

to 12 Army Group, which was to clear up the area of the Ruhr and then turn to the south-east, directed on Leipzig and Dresden. Ninth U.S. Army had been ordered by General Bradley, however, to protect Second British Army's right flank as far as Hanover, and for this purpose to establish its own left flank firmly in the Der Deister hills to the south-west of the city. Lt-Gen Dempsey would thus be enabled to secure the line of the Weser to include Minden and Bremen. He would then advance his right to the rivers Aller and Leine. Holding firmly on to Bremen, he was to force bridge-heads over the three rivers preparatory to making a further advance to reach and cross the Elbe. His left boundary with General Crerar took in the line of communications through Hengelo, Nordhorn, Lingen, Haselunne, Bremen and Hamburg, (G.O.C.-in-C. file 1-0, Directive M567, from C.-in-C., 21 Army Group, 5 Apr 45)

GENERAL CRERAR'S TASK AND APPRECIATION, 5 APR 45

62. In view of these developments Field-Marshal Montgomery visited General Crerar's Headquarters on 5 Apr to discuss the future course of his operations as they were affected by the turn of events. The outcome of the conference is thus set forth by General Crerar in his Despatch:

In priority, the tasks set for the Canadian Army were to open the route between Arnhem and Zutphen, to clear the northeast Netherlands, then northwest Germany to the line of the Weser to be prepared to take over Bremen from the Second British Army and, advancing eastward to the Elbe, to protect the left flank of the Second British Army and clear the Cuxhaven peninsula. Our penetration into the western Netherlands was also to be maintained.

In the course of his operations northeastwards to clear the coastal belt of Germany, including all naval establishments, as far as the river Weser, Lt-General Simonds was to direct one armoured division on the axis between Almelo, Neuenhaus, Meppen, Sogel, Friesoythe and Oldenburg, in order to afford the necessary measure of security to Lt-General Dempsey's left flank. It followed that I should be responsible for establishing a central control in the west and northeast Netherlands as soon as these districts were cleared, for which purpose Headquarters, Netherlands District, was to maintain close liaison with my Headquarters and to provide Civil Affairs detachments for deployment under my command to ensure continuity when Netherlands District eventually took over from First Canadian Army.

(General Crerar's Despatch, op cit, paras 19 and 20; see also W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, April 1945: Appx 2, Directive, 7 Apr)

63. General Crerar explains the implications of his commitment in the Netherlands in the following terms:

I appreciated that the Germans could not now withdraw their forces from the western Netherlands where they appeared to have chosen to fight a separate battle, standing first along the IJssel and then on the Grebbe and New Water lines farther to the west. For such a contest the Commander of the Twenty-Fifth Army would have the combined resources of the troops still remaining in the country as a garrison, and the formations now falling back across the river as a result of my offensive to the north. It was to be assumed that his total forces would number about 100,000 men. Not all of his formations were experienced in battle, nor at full strength, but with the varied water obstacles which they were evidently prepared to exploit without regard to the further devastation by flooding of large areas of the country at this stage of the war, they were capable of putting up a strong defence. At the same time, I held only a low priority on the special resources necessary to carry my operations westward to the North Sea.

While I still thought it possible that the enemy might try to delay my northern advance on Groningen, I did not expect this part of the Netherlands to be heavily defended, with the exception of the coastal areas opposite the naval base of Emden.

(General Crerar's Despatch,
op cit, paras 21 and 22)

THE EXPLOITATION BEYOND THE TWENTE CANAL,
OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 5 APR*

64. The order for 5 Apr was "drive on to the north" and from first light of that day on Maj-Gen Vokes did not waste any time in carrying it out. Leaving the A. & S.H. of C. to complete the house-clearing in Almelo and the remainder of 4 Cdn Armoured Bde to gradually build up its strength, Lake Sup R. (Mot) started away early in the morning. First "D" Coy moved up from Delden at 0600 hours towards Borne, thus bringing up the tail of the battalion, which was about to press on to the north; then, at 1000 hours the rest of the motor battalion, now relieved of its responsibility at Almelo (by A. & S.H. of C. of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, under command since 1400 hours 4 Apr) struck out over the small bridge which 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt had seized the night before. Even

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, 1:50,000, Sheets 28 - Almelo, 22 - Coevorden.
G.S.G.S. 4416, 1:100,000, Central Europe, Sheet N1 - Almelo; also Appx "D".

while this bridge was being strengthened the lighter vehicles were able to cross, and soon the armoured half tracks and carriers of the motor battalion were pushing to the north and north-east at "amazing speed". (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde; Lake Sup R. (Mot), G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945: Appx 15, Message 0413 BB, 5 Apr 45)

65. By mid-day 5 Apr Lt-Col R.A. Keane had motor companies in Neuenhaus, Emlichheim and Ulsen (4233); thus the small flap of Germany projecting out towards Coevorden was rapidly falling into our hands (Ibid). Meanwhile 8 Cdn Fd Sqn was working furiously to produce a bridge fit for tanks. The succeeded at 1315 hours and the armour roared across. (W.D., 8 Cdn Fd Sqn R.C.E., 5 Apr 45; W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 5 Apr 45) Soon the tank regiments were rolling in the wake of the motor battalion, and as the brigade diary states:

Thus commenced one of the most successful armd dashes which the brigade has ever made. Original objectives were overrun in a matter of a few hours and plans were changed on the move and the whole force proceeded on until at last it we curled our tail up into a bde fortress area prepared for anything which the enemy might throw at us...

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 5 Apr 45)

That night when the group halted, brigade headquarters, A. & S.H. of C. (freed of their task in Almelo), and 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) were set up in a position between Ulsen (4233) and Wilsom (4083). 28 Cdn Armd Regt was in Neuenhaus, 22 Cdn Armd Regt was to the west of Ulsen near Achterrener (3633). 21 Cdn Armd Regt, together with "D" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) and 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt was at Emlichheim where "B" Coy of the Superiors was soon due to arrive. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, 5 Apr 45). "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was at the gates of Coevorden, but the most northerly element of the force was "C" Coy of the motor battalion which had reached Hebelermee (5660) on the Sud-Nord Kanaal just inside the German border, and about ten miles from Meppen. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 5 Apr 45).

66. The responsibility for the Delden - Borne - Almelo base had by this time been taken over by Brigadier Jefferson's "Lion" Group, which was soon to become involved in a sort of private war miles behind the racing armoured group. The Brigade's History presents the situation in this way:

Meanwhile the north-south arm of the Twente Canal from Delden to Almelo seemed to be the right flank of a German defensive system created to allow the escape northward of the troops trapped in from the west by the 2nd and 3rd divisions and on the east by ourselves.

The line was held by the Lincolns in Delden, the NBRs and SARs along the centre and the Algonquins in Almelo to the north. It was an odd situation for 4 Brigade was miles away... as was divisional Headquarters and the Brigade was left so far behind that any wireless or line communications was out of the question.

(R.A. Paterson, A Short History of Tenth Canadian Infantry Bde, p. 64)

On 5 Apr the Algonquins took over the town of Almelo from A. & S.H. of C. amid a riotous reception from the burghers and burghesses. (W.D., Alq R., 5 Apr 45). The next morning the first of many attempts was made to dislodge the Hun from his pivot position in Wierden (2218), about two and a half miles to the west of Almelo. (Ibid, 6 Apr 45). Several miles to the north of Almelo, elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt were fanning out freely and had already occupied Venebrugge (2741) while other elements held a small bridgehead on the western bank of the Overisselsch Canal at Daarlerveen (2127 - 2128). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 5 Apr 45)

67. During the night 5/6 Apr "C" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was ordered to move from Hebelermeeer to seize Meppen and dominate a crossing of the River Ems. Simultaneously one squadron of 28 Cdn Armd Regt was also ordered to Meppen to assist in this task. The motor company, which had received their order to move at 2300 hours, found their way through the intense darkness to the outskirts of the town by 0400 hours, 6 Apr, but met fierce resistance and could do little else but firm up where they were to wait for the tanks. At the same time there had been some progress on the left, for patrols of "A" Coy had found bridges across the Overijsselsch canal which were used to approach Coevorden from the south-west. The enemy put up stern resistance but the town fell at noon to Lake Sup R. (Mot) with under command "A" & "C" Coys of A. & S.H. of C. and elements of 21 Cdn Armd Regt. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, 5 Apr 45)

68. With troops scattered across the front from Coevorden to Meppen some doubt arose as to going on north, or swinging east through Meppen. However at 1300 hours the G.O.C. saw Brigadier Moncel and ordered him to force his way across the Ems, (perhaps as a result of knowing that the 1st Polish Armoured Division would be available within 48 hours to take over the thrust to the north). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde; A. & S.H. of C., 6 Apr 45; AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/F, Docket I, Folio 10: 2 Cdn Corps Summary of Ops and Activities, 1 Apr to 7 Apr 45 incl, para 7). Maj-Gen Vokes was also justified in this decision by the intention of 2 Cdn Corps issued the night before: "Second to thrust out light forces to open the axis towards Meppen..." (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945: Appx 5, Intentions 2 Cdn Corps, 6 Apr 45). The divisional commander, having seen for himself with satisfaction how his effort was progressing, returned to his headquarters just in time to meet the Army Commander who, as was his custom, had flown up in his

Auster aircraft to size up the situation. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 6 Apr 45; W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, 6 Apr 45). Meanwhile A. & S.H. of C. had been ordered forward to Meppen.

69. The Commanding Officer of A. & S.H. of C. received his orders to proceed to Meppen in the early afternoon, and, in spite of bad road conditions, had his battalion (less the two companies at Coevorden) in Kl.* Fullen (6554), two miles from the town, by 2100 hours (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Apr 45). On his arrival in the Meppen sector, however, Lt-Col F.E. Wigle, O.B.E., found things not going too well, and immediately dispatched a note to Brigadier Moncel reporting the situation and setting out his plan for dealing with it. The note reported that the situation was not good at the moment but that the outskirts of Meppen should be in his hands very shortly. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 6 Apr 45). The Lake Sup R. (Mot) company in this area had been driven back by small arms, machine gun and 20-mm fire, with the loss of their company commander; furthermore the north-western outskirts were "lousy" with snipers, and 105 and 88-mm guns were reported lurking about ready to open fire. An attack by the motor company, plus five "Shermans" and two "Honeys" of 28 Cdn Armd Regt, was going in to clear this sector when the commanding officer of A. & S.H. of C. arrived, and his plan was that on completion of this attack, his companies would relieve the motor company and patrol forward. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde & units, 6 Apr 45). Later that night another situation developed on the left. After "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) had left Coevorden to the Argyles and returned to concentrate around Emlichheim, a report came in from A. & S.H. of C. that a body of enemy was moving towards Coevorden. The armoured brigade's flank position in this area was not yet free of danger, therefore "B" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was immediately dispatched to ensure the security of the bridges west of the town. Later this flank was strengthened by the scout platoon of the motor battalion which arrived to hold the village of Gramsbergen (2840) until relieved on the following day by a Belgian S.A.S. unit. (W.Ds., Lake Sup R. (Mot), A. & S.H. of C., 6 Apr 45)

70. Thus midnight 6/7 Apr saw 4 Cdn Armd Div poised to crash across the Ems river as soon as sufficient artillery support could be made available. The fast pace of the last 48 hours had resulted in a wide dispersal of units and many regiments often found themselves completely out of contact with their higher headquarters. The extended battle front with its left flank under constant threat made it impossible for the gunners to provide fire support for our far flung companies in such distant places as Meppen and Coevorden. As one of the Artillery historians explained:

That morning recce parties from the 15th Field were ordered to prepare positions opposite Meppen to support a crossing of the Dortmund-Ems Canal. The long trip over bad roads required

* Kl., the abbreviated form of "Klein", or "little".

several hours. By dusk positions had been selected and guides posted to meet the guns, but in view of the stiff opposition encountered throughout the day at Wierden recce parties were ordered to return to Almelo the following morning. The regiment was then informed that the guns would be required to remain in action at Almelo until this flank was secure.

(R.A. Spencer; History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regt, op cit, p. 245)

71. The opposition¹ encountered by 4 Cdn Armd Bde at Meppen and 10 Cdn Inf Bde at Wierden (west of Almelo) was actually the first serious resistance to the armoured thrust. Wierden itself had all the appearances of being a flank strong point on which the enemy placed a temporary diversionary value; while, north of Almelo, along the Overijsselsch Canal, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt reported scattered but determined groups of German infantry, all of this suggesting some regulated plan for keeping our troops away from the line of the canal northward from Almelo. Certainly, the struggle which the enemy was putting up against Lt-Gen Simonds' infantry divisions to the west might indicate that he still had forces in Western Holland that were to be withdrawn for use in Germany proper. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div & 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 & 6 Apr 45; also Appx 79, 4 Cdn Armd Div Intrep No. 133 & 134). A glance at the map of the Almelo sector is sufficient to show the significance of the little village of Wierden. It stands astride the main Almelo - Nijverdal (1319) road and railway and is the logical pivot of a flank protection screen to the main route Rijssen (1713) - Nijverdal to the west. To break this screen would mean partial domination of the rear of those enemy troops facing 2 Cdn Inf Div and to this task Alq R. of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, (supported by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt and whatever guns of 15 Cdn Fd Regt could be brought to bear), bent itself. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 5 Apr 45)

72. The first attack went in early on the morning of 6 Apr, but made no headway against heavy small arms fire, and while it was in progress, civilians reported infiltration into our extended lines of communication north along the line Delden - Bornebroek. A small battle group made up of elements of Linc & Welld R. (reverted to Comd 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 1030 hours, 5 Apr) and 29 Cdn Recce Regt tanks was sent to deal with it, and by late afternoon had succeeded in pushing the enemy back across the canal west of Bornebroek with severe losses. This minor success, however, was offset by that of the enemy against the Algonquins, whose second attack by "D" Coy along the axis Almelo - Wierden had been repulsed with considerable casualties. North of Almelo around Aadorp (2420)

* 38 Para Regt (7 Para Div)
32 Para Regt (8 Para Div)
2 Tp, 267 Flak Bn, (AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/L/F, Docket I: Folio 23, Intrep No. 136, 8 Apr 45).

our troops had better luck; for here the Alq R. carrier platoon went into action with machine gun and flame-thrower to wipe out an entire enemy out-post, killing 25 Germans and capturing 12. (W.D., H.Q. 13 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Apr 45)

73. All through the night of 6/7 Apr the Northern Ontario regiment continued to probe the approaches to Wierden, but with small measure of success. The enemy in the village were well placed to cover the road from Almelo and had enough heavy support to discourage any movement against them; moreover, across the eastern edge of Wierden ran the Hollandergraven Canal over which the Canadian infantry must cross to enter the village. It was the old story of a few fanatical defenders choosing a vital point as their stronghold, a repetition of any of a dozen or more of the delaying actions with which our troops had had to contend earlier in the campaign. The quality of the enemy's choice of ground was to prove itself during the next two days. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde; Alq R., Linc & Welld R., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 6 Apr 45; also G.S. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945, Appx 79, Intreps No. 134, 135)

THE ARMY COMMANDER'S DIRECTIVE, 7 APR 45

74. The following morning, while Maj-Gen Vokes' armour waited outside Meppen for the moment to force a crossing of the Ems and his infantrymen tested Wierden, General Crerar sat down in his caravan at Army Headquarters to prepare a new directive to his Corps Commanders. He wrote:

The tasks of First Canadian Army are as follows:

- (a) To open up and secure for use the route Arnhem - Zutphen.
- (b) To clear North-east Holland.
- (c) To clear North-west Germany up to the line of the Weser.
- (d) To be prepared to take over Bremen from Second British Army and advance eastwards to the Elbe protecting the left flank of Second British Army and clearing the Cuxhaven Peninsula.
- (e) Simultaneously with (b) above to operate westwards to clear west Holland.

(W.D., G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, April 1945: Appx 2, Directive, G.O.C.-in-C., 1-0-4/1, 7 Apr 45)

The share of 2 Cdn Corps was a trident thrust, with western, and northern and north-eastern lines:

Simultaneously, but without detriment to the preparation and early execution of Operation "CANNONSHOT" - which has as its object the crossing of the IJssel from the east, and the capture of the high ground between that place and Arnhem - 2 Canadian Corps will operate Northwards to clear North-east Holland.

Without prejudice to the speedy carrying out of the responsibilities indicated in paragraph 7 above and on a lower priority, 2 Canadian Corps will also proceed to operate north-eastwards to clear the coastal belt of Germany, including all naval establishments, up to the line of the R. Weser. During such operations 2 Canadian Corps will direct our armoured division on the axis Almelo - Neuenhaus - Meppen - Sogel - Friesoythe - Oldenburg, so as to afford a measure of security to the left flank of Second British Army.

(Ibid)

This latter task, as we shall see, fell to 4 Cdn Armd Div.

2 CDN INF DIV'S OPERATIONS, 5-7 APR 45^{*}

75. The example set by the armoured division in its brilliant break-out on the right had been followed with almost equal success by the two infantry formations further to the west. In the centre of Lt-Gen Simonds' front on the morning of 5 Apr Brigadier McGill's 5 Cdn Inf Bde continued their push towards Laren. From their original objectives on the left of the Groot Dochteren - Laren Road which they had occupied during the night before, R. de Mais supported by "A" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt pushed to their final objectives astride the main road south-west of Laren, reaching them before dawn on 5 Apr. Behind the French-Canadians, the Calgary Highlanders had moved up to take over the left flank, while well to the front "A" Sqn 8 Cdn Recce Regt felt out the approaches to Laren and the flanks. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 5 Apr 45)

76. Shortly after daybreak 6 Cdn Inf Bde arrived in the line and Fus M.R. relieved the Calgaries, who swung to the right directed onto the stretch of road connecting Laren and Lochem. Meanwhile as R.H.C. prepared to pass

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets 34 - Groenlo, 28 - Almelo, 22 - Coevorden, 33 - Zutphen. Appx "E".

through to attack Laren, R. de Mais was ordered to side-step to the north-west to secure the left flank, and Calg Highrs began advancing on the right on a line parallel to the railway track. (Ibid)

77. The Black Watch went forward at 0745 hours, 5 Apr, led by "C" and "B" Coys mounted on the tanks of "A" Sqn of the Fort Garry Horse (10 Cdn Armd Regt) and on the carriers of the battalion's support company. The enemy, however, was not prepared to let the armoured column get too far ahead, and just before the Canadians reached their forming up place a terrific hail of fire forced the infantry to dismount and go to ground. A second bombardment of shell, rocket, and mortar followed, causing many casualties to "C" Coy, and two of the missiles unfortunately landed right on top of the Black Watch tactical headquarters. The officer in temporary command of the unit, Maj E. Motzfeldt, the Scout Platoon Commander, the Intelligence Officer and several others were wounded, and the task of getting the troops forward fell to Maj A. Traversy, the senior company commander. There was a little delay but a new plan was formed and at 1115 hours the advance was resumed. The first objectives in Laren were overrun without much trouble and by mid-afternoon the town and its approaches were firmly controlled by R.H.C. (Ibid). Contact patrols were then dispatched on either flank. (Ibid; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 2199, 3173, 3177; W.D., R.H.C., April 1945, Appx 13; Ops Log, serials 225, 286, 290, 295, 300, 320, 321). Fortunately, neither the R. de Mais to the west nor the Calg Highrs to the south had as much opposition in reaching their allotted objectives. Both units were able to report their new positions by 1500 hours, and spent the remainder of the day establishing flank contacts and patrolling. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 5 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 3177, 3183)

78. Neither of Maj-Gen Matthews' other brigades had been particularly active during 5 Apr. On 4 Cdn Inf Bde's front, an overall readjustment of dispositions took place when R. Regt C., temporarily freed of responsibility by Brigadier McGill's advance towards Laren, sent two of its companies over to the left flank to relieve R.H.L.I. The Hamilton unit, at the time holding a base from which 7 Bde of 3 Cdn Inf Div had struck out westwards, turned over its area to R. Regt C. and began moving eastwards along the railway to seize the bridge sites above Lochem. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 5 Apr 45). The advance of R.H.L.I., while not greatly opposed by "bodies on the ground", was seriously hindered by extensive minefields. By last light however; after all objectives had been heavily engaged by artillery and flame, the battalion consolidated near the hamlet of Exel'tol (0898) thus filling the gap between Calg Highrs of 5 Cdn Inf Bde and the highway bridge north-west of Lochem. (Ibid; and 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 2212, 2220, 2227, 2236, 2238, 2224). The position of Essex Scot R., holding the northern end of the rapidly expanding bridgehead area, remained unchanged and thankfully allowed the Scottish to rest before the next move. (W.D., Essex Scot R., 5 Apr 45)

79. After moving up Fus M.R. to the left side of the Almen - Laren road, headquarters 6 Cdn Inf Bde spent the rest of the day getting its other battalions forward. By last light both Camerons of C. and S. Sask R. were concentrating to the south-west and south of Laren digesting the orders for the next attack. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 5 Apr 45). The intention was that 6 Cdn Inf Bde should form a bridge-head over the Schipbeek Canal. This obstacle extends eastwards from the town of Deventer and cuts the two roads leading from Laren (0600) to Holten and Markelo before curving southwards to join the Twente Canal west of Diepenheim. The method of attack was to be dependent on the opposition encountered south of Laren. If it was light, S. Sask R., mounted on tanks of "C" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt and Kangaroos of 1 Cdn Carrier Regt, would attack north along the main road Laren - Holten preceded by two squadrons of 8 Cdn Recce Regt. Following the main effort would be Fus M.R. on the left flank and Camerons of C. on the right, clearing both sides of the main axis. If the resistance was heavy, then the assault was to be made on a two-battalion front with Fus M.R. and Camerons of C. forward and S. Sask R. in reserve, while a squadron of 8 Cdn Recce Regt patrolled each flank. In their respective concentration areas, the infantry units proceeded to "marry up" according to the prescribed groupings* (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 5 Apr 45; also W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx 5, Intelligence Log, 5 Apr 45, serial 61**).

80. During the night 5/6 Apr minor advances were made by Fus M.R. and Camerons of C. against light opposition indicating that the enemy had pulled back. This meant that Brigadier Allard's alternative plan could be put into operation.

* GROUPINGS:-

The following groupings will be carried out in conc areas NORTH of br in 0197:-

In sp Fus MR	- 1 tp C Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt 1 tp (towed) 17 pdrs - 23 A Tk Bty 1 MMG pl - C Coy Tor Scot (MG).
In sp Camerons of C	- 1 tp C Sqn 10 Armd Regt, 1 tp (towed) 17 pdrs - 23 A Tk Bty
In sp S. Sask R.	- 2 tps C Sqn 10 Armd Regt, 1 sqn Kangaroos, 1 Scissors br sec (?) 1 Sherman dozer, 1 Engr Recce Party (7 Fd Coy RCE), A Coy Tor Scot (MG) 1 Pl C Coy Tor Scot (MG), 1 tp (SP) 23 A Tk Bty.

CONC:-

Fus MR in present location, Camerons of C in present location of R. de Mais - 043001. S Sask R SOUTH of Calg Highrs - 066982.

** (Ibid).

(W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Apr 45). Shortly after midnight "A" Coy Camerons of C. was mounted on carriers and directed on the bridge over the Shipbeek canal 4000 yards north of Oolde (0401), with the object of preventing the enemy from demolishing it and establishing a bridgehead there. (Ibid: Appx 5, Intelligence Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 83, 90, 6 Apr 45, serials 2, 3, 5). If the Camerons succeeded in this, then S. Sask R. was to be passed through to the east to capture the main bridge site south of Holten. By "building up" their patrols, the Camerons were able to seize the village of Oolde early on 6 Apr and allowed 8 Cdn Recce Regt to move on seeking contact. There was little sign of the enemy to be found and by 0700 hours Lt-Col A.A. Kennedy, D.S.O., E.D., had his men concentrated between Dorth (0404) and the bridge, which was already in shambles but over the wreckage of which it was possible to move marching troops. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 6 Apr 45). At 1300 hours the commanding officer gave his orders for the crossing, and within three and a quarter hours "A" and "B" Coys were on the north bank with "C" Coy about to cross. (Ibid)

81. The good fortune which our troops had enjoyed thus far, however, was not to last much longer, for immediately after consolidation by the Camerons' three rifle companies, the German guns and mortars opened up impeding communications by causing several casualties among the regimental signallers. (Ibid). There was no let up in the enemy's retaliation against the bridgehead force, which by nightfall was firmly dug in with its flanks south of the canal protected by "D" Coy on the right and a composite company of Calg Highrs (5 Cdn Inf Bde) on the left. Similarly, Brigadier Allard's other battalion had moved up and the end of the day found Fus M.R. holding the area of Bekmansbroek (0804) and S. Sask R. concentrated astride the main road just south of the Fusiliers. (Ibid). The intention for the morrow was to expand the holding north of the Schipbeek Canal and, as Camerons of C. continued to draw the enemy's attention towards their bridgehead on the left flank, S. Sask R. made hasty preparation for its journey to the other side of the obstacle. (W.Ds., Camerons of C; S. Sask R; 6 Apr 45)

82. While Brigadier Allard's men had been facing up to the Schipbeek Canal, 5 Cdn Inf Bde had held Laren and exploited further eastwards along the Twente Canal with Calg Highrs, who covered another 800 yards eastwards to settle along the track from the buildings at Huurneman (0799) to Hiddink (0799) (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, serial 23, W.Ds., Calg Highrs and 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Apr 45). Brigadier Cabeldu had also readjusted his positions to suit the situation created by 6 Cdn Inf Bde's advance to the north. On the right R.H.L.I. were ordered to move to the east to secure the other bridge site near Lochem station as the railroad bridge in their present area was not satisfactory. By 1500 hours Lt-Col H.C. Arrell had his companies consolidated in their new positions. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 6 Apr 45, serials 2291, 2336). Simultaneously Essex Scot had been moving northwards: and by 1800 hours had covered another 3000 yards to enter the area covered by 8 Cdn Recce Regt in its sweep to contact. (Ibid: serials 2358, 2366; also W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 6 Apr 45)

83. Nightfall saw the Essex firmly holding the wooded area north of Harfsen with the forward troops on the highway and strong company positions on either flank. Under Lt-Col Pangman's command at that time was "A" Coy R. Regt C., which became responsible for the line of supply to Harfsen. The other companies of R. Regt C. remained south-east of Harfsen (with elements of 10 Cdn Armd Regt) acting as a mobile counter-attack force for R.H.L.I. far on the eastern flank. (Ibid: serials 2358, 2366, 2377; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 6 Apr 45)

84. Maj-Gen Matthews' intention for 7 Apr was to build up his bridgehead over the Schipbeek Canal along the axis Laren - Holten. 8 Cdn Recce Regt was to tap out Holten and, if resistance allowed, was to reconnoitre both the high ground to the north and the Holten - Rijssen road. The capture of Holten was entrusted to 5 Cdn Inf Bde. By way of additional and highly mobile fire power, 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) less one Squadron, (under General Matthews' command since the morning of 6 Apr), was to grasp the first opportunity to carry out medium reconnaissance ahead of the advancing infantry along the road Raalte - Zwolle. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serial 3148; 6 Apr 45, serial 2403). To 4 Cdn Inf Bde was left the task of securing the firm base the division had created on the northern bank of the Twente Canal and thereby preventing any interference with the bridging operations north of Lochem. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H; Docket V, April 1945, Liaison Officers' Reports 061500B)

OPERATIONS BY 3 CDN INF DIV, 5-7 APR 45*

85. Meanwhile, on Lt-Gen Simonds' left flank, 3 Cdn Inf Div, although forced to contain several local centres of resistance along the east bank of the IJssel River, had moved 7 Cdn Inf Bde northwards in conformity with 2 Cdn Inf Div on its right. On the morning of 5 Apr, 9 Cdn Inf Bde exerted further pressure on the southern and south-eastern approaches to Zutphen and 8 Cdn Inf Bde continued to maintain a series of "containing" outposts along the eastern bank of the IJssel from the area of Doesburg northward to Steenderen (9386), Bronkhorst (9387), Baak (9788) and Wichmond (9889); while the other brigades were thus employed, 7 Cdn Inf Bde ordered its first battalion (Regina Rif) to cross the Twente Canal. (See para 22). The Reginas, their open flank protected by a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, struck westwards from the line held by 4 Cdn Inf Bde at 0530 hours, using "B" and "C" Coys up

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets 33 - Zutphen, 27 - Hatten.
G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 3903 - Steenderen, 3803 - Zutphen, 3702 - Deventer, 3703 - Bathmen, also Appx "E".

on the left and right respectively. The leading troops met only light opposition, which was effectively smothered by the supporting fire of tanks, and reached the eastern part of Eefde by 0820 hours, whereupon "A" and "D" Coys passed through. By 1400 hours Regina Rif had consolidated its objective. A similar thrust towards Zutphen by R. Wpg Rif along the south bank of the canal was equally successful. After the initial break-out from the area held by 6 Cdn Inf Bde at 0540 hours "A" and "C" Coys had no trouble in getting to the railway between Huize de Voorst (9796) and Veldkamp (9896). At that point the two other companies passed on to secure the line Den Dam (967966) to the circular roadway west of Huize de Voorst (975967). By 1630 hours both units with their supporting tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt were firm; 1 C. Scot R., the reserve battalion, had been ordered to stand down for the time being. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, H.Q. 7, 8, 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, Regina Rif, R. Wpg Rif, 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 5 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 1, 5, 22, 23, 42, 45, 51)

86. The progress of 7 Cdn Inf Bde was sufficient to enable the engineers to get on with their job of bridging the canal south of Eefde. The sappers plied their trade with great enthusiasm even though the site at Eefde was still under fire from the unsubdued Hun in Zutphen. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Apr 45; AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V: Special Report No. 22, R.C.E.). In the short space of three hours the sappers of 6 Cdn Fd Coy completed a 70-foot Bailey bridge over the gap - "an exceptionally fast job". A smoke screen laid between the bridge builders and Zutphen gave some protection against observed fire, but it was by no means a mere routine job:

Work commenced at 1500 hrs and there were no further interruptions until 1730 hrs when the last riband bolts were being tightened and the finishing touches put to the bridge. At this time a sniper opened up on the bridge with a Schmeisser and although his aim was bad it was most unpleasant. The bridge was opened for traffic at 1800 hrs.

(AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F,
Docket V: Report No. 22, R.C.E.;
45/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket II,
Vol 1, Report on Smoke Screens
Carried Out by First Cdn Army,
p. 34)

Thus another route to the north was now available.

87. On the southern approaches to Zutphen 9 Cdn Inf Bde had not been idle. The early hours of 5 Apr had found Nth N.S. Highrs and "A" Sqn 27 Cdn Armd Regt still battling hard for the right to enter Warnsveld (9694). After a rough time spent in clearing the hospital area on the left, "A" Coy held its ground to allow "C" Coy to pass through. On the right, however, "B" Coy could not get past the road junction east of the hunting lodge (976949). Here the chief cause of trouble came from the woods between the two axes; in these woods were

many well placed snipers who harassed every move the infantry made to press on. Soon after first light two troops of crocodiles reported for duty and these were sent forward, but as the flame-throwing monsters edged their way up the woods, they too ran into serious opposition. "B" Coy was then ordered to switch to the south to assist the supporting vehicles through. This was done at grievous cost, one platoon officer being killed and the company commander wounded. A short delay followed while a replacement officer came up to take over. A fresh effort by "B" Coy cleared the woods and once this was done, "B" Coy returned to the northern axis. From there on the advance was totally successful; two 20-mm guns which had been pouring a volume of shells eastwards were speedily overrun by the flame-supported thrust and "D" Coy was launched through along the main northern route into Warnsveld. At the same time "C" Coy came in from the south from Bieshorst (973944). By 1830 hours 5 Apr Warnsveld was clear, Nth N.S. Highrs being in firm control of the town with "C" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt settled on the northern flank along the tramway. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Nth N.S. Highrs, 5 Apr 45, also 3 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serials 10, 13, 19, 26, 28, 63, 80, 85)*

88. While the North Novas had been blasting a path into Warnsveld, Brigadier Rockingham's other two highland units had conformed on the left and made minor gains to ensure the complete enclosure of Zutphen from the south-east. Nightfall saw the brigade in contact all across the front after a day of sharp skirmishing and constant patrols. A particular highlight was a sortie by "B" Coy S.D. & G. Highrs which assaulted an enemy strong-point around the hamlet of Brinke (965934) killing over thirty-four Germans.** (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs, H.L.I. of C., 5 Apr 45). Further to the south, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, apart from keeping a watchful eye over its extended sector, had been busy formulating new plans. The brigade, presently under the guidance of Lt-Col S.M. Lett, was given the task of assaulting the fortress of Zutphen. The attack was to be carried out by N. Shore R. and R. de Chaud. Q.O.R. of C. with under command "B" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, and elements of C.H. of O. (M.G.) and 3 Cdn A.Tk Bty were to assume responsibility for the line east of the Ijssel river from Doesburg to Bronkhorst. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde & units, 5 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, 6 Apr 45; serial 26; also 235Cl.013 (D5) Ops 3 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 6 Jun 44 - 5 May 45)

* War Diary and other sources inadequate. The Ops Log explains the full story more clearly.

** 3 Bn, 3 Para Trg Regt: 3 Para Rft Regt (3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summaries, op cit, Folio 33, ISUM No. 111, 6 Apr 45)

THE START OF THE ASSAULT ON ZUTPHEN BY
8 AND 9 CDN INF BDES, 6 APR 45*

89. The attack on Zutphen began at 0430 hours 6 Apr with N. Shore R. on the right, R. de Chaud on the left, going through R. Wpg Rif's positions between the Nth N.S. Highrs and the Twente Canal. R. de Chaud was able to make good progress against steady resistance but N. Shore R. was literally stopped in its tracks by well-directed crossfire. At 0900 hours the brigade commander decided that the best thing to do was to reinforce the success achieved so far by R. de Chaud and he ordered the New Brunswick unit to pull back, swing left and pass through the R. de Chaud's right flank which now faced the moat on the north-eastern sector of Zutphen. Accordingly at 1300 hours "A" and "C" Coys N. Shore R. moved into the new position. Both units then settled to consolidate the ground won and reorganize for a fresh attack. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, N. Shore R., 6 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 29, 8 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945; Appx 1, Sitrep No. 550)

90. On the southern approaches to Zutphen 9 Cdn Inf Bde was also experiencing difficulty in closing in on the town. There were still several mutually supporting strong points to be cleaned out but as the average operational map will show, the numerous streams and rivulets west of the line Ooierhoek (9693) - Warnsveld made any large organized advance dangerously impractical. Brigadier Rockingham could do little else besides harass the enemy's southern outpost defences leaving the reduction of the canal-bound fortress to 8 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 6 Apr 45)

91. The operations against Zutphen on 6 Apr were really overshadowed by another smaller yet much fiercer battle still further to the south. Q.O.R. of C., left to contain the line Doesburg - Bronkhorst since the previous day, had not been content to sit idle, and on the afternoon of 5 Apr launched a three-company attack towards the river line. The attack commenced at 1600 hours (5 Apr). "D" Coy, striking south from the village of Emmer (9285) to capture the farm at t'Huis Weerd (914857) north of Rha (9185), completed the task at 1700 hours without opposition but under difficult conditions, having to advance on its objective through a network of muddy and waterlogged trenches. Neither "A" Coy, (which had the task of reaching Rha from the east), nor "B" Coy (whose objective was the hamlet of Pipelure (9083)) had an easy time. At 1730 hours "B" Coy was nearing its objective when the two forward platoons were pinned down. The situation deteriorated with the passing minutes, and lacking the necessary heavier support the infantrymen could not advance further. The reserve platoon had to be quickly employed to enable the other battered sub-units to withdraw. "A" Coy had an even rougher time, the leading platoon (No. 9) used the water filled trenches to reach the outskirts of Rha

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 3803 - Zutphen,
G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets
33 - Zutphen, 40 - Arnhem, also Appx "E".

without much trouble, then the second platoon moved through into the open towards the town while the last platoon swung to the right into the village. At this point the enemy began pounding the riflemen from three sides, then counter-attacked viciously and as one report puts it "a nightmare battle began". (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 5 Apr 45)

92. In the darkness Canadian fought German hand to hand and very soon the situation became hopeless against the enemy's numerical superiority. In the dwindling light from the burning houses, our infantry retired eastwards again, taking five of their wounded with them, but they left five dead and six others were unaccounted for. The hazardous trip back to Eekhoorn (9285) completed, "A" Coy, depleted and weary, turned its area over to "C" Coy and moved back into reserve for reorganization and rest. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 5 Apr 45; also Appx 52, Operation "PLUNDER" Phase II, 5 & 6 Apr 45). An "all out" effort to wreak vengeance took place the next day when the fire power of the entire battalion and its supporting arms was turned on Rha and the neighbouring farms. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 6 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div, Ops Log, 5 Apr 45, serial 90, 6 Apr 45, serial 8, 24, 32)

7 CDN INF BDE SWINGS TO THE NORTH, 6 APR 45*

93. As soon as 8 Cdn Inf Bde passed through to attack Zutphen Maj-Gen R.H. Keebler ordered 7 Cdn Inf Bde to build up its strength north of the Twente Canal and to clear a divisional axis from Zutphen to Deventer (9207). This advance began at 0750 hours 6 Apr, 1 C. Scot R., supported by a squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt, led the way with a squadron of reconnaissance cars working to the front and on the right flank. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Apr 45). The Scottish were directed on Gorssel (9501), a small community some five thousand yards north of the recently completed bridge at Eefde. The Reginas were to follow up keeping slightly to the west until ordered to pass on to Epse (9404), while R. Wpg Rif travelled up the line of the railway beyond Joppe (9702), the immediate object being to position the brigade for the coming assault on Deventer. (Ibid)

94. The leading battalion made good progress and by 0840 hours "B" Coy (1 C. Scot R.) was at the road junction south of Gorssel. Lt-Col L.S. Henderson was then instructed to take advantage of the slackening resistance and not to stop in Gorssel but to press on to the village of Epse about two and a half miles further on. Upon receipt of this order,

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets 33 - Zutphen, 27 - Hattem.
G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 3803 - Zutphen, 3703 - Bathmen;
also Appx "E".

1 C. Scot R. proceeded northward, but left one company to clear the wood at Eester Loo (9300) on the left flank, where some enemy had been reported. At about this time R. Wpg Rif began to move along the railway on the right. By 1230 hours, as the Scottish pushed on to Epse, R. Wpg Rif were past Joppe and around the highway and railroad junction one thousand yards to the north. Regina Rif was now directed on Gorssel and became responsible for mopping up the sector vacated by 1 C. Scot R. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V; folio 17, Special Report No. 26, Operation "PLUNDER", prepared by 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Part II).

95. During the afternoon of 6 Apr Brigadier Gibson's battalions were urged to press on as fast as possible. R. Wpg Rif were to occupy the area of Oxe (9704), Regina Rif were to swing over to the right flank and take over Joppe, and 7 Cdn Recce Regt, of which two squadrons were now operating under Brigadier Gibson, was directed to send one north-east of Oxe to Dorterhoek (0005). Once there the reconnaissance men must try to cross the Schipbeek canal. The other reconnaissance squadron was based at Gorssel and had the task of "swanning" about that place, clearing to the south-west and north as far as Epse whatever of the enemy's troops had been missed by the infantry units. (Ibid). Lt-Col L.R. Fulton, D.S.O., had his companies in the new area by 1600 hours, but not without a few casualties mainly caused by sniping and mortar fire. The Winnipeg positions at this time formed a protective semi-circle just north of Oxe with three companies, "D" on the left, "C" slightly forward in the centre astride the road and "B" on the right near Vesterbosch (9805). "A" Coy was in Oxe itself with battalion headquarters occupying what had been the local gaol. (Ibid). As a matter of interest it was in that building that the "Riflemen" were again reminded of the devilish treatment which on special occasions the fanatical German was wont to mete out to his unfortunate prisoners; and to use the words of the unit War Diary

A dismal sight awaited us when some of the tps discovered a brick firing bay. On this brick wall was smattering of blood and flesh. The earth at the base of the wall was extremely soft and one of the men was curious enough to start digging. In a few minutes time the battered body of a middle-aged man appeared. This was only part of the dismal and gruesome sight for after a few hours ten similar bodies lay on the surface. The bodies were identified the following day by a member of the Dutch Underground. He told us that the German Gestapo had held these people as prisoners for they were suspected to be members of the Dutch Underground. We were also informed that when the Gestapo heard that we were coming they murdered their prisoners and evacuated the camp.

(W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Apr 45)

It was but another atrocity to be credited to the enemy for future retribution.

96. R. Wpg Rif did not linger long at Oxe; the bridge across the Schipbeek north-west of the village was demolished but not enough to prevent the Pioneer platoon from improvising a way for "D" Coy to get over to form a perimeter at about 2100 hours. They were quickly followed first by "B" Coy which passed through to consolidate on the right then at 0300 hours the following morning by "A" and "C" Coys, which went on to dig in along the east west track south of Colmschate (9806). Thus by the morning of 7 Apr, 7 Cdn Inf Bde had R. Wpg Rif north of the canal firmly holding their bridgehead under heavy mortar fire, Regina Rif between them and Joppe to the south flanked by a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, and 1 C. Scot R. on the left near Epse with another reconnaissance squadron along the southern lines of communication based on Gorssel. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 6 Apr 45, serial 93, 7 Apr 45, serial 3, 7 Cdn Inf Bde Special Report No. 26, Cp "PLUNDER", Part II). During the night 6/7 Apr the staff at H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde completed a careful listing of possible air support targets on the approaches to Deventer and on the west bank of the IJssel River in that area. This list was passed to Maj-Gen Keebler's Headquarters and, early on the morning of 7 Apr, the air contact car reported for duty. As the narrative of the next few days action will show, the air support, aided by perfect weather, was both considerable and successful. (Ibid)

THE SITUATION OF 2 CDN CORPS, 7 APR 45*

97. Lt-Gen Simonds' battle map at this time presented a strange yet satisfying picture. It showed his Corps stretched out across a long straggling front from Maj-Gen Vokes' rapidly strengthening position at Meppen, westwards to Coevorden then south through Almelo to the north bank of the Twente Canal west of Delden, whence the Canadians dominated the canal as far west as Lochem. From there the front swung north again through Exel'tol and Laren to Maj-Gen Matthews' new bridgehead over the Schipbeek Canal south-west of Holten. The line of forward troops then edged westwards along the southern bank of the Schipbeek to the left flank as represented by the IJssel River. Along this flank Maj-Gen Keebler's men were threatening Deventer from the south, attacking Zutphen from the north-east, east and south-east, and containing the enemy's last remnants east of the river down to Doesburg. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/G, Trace No. 274, 7 Apr 45)

98. The area south-west of Doesburg bounded by the oude IJssel on the right, the IJssel River to the front and the Neder Rijn on the left, and which included such places as Loil, Didam, Zevenaar and Westervoort was now under Corps control. A composite force made up of "A" Sqn 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt and the dismounted 103 and 74 Btys of 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheet N1 - Almelo.

took over the sector at 1830 hours 4 Apr and was supplemented by a troop of medium guns of 83 Fd Bty R.A. the next day. The remainder of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) (under Lt-Gen Simonds' direction since the 2 Apr) then went under command 2 Cdn Inf Div (6 Apr) and proceeded to concentrate at Laren (0600). (W.Ds., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) 4 - 6 Apr 45; also Appx 6B "Map showing dispositions", 4 - 6 Apr 45; 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 4 - 6 Apr 45). Another unit introduced into the current operations was 2 Cdn Corps Def Coy (P.E.I.L.H.) which took over a portion of the front along the Twente Canal on 5 Apr. The Prince Edward Islanders were given the task of holding and patrolling from the road bridge (1097) near Lochem eastwards to the junction of the Twente and Schipbeek canals (1500) after it had been reported that some of the enemy's troops were attempting to infiltrate. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/F, Docket I, Folio 10, Summary of Ops, 1 - 7 Apr 45, p. 2, para 7)

PLANS OF 2 CDN CORPS, 7 APR 45*

99. Lt-Gen Simonds' intention for 7 Apr was for 4 Cdn Armd Div to retain its firm base in the triangle Almelo - Borne - Delden while Brigadier Moncel secured a crossing over the Ems at Meppen. Following that, Maj-Gen Vokes' armour was to leave a force to protect the bridgehead and to thrust out towards Sogel (8472). 2 Cdn Inf Div was to complete its crossing of the Schipbeek Canal, capture Holten and exploit eastwards with its reconnaissance regiment to contact 4 Cdn Armd Div's firm base. For a similar exploitation in the opposite direction, Maj-Gen Matthews was given 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.). 3 Cdn Inf Div was to press on to Deventer with 7 Cdn Inf Bde and then to advance on Zwolle, while 8 and 9 Brigades cleaned out Zutphen and mopped up to the IJssel River south of that town. "A" Sqn of the Royal Canadian Dragoons with its two batteries of 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt would continue in its present role, while along the Twente Canal between the bridgeheads of 2 Cdn Inf and 4 Cdn Armd Div, the Corps Defence Company (P.E.I.L.H.) supported by a detachment from 6 Cdn Armd Regt besides 30 Fd Coy, R.C.E., would establish its own bridgehead with the object of erecting a class 40 bridge near Goor (2104). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945, Appx 5, Intention 2 Cdn Corps, 7 Apr 45)

100. Besides his normal array of strength Lt-Gen Simonds also had had **under command** since 2 Apr 1 Cdn Inf Div, which was commanded by Maj-Gen H.W. Foster. The "Red Patch Devils" who had been concentrating west of the Rhine near Cleve, were now ordered to prepare for Operation "CANNONSHOT", the attack westwards across the IJssel River, by moving their leading assault elements over the Rhine into the area of Baak

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets N1 - Almelo, N2 - Osnabruck, M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg.

and Hummelo. (Ibid). Thus, for his forthcoming operations, Lt-Gen Simonds was to have all three Canadian infantry divisions, 4 Cdn Armd Div, and, as the Army Commander had informed Lt-Gen Simonds on 5 Apr, their old armoured partners, 1 Polish Armd Div. In addition he had 2 Cdn Armd Bde, both the Canadian armoured car regiments, as well as 2 Cdn A.G.R.A. He would, however, only have control of 1 Cdn Inf Div for Operation "CANNONSHOT". When the Ijssel had been successfully crossed from the east that formation would revert to 1 Cdn Corps. The Poles were to be available on 7 Apr, and there was a chance that a British Division, 5 Inf Div, would join him on 15 Apr. (Ibid: also AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/R/F, Docket II, Personal War Diary Notes, Brigadier N.E. Rodger, C.B.E., 5 Apr 45)

THE ENEMY'S POSITION, 7 APR 45^{*}

101. Even if the enemy had known the size of the force which was about to be hurled against him, it does not seem at all likely that he would have withdrawn from north-western Holland. His every action of the past few days on our left flank and in some cases in the centre made clear that he intended to stand on the banks of the Ijssel, resisting stubbornly at Zutphen, Doesburg and in small pockets between these two places. By contrast to this dogged defence effort his organized resistance on the right had literally collapsed. Now the only serious obstacle to an Allied advance further into north-western Germany lay in the Ems River. In the centre also the German troops had begun to fall back. (Ibid; First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary No. 280, 6 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summary No. 53, 6 Apr 45)

102. The importance of the lightning thrust northward on the right flank cannot be overestimated, for it was the cause of greatest confusion to the enemy, and even that unpleasant but efficient little man General Eugen Meindl, Commanding 2 Para Corps, appears to have been vague as to the course of events on his side. Later, when General Meindl was questioned, his interrogators explained that while he had given much information about the campaign up to April 1945, he had done so by referring to a set of personal notes. (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary, No. 280, 6 Apr 45). But as the interrogating officers stated in their report:

From April 1 to April 11 he was apparently much too busy to keep up this account. He only knew that it was a period of complete confusion in which each commander acted on his own initiative without reference to higher authority. As far as he knows there was no great strategical plan for the withdrawal north to Germany. The only order he received was the desperate and oft-repeated invocation to "Hold on at all costs".

* Reference maps: As for para 99.

The boundary between 88 Corps and 2 Para Corps was roughly the Dutch border. With 6 Para Division on the right flank and 7 and 8 Parachute Divisions taking over the rest of the corps front to the Ems River, 2 Parachute Corps began its slow retreat. But a sharp armoured thrust early in April resulted in the capture of Almelo, Hengelo and Nordhorn and split 2 Para Corps from its right hand neighbour, 88 Corps. The speed of this attack cut off 6 Parachute Division from 7 Parachute Division. As a result 6 Parachute Division was taken from under Meindl's command and placed under 88 Corps. This latter Corps, a part of Twenty-Fifth Army, was then ordered to retire behind the Ijssel River and defend Eastern Holland from attack.

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F,
Docket III, Special Interrogation
Report - General Eugen Meindl)

The armoured attack referred to by Meindl was the good job done by Maj-Gen Vokes' 4 Cdn Armd Div after the crossing of the Twente Canal.

103. The story is now taken up by Lt-Gen Hermann Plocher, whose formidable 6 Para Div, after attempting to hold the shore of the Rhine between Emmerich and Rees, had suffered the unique fate of being chased out of Germany into Holland. After this humiliation the first line he attempted to hold was from Terborg to Aalten, but this was broken by the British and by 2 Cdn Inf Div, as we have seen. Having lost contact with 8 Para Div, Plocher withdrew with an open left flank. When the Twente Canal had been crossed, the division retired once more:

It was at this stage that Plocher received his orders to swing his defence line back into Holland. He now understood his task to be a withdrawal over the River Ijssel and the defence of the west bank of that river. Establishing a bridgehead position at Deventer, and slowly falling back in a northwesterly direction he carried out this curious tactical move. Once back to the Ijssel, part of the division crossed over to the west bank at Wijhe, while the balance of it took up another bridgehead position at Zwolle... Plocher attributes his ability to carry out this rather complicated manoeuvre to the same slow and planned allied tactics which had enabled him to fall back in the Reichswald. The tactics, he says, always followed the same pattern. First there was a reconnaissance, then a tank attack, then infantry widened the penetration and then there was a consolidation. Each step took about three days and each time Plocher was able to regroup and consolidate his front.

(Special Interrogation Report,
op cit, Lt-Gen Hermann Plocher)

104. Interrogation of prisoners at that time indicated that even the tough men in the ranks of the parachute divisions were beginning to lose heart:

Morale: not very good, because they always have to fight against armour and because they never get their promised rest. PW explained that where they have to fight as infantry against infantry they usually "enjoy" this and fight on.

(W.D., First Cdn Army G. Int
Files, 40-6-4/Int Vol 3: 6
Para Div, 1-1776, 071730 hrs)

Of another of Flocher's men the interrogator reported:

PW was a typical example of a former tough paratrooper who had had enough. He was terrified of our flamethrowers which had launched the final attacks on his position.

(Ibid, Intrep Lt E.E.
Sorenson 062200 hrs)

Nevertheless it was still expected that most of the parachutists would fight to the end, for in the Nazi way of life there seemed to be no place for capitulation.

AIR SUPPORT, 2-7 APR 45

105. An important factor in the enemy's present state of confusion could be attributed to the widespread air effort in support of First Cdn Army. From the morning of 2 Apr up to 0930 hours 7 Apr, 84 Group R.A.F. flew 961 sorties over General Crerar's Sector, mostly on Armed Reconnaissance in varying types of weather which became more unsettled during the last two days of the period under review. The claims of damage, however, were impressive. A telephone exchange was destroyed near Utrecht on 2 Apr; so were many vehicles including locomotives and tanks. The plan of destruction went on throughout 3 Apr, when "Meteor" jet fighters went into operations for the first time with 84 Group, and continued apace over the next three days with fair success. There was hardly a sight of the Luftwaffe, which until 5 Apr had seemingly been confining its attention to the area of Kassel on the American front. On that day, however, an increase in German air activity became noticeable in 21 Army Group's sector. 83 Group R.A.F. ran into several Luftwaffe sorties and destroyed several German fighters. This switch in attention by the enemy to the Hanover - Lingen area was probable proof of his sensitiveness to the threat imposed to the crossing places over the River Weser by Lt-Gen Dempsey's advance. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket I, 84 Group R.A.F. Intelligence Summaries Nos. 235, 239, 6 Apr 45)

SECOND ARMY OPERATIONS, 4-7 APR 45^x

106. The Weser was first reached by Lt-Gen E.H. Barker's 8 Brit Corps. On the extreme right, 6 Airborne Division, advancing on the axis Osnabruck - Lubbecke (6012) - Minden, got to the river on 5 Apr with orders to bridge the river either at the historical town of Minden or at Petershagen (8420) to the north. Meanwhile, 11 Brit Armd Div, with instructions to protect the Corps' left flank on the line of the Weser, had entered Stolzenau (9135) another town on the same river. Here Maj-Gen G.P.B. Roberts proceeded to quickly establish a bridgehead, using 1 Cdo Bde to reinforce it. Events took a bad turn however at Stolzenau. The enemy proved very sensitive to the British thrust and the bridgehead was subjected to some of the heaviest shelling and air attacks ever experienced. This, moreover, was the penalty which 8 Corps had to accept for advancing far beyond the limits which could be covered by our air support. The necessary landing grounds were still not available to us. It was on account of this unforeseen air opposition which wrecked the bridge-site, that the abandonment of the proposed bridgehead by 11 Brit Armd Div resulted early on 7 Apr. The Commander of 8 Corps had little alternative but to order the armoured formation to swing south and pass through 6 Airborne Division's bridgehead at Petershagen. From there Maj-Gen Roberts was directed to keep his flank along the Elbe - Weser Canal and strike out for the River Leine between Wunstorf (1527) and Neustadt (1736). (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I; also First Cdn Army, Liaison Officers' Reports, op cit, 051530B, 071500B, G Ops Second Army; First Cdn Army Ops Log, 5 Apr; serials 53, 96, 122)

107. With 8 Brit Corps and the American Ninth Army on the right thrusting deeper into the heart of Germany, Lt-Gen Dempsey's centre formation, 12 Brit Corps under Lt-Gen Ritchie, which had 7 Armd Div on the right, 52 (L.) Inf Div in the centre and 53 (W.) Inf Div on the left had swung its eastern flank north from Osnabruck and sent the "Desert Rats" through Halen and Bramsche (1623) to ~~secure~~ a bridge over the Ems - Weser Canal early on 5 Apr. From there the Division made hasty progress north-eastwards and by mid-day 6 Apr had captured Diepholz (4346) and Wagenfeld (5840) by an armoured thrust directed around the south of the Dummer Sea, whence the spearheads swung north again to reach the banks of the Weser near Hoya (9568) on the next day. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I). Behind the Armd Div both 52 (L.) and 53 (W.) Div took over the newly won ground and followed up. (Ibid)

108. On the left flank of Second Army Lt-Gen Horrock's 30 Brit Corps, which had been advancing with Gds Armd Div on the right and 43 (W.) Inf Div on the left,

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets M3 - Bremen, N3 - Minden, N4 - Hanover, N2 - Osnabruck. Also Appx "G".

(followed by 3 Brit Inf Div) had regrouped. Maj-Gen Whistler's Div had taken over the left to clear the town of Lingen (which stands at the junction of the Ems River with Dortmund - Ems Canal). The objective of 30 Brit Corps was the city of Bremen, and the plan was for 3 Brit Inf Div to swing south after clearing Lingen to secure two suitable bridges for the armour to use on 6 Apr. Over these the "Guards" were to plunge forth with 43 (W.) Inf Div on the left, leaving Maj-Gen Whistler the task of covering the northern flank next to the Canadians. (Ibid)

109. The assault across the Ems River opposite the garrison town of Lingen had originally been timed for 2000 hours 3 Apr, but just after the commanding officer of 2 K.S.L.I. (185 Inf Bde) had given his orders for a boat-crossing south of Lingen, the cheering message arrived from Gds Armd Div to say that they had seized a bridge intact over the Ems River three miles to the north of the town and west of Altenlingen (6938). The plan of attack was therefore changed, and at 0430 hours 4 Apr, after some hard marching 2 K.S.L.I. reached the bridge. From here the attack went with clock-like precision. The regiment advanced once more eastwards to the outskirts of Altenlingen, the assault boats were brought forward, and at 0530 hours the crossing of the Dortmund - Ems Canal was under way. The slight resistance encountered made it clear that the element of surprise had been achieved. The enemy had been expecting an assault further to the south and no doubt he had been influenced by the fact that the divisional artillery had been carrying out deceptive firing on targets south of Lingen. By the time that the enemy realized his error, the assault had gained the required momentum and 2 Warwick were passed through into Lingen itself followed in turn, first, by 1 Norfolk later in the day; then by 2 Lincolns of 9 Brit Inf Bde at 2000 hours. (Ibid).

110. A night and a full morning of the fiercest street-fighting followed in which the British troops were enthusiastically and effectively supported by Crocodiles. During the afternoon of 5 Apr the enemy threw in his first counter-attack, supported by more than half a dozen self-propelled guns, against 2 Warwick. Four of the offending guns got into the town and caused much trouble. However, by the greatest of combined effort the enemy's attack was broken up and all four guns were captured. Finally, 9 Brit Inf Bde arrived in full strength to establish itself in the southern part of Lingen, followed by 8 Inf Bde which settled down to cover the northern and north-eastern approaches to the town. The flank between the Ems River and the Canal was taken over by the divisional support battalion, 2 M.X. Thus, by 7 Apr, Lingen was secure, 350 prisoners had been taken and a great part of the enemy's garrison had been killed. The Guards Armd and 43 (W.) Divs could now resume the advance eastwards to Bersenbruck (1940) and Haselunne (8353). (Norman Scarfe, Assault Division, p. 235-239; also First Cdn Army Liaison Officers reports, op cit, 041600B; 051530B, 061600B; First Cdn Army Ops Log, 3 Apr 45, serial 165, 4 Apr 45, serials 30, 37, 120, 125, 5 Apr 45, serials 59, 115, 6 Apr 45, serial 5)

PLANS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF S.A.S. TROOPS
28 MAR - 6 APR 45^{xx}

111. The present state of confusion among the enemy's forces facing 21 Army Group was very soon to be increased; and in a manner far from his liking. Daily air reconnaissance indicated that, behind the determined rearguards and demolitions which were delaying the Canadian advance northward, much enemy transport and many troops were starting to head for the east. The enemy had apparently made up his mind to face up to our advance westwards along the line of the IJssel River, but it appeared that he was withdrawing what elements he could spare from Northern Holland. His chosen action was being forced upon him for he could not hope to survive long under the pressure being applied by 2 Cdn Corps from the south. Furthermore, he must pull out eastwards quickly for, even after extracting himself from the corner under pressure by the Canadians, he still had to travel fast to escape the long tentacle of 30 Brit Corps reaching towards Bremen at the mouth of the Weser River. The nature of the country in Northern Holland lent itself to defensive action; its many streams and rivers became severe obstacles once the bridges were demolished and as such were wont to cause considerable delay unless the destruction of the bridges could be prevented and the defensive strong points shaken loose by attack from the rear. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/F, Vol II, Docket III folio 1A, Report by Brigadier J.M. Calvert, D.S.O., Comd S.A.S. Tps, Operations "AMHERST", May 1945, Appx "A" attached Appreciation by Brigadier J.M. Calvert, 30 Mar 45, and attached, "Notes on the Enemy in North-East Holland"; also First Cdn Armd Intelligence Summaries No. 276, 2 Apr 45, Para "Intentions"; No. 279, 5 Apr 45, para "Intentions"; No. 280, 6 Apr 45, para "Intentions").

112. A plan to do this had been under consideration since 28 Mar, when a proposal was made by 21 Army Group for the use of Special Air Service troops in north-east Holland. Two days later an outline plan of operation was approved by the G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, after discussion with Brigadier J.M. Calvert, D.S.O., Commander S.A.S. Troops.^{xx}

x Reference maps: HOLLAND: 1:50,000, Sheets 7 - GRONINGEN, 12 - ASSEN, 17 - BEILEN.

xx Brigadier Calvert had the rare distinction of having a brigade named after him (77th Infantry Brigade (Calvert's Brigade)). He commanded this formation in the Chindit Division under Maj-Gen O.C. Wingate, D.S.O., in Burma, 1943-44.

These troops had four main tasks allotted to them -

- (i) To cause maximum confusion in the area and thus prevent the enemy from taking up fixed positions.
- (ii) To try and prevent demolition of bridges by destroying the demolition charges, in order to hasten the advance of our ground forces.
- (iii) To try and preserve Steenwijk airfield.
- (iv) To raise the resistance in the area.

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/F,
Vol II, Docket III, Folio
3, H.Q. No. 38 Gp R.A.F.,
Report on Operations "AMHERST"
and "KEYSTONE")

The plan actually divided itself into two distinct operations:

- (i) Operation "AMHERST" which provided for the dropping of Nos 2 and 3 Regiments de Chasseurs Parachutistes, with jeeps under British command.
- (ii) Operation "KEYSTONE" which called for the dropping of No. 2 S.A.S. Regt with jeeps preceded by 2 Jedburgh (Wireless) teams to carry out reconnaissance.

(Ibid: folio Ia, Report by
Brigadier Calvert, D.S.O.,
Comd S.A.S. Tps, Operation
"AMHERST", May 1945)

113. The area of operations for Operation "AMHERST" was to be along the important axis Zwolle - Groningen, while Operation "KEYSTONE" would be carried out above ARNHEM and west of Apeldoorn. In the former's area there were listed two airfields (Steenwijk (9869) and Leeuwarden (6815)) and eighteen road and railway bridges, while in the latter area one airfield (Teuge (8406)) and seven bridges were earmarked for attention. No. 38 Group R.A.F. was to be responsible for conveying the parachutists and their equipment to their correct zones of operations. It was calculated that operation "AMHERST" would go in on the night 6/7 Apr 45; "KEYSTONE" was to follow two nights later. However, since everything depended on the weather, their timings were subject to change. (Ibid: Folio 3, H.Q. 38 Gp R.A.F., Report on Operations: Operation "AMHERST" May 1945)

114. Meanwhile the exodus of Germans continued along the line south-west to north-east behind their defence line. The enemy had little choice, however, other than to move under the cover of darkness, for daylight movement in these days of fast declining German air power invariably invited quick annihilation by marauding Allied

* In 1 Cdn Corps' Area.

aircraft. Now, with the scourge of S.A.S. Troops in their midst, the enemy would find that even the darkness had lost its protective shroud. A new terror was about to strike, this time by night and out of the shadows along the roads and tracks leading east to Germany.

115. As events already related have shown, for manifold reasons operation "AMHERST" did not take place on the night 6/7 Apr. On the evening of 5 Apr a message came from Headquarters First Cdn Army to Headquarters S.A.S. and Headquarters 38 Group R.A.F. announcing the first postponement. This however was followed on the night 6/7 Apr by another more heartening message stating that "AMHERST" would take place on the night 7/8 Apr. (Ibid)

OPERATIONS OF 3 CDN INF DIV, 7-11 APR 45^{*}

116. Early on 7 Apr, while the S.A.S. troops awaited their signal to emplane, Lt-Gen Simonds' men resumed the offensive to the north and east. On the left flank 3 Cdn Inf Div was pressing toward Deventer with R. Wpg Rif of 7 Cdn Inf Bde; and girding itself for the final effort against Zutphen with 8 Cdn Inf Bde while preparing to withdraw 9 Cdn Inf Bde for use further to the north on the right of Brigadier Gibson's formation. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7, 8, 9 Cdn Inf Bdes and Units, 7 Apr 45) During the day while R. Wpg Rif strengthened their bridgehead over the Schipbeek Canal, Typhoons on 84 Group R.A.F. softened up the approaches to Deventer with considerable success. Regina Rif were now moved up to new positions on the right flank between the Canal and main road some 2500 yards west of Dorterhoek (0005). They now became responsible for Maj-Gen Keefler's right flank contact, already established by 7 Cdn Recce Regt, with 2 Cdn Inf Div. 1 C. Scot R. also moved closer to the canal. After relief by "B" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, the Scottish concentrated south-west of Oxe with the object of being employed to clear Bathmen (0060) should the divisional axis be swung over to pass through that place. The day was marked by heavy mortar and gun fire against the leading battalion, which took about 30 prisoners. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units and 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 7 Apr 45)

117. The extension of the bridgehead enabled the engineers, who had so far been subjected to heavy fire, to erect a bridge. This was done during the night 7/8 Apr and the Reginas passed over it shortly after midnight. Their task was to keep to the right of the R. Wpg Rif and clear the woods east of Colmschate (9606). Led by "A" Coy, the Reginas were soon on the objectives and in control of the road running through the woods. From here Lt-Col A.S. Gregory was ordered to change direction again, this time to the west. The Reginas were now faced with the task of securing a firm base along the eastern bank of the Zijkanal directly east of

* Reference Maps: G.S.G.S. 4065, Holland, 1:50,000
 Sheets 27 - Hatten, 33 - Zutphen,
 G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000
 Sheets 3702 - Deventer, 3703 - Bathmen,
 also Appx "E"

Doventer. At the same time R. Wpg Rif were instructed to establish a company position on the left flank at the railway junction (949071) about 1000 yards to the west. This effort was successful and by 1445 hours the company held the railway junction and had thirteen prisoners, mostly from the Flieger Horst Battalion. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and Units, 8 Apr 45). By that time Regina Rif's attack was underway. With a screen of 7 Cdn Recce Regt on their right flank and ably supported by corcodiles and tanks, the first two companies reached the Zijkanal at 1615 hours. The other two companies were not long in following. By 1700 hours, Regina Rif. had completed their task, they had taken 115 prisoners and captured two "eighty-eights", one intact, and two 20-mm cannons, both in good order. The enemy was by no means subdued, however, at least at a distance; his mortars and guns put down terrific volumes of fire "bottling up the area to some degree". (Ibid) Later that night an engineer's reconnaissance party appeared at the headquarters of the Reginas to determine the possibility of erecting a bridge over the Zijkanal that night (Ibid).

118. The position of 7 Cdn Inf Bde was by this time quite favourable, for during the afternoon 1 C. Scot R. had entered the area held by R. Wpg Rif., cut to the east, and at 2100 hours had advanced with "A" and "C" Coys. Progress was slow, for the wooded area provided ideal cover for the German infantry manning his well-sited machine-guns. By midnight 8/9 Apr, however, the two leading sub-units were about one-quarter of the way to their objective, (the east-west road above Gooiermars (9707)). It was the brigade commander's intention to attack Doventer by way of Schalkhaar (9409) and in order to carry this plan out 1 C. Scot R. was urged to press on to its objective along the Krodden Dijk (9708 - 9908). Regina Rif was to get a company across the canal as soon as possible to cover the bridging operation. (Ibid: also 3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report: No. 26 OP "PLUNDER", 7 Cdn Inf Bde, as above).

7 CDN INF BDE CLOSES IN ON DEVENTER, 9-10 APR 45*

119. The Reginas did not have an easy time in getting a company over to the western bank of the Zijkanal, but by 0700 hours 9 Apr, the job was accomplished. Following this a further advance in the afternoon expanded the Regina's holding from the bridge-site south to the canal's junction with the Douweler Kolk (9507), a small half-moon-shaped lake on the left. 1 C. Scot R. was also able to secure its objective by 1100 hours but only after a brisk fight. It had been hoped to build a bridge at the original site north-east of the Douweler Kolk (9507), but snipers were so active in that area and mortar fire so heavy that the plan had to be changed. Instead the bridge would be erected at the junction (960088) of the main road and the canal on the right flank of Regina

* Reference maps: As for para 116, also Appx "E"

Rif. Readjustments in disposition now took place. R. Wpg Rif. placed one company on the Roginas' left to prevent infiltration and the Scottish were directed westwards to secure a lodgement over the canal north of the Roginas' position. Additional strength was lent to the brigade by the arrival of Q.O.R. of C., which came under command and after taking over from R. Wpg Rif. were ordered to exploit 7 Cdn Inf Bde's left flank towards another possible crossing place at Snippeling (945070). R. Wpg Rif. retired temporarily to concentrate. (Ibid, and W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, Q.O.R. of C., 9 Apr 45).

120. 1 C. Scot R. began crossing the canal early that evening, and after a hard struggle managed to establish two of its companies on the other side. In doing this, great use was made of the wreckage of the bridge which, though it allowed fair passage for foot soldiers, was under continuous mortar fire -- not the best of working conditions for the engineers. Nevertheless, the building of the bridge commenced. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Apr 45). Meanwhile R. Wpg Rif. relieved Regina Rif in preparation for the "all-out" assault on Deventer. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report No. 26, as above). Midnight 9/10 Apr saw 1 C. Scot R. firm in their bridgehead and under orders to journey north-eastwards to capture Schalkhaar, a suburb of Deventer. The advance was resumed at 0100 hours 10 Apr. Opposition was negligible and within five hours the Scottish infantry was consolidating around the main road junction west of Brinkgreve on the north-eastern outskirts of Deventer. Brigadier Gibson was quick to take advantage of the situation and he ordered R. Wpg Rif., who were in the process of occupying their new area, to move up their two reserve companies over the bridge to 1 C. Scot R's sector, thus thickening up our positions around Schalkhaar (9409) prior to the coming attack (9409). (Ibid and W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45). By that time Q.O.R. of C. had also made its bid to advance westwards, and at 0800 hours 10 Apr H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde heard that the Queens Own's leading troops were almost at Snippeling, but at a heavy cost to "A" Coy, which was counter-attacked and had to be assisted into its allotted area. (Ibid and Q.O.R. of C., 10 Apr 45)

121. All this time the northern and eastern flanks had been watched over by "C" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt which was really doubling in duty since it had gone under command 9 Cdn Inf Bde on 8 Apr. These "reccemen" distinguished themselves particularly on 9 Apr when, besides killing 25 Germans and capturing 37 in a sharp skirmish, they overran a V-2 site about two miles north of Bathmen. The mass destructive weapons base was in shambles, however. The R.A.F. had been there before the "Recce". (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report, No. 20 Op "PLUNDER" 7 Cdn Recce Regt, also W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt 8-9 Apr 45) On 10 Apr the squadron crossed the Zijkanal and, as one troop probed to the east to contact the flanking formation, other patrols explored the area north of Schalkhaar. It was here that the enemy engaged our troops heavily with mortar fire, causing both the squadron commander and his second in command to become casualties. "A" and "B" Sqns were still in position along the Ijssel river but eagerly awaiting the order that would send them to join their comrades east of Deventer. (Ibid)

122. Deventer had been an awkward place to approach. The canals radiating from it created major water obstacles, none of which were fordable, and, apart from the Schipbeek Canal which is more winding than usual, our troops had been forced to cross the Zijkanal, which runs straight from the north-east to join the circular sluice south of the town. Deventer itself was divided by smaller canals and basins which made it a miniature Calais. It could be well appreciated that the defenders, those tough parachutists of Lt-Gen Plocher's 6 Para Div, would seize every opportunity of delaying our advance. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket I, Intelligence Summaries Nos. 280, 281, 6-7 Apr 45).

123. Success in the attack on Deventer was essential, for the start of operation "CANNONSHOT" (the assault across the IJssel by 1 Cdn Inf Div)^x depended upon the early capture of the town. Once Deventer was in our hands Maj-Gen Foster need have no further worry about his right flank. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report: No. 26 as above). Throughout the morning of 10 Apr both 1 C. Scot R. and R. Wpg Rif. sorted themselves out in preparation and at 1230 hours the infantry moved forward. Simultaneously the divisional guns, supplemented by the artillery resources of 1 Cdn Inf Div, opened fire in support of the attack. (Ibid: also 3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report, op cit No. 21). The battalions advanced on either side of the road Schalkhaar - Deventer. On the right 1 C. Scot R. with "B" and "D" Coys forward pressed on with great dash. On leaving the woods near Brinkgreve where the unit had formed up, the troops supported by tanks from 27 Cdn Armd Regt were confronted by a 500-yard stretch of open ground intersected by an anti-tank ditch which skirted the eastern portion of the town. Moreover, enemy machine guns raked the fields with well co-ordinated cross-fire. It had been planned to wait for the obstacle to be breached before employing the flame throwers, but one company commander, Maj E.G. English, sensing the urgency of the situation, called for them at this time. This proved to be the turning point, for the opposition collapsed. Once the ditch was crossed the pace of the advance increased and, by 1500 hours, the Scottish were on their objective lining the railroad track north of the station (9207) and around it. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 C. Scot R., 10 Apr 45).

124. The "Winnipeg" had an equally rough time in the first stage of the battle, as the unit's War Diary explains:

....A and C Coys were to be the two leading coys into the town. 1230 hours arrived and in went the two coys with tks and flame-throwers in sp. The Germans were waiting for no sooner had the tps reached the open ground into the City

^x See para 187 to this report.