

and C.R.E. of 1 Cdn Inf Div jointly laid down the requirements:

- (a) In conjunction with the artillery, to form a smoke box around the prepared bridgeheads until the assaulting troops were firm on the ground.
- (b) To protect bridging operations and subsequent traffic over the bridge from observed enemy **fire** after the fire-plan outlined in "a" had stopped.

(AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/RCA/C/F, Docket III, Vol 1, Report on Smoke Screens Carried out by First Cdn Army, 15 Jul 45)

For 2 Cdn Corps this was the first time that artillery and generator smoke had been used together to form the one screen, and only very close co-operation between the two branches<sup>x</sup> could make a success of it. The necessary close liaison was achieved by having a chemical warfare officer at headquarters R.C.A. (Ibid)

#### ARMoured AND ARTILLERY SUPPORT

191. The fire-plan devised by C.R.A. 1 Cdn Inf Div, in consultation with the commanders of 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes, provided for a series of concentrations. These were to be fired at known defence positions whose locations had been established from aerial photographs or by our Intelligence. The artillery's share in the smoke screen was to begin at H - 30, and at H - 10 a hail of high explosive was to start falling on the far side of the river. At H - hour this was to be replaced by concentrations fired on the enemy positions further back. The guns of 1 Cdn Inf Div had been placed in support of 7 Cdn Inf Bde on 7 Apr and at that time the detachments had their first experience of building gun pits instead of digging them, for in the sodden soil of this part of Holland any hole soon filled with water. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket III: folio 8: 1 Cdn Inf Div, Operation "CANNONSHOT". Outline Account of Supporting Arms and Services, p. 1). Air support was provided by "Cab Rank" fighter bombers, on call. Armed reconnaissance was provided to make life miserable for German road traffic, and to ensure that adequate information came back. There was also an aerial counter battery programme by medium bombers. They would engage known enemy batteries from H-hour onwards. H hour was set at 1630 hours 11 Apr 45. (Ibid, Docket III: folio I, Appx I, 1 Cdn Inf Div, Op Order No. 1, Op "CANNONSHOT")

#### 1 CDN INF DIV MOVES UP TO MEET THE ENEMY, 3-10 APR 45<sup>x</sup>

192. On 3 and 4 Apr 1 Cdn Inf Div had moved from its concentration area outside Brussels to the Reichswald, where it

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<sup>x</sup> R.C.A. and chemical warfare.

<sup>xx</sup> Reference maps: As for para 186.



came under command of 2 Cdn Corps. The men of the division were once more allowed to put up their red patches and unit flashes, which had been removed from their battledress as a security measure during their journey from Italy. On 7 Apr the division moved across the Rhine, and on 9 Apr Maj-Gen Foster, who now commanded the division, brought his men into a concentration area north-east of Zutphen. On the afternoon of the 10 Apr, when 7 Cdn Inf Bde took Deventer, the stage was set for 1 Cdn Inf Div to make its debut in North-west Europe. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket III, folio I, Operation "CANNONSHOT" op cit). Although the German troops now facing east from across the IJssel were a very mixed lot, there was no reason to look forward to the coming battle with too much complacency:

Although the terms "hodge-podge", "odds and sods", "scrapping", etc., are accepted epithets for such an order of battle as he now discloses on our front the skill and fighting spirit of individual units has often been up to the standard of elite troops. Even though the soldiers are often youths from the training centres, they are fanatical and brave. Officer instructors from training units have provided the highest standard of leadership.

(AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/L/F,  
Docket I: 2 Cdn Corps Int  
Summary No. 153, 6 Apr 45)

193. When the division moved into the area from which it was to assault, 7 Cdn Recce Regt of 3 Cdn Inf Div was placed under command to watch the river line from Zutphen to Deventer. At this time, the division's own reconnaissance regiment, 4 P.L.D.G. was in process of being reconverted from infantry to reconnaissance. (Ibid). Men of 1 Cdn Inf Div had already been across the river; as early as the evening of 8 Apr a small reconnaissance group from L. Edm R., consisting of the scout officer, two scouts and two Dutch civilians, had been across and determined that the enemy held many well-dug-in positions along the western dyke. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket III, 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Report on Ops 11 Apr 45 - 23 Apr 45: The Loyal Edmonton Regiment, Report of Ops, 7 Apr 45 - 23 Apr 45)

194. At the same time as 1 Cdn Inf Div was preparing to cross the IJssel, under General Simonds' direction, 1 Cdn Corps was itself planning the assault on Arnhem. The original proposal for the capture of Arnhem involved an attack from the south-west across the Neder Rijn. This plan had to be revised, mainly because it was appreciated that the roads across the "island" between the rivers to the north of Nijmegen were only likely to bear the weight of heavy traffic at the cost of intensive effort on the part of the sappers. It was decided, therefore, to attack across the upper IJssel from the south-east, where the approaches were more favourable. Accordingly, under cover of a smoke screen, 49 (W.R.) Inf Div was relieved on the "island" by Westmr R. (Mot) with some Belgian troops under command, and shifted to the east of the Panterdensch Canal with orders to cross the River on 12 Apr.\* (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Corps/C/F: Draft outline of Ops of 1 Cdn Corps in Clearing of Western Holland, April 1945)

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\* This operation, which was carried out under 1 Cdn Corps, is described in a subsequent report.



THE SITUATION OF SECOND BRIT ARMY, 10-11 APR 45\*

195. The possibilities of progress in this part of the Netherlands, however, were limited by the extent and requirements of the great advances being made elsewhere along the front of 21 Army Group. Second Brit Army had considerably expanded the wings of its thrust between the Ems and Weser Rivers. On the left, flanking the Canadians, Lt-Gen Horrocks's 30 Brit Corps, whose objective was the city of Bremen, had made slow progress. By 9 Apr Gds Armd Div and 43 (W.) Inf Div had after some severe fighting reached the areas of Furstenau (9635) and Haselunne (8353) respectively, but against well organized opposition, craters, and road blocks. Behind them 51 (H.) Div had the task of holding the area of Lingen, which had been handed over to them by 3 Brit Inf Div on its transfer to Lt-Gen Ritchie's 12 Corps on 8 Apr. The armoured and infantry advance went on throughout 10 Apr, and on the following day 51 (H.) Div was brought forward with orders to capture Quakenbruck (1542), while 43 (W.) Inf Div took Cloppenburg. (AEF: 45/Second Brit Army/C/D, Docket I; also First Cdn Army Liaison Officers Reports, 111620A)

196. In the centre of 12 Brit Corps' sector much greater progress had been made, mostly by 7 Armd Div with under command 155 Inf Bde (52 (L.) Div), 9 Inf Bde (3 Brit Inf Div), and 160 Inf Bde of 53 (W.) Inf Div)). The town of Hoya on the west bank of Weser was captured by 22 Armd Bde on 8 Apr, while to the north-west more of the armour advancing up from Diepholz secured Bassum. Far to the rear, on the left flank of 12 Corps, 52 (L.) Div (less 155 Inf Bde) was still having trouble on the axis Bramsche (1624) - Diepholz (4346), north-west of the Dummer Zee, while 3 Brit Inf Div looked after the base of the flank farther back, thus freeing 53 (W.) Div to follow up the armour now driving on with the object of seizing Delmenhorst (6095). Progress north-west of the road Bremen - Diepholz was slow however, and on 10 Apr 131 Inf Bde took over the attack from 22 Armd Bde. Meanwhile 160 Inf Bde slid over the Weser at Hoya and firmed up a bridgehead from which 53 (W.) Inf Div was ordered to expand eastwards first, towards Rethem, then up between the rivers Aller and Weser to Verden (0182), then south to Nienburg (0050). For this operation 4 Brit Armd Bde, which had been operating with 52 (L.) Div, came forward to assist 53 (W.) Inf Div. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I)

197. The Lowland Division, after much hard fighting finally broke up the enemy before them and captured Ankum (0938) and Bersenbruck (1440). They went on the next day to secure the area of Damme (3136 - Holdorf (2643) - Neuenkirchen (2235), this latter advance being made possible by the situation loosening up on 30 Brit Corps front. The resistance against our troops had stiffened so much, however, that it was clear that Bremen could not be taken from the south without a major attack. The orders that the Corps now prepared to follow therefore, called for a strong effort to the east, while the containing of the southern approaches to the city was turned over to 3 Brit Inf Div. Maj-Gen Whistler was instructed to

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Central Europe, 1:100,000, Sheets M3 - Bremen, N2 - Osnabruck, N4 - Hanover, N3 - Minden, M4 - Soltau, also Appx "G".



maintain offensive patrolling in the direction of Delmenhorst. 7 Armd Div was to make use of the 53 (W.) Inf Div's bridgehead and debouch to the north-east towards Soltau and Luneburg. (Ibid)

198. Meanwhile 8 Brit Corps, with its right flank resting along the Elbe-Weser Canal, had struck out from its Weser River positions between Petershagen (8420) and Minded (8010). 6 Airborne Div headed for the Leine River on the right, circling to the south of the Steindhuder Meer (0630), and reached the river at Bordensau (1831) south of Neustadt (1736). To the north of the Steindhuder Meer 11 Brit Armd Div maintained a very strong thrust through Rehburg (0232), having previously detached part of its force to deal with Stolzenau (9136) from the south-east. Maj-Gen Roberts' troops bridged the Leine River at Neustadt and drove all out along the main road north to Essel. While these operations proceeded, 15 (S.) Inf Div was being concentrated preparatory to the breakout towards the Elbe River. By 11 Apr, 8 Brit Corps therefore was correctly positioned to resume its advance to the river Elbe with full speed, with 15 (S.) Inf Div on the right directed on Uelzen (9089), and on the left 11 Armd Div directed on Ebstorf (7995). (Ibid)

199. The main theme of present speculation was how long the enemy would continue to resist. Half of Germany was now in Allied hands. South of Field Marshal Montgomery's sector, powerful American armoured columns had run wild. Ninth U.S. Army had taken Hanover and was threatening Brunswick, First U.S. Army was closing on the main route from Brunswick to Nurnburg, besides besieging the Ruhr Pocket, now far behind the front. The other U.S. Armies and the French Army were making equally good progress. Third U.S. Army under General Patton was at the gates of Erfurt, Seventh U.S. Army commanded by General Patch was within 30 miles of Nurnburg, while the French troops under General de Lattre de Tassigny, having crossed the Rhine near Karlsruhe, were poised ready to strike at Stuttgart. (4/Summ CIGS/2/6, Summary No. 310 and Map "B", attached)

200. From the east, the Russian Armies had swarmed forward, and were now building up their forces on the Oder River east of Berlin, Breslau had long been taken, the east part of Czechoslovakia had been entered, and Vienna was being stormed. The Russian front line ran well into Austria south of its capital, then on further south into Croatia, where a juncture had been effected with Marshal Tito's partisans, who had been pinning down countless numbers of the enemy's troops. (SHAEP Weekly Intelligence Summary as above, No. 56, Map attached, Dispositions of the Divisions of the German Army as at 14 Apr 45)

#### NEW DECISIONS BY THE SUPREME COMMANDER, APRIL 1945

201. The result of the current operations had been envisaged earlier by General Eisenhower as a cleaver to cut Germany in two. As he explained in his official report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff,



Once the process of eliminating the enemy forces in the Ruhr had reached a stage when they presented no potential threat to our security, three main avenues by which we could thrust deeper into Germany lay before us.

(Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force, 6 Jun 1944 to 8 May 1945, p. 105)

There was the northern route across the north German plain to the Baltic and Berlin, the latter being, as the Supreme Commander added:

...the symbol of victory before the eyes of every Allied soldier from the day we set foot in Normandy; but other gains would spring from an advance to the northern sector, gains which were at least as important as those to be derived from capture of the German capital. By a thrust to the Baltic, we should cut off from the main armies those elements which were located in Denmark, Norway, north-west Germany, and Holland, at once depriving them of supplies and preventing their coming to the assistance of the forces in the centre of Germany. Furthermore, we should gain the north German ports and thus deny the enemy use of his naval bases and ship-building yards, bringing to an end the activities of the submarines and other craft which had for so long preyed upon our supply routes. Finally, we should link hands with the Russian forces sweeping across Pomerania to the north of Berlin.

(Ibid)

202. The gap in the enemy's line left by the now trapped Army Group "B" laid open the central route to us:

An easy advance was thus offered from Kassel, through Erfurt and Leipzig, to Dresden. This would again bring our forces to an important industrial area, the richest still left to the Germans after their loss of the Ruhr and Silesia. There also we should be able to meet the advancing Red Army, and in so doing we should cut in half what remained of Hitler's Reich.

(Ibid)

203. The southern route, which ran through Nurnburg and Regensburg, through the Danube Valley into Austria also had possibilities and General Eisenhower had pointed out that:

A thrust on this axis would also enable us to isolate, and then penetrate, the Redoubt in western Austria into which we now knew the enemy intended eventually to withdraw as many of his forces as possible. The prevention of such a withdrawal was a major objective in any operations which we might execute in the south.

(Ibid, p. 106)



204. From this calculation the decision had emerged:

Weighing the relative advantages which would accrue from an advance in strength in either north, centre, or south, I decided that an offensive first in the centre would prove the most effective. With Germany once cut in two, the enemy remaining in each portion could then more economically be eliminated. Such a central thrust, moreover, would afford us the maximum degree of flexibility for future operations, as we could subsequently switch forces rapidly to the north or to the south as the situation should indicate.

(Ibid)

General Bradley had accordingly been ordered to put his central group of Armies on the offensive. (Ibid)

205. The Supreme Commander, anxious to co-ordinate his plans with our Russian Allies, explains the liaison in the following words:

I therefore informed Marshal Stalin of my general plan to strike first in the centre and subsequently to effect a link-up with his forces in the Regensburg-Linz area with a view to neutralizing the Redoubt. Marshal Stalin replied that this scheme coincided entirely with the Russian plans in respect to both the central and southern sectors.

The decision to concentrate first upon a major thrust in the centre nevertheless gave rise to some misgivings. The desirability of bringing the U-boat war to an end, of opening up supply lines through the north German ports, of acquiring the use of Swedish shipping, of relieving the Dutch, and of occupying Denmark and Norway, and the political and psychological effects of an early entry into Berlin were all advanced as reasons in favour of early operations in the 21 Army Group sector.

Our reply pointed out that we had not forgotten the important advantages to be gained by the conquest of north Germany. It was merely a question of timing that was at issue. Our plan for an advance in the centre was itself intended to facilitate such a conquest which, I was convinced, could more easily be achieved once Germany was cut in two. It was vital that we should concentrate for each effort in turn rather than allow our power to be dispersed by attempting to undertake too many projects at once.

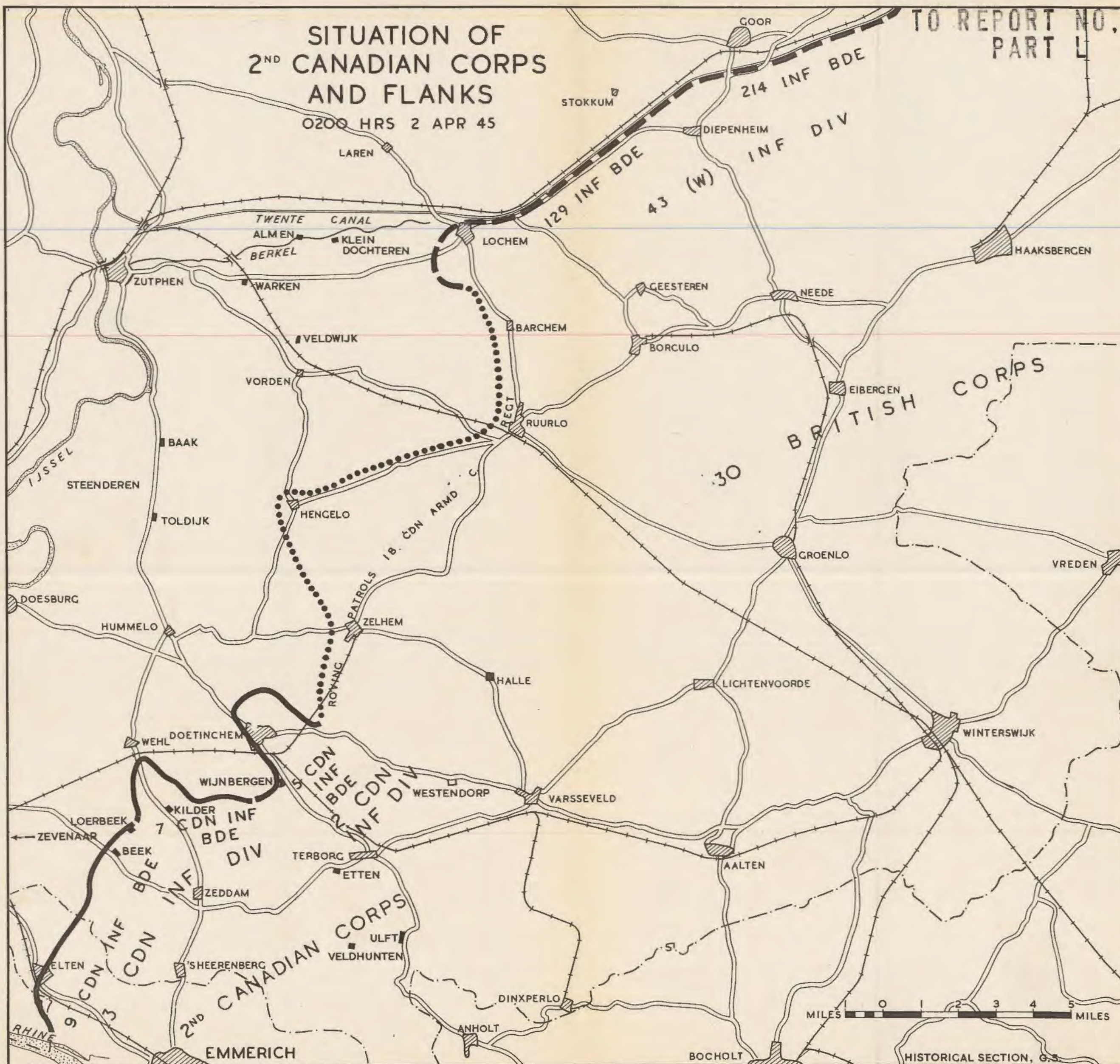
(Ibid)

By 11 Apr the value of General Eisenhower's appreciation and the justification of his decision were evident to all.

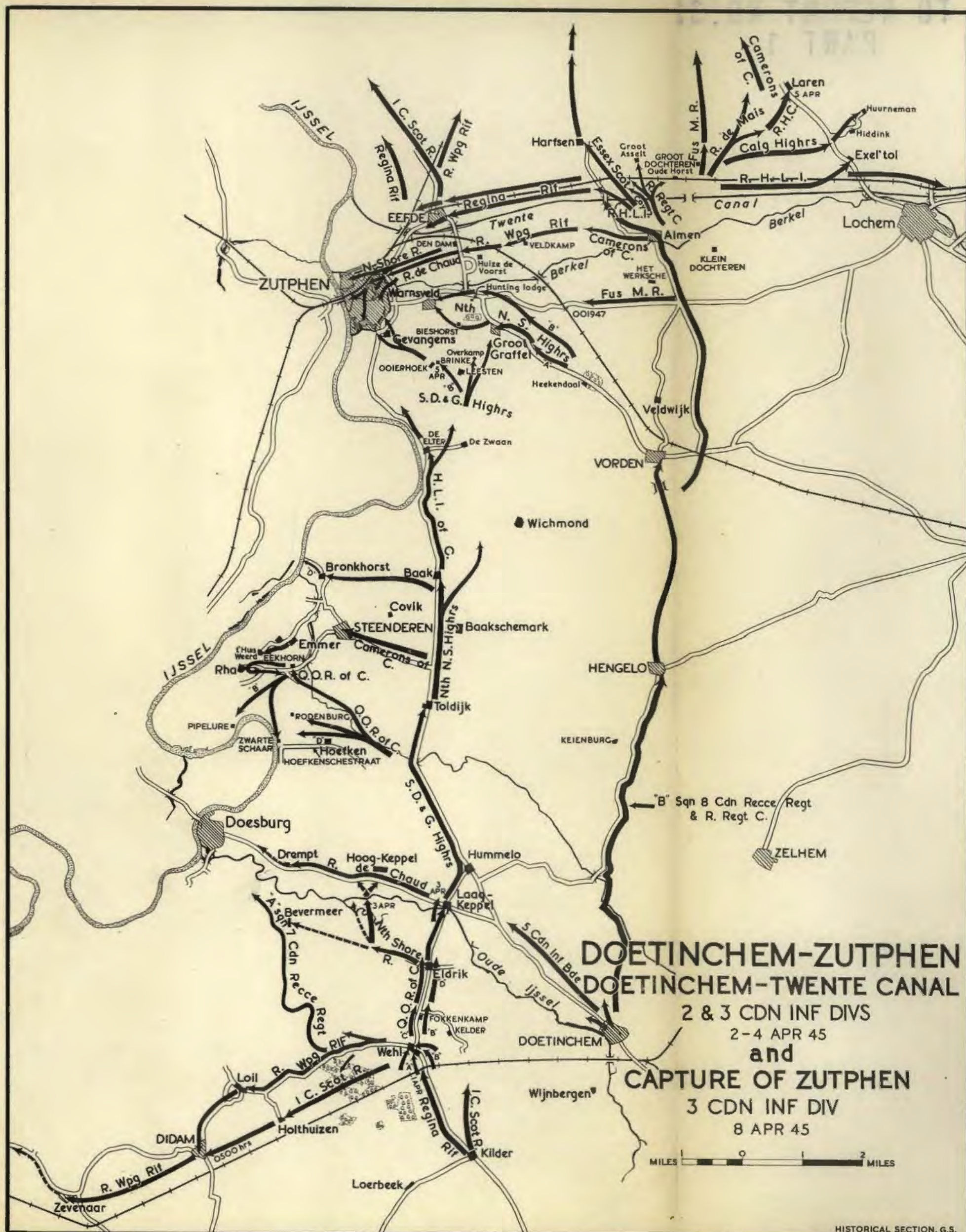


# SITUATION OF 2<sup>ND</sup> CANADIAN CORPS AND FLANKS

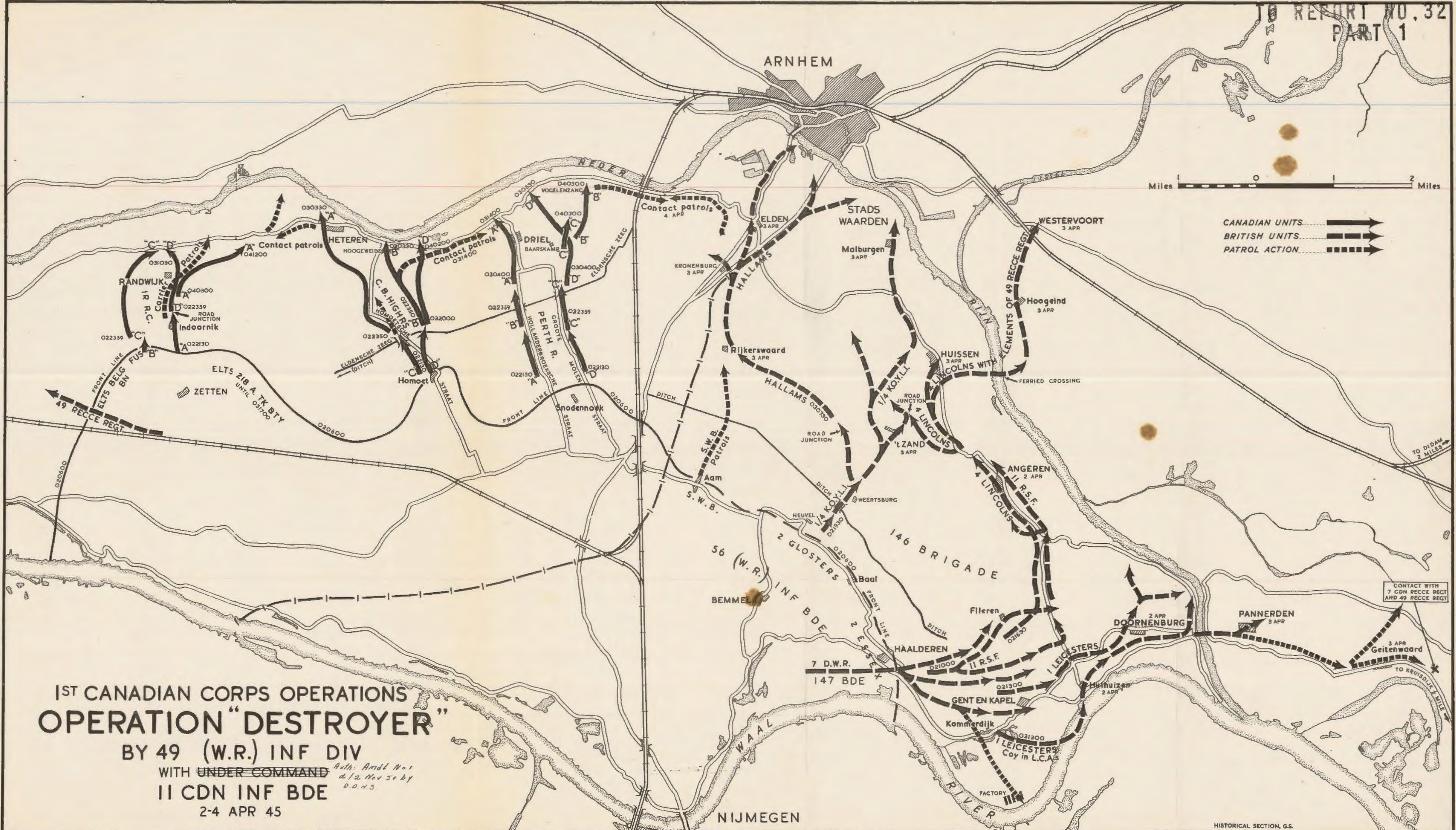
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PART I





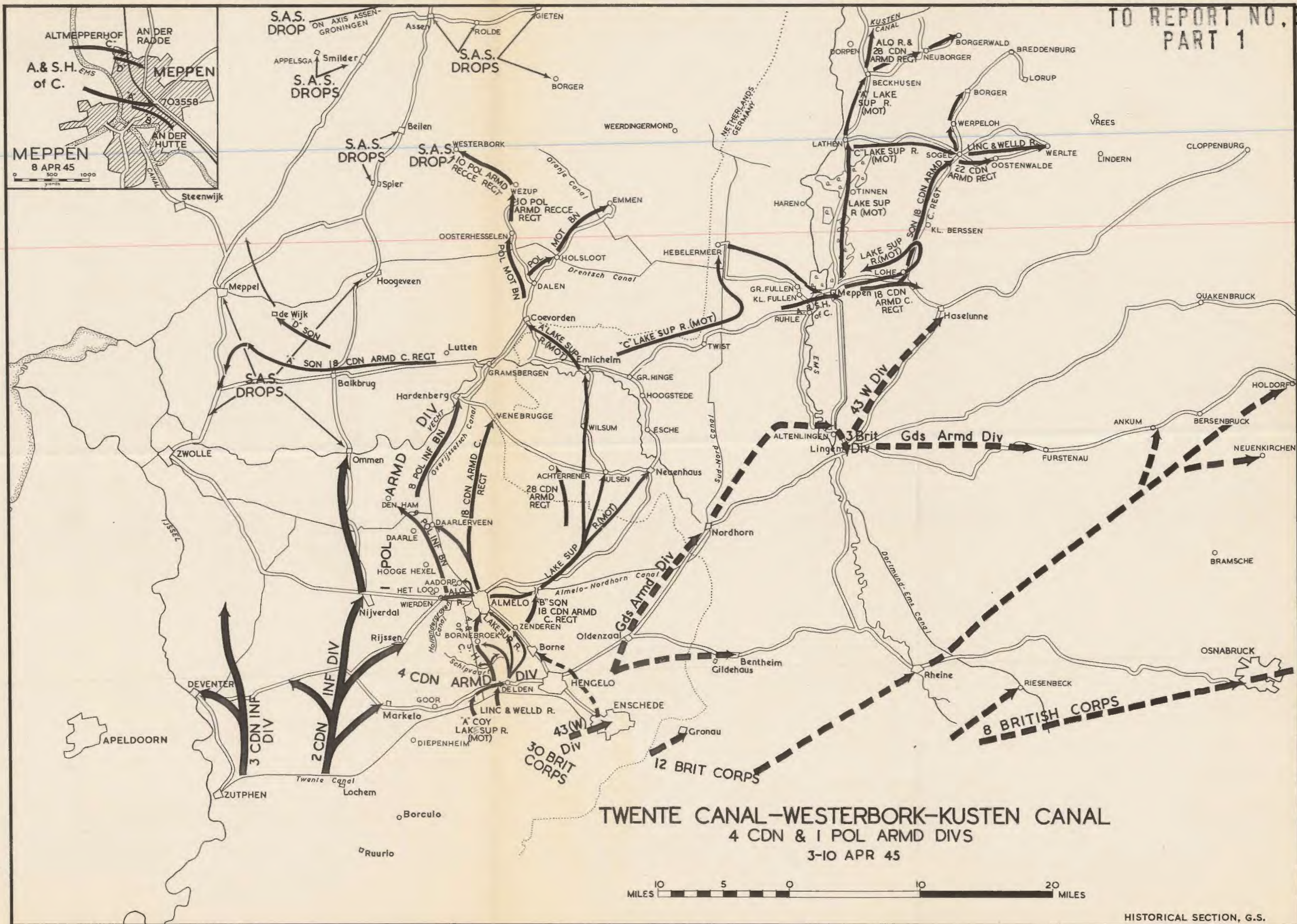




1ST CANADIAN CORPS OPERATIONS  
**OPERATION "DESTROYER"**  
BY 49 (W.R.) INF DIV  
WITH ~~UNDER COMMAND~~ 11 CDN INF BDE  
2-4 APR 45

Auth: Amde No. 1  
d/2 Nov 50 by  
D.O.H.S.









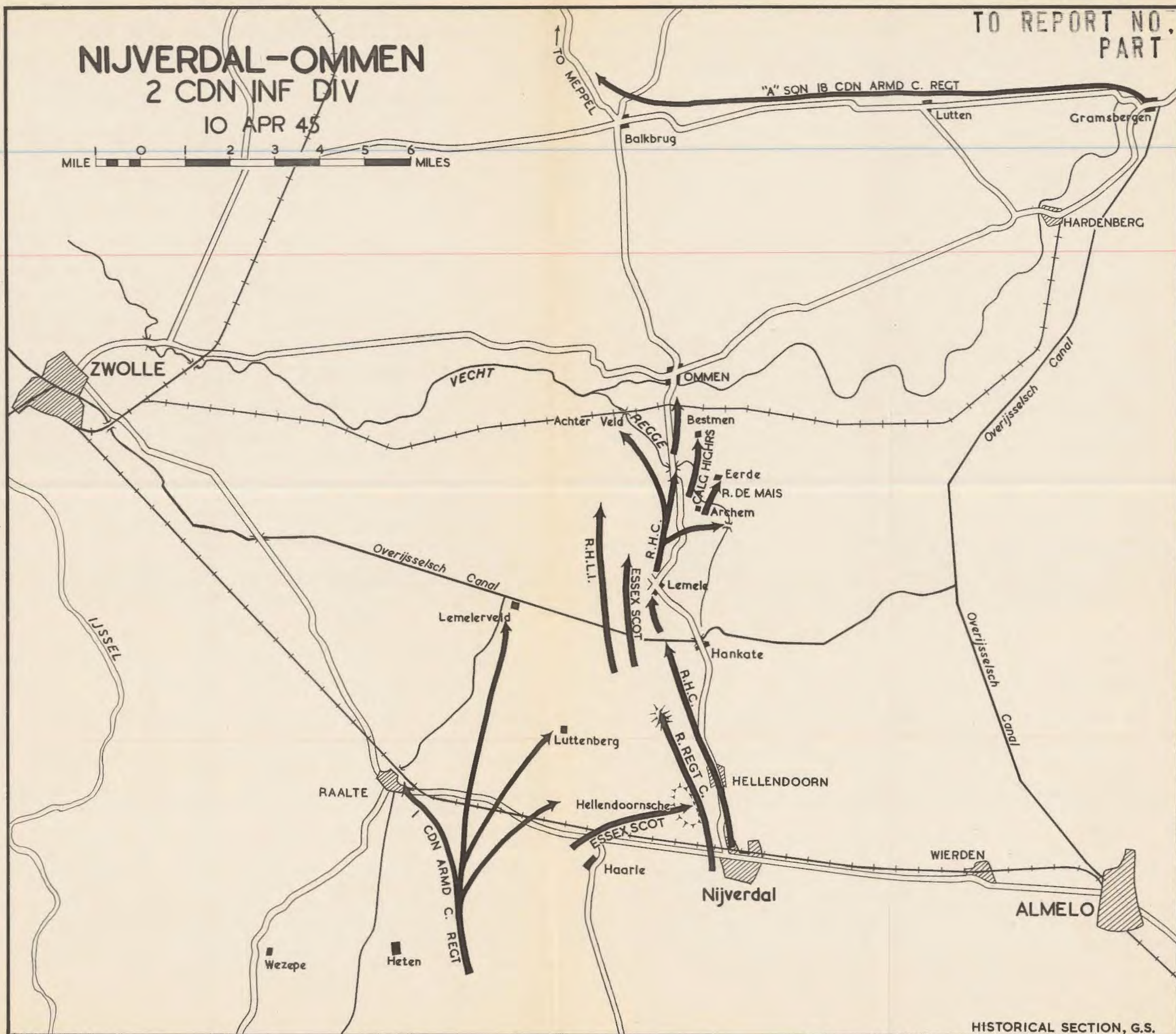


## NIJVERDAL-OMMEN

2 CDN INF DIV

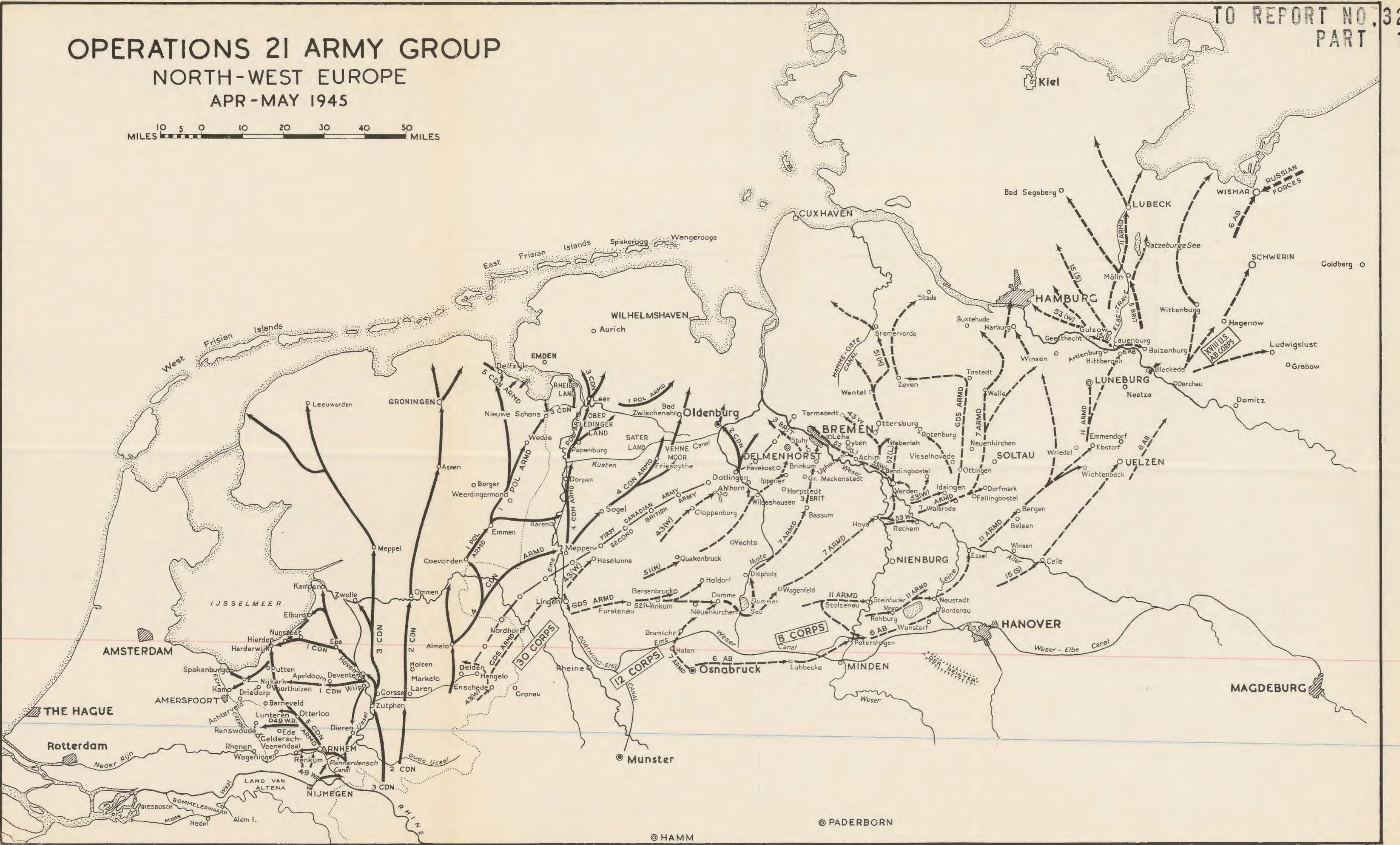
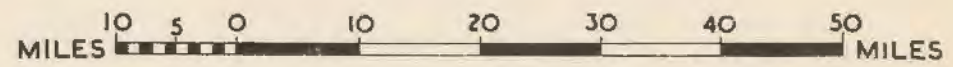
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# OPERATIONS 21 ARMY GROUP NORTH-WEST EUROPE APR-MAY 1945





**CANCELLED**

PART II

**DECLASSIFIED**  
AUTHORITY: DHD 3-12

THE OPERATIONS OF FIRST

BY QAC FOR DHIST NDHQ

CDN, ARMY, 12 - 19 APR 45

DATE: NOV 10 1986

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PART II

The Operations of First  
Cdn Army, 12-19 Apr 45.

GENERAL CRERAR'S TASK, 11 APR 45

206. The task now assigned to First Cdn Army may be described in Field Marshal Montgomery's own words.

The aim of 21 Army Group remained to reach the line of the Elbe in our sector, and to reduce the ports of Bremen and Hamburg. Now that the Allies would not be so relatively strong in the northern sector, it was to be anticipated that these tasks would take longer than I had previously hoped, and Second Army would require to watch for the security of its southern flank. I decided to establish an intermediate phase in our advance to the Elbe on the line of the Weser, Aller and Leine rivers. While Second Army advanced to this line, Canadian Army was to clear north-east Holland and the Emden-Wilhelmshaven peninsula.

(Montgomery: Normandy to the Baltic as above, p. 210-211)

As has already been seen, the intermediate phase by Second Army had been completed. (See paras 195-198 to Part I of this report.) General Crerar's part, however, though well advanced, was to require another three weeks of full-hearted effort, and some of it was to include some very bloody fighting indeed.

207. The morning of 11 Apr found the staff at Canadian Army Headquarters busier than usual, for on this day the first offensive into the western Netherlands was to be launched as a prelude to the full scale employment of Lt-Gen Foulkes' 1 Cdn Corps. It was also to be a significant day for Lt-Gen Simonds, whose 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Div's were advancing towards the North Sea between the IJssel and Ems Rivers. For the armour, the day was notable too, but in an adverse way; both Maj-Gen Maczek and Maj-Gen Vokes (the latter especially) were finding themselves in country which offered little in the choice of tactical routes. (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/F; Docket I: 2 Cdn Corps Summary of Ops & Activities 8-14 Apr 45, paras 3, 4)

THE ASSAULT ACROSS THE IJssel RIVER BY 1 CDN INF DIV,  
11 APR 45\*

208. Exactly at 1630 hours 11 Apr the first Buffaloes slithered down into the waters of the IJssel carrying the

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000 Sheet 33 - Zutphen, Sheet 40 - Arnhem: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheet P1 - Bocholt, also Appx "D".



Seaforths and the P.P.C.L.I. on the left and right respectively.\* The enemy artillery reacted immediately, shelling Gorssel (9501) and the nearby loading areas, but it appeared that until the actual moment of the attack the enemy had suspected nothing, perhaps being led astray by the simulated attacks staged by 3 Cdn Inf Div north of Deventer and south of Zutphen. After short engagements with the enemy three out of the four assaulting companies were on their objectives very quickly. The right company of P.P.C.L.I. had some difficulty but overcame it, capturing some prisoners and one German tank. By 1800 hours the initial stage of the operation was completed, and both battalions were beginning to exploit forward from the bridgehead. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 11 Apr 45)

Shelling during this period was not as heavy as that experienced in previous battles in Italy, but the bridge site had been accurately registered and the left Buffalo ferry service was under observed fire. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Docket III: Op "CANNONSHOT", 11 Apr-8 May 45, Folio 2 "2 Cdn Inf Bde report on Ops", para 13)

By 2100 hours the infantrymen had enlarged the bridgehead\*\* but were meeting heavy resistance from determined Germans who were in no mind to yield the dyke, which runs north parallel to the river through the villages of Wilp (9104) and Hoven (9009). The engineers, bothered considerably by shelling, were working furiously at the bridge site. At 2330 hours they had the bridge open for traffic, and the searchlight troop followed by 2 Cdn Inf Bde headquarters were the first troops across. The first tanks crossed by class 40 raft at 0300 hours. (Ibid: Folio 1, Summary of Operations from R. Ijssel to R. Ems). L. Edmn R. joined the rest of the brigade in the bridgehead at midnight (2 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit).

209. During the night P.P.C.L.I. met considerable resistance from infantry supported by tanks and artillery, especially around Wilp, but this resistance was beaten down, and at 0530 hours the battalions of 1 Cdn Inf Bde were on the way across the river. By 0830 hours the Canadians had twenty-three tanks on the west side of the river and some of the smoke-screen vehicles had also crossed. At 0900 hours the bridgehead was considered well and truly established and at 1015 hours 1 Cdn Inf Bde started the second phase of the attack. At this time there were thirty-five tanks in the bridgehead ready to help the division forward. (1 Cdn Inf Div, Summary of Ops from R. Ijssel to R. Ems, op cit, p. 3)

210. The first troops of 1 Cdn Inf Bde to move forward were 48 Highrs, who advanced through P.P.C.L.I., and by noon were five kilometres inland from the original crossing. (ibid). R.C.R. were close behind, and Hast and P.E.R. were in reserve in the bridgehead. At this stage, with 1 Cdn Inf Bde fanning out north and west and 2 Cdn Inf Bde striking southwest, it was necessary to bring over Carlt & York R. to fill in the gap so created, and to make the bridgehead secure. Crossing the river

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\* See Para 190 to Part I of this Report.

\*\* See Appx "D".



at 1400 hours the Carletons were held up until Seaforth of C. had used Wasps to clear the wooded estate south of Wilp. Carlt & York R. relieved Seaforth of C. and P.P.C.L.I.'s companies in the vicinity of Wilp. Meanwhile, L. Edmn R. had passed through P.P.C.L.I. and moved south with tank support. By midnight, 1 Cdn Inf Bde had pushed out to Twelloo (8805) on the Deventer - Apeldoorn railway, about three miles west of Deventer. This was the brigade objective for the second phase of the attack. (Ibid)

1 CDN INF DIV PASSES FROM LT-GEN SIMONDS' COMMAND,  
13 APR 45\*

211. At 0600 hours on 13 Apr the Division passed from Lt-Gen Simonds' command back to 1 Cdn Corps, but it is necessary to follow its fortunes a little further in order to understand its task while with 2 Cdn Corps. In the Divisional Commander's own words:

On the night 13/14 Apr a change in plan was necessary. The original plan visualized 49 (W.R.) Inf Div crossing to the west of Arnhem, but they crossed east of the city (and caught the enemy off balance thereby). I received orders to link up with 49 (W.R.) Div and to open the road down the west side of the river Ijssel, so that a bridge could be built from Zutphen. This additional job was given to 2 Cdn Inf Bde, though my original intention had been to keep 2 Cdn Inf Bde in reserve, since they would have done enough by making the assault crossing and establishing the bridge-head... \*\*

... with the committing of 2 Cdn Inf Bde on this task, we were facing three ways at once. 1 Cdn Inf Bde on the right with an exposed northern flank, was moving to Apeldoorn; 3 Cdn Inf Bde in the centre was moving up to the canal, south of the town, with their eyes on the main objective; 2 Cdn Inf Bde was clearing south and linking up with 49 (W.R.) Inf Div.

(AEF: 45/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket II: Comment on operation "Cannon-shot" by Maj-Gen H. Foster)

This left General Foster in the unenviable position of having all three of his brigades fully committed, and no reserve for emergencies on his northern flank. Fortunately the enemy was equally extended and unable to take advantage of the situation. (Ibid)

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\* Reference maps as for para 208.

\*\* 49 (W.R.) Inf Div crossed the Ijssel at 2240 hours 12 Apr assisted by landing craft of Naval Force "T" AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/F Docket II: Folio I, Lectures, Brig C.C. Mann, C.B.E., D.S.O.



THE DASH TO THE NORTH SEA BY 3 CDN INF DIV,  
11-18 APR 45<sup>x</sup>

212. Having passed the responsibility of his effort into Western Holland to 1 Cdn Corps, Lt-Gen Simonds was now able to turn about and devote his entire attention to the continuation of the armoured advances on Oldenburg and Leer and the clearance of the coastal areas on his northern flank. On the morning of 11 Apr, a new operation instruction had been sent out to the brigades and supporting units of 3 Cdn Inf Div. 7 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to concentrate in the area then held by 9 Cdn Inf Bde north of Deventer, leaving the town to Q.O.R. of C. The brigade was to be prepared to pass through 9 Cdn Inf Bde to take Zwolle (8835), or at least to regain contact with the enemy. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to hold the Zutphen area until released by the establishment of 1 Cdn Inf Div's bridgehead across the IJssel. Then it would concentrate and prepare to pass through 7 Cdn Inf Bde to continue the advance. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to lead the division up to the line Wijhe (9122) - Raalte (0022), with a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt scouting ahead of the brigade. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, April 1945, Appx 5: 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 4). The plan met with great success: the reconnaissance, working ahead of the brigade, met with little opposition, and in the afternoon carriers of Nth N.S. Highrs clattered into Raalte (0022). With the enemy showing no sign of trying to hold up the advance, conditions were ripe for a dash northward like that just made by 4 Cdn Armd Bde. The brigade was ordered to regroup and form the divisional advance guard for a dash to Leeuwarden (7013). (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Apr 45). A squadron of twenty Rem gun-towers borrowed from 6 Cdn A.Tk Regt acted as Kangaroos to help lift the infantry forward, and those not able to squeeze aboard hitch-hiked on the tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt and the vehicles of 14 Cdn Fd Regt. The battalions were to advance in the order S.D. & G. Highrs, Nth N.S. Highrs and H.L.I. of C. (Ibid; AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 32, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, and Regimental History 6 Cdn Anti-Tank Regiment; p. 29)

213. At 0830 hours on 12 Apr the cavalcade rolled out to the north<sup>xx</sup> with a screen of the reconnaissance regiment exploring the main axis and sweeping out a mile on either side. Craters and blown bridges made progress slow at first; just south of Heino (9727) a blown bridge halted the advance until Brigadier Rockingham himself found a light bridge to the east of the main road. This he hastily ordered strengthened with planks and a tank was ordered to try it out. "Very gingerly" the crew commander eased his massive vehicle out on to the span, and across the stream. Soon the whole squadron was across and advancing on Heino with S.D. & G. Highrs, who had scrambled over in typical infantry manner. Together tanks and infantry cleared the town. (Ibid). With Heino taken the brigade resumed its advance toward the next possible obstacle, the Overijsselsch Canal. Giving Zwolle a wide berth, the troops went up the

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000  
Sheets P1 - Bocholt, N1 - Almelo, M1 -  
Groningen; G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000  
Sheet 6 - Leeuwarden. Also Appx "A".

xx See Appx "A".



secondary road which runs north from Heino. The bridge had been demolished but by 1640 hours one company of S.D. & G. Highrs crossed on the broken remains. Soon a substantial bridgehead had been created. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 12 Apr 45; and Appx 5, Marked Map No. 8). Then the enemy had a final fling:

Before any supporting arms could be brought over, the enemy counter attacked in a most determined manner, supported by armour. An hour's most confused fighting ensued in the growing darkness before the attack was repulsed.

(AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 19, p. 6)

Subsequent examination of the tracks left revealed that the attacking vehicles were a scout car, an armoured car and a self-propelled gun. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 13 Apr 45)

#### 9 CDN INF BDE CROSSES THE VECHT RIVER, 13 APR 45<sup>\*</sup>

214. Next morning H.L.I. of C. took the lead, passing through S.D. & G. Highrs and advanced toward Dalfsen (9935) (which the reconnaissance regiment had already entered) on the Vecht river, about three miles further north. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and S.D. & G. Highrs, 13 Apr 45). The only bridge (9935) across the Vecht proved to be blown, but this was not allowed to delay the unopposed advance. The men of the rifle companies crossed the river on a barge which was placed to fill the gap in the bridge, while anti-tank guns, carriers and jeeps were ferried across on civilian barges at a point a thousand yards downstream. The Dutch civilians gave the liberators a rousing reception, complete with brass band. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and H.L.I. of C., 13 Apr 45). No further advance was practical that day, for the engineers had great difficulty in bridging the river. However, sappers of 16 Cdn Fd Coy succeeded in finishing this 185-foot bridge at 2359 hours, so that the advance could go on in the morning. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V, Special Report No. 22, R.C.E.)

215. The following day, 14 Apr, the brigade started north again from Dalfsen, H.L.I. of C. acting as vanguard. Orders were to by-pass any opposition, leaving it to be dealt with by the other brigade following up. (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs, 14 Apr 45; H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Apr 45). The advance was described thus by the diarist of Nth N.S. Highrs:

There was no fighting. The enemy was retreating from northern Holland in headlong flight and the 9 Canadian Infantry Brigade was rolling through. The Dutch people were nearly going crazy, lining the route and cheering and waving. There was orange bunting everywhere.

(W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 14 Apr 45)

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\* Reference maps: As for paragraph 212 and G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets 3503 - Heino, 3403 - Dalfsen, 3303 - Meppel. G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000 Sheet 11 - Heerenveen, Sheet 6 - Leeuwarden, Appx "A".



Brigade headquarters recorded the following:

The reception we are now receiving is greater than any we have met in any previous experiences in Holland. The whole countryside is blurred with orange flags, banners and designs. In some cases the people are so anxious to greet you it is impossible to pass traffic through.

(W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Apr 45)

S.D. & G. Highrs were particularly impressed by the number of people wearing the traditional costume:

The countryside shows little evidence of warfare (sic) apart from a few burning buildings. South of Meppel we were intrigued to see groups of girls and women wearing the native costume affected by girls in the Province of Friesland. They, and the men dressed in blue jeans and jackets represent what our Primers at School encouraged us to expect to see throughout Holland. Nevertheless such a sight in the wake of battle struck us as looking somewhat incongruous and anachronistic: they looked like groups of Hollywood extras relaxing from work in a period film.

(W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 14 Apr 45)

No sign of the enemy was seen except the usual demolished bridges. Meppel (9556) had been passed, and the Nth N.S. Highrs who had taken over the task of advance guard entered Heerenveen (7886). The enemy still covered the main bridge in town. As the Canadians appeared they fired one burst, before withdrawing, and "D" Coy crossed and established a bridgehead without trouble. The bridge was not destroyed, and although the machinery which swung it had been damaged, the civilian bridge-tender succeeded in closing it by hand. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and Nth N.S. Highrs, 14 Apr 45)

216. Meanwhile, the Dutch were helping their liberators. As recorded by S.D. & G. Highrs:

...Two civilians turn up at this H.Q. wishing to speak with Col Gemmel. They are representatives of the local underground, and we learn from them that they had received a telephone call from the leader of the underground in Leeuwarden who wishes to speak as soon as possible to the first British Officer to arrive in this area. Col Gemmel, as a result, takes his jeep to a power station, directly opposite from "D" Coy Headquarters where a secret line to Leeuwarden is disclosed. Here after much endeavour Col Gemmel fails to contact Leeuwarden. At 2100 hrs he tries once again this time with success. The underground is able to reveal much interesting information: the conditions of the roads and bridges, and the disposition of the troops remaining on Leeuwarden. From this secret telephone communication Col Gemmel is enabled to supply Bde with information pertinent to this Bde's attack on the city.

(W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs,  
addenda to entry, 14 Apr 45)



217. The next morning the brigade group got under way again, led by H.L.I. of C. Once again no resistance was encountered but the column was brought to a halt by a blown bridge (749916) outside Haskerdijken (7491). While the Engineers were at work, the G.O.C. ordered Brigadier Rockingham to send S.D. & G. Highrs around to the west on a route discovered by the reconnaissance regiment. Passing through Joure (6987), the Glengarrians rejoined the main road at Akkrum (7296). Meanwhile the brigade commander, the C.R.A.'s representative and the brigade I.O. had gone around to the east in search of a route and reached Drachten (0002) (in spite of "the cheering populace of each town and village"). Here the Brigadier instructed the local underground leader to telephone every village on the road to Leeuwarden and find out if the route was free of blown bridges. "This was completed very quickly, a credit to the underground organization." North N.S. Highrs were sent northward on this eastern route and entered the town about midnight to find that elements of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt were in occupation. Brigadier Rockingham had already proceeded into town, to be greeted by a "mass of madly cheering people". (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Apr 45). The following day a carrier patrol of H.L.I. of C. located a last pocket of over 300 enemy at Harlingen (4411), which is situated on the coast west of Leeuwarden. The attack on this town was launched with tank support at 2000 hours, and by 0430 hours the next morning the town was in our hands. Only a few of the garrison got away westwards over the IJsselmeer Causeway (0102). At the cost of two casualties H.L.I. of C. had taken the town and 400<sup>xx</sup> odd prisoners. (Ibid, 16 and 17 Apr 45)

#### OPERATIONS OF 7 CDN INF BDE, 11-18 APR 45<sup>xx</sup>

218. Meanwhile as 9 Cdn Inf Bde had rolled on up the Leeuwarden road, followed by 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Brigadier Gibson's troops attended to the task of mopping up. From the concentration area occupied north-east of Deventer on 11 Apr, 1 C. Scot R. was ordered to relieve H.L.I. of C. and Nth N.S. Highrs on the following day and to hold the line Kletterstraat (8913) - Hengvorden (9014) Beeste Mars (9416) north of Deventer. This the Scottish did by 0930 hours. Next R. Wpg Rif was ordered to occupy Raalte after 9 Bde had left it. All this time the squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt was sweeping the triangle Deventer - Raalte - Zwolle, and from these probings it was established that the enemy still occupied Olst (8917) and Wijhe (9122). (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde & units, 11-12 Apr 45). These two places, however were not to hold up our progress long, for on 13 Apr R. Wpg Rif was told to take Wijhe while 1 C. Scot R. cleared Olst. The Winniepgs sent two companies onto Wijhe and by 1300 hours were firm in the place. Against Olst, 1 C. Scot R. had little difficulty except for mines. At this point Regina Rif were brought up to take positions between Raalte and Wijhe and then to move on Zwolle. (Ibid: 12-13 Apr 45)

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\* 246 Naval Flak Bty, 223 Airforce Sigs Regt (3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 98, 18 Apr 45)

xx Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheet N1 - Almelo; G.S.G.S. 4083, Holland 1:50,000 Sheet 27 - Hattem; G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets 3602 - Wijhe, 3603 - Raalte, Appx "A".



219. It is obvious that the enemy in Zwolle must have appreciated the new danger which he faced once 9 Cdn Inf Bde had by-passed the town to the east. As a result, he thinned out his troops rapidly, and by the morning of 14 Apr Regina Rif and R. de Chaud, which had been placed under command for this attack, found that their patrols into the town were not being opposed. Much of the credit for the easing of resistance in the old town may be given to a single intrepid soldier of R. de Chaud. This man's intervention was probably the reigning factor in the German's decision to get out of Zwolle. Pte L. Major had volunteered during the previous night to enter the town in order to locate the enemy positions, with a view to avoiding the further loss of Dutch lives. His sole companion on the venture was killed; but Pte Major spent six hours in the town, established contact with the local resistance, and led patrols of these underground fighters against the enemy, with the result that by morning the enemy garrison, menaced from inside and from outside, were forced to withdraw as their position became untenable. Posting patrols of his newly acquired Dutch friends at strategic points he returned to his unit at 0500 hours on 14 Apr, carrying the body of his dead companion. In the words of the citation for his Distinguished Conduct Medal: "His gallant action was instrumental in enabling the mopping up on 14 Apr, 1945, to be done successfully without a shot being fired". (Citation for D.C.M., D.106190 Pte Major, L., Le Regiment de la Chaudière: Canada Gazette, 11 Aug 45; C.A.R.O. No. 5953, 11 Aug 45). With Zwolle safely in our hands, R. de Chaud returned to 8 Cdn Inf Bde while Regina Rif moved into the area between the town and the River IJssel. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report No. 26, op cit; also W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Apr 45)

220. The unanticipated piece of good luck in getting into Zwolle so easily, naturally made some changes in the brigade's plans necessary. R. Wpg Rif was instructed to immediately send two of its companies to occupy the area vacated by R. de Chaud, and 1 C. Scot R. was moved up to the southern outskirts of Zwolle. (*Ibid*). Now as the task of the brigade was becoming more clearly defined, an operation order was produced by brigade headquarters. The intention was that the brigade group should clear and deny to the enemy the line of the IJssel and the IJsselmeer from Deventer to Blokzijl (7860), which is on the east shore of the IJsselmeer west of Meppel. For the purpose the area was divided into four sectors under separate commands, with a mobile brigade reserve. A battalion group took over each sector, and a mobile reserve was established in the area of Raalte. This consisted of one company of 1 C. Scot R., a battery of 12 Cdn Fd Regt (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx 7: 7 Cdn Inf Bde O. No. 1, and Appx 8 Amendments thereto). The gap between Deventer and Zwolle was filled by "Ross Force", a mixed bag of warriors under command of Lt-Col R.M. Ross, commanding officer of C.H. of O. (M.G.). His command consisted of his own unit and three anti-tank batteries, as well as a squadron of armoured cars of 1 Cdn Armd Car Regt. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V: Report No. 26, Operations, 7 Cdn Inf Bde: and W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 14 Apr 45)\*

221. The enemy at this time showed little sign of active interest in our doings. A few nuisance patrols crossed the IJssel between Deventer and Zwolle, only to be severely checked by our counter patrols. The next four days saw continued

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\* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheet 1A - Leeuwarden.



sweeping patrol action. On 15 Apr as R. Wpg Rif took over Hasselt (8846) to the north of Zwolle, Regina Rif occupied Steenwijk (9066) leaving 1 C. Scot R. at Zwolle. Each of the battalion sectors was carefully swept by fast mobile patrols, and by the night of 17 Apr things were so quiet that Brigadier Gibson's headquarters had turned to a less warlike routine of daily parades, of arms drill and the general cleaning up of equipment. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 15-17 Apr 45)

8 & 9 CDN INF BDE'S OPERATIONS, 14-18 APR 45\*

222. To Brigadier J.A. Robert's group (following in the tracks of 9 Cdn Inf Bde as far as (Heerenveen) had fallen the task of clearing the enemy from the area westwards to the river and as far north as the causeway between Makkum (4298) and Zurig (4204). The first village on this axis was Sneek (6095), but once again the advantage of working in a country with brave and friendly inhabitants became apparent:

8 C.I.B. was in possession of the most recent defences of Sneek, as well as information as to the telephone communications and the water supply. This valuable information, which was provided by the Dutch underground, is only one example of the assistance given by them to the Canadians throughout the fighting in Holland.

(The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment 1940-1945, Royal Canadian Artillery, p. 126)

For the clearing operation the infantry battalions operated separately, each with the support of a battery of 13 Cdn Fd Regt. On the evening of 15 Apr, patrols of R. de Chaud entered Sneek and found the underground in control. The next morning, N. Shore R. pushed through the cheering populace of Sneek, and advanced on Bolsward (5198). (W.D., N. Shore R. 16 Apr 45). Here it was the same story - the underground was in control; the Hun had fled:

Under the bright warm sky, the picturesque town of canals and simple buildings was a pleasant background to crowds of happy citizens.

(Ibid, p. 127)

223. Q.O.R. of C. were not as lucky. After spending a restful night in Heerenveen, the Queen's Own embussed in its T.C.Vs. and headed for the causeway which runs across the IJsselmeer. The trip was uneventful until "B" Company hit the enemy at Wons (4501). After a brisk fire fight, however, the Germans gave up that village and "A" Coy was passed through. Real trouble was not long in starting. The infantry soon came under another hail of fire and, despite the assistance provided by tanks and flame throwers, the troops could not make much headway towards Zurig (4204). Things were slightly easier on the flanks. "D" Coy took Witmarsum on the right and "C" Coy on the left was able to take Kornwerd (4201). All through the night individual companies were in action against small groups of enemy, many of whom were trying frantically to escape. On 17 Apr, Gooium (4402), Pingjum (4604) and Zurig all fell, but only after a good

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\* See Appx "A".



deal of fighting in the course of which more than a few Germans fell under the fire of our resolute infantry and tanks. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 16-17 Apr 45). The fire from the artillery battery (22 Cdn Fd Bty) also accounted for a good number of our opponents and in this area the battery had the opportunity of doing crash action, an enlivening bit of routine so assiduously practiced in training but scarcely ever used for actual combat to date. (The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment, op cit, p. 127-128)

224. All this time the newly liberated Netherlands, were having the time of their lives:

Nearly all the gun positions had a similar story to tell about the crowds of people who invaded the area to look in wonderment at the equipment, to ask for cigarettes and chocolate or just to be near activity. It was the people's first daze of liberation and they made the best of it. Baker Troop was a typical example. Here the crowds around the guns and the command post were so great that BSM Hooper was forced to rope off restricted areas so that the troop could function properly. Even at that some pretty "young thing" was sure to trip over the tannoy wire and break communications to one of the guns. Of course the kitchen was a great attraction. To see what the men ate and perhaps obtain some of it! Many had not seen white bread for five years nor tasted the weird and wonderful dishes which were just another monotonous meal to the soldiers. Two of the feature events for the spectators were the firing of the guns and the rides in the exchange crew carrier. The firing of a gun meant a chance for the braver ones to pull the firing lever and, also, meant another cartridge case for the souvenir hunter to take home. The rides in the carrier were shared by all the teen-aged kids of the district. With flags flying and arms waving the carrier would run regular trips along the road to the nearest town.

(Ibid, p. 128)

225. Meanwhile most of the Germans not yet rounded up were still trying to escape by boat or raft from the small port of Lemmer (6374),\* upon which R. de Chaud advanced from Sneek. N. Shore R. sent patrols to Stavoren (4098) and over the stretches of land to the southeast, but encountered no enemy. The following day saw the end of operations in that area when Makkum (4398) was liberated and the last German retreated to fortified positions far out on the Causeway connecting Friesland with North Holland. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 16-18 Apr 45). The fight for Makkum which began at 1400 hours 18 Apr was short but spectacular. Two farms on the eastern outskirts were known to be well defended and against these N. Shore R. quickly laid on a set piece attack, supported by tanks and wasps. It was completely successful with only very light casualties to our infantry, but the enemy's loss was considerable. Eleven Germans were killed and 186 taken prisoner. Having completed its task N. Shore R. pulled back its main force to Sneek, leaving two companies to patrol the coastline. (W.D., N. Shore R., 18 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summaries op cit, Isum No. 122, 19 Apr 45)

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\* Reference map: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000  
Sheet 2A - Den Helder



226. The resistance of the past few days had mostly been localized to the west coast. Although Q.O.R. of C. had had to fight to reach the coast and H.L.I. of C. had met some resistance at Harlingen (4411), on the whole these posts had been quickly cleaned up. In so far as 3 Cdn Inf Div was concerned, operation "PLUNDER" was over for that formation on the evening of 18 Apr. At that time 7 Cdn Inf Bde was directed eastwards towards Groningen to relieve 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Cdn Inf Bde assumed responsibility for the south-west section of Friesland, with a northern boundary along the Harlingen - Leeuwarden road, the eastern boundary being the Leeuwarden - Heerenveen road. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was detailed to watch the coast-line north of the Harlingen - Leeuwarden - Buitenpost (9318) Railway. (W.Ds., 7, 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 17-18 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report No. 19, Op "PLUNDER", op cit)

#### THE WORK OF THE SUPPORTING ARMS, 2-18 APR 45

227. It is only fitting that special mention be made of the work of some of the units which supported Maj-Gen Keebler's infantrymen during this brilliant advance from Zutphen to the sea. Certainly the divisional reconnaissance unit had excelled itself in terrain which, though well intersected with fair roads, was also crisscrossed with dykes, ditches and canals. Yet, despite these obstacles, 7 Cdn Recce Regt had carried out its task of forward and flank reconnaissance to the tremendous advantage of the general advance northward. The divisional artillery had also maintained its usual high standard of efficiency. The "mediums"\* especially had scored notable success against the German armour and on one occasion when the "five-fives" engaged three enemy tanks, one was hit directly and destroyed, another was disabled while the third lost heart completely and fled from the scene. The anti-tank and light anti-aircraft regiments had not been so often confronted with chances to ply their trade. The absence of the Luftwaffe overhead and the fast diminishing threat of German armour in Maj-Gen Keebler's sector robbed these specialists of additional "bags". They were, nevertheless, not kept idle. On various days one could find anti-tank and light ack-ack troops holding vital points as infantry and guarding the long lines of communication occasioned by the rapidity of the advance. (3 Cdn Inf Div Special Report, No. 19, as above)

228. By far the busiest of the supporting arms were the engineers, who had been kept constantly busy erecting bridges so that our attacks could pass on. Regardless of the fact that the enemy had loosely sown hundreds of thousands of mines along the east bank of the Ijssel river, ninety per cent of the sappers' time had been spent on bridging operations. Most of their work had been carried out under fire, although after the capture of Zwolle, much of this interference ceased. The engineers' record of achievement is set down thus:

Between the 29th of Mar when the formation built its first bridge west of the Rhine, and the 17th Apr when the last bridge of the operation was completed, the Divisional Engineers built 40 bridges, 29 Bailey bridges of which a third were 80 feet or over including a 200 foot Bailey pontoon bridge, and 11 improvised

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\* Attached to the Divisional Artillery.



bridges. There was, as well, in the same period, a good deal of work to be done on filling craters, clearing mines and other normal routine engineer tasks.

(Ibid)

229. It would take many pages to describe fully the contribution of the other supporting arms and services (the C.H. of O. (M.G.), the Signals, R.C.A.S.C., R.C.O.C., R.C.E.M.E., R.C.A.M.C., and the Provost Corps.). C.H. of O. (M.G.) had special cause for regret. During the initial operations across the Rhine, the expenditure of Mk VIII\* and 4.2 ammunition had been so heavy, that as an official report states:

...the allotment for the month of April was reduced to 90 rounds per gun per day and 10 rounds per mortar per day. This allotment later proved to be so scanty that forward Companies were unable to shoot Germans seen moving about on their front.

(Ibid, p. 10)

On the other hand the R.C.A.S.C., whose tasks are always so strenuous and exacting, had more than enough work. Additional tasks arose with the ever lengthening supply lines;

The transportation of prisoners of war took many vehicles. The fact that the momentum of the advance was maintained implies not only long hours of driving, but also of maintenance, to keep vehicles roadworthy.

(Ibid)

230. Ordnance difficulties had not existed to any great extent. Dumps placed well forward had been able to cater to all needs. In fact, so well organized was the business of equipment supply far back that stores were rarely lacking. Good basic organization can also be put down as the reason for successful operation by the R.C.A.M.C. Evacuation of casualties, as our troops pushed on to the north, was a long and slow business, but never at a morale-breaking standstill that the Germans had experienced for so long. Equally hardworking in its contribution towards the clearing of Friesland was the Provost Corps, who rarely failed to solve traffic problems despite the numerous bottle-necks, detours around demolitions and other such obstacles. Their main difficulty had been on account of the large numbers of prisoners; although on more than one occasion the divisional cages had brimmed over capacity, efficiency of the work at hand had not suffered. (Ibid, p. 11-12)

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\* Mark VIII - a special "streamlined" bullet for use only with medium machine guns.



2 CDN INF DIV BREAKS AWAY, 11 APR 45

231. It may safely be assumed that on 11 Apr the enemy opposing 2 Cdn Inf Div still had four choices. He could:

- (a) Join the garrison in Western Holland.
- (b) Surrender on the spot.
- (c) Be driven back into the sea.
- (d) Head westwards to Germany.

The pace set by the advance of Maj-Gen Keefler's division from the very beginning was soon to cut short the first choice and many Germans adopted the second choice rather than accept the third. Those who remained on 2 Cdn Inf Div's front and had hopes of getting back to Germany under whatever withdrawal programme might have existed began to cast fearful glances over their left shoulder, only to find that the Poles were closing on the mouth of the Ems River. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Maj-Gen Matthews troops were able to cover considerable territory, much of it against a totally disorganized enemy who apparently, after reviewing the present situation, decided that there was not much point in putting up a fight. (First Cdn Army Intelligence Summaries, op cit, Nos 285, 286, dated 11-12 Apr 45)

232. 2 Cdn Inf Div had not been held up long at Ommen (1036). Early on 11 Apr 5 Cdn Inf Bde tapped the defences of the village and, though most of the bridges into the place were out of commission, R.H.C. had no trouble moving in. At that point Maj-Gen Matthews conferred with Brigadier McGill and ordered him to form a firm base around Ommen while 6 Cdn Inf Bde, which was coming in from the right, took Balkbrug (0845) and swung north towards Groningen. The Commander of 5 Cdn Inf Bde then moved R.H.C. into Varsen (0836) to the west of Ommen, R. de Mais into Arrien (1237) to the east, and placed Calg Highrs in Ommen itself with orders to follow elements of 8 Cdn Rocce Regt and 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt up the axis Ommen - Balkbrug and to take the town if they reached it before Brigadier Allard's men. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde 11 Apr 45). The Calgary companies were briefed and ready to move off by 0900 hours but obviously could not do so until the battalion's wheeled and tracked supporting vehicles were in position. Thus the infantry was forced to wait until the river was bridged. The engineers pushed their efforts the limit and at 1130 hours a Class 40 structure was ready for the "F" echelon vehicles and tanks to cross the Vocht. (W.D., Calg Highrs, 11 Apr 45)

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083 Holland 1:50,000 Sheets  
22 - Almelo, 17 - Beilen, 12 - Assen, ; ~  
7 - Groningen: G.S.G.S. 4416 Central Europe  
1:100,000 Sheets N1 - Almelo, M1 - Groningen,  
G.S.G.S. 4414 Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets  
3404 - Ommen, 3304 - Kerkenbosch, 3204 -  
Hoogeveen, 3104 - Dwingelo, 3004 - Kloosterveen,  
2904 - Veenhuizen, 2804 - Roden,  
2704 - Zuidhorn, 2605 - Beilen, 3005, Assen,  
2905 - Zeien, 2805 - Haren, 2705 - Groningen,

\*\* See Appx "A"



233. At 1400 hours 11 Apr "B" Coy Calg Highrs mounted on the carriers of its Support Company, began its journey north while the other rifle companies followed on foot. Balkburg was reached without incident and found clear, whereupon the carriers deposited their loads and turned about to shuttle in the rest of the battalion. The move was completed by 1700 hours and the brigade settled down to hold and wait for the next order, for by that time 6 Cdn Inf Bde's advance from the Gramsbergen area had carried Brigadier Allard's battalions into the spearhead position. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 11 Apr 45)

\*  
6 CDN INF BDE CROSSES THE ORANJE CANAL, 11-12 Apr 45

234. Led by Camerons of C., 6 Cdn Inf Bde got to Balkbrug (shortly after the Calgaries had entered the place) and from there the columns swung to the north while the recce squadrons raced ahead. With fair promise of a break-through, Brigadier Allard urged the Camerons of C. to go all out past Kerkenbosch (1154) on to Terhorst (1772), a small village south of Beilen (1874). From positions at Terhorst, Lt-Col A.A. Kennedy sent out his patrols to reconnoitre the bridgesite over the Linthorst Homan Canal (1773), which lay across the line of advance. (W.D., Camerons of C., 11 Apr 45). Meanwhile both Fus M.R. and S. Sask R. had closed up to the centre line and by 2200 hours were bivouaced along the main road west of Terhorst and around Spier (1469) where elements of the French S.A.S. were contacted and given assistance in rounding up prisoners and collecting their wounded. Out on the flanks 8 Cdn Recce Regt had its scout cars probing the enemy's local line of resistance. The immediate problem was the capture of Beilen so that the canal south of it could be bridged, thus allowing the advance to continue. In order to do this Brigadier Allard's plan called for Fus M.R. to establish the initial bridgehead west of the village and push east to seize the place. Once this was accomplished Lt-Col V. Stott would lead the S. Sask R. through to form up on either side of the centre line and hold the base from which Camerons of C. were to thrust out for Hijken (1678). (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 12 Apr 45, serial 3548; also W.Ds., 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 11 Apr 45)

235. During the night 11/12 Fus M.R. assaulted across the canal and, having gained complete surprise, captured Beilen, but not without a sharp fight. The enemy had occupied the buildings covering the approaches to the village and there he met our men with machine guns and bazookas. It took the added support of the flame throwing Wasps to shift them out, but even then house-to-house fighting went on for well over two hours before the opposition was overcome. Some two hundred prisoners were taken by the French Canadians in the vicinity of Beilen. (W.D., Fus M.R. 12 Apr 45). Following this action, S. Sask R. pushed through and proceeded up the main axis to the next canal south of Halerbrug (1877), but here the bridge was found demolished. S. Sask R. at once set about finding another crossing place, this time about 4000 yards to the east (2277) in the area of Zwiggeltor Veld (2277) where "A" & "B" Coys began crossing at 0730 hours. Within 90 minutes all its companies were safely over the water barrier against very light opposition. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, S. Sask R., 12 Apr 45; 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, Apr 1945, 12 Apr, serial 3552)

236. Lt-Col Stott now decided to expand his bridgehead westwards towards the original main axis with all possible speed.

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Reference maps as for para 231



The enemy had aroused himself however and before our troops could move forward some heavy support from the guns and mortars became necessary. As the hours passed and the infantrymen gained ground steadily, the engineers built a bridge (225773) at the crossing site. This was completed at about 1700 hours; by which time "B", "C" and "D" Coys had, after some hard fighting, reached their respective objectives. "B" now held a firm position astride the railway a thousand yards north of Halerbrug (1878), "C" Coy was around the main road junction (2178) in Worklust (214784), while "D" Coy, which had swung directly left from the crossing place, had followed the canal's northern bank to settle finally in Halerbrug itself. (W.D., S. Sask R., 12 Apr 45; W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1945, Appx 5 Int Log 12 Apr, serials 100, 103). This last manoeuvre was assisted largely by the fact that the medium machine guns of Tor Scot R. (M.G.) had been supporting the infantry from positions on the south bank of the Canal. (Ibid Serials 60, 72, 75, 82, 93, 95)

237. Now that S. Sask R. was established across the obstacle, Fus M.R. were instructed to hold Beilen, while Camerons of C. (having also entered Beilen from the south) proceeded northwards to take over the village of Hijken (1678) from the men of Tor Scot R. (M.G.) who had seized the place earlier in the day. This take-over was completed by 2150 hours. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Camerons of C., Tor Scot R. (M.G.), 12 Apr 45). The day had been marked by scattered opposition and a series of delays caused mainly by blown bridges, yet despite all this the pace of the advance had not slackened to any extent. The build-up of the formations and units which were detailed to pass on through went on unhindered and by mid-afternoon 12 Apr Brigadier Cabeldu's 4 Cdn Inf Bde was concentrated near Westerbork (2473). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 12 Apr 45). At the same time, on either flank and well ahead of the main body, 8 Cdn Recce Regt and 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt felt out the routes. On the right Lt-Col B.M. Alway's scout cars had contacted the Poles east of Westerbork, while on the left the armoured cars (Staghounds) had crossed the Assen-Meppel canal and surged on north-west to cut the main road to Steenwijk, a left jab which produced an unpleasant shock for the enemy. (W.Ds., 8 Cdn Recce Regt; 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 11-12 Apr 45; also History of The Royal Canadian Dragoons, p. 164-165-166; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log as above, 12 Apr 45, Serials 3634, 3641, 3644)

#### THE CAPTURE OF ASSEN BY 4 CDN INF BDE, 12 Apr 45

238. Brigadier Cabeldu's first objective was the town of Assen (2189). For the approach march Essex Scot was placed in the lead. At the same time R. Regt C. and R.H.L.I. were ordered to follow up along the main road Halerbrug - Assen and to be prepared to support the attack. It was during this move up that "D" Coy R.H.L.I. was temporarily detailed and assigned the novel role of guardians over a Jewish women's concentration camp (2480), which 8 Cdn Recce Regt had overrun some 4000 yards east of Hooghalen (1981). (Ibid, Serials 3643, 3647; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 12 Apr 45). First resistance was met at Hooghalen. The enemy was operating in small bazooka teams which would appear along the heavily mined road, release their deadly missiles at our vehicles, and then retire during the commotion which followed. It became a slow but costly journey.

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\* Reference maps as for para 231.