

There the Westminsters concluded the day's action. (W.D., Westmr R. 30 Apr 45)

709. Early morning of 1 May found "C" Coy C.B. Highrs moving slowly in the cold and wet. It cleared area (452276) and went on to its final objective (455278). Being firmly established by 0109 hours, the company had taken 50 prisoners. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 1 May 45). As this action completed Phase II of the attack on Delfzijl, Lt-Col Sommerville ordered the beginning of Phase III. "D" Coy set out accordingly, picking up flame-throwers as it went through "A" Coy. The Wasps had to be left behind in "C" Coy area as the track along the top of the dyke was impassable to vehicles. After proceeding about 200 yards, the company met enemy resistance in the form of mortaring, shelling, and small arms fire from the vicinity of Delfzijl harbour. (Ibid). Artillery fire was called down, thus enabling "D" Coy to get on and eventually reach a point about 100 yards from its objective. Once again enemy resistance flared up, and in the ensuing fire fight the Cape Bretons began to run short of ammunition. "C" Coy was instructed to organize a party to take some to "D" Coy, but this failed to get through and "D" Coy's position rapidly became worse. The C.O. then decided that the best way to assist was to proceed with Phase IV, and so outflank the enemy position. Consequently, "B" Coy was ordered forward to seize the railway station in Delfzijl (463271). Meanwhile, "C" Coy had reported enemy small arms and mortar fire coming from (452274). Since this position was on the proposed route of "B" Coy the information was passed to it with orders to clear up the opposition before advancing beyond this point. "D" Coy's situation deteriorated still further. Once again more ammunition was requested and a second party was ordered forward. In the meantime "B" Coy's attack, supported by a troop of 8 N.B.H. tanks and liberal use of smoke, got underway. Some trouble was experienced as it was now daylight. One tank was knocked out by anti-tank fire, but those remaining were able to destroy one of the guns. By 0720 hours "B" Coy were on its objective, clearing it up against some opposition. The smoke now permitted a platoon from "C" Coy to reach "D" Coy with ammunition and its situation was restored. (Ibid, 11 Cdn Inf Bde, Ops Log, op cit, serial 27, 1 May 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit). "B" Coy Perth R. was sent to take up a firm base position in Uitwierde (4327) in order to release "A" Coy C.B. Highrs for further moves. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 26, 1 May 45)

710. The final stage of C.B. Highrs attack on Delfzijl was rapidly concluded and saw the wholesale surrender of the German garrison. At 0950 hours "B" Coy set out on the tanks and by going flat out reached its objective, the Railway Station (463271). As soon as the tanks entered town, white flags appeared and all organized resistance ceased. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 27, 1 May 45). "B" Coy's Commander advised Lt-Col Sommerville that the presence of an additional company in Delfzijl would likely secure the complete surrender of the garrison. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 1 May 45). Accordingly, the latter ordered "A" Coy to pass through "B" Coy and begin the mopping up. It reached the town by 1120 hours and pushed forward to the canal, shortly afterwards getting one platoon over into the southern part of town. Some slight resistance was met, but by early afternoon enemy action had ceased. As soon as "B" Coy entered the station the pressure on "D" Coy had been relieved, and the latter moved forward to take the gun area in Delfzijl harbour (463271). It reported enemy troops attempting an evacuation by sea in small boats and artillery fire was brought down on them, sinking some. The Scout Pl was sent to Biesum (4427) and reported it clear. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 1 May 45). By 1600 hours the company positions

were reported as follows: "A" Coy (458270), "B" (457270), "C" (455278) and "D" Coy, (463273). This concluded C.B. Highrs fighting in the Second World War, as certain routine patrols, taking place at a later date, produced no enemy reaction. (Ibid, 1 May 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 45, 1 May 45)

711. During 1 May B.C.D. carried out various tasks which included supporting fire for C.B. Highrs' attack on Delfzijl and some local patrolling. "C" Sqn carried out the fire tasks, engaging targets at a factory (442263), railway embankment (454269), and Delfzijl (456267). At 1230 hours "A" Sqn was ordered to check the road and railway from Appingedam to Delfzijl. A patrol went out and reported back at 1530 hours with the information that there were two demolitions and some mines. A second patrol from "A" Sqn proceeded to a factory at (423256), finding it clear, and on to houses (433252), where some opposition was met. It then returned with 24 prisoners, suffering two wounded. Further parties went out between 1700 hours and 1845 hours, checked buildings in the Appingedam area, and returned with a few more prisoners and captured enemy small arms. A group composed of dismounted personnel from "A" Sqn and a troop of tanks from "A" Sqn supplied a covering force for sappers constructing a bridge at (432259). Shelling had been severe until 1200 hours, but tapered off and was only occasional throughout the night. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 May 45)

712. In Ir R.C. sector nothing of importance occurred on 1 May. The battalion remained with its forward companies in Heveskes (4824) awaiting the scheduled attack on Weiwerd (4724), which was planned for 0001 hours on 2 May. Shelling continued throughout the day and "C" Coy suffered a few casualties. (W.D., Ir R.C., 1 May 45)

713. Westmr R. (Mot) concluded its last action of the war on the 1 May, with no fighting. Severe shelling from both light and heavy calibre guns from the area of the Reider Spit continued until 0300 hours, when all guns became silent. A Russian ex-prisoner who made his way from the German gun positions stated that the guns were to be destroyed and the positions evacuated during darkness. This was proved to be true when a patrol from "C" Coy found the place deserted at 1300 hours. Thus ended the war for the Westminsters. They had taken over 700 prisoners and much enemy equipment for the total cost of four killed and 15 wounded. (W.D., Westmr R., (Mot) 30 Apr 45)

714. After the reported surrender of the Commander of the Delfzijl area to Ir R.C., C.B. Highrs were ordered to clear the area between the Damster river and the Eems canal as far as the north - south road from (430245) to (433254). As German communications were known to be very poor it was anticipated that certain enemy positions would not have heard of their commander's surrender. Therefore "C" Coy, the clearing group, was given Wasp flame-throwers and tanks as support. Although, it was found impossible to get the vehicles over the canal, this precaution proved to be unnecessary, for no opposition was met. The company returned at 1355 hours, having contacted Ir R.C. and B.C.D. (W.D., Ir R.C., 2 May 1945)

715. B.C.D. carried out further patrolling on 2 May without encountering any enemy reaction. The C.B.H. were contacted during the afternoon and the regiment's active operations ended. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 2 May 45)

716. Ir R.C.'s attack for the 2 May 45 was planned as follows. "A" Coy was to pass through "C" Coy to take the west half of Weiward (4724), then "C" Coy would follow on and take the east half; after this was completed, "D" Coy would move up along the dyke from Oterdum (5024) and take Farmsum (4625); "B" Coy was to be in reserve. At 0001 hours the advance started. "A" Coy moved quickly behind an artillery barrage and entered the town at 0025 hours, taking the enemy by surprise. Before the Germans could recover they had made their way through and seized the bridges on the west intact. "C" Coy followed as planned, and the two companies proceeded to clear the town. Opposition was fairly stiff, but by 0300 hours the job was finished and many prisoners had surrendered. "D" Coy, meanwhile, had been advancing along the dyke, but was held up by a minefield north of Heveskes losing four killed. The Commanding Officer therefore altered his plan and committed his reserve through Weiward directed on Farmsum. At 0500 hours "B" Coy struck through "A" Coy, supported by tanks. A fire fight ensued, and at first it looked as if the enemy intended to continue resistance. A sudden collapse put an end to these intentions and the German commander asked for surrender terms. The Ir R.C. diarist wrote:

at 0640 hrs the German commander sent an Officer to "B" Coy HQs under a flag of truce with a request for terms of surrender. He was told the only terms were unconditional surrender of the whole German Garrison in the area. He agreed and at 0700 hrs the COMMANDING OFFICER LT. COL. L.H.C. PAYNE received the surrender of the GERMAN GARRISON from the GERMAN COMMANDER., COL. WALTERS at GERMAN HEADQUARTERS, FARMSUM (MR. 463257 Sheet 2607 1/25,000).

The enemy prisoner count amounted to 1,386, and a good deal of enemy equipment of all kinds was taken. The attack cost the Irish five killed and 16 wounded, indicating its determination and skill. The Second World War was now over for the Ir R.C. (W.D., Ir R.C., 2 May 1945)

717. The German surrender in Delfzijl marked the end of fighting for 5 Cdn Armd Div. The period 0700 hours 2 May to the end of the war, was spent in regrouping and uneventful guard duties along the northern coast of Holland. It will be seen from the foregoing account that the battle for Delfzijl was really a brigade operation, with assistance and general direction from Divisional Headquarters. (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May - 5 May 45)

OPERATIONS OF 1 CDN CORPS 19-27 APR 45<sup>⊠</sup>

718. Meanwhile the operations by 1 Cdn Corps in Western Holland had been concluded in dramatic style.

While the successful thrust of 5 Cdn Armd Div had practically destroyed the enemy forces EAST of the Grebbe line there was still considerable territory to be "walked over" before it would be safe to prepare an assault on the second line of def. Moreover the

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⊠ Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 2541, Holland 1:100,000 Sheet 2 - Utrecht: also Appx "J".

higher command had decided that 5 Cdn Armd Div should be withdrawn from under command 1 Cdn Corps and used by 2 Cdn Corps. It was therefore decided not to assault the GREBBE LINE immediately. 49 (WR) Inf Div excl 49 Recce were to clean up the NORTH bk of the NEDER RIJN for a limited distance.

(Outline of Ops 1 Cdn Corps  
in clearing Western Holland,  
Apr 1945, op cit)

49 (W.R.) Inf Div had already occupied Ede, Bennekom (5880) and Wageningen (5776) with 147 and 56 Inf Bdes and by 21 Apr had strong company positions based all along the line Barneveld - Lunteren - Ede - Wageningen. Patrols were pushed out to the water defences of the Grebbe line without any substantial contact and, beyond occasional clashes with German patrols, no further activity occurred in this sector. (Ibid)

719. However, there still remained a large area bounded by the Ijssel River, the Ijsselmeer, and the line Deventer - Harderwijk, where the Allies had not penetrated. Therefore, on the morning of 19 Apr, 49 (Brit) Recce Regt was positioned to the north of Apeldoorn together with tanks of 11 Cdn Armd Regt, a company of 1/4 K.O.Y.L.I., and some self-propelled artillery, with orders to clear up any enemy found north of Apeldoorn. (AEF: 1 Cdn Corps/C/H Docket I: 1 Cdn Corps Ops Log 18 Apr 45, serial 26). At the same time 1 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by the light tanks of 12 Cdn Armd Regt was directed to sweep the wooded areas (5809) to its front. While these actions progressed the troops of 2 Cdn L.A.A. Regt who had been holding the right flank enlisted the aid of some two hundred Dutch Nationals and cleared the densely wooded land north-west of Arnhem, successfully reaching Epe (8118), Nunspeet (6721) and Harderwijk. (Ibid, also W.Ds., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 and 12 Cdn Armd Regts, 2 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 19-21 Apr 45)

720. By this time the 49 Recce Regt Group had swept on between the woods and the Ijssel River to clear Kampen (7742) at the mouth of the river and then swung south to occupy the villages of Elburg, Nunspeet (6721) and Hierden (5919)

Amazingly little opposition remained and the civs confirmed the report of the sea evacuation of the elts who had retired from APELDOORN. The GERMANS who were encountered offered little resistance and over 1,000 PW were acquired during the day. J Cdn Inf Bde also carried out their part of the programme and retired into div res.

(Outline of Operations, 1 Cdn  
Corps in the clearing of West-  
ern Holland, April 1945,  
op cit).

721. Meanwhile on the left Maj-Gen H.W. Foster's brigades completed the relief of 5 Cdn Armd Div and faced west, with 3 Cdn Inf Bde on the right and 2 Cdn Inf Bde on the left. The West Novas who took over at Putten continued to press on down the main coastal road with flanking elements along the shores of the Ijsselmeer. (Ibid)

By the morning of the 21st they were firmly est in the wooded area in square 4706 on the Eastern edge of the

flooded section and were sending out patrols of carriers and inf to circle the inundations and approach the outer def's of the GREBBE LINE. On their left CARLT & YORK R occupied NIJKERE while R 22e R had fwd coys in DRIEDORP Z4804. Both the latter units maintained vigorous patrols fwd and contacted enemy outposts just in front of the water barrier EAST of AMERSFOORT E3897. 2 Cdn Inf Bde had L. EDMN R RIGHT and PPCLI LEFT with SEAFORTH of C in res. L EDMN were astride the main highway around rd jct E509994, the PPCLI were conc around the WEST of BARNEVELD.

(Ibid)

Both battalions maintained aggressive patrols to dominate the open ground between their forward areas and the Grebbe Line. (Ibid; also W.D.'s, H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, L. Edmn R., P.P.C.L.I., 20-21 Apr 45)

THE LAST ADVANCE TO THE GREBBE LINE, 21-27 APR 45 <sup>¶</sup>

722. Throughout this last week of operations, Lt-Gen Foulkes' men kept on pushing patrols further forward towards the Grebbe line.

WEST NSR sent a patrol around the Southern edges of the flooded area which extended about 2,000 yds from the ZUIDER ZEE between Eastings 40 and 43. The patrol reached SPAKENBURG Z3909 during the night 21 Apr. A Coy posn was est there next day but this was finally turned over to Dutch Resistance units while the rest of the bn remained conc around WULLENHOVEN Z4705 till they adv to relieve the CARLT & YORK R on 26 Apr.

(Outline operations of 1 Cdn Corps in the clearing of Western Holland, April 1945, op cit)

The latter unit made a series of spectacular patrols in carriers to sweep over the ground between the inundations and Amersfoort. The battalion followed up these patrols and by the morning of 25 Apr had three of its forward companies on the 38 easting from northing 04 to northing 01, occupying Ham (3800) with the fourth company. (Ibid; also W.D., Carlt and Y.R., 23-25 Apr 45)

723. R. 22e R. made a parallel advance on the left and finally established companies between Ham (3800) and the railway junction (403996) to the south. As for Brigadier M.P. Bogert's formation:

2 Cdn Inf Bde adv from their conc area around Barneveld with L EDMN R RIGHT, PPCLI CENTRE, SEAFORTH of C LEFT. Their fwd posns were as follows: L EDMN R from HOEVELAKEN E 4399 to the woods in square 4397, PPCLI HQ in ACHTERVELD E4695 and fwd coys astride the highway at

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¶ Reference maps as for para 727; also Appx "J".

Eastings 455, SEAFORTH of C astride the 46 Easting from Northings 94 to the div bdy.

(Outline operations of 1 Cdn Corps in clearing of Western Holland, April 1945, op cit)

724. 49 (W.R.) Inf Div also made limited advances, particularly on its right, where the battalions of 147 Inf Bde had edged forward to within two miles of the line Scherpenzeel (4589) - Renswoude (4988) - De Klomp (5285)

On the LEFT 1/4 KOYLI relieved S.W.B. during the night 23/24 Apr and adv to posns about 1,000 yds short of GELDERSCH VEENENDAAL E5083. The remainder of 56 Inf Bde remained in BENNEKOM and WAGENINGEN.

(Ibid)

Lt-Gen Foulkes front had thus been brought up to a line from Spakenburg on the Ijsselmeer to Wageningen on the Neder - Rijn. Those positions remained the same during the process of negotiations which resulted in the feeding of the Dutch and the final surrender of the Germans in 25 Army Group. (Ibid)

THE MAAS RIVER LINE, 22 Apr - 4 MAY 45<sup>Ⓢ</sup>

725. Much further to the west along the soggy dykes lining the Maas River towards the sea, Headquarters Netherlands District<sup>ⓈⓈ</sup> (under General Crerar's command) kept constant watch for the Army Commander had received persistent reports that the enemy was vacating the Bornelerwaard, the Land van Altena, and the Biesbosch. Patrols which crossed the river during the night 22/23 Apr had confirmed this. (First Cdn Army Liaison Officers Reports op cit, April 1945, dated 2314445B). In commenting on this development General Crerar stated:

I consider it to be desirable, therefore, that our forces should patrol aggressively up to the line of the Waal, and in order that this should be done as part of a co-ordinated plan of operations against the enemy north of that river, Headquarters Netherlands District, came under my command at midnight on 23 Apr. The enemy's ability to establish himself temporarily on the Grebbe line, however, encouraged him to retain his hold on the Bornelerwaard and the line of the Maas, and the positions established by the Royal Netherlands Brigade at Hedel

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Ⓢ Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 2541, Holland, 1:100,000 Sheet 5--  
'SHertogenbosch, Sheet 4-- Rotterdam.

ⓈⓈ The story of the activities of H.Q. Netherlands District and of the many units which came under its command may be found in the following documents:

- (a) First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit April - May 1945.
- (b) First Cdn Army Liaison Officers Reports, op cit, April - May 1945.

These activities were confined mainly to patrolling and observation.

were attacked by elements of the 361st Infantry Division. The enemy was repulsed, but as it was not my intention to become involved with only limited resources in the unfavourable terrain between the rivers, the Netherlands troops, and those of the 116th Royal Marine Brigade which had taken possession of Alen Island, were withdrawn.

(General Crerar's Despatch,  
op cit, para 37)

Many troops other than those of 116 Inf Bde, R.M., and Royal Netherlands Bde, spent long hours in watching over this flank; these included men of 4 Cdo Bde, 33 Armd Bde Gp, 1 H.C.R., 1 Belg Fus Bn., 1/3 Dutch Lt Inf Bn, several Dutch Independent Infantry companies, and 62 A. Tk Regt R.C.A. Support was provided by elements of 90 Fd Regt (S.P.), 7 Med Regt, 112 H.A.A. Regt (all of the Royal Artillery) and a Dutch 25-pounder battery. (First Cdn Army Liaison officers report, op cit, G. Ops H.Q. Netherlands District, April 1945, dated 061430B, also Trace "P" attached, situation Trace as of 45, also report dated 081200B)

TRUCE IN THE WESTERN NETHERLANDS, 28 Apr 45 <sup>#</sup>

726. Actually, from 27 Apr on, beyond the activity of patrols no further offensive action was taken against the enemy in the western Netherlands. Everywhere else the German military position was collapsing and the will of the garrison of "Fortress Holland" to hold out in so isolated and hopeless a situation depended only on the precarious existence of the central authority of the Reich. That the local command was willing to accept the inevitable when the time came, meanwhile preserving a posture of defence, was made known to Allied Intelligence through the agency of the Dutch Forces of the Interior. A representative of the Dutch Commander, infiltrated into enemy territory, had succeeded in entering into conference with Hitler's representative, the Reichskommissar, Dr Seyss-Inquart, with the object of finding some basis of agreement between the German forces and the Allies. (W.Ds., Chief of Staff and G.Plans, H.Q. First Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx 5, serial 1, SFO/46, 16 Apr 45, Memorandum on Negotiations between Dutch Forces of the Interior and Seyss-Inquart in Amsterdam)

727. The Dutch Government had long been most anxiously concerned about the fate of the inhabitants of the western provinces. There two-fifths of a population of over 9,000,000, largely concentrated in the great cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, still lay under German domination. These people were normally supplied with food from the surpluses of the eastern parts of the country from which they were now cut off. The general strike on the Dutch railways beginning in September 1944, the resultant refusal by the Germans to move supplies themselves, the subsequent flooding of some 500,000 to 800,000 acres of arable land, together with the Wehrmacht's own inroads upon existing resources had produced a situation of acute shortage. As early as the beginning of Oct 44 "it was evident to SHAEF that the food relief problem in Western Holland would be the most critical one yet faced in North-Western Europe". (Ibid)

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# Reference maps as for para 727.

728. In these unhappy circumstances, political, military and humane considerations were all involved. The urgency of rescue or sustenance, objects of continuous effort on the part of the Dutch cabinet and the Queen, had been drawn to the personal attention of the heads of the governments of Great Britain and the United States and referred also to the Supreme Commander. (AEF: 45/SHAEP/O/F Docket II, (Hist Sec File 205sl-043(1)) (Relief for the Netherlands - a Monograph prepared by Hist Sec. G-5 Division, SHAEP: 60 Histories, Monographs and Sketches, SHAEP/G-5/INFO/4800, Jun 45, page 1 et passim). Before the end of October 1944 General Eisenhower, "on the grounds of humanity", had already accepted proposals to grant safe-conduct for three neutral vessels bearing supplies to enter Dutch waters, a plan in which the Germans concurred. The arrival of the ships was delayed, the relief inadequate, and by the end of March 1945 conditions in the heavily-populated areas north of the rivers had still further deteriorated.

...Adults had received no milk since January; children under three and nursing mothers no more than three-quarters of a litre per week. No fats, no sugar, no vegetables were to be had. Complete lack of coal had almost entirely stopped the production of gas, electricity and steam. Without gas, no cooking or heat was possible. Without electricity, the sewage system had broken down and sanitary conditions were critical. Deaths from tuberculosis, diphtheria, diarrhoea and enteritis had tripled.

(Ibid, p. 39)

729. As has been seen, it had not proved possible to attempt to relieve the Dutch of their privations by further offensive operations. A cable sent from SHAEP on 27 Mar to the Combined Chiefs of Staff informed them that "so long as the enemy continues cohesive resistance in Western Holland it is militarily inadvisable to undertake operations West of Utrecht" (ibid). The fact was emphasized that such an operation would not only interfere with the major allied effort against the enemy in Germany, but would in itself cause great suffering to the civil population (ibid). The Dutch government was thus forced to turn to the alternative of sending in supplies, if necessary by dropping them from the air, while the enemy still remained in occupation. It was to this end that the Reichskommissar was approached through the agency of the Forces of the Interior.

730. Before the conversations began, the Dutch emissary made it clear that they would not in any way prejudice the principle of unconditional surrender. Seyss-Inquart replied with candour. He said that he had been ordered to hold out under all circumstances, and, if necessary, to cause such demolitions and inundations as would bring utter disaster to the western provinces and probably render them for years uninhabitable. He suggested that if the Allies were to bring their advance to a stop short of the Grebbe Line, it would be unnecessary for him to have such harsh recourse, while at the same time he would save face with Berlin. He intimated further his willingness to relax the stern measures hitherto enforced against the civilian population, and to render any assistance needed for opening the port of Rotterdam in order to afford entry to barges bringing in supplies of food and coal. It was admitted that the food available in the occupied territory could barely last three weeks. "In the eyes of the German Government, however, this would not be an excuse to surrender or to withdraw the order for the demolitions and inundations

as laid down by this government". Nevertheless, both parties to these negotiations felt that some agreement could, and indeed must, be reached in order to avoid widespread starvation and disease. (W.Ds., Chief of Staff and "G" Plans, H.Q. First Cdn Army, May 1945; as above).

731. Being apprised of Soyss-Inquart's reception of these proposals, the Dutch Prime Minister, Dr. Gerbrandy, then on the Continent, returned to England to confer with his cabinet, and thereafter the matter "was taken up at the highest governmental levels in San Francisco", although it was recognized that the immediate decision lay with SHAEF. Here again humanitarian considerations prevailed, and on 23 Apr General Eisenhower cabled the following message to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the British Chiefs of Staff:

...The situation is so bad that something must be done to arrange for the introduction of food into Holland by free dropping and by every other possible means even though the best we can do may be a small contribution in comparison with the widespread destitution which now exists.

(Relief for the Netherlands, SHAEF Monograph, op cit, p. 40)

The Supreme Commander proposed to send a "very strongly worded message" to Col-General Blaskowitz ordering him, under threat of treating him and each responsible member of his command as violators of the laws of war, to cease opening the dykes and to be ready to assist in distributing the food to the starving people for whose welfare he was held to be answerable. (Ibid)

732. In order to implement the plan to drop food from the air, SHAEF requested Bomber Command and the Eighth U.S. Air Force to have 200 aircraft ready. On the same day (23 Apr) Brigadier C.C. Mann, General Crerar's Chief of Staff, conferred with the Deputy Director of Military Government and senior staff officers to determine the approximate tonnage which the First Cdn Army could begin to move at short notice by road and rail into occupied territory. The Canadians were also called upon to make arrangements for a conference to be held with the enemy on 28 Apr. On that day a truce came into effect, Lt-Gen Foulkes' troops being ordered not to fire on the enemy unless they were attacked. The meeting, held in the school house at Achterveld, a village just within the Canadian lines and about five miles from Amersfoort, was attended on behalf of the Allies by representatives from SHAEF, the Netherlands authorities (Prince Bernhard and his Chief of Staff), 21 Army Group, First Cdn Army, Netherlands District, and the U.S.S.R. (watching the interests of the Soviet Government). Preliminary talks with delegates of the Reichskommissar were concluded satisfactorily and it was arranged for a further discussion to take place two days later. (Memorandum of Negotiations with German Authorities in Western Holland op cit, W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps and H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 28 Apr 45)

733. The delivery of supplies by air was to have taken place for the first time on 28 Apr, but owing to bad weather had to be postponed until the following day. On that occasion, 239 aircraft took part and 510 long tons, comprising 550,000 rations, were dropped into the western provinces. Thereafter, the operation was to continue very effectively until the Germans capitulated. (Relief for the Netherlands, SHAEF Monograph, op cit, p. 41)

734. The second conference met in Achterveld on 30 Apr, the Allied delegation being led by Lt-Gen W. Bedell-Smith, Chief of Staff to General Eisenhower. Dr. Seyss-Inquart brought a group of experts composed of high-ranking officers of the three services and the Dutch Director General of Food. In a state of high excitement, the villagers gathered in the street to watch portentous comings and goings, convinced that they held a promise of release from danger, hunger and oppression. (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary op cit, No. 308, Appx "D": Food for the Dutch, 4 May 45; also Hist Sec file 229C1 (12) Op "Faust" The Feeding of the Dutch)

735. When agreement had been reached on the general arrangements for taking the food in, the conference divided into sub-committees which dispersed to the classrooms to consider the details. It fell to the lot of Lt-Gen Foulkes to discuss with Lt-Gen Plocher, commander of 6 Para Div, the conditions under which the convoys carrying food might pass freely through the lines. Their conversation made no progress, however, since Plocher's command covered only a part of the front, nor had he been empowered to enter into any agreement on behalf of Col-Gen Blaskowitz, the Army Commander. Ultimately, another meeting was arranged for the next day, on the understanding that Col-Gen Blaskowitz would either be present himself or would send an officer with full authority to act on his behalf. In the meantime, the truce was to continue. The Naval and Airforce delegates with Seyss-Inquart were fortunately more definite in negotiation, and in full conference the work of the sub-committees was co-ordinated without further difficulty. (Ibid)

736. It was agreed to open the road from Wageningen to a dump behind the enemy's lines at Rhenen on the Neder Rijn from 0700 hours on 2 May. At that time H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps would become responsible for sending in 1,000 tons of food a day from an advanced stock pile already set up at Ede. The work of distribution was to be undertaken by the Dutch civil authorities, whom, the Allies were to provide with 200 lorries and the necessary petrol for the purpose of ensuring as rapid a dispersal as possible throughout the country. (W.Ds., C. of S. and "G" Plans, op cit, May 1945: Appx 5, serial 8, Notes taken by Chief of Staff, First Cdn Army, at the Second Meeting of Allied Representatives with German Representatives in Regard to the Feeding of the Dutch in Western Holland, Monday 30 Apr 45, paras 25-28; W.D., S. & T. Branch, Rear H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 1-2 May 45)

737. At the subsequent meeting on 1 May Lt-Gen Foulkes and Lt-Gen Reichelt, Chief of Staff to Col-Gen Blaskowitz, agreed upon a corridor to be established between the opposing forces from the railway line through Arnhem and Utrecht south to the Waal at Ochten. Pending a further communication from the German C.-in-C., Lt-Gen Foulkes undertook to carry out no offensive operations along the whole of the front between the IJsselmeer and Walcheren. (W.Ds., C. of S. and "G" Plans, op cit, May 1945: Appx 5, serial 9, Meeting between Lt-General C. Foulkes, Comd 1 Cdn Corps, and Lt-General Reichelt, Chief of Staff to Col-General Blaskowitz, 1 May 45)

OPERATIONS OF SECOND BRITISH ARMY, 20 APR - 4 MAY 45 <sup>≠</sup>

738. While Canadian operations leading to the truce in Western Holland and resulting in such vast successes west of the Weser River had been in progress, Lt-Gen Dempsey's Second British Army had flung the enemy out of one position after another with amazing rapidity and little loss to itself. On 19 Apr Second Brit Army had 8 Corps on the right. In this sector 11 Arm'd Div was fast approaching the Elbe River from the north-west of Uelzen (W9089), while to the north-east 6 Airborne Div fulfilled its task of flank protection and flank contact along the Army group boundary. In addition, Lt-Gen Barker (commanding 8 Corps) had 5 Brit Inf Div and 15 (S.) Inf Div ready to close up to the Elbe River between Bleckode and Tarchau and to fill the gap between 11 Arm'd and 6 Airborne Divs. (See para 327 to this report and notes on the operations of 21 Army Group, op cit, para 204)

739. In the centre 12 Brit Corps (commanded by Lt-Gen N. Ritchie) had Gds Arm'd Div in Visselhovede, in Tostedt, and closing on Zevon (0323); 53 (W.) Inf Div having taken Verden was about to pause (to allow 52 (L.) Inf Div to pass through towards Achim and then onto Bremen from the south-east<sup>≠</sup>) before going on itself in the wake of Maj-Gen Adair's guardsmen. 7 Arm'd Div, on the corps' right flank, was at Welle and nearing Winsen but was in flank contact with 11 Arm'd Div (see para 331 to this report, also notes on Operations 21 Army Group, op cit, also AEF: 45/Second Brit Army/C/D Docket I)

740. Along the Canadians' eastern boundary was 30 Brit Corps (under Lt-Gen Horrocks), with 43 (W.) Inf Div, 3 Brit Inf Div and 51 (H.) Div approaching Bremen from the south and south-west. (See para 335 of this report). Since the evening of 20 Apr, 51 (H.) Div had its forward elements established due west of Belmenhorst. On 21 Apr further directions were issued as follows:

52 (L) Division  
Continue operations towards BREMEN.

3 British Division  
Hand over LEFT sector to 51 (H) Division (West of road MACKENSTEDT 6589 - HUCHTING 6696) and prepare to assault BREMEN West of the R WESER.

51 (H) Division  
Re-organise and hold present front in contact with 3 British and 43 Divs

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≠ Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4346 Germany 1:250,000 Sheets L53 - Hanover, L54 - Hamburg, M53 - Magdeburg, M54 - Schwerin; also Appx "J".

≠≠ 52 (L.) Inf Div was to pass to Lt-Gen Horrocks command on 19/20 Apr for the assault on Bremen.

43 Division

To be prepared to move from 22 Apr to concentrate South of ACHIM.

(AEF:45/Second Brit Army/C/D  
Docket I, op cit, p. 382)

741. Despite limited advances on 21 Apr, the main Corps effort, which was to be made on the right by 52 (L.) Inf Div, did not develop until early on 22 Apr. By first light the heavy night bombing attack on Achim seemed to have had the desired effect, and by 0900 hours elements of 52 (L.) Inf Div, having captured and cleared Achim, were pushing on to Uphuisen some three miles beyond. The attack continued on 23 Apr when 43 (W.) Div developed a thrust to cut the autobahn north-east of Achim before turning towards Bremen.

UPHAUSEN was reported clear of enemy soon after midday on 23 Apr, while on the RIGHT 157 Brigade had reached the autobahn at OYTEN 8696. During the afternoon reconnaissance elements cleared two villages respectively two and four miles east of OYTEN. 155 Brigade continued the advance throughout the night 23/24 Apr and had secured MAHNDORF, their objective for the night, by first light. Opposition was fairly light, with the exception of artillery fire. 43 Division had meanwhile captured HABERLAH 9993, on the right flank, against moderate opposition and pushed on to AHAUSEN. By the evening it had reached HELLWEGE 0098. 129 Brigade moved over to rejoin 43 Division late on 24 Apr. 43 Division relieved 52 (L) Division in the OYTEN area in preparation for an attack North-West on 25 Apr.

(Ibid)

742. Following another heavy bombing attack, 52 (L.) Inf Div secured the built-up area on the southern edges of Bremen by 25 Apr.

Medium bombing of BREMEN continued on 25 Apr for five hours at 30 minute intervals. The attack through the heavily built up area continued well, with rubble and demolished buildings the main difficulties. By 1600 hrs 156 Brigade had penetrated some two miles along the main railway line, with 155 Brigade still close behind. The leading battalion of this brigade passed through at 1930 hrs. The division's intentions for that night and 26 Apr was to complete the clearance of BREMEN between the railway and the river.

(Ibid)

3 Brit Inf Div had by this time reached that part of Bremen south of the Weser, while 43 (W.) Inf Div, working along the northern sector of the city, had similarly forced the opposition to loosen up and was now making fair progress. (Ibid, p. 383)

743. Progress by all the three infantry formations continued satisfactorily throughout 26 and 27 Apr until the city was clear. Then certain readjustments took place. 51 (H.) Div, which had been operating around Dolmenhorst, was now on the east bank of the Weser, and with 43 (W.) Inf Div (which in its turn was freed of its responsibilities in Bremen by 52 (L.) Div) was given a new task. At the same time 3 Brit Div extended its

holdings westwards to pass under the command of First Cdn Army.  
(Ibid)

30 Corps operations were now directed towards clearing the CUXHAVEN peninsula, striking North with 51 (H) and 43 Divisions. 51 (H) Division was to advance on the axis OTTERSBURO 9402 - WENTEL 9420 and make contact with Guards Armoured Division, then operating North from the Zeven area towards BREMERVORDE. Guards Armoured Division passed to command 30 Corps early on 29 Apr.

43 Division axis of advance was LEHE 7601 - TRUPERMOOR 8008 - TARMSTEDT 8915.

(Ibid, p. 383)

744. On 29 Apr Gds Armd Div, moving on Bremervorde, stopped short of the town and swung away to the east to isolate Stade. On the same day, 51 (H.) Div, having previously relieved the Guards on the high ground west of Zeven, followed up and took over the task of capturing Bremervorde. Further to the west 43 (W.) Div took Tarmstedt, then set about relieving the Gds Armd Div west of Zeven. From here Maj-Gen G.I. Thomas was to secure crossings over the Hamme - Oste Canal. Thus Lt-Gen Horrocks' formation was left to clear the Cuxhaven peninsula. (Ibid)

745. In the meantime, the remainder of Second British Army, was occupied in following the army plan for the advance to the Baltic.

- (a) 8 Corps (11 Armd Div, 6 Guards Armd Bde, 1 Cdo Bde, 5 and 15 Inf Divs, and 6 Airborne Div earmarked for XVIII US Corps later). To establish bridgehead over R Elbe near LAMNENBURG and advance NORTH to capture LUBECK and clear SCHLESWIG - HOLSTEIN.
- (b) XVIII US Corps (7 US Armd Div, 8 US Inf Div, 82 US Airborne Div and later 6 Brit Airborne Div). (From 12 US Army Group) To cross the ELBE about 8 miles EAST of 8 US Army Corps, advance NE and protect RIGHT flank Second Army.
- (c) 12 Corps To cross ELBE in 8 Corps bridgehead, swing NW, protect LEFT flank of 8 Corps by masking HAMBURG and later to capture HAMBURG.

(Notes on the operations of  
21 Army Group, 6 Jun 44 - 5 May  
45, op cit, p. 53)

At that time Lt-Gen Dempsey was facing the elements of about 15 German divisions besides a varied collection of units mustered from local depots and from the German forces occupying Denmark. (Ibid)

746. 8 Corps was lined up to the west bank of the Elbe River by 25 Apr; two days later 12 Corps had also reached the river and was investing Harburg, the large town to the south of Hamburg.

The advance to the river had been extremely rapid and the communications of the corps were now strung out over a great distance from the roadheads and dumps.

The river itself was a wide obstacle which could not be tackled by means of a hasty scramble landing.

(AEF: 45/Second British Army/  
C/D Docket I, op cit, p. 393)

A period of several days was necessary, therefore, to allow for the regrouping of formations and for the moving up of stores and equipment. (Ibid). As will be appreciated:

The crossing of the R ELBE was a major river crossing and although a stage of the war had been reached in which extreme risks could be willingly undertaken, an operation of this kind could not be carried out without a limited amount of planning.

(Ibid, p. 393)

747. In accordance with the Supreme Commander's instructions, XVIII U.S. Airborne Corps left 12 U.S. Army Group to join Lt-Gen Dempsey's army. The main assault was to be carried out by 8 Corps, and the object as laid down by the Army Commander was to capture a bridgehead over the River Elbe to allow 12 Corps and XVIII U.S. Corps to pass through. The target date was set at 1 May 45 and as H hour approached 12 and 30 Corps continued to keep the enemy on Lt-Gen Dempsey's left occupied. (Ibid, p. 393)

748. The fighting up the River Elbe had shown only too clearly that the enemy was unable to produce anywhere near a sufficient number of properly controlled formations to delay the progress of Second British Army. It was not anticipated that any large or even well trained enemy groups could oppose the crossing of the Elbe or halt the Allied drive to the Baltic.

The line of the R. ELBE on the front of Second Army East of HAMBURG was held largely by "ersatz" battalions, including naval troops, police battalions and Landeschutzen battalions. These totalled approximately 20 and had a combined approximate strength of 6,000.

In addition, there were 100 heavy Anti-Aircraft guns, approximately 160 light Anti-Aircraft guns and a very few field pieces. There was also the possibility that somewhere in the area lay 245 Division. No organised defensive positions had been prepared on the line of the river or behind it.

(Ibid, p. 393)

749. At 0200 hours 29 Apr, 15 (S.) Inf Div of 8 Corps began its assault across the River Elbe. Opposition was light on the right but negligible on the left, and by 0630 hours the two leading brigades were complete on the east bank. As the morning passed resistance stiffened, particularly at Lauenburg

... but by midday this town had been captured and a second bridge seized over the ELBE-TRAVE Canal. 44 Brigade held the original bridgehead, with 46 Brigade striking North to Krusen and 227 Brigade starting to pass through the LEFT of the bridgehead towards the North West. Bridging had started at both LAUENBURG and ARTLENBURG, although the construction of the class 40 bridge at the latter site was slightly delayed by enemy artillery fire.

(Ibid, p. 395)

750. The highlight of the day, however, was the short though spectacular display of initiative by the seemingly dying Luftwaffe which, to quote an official account,

using groups of about twelve aircraft, made a series of bombing attacks on the bridging sites.

(Ibid P. 395)

Ground opposition remained light however, and

by midnight the three brigades of 15 (S.) Division had expanded the bridgehead to the line BASEDOW - JULIUSBURG - GULZOW - GRUNHOF. Combined patrols of 15 Reconnaissance Regiment and Special Air Service troops had confirmed that LATAU was still occupied by the enemy and appeared to be held more strongly than the other villages in the sector. This village was accordingly attacked by 46 Brigades and cleared on the morning of 30 Apr.

(Ibid)

751. By the morning of 30 Apr the enemy's air attacks had decreased, mainly because of the counter air effort put up by 83 Gp R.A.F. Thus, under these improved conditions, both the class 9 bridge at Lauenburg and the class 40 structure at Artlenburg were completed. 6 Airborne Div had by this time begun to cross the obstacle and by the close of 30 Apr -

was approaching its objective on the ELBE-TRAVE Canal, while 3 Parachute Brigade had moved rapidly East to reach BOIZENBURG.

(Ibid)

752. The break from the bridgehead began at first light 1 May. 11 Arm'd Div passed through the Scottish formation. At the same time 6 Airborne Div and 1 Cdo Bde came under command XVIII U.S. Airborne Corps. During 1 May and throughout the following day 11 Arm'd Div made good progress, being delayed only by the deteriorated state of the roads. 5 Brit Inf Div which joined 11 Arm'd in the journey northward, met with equal success. By midnight 2/3 May Maj-Gen Roberts' armour had cleared the city of Lubeck and reached the Baltic beyond, while on his right 5 Inf Div was north of the Ratzeburger See, having captured Molln en route. On 3 May 5 Div relieved 11 Arm'd Div in the Lubeck sector and the armour swept north unopposed. (Ibid, p. 396)

753. Meanwhile 15 (S.) Div had turned left from the bridgehead to secure Geesthacht<sup>⊗</sup> (7541), passing the first bridge of 53 (W.) Inf Div (158 Inf Bde) through towards Hamburg. A second brigade (71 Inf Bde) crossed the Elbe on 2 May. 15 (S.) Inf Div reported incredible scenes in the wake of the two divisions which had gone on to Lubeck and beyond (11 Arm'd and 5 Inf Div)

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⊗ This town, around which the enemy had several large dumps of Gas-filled projectiles, surrendered without trouble. (Ibid, p. 396).

Tens of thousands of German troops, their numbers swollen by those fleeing from the Russians, were surrendering. Long columns of enemy transport and horse-drawn vehicles were passing South down the Lines of Communication with no other intention than that of crossing the R. ELBE to what seemed safety.

(Ibid, p. 396)

754. Despite the fact that some of the troops (158 and 71 Inf Bdes of 53 (W.) Div) were already on the way towards Hamburg from the east, 12 Brit Corps was not yet ready to start its attack against this large fort. It was just as well since negotiations for the surrender of Hamburg were already afoot.

These were stopped temporarily to allow the start of discussions for the surrender of the entire German Army Group, but the local conditions for the occupation of HAMBURG were completed during the morning of 3 May and the city was entered, without incident, by 7 Armoured Division.

(Ibid)

7 Armd Div crossed the Elbe over bridges north of Harburg for the specific purpose of occupying Hamburg. (First Cdn Army Op Log, 3 May 45, serial 113)

755. The right flank attack across the Elbe by XVIII U.S. Airborne Corps had similarly achieved good results. From 0100 hours 30 Apr, the time at which the first American troops crossed the Elbe at Bleckede, everything went according to plan, and by the evening of 1 May contact with 8 Brit Corps had been established east of Boizenburg. On the following day Hagenow and Wittenburg fell.

From now on there was no hindrance to the forward movement of the corps other than the vast numbers of enemy pouring down roads in disorganised retreat from both the front of Second Army and from the East. LUDWIGSLUST and SCHWERIN were occupied by 82 Airborne Division and 8 Division. WISMAR was captured and the BALTIC coast reached by 3 Parachute Brigade.

(Ibid, p. 397)

756. The confusion of the enemy was by now supreme:

As a yardstick to measure the disintegration of the German Armies caught between the Russians and Second Army, it was estimated that approximately 100,000 prisoners were taken during 2 May on this corps front alone.

(Ibid, p. 397)

The end was very near. At 1605 hours on 2 May our tactical reconnaissance planes on this front reported that Russian tanks were in Goldberg. At 2100 hours of this memorable day elements of 6 Brit Airborne Div met the Russian forces at Wismar. Then,

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\* This formation, which included 1 Cdn Para Bn, was part of 6 Brit Airborne Div.

at 1032 hours on the following day, further contacts with our Eastern Allies were established at Grabow, south-east of Ludwigslust. (Ibid)

757. On 3 May the Army Commander, being aware that high level talks of peace were in progress, issued the following directive to his corps.

1. 8 Corps and 12 Corps will not advance beyond SEGEBERG - HAMBURG without orders from me.
2. XVIII Corps is established on the line DOMITZ - LUDWIGSLUST - SCHWERIN - WISMAR. There will be no further advance in an Easterly direction from this line. Contact has already been made at WISMAR and GRABOW with the Russian Army.
3. A delegation from Admiral DCENITZ and Field Marshal KEITEL passed through my headquarters this morning; they are now at Tactical Headquarters 21 Army Group. Representatives of the Supreme Commander will meet them tomorrow morning. The delegation appears to have full authority to negotiate surrender.
4. The Commander of the HAMBURG Garrison surrendered HAMBURG this morning, and 12 Corps is occupying it today.
5. The main problem facing us at the moment is the organization and feeding of the vast number of prisoners, displaced persons and German refugees within the area NEUSTADT - WISMAR - DOMITZ - HAMBURG.
6. All German prisoners of war will be placed in areas selected by you and kept there for the time being. Officers should remain with their men. No further evacuation of prisoners of war will take place for the present.
7. Displaced Persons and German civilians should, so far as possible, be made to stand-fast in the areas in which they already are. In any event they must not be allowed to cross the ELBE - TRAVE Canal from East to West nor the R ELBE from North to South.
8. British and American ex-prisoners of war should be evacuated to Lunenburg at once".

(Ibid, p. 398)

758. Staff officers at Lt-Gen Dempsey's headquarters estimated the number of prisoners taken in the last four days at 580,000, with a further 40,000 enemy considered killed, wounded or missing. In comparison the British losses since April were given as 679 officers and 8371 other ranks. (Ibid) But, when losses are mentioned, contributions made by the air force towards ultimate success must be counted.

From 30 Apr to 3 May 83 Group had taken tremendous toll of enemy movement fleeing West in front of the Russian advance. Enemy aircraft of all types were shot down



759. Even these momentous events were not, however, by any means the most important of the times. Everywhere the enemy's once proud forces were involved in spectacular collapse. Hitler had been reported as dead on 1 May, on 2 May the Russian ring about Berlin closed in and, after a bloody battle, the capital fell. On the same day the German Army Group "C" surrendered to Field-Marshal Alexander in Italy. Elsewhere French and American Armies had all been reporting endless success for the past ten days. General de Lattre de Tassigny's First French Army had long since swung east from Stuttgart to skirt the northern edge of the Black Forest and seal the Swiss Border from Lake Constance to Basle. Lt-Gen Patch's Seventh U.S. Army had turned south from Nurnburg to seize, first Ulm and Augsburg, then Munich, Salzburg and Hitler's famous retreat at Berchtesgaden, before making a final thrust towards the Brenner Pass. (Report by the Supreme Commander: op cit, p. 108 - 109, 115; also SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summaries, op cit, No. 303 dated 29 Apr 45, 304 dated 30 Apr 45, 306 dated 2 May 45 and 307 dated 3 May 45)

760. The gains made by the far-flung spearheads of Lt-Gen Patton's (Third U.S.) Army had in turn exceeded all expectation.

the thrust of the Third Army down the Danube Valley began on 22 April and made rapid progress against a tottering enemy. Although the defenders held out at Regensburg until 26 Apr, XX Corps established bridgeheads across the Danube east and west of the city on the 25th, and then advanced southeast down the right bank while XII Corps did likewise north of the river. By 2 May, the north bank had been cleared of the enemy as far as Passau, and the 11th Armoured Division shot ahead to receive the surrender of Linz on 5 May. With this lengthening of the XII Corps line, the Third Army took command of V Corps, from the First Army, for operations into Czechoslovakia on its northern flank. By an attack eastwards across the frontier, Pilsen was captured on 6 May.

(Report by the Supreme  
Commander, op cit, p. 115)

761. On the left of Lt-Gen Patton's fast-moving columns, First U.S. Army had particularly distinguished itself by being first to contact the Russian forces at Torgau along the upper reaches of the Elbe river. There Lt-Gen Hodges had consolidated to cut Germany in two. Thereafter Lt-Gen Simpson's Ninth U.S. Army soon set about severing the northern portion of the Reich by thrusting through Brunswick to reach the Elbe at Magdeburg. (Ibid)

762. The last two days (3 and 4 May) saw the linking up of several armies as the enemy pockets either surrendered or were annihilated. First French Army and Lt-Gen Patch's Seventh Army met up in the Ill and Kloster Valleys of south-western Austria, while at about the same time other troops of Lt-Gen Patch's Army entered the Brenner pass and pressed through to contact forces of the Allied Armies in Italy. Further contacts between Third U.S. Army and the Russians along the borders of Czechoslovakia was reported hourly. (Ibid, also SHAEF, Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 59, op cit)

763. These operations were carried out in full co-ordination with the Russians approaching from the east.

The American troops advanced to the line Budejovice - Pilsen - Karlsbad, but were there halted while the Red Army cleared the east and west banks of the Moldau River and occupied Prague. South of Czechoslovakia, the agreed provisional line of junction ran down the Budejovice - Linz railroad and thence along the valley of the Enns, where contact was effected in due course.

(Report by the Supreme  
Commander, op cit, p. 115)

RUSSIAN OPERATIONS ON THE EASTERN FRONT, 1-4 MAY 45

764. While operations on the western front were being concluded against the dwindling enemy pockets, the Russian armies had been striking staggering blows at German Army Group Vistula as it fell rooling back through Northern Germany.

Shifting the bulk of its efforts to Western POMERANIA and Northern BRANDENBURG, the Red Army drove a hundred miles to the WEST and by 4 May, troops of Marshal ROKOSSOFSKY's Second White Russian Front and Marshal ZHUKOV's First White Russian Front had closed up to the positions held by the Western Allies, contact being made roughly along the line WISMAR - GRABOW - LENZEN - WITTENBERGE. Several pockets, notably at SWINEMUENDE, were created by these rapid advances but most of them, including the above, had been cleaned up by 5 May.

(SHAEF Weekly Intelligence  
Summary, op cit, Part I,  
para 3)

765. Berlin had fallen. In street fighting that was as bitter as any ever, the ruined capital, defended step by step from its outer suburbs to the very core of the city, fell on 2 May. 135,000 prisoners were taken that day - but the man who was responsible was not included among them, Hitler was dead.

The day on which the Red Army flag was raised above BERLIN also marked the end for the large enemy force surrounded Southeast of the city; between 24 April and 2 May over 120,000 Germans were captured there and half that number killed.

(Ibid)

766. West of Berlin, Brandenburg also fell and

Russian forces drove on against the pocketed remnants of the German Ninth and Twelfth Armies, their backs to the ELBE and their flanks little more than 40 miles apart. By the end of the week the pocket had practically vanished, much of it disappearing over the ELBE as large numbers of Germans turned themselves in to the Allies.

(Ibid)

GERMANY'S POSITION WITH REGARD TO SEA AND AIR POWER, 4 MAY 45

767. In the following words General Eisenhower has summed the enemy's air and sea picture as it existed at this time.

Of enemy offensive activity in the air there was no sign. As the area left to the Germans decreased, the congestion of planes on the remaining airfields grew worse, and the number of aircraft destroyed on the ground mounted in proportion. The demoralization of the German Air Force personnel was too far developed for any suicidal effort to be made with the jet aircraft squadrons left in Austria and Czechoslovakia, and by the beginning of May practically the only flights undertaken were for the purpose of desertion.

(Report by the Supreme  
Commander, op cit, p. 116)

768. Of the German Navy, the Supreme Commander says:

The end of the German Navy was even more unspectacular. Having put to sea only on rare occasions throughout the war, then invariably to be hounded to their destruction or driven crippled back to their bases where Allied air forces repeatedly undid any repair work attempted, the heavy units lay helpless in the northern ports as these fell into the hands of the advancing armies. Only three of the larger ships were in anything approaching a condition for effective action when the last naval bases surrendered. The coastal craft had ceased to operate during April, and it was left to the submarine forces - the only truly successful naval weapon of which the enemy had enjoyed the use -- to carry on the fight to the end.

(Ibid, p. 116 - 117)

769. By comparison in these concluding stages of the war, General Eisenhower goes on to state that

the allied air forces continued to afford the invaluable support which had been such a vital factor in insuring our successes throughout the entire campaign. As the Eastern and Western Fronts closed together, however, the opportunities for employment of the strategic bomber forces grew more and more limited, former strategic targets having now become tactical ones. The chief occupation of Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force by the beginning of May consequently consisted of flying food supplies to the Dutch civilian population and of evacuating casualties and liberated Allied prisoners.

(Ibid, p. 116)

770. The work of the Tactical Air Forces in close support of the Allied Armies was particularly worthy of the highest praise for their operations were restricted

by the danger of hitting advanced Russian elements and the large bodies of prisoners who, having broken loose from their camps, were streaming westward along the roads. The last major offensive by the tactical planes

was in the south, where attacks were concentrated ahead of the Third Army down the Danube Valley, destroying the enemy's remaining dumps of fuel and other supplies in that area, and cutting the few communications still available for their distribution.

(Ibid)

#### THE SURRENDER IN THE SOUTH, 2 - 5 MAY 45

771. By the beginning of May 1945 the majority of the principal objectives of the Allies had been reached. The war in Europe was virtually at an end, and, to quote the Supreme Commander:

Nowhere on the Continent was there still in existence a German army capable of continuing to fight.

To the east, the armies under my command were joining hands with their Russian Allies from the Baltic to the Alps. To the south, they had linked with their comrades in Italy, where already the enemy had made formal surrender. Of the Nazi "fortresses", the national Redoubt had been penetrated while its intended garrison lay dispersed and broken outside its walls; Norway was isolated and doomed; Dunkirk, the Brittany ports, and the Channel Islands were helpless;

(Ibid, p. 117)

772. Now the German forces in Holland and Denmark were on the verge of capitulating. The Germany which sought to dominate the world and plunge humanity back into the dark ages was crushed and the time had arrived for it to acknowledge defeat. The first attempt (in March 1945) to make a separate peace with the West had failed. A second attempt by Himmler later was similarly ignored. However, on the Italian front there were men who realized all too well the futility of continuing the fight. The capitulation of the German Armies in Italy was quickly followed by further mass surrenders of the German forces facing south in the Alpine section, thus put the German First and Nineteenth Armies out of the war. (Ibid, p. 118)

#### THE SURRENDER IN THE NORTH, 2 - 5 MAY 45

773. Rumor of capitulation in northern Europe also reached the Allies in mid-April 1945.

Field Marshal Busch, commanding the Hamburg area, was stated to be anti-Nazi and willing to surrender, but unable to do so until the Western Allies reached the Baltic and cut him off from the possibility of the arrival of die-hard SS formations from central Germany. General Lindemann, the commander in Denmark, was also understood to be ready to yield at the same time as Busch, and on 30 Apr an emissary appeared in Stockholm to confirm this. It was urged that the British Army should make all speed to reach the Baltic before the Russians did so, for the Germans would under no circumstances surrender to the Red Army.

(Ibid p. 118)

774. The capture of Lubeck by Second Brit Army on 3 May severed Denmark and North-West Germany from the remainder of the Reich. At that time, as General Eisenhower states:

...more important figures came within our reach. As the Red Army had drawn nearer to the Western Allies, Admiral Doenitz, upon whom the mantle of the Fuhrer had now fallen, had instructed his armies which had been facing east to turn about and surrender to the Anglo-American forces.

(Ibid, p. 118 - 119)

775. Now, with hundreds of thousands of his country-men in full flight before the advancing Russians, Admiral Friedeburg, newly appointed head of the German Navy, (because of Admiral Doenitz's doubtful promotion to the tottering post of Fuhrer), approached the Western Allies through the headquarters of 21 Army Group.

They asked to be allowed to surrender the Third Panzer, Twelfth, and Twenty-first Armies, which had been fighting the Russians, and to be permitted to pass refugees through the Allied lines into Schleswig - Holstein. Their sole desire was to avoid the necessity of surrendering to the Russians. Field Marshal Montgomery, however refused to discuss capitulation with them on these terms, though he informed them that individual soldiers who gave themselves up would be treated as prisoners of war.

(Ibid, p. 119)

faced with another rebuff, the German representatives sent back to Field Marshal Kietel, their chief, for further instructions. (Ibid)

776. The next day Admiral Friedeburg made an important announcement:

...he had received permission from his superiors to make unconditional surrender of all German armed forces, land, sea, and air, in the north-west Germany (including the Frisian Islands, Heligoland, and all other islands), Holland, Schleswig-Holstein, and Denmark.

(Ibid)

According to instructions issued by the Supreme Commander, the capitulation in these areas were to be regarded as a tactical matter<sup>z</sup> and as such must be dealt with by Field Marshal Montgomery. It was arranged, however, that a Russian representative should be present to accept the submission on behalf of the Soviet Union. (Ibid; also Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, p. 220)

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<sup>z</sup> This was actually but one flank of the Allied effort, the surrender of which merely meant the neutralization of one portion of the European battlefield.

CEASE FIRE FOR THE CANADIANS, 4 MAY 45

777. With mass surrenders taking place in every part of the front, it came as no surprise when at 1255 hours on 4 May General Crerar received a message by telephone from the Chief of the Staff, 21 Army Group, informing him of the negotiations then being conducted between Field Marshal Montgomery and the representative of Grand Admiral Doenitz concerning the unconditional surrender of the remaining German forces in North-West Europe (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army 4 May). In the light of this development, the C.-in-C. agreed with General Crerar on the advisability of not pressing the demands for the delivery of Jever to the Poles and Aurich to 3 Cdn Inf Div, and Lt-Gen Simonds was therefore directed to withhold direct assault against these towns (ibid; General Crerar's Despatch, para 44).

778. Later that evening General Crerar was informed that the B.B.C. had just broadcast a special announcement, issued by Supreme Allied Headquarters, that the end had come. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 4 May). A few minutes later official word to this effect was communicated by a message from 21 Army Group.

All offensive ops will cease from receipt this signal. Orders will be given to all tps to cease fire 0800 hrs tomorrow Saturday 5 May. Full terms of local German surrender arranged today for 21 Army Gp front. Emphasize these provisions apply solely to 21 Army Gp fronts and are for the moment excl of Dunkirk...

(W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First  
Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx 12)

779. This was followed by a second message containing a digest of the instrument of surrender signed by the C.-in-C. and German representatives.

The German Comd agrees to the surrender of all German armed forces in Holland, in N.W. Germany incl the Frisian Islands and Heliogoland and all other islands, in Schleswig-Holstein, and in Denmark to the C-in-C 21 Army Gp. These forces to lay down their arms and to surrender unconditionally.

All hostilities on land, on sea or in the air by German forces in the above areas to cease at 0800 hrs E.B.S.T. Saturday 5 May 1945.

The German Comd to carry out at once and without argument or comment all further orders that will be issued by the Allied Powers on any subject.

Disobedience of orders or failure to comply with them will be regarded as a breach of these surrender terms and will be dealt with by the Allied Powers in accordance with the accepted laws and usages of war.

This instrument of surrender is independent of, without prejudice to and will be superseded by, any general instrument of surrender imposed by or on behalf of the Allied Powers and applicable to Germany and the German armed forces as a whole...

(Ibid, Message GO 412A,  
From 21 Army Group)

780. General Crerar at once communicated these facts to the formations under his command, issuing the following message to be read to all ranks.

From Sicily to the River SENIO, from the beaches of DIEPPE to those of Normandy, and thence through Northern France, Belgium, Holland and Northwest Germany, the Canadians and their Allied comrades in this Army have carried out their responsibilities in the high traditions which they inherited. The official order that the offensive operations of all troops of First Cdn Army will cease forthwith and that all fire will cease from 0800 hours tomorrow, Saturday, 5 May, has been issued. Crushing and complete victory over the German enemy has been secured. In rejoicing at this supreme accomplishment, we shall remember the friends who have paid the full price for the belief they also held that no sacrifice in the interests of the principles for which we fought could be too great.

(W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First  
Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx  
"D")

781. On 5 May Brigadier J.A. Roberts, Commanding 8 Cdn Inf Bde, met the German commander of the WILHELMSHAVEN - EMDEN area, General der Infanterie Straube (formerly commanding 86 Corps) and escorted him to Bad Zwischenahn, where Lt-Gen Simonds was to accept his surrender (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 May). The newly formed Armee Abteilung Straube had assumed command of the sector between the Weser and the Ems, including the Frisian Islands, about 2 May. Such was the enemy's disorganization that the precise order of battle was unknown even to the German staff. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, May 1945: Appx 3, 2 Cdn Corps Int Bulletin No. 2, 11 May). A diarist gives the following account of the meeting:

...With all divisional comds and Brigadiers of Corps HQ present, the Corps cmd dealt with Gen STRAUBE by first reading the terms of the surrender to 21 Army Gp and then going through in detail the orders which Gen STRAUBE was to carry out in the area opposite 2 Cdn Corps...

At the conclusion of the meeting a champagne toast was drunk by the allied officers present.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn  
Corps, 5 May)

782. The orders given to General Straube (as issued by H.Q. First Cdn Army) required him to ensure that no unauthorized movement of his troops took place and to submit a detailed order of battle of his command. All enemy personnel were to be disarmed and all war material dumped and guarded. The German Commander was, moreover, to be responsible for the maintenance of his own troops. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Corps/C/F: Brief Historical Outline of the Occupation of North-West Holland by 1 Cdn Corps, Appx "A")

783. A like ceremony was enacted in 1 Cdn Corps' sector at Wageningen, where on the same day Lt-Gen Foulkes accepted from Col-Gen Blaskowitz the surrender of the German forces in the Western Netherlands. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Corps, May 1945: Appx 43, 1 Cdn Corps Post Mortem No. 5)

784. Following the local surrenders to Lt-Gen Simonds and Lt-Gen Foulkes, on 6 May General Crerar sent a directive to Col-Gen Blaskowitz concerning the surrender of all his existing command and defining his responsibilities and chain of command. This reads in part:

1. By virtue of the powers vested in me, I authorize Lt-Gen Charles Foulkes, General Officer Commanding 1 Canadian Corps, to accept your surrender and signature on behalf of your present command. Your area of responsibility extends to the NETHERLANDS and that part of GERMANY lying WEST of the River WESER, including the FRISIAN Islands as far EAST as inclusive ALTE MELJUM and WANGEROOGE, and NORTH of the general line...  
DELMENHORST - CLOPPENBURG - NORDHORN - LINGEN...
2. The General Officer Commanding 2 Canadian Corps has already accepted the surrender of all the German Forces within that portion of GERMANY lying within your area of responsibility as defined in paragraph 1 above.

(W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First  
Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx "E")

This directive was given to Col-Gen Blaskowitz on the same day at a meeting held by Lt-Gen Foulkes (W.Ds., Chief of Staff and "G" Plans, op cit, and G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 6 May)

THE SITUATION OF FIRST CDN ARMY AT 0800 HOURS 5 MAY 45 <sup>\*</sup>

785 For the Canadians in Europe the war was over. Most of General Crerar's troops had been in action until the last moment. An example of this may be taken from the operations of 4 Cdn Armd Div, on whose front the Canadian Grenadier Guards (22 Cdn Armd Regt) had been fighting their way forward throughout 4 May. The Grenadiers proudly record this in words that any other regiment might have echoed - "the end came when we were out in front pushing on". (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 4-5 May 45)

786. From other localities along the Canadian front came similar stories of heated action right up to the last. Some units of formations such as 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf and Pol Armd Div could be found in concentration preparing for another attack. Everyone had heard rumours of capitulation but no one allowed even the strongest of these to interfere with the thought of and preparation for more offensive action. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs, 2-4 May 45)

787. The troops themselves took the news of victory calmly. Major G.L. Cassidy, D.S.O., the historian of the Algonquin Regt, recounts how the message to stand down reached him -

By the dim dash-bulb light of the carrier, the words seemed to dance before one's eyes. Down the road, the tanks, motors rumbling throatily, were crowded with men waiting to ride up to a battle that was not to come off. How appropriate to walk down the column in the gathering darkness and to give, with more meaning than it ever had before, the "washout" signal. "Climb down, lads. It's all over. All over".

(Cassidy, Warpath, op cit, p.328)

\* See Appx "K"

There were no cheers. There was little sign of emotion.. One could hear the motors of tanks in their laagers and the clink of shovels as the men dug into the black earth. Few words were spoken.

788. The morning of 5 May dawned bright and clear. Urged by the news of the previous night, most of the Canadians had taken advantage of the situation to get their first night's untroubled sleep in months. But when they woke they found that the victory called for further efforts, and as the morning passed each divisional headquarters received fresh instructions which in turn were passed to all units. These directions dealt mainly with:

- (a) Local surrender problems.
- (b) Establishment of communications.
- (c) Disarmament of enemy soldiers' personal weapons.
- (d) Similar disarmament of unit and formations weapons, such as mortars;
- (e) the surrender of guns, tanks, and SP equipments;
- (f) the surrender of technical stores;
- (g) the movement of enemy troops and their future administration within a prescribed area.

(2 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly  
Summary of Ops and Act-  
ivities, op cit, 6 -  
12 May 45)

789. With the exception of those of 2 Cdn Inf Div the forward positions across 2 Cdn Corps front had not changed much during the twenty-four hours preceding the "cease fire". 4 Cdn Inf Bde and its battalions moved up to concentrate on the wooded areas south-east of Rastede. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 May 45). 5 Cdn Inf Bde, having handed over to 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, also moved into unit concentration areas on the northern fringes of Oldenburg. (W.Ds., R.H.C., Calg Highrs, R. de Mais, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 4 May 45; also W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde May 1945, Appx 13, Message log, serials 1058, 1059, 1060). 6 Cdn Inf Bde remained in the western side of the city. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 4 and 5 May 45). 8 Cdn Recce Regt, however, was one unit which was in action to the very last moment. Working on the road Oldenburg - Meerkirchen (3819), "A" and "C" Sqns met stiff opposition and suffered quite heavy losses in men and scout cars. (W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 4 May 45)

790. Neither of the brigades of 4 Cdn Armd Div nor 2 Cdn Armd Bde carried out any tactical moves forward after last light on 4 May. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 4 May 45). The Poles, however, had started to feel their way forward once again, and were in contact with German infantry and self-propelled guns north and south-east of Asterderfeld (1329 - 1429) when news of the "cease-fire" reached Maj-Gen Maczek. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/H, Docket III, May 1945, folio 48, sitrep No. 610 dated 050001B from H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps to H.Q. First Cdn Army). Our lines south-east of Emden and on the approaches to Aurich remained unchanged. (W.Ds., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div; 7, 8, and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 4 - 5 May 45)

791. The surrender to Field Marshal Montgomery was actually but one in a dramatic succession. On 5 May Nineteenth German Army, and on the following day the whole of German Army Group "G", ceased resistance to 6 Army Group. On 7 May the war

in Europe came to an end when all German land, sea and air forces were unconditionally surrendered at Rheims to the Allied Expeditionary Forces and the Soviet High Command. The instrument was signed in Berlin shortly after midnight on 8/9 May. (Report by the Supreme Commander, op cit, p. 119 - 120)

#### CONCLUSION

792. Reviewing the campaign as a whole, General Crerar has given an approximation of the number of enemy prisoners captured by First Cdn Army. 35,355 were taken in April 1945\*.

Excluding the considerable German forces in the occupied Netherlands and on the German coastline between the estuaries of the Ems and Weser, of which more than 185,000 remained to be taken under my control as capitulated troops, the number of prisoners taken during this period was over 50,000. The total number captured since 23 Jul thus exceeded 190,000. In ten months of continuous fighting, always on the left and vital flank of the allied armies and over the most difficult military country, First Canadian Army had encountered and defeated no fewer than fifty-nine divisions of the German Wehrmacht. These divisions had ranged from the fanatical SS and tenacious Paratroopers to the mediocre "Training" formations and others drawn from the German navy and air force. But throughout the campaign we had always been opposed by the best forces available to the German High Command.

(General Crerar's Despatch,  
op cit, para 46)

793. The casualties\*\* suffered by First Canadian Army from 0600 hours 1 Apr 45 to 0600 hours 6 May 45 amounted to 388 officers and 5455 other ranks killed, wounded and missing. Of these numbers 314 officers, and 4461 other ranks were Canadians. For the whole of the campaign in North-West Europe from 6 Jun 44 to 5 May 45 (inclusive) our losses totalled 3680 officers and 44,272 other ranks. In comparison, the enemy's casualties proved to be much greater; besides the vast counts of prisoners, his dead and long-term wounded ran into many thousands. (Ibid: Appx "K" to this Report; also AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F Docket V, Enemy Casualties; also Hist Sec file 215C1.98(D301) POW Evacuation reports)

794. In this last phase, the Army's operations from the Rhine to the Weser, the North Sea, and the Ijsselmeer differed considerably in their nature from such heavy and deliberate actions as those which had carried 21 Army Group's winter offensive through the Reichswald. Movement was swifter, the end more clearly in view. General Crerar's formations were more divergently and variously employed. There was width and depth to the battlefield, the offensive covering distances greater than a hundred and fifty miles from north to south, and from east to west.

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\* First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary, op cit, No. 307 dated 3 May 45, Part II, "Enemy Strengths"

\*\* See Appx "B" to this Report.

Whereas these forces had previously been concentrated for the main onslaught against the enemy between the rivers south-east from Nijmegen on a front scarcely twenty miles across, they were here spread out over great tracts of territory. Once the crossing of the Rhine had been effected by Second British Army, there developed a running fight carried on between lines and centres of resistance hurriedly improvised by enemy forces, a large proportion of whom only the most agile and ingenious staff work was able to bring and hold together.

795. After the Rhine no barrier of any comparable importance remained to block the march eastwards. The numerous minor waterways of this part of Europe, such as the Ijssel and the Kusten canal were among the more formidable of obstacles encountered and they presented tactical hindrances. These were overcome in due course, but only as the result of the most determined contest by the Canadians, for the enemy never fell into such a state of disorganization as to be unable or unwilling to defend himself. On the contrary, the paratroops fought well and bitterly to the end. That their defeat had become only a matter of time was in itself sufficient testimony to the devotion and bravery of all ranks engaged under General Crerar's command in those last angry battles across stream and bog, the outcome of which was to press the Germans always closer to the sea. Happily, the casualties sustained were proportionally fewer than in other more closely fought phases of the campaign.

796. With the arrival of the 1st Canadian Corps from the Mediterranean the Army had become predominantly Canadian in composition, but it still comprised certain British and Allied formations and units. Among these the 49th (West Riding) Division had been under command for nearly six months, and the 1st Polish Armoured Division from the early days in Normandy. This honourable and valiant association, so easy and natural as between the nations of the British Commonwealth, had thus been proven no less effective where troops of other nationalities were involved. That the Army under his command made an international entity was a circumstance which General Crerar was apt to remark upon as having wider significance for the future.

797. Again, the support of the R.A.F.\* provided the ground troops both with continuous and accurate information on the movement and observable intentions of the enemy, and with a weapon which on many a notable occasion they were able to bring to bear with most satisfying results. The intimate association between General Crerar's Headquarters and the Headquarters of Air Vice-Marshal E.C. Hudleston, C.B., C.B.E., the Air Officer Commanding the 84th Tactical Group, remained as one of the distinguishing characteristics of both.

798. From the calculated risk of 6 Jun 44 to the day of victory in Europe, the Canadians and their Allies fought for three hundred and thirty-three days. The Canadian soldier could now look back upon eleven months of hard fighting, most of it very bloody. That he had done his share, no man can doubt, and in due course, the Supreme Commander was to write as follows:

In attempting very briefly to assess the factors underlying the Allied success in this campaign, I would stress the importance of three episodes as being the most decisive in insuring victory. The first of these was the battle of the Normandy beaches...The second vital battle was that of the Falaise pocket...The third

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\* See Appx "L".

decisive phase in the campaign consisted of the battles west of the Rhine during February and March...

(Report of the Supreme  
Commander, op cit,  
p. 121)

799. Canadian soldiers had played a main part in all three of these episodes. Near the Normandy beaches, around Falaise, and in the Rhineland, as well as at many points between these places, the proof of the unflagging effort of Canada's soldiers towards the complete and final victory will be found. It is there for all men to see.

800. This report was prepared by Capt P.A. Mayer, R.C.I.C., who fought as company commander with the Alq R. throughout the operations described. Capt J.C. Newlands, P.P.C.L.I., R.C.I.C., also contributed to this work, and was responsible for producing paras 659 to 717.

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