THE BRIDGEHEAD IS SECURED, 19 APR 45 ✱

311. Once the German attacks began to waver, Maj-Gen Vokes' engineers were urged to press their task. Throughout the last few hours, these men had worked under intense fire to complete the bridge. They suffered a good many casualties but persisted for they realized that now as never before armoured support was urgently needed by the infantry ahead of them (W.Ds., H.Q., R.C.E., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Apr 45; also 9 Cdn Fd Sqn, R.C.E., 18-19 Apr 45). South of the canal, two squadrons of 28 Cdn Armd Regt awaiting the signal to move up also took a severe pounding. They had not long to wait:

> At about eight in the morning the lead tank of the B.C.Rs inched its way across. Just as it reached the far bank and started to slew over to the right side of the road, it was hit dead on by an 88-mm gun firing straight down the road. It did not brew up, however, and managed to get clear of the roadway. Colonel Bradburn ordered a medium artillery concentration, and under its cover the next tanks came across full tilt, firing directly up the road. In a few minutes the first troop was successfully across and into fire positions in among the grateful infantry.
>
> (Cassidy, Warpath op cit, p. 315)

312. The arrival of the tanks gave new life to the troops in the bridgehead. The commander of 10 Cdn Inf Bde now made his plans for the exploitation and that morning the infantry began to move ahead once more. The reasons for the apparent slowness in the advance to date had been basically an organic one, and the G.S.O. 1 of the division later offered his explanations:

> We were an armoured div fighing in what was, properly speaking, inf country and, early in this battle, we began to feel our shortage of inf. Only so much effort could be expected from the inf resources at our cond, and for one short period the G.O.C. was reduced to fighting on a one or at the most a two-bn front. Further, the div was definitely road-bound - a fact of which the enemy was entirely aware, and not only were we road-bound, but it was constantly necessary to rebuild the rds over which the Div had to adv or actually to construct new roads to permit further advances.
>
> (AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket II: Folio 3, op cit, Part II, Para 4)

The G.O.C., himself an engineer, had quickly appreciated the situation regarding his one route, and at an early stage in the battle he decided to concentrate his engineer resources and all available vehicles within his information to maintain the route. Thus it was kept open, but only by the greatest of co-operative effort on the part of the divisional engineers. (Ibid, Part I, para 11)

313. As the build-up of our effort in the bridgehead continued, the flanks of the division were being constantly watched by Brigadier Moncel's motor battalion. To quote the Divisional Historical Officer:)

✱ Reference maps as for para 300.

> 4 Cdn Armd Bde assumed op control of the triangle 1790 - FRIESOYTHE - KAMPE. The Lake Sup R. (MOT) which had taken over the committments of the A. & S.H. of C. in the KAMPE area, also relieved the fwd coy of the Linc & Welld R. in the area 1790. The Lake Sup R. (MOT) were thus responsible for the immediate right and left flanks of our front. 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt continued to operate on the extreme right, with elements of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt patrolling the south bank of the Kusten Canal or our extreme left from below Kampe to the inter-div bdy of 1 Pol Armd Div.
>
> (Weeky summary of ops and activities; 4 Cdn Armd Div, Apr-May 45 by Hist Offr op cit, Part I para 9)

On 19 Apr a further regrouping released other forces for employment in the bridgehead:

> 3 and 65 A Tk Btys were moved up from the areas 0783 (MARKHAUSEN) and 0797 respectively and came under comd 10 Cdn Inf Vde for employment in the br-head in a ground role. The Bty formerly at 0797 was relieved by sqn of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, while a second sqn of the same regt move fwd PEHEIM 0676 to garrison GARREL.
>
> (Ibid)

Garrel had been cleared by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt and "D" Coy Linc & Welld R. on 17 Apr. The South Albertans had also contacted Lt-Gen Dempsey's troops on the right. After this the armoured reconnaissance troops advanced east** along the road Garrel - Bissel (2984) - Sage (3183). Progress along this route was slow because of the many mines encountered, but by 1500 hours 19 Apr Bissel and Sage (3183) were in our hands and plans were adjusted for a new advance north from these two places. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 17-19 Apr 45)

314. It now remained for the infantry brigade to enlarge the bridgehead sufficiently to allow the armour room enough to deploy and manoeuvre. Unfortunately the scope of resistance and condition of ground did not make for speed and it was to be almost another week before Brigadier Moncel was given his orders to move northwards. However, the intervening time was not spent in idleness. The armoured regiments were kept busy supporting Brigadier Jefferson's men by tank-gun fire. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 19, 20, 22 Apr 45). Coupled with this support and that of the divisional field artillery and three medium regiments, a spectacular programme of close air support had contributed greatly to the results achieved thus far north of the canal. Ninety-seven sorties were flown on 17 Apr, followed by another ninety-four on 18 Apr and eighty-seven more on 19 Apr; all achieved great success and brought heavy loss to the enemy. (Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 14-21 Apr 45 op cit, para 11). An adequate tribute to the aircraft and pilots is contained in the War Diary of 4 Cdn Armd Div for 19 Apr which reads:

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* Osterloh

** Refer to map 1:25,000 Sheet 3016 - Dotlingen.

4 Cdn Armd Div freely acknowledges its debt to air sp during 18-19 Apr, without which it is felt the brhead could NOT have been successfully held.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 19 Apr 45)

OPERATIONS ON GENERAL CRERAR'S WESTERN FLANK, 12-18 APR 45 *

315. While Lt-Gen Simonds' men had been liberating north-eastern Holland and staking further claims on German soil to the east, the incursions of 1 Cdn Corps into the western Netherlands had met with strenuous opposition. Col-Gen Blaskowitz, the General Officer Commanding the Twenty-Fifth German Army and various subordinate formations of the enemy's beleaguered garrison, was under orders to dispute our passage to the last. (W.D., G.S. (Int), H.Q. First Cdn Army, May 1945: Appx 5, First Cdn Army Intelligence Periodical No. 1). Nevertheless, the effort to thrust his forces back from the line of communications running north-east from Arnhem was pursued with good success. On the night of 15/16 Apr 1 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes fought their way to the east bank of the canal at Apeldoorn where it passes through the suburbs and to the south of the town itself. On the Division's left 2 Cdn Inf Bde cleared southwards and on 16 Apr linked up at Dieren (8784) with elements of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div which had pushed out from the bridge-head at Arnhem to cross the high ground north of the road to Zutphen. (Ibid: AEF: 45/1 Cdn Corps/C/F, Draft Outline of Ops of 1 Cdn Corps on Clearing Western Holland, Apr 45)

316. These encouraging developments were to be exploited by a swift attack north and north-westwards from Arnhem with 5 Cdn Armd Div directed on the Ijsselmeer at Nijkerk (4605) with the object of cutting off the enemy's forces opposed to Maj-Gen Foster (Ibid). On the morning of 15 Apr 5 Cdn Armd Bde began to advance northwards through the woods above Arnhem and across the sandy heath-land beyond and that night occupied Otterloo (6591). On the following morning the armour turned westwards in the direction of Lunteren (5589) and on the same day (16 Apr), bypassing Barneveld (5245), cut the Apeldoorn - Amersfoort railway. On the right Voorthuizen (5401) was captured, our tanks being thus astride the main way of escape for the enemy troops holding Apeldoorn, from which they were forced to withdraw on 17 Apr. So rapid was our advance that on the night 16/17 Apr a rabble of the defenders, attempting to break throught the exposed right flank of 5 Cdn Armd Div, threatened to overrun Maj-Gen Hoffmeister's Headquarters. A vigorous local defence by all units in the area of Otterloo drove off the enemy with many casualties and brought in a couple of hundred prisoners. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket II; History of Operations, 5 Cdn Armd Div, North-West Europe.)

317. During the same night our troops at Voorthuizen beat off an attack by elements of 6 Para Div trying to get through to the west. Although the enemy held grimly on to Putten (5409) and the road thence to Nijkerk, the only escape route to landward still open to the disconfited enemy, 5 Cdn Armd Regt reached the Ijsselmeer at noon on 17 Apr. By this time 11 Cdn Inf Bde was moving up towards the coast to clear the woods of scattered fugitives.

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* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083 Holland 1:50,000 Sheets 27 - Hattem, 33 - Zutphen, 40 - Arnhem, G.S.G.S. 2541 Holland 1:100,000, Sheet 2 - Utrecht.

Taken at a sudden disadvantage by the speed of the armoured thrust to the north, the Germans had lost over 7,000 prisoners, including a large part of the 346th and 361st Infantry Divisons (General Crerar's Despatch 5 May 45, op cit, Para 31)

318. To the south on Lt-Gen Foulkes' left flank, further gains by 49 (W.R.) Inf Div along the Neder Rijn westward from Arnhem, established the line by dusk on 19 Apr through Renkum and Ede (5885), whence it ran through Barneveld to the small port of Harderwijk (5519). The enemy troops caught in the area between the lower Ijssel and the coast were rounded up, and patrols began to test the defences of the Grobbe Line, in the easily flooded country watered by the Eem, Luntersche Beek and Grobbe streams and centred on the important railway junction of Amersfoort (Outline of Ops of 1 Cdn Corps, op cit). I Cdn Corps had completed its task; the line of communications throught Arnhem and Zutphen had been secured and could now be developed to maintain the final stages of the advance of 2 Cdn Corps into north-western Germany (Ibid)

THE ARMY'S PLANS ARE READJUSTED - 17-19 APR 45

319. In his dispatch to the Minister, General Crerar has explained how the facts which governed the operations of 21 Army Group were put before him by the C.-in-C. on 12 Apr.

> ...The second British Army, continuing its advance to the Elbe, was developing two main thrusts along the axis between Ulzen and Domitz, Soltau and Luneburg. On Lt-Gen Dempsey's left the 30th British Corps was to drive on with all possible speed to capture Bremen. Should this object not have been achieved before the arrival of First Canadian Army in that area, it was possible that the completion of this task might then devolve upon me. In such circumstances, it was expected that one, or possibly two British Infantry divisions in the vicinity would come under my command. Operations to clear the west Netherlands, the primary task of the 1st Canadian Corps and the securing of the left flank of the Corps area to the west of the Ijssel and south of the Zuider Zee, would only proceed to the extent that they were within the scope of the limited resources which Lt-Gen Foulkes had available to him. For as soon as it could be released without detriment to the completion of the operations intended to give us the route through Arnhem and Zutphen, the 5th Canadian Armoured Division was to relieve the formations of the 2nd Canadian Corps, then in the process of clearing the north-east Netherlands, and would come directly under command of First Canadian Army. Lt-General Simonds would then keep the weight of his forces on the right and be prepared for a possible assault on Bremen. After the capture of the city, it was intended that the 2nd Canadian Corps would clear the enemy from the Wilhelmshaven - Emden Peninsula before thrusting beyond the Weser below Hamburg, cutting off the enemy's escape route to the sea and closing the Cuxhaven peninsula.
>
> (General Crerar's Despatch, 5 May 45; op cit, para 28; see also W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, April 1945: Appx 3, Directive to G.O.C's, 1 and 2 Cdn Corps, 13 Apr.)

320. These further objectives were on the point of being attained on the left by the clearing of the provinces of Groningen and Friesland by 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs, on the right by Maj-Gen Vokes' progressive attempt to carry the line of the Kusten Canal, and in the centre by the parallel armoured effort of 1 Pol Armd Div. But with affairs standing to such advantage in both Gelderland and the northern provinces, it was possible by regrouping forces to improve the prospects of coming to an early conclusion with the enemy in Germany. On 17 Apr Field-Marshal Montgomery had informed General Crerar that the Canadian Army would not capture Brémen, but that this task would be left to Lt-Gen Dempsey (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C. file 1-O, op cit, Message from C.-in-C., 17 Apr). The situation is described by General Crerar as follows:

> On my right flank substantial advances were being made by the forces of Lt-General Dempsey along the whole of their front. The enemy was being forced to withdraw his salient in front of Cloppenburg, the Elbe had been reached and advance elements were within eight miles of Harburg. In view of the existing situation, the C-in-C decided that the Second British Army would now capture and hold Bremen irrespective of the arrival of Canadian elements in the area. It followed that I would not now be required to take over the city until I had completed the task of clearing north-west Germany up to the line of the Weser. It was still the intention, however, that I would then assume responsibility for Bremen and develop operations to clear the Cuxhaven peninsula. In the meantime, Lt-General Simonds was to continue to give protection to the left flank of the Second British Army up to the Weser and to overrun the coastal lands to the north.
>
> (General Crerar's Despatch, 5 May 45, op cit, para 33)

321. In order to improve the situation for Second British Army in its assault on Bremen, the C.-in-C. directed that 2 Cdn Inf Div be transferred to Lt-General Simonds' right flank over towards Oldenburg (Ibid., para 35; W.D., Hist Offr, H.Q. First Cdn Army, 20 Apr). Several days were required for this lengthy move, the brigades travelling eastwards in succession to their new area during the period 18 to 21 Apr (2 Cdn Inf Div, Monthly Consolidated Summary of Ops, op cit, 1-30 Apr). Stronger forces would also be brought to bear against the enemy's line of defence across the Wilhelmshaven - Emden peninsula, where pressure had hitherto been sustained by the two armoured divisions only. The advent of 5 Cdn Armd Div into the northern Netherlands (319) would release 3 Cdn Inf Div for the task of destroying the enemy still resisting west of the Ems. The resulting relief of 3 Pol Inf Bde would enable Maj-Gen Maczek to concentrate his forces on the right bank of the Ems for his armoured thrust through the fen country to Papenburg and the River Leda. When 3 Cdn Inf Div had completed its task west of the Ems, Maj-Gen Keefler would be prepared to take the port of Leer by an assault across the Ems and the Leda. (W.D., G.S. H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 21 Apr)

322. The tasks of First Cdn Army were to be limited still further. In a message to General Crerar dated 19 Apr, Field-Marshal Montgomery explained that the allotment of an American force to 21 Army Group would enable the pace of our operations to be quickened considerably. In the light of this

development, it would no longer be necessary for First Cdn Army to cross the Weser and clear the Cuxhaven Peninsula (G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, file 1-O, Vol II op cit, folio 36 Message C.-in-C., 19 Apr). Instead General Crerar was to assume the alternative responsibility of clearing the islands at the eastern end of the Frisian group (ibid, Directive M 574 from C.-in-C., 22 Apr).

323. The actual directive reads:

> The right wing of Canadian Army will operate strongly against OLDENBURG, and south of it, in close touch with the left wing of Second Army which is advancing on BREMEN.
>
> As soon as that portion of BREMEN on the south bank of the Weser has been captured by Second Army, the right wing of Canadian Army will operate northwards to capture EMDEN and WILHELMSHAVEN and clear all enemy from the peninsula between the rivers WESER and EMS.
>
> Canadian Army will study the problem of capturing those islands at the eastern end of the FRISIAN group from which the enemy could interfere with the free use of the WESER estuary e.g. WANGEROOGE, and possibly also SPIEKEROOG.
>
> (Ibid, folio 39)

SECOND BRIT ARMY'S OPERATIONS, 11-19 APR 45 *

324. Before considering the enemy's situation at this time, it is necessary to review the activities of Lt-Gen Dempsey's troops on 21 Army Group's right flank during the past week. (See Part I Para 198). On 10 Apr, 8 Brit Corps had received orders to secure Celle (5951), and the line of the River Aller, and then press on to capture Uelzen (9189) at the same time keeping firm contact with Ninth U.S. Army. These tasks were sub-allotted in the following manner. 15(S) Inf Div was responsible for the capture of Celle and Uelzen and for providing a class 40 bridge over the River Aller. Meanwhile 11 Brit Armd Div was given the task of advancing at maximum speed to seize Bergen (5171) thus protecting the left of 15(S) Inf Div. In addition Maj-Gen G.P. Roberts' (11 Armd Div) must bridge the Aller at either Essel (3056) or Winsen (4755). Lt-Gen E. Barker's third formation (6 Airborne Div) was to follow up and clear out any enemy by-passed by the armoured division (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I; also First Army Liaison Ops Reports, op cit, 111620B, G Ops, Second Army)

325. Class 40 bridges across the Aller were established at Celle on 11 Apr and at Essel (where 1 Cdo Bde had made its crossing) on the following day. By the morning of 12 Apr the Scottish Division had one brigade over the Aller and in the town of Celle (5951) and, in short order, the Scots were off towards Uelzen (9187) 25 miles away. Uelzen was reached on 14 Apr but

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* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416 Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheets M2 - Oldenburg, M3 - Bremen, M4 - Soltau, N3 - Minden, N4 - Hanover, L4 - Hamburg, L5 - Lauenburg, M5 - Salzwedel, W5 - Braunschweig

there the enemy reacted violently. While 15 (S) Div made preparations to capture the town 11 Armd Div, having captured Bergen and the notorious concentration camp at Belsen, came up on the left. (Ibid: 121400B, G Ops, Second Army: also First Cdn Army Ops Log op cit, 12 Apr 45, serials 49, 73, 104)

> With opposition loosening in front of 11 Armoured Division as it got away from the R Aller, 3 R Tks battle group sped on and at 1700 hrs on 16 Apr entered Ebstorf. 15/19 H battle group was moving on a Southern axis and that same evening reached WICHTENBECK, some six miles to the South West.
>
> 15(S) Division objectives on the R Elbe were at the same time moved further north to Lauenburg 8734 and Boizenburg 9835. The division had instructions to ignore its right flank, for 5 Division, which had arrived from another theatre, had meantime been placed under command of 8 Corps, and was to concentrate South West of Uelzen between 18 and 20 Apr. This division and 6 Airborne Division together could deal with the corps right flank.
>
> (AEF: 45/ Second Army/C/D Docket I, p. 376)

326. On 17 Apr General Dempsey informed the Commander of 12 Brit Corps that the Russian offensive towards Berlin had begun on the previous day. The opinion expressed, at this time, was that since the German strength in the east was further to the south, the Russians might be able to make good progress. If this were the case thousands of refugees fleeing before Marshal Stalin's troops would be driven towards General Dempsey's area. This would complicate matters greatly and it was emphasized that Second Army must reach the west bank of the Elbe to stop any mass crossings by these refugees. Plans were therefore completed for the immediate encirclement of Uelzen so that the advance eastwards might continue unimpeded. The divisional tasks were thus defined;

> 15(S) Division - Be prepared to assault Uelzen not before 1200 hrs 17 Apr
>
> 6 Airborne Division - To establish itself East of the town as early as possible and to make contact with 11 Armoured Division at Emmendorf 9095.
>
> 11 Armoured Division - To establish itself firmly in the area Ebstorf-Wriedel 7296 with active patrols to the North. To cut the road Uelzen-Luneburg and to make contact with 6 Airborne Division
>
> (Ibid)

The operations continued with 15(S) Inf Div applying co-ordinated pressure against Uelzen.

> About midday on 17 Apr the defenders of Uelzen began to reconsider the situation, and 15(S) Division reported signs of withdrawal northwards. During the afternoon 11 Armoured Division cut the road Uelzen-Luneberg, and 15(S) Division entered and began to clear the town. With contact established between 11 Armoured Division and 6 Airborne Division, this task was completed on 18 Apr and arrangements were made for the division to extend East of the town, relieving elements of 6 Airborne Division and 11 Armoured Division.

11 Armoured Division made immediate preparations to move North on Luneburg. Light elements had entered the town by 1600 hrs on 18 Apr and had seized the bridges intact. At the same time an equally forceful thrust to the west of the town had brought armoured elements to a point about four miles almost due North of it and on the east a battle group had captured Neetze 9322 by the evening before midnight the river Elbe had been reached at Hittbergen 9031, ten miles North East of Luneburg.

(Ibid)

327. On 19 Apr, covered by an armoured car screen (provided by the Royals) working deep on the southern flank, the Airborne troops then began clearing over a wide area to the east and north-east of Uelzen. At the same time 15(S) Inf Div went into concentration areas between Uelzen and Luneburg (7122). On that day Lt-Gen Barker issued fresh instructions designed to establish the corps firmly on the Elbe. (First Cdn Army Ops Log op cit: 18 Apr 45, serials 32, 73; also AEF 45/21 Army Group/C/F, Docket II: Notes on the Operation of 21 Army Group, 6 June 1944 - 5 May 1945, para 204)

5 Division - To be prepared to advance to the R Elbe on 20 Apr on a front between Bleckede and Darchau.

15(S) Division - To advance as soon as possible to the R Elbe. On the left relieving certain elements of 11 Armoured Division in the Lauenburg area and extending south east to Darchau.

11 Armoured Division - To establish itself on the R Elbe from opposite Lauenburg to inclusive Winsen 6532 and to protect the corps left flank on a general line southwards from Winsen.

6 Airborne Division - To remain in its present situation with reconnaissance tasks and to be responsible for the protection of the corps Right flank.

(Ibid, p. 377)

328. In the centre 12 Brit Corps had had great difficulty around Rethen (1167), but by midnight 12/13 Apr 53(W) Div had almost cleared the town and had a light bridge ober the River Aller. Meanwhile, as 52 (L) Inf Div had moved to the area east of Diepholz, 3 Brit Inf Div was transferred to under command 30 Brit Corps. From 13 to 15 Apr the bridgehead held by the Welsh division across the Aller was subjected to heavy bombardment and several fierce counter-attacks, but the enemy could not make any headway. Subsequently on 15 Apr, 7 Armd Div took over contol of the bridgehead with the intention of clearing the area Rethen - Walsrode in conjunction with 155(L) Inf Bde.

Progress during the initial stages of the break-out was not rapid, but in the afternoon the thrust began to meet with more success. Walsrode with bridges intact fell to 7 Armoured Division late on 15 Apr. Considerable trouble was still being experienced from air attacks on the Rethem bridge. A number of demolished bridges and carefully-sited craters was also encountered

and these considerably affected the speed of the advance.

The thrust of 4 Armoured Brigade under command 53 (W) Division on the left of 7 Armoured Division also began to make good progress. One regiment had captured Idsingen, some six miles north-west of Walsrode by midnight 15 Apr.

By midnight 16 Apr, 4 Armoured Brigade had reached Bendingbostel, 1285, against slight opposition. At the same time 158 Brigade was turning left-handed to Verdon, followed by 71 Brigade, which was prepared to pass through to capture the town.

On 16 Apr the Army Commander ordered Guards Armoured Division to join 12 Corps forthwith. It was to move via Nienburg-Rethem and Walsrode, concentrate about Rethem and was to be directed on to the Zeven area.

This required a right hook, but the Army Commander considered that greater advantage would result by advancing as far North as possible towards Hanburg, before swinging left. It was appreciated that this might involve the capture of Rotenburg.

After reaching Fallingbostel early on 16 Apr, progress by 7 Armoured Division was again checked by demolitions and craters, but by evening Dorfmark had been captured.

(Ibid, p. 378; also First Cdn Army Ops Log; op cit, 12 Apr serials 83, 135, 16 Apr serial 130)

329. At this point as it was appreciated that the town of Soltau would be strongly defended, the following plans were formulated. 7 Armd Div was to screen Soltau (4190) with 8 H while 155 Inf Bde assaulted the place from the south. The remainder of the armoured division was to by-pass Soltau and go on towards the Elbe River. At the same time Gds Armd Div was ordered forward to advance on the axis Walsrode (2575) - Visselhovede (2489) - Stade (1557), while 53(W) Inf Div captured Verden and Rotenburg (1102) if possible, prior to following the Guards. 52(L) Inf Div less 155 Bde (at present under command 7 Armd Div) was to pass to command 30 Brit Corps. (AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D Docket I p. 378). These changes themselves called for reallocation of tasks especially so since it was now known that First Cdn Army would not operate east of the Weser River. The new divisional tasks for 12 Corps were:

7 Armoured Division - Advance to R. Elve on frontage Winsen-Buxtehude 3144.

Guards Armoured Division - Advance to seize Rotenburg 1102 (unless already captured by 53(W) Division) starting at first light 18 Apr. Thereafter to capture Zeven 0323 - Bremervorde 9444 and Stade 1557.

53(W) Division - Capture Verden.

Capture Rotenburg if the situation loosened, using 4 Armoured Brigade. Pass one brigade group 52(L) Div to screen the eastern approaches to Bremen. Follow Guards Armoured Div.

52(L) Division - Less 155 Brigade (still under command 7 Armoured Division) to pass through and screen Bremen from the east.

(Ibid, p. 379)

330. After a rapid advance on 17 Apr 7 Armd Div was in Welle (3818) some twenty miles due north of Soltau (4190), which at that time was being invested by 155 Inf Bde. By midnight Soltau was clear and 53(W.) Div reported success in Verden.

With Verden clear and bridging under construction 156 Brigade, still under command 53(W) Division, started on 18 Apr to advance north west along the east bank of the R Weser, towards Achim 8791. The same morning the Guards Armoured Division started to move north from Walsrode, directed initially on Visselhovede 2489.

At midday 2 HCR reported the road Soltau-Neuenkirchen 3294 clear. With one battle group working due north, having reached Ottingen, about two miles south east of Visselhovede, a second battle group swung east to cut road Visselhovede-Neuenkirchen.

5 Guards Armoured Brigade took a wider sweep to the East, moving on 7 Armoured Division's routes as far as Tostedt 3222 and then turning almost due west towards Zeven. In effect, therefore, the Guards were carrying out a wide pincer movement from the East.

With Neuenkirchen captured during the evening of 18 Apr, the Coldm Gds Groups turned south-west towards Visselhovede.

(Ibid, and p. 380)

After twenty-four hours hard fighting, the Guards reported Visselhovede clear during 19 Apr. Further north another of the division battle groups was closing in on Zeven (0323) from the east. (Ibid)

331. Meanwhile on the left of Maj-Gen Adair's guardsmen

4 Armoured Brigade was thrusting towards Rotenburg from the south, and by last light was some three miles short of the town. With Verden becoming the responsibility of a brigade of 52(L) Division, 71 Brigade passed to command Guards Armoured Division and 160 Brigade to command 7 Armoured Division on 19 Apr. This was to enable 155 Brigade to be released to rejoin 52(L) Division.

52(L) Division, with 4 Armoured Brigade, less one regiment, passed to command 30 Corps during the night 19/20 Apr

(Ibid)

Thus ended a most satisfactory day, especially for 7 Armd Div which that night contacted 11 Armd Div of 8 Brit Corps four miles south-west of Winsen (6070). (Ibid)

OPERATIONS OF 30 BRIT CORPS, 11-19 Apr 45 ✱

332. Along the boundary between First Cdn and Second Brit Armies, Lt-Gen B.G. Horrock's 30 Corps had similarly made good progress but against very stiff resistance on the line Cloppenburg - Quakenbruck (1553) - Vechta (3759). Up to 14 Apr 30 Corps had managed to take Quakenbruck, but the other two places were still being strongly defended. New orders were therefore issued:

3 British Division

To seize in succession the following areas with the object of screening Bremen from the south-west.

(a) Tolkenbruck 6592 - Brinkum 7091 GrosseMackenstedt 6589

(b) Havekost 5388-Hengsterholz 5387.

(c) Delmenhorst.

51 (H) Division

To complete the capture of the area Vechta-Wildeshausen. To be prepared to relieve 3 British Division on the left portion of their present sector and to be prepared to protect the left flank of 3 British Division for its attack on Delmenhorst.

Guards Armoured Division

To complete occupation of the high ground west of Cloppenburg.
To be prepared to operate in a counter attack role north-east or north-west.

43 Division

To complete the capture of the area Cloppenburg - cross roads 3177.

Opposition in front of 51 (H), Guards Armoured and 43 Divisions loosened considerably during 14 Apr, so that 51 (H) Division came up rapidly on the left of 3 British Division. Guards Armoured Division cleared the area north of Vechta and west of 51 (H) Division without difficulty. On the left 43 Division entered Cloppenburg early in the day.

(Ibid, p. 381)

333. Opposition loosened during 14 Apr. The Highland Division advanced rapidly on the left of 3 Brit Inf Div, the Guards cleared north of Vechta and 43 (W) Inf Div entered Cloppenburg. However

Opposition to any move North West by 3 British Division was strong. In consequence 3 British Division had to be put on to a narrower front before substantial progress could be expected. In accordance with Army's

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✱ Reference maps as for para 324

first priority, i.e. the capture of Bremen, 30 Corps issued orders for completion of the clearance of the area west of the R Weser within the corps boundaries.

While 3 British Division continued to operate towards Delmenhorst, 51 (H) Division was to make local improvement of positions and to relieve 9 Brigade (3 British Division) on 16 or 17 Apr having handed over to 43 Division its own left Brigade sector (152 Brigade). 43 Division was to capture the cross roads 3177 and to maintain contact with 4 Canadian Armoured Division which was at that time directed on Oldenburg on an axis parallel with that followed by 43 Division. Guards Armoured Division concentrated and came into corps reserve.

(Ibid)

By the night of 15 Apr the Wessex Division had taken the Cloppenburg crossroads and proceeded to relieve 152 (H) Bde on its left. (Ibid)

334. On the same day 185 Bde of 3 Inf Div attacked the villages of Leeste and Brinkum, but opposition, mainly from SS troops, was extremely strong and it was appreciated that the assault on Delmenhorst, one of the main defensive outposts to Bremen, would require a well supported and concentrated effort.

During 16 Apr, both 51 (H) and 43 Divisions improved their positions. 51 (H) Division captured Dotlingen while 153 Brigade and 43 Division pushed east from the cross roads 3177 to capture Ahlhorn. The attack by 3 British Division had resulted in the capture of Brinkum, save for a small corner north west of the town, and also in that of Grosse Mackenstedt 6589, where only light opposition was encountered.

(Ibid)

335. In his instructions to his divisions on 17 Apt Lt-Gen Horrocks announced his intention to continue the thrust towards Mittels-Huchting (6696) - Stuhr (6892) with 3 Inf Div while the Highland formation pressed on to Harpstedt and Delmenhorst. Additional tasks allotted were:

43 Division

To take over from 153 Brigade and to move off the route Haselunne-Cloppenburg to allow 2 Canadian Corps unrestricted use of it from the morning of 19 Apr.

Guards Armoured Division

To pass to under command 12 Corps.

As a result, during 17 Apr

51 (H) Division advanced about three miles, reaching Ippener 5985. Both these attacks i.e. 3 British and 51 (H) Division continued on 18 Apr, against stiff opposition and had limited, but nevertheless steady progress.

52 (L) Division was already attacking towards Bremen. along the north bank of R Weser, having been passed

through 53 (W) Division by 12 Corps. The time has now come for the Bremen operation to be co-ordinated under 30 Corps. 52 (L) Division therefore passed to command 30 Corps on 19 Apr. Both 51 (H) and 43 Divisions had also been warned to be prepared to assist in the capture of Bremen, from the West and East respectively.

(Ibid, p. 382)

On the afternoon of 19 Apr, 51 (H) Div had its forward troops in Adelheide (5891) at a place about three miles south of Delmenhorst. Further on the right, a brigade of the Wessex was shifted to cover the east bank of the River Weser. There it came under command of the Lowland Division, which had itself recently arrived under Lt-Gen Horrocks' control and was thrusting northward from Verden. (Ibid)[x]

THE ALLIED SITUATION, 19 APR 45

336. The Allied situation at this time could scarcely have been better. As if to crown our efforts in grand fashion, the forces in the Ruhr had capitulated. General Eisenhower describes the last moments of the great industrial area in these words:

> The eastern half collapsed on 16 April, when 80,000 prisoners were taken in the 24 hours, and on 18 April the pocket was finally liquidated. The total bag of prisoners reached the immense figure of 325,000, including 30 general officers. Originally we had estimated that only 150,000 could be taken. Twenty-one divisions were destroyed, including three panzer, one panzer grenadier and three parachute divisions, and enormous quantities of booty fell into our hands. What Hitler may have expected to prove a fortress to hold us back from central Germany had given way after 18 days, and by now the main front was over 100 miles distant to the east.
>
> (Eisenhower, op cit, p. 105)

337. Again there arises the difficulty of explaining why the Germans hung on for so long in the Ruhr when they should have pulled their forces back. The Supreme Commander suggests

---

x Paras 324 - 335 have been written mainly according to the account of Second Army operations contained in AEF: 45/Second Army/C/D Docket I, and checked by the following references:

(1) AEF: 45/Second Army/C/H Docket III. Second Army Sitreps for April 1945 as received at H.Q. First Cdn Army:

Nos	523 & 525	for period	110001B - 120001B
Nos	525 - 526	" "	120001B - 130001B
Nos	527 - 528	" "	130001B - 140001B
Nos	529 - 530	" "	140001B - 150001B
Nos	531 - 532	" "	150001B - 160001B
Nos	533 - 534	" "	160001B - 170001B
Nos	535 - 536	" "	170001B - 180001B
Nos	537 - 538	" "	180001B - 190001B
Nos	539 - 540	" "	190001B - 200001B

that the enemy preferred to follow the policy of fighting where he stood regardless of the odds. Moreover, General Eisenhower adds:

> The enemy may have entertained ideas of holding out in the Ruhr for some time and thus constituting a threat in our rear which would prevent our further progress while his remaining armies regrouped. If so, he had seriously miscalculated. Events were to show that the Ruhr could not support its defenders, despite its armament works and fuel production plants, while the armies to the east were in no condition to regroup and reform any sort of effective line. Each of them was hard put to maintain its own position, and there was no hope of filling the gap in the center of the front created by the trapping of the 21 divisions of Army Groups B and H. Through that gap the Allied armies were shortly to pour eastward, since the German troops which should have been barring their path were, instead, on the march to Allied prison camps.
>
> (Ibid)

338. Continuing the General states that

> Immediately the encircling move had been completed, operations were instituted to render innocuous the forces in the pocket. The densely built-up Ruhr area offered many advantages to the defence, and it was my intention, should the enemy continue to resist firmly, to content myself with compressing him into a small area where only a few divisions would be needed to contain him, and there to starve him into surrender. Even if the Ruhr itself could supply its garrison with adequate means of defence, it was clear that so populated an area, containing many hungry civilian mouths, could not also feed indefinitely the huge armies which it suddenly found in its midst.
>
> (Ibid)

339. For some time after the jaws of the trap closed, the enemy attempted with great spirit to break out, first from Hamm, then from Siegen:

> These attempts, however, like the cooperating counter-attacks by the enemy armies outside the pocket, were abortive, and were forced back everywhere except along the bank of the Rhine. Meanwhile the ammunition factories ceased production, and what little was available could not be transported to the front. Fuel and food likewise could not be supplied where they were needed; the rail system was ineffective for this purpose since, apart from the damage it had suffered, the network was thinnest where the fighting was hottest, in the southern Sauerland. Shortage of weapons was as grave as elsewhere in the German armies, rear echelons were stripped to arm forward ones, but even then the latter often lacked ammunition of the correct calibers.
>
> (Ibid)

340. By mid-April, the end of opposition in the Ruhr was in sight:

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>
> (Ibid)

340. By mid-April, the end of opposition in the Ruhr was in sight:

> Signs of disintegration were evident, resistance becoming scattered and the enemy giving themselves up in such numbers that the disposal of the prisoners constituted a difficulty. It was clear now that there would be no question of starving a stubborn remnant into submission. The main industrial towns in the north were cleared, and on 14 April the pocket was split into two at Hagen.
>
> (Ibid)

This event dictated but one personal course to the German Commander in the Ruhr and on 16 April Field Marshal Model committed suicide. (First Cdn Army Int Summaries op cit, 10 Apr 45, No.290)

341. Meanwhile the American and French Armies to the south had run wild. Seventh U.S. Army had reached Nurnburg on 16 Apr and proceeded to clear that city. The French had seized Baden-Baden and Kehl and the way was soon clear for bridging operations at Strasbourg to commence. The enemy in this sector was retreating in some haste and Stuttgart was about to fall to converging pincers from the north-east and south-east. (Eisenhower, op cit, p. 111) (First Cdn Int Summaries, op cit, No. 293, 19 Apr 45)

342. Next in line of the victorious plunging forces was Third U.S. Army. After seizing Weimar and clearing Erfurt on 11 and 12 Apr, Patton's men went on to Jena where Napoleon had long ago crushed his enemies. By 13 Apr Jena was clear and the armour was at the gates of Chemnitz. While XX U.S. Corps swept on along the northern frontier of Czechoslovakia, General Patton's other formations pushed on throught Neustadt towards the mountains of Bohemia. (Eisenhower, op cit, p. 107; also First Cdn Army Int Summaries, op cit, Nos 287-288, 289, dated 16-18 Apr 45 incl)

343. North of the Third Army sector, General Hodges' troops had started an offensive south of the Harz Mountains by 11 Apr and made such great progress that within a week the enemy's forces in the mountains were encircled. Efforts to reduce this large pocket at first met with strenuous opposition, but by applying steady pressure the American soldiers succeeded in weakening the defenders. Last organized opposition, however, did not actually disappear until 21 Apr. Meanwhile an important gain was made in the occupation of Leipzig, a bitterly defended stronghold which fell to the famous Rainbow Division (69 U.S. Inf Div) on 19 Apr. (Eisenhower, op cit, p. 107; also First Cdn Army Intelligence Summaries, op cit, Nos 292-293, 18-19 Apr 45)

344. Still further to the north, Ninth U.S. Army, having reached the Elbe River south of Magdeburg on 11 Apr, went on to seize Brunswick on the following day and at the same time to establish a bridgehead over the Elbe. A second bridgehead, south of Wittenberge on 13 Apr, was made by XIII U.S. Corps. Magdeburg itself fell on 18 Apr to XIX U.S. Corps. Meanwhile the two bridgeheads east of the Elbe River had received such drastic punishment that our troops had been forced back out as General Eisenhower relates

> A third at Barby held firm as enemy attempts to destroy the bridge by floating mines down the river proved abortive. So rapid had been the thrust to reach the Elbe that a number of German pockets had been bypassed on the way. The forces in these, before being mopped up, attempted to harass the Allied lines of communication, but with little success.
>
> (Eisenhower, op cit, p. 107)

THE ENEMY, 19 APR 45

345. As for the enemy, he had little left with which to dispute Allied aims. In the east the Russian avalanche had taken on gigantic proportions and was steadily gaining momentum in the all-out drive to meet the American and British Armies. For the western task forces the battle was now made up of a series of drills which followed the monotonous pattern of pursuit, encirclement and mopping up. At the western extremity of the front, the Ijssel position, on which the enemy had formed such high hopes, had been broken by General Crerar's men. On the Canadian right in Germany proper a similar type of hopeless struggle was being waged and everywhere the Germans were being driven back. The approaches to the sea which now provided their only exit were no longer the responsibility of the soldier alone. Sailors and marines had been brought forward from the naval stations to stem the tide. These last remnants had held strongly along the Kusten Canal, but now the infantry bridgeheads over that obstacle were being enlarged and soon the Canadian armour would be reaching out to Emden and Wilhemshaven. (First Cdn Army Int Summaries op cit, Nos 291-292, 17-18 Apr 45)

346. On General Dempsey's front, the main opposition came from odd Wehrmacht, marine and other hastily assembled assortments of so-called fighting men under General Gunther Blumentritt. According to a later interrogation report

> Blumentritt's staff contained only a few operational officers and there was practically no means of communication. The General purposely organized his new command so that he would always be facing the Second British Army.
>
> (First Cdn Army Interrogation Report op cit, No. 20, General Gunther Blumentritt, p. 13)

At his interrogation Blumentritt recalled the final tactical order he had received from Berlin:

> It was that the Armoured Division "Clausewitz" was to be pushed through from the area Soltau X 49 and make for the Harz Mountains "in order to cut off the communications of the Americans advancing on Magdeburg Y 60, and to enable the Twelfth German Army to move out of the Harz". This so called division consisted of about two or three infantry battalions, about eight guns and some twenty tanks of various types.
>
> (Ibid)

Actually this division got only as far as Gifhorn (X 93). There it was swamped by the strong American Forces it was attempting to push aside. (Ibid and AEF: US/Second Army/4F, Docket I; Second Army Intelligence Summaries 31 Mar - 5 May 45, op cit, Nos 320 of 19 Apr 45, 315 of 17 Apr 45)

347. The opposition on the approaches to main German ports remained fairly stiff. South of Bremen the Germans showed no indication to give up easily. In this area Corps Ems was trying desperately to ward off the British thrust which was about to cut the Hamburg - Bremen autobahn and threaten Bremen from the rear. (First Cdn Int Summary, op cit, No. 294, 20 Apr 45). On the extreme left, however, at Delmenhorst (6096) the enemy had slackened off slightly and prisoners taken on 19 Apr stated that this relaxation of effort was due to the fact that Delmenhorst

was a hospital area and was to be abandoned. (First Cdn Army Int Summary, op cit, No 293, 19 Apr 45)

348. Since the Western Allies had crossed the Rhine five weeks previously the battle of Germany had completely altered its course. The Allies had swung into terrific stride, exploiting their mobility to the full. At the same time both the Reich and the German Army were being cut up into pockets which for reasons of supply alone could not hold out much longer. Facing the Canadians was an enemy who had two choices; surrender or death, the latter either by fire or by water, for the sea offered nothing in the way of escape. (First Cdn Army Int Summaries, op cit, No. 293, 19 Apr 45). But the Canadian task was not to be an easy one. As our Intelligence staff observed:

> The soldiers, parachutist and sailors...have received their orders. They fight because they have been told to do so and because for so long as they can remember they have done nothing but obey orders.
>
> (Ibid, No. 294, 20 Apr 45)

THE SITUATION OF FIRST CDN ARMY, 1200 HRS 19 APR 45

349. It had been intended earlier that General Crerar's troops would go past the River Weser as far as Hamburg, and then clear the Cuxhaven peninsula as well as the area of Emden - Wilhemshaven; additional responsibilities were Frisian Islands, exclusive of Heligoland. But as the situation developed fresh instructions indicated that our first priority lay in North-west Germany. Thus on this date we see the Canadian right wing making steady yet not rapid progress along its active front, which stretched from the positions presently held by Maj-Gen Vokes' armoured reconnaissance regiment (29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt) out of Garrel and north of Cloppenburg westwards to 10 Cdn Inf Bde's new bridgehead over the Kusten Canal at Edewechterdamm (north of Friesoythe). From this point the position ran west again following the canal line to its junction with the Ems River, where 1 Pol Armd Div, in operating astride the river, was now applying its strength particularly along the east bank. (W.D, G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Apr 45; also First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports op cit 191600B G Ops 2 Cdn Corps; also First Cdn Army/C/H Docket III: Sitreps: Folios 28 & 30, Msgs G.O. 158, 19 Apr 45, 162, 19 Apr 45)

350. West of the Ems River 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp held a broken line facing Weener (7408) and Bunde (6810) from the south. Further west the front had been stabilized from Nieuwe - Schans (6409) through Oosterwolde (5412) on to the area of Siddeburen (4216), where contact was being maintained with elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt of 3 Cdn Inf Div (First Cdn Army Ops Log op cit, 18 Apr 45; serials 92; 19 Apr 45, serials 104, 109; 20 Apr 45, serials 30, 40; also W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 19 Apr 45). The presence of 7 Cdn Recce Regt in this sector was the result of certain modifications in the allocation of responsibility to Maj-Gen Keefer's troops. When last mentioned (17 Apr), 3 Cdn Inf Div's consolidated areas were as follows:

> 7 Cdn Inf Bde were given the area from STEENWIJK West to the river IJSSEL and South to ZWOLLE. 8 Cdn Inf Bde were given the area South of the HARLINGEN - LEEUWARDEN railway, and the intervening sector including the coast line west of the LEEUWARDEN - HEERENVEEN road. 9 Cdn Inf

> Bde were given the task of consolidating North of the HARLINGEN - LEEUWARDEN - ZWAGERVEEN railway, and guarding the coast line.
>
> (Weekly Summary of Ops, 3 Cdn Inf Div, op cit, 15 Apr - 21 Apr 45)

351. This allocation, however, had been modified somewhat on 18 Apr. On that date as the official summary of operation states:

> The area as far East as Groningen became a 3 Cdn Inf Div responsibility. 7 Cdn Inf Bde turned over most of their responsibility to the Dutch Resistance and moved to the new area. 8 Cdn Inf Bde somewhat enlarged their sector to include some of that vactaed by 7 Cdn Inf Bde.
>
> (Ibid)

The only real change in 3 Cdn Inf Div's present disposition was on the right. 7 Cdn Inf Bde was now facing north-east on the line Hoogezand (3408) - Weltersum (3[illegible]20) - Fraamklap (2527) (First Cdn Army Op Log, op cit, 20 Apr [illegible], serial 32; also W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units); In order to give a more detailed picture of the positions held by Brigadier T.G. Gibson's men, the Rifle Brigade's war diary is quoted

> R. Wpg Rif were positioned on the outskirts of GRONINGEN covering the NORTH-EASTERN approaches to the town while Regina Rif 8 miles to the NORTH controlled re junc, villages of WINSUM, 1827, ONDERDENDAM, 2327, and MIDDELSTUM, 2628. I G Scot R some 9 miles SOUTH-EAST of GRONINGEN moved into the towns of HOOGEZAND, 3408 and KOLHAM, 3310. A sqn 7 Recce Regt and a sqn of RCD were put under bde comd and a tp of 27 Armd Regt was working with R. Wpg Rif. During the afternoon R. Wpg R. were ordered to move up on the rt flank of Regina Rif.
>
> (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Apr 45)

352. The previous occupant of this sector, as has already been related, was 2 Cdn Inf Div, but now that formation was in the act of moving (on the direct order of the [illegible]-in-C.) to Lt-Gen Simonds' right flank (General Crerar's Dispatch 5 May 45, op cit, para 35). The divisional summary of operations for the week, 15-21 Apr records this important move in these words:

> On 18 Apr, HQ 2 Cdn Inf Div proceeded south through ASSEN, HOOGEVEEN and BAKKBRUG before turning east throught HARDENBURG, over the OVERIJSSELSCH Canal, and across the Dutch-German frontier in square 2840. Up to this point, the roads had been lined with the Dutch people, who gave a very enthusiastic welcome to the troops.
>
> Continuing eastwards over the frontier, HQ 2 Cdn Inf Div passed through UELSEN, NEUENHAUS and NORDHORN. The River Ems was crossed east of LINGEN and the first stage of this long journey from GRONINGEN ended, after 110 miles near HASELUNNE. On the following day (19 Apr), HQ 2 Cdn Inf Div traversed the remaining 37 miles from HASELUNNE, through LONINGEN, to a position in square 2676 approximately 5 miles north-east of Cloppenburg (square 2072).

(Weekly Summary of Ops, 2 Cdn Inf Div, op cit, 15-21 Apr 45)

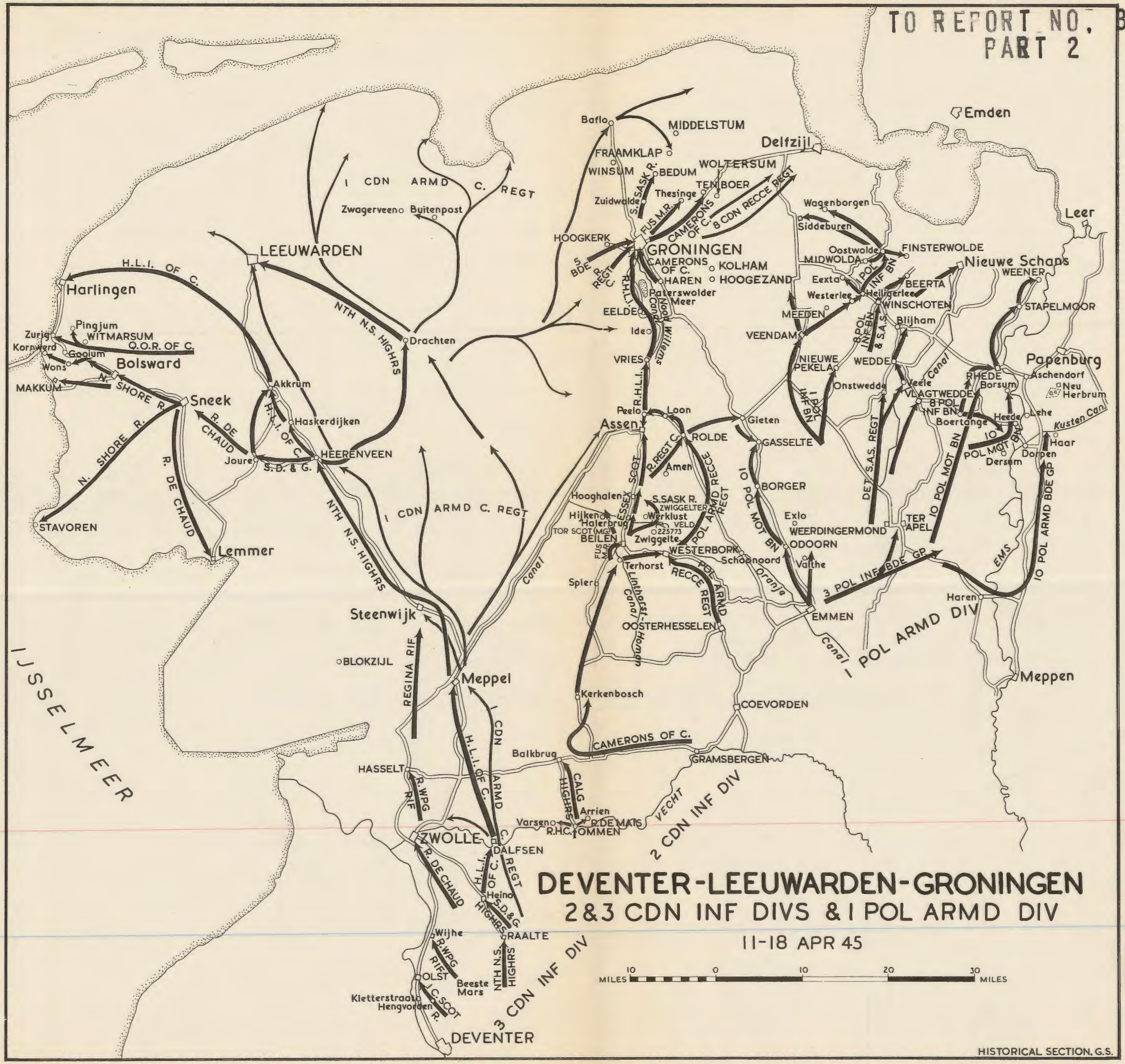
As soon as the Divisional headquarters arrived in its new area on 19 Apr, the commander and his staff began planning for the next offensive against Oldenburg (ibid)

END OF PART II

APPENDIX A

TO REPORT NO. 32

PART 2



DEVENTER-LEEUWARDEN-GRONINGEN

2&3 CDN INF DIVS & 1 POL ARMD DIV

11-18 APR 45

10 0 10 20 30 MILES

HISTORICAL SECTION, G.S.

APPENDIX B
TO REPORT NO. 32
PART 2

CAPTURE OF GRONINGEN
2 CDN INF DIV
16 APR 45

Dorkwerd
Noorderhoogebrug
Hoogkerk
Rozenburg
Helpman
GRONINGEN
"D" COY
"A" & "B" COYS
174143
214136
FACTORY
STATION
WATER TOWER
STADSPARK
STERRE BOSCH
PRISON
POWER PLANT
ESSEX SCOT
CAMERONS OF C.
R. DE MAIS
R.H.C.
R.H.L.I.
R. PEGT
R. US M.P.
R. SASK. R.
PARK
CALG. HIGHRS
"A"
"C"
"D"

MILE 0 MILE

HISTORICAL SECTION, G.S.

SÖGEL - EDEWECHTERDAMM - SAGE

4 CDN ARMD DIV

11-18 APR 45

MILE 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 MILES

Kusten Canal
Kampe
Lahe
ALO R.
Edewechterdamm
A. & S.H. of C.
Coy LINC & WELLD
TO OLDENBURG
122960
Schwaneburg
SQN 22 CDN ARMD REGT
A. & S.H. OF C.
LAKE SUP R. (MOT)
Wolfstange
Pirgo
Altenoythe
SCHOOL
Friesoythe
"C" Coy LAKE SUP R. (MOT)
LINC & WELLD R.
Kronsberg
Osterloh
Bosel
Sudkamp
Aue
Neuscharrel
A. & S.H. OF C.
Soeste
Esterwegen
ALO R. & 28 CDN ARMD REGT
Neulorup
Neuvrees
Mittelsten Thule
Garrel
Borgerwald
"A" Coy Alg R. & "A" Sqn 28 CDN ARMD REGT
Breddenburg
ALO R.
Neuborger
Markhausen
29 CDN ARMD RECCE REGT
Hintern Esch
Bissel
Sage
Tweel
Dannen-kamp
Amerika
Airfield
FORST KLEMENSWERTH
Lorup
Borger
"D" Coy A. & S.H. OF C.
21 CDN ARMD REGT & "A" COY, A.S.H. OF C.
Neu Markhausen
"C" Sqn 29 CDN ARMD RECCE REGT
"A" Sqn 29 CDN ARMD RECCE REGT
Peheim
Vrees
Varrelbusch
"B" Sqn
"A" Sqn
"C" Sqn
Neumuhlen
Resthausen
Stedingsmuhlen
Dwergte
Gronheim
Harrenstatte
Spahn
Bockholte
Werlte
Sögel
"D" Coy LAKE SUP R. (MOT)
Sqn 18 CDN ARMD C. REGT
Osterlindern
Lindern
LINC & WELLD R.
Marren
Lahn
Wieste
CLOPPENBURG

HISTORICAL SECTION G.S.

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

MILES 10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 MILES

Kiel
CUXHAVEN
Bad Segeberg
LUBECK
WISMAR
RUSSIAN FORCES
6 AB
Ratzeburger See
SCHWERIN
Goldberg
Mölln
HAMBURG
15 (S)
7 ARMD
53 (W)
ELBE-TRAVE
SIRIT
Wittenburg
Hagenow
Ludwigslust
Grabow
Boizenburg
Lauenburg
Gulzow
Geesthacht
Winsen
Artlenburg
Hittbergen
6 AB
XVIII US AB CORPS
Bleckede
Darchau
LUNEBURG
Neetze
Domitz
Stade
Buxtehude
Harburg
Bremervorde
HAMME-OSTE CANAL
51 (H)
Wentel
Zeven
Tostedt
Welle
GDS ARMD
7 ARMD
Neuenkirchen
SOLTAU
11 ARMD
Emmendorf
Ebstorf
Wriedel
6 AB
UELZEN
Wichtenbeck
Tarmstedt
43 W
Ottersburg
Rotenburg
Haberlah
Visselhovede
Ottingen
BREMEN
Lehe
Oyten
Stuhr
82 (L)
Achim
Uphusen
Weser
DELMENHORST
Havekost
Brinkum
Gr. Mackenstedt
Wendingbostel
53 (W)
52 (L)
Idsingen
Dorfmark
Fallingbostel
Verden
7 ARMD
Walsrode
Bergen
Belsen
Hoya
53 W
Rethem
Winsen
Essel
Celle
Aller
15 (S)
Leine
NIENBURG
Oldenburg
Bad Zwischenahn
3 BRIT
2 CDN
1 POL ARMD
3 CDN
Leer
RHEIDER LAND
OBER LEDINGER LAND
SATER LAND
VEHNE MOOR
Friesoythe
Papenburg
Dorpen
Kusten
Canal
Wedde
Nieuwe Schans
EMDEN
Delfzijl
Aurich
WILHELMSHAVEN
East Frisian Islands
Spiekeroog
Wangerooge
West Frisian Islands
Leeuwarden
GRONINGEN
Assen
Borger
Weerdingermond
Meppel
Coevorden
Emmen
Haren
Meppen
Haselunne
Sogel
4 CDN ARMD
1 POL ARMD
Dotlingen
Ippener
Harpstedt
Ahlhorn
Wildeshausen
Cloppenburg
Vechta
Quakenbruck
Diepholz
Holdorf
Bassum
Hunte
Ems
Lingen
43 (W)
51 (H)
GDS ARMD
52 (L)
Furstenau
Ankum
Bersenbrück
Damme
Neuenkirchen
Dümmer See
Wagenfeld
Stolzenau
II ARMD
Steinhuder Meer
Rehburg
Neustadt
Bordenau
Wunstorf
HANOVER
Weser - Elbe Canal
Petershagen
6 AB
8 CORPS
Canal
Bramsche
Halen
Osnabruck
Lubbecke
MINDEN
Weser
Rheine
12 CORPS
DORTMUND-EMS CANAL
30 CORPS
Nordhorn
Almelo
Delden
Hengelo
Enschede
Gronau
CDN ARMD
2 CDN
3 CDN
Ommen
Zwolle
Kampen
IJSSELMEER
Elburg
Nunspeet
Hierden
Harderwijk
Epe
1 CDN
Putten
Apeldoorn
Deventer
Hoven
Wilp
Gorssel
Laren
Holten
Markelo
Zutphen
Dieren
IJssel
Oude IJssel
Spakenburg
Hamo
Driedorp
Nijkerk
Voorthuizen
AMERSFOORT
Barneveld
Lunteren
Otterloo
Ede
049 W.R.
5 CDN ARMD
Renswoude
Geldersch-Veenendaal
Rhenen
Wageningen
ARNHEM
Renkum
Pannerdensch Canal
49 W.R.
2 CDN
3 CDN
NIJMEGEN
LAND VAN ALTENA
Waal
BIESBOSCH
BOMMELERWAARD
Maas
Hedel
Alem I.
RHINE
Neder Rijn
Rotterdam
THE HAGUE
AMSTERDAM
Munster
HAMM
PADERBORN
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PART III

THE OPERATIONS OF FIRST CDN ARMY, 20 APR - 5 MAY 45

Contents	Para	Page
Polish Operations North of the Kusten Canal, 19-21 Apr 45	354 - 356	156
Intentions of 2 Cdn Corps, 20 Apr 45	357	157
The Advance of 1 Pol Armd Div Continues, 22 Apr 45	358 - 363	158
3 Cdn Inf Div's Operation West of the Ems, 21-29 Apr 45	364 - 376	160
7 Cdn Inf Bde Shifts to the Right, 23 Apr 45	377 - 379	164
Operations of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 21-27 Apr 45	380 - 386	165
Disposition and Plans of 3 Cdn Inf Div, 27-28 Apr 45	387 - 388	167
Support for Operations "DUCK", 28 Apr 45	389 - 393	168
The Assault against LEER by 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Apr 45	394 - 407	170
7 Cdn Inf Bde crosses the Leda River, 29 Apr 45	408 - 416	174
1 Pol Armd Div passes through to the North-East, 30 Apr 45	417	177
The Advance on Emden and Aurich by 3 Cdn Inf Div, 1-4 May 45	418 - 433	178
1 Pol Armd Div's Operations, 29 Apr - 4 May 45	434 - 437	183
Operations of 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Apr - 4 May 45	438 - 456	185
29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt's Independent Role, 19-25 Apr 45	475 - 463	191
4 Cdn Armd Bde takes the Lead, 25 Apr 45	464 - 476	194
4 Cdn Armd Div Regroups, 26/27 Apr 45	477 - 479	198
The Advance Continues, 27 Apr 45	480 - 493	199
The Final Stages, 29 Apr - 5 May 45	494 - 509	204
Intentions 4 Cdn Inf Div, 1 May 45	510	210

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Contents

	Para	Page
Operations of 4 Cdn Armd Div, 1-4 May 45	511 - 518	210
4 Cdn Armd Bde turns East, 2 May 45	519 - 523	213
The Southern Flank, 25 Apr - 3 May 45	524 - 526	215
Concluding Operations of 4 Cdn Armd Div, 3-4 May 45	527 - 532	216
2 Cdn Armd Bde Closes the Left Flank, 3 May 45	533 - 534	218
The Last Few Miles - Operations 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 May 45	535 - 554	220
The Operations of 2 Cdn Inf Div, 19-30 Apr 45; Situations and Plans, 19-20 Apr 45	555 - 558	226
Divisional Plans, 21 Apr 45	559 - 561	228
The Advance by 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Apr 45	562 - 564	229
The Attack by 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Apr 45	565 - 580	230
5 Cdn Inf Bde Cuts the Road Delmenhorst - Oldenburg, 24 Apr 45	581 - 593	235
Operations of 4 Cdn Inf Bde on 25 Apr 45	594 - 597	239
Patrol Action and Regrouping Operations 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes, 25 Apr 45	598	240
The Attack Continues, 26 Apr 45	599 - 609	241
Plans for the Attack on Oldenburg, 27 Apr 45	610 - 614	244
The Approaches to Oldenburg, 28 Apr 45	615 - 618	246
The Thrust to Oldenburg Commences, 29 Apr 45	619 - 633	247
The Fall of Oldenburg - Operations 2 Cdn Inf Div, 1-4 May 45	634 - 644	252
The Crossing of the Kusten Canal and Hunte River by 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 May 45	645 - 649	256
4 Cdn Inf Bde Moves into Oldenburg, 3 May 45	650 - 658	257
Operations of 5 Cdn Armd Div - The Move from Western Holland to the Groningen area, 20 Apr 45	659 - 668	260
The Delfzijl Pocket: Topography	669 - 670	264
The Delfzijl Pocket; Enemy Strength	671 - 673	264
The Clearing of the Delfzijl Pocket: Phase I, 23 Apr 45	674 - 698	266

Contents	Para	Page
Clearing of the Delfzijl Pocket: Phase II 29 Apr 45	699 - 717	273
Operations of 1 Cdn Corps 19-27 Apr 45	718 - 721	280
The Last Advance to the Grebbe Line, 21-27 Apr 45	722 - 724	282
The Maas River Line, 22 Apr - 4 May 45	725	283
Truce in the Western Netherlands, 28 Apr 45	726 - 737	284
Operations of Second British Army, 20 Apr - 4 May 45	738 - 763	288
Russian Operations on the Eastern Front, 1-4 May 45	764 - 766	297
Germany's Position with regard to Sea and Air Power, 4 May 45	767 - 770	298
The Surrender in the South 2-5 May 45	771 - 772	299
The Surrender in the North 2-5 May 45	773 - 776	299
Cease Fire for the Canadians, 4 May 45	777 - 784	301
The Situation of First Cdn Army at 0800 Hours 5 May 45	785 - 791	303
Conclusion	792 - 800	305

APPENDICES - PART III

Appendix "A", Map - 1 Pol Armd Div advances to Leda R. and Hesel, 19 - 1 May 45.

Appendix "B", Map - Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div west of the Ems, 21 - 29 Apr 45.

Appendix "C", Map - Operations 3 Cdn Inf Div east of the Ems, 28 Apr - 4 May 45.

Appendix "D", Map - 4 Cdn Armd Div, Edewechterdamm to Zwischenahner meer, 19 Apr - 3 May 45.

Appendix "E", Map - Operations 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Apr - 4 May 45.
Operations 1 Pol Armd Div, 29 Apr - 4 May 45.

Appendix "F", Map - Operations 2 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Apr - 4 May 45.

Appendix "G", Map - Operations 5 Cdn Armd Div, Northern Netherlands, 20 - 26 Apr 45.

Appendix "H", Map - The Delfzijl Pocket, 5 Cdn Armd Div 23 Apr - 2 May 45.

Appendix "J", Map - First Cdn Army forward line of troops, 5 May 45.

Appendix "K", Map - Operations 21 Army Group, North-West Europe, April - May 1945.

Appendix "L" - Consolidated Casualties from 0600 hours 1 Apr 45 - 0600 hours 6 May 45.

Appendix "M" - The Enemy and Air picture from Day to Day.

PART III

The Operations of First Cdn Army, 20 Apr-5 May 45

353. The topography of the area through which the main Canadian advance was moving lent itself to defence and as General Crerar states in his dispatch

> The enemy was able to block the approaches to his positions through the surrounding peat bogs with barriers and mines and to cover these with concentrated fire. Notwithstanding the collapse of the German armies elsewhere on the western front, the 2nd Parachute Corps was still maintaining good control. In part the troops available to defend this territory and the ports lying on the sea coast were composed of naval units. These nautical elements showed more spirit than dexterity in their unaccustomed role as infantry. But in the bitter struggle being waged between the lower reaches of the Weser and Ems the parachutists still fought with their accustomed fanaticism and skill at arms.
>
> (General Crerar's Dispatch, 5 May 45, op cit, para 34)

True enough, the awkward nature of the terrain had slowed up operations into North-Western Germany, but, even coupled with fanaticism and skill at arms, it was not enough to divert the deluge which was steadily engulfing the enemy's forces.

POLISH OPERATIONS NORTH OF THE KUSTEN CANAL, 19-21 APR 45*

354. 10 Pol Armd Bde Gp established a bridgehead across the Kusten Canal west of Haar (7639) at 1030 hours on 19 Apr. Progress was good for by 1350 hours a bridge had been completed and a squadron of armour was over the canal. (First Cdn Army Liaison offrs reports, op cit, 191600B G. Ops, 2 Cdn Corps). It was expected that the opposition would soon crumble and that the two brigade groups would proceed northwards unhindered. (Ibid). Having no wish to give up ground so easily however, the enemy contested the advance towards Aschendorf (7395) more heavily, although the Poles managed to capture Lehe (7289). (First Cdn Army Ops Log, April 1945, op cit, 19 Apr 45, serials 104, 107, 108, 20 Apr 45, serial 2)

355. Shortly after midnight 19/20 Apr, one of the Polish armoured groups (1 Pol Armd Regt and 1 Pol Inf Bn) reported that the woods south-west of Neu Herbrum (7592) were clear and that the attack on the village Aschendorf (7595) would follow. A great deal of pressure was required along this route and numerous skirmishes with the German rear guards took place

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* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4416, Central Europe 1:100,000 M1 - Groningen, M2 - Oldenburg, L2 - Wilhelmshaven; also Appx "A".

before Aschendorf (7395) was finally captured by 1830 hours 20 Apr. Meanwhile a report had arrived at 2 Cdn Corps Headquarters stating that 24 Polish Lancers had broken away to the right of Aschendorfer Kampe and were heading for the Borgerwald-Papenburg road. An armoured group thereupon thrust forward, leaving two companies of 9 Pol Inf Bn to clear Aschendorf. The roads leading from this small community to the bridges over the Ems on the west and north were quickly secured by consolidating the main road Aschendorf-Rhede (6896) and seizing the village of Tunxdorf (7199). (First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Report, op cit, 201630B, SO 2 Cdn Corps; also First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit, at 20 Apr 45, serials 29, 38, 51, 63, 85, 94, 104)

356. The advance continued during the night 20/21 Apr, and on the morning of 21 Apr 3 Pol Inf Bde (partially relieved of its commitments west of the Ems River by 3 Cdn Inf Div) crossed the Kusten to reinforce the main effort. This group assumed the task of clearing the area immediately north of the canal in the triangle Neulehe (7789) - Wildes Moor (8193) - Borgermoor (8391) and of opening the route Borgermoor - Papenburg. Meanwhile the armoured brigade, having reached the outskirts of Papenburg, had passed its infantry through to clear the way. It was understood that a regrouping would take place as soon as the Poles were fully relieved west of the Ems. At that time the armoured brigade group would take over the responsibility of the entire area bounded by Papenburg - Borgermoor - Bockhorst (8991) - Rhaudermoor (8805) while the infantry group would press on eastwards to secure the next main route north of the canal from Sedelsberg (0093) to Bollingen (9604). (First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports, op cit, 211300B, G. Ops 2 Cdn Corps; also First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit, at 21 Apr 45, serials 34, 88)

INTENTIONS OF 2 CDN CORPS, 20 APR 45*

357. Lt-Gen Simonds had on 20 Apr told the Polish Commander that his immediate tasks (after Papenburg was clear) would be to probe for a crossing of the Leda river on the road to Leer, but, if this route proved to be too strongly held, then the main weight of the Polish effort must be transferred towards Varel. On the same day the G.O.C. 2 Cdn Corps had conferred with the commanders of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div to impress upon them the importance of the complete relief of 3 Cdn Inf Div by the troops of Maj-Gen B.M. Hoffmeister's formation. This would free the infantry division for its task of first mopping up west of the Ems River and then following the Poles with its object of taking on Leer if that place called for an infantry attack. The war diary of 2 Cdn Corps outlined the tasks as follows:

(a) 3 Cdn Div to relieve 1 Pol Armd Div complete WEST of R EMS and clear enemy from pockets in that area, also to prepare for inf bde assault across R Leda into Leer and open WEENER - LEER rd, then to advance via AURICH on to EMDEN.

(b) 4 Cdn Armd Div to complete crossing of KUSTEN KANAL, advance on ZWISCHENAHNER MEER, strike EAST to OLDENBURG and if it is too strongly held for an armd div to capture, to capture and seal off northern exits and close up to R WESER.

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* Reference maps as for para 354.