

Artillery of both these divisions was under strength. The enemy's tactics are also worthy of mention. His custom was to fight a stiff delaying action on each river line until our forces stopped to regroup, when he would break contact and withdraw to the next defendable line and await our attack. During the early evening of 1 Dec, 356 Inf Div, which had been resisting fiercely throughout the last week of November, once more adopted these tactics and disengaged on the front taken over that day by 1 Inf Div. ("CHUCKLE" Introduction, pp 9 - 10; C.I.G.S. Summary Italy, 30 Nov 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, November 1944: Appx 37, Int Summary No. 165, 29 Nov 44)

1 CDN INF DIV (3 CDN INF BDE) ADVANCE TO THE LAMONE,  
2 - 5 DEC 44

52. At the Teatro Dante in Riccione, on 25 Nov, Brigadier Smith, the acting G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div, held a conference of the officers of his divisional staff and of brigade groups down to and including company and squadron commanders and discussed his plan for the forthcoming operations. The divisional plan called for the operation to be carried out in four phases. (See Map 1). In Phase I, 3 Cdn Inf Bde would launch an attack designed to capture Russi and force a bridgehead over the Lamone River. The start line for this phase of the operations would be flexible and would depend on the line reached by 10 Ind Div in its current operation west of the Montone River. On the successful completion of the 3 Cdn Inf Bde task, 2 Cdn Inf Bde would advance to capture Bagnacavallo (3938) and establish a bridgehead over the Senio River. The third phase, assigned to 1 Cdn Inf Bde, called for the capture of Cotignola (3634) and Lugo (3338) and exploitation to the line of the Santerno River. In the final stage 3 Cdn Inf Bde would re-enter the battle, capture Massa Lombarda (2742) and push north-west to Medicina (1245). Each stage of the attack would be supported by the divisional artillery and 1 Cdn A.G.R.A. Air support would include rocket-firing Thunderbolts, new to 1 Cdn Inf Div. Enemy reaction to the attack was expected to follow the pattern previously set, i.e., a small battle at a river line, a period of no contact, another bump at the next river line and so on. It was expected that he would continue these tactics until he reached the salt pan lying between Argenta and Bologna, when he would probably regroup and strengthen his position. On the conduct of the battle Brigadier Smith stressed the following points:

There must be an alternative plan for every action of every unit and sub-unit.

Get patrols up to the next river obstacle immediately after a bridgehead has been formed.

Do not worry about flanks. We can and must forget flanks right down to company and battalion level.

Avoid house fighting. Bring fire down before we reach them.

((H.S.224C1.016(D5): Historical Officer's Notes on G.O.C's Conference (Brigadier Smith's) 25 Nov 44)



53. On 28 Nov 3 Cdn Inf Bde moved north from the rest area near Riccione to a concentration area between the Montone and the Ronco north of Forli. At this time the brigade group consisted, in addition to its three infantry battalions, of two batteries from 1 A. Tk Regt R.C.A., "C" Coy Sask L.I. (M.G.), 3 Heavy Mortar Bty Sask L.I., 4 Fd Coy R.C.E., 9 Lt Fd Amb R.C.A.M.C., and "C" Sqn, 12th Battalion Royal Tank Regiment, now equipped with a number of "Crocodiles" (Churchill tanks equipped with flamethrowing attachments). On the following day Brigade Headquarters received word that R.C.D. would be placed under command to provide flank protection on the left. As yet there were no bridges over the Montone in this sector except for a Class 2 pontoon bridge and two suspension foot bridges.

This meant that all traffic into the bridgehead had to go SOUTH through FORLI and then up the WEST side of the MONTONE where the one available road was narrow and rapidly becoming broken up with the volume of traffic using it and the bad weather conditions. Owing to the shallowness of the bridgehead, the area was also very crowded with troops, vehicles, tanks and guns. All transport was road bound due not only to the muddy condition of the fields, but also to the fact that the majority of the entrances to farmyards across the deep ditches which lined either side of the road had been destroyed by the enemy. These physical factors were to render more difficult the task of passing the brigade through the Indians.

((H.S.)23401.013(D10): 3 Cdn Inf Bde  
Operations in Italy, 2 Dec 44 to 6 Jan 45,  
Part I)

On 30 Nov while 10 Ind Div made a final effort to secure the bridging site at Casa Bettini, a short distance upstream at 427277 the engineers commenced the construction of a Class 40 Bailey\*. To allow time for the completion of these tasks, the move of 3 Cdn Inf Bde over the Montone, originally planned for the night 29/30 Nov was now set back to the morning of 1 Dec. (Ibid; Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces: Section C, 5 Corps Operations: Appx "B"-41))

54. At 2130 hours on the 30th, the Brigade Commander, Brigadier J.P.E. Bernatchez, called an "O" Group at his headquarters and gave out his plans for the take-over. At daylight the infantry would cross the river on the foot-bridge while the essential transport moved around via Forli. It was anticipated that the Bailey bridge at 427277 would be completed by 0800 hours, at which time the remaining transport would cross the Montone. The Brigade Group was to be enlarged still further by R.C.D. coming under command for left flank protection, and a British unit, K.D.G., coming in on the right. In addition it had now been

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\* Presumably the bridge referred to in the Three Brigade report as a Class 30 Bailey at 425274. The same source gives the time of completion of the bridge as 1000 hours 1 Dec.



decided to launch the initial 5 Cdn Armd Div attack from the Montone bridgehead, and for this purpose P.L.D.G. had been placed temporarily under command 3 Cdn Inf Bde. The Princess Louise would be the last unit to move into the bridgehead and would take up a position between West N.S.R. and the river. K.D.G., although under command 3 Cdn Inf Bde, would not pass into the bridgehead as that part of the 10 Ind Div sector which they were to take over lay east of the Montone. The 10 Ind Div supporting armour and anti-tank guns would remain in position until our tanks and anti-tank guns were able to cross the Bailey bridge. During the day (30 Nov) the Indian Division had pushed forward, and by the time the "O" Group was called had reached Casa Bettini. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde op cit; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Nov 44; W.D., 4 P.L.D.G., 29 Nov 44)

55. At first light on 1 Dec, the battalions commenced to move forward to the Montone. By 1000 hours the bridge over the river was ready and traffic at once began to pass over it. With one exception the change-over proceeded smoothly and at 1600 hours Brigadier Bernatchez took over command of the sector from 10 Ind Inf Bde\*. West N.S.R., however, did not complete its relief of the Indians until early evening because of enemy counter-attacks during the day against the latter. The last unit to cross the river, 4 P.L.D.G., was in position by 1730 hours. Thus on the eve of the attack the units comprising 3 Cdn Inf Bde were positioned as follows: on the right K.D.G. in widely scattered troop positions (463292-445285) faced up to the east bank of the Montone between the left-flanking positions of Westmr R. in the area south of Molinaccio and the P.L.D.G. assembly area across the river near Casa Bettini; in front of P.L.D.G. the two forward companies of West N.S.R. lay respectively 700 yards north and 1000 yards north-west of Casa Bettini (434296 and 426293); about 1000 yards to the south-west of the latter unit just forward of the Scolo via Cupa from 420288 to 415285 was R. 22e R.; R.C.D. was covering the left flank with two squadrons about 1100 yards north of Albereto on the Russi road and a third to the west of Albereto near the Scolo via Cupa. Carlt & York R. remained in reserve east of the Montone. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Dec 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div; W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Dec 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, December 1944: Appx 72, Sitrep 020145)

56. With the completion of the relief of 10 Ind Inf Bde on 1 Dec by 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Cdn Corps assumed command of the whole right flank of Eighth Army from exclusive Albereto to the coast. As laid down in a 1 Cdn Corps message on 30 Nov\*\* the boundary between 5 Corps and

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\* From right to left 1st King's Dragoon Guards relieved 2nd Battalion 10th Gurkha Rifles, the West Nova Scotia Regiment the 4th Battalion (Duke of Connaughts Own) 10th Baluch Regiment, The Royal 22e Regiment the 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry and the 1st Armoured Car Regiment (the Royal Canadian Dragoons) the 1st Battalion 2nd Punjab Regiment.

\*\* The exact boundary was as follows: all inclusive 5 Corps 586169, 542183, 485210, 471213, 456220, 444220, 422245, 440275, 420285, 405295, 377312, 356325, 335338, 330349, 317357, 305355, 265378,



1 Cdn Corps ran from the Montone a few hundred yards south of Casa Bettini in a west-north-west direction and over the Lamone River 500 yards downstream from Le Tombe (3829). Forward of the Lamone it ran north-west crossing the Canale Naviglio about 300 yards north of Granarolo (3532) and on to reach the Senio River nearly 3000 yards above Cotignola (3634) (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, November 1944: Appx 62, 1 Cdn Corps G.O. 218). At 0145 hours 2 Dec, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps signalled H.Q. Eighth Army the following as the Corps intentions:

5 Cdn Armd Div, 12 Cdn Inf Bde, are attacking to cut Highway 16 area 4942...1 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf Bde will capture Russi and secure crossings over River Lamone...H hour both divisions 020900 hours...Partisans - 3 ambush parties will operate east and north east of Ravenna.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, December 1944: Appx 136, G.O. 233)

The boundary between 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div for the first phase of the Corps attack followed the line of the Scolo Via Cupa (421291) as far as a point (461336) due south of Godo, then swung northwards, passing 1200 yards west of Godo (431377), to the Lamone River opposite Traversara (4237). In order to facilitate movement into the bridgehead the Corps boundary was moved temporarily approximately 2,000 yards to the south-west to include within the Canadian sector the bridge at 427277. (Ibid: Appx 3, 1 Cdn Corps G.O. 234)

57. At 2130 hours Brigadier Bernatchez held his Orders Group, and final details for the initial attack were prepared. H Hour was set for 0900 hours, 2 Dec. On 3 Cdn Inf Bde front West N.S.R. and R. 22e R. were ordered to advance north to the Lamone and establish a bridgehead over that river. West N.S.R. would advance to its first objective the Scolo via Cupa (4331) where it ran due south of Russi. From this position the battalion would by-pass Russi (on the battalion left), cross the railway and capture the crossroads on the Via di Pfangipane 600 yards farther north (at 448353). R. 22e R. was ordered to advance parallel to West N.S.R., by-pass Russi to the west, secure the line of the railway (area 4234) and advance west from there to the Lamone (area 4235). It was hoped that the "Van Doos" on reaching the river, might capture the railway bridge (416352) intact by getting in behind the enemy. Carlt & York R. in reserve, would be prepared for the Lamone River assault and was put on one hour's notice to move. At H Hour 4 P.L.D.G. and K.D.G. were to revert to command 5 Cdn Armd Div. The former unit was to take part in the armoured division's attack on the right flank. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., R. 22e R., December 1944: Appx 73, Battle Report on Operations from 31 Nov 44 to 10 Jan 45)

58. Artillery support was to consist of a series of concentrations on the immediate front with later targets on call. A number of specified air targets were on call from 0900 hours to be engaged by fighter bomber aircraft already circling the target area. Additional aircraft were to engage in bombing and strafing the immediate rear of the enemy lines for half an hour starting at H Hour. One troop of the North Irish Horse would support each battalion in the



initial phase and "C" Sqn 12 R.T.R. would be available in reserve. Flamethrowing "crocodiles" from the last-named squadron were on call, and each battalion was allotted anti-tank support. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde)

59. Both Canadian divisions went into the attack at 0900 hours 2 Dec. They met little opposition at the start, for, in conformity with his method of defensive fighting, the enemy had retired during the previous night to a position along the Scolo via Cupa. R. 22e R. was astride this canal at the beginning of the attack but soon encountered opposition along the network of roads and irrigation trenches on their front. On the right West N.S.R. got two platoons across the Scolo in the area of a blown bridge (432310) at 1345 hours, but because of a threatening enemy counter attack had to assume the defensive for several hours. At 1745 hours, however, this unit launched a two-company attack from its small bridgehead but meeting with very heavy opposition withdrew in a short time to the near bank of the canal. As night fell R. 22e R. to the west were also held up on the same general line, in spite of repeated company attacks. Thus, at the end of the first day's fighting the brigade had advanced less than 2,000 yards. (Ibid; W.D., R. 22e R., 2 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 2 Dec 44)

60. The Brigade Commander ordered both battalions to continue to press forward during the night. Shortly after 2100 hours information was received from Divisional Intelligence that the enemy on the left flank were preparing to withdraw to the Lamone. Just before midnight, opposition on that flank did slacken and both battalions prepared for a rapid advance during the remaining hours of darkness. Meanwhile on the left R.C.D. had moved strong patrols forward to cover the left flank of R. 22e R. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Dec 44; W.D., R.C.D., 2 Dec 44)

61. By midnight R. 22e R. advancing again and with two companies leading, by-passed the enemy's strongly prepared positions. By daylight one company had reached the line of the railway north of Russi (4333) where it waited for the remainder of the battalion to move up. The infiltration of the forward companies during the night made it possible for the rear companies and Carlt & York R. following up to capture a number of prisoners after daylight. During the remainder of the morning R. 22e R. firmed up their positions just short of the railway line in preparation for a final advance to the Lamone. Meanwhile West N.S.R. made another two-company attack across the Scolo via Cupa at 0215 hours (3 Dec). This time the Nova Scotians met little opposition and by daylight were on the outskirts of Russi and had taken the hamlet of Pezzolo. At 0700 hours one company advanced to Russi and found it free of the enemy. Immediately north of the town, however, the battalion was again held up by sniper and heavy mortar fire along the line of the railway. (Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., R. 22e R., 3 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 3 Dec 44)

62. Early on the morning of 3 Dec Brigadier Smith visited Brigadier Bernatchez's Headquarters and congratulated him on the achievements of his Brigade during the night. Both Commanders now hoped for a rapid advance to the Lamone and the establishment of a bridgehead on the other side. R. 22e R. was ordered to move forward and seize



the railway bridge and the road bridge (427365) a mile farther north. The battalion was urged to make every effort to capture these bridges intact and if possible to cross the river. Carlt & York R. would then pass through R. 22e R. and establish a firm bridgehead across the Lamone. By this time 12 R.T.R. had relieved N.I.H., and Carlt & York R. was in position close behind R. 22e R. West N.S.R. was ordered to continue its advance and cut the railway north of Russi in order to secure the right flank of the brigade. (Ibid)

63. The advance to the Lamone, however, was not to be an easy one. By 1000 hours it was obvious that the enemy intended to hold the line of the railway on both battalion fronts. West N.S.R. was again halted north of Russi while the R. 22e R. company, which had reached the railway during the night, was driven from its positions by heavy enemy fire. Brigade Headquarters now made arrangements for a fresh attack by the two battalions coordinated with an artillery fire plan to take place early in the afternoon. R. 22e R. were to secure the fork in the railway then swing left to the river between the two lines. On the right West N.S.R. would renew its efforts to get forward north of Russi while, in the rear, Carlt & York R. would have two companies standing by in readiness to pass through and exploit success. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Dec 44; W.D., R. 22e R., 3 Dec 44)

64. At 1400 hours R. 22e R. began its attack and quickly crossed the railway at 424341. The leading company then turned left towards the river in the triangle formed by the railway, but soon met stiff opposition and by the time it reached the centre of the triangle the enemy were attacking from all sides. Two companies, one on each flank, advanced to relieve the pressure on the forward company but without success. However, with the aid of artillery and mortar fire the battalion held its positions. On the right, West N.S.R. again was unable to get forward. The enemy were fighting hard to deny the Brigade the approaches of the Lamone. (W.D., R. 22e R., 3 Dec 44; W.D., West N.S.R., 3 Dec 44)

65. With his brigade stalemated several hundred yards from the river, Brigadier Bernatchez decided to use Carlt & York R. to complete the attack to the river line; for in the meantime on 5 Cdn Armd Div front 12 Inf Bde had reached and cut the railway east of Godo and were still advancing. With the enemy withdrawing on this flank a brigade night attack was set for 2130 hours. Carlt & York R. was ordered to advance through R. 22e R. and clear the river from the railway north to the road bridge (427365). West N.S.R. on the right flank was ordered to attack again across the railway and secure the area flanking Carlt & York R. advance. This night attack was to be supported by artillery concentrations laid down on the objectives prior to H Hour. On the brigade left R.C.D. was ordered to patrol forward as far as possible and to hold any ground it could acquire. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Dec 44)

66. By the time the attack started the whole battle area was covered with dense fog, but enemy opposition had lessened and the two battalions got off to a good start. Both Carlt & York R. and West N.S.R. prodded their way forward overcoming scattered resistance and capturing several prisoners. On the right West N.S.R. companies quickly



reached their objectives and consolidated their positions. At daylight Carlt & York R. with its right flank now protected continued to battle forward, coming under increasingly heavy enemy fire as it approached the river. Now however enemy posts east of the river were few in number, the main opposition coming from his positions on the far bank. Shortly after daybreak leading elements of the brigade reached both the railway and road bridges but found them demolished, with enemy M.Gs. on the far bank covering the approaches. During the remainder of the morning Carlt & York R. continued clearing the area between the two bridges and at the same time endeavoured to press northwards towards the inter-divisional boundary (see para 56). (W.D., West N.S.R., 3 and 4 Dec 44; W.D., Carlt & York R., 3 and 4 Dec 44)

THE REPULSE OF 1 CDN INF BDE AT THE LAMONE, 5 DEC 44

67. On the morning of 4 Dec the G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div ordered 1 Cdn Inf Bde to attack through the 3 Cdn Inf Bde positions and establish a bridgehead across the Lamone. Brigadier J.A. Calder, E.D., had already received advice of the possibility of this operation and had placed his units on short notice to move. The Brigade at this time was concentrated just west of the Montone in the vicinity of Casa Bettini. At 0900 hours Hast & P.E.R. and R.C.R. were moved forward to positions behind 3 Cdn Inf Bde while plans for the attack were being prepared. The Divisional Commander, anxious to get a foothold across the Lamone, ordered the assault to begin at 1250 hours along the river line between the road bridge and the railway bridge\*. Hast & P.E.R. were ordered to make the initial attack, and the remaining battalions of the brigade were moved forward in order to exploit success. An artillery programme was prepared to cover the crossing, and a Timothy Target arranged to cover the area through which the advance beyond the river would be made. Carlt & York R. would assist the crossing with supporting fire on the flanks. ((H.S.) 234Cl.013(D10): 1 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Operations, December 1944)

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\* I took several photos of the Lamone at the railway bridge (417353)...The railway travels on a high embankment-level with the dyke tops and 20 feet above level of surrounding country. This gives commanding view of river. The river flood banks are the highest yet encountered (going north-west). 25 foot dykes on land side, 40 foot on river side - some canes at river level - but mostly grassy banks. Footpath and bicycle track on top of dykes. From the dyke **tops** Bagnacavallo is visible between the trees. Fields still small, with 12 inch thick poplars supporting the vines in the bridgehead.

((H.S.)903.003(Dz): Italy - Topographical Notes by Lt-Col G.W.L. Nicholson, September - November, 1948, p.30)



68. At 1300 hours Hast & P.E.R. began moving forward from their start line, a ditch 150 yards east of the river, but when they were within a few yards of the Lamone they suddenly came under intense mortar and machine gun fire. The dyked river wall in this area was approximately 45 feet high and with the enemy apparently controlling this obstacle it seemed impossible for the battalion to advance further. However, with the support of our artillery one company attempted to climb the dyke, but was again held up by heavy fire. After this second attempt the C.O. of the battalion decided that it would be impossible without greater support to make the river crossing and accordingly ordered his men to withdraw. (Ibid; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 4 Dec 44)

69. Following the failure of the Hast & P.E.R.'s attack the Brigade Commander immediately called an "O" Group and laid plans for a fresh assault in the same area. He now intended to make a two-battalion attack, using Hast & P.E.R. on the right and R.C.R. on the left, during the hours of darkness. Behind the assault waves, the supporting engineers would be held in readiness to construct rafts and temporary bridges. H Hour was set for 0100 hours 5 Dec. Following the "O" Group both battalions began making their individual plans for the attack. Reconnaissance patrols went forward and with great difficulty climbed the dyke to gain information about the depth and width of the river. The R.C.R. patrol Commander was drowned in the icy water, when he attempted to swim the river, but his patrol got back with the information that the water was icy cold and running fast, with a depth of five feet and a width of 35. Meanwhile an artillery plan had been completed which included the fire support of four medium regiments in addition to that of the divisional field regiments. This plan called for a series of medium concentrations along the road on the far side of the river from H-10 until H Hour, with divisional field regiments on the same targets H-2 until H plus 10. At H plus 10 the divisional artillery would lift and until H plus 40 engage other pre-arranged targets, followed by targets on call. (Ibid; W.D., R.C.R., 4 Dec 44; ((H.S.) 234Cl.013(D10): Hast & P.E.R. Report on Operations, December 1944)

70. The R.C.R. plan called for an attack across the river just north of the railway bridge. Because of the depth of the river assault boats were to be used for the initial crossing. "D" Coy was to be in charge of the boats and to be responsible for passing the other three companies of the battalion over the river. "A" Coy on the battalion right was to cross and secure the road and track junction on the lateral road (417357) just north of the railway bridge while at the same time on its left "B" Coy would move over and take up a position just forward of the lateral road near the railway embankment (415356). "C" Coy would then pass through to take an objective on the track about 500 yards forward of "A" Coy. "D" Coy after their ferrying duties were completed would cross and reinforce the bridgehead. At H Hour both "A" and "B" Coys were ferried across by "D" Coy under cover of the barrage. On reaching the other side they moved forward without opposition and reached their objectives. One platoon of "B" Coy, however, which tried to cross on the partially demolished railway bridge, came under a terrific mortar concentration and was practically wiped out.



"C" Coy then crossed without incident but, becoming confused in the darkness, took up a position some distance beyond its true objective. By first light "D" Coy had passed four anti-tank guns and a jeep across on a Class II raft and was preparing to move into the bridgehead. (W.D., R.C.R., 4-5 Dec 44; Appx 17, Battle Narrative Royal Canadian Regiment)

71. Up to this point the R.C.R. operation seemed to be developing into a marked success. Daybreak, however, brought a heavy fog and indications of impending disaster. For, in the course of the night, the enemy had withdrawn from the line of the river and had taken up a position along the railway embankment on the left flank of R.C.R. Supported by self-propelled guns firing through breaches in the embankment and by machine guns lining the top, the enemy counter-attacked "B" Coy and soon overran the company headquarters, taking the Company Commander and other personnel prisoner and dispersing the platoons. Leaderless and reduced to less than 30 men, the survivors, many of them wounded, withdrew to the dyke. In the meantime "C" Coy 500 yards beyond was receiving worse treatment. Completely dominated by machine guns on the railway embankment and not yet dug in, the company prepared to make a stand in a large stone house. But S.P. gunfire brought the house down on the defenders' heads and dispersed those of the company who had not fallen to the enemy machine gun bullets. Close behind the S.P. gunfire infantry debouched from a blow in the embankment and overran the remainder of the company. Only some 12 men of "C" Coy managed to extricate themselves and fall back towards "A" Coy. By 1000 hours there were only the reduced numbers of "A" Coy remaining in the bridgehead. "D" Coy in the meantime attempted to move forward in support but was unable to do so as the enemy had anticipated this move and brought heavy fire to bear along the top of the dyke. Shortly afterwards "A" Coy effected a withdrawal to the near side of the river, abandoning the anti-tank guns which had been ferried across during the night. (Ibid; Galloway, Major Strome, E.D., "55 Axis" With the Royal Canadian Regiment 1939-1945, pp 176-79)

72. Meanwhile on the right flank of the brigade, where the crossing was planned to take place just south of the road bridge, Hast & P.E.R. met an early reverse which delayed their attack three hours. The two assaulting companies forming up under the near dyke came under our own medium concentration and due to the resultant casualties and disorganization were for the time unable to proceed. Battalion Headquarters at once ordered a fresh company forward and set back H Hour until 0400 hours. Using an Olafson bridge<sup>\*</sup> this company ("D" Coy) reached the far side of the river by 0500 hours, closely followed by "A" and "B" Coys. The three companies then moved off to the right toward their objective along the Via Albergoni. They were soon held up by the enemy, however, who began firing from

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\* For a brief description of "OLAFSON" bridge see para 23.



the houses along the river road. Then followed the counter-attack against R.C.R. on their left and with wireless communication cut off due to heavy interference the companies halted. At this time the battalion had no anti-tank guns across the river to meet the threat of enemy self-propelled guns and tank attack. Conflicting information passed from company to company but finally at 1100 hours all three withdrew to the east side of the river. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 5 Dec 44)

73. By midday both R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. were consolidated on the east bank of the Lamone. Both battalions had lost heavily, having suffered over 150 casualties between them in the short engagement.<sup>\*</sup> It was a serious setback to the 1 Cdn Inf Div plans. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Dec 44). Of the factors contributing to the failure of the venture the report of R.C.R. says:

The fact that the enemy had superiority in numbers in infantry, was supported by armour in his attack, had a covered approach to within a few hundred yards of our LEFT position by means of the railway embankment, enabled him to smash the bridgehead completely. On the other hand our infantry had very little support of any kind, also, due to the fog could not employ their PIAT's to the best advantage.

((H.S.)234C1.013(D10); R.C.R. Report on Operations, December 1944)

#### 5 CDN ARMD DIV ADVANCE TO THE LAMONE, 2-5 DEC 44

74. While the units of 1 Cdn Inf Div were carrying out their four-day operation (2-5 Dec) between the Montone and the Lamone, 5 Cdn Armd Div, assisted by the Partisans and with Porterforce under command, had accomplished a more spectacular operation on the right flank of 1 Cdn Corps. By nightfall on 5 Dec they had cleared the Lamone from the right boundary of 1 Cdn Inf Div as far north as Mezzano on Route 16, cut off and occupied Ravenna and pushed the retreating enemy back towards the water-soaked fringe of the Valli di Commacchio.

75. In the 1 Cdn Corps plan (see para 41), 5 Cdn Armd Div was given the task of cutting Route 16 north-west of Ravenna and capturing the city. The operation was to be carried out in five phases:

Phase I - Securing a bridgehead over the MONTONE R in the area S. PANCRAZIO - MOLINACCIO 4731.

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\* R.C.R. casualties on 5 Dec numbered 29 killed or died of wounds, 46 wounded and 31 prisoners of war while Hast & P.E.R.'s were 15 killed or died of wounds, 36 wounded and seven prisoners of war. In addition the latter unit had one killed and six wounded on 4 Dec. ((H.S.)133.065(D345); War Records (D.V.A.) Casualty Statistics for the Campaign in Italy, 3 Sep 43 to 8 May 45)



- Phase II - Capture of GODO (4635).
- Phase III - Capture of PIANGIPANE (4738)
- Phase IV - Curring of Highway 16 and securing of the bridge over the Canale GORETTI (4942) and the bridge over the R. LAMONE (4744).
- Phase V - Capture and clearing of Ravenna

((H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): History of Ops  
5 Cdn Armd Div - Capture of Ravenna)

12 Cdn Inf Bde, with "C" Sqn of 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.), two companies of Ir R.C. and 16 A.Tk Bty R.C.A. under command, was given the task of carrying out Phases 1 - 4. If this was accomplished without heavy fighting the Brigade would also clear Ravenna, otherwise 11 Cdn Inf Bde would undertake Phase V. 12 Bde's plan was co-ordinated with that of 1 Cdn Inf Div (see para 54). Simultaneously with 3 Inf Bde, 12 Inf Bde was to attack from the bridgehead along the north bank of the Montone toward S. Pancrazio. \* The Brigade start line was situated in the la Miseria area, with H Hour set at 0900 hours on 2 Dec 44. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 1 Dec 44)

76. The original plan for the first phase of this operation was to launch a night assault crossing on a two-battalion front opposite S. Pancrazio with that town as first objective and Godo as the second. Later the plan was changed and it was decided to secure the bridgehead east of S. Pancrazio at Molinaccio by an advance from the 10 Ind Div bridgehead to the south to be co-ordinated with the 3 Cdn Inf Bde attack. This flanking drive along the west bank of the Montone would dispense with the need for an assault crossing of the river. ((H.S.) 244C5.013(D4): Report on Operations of 12 Cdn Inf Bde, 1-6 Dec 44)

77. On 1 Dec 12 Cdn Inf Bde received from Porterforce, Westmr R. and G.G.H.G. (W.D., H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx 3, 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 1 Dec 44). This resulted in the Brigade's taking over the sector of the front between the Ronco at Longana and the Montone immediately west of S. Pancrazio. On this same date 4 P.L.D.G. was placed temporarily under command 3 Cdn Inf Bde for the purpose of co-ordinating its move into the assembly area in the Montone bridgehead. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, December 1944: Appx 49, 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 1 Dec 44). Prior to the attack Lan & Ren Scot R. and "C" Sqn B.C.D. moved into concentration areas near the Montone about 2 miles south of Casa Bettini. Placed in direct support of 12 Cdn Inf Bde were 11 Fd Regt

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\* Country north towards S. Pancrazio (seen from 432285) small fields of grain divided by well treed vines, elms and poplars 20 ft apart in rows. From the road on top of the west dyke one looks across these fields to the scattered houses of La Miseria. The dyke tops are the only points of vantage in this otherwise featureless terrain.

(Italy - Topographical Notes, op cit, p. 29)



R.C.A., 1 Med Regt R.C.A. and 10 Fd Sqn R.C.E. During the night 1/2 Dec G.G.H.G. extended its frontage to the left when it relieved "B" Coy Westmr R. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report op cit)

78. 12 Cdn Inf Bde attack towards San Pancrazio and Godo was to start (2 Dec) one hour after 3 Cdn Inf Bde opened its offensive towards Russi. At H Hour G.G.H.G. would revert to command H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div and 4 P.L.D.G. to command 12 Cdn Inf Bde. As originally planned the 5 Cdn Armd Div attack was to have been launched from the line of the road running south-east from Pezzolo to the Montone, about 3000 yards beyond Casa Bettini, on a 1000 yard front. Due to the failure of the Indian Division to gain all its objectives, however, the divisional plan had to be altered somewhat, and the attack mounted on a much narrower frontage about 2000 yards farther south.\* The amended plan was for P.L.D.G. to commence the attack at 0900 hours on a one company front and as they progressed, and the 5 Cdn Armd Div area west of the Montone widened, to broaden out on a two-company front until they reached the area of the original start line. At this point Lan & Ren Scot R. was to come in on the right of 4 P.L.D.G. and secure S. Pancrazio while P.L.D.G. headed north-east for Godo. As soon as the west bank of the Montone in the Molinaccio area was cleared by Lan & Ren Scot R., bridging operations were to start there and Westmr R. (Mot) was to cross in assault boats and push across country with all possible speed towards Piangipane (4738). Finally the two companies of Ir R.C. under command were to cross the Montone and form a firm base around S. Pancrazio. As soon as a Class 9 bridge just south of Molinaccio (at 471308) was completed, supporting arms would be moved up to join the attacking battalions. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log 2 Dec 44)

79. At 0215 hours 2 Dec, 12 Cdn Inf Bde received 5 Cdn Armd Div G.O. No. 9 which read as follows:

Intentions. Cut Highway 16 area 4942. 12 Cdn Inf. Bde to attack. Centre line S. Pancrazio 467320, Godo 4635, X-roads 497422. Objectives (1) S. PANCRAZIO 467320 (2) Area road junction 477325 - GODO - PIANGIPANE 4738 - Highway 16. inclusive bridges 499421 and 475441. H Hour 020900A.

(12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log op cit, 2 Dec 44)

80. On 2 Dec the enemy had four battalions of an average strength of 250 each facing 12 Cdn Inf Bde. The western enemy battalion belonged to 356 Inf Div and held the Montone as far east as the Pezzolo road which was the approximate boundary between 356 Inf Div and 114 Jaeger Div.\*\* The remaining three battalions belonged to 114 Jaeger Div, which, with seven battalions, was responsible for the whole front from that road to the sea - a distance of about 12 miles.

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\* The final start line lay on a track running from 433294 to R. Montone at 435290, a front of about 600 yards.

\*\*The road originally intended for the divisional start line (see para 78).



As supporting arms the enemy had an estimated 24 field guns of 10.5-cm or 15-cm calibre plus five Italian self-propelled assault guns, six self-propelled 8.8-cm anti-tank guns, and several Panther tanks. Already the enemy had taken preparatory steps in anticipation of a possible forced withdrawal from the Ravenna area. Demolitions had been prepared and he had evacuated certain of his base installations. But in spite of this and the fact that his right flank was already insecure due to our advances beyond the Montone farther south, he made it abundantly clear that he would not give up Ravenna without a fight. He continued to maintain outposts and to patrol aggressively south of the Montone against G.G.H.G. and Westminsters, while his artillery and mortars, directed from good observation posts behind his forward defences on the north bank of the Montone, greatly restricted Canadian movement south of the river in this area. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

81. Like 1 Cdn Inf Div's area, the ground over which 12 Cdn Inf Bde operated between 1-6 Dec was bounded to the south-east and north-west by two main waterways, the Montone and Lamone. Here the rivers average 30 feet in width and are bordered by embankments 25 feet high. Between, and running parallel to them are several smaller canals and drainage ditches of which the Scolo Via Cupa was the largest. These are narrow and shallow without embankments and did not form serious obstacles. The many second class roads cross numerous water courses which afforded the enemy opportunities for demolitions. The ground is flat and soft, with few trees. Cover, therefore, existed only in buildings, drainage ditches and embankments. (Ibid)

82. The night 1/2 Dec found 4 P.L.D.G. disposed in 3 Cdn Inf Bde area with two companies forward between Casa Bettini and the start line and the remainder of the battalion about 1000 yards farther upstream.\* (Ibid; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 1 Dec 44). At 0900 hours the leading P.L.D.G. company moved into action, immediately coming under heavy machine gun fire, as did a second company which commenced edging forward shortly after the attack started. (W.D., 4 P.L.D.G., 2 Dec 44). By 1030 hours advanced elements reached the Pezzolo road where they encountered some enemy opposition. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 2 Dec 44). Shortly after as the front broadened out, P.L.D.G. began to advance with two companies up. As the afternoon wore on, despite persistent enemy machine gun fire, they gradually strengthened their positions astride the Pezzolo road. During this time no assistance was forthcoming from the tanks, which were held up completely by mines and craters in the road. Enemy resistance increased, especially on the right flank where he made a strong effort to maintain his hold on the river and by 1715 hours the unit had made no further gains. In the eight hours since the commencement of the attack P.L.D.G. had advanced about 2500 yards. (Ibid; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Dec 44; W.D., 4 P.L.D.G., 2 Dec 44).

83. Meanwhile at 1200 hours Ian & Ren Scot R. crossed the Montone over 1 Cdn Inf Div's bridge and by 1620 hours was concentrated in rear of P.L.D.G. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Dec 44). In the afternoon the Brigade

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\* Companies at 433288, 428286, 433273 and 422270.



Commander, Brigadier J.S.H. Lind, D.S.O., visited the forward area to gain a first hand impression of the situation and before leaving made plans for an attack to start at 1800 hours. Lan & Ren Scot R. were now moved up on the P.L.D.G. right flank and the two battalions were put in readiness for a push forward - P.L.D.G. north to Godo and Lan & Ren Scot R. north-east to S. Pancrazio. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Dec 44)

84. In the meantime a subsidiary attack mounted by Westmr R. against the German left flank on the Montone had achieved a fair measure of success. Early in the morning H.Q. 12 Cdn Inf Bde, with the intention of diverting some of the enemy strength from the area of the main attack, ordered Westmr R. to cross the Montone opposite S. Pancrazio. At 1000 hours, under cover of a heavy fog which hung over the river flats throughout the morning, elements of one company commenced to infiltrate to the opposite bank.\* Initially the passage of the river was made in assault boats manned by drivers and batmen. Later, however, a number of these boats were fastened together to form a bridge. As recorded in the following passage from their War Diary the Westminsters encountered comparatively light opposition.

Enemy snipers were active during the early stages of the crossing and mortaring continued all day. Some casualties were inflicted on "C" and "A" Coys, chiefly by mortar and shell fire. A number of enemy were killed and 21 prisoners taken. The N.C.O. who was responsible for the defence of the sector said that our attack had been quite unexpected and before they could muster their defence they were beaten.

(W.D., Westmr R., 2 Dec 44)

Stiffer opposition developed in the vicinity of S. Pancrazio, but despite this the Westminsters made good progress and by 1855 hours had one company in the built-up area at the western end of the village with a second closing in farther to the right. During the night (2/3 Dec) the engineers erected a Class 9 F.B.E. (at 471308) about 600 yards above the road at Molinaccio. This was ready for use at 0930 hours 3 Dec and the unit transport and battalion headquarters were moved across the river. Ir R.C. took over the areas south of the Montone vacated by Westmr R. (Mot). (Ibid, 3 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log 3 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Dec 44).

85. The 4 P.L.D.G. and Lan & Ren Scot R. attack started at 1800 hours and by midnight the two units were about 2000 yards south-west of San Pancrazio. At this time Westmr R. was closing in on that village from two sides. At 0525 hours Lan & Ren Scot R. contacted the left flank of Westmr R. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 2-3 Dec 44). On the brigade left, at this time, P.L.D.G. was within 500 yards of the Russi - San Pancrazio road. At 0800 hours elements of both Lan & Ren Scot R. and Westmr R. were in San

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\* The crossing was made at 470308 (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 2 Dec 44).



Pancrazio, the first-named unit continuing through the village north towards Godo. Opposition during the morning proved light and shortly after midday leading elements of the Scottish Regiment reached the line of the Scolo via Cupa, which was found to be a small drainage canal with dykes only five feet high. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

86. During the early afternoon Brigadier Lind visited all units in the brigade and issued orders for the next stage of the attack. Lan & Ren Scot R. was to advance along the axis of the San Pancrazio - Godo road with Godo as its objective. 4 P.L.D.G. was to move across country around the right flank of the Lanarks and cut the Ravenna - Godo road about 1000 yards east of Godo. For the time being Westmr R. would be in reserve, but the unit would eventually pass through 4 P.L.D.G. to capture Piangipane. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

87. P.L.D.G. had its two forward companies at the Scolo via Cupa a few hundred yards west of the Godo road by 1445 hours. Shortly after these passed over the canal and turned east to cross the smaller Scolo Pisinello just above its confluence with the via Cupa. By 1545 hours P.L.D.G. was 1000 yards beyond the line of the Pisinello. Under only light mortar and machine gun fire the leading company now made a rapid cross-country march and by 1605 hours had cut the main road to Ravenna just east of Godo (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3 Dec 44). By 1730 hours all four squadrons were across this road and astride the railway where they consolidated awaiting further orders. Meanwhile Lan & Ren Scot R. had not made quite as rapid progress as its sister unit and, at 1545 hours, was still south of the Scolo via Cupa held up by mortar and machine gun fire. By 1730 hours, however, all companies of the Lanarks had finally crossed the canal while the lead sub-units were about 1200 yards south of Godo. During the following two hours the Lanarks brought the remainder of the battalion forward to the vicinity of Godo and firmed up with two companies in the eastern built-up sector and two just south of the railway. (Ibid; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 3 Dec 44). It had been a most successful afternoon for 12 Cdn Inf Bde.

...for the speed and suddenness of our advance had carried it through the enemy's delaying line EAST of R.LAMONE (which was in fact the line of the railway running through GODO). RAVENNA itself became badly outflanked and the enemy manning the R. MONTONE EAST of SAN PANCRAZIO and SOUTH of the GODO - RAVENNA railway line was faced with the choice of a very hasty and disorganized withdrawal, or the near certainty of being completely cut off. Later events proved that he chose the former course.

(12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

88. With a view to increasing the threat to enemy troops in the Ravenna area and of facilitating the drive north of Westmr R. to Piangipane, Brigadier Lind at 1830 hours ordered P.L.D.G. to seize a position astride the Piangipane - Russi road north of Godo and be prepared to exploit to Piangipane. Unfortunately P.L.D.Gs. were unable to complete this task that night (3/4 Dec), most of which they spent in company with Lan & Ren Scot R. in mopping up Godo and consolidating the brigade holdings north and east



of this town, in the course of this activity having several light skirmishes with the enemy. (Ibid)

89. During the afternoon the Westminsters remained in the S. Pancrazio area, and at 1600 hours moved off directly across country towards Piangipane. They were heavily loaded, for they faced a seven-mile move totally on foot with little prospect of transport being able to follow immediately. In spite of a thick fog and the absence of landmarks they made good progress, and by 1930 hours had crossed the Scolo via Cupa and reached a point only a few yards short of the road via del Godo. There they halted long enough to check their position and report it to Brigade Headquarters. Due to difficulties with the wireless this proved to be their last contact with brigade until 0600 hours the next morning (4 Dec). Another 3000-yard march over the flat, muddy ground brought them at 2330 hours to the Ravenna - Godo road, a mile east of Godo. From there two companies continued forward along the secondary road leading north to Piangipane. Battalion Tactical Headquarters and the balance of the unit remained behind in a house near the road junction. There shortly before midnight a sentry reported vehicles coming down the main road from the direction of Ravenna.

All lights were extinguished and everyone looked "to his arms". Major F. Shawcross was at the window counting them and reported 15 vehicles of all types accompanied by infantry on foot. The column passed by but some movement near the door drew the attention of three officers who were bringing up the rear. One of these came toward the house calling in German. The C.O. who was in the doorway to meet him, eased the bolt of his .30 carbine forward and pulled the trigger, but the weapon failed to fire. The officer grappled with the C.O., but several shots from other weapons quickly stopped him and he fell dead onto the floor. When this firing broke out the column of vehicles made off down the road towards GODO. The house was evacuated by TAC HQ who took up a position in the CANALETTA DEL GODO which ran north and south immediately behind the house. It was now about 2400 hours. At about 0010 the vehicles came back in our direction stopped a short distance down the road and shot the area up with 7.5 cm guns and M.Gs., causing several casualties. When they started to come past the house the first, a half-track got by, but the following five were all knocked out. Two of the vehicles (SEMOVENTE 7.5 cm Assault Guns...) continued to fire their machine guns, but no further casualties were caused. Otherwise the vehicles had been very effectively knocked out by the PIAT men of "B" and Sp Coys... then commenced "mopping up" operations, the final score being 10 killed, four wounded and 23 prisoners... Two tanks were knocked out and three half-tracked recce vehicles were taken. Three of our men were killed and four wounded.

(W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 3 Dec 44)

Meanwhile the two leading companies, on hearing the sound of fighting behind them, had halted and taken up a firm



position in some houses about a half-mile to the north. On contacting Battalion Headquarters they received orders to remain where they were until morning when they were to resume the advance to Piangipane. (Ibid; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 3-4 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log, 3-4 Dec 44).

90. During the day Ir R.C., given the task of guarding the right flank and picqueting the area between S. Pancrazio and Godo to intercept enemy troops attempting to escape to the west from the positions south of Ravenna, moved over the Montone into the area vacated by the Westminsterers. Early on 4 Dec the Engineers opened the San Pancrazio - Godo road and much urgently required unit transport, two squadrons of tanks, and a battery of anti-tank guns, proceeded to Godo. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

91. The morning of 4 Dec found Lan & Ren Scot R. in full control of Godo and the northern and western approaches to it. Just east of the town 4 P.L.D.G. was still in position astride the road connecting Godo and Ravenna, while to the North-east Westmr R. was advancing towards Piangipane. The whole of 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.) was now under command of the brigade, with two squadrons in Godo and another in support of Westmr R. Brigade now ordered P.L.D.G. to move east along the road to Ravenna, consolidate in and around S. Michele (4936), and patrol towards Ravenna. After meeting some enemy resistance the battalion consolidated at S. Michele. At this place the unit received information from partisan sources that the enemy had cleared out of Ravenna during the night 3/4 Dec and that 27 L. were advancing from the south into that city against little opposition. 4 P.L.D.G. therefore sent two of its squadrons and a squadron of B.C.D. tanks to enter Ravenna from the north-west and link up with 27 L. P.L.D.Gs. advanced rapidly along the road meeting with no opposition until they were within a few hundred yards of the railway crossing on Route 16 when they encountered a Panther tank. This was quickly dealt with by the guns of the B.C.D. squadron and the advance continued. Shortly after the infantry and their supporting armour parted company when a blown bridge over the Scolo via Cupa barred the way forward to the latter. P.L.D.G. continued into Ravenna on foot and at 1700 hours linked up with 27 L. in Garibaldi Square. The senior squadron commander 4 P.L.D.G., Maj D.J. Burke, was appointed Garrison Commandant, and the two squadrons of this unit, after securing the town, moved into its outer edges in order to avoid needless casualties from the many mines and booby traps the enemy had left in his withdrawal. Earlier that afternoon the Westminsterers supported by tanks of B.C.D. entered and cleared Piangipane. The enemy ensconced in houses along the approach road and backed by mortar and S.P. fire had put up a stiff fight. In the fighting, one enemy S.P. was destroyed and another captured while one tank belonging to B.C.D. was knocked out. (Ibid; W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 4 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 4 Dec 44; 12 Cdn Inf Bde Operations Log 4 Dec 44)

92. With the fall of Ravenna and with the right flank of 12 Cdn Inf Bde clear, apart from small enemy pockets and groups of stragglers, 5 Cdn Armd Div was able to concentrate its attention on the Lamone between Route 16 and 1 Cdn Inf Div boundary, particularly on the bridge over this river at Mezzano (4743). By 1600 hours 4 Dec, 12 Cdn Inf Bde



had consolidated on a triangle formed by Godo, Piangipane and S. Michele: Lan & Ren Scot R. were in the Godo area, Westmr R. at Piangipane with advanced elements at Borgo Fusara, a hamlet a mile to the north of Piangipane, where they were in contact with the enemy while 4 P.L.D.G. was at S. Michele with two sub-units in Ravenna. A squadron of B.C.D. was with each of the battalions in their respective areas. At this stage 11 Cdn Inf Bde passed through Westmr R. with Perth R. on the right headed towards Osteria (4942) on Route 16 and Ir R.C. on the left directed on Mezzano. The inter-brigade boundary between 11 and 12 Cdn Inf Bdes ran from just north of Piangipane along the Via Maccalone to the cross roads at 474398 thence along the Via della Canala to opposite Borgo Villanova (443406) on the Lamone River. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

93. This left 12 Cdn Inf Bde with a front of over 3000 yards facing the Lamone between 11 Cdn Inf Bde on the right and 1 Cdn Inf Div on the left. The brigade task now was to mop up this area to the west bank of the river. Little difficulty was experienced in this final stage of the operations which was carried out by Westmr R. on the right and Lan & Ren Scot R. on the left. In the rear of the brigade sector 4 P.L.D.G. and 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt assisted by groups of local partisans cleared out enemy remnants which had been by-passed in the advance. By 6 Dec Brigadier Lind had one company of Westmr R., right, and two of Lan & Ren Scot R., left, along the lateral road east of the Lamone in the sector opposite Borgo di Villanova and Traversara. The remaining elements of these units and P.L.D.G. were still in the Piangipane - Godo - San Michele area. Thus disposed the brigade was able to rest one unit and portions of two others\* (Ibid)

94. On 5 and 6 Dec 12 Cdn Inf Bde had a quiet time, with only light shelling and mortaring. There were no more enemy troops east of the Lamone in its area and normal patrol activity along the near bank was all that was necessary. In four days (2 - 5 Dec) the brigade had fought its way from the Montone to the Lamone over ground that was difficult and in weather that was for the most part very inclement. The Brigade Report shows 160 prisoners and a large amount of enemy equipment captured against own casualties of slightly over 100.\*\* (Ibid)

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\* Brigade Headquarters was at 469357; 4 P.L.D.G. Headquarters 493365 and companies at 476358, 517382, 495368; Westmr R. (Mot) Headquarters 474378 and companies at 449394, 481387; Lan & Ren Scot R. Headquarters 478363 and companies at 435382, 448387, 446377, 454365. (12 Cdn Inf Bde Report)

\*\* The following figures reveal an interesting similarity between the casualties suffered by the infantry units of 12 Cdn Inf Bde and those of 3 Cdn Inf Bde during the three days 2-4 Dec.

	12 Cdn Inf Bde	3 Cdn Inf Bde
Killed or		
Died of Wounds	23	28
Wounded	83	76
Prisoner	1	-
Total	107	104

(Casualty Statistics - Italian Campaign op cit)



95. Meanwhile on 3 Dec 11 Cdn Inf Bde had commenced to move forward from its reserve position in Cervia. The plan was for 11 Cdn Inf Bde to concentrate in rear of Westmr R. and when that unit had secured Piangipane to pass through on a two battalion front, on the right Perth R., directed along the Via di Piangipane to Route 16, and Ir R.C. on the left, headed north towards the town of Mezzano on the Lamone River. Shortly after midday on the 4th the Brigade Commander, Brigadier I.S. Johnston, issued his orders to his unit commanders and at 1730 hours his two leading battalions began to pass through the Westminsters. One troop of tanks of 9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.) was placed with each of the advancing battalions. (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 4 Dec 44). On the Brigade left Ir R.C. advanced against machine gun and mortar fire along the route Via Maccalone, Via Mantraversa and Via delle Ammonite to Mezzano. The bridge at Villanova (4541) was blown on their approach as was the bridge at Mezzano. By first light on 5 Dec the regiment was firm in the area of Mezzano and facing up to the Lamone on a 2,000 yard front south of the town. Meanwhile Perth R., encountering only moderate resistance along Via di Piangipane, made similarly good progress and at 0100 hours, 5 Dec, reached Osteria on Route 16. At 0500 hours 5 Dec the unit reported all companies established in the area of Osteria and the road back to Piangipane open to traffic. (5 Cdn Armd Div Report, op cit; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 5 Dec 44). During the same morning C.B. Highrs advanced and took up positions on the lateral road Via Delle Ammonite between Ir R.C. and the inter-brigade boundary (see para 92). (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, December 1944: Appx 8, Report on Operations 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 2-27 Dec 44; W.D., C.B. Highrs, 5 Dec 44). In these positions 11 Cdn Inf Bde spent the balance of 5 and 6 Dec patrolling, improving its positions and, in so far as possible, resting in preparation for the impending attack over the Lamone River.

#### THE FALL OF RAVENNA, 4 DEC 44

96. Although on 1 Dec Ravenna had not yet been captured it was being closely threatened. Less than three miles to the south, Porterforce was engaged in mopping up the last enemy remnants south of the Fiumi Uniti. Between the Ronco and Montone rivers, south-west of the city, 5 Cdn Armd Div was making final preparations to launch 12 Cdn Inf Bde into an attack designed to cut Route No. 16 to the north-west and enter and clear Ravenna itself. On this date Porterforce, now operating under direct command of 5 Cdn Armd Div, was disposed with P.P.A. on the right near the coast, 2721 Sqn R.A.F. Regt and 27 L. in the centre astride Route 16 about a mile south of the Fiumi Uniti, while elements of 27 L. covered the near bank of the Ronco River to the left boundary. Across the river, near the village of Longana, lay the now right flanking unit of 12 Cdn Inf Bde, G.G.H.G.\* (W.D. Porterforce, 29 Nov 44; (H.S.) 224Cl.013 (D16): 1 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 1 Dec 44) (See Map 7.)

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\* Three units had passed from under command Porterforce that morning (1 Dec); K.D.G. to 1 Cdn Inf Div, Westmr R. and G.G.H.G. to 12 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., Porterforce, 1 Dec 44; (H.S.) 224Cl.015 (D2): 1 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 1 Dec 44)



97. Between 1 and 3 Dec Porterforce continued to patrol actively over the mile or so of country lying between its forward positions and the Fiumi Uniti. During the late afternoon of 1 Dec a squadron of 27 L. had a sharp fire fight with enemy troops in houses (533317) along the east bank of the Ronco some distance downstream from Longana. Subsequently the enemy shelled the Lancers and succeeded in hitting an armoured car and killing the squadron leader. In addition he shelled and mortared the sugar factory throughout the day. On the following day (2 Dec) a combined P.P.A. - partisans patrol to the mouth of the Fiumi Uniti flushed an enemy outpost (at 661344) killing two and taking 12 P.W. The enemy made his last effort in this area on 3 Dec when his patrols appeared near the mouth of the Uniti and east of the Ronco near its junction with the Canale del Molino. In both cases he suffered losses in wounded and P.W. (Porterforce, op cit, 1 to 3 Dec 44). There was little change in Porterforce positions during these first few days of the month. (1 Cdn Corps Sitreps, 30 Nov - 3 Dec 44)

98. The intention of Porterforce for 4 Dec was to seize the junction of the Uniti and Ronco, commence an enveloping movement with P.P.A. from the mouth of the former river and at the same time demonstrate in the centre up Route No. 16. That night (3/4 Dec), however, personnel of Porterforce heard heavy explosions from the direction of Ravenna, and early in the morning 27 L. received a report from partisan sources that the Germans had evacuated the city at 0700 hours. By 1100 hours Porterforce patrols across the Fiumi Uniti had reached the Scolo Lama on Route 67 without sighting the enemy. Shortly after 27 L. began crossing the Uniti near Route 16 in assault boats, while other 27 L. elements and P.P.A. commenced moving up both banks of the Uniti from its mouth. Meanwhile the patrols had continued their advance into Ravenna and at 1500 hours arrived in Garibaldi Square, where they received a good welcome from the populace. There at around 1700 hours they were joined by the two squadrons of P.L.D.G., whose march to the city was mentioned earlier (para 91). By this time the main body of Porterforce was in the city. As a result of the efforts of the partisans after the German withdrawal, the regular forces found the city quiet and orderly. (Porterforce, 3 and 4 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 4 Dec; (H.S.) 22401.013 (D14); 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No. 42, 4 Dec 44). On the other hand the enemy left Ravenna well mined and booby-trapped, roads blocked with felled trees, and in addition had demolished every bridge leading into the city.

99. The fall of Ravenna, one of the oldest towns in Italy and the capital of Romagna province,\* to forces

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\* Ravenna was originally a lagoon-city and a seaport, like Venice, and is now connected with the sea by a canal six miles long. It was enlarged by Augustus as a harbour for the Adriatic fleet. The prosperity of Ravenna began in 402, when the Imperial court, converted to Christianity, transferred its seat from Milan to this safer lagoon-city. During the stormy times of the barbarian migrations, under Honorius there was great building activity at Ravenna, and the art of mosaic decoration was zealously practised.

(Baedeker's Italy - from the Alps to Naples, pp 137-8)



under command 1 Cdn Corps drew considerable attention. General H.D.G. Crerar, G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, sent a personal message of congratulations:

Desire you convey all ranks 1 Cdn Corps the interest, support and congratulations of all ranks First Cdn Army on results of 1 Cdn Corps recent operations vicinity of Ravenna. Keep it up. Drive on and finish him off.

(W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps,  
17 Dec 44)

As a provincial capital, the city was important politically and was expected to present many unusual security problems. In view of this a special security force, known as "Basforce", took over Ravenna from P.L.D.G. and Porterforce early on 5 Dec. Basforce consisted of two field security sections, one port security section, two field security reserve detachments, C.L. and P.W.B. representatives, a guard force of 20 O.Rs from 522 Italian Guard Battalion, and 90 Carabinieri. In command was Capt Basil Foreman, G.S.O. 3 I(b), of 1 Cdn Corps. (Ibid, 5 Dec 44 and Appx 70, Basforce Security Operations in Ravenna, 16 Dec 44)

100. One of the first tasks of Basforce was to organize the local partisans to man check points and assist in the movement of supplies. Until late on 6 Dec, when the bridges on Route 16 to the north and over the Uniti to the south were completed, all supplies had to be ferried into the city. For this purpose the local partisans, although "short on discipline and long on exercise of their own judgment" provided "willing porters for rations which had to be ferried in to the tune of about two tons" (Basforce Operations op cit). With the arrival of the partisan leader, Major Bulow, and Major D.M. Healy of 1 Cdn Corps on 6 Dec the discipline and usefulness of the partisans greatly increased. On the following day Major Bulow addressed a parade of all partisans as a result of which the "irregulars" turned in their arms or left them at home thereafter. In the meantime Navy representatives had examined the port facilities and found that the Allied bombing and the German demolitions had rendered them practically useless. It was not until 9 Dec that an A.M.G. Refugee Centre was in operation, and as a result the Basforce Collection Centre, set up for the interrogation and sorting of persons stopped at control points, found itself with a large number of civilian refugees on its hands and no feeding facilities. The civilians of Ravenna were generally friendly and helpful to Basforce, while the early arrival of provost personnel guarded against looting and misbehaviour by the troops, and in the first week only one complaint was lodged by a civilian. By 10 Dec when Basforce was dissolved about 60 political prisoners had been dealt with, half of whom would have to be released for lack of evidence. (Ibid)

101. In the days immediately following its arrival in Ravenna Porterforce patrolled widely to the north and north-west. The enemy had destroyed the bridges over the waterways north of the city but by 6 Dec a pontoon bridge for jeeps was in place across the multiple canal system (at 575420) on the road that runs north into the marshlands. During 7 Dec P.P.A. patrols pushed along this road to within two miles of the village of Mandriole (5852) on the Canale di Bonifica. They found that although the enemy had not



mined the road he had demolished two of its bridges. The last fighting within the city took place on 5 Dec when P.L.D.G. and Porterforce in a joint action liquidated an enemy force in a fort. (1 Cdn Corps Operations Log, 5-7 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Corps Ops Summary No. 43, 5 Dec 44; W.D., Porterforce, 5-7 Dec 44)

102. On 7 Dec, the conduct of operations over the whole of the area between Route 16 and the sea became the responsibility of H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde and at 1400 hours Porterforce passed to under command that Headquarters. On the same day Lt-Col Horsbrugh-Porter lost 2721 Sqn R.A.F. Regt to under command Lt.S.H. Although Porterforce now consisted of only 27 L. and P.P.A., it continued to exist as a separate force until 10 Dec and to play an important part in the protection of the extensive and thinly-held right sector of 1 Cdn Corps. (W.D. Porterforce, 7 Dec 44; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 7 Dec 44, 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 7-8 Dec 44)

OPERATIONS OF GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HORSE GUARDS,  
1-5 DEC 44

103. Meanwhile on 1 Dec, 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), with the task of covering the divisional right flank between 12 Cdn Inf Bde and Porterforce, relieved Westmr R. in the sector between Longana on the Ronco and Molinaccio on the Montone. As will be remembered (para 38) "C" Sqn G.G.H.G. had held the Longana position since 25 Nov. It now extended to the left along La Canala<sup>\*</sup> as far as the Via Pugliese while at the same time a second squadron established troop positions covering the north bank of the canal as far as the road running south-east from Molinaccio. (1 Cdn Corps Operations Log, 1 Dec 44; 1 Cdn Corps Sitrep, 1 Dec 44; Regimental History 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), Chapter VIII Winter Offensive, November 26 - December 28 (ms))(See Map 7)

104. Between 1 and 3 Dec the Horse Guards, although employed in a dismounted and static role, maintained close contact with enemy positions immediately north of them on the near bank of the Montone River. During the night 1/2 Dec enemy guns and mortars were active and on the following morning he showed signs of activity in the vicinity of an advanced G.G.H.G. post located near the Montone about 1,000 yards east of Molinaccio. Eventually he made two attempts to knock out this position:

They were repulsed on both occasions, but continued to fire rifle grenades until engaged with a Piat, when they withdrew behind the bank. They effected their retreat under the cover of two cows and despite the fact that the troop brought all their fire to bear on this exploit they managed to reach the bank. One of the cows was killed, but unfortunately none of the Germans.

(Ibid)

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\* A small irrigation canal which in this area parallels the Scolo Lama 100-200 yards to the north.



That night enemy patrols were very aggressive and their line-cutting activities compelled G.G.H.G. to revert to the use of wireless. The enemy continued to hold to his positions south of the Montone until the night 3/4 Dec when he withdrew across the river between Molinaccio and San Marco (5232). (Ibid; 5 Cdn Armd Div Report)

105. During the night 3/4 Dec the Divisional Commander ordered G.G.H.G. to despatch a mounted squadron to sweep the area behind the enemy troops still holding the north bank of the river in the armoured regiment's sector. On the following morning the engineers completed a Class 40 floating Bailey bridge near Molinaccio and G.G.H.G. despatched a mounted squadron over the Montone to carry out this task. The tanks moved through San Pancrazio and along the road to Godo until they reached the cross-roads south-east of that town when they turned back towards the Montone along the Via del Godo. Enemy demolitions brought the squadron to a halt, however, just north of the Scolo via Cupa. Nevertheless a patrol proceeded from there on foot to San Marco where it contacted enemy troops in some strength. (5 Cdn Armd Div Report; G.G.H.G. History op cit; W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 4 Dec 44; 5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 4 Dec 44)

106. It was by this time apparent that these were the only enemy troops still remaining in the G.G.H.G. sector. Accordingly, the regiment, with the exception of "A" Squadron, pulled out and moved north to a new position in the vicinity of Godo. (5 Cdn Armd Div Operations Log, 5 Dec 44). A heavy fog had now settled over the land and under cover of this, "A" Sqn made repeated attempts to cross the Montone and enter the village of S. Marco.

They were able to reach the opposite bank without particular difficulty, but the Germans commanded the top of the dyke with machine guns and prevented all efforts to climb it. At 0600 hours, they eventually managed to cross, six hundred yards south-west of the town, wheeling around to the north, to cut off the German retreat. They then pushed south and after a house to house check, discovered to their embarrassment that the enemy had slipped through their hands. We later learned that they had fallen easy prey to the P.L.D.Gs. and the B.C.D., two thousand yards to the north, being forty-eight all ranks, including an officer.

(G.G.H.G. History)

On the following day (6 Dec) the regiment was placed under command 5 Cdn Armd Bde. (W.D., 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.), 4 - 6 Dec 44)

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\* 5 Cdn Armd Div Report states: "These German troops were subsequently captured by B.C.D. and Perth R. on the 5th of Dec in the area of Osteria 4942 and turned out to be from 13 Coy III/741 JR".



OPERATIONS OF THE PARTISANS NORTH OF RAVENNA,  
23 NOV - 9 DEC 44

107. As previously mentioned, on 20 Nov, Major Bulow, leader of the partisans operating between Ravenna and the Valli di Comacchio, visited Headquarters 1 Cdn Corps at Cervia (see para 49). The purpose of this visit was to co-ordinate the partisan operations with the main actions of the regular forces. At an evening conference, the Corps Commander informed Major Bulow of the Corps intentions and in return requested him to harry the enemy and if possible force him to withdraw troops from the Ravenna area. Arrangements were also made for Capt (A/Major) D.M. Healy, an Italian-speaking officer of the Corps Intelligence staff, to accompany the Partisan leader on his return. To Maj Healy was assigned the task of gathering military intelligence behind the enemy lines and in the capacity of Corps Commander's representative to co-ordinate the partisans' effort as closely as possible with that of the Canadian Corps. ((H.S.)224Cl. 013(D18); G.S.O.3 (Ops) 1 Cdn Corps "Chuckle Introduction"; (H.S.) 224Cl.013(D12); Report on an Attachment to the Partisans of the Province of Ravenna by Maj D.M. Healy)

108. On two successive nights the row-boat, in which Healy and party hoped to reach the partisan camp, was forced back into Cervia by heavy squalls, but the third attempt on 23 Nov was successful.

After tossing for seven hours on a lonely sea, the din of battle began to die away in the distance. We were well behind the enemy lines and the captain of the craft turned in towards shore. At 2310 hours we sighted the coast and about half an hour later made a successful landing NORTH of PORTO CORSINI, at M.632491. Owing to a misunderstanding, there were no signals; we waded ashore with weapons cocked, ready for action. No sooner had we beached our craft than the shrill cry of a night hawk rang out 200 yds to our right. One of our oarsmen replied and we were soon surrounded by a band of armed cut-throats who spirited our cargo away into the night and lifted our craft onto an awaiting ox-cart. No word was passed. A few minutes later, we were threading our way through the dunes towards the Partisan camp which lay in a marsh nearby.\* A rear party worked until one hour before dawn covering the tracks we had left, then women and children from the neighbourhood went down at first light and finished the job.

My first impressions of the camp were confused. We lacked so many essential things that I doubted whether we could be effective as a harrying force unless supplies could be sent in before we were ordered into action. We had weapons but insufficient ammunition and no lubricant other than Brillantine, which proved unsatisfactory in our first action. We had no means of caring for the sick and wounded and no means of evacuating them. The men were half naked and it looked as though the cold and damp would greatly reduce our fighting strength unless warm clothing and blankets could be provided.

(Ibid)

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\* Presumably the Pialassa della Baiena (6249)



After consulting with Major Bulow, Healy sent off a request to 1 Cdn Corps on 25 Nov for the most urgent needs; ammunition belts and magazines and "most important 4 gallons of gun oil and cleaning fluid". Unfortunately there now occurred a spell of bad weather and it was several days before either the Navy or the Air Force could deliver the supplies. Both services made repeated attempts and in the end some of the stores arrived by the sea route and some by air. (Ibid; (H.S.) 224Cl.013 (D12): Messages 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans, 25 Nov 44)

109. Soon after his arrival Maj Healy took steps to improve the local defences of the partisan camp. As this was situated on a small island surrounded by flat marshland it offered good fields of fire. Should the enemy discover the position, however, he would undoubtedly bring down artillery or mortar fire upon it. Herein lay the greatest danger for the partisan defences would be extremely vulnerable to this form of attack.

The day after I arrived I asked that orders be given to dig crawl and slit trenches all over the island and that steps be taken to improve our defences. The Partisans muttered darkly about "regular soldiers nonsense" but complied with the request.

(Healy op cit)

Although the discipline of these people in action was of the highest order at all other times it was very poor. In camp the hardest rules to enforce were those concerning blackout and going down to the water's edge by day. (Ibid)

110. On 24 Nov 1 Cdn Corps informed Healy of an apparent German withdrawal towards Faenza and behind the Lamone River and requested him to watch for a conforming movement on the Montone and Uniti. If the enemy in this sector started going back the partisans were to harass his columns particularly in the area north-west of Ravenna and between that city and Porto Corsini. (See Map 7). At this time the Germans were holding the area east and north of Ravenna with infantry companies split up into small groups. The partisan method was to ambush and destroy these isolated elements wherever and whenever possible. One such ambush occurred on the night 24/25 Nov when the partisans attacked a German patrol, which operated regularly on the road Ravenna - Porto Corsini - Punta Marina - Ravenna, inflicting two fatal casualties. (Messages 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans, 24 and 25 Nov 44)

111. In order to discover the strength of the enemy mobile reserves in the Ravenna area, the partisans planned an attack on a German post on the Ravenna - Porto Corsini road near La Fabbrica Vecchia (6245). It was considered that the reaction of the enemy would be to send reinforcements from Ravenna and elaborate preparations were made to ambush these as they approached Porto Corsini. This was the first partisan action in which Maj Healy took part, and he describes it in his report.

After dinner three companies, total strength 150 men, set off for PORTO CORSINI. We went through a maze of canals in small boats and finally landed at a point where we could hear the Germans singing in their billet some 500 yards away. The Partisans crawled forward over a stretch of flat ground to within 150 yards of the bridge at 622451. The



first volley cut down the sentries and our little action developed according to plan for almost a minute, then three enemy MG's opened fire from the left flank. BULOW directed our fire onto the M.Gs. We managed to silence two of them but the third continued to fire sporadically and, as it were, without conviction. Soon it became apparent that we would have difficulty inflicting more casualties because the enemy had got into his prepared positions. BULOW then gave the order to withdraw. We moved back in good order, under cover of fire, leaving the ambush party in position at 611437. Our only casualty was an officer who had been shot through the shoulder.

The most impressive thing about our little action was the fire control which was good, by anybody's standards. I rather question the advisability of having all the officers in one group 150 yards from the enemy but in Partisan operations it may be necessary for the leaders to be further forward than any of their men.

(Healy)

The only information available, concerning the results of the attack, is contained in the following messages:

- 29 Nov Enemy force...estimated 50 reacted to our attack. We silenced two machine guns and inflicted casualties. Details not yet available.
- 30 Nov Troops still leaving Ravenna. Some went north-west some moved to reinforce Porto Corsini after partisans attack.

(Messages, 1 Cdn Corps -  
Partisans)

As to the ambush no mention as to the outcome of this has been found.

112. Apart from direct action against the enemy of the type noted above, the partisans provided valuable information to the regular forces on his strength, dispositions and movements in the rear area. Of this phase of his activities, Healy has this to say:

No task is more trying than that of attempting to obtain accurate military intelligence from untrained observers. It required the patience of an angel, an inexhaustible supply of cigarettes and a fund of good humour. No matter how skeptical the intelligence officer is, no matter how carefully he sifts his information before passing it, absurdities occasionally slip through.

(Healy)

Getting the information through in time was a constant problem. Since young Italians were naturally an object of suspicion to the vigilant enemy, it was necessary to make considerable use of the aged and infirm and the very young as runners:



When one is obliged to use the aged and infirm as runners to deceive the enemy's vigilance, it is difficult to pass certain types of information in time for effective action to be taken. Come wind come weather, our runners invariably got through bringing, concealed about their persons, marked maps, sketches, drawings and reports. Considerable use was made of Partisan observers but the restrictions on civilian movement were such that they could only travel by night in areas they knew intimately. The result was that a man would go out one night, lie up all the following day in some house, using every female and small boy he could find as observers, sort out his information and then come racing back to camp as soon as night fell.

(Ibid)

These missions were not without risk and on several occasions the partisans failed to return.

113. Typical of the information passed on by Healy to Eighth Army and 1 Cdn Corps is that contained in the following message:

Believe enemy has withdrawn most of his forces to positions west of Lamone River along which he is building field fortifications. Most of his field and medium artillery appears to be sited in the area Alfonsine 445480 Fusignano 380440 Bagnacavallo 390385. Heavy concentration of Ack Ack area Bastia 310570 San Biagio 308578 which is most vulnerable point on his line of communication very heavy traffic by night area San Biagio, Bastia and thence south. Enemy left flank guarded by estimated one battalion Infantry companies in small groups east and north of Ravenna. Partisans will harry and destroy isolated elements wherever ambush is possible.

(Messages, 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans,  
24 Nov 44)

In addition they watched for and reported targets of opportunity for the attention of the artillery and/or the Air Force:

26 Nov Urgent 40 guns halted area 580390  
Bomb or shell now

(Ibid, 26 Nov)

Apparently, G.S.I Eighth Army questioned the accuracy of this latter message bringing this tart reply from Healy:

My message abundantly clear. Artillery column of 40 guns was halted 580390 moved west presumably. Did you engage. Do you want opportunity targets or not.

(Ibid, 27 Nov)



Eighth Army assured him that they had engaged the target with artillery and tank fire on the afternoon of 26 Nov, going on to say that they were "always grateful opportunity targets and very pleased with your other information" (ibid, date - stamped 28 Nov 44). \* On 2 Dec Healy's observers brought him information of a parade of some 300 German troops scheduled to take place on the square in front of Ravenna railway station at 1000 hours the following day. At the appointed hour all available guns of the Corps Artillery engaged this most unusual target, with results described by observers on the spot as "effective and terrifying". (Messages 1 Cdn Corps - Partisans, 2-3 Dec 44; (H.S.)224C1.023(D11): 1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 169, 3 Dec 44)

114. On 2 Dec, in co-ordination with the Corps attack commencing that morning, the Partisans began an all-out effort against the enemy's lines of communications. For the purpose of this offensive the partisan forces were divided into two groups of three hundred, each with the following tasks:

Group A To occupy SAN ALBERTO and LA CILLA south of LAKE COMACCHIO blow the bridge at 512513, and then move in small groups towards ALFONSINE and MEZZANO to ambush the enemy withdrawal on Route 16.

Group B This was to be the main effort. To occupy or block the enemy in MANDRIOLE and PORTO CORSINI then move south to ambush the enemy withdrawing between the sea and 5541.

(Allied Strategy: Appx "G"-4, p. 99) \*\*

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\* Up to this point Healy's wireless link was with G.S.I. Eighth Army. At this time, however, Eighth Army advised him that a rear link was being established for direct communication with G.S.O.2 (Int), 1 Cdn Corps.

\*\* In a subsequent paragraph of the report mentioned above (Allied Strategy: Appx "G"-4, p.100) it speaks of "some nine hundred irregulars", and Healy, in his report, states that on 2 Dec "about 900 partisans went into action". Thus it would appear that the activities of Groups A and B although they constituted the main part did not constitute the whole of the partisan actions in this sector.



On the first two nights (1/2 and 2/3 Dec) partisan bands attacked at a number of places on Route 16 north of Mezzano, inflicting several casualties on the enemy. On 4 Dec two to three hundred of Bulow's men laid siege to the German garrison of Porto Corsini. By last light they had surrounded the port, blocking all attempts of the enemy to escape, although a few may have effected a withdrawal by sea. By the 5th they had cleared and occupied that part of Porto Corsini lying south of the canal. (Ibid; Healy)

115. To the north between the Canale di Bonifica and the Valli di Comacchio, the partisans went into action early on the 5th. At first light they attacked San Alberto (5352) and by afternoon had overwhelmed the German garrison and occupied the village. During the same morning they attacked and cleared the villages of La Cascina (6054), La Cilla (5151) and Mandriole (5852). At Mandriole nearly half of a German force of about 30 men surrendered without a fight, the rest dispersed. About this time, however, the weather deteriorated and the enemy possibly anticipating a halt in the Canadian offensive, launched a counter-attack on Group A. Late in the afternoon of 5 Dec an enemy force consisting of about five self-propelled guns, a few armoured cars, and some lorried infantry commenced a drive to the east between the Bonifica and the Valli di Comacchio. By the following morning the partisans, armed only with Stens, rifles, and a few machine guns, had suffered severe casualties and were in a state of some confusion. Nevertheless Bulow, who was personally directing the operations in this area, succeeded in making an orderly withdrawal to the line of the Scolo via Cerba. At the same time, to avoid reprisals, he ordered the evacuation of the civilian population of the villages north of this canal. (Healy; Allied Strategy: Appx "G"-4, p.100)

116. On the same day, 6 Dec, Majors Bulow and Healy went to Ravenna, where, on the following day, they attended a conference held by the G.S.O. 2 (Int) 1 Cdn Corps. As a result of this meeting arrangements were made to assemble Bulow's men during the following few days in Ravenna. There, under Corps or Corps-delegated direction, they were to be clothed, equipped and trained for possible future employment in operations between Ravenna and the Valli di Comacchio. In the War Diary of the G.S. Branch 1 Cdn Corps the completion of the programme of re-equipment and concentration is noted:

The last group of Maj BULOW's Partisans has been issued with new underwear, socks and boots in RAVENNA today. The first of these 800 Partisans, whose activities SOUTH of the VALLI DI COMACCHIO greatly assisted...in the capture of RAVENNA, came through our lines early 9 Dec. All have now been through the mobile bath at CERVIA and have had medical and dental inspections. Each man has been issued with a waterproof cape or a ground sheet. Arms have been turned in for issue to Partisans further NORTH, but about fifty Partisans have been re-equipped with new weapons and are fighting with 5 Cdn Armd Bde fwd tps. Transportation is provided so that Partisans may visit relatives who live within 30 km of RAVENNA. During their stay in RAVENNA, the Partisans have been fed on Army rations, which they cook themselves. The



assistance of FS personnel was required the first day to interpret the cryptic abbreviations on the cans. "M & V" for example. Music with their meals has been provided by P.W.B. loudspeaker van.

(W.D., G.S. Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps,  
11 Dec 44)

117. The most successful of the partisan engagements were those in which a sudden and violent attack by 40 or 50 men was followed by a quick withdrawal. On those occasions on which they attacked the enemy in prepared positions or seized ground and attempted to hold it, their equipment and training proved to be inadequate. In his report Maj Healy claims these achievements:

- (a) We pinned down and destroyed part of the enemy garrison in PORTO CORSINI, preventing certain final demolitions from being carried out.
- (b) We destroyed a number of German outposts and so harried the enemy that he took to the swamps in small groups in an attempt to escape westward. These groups we destroyed wherever we found them.
- (c) We dominated the area in which we had been ordered to operate for a number of days and so infuriated the enemy that he saw fit to do us the honour of a counter-attack with tanks, SP equipments, infantry and mortars at a time when he could ill afford any punitive expedition.
- (d) We inflicted the following casualties:
  - Killed - between 75 and 125
  - Wounded - between 30 and 50
  - Prisoners - 23

(Owing to the "hit and run" nature of the Partisan operations, exact data is never available. These figures are conservative.)

(Healy)

118. One of the difficulties of partisan warfare was that of maintaining proper reserves - "everybody wants to be on hand when the fun starts and once they have started in dead earnest they carry on until they drop in their tracks of weariness and fatigue" (*ibid*). Healy attributed much of the success of the partisan operations to the following things:

- (a) Almost a fortnight before the attack, the Commander made his intention perfectly clear to both the Partisan leader and to me.
- (b) The Commander explained exactly what he wanted the Partisans to do.
- (c) The Commander left the Partisan leader entirely free to work out the method of carrying out his instructions.