regt were in Olendon.⁷⁰¹

There were plenty of mistakes made in the development and execution of TRACTABLE. Simonds' dismissive attitude towards the potential threat posed by the topography and the Laison River to the conduct of the operation was to prove the most costly. The river ran across the front of both divisions about two miles beyond the start line. It was narrow and comparatively shallow. In his briefings on the operation, Simonds had assured his subordinate commanders that the Laison River was "fordable by tanks at all points." In fact, the river's muddy bottom and steep banks formed a major anti-tank obstacle and even Dominik Graham, Simonds' sympathetic biographer, referred to this assessment as an error of "major consequence" which delayed the advance for two hours and cost the 2nd Cdn Corps "a decisive battle."⁷⁰² The delay and disorganization resulting from the river crossing robbed the attacking formation of valuable daylight hours within which to prosecute the attack deeper into German territory.

Since the intelligence assessment had stated that the Laison could be forded at all points, engineering units were not part of Simonds' construct for the armoured phalanxes. In a normal armoured attack, the engineering units would have accompanied the forward units to clear obstacles and provide other necessary tasks, such as facilitating river crossings. In a very shrewd move, Kitching decided to insert engineering units into the forward elements of the 4th Cdn Armd Bde phalanx from 8th Field Squadron.⁷⁰³ These units were credited with erecting two scissor crossings, two fascine crossings and

⁷⁰¹ 4 Cdn Adm Div SITREP 35. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 28.

⁷⁰² Graham, *the Price of Command*, 154.

⁷⁰³ Outline of Instructions Issued by GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 131230B Aug 44. OP TRACTABLE. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div 1-31 August 1944, App 23.

locating a useable ford over the river.⁷⁰⁴ Had these engineering units not been with the forward units the 4 Cdn Armd Bde advance would have ground to a standstill at the river.

The execution of the TRACTABLE plan was difficult since it directed units of the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde, 3rd Cdn Inf Div and 4th Cdn Armd Div all towards the same area—the commanding ridge of ground just north of Falaise—with the 3rd Cdn Inf Div tasked to capture the northwest portion while the 4th Cdn Armd Div was to capture the northeast portion. The continued advance south to Falaise by all of these forces brought them into closer proximity to each other and at the same time into the strongest parts of the German defences. Montgomery's continued insistence on the capture of Falaise by the Canadians at this point once again allowed the German defenders to concentrate their reduced resources against a mass of Canadian forces attacking over ground that was very favourable to the defender. This lack of manoeuvre room became a significant problem at approximately 1300 hrs, on 15 August in the region of Pt 168 as units from 3rd Cdn Inf Div and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde began converging on the same area as the two 4th Cdn Armd Div battle groups.⁷⁰⁵

A planning mistake that is rarely discussed, however, is the choice of H-Hour. Waiting until 1200 hours denied the attacking formations a considerable number of daylight hours on 14 August for their advance. Russian and German attacks were usually timed to start at dawn allowing the attacking formations the maximum number of daylight hours possible to exploit the success of the attack. While, on the one hand Simonds was ordering the armoured formations to exhibit more aggressiveness, on the

⁷⁰⁴ Rollefson, *Green Route Up*, 31. For the composition of the 4 Cdn Armd Div formations see Outline of Instructions Issued by GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 131230B Aug 44 for OP TRACTABLE. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App 23.

⁷⁰⁵ By this time the 4 Cdn Armd Bde group consisted of the CGG, BCR, and a sqn from the Lake Sup Regt and the 10 Cdn Inf Bde group consisting of the Linc & Welld R with two squadrons from SAR.

other he had significantly reduced the available time they had to accomplish their mission.

A notable feature of the day was the constant bombing and strafing of Allied troops by Allied tactical aircraft. After the planned heavy bombers attacks had been completed, tactical airpower took over and the ops logs of all the attacking units are filled with entries of being attacked by Allied air power. The echelon forces of 4th Cdn Armd Div were attacked on numerous occasions with American P-47 Thunderbolts named as the primary culprits.⁷⁰⁶

On the afternoon 14 August 4th Cdn Armd Div achieved a complete breakthrough. However, because of the loss of Booth, the brigade tactical HQ and the communication link back to division HQ, Kitching was unaware of the extent of the breakthrough, the exact location of his units and, consequently, was unable to exploit the success. He took it upon himself to find out and left his Tac HQ to try and determine the true nature of the tactical situation. During the latter part of the afternoon, 4th Div HQ received word that Booth was a casualty but no definite word on the seriousness of his wounds, his location or whether he was still trying to exercise command of the brigade.⁷⁰⁷ These questions would not be answered until Chubb reported back to Div HQ. When Kitching did find out, he took immediate action by appointing Chubb as acting brigade commander until such time as Scott could be contacted and could take over the brigade. He then contacted Simonds and asked for Moncel.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁶ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

⁷⁰⁷ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 14 Aug

⁷⁰⁸ Chubb, in a letter to Dr Roy, stated that Kitching appointed Chubb acting brigade commander until further notice when Kitching found out that Booth was a casualty. Chubb, Letter [Recollections on Normandy], 20 December 1980.

There are a number of differing opinions as to the impact Booth's death had on the success or lack thereof of the division on 14 August. One opinion states that Booth's fatal injury was a major setback which prevented the 4th Cdn Armd Div from achieving complete success on 14 August⁷⁰⁹ while another states that it was actually the loss of the brigade tactical headquarters and not necessarily the loss of Booth himself that prevented success.⁷¹⁰ While the impact of these combined circumstances was devastating, the resulting situation was not insurmountable since military training is based on the premise that leadership at all levels may become casualties and training is designed to ensure that junior leaders can fill the vacant ranks to ensure that the organization continues to function as if nothing happened. The positive actions of the regimental commanders in continuing their advances towards their assigned objectives is indicative of the effectiveness of the training that had been executed within 4 Cdn Armd Div.⁷¹¹

It was the third circumstance of this incident that proved to be the most devastating and more critical to the outcome of that day. The third circumstance was the fact that Kitching and the 4th Div HQ were unaware that Booth was even a casualty. The lack of communication traffic between the brigade and the division should have been an indication to 4th Div HQ that something was amiss; but, given the confusion that existed that afternoon and the disrupted communication caused by the bombing, their ignorance of the situation can be understood. Kitching simply did not know that there was no one in command or control of the armoured brigade. Had the fate of Booth been conveyed

⁷⁰⁹ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 263

⁷¹⁰ There are a number of incidents where the brigade commander became a casualty but the brigade continued to function seamlessly. The case of Brig Wyman on 8 August is a case in point. He was wounded by sniper fire but immediately replaced and the brigade continued to function. Moncel, *Letter [Reflections on Normandy Campaign]*, Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria

⁷¹¹ Remember, that Kitching had had sessions with his commander discussing the succession plan when commanders become casualties prior to entering Normandy.

promptly, then Scott may have been in a position to take over before he actually crossed the Laison River; in which case brigade control could have been re-established earlier. Having the vehicles to effectively command the brigade would have been problematic. The fact remains that Kitching didn't know that there was a problem to solve.

Both Booth and Scott made the critical choice of taking their headquarters forward. Usually the headquarters was located in a spot where it would be relatively safe and where good communications would be possible. The commander was then free to roam the battlefield knowing that the integration of information from both superior and subordinate headquarters and units was secure. The integration and passing of this information was crucial for situational awareness throughout the chain of command. By moving forward as they did both commanders risked becoming casualties or getting involved in actions that were secondary to the main effort.⁷¹² This lack of higher direction and coordination was unfortunate because the German defence was stretched to the breaking point on 15 August. At 1200 hrs that day, I SS Pz Corps reported to 5 Pz Army that the 85 In Div was "almost annihilated and only had one-and one half battalions and two 8.8 cm guns available."⁷¹³ In addition, it was reported that 12 SS Pz Div had only 15 tanks left.

Knowing that Scott was commanding the armoured brigade on 15 August, an obvious question is why Kitching failed to provide more direct control over the armoured brigade on that day. On the surface, Kitching had no reason to believe that Scott could not command the brigade and he was unaware that Scott was injured. Scott could have been criticized for a late start but, after that, events at a macro level went well with the

⁷¹² Robert Moncel, Letter [Reflections on Normandy Campaign], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 2 September 1981.

⁷¹³ Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 187.

BCR and Grenadier Guards advancing over three miles in a few hours of hard fighting. At around 1630 hrs, the division had elements of three armoured regiments (BCR, Grenadier Guards and SAR), elements of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment and the Lake Superior Regiment and a squadron from the 18th Cdn Armd Car Regt in a position for a combined arms assault on Pt 159. All they needed was artillery support, which was requested but never materialized. Arranging that support was the job of the brigade commander but Scott was on his way to Kitching's Tac HQ to ask to be relieved. Initiative and drive on the part of the regimental commander had gotten them to the point where success was in their grasp. The coordinating function of the Brigade HQ was needed to complete the task and it was at this point in the day where the true lack of brigade command and control failed, to the detriment of the operation.

The command of the 4 Cdn Armd Brigade was now a significant leadership issue for Kitching. Kitching at one point told Simonds that if Moncel could not be made available, he was going to take direct control of the armoured brigade himself. Simonds rightly discouraged Kitching. Kitching's suggestion was not a wise one since it would have denied the division the oversight and control function required from the division commander. Kitching's request, however, is indicative of the sense of frustration he felt towards Simonds who was aloof to the very real command and control difficulties that Kitching was experiencing. According to Kitching, the combination of so many casualties among his senior commanders, the frequent changes of command of the regiments, squadrons and troops, the loss of so many tanks and crews, the breakdown in communications and the inexperience in battle greatly impacted the division's

performance in action. Kitching believed that Simonds did not sufficiently appreciate these factors.⁷¹⁴

The command and control framework within the armoured brigade was breaking down because of the excessive number of casualties in senior officers (majors and above) among the armoured regiments. More junior officers were promoted into senior positions but they did not necessarily have the experience and training necessary to replace those who had become casualties.⁷¹⁵ With Halpenny now the acting Brigade commander, lieutenant-colonels commanded none of the armoured regiments. The armoured brigade was now short one brigadier, and two lieutenant-colonels.

What of the division's success on 15 August? There seems to be a general acceptance in the current literature of Kitching's statement that the armoured brigade forces "had turned back to wait for additional support" with the added assumption that there was no further advance that day. The evidence would suggest that this is not entirely correct. A series of entries in the war diaries suggests that the division advanced further than has been commonly believed. At 1713 hrs the words "Idaho has been taken" were broadcast over the 4th Cdn Armd Bde radio net.⁷¹⁶ At 1740 hrs, the ops log for 1st Cdn Army recorded that Foot Guards and Grenadier Guards were reported on the objective with the Linc & Welld Regt passing through and that Kitching was ordered to get patrols and the Linc & Welld Regt into Falaise.⁷¹⁷ Simonds was advised at 1740 hrs

⁷¹⁴ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 200.

⁷¹⁵ Corps commander was usually thinking a number of days in the future with respect to operations but the dire circumstances with respect to the command of the armoured brigade should have been visible to him immediately. *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁶ The 15 August entry in the narrative portion of the war diary states that the GGFG declared Idaho taken at 1650 hrs and that the claim was reported false at 1730 hrs. There are no entries in the 4 Bde Ops Log that support these timings even if the normal time/bravo time factor is taken into consideration. 4 Cdn Armd Bde War Diary, HQ 4 Cdn Armd Bde 1-31 August 1944, App 5, Ops Log serials 126.

⁷¹⁷ War Diary HQ First Cdn Army Main, 1-31 August, Ops Log 15 August serial 117.

that two armoured regiments were on the objective.⁷¹⁸ Kitching left for Simonds HQ at 1800 hrs with the belief that his tanks had taken and were on the objective.

At 1826 hrs the BCR asked whether infantry were on IDAHO and at 1900 hrs, the Grenadier Guards reported that they could not proceed further. Unable to advance on their own front, the general impression is that the regiments remained about 1500 yards north of IDAHO during the night and provided fire support to 3rd Cdn Inf Div.⁷¹⁹ There is evidence however that the division continued to push south during the evening.

The BCR war diary states that after being re-supplied at 1500 hrs the BCR began a new advance towards the objective that took them on a route through Pt 170, Pt 168 to Pt 159. According to the BCR war diary, A and B squadrons with C squadron covering, reached Pt 168 at 2100 hrs. Meanwhile, reconnaissance tanks had gone forward to the objective where they identified a Panther tank, which was impeding the advance. Unfortunately, due to the terrain, the tanks equipped with 17-pdr guns could not get an effective angle to engage the German tank.⁷²⁰ An entry in the GGFG regimental history suggests that there may have been other tanks with the BCRs. The entry states that when the GGFG was assisting the 3rd Div attack they spotted tanks to their front, which were later identified as belonging to the SAR. Evidence of an attack later in the evening also exists in the book *A Short History of the Tenth Canadian Infantry BDE* written immediately after the war by members of the brigade. The book states that at last light the

⁷¹⁸ War Diary HQ First Cdn Army Main, 1-31 August, Ops Log 15 August serial 105.

⁷¹⁹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 August.

⁷²⁰ It is not clear whether the reference to reconnaissance tanks refers to Stuart light tanks of the BCR recce squadron or the tanks of the SAR. War Diary, South Alberta Regiment, 1-31 August, entry 15 August.

Lincolns had gone forward with one squadron of the SARs and captured a section of high ground overlooking Falaise.⁷²¹

An account of the operation by 2 Cdn Armd Bde, provides further detail. When planning the evening attack on Pt 159 scheduled for 2015 hrs the volume of artillery fire for the attack had to be reduced because both of the flanks were reported secured by flanking formations (4 Cdn Armd Bde was on the eastern flank.). At 1800 hrs it was learned that two armoured regiments of 4 Cdn Armd Div were in possession of Pt 159 which meant that the artillery fire plan had to be reduced further since targets could now not be engaged on either flank or on the proposed target area. The aim of the attack was changed to a mopping up operation between Pts 168 and 159 and to reinforce the troops already on Pt 159. On approaching the start line both the 1st Cdn Hussars and Fort Gary Horse Armd Regt reported that on moving up they had passed through the two armoured regiments that were supposed to be on Pt 159. This now meant that their attack would proceed with inadequate artillery support. The tanks encountered immediate anti-tank fire from the front and both flanks and began taking casualties.⁷²²

There is evidence, therefore, to support a conclusion that a combined attack was attempted by 4 Cdn Armd Bde late in the evening, which, as a minimum, advanced beyond Pt 168 and reached the forward slopes of Pt 159. Recce tanks were sent forward and overran southern portions of the feature before retiring.⁷²³ A continued advance into the evening of 15 August that captured portions of Pt 159 would then correlate with

⁷²¹ R.A. Paterson. *A Short History, The Tenth Canadian Infantry Bde*, (October 1945), 26.

⁷²² OP TRACTABLE: AN ACCOUNT OF OPS BY 2 CDN ARMD BDE IN FRANCE 14 TO 16 AUG 44, War Diary HQ 2nd Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 7.

⁷²³ Stacey believes that a few tanks from the Foot Guards had worked their way forward under cover of smoke and had managed to reach the objective. He also states that withering fire from the line west of Eraines, however, eventually drove them off. CMHQ Report No. 169, para 154.

reports filed in the operations log of 2 Cdn Corps which stated that “two armd regts reached high feature 1438[Pt 159] but encountered enemy A tk guns and dug in, but then they were “forced to withdraw.”⁷²⁴

One theme remains consistent in the war diaries of the BCR and Grenadier Guards: little to no direction was received from Scott on 15 August. Chubb is very critical of Scott’s actions while acting as the Brigade commander stating that he [Scott] never physically appeared at Brigade HQ to take over command, leaving the headquarters in a vacuum as to his intentions for 15 August.⁷²⁵ In addition, Scott further complicated the situation by netting the brigade net to his scout car, which effectively took the Brigade HQ out of the game.⁷²⁶ This move meant that he had minimal contact with his regiments and no contact whatsoever with Div HQ. A commander could only fight a brigade from a scout car when an operating headquarters backed him with good communications to front and rear.⁷²⁷ This would represent the second day in a row and the third time in the span of a week when the brigade units fought in a major operation without effective brigade oversight and control.

The echelon forces of 4th Cdn Armd Div had spent a large portion of the two days of TRACTABLE dodging Allied air attacks. The heavy bomber attack was the first to take its toll. A court of inquiry, on which Proctor was a member, into the bombing of friendly troops latter found that the likely cause of the bombing mistake was the road and

⁷²⁴ Ops Log 16 August serial 4, War Diary, 2 Cdn Corps Main, 1-31 August 1944.

⁷²⁵ Chubb, Letter [Recollections on Normandy], 20 December 1980.

⁷²⁶ Moncel, *Letter [Comments of Draft Chapter VII]*, Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria

⁷²⁷ Robert Moncel, Letter [Comments on draft Chapter], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 16 September 1981.

railway crossing that was used as the target indicator.⁷²⁸ A two-second margin of error proved costly for the division since it lost 30 ammunition vehicles that were loaded and ready to move forward with the advancing formations.

In addition, on the evening of 14 August, the division B-echelon troops, crowded nose to tail in anticipation of moving forward to re-supply the fighting echelons, were hit by an infrequent but nonetheless effective air strike from the Luftwaffe. At approximately 2300 hrs, the loaded vehicles of the division's ammunition company were hit, causing a chain reaction of exploding and destroyed vehicles. For the next several hours the provision of normal maintenance was disrupted as everyone avoided the exploding ammunition.⁷²⁹ This incident, in part, explains why only one of the armoured brigade maintenance columns was able to get through to the fighting echelon the following morning and why it was so late getting there.

The Laison River continued to wreak havoc with the division as the lack of bridges tied up traffic and hampered the movement forward of the rear echelon vehicles.⁷³⁰ TRACTABLE represented the first significant challenge for the division's engineering units as they worked to build bridges and open up maintenance routes. Along with facilitating the advance by the building of bridges, the engineers also began construction of seven miles of road from St. Sylvain to Rouvres to help alleviate the problems with the maintenance traffic.⁷³¹

⁷²⁸ There were two road/railway crossings in close proximity to each other, one 21 seconds from the coast and the second one 23 seconds from the coast. The master bombardier had put his indicator on the first one. John Proctor, Letter [Recollections on Normandy], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 4 May 1981.

⁷²⁹ French, *Some Reminiscence*, 72.

⁷³⁰ John Proctor, Letter [Recollections on Normandy], Dr Reginald Roy Special Collections University of Victoria, 9 June 1981.

⁷³¹ On 15 August, 2nd troop 9 Field squadron built the Division's first operational bridge by replacing a scissor bridge at Rouvres with a 40-ft Bailey bridge over the Laison River Rollefson, *Green Route Up*, 32.

The one event that seems to have taken the Canadians off guard as a whole was the large number of prisoners of war (PW) that had to be processed. At one point in the advance, prisoners were disarmed and ordered to walk to the rear without formal escort. Transporting them became a serious drain on transportation resources within the division to the point where supplies were offloaded in order to transport prisoners to the rear.⁷³² The problem of dealing with prisoners of war would continue to tax rear echelon planning and resources during the next phase of operations.

A vital lesson learned from an echelon perspective was that of re-supply on the battlefield. As the battles in Normandy became more fluid, topping up fuel and re-arming was done during lulls in the battle. This process forced the echelon vehicles to advance much further forward into the battle zone than was usual. The emphasis on keeping continuous pressure on the retreating Germans forced a greater integration and cooperation between the fighting and rear echelons of the division. The result was a marked improvement in overall combat efficiency. On the battlefield, top-ups rather than fill-ups were more common as it was dangerous for crews to remain exposed outside the tank for long.⁷³³ It was in this role that the Priests were to prove invaluable.

The status of the division at the end of TRACTABLE was not good. An ADREP was not found for 15 August but the one submitted for 0420 hrs 16 August provides an adequate reference point. The division POL state was, not surprisingly, down to 160 miles from 175 miles at the start of the operation and the division had recorded the capture of 680 PW. The division began the operation with 259 tanks, 133 armoured cars and 133 scout cars and finished with 194 tanks, 71 armoured cars and 128 scout cars. The

⁷³² War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AAQMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

⁷³³ Claydon, *Green Flash*, 112-114.

fighting strength of the Foot Guards was eight tanks while the Grenadier Guards were left with 18 tanks.⁷³⁴ The division strength at the beginning of TRACTABLE was recorded as 871 officers and 15111 other ranks and on the morning of 16 August the division strength was recorded as 821 officers and 14489 other ranks—a difference of 50 officers and 622 other ranks. A crucial supply note was that 17-pdr sabot ammunition for anti-tank use was still in short supply.⁷³⁵

In a post operation report filed on 16 Aug 1944, J.G. Sprague, the acting brigade commander of 8th Cdn Inf Bde, made a number of important observations on the operation. In general he claimed that the general tactics and results of the operation were “excellent.” He attributed the delays that occurred to driving difficulties and the bombing and made a number of specific recommendations for future operations. Interestingly, he highlighted the confusion that occurred when the name of the operation was changed at the last moment. When operating under 4th Cdn Armd Div the operation was called TRACTABLE but 3rd Cdn Inf Div continued to call the operation TALLULAH.⁷³⁶ Confusion was also created when code words of flanking formations were different or known only to that particular formation. For example IDAHO was a 4th Cdn Armd Div code word for Pt 159, which did not show up in the formal list of code words for the operation. It was common practice to allot a number of specific code words for use by each formation but how they were used was not necessarily conveyed to flanking

⁷³⁴ The status of the tank strength in the SAR is unknown. Ops Log 16 August 44 serial 42. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944.

⁷³⁵ ADREP dated 160420B August. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AA& QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁷³⁶ It is not clear why the name of the operation was changed. A message from G OPS MAIN 4 Cdn Armd Div dated 141145B that was sent to all 4 Div units and 8 Cdn Ind Bde stated “op TALLULAH will now be known as op TRACTABLE.” War Diary, HQ 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

formations.⁷³⁷ This practice impeded mutual cooperation among flanking formations and clouded the situational awareness at higher levels in the command chain.

TRACTABLE is commonly viewed as a failure because the Germans were able to once again deny the Allies the planned objectives they sought.⁷³⁸ The operation succeeded in breaking through the “best-organized defensive position left to the Germans in Normandy.”⁷³⁹ In addition, the operation proved that Kitching and the division, its staff and formations could operate and innovate on and succeed under the most complex and challenging conditions warfare could offer up. This was the second major operation for the division in the span of a week yet despite all of the challenges and setbacks that were thrown at the division’s leadership, they adapted, refocused and continued on.

The key question is not whether TRACTABLE was a successful operation because it was. The more important question concerning TRACTABLE is: What was the cost to the true operational level requirement of capturing Trun and closing the gap by the continued drive to Falaise by the 4 Cdn Armd Div on 15 August? Montgomery’s orders to take Falaise first before exploiting to Trun cost the Canadians and the division two crucial days (15 and 16 August) that could have been used to seal and secure the gap.

The actions of 14 August were necessary to launch the operation but once over the Laison River and once Perrières was taken on the morning of 15 August, 4th Cdn Armd Div should have be sent straight to Trun alongside the Polish Armd Div, leaving the 2nd and 3rd Infantry divisions and the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde to deal with Falaise. Such a

⁷³⁷ The 4 Cdn Armd Div codewords for TRACTABLE were Rouvres-“Victoria”, Maizières-“Albert,” Woods on left-“Hudson Bay”, Final objective –“Idaho”, Sassy-“Florida”. 8 Cdn Inf Bde OO No17. Op “Tallulah” dated 14 August 44. Ibid. The only place that Idaho as a code word showed up in the 4 Cdn Armd Div orders was on the map traces. It was not found in any written order.

⁷³⁸ English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 297; Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 232.

⁷³⁹ Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 232.

move would have sidestepped the strength of the German defences and would have unhinged the northern portion of the German defences. The capture of Falaise may have been delayed but the trade off was having a strong force barring the escape routes out of the pocket before the formal German order for retreat had been given. This course of action would have still achieved the desired result for TRACTABLE by severing the lines of communication through Falaise but at a point further east.

The command decisions made by Montgomery and Simonds during TRACTABLE have not received the critical analysis that they deserve since they are directly responsible for the desperate fighting that would happen in the days to come. On 14 August, Montgomery directed First Cdn Army, and by extension, 2nd Cdn Corps to take Falaise. According to Montgomery, this new task was not to interfere with the larger and more important task of driving southeast to capture Trun and the link up with the Americans.⁷⁴⁰ The imperative of the two tasks: take Falaise as soon as possible and not impede the capture of Trun and link up with the Americans as the primary task were, however, mutually exclusive. Capturing Falaise as soon as possible implied a maximum effort by 2nd Cdn Corps against Falaise. The accomplishment of this task meant that the depth of the Canadian attack had to be extended southwest to take the city. This action would take the 2nd Cdn Corps forces in the complete opposite direction of their main task, which was the link up with the Americans at Trun.

Montgomery compounded the issue by not reinforcing 2nd Cdn Corps. Despite giving Crerar a major new responsibility and shifting the direction of the Canadian operations, Montgomery did not reinforce Crerar with one of the three armoured divisions of

⁷⁴⁰ Ops Log, 14 Aug 44, Serial 75. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff , 1-31 August 1944, App 74.

Second Br Army, which in the course of events, were in danger of being pinched out of battle.⁷⁴¹ Saddling 2nd Cdn Corps with the two tasks with no additional resources meant that Simonds now had to choose where his main effort would be.

Simonds had a number of options: tackle the tasks sequentially by sending everything he had against Falaise in the hopes of a swift victory and then shifting the effort to Trun or tackle them concurrently by dividing his forces. If he chose the concurrent approach, Simonds had to decide the weight assigned to each effort. He could divide the forces equally against both targets or he could send a majority of troops against one and a reduced force against the other. Simonds had to weigh the tactical values of an early capture of Falaise and a delayed link-up with the Americans against an early link-up with the Americans and a delayed capture of Falaise.

Simonds chose parallel lines of operation with a weighted effort against Falaise which was, in fact, contrary to the stated primary task which was the link-up with the Americans at Trun. The majority of his forces carried the attack towards Falaise while the Polish Armd Div was sent southeast to try and seal the gap. By choosing this option, Simonds gave the Germans in the pocket the one commodity they were quickly running out of—time.

Simonds compounded the problem by assigning the task of taking Falaise to Kitching and 4th Cdn Armd Div. This decision was fundamentally wrong on two fronts. An armoured division, because of its weaker complement of infantry and because of the increased vulnerability of tanks in confined spaces, was the wrong asset to use to take a town. Capturing a town usually involved infantry-intensive house-to-house fighting and

⁷⁴¹ Graves, *South Albertas*, 133.

this task was traditionally given to an infantry division. The second and more important reason was because 4th Cdn Armd Div was one of only two formations that Simonds had that could get to Trun quickly with enough combat power to seal the gap and cause havoc in the German rear areas. Forcing the division to fight on towards Falaise and into the strength of the German anti-tank defences resulted in the serious degradation of the combat power of the division and, had the division captured the heights and then the city itself, its ability to advance to Trun would have been seriously delayed and, more importantly, the division may not have even had the combat strength to be a factor in the next battles.⁷⁴² Simonds' decisions on 15 August must be seriously questioned.

The actions of 15 August represented a wasted day of conflict that resulted in far too many needless tank and personnel casualties in 4th Cdn Armd Div. 16 August would become a wasted day to recover and reorient the division after the actions of 15 August. Falaise was a distraction: one could even say an obsession for Montgomery. This distraction delayed the movement of the division into the gap and gave the Germans two more days of respite to utilize the open path to the east.

TRACTABLE, as a plan, did not survive its initial contact with either the enemy or the elements, consequently it tested the training, resolve and initiative of the men at all levels within the division. The casualties among the senior leadership within the armoured brigade forced the leadership role down to the regimental commanders who proved up to the challenge by continuing the advance with leadership and initiative on the battlefield. They were able to successfully continue the advance using new tactics-smoke and new re-supply innovations-top ups on the battlefield, to keep their battlegroups

⁷⁴² Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 232.

moving towards their objectives. The advance to Pt 159 was achieved by the personal initiative of the commanders of BCR (Maj Parish) and Grenadier Guards (Lt Col Halpenny) who not only had to deal with effective German defences but had to operate with little or no brigade support and a total lack of situational awareness. Certainly all of the leaders of both the fighting and rear echelons displayed a drive and energy which demonstrated their ability to implement the lessons learned in previous engagements into a winning formula on the battlefield.

At all levels the soldiers of the division were tempering the lessons and drills of their training with their actual combat experiences to garner real lessons learned.⁷⁴³ The division was learning how to operate in combat. The mix-ups and separation in TRACTABLE caused by the smokescreen and the Laison River demanded some reorganization south of the River valley. The action had to be completed while combating the Germans in an area that they strongly defended. Considering the fact that the 4th Cdn Armd Div was conducting its second major operation in less than a week and that it was having to overcome significant unit reorganization and command issues because of casualties and losses, the units had acquitted themselves well but, more importantly, they were learning. A statistic that seems to be lost on most who judge the performance of the division as poor was that 15 August 1944 was only day seven of combat operations for 4th Cdn Armd Div.

⁷⁴³ One of the interesting footnotes to this operation is that the armoured regiments had learned the value of using smoke as a tactic. The Grenadier Guards and BCR successfully used this tactic to bypass German strong points around Epancy and there are numerous other reports of the use of smoke by the other regiments/battalions. In fact, Proctor recorded that he had to ask Corps for an additional allotment of 3300 rounds of smoke as "the program today used up most of ours. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 15 Aug.

Chapter Nine: Closing the Falaise Gap

On the morning of 16 August, the area known as the Falaise Pocket was 35 miles deep and approximately 12 miles wide. Elements of 21 German divisions, comprising approximately 200,000 men, were in danger of encirclement but Field Marshal von Kluge had finally given the approval for a formal retreat to the Seine.⁷⁴⁴ The Germans concluded that they needed three nights to get the western-most forces across the Orne River and one more night to complete the withdrawal behind the Dives River. The outcome of the operation to rescue the remaining German forces in Normandy depended, therefore, on their ability to keep the shoulders of the Gap open for four days.⁷⁴⁵

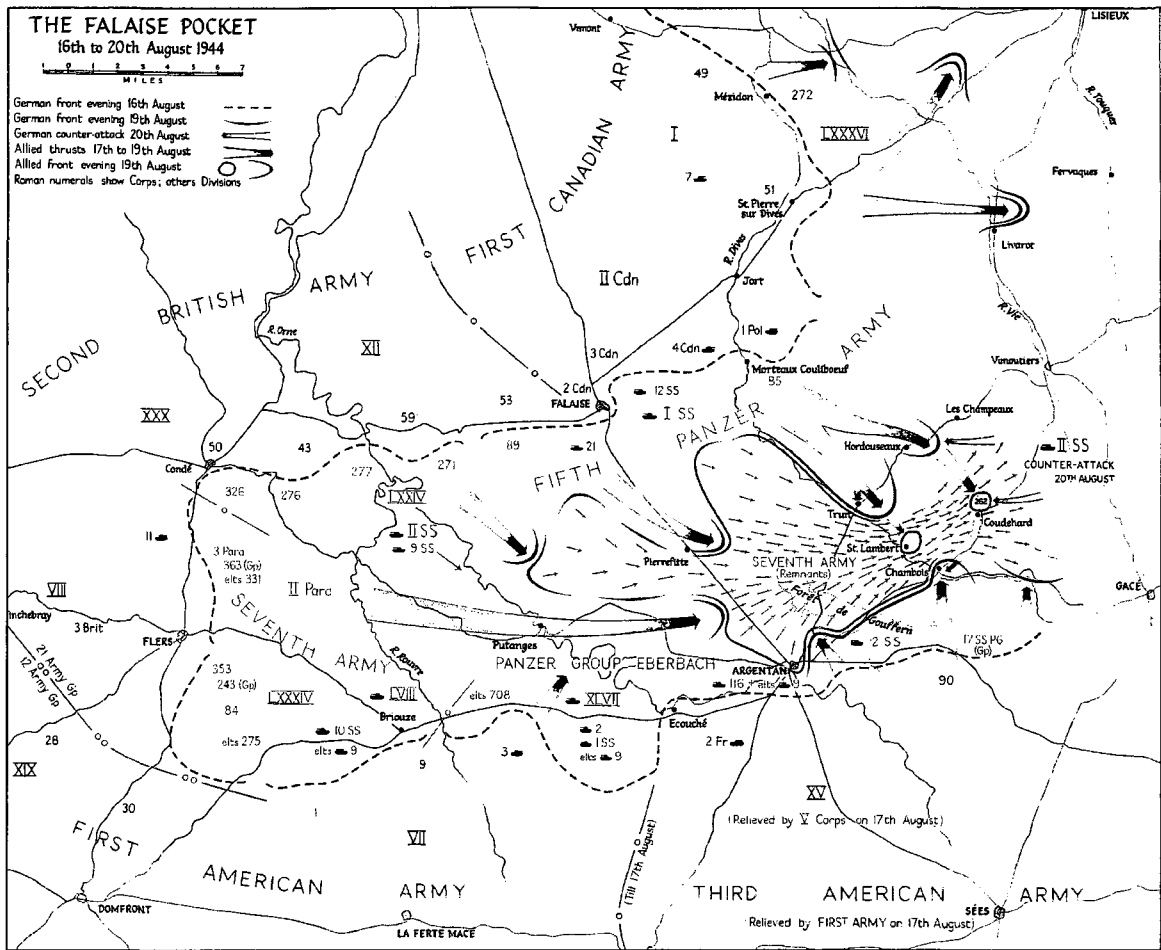
Despite the late order to withdraw, many German troops had already left the area. Senior German officers had seen what was coming and had been quietly evacuating troops to the east for some time. Earlier, von Kluge had authorized the withdrawal of “administrative troops and motorized transport.” German commanders stretched the interpretation of this directive to include complete formations or units. The 12th SS Pz Div, for example, retained only its headquarters and a battle group of 500 men inside the pocket. Echelon personnel and non-combat worthy troops (gunners without guns, tankers without tanks)—a total according to Hubert Meyer of nearly 12,000 men—were sent to safety well before permission to retreat was granted. Other German formations did the same.⁷⁴⁶ Despite the terrible pounding by Allied aircraft, nearly 55,000 Germans, many without their transport, managed to escape from the pocket in the first three days of the withdrawal.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁴ Copp, *The Canadian Battlefields in Normandy, A Visitor's Guide*, 140.

⁷⁴⁵ Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 528.

⁷⁴⁶ Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 204.

⁷⁴⁷ Graves, *South Albertas*, 137-138.



Map 20: The Falaise Pocket. Ellis, *Victory in the West*, 489.

Kluge directed Fifth Panzer Army and Seventh Army to withdraw without delay to the sector of the Dives and the line Morteau-Trun-Gacé-Laigle. The withdrawal was to be carried out under the overall command of Seventh Army. Pz Grp Eberbach was to cover the withdrawal to Argentan and Gacé and, after the fulfilment of these orders, was to disband. Once extracted from the pocket, Seventh Army was to take over control of the sector from the sea to Laigle inclusive and Eberbach was to assume command of Fifth

Panzer Army and control the sector from Laigle to Paris. All troops in these areas were to be brought under command of the Army in their respective zone.⁷⁴⁸

On the morning of 16 August, Simonds changed the tasks of his divisions. There was to be no set-piece plan of attack; in fact, there were to be no further “formal” or detailed plans issued during the battle. Instead, he stated that he would now operate by telling his divisional commanders what he intended to do and what action he wanted them to take. Simonds’ intent for 2nd Cdn Corps on 16 August was as follows:

- With two infantry divisions, form a firm base enclosing Falaise until relieved by Second Army.
- With two armoured divisions, exploit to capture Trun and the high ground dominating it in the southwest and northeast.
- Prepare to advance in a northeast direction on Lisieux.⁷⁴⁹

The 2nd Cdn Inf Div was given the assignment of taking Falaise. It would then hold it and thrust further down the road to Argentan or move east behind the armour. The 3rd Cdn Inf Div was to widen its front to take over the area currently held by the 4th Cdn Armd Div and was to be prepared to advance on the axis Sassy-St Pierre-sur-Dives-Lisieux when ordered. The 2nd Cdn Armd Bde was to go into Corps reserve.⁷⁵⁰

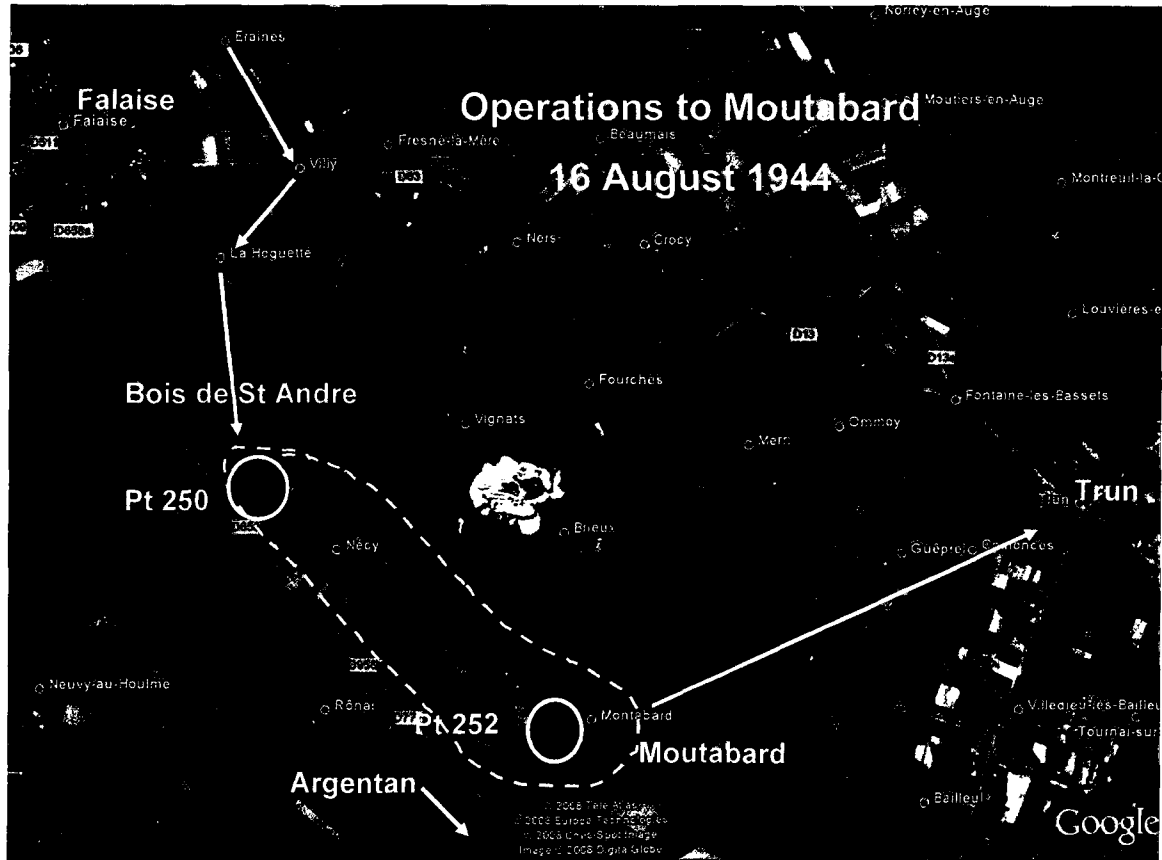
The 4th Cdn Armd Div was to advance on the axis Eraines-Pt 250 -Pt 252 and was to position itself to dominate the high ground at Moutabard. The division was to recce in the direction of Trun and make contact with the Polish Armd Div in Trun. The division was to be prepared to advance northeast from Moutabard when ordered. The Polish Armd Div was to advance on the axis Maizieres -Jort-Pt 259 and was to position itself to

⁷⁴⁸ Part II Invasion and Battle of Normandy (6 Jun-22 Aug 44).Canada. Army, Army Headquarters Report No. 50, The Campaign in North-West Europe Information from German Sources (Ottawa: Army Headquarters, 14 October 1952), M 264-265.

⁷⁴⁹ Memo GOC “Operations Following the Capture of Falaise” dated 15 August 1944.War Diary, HQ 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 11.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

dominate the area from Pt 226-Pt 258 and Trun. This move would establish a blocking position for any possible German escape.⁷⁵¹ This strategy by Simonds was designed to set up a double-layered defensive line along the Dives River with the 4th Cdn Armd Div to the west of the river and the 1st Polish Armd Div to the east of the River.



Map 21: Operations to Moutabard, Google maps capture.

These new orders revised the intentions outlined by Simonds the previous evening as well as the more recent plans by Kitching later that same evening to seize Versainville and Falaise. The 4th Cdn Armd Div was still oriented physically and mentally to take Falaise and much planning had been undertaken during the evening and early hours of 16 August towards the anticipated attack on the town. The new orders were now directing the two armoured divisions away from Falaise and south, into the center of the Gap, to

⁷⁵¹Discussion of this 4 Cdn Armd Div operation has not been found in any previous secondary source. Memo GOC "Operations Following the Capture of Falaise" dated 15 August 1944. Ibid., App 11.

close the German escape route and to deny them the bridges, river crossings and road junctions necessary for their escape. Once this task was accomplished, the Germans would be forced to move in small groups and their ability to conduct a controlled and fighting withdrawal would be severely hampered.⁷⁵²

The day of 16 August was used to rebuild the division. Halpenny concentrated on organizing his brigade headquarters before the next attack.⁷⁵³ Proctor ordered all repaired, LOB tanks and tanks in the 25th Armd Delivery Regt to report to the armoured brigade in an attempt to rebuild the armour strength of the regiments. The Grenadier Guards, whose tank strength had been reduced to 23 Sherman tanks, were grateful for the chance to obtain replacements but only ten were available. The Foot Guards could obtain only enough tanks and crews to operate with two squadrons of 12 tanks each.⁷⁵⁴ The 4 Cdn Armd Bde had a fighting strength of just 72 tanks to begin the next series of operations: one-third the tank strength it should have had.⁷⁵⁵

Now that the area north of the Laison River was in Allied hands, Rear HQ had to cope with the inevitable job of dealing with the division's dead. The B Echelon troops were tasked to provide work parties to clear the bodies from the tanks and to bury the dead of Worthington Force. Late in the evening of 16 August, the echelons crossed the Laison River and harboured near Rouvres. In the early hours of 17 August, the A echelon moved forward to provide an immediate delivery of the day's rations prior to the advance south.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵² Cassidy, *Warpath*, 130.

⁷⁵³ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 289.

⁷⁵⁴ Of these tanks seven had turrets which could only be hand operated French, *Some Reminiscences*, 73.

⁷⁵⁵ Minutes of the Morning Joint Conference 0830 hrs 17 August 1944, War diary, First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944 App 47.

⁷⁵⁶ French, *Some Reminiscences*, 73.

At 1700 hrs 16 August the orders changed again! Kitching issued new orders for OP “SMASH.” OP SMASH was the one operation where Kitching had a modicum of latitude to plan and execute how he wanted to achieve his objective, yet details of the operation have been poorly described and understood. The intention of OP SMASH was for 4th Cdn Armd Bde to capture Trun and firm up on the high ground north and northeast of the town. The ops logs of the 4th Cdn Armd Bde refer to the objective, as Antarctic, which according to the map traces found in the war diaries, was Pt 147 near Louvières en Auge.⁷⁵⁷

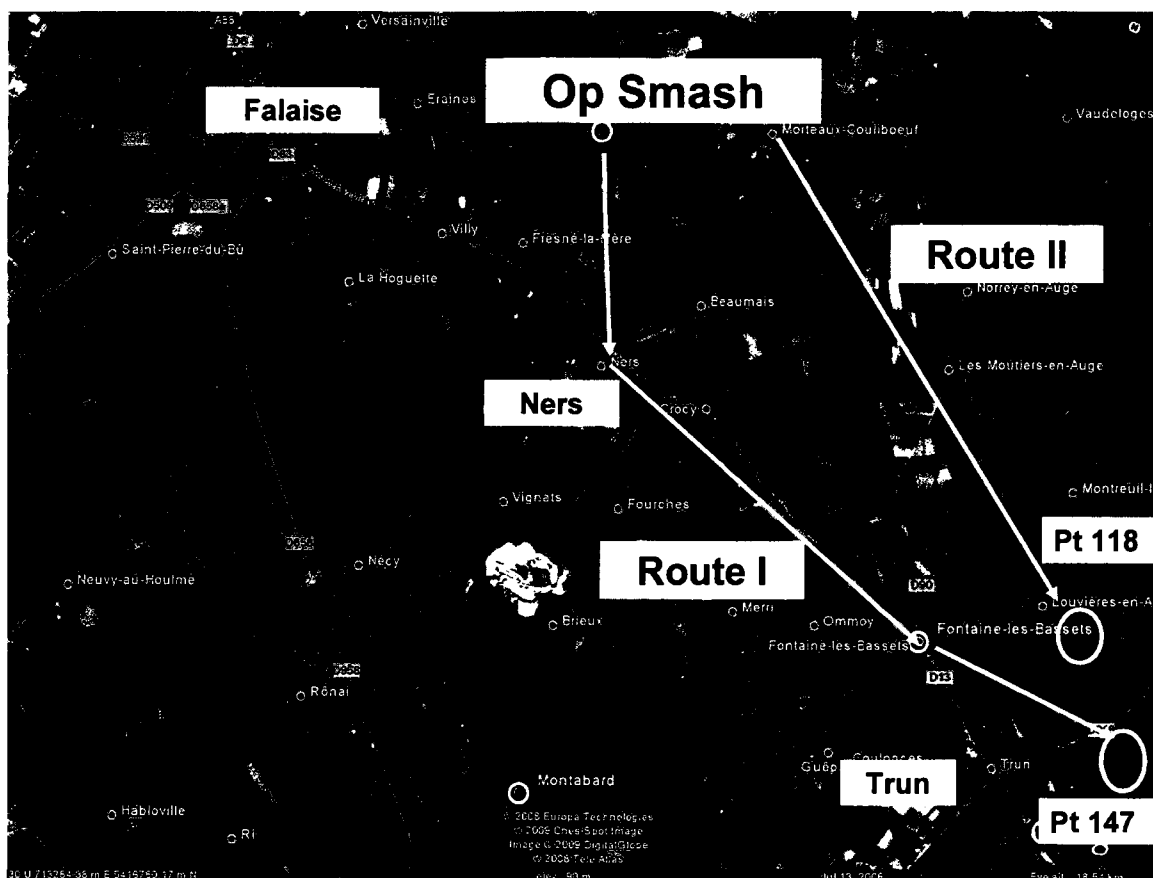
The 10th Cdn Inf Bde would seize a bridgehead over the Ante and Train Rivers. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde would pass through and advance on the main divisional objective—Trun.⁷⁵⁸ Kitching specified two routes for the advance: Route I (codenamed Irish) through Damblainville and Route II (codenamed Japan) through Morteaux Couliboeuf.⁷⁵⁹ There would be three phases to the attack. The first phase was the capture of the dominating, partly-wooded hill overlooking Damblainville; the second was the seizure of the village itself; and the third was the securing of yet another dominating feature 1,800 metres south of the river. A reconnaissance of the Dives River for crossings by 9th Field Sqn engineers resulted in a recommendation that the Damblainville crossing

⁷⁵⁷This objective was at odds with information in the First Cdn Army war diary which identified the high ground immediately southwest of the town of Trun as the objective of the Division’s advance. The specific grid reference given was (grid 309297) which is south of Trun. A message from the First Cdn Army Liaison officer to 2nd Corps at 1130 hrs reported the following expected disposition of the two divisions by evening of 17 August: 4th Cdn Armd Div on the high ground south of Trun and the Polish Armd Div in the area north of Trun. These reports were logged prior to the switch in the Division’s advance from Damblainville to Morteaux-Couliboeuf and south. Ops Log 17 August serial 57, War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944.

⁷⁵⁸ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 16 Aug.

⁷⁵⁹There was a third implied route which ran from Falaise-Mandeville-Trun. The intent specified that, if Falaise was taken and the streets clear, the division was to advance through the town down along the Falaise-Trun highway to Trun. If these conditions were not satisfied, then the Division would move north and use Route I as the preferred choice. Notes “Op Smash.” War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 20.

be used since a bridge was found intact and a reconnaissance beyond the town found no Germans for at least another mile. The decision was made to go with Route I. The division would advance straight south to cut the main Falaise-Trun Road and then southeast to Trun.⁷⁶⁰



Map 22: Proposed Plan Op Smash. Google Maps capture.

The axis of advance to Antarctic for the Advance Guard was through Damblainville to Ners then southeast along the Falaise-Trun road to Fontaine les Bassets where the Advance Guard would cross the Dives River above Trun and advance to Pt 147.⁷⁶¹ No specific axis of advance was identified for Route II beyond Coulibouef. The

⁷⁶⁰ Rollefson, *Green Route Up*, 33.

⁷⁶¹ Map Trace Op SMASH War Diary, the Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, App 7.

orders stipulated that the route would either be cross-country or through Trun to the final objectives. The route was to be picked by the Advance Guard.⁷⁶²

The final objectives for the three armoured regiments lay northeast of Trun along the Trun-Vimoutiers road. The BCR was assigned Pt 147 on the south side of the highway and the Foot Guards and Grenadier Guards were assigned the high ground between Louvières-en-Auge and Hordouseaux on the north side of the highway. The infantry of 10th Cdn Inf Bde were tasked to follow behind the armoured regiments but no specific objectives were found in the available sources.⁷⁶³

Waiting for the outcome of the 2nd Cdn Inf Div attack on Falaise delayed the deployment of 4th Cdn Armd Div in preparation for OP SMASH. The only units that were authorized to move were those tasked with securing the river crossing for the two proposed routes. The Argylls were directed to move at once from Perrières to the high wooded hill north of Damblainville and to be ready to press on into the village and cross the Ante.⁷⁶⁴ Mounted in armoured half-tracks and accompanied by C Sqn SAR, the battalion moved southeast from Perrières at 1800 hours and reached their hill without being opposed. Patrols reported Damblainville to be undefended, although enemy tanks were passing through it. Jefferson had also sent a small mobile force from the Algonquin Regiment from Tassily to capture the single-track bridge across the Dives at Couliboeuf, in accordance with Kitching's plan, with a view to using it should the attack to the south

⁷⁶² Hand written notes of the orders for OP SMASH. War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, App 20.

⁷⁶³ Hand written notes of the orders for Op Smash. Ibid., App 20.

⁷⁶⁴ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug; War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 16 Aug.

of Damblainville fail.⁷⁶⁵ The Algonquins found the bridge intact and seized it unopposed.⁷⁶⁶ Once it was clear that the Falaise route was not possible, the division began to move towards Route I.

The current narratives of the Normandy campaign fail to appreciate the significant amount of change that the senior leadership of 4th Cdn Armd Div had to deal with on 16 and 17 August. The number of O Groups as recorded in the Lake Superior Regiment War Diary highlights this fact. The first brigade O Group occurred at 0030 hrs 16 August with orders for the renewed attack to take Falaise. Keane conducted his own O Group and the companies of the battalion reported themselves ready in position for the anticipated attack by early morning. The next Brigade O Group was at 1400 hrs and detailed Simonds' new intent, which was the move south and the link up with the Americans. The objective for the division was now to dominate the high ground from Pt 241 to Pt 252 at Moutabard along the Falaise-Argentan road. Associated with these orders was the task of linking up with the Poles at Trun. Kitching held his third division O Group in less than 20 hours at 1700 hrs where the details of OP SMASH were briefed and the task of capturing the bridgehead at Damblainville and the alternate bridge at Couliboeuf were outlined.⁷⁶⁷ At 2000 hrs, Keane was once again called to a Brigade O Group where OP SMASH was briefed. Keane's O Group for this third change in orders took place at 0330 hrs 17 August.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁵ If the main attack was successful, the Algonquins were to clear the west side of the River and meet up with the Argylls south at Damblainville Ops Log 17 August serial 47. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army-General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, App 74.

⁷⁶⁶ CMHQ Report No. 169, para 154.

⁷⁶⁷ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 16 Aug.

⁷⁶⁸ War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entries 15-17 Aug. In his memoirs Kitching only mentions one O Group with Simonds on 16 August at 0900 hrs. Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 200.

Advanced units of 10 Cdn Inf Bde started moving at 0100 hrs with the rest of the brigade moving at 0600 hrs. The armoured brigade began its move at 0900 hrs. Difficulty in moving forward developed early as elements of 3rd Cdn Inf Div and other formations cut into the route designated exclusively for the armoured division.⁷⁶⁹ This situation backed up the division columns and provided easy targets for German artillery and the Luftwaffe which made a rare daylight attack.

At 0730 hours, the combined force of Argylls and SAR descended quickly on Damblainville and captured the town without much trouble. The town, riverbank and bridge over the Ante River were all seized and consolidated within an hour. Around noon, A and C Squadrons of the SAR and the Algonquins moved through the town toward the next objective. The leading infantry managed to advance about 1,000 yards south of the bridge before they were pinned down by accurate German machine gun, artillery and anti-tank fire. Accurate mortar and artillery also fell on the town. Elements in the column behind the town tried to deploy off the road and disperse but the town provided little room for manoeuvre and casualties mounted. The Algonquin Regiment was ordered to firm up in Damblainville alongside the Argylls.⁷⁷⁰

The advanced guard of the armoured brigade passed through and tried several times to push on to the heights.⁷⁷¹ The Germans let the personnel carriers move freely but as soon as the tanks moved they came under immediate German fire.⁷⁷² It was now clear to Kitching that the Germans were determined to resist any attempt to move on Trun

⁷⁶⁹ Proctor had assigned officers along the route to control the traffic. These officers were in wireless communications but they had not counted on the use of the road by other units. War Diary, 4 Cdn Arm'd Div-AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug.

⁷⁷⁰ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug.

⁷⁷¹ The advanced guard was a combined arms battle group based on A Company of the Lake Superior Regt with B Squadron of the BCR under command. War Diary, the Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug.

⁷⁷² Meyer, *History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 192.

from the Damblainville bridgehead and that any advance in that direction would require a major attack.

At 1130 hrs Kitching issued a warning order to change the route to Route II and at 1203 hrs the Grenadier Guards were ordered to move to “Japan and proceed to Antarctic.”⁷⁷³ The 4th Cdn Armd Bde would lead the attack. Changing the direction of an armoured division's attack while part of the division is engaged in battle is a formidable assignment. This task was made even harder by the lack of good roads in the area. The change in orders involved an extraordinary manoeuvre on the part of Wigle, Proctor and the division's transport in the shortest of time.⁷⁷⁴

Fortunately, the armoured regiments had not been committed at Damblainville but were grouped behind the hill north of the city. The tactical situation meant that the Grenadier Guards and Foot Guards would have to proceed without their normal complement of supporting infantry from the Lake Superior Regiment, since the latter had already been committed at Damblainville. There was a large risk to the armoured regiments, particularly with the approach of night, but Kitching was prepared to accept the risk.⁷⁷⁵

The division unscrambled itself and moved to the new bridge, “if not in an orderly fashion, at least in control.”⁷⁷⁶ Wigle passed new instructions to the armoured brigade and then proceeded to the bridge at Couliboeuf where he personally briefed the regiment commanders on the general situation as they passed through. Maj M.R. Ware (GSO II)

⁷⁷³ Pt 118 and Pt 147 are opposite each other with Pt 118 north of the Trun –Vimoutiers Highway and Pt 147 south of the Highway. One explanation for the two points being recorded as ANTARCTIC is that Pt 118 may have been an intermediate objective on the way to Pt 147. Another is that the two hills combined represented the final objective. Op Log 17 August serials 41 & 53. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁷⁷⁴ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug.

⁷⁷⁵ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 202.

⁷⁷⁶ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug.

and Capt J.A. Berthiaume (GSO III Ops) controlled the disengagement at Damblainville and the re-routing of the armoured brigade to Couliboeuf. The vanguard was ordered to keep the Germans engaged at Damblainville while the remainder of the forces were withdrawn and re-routed through Couliboeuf to Pt 118 above Trun.⁷⁷⁷ The Damblainville position would be taken over by 9th Cdn Inf Bde.

The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to disengage at Damblainville, follow the armour across the river and protect the division's right flank (i.e. the northern bank of the Dives River) from Morteaux Couliboeuf to the area Fontaine Les Bassels. The infantry brigade was able to disengage under cover of artillery fire from the 15th Field Regiment.⁷⁷⁸ The proposed disposition of the infantry brigade had the Lincs on Pt 65, Argylls on Pt 64 and Algonquins Pt 78, which placed the infantry brigade astride the high ground to Trun along the route of the Dives River.⁷⁷⁹ The Lincoln & Welland Regiment was subsequently ordered to Pt 104, located approximately 4.5 miles northwest of Trun.

By 1600 hours the Grenadier Guards were across the bridge, followed closely by the Foot Guards. Once across the river, the tanks fanned out to the south and southeast. By early evening, the Grenadier Guards had captured Pt 118 on the outskirts of Trun but, having no infantry, the regiment arranged their tanks in an all-round defense with all possible personnel in front on foot patrols. The remainder of the brigade made good progress. The Foot Guards consolidated on the hill a mile and a half northwest of Le Marais-la-Chapelle, while the BCR harboured in Les Moutiers-en-Auge for the night.⁷⁸⁰ Another regimental commander was lost when the commanding officer of the Foot

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ Spencer, *History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment*, 115.

⁷⁷⁹ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Jun.

⁷⁸⁰ See the war diary entries for the three armoured regiments on 17 August.

Guards, Maj H.F. Baker, who had just taken over command the previous day, was seriously wounded when conducting a forward reconnaissance. Command of the regiment went to Capt G.T. Baylay.⁷⁸¹ The tactical gamble to send the armoured regiments without infantry support had, however, succeeded. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde was in the German rear area without their knowledge and the divisions' echelon forces were able to retain contact with the regiments and were able to come forward on demand to re-supply the tanks.

Once Kitching made the decision to switch from Route I to Route II, the issue of the axis of advance had to be decided upon. Using Route II meant that the division would be on the opposite side of the Dives River from that originally planned and in the area of operations allocated to the Poles. The 4th Cdn Armd Div war diary records a "hasty" conference with Simonds at this point. Most of the current narratives state that the conference was to seek Simonds' approval for the switch to Couliboeuf.⁷⁸² Since this route was already part of the approved OP SMASH plan, the more likely scenario is that Kitching was trying to establish the new boundaries between the two divisions and to decide whether new objectives had to be identified for his armoured regiments. The Poles had been ordered to take Norry-en-Auge and Hills 159 and 259. The two divisions would now be travelling beside each other with no physical boundaries between them as before. In addition the 4th Cdn Armd Div objectives were initially deeper in enemy territory. This changed at 1750 hrs, however, when Simonds ordered the Poles to capture Chambois.⁷⁸³

⁷⁸¹ Major Ed Smith from the Grenadier Guards was ordered to take command of the Foot Guards the following day. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 21.

⁷⁸² The 2nd Cdn Corps war diary records visits by Simonds to 4 Cdn Armd Div HQ and 1 Pol Armd Div HQ at 1030 hrs. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug.

⁷⁸³ Stanislaw Maczek, "The 1st Polish Armoured Division in Normandy," 65.

The 4th Cdn Armd Div would no longer have the benefit of travelling over a main highway. The axis of advance had the Dives River on the right and the Poles on the left. The frontage provided about 2,000 yards of manoeuvre room but the Canadian armour would now have to travel over secondary roads through terrain that had plenty of woods, rolling hills and hamlets which provided excellent concealment for the Germans along the line of advance. Flanking the advance route were the hills on the western side of the Dives, which were still in German hands. In addition, the tanks would have to traverse two additional water obstacles that bisected the line of advance.

By the afternoon of 17 August, Montgomery was quite unhappy with the rate of the advance and at 1445 hrs new orders were issued to First Cdn Army.

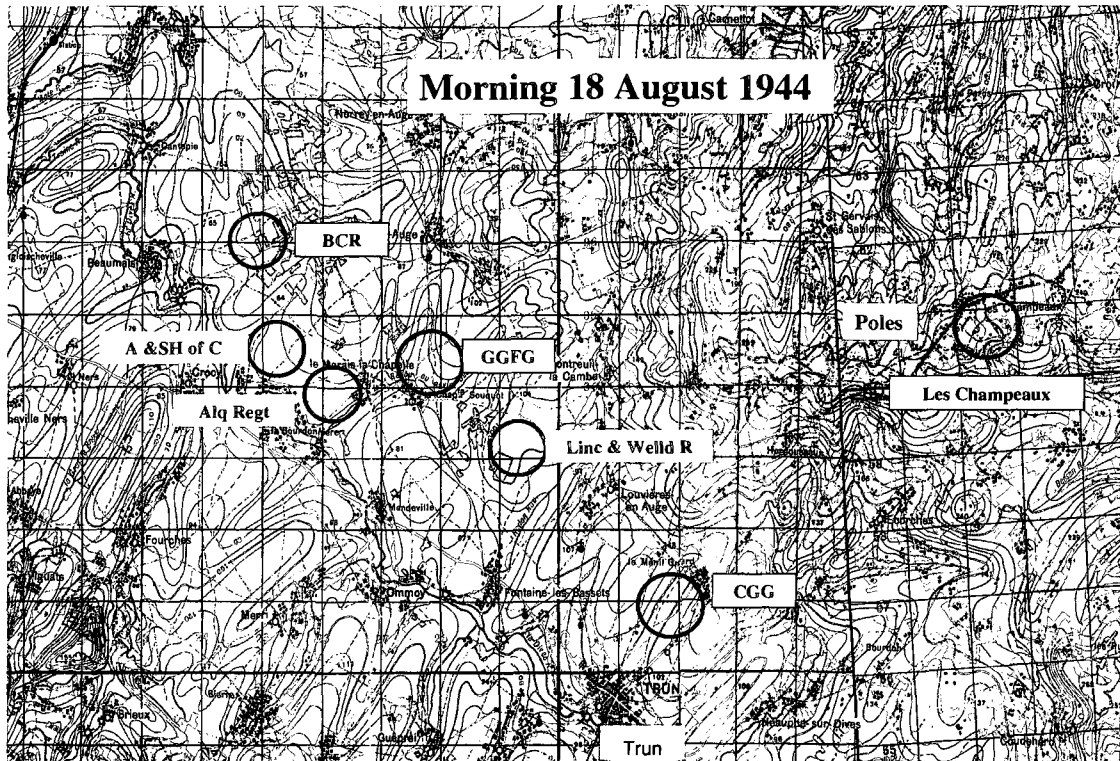
By direction C-in-C [Montgomery] 1 Pol Armd Div has been ordered to thrust on Chambois. Essential to push on greatest possible speed regardless of losses in order to close the gap. 4 Cdn Armd Div continuing thrust on Trun.⁷⁸⁴

This is the first reference to any move of 2nd Cdn Corps units to Chambois. As late as 1837 hrs, 4th Cdn Armd Div was reporting that it intended to establish a firm base in the area Norrey-en-Auge to Mandeville.⁷⁸⁵ At 1945 hrs, Simonds issued specific orders for 4th Cdn Armd Div to capture Trun that night.⁷⁸⁶ In order to facilitate the task, 3rd Div was ordered to relieve the units of 10th Cdn Inf Bde, still in the Morteaux Couliboeuf area. This move would allow 4th Cdn Armd Div to concentrate and re-form itself.

⁷⁸⁴ Ops Log 17 August, serial 27, War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944.

⁷⁸⁵ Ops Log 17 August, serial 141, Ibid.

⁷⁸⁶ Ops Log 17 August, serial 144, Ibid.



Map 23: Disposition of 4 Cdn Armd Division units morning 18 August 1944.

The 4th Cdn Armd Bde Operations Log for 17 August revealed a much firmer control of the brigade by Halpenny. The rapid advance, however, had carried the armoured regiments beyond radio range of the armoured brigade headquarters.⁷⁸⁷

Communications were further hampered by the hills and valley of the Trun area. The division had been ordered to capture Trun and was also ordered to send one armoured regiment to cut the Trun-Vimoutiers Road.⁷⁸⁸ Kitching ordered Trun captured during the night and ordered 4th Cdn Armd Bde to execute the attack.⁷⁸⁹ Without infantry, however, the attack could not proceed so the armoured regiments waited for the arrival of the Lake Superior Regiment.

⁷⁸⁷ Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 278.

⁷⁸⁸ Message GO 144 SITREP 172100B Main First Cdn Army to Third US Army. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army- General Staff, 1-31 August 1944.

⁷⁸⁹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug.

On the German side, 277th and 271st Inf Div and elements of 12th SS Pz Div were quickly disintegrating. The 85th Inf Div was being pushed out of the pocket by the Allied advance, which meant that the remaining elements of 12th SS Pz Div had to withstand the brunt of the Canadian and Polish advance. The fate of the German armies depended on their ability to hold open the seven-km stretch between Trun and Chambois. Elements of 21st Pz Div, battle groups Luck and Rauch were subordinated to 12th SS Pz Div and had orders to launch counterattacks with the aim of holding open an east-west passage through the road crossing at Trun. Battle group Luck would bear the brunt of the 4th Cdn Armd Div attack against Trun.⁷⁹⁰

On 18 August, Field Marshal Model relieved von Kluge and took over command of the German forces in the West.⁷⁹¹ Model formulated a plan for the extraction of the remaining German forces. His first task was to re-establish a coherent front. The 2nd SS Pz Corps with the remnants of 2nd, 9th, 21st Pz Div along with 12th SS Pz Div was to hold the northern portion of the escape corridor in an attempt to prevent the 2nd Cdn Corps from advancing over the Dives River and was ordered to recapture the ground already lost in the Morteaux-Couliboeuf area. The southern wall of the corridor was to be held by the 47th Pz Corps with the 2nd and 116th Pz Div.⁷⁹² The 2nd SS Pz Corps was ordered to

⁷⁹⁰ Robert John Sauer, "Germany's I SS Panzer Corps: Defensive Armored Operations in France, June-September 1944" (PhD, Boston College), 400-404.

⁷⁹¹ Model saw himself at the head of two Army Groups: Army Group B and Army Group G, of which Army Group B controlled the Armed Forces Command Netherlands, Fifteenth Army, Seventh Army and Fifth Panzer Army, while Army Group G controlled First Army and Nineteenth Army. Canada. Army, *Army Headquarters Report No. 77, The Campaign in Northwest Europe: Information from German Sources Part IV: Higher Direction of Operations from Falaise Debacle to Ardennes Offensive (20 Aug- 16 Dec 44)* (Ottawa: Army Headquarters, 31 March 1958), 3.

⁷⁹² Notes on Conference with Field Marshal Model 18 Aug 44. AHQ Report No 50, M274.

position itself near Vimoutiers as soon as possible. The orders were for the armoured formations to get away first, leaving the infantry divisions to the last.⁷⁹³

Inside the Pocket, the remnants of the once powerful Fifth Panzer Army and Seventh Army, were trying to extricate themselves as best they could.⁷⁹⁴ The major road along the valley of the Dives led through Trun, St. Lambert sur Dives and Chambois. To the south, the highway leading from Falaise southeastward to Argentan was under shellfire.⁷⁹⁵ In between were numerous smaller roads. German tanks and half-tracked vehicles were not road-bound and could use the open fields to escape. Model's problem was compounded by the fact that the skies were clear, the Allied air forces were on the prowl and he had run out of time.⁷⁹⁶

Simonds intent for operations on 18 August was to link up with the Americans and hold the Dives River line.⁷⁹⁷ At first light, No 1 and No 3 Squadrons of the Grenadier Guards moved southeast to occupy the area around Pt 147 and reported themselves on ANTARCTIC, their objective, at 0741 hrs.⁷⁹⁸ They made their presence known to the unsuspecting retreating German columns by engaging targets. At 1000 hrs, radio contact was re-established with brigade HQ. The BCR reported gaining contact with the

⁷⁹³ They had been prohibited from travelling during the day to this date. G1-301 ISUM No 39 Information to 181300B. Ops Log 18 August serial 112. War Diary, HQ 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁷⁹⁴ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 298.

⁷⁹⁵ This road would be completely cut on 19 August by American and French divisions.

⁷⁹⁶ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 298.

⁷⁹⁷ Ops Log, 17 August, Ops message no.13, G Ops 2 Cdn Corps Main 172225B. War Diary, First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944.

⁷⁹⁸ There seems to be considerable confusion as to where ANTARCTIC actually was. According to the Canadian Grenadier Guards history ANTARCTIC was Pt 147 on the eastern side of the Trun-Vimoutier road near les Menil Girard. ANTARCTIC according to the operation order for OP SMASH was the high ground south west of Trun at grid reference 3029. Antarctic according to the Lake Superior map traces is Pt 118. There is considerable confusion over the 4 Cdn Armd Bde ops net when the Grenadier Guards declares themselves on ANTARCTIC early in the morning. They are on Pt 147. It is unclear whether the code words were changed or whether there was an error in calling Pt 147 ANTARCTIC. Ops Log 18 August serial 15. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5; Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, map 26.

Grenadier Guards at 1019 hrs but they arrived short of fuel, ammunition and water and at 1045 hrs an immediate request was sent for re-supply. Their A echelon came forward and re-supplied the regiment.⁷⁹⁹

The Lake Superior Regiment's C Coy and the BCR reached ANTARCTIC with little opposition and then pushed boldly into Trun but were forced to withdraw temporarily when American aircraft bombed the town. Trun remained lightly held until the arrival of elements of 10th Cdn Inf Bde.⁸⁰⁰ In the meantime, the remaining armour swept eastwards and by 1200 hrs occupied the dominating feature northwest of Le Mesnil Girard. On arrival, the Foot Guards found the objective occupied by a motor battalion of the 1st Pol Armd Div. Liaison was established with the Poles and the regiment deployed in fire positions commanding the Falaise-Trun and Trun-Vimoutières roads.⁸⁰¹

The 10th Cdn Inf Bde had made slow progress through the wooded hills southeast of Morteaux the previous evening. The Algonquin Regiment, with the support of B Sqn SAR, took their initial objective of La Marais la Chapelle at 0700 hrs against light opposition. By 1000 hours the remainder of the brigade had established positions on the east side of the Dives River from Morteaux-Couliboef to Le Marais la Chapelle.⁸⁰² In less than twelve hours the division had executed an improvised advance over complex terrain into the heart of the gap. By early morning the infantry of the Lake Superior Regiment had married up with their respective armoured regiments.⁸⁰³ The stage was now set for Kitching to solidify the division's gains.

⁷⁹⁹ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 18 August. Ops Log 18 August serial 45, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 5.

⁸⁰⁰ In this case the Lake Sup Regt war diary states that ANTARCTIC is the heights over looking Trun. War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 18 Aug.

⁸⁰¹ Baylay, *the Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 120.

⁸⁰² War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 18 Aug.

⁸⁰³ A Coy under command GGFG, B Coy under command CGG and C Coy under command of the BCR.

At 1000 hrs, 18 August Kitching held his O Group outlining his plan to firm up the occupation of the east bank of the Dives River from Morteaux Couliboeuf to Trun. Late in the evening of 17 August he received instructions ordering him to get into position in the area Trun –Lemarais la Chapelle- Louvieres en Auge.⁸⁰⁴ The three infantry battalions of the 10 Cdn Inf Bde would hold the east bank of the river while the armoured regiments of 4th Cdn Armd Bde arrayed themselves in depth behind the infantry on the high ground to the east in a counter-attack role. Trun was to be occupied by the Lake Superior Regiment and one armoured regiment. The artillery was to concentrate in the area Montreuil la Combe-Louviers-en-Auge.⁸⁰⁵

At 1400 hrs, a combined force from the Grenadier Guards and Lake Superior Regiment attacked south from their position on Pt 147 to cut off the approach to Trun from the southeast. The attack succeeded and the infantry went to ground while the tanks advanced to Trun from the south where they met members of the Argylls who informed them that they were in Trun. The Grenadier Guard tanks repositioned themselves on the rising ground 1,000 yds from the Trun crossroads and began to engage targets of opportunity across and up the valley.⁸⁰⁶ The BCR consolidated a strong position south of Hordouseaux.

The Lincoln & Welland Regiment advanced to relieve the Grenadier Guards in Trun with under command A Sqn SAR and supporting troops. The main column moved off at 1300 hrs and proceeded through Montreuil la Cambe, Louvieres-en-Auge and into Trun. By 1500 hrs, the battalion, with the support of tanks and anti-tank guns, had turned

⁸⁰⁴ Ops Log 17 August, Appendix to Log -From 2 Cdn Corps 172315B, 17 Aug 44, War Diary, Main HQ 2nd Cdn Inf Div, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁰⁵ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 18 Aug.

⁸⁰⁶ Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 279.

the town into a Canadian strong point.⁸⁰⁷ German columns continued to head to the town, unaware that it was in Canadian hands and by evening more than 500 prisoners had been captured.

The 4th Cdn Armd Bde had now established itself in Trun astride the main road to Vimoutiers as directed by Simonds. This disposition strategically placed the brigade in a position to deal with any Germans who might attempt to escape northeast through Trun and any of the secondary roads to Vimoutiers.⁸⁰⁸ The 4th Cdn Armd Div was now arrayed in accordance with the disposition identified in OP SMASH.

The operations on 17 and 18 August demonstrated the flexibility, professional competence and growing maturity of Kitching, his staff and the formations within 4 Cdn Armd Div. The professional manner in which the division switched to Route 2 once Kitching realized that further attempts to advance through Damblainville would be costly is a testament to the training of the staff members who were able to orchestrate the switch in such a manner that the armoured brigade could still continue the attack late into the day. The 4 Cdn Armd Bde attack was not simply a made dash for ground but a coherent advance where the echelon forces were able to advance and conduct re-supply when called upon. The success of the advance is even more impressive when one considers that the armoured brigade and all three armoured regiments were commanded by people whose time in command was measured in days at best! This successful advance is indicative of a division that was being effectively commanded and controlled at all levels.

⁸⁰⁷ A Company was deployed on the road to Falaise, B Company on the road to Argentan, C Company on the road to St. Lambert-sur-Dives and D Company covered the road to Vimoutiers. Tanks and anti-tank guns were disposed to make strong points within the town and to cover the approaches to the Dives River from the east. War Diary, The Lincoln and Welland Regiment 1-31 August 1944, entry 18 Aug. Rogers, *History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment*, 156

⁸⁰⁸ War Diary, British Columbia Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 18 Aug.

While the division was executing Kitching's plans for the occupation of the Morteaux Couliboeuf to Trun area Simonds summoned his four division commanders to an O Group at Kitching's headquarters. Earlier in the day, Crerar had ordered Simonds to seal off the front from Trun to Chambois and, anticipating that the German forces in the pocket would soon be destroyed, Simonds was also to carry out active reconnaissance to the northeast in the direction of Vimoutiers. Simonds' plan was for 2nd Cdn Div to mop up Falaise, for 3rd Cdn Inf Div to take over the east bank of the Dives River from Morteaux-Couliboeuf to Trun, while 4th Cdn Armd Div advanced southeast from Trun on Chambois. The 1st Pol Armd Div was to advance southwest from the area of Les Champeaux to Chambois and link up with the U.S. forces.⁸⁰⁹

Kitching was to carry out his part of this operation the next day, 19 August, as soon as the division had cleared the enemy from the area north and northwest of Trun. To undertake this clearing task, Simonds ordered that 4th Cdn Armd Bde and the Algonquin Regiment, which were moving in accordance with Kitching's plan, "to deploy in an area about two miles north of it," on the axis Trun-Vimoutiers and away from the Trun-St. Lambert line.⁸¹⁰ Simonds' orders entailed, as Kitching later recalled, changes to the orders he had already issued to the two brigades that morning and a significant redeployment of his forces.⁸¹¹

This constant change in plans was frustrating Kitching and he knew this situation was having a detrimental effect on his division. Two days earlier, the division plan was changed three times in the span of 24 hours. Once again, he had to countermand orders

⁸⁰⁹ The orders as recorded in the 4 Cdn Armd Div war diary indicate that the entire division was to proceed south to Chambois. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, 18 Aug.

⁸¹⁰ Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 279.

⁸¹¹ Kitching's commanding officers had already given orders to his officers to execute his plan for the defence of the Dives River. Graves, *South Albertas*, 138.

that he had already issued. He wrote in his memoirs that changes in a plan become more exhausting as they go down the chain of command and, as a result, his men must have wondered why he couldn't make up his mind.⁸¹²

Opinions vary as to whether the splitting of the division was to counter an anticipated German attack from outside the Trun-Vimoutiers area or whether this was Simonds' attempt to pre-position the division for the drive to Lisieux as per the direction he issued on 16 August.⁸¹³ These new moves on the part of the units of the armoured brigade were achieved with little enemy opposition but the disposition of the division's units was of great concern to Kitching. The greater part of his division, including the three armoured regiments of the armoured brigade, the Lake Superior Regiment and Algonquin Regiment were sent off to the northeast away from the Trun-St. Lambert-Moissy line. This left the three remaining units of 10th Cdn Inf Bde (the Lincs, Argylls and SAR) to carry out Simonds' orders to occupy the line of the Dives River south of Trun, a distance of some four and a half miles.⁸¹⁴

Moving 4th Cdn Armd Bde away from the Trun-Chambois line was accepting a considerable amount of operational risk. Simonds would have had to make significant assumptions about the combat capability of the German forces left in the Pocket in accepting this risk. Simonds must have felt confident, given his assessment of the tactical

⁸¹² It would be safe to assume that Kitching would have informed Simonds of his previous orders to his brigade commanders and that these new orders meant a significantly different deployment for his troops than the one he had already initiated for the defence of the Trun-St. Lambert line. Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 203.

⁸¹³ Prof Terry Copp argues that the decision to place 4 Armd Bde in defensive positions along the Trun-Vimoutiers highway instead of committing it to the closing of the gap between Trun and Chambois may have been the result of Ultra intelligence. "At 0916 18 August Ultra recipients were informed that 2nd SS Pz Corps had been ordered to clear up the situation resulting from the allied penetration northwest of Trun. This was to be accomplished by a concentric attack carried out by 2nd SS Pz Corps and two other panzer divisions directed on Trun from both inside and outside the pocket." Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 241.

⁸¹⁴ Graves, *South Albertas*, 143.

situation, in the risk involved in having the Dives River line held by minimum forces. The role of clearing the area north of the Trun-Vimoutiers road could have been assigned to 3rd Cdn Inf Div and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde which would have allowed Kitching to use the entire resources of his division to seal the Dives River line. Given the evolving tactical situation and the requirement to close all possible escape routes, it is odd that Simonds seemed to have placed a higher priority on clearing the Trun-Vimoutiers area over firmly sealing the Dives River line on 18 August. A coordinated thrust by the entire division to Chambois on 18 August represented a course of action with a high probability of success in taking the town and cutting off the main roads and bridges along the Dives River. Simonds orders of 18 August caused many routes to remain open and available to the Germans.

Simonds actions suggest two possible conclusions: he thought that the majority of the German units had escaped and those left in the pocket presented a marginal threat; or he felt that he had more time to accomplish the two tasks of clearing the area around Trun before he had to seal off the Dives River line. Simonds intent for operations on 19 August issued at 2140 hrs on 18 August would suggest the first conclusion is more probable.

On 17 Aug 2 Pz, 2 SS Pz, Pz Lehr, 26 Pz and 116 Pz divisions were reported east of the Dives. 9 and 10 SS Pz were still in the gap and 1 SS Pz and 12 SS Pz were reported as “no evidence” as to their location.⁸¹⁵ The 17 August report concluded that, “The enemy clearly intends to get out. He knows he is almost encircled and is trying to save what he can and take it over the SEINE.” The intelligence picture for 18 August is indicative of the uncertainty of the German strength in the pocket.

⁸¹⁵ First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary Number 50, Part II dated 17 August 1944, War Diary First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944.

The mystery of the bag continues today. Is he out? Is he in? If he is in, why is the bag so small in size? What has been passing NORTH of the BOIS DE GOUFFERN? If he is out, why is there a bag at all or why a gap?

The Germans were described as “beaten troops fleeing the field.” A captured soldier from 9 SS Pz Div provided a detailed report of the escape plan and order of march for the escaping formations which proved to be completely accurate. His information allowed Canadian intelligence to identify all of the known German panzer divisions. A detailed review of the evidence surrounding 12 SS Pz Div concluded that the division as a fighting formation –“no longer exists.”⁸¹⁶ The minutes of the Daily Joint Conference for 19 August indicated that 3 panzer divisions (1 SS, 9SS, and 10 SS Pz Divs) were “still in the bag.”⁸¹⁷

Insight into the mood at that time is provided by the 4 Cdn Armd Div Intelligence Summary for 2200 hrs 18 August which stated:

On both sides the pace has accelerated greatly during the past few days. As the enemy conc more and more on getting his armour out through the narrowing gap, so it becomes more difficult for him to maintain a steady withdrawal. As our pressure increased, time became the all important factor, and speed the enemy to order of the day. Today the speed has turned to haste, frantic haste, and the picture is one of disorganization.⁸¹⁸

Simonds ordered 2nd Cdn Corps to hold its present position and reorganize for the advance northeast.⁸¹⁹

The intelligence report for 19 August was very dismissive of the combat capability of the forces remaining in the pocket. It stated that for the Germans the battle for Normandy was lost and concluded that German intentions after “this decisive defeat”

⁸¹⁶ First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary Number 50, Part II dated 18 August 1944, War Diary First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸¹⁷ Minutes of the Morning Joint Conference 0830 hrs 19 August 1944, War diary, First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944 App 48.

⁸¹⁸ 4 Cdn Armd Div Int Summary Number [illegible] Based on infm up to 2200 hrs 18 Aug 44. War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 Aug 1944, App 6.

⁸¹⁹ Ops Log 19 August, serial 9, War Diary, Main HQ First Canadian Army, 1-31 August 1944.

were more political than military.⁸²⁰ Desperate food, ammunition and fuel shortages were highlighted. Even though panzer divisions were noted in the area of Vimoutiers it was concluded that even if they had fuel or the spirit to attack it was doubtful that they would.⁸²¹ This intelligence poorly served the Canadian commanders by establishing a false sense of security; dismissing the potential danger that still existed within the pocket.

Since Simonds had specifically tasked 4 Cdn Armd Bde to move northeast in the direction of Vimoutiers, Kitching only had the units of the depleted 10th Cdn Inf Bde to advance southeast towards Chambois. This new task placed an additional burden on his already stretched resources.⁸²² The SAR, less one squadron and plus one company from the Argylls, was given the task of taking Chambois. Wotherspoon assigned the lead to Maj D.V. Currie of C Squadron. At 1500hrs, a depleted B Coy Argylls of approximately 55 men came under command of Currie. Rather than waiting for the next day, the combined group was ordered to seize and hold Chambois before last light.⁸²³ Currie's squadron at this point was down to 15 tanks. The battle group got underway at 1800 hrs and reached St. Lambert-sur-Dives at dusk. Reports indicated that the town was strongly held by anti-tank guns and infantry. Currie was told, therefore, to wait until first light before clearing it. Wotherspoon decided to support Currie by moving down to Currie's position on Hill 117 with the remaining assets of the regiment.⁸²⁴

⁸²⁰ First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary Number 51, Part II dated 19 August 1944, War Diary First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸²¹ First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary Number 51, Part II dated 19 August 1944, War Diary First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸²² The 10 Cdn Inf Bde war diary states that the brigade was to seize and hold Chambois. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 18 Aug.

⁸²³ War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlander's of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entry 18 Aug.

⁸²⁴ This included his Regimental HQ of four tanks, recce troop, B Sqn and 4 M-10 self propelled anti-tank guns Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 240.

By mid-afternoon of 18 August, Trun was secure and the units of 4th Cdn Armd Div were on or approaching all of their new objectives, but the Poles had not yet captured Chambois. When Simonds met his division commanders for the second time that day at 1500 hrs, Maczek reported that the Koszutski battle group had gone astray and ended up at Les Champeaux, 10 km north of Chambois. It was short of ammunition and fuel and Maczek had sent one of his infantry battalions to assist it. The Polish Div recce regiment had reached the edge of Chambois but could not enter the town, which was under constant Allied air attack.⁸²⁵

By the end of the day, a strong blocking position had been established at Trun but the Argentan-Chambois-Vimoutiers highway (D113-D16) was still open, as were the secondary roads and lanes through St. Lambert and Moissy. German units continued to pour through this gap in the Allied line but not without consequence. The weather was clear and, during the daylight hours, these roads were ravaged by the Allied tactical air force.⁸²⁶

The 4th Cdn Armd Div engineers were charged with opening up the long lines of communications and were specifically tasked with opening up three routes: two maintenance routes into the area along the line Les Moutiers en Auge across to Menil Girard and one return route.⁸²⁷ The engineers were kept busy trying to clear the death and

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ The 2nd Tactical Air Force claimed 124 tanks destroyed and 96 damaged and 1,159 transport vehicles destroyed with a further 1,724 damaged. Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 257. A detailed examination of the impact of fighter and fighter bomber attacks on German vehicles during the Falaise gap timeframe was conducted by No 2 Operational Research Section of 21st Army Group. Their report is available in Chapter 3 of *Montgomery's Scientist*. Terry Copp, ed. *Montgomery's Scientists: Operational Research in Northwest Europe, The Work of No 2 Operational Research Section with 21 Army Group June 1944 to July 1945*. Waterloo: Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament studies, 2000.

⁸²⁷ In 2nd Cdn Corps each division was responsible for developing and the control of one two way traffic circuit between its administration and forward elements. Corps was responsible for the development and control of an additional route to be used primarily for operational moves. Memorandum, Control and

destruction along the many paths and roads to facilitate the movement of vehicles and maintenance columns.⁸²⁸ Despite the confused and scattered nature of the forces, the echelon forces were able to meet the calls of re-supply from the division's fighting units. Re-supplying St. Lambert became a difficult problem, given the nature of the fighting in and around the area but a system of back roads was found to keep the supplies moving into the town.⁸²⁹

The heaviest fighting on 19 August occurred in 10th Cdn Inf Bde's sector where the Germans were attempting to break out *en masse*. By early morning, it was evident that the main German escape effort would be along the Dives River line Trun-St. Lambert-Chambois. At 0635 hrs the 10th Cdn Inf Bde ops log reported a message from the SAR stating "attacking ROOSTER now" as Currie's composite force attacked the village of St. Lambert. The force was able to clear one half of the town but was unable to go further because of the Germans' superior numbers. Currie decided to consolidate his gains and establish his lines near the centre of town.⁸³⁰

At noon, the SAR was ordered to push on to Chambois. At 1300 hrs, the SAR contacted the Polish forces to their left and coordinated a plan in which the Poles would continue to Chambois while the SAR conducted a left flank attack to cut the road to Chambois by taking Pt 124. Wotherspoon sent B Sqn SAR to accomplish this task. The squadron would then be in a position to either support the Poles at Chambois or interdict

Naming of Routes 13 Aug 44 Main Headquarters 2nd Canadian Corps. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944, App 18.

⁸²⁸ Rollefson, *Green Route Up*, 34.

⁸²⁹ A shuttle system, similar to the one used on Hill 195, was again employed to bring the supplies into St. Lambert. The A-1 Echelon brought the supplies to Hill 117. The supplies were then configured into smaller loads, transferred to the decks of the crusader tanks of the SAR anti-aircraft troop and taken to the forward positions. A back route was found into St. Lambert through farm lanes to Currie's headquarters where, one by one, each of Currie's tanks could pull back to refuel and re-ammunition Graves, *South Albertas*, 146.

⁸³⁰ Rooster was the codename for St. Lambert. Ops Log 19 August, serial 7. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, War Diary, South Alberta Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 19 Aug.

the Chambois- Mont Ormel road.⁸³¹ An order from division to 10th Cdn Inf Bde stated that the SAR had to complete the attack today and, if necessary, another company was to be sent to help out in the attack. A subsequent message at 1500 hrs ordered the SAR to remain firm in St. Lambert and let the Poles deal with Chambois.⁸³²

Throughout the day, German infantry kept surging forward between Trun and Chambois. Currie asked for infantry reinforcements to help cope with the large number of prisoners that were coming into his PW cages. At 1400 hrs, a composite force of two companies of soldiers was sent from Trun to St. Lambert sur Dives to reinforce Currie's force.⁸³³ The detachment reached St. Lambert on foot and was integrated into the defences by 2200 hrs. Even with the additional reinforcements, Currie was forced to give up part of the village to tighten his defences.⁸³⁴

A telling indication of how the Canadian leadership was controlling the tactical battle exists in a summary of conversations between Simonds and the Chief of Staff, First Cdn Army, Brig C.C. Mann. The summary records the discussions between Mann and Simonds between 1040 and 1140 hrs 19 August. During the course of these

⁸³¹ Graves, *South Albertas*, 146.

⁸³² Wotherspoon claims that he sent the Poles on to Chambois when he realized that any advance beyond St. Lambert would result in his forces being cut off by the tide of advancing Germans. There are a couple of messages recorded in the 10 Cdn Inf Bde ops log for 19 August which could be interpreted to support this claim. Serial 12 at 1230 hrs orders the SAR to push on to Chambois, Serial 14 at 1300 hrs Friends on left [Poles] going straight to Cock. 29 Recce making left flank attack to cut road at cock and a message recorded at 1500 hrs which states "Liaise with friends and have friends take care of COCK [Chambois]. Remain firm at Rooster [St. Lambert]." Wotherspoon, Gordon Dorwood de Salaberry, "Interview for *Black Yesterday's* by Bill Wiley," (interview, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada Museum, Hamilton, 25 September 1986).

⁸³³ The detachment came from the Linc & Welld Regt, consisting of C Coy plus one platoon from D Coy and C Coy from the A & SH of C. See the war diaries for the Linc & Welld R and A & S H of C entries for 19 August 1944.

⁸³⁴ The fighting in St. Lambert sur Dives would last three days. The commander of the Canadian forces in the town was Major David Currie. Currie would win the Victoria Cross the first award of its kind to be won by a Canadian in North-West for leadership and actions. The citation for the award was written by Lt Col John Proctor who states that he had to write the narrative a number of times before it was finally accepted. War Diary, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment 1-31 August 1944, entry 19 Aug. Hayes, *The Lincs*, 38.

conversations, Simonds stated that he was about to leave for a meeting with his divisional commanders but he did not have a clear idea as to how he should operate “during today and in the immediate future.” Mann endeavoured to obtain direction from Crerar or Montgomery. Mann stated that he had not been in touch with Montgomery but that, in his opinion, the instructions would direct 2nd Cdn Corps to continue to close the Gap and keep it closed until Second Br Army was able to take over the task.⁸³⁵ This evidence would suggest that Simonds was having difficulty deciding whether he would tackle his two tasks (closing the gap and pursuit) sequentially and concentrate his forces accordingly or whether he would deal with them concurrently and divide his forces according to the traits of the divisions (i.e., armoured division for the pursuit and the infantry divisions for the defence of the Dives River line).

Simonds conferred with his four divisional commanders at Kitching’s main headquarters east of Morteaux-Couliboeuf at 1100 hrs on 19 August. His orders stated that the encirclement must be complete—no Germans were to escape. Once this was complete, the Corps would face east and pursue the retreating Germans. These orders would suggest that Simonds was planning to deal with his two tasks sequentially. In order to complete the encirclement, 2nd Cdn Inf Div was to take over the north portion of the 3rd Cdn Div area along the line of the Dives River. This would allow the 3rd Cdn Inf Div to strengthen its line and close all escape routes. The 4th Cdn Armd Div was to concentrate upon the area between Trun and Moissy on the Dives while the Poles would be

⁸³⁵ The timings of these conversations conflict with the O group timings. It is possible that the telephone conversations were recorded in actual time while the war diary timings are recorded as B time. As already noted there is a one hour difference between the two. Memorandum, Summary of Conversations with Comd 2 Cdn Corps and Chief of Staff 21 Army Grp, dated 19 Aug 44. War Diary, 1st Canadian Army-General Staff, 1-31 August 1944, App 74.

responsible for the area from Moissy to Chambois and Hill 262, a commanding height northeast of Chambois.⁸³⁶

The details of the 4 Cdn Armd Div orders demand closer scrutiny. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to relieve 10 Cdn Inf Bde in Trun during the night 19/20 August and in St Lambert sur Dives on 20 August. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to relieve 4 Cdn Armd Bde and 10 Cdn Inf Bde at Pt 258, Hordouseaux and Pt 259 during 20 August. 4 Cdn Armd Bde was to remain in its current area until relieved by 8 Cdn Inf Bde which was to occur during daylight 20 August. Simonds ordered the armoured brigade to “stand-down,” it would not be required for further operations before first light 21 August.⁸³⁷

Simonds’ orders for 10 Cdn Inf Bde are more interesting. The brigade units in St Lambert and Chambois were to concentrate in the area of Hordouseaux. The brigade was to provide two scout platoons mounted in carriers under command of A Sqn Manitoba Dragoons for a reconnaissance in force during 20 August along the projected division centreline Hordouseaux- Le Champeaux-Le [blank] La Fauvetiere- Vimoutiers. 10 Cdn Armd Bde was to have one battalion on wheels at “Instant readiness from 201000B hrs to take over corps localities when captured by 18 Cdn Armd Car R.” The remaining two battalions were placed on two hours notice to move to take over the captured areas along the centre line to Vimoutiers. The SAR once withdrawn from the Dives River line was to concentrate and stand down until first light 21 August.⁸³⁸ Based on Simonds orders for 20 August, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, on relief, was to stand down and 10 Cdn Inf Bde, on relief and concentration, was to support a reconnaissance in force by the Manitoba Dragoons

⁸³⁶ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 19 Aug; Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 260.

⁸³⁷ Hand written orders, Summary GOC’s O Grp subsequent intrs received from Comd 2 Cdn Corps, War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-31 August 1944, App 23.

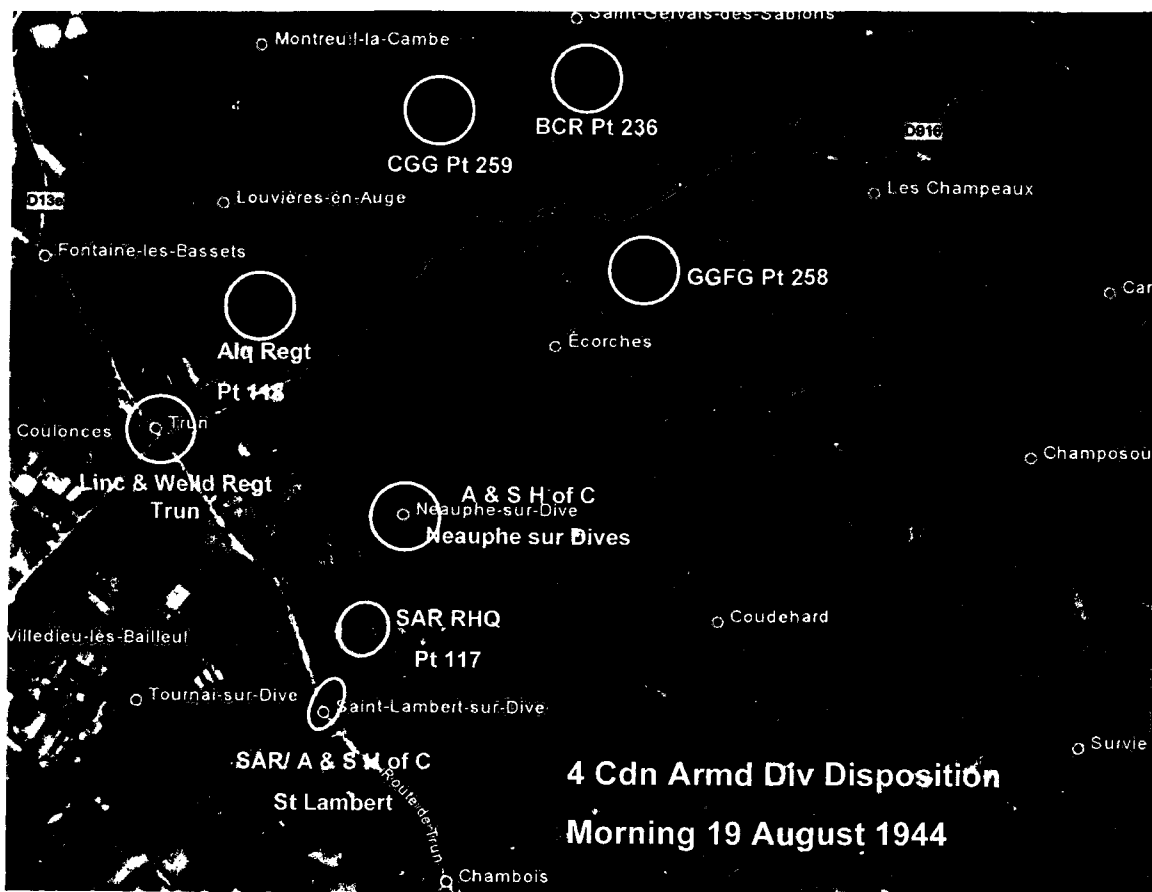
⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*

and if required launch an advance to take over captured positions without the support of any of the division's armour regiments since they had all been stood down.

These orders can only lead to one conclusion: Simonds believed that the threat from the German forces left in the gap was minimal. Otherwise his orders for standing down the armoured regiments of the division on 20 August do not make sense! The apparent intent was to extract the units of 4th Cdn Armd Div from their battles and reform the division for the drive to the Seine. Unfortunately, Simonds' plan was derailed by the slow execution of the planned reliefs, and the German intent to rescue as many of their trapped forces as possible. Kitching and his men were forced to improvise once again to meet the demands of a changed and complex tactical situation.

At 1130 hrs 19 August, 9th Cdn Inf Bde was informed that it was to relieve 10th Cdn Inf Bde in Trun on the night of 19-20 August and St. Lambert on 20 August.⁸³⁹ The 5th Cdn Inf Bde would relieve the 8th Cdn Inf Bde, who would then relieve 4th Cdn Armd Bde on 20 August. The delay in getting more infantry into the critical area of the defensive line along the Dives River meant that Jefferson's meagre forces would have to withstand the onslaught of the remaining Germans trying to escape.

⁸³⁹ This move was dependent on 6th Cdn Inf Bde relieving 9th Cdn Inf Bde, which was located around Beaumais. War Diary, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 19 Aug.



Map 24: Disposition of 4 Cdn Armoured Division Units Morning 19 August 1944. Google Maps capture.

As the intensity of the German breakout became apparent, Simonds finally realized the seriousness of the 10th Cdn Inf Bde position and began placing formations under Kitching's command to thicken up the defences along the Trun-St. Lambert-Chambois corridor. The 2nd Cdn Armd Bde was placed under command 4th Cdn Armd Div at 1300 hrs and two regiments were ordered to thicken up 10th Cdn Inf Bde defences in the Chambois-Trun area.⁸⁴⁰ In addition, A Sqn 18th Cdn Armd C Regt was detached and placed under Kitching's command. While this squadron was under command of Kitching, it came with an assigned mission to recce the area from Trun to Vimoutiers.

⁸⁴⁰ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 19 Aug.

Kitching was left to deal with the unfolding tactical situation with armour units when what he actually needed was infantry to fill gaps in his lines.

As the Poles pushed east and south to cut the road running northeast from Chambois and to seize Chambois itself, it quickly became apparent that the series of hills that dominated the highway would also have to be captured if the line that blocked the German retreat was to be made secure. By 1030 hrs, the Koszutski battle group in the Les Champeaux area had been re-supplied and soon after midday it set out for Pt 262 north. The Zgorzelski battle group secured Point 137 near Coudehard by midday, and the 24 Lancers then moved south towards Fr n e. At about the same time, the 1st Pol Armd Regt with the 9th Inf battalion and a company of anti-tank guns advanced towards the main Chambois-Vimoutiers road at Pt 262 north and Pt 252 located five km northeast of Chambois. By 1700 hrs, it had established itself on the north and east sides of the feature. While Pt 262 north and Coudehard became Polish strongholds, no one occupied Pt 262 south. It was through this Coudehard-Pt 137 corridor on the west side of Mont Ormel that many of the Germans (particularly 1st & 12th SS Pz Div personnel) who emerged from the St. Lambert and Moissy crossings would inevitably pass. The Polish position on Mont Ormel controlled its immediate environment but little else. Nonetheless, this position became a major impediment to the German breakout.⁸⁴¹

At 1930 hrs, the Polish 10th Dragoons, a motorized infantry battalion, moved off Pt 137, entered Chambois and shortly thereafter linked up with the American 2nd Battalion 359th Infantry Regiment. Despite the link-up, the defensive ring was far from closed. There were no Allied troops physically blocking the five-km stretch along the Dives River between Magny and Moissy. The vehicle crossings at Magny, St. Lambert

⁸⁴¹ Reynolds, *Steel Inferno*, 273-274.

and Moissy, although heavily shelled, were still open. This situation was further exacerbated when part of the French 2nd Armd Division, which had advanced to Frénée and the Chambois-Vimoutiers road by early evening, withdrew south of the Dives as darkness fell.⁸⁴²

Moncel finally arrived around noon 19 August to take over the armoured brigade, five days after Kitching initially asked for him.⁸⁴³ When he arrived at Bde HQ, he found that Chubb, (the brigade major) had the headquarters organized and after discussing the tactical situation with Halpenny, Moncel took over the brigade. Halpenny returned to his regiment and Moncel set out to visit the units.⁸⁴⁴

Kitching held an O Group at 1800 hrs to outline the operations for the following day. Based on Simonds' direction, Kitching was to orchestrate and control two entirely different types of battles in diverging directions: a defensive battle conducted by Jefferson and his reduced 10th Cdn Inf Bde along the Trun-Chambois road and an offensive battle on the part of Moncel and 4th Cdn Armd Bde in a north-easterly direction. Neither action supported the other. The armoured brigade was to advance to a

⁸⁴²Its commander seemed more interested in the liberation of Paris and did not want to get embroiled in a battle around Chambois from which he could not extricate himself. Ops Log 19 August, serial 109, War Diary, HQ 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁴³ The five-day delay in Moncel arriving at 4 Cdn Armd Bde had not been satisfactorily explained. Moncel claimed that he was not aware that he had been pre-selected to take over the brigade if it required a new commander. Moncel also stated that he was told in the morning and by noon he was at the brigade and in his letter to Dr Roy states that the date was 17 August but this is incorrect. Letter Lieutenant General R Moncel to Reg Roy dated 18 May 1981. All references to his taking command state that it happened on 19 August. See W.D. 22 Cdn Armd Reg, 1-31 August 1944, entry 19 August. A message dated 16 1320 B from Main HQ First Cdn Army stated that Moncel was to be appointed acting Brigadier with effective date 15 Aug. The appointment was recommended by Kitching and approved by Simonds. 1st Canadian Army, Message [Appointment of Lt Col Moncel to acting Brig], 16 Aug 44. Crerar Papers MG 30, E 157Vol 3, File 958C .009 (D178) GOC-in-C File 5-0-3 Vol I &II, Higher Command-Canadian Army Period 29 May 44 to 22 Dec 44. The war diary entry for 2 Cdn Corps for 17 August stated that Moncel was to take over command of 4 Cdn Armd Bde and that he was to be replaced by Lt Col Rothschild the BM of 2 Cdn Armd Bde. War Diary, General Staff- 2 Cdn Corps, 1-31 August 1944, entry 17 Aug.

⁸⁴⁴ Moncel was not happy with the deployment of the Lake Superior Regt and began by moving a company out to each armoured regiment. He also made sure that each armoured regiment had an anti-tank troop and that communications were in good order within the brigade. Moncel, *Letter [Comments on Draft Chapter]*. Reginald Roy Special Collection , University of Victoria.

position on the high ground overlooking Vimoutiers. The operation was to be done in two phases. In Phase I, the Foot Guards with under command A Coy Lake Superior Regiment were to advance to Pt 261 and be there by first light. They were then to capture the high ground astride the main road east of les Champeaux. On completion of this task, the BCR battle group, with its complement of infantry and anti-tank battery, would pass through and capture Pt 240. The Grenadier Guards would join the BCR on Pt 240 and firm up area. The Brigade would then start Phase II.⁸⁴⁵

On order, the Foot Guards would then pass through the firm base established in Phase I to capture Pt 227. The 10th Cdn Inf Bde would then pass through and establish a bridgehead over the Vie River. The Foot Guards and BCR were to move at 0600 hrs 20 August with the Grenadier Guards on one hour's notice from 0600 hrs. The operation, however, was dependent on the timely relief of both regiments.⁸⁴⁶

The 4th Cdn Armd Div sitrep for the period ending at midnight 19 August reported that, while reconnaissance elements had reached within 300 meters northwest of Chambois by 1930 hrs, the formal advance to Chambois by the SAR battle group was delayed by the heavy fighting for control of St. Lambert sur Dives. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment remained firmed up at Trun and the Algonquin Regiment was in the area of Horduseaux with one company in the village. The A & SH of C was in St. Lambert with C Sqn SAR. The regiments of the armoured brigade, each with one

⁸⁴⁵ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 19 Aug.

⁸⁴⁶ Since the SAR/Argyll battlegroup was not scheduled to be relieved until 20 August the 10 Cdn Inf Bde portion of this plan would have had to be carried out by the Alq R and those elements of the Linc & Welland R that had been relieved at Trun. This could explain in part why these infantry battalions were not committed to the fight at St. Lambert. Ibid.

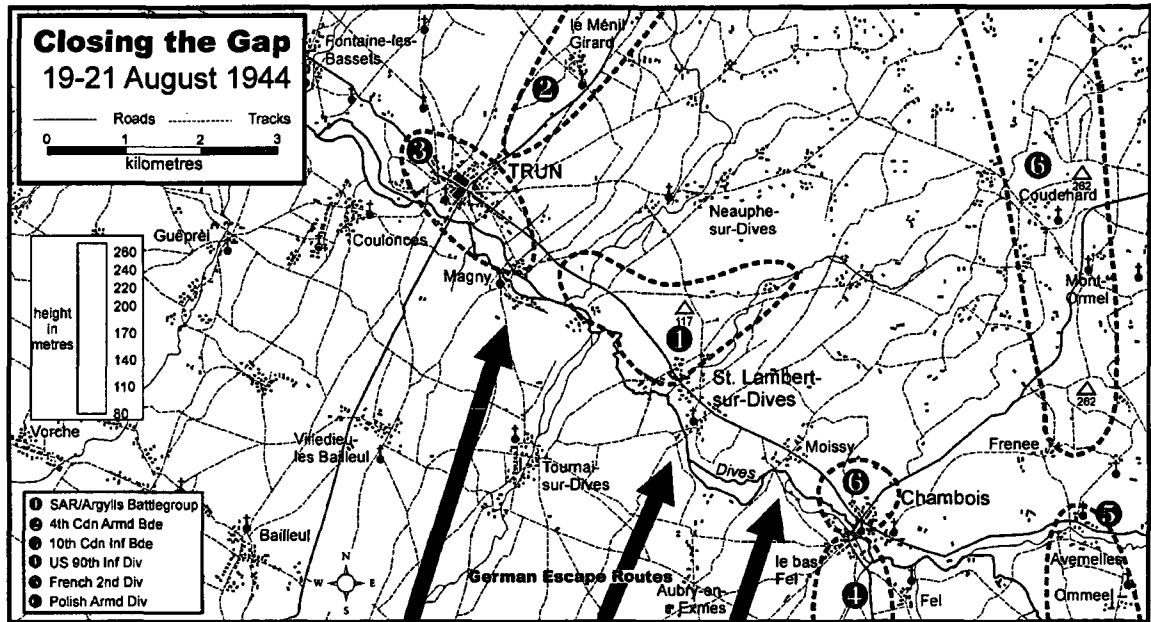
company of the Lake Superior Regiment in support, were firmed up in the area of Pt 259 and were refitting.⁸⁴⁷

Kitching was faced with a growing problem. First and foremost, the division had to seal the existing gap between Trun and Chambois. This task had been given to the SAR-Argyll battle group but the fighting was extremely heavy in and around St. Lambert and German infiltration continued. The expected reinforcements would not be arriving in time and, given the requirement to launch the advance towards Vimoutiers the following morning; Kitching had no more resources within his division to commit to the Dives Line. In addition, he now had to prepare for the expected attempts by the Germans to break through to the trapped forces inside the pocket from the east.

The second task assigned to the division was the re-establishment of communications with the Poles so that they could be supplied with ammunition, fuel and food. Hanging over all of this was the need to prepare for the pursuit of the Germans once the current battle was over.⁸⁴⁸ Attempting to accomplish these tasks simultaneously with the forces at hand was almost impossible. The situation for Kitching was made worse by the fact that Simonds was not only telling him what he wanted done but also which units were to execute his orders which, at times, was at odds with what Kitching was attempting to do. Kitching was trying to win the immediate fight and stop the remaining German forces from getting out of the Gap while Simonds was orchestrating the future battle space by trying to pre-position the division for the drive to the Seine. The two goals were incompatible and one had to suffer. What was needed was more infantry but the infantry brigades would not arrive for another day.

⁸⁴⁷4 Cdn Armd Div Sitrep 44 for period 191200 B to 192400B. Ops Log 19 August, serial 14, War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁴⁸ Cassidy, *Warpath*, 136.



Map 25: German Breakout 19-20 August 1944. Copp, *The Canadians Battlefields in Normandy*, 114.

In the early morning hours of 19-20 August, the remnants of Seventh German Army, with the 2nd Parachute Corps and Panzer Group Eberbach leading, began the breakout attempt.⁸⁴⁹ The internal attack would begin with two columns of paratroopers attacking across the Dives Rivers at Magny and St. Lambert, supported by the remaining elements of the 12th SS Pz Div. The 1st SS and 116th Pz Div would break through near Chambois while the rest of the German forces, 10th SS and 2nd SS Pz Div and elements of three infantry divisions were to form a third wave, securing the flanks and the rear as they withdrew. If all went well, the concentric attack would open the Chambois-Vimoutiers road so that both vehicles and men could escape.⁸⁵⁰ The breakout bid started at 2230 hours on 19 August.

⁸⁴⁹ German commanders had gained considerable experience on the Russian Front with breaking out of encirclements. They had developed an effective technique for this complex operation in Russia. The weakest point of the encirclement was selected. The point was then attacked from inside the pocket by the trapped troops and from outside the pocket by relief formations. Once a gap was opened, strong forces were used to hold the gap open to allow the trapped forces to escape. Graves, *South Albertas*, 151.

⁸⁵⁰ Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 247.

Waves of German infantry began moving against the Allied defensive line focussed on St. Lambert, Trun and Chambois at 0800 hrs 20 August. At first, the attacks made little headway. Eventually, the sheer volume of troops fighting to escape overwhelmed the defensive positions near St. Lambert enlarging the gaps in the interior ring enough to allow the extrication of portions of the 74th and 94th Corps. Heavy concentrations of Allied artillery fire and lack of fuel on the part of the Germans ensured that the escape would be carried out mainly on foot but the door had now been forced open.⁸⁵¹

At approximately 0400 hrs, 2nd SS Pz Corps began the second part of the breakout bid by attacking back into the Trun-Chambois area. The attack began from the area south of Vimoutiers and proceeded in the direction of Trun. The 9th SS Pz Div, advancing on the right, encountered parts of the 1st Pol Armd Div near St. Gervais and les Champeaux. On the left, the 2nd SS Pz Div attacked along the line Fresnay le Samson-Champosoult-Coudehard. At first the 2nd SS Pz Corps advance made good progress but it came to a stop in front of the range of hills, Hill 258 south of les Champeaux, Hill 240 at Ecouches and Hill 262 north of Coudehard.⁸⁵²

Along the Dives, the German advances were not coordinated attacks with proper fire support and deliberate tactics, but rather a mass of individually armed soldiers working in small groups trying to escape. The pressure was taxing on the fragile defensive disposition of 10th Cdn Inf Bde and considerable German infiltration occurred east and northeast of Trun and through St. Lambert. At 0845 hrs, Wotherspoon informed Brigade that, unless support arrived, he could be pushed out of his positions. As the

⁸⁵¹ AHQ Report No. 50, M 279; Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 262.

⁸⁵² Meyer, *The History of the 12th SS Panzer Division*, 199-200.

morning wore on, Currie was forced back from the southern and central parts of town and concentrated his infantry and remaining tanks at the northern end. Currie's force was saved in part by the fact that the Germans did not want to re-take the town but wanted to hold open a crossing of the Dives that would allow them to move east. Any German attempt to move up the D13 was effectively countered by Currie's force and massive concentrations of Canadian artillery fire. There were simply not enough infantry on the ground between 10th Cdn Inf Bde and the Poles to stop the German exodus or to seal the gaps in the Allied defensive line. The only Canadian counter was massive amounts of artillery and cannon fire on the avenues of German movement.⁸⁵³

Meanwhile, the desperately needed Canadian infantry reinforcements were still not available. Wotherspoon, who had expected the arrival of the needed infantry reinforcements the night before, sent a stream of messages asking for the promised reinforcements. Rockingham's 9th Cdn Inf Bde had not moved forward the previous night. The relief of his forces by 2nd Cdn Inf Div had been completed after dark and Rockingham decided to wait until morning. The brigade was formed up on the road ready to go at 0800 hrs when information started coming in of the German attacks. The Brigade had still not moved at 0945 hrs when the SAR request for assistance was passed on to 9th Bde.⁸⁵⁴ The Brigade's movement was slow, exacerbated by a lack of effective communication between the two brigades and conflicting reports as to the location of the

⁸⁵³ Graves, *South Albertas*, 154-158. Donald Graves provides a detailed account and analysis of the fighting in and around St. Lambert and in particular the actions of the SAR in *South Albertas*. See pages 128-176.

⁸⁵⁴ Ops Log 20 August, serial 7, War Diary, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

various 10th Cdn Inf Bde units. Consequently, 18th Cdn Armd C Regt was tasked to provide a liaison officer to facilitate the relief process.⁸⁵⁵

The 9th Cdn Inf Bde's relief of 10th Cdn Inf Bde troops began with the Lincs in Trun which was complete by 1000 hrs.⁸⁵⁶ Rockingham, instead of moving down the D 13 to St. Lambert, moved the remainder of the brigade to Neauphe sur Dives. The North Nova Scotia Highlanders assigned to take over St. Lambert were ordered instead to Neauphe sur Dives, two km north of St. Lambert. "They did not attempt to relieve the SAR until the fighting had died down that evening."⁸⁵⁷ The Highland Light Infantry of Canada who were waiting to link up with the 1st Hussars "were equally hesitant to get involved in this confused situation" and did not move forward until the next day.⁸⁵⁸ The 10 Cdn Inf Bde was on its own.

Meanwhile, in accordance with orders received the previous evening, the Foot Guards pushed off at 0530 hrs to capture the high ground at Pt 261. The objective was occupied without opposition and the remainder of the regiment moved forward to Camembert. Elements from the 18 Cdn Armd C Regt had reached out even further, closing in on Vimoutiers itself. Initially 4th Cdn Armd Bde was told that they were to be stood down and would not be required for operations before first light 21 August, when the plan for the advance briefed the previous evening would be executed. Information that the Germans were now trying to break through the Canadian-Polish lines, however,

⁸⁵⁵ War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, entry 20 Aug.

⁸⁵⁶ War Diary, The Lincoln and Welland Regiment 1-31 August 1944, entry 20 Aug.

⁸⁵⁷ Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 249.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

resulted in all 4th Cdn Armd Bde units being recalled and returned to their original positions.⁸⁵⁹

Elements of the German 353rd Inf Div managed to cross the Dives River at Moissy early in the morning of 20 August and reached Hill 262 south. The Poles had not occupied this feature and at 1530 hrs 1st SS Pz Div and 116th Pz Div succeeded in capturing the road fork 1,000 meters northwest of Coudehard, opening up the Champosoult-Boisjos and Chambois-Vimoutiers roads.⁸⁶⁰ This action opened up the first clear escape route to the outside for the trapped German troops. The route ran through St. Lambert-Moissy, then by back roads and tracks to the high ground at Mont Ormel and on to Vimoutiers. By the time the Poles closed this route, the Germans had opened another route around Hill 262 north. By 1500 hrs, the Polish situation was steadily deteriorating. Attacked from all sides and cut off from the rest of 2nd Corps, the Poles were unable to evacuate wounded and were running low on food, ammunition, fuel and medicine.⁸⁶¹ By 1700 hrs, the Germans broke into the northern part of the Hill 262 perimeter and were not expelled until 1900 hrs. The toll on the Germans was enormous but they continued to keep the escape corridor open.⁸⁶²

The Poles reported that the Germans had broken through the area around St. Lambert-sur-Dives and Moissy and had reached Pt 240.⁸⁶³ In response, at 1115 hrs the Grenadier Guards, who were being held in reserve on Pt 259 for the advance north, were now ordered into the centre of the gap to Pt 240, two km east of the Polish position at Pt

⁸⁵⁹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 20 Aug.

⁸⁶⁰ AHQ Report No. 50, M 282.

⁸⁶¹ Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 262.

⁸⁶² Ops Log 21 August, serial 11, War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁶³ The Poles were disposed in three main groups: one group on Hill 240, a mile east of Ecorches; a second group on the dominant feature above Coudehard formed by the hills 252 and 262; and a third, north of Chambois. Ops Log 20 August, serial 21, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

262.⁸⁶⁴ In addition, the BCR were ordered to leave their supporting infantry in their old location pending the arrival of the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde who would take over the old positions and were ordered to Pt 261.⁸⁶⁵ These moves resulted in the Foot Guards firmed up on Pt 258; the BCR astride the road from Trun near the village of Les Champeaux; while the Grenadier Guards occupied Pt 240, located above the village of Ecorches, which was situated between the two highways. This tactical disposition allowed the regiments to dominate the maze of dirt roads, which the enemy was trying to use north of Trun and Chambois.⁸⁶⁶

At 1637 hrs, 4th Cdn Armd Bde Control reported that 100 German tanks were moving east towards the St. Lambert-Moissy line and that this concentration was being engaged by artillery. It also reported that German tanks and infantry were headed towards the position of B Sqn SAR on Hill 124.⁸⁶⁷ In anticipation of more efforts to break out, LCol D. S. Harkness of the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment was given the task of coordinating the anti-tank defence across the whole divisional front. To give added strength to the screen, the 1st Hussars, and the Highland Light Infantry were ordered to relieve B Sqn SAR on Pt 124.⁸⁶⁸ This battlegroup was slow to move and would not reach Pt 124 until 0730 hrs the next day: far too late to be of any assistance to B Sqn SAR.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁴ War Diary, Governor-General Foot Guards, 1-31 August 1944, entry 20 Aug; Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 280-281.

⁸⁶⁵ Ops Log 20 August, serial 65. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁶⁶ Ops Log 20 August serial 40, War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁶⁷ Ops Log 20 August, serial 80, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁶⁸ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 20 Aug.

⁸⁶⁹ Their inaction left the remnants of B Sqn SAR to fight it out alone for another night. During the course of that fighting, the Germans infiltrated their position. Lacking infantry support, the squadron commander decided to withdraw by any means possible with his few remaining tanks. This vital position was abandoned until the Hussars and Highland Light Infantry arrived the next morning. Graves, *South Albertas*, 169.

Maczek and his officers were openly critical of 4th Cdn Armd Div's failure to cooperate with them during 20 August when the fighting was at its peak. According to Maczek, repeated requests for assistance were ignored until Simonds arrived at his divisional headquarters and was briefed on the Polish situation in Chambois and at Pt 262. Simonds ordered an immediate counterattack by 4th Cdn Armd Bde to relieve the situation. Simonds then went to 4th Cdn Armd Div headquarters to make sure the orders were obeyed. Kitching protested the order and told Simonds, "to hell with them. They have run out of food and ammunition because of the inefficiency of their organization; our people have been fighting just as hard but we have managed to keep up our supply system."⁸⁷⁰ Simonds silenced Kitching and ordered immediate action.

At 1900 hrs, Simonds ordered 4th Cdn Armd Bde to attack southeast from the Hordouseaux-les Champeaux area towards Champosoult-Coudehard to seal the escape route and assist the hard-pressed Polish troops. Simonds placed 9th Cdn Inf Bde from 3rd Div under Kitching's command.⁸⁷¹ At 1931 hrs, the Grenadier Guards received orders to advance south immediately to the area north of Coudehard and give all possible assistance to the Poles. They were directed to leave without their supporting infantry, which was to remain in place. The Foot Guards and the BCR were ordered to Pt 240 and arrived on the objective at 2200 hrs.⁸⁷² At 2000 hrs, the Foot Guards with under command one company Lake Superior Regiment was tasked to move to Pt 239 immediately opposite Pt 240 and dominate the roads radiating from both St. Lambert and Chambois. Two companies of the Lake Superior Regiment were subsequently ordered to

⁸⁷⁰ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 204-205.

⁸⁷¹ This brigade plus 6th Cdn Armd Regt (1st Cdn Hussars) were then placed under command 10th Cdn Inf Bde. Both orders were effective only until 0800 hrs 21 August. Events would force the extension of these secondments. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 20 Aug.

⁸⁷² See the war diaries of 22 and 28 Canadian Armoured Regiments for 20 August.

join the Foot Guards at their position.⁸⁷³ At last light, the Foot Guards moved off and arrived on their objective without opposition.⁸⁷⁴ The BCR was ordered to move to Pt 240.

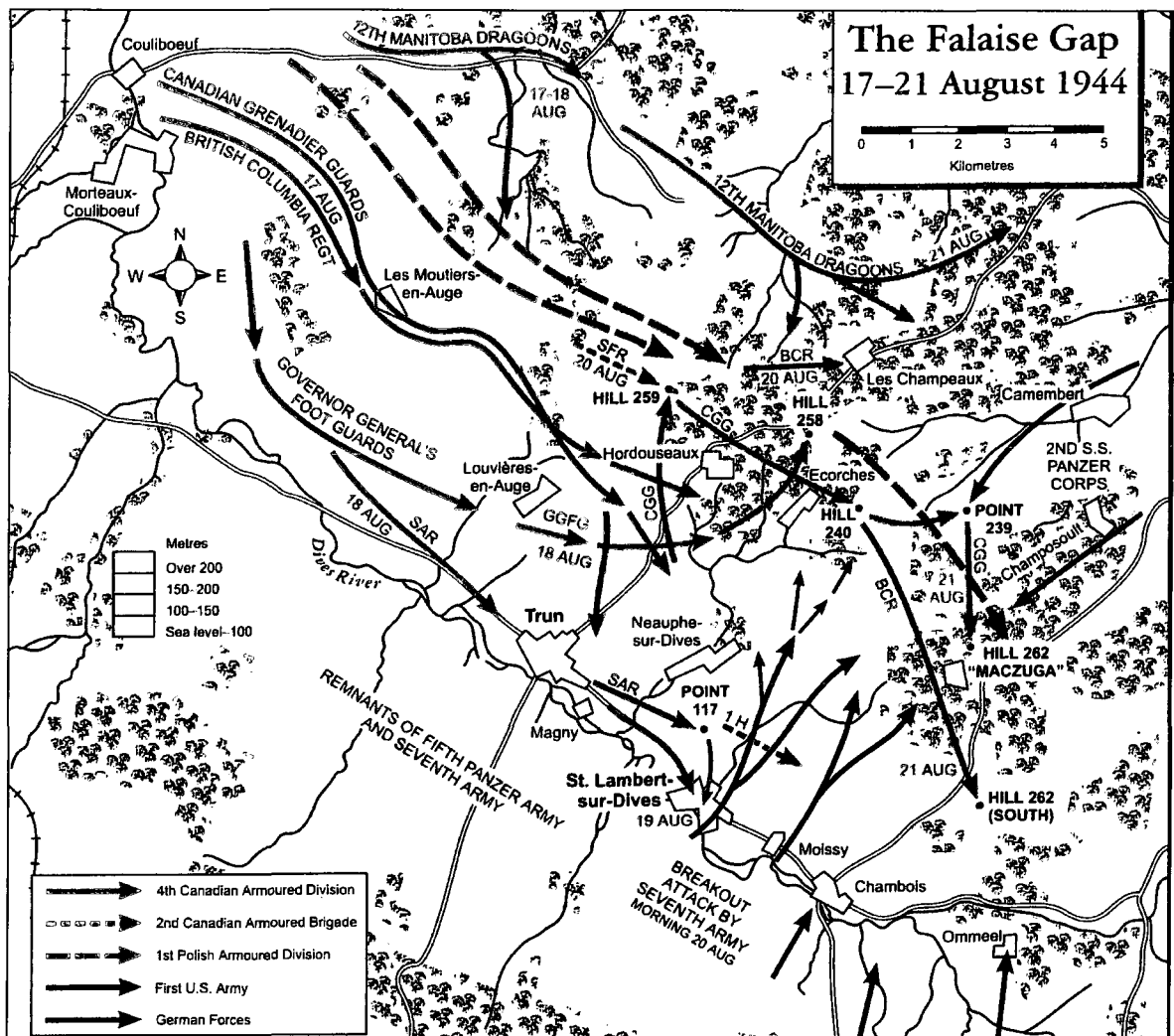
On 19 August and 20 August, the movements of the various units of the 4th Cdn Armd Div, both armour and infantry, made it almost impossible to define the divisions' "front." The division war diary stated that the Germans were attacking from the east and west and that many calls were received to seal off the numerous German escape routes. The units were mixed up and it was difficult to define any particular brigade areas.⁸⁷⁵ The fighting during the day was confused in part because the position of the Poles was not known for certain. The division sitrep reported the main escape route to the northeast in the area of St. Lambert was closed with extremely high casualties for the Germans, either killed or captured. For the period of 1400 hrs on 19 August to 1800 hrs 20 August, the division reported capturing 47 officers and 2,118 enlisted men.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷³ Ops Log 20 August, serials 106, 107 and 137, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁷⁴ Baylay, *The Regimental History of the Governor General's Foot Guards*, 120.

⁸⁷⁵ The disorganized nature of the fighting that day was reflected in the disposition reported for the regiments. The GGFG at Pt 239, the CGG at Pt 147 and moving to the Polish position at Pt 262 north with the assistance of the BCR. The regiments of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Cdn Inf Bde and 2 Cdn Armd Bde were scattered throughout the Trun-Champeaux-Pt 262-Chambois- area. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 20 Aug.

⁸⁷⁶ 4 Cdn Armd Div SITREP 46 201400B to 202400B, War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, App36.



Map 26: The Falaise Gap, 17-21 August. Martinson, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps*, 281.

Early on the morning of 21 August in pouring rain, the Grenadier Guards, with a company from the Lake Superior Regiment under command, moved off to break through the line the Germans had thrown around the two Polish regiments on Pt 262. Each squadron of the Grenadier Guards was at less than half strength and, from the beginning, the combined force met with opposition.⁸⁷⁷ The progress, however, was slow with roads blocked and lined with destroyed German vehicles, dead horses and men.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁷The BCR was originally tasked with leading the attack to relieve the Poles at Pt 262. However, their commanding officer Lt Col Parish became lost returning from the brigade orders group. No 1 Sqn was the lead squadron for the CGG for any possible action received at the orders group. The standard operating

Arriving at Pt 239 and finding the Foot Guards in secure possession of the position,⁸⁷⁹ Halpenny decided to add weight to the assault on Pt 262 by adding No 3 Sqn of nine tanks to the battlegroup leaving only No 2 Sqn to guard the line of communications. After a number of short actions, the force contacted the Poles and advanced to Hill 262. The advance ran into a ring of self-propelled guns and tanks, resulting in a difficult and bloody fight. Amy's squadron broke through to the Poles at 1420 hrs but his squadron was now down to five working tanks.⁸⁸⁰

The echelon forces of the division now swung into action to resupply the Poles. Five Priests from the Grenadier Guards battle lorry group made ten trips that night, bringing in supplies and taking out casualties. The Grenadier Guards and the BCR kept the lines of communications open against Germans who were still attempting to infiltrate through the Canadian-Polish positions.⁸⁸¹

The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was tasked with getting supplies through to the Polish units that had been cut off in Chambois. A recce in force was conducted by SAR who

procedure within the regiment was to have the OC of the lead squadron at the regimental Hq halftrack when the regimental CO was away at a brigade orders group. On his return Smith explained that the BCR were to attack at first light to relieve the Poles. Since Parish could not be found the task of leading the advance was given to the CGG. At 0633 hrs the CGG were issued a warning order to be prepared to take over the task of leading the advance to relieve the Poles. At 0335 hrs the initial queries for sunray 28CAR were sent. Parish reported on the net at 0707 hrs and was notified of the switch in tasks between the two regiments. Ops Log 21 Aug serials 4-9. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁷⁸The advance was to be executed in two stages. It began with a mile run eastwards across the valley to Pt 239, occupied by the Foot Guards and Lake Superior Regiment on the previous evening. This move was to be followed by an advance of 2,200 yards due south across another valley and up a steep hill to Pt 262 above Coudehard. At 0800 hrs, No 1 Sqn led off with seven tanks, followed by B Company Lake Sup Regt and No 3 Sqn. Much of the German transport at this point in the war was by horse. Salvage teams working after the battle pulled over two hundred horse carcasses from the Dive River alone 21 Army Group, *the Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 51; Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 282.

⁸⁷⁹At 0815 hrs the harbour area of the GGFG was attacked by a German mobile column proceeding eastwards. B Company LSR were caught preparing breakfast and had to scramble to return fire. The security that harbouring offered was amply illustrated as the GGFG tanks responded very quickly. The fight raged for an hour and a quarter before the attack was repulsed War Diary, The Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) 1-31 August 1944, entry 21 Aug.

⁸⁸⁰Ops Log 21 August serial 37, War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁸¹Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 282-283.

succeeded in getting through to Chambois and back early in the afternoon. At the same time, Highland Light Infantry, supported by elements of 2nd Cdn Armd Bde, managed to get through to Chambois from the northwest. The first convoy of food, carried in half-tracks and carriers, got through at about 1700 hrs with three more convoys dispatched during the night.⁸⁸²

As a result of the day's operations, firm contact was made with the Poles and the gaps in the Allied lines were closed at Pt 262 and along the Dives River.⁸⁸³ The Allies had finally succeeded in closing the Falaise Gap effectively, stopping the flow of German forces out of Normandy. Individual and small groups of German soldiers continued to infiltrate eastward through the Canadian lines but the vast majority were caught, swept into the prisoner-of-war cages and added to the thousands who had been taken earlier. There were still incidents, however, of Germans infiltrating through the valleys and woods during the night, sometimes bumping into Canadian artillery and Service Corps units who normally operated several miles behind the front lines. Headquarter security units had to be brought in on a number of cases to take care of these stragglers.⁸⁸⁴

It had taken 2nd Cdn Corps from 17 August to 22 August to close the Falaise Gap. First Cdn Army and, in particular, 2nd Cdn Corps was judged to have not achieved their objectives quickly enough, provoking profound disappointment among senior Allied commanders.⁸⁸⁵ Closing the Falaise Pocket had taken far longer than expected and had come at a greater cost than anticipated. Someone had to be held accountable. As the

⁸⁸² War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 21 Aug.

⁸⁸³ The 3rd Div units assigned to take over St. Lambert had not completed that task by nightfall, which forced the SAR to remain in St. Lambert another night. The regiment finally started pulling out at 0900 hrs on 22 August. By the time the SAR were officially relieved from their positions around St. Lambert, the Regiment estimated that it had captured 7,000 prisoners, had killed 2,000 men and wounded another 3,000. War Diary, South Alberta Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 21 Aug.

⁸⁸⁴ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 313.

⁸⁸⁵ Martin Blumenson, *The Battle of the Generals* (New York: Morrow, 1993), 268-269.

commander of the division spearheading the Canadian drive, the focus of attention landed on Kitching. Kitching was assessed as ineffective by Simonds. Simonds felt compelled to act and relieved Kitching of his command at noon 21 August informing him that he was to be replaced by Brig H. Foster. Foster arrived to take over command of the division at 1800 hrs.

The main issues facing the support echelons during the Falaise Gap actions were the opening of the maintenance routes and the processing of prisoners. In the 24-hour period ending 1600 hrs 21 August, the division processed over 2,255 prisoners of war.⁸⁸⁶ Also, 25 more echelon vehicles had to be off loaded and were pressed into service moving them. Clerks from the rear echelons had to be used as escorts since no front line troops could be spared. The total number of PWs taken by the division will never be known accurately since many of them were processed through the cages of 3rd Cdn Inf Div because the armoured division cages could not handle the volume.

The physical state of the division with respect to vehicles is not clear since the ADREPs for the period 17 to 29 August are missing from the AA & QMG war diary. The personnel state of the division's regiments is, however, known through graphs kept by Proctor. On 21 August, the BCR, SAR and Lake Superior Regiment were reporting strengths above 85 percent. The Grenadier Guards and Foot Guards were reporting 81 percent; the Algonquin and Lincoln & Welland Regiment were at 75 percent strength; and the Argylls were the worst of the infantry battalions at less than 65 percent.⁸⁸⁷ The

⁸⁸⁶ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 21 Aug.

⁸⁸⁷ Notes by Lt Col Proctor. It should be noted that ninety per cent of battle casualties occur in the rifle companies and armoured regiments. When an infantry battalion dropped below 85 per cent the companies were on average operating with less than 100 men. When the other manpower requirements such as LOB, a high proportion of which must come from the rifle companies, it was not uncommon for a unit showing a strength of 75 per cent to go into battle with rifle companies averaging 35-40 men. "Battle Casualties &

highest number of battle casualties incurred by the division was reported between 18 and 20 August at over 90 casualties. The division reported that it needed 11 officers and 814 ORs as reinforcements to replace the gaps in its ranks but received only six officers and 40 ORs.⁸⁸⁸

The fighting in Normandy, which concluded with the battles to close the Falaise Gap, gave the Allies a great, if incomplete, victory. This battle could be called the German equivalent of the British evacuation of their troops from the continent at Dunkirk in May 1940 where a large number of troops escaped to fight another day but most of their equipment was lost in the evacuation. In theory, the Pocket could have been sealed off more quickly.⁸⁸⁹ The controversy continues over the question of who was responsible for leaving the door open for so long, allowing the tens of thousands of Germans to escape.

The command decisions made by the senior Allied generals to close the Falaise Gap remain a hotly debated topic. Martin Blumenson, in *The Battle of the Generals*, argues that the senior Allied leadership (Eisenhower, Montgomery and Bradley), “anticipated reality and set about laying future plans.”⁸⁹⁰ They felt that immediate operations to seal the Pocket around the German troops in the Falaise area would be successful and that the German armies in Normandy would be trapped and eliminated.

This attitude, combined with a rising tide of optimism that the Germans could not withstand a defeat of this magnitude and still remain in the war, spawned a belief that the war would be over by Christmas. The senior Allied military leadership simply took for

Unit Strength When under 85%”War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944. See Appendix 15.

⁸⁸⁸ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 21 Aug.

⁸⁸⁹ Blumenson, *Battle of the Generals*, 263.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 262.

granted what would happen at Falaise before the tactical situation evolved to a state in which the desired outcome was assured. The result was operational carelessness and a misreading of what was required to finish the Germans in Normandy. The ultimate mistake, according to Blumenson, was to “dismiss” the fate of the German troops inside the closing Pocket.⁸⁹¹

The nature of the battle was quite different from those that had been fought by the Anglo-Canadian forces in Normandy to that time. It was dynamic and fluid where the location and nature of the combat was constantly changing. Situational awareness was crucial and consequential decisions had to be made in real time. There was no time to seek higher authority. The most problematic issue, however, was that it was not a tidy battlefield. Montgomery and Simonds were most comfortable with a well-planned, set-piece battle in which all the participants, including the enemy, did exactly what had been scripted for them.⁸⁹² There were no defined boundaries for fronts or rear areas. Canadians were engaging Germans on all sides and sometimes in the rear. The nature of the battlefield, therefore, challenged the command paradigm of the senior Canadian leadership.

The closing of the Falaise Gap highlighted the competing obligations inherent in the role of the Corps commander between his need to plan ahead of current operations so that he can shape the future battlefield while simultaneously ensuring that current operations are won. While the division commander was responsible for winning the immediate battle, it was the responsibility of the higher-level commander to ensure that lower-level commanders had the means and resources to win.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid., 262

⁸⁹² Flint Whitlock, "Imperfect Victory at Falaise," *World War II* Issue 12, no. 1 (1997), 26-33.

Simonds issued daily orders that outlined his intent for operations on the following day and, unfortunately, not all of them were found for examination. The intent signed by Simonds on 16 August requires closer examination since it establishes the start point in Simonds' thinking as to how he was going to solve his part of the military problem of closing the escape route of the German Seventh Army by linking up with U.S. forces moving north towards the Falaise area.

Simonds' orders had two implied tasks: to capture Trun and the high ground dominating it from the southwest and northeast and to be prepared to advance in a northeasterly direction on Lisieux. Two key points must be made at this juncture. The direction to use armoured divisions to close the Gap came directly from Montgomery. While the selection of armoured divisions could be rationalized based on the need to travel fast to close the Gap, the terrain in the Falaise-to-Vimoutiers region was totally unsuited for armour warfare or tactics. The terrain, because of the numerous hedges, hills, forests and rivers, was best suited for the employment of infantry divisions which, with their greater complement of infantry, could better cover the ground. The only way to mitigate the risk inherent in these orders to the armoured regiments was to ensure that infantry always accompanied the tanks.

Kitching was initially ordered to establish a blocking position by setting up on a number of key terrain features to dominate the area between Falaise and Trun along the Falaise-Argentan highway and to establish contact with the Polish Armd Div in the Trun area. This changed to establishing a blocking position to dominate the area north of the Trun-Vimoutiers highway. The mission expanded to include the capture of Trun (17 August) and the cutting of the Trun-Vimoutiers road, then the capture of the area St.

Lambert-Moissy (18 August) and finally to move to Chambois (19 August). The taking of Trun required a small modification to the initial deployment. Taking over the responsibility for establishing a defensive line along the Dives River was a significantly more complex task altogether.

In military operations and, in particular, land operations, there is a constant friction between two variables—the requirement to defeat enemy forces and the requirement to take ground. Examining the military actions and command decisions in and around 18-21 August through this lens allows an important perspective on what happened in this timeframe. In the early part of the Normandy campaign, ground was the primary focus in order to expand the bridgehead. On 17-18 August, the emphasis was still on ground as the Canadians and Poles tried to close the Falaise gap. The timeframe 19-21 August represented the cusp of the two variables in which Simonds as the higher level commander had to make crucial decisions as to where his main effort would be—sealing the fate of German Seventh Army or launching the pursuit after the escaped German forces.

The requirement to be prepared to move northeast significantly shaped how Simonds orchestrated the movement of his forces from 18 August onwards and shaped the disposition of 4th Cdn Armd Division. The record of conversation between Simonds and Brig Mann at First Army HQ on 19 August reflected Simonds dilemma and uncertainty. Using this construct, Simonds' orders to split 4th Cdn Armd Div as he did must lead to the conclusion that by 19 August Simonds believed that pursuing the escaped German forces was more important than destroying the remnants of the German forces in the Pocket. Even with the desperate fighting that had begun on the evening of

19/20 August the Minutes of the First Cdn Army Joint Conference held at 0830 hrs 20 August stated that the ground plan for 20 August was for 2nd Cdn Corps to regroup in preparation for the advance east. 2nd Cdn Corps was to be relieved by 12 Br Corps. Once the relief was accomplished the corps would advance on the axis ORBEC-BERNAY-ELBEUF.⁸⁹³

When the tactical situation began to change drastically on the evening 18-19 August, Simonds' initial solution was not to redeploy 4th Cdn Armd Bde along the Dives line but to commit the 2nd Cdn Corps reserve, the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde, to this line but these units arrived too late to help Kitching or his division.⁸⁹⁴ Simonds' second move to help Kitching was placing 9th Cdn Inf Bde under command on the evening of 19 August but, as mentioned above, Rockingham's battalions were also late in starting the move to St. Lambert leaving Kitching and Jefferson to battle on with only the resources of the division and with a tactical disposition neither wanted.

The scattered disposition of 4th Cdn Armd Div was the direct result of orders by Simonds and not based on a concept of operations designed by Kitching. Simonds was not only identifying what he wanted done but also the formations that should execute his orders, which at times was contrary to orders recently given by Kitching. Kitching would have been in a better position to decide which units were best able to meet the intent of Simonds' orders while lessening the confusion and frustration of the units at the changing orders. Instead, Kitching was left to try and maintain control over a division with

⁸⁹³ Minutes of the Morning Joint Conference 0830 hrs 20 August 1944, War diary, First Cdn Army, 1-31 August 1944 App 25.

⁸⁹⁴ The Sherbrooke Fusiliers were assigned Pt 259 and reached their objective at 2010 hrs that night. The 1st Hussars were ordered to take over from the SAR in St. Lambert by 2000 hrs 20 August. By the morning of 21 August, they were reporting their location as in the general area of Bois de Courcy and did not report themselves in position until 0900 hrs. At 0745 hrs 21 August, the Fort Garry Horse reported themselves on their objective at Pt 258 and reported everything quiet. .Ops Log 20 August page 6. War Diary, HQ 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944

components of two brigades moving off in different directions, which were not mutually supporting and without any discernible fronts but forced to engage in combat in all directions.

Simonds' management of the command arrangements with the Trun-Chambois area complicated and constrained any freedom of action Kitching had in responding to the tactical situation. Two terms are important to the understanding within this context: "under command" and "relief." When one unit relieves another, the control of the area of the unit that has been relieved shifts to the commander of the relieving unit. In the case of 9th Cdn Inf Bde, when the Stormont Dundas and Glengary Highlanders relieved the Lincs in Trun, command over the area of Trun shifted from Kitching to Maj Gen D. Spry the GOC of 3rd Cdn Inf Div. The assigned plan for the relief of 10th Cdn Inf Bde by 3rd Cdn Inf Div meant that the defence of the line of the River Dives should have been the responsibility of Spry by the evening of 20 August, had the relief plan been executed as directed. This would have meant that Kitching would have had only one task and that was the drive to Vimoutiers as directed in the plan briefed on the evening of 19 August. Instead, both 9th Cdn Inf Bde and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde were late, meaning that 10th Cdn Inf Bde had to hold the line much longer than expected and Kitching had to divide his attention between holding the Dives line and launching the drive to Vimoutiers on the morning of 21 August.

The second term is "under command." When a unit is placed under command of another organization, it means that the new commander now has control over the unit and can assign that unit missions and tasks without consulting with the previous commander. Units would shift under command of another unit on a temporary basis, typically to

accomplish a specific mission. In this case, 2nd Cdn Armd Bde, 9th Cdn Inf Bde and one squadron 18th Cdn Armd C Regt were placed under Kitching's command, but Kitching was not free to use these formations as he saw fit.

There are three points that need to be highlighted within this discussion: the units were assigned too late to make any meaningful contribution to the battle; they were only assigned to Kitching until 0800 hrs 21 August; and two units came with assigned missions, which Kitching was not allowed to change. Had the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde and the 9th Cdn Inf Bde come under Kitching's command on 19 August, it would have allowed Kitching much more flexibility in fighting the tactical battle. Both the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde and the 9th Cdn Inf Bde had to move south from the Falaise-Damblainville area to reach the Trun-Chambois area. Kitching's units were much closer to the German escape routes and could have moved more quickly into the battle. Understanding that time was the critical factor, a better course of action would have had the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde and the 9th Cdn Inf Bde relieve the 4th Cdn Armd Div units along the Trun-Vimoutiers axis with 2nd Cdn Armd Bde assigned the task of executing the requirement to advance to Vimoutiers. These two units could have reached the Trun-Vimoutiers areas more quickly relieving the 4th Cdn Armd Bde for use by Kitching earlier on 20 August.

Releasing 4th Cdn Armd Bde from the Trun-Vimoutiers axis would have allowed Kitching to concentrate the entire strength of his armoured division against the German escape routes between Trun and Chambois and would have greatly simplified the command arrangements within the area. Spry would have controlled the area north of the Trun-Vimoutiers highway; Kitching would have controlled the area from the highway south to Chambois; and the Poles could have been retained their position at Pt 262 as a

blocking force against any attack from the outside. Instead, Simonds was late in committing required forces; the forces that were committed were late in arriving; and the concept of operations for the relief complicated the command and control structure within the area. Spry, Kitching and Maczek were now trying to control the tactical battle with no one in overall control to ensure a coordinated effort. The tactical situation cried out for one commander to oversee all aspects of the closing battle; yet Simonds seemed content to have three separate division commanders involved in the fight, each with his own objectives and no one commander with the requisite authority to orchestrate the Allied forces to meet the unfolding situation when the Germans attacked or when the relief brigades failed to meet required timelines.⁸⁹⁵

Complicating the operations on 20 August even further was Simonds' intent for operations that day. His intent stated that 2nd Cdn Corps would assist 12th Corps in a sweep-up of the area to the front and then commence the advance northeast.⁸⁹⁶ Some argue that Jefferson and Kitching appeared "unwilling" to change their plan by committing the recently relieved Lincs from Trun or the last two companies of Argylls to the St. Lambert battle instead of waiting for the planned infantry battalions from 9th Cdn Inf Bde but it is not clear that Kitching actually had the latitude to make those changes.⁸⁹⁷ Simonds was fixated on moving northeast using 4th Cdn Armd Bde and this imperative constrained the options available to Kitching to close the gap along the Dives. The fact that orders were given for the advance northeast despite the fact that the gap had not been closed and German forces were known to still be on the western side of the river raises serious questions as to Simonds situational awareness at this critical juncture.

⁸⁹⁵ Hayes, *The Lincs*, 40.

⁸⁹⁶ Ops Log 20 Aug, page 2, War Diary, HQ 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁹⁷ Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 248.

The decision to commit 4th Cdn Armd Bde to closing the escape routes happened at 1915 hrs on 20 August when Kitching ordered the Grenadier Guards to launch an immediate attack to Coudehard.⁸⁹⁸ Their mission was to relieve the Poles and open the lines of communications to them. Kitching's opposition to being ordered to help the Poles can be understood in part by the fact that he was denied the opportunity to use his armoured brigade to aid his own troops who were in dire straits along the Dives; yet, when the armoured brigade was finally committed, it was to help the Poles and not his own men. His frustration may have been already heightened by the fact that neither 9th Cdn Inf Bde nor the 2nd Cdn Armd Bde was going to arrive in time to influence the battle or help out his own units. While he may have felt his assessment of the Poles was correct, in the end, his outburst and possible insubordinate reaction to Simonds' order to help the Poles must now be viewed as the main factor in his dismissal despite the successful series of combat operations that Kitching had lead the division through since TOTALIZE.

Naturally Kitching was shocked and upset at the decision to relieve him and made a number of points in his defence. The first involved the long delay in sending Moncel to command the armoured brigade. He also complained that the division had had too many changes in orders over a period of ten days and had taken very heavy casualties in commanders, soldiers and tanks in its first battles. According to Kitching, Simonds had no rebuttal for any of these very valid points.⁸⁹⁹

The arrival of Moncel to command 4th Cdn Armd Bde on 15 August would have alleviated some of the command and leadership problems caused by casualties throughout the armoured brigade and probably would have helped the division capture its

⁸⁹⁸ Ops Log 20 August, page 5. War Diary, HQ 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944.

⁸⁹⁹ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 205.

objectives on 15 August. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that the armoured brigade would have been more effective than it was in the 16-21 August timeframe under Moncel. Once Halpenny was given command, the brigade operated quite well and accomplished all of its assigned tasks during this period.

Kitching's comment about casualties among the officers in the armoured regiments was valid. Simply stated they were high. The robbing of the regimental commanders to command the armoured brigade combined with the casualties among the rest of the officers had a ripple down effect on leadership within the armoured brigade. A typical armoured regiment had 38 officers. By 26 August the Foot Guards had 19, the Grenadier Guards 23, the BCR 16 and the SAR had 23 officers remaining from the original cadre that began the month. On average, 45 percent of the original officer complements were casualties by 26 August. What is even more compelling is the loss of senior officers (major and lieutenant colonels) in 4th Cdn Armd Bde. Their casualty rate was 56 percent with the brigadier and two of three regimental COs as casualties.⁹⁰⁰ Notwithstanding, this casualty rate the junior leadership cadre stepped up and the regiments performed well, which is a testament to the quality of the men, their leadership and their training before entering Normandy.

Kitching's complaint over changing orders has already been highlighted. Viewed in hindsight Kitching was subjected to changing orders on each day from 7 August until his relief on 21 August. Some were by design as in TOTALIZE and many as a result of the fluid battle conditions being encountered. What is clear however is that the command

⁹⁰⁰ Numbers were taken from the war diary strength returns on 5,12,19 and 26 Aug for both officer and OR strengths from the respective war diaries.

team of Kitching, Wigle and Proctor and the division as a whole were up to the challenge of each new task.

The war diary of 4th Cdn Armd Div summed up their experience as follows:

The tremendous feats performed by the infantry and armoured brigades during the past two days in completing the destruction of the enemy in Normandy and its full importance has not yet been realized by any of the personnel in the div. No one yet realizes that the heavy fighting south from Caen to the Trun Chambois area has sealed the fate of the German 7th Army. Perhaps it is because everyone has been so busy killing Germans or planning to kill Germans or doing their job in the best way they know in confusing circumstances, that the full importance of this victory is not yet apparent to them.⁹⁰¹

The story of defeat, rout, confusion, disorganization and disaster of the German Seventh Army in Normandy was clearly written along the route from Falaise to Vimoutiers.⁹⁰²

The examination and conclusions drawn from the complex set of operations from the initial landings in Normandy to the closing of the Falaise Gap will be debated for some time to come. Arguments as to whether the Normandy campaign succeeded or failed will never be answered to everyone's satisfaction. In the end, it was Kitching's and Maczek's armoured divisions that carried the burden of plugging the First Cdn Army side of the gap.

During the 16-22 August phase of the Normandy campaign, the Canadians were to find themselves simultaneously fighting offensive and defensive battles. Instead of the armoured divisions being employed in their role as exploitation forces, units were gathered in battle groups and sent off to seize towns, dominant hills or crossroads. What resulted was a series of clashes and battles varying in time and intensity, depending on the degree to which the Germans could organize a response. Maintaining control and

⁹⁰¹ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 22 Aug.

⁹⁰² Ibid.

keeping communications open became challenging, especially in the hilly terrain of the Falaise-Trun-Vimoutiers area. The situation was confusing and difficult to control and placed an enormous strain on all formations, but an even greater strain on those charged with commanding those formations.⁹⁰³

Due to the nature of the fighting, the squadron and regimental officers became the on-scene commanders who had to make independent decisions, weighing their mission against the situation they were facing on the ground. The only way Kitching could influence this type of battle was by ensuring that his subordinate commanders understood the intent of his orders and through the interjection of reserves and supporting forces, such as artillery and tactical aircraft, at decisive points. Unfortunately for Kitching, when additional forces were eventually made available, they arrived too late to be of assistance.

The battles waged to close the Falaise Gap became the ultimate testing ground for Kitching and the men of the 4 Cdn Armd Div. The desperate combat conditions combined with the physical state of the leadership, men and equipment of the division ensured that the fighting would test every aspect of their training, professional competence and maturity as a fighting formation. The record of the division and its accomplishments speak for themselves. They penetrated the furthest of any Canadian unit during TOTALIZE and, despite many setbacks, they achieved their objectives in TRACATBLE. They were the first to the Dives River and succeeded in gaining and holding St. Lambert-sur-Dives and their portion of the Gap. In the words of Cpl Stu Johns of the Grenadier Guards “By the time we closed the gap we had figured out how to fight the regiment.”⁹⁰⁴ The same could be said of the entire division.

⁹⁰³ Roy, 1944: *The Canadians in Normandy*, 299.

⁹⁰⁴ Interview Cpl Stu Johns Canadian Grenadier Guards and author, 29 August 2004.

The 4 Cdn Armd Div entered Normandy as an untried, inexperienced formation and in the span of 14 days of continuous conflict became a mature fighting formation. Given the significant challenges the division had to overcome during the unfolding battles of August 1944, Kitching and the 4th Cdn Armd Div performed much better than history has recorded. In the end, Kitching was an able commander in an almost impossible situation. His lasting contribution to the division, however, was that he trained and mentored his senior staff officers, Wigle and Proctor, who would now shine in the next phase of the campaign in northwest Europe- the pursuit.

Chapter Ten: The Pursuit

The period from the closing of the Falaise Gap on August 22 to the capture of Antwerp on September 4 has been traditionally labelled the pursuit phase of the campaign of northwest Europe. The exploitation of the opportunities that evolved from this phase of the campaign offered the promise of enormous opportunity, including the collapse of the entire German Army in the west and the potential for an early end to the war. By early September, this great strategic opportunity had been lost. Decisions by senior Allied commanders caused the advance of the Allied armies to stall. This respite delayed the assault on the Ruhr, giving German commanders the opportunity to rebuild and reorganize—an opportunity they were intent on not squandering.⁹⁰⁵

In the strategic realignment of the Allied armies for the pursuit, Montgomery, as one of his final acts as the Allied ground force commander, tasked the Third U.S. Army to pass south of Paris and move eastwards through Reims to the Meuse above Sedan. He directed the First U.S. Army and the British Second Army to finish clearing the Argentan-Falaise area and to advance on the Seine between Paris and Rouen. The former headed up the Oise and down the Meuse to Liège; the latter moved by Amiens, Arras, and Tournai towards Antwerp. His orders to the First Cdn Army involved three important tasks: to cover the left of the advancing British and American armies; to overrun the launch sites along the Channel coast for the German V-1 flying bombs which were being

⁹⁰⁵ An OKH Organization Section study on armaments for 1944 made it quite clear that by the end of 1944, the Army hoped to have available 32 panzer divisions, each with 130 tanks, based on a combination of Pz IVs and Panthers, plus 12 to 14 Tiger battalions. To achieve this, German industry would have to produce 400 Pz IVs, 400 Panthers and 130 Tigers per month. These figures were never met, and the number of real panzer divisions never exceeded 30. DiNardo, *Germany's Panzer Arm*, 24; James F. Camsell, "From Normandy to the Scheldt: Logistics and the First Canadian Army (June-September 1944)" (M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick), 118.

launched against London and other British cities; and to capture the ports of Le Havre and Dieppe, upon whose capacity for re-supply depended future operations along the entire front.⁹⁰⁶

The senior Allied command decisions made during the pursuit would shape the course of the rest of the war. The opportunity for victory was at hand but would depend in part on the Allied ability to sustain pressure on the retreating Germans and not give them the opportunity to regroup. This would require the application of the military art of pursuit. Carl von Clausewitz observed that the conditions for successful pursuit were fleeting and that only a bold and resolute commander was able to exploit battlefield success beyond its immediate aftermath.⁹⁰⁷ The Germans realized that Allied victory could be denied through rigorous rear-guard actions and counter-attacks and employed just such a strategy in their retreat. Patton and his Third U.S. Army had been involved in a pursuit since operation COBRA. It was now Montgomery's turn but 21st Army Group had a poor record in Normandy of translating tactical success into operational level success.⁹⁰⁸

The aim of a pursuit operation is to maintain pressure on a retreating enemy and to gain ground. According to Canadian doctrine, "By vigorous relentless, and sustained pursuit the battle will be kept fluid, and favourable opportunities will be created for the higher commander to complete his victory by the combined action of all his force."⁹⁰⁹ A successful pursuit had to find the correct balance between maintaining the impetus of the pursuit versus stopping to deal with rear guards, pockets of resistance or seizing

⁹⁰⁶ Duguid, *History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards*, 286.

⁹⁰⁷ Melvin Mungo, "The Forgotten Art of Pursuit," *The British Army Review*, no. 137 (Summer 2005), 29.

⁹⁰⁸ Mungo, "The Forgotten Art of Pursuit," 30.

⁹⁰⁹ War Office, *MTP No. 41, Part 1*, 40.

important cities, ports or terrain features. Deciding the balance was the realm of the commander. Montgomery expressed his thoughts in a directive he sent out on 26 August, “the proper tactics now are for strong armoured and mobile columns to by-pass enemy centres of resistance and to push boldly ahead, creating alarm and despondency in enemy rear areas.”⁹¹⁰

Operational tempo was another key consideration for the commander as he balanced the rate of advance against the capacity of his administration to support the operational tempo desired. Generating the capacity for the pursuit and the resulting operational tempo was entirely dependent on the ability of echelon forces to keep the critical supplies flowing to the fighting units. Montgomery settled the critical higher level command question of ports versus pursuit in favour of pursuit. Given the overwhelming Allied superiority in materiel, this should not have been a problem and yet this decision would cause a growing shortage of critical supplies and transport beginning in early September that would impact operations and would not be resolved until the opening of Antwerp in November 1944.

The task of the A and Q organization of 21st Army Group was to develop an administrative organization on the continent that would allow Montgomery to carry out any operation he deemed necessary. The narrow confines of the bridgehead in June and July restricted the number of administrative units that could be accommodated on the continent but the proximity of the supply dumps to the fighting units marginalized the extent of this problem. While the expansion battles were being fought, preparations had been made to support the expected breakthrough and pursuit operations. Mobile warfare required a robust administrative organization, well stocked with transport, to support the

⁹¹⁰ Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 283.

operations; unfortunately, administrative units had a low priority for movement into theatre because of the size of the bridgehead. Consequently, in late August the necessary resources to support a theatre wide strategy of pursuit were missing.⁹¹¹

With the victory at Falaise and the Germans in full retreat, a few optimists on the Allied side were predicting the war would be over by the New Year. The troops were enjoying the adulation of the French citizenry and, for the first time in many weeks, the air was fresh; the landscape unmarked by war; and there were days when advancing Canadian troops were not in contact with German forces. While the Allied columns pursued the stream of shattered German units across France, cracks began to appear in the Allied administrative structure due to the strain caused by the rapid Allied advance.

On the afternoon of 20 August, Model received his orders from Hitler. He was to hold the bridgehead west of Paris to prevent an enemy breakthrough between the Seine and Loire rivers towards Dijon and to re-form the battered armies behind the Touches sector with the armour at the southern flank. If the area forward of the Seine could not be held, he was to fall back and defend the line Seine-Yonne-Canal de Bourgogne – Dijon-Dol-Swiss Border.⁹¹²

The Army Group B sitrep to OKW on 23 August revealed the severity of the destruction in Normandy. There were only 67 tanks remaining among the eight armour divisions. Most had no artillery and they were supported by weak infantry elements. The 9th SS Pz Div was the strongest at 460 men, 20–25 tanks and 20 artillery pieces.⁹¹³ The

⁹¹¹ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 34.

⁹¹² AHQ Report No. 77, 4 & 6.

⁹¹³ 10 SS Pz Div four weak infantry battalions, no tanks, no artillery, 12 SS PZ Div 300 men, 10 tanks, no artillery, 1 SS Pz Div weak infantry elements, no tanks, no artillery, 2 Pz Div one infantry battalion, no tanks, no artillery, 2 SS Pz Div 450 men, 15 tanks, 6 artillery pieces, 9 SS Pz Div 460 men, 20-25 tanks, 20 artillery pieces, 16 Pz Div one battalion, 12 tanks, approximately two batteries, 21 Pz Div four weak battalions, 10 tanks, artillery unknown O.B. West, Daily SITREPS 25 Jul to 31 Aug SITREPS for 21 and

German armoured forces were ordered to concentrate near Evreux and to re-establish contact on the south shore of the Seine River with the forces in Paris. New forces were being marshalled for subsequent fighting in France but there would be no reinforcements before 1 September.⁹¹⁴ Model knew however that there were no strategic reserves.

On 25 August, Fifth Panzer Army recorded its fighting strength as 17,980 infantry, 314 pieces of artillery and 42 tanks and assault guns.⁹¹⁵ These troops, added to the expected replacements, did not represent a force that would be capable of creating a new front or a coherent defence of France. The Germans needed time to regroup and rearm: a commodity that was totally dependent on the Allied ability to sustain their pursuit.⁹¹⁶

Model sent his estimate of the situation to Hitler and believed that the Allies would deliver one or several thrusts along the following lines:

- to the Somme by advancing northwards between Rouen and Mantes, with the objective of capturing the V-1 sites and the Belgium industrial basin
- via Paris to Rheims along the traditional invasion route to Germany
- to Dijon with the intent of cutting off Army Group G and reaching Alsace via Belfort

22 Aug 44. Canada. Army, AHQ Report No. 50, M 284-285. The numbers provided for 12 SS Pz Div do not align with the figures given by Hubert Meyer in his history of the division. Both Meyer and Reynolds feel that the numbers represent those who had broken out of the pocket and were ready for combat and not those that had been previously evacuated. Reynolds, *Steel Inferno*, 282.

⁹¹⁴The 3rd Pz Gren Div and 15th Pz Gren Div were to be moved from the Italian theatre and three new infantry divisions (36th, 553rd and 563rd Gren Divs), including a number of other formations and units, were being rushed to France. In addition, 502 artillery pieces and 182 tanks were being prepared for dispatch to France. AHQ Report No. 77, 5.

⁹¹⁵ AHQ Report No. 50, M 287.

⁹¹⁶ During the first twenty-four days of the Normandy invasion, the German lost 2,400 vehicles including 1,866 trucks. In the aftermath of the breakout from St Lo and the Falaise disaster, vehicle losses swelled to about 20,000. Combined with the losses on the eastern front German truck losses from January to August 1944 were over 109,000 or the equivalent to the entire 1943 production. The 1944 production could not keep up with these losses and some of the panzer divisions including the 20th Pz Div and 13th Pz Div resorted to using horses for transport. DiNardo, *Germany's Panzer Arm*, 21.

Model was quite aware that the Allied Airborne army of five or six divisions might be used to facilitate any of these options.⁹¹⁷

Model's problem, however, was that the Somme-Marne line was not ready. The line of the Seine below Paris was manned by the remnants of 12 divisions and between the Seine and the Somme the remnants of six Panzer divisions would form a mobile reserve while being rehabilitated. To hold the Seine-Yonne-Dijon line would require 15 additional divisions. These divisions were to be assembled in the Troyes-Dijon-Lake Geneva area by 10 September. The only viable option for the Germans was to trade space for time in an attempt to gain the time they needed to prepare successive rear positions up to and including the West Wall and for reinforcements to reach the theatre.⁹¹⁸

Allied operations during this phase can be divided into four stages:

- the combined operations in the area of Falaise leading to the crossing of the Seine River
- the pursuit of the enemy through France and Belgium
- the operations by First Cdn Army up the coast of France and Belgium
- the operations to extend east and north in Belgium and Holland, culminating in the combined U.S. and British airborne operation in the neighbourhood of Nijmegen and Arnhem.

Two of these operations—the Second Br Army operations up to Brussels and Antwerp and the First Cdn Army operations along the French coast—would take place concurrently.⁹¹⁹

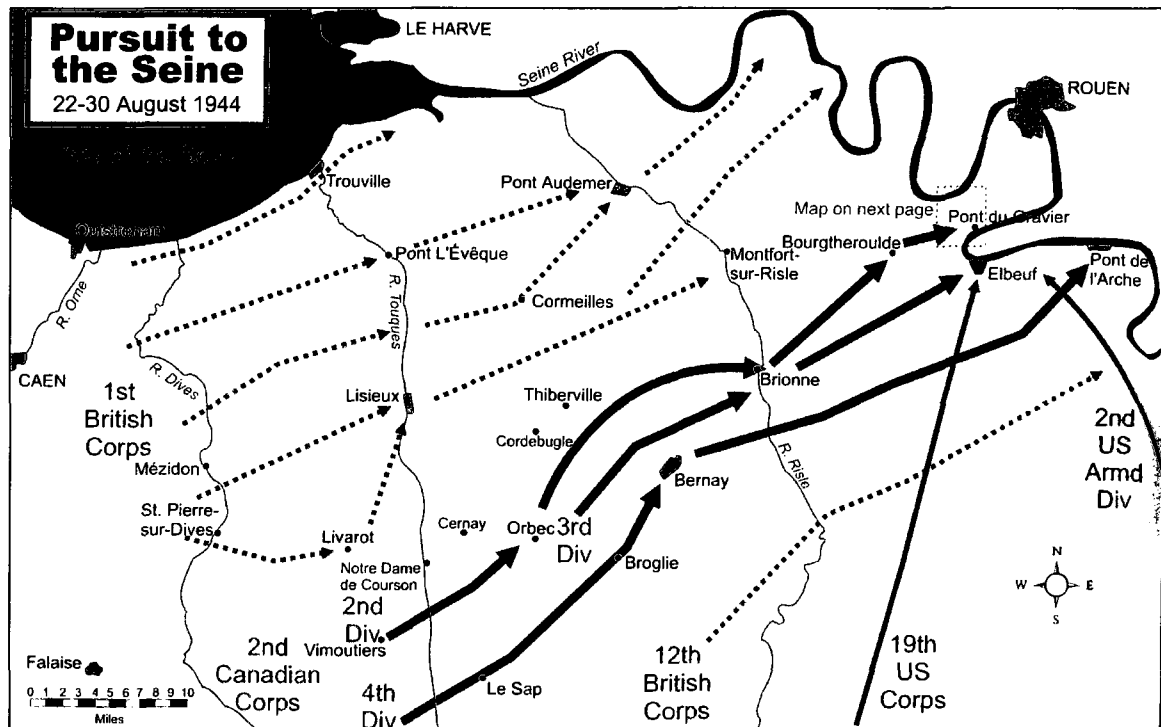
Crerar gave his two corps commanders their preliminary orders for the advance on 19 August. The 1st Br Corps was to continue its movements along the axis Liseaux-

⁹¹⁷ AHQ Report No. 77, 7.

⁹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 8

⁹¹⁹ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 32.

Pont Audemer. The 2nd Cdn Corps was to follow the general line Trun-Vimoutiers-Orbec-Bernay- Elbeuf. The advance would not begin until ordered by Crerar but Simonds was allowed to carry out active reconnaissance on his axis of advance.⁹²⁰ Simonds responded by dispatching his reconnaissance units toward the Seine River on 21 August, and followed these units with the entire 2nd Cdn Inf Div.⁹²¹



Map 27: Pursuit To The Seine. Copp, *The Canadian Battlefields in Normandy*, 130.

Prior to launching into an examination of 4 Cdn Arm Div actions in the pursuit, it is instructive to paint a picture of Kitching's successor Maj Gen Harry Foster and examine his career to this point. Like Kitching, Foster also experienced a rapid rise through the ranks of the wartime army. In his book, *Meeting of the Generals*, Tony Foster stated that his father, Harry Foster, graduated from RMC in 1924.⁹²² In fact, Harry Foster left RMC, having failed his third academic year, but with a Certificate of Military

⁹²⁰ Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 279.

⁹²¹ Jeffrey Williams, *The Long Left Flank: The Hard Fought Way to the Reich, 1944-1945*. (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd, 1988), 27.

⁹²² Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 58.

Qualification, which all cadets earned when they finished two full years at RMC. With this certificate in hand, cadets could cut short their time at RMC by applying for a Queen's commission in the Permanent Force (PF). Foster did so in 1924. This was an option which many RMC cadets with good military marks, but mediocre to bad academic results, did during the interwar years. Foster withdrew from RMC in July 1924 to receive the Queen's Commission and a posting to Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) on 2 July 1924.⁹²³

Foster was promoted to brevet captain in May 1929 and to captain in July 1934.⁹²⁴ Foster wrote the qualifying exams for Staff College every year from 1929 onwards until he was finally selected as the Canadian candidate to attend the two-year English Staff College at Camberley in July 1937. In November 1939 he was appointed Brigade Major (BM) of the 1st Cdn Inf Bde. Foster was selected to numerous commands in short order. In 1941 he appointed CO, 4th Princess Louis Dragoons; in 1942, CO, Highland Infantry of Canada; and in 1943, he was promoted Brigadier and became the CO, 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade. Included in this timeframe was a short stint as GSO 1, 1st Cdn Div in England and CO, Canadian Forces Aleutian Islands Pacific, in 1943. It was Kitching who replaced Foster as the GSO 1 of 1st Cdn Div on 14 Dec 1942.⁹²⁵

Foster's success as a Brigadier is difficult to evaluate. His brigade, the 7th Cdn Inf Bde, fought a series of battalion-level engagements in Normandy which required little oversight from the brigade commander. Foster's major intervention in the bridgehead battle occurred on 7 June 44 during the fighting around Norrey en Bessin. In response to

⁹²³ G. M. Boire, *Notes on 1661 Gentleman Cadet Harry Wickwire Foster, Class of 1925. from Cadet File:1661 H.W. Foster, Archives of the Royal Military College of Canada, 22 October 2004.* .

⁹²⁴ Tony Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 70.

⁹²⁵ CMHQ Report No 96, 9.

a German counterattack Foster deploy one armoured squadrons and a company of his reserve battalion to the high ground west of Mue and advised the Regina Rifles to withdraw from their key defensive position at Norrey en Bessin. Lt Col Foster Matheson, the CO of the Regina Rifles was confident that his men could fight from their positions and after checking with his company commanders told Foster that he wished to maintain his positions. Foster agreed.⁹²⁶

Foster's hatred of paperwork and staff duties is mentioned in Kitching's book when the two began their handover as GSO 1 of 1st Cdn Div and again in *Meeting of the Generals*.⁹²⁷ The definitive statement in this matter comes from Foster himself where, in his initial meeting with Proctor Foster stated, "I hate paperwork and administration. I'm not worth a shit at it. It's up to you to run it. I won't interfere-I'll keep you in the picture but you run it. Understood?"⁹²⁸ Foster was lucky since he inherited from Kitching a well trained battle-hardened staff manned by exceptional staff officers that could take care of the paperwork and administration allowing him to concentrate on operations. The staff's competence facilitated Foster's hands off leadership approach to commanding the division.

The first order of business for Foster when he took over command of the division was the handover with Kitching. Kitching was in tears and distraught over his dismissal. He gave Foster a briefing on the tactical situation and provided his assessment on the key division staff officers. Foster talked to both Wigle and Proctor to better understand how they worked and to explain how he wanted the division to operate. Proctor explained his process for handling the supply echelons. During the day he was up front. Whenever the

⁹²⁶ Copp, *Fields of Fire*, 69.

⁹²⁷ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 127.

⁹²⁸ Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 384.

tanks began shooting, the ammunition trucks dropped their loads and went back to the rear for more supplies. If the unit was breaking out, then they dropped their ammunition and went back for more fuel. Foster leadership style was to issue his intent for operations leaving the details and administration to Wigle and Proctor.⁹²⁹

At 2100 hrs 21 August, Foster outlined his plan for the following day. During 22 August the division and its attached units would regroup. The 9th Cdn Inf Bde and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde were to hold the Chambois-Trun area. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde was to concentrate in the area Champosoult and 10th Cdn Inf Bde in the area Coudehard with one battalion assigned to sweep the valley of Foulbec to clear out any Germans remaining in that area.⁹³⁰

During 22 August the regiments of the four brigades sorted themselves out so that by 1800 hrs the regrouping was complete. The 2nd Cdn Corps plan involved an advance to the northeast with right 4th Cdn Armd Div moving on an axis Le Sap-Broglié, center 3rd Cdn Inf Div advancing on the axis Vimoutiers-Orbec and left 2nd Cdn Inf Div advancing on the axis Orbec-Thiberville. The 1st Polish Armd Div was placed in Corps reserve. If 2nd or 3rd Div ran into opposition, 4th Cdn Armd Div was to be prepared to carry out a right flanking attack to dislodge the enemy. The 4th Cdn Armd Div was to advance to the area of Broglié, “one up” with 4th Cdn Armd Bde leading, preceded by 18th Cdn Armd C Regt. The reconnaissance regiment was to travel over a broad front to obtain the strength and disposition of the enemy forces and to provide information on the ground over which the division was to travel.⁹³¹

⁹²⁹ Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 384.

⁹³⁰ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 21 Aug.

⁹³¹ Summary of Instructions issued by GOC 4 CAD, War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, App XV.

At 1800 hrs, Foster gave his orders for the pursuit to the Seine with the objective the town of Rouen. In his orders Foster provided an overview of the German situation and stated that the Germans were conducting continuous withdrawals from Normandy. Reconnaissance had shown that there were no fortifications or defensive lines on the Seine River but there was evidence of construction of fortifications on the line of the Marne and Somme Rivers. Intelligence reports indicated that the Germans were trying to regroup their panzer divisions south and southeast of the area Orbec-Broglie.⁹³²

The division had only been given one route for the advance; therefore, the armoured brigade was assigned to lead, followed by the infantry brigade. The armoured brigade would advance until reaching Le Sap and then Zap. Once past Le Sap, the brigade would advance two up with the BCR on the right and the Grenadier Guards on the left. The pursuit was to start at 0700 hrs on the 23rd August.⁹³³

Foster also issued new orders for the echelons. In an effort to increase the range and self-reliance of the regiments, F echelon would now be comprised of the fighting vehicles plus necessary command vehicles as well as 11 soft-skin vehicles per armoured regiment for fuel, ammunition and rations. The commanding officers were warned to keep their regimental headquarters out of the fight so that they would be in a better position to observe and control.⁹³⁴

The drive to the Seine began on 23 August led by the BCR and the Lake Superior Regiment. The armour made better time after the River Tougues was crossed and road surfaces became firmer and free of destroyed enemy equipment and vehicles. The columns rolled down the road at “convoy speed” through Le Sap and Monnai without

⁹³² Ibid.

⁹³³ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 22 Aug.

⁹³⁴ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 22 Aug.

opposition. Once past Le Sap, tanks raced on over hard surfaced highways and at Monnai turned northeast. Halfway to Broglies, armoured cars moving ahead of the tanks discovered a pocket of German anti-tank guns protected by infantry. Attempts to bypass failed and the armoured brigade deployed to attack.⁹³⁵ The BCR lost nine tanks in the encounter. While this engagement was in progress, the Foot Guards were ordered to return to Le Sap and carry out a flanking movement against this pocket while the Lake Superior Regiment cleared the woods.⁹³⁶

Foster's plan for 24 August had two alternatives, depending on the success of the attack against the German rearguard. If the German rearguard had not withdrawn, the infantry brigade would attack and the armoured brigade would pass through. If the rearguard had been withdrawn, the advance would be continued with the armoured brigade leading. As it turned out, enemy fire succeeded in pinning down the armour for most of the day and the Foot Guards lost two more tanks. The Germans withdrew during the night, blocking key crossroads with mines, booby traps and trees.⁹³⁷

Fuel consumption rates within the division were aggravated by the initial moves out of the Trun/Vimoutiers area, which were either cross-country or over bad and sometimes washed-out roads. The reserve fuel cans normally carried by the vehicles had long since been removed for fear of fire. Maintenance columns had not been able to get forward the night of 23 August and, even though the units had been topped up on 22 August, there was a shortage of rations and a more serious shortage of fuel. In addition, there were no maps of the area beyond Bernay. In order to keep the advance moving,

⁹³⁵ Spencer, *History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment*, 123-124.

⁹³⁶ *A Brief History of the 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade in Action July 1944- May 1945*. (Mitcham: West Brothers, 1945), 16.

⁹³⁷ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 23 Aug

every drop of fuel was transferred to the recce vehicles so that they could set off. Maps arrived just as the recce units were about to leave.⁹³⁸

On August 24, a special self-contained combat group was ordered to spearhead the advance. Keane Force was based on the Lake Superior Regiment, two squadrons from 18th Cdn Armd C Regt, the BCR, and the Argylls. The force composition of Keane Force was sufficient enough to allow its commander to deal with immediate problems without having to engage brigade headquarters. Should the force encounter opposition that could not be brushed aside by the tanks and the Lake Superior Regiment, then the Argylls would be available to add the necessary weight to the attack. In order to facilitate the command and control arrangements, Stewart, the commanding officer of the Argylls, travelled with the tactical HQ of the Lake Superiors.⁹³⁹

Keane Force continued the advance at 0830 hrs 24 August and by 1530 hrs had reached the line of the River Risle at Serguingy and Fontaine to find both bridges blown. It was decided that the only logical place to build a bridge was at Fontaine and that the engineers would construct it during the night after the infantry brigade had formed a bridgehead on the other side. The Lincoln & Welland Regiment and Algonquin Regiment made a crossing and seized the high ground Pt 152 on the other side.⁹⁴⁰

At 0900 hrs on 25 August, the bridge at Fontaine was completed and the column began moving again. Once across the river, the column made good speed, so much so that it became strung out and communication between the armoured brigade and division HQ became difficult. Heavy traffic and confused routes between 4th Cdn Armd Div and 3rd

⁹³⁸ Spencer, *History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment*, 126.

⁹³⁹ Keane Force also included one battery 23rd Field Regiment and one battery 3rd Medium Field Regt. Stanley, *In the Face of Danger*, 183-184.

⁹⁴⁰ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 24 Aug.

Cdn Inf Div caused their columns to be mixed. In the early part of the afternoon 4th Cdn Armd Bde reported running into troops from the 29th U.S. Inf Div and 2nd U.S. Armd Div in the area of Le Neuborg. There was some confusion as to exactly whom this part of the Seine belonged and, until the matter could be settled, Foster decided to concentrate the division in the general area Criqueboeuf la Campagne. 4th Cdn Armd Div was eventually assigned responsibility for the area and the U.S. troops withdrew to the south.⁹⁴¹

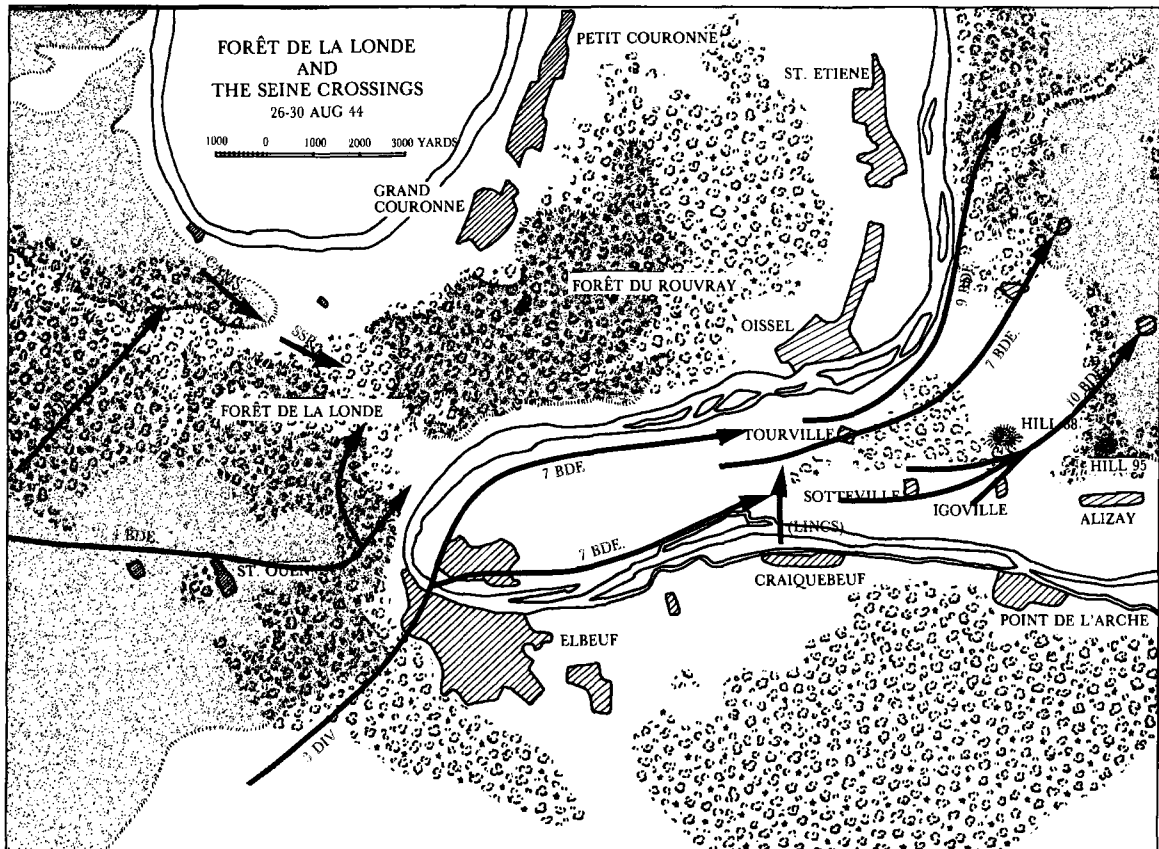
On 26 August, orders were issued for 21st Army Group to advance north with the intention of eventually capturing Antwerp.⁹⁴² The 4 Cdn Armd Div was ordered to clear the Foret Dominale de Bord and recce crossing sites over the Seine River between Criquebeuf sur Seine and Pont de L'Arche. The general outline of Foster's plan was for the division to advance two up with the 4th Cdn Armd Bde moving on the right and 10th Cdn Inf Bde on the left. The armoured brigade had the Argylls under command and was given the objective of Pont de L'Arche. The infantry brigade was to advance to Criquebeuf. The leading troops reached the Seine at approximately 1115 hrs and, by 1600 hrs, the division was concentrated south of the river between the area Pont de L'Arche and Criquebeuf. No opposition had been met in the advance but it was clear that the Germans were defending the north bank of the river.⁹⁴³

⁹⁴¹ Ibid.

⁹⁴² Since 23 August, Montgomery had been pressing his concept of a single massive thrust into Germany. Eisenhower did not agree with this strategy, favouring an advance into Germany over a broad front. Montgomery believed that a single thrust into Germany would be enough to cause the rapid collapse of Germany and believed that this could be accomplished before the Allied imperative of opening ports and, in particular, Antwerp, was necessary. Eisenhower remained doubtful but was prepared to defer operations to clear Antwerp until after operation MARKET GARDEN, the airborne operation to seize the Nijmegen and Arnhem bridges. Eisenhower emphasized the importance of opening Antwerp but authorized Montgomery to defer until after the airborne operation. Williams, *The Long Left Flank*, 41. 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 31.

⁹⁴³ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-31 August 1944, entry 24 Aug.

At 2100 hrs, Foster outlined his orders for the assault across the Seine scheduled for the next day. The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to carry out the assault from the area of Criquebeuf sur Seine with the object of seizing a bridgehead in the general area Pt 95–Pt 88–Pt 80. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde was to provide supporting fire from the high ground south of Pont de l'Arche.⁹⁴⁴



Map 28: Seine River Crossing. Copp, *Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp*, 32.

At 1700 hrs, however, the CO of the Lincs Lt Col Cromb seized the initiative and sent his scout platoon and D Company of the Lincs crossed the Seine River and occupied houses opposite Criquebeuf. They became the first Canadians to cross the Seine and reported that no sign of the enemy existed. Cromb decided that such an opportunity was too good to pass up and quickly ordered a larger force to cross and occupy the village of

⁹⁴⁴ Outline Plan for the Establishment Brhead over Regt Seine 27 Aug 44. War Diary, Manitoba Dragoons, 1-31 August 1944, App XVII.

Freneuse. By dark, D Company was dug in on the opposite bank. Cromb then reported what he had done to brigade. Proctor had located a few rafts and DUKWs⁹⁴⁵ to ferry some light armour across to support Cromb's force which, by this time, had grown to three companies. Foster decided to continue to put the rest of the brigade across at Criquebeuf but, because of the increasing resistance by the 17th Luftwaffe Field Div in the immediate area, decided to have the armoured brigade cross at Elbeuf, the original crossing point since opposition there was lighter.⁹⁴⁶

The approaches to the Seine crossing were quite open with only the buildings affording cover. The land on the Allied side sloped gently down to the water, while on the enemy side it rose sharply to form an escarpment with the two villages Sotteville and Igoville directly beneath the heights. Hill 88 and Hill 95 above each town respectively. Any movements on the Allied side of the river were in plain view of the enemy. The bridgehead had to be expanded to include the two heights and the Argylls and Algonquins were allotted the tasks of taking the two towns and the respective heights.⁹⁴⁷

At 0530 hrs the next morning, six storm-boats and two class-nine ferries had arrived to begin moving the two battalions across. The Algonquins were across by 0715 hrs and the Argylls by 0900 hrs. The Argyll objective was Igoville and the high ground beyond. Just prior to this action, the battalion HQ group, lost direction and travelled down the main road of Igoville while it was still in German hands and was captured.

⁹⁴⁵ The DUKW (popularly pronounced *DUCK*) was a six-wheel-drive amphibious truck that was designed by General Motors Corporation during World War II for transporting goods and troops over land and water and for use approaching and crossing beaches in amphibious attacks. DUKW was GM's manufacturer's code used to identify the different vehicles in their range. In this case it works as follows; D = Date 1942 - the first year of manufacture, U = Amphibian, K = Drive to all wheels, W= Dual rear axles. The similarity with Duck is purely fortuitous. <http://www.transchool.eustis.army.mil/Museum/DUKW.htm> accessed 8 February 2008.

⁹⁴⁶ Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 388

⁹⁴⁷ Paterson, *A Short History of the Tenth Canadian Infantry BDE*, 32.

Stewart ordered an immediate attack to try and get his people back. The attack on the town began at 1500 hrs and met heavy opposition but the objective was taken and consolidated by 1800 hrs. The battalion suffered 75 casualties in the action to take the town but failed to get their captured comrades back.⁹⁴⁸ The Algonquins met stiff opposition and heavy fire in trying to take Sotteville. The battalion was finally able to secure the town by evening but an attack to reach the high ground beyond the town was turned back. The battalion remained in place during the evening under constant sniper and mortar fire.⁹⁴⁹

While these actions were taking place, the remainder of 10th Cdn Inf Bde was ferried across the Seine on rafts. At the same time, 3rd Cdn Inf Div succeeded in establishing a bridgehead at Elbeuf and started construction of a class-40 bridge. The 4th Cdn Armd Div was to have priority on this bridge, while 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to continue to use the ferry site.⁹⁵⁰ It was not expected that the echelon forces would cross for several days. Extra supplies, therefore, were carried in all vehicles to enable the regiments to move and fight without the daily maintenance process.⁹⁵¹

Most of 28 August was spent in regrouping under constant German shelling. At 1400 hrs the Lincoln & Welland Regiment launched an attack to take Hill 88 and by 1700 hrs the hill was taken. The Lincs then moved to Igoville to provide a firm base for the Argylls' attack on Hill 95. At 1930 hrs, the Argylls, with the support of the C Sqn

⁹⁴⁸ Of the group, three escaped, two were killed and 15 taken prisoner. War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entry 27 Aug.

⁹⁴⁹ War Diary, Algonquin Regiment, 1-31 August 1944, entry 27 Aug.

⁹⁵⁰ Spencer, *History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment*, 129.

⁹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 129

SAR, attacked and captured Hill 95. These two attacks ended the source of much of the harassment fire against the bridgehead.⁹⁵²

On 28 August, Simonds ordered 4th Cdn Armd Bde to capture and hold the triangular area formed by the towns of Boos, Le Hammel and Pt 164. Foster decided that the Brigade would cross the class-40 bridge which was being built at Elbeuf. It would then move through 3rd Cdn Inf Div to the objectives. The BCR was to capture and hold Le Hamel aux Batiers, at which point it would be joined by an infantry battalion from 10th Cdn Inf Bde. The Foot Guards were to capture and hold Boos and the Grenadier Guards were to capture Pt 164.⁹⁵³

The Brigade moved to the marshalling area within 3rd Cdn Inf Div and started coming under heavy shellfire. The infantry of 3rd Div and 10th Cdn Inf Bde were tasked with creating an alley through which the armoured brigade could travel. The 7th Cdn Inf Bde was to capture St. Aubin Celloville; 9th Cdn Inf Bde was to pass through to St. Pierre and then strike out along the road to Rouen. The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to secure Pt 135 at first light and work up to the woods at Boos.⁹⁵⁴ On 29 August, A Sqn SAR supported the Lincoln & Welland attack on Pt 135 which was taken by 1800 hrs. C Sqn SAR was then tasked with supporting the Argylls in an attack on Boos which was completed by 1930 hrs. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde was firmed up on their objectives by 1900 hrs.

The issue of infantry strength was becoming acute among the division's infantry battalions. The Argylls were now operating with three companies of 40 men, the

⁹⁵² War Diary, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, 1-31 August 1944, entry 28 Aug.

⁹⁵³ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 28 Aug.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Algonquin Regiment with three companies of 60 men and the Lincs with three companies of 70 men.⁹⁵⁵ There was little hope at this point that the deficiencies could be made good.

Simonds ordered the division to bypass whatever opposition remained in Rouen and make with all speed for the high ground near Buchy, 13 miles to the north. The 4th Cdn Armd Bde was ordered to capture the general area of Pt 224–Pt 223 near Buchy with one regiment in Buchy, one regiment in the area Bos Roger sur Buchy and one on Pt 233. The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to seize Pt 233 and to establish a firm base for the division. Once the firm base had been established, 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to send a detachment to take Forges les Eaux. Once this task was completed, the division would become the corps reserve and have a five-day rest period.⁹⁵⁶

At 0800 hrs, the advance continued with Buchy as the objective. The Germans had withdrawn from their positions during the night and 4th Cdn Armd Bde encountered no opposition during the advance, arriving on the objective at 1500 hrs. The 10th Cdn Inf Bde advanced during the afternoon and firmed up in Bois Guilbert. The special force assigned to capture Forges les Eaux was under the command of Major D. Currie from the SAR and included one company from the Argylls and supporting troops. Currie's force was dispatched at 1700 hrs and occupied the town at last light.⁹⁵⁷ Jefferson was evacuated during the afternoon with malaria and Lt Col Stewart took over command of the brigade. The maintenance train brought forward much-needed supplies of rations, fuel and mail as the division settled in for the anticipated rest period.

⁹⁵⁵ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA& QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entry 29 Aug.

⁹⁵⁶ Confirmatory Notes GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div O GP 301100B Aug. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, App 7.

⁹⁵⁷ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-31 August 1944, entry 31 Aug.

In the 11-day timeframe from 22 August to 1 September, the First Cdn Army as a whole advanced approximately 137 miles from Trun to Dieppe. Excluding the days dedicated to the crossing of the Seine River (26–29 August), the Canadian Army advanced an average of 17 miles a day with the shortest advance at 12 miles and the longest at 32 miles. The rate of the advance was even more impressive because the Army had to cross two major river obstacles, the Tougues and Risle Rivers, in addition to the more formidable Seine crossing.⁹⁵⁸

The Allied administrative organization however was not prepared for the rate of Allied advance after 22 August. Planners had not anticipated the complete disintegration of the entire German front. The administrative plan was based on a staged German withdrawal that would have allowed the Allies to build up essential supplies during a more deliberate advance. The plan included an operational pause at the Seine for this specific purpose.⁹⁵⁹ Actual operations forced the AA & QMG organizations at all levels to improvise in order to meet the demands of the rapid advance.

Allied supply dumps remained in the Rear Maintenance Area (RMA) and the problem of supplying a two-corps advance, moving at a rate of 40 miles at times, had to be resolved. Operationally, it was necessary to maintain contact with the retreating German forces to exploit their disorganization and vulnerability. The issue was not so much the amount of supplies needed but, rather, how to get the supplies forward to the fighting formations. The critical element was transport.

The capacity to support all Allied armies did not exist; therefore, decisions had to be made with respect to the sequencing of operations—who would conduct the operations

⁹⁵⁸ First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary No 47 App C. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-30 September 1944, App 2.

⁹⁵⁹ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 34.

and what level of administrative support each of the armies would receive. As a result, 8th Corps was “grounded” by 2nd Br Army and all its second line and 50 percent of its first line transport was temporarily removed in order to provide transport to supply the Army’s other two corps.⁹⁶⁰ The transport problem became more acute when a major fault was found in the engines of the British K-5, 4X4, three-ton Austin trucks, of which 1,400 of them and all of their replacement engines were defective because of piston trouble.⁹⁶¹

In First Cdn Army, for the first time, the availability of transport was less than the demand. It became necessary for Q Branch at First Cdn Army to lay down priorities according to the needs of the situation on a day to day basis. Within a matter of days after the breakout, daily turn around supply availability became a thing of the past. With the congestion at the depots and crowded roads, it was now necessary to allow an average of a three-day turn around from supply bases to the Seine.⁹⁶²

The daily maintenance requirements for First Cdn Army on 24 August highlighted the problem.⁹⁶³ The following requirements were reported for First Cdn Army organizations: Army troops 459 tons, 1st British Corps 1,293 tons, and 2nd Cdn Corps 1,469 tons respectively. These demands required 3221 tons of lift but only 1170 tons of lift was available representing a deficit of 2,051 tons of daily transport lift capability. The only way that this deficiency could be made up was if all of the first line transport companies were withdrawn from the corps and divisions. These resources

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁶¹ Initially captured German trucks were pressed into service as a solution but this practice was halted when they were found to be mechanically unreliable. 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 47.

⁹⁶² Canada. Army Service Corps, *An Account of Operations of Supply and Transport Service: First Canadian Army France and Belgium 23 July 44-31 Oct 44*. (s.l.: S&T Branch HQ First Cdn Army, 15 Dec 44), 2, 19.

⁹⁶³ Over all, First Cdn Army required over 4,000 tons of all supplies and 1,500 tons of POL on a daily basis. A division required approximately 500 tons of supplies per day to sustain its operations. Camsell, *From Normandy to the Scheldt*, 139.

represented another 2,190 tons of capability but implementing this plan would have left the divisions with little in the way of capability to support the fighting echelons or maintain the pursuit.⁹⁶⁴ This was not a viable solution and so improvisation and compromise became the norm.

One approach employed at 21st Army Group was to ground a number of divisions and remove their transport.⁹⁶⁵ Another was improving efficiency with strict traffic control to ensure that bottlenecks did not occur at the improvised bridges over the Seine or the numerous other bridges and rivers along the maintenance routes. Tank transporters which were originally confined to specific hours of movement each day were now pressed into service in large numbers to transport essential ammunition and ordnance stores.⁹⁶⁶ All third line transport was pooled and placed directly under Army control and approval was even granted for trucks to travel at night in rear areas with full headlights rather than the restricted headlights, known as cat's eyes, in the forward areas.⁹⁶⁷ Even with all of these measures, at no time during the pursuit phase did the daily vehicle tonnage available exceed 2,000 tons for all of 2nd Cdn Corps.

On 26 August, corps staff formed a new plan to try to deal with traffic control problems. One section of provost corps was taken away from each division to augment the Corps Provost Company and the corps traffic boundary was moved up to a position in the rear of divisional headquarters. The divisions would control traffic in their areas and corps would handle everything else. It was felt that reducing the area of responsibilities of the divisions would reduce traffic tie-ups. Experience had shown that, in the rush of

⁹⁶⁴ The 4 Canadian Armoured Division Transport Company could provide 450 tons of lift daily. Canada. Army Service Corps, *an Account of Operations of Supply and Transport Service*, 42-43.

⁹⁶⁵ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 35.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁷ Part One Orders 4 Cdn Armd Bde September 1944. War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-30 September 1944.

operations, divisions simply did not discuss moves with each other, which resulted in roads being tied up and time wasted. In the rear areas controlled by Corps, traffic usually moved in controlled convoys over well-defined and well-marked roads. This was not the case in the forward areas where echelons were using roads, usually within hours of them being taken by the fighting troops.⁹⁶⁸

The pursuit for the 4 Cdn Armd Div echelon formations started on 24 August.⁹⁶⁹ The impact of limited supplies and transport was felt at every level, yet Proctor and Wigle revealed themselves to be masters of innovation which allowed them to provide Foster with the needed resources to maintain the operational tempo he demanded. On 29 August, Proctor moved 29 lorries full of supplies, ammunition and fuel to the north shore of the Seine, despite enemy shelling. The division established the first dump on the north shore of the Seine River and Proctor had it built up to 180 tons of fuel, ammunition and supplies by the time the rest of the corps reached the bank. Proctor had all of his supply dumps moved across the river and was providing the Polish armoured division with ammunition, fuel and spares until their own supplies arrived.⁹⁷⁰ This supply dump remained the only one on the north side of the river for some time and had other units drawing from it almost immediately.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶⁸ Memorandum Conference DA & QMG, AA & QMG, DAAG AQM (Plans) First Cdn Army 26 Aug 44. War Diary, AG & QMG Branch, HQ 2 Cdn Corps, 1-31 August 1944, App 43.

⁹⁶⁹ Since the 4th Cdn Armd Div was known as the Green Patch Division, the centre line of the division advance was known as Green Route, which was marked by metal signs displaying the Green Patch. If the roads were poor and alternate routes were feasible, there might be separate routes Green Up to the fighting echelon and Green Down, returning to the A and B echelons. As one travelled further into the rear areas, roads would become Maple Leaf Up and Maple Leaf Down for use by all Canadian traffic. Tactical numbers were painted on all Division vehicles to help facilitate the convoy and supply process. Tactical signs- 50 represented 4 Cdn Armd Bde Hq, 51 GGFG, 52, the CGG, 53 the BCRs and 54 the Lake Sup R, 45 SAR, 61 Linc & Wellld R. French, *Some Reminiscences*, 76.

⁹⁷⁰ Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 388.

⁹⁷¹ The division artillery from 3rd Cdn Inf Div, for example, was drawing from it almost as soon as the regiments were established. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-31 August 1944, entries 27-28 Aug.

On 31 August, Proctor proposed a plan for the maintenance of the division in the event that Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC) transport was withdrawn to support Corps or Army operations. The plan was designed to maintain the division with its own resources for a maximum of 100 miles. His plan was based on the assumption that ammunition requirements would not exceed the average daily demand of the last month and that the daily demand for fuel would not exceed 72,072 gallons or the normal second line of the division. A key factor in the plan was that Proctor was going to “ground” the division’s Main HQ and administrative units and divert their transport resources to the fighting echelons.⁹⁷²

The plan called for 43 vehicles for stores, 102 vehicles for fuel and 105 vehicles for the movement of ammunition or 250 vehicles in total. An additional 24 vehicles were needed if the two days’ reserve rations normally carried by RCASC were still required. A and B echelons were disbanded, leaving only F echelon and the battle lorries which were tasked to move the commodities between F echelon and the forward supply points. The supply points would be placed as far forward as possible and would remain static. The maximum distance between the forward supply points and F echelon was to be 25 miles. All other available vehicles would be assigned to restocking the supply points.⁹⁷³

On 30 August, the decision was made to rely on the early capture of a Channel port, such as Dieppe or Boulogne, and to cease bringing in large quantities of stores and vehicles through RMA. It was felt that the RMAs were adequately stocked with supplies so that stores that were once considered essential were now phased back until such time

⁹⁷² Outline Plan for Maint if RCASC Tpt is Withdrawn 4 Cdn Armd Div dated 31 August 44. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA &QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App. 8.

⁹⁷³ Outline Plan for Maint if RCASC Tpt is Withdrawn 4 Cdn Armd Div dated 31 August 44. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA &QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 8.

as a port or ports nearer the battle area became available. Imports were reduced from an average of 16,000 tons a day to only 7,000 tons per day. This decision released critical transport for the direct support of the armies.⁹⁷⁴

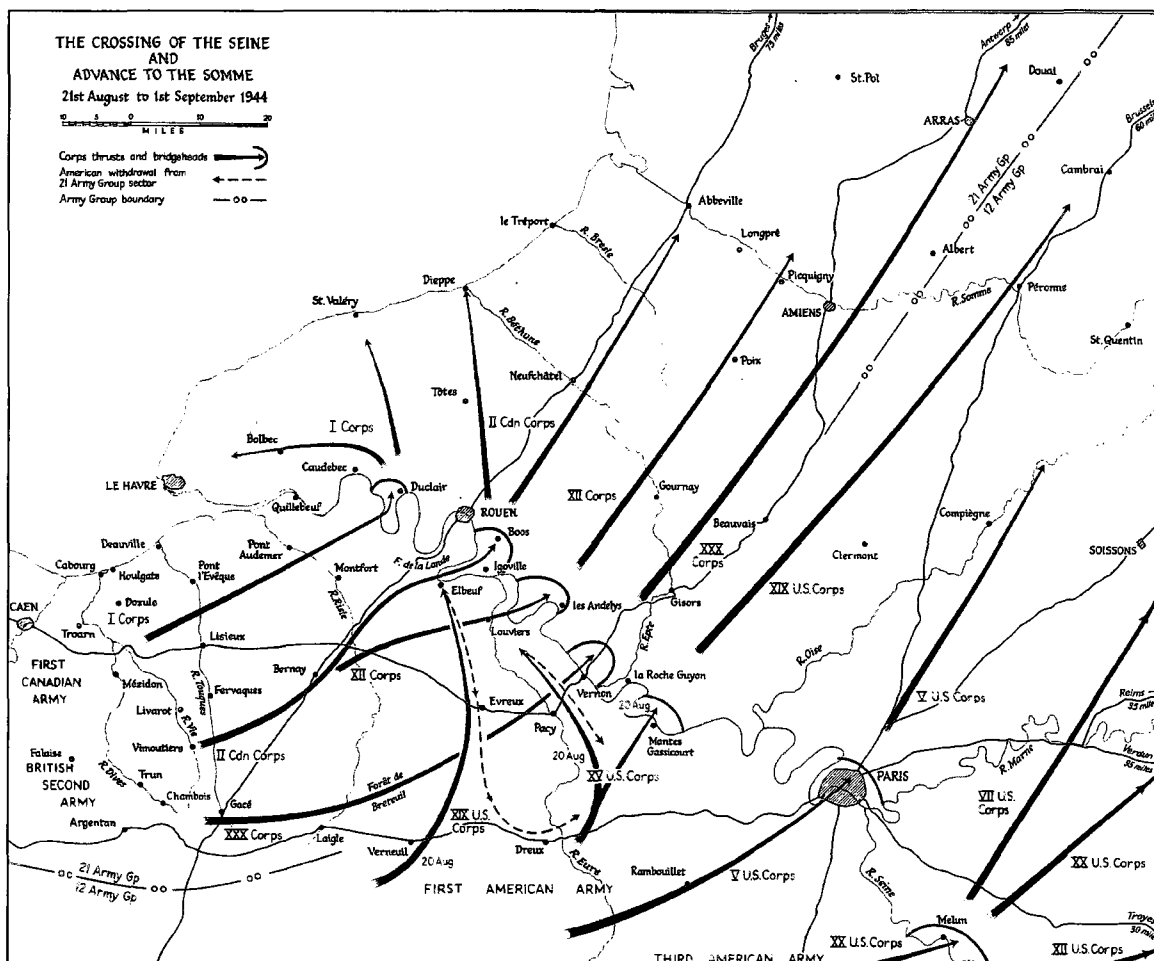
When it became obvious to the German High Command that at best only a delaying action could be fought on the Seine, they ordered Model to prepare a stop line along the River Somme. Their immediate problem was to save their forces south of the River from encirclement and destruction. On 28 August, General von Zangen, commanding the Fifteenth Army, ordered his two divisions holding the coast south of the river to withdraw to it and prepare it for defence. This they did, blowing all the bridges over which the First Cdn Army would have to advance.⁹⁷⁵ In the early morning of 31 August, the 11th British Armd Div caused consternation among the Germans by overrunning the headquarters of the Fifth Panzer Army southwest of Amiens, capturing the commander of the Seventh Army. The British then pushed across the Somme on a still intact bridge at Amiens. This unexpected situation caused the orders to 4th Cdn Armd Div to be changed. There would be no rest period: the pursuit would continue.

Simonds issued new orders on 31 August. The 7th Br Armd Div had crossed the Seine and, after a rapid unopposed advance to Amiens, was headed northwest to Abbéville and it was necessary to protect their flank. The Poles, who were behind 4th Cdn Armd Div, had been slated for this role but it was decided not to wait for them to pass through. Instead, 4th Cdn Armd Div moved at once either to capture Abbéville or to take control of the city depending on the rate of advance of the 7th Br Armd Div.⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷⁴ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 34.

⁹⁷⁵ Williams, *The Long Left Flank*, 41.

⁹⁷⁶ Spencer, *History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment*, 134.



Map 29: Advance to the Somme. Ellis, *Victory in the West*, 471.

Orders had already been given to stand the units down for rest and maintenance routines had been organized. Wigle and Proctor now had to immediately organize a night move to a new objective over 30 miles away. The move was to be conducted over a single road on a pitch-black night through unreconnoitred country and without proper maps.⁹⁷⁷ Despite all these challenges and as a testament to the work of the division staffs, the division would only be two hours late off the mark. The lead units of 10th Cdn Inf Bde

⁹⁷⁷ Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 389.

crossed the start line at Forges les Eaux at 0200 hrs and by 0700 hrs the leading units were in Orival, after what was described as a “smooth advance.”⁹⁷⁸

The Grenadier Guards led off the 4th Cdn Armd Bde advance at 0445 hrs and passed through 10th Cdn Inf Bde at 1000 hrs to continue the advance. The armoured regiments at this point were fighting with two squadrons of 14 tanks each. On reaching the town of Hornoy around midday, the column became entangled with elements of the British 7th and 11th Armd Divisions and 53rd Infantry division. All the columns were headed towards Abbéville and it appeared the same centre line had been allocated to the four divisions.⁹⁷⁹

The Germans added to the confusion by deciding to make a stand near the town of Airaines. It was not known if the British or the 4th Cdn Armd Div should deal with the situation. After a long delay, 4th Cdn Armd Bde bypassed Airaines via Allery and harboured northeast of the city. Foster was forced to visit Simonds in order to sort out the problem of the centre line of the division. The 2nd Cdn Corps staff had allocated the division a centre line that was south of the inter-army boundary. While the fighting echelons continued towards Abbéville, all of the rear echelon formations conducted another short notice, yet expertly executed, move north into First Cdn Army area before following the fighting formations.⁹⁸⁰ Again, the expertise and professionalism of the staff was demonstrated in conducting the shift without impacting the fighting ability of the combat formations.

⁹⁷⁸ The line of advance for the Division was Bucy-Forge les Eaux-Aumale-Hornoy-Abbéville. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 September 1944, entry 1 Sep.

⁹⁷⁹ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 September 1944, entry 1 Sep.

⁹⁸⁰ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 September 1944, entry 2 Sep.

The 10th Cdn Inf Bde harboured near Hallencourt. While firming up its position, 10th Cdn Inf Bde was tasked to send one infantry battalion to Airaines to help clear up the situation after a failed 4th Br Armd Bde attack.⁹⁸¹ The Lincoln & Welland Regiment was given this task and encountered little opposition as the Germans withdrew again during the evening. The task of clearing the city was completed at first light on 2 September. The Lincs were relieved by infantry from 53rd Div (Br) and moved to Sorel.⁹⁸² The 4th Cdn Armd Div reached the river at Abbéville in the early hours of 2 September.

The division was assigned two tasks for 2 September. The first task was the shifting of the division to the left of the new inter-army boundary and the second task was to seize a crossing of the River Somme in the area of Pont Remy. In order to accomplish the first task, the whole division representing the movement of thousands of vehicles and men had to sidestep five miles north. This move started at 0800 hrs and was completed by 1200 hrs.⁹⁸³

In order to accomplish the second task, all three regiments of 4th Cdn Armd Bde carried out patrols along the Somme River in an attempt to find a bridge still standing. The Lake Superior Regiment companies were under command of their respective armoured regiments and patrolled with their respective recce troops. If a suitable crossing was found, the respective Lake Superior Regiment company was to be used to seize the initial bridgehead.⁹⁸⁴

The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was tasked with concentrating the brigade in the area of Grandsart-Hallencourt. If the armoured brigade was successful in seizing a bridge or

⁹⁸¹ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 September 1944, entry 1 Sep.

⁹⁸² War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 September 1944, entry 1 Sep.

⁹⁸³ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 September 1944, entry 2 Sep.

⁹⁸⁴ War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 1-30 September 1944, entry 2 Sep.

bridgehead, the infantry brigade was to be prepared to take over and exploit the position. In this event, the armoured brigade was to be ready to move to the area Erondelle so that they could provide cover fire for the crossing.⁹⁸⁵ The four bridges in Pont Remy were all reported as blown and the patrols all reported heavy fire from German artillery and mortars. By last light no crossing had been made but, within 12 hour, the division engineers in another display of initiative and professionalism were able to repair all four bridges.⁹⁸⁶

The confirmatory notes to Foster's O Group of 2100 hrs, 2 September, outlined the general German situation as withdrawing after blowing bridges over the River Somme. Foster's intent was to seize a bridgehead across the Somme in the vicinity of Pont Remy, followed by an advance in the general area St Mauguille le Haut Clocher. The 10th Cdn Inf Bde was to secure the bridgehead across the Somme by a silent attack and the armour brigade would then pass through on completion of a bridge across the river.⁹⁸⁷

Patrols from the Lincs and Algonquins were the first to cross the river and met no opposition. Three battalions were across and firmed up by 0430 hrs. The 53rd Div (Br) had also crossed and was on the right of the infantry brigade. With the division's artillery in close proximity to the bridgehead, the division bridgehead was secure. The armour could wait until a bridge had been constructed.⁹⁸⁸

⁹⁸⁵ 4 Cdn Armd Div Op Instr Number 6 dated 2 Sep 44. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 September 1944, App 2

⁹⁸⁶ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 September 1944, entry 2 Sep.

⁹⁸⁷ Confirmatory Notes GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div O GP 022100B Sep dated 2 Sep 44. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div 1-30 September 1944, App 2.

⁹⁸⁸ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 September 1944, entry 2 Sep.

A class-40 bridge was expected to be ready by 1200 hrs 3 September but, by that time, the division's engineers were able to construct three class-40 and one class-30 type bridge over the river.⁹⁸⁹ The 4th Cdn Armd Bde began crossing the Somme River at 1330 hrs and was firmed up on the objective of the day, Bugny L'Abbe at 1610 hrs. The 1st Pol Armd Div was to pass through the division to continue the advance. Orders were issued that the 4th Cdn Armd Div would stand down for two days and both A and B echelons were ordered forward to rejoin their regiments.⁹⁹⁰

The evening of 3 September was used to consolidate the different elements of the division and all units were established in their allotted positions in the concentration area by 2330 hrs. At 0030 hrs, Main division HQ was warned to move in one hour when it was discovered that the HQ was the furthest forward of all troops and there was no one between them and the Germans. The Polish Armd Div was supposed to have passed through earlier but had failed to do so. Both Main and Rear HQs were ordered to pull back three miles to new locations.⁹⁹¹ This was the first time since landing in France that all elements of the regiments and division were together. Although there was some movement of harbours, the division spent 4 and 5 September in maintenance and reorganization.

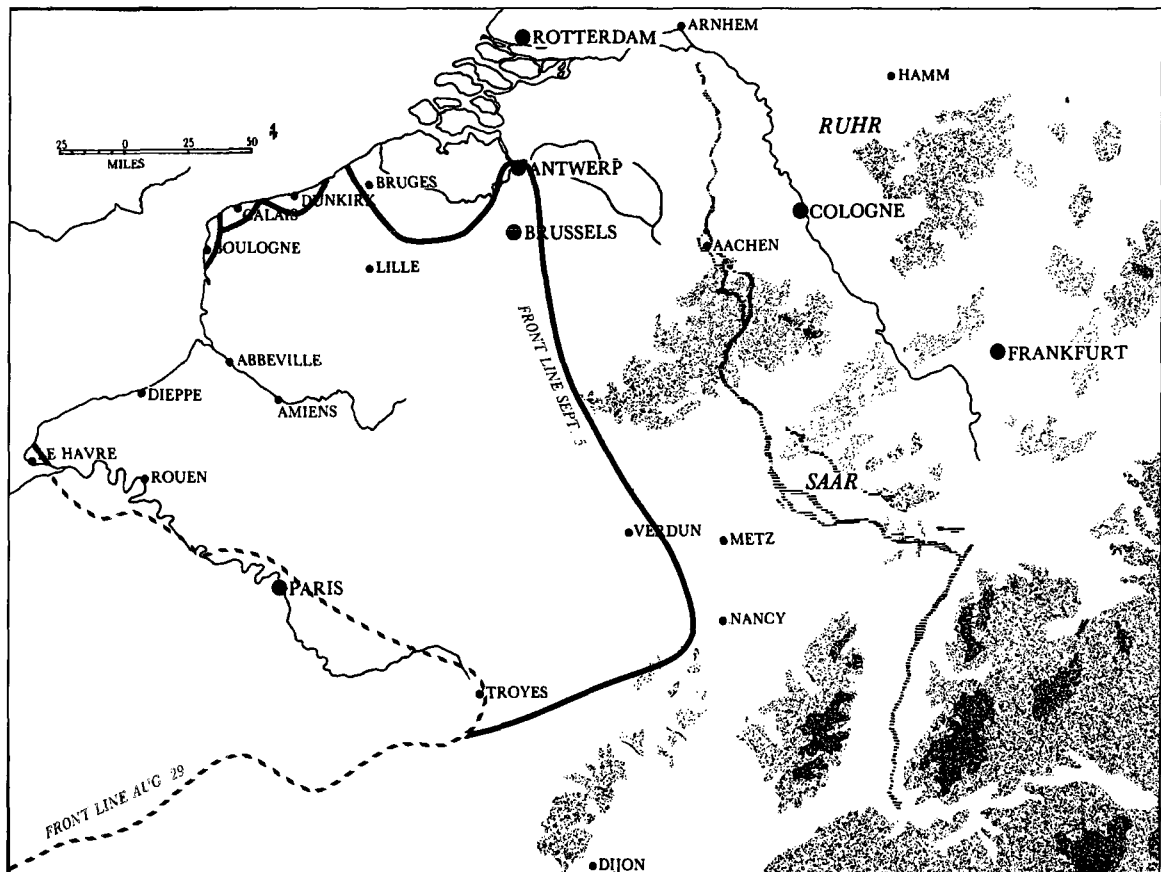
On 3 September, Montgomery issued his orders for operations to continue. 21st Army Group was to the advance eastwards and destroy all enemy forces encountered. In addition, it was to occupy the Ruhr and get astride the communications leading from it

⁹⁸⁹ "The Bailey Bridge is essentially a pre-fabricated structure, the roadway being carried between two main *girders*. A main girder is formed from panels (*trusses*) 10 ft long pinned together end to end. The strength of the girder can be increased by adding extra panels alongside and on top of the original panels." An armoured division needed a Class 30 bridge; an infantry division needed a Class 40 bridge; a corps needed a Class 70 bridge. <http://www.abfigures.co.uk/The%20Bailey%20Bridge.doc>

⁹⁹⁰ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 September 1944, entries 4, 5 Sep.

⁹⁹¹ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 September 1944, entry 3, 4 Sep.

into Germany and the sea ports. First Cdn Army was assigned the task of clearing the coastal belt and remaining in the general area Bruges-Calais until the maintenance situation allowed its employment further forward.⁹⁹²



Map 30: Allied Advance 5 September 1944. Copp, *Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp*, 47.

On 4 September, Dempsey's Second Army made a 60-mile dash from Brussels to capture Antwerp. Aided by the Belgium resistance, the huge docks and warehouse facilities were captured intact.⁹⁹³ On the same day Simonds gave orders to his divisional commanders. They were to continue the pursuit to the Scheldt destroying or capturing all enemy south of that River. The Canadians had the additional task of opening the channel

⁹⁹² Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 324.

⁹⁹³ Unfortunately, the advance halted there and did not continue north to seal off the escape route of the German Fifteenth Army at Woensdrecht, located at the eastern end of Walcheren peninsula. As long as the Germans held the Walcheren peninsula they threatened the approaches to the port rendering it unusable to the Allies. The clearing of the peninsula would be the focus of the Canadian Army during October.

ports to shorten the lines of communications for the Allied armies. The 2nd Cdn Inf Div was to clear the coast from Dunkirk to the Dutch Border; 3rd Cdn Inf Div was to ensure that the 2nd Div's route was "clear;" and, thereafter, to "reorganize around Calais."⁹⁹⁴ The 1st Pol Armd Div was to advance to Ghent while the 4th Cdn Armd Div was directed towards Bruges.

The Allies had not expected the Germans to fight for the channel ports but on 4 September, Hitler issued orders that designated Le Havre, Boulogne and Dunkirk as fortresses that were to be defended to the last man.⁹⁹⁵ These ports were part of the defensive zone of the German Fifteenth Army. Within this zone, the Calais defense area, Walcheren Island, Flushing Harbor, the bridgehead at Antwerp and the Albert Canal positions were also designated as fortresses. Many of the units of the Fifteenth Army had not been engaged in the Normandy fighting and were well equipped and up-to-strength. Immediately inland were the V1 launching sites which had been designated as a security area, and swept clean of the French Resistance (known as Maquis). Advancing through this zone meant crossing every river of western France at its widest point and, since there were no Maquis to help capture the bridges, the Germans impeded the Canadian advance by destroying every bridge. This action placed engineers and bridging equipment at the top of the list of needed resources.⁹⁹⁶

On 4 September, Simonds issued his directive for the move forward of 4th Cdn Armd Div to the area Ostend-Bruges-Ghent. Once this advance was completed, it was Simonds' intent to withdraw and centralize division artillery and transport under corps

⁹⁹⁴ Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 326

⁹⁹⁵ Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 326.

⁹⁹⁶ Williams, *The Long Left Flank*, 48.

command to be used in operations against the ports.⁹⁹⁷ At 1000 hrs 5 September, Foster held a conference during which he outlined his concept for the reorganization of the division into two balanced battle groups. The battle groups would be called Moncel and Stewart after the brigade commanders. The Grenadier Guards were now placed under command of the Stewart battle group and the Algonquin Regiment was moved under the command of Moncel battle group. This placed two armoured regiments and two infantry battalions in each battle group. Within each battle group, the infantry battalions were married up with an armoured regiment.⁹⁹⁸ The new advance would take the division to Eeklo in Belgium via St. Omer. The advance was to begin at 0630 hrs on 6 September. Keane Force from the Moncel battle group would lead the advance.⁹⁹⁹

In order to support the renewed advance, Proctor once again resorted to innovation. He decided to drop 50 percent of the 75-mm and 17-pdr ammunition being carried by his supply units into a field and used the freed-up space to transport fuel. Ammunition expenditure since crossing the Seine had been light and fuel was deemed to be the more necessary commodity.¹⁰⁰⁰

The first large scale demand on division echelon resources also came on 5 September as five platoons of RCASC trucks were loaned from the division to 2nd Cdn Corps to help in the build up of a forward supply base. Fully one-third of the entire stock was to be moved by 4th Cdn Armd Div resources while corps and army transport were tasked with moving the rest.¹⁰⁰¹ As a result of this tasking, Proctor decided to move the

⁹⁹⁷ War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-30 September 1944, entry 7 Sep.

⁹⁹⁸ War Diary, Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1-30 September 1944, entry 5 Sep.

⁹⁹⁹ War Diary, 4th Cdn Arm Div, 1-30 September 1944, entry 6 Sep.

¹⁰⁰⁰ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 September 1944, entry 5 Sep.

¹⁰⁰¹ A platoon was composed of approximately 30 trucks. Adm Situation as at 1800 hrs Tue 5 Sep 44. War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-30 September 1944, App 2.

division Adm Group and the brigade workshops up with the brigade A echelon vehicles in order to reduce the “tail” of the division and have the workshops available for the early repair of tanks and vehicles. This practice proved to be unsatisfactory and was ceased on 7 September.¹⁰⁰²

The 4 Cdn Armd Div advance was again held up by traffic, as elements of 1st Pol Armd Div began using the 4th Cdn Armd Div centre line. After the confusion was cleared, the advance went well. The Moncel battle group collided with determined German resistance at Bergues near the Dunkirk perimeter. When the garrison refused to surrender, Foster ordered Moncel to bypass it and head into Belgium. By 1107 hrs, the advance elements of Keane Force reached the line of the canal at St. Omer. A recce of the area revealed that all three main bridges had been destroyed but the town was clear of Germans.¹⁰⁰³

The Lake Superior Regiment found a partially destroyed bridge which was immediately repaired sufficiently enough to take light vehicles, scout cars and carriers. The Algonquin Regiment was able to cross the river and established a bridgehead which allowed the engineers to construct a class-40 bridge. The BCRs were placed on standby to push across the bridge, when it was completed, to expand the bridgehead. The bridge was completed at 2215 hrs and the infantry elements of both brigades were pushed across to establish a bridgehead.¹⁰⁰⁴

On 7 September, Simonds outlined the immediate tasks for his divisions: 1st Pol Armd Div was to continue the pursuit to Aeltre; 4th Cdn Armd Div was to continue the

¹⁰⁰² In future, workshops would only move when directed by Proctor. War Diary, 4th Cdn Arm Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 September 1944, entry 5 Sep.

¹⁰⁰³ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 September 1944, entry 6 Sep.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid.

pursuit to the vicinity of Eekloo and then position itself northward to cover the Leopold Canal in order to prevent further move of the trapped German forces along the coast. Bruges was to be bypassed and dealt with later. The 2nd Cdn Inf Div was to advance along the coast as quickly as possible, sealing off Dunkirk and other ports which would be dealt with later. The 3rd Cdn Inf Div was to carry out active patrolling to acquire information for future planned attacks against Calais and Boulonge.¹⁰⁰⁵

The 4th Cdn Armd Div advance continued at 0530 hrs on 7 September along two parallel routes under heavy rain. The columns advanced without meeting opposition and crossed the Belgium border at approximately 1340 hrs. There was no stopping for meals but just a steady push. The battle group advanced until they were held up by blown bridges near the town of Loo. Foster ordered the brigade to firm up along the canal line west of Loo.¹⁰⁰⁶

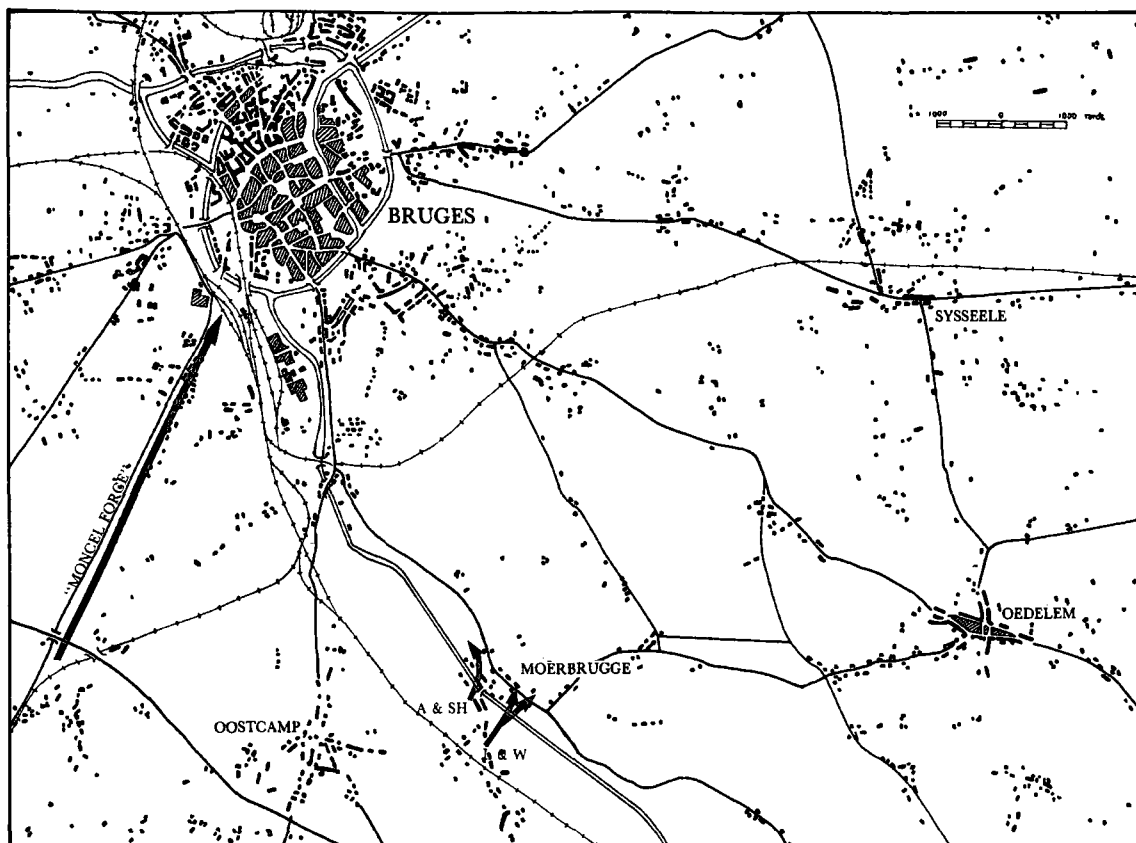
Keane Force once again led the armoured brigade advance along the “left route,” also known as Green route. The incessant rain and heavy traffic made road conditions quite poor. As the Force moved closer to Bruges the vanguard came under heavy shell fire. A patrol from the Lake Superior Regiment found that Bruges was held in some strength. A German officer PW was sent into the town with a statement advising the garrison commander to surrender. No answer was received and in the afternoon Foster ordered Moncel to continue the advance¹⁰⁰⁷ south and east of Bruges which had been previously surveyed and signed by the division provost. The bridge across the

¹⁰⁰⁵ War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-30 September 1944, entry 7 Sep.

¹⁰⁰⁶ The Stewart battle group moved along the “right route,” also known as Blue route. War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 September 1944, entry 7 Sep.

¹⁰⁰⁷ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 September 1944, entry 7 Sep.

Moerbrugge canal was blown and the engineers stated that it would not be ready until 0800 hrs the next day. The brigade, therefore, harboured for the night.¹⁰⁰⁸



Map 31: Advance to Bruges, Moerbrugge attack. Copp, *Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp, 71*.

The infantry battle group began the advance at 0800 hrs, crossing at Dixmude and advancing without opposition. Reconnaissance along both routes of advance revealed that the bridges over the Canal de Ghent were blown and that the Germans were on the east side of the canal in some strength. The Argylls were ordered to seize a bridgehead over the Canal in the area of Moerbrugge. They were able to get across against light opposition, using boats and rafting equipment found along the shores of the Canal. The Lincs followed the Argylls across the Canal. Around midnight, shelling and mortar fire

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid.

increased and German activity along the Canal increased to the point where the engineers were not able to put a bridge across the Canal.¹⁰⁰⁹

The commander of 15th Army Gustave von Zangen had ordered the Canal line held during the army's evacuation across the Scheldt from Terneuzen and Breskens. The Germans were able to put down a truly effective concentration of fire for the first time since Falaise that prevented the engineers from getting a bridge across. At first light, no bridges were across the canal. The Argylls and Lincs were caught between two German divisions and subjected to intense artillery and mortar fire. Cut off from the main force, they held their precarious toehold along the northern bank against repeated German attacks. By late afternoon, the bridgehead remained small and the proposed bridge site remained under German fire.¹⁰¹⁰

Brig Jefferson returned from hospital to take command of the brigade. After surveying the situation, Jefferson placed Stewart, who returned to the command of the Argylls, in charge of all forces inside the bridgehead and directed that the area of the bridgehead be consolidated so that a bridge could be built during the night. Stewart made the Lincs responsible for the right half of the bridgehead and the Argylls, the left. Stewart was able to clear the bridgehead as ordered and a class-30 bridge was completed over the canal by 0630 hrs the next morning. This allowed the bridgehead to be reinforced with a squadron of tanks from the SAR at 0700 hrs.¹⁰¹¹ By the end of the day, the bridgehead had been reinforced with two battalions, one additional company of infantry and the three SAR squadrons. Progress within the bridgehead was slow, but the Germans were starting to give way slowly to consistent Canadian pressure. It was now clear that the nature of

¹⁰⁰⁹ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 September 1944, entry 9 Sep.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹¹ War Diary, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-30 September 1944, entries 9, 10 Sep.

the tactical battle had once again changed. Canadians were now facing organized German defensive positions under effective tactical command and control. The pursuit phase was over.

Foster admitted to his first tactical mistake of the war in trying to rush the crossing at Moerbrugge without proper planning or artillery support. Since Falaise, he admitted that he had allowed himself to be “lulled into a dangerous sense of invincibility.”¹⁰¹² He had anticipated the same short, sharp fights of the previous two weeks. Up to this time, Wigle and Proctor had been instrumental in dictating the operational tempo of 4 Cdn Armd Div’s advance with little input from Foster. This suited Foster’s hands off leadership style. The days of easy advances were now over, however, and Foster’s true skills as a leader and tactician would be put to the test.

By the time the 4 Cdn Armd Div reached Moerbrugge serious cracks were starting to show in the theatre wide administrative system. French ports began to fall to the advancing Allies but they did not provide the immediate relief to the supply problem that was being experienced and, in most cases, the impact of additional port capacity was not felt until well after the pursuit phase was completed. Dieppe was captured on 1st September and the first ship arrived two days later. The port was used to bring in vital stores but the majority of the transport and supplies were allocated to Second Br Army. Ostend was captured on 9 September and became operational on 28 September, with Boulogne and Calais captured on 22 and 30 September respectively. While Antwerp was in Allied hands, the approaches were still controlled by the Germans rendering the port unusable as a supply entry point.¹⁰¹³

¹⁰¹² Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 403.

¹⁰¹³ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 35.

The supply situation in theatre was becoming critical. There were no stocks between the main depots in the RMA and the forward areas. The 21st Army Group lines of communications had lengthened to almost double the distance on which the allotment of transport had been calculated.¹⁰¹⁴ The original sustainment plan had been designed with road heads at distances of 50 and 100 miles apart. These were to be stocked with a maximum of five days' holdings of all stores but this system had to be modified because of the rapid advance. There was an expectation that the rapid advance would net captured German wartime stocks from German dumps abandoned during the retreat but this did not happen. The movement of supplies was further complicated by the effectiveness of the Allied air interdiction campaign, which had caused extensive damage to the major rail centres and transportation routes that the Allies were now trying to use. The Allies were now victims of their own success as transportation units were not able to move with the complete flexibility they needed.¹⁰¹⁵

The vital supply commodity during a pursuit was fuel. There is a truism in military operations that the expenditure of ammunition is almost always inversely proportional to the amount of fuel needed. At the beginning of the campaign, POL imports averaged 4,500 tons per day with an average daily consumption of 2,000 tons per day. The initial restricted size of the bridgehead reduced petrol consumption to a minimum and, by 5 August, 66,000 tons or 33 days' supply had been built up. This surplus quickly evaporated as consumption for the second half of August doubled and stabilized at 4,000 tons per day.¹⁰¹⁶

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰¹⁵ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 45.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

A reality of the long lines of communications was the use of POL by the very vehicles bringing it forward to the fighting units. Doctrinally, vehicles carrying maintenance loads of POL were not to use their loads for their own use but were to refuel from their own dedicated logistics units. During the pursuit across France, adherence to this principle was difficult because of the great distances that had to be covered. During the period in early September, the POL group supporting the army troops recorded an increase in daily POL issue from 30,000 to 90,000 gallons. This meant that as much as 60,000 gallons a day was being siphoned away from the combat formations to keep the transport rolling between the Forward Maintenance Centres (FMCs) and the combat units.¹⁰¹⁷

On 7 September, First Cdn Army introduced revised fuel allotment rates. The new allotment allowed first line to be supplied to its full allotment, (although what “full” meant was never clearly defined), with three jerricans per vehicle, 50 miles in 2nd line and 50 miles in corps reserve. The problem was that the 2nd Cdn Corps did not have the specified corps reserve of 50 miles for each formation, which represented a shortage of 250,000 gallons of fuel. Simonds was made aware of the problem and notified that the corps had enough fuel to get the fighting formations to the Dutch border. Simonds was prepared to accept the operational risk associated with the situation and to stand the formations down until the fuel situation could be rectified. In the meantime, he would

¹⁰¹⁷ An FMC was to hold a reserve of all commodities provide a refilling point for second line transport, and, to economize in time and transport resources, the forward push of supplies. Camsell, *From Normandy to the Scheldt*, 142.

apprise Crerar of the situation and place the responsibility for getting more gas for operations beyond that point with First Cdn Army.¹⁰¹⁸

The fuel issue was further complicated on 9 September when a misunderstanding ensued between First Cdn Army and 2nd Cdn Corps as to how much fuel the corps actually had. The First Cdn Army felt that 2nd Cdn Corps was carrying more than they should in first line. Until the dispute could be resolved, the 2nd Cdn Corps solution was to withdraw all 2nd line fuel from 2nd and 3rd Cdn Inf Divs and the 2nd Armd Bde less fuel for 10th Cdn Armd Regt. The withdrawn fuel was held at the St. Omer dump and was to be issued in the following order of priority: 4th Cdn Armd Div and 1st Polish Armd Div—first priority; 2nd Cdn Inf Div, 3rd Cdn Inf Div and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde—second priority.¹⁰¹⁹ The misunderstanding was resolved in part on 10 September when First Cdn Army informed 2nd Cdn Corps that 113,000 gallons per day was being made available for maintenance and that additional quantities would be furnished from 21st Army Group resources as quickly as possible to refill corps echelons.¹⁰²⁰ By 15 September, however, the fuel situation had still not been resolved.

The physical distribution of fuel to the Allied armies became a critical issue after the crossing of the Seine. The First Cdn Army solution to the transport problem was to modify tank transporters by welding on each trailer a base and sides of airfield track, converting 40-ton tank transporters into load carriers. These modified transporters could

¹⁰¹⁸ Memorandum from DA & QMG subject PETROL dated 7 Sep 44. War Diary, AG & QMG Branch, HQ 2 Cdn Corps, 1-30 September 1944, App 4.

¹⁰¹⁹ War Diary, AG & QMG Branch, HQ 2 Cdn Corps, 1-30 September 1944, entry 9 Sep.

¹⁰²⁰ POL rationing was initiated on September 9 throughout the army. The rationing would not be completely ended until the end of September when sufficient quantities of POL reached the army from both the RMA in Normandy and from newly opened channel ports War Diary, AG & QMG Branch, HQ 2 Cdn Corps, 1-30 September 1944, entry 10 Sep; Camsell, *From Normandy to the Scheldt*, 130-131.

carry 16.5 tons of supplies, 36 tons of ammunition, and ten tons of POL (or 500 jerricans), which provided considerable flexibility.¹⁰²¹

Jerricans, the primary means of transporting fuel, were a particular problem. A serious shortage of jerricans resulted from units abandoning them in their speedy advance after tops ups. Jerricans were a highly attractive item for the civilian population who made away with them en masse. The sudden dearth of jerricans in the supply system became so critical that the salvage of these containers was made a matter of top priority.¹⁰²²

Solving one problem, however, invariably led to others. Using tank transporters to haul fuel and commodities meant that they were not available to move tanks. The period between the cessation of imports into the RMA and the opening of Antwerp was a critical one for the shipment of replacement vehicles, as the movement of stores was taking up almost all of the transport capacity of the freed Channel ports. The heavy vehicle situation became serious, as many tanks damaged during the advance or left behind because of mechanical breakdown could not be replaced. A large number of repairable tanks lay between Rouen and Brussels but, owing to the strain on recovery facilities and recovery vehicles, they were left behind.¹⁰²³

The optimum theatre position for holdings of Sherman 75 mm gun tanks was for the units to be at 100 per cent with a further 25 percent behind in the Armoured Replacement Group (ARG) and a further 25 per cent in base vehicle parks. The optimum theatre holding was 150 per cent of the required number of Sherman tanks.¹⁰²⁴ Up to the

¹⁰²¹ 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 47.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid.*

end of August, no appreciable base stocks had been built up. No sooner had tanks arrived in the theatre than they were issued to ARG and from there to units. In the latter half of August, issues to the ARG continued and stocks increased in the ARG because there was a lack of capacity to get tanks forward to the units advancing across the Seine. A peak holding was reached on 5 September when shipping of tanks was turned off until 25 September. Thereafter throughout September, the losses by units could not be wholly replaced. The stocks in the ARG were run down and the base stocks in theatre were rapidly depleted. Compounding the recovery problem was the fact that 50 recovery units were committed to the unpleasant task of cleaning up the destruction left behind in the Falaise Gap. By mid September tank regiments had less than 75 per cent of the tanks they needed. It was not until the shipment of tanks was resumed on 26 September through Ostend and Boulogne that the theatre position in Sherman tanks began to improve.¹⁰²⁵

The maximum range of the Sherman tank with a full fuel load over reasonable terrain was approximately 100 miles. As soon as the distances and speed of the advance increased the wear and tear on the engines of the M4 and M4A1 Sherman tanks required that most had to be replaced after as few as 600 to 700 miles.¹⁰²⁶ The rapid advance forced the AA & QMG of the respective divisions to make critical decisions with respect to the utilization of organic recovery and repair units within the division. For example, if the armoured brigade workshops were kept with formations, little work could be done since they were always on the move. If they were left behind, the distance between

¹⁰²⁵ The flow rate was 40 tanks a day. *Ibid.*, 67 & App S.

¹⁰²⁶ David Fletcher, *The Universal Tank* (London: HMSO, 1994), 102.

recovery and repair and sending the repaired vehicles back to the fighting formations became problematic.¹⁰²⁷

Artillery ammunition was another commodity in short supply in the forward areas. The formations within 21st Army Group were restricted to drawing half of their normal allotment rates per day. At one point, the artillery ammunition situation became so acute that it became necessary to despatch 112,000 rounds of 25-pdr ammunition by air from Britain to the forward areas. The ammunition situation improved with the discovery of 80,000 rounds of 25-pdr ammunition at Louvin, which had been brought over by the British in 1940 and excellently maintained by the Germans since that time.¹⁰²⁸

Operations to clear the channel ports could not start until the artillery stocks had been built up. The ammunition was available in Normandy but 2nd Cdn Corps had to get it with its own transport. A plan was devised which withdrew transport from the corps divisions on a rotating basis to help stockpile the needed ammunition. The trip represented a 650-mile round trip journey with an estimated six-day turn around time. The plan was initiated on 8 September and the first ammunition from this plan was expected to arrive at the ammunition dump at Colombert on 15 September. The 4th Cdn Armd Div was expected to commit transport and TCVs to this dumping operation on 10 September.¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰²⁷ Infantry brigade workshops did not have the same problems as there were three in a division and they were able to leap-frog each other. 21 Army Group, *The Administrative History of the Operations of 21 Army Group*, 50.

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid..

¹⁰²⁹ Memorandum, DDST "Amn Dumping Program" dated 9 Sep 44. War Diary, AG & QMG Branch, HQ 2 Cdn Corps, 1-30 September 1944, App 7.

A common complaint registered in regiment, brigade and division war diaries was the lack of maps during the pursuit. In some cases, the formations were advancing beyond the boundaries of the maps they had before the next issue was received. On 2 September, the infantry units of 4th Armd Div were fighting with one map per company.¹⁰³⁰ By 10 September, the map situation was critical with only 500 copies of the 1/100,000 and 500 copies of the 1/250,000 maps for distribution to the entire 2nd Cdn Corps!¹⁰³¹

On the morning of 7 September, 4 Cdn Armd Div echelon troops started their longest single move of the war. The echelon moved to Gryverinchove (a move of 21 hours and 130 km), arriving on 8 September at 0500 hrs. The centerline of the advance on 7 September ran through the town of Bergues south of Dunkerque. The town was strongly held by the Germans and a decision was made to bypass the town. This meant that an alternate route had to be found and properly signed. As the division was now passing a known German position, the flank of the division column was exposed to possible German attack. Proctor had to improvise a flank guard of LOB tanks from the armoured brigade to protect the echelon forces from a possible German attack. Despite the best efforts of the Provost corps, a number of Main HQ vehicles took a wrong turn and entered Bergues but were able to extract themselves after a brief exchange of fire.¹⁰³²

Ammunition and fuel points were set up alongside the centre line of advance and operated on a 24-hour basis. These points were continually moved forward behind the advancing echelons. Normal paperwork was in some cases sacrificed for the exigencies

¹⁰³⁰ In normal circumstances the company commander, the company 2I/C, and each platoon commander would have had a map. Commanders usually carried multiple maps with different scales. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 September 1944, entry 2 Sep.

¹⁰³¹ War Diary, HQ 2nd Cdn Corps-G Branch Main, 1-30 September 1944, entry 10 Sep.

¹⁰³² War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 September 1944, entry 7 Sep.

of the advance. Units could pick up ammunition at any time without paperwork but, interestingly, rations could only be obtained with the proper paperwork and signatures.¹⁰³³

The traffic plan for the move on 8 September was complicated since the division would be advancing over two parallel routes—Blue and Green, which came together for a three-km stretch of road stretch at the town of Diximude. There was, however, little confusion over the stretch used by both groups, as the division staff and MPs coordinated the process. The fighting echelons were fed into the one road on the basis of one Green vehicle and one Blue vehicle, so that vehicles from each route alternated down the main road. When the echelons arrived, they were alternated as a group rather than in single vehicles.¹⁰³⁴ The process was completed without incident and the advance continued to the area of St. Andre near Bruges.¹⁰³⁵

The problem of a liberated populace reared itself during the long drive to the Belgium border, which included many long halts in newly liberated villages. The troops were showered with many gifts, including alcohol. Overwhelmed by the generosity, many troops ended up drunk, which had a serious effect on convoy discipline and on progress as a whole. Wigle was forced to parade all ranks of the Main HQ the following day and he drew attention to the poor convoy discipline and laid down strict orders for all

¹⁰³³ French, *Some Reminiscences*, 84.

¹⁰³⁴ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 September 1944, entry 8 Sep.

¹⁰³⁵ South of the Scheldt three major canals intersected the area held by the Germans. Dividing it roughly into two equal parts was the Terneuzen Ship Canal running north from Ghent to the Scheldt. From Zeebrugge on the coast, the Leopold Canal and the Canal de Derivation de la Lys run parallel to each other south-eastwards for some 22 kilometres. There they diverge, the Leopold veering eastwards almost to the base of the Braakman inlet from the Scheldt War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div, 1-30 September 1944, entry 8 Sep; Williams, *The Long Left Flank*, 87.

future moves, including abstaining from accepting any gifts and the severity of the punishment for anyone found to have disobeyed his instructions.¹⁰³⁶

The advance to the Seine and beyond by 2nd Cdn Corps was impeded, not by any serious German resistance, but by the Allied inability to sustain the advance of its combat forces. There were a number of reasons for the sustainment problem. First, and most importantly, there was a complete change in the type of warfare being conducted, requiring new methods of replenishment. The maintenance practices that had developed and matured during the time in the bridgehead were no longer capable of supporting the rapid advance that was taking place across France. The demand for replenishment of units began to occur over ever increasing lines of communications and there was a shortage of transport and drivers to move the needed supplies forward from Caen to the combat elements of the corps.¹⁰³⁷ The corps solution was to demand resources from the very combat forces they were tasked with supporting, which impacted the operational effectiveness of the divisions.

The 4th Cdn Armd Div adopted a more radical approach to the problem of lengthening lines of communication by taking the majority of first line transport away from its combat units in order to augment second line resources. Critical supply items for an armoured division included food, water, fuel, oil, lubricants, ammunition and spare parts. The need for these items varied. Some, such as food and water, were easily calculated: a function of the daily allocation per man multiplied by the number of

¹⁰³⁶ When the column was stopped, one man only would exit the vehicle. That man would be for traffic control and would not leave his post. Absolutely no gifts were to be accepted from civilians and any man found drunk on the moves in the future would be deemed incapable of properly performing their duty and charged accordingly with the maximum penalty given. War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-30 September 1944, entry 8 Sep.

¹⁰³⁷ Ibid., 126-127.

personnel in the force. Other requirements such as fuel and ammunition were scaled for different operations and tended to be inversely proportional.¹⁰³⁸ It was not uncommon for the commodities to be left on the ground in order to free up second line vehicles for carrying supplies over the expanding lines of communications.¹⁰³⁹ The key was understanding what commodities could be sacrificed when in order to keep the combat formations moving. The success of the 4th Cdn Armd Div drive across France and into Belgium was a function of the collaboration, effectiveness and innovation of the echelon troops under Proctor and the operations staff under Wigle.

The fighting since the landing in late July had taken its toll on the fighting formations of 4 Cdn Armd Div. Only two of the eight major units of the division, the Lake Superior Regiment and the SAR, never dropped below an effective combat strength of 85% during the timeframe examined. The infantry battalions suffered the most with the Argylls and the Algonquins dropping below 70 percent during the pursuit with the Lincs close behind at 73 percent. The combat strength of the infantry battalions would not recover until late September.¹⁰⁴⁰

The Grenadier Guards were the worst of the armoured regiments dropping to a combat effective strength which hovered around 77 percent during this period. The regiment would not exceed 85 percent combat effectiveness until 24 October. Both the Foot Guards and BCR were recorded at 80 percent until 6 September at which point they

¹⁰³⁸ Camsell, *From Normandy to the Scheldt*, 36.

¹⁰³⁹ War Diary, 4th Cdn Armd Div-AA & QMG, 1-31 August 1944, App 8.

¹⁰⁴⁰ "Unit Strength When under 85%" War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, See Appendix 15.

climbed above 85 percent effective.¹⁰⁴¹ Battle casualties spiked at 108 in crossing the Seine and then dropped to almost zero prior to the operations at Moerbrugge.¹⁰⁴²

The transition in command from Kitching to Foster was seamless due to the professionalism and resilience of the division staff and its leaders. Foster had no previous experience in commanding an armoured division but he had capable officers in command of his regiments, battalions and both brigades.

Foster's direct influence in the pursuit phase was limited. His decision to divide the division into two balanced battlegroups was the most significant change to division operations. This move had been contemplated since July when Kitching talked of balanced all arms battlegroups in the July TEWT but no real opportunity presented itself to adopt this configuration prior to the pursuit. During the pursuit, Foster was called upon to settle a number of command and control issues with 2nd Cdn Corps. His potentially significant operational challenge, the crossing of the Seine was pre-empted by Cromb's excellent leadership and initiative in getting his troops across the river early. Otherwise there was no significant battle or challenge to test Foster until Moerbrugge. Foster demonstrated complete confidence in the professional capabilities of Proctor and Wigle and seemed generally content to allow them to plan and execute the pursuit.

Despite all the problems and challenges involved in theatre administration and in all the demands made by 2nd Cdn Corps on 4th Cdn Armd Div resources, Proctor and his Q branch never failed to meet the supply or transport requirements of an operation requested by either Kitching or Foster. In fact, there were numerous times through August and early September where the effectiveness of 4 Cdn Armd Div's administration

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴² "Battle Casualties "War Diary, 4 Cdn Armd Div-AA&QMG, 1-31 August 1944, See Appendix 16 &17.

resulted in the division supporting other divisions of 2 Cdn Corps whose echelons could not cope. There were days when the combat troops never engaged the enemy but were simply passengers on the express to Belgium. Much of the credit for the success of the division in the pursuit phase lies with the ingenuity of Proctor and Wigle but just as much credited must be given to Kitching who recognized the importance of the staff function in supporting operations and made sure that he trained them as well as he did his combat troops. The legacy that Kitching left his division was a well-trained and well lead staff that rose to every challenge.

Conclusion

Commanders cannot reasonably be assessed as either success or failures without an understanding of the military context within which they fought or the nature of the forces that they commanded.¹⁰⁴³ Dr Richard Gabriel, in his examination of the great commanders of antiquity found that great leaders appear to be the consequence of two sets of factors coming together at an appropriate time: the “traits of personality and character whose presence and exercise permit the development of a mind that understands its environment and can deal with it without paralysing apprehension” and “the historical circumstances in which the potential leader must live out his life.”¹⁰⁴⁴ He concluded, “Great men are only possible when there are challenging times that provide opportunities for their greatness to manifest itself.”¹⁰⁴⁵ Maj Gen George Kitching had the requisite traits of personality and character and led his division in challenging times that provided opportunities for greatness yet his reputation as a commander has been defined by his dismissal rather than what he accomplished. This suggests a third factor that Dr Gabriel did not mention or consider: when history and historians have gathered enough relevant information to provide a balanced assessment of the leader including a comprehensive understanding of the true context of his leadership challenge and how he overcame it. The latter has not existed until now for either Maj Gen George Kitching or the men of the 4 Cdn Armd Div.

When most people think of an armoured division they visualize a group of tanks moving across a battlefield to capture a piece of ground or vital objective. The reason why the force is there and the fact that it is supported by a complex administrative system

¹⁰⁴³ Richard A. Gabriel. *Great Captains of Antiquity*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 5.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Gabriel, *Great Captains of Antiquity*, 214-215.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Gabriel, *Great Captains of Antiquity*, 215.

of machines, material and people whose mission it is to keep the fighting echelons operational, is often forgotten or ignored.¹⁰⁴⁶ The fighting and the support echelons together represent a cohesive system capable of fighting, supporting, fuelling, servicing, repairing, evacuating, and moving the people and equipment that are vital to the fighting capacity of the division under all kinds of conditions. Without the support of the echelon troops, the fighting elements cannot operate, shoot, communicate or provide sustenance to the soldiers who fight. It is with these ingredients that hills are taken, rivers crossed and enemies killed or captured.¹⁰⁴⁷ Likewise, understanding the leadership, training, equipment and unit cohesiveness are crucial to assessing the fighting efficiency of the combat formations of the division. An understanding of the entire complex system is vital before any assessment can be made of success on the battlefield.

A detailed examination of Kitching's role in the training of his division revealed significant hurdles over which he had no control severely tested his resources as both a leader and teacher. The evidence has made it clear that Kitching faced significant challenges in the training of his division that prevented him from attaining the level of expertise he knew was required for the mobile operations that he was expected to conduct in Normandy. The reasons can be directly attributed to command decisions made at the Corps and Army Group level. Some decisions were operationally focused, such as deliberately using 4 Cdn Armd Bde in April and May 1944 to bring up the readiness of the assault divisions for the Normandy invasion. Others were administrative such as the order to waterproof all of the divisions' vehicles. Combined, these decisions severely constrained Kitching's ability to facilitate the interoperability of his infantry battalions

¹⁰⁴⁶ Richard E. Simpkin, *Human Factors in Mechanized Warfare* (New York: Brassey's Publishers Limited, 1983), xiii.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *ibid.*, xiv

and tank regiments indeed some would be tasked to work together for the first time in combat.

This dissertation has also examined the effectiveness of the leadership of the 4th Cdn Armd Div during two specific types of operations – “the breakout” exemplified by operations TOTALIZE, TRACTABLE and closing of the Falaise Gap, and “the pursuit” exemplified by the actions to pursue the retreating German armies across France and Belgium ending on 8 September 1944. One focus of this investigation has been the effectiveness of the interaction between the GOC, his subordinate commanders, and the two key division staff members, the GSO 1 and the AA&QMG. The goal was to determine how well the leadership, working together within the construct known as the commander-staff dynamic facilitated successful combat operations. The dissertation has also examined the experience of brigade, battalion, armoured regiments and ad hoc battlegroups in specific operations to assess the abilities of subordinate commanders in the division.

4 Cdn Armd Div operations were examined through the lenses of common situational awareness, common intent, and coordinated action. The evidence strongly supported the conclusion that during the timeframe examined the command team composed of Kitching, Wigle and Proctor worked well, overcoming significant challenges and obstacles in facilitating and coordinating the combat operations of the division. The actions and successes of the division when placed in proper context revealed initiative, improvisation and battlefield successes where none was seen to previously exist.

One of Simonds' dictates to his commanding officers was to ensure that their subordinate formations were lead by competent officers. Realistic exercises represented the only valid vehicle through which senior officers could be reasonably judges. Kitching asked to exercise his division as a division so that he could expose his soldiers and commanders to more realistic scenarios gained from his experience and knowledge on the battlefields of Sicily and Italy. He also wanted to evaluate his subordinate commanders and staff under realistic training conditions. His request was denied in part because there weren't adequate training areas and the division did not have a high enough priority to get access to the large training areas. These decisions again reflected the emphasis on the assault phase of the OVERLORD without a clear appreciation of the actual training required for the roles assigned to the different divisions for the different phases of the invasion. Instead, Kitching was left to improvise as best he could and utilized skeleton communication exercises and TEWTs whenever possible as a training method.

The commanding officer attrition rate within 4 Cdn Armd Div is striking. One of the two brigade commanders was lost as a casualty. Of the four armoured regiments that landed in late July, only the SAR retained its original commanding officer (Wotherspoon) by 21 August. Within the three infantry and one motor battalion, only the Argylls retained their original commanding officer (Stewart). Even within his senior staff Kitching lost one of his two key staff officers during this period (Ganong). Dealing with this extraordinary level of change in his senior leadership represented a considerable challenge for Kitching. It is a testament to the quality and training of the officers within the division that the tier of officer who succeeded the original commanding officers all

came from within the division and fought successful major battles within hours of taking command. Most stayed with their units throughout the rest of the war.

Kitching's own battle experience, his research, debriefs from officers returning from theatre and mining of after action reports lead him to the conclusion that the doctrine that was being imparted in the training was not what was needed in theatre. He realized that combined arms battlegroups were needed in Normandy and created such groups when possible. Infantry-tank combined arms training at the unit level and sub-unit level was conducted but what he really needed was the opportunity to school his senior commanders in the command and control of combined arms battlegroups. His decision to conduct EX IROQUOIS at the beginning of July reveals a desire to expose his senior officers to the concepts and challenges of battlegroups in an attempt to get them thinking about the issues involved in coordinating the different arms.

The evidence of Kitching's comprehensive insight into combat effectiveness lies with the amount of effort that went into the training of the division staffs. As a former GSO 1, Kitching knew the importance of a properly trained and educated staff to the conduct of successful operations. Staff training was one area where he did have the resources and the means to properly train his people and the evidence indicates that he trained them just as hard under realistic conditions as the combat troops. The fact that one of his first directives was to get the staff working under field conditions was indicative of the level of importance he placed on staff training. The payback for this effort came during the pursuit when, despite all of the administrative and logistical challenges that were present theatre wide in northwest Europe, the division staff and echelon forces were

able to maintain both the combat power of the division and the operational tempo required by the division commander.

Helmuth von Moltke, a famous German military commander of the 19th century wrote, "...no plan of operations will ever extend, with any sort of certainty, beyond the first encounter with the hostile main force." Success in battle was gained through the commander's ability to recognize the changed situation and react accordingly. These and similar dicta stressed that victory is won by the flexibly minded leader capable of adapting to the rapidly changing circumstances on the battlefield.¹⁰⁴⁸ Unfortunately for Kitching, flexibility was not a feature of Simonds' plans for TOTALIZE: a plan Kitching found fundamentally flawed. Yet Kitching displayed flexibility, initiative and leadership in bouncing back from losing the loss of two regiments during his first night of combat by getting his forces on Pt 180 and Pt 195 the next evening.

The events of June and July, combined with the British doctrinal preference for set-piece attacks, shaped the operational tempo for the August breakout battles. Inherent in this paradigm was an environment where flexibility and initiative were limited. What did this paradigm mean for the divisional commanders? From the perspective of operational tempo their hands were tied. Phasing operations placed constraints on what could be done with respect to operational tempo and momentum. The tactic that killed momentum altogether was not the tying of the ground campaign to a bombing plan, as is commonly stated, but the narrow frontage allotted to the armoured divisions in Phase II. The evidence has clearly shown that the Phase II could not have started any earlier. Allowing the two armoured divisions more space in Phase II could have allowed more

¹⁰⁴⁸ James Lucas, *Battlegroup! German Kampfgruppe Action of World War Two* (London: Arms & Armour, 1993), 7.

combat power from the armoured brigades put up front. This may have been enough to overpower the hastily reconstructed German defenses on the afternoon of 8 August 1944. It is not clear however whether a different division attack plan for Phase II would have addressed the breakdown in the deployment procedures within 4 Cdn Armd Bde in the rush to launch TOTALIZE.

The loss of Worthington Force was a tragic event and a clear example of the fog of war. While the attack has often been view as a tragedy; the fact remains that a battlegroup had broken through and penetrated into Meyer's rear area and because of this action, Meyer had to respond to this immediate threat. The actions of Worthington Force, it has been argued, facilitated the operations of 9 August by tying up Meyer's armoured reserve for the entire day denying him the initiative. The possibility for a brigade breakthrough was real had Worthington been reinforced. The inability of the Poles to provide any support to Worthington or exploit the tactical situation he had created remains as one of those historical "might have beens" that may have changed the entire outcome of TOTALIZE.

Kitching is often blamed for not finding the BCRs but his assets were all engaged by the time it was realized that the BCRs were not on Hill 195. Simonds could have provided additional assets but he seems to have considered it a division problem since no additional resources from 2nd Cdn Corps were offered or committed to find the BCRs.¹⁰⁴⁹ Simonds inaction on this issue is hard to reconcile. The failure of the typhoon aircraft to communicate with 2nd Corps is a glaring indication that 21 Army Group had much to learn with respect to interoperability between the army and the allied tactical air forces.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Jarymowycz, *The Quest for Operational Maneuvre in the Normandy Campaign*, 219

In TRACTABLE, operational tempo was disrupted by a corps mistake in not considering the Laison River as a tank obstacle and by the degradation of the command and control capability of the armoured brigade through the death of Booth, the wounding of Scott and the destruction of the brigade Tac HQ. Despite the successful attack of the armoured brigade on 14 August, the loss of the coordination function of the brigade HQ, late on 15 August, denied the division its objective for the day. Yet the division units in both TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE generated opportunity and achieved successes that boosted the confidence of the soldiers. Kitching and the division may have suffered setbacks and casualties but their determination to “get to grips with the Germans” never waned.

Other historical accounts have recorded what happened as opposed to what was intended and in a number of cases these were not the same thing. A case in point is the changing orders received by the division on 15/16 August. Most of the current narratives simply state that the operation to capture Falaise was cancelled that the division spent 16 August regrouping followed by an advance on 17 August that was to take them to Trun. The actually level of complexity and activity generated by the changing orders to the division in that twenty-four hour period has largely been ignored or simply misunderstood. The impact on the commanders and staffs of the division for example, of having three divisional orders group in less than 24 hours, with each O Group sending the division in a different direction is difficult to fathom. The fact that the division was actually able to launch operations essentially on time in the early morning of 17 August is a testament to the effectiveness of the commander-staff dynamic within the division.

The commander-staff dynamic was a representational model used to illustrate the complex intellectual interaction between a commander and his staff with three outcomes key to the achievement of operational tempo: common situational awareness, common intent and coordinated action. The examination revealed that while all three outcomes had to be present a unique characteristic of the model was that primacy between commander and staff in generating operational tempo was a function of the type of operation being undertaken. In deliberate operations such as TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE the commander dominated but in the pursuit operational tempo was more a function of the staff ability rather than commander influence.

The effectiveness of the commander-staff dynamic was a function of the leadership ability of the key members of the command team, senior staff and the command environment. There is no doubt that Kitching, Wigle and Proctor were effective leaders. The level of trust between them was evident and Kitching remarked on their individual and combined effectiveness a number of times in his memoirs. Kitching created a command environment in which he gave his intent and the expected outcome for coming operations and left the details to his staff. Kitching trusted both Wigle and Proctor and their abilities to generate what was required from the staff and the echelon forces to meet the intent of his operations. As a former GSO 1 it would have been natural for Kitching to have a command style that was more intrusive when it came to what the staff was doing and telling them how he wanted things done. The leadership team was effective, responsive to the changing nature of the operations and was able and willing to improvise. At no point during the timeframe examined did the leadership at the division

level fail to provide the guidance or resources necessary for the purpose of coordinated action on the part of the division.

The same cannot be said of the subordinate commanders within the division. The reality of human nature and combat is that you cannot determine, even with the most realistic training, how various people are going to react when under fire. Some of the apparently promising people were complete failures, and by the same token some of the most unlikely people turned into superb leaders. Even those who had survived and had gained experience in previous combat were not immune to the hazards of renewed combat. In the case of Booth and Murrell it is clear that they were promoted beyond their level of capability. Booth was a liability to Kitching as were some of his regimental commanders. TOTALIZE exposed McQueen and Murrell as a weak regimental commanders and Booth as a marginal Brigade commander. The two regimental commanders were dealt with in quick order but the options with respect to Booth became limited very quickly. Viewed in hindsight, Booth should have been relieved right away but it is difficult to second guess Kitching on a decision he made in the middle of his first major battle. After all, Booth had commanded tanks in battle before, Kitching had not!

The focus must then turn to one question: knowing that Booth had been killed, that Scott had been sent to hospital and with repeated requests by Kitching for Moncel why did Simonds allow the 4th Cdn Armd Bde to remain without a permanent leader for four crucial days? His inaction can only be viewed as a conscious decision on his part. As such, he failed in his responsibility as a commander to provide his subordinate commander with all of the resources necessary to complete his assigned mission. In this respect, Simonds failed Kitching. Reflecting on the situation afterwards Kitching realized

that he had an effective replacement in Brig Lane his CRA, but this solution meant robbing his artillery units of effective leadership.

While the command environment within the division was based on trust this was not the case within the Corps command environment. The Simonds command paradigm focused on controlling the command initiative of his divisional commanders. Kitching was forced to command in an environment in which higher headquarters produced detailed plans for lower formations and units to implement. Dr Bill McAndrew aptly called Simonds subordinates “unconsulted employees.”¹⁰⁵⁰

Simonds’ ideas resulted in centralized planning, control at the highest level, staff management of the battlefield, reliance on indirect fire support, little consideration to the concept of manoeuvre, and cautious exploitation. There was little room for flexibility, initiative, originality or the modification of the plan to meet the emerging demands of the battlefield.¹⁰⁵¹ If the plan failed, the blame was pushed downwards to the units and commanders involved. Stacey summarized the command crisis as follows:

Thus by the end of August 1944, among the nine infantry or armoured brigades in the 2nd Canadian Corps there had been eight changes in command, and only three brigades retained their original commanders. Four changes were due to battle casualties, a fact which reflects the extreme fierceness of the fighting. Two were the result of what higher authority considered unsuitability. Among the commanding officers of armoured regiments, two were changed as consequences of death or injury, and two for other reasons; seven commands remained unchanged. In the infantry and machine gun battalions (24 in number) only seven commands had not changed by the end of August. No less than 14 battalion commanders had been changed as the result of battle casualty of sickness. Five commanding officers had been promoted, and five removed because considered unsuitable.¹⁰⁵²

¹⁰⁵⁰ McAndrew, *Fire Or Movement? Canadian Tactical Doctrine, Sicily- 1943*, 145

¹⁰⁵¹ William J. McAndrew, "Operational Art and the Northwest European Theatre," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (December 1991), 24.

¹⁰⁵² Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 275.

Stacey concluded his study by stating that a “great deal had been done” prior to D-Day to weed out the officers who were deemed not effective in command but the final arbiter despite the best training conditions was the “test of battle.”¹⁰⁵³

The story of Kitching contains an interesting footnote and further controversy. After his relief Kitching was reduced in rank to brigadier and was placed in command of the 13 Cdn Brigade in Helmsley Yorkshire where his main task was to retrain volunteers from other parts of the army, technicians for the most part, into infantry soldiers.¹⁰⁵⁴ Shortly after word of his relief was known and unbeknownst to Kitching, heavy lobbying was taking place on the part of Lt Gen Burns to have Kitching take over command of the 1 Cdn Inf Bde. A formal request in the form of an immediate message was sent to Lt Gen Stuart on 2 Sep asking for Kitching. “If you consider Kitching should have another chance in command Vokes and I would be glad to have him.”¹⁰⁵⁵ Crerar weighed in on the debate in a memorandum to Stuart on 4 Oct 44 decidedly against the request.

I do not consider the Kitching- Calder “swap” would do other than to suggest “horse trading.” It gives no promotion to either-just an indication that what is acceptable to one Corps Comd is not liked by the other. I am opposed to such business.¹⁰⁵⁶

In his message to Stuart explaining Kitching’s dismissal, Crerar had stated that Kitching could not be usefully employed in the field in the immediate future.¹⁰⁵⁷ This recommendation was almost certainly based on information provided by Simonds. It

¹⁰⁵³ Stacey, *Victory Campaign*, 275.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields*, 208.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Message, 1 Cdn Corps Message 96, [Senior Appointments], 021700A Sep 44, Stuart From Burns, Crerar Papers, MG 30 Series E157 Vol 3, file 958.009 (D 178) GOC-in-C File 5-0-3 Vol I & II Higher Command- Canadian Army Overseas Period 29 May 55 to 22 Dec 44.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Memorandum from Crerar to C. of S. CMHQ dated 4 Oct 44. MG 30 Series E157 Vol 3, file 958.009 (D 178) GOC-in-C File 5-0-3 Vol I & II Higher Command- Canadian Army Overseas Period 29 May 55 to 22 Dec 44.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Message Main HQ First Cdn Army to C45 211900B Aug 44, for Stuart from Crerar.[Removal of Kitching, Appointment of Foster], E157 Vol 3, file 958.009 (D 178) GOC-in-C File 5-0-3 Vol I & II Higher Command- Canadian Army Overseas Period 29 May 55 to 22 Dec 44.

should also be noted that on 29 August 1944, Crerar had written a personal letter to Simonds warning of the “most deleterious general effect on the morale and cohesion of Canadian formations and units,” brought about by the “these frequent changes of command.”¹⁰⁵⁸ This particular letter was prompted in part by Simonds’ decision to relieve Ganong with less than a month in command. Simonds’ inclination to relieve senior officers, in this case two in the span of a week, in addition to those that had been relieved in the previous three months, was obviously starting to weigh on Crerar’s mind.

Simonds typically believed that his plans were never the problem. Rather, it was the execution of his plans by his subordinates that resulted in failure. In fact, the plans were a significant part of the problem. The command authority within which Kitching was able to operate diminished as Simonds exerted greater control over his subordinate units and their commanders. While Kitching was given some latitude in the opening operations by 4th Cdn Armd Div against Tilly la Campagne, this latitude decreased in TOTALIZE and TRACTABLE. OP SMASH represents the only true operation that was planned and executed by Kitching and his division with little apparent oversight by Simonds or 2nd Cdn Corps. Examined objectively, the operation revealed flexibility in thought on the part of Kitching in selecting, two possible routes depending on intelligence, reconnaissance and German defences. It suggested flexibility and adaptability on the part of Kitching, in not trying to force a bad situation at Damblainville but switching to his alternate route at Morteaux-Couliboeuf. The remarkable leadership and flexibility of the division staff in fixing the defending German forces in place at Damblainville, switching the axis of advance for the armoured regiments over a

¹⁰⁵⁸Letter GOC-in-C 5-0-3 Tac Hq First Cdn Army, 29 Aug 44, Crerar to Simonds, E157 Vol 3, file 958.009 (D 178) GOC-in-C File 5-0-3 Vol I & II Higher Command- Canadian Army Overseas Period 29 May 55 to 22 Dec 44.

significant water obstacle and arranging the subsequent advance with the Poles who were already operating in the same area. Effective, adapted and flexible leadership was displayed at all levels within the division during this operation.

This dissertation has argued that Simonds' management of the Canadian actions to close the Falaise Gap were flawed in part because of his dual responsibility to win the current battle while positioning his forces for future operations. The evidence has suggested that the latter took precedence in Simonds' mind, which resulted in his questionable order to split 4 Cdn Armd Div placing the under-strength 10 Cdn Inf Bde squarely in the path of a still dangerous German army. Had it not been for the fighting ability and determination of the SAR/Argyll battlegroup the 4 Cdn Armd Div positions along the Dives line may have been overrun and lost.

Even after it became apparent that he, and Allied intelligence, had misjudged the potential threat posed by the Germans trapped in the pocket, Simonds' response reflected his focus on the pursuit. Instead of reinforcing 10 Cdn Inf Bde with 4 Cdn Armd Bde which could have happened relatively quickly and maintained unity of command along the Dives River line, Simonds ordered 2nd Cdn Armd Bde and 9 Cdn Inf Bde who were outside of the area of the immediate battle into the fray. This decision not only delayed the relief of the 10 Cdn Inf Bde but also created a further level of command complexity whereby three division commanders (Kitching, Spry and Maczek) were now trying to control the battle in the confined and confused battlespace in and around the Dives River line. One is again left wondering what might have happened had Kitching been allowed to implement his plan for a defences in depth along the Dives River with the 10 Cdn Inf Bde along the river and the tanks of the 4 Cdn Armd Bde arrayed behind in support.

There has also been a tendency to judge success and or failure in operations without a proper understanding of the context within which the operations were conducted. Through an examination of commander's intent, the effectiveness of the commander-staff dynamic at the division level and the results in operations this dissertation has determined that the 4th Cdn Armd Div was a well led organization at the division level under both Kitching and Foster. The key elements of the dynamic common intent, common situational awareness and coordinated action were consistently achieved at the divisional level which meant that the combat power of the division was synchronized for the achievement of the commander's intent.

The evidence examined revealed a clear correlation between mission success, defined as achievement of the stated intent of an operation, and the leadership of 4 Cdn Armd Bde. On the days where Booth was exercising proper control the armoured regiments performed well as exemplified by the actions on 9 and 10 August. Through a combination of circumstances, leadership was missing on the critical days of 8, 14 & 15 August. As for the remainder of the period, leadership was good from 16-19 August under Halpenny and from 19 August forward effective leadership was established and retained for the rest of the war under Moncel.

Little has been said about 10 Cdn Inf Bde due mainly to the fact that it had a solid record of success in the August battles particularly in the Pt 180, Pt 195 and St Lambert sur Dives battles. Jefferson provided adequate and consistent leadership as the brigade commander and he had the definite advantage of having two of the best regimental commanders, Wotherspoon and Stewart, to provide advice. When Jefferson became ill during the pursuit Stewart assumed the brigade commander role with great effectiveness

and ease. During the pursuit phase, Foster provided the necessary oversight for division operations but it is clear that both Wigle and Proctor provided the necessary coordination that resulted in the division's successes up to Moerbrugge. Theirs was a formidable combination forged and proven in the crucible of the August battles. It was their skill and professionalism that facilitated the command style of Foster.

The 4th Cdn Armd Div led the way in the August battles but as a new division it had to learn how to fight while it fought. The division gained valuable experience in its first actions and so did its commanders.¹⁰⁵⁹ The tenets of doctrine had to be tempered by combat experience to provide new concepts in the planning and execution of operations. The members of the division learned quickly at all levels leading to innovation in tactics, combat support, battlefield replenishment, resupply and in sustainment exemplified in particular by the action of the echelon forces to support the pursuit across France into Belgium. The evidence has revealed that during the timeframe in question the division and its leadership was placed under significant stresses and yet they proved resilient to these stresses, allowing them to function effectively in very difficult circumstances. In doing so, this dissertation has shown that the history of the 4 Cdn Armd Div is much more complex than previously recorded and that the men who commanded and lead the formations and who travelled the green centre line deserve much more credit for their professionalism, expertise, leadership and ingenuity. Knowing that further primary evidence exists in the still concealed Foster and Kitching papers one hopes that this is but the first chapter in a more comprehensive study of the 4 Cdn Armd Div and these two commanders.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy*, 316

Appendices

Appendix 1. Glossary

GLOSSARY

Administration	Administration was defined as that function of command which deals with the maintenance of the forces in the field divided into general administration-controlled by the headquarters of the forces in the field local administration-controlled by the local commander.
AFV	Armoured Fighting Vehicle
ARG-	Armoured replacement group
Armd	Armoured
Army Group	Several field armies under a designated commander
Army roadhead-	an advanced depot area under control of an army to give it the necessary administrative flexibility and to provide the source of supplies for FMCs.
Arty	Artillery
ATI	Army Training Instruction
ATP	Army Training Pamphlet
Axis	The line giving the general direction of movement, astride which a higher formation will move.
Axis of Advance	A line of advance assigned for purposes of control: often a road or a group of roads or a designated series of locations , extending in the direction of the enemy
Bailey Bridge	British-designed portable pre-fabricated truss bridge, designed for use by military engineering units to bridge gaps up to 200 feet wide. The design was unique in that: Construction required no tools or heavy equipment. Bridge components were small enough to be carried in trucks and even man portable over short distances, The bridge was strong enough to bear the weight of vehicles up to 70 tons (Bridge Classification 70). http://www.canadiansoldiers.com/equipment/engineerequipment/baileybridge.htm
BGS	Brigadier General Staff
Bound	single movement , usually from cover to cover, made by troops often under artillery fire or small arms fire.
Boundary	An artificial division to define the limits of responsibility or manoeuvre of a formation or unit.
Brigade Group Administrative area	The area in which unit rear echelons and service units of a brigade group , whose functions do not require them to be elsewhere are located.
Centre Line	The route along which a formation, unit or sub-unit headquarters will move.

Chain of Command	The succession of commanding officers from superior to a subordinate through which command is exercised.
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial general Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
Corps	An organization larger than a division and smaller than a field army: usually consist of two or more divisions together with supporting arms and services.
CRA	Commander Royal Artillery
CRO	Current Reports form Overseas
Delivery Point	A point where the logistic vehicles of a formation issue maintenance items to a consumer unit.
Distribution Point	A point at which supplies and or ammunition obtained from supporting supply points by a division or other units are broken down for distribution to subordinate units. Distribution points usually carry no stock; items are issued completely as soon as possible
Division	A major administrative and tactical unit/formation which combines in itself the necessary arms and services required for sustained combat larger than a regiment/brigade and smaller than a corps
Dump	A temporary storage area, usually in the open, for bombs, ammunition, equipment or supplies
Engr fascine	Engineer a bundle of sticks bound together, used to fill ditches, strengthen the sides of trenches, the banks of streams etc. http://www.yourdictionary.com/fascine
Fd	Field
First Line Holdings	The quantity of maintenance items held by units on a scale determined by the formation commander
First Line Transport	Unit transport, the administrative echelons of which take over ammunition, POL, supplies and other stores from second line transport at delivery points.
Flak units-	anti-aircraft units
FOO	Forward Observer Officer
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOC-in-C	General Officer Commander -in-Chief
GSO	General Staff Officer
Harbour	Any area occupied by a unit or battle group when halted. The main purpose of a harbour is to permit the dispersal and concealment of vehicles and troops against attack. Also allows for the maintenance of the unit or battle group
HE	High Explosive
HQ	Headquarters
HV	High velocity

Hy	Heavy
Inf	Infantry
L of C	Lines of Communications. All routes, land, water and air, which connect an operational military force with support areas and along which men and material move
L of C	Lines of communication
LAA	Light Anti-aircraft
LMG	Light machine gun
LOB-	Left out of Battle
Logistics	Unlike the US Army or Navy the Canadian and British military did not officially use the term logistics or understand it in its modern sense. In commonwealth forces the terms administration and maintenance were used.
M10 17 Pdr	Tank destroyer with a 17-pdr gun
maintenance	Maintenance was the process of keeping the forces in the field complete in personnel, animals and material
MTP	Military Training Pamphlet
Mutual Support	The ability on one post, locality, or area to bring fire to bear upon enemy attacking a neighbouring post, locality or area, having regard to the weapons within it.
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NTW	Notes From Theatres of War
O Group	Orders Group
One day's Supply	A unit or quantity of supplies adopted as a standard of measurement, used in estimating the average daily expenditure understated conditions. It may be expressed in terms of a factor, such as rounds of ammunition per weapon per day.
OR	Other Rank
Order of Battle	the identification , strength, command structure and disposition of the personnel, units and equipment of a military force.
POL	Petroleum, Oils and Lubricants. A broad term which includes all petroleum and associated products used by the armed forces.
PWs	prisoners of war
RAF	Royal Air Force
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps (British)
RCASC	Royal Canadian Army Service Corps-The role of the RCASC in the field is the provision of supplies, the operation of transport for the carriage of personnel and materiel of all kinds and the delivery of requirements to the field units at a time and place convenient to them.
RE	Royal Engineers
Recce-	reconnaissance

Report line	Lines on which units or formations report but do not halt. They have no tactical significance but should follow clearly defined features such as lateral roads, rivers or railways
RHQs	regimental headquarters
RMA	Rear Maintenance Area
Second Line Reserves	stocks of maintenance items held by supporting service units within a formation on a scale determined by the formation commander for the immediate replenishment of the first line holdings.
Second Line Transport	Basic RCASC transport allotted for the maintenance of brigade groups, AGRAs, corps and army group troops
Shadow divisions	were bodies of troops organized like divisions but without supply troops and used to reform badly shattered formations.
Standin Operating Procedure	A set of instructions covering those features of operations which lend themselves to a definite or standardized procedure without loss of effectiveness
Start Line	The line from which, at a specified time, assaulting troops advance to attack. It should follow a clearly defined feature and be nearly at right angles to the direction of attack.
Start Point	The point along a route where control of movement becomes the responsibility of the commander ordering the movement
Sustainment	Sustainment is the ability of a force to maintain the necessary level of combat power for the duration required to achieve its objectives.
Tac Hq-	tactical headquarters
Tactical Movement	Any movement that is influenced by battle conditions so that the tactical order of march, deployment, grouping and dispersion must be taken into account.
TCV-	Troop carrying vehicle
TEWT	Tactical Exercise Without Troops
Warning Order	A preliminary notice of an order or action which is to follow. It is designed to give subordinates time to make necessary plans and preparations.

GERMAN

Abteilung	battalion, detachment
Flak	Anti-aircraft gun
Heer	Army
Jagdpanzer	tank destroyer
Kampfgruppen	Task force, or battlegroup
Kompanie	company
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres-Army High Command
Panzer Grenadier Division	Motorized Infantry division
Panzerabteilung	tank battalion
Panzercorps	tank or armoured corps
Panzerdivision	tank or armoured division
Panzerjaeger	tank destroyer
Panzerkampfwagen	tank
Panzerregiment	tank regiment, armoured regiment
Schwere Sturmgeschutz	heavy (StuG) self-propelled gun. Sturmgeschuetz were a series of assault guns and tank destroyers produced by the Germans during the war. Sturmgeschuetz were typically large caliber guns mounted on a tank chassis. They were easier, cheaper and less time consuming to produce than turreted tanks and were produced in large numbers from German factories.
Tigerkompanie	company of Tiger tanks
Wehrmacht	correct name for German Armed Forces as a whole Heer, Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe but often in Allied terminology as meaning the German army itself
Zimmerit	an anti-magnetic cement applied to tanks to prevent the adhesion of magnetic mines

Appendix 2. Outline of Instrs issued by GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 071300B Aug 44 Op

TOTALIZE[R]sp

INFM

1. Enemy

The 2 Cdn Corps front is held by 89 Inf Div and 272 Inf Div, reinforced by one bn from 711 Div, on the gen line FONTENAY-le-MARMION 0358-ROQUANCOURT 0578-LA HOGUE 0960 0678 TILLY LA CAMPAGNE 0760-LA -HOGUE 0960. There are definite indications that 1 and 12 SS Pz Divs are moving WEST, some elements already having crossed the R ORNE.

2. Own Tps

Outline Order of Battle, 2 Cdn Corps:

- (a) 4 Cdn Armd Div
- (b) POLISH Armd Div
- (c) 2 Cdn Div
- (d) 3 Cdn Div
- (e) 51 (H) Div
- (f) 2 Cdn Armd Bde
- (g) 33 Armd Bde
- (h) 2 Cdn AGRA
- (i) 9 AGRA

3. The task of 2 Cdn Corps is to break through enemy posns astride the CAEN-FALAISE rd.

4. Outline of Ops -2 Cdn Corps

The op is divided into two phases:

- (a) Phase I
 - (i) Right – 2 Cdn Div with under comd 2 Cdn Armd Bde and
 - (ii) Left – 51 (H) Div with under comd 33 Armd Bde are to capture the gen. line CAILLOURT 0554-GAUMESNIL 0756-woods SOUTH of ST AIGNAN de CRAMESNIL area 0588 woods area 1058- 1160. H-hr 072330B Aug 44.
- (b) Phase II
 - (i) RIGHT—4 Cdn Armd Div is to pass through 2 Cdn Div and capture the FONTAINE-le PIN feature (pt 180 0737-pt 195 0846-pt 206)
 - (ii) Left – POLISH Armd Div is to pass through 51 (H) Div and Capture high ground NORTH of FALAISE (area pt 170 1442 -- pt 159 1451).

5. Corps SL, report lines and bdys as already issued.

6. AIR

- (a) Phase I – RAF Bomber Command is to drop hy bombs in the area indicated on the trace already issued.
- (b) Phase II – RAF med bombers are to drop fragmentation bombs in areas indicated on trace already issued.
- (c) 83 Gp RAF in sp First Cdn Army fighter-bombers and RP typhoons are available on call.

7. Additional Tsp Under Comd 2 Cdn Corps:

- (a) 1 LOTHIAN (Flail Regt)
- (b) 87 Sqn AVRE

8. Inter-Div Bdy – 4 Cdn Armd Div – POLISH Armd Div – Phase II

All incl 4 CDN Armd Div – pt 112 084549—church 07527
BRETTEVILLE LE RABET 1060-WEST edge of woods 116483—
woods 117475-excl br 127449.

TASK OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV

9. To capture FONTAINE-le-PIN feature (pt 180 0747 pt 195 0846-206 0943)

METHOD

10. 4 Cdn Armd Div will adv two up.

(a) RIGHT—10 Cdn Inf Bde with

(i) under comd

One sqn 1 LOTHIAN

Two btys 17 pr A Tk (towed)

One tp 17 pr Tk (SP)

(ii) in sp

15 Cdn Fd Regt

One sqn less one tp 87 Sqn AVRE

One tp 8 Cdn Fd Sqn

(b) LEFT—4 Cdn Armd Bde with

(i) under comd

One sqn 1 LOTHIAN

One bty A Tk (SP)

(ii) in sp

23 Cdn Fd Regt (SP)
One bty 17 pr A Tk (SP)
One tp 8 Cdn Fd Sqn

11. The op will be carried out in two phases:

- (a) Phase I – Move from conc area, VAUCELLES, to assembly area, NORTH of Corps SL on two routes as per instrs already issued.
- (b) Phase II – Adv to capture FONTAINE-le-PIN feature—SL for this Phase to be bomb-line for Phase II.

12. Task – 4 Cdn Armd Bde—Phase II

- (a) To adv SOUTH, by passing CINTREAUX 0853 and HAUTMESNIL 0852 to the East.
- (b) Est a firm base in the area BRETTEVILLE LE RABET and
- (c) Adv South to capture the FONTAINE-LE-PIN feature,
- (d) A special force composed of the ALQ R embossed in White scout cars and half tracks, with supporting arms, will be under comd 4 Cdn Armd Bde for move in order to relieve elements 4 Cdn Armd Bde in BRETTEVILLE LE RABET. This force will revert to comd 10 Cdn Inf Bde as soon as the firm base is consolidated in BRETTSVILLE LE RABET.

13. Task – 10 Cdn Inf Bde- Phase II

- (a) To capture and hold in succession
 - (i) CINTHEAUX 0853
HAUTNESNIL incl Quarry 0853

A force of NOT more than one bn will be employed on this task.

- (b) To firm up and hold with one bn BRETTEVILLE LE RABET and then firm up woods and houses between BRETTEVILLE LE RABET and woods.

14. Task – 18 Cdn Armd Regt

- (a) To be prepared to provide one sqn to act as convoy escort for adm vehs moving fwd to the FONTAINE-LE-PIN feature from the assembly area.
- (b) To be prepared to exploit SOUTH and EAST from the gen line MESLAY 0043 FONTAINE-le-PIN 0644 FALAISE 1455 ARGENTAN 2618

15. CL, report lines and bdys as already issued.

16. Timings.

- (a) Phase I -Move to assembly area completed by 060600B
- (b) To cross SL for phase II at approx 061400B

17. Arty.

Arty sp in the form of pre-arranged concs on-call will be provided by 4 Cdn Armd Div Fd Arty with under comd 19 Cdn Fd Regt (sp) and one med regt sp by one AGRA after phase I.

18, Engrs.

- (a) Task during phase II to construct, if necessary, crossing of the rly between 068563 and 070580.
- (b) After capture of CINTHEAUX and HAUTMESNIL open up CL on main rd CAEN-FALAISE, as far SOUTH as LANGANNERIE 0949.

19. Adm.

Issued Separately.

20. Inter-Com

- (a) Axis of Adv, 4 Cdn Armd Div – Rd CAEN-FALAISE except between rd junc 047645- CINTHEAUX, when it will be the EAST track developed by 2 Cdn Div parallel to the rd CAEN-FALAISE.
- (b) HQs locations (i) Phase I – Area X rds 042665
(ii) Phase II – Axis of Adv.
- (c) Code words as already issued.
- (d) Sigs instrs issued separately.

21. Ack

F E Wigle Lt Col
GS 4 Cdn Armd Div

Time 2359

Appendix 3. TOPSEC Summary of GOCs plan for 10 Aug

1. By approx 100300B the following situation is envisaged
 - 1) 4 Cdn Armd Bde less Lak Sup R positioned in the gen area 0848 prepared to attack south with objectives
 - a) Pt 195 if necessary
 - b) Pt 206
 - 2) 10 Cdn Inf Bde with under command Lake Sup R positioned as follows
 - a) Linc & Welld R pt 180 0747, Alg R area woods and buildings 0847 A & SH of C Pt 195 0846, 29 Cdn Recce Regt as required by Bde Comd
 - b) Or (ii) as for (i) but with A & SH of C not in occupation of Pt 195 0846.
 - 3) 18 Cdn Armd C Regt positioned in rear and to the north of 4 Cdn Armd Bde prepared to exploit south with two alternatives
 - a) If 4 Cdn Armd Bde is required to capture pt 195 0846 the Regt will exploit south directed on POTGNY 1014
 - b) If 4 Cdn Armd Bde is only required to capture pt 206 the Regt will exploit south to Falaise and west to contact elements of Second Br Army advancing from the west.
2. The outline plan follows
 - a. Plan I
 - i. If 10 Cdn Inf Bde are in possession of pt 180 0747-wood and building 0847-pt 195 then
 - ii. 4 Cdn Armd Bde will attack south and capture pt 206 0943 at first Lt[light]
 - iii. 18 Cdn Armd C Regt following in rear of 4 Cdn Armd Bde will after capture of Pt 206 by Armd Bde exploit south and west as outlined above in para 1 (ii)
 - b. Plan II
 - i. If 10 Cdn Inf Bde are not in possession of pt 195 then
 - ii. 4 Cdn Armd Bde will attack south at first light and capture in succession pt 195 and pt 206
 - iii. 18 Cdn Armd C Regt after capture of objectives by 4 Cdn Armd Bde will exploit south directed on POTIGNY-FALAISE and R[iver] ANTE.

It is suggested that very close liaison be maintained between 4 Cdn Armd Bde , 10 Cdn Inf Bde and 18 Cdn Armd C Regt so that all concerned will know the definite situation before first Lt [light] and the comds intentions carried out.

F Wigle
Lt Col
GS 4 Cdn Armd Div

Time of signature 092355B

ARMY FORM C 2136 (Large)

MESSAGE FORM

Register No.

Call	Srl. No.	Priority	Transmission Instructions
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ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY.

FROM (A) GSO 1 4 CDN ARMD DIV For Action BM 4 CDN ARMD BDE BM 10 CDN INF BDE TO OC 18 CDN ARMD C REGT (W) For Information (INFO)	Date-Time of Origin.	Office Date Stamp APPENDIX III 977/1 8 1914
		Message Instructions. GR

Originator's No. TOPSEC, summary of GOC's plan for 10 Aug.

1 By approx 100300B the following situation is envisaged.

(a) 4 Cdn Armd Bde less LAKE SUP R positioned in the gen area 0848 prepared to attack SOUTH with objectives

(i) pt 195 if necessary
 (ii) pt 206

(b) 10 Cdn Inf Bde with under cmd LAKE SUP R positioned as follows

(i) LINE & WELLD R pt 180 0747
 ALD R area wood and buildings 0847
 A + SH OF C pt 195 0846
 29 Cdn Recce Regt as required by bde cmd

or (ii) as for (i) but with A + SH OF C NOT in occupation of pt 195 0846

c 18 Cdn Armd C Regt positioned on rear and to the NORTH of 4 Cdn Armd Bde prepared to exploit SOUTH with two alternatives

(i) if 4 Cdn Armd Bde is required to capture pt 195 0846, the regt will exploit SOUTH directed on POTIGNY 1014

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			THI or TOR		
			Time Cleared		

ARMY FORM C 2136 (Large)

MESSAGE FORM

Register No.

Call	Srl. No.	Priority	Transmission Instructions		
ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY.					
FROM (A)		Originator	Date-Time of Origin.	Office Date Stamp	
		For Action.			
		Z			
TO		(W) For Information (INFO)	Message Instructions.	GR	

Originator's No.

FALAISE 1435 and the line of the R ANTE to the WEST and EAST of FALAISE.

(ii) If 4 Cdn Armd Bde is only required to capture pt 206, the Regt will exploit SOUTH to FALAISE and WEST to contact elements of Second Army advancing from the WEST.

Z. The outline plans follows

(a) Plan I

(i) If 10 Cdn Inf Bde are in possession of pts 180 0747 - wood and buildings 0847 - pt 195. then

(ii) 4 Cdn Armd Bde will attack SOUTH and capture pt 206 0943 at first Lt

(iii) 18 Cdn Armd C Regt following in rear of 4 Cdn Armd Bde will, after capture of pt 206 by the Armd Bde, exploit SOUTH and WEST as outlined above in para 1(96').

(b) Plan II

(i) If 10 Cdn Inf Bde are NOT in possession of pt 195 then at first Lt

(ii) 4 Cdn Armd Bde will attack SOUTH and capture in succession

pt 195 and
pt 206 ~~at first Lt~~

(iii) 18 Cdn Armd C Regt, after capture of

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Originator's Instructions. Degree of Priority.

Time	System	Op.
THI or TOR		
Time Cleared		

Appendix 4. TOPSEC Summary of instrs issued up to 102300B hrs [10 Aug]

1. Gen

As the enemy were found in some str[strength] in the area MOULNES 0{]46 by special patrols 18 Cdn Armd C Regt it was decided by comd NOT to emp 4 Cdn Armd Bde on the right flanking move to capture high ground USSY 0842-pt 195 0840.

2. Plan for 11 Aug

- a. Timing for attack by 10 Cdn Inf Bde to capture USSY 0842-pt 195 0840 at this time are tentative dependant on arrival of PRIESTS for tpt [transport] A & SH of C in 10 Cdn Inf Bde area.
 - b. 4 Cdn Armd Bde less 21 Armd Regt and Lake Sup R are to remain present posn with 22 Cdn Armd Ret to be prepared to hold USSY-pt 195 in conjunction with 21 Cdn Armd Regt
 - c. 10 Cdn Inf Bde with under comd 21 Cdn Armd Regt and Lake SUP R are to capture pt 206 0943 and USSY-pt 195. The attack is to be carried out in two phases
 - i. Phase I A & SH of C embossed in PRIESTS and supported by 21 Cdn Armd Regt under the cover of arty smoke[?] only are to capture pt 206. H Hour 111000B.
 - ii. Phase II. It is understood that the 21 Cdn Armd Regt and LAKE SUP R less one coy are to capture USSY-Pt 195 0840. On completion of this phase 21 Cdn Armd Regt and Lake Sup R less one coy are to revert to comd 4 Cdn Armd Bde . 4 Cdn Armd Bde is to firm up the USSY posn.
 - d. 18 Cdn Armd C Regt is sweep WEST, SOUTH and EAST on the gen line BARBERY 0349-MESLAY 0043-MARTIGNY 0736-high ground SOUTH of FALAISE.
3. It is desired to have the div positioned as flows
- a. 4 Cdn Armd Bde in the gen area USSY-pt 195 0840
 - b. 10 Cdn Inf Bde in the gen area pt 180 0747-pt 195 0846-pt 206 0943
 - c. 18 Cdn Armd C Regt with elements SOUTH of Falaise and elements protecting the div RIGHT flank between URVILLE 0750 -pt 180 0747 by last lt 11 Aug.
4. Attack by 3 Cdn Div was launched at 102000B. The present situation is somewhat obscure but it appears that 8 Cdn Inf Bde are now firming up and mopping up QUESNAY wood area 10 47.

F Wigle Lt Col
GS 4 Cdn Armd Div

ARMY FORM C 2136 (Large)

MESSAGE FORM

Register No.

Call	Srl. No.	Priority	Transmission Instructions
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ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY.

FROM	Originator	Date-Time of Origin.	Office Date Stamp
(A)	GSD 1 4 CDN ARMD DIV	102345	APPENDIX IX
	For Action.		
	BM 4 CDN ARMD BDE		
	BM 10 CDN INF BDE		
	18 CDN ARMD C REGT		
TO	(W) For Information (INFO)	Message Instructions.	GR

Originator's No.

SECRET. Summary of instrs issued up to 10 x 0 00 B hrs

1 Gen

As the enemy were found in some str in the area MOULINES 0846 by special patrols 18 Cdn Armd C Regt it was decided by comd NOT to emp 4 Cdn Armd Bde on the RIGHT flanking move to capture the high ground USSY 0842 - pt 195 0840.

2 Plans for 11 Aug

(a) Timings for attacks by 10 Cdn Inf Bde to capture USSY 0842 - pt 195 0840 at this time are tentative dependant on arrival of PRIESTS for Lt A+SH OF C in 10 Cdn Inf Bde area.

(b) 4 Cdn Armd Bde less 21 Armd Regt and LAKE SUP R are to remain present from with 22 Cdn Armd Regt to be prepared to hold USSY - pt 195 in conjunction with 21 Cdn Armd Regt.

(c) 10 Cdn Inf Bde with under comd 21 Cdn Armd Regt and LAKE SUP R are to capture pt 206 0943 and USSY - pt 195. The attack is to be carried out in two phases.

(i) Phase I A+SH OF C embarked in PRIESTS and supported by 21 Cdn Armd Regt under the cover of arty smoke only are to capture pt 206. H HV 11000 B

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Signed.

Originator's Instructions. Degree of Priority.

Time	System	Op.
THI or TOR		
Time Cleared		

Appendix 5 SECRET. Summary of GOCs instrs up to 111500B and relevant infm.

1. Enemy

Enemy resistance has stiffened an div front 4 Cdn Armd Bde being held SOUTH of pt 195 0841 by A tk screen which extends in semi circle on gen line of rly[sp] Le HAMLET FONRAINE 0647-FONTAINE -LE PIN 0844- ASY 0945 QUESNAY woods 1047 still held in str.

2. Own Tps

- a. On our right 12 Corps have cleared the Foret du Cinglais but a patrol from 9 Cdn Bde crossed the R LAIZE in the area GOURIX 0651 and reported no enemy.
- b. 3 Cdn Div is taking over a sector of the 2 Cdn Corps front between 4 Cdn Armd Div and Polish armd Div. they are attacking south at approx 111700 with objectives QUESNAY Woods and POTIGNY 1044. Phase I Quesnay Woods {unknown word} completed by 112400 B. Phase II POITGNY by first light 12 Aug Phase III to secure brhead over R LAISON.
- c. Polish Armd Div are attacking SE when 3 Cdn Div captures Quesnay woods with objective phase I area pt 132 1448 phase II area pt 118 1645 phase III area pt 115 area 1849.

3. 4 Cdn Armd Div

- a. 4 Cdn Armd Bde is to either
 - i. Remain in present posn area pt 195 0846 or
 - ii. With Lake Sup R back under comd adv south and capture pt 206 0943 when a favourable opportunity is presented
 1. attack by 3 Cdn Div at or
 2. when air and arty sp make it possible to break through enemy A ttk screen.
- b. 10 Cdn Inf Bde is to either
 - i. Remain in present position prepared to send one inf bn fwd to take over pt 206 from 4 Cdn Armd Bde or
 - ii. With under comd one armd regt 4 Cdn Armd Bde attack south to capture pt 206 the armd regt will exploit south and seize area USSY 0842-pt 0840.

18 Cdn Armd C Regt is to exploit south to the high ground south of Falaise and either remain there overnight or return to dev area at OCs discretion as well as moving west to meet Second Brit Army.

F Wigle Lt Col
GS 4 Cdn Armd Div

ARMY FORM C 2136 (Large)

MESSAGE FORM

Register No.

Call

Srl. No.

Priority

Transmission Instructions

ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY.

FROM (A) GSDI 4 CDN ARMD DIV		Originator	Date-Time of Origin.	Office Date Stamp APPENDIX X 977/1 Apex 19 AUG 1944
For Action. BM 4 CDN ARMD BDE BM 10 CDN INF BDE				
TO OC 18 CDN ARMD C REGT		(W) For Information (INFO)	Message Instructions.	GR

Originator's No.

SECRET. Summary of GOCs notes up to 111500B and relevant info.

1. Enemy

Enemy resistance has stiffened on div front 4 Can Armd Bde being held SOUTH of pt. 95-0846 by A th screen which extends in semi-circle on gen line of rly LE HAMELET FONTAINE 0647 - FONTAINE-LE-PIN 0644 - AISY 0945. QUESNAY wood 1047 also held in str.

2. Own Ops

(a) On own RIGHT IV Corps have cleared the FORÊT DE CINGLAIS ~~screen~~ but a patrol from 9 Can Bde crossed the R LAIZE in the area GOUVIX 0651 and reported no enemy.

(b) 3 Can Div is taking over a sector of the 2 Can Corps front between 4 Can Armd Div and POLISH armd Div. They are attacking SOUTH at approx 111700 with objectives QUESNAY woods and POTIGNY 1044. Phase I QUESNAY woods estimated completed by 115400B Phase II POTIGNY by first lt 11 Aug Phase III to move ahead over R RAISON

(c) POLISH armd Div are attacking SE, when 3 Can Div capture QUESNAY woods with objectives Phase I area pt 132 1448 phase II area ~~pt 103~~ pt 103 1645 phase III area pt 115 area 1843.

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Signed.

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Signed.

Originator's Instructions. Degree of Priority.

Time	System	Op.
THI or TOR		
Time Cleared		

ARMY FORM C 2136 (Large)

MESSAGE FORM

Register No.

C	Srl. No.	Priority	Transmission Instructions
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ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY.

FROM (A) GSOI 4 CDN ARMD DIV	Originator	Date-Time of Origin. 171600 B	Office Date Stamp APPENDIX XI
BM 4 CDN ARMD BDE BM 10 CDN INF BDE BMRA	For Action.		
TO OC 18 CDN ARMD C REGT	(W) For Information (INFO)	War Diaries Ser 7771 Appx 11	Instructions. GB

Originator's No. SECRET. Summary GOC's conference 121200 B.

INFM

1 2 Can Div with 4 Can Bde leading has crossed the R LAIZE and is advancing on the CL BRETTEVILLE SUR LAIZE 0552 - BARBERY 0349 - MAULINES 0446 - CLAIR TIZON 0643 to capture the high ground pt 195 - USSY 0841.

2 3 Can Div is holding the gen areas
(a) pt 180 0747 - pt 195 0846 - ST HILAIRE 0943 with 9 Can Bde
(b) area BRETTEVILLE LE RADET 1050 with 8 Can Bde
(c) area ESTREES LA CAMPAGNE 1249 - SOIGNOLLES 1351 with 7 can bde

3 POLISH Armd Div has leading elements in LA BU SUR ROUVRES 1651. Its gen task was to find crossing places over the R LAISON from MAIZERES 1749 to CANON 2255. It has now been withdrawn from this task.

4 51(H) Div still holds the following bde areas
(a) woods areas 1552 - 1553
(b) ST SYLVAIN 1250
(c) area CONTEVILLE 1757 - POUSSY LA CAMPAGNE 1356
(d) one Bgn of 51(H) div recon regt is attempting to seize the spur in area 1554 this afternoon.

This message may be sent AS WRITTEN by any means except

WIRELESS.

Signed.

If liable to be intercepted or to fall into enemy hands this message must be sent IN CIPHER.

Signed.

Originator's Instructions, Degree of Priority.

Time	System	Op.
THI or TOR		
Time Cleared		

ARMY FORM C 2136 (Large)

MESSAGE FORM

Register No.

Call	Srl. No.	Priority	Transmission Instructions
------	----------	----------	---------------------------

ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY.

FROM (A)	Originator	Date-Time of Origin.	Office Date Stamp	
	For Action.			
TO	(W) For Information (INFO)		Message Instructions.	GR

Originator's No.

5. 4 Cdn Armd Div remains in present conc area.

18 Cdn Armd C Regt is carrying out a recon SE from ST SYLVAIN 1354 with a view to

(a) Ascertaining the enemy's str in the area SE of ST SYLVAIN to R LAISON between MAIZIERES 1749 and CANON 2255

(b) Seize crossings of the LAISON between MAIZIERES and CANON and

(c) Hold crossings for 4 Cdn Armd Div to pass through.

6. There are three tentative tasks for 4 Cdn Armd Div

(a) To follow 2 Cdn Div pass through in the area USSY 0841 and adv unit objective FALAISE

(b) To follow 18 Cdn Armd C Regt cross the RLAIZE and adv on the CL SASSY 1845 - EPANCY 1641 with objective FALAISE

Both above tasks would commence at first Lt 13 Aug.

(c) To carry out Op TALLULAH in conjunction with 3 Cdn Div. Outline plan is as follows

(a) The adv will be carried out two divs up

LEFT

RIGHT

(i) First ech one inf bde 3 Cdn Div

one inf Bde 3 Cdn Div

(ii) Sec ech 4 Cdn Armd Bde

2 Cdn Armd Bde

(iii) Third ech 10 Cdn Inf Bde

one inf bde 3 Cdn Div

This message may be sent AS WRITTEN by any means except

WIRELESS.

Signed.

If liable to be intercepted or to fall into enemy hands this message must be sent IN CIPHER.

Signed.

Originator's Instructions. Degree of Priority.

Time	System	Op.
THI or TOR		
Time Cleared		

TOP SECRET

1-6

Main HQ 4 Cdn Armd Div
13 Aug 44Copy number 4977/1
12
AUG 1944
OUTLINE OF INSTRS ISSUED BY
GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div 131230B Aug 44

OP TRACTABLE

Ref Maps: FRANCE 1/50,000 sheets 7F/3 7F/4 7F/5 7F/6

INFM1 Enemy

The enemy on the div front appears to have formed an A tk screen pivoted on the area QUESNAY 1047 - POTIGNY 1044. The screen to the EAST follows the line of the R LAISON. The pivot is held by part of 85 Inf Div and 12 SS Pz Div. The line of the R LAISON down stream to the area CONDE SUR IFS 2052 is held by 12 SS Pz Div.

2 Own Tps

2 Cdn Corps with RIGHT 3 Cdn Div and LEFT 4 Cdn Armd Div is attacking SOUTH with the object of gaining comd of the enemy's comms through FALAISE. The Op will be carried out in three phases.

(a) Phase I

The crossing of the R LAISON and seizure of the high ground area pt 118 1546 - woods pt 103 1645.

(b) Phase II

To adv SOUTH and SW to capture the high ground NE of FALAISE area pt 170 1442 - pt 175 1441 by 3 Cdn Div and area ring contour 160 1436 by 4 Cdn Armd Div.

(c) Phase III

Exploitation to capture the bns at ERAINES 1737 and DAMBLAINEVILLE 2038 preparatory to advancing on TRUN 3029 to meet 15 US Corps by 4 Cdn Armd Div.

3 51 (H) Brit Div is to capture LA BU SUR ROUVRES 1651 op commencing at 2 Cdn Corps H hr.

4 Additional tps under comd 4 Cdn Armd Div

- (a) 8 Cdn Inf Bde (Phase I only)
- (b) 1 LOTHIANS (Flail Regt)
- (c) A Sqn 141 RAC (Crocodiles)
- (d) 19 Cdn Fd Regt (SP)
- (e) One sqn AVRE 5 Aslt Regt

5 The RAF is supporting 2 Cdn Corps during Op TRACTABLE as follows

(a) Bombing of the valley of the R LAISON from incl PLAYE 1345 to incl ERAINES 1949 from H hr minus 20 mins to H hr minus 5 mins with med bombers.

(b) Bombing of the following areas by med bombers

- (c) Hy bombers on the POTIGNY pivot area from H plus 2 hrs to H plus 4 hrs. It is considered that this prolonged bombing will either destroy the enemy in the POTIGNY area or prevent them from counter attacking the 2 Cdn Corps thrust.

6 Corps bdys, SL and inter div bdy as shown on Trace "X" att.

TASKS 4 CDN ARMD DIV

- 7 (a) To seize the high ground NE of FALAISE
(b) To capture the brs at ERAINES 1737 and DAMBLAINVILLE 2038
(c) To be prepared to exploit SOUTH and SE to meet 15 US Corps in the area TRUN 3029.

METHOD

8 The div will adv one up as follows

(a) 4 Cdn Armd Bde

(i) with under comd

Two sqns 1 LOTHIANS
96 Cdn A Tk Bty (SP)

(ii) with in sp

19 Cdn Fd Regt (SP)
23 Cdn Fd Regt (SP)
One sqn AVRE 5 Aslt Regt
Two tps 8 Cdn Fd Sqn

(b) 8 Cdn Inf Bde with att tps incl A Sqn 141 RAC

(c) 10 Cdn Inf Bde

(i) with under comd

One sqn 1 LOTHIANS
3 Cdn A Tk Bty

(ii) with in sp

15 Cdn Fd Regt
One tp 8 Cdn Fd Sqn

9 Tasks 4 Cdn Armd Bde

- (a) To lead the div adv
(b) To cross the R LAISON and by-passing all opposition capture the objective ring contour 160 area 1438.
(c) To capture and hold PIERRIERES with elements of the mot bn until relieved by one bn 10 Cdn Inf Bde
(d) To be prepared to send recee elements to the brs at ERAINES and DAMBLAINVILLE

10 Tasks 8 Cdn Inf Bde

(a) Phase I

(i) Two bns embussed in PRIESTS, half-tracks and carriers will clear the valley of the R LAISON between oxol br at 156475 and incl MAIZIERES 1749 and seize the high ground pt 103 area 1646

(ii) Remaining bn marching will mop up area between Corps SL and valley of R LAISON

(b) On completion of above tasks will revert to comd 3 Cdn Div and move to capture SASSY 1845

11 Tasks 10 Cdn Inf Bde

(a) Phase II

- (i) To capture OLENDON 1644, if necessary
- (ii) To relieve the mot bn 4 Cdn Armd Bde in PIERRIERES 1843 and est a firm base there
- (iii) To capture EPANCY 1641, if necessary and push fwd to link up with 4 Cdn Armd Bde on final objective
- (iv) Depending on opposition encountered the bde may be required to leave elements in OLENDON and EPANCY

12 Tasks 18 Cdn Armd C Regt

- (a) When 4 Cdn Armd Bde crosses the Corps SL to make a recce in force to protect the LEFT flank of the div between ST SYLVAIN 1354 and MAIZIERES 1749. (In view of para 3 direct liaison with 51 (H) Div will be necessary)
- (b) To follow 8 Cdn Inf Bde across the R LAISON and protect the LEFT flank of the div between MAIZIERES and SASSY
- (c) To be prepared to carry out a recce in force of the wooded areas 1839 - 1940 - 2041 and exploit to ERAINES and DAMBLAINVILLE
- (d) Hold in res one sqn for exploitation SOUTH and EAST from ERAINES and DAMBLAINVILLE on orders GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div

13 Arty

(a) Phase I

- (i) A smoke screen is to be laid on both flanks of the adv on the RIGHT in the area QUESNAY and on the LEFT EAST of the gen line MAIZIERES - SASSY
- (ii) A smoke barrage precoding the armour from the Corps SL to the first objective pt 103 from H minus 5 to H plus 35. Timings are so arranged that the armour will have 15 mins smoke in the area from incl the valley of the R LAISON fwd to the first objective pt 103 to complete the river crossing.
- (iii) Med arty cones on known and suspected 88 mm gun posns

(b) Phase II

Pre-arranged cones by med arty on call on known and suspected 88 mm gun posns and enemy localities

- (c) Comds will ensure that no hy smoke programme involving more than one fd regt will be laid down from H plus 1 hr until after H plus 4 hrs as hy smoke may obscure target indicators for RAF hy bombers

14 Engrs

under CREs control

- (a) One sqn AVRE 5 Aslt Regt and one tp 8 Cdn Fd Sqn will be in sp 4 Cdn Armd Bde to assist in the crossing of the R LAISON
- (b) One tp 8 Cdn Fd Sqn with necessary explosives will move with 4 Cdn Armd Bde to prepare pits for tks to be dug in on the final objective
- (c) Two tps 8 Cdn Fd Sqn will assist 10 Cdn Inf Bde in the crossing of the R LAISON

15 SL, Bdys, Report Lines

As detailed on Trace "X" att.

Kitching Note to Lt Col Scott undated [14 August 44]

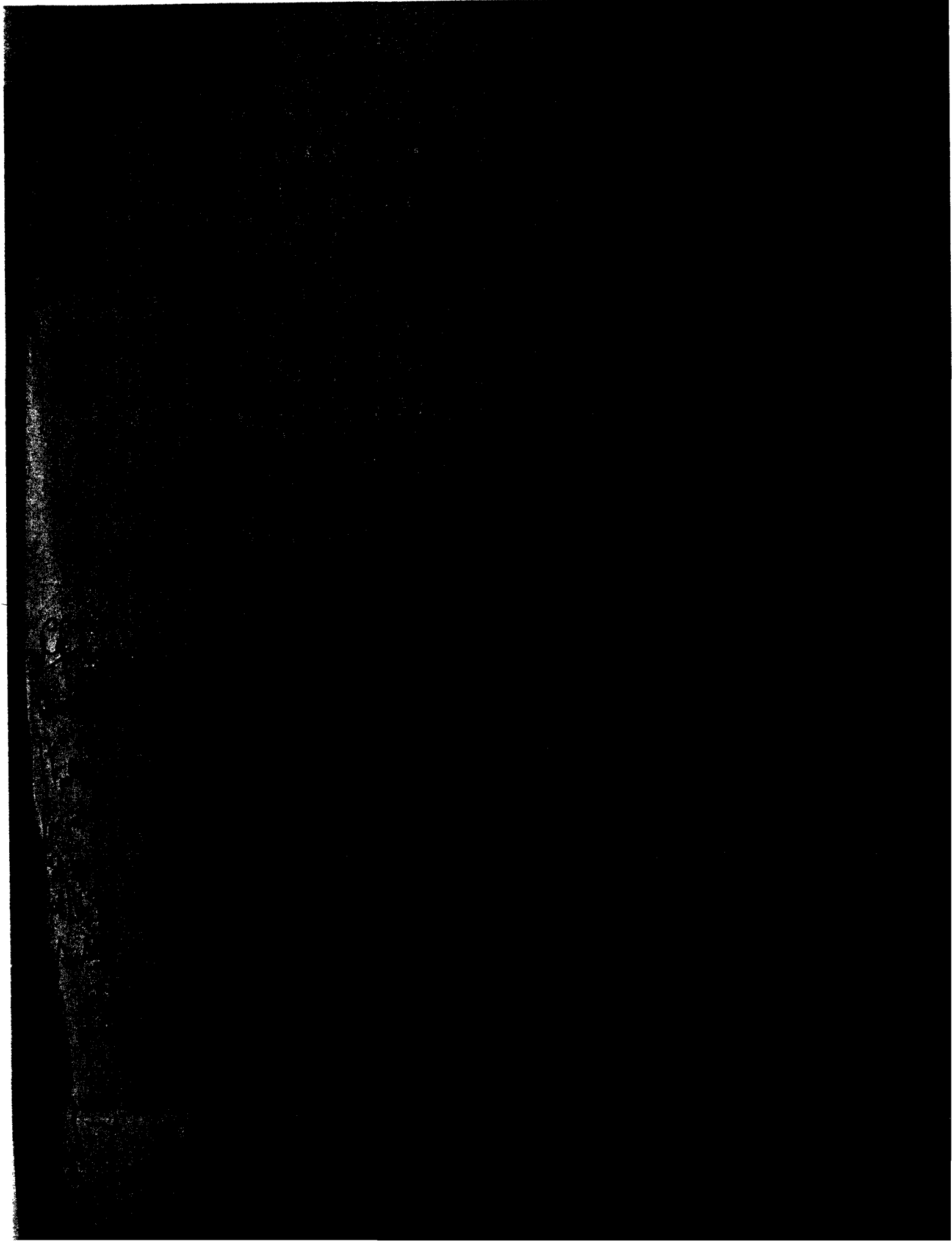
Dear Murray

I am sorry to hear about Boothie. But I'm very confident in our ability to fight the Bde. Keep going tonight until dark then regroup your armour for a big effort tomorrow morning. Brig Jefferson is going to capture (a) OLENDON (b) High ground 182438 (unless already taken by your motor Bn (c) Epancy.

We have to capture FALAISE tomorrow.

Sincerely

George Kitching



Appendix 11. Op Smash

Enemy

Digging in at 2142-2239
Dug in tanks & Atk guns at 1836
Enemy activity in Fresney le Mere 1935
Enemy in some strength at Morteaux-Coulbeauf 2339
Lt opposition in NE sector of Falaise

Own Trps

2 Div on high ground south of Falaise
Argylls-1 Coy in Falaise
Poles cleaning up opposition in Morteaux Coulibeeauf & have sent patrols on to Trun
(code word of recognition “ Jordon ”
French forces (armd) east of 2825 Bailleul
US at 2346 (Moulins sur Orne)
10 CIB recce of crossing Irish & Japan & will follow 4 Bde
Argylls to 2039 by morning
Algonq- Japan “ “ [by morning]
L &W move up behind Blacks [sp] (MR 420139)

Intention: 4 Bde will seize Trun firm p on high ground to north & NE

Method: SP [start point] main Rd junc 1743

Route I Epancy-track across high ground to Irish (Damblainville)
Route II Perrières-Japan (Morteaux-Couliboef)
Route I for Irish to CL[centre line] RR[railroad] Br [bridge] 2036-Pt 77-Ners
Route for Japan to CL -?

Order of march

LSR with under comd 28CAR-96 Atk, 14 Atk Bty less 1 Tp LAA-2Tp Lt Fd sqn
21 CAR with under comd 1 Tp flails
Bde HQ
9 vehs of 23 Sp Regt
22 CAR
2 Sqn Flails
23 Sp Regt
Provost

23 Sp Regt will deploy “arctic”
Units will liaise [] for start time

Tasks-LSR & 28 CAR seize Pt 147 3331

21 & 22 CAR firm up at high ground 3233- 3232 (22 on 3233) --(21 on 3232)

Route to objective x-country or through Trun depends on sit

Route will be picketed by adv gd(LSR)

Regts responsible for own left flank

AA prot crossing at Damblainville

Eng will prepare bridge at Irish for Dem[demolition]

Admin

2 Pet[troll]-1 Amm[unition] 1 ½ trucks per sqn

1 art-regt

Remainder of A1 remain present location

Comds to stand by for move up

A2 remain locn 151463

CCP at Olendon

Intercom

Start Time -0500-depart time given on air

Recce Trp will liaise with Bde to find route to sp & time of move to SP

Ser. No. 1111
Apr 1945

Inf - Enemy: Digging in at 2142-2239 - 20
Dig in the 4 ATK guns at 1836
Enemy activity in Freney le man
1935

Enemy in some strength at Mortaux -
Coulbeuf 2339

Enemy: 2 bn on high ground south of
Falaise -

Angyles - 1 coy in Falaise.
Boles cleaning up opposition in Mortaux
Coulbeuf. We have sent patrols on
to them. (code word of recognition is
French flag (around) east of 2035 (Railroad))

US at 2346 (Moulins sur Orne)
10 CIB recce of crossing Isthm Japan
& will follow 4 bde.

Infantry: Angyles to 2039 by morning
Albany - Japan " "
Low moral up behind Backs (MR 40139)

Infantry: 4 bde will seize TRUN
from up on high ground to North & NE

Infantry: SP 2 main 1775

Route I Epauvy - break across high
ground to Isthm - (Damlainville)

Route II Parnes - Japan (Mortaux-Coulbeuf)

Route for Isthm to Ch R Br 2036 - A
West.

Route from Japan to Ch - ?

Order of march -

14 CAC with ...
17 CAC ...
19 74 92 -

21 CAC with ... 1 TR flanks.

Bde HQ

9 units of 23 SP Regt.

22 CAC

2 Sign flanks

23 SP Regt

Provost.

23 SP Regt will deploy at "Arctic".

Units will have food for start time.

Tasks - ...

21 & 22 CAC form up at high ground

3233 - 3234

Route to ...

Route will be protected by ...

Regs responsible for own left flank.

AA post ...

Eng will prepare bridge at ...

Admin: 2 Regt - 1 team - 1/2 tank per ...

1 av - Regt.

Remainder of ...

Comds to ...

AV remain ...

CCP at ...

Start Line - 0500 - ~~April 1st~~ June
on air.

Reese ~~to~~ will leave to ~~the~~ to find
route to ~~of~~ & trail of mail to ~~of~~.

Appendix 12. Summary of GOC's O Grp subsequent instructions received from Comd 2

Cdn Corps

- 1) 2 Cdn Div is being relieved by 12 Corps and will in turn relieve 3 Cdn Div ob R Dives SOUTH to incl 260333 during 19 and 20 Aug
- 2) 3 Cdn Div
 - a. 7 Cdn Bde remain present posn on R Dives from 260333 to excl Trun
 - b. 9 Cdn Bde will relive 10 Cdn Bde in Trun night 19/20 Aug and in St Lambert Sur Dives area 20 Aug Polish Armd Div will be relieved in CHAMBOIS 20 Aug
 - c. 8 Cdn Bde will take over from 4 Cdn Armd Bde and 10 Cdn Inf Bde following areas
 - i. 258 4159
 - ii. Hordouseaux 3333
 - iii. 259 3334
 - iv. During 20 Aug
- 3) Polish Armd Div is to Firm up Corps Left flank by occupation of following areas
 - a. Pt 262 4355 with one armd and two inf Regts
 - b. Pt 262 4352 with two armd and one Inf regt
 - c. Chambois with the mot Bn
- 4) 4 Cdn Armd Div
 - 4 Cdn Armd Bde
 - a. 4 Cdn Armd Bde Regts will remain in present locations although area will be taken over by 8 Cdn Inf bde during daylight 20 Aug
 - b. 4 Cdn Armd Bde will STAND DOWN on relief by 8 Cdn Bde and will NOT be required for ops before FIRST LIGHT 21 Aug
 - 10 Cdn Inf Bde
 - c. 10 Cdn Inf Bde will be relieved by 9 Cdn Bde in Trun during night 19/20 Aug. Units and sub units committed in St LAMBERT SUR DIVES and CHAMBOIS area will NOT be relieved until daylight 20 AUG by 9 Cdn Bde. These units and sub units will then CONC in area HORDOUSEAUX Pt 147 331 3232
 - d. 10 Cdn Inf Bde will provide two sc pls mounted in carriers under comd A Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C Regt for recce in force being carried out during daylight 20 Aug by A Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C Regt which will RV at 4 Cdn Armd Bde in Hordouseaux 200930B
 - e. Remainder of 10 Cdn Inf Bde

1. one Bn on wheels to be at instant readiness frn 201000B to take over coy localities when captured by 18 Cdn Armd C Regt on CL to Vimoutiers 4867. CO A Sqn will report when suitable coy localities have been captured on CL to DIV HQ. Div HQ will advise 10 CIB who will have a coy despatched forthwith Atk guns will be taken with coy to consolidate locality.
 2. Rem two Bns will be on two hours notice to move to take over areas on CL to Vimoutiers
 3. Unless considered otherwise necessary by Bde Comd 29 Recce Regt after release and conc will be allowed to stand down until first light.
- f. "A" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C Regt will carry out a recce in Force from the area HORDOUSEAUX on the projected DIV CL rd HORDOUSEAUX – Le CHAMPEAU 4261-Le 4462 LAFAUVETIERE 4862 VIMOUTIERS. Sqn will have u/c two Sc pls 10 CIB in carriers, one FOO 4 Bde Offr Recce parties Engr 4 Div On conclusion of the task Sqn will withdraw to rear of leading unit to HARBOUR night 20/21 Aug

5. ARTY 4 CAD

1. Three Fd regts & two med regt now under comd
2. Fd regts conc area Le Menil Girard 3231
3. Will provide A Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C Regt with one FOO (RV HQ 4 CAB) who will have call on as much arty as CRA considers necessary or can provide

6. Engrs 4 CAD

Will provide offr recce on following A Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C to carry out detailed rd recce of projected div CL Offr RV 4 CAB HQ 0930 B
Detail of the adv on the CL VIMOUTIERS ORBEC will be issued 20 Aug.
Report line & code words already issued.

Main HQ 4 CAD moving to area MONTREUIL LA CAMBE 304347 during morning of 20 Aug

21 CAR & 22 CAR will probably be the only units of this form who will have 8 bde bodies in their area.

A Chubb Maj
BM 4 CAB

TO

(W) for information (488)

Message instructions

CR

Originator's No.

SECRET @ Summary GOC: O' S...
subsequent imado received from Comd
2 CON Coats

① 2 CON DIV is being relieved by
12 Corps and will in there relieved
3 CON DIV and R DIVS SOUTH to insert 26333
during 17 and 20 Aug.

② 2 CON DIV

② 7 2nd Para remains present
from on R DIVS from above to 263
TRIM

③ 2 CON DIV will relieve 10
2nd Para in 7th night 1950 Aug and
in at location 2nd Para. Also 2nd Para
2nd Para will be in branch in
Chattanooga at 26333.

④ 3 2nd Para will be in
head of 2nd Para 2nd Para 10 CON DIV R DIV
following 1950 Aug.

1950 Aug 17

1950 Aug 18

1950 Aug 19

⑤ 2nd Para will be in branch in
Chattanooga at 26333.

⑥ 2nd Para will be in branch in
Chattanooga at 26333.

Approved	Special Agent in Charge	Approved	Special Agent in Charge

FROM

ORGANIZATION

Date Time of Receipt

Office Use Only

TO

(1) For Information (INFO)

Message in Translation

CR

Originator's No.

(1) At 262 4357 with two Ground
and one Inj. Unit.
(2) CUMMIS with the net Bal

④ 4000 Ground Dy

1 cdm Ground Bal

(2) 9 cdm Ground Bal. Rights will remain
in present locations although access will
be taken over by 3000 2000 during
daylight hours.

10 cdm Ground Bal will stand down and
return by 3000 2000. Will NOT be
required for open before first hour of day.

10 cdm Inj. Unit

(3) 10 cdm Inj. Unit will be relieved by 9
cdm Inj. Unit during night hours. They
will be relieved by 3000 2000 at 0700
hours. The 9 cdm Inj. Unit will be
relieved by 3000 2000 at 0700 hours.
The 10 cdm Inj. Unit will be relieved by
3000 2000 at 0700 hours. The 10 cdm Inj. Unit
will be relieved by 3000 2000 at 0700 hours.

The 10 cdm Inj. Unit will be relieved by
3000 2000 at 0700 hours. The 10 cdm Inj. Unit
will be relieved by 3000 2000 at 0700 hours.
The 10 cdm Inj. Unit will be relieved by
3000 2000 at 0700 hours. The 10 cdm Inj. Unit
will be relieved by 3000 2000 at 0700 hours.

O of S 1-1-0
Main First Cdn Army
19 Aug 44

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Chief of Staff

TO: GOC in C

PA 19 AUG 44
ARMY OPS ROOM
FIRST CDN ARMY

Summary of Tele Conversations with Comd 8 Cdn Corps and
Chief of Staff 21 Army Gp

- 1 At 1040 hrs, 19 Aug 44, Chief of Staff 21 Army Gp asked whether or not further attacks by aircraft were acceptable on the rd MONT-ORUEL-VIMOUTIERS as their info was that enemy were still escaping from CHAMBOIS through MONT-ORUEL up to VIMOUTIERS.
- 2 I stated that we would not be able to accept such attacks without the prior approval of 1 Pol Armd Div, and that I doubted if they would agree in view of yesterday's unfortunate occurrences. I said that I would check with General Simonds to see if he was prepared for the renewal of such attacks.
- 3 At 1045 hrs Gen Simonds stated that he was NOT prepared to agree to the above proposals, and that he had just had it reported to him that an armd recon regt was at pt 113 in 4152, and that the Americans had just asked for, and had been denied, permission to attack CHAMBOIS from the SOUTH. Gen Simonds said that he had instructed the Americans to direct their forces to make jump with his own by mov from the SE.
- 4 I then reported this info to the Chief of Staff 21 Army Gp, and while doing so had a further call from Gen Simonds giving further new info regarding the Polish situation as follows:-
 - (a) An armd regt and bn at pt 252 in 4455.
 - (b) An armd regt and bn in sq 4054.
 - (c) An armd regt and bn in sq 4154.
 - (d) A recon sqn NORTH of the rd 4252.
 - (e) 4 Cdn Armd Div were now in direct touch with US Forces and were separated by approx two miles.
- 5 I passed this info to the Chief of Staff 21 Army Gp.
- 6 At 1125 hrs Gen Simonds tele to say that he was most anxious to leave his HQ in order to keep a RV with his Div Comds and that he would be a half hr late if he left at once. He asked when the Army Comd would be back or when he could expect a tele call, as he did not have a clear idea as to how he should operate during today and in the immediate future. I said that I would tele the Chief of Staff 21 Army Gp on this pt and endeavour to obtain a forecast of the G in C's intentions at once.
- 7 At 1135 hrs, the Chief of Staff 21 Army Gp said that he had NOT been in contact with the G in C this morning but that, in his opinion, the instrs were almost certain to be:-
 - (a) For 8 Cdn Corps to continue to close the gap and to keep it closed until Second Brit Army were able to take over this task, and
 - (b) That 1 Brit Corps should continue to push on towards LISIEUX.
- 8 At 1140 hrs, I passed the info in para 7 above to Gen Simonds, gave him a release to proceed to his RV with his Div Comds, in full knowledge that we would almost at once be out of line comm until late this evening owing to the impending move of HQ 8 Cdn Corps, and the consequential cutting of comms during the period of the move.

RG 24. C17

National Defence/
Reference National

JUNO BEACH

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O BUNGT
24-29 JUL

REGIMENT DISEMBARKED
24-25 JUL 44

O GRAYESUR
MER

O BANVILLE

O CREULLY

O CAIRON

O BUREN

27 JUL
- 11 AUG

CAEN

P. ORNE

6-7 AUG

O OMONDEVILLE

O ODEMOUVILLE

FALAISE ROAD

1-3 AUG

4-5 AUG

21-30
JUL

IFSO

11-13 AUG

8 AUG

11 AUG

FRONT LINE
7 AUG

O BOURGEBUS

O TILLY LA CAMPAGNE

O MAYSURORNE
O ROQUAN COURT

13-15 AUG

FRONTLINE 8 AUG
MIDNIGHT

O ST AGNAN

O GAUMESNIL

9 AUG - 1100

11-14 AUG

O CINTHEAUX

O HAUTMESNIL

4-10 AUG

O BRETTEVILLE
LE RABET

FRONTLINE 10 AUG
MIDNIGHT

10-11 AUG

O QUESN
WOOD

LOCATIONS

⊗ TANKS

□ ECHELON

⊗ ECHELON

ROUTES

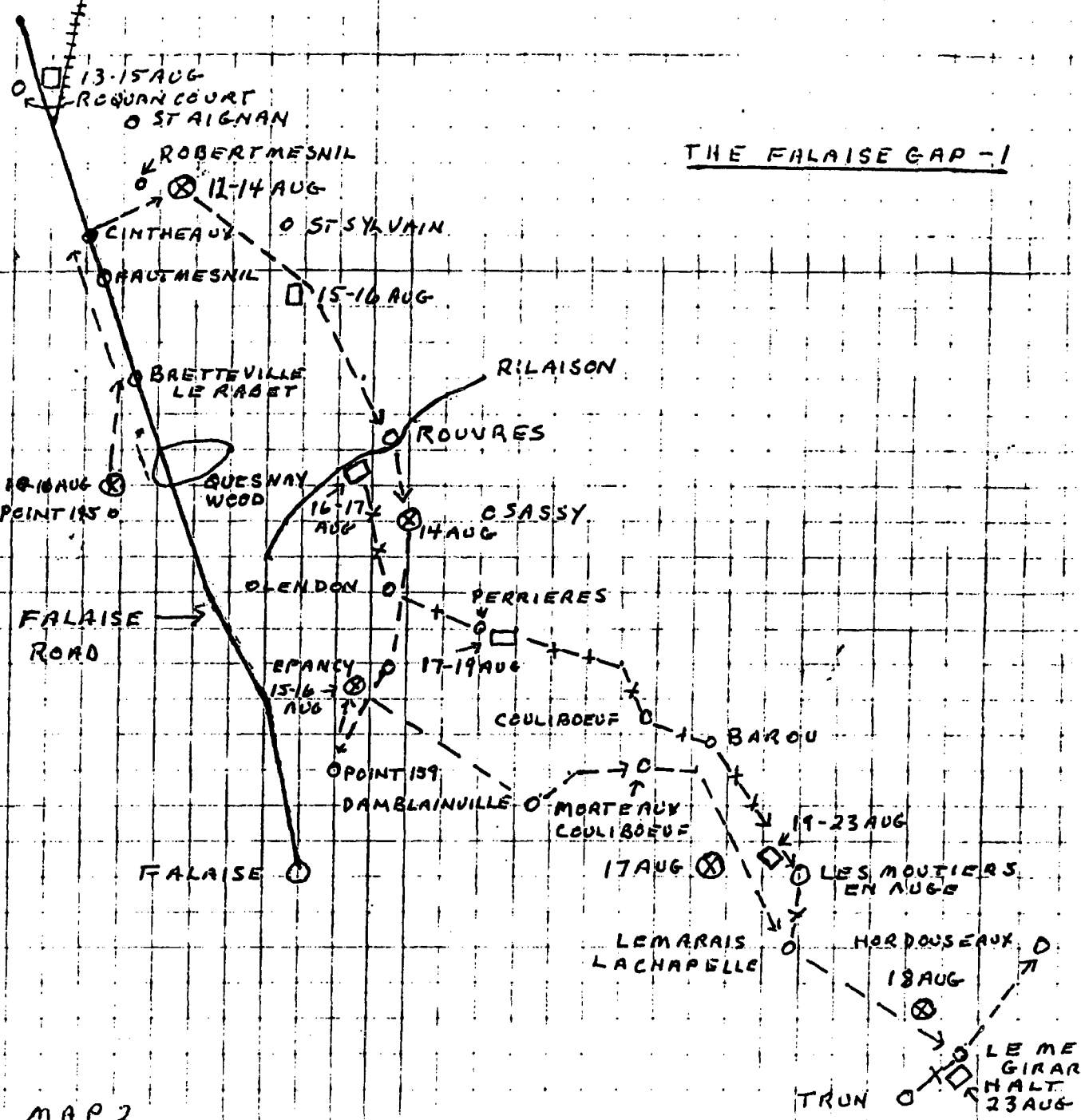
- - - - - TANKS

- X - X - X - ECHELON - W/ DIFFERENT

06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35

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THE FALAISE GAP - I

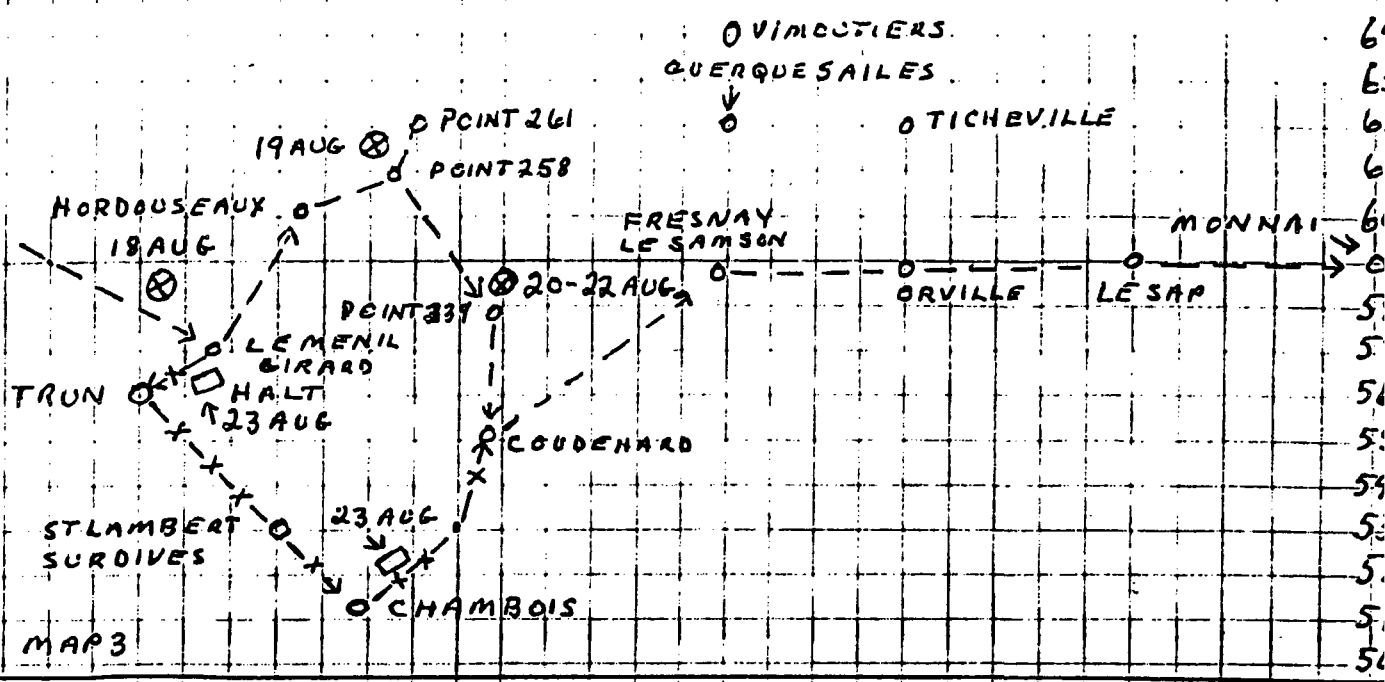


MAP 2
ABF OCT 84

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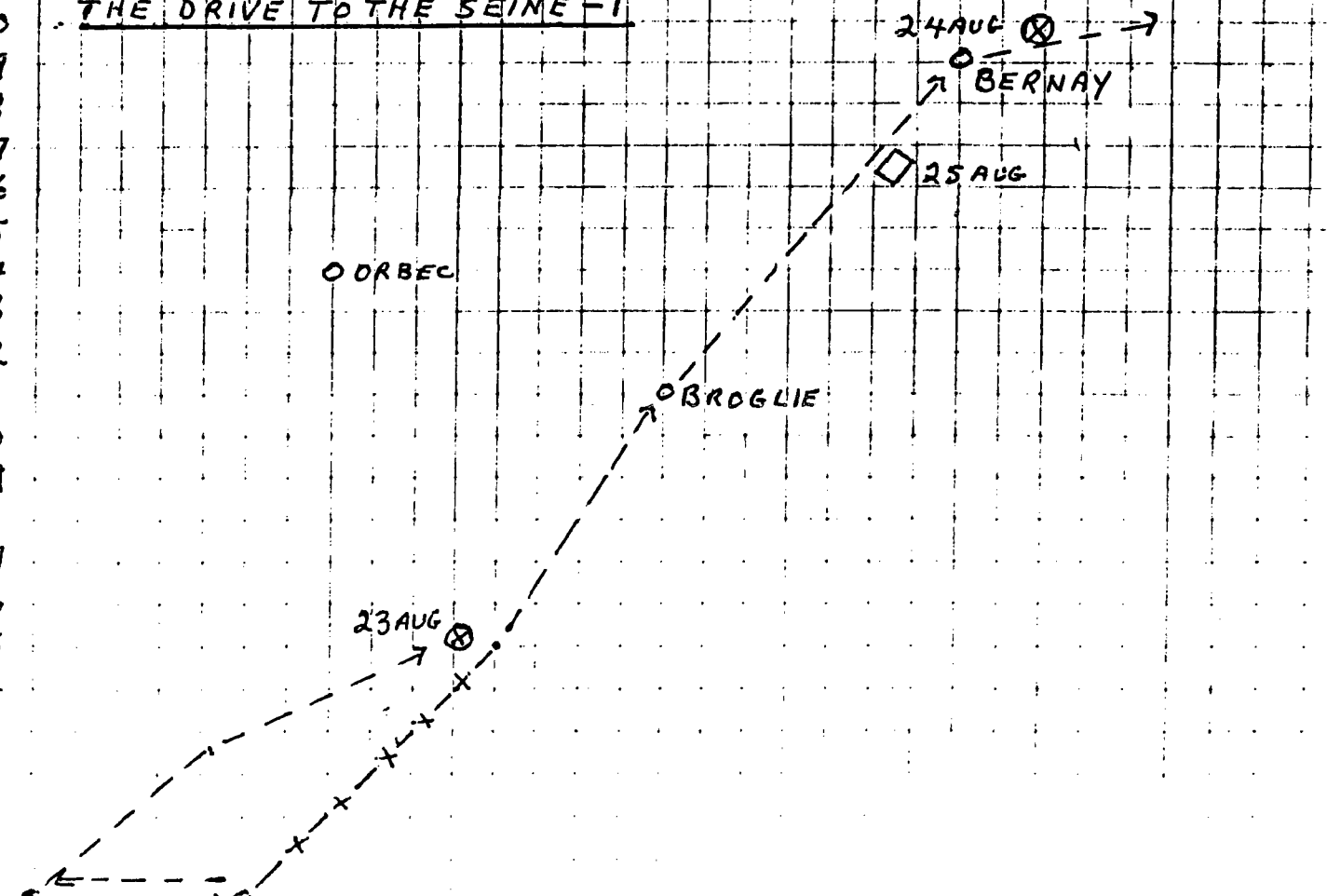
CLOSING THE GAP



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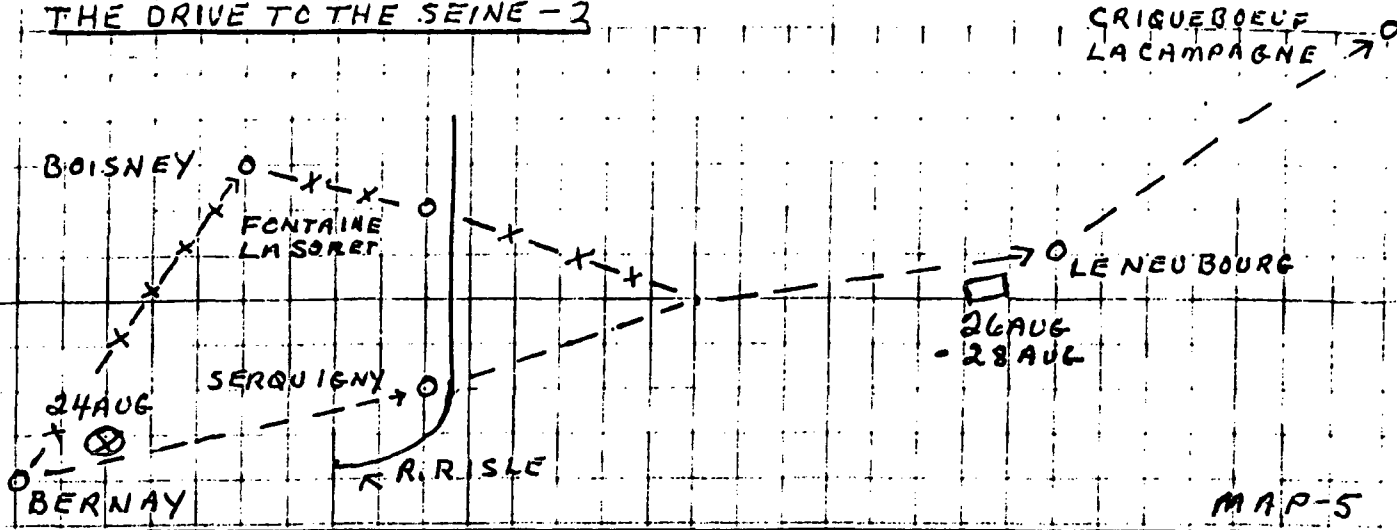
THE DRIVE TO THE SEINE - I



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THE DRIVE TO THE SEINE - 2

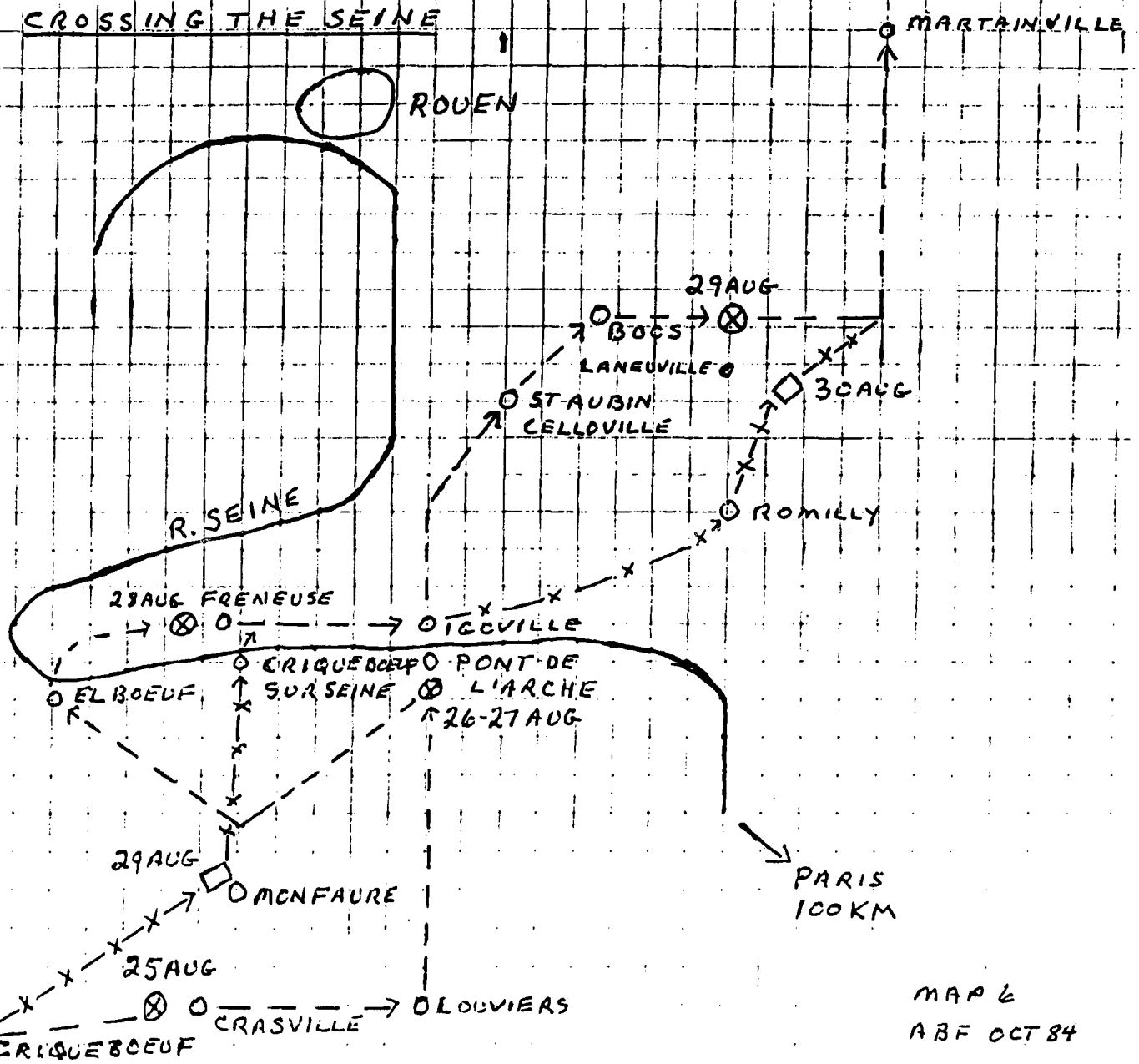


MAP-5

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CROSSING THE SEINE



MAP 6
ABF OCT 84

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PURSUIT TO THE SOMME - 1

CONTEVILLE

DIEPPE
45 KM

31 AUG

31 AUG
1 SEP

FORGES
LES EAUX

BUCHY

30 AUG

BLAINVILLE

SALMONVILLE

MARTAINVILLE

MAP 7

PURSUIT TO THE SOMME - 2

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1 SEP - N

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AMIENOIS

HORNOY

2 SEP
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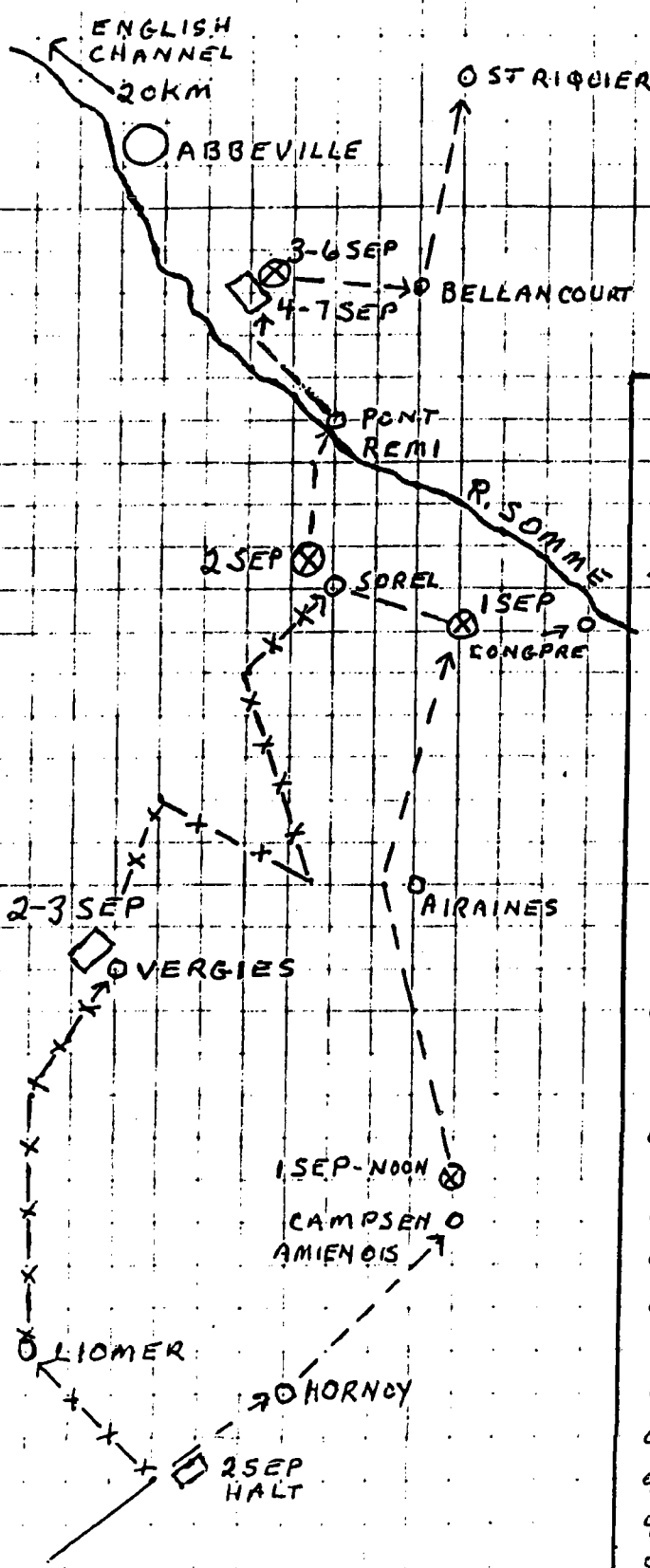
CONTEVILLE

MAP 8

ABF OCT 84

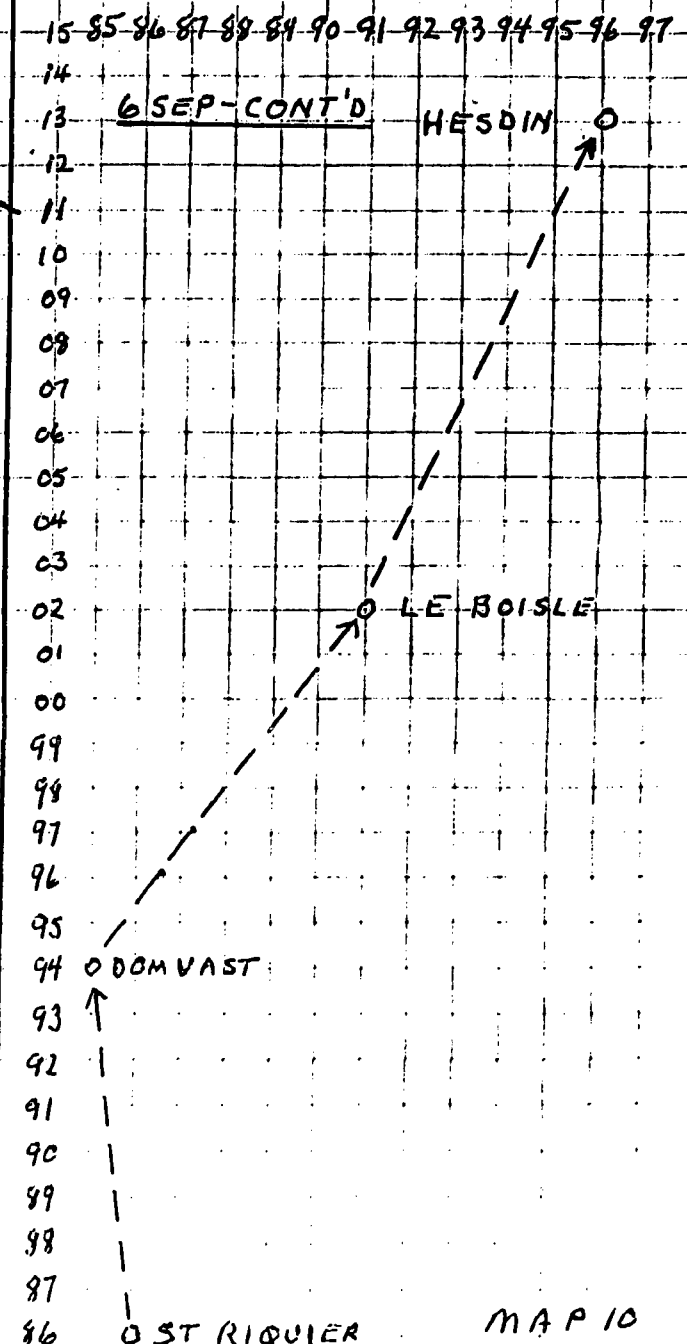
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CROSSING THE SOMME



MAP 9

ROAD TO BRUGES I



MAP 10

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CALAIS 35KM

ROAD TO BRUGES - 2

ST OMER

6 SEP - CONT'D

ROAD TO BRUGES - 3

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6 SEP - CONT'D

BERGUES

FAUQUEMBERGUES

SOEX

FRUGES

ZEGGERS
CARPEL

6 SEP
NOON

ST MENELIN

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MAP 11

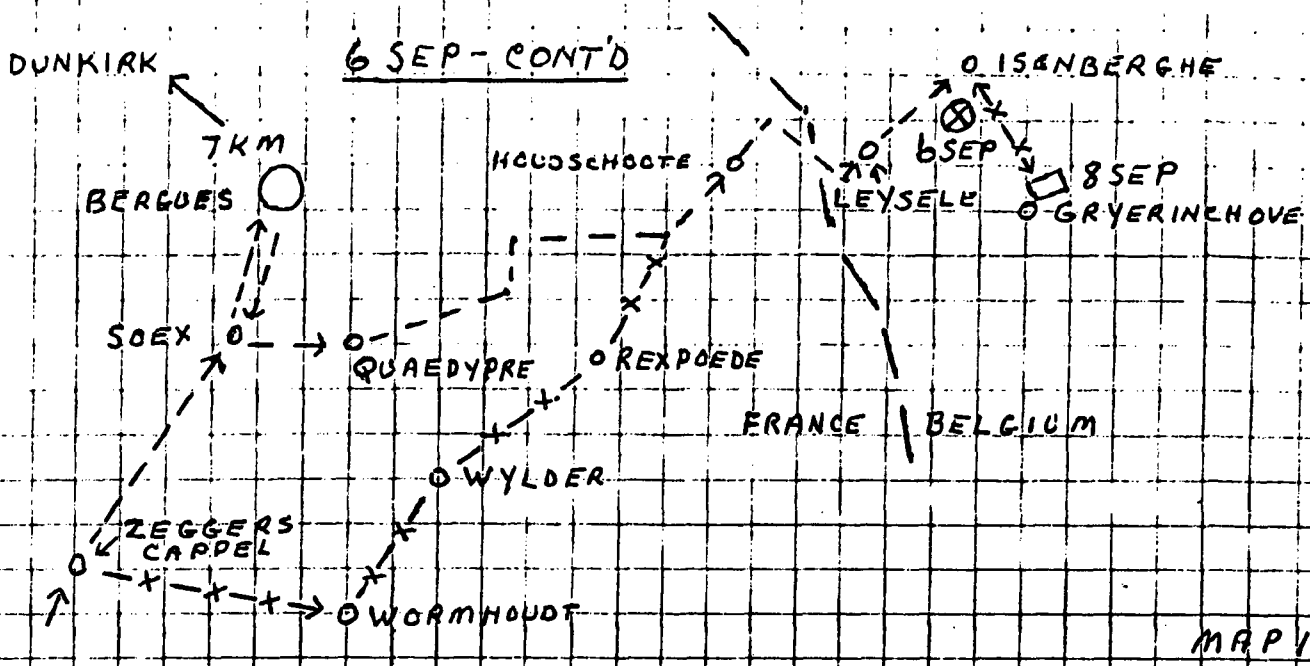
MAP 12

ABF OCT 84

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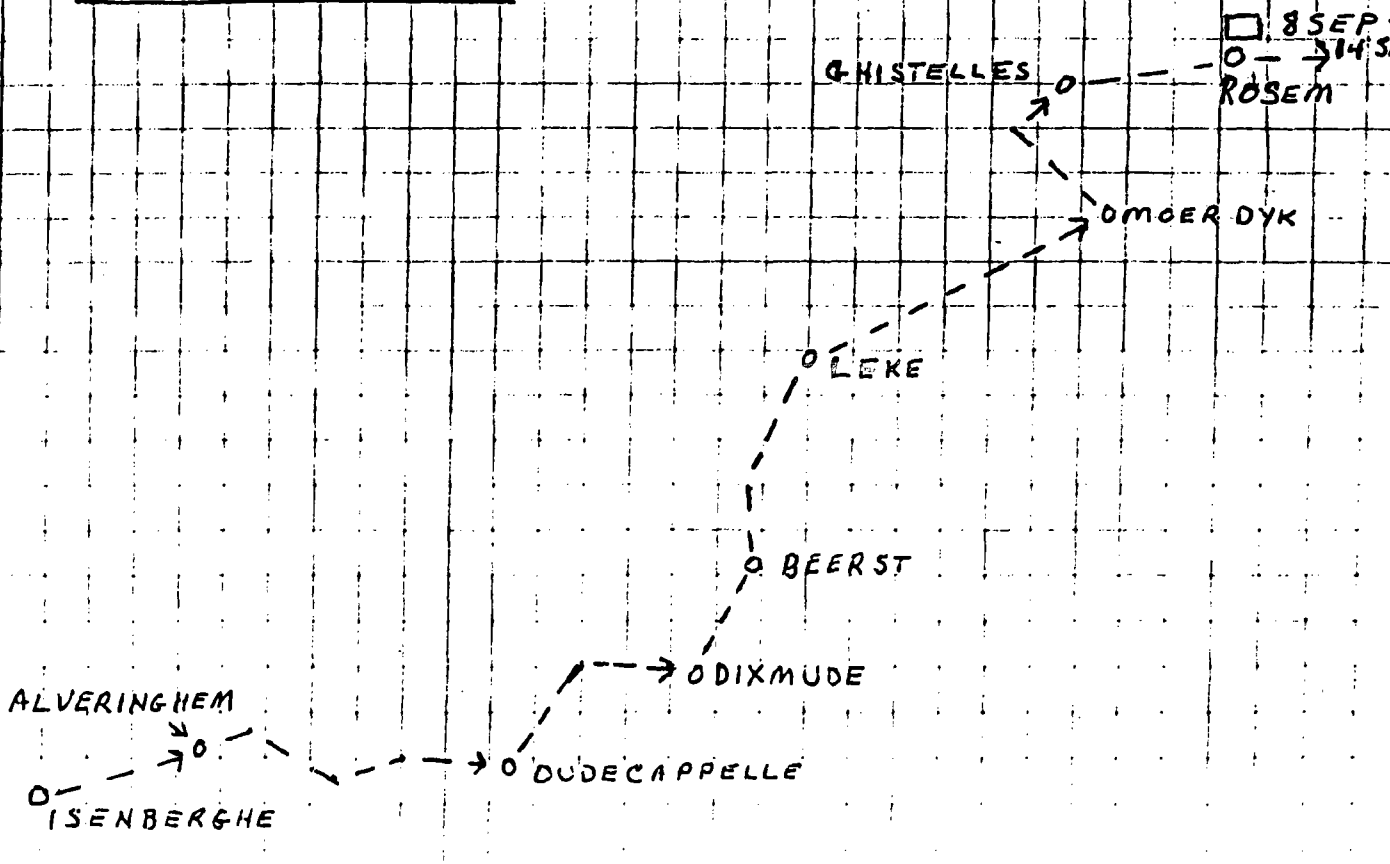
ROAD TO BRUGES - 4



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ROAD TO BRUGES - 5

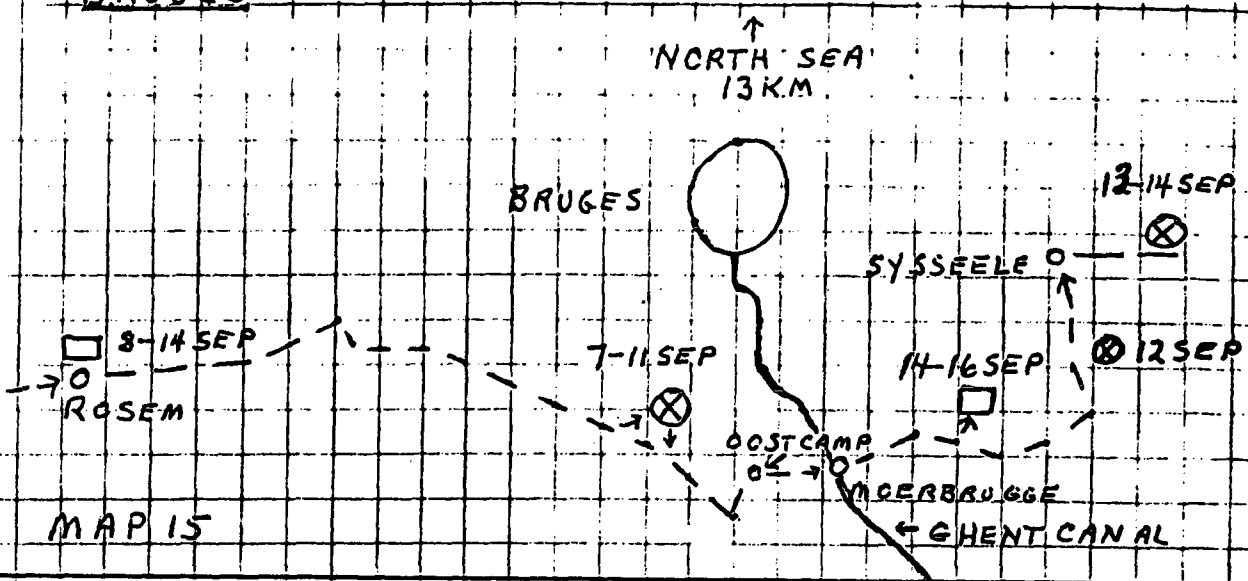


MAP-14
ABF OCT 84

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BRUGES

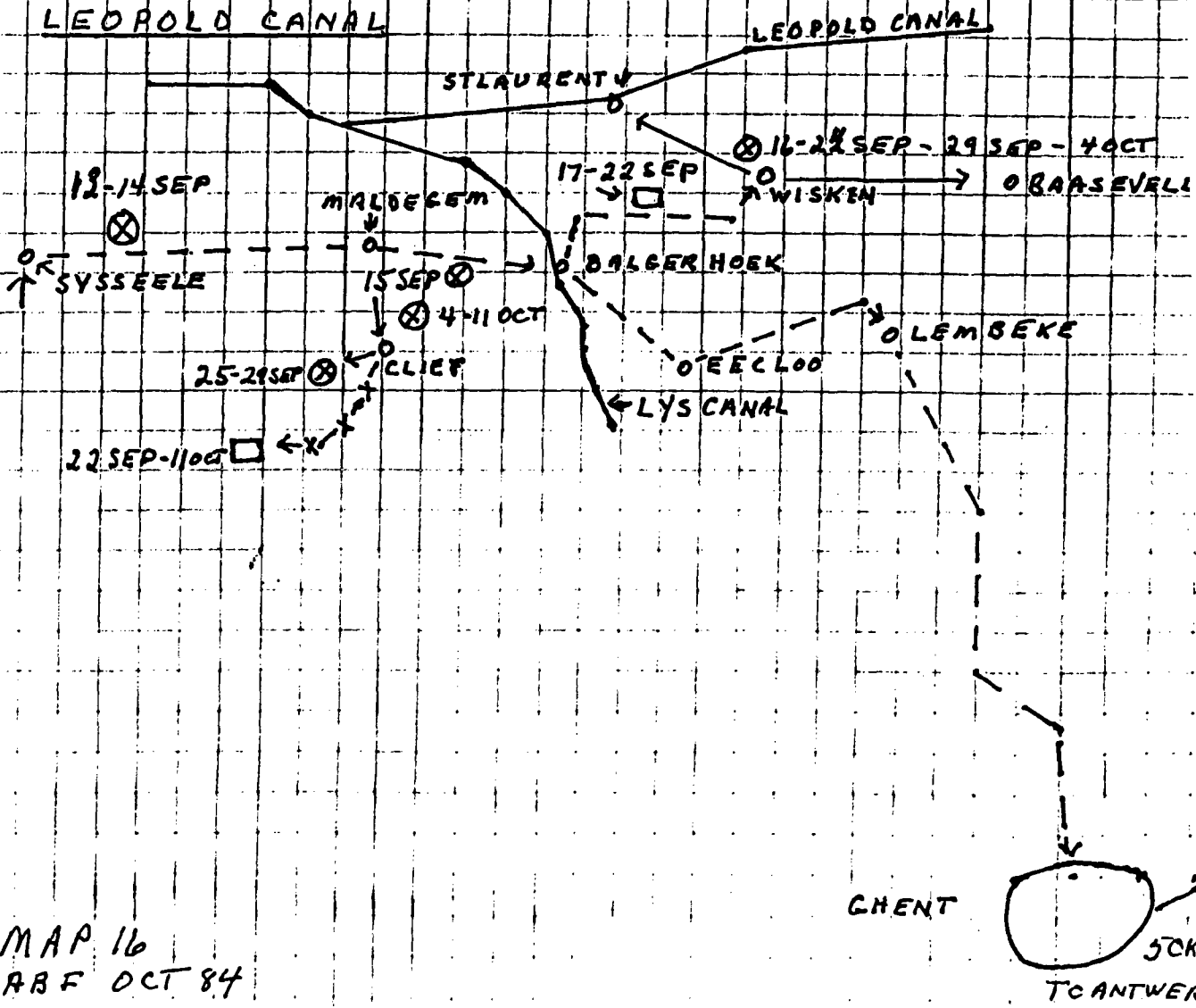


MAP 15

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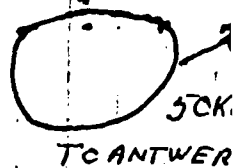
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LEOPOLD CANAL



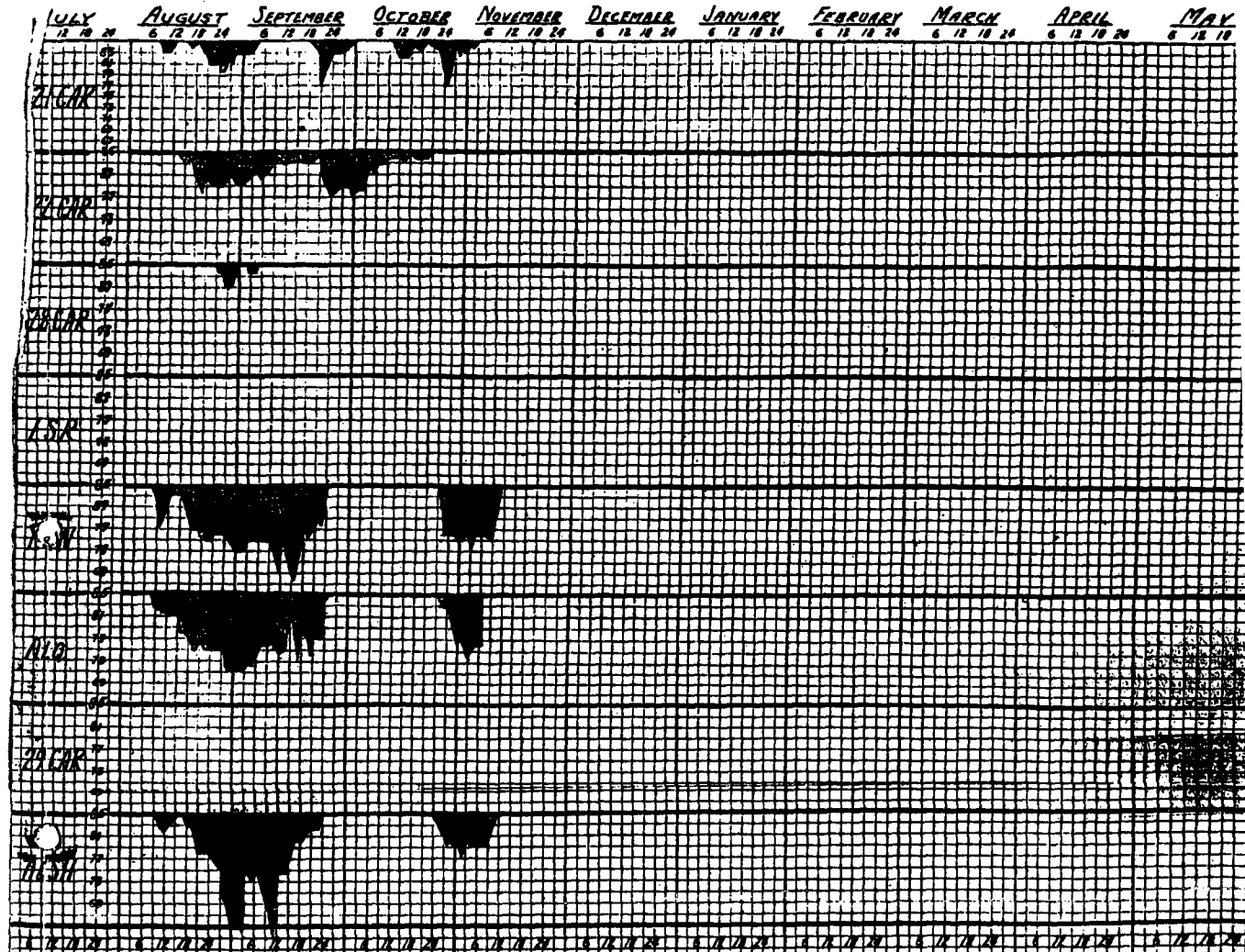
MAP 16
RBF OCT 84

GHENT



UNIT STR WHEN UNDER 85%

4 CDN ARMD DIV



It is to be noted that 90% of Battle casualties occur in the Rifle Coys and when a unit drops below 85% Rifle Coys are usually reduced to below 100. Added to this are the TCB battalions. A high proportion of which must be from the Rifle Coys, so that it normally happens that a unit showing 70% of strength will go into battle with Rifle Coys averaging 30 to 40 strong.

On August 1, 1944, the line of battle attached Steubenberg, the figure for strength showed the unit was at strength. Actual count of the Rifle Coys, by the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th.

OFFICIAL CORRECT

 Lt-Col John W. Proctor, OBE
 4th Cdn Armd Div

Appendix 16. 4 Cdn Armd Bde Casualties-Officers-August1944

4 Cdn Armd Bde						
	Est Str	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	
Brig	1	1	1	0	0	
LCol	0	0	0	0	0	
Maj	4	4	4	4	4	
Capt	8	8	7	5	5	
Lt	4	5	5	4	3	
total	17	18	17	13	12	
ORs	202	202	200	175		
10 of the original 17 officers were left on 26 Aug						
10 Cdn Inf Bde						
	Est Str	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	
Brig	1	1	1	1	1	
LCol	0	0	0	0	0	
Maj	2	2	2	2	2	
Capt	14	12	12	11	11	
Lt	2	2	3	2	2	
total	19	17	18	16	16	
ORs	59	59	58	57		
21 Cdn Armd Reg GGFG						
	Est Str	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	Original
LCol	1	1	1	0		0
Maj	5	5	3	2		2
Capt	11	11	10	8		9
Lt	20	19	17	13		8
total	37	36	31	23		19
ORs	657	649	622	558		
19 of the original 37 Officers were left on 19 Aug- 8 officers were reported killed and 11 wounded						
30 Ors were reported killed and 62 wounded						
22 Cdn Armd Reg CGG						
	Est Str	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	
LCol	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maj	5	5	5	5	4	3
Capt	11	11	10	11	10	8
Lt	20	20	14	13	16	11
total	37	37	30	30	31	23
ORs	657	642	571	536	521	
23 of the original 37 officers were left on 26 Aug						
28 Cdn Armd Reg BCR						
	Est Str	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	
LCol	1	1	1	1	1	0
Maj	5	5	5	3	3	2
Capt	11	11	11	10	10	4

Lt	20	19	21	16	13	10
total	37	36	38	30	27	16
ORs	657	656	622	593	554	
16 of the original 36 officers were left on 26 Aug						
29 Cdn Armd Reg SAR						
	Est Str	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	
LCol	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maj	5	5	5	4	5	4
Capt	11	12	11	12	10	7
Lt	20	20	20	21	13	11
total	37	38	37	38	29	23
ORs	657	648	650	639	589	

23 of the original 37 officers were left on 26 Aug

Average of 55% of original officers left
44% senior officers in 4 bde
left

Appendix 17. 4 Cdn Armd Div Strength Returns

CONSOLIDATED STRENGTH RETURNS AUGUST 1944							
HQ 4TH CDN ARMD BDE							
	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
BRIG	1		1	1	0	0	0
COL	0		0	0	0	0	0
LCOL	0		0	0	0	0	0
MAJ	4		4	4	4	4	
CAPT	8		8	7	5	5	
LT	4		5	5	4	3	
TOTAL	17		18	17	13	12	
Governor General Foot Guards							
RANK	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
LCOL	1		1	1	0		0
MAJ	5		3	2	1		1
A/MAJ			2	1	1		2
CAPT	11		11	11	9		8
A/CAPT			1				
LT	20		19	17	12		8
QM	1						
TOTAL	38		37	32	23		19
Canadian Grenadier Guards							
RANK	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
WO I	1		1	1	1		
WO II	7		7	7	7		
CSM	4		4	4	4		
SSGTS				0	0		
SGTS	43		39	35	34		
CPL	63		70	68	59		
PTE	539		528	507	453		
TOTAL	657		649	622	558		
Canadian Grenadier Guards							
RANK	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
LCOL	1		1	1	1	1	1
MAJ	5		5	5	5	3	3
A/MAJ	0		0	0	0	1	1
CAPT	11		12	10	11	10	8
A/CAPT	0		0	0	0	0	1
LT	20		20	14	13	16	11
QM	1		1	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	38		39	31	31	31	25
Canadian Grenadier Guards							
RANK	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
WO I	1		1	1	1	1	
WO II	7		6	7	7	7	

CONSOLIDATED STRENGTH RETURNS 10 CDN INF BDE							
10th Cdn Inf Bde HQ							
	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
BRIG	1		1	1	1	1	1
COL	0		0	0	0	0	
LCOL	0		0	0	0	0	
MAJ	2		2	2	2	2	
CAPT	14		12	12	11	11	
LT	2		2	3	2	2	
TOTAL	19		17	18	16	16	
Algonquin Regiment							
	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
LCOL	1		1				
MAJ	5		3				
A/MAJ	0		1				
CAPT	12		9				
A/CAPT	0		4				
LT	18		17				
QM	1		0				
TOTAL	37		35				
RANK	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	
WO I	1	1	1				
WO II	7	7	7				
CSM	6	6	6				
SSGTS	0	0	0				
SGTS	39	38	38				
CPL	73	74	70				
PTE	685	677	667				
TOTAL	811	803	789				
The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada							
	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
LCOL	1		1	1		1	1
MAJ	5		5	0		2	2
A/MAJ	0		0	0		2	0
CAPT	12		11	9		8	8
A/CAPT	0		1	1		3	1
LT	18		18	13		17	10
QM	1		0	0		1	0
TOTAL	37		36	24		34	22
RANK	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	
WO I	1		1	1		1	
WO II	7		7	6		6	

CSM	6		6	6		5	
SSGTS	0		0	0		0	
SGTS	40		39	36		38	
CPL	73		73	65		63	
PTE	685		645	563		495	
TOTAL	812		771	677		608	
Lincoln and Welland Regiment							
	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	ORIGINAL
LCOL	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
MAJ	5	5	4	4	2	3	3
A/MAJ	0	0	1	1	2	2	0
CAPT	12	10	9	10	9	9	9
A/CAPT	0	3	3	3	3	3	3
LT	18	17	15	17	13	19	12
QM	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
TOTAL	37	37	34	37	32	39	28
RANK	EST	29-Jul	5-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	
WO I	1	1	1	1	1	1	
WO II	7	7	7	7	6	6	
CSM	6	6	5	5	6	6	
SSGTS	0	0	0	0	0	0	
SGTS	39	40	38	41	37	38	
CPL	73	73	66	69	64	61	
PTE	685	683	625	624	510	491	
TOTAL	811	810	742	747	624	603	

SECRET
 4AD/2-0 PD 1
 Q Rear 4 Cdn Armd Div
 3 Aug 44

- Div HQ Sqn
- HQ 4 Cdn Armd Bde
- HQ 10 Cdn Inf Bde
- HQ Arty
- CRB
- CRASC
- ADMS
- APM
- DAAG
- 18 Cdn Armd C Regt
- 7 Cdn Recce Regt
- Div Sigs
- HQ Adm Gp

Fwd Del Sqn } for info
 A&Q

DAILY ADREP

1 All previous instrs concerning the daily Adrep are cancelled and will be destroyed. The following will be taken into effect immediately.

2 An adm sitrep to be known as "ADREP" will be submitted by the addressees daily as of 1600 hrs. It will be franked IMMEDIATE and will be forwarded by the quickest possible means to reach Q Rear 4 Cdn Armd Div BY 1900 HRS. Nil returns will be submitted.

3 The ADREP will take the form of a short sig message using the following headings. Addressees will only submit those portions as indicated in the right-hand coln. Fms will include all units under their comd (ie 10 Bde will include 18 Cdn Armd C Regt in their total figures).

		<u>Submitted By</u>	
A	_____ (Days rations held excl emergency chocolate ration)	"Q" Rear	CRASC(2nd line)
B	_____ (Miles POL held in 1st and 2nd line)	4 Bde 10 Bde HQ Arty	CRASC(2nd line)
C	_____ (Ann expenditures in total rds in 24 hrs previous to 1600 hrs)	4 Bde 10 Bde HQ Arty	CRASC(2nd line)
D	_____ (Ann. in total rds, held in excess of 1st and 2nd line holdings)	4 Bde 10 Bde HQ Arty	CRASC(2nd line)
E	_____ (PW Captured)		
	1 _____ (Offrs)	} APM	
	2 _____ (ORs)		
F	_____ (Fighting State of those units below 85% of WS Str)	4 Bde 10 Bde HQ RCA CRB	

SECRET
NOV 1950



NOV 1950

00Y-36

The secret of a deep 250 16/250
 300 @ 80 8680 90/7250
 110 1500 120 9000 160
 4000 240 3200 80 164000
 90/157000 120 3600 180 19800
 1/10 20520 360 f 0.15R 85 PERCENT
 5% of C and also on 82 percent
 line and would 75 percent @
 21500 710 30 1330
 14000 @ detail *

Appendix 19. ADREPs August 44

4 CDN ARMD DIV ADREPS AUGUST 1944

Day	time	Dys rations	miles POL	str of units below 85%	battle worthiness of veh tanks	Armd Cars	Scout cars	MED	CAS	OTHER
		A	B	F	G			H	J	K
1		5	190							
2		5	190		333	103	140		25	
3		5	190		331	102	140		126	
4		5	190		332	72	138		28	
5										
6		6	190		325	72	139		93	
7		6	190		326	72	139		6	
8		5	180		328	75	138		10	
9										
10	100245	5	165		247	78	97			
10	102105	5	150	BCR 71%	234	70	135	21	91	
11	112020	5	175	LSR 85% ASHOF C 82% ALG 82% LINC 72%	235	71	133		400	
12	122140	5	175	LSR 85% ASH82% ALG 82% LINC 75%	235	71	135			6 pdr & 17 Pdr sabot deficient &essential
13	132155	5	175	ASH83% ALG 83% LINC 83%	237	71	133		67	
14	2100	5	175	ASH83% ALG 83% LINC 83%	259	70	133		21	6 pdr & 17 Pdr sabot deficient &essential
15										
16	420	5	160			71	128		45	
16	2125	5	175		190	71	132			17 Pdr sabot deficient &essential

17	2140	5	175		206	68				17 Pdr sabot deficient & essential
31	1805	3	195		212		73			

The omitted columns are C –ammunition expended, D- Ammunition held, E- PWs

Strength Returns from August 44 ADREPs		
Date	Officers	OR s
1	829	14757
2	868	15516
3	867	15423
4	874	15461
5		
6	867	15277
7	868	15296
8	869	15383
9	849	14616
10	824	14248
11	678	15193
12	872	15118
13	871	15111
14	854	14973
15	849	14950
16	821	14489
17	768	13681
18	816	14518
19	768	13681
20	772	13855
21	771	13581
22	762	13507
23	782	13507
24	785	13538
25	785	13538
26	730	13448
27	730	13448
28	73	13483
29	807	13876
30	806	13876
31	806	14058

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