

when all hell seemed to break loose. Our tps were met with everything the Jerry had. Our tks retaliated, the Crocodiles swept the area with flame and the mortars and arty blanketed the approach of the town. The rugged riflemen overran the Hun with every step and shortly after the first assault almost 200 PWs were ours. The tks and Crocodiles were halted by an enormous anti-tk ditch which surrounded the city. Precious minutes were lost awaiting a bulldozer to fill in the ditch but the tps dashed on. Finally the first buildings were reached and the tough half of the battle was won. Fresh and eager B and D Coys now entered the fray. Once again the tks and flame-throwers were at their side. Opposition was still met and obstacles were many but all this was overcome in a very few hours.

(W.D., R. Wpg Rif., 10 Apr 45).

125. By 1730 hours R. Wpg Rif were lining the railway south of the station and had well over 200 prisoners. Learning from patrols that the path ahead was clear, Brigadier Gibson ordered his men to push on into the main part of the town. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div, Special Report No. 26 as above). At midnight 10/11 Apr the greater part of Deventer was ours. One item of the account however was still outstanding - the cement works on the river at the south-western corner of the town - and, to get at it, it was necessary to cross the circular sluice into which the two main canals flowed on route to the IJssel. This crossing was carried out at Snijpenling against light small-arms fire by "C" Coy Q.O.R. of C., between 0001 hours and 0115 hours, 11 Apr was safely across. Elements of Regina Rif then passed through at 0300 hours to capture the cement works. By first light on 11 Apr Deventer was completely under the control of 7 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid, also W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, Q.O.R. of C., 10-11 Apr 45). Since noon 9 Apr over 500 prisoners had fallen into Canadian hands in Deventer alone. It became evident, after the flamethrowers went into action, that the majority of the German garrison had had enough. Some, however, attempted to escape westwards by boats, but to no avail, for 1 Cdn Inf Div's artillery, which being in the area, was at Maj-Gen Keefer's disposal, put several discouraging concentrations down on to the escape route, thus devaluating greatly that means to exit from the battle. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Apr 45).

126. The task of thoroughly securing the town was now developed with the able assistance of a well organized Dutch Resistance group. This work continued throughout the morning as patrols scoured the entire brigade area. R. Wpg Rif and 1 C. Scot R. were ordered to patrol northwards astride the railway. Regina Rif, who had captured six 88-mm guns during their clearing operations, covered the southern portion of the town and contacted 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which was working from the south out of Epse (9404).

Needless to say the people of Deventer were overcome with joy at their relief from the Nazi grasp. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Apr 45) But events elsewhere had taken too important a turn towards final victory to allow all the soldiers to spend much time among the people they had liberated. Headquarters 3 Cdn Inf Div ordered Brigadier Gibson to turn the town over to Q.O.R. of C. and to concentrate to the north-west for a short rest, re-equipment and more fighting. By last light 11 Apr the three rifle regiments were in their new areas, R. Wpg Rif at Vrieswijk (9411) an estate on the west side of the main road leading north from Schalkhaar, Regina Rif were on the other side of the road about 1500 yards to the east, and 1 C. Scot R. was astride the road between them but slightly further north. Q.O.R. of C. was left to reap the victor's reward in Deventer. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf and units, also Q.O.R. of C., 11 Apr 45). 7 Cdn Inf Bde was thus able to get its much needed rest, its bivouac area having been well combed by the roaming vehicles of "C" Sqn of the Reconnaissance Regiment, who by the evening of 11 Apr were well ahead to the north and on the left flank (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report, op cit, No. 21).

OPERATIONS OF 8 CDN INF BDE, 7-11 APR 45^x

127. Left with the task of reducing Zutphen 8 Cdn Inf Bde had set about the job with considerable enthusiasm and with good result. The assault on the fortress started at 1300 hours 7 Apr. On the right N. Shore R. crossed the moat (between the Berkel stream and the railway) at a point about 250 yards south-east of the railroad track. At 1530 hours, after making good progress, one company was reported consolidating south-east of the **track** and near the pond (9495) which extends north from the Berkel into the main part of Zutphen. From here a platoon was pushed across the railway line towards the area of the gas works, but to no advantage, for the enemy's increasingly heavy fire drove it back. On the southern flank R. de Chaud experienced similar difficulties in getting forward in a sector which, as the map of Zutphen will show, restricted manoeuvre considerably. The close fight for freedom of action went on all through the last half of the day and even by 2200 hours very little gain had been made. By this time the enemy had seemingly mustered his defensive resources. Not only was his machine-gun fire very deadly, his artillery fire and mortar fire from the west bank of the IJssel was also heavy. It was evident that before N. Shore R. could break out of the narrow corridor (947955) formed by the pond and the railway track (and presently held by "C" Company) some effort would have to be made west of the track in order that "A" and "B" Coys could work out towards the main river. (W.D., N. Shore R., 7 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, Serials 41, 52, 79).

^x Reference maps: as for para 116. Also Appx "E"

128. A similar situation prevailed with R. de Chaud, whose troops were committed to a strenuous programme of house-clearing between the pond and the Berkol Stream. The only exits southwards from this area lay over the small bridge (952952) west of the water tower (953951), but this was well covered by the enemy. In order to pry loose this opposition R. de Chaud sent "C" Coy through N. Shore R's lines with the object of patrolling down the west side of the pond (9495). (Ibid). North Shore R. eventually succeeded in getting some of its Wasps and "A" Coy across the railway track, and by midnight 7/8 Apr the company was firm west of the railway line. (Ibid: Serials 79 and 80). Meanwhile "C" Coy R. de Chaud was probing southward from the North Shore's positions at the other end of the pond (Ibid:)

129. During the night R. de Chaud's patrol penetrated into the main section of the town meeting no opposition and Lt-Col G.O. Taschereau quickly seized the opportunity to exploit by ordering his remaining companies forward. The process of searching the lower half of the town went on well into the next morning but by 1100 hours R. de Chaud was in full control as far west as the Ijssel River and as far south as the "Y" shaped (9494) canal joining the river and the tramway. (Ibid: 8 Apr 45, Serials 3, 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36). N. Shore R. also succeeded in its task. Its operations for the day began at first light with "A" and "C" Coys leading, supported by Crocodiles and some tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. All went well, the companies being leap-frogged through each other until (at about 1300 hours) the northern part of Zutphen was declared clear of enemy. Patrols which were dispatched north towards the Twente Canal met no resistance. (Ibid: serials 96, 102, 107; W.D., N. Shore R., 8 Apr 45). Having completed its job, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was now given the responsibility of holding the area of Zutphen, along the line of the Ijssel river as far south as 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt's holdings. (First Cdn Army Liaison Officers reports, op cit, 081330B). On the following day, however, R. de Chaud was withdrawn from Zutphen and placed in reserve at Warnsveld, leaving N. Shore R. in sole possession of the ancient town. (W.D., R. de Chaud, 9 Apr 45)

THE HIGHLAND BRIGADE TURNS NORTH, 7-10 APR 45^{xx}

130. Having contributed greatly to the success of our arms at Zutphen by compressing the south-eastern defences for several days, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was given new orders on 17 Apr. H.L.I. of C. and Nth N.S. Highrs were to be withdrawn from their present positions. The North Novas moved away first at 1600 hours to a concentration area in the woods (9699-9799) beyond the railway east of

^{xx} 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"

Huize do Voorst (9796). Later in the day, after their relief by "C" Coy C.H. of O. (MG), H.L.I. of C. followed, accompanied by one squadron from 27 Cdn Armd Regt. S.D. & G. Highrs alone remained on the outskirts of Zutphen, where they continued to harass and box in the southern approaches by another series of advances which carried them up to the tramway running south on the left and past the moated estate (953942) into the south-eastern tip of the town on the right (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Apr 45). The brigade held these positions until mid-day 8 Apr. At that time Nth N.S. Highrs and H.L.I. of C. resumed their journey north to a forward assembly area around Dorterhook, from which Brigadier Rockingham intended to cross the Schipbeek canal south of Bathmen. S.D. & G. Highrs joined the brigade there after handing over their responsibilities to elements of Q.O.R. of C. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 8 Apr 45).

131. Once in the new area Nth N.S. Highrs were given the orders for the crossing of the Schipbeek Canal. The plan was to assault with "C" Coy on the left of the main road and "D" Coy on the right. "D" Coy was to seize the small wood five hundred yards east of the demolished bridge, cross the obstacle and firm up on the high ground just beyond the canal line. "C" Coy would cross at the bridge-site and together with "D" advance to capture Bathmen. (Ibid). The attack on the right went in at 1445 hours, but the difficulties mounted with each passing minute, "D" Coy being completely pinned down. Lt-Col D.F. Forbes then launched his left hand effort, assisted by artillery, direct tank-fire support and smoke laid across the front north of the canal by the battalions mortars. "A" Coy was then sent after "C" Coy along the same axis, but with instructions to swing east and clear out the enemy holding up "D" Coy's advance. At the same time "B" Coy was ordered to follow "C" and patrol the right flank. (Ibid). A stiff struggle for mastery of the bridgehead followed, but by 2300 hours Nth N.S. Highrs were consolidating their objectives around Bathmen and waiting for H.L.I. of C. to come forward to secure the brigade's left flank. (Ibid)

132. By midnight 8/9 Apr H.L.I. of C. had begun to cross the canal and within three hours the entire unit was over. Further strength to the effort was soon to be added, for at 0400 hours the engineers commenced bridging operations which resulted in the structure being completed by 0815 hours. (Ibid) The advance continued throughout the morning against light resistance and at 1550 hours S.D. & G. Highrs followed brigade headquarters across the bridge. S.D. & G. Highrs were not kept idle long: the "Glengarrians" were pushed through H.L.I. of C. and by 1630 hours held a circular position astride the main road from Lettele (0009) in the north to the high knoll (002092) 900 yards south of the village. Extensive patrolling was carried out but little sign of the enemy could be found. (Ibid) During the night S.D. & G. Highrs shifted its line of advance north-westwards and daylight on 10 Apr found the

regiment strung out precariously from Lettel to the region of Daggenvoorde (9811). Meanwhile H.L.I. of C. redispersed its companies along the main road directly north of Bathmen. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 9 Apr 45). The brigade's operations were assisted further by "C" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, whose armoured car patrols provided a running stream of highly valuable information from the flanks and from far ahead. (W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 8-10 Apr 45).

133. Events took a bright and unexpected turn during the next twelve hours, when S.D. & G. Highrs forced their way across the Zijkanal. This enabled Nth N.S. Highrs to move westwards over the bridge across the Zijkanal at a point 2700 yards west of Lettele and thence proceed north to contact the Glengarrians. This contact was made shortly after 1430 hours 10 Apr, and Nth N.S. Highrs continued on up the west side of the Zijkanal with the object of taking the village of Wezepe (9615). Opposition was very moderate all the way; the companies were leap-frogged one through the other, and by last light the North Nevas were within 2500 yards of their objective with elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt well out to the front and flanks. Progress in the darkness was extremely slow but by 0500 hours 11 Apr the battalion was preparing to take over Wezepe. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10-11 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log 10 Apr 45, serials 55, 57, 64; 11 Apr 45, serials 4, 13, 18). The absence of resistance to our advance in this sector indicated that the enemy's line was crumbling fast. If this was the case, then speed in following up was vital. In their position west of the Zijkanal, all three of Brigadier Rockingham's battalions waited for fresh instructions which, as we shall see, would send the brigade rolling on, far past Zwolle and Meppel, to Leeuwarden. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report op cit, No. 32, Operation "PLUNDER" by 9 Cdn Inf Bde).

* Note The operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div as described in paras 116 - 133 have also been checked with the following First Cdn Army Sitreps and Ops Summaries as contained in AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H, Docket III: March and April 1945, Sitreps and Ops Summaries.

Folio	70	Sitrep	No.	516	072400B	-	081200B
"	69	"	"	517	081200B	-	082400B
"	67	"	"	518	082400B	-	091200B
"	65	"	"	519	091200B	-	092400B
"	60	"	"	520	092400B	-	101200B
"	59	"	"	521	101200B	-	102400B
"	57	"	"	522	102400B	-	111200B

OPERATIONS OF 2 CDN INF DIV, 7-10 APR 45*

134. Meanwhile the instructions issued on 6 Apr by Maj-Gen Matthews for the enlargement of the bridgehead over the Schipbeek Canal had been acted upon with all possible speed. At 0325 hours 7 Apr the first company of S. Sask R. crossed the Canal on the right of Camerons of C; the other sub-units followed and at 0730 hours both battalions were linked in contact. An hour later the engineers began bridging the canal at the Cameron's bridge-site north-east of the village of Zuidloo (0304), and rafting operations were started at Wippert (0705) behind S. Sask R. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 7 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, serials 2418, 2420, 2422, 2426, 2428). During the morning Fus M.R. were ferried over the canal with orders to expand eastwards, but progress was slow due to mines and well directed small arms fire. By 1930 hours however the French-Canadians held a firm line slightly forward and to the right of S. Sask R. from a point on the road 800 yards above Vrijbroeken (0806) eastwards to Fort Jan (090065) thence to the canal north of Bloemendaal (092059). (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, serials 2442, 2446, 2457, 2516). Having completed its allotted task 6 Cdn Inf Bde now held its ground pending the capture of Holten (1010) by 5 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid)

135. Brigadier McGill's task was to capture Holten and his plan called for a three phase attack. First Calg Highrs were to move across the bridge in S. Sask R's area as soon as it was completed, to take up positions astride the main road to Holten some 2000 yards ahead of 6 Cdn Inf Bde's forward positions. Once the Calgaries were firm on their objective, R. de Mais and R.H.C. were to move through. R. de Mais' task was to settle astride the road and railway leading east from the town while R.H.C. took the outskirts of the built-up portion of Holten. In the second phase Calg Highrs was to go across the railroad and into the small woods north of Bekken (0910), leaving R. de Mais to swing east to the main rail and road junction. After clearing the woods Calg Highrs would cover another 1000 yards to the high ground between the two roads leading north from Holten. On the third and last phase R.H.C. would pass to the west of R. de Mais while that battalion turned south to mop up the town and occupy the south and south-eastern approaches to it (Ibid: serial 2456)

136. The bridge at Wippert (0706) on the Schipbeek Canal was ready for use at 0600 hours 8 Apr and the fighting columns of 5 Cdn Inf Bde rolled over it into battle. On the way across Calg Highrs (having picked up its "B" Coy which had been employed on 6 Cdn Inf Bde's left flank for the past day) led off the attack with "C" and "D" Coys forward. By 0900 hours Calg Highrs had the first objective and the other two battalions passed through to the line of the railroad and the western outskirts of the town without

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, 1:25,000, Sheets 3704 - Holten, 3604 - Nijverdal, 3605 - Almelo, 3504 - Lemelerveld, 3404 - Ommen. G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheet 28 - Almelo, 22 - Coevorden, also Appx "E".

interference. Calg Highrs then passed on and sent "A" and "B" Coys on to the high ground, which the artillery and the heavy mortars of Tor Scot R.(M.G.) had been pounding. Behind the westerners, the third phase began without much trouble, and by 2000 hours house clearing operations in Holten were under way. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 8 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 8 Apr 45, serials 2563, 2578, 2624, 2632, 2664, 2666, 2669). It now remained for 4 Cdn Inf Bde to pass through with the Reconnaissance Regiment, in preparation for which task, Brigadier Cabeldu had his formation concentrated halfway between the bridge in S. Sask R's area and Laren. (Ibid: 2623, also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 8 Apr 45)

137. Despite the fact that the main battle was well ahead, 6 Cdn Inf Bde had not remained totally idle. During the past day Fus M.R. had patrolled eastwards to find Markelo (1404) clear, S. Sask R. had swung to the north-west flanking 5 Cdn Inf Bde to consolidate the high ground north of Pieriksmars (0509), while Camerons of C. cleared the woods bordering the Oude Schipbeek stream to their front and patrolled westwards to contact 9 Cdn Inf Bde in the region of Bathmen. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 8 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 8 Apr 45, serials 2637, 2643, 2644, 2653, 2654, 2663, 2879, 2889). The intention for 9 Apr was to push 8 Cdn Recce Regt out along two axes ahead of two mobile columns of 4 Cdn Inf Bde with the object of cutting the road Raalte (0022) - Nijverdal (1319). Brigadier Allard's battalions would regroup and be prepared to clear the wooded areas north of Holten. 5 Cdn Inf Bde was to remain behind to sweep along the axis Holten - Markelo and to contact 1 Pol Armd Div, which had just made its appearance on the battlefield. In addition to these plans 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (less the two squadrons presently employed by 2 Cdn Corps and 3 Cdn Inf Div along the IJssel river further to the south-west was to commence its long range patrol programme along the axis Raalte - Zwolle. (Ibid: serial 2870)

138. The bright sunny morning of 9 Apr saw 4 Cdn Inf Bde's battle groups cross the Schipbeek Canal and pass into concentration. They did not have long to wait. At 0800 hours G.O.C. 2 Cdn Inf Div gave the "go ahead" signal to Brigadier Cabeldu and half an hour later, as word came from 8 Cdn Recce Regt that it had "bumped" the enemy some two miles ahead near Nieuwheten (0514), both columns crossed the start-line - Essex Scot . . going through S. Sask R. and R.H.L.I. through 5 Cdn Inf Bde north of Holten. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 9 Apr 45). Progress varied, slower on the left than the right, but resistance was not heavy. By midday R.H.L.I., after spending some time clearing the woods south-east of Nieuwheten (0514), had begun to break away, and the brigade commander ordered Lt-Col Arrel to drive on as fast as possible, by-passing all opposition. R.H.L.I. pressed on; R. Regt C. was brought forward to curl up around Nieuwheten in order to provide a pivoting base for the brigade. To the west Essex Scot . . was then given orders to disengage and swing east to follow R.H.L.I. (Ibid). The advance continued against scattered resistance, many prisoners were collected and shortly after dark R.H.L.I. was consolidated north-east

of Haarle (0718). Essex Scot . had travelled fast to cut the road Raalte - Nijverdal and the railway, and R. Regt C. had also swerved eastwards to firm up on the south-western side of the wooded heights of Haarler Berg (0917 - 0918). (Ibid)

139. In the meantime 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes had been equally busy. Early that day Brigadier McGill had put his three battalions to work; R.H.C. pushed out to the south of Holten to sweep the woods bordering the road Holten - Markelo, simultaneously Calg Highrs drove north to clear the cover north of Holten, while R. de Mais supported by "A" Sqn 10 Cdn Armd Regt thrust east towards Rijssen (1713). (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Apr 45). The capture of Rijssen proved no problem; R. de Mais sailed into the town and were firm there by 1600 hours. Lt-Col J. Bibeau was then instructed to take his unit on to the small industrial town of Nijverdal. After an uneventful journey the town was entered without interference and the French-Canadian infantrymen consolidated. By that time R.H.C., having completed its allotted task in the woods, had moved up to settle in Rijssen. Calg Highrs remained at Holten. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Div and units, 9 Apr 45)

140. Part of the 6 Cdn Inf Bde's original intention had been to follow up 4 Bde and clear the many small pockets of enemy it had by-passed; pending a suitable time to do this, Brigadier Allard's battalions were ordered to proceed to a forward concentration area, mopping up en route. Thus to Fus M.R. fell the task of clearing the forest lands of the Holter Berg (0914). Lt-Col J.A. Dextraze dispatched his carrier platoon to do this and mounted his rifle companies on T.C.Vs. to follow up. The objective, centring on the spot-height ((10111637) (75.3 metres)) at the northern end of the heights, was occupied by last light with the capture of twenty-four prisoners. (W.D., Fus M.R., 9 Apr 45). Neither of the other units in 6 Bde had much to do. During the early evening of 9 Apr Camerons of C. moved to concentrate north of Nieuwheten before relieving Essex Scot W. of 4 Bde, while S. Sask R. also concentrated in the woods between Holten and Nieuwheten to await developments. (W.Ds., S. Sask R., Camerons of C., 9 Apr 45)

141. In the early hours of 10 Apr,* Camerons of C. took over the Essex Scot positions west of Nijverdal; this allowed Lt-Col Pangman's men to exploit further north, and by 0600 hours the Essex were firm on the Hellendoornsche feature (1024 - 1025) south-west of Hellendoorn (1222). At the same time R. Regt C. moved up to the northernmost part of the feature, which on occupation was discovered to be one of the largest "V" weapon launching sites ever seen. The third unit, R.H.L.I., remained near Haarle (0718) and patrolled northward

* See Appx "F".

beyond the road Raalte - Nijverdal. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serials 3102, 3108, 3109, 3116, 3149). Meanwhile on the right 5 Cdn Inf Bde had carried out a most successful advance. In quick order R.H.C. passed through R. de Mais at 0700 hours, entered Hellendoorn, and reached the Overijsselsch Canal west of Hankate (1227). Here the Black Watch did not waste time; Lt-Col S.W. Thompson, D.S.O., M.C., passed three rifle companies over the rubble of the demolished bridge and went on to take the village of Lemele (1029). Behind R.H.C., while Dutch civilians were organized to operate a light ferry service for the battalion's heavier weapons and the engineers prepared to erect a class 40 bridge over the canal, Calg Highrs advanced to concentrate south of the obstacle and west of the main road to Hankate (1227) (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45).

142. Assisted by members of the Dutch underground, the engineers began work on the bridge at Hankate (1227), guaranteeing to have the supporting tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt over within a few hours. While this work progressed, the Black Watch pressed on to the next barrier, the Regge River, a tributary of the Vecht. "B" Coy led the way up the main road but on arrival at the river found the bridge (1033) in the usual state of demolition. While the carrier platoon probed the wooded areas of Achterveld (0735 - 0835) on the left, "B" Coy scrambled across the river at the bridge-site, and was soon joined by the other sub-units which crossed by a footbridge situated east of the road and carelessly overlooked by the German demolition parties. In addition, another undamaged bridge was found south-east of Archem (1131), making it possible for the battalion's vehicles and the forward elements of 8 Cdn Recce Regt to move up. Brigadier McGill then ordered R. de Mais to get on from Nijverdal, and directed Calg Highrs to follow the route used by the Black Watch's vehicles. By 1840 hours Calg Highrs were consolidating in the village of Bestmen (1134) and R. de Mais took over the task of securing the right flank, establishing itself about Eerde (1233). (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serials 3223, 3251, 3279, 3286, 3294). The remarkable progress made by 5 Cdn Inf Bde was brought to a halt as the day ended however, for the enemy decided to defend Ommen (1036), at least for a time. "C" Coy R.H.C. was heavily engaged by small arms fire on the approach to the railway line south of Ommen, and the brigade commander, fully appreciating the defensive value of the ground ahead, the danger of extended lines of communication, and the bridging difficulties as well as the fact that the objective ahead of him called for a set-piece attack halted for the night. His three battalions therefore held their ground and patrolled. (Ibid)

143. While 5 Cdn Inf Bde had been carrying out its spectacular advance towards Ommen, 4 Bde had sent R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot forward at 1400 hours with the object of seizing the high ground north of the Overijsselsch Canal and left of the main road Lemele - Ommen. This advance was quite uneventful. By 1900 hours both R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot were firm in their allotted areas and R. Regt C. had come up to settle west of (and around) Lemele astride 5 Cdn Inf Bde's line of communications which was also the main divisional axis.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serials 3228, 3231, 3238, 3239, 3242, 3247). 6 Cdn Inf Bde, having completed the clearing of its areas, had stood by all day awaiting fresh instructions. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Apr 45).

144. At 2100 hours 10 Apr Maj-Gen Matthews issued his plans for the next day's work. 2 Cdn Inf Div was to continue the pressure on Ommen with 5 and 4 Cdn Inf Bdes. 6 Bde was to form itself into a battle group and start off on a long journey around the right flank through the area through which 1 Pol Armd Div was advancing to the north. The brigade concentration was to be made at Gramsbergen (2846), whence a thrust was to be launched westwards by Camerons of C. led by a squadron of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) to establish a firm base at Balkbrug (0946), the object being to cut off the enemy facing 4 and 5 Cdn Inf Bdes. S. Sask R. was to follow up and position itself south of Balkbrug with the task of dealing with Ommen from the rear. Fus M.R. were to settle on the firm base prepared to support either S. Sask R. or drive north to Groningen. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serial 3299). Just before midnight 10/11 Apr, Brigadier Allard's brigade group started to roll and, whatever course events might take, 6 Cdn Inf Bde's part appeared sure of having significant consequence. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Apr 45)

145. To the men of the reconnaissance and armoured car regiments the past few days had been days of fulfilment. As the enemy loosened up ahead of our infantry, so the opportunity had arisen to ply their trade "according to the book". This was specially the case with Canada's senior cavalry regiment, The Royal Canadian Dragoons (1 Cdn Armd C. Regt), which had long been bursting with eagerness to do a real "armoured car job". In Italy this regiment had fought in many strange roles, a necessary yet bitter experience for men who had been trained for the classic cavalry task - the mad dash into the enemy's territory to heighten the confusion of the break-through. Of the prospects which arose when the unit went under Lt-Gen Simond's command, the regimental historian wrote with great enthusiasm:

It was felt that now or never The Royal Canadian Dragoons would establish their reputation as the truly great Regiment they knew themselves to be and to a man the Regiment hoped and prayed that here at last after the bitter memories of the Liri, Gothic Line, Marrechia, Savio and all the other rivers and canals where they had fought and crossed, the golden opportunity of a proper armoured car role would present itself. Subsequent events proved that such indeed was to be the case...

(The Royal Canadian Dragoons,
1939-45, p. 156)

146. For the Dragoons therefore 9 Apr was an historic day. On that day, the regiment went into its first real action in north-west Europe. Leaving "A" Sqn in a holding role east of Doesburg, "C" and "D" Sqns flung themselves

into the fifty-mile square which had been a paratroop training ground of the German Air Force. Here lurked many remnants of the once proud parachute formations, and during the first day the Dragoons made their presence felt. By nightfall Okenbroek (0312) had been passed, the village of Heten (0116) was within small arms range and 91 prisoners had been taken. These prisoners came from an assortment of rapidly deteriorating parachute, engineer, flak and training units at present under command of 88 Corps: On the following day exploitation commenced along the route Raalte - Zwolle, with "B" and "C" Sqn up. Raalte was tapped and contained from the east and by midnight 10/11 Apr the armoured cars were maintaining a flank screen to the south-west of 2 Cdn Inf Div from the railway north of Haarle (0718) past Luttenberg (0623) to Lemelerveld (0428). (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 9 - 10 Apr 45; First Cdn Army Int Summaries Nos 2837, 9 Apr 45; 284, 10 Apr 45)

147. 8 Cdn Recce Regt, commanded by Lt-Col B.M. Alway, had likewise been operating widely dispersed and well to the fore, yet always very closely co-ordinated with the movements of the main thrust. One squadron worked the left flank in contact with 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, while a second squadron, besides spearheading the advancing infantry, covered the right flank, where contact was later established with 1 Pol Armd Div. By the evening of 10 Apr the "reccemen" were roaming freely, and it appeared that a complete collapse of the enemy's line was imminent. As if to encourage this belief, the squadrons were issued with fresh maps that night. The sequence of the maps alone was enough to convey a thrilling message, for they covered many miles to the north, straight through to the sea. (W.D., 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 9-10 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, serials 2909, 2916, 2929, 2983, 3015, 3027, 2040, 3056; 10 Apr 45, serials 3131, 3143, 3177, 3183, 3219, 3221, 3222, 3225, 3253, 3254)*

148. However, with the attacking forces situated as they were at this time, it provided an item of speculation as to who might reach the coast first, for by this time 4 Cdn Armd Div had crossed the Ems River at Meppen and was now some sixty miles to the north-east. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 10-11 Apr 45)

THE CROSSING OF THE EMS RIVER BY 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 7-10 APR 45*

149. The crossing of a water obstacle is never the choicest of operations. Even under favourable conditions of

* War Diary sources are not adequate. It is necessary to follow this Operations Log to get the full picture of Reconnaissance Operations.

** Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets L1 - Emden, L2 - Wilhelmshaven, M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg, N1 - Almelo, N2 - Osnabruck. G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany, Sheets 3309 - Meppen, 3209 - Haren, 3210 - Kl. Berssen, 3109 - Lathen, 3110 - Wahn, 3111 - Sogel, 3112 - Werlte, also Appx "D".

ground, weather, and amount of resistance, the task involves careful preparation to meet the countless difficulties which invariably arise. The attack by 4 Cdn Armd Bde across the Ems River proved to be no exception. On the morning of 7 Apr Brigadier Moncel set about the clearance of the western half of Meppen with A. & S.H. of C. in order to secure the left bank of the River. Opposition at first was not heavy, but as the Argyles closed up to the river the enemy on the east bank became very active and engaged our troops with 20-mm gun fire. During the afternoon, however, the Germans received some extremely heavy punishment as thirty-two Typhoons appeared (at 1430 hours) and, although the aircraft ran into a good deal of light anti-aircraft fire, each dived repeatedly to rocket and strafe the offending positions. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, A. & S.H. of C., 7 Apr 45)

150. While these activities progressed an even rougher treatment of the enemy was being planned at divisional headquarters. There Brigadier Moncel received from Maj-Gen Vokes the orders for the brigade to assault across the Ems at Meppen, and then break out and advance along a new centre line Meppen - Sogel (8571) - Friesoythe (0692) - Oldenburg. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 7 Apr 45). The Argyles were to secure the bridgehead. The battalion plan was to attack on a front of two companies, supported by the fire of artillery and tanks. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 7 Apr 45). When the bridgehead had been established, Lake Sup R. (Mot) would lead the brigade through, followed by the Linc & Welld R. embussed, then Brigade headquarters (protected by a squadron of armoured cars), 12 Cdn Lt Fd Amb, 22 and 21 Cdn Armd Regts, and 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 8 Apr 45). The decision to advance to the east instead of to the north made a complete regrouping necessary. The full weight of the Canadian armour was to be flung across the Ems into the North German plain. The Coevorden sector was to change hands and become another firm base for the advance of 1 Pol Armd Div. The Poles were at the time concentrating further to the south-west near Geor. (Ibid).

151. The forthcoming attack was obviously going to demand speedy execution in the initial stage and heavy support in its exploitation. It therefore became most imperative that all available forces be marshalled close at hand to reinforce the first signs of success. To facilitate the regrouping, a Belgian S.A.S. Regiment had been placed under Maj-Gen Vokes' command. He now used it, supported by a battery of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, to take over the armoured brigade's positions at Coevorden, thus freeing those elements of A. & S.H. of C. and Lake Sup R. (Mot) which had been holding that area. There were many staff and technical problems to be settled before the plan of operations could be put into effect, and the units had to be concentrated and made ready for battle. The movement along the centre line which passed through the hamlets of Neuenhaus (4733) - Esche (4738) Gr.* Ringe (4544) - Twist (5449) - Ruhle (6752) - to hastily selected concentration areas, without the advantage of previous reconnaissance, was made more difficult by the state of the roads. The brigade's

* Gr. (Gross or Grosse) i.e., Great.

armoured column (in order 21, 22, 28 Cdn Armd Regts) began to move up at 1500 hours and the armour rolled slowly northward without mishap until early evening, but by that time the weight of traffic (represented by 21 Cdn Armd Regt leading the column and the Engineer and Service Corps lorries full of bridging equipment) had severely damaged the roads. This was unfortunate, especially for Lake Sup R. (Mot) which, having been previously slated to trail the column into Meppen, was suddenly ordered to leave its area at Emlichheim (4046) and move east to relieve A. & S.H. of C. (presently supported by "A" Sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt). The Argyles were to be pulled back to prepare for the attack across the river. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units and A. & S.H. of C., 7 Apr 45)

152. The C.O., Lake Sup R. (Mot), Lt-Col R.A. Keane, led his men about half way to Meppen, where the battalion was forced to stop. The brigade diarist explained the situation in these words:

... The cobble stone rd which suffered heavily from the passage of the first armd regt and the hy bridging lorries finally at about 2000 hrs gave up the ghost completely and the cobble stones disappeared into the peat bog and in places the rd ceased to exist. Mov came to a complete halt and our position was not enviable.

The Lake Sup R (Mot) were required urgently in the area MEPPEN and it was of importance that they should get through. Finally a diversion previously used by the A. & S.H. of C. and one coy of the Lake Sup R. (Mot) was cleared of some suspected bazooka opposition and in complete darkness over sandy trails and a class nine br the Lake Sup R. (Mot) finally worked themselves into the outskirts of MEPPEN.

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

Meppen was reached at about 0400 hours 8 Apr; once there "B" and "C" Coys relieved A. & S.H. of C. while "A" Coy firmed up at Kl. Fullen (6554) with elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt. (W.D.; Lake Sup R. (Mot), 7 Apr 45)

153. By far the most strenuous task of the moment was that of getting the remaining armour and Linc & Welld R. forward. As the Brigade diary explains further,

This still left half of the 22 Cdn Armd Regt, all of the 28 Cdn Armd Regt, all of the Linc & Welld R. and all of the Echs stranded along the rd which for all practical purposes had ceased to exist.

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

Under these adverse conditions the dispositions of 4 Cdn Armd Bde at midnight 7/8 Apr were somewhat scattered. However by 0600 hours 7 Apr the situation showed marked improvement, although part of the armour was still not in the position required for the coming attack. Forward in Meppen itself were "B" and "C" Coys of the motor battalion supported by "A" Sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt. Preparing for the assault in Kl. Fullen

were A. & S.H. of C. together with "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) and elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt. The remainder of the brigade was more dispersed according to the peculiar conditions of terrain in that area. 21 Cdn Armd Regt was concentrated on the north-western outskirts of the woods north of Meppen, while the Grenadiers were situated north of Gr. Fullen (6556). The last three squadrons of 28 Cdn Armd Regt were still far back around the hamlet of Twist where the roads had become impassable to the heavy Shermans. Farther back still along the road from Neuenhaus Linc & Welld R. (now under Brigadier Moncel's command) was also delayed by the condition of the route, and it was to be some hours before this regiment reached its concentration area outside Meppen. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, Linc & Welld R. and A. & S.H. of C., 7-8 Apr 45, AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/H, Docket I: Ops Log, 7 Apr 45, serials 73, 87; 8 Apr 45, serials 1, 3, 9). In immediate support of the brigade was 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) which had moved up to the region of Ruhle (6652) where it deployed its guns and awaited the time of assault. (W.D., 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.), 7 Apr 45).

154. As the tail of the armour extricated itself from the peat bogs west of Meppen, A. & S.H. of C. had completed preparations for their assault. The boats were ready. "C" and "A" Coys were to lead the way across the river on the left and right respectively; "C" Coy was to secure the left flank from the river to the railway about Altmepperhof (9656); "A" Coy was to seize the area of the crossroads (703558). On the successful completion of this phase, "D" Coy would pass through "C" on the left to consolidate astride the road south of An der Radde (7056), while "B" Coy would swing south from "A" Coy's holding to the built-up position of Meppen north of An der Hutte (7055). Thereafter "A" Coy was to go through "B", cross the footbridge over the Dortmund - Ems canal just south of its Y-shaped junction (7055) with the Ems River, and swing in to capture the southern end of the town. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 7 Apr 45)

155. Despite some delay caused by one company which lost its way, the Argyles succeeded in crossing the small river at 0600 hours 8 Apr. Thereafter the operation progressed rapidly, strictly according to the plan, and luckily without casualties. By 0700 hours the two leading companies were established on the east side and two hours later the whole battalion was on the way to its final objectives, all of which were secured without difficulty or casualties and cleared by mid-afternoon (Ibid). In the words of the divisional diarist:

Opposition broke quickly and clearing proceeded with little difficulty. PW provided the answer to this almost bloodless crossing. NO reputable unit was available to def the town. Two days ago, Lt-Col Schieber, who comd the recruiting depot in the dist, was deputed to assemble a force from such stragglers as he could lay hand to. The result, one weak Bn which compounded some 2 Cm guns of 276 Flak Bn, could NOT be said to constitute a formidable force.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 8 Apr 45)

Three 20-mm guns had been knocked out and 47 prisoners captured so far. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, and A. & S.H. of C., 8 Apr 45). With the consolidation of Meppen well under way, the engineers of 9 Cdn Fd Sqn with a troop of 8 Cdn Fd Sqn and 40 odd pioneers worked on the construction of a bridge. This project commenced at about 1130 hours and the 215-foot length of Bailey pontoon bridge was opened to traffic shortly after 1930 hours, much earlier than had been expected. It was now time for the main body of the armoured brigade to cross the Ems River and break out to the north. Brigadier Moncel planned to have Lake Sup R. (Mot) lead off to feel out the route towards Sogel (8571) by following the road and railway eastwards from Meppen to the crossroads south of Lohe (7857). At that point Lt-Col Keane's men were to turn north, followed by an armoured column. (Ibid).

156. Since early that morning Lake Sup R. (Mot) had been busy. At 0700 hours "A" Coy had journeyed north to Haren (6666), where another demolished bridge littered the river banks, and here a short skirmish which resulted in two casualties took place. Shortly after noon however this company was brought back to Meppen, where orders were given for the continuation of the advance. The motor battalion was to follow the road Lohe (7857) - Kl. Berssen (8163) - Sogel (8571) with "B" Coy leading. By this time an energetic platoon of the Superiors had ferried itself across the river and was already probing the eastern exits from Meppen. (Ibid). West of the river, the brigade column had formed up and was waiting for the signal to cross and begin its advance. The order of march called for Linc & Welld R. (embussed) to follow Lake Sup R. (Mot), followed in turn by Brigade Headquarters (and the units shown in para 150). 28 Cdn Armd Regt was to remain in Meppen to go eventually under command 10 Cdn Inf Bde, when that formation should reach the east bank of the Ems River. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units; and Linc & Welld R., 8 Apr 45)

157. At 2030 hours the main body of Lake Sup R. (Mot) crossed the river and started out towards Kl. Berssen. It met resistance on the route, whereupon the Officer Commanding asked permission to switch the weight of his attack along another more northerly route through Lathen (7174) and Tinnen (7267). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 8 and 9 Apr 45). The brigade commander quickly consented to this change in plan, for he had been instructed to break out with all possible speed. This decision was well justified. A break-through was effected and the motor battalion made excellent progress. At 0315 hours 9 Apr Linc & Welld Regt crossed the bridge in the wake of the Lake Superiors. The brigade war diary describes the events which followed thus:-

At first it the tail of the Linc & Welld Regt was just clearing the obstacle and Bde H.Q. was to follow. The Coy of Lake Sup R. (Mot) working along the old CL had been withdrawn and it was decided to push B Sqn of 18 Cdn Armd Car Regt out along that axis and inf sp was arranged for them through the A & S H of C.

From a staff standpoint there then followed one of the most satisfactory operations imaginable. Comms were excellent. An adequate supply of LOs was available and it was relatively easy to effect changes in the course of the battle and to exercise control. By 0645 hrs leading elements of the Lake Sup R. (Mot) were clearing the town of Lathen and immediately on the completion of this they had orders to push NORTH towards the KUSTEN KANAAL and east towards SOGEL.

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

To Lt-Col Keane's "B" and "C" Coys, Lathen yielded about 100 prisoners, all very surprised at the sudden appearance of our troops. A further short, sharp attack on the railway station on the north side of the town by "A" Coy resulted in the capture of 59 more prisoners. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 9 Apr 45)

158. North of the Lathen station the enemy engaged our troops heavily and no further advance was possible in that direction, but to the east the Superiors carried everything before them. Sogel was cleared by "C" Coy, which pushed on to Werpeloh (8475) then to the edge of Borger (8679), where again the enemy reacted with considerable violence and forced the Canadian infantry to withdraw slightly. By this time Linc & Welld R. had taken over temporary duty in Lathen and the rest of Lt-Col Keane's battalion was firmed up around Sogel with elements of 22 Cdn Armd Regt. "B" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, which had remained on the original centre line (see para 156) to tap the opposition, had also found the going anything but easy, and it too was forced to explore other side-routes in order to get ahead. Ably assisted by a small force of A. & S.H. of C., the armoured cars managed to gain ground slowly and at 1300 hours had contacted the 30 Brit Corps' left flank formation (43 (W.) Inf Div) south of Lohe. At this stage, however, the infantry returned to Meppen, leaving the armoured cars to continue alone. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde & units; A. & S.H. of C., Linc & Welld R., 18 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Apr 45)

159. The momentum of the advance was kept up, and by evening 4 Cdn Armd Bde had taken places twenty-five miles away from the starting point which it had left eighteen hours before. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Apr 45). As the leading troops made ground, Brigadier Moncel had brought forward more of his men and by last light held a strong fortress-like position covering the Ems bridgehead. Sogel was held by 21 Cdn Armd Regt, together with the Linc & Welld Regt and a company of the motor battalion. Another motor company held Werpeloh, to which they had retired after being driven back from Borger (two miles to the north) by bazooka and small-arms fire. Far on the left "A" Coy had resumed its advance north along the railway through Beckusen (7382). Lathen on the Ems was garrisoned by the remainder of 22 Cdn Armd Regt, and the Argyles were still concentrating at Meppen. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H, Docket 1: Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, and W.D., G.S., 2 Cdn Coys, April 1945, Appx 3, Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serial 7). In addition, the armoured car squadron which had been approaching Sogel from

the south, had, in spite of road blocks, mines and craters, reached Sogel to report the existence of a good class 40 bridge south of the town. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 9 Apr 45)

160. Inspired by the rapid progress of the first few hours, Brigadier Moncel contemplated pressing on to Werlte (9672), Lorup (9380) and Breddenburg (9184), but it was apparent that his troops were much too tired; orders were therefore given to halt the advance and dig in while artillery harassing fire tasks were laid on to soften up the enemy's positions ahead. (Ibid). After a quiet night, at 0600 hours 10 Apr Linc & Welld R. commenced the move towards Werlte against moderate opposition and by 0945 hours Lt-Col . . . Coleman had his men (less the company garrisoning Sogel) deployed outside the village ready to assault. "B" Coy led the way but was soon pinned down and "A" Coy was committed to carry out a right hook. Opposition was still heavy, but by 1335 hours the three companies of Linc & Welld R. had cleared the southern half of the village. Fresh instructions were then received to the effect that Linc & Welld R. was not to go beyond Werlte, for at this particular stage neither of the routes from Sogel to Werlte nor from Sogel to Werpeloh (8475) was secure. (Ibid).

161. Evidence of the enemy's determination was plentiful; already that morning Sogel had been counter-attacked by members of 31 Para Bn who fell upon the garrison (comprising elements of Linc & Welld R., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 8 Cdn Fd Sqn and 12 Cdn Fd Amb), causing numerous casualties. It was only after an all out effort by these units that the place was clear. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde & units, 12 Cdn Fd Ambulance, 8 Cdn Fd Sqn, 10 Apr 45). To the medical men, especially, it was by far the most exciting event in their unit's history, as their diary shows

They [the enemy] pressed an attack of approx 30 men right down the street on which we were situated. Our men had to take up arms. Some of the enemy were killed within 10 yds of the ADS entrance. Naturally a great deal of excitement ensued. After about one hour a troop of tanks arrived who blasted houses from which enemy were sniping. When the attackers were finally wiped out we realized that we had been holding a small portion of the front. If we had not taken up arms we would have been shot up and the enemy would have gained access to the main street of the town. We had 5 of our personnel wounded, one seriously. Personnel of an Engineer and an RCASC unit who had been over-run in the early dawn were killed or wounded. All ranks of the unit did very well. ADS personnel continued working even with small arms fire coming through the windows. S.Bs. were working under direct fire. Two were wounded.

(W.D., 12 Cdn Fd Amb,
11 Apr 45)

162. In order to prevent any further local interference with our plans, it was decided to firm up along the two axes, Sogel - Werlte and Sogel - Werpeloh. To assist in this task, two companies of A. & S.H. of C. began the journey eastwards from Meppen in Kangaroos. At the same time 22 Cdn Armd Regt occupied Oostenwalde (8971), where the tanks awaited preparatory to the continuation of the advance on Lorup (9381). The brigade's position was strengthened further by the arrival of "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot), which had been operating far on the left flank (area Lathen - Beckusen). During the afternoon "B" Sqn of the armoured car Regiment probed the open right flank and at 1700 hours an Argyle company reported to each of 21 and 22 Cdn Armd Regts. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and units, A. & S.H. of C., 10 Apr 45). Ahead of 4 Cdn Armd Bde and all across the present front 84 Gp R.A.F. took full advantage of the good weather. With 72 fighter bombers aided by another ten in a tactical reconnaissance role, the group blasted away freely at every sign of enemy movement in the path of the advance. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Apr 45)

136. During the night 10/11 Apr the two armoured regiments used their guns to great effect on the woods in the triangle Sogel - Werlte - Lorup and on the villages and farms nearby, and when dawn came the brigade was ready to resume its advance on Borger. Other immediate tasks were the clearance of the woods within the triangle by Lake Sup R. (Mot) and the mopping up of Werlte by Linc & Welld R. By 0830 hours all three operations were under way, the capture of Borger being allotted to 21 Cdn Armd Regt. (Ibid)

164. While the armoured brigade was scoring conspicuous success in its dash to the north-east, 10 Cdn Inf Bde had carried on its private war with the stubborn garrison of Wierden.* Supported by the guns of 15 Cdn Fd Regt, Alq R. had fought a series of engagements with the stubborn defenders from 5 Apr on, without taking the place. This sore of enemy resistance was a constant menace to the main route north over the Twente Canal west of Delden, and many vehicles were shot up and their drivers killed or wounded when they were many miles behind the "front":

Because of infiltration east of the subsidiary canal and the enemy fire directed at the area west of Delden, the main supply route which crossed the Twente Canal just west of this town was actually in the front line. L. of C. traffic which poured over the bridge throughout the night was frequently sniped at and occasionally mortared or shelled. The down route through Delden was not well marked and from time to time vehicles instead of turning west along the Goor road until stopped by fire at the subsidiary canal. Short of this canal was a graveyard of vehicles which had been shot up by the enemy from the west bank.

(R.A. Spencer, History of the Canadian Field Regiment, p. 243)

* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheet 28 - Almelo. Also Appx "D".

165. This unhappy situation along our lines of communication only ended when Alq R. patrols worked their way into the village on 9 Apr, to find it empty. This easy entry, however, was no gauge of what had gone before. Several well supported attempts had been made by the Algonquins, some with serious loss. Only the day before a strong infantry patrol had penetrated as far as the church in Wierden but had been driven back by heavy small arms and 20-mm fire. The first cue for a general loosening up of resistance on this lengthy flank came late on 8 Apr, when 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt entered Goor at the base of the flank west of Delden. Here civilians reported a hasty exodus by the enemy towards the north. The enemy had evidently only held Wierden as long as it acted as a covering position for his withdrawal; when the strong point had served its purpose, the Germans literally vanished, and quick contact was made with 2 Cdn Inf Div at Rijssen (1713), thus solidifying the front. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde & Alq R., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 8-9 Apr 45; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945, Appx 81: Ops Log serial 43; 2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, serials 25 and 36). 10 Cdn Inf Bde, though at present consisting only of the Algonquins and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, was now available to move to the north-east to Meppen with the rest of the division. (Ibid)

166. With the end of the German resistance at Wierden, the Shermans of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, the guns of 15 Cdn Fd Regt, and the T.C.Vs. carrying the Algonquins rolled away to the north-east. The new role of the brigade necessitated some regrouping. A. & S.H. of C. returned once more under command, and additional armour was added by placing 28 Cdn Armd Regt under command of the infantry brigade. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, entry 9 and 10 April 1945, and Appx 26 and 27). The task set for 10 Cdn Inf Bde was to relieve the squadron of 22 Cdn Armd Regt and the motor company in Lathen, "then proceed on and capture in succession, Papenburg and Leer". The armoured reconnaissance unit and A. & S.H. of C. were to remain at Meppen pending developments. (W.Ds., 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 9 Apr 45, W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, April 1945, Appx 81: Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, serial 80)

167. As has been noted, "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) had first felt its way north from Lathen along the axis of the road and railway against fair opposition. This had decreased, and when Alq R. and elements of 28 Cdn Armd Regt (under Lt-Col R.A. Bradburn) took over the responsibility on the left flank, it was with the intention of crossing the Kusten Canal in that area. But when the troops reached the obstacle, the bridges were found to be demolished and well covered by small arms fire from the north bank. Reconnaissance of the possible crossing sites continued until shortly after noon, when Maj-Gen Vokes ordered Brigadier Jefferson to turn over his present positions to 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt and to reconnoitre in force to the east towards Neuborger (8184), Borgerwald (8586) and Breddenburg. By 1800 hours the Algonquins' vanguard company, supported by tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt, reported the community of Neuborger clear. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Apr 45). There followed the dispatch of a second company-squadron group to Borgerwald which was also found unoccupied at 0400 hours 11 Apr. From Borgerwald patrols were to be sent south to Borger itself, where it was hoped that 10 Cdn Inf Bde

and Brigadier Moncel's formation would make contact. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 10-11 Apr 45). Maj-Gen Vokes' intention was to press his advance on to the new main objective, Oldenburg, along the axis Friesoythe - Bad Zwischenahn, by capturing Lindern (0373), Vrees (0377) and Lorup as quickly as possible. (First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports op cit, 101600). The tasks of capturing Leer and Papenburg had been passed to 1 Pol Armd Div. (Ibid)

1 POL ARMD DIV ENTERS THE BATTLE, 8-11 APR 45*

168. By the morning of 11 Apr the situation on the extended flank of 4 Cdn Armd Div had undergone a considerable change, for 1 Pol Armd Div had been fully committed on 10 Apr, with orders to advance north on the axis Coevorden - Emmen - Nieuwe Schans (6409). The Poles were to build a class 40 bridge at Haren (6666) (north of Meppen) and drive all out for Leer (8118) and Papenburg (7798), the original objectives of 4 Cdn Armd Div. (Ibid, Maj-Gen Maczek's famous fighters had first appeared on the scene on 8 Apr, when the division began its concentration in 2 Cdn Corps' area, taking over the line of the Twente Canal opposite Goor (2104) from a detachment of 6 Cdn Armd Regt. On 9 Apr the Poles, then fully concentrated around the region of Goor - Borculo (1691), sent their motor battalion to Coevorden, where the S.A.S. Regiment holding that area came under command. The task allotted to the division at that time was for 1 Pol Inf Bn Gp to advance north from the Twente and contact 2 Cdn Inf Div at Rijssen, while 8 Pol Inf Bn Gp moved up on the left to contact 4 Cdn Armd Div's 10 Cdn Inf Bde at Wierden, the capture and security of both these places being in high priority if still held by the enemy. 9 Pol Inf Bn was to remain in Goor and the Polish Armour was to concentrate near Markelo. As we have already noted, the capture of these places by the Polish troops proved to be unnecessary, (see paras 137 - 138 to this report) and the division pressed on to the north. (First Cdn Army Ops Log, 9 Apr 45, serials 90, 91, 106, 108)

169. While the main body of the division moved up, the Polish motor battalion (with the S.A.S.) maintained contact north of Coevorden and carried out a rapid dash to the north-west which resulted in the bridge over the small canal south of Oosterhesselen (3162) being seized intact. Throughout the early morning of 10 Apr the Polish armour and infantry crept steadily forward and by midday, as 8 Pol Inf Bn headed north to occupy Hardenberg, 9 Pol Inf Bn took over left flank protection from "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt to hold the line Den Ham (1530) - Daarle (1827) - Hooge-Hexel (2023) - Het Loo (2119). At the same time 10 Pol Armd Recce Regt was advancing north-west astride the road Coevorden - Dalen (3356) - Wezup (3168) - Westerbork (2473), while the motor battalion pushed north-east to capture another good bridge at Holsloot (3759). (Ibid: 10 Apr, serials 21, 31, 44, 53)

170. During the afternoon of 10 Apr the pace of the operation increased and by nightfall the Pol Armd Recce Regt had swept forward to the area of Westerbork with strong

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets N1 - Almelo, M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg, also Appx "D".

reconnaissance forces on either side of the main axis. On the eastern flank, the motor battalion had reached the Oranje Canal west of Emmen (4466). But more significant than the ground gained was the fact that contact was made with the hard pressed men of the S.A.S. who had been harassing the enemy's rear areas for the last two days. (Ibid: serials 100, 103, 132, 133, 160; also 2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, 10 Apr 45, serials 28, 34, 50, 61). Progress continued during the night 10/11 Apr; on the right Emmen was entered and work commenced on reinforcing the bridges over the Oranje Canal so that Maj-Gen Maczek's main effort to the north-east might be launched. (Ibid: 11 Apr 45, serial 11)

18 CDN ARMD C. REGT OPERATIONS, 7-11 APR 45^{*}

171. Mention has already been made of the relief of some of the S.A.S. troops by the Poles, but they were not the only ones who contacted the red-bereted skymen. Originally the task of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt had been to provide left-flank cover for Maj-Gen Vokes' push towards Leer, but, with the change of axis for the armoured division, the prospective arrival of the Poles and the dropping of S.A.S. troops in the north, the plan for the armoured cars was drastically altered. By 11 Apr only "B" Sqn remained with 4 Cdn Armd Div, the remainder of the unit having reverted to under command 2 Cdn Corps. Up to 6 Apr these three squadrons had been employed along the then extended left flank of Maj-Gen Vokes' formation, but on that day "A" Sqn was directed to work towards Meppel out of Coevorden while "C" and "D" Sqs watched the western approaches to the Overijsselsch Canal, the east to west grid line 28 being set as the dividing line of responsibility. These operations of "C" and "D" Sqs continued with good result until 9/10 Apr, when the Polish infantry took over and Lt-Col P.C.R. Black's entire effort was shifted to the north, where "A" Sqn had been roaming far and wide from Lutten (2146) past Balkbrug (0845) towards Meppel (9956). At that time "D" Sqn took up its position at De Wijk (0154), with the task of cutting the main roads leading north-east from Meppel, and "C" Sqn applied itself to the job of watching the approaches to the south along the Balkbrug (0845) - Gramsbergen (2647) road. It was during its operations along the road Meppel-Assen (2189) that "D" Sqn contacted a group of S.A.S. troops, who needless to say were delighted to be among friends again. Meanwhile "A" Sqn had turned south-west to feel out the routes from Meppel to Zwolle. The number of prisoners taken during these far flung excursions was large, over 370 had fallen into our hands. (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 6-10 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/D, Docket II: Report on Ops of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 5-11 Apr 45)

172. The threat to his most recent line of resistance by 2 Cdn Inf Div's attack on Ommen was to prove its worth, for throughout 10 Apr the enemy, beset by Maj-Gen Matthews' men from the south, by the roving armd cars in his midst and the S.A.S. armoured at his back, gave ground readily. But alas, the novel joy of working within a good network of firm roads and of encountering

* Reference maps: As for para 168, also Appx "D".

disorganized groups of German troops who gave in quickly, was not to last much longer for 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt. Operations to the north-east were developing fast and the armoured division badly needed extra help to cover the flanks of its advance to Oldenburg. Late in the afternoon of 11 Apr, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt was relieved by the Royal Canadian Dragoons and moved eastward to protect the left of 4 Cdn Armd Div and maintain contact with the Poles. (Ibid: also W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 10-11 Apr 45)

173. As a craftsman takes pride in his own particular trade, so the men of the armoured car regiment were fully appreciative of the recent achievements which had called for the employment of their unit in the actual task for which it had been trained. The regimental history makes special note of the operations in this way.

... Patrols of the regiment were engaged in mobile recce of an area more than twenty-five miles in width. Obviously it was impossible to cover all the roads in such an area. The only course was to run patrols from town to town and bridge to bridge. The situation became somewhat confused at this point. Troop leaders would call up on the wireless and report contacting the enemy and either disposing of him or looping around the flanks. Roads that were free of the enemy when troops went one way on them would be covered by the enemy when the return journey was attempted. The enemy in his frantic efforts to find out what was going on would wander hither and yon. This the armoured car patrols were doing too but with a difference. They knew what they were doing, and had a field day killing or capturing the enemy. It is impossible to capture in words the spirit of the chase that prevailed.

(XII Manitoba Dragoons,
Regimental History of the
18th Canadian Armoured Car
Regiment, p. 75)

174. The whole hectic period from 6 to 11 Apr, when the regiment, in the words of its own history, was "out on a limb", is described:

They had been a most interesting few days - the sort of thing one dreams about but which one never dares to hope will be. It is a difficult story to get in one's mind even when one knows what went on. If one can visualize four divisions moving generally north with the one furthest to the east well ahead of the others, and then take the exposed flank of that division as a base for the operations of an armoured car Regiment, one has a fair picture of the situation. With the whole emphasis of the advance to the north and to the east the regiment was called upon to work in a westerly direction in an effort to expedite the link-up of these divisions. This had been done and the patrols had an almost free hand in fanning out to the west, south-west, and north-west. To say these patrols had run amuck or run wild would not be far from the truth, for with enough roads to operate on and only scattered remnants of a disorganized and retreating enemy to bar the way and to assist in making the days exciting the time had passed.

...hundreds of the enemy had been captured:
there is no need to worry about how many had been
killed.

(Ibid: p. 79)

THE S.A.S. DROP, OPERATION "AMHERST", 7-11 APR 45*

175. It must be remembered, however, that much of the confusion from which the armoured cars benefited, was in fact directly caused by the daring S.A.S. operation which had taken place several days before. Accordingly, in order to get the full picture of the enemy's reaction to this airborne attack, it is necessary to trace the operation from its beginning on the night 7/8 Apr. At that time 47 aircraft left England to drop troops, equipment containers, and detonating simulators on 19 specially picked dropping zones in northern Holland.** Due to bad weather conditions the "jeep drop" had to be cancelled. Instead, these vehicles were driven overland into the area of operations on 8 Apr. Of the 47 aircraft, 46 got their loads off over the appointed areas, one other plane did not take off and postponed its drop until the following night. In all, that first night, 690 men came down to earth and organized themselves to cover six definite areas. The first group, dropped in the region of Meppel (9556), Hooogeveen (1559) and Ommen (1036) were, as already related, quickly joined by the Canadians and Poles. The second group, under Lt-Col Bollardiere, operated around Beilen (1874) and Spier (1470), ambushing the enemy and generally creating havoc. A third group under Maj P. Samson dropped near Westerbork (2473), attacked the police headquarters and accounted for a German general among those killed. Westerbork, however, had to be given up when the enemy brought in reinforcements from Assen. Nevertheless the parachutists did capture and hold several good bridges of which the Poles later made excellent use. (Report by Brigadier J.M. Calvert D.S.O., Comd S.A.S. Troops - May 1945; Operation "Amherst", op cit; (Op AMHERST) 3, H.Q. No. 38 Group R.A.F. - Report on Ops AMHERST and KEYSTONE, 7 Jul 45, op cit)

176. Another party had fair success in the areas of Gieten (3490), Borger (3681) - Assen (2189) and Rolde (2688). Ambushing was the order of the day, and with the help of the Dutch Resistance the enemy was beset from all sides, and roads and bridges were "demined" and guarded until the Canadian Army reached them days later. On the other two zones, around Assen and Groningen, and around Smilde (1080) and Appelsga (0785), the S.A.S. had a much stickier time, one party of our men being betrayed by a Dutch farmer. Still the parachute troops maintained the offensive and caused tremendous damage. Regarding the enemy's losses Brigadier Calvert wrote later:

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets M1 - Groningen, N1 - Almelo.
G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheet 17 - Beilen, also Appx "D".

** Some of these DZ had to be changed at the last minute as First Cdn Army had already overrun several of those originally selected.

It is difficult for the Bns to assess the material damage they did, but the following figures give some idea and are probably about midway between the most optimistic and the most pessimistic claims. In the dark it is impossible to assess for certain what damage has been done. 2 RCP^x claim the following enemy losses:-

Killed	177
Wounded	70
Prisoner of War	85
Motor transport destroyed	13
" " captured	1
Railway cut	3 places.

3 RCP^x claim the following enemy losses:-

Confirmed killed	92
Killed or wounded, but not confirmed	150
Prisoners	102
Material destroyed or captured	15 vehicles.

(Ibid, para 13, p. 10)

177. In his report on the operations Brigadier Calvert described the damage inflicted on the enemy's communications.

The actual destruction of vehicles and men was a means to an end, the main end being to cause the maximum confusion amongst the enemy. A number of bridges were prevented from being blown and others were blown prematurely before the enemy could retire over them. We cannot for certain claim the success of preventing the destruction of STEENWIJK airfield although, indirectly, this might have been achieved. The roads MEPPLE - ASSEN, BEILEN - ASSEN, ASSEN - GIETEN, ZUIDLAREN - GIETEN were practically forbidden to all night convoys from 8 Apr onwards. The enemy was pinned down and given no chance either to form a line of resistance in the good defensive country along the canal, in which positions had already been dug and wired, nor was he able to retire in comfort. Thus like a net the French entangled the enemy for the thrust by 3 Canadian Div, which took it in a very short time to the North Sea.

(Ibid)

Contrary to previous reckoning approximately fifty percent of the paratroops were not overrun by First Cdn Army within 72 hours; yet those men did not consider themselves as utterly lost. The calibre of the average S.A.S. trooper is high and, even without the prospect of immediate relief, he did not seek a place of hiding unless he was wounded. On the contrary as

x Régiment Chasseurs Parachutistes.

events proved, each man went on about the business of raising the resistance, killing or capturing Germans galore and thus giving heart to the sorely pressed Dutch people in his immediate area. (Ibid)

178. Against these gains, the losses must invariably be measured: 29 men were killed, 45 wounded and 17 unaccounted for when the whole S.A.S. force was eventually overrun by the Canadians and Poles, some eight days after the initial drop. Most of the wounded were luckily evacuated safely with the aid of the armoured jeeps of 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt, which on arrival in General Crerar's sector was routed to Coevorden to operate out of that place, first under command of 4 Cdn Armd Div and later under Maj-Gen Maczek. (Ibid: Report on Op "AMHERST" by 2 and 3 RCP in N.E. Holland). Among the points of interest which arose from the operations, three stood out. First there was the employment of Typhoon aircraft in a novel supply dropping role. Secondly there was the successful use of the "Gee fix" a radar navigational aid system. The third point of note was the communication enjoyed by the troops in enemy held areas, among themselves and direct with S.A.S. H.Q. in England. This was accomplished by the use of Jedburgh sets. The ground troops were continually in contact through their own pack sets and a firm liaison was maintained with the Belgian S.A.S. Regt at the Coevorden base as well as with the Canadian armoured cars in the area. (Ibid: p. 5)

THE SITUATION OF 2 CDN CORPS, 0800 HOURS, 11 APR 45*

179. On the morning of 11 Apr Lt-Gen Simonds' front line ran in straight solid fashion from the northern outskirts of Deventer north-east across the Regge River and on past Coevorden to Emmen. This western part of the front was represented on the left by 3 Cdn Inf Div along the Ijssel River; in the centre by 2 Cdn Inf Div about to cross the Vecht River, and on the right but west of the Ems River by the Pol Armd Div operating out of Coevorden. To the north-east across the Ems River and flanking the allied drive into Germany was 4 Cdn Armd Div, before which the enemy was giving up ground rapidly. But it was really on the eastern side of the Ems River that the state of the enemy (between our forces and the old town of Groningen) presented the possibility of a quick dash to the North Sea coast. Lt-Gen Simonds' intention, as issued late on 10 Apr to his divisional commander, called for quick expansion towards the sea and towards the coastal objective to the north-east. From left to right the orders were

- (a) 3 Cdn Inf Div to go for Wezepe (with 9 Cdn Inf Bde leading)
- (b) 2 Cdn Inf Div to open up the route Ommen-Hoogeveen-Beilen (6 Cdn Inf Bde was already on its way to assist by hooking in behind Ommen from the east)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets N1 - Almelo, M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg.

- (c) Pol Armd Div to establish a firing base about Weerdingermond so that it might first move on Weede and secondly tie up its right flank with 4 Cdn Armd Div at Haren and Dorpen.

(First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit,
11 Apr 45, serial 3)

4 Cdn Armd Div was to press its effort towards Oldenburg.
(Ibid)

180. It was here on the right that the Army Commander's chief concern lay, for although the enemy was being forced back, he was, to quote,

... falling back on Friesoythe and the line of the Kusten canal, beyond which, on the left, the defensible low-lying ground of the Sater, Ober Ledinger and Rheider lands extended towards Leer and the mouth of the Ems. In this marshy and confined region, offering only limited accessibility along inadequate roads off which the deployment of fighting vehicles and artillery was difficult, if not impossible the 2nd Parachute Corps was prepared to cover the East Frisian naval bases along the lines of the canal and the approaches across the Vehn-Moor offered similar disadvantages for an assault northward across the Kusten canal...

(General Crerar's Despatch,
op cit, para 29)

181. Apart from the disadvantages of terrain with which his armoured thrust to the north-east had to contend, the Commander of 2 Cdn Corps had another worry; one which, in this land of canals, might well prove critical. It was the shortage of Bailey and Pontoon bridging equipment. This had resulted from the number of canals, rivers and other anti-tank obstacles which our troops had been committed to cross in pursuit of the current operations. At this time Brigadier N.E. Rodger C.B.E., the Chief of Staff of 2 Cdn Corps, noted the urgency, as an entry in his personal war diary shows:

Shortage of Bailey and Pontoon bridging becoming a critical factor in ops though up to now CEs of 2 Cdn Corps and First Army have managed to meet all demands by furiously lifting brs on other than main routes behind Divs and by agile manipulation of the slender resources of bridging and tpt.

(AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/K/F,
Docket II: War Diary Notes
by Brigadier N.E. Rodger, C. of
S. 2 Cdn Corps, 11 Apr 45)

As things turned out the so-called "agile manipulations" by the Chief Engineers concerned met all requirements.

THE ENEMY, 7-11 APR 45

182. The shortage of warlike stores and equipment was not, however, confined to our own needs. The enemy also was having a bad time in this respect. Comment on the current German supply problem was made in the SHAEF Weekly Intelligence Summary for 1 Apr:

In the present rapidly changing situation EAST of the RHINE and with Allied forces penetrating deep into GERMANY, apparently restricted only by their own supply problems, and with increasingly large numbers of prisoners falling into our hands, evidence of equipment shortages and the poverty of the once well-to-do supply branches of the Wehrmacht daily becomes more apparent.

The results of the enemy petrol shortage were seen in the speed with which Allied break-throughs WEST of the RHINE were exploited and in the number of prisoners and amount of equipment taken in the process, in the reports of abandoned and enemy-destroyed artillery and AFVs, and in the almost total inability of the German command to regroup its forces with sufficient speed in the face of a fast moving situation.

(Hist Sec File 205 S 1.023
(D3) SHAEF Weekly Intelligence
Summary, No. 54)

Moreover the record "low" in fuel production and the increased demands upon alternate means of transportation, which, incidentally, the Allied air effort was rapidly canalizing had forced the enemy to a position which only a tremendously high state of transport efficiency could save from utter chaos. (Ibid)

183. As it was, transport losses were making supply of ammunition extremely difficult, and a captured document showed that even as early as 21 Jan 45 the Germans had felt the pinch acutely:

Ammunition supplies for 105-mm and 150 howitzers are rapidly decreasing; for heavy infantry weapons still sufficient on hand. 120-mm mortar ammunition presents a severe bottle neck. 75-mm anti-tank ammunition is critical. For Nebelwerfers there will be no further supplies for the time being...

There will be no further supplies of mines of all types for some time to come. It will be necessary to improvise mines. Stocks of explosives as used by Army engineers are entirely insufficient. Only commercial dynamite is on hand.

(Ibid)

A poor state of affairs indeed for an Army that had once boasted a model system of provision for its troops.

184. On the Canadian Army's front the daily intake of prisoners and the multitude of units identified were in themselves conclusive evidence of the difficulties the enemy was having. The situation was thus stated by 2 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summary for 10 Apr:

It would not serve any useful purpose either to enumerate the staggering multitude of units identified during our advances in the past forty-eight hours or to discuss their precise place in the enemy's complex order of battle. Today's bag of prisoners has been exceptionally large, its diversity bewildering. The final count should exceed fifteen hundred while the completed list of identified units will run to several pages. Yesterday's take of between three and four hundred, although less impressive, was equally diverse.

(215C1.98 (D376) Int Summaries
2 Cdn Corps/Vol 8: No. 155
10 Apr 45)

As for the troops opposing the Canadians, it was pretty clear that their main opponent, 6 Para Div, had withdrawn west to the line of the Ijssel River, where it was now being reorganized with units which had no previous connection with it, such as 31 Para Regt, 3 S.S. Police Regt, Battle Fuchs, 30 M.G. Bn and a wide variety of training elements, either infantry, engineer or signals. Our troops had met all of these between the Ijssel and Ommen. East from the latter place to the Ems River the order of battle was not completely known, although at Meppen prisoners had appeared from a Battle Group Schneeber, which our Intelligence Staff presumed to be controlled by 7 Para Div, last located about Lingen opposing 43 (W.) Inf Div of 30 Brit Corps. (2 Cdn Corps Intelligence Summaries, Nos 154-155, dated 8-10 Apr 45)

185. But what of the enemy's intentions? The stubborn 6 Para Div had begun to give way in the centre, and the breaking of contact before the armoured thrust to the east implied that the enemy on that flank, (63 Para Regt of 21 Para Div, identified near Borger) was seeking new positions on which to put up an organized fight. In the western flank, his intention to stand on the Ijssel River was, as the First Cdn Army Intelligence Summary for 9 Apr put it,

...the only clear one. He may possibly defend GRONINGEN with the troops already in NORTH EAST HOLLAND. The most valuable targets are EMDEN and WILHELMSHAFEN because the Allied advance on BREMEN is cutting off the forces in NORTH WEST GERMANY from operating further WEST.

(First Cdn Army Intelligence
Summaries, Nos 283 & 284, 9-10
Apr 45)

The coastal forces alone were certainly not large enough to hold any long line or cover more than a few vital points, but if some concentration of them could be achieved and they could be supplied from coastal depots, then General Crerar's troops might well be forced into another set-piece battle. (*Ibid*)

LT-GEN SIMOND'S TASK IN WESTERN HOLLAND, 10-11 APR 45*

186. Meanwhile, as the battle for North-east Holland had been taking shape, the elimination of the enemy's forces along the east bank of the Ijssel River up to Deventer had prepared the way for 2 Cdn Corps to undertake the preliminary assault in the battle for the western Netherlands. (See para 187). With Deventer cleared by 3 Cdn Inf Div, the last obstacle had been removed which might delay the launching of the first attack mounted by 1 Cdn Inf Div in the North-western European theatre, the assault across the River Ijssel. The river presents a formidable water barrier and for some time 21 Army Group had thought enough of the problem to prepare a study of an assault crossing from east to west. The planning staff had decided that the best crossing sites were astride Zutphen, for in that area there was no high ground on the enemy's side close enough to the river to give him good observation. It was also the logical site for a bridge to take advantage of the main road. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/B/I, Docket II: The Assault Crossing of the River Ijssel from East to West, 26 Mar 45)

187. The River Ijssel is, in fact, one of the mouths of the Rhine and flows north into the Ijsselmeer, a non-tidal inland sea. **Since it flows through fairly flat land, the pace of its current is only two to three knots but its width is 350 feet.** Under normal conditions the banks rise about 6 to 10 feet above the water, which is from 10 to 12 feet deep. But even in summer the Ijssel is prone to flooding. The best crossings were therefore thought to be those astride Zutphen, where a bridge would be needed in any event to take advantage of the good main road. But as early as 26 Mar when the study was made, it had been foreseen that Zutphen "may be a tough nut to crack", a view justified later by the trouble 3 Cdn Inf Div had in routing the parachutists out of the place. On the other hand,

Assault crossing sites in the Zutphen area are better than further south and the going is likely to be better than elsewhere. Enemy observation of the crossings in the Zutphen area is not so easy as further south, and, by securing Zutphen early, time will be saved in the construction of the main bridges in the town.

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/B/I, Docket II: The Assault Crossing of the River Ijssel from East to West, 26 Mar 45)

188. The Chief Engineer, First Cdn Army, Brigadier G. Walsh, had also made a study of the crossing, particularly with reference to the possibility of using that old Canadian favourite, the Buffalo or L.V.T. It was determined that L.V.Ts. could enter the water at most places in the area between Zutphen and Deventer, but that in most places they would have to unload their infantry passengers at the river's edge as they would be unable to climb the far bank themselves.

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland, 1:50,000, Sheets 39 - Rhenen, 40 - Arnhem, 33 - Zutphen, 27 - Hattem.

Accompanying sappers would, it was thought, be able to make exits within about one hour of landing. (W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 122). These exits would be needed by the L.V.Ts., which would ferry the anti-tank guns and other supporting weapons across, for these things were too heavy to be unloaded on the river bank. Because of the long rough carry necessary to get boats to the water, Brigadier Walsh recommended the use of assault boats rather than the more capacious but unwieldy storm boats. (Ibid). The plan finally evolved by the C.R.E. 1 Cdn Inf Div (Lt-Col E.H. Webb) was as follows:

The C.R.E.'s plan for the crossing was based on the construction of a class 9 FBE bridge, and two 'A' type class 40 BPB rafts. The staff of Brigadier Black, C.E. 2 Cdn Corps, under whose command we came for the operation afforded us invaluable assistance in the procurement of stores. A platoon and a half each of FBE and Bailey Bridge, plus all the paraphernalia pertaining to an operation, such as ours was to be, were obtained without difficulty.

(AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F,
Docket III: Outline accounts
of Supporting Arms and Services)

MAJ-GEN H.W. FOSTER'S PLAN TO CROSS THE IJssel*

189. On 10 Apr the Divisions operation order was issued, giving as the intention that 1 Cdn Inf Div would establish a bridgehead in the great bend of the IJssel south of Deventer, and then advance and capture Apeldoorn. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was to carry out the assault crossing and establish the bridgehead. A great smoke screen, created both by artillery and mobile generators, was an essential part of the assault plan especially to cover the bridging and rafting operations. 6 Cdn Armd Regt was the armoured unit detailed to support the operation. One squadron under command 2 Cdn Inf Bde, with the rest of the regiment under 1 Cdn Inf Bde, was the initial allotment. The Shermans would be ferried across as soon as the two class 40 rafts were completed. The assaulting troops were to be ferried in L.V.Ts manned by 4 R.T.R. of 79 Armd Div, a versatile formation and old friends of 2 Cdn Corps since D-Day but new to the men from Italy. L. Edmn Regt called them "Buffalo Herders". (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket III: 1 Cdn Inf Div Ops Order No. 1, Op "CANNONSHOT"). Artillery resources in addition to the divisional artillery, consisted of 7 Cdn Med Regt, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, two British heavy batteries equipped with 7.2s, and a British Medium Regt. In addition, there was 33 Bty of 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt and a troops of search lights. (Ibid)

THE IJssel SMOKE SCREEN

190. It was considered necessary that the river-bend near Gorssel, where the crossing was being made, should be screened as much as possible from enemy observation. The C.R.A.

* Reference maps: As for para 186.