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REPORT NO.178

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

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CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN ITALY,

5 JAN - 21 APR 44

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17 Jan 44 and
The Attack Along The Villa Grande - Tollo Road
(Hast & P.E.R.), 30 - 31 Jan 44.

MAP "B" - Location 1 Cdn Corps, 13 Feb 44.

REPORT NO. 178

HISTORICAL SECTION

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22 Jul 47

Canadian Operations in Italy,
5 Jan - 21 Apr 44

1. Chronologically this report follows No. 165, Operations of 1 Cdn Inf Div and 1 Cdn Armd Bde in Italy, 25 Nov 43 - 4 Jan 44. It forms a sequel to Report No. 170, which deals with Operation "TIMBERWOLF" and to some extent duplicates the period covered by the latter part of that report. The first four months of 1944 saw little action by Canadian forces in Italy; during the greater part of that time the Eighth Army's Adriatic front - on which the Canadian formations were serving remained practically dormant. Two engagements during January themselves relatively minor in comparison with the scale of the heavy fighting of the previous month - mark the only active operations in which Canadian forces in Italy were engaged during the opening months of 1944. This narrative describes these two operations: it then gives an account of the so-called "static period" from 1 Feb to 21 Apr 44, during which 1 Cdn Corps, and subsequently 1 Cdn Inf Div alone, held positions in the Adriatic sector of the Eighth Army's line; and it concludes with a general appreciation of the Allied Mediterranean strategy which led to the mounting of the great May offensive of the Allied Armies in Italy - the battle for Rome.

THE SITUATION AT THE BEGINNING OF JANUARY

2. Offensive operations up the Adriatic coast by 1 Cdn Inf Div, which reached a peak in the battle for Ortona, terminated on 4 Jan 44, as we have seen in a previous report (No. 165), in the general halt which took place along the entire Eighth Army front. On that date the enemy's line ran south-westwards from the coast some three miles along the course of the River Riccio, crossing thence to the line of the Arielli River, and passing east of Orsogna into the foothills which led to the slopes of the Majella mountain range. Along this 50-mile front the Eighth Army was thinly deployed - for Fifth Army's offensive against the enemy's western Winter Line positions was making heavy demands on General Sir Oliver Leese's reserve formations - 5 Corps held the coastal sector, while 13 Corps faced the enemy at Orsogna and in the mountains. Nearest the coast was 1 Cdn Inf Div, on a two-and-a-half mile front; on their left was the 8 Ind Div. (Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces in Italy, 3 September 1943 to 2 May 1945, Part I, Section "B", Eighth Army Operations - Reggio to Ortona, p. 110)

3. At a conference held by the Army Commander on 12 Jan, General Leese explained that the Fifth Army's offensive must be supported in every way possible, that the war in Italy continued to play an important part on the general picture, and that "all ideas of a static or low priority front were erroneous and must be eradicated from everybody's minds" (Eighth Army Operations - Reggio to Ortona, op cit, Appx "F"-2, Minutes of Conference, Eighth Army, 13 Jan 44). To this end it was planned that 13 Corps on 24 Jan - or later if the certainty of success demanded a postponement - would launch an assault against the enemy positions at Orsogna - Guardiagrele - San Martino, and thus open the way to Chieti. In order to

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concentrate 4 Ind Div for the attack, 11 Cdn Inf Bde was to relieve the Indian formation in the 13 Corps right-forward sector during the night of 22/23 Jan. (Ibid; and Report No. 170, para 97). In addition Headquarters 5 Cdn Armd Div would assume command of this portion of the front and the adjacent sector to the left held by 2 Para Bde (Minutes of Conference, 13 Jan 44. Actually H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div did not take over command of the sector until 1 Feb. See Report No. 170, paras 103-5). The role of 5 Corps, meanwhile, was to indicate that a vigorous advance along the coast or up the Tollo axis was contemplated late in January (Eighth Army Operations - Reggio to Ortona, p. 114).

4. In specific pursuit of this intention for 5 Corps, the Eighth Army plan provided for an attack to be launched in the direction of Tollo.

5 CORPS using ONE CDN DIV reinforced by 11 CDN LORRIED BDE were to make every effort to gain the high ground EAST of R ARIELLI. This operation to be supported by all artillery available. Heavy casualties are NOT to be incurred and if the Corps Comd decided that this cannot be done without incurring heavy casualties the matter is to be re-referred to the Army Comd.

This operation was to be completed in time to allow 11 CDN LORRIED BDE to pull out from 5 CORPS front on the night 20/21 Jan.

(Minutes of Conference,
13 Jan 44).

5. As we have seen in a previous report, 11 Cdn Inf Bde, commanded by Brigadier G. Kitching, D.S.O., came under command 1 Cdn Inf Div on 12 Jan and relieved 3 Cdn Inf Bde on the coastal flank on 13 - 14 Jan (Report No. 170, para 96). The brigade had completed training, and it was desired to give it operational experience as soon as possible (Ibid, para 94). A plan was made to use this formation to play upon the enemy's fears of a coming major offensive by 5 Corps. Between the Riccio and Arielli Rivers the German paratroopers held a ridge of high ground which overlooked 1 Cdn Inf Div positions. The capture of this feature would reverse the situation and give our troops a position commanding the enemy's defences along the Arielli.

"THE ARIELLI SHOW"

6. The sector of the enemy's line opposite 11 Cdn Inf Bde was being held by 1 Para Regt - who had excellent ground on which to fight a defensive action. Inland from the coastal road the land rose sharply into a plateau cut by ravines running north-east across the line of the proposed Canadian attack. Our forward positions were less than two miles from Ortona, and on the forward slope of a ridge called R. di Muccia near the coast and R. di San Pietro further inland. Forward of this ridge lies the valley of the R. Riccio, then another ridge, R. di Fendo, and the valley of the Arielli, a much larger river about midway between Ortona and Francavilla. (Because the latter river is named on the 1/50,000 maps, which were the largest scale available to our troops, this operation has commonly been referred to as the "Arielli Show".) The enemy's defences were based on the R. di Fendo. The ridge is crowned by several scattered groups of farm buildings and it has for a sort of irregular backbone a secondary road, which meanders

by the easiest grades from the coastal road at the mouth of the R. Riccio up the southern slope of the feature R. di Fendo and finally arrives at the town of Tollo. The enemy had constructed a number of strongpoints and weapon pits along the high ground. During the hours of darkness patrols of both sides wandered over the Fendo ridge with reasonable freedom, arranging booby traps and occupying likely posts from which to shoot up opposing parties. The whole area was an enlarged 'No Man's Land', virtually abandoned during the day and at night the property of the most aggressive. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., January 1944; Appx 10, 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 34, 15 Jan 44)

7. The task of 11 Cdn Inf Bde was to seize a series of strongpoints along and beyond the Tollo road and from there to push to the Arielli Valley less than a mile ahead, and thus establish our firm forward positions one ridge forward. The general instructions for the attack included a warning that after the operation 11 Cdn Inf Bde would be relieved by 2 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1944. Appx 52, Serial 1554, 15 Jan 44). The assault was to be made by two battalions - Perth R. and C.B. Highrs - carrying out successive attacks, the former on the left, the latter on the right. On 15 Jan, Perth R. company commanders were called to "O" Group at the headquarters of Ir R.C. where the brigade commander, Brigadier Kitching, explained the plan and pointed out on the ground the company objectives (W.D., Perth R., 15 Jan 44). In Phase 1 of the battalion attack, "A" Coy right and "C" Coy left were to cross the valley of the Riccio and seize strongpoints on the Tollo road, "A" Coy the bridge at C294184 and "C" Coy the road junction at C292178. In the second phase, "B" Coy on the right was to consolidate the spur between the objectives already gained (approximate area C295180), and "D" Coy on the left would push up the road or the gully from "C" Coy's objective and seize the bridge and road junction at the head of the draw at C291176. (See Map "A".) These two phases of the Perth R. attack constituted Phase 1 for the brigade attack and were assigned the code name "ASTER". "A" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt was in support. (Ibid)

8. The second phase of the brigade attack was named "BUTTERCUP" and was assigned to C.B. Highrs. On the order of the brigade commander this battalion, with "C" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt in support, was to move up on the right of the Perth R. and occupy the high ground to the north-west of the gully to be seized by "A" Coy of the Perths. In the first phase "D" Coy would cross the bed of the Riccio, move up the slope of the north bank, cross the Tollo road and take the area C300187, which was to become Battalion Headquarters area as the attack continued. Immediately behind them "C" Coy was to push through and occupy the high ground around the houses in area C297191. The second phase, to be initiated on the battalion commander's order, called for "A" Coy to pass to the right of "D" Coy and hold the lower end of the spur around C303191, while "B" Coy passed to the left and consolidated the area north of the Tollo road, to link up with "A" Coy of the Perths (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 16 Jan 44). The third phase of the brigade attack, code named "COLOMBINE", called for further advances by both battalions towards the Arielli with the purpose of establishing firm positions on its southern slope. Ir R.C. with one squadron of 11 Cdn Armd Regt were to be in reserve for this phase. (W.D., GS, H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1944; Intentions night 162300 hrs Jan; and Appx 52, Ops Log Ser 1554, 15 Jan 44)

9. For the operation 11 Cdn Inf Bde had in support 1 Cdn Inf Div artillery, 17 Fd Regt R.C.A., 57 Army Id Regt R.A., 1 A.G.R.A. and 8 Ind Div artillery. For Phase 1 there were planned three small barrages, a smoke programme and concentrations. Phase 2 consisted of concentrations, and D.F. tasks were prepared to assist in consolidating gains. No tasks were laid on for Phase 3 but a comprehensive C.B. list had been drawn up, and F.O.Os. were attached at company level for the assaulting battalions to provide observed fire as required, should further attacks be carried out. Air support was to be on a large scale. Although it was limited to attacks on the north bank of the Arielli for the actual day of the attack, until 2359 hours on 16 Jan the area between the forward positions of our troops and the Arielli was bombed and strafed* (V.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt, 15 Jan 44). The heavy mortars of 1 Cdn Inf Div were also linked with the artillery programme; they were assigned chiefly to targets on the right flank of the C.B. Fighrs' objectives. To divert enemy attention both 1 Cdn Inf Bde on the left and P.P.C.L.I. who were under command on the right flank of the 11 Cdn Inf Bde attack were ordered to demonstrate strongly from present positions. (V.D., G.S., F.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1944: Apx 52, Intentions 162300 hrs January 1944; V.D., 17 Fd Regt R.C.A., January 1944: 17 Fd Regt R.C.A. Operation Order)

10. Preliminary patrolling did not add much to the sum of information. During the night 16/17 Jan, a C.B. Fighrs standing patrol at the forks of the Riccio at C303186 passed a quiet evening, but a reconnaissance patrol attempting to cross the stream further to the left came under fire there and returned. (V.D., C.B. Fighrs, 17 Jan 44). A patrol from Ir R.C. the same evening forded the Riccio still further left and not only crossed the Tollo road but got up on to the crest beyond in the area of the C.B. Fighrs objectives, where it found no enemy but noticed signs of digging and found slit trenches. On its way back the patrol checked the ford at C298176, which was on the axis of advance for the left companies of Perth R. It reported the road through the valley passable for jeeps. Patrols sent into the battle area on the night before the attack - 16/17 Jan - ran into enemy patrols who appeared to be carrying out some type of military works. The trail was reported as showing signs of digging and was in some places covered with rushes. Patrol reports do not state whether these innovations were extensively investigated but affirm that the personnel "looked for booby traps and found none". (V.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, January 1944: Ops Log, Ser 66, 162400 hrs)

* Of the five targets laid down for 16 Jan, only two were in the area to be attacked and both were on the left side of the Perth R. objectives and along the Tollo road. (1 Cdn Inf Div Air Log for 15-17 Jan 44). No targets are reported as being engaged in the Riccio valley and the main effort for the day appears to have been put on the town of Tollo. (V.D.s. of four forward battalions). V.D., P.P.C.L.I. for 17 Jan states "We had a ringside view of twenty-odd squadrons of Kitty-Hawk dive bombers plastering the forward positions across the Tollo road." In view of the fact that the P.P.C.L.I. report their forward areas being shelled extensively during the day (they report 4 killed and 12 wounded) it might be assumed that their observation may have been made from the level of slit trenches and that the problem of false crests may have influenced the above report.

11. This paucity of conclusive patrol information seems to have had little effect on the plans for the 17th. C.B. Highrs had been thoroughly briefed on the 16th and the C.O., Lt-Col J.B. Fair, O.B.E., E.D., had arranged to occupy an O.P. at C303184 on the forward slope of the spur that runs into the valley of the Riccio opposite the proposed start line of the C.B. Highrs attack. Perth R. had not only checked the ground but had carried out the briefing process down to platoon level on representative rear areas. There is no doubt that the units had every intention of showing that the lessons so long rehearsed in training would be carried out in action. (I.D.s., Perth R. and C.B. Highrs, 16 Jan 44)

12. Early on the morning of 17 Jan the Perth R. attack went in on time and achieved early successes. "C" Coy advanced down the road which runs into the Riccio valley from the west to the ford at C298176. The leading platoon under Lieut R.S. Chamberlain, M.C., and Cpl George Lyons, M.M., got across the river at 0540 and reached its section of the company objective by 0730 hours. Here the group dug in and remained throughout the day. [#] (W.D., Perth R., 17 Jan 44). The barrage had opened at 0530 hours and the enemy must have been aware or at least suspicious that an attack was impending. Defensive fire was immediate and heavy, for the enemy mortars were well sited on the reverse slope of the Fondo ridge and the artillery had had every opportunity both for survey and registration of the valley in the preceding weeks. The remainder of "C" Coy under Major MacDougall came under the enemy fire as soon as they reached the ford and the heavier weapons were supplemented by heavy and light M.G. fire from the slopes of the ridge up to the Tollo road. Deciding that the most effective fire was coming from a house at approximately C296177, Major MacDougall led a party consisting of seven in a gallant attempt to storm it. His entire group was wiped out (missing presumed killed); the remainder of the company, under C.S.M. Tidd, took cover around the ford whence they were unable to make any advance. (W.D., Perth R., 17 Jan 44)

13. Meanwhile on the right "A" Coy under Capt F.B. Kennedy's command, met the same withering fire and were likewise halted as soon as they entered the gully. P.I.A.T. gunners got direct hits on a German strongpoint at C301184 which seemed to be causing most of the trouble. The tanks were brought to fire on this strongpoint but S.A. fire from it remained very heavy and the company was unable to make any advances out of the bed of the stream. ^{##} An attempted left flank movement by Lieut Clements was unsuccessful and cost the life of its leader. (W.D., Perth R., 17 Jan 44)

[#] In an attempt to establish the state of visibility the narrator made the following discoveries. The War Diary of Perth R. says the weather was "hazy and cool", Ir R.C. declare it was fair and warm, P.P.C.L.I. record it as "overcast and warm - visibility good". H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div declare it was "fair to cloudy with occasional showers" and the Cdn Met Sec, which might have produced a rather more scientific record were at that time moving forward with H.Q. 1 A.G.R.I. and no copies of their weather summaries have survived in the diaries consulted to date. The unfortunate loss of originals by enemy action has again taken the heaviest toll in appendices.

^{##} A defence overprint of this area published in March 1944 showed extensive V.G. positions on the ridge just above this house. (W.D., Perth R., 17 Jan 44)

14. While the story to this point follows a fairly simple pattern in the Perth R. war diary, it is not easy to make it accord with the reports that occur in the Operations logs of 11 Cdn Inf Bde and 1 Cdn Inf Div. Extensive use was made of smoke projectiles from all weapons and visibility in the valley became rather limited. The C.B. Highrs O.P., which might have provided a second point of observation, was under heavy fire and its occupants were finally forced to call for smoke and to evacuate at top speed. (I.D., C.B. Highrs, 17 Jan 44). Line communications were broken repeatedly and in spite of the efforts of Capt D. George and his line crew - which won for the officer an M.C. and for his senior N.C.O. an M.M. - there were many times when no clear picture of the attack could be obtained at any level of command.^x Heavy calls for supporting fire came in from Perth R. between 0800 and 0900 hours, but by 1040 hours the situation showed no improvement: "Right no change, sticky but solid, left pinned and broken." (I.D., 11 Cdn Inf Bde and Perth R., 17 Jan 44)

15. Two messages from Perth R. to H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde at 1135 and 1155 hours asked for smoke in the area of the Ford C298176, so that "B" and "D" Cos might work forward. The latter message states that, "'D' on the left will try "C" coy objective."^{xx} During the morning "B" Coy moved in behind "A" Coy and received the same heavy fire as they attempted to cross the gully. Although heavy casualties were suffered and the majority of the troops were pinned down, a section under Lieut Cook succeeded in getting on to the "C" Coy objective "but in insufficient strength to hold the ground". "D" Coy under Capt Ridge meanwhile tried to work around to the left of "C" Coy toward its own objective, but it was unable to advance owing to the heavy concentrations of mortar and shell fire that the enemy put down in addition to direct fire from machine guns on the slope. (I.D., Perth R., 17 Jan 44)

16. It was at this time, with at the most two platoons forward on the ridge and the remainder of the forward companies casualties or severely pinned down, that the following message timed 1135 hours, was passed from Intelligence 11 Cdn Inf Bde to H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div:

'A' Coy on obj incl gully H3C7 (C297184) and incl houses H2C7 (C295182). Tanks number unknown across to G8C6 (approx the enemy strongpoint at 296177).

It was decided to start the second phase of the operation which had depended on Perth R. control of at least the right end of their objectives. The plan for the C.B. Highrs attack was modified drastically in accordance with the situation. Instead of following the Perth R. route into the valley,

^x 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, item at 170925, C.B. Highrs to 11 Cdn Inf Bde, "Sitrep - no comms - no info - Brig tank coming up for OP." Possibly some communications were never logged, for gaps appear between battalion reports and sitreps. For example a Perth R. message to H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde of 170745 states: "Right (A) coy O... Left (C) coy held up by house at G8C5 (C296177) Tks engaging." The 11 Cdn Inf Bde sitrep to H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div of 170800 reports the following: "Right (A) coy held up by fire from houses 298186 12 tk sup very effective." The enemy points of resistance are located with reasonable accuracy but there is no record of an "in" message to 11 Cdn Inf Bde reporting the trouble for "A" Coy.

^{xx} Further evidence on the lack of information already referred to is shown by the phrase in this message "no known inf across ford at present moment."

C.B. Highrs were ordered to work down the draw of the stream that joins the Riccio at C300178, a route which would give a covered approach until the main stream was reached. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 17 Jan 44). As previously stated the O.P. party on the ridge had been under such heavy fire that they had been forced to retire. They were in the act of doing so when the order for the C.B. Highrs' attack was sent down from Brigade Headquarters at 1245 hours. Lt-Col Weir went forward in a tank to direct the attack. "D" Coy led the attack behind the barrage and the leading platoon got on to the Tollo road just short of the objective. Enemy fire became so heavy that the company had to take cover; they called for smoke, which was not too effective as the sloping terrain is difficult to screen at the best of times. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 17 Jan 44). No further progress was made, and when "C" Coy followed into the valley they also suffered heavily from the enemy fire of all types, lost communications and became confused in the smoke. Eventually part of the company retired through the smoke to the line of approach, while the remaining two platoons worked around to the left and succeeded in disengaging up the draw used by the Perth R. attack, although under fire and suffering casualties.

17. The remaining operations of C.B. Highrs are rather obscure. The unit war diary states that 'D' Coy made several attempts to get on to their objective, sending out raiding parties with P.I.A.Ts. to shoot up enemy strongpoints and attempting a right flank move that failed. The tanks supporting this attack did not cross the stream because of the failure of mine-clearing parties (who could hardly be expected to clear a ford where the forward infantry were pinned down on both banks and in the stream bed itself). The diary makes no mention of the reserve companies, "A" and "B", being committed, and states that:

At 1450 hours Lt-Col Weir received a message from Brigadier Kitching telling him not to commit his other two companies until the first two were consolidated on their objectives and also not to become involved in a night attack.

In view of this evidence the following message, C.B. Highrs to 11 Cdn Inf Bde, of 1710 hours, can only be interpreted as having confused the names of companies involved: "'A' coy held up within 60 x of obj. 'B' coy within 150 x of obj. 'D' coy moving up now.' With the exchange of 'D' for 'A' and 'C' for 'B', it constitutes a reasonable though optimistic statement of the situation. (W.Ds., 11 Cdn Inf Bde and C.B. Highrs, 17 Jan 44)

18. Meanwhile Perth R. made a second attempt to achieve the initial objectives on the Tollo road. Under cover of smoke and heavy artillery concentrations, "D" Coy assembled a force and pushed up towards the "C" Coy objective, making contact with the "C" Coy group which had gone to cover after the death of Major MacDougall. The combined force got within 200 yards of their objective but failed to cross the Tollo road. They had the support of direct fire from the tanks of "A" Sqn 12 Cdn Armd Regt, who, unable to cross the main stream of the Riccio, took up positions on the knoll at C296174. "A" Coy on the right was unable to make any comparable advance and at 1710 hours were reported to be abandoning their positions in the gully. (W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt and Perth R., 17 Jan 44). From H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde came orders to hold on at all costs and to keep the small bridgehead so hard won; but Perth R. H.Q. could only report as follows:

'A' coy out of touch. 'B' coy spread and out of control but are gathering in gully. 'C' coy joined up with 'D' and move [sic] up on to original obj of 'C' coy. Awaiting report.

(W.D., Perth R., 17 Jan 44)

"A" Coy withdrew about 1730 hours and "C" and "D" followed later. Although casualties had been very heavy there was a steady trickle of stragglers coming in during the night of 17/18, among whom were Lieut Chamberlain and his platoon from "C" Coy, which had spent the day dug in around the company objective. (W.Ds., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde and Perth R., 17 Jan 44). A Last Light Sitrep from 5 Corps gave the following picture of the day's effort:

Attack by 11 Cdn Inf Bde met by opposition and neither of the leading battalions reached their final objectives. Situation is still obscure and NO detailed locations are yet available but PERTH R have established a brhead over the river in area 298177. CB Highrs crossing at 303187 was heavily opposed and as yet no locations of fwd coys have been reported.

(Italy: 1944/5 Corps/C/H,
Docket III: 5 Corps Sitrep
0.611, 17 Jan 44)

19. During the evening a plan was formed for a second attack on the brigade objectives next day. No mention of the plan appears in war diaries of the infantry battalions or senior formations but the following excerpt from the 12 Cdn Armd Regt war diary shows that preparations were being well organized.

At approx 2100 hours the C.O. (Lt.-Col. J.F. Bingham)... was ordered to H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde for an 'O' Group, and plans were made for the C.B. Highrs to attack the following morning, 18 Jan, at 0800 hours, supported by an artillery barrage and "A" sgn 12 Cdn Armd Regt. This attack was to go through the Perth R. bridgehead which was being strengthened during the night and engineers were laid on to have the mines cleared by morning.

(W.D., 12 Cdn Armd Regt,
17 Jan 44)

Further confirmation appears in the operations log of 1 Cdn Inf Div in the form of a message from 11 Cdn Inf Bde at 2030 hours, which gave the intention of "Perth R. to maintain small bridgehead already formed and patrol strongly". (W.D., "G", H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1944: Ops Log Ser 1725, 17 Jan 44). In a speech to all ranks of C.B. Highrs on 19 Jan, General Vokes "complimented them and told them that they were to have attacked again the morning of the 18th but the plan was changed on a very short notice and they had been pulled out because of a larger picture". (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 19 Jan 44)

20. The high level decision to abandon this second attack and withdraw 11 Cdn Inf Bde does not appear in the war diaries of any Canadian formation, but the action taken was in keeping with the Eighth Army plan to avoid incurring heavy casualties, and to provide further employment for the brigade a few nights later (see para 4). It was evident from the confused and conflicting reports received during the day by H.Q. 5 Corps that only the slenderest hold had been obtained north of the River Riccio and all attempts to get forward were being strongly opposed by the enemy. The Corps Commander, realizing

that to press the attack further would entail a greater cost than results would justify ordered the brigade to disengage and withdraw to its original positions. (Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces in Italy, Part I, Section "B", p. 115, para 17). The word reached the units concerned at various times after 2100 hours that "Corps requested return to command of 11 Cdn Inf Bde and therefore brigade being pulled out. Perth R. and C.B. Highrs being pulled back through Ir R.C. and P.P.C.L.I. tonight and meet transport South of Ortona." (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Jan 44). The withdrawal took place as planned and during the afternoon of the 18th Seaforth of C. relieved Ir R.C., who joined the rest of the brigade. (W.D., Ir R.C., 18 Jan 44)

21. The Canadian casualties had been severe, and totalled seven officers and 149 other ranks. Heaviest sufferers were Perth R., who had lost three officers and 32 men killed or missing, and 63 other ranks wounded. C.B. Highrs had sustained casualties of twelve men killed, and three officers and 28 other ranks wounded. (W.Ds., Perth R. and C.B. Highrs, May 1945: Records Office Machine Roll of Casualties)

22. Units of 11 Cdn Inf Bde had now fought their first action and had suffered their first battle casualties. The operation was briefly summed up in the 5 Corps war diary.

11 Cdn lorried Inf Bde attacked across R. Riccio with object of firming up along line of R. Arielli. Hy opposition was encountered, and at last light the posn of fwd tps across the river was so insecure that it was decided to withdraw them and resume the status quo.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Corps,
17 Jan 44)

Early in January, when the brigade was first committed to the line, its diarist had written, "The intention is to 'break us in easily'". He had been wiser than he knew when he concluded the entry with the words: "We shall soon see whether it is 'easy' or not." (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Jan 44). Towards the end of the month (26 Jan) Maj-Gen Burns and Maj-Gen Simonds visited 11 Cdn Inf Bde Headquarters. It was reported (apparently on the basis of their impressions) that

...it appeared that the Perth R. and C.B. Highrs while not successful in taking and holding their objectives, had performed quite creditably in what was a difficult operation for their first try, fighting against hard opposition.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn
Armd Div, 26 Jan 44)

23. As recorded in an earlier report (No. 170), at the conclusion of the operation 11 Cdn Inf Bde did not long remain in reserve after its relief by 2 Cdn Inf Bde (17, 18 Jan 44). On 20 Jan the brigade came under command of 4 Ind Inf Div (of 13 Corps), to relieve 7 Ind Bde on the Orsogna front (see para 3; and W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jan 44). Brigade Headquarters relieved H.Q. 7 Ind Bde at Spaccarelli (C2804), and C.B. Highrs relieved 1/2 Gurkhas. "B" and "D" Coys of Perth R. relieved the "flank force" of 7 Ind Bde on 21 Jan. (Ibid, 21 Jan 44). The remaining companies of the regiment were held in reserve, and on the 24th were moved into the area of the Ir R.C., who had taken over from the R. Sussex

on the morning of 22 Jan. For the rest of the month activities of the brigade were restricted to patrolling. The formation remained under command 4 Ind Inf Div, and did not rejoin 5 Cdn Armd Div until 1 Feb (See para 49).

24. The same report describes the initial operations during January of other units of 5 Cdn Armd Div. These involved the relief of 19 N.Z. Armd Regt on 19-21 Jan by 2 Cdn Armd Regt. Squadrons of the regiment supported 5 and 7 Ind Inf Bdes in the Castel Frentano (H2999) area. When 5 Cdn Armd Div took over 4 Ind Inf Div's sector of the line on 1 Feb, the armoured regiment reverted to under command its own division (Report No. 170, para 98; and W.Ds., 2 Cdn Armd Regt and G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, January 1944). The brief period of service by Westm R. (Mot) - 18-25 Jan - when it was placed under command of 5 Ind Inf Bde near Salarola (H229977) is described in para 100 of Report No. 170.

THE HAST & P.E.R. ATTACK ALONG THE
VILLA GRANDE - TOLLO ROAD, 30-31 JAN 44

25. One more offensive operation by Canadians on the Adriatic front during the winter of 1943-4 remains to be recorded. This was the abortive and costly attempt by Hast & P.E.R. to capture enemy localities on 1 Cdn Inf Bde's front during 30, 31 Jan. As we have noted, the month of January was in the main confined to patrol activity and no operation of any magnitude was undertaken by troops of 1 Cdn Inf Div. Few prisoners were taken and the enemy displayed increasing alertness and wariness. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/ 1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket I, Report by Historical Officer 1 Cdn Inf Div, 8 Jan 44). The capture on 4 Jan 44 of Torre Muchia - better known to our troops as Point 59 - had forced the enemy to withdraw to the high ground in front of the Arielli and overlooking the Riccio. (W.D., Carlt & York R., 4 Jan 44)

26. At the end of the month 1 Cdn Inf Bde was on the division's left and southern flank in an area generally known as the Moregine Plateau. (See Map "A"). To the north-west of the Ortona - Orsogna road the coastal plateau is cut by a series of gullies, the first being the Riccio to the east of the Villa Grande, while two miles beyond is the deeper gully of the Arielli. Between the Riccio and the Arielli another small gully runs due north from Villa Grande. It was in this last gully, intersected by the Villa Grande - Tolto road, that the brigade was entrenched on 30 Jan, with the Piano di Moregine separating the brigade's position from the valley of the Arielli. In the immediate rear of these positions were the villages of S. Tommaso, S. Nicola and Villa Grande. On the brigade's right was R.C.R., in the centre was 4 Cdn Recce Regt (P.L.D.G.), and on the extreme left flank 48 Highrs. Hast & P.E.R. was in reserve in the rear of 48 Highrs, through whose area they were ordered to attack. (Report by Historical Officer, 1 Cdn Inf Div, 29 Jan 44)

27. It was believed that the German 1 Para Div was strongly entrenched on the east side of the Arielli at all points along this sector, but the opinion also prevailed amongst the Intelligence staff that certain elements of this hard fighting formation had been moved to the Fifth Army front. (Ibid). Consequently, it was with the primary object of taking prisoners for purposes of identification and interrogation that plans were made to seize and hold two limited

objectives on the Moregine Plateau overlooking the Arielli. The project would also test in what strength the enemy was holding the approach to Tollo. It is not apparent that, in the event of the attack being brought to a successful conclusion, any plans were contemplated for further exploitation. (Ibid)

28. The selected objectives were two positions astride the Villa Grande - Tollo road, 1000 yards south-east of its crossing over the Arielli (see Map "A"). The axis of advance was the Villa Grande - Tollo road itself. The right objective consisting of a group of houses, was given the code name of "APPLE BLOSSOM" (278145) and the left objective was labelled "TRAFALGAR" (279142)*. (G.S.G.S. Italy, 1944, 1/50,000 Sheets 141-II and 147-I; Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III, Hast & P.E.R.: Maj-Gen C. Vokes, Report by H.Q. 1 Cdn Div, on the attack by the Hast & PER astride the TOLLO rd 30 and 31 Jan 44). The start line, approximately 1500 yards west of Villa Grande, was immediately in front of 48 Highrs' position astride the Villa Grande road. Approximately half way between the start line and the objectives was a demolished house labelled "ASTER" (281143). (Ibid)

29. During the week immediately preceding the date set for the attack, 30 Jan, both sides patrolled the intervening ground and each other's positions with undiminished activity. 48 Highrs reported the approaches and verges to "ASTER" thick with mines and booby traps. (Ibid, Ser 2364, 29 Jan 44). The enemy was reported "using dogs to give warning of approaching enemy patrols." (Ibid, Ser 2374, 30 Jan 44). During the night 29/30 Jan a section from 1 Fd Coy R.C.E. was detailed to attempt to clear the area of mines; mines were to be neutralized not lifted. (Ibid, Ser 2375, 30 Jan 44). That same night enemy shelling was very heavy in the area; contact patrols operated throughout the night. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 30 Jan 44). In contrast to the wild storms and intense cold which had characterized the close of the year the greater part of January had been favoured with unseasonably hot weather, and the days had been fine and clear. The weather reports for 30 and 31 January were "clear and sunny". (W.D., 48 Highrs, 30, 31 Jan 44)

PLAN OF ATTACK

30. The intention of the Brigade Commander - Brigadier D.C. Spry - was that Hast & P.E.R. should advance on a two-company front behind a very heavy barrage and seize and hold their objectives. Following reconnaissances of the area, Lt-Col A.A. Kennedy, D.S.O., commanding Hast & P.E.R., issued orders that "D" Coy on the left and "B" Coy on the right should lead the battalion in the attack, with "A" Coy following "D" Coy and "C" Coy following "B" Coy. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 29 and 30 Jan 44). Artillery, tank and aerial support would be given respectively by 1 Cdn Inf Div R.C.A., by a squadron from 14 Cdn Armd Regt, and by squadrons of the Desert Air Force. (Vokes, Report by H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div on the attack by the Hast & PER astride the TOLLO rd 30 and 31 Jan 44). Diversions during the attack would also be created by R.C.R.

* These reference points are given, apparently incorrectly, in 1 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log as 288146 and 279142 (W.D., "G", H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, January 1944: Appx 52, 1 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, Ser 2387, 30 Jan 44)

on the right flank and 48 Highrs on the left. The artillery support would consist of a barrage 1200 yards in depth on a 1000-yard front and would advance at the rate of 100 yards in two minutes. On the right flank there would be heavy concentrations on pre-arranged enemy positions on call by the battalion commander. It was planned to lay down a smoke "screen" on the left flank if required. In addition a heavy 4.2-inch mortar concentration to deal with the enemy in the river valley was arranged under direction of C.R.A. (Vokes, op cit). In the war diary of H.Q. R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div appears the following comment on the operational plan:

A straightforward affair with only one unusual feature. That is the rate of advance which is 100 yards in two minutes. Time alone will tell if our infantry can follow at such a pace even though the ground is very favourable.

(W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 29 Jan 44)

31. It was arranged that tank support should be given by "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt and that one troop should be placed under the command of each of the officers commanding the two leading infantry companies. The tanks were ordered to advance immediately behind the barrage and to sweep the objectives before the infantry reached them (Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket III, Hast & P.E.R., Lieut Lachance, Narrative of Hast & PER attack 31 Jan). Arrangements were made with the Desert Air Force that Tollo should be bombed at 1530 hours on the day of the attack, and that hostile battery positions should be bombed and strafed from 1500 hours till dusk. R.C.R. positioned on the right flank was ordered to create a diversion "by means of small arms, 3-inch mortar and supporting arms on their front, thus containing the enemy that they are in contact with." (W.D., R.C.R., 30 Jan 44). On the left flank 48 Highrs were also ordered to co-operate:

Our role to lend all possible co-operation to Hast & P.E.R. and to shift our forward companies clear of artillery barrage. Also we are to provide left flank reserve fire with our attached M.M.G. [medium machine guns].

(W.D., 48 Highrs, 30 Jan 44)

Zero hour was set for 1600 hours 30 Jan 44.

THE FIRST ATTACK, 30 JAN 44

32. The two leading companies of Hast & P.E.R., "D" Coy on the left and "B" Coy on the right, left for their forming up places at about 1400 hours on the day of the attack. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 30 Jan 44). At 2230 hours on the previous evening two troops, 5 and 7, of "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt, left their harbour and moved to a sheltered position behind Hast & P.E.R. (W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Jan 44). Promptly at zero hour the attacking infantry, followed by their supporting armour, crossed the start line immediately in front of 48 Highrs' position. At the outset everything went according to plan. The barrage came down with great effect - in the words of the R.C.A. war diary "The barrage fell beautifully." (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jan 44). At 1530 hours Tollo was bombed by the Desert Air Force, and from 1500 hours, continuing during the attack until dusk,

enemy battery positions were bombed and strafed. The extent of the air support is shown in the following R.A.F. report:

The principal close support missions were flown to soften the enemy defences at Tollo in the coastal sector prior to a thrust by the Canadians; in this connection Baltimores flew 36 sorties and Kittyhawk bombers 63 sorties.

(R.A.F. Mediterranean Review, No. 6, January to March 1944, p. 51)

33. The diversion created by R.C.R. was considered by that unit to have had good effect. "At the beginning of the attack our forward companies became active; the mortars opened up and a successful diversion was created on our part." (W.D., R.C.R., 30 Jan 44). Everything in the initial stages of the advance appeared to be going well with all the contributory factors fitting in with the planned picture. The infantry and tanks continued to move forward behind the barrage but apparently had difficulty in keeping up with it at the rate of 100 yards in two minutes, a contingency foreseen by the staff of H.Q. R.C.A. (See para 30). During the advance to "ASTER" opposition by the enemy was slight, and at 1705 hours the Commanding Officer reported everything satisfactory, and said that he expected to take the objectives shortly. (Vokes, op cit)

34. After reaching "ASTER", however, the situation rapidly worsened. The two leading companies, "D" Coy and "B" Coy, were pinned down by intense fire from well-sited enemy mortar and machine gun positions and were forced to go to ground. They managed, however, to reach a gully (281145) and regrouped. (W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 30 Jan 44). On the right "B" Coy had suffered casualties from machine gun fire whilst on the left "D" Coy suffered even more heavily from mortar fire; neither company was able to advance. Up to this point the tanks had moved forward with the infantry and had given them supporting fire, but, shortly after reaching "ASTER", the right troop of tanks lost sight of the infantry and held firm on fire positions on the right of "ASTER". The left troop was also undergoing difficulties; the troop leader's tank had become bogged down shortly after crossing the start line, but the other two tanks had managed to work forward as far as "ASTER". (Ibid)

35. After regrouping, the infantry made another attempt to advance. "D" Coy on the left was reinforced by one platoon from "A" Coy, which was in reserve on the left. A second fire plan to deal with enemy machine guns was hastily arranged. (Ibid). "D" Coy, leading on the left, succeeded in reaching positions only 100 yards short of their objective, but, owing to the fact that they had to cross open ground which was under extremely heavy mortar fire, were again pinned down at that point. On the right, "B" Coy, which had completely lost contact with the tanks, made some progress, but was stopped by mortar fire and could not continue to move forward. By this time darkness had begun to fall and further fighting was useless. The battle ended at approximately 1740 hours. (Vokes, op cit). The attack had proved abortive. The objectives were still held by the enemy, no prisoners had been taken, and our casualties - 1 killed and 41 wounded - were relatively high. (Ibid). During the evening of 30 Jan the C.O. Hast & P.E.R. reported the situation to the Commander 1 Cdn Inf Bde. On the basis of the information then available the Brigade Commander ordered the two forward companies of Hast & P.E.R. to withdraw, and preparations were made for another attack on the following day. (Ibid)

THE SECOND ATTACK, 31 JAN 44

36. The intention of the second attack was the same as for the first with the following changes of plan: (a) in order to preserve the element of surprise there would be no artillery concentrations before the barrage; (b) the tanks were ordered to precede the infantry moving close under the barrage and covered by a smoke screen; (c) the rate of advance was altered from 100 yards in two minutes to 100 yards in three minutes. The general intention was that the tanks, advancing immediately behind the barrage, should sweep the objectives before the infantry reached them. Zero hour was originally planned for 1400 hours 31 Jan, but was subsequently postponed to 1430 hours to enable the casualties of the previous day to be evacuated from the battlefield. (Ibid)

37. At 1430 hours 31 Jan the barrage came down as planned, and the tanks advanced close behind it. To give an adequate conception of this second attack it is necessary to describe the movements of "B" Sqn tanks in some detail. 7 Tp was ordered to attack on the left flank with 6 Tp attacking on the right; 5 Tp was ordered to give covering fire from a rear position, and 8 Tp was detailed to come up after the attack to act as a reserve troop. The first tank of 6 Tp proceeded along the road leading to "ASTER", but, before reaching that intermediate objective it was forced off the road by a demolition and struck a mine. The second tank managed to by-pass both the demolition and the damaged first tank, and was able to follow up close behind the barrage. The third tank was not so fortunate; it also struck a mine and was put out of action. Meanwhile the remaining tank moved to the right, and when the barrage lifted the crew found themselves facing an enemy anti-tank gun. Reacting quickly the crew engaged this unexpected target and destroyed it. From this position the crew engaged many targets with great success as long as ammunition lasted. On the left the three tanks of 7 Tp advanced in open order, engaging a number of targets with good results. It was not very long, however, before the troop commander was wounded and had to return to the rear. The sergeant immediately assumed command, and the two remaining tanks advanced close to their objective. At this point the sergeant's tank struck a mine which put his guns and his tank completely out of action. The surviving tank continued to fire until ammunition ran out. (W.D., 14 Cdn Armd Regt, 31 Jan 44)

38. The infantry story can be told briefly. By 1450 hours one tank had reported the right objective and a second that he was just short of the objective on the left. Immediately on receipt of this information the infantry moved forward. As in the attack on the previous day, neither of the leading companies met with any serious opposition at the outset, and they were able to advance with little hindrance to a point roughly half way between the start line and the final objectives. "A" Coy on the left and "B" Coy on the right were now in the middle of flat table ground, when they encountered intense enemy mortar and machine gun fire, described by one eye witness as "the heaviest mortar barrage he had ever seen." Four times they tried to go ahead but each time they were scattered by fire. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Bde, Docket III, Hast & P.E.R.: Report by Lieut Lachance). The leading companies were subjected to the most savage artillery and mortar fire, and also to machine gun fire from the left objective. It was estimated that at least fifteen enemy machine guns had opposed the left flank. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 31 Jan 44)

39. By this time - approximately 1615 hours - the tanks had run out of ammunition and were unable to render further assistance to the infantry. They were accordingly ordered to withdraw. The Commanding Officer Hast & P.E.R. did not wish to commit a third troop of tanks, as he would then be left without reserves. It was now apparent that the infantry was unable to capture the objectives; the enemy fire was of such ferocity that it was purposeless to continue the battle. Darkness was beginning to descend and the battalion was ordered to fall back. By 1630 hours the withdrawal had been completed. (Vokes, op cit)

40. The two attacks had failed to capture the objectives, and our casualties had been heavy. Nor did the operation confirm that the German 1 Para Div was holding the enemy sector. No available sources of information record that any prisoners were taken by our troops. An Intelligence Summary comments on what is described as "The fight for the Arielli" in these words:

It will be seen that the enemy relied upon concentrated mortar fire for the protection of the right hand side of the Tolto road, and upon M.G. fire for the protection of the left hand side of the road. It is more usual to mix the two forms of fire ... It must be assumed that the left of the road was held by one coy, probably 3 Coy of the 4 Para Regt, with another holding the lip of the gully to the right of the road, this coy being more extended across the front... The tanks had the drop on the Paks by being so well up behind the barrage, and so, in two days fighting, Ko'd 4 of them while the smoke from the shells obscured the enemy's vision.

(Hist Soc file Italy: 1944/
1 Cdn Inf Div/L/F, Docket I:
1 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence
Summaries, Report No. 35)

41. It is not possible to give an accurate estimate of enemy casualties, but three anti-tank guns were definitely destroyed, and our tanks inflicted a considerable number of casualties. Our own casualties for the two days' action were officers, 1 killed, 4 wounded and 3 missing; other ranks 10 killed, 75 wounded and 25 missing. Three of our tanks were knocked out, two by mines and one by anti-tank fire. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 31 Jan 44). The value of the operation can only be assessed in the light of the importance placed on the knowledge gained of the enemy's strength. Recorded opinions generally discounted the value as the following comments indicate:

The general feeling is that this is a very high price to pay for the knowledge that the enemy is holding the approach to Tolto in strength.

(W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf
Bde, 2 Feb 44)

The attack of Hast & P.E.R. with "B" Sqn 14 Cdn Armd Regt was partially successful.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn
Inf Div, 31 Jan 44)

42. But the operation taught more than one lesson, and the following extracts from the G.O.C.'s. report are of interest:

The rate of advance of the barrage on 30 Jan 44, i.e. 100 yards in two minutes, is too fast for infantry. 100 yards in three minutes is the maximum speed. The rate of advance must be the subject of appreciation on every occasion, bearing in mind the configurations of the ground and the "going" conditions for the infantry. The ruling factor must always be that the barrage shall move at a speed which enables the leading infantry to keep close behind.

(Vokes, op cit)

With regard to enemy fire the G.O.C. comments:

Enemy D.F. tasks are usually on "fixed" lines and come down automatically. It is fatal for infantry to allow themselves to be "pinned". If they move through it quickly the enemy cannot alter range as quickly as they can move. It should be the object of every single soldier to "close" on his objective irrespective of whether he is "alone" or "accompanied".

(Ibid)

43. The reception given the Hast & P.E.R. attack on 30, 31 Jan made it obvious that the enemy was holding the approaches to Tolto - and by inference his whole Adriatic front - in greater strength than would allow of their capture by a small-scale operation, even though the infantry was given artillery, tank and air support. No further offensive operations were attempted that winter by 1 Cdn Inf Div, or by 1 Cdn Corps when that formation shortly afterwards relieved 5 Corps on the right of Eighth Army's line. The next twelve weeks in the history of the Canadian military forces in Italy were to be devoid of major action - weeks of static warfare, reliefs, training, and preparations for the great spring assault of the Allied Armies of Italy.

1 CDN CORPS ASSUMES COMMAND
IN THE ADRIATIC SECTOR, 1 FEB 44.

44. At midnight 31 Jan/1 Feb 44 H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps formally relieved H.Q. 5 Corps. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, February 1944: Appx 40, Scr 18, 1 Feb 44). The announcement of the changeover was full of significance for every Canadian soldier in Italy, since it proclaimed that for the first time in any theatre of war a Canadian Corps was operating in the line, and emphasized another milestone on the march of Canada's army. It was in fact the realization of a policy conceived in October 1943, when it was decided at a conference held at Canadian Military Headquarters in London to ship to the Mediterranean sufficient troops to "make up a balanced Corps in the Middle East". (First Cdn Army file: P.A. 1-18-1, Conference of 8 Oct 43, Notes by Brig Rodgers; and Report No. 170, Operation "TIMBERWOLF")

45. On the last day of January Corps Headquarters moved from the area of Bari to Rocco S. Giovanni, to assume its first operational role. Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, C.B., D.S.O., thus became responsible for a seven-mile sector on the right flank of the Eighth Army bordering on the Adriatic Sea. The troops under his command on 1 Feb consisted of 1 Cdn Inf Div -

commanded by Maj-Gen C. Vokes, D.S.O. - and two squadrons of 14 Cdn Armd Regt on the right, with 8 Ind Div, 2 Para Bde and one squadron of 14 Cdn Armd Regt on the left. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, less certain elements, was in reserve; artillery support was provided by 1 (Br) A.G.R.A. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, February 1944: Appx 3, 1 Cdn Corps Order of Battle 1 Feb 44). The Corps boundary between 1 Cdn Corps and 13 (Br) Corps ran roughly through Lanciano north-west, crossing the Orsogna - Ortona lateral road south of Arielli.

46. On the 1 Cdn Inf Div front 2 Cdn Inf Bde commanded by Brigadier B.M. Hoffmeister, was located near the Adriatic Sea on the Division's right flank astride the coastal road - Route 16 - holding the important high point 59 (Torre di Mucchia); its forward line ran along the right bank of the River Riccio. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, commanded by Brigadier D.C. Spry, occupied the left and southern flank of the Division and was disposed on the Moregine plateau looking across the valley of the Arielli towards Tollo. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, under Brigadier T.G. Gibson, was in reserve with two battalions in Ortona and one in Apollinare. Divisional Headquarters was established in the mud by Marina S. Vito (559123). (Ibid: Appx 4, 1 Cdn Corps Location Statement 2 Feb 44; Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F Docket I: Report by Historical Officer 1 Cdn Inf Div, 28 Jan 44)

47. 8 Ind Div, under command of Maj-Gen D. Russell, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., was deployed to the south-east of 1 Cdn Inf Div in positions covering the Orsogna - Ortona road, with 21 Ind Bde on the right covering the area along the Arielli between Crecchio and 1 Cdn Inf Bde. 17 Ind Bde was opposite Crecchio and 2 Para Bde - which was under command of 8 Ind Div - held the left flank between Crecchio and Arielli. 19 Ind Bde was in reserve in the divisional area (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, February 1944: Appx 4, 1 Cdn Corps Location Statement, 2 Feb 44; and Appx 40, "G" Ops Log, Ser 49, 2 Feb 44)

48. The regrouping of the Eighth Army which took place at this time coincided with a decision of the Commander-in-Chief that Fifth Army's new offensive on the western side of Italy must be given all possible assistance by General Leese's Army. In order to cause the enemy to maintain a large force opposite the Eighth Army front considerations were given, towards the end of January, to two alternatives: (i) an immediate small-scale attack, or (ii) a larger offensive to be mounted later when Eighth Army had received reinforcing formations. On 20 Jan the Army Commander informed General Alexander that he thought it preferable to husband his resources until a major effort could be launched in sufficient strength to secure penetration in depth, and that offensive operations should not be started before mid-February. But on 30 Jan the C.-in-C. asked that 4 Ind Div, which had been employed since the middle of the month on the right flank of 13 Corps, should be sent with all speed to the Fifth Army front. General Leese then realized that any offensive in the near future by the Eighth Army was out of the question. (Eighth Army Operations - Reggio to Ortona, pp 110-117)

49. As 4 Ind Div began, on the last day of January, to move out of 13 Corps' area, 11 Cdn Inf Bds continued to hold the division's right sector between Arielli and Orsogna. On 1 Feb 5 Cdn Armd Div took over command of the sector from 4 Ind Div, itself coming under 13 Corps command. On 4 Feb General Alexander informed the Commander of Eighth Army that he would require a further division - 78 Inf Div - to move from Eighth Army to be available as a reserve for Fifth Army. This additional drain upon Eighth Army's resources was considered essential in order

that all available forces might be concentrated on winning the Cassino battle. The movement of 78 Div started on 16 Feb and was completed two days later. (Ibid, pp 119-120)

50. The departure of these two division to the west necessitated re-arrangement and extension of the area of control of the remaining formations and units on the Adriatic front. This resulted in the formation of a completely Canadian command under H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps. During the first week of February, as we have seen, 1 Cdn Corps, having taken over from 5 Corps, had 1 Cdn Inf Div on the right in the coastal sector, and 8 Ind Div on the left deployed on both sides of the town of Crecchio. 1 Cdn Armd Bde was under command, and four regiments of 1 (Br) A.G.R.A., were temporarily under command for medium and heavy artillery support. The consummation of plans for a unified Canadian Corps control came when orders were issued on 6 Feb that 5 Cdn Armd Div - in the sector opposite Orsogna - would pass from under command 13 Corps to under command 1 Cdn Corps. During the night 8/9 Feb 11 Cdn Inf Bde was relieved by a reserve brigade of 8 Ind Div. Next day the Canadian brigade moved into the line again, relieving the remaining brigades of 8 Ind Div east of Crecchio. 8 Ind Div in turn relieved 5 Cdn Armd Div and two brigades of 78 Div on the 13 Corps front, releasing the latter division for its movement to the Cassino sector. On 4 Feb 1 Cdn A.G.R.A., commanded by Brigadier W.E. Huckvale, moved into support of 1 Cdn Corps, relieving 1 (Br) A.G.R.A., which was transferred to the Fifth Army front (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn A.G.R.A., 1-6 Mar 44). At 1200 hours on 9 Feb 5 Cdn Armd Div came under command 1 Cdn Corps; 1 Cdn Armd Bde was placed under command 13 Corps to give the latter requisite armour. (Eighth Army Operations - Reggio to Ortona, p. 120; W.D., Lt.-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, 5, 6 Feb 44)

51. With the movement of 5 Cdn Armd Div into 1 Cdn Corps a change in the inter-Corps boundary somewhat reduced the width of the Corps sector. The new boundary with 13 Corps (see Map "B") now ran roughly through Mozzogrogna north-west to Scorciosca (3602) - Salciaroli (2809) - Crecchio and beyond in a straight line to Ripa Teatina (1917) in enemy-held territory. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, February 1944: Appx 40, "G" Ops Log, Ser 315, 6 Feb 44). 1 Cdn Inf Div on the right flank of the Corps occupied the same positions it held on the first of the month (see para 46). A routine change took place when 1 Cdn Inf Bde on the left flank was relieved by 3 Cdn Inf Bde on 10 Feb to go into divisional reserve. On the left flank of 1 Cdn Corps the 5 Cdn Armd Div line now extended from its junction with 1 Cdn Inf Div, near the village of Villa Grande, along the upper reaches of the Arielli as far left as Crecchio, where it joined the 13 Corps boundary. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, with Westmr R. (Mot) under command, held this sector; 5 Cdn Armd Bde was in reserve. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, February 1944; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, February 1944; H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, February 1944: Appx 8, 1 Cdn Corps Location Statement, 13 Feb 44)

52. At long last practically the whole of 1 Cdn Corps had taken its place in the line. The diarist of H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps describes the period from 1 Feb to 7 Mar 44 (the date on which the sector reverted to the command of 5 Corps) as "five somewhat discouraging weeks." (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, March 1944: Appx 48, Ser 358). Nevertheless, although the Corps was committed to a static role, the period was one of incessant, if not spectacular, activity. The terms static and active are not incompatible. The Corps had a task to perform, and subsequent paragraphs will show the nature of the task and the manner of its fulfilment.

THE ADRIATIC BARRICADE - 1 CDN CORPS' TASK

53. 1 Cdn Corps was now called upon to play its part in the general development of Italian operations. British and American troops were thrusting hard at the enemy around the new Anzio bridgehead, where bitter fighting was taking place. On the main Fifth Army front the Americans had advanced and had consolidated their positions north of Cassino; the town was almost completely cut off. On the Eighth Army front active patrolling continued; patrols reported the enemy very alert and considerable enemy movement was heard. (4/Summ C.I.G.S./1/3: C.I.G.S. Summary No. 154, 3 Feb 44). During the first week of February General Lumsden visited the Canadian Corps and, in a speech to R. 22e R. on 4 Feb, spoke encouragingly of the past accomplishments and future role of the Canadian forces in Italy:

Our first object was to knock Italy out of the war. This we have done. We are now on another venture. Germany must be finished in 1944. The Eighth Army led by Canadians is going to Germany. The present large scale operation is the capture of Rome. You have brought us all the way through Sicily and half way across Italy. Your Corps will lead the way to Berlin.

(W.D., R. 22e R., 4 Feb 44)

54. The immediate task of the Canadian Corps was to contain as many of the enemy as possible, to hinder his movements and his efforts at thinning out his line on the Corps front, and to harass him unceasingly.

The task which we have been set is now more important than ever in view of the landing south of Rome and the push of the Fifth Army. We must not only push the enemy back, but above all we must contain as many of the enemy as possible. This we have so far succeeded in doing, and only one battalion, III/1 Para Regt, has the enemy dared to withdraw to succour the hard pressed friends across the hills.

(Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div/L/F, Folio 1: 1 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 35, 1 Feb 44)

A later Intelligence Summary emphasized the importance of the Corps role:

It is growing more important for the "BIG PICTURE", which now spreads to within fifteen miles of Rome, that our Division keeps close touch on those Huns who are now facing us. The enemy would like nothing better than to withdraw some of his trusty Parachutists and fill the resultant gaps with some infantry such as those from 305 Inf Div.

(Ibid: Summary No. 36)

55. Not the least urgent part of the Corps' task was to capture prisoners, in the hope that an exact enemy order of battle might be maintained. It had become a matter of extreme importance to the larger planning that moves of enemy formations

and units to the Cassino front and the Anzio bridgehead should be accurately registered. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 12 Feb 44). Of particular interest to Eighth Army Intelligence were the dispositions and intentions of units of 1 Para Div. The enemy could be expected to consider that General Heidrich's redoubtable division was wasting its energies in the comparatively quiet Adriatic sector, and the possibility was recognized that the Paratroopers would be withdrawn to another front at the first opportunity. Prisoners were thus needed to establish or confirm the identification of the troops facing the Canadian Corps and to determine to what extent elements of 1 Para Div had been moved to the Fifth Army front. (Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket I: Report by Historical Officer, 20 Feb 44) (See para 27). The enemy troops along 1 Cdn Corps Front on 1 Feb 44 were believed to be 1 Para Div with elements of 65 Inf Div on the German left or coastal flank inland as far as Crocchio, 305 Inf Div in the centro, between Arielli and Orsogna, and on the right, 334 Inf Div south of Orsogna. These formations were under command of LXXVI Pz Corps (replaced on 11 Feb by LI Mountain Corps) (4/Summ C.I.G.S., Summary No. 153 2 Feb 44; No. 163, 12 Feb 44)

56. On 1 Feb the G.O.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div returned from leave and announced at a divisional "O" Group on 4 Feb that the static role would be maintained for some time. (Report by Historical Officer, 20 Feb 44). The term "static" must not be interpreted to mean complete quiescence and cessation of all activity. It conveys rather that the Corps did not contemplate the prosecution of any "territorial gains". The month of February was, in fact, to be marked by unceasing patrol activity on both sides, with the enemy continuing to improve his positions whilst we harassed him by unexpected artillery tactics. Any inference that it was a period of inactivity on the part of the infantry is contradicted by the Historical Officer, 1 Cdn Inf Div:

From the point of view of the battalions this has been an exacting and hazardous task. The laconic announcement of "patrolling" in sitrops and communiquees has become so usual that this word is generally regarded as synonymous with inactivity. Nevertheless a good proportion of an infantry company in forward positions is committed nightly and frequently during the day to a form of warfare which requires the soldier to crawl on his belly for considerable distances through the mud and to run the gauntlet of "S" mines, flares, machine gun and mortar fire in order to take a prisoner or recon an enemy position. This dangerous form of military exercise becomes increasingly distasteful during a period of static operations. If the troops know they are going somewhere they patrol with zest, but, if they feel that patrolling has become a routine substitute for more active offensive operations, they are inclined to lose interest.

(Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket I, Report by Historical Officer, 3 Mar 44)

57. 1 Cdn Corps assumed its duties in the line at a time when weather conditions were at their worst and the spirits of the troops at a low level. The credit and debit sides of the morale of the troops will be dealt with in subsequent paragraphs. This service, however, in what has not inappropriately been called "The Adriatic Barricade" provided a good probationary period for the reinforcements who were filling the gaps caused by casualties or sickness, and, as a prelude to the strenuous months

of action which lay ahead, acclimatized them to enemy fire and the exigencies of battlefield conditions. It was also a period in which many units were temporarily rested, and were thus afforded such amenities of civilization as were available behind the line.

1 CDN CORPS IN THE LINE, 1 FEB - 7 MAR 44

58. The task outlined above was performed assiduously, and the enemy enjoyed little peace. The story of the Corps' stay in the line is one of unrelenting harassing of the enemy by our fire, coupled with unceasing patrolling. There are few "high lights" to record. The tempo remained constant and unadorned by any spectacular crescendos; the only diminuendos were when the weather called a halt to all activity. During the tenancy of 1 Cdn Corps of the sector weather conditions were appalling, and were thus described by an observer.

Descriptions of the weather are vital to the understanding of most questions of operations and morale on this front. With very little respite the weather in February remained bad, and the effect of this factor has been depressing. The heavy clay of the coastal sector, in which we have tried to fight, has been converted into a morass, and the conditions of our forward slit trenches can be imagined more easily than described. It was not until 27 February that the sun made more than a fitful appearance. Although the climate moderated somewhat during the last days of February, for the first ten days of March "the elements raged with unexampled fury." Gales which broke over the battlefield on 10/11 Feb brought heavy floods which caused large sections of the coastal road to disappear, necessitating the use of the roundabout mountain roads which had become similarly impassable.

(Ibid)

59. Since the main activity during the five weeks 1 Feb to 7 Mar was patrolling, it is relevant to clarify the nomenclature and objects of the several types of patrols as established at a conference held at H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, on 14 Feb. They were defined as follows:

- (1) Recce patrols,
 - (a) Strength: generally one officer and three other ranks - to be heavily armed and capable of defending itself.
 - (b) Objects: to obtain information by listening, watching or searching; avoids fighting.
- Standing patrols,
 - (a) Strength: any number up to a platoon.
 - (b) Objects : (1) for protective purposes
(2) to kill (3) to ambush,
- Fighting patrols,
 - (a) Strength: generally one officer, one N.C.O., and ten other ranks. Special Fighting patrols - generally a platoon. Objects: (1) to contact the enemy and fight (2) to bring in a body (3) to dominate No Man's Land.

Raiding party,

Strength: larger than a platoon,
Objects : (1) to raid and clear out positions
(2) to capture prisoners from an enemy position
(3) to carry out special tasks.

(W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde,
February 1944: Appx 17)

During February and March patrols of all these types were employed by the Canadians for the all-important purpose of gaining information. In the paragraphs which follow a limited selection will be made from the large number of incidents reported in brigade and unit war diaries.

60. Night after night our patrols continued to operate along the entire front. The need for prisoners was stressed from Corps to division, from division to brigade, and thence to every battalion and every platoon. Successful results came slowly, and at infrequent intervals. When they did it might be in the following pattern. On 4 Feb Seaforth of C., in the Ortona sector, took a prisoner in a sharp patrol skirmish, the first captured on the divisional front for some time. The patrol was operating in the area 2917 when they came across two Germans in slit trenches. The patrol commander shot both of them, killing one and wounding the other. The prisoner was interrogated at Seaforth of C. R.A.P., where he died a few hours later, but not before some useful information had been obtained from him. He belonged to II Bn, 3 Para Regt, and he stated that their company strength was only 70; their company commander had been killed at Ortona and their company had been led since then by a staff-sergeant. He declared that they had had no reinforcements for a month. His capture was of value in establishing the fact that up to that time 1 Para Div had not left the sector. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 4 Feb 44). The effect of our patrolling on enemy morale is indicated by some extracts from the diary of this young prisoner, who had not yet attained his nineteenth birthday.

24/1/44, I have changed a good deal, I never smile now. Here one must run for one's life. 30/1/44, Listening posts are put forward with grenades and machine pistols, One cannot feel safe here.

(Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div/L/F, Folio 1: 1 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 38)

61. Typical of patrol activity on a slightly larger scale was a raid on Crecchio which took place on 9 Feb. A fighting patrol from R. 22e R. reached the town, which a forward section entered. They shot up the Germans as they tried to man their positions. The section in the town was forced to withdraw, however, as the main body was heavily engaged by M.M.G. fire from the house-tops. As R/T communications failed, and snow began to fall, the patrol returned to their company area. In the words of the diarist: "No P.W., but a lot of fun." (W.D., R. 22e R., 10 Feb 44)

62. On the night of 11/12 Feb the usual patrol programme was varied to include a company raid by P.P.C.L.I. to "BINGO" (302186), a spur immediately west of the "U" bend in the coast road, with the usual object of taking prisoners. After an initial success the patrol was pinned down by a great volume of fire from machine guns firing on fixed lines. The company commander sent his company back, but remained out himself with ten men, in the hope that a few prisoners might be taken by stealth after the firing had died down.

But although some hard fighting followed, no prisoners were taken. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 12 Feb 44). That same night was one of increased patrol activity along the whole front. With the ever pressing object of taking prisoners two ambush patrols were planned by L. Edmn R. - one by the ford (298176) and another at (295168), in the Ortona sector. The party at the ford was attacked at close quarters by an enemy fighting patrol of ten or fifteen men, armed with a machine pistol, rifles and grenades, who appeared to be wearing British type steel helmets. Our patrol was reinforced, and after a sharp skirmish the enemy withdrew. Our casualties were, one killed, one badly wounded, and one missing. (W.D., L. Edmn R., 11 Feb 44). On the same night a fighting patrol from West N.S.R., consisting of one officer and 25 other ranks, attacked an enemy position just right of the Tollo road (281144). Faced with heavy opposition they were forced to withdraw, having suffered casualties of one officer and five other ranks wounded, and one other rank killed. (W.D., West N.S.R., 11 Feb 44)

63. In spite of this apparent lack of success, Divisional Intelligence drew certain useful conclusions:

Patrol activity on our front on the night of 11/12 Feb failed to produce any prisoners, but the tactics displayed by the enemy were so strongly characteristic of 1 Para Div that it was immediately apparent that no other Division had taken over. All our fighting patrols worked well up to known positions and were able to plot definite strength and locations. In our sector the cave-dwellings were searched but found empty showing only once more that 90% of the enemy strength is on stand-to during darkness. Again machine guns opened up one at a time and fired in long bursts of 75 or more. The enemy made good use of grenades, allowing our patrols to come in close before opening fire. Enemy artillery was used only lightly, the main reliance for D.F. tasks being 81 mm mortars.

(Hist Sec file Italy: 1944/1 Cdn Inf Div, Folio 1: Intelligence Summary, No. 40)

64. In their efforts to win effective results for their patrols the Canadians resorted to whatever devices their ingenuity could produce. Here is the story of one of the less successful of such inventions. In the early days of February our patrols found that they were considerably troubled by enemy dogs who barked and gave warning of the approach of a Canadian patrol. These dogs often came into our lines, but, like their masters, they were very wary and were difficult to shoot. Divisional experts put their heads together and thought out a solution. Tho D.A.Q.M.G. ordered the country to be scoured for bitches in a seasonal condition of interest to their males.

With the aid of a lorry, some bully beef and a couple of long distance runners, the campaign was on. Dogs seemed to predominate and bitches were extremely hard to find. Five bodies were eventually picked up despite the wailings of Italian families, and stayed the night at 3 Cdn Inf Bde, R.C.A.S.C.

(W.D., A/Q Branch, H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 8 Feb 44)

The diarist of P.P.C.L.I. continues the story:

They shipped us a mongrel bitch 'on heat' with the idea that she would seduce the enemy dogs from their duty and bring them in where we could get a crack at them. 'Mona', a black and white spotted bitch, duly arrived on 10 February. It appears, however, that Divisions made two strategical blunders in selecting 'Mona' as a front line siren. (1) She is not 'on heat', (2) She is less than six months old, and, consequently is not interested in sex and has no sex appeal.

(W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 6 and 10 Feb 44)

65. Up to 19 Feb no evidence had been collected of any major change in enemy dispositions along the Canadian front. It was on 20 Feb that Carlt & York R. really "did the trick" in making new identifications. A fighting patrol went out at 2000 hours (282153) and captured two prisoners right out of their weapon pits. The men were from 146 Regt of 65 Inf Div, and they claimed to have relieved 1 Para Div two nights ago. The patrol was rewarded with a bottle of Scotch, ten pounds and seven days' leave. The Corps Commander wrote to G.O.C. 1 Cdn Inf Div and enclosed five pounds:

Herewith the most welcome payment I have ever made, and I hope that the lads in that Carlt & York R patrol which brought in those prisoners, will get the benefit of it. The identifications thus secured are most valuable. The increasing domination of No Man's land by 1 Cdn Inf Bde is equally so. You might sell the troops the slogan 'A prisoner a day keeps the enemy in a bad way'.

(W.D., Carlt & York R., February 1944:
Appx 1)

The Brigadier added a further five pounds to the Corps Commander's gift (Ibid). Whether our men were spurred on to greater efforts by such incentives, or the enemy's will to resist was deteriorating, satisfactory results followed quickly. On 23 Feb West N.S.R. patrols brought in four more prisoners bearing our safe conduct badges; they seemed very hungry and their morale was low. The West Novas repeated their success on the following day when they captured two more Germans. From the Corps Commander came a special message congratulating the battalion on the excellent patrolling which had resulted in the capture of six prisoners.
(W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 and 23 Feb 44)

66. The sudden increase in the number of prisoners captured by our patrols is understandable from a comparison of the calibre of the Paratroopers with that of the units who relieved them. It was now apparent that 1 Para Div had left, and the spirits of our troops were lightened by the disappearance of an old enemy. As a result the taking of prisoners was becoming easier than before. In addition the small but steady stream of deserters, which had first been received in the Campobasso area, was beginning to flow again.

The disappearance of the Para Div can be accounted for by the enemy's urgent need for first class troops in the ANZIO bridgehead. The process of thinning out began earlier in the month, and the capture of two PW from 146 Regt of 65 Inf Div,

confirmed the fact that the last remaining paratroops had left. It will be remembered that 65 Inf Div was virtually destroyed during the crossing of the SANGRO river and the subsequent advance to the MORO and it was with real pleasure that our troops welcomed its survivors or successors back to the ARIELLI. Our troops left that it would now be possible to take prisoners, if necessary with their bare hands. No identifications, however, were made of any other regiment of 65 Inf Div although the dispositions of 146 Regt were carefully revealed to us by one Czech deserter on 22 Feb and four Polish deserters on 23 Feb. But on the night 24/25 Feb 146 Regt was relieved by an unknown unit and it now seems probable that the enemy division in front of us from the TOLLO road to the sea is 90 Pz Gr Div which faced us during the furious ten days of the MORO river and ORTONA cross-roads battle.[#]

(Report by Historical Officer,
3 Mar 44)

67. Throughout February and early March neither side undertook anything in the nature of a formal attack, although the possibility that the enemy might become adventurous was always present. On the night of 8 Feb there were indications that he might launch operations in the vicinity of 1 Cdn Inf Bde front, and Brigadier Spry informed all battalion commanders that an attack could be expected with a probably zero of 2100 hours. All companies were notified. A 100 per cent stand-up was ordered and all supporting arms were given their tasks; but the expected assault did not materialize. (W.D., R.C.R., 8 Feb 44). The fact that the contingency of an enemy attack was never ruled out is illustrated by the following order given to 1 Cdn Inf Bde whilst it was in its rest area south-east of S. Vito during the second week of February: "Should a serious change develop on 1 Cdn Inf Div front you will be placed on four hours notice to carry out a deliberate counter-attack in either 2 or 3 Cdn Inf Bde areas." The Commander 1 Cdn Inf Bde was disturbed on receipt of this order by the condition of the road which was now entirely out of use for motor transport at the river Torchino. Existing weather conditions were rapidly making it worse, and, in the event of a sudden move, the problem of getting mechanically driven vehicles out of the area would be considerable. (Report by Historical Officer, 20 Feb 44). No change in the general situation developed, however, and the attack was never laid on.

68. Early in February the diarist at Divisional Artillery Headquarters in reporting the forthcoming static role of 1 Cdn Corps prophesied: "Artillery part to be a large one while present static role continues." (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 4 Feb 44). During the weeks that followed our guns were rarely silent. On the afternoon of 3 Feb 1, 2 and 3 Fd Regts, R.C.A., 4 Med Regt, R.A., the divisional 4.2-inch mortar group and 2 Cdn Inf Bde's 3-inch mortar group performed a mock attack shoot in order to test the enemy's reaction and particularly his

[#] But the capture of three more prisoners on the night of 1/2 Mar together with other indisputable evidence contradicted the supposition that 90 Pz Gr Div was in front of the Canadian Corps. It was definitely established that the enemy forces opposing us were made up of 305 Inf Div and the pioneers of 334 Inf Div, the latter being on the extreme coastal flank. (Ibid: Report by Historical Officer, 18 Mar 44)

artillery reactions. No significant reaction occurred. The enemy showed his traditional reluctance to commit his artillery to defensive fire tasks. In general it was believed that many of his heavy guns had been moved across the mountains. (Report by Historical Officer, 20 Feb 44). Our guns kept up incessant harassing fire, but ammunition was strictly rationed. "Ammunition allotment is not yet good enough; eight bombs per mortar is no good." (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Feb 44). The same diarist continues his complaint:

During the day the Boche keeps very quiet and little or no movement can be observed from our own O.P.'s. Under the circumstances there can be no observed shooting in the true sense of the word. What occurs is a fairly heavy shelling of 'known or suspected' enemy positions. A shoot against a real live Jerry would rate a fairly high billing in any sitrep. Things are very dull.

(Report by Historical Officer, 14 Feb 44)

In addition to being subject to our nightly harassing fire the enemy was bombarded with propaganda leaflets contained in artillery shells. It was reported that these pamphlet shells frequently fell short because their line of fire was distorted by their lighter weight. (Report by Historical Officer, 3 Mar 44)

69. The operational role of 1 Cdn A.G.R.A., which moved to Ortona and came under command 1 Cdn Corps on 4 Feb, was primarily counter-battery work, but harassing fire tasks were also carried out on targets beyond the range of 1 and 6 Brit L.G.R.As. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn A.G.R.A., March 1944: Appx 4, Notes on General Policy Regarding Operational Role of 1 Cdn A.G.R.A.). On 7 Feb Chieti was introduced as a target for the guns of 1 Cdn L.G.R.A. when 14 Hy Bty fired on the town using its long range guns to advantage for the first time. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn A.G.R.A., 7 Feb 44). The Corps A.G.R.A. also stressed the shortage of ammunition: "Ammunition was severely curtailed by H.Q. R.C.A., when the maximum daily expenditure was set at 25 r.p.g. for the 4.5 and 5.5 inch guns, and 20 r.p.g. for the 7.2 inch and 155 mm equipment." (Ibid, 8 Feb 44). And again: "Eighth Army has ordered limitation of expenditure of ammunition due to necessity for making adequate provision for current offensive operations." (Ibid, 16 Feb 44). On the other hand, the amount of ammunition at the disposal of the enemy seems to have increased. A number of war diaries report that early in March he seemed to have more at his disposal than at any time since the Ortona battle. During the first week in March Ortona was shelled three times and military and civilian casualties resulted. (Report by Historical Officer, 18 Mar 44).

70. When on 19 Feb Corps received an enemy intercept indicating that 1 Para Div was leaving the sector that night, Canadian guns gave them a suitable "send-off". The diarist at the Divisional Artillery Headquarters wrote:

Will we arrange a special H.F. programme? Just give us the ammunition and watch us go to town. Twenty rounds extra per gun will be forthcoming. Intelligence has given us the known routes of the change-over and reliefs by Jerry, so we will plaster those places from 1830 to 2100 hrs.

(W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Feb 44)

Again on 23 Feb the guns of R.C.A. roared into action for the benefit of the relieving German units.

Heavy harassing fire programme on 2 Cdn Inf Bde front to-night. Over 1000 rounds. The idea is really to smarten up these new people to-night and then catch them to-morrow night.

(Ibid, 23 Feb 44)

During the first week of March our artillery continued its ingenious programme of harassing fire, although on a more limited scale. Reports by prisoners that enemy field cookers used the bridge over the Arielli in front of Tollo at the specific time of 1800 hours led to a "Stonk" (concentrated line of fire) at that point on 2 Mar. It appeared that all enemy eating arrangements were seriously disrupted from time to time by the R.C.A. (Report by Historical Officer, 18 Mar 44)

71. During the period that 1 Cdn Corps was in the line, the armoured units played but a small part in the general picture; for the movement of tanks was largely restricted by weather conditions. At a conference held on 11 Feb Maj-Gen E.L.M. Burns, commanding 5 Cdn Armd Div, outlined the governing policy. The Division was to adopt an aggressive defensive and to contain the enemy opposite by the threat of attack. To this end it was the Division's task to "Study, reconnoitre for, and, to a limited extent, make other preparations for, forcing the crossing of the Arielli on the divisional front" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, February 1944: Appx 4, Notes on Conference held by Maj-Gen Burns, 11 Feb 44). Patrolling had as its specific aim the gaining of reliable information about the enemy's locations and the location of routes across the valley suitable for tanks and supporting arms. A 5 Div Operation Instruction issued on 13 Feb summarized the formation's role:

The role of 5 Cdn Armd Div, in conjunction with other forces of Eighth Army, is to prevent a further reinforcement of enemy troops on the Fifth Army and Rome bridgehead fronts from troops presently opposite Eighth Army.

In order to accomplish this object, the enemy must be convinced by the activity of our forces that Eighth Army intends to resume the offensive in the near future.

(Ibid; Appx 5, 5 Cdn Armd Div Op Instr No. 2, 13 Feb 44)

72. While implementation of the foregoing role was largely a task for the infantry units of the armoured division, representatives of armoured regiments and engineers accompanied reconnaissance patrols (Ibid). When 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) came under command 5 Cdn Armd Div on 18 Feb, dismounted squadrons of the unit were placed under command forward infantry battalions to give them experience in patrolling, observation and front line conditions (Ibid: Appx 8, 5 Cdn Armd Div Op Instr No. 4, 20 Feb 44). Generally speaking, there was less activity on 5 Cdn Armd Div front than on the coastal sector, and enemy patrols were less adventurous. During the whole period there were no infantry-cum-tank operations.

BEHIND THE LINE

73. The morale of troops must be always a matter of concern since the fighting value of a soldier depends so largely upon it. Periods of rest behind the line are a necessary part of a revitalising process, and are essential to the soldier's mental and physical well-being. Everything possible is done by military administrations and auxiliary services to foster that mental and physical well-being by providing diversions and entertainment. Analysing the general situation as it affected the morale of the Canadians in the line, the Historical Officer, 1 Cdn Inf Div, wrote in February:-

It is generally considered that the decision to rest 1 CIB was taken none too soon. Certain unmistakable signs of declining morale were increasingly evident towards the end of their long tour of duty in the line. The necessity of holding positions for a long period which have not been deliberately organized or constructed for defence has imposed a considerable strain on all troops of the division. The only cure possible in the present circumstances is regular relief and vigorous training between periods of contact with the enemy. It should be noted that personnel of the division has almost completely changed since the landing at PACHING through casualties and reinforcement. The necessity of sitting in slit trenches during the day with anything like normal movement only possible at night, imposes great difficulties on the administration of platoons, companies and battalions. These are immeasurably increased when the slit trenches are full of water, the ground is deep in mud and temperatures at night are below the freezing point. All commanders agree that the mental and physical qualities of their reinforcements are high but complain that their basic training is frequently inadequate. Manning weapons under adverse conditions of ground and weather requires a degree of training and experience which all too frequently recent drafts have not possessed. Soldiers have disappeared from their Bren posts in the darkness having become too easily the victims of enemy patrols. Many men now holding senior non-commissioned rank are ill equipped to perform their duties having experienced bewilderingly rapid promotion. There is on the whole a general increase in wariness on the battlefield, which in the case of tired and discouraged troops quickly becomes reluctance to take any risks at all. Most officers feel that the offensive spirit can only be cultivated and maintained by regular periods of rest. In this respect 3 CIBs training school has done wonders for a formation which was faced with a serious decline in morale at the beginning of the year.

(Report by Historical Officer,
20 Feb 44)

the Canadian Corps sector reverted to the command of the British Corps, and after five somewhat colourless weeks in the line H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps closed at Rocco S. Giovanni and moved south to open at Larino on the following day. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, March 1944: Appx 48, Ops Log, Ser 358, 6 Mar 44). During these weeks the enemy had been well and truly harassed; our guns and our patrols had kept him continually "on edge", and our casualties had been light. It can certainly be said that we had had the best of it. Our patrols had dominated no-man's-land, and enemy movements had been sorely hampered by our artillery. Our control of the air was also complete: "The contrast between the utter stillness on the enemy side from the Tollo road to the Arielli and the gambolling carefree movement of men and vehicles on our side leaves no doubt as to who has had air supremacy." (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 22 Feb 44). Neither side had attempted anything in the nature of an offensive. Out of a maelstrom of patrol reports little emerges which can make the story of this period an absorbing one. It can only be said that, under difficult conditions, our troops ably fulfilled their allotted task; more had not been asked of them.

77. The Corps was now commanded by Lt-Gen E.L.M. Burns, O.B.E., M.C., following the departure on 3 Mar of Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, C.B., D.S.O., to become G.O.C. First Canadian Army. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 3 Mar 44). General Burns was succeeded as G.O.C. 5 Cdn Armd Div by Maj-Gen B.M. Hoffmeister, D.S.O., former Commander 2 Cdn Inf Bde (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 21 Mar 44). Simultaneously with the passing of command from 1 Cdn Corps to 5 (Brit) Corps, H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div and 5 Cdn Armd Bde were withdrawn from the line, leaving 11 Cdn Inf Bde together with Westmvr R. (Mot) and 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) temporarily under command of 1 Cdn Inf Div. Headquarters of the Armoured Division moved southwards from Appolinare to Castelnuovo, some 25 miles east of Campobasso. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 7 Mar 44). On the same day (7 March) 1 Cdn A.G.R.A. passed to command 5 (Brit) Corps. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn A.G.R.A. 7 Mar 44)

78. A crop of rumours as to the ultimate destination of 1 Cdn Inf Div sprang into being after the withdrawal of 1 Cdn Corp. A quickening of interest, not entirely due to the improvement in the weather, was detected on all sides. Without enumerating the several rumours let it suffice to say that they were so varied as not to constitute a menace to military security (Report by Historical Officer, 18 Mar 44). The approach of spring, the possible end of the static period, the encouraging news from other fronts, all combined to put the troops in good heart. The five "somewhat discouraging" weeks had come to an end.

1 CDN INF DIV'S ROLE, 7 MAR - 21 APR 44

79. The moves and training of 1 Cdn Corps (less 1 Cdn Inf Div) after its withdrawal from the line early in March are described in a subsequent report (No. 179). The present narrative continues with an account of 1 Cdn Inf Div's operations during its further occupation of the Adriatic flank during March and April. From 7 Mar 5 (Brit) Corps commanded by Lt-Gen Sir C.W. Allfrey, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., was responsible for a thirty-mile front which reached from the coast above Ortona to Palena (H1176). Only two infantry divisions and one armoured brigade were allotted to the corps with which to hold its sector. 1 Cdn Inf Div on the right and 8 Ind Div on the left, between them holding almost the entire front, were each temporarily reinforced by one infantry brigade. With an ultimate reduction of his forces to six brigades,

General Allfrey was faced with the problem of preparing to defend more than 30 miles of front with that meagre allotment:

Broadly, two types of deployment were available to him; the front could be held very thinly and a comparatively large divisional reserve held in each area, or the front might be held less thinly, a small reserve held in each brigade area with only a very small divisional reserve maintained. The latter course would enable the corps to exercise superiority over no-man's-land - which was essential if an early indication of any change in temper of the enemy was to be obtained - and local reliefs within brigades could more readily be arranged. Moreover, the Corps Commander was impressed by need to conceal from the enemy the change to a purely defensive policy and such thinning out as a larger plan of the Allies required in this sector. He accordingly adopted the latter course, ordering a large proportion of the available forces to be deployed in front line positions. (Operations of British, Indian and Dominion Forces in Italy, Part II, Section E, 5 Corps on the Adriatic Coast, para 2; and Ibid: Appendix "D", Personal Memorandum by Lt-Gen C.W. Allfrey, 7 Mar 44)

80. The operational role of 1 Cdn Inf Div was thus but slightly altered by the withdrawal of the other Canadian formations from the scene. What change there was came in the assumption of a more strictly defensive holding role than ever. The thinness with which the sector was held made even small-scale offensive actions impossible. But within these limitations the conduct of the defence was to remain active and aggressive. The Divisional (and Corps) task resolved itself into making such preparations that a small penetration by the enemy could be quickly sealed off and exploitation of any initial success by him prevented. The idea of static defence was frowned on. The Corps Commander directed that mines and wire should be erected only with the aim of closing approaches which could not adequately be covered by fire, and that all possible measures be taken to limit the enemy's scope for patrolling. To obtain depth within the sectors General Allfrey ordered the organizing of defensive strongpoints behind the front line.

Divisional commanders will arrange to construct "keeps" behind the areas occupied by the forward infantry wherever there is an obvious approach for the enemy. These keeps which should not be too numerous - one, or at the most two on a brigade front - should be natural strong defensive positions on which work will be done in order to make them easy to hold. In some cases there will be troops available to man them from divisional resources, but this will not necessarily be the case. There are two main objects in preparing them. The first is so that troops which are brought up from the rear or from a flank locality can move in to these keeps which have been properly organised. The second is so that if a coy or similar unit is temporarily over-run and forced back they can withdraw into a well-organised position. By this means a purely local situation which has gone wrong will be checked at the outset and it will be impossible for the enemy to exploit it into something serious. These keeps should be well camouflaged.

(Personal Memorandum by Lt-Gen C.W. Allfrey, 7 Mar 44)

81. The reduction of the Canadian strength in the Adriatic sector of the line to a bare infantry division proceeded by successive stages during the first half of March. When H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps relinquished command of the front and moved southwards to Larino on 7 Mar, 5 Cdn Armd Div (less 11 Cdn Inf Bde) was also withdrawn from the line as we have noted (para 77) and moved into reserve at Castelnuovo della Daunia - some 15 miles north-east of Larino - passing under command of 5 Corps. It was agreed at the time that, should indications become apparent that the enemy proposed to embark upon a more aggressive policy and the threat of serious attack became imminent, the armoured division would be moved up to positions close behind 5 Corps so that it could intervene on the first day of any such enemy offensive (5 Corps on the Adriatic coast, para 3). 11 Cdn Inf Bde, together with Westmnr R. (Mot), 13 Fd Coy R.C.E., 11 Fd Regt R.C.A. and 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt (R.C.D.) thus remained for the time being under command of 1 Cdn Inf Div. Tank support for the division was supplied at first by 2 Cdn Armd Regt of 5 Cdn Armd Bde. The boundary with 8 Ind Div was moved southward so that Crecchio was included within the Canadian divisional front.

82. On 8 Mar relief of 11 Cdn Inf Bde in the Crecchio sector of 2 Cdn Inf Bde began with the withdrawal of Ir. R.C., which moved southward to the new training area near Castelnuovo della Daunia; their place was taken by C.B. Highrs, who had to spread out "very thin on the ground", covering about 2500 yards of front. The remainder of the brigade was withdrawn on 14 Mar, and joined H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps and 5 Cdn Armd Div (W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 and 14 Mar 44). Squadrons of 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt were withdrawn on 11 Mar, their places being taken by widely dispersed companies of infantry battalions of 2 Cdn Inf Bde (Ibid, 11 Mar 44). On 14 Mar 2 Cdn Armd Regt was replaced by 11 Cdn Armd Regt of 1 Cdn Armd Bde, one squadron being placed in support of each forward brigade. The amount of armour available to the corps was successively reduced, until by 17 Mar only 1 Cdn Armd Bde, less one regiment, remained in the line. On 26 Mar 23 (Brit) Armd Bde relieved the Canadian armoured brigade, which moved across the mountains to a training centre in the Volturno sector south-east of Venafro (H0320) (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Armd Bde, 1 and 2 Apr 44). 11 Cdn Armd Regt was replaced on the same day by 40 Brit R.T.R. as divisional tank support (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 26 Mar 44).

83. With the relief of 11 Cdn Inf Bde by 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Cdn Inf Div was disposed on a three-Brigade front, and the G.O.C. ordered that all personnel in supporting arms and services should be organized with a definite defence role to meet any possible counter-attack. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Mar 44). The dispositions of the Infantry Brigades were now as follows. On the coastal flank 1 Cdn Inf Bde had R.C.R. on the right and Hast & P.E.R. on the left; in 3 Cdn Inf Bdes' sector, in the centre, from S. Nicola to positions south of the Villa Grande - Tollo road, Carlt & York R. were on the right and West N.S.R. on the left; in the Crecchio sector 2 Cdn Inf Bde was holding the line with Seaforth of C. on the right, and P.P.C.L.I. on the extreme left of the divisional front, with its Battalion Headquarters very close to the Orsogna - Ortona lateral road. In order to provide the necessary reliefs without a Brigade in reserve, battalions were relieved in rotation within each Brigade on approximately a weekly basis. (Report by Historical Officer, 18 Mar 44). On the Corps left flank the line was held by 8 Ind Div from 7 Mar until 9 Apr, when they were relieved by 4 Ind Div. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Apr 44)

84. If our own forces were sparsely deployed, it was estimated that the enemy too was more thinly spread than at any time since the Sangro battle. In the open coastal sector only a dozen battalions held a front of nearly 20 miles. At the time of the return of 5 (Brit) Corps on 7 Mar a battle group of two regiments from 305 Inf Div held the four miles nearest the coast (as far inland as Casa Vezzani - C2812); the next twelve miles as far as Guardiagrela fell to the responsibility of 334 Inf Div; while the remainder of 305 Inf Div - known as the "Bodo Group" - held the slopes of the Majella and the central passes through the mountains as far as Alfadena - another 35 miles (5 Corps on the Adriatic Coast, para 6).

IN THE LINE, 7 MAR - 21 APR

85. From 7 Mar to 21 Apr - the period of 1 Cdn Inf Div's remaining tenure of the line - infantry operations were largely confined to patrolling. There were some attempts on our part to raid enemy positions at platoon strength, and even to seize certain enemy outposts with the idea of incorporating them into our own forward defence line scheme, but these efforts were unsuccessful. Our guns harassed the enemy to the maximum of their capacity under the prevailing circumstances, although even the most casual observer could not fail to notice the emptiness of our once teeming gun areas and the general slackening of traffic along our lines of communication. The absence of artillery was particularly noticeable as a result of the thinning out process which was in progress, and the limitation of 15 r.p.g. per day laid a considerable restriction on such artillery as remained. (Report by Historical Officer, 31 Mar 44)

86. In a routine of patrolling that in general conformed to an uneventful pattern, one incident stood out as more nearly resembling an offensive operation than anything else that happened in the six-week period. It was found that on the whole the enemy had built up their outpost positions and had improved local defences by increased digging. (Ibid, 23 Mar 44). "BOURLON" (285161), a case in point, exemplified our repeated and unsuccessful attempts to capture an enemy outpost. This position at Casa Colombo, commanding a considerable portion of our own forward positions, was situated on the western edge of the gully running roughly parallel to and east of the Tollo - Torre Muchia road, from which it separated the area known as the Piane di Moregine. On 20 Mar a platoon of Carlt & York R. attacked the position, but they were forced to withdraw in the face of heavy machine gun fire. On 22, 23 and 24 Mar our mortars smoked the far side of the gully with the idea of simulating further infantry attacks. The first of these experiments obtained an immediate and remarkable reaction in that the enemy apparently arose as one man and threw grenades into the smoked area. The presence of the Germans in what now appeared to be platoon strength was disconcerting since no movement had been seen for some time previously and there was no indication of the means by which this position was supplied. On the third day our mortars mixed H.E. bombs with their smoke in order to catch the grenade throwers while they were up. This apparently discouraged them, for two days later a further invitation to play was disappointing. (Ibid, 3 Apr 44). On the night 27/28 Mar West N.S.R. took their turn at solving the mystery of "BOURLON", approaching it with two sections from the left and right. The left section succeeded in exploding a bangalore torpedo in the position without provoking any reprisal. The right hand party became involved in a maze of trap wires and booby traps. During the day a platoon of West N.S.R. remained on the feature enduring mortar and M.G. fire, and was reinforced at night by an additional platoon. Fierce

fighting followed and the force subsequently withdrew, having suffered casualties of three killed, twelve wounded and one missing. (Ibid).

87. "BOURLON" received constant attention from our artillery, and observation of enemy stretcher bearers indicated that it must have been an expensive position to hold. Yet the enemy's determination to hold it remained unchanged. On the evening of 6 Apr West N.S.R. raided it again with a patrol and found the ruins empty. The position was then engaged by our fire, and enemy machine guns from the "BOURLON" area replied. Two days later the West Novas again attempted to take the position, but again they were repulsed by heavy fire. A subsequent attack that same night with artillery support also failed. Four enemy were known to have been killed on this second raid; we suffered in casualties one missing believed killed, and ten wounded. (Ibid, 18 Apr 44). On 18 Apr R. 22e R. took up the quarrel with "BOURLON". At 0910 hours four sections, supported by fire from 1 Fd Regt R.C.A., attacked this exasperatingly important group of ruins. One section got on to the objective and at grips with the enemy but were driven back by enemy reinforcements which were hastily brought forward. The remaining three sections were held up by heavy mortar defensive fire. Our casualties were three killed and twelve wounded. (Ibid, 3 May 44). When 1 Cdn Inf Div left the sector, "BOURLON" remained untaken.

88. Canadian casualties were heavier during this period than in the five weeks when H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps commanded the sector, for the enemy was putting up stiffer resistance to our intrusions.[#] Prisoners were not so easily acquired. On 5 Apr an R.C.R. fighting patrol - one officer and nine other ranks - reconnoitring along the coast road north of the Riccio, was ambushed and only two men returned. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 5 Apr 44). Casualties were again sustained on 19 Apr when R.C.R. put in a company raid on "BINGO" - an enemy position at 300188. The attack, which was preluded with a 30-minute series of artillery and 4.2-inch mortar concentrations, met with heavy fire resistance, and after three separate attempts had failed the R.C.R.s. were forced to withdraw. Our casualties were three officers and nine other ranks wounded. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Apr 44). A West N.S.R. patrol was unfortunate on 29 Mar when it ran into the enemy at 284161 and suffered casualties of one killed and six wounded; on returning to their company lines a mortar bomb fell in their midst, killing two and wounding a further six. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Mar 44). Although our casualties were thus relatively high during this "passive" period the enemy too received his share of losses, and the experience gained at this time was not without value. So considered the diarist of 3 Cdn Inf Bde: "This area has served to increase our knowledge of the Hun and his methods and has improved our patrolling. This experience will repay us in the future." (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, April 1944; Appx 20, April Résumé)

89. With so wide a front to hold with so few forces it was not possible, of course, to provide all the artillery support that could have been wished. In addition to divisional field artillery only four medium regiments had been made available to 5 Corps, and these were deployed in such a way that three out of the four could bear on most parts of the Corps front. Because of the thinness of the troops on the ground, the ability to obtain quickly the greatest weight of artillery fire assumed great importance.

[#] For a summary of Canadian casualties during the period 4 Jan - 21 Apr 44 see Appendix "A".

Artillery support was co-ordinated on a Corps basis and arrangements were made whereby the fire on any part of the front could be thickened if necessary from flanking guns of all calibres. (5 Corps on the Adriatic Coast, para 4). An indication of the altered conditions under which 1 Cdn Inf Div was operating at this time is supplied by the attempt of 3 Cdn Inf Bde to bring down artillery fire on enemy O.P.s. in Tolto during the latter part of March. The artillery was unable to supply sufficient ammunition for the 5.5-inch mediums which were alone in a position to perform this task; wear and tear on barrels had also to be borne in mind. The alternative of a dive bombing attack, suggested by the Brigade, met with a refusal because of our heavy air commitments on the other side of the mountains. (Report by Historical Officer, 23 Mar 44)

90. Yet in spite of depleted gun areas and rationed ammunition our artillery allowed the enemy little peace. For the most part activity was confined to harassing fire and the assistance of patrols, but occasionally small scale offensive action broke the routine. During the night of 18/19 Mar 1 Fd Regt R.C.A. moved a gun up to the road between S. Tommaso and S. Nicola and fired 15 rounds over open sights at some houses in front of Carlt & V.R. positions to inflict considerable damage. On the following night the enemy bombarded the position of 1 Fd Regt with 55 rounds. All but two of these appeared to be "duds", but in actual fact only six failed to explode. The enemy was using a new type of 15-cm ammunition which penetrated deep into the ground before exploding. (Ibid). An experiment was conducted on 5 Apr in the cutting of enemy wire with H.A.A. air bursts. The target was single Dannert wire at 278142, and after the shoot 3-inch mortars laid smoke behind the affected area to silhouette the damage. It was discovered that a gap, 15 to 20 yards wide, had been cut with the expenditure of 22 rounds. (Ibid). Counter-mortar activity assumed a role of growing importance, for it alone could search the deep gullies in which the Germans were wont to hide. The country from south of Tolto to the Adriatic coast at Torre Muchia is more or less flat, cut by deep gullies and river beds of which the enemy took full advantage. Tank runs were few and far between as most gullies were impassable except to infantry, mules and jeeps. Further, it was a quick and accurate way of engaging enemy mortars, whose ammunition supply appeared to be greater for these than for any other weapons. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, March 1944: Appx 23, March Résumé)

91. At the end of March enemy shelling was observed to be more methodical if not heavier than before, and Ortona, after a period of unexpected immunity since its capture, now became a fairly regular target with occasional heavy concentrations on the town and harbour. On 2 Apr the enemy secured a direct hit on the Ortona Opera House, used as the Red Shield Club, while a church service was in progress, and caused casualties of two killed and 15 wounded. The town was shelled again on the night of the 7th, and again heavily on the afternoon of the 11th - apparently in answer to a shoot by our Oerlikon guns at the mouth of the Arielli. Again on 15 Apr 30 shells fell in the harbour area, and the N.O.I.C. prohibited for the time being the operation of any naval vessels out of Ortona. A week later Ortona again received attention, and on 20 Apr a shell passed through H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, exploding in the garage below; fortunately only one officer was wounded. (Ibid, 18 Apr 44)

92. As mentioned above, prisoners were not easily acquired. Between 1 and 15 Apr only five were taken, one by P.P.C.L.I. on 1 Apr, two by West N.S.R. and one by Seaforth of C. on 4 Apr, while one deserter came into Carlt & York R. lines on the 10th.

Some valuable information supplied by these prisoners regarding the "BOURLON" position revealed the existence of underground communications there. Although they reported considerable hardships and long periods of duty, their morale appeared to be reasonably high. (Ibid). On 8 Apr the Defence and Employment Platoon at H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div departed from their usual sphere of usefulness by capturing five prisoners. They were five Italians who landed from a boat in the Headquarters area. They were handed over to the Field Security Officer. The divisional diarist comments "One sometimes wonders what is the fate of such culprits. Our Intelligence officer tells us that a surprising number turn out to be enemy agents, and end up against a wall. Often the agents are handed over to the 'co-belligerent' Italians and are executed by them." (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 8 Apr 44). Our own losses in prisoners were not high. On 16 Apr the enemy harassed the Seaforth of C. positions from behind Crecchio with a high velocity gun and machine gun fire, and on the same evening this fire was substantially increased by tanks and mortars. During the subsequent stand-to the enemy neatly seized six men from our forward O.P. at 274108. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Apr 44). A few days prior to this an R.C.R. patrol of one officer and seven other ranks was not accounted for.

93. On 20 Apr sounds of celebrations were heard from Crecchio, and flags, red with a white circle, were displayed on the buildings. It appears that the enemy was celebrating Hitler's birthday. A more serious outburst of enemy exuberance occurred on the same day, when Lenciano was bombed and strafed. Much damage was inflicted, and casualties were finally estimated at 47 killed and 200 wounded. None of these were Canadians, but the attack was a disturbing reminder to our troops of the danger of under-estimating the capacity of the Luftwaffe to deliver swift surprise attacks. (Report by Historical Officer, 3 May 44). The fine weather produced a renewal of air activity on both sides, although its scale was not comparable to that of January. The enemy indulged in reconnaissance flights as far south as Vasto. On the morning of 15 Apr 2 L.A.A. Regt R.C.A. had a long awaited shoot at one of these flights, and succeeded in destroying an M.E. 210 which was endeavouring to escape from a pursuing Spitfire after attempting to bomb the Sangro bridges. (Ibid, 18 Apr 44)

94. In reply to the propaganda leaflets with which we had bombarded the Tollo area early in April the enemy in his turn showered 1 Cdn Inf Bde front with an attractive pamphlet entitled "Welcome to sunny Italy". The document expatiated on the shortness of the Italian spring and the ferocity of the approaching summer, and in general terms asked the Canadians how long they thought it would take them at their present rate of advance to reach Northern Italy. (Ibid). As a reflection on enemy Intelligence it is worthy of mention that propaganda leaflets addressed to Canadians were still being fired on 10 Ind Inf Div front as late as 30 Apr, after the departure of 1 Cdn Inf Div. (Ibid, 3 May 44)

95. During the last few weeks in the Adriatic sector considerable attention was given both by the enemy and ourselves to improving defences. The enemy built up his outpost positions and improved his local defences with increased digging, mines and booby traps, especially in the "BOURLON" area, 285161. The bank of the Arielli formed a perfect parapet from which he could engage our troops from a number of alternate positions. Enemy outposts were inter-visible, mutually supporting, and, being on high ground, served as O.P.s. and controlled all approaches during daylight. (W.D., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, March 1944: Appx 23, March Résumé). Air photographs revealed that the enemy had virtually completed a defensive line protected by wire running inland from the coast

between the river Foro and Francavilla. Similar preparations were made on our sector roughly along the line of the Orsogna - Ortona lateral road. (Report by Historical Officer, 3 Apr 44). It was always considered possible that the enemy might launch an attack to try to regain Ortona and control of the main roads to the south. (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Apr 44). With this contingency in view three nodal points were designated at Ortona, the Ortona cross-roads, and V. Roatti. The object of these was to provide defended concentration areas for the troops not actually committed in the battle line, and these points would be manned in the event of an enemy breakthrough. Ortona itself was turned into a fortress, and the garrison troops were made responsible for its defence. Garrison troops consisted of 1 Cdn Inf Bde stationed in Ortona plus all troops under command, in support, and attached. Divisional artillery would support the defence. The city was divided into sectors, each sector to be manned by a definite sub-unit and a commander appointed. All localities were to be mutually supporting and the whole co-ordinated by the garrison commander. All defence positions were completed by 24 Mar, and it was ordered that Ortona be defended "to the last man and the last round." (W.D., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, March 1944: Appx 5, Plan for the Defence of Ortona)

THE RELIEF OF 1 CDN INF DIV

96. Early in April it was realized that the long stay in the Adriatic sector was drawing to a close. The morale of the troops was high; a spirit of vernal optimism was in the air and rumours were rife as to the future movements of the Division. These rumours were stimulated by the attachment of elements of 10 Ind Inf Div to Canadian brigades at the beginning of the month:

Elements of 10 Ind Inf Div are being attached to this Division, 10 Ind Inf Bde to 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Ind Inf Bde to 2 Cdn Inf Bde, and 20 Ind Inf Bde to 3 Cdn Inf Bde. Similar attachments are being made to all arms throughout the Division. 'It seems obviously indicative of an early relief'.

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Apr 44)

The only depressing factor was the scarcity of mail. "Lately mail has been almost non-existent, the worst service we have had since the first days in Sicily." (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Div, 5 Apr 44). A message from H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, however, eased the depression with an assurance that Ottawa was doing everything possible to expedite mail deliveries. (Ibid). On 15 Apr, a few days before the Division left the sector, a Canadian cemetery was dedicated in commemoration of the Moro and Ortona fighting, and the pipes of 48 Highrs and Seaforth of C. were heard in lament across the surrounding countryside. The cemetery is beside the coast road between the Moro River and Ortona, just behind the church of S. Donato. To the westward lies "Vino Ridge" and to the east Punta di Acquabella. (Report by Historical Officer, 18 Apr 44).

97. The larger strategical planning which governed the return of 1 Cdn Inf Div to its parent Corps is discussed elsewhere (see Report No. 179). On 21 Apr the relief by 10 Ind Div began and the move southwards commenced. During the night 20/21 Apr 10 Ind Inf Bde began the relief of 1 Cdn Inf Bde, completing it by noon on the

21st. The relief of 3 Cdn Inf Bde by 20 Ind Inf Bde was completed that same day, and after a busy night, 22/23 Apr, 2 Cdn Inf Bde was replaced by 25 Ind Inf Bde. Command of the sector passed to H.Q. 10 Ind Div at 0200 hours on the 23rd. Two staging areas were provided for the move south, the first between Lanciano and the Sangro river, and the second between Larino and the sea. By 26 Apr all arms and services were dispersed around Vinchiatura, where Divisional Headquarters was established, and the Division reverted to under command 1 Cdn Corps. (Report by Historical Officer, 3 May 44)

98. At last the long and, in many respects, often unsatisfactory period of service on the Adriatic front was over. Among the units and formations moving south - and later west - there were few regrets. The sector had been the scene of much bloody fighting by men from the Division, and many had fallen on the battlefield. The months which followed the capture of Ortona had brought a form of inactivity distasteful to all - warfare which, in spite of all attempts at redefinition by higher authority, could only be regarded as static. But now the change in environment placed all this in the past. It was no secret that preparations were afoot for the initiation of a large-scale offensive against the enemy, and the prospect of action was a pleasing one. Before many weeks had passed Canadians were to have undertaken and splendidly accomplished one of their most spectacular operations of the entire Italian campaign.

ALLIED MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY DURING THE WINTER 1943-44

99. The decision to launch the great impending spring offensive in preparation for which reorganization of the Allied Armies in Italy had for three months thus governed the dispositions of the Canadian formations in the Peninsula had not been reached without much serious consideration at the highest level and the exploration of many alternative ventures in strategy. While it is not within the scope of the present report to deal with the planning and preparations which immediately preceded the momentous Italian operations of May 1944, it is considered that the following brief examination of the course taken in the moulding of Allied strategy during the preceding winter, particularly insofar as it affected the Mediterranean Theatre, can usefully provide a background to the story of the Battle for Rome.

100. By the end of 1943, Allied hopes of the early capture of Rome faded when the German Tenth Army was able to prevent Eighth Army from reaching the Pescara River, and deny to Fifth Army the Liri and Sacco Valley approach to the Capital. Across the whole of the Italian Peninsula the enemy's Winter Line had been held at heavy cost to both attacker and defender. The stalemate which had developed and which threatened to continue during the early weeks of the New Year not only distressed the Allied commanders on the Peninsula but directly interfered with the basic Allied strategy conceived at the Casablanca, Quebec and Cairo Conferences. With the approaching invasion of North-West Europe, operations in the Mediterranean were to be closely coöordinated with the supreme effort. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had considered that the most effective assistance which the Allied Forces in the Mediterranean could give to "OVERLORD" would be a major amphibious operation against the South of France. (H.M. Stationery Office, London, Report by The Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operations in Southern France, August 1944, pp 1-11)

101. In August 1943, at the "QUADRANT" Conference in Quebec, the decision was made by the Combined Chiefs of Staff that the operations complementary to "OVERLORD" based on the Mediterranean would be diversionary, but in November, at the "SEXTANT" conference in Cairo, this was altered in favour of a full-scale assault. Shortly afterwards at the Teheran Conference this latter decision was embodied in agreements with the Soviet Union. As a result of the broad strategy laid down at these conferences, General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, Mediterranean, was directed to plan for the invasion of Southern France. (Ibid)

102. Such a complex task required careful assessment of resources against present and proposed commitments. Without doubt the greatest difficulty would be the provision of sufficient shipping, and many of the craft then available in the Mediterranean were scheduled to sail for the United Kingdom. With this in view, amphibious operations in the Bay of Bengal, tentatively planned for 1944, were postponed, and the shipping diverted to what the Combined Chiefs of Staff described as the "Supreme Operations of 1944".¹¹ The Joint Planning Staff at A.F.H.Q. proceeded with plans for a two-or-three-division assault against the South of France building up to ten divisions. (Ibid). The operation was given the codeword "ANVIL" and the target date was the most suitable date during May 1944. The changes in command and personnel during late December 1943 did not disturb planning. General Eisenhower left to take up his appointment as Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force; General Sir H. Maitland Wilson became Supreme Commander, Mediterranean, on 8 Jan 44. (Ibid)

103. The planning for "ANVIL" was based on several assumptions, the most important of which was that by May 1944 the Allied advance in Italy would have reached a line from Pisa to Rimini exclusive of the port of Leghorn. The campaign in Sicily and the rapid advance through the south of Italy raised hopes of the early capture of Rome and a rapid, if not voluntary, withdrawal of the enemy behind prepared positions along the Pisa - Rimini line. The December battles on the Adriatic and south of Cassino were evidence that such an assumption was optimistic. Rome had been an objective of great political significance, although, too, it was militarily important because of the area north of the Alban Hills. If the full-scale assault against the South of France were to succeed, dislodging the enemy from his positions south of Rome and pushing him back to the Pisa - Rimini line was desirable if not essential.

104. While Eighth Army's December offensive in the Adriatic sector had petered out, Fifth Army continued to attack towards Cassino. On 5 Jan a new offensive opened to drive the enemy back to his principal defences, now termed the Gustav Line, ¹² at Cassino (Military Intelligence Division, U.S. War Department, The Winter Line, p. 93). This new effort, it was hoped, would bring Fifth Army up to the flat Liri Valley corridor to Rome. Before this offensive started on 5 Jan, the decision

¹¹ It was later found necessary to postpone indefinitely amphibious operations against the Island of Rhodes. (Ibid)

¹² The Gustav Line approximated to the old Winter Line with the exception that it swung through Cassino rather than over the Mignano defile to Venafro. Fifth Army breached the Winter Line at Mignano in December in the same way that Eighth Army breached it on the Adriatic. It was when advancing from Mignano that Fifth Army was faced with the Gustav Line at Cassino. (The Winter Line, Map, p. 5.)

had already been made to mount the amphibious operation at Anzio. In December certain senior commanders had put forward the proposal that an amphibious operation of not less than two divisions behind the enemy's right flank would assist in reducing his main defences holding up the frontal attacks of Fifth Army. At a conference in Tunis on Christmas Day 1943, attended by Mr Churchill, General Eisenhower, General Smith, General Alexander, Air Chief Marshal Tedder, Admiral Cunningham and other senior staff officers, it had been decided to mount the operations at Anzio, since it was agreed that the campaign in Italy should not drag on half completed. (The Operations in Southern France, p.7)

105. This new amphibious operation at the time the "ANVIL" planning was underway made further demands on shipping resources, and it was decided to postpone the departure of craft to the United Kingdom until 8 Feb, thereby retaining in the Mediterranean, sufficient for a two-division assault at Anzio on or about 20 Jan.* The commanders concerned expressed a confidence that the landing would have the desired effect of forcing the enemy to concede his main defences. (Ibid). On 22 Jan the Anzio operation began and was met with furious counter-attacks. This abortive landing was a clear indication of the Allied mis-appreciation of importance which the enemy placed on the Italian capital, and the lengths to which he was prepared to go to retain it. General Wilson in his report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff implies such mis-appreciation.

None of us had sufficiently realised the strength of political and prestige considerations which would induce the enemy to reinforce his front south of Rome up to seventeen divisions to seal off the bridgehead, and even to expend much of his fighting strength in counter-attacks to drive us into the sea... For the remaining winter months however, the isolated position of our bridgehead constituted a first mortgage on our own resources, and necessarily made junction between bridgehead forces and the main front our primary pre-occupation.

(The Operations in Southern France, p. 10)

* On 23 Jan General Eisenhower proposed to the Combined Chiefs of Staff that the target date, 1 May, for "OVERLORD" be set back, mainly because of the shortage of craft to lift the initial assault force of five divisions. There is no suggestion that this shortage of craft was due to the situation in the Mediterranean resulting from the Anzio landings; rather it was because of the decision to increase the initial assault force for "OVERLORD" from three to five divisions. But the Italian campaign was still regarded optimistically. General Eisenhower, in his report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff said: "From the strategic point of view the postponement seemed desirable, since weather conditions at the end of May would be likely to be more favorable for the mounting of a large-scale Russian offensive to assist the Overlord operation. Additionally, the situation in the Mediterranean might be sufficiently resolved by that time to preclude the necessity of an operation against the south of France closely co-ordinated with our western assault. The German forces in that theater might be so heavily engaged by our armies that a diversionary and containing assault would not be required in direct and immediate assistance to Overlord."

106. Tactically, the immediate effect of the Anzio landing was the necessity for the enemy to commit his Fourteenth Army to an operational role. The enemy forces deployed to contain the beachhead were mainly drawn from the north and from coast-watching tasks. Failure of the enemy to destroy the beachhead greatly strained his own resources in the Mediterranean; his bold counter-attacks, however, temporarily frustrated Allied plans. During the remaining winter months the primary concern of the Allies in Italy was to effect a junction between the beachhead at Anzio and the main front at Cassino, and advance on Rome. Not only for military reasons was the capture of Rome important, but as the prolonged indecisive struggle continued into the Spring, Rome became a prize of increasing political significance. Continuing his Report General Wilson said:

Moreover, the fact that the enemy had chosen to defend Rome at all costs for essentially prestige reasons constituted a challenge which we were bound to accept. There was already adequate military reason to capture Rome for the sake of denying use of its airfields to the enemy and to acquire it for ourselves, but it was agreed that the capture of Rome probably had even more political than military value. The Prime Minister said that if Rome were not captured, the world would regard our Italian Campaign as a failure.*

(Ibid)

107. As the expenditure of the Italian campaign increased, without producing any proportionate achievement, the fate of Operation "ANVIL" became uncertain. On 18 Feb General Wilson conferred with General Alexander and his other Commanders-in-Chief to review the entire situation in the Mediterranean. The outcome of this conference was agreement that complete priority must be given to the Italian campaign with the object of linking up the beachhead with the main front, and taking Rome. (The Operations in Southern France, p.11)

There was no thought of planning a one-division assault of Southern France in the Spring, and since at this time odds were still against our being allotted sufficient resources by the

* It was at the Christmas conference that the Prime Minister expressed his opinion on the importance of the Italian Campaign. One strategic argument for continuing the advance was to give sufficient depth for the protection of the Foggia and Naples area, then being developed because of their airfield and port facilities. The launching of "ANVIL" was not the only strategic consideration. (H.M. Stationery Office, London, Report by the Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on The Italian Campaign, 8th January 1944, to 10th May 1944, pp 6-7). While in North Africa Mr Churchill cabled to the Deputy Prime Minister, "We cannot leave the Rome situation to stagnate and foster for three months without crippling amalgamation of "ANVIL" and thus hampering "OVERLORD". We cannot go to other tasks and leave this unfinished job behind us. (Ibid, p. 42)

Combined Chiefs of Staff to mount a two-division assault, it very much looked as if the projected operation in Southern France was dead. Even if they should find the resources, I was now opposed to their expenditure in this way.

(Ibid)

108. On 22 Feb, General Wilson informed both the British and United States Chiefs of Staff that:

...any effort to prepare a two or three-division assault against Southern France would have a most serious effect on the operations in Italy and could not but prejudice the success of the battle...

At the same time the Supreme Commander suggested that he be given a new directive to "conduct operations with the object of containing the maximum number of German troops in South Europe..." (Ibid). The Combined Chiefs of Staff, on the grounds that it was strategically inadvisable and contrary to the Teheran agreements, did not agree to the cancellation of "ANVIL" (The Operations in Europe p.16). General Eisenhower himself believed that ten or more divisions operating on his right flank subsequent to the clearing of Northern France, would be of immense value. (Ibid)

109. Meanwhile the enemy in Italy was holding the Anzio beachhead and throwing back the frontal assaults against Cassino. On 26 Feb, General Wilson received the new directive which he had requested from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. This directive had the approval of President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill.

The directive relieved my concern for the future of the Italian Campaign by granting it 'overriding priority over all existing and future operations in the Mediterranean' and giving it 'first call on all resources, land, sea and air' within the Theatre.

(The Operations in Southern France, p.11)

This new directive did not mean, however, that "ANVIL" was at that time considered impracticable. The Combined Chiefs of Staff made it clear that they were desirous of maintaining the "maximum flexibility" of operations in the Mediterranean in order to give the greatest support to "OVERLORD". Some hope was still placed on the enemy's voluntary withdrawal to the Pisa-Rimini line. General Wilson was further directed:

...subject to the overriding priority of the Italian Campaign, to 'prepare alternative plans and make such preparation as can be undertaken without prejudice to operations in the Mediterranean with the object of contributing to the northern invasion by containing and engaging the maximum number of enemy forces.'

(Ibid, p.12)

There was no doubt that the first of any "alternative plans" meant the invasion of Southern France on a two-division assault scale, with a subsequent build-up to ten divisions. The new directive from the Chiefs of Staff concluded with the statement that the whole situation should be reviewed on 20 Mar, and if then "ANVIL" appeared impracticable, all landing craft which could be usefully employed in "OVERLORD" were to be diverted

to the United Kingdom.* (Ibid)

110. Until 20 Mar, when it was hoped that the situation would be such that a definite decision could be made on "ANVIL", planning continued with the provision that complete priority was to be given to the Italian Campaign until the advance had reached a line north of Rome. The planners were to assume also that such a line would be achieved by 1 May, and that by 15 Apr the outcome of the battle in Italy would enable the first measures to be taken to mount "ANVIL" without jeopardizing the priority allotted to the campaign on the Peninsula. It was calculated that the earliest possible D Day for "ANVIL" would be 10 Jun. (Ibid). Since practically all the formations required for "ANVIL" had to be drawn from the forces in Italy it was obvious that any delay in forcing the enemy to the north of Rome would mean a corresponding delay in D Day for the "ANVIL" assault. (Ibid, p.13)

111. Such a delay there was. When on 20 Mar General Wilson was to give his appreciation of the whole situation in the Mediterranean with particular regard for the Battle in Italy and the proposed "ANVIL", the Gustav Line remained unbroken. The Anzio beachhead and the main front were no closer to being joined.

On 21st March, after full discussions with General Alexander and Lieutenant-General Eaker, I reported that the results of the Cassino battle would probably be such as to give General Alexander a bridgehead over the Rapido River and adequate jumping off ground for a further offensive, but that the Gustav Line was still unbroken and regrouping and a fresh offensive would be necessary in order to rupture both this line and the Adolf Hitler Line, which lay behind.

(Ibid)

112. It was obvious that whatever was the decision in regard to "ANVIL", that operation would have to be set back long after the proposed date for "OVERLORD". General Wilson reported that 14 Apr was the earliest date on which a new major operation could be launched in Italy, and that he could not count on a junction of the main front and Anzio before 15 May. Thus, since it was estimated that a ten-week interval was necessary to train and re-equip the formations to be withdrawn from Italy, the earliest date for launching "ANVIL" would be the end of July. (Ibid)

113. The condition of the battle in Italy led General Wilson to advocate to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the entire cancellation of "ANVIL" except, of course, should there be a collapse or voluntary withdrawal. His suggestion of abandoning "ANVIL" was based on the fact that its delayed D Day, the limitation of a two-division assault force and the slow rate of build-up to ten divisions lessened the possibility of obtaining a major port before the advent of bad weather. He considered that the greatest assistance which his theatre could give to "OVERLORD" would be to continue the offensive in Italy with all resources. Accordingly he proposed that he be given another directive:

First to carry through the battle in Italy to include the capture of Rome and its airfields, and, thereafter, to concentrate on intensive operations up the mainland of Italy, with provision for amphibious "end runs" by the

* Excluding a one division ship-to-shore lift. (The Operations in Southern France, p.12)

allotment of an assault lift of one division plus on a "shore-to-shore" basis, and with allotment of resources to carry out any commando operations which I might wish to employ.

(Ibid, p. 17)

114. The immediate task of the Mediterranean Theatre was clear - to break through the Gustav and Hitler Lines and capture Rome. What should follow the achievement of that objective became dilemma. Even the date of 15 Apr for the beginning of the new offensive in Italy was too optimistic. It was found necessary to postpone it until 10 May, thus automatically delaying "ANVIL" until mid-August. Doubt that "ANVIL" would be the best practical method of assisting "OVERLORD" increased, and this doubt led to the consideration of how best the resources might otherwise be employed after the primary object of the Italian campaign had been achieved. In any alternative operations, shipping was the limiting factor. Whatever assistance he might consider desirable in the Mediterranean, General Eisenhower realised that until "OVERLORD" was progressing satisfactorily, he could give no definite promise to return to the Mediterranean the landing craft which had been withdrawn. (Ibid, pp 18-20)

115. General Wilson considered that should the enemy succeed in establishing himself on another line south of Rome it might be necessary to expend his amphibious resources in a landing on the coast in the area of Civitavecchia.* Should the opposite happen and the enemy withdraw hastily to the Pisa - Rimini line it might be necessary to build up the Armies north of Rome by sea since the supply routes by land were limited. The outcome of the new offensive might, however, be such that neither of these alternatives was necessary. Should that be the case a modified "ANVIL" might be practicable, or perhaps large amphibious operations at the head of the Adriatic directed towards Hungary. (Ibid)

116. Whatever alternative might finally be selected, the outcome of the new offensive through the Liri valley would have far more than a local effect. The entire direct support which the Allied Armies could give to "OVERLORD" depended first on their ability to destroy the enemy south of Rome. In its proper perspective the Spring offensive was integral to "OVERLORD"; only when its task had been achieved would the resources become available to exploit any strategic mishap in which the enemy might find himself.

117. The foregoing report is based on material prepared by Major L.A. Wrinch, Gen List, (paras 6-24); V.A.G. Eliot (paras 25-98); and Capt J.A. Porter, who wrote the final section on Allied Strategy. The whole was revised and edited by Lt-Col G.W.L. Nicholson.

*for G.W.L. Nicholson Lt.-Col
(C.P. Stacey) Colonel
Director Historical Section.*

* See Report No.179 paras 34 ff., The Deception Plan, 18 Apr - 11 May.

SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES

1 CDN CORPS (4 Jan-21 Apr 44)

(Includes formation headquarters and infantry and Armoured units only)

(Compiled from Casualty Cards of Records Office C.M.H.Q.)

Formation or unit	4 Jan-7 Mar 44			8 Mar-21 Apr 44		
	(K&DW) Offr ORs	(W) Offr ORs	Total [#] Offr ORs	(K&DW) Offr ORs	(W) Offr ORs	Total [#] Offr ORs
H.Q. 1 CDN CORPS	-	-	- 1	- 1	-	1 1
H.Q. 1 CDN INF DIV	-	-	-	-	-	1 - 1
H.Q. 1 CDN INF BDE	-	-	- 1	- 1	-	2 - 2
R.C.R.	2 18	3 53	5 71	2 7	3 31	5 38
HAST & P.E.R.	4 37	7 119	11 156	- 7	3 23	3 30
48 HIGHRS OF C.	1 14	1 51	2 65	- 7	1 21	1 28
H.Q. 2 CDN INF BDE	-	-	-	-	-	1 - 1
P.P.C.L.I.	- 12	1 51	1 63	- 8	1 31	1 39
SEAFORTH of C.	- 18	6 49	6 67	1 2	4 30	5 32
L. EDMN R.	- 9	5 41	5 50	1 3	3 19	4 22
H.Q. 3 CDN INF BDE	-	-	1	- 1	-	-
R. 22e R.	1 20	2 42	3 62	1 10	2 58	3 68
CARLT & YORK R.	- 10	2 42	2 52	4 6	- 35	4 41
WEST N.S. REGT	1 24	3 46	4 70	1 10	3 53	4 63
H.Q. 5 CDN ARMD DIV	- 1	- 8	- 9	-	-	4 - 4
H.Q. 5 CDN ARMD BDE	-	-	-	-	-	4 - 4
2 CDN ARMD REGT	- 3	- 12	- 15	- 1	-	8 - 9
5 CDN ARMD REGT	-	- 5	- 5	-	-	8 - 8
9 CDN ARMD REGT	-	- 3	- 3	-	-	9 - 9
H.Q. 11 CDN INF BDE	-	-	-	-	-	2 - 2
PERTH R.	3 59	- 103	3 162	- 9	- 25	- 34
C.B. HIGHRS	- 19	3 61	3 80	1 1	2 25	3 26
IRISH REGT	1 18	6 56	7 74	- 2	- 30	- 32
WESTMR R. (MOT)	1 12	2 29	3 41	- 5	- 14	- 19
	14 274	41 774	55 1048	11 78	23 435	34 513

* During the periods covered by these statistics, Casualty Cards of Records Office indicate that formations and units listed had no P.W. or Missing casualties.