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ARMY HEADQUARTERS

10 Dec 49

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

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R E P O R T   N O . 31  
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1. This report deals with the activities of 1 Cdn Corps following its withdrawal into reserve at the conclusion of Operation "OLIVE", i.e., the period in reserve and the operations of Porterforce; then in December the winter offensive, when 1 Cdn Corps in nearly a month of hard fighting advanced from the 5 Corps' Montone bridge-head over numerous water barriers to the Senio; and finally the two months of static warfare on the winter line that preceded the withdrawal of the Canadians and their departure for North-West Europe. Non-Canadian troops under command 1 Cdn Corps during this period included 21 (Brit) Tk Bde, 2 (Brit) Armd Bde, 9 (Brit) Armd Bde, British components of Porterforce, and the Cremona Combat Group (Italian) (see Appendices "A"-1 and "A"-2).

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

EIGHTH ARMY PLANS FOR A WINTER OFFENSIVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* See Map "Florence - Rimini - Bologna Sector"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Allied Strategy, para 50)

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

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

9. Previous to the Army Commanders' conference Eighth Army began plans for the coming winter offensive. On 18 Nov H.Q. Eighth Army issued an operation instruction providing for the regrouping of the army at the end of the month. It was decided that the December offensive should be on a broad front of three corps with the Canadian Corps returning to the line again after being in reserve all the month of November. The Army plan forecast that 1 Cdn Corps would take over the right flank of the army from Porterforce, while 5 Corps would remain along the axis of Route 9 and 2 Pol Corps on the army left flank. (Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces op cit Section B, Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, pp. 80-1)

10. At this stage (18 Nov) Eighth Army front had moved forward to a position where the two important cities, Faenza and Ravenna, were almost within its grasp. Ravenna had not fallen because the forces needed to undertake operations against it could not be spared. Porterforce, however, was nearing the Fiumi Uniti directly south of the city, but the enemy had strengthened his position and the line in this area remained static during the remainder of the month. South-west of Ravenna this line followed the Ronco for a short distance and then hinged back toward the Montone near S. Pancrazio. From this point 5 Corps held the east bank of the Montone south-west to Route 9. Forli had been captured on 9 Nov and elements of the Corps were across the Montone south of the town. 5 Corps thus held the vital sector along Route 9 west of the Montone between Forli and Faenza. On the army left flank the Polish Corps held the line along the foothills of the Apennines between the Montone and the Lamone rivers (Ibid, pp. 72-4)

11. It was now apparent to the Eighth Army Commander that an attack by three corps on a broad front would have the advantage of a third natural axis of advance. Following the capture of Rimini two highways, 9 and 16, led to the north-west. The operations that took place during November brought Eighth Army to within striking distance of Russi (4333), through which a third route ran to the north-west to Bagnacavallo, Lugo, Massa Lombarda, and Budrio, the latter place being only a few miles north-east of Bologna. This new route would present few of the tactical and engineering difficulties likely to be encountered on Route 16. The going on either side of this third axis was difficult, being typical of the central belt of the Romagna where the major rivers are canalized between very high flood banks connected by a large number of canals, making it easy for the enemy to flood the intervening country if he chose. Against these disadvantages could be set the facts that the enemy was weak in this sector and that the leaves were now off the vines which had so greatly impeded our tanks in the early autumn; moreover a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Ibid, 11 Nov 44)

#### OPERATIONS OF PORTERFORCE, 28 OCT - 30 NOV 44

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

Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 2 Fd Regt R.C.A., 24 Fd Regt (S.P.) R.A., 5 Med Regt R.C.A., 151 A. Tk Bty R.A. and 12 Fd Coy R.C.E. ((H.S.) 224C1.013 (D.12); W.D., Porterforce, 26 Oct 44). The whole force was commanded by, and named after, Lt-Col A.M. Horsbrugh-Porter, D.S.O., Commanding Officer 27 L. Although for operations Porterforce came under direct command of Eighth Army, for purposes of administration it was under Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps (*ibid*: Appx 2, Porterforce Op Instr No. 1, 28 Oct 44). An operation instruction issued by Eighth Army on 27 Oct assigned to Porterforce the following tasks:

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Eighth Army, etc. p. 69)

\*\* A three-inch self-propelled gun.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(footnote continued on p. 16)

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

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

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

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

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

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\* (footnote continued from p. 15)

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

encountered in this type of work:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Ibid)

PREPARATIONS OF 1 CDN CORPS FOR THE DECEMBER OFFENSIVE

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

PLAN I - Assuming enemy hold line of R. MONTONE

(a) 1 Cdn Inf Div objectives -

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

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

(a) 1 Cdn Inf Div objectives -

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a) To increase the apparent strength of Eighth Army by disclosing the presence of 10 Corps with under command 46 Inf Div, 4 Inf Div and 9 Armd Bde in a forward concentration area behind 1 Cdn Corps.

(b) When it is decided in which direction 1 Cdn Corps is to attack from the area of MASSA LOMBARDA 2742, to disclose that 10 Corps will operate in the other direction.

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

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

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

48. Air support for the operation was to be on as large a scale as possible in view of the fact that 5 Corps and 2 Polcorps were to begin operations at the same time. No close support bombing was called for during the early stage of the operation due to the fact that the enemy had not to any great extent constructed "emplaced" positions along his present front. However, six tentacles were available to the Canadian Corps operation from 29 Nov. "Rover David" would be available in the Corps area, with R/T links to both Divisional and Corps Headquarters. To obtain maximum effect, "Cabrank" attacks would be requested for a time to coincide as near as possible with that of the ground attack. Individual towns would not be blitzed unless there was proof that the enemy was occupying them in strength. A list of targets including houses and churches (possible O.Ps.) was submitted to Army Headquarters, but only to be bombed if the enemy was known to be actually occupying them. Since it was appreciated that the enemy would do all his moving by night, especially in the area of Route 16, the Desert Air Force was asked to harass these roads from last until first light, by flare dropping, bombing and strafing ((H.S.) 224C1.096(D1): Air Plan for Operation "CHUCKLE", 28 Nov 44).

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

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

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

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