

REPORT NO 184

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE OPERATIONS IN NORTH-WEST
EUROPE 1944. PART V: CLEARING THE CHANNEL
PORTS, 3 SEP 44 - 6 FEB 45

| <u>CONTENTS</u> | <u>PAGE</u> |
|---|-------------|
| FIRST CDN ARMY'S ASSIGNMENT | 1 |
| "A". OPERATION "ASTRONIA", THE CAPTURE OF LE HAVRE 10-12 SEP 44 | 2 |
| THE PLAN OF ATTACK | 3 |
| THE ASSAULT IS LAUNCHED | 7 |
| THE SECOND DAY'S OPERATIONS | 9 |
| THE FALL OF LE HAVRE, 12 SEP 44 | 9 |
| "B" OPERATION "WELLHIT", THE CAPTURE OF BOULOGNE 17-22 SEP 44 | 11 |
| THE DEFENCES OF BOULOGNE | 12 |
| THE FORTRESS COMMANDER AND HIS GARRISON | 13 |
| THE CANADIANS INVEST BOULOGNE | 14 |
| THE PLAN FOR THE ASSAULT | 19 |
| THE AIR PLAN | 21 |
| SPECIAL ARMOURED SUPPORT | 22 |
| ARRANGEMENTS FOR SPECTATORS | 24 |
| THE FORTRESS ASSAULTED | 24 |
| THE ASSAULT ON MONT LAMBERT AND THE THRUST TOWARDS THE RIVER | 25 |
| 9 CDN INF BDE TAKES THE CITADEL AND CROSSES THE RIVER, 18 SEP 44 | 28 |
| 8 CDN INF BDE CAPTURES LA TRESORERIE, 18 SEP 44 | 30 |
| C.H. OF O. (M.G.) TAKES HERQUELINGUE, 18-19 SEP 44 | 31 |
| 9 CDN INF BDE ON THE PENINSULA, 19-21 SEP 44 | 31 |
| THE NORTHERN SECTOR, 8 CDN INF BDE, 20-21 SEP 44 | 35 |
| THE REDUCTION OF WIMEREUX, FORT DE LA CRECHE AND LE PORTEL, 22 SEP 44 | 35 |

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| "C" | OPERATION "UNDERGO", THE CAPTURE OF CALAIS 25 SEP - 1 OCT 44 | 38 |
| | THE WATCH ON THE HIGH GROUND | 38 |
| | CLEARING THE CAP GRIS NEZ PENINSULA 12-29 SEP 44 | 39 |
| | THE DEFENCES OF CALAIS | 40 |
| | THE PLAN FOR THE ATTACK | 42 |
| | THE ASSAULT BEGINS, 25 SEP 44 | 45 |
| | THE TRUCE AND EVACUATION 29-30 SEP 44 | 48 |
| | CAPTURE OF CAP GRIS NEZ, 29 SEP 44 | 50 |
| | THE FALL OF CASAIS, 1 OCT 44 | 53 |
| "D" | THE CONTAINING OF DUNKIRK, 15 SEP 44 - 6 FEB 45 | 54 |
| | 4 S.S. BDE RELIEVES 2 CDN INF DIV, 16 SEP 44 | 56 |
| | 154 (H.) INF BDE TAKES OVER, 26 SEP 44 | 57 |
| | THE ROLE OF 2 CDN H.A.A. REGT | 57 |
| | 1 CZSK INDEP ARMD BDE RELIEVES 154 (H.) INF BDE, 6-9 OCT 44 | 59 |
| | THE WINTER SIEGE | 63 |

APPENDICES

| | |
|-----|---|
| "A" | - ARMY COMMANDER'S DIRECTIVE TO CORPS COMMANDERS, 15 SEP 44 |
| "B" | - OPERATION "WELLHIT", 17-22 SEP 44 |
| "C" | - 2 CDN CORPS FRONT, 19 SEP 44 |
| "D" | - OPERATION "UNDERGO", 25 SEP - 1 OCT 44 |
| "E" | - CAPTURE OF CAP GRIS NEZ, 29 SEP 44 |
| "F" | - SIEGE OF DUNKIRK, OCTOBER 1944 - FEBRUARY 1945 |

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe 1944. Part IV: Clearing the Channel Ports, 3 Sep 44 - 6 Feb 45.

1. This is a further report in the series dealing with the Canadian operations in North-West Europe during 1944-45. It presents a detailed narrative of the operations of First Cdn Army in reducing the great channel fortresses of Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais, and in laying siege to Dunkirk. (The story of the bloodless liberation of Dieppe is recounted in [Report No. 183](#), which deals with the pursuit of the German armies, reeling back from their disastrous defeat in Normandy). The operations here described have been recorded in a less detailed form in Preliminary [Report No. 146](#).

2. With bridgeheads on the east bank of the Seine wrested from the enemy, 21 Army Group was in position to sweep through France and on to the Low Countries in a mighty thrust inside the West Wall of Hitler's Europe. The defences and garrison of that thin but formidable barrier would menace the left flank of any such advance. The German strongholds lying between the foremost troops and the United Kingdom would prevent the maintenance of the Allied armies by the shortest cross-channel routes. Until the channel coast was cleansed of the German plague, the advancing armies would be dependent on what supplies could be brought in across the distant beaches of Calvados. Furthermore, from the coastal belt the Hun was shelling our convoys passing through the Straits of Dover. Clearing this vital Channel coast was to be the task of First Canadian Army, in its capacity as the left flank of 21 Army Group.

FIRST CDN ARMY'S ASSIGNMENT

3. Along the western coastline of France the Germans had turned the ports into fortified nodal points of the West Wall. The planning of these defences was done on a grand scale. They were to have the biggest guns, the most cement, and the best troops in France. In fulfilment of these ambitious designs guns and cement were as specified by Hitler, but in all cases the character of the troops left much to be desired. Over a dozen fortresses were named, including the channel ports, Le Havre, Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk. The instructions on the handling of these bastions came straight from Berlin in a series of decrees by the Fuhrer himself. They were to be defended to the last, and each Fortress Commandant was to be responsible with his head if these orders were not carried out. (AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: fol 16, Special Interrogation Report, Field Marshal Karl Rudolph Gerd von Rundstedt, p. 5)

4. On 26 aug, while the Allied armies were crossing the Seine, General Sir. B.L. Montgomery, C.-in-C. 21 Army Grp, gave his orders to Lt-Gen H.D.G Crerar:

Having crossed the Seine, the army will operate northwards, will secure the port of Dieppe, and will proceed quickly with the destruction of all enemy forces in the coastal belt up to Bruges.

(G.O.C.-in-C./1-0: fol 63,
Directive M520; and Montgomery,
Normandy to the Baltic, p.155)

1 Brit Corps would swing westwards into the Le Havre peninsula, to destroy the enemy there and secure the great port of Le Havre (Ibid). The army commitment was spread over a considerable distance and involved the reduction of all the

fortresses along the channel coast from the Seine to the mouth of the West Scheldt. (AEF 45/First Cdn Army/C/F, Docket II: Mann Lectures, 18 May 45)

The seizure of these ports was now urgent, for 21 Army Group's lines of communications were becoming extended as the leading troops raced on toward Germany. On 30 Aug, the C.-in-C. decided to reduce the quantity of stores and vehicles being brought in across the Calvados beaches, and rely for some maintenance on the early capture of a small port such as Dieppe or Boulogne. (Montgomery - Normandy to the Baltic p.162)

5. Dieppe fell quickly (see [Report No. 183](#)), and Le Havre was invested by 1 Brit Corps, while 3 Cdn Inf Div, as we shall see, thrust on towards Boulogne and Calais. But even if Le Havre fell soon, General Montgomery would not have the port he needed, for in the administrative plan it was assigned to the use of United States forces. (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45). On 6 Sep, therefore, he asked Lt-Gen Crerar for his estimate of how long it would take to get Boulogne, for even at this early date he saw that the Germans would attempt to deny him the use of Antwerp by holding the islands at the mouth of the Scheldt (G.O.C.-in-C./1-0: fol 73, Personal Message for Army Comd from C.-in-C.)

6. General Crerar's opinion was that a "speedy and victorious termination of the war depended fundamentally upon the capture by First Cdn Army of the channel ports". These ports had become essential to solve the administrative problem resulting from the rapidity of the recent advance of the Allied armies, and the delay in the capture of the great port of Brest. Until they were secured it was not possible to press on against the retreating enemy as quickly nor as powerfully as the favourable military situation warranted (W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, September 1944: Appx "D"; Letter 9 Sep 44, G.O.C.-in-C. to Corps Comds). Le Havre was assigned, as we have seen, to 1 Brit Corps, and Lt-Gen G.G. Simonds, commanding 2 Cdn Corps, which was advancing with all speed between the Army boundary and the English Channel towards its objectives around Bruges and the West Scheldt, directed 3 Cdn Inf

Div on Boulogne and Calais. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/E, Docket II: fol 16,
Directive to Corps Comds, d/1 Sep 44)

A. OPERATION "ASTONIA", THE CAPTURE OF LE HAVRE

10-12 SEP 44

7. The leading troops of 1 Brit Corps, Yorkshiremen of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div, having crossed the Seine about 25 miles east of Le Havre, made contact with the perimeter defences of that port on the evening of 3 Sep. At 0800 hrs the next morning the besiegers received the rejection of their demand that the German garrison surrender. It was apparent that the place would have to be assaulted (AEF/1 Brit Corps/C/F: Directorate of Tactical Investigation, War Office, Operation "ASTONIA" p.1; and AEF/21 Army Gp C/F, Docket II: Lt-Col A.E. Warhurst, Immediate Report No. 54, Capture of Le Havre, d/1 Oct 44). The German Commander, Colonel Eberhard Wildermuth, now had nothing to do but await the assault. Wildermuth appears to have had a vague hope that it might not come, and that a siege would be attempted instead. This hope stemmed from the fact that the Allies probably knew that the harbour had been made unserviceable, and that La Havre as a port, had, for the time being, been destroyed. But it was a forced hope, and later Wildermuth admitted that in his heart of hearts he realized that a siege at that stage of the campaign was unlikely (AEF/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Ser 15, Special Interrogation Report, Colonel Eberhard Wildermuth)

THE PLAN OF ATTACK

8. As early as March 1944, the planning staff of 21 Army Group had produced a preliminary study, "to effect the capture of Rouen and Le Havre about D-plus-90 with the object of securing the Port of Le Navre". (D.T.I., War Office, Operation "ASTONIA") In the event, the outline plan for the operation was actually produced on 3 Sep, 89 days after the Allies had landed

on the Normandy beaches. This called for the employment by 1 Brit Corps of 29 (W.R.) Inf Div with 34 Tk Bde under command, and 51 (H.) Inf Div with 33 Armd Bde under command.

9. The Highland Division was to move down the coast and take over the Western half of the line and the two divisions were to continue to drive in the enemy outposts and by vigorous patrolling intimidate him and learn everything possible about his dispositions. If the enemy showed any sign of weakness and presented the opportunity, penetration of his main positions was to be made. Arrangements were made for Naval and Air bombardment to "soften-up" his defences, and to facilitate this co-operation, Corps Headquarters was put in direct touch with the Royal Navy and with Bomber Command. In the event of these attacks and the preliminary efforts of the ground forces having no effect the assault was to take place on 8 or 9 September, depending on the administrative situation and the amount of information obtained. (Warhurst, Capture of Le Havre, d/1 Oct 44)

10. The assaulting forces were faced with a difficult task, for Le Havre was strongly protected from ground attack, both by the nature of the ground and by man-made defence works

¹. Water protected three sides of the city - on the west the open Channel, on the south the Seine estuary, and on the east the flooded valley of the Lezarde River. It was obvious that the attack would have to come from the north. But here again the topography aided the defenders. High ground around Octeville, about two miles north of the city and half-a-mile inland from the sea, commanded the northern approaches to the city, and to the north-east, on the west side of the Lezarde valley, were two high plateaux. This high ground was protected by a belt of wire and minefields running from the Lezarde valley at La Rive, near Montivilliers, to the sea coast near Octeville. Air photos

¹ See Map "A"

revealed, running between the minefields, along the northern slope of the natural features, an anti-tank ditch, 20 feet wide and about 10 feet deep. (D.T.I. Report, Operation "ACTONIA", Trace "A"). Numerous infantry strong points of concrete for the employment of machine guns and anti-tank weapons studded the outer defence positions to the north. Eleven of these were spotted (and their positions confirmed by deserters) on the northern plateau west of the Lezarde. In the city itself were 28 artillery positions, nominally of four guns each. The majority of these, however, could only fire out to sea. Within the city two forts, Fort Ste Adresse and Fort Saniv, together with many road blocks, pill boxes, fortified houses and concrete shelters, completed the defensive system behind which the enemy awaited the assault. The strength of the garrison was believed to be between 7350 and 8700, including some 4,000 artillery and flak troops and 1300 naval personnel of low fighting value. Patrols, air observation and civilians, all contributed to the store of information available before the attack. Over 300 civilians were interrogated in the quest for intelligence. (D.T.I. Report, Operation "ASTONIA", p.2. For a detailed description of intelligence methods employed see 2 Cdn Corps Int Summary, No. 57, 22 Sep 44)

11. The German Commander was interviewed, while a prisoner of war, and gave his own estimate of the strength of his garrison. He was pleased with the conscientiousness and ability of his staff of elderly reserve officers. He had about 4500 infantry of varying quality. He considered that his best troops were a battalion of 36 Gr of 245 Inf Div. These men were well trained and knew the problems of the defence. Battle-experienced men on leave from the eastern front, hastily banded together into two battalions, had not yet shaken down into a smooth-working team. The men of 81 Fortress Unit, and two battalions of 5 Sicherungs Regiment (Protective Regiment) were infirm and of small fighting value. The fortress commander having considered the quality of his troops and the facilities for defence, had reported to the Commander of Fifteenth Army, so he alleged later, that the fortress could be held against

an assault for 24 hours in unfavourable circumstances, or 72 hours if circumstances favoured the defence. (Special Interrogation Report - Wildermuth)

12. Operations began with a process of softening the defences with high explosive and the defenders with propaganda. The Royal Navy monitor H.M.S. "Erebus", armed with two 15" guns, engaged counter-battery targets arranged by the C.C.R.A. on 5 and 8 Sep. On both occasions, however, she suffered hits from a shore battery and was forced to withdraw. (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA"; C.B. 3148, (February 1945) Gunnery Review, Normandy Bombardmen Experience, June/September, 1944; and AEF/First Cdn Army/B/F, Docket II: Appx "C", fol 5, Naval Fire Support). Daylight attacks were made by heavy bombers on 5, 6 and 8 Sep, during which 1000 aircraft dropped over 4000 tons of bombs upon the town and surrounding defences. To prevent any repetition of the tragic errors of 14 Aug (see [Report No. 169](#)), forward troops were withdrawn 3000 yards during these attacks, but the bombs were dropped with extreme accuracy and were well concentrated upon their proper targets (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA"; and W.D., G.S. Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, September, 1944, Appx 126; Tel 1 Corps to First Cdn Army, 5 Sep 44). When interviewed, the German Commander claimed that the military damage done by these air raids was comparatively slight, but he did admit that two anti-aircraft batteries were made useless, the telephone circuit was damaged and the streets made impassable by rubble (Special Interrogation Report - Wildermuth). There seems little doubt that the preliminary shelling and raiding, combined with the 900,000 leaflets dropped by the R.A.F., 22,000 more fired by the artillery, and the loudspeaker broadcasts, were all factors which contributed in no small degree to the speed with which the reduction of the fortress was achieved (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA").

13. Meanwhile, Lt-Gen Sir John Crocker, commanding 1 Brit Corps, was making final plans for the assault. In view of the nature of the defences specialized armour from 79 Armd carriers (Kangaross)² of the newly organized 1st Canadian Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron, a unit formed as a result of the successful use of "unfrocked Priests" on 7/8 Aug and 14/15 Aug (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn, 10 Sep 44). The attack was to be in two phases. In the first, 49 (W.R.) Inf Div was to breach the outer defences, capture the northern plateau and secure a bridgehead on the southern one. Then, in the second phase, while 51 (H.) Inf Div secured a firm base north of the Forêt de Mongeon, the Yorkshiremen would complete the capture of the southern plateau. 51 (H.) Inf Div would then destroy the defences at Oteville, and secure the high ground on the north-western outskirts of Le Havre. In the final phase both divisions were to exploit relentlessly into the town. (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA", 1 Corps Op Instr No. 14, 6 Sep 44)

14. The initial task of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div in the first phase was to breach and enter the enemy defences at a point a mile west of Montiville. Here it would be necessary to make three gaps through wire and minefield and, in the case of the central passage, bridge the anti-tank ditch. For the task, 56 Inf Bde had flails to deal with mines, A.Vs.R.E. for the bridging of the ditch, and the Churchills of 7 R. Tks. To deal with the strongpoints behind the enemy minefields and wire, they had more A.Vs.R.E. and Crocodile flame-throwing tanks. The battalion whose task it was to pass through the northern plateau and secure a bridgehead on the southern plateau, had Churchills in

² 1 Canadian Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron had been formed on 1 Sep 44 as the result of the success which attended the use of "unfrocked Priests" carrying infantry during Operations "TOTALIZE" and "TRACTABLE". The squadrons had 4 troops each of 12 Kangaroos (W.D., 1 Canadian Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron, 1 Sep 44). This squadron and its successor, 1 Canadian Armoured Personnel Carrier Regiment, (formed 23 Oct 44) were to provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of transporting infantry safely through the enemy's outer defences. (A Short account of the activities of the unit has been published under the title First Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment, The History of the Kangaroos).

support, plus the very great advantage of being carried to their objectives in the Canadian-manned Kangaroos. (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA")

15. In the second phase, 51 (H.) Inf Div was to start its operations in darkness, with a break-in just west of the gaps made earlier by 49 (W.R.) Inf Div. For their part in the assault the Scotsmen also received the assistance of the strange contrivances of 79 Armd Div. The gap was to be three lanes in width, and each lane was to be made by an identical armoured column, or "gapping team". The leading vehicle was an A.V.R.E., whose principal function was to clear the anti-landing poles and wires which infested the area. Next came the first "flail", whose responsibility included direction keeping by gyro compass, an important and difficult task at night, as had been found in Operation "TOTALIZE". There would follow two A.Vs.R.E. with "snakes" for detonating by explosives the mines on the far side of the trench, and so giving the four flails which followed a clear area from which to start their work of mine detonation. The last two vehicles would be an A.V.R.E. towing a sledge full of fascines for use by the divisional sappers and a bulldozer to improve the crossings. As in Operation "TOTALIZE", direction-keeping was to be aided by tapes and lights, and Bofors tracers. (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA")

16. To the infantry, as yet unacquainted with the work of the 79 Armd Div special equipment, their forthcoming assistance was not regarded as an unmixed blessing. The following was the reaction of a British battalion second-in-command when he saw the mass of queer vehicles which were to assist his battalion:

After supper I drafted the orders of march for our advance. We are to have Crocodiles, A.Vs.R.E., tanks and flails. All very complicated, too complicated in fact, and I have been trying to persuade Harry to leave some of this menagerie behind as I fear they will get stuck in

the woods we have to go through...We were up early for our rehearsal with the funnies. It has been raining for days, and the flails and AVREs got stuck in the mud, and the crocodiles did not do much better. It is going to be very difficult to control this Zoo...We shall have fifty-four vehicles and they are all being lined up tonight, (9 Sep). I hope to goodness they mark the route well, and especially the minefields, so that we cannot go wrong in the dark. Our column is being led by a sapper sergeant, Whitefield, in charge of a scissors bridge to put across the first anti-tank ditch. It seems a great responsibility to give an N.C.O.

(Lt-Col Martin Lindsay, D.S.O.,
M.P., So Few Got Through)

17. As already indicated, the attacking corps received the weighty assistance of Bomber Command and the Royal Navy. The air plan for the day of the operation called for the use of a very large number of bombers, with a bomb load of over 4000 tons to be dropped on defined targets within the city. H.M.S. "Erebus" and H.M.S. "Warspite" were to bring to its climax the counter-battery programme which had begun during the softening-up period (see para 12). The air effort in support of the ground also received ground support, for the artillery were to fire a counter-flak programme, to keep all enemy anti-aircraft guns out of action while the bombers were attacking. (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA")

18. A tremendous weight of artillery was available to support the attack. In addition to the six field regiments of the two divisions, there were two A.G.R.A.'s, comprising six medium and two heavy regiments. Besides timed concentrations, the corps commander could order, and divisions could request, "victor" targets. When one of these was ordered by the C.C.R.A., every gun which could reach the target, and was not otherwise engaged, would take part

in the shoot. The call to fire on a "victor" target took precedence over counter-battery or counter-flak tasks. Pre-arranged concentrations were also available on call. (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA", R.A., 1 Corps O.O. No. 7) In addition to the army artillery the mighty- 15-in guns of the veteran battleship H.M.S. "Warspite" and the monitor H.M.S. "Erebus" would engage shore batteries from the sea (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA").

19. Preparations for the attack were hampered by consistently bad weather. The frequent downpours of rain soaked the clay soil, so that the passage of even a few vehicles reduced it to a quagmire. As a result, D Day, originally planned for 9 Sep, was postponed 24 hours. (W.D., G.S., Ops, H.P. First Cdn Army, September, 1944; Appx 126, Tel 1 Corps to Bomber Command, 7 Sep 44) Fortunately the weather cleared, but the heavy state of the ground was seriously to affect the operations, particularly the performance of the flail tanks. (D.T.I., Operations "ASTONIA") The delay, however, gave valuable time for detailed planning and briefing. The use of sand tables for detailed planning and briefing. The use of sand tables and cloth models of the minefield-breaching operation and the areas to be assaulted proved valuable, and particularly so to 51 (H.) Inf Div, which was to assault in darkness. (Ibid, p.7)

THE ASSAULT IS LAUNCHED, 10 SEP 44

20. At 1000 hrs on 10 Sep, the morning of D Day, the two great ships began the bombardment of the enemy's batteries. The guns of H.M.S. "Warspite" silenced the shore battery which had previously scored two hits on the monitor, and during the next six hours the guns of the two vessels pumped 300 15-in shells into the defences of Le Havre. The assault proper began at 1645 hrs on 10 Sep, when the first bombers dropped their loads exactly on schedule. There were three successive target areas centred on the divisional objectives. Nine hundred heavy bombers dropped 4264 tons of high explosive

bombs on these targets (Warhurst, Capture of Le Havre). To the waiting troops, formed up west of Montivilliers on the right bank of the Lezarde, the weight and apparent precision of the bombing was impressive and encouraging. They estimated that its effects on the defenders would be considerable. Prisoners stated subsequently, however, that although the bombardment was very frightening, comparatively few of the German troops were killed or wounded because of the excellent shelters, including those supplied for the civilian population. Damage was done to weapons, but the most important result was the breakdown in communications, which prevented the German artillery commander from controlling his resources, and precluded centralized direction of the defence. (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA")

21. The infantry advance by 49 (W.R.) Inf Div started sharp at 1745 hrs, and flails went into action in the left gap at 1825 hrs. By 1940 hrs three lanes were completed, at a cost of four flails. The centre gap was very difficult, as it involved bridging an anti-tank ditch. Here, even after tremendous effort, only one lane was successfully completed. The eastern gap was meant to consist of two lanes, but it was only possible to open one as three flail tanks were destroyed after only 50 yards of operation. The gapping cost altogether 29 flails and two command tanks - most of which were disabled by mines - and six A.Vs.R.E. (Ibid)

22. The German view of this part of the operation is interesting as showing the effectiveness of the methods employed by the attackers:

During the night 10/11 September, Allied artillery kept up its intensive fire. In addition a dome of light formed by huge searchlights was thrown over the fortress, and under this artificial moonlight infantry and flame-throwing tanks continued their break-in all through the night. Command during the hours of darkness was almost impossible with means of communication, wireless and roads, hopelessly

damaged. Companies thrown in for relief reached their assembly points late, and with considerable casualties. When daylight came, Wildermuth realized a counter-attack was out of the question, and he ordered his troops to take up the defence of the second position, on the east and north-east edge of the forest of Mongeon...

Minefields were penetrated very quickly, and Allied tanks and infantry co-operated well in the attack. The flame-throwing tanks had a great morale effect in weakening the defenders' will to resist. The artificial moonlight on the night of 10/11 September, created considerable surprise. Preceding the attack into the town, Allied artillery gave prompt and mobile support to the spearheads of the attack. The infantry advanced carefully and capably, and the British fighter, according to Wildermuth, proved himself to be a hard fighter in the break-in and in house-to-house fighting.

(Special Interrogation Report -
Wildermuth)

23. As soon as the gaps were ready the 7 R. Tks, supporting the advancing infantry, poured through, and with the riflemen and Crocodiles engaged the enemy pill boxes. Fighting raged across the northern plateau as darkness fell, and the searchlights came on. The battalion whose task it was to seize a bridgehead on the southern plateau were forced to advance on foot from the gaps as the going, because of mud and undetonated mines, was too bad for the Canadian-manned Kangaroos which were carrying them to proceed further. Although unable to establish an effective bridgehead on the southern plateau, they seized two undamaged bridges across the River Fontaine, which divides the two plateaux, and the supporting sappers - working in A.Vs.R.E. for protection from the enemy fire which swept the valley - completed two further crossings.

(D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA"; Warhurst, Capture of Le Havre p.14; and W.D., 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn, 11 Sep 44)

24. While the Yorkshiremen battled their way into the defences, the Scots of 51 (H.) Inf Div were preparing to smash their way in on the right. At 2359 hrs, their leading battalion, using the right hand gap already made by 49 (W.R.) Inf Div, swung in behind the enemy defences opposing the Scots, and ten minutes later the gapping teams began their task.

25. The approach to the anti-tank ditch was made in darkness, there being little cloud to reflect the searchlights. As a result of the heavy going, bad visibility, and resulting difficulty in keeping direction, the gapping teams took an hour instead of the estimated thirty minutes to reach the ditch. By 0240 hrs, in all three lanes, bridges had been launched across the obstacle; two hours later one lane was complete, swept of mines, and in fit condition for vehicles to use.

THE SECOND DAY'S OPERATIONS, 11 SEP 44

26. Meanwhile, to the east of the River Lezarde, 146 Bde of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div was preparing to discomfort the enemy further by attacking the four strong points east of Harfleur, which formed the right flank of the defences. This attack started at 0530 hrs on 11 Sep, with infantry, tanks and flails supported by four field and one medium regiments. The first assault was only partly successful, great difficulty being experienced with unexpected mines. As a result, even though the infantry were supported by the terrible threat of the Crocodiles, fighting raged until after 1400 hrs, when the last enemy garrison in the strongpoints surrendered. By last light on 11 Sep, 146 Inf Bde troops, who had found four bridges intact, were forcing their way westward into Le Havre, the forward infantry having reached a point on the Canal Vauban north-west of the railway marshalling yards. (D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA";

Warhurst, Capture of Le Havre, p. 17, paras 54, 55; and AEF/21 Army Gp/C/F, Docket II: fol 26, Immediate Report No. 45. R.E. Branch, 21 Army Gp, Report by ARE Troop Commander on attack on Le Havre, d/7 Oct 44)

27. During the daylight hours of the 11th the main attacks from the north had penetrated deeper into the defences, as pill box garrisons were burned into subjection by the searing flames of Crocodiles, or blasted into surrender by the petards of the A.Vs.R.E. All day long the Royal Air Force plied their trade from overhead, starting with 155 Bomber Command aircraft which dropped 857 tons of high-explosive bombs between 0730 and 0800 hrs. Tactical air support was given by rocket-firing Typhoons, which engaged targets during the day with their spectacular hissing projectiles. By nightfall the forward troops had penetrated as far as Doudenville, a settlement 1000 yards south of Octeville, Bléville and la Hève, west of Le Havre. The built-up area had been occupied to a line just north of the two forts, Ste Adressee and Sanvic. 49 (W.R.) Inf Div held positions running from the cemetery east of Fort Sanvic to Point 99 on the southern plateau, and 146 Bde of that division had penetrated 2000 yards along the Canal Vauban from Harfleur.

THE FALL OF LE HAVRE, 12 SEP 44

28. On 12 Sep, the final clearance of Le Havre was carried out. The area between Doudenville and the sea was looked after by 152 (H.) Inf Bde, against very little resistance, while 153 (H.) Inf Bde attended to the area to the south, except the high ground around la Hève, which was left to be dealt with by 154 (H.) Inf Bde. The strongest resistance encountered by 51 (H.) Inf Div came from Ste Adresse Fort, which did not surrender until 1500 hrs. Meanwhile 49 (W.R.) Inf Div had cleared the city down to the docks and Canal Vauban; it had taken Fort Sanvic, and captured the wounded Garrison Commander, Colonel Eberhard Wildermuth, and his artillery commander. Bit by bit, the last pockets of resistance in the great harbour were eliminated.

29. In 48 hours' fighting the great fortress of Le Havre had been reduced. The port was thus secured for our use 98 days after the first invaders landed in German-occupied Europe. The besiegers suffered just under 500 casualties killed, wounded and missing from 3 Sep to the end of the operation on 12 Sep. On the other hand the defence had cost the Germans 11,300 prisoners, as well as uncounted dead. An official report on the battle lists the dominant factors which led to the British success:

There is no doubt that the speed and comparative ease with which the operation was accomplished were largely due to the absence of a determined will to resist on the part of the garrison, and that this condition was created by a sense of complete isolation by land, sea and air, culminating in the concentrated and undisturbed bombardment of the defences by the Royal Artillery, the Royal Navy and above all, the Royal Air Force. The Corps plan, both in its conception and execution, made full use of this condition; all available arms were employed to their best advantage; the momentum of the assault was never permitted to relax; before it had time to recover the garrison was overwhelmed.

(D.T.I., Operation "ASTONIA")

30. The great and gallant work of the men who manned the special armour which played such a vital part in this brilliantly successful assault is described by a British authority:

Two British divisions, the 49th (West Riding) and the 51st (Highland) Divisions were assigned to its reduction and the 79th Armoured Division under General Hobart was afforded a first large-scale opportunity to practise the armoured assault-team technique which formed part of the inspired conceptions which had led to the setting up of that novel formation. Flails, mounted in "Crabs" to thresh a path through the

minefields, "Avres" with their bombardment "Pettrards" and miscellaneous equipment to bridge and overcome the miscellaneous anti-tank obstacles and "Crocodiles" to bring terror to the hearts of the defenders, constituted a redoubtable trio which carried all before them. Despite very bad going and by virtue of great gallantry by Crab, Crocodile and Avre crews alike, the formidable fortifications were over-run and the lives of many infantrymen were saved. The enemy condemned the "Crocodiles" as unfair and un-British and one officer prisoner reported that a whole platoon caught in the open had been burned to death. A "Crocodile" commander who witnessed this episode, one of the few occasions throughout the campaign when the enemy stood up to flame in the open without instantaneous surrender, has described the horror of the blazing, shrieking, demented Germans. Some of his crew were physically sick at the sight.

(Sir Donald Banks, Flame Over Britain, p.111)

31. Colonel Wildermuth gave, from the German viewpoint, a studied and logical evaluation of the comparative contributions of the various arms and services in our conduct of the battle of Le Havre:

Describing Allied tactics, he claimed that the main brunt of the attack had been delivered against the weakest part of the land front. That this would come on 10 September, was hardly to be doubted in consideration of what had gone before. That the attack would start after 1730 hrs, however, came as something of a surprise. The air bombardments and the shelling from the sea had only a general destructive effect, but did not create much military damage. The real effective fire came from Allied concentrated artillery which had devastating results in knocking out the guns of the fortress.

(Special Interrogation Report,
Wildermuth)

32. The C.-in-C. himself, well pleased with this feat, wrote later:

Le Havre constituted one of the strongest fortresses of the Atlantic Wall and had been provided with most elaborate concrete defences, extensive minefields and other obstacles, but it had been reduced after forty-eight hours' fighting.

(Field-Marshal the Viscount
Montgomery of Alamein: Normandy
to the Baltic, p. 168)

33. The capture of Le Havre did not give General Montgomery the port he needed so badly, for it was assigned to the U.S. forces (para 5). The German intention to deny us the use of Antwerp by holding the islands at the mouth of the Scheldt was quite evident, and emphasized the importance of the smaller ports. Boulogne was particularly needed as a terminal for "Pluto", the cross-channel pipe line. (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45; and Sir Donald Banks, Flame Over Britain). But progress had been made, for the fall of Le Havre released to 2 Cdn Corps the strong body of armour and artillery required by 3 Cdn Inf Div to assault Boulogne. It also made available the resources of R.A.F. Bomber Command and the guns of 51 (H.) Inf Div and 9 A.G.R.A. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/I: Minutes of Morning Joint Conference, 11 and 12 Sep 44; W.D., 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn, 13 Sep 44; and W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944: Appx No. 3, "WELLHIT"). On 13 Sep General Crerar, in a directive to his Corps Commanders, in which he outlined the future requirements to be carried out by First Cdn Army in the clearing of channel ports and the opening of Antwerp, gave orders that 2 Cdn Corps should capture Boulogne on 16 Sep, "or as soon thereafter as the necessary air support can be

afforded". (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/E, Docket II: G.O.C.-in-C. 1-0-4, 15 Sep 44. For full text of this directive see Appendix "A")

"B"

OPERATION "WELLHIT", - THE CAPTURE OF BOULOGNE

17-22 SEP 44

34. Boulogne, in normal times the French port on many cross-channel services, is situated at the mouth of the River Liane, which forms the town harbour, and is surrounded by high features³. A mile to the north, half-way to Wimereux, is the 70-metre high feature on which stands Fort de la Crèche. To the east is the very high hill of Mont Lambert, whose summit is 170 metres above sea level. a little more than one mile due south of this eminence rises the hight of Herquelingue, only ten metres lower. On the west side of the valley of the Liane, between it and the sea, is the hilly peninsula on which stand St Etienne, Outreau, and le Portel. An officer who visited the vicinity on a topographical reconnaissance in August 1946, made the following notes:

Fort de la Crèche is a dominating feature to the north of this badly blitzed port. It stands on the coast a mile outside the town, just inland from the highway. Although most of its concrete is concealed, and it is thus not very impressive, its tactical importance is apparent for it is situated on an eminence which towers over Wimereux to the north, Boulogne itself to the south, and the lower ground immediately inland. Mont Lambert is apparently less of a fort, but an even more dominating feature. It is a very high hill from the top of which all of Boulogne can be seen. Treeless, and covered only with scrub and gorse, it is furrowed with trenches and dotted with pillboxes. From the point where the road to Desvres passes over the top all the other

³ See Map "B"

roads to the north and south are easily dominated, and one can see almost as far as Gris Nez.

(Topographical Notes of Normandy
Battlefields, made by
Capt R.A. Spencer, Hist Sec,
C.M.H.Q., 26 Jul - 4 Aug 46)

H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div summed up the topography succinctly: "High ground area Boulogne forms a horseshoe shape which surrounds the port". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 8, Op Order No. 2, 6 Sep 44)

THE DEFENCES OF BOULOGNE

35. The area Boulogne - Cap Gris Nez - Calais had long been a French fortified zone, and during their four years' occupation the Germans had methodically improved the coastal defences, adding radar installations and preparing the forts for all-round defence. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 14, Int Summary No. 42). The defences were mutually supporting to a very marked degree, and covered all possible approaches to the city. They consisted of very strong reinforced concrete gun emplacements, dug-outs and underground passages, in addition to ordinary earthworks, surrounded by wire entanglements and minefields. All roads were mined, and all bridges were prepared for demolition. (AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket V: Operation "WELLHIT", 17-22 Sep 44). Some of these defences formed simple infantry-defended localities, but others centred round coast-defence batteries and fortified radar stations (Ibid).

36. The strongest links in this chain of defence were the defences of the Mont Lambert and Herquelingue features mentioned above. The steep slopes of these two heights were studded with small fortresses made up of casemated

guns, guns in open emplacements, trenches, weapon pits, and pill boxes. Mont Lambert was a labyrinth of underground tunnels and dug-outs, and boasted a number of disappearing guns. (Ibid). In the event of seaborne attack, the Germans planned that the fortress commander should use Mont Lambert as his headquarters; accordingly wireless communications were installed to enable him to direct the battle from there. (Ibid: and AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special Interrogation Report, Genlt Heim). The Herquelingue locally was similarly defended by guns in casemates and open positions, with shelters, pill boxes and trenches. On the southern part of the feature pill boxes and guns covered the main road which runs from Boulogne to Samer. The Mont Lambert and Herquelingue positions together commanded all approaches to the port from the south and south-east. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above; and Defence Overprint, France 1:25,000, Part of Sheets 49 N.W. and S.W., dated 12 Sep 44)

37. But these two formidable positions were merely parts of a great defensive horseshoe which embraced Boulogne from Wimereux in the north to Nocquet on the coast to the south. Fort de la Crèche, the northern anchor, consisted of one old French fort modernized by very strong concrete pill boxes and other defence works. There were light guns of all calibres, and four formidable 240-mm guns, with all-round traverse, capable of engaging targets inland. To the north, outside the main ring at Wimereux and la Tresorerie, were coastal defence positions, capable of firing out to sea only. An exception was the three 305-mm guns at la Tresorerie which could bring fire down on the beaches at Wissant. Heavy and light anti-aircraft guns supplemented the concrete defences in this area. Astride the two main roads leading into Boulogne - at St Martin-Boulogne - was a strong infantry position, consisting of mines and wire, earthworks, and deep earth dug-outs. Mont Lambert and Herquelingue, already described, formed the next part of the perimeter. South-west of Herquelingue, across the Liane valley, is the height of St Etienne. On this feature were many small-calibre batteries as well as

strong concrete defences. On the coast at Nocquet was a fortified radar station defended by light and heavy anti-aircraft guns, some field guns in open emplacements and numerous pill boxes. (Ibid; and AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket II: No. 2 Operational Research Section, 21 Army Gp, Report No. 16, Air and Ground Support in the Assault on Boulogne)

38. Inside this sturdy perimeter, between the harbour of Boulogne and the sea, was a strong position on the heights at le Portel, consisting of a northern and a southern fort. In the event, this was to prove the last part of Boulogne to fall. The city itself behind its perimeter defences was well fortified. The streets were commanded by anti-tank guns and medium machine-gun booby-traps, all designed to obstruct our troops if they should penetrate the built-up area. The old Citadel, an ancient fortress surrounded by a moat, was in itself a formidable obstacle even for a modern army. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above)

THE FORTRESS COMMANDER AND HIS GARRISON

39. Commanding the garrison was Genlt Ferdinand Heim. This professional soldier, who after serving in Poland and Russia had spent some time in arrest, as he alleged, for political reasons, was suddenly recalled for duty in August and posted to command the Boulogne Fortress. His only infantry division which had been there long enough to know the countryside and to become familiar with the many foreign weapons installed in the defences - 47 Inf Div - was withdrawn late in August, and was replaced by two and one half Fortress Machine Gun Battalions. These had made a hazardous progress from Germany under constant air attack. The inadequately trained newcomers, 2000 former office clerks and older men, formed the sole infantry element of the garrison. The balance consisted of the naval personnel manning the coastal guns, the administrative personnel of the port of Boulogne, and a nine-gun battery together with some engineers from 64 Inf Div that Heim had managed to retain

(Special Interrogation Report, Heim, as above). The shortage of infantry in the garrison was established before the assault by the capture of German patrols far from their own areas. The prisoners stated that they had been sent there to patrol, as the troops in the areas concerned were not trained for such work. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above). Even highly skilled signals personnel were employed as infantry before the assault, so great was the shortage of the latter arm (Ibid).

40. The spirit of the garrison was not easy to determine at the time, but it was estimated to be low. Heim, interviewed some months after his capture, spoke of the morale of the troops as being good "under the circumstances", but his subsequent remarks contradicted this statement. (Special Interrogation Report, Heim, as above). The men of the garrison were apparently well aware of the general war situation in France, Belgium and Holland. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above). It was clear to them from the first that they were a lost outpost. But to a certain extent the enormous strength of the defences behind which they stood compensated for the low morale of the garrison. On 13 Sep the German strength was estimated at 5,500 to 7,000 men (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 14, Int Summary No. 42).

THE CANADIANS INVEST BOULOGNE

41. As 3 Cdn Inf Div, having crossed the Seine, pursued the enemy into the Pas de Calais, 7 Cdn Recce Regt probed ahead, and on 5 Sep found Boulogne and Calais heavily defended. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was directed on Boulogne and the brigade commander felt that he could take the town in his stride. Approaching from the south-east, the brigade ran into heavy opposition, and contrary to the brigadier's hopes, was brought to a standstill five miles from the city. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above). The situation was appreciated next day in the divisional operational order:

- a. Our advance on Boulogne from the south and south-east met increased resistance during afternoon and evening 5 Sep;
- b. It is apparent that enemy intends to make a stand of some sort in Boulogne area using well-prepared defence positions, including guns of heavy size, concrete emplacements, and considerable numbers of automatic weapons;
- c. A profusion of anti-tank mines, booby traps and wire covered by machine gun fire block the approaches to the area Boulogne, particularly to the south-east; and
- d. Unconfirmed reports from civilians indicate a strong garrison is defending Boulogne.

(W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde,
September 1944: Appx 5, Op Order
No. 2)

Maj-Gen D.C. Spry's intention was that "3 Cdn Inf Div and attached troops will capture Boulogne and destroy its garrison" (Ibid). But before this could be done, the fortress must be invested and cut off from Cap Gris Nez and Calais to the north. This segregation was accomplished by regrouping so that 7 Cdn Inf Bde was left free to move off and seize the high ground north-east of Boulogne, near Gris Nez, while 9 Cdn Inf Bde, relieving 7 Cdn Inf Bde, took over the southern approaches to Boulogne from Courcollette on the western edge of the Forêt de Boulogne, to Hardelot⁴ on the coast. 9 Cdn Inf Bde thus faced

⁴ Hardelot was the scene of the Canadian Armys' first (and abortive) cross-Channel enterprise in April 1942, when a detachment of the Carleton and York Regiment participated in the small-scale operation "Abercrombie". (See Historical Offr's [Report No. 81](#) Canadian Participation in Operation "Abercrombie" 22 Apr 42)

the Herquelingue and St Etienne features, and in this vicinity set out to patrol and obtain information. The intention was to give the enemy garrison the impression that this sector was as strongly held as that of the 8 Cdn Inf Bde. The latter brigade held a position facing Boulogne from the east and north-east, "the area Conteville - le Croix - la Capelle astride the main east - west road St. Omer - Boulogne", except for a gap between the brigade's right flank and the sea which was held by 7 Cdn Recce Regt. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 5 Sep 44)

42. The great task of the moment was to secure every scrap of information possible about the garrison and defences of Boulogne. Very active and co-ordinated patrolling became the order of both day and night. Civilians generally and the well-organized F.F.I. in particular, gave useful information; the F.F.I. were especially valuable, for they were trained to give accurate observations of enemy positions. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above; and W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 12). Their knowledge of the country, and of the whereabouts of minefields, road blocks, and other defences, turned out to be of the greatest assistance. They were used to indicate places to which patrols should be sent, and in some cases acted as guides. They gave valuable assistance in plotting enemy dispositions, so that these might be dealt with in the fire plan, and they provided detailed information about defences within the city itself. Finally, F.F.I. guides were provided to lead the columns through the city during the actual assault. These French patriots were well organized, keen, and business-like in carrying out their assignments, and there is little doubt that the excellent quality of our intelligence at the opening of the battle was in a large measure due to their assistance. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above). In spite of adverse weather, much valuable information came to the besiegers by means of aerial photography. This material had to be collated and distributed to those concerned, a task so enormous that the divisional Intelligence staff - not designed for such a deliberate operation as the

reduction of a fortress - was almost inundated (Ibid). In spite of this limitation, and the bade weather, air photographs were widely distributed, and a defence-overprint map, which showed enemy defences clearly and accurately, was prepared and issued on 13 Sep 44 for general use during the operations (Ibid; and AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket I: Summary of Cdn Ops and Activities, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 2 - 9 Sep 44).

43. Even with the foregoing great flow of information, planning was a difficult task, for the staff had to consider plans for attacking Cap Gris Nez and Calais concurrently with the preparations to assault Boulogne. To the north, 7 Cdn Inf Bde was preparing to deal with the isolated Cup Gris Nez position before moving into position to assault Calais. If and when Cap Gris Nez had been reduced, 7 Cdn Inf Bde was to proceed to the attack on Calais concurrently with the Boulogne assault in the event of the latter going well. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above)

44. In addition to problems of planning and intelligence, there arose those concerned with supply and the movement of supporting troops, armoured and artillery, into the area. The artillery ammunition dumping programme provided a major worry in administration. Heavy calibre ammunition was still being landed across the distant Calvados beaches, and it had to be brought by road to Boulogne, a seven-day round trip. Ammunition of all other natures was drawn at Dieppe, a three-day turn-round. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above). Approximately 8500 tons were to be brought up in this way (Ibid). Further, arrangements had to be made to bring from Le Havre the specialized armour of 79 Armd Div, as soon as it could be spared from Operation ASTRONIA. Top priority was given to the movement by road, on tank transporters, of the Crocodiles, A.Vs.R.E., Flails and Kangaroos, as soon as these ingenious devices had finished their tasks at Le Havre. (AEF/First Cdn Army/C/I, Minutes of Morning Joint Conference, 11-12 Sep 44; and W.D., 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn, 13 Sep 44). The problem of communications was made

easier by the establishment of an extensive line system which included alternatives for each channel. The work expended on this task paid a handsome dividend during the operation, even though it required the laying of over 200 miles of cable, in addition to the elaborate telephone communications used by the two A.G.R.As. (Operation "WELLHIT", as above)

45. While 3 Cdn Inf Div was engaged in the preliminary stages of investing Boulogne, Lt-Gen Simonds, commanding 2 Cdn Corps, was directing his other divisions northward on their way to objectives as distant as Bruges and the Leopold Canal⁵. Though his responsibilities were now so scattered, he was able personally to supervise affairs at Boulogne. On the evening of 7 Sep he laid down to Maj-Gen Spry his division's tasks around Boulogne, and on 8 Sep received a visit from Brig C.C. Mann, Chief of Staff First Cdn Army, who came to find the Corps requirements for the Boulogne attack. The following day General Simonds saw Maj-Gen Spry again, re-defining the divisional tasks: "To continue probing and patrolling for the purpose of reducing enemy-held area and isolating gun positions preparatory to attack on Boulogne". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 7, 8 and 9 Sep 44). The Corps Commander was then visited by Maj-Gen Sir Percy Hobart, commanding 79 Armd Div. Discussing with him the requirements of specialized armour for the operation, the Corps Commander asked for three squadrons of Flails, and two squadrons each of A.Vs.R.E. and Crocodiles. At this time, General Simonds foresaw the possibility of the Boulogne defences softening to the extent that a large deliberate operation might not be needed to reduce the place. (Ibid, 9 Sep 44). On 12 Sep, the day Le Havre fell, he ordered 3 Cdn Inf Div to

... enclose Boulogne on the north. Close the southwestern exits from Boulogne on the general line Hesden - l'Abbe - Hardelot with a machine-gun battalion. Assault Boulogne with two infantry brigades on the axis

⁵ See Map "C"

astride the road la Capelle - Boulogne not before 15 September 1944. Detailed instructions will be issued verbally to GOC 3 Cdn Inf Div. The assault will be supported by all available heavy and fighter bombers and medium artillery.

(AEF/First Cdn Army/C/E,
Docket II: fol 33)

The same day, the Corps Commander visited 3 Cdn Inf Div, and gave Maj-Gen Spry directions on how the attack should be mounted: "Attack to take place on or after 12 Sep with bombers, Priests, and medium artillery as vital to plan. Other gadgets desirable but postponement of attack not necessary if they did not arrive". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 12 Sep 44). The diarist then notes: "Gen Hobart, 79 Armd Div, visited commander at 1630 hours to say how soon his gadgets would arrive and learn how attack is to be effected" (Ibid).

46. During the early stages of the siege the massive artillery formations needed to support the assault were already moving in to the area, mostly to positions behind the Forêt de Boulogne. First on the scene, arriving with the division, were the three field regiments of 3 Cdn Inf Div, and 7 Cdn Med Regt; one of these field few days the enemy was deceived by "roving troops", which fired from one position, then another, to give the impression that a large amount of artillery was deployed. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 5, "Assault on Boulogne - Artillery Picture"). On the evening of 6 Sep the two field regiments outside Boulogne and 7 Cdn Med Regt fired a series of concentrations and a smoke screen, designed to make the enemy think that an attack was impending, and so delude him into firing his defensive fire plan, and thus betraying the whereabouts of his guns. (Ibid, 6 Sep 44; and Appx 7, Fire Plans 2000 hours, 6 Sep 44; and W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 3, "Fake Attack"). Very little information was gained, however, as the canny German artillery did not reply (Ibid). The

"moving troop" trick was successful in deceiving the enemy gunners, as we know from the interrogation of the German artillery commander, who admitted that he had no idea how many guns were opposing him, and that his observation posts had been entirely unable to plot the whereabouts of our batteries (Operation "WELLHIT"; and W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 6 Sep 44). By 9 Sep, guns of 2 Cdn A.G.R.A. and 9 A.G.R.A. had started to move into position. The 25-pdrs of 51 (H.) Inf Div, which were to join in the attack later, remained committed at Le Havre until 12 Sep (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 9 Sep 44). Once the guns were in action they engaged in a variety of tasks. Red smoke was fired to indicate targets to rocket-projectile typhoons; harassing fire was brought down on likely enemy positions; and observed fire was directed by forward observing officers. Counter-flak programmes were fired on known enemy anti-aircraft sites in support of our medium bombers engaged in softening up the defences. (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 7-12 Sep 44). The guns also carried on psychological warfare, firing 25-pdr base-ejection shells set to burst over the enemy positions and showering them with "safe-conduct" leaflets (Ibid; Operational Research in North West Europe, p. 39; The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery, p. 72; and W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 1, A. & Q. Log, 11 Sep 44, Ser 2).

47. It was considered, and rightly, as events transpired, that the isolated garrison of Boulogne confronted with the assemblage of such a vast force of men, armour and artillery, and frequently subjected to devastating attacks from the air, would be particularly susceptible to psychological warfare. As well as the artillery "Propaganda Shoots" two other forms of war with words proved useful. On 14-15 September, 420,000 leaflets, "The Lesson of Le Havre for the Defenders of Boulogne", were dropped on the city by medium bombers. (Operational Research in North West Europe, Appx "D", p.39). During the period of 19-22 September, when the assault was taking place, four White scout cars equipped with powerful loudspeakers ("loud hailers") made broadcasts which were officially credited with the surrender of 900 Germans. (Ibid)

48. Within the defences, Genlt Heim was now finding the French civilians, approximately 10,000 souls, a source of anxiety. They taxed the supply of food and water, and their hostility made them potentially dangerous to the security of the fortress. He decided on 10 Sep to evacuate the whole population with the two-fold object of getting rid of a dangerous element, and presenting the besiegers with an awkward evacuation problem. Incidentally he tried to discover the date of the assault by finding out the date by which all civilians must be clear of Boulogne. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 6). The reception of the evacuees was carried out by 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, which established control points from which to direct the people to safety (W.Ds, H.Q. 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 13 Sep 44). All day on 13 Sep the road was lined with men and women "carrying with them such meagre possessions as they could carry without transport", for the refugees were denied even the use of wheelbarrows, hand-carts and bicycles. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Sep 44). The civilians living in an area of 50 square kilometres between the Forêt de Boulogne and the outskirts of the city had already been evacuated on 10 Sep by the Canadians. (W.D., A. & Q., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Sep 44; and Appx 24, Adm Orders Nos 1 and 10, and attached notices). All the evacuated civilians were carefully checked by Field Security personnel at the control points which had been established (Ibid). By 16 Sep over 8,000 people had been disposed of (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 6).

49. During the period of waiting, while patrols probed for information, and staffs planned for the coming assault, the air arm was attempting to soften up the defences. On 9 Sep rocket-firing Typhoons shot up targets indicated by 25-apr red smoke shells. (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 9 Sep 44). The attacking aircraft were supported by a counter-flak shoot on two nearby enemy anti-aircraft gun-sites (Ibid). The following morning at 1100 hours, and again in the afternoon mediums bombed smoke-indicated target (Ibid, 10 Sep 44). On 12 Sep Typhoons hurtled down on the enemy near St Martin-Boulogne (Ibid, 12 Sep 44). The next afternoon red smoke indicated targets on Mont Lambert to

90 medium bombers, which made their bombing run while our counter-battery fire kept the German anti-aircraft gunners to their dug-outs. Later Spitfires engaged targets in the vicinity of Wimille - la Tresorerie (Ibid, 13 Sep 44), and the next day the medium bombers were at it again (Ibid, 14 Sep 44). The Operational Research Section of 21 Army Group had investigators close at hand during the operation, and they analysed the results of these attacks:

Air attacks before the assault had not done significant damage to infantry defences, and broken communication cables had often been relaid; although they may have lowered enemy morale, the effect does not seem to have been marked ... There were altogether 49 air attacks by Mediums, Fighter Bombers and R.P. Typhoons. 31 of these, directed at battery positions were subsequently examined; 7 proved to be attacks on dummy positions and 11 on empty emplacements. Because of this wastage, the total score of guns damaged was poor, but excluding the wasted attacks, 1 rangefinder and 4 guns were put out of action by 800 bombs and 200 rockets, which is well in keeping with known accuracy figures.

(Operational Research in North West Europe, Report No. 16, Air and Ground Support in the Assault of Boulogne, p.24)

THE PLAN FOR THE ASSAULT

50. On 12 Sep, as we have seen, Le Havre had fallen after only 48 hours of fighting. In spite of this quick success, General Crerar appreciated how formidable was the task which still faced those of his men who besieged Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk. On 13 Sep, he wrote to Field Marshal Montgomery

a letter in which he pointed out the necessity for taking adequate time to prepare for the attacks on these ports:

The estimated garrisons of BOULOGNE and DUNKIRK are 10,000 each, CALAIS, we now know, has approximately 7000 Boches holding it. In addition, there will probably be individual operations to subdue, and capture, his four super-heavy gun positions. While the rapid fall of LE HAVRE has favourable potential influences, it is most important that the effect so gained should not be more than lost by an unsuccessful attack on the next objective, BOULOGNE. I, therefore, want Simonds to button things up properly, taking a little more time, if necessary, in order to ensure a decisive assault. The same view applies to DUNKIRK and CALAIS. In consequence, I estimate it will take ten days or two weeks for 2 Cdn Corps to finish their allotted tasks and clean the coast up to the WEST bank of R SCHEDLE.

(G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army
file 1-0; Letter, General Crerar
to C.-in-C., 13 Sep 44)

51. On 12 Sep the general plan for the assault was beginning to take shape. The attack was to be launched from east to west with two brigades, 8 Cdn Inf Bde on the right being responsible for objectives north of the Boulogne - Colembert road, while 9 Cdn Inf Bde on the left attacked south of the road. The northern and southern flanks of the fortress were to be contained, 7 Cdn Inf Bde⁶ (in the Cap Gris Nez area) and 7 Cdn Recce Regt pinning down the northern flank, while a mixed battle group, the principal element of which was

⁶ 7 Cdn Inf Bde carried out its duty from last light 15 Sep to the early morning hours of 18 Sep without 1 C. Scot R. This battalion was withdrawn to divisional reserve for Operation "WELLHIT" during this period. It was returned when it was appreciated that the battalion would not be needed during the Boulogne attack (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 15 - 18 Sep 44).

C.H. of O. (M.G.), covered the southern flank. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 12, Op Order No. 4, 12 Sep 44). These dispositions necessitated moving 9 Cdn Inf Bde around from its position on the southern sector to the northern end of the Forêt de Boulogne, there to "patrol vigorously within the brigade boundaries and familiarize themselves with the ground and enemy defences", and prepare for the assault on Mont Lambert. The move was to be made on the night 12/13 Sep, when the brigade would be relieved by the battle group of C.H. of O (M.G.) (less three platoons) and a battery of self-propelled anti-tank guns, with divisional troops giving depth to the defence. (Ibid; and Operation "WELLHIT", P. 8). The regrouping was carried out successfully as planned (Operation "WELLHIT" and W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde 12 Sep 44).

52. On 13 Sep, 3 Cdn Inf Div issued the Operation Order which, with a few amendments, contained the plan by which the garrison was attacked and destroyed. There was to be an attack by two brigade groups, supported by armour, artillery and aircraft. During this assault the north and south sectors of the perimeter would be contained, while the attack swept in from east to west. Before the main attack, 8 Cdn Inf Bde would first launch one battalion group to deal with the isolated German positions at la Tresorerir. The main attack would go in on a front of two brigades, with 8 Cdn Inf Bde on the right and 9 Cdn Inf Bde on the left, and was to be carried out in four phases. In the first phase 8 Cdn Inf Bde would take St Martin-Boulogne and Marlborough, while 9 Cdn Inf Bde cracked the hardest nut of all, the bristling mass of Mont Lambert, which grim feature was given the incongruous codeword "DAFFODIL". In the next phase, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to seize a sector of the built-up area of the city, west of its first objectives. At the same time 9 Cdn Inf Bde's objective, and effect a crossing over the River Liane, before the bridges could be blown. The other prong would thrust south-west to the forward slope of the feature beyond le Chemin Vert. In the third phase, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, swinging right, would thrust northward to take Fort de la Chèche,

while the brigade on the other flank, attacking west of the Liane, dealt with Outreau and the high ground south of it, as well as taking Herquelingue, east of the river, from the north. In the final phase, only 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to take part, clearing Nocquet on the coast, and the heights of St Etienne.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 13, 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Order No. 5, Op "WELLHIT"; and W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944: Appx 3, Notes on Planning - Op "WELLHT")⁷

53. The Commander of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Brigadier J.M. Rockingham, was faced with a major problem in the first phase. He was forced to decide whether to assault the formidable Mont Lambert fortress with one battalion or with two. If he used two battalions he would be left with no reserve, for it was vital that while Mont Lambert was being taken a battalion should get through to the river. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 15). Brigadier Rockingham decided to use a single battalion - Nth N.S. Highrs - to assault Mont Lambert, mop up the garrison there and consolidate, while S.D. & G. Highrs seized the area to the north. This would leave H.L.I. of C. as brigade reserve, to relieve either or both of the other two battalions on their objectives. In the next phase S.D. & G. Highrs were to sweep forward, and establish a bridgehead across the River Liane, while Nth N.S. Highrs struck south-west to capture le Chemin Vert. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 3, 9 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No. 1, Operation "WELLHIT")

54. The artillery support for this two-brigade attack was on a lavish scale - amounting to 368 guns of all calibres from 25-pdr field guns up. These were made up of the divisional artillery of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 51 (H.) Inf Div, and the guns of 2 Cdn A.G.R.A. and 9 Brit A.G.R.A. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944: Appx 3, Notes on Planning - Op "WELLHIT"). In this great array were four heavy regiments, armed with a total of 24 ponderous 7.2-inch

⁷ For Order of Battle, Operation "WELLHIT", see Appx "B".

howitzers and an equal number of 155-mm pieces. Of all our guns, these great ordnance were the best for shattering the enemy's heavy concrete positions. Two heavy anti-aircraft regiments, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt and 60 H.A.A. Regt R.A., were deployed, ready to operate in a ground role. Their principal task was to burst their 28-pound shells in the air over the enemy gun pits. (Ibid, Counter Battery Task Table No. 7). Slit trenches and gun pits give no shelter against the lethal splinters of the meticulously accurate air-burst of the 3.7-inch anti-aircraft gun which these regiments served. The artillery fire plan, prepared by H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, was summed up in a memorandum issued by that headquarters on 20 Sep:

In support of the actual assault on 18 Sep the artillery was laid on to carry out these main tasks. Firstly, to prolong the neutralizing effect of the Air Bombardment long enough to enable the infantry to reach their first main objective before the gunners could return to their guns. Secondly, to neutralize any strongpoint that might cover the ground over which the infantry was to advance beyond the first objective. Thirdly, to engage targets of opportunity in close support of the infantry.

To achieve the above, a comprehensive fire plan including over 400 predicted targets which covered every known and every possible strongpoint, gun position and infantry position. These targets were suballotted to sixteen field, medium, heavy, and heavy anti-aircraft regiments so as to bring the required amount and most effective type of fire on each specific target. There was a timed programme to cover the infantry to their first objectives, from then on pre-arranged tasks were made available on call as the advance progressed and the need arose.

55. To prolong the effect of the air bombardment the timed concentrations were brought down while the bombing was still going on, and kept up afterwards until the troops were almost on the objective, in the hope that the enemy in his shelters would not be able to distinguish it from the bombing. (Operation "WELLHIT", p.12). Provision was also made for a counter-flak programme, to be fired by three medium regiments, in support of the second part of the heavy bomber effort. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944: Appx 3, C.B. Intelligence Summary No. 6, Area Boulogne). This fire, predicted initially, would be corrected by the observation of Air O.P. pilots, whose minute Auster aircraft would thus assist their great four-engined brothers to their task. A contemporary report says:

The air OPs played an important part in the CB programme. In carrying out their task as previously outlined ... above at least three planes were in the air for practically the entire day. They reported twelve known and at least eight unknown Hostile Batteries as being active and observed thirty-four bombards on them. They were also the source of much general information. One plan was hit by enemy fire and was forced down close to the 14 Fd Regt gun positions. The pilot, who was wounded, was evacuated to an FDS.

(Ibid)

THE AIR PLAN

56. When Operation Order No. 5 was issued by H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div on 13 Sep, it stated that heavy bombers would support the attackers, but details of timings, target areas, and safety bomb lines had not yet been settled and were

to be issued later. On 15 Sep, Lt-Gen Simonds himself, accompanied by his Chief of Staff, by Brigadier C.C. Mann, Chief of Staff First Cdn Army, and the Army S.A.S.O., flew to H.Q. A.E.A.F., at Versailles, to arrange air support for the assaults on both Boulogne and Calais. There ensued considerable discussions with Air Vice-marshal Groom, and an air vice-marshal representing Bomber Command. The proceedings are described by the corps diarist:

There was considerable reluctance to use more than 300 - 400 RAF Bombers for each port supplementing them with such med bombers as might be available from the various other priority tasks which AEAF had at the moment on their list. However, the psychological opportunity was seized by the Corps Comd when Air Marshals TEDDER, HARRIS and LEIGH MALLORY arrived for another meeting. The Comd again stated his army plan and air sp requirements to them just before the start of their meeting. The Air Marshals agreed with little hesitation that if BOULOGNE and CALAIS were to be captured forthwith and air sp was necessary, then it should be given in full measure.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps,
15 Sep 44)

The Corps Commander got his bomber support.

57. This close support by heavy bombers took two forms. The first provided for 90 minutes' bombing before the assault of a great quadrilateral of country, which included Mont Lambert and St Martin-Boulogne, and reached almost to Marlborough and Bon Secours. The area to be bombed was over three kilometres in frontage, and a little over a kilometre in depth. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 17, Op "WELLHIT", Bombing Programme). It was this portion of the aerial assault which was co-ordinated with the timed artillery concentrations (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 12), and the

last bomb in this area would mark Z Hour for the ground troops. The other bombing was to be in close support; it was the engagement of enemy guns in four areas west of Boulogne. There were two positions near Outreau - one on a knoll to the west, and one to the south - which were destined to receive this treatment: the strong defences near Nocquet, and a larger area at St Etienne were to receive the same treatment (Ibid; and Appx 17, as above). these last four targets were to be engaged from 1100 to 1250 hours, as a form of counter-battery fire from the air, which would release guns to fire in support of the main attack (Ibid). Other air support came from 84 Group R.A.F., of the Tactical Air Force. A Forward Control Post was established at H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf div, which had immediate call on Typhoons, armed either as fighter-bombers or rocket-projectile aircraft (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 19, Amendment No. 2 to Op Order No. 5). Nineteen targets were selected before D Day, and pilots were carefully briefed well in advance. The "cab rank" method was to be employed - aircraft were waiting on the ground ready to be called up instantly. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 14). Units could expect rounds on targets within 30 minutes of calling for them (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 21).

SPECIAL ARMOURED SUPPORT

58. As at Le Havre, the assault armour of 79 Armd Div was given an important part in the attack. Flails were needed to breach the minefields, A.Vs.R.E. would fling their "flying dust-bin" bombs from their petards, and some of the assaulting infantry were to be carried forward to their objectives in Kangaroos. The invaluable Crocodiles would be needed to flame any pillboxes whose defenders had not already been convinced by bomb or shell of the futility of resistance. Once again these devices came as a great surprise to the garrison. An officer who interviewed Genlt Heim about a year after the fall of Boulogne wrote:

Boulogne was not in direct communication with Le Havre, and the details of the latter's fall were not sent to Heim. No direct intelligence was given to the general as to the methods used in assaulting Le Havre, and our use of the AVRE's ... flails, flame-throwers and armoured personnel carriers, came with as much surprise to Heim as it did to Wildermuth at Le Havre ... The only strange equipment of which Heim had been informed, and this from Fifteenth Army, was a tank that cleared minefields. But so vague was the description that it was necessary for his interrogator at this late date to enlighten him on the appearance and principle ...

(AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F,
Docket III: Special
Interrogation Report, Genlt Heim)

57. On the other hand, the lessons of Le Havre were readily available to the besiegers, if not to the beleaguered garrison of Boulogne. On 13 Sep, Brigadier Mann, C. of S., First Cdn Army, sent a message to General Simonds detailing the lessons learned by 1 Brit Corps in the use of special armour at Le Havre. Thus, the day following the "ASTONIA" attack, the improved techniques learned at Le Havre were available for use against Boulogne. (AEF/First Cdn Army/B/F: Docket II, fol No. 6. Teleprint Mann-Simonds 132000, Sep 44). As it turned out, on the evening of 15 Sep, 31 Tk Bde was already drawing up an operation instruction laying down the tasks and composition of these armoured columns, which in fact took part in the attack on 17 Sep. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 3, Op "WELLHIT", 31 Tk Bde Op Instr No. 8). As well as the special devices, there were orthodox fighting tanks, Shermans of 10 Cdn Armd Regt. A squadron of these was allotted to each of the two assaulting brigades. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was allotted one squadron of A.Vs.R.E., if D Day came before 18 Sep, with an additional assault team if D Day should be 18 Sep or later. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was

allotted more specialized armour, as it was responsible for the heavy task against Mont Lambert and the breakthrough to, and crossing of, the River Liane. The minimum support assigned to this brigade was one squadron of Flails, one squadron of Crocodiles, and one squadron of A.Vs.R.E. If D Day were 18 Sep or later, there would be added two special assault armoured teams. In any event this brigade would have 36 Kangaroos and 20 half-tracks as personnel carriers. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 13, 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Order No. 5, Op WELLHIT")

58. As well as having the help of the British sappers with their special armour, the assaulting brigades were supported by the divisional Engineers, each being assigned a field company less one platoon - a disposition which left the C.R.E. a divisional reserve of one field company plus two platoons. Each brigade commander thus had his own sapper adviser, and the skilled men needed for such jobs as clearing routes in the areas cratered by the bombing, preparing and maintaining tactical routes, and, if necessary, constructing an improvised bridge over the river in order to get enough troops across to form a bridgehead for a proper Class 40 Bailey bridge capable of bearing armour. There were four armoured and seven non-armoured bulldozers. One of these armoured bulldozers was allocated to 8 Cdn Inf Bde, and two to 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Corps Troops R.E. were also standing by in case any major bridging operation should be required. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 13; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 13, Op Order No. 5, Op "WELLHIT")

ARRANGEMENTS FOR SPECTATORS

59. Staff officers developed a habit of referring to an operation as a "show". No show is complete without an audience, and provision was made for one for Operation "WELLHIT". On 15 Sep, instructions were issued which set out the arrangements made for spectators. Reciting that "It is becoming apparent that a large number of spectators are planning to attend Op

"WELLHIT"; these include naval, military and air force personnel as well as press correspondents", the instruction goes on to say "it is imperative that such spectators do NOT position themselves at an operational headquarters where the staff is engaged in fighting the battle". Accordingly, it was provided "that all such spectators will be sent to a spectators' stand which has been suitably marked ...". This stand was located on very high ground two kilometres east of Neufchatel. It afforded excellent observation of the Boulogne area, and was within the safety limits of the heavy bomber support. The instruction adds cautiously: "This formation accepts no responsibility for spectators within the divisional area". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 20, Op "WELLHIT", Spectators)

THE FORTRESS ASSAULTED, 17 SEP 44

60. The question of timing the operation resulted in some complications. D Day was originally forecast for 15 or 16 Sep, but because weather conditions were not suitable for the heavy bombers until 17 Sep, it was fixed for that day. This introduced an additional complication, for 17 Sep was the day on which the change was made from Double British Summer Time (two hours faster than Greenwich Mean Time) to the regular war-time, one hour faster than G.M.T. It was therefore necessary to order all watches to be set back one hour at 0300 hours on 17 Sep, so that there could be no possibility of a fatal hour's error throwing the whole attack into confusion. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 4, Operation "WELLHIT", 8 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No. 19, para 13, amended; and W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 15 Sep 44, Ser 8). The original plan called for an assault on the la Tresorerie positions at the same time as the assault on Mont Lambert, with the main 8 Cdn Inf Bde attack taking place half an hour later. This was amended so that the operation by 8 Cdn Inf Bde against la Tresorerie began at 0925, half an hour before Z Hour, and both 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes crossed the start line together at Z Hour, taking their time from the fall of the last bomb,

which was due to burst at 0955 hours - an hour and a half after the bombing began. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 4, Op "WELLHIT", Op Order No. 19, amended; and W.D., N. Shore R., 17 Sep 44; and AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account by Lt-Col R. Rowley, The Attack on Boulogne, para 18)

61. The attack on Boulogne began on 17 Sep, when the great four-engined Lancasters took off from England and set course for Boulogne. At 0825 hours, sharp on time, the target indicators cascaded down on the first target area, stretching from Mont Lambert to Bon Secours. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx "H", Photographs of Lancasters bombing). The counter-flak fire kept the enemy A.A. fire to a minimum, but at least one Lancaster was badly holed, and two more were shot down. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 17 Sep 44, Sers 29 and 31; and W.D., S.D., & G. Highrs, 17 Sep 44). When the bombs had been falling for an hour, two companies of N. Shore R. put in their attack on la Tresorerie. They pressed on against heavy air-burst artillery fire, and suffered casualties from mines. (W.D., N. Shore R., 17 Sep 44). Half an hour later, at 0955 hours, five minutes after the artillery had joined the bombers in pounding the enemy's forward positions, the main assault began, exactly as the last of 4711 bombs, weighting in all 1850 tons, fell on the first target. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 17 Sep 44, Ser 33; Account by Lt-Col R. Rowley, as above; and Operational Research in North West Europe, p. 28)

THE ASSAULT OF MONT LAMBERT AND THE
THRUST TOWARDS THE RIVER

62. On the left, 9 Cdn Inf Bde sent forward two battalion columns - S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs - headed by tanks. The armoured vanguard of each column was followed by three rifle companies, each riding in six

Canadian-manned Kangaroos, supported by A.Vs.R.E., and followed by the battalion reserve company riding in seven armoured half-tracks. Each infantry section was reduced to an N.C.O. and six men, giving companies a strength of 85. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 4, 9 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No. 1, Appx "A"). Company carriers, but no "soft-skinned" vehicles, went forward with the assault. The accompanying engineers rode in Kangaroos. (Ibid, Notes 2 and 3). S.D. & G. Highrs had under command a troops of M-10 self-propelled three-inch anti-tank guns. (AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account by Lt-Col R. Rowley). Each battalion had a section of Wasps (carrier-mounted flame-throwers). (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, September 1944: Appx 7, 9 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No. 1, Op "WELLHIT")

63. As they swept forward, a hail of small arms projectiles ricocheted from the armoured vehicles but failed to stop them. S.D. & G. Highrs rode forward until mines made further progress impossible; then the infantry leaped from the Kangaroos, and proceeded on foot. In 45 minutes all objectives were captured. (Account by Lt-Col Rowley, as above). Nth N.S. Highrs actually got part way up the slopes of Mont Lambert before debussing. There they fought a series of fierce battles against innumerable pill boxes. Before the summit was reached 20 of these small fortresses had been dealt with, some by man-pack Lifebuoy flame-throwers, and some by the blasting petards of the A.Vs.R.E. Fighting on Mont Lambert raged all day and into the night (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 18). The two troops of 10 Cdn Armd Regt, tanks with Nth N.S. Highrs gave supporting fire, although encountering hard going from mud and minefields. The tanks supporting S.D. & G. Highrs had great difficulty avoiding bomb-craters left by the R.A.F., to say nothing of German minefields and blocks ("Vanguard", The Fort Garry Horse in the Second World War, pp 71-72)

64. With Mont Lambert still holding out, and - well to the right front - the high ground in the neighbourhood of Napoleon's Monument still in enemy

hands, the S.D. & G. Highrs group found the disadvantages of their position painfully evident. From these two points, as well as from the high ground around le Portel, heavy artillery fire was directed at any movement. (Account by Lt-Col Rowley, as above). In spite of this damaging fire, Canadian sappers cleared by hand a minefield in the area. During the afternoon two of the three columns of special armour of 31 Tk Bde arrived to attempt to smash through to the river crossings. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 4, Op Order No. 19, amended). Of the two routes which were to be used, the northern route was impassable because of cratering from the bombing; the south could be made passable by the bulldozer, but some difficulty was experienced in getting the machine forward. The route was finally cleared, and both teams directed along it at 1630 hours. The two assault columns started down the southernmost route, each accompanied by one company of S.D. & G. Highrs in Kangaroos. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 17 Sep 44; and Account by Lt-Col Rowley, as above). F.F.I. guides, riding in the leading flails and in the scout cars of the vanguard and column commanders, pointed the way through the wreckage of their native city. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 30)

65. This vital thrust to the river encountered great difficulties from our own bomb-craters as well as from enemy road blocks. Craters were from 30 to 50 feet wide and 20 deep. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 28). Blinded by the dust that arose from the shelling and from the caterpillar tracks of the columns themselves, many armoured vehicles floundered into these huge holes. (Operational Research in North-West Europe, p. 32, and Photographs 4 and 5). Filling them in with the earth blown out was not satisfactory, for it was too pulverized to give the tanks traction. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 28). Flails were lost in the dust of their own threshing, and three bogged down in this way (Operational Research, supra, p. 32). With these obstacles confronting them, and much heavy enemy shell fire coming down upon them, it is not surprising that neither of the two armoured columns succeeded in reaching the bridges to which they were directed. Instead, they spent the night fighting

in the streets of Boulogne, where they were joined by S.D. & G. Highrs, as one column besieged the Citadel. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 18; W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 17 Sep 44; and Account by Lt-Col Rowley, as above). Meanwhile, H.L.I. of C. moved into the objectives which S.D. & G. Highrs had taken and vacated when they moved on with the armour. (W.Ds., H.L.I. of C. and S.D. & G. Highrs, 17 Sep 44)

66. While the struggle for Mont Lambert and the thrust towards the river were going on, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was also facing stern resistance. N. Shore R. spent the day grimly fighting against the positions at la Tresorerie, where the defenders were armed with 20-mm anti-aircraft guns. The Canadians had no tank support, but they were effectively aided by self-propelled M-10 anti-tank guns. Although progress was not as rapid as planned, the North Shore attack kept the enemy from engaging the other two battalions of the brigade. (W.D., N. Shore R., 17 Sep 44; and Operation "WELLHIT", p. 17). The remaining battalions of 8 Bde also found the resistance heavy and the going bade. R. de Chaud got off to a good start, when they took their intermediate objective, the radar station at Ruppembert, intact with 60 prisoners. This was the first installation of its kind captured by the Allied armies. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 17; and Le Geste du Regiment de la Chaudière, p. 54). the Q.O.R. of C. reached the small river which flows through Denacre to Wimille, and crossed it upstream from Denacre with the assistance of fascine-carrying A.Vs.R.E. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 17; and W.D., 16 Cdn Fd Coy, 16 and 17 Sep 44). Flails cleared a minefield 600 metres deep in front of the battalion. The riflemen penetrated as far as the station at St Martin-Boulogne where they fought a bitter two-and-a-half-hour engagement, in which they fired their anti-tank guns over open sights at enemy mortars. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 17 Sep 44). This was the extent of the battalion's penetration into the enemy positions. R. de Chaud advanced far enough to get one company on to the Boulogne - Calais road, taking some houses in the settlement of Bon Secours,

which straggles along the road to the north-east of the monument erected to Napoleon's Grande Armée. (Le Geste du Regiment de la Chaudière, p. 57)

67. The situation at the end of the first day's fighting could now be appraised. Although great progress had been made against strong opposition, formidable defences, and heavy artillery fire, the attack had not gone as rapidly as anticipated. Mont Lambert was not yet fully in our hands, and the armoured columns, although the Citadel was besieged, had failed to secure the river crossings. Marlborough and St Martin-Boulogne were largely in our hands, but the heights to the north around Napoleon's monument were still in enemy tenancy. On the extreme right, la Tresorerie and Wimille were not completely mopped up. Such progress as had been made had received the assistance of unprecedented artillery support. More pre-arranged concentrations had been called for by the infantry, and fired by the supporting artillery, than ever before in a single operations in the European theatre. This co-ordination of effort went on all day and well into the night, with ten telephones and four wireless sets at 3 Cdn Inf Div artillery headquarters continuously manned and busy. (History of H.Q. R.C.A.A 3 Cdn Inf Div, p. 11)

68. An explanation of the failure of this tremendous hail of shells to silence the enemy guns is offered in a counter-battery intelligence summary of the following day:

The effort of the CB effort is not yet fully known as there is little opportunity for the units most affected by enemy shelling to pass back information. The artillery representative at 9 Cdn Inf Bde and 13 Cdn Fd Regt were exceptions, however, and were able to send in several reports of guns firing during the first bombing attack and throughout the day. Of the HB's contained in the task tables and engaged, ten

were later identified as being active again. This continued activity was due to two factors:

- a. The very light concentrations used, seldom more than 2 to 1. (Two of our guns to each one in the enemy battery); and
- b. The very strong construction of the gun positions, many of which were of concrete and originally designed for coast defence. This necessitated direct hits on the guns as the crews apparently had good protection from our fire.

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn A.G.R.A,
September 1944: Appx 3, Op
"WELLHIT", C.B. Intelligence
Summary No. 6, Area Boulogne,
18 Sep 44)

Even the heavy R.A.F. bombing used as counter-battery fire was not completely successful. It was reported later:

It had been hoped that the Heavy Bombing of Targets 2, 3, 4 and 5, west of the river, would render hostile batteries in this area inactive. In fact, however, Air OP's spotted batteries active even during the bombing (although presumably not in the actual target areas) and C.B. was therefore carried out in this area actually during the bombing.

(Operational Research in North-
West Europe, p. 29)

When to these adverse factors are added the difficulties created by the enemy mines and our own bomb craters, it is seen that the progress made, although not up to expectation, was in fact no mean feat of arms.

9 CDN INF BDE TAKES THE CITADEL AND
CROSSES THE RIVER 18 SEP 44

69. The early morning of 18 Sep, second day of the battle, found S.D. & G. Highrs on the 9 Cdn Inf Bde front, fighting in Boulogne itself, where the Germans were still holding out in the market square and the old Citadel (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 19). Nth N.S. Highrs had arranged with the third assault team to clean up the Germans still on Mont Lambert at first light (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 18 Sep 44, Ser 12). A member of the Fort Garry's (10 Cdn Armd Regt) describes this attack:

It was on the second day of the assault that Mont Lambert and its entire garrison was captured. The attack began at first light, with two columns surging forward through the ground haze. The left-hand column moved in on the Southeast face of the feature, and the right column went over the summit and on down to Le Chemin Vert. In each case, tanks were in the lead, followed by AVRE's, and then infantry. Under the protecting fire of the tanks, the engineers were able to emplace 70 lb charges in and around the dugouts, and the infantry, following in closely, took out the prisoners. One by one the dug-outs surrendered, and the commander of the mountain's garrison gave himself up by 1100 hrs.

(Vanguard, The Fort Garry Horse
in the Second World War, p. 72)

A British account says:

Column C, under Lt-Col Waddell of the 141st Regiment, R.A.C., swept flaming and bombarding over the heights. Four "Crocodiles" in particular, with a stout backing of "Crabs" and "Avres" had a field day here and collected large number of prisoners.

("Flame Over Britain",

Sir Donald Banks, p. 115)

When the Crocodiles ran out of flame-thrower fuel, they discarded their trailers and fought on as ordinary tanks (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 18 Sep 44, Ser 52). It was a company of Nth N.S. Highrs which, with Crocodiles and A.Vs.R.E., broke through the southern portion of Boulogne to find the southernmost bridge across the Liane, a wooden structure, destroyed by fire. (AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account by Lt-Col D.F. Forbes)

70. During the morning the Citadel fell to S.D. & G. Highrs and the besieging armour. As the commanding officer told the story at the time:

Arriving at the Citadel, which was entirely surrounded, castle-fashion, by a high wall, D coy got into position before the bastion gate under cover of smoke. Then commenced a strange drama of medieval siege mingled with modern warfare. A French civilian approached, offering to point out a secret tunnel leading into the heart of the citadel. Major Stothard, the company commander, taking with him one platoon, at once entered the tunnel.

At the same time the Churchills wheeled up, raking the ramparts with Besa fire, and prepared to place petards against the portcullis. The

gate was effectively blown in. At once a host of white flags waved from the walls. To add to the confusion Major Stothard had now appeared in the midst of the besieged fort, utterly astonishing its defenders.

(Account by Lt-Col Rowley, as above)

71. Though the Citadel was in our hands, the River Liane was still uncrossed, but this situation was to be corrected during the course of this exhausting day. At 0915 hours 31 Tk Bde⁸ reported that one of the armoured columns had reached the river, that the bridge nearest the harbour had an 80-foot gap but was passable to infantry, and that the one farthest upstream contained a 160-foot hole which was bridgeable. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 19; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 18 Sep 44, Ser 51). H.L.I. of C., who were originally meant to take Herquelingue, then St Etienne, were now given a different task - that of establishing the bridgehead over the river. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 17 and 18 Sep 44; and Appx 6, 9 Cdn Inf Bde Op Order No. 1, and H.L.I. of C. Op Order No. 5). Moving up in Kangaroos under heavy shell-fire, they were able to dismount and form up near the river for the assault across the less damaged bridge. The crossing - which was effected at 1945 hours that evening - was covered by an extraordinary variety of fire.

The fire support for the crossing of the River La Liane [sic] organized by commander 9 Brigade was interesting. He moved up every available tank, armoured vehicle, anti-tank gun and PIAT etc, as close to the river as possible, concealed in buildings etc. Their task was to

⁸ The operations log, H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, shows this and other messages coming from 30 Tk Bde, but the columns were 31 Tk Bde troops. (See W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 4, Op "WELLHIT")

plaster the enemy in the buildings etc on the opposite bank, whilst the infantry crossed, and as soon as they were across, the barrage ceased, and support continued by observation. The commanders of the various weapons were with the Commanding Officer of the assaulting battalion, and he controlled the fire through them.

The artillery was used on the deeper targets and CB.

(Operation "WELLHIT", p. 31; and
W.D., H.L.I. of C., 18 Sep 44)

72. The repair of this bridge in order that supporting weapons and vehicles might cross is a story of the sappers' ingenious improvisation:

After a more detailed recce, it was decided the best plan was to repair this bridge. Timber in fairly large quantities was required. This was found close at hand after some searching in almost complete darkness under the nose of the enemy. The section of sappers (the platoon officer was there too) was helped by the pioneer platoon of H.L.I. of C. The mess created by the enemy demolition was soon cleared up and the timber carted to the site. The biggest snag was that no one could find a hammer, saw, nails, or, in fact anything except one small hand-axe. The sappers didn't have them since they were an assault team with the infantry. It was out of the question to send back for them, so being good sappers, they set to work fitting the timbers together with good healthy air. The job was finished by 0415 hrs on 19 Sep and tested by carefully driving a 5-cwt over it. Before dawn the transport of the battalion (including 3-ton lorries) was across the river. Some other sappers then appeared to build a Bailey across the damaged span. We think our "bridge" - if it can be called one - was a pretty good

effort and certainly never expected to build a bridge at any time with timber alone.

(W.D., 18 Cdn Fd Coy, September 1944:
Appx 3, War History, 1700 hrs 16 Sep 44 -
1700 hrs 23 Sep 44)

At 0455 hours on the morning of 19 Sep, H.L.I. of C. were able to report that the bridge was finished and the battalion was "pushing forward now". (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Sers 3, 4)

8 CDN INF BDE CAPTURES LA TRESORERIE, 18 SEP 44

73. The second day of the attack was one of gruelling fighting and little progress for 8 Cdn Inf Bde. In the early morning Q.O.R. of C. started for their objectives in the built-up area of Boulogne, which they were to take prior to surging northward, towards Fort de la Crèche. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 18 Sep 44, Ser 26). Before noon the leading riflemen were fighting on their objectives (Ibid, Sers 74, 75). Two hours later all companies were in the enemy positions, and the other two battalions of the brigade had reported small gains (Ibid, Ser 86). At 2000 hours a liaison officer arrived at divisional headquarters from the brigade, reporting that Q.O.R. of C. had completed their task in Boulogne, and were turning northward in spite of fire from anti-aircraft guns near the harbour. R. de Chaud forecast that as soon as they had finished with the enemy around the Monument, they would go northward to Poterie, a collection of buildings a kilometre inland from Fort de la Crèche N. Shore R. was reported to have at least 500 prisoners, including some high ranking officers (Ibid, Ser 112). These had been captured by the two companies assaulting la Tresorerie. After spending the night 17/18 Sep sharing half a casemate with the enemy they had completed the capture of all three casemates of the fort,

together with three fortified observation posts. P.I.A.Ts. and the smoke and fire of phosphorus bombs played an important part in the operation (AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket IV: Account by Lt-Col J.E. Anderson).

C.H. of O. (M.G.) TAKES HERQUELINGUE, 18-19 SEP 44

74. On the south-eastern front the great bulk of Herquelingue, well outflanked by 9 Cdn Inf Bde's progress, was still unconquered, for H.L.I. of C. had been diverted to the task of crossing the river. On the afternoon of 18 Sep, Maj-Gen Spry ordered C.H. of O. (M.G.) to take and hold this still formidable position. The battalion plan was to send a fighting patrol, to be followed by a company, reinforced with one officer and 30 gunners of 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, acting as an infantry platoon. Anti-tank guns, the guns of 14 Cdn Fd Regt, and medium machine-guns and mortars provided covering fire (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 18 Sep 44, Ser 123). The patrol started out at 1830 hours, and passed through Quehen, one mile south-east of the summit, an hour later. Other platoons were sent on up the hill, and all spent a hazardous, busy night. The next day, 19 Sep, the machine-gunners and artillery-turned-infantry succeeded in capturing the five great casemates and taking over 140 prisoners. (W.D., C.H. of O. (M.G.), September 1944: Appendices 7 and 8). After a counter-attack was repelled on the night of 19 Sep, it appeared that the last enemy had been cleared from Herquelingue. (W.D., G.S. H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Ser 78).

9 CDN INF BDE ON THE PENINSULA, 19-21 SEP 44

75. On the morning of the third day of the battle, H.L.I. of C., who now had their supporting weapons across the Liane, started mopping up and expanding their bridgehead (Ibid, Sers 15, 16 and 18; and W.Ds., H.L.I. of C. and S.D. & G. Highrs, 19 Sep 44). The battalion was reported to have made

good progress to the north-west, having reached a position about a kilometre north-east of Le Portel by about 1030 hours, and taken 400 to 500 prisoners (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Ser 27). At 1520 hours, H.L.I. of C. started an attack on Honriville, which lies a kilometre northeast of le Portel. The battalion was supported by one of the special armoured columns. (Ibid, ser 54). At 1500 hours S.D. & G. Highrs were ordered once more to enter the fight. The battalion was to cross the river, move through the H.L.I. of C. bridgehead and take the enemy battery on the knoll at Turbinghem, the settlement of Outreau, and the two sugar factories to the east, near the Liane. (Ibid; and Account by Lt-Col Rowley, as above). In execution of these orders the battalion crossed by the new Bailey bridge (see para 72), passed through the H.L.I. of C. bridgehead, and attacked at 1600 hours, an hour after they had been first warned (Ibid). The most spectacular part of this assault was the capture of the enemy battery, which had 15 pieces, including six 88-mm guns:

The target had been allotted one medium concentration and four field "stonks" ... The result was magnificent surprise. The infantry, following the fire closely, swarmed over the hill with bayonets and grenades before the last rounds had fallen. At no time were they more than 250 yards from the bursts. The nearest position was overrun and its three 88s taken intact; the troops rushed for the other three but these were blown up. The action resulted in the taking of 185 prisoners, but during it Major Stothard's only two remaining officers were wounded. It was now nearly dark and the company consolidated its position and remained on the hill all night.

(Account by Lt-Col Rowley, as above)

This battery, in spite of being the target for 800 bombs during the bombing, had lost only one 88-mm and two 20-mm guns, and had succeeded in firing over

2000 rounds of 88-mm at ground targets before being silenced (Operational Research in North-West Europe, p. 29). Its capture eliminated a constant source of trouble (Ibid).

76. Meanwhile the H.L.I. of C. assault on Honrville, though made with full scale artillery support, and with the help of Flails and A.Vs.R.E., had not gone well. The attackers ran into heavy fire from weapons of all natures - 88-mm airburst, the staccato fire of 40-mm and 20-mm, and a heavier gun described as "something really big". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Ser 97). The infantry was pinned down, suffering 50 casualties, and the armour lost four Flails. As a result of this set-back, the attack was discontinued. (Ibid; W.D., H.L.I. of C. 19 Sep 44; and Operation "WELLHIT", p. 22). 9 Cdn Inf Bde thus spent the night with two battalions on the peninsula and Nth N.S. Highrs still east of the Liane. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Ser 102)

77. This third day of the attack had been another 24 hours of exhausting struggle in rainy weather in 8 Cdn Inf Bde's sector (W.D., R. de Chaud, 19 Sep 44). On the morning of 19 Sep the two companies of N. Shore R. in la Tresorerie were able to see the strength of the positions they had taken during the previous two days' fierce fighting:

Stronger fortifications could hardly have existed. The casemates had been unshaken by heavy bombing. Each one contained a complete electric plant and Diesel engine, which were kept in running order by a few prisoners retained for that purpose. The quarters, well heated and lit, were most comfortable. The garrison was nearly all German: most of them were marines. Perhaps because of the superior facilities of their quarters they looked cleaner and more soldierly than the usual prisoners. Their ammunition supply was in no way depleted. There was

an ample stock of food, which might have lasted three months. The battery also possessed a dug-in, well equipped hospital.

(AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket IV:

Account by Lt-Col J.E. Anderson)

78. The two companies stood fast in this hard-won position, while another company tackled Wimille, ran into heavy opposition on the eastern side, and circled round to the south, where it spent the night 19/20 Sep (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Sers 30 and 36; Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Sers 55 and 66). To the south, R. de Chaud, supported by a squadron to 10 Cdn Armd Regt and A.Vs.R.E., attacked in the afternoon to clear the troublesome enemy out of the positions he still held around the Monument. (8 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, Ser 32; 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, Ser 55; and W.D., R. de Chaud, 19 Sep 44). It was reported at 1750 hours that "R. de Chaud attack is against heavy opposition but progress is fair" (8 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, as above, Ser 32). The enemy strongpoints here included a series of blockhouses with steel turrets for machine-guns, forming a very formidable defensive position. (Le Geste du Regiment de la Chaudière, p. 58). Three of the deadly 88s added to the battalion's discomfort (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Ser 72). Meanwhile, Q.O.R. of C. were trying to break out to the north where their way was blocked by a strongpoint, armed with a 75-mm gun. In the afternoon a company attack was launched but driven back by heavy opposition. That night the battalion finally reported that it could neither take nor by-pass the enemy infantry and artillery and that the position would require "special treatment". (Ibid, Ser 68; and W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 19 Sep 44, Sers 66 and 74)

79. The Division's own intelligence summary, based on information up to 1800 hours on 19 Sep, gave this report of the fighting:

The resistance offered by the Boulogne garrison has been surprisingly tenacious, when one considers that they are fully aware of the advances made by the allied forward elements. This can be attributed to the following factors.

- a. The thick concrete defences tend to minimize the effect of our fire power; and
- b. The very low percentage of foreigners within the garrison.

Up to 1300 hours the number of PW through the Divisional cage amounted to 76 officers and 3035 other ranks. This does not include PW evacuated through medical channels, and a reported 500 further PW southwest of the river who have not yet entered the cage.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div,
September 1944: Appx 30, Int
Summary No. 44)

It was estimated that there were 2000 Germans in the positions still holding out, none of whom, at the time of this summary (2315 hours on 19 Sep) had indicated any intention of surrendering. (Ibid)

80. The fourth day of Operation "WELLHIT" saw Nth N.S. Highrs brought back into the lead again, after the brief breathing space which followed their strenuous battle for Mont Lambert (AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account by Lt-Col D.F. Fobres). The objective of the battalion was the strong position at Ningles, which lies near the shore in a re-entrant about half-way between Nocquet and le Portel. (Ibid; and Operation "WELLHIT", Defence Overprint, 12 Sep 44). The commanding officer made his reconnaissance from the hill west of Outreau, at the moment when S.D. & G. Highrs and their

artillery representative fired a captured 88-mm at le Portel, knocking out one of the enemy's guns there. (Account by Lt-Col D.F. Forbes; and W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 20 Sep 44). The hail of fire with which the enemy responded swept the open ground across which Nth N.S. Highr would have had to advance. Brigadier Rockingham therefore decided to send the Nova Scotians around by a circular route, passing through the enemy positions at St Etienne, Ecault and Nocquet, and approaching Ningles from the south. (Account by Lt-Col Fobres, as above) With Typhoons preparing the way, Nth N.S. Highrs, supported by a squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt, crossed the Liane, and turned south toward St Etienne. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 20 Sep 44, Ser 20). En route the tanks engaged an enemy S.P. gun and some German positions which were still holding out on the slopes of Herquelingue (Ibid, Ser 38). As the troops advanced down the open road, they came under heavy fire from one section of the German-held position, through "white flags had already been hoisted in another portion of the village" (Account by Lt-Col Fobres, as above; and Ibid, Ser 49). One troop of tanks was sent from Haffreingue in the valley of the Liane toward St Etienne. When they opened fire on the village, "white flags blossomed everywhere" (Account by Lt-Col Forbes, as above) and about 250 prisoners poured out of the defences (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 20 Sep 44, Sers 52 and 56). The capture of this dominating feature was achieved without the Nova Scotians losing a man (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 20 Sep 44). The battalion was now in a position to send patrols during the night north and west to the coastal positions still held by the enemy (Account by Lt-Col Forbes, as above; and W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Sep 44).

81. The remaining battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde continued to made useful progress. S.D. & G. Highrs remained firm in the positions they captured on 19 Sep, and sent a company to clear a wood near the sugar factory (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 20 Sep 44). H.L.I. of C., faced with extensive mopping up in the northern part of the harbour area and Honriville, planned an attack with

artillery, armour and air support (W.D., H.L.I. of C., September 1944: Appx 8, Pencilled "O" Order Notes, 20 Sep 44). Before the assault Typhoons were to deal with a troublesome gun at the end of the long harbour breakwater; Q.O.R. of C. were to silence the strong point which was shelling H.L.I. of C. and holding up the riflemen; and the artillery had to range on its targets. To allow time to co-ordinate this varied support, H Hour was finally set at 1245 hours. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., September 1944: Appx 3, Intelligence Log, 20 Sep 44, Ser 22). Sharp on time the two assaulting companies went forward, and at 1312 hours one company reported capturing its objective, including three guns (Ibid, Sers 29 and 33). The other company, supported by a troop of M-10 self-propelled anti-tank guns (Ibid, Ser 52), and using a "loud-hailer" (powerful loudspeaker and amplifier on a White scout car), made good progress and by 1626 hours had taken 100 prisoners (Ibid, Ser 66). but there were still Germans holding out in the harbour area when night fell on 20 Sep. The last resistance was cleared up the next afternoon with the reduction of the ship-like fort at the end of the main harbour jetty. A Wasp and a section of infantry advanced perilously out along the pier, the carrier tracks skidding on the railway lines as its crew projected its flaming fuel ahead. This terrifying fire coming out to sea persuaded the garrison of 50 men to surrender, but it took them half an hour to work up enough courage to come out with their hands up, so shaken were they by fear of the scorching flames. (Sir Donald Banks, "Flame Over Britain," pp 116, 117; and W.D., H.L.I. of C., September 1944: Appx 3, Intelligence Log Diary, 21 Sep 44, Ser 51; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 21 Sep 44, Ser 52)

82. Apart from the mopping up by H.L.I. of C. and the successful termination of Nth N.S. Highrs' sweep into Nocquet, 21 Sep was quiet on the 9 Cdn Inf Bde sector, except for what has been called "The Bargain Basement" incident:

For approximately two days the CH of O had been sitting on HERQUELINGUE (ASTER) and during this period no enemy had been seen. However, early on this day a dugout door suddenly opened and out walked a German major, who said he had about 500 men underground and that he wanted to surrender and do the thing in the approved fashion. He made very careful arrangements with 9 Brigade and the CH of O, and it was finally agreed that this little gang would appear above ground at 1300 hours. This they did. The CH of O Company was certainly more than surprised. The GOC of the Division referred to it as the Bargain Basement Incident, because apparently no one had bothered to go down and look.

(Operation "WELLHIT", p. 26)

THE NORTHERN SECTOR, 8 CDN INF BDE, 20-21 SEP 44

83. 20 and 21 Sep were days of steady but unspectacular progress for 8 Cdn Inf Bde. On 20 Sep, N. Shore R., supported by the fire of M-10 self-propelled anti-tank guns, took Wimille, and cleared the adjacent settlement of Auvringhen. (AEF/8 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket IV: Account by Lt-Col J.E. Anderson, p. 3; and W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 20 Sep 44, Ser 22). The battalion's next task was the capture of the coast town of Wimereux, which was effected on 21 Sep with the support of M-10s and a minimum of artillery fire. Indeed, the light German 20-mm guns on the defences of la Tresorerie were fired by the Canadians. The result was a demoralizing uproar, but the light shells did not smash the town and kill civilians as artillery would have done. This consideration was proved justified when the battalion finally entered the streets on 22 Sep. "The town was thronged with civilians, which confirmed the CO's belief and made him glad they had been able to capture it without the devastating effect of so much artillery." (Account by Lt-Col J.E. Anderson, as above)

84. The other two battalions of the brigade had meanwhile been pressing closer to Fort de la Crèche. It was planned to bomb the fort on the afternoon of 20 Sep with medium bombers, but this air support was postponed at the last moment.⁹ (Operation "WELLHIT" p. 23; and W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 1, Ops Log, 20 Sep 44, Sers 6, 15, 23, 42 and 45). A further effort was promised for first light 21 Sep (Ibid, Ser 64). Q.O.R. of C. made some progress during the hours of darkness but R. de Chaud were unable to achieve anything during a difficult night (Ibid, 21 Sep 44, Sers 8 and 19). During 21 Sep the two battalions infiltrated forward with armoured and artillery support, but the fort continued to hold out firmly (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 25). Even a thorough pounding by four waves of medium bombers - 78 aircraft in all - failed to induce the garrison to surrender, although the infantry made considerable progress while the bombing took place (Ibid, p.25).

THE REDUCTION OF WIMEREUX, FORT DE LA CRÈCHE AND LE PORTEL

22 SEP 44

85. As 22 Sep, the sixth day of the attack dawned, the only places still in enemy hands were Fort de la Crèche, the north and south forts at le Portel, and some positions in Wimeruex. The end could not be far off. During darkness W.O.R. of C. had succeeded in infiltrating very close to Fort de la Crèche, and had tanks and M-10s in hull-down positions covering the stronghold. When first light came their 75-mm and 3-inch guns soon convinced the besieged that they were beaten. At 1045 hours the garrison of 500 men surrendered. As we have seen, N. Shore R. had liberated Wimeruex, and le Portel alone remained untaken. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 27)

⁹ For evidence that this cancellation was due to an error at H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps see W.D., G.S.Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, September 1944: Appx 83, 8-1-8/Ops, 20 Sep 44, Hy and Lt Bombing in sp 2 Cdn Corps, 20 Sep 44).

86. At 1145 hours on the morning of 22 Sep, Brigadier Rockingham, commanding 9 Cdn Inf Bde, sent over the loud-hailer this stern ultimatum to Lt-Gen Heim.

Your have lost the battle for BOULOGNE. Over 7,000 prisoners have been taken and all form of resistance has ceased except this posn. You are completely surrounded by a large force of all arms.

If you surrender now no further casualties will occur on either side and you and your garrison will be treated as prisoners of war and eventually return to your families. If, however, you do not surrender with all your garrison we will attack you with every means at our disposal, during which time we will incur some casualties but there is no way of assessing how many you will incur.

You have one hour to make up your mind. Come out with a white flag flying, your hands above your heads, and unarmed, within one hour. If this does not occur we will commence at once to destroy you and your garrison. You have had your warning, surrender or die from flames.

(W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde,
September, 1944: Appx 17; and W.D., S.D.
& G. Highrs, 22 Sep 44)

87. This ultimatum expired at 1255 hours. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 22 Sep 44). Ten minutes ahead of time the enemy were seen pouring out of the northern fort, marching over to the H.L.I. of C. and surrendering (Ibid). A German officer was ordered by the Brigadier to go back and tell Lt-Gen Heim to surrender the southern fort (Ibid). This was not effective immediately, for intermittent firing still came from this last outpost. Then the Germans began to demolish their own guns, as they saw closing in on them, tanks and flame-

throwing Crocodiles. At 1617 hours the order went out over the brigade wireless net to cease fire, as there were now white flags on both forts. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., September 1944: Appx 3, Intelligence Log Diary, 22 Sep 44, Ser 24) In a quarter of an hour came the message "Gen Heim has been taken and is on way to Brigade Headquarters", followed in minutes by "All folding up. Boulogne had been taken" (Ibid, Sers 27, 28). This information was not entirely accurate, for one lone 88-mm position on the end of the mole failed to recognize the liberation of Boulogne until a note from Heim ordering its surrender reached the gun detachment. (Operation "WELLHIT", p. 26; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log, 22 Sep 44, Ser 78)

88. The reduction of Boulogne with its garrison of approximately 10,000 men - armed with over 90 guns - had been accomplished by two bridges at a cost of only 600 Canadian casualties (Operational Research in North-West Europe, p. 30; and Operation "WELLHIT", p. 27). The actual number of prisoners taken was 9,535 (First Cdn Army Int Summaries Nos. 87 and 88, 25, 26 Sep 44). The success of the operation may be attributed chiefly to two factors - the effective employment of a great force of supporting arms in a skilfully conceived and boldly executed plan, and the enemy's lack of will to resist to the last man, brought about mainly by the isolation imposed on the garrison by the Allied sweep across Europe. That the attack had taken four days longer than expected was chiefly due to the great difficulty caused by the craters and rubble which our own bombing had created, and to the heavy shelling from the well-protected enemy batteries. In spite of the terrific bombardment from the air - 690 aircraft dropped 3356 tons of bombs on the five targets engaged at the beginning of the assault - and the expenditure by the artillery of 80,000 rounds on counter-battery tasks, the enemy guns in their incredibly strong casemates and gun-pits stayed persistently in action throughout the operation, continually holding up our advance and causing the majority of our casualties. (Operational Research in North-West Europe; and Report No. 146)

89. The German officers captured in Boulogne talked freely, giving a full picture of the effectiveness of our tactics. From German artillery officers it was learned:

Roughly half the field guns had concrete positions from which to fire. The remainder were dug in as normally. Very few casualties were suffered from bombing, shelling and the subsequent fighting. The barrage which followed the heavy bombing forced the gun detachments to seek cover long enough for the tanks and infantry to assault the positions.

(First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 83,
21 Sep 44)

The great mass of our artillery hiding east of the Forêt de Boulogne, and not opening fire until the attack, had completely baffled the enemy. The German gunners thought that only five troops were in this area, and could only estimate their whereabouts to an accuracy of one kilometre. Our employment of a "roving troop" to do all our firing was a complete surprise. With no flash-spotting or sound-ranging personnel and no counter-battery staff the Germans had been unable to draw even a faint image of our artillery picture. (Ibid). Lt-Gen Heim, interrogated months later, produced only one criticism of the tactics which had brought his fortress down around his ears. He showed an amazing lack of knowledge of what had happened - doubtless because of the havoc our bombing had made of his communications.

Heim was most impressed by the tactics of attack and the close co-operation of all arms of rout out position after position. The ability of the artillery to lay down a curtain of fire and smoke under which infantry and tanks crept until the strongpoint was reached was most effective. These timed barrages enabled the Canadians to be at their

objective at the very moment the artillery fire lifted, and as a result when the German came out of his bunker he was immediately faced by Canadian infantry and tanks. His one criticism of these methods was that they were too cautious and over-meticulous and thus resulted in a lack of drive and sometimes in failure to exploit a situation.

The general knew very little about the propaganda methods used at Boulogne which had been so successful in persuading large groups to surrender. The work of the loudspeakers had not been reported to him. He did know however that a number of small strongpoints had disappeared without a trace on the first day or two of the assault. He enquired of his interrogators whether they could explain these mysterious abductions, and he was rather surprised to find that words, and not bullets, had caused them to surrender.

(AEF 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket III: Special
Interrogation Report, Genlt Heim)

"C". OPERATION "UNDERGO" - THE CAPTURE OF CALAIS, 25 SEP - 1 OCT 44

90. The priority assigned to the capture of the channel ports was under constant review by the C.-in-C. in terms of the rapidly changing administrative requirements of 21 Army Group. After examination of the conflicting requirements and changing factors, General Montgomery concluded that the early use of the great harbour of Antwerp was essential. He told General Crerar that he was prepared to give up operations against Calais and Dunkirk, "if it would enable you to speed up the Antwerp business". (G.O.C.-in-C., 1-0, fol 84, Message M.203; and Mann Lectures, 18 May 45). This decision was modified later, for Naval considerations made it necessary that Calais and the batteries at Cap Gris Nez and Sangatte be captured, lest otherwise their great guns might prevent the free use of the port of

Boulogne.¹⁰ (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45). No such condition applied to Dunkirk, and it was decided merely to contain the town, not to undertake its capture. (Ibid)

91. While Boulogne was the object of 3 Cdn Inf Div's main effort, Cap Gris Nez and Calais had also been its responsibility. 7 Cdn Recce Regt, leading the way up the coast, had "bumped" the defences of Boulogne on 4 Sep, and on 5 Sep:

At first light it was obvious that Boulogne was to be a tough nut to crack, so the Regt did a quick right wheel, left 9 (C.I.B.) taking over the opposition encountered in this area, and proceeded to cut the escape routes to the North. By midday 5 Sep 44, "B" Sqn was on the high ground near Marquise cutting the main Boulogne - Calais road, "A" Sqn was at Guines containing the garrison of Calais from the south and "C/ Sqn had completed the encirclement by cutting the coast road from Calais to Dunkerque and Oye and linked up with "A" Sqn.

(W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, September 1944; Appx 7: Report on Operations - Advance from Falaise to Calais, page 4)

¹⁰ The report of a conference held to plan Operation "INFATUATE" (the Walcheren landing) discloses that General Crerar was prepared, should the operations to reduce Calais be unduly prolonged, merely to mask the port.

"Admiral Ramsay expressed the opinion that BOULOGNE could be used with a satisfactory degree of risk if the btys at CAP GRIS NEZ were captured. The GOC in C drew attention to the memo prepared by Captain Pugsley, R.N., which showed that, in his view, it would be necessary to capture CALAIS in order to make practicable the use of the port of BOULOGNE.

"The GOC in C, after hearing these views of Admiral Ramsay, stated that in this case he was prepared merely to mask CALAIS in the event that its capture was not achieved quickly in order to conc the resources of First Cdn Army for Op 'INFATUATE'."

(W.D., "G" Plans, H.Q. First Cdn Army, September 1944: Appx 22, Op Infatuate - Notes of Conference, 21 Sep 44)

THE WATCH ON THE HIGH GROUND

92. Calais was invested, but by a very light screen indeed. The next step was to thicken up this containing force, and seal off Cap Gris Nez and Calais from Boulogne. As we have seen (para 41), this was done by disengaging 7 Cdn Inf Bde from the Boulogne horseshoe, and sending it to dominate the high ground which forms a giant "T"-shaped feature south-west of Calais. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944; Appx 8, 3 Cdn Inf Div 00 No. 2). The cross" of this "T" extends from Mount de la Louve (4 kilometres south-west of Cap Gris Nez) north-eastward, parallel to the coast, to Noires Mottes (about 6 kilometres west of Calais). The upright of the "T" runs inland along the high ground through Mont Couple to Mont de Fiennes, 12 kilometres south of Calais. (Ibid). For its task of cutting the main Boulogne - Calais road the brigade was supported by one squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt, a battery of anti-tank guns, 12 Cdn Fd Regt, and necessary services (Ibid). 7 Cdn Recce Regt was given two main tasks - to protect the eastern flank of the brigade's position, and to search the areas east and west of Calais and destroy any enemy who tried to get out (Ibid). By 1515 hours, 6 Sep, 7 Cdn Inf Bde was in position with brigade headquarters at Moyecques, on the "upright" of the "T". (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Sep 44). Here the brigade and the reconnaissance country, which bore a striking resemblance to the rolling chalk downs of England where the battalions had trained so long. (Ibid)

93. As at Boulogne, every scrap of information about the enemy positions was now sought eagerly. Patrols cast about, on the scent of prisoners and information. From battalion observation posts, relays of observers scanned the countryside. Civilians brought in scraps of news which they had gleaned about the Boche. Then on 9 Sep, a Frenchman brought in "all sorts of papers the Germans had left behind." Amongst them was a complete plan of the strong-point centred around the huge cross-channel guns at Sangatte, known as "Battery Lindemann." This plan was interpreted and amplified by a Polish

deserter who gave full details of the defences of the great 40.6-cm guns. These monsters in concrete emplacements 12 to 16 feet thick, could only fire out to sea, but their rear was more than adequately protected by "very numerous anti-aircraft guns," four 75-mm and three 15-cm guns, mines, and wire, some electrically charged. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 7-9 Sep 44, and Appx 8, Trace, "Civilian information")

94. The brigade group, isolated by 20 long miles from the besiegers of Boulogne, carried on aggressive patrolling, the battalion extending its territory a little at a time. On the night 9/10 Sep Regina Rif occupied Wissant, a seaside resort six kilometres east of Cap Gris Nez, isolating that position from Calais. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and Regina Ref 9 Sep 44). Here they found "civilians still occupy the village and businesses and shops in full operation". (Ibid). The battalion also established an observation post on the 163 metre height of Mont Couple. The brigade and 7 Cdn Recce Regt were now painfully thin on the ground, and there was great relief when 3 Cdn Inf Div advised that from 10 Sep the eastern and south-eastern approaches to Calais would be covered by elements of 2 Cdn Inf Div, thus releasing a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt to thicken up the defence of the area between 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Sep 44). Meanwhile, the flow of intelligence continued. Some of it was alarming, for Regina Rif reported a German submarine off Cap Gris Nez, and Polish prisoners gave news of a proposed enemy counter attack. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 10, 11 Sep 44)

CLEARING THE CAP GRIS NEZ PENINSULA, 12-29 SEP 44

95. A more definite task was now assigned to 7 Cdn Inf Bde. The G.O.C. ordered the brigade to clear the enemy from Mont de la Louve (the southwestern end of the cross-bar of the "T") and drive the Germans at Audresselles and Cap Gris Nez into the sea. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Sep 44; W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Entry for 12 Sep 44 and Appx 9,

7 Cdn Inf Bde Operation Order No. 1). The clearance of this "Cap Gris Nez rectangle" necessitated the planning of an elaborate attack, to be carried out in three phases, with the support of a squadron of tanks, a squadron of flails, and a squadron of A.Vs.R.E. An artillery fire plan was to be fired by 12 Cdn Fd Regt and three medium regiments. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 9, Operation Order No. 1). A command group of brigade headquarters moved to Marquise, and during the night 12/13 Sep, and the day 13 Sep, the battalions closed in on Cap Gris Nez, suffering some shelling from such heavy guns as the Germans could bring to bear. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 12, 13 Sep 44)

96. The process of clearing the Cap Gris Nez peninsula proceeded steadily for the next few days. On 14 Sep, 1 C. Scot R. were withdrawn into divisional reserve, to be used if needed in the Boulogne assault, leaving the brigade with two infantry battalions to complete the clearance. By this time, a ring had been drawn around the Cape, from Ambletuese on the coast to Mt. de la Louve, then north to Tardingenhen on the coast road. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 10 Trace). This ring was thinly held, but patrols were to be kept active, denying all useful ground to the enemy, and probing his defences. (Ibid) On 16 Sep the necessity of clearing the Cape was emphasized again when the Brigadier gave further orders for mopping-up the enemy there. On 17 Sep, as the main attack went in on Boulogne, further advances were made against heavy mortar fire, which only resulted in establishing that the "battery of three huge 38-cm guns, each encased in very thick concrete (some estimates give 18 - 20 feet thick)" and their defending pillboxes would be a very difficult nut to crack. The R. Wpg Rifs sent an ultimatum to the commander to surrender or be blown into the sea, but secure behind his wire, mines and concrete, that haughty German scornfully rejected it (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Sep 44)

97. The enemy was now hustled into his strong positions at the end of the peninsula. Here it was decided to leave him, relieving the battalions (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div: September 1944, Appx 24, 4(a)) by a squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which would keep a watchful eye on Cap Gris Nez while the brigade, including 1 C. Scot R. returned to hold the downland of the "T" feature. (Ibid, Appx 28, msg G03; W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and R. Wpg Rif, 17 Sep 44). There, all preparations could be made for the assault on Calais. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Sep 44). D Day was forecast as 19 Sep. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 28, msg G03).

THE DEFENCES OF CALAIS

98. The flow of information from all sources built-up a clear picture of the formidable fortress of Calais¹¹. (Ibid: Appx 27, Int Summary No. 43). Topographically, it was in direct contrast to Boulogne. The defence of Calais was based on water obstacles and low, marshy ground instead of fortified hills. A ridge running into the town west of the flooded area offered the only dry approach to the city, but this feature was commanded by the defences of the great Noires Mottes battery of four 40.6-cm coastal guns, and by other strong positions at Sangatte and Vieux Coquettes. The low-lying ground east and south of the city was swept by the observed fire of the innumerable small strong infantry and artillery positions erected astride the Calais - Gravelines and Calais - St. Omer roads. The city itself, built on a series of islands, intersected by dykes and canals, was a natural stronghold, made more formidable by weapon positions whose fire could mow down anyone rash enough to try to cross the waterways. On 17 Sep, it was estimated that the Germans had 4450 to 5550 men defending the city (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 27, Int Summary No. 43)

¹¹ See Map "D"

99. Details of the various strong points were now available. There were six principal areas: Noires Nottes, Belle Vue Ridge, Vieux Coquelles, les Baraques, the eastern and south-eastern approaches, and the city itself. The basis of the Noires Mottes post was the main battery of four 40.6-cm guns in casemates surrounded by mines and wire. In the perimeter of the fort were shelters, pillboxes, and anti-aircraft and light guns in addition to the infantry positions. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 27, Int Summery No. 43). The whole formed a solid bristling mass of wire, guns and mines, stretching two kilometres along the coast north-east from Escalles, with a depth inland almost as great. (France 1:25000, sheet 38NE, Defence overprint edition 12 Sep 44). The ridge running east from Belle Vue was the next part of the defences. It was wired, defended by machinegun posts, and included two great railway guns. Astride the main Boulogne - Calais road at Vieux Coquelles was a strong point dominating the inundated area, which lay to the south-east. Machine-guns, anti-aircraft machine-guns and the dreaded 88-mm as well as infantry and field guns would make this a formidable fortress if held by determined men. Two kilometres to the north, in the rear of this bastion, was a coastal defence position at les Baraques. The defenders here had the usual coastal defences and mines, and were through to have flame protection as well. (Ibid). The eastern and south-eastern approaches were guarded by infantry and anti-aircraft anti-tank positions astride the Calais - Ostend road, and the Calais - St Omer Road. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 27, Int Summary No. 43; and France 1:25000, Part Sheets 38NE, 39NW, 28SW, Defence Overprint 12 Sep 44). The city itself, on its islands, centred round the old Citadel so gallantly defended by the British riflemen in 1940. Pillboxes, guns in casemates, anti-tank guns, and infantry posts combined with the many canals and dykes to make the heart of the position as formidable as its tough outer shell. (Ibid)

100. Commanding the defending garrison was an army officer (the Divisional Int Summary incorrectly names a naval officer), Lt-Col Ludwig Schroeder. This undistinguished soldier was interrogated after his capture, and gave his examiners a poor impression:

It cannot be believed that much importance was attached to the defence of Calais when so mediocre and accidental a leader as Oberstlt Ludwig Schroeder was designated to hold it. Not only was his rank comparatively low for a large scale ideological stand, but he was assigned the role merely because he happened to be around and not because he was endowed with any special abilities for it.

(AEF/First Cdn Army/L/F Docket III:
fol 14 Special Interrogation Report,
Lt-Col Ludwig Schroeder)

Schroeder claimed that until mid-August the ports had only been prepared chiefly against a sea-borne attack. Not until well on in that month was the expectation of another cross-channel invasion abandoned. Then all-round defence had to be organized, based mainly on field positions, rather than on concrete. Schroeder himself took command on 30 Aug 44, when 1035 Gr, which he commanded, was withdrawn for use elsewhere. (Ibid)

101. Schroeder did not put much faith in the fighting ability of his garrison of fortress troops, sailors, home guards and harbour technicians. An engineer company of 59 Inf Div, and a reinforcement battalion of 47 Inf Div were the only part of the garrison that had a divisional background. The morale of this conglomeration of troops was wretched. They were likely to be easy victims of Allied propaganda, for many were "Volkdeutsche" (Germans who had lived in foreign countries), and "Hiwis" (foreign volunteers). Schroeder

had almost as little confidence in his officers as in his men (Special Interrogation Report - Schroeder).

THE PLAN FOR THE ATTACK

102. In spite of the heavy responsibility of preparing for the attack on Boulogne, the headquarters staff of 3 Cdn Inf Div produced a plan on 16 Sep for the capture of Calais. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 24, 3 Cdn Inf Div, Operation Order No. 6, Op "UNDERGO"). The only part, however, which was acted on was the withdrawal of 7 Cdn Inf Bde from the Cap Gris Nez rectangle, and its deployment on the approaches to Calais. (See para 92). The unexpected protraction of the attack on Boulogne caused the greater part of the preliminary plan to be replaced by a later one, closely resembling it. D Day, forecast as "probably 19 Sep", was repeatedly postponed. A divisional operation order was finally issued on 22 Sep, cancelling that of 16 Sep but retaining the same inter-brigade boundaries, method of traffic control, and air targets. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 34, 3 Cdn Inf Div Operation Order No. 7, Op "UNDERGO").

103. The plan called for an attack with two brigade groups, supported by armour, artillery, and air bombing. The portion of the perimeter defence not under direct attack would be contained. To 7 Cdn Inf Bde fell the task "Attack and capture or destroy the garrison" of the area including Noires Mottes, Bellevue, Coquelles and Calais. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to deal with the Escalles area. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, having completed any mopping-up needed in Boulogne, would relieve the squadron of 7 Cdn Recce Regt at Cap Gris Nez, and "capture or destroy the garrison there, probably 25 Sep 44". The brigade was also to make two battalion groups available as divisional reserve for Operation "UNDERGO". 7 Cdn Recce Regt would be responsible for containing the southern sector of Calais, and C.H. of O. (M.G.) would relieve Tor Scot R.

(M.G.) of 2 Cdn Inf Div of the responsibility of guarding the eastern route out of Calais. (Ibid)¹²

104. The outer brigade boundary underwent some revision, for 8 Cdn Inf Bde's operation order of 23 Sep gives the brigade intention to "capture the Escalles and Noires Mottes strongpoints and destroy all enemy in the area". (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 5, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Operation Order No. 20, Op "UNDERGO"). The brigade would attack on a two-battalion front, with N. Shore R. on the right "capturing the Sangatte battery" and the defences of the whole Noires Mottes area. On the left R. de Chaud would capture the high ground east of Escalles and all defences on the Cap Blanc Nez feature. (Ibid). On the left, 7 Cdn Inf Bde planned to attack in three phases. In the first phase, the brigade would capture Coquelles and Bellevue. In the second phase, the objectives would be the country north of these positions and in the third phase, the town itself. Like 8 Cdn Inf Bde, the brigade would attack on a two-battalion front with R. Wpg Rif on the right and Regina Rif on the left. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 3, 7 Bde Operation Order No. 2)

105. The heavy bombers would support the attackers with the same smashing, battering bombing as at Boulogne. This air effort was considered "an integral part of the Operation as a whole". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 31, Op "UNDERGO" "Hy Bomber Effort"). Five target areas were selected in the area between Sangatee and the city. (see map "D"). The fall of the last bomb on the first two targets would mark H Hour (or Zero hour). (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, September 1944: Appx 3, R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div, Op "UNDERGO", Heavy bomber effort). After a pause of half an hour, the third target would get an hours' pounding. The remaining targets were successively to receive fifteen minutes' treatment at intervals of half an hour. In an

¹² For Order of Battle, Operation "UNDERGO", see Appx "C"

effort to learn how to avoid the delay imposed by cratering, which had caused so much trouble at Boulogne, an experiment was to be made:

Cratering and destruction is essential, but in order to test the killing effect that might be obtained by the use of fragmentation type bombs among concrete and earthwork defences, bombs for Target 4 are to be fused for less cratering, and more blast effect. This refinement does not necessitate an increase in the 2000 yard safety line.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div,
September 1944; Appx 31, Op "UNDERGO", "Hy
Bomber Effort" and trace)

It was agreed that postponement might be necessary because of adverse weather, but that no matter when the operation took place, H Hour could not be later than noon of the day selected. (Ibid)

106. The same guns that dealt so effectively with Boulogne were available to reduce Calais. As soon as Boulogne was conquered, the artillery moved by two main routes to deploy where it could engage Calais. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 6, Trace, and Adm Instr No. 1, and W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944; Appx 4). This movement was hidden from the enemy at Cap Gris Nez by a vast smoke screen¹³. The fire plan and traces were

¹³ It was appreciated that the concentration of these regiments must be secured from observation by the enemy at Cap Gris Nez. The line of origin selected for the smoke generators was along the road Wissant - Marquiese. In a three-kilometre stretch there were 60 smoke-points, manned by 23 gunners of 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt. By experiment it was found possible to reduce this to less than 20 points. The screen was operated continuously during the daylight hours from 23 Sep until 28 Sep, with breaks of three hours each during R.A.F. bombing attacks on Calais on 26 and 27 Sep. The screen consumed 147 tons of generators during its period of operation. (AER: 45/First Cdn Army/C/F Docket II: Vol 1, Report on Smoke Screens)

issued to regiments on 22 Sep, and on 23 Sep, the guns finished the movement into the Calais area. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 23 Sep 44). With the lesson of Boulogne in mind, a heavy bombardment of the hostile batteries was planned to last from H minus 73 to H minus 35, 21 hostile batteries being engaged for three minutes each at a concentration of 15 to one. In addition, there was a counter-flak programme by our medium, heavy, and heavy anti-aircraft guns, to deal with the enemy's heavy anti-aircraft batteries. Air O.Ps. were available to direct observed fire on to any enemy guns which remained active. Rocket-projectile Typhoons were also briefed to engage selected enemy gun positions. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944: Appx 4, Operation "UNDERGO", 2 Cdn Corps C.B. Int Summary No. 12, 26 Sep 44). "In anticipation of forward moves as the battle progresses", preparations were made for extensive concentrations and "stonks" (linear concentrations) available on call. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 6, Task Table and Traces). There was also an initial timed programme to be fired on targets in the Noires Mottes - Escalles defended locality. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn A.G.R.A., September 1944: Appx 4, Op "UNDERGO" Trace, and History of 13 Cdn Fd Regt, p. 77)

107. The comforting snorting and grinding of the armoured devices of 79 Armd Div would be heard again, for flails, A.Vs.R.E., Crocodiles and Kangaroos were all coming to Calais, as at her sister ports, to clear the minefields, flame and batter the strong points, and protect the infantry, according to their various natures. A regiment plus a squadron of flails - 6 Aslt Regt RE - complete with all its A.Vs.R.E., and a regiment less one squadron of Crocodiles were put under command of 3 Cdn Inf Div for the operation. The 36 Canadian-manned Kangaroos of 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn would be on hand to carry the infantry of 7 Cnd Inf Bde. As well as the special armour, the ordinary fighting Shermans of 2 Cdn Armd Bde, with the exception of one

carried out by First Canadian Army)

regiment, were under command. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 34, 3 Cdn Inf Div, Operation Order No. 7, Op "UNDERGO", Appx A, Order of Battle). 7 Cdn Inf Bde was to be supported by 6 Cdn Armd Regt, two squadrons of flails, one squadron of Crocodiles, two squadrons by a single squadron of Shermans of 10 Cdn Armd Regt, one squadron plus one troops of flails, one squadron of Crocodiles, and two troops of A.Vs.R.E. (Ibid)

108. By 17 Sep, the assault which was at last about to fall on Calais, had been postponed again and again. On that day, Headquarters 3 Cdn Inf Div issued a message giving the probable D Day for Operation "UNDERGO" as 19 Sep (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Entry for 17 Sep 44, and Appx 28). But the protracted defence of Boulogne produced a further day-to-day postponement, for the men, tanks and guns, which would be needed to attack Calais, could not be released until Boulogne fell. On 20 Sep it was considered possible that D Day would be 22 Sep. But the troops were still engaged at Boulogne until late that day. Following that city's fall, a G.O.C.'s conference was held regarding Operation "UNDERGO", and on 24 Sep, in spite of rainy windy weather, zero hour was fixed for 1000 hours the following day. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 18 - 24 Sep)

109. On 24 Sep, R.A.F. heavy bombers proceeded to "soften up" the Calais defences. The raid appears to have been the result of a message from 2 Cdn Corps to Bomber Command:

If factor causing your postponement of "UNDERGO" should change to permit bombing later in day, we would welcome any spare effort you can offer tomorrow for softening Calais defences.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div,
September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 24 Sep,
Ser 35)

The request was acceded to, and 3 Cdn Inf Div received the message at 1300 hours that five targets would be attacked from 1730 hours to 1830 hours. (Ibid, Ser 27). The attacking aircraft came over, and their attack was reported by 7 Cdn Inf Bde as follows:

Air Force dropping phosphorus bombs on north-east portion of Calais. There appears to be large balls of fire shooting skyward not anti-aircraft. Heavy smoke over northern part of Calais. One fire burning at harbour entrance. Four planes have crashed.

(Ibid, Ser 43)

Later, it was confirmed that seven aircraft had been shot down, apparently by enemy anti-aircraft in the Escalles area, over which they flew after the bombing and before they turned out to sea on their return to base. (Ibid, Sers 46 and 51). The diarist of 7 Cdn Inf Bde attributes the heavy losses to failure to arrange the counter-flak programme:

At 1315 hrs Division informed us that targets 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 (all in Calais) would be taken on by bombers from 1730 - 1830 tonight. Later on this was cancelled but at 1730 over came the bombers. This was most unfortunate for then it was too late to tee up our artillery to fire on Gerry ack-ack defences, or as we say, Pancake them. As a result we lost eight Lancasters.

(W.D, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 24 Sep 44)

THE ASSULT BEGINS, 25 SEP 44

110. On arrival from Boulogne, 8 Cdn Inf Bde took up positions in the Bernes - Audembert - Wissant area, on the reverse slopes of the Mont Couple feature.

7 Cdn Inf Bde was deployed around Bonningues-les-Calais, while beyond the inundated area, C.H. of O (M.G.) took over the containing of the eastern perimeter from Tor Scot R. (M.G.), assuming once more its function as a mock brigade. (AEF/3 Cdn Inf Div/C/F, Docket I, fol 14 Monthly consolidated Summary of Cdn Ops and Activities, 3 Cdn Inf Div.

111. At 0815 hours on 25 Sep, the familiar prelude of heavy bombing led off Operation "UNDERGO". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 15, Op "UNDERGO", "Hy Bombing Effort"; and 3 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log 24 Sep 44, Ser 40, and 25 Sep 44 Ser 10). At 1015 hours, as the last bombs fell on the first two targets, the two infantry brigades began their assault, each with A.Vs.R.E., flails and Crocodiles (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops log 25 Sep 44, Sers 11 and 12). On the left, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, whose battalions had been compelled by lack of cover in the downland to form up 2000 yards short of the start line, advanced as planned. On the left of the brigade, R. de Chaud moved toward the high ground north of Escalles, from Point 134 to the Observatory. The French, Canadians carried out the traditional infantry attack on their own feet; they relied on the neutralizing effect of the bombing and the field, medium, and heavy shells which had been whistling above them since Z minus 30 to detonate on the enemy positions ahead. (AEF/21 Army Gp/C/F, Docket II: fol 19, Immediate Report No. 53). The ground up which the battalion advanced was so steep that no armour could accompany it (Ibid). On the right of the brigade front N. Shore R. advanced up a re-entrant which ran into the enemy's defences. This gave the battalion protection from the enemy positions on the right flank. A squadron of Shermans, 20 flails, size A.Vs.R.E., and seven Crocodiles moved up on the right of the battalion, and joined it near the start line. The armoured vehicles made through the enemy's wire and minefields three lanes, which were checked and marked by Canadian sappers. (W.D., 16 Cdn Fd Coy, 25 Sep 44). The infantry swarmed up the high ground at Noires Mottes without much difficulty. (Ibid, and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944:

Appx 41, Ser 35). Once over the crest, they found the downward slope swept by heavy machine gun and 20-mm fire. The A.Vs.R.E., and the Crocodiles gave what assistance they could, but they experienced great difficulty in the badly cratered ground. Meanwhile, R. de Chaud, fighting with great dash and skill, were clearing up the enemy, bagging 278 prisoners for a loss of three killed and nine wounded. (Ibid)

112. To the east, 7 Cdn Inf Bde crossed the start line with R. Wpg Rif up on the right, and Regina Rif on the left. Each battalion was heavily supported by tanks, flails, A.Vs.R.E., and Crocodiles. The Manitoba battalion and supporting armour were soon on the Coquelles position, collecting batches of prisoners. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Sep 44) On the left, Regina Rif ran into sterner opponents, but with the support of the armour they established themselves firmly on half of the Belle Vue strongpoint by 1545 hours.

1 C. Scot R. in Brigade Reserve were ordered forward in their Kangaroos at 1745 hours to carry out the second phase, but instead of going on and swinging to capture Calais, as planned, were directed to the assistance of Regina Rif. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Entry for 25 Sep, and Appx 13: 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Operation Order No. 2). 1 C. Scot R. dismounted, helped Regina Rif on to their objective and then infiltrated towards the coast (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log 26 Sep 44, Ser 1). The battalions were ordered to make their positions firm for the night, in preparation for the continuation of the attack on the morrow. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 25 Sep 44)

113. The diarist of 7 Cdn Inf Bde expresses his gratitude to 8 Cdn Inf Bde:

While all this was going on, the 8th Bde on our immediate left had got a good strong hold on the enemy's defences and Escalles and Sangatte. This was indeed a job well done, for the operation depended a good deal

on the fact that 8 Bde would be able to take out the fact that 8 Bde would be able to take out the two places mentioned above.

(Ibid)

This job, well done though it was, had not completely purged the 8 Cdn Inf Bde area of the Boche. Our patrols were very active during the rainy night 25/26 Sep, and by 0900 hours the German commander of the Sangatte battery offered to surrender at noon. At 1200 hours, N. Shore R. gathered him in with his men, 280 in all. This ended all organised enemy resistance in the western end of the Calais defences. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 26 Sep 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log 26 Sep 44; Sers 14, 25 and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 26 Sep 44, Ser 38)

114. On 26 Sep, 1 C. Scot R. led the way on 7 Cdn Inf Bde's front. The weather had now cleared, and the battalion started the division's right turn into Calais by seizing Sangatte and two kilometres of the Sangatte - Calais coastal road. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log 26 Sep, Sers 11, 12). With effective support from our artillery, the battalion advanced in spite of enemy shelling. Leading elements pressed eastward along the coast to a point due north of Coquelles, meeting considerable resistance. (Ibid, Ser 14). After our guns had pounded the area ahead, two companies went forward again at 1520 with tanks, crocodiles and A.Vs.R.E., and made some progress before being slowed down by demolitions, mines and booby-traps. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log 26 Sep, Ser 25; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 26 Sep, Ser 50; W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Appx 15, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Battle Log, 26 Sep, Sers 15, 23, 25, 33, 35). Their progress was further impeded by the necessity of clearing

out every house, slit trench, and strong point they encountered. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 26 Sep 44). In spite of a counter attack, the Scottish prepared to assault Fort Lapin and les Baraques. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 26 Sep 44, Ser 81 and 83, and 27 Sep 44, Ser 12)

15. In a little more than a day and a half, great progress had been made against the formidable defences, both man-made and natural, of Calais. By midnight, 26/27 Sep, the division was able to report that the enemy was now back at his inner defences, and that 28 officers and 1,525 other ranks had been taken prisoner. The Escalles feature was completely clear of the enemy, and 8 Cdn Inf Bde was being withdrawn to a concentration area to be used as divisional reserve. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log 27 Sep 44, Ser 1). During the day's operations heavy bombers and rocket-firing Typhoons had rendered effective support. (Ibid). Thus, by the evening of 26 Sep, the attack on Calais had become almost entirely a 7 Cdn Inf Bde affair; for C.H. of O. (M.G.) on the east were still engaged in cutting the enemy's escape in that direction, and 8 Cdn Inf Bde had completed its tasks in the west.

116. At 2030 hours, Brigadier J.S. Spragge issued his orders for operations by 7 Cdn Inf Bde during the night 26/27 Sep. 1 C. Scot R. were to continue along the sea front and try to break into the north end of Calais immediately. R. Wpg Rif were directed to take the old Fort Nieulay, on the western outskirts of the town, and force a crossing over the canal into the town. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and R. Wpg Rif, 26 Sep 44). Regina Rif were assigned the task of getting troops across the inundated area by boat and penetrating Calais from the south. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and Regina Rif, 26 Sep 44; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 26 Sep, Ser 81; W.D., 1 C. Scot R. September 1944: Appx 3, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Battle Log 26 Sep 44 Ser 53). These thrusts made poor progress and it was

therefore decided to use heavy bombing of the western approaches to Calais in an attempt to facilitate entrance into the town. Accordingly, 2 Cdn Corps asked for heavy bombers to engage seven targets on the western edge of Calais in support of this attack, and early on 27 Sep, our troops were withdrawn to a line two kilometres west of the outskirts. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 26 Sep 44, Ser 80)

117. From 0830 to 1105 hours on 27 Sep, R.A.F. heavy bombers pounded the western outskirts of Calais. The bombing was generally effective, and our counter-flak fire kept the German anti-aircraft gunners from seriously molesting the aircraft. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log 27 Sep 44, Ser 16; W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 27 Sep, Ser 15, 21, 22, 24, 32). One bomber was lost, but some at least of the crew seem to have parachuted safely.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944; Appx 41, Ops Log 27 Sep 44, Sers 33, 36). The infantry continued to press on towards Calais town.

1 C. Scot R. fought their way along the coast to Fort Lapin, which was only taken after Typhoon attacks on the neighbourhood, and a furious battle by the infantry supported by tanks and Crocodiles, which flamed the pill boxes built into the walls of the fort. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944, Appx 41, Ops Log 27 Sep, Sers 58, 59, 63, 75, 84, 86; and W.D., 1 C. Scot R. 27 Sep 44). At about the same time the R. Wpg Rif succeeded in capturing Fort Neiulay, in spite of its wide, deep moat, and heavily reinforced stone walls, 33 feet high, The flame-throwers once again were the final argument which convinced the garrison to surrender. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 27 Sep 44).

Regina Ref, meanwhile, had carried on across the inundations and had reached factories on the southern part of Calais. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Sep 44). While 7 Cdn Inf Bde was fighting for these gains, the reserve battalion of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Q.O.R. of C., which had not taken part in the Escalles operations, was warned for movement in T.C.V's. to the C.H. of O. (M.G.) sector of the eastern perimeter. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div,

September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 27 Sep 44, Ser 93, 96, 99, 102). The riflemen were to be put under command of the Division at 0800 hours on 28 Sep. (Ibid)

118. The plans for the next day called for much the same tactics. Once again heavy bombing would prepare the way, attacking targets east and north of Calais from 0900 to 0955 hours. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 28 Sep 44, Ser 27). This attack was reported to be successful, by ground observers, in spite of the loss of one of our aircraft. (Ibid, Ser 28). 1 C. Scot R. found that bunkers just ahead of Fort Lapin still contained Germans who wanted to resist, but the Scotsmen reported that they could soon be dealt with. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 28 Sep 44, Ser 37). In fact, during the night 27/28 Sep, two companies had succeeded in crossing the canal along the western perimeter of the city - near the citadel - by boat, by swimming, or even by pulling themselves across on ropes. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R. 28 Sep 44). These intrepid souls were, however, cut off by a belt of enemy fire; their radio batteries began to fail, and they found themselves without food or water. There they remained, unable to dislodge the Germans, and unable to withdraw themselves. (Ibid; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 28 Sep 44, Ser 57). R. Wpg Rif penetrated as far as the group of houses known as Grevière, on the Calais - Marquise road, and by noon, Regina Rif reached the railway junction on the southern outskirts of the town, beside the canal. (3 Cdn Inf div Ops Log, Ser 57). By 1830 hours, Regina Rif had completed all arrangements to cross the canal into the city proper during the night. (Ibid, Ser 57). Then came the news that the commander of the garrison had asked for a truce. (W.Ds., 1 C. Scot R, and Regina Rif, 28 Sep 44). All activity ceased, and our troops were ordered to engage only active enemy patrols. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 28 Sep 44). The diarist of 7 Cdn Inf Bde wrote "The front settled down into a

very unnatural calm - and we laid plans for an all-out assault on the town."
(W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Sep 44)

THE TRUCE AND EVACUATION, 29-30 SEP

119. The events which led to the opening of negotiations were as follows. On 28 Sep detachment of Civil Affairs, 2 Cdn Corps, at Ardres, received word that the German Commander was ready to consider surrender. A message in the following terms was forthwith sent to Lt-Col Schroeder:

- a. The Canadian Commander is prepared to meet the German garrison Commander of Calais at Pont sans Pareil tomorrow morning 1000 hours (1100 hours German time) Friday 29 Sep 44;
- b. On receipt of acknowledgement agreeing to this meeting and cessation of all German fire, Canadian troops and cessation of all German fire, Canadian troops will be instructed to suspend attacks;
- c. The Garrison Commander must travel in a car bearing a white flag. His personal safety and that of other occupants of his car is guaranteed; and
- d. To enable Canadian troops to be warned of this arrangement, early acknowledgement should be made.

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, Civil Affairs
28 Sep 44)

The reply, again through the detachment at Ardres, was that the Germans agreed to the meeting. At 1000 hours on 29 Sep, the meeting between General Spry and four German officers took place at Point sans Pareil - but it turned out that

the Germans did not want to surrender. They boldly asked that Calais be declared an open city. Their excuse was that the 20,000 civilians in the town were suffering from the bombing, shelling and shortage of food and medical supplies. General Spry refused the request, on the grounds that the Boches were in the city and defending it. He agreed to a truce until 1200 hours on 30 Sep, during which the population was to be evacuated.

120. Immediately after the conference at Pont sans Pareil, General Spry called a conference to announce his instructions regarding the truce, and to issue his orders for the attack which would immediately follow. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 29 Sep 44). The attack was to be in two phases. The first would begin at 1400 hours on 30 Sep, after a two-hour preliminary air attack by medium bombers, followed by rocket-projectile Typhoons. The ground attack would be delivered from the east by Q.O.R. of C. and medium machine-guns, supported by two troops each of Falails, Crocodiles, and A.Vs.R.E; their objective was the eastern bank of the perimeter canal. Meanwhile, 7 Cdn Inf Bde and its supporting troops would remain alert to take advantage of the diversion created on the east side. 7 Cdn Recce Regt and C.H. of O. (M.G.) were to patrol vigorously and close in as much as possible. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 38, 3 Cdn Inf Div Operation Order No. 8, Op "UNDERGO"). The guns of the divisional artillery and the two A.G.R.As. would provide the artillery support, including increasing the smoke resulting from incendiaries dropped by the medium bombers, with 25-pdr smoke shells. Air burst H.E. from 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns was to be fired as well. The fire plan was novel, as each regiment was allotted an area, which it was to "sweep and search" from 1300 to 1355 hours. After that time, selected targets would be engaged in a normal way, except that the guns of 13 Cdn Fd Regt would fire the 25-pdr smoke programme. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 7, Fire Plan in support to attack of Q.O.R. of C. 30 Sep 44)

121. The second phase of the attack was largely a task for 7 Cdn Inf Bde group. This was to be the main assault on Calais to complete the destruction or capture of the garrison. D Day would be 1 Oct, with Zero Hour either at first light, or "first tank light", the decision to be made by Brigade Headquarters. The artillery support would be on the same scale as in Phase I, and medium bombers and Typhoons would be available. (Operation Order No. 8)

CAPTURE OF CAP GRIS NEZ, 29 SEP 44

122. The divisional Operation Order for the final reduction of Calais stated:

- a. Engage only enemy weapons firing at our own troops and engage any active enemy patrols;
- b. NO redistribution will take place in FDLs;
- c. Regrouping which would have taken place if NO armistice declared may be made as required; and
- d. We must NOT be first to fire before 301200 hours.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div,
September 1944: Appx 38, 3 Cdn Inf Div 00
No. 8, Op "UNDERGO").

But these instructions did not affect the operations of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, facing the Germans positions on Cap Gris Nez. This was an isolated action separate from the main attempt to capture Calais; it began and was completed on the day the truce was in effect at Calais, 29 Sep 44. The operation was intended to capture or destroy the long-range guns that for four years had harassed the

Dover Coast. The value of Calais as a port for 21 Army Group was not the essential issue, but the Cap Gris Nez batteries could dominate the harbour of Boulogne and effectively render the movement of shipping in the Straits precarious. (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45) In view of these facts, the batteries on Cap Gris Nez had to be liquidated by means of an attack similar in planning to "WELLHIT"¹⁴.

123. The enemy troops in this sector were largely marines, estimated before the operation to be from 800 to 1,100 in number (9 Cdn Inf Bde, Operation Order No. 2, 27 Sep 44) but whose morale was definitely dependent on the strength and depth of their concrete casements and pill boxes. The actual armament consisted of the four cross-channel guns at Haringzelles, and the batteries at Floringzelle, made up as follows: the Battery Todt at haringzelles with four guns of 38-cm calibre, firing seaward with a range of 45,000 yards; the Battery Grosser Kurfurst about Floringzelle and Framzelle, with four guns of 28-cm calibre, 45,000 yard range, and an all-round field of fire; the Battery Gris Nez, of three 17-cm guns, with a range of 24,600 yards, situated in much the same area and about the lighthouse; and the Battery Wissant with three 15-cm guns firing seaward. All were encased in reinforced concrete and steel casemates similar in design to those at Boulogne and impervious to any but a direct hit. (W.D., G.S. Int, H.Q. First Cdn Army, September 1944: Appx 31, Int Summary No. 91, 29 Sep 44). They were supplemented by some 88-mm, several 20-mm A.A. guns, anti-tank ditches cleverly concealed, minefields, wire, concrete pill boxes and machine-guns. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde September 1944: Appx 24, Report on Defences of Calais, d/10 Sep 44)

124. On 23 Sep, 9 Cdn Inf Bde had been instructed to relieve 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which unit had held the enemy garrison within this area since 22 Sep.

¹⁴ See Map "E"

(W.D., 7 Cdn Recce Regt, 22 Sep 44), and to take up position for the capture or destruction of the gun positions on Cap Gris Nez. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Sep 44). The Brigade decided to employ two battalions - Nth N.S. Highrs and H.L.I. of C. - with supporting troops, for the assault. The H.L.I. of C. were to attack on the right with under command one squadron 141 R.A.C. (Flails), two troops of Crocodiles, one troop of A.Vs.R.E. and in support "B" Sqn 6 Cdn Armd Regt, less two troops. Their objectives were Floringzelle fort and the lighthouse strongpoint; they were also to clear the area north of Chatelet. On the left the Nth N.S. Highrs with under command an equal force of special assault equipment, and in support two troops of "B" Sqn 6 Cdn Armd Regt were to attack with the object of clearing Haringzelles and the control station at Cran aux Oeufs. Each battalion had also under command one section of Engineers. (W.D., 9 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944: Operation Order No. 2, 27 Sep 44). Units moved into position on 24 Sep.

125. The plan for artillery and heavy bombing support was very comprehensive. The artillery support consisted of one field regiment (14 Cdn Fd Regt), four medium regiments (unspecified) and two batteries of heavy 7.2 inch Howitzers. The fire plan was in the nature of concentrations on the strongpoints in the area and was to commence ten minutes before the assaulting troops advanced, continuing until ten minutes after the zero hour. The field regiment was then to be on call for opportunity targets, while the medium and heavy guns were to continue for another hour, depending on the progress of the advance. Provision was made for an expenditure on the programme of a total of 1,000 or more rounds. (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, R.C.A. September 1944; Appx 2: Operation and Movement Orders). An air observation post was available to direct medium fire on observed targets. In anticipation of the forthcoming attack, the B.R.A. First Cdn Army made arrangements for the engagement of the guns on Cap Gris Nez by the heavy batteries on the Dover coast. One battery at St Margarets' Bay, Kent on 19 Sep engaged the gun positions at Floringzelle, firing a total of 68 rounds which damaged three of these

seriously. The fourth suffered only slightly. A British officer in an air O.P. directed this fire, and when his plane was fired upon by anti-aircraft guns, turned his attention to these and had the satisfaction of silencing six of them. Eventually their worn condition forced the Dover guns to cease fire, but there is no doubt that by thus drawing the fire of the Cap Gris Nez batteries, they materially reduced our own casualties. (The History of the Brigadier, royal Artillery, Branch of Headquarters, First Canadian Army of Second Great War).

126. It was planned that the heavy bombers should engage the area at any time between 1200 hours 28 Sep and 0200 hours 29 Sep. The bombing actually began at 1800 hours and continued until 1925 hours with a five-minute interval every ten minutes. This programme went a long way towards unnerving the garrison, which had been receiving previous attention along with Calais; in fact on 26 Sep about 2808 tons of H.E. had been dropped on the area. (Information supplied by Historical Section, R.C.A.F.; W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 26 Sep 44). Arrangements were made with Army to have Typhoons available to subdue reluctant strongpoints with their rockets. (W.D., G.S., Air, Main First Cdn Army, September 1944)

127. The Gris Nez area was on the whole much less marshy than that about Boulogne or Calais. The ground rose steadily from sea to a high ridge 100 metres above sea-level, dividing the Cap into a watershed south and east of the defences. The attack down the seaward slope led over two streams, one on each battalion front. The defences at the lighthouse were on each battalion front. The defences at the lighthouse were on a promontory some 50 feet above sea-level. Because of the few days of rather dry weather the land was relatively hard, so that cratering and minefields proved much more troublesome than soft ground. Patrols had also established that the necessary bridges were intact, and that at least one was capable of carrying tanks. In any case, the streambeds were not major tank obstacles for they were only fifteen

feet wide, and although soft, were free of water. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., September 1944, Appx 4: Patrol Reports and W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, September 1944, Appx 6: Patrols). The attacking area provided little natural cover, as it was not wooded, but both assaulting forces were able to form up behind the start line - the road Andresselles - Onglevert - Tardinghen - in positions well concealed by trees. The H.L.I. of C. assembled at Moscau Farm and the Nth N.S. Highrs on a wooded reverse slope on the road between Andresselles and Onglevert. (Ibid)

128. The morning of 29 Sep dawned fine and clear, as the spell of good weather continued. With the artillery fire plan in full operation the assaulting troops moved off at 0645 hours. Indeed, prisoners claimed later that they had no idea that an attack was coming and believed the artillery effort to be another bombing. The heavy bombing had been done by 6 Group, R.C.A.F. Three hundred and one aircraft took part, of which 198 reached the target, while 103, due to unsatisfactory weather, went astray. They dropped a total of 837 tons of H.E. and over 18 tons of incendiaries. (Information supplied by Historical Section, R.C.A.F.). The bombing, however, cratered the roads so badly that the tanks bogged down and had to take to the fields. This was particularly the case on the Nth N.S. Highrs front. "D" Coy Nth N.S. Highrs had to make a slight detour as A.Vs.R.E. with fascines advanced first to bridge the anti-tank ditch. The company moved northwards to the road running west from Onglevert, where it was held up for a short time by machine-gun fire from a pill box on the north flank. This obstacle was quickly flamed out by a Crocodile and the company took the northernmost gun. Meanwhile, on its right, "B" Coy moved north-west more directly over a bridge towards its objective. It also met little opposition, but the accompanying flails and Crocodiles bogged down one by one or lost tracks by mines. One A.V.R.E. got close enough to the casemate of the one remaining gun to use its petards against the slits, and, induced by a few hand-grenades hurled through the apertures, the occupants capitulated. "C" Coy of the Nth N.S. Highrs now

moved through "D" Coy, having followed the same route to take the control tower at Cran aux Oeufs with little trouble, although two minefields had to be breached. One by one the Flails were gradually immobilized until only a single one got close enough to place the company on its objective. The whole engagement was completed by 1030 hours and the battalion was able to march with pipe band accompaniment into its concentration area in Ambleteuse in time for lunch. (AEF/9 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Docket II: Account of the Attack on Cap Gris Nez given by Lt-Col D.F. Fobres, Officer Commanding Nth N.S. Highrs. 27 Oct 44, to Historical Officer)

129. Meanwhile the H.L.I. of C., attacking at Floringzelle, moved into the assault area with even less trouble. "A" Coy went westward from Tardinghen across country. Mines and obstacles seemed the most troublesome of the enemy's efforts. The Company soon reached its objective and was able to clear northward to Le Chatelet. "B" Coy advanced on Framzelle, following the inter-battalion boundary west to Audinghen, then north to the objective, which was speedily mopped up. All the gun positions readily surrendered. Phase I of the operation was completed by 1000 hours. The Germans retreated to the strongpoint about the lighthouse, a strategy which forced a Canadian pause to plan its destruction. The attack was resumed at 1500 hours and by nightfall the battalion was able to report the area clear. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log 29 Sep 44). No elaboration of the plan of this attack is to be found in available sources. The armour of 6 Cdn Armd Regt was able to reach the cape in spite of the difficult ground and numerous bomb craters. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Sep 44)

130. The whole action on Gris Nez lasted but a few hours, and our casualties were very light, - three officers and 39 men, of whom five were killed. We took as prisoners 26 officers and over 1500 other ranks, all of whom declared

that they did not know what was happening.¹⁵ (First Canadian Army, Int Summary No. 92, 30 Sep 44)

131. So ended at last the four-year target practice of these batteries against the Kent coast. The harbour of Boulogne, so important at this stage, could now be safely used, and shipping could proceed with safety up the straits of Dover to Antwerp as soon as First Cdn Army could clear the approaches to that port.

THE FALL OF CALAIS, 1 OCT 44

132. Meanwhile, on the Calais perimeter, great confusion arose out of the truce. The evacuation of the civilians was carried out in both Canadian and German transport. The German drivers, once out of the doomed city, had no desire to go back, and insisted on being taken prisoner. Permission to oblige them was requested by C.H. of O. (M.G.), who evidently feared that such action might be a breach of the terms of the armistice. There were no such scruples at divisional headquarters, and permission was given. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 29 Sep, Ser 59). Among these deserters was the personal driver of Lt-Col Schroeder, whose frantic request for the return of his chauffeur went unheeded. (W.D., C.H. of O. (M.G.), 29 Sep 44). During the night 29/30 Sep, while the truce was still in effect, 1 C. Scot R. tried to get food to their comrades isolated near the Canal. The attempt resulted in a flurry of firing, but the food reached the isolated troops. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R. 29, 30 Sep 44). On the morning of 30 Sep, Col Hurley and other civil affairs officers met a German major and two captains at the old rendezvous at Pont sans Pareil. These worthies reported that the garrison wished to surrender at 1400 hours. They were advised that this was not possible as operations would begin as soon as the armistice

¹⁵ W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Sep 44, gives the figures as 65 officers and 1600 other ranks.

expired. (W.D., Civil Affairs, H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 30 Sep 44). General Spry's reaction, when this offer of surrender was communicated to him, was that the operation would go on as planned. His instructions were "that the Hun, if they wished to quit, could march out with their hands up, without arms, and flying white flags in the normal manner." (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Sep 44)

133. This plain order was apparently misunderstood by the Boche, for when at 1200 hours bombing began, an indignant German officer reached the officer commanding C.H. of O. (M.G.), and accused the Canadians of committing a breach of faith, for it seemed that Lt-Col Schroeder had in fact ordered his men to lay down their arms. While Lt-Col Klaehn (C.O. of the C.H. of O) was trying to straighten out this tangle, and to get into Calais to accept Schroeder's surrender, the artillery began firing their timed programme. When this stopped, Lt-Col Klaehn got permission from divisional headquarters to go into Calais, and accept the surrender. His attempts were nearly fatal, for the observed fire of Canadian guns was brought down in error on the vehicles as they headed for Calais. (W.D., C.H. of O. (M.G.) 30 Sep 44). Meanwhile, the battalions of 7 Cdn Inf Bde had begun to enter the city from the west at 1600 hours. They found no opposition, but a great rash of white flags breaking out, and hundreds of Germans ready to surrender. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and 1 C. Scot R., R. Wpg Rif, 30 Sep 44; and W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 30 Sep, Ser 66, 68, 72, 73). At 1900 hours the garrison commander drove out in a car with a white flag and surrendered to C.H. of O. (M.G.). (W.D., C.H. of O. (M.G.) 30 Sep 44). The battle for Calais was over; the rest of the operation was merely a question of clearing roads, rebuilding bridges, and collecting the few harassed German stragglers. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 41, Ops Log 30 Sep 44, Sers 98 and 101).

134. The end of operation "UNDERGO" marked the close of 3 Cdn Inf Div's fighting on the Channel coast. On 1 Oct General Spry sent his unit commanders a message of thanks.

I send you my most sincere congratulations on the very fine way in which you and all those who serve with you have conducted recent operations against BOULOGNE, CALAIS, and CAP GRIS NEZ. By your efforts the enemy has been cleared from the Channel Ports, and some measure of safety and peace of mind has been returned to the civil population of FOLKESTONE and DOVER.

All ranks may well take pride in the soldierly way in which these operations have been carried out. Some twenty thousand prisoners have been taken for which we have suffered comparatively very few casualties. As a result of our success, these ports will now be opened for heavy traffic for the maintenance of the Allied Armies in the advance into Germany. In years to come there will not be one of us who will not be glad to say of these battles, "I was there".

(W.D., H.L.I. of C. September 1944:

Appx 8, 3 Cdn Inf Div Memorandum No. 4)

135. That evening congratulations reached the division from General Crerar, who had been admitted to 11 Cdn Gen. Hospital at Taplow, England, on 27 Sep:

Following msg received from First Cdn Army quote SIMONDS from CRERAR. Desire that you transmit to Maj Gen SPRY and all ranks under his comd my congratulations on their fine fighting achievement in capture of CAP GRIS NEZ and CALAIS and many thousand enemy prisoners. No matter how tough the job may be the Third Inf Div never fails to accomplish unquote. The A/GOC in C wishes to add his own congratulations.

(AEF/2 Cdn Corps/C/I Docket II fol 4; and
W.D., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army,
27 Sep 44)

"D". THE CONTAINING OF DUNKIRK, 15 SEP 44 - 6 FEB 45

136. Dunkirk¹⁶ was originally on the list of ports destined for capture by First Cdn Army, but with the increasing need for Antwerp the small port lost much of its importance. Rather than employ in its reduction forces badly needed elsewhere, it was decided to contain its garrison within a strong perimeter. Thus the last part of northern France abandoned to the Boche in 1940 - when the British Expeditionary Force was evacuated across the adjoining beaches - was fated to be the last part of the Republic to be liberated.

137. As late as 13 Sep, the C.-in-C., writing to General Crerar, still gave Dunkirk equal priority with Boulogne and Calais:

The things that are important now are:

- a. Capture of Boulogne and Dunkirk and Calais; and
- b. The setting in motion of operations designed to enable us to use the port of antwerp.

(G.O.C.-in-c./1-0, fol 79, Letter, Field
Marshal Montgomery to Lt-Gen Crerar,
13 Sep 44)

¹⁶ The Anglicized spelling "Dunkirk" is used throughout this report.

But later the same day the C.-in-C. sent a message which showed a change of view.

Early use of Antwerp so urgent that I am prepared to give up operations against Calais and Dunkirk.

(Ibid, fol 84)

The next day General Montgomery decided:

Dunkirk will be left to be dealt with later; for the present it will be merely masked.

(Ibid, fol 87, Directive M.525)

Accordingly, General Crerar issued a directive to his corps commanders:

No deliberate assault on Dunkirk will be attempted; this port will however, be closely contained (4 S.S. Bde is being transferred to 2 Cdn Corps for this purpose) and the garrison will be influenced to surrender by frequent bombardment from the air and the ground, and by propaganda leaflets.

(AEF/First Cdn Army/C/E, Docket II:
fol 36, Directive, Army Comd to Corps
Comds. 15 Sep 44)

By the 27th the C.-in-C's policy was that:

The left wing of the Canadian Army will complete the operations that are now in progress to enable us to use the ports of Boulogne and Calais. Dunkirk will be masked, and will be dealt with later.

(Ibid, fol 91, Directive M.527)

138. Like the policy with regard to the historic port, the forces besieging it also changed. We have seen ([Report No. 183](#)) how 2 Cdn Inf Div first made contact with the defenders, and gradually tightened the net around the garrison. But 2 Cdn Inf Div had an appointment to keep beyond Antwerp, so that it was necessary to relieve those of General Foulkes' men still besieging the town - the 5 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes. 4 Cdn Inf Bde had been recalled to move to the Antwerp area on 16 Sep (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Sep 44). On 15 Sep orders were issued for the relief of 6 Cdn Inf Bde (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Sep 44).

139. The garrison of Dunkirk was a mixed force of army, navy and air force troops estimated at some 12,000 men, supported by 170 guns. The army element included part of 226 Inf Div, detached from 67 Inf Corps for the defence of the town. (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/L/F, Docket II: Vol 2, Special Interrogation Report, General Otto Sponheimer) Although there were at that time strong indications that Gen-Lt Von Kluge, commander of this division, was the fortress commandant, conflicting evidence suggested that a senior naval officer, Vice-Admiral Frisius, commanded the Dunkirk stronghold - in spite of a report that a convoy of cars seen approaching the port on 6 Sep had brought in an army general¹⁷ (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, September 1944: Appx 27, Sitrep 180215; and Appx 28, Int Summary No. 49). A different version was provided by a German Major who fell into our hands. He professed that he had heard that:

¹⁷ Later, incontrovertible evidence established the fact that it was Vice-Admiral Frisius who commanded the Dunkirk garrison (See Appendix "D")

After a colonel (name unknown) had taken over command of Dunkirk and had taken the special oath necessary for commanders of beleaguered garrisons, a certain division (not known) arrived there, whose commander as the Senior Officer wished to take over the duties of Garrison Commander. The Colonel was unwilling to give way and the Divisional Commander eventually left Dunkirk with part of his staff, leaving his division behind.

(First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 77,
14 Sep 44 See Appendix " ")

Although the commander's identity was obscure, there was no doubt that a strong garrison held the port, for on 16 Sep further prisoners fell into our hands, establishing the presence not only of elements of 226 Inf Div, but also of personnel from 49 Inf Div. (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 80, 17 Sep 44)

4 S.S. BDE RELIEVES 2 CDN INF DIV, 16 SEP 44

140. In the evening of 16 Sep, 4 S.S. Bde arrived in the area to take over the siege, and the following day 107 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Brigade (but not including 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt) came under command of 2 Cdn Inf Div (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 16 Sep 44). With rumours flying of attempts to evacuate the garrison by motor boat, General Foulkes decided, as a parting gesture, to send an ultimatum to the garrison commander - which he addressed to "The Commander in Chief of the Dunkerque garrison, Lt-Gen Von Kluge or his representative" - calling upon him to surrender unconditionally or face the consequences (Ibid, 17 Sep 44; and Appx 37). When rumours flying of attempts to evacuate the garrison by motor boat, General Foulkes decided, as a parting gesture, to send an ultimatum to the garrison commander - which he addressed to "The Commander in Chief of the Dunkerque garrison, Lt-Gen Vol Kluge or his representative" - calling upon him to surrender unconditionally or face the

consequences (Ibid, 17 Sep 44; and Appx 37). When at 1100 hours, 18 Sep, no reply had been received, the anti-aircraft brigade and all other available guns and mortars pumped five rounds each into the enemy defences (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 18 Sep 44; and Appx 30). The enemy reacted violently with all his guns to this fire (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Sep 44). Subsequently a written refusal from the garrison commander, signed "Von Kluge" was received. This signature pleased the officers of the Intelligence Staff, for it seemed to confirm their deductions that Gen-Lt von Kluge was the commander of the fortress. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 18 Sep 44). 4 S.S. Bde started relieving the Canadians early on 18 Sep, enabling 5 Cdn Inf Bde to start for Antwerp at 0600 hours. By 2100 hours 6 Cdn Inf Bde had also been relieved. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Sep 44; Appx 4, Intelligence log, 18 Sep, Ser 1; and W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Sep 44). The relief was carried out quietly pursuant to General Crerar's orders to General Simonds:

Outward move 2 Cdn Inf Div and assumption of containing role Dunkirk by 4 S.S. Bde should be so conducted that enemy obtains no definite indications of less offensive intentions against that locality.

(AEF/First Cdn Army/C/E, Docket II:
Message C110, Simonds from Crerar,
15 Sep 44)

154 (H.) INF BDE TAKES OVER, 26 SEP 44

141. The four commandos of 4 S.S. Bde were not to remain for long in the role of besiegers. As long as they did, they carried out intense patrols against the enemy perimeter, and made his life miserable with mortars, and P.I.A.Ts. fired as mortars (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, September 1944: Appx 3, Ops Log, 26 Sep 44, Ser 19), but the Special Service troopers were needed elsewhere for a task which better suited their peculiar abilities - the

proposed assault on the island of Walcheren, at the mouth of the Scheldt. On 23 Sep, Brigadier Leicester, commanding 4 S.S. Bde, was "briefed" by General Simonds for this task. He was told that his brigade would be relieved on 26 Sep by 154 Bde of 51 (H.) Inf Div, in order to give them time to practise for the landing. By midnight, 26/27 Sep, the relief was well under way (Ibid, Ops Log, 27 Sep 44, Ser 3).

THE ROLE OF 2 CDN H.A.A. REGT

147. The withdrawal of 2 Cdn Inf Div did not end Canadian participation in the siege of Dunkirk. 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt moved up to the Dunkirk area from Calais on 30 Sep, having completed the task of supporting 3 Cdn Inf Div in Operation "UNDERGO" (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 30 Sep 44). It was intended that experienced assault division should return to capture Dunkirk, after clearing the enemy out of the pocket north of the Leopold Canal (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 27 Sep 44). This intention adds point to the naming of that heroic operation "SWITCHBACK". In the event, however, the French-grey patch of the division was never seen again on the channel coast; the gunners of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt were the only Canadians to take any prolonged part in the siege. The war diary kept by 11 Cdn H.A.A. Bty of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt describes the organization and role of the besieging forces at this time.¹⁸

The set up here is broadly this: one brigade of the 51 (H.) Inf Div is containing the Port of Dunkerque with a thin line. 107 A.A. Bde is the artillery formation in support. There is also a field regiment, an anti-tank troop, and a battery of searchlights. The brigadier of 107 A.A. Bde is the C.R.A. Our job is harassing day and night.

¹⁸ See Map "F"

(W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, October 1944:
Appx 24, W.D., 11 Cdn H.A.A. Bty)

143. A defence overprint map was available to the besiegers, with most of the enemy positions plotted on it. Predicted fire was carried out daily on targets selected by the brigade, and officers in the regimental observation posts directed observed fire on any targets which presented themselves (Ibid). Conditions were miserable, for the low country surrounding Dunkirk had been inundated by the Germans. On 2 Oct the battery diarist observed: "If there should be a lot of rain, living conditions will be almost unbearable - as there is no high ground and drainage is impossible". The next day he recorded sadly: "It looks as if rain is going to be our lot... Even in three days the troop positions are becoming quagmires". (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 3 Oct 44). The next day reads. "The men should have rubber boots as they cannot stand up to this long. They have to bail out the gun pits every morning as the water is up to the platforms" (Ibid, 4 Oct 44). Perhaps it was as well that the gunners did not know then that their beloved "3.7s" would be pointing their long barrels at the stronghold until February 1945.

144. As the weeks passed the gun detachments of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt continued to improve their positions, bail out their sodden gun-sites, and fire hundreds of rounds into the defences. Many technical problems in connection with the use of these heavy anti-aircraft guns in the ground role proved puzzling until solutions were found¹⁹. As well as filling the gunners' traditional role of making the employed its radar equipment in a novel manner. Two radar A.A. No. 3 Mk II stations were used in tracking the course of meteorological balloons released to ascertain the weather conditions. The information so

¹⁹ For instance, the normal fuzes, 208 and 214, were not satisfactory for ranging purposes, as they could not be relied on to burst on impact with the ground. What was required was a percussion fuze, such as the 117, designed to burst on contact. For a time these percussion fuzes were not available. (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt 1 Oct 44)

obtained was incorporated in "meteor telegrams", needed for deducing the corrections to be applied to the guns in predicted shooting (Ibid, 2 Oct 44).

145. On 3 Oct 44, the artillery was ordered to hold its fire while negotiations were carried out with a view to arranging the evacuation of the civilian inhabitants. Quiet prevailed from 0700 to 1345 hours. Then at 1530 hours, firing was stopped again, and a truce went into effect from 1800 hours, 3 Oct 44, to 0600 hours 6 Oct 44 (W.D., 12 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 3 Oct 44). An official account describes the terms of the truce:

- a. 36 hours from 0600 hours 4 Oct to 1800 hours 5 Oct for the movement of civilians with an extension of 12 hours both ends to permit the German commander to clear and repair the road to be used for the evacuation, and to blow it up and lay mines again when the civilian move was completed.
- b. Cessation of all hostilities from 1800 hours, 3 Oct to 0600 hours, 6 Oct, during which time there would be no change in military dispositions and no hostile acts. A guarantee was given that there would be no air reconnaissance and air or naval activity within a specified perimeter of Dunkerque.

(W.D., Civil Affairs, H.Q. First Cdn Army,
October 1944: Appx 9, Semi-Monthly Report
No. 6, Part III, Detailed Report No. 4)

146. The story of the evacuation is told in the same report:

The evacuation proceeded according to plan. At 0600 hours on 4 October 1944, it was raining heavily, and movement was slow, until the afternoon. On the following day, however, heavy movement occurred

throughout the day, and the time was extended for an additional four hours, to 2200 hours, to compensate for an equivalent interruption caused by the temporary breakdown of a bridge. 17,500 people were evacuated, leaving an estimated 500 DUNKIRK. Included among the evacuees were 150 stretcher cases, some of the wounded German and Canadian soldiers. The whole hospital staff, and all the civilian ambulances were evacuated. A great many farmers came out with their wagons and livestock, and most evacuees had a considerable amount of luggage.

A total of 218 assorted lorries were finally mobilized, of which a certain number were Civil Affairs lorries kept in reserve for use at moments of congestion. About 8,000 refugees were moved by train in the direction of LILLE, the remainder being dispersed locally. There were no untoward incidents. One old man died from natural causes, and two babies were born during the proceedings.

A rapid security check was made at the control post, and this was supplemented by FFI checks on the trains and the lorries.

All arrangements proved ample, even at moments of greatest influx, when the only change necessary was an increase in the great number of lorries loaded simultaneously.

(Ibid)

1 CZSK INDEP ARMD BDE RELIEVED 154 (H.) INF BDE, 6-9 OCT 44

147. On 6 Oct a new force came to relieve the "Jocks" of 154 (H.) Inf Bde. This was the Czechoslovakian Independent Armoured Brigade Group²⁰, commanded by Maj-Gen A. Liska. General Liska's command comprised two armoured regiments, an armoured reconnaissance squadron, a motor battalion, a field artillery regiment, an anti-tank battery, and engineers, signals and necessary service troops. Among these men were many veterans of the 1st and 2nd Czechoslovakian Regiments who had served with the French Army in 1940, and who had escaped to the United Kingdom in that disastrous summer. With the arrival of the Czechs, First Canadian Army now included units and formations of almost all the allied nations fighting in North-West Europe, and edifying and broadening experience for all concerned and one that worked with remarkable success (Mann Lectures, 18 May 45).

148. On 7 Oct, H.Q. First Canadian Army issued an Operation Instruction which defined the task of 1 Czsk Indep Armd Bde in relation to the enemy's garrison at Dunkirk following the relief of 154 (H.) Inf Bde. The garrison was to be closely contained and influenced to surrender. This task was to be carried out by active patrolling, artillery bombardment, and psychological warfare and by preventing reinforcements or supplies from being sent in by sea or air. It was explicitly forbidden to mount any direct assault on the fortress or to deliver an ultimatum to the garrison (AEF/Czsk Armd Bde/C/D, Docket I). Pursuant to this instruction, the relief of 154 (H.) Inf Bde by 1 Czsk Indep Armd Bde was completed by 9 Oct (Ibid)

149. At this time, as a result of a conference held at "H.Q. R.A. Dunkerque", on 6 Oct, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt was serving in two capacities. As well as acting as artillery against ground targets, the regiment, and 109 H.A.A. Regt, R.A., were required to take anti-aircraft action. This fire was to counter the enemy's attempts at reinforcing and supplying Dunkirk from

²⁰ An account of a visit to the Czechoslovaks at Dunkirk is given in Army Bureau of Current Affairs, "War" No. 94, 12 May 45, Return via Dunkirk.

the air, by knocking his aircraft out of the sky, if possible, and making the accurate dropping of loads difficult and dangerous. For this purpose each regiment detailed one troop to function in its original role. A reception committee of Bofors guns was made ready to provide a hot welcome for any enemy aircraft which tried to make a low-level approach. Both light and heavy guns were ordered to be prepared to engage any aircraft which might be picked out by the beams of searchlights, which were kept in readiness (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, October 1944: Appx 11: Memorandum, Meeting of C.O.'s, H.Q. R.A., Dunkirk, 6 Oct 44). The method of engagement ordered at this conference was quite unorthodox:

There was once, during the stay at Dunkirk, the suggestion that two troops...should also take on A.A. duties, these troops deployed radar and command posts accordingly. The purpose was mainly to help the Bofors guns get on target, and it was suggested that one gun of each H.A.A. troop would fire A.P. shot every ten seconds and then the Bofors guns could fire along the line of that tracer.

(A History of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt
pp 45 and 46)

This plan was soon dropped, and a new one adopted. It proved most successful:

The A.A. role was left to the Bofore gunners alone, who first opened up on the Germans' Dunkirk mail planes on 26 Oct, and shot down the only three that come over in the one night. Therefore enemy air activity was virtually nil.

(Ibid)

150. During the evening of 9 Oct, when the Czechs had been in action less than a day, an enemy patrol took the first offensive action of the siege. A force, estimated at from 40 to 60 men, broke out of the perimeter in the neighbourhood of Loon-Plage (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, October 1944: Appx 22 and 23, diaries of 1 and 8 Cdn H.A.A. Batteries). They were said to have added insult to injury by stealing a tank, while its crew was away on an infantry patrol, and burning two others (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 9 Oct 44). The answer to this sortie was a counter attack by 7 R. Tks and members of the F.F.I., supported by the fire of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt. The miniature battle which resulted went on until almost noon on 10 Oct²¹ (Ibid, 10 Oct 44). The regimental history tells the story:

Possibly suspecting that the containing force had changed and anxious to find out who was now holding them in, the Germans sallied forth in some force towards Loon-Plage (on the west) and over ran OPs and forward positions there; a counter attack on the 10th was supported by the regiment with over 2,000 rounds and regained the lost ground.

(A History of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, p.43)

151. During the night of 19/20 October, the besieged apparently felt the "furor Teutonius" again, and attacked one of our defended localities three kilometres east of Loon-Plage. The attacking battle group "Stossgruppe" consisted of approximately 300 men. The assault was launched by two companies, with the apparent object of destroying the defence post, which had been thoroughly reconnoitred by special enemy patrols on the three preceding nights. A third company was held in reserve. The attackers were armed with machine-carbines, rifles, hand grenades, incendiary bombs, "Panzerfausts", and

²¹ A graphic account of this attack was given in French on the front page of "La Voix du Nord", dated Lille, 12 October 1944 (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, October 1944: Appx 12)

mines. One horse-drawn anti-tank gun, of the type known to the Germans as "puppchen", also supported the attack (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, October 1944: Appx 23, W.D., 8 Cdn H.A.A. Bty, October 1944: Appx V, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt Sitrep). The alarm caused a great flurry of activity on the Canadian gun sites. Calls for defensive fire came in incessantly from the regiment's representatives with 7 R. Tks at Loon-Plage, and before the night was over, more than 2,000 rounds were fired.

Enemy in approximately company or quarter [sic] strength attacked squadron positions... Posts were overrun using machine guns, grenades, 88's and mortars covering. An S.P. 88 was used. We suffered numerous casualties and prisoners were taken. Reserve and reconnaissance squadrons were out. All quiet now but we must expect further activity.

(Ibid: Appx VI)

The officer who acted as "C.O's rep" reported:

Total sum up, one officer missing, two O.Rs killed. 8 O.Rs missing, 8 O.Rs wounded. This is quite sizable, considering the post strength to be approximately twenty. F.F.I. - 2 killed, 17 missing.

(Ibid: Appx IV)

152. Treatment of this kind could not be tolerated, and 7 R. Tks planned vengeance and re-adjustment:

The intention of 7 R. Tk Regt is to attack with the support by F.F.I. and artillery to limited objectives on 24 Oct 44, for the purpose of destroying enemy strong points and to gain local intelligence. Our

forces will not remain on objectives when seized but will return on conclusion of operation to area presently held.

(Ibid: Appx VIII, 107 A.A. Bde O.O.

No. 3)

H Hour for Operation "WADDLE", as it was called, was 1400 hours. Forward observing officers from 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt were assigned to go forward with the two assaulting squadrons (Ibid). The operation was carried out successfully. One troop of 7 R. Tks advanced to within 200 yards of Grande Synthe and shelled it without drawing return fire. F.F.I. and a French Army detachment entered Petite Predembourg and found it empty. Various buildings at a farm and in Grande Predembourg were set on fire to render them useless to the enemy (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 24 Oct 44). The raiding troops were back in our lines before 1630 hours (Ibid).

153. The success of this foray suggested a second attempt. It seemed appropriate to General Liska that this attack should be made on 28 Oct, Czechoslovakian Independence Day. The Czechs were holding the eastern flank of the perimeter with 1 Czsk Mot Bn on the right and 2 Czsk Armd Regt on the left. They intended to attack towards limited objectives with the armour, the motor battalion having previously drawn the enemy's attention with a diversionary attack. The diversion would take place at 0630 hours, 28 Oct 44, the main attack at 0900 hours. 125 L.A.A. Regt would cause the enemy discomfort on the south by vigorous patrolling, supported by the fire of one battery of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt. An Air O.P. was available to direct fire during the operation, having on call the guns of 109 H.A.A. Regt and two batteries of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, October 1944: Appx 24, W.D., 11 Cdn H.A.A. Bty, Appx "C", 107 A.A. Bde, Operation Order No. 4). The attack, launched on a clear sunny morning, was eminently successful. The diversions by 125 L.A.A. Regt and Czech Motor Bn resulted in one German

officer and 27 other ranks being captured. The Czechs lost two dead and fifteen wounded. The main operation is recorded in a regimental situation report issued the following morning:

Right flank - heavy opposition delayed in reaching objective. Centre and left flanks went quite well - all objectives reached. PW collected on this sector - 4 officers and 200 O.Rs. 2 Armd Regt casualties so far disabled by crew. One half-track and one scout car received direct hits from shell fire. One O.P. officer had bullet through trousers.

(W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, October 1944:
Appx 23, War Diary 8 Cdn H.A.A. Bty
Appx IX, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, Sitrep
290900A, No. 9)

An important result of the operation was the fact that the attack drew the enemy's fire, causing him to expend his limited ammunition (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 28 Oct 44). General Liska congratulated the gunners on their fine work:

I wish to express my best thanks for the magnificent support your regiments gave to our brigade this morning.

The very accurate fire and the precise timing had two main effects: they depressed the Jerries and encouraged our men, who, realizing the efficiency of the artillery support, went forward and succeeded in routing the enemy.

(W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, November 1944:
Appx 6, C.R.A. Dunkirk Force, letter
170/R, 7 Nov 44)

154. There were two more raids on enemy positions, the first on 3 Nov, and the second on 5 Nov (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 3 and 5 Nov 44). The first was quite a small affair by 7 R. Tks against an enemy-held farm. Three Germans were killed, and the rest of the garrison fled, leaving all their equipment and arms behind them (W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, November 1944: Appx 12, W.D., 8 Cdn H.A.A. Bty, November 1944; Appx VI, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, Special Int Summary 1 - 5 Nov 44). The operation on 5 Nov 44 was a more elaborate affair - a reconnaissance in force of 2 Czsk Armd Regt, with additional troops, including one motor company and two platoons of tankmen temporarily turned infantry. The task of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt was to engage hostile batteries at the call of a Royal Artillery officer flying an Auster Air Observation Post (Ibid: Appx 13, W.D., 11 Cdn H.A.A. Bty, Appx "E", 107 A.A. Bde, Operation Order No. 5). The attack proved a costly one, for the report came in to 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt at 1635 hours:

Own troops now back but three or four tanks left in sunken road. Efforts being made to recover these now. Our casualties upwards of 60, enemy casualties 160 prisoners and a lot reported killed. Enemy infantry are trying to get forward again.

(W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 5 Nov 44)

Due to the heavy casualties on both sides, a truce was arranged from 1200 hours to 1900 hours the following day, to allow burial of the dead and recovery of wounded (Ibid, 6 Nov 44).

THE WINTER SIEGE

155. All these brushes with the defenders confirmed that a stalemate had been reached:

The enemy will certainly not break out in force, whilst we can equally certainly not capture the city with the present class of force or degree of air and artillery support. Both sides can exploit one another's weaknesses - as is shown by the enemy's night raids in the western sector and C.I.A.B.G.'s surprisingly successful Independence Day celebration in the east. The balance is in favour of the besiegers who are better equipped and supplied both morally and physically.

(W.D., No. 22 Liaison H.Q. 31 Oct 44)

156. Meanwhile, the Canadian gunners were mastering the difficulties of static siege warfare. The first trouble was mud.

Within a week of our arrival, two or three heavy rainstorms gave a strong hint of the shape of things to come, and before October was over, everyone realized the truth of all the stories they had every heard about the French and Flemish mud of the last war. Gun pits caved in and guns slipped back when fired; an out-of-door command post was impossible; vehicles bogged down any time they left the main road; and wagon-lines and gun positions were soon mires of impassable mud.

(A History of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, p. 40)

But 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt believed in a high standard of living.

Our initial deployments at Dunkirk were entirely in the open; command posts were under canvas, and bivouacs in holes in the ground covered by tarpaulins or groundsheets. Soon command posts were in the nearest building: where possible men were billeted, but this could not be done on the gun sites. Near St. Omer however the Germans had thoughtfully left an airfield full of small huts, and scattered all over the coast

line and countryside were deserted German sites and houses, full of furniture and furnishings. By the end of our stay at Dunkirk, each troop position was a village in miniature; the men had huts of their own, varying according to individual taste from a one-man bungalow to a massive structure complete with attic and capable of housing more than a dozen; all with beds, mirrors, tables, chairs, wash basins, stoves, radios, and even curtains - to say nothing of large and varied assortments of "pin-ups". Command posts were contained in similarly elaborate huts, and those in barns were improved beyond recognition, even to the inclusion of folding beds for the C.P.O.A. on duty. All huts had electric light, tapped off the mains, with auxiliary supply from the 1098 generators in case the mains went off (which they always did in a high wind or just when a shoot was about to start).

Boardwalks connected all huts with each other and with anywhere else one might want to go - which was very necessary, for a walk anywhere but on the boards meant trudging ankle deep in mud. Ammunition was dumped just off the main road, and conveyed from there to gun pits on miniature railways, removed from old German airfields. A bulldozer filled in holes, cleared roads, pushed up blastwalls around gun pits and against huts. One or two troops built roads of their own. Each troop position and each wagon line area had its own home-built mess-hall and canteen, tastefully decorated and furnished, capable of seating a troop at a time, stocked with NAAFI and YMCA supplies, and with fresh fruit and Belgian beer. "Liberty" trucks went regularly to Ypres, Poperinghe and St Omer. Lille for a time was out of bounds, but later became the "official" liberty centre, for on 1 Dec, brigade opened men were served dinner, supper, and late snacks, after which the late-comers were poured on board and the vehicles returned to sites. Mr McKenzie organized a YMCA theatre in Zeggarscappel, seating about 250 at once, and showed two pictures a week. RHQ had constructed

regimental showers - somewhat draughty and with a somewhat temperamental water system, but nonetheless cleansing when working.

(A History of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt,
pp. 43 - 44)

157. The eight day of November saw the inauguration of a very pleasant custom:

Eight Canadian nurses arrived as guests of the Regiment from 16 Cdn Gen Hospital, located at St. Omer. The C.O. and the three Battery C.Os. were on hand to greet them. After having coffee at RHQ Officers' Mess, the party was split, two nurses being allotted to each battery, two remaining at RHQ. The guests stayed at the batteries for the remainder of the day, and were shown all the points of interest pertaining to a H.A.A. Regt. In the evening, the party again gathered at RHQ Officers' Mess, accompanied by two officers from each battery. Drinks were served, afterwards a buffet supper.

(W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, 8 Nov 44)

This was such a good idea that it was tried again two days later, and subsequent visits became an established part of the regimental social life. (Ibid, 10 and 17 Nov 44)

158. The regiment's history ruefully records a drawback to the uneventfulness of this static life:

As was to be expected, with the development of the more or less static conditions, the old army game of "spit and polish" once again reared its ugly head.

The change is reflected in regimental orders concerning dress and conduct:

- a. Dress when off sites or outside the immediate compounds or offices, will consist of battle-dress, web belts, anklets, berets, and personal weapons;
- b. However, web belts and anklets need not be worn on Monday. This day they will be cleaned; and
- c. Every effort will be made to maintain a smart and soldierly appearance.

(W.D., 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, October 1944:

Appx 18, Part I Orders, No. 82, 11 Oct 44)

The regiment was thus kept at the same pitch of smartness and efficiency in Flanders mud as on the static sites of Air Defence of Great Britain (A History of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, pp 10 and 44).

159. While the siege of Dunkirk continued, the main body of First Cdn Army had advanced far away into Holland and Germany. As a result Army Headquarters was now situated inconveniently distant from the besiegers of the isolated post. Accordingly, on 27 Nov, 21 Army Gp took 1 Czsk Indep Armd Bde directly under its own command, and First Cdn Army was thus relieved of all responsibility for the containing of Dunkirk (AEF: 45/Czsk Armd Bde/C/I).

160. The comparative luxury of gun sites with hutted living quarters, and the delights of liberty visits to Lille began to pall:

In June 1941, the Regiment despaired of ever leaving Canada; by 1943 it began to wonder if it would get any further than England; and by December 1944 it seemed impossible that there would ever be any world other than Dunkirk. The main consolation was that the rest of the Canadian Army was spending a static winter, though the Ardennes fighting aroused a natural desire to see more action than Dunkirk was providing.

(A History of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, p. 46)

There was one occasion, however, on which the gunners were thoroughly grateful that they were at Dunkirk, and not engaged in mobile war:

At Christmas time, however, everyone was thankful for their comfortable huts and canteens, and the day was well and truly celebrated with dinners of chicken and turkey and ice-cream, followed (and in some cases preceded) by a certain amount of singing and shouting and camaraderie, not solely due to good spirits.

(Ibid, p. 46)

161. January, a month of high winds, hard frozen ground, considerable snow and clear frosty air, was the last full month of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt's duty at Dunkirk. On 31 Jan one battery's guns were taken out of action, and on 6 Feb the remaining two batteries disengaged their 3.7's, and set out for an anti-aircraft practice camp to polish up their long-unpractised anti-aircraft procedure. Thus ended Canadian participation in the siege of Dunkirk. (A History of 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt, pp 46 and 47)

162. The Czechs, meanwhile, had been reinforced by the addition of another tank battalion, an artillery regiment, a motor transport company, and a

company of engineers. The members of these new units were recruited in a strange way - from the German army. They were Czechoslovak nationals who had been forcibly enlisted into the German army during the occupation of Czechoslovakia and who had been taken prisoners of war by the British and Canadian units during the battles of Normandy. With these additional units the Czechs continued the siege. (AEF/1 Czsk Armd Bde/C/I, Docket I: Historical Note on the Operations of 1 Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade Group in Northwest Europe Sep 44 - May 45)

163. The besiegers were well aware of conditions within the beleaguered fortress, for an exchange of prisoners took place during April, and the returning Allied soldiers and airmen painted a clear picture of life "within Admiral Frisius' sphere of influence" (First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 298, Part II, 24 Apr 45). food was poor, and the allowance for prisoners was miserable, unless they were willing to do such work as collecting vegetables and sugar beet. For wounded and sick, life was pitiful:

Medical care was bad, and in the hospitals there is a deficiency of medical stores, causing the death of several Allied as well a of a considerable number of German soldiers. The atmosphere in hospital is disagreeable because of the deficiencies in drugs and bandages.

(Ibid)

Discipline was incredibly harsh, and the death sentence was frequently carried out. The garrison of 12,000 men could only produce 8,000 able to fight, for 3,000 were medically unfit, and 1000 - mostly Poles and Austrians - were considered unreliable and were not entrusted with arms. (Ibid)

164. At 2050 hours on the evening of 4 May 44, a long awaited message was transmitted by 21 Army Group:

All offensive operations will cease from receipt of this signal. Orders will be given to all troops to cease fire at 0800 hours tomorrow, Saturday, 5 May. Full terms of local German surrender arranged to-day for 21 Army Group front follow. Emphasize these provisions apply solely to 21 Army Group front are, for the moment, exclusive of Dunkirk.

(W.D., G.S., Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army
May 1945: Appx 14, Ops Log, 4 May 45,
Ser 93)

The war on the channel coast was thus not yet quite over. It was not until two days later, on 7 May 44, that Maj-Gen Liska accepted the surrender of the garrison, and sent his forces in to occupy the town (AEF: 45/1 Czsk Armd Bde/C/I, Docket 1: Historical Note). The channel coast was free, and the Czechs could now return to their homeland, which had just been freed by United States and Russian forces after six years in Nazi bondage.

The Germans regarded their final occupation of Dunkirk, after Field-Marshal Alexander left the beach, as a symbol of the final defeat of Britain. The rest was merely to be an occupation, when convenient. It is pleasantly symbolic that the Army that watched the section of the German Army at Dunkirk disintegrate should be the Army of the first people in Europe to suffer from the German suicidal lust for power.

("War" No. 94, "Return Via Dunkirk" p. 10)

165. By the end of September, First Canadian Army had cleared the channel coast from the Seine to the Leopold Canal, leaving only Dunkirk in the enemy's hands. Hitler's West Wall in France and Belgium was no more. The three great fortified harbours, Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais had fallen by storm, in

spite of their great guns, their garrisons, and the Fuhrer's orders. In trying to hold these ports, the Germans had lost 30,000 troops, in addition to the 12,000 bottled up in Dunkirk. While these successful operations were proceeding, plans were being laid for the next phase, when First Canadian Army would clear the banks of the West Scheldt and give access to the port of Antwerp. At a conference at General Crerar's Headquarters on 23 Sep, the basic plan was approved by which 2 Cdn Cops, after concluding its task at Calais, would concentrate on the task of opening the Scheldt to allied shipping (AEF: 45/First Cdn Army/C/E, Docket I, fol 3: G.O.C.-in-C's Report to the Minister of National Defence upon Operations 2 Sep - 30 Sep, dated 8 Nov 44). The grim battles to clear the estuary form the subject of a subsequent report in the present series.

166. This report was prepared by Captain J.W. Monahan, R.C.A., Historical Section, C.M.H.Q.

(C.P. Stacey) Colonel
Director Historical Section

ARMY COMMANDER'S DIRECTIVE TO CORPS COMMANDERS, 15 SEP 44

GOC-in-C
Main HQ First Cdn Army
15 Sep 44

Comd 1 Brit Corps

Comd 2 Cdn Corps

1. The Airborne operation, planned to take place in conjunction with a thrust by Second Brit Army - as mentioned in my directive of 9 Sep - will be launched on 17 Sep, or as soon after that date as weather permits.

2. The maintenance of the forward momentum of the Allied Armies, owing to stretched communications and inadequate port facilities, continues to present the vital problem. While the capture of the deep-water port of LE HAVRE by 1 Brit Corps promises shortly to ease the general problem, the needs of US Armies are so acute that the bulk of the future tonnage landed at this port will not be available to Second Brit or First Cdn Armies. In consequence, the early use of the large, and virtually undamaged, port of ANTWERP, for the maintenance of 21 Army Group, becomes a matter of paramount importance.

3. In view of this situation, the following requirements will be carried out by First Cdn Army.

4. 2 Cdn Corps will capture BOULOGNE on 16 Sep, or as soon thereafter as the necessary air support can be afforded. If the resulting situation shows prospects of quick exploitation, 2 Cdn Corps will then take immediate steps also to capture CALAIS and clear the CAP GRIS NEZ area of the enemy.

5. If, on the other hand, the enemy garrison of CALAIS shows definite indications of putting up a stubborn resistance, of a type which will require

to be overcome by a deliberately prepared assault, then 2 Cdn Corps (3 Cdn Inf Div) will contain this port, only, until relieved by 1 Brit Corps, the latter then assuming responsibility for such deliberate operation (see para 9).

6. No deliberate assault on DUNKIRK will be attempted. This port will however, be closely contained (4 SS Bde is being transferred to 2 Cdn Corps for this purpose) and the garrison will be influenced to surrender, by frequent bombardment, from the air and the ground, and by propaganda leaflets.

7. 2 Cdn Corps will, forthwith, assume responsibility for developing operations to enable full use to be made of the port of ANTWERP. As a first step, 2 Cdn Inf Div will take over the city of ANTWERP from 53 Inf Div of 12 Corps, relief to be completed by 18 Sep. Detailed arrangements, including temporary inter-Corps and inter-Army boundaries and temporary retention by 2 Cdn Corps of one Armd Regt of 12 Corps, will be made by Corps Comds and notified to this HQ. The eventual forward boundary between Second Brit and First Cdn Armies will be, all incl First Cdn Army HERENTHALS - TURNOUT - TILBURG - HERTOGENBOSCH - UTRECHT, but the extension of Cdn Army responsibilities to the EAST of ANTWERP, and to this boundary, will be gradual and timed to suit the developing situation. Moves of other formations 2 Cdn Corps from their present localities to other areas will be referred initially to this HQ before action is taken, owing to the important effect on the Army maintenance problem of any particular, or considerable, formation movement at this time.

8. For the operations to secure the WEST SCHELDE, and the use of the port of ANTWERP, 2 Cdn Corps will have at its disposal maximum air support, including Bomber Command, and the paratroops of 17 US Airborne Div. Details to be arranged through this HQ.

9. As indicated in para 5, should the seizure of CALAIS - necessary for the full use of the port of BOULOGNE - require a deliberate assault, this task will be undertaken by 1 Brit Corps, which formation will also become responsible for containing DUNKIRK, with 4 SS Bde returning to command. This

situation should be clarified very shortly after the capture of BOULOGNE by 2 Cdn Corps.

10. On the other hand, should CALAIS quickly capitulate, following the attack on BOULOGNE, then 1 Brit Corps will be directed to take over the right front of the Cdn Army, linking up with 12 Corps and securing the right flank of 2 Cdn Corps against enemy interference while the latter is engaged in the task set out in para 7.

11. Owing to supply difficulties, 51 (H) Div of 1 Brit Corps will be temporarily "grounded" in the LE HAVRE area, its MT being used under direction of HQ First Cdn Army, as the developments in the near future may indicate.

12. 1 Brit Corps (less 51 (H) Div), in accordance with orders and arrangements which will be separately notified, will take immediate steps to commence its forward movement. It is most important that no time be lost in the assumption by 1 Brit Corps of one of the alternative responsibilities, shortly to be decided.

13. ACKNOWLEDGE by signals message.

(H.D.G. Crerar) Lt-Gen
GOC-in-C
First Cdn Army

Copy to:

C of S
DA&QMG
Col GS
File
War Diary

ORDER OF BATTLE AND ALLOTMENT OF TROOPSOPERATION "WELLHIT"

H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div

with under command

2 Cdn Armd Bde less one Regiment
 7 Cdn Med Regt
 "C" Flight, 660 Air O.P. Sqn, R.A.F.

and with in support under command for movement

Elements of 31 Tk Bde

1 Lothians (Flails)
 6 Aslt Regt R.E., less two squadrons (A.Vs.R.E.)
 141 R.A.C. less one squadron (Crocodiles)

1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn (Kangaroos)

H.Q. R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div

12 Cdn Fd Regt
 13 Cdn Fd Regt
 14 Cdn Regt

with in support under command for movement

Fd Regt, R.A. (51 (H) Inf Div)
 Fd Regt, R.A. (" " " "
 Fd Regt, R.A. (" " " "

H.Q. 2 Cdn A.G.R.A.

3 Cdn Med Regt
 4 Cdn Med Regt
 15 Med Regt, R.A.
 1 Hy Regt, R.A.
 "C" Flight, 661 Air O.P. Sqn, R.A.F.

H.Q. 9 A.G.R.A

9 Med Regt, R.A.
 10 Med Regt, R.A.
 11 Med Regt, R.A.
 107 Med Regt, R.A.
 51 Hy Regt, R.A.

7 Cdn Recce Regt

with under command

56 Cdn A.Tk Bty (S.P.)

C.H. of O. (M.G.) (less three platoons of "D" Coy).

with in support

3 Cdn A.Tk Regt less three batteries
H.Q. 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt plus one 40 mm troop
3 Cdn Fd Pk Coy
Detachment R.C.E. (dummy mortar platoon)

H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde

R. Wpg Rif
Regina Rif

with under command

one platoon "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
4 Cdn A.Tk Bty
one platoon 6 Cdn Fd Coy
one company 14 Cdn Fd Amb

with in support

6 Cdn Armd Regt

H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde

Q.O.R. of C.
R. de Chaud
N. Shore R.

with under command

one platoon "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
52 Cdn A.Tk Bty
one platoon 16 Cdn Fd Coy
one coy 22 Cdn Fd Amb

and with in support under command for movement

one squadron 10 Cdn Armd Regt
one squadron 6 Aslt Regt R.E. (A.Vs.R.E.) less one troop

H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde

H.L.I. of C.
S.D. & G. Highrs
Nth N.S. Highrs

with under command

one platoon "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
94 Cdn A.Tk Bty
18 Cdn Fd Coy less one platoon
one coy 23 Cdn Fd Amb

and with in support under command for movement

one squadron 10 Cdn Armd Regt
one squadron 6 Aslt Regt R.E. (A.Vs. R.E.) less one half troop
Three armoured assault teams of 31 Tk Bde, operating in three columns

Column "A"
(commander - OC 1 Lothians)
 one troop 1 Lothians (flails)
 two troops 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles)
 half troops 6 Aslt Regt, R.E. (A.Vs.R.E.)
Column "B"
(commander - OC 6 Aslt Regt R.E.)
 one troop 1 Lothians (flails)
 two troops 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles)
 half troop 6 Aslt Regt, R.E. (A.Vs.R.E.)
Column "C"
(commander - OC 141 R.A.C.)
 one troop 1 Lothians (flails)
 two troop 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles)
 half troop 6 Aslt Regt R.E. (A.Vs.R.E.)

(9 Cdn Inf Bde was allotted 36 Kangaroos from 1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn, and 20 armoured half tracks to carry the assaulting battalions.)

(W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944:
Appx 4, 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 5:
Appx "A", Order of Battle; and 31 Tk Bde
Op. Instruction No. 8.)

ORDER OF BATTLE AND ALLOTMENT OF TROOPSOPERATION "UNDERGO"

H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div

with under command

2 Cdn Armd Bde less one regiment
 7 Cdn Med Regt
 "C" Flight, 660 Air O.P. Sqn, R.A.F.
 56 Cdn A.Tk Bty (S.P.)

and with in support under command for movement

Elements of 31 Tk Bde:

1 Lothians (flails)
 "C" Sqn 22 Dragoons (flails)
 6 Aslt Regt, R.E. (A.Vs.R.E.)
 141 R.A.C. less one squadron (Crocodiles)

1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn (Kangaroos)

H.Q. R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div

12 Cdn Fd Regt
 13 Cd Fd Regt
 14 Cdn Fd Regt

with in support

H.Q. R.A., 51 (H.) Inf Div

126 Fd Regt, R.A.
 127 Fd Regt, R.A.
 128 Fd Regt, R.A.

H.Q. 2 Cdn A.G.R.A.

3 Cdn Med Regt
 4 Cdn Med Regt
 15 Med Regt, R.A.
 1 Hy Regt, R.A.
 "C" Flt, 661 Air O.P. Sqn, R.A.F.

H.Q. 9 A.G.R.A.

9 Med Regt, R.A.
 10 Med Regt, R.A.
 11 Med Regt, R.A.
 107 Med Regt, R.A.
 51 Hy Regt, R.A.

H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde

R. Wpg Rif
 Regina Rif
 1 C. Scot R.

with under command one platoon, "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)

4 Cdn A.Tk Bty
6 Cdn Fd Coy, less one platoon (and three armoured bulldozers)
one company 14 Cdn Fd Amb

and with in support

6 Cdn Amd Regt
two squadrons 1 Lothians (flails)
one squadron 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles)
one squadron 6 Aslt Regt, R.E. (A.Vs.R.E.)
1 Cdn Armd Personnel Carrier Sqn (Kangaroos)

H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde

Q.O.R. of C.
R. de Chaud
N. Shore R.

with under command

one Pl "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
52 Cdn A.Tk Bty
16 Cdn Fd Coy, less one platoon
one company 22 Cdn Fd Amb

and with in support

one squadron 10 Cdn Armd Regt
one squadron plus one troop 1 Lothians
one squadron 141 R.A.C.
one troop 6 Aslt Regt R.E.
one platoon, 16 Cdn Fd Coy

H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde

H.L.I. of C.
S.D. & G. Highrs
Nth N.S. Highrs

with under command

one platoon "D" Coy C.H. of O. (M.G.)
94 Cdn A.Tk Bty
one platoon 18 Cdn Fd Coy
one company 23 Cdn Fd Amb

(additional allotment of supporting arms was made for the
attack on Cap Gris Nez)

7 Cdn Recce Regt

with under command

56 Cdn A.Tk Bty (S.P.)

C.H. of O. (M.G.) less three platoons of "D" Coy

with under command

105 Cdn A.Tk Bty (S.P.)

Divisional reserve

2 Cdn Armd Regt, less two regiments and one squadron

(W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1944,
Appx 5: 3 Cdn Inf Div OO No. 7, Appx "A")

WHO COMMANDED THE GERMAN GARRISON OF DUNKIRK?

During the early stages of the siege, Canadian Intelligence had great difficulty in establishing the identity of the German commander. At first it was thought that Gen-Lt von Kluge, commander of 226 Inf Div was in charge. The presence of elements of this division among the garrison, and the signature on the reply received by 2 Cdn Inf Div to a demand for surrender, lent weight to this theory. (2 Cdn Corps Int Summary, No. 54, 16 Sep 44; and W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Div, 17 Sep 44). But a civilian report received later indicated that Von Kluge had escaped by sea. Two days later, on 24 Sep 44, 2 Cdn Corps Int Summary read:

From a reliable source in Dunkirk came the confirmation of earlier vague reports that the general in command of the garrison, (presumably Lieut-Gen Von Kluge) had escaped from the fortress by boat. The general was said to have left a vice-admiral in command of the port, and a colonel in command of the garrison's fighting troops. The vice-admiral may be a naval officer named Schneider, previously reported in Dunkirk. Colonel Wittstatt, former commander at Rouen who is said to be despised by other garrison officers for surrendering that port without a fight may be the Colonel referred to. Information that the garrison has been receiving mail by fast surface boat supports the news of Von Kluge's escape.

(2 Cdn Corps Int Summary, No. 58,
24 Sep 44)

During the negotiations for the evacuation of the civilian population, and the subsequent truce (3 Oct - 6 Oct 44), the fortress commander despatched two

notes to 154 Inf Bde, but the signature - by accident or design - was so illegible as to give no clue to his identity. (W.D., H.Q. 154 Inf Bde, October 1944: Appx C and F; notes received from German Commander). When 1 Czsk Indep Armd Bde took over the siege, however, an operation order issued on 10 Oct 44 included an intelligence summary which stated that the garrison commander was Admiral Frisius. (AEF/1 Czsk Armd Bde/C/D: extracts from W.D., 22 Liaison H.Q. October 1944: Appx "C", Operation Order No. 1, 10 Oct 44: Appendix: Int Summary). It thus appears that between the truce (3 Oct to 6 Oct 44) and 10 Oct 44, sufficient evidence accumulated to justify the belief that Frisius was the commander of the garrison. It is possible that this information came from some of the civilians who were evacuated; later, plentiful documentary evidence was obtained, in the form of orders signed by Frisius (First Cdn Army Int Summaries, Nos. 159, 164).

It is worth noting that Gen-Lt Wolfgang Von Kluge was 53 years of age in 1945, and the late Field Marshal Gunther Von Kluge was 63 at the time of his death in 1944. (German order of Battle, The War Office, January 1944; and Order of Battle of the German Army, March 1945; Military Intelligence Division, War Department, Washington, D.C.) Whatever the relationship between Von Kluge of Dunkirk and the Field Marshal, they were not father and son.

THE CHANNEL PORTS IN OPERATION

Little time was lost in preparing to utilize the captured ports to ease the supply problem for 21 Army Gp. At Dieppe, the work of repairing the damage wrought by the retreating Germans began immediately. The harbour was swept of mines, and by 6 Sep the port was ready to receive its first cargoes. (W.D., A/Q Branch, Adm H.Q. First Cdn Army, September 1944: Appx 8, D.A. & Q.M.G's file on Operations of Dieppe). On the afternoon of the 7th, ten ships arrived with some 3,000 tons of petrol, ammunitions and supplies. The railway to Amiens had already been restored to running order, and on 9 Sep the first train, carrying 400 tons of petrol and oil, left Dieppe, consigned to Second Brit Army at Brussels. (W.D., A/Q Branch, Adm H.Q. First Cdn Army, 9 Sep 44)

Once the facilities of Dieppe were at the disposal of 21 Army Group, the placing of the other channel ports in operation followed slowly - delayed generally because of shortage of engineering equipment and labour to effect the necessary repairs.

Boulogne was captured on 22 Sep, and on 10 Oct the first "Pluto" pipe line was laid there from Dungeness (Sir Donald Banks, Flame over Britain, p. 200). Not until 14 Oct was the harbour open to traffic. Calais, captured on 30 Sep, was not used as a port until 21 Nov. The Army Group also had port facilities on the Belgian coast, for Ostend - captured 9 Sep - was in operation by 28 Sep. (Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, map 28, The Development of the Administrative Plan)