

(c) 2 Cdn Div - to protect LEFT flank of 30 Corps and advance to VEGESACK.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 20 Apr 45)

In addition a special light force was to be formed composed of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1 Belgian S.A.S. and 1 Brit S.A.S. all under the command of Headquarters 2 Cdn Armd Bde. This force was to be prepared to pass through the left of 4 Cdn Armd Div or later (as opportunity offered) through the Polish formations to harass the enemy in Ost Friesland. (Ibid)

THE ADVANCE OF 1 POL ARMD DIV CONTINUES, 22 APR 45\*

358. Throughout 22 Apr the advance northward was carried out by two parallel columns. 1 Pol Armd Regt and elements of 9 Pol Inf Bn followed the line of the railway towards Ihrhove (8108) while on the right 24 Polish Lancers paced the main thrust by moving along the road Vollener-Konigsfehn (8000) - Flachsmeer (8102). At 1000 hours Ihrhove (8108) had been passed and the right flanking force (24 L) had swung eastwards to explore the areas west of Rhaudermoor (8805). By the end of the day the armoured group had taken the villages of Breinermoor (8411), Bakemoor (8610) and Kollinghorst (8607) and had cleared most of the ground south of the Leda river. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 14, 20, 24; 23 Apr 45, serial 1). Meanwhile a portion of the infantry group had gone into action along the north bank of the Kusten following the line Neulehe (7789) - Borgermoor (8391); it had taken Bockhorst (8992) and was sweeping to the north. (Ibid)

359. By this time there had occurred two changes in plan. First, the state of the roads was so bad that Maj-Gen Maczek decided to call in his Lancers from the right flank and push them north through Ihrhove (8108). Secondly, the pressure against the Canadian armour further east was so heavy that the Polish general was ordered (see para 357) to switch his main axis towards Varel (2733) and ease the situation for Maj-Gen Vokes' hard pressed troops. (First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 18, 27). While the armoured brigade cleared its way northwards, 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp (2 Pol Armd Regt and 10 Pol Mot Bn) concentrated at Kollinghorst (8607) and by 1300 hours 23 Apr this column was ready to proceed eastwards. At the same time 8 Pol Inf Bn was working its way up from the south in the direction of Langholt (9002). (Ibid, 23 Apr 45, serial 17, "Intentions"; First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Report, op cit, 231500B, SO 2)

360. During the night 23/24 Apr, 8 Pol Inf Bn made good progress and by 1000 hours held the cross roads (915050) east of the water obstacle and north of Langholt (9002). Simultaneously, further south a small reconnaissance group followed the northern bank of the Kusten Canal, clearing as it went. On the northern flank strong patrols journeyed to Driever (7811) and Esklum (8013) to find the enemy in possession there. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45; serials 1, 7, 20). The advance now began to show signs of dragging, for the roads were disappearing on every axis along which the Poles were travelling. Moreover,

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\* Reference maps as for para 354; also Appx "A".



water obstacles abounded and a seemingly endless series of bridging operations had to be carried out. (Ibid, serials 23, 33). Nevertheless, where physical contact was not possible, pressure was kept up by fire. The night of 24 Apr found the Polish troops holding a scattered line which stretched from the outskirts of Driever (7811) on the left eastwards through Brienermoor - Bakermoor - Schatteburg (8609), then in a south-easterly direction past Holte (8908) to the proposed bridge east of the Langholtermeer, where the position had been sufficiently strengthened by the Polish medium machine guns to secure the southern flank. Along the north bank of the Kusten Canal, the light reconnaissance group had reached a point a few hundred yards short of Sedelsberg (0093), but here considerable opposition was encountered and no further headway was possible. (Ibid, 25 Apr, serial 3)

361. Very little progress was made on 25 Apr, mainly because of the bridging and water difficulties. On the following day, however, 10 Pol Mot Bn, having secured the area of Potshausen (9210), assaulted across the stream north of that place and, supported by fighter bombers, pressed on towards Stickhausen (9313). (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 2, 17). Some 3000 yards to the south, 1 Pol Inf Bn moved towards Bokelesch, where it became involved in a woods clearing operation, while on the immediate right flank 8 Pol Inf Bn went for Bollingen (9604). In all sectors progress was slow for the enemy was ideally placed to conduct his defence. (Ibid, 27 Apr, serial 2; also First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit; 26 Apr 45, serials 74, 75). On the morning of 27 Apr a message received at Headquarters First Cdn Army explained the very great difficulties which Maj-Gen Maczek's men had to face in their attempt to break out to the east:

G.S.O. 2, 1 Pol Armd Div 0940 hrs, 3 Pol Inf Bde. 1 Pol Inf Bn cleared wood 9507 during night. 10 Pol Mot Bn report six 60 ft craters on dyke rd between Q923110 - 925114 with ground both sides flooded. CRE states all craters must be bridged. One 30 ft span br under constr at 921106 but work held up by hy mortar and arty fire. Two pontoons sank during night.

(Ibid, serial 26)

362. Under such trying conditions of ground and resistance it was small wonder that the Polish soldiers could not move on more quickly. However, by persistent effort throughout 28 Apr the line edged its way eastwards. During the afternoon Bokelesch (9507) was cleared; while Bollingen (9603) fell and was held despite the enemy's frantic efforts to recapture the village. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serial 1). Further south, out of Langholt, 10 Pol Armd Recce Regt had swept south to the area of Ramsloh (9500), whence it proceeded along the main road as far as the hamlets of Hollen (9799) and Scharrel (9777). There at 1500 hours 28 Apr contact was established with the Polish light reconnaissance group coming up from Sedelsburg (0093). (First Cdn Army Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 55, 63). Meanwhile, on the northern flank beyond Ihrhove (8008), 9 Pol Inf Bn had cleared up to the southern banks of the Leda river and was preparing to enter the small town of Nettelburg (8313). (Ibid, serial 88)

363. The struggle for the opportunity to manoeuvre went on all through 29 Apr. 3 Pol Inf Bde continued to develop the route from Potshausen (9100) to Stickhausen (9313), at the same time maintaining a firm contact with the Germans to its front.



10 Pol Armd Bde, not being able to operate successfully in this boggy area, was gradually being pulled out of the line for a new task - that of passing through the town of Leer, which had been recently captured by 3 Cdn Inf Div, and striking out to the north-east in the direction of Wilhemshaven, that proud bastion of the German Navy. (Ibid, 29 Apr 45, serial 69, 71). But before that story can be told it is necessary to trace the operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div, whose capture of Leer was to make the Polish advance possible.

3 CDN INF DIV'S OPERATION WEST OF THE EMS,  
21-29 APR 45\*

364. According to the instructions issued by Headquarters 2 Cdn Corps on 20 Apr (see para 357 to this report) control of the area between Groningen and the Ems River had completely passed to Maj-Gen Keebler's command by the evening of 22 Apr.

On the right flank, based on the West bank of the river EMS, 8 Cdn Inf Bde with R. de Chaud on the right and Q.O.R. of C. on the left faced up to the WEENER (7408) NIEUWE - SCHANS (6410) railway. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was concentrated in WINSCHOTEN (5305) with Divisional Headquarters. 7 Cdn Inf Bde held the left flank with 1 C. Scot R. in the vicinity of WAGENBORGEN (4618), R. Wpg Rif in the vicinity of APPINGEDAM (3125), and Regina Rif in the area of SPIJK (4033).

(3 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly  
Summary of Ops and Activities,  
op cit, 22 Apr - 28 Apr 45)

In this area west of the Ems, the Canadians must now reduce the remaining enemy strongholds on the left bank of the estuary and east of Groningen. (Ibid)

365. The first matter to be attended to was the elimination of the German stronghold at Delfzijl, a task which fell to the rifle brigade. The Reginas were thus directed to the north and north-west of Groningen; R. Wpg Rif had to take out the large town of Appingedam (4125) while the 1 C. Scot R. was launched against Wagenborgen (4618). (Ibid, also W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Apr 45)

366. On the right 1 C. Scot R. had deployed its companies suitably. On the morning of 21 Apr "B" Coy was stationed on detachment duty at Finsterwolde (5712) (where it had relieved the Poles), "C" Coy held Nieuwolda (4917), while "D" Coy was

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland, Western Germany, 1:25,000 Sheets 2907 - Nieuwepekela, 2908 - Onstwedde, 2909 - Aschendorf, 2807 - Veendam, 2808 - Winschoten, 2809 - Nieuwe Schans, 2810 - Weener, 2811 - Westrauderfehn, 2707 - Siddeburen, 2711 - Nortmoor, 2709 - Ditzumer Verlaat, 2710 - Leer, 2708 - Woldendorp, 2611 - Hesel, 2610 - Neerhoor, 2609 - Emden, 2607 - Delfzijl; also Appx "B".



firm east of the road and railway junction at (442181); "A" Coy was still in Groningen on guard duties. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 21 Apr 45). Early on 21 Apr, "D" Coy was sent in to attack the village of Wagenborgen (4618) from the south-west. Throughout the morning the troops made one effort after another to advance against the heavy fire covering the several obstacles along the route. The enemy put up tremendous resistance. During the afternoon the Scots had some success, but it was short-lived. Counter-attacks and accurate fire began to take toll, and by the end of the day "D" Coy had only forty-five fighting men\* left. Realizing that he was up against stern opposition and that a co-ordinated effort would be necessary, Lt-Col L.S. Henderson ordered "D" Coy to retire to its former positions east of the railway. Reinforcement was essential but this would take time, for the battalion was well dispersed. Orders were therefore quickly sent out to both "A" and "B" Coys to come forward in TCVs to strengthen the battalion's sector. (Ibid)

367. As soon as the fresh troops arrived, "B" Coy was sent to re-occupy "D" Coy's old position on the road south of Wagenborgen (in the built up area (4517)). "A" Coy lined the railroad to the north of "D" Coy. From these positions, a strong patrolling programme commenced. By 1800 hours the commanding officer felt that he had sufficient information upon which to base a concentrated attack. Within a short space of time the required support had been laid on and at about 2130 hours, "A" and "B" Coys attacked from the west and south while "C" Coy began to push towards the high dyke which protects the eastern part of the village. (Ibid). The assault was pressed home in the darkness against scattered opposition and at midnight, 22/23 Apr, the Scottish had "A" and "B" Coys in Wagenborgen. Simultaneously "C" Coy had established itself firm on the dykes to the east. (Ibid)

368. The enemy's reaction to our capture of Wagenborgen was mainly confined to harassing fire with small arms and self-propelled guns. The morning of 23 Apr saw "B" Coy firm in the southern portion of the village and "A" Coy well established in the northern part. Both sub-units had some trouble with isolated strong points, but accounted for a good number of Germans who were identified as members of 350 Marine Fortress Bn. Over on the dyke east of the village, "C" Coy, though well positioned, was subjected to fierce volleys of well-aimed rifle and machine gun fire and was thus pinned temporarily, being unable to contact the soldiers within the village itself. (Ibid, 22 Apr 45)

369. The enemy launched his counter-attack against the Canadian Scottish at about 1130 hours. "A" Coy saw the German infantry forming up and asked for reinforcement. This soon arrived in the form of several carriers (from "D" Coy's position to the rear) and a troop of tanks, the latter being warned to proceed with caution. This warning they totally disregarded. As the War Diary of 1 C. Scot R. states:

...they romped through the southern part of the village; and, as they reached the area between "A" and "B" Coys, three were knocked out by Panzerfausts (Bazookas). The enemy had infiltrated through the positions held by our coys and had met the tanks as they came.

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\* Normally a fighting company in action musters about 65 - 75 all ranks.



Artillery was brought to bear on the infiltrating force causing them to go to ground and evacuate the area.

(Ibid, 23 Apr 45)

By the close of day, thorough sweeps certified that the greater part of the area was clear. Small enemy groups, however, were still trying hard to penetrate the Canadian positions and, as the night wore on, the "Scottish" remained alert. (Ibid)

370. On the following day 1 C. Scot R. was relieved by 11 R.C. of 11 Cdn Inf Bde and Lt-Col Henderson's men concentrated around the village of Eeksta (4808). There, mobile bath units were available, hot meals were served and the troops were able to rest. However, any outlook or promise for an easier time was shattered that evening when the battalion was ordered to be at Nieuwe Schans (6409) by first light 25 Apr. There the "Scottish" would come under command 8 Cdn Inf Bde and would assist Brigadier Roberts' men to clear up the west bank of the Ems River. (Ibid, 24 Apr 45)

371. Meanwhile the other rifle regiments had also contributed towards the sealing of the Delfzijl pocket. In the centre sector R. Wpg Rif had begun to move on Appingedam (4125) on 20 Apr and by last light on that day Lt-Col Fulton had his troops deployed and ready to assault. "D" Coy was then holding Loppersum (3426), "A" Coy was established in Wirdum (3625), "B" Coy occupied Leermens (3728) while "C" Coy watched the battalion's right flank from the area of Wirdumerdraai (3625). On the northern flank a troop of 7 Cdn Recce Regt was feeling out the routes towards the coast north of Appingedam (4125). (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 20 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket VI, Folio No. 17, Special Report No. 34, prepared by R. Wpg Rif; Phase I, 18-24 Apr 45 - Holland)

372. 21 Apr dawned, a cool, showery day. At 0800 hours the "little black devils" received the order to advance.

"B" and "C" Coys were to push on towards APPINGEDAM (MR 4227). The 7 Recce were also to proceed towards MARSUM (MR 4227).

(Ibid)

On the left "B" Coy was aided by the scout cars of 7 Cdn Recce Regt. From Leermens (3728) the reconnaissance troops, finding all the bridges leading to Appingedam demolished, swung north to occupy the farming village of Godlinze (3831) at 1130 hours. On the right "C" Coy followed the main road leading into the objective from Wirdum (3625) and reached the woods east of Eekwerderdraai (3724) to overrun a small enemy gun position. While "C" Coy resumed a cautious advance because of the various obstacles and many mines, "B" Coy worked out of Leermens (3728) to see what routes might still be open. At the same time "A" Coy was brought forward into Leermens. (Ibid). At about midday one good (but very light) bridge was found between Leermens and the tiny hamlet at Oosterwiltwerd (3827) and "A" Coy was told to push on through. In Oosterwiltwerd (3827) "A" Coy stopped to organize for its attack, and at 1500 hours Lt-Col Fulton ordered the advance on Appingedam to commence. (Ibid)

373. Lack of bridges as well as the numerous ditches and small pockets of enemy resistance made progress very slow. "A" Coy made little headway for the rest of the day, but early



on the morning of 22 Apr the village of Jukwerd (4027) was entered and thus a start line was secured for the final effort. "D" Coy was brought up behind "A" for a coordinated attack in conjunction with "C" Coy's thrust along the southern axis. The two companies went forward at 0800 hours but again progress was extremely slow and both our artillery and mortars were kept busy helping the infantry to move on. In addition, most of the roads and tracks were heavily mined. Obstacles were so numerous that some considerable time was required before the way to Appingedam was clear enough to permit safe passage. It was a day of continuous trial and effort against bad conditions of ground and well-sited defences, but operations on the next day proved that the end was not far off. (Ibid)

374. After a night of steady patrolling, the advance was resumed in the early hours of 23 Apr and by 0600 hours both "D" and "C" Coys were inside the small town. Meanwhile "B" Coy had been moved up behind "D" to seize the brickyards (4126) on the northern outskirts. The enemy was not in any great strength, true, but he put up a stiff fight whenever encountered and it was midday before the Canadians were in firm control of Appingedam. "D" and "C" Coys held the main portion of the place, "B" was consolidated around the brickyards, and "A" Coy held its ground at Jukwerd. North of "A" Coy, Lt-Col Fulton had placed his anti-tank platoon as infantry near Nije-Klooster (4028) to watch the left flank. Later in the afternoon "B" Coy was sent through "C" to mop up the south-eastern section of the little town beyond the river. This was accomplished without much trouble before last light. (Ibid)

375. The relief of R. Wpg Rif by Perth R. on the following morning was heartily appreciated, for, although the opposition had never been of a dangerous nature, the troops had had to work hard to gain ground. Now, having successfully completed the task allotted, Lt-Col Fulton packed his men into the Kangaroos which had brought Perth R. up to the front and started off towards the area of Oostwolde (5312). (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and R. Wpg Rif, 22-24 Apr 45)

376. On the northern flank Regina Rif had not had much fighting to do. Their main object had been to get as close as possible to Delfzijl from the north. Having a very large area of responsibility did not make this an easy task, since in this sector there were many routes which the enemy could have used to infiltrate and disrupt activities. Thankfully enough the enemy (it seems) had only one idea, to withdraw into his perimeter at Delfzijl and deny that place for as long as he could. To the east of the line Uithuizen (2935) - Middelstum (2628), the villages of Roodeschool (3536), Garshuizen (3131), Zandweer (2933) and "tZandt (3530) were all found clear and occupied by midday 21 Apr. Thereafter Lt-Col Gregory moved his headquarters up to Godlinze (3831) to direct the advance of Spijk (4033), by "B" Coy. At about the same time "D" Coy moved on to Losdorp (3931), the idea being to form a line facing Holwierde (4229) from the north. Very little was seen of the enemy, the main opposition being from the long-range guns on the coast above Emden and the few pieces which were defending Delfzijl. The Regina's positions remained unchanged throughout 22 Apr, and whatever ground had been given up on the left in order to close in to the south was taken over by elements of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt. Late that night the battalion, like the others in the brigade, received orders to move and hand over to Perth R. of 5 Cdn Armd Div. (W.D., Regina Rif, 21-23 Apr 45)



7 CDN INF BDE SHIFTS TO THE RIGHT, 23 APR 45\*

377. From the areas of Oostwolde (5312) eastwards to the region of Nieuw-Beerta (6111), R. Wpg Rif and Regina Rif now took on the work of clearing up to the Dollart coast. The onus of this task fell mainly on Regina Rif together with a special battle group composed of a company of R. Wpg Rif, a troop of L.A.A. guns, a platoon of medium machine-guns and a platoon of heavy mortars, the last-named sub-units from C.H. of O. (M.G.). This battle group was to act as a left flank pivot for the Reginas, who were to mop up the last few of the enemy's gun positions on the coast line. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Apr 45). "A" Coy moved first at 1230 hours to seize the community of Kostverloren (6113); the Winnipeg's company group then brought up the left, occupied Gandzendijk (5812) and pressed on to Hongerigewolf (5913), despite some very heavy shelling. Meanwhile the Reginas' advance was progressing well, the enemy being driven from his defences by the successive bombing and strafing attacks of a dozen supporting Spitfires. Drieburg (6212) fell at 1550 hours and Lt-Col Gregory laid on the necessary patrols to cover the preparations for a full attack later on along the Reiderwolder Polder Dijk (625155-640157). "A" and "D" Coys were to secure the dyke, whereupon "B" Coy would pass on through to the west to take the canal and dyke junction 2000 yards north of Hongerigewolf (5913). (Ibid, also W.D., Regina Rif, 24 Apr 45)

378. The Regina Rif's effort started at 0130 hours 25 Apr; although opposition was fairly heavy, within the hour "A" and "D" Coys reported success on the first objectives along the Reiderwolder Polder dyke. As daylight approached the open nature of the ground prevented much movement. For a while it appeared that the attack might have to be postponed, but, as the brigade's War Diary relates:

...the situation was not quite as grim as it might have been especially when the R. Wpg Rif reported the cheering news that a white flag was flying at 598163 - this is the 4 gun bty position which during the last few days caused us so much trouble. The Reginas following this report quickly moved up and captured the position - total bag 4 x 10.5 cm guns - two intact and two destroyed (by our arty) and approx 165 PW. The German offrs in charge of the bty had escaped the previous night via boats to EMDEN. The Reginas then consolidated their positions along the line 598164 - 643137 - 588149 - 639156 and then sent the recces NW along th roads to contact the Westminster Regt on our LEFT flank.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Apr 45)

379. This short operation ended the rifle brigade's task in this sector. It was now decided that 5 Cdn Armd Div should extend its lines eastwards to cover Brigadier Gibson's area, thus freeing the infantry battalions for their part in the assault on Leer. On 26 Apr the rifle brigade moved across the Ems river over 1 Pol Armd Div's routes to concentrate north of Papenburg, taking with them 16 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., "B" Coy, 14 Cdn Fd Amb, "C" Sqn, 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 4 A.Tk bty and the 4.2 mortars of C.H. of O. (M.G.). (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 26 Apr 45)

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\* Reference maps as for para 364; also Appx "B".



THE OPERATIONS OF 8 CDN INF BDE, 21-27 APR 45\*

380. 8 Cdn Inf Bde's efforts to clear the west bank of the Ems River (and secure one of the start lines for 9 Cdn Inf Bde's assault on Leer) began on 22 Apr, shortly after elements of 1 Pol Armd Div in the area south of Weener (7407) and Bunde (6810) had been relieved. Having formed a base of operations at Rhede (6996) with N. Shore R., the brigadier sent Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud, adequately supported by crocodiles together with one squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt and a large amount of artillery, to close up to the railway Bunde (6810) - Weener (7407) late on 22 Apr. (W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 22 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 27, 36). Both battalions moved forward by leap-frogging their companies along the selected routes. Although neither unit was able to travel very fast, by 0830 hours 23 Apr R. de Chaud was up to the line of the railway some five hundred yards east of Bunde (6810). Similarly, Q.O.R. of C. on the right had crossed several formidable craters to reach the railway tracks south of Weener. (7407). (Ibid, 23 Apr 45, serials 12, 15)

381. N. Shore R. then passed through Q.O.R. of C. at about 1100 hours and advanced towards Weener supported by the tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. (Ibid, serial 23). Sniper fire met the New Brunswick men as they plodded forward and craters barred the road, making it impossible for the armour to keep up, but by sheer perseverance Lt-Col J.N. Gordon kept his soldiers moving on. Weener was entered and all companies had consolidated by 1800 hours. The prisoners totalled one hundred and three.\*\* (W.D., N. Shore R., 23 Apr 45). While N. Shore R. had been thus occupied the Chaudieres entered Bunde. Elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which had struck out from the region of Nieuwe Schans (6510) to probe the brigade's left flank, reported that a fair number of the enemy were withdrawing to the north. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit; 23 Apr 45, serials 45, 57, 60)

382. After a night of strenuous patrolling the advance was resumed on 24 Apr. Opposition remained stiff and some bitter encounters with the enemy rearguards took place. On the right N. Shore R. took Kirchborgum (7711) and Bingum (7814). On the left R. de Chaud had travelled north from Bunde and approached the road junctions (7013 and 7016) some two thousand yards west of Bohmerwold (7215). At this stage, Brigadier Roberts ordered the Queen's Own to pass through R. de Chaud., but, fearing for his open left flank, he asked Maj-Gen Keefer whether a battalion of 7 Cdn Inf Bde could be made available on that flank. As a result of this request, 1 C. Scot R. was placed under command 8 Cdn Inf Bde. As will be seen, however, the reconnaissance troops did their work too well and the Scottish were not needed much. (Ibid, 25 Apr 45, serials 4, 6, 11; W.Ds., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde & units, and 1 C. Scot R., 24-25 Apr 45)

383. On the night 24/25 Apr Q.O.R. of C. began its tedious journey towards Ditzumer Verlaat (6819) to contact 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which had come up very quickly on the left. The Queen's Own were then left to continue on to reach Oldendorp (7023), Ditzum (6924) and Pogum (6824). That these tasks involved

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, 1:25,000 Sheets 2709 - Ditzumer Verlaat, 2710 - Leer, 2809 - Nieuwe Schans, 2810 - Weener; also Appx "B".

\*\* Marine Security Bn (3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 100, 23 Apr 45).



more than idle routine is illustrated by an official account of the operations.

...at 0730 hrs a group of the enemy were observed forming up for an attack on the right of Charlie Coy. Before any assault could materialize however, Charlie Coy took effective counter-action. Twenty-five casualties were inflicted and five others taken prisoner. Charlie Coy suffered no casualties in this action, but shortly after two casualties were suffered under a severe concentration of shellfire.

(AEF: 45/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D,  
Docket II, Folio I, 1st Bn,  
Q.O.R. of C., 24 Apr - 25  
Apr 45)

384. Beyond Ditzumer Verlaat (6818) the riflemen crossed a small stream and established a bridgehead through which "B" Coy was passed to capture Dijksterhusen (6722) and Pogum (6824) on the left and "D" Coy went on to seize Ditzumer (6820) on the right. (Ibid). These attacks did not, however, go well. The account relates:

Baker Coy, committed at 1730 hrs, was forced to withdraw because of resistance and rising water on the southern approaches to POGUM. Dog and Charlie Coys were also withdrawn and a Bn "O" group was held. Under a different plan of attack Dog Coy at 0100 hrs in the morning was committed first to take DITZUMER.

(Ibid)

Both objectives were found to be well manned, but the enemy, sensing that it was too late to put up any effective resistance, gave up without much ado. Approximately five hundred prisoners were taken by Q.O.R. of C. (Ibid, and W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 24-26 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 25 Apr 45, serials 60, 26 Apr 45, serial 61)\*

385. Meanwhile R. de Chaud had been redirected over to the right and on that flank the French-Canadians seized Jemgum (7619), Midlum (7521) and Neudorp (7124) without much trouble. (Ibid, 26 Apr, serial 61, 27 Apr, serials 2, 4, 6, 8). South of the Chaudieres the stretch of road covering the villages of Holtgaste (7515) and Soltborg (7715) and leading from Bingum to Jemgum were left to the reconnaissance squadron, which cut eastward across the rear of the two forward battalions. (Ibid, serial 5). On 27 Apr, 8 Cdn Inf Bde completed its task, Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud linked up, and it was arranged that the area would be taken over by 103, 74 and 52 Cdn A.Tk Btys with elements of C.H. of O. (M.G.). (Ibid, serial 11). The three infantry battalions would then concentrate near Nieuwe Schans. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Apr 45)

386. This last phase of operations by 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been characterized by day and night action during which resistance was spasmodic and casualties were suffered mainly by reason of well-concealed mines and the shelling from the guns of the fixed defences of Emden (6531). The Rheider-Land peninsula consists of flat farm land with dyke roads, the

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\* Elements of 361, 363, 366 Marine Fortress Bns; 6 Alarm Bn, 18 Rft Unit (4, 7, 9 Convalescent Coys) 126 Marine Arty Bn. (3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 101, 26 Apr 45).



surrounding ground being usually impassable to vehicles of any sort. Consequently it had been necessary to "plug away" along the available roads. Craters had been filled or bridged under the most unpleasant conditions, for the enemy knew his ground well and most of the passable routes had been fully registered by his heavy coastal guns. The task of 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been well done and now the troops were told that they might enjoy a few days well-earned rest. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket VI: Special Report No. 38 by H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde - Battle Narrative, 18 Apr 45 - 5 May 45)

# DISPOSITION AND PLANS OF 3 CDN INF DIV, 27-28 APR 45\*

387. Maj-Gen Keebler's troops were now about to undertake a most important operation, the assault on Leer. It was estimated that this large town, which lies east of the Ems River and is protected on the south by the Leda River, was held by well-organized portions of 361, 363 and 366 Marine Fortress Battalions, supported by anti-aircraft and coastal defence guns from the area of Emden. 3 Cdn Inf Div was to establish a bridgehead north of the junction of the Ems and Leda waterways and to secure first Leer (8115), then the smaller town of Loga (8215). The divisional plan called for an attack in three phases. In the first instance 9 Cdn Inf Bde (Brigadier Rockingham) was to carry out three simultaneous thrusts across the Ems and Leda Rivers and secure the bridgehead, which included the town of Leer. In the second phase 7 Cdn Inf Bde was to pass through the highland brigade and swing east to capture Loga (8215) (a suburb of Leer east of the town itself) and the neighbouring woods (8216). Thereafter 9 Brigade would strike northwards to enlarge the lodgment. In support of the attack the Canadians had 12, 13 and 14 Fd Regts, which comprised Maj-Gen Keebler's divisional artillery, 11 Cdn Army Fd Regt and 7 Cdn Med Regt. In addition, they had 4 Brit A.G.R.A., which at the time consisted of four medium regiments, two heavy regiments and one sub-unit of super heavy (9.2 inch) guns. (AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/RCA/C/E; R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 2, Op "DUCK", dated 28 Apr 45, and Task Table No. 1, Op "LULU", 27 Apr 45, attached)

388. Brigadier Rockingham's intention was to assault with two battalions in storm boats\*\* and one company of his third unit in assault boats\*\*\* as follows. On the right one company Nth N.S. Highrs, having assembled at and embarked from the curved (8113) dyke west of Heerenborg (8112), was to cross the Leda River and capture the small peninsula which guards the entry to the harbour of Leer. In the centre H.L.I. of C., with under command one platoon of "C" Coy C.H.O. of O. (M.G.) and in support

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\* Reference maps as for para 364.

\*\* Storm boats - small powered craft provided, supervised and operated by R.C.E.

\*\*\* Assault boats - collapsible boats normally provided by R.C.A.S.C. direct to the infantry who operate them. (Infantry Training, Part V, Appx F, p. 58 and amendment No. I attached; and Field Engineering & Mine Warfare, Pamphlet No. 8, Part I, "Assault River Crossing" 1948, Reprinted in Canada 1949, Appx "A").



one section of 18 Cdn Fd Coy, was to assemble at and embark from Langeniepe (7710), proceed up the Ems River, and sail in 30 storm boats against the area of Leerort (7913). On the left S.D. & G. Highrs, with almost identical units\* to those which H.L.I. of C. had under command, would assemble at Bingumgaste (7713) and embark at Bingum (7814), cross the Ems north of the Leerort bridgesite, and seize the western outskirts of Leer. In reserve the brigade commander had Nth N.S. Highrs (less one company), with under command one platoon of medium machine guns of C.H. of O. (M.G.) and one section of 18 Cdn Fd Coy (20 assault boats). The task of the reserve was to cross the Leda River from the village of Esklum (8012) as soon as the situation elsewhere permitted, and strike at the centre of Leer from the south. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx I; 9 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 1, Op "DUCK").

#### SUPPORT FOR OPERATION "DUCK", 28 APR 45

389. Apart from the extremely heavy artillery support (already mentioned in para 387), 9 Cdn Inf Bde had the assistance of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. The armour was allotted these tasks:

- (a) "B" Squadron, 27 Cdn Armd Regt would concentrate in the area of Mittelsten Borgum (7710) and await orders to be ferried across the obstacle.
- (b) "A" & "C" Squadrons, 27 Cdn Armd Regt were to take positions on the west bank of the Ems and south bank of the Leda rivers and would give direct support to the assaulting troops.

(Ibid)

390. The bridging and rafting programme is of particular interest. A Class 40 bridge would be constructed after dark at the ferry site north of Esklum (8013). Three Class 40 rafts, previously constructed at Langeniepe (7710), were to be floated downstream to operate at the two ferry sites. One near the proposed bridgesite (803133) north of Esklum, the other west of Leerort (792137). In addition storm boat ferries would convey jeeps and the battalion anti-tank guns across the water. Each battalion was allotted four storm boats for this purpose. The heavier equipments, such as the guns of 94 Cdn A.Tk Bty and the heavy mortars of two platoons of C.H. of O. (M.G.), were to be allotted to the forward battalions as soon as a bridge was completed. H hour for the attack was set for high tide on the afternoon of 28 Apr and would be made known by the code word "WHISKY". (Ibid, paras 6-10 inclusive; paras 12-15 incl)

391. It is now necessary to review the activities of 7 Cdn Inf Bde for the past twenty-four hours, mainly because it was Brigadier Gibson's (Lt-Col Gregory was, in fact, acting Brigade commander at the time) task to clear the south bank of the Leda River. The Polish troops which had been operating in this area had been swung over to the east, leaving several small pockets of enemy along the river bank. It was against these that the commander of the rifle brigade now turned his attention. Shortly after midday, 26 Apr, R. Wpg Rif and Regina Rif settled once more within the German border to occupy concentration areas

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\* 20 storm boats instead of 30.



north of Flachsmeer (8102). Here the two units carried out some intensive house clearing. Meanwhile, (on 26 Apr) 1 C. Scot R. had attacked and secured the riverside hamlet of Kloster Mudhe (7812), from which the Scottish went on to occupy Esklum (8013) by 1630 hours. According to the brigade's war diary, the situation at Esklum (8013) was quiet.

However, this state of happiness did not last for any length of time for the Boche suddenly decided to stage a counter-attack in the form of an assault with boats from the North bank (i.e. Leer side) of the Leda River.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf  
Bde, 26 Apr 45)

This attack was quickly broken up by fire from the guns of 12 Cdn Fd Regt. 1 C. Scot R. then proceeded to sweep along the south bank of the water barrier. While this was going on R. Wpg Rif were put on short notice to occupy Ihrhove (8008) early on the following day in order to set up a marshalling area for the assaulting troops of 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid)

392. Throughout the night 26/27 Apr, Lt-Col Henderson's men consolidated their gains and even exploited eastwards to seize the village of Heerenborg (8112). By 0500 hours thirty prisoners had been taken and over three hundred mines lifted. Shortly after first light the brigade commander ordered 1 C. Scot R. to secure the road leading from Ihrhove (which was now controlled by R. Wpg Rif) to the river.

The 1 C. Scot R. acting on these orders sent out a recon party to the area first, then occupied the position around 1800 hours. From the start it was not exactly a health resort - Jerry laced them with arty, mortars and M.G. fire and at approx 1900 hrs counter-attacked the coy there from the NE. Tanks from the Polish Arm'd Div who are in this area were rushed to the scene, and in conjunction with "D" Coy 1 C. Scot R. repelled the attack. Even at that our casualties were not light.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf  
Bde, 27 Apr 45)

393. The trouble in this sector was gradually overcome and the divisional flank made secure, although no firm contact could be established with 1 Pol Arm'd Div on the right. On the morning of 28 Apr arrangements were made to allow Nth N.S. Highrs to concentrate at Esklum in preparation for the assault across the river. This according to the Brigade's war diary

...meant that two coys of the 1 C. Scot R. were forced to pull back. However the move was completed satisfactorily with no undue excitement. Trouble was caused by some German civilians in the 1 C. Scot R. area so the peoples of all the towns there were evacuated some miles to the SOUTH.

(Ibid, 28 Apr 45)



THE ASSAULT AGAINST LEER BY 9 CDN INF BDE,  
28 APR 45\*

394. The operation, known by the codeword "DUCK", was to be launched in daylight. Lt-Gen Simonds' headquarters had insisted that the bridgehead be firm by last light, so that the engineers could start building a bridge. The daylight assault necessitated a powerful supporting programme\*\* to neutralize the enemy's observed fire. This had already been arranged as well as a smoke screen to cover our approach. Leer is situated at the confluence of the Ems and Leda rivers and covers the roads to the famous naval base at Emden (6470). The town itself is well protected by water on three sides and marshy ground on the north. Other than by boat, it could not be approached, since all bridges leading to it had been demolished. An official account of operation states:

An opposed landing was anticipated, as air photographs showed weapon slits dug along the dykes surrounding the Leer peninsula.... The Ems is a tidal river, at this point about 300-350 yards wide. The assault in storm boats could only be made during the period of "Slack Water". Suitable landing sites were only available at high tide.

(AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D,  
Docket I, folio 1; Memorandum  
No. 13, Memo of Interviews  
with Brigadier J.M. Rocking-  
ham, D.S.O., Comd 9 Cdn Inf  
Bde and other officers,  
given to Hist Offr, 3 Cdn  
Inf Div, 4 May 45; Operation  
"DUCK")

395. The hour of high and low tide were ascertained with considerable patience by the intelligence officer of S.D. & G. Highrs, who spent some twenty-four hours observing the river. H. Hour was finally set for 1500 hours 28 Apr; at that time the tide would be high and, with a certain amount of good fortune, the brigade could cross and secure the lodgment by nightfall. (Ibid)

396. The afternoon of 28 Apr was sunny and clear enough that "Our close support aircraft were able to attack Leer in the initial softening up stage". (Ibid). Then at 1425 hours the artillery programme commenced. The concentrations were fired in excellent fashion and one burst after another was seen to land along the dykes amongst the enemy's entrenchments. Added to this a "Pepper Pot" shoot, co-ordinated by Lt-Col R.M. Ross (C.O., C.H. of O. (M.G.)), saturated the assault area and did much to keep the enemy's heads below ground level. At the various embarkation points, the troops awaited the signal: once it was given the soldiers launched the boats, loaded up, and sailed off for the enemy's shore. (Ibid, also W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 28 Apr 45)

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\* Particular reference should be made to maps G.S.G.S. 4414  
1:25,000 Sheets 2810 - Weener, 2710 - Leer, 2711 - Nortmoer;  
also Appx "C".

\*\* This included support from 84 Gp R.A.F.



397. On the right the Nth N.S. Highrs attack was led by "D" Coy whose first task was to capture the long point of land guarding the approaches to Leer from the south. This crossing was no easy problem for the enemy's positions were so close that our guns and mortars could not effectively engage them. Furthermore, the artillery and mortar smoke plan on this flank could not be carried out because of the strong breezes. In order to aid his assault, therefore, the company commander employed his 2" mortars to fire smoke bombs and made arrangements with 1 C. Scot R. to have all available small arms fire brought to bear on the enemy positions. This fire, in addition to that of a platoon of machine guns of C.H. of O. (M.G.), was calculated to dominate the north bank of the Leda and thus ensure a safe passage for the attacking troops. (AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket I, Memorandum and Docket II, Account of the battle of Leer, "D" Coy No. 13, op cit, also W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 28 Apr 45). "D" Coy then was responsible for the brigade's right flank. Later, after the centre and left-hand battalions had consolidated the remainder of Nth N.S. Highrs would cross to the area east of Leerort and advance with "A", "B" and "C" Coys abreast to clear the main built-up portion of Leer. (Ibid, 27 Apr 45)

398. At H. minus five minutes, while the Allied guns hammered the outskirts of Leer, the officer commanding "D" Coy Nth N.S. Highrs waved his hand in signal and his two forward platoons each with three boats moved over the crest of the dyke. An eye-witness has said:

It was a good show to see, these boats being hauled very quickly over the dyke and along a 30 yard watery marsh and touching the water at the same time.  
(Account of the battle for Leer; op cit, 28 Apr 45)

Despite the strong current the platoons touched down without mishap and one section of each at once took up a fire position. Taken completely by surprise, the enemy was still in his slit trenches when "D" Coy charged in to capture about thirty prisoners, three machine guns intact, and various other equipments. The company commander then ordered his reserve platoon to cross. The infantry moved with enthusiasm and speed from one dugout to another, capturing more prisoners and killing those who were reluctant to give in. Within half an hour of landing "D" Coy had consolidated and had added to their booty four 20-mm guns which the enemy had sited on the dykes. (Ibid & W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 28 Apr 45)

399. In the meantime the centre and left-hand efforts of H.L.I. of C. and S.D. & G. Highrs had also met with success. H.L.I. of C., having embarked at Langeniepe (7710) in order, "D", "C" and "A" Coys sallied forth:

The power driven storm boats brought them down stream where they beached at 1515 hours. The landing was happily unopposed as the flotilla was an easy target. Unforeseen circumstances had delayed the landing, thus depriving it of the timed artillery fire plan. However, artillery and mortar fire was repeated as well as additional smoke to cover the approach. "D" Coy landed on the right, C Coy in the centre and A Coy landed on the left. B Coy assembled at 782119 from whence they were carried by storm boats to assist in consolidating and expanding the beachhead. (AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket I, Memorandum No. 13, op cit)



Opposition was not stiff and after the companies had formed up the attack continued towards the town's edge without much interference. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 28 Apr 45)

400. The S.D. & G. Highrs attacking on the left were not as lucky as the others. Assaulting with "C" Coy on the right and "A" Coy on the left, the first wave crossed successfully although the enemy "reacted with considerable violence" once the troops were on shore. The second wave ("D" Coy right, "B" left), however, was subjected to terrific fire while still on the water and three of the boats sank. One was fortunately near the river bank, but the other two, full of soldiers weighted down with battle equipment, vanished and were not seen again. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 28 Apr 45). The fighting on land was quite heavy, the enemy being especially active on the left of Lt-Col N.M. Gemmell's battalion. Nevertheless, the battle swung rapidly in favour of the Canadians and at 1630 hours the brigade commander ordered the remainder of Nth N.S. Highrs to cross the Leda River from Esklum. Within thirty minutes "A" Coy Nth N.S. Highrs was on the way over. (Account of the battle for Leer, op cit, "A" Company)

401. "A", "B" and "C" Coys of Nth N.S. Highrs had landed in succession by 1830 hours (28 Apr) and moved forward to pass through H.L.I. of C. "C" Coy on the right found the causeway to the island unguarded and quickly rushed over to clear that area. While "A" and "B" Coys pressed on north-eastwards to secure the built-up portion of the town immediately north of the island, the S.D. & G. Highrs, having edged in from the west, sent its "C" & "D" Coys directly to the north, thus safeguarding the brigade's left flank. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 29, 41; also W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs, 28 Apr 45). Late that evening, after Nth N.S. Highrs had cleared their allotted section, H.L.I. of C. was ordered to pass two companies through towards the line of the railway. At about the same time, "D" Coy of Nth N.S. Highrs (which had taken part in the first wave of the attack) relinquished its responsibility on the southern flank to join the rest of the battalion in Leer. The southern approaches were turned over to a company of C.H. of O. (M.G.). (Account of the battle for Leer, op cit, "D" Coy; also W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 28 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 43, 44)

402. Throughout the night of 28/29 Apr a great deal of confused fighting took place:

The enemy took advantage of his local knowledge and at times fought with the greatest dash and bravery. Our positions were not clearly defined and great care had to be taken to avoid shooting friendly troops.

(AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D,  
Docket I; Memorandum No. 13,  
op cit)

Lt-Col R.D. Hodgins' men soon realized that house-to-house fighting at night is a costly business; as a result of this, and because of infiltration against Nth N.S. Highrs, clearing operations were called off until daylight. (Ibid, also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log; op cit, 29 Apr 45, serial 2; also W.D., H.L.I. of C., 29 Apr 45)



403. At first light the fight was taken up once more, With snipers and isolated posts forming the main opposition, it took H.L.I. of C. until 1630 hours before the objectives along the railway line were reached. It was time again for Nth N.S. Highrs to move forward. Lt-Col D.F. Forbes' battalion went past H.L.I. of C., and (using H.L.I. of C's position as a firm base) swung to the south with its left flank along the railway to occupy the ground bounded on the east by the railway and on the south by the Leda River. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 29 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 10, 11, 23, 28)

404. The task of 9 Cdn Inf Bde in operation "DUCK" was thus accomplished. On the left S.D. & G. Highrs were firmly astride the main road leading west from Leer, and facing north. In the centre H.L.I. of C. was secure in the north-eastern portion of the town, presenting a solid northern flank, and consolidated to the east up to the railroad, was well situated to go to the north or east. On the right Nth N.S. Highrs now faced east along the track from the H.L.I. of C's right flank down to the main railway bridge over the Leda. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Apr 45). In view of the results, the costs to Brigadier Rockingham's battalions had not been overly heavy. Total casualties amounted to fifty-nine all ranks, killed, wounded and missing. (AEF: 45/9 Cdn Inf Bde, Memorandum No. 13, op cit)

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405. The build-up which was to have been carried out by ferries and rafts until the proper bridge was ready had not come up to expectations.

Two class 40 and two class 9 ferries were established across the EMS, while one class 40 was established across the LEDA. Despite untiring efforts on the part of the RCE personnel running these ferries, less was carried over than anticipated. Wind, tide, breaking approaches and engine trouble were the chief difficulties.

(Ibid)

Up until 1700 hours 29 Apr only twenty-four vehicles had been ferried over. Some storm boats capsized, including one containing a jeep. The task of ferrying the tanks proved to be most iddifficult and only three found their way to the other bank. (Ibid, para 11)

406. Like every operation of this size, the attack by 9 Cdn Inf Bde produced its valuable lessons. Two extremes appear in this operation; as the official account states: "An unopposed landing with no casualties and an opposed landing with many casualties". (Ibid). Any such marked contrast is always worth noting for future reference in the study of operations. While the first offered no lessons, the second bore examination, for some 20 soldiers had vanished into the murky depths of the Ems. All these had on life-belts and their equipment had been worn correctly so that in an emergency the man had only to unbuckle his waist belt to free himself from his heavy assault gear. It could only be presumed that many of those who perished had been struck by the enemy's fire before they reached the water. Another lesson well brought out was that in order to maintain the momentum of an attack at night in a built-up area the strictest control should be imposed; specified units must work within carefully selected boundaries and the closest liaison must prevail between adjoining units. Last, but certainly not least of all, there was the administrative factor. In any operation across a tidal river, the administrative problems must



be thoroughly appreciated. Those concerned must make a conservative estimate of the capabilities of the raft and ferry services over which the initial build-up will travel, so that the force of the attack does not lag for want of supply or close support. (Ibid, paras 13-14)

407. The capture of the town of Leer opened the way to the north. Ahead lay the towns of Emden and Aurich (8341) and the great naval base of Wilhelmshaven, but, before any complete break-out could be carried out, the bridgehead had to be enlarged to the east. Once this was done, Maj-Gen Keefer's men could turn again towards the northern coast and the Polish armour would be able to push through to Wilhelmshaven. This job of enlarging present holdings was given to 7 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid, W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Apr 45; also W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 29 Apr 45)

7 CDN INF BDE CROSSES THE LEDA RIVER, 29 APR 45\*

408. 9 Cdn Inf Bde's operation had been satisfactory enough on the morning of 29 Apr to allow Brigadier Gibson's forward battalion to start moving across the river. As the bridge was not quite ready, it was decided to get Regina Rif over by using storm boats. Lt-Col Gregory's four rifle companies were across the Leda by midday and immediately marched on to their forming up places in H.L.I. of C's area west of the railroad. (W.D., Regina Rif, 29 Apr 45). A great deal depended on the time at which the bridge would be finished; the engineers toiled continuously under severe shelling and against the changing tide until eventually at about 1900 hours the structure was ready. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 3, 6, 26, 30). Naturally the first vehicles to cross were those of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, for Brigadier Rockingham's battalions had not yet collected all their supporting arms. Then, as 7 Cdn Inf Bde War Diary relates:

The word was given to our bns to get cracking - Regina Rif vehs were first on the priority list, followed by the R. Wpg Rif and finally 1 C. Scot R. The bde less bde HQ was across by 2100 hrs.

(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Apr 45)

Meanwhile the Reginas, long settled within the town and awaiting the order to attack, had been subjected to some heavy mortaring. As the brigade's diarist notes

The only thing they could do was to dig deeper and keep ducking.

(Ibid)

409. 7 Cdn Inf Bde's attack was to start at 2130 hours, preceded by half an hour's intense artillery bombardment. The effort was to consist of four phases. In the first Regina Rif, with under command a platoon of medium machine guns (C.H. of O. (M.G.)) and supported by a troop of tanks from "C" Sqn 27 Cdn Armd Regt and a half squadron of crocodiles ("A" Sqn 141 R.A.C.), was to capture the area (beyond the railway) immediately

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\* Reference maps as for para 395. See also Appx "C".



west and south of Julianen Park (8216). In the second phase R. Wpg Rif, also with medium machine guns under command but with the added support of "A" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt, would clear along the road to Loga (8315) to secure Julianen Park and all the ground north of the road up to and including the line of the railway and as far east as the eastern edges of the small woods north of Loga (8315). In this phase the reconnaissance squadron would be used to take over and thus safeguard the northern flank along the bend of the railway after its capture by the infantry. The next phase called for the assault on Loga by 1 C. Scot R. from the R. Wpg Rif area. The last phase required R. Wpg Rif (on the northern flank) to exploit along the line of the railway and consolidate north-east of Loga while on the right the Reginas swung southwards to clear down to the banks of the Leda River. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1945, Appx 10, 7 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 2, 28 Apr 45)

410. As soon as the artillery fire plan started "B" and "C" Coys (Regina Rif) were ordered to move up to the line of the railway, which represented the battalion's start line. It seemed, however, that 9 Cdn Inf Bde had not established full control in this area, for the Reginas met unexpected opposition while still 400 yards west of the railway. "C" Coy especially was heavily engaged and it all resulted in considerable delay. Finally the situation was adjusted, enabling all four companies to move on without further interference. By 0030 hours 30 Apr Lt-Col Gregory's men had seized all their objectives. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Regina Rif, 29 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serial 54, 30 Apr 45, serial 2). The R. Wpg Rif's attack which followed at 0200 hours was equally uneventful except for some light shelling, and by 0615 hours the situation was well enough in hand to allow the Scottish to begin their assault on Loga. 1 C. Scot R. advanced at 0700 hours. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde; 1 C. Scot R., 30 Apr 45)

411. Led by "A" and "C" Coys the Scottish thrust into the rubble piles of Loga, meeting only scattered opposition but taking quite a number of prisoners. It took the troops about two and a half hours to complete a thorough sweep of the area, whereupon the battalion laid on its contact patrols and settled down to consolidate. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 30 Apr 45). Meanwhile, at Brigade Headquarters it had been appreciated that the enemy was definitely on the run and, even while 1 C. Scot R. was still mopping up in Loga, the brigade commander had ordered R. Wpg Rif to go ahead with the last phase of the operation. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 30 Apr 45). The Winnipeg's effort was most successful. Leaving the squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt to line the railway and protect the northern flank, the infantry moved, pacing the Scottish attack on Loga, and by 0930 hours were well-positioned directly north of Loga, with strong patrols probing towards Logabirum. (Ibid, also W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Apr 45)

412. At this time (0930 hours) our affairs on the left were in such good order that the Reginas were sent in to do their part of the fourth phase. This involved an attack by "B" and "D" Coys on the left and right respectively. When it began no one anticipated much opposition, according to an official account.

Information re enemy in this area was NIL, but in view of the light opposition encountered by our Bde generally, NO one, least of all the comds of either "B" or "D" Coys figured on any sort of a fight. This was to be the usual methodical check-up on houses in the area for



hidden and scared PSW. Each Coy had under comd 1 Sec of WASPS and 1 Sec of Pioneers for booby traps and mine clearing plus 1 6 pr a tk gun.

(AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F  
Docket VI, Folio 13, Battle  
Narrative 1st Bn The Regina  
Rifle Regiment, 29-30 Apr 45)

The enemy had no intention of giving up without a fight, however, and as soon as the Canadian infantry appeared met them with intense small arms fire (ibid).

413. The supporting Wasps were immediately brought into play and the initial result was satisfactory for twenty-five prisoners fell into our hands. Most of the resistance came from the barracks area (8214). There a good number of well-sited machine gunners and snipers were, so prisoners reported, ready to fight to a finish. Aided by their six-pounder anti-tank guns and by the hard-working flamethrowers, the two Regina companies fought all morning from house to house. By 1300 hours, however, most of the enemy had been either killed or captured, with the exception of one strong point. There, according to the battle narrative:

...the enemy had set up a fortress defence by manning both the basement and upstairs sandbagged windows with machine guns and PANZERFAUST. The Wasps were too vulnerable to this overhead fire to be successfully committed against this point nor could a good shot be got at it with the A. tk gun....

(Ibid)

Tanks would have proved useful at this stage but, until some arrived, improvised methods had to be adopted. The answer was soon found; PIATs were employed against the strong point at short range and the explosions of the hollow charges soon set the place afire. There was little else the enemy could do then but capitulate. One officer and thirty-four German soldiers surrendered here (ibid). This brought the total of prisoners which the Reginas had taken to over 200, making a grand total for the brigade of over five hundred prisoners. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Apr 45; 3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summaries op cit, Isum Nos 129 and 130, 2 May 45)

414. Meanwhile, as 7 Cdn Inf Bde consolidated the newly won ground east of Leer, Brigadier Rockingham's battalions had ventured northwards to enlarge the lodgment. On the left S.D. & G. Highrs moved freely up the dyke road bordering the east bank of the Ems River. The Glengarrians met no opposition but captured many prisoners. (Ibid). In this advance Lt-Col N.M. Gemmell, D.S.O., had the assistance of "B" Squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which forged on ahead during the late afternoon to see whether any good bridges existed on the northern routes. At 2000 hours the reconnaissance men reported that they were at Thedingaer Vorwerk (7819), that the road up to that point was clear of obstruction, and that all the bridges over the creeks which flowed eastwards from the river were in good repair. It is worth noting that during the move the reconnaissance men took over sixty prisoners. As night descended the infantry was ordered to remain dug in on the dyke road opposite Jemgum (7619) while the recce squadron watched the recently acquired bridges some 1500 yards further to the north. (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs,



30 Apr 45, 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 30 Apr 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit: 30 Apr 45, serial 69; also AEF: 45/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Docket VI, Special Report No. 42, Battle Narrative 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 15 Jun 45)

415. In the centre of 9 Cdn Inf Bde's sector H.L.I. of C., moving along the road to Nuttermoor (8018) since first light, was not able to report such an easy advance as its flanking neighbours. As the War Diary reads:

"A" Coy ran into the enemy in considerable strength and put on a classic demonstration of Inf and tank tactics. The Inf edged forward in front of the tanks and the armour blasted enemy posns with HE and AP.

(W.D., H.L.I. of C.,  
30 Apr 45)

However, once this opposition was cleared, there was little else to do, Lt-Col Hodgins therefore leapfrogged his sub-units along the battalion centre line and "C" Coy reached the outskirts of Nuttermoor (8018) by last light. With their task completed, H.L.I. of C. firmed up and sat tight in widely separated but well chosen company strongholds on the Leer-Nuttermoor road. (Ibid)

416. On Brigadier Rockingham's right flank the Nth N.S. Highrs spent an uneventful afternoon.

The Battalion advanced quickly meeting little opposition except for the odd sniper and schmeisser fire.

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

"C" Coy took over fifty prisoners without suffering any casualties itself while "B" Coy gathered up another fifteen. The main job was a sweep through the village of Heisfelde (8117) and the woods to the north. Accomplishing this in quick order, the unit consolidated around Heisfelde for the night. (Ibid)

#### 1 POL ARMD DIV PASSES THROUGH TO THE NORTH-EAST, 30 APR 45\*

417. Thus, by the late afternoon of 30 Apr, Maj-Gen Keebler held a lodgment area sufficiently large to allow Lt-Gen Simonds to go ahead with his plans for pushing 1 Pol Armd Div through towards the naval base at Wilhelmshaven. The opportunity for large-scale exploitation had arrived and the Commander of 2 Cdn Corps did not lose time in seizing it. Lt-Gen Simonds now ordered Maj-Gen Maczek to pass one of his Polish battle groups through the newly won bridgehead to thrust north-eastwards towards the German naval bastion. At the same time he directed that 3 Cdn Inf Div continue the advance on Emden and Aurich. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 30 Apr 45, 2 Cdn Corps Weekly Summary of Ops, op cit, 29 Apr - 5 May 45). 10 Pol Armd Bde Gp crossed the Leda River at about midday (30 Apr). 2 Pol Armd Regt led the way and by nightfall had its forward elements astride the road (8719) north-east of Brunn (8618). At that time 1 Pol Armd Regt was at Logabirum awaiting its turn to advance.

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\* Reference maps as for para 395.



Maj-Gen Maczek's infantry was still heavily committed in the regions of Bollingen (9604) and Stickhausen (9313). (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 1 May 45, serial 2; also AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/H; Docket III, 2 Cdn Corps Sitreps, May 1945 - Sitrep No. 600, dated 0102245B)

THE ADVANCE ON EMDEN AND AURICH BY 3 CDN INF DIV,  
1-4 MAY 45\*

418. Having allowed the Polish armoured brigade group to pass through on 30 Apr, 3 Cdn Inf Div was about to take up a new task. On the morning of 1 May 9 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to establish itself in the area Terborg (7722) - Veenhusen (8121) by last light and to clear the community of Neermoor (8023), if time permitted, on that day. At that time 7 Cdn Inf Bde was continuing the process of firming up in the vicinity of Loga (8315) while Brigadier J.A. Roberts' battalions still remained in concentration west of the Ems River. Traffic having become very heavy over the bridge south of Leer, it did not seem possible that Maj-Gen Keebler's entire formation would be able to concentrate for its advance on Emden and Aurich until the engineers of 2 Cdn Corps finished their work on the long bridge west of Leer. The completion of this structure was expected to take place at 2359 hours 1 May. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/H; Docket V, Liaison Officers Reports, May 1945, G. Ops 2 Cdn Corps; 011000B, para 5)

419. Throughout 1 May 9 Cdn Inf Bde did little except patrol northward, it was a tedious business for the enemy had cratered the roads in numerous places and distributed his mines carefully. Nevertheless, the infantrymen went about the task of finding new routes and collecting the odd German straggler. At the end of the day all three units had made good advances to occupy Terborg (7622) with S.D. & G. Highrs, Neermoor (8027) with N.S. Highrs, and Veenhusen (8021) with H.L.I. of C. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 1 May 45). New orders were then issued; the brigade was to form mobile groups consisting of infantry, engineers, tanks and reconnaissance elements, and would strike northwards to open the routes to Aurich and Emden. (Ibid)

420. Of the other two brigades, only Brigadier Gibson's men had been busy. Their activities were mainly due to the fact that the Poles had passed on through to the north-east and reached the towns of Hesel (9023) and Holtland (8920) without much trouble. (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, 1 May 45, serials 11, 13). The corps commander felt that these areas must now be taken over at the earliest moment in order to free the Poles for further advances; as a result Maj-Gen Keebler was ordered to move some of his troops to relieve Maj-Gen Maczek's men north of Hesel (9023). This task fell to R. Wpg Rif, which was already widely deployed near Loga after taking over some of 1 C. Scot R.'s area when that unit had moved into 9 Cdn Inf Bde's sector north of Leer. Nevertheless during the late afternoon R. Wpg Rif and one squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt set out to occupy Holtland (8920) and Brinkum (8819). The Loga sector passed to the control of C.H. of O. (M.G.), who had on previous occasions demonstrated

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland - Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2610 - Neermoor, 2611 - Hesel, 2510 - Aurich, 2710 - Leer, 2711 - Nortmoor, 2511 Holtrop; also Appx "C".



their ability to carry out a plain infantry role as efficiently as their normal one. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, C.H. of O. (M.G.), 1 May 45). The "Winnipegs" groups were in position at Holtland and Brinkum (8819) by 1900 hours and half an hour later N. Shore R., who had come under Brigadier Gibson's command earlier, reported that it was in occupation at Hesel (9023). (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, R. Wpg Rif, N. Shore R., 1 May 45). Meanwhile the Reginas, who had been sent west to take over the areas vacated by 9 Cdn Inf Bde, had settled at Nuttermoor (7918) with "A" Sqn 7 Cdn Recce Regt and 4 Cdn A.Tk Bty in attendance on the flanks left open by Brigadier Rockingham's advance. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, and Regina Rif, 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 1 May 45)

421. The readjustments in position, however, were but a prelude to more important events, and on the evening of 1 May fresh orders were issued to 3 Cdn Inf Div. The advance on Emden and Aurich was about to begin. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 May 45). Simultaneous with the news of a fresh task came other news of a startling yet joyous nature when the troops heard the B.B.C. announcer tell the world that Adolph Hitler was dead. To weary men who must go ahead on the morrow and again face death this news gave more than a little encouragement, for it meant that the end of the war might well be very close. (*Ibid*)

422. The details for the continuation of the advance were given out to the brigades on the evening of 1 May. The intention, as stated by Maj-Gen Keefler's headquarters, was to capture Aurich. The task was to be carried out in three phases. In the first, while 7 Cdn Inf Bde concentrated in the large woods (9223) east of Hesel, 8 Cdn Inf Bde would occupy the areas of Mitte-Grossefehn (8833), Schirum (8538) and Holtrop (8837). At the same time Brigadier Rockingham's battalions would sweep forward on the left to establish a battalion group around Oldersum (7325) - Tergast (7527) and secure the line Oldersum (7325) - Simonswolde (7730) - road junction (8038). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, May 1945, Appx 2, 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 9, 2 May 45; also W.Ds., H.Q. 7, 8, 9 Cdn Inf Bdes and units, 1-2 May 45). In the second phase 7 Cdn Inf Bde would move through 8 Bde to settle in the area north-east of Aurich; here Brigadier Gibson's troops were to prepare for a direct assault on the divisional objective. At the same time 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to cut the Aurich-Emden road and secure the brigade's flanks. On the left 9 Cdn Inf Bde would conform by pivoting on Oldersum (7325) and swinging its right nearer to Emden. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Instr No. 9, 2 May 45, *op cit*, para 4)

423. The second phase is worth noting for its careful allotment of supporting arms. It called for the special employment of C.H. of O. (M.G.), 3 Cdn A.Tk Regt, and part of 7 Cdn Recce Regt. One medium machine gun company was placed in support of 9 Bde and another under command of the divisional anti-tank unit. Each of 7 and 9 Brigades had a heavy mortar platoon to assist it; Brigadier Roberts' formation had two heavy mortar platoons. The remainder of C.H. of O. (M.G.) (with an anti-tank battery under command) had the task of maintaining a right flank guard while, beyond this outpost line to the east and north, 7 Cdn Recce Regt would move along, destroying any enemy driven northwards from Aurich. In the third phase 7 Cdn Inf Bde was to capture Aurich; 8 Bde would seal off the routes westwards from the town while 9 Cdn Inf Bde moved up on the left to screen Emden. For this phase each brigade was allotted one squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt. "A" Sqn of 141 R.A.C. (flame-thrower "crocodiles") would support the brigade. (*Ibid*)



424. In 8 Cdn Inf Bde's sector the activity on 2 May was mainly confined to N. Shore R.'s advance, which began at about 1130 hours. The commanding officer had already sent his carriers and elements of 7 Cdn Recce Regt to find a route over the badly cratered roads. At 1200 hours the leading company ("B") contacted the reconnaissance unit at the bridge (915276) south of Bagband (9128). A bridgehead was quickly established by "B" Coy, which went on into the village, surprisingly enough, with hardly a shot being fired. The other companies followed with all possible speed and by 1600 hours the battalion was firm on all its objectives around the road junction at Bagband. In all, N. Shore R. took twenty-four prisoners. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serial 20; W.D., N. Shore R., 2 May 45). In their newly won positions the New Brunswick men waited for R. de Chaud to pass through. Meanwhile, far to the right, Lt-Col C.A. Baerman's reconnaissance cars had reached Neudorf (0127). (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serial 60)

425. R. de Chaud's first sub-units ("A" and "B" Coys) went through the small town of Bagband (9128) at 2115 hours 2 May. The advance was not hindered in any way and within five hours the entire battalion was consolidating at Ulbargen (8931). (Ibid, serial 62, 3 May 45, serial 4). All this time Q.O.R. of C. had remained concentrated at Hesel (9023) awaiting the orders to proceed northward. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 2 May 45). Probably the best effort on this sector was made by 7 Cdn Recce Regt, whose "A" Sqn was in support of 8 Cdn Inf Bde. By noon on 2 May the squadron had cleared Firrel (9426) and Schwerinsdorf (9524) and secured the bridge (9127) over which the N. Shore R. had travelled to Bagband, besides aiding the infantry in its sweep through Bagband (9128). (7 Cdn Recce Regt Special Report No. 42, op cit, entry for 2 May 45)

426. Over on the left flank, "B" Sqn working with 9 Cdn Inf Bde was similarly active. In conjunction with strong patrols from the highland battalions, the areas of Hatshausen (8329), Oldersum (7426) and Rorichum (7625) were all explored, but little was to be seen of the enemy. Contact was made with Brigadier Roberts' men on the right early in the afternoon. (Ibid, also W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 2 May 45). By the end of the day, 9 Cdn Inf Bde had H.L.I. of C. strung out between Veenhusen (8121) and the main crossroads (8525) in Bock-Zeteler-Fehn (8426-8525). Nth N.S. Highrs were then deployed along the road Neermoor (8023) - Hatshausen (8329), meanwhile S.D. & G. Highrs had advanced its forward line of troops to the village Rorichum (7425). (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, May 1945, op cit, 2 May serial 69)

427. The following morning was marked by a single surprise (although of short duration) when a group of the enemy sallied forth to counter-attack S.D. & G. Highrs. The attack came in after a short mortar bombardment and was supported by concentrated machine gun fire. For a brief time the area was thick with shot and shell. The Canadian gunners, however, played havoc with the German infantry, which soon withdrew, leaving behind twelve prisoners and many dead. One of these prisoners stated that the attacking force, which was 130 strong, had moved to the battle from Tergast (7526). (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, May 1945, op cit, 3 May 45, serial 27; also W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 3 May 45). Although by mid-morning the front had quietened considerably, there were no prospects of any rest for the highlanders as new instructions called for the continuation of the advance northward. Nth N.S. Highrs were to take Timmel (8630); H.L.I. of C. were to pass through and cut eastwards to seize Ihlowerfehn (7934). Once H.L.I. of C. were firm there, Nth N.S. Highrs would take up the task and press on to capture



Riepe (7433). Meanwhile S.D. & G. Highrs would occupy Tergast (7526) and Oldersum (7326) in turn. (3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, serial 27, as above)

428. During the afternoon Nth N.S. Highrs moved forward and crossed the canal south of Timmel (8530) without interference. By 1640 hours tow companies were in the village and the following report was sent to Maj-Gen Keebler's headquarters.

Two coys in TIMMEL and two coys crossing canal at 8429. Leading coy is well into the town and second coy is about to go through to centre of town.... many felled trees and craters along rd to TIMMEL delayed progress but are being cleared now.

(3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, May 1945, op cit, 3 May 45, serial 42)

At this time the leading companies of H.L.I. of C. were moving up to pass on once the North Novas were secure in the new position. S.D. & G. Highrs, still being heavily shelled in Rorichum (7425), had not changed positions. (Ibid)

429. Further to the east 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been well occupied and showed substantial gains for its efforts. N. Shore R., having seized Strackholt (9330), passed control of this area into the capable hands of 52 Cdn A.Tk Bty and returned to concentrate in Bagband (9128), where Q.O.R. of C. had recently arrived in preparation for their attack through R. de Chaud's positions at Ulbargen (8931). (Ibid, 3 May 45, serials 20, 31, 35, 40). Lt-Col S.M. Lett's responsibility included the clearance of Ostersander (8536) and Holtrop (8837), the line between these two places being the start line for 7 Cdn Inf Bde's assault on Aurich. The Queen's Own moved its "D" Coy over the battalion's start line at 1815 hours; it got as far as the bend in the road (886347) above Mitte-Grossefehn (8933) before the enemy decided to react. Here, according to an official account:

The leading platoon was pinned down by MG and SA fire from both flanks. The flat terrain afforded no cover and the coy was forced to remain in this position and neutralize the enemy by fire.

(AEF: 45/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II - folio I, Day by day account of operations, Q.O.R. of C., 3 May 45)

The battalion commander immediately called for artillery and mortar support to cover his men while they dug in. No further move forward was to be made until well after dark. (Ibid)

430. Shortly after midnight Q.O.R. of C. moved on once more, this time without trouble, for it appeared that the enemy had withdrawn completely. Ostersander (8536) was entered and patrols were dispatched towards Holtrop (8837). As the day passed N. Shore R. was brought up to Ostersander (8536), whence company groups travelled south-westwards to Westersander (8435) and north towards Schirum (8538). (Ibid, also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, May 1945; 4 May 45, serials 3, 19, 37). Meanwhile, on the left, R. de Chaud had eased its way forward from Ulbargen (8931) to the next community along the main road, at the same time maintaining contact with 9 Cdn Inf Bde troops north of Timmel (8530). The situation in Brigadier Rockingham's sector



had not altered much; the highland troops were secure around Timmel (8530), still holding the region of Neermoor (8023) and probing the approaches to Tergast (7527) on the extreme left. Here, in the area occupied by S.D. & G. Highrs, the shelling, which had been so heavy for the past two days, had lessened considerably. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 4 May 45; also First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports; op cit, May 1945, 502 (L) 2 Cdn Corps 041330B, para 4)

431. For 7 Cdn Inf Bde the past forty-eight hours had been quite uneventful. The rifle brigade moved into Staatsforst Friedeburg on 3 May and remained there until 1500 hours on the following day. At that time receiving an order to move, R. Wpg Rif travelled on to Holtrop (8837) and Regina Rif to Wrisse (9037) while 1 C. Scot R. took over Aurich-Oldendorf (9135). (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 and 4 May 45)

432. These last days had also been ones of furious activity for the divisional reconnaissance unit; its scout cars could be seen on every side road or track, guarding the infantry's flank or probing the opposition, securing a bridge here and there or guarding a vital point. On 3 May 7 Cdn Recce Regt ("A" Sqn) in helping the Polish troops on the far right overran two prisoner of war camps near Auricher Wiesmoor II (9733). Then on 4 May "A" Sqn occupied Wiesmoor (9935) and took twenty prisoners. Later, on approaching the bridge (9840) south of Wieseder-Meer (9942), one patrol of the reconnaissance men had the bridge blown up "in their faces", yet another patrol collected thirty-seven more prisoners. "A" Sqn had by 1530 hours on 4 May not only thoroughly swept Maj-Gen Keefer's right flank but had good observation over a length of the Ems-Jade canal (from 8839 to 9440 to 0033). On the left the Sqn had been equally active in maintaining a firm reconnaissance line some distance south of Schirum (8538) - Ludwigsdorf (8135). (7 Cdn Recce Regt - Special Report No. 42, op cit; also W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 3-4 May 45; also 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, May 1945, op cit; 3 May, serial 58; 4 May, serials 18, 20, 25, 40)

433. Despite the fact that 3 Cdn Inf Div was fully prepared to carry out its operations against Aurich and Emden, there were signs by the evening of 3 May that our troops might be spared any further action. It all began when German civilian representatives in Aurich sent an envoy to 8 Cdn Inf Bde headquarters with the request that it be declared an open town.

At 2300 hours a German schoolmaster accompanied by a German Red Cross worker arrived in the R de Chaud lines and asked to be taken to the comdr. to discuss the poss surrender of AURICH, MR 8341 Sheet 2510. Lt COL Taschereau brought them to this HQ where they met Brig J.A. Roberts. The civilian stated that the civilian population and about 90% of the soldiers in the area were willing to surrender but that the military authorities would not allow it. Brig J.A. Roberts decided that as it was an entirely military matter concerning surrender there was nothing that he could do about it unless the military comd personally agreed.

(W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 May 45)

Brigadier Roberts also informed the civilian envoy that he would cease offensive action against Aurich until 1200 hours 4 May; furthermore, he suggested that the mayor persuade the military authorities to surrender.



It was agreed that if the plan was successful a military representation would come out of AURICH under a white flag before 1200 hrs to meet the Brig Comd who would then accompany them back into the town to discuss the terms of surrender with the military comd. The civ agreed to try and put the plan into effect.

(Ibid)

It has been seen, however, that the movement of the Canadian troops forward was not stopped altogether. The battalions of both 8 and 7 Brigades kept edging northward so that if Aurich did not put up the white flag they would be in a position to carry through their threat of a concentrated assault. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes and units, 4 May 45)

# 1 POL ARMD DIV'S OPERATIONS, 29 Apr - 4 May 45\*

434. Once Maj-Gen Maczek had passed the responsibility of the sector Holtland-Hesel to 3 Cdn Inf Div, the Polish commander turned his attention to his new task of pushing on with all possible speed towards Wilhemshaven. By that time, on the right, 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp had entered Stickhausen (9313) from the south and gone on eastwards to secure Detern (9512) (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, May 1945; 1 May 45, serials 2, 11, 13, 18, 2 May 45, serial 5). A little later it was reported that the Polish armoured reconnaissance regiment, working ahead of 10 Pol Armd Bde's main northern thrust, had reached the village of Remels (0123) after a perilous journey over cratered roads and around prepared demolitions at the several bridge-sites along the route. (Ibid, also 1 May, serial 20). On the morning of 2 May, while 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp sent strong patrols northwards from Detern (9512) and eastwards to Bokel (0013), the armoured group (on the northern flank) regrouped behind its armoured reconnaissance screen, which reported some of its troops as far forward as Meiners-fehn (0724) and past Grossander (0422). (Ibid, 2 May 45, serial 22). There was little activity on the Polish sector for the remainder of the day. Obstacles of various types and sizes abounded on the routes, and it was at one of these that the armoured reconnaissance unit lost five tanks to a well concealed anti-tank gun firing from the flank. To the south around Bokel (0013) the infantry group was occupied in overrunning the rapidly weakening opposition. (Ibid, 3 May 45, serial 5)

435. By 1000 hours on 3 May, Bokel (0013) was clear; most of the craters on the road through the place had been filled by the energetic Polish engineers and two companies of infantry were firm in the village. (Ibid, 3 May 45, serial 12). Further to the north-east opposition was disappearing fast. The Polish motor battalion supported by tanks of 2 Pol Armd Regt reached the larger centre at Westerstede (1218) during the afternoon and later contacted a patrol of the Royal Canadian Dragoons.\*\*

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland - Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2711 - Nortmoor, 2712 - Apen, 2812 - Barssel, 2713 - Westerstede, 2612 - Remels, 2611 - Hesel, 2613 - Neuenburg; also Appx "E".

\*\* 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt operating with 2 Cdn Armd Bde under command 4 Cdn Armd Div.



Another contact was established later in the evening by 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp with troops of 4 Cdn Armd Div south of Apen (0413). As darkness descended other gains were reported. 1 Pol Armd Regt entered Halsbek (1224) and took up defensive positions there while one of its squadrons swung first south-eastwards then to the north to occupy the area of Bredehorn (1526). (Ibid, 3 May 45, serials 24, 26; 4 May 45, serial 6)

436. Maj-Gen Maczek's sector was clearly not one of choice for an armoured division. There was not an adequate amount of ground solid enough for armoured manoeuvre and the roads began to disappear fast under the weight of the heavy tanks. By the evening of 3 May all engineer resources of the division had been put to work on the roads to recondition them so that the tanks might pass on to the east. (First Cdn Army Liaison Offrs Reports, op cit, May 1945; 031700B, SO 2, Liaison, 2 Cdn Corps). The intention then was to establish a firm base of operations at Westerstede (1218) with 3 Pol Inf Bde Gp and to pass the rest of the armour through Moorbург to the north-west. (ibid).

437. The night of 3/4 May was taken up by a series of re-groupings and concentrations. It has been seen that Maj-Gen Maczek's right flank was now secure for some distance ahead, the contacts made with 4 Cdn Armd Div proved that; and this implied that the Poles would now shift the weight of their attack northwards. Bridges on the main roads were speedily erected over the craters and the Polish field artillery regiments brought forward into a gun area between Eggeloge (1323) and Grafenfeld (1523) (2 Cdn Corps Ops Log, op cit, May 1945; 5 May 45, serial 6). Meanwhile 10 Pol Armd Recce Regt plodded on up the main road past the road junction (1528) south of Grabstederfeld (1629), but only to be stopped by a group of Germans who were in well dug positions south of Linderner Busch (1530). The armoured brigade group attempted vigorously to overcome this resistance, but the craters and other obstacles proved too much for the unwieldy tanks. As in many other instances in the past, the offensive was held up while additional artillery support was brought up to blast a way through. This took up considerable time but, by the night of 4 May, 11 Cdn Army Fd Regt, 53 Pol Med Regt and 1 Cdn Med Regt had arrived to participate in the attack. (Ibid). In preparation for his fresh thrust, Maj-Gen Maczek<sup>x</sup> ordered an extensive programme of patrolling. While this was being carried out, however, important messages began to arrive at the Polish and other headquarters indicating that the guns and tanks might be robbed of a last chance to engage the old enemy (ibid). (AEF: 45/2 Cdn Corps/C/F Docket I, Folio 3, 2 Cdn Corps Summary of Ops and Activities, 29 Apr - 5 May 45)

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\* Maj-Gen K. Rudnicki had (since 2 May) been appointed to command 1 Pol Armd Div and Maj-Gen Maczek had been appointed to command a Polish Corps. This change did not take place however until much later. (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., 2 May 45)



OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 20 APR - 4 MAY 45\*

The Enlargement of the Kusten Bridgehead  
by 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20-24 Apr 45

438. The enemy's efforts thus far had been characterized by determined resistance and a skilfully coordinated defence on ground which was completely unfavourable for armoured attack. Relying largely upon mined roads and demolished bridges to slow down the Canadian advance, the Germans had succeeded (in such places as Garrel and Friesoythe (0891)) in forcing Maj-Gen Vokes' men to deploy fully and participate in pitched battle. Now, in the compressed bridgehead over the Kusten Canal, 4 Cdn Armd Div again found itself facing savage opposition backed by the same sort of defences, demolitions, craters and ground, beyond which every yard gained must be paid for very dearly. (AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket I, Folio 4; Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities of 4 Cdn Armd Div, 14-21 Apr 45). The enemy had organized his order of battle with keen intent. Following the capture of Friesoythe (0891) the fanatical parachute units had been relieved by an assortment of Marine battalions. These, the enemy calculated, would serve as a cushion for our first penetration beyond the Kusten canal. The marines had more than served the purpose; not only had they acted as the cushion, they also had been used as a battering ram in the first attempts to expel us from the Kusten bridgehead while the tougher paratroops regrouped further back. By the morning of 20 Apr, however, the Marines had received a great deal more punishment than had been intended for them in their battle inoculation and both 20 and 21 Para Regts were placed once more in the front line (ibid).

439. By the early hours of 20 Apr, the situation of 10 Cdn Inf Bde, which had so recently been close to desperate, had improved. Alq R. held firm at the base of the bridgehead, A. & S.H. of C., though extended along the left flank, were ready to push on northwards, while the Line & Welld R., which had been brought in originally to secure the line of the railway on the right, had not only established a strong flank facing east but had also passed some of its companies straight up the main road to clear several road and track junctions (141999 - 142002). (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 19-20 Apr 45). Added to this, the bridge over the canal, though under fairly heavy shell fire which rendered it useless for a time, was complete. Over it, at varying intervals, had passed most of the fighting vehicles of the three infantry battalions beside the supporting tanks of "B" Sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt. (Ibid, also W.D., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 19-20 Apr 45; also W.D., H.Q. R.C.E., 4 Cdn Armd Div, 20 Apr 45)

440. Throughout 20 Apr Line & Welld R. had A. & S.H. of C. moved forward slowly over the soggy fields and cratered roads. On the right flank the railway track was ripped up to create a suitable line of advance for the advancing armour. Lt-Col Coleman's troops began to move forward at 1100 hours with air support from a Typhoon "cab rank" and under cover of an artillery barrage as well as concentrations from 4.2 and 3-inch mortars. "B" Coy led the way up the main road and reached the

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\* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000  
Sheets 2913 - Friesoythe, 2914 - Littel,  
2915 - Wardenburg, 2813 - Edeweicht, 2814 -  
Bad Zwischenahn, 2815 - Oldenburg; also  
Appx "D" and "E".



road (and lane) junction (148017) without much trouble. "C" Coy then went on to try to force a way across the Vehne stream. At this stage, however, the main advance of Linc & Welld R. stopped, for large craters on the centre line blocked further progress. Patrols were sent on and later in the day reached the shallow river over which the road passed, but finding the enemy's fire too heavy, they were forced to pull back into the battalion area. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 20 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II, Folio 5, Operations of the Linc & Welld R., 31 Mar - 6 May 45, by Lt-Col R.C. Coleman)

441. Over on the left A. & S.H. of C. (Lt-Col A.F. Coffin) had been plodding through the soggy flat land since about midday. At that time "B" and "C" Coys took advantage of the aerial "cab rank" overhead and the flanking thrust northwards by Linc & Welld R. to gain fresh ground. The going both for infantry and armour was most difficult; the two leading rifle companies reached the area of the crossroads (134013) but there the enemy's fire forced them to deploy and hold. Lt-Col Coffin now ordered his other sub-units to get on. "A" Coy pushed ahead to the banks of the Aue river south of Osterscheps (1402) and "D" Coy managed to secure a good flank position some 500 yards further to the south-west. Fortunately, the supporting tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt, by this late hour, had succeeded in working their way forward to help the men on the ground. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C. and 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 20 Apr 45)

442. Back at Brigade headquarters, Brigadier Jefferson appreciated that after the day's aerial effort the front would soften up considerably. He therefore issued instructions to A. & S.H. of C. to get across the water obstacle before first light and capture Osterscheps (1402); at the same time he ordered Lt-Col Coleman to press on. In order to make fuller use of the infantry at present north of the canal, the brigadier was now given several troops of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt (under command) to take over the exposed flanks as the next phase of the operations progressed. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 20 Apr 45)

443. On 19 Apr the divisional anti-tank regiment was made responsible for both flanks of the bridgehead.

The 3rd and 65th Batteries crossed, taking two guns each, and deployed as infantry on the left and right respectively, each relieving a weary infantry battalion and covering a front of about 1000 yards.

(The History of the 5th  
Canadian Anti-Tank Regt,  
p. 65)

A similar role was given to 96 A.Tk Bty on 20 Apr. (Ibid)

444. During the night 20/21 Apr all three battalions were heavily shelled and mortared. Naturally enough, our own guns, mortars, and medium machine guns were kept busy on H.F. tasks covering all probable approaches into the Canadian line, and this covering fire enabled the units to carry out certain readjustments of position in preparation for the continuation of the advance. (W.Ds., 15 Cdn Fd Regt, 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy and units to 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 20-21 Apr 45). It was the Argyles' turn to move forward and shortly after first light "Jock"\* patrols

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\* A familiar term meaning Highlander, used within the Highland Regiments.



began to edge up to the south bank of the water obstacle. The enemy was fully alive to the threat on this flank, however, and plastered the area of the demolished bridge severely throughout the morning of 21 Apr. Lt-Col Coffin's first attempt to cross with "A" Coy at 1500 hours was driven back by a murderous cross-fire, but the second try was successful. At 1615 hours "B" Coy got over the river and consolidated a small bridgehead around the old bridgesite. Lt-Col Coffin then ordered "A" Coy to follow "B". This proved to be anything but easy, according to the unit War Diary.

"A" Company came under a terrific enemy barrage and suffered very heavy casualties before establishing themselves on the other side.

(W.D., A. & S.H. of C.,  
21 Apr 45)

445. Despite this opposition, by 1825 hours all four companies were across the stream, and a little later "D" Coy reported that it was in the southern part of Osterscheps (1402). (Ibid, also AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/H, Docket I, Ops Log, April 1945, 21 Apr 45, serials 36, 38, 46). The German guns and mortars obviously had this area well registered and the Canadians lost a good many men in the inferno of shell fire which descended on them. Because of this, and because his troops were already over-extended, thus leaving a wide open left flank, the commanding officer requested "D" Coy to withdraw to form a tighter battalion position. Before this order could be carried out, however, the inevitable happened - the enemy counter-attacked. A fierce fight followed in which the Argyle company commander, Major W.J. Whiteside, was severely wounded together with several of his men. "D" Coy nevertheless succeeded in beating off the enemy's attack and in falling back according to instructions (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 21 Apr 45)

446. For both Linc & Welld R. and Alq R. 21 Apr provided a certain amount of disappointment. Linc & Welld R., held up on the main road because of a large crater, had to wait until the engineers bridged it. Once this was done "C" Coy settled itself south of the bridge (153023) and patrolled forward to recce the crossing place. Several of these attempts were not only unsuccessful but very costly as the enemy ceaselessly shelled and mortared the bridge site. Added to this, numerous well-sited machine guns and the odd self-propelled gun kept the road well covered. It was not until mid-afternoon that patrols were able to reach the bridge, which they reported blown. Meanwhile the German missiles continued to rain down on the area, thus preventing any further movement forward. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 21 Apr 45). The only moves made by Alq R. (ordered by brigade headquarters to ensure the security of the bridgehead) took place without incident. "C" and "D" Coys, with attendant portions of the New Brunswick Rangers (10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy) and 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, took positions along the line of the railway on the right flank. The regiment's other company positions at the base of the bridgehead on the centre line remained unchanged. (W.Ds., Alq R., 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy, 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, 21 Apr 45)

447. By the morning of 22 Apr it appeared that the enemy had withdrawn some of his troops, and so the Argyles were able to get onto their objectives without interference. All four rifle companies made good gains. The bridge over the river was completed, allowing the battalion's vehicles to join the troops in the bridgehead. The responsibility for the bridgesite now