

two more were knocked out by enemy S.P. guns; and the River Ausa was found to be a tank obstacle. The attack bogged down as both P.P.C.L.I. and Carlt & York R. casualties mounted in the flat ground overlooked by all the forces on S. Fortunato and S. Martino, and with determined enemy dug in across the Ausa. At 1500 hours arrangements had been made at brigade level for a Carlt & York attack across the river, but the officer commanding Carlt & York R., in view of the enemy's fire and his own casualties, considered that a daylight attack across the River Ausa by one battalion would be suicidal both to the infantry and to the Engineers who would have to prepare the crossings^A. Lt-Col Bogert agreed with this opinion, so instead a night attack (18/19 Sep) was planned. (3 Cdn Inf Bde: "OLIVE"). As a result of the lack of progress the forward move of the two L. Edm R. reserve companies was cancelled shortly after noon, and they stood fast in the area behind S. Lorenzo.

246. At 1800 hours, 18 Sep, the G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div held a conference at which orders for re-grouping and subsequent operations were given. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was assigned a temporary holding role, and 3 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to establish a bridgehead across the River Ausa and exploit north to capture the S. Fortunato objective. For this attack Hast & P.E.R. returned to its parent formation from under command 3 Cdn Inf Bde. (See para 238). Supporting tanks were 48 R.T.R. On the same night (18/19 Sep) 4 (Brit) Div on the Corps left were to attack across the Ausa to the S. Aquilina feature (See para 233). It was hoped that the double thrust might have the effect of diverting some of the enemy's artillery and mortar fire.

247. The acting Brigade Commander, Lt-Col Bogert, divided the attack into three phases. Phase I was the establishment of a bridgehead across the River Ausa by Carlt & York R. and the construction of wheel and track crossings. The bridgehead planned was shallow and about 700 yards long, directly opposite Belvedere and S. Fortunato (from 846935 to 842929). H Hour was set at 2130 hours. In the second phase Hast & P.E.R. right and West N.S.R.^{XX} were to secure the bridgehead and advance to final objectives - respectively Covignano and Palazzo Paradiso (the highest point of the feature). It was estimated that 0500 hours 19 Sep was a possible time for the initial advance from the bridgehead, but should the break-out be delayed after that hour, a smoke screen was to come down on the feature to blind the enemy. It was highly important to gain the foot of S. Fortunato ridge before daybreak, as to be caught in the flats would prove extremely costly. In Phase II R. 22e R. would move up on the left of West N.S.R., and then all battalions would exploit northwards from their objectives up to a distance of 1000 yards. (Ibid: Appx "C")

248. The advance of Carlt & York began at 2130 hours and continued successfully against little opposition from machine-gun fire, though shelling was fairly heavy and enemy tanks could be heard milling around. The river was crossed at midnight and by 0115 hours, 19 Sep, two companies had established a bridgehead and a tank crossing was in preparation. A fascine was placed in a small ditch near the River, Ausa and an Ark in the Ausa itself. Sherman bulldozers prepared the necessary approach; the task was completed

^A A statement in the 1 Cdn Corps report on which the British narrative is based incorrectly places Carlt & York across the Ausa by 1100 hours on 18 Sep. (1 Canadian Corps Operations, p.17)

^{XX} West N.S.R. were now commanded by Major F.E. Hiltz. Lt-Col R.S.E. Waterman, D.S.O. vacated active command on 17 Sep. (West N.S.R.: "OLIVE")

by 0345 hours. (1 Cdn Inf Div R.C.E., 3 Cdn Inf Bde: "OLIVE"). At 0150 hours Hast & P.E.R. and West N.S.R. were ordered to advance to their F.U.Ps. behind River Ausa and 0400 hours was fixed as the time for them to cross the start line (railway) in Phase II of the brigade operation.

249. Both battalions crossed the railway at the appointed time, and by 0550 hours the two supporting squadrons of 48 R.T.R. were across the river. The infantry moved forward without too great difficulty but against increasing shelling, mortaring and machine-gun fire, and by 0600 hours were reported at the main lateral road 1000 yards beyond the Ausa, and therefore almost at the base of the S. Fortunato feature, now swathed in the smoke of battle and under bombardment by our guns and light bombers. By 0630 hours - the time set for the crossing of the lateral road and the advance to the heights - all forward companies were in contact with the enemy and under intense shellfire. Every attempt at movement forward brought down a hail of fire. West N.S.R. on the left made repeated attempts but at best got only 300 yards beyond the lateral road. By evening they were back at this road from which they had started in the morning.

250. On the right Hast & P.E.R. were also, after 0630 hours, under heavy small arms fire and mortaring and could make little progress. An extensive and dense smoke screen on their right gave them some protection and assisted in a re-grouping for a revised attack at 1030 hours. A company moved off with tanks and did a very good job of clearing an important road junction (839953) half way up the feature and 400 yards north-east of the battalion objective; on the way they took some 60 P.W. Advancing from this road junction up to Covignano, the infantry were stopped completely by withering machine-gun fire from their flanks when about 200 yards from the objective. They consolidated at noon in the area of the road junction, where they could effectively engage enemy positions on the feature with small arms fire. Forward elements of the Hast & P.E.R. company on the left, starting from the lateral road at the base of the feature, reached the next and higher road 350 yards south-west of Covignano and below it they too were stopped by fire from Covignano and S. Fortunato. By this time only three tanks were in operation, and they were low in ammunition. At 1500 hours the battalion was consolidated in the positions then held. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D; Account of Lt-Col D.C. Cameron). The 3 Cdn Inf Bde attack had thus only limited success. Any forward move in daylight brought down immediate enemy concentrations of shells and mortar bombs. Fresh infantry fresh tanks, a renewed artillery programme and - above all - darkness were needed in order to make a final successful assault.

251. Some progress had been made on the right in the 1 Cdn Inf Bde and 3 Gk Mtn Bde area. A 48 Highr patrol entered S. Martino on the night 18/19 Sep, to find that the enemy had withdrawn. A company was sent in to occupy it. (1 Cdn Inf Div Ops Message Log, Serial 459, 19 Sep 44). Thus was brought to an end an unhappy chapter in the division's story. With the coming of daylight the 48 Highrs could look around them without triumph on blasted houses, scorched and tortured vines and olive trees, down a bare slope to the graves or still forms of Canadians and Germans; and look west to the flat valley of the River Ausa and the haze of S. Fortunato now being fought for so desperately. Other elements of 48 Highrs moved forward a mile north-west of S. Martino, encountering only accurate shelling on the road. 3 Bn of 3 Gk Mtn Bde took over the forward positions of R.C.R. (who were ordered back to the S. Martino area); 2 Bn moved along the coastal sector a mile forward of the airfield against only sporadic mortaring and machine-gun fire. By 1700 hours, 19 Sep, 3 Bn advancing west of Route 16, were one and a half miles north of the airfield. The whole sector was reasonably quiet. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Corps/C/F: Hist Offr's Daily Summary, 19 Sep 44)

THE CAPTURE OF S. FORTUNATO, 19-20 SEP

252. At 1600 hours, 19 Sep, the G.O.C. 1 Cdn Div held a conference and ordered 3 Cdn Inf Bde to exploit the success of Hast & P.E.R. regardless of the progress of West N.S.R.* 2 Cdn Inf Bde were directed to make a night infiltration on the southern knolls of the S. Fortunato feature to the spurs beyond S. Fortunato and Covignano, i.e., to S. Lorenzo in Monte (822955) and Le Grazie (836955) - and to establish a bridgehead across the River Marocchia. The success of the night infiltration would mean, of course, that our troops had got in behind the enemy. (1 Cdn Inf Div: "OLIVE"; Gibson: op cit). Fire plans were arranged, including protective belts of concentrations and independent programmes in support of R. 22e R., L. Edm R. and Seaforth of C. The commander of 3 Cdn Inf Bde ordered R. 22e R. (who had moved up to the railway) with a composite squadron of 48 R. Tks to capture the road and track junction 300 yards south-west of Villa Belvedere (830941) on the lower slopes of the feature and then the Villa itself, which from the R. 22e R. position on the flats behind the River Ausa was the most prominent and seemed to be the highest knoll of the S. Fortunato feature^{AV}. Lt-Col Allard, with the concurrence of the brigade commander, decided, that a last light attack was preferable to an earlier start.

According to the information received from COs WNSR and HPER by personal contact, the enemy was holding the feature in strength, supported by tanks and a large quantity of mortars; but he was holding it with well dug in positions from the top of the feature. With this information and considering the approaches to the top it was decided that it would be preferable to do a last light attack, as speed was essential in order to get a firm grip on it and consolidate after dark. In order to carry out this plan it was decided to keep the majority of the tanks behind, and from where they would be able to give direct fire support and it was also decided that one troop will follow behind the left forward Coy and provide immediate A Tk defence. The orders were: "A" Coy with a troop of tanks to capture road junction MR 831937 and form a firm base from which further operations could be launched. "C" Coy was to move in as quickly as possible by the most direct route by-passing all opposition until it reached Pt 152 MR 830941 and consolidate there.

(R. 22e R.: "OLIVE")

* The success of D.C.L.I. (4 (Brit) Div) in taking S. Aquilina must also have been a factor in the divisional commander's appreciation of the situation and his insistence on continuing the attack without abatement.

** Lt-Col Allard in his account, R. 22e R.: "OLIVE", takes Villa Belvedere and Point 152, i.e., Palazzo Paradiso, as one and the same point. Point 152 is actually higher than Villa Belvedere but was not visible from the flat ground where R. 22e R. were assembled on the afternoon of 19 Sep.

253. The 2 Cdn Inf Bde plan was to attack with L. Edmn R. directed on S. Lorenzo in Monte, passing to this objective from the Carlt & York bridgehead by any route between S. Fortunato and Covignano which they found possible. Seaforth of C. were to follow through the L. Edmn R. gap and swing right to Le Grazie, by-passing S. Fortunato^A. After consolidation of the feature, P.P.C.L.I. were to pass through beyond S. Lorenzo in Monte to establish the bridgehead. 2 Cdn Inf Bde were to be supported by a flexible fire plan - three diverging lanes of fire in overlapping concentrations, 600 yards deep and 1000 yards wide, with each bloc numbered so that any one bloc could be stopped should the movement of the infantry so require it. L. Edmn R., with one company up, were assigned one lane, Seaforth of C., with two companies up, two lanes. Before the 2 Cdn Inf Bde attack began, forward troops of 3 Cdn Inf Bde (Hast & P.E.R. and West N.S.R.) were ordered to withdraw slightly to allow for the artillery preparation. (Gibson: op cit). The action of the night and of the following morning can most clearly be followed by separate considerations of first, R. 22e R's. progress, secondly, L. Edmn R's., thirdly, the consolidation, including the Seaforth of C. and Hast & P.E.R. actions.

254. R. 22e R. by dash and good leadership achieved a notable success. "100 P.W. had been taken by midnight and in spite of large numbers of enemy, the situation was well in hand." (3 Cdn Inf Bde: "OLIVE"). Owing to the late arrival of the tanks H Hour had been postponed for 10 minutes, and the artillery agreed to keep up the concentration for an additional 18 mins. At 1840 hours the leading companies crossed the start line (the first lateral road across River Ausa at 836935). For some unknown reason the troop of tanks did not catch up with the infantry. (R. 22e R.: "OLIVE"). Lt-Col Allard's detailed account continues:

The left fwd Coys attack went on very well and at 1955 hours were holding a firm base at MR 831937 and were ready to exploit their success. "B" Coy who had been ordered fwd arrived at 2042 hrs, to take over the firm base from "A" Coy who was ready to attack a strong-point. "A" Coy handed over some PW to "B" Coy, then started off for the attack area (house 831939). At 2045 hrs "A" Coy started off and after a short but fierce battle, they gained their second objective capturing 70 PW and killing many more. They were ordered to consolidate there and assist "C" Coy if necessary^{AA}.

"C" Coy started at 1840 hrs and went fairly well until they reached house 831939, where they were engaged by small arms fire. The Coy Cmd left the engaged pl behind and with his two other pls, by-passed the opposition and continued the advance towards the

^A S. Fortunato was eventually set as a West N.S.R. objective; Covignano and Le Grazie were Seaforth of C. objectives. "At 0500 hrs "C" Coy, who had originally been ordered to go to COOTEHALL (S. Fortunato) were ordered to proceed to COOKSTOWN (road junction 500 yards north-east of Covignano." (W.D., Seaforth of C., 20 Sep 44)

^{AA} The Commander of the left forward company, "A", Major H. Tellier has given a lively description of the action before midnight. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/3 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II). For a comment on details of this action see Appx "A" to Historical Officer's account of S. Lorenzo and S. Fortunato battles and the map in Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket "F".

objective. When "A" Coy came to attack the house where a pl of "C" Coy was left behind to deal with the enemy who had engaged them, "A" Coy relieved the pl who then rejoined its Coy; and at 2041 hrs, they were on their objective, in the middle of a lot of enemy, 25 enemy having already been captured and then the mopping up process started. At that time it seemed evident that the enemy was taken by surprise, because they themselves had blown up one of their tanks and an inf gun. The mopping up was very difficult because the enemy was resisting stubbornly and the darkness added difficulties.

At 2340 hrs "D" Coy was moved fwd to take up a position in the area road junction 835938, this was carried out successfully without opposition. At 0255 hrs A Tk guns and MMGs arrived in the area and have taken positions to protect "B" and "C" Coys.

(Ibid)

255. On the 2 Bde front L. Edmn R. had meanwhile had a quieter time but had scored no less a spectacular success. Protected by the artillery fire "D" Coy moved forward at 2100 hours (19 Sep) with the object of seizing the road junction (827950) behind S. Fortunato and 1000 yards due west of Covignano. They were followed by "B" Coy, who were to pass through and seize the battalion's main objective, S. Lorenzo in Monte. The two reserve companies were to come up behind to clear the rear slopes and seize the ground on the flanks. The "artificial moonlight" of the searchlights which were at the left rear in 4 (Brit) Div sector, was of material assistance for the forming-up and for keeping direction. Box-mines were encountered on the lower slopes but the sappers neutralized them quickly. Shelling and machine gun fire was fairly heavy, but was not directed on the attacking companies accurately; further these companies were making use of sunken roads and tracks. The L. Edmn R. infiltration was completely successful, though movement and events between 2300 hours and 0200 hours (20 Sep) were confusing to flanking pockets and battalion headquarters because of the failure of R.T. communications. Companies had to continue as best they could, making physical contact with each other when possible.

"D" Coy after passing through R. 22e R. below S. Fortunato, swung slightly off their axis and had a brisk encounter with the enemy. The two platoons contacted reported that two of the pl officers were cas, and the coy cmd had gone on to the objective with the remaining portion of the company, which it was later learned totalled 16 men. No contact, either by R.T. or physically could be made with "B" Coy. The scout officer was ordered to re-group the part of "D" Coy with him, and if possible clear Cootehall (S. Fortunato.)

(Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/2 Cdn Inf
Bde/C/D, Docket IV: The L. Edmn R.
Campaign Narrative.)

* S. Fortunato knoll was still occupied by the enemy at 0340 hours, 20 Sep (W.D., Seaforth of C., 20 Sep 44), nor was it cleared by 0910 hours, when an enemy S.P. gun was reported to be active in that area. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 20 Sep 44.) L. Edmn R. entry in

(Footnote cont'd on p.125)

256. By 0130 hours "B" Coy was on its objectives; three hours later "C" Coy had occupied S. Lorenzo in Monte. The Officer Commanding "C" Coy, Captain J.A. Dugan, M.C., describing the action says:

D Coy...between VILLA BELVEDERE (830942) and S. FORTUNATO (835945)...ran into difficulty and got out of contact. B Coy behind also lost communication. I was ordered to push on and contact the Scouts and Sniper Pl officer at IL CASTELLACCIO (836944), between BELVEDERE and S. FORTUNATO. This officer had an intermediate link with his 18 Set. I couldn't find him.

I was then ordered to push through twds S. LORENZO IN MONTE, though there was still fighting to be heard on both flanks. I kept to my plan of following roads all the way if possible. Arriving on top of the ridge in the depression between the higher points of BELVEDERE and S. FORTUNATO, I found a sunken road, in some places 25 yds deep, along which we went in single file.

We were almost clear of the road and nearing our objective when a Tiger tk came down from the mid-way hill (at road junction 827950). The tk veered to the left past us. I pulled the coy back into the valley, moved them around to the left to come up under cover of a bamboo patch behind this road junction. Here 13 Pl went left and I took 15 to the right. No sooner had we split up than a column of troops came marching down the road in the direction of S LORENZO. We were forty yds from them when it was suddenly realized that these troops were German. I waited until 13 Pl on the left had got into position to cut the road. As soon as they fired, we turned out two pls left into a line and charged the Germans. We took them utterly by surprise, so much so that they returned scarcely any fire. Our bag there included 3 officers and numbers of OR's taken prisoner, others wounded and dead in the ditch. The rest dispersed.

We then contacted B coy to learn that they had occupied the road junction (827950). As we started to reorganize the Tiger tk came back down the road, and B coy knocked it out with 75 Grenades strung along the road and a PIAT.

(Footnote cont'd from p. 124)

their War Diary gives the information that "at about 0430 hrs" - possibly an hour later - "a sitrep of our fighting flanking tps was obtained and it was learned that the WNSR had tps in the area SW of COOTEHALL (S. Fortunato)". (Ibid). It would seem, from the War Diary of West N.S.R. that West N.S.R. companies were then still down at the base of the feature in apparently the same position held during 19 Sep.

I received the order to push on to S LORENZO IN MONTE (our final objective 822955), and sent a patrol into it. They found it unoccupied, so we occupied it, but just in time, for as we got in we saw that Jerry was coming up to do likewise. Our Bren gunners had a grand time against them, mowing them down right and left.

(Hist Sec file Italy:
1944/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/C,
Docket IV)

257. An enemy counter-attack developed almost immediately, but artillery fire was called down, and the German effort was quickly smashed. From the high point of vantage held by the Edmonton company it was possible to keep a close watch on enemy movement along the flanks and during the morning of the 20th the company commander was able to call down effective artillery fire on German tanks and S.P. guns. The company's own score for its successful attack numbered some 50 prisoners, including five or six officers. The enemy dead were numerous; the company commander personally counted 20 killed by S.A. fire. (*Ibid*)

258. The narrative must now be turned back to the early hours of the morning, when R. 22e R. and L. Edmn R. were reporting their successes in getting to the top of and behind S. Fortunato. Every effort was made to consolidate the positions, for the enemy were still numerous and active even by noon on 20 Sep. With great determination the anti-tank guns were brought up to the top of the feature by daylight. Seaforth of C. had been ordered forward at 0320 hours (Gibson: *op cit*), and P.P.C.L.I. (for whom reinforcements had just arrived) were put on short notice to pass through to the river. Seaforth of C. companies were on their objective by Le Grazie by 0600 hours. In their consolidation of S. Fortunato they were assisted by Hast & P.E.R., who took 112 P.W. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, folio III: "Battle for S. FORTUNATO Ridge"). Until noon, however, a great deal of close fighting took place all over the feature, though in a sense it was a "field day" for 2 and 3 Bdes. (*Ibid*) As Brigadier Gibson reported, "units took prisoners literally by the hundreds and large numbers of Germans were killed." (*Ibid*) The Seaforth of C. account of the action on 20 Sep gives corroboration:

"B" coy met more opposition on the right flank and were several times pinned down by enemy fire but withall took a large toll of the enemy who had apparently decided to abandon the feature around noon. This coy, at one time, had so many PW that its mobility was embarrassed. Together B, C, and D coys turned in the total of 214 PW that day, and the number of enemy dead on the feature must have approximated that amount. The arty had a field day shooting up bands of retreating Germans, and many were caught in the gullies that run down to the MARECCHIA R.

(Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/2
Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III)

259. R. 22e R. tell the same story of heavy fighting during the morning, of numerous prisoners and of most effective shoots against imminent counter-attacks:

At 0730 hrs 20 Sep 1944 "C" Coy was being heavily engaged by enemy guns and small arms fire and it became evident that a counter-attack was being prepared by whatever forces the enemy had with him on top and the reverse slope of the feature. At 0800 hrs the counter-attack started but quickly lost its momentum when the Coy Comd got his MMGs on the second floor of a building and started to use them for direct fire. The enemy was nevertheless within the Coy's sector, and if they were pinned down by our MMGs fire, they were also preventing any movements in the area. When this new situation developed it was decided to use "D" Coy in a flanking attack. The left fwd pl of "C" Coy was used as a firm base for this attack. "D" Coy started from Rd and Track junction 229941 and attacked in a NE direction. Their adv was covered by MMG fire and direct fire from 6 pdr A Tk guns.

This fire was kept up until the Coy was very close to the enemy. On a pre-arranged signal of a white flare - all fire stopped and the Coy charged the position at the double, this operation was highly successful, and by 1015 hrs the two Coys had captured another 79 PW and the position was finally consolidated.

(R. 22e R.: "OLIVE")

Lt-Col Allard says of his battalion's P.W. bag and booty:

During that operation more than 200 prisoners were captured over 50 were left dead on the ground, and a large quantity of equipment was seized such as:-

Mortars 81 mm	20
Tank Mk IV	1
MGs 45	20
A Tk Projector	20
Rifles - Over	200
Sniper's Rifle	1
Auto Pistols - Several with a large quantity of personal equipment.	

(Ibid)

260. By evening of 20 Sep the S. Fortunato feature was consolidated and cleared. West N.S.R.* had moved up during the morning to S. Fortunato itself and assisted in the clearing up process there, after which they consolidated (W.D., West N.S.R., 20 Sep 44). P.P.C.L.I. had also moved up, and at 1400 hours had two companies in the L. Edmn R. area in S. Lorenzo in Monte and two companies behind, preparatory to securing a bridgehead across the River Marecchia. The various battalion positions were now: Seaforth of C. in the area of Le Grazie; L. Edmn R., S. Lorenzo in Monte; Hast & P.E.R., Le Grazie, Covignano and the eastern slopes; West

* Lt-Col A.L. Saunders, formerly G.S.O.(2), H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, assumed command of the regiment on the 22nd, taking over from Major F.A. Hiltz, the 2I/C.

N.S.R., S. Fortunato and Palazzo Paradiso; R. 22e R., Villa Belvedere, Palazzo Paradiso and the western slopes; P.P.C.L.I. in the L. Edmn R. area. Carlit & York R. were under orders to move forward to relieve L. Edmn R. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket F: on cit)

261. As seen after the action, the area was badly battle-scarred, though considering the tremendous air bombardments there were remarkably few bomb craters. (It should be noted that during the bombing raids of 17 to 19 Sep many fragmentation bombs were used.) But with one or two exceptions all buildings were a shambles. A main defensive fire position seemed to be a cleared area just off the Fortunato - Covignano road on the south side. Here there was a view as far as the eye could see. There was no evidence of prepared concrete and steel positions such as were to be seen on the Hitler and Gothic Lines. Rather, the enemy had made good use of knolls, walls, brick and earth. Part of the Fortunato - Covignano road is sunken. Into the far bank here were cut several tunnels, with entrances reinforced by brick and timber, and with electric lighting in the interior (indications that this was a permanent coastal defence area and/or a headquarters). These tunnels and German M.G. positions were useful to our own troops when the enemy's artillery fire came down, as evidenced by the litter of cigarette cartons of Canadian brands overlaying the German and Italian cartons. German helmets, hand grenades and M.Gs. were to be had in quantity.

262. By evening of 20 Sep all evidence pointed to a general withdrawal of the enemy - such as were left unwounded or outside the P.W. cage. The defenders of S. Fortunato - according to P.W. interrogation reports - had been battle groups of 1 Para Div, 29 Pz Div, 162 Turkoman Div and 20 G.A.F. Div. (1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 91, 22 Sep 44). Our artillery fire had taken a heavy toll (1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 120, 21 Sep 44) as had our infantry weapons' fire, and the toll of prisoners had been as great as or greater than for any other day in 1 Cdn Corps history. (1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 119, 21 Sep 44)* A German account confirms the exhaustion of their divisions in the Rimini area:

The speed at which our formations had become exhausted in the Rimini area between 12 and 21 Sep was shown by 356 Inf Div, which was committed on 13/14 Sep. Already, after just a week, the unbattleworthy condition of this division necessitated their gradual relief by 90 Pz Gren Div, of which reinforced Pz Gren Regt 361 (with 2 and 3 Bns Pz Gren Regt 361, 1 Bn Pz Gren Regt 200, 2 and 3 Bns Arty Regt 190, Tank Bn 190) had arrived about 20 Sep and were committed between the rivers Marecchia and Rubicon.

(Pretzell, on cit, p. 26)

* "Nevertheless it was the best day from a P.W. point of view that the Corps had ever had. The total for today exceeded our best day in the LIRI Valley battle, where 500 odd became captives." (1 Cdn Corps Int Summary No. 119, 21 Sep 44). These statements are not borne out by the analysis of the P.W. returns appended to the same Intelligence summary. However, many prisoners were by evening of 20 Sep still in battalion and brigade hands and would not pass through the corps cage until the following day. It should be noted that the recorded number for 21 Sep was 311, on a day when the action against the enemy was not heavy.

263. Rimini was now dominated and made untenable by our control of the S. Fortunato feature; the noise of explosions in the city during the night 20/21 sounded like the usual German prelude to a withdrawal. From S. Fortunato north-east lay the great plain and the towns and roads pointing away to Ravenna, Bologna and the Po River. Immediately below S. Fortunato lay the broad basin of the River Marecchia. There were two immediate tasks for the division - the capture of Rimini and the crossing of River Marecchia, for which latter task P.P.C.L.I. on the afternoon of 20 Sep were preparing.

4 (BRIT) INF DIV BRIDGEHEAD OVER THE MARECCHIA 21-22 SEP

264. Following their relief on the night 17/18 Sep, 28 (Brit) Inf Bde had gone into reserve (para 236), but on 20 Sep they were ordered to assist in the formation of the Marecchia bridgehead. The roads were so bad that 2 Kings never got forward at all and returned to the concentration area in Misano. 2/4 Hamps and 2 Som L.I. remained behind 10 (Brit) Inf Bde during 21 Sep while 6 Surreys continued to clear the forward slopes overlooking the Padulli. Point 112 was cleared in the morning virtually without opposition. A patrol was then sent over the Padulli to Point 100 (792943) on the final ridge overlooking the Marecchia, where they arrived at 1635 hours without making contact. As 28 (Brit) Inf Bde passed through, 10 (Brit) Inf Bde stood fast to help keep the roads clear for the advance of 5 Cdn Armd Div, who were moving up to relieve 4 (Brit) Inf Div once the crossing of the Marecchia had been accomplished.

265. 28 (Brit) Inf Bde advanced with 2 Som L.I. right and 2/4 Hamps left, and passed without opposition to the final ridge. That night, patrols reached the banks of the Marecchia without encountering resistance, but were fired on from the north bank. They consolidated next day, 2 Som L.I. on the ridge and 2/4 Hamps in front of it in houses along the lateral road which runs south of the Marecchia, both battalions about a mile short of the river. However, an enterprising officer, having crossed the river to S. Giustina (73788) and found it empty, 2 Som L.I. occupied the town during 22 Sep with no more inconvenience than heavy shelling by German artillery after they had moved in. In the centre and left, 4 Recce and 2/4 Hamps respectively, got elements across the river but met enemy resistance on the ground and found the roads effectively demolished. (1 Canadian Corps Operations, pp 40,41)

266. During the night 22/23 Sep, 2/4 Hamps followed their patrols in strength and reached Route 9 about a mile west of S. Giustina, which continued to be heavily shelled. Further movement along the highway drew artillery bombardment, and an advance up a lateral running north-west from S. Giustina brought 4 Recce Bn under heavy fire from the area centred around Casale (777995) about 1000 yards north of the highway. In the afternoon the troops of 12 Cdn Inf Bde passed through and attacked Casale which was not finally cleared till next day, 24 Sep. 2 Som L.I. and 4 Recce then withdrew leaving 2/4 Hamps under command 5 Cdn Armd Div to protect the left flank of the bridgehead.

* Command of the divisional sector officially passed to the Canadians at 0715 hours, 23 Sep.

1 CDN INF DIV BRIDGEHEAD OVER RIVER MARECCHIA AND THE
CAPTURE OF RIMINI, 20-22 SEP

267. The P.P.C.L.I. advance in the late afternoon of 20 Sep down the forward slope was checked by the presence of enemy armour at the road junction below S. Lorenzo in Monte (Monticello 823964). It was also impeded by rain which began to fall in the early evening, making roads difficult for wheels and tracks. It was not until after midnight 20/21 that two companies moved forward to by-pass Monticello and to establish themselves on the lateral road immediately south of the river and 1000 yards north of Monticello road junction. Contact with the enemy was slight, though there was some shelling. One company moved across the river to the main lateral road north of it (Route 9) and was firmly established by 0950 hours, 21 Sep; two other companies moved north-west to protect the bridgehead and the sappers' bridging operations. The Engineers both here and in 1 Cdn Inf Bde's area now began to race against threatening floods, for the rain was continuing. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 20, 21 Sep 44; 1 Cdn Inf Div Engrs: "OLIVE")

268. On the right, 1 Cdn Inf Bde was quick to take advantage of the general withdrawal. (Operations by R.C.R. and 48 Highrs had been almost negligible on 20 Sep and both shelling and mortaring were light.) Early on 21 Sep, 48 Highrs were ordered to advance beyond the railway and, keeping to the west of Rimini, to secure and report upon crossings over the streams up to the River Marecchia. This advance was carried out rapidly and without opposition. By 1100 hours patrols reported having reached the south bank of the river and being under fire from enemy M.G. posts on the far side. (1 Cdn Inf Bde "OLIVE"). In mid-afternoon, the brigade commander ordered 48 Highrs to secure a bridgehead across the river and the road junction at Celle (835988) - which was also an objective of P.P.C.L.I. Celle is at the intersection of Route 16 to Ravenna and Route 9 to Cesena; it was here that the two brigades were to effect their junction. The advance began at 1800 hours. The river was passed before midnight, but the 48 Highrs company moving on Celle came under heavy machine gun fire when about 100 yards short of the objective and was stopped temporarily.

269. 3 Gk Mtn Bde had progressed heavily up Route 16 on 20 Sep, fighting in a diversionary role during the main S. Fortunato attack. Opposition was particularly keen at the hamlet of S. Maria, a mile from the city of Ravenna itself, and from enemy in buildings north-east towards the coast. A few paratroopers were in the area to bolster up the mercenaries of 162 Turkoman Div. The Greeks suffered nine killed and 30 wounded on 20 Sep but took some prisoners and a large amount of enemy equipment. During the night 20/21 Sep opposition slackened and a patrol at 0650 hours, 21 Sep, reached the River Ausa at the southern outskirts of Rimini. The brigade commander asked for and received permission to advance into the city. Orders were given to push on as rapidly as possible into Rimini, with instructions to capture the bridges over the River Marecchia. There then developed a race among the three battalions to seize the prize. 2 Bn was first, and by 0800 hours, 21 Sep, the Greek flag was hoisted over the town. No enemy opposition was encountered. A fitting gesture was the Greek request to divisional headquarters for a "Canadian" flag to raise beside the Greek pennant. * "At 0730 hours the mayor of Rimini inf

* It was the talk of the messes at divisional headquarters that no Union Jack or Canadian ensign could be found immediately and that the red banner of the Auxiliary Services was lent for the nonce.

Captain Apostolakis that he was ready to hand over the town. The handing over protocol was therefore drawn up in Greek, English and Italian." (Op Sum of 3 Gk Mtn Bde from 7 to 23 Sep 44, a copy of which is appended to the divisional "OLIVE" file).

270. The ancient city of Rimini - the Roman Ariminum - whose peace-time population was 31,000, was found to be badly damaged with a great many of its historic buildings and modern fashionable villas destroyed. Only one bridge was found to be intact (at 850982) - the venerable stone Ponte d'Augusto.* The interior of the church of S. Francesco (Tempio Malatestiano) was ruined, but its early renaissance facade (designed by Alberti) still stood though cracked in various places. The Triumphal Arch dating from 27 B.C. - the Arco d'Augusto - was shaken by blast but still stood. Three 17th Century churches were completely destroyed. The principal damage was done long before the Canadian attack by Allied bombing raids of 1943 against the port installations.**

271. The attack of P.P.C.L.I. across the River Marecchia to cut Route 16 at Celle continued during the night 21/22. The company given the task had to fight its way against pockets of enemy left behind as rearguards. 48 Highrs and P.P.C.L.I. were both actually in a support role for 2 N.Z. Div, whose liaison officers were already at the various forward battalions and company headquarters. New Zealand Engineers were working on river crossings and the troops and vehicles of the relieving division were crowding the roads from Route 16 inland beyond S. Fortunato. The P.P.C.L.I. Company Commander, Major Colin McDougall, O.C. "B" Coy, has described this action:

We crossed over the river and got to within 200 yds of the lateral road on the north side. There we ran into a German coy, which we attacked and completely demoralized. One pl under a L/Sgt - strength 10 men - made a charge, took 5 PW, killed 3 and wounded a lot of others. The remaining Tedeschi got up out of their weapon pits and ran away helter-skelter.

I realized from PW that the Germans were holding the lateral road in strength, so decided to attack CELLE through the "snug" road junction on Highway 16. We approached this point, and found it snug by Tedeschi. So we had another fight there. The situation was got under control, and the Germans who could fled. The NZ tanks from across the river opened fire on us - it was then last light. We pulled back to the river bank to get out of the NZ fire, and there I made contact with the NZ commander. He said he didn't want us to go

* According to the German account the High Command had ordered the preservation of the ancient Roman bridges at Rimini "regardless of the disadvantages entailed thereby". (Pretzell, op cit, p. 25)

** Reference has been made to Works of Art in Italy - Losses and Survivals in the War, London; H.M. Stationery Office, 1945.

into CELLE, since he was teeing up a two coy attack on it. He told us to stay put until first light, then to go up and take a point west of CELLE; which we did.

(Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/2
Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II)

272. On the night a 48 Highr company was providing local protection during the night for a New Zealand Engineer mine-clearing party. One platoon of this company supported by New Zealand tanks went up Route 16 to assist in the attack on Celle. After a third infantry assault, the position was captured and consolidated about 0430 hours. (1 Cdn Inf Bde: "OLIVE"). The last stages of this phase of Operation "OLIVE" had begun to take place at 1600 hours, 21 Sep, when 2 N.Z. Div started to pass through 1 Cdn Inf Div. At 0800 hours, 22 Sep, the Canadian division went into Corps reserve and all brigades including the Greek Mountain Brigade began to retire to rest and training areas along the coast from Rimini to Cattolica. (1 Canadian Corps Operations, p. 19)

CONCLUSION

273. When 1 Cdn Inf Div retired into Corps reserve many Canadian infantrymen still believed that they had fought their last battle in Italy. The man with the red patch on his arm standing on top of S. Fortunato ridge on 21 Sep and watching the armour and cars of 2 N.Z. Div go through towards the great plain beyond - this man, tired though he was, could vigorously wave them on, for he believed that his job was done, that the scout cars and carriers and Shermans and Churchills would sweep into the plain taking all before them. But had he looked down at his feet, he would have seen that they were wet and muddy and might have taken their condition as an omen. For during the next weeks the tanks and scout cars bogged down in mud and the infantry were called on to establish bridgeheads over the very next river - the Uso at Santarcangelo, and during the subsequent weeks and months over the next and next and next rivers, from Savignano to Cesena, from Cesena to Ravenna. The battle for S. Fortunato had been won against the Germans, but the battle for the plains was temporarily lost against the mud and rain. Certainly some maleficent deity fostered the enemy's delaying actions, for heavy rains came early and actually set in on the very eve of the victory at S. Fortunato.

274. By 22 Sep the battle face of Italy was considerably changed. In 26 days, since the offensive opened on 25 Aug, Eighth Army had advanced some 30 miles (Allied Strategy, p. 11) 5 Corps, like 1 Cdn Corps, was across the River Marecchia after its 56 Div's fierce battle for Ceriano ridge on 21 Sep. Eighth Army's main thrust on the Adriatic sector had drawn the weight of the German forces away from the central sector - twelve enemy divisions (or remnants thereof) were by 22 Sep located in the Adriatic sector leaving only nine committed across the remaining three-quarters of the Italian front (C.I.G.S. Summary, No. 386, 22 Sep 44). This had made possible the rapid continuation of the advance begun by the Fifth Army north of Florence in the first week of September - which resulted in the breaching of the Gothic Line by 13 (Brit) Corps and II (U.S.) Corps in mid-September. (C.I.G.S. Summaries for 10-20 Sep 44). (See Map "A")

275. The conduct of future operations of Eighth Army would be determined by the extent to which its formations could

be kept at fighting pitch:

Except for the New Zealand Division all the fighting formations of the Army were tired. The Polish Corps had had some three weeks rest, but consisting as it did of only four infantry brigades and one armoured brigade, its strength was less than its name implied. In the Canadian Corps, the Canadian infantry division was very tired, the 4th British Infantry Division and 5th Canadian Armoured Division were somewhat better off. In 5 Corps, however, all divisions were very tired: the 1st British Armoured Division and 56th Infantry Division had suffered such severe casualties that it was necessary to reduce one infantry brigade each to a mere cadre; the 46th British and 4th Indian Divisions had been fighting without respite in very difficult country ever since the offensive began.

(Eighth Army - The Gothic Line and Romagna Battles, p. 40)

276. Plans were now made for the drive that would assist a main thrust by Fifth Army:

The problem, therefore, was to arrange to maintain heavy pressure on the enemy, if only to assist the operations of the Fifth Army to capture the Allied objectives, and at the same time to rest and reorganise these tired divisions. It had been the Army Commander's intention announced to Corps Commanders on 16 September, to pursue the beaten enemy beyond the Rimini line with 1 Canadian and 5 Corps up; he did not wish to use 2 Polish Corps until it was really necessary. The spearhead of the pursuit was to be the three armoured divisions - 2nd New Zealand Division, 5th Canadian and 1st British Armoured Divisions - while the rest of the Army reorganised. Precisely what reorganisation would be required could not be decided until more was known of the enemy's intentions and of the state of formations when the Rimini line had fallen. Leading Corps were, therefore, to continue on the axes previously allotted to them, with the Canadian Corps on Route 16 directed on Ravenna and Ferrara, and 5 Corps on Route 9 directed on Bologna.

(Ibid, p. 41)

277. The last phase of 1 Cdn Inf Div's action, which culminated in the capture of S. Fortunato, had been the heaviest of the entire progress from River Metauro. (The struggle for S. Martino was in fact a part of the S. Fortunato battle). The capture of S. Fortunato was notable not only in the success of the action but because of the fact that five infantry battalions during the day and a half beginning on the night 19/20 Sep were engaged in battle on its heights in an area not much greater than one square mile. General Leese sent a personal message to various

battalion and brigade commanders after the capture of S. Fortunato, messages couched in warm terms such as: "The regiment may be proud of its part in a great hard-fought victory. With my thanks and best wishes to you all. Well done Canada." (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 32).

278. Significant of the greatness of the effort was the air support. During the period 1-20 Sep there was an average of 302 fighter bombers and 110 light or medium bomber sorties flown each day in support of the Eighth Army - and this period included several days when the weather was bad and the landing ground unserviceable. (1 Cdn Inf Div: "OLIVE"). General Leese states that the air support "was the most powerful we had yet had with the Eighth Army". (Leese, on cit). The artillery effort was likewise tremendous. Corps artillery from the beginning of the operation up to 22 Sep had fired 17,500 tons of ammunition. (1 Cdn Corps: "OLIVE")

279. Advantage was taken of the fact that the Canadian Corps was operating along the coast, to furnish naval support:

On 3 September a naval task force similar to one which had previously supported the Polish Corps was placed in support of the 1st Canadian Corps. The task of the force was to shell hostile batteries, coast defences and towns along the coast on request of Commander Corps Royal Artillery 1 Canadian Corps. The force changed in strength and composition during the next few weeks, since naval operations frequently required the ships to undertake other tasks. It was finally released on 14 October, when continued bad weather made it impossible for air observation posts and artillery reconnaissance aircraft to operate and provide the ships with targets. Moreover the coastal waters were heavily mined, and on several occasions the ships could not engage targets properly because of the difficulty of manoeuvring into position.

(1 Canadian Corps Operations,
p.10)

280. In the operations to break the Gothic Line both Canadian divisions had played their part well. Though 1 Cdn Inf Div was in the action more continuously and longer, 5 Cdn Armd Div did an exceedingly good job. At the beginning of the action the armoured division was battle-tried, in particularly good fettle, and ready to prove itself - which it did brilliantly at Coriano. 1 Cdn Inf Div fought throughout the whole operation gallantly and well.* Of the division's achievement, the G.O.C. says: "We gained our objectives, one by one, throughout five complete phases and over a period of 26 days, and in so doing we

* The term "Gothic Line" has become generic in the mouths of the participants as signifying the entire action from River Metauro to River Marecchia, though the battle for S. Fortunato is separately referred to, as is the battle for Coriano.

advanced a total of 32 miles." (1 Cdn Inf Div: "OLIVE"). The support of 21 Tk Bde was everywhere appreciated. It is an interesting fact that the men and officers of 1 Cdn Inf Div - which had since the beginning of operations in Sicily been supported usually by British tank regiments - always considered that they could have no better support than British-manned tanks. It seems also that the British crews liked working with Canadian infantry. A corollary of these prejudices and opinions is the complete harmony and mutual esteem with which British and Indian troops and Canadians of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade worked. An explanation may be that the two nationalities strive for each other's good opinion and make a special effort of co-operation, going "the second mile".

281. Among the messages of congratulation which came from many sources, two are of particular interest; the first from General Leese to the G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div, the second from the commander of 3 Gk Mtn Bde, also to General Vokes, in reply to a message of congratulation from the latter:

YOU HAVE WON A GREAT VICTORY (.) BY THE
BITTEREST FIGHTING SINCE EL ALAMEIN AND
CASSINO YOU HAVE BEATEN ELEVEN GERMAN
DIVISIONS AND BROKEN THROUGH INTO THE PO
VALLEY (.) THE GREATER PART OF THE GERMAN
ARMIES IN ITALY WERE MASSED AGAINST US AND
THEY HAVE BEEN TERRIBLY MAULLED (.) I
CONGRATULATE AND THANK YOU ALL (.) WE MUST
NOW HIT THEM HARD DAY AND NIGHT AND FORCE
THEM BACK OVER THE PO (.)

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div,
September 1944: Appx 77)

I MADE KNOWN YOUR MESSAGE TO ALL RANKS (.)
ALL US DEEPLY TOUCHED THANK OUR DIV COMMANDER
AND 1 CDN INF DIV FOR CONGRATULATIONS (.)
WE ARE HAPPY BECAUSE THEY COME FROM GLORIOUS
WARRIORS (.) WE KNEW THIS AND NOW THE
SATISFACTION IS GREATER WHEN OUR SMALL
CONTRIBUTION IS RECOGNIZED (.) KINDLY ACCEPT
RESPECTS OF BDE AND WISHES THAT GLORY
ACCOMPANIES ALWAYS YOURSELF AND YOUR DIV (.)
LONG LIVE CANADA (.)

(Ibid: Appx 78)

282. The victories were not gained without casualties, and one of the first tasks of the brigades was to prepare cemeteries. An analysis of casualties has been made in Preliminary Report No. 143. Figures supplied the narrator by 1 Cdn Inf Div (Staff Capt. "A", Rear H.Q.) early in October 1944 show total number of casualties of the division (exclusive 3 Gk Mtn Bde and 21 Tk Bde, i.e., only Canadian casualties) to be 2424. This figure is broken down as follows: 30 officers and 412 other ranks killed; 97 officers and 1691 other ranks wounded; five officers and 189 other ranks missing. Computing by brigades, 3 Cdn Inf Bde had the greatest total casualties - 781, 2 Cdn Inf Bde had 692, 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 689. All other units of the division (R.C.D., R.C.A., R.C.E., Sask L.I., Sigs, etc.) had a total of 262 casualties. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket I). In the period of operations (25 Aug to 19 Sep) in which they were in action 5 Cdn Armd Div suffered casualties of 28 officers and 293 other ranks killed, 70 officers and 961 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 15 other ranks missing. (Report No. 143, Appx "A") (For total casualties sustained by Canadian troops in Italy from 19 Aug to 30 Sep 44 see Appx "B" to this report). It is interesting to note that during the period 23 Aug