

446. The significance of the engagement is seen in the high fighting quality of the enemy troops employed, a fact which serves to foreshadow the shape of the next phase of the campaign. It reflected the German's extreme sensitiveness concerning their right sector, their recognition of the Caen area as the vital pivot of their defence, and their determination to resist any penetration of it with every means at their disposal. Hence, it is not to be wondered at that 9 Cdn Inf Bde's thrust, breaking into the arc of jealously guarded territory centred on Caen, sustained so heavy a blow. Over a month was to pass before Canadian troops again entered Authie.

447. The despicable treatment accorded to the Canadian prisoners was found to be characteristic of 12 SS Pz Div, which throughout the Normandy campaign was to present a consistent pattern of brutality and ruthlessness. In the course of this first battle and immediately thereafter, at least 27 prisoners of war, mostly of Nth N.S. Highrs, were murdered in cold blood by members of 12 SS Pz Div. These incidents continued throughout June whenever the formation was engaged. For further information on this subject see (HS) 205Sl.023 (D9): "Supplementary Report of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Court of Inquiry re Shooting of Allied Prisoners of War by 12 SS Panzer Division (Hitler-Jugend) in Normandy, France 7-21 June 1944"

448. (iii) 8 Cdn Inf Bde D plus 1 found 8 Cdn Inf Bde continuing to quell resistance on the divisional left flank and in the rear of 9 Cdn Inf Bde's advance. Around Colomby-sur-Thaon and Anguerny, both R. de Chaud and Q.O.R. of C. were engaged during the day in clearing out the snipers who infested the area. The latter battalion captured at least 12 enemy vehicles in Anguerny. (W.Ds., R. de Chaud and Q.O.R. of C., 7 Jun 44)

449. By far the heavier task lay with N. Shore R., which had already met difficulty on the beach and in Tailleville. It was now required to capture the Douvres Radar Station, supported by 19 Cdn Fd Regt and a squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt. This done, the battalion was to join the remainder of its brigade on the objective near Anguerny.

450. Setting out from Tailleville at 0700 hrs, the leading troops began to clear an enemy headquarters northwest of the Radar Station. This lengthy process resulted in the taking of only four prisoners; later it was learned that many more had escaped only to be rounded up in H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde at Basly. (W.Ds., N. Shore R., and H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jun 44) A company attack on the main defences of the Radar Station produced little result, and eventually even a battalion effort met with no more success. Like Tailleville, the position was a labyrinth of tunnels and concrete works and could not be reduced

without overwhelming fire support, which was not available. Late in the evening permission was obtained to by-pass it and rejoin the brigade. At 0200 hrs, 8 Jun, N. Shore R. had arrived at its allotted area north of Anguerny. (Message Log, H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jun 44)

451. The Radar Station was left to be contained by troops of 51 (H) Inf Div. Ten days were to elapse before its reduction.* In the Canadian sector, the Douvres strongpoint was thus the only one to fulfill its designated task of holding out against the initial assault. The corollary to this determined stand -- the break-through which was to relieve it -- did not come to pass. So far, German defensive policy could be dismissed as a theory based on unjustified optimism.

452. The balance of 10 Cdn Armd Regt was in reserve on 7 Jun, and took up a regimental position on the high ground south of Colomby-sur-Thaon, where the squadron operating with N. Shore R. later joined it. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD") In the afternoon the commander of 2 Cdn Armd Bde ordered the regiment to stand by ready to move in full strength to reinforce 27 Cdn Armd Regt, should the situation in front of Les Buissons deteriorate further. This was not found necessary. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 7 Jun 44)

.....

453. The news of the fierce fighting in Buron and Authie gave 7 Cdn Inf Bde a warning to be prepared for similar enemy attacks. The battalions were now firmly dug in on ground of their own choosing, with supporting weapons in position. It was apparent that there was a dangerous gap between the two forward brigades in the vicinity of Cairon, through which the Caen-Creully road passed. About 2100 hrs, therefore, 1 C. Scot R. was directed to despatch a company to that area, supported by a squadron of armour and a troop of M. 10's ("Jill" Force). The remainder of 6 Cdn Armd Regt was concentrated at Le Bout Cachard (925748) to be prepared "to restore any portion of the Bde fortress" (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jun 44).

*A description of the defences and defenders at the Douvres Radar Station is given in (HS) 981SOM (D97): "The Battle of 716 Inf Div in Normandy, 6 Jun-23 Jun 1944". By means of its underground cable connections, "in the days which followed, hostile preparations for attack and assemblies for an assault on Douvres itself and on the defense positions of the 716 [Inf Div] and 21 Pz Div could often be successfully countered by the remainder of the 716 Div artillery and by the 21 Pz Div artillery, using Douvres as [an] observation post" (Ibid).

454. On the morning of 7 Jun, the still diminutive divisional headquarters had moved up on foot from Bernières to Beny-sur-Mer, where the inconsiderateness shown by enemy snipers was much remarked on. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 7 Jun 44) At 1805 hrs a message from Major-General Keller to General Crerar informed the Army Commander of the attainment of the final objective (by 7 Cdn Inf Bde), adding, "courage, dash and initiative of the Canadian soldier truly amazing" (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "Q", Message Log, 7 Jun, Serial 74).

455. By evening on 7 Jun forward dispositions had already taken the shape (discounting adjustments and minor advances) which they were to retain for some weeks, a fact which invites comparison with the positions planned for Phase III (cf paras 145-150 above and Appx "G") Essentially these positions were based on two brigade fortresses -- one centered on Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse and one on Villons-les-Buissons, the third brigade occupying a position in the left rear of the Anguerny-Anisy feature. It will be recalled that the plan had specified that the left forward brigade should be disposed equal with the right, that is, centred on Carpiquet; on the right and rear positions were occupied as planned. The fact that 9 Cdn Inf Bde was actually some miles short of its objective left open the wooded valley of the Mue, which would otherwise have formed the boundary between the two forward brigades. This subsequently necessitated moving 8 Cdn Inf Bde into a central position between 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes to seal off this potential entry into the divisional area. As a result, all three brigades were required to hold the line, which left no reserve formation to provide relief and made impossible a renewed offensive. As planned, the role of 8 Cdn Inf Bde would have been to act as reserve in the right rear (Phase IV, para 151 above). Thus, for a considerable time the role of 3 Cdn Inf Div became a purely defensive one.

(b) Phase IV, 8-11 Jun*

456. On D plus 2 it was possible to take stock of the divisional situation, to lay plans for a renewed advance, and, in the meantime, to consider how best to prevent enemy penetration. At 1100 hrs, 8 Jun, the G.O.C. held an Orders Group at divisional headquarters and informed his officers that both H.Q. 1 Corps and Tactical H.Q. Second Army had landed. 4 S.S. Bde was now under the command of 51 (H) Div, which was responsible for the area Douvres-St. Aubin-Tailleville. An assault was soon to be made on the Radar Station, preceded by air attack. (This was later cancelled) Concern was expressed over reports of enemy tanks appearing on the right flank between 69 Inf Bde and 7 Cdn Inf Bde, but these were believed to be "only recon elements". For the present, 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes were to remain in their positions, the former reestablishing contact with formations on either flank. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was directed to capture Buron with the support of the full divisional artillery. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "A", Div O Gp)

*A map showing the advance of 3 Cdn Inf Div between 8-11 Jun is attached as Appendix "N".

457. With a view to concentrating the armoured brigade for an advance beyond the final objective, Brigadier Wyman ordered 27 Cdn Armd Regt to move to the vicinity of Camilly, and to be relieved in Les Buissons by 10 Cdn Armd Regt. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD")

458. (i) The Attacks Against 7 Cdn Inf Bde
Having succeeded in halting 9 Cdn Inf Bde, the enemy was now showing signs of preparing to dislodge 7 Cdn Inf Bde from its position astride the Caen-Bayeux road. There were persistent reports of enemy tanks in the area; in the afternoon a considerable force of German armour made its appearance far up on the left flank between Lasson and Cairon. Fortunately at this moment 27 Cdn Armd Regt arrived on the way to its concentration area in company with 15 reinforcement tanks from the Forward Delivery Squadron, and their combined show of strength was sufficient to cause the enemy to withdraw. (Ibid)

459. A more serious situation had developed on the right, where R. Wpg Rif bore the brunt of the enemy's attacks. Before first light, enemy patrols were so active as to prevent minefields being laid, and tanks could be heard south of the railroad. The enemy infantry in the area were from 25 SS Pz Gren Regt which had moved up between Villeneuve - Fontenay-le-Pesnel during the previous day, too late to prevent the capture of Rots and Bretteville. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 65) Soon infantry and a small force of armour, supported by artillery and mortars, attempted to cross the railway into "A" Company's area. They were driven back at about 0630 hrs by small-arm and medium machine-gun fire, and a Mark III was destroyed by a 6-pounder.* (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 8 Jun 44)

460. But the enemy was not so easily discouraged. Putot-en-Bessin was found to be full of snipers who made movement increasingly difficult throughout the battalion area. During the whole morning enemy infantry** pressed forward and by noon had infiltrated between company areas, so that nearly all positions were under aimed fire. By 1330 hrs, "A", "B" and "C" Companies were completely encircled. It was impossible to replenish ammunition, which was by this time dangerously low. Armoured support was

*In their move to support 7 Cdn Inf Bde late in the day, 27 Cdn Armd Regt also destroyed a Mark III tank in the vicinity of Cairon (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Jun 44)

**Possibly 2 Bn, 26 Pz Gren Regt. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50 para 65) supported by a battalion of (Panther?) tanks.

requested, but the tanks were busily engaged elsewhere on the brigade perimeter. Under cover of smoke, the three forward companies attempted to make a withdrawal, but did not succeed in extricating most of their number and many positions were overrun. The survivors reached battalion headquarters just east of Putot (908725); and "D" Company, which was nearly intact, established a defensive position there. (Ibid; see also (HS) 145.2R20011(D1): Memo of Interview with C.S.M. Belton, R. Wpg Rif) The sequence of events was not easy to reconstruct, but it was later concluded that "A" Company, on the right, had come under sudden attack by a force of enemy tanks and infantry and had been overcome. The enemy had then swept on through "B" Company's position into the village of Putot. ((HS) 159.95023(D9): "Statement of Lt-Col J.H. Meldram" in Report of No. 1 Canadian War Crimes Investigation Unit....") Artillery was brought down on the village, but did not dislodge the enemy who had by now enveloped even battalion headquarters by fire. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 8 Jun 44)

461. By 1830 hrs the brigade commander had formed his plan to recapture Putot and the road and the railway crossing in front of it (895720). The counter-attack was to be launched by 1 C. Scot R. (the detached company returning from "Jill" Force), supported by a platoon of 4.2-inch mortars from C.H. of O. (M.G.)*, a squadron of tanks, 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts and a troop of M. 10s. H Hour was set at 2030 hrs. (Message Log, H. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jun 44)

462. At 2020 hrs the companies of 1 C. Scot R. formed up southeast of Secqueville and the counter-attack began on schedule, "D" Company leading. The advance followed the road leading to the railroad crossing, which was without cover of any sort. At 2100 hrs the leading troops reported their arrival on the objective. (Message Log, 1 C. Scot R., 8 Jun 44) At the same time, R. Wpg Rif advised that the artillery concentration had been very effective. (Message Log, H. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jun 44) Not only was the enemy thrown off the objective, but the impetus of the attack carried "A" and "D" Companies well beyond it, across the railway line, from which they later retired. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 8 Jun 44) During

*Although more attention is given to the infantry and armoured battalions in this Report, it should be remembered that those units in support of these battalions played an invaluable part in the success of the operations, and indeed, were frequently as heavily engaged in the fighting as the "front line troops". For example one of "A" Company's platoons, (C.H. of O.) supporting 7 Cdn Inf Bde, was overrun by the enemy when he attacked Putot. The machine-gunners then fought as infantry. During this engagement alone two officers and two men of C.H. of O. won decorations for their courage and gallantry. (W.D. C.H. of O. (M.G.), June 1944: Appx 6, "A" Company War Diary; (HS) 713.065(D1): Honours and Awards, Officers and Other Ranks.

the night patrols were sent into Putot and found it unoccupied. (Ibid: Appx 12, Personal Accounts)

463. This gallant action, which had cost "D" Company heavily, restored the situation on the divisional left flank. Putot was in our hands again, and "the Scottish remained there for a week of almost incessant shelling and mortaring" (Brigadier Foster, op cit). At dark, 6 Cdn Armd Regt withdrew once more to Le Bout Cachard. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Jun 44)* R. Wpg Rif, who until now had not had time to reorganize their many reinforcements, were placed in reserve near La Bergerie Farm, moving on 9 Jun to Secqueville. During this time, the battalion flank protection group had remained intact near Bronay (8872), in liaison with 50 (N) Inf Div. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 8-9 Jun 44)

464. On the left half of the brigade front there was equal evidence of growing enemy aggressiveness. Enemy armour had penetrated between Lasson and Cairon, as described above. At 1100 hrs, "D" Company, Regina Rif, stationed near the bridge south of La Villeneuve, observed enemy tanks "in considerable strength" 1,000 yards to its front. The same company was withdrawn during the afternoon into the battalion fortress at La Ferme de Cardonville (919713). (W.D., Regina Rif, 8 Jun 44)

465. In the evening, after a day of threats and rumors, the attacks began. At 2050 hrs, (when the counter-attack was being launched by our forces against Putot) "C" Company in Norrey repulsed an infantry sortie; but this was followed by the appearance of armour, against which artillery fire was requested. (Message Log, Regina Rif, 8 Jun 44) From this point on, the story of the night-long battle in Bretteville is taken from the graphic account given by the battalion commander to 3 Cdn Inf Div Historical Officer:

The tks came in from the East along the Caen-Bayeux rd. The carrier pl and the MG pl were caught while digging in. Several carriers were knocked out and their posns overrun. About 2230 hrs, with B, C and D Coys all engaged, some tks continued forward to Bretteville to within about

*It is curious that two diaries (6 Cdn Armd Regt and 12 Cdn Fd Regt) show faulty chronology in describing the counter-attack on Putot as taking place on 9 Jun, rather than 8 Jun 44. This is no doubt due to their having been prepared some time after the event. The War Diaries of both 6 Cdn Armd Regt and 1 C. Scot R. say that the greater part of 6 Cdn Armd Regt's tanks were employed in this action. It is probable that additional tank support was given 1 C. Scot R. as the attack was in progress.

300 yards of Bn HQ. There they remained for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hrs shelling and machine-gunning the town. About 2400 hrs two Panthers (Mk V) entered the town. One came opposite Bn HQ and was struck by a PIAT bomb, fired from behind a low stone wall at 15 yds range, safe from the tk's huge gun. It halted for a moment, started again and after 30 yds was hit again by a second PIAT. It stopped, turned around and headed out of town. A third PIAT hit finished it off so that it slewed around, out of control, running over a necklace of #75 grenades which blew off a track. The crew dismounted and attempted to make off, but were killed by SA fire. During this incident the second Panther had remained further up the rd. Seeing the fate of its companion, it commenced to fire both 75 mm and MG wildly down the street 'like a child in a tantrum', doing no damage whatsoever except to set fire to the first Panther....

Altogether 22 Panthers circled about Bn HQ and A Coy posn during the night, and it is hard to picture the confusion which existed. Contact with all but D Coy was lost. Fires and flares lit up the area, and the enemy several times appeared to be convinced that opposition had ceased....

(Lt-Col Matheson, op cit)

466. The chief point emerging from this engagement was that, even when German tanks had rolled through the defended area, the infantry held on firmly. These tactics were to become a rule in the protracted period of defensive warfare which followed. This was not the last of the attacks against the Regina Rif; every night saw them renewed in varying strength, but always they were repelled. The battalion area was not easily defended with one company detached to hold Norrey. "The fwd posn was too exposed and Brigadier Foster more than once suggested it be withdrawn. The bn comd ... and the comd of the coy in question protested vigorously, arguing that they would only have to recapture the village later. They were allowed to remain. The town was a ruin and the stench ... of German dead added to its unpleasantness" (Brigadier Foster, op cit).

467. (ii) Events in the Left Sector: The Capture of Vieux Caïron. The plan considered at the Orders Group on 8 Jun (supra, para 456), whereby 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to recapture Buron, did not come to fruition, although on several occasions during the period 8-11 Jun it seemed on the point of being put into effect. The original intention was that H.L.I. of C., still intact and in reserve at Villons-les-Buissons, should pass through the two forward battalions to recover the village. But the scale of the attacks against 7 Cdn Inf Bde, coupled with the growing threats against the Les Buissons area, made it necessary to postpone the plan. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 8 Jun 44) It was to be revived at intervals.

468. On 8 Jun, 10 Cdn Armd Regt relieved 27 Cdn Armd Regt at Les Buissons, and immediately proceeded to carry out a squadron raid on Vieux Cairon, withdrawing into the brigade fortress at its conclusion. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD") With this exception, however, 9 Cdn Inf Bde found itself committed during 8 and 9 Jun to a defensive role, while there developed a continuous fire fight, punctuated by strong enemy probing. The weight of the enemy's pressure was borne by S.D. & G. Highrs, who were dug in east of Les Buissons; on their right were Nth N.S. Highrs, now operating with two rifle companies. (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs, 8-9 Jun 44)

469. Enemy troop concentrations were heavily shelled by artillery and by the cruiser Belfast. No ground was gained by the enemy, whose infiltration tactics on one occasion made it necessary to bring down artillery fire close to our positions. (Ibid, 9 Jun 44) On that same day there arose once again the question of the capture of Buron and Gruchy by H.L.I. of C., to be followed by a rapid advance to the final objective, which now seemed more remote than ever. But the left flank of the brigade was considered too dangerously exposed to warrant such a move and the decision was later taken to hold. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 9 Jun 44)

470. Efforts were already being made to improve the situation on that flank. On the afternoon of 9 Jun, 9 Brit Inf Bde advanced under a heavy artillery barrage against Cambes, intending later to seize Galmanche, St. Contest and Malon. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 1, Confirmatory Notes, 9 Brit Inf Bde) The attack was made from Anisy, in Q.O.R of C.'s area. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 9 Jun 44) After very severe fighting against troops of 25 SS Pz Gren Regt, the brigade was established by nightfall on its first objective, Cambes, and there it called a halt. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Jun, Serial 46) At noon on the next day, 3 Brit Inf Div reported that enemy dispositions were "now clear"; it appeared that 21 Pz Div held the right flank from La Bijude to Herouville with 192 Pz Gren Regt, and that 25 SS Pz Gren Regt held the line from Galmanche to Rosel. (Ibid, Serial 80)

471. During this period patrols investigated enemy positions, especially in Buron and Vieux Cairon, and on occasion found both villages empty. (Cf, e.g., W.D., H.L.I. of C., 10-11 Jun 44) On 11 Jun a new plan was formed: S.D. & G. Highrs were first to attack and capture Vieux Cairon, after which H.L.I. of C. would seize Buron. (Ibid) The operation began that same afternoon. Skirting Les Buissons, S.D. & G. Highrs entered Vieux Cairon almost without opposition and consolidated there. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 11 Jun 44) By 1600 hrs, H.L.I. of C. was ready to commence its phase when the order was given "to stay the assault" (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 11 Jun 44). The expected

attack was not to be launched after all, and Buron still remained in enemy hands. Dispositions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde on 11 Jun were as follows: S.D. & G. Highrs in Vieux Cairen; H.L.I. of C. and Nth N.S. Highrs in the area of Villons-les-Buissons; and brigade headquarters at Colomby-sur-Thaon.

472. (iii) The Armoured Advance Towards Cheux
As noted above, the seriousness of the enemy threat to 7 Cdn Inf Bde on the final objective was not dissipated with the failure of his first violent efforts to carry the position. Early on 9 Jun, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde reported to divisional headquarters that enemy tanks were "cruising freely" through the forward positions and that "rather a sticky time was expected" (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jun 44). Deprived of success in Bretteville, the enemy turned his attention once again to Futot, where 1 C. Scot R. and tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt were busy throughout the day repelling his sharp counter-attacks. The battalion area became a tank killing-ground, and the high spirits of the defenders are illustrated by such messages as the following: "Scottish reports track clear, situation restored. Send up rum ration" (Ibid). On the right flank a squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt was moved into the area of Bretteville, where it also engaged enemy armour. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD")

473. Special concern was felt about the open left flank of the brigade along the River Mue. 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts, deployed near Bray (in Gun Area "DOROTHY"), found themselves without infantry on their front, so that the order, "Prepare for tanks", took on urgent meaning (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 8 Jun 44). It was reported that enemy tanks and infantry, which had worked their way around to the east of Bretteville, approached the gun positions and were engaged by small arms fire and even field guns firing over open sights. (lt-Col R.H. Webb, op cit) In order to seal this gap, Q.O.R. of C. were placed under the command of 7 Cdn Inf Bde on 9 Jun and moved from Anguerny to Bray, where they would also be available to attack when the occasion arose. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 9 Jun 44) Their former location was taken over by N. Shore R., which in turn was relieved north of Anguerny by 46 R.M. Commando, now under the command of 8 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jun 44)

474. Although the attacks on the right sector continued without cessation, the enemy achieved no success and plans were therefore resumed for offensive action, in which 2 Cdn Armd Bde was to be employed. Tank holdings were now improved as replacement tanks were steadily brought forward. On 10 Jun Brigadier R.A. Wyman attended a conference at divisional headquarters to discuss a scheme by which 2 Cdn Armd Bde, with Q.O.R. of C. in support, should attack through 7 Cdn Inf Bde to seize the high ground between Cheux and Le Haut du Bosq, about three miles south of the

Caen-Bayeux railroad. By late evening, in preparation for this advance, 6 Cdn Armd Regt had been concentrated in the area of Bray and 10 Cdn Armd Regt northwest of Cairon. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD") Q.O.R. of C. moved from Bray to Neuf Mer. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 10 Jun 44) After further study of the problems the armoured brigade commander came to the conclusion that more time was required to carry out preliminary reconnaissance on the front of 7 Cdn Inf Bde, and that the presence of enemy in unknown strength in the Mue Valley constituted too great a hazard to the flank. At a conference with his regimental commanders at 2200 hrs, 10 Jun, the new plan was outlined. For the first phase, 46 R.M. Cdo and a squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt were to clear the enemy from the Mue Valley on 11 Jun. Then, at first light on 12 Jun, 6 Cdn Armd Regt, with Q.O.R. of C. under command, and supported by the divisional artillery, was to advance south through Le Mesnil-Patry and Le Haut du Bosq, swinging left to seize the high ground north of Grainville-sur-Odon. The plan was approved and preparations to execute it were begun. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD") Air attacks by Typhoons on the Cheux area were scheduled, but a request for heavy bombers was refused. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Jun 44, Serials 100 and 105; 11 Jun, Serials 14 and 53) On 10 Jun, 30 Corps had already begun its powerful offensive on the axis Tilly-sur-Suelles - Villers-Bocage (infra, paras 520 ff); 2 Cdn Armd Bde's attack was evidently designed to complement 30 Corps' offensive and protect the left flank of 7 Armd Div, the attacking formation. (Infra, paras 523-25)

475. On the morning of 11 Jun, the preparatory mopping-up operations in the river valley had commenced, when word was suddenly received at H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde that the second phase, the advance to Grainville, must be begun as soon as possible.* (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44) This acceleration of timing prevented adequate briefing of the troops who were to participate; as late as 1000 hrs, 11 Jun, the diarist of Q.O.R. of C. had noted: "Rumors of an attack to be put in but nothing definite as yet" (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 11 Jun 44). With H Hour set at 1300 hrs, the brigade Orders Group was held only two hours previous and unit orders in consequence were issued even later. (W.Ds., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, and 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44) The artillery plan, moreover, could not be properly co-ordinated. (Ibid)

476. It was proposed that "B" Squadron, with

*Canadian War Diaries give no reason for this order. However, "...it must be assumed that the decision was taken at a conference held by the Army Commander at 1700 hours 10 June with the Commanders 1 and 30 Corps, and that it was designed in order to protect the left flank of 69 Infantry Brigade of 50 (N) Division (30 Corps) who were planned to advance through Bronay (8872) on to the feature point 103 (856704) on the morning of 11 June" ((HS) 952.013(D97): Historical Section of the Cabinet, Liberation Campaign North West Europe 1944-45, Operations 7-16 June 1944, Ch III, Book II, p. 201).

"D" Company, Q.O.R. of C., should lead the advance, first seizing Le Mesnil-Patry so that the River Mue could be crossed at its narrowest point (i.e., southwest of Norrey). (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44; Major J.N. Gordon, op cit) A second squadron and another infantry company were then to by-pass Cheux and seize the high ground to the south of it. Finally a battalion fortress would be formed there and the armour withdrawn. ((HS) 145.2Q2011(D4): Special Report on Q.O.R. of C's action at Le Mesnil-Patry.)

477. The attack was attended by misfortune from the very first.* The start line selected was the railway south of Bretteville and at this point the tanks were to be deployed. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report ...) But insufficient knowledge concerning the location of minefields on either side of the road in this area made it necessary to proceed through Norrey-en-Bessin in line-ahead formation. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44) The railway line was crossed by the leading squadron at 1437 hrs (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44); with a company of infantry riding on the tanks, the squadron then passed through Norrey and moved to the west towards Le Mesnil-Patry, followed by the remainder of the regiment and the second infantry company. The tanks had not gone far across the wheat fields between Norrey and Le Mesnil-Patry when a very heavy volume of mortar and machine-gun fire from concealed enemy positions compelled the infantry to dismount and take cover. Although the tanks proceeded ahead to shoot the enemy out of his slit trenches, "D" Company, Q.O.R. of C., suffered numerous casualties and could not reorganize successfully. "C" Squadron, which was following, moved to the right to give covering fire and a small party of infantry actually reached Le Mesnil-Patry (or its twin village, Les Saullets; the point is not clear), from which it eventually withdrew to Norrey. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 11 Jun 44). The enemy's positions could not easily be located, but elements of "B" Squadron moved forward and likewise entered Le Mesnil. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44)

478. At 1615 hrs came a report that enemy tanks had been observed in the area of Cristot (8770). (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44) But only a little earlier word had been received that Cristot was in the hands of 8 Armd Bde, and accordingly the Canadian Shermans were directed to display their recognition signals. It was soon all too evident that the armour in question was hostile and the situation rapidly grew worse as more tanks and anti-tank guns opened fire from St. Mauview to the south. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report....) Seeing that the whole regiment was in danger of being outflanked, the commanding officer ordered

*This day's action, which their regimental history calls "The Black Day of the Hussars", is vividly described in A History of the First Hussar Regiment, op cit, Ch XVIII.

a withdrawal to the start-line, and "A" Squadron was despatched to a position east of Bretteville to cover the return of the infantry. But the order to withdraw was not received by "B" Squadron, with which all contact had been lost, and it continued to fight on. All its officers and all save three N.C.Os. were listed as missing, and only two of its tanks returned. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44) Although the 6 Cdn Armd Regt had suffered heavy casualties, they "inflicted heavier ones on the enemy, especially on his infantry" (Ibid). Moreover, the regiment, claimed to have knocked out three anti-tank guns and 13 tanks, mostly Panthers. (Ibid) "D" Company of Q.O.R. of C. was found to have suffered 96 casualties, of whom more than half were missing. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 11 Jun 44) At the close of this disastrous day the infantry battalion returned to Neuf Mer (Ibid), and the following day was ordered to rejoin its brigade. At the end of the day, Brigadier Wyman decided to "withdraw the [armoured] brigade three miles behind the forward infantry positions, and to concentrate it within a circle of two miles diameter" (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44). Brigade headquarters was moved to Camilly and the three armoured regiments were placed in a semi-circle around the outskirts of that village. (Ibid)

479. The following day 6 Cdn Armd Regt was told by the Corps Commander "that while the battle yesterday had seemed futile, it actually put a Panther Div attack on the skids" (Ibid, 12 Jun 44). Moreover, the Canadian attack supplemented the attack by 7 Brit Armd Div on its right flank. (Infra, para 523). It is significant that the scale of the enemy's counter-attacks on the brigade fortress materially diminished after this date. Also, the operation had served to relieve the pressure against 30 Corps, whose armoured offensiveness was now in full course. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report....).

480. Later, as reports began to filter in, it once again became evident that SS troops were ruthlessly shooting those soldiers who fell into their hands. A rifleman of "D" Company, Q.O.R. of C., described how after the action the enemy searched the grain fields and shot any Canadians found lying there, whether wounded or not. (Special Report on Q.O.R. of C.'s Action at Le Mesnil-Patry) Similar experiences were related by tank crews who subsequently escaped from imprisonment. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 17 Jun 44) After Le Mesnil-Patry was captured, a burial party was dispatched to search the area. At one point five bodies were found lying in a row: all had been wounded and had had their wounds dressed and all had been shot at close quarters through the head. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., June 1944: Appx 75, Report of Burial Party) To this atrocity, known to have been committed by members of 26 SS Pz Gren Regt, must be added that occurring on 8 Jun at the Château d'Audrieu (864713), in which personnel of R. Wpg Rif, captured at Futot-en-Bessin, were similarly put to death. (Report of No. 1 Canadian War Crimes Investigation Unit...., op cit) When the incidents at Buron and Authie are recalled, it becomes quite obvious that these practices were common throughout the entire 12 SS Pz Div.

481. (iv) The Clearance of the Mue Valley
To complete this record of activity in the right sector up to 11 Jun, it is necessary to describe more fully the 'mopping-up' operations undertaken by 8 Cdn Inf Bde. These had properly begun as early as D plus 2, when it was found "that the wide front on which the assault was made and the stress which had been laid on advancing inland with all possible speed had prevented a thorough search ... being carried out between the various axes of adv" (Lieutenant Blackader, op cit). The operations in the Mue Valley and adjoining area fall into two stages: (i) the elimination of snipers within the divisional area as far south as Thaon, and (ii) the clearance of the valley beyond Thaon, which was to be integrated with the attack on Cheux described above.

482. The first stage was chiefly the responsibility of R. de Chaud, which on 8 Jun was engaged in clearing the woods about Fontaine-Henri. Guided by civilians, the unit accounted for numerous snipers. It might be observed that it was in this role that the members of 716 Inf Div seemed to excel; unreliable in defence and hopeless in the attack, their snipers nonetheless "very tenaciously and bravely" continued to harass the divisional area when they might have been expected to attempt escape (Ibid). On the first day of this 'anti-sniper campaign', a party of R. de Chaud was led to a cave sheltering a large body of enemy artillerymen, who had previously captured certain Canadian provost and signal personnel. When their position was besieged, 109 Germans surrendered without a fight, acting on the suggestion of a Canadian officer. (For details see W.D., 4 Cdn Pro Coy, June 1944: Appx 4 and W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, June 1944: Appx 2) The same activity continued throughout 9 and 10 Jun, with troops of 51 (H) Div assisting. (W.D., R. de Chaud, 9 Jun 44) The diarist of 9 Cdn Inf Bde remarked on the efficiency shown by R. de Chaud in this work, saying that it was now "comparatively safe to walk through the village" of Colomby-sur-Thaon (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Jun 44).

483. The second stage, which involved clearing the same valley almost as far south as the Caen-Bayeux road, was at first designed, as we have seen, to prepare the way for the armoured advance on Cheux. This task was assigned to 46 R.M. Cdo, placed under command 8 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by "A" Squadron, 10 Cdn Arm'd Regt, a troop from R.M. Arm'd Sp Gp, a section of engineers, and a field regiment of artillery on call. ((HS)285SS4.018(D1): War Diary Extracts - 46 R.M. Cdo) As the clearance of the valley progressed it was planned to move the units of the brigade into position there, so that the enemy, once driven out, could not re-occupy the area. The movement of the brigade was to be carried out in the following manner; R. de Chaud would proceed first to Bray and then, following 46 R.M. Cdo, would occupy the village of Rots (9571); N. Shore R. was to move to the area of Camilly, later taking up positions in Rosel (9673). (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Jun 44)

Brigade headquarters was to be moved from Anguerny to Bray. The conclusion of the operation would see 8 Cdn Inf Bde in control of the wooded valley which still threatened the security of the divisional area, and a firm left flank thus established to permit further advances from 7 Cdn Inf Bde's sector. These movements were begun on the morning of 11 Jun, with R. de Chaud being transported to Bray in troop-carrying vehicles. (W.D., R. de Chaud, 11 Jun 44) At the same time N. Shore R. moved from Anguerny to the western outskirts of Cairon, the village itself still being in enemy hands. As events fell out, the timing of the Cheux attack was advanced, so that the two operations proceeded almost simultaneously.

484. The operations in the valley were to be carried out by 46 R.M. Cdo in four phases: Phase I, the clearance of the woods from Barbière to Cairon, Phase II, the capture of Cairon; Phase III, the capture of Rosel; and Phase IV, the capture of the twin villages of Le Hamel and Rots (W.D. Extracts, 46 R.M. Cdo, 11 Jun 44) "A" Squadron 10 Cdn Armd Regt, was to move along the right flank of the ridge running southwest from Thaon between Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse and Le Hamel. (R.M. Commandos in Normandy, op cit)

485. Although initially opposition was light, the operation proved to be a slow task. The Commando crossed its start line at 0845 hrs, 11 Jun, but had reached Cairon only by 1145 hrs. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Jun 44) The advance continued during the afternoon and Lasson and Rosel were cleared. Serious resistance was encountered in the evening when the force entered Le Hamel and Rots, where bitter street fighting took place against SS troops. To assist the Royal Marines, Shermans were brought from the high ground into Rots itself. Panthers had been concealed in the centre of the village and knocked out several of the tanks. The Shermans replied and two Panthers were in turn destroyed, but the attacking force was compelled to withdraw temporarily in the face of stern opposition (R.M. Commandos in Normandy; 2 Cdn Armd Bde Report....) The Commando was given the assistance of a company of R. de Chaud, and reported the area clear at 0605 hrs, 12 Jun. (Message Log, H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Jun 44) The fierceness of the fighting in Rots is reflected in the fact that 122 German dead were later discovered in the town. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 14 Jun 44: Serial 9) N. Shore R. entered Lasson and Rosel. (W.D., N. Shore R., 12 Jun 44) Q.O.R. of C., now released by 7 Cdn Inf Bde after their unfortunate attack on the previous day, completed the occupation of the new brigade fortress by taking up a position in Bray. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 12 Jun 44) During the night 12/13 Jun, a patrol of R. Wpg Rif entered La Villeneuve (949707), found it unoccupied and remained there until relieved some hours later by a platoon of R. de Chaud. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Jun 44)

SURVEY OF THE ASSAULT*

486. 11 Jun may be said to mark the end of the first phase of Operation "OVERLORD". Main Headquarters, Second Army was now in operation at Creully. By this date, moreover, the permanence of the Allied bridgehead in Normandy had been assured. On the previous day General Montgomery, in a personal message to all the forces under his command, had written:

After four days of fighting, the Allied Armies have secured a good and firm lodgement area on the mainland of France.

.....

British, Canadian and American soldiers, fighting gallantly side by side, have achieved a great success and have placed themselves in a good position from which to exploit this success.

(W.D., Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar,
G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army,
June 1944: Appx "G")

487. On 11 Jun General Keller sent to General Crerar the following message:

From Keller to Crerar. Following letter received by me today from Army Commander. Quote. My dear Keller the first phase of the operations the gaining of the beachhead is over. You and your division played a major part and I want to tell you how much I admire and appreciate the magnificent work you have all done. A battalion of 3 Canadian Division was the first unit in the Second Army to reach the final objective. That is something which you will always remember with pride. Yours ever Dempsey. Unquote.

(W.D., G.S. (Ops), H.Q. First
Canadian Army, June 1944:
Appx 55)

488. 3 Cdn Inf Div had indeed lived up to all expectations. By 12 Jun the men of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, who but a week previous had been 'green' troops, had not only broken through the Atlantic Wall but had sustained the weight of the enemy's counter-attacks without losing ground. They could now consider themselves firmly established. "OVERLORD" now entered upon its second stage.

489. Important as were the infantry and armoured battalions which engaged, for the most part, the enemy at

*A map showing the advances of 21 Army Gp during 7-13 Jun is attached as Appendix "O".

closer quarters than other units in the division, theirs is not the whole story. This survey will sketch the work of those supporting arms and services behind the lines whose contribution to the success of "NEPTUNE", if less spectacular, was nonetheless equally essential. Also, a review of the events on the whole "NEPTUNE" front will be given to place the Canadian effort in its proper perspective.

(a) Artillery

490. By 11 Jun, 3 Cdn Inf Div had almost doubled the artillery support with which it started on D Day. On the right, 12 and 13 Fd Regts, R.C.A., were in support of 7 Cdn Inf Bde. 6 Fd Regt, R.A., and 14 Fd Regt, R.C.A., gave support to 8 Cdn Inf Bde while 191 Fd Regt, R.A., and 19 Fd Regt, R.C.A., supported 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Troops of 2 R.M.A.S. Regt were attached to various artillery units throughout the division and acted as field artillery or in an anti-tank role as the situation demanded.* Also under command C.R.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div was 79 Med Regt, R.A. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 11 Jun 44) Frequently these British and Canadian artillery regiments were called upon to give support to the British divisions on either flank of 3 Cdn Inf Div.

491. All artillery units, whatever their role, were kept very busy during the first week of battle. Not only did they give supporting fire to the infantry both in offensive and defensive actions but, owing to the fluidity of the battle, frequently had to perform infantry tasks to clear snipers, etc., from their gun areas. An example of the tasks carried out by one of the field artillery units is given by the regimental historian of 12 Cdn Fd Regt. The fighting he describes took place on 9 Jun when the unit was in Bray. This was the same attack on 7 Cdn Inf Bde as described above (paras 458 ff).

On no occasion did the artillery play a more vital role than they did on that day. The weather was too bad for air support so that if the tanks were to be stopped we had to stop them. We fired first an "Uncle" target directly in front of us and then the guns would switch ninety degrees and fire on the attack on the right. While all this was going on the 8th Brigade and the 3rd British Division on our left flank called for help and we fired "Uncle" and "Victor" targets that required switches of 180 degrees and ranges of seven to nine thousand yards. What a day it was; the Gunners responded magnificently and the piles of empty cartridge cases beside the S.Ps. grew by leaps and bounds. Each time we switched back to the tanks in front of us the range would be shorter and appeals of the F.O.Os. more desperate. When we finally stopped them the range was just over 1600 yards -- much too close for comfort, especially when we were firing at 8000 yards in the opposite direction.

(The History of 12 Canadian Field Regiment, op cit, p. 19)

*This regiment continued to work with the Canadians until 20 Jun by which date 25 of the original 32 Centaur tanks were still in action. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jun 44)

492. During this same attack 94 Bty of 3 Cdn A tk Regt, supporting 7 Cdn Inf Bde in Putot and Bretteville, saw heavy fighting and suffered considerable casualties. The regiment "had six 6-pdr guns knocked out and 3 M10s put out of action" during the first few days of mixed fighting (W.D., 3 Cdn A tk Regt, 9 Jun 44). By 12 Jun the unit's guns were distributed as follows: 4 Bty supported 8 Cdn Inf Bde in the Bray area; 94 Bty supported 7 Cdn Inf Bde in the Norrey area; and 105 (Composite) Bty, together with 52 Bty, with both in Villons-les-Buissons area supporting 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid, 12 Jun 44)

493. By 12 Jun also all the batteries (less one troop of each battery) of 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt had landed in Normandy. Prior to this time 32 Bty, which had landed on D Day (supra, para 325), had shot down six enemy aircraft and damaged others. (W.D. 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, July, 1944: Appx 10, "War Diary of 32 Bty, 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 6-11 Jun 44") On the day the remainder of the unit landed, this same battery "shot down 3 FW 190s between 1415 hrs and 1520 hrs" (W.D., 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 12 Jun 44). Within forty-eight hours of their landing, 69 and 100 Btys were deployed in 3 Cdn Inf Div's gun areas and were engaging enemy aircraft. (Ibid, 14 Jun 44)

(b) Engineers

494. After the obstacles had been cleared from the beaches, no further main engineering tasks confronted 3 Cdn Inf Div. Nevertheless, there was a variety of sapper duties to be performed. Chief among these for all companies was route clearance for infantry brigades. This included not only checking the roads and their verges for mines, but removing knocked-out vehicles which blocked the roads. Areas were also swept for mines to provide sites for assembly areas, headquarters, vehicle 'harbours', etc. Enemy guns and ammunition dumps were destroyed along with other enemy equipment and emplacements. Water points were established, houses and buildings searched for booby-traps and deloused, and a general reconnaissance was made of the area for local resources, airfield sites*, and so forth. In some cases small mine belts were laid in conjunction with the infantry. The largest of these minefields was one containing 1250 mines laid on 9 Cdn Inf Bde's front by 16 Cdn Fd Coy. (W.Ds., 5, 6, 16, and 18 Cdn Fd Coys, 6-12 Jun 44)

495. On the whole, the assault forces had comparatively little trouble with large minefields. Aside from the enemy's inability to lay the number of mines he

*Canadian Engineers made a reconnaissance of an airfield site south of Amblie which, by 12 Jun, was well under construction. (W.D., 16 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., 12 Jun 44: Appx 6, "Message from C.R.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div to 18 Cdn Fd Coy")

would have desired (supra, para 70), the Allies were further aided by the geographical problems besetting the enemy. These problems have been explained as follows:

One unexpected feature of the invasion was the ineffectiveness of the land minefields behind the beaches in holding up the advance inland. The Germans had compromised between military and civil considerations by placing the minefields so as to avoid much interference with the life of the region. The fishing villages and holiday resorts that cover nearly half of the coast between the Orne and Courseulles were comparatively clear of mines. To prevent children and cattle from straying into the minefields, they were usually surrounded with barbed-wire fences with warning notices. And the vast extent of the West Wall led to stratagem -- more than half of the minefields in Normandy were dummies. The key to the minefield defence lay in covering their gaps with fire, but the surprise achieved as a result of the ... [weather in which the Allies attacked] made this impossible.

(Arthur Davies, "Geographical Factors in the Invasion and Battle of Normandy", The Geographical Review, October 1946, p. 618)

(c) Intercommunication

496. Communications, which functioned well during D Day, improved during the first week of battle as more men and equipment were made available to signal officers. In short time "line was put into everyone but 7 Cdn Inf Bde", the latter being omitted "owing to a dangerous route" (W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, June 1944: Appx 17, Report on Operation "OVERLORD"). By 11 Jun the signals war diarist wrote: "It is our boast ... that at no time since the Operation commenced have we not been in communication with everyone" (W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, 11 Jun 44). Cable-laying sections had learned by this time to keep a man covering them as they laid their lines. One signals section "ended up with 85 prisoners from this policy" (Report on Operation "OVERLORD"). Little use was made of enemy or French equipment in the area by 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs.

497. The Contact Detachments remained with their formations until D plus 8, at which time they were withdrawn to divisional headquarters (Interview with Capt. Newsam, op cit) Should the division go on the offensive once more, these detachments would be returned to their respective units. (Ibid) The regiment supplying these Contact Detachments was further represented in Normandy by 11 Jun. On that day "B" Squadron, 7 Cdn Recce Regt,

landed in France, accompanied by Lt-Col T.C. Lewis, the unit's commanding officer. (Pavey, op cit, pp 44-45) On 12 Jun "the Squadron moved to the village of Camilly, where it took up positions around the village to give local protection to Divisional Headquarters in case of enemy infiltration or paratroop attacks" (Ibid, p. 44).

(d) Administration

498. Until such time as higher formations assumed responsibility, maintenance was controlled by the division. Beach stores dumps were quickly accumulated by using amphibious load-carriers (DUKWs) as well as all types of landing craft. (Highlights of Administration, op cit) "The op proved that planning had been sound as to admn arrangements. Assault scale tpt had been properly loaded to provide the immediate essentials during the early days. No one went short of amm, tools, food or water" (Brigadier Blackader, op cit)

499. The provision of ammunition and petrol was the responsibility of the divisional R.C.A.S.C., which for the early stages of the operation had created a number of special departments to meet the abnormal supply situation. (Sec 3 Cdn Inf Div Admn Plan, op cit) A beach dump was established on both MIKE and NAN Sectors and ammunition stored there was available either on call from the infantry or for subsequent removal to the gun areas. Distributed throughout ships and craft of Force "J" were 420 trailers 5-cwt, loaded with petrol, small arms ammunition and mines; these were brought ashore by any available vehicles, and when assembled in a trailer park constituted a mobile store for immediate replenishment. They were towed to forward localities by a 'jeep platoon' formed for this purpose. Ammunition dumps were established in "MARY" and "JANE" Gun Areas, the first stocks of infantry ammunition and mines being carried forward on the field artillery "Priests" which occupied these areas. On 8 Jun, the beach dumps were closed down and the Divisional Administrative Area proper was formed. ((HS) 235C3.6011 (D1): Interview with Capt. L.A. Brennan, R.C.A.S.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div) A full description of the work of the divisional Army Service Corps is given in a unit history ((HS) 235C3.6013 (D1): History of R.C.A.S.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, June to December 1944).

500. The medical components of the Canadian assault force "were three field ambulances, one light field ambulance, two field dressing stations, and a field hygiene section. Only the three field ambulances were to participate in the initial assault; apart from these the Canadians were to be dependent upon British medical units" (Revised Draft, Official History of the Canadian Medical Services, 1939-1945, Vol. 1, p. 358). By D plus 1 the entire units of Nos. 14, 22 and 23 Cdn Fd Ambs were ashore supporting 7, 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes respectively. During

the first hours of the landing, the assault sections of the field ambulance units

... remained in the beach area collecting casualties, giving them first aid, and 'nesting' them in the shelter of sea-walls, buildings or wherever they could be kept from the withering fire that still swept the beaches.

(Ibid, p. 361)

By 8 Jun, however, casualty collecting posts, advanced dressing stations and field dressing stations were in operation as well as Jeep ambulances.

501. British medical units (see Order of Battle at Appendix "C") working in conjunction with Canadian medical units were also functioning smoothly by this time. British advanced surgical centres "were in operation and performing surgery before 11 p.m. [6 Jun]. In four days they had performed about 220 major operations and handled in all about 1800 casualties..." (Ibid, p. 364).

502. On 8 Jun organized evacuation of casualties from the beaches by L.S.T. was underway, thus relieving the crowded beach dressing stations. Canadian medical officers and personnel were on board these L.S.T. and "casualties were given treatment ... in an improvised operating room on the lower deck, fed, and cared for so that they would arrive in England in the best possible condition" (Ibid, p. 366). Evacuation of casualties by air began on 13 Jun, "a week earlier than had been anticipated" (Ibid). For further details on the medical aspect of the assault phase, see the Official History of the Canadian Medical Services, 1939-1945, Vol I, Ch XVIII.

(e) 1 British Corps

503. (i) 6th Airborne Division By the evening of 8 Jun,

... the 6th Airborne Division was established firmly on the eastern bank of the River Orne, holding a half circle round the little villages of Ranville, Le Mariquet and Herouvillette, with the 1st Special Brigade under their orders on the high ground of Le Plein and near the little village of Breville, soon to become the scene of a fierce battle. The fighting during those forty-eight hours had gained for the Division all its objectives with the exception of a small coastal strip near Franceville. They had suffered 800 casualties, and more than 1,000 parachutists had not yet reached their rendezvous.

(By Air to Battle,
op cit, p. 89)

504. During the next few days 6 Airborne Div was

engaged in "consolidating its position, beating off counter-attacks, and welcoming the arrival of small, scattered bodies of parachute troops, who had gradually made their way ... to the sound of the guns" (Ibid, p. 91).

505. Enemy attacks against the division were launched from the south (by elements of 21 Pz Div) and from the east (by elements of 711 and 346 Inf Divs, the latter having come from the Le Havre area). (A.H.Q. Report No. 50 paras 67 ff) Although most of these armoured-supported infantry attacks were beaten off by the parachutists and commandos, the enemy continued to hold a position in Bréville -- one forming a dangerous salient across the Troarn-Sallenelles ridge. It was 1 Corps' intention to extend the division's bridgehead south (infra, para 519) and to this end the southern section was to be taken over by 51 (H) Div. However, "no serious attack south was ... safe with the Bréville gap still in the enemy's hands" (6 Airborne Division - Report on Operations in Normandy, op cit). An attempt by the enemy to extend and widen the gap on 10 Jun had been stopped, but it was realized that the airborne troops would need assistance to eliminate the salient altogether.

506. During the night of 10/11 Jun the leading elements of 51 (H) Div (153 Inf Bde) began to cross the Orne. "This was in connection with a proposed 1 Corps operation, to be carried out by 51 (H) Division, to break out of the bridgehead [on 12 Jun] to the south and east of Caen, (Operation 'SMOCK')".* (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book II, p. 248). 5 Black Watch, placed under General Gale's command, made an attack on Bréville on 11 Jun but was repulsed with heavy casualties. On 12 Jun,

...enemy attacks from Bréville began at 0500 hrs sp by tks. A counter attack restored the situation at 0615 hrs. Further enemy attacks came in at 0630 hrs and 1500 hrs. DF tasks being fired by 3 Br Div and 51 (H) Div, to repel these. At 1700 hrs another very determined attack came in which pressed tps back from their fwd posns.

(6 Airborne Division-Report on Operations. op cit)

"The situation was only restored", wrote General Gale, "by a gallant counter-attack by Canadian parachutists, led by

*On the morning of 7 Jun, General Montgomery stated in a message to Main 21 Army Group: "Dempsey to proceed relentlessly with original plan. He will hold a flank on the River Dives and capture CAEN and BAYEUX. He will then pivot on CAEN moving east of River ORNE. Likely that 51 Div will cut in behind CAEN moving east of River ORNE" (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 2).

Brigadier James Hill himself" (Gale, op cit, p. 99; see also A.H.Q. Report No. 26, pp 10-11). But the "situation restored" was still one which called for drastic action. It was decided to attack again at last light. Supported by one medium and four field regiments of artillery* and a squadron of tanks the attack went in at 2230 hrs. It was completely successful. After this battle for Bréville, "neither in the North nor in the South were we [the Airborne troops] seriously attacked again" (Gale, op cit, p. 101).

507. Meanwhile, on the morning of 11 Jun, General Dempsey

...was warned by Intelligence sources that the Germans were concentrating for an attack from Caen. This seemed to be the major armoured counter-stroke which he had been expecting since D plus 1 and, as his primary task was to safeguard the Allied left flank, he postponed the airborne plan,** called for aerial bombardment of Caen and ordered Crocker (the commander of 1 British Corps) to convert the Canadian attack into a 'spoiling operation' and to dispose the rest of his forces defensively.

(Wilmot, op cit, p. 302)

The enemy field commanders, however, had by this time given up what plans they had for an armoured offensive to drive the Allies into the sea. On 7 Jun, Panzer Group West, commanded by General Geyr von Schweppenburg, was ordered to take over from 1 SS Pz Corps "the task of eliminating the beachhead and regaining the coast" (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 48). By 10 Jun, Tactical Headquarters of Pz Gp West was a few miles from Thury-Harcourt, having assumed command from 1 SS Pz Corps during the evening of 9 Jun. On the afternoon of 10 Jun, "Marshal Rommel was present at the headquarters of the Panzer Group and discussed the 1 SS Pz Corps attack then being planned for the night of 10/11 Jun" (Ibid, para 49). This attack was to be launched, however, with armoured divisions already deeply engaged in the bridgehead fighting, and there were no infantry divisions available to replace them. This, together with the aggressiveness of the Allies and the speed of their build-up, resulted in the 1 SS Pz Corps' offensive being called off. As a finishing touch, not long after Rommel had left Geyr's headquarters, it came under a heavy air attack.

*The divisional commander wrote that during the first week of action, "...except for the artillery support which I could get out of the 3rd Division and the 1st Corps, which incidentally was never begrudged and was always effective, I had only one eight-gun battery of 75-mm Howitzers in the bridgehead..." (Gale, op cit, p. 109).

**This was a plan to drop parachutists south of Caen in conjunction with a pincer movement on that city. See infra, para 519.

General von Geyr was only slightly wounded, but his C. of S., Maj Gen von Dawans, and most of his staff officers were killed, the signal section was destroyed, and early on 11 Jun Seventh Army returned the command authority in the sector to 1 SS Pz Corps.

(Ibid)

Thus it was while these events were forcing the enemy on the defensive that General Dempsey received word of a possible German armoured offensive.

508. While the fighting for the Bréville ridge was in progress, 152 Inf Bde of 51 (H) Div arrived east of the Orne. During the night 13/14 Jun, 51 (H) Div assumed responsibility for the southern portion of the bridgehead. 51 (H) Div made some small gains against stubborn enemy resistance in their new position. Operation "SMOCK" was drastically curtailed on 12 Jun, however, owing to information received at Corps Headquarters which indicated a strong enemy armoured attack against 3 Brit and 3 Cdn Inf Divs. Thus the remainder of 51 (H) Div was held west of the Orne which limited, naturally, the division's operations in the bridgehead. 6 Airborne Div was reinforced by 4 S.S. Bde which came under divisional command on 11 Jun.

509. (ii) 3rd British Infantry Division The operations of 3 Brit Inf Div during the first week of the assault were in many respects parallel to those of 3 Cdn Inf Div. During the days immediately after the initial landing there followed a series of bitter attacks and counter-attacks on brigade and battalion levels, after which the division settled down to a period of consolidation and active patrolling. The following account is based on Scarfe, op cit, Ch III; (HS) 235B3.018 (D1): G Ops Log, 3 Brit Inf Div, 6-30 June 1944; and Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book II, pp 206a ff.

510. On D plus 1 the task of eliminating the salient which separated 3 Cdn and 3 Brit Inf Divs was undertaken by 4 S.S. Bde on the coast, 8 Inf Bde a few miles inland and 9 Inf Bde in the south. 8 Inf Bde entered Plumetot and Casserons soon after midday on 7 Jun. It also gave some support to 41 R.M. Cdo on the coast. At the same time the brigade patrolled Ouistreham to clear

out such enemy pockets as remained in the town.

511. At noon on 7 Jun 9 Inf Bde was ordered to attack the base of the salient, i.e., to clear Cazelle and thrust on to St. Contest. Periers and Cazelle were taken with little trouble. The brigade then pressed on to Cambes but was forced to withdraw to Le Mesnil after meeting strong enemy opposition. On 9 Jun brigade troops made another attack with strong artillery support plus cruiser gunfire. The village was taken in spite of determined enemy resistance, and by last light 9 Inf Bde was firmly consolidated on its position. Contact between 3 Brit and 3 Cdn Inf Divs was by now firmly established along the divisional boundary.

512. Except for small local gains, all attempts by the division to push closer to Caen itself proved fruitless. On 7 Jun 185 Inf Bde launched an attack to secure the Lebissey ridge which overlooked Caen. The units taking part in this attack met fierce resistance and were forced to withdraw that night after suffering heavy casualties. Except on the right flank (in the Cambes area), the F.D.Ls. of 3 Brit Inf Div were little closer to Caen by the end of the first week of action than they had been on D plus 1.

513. The strong resistance met at Cambes by 9 Inf Bde and on the Lebissey ridge by 185 Inf Bde on 7 Jun had its parallel in the Buron-Authie battle by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Both Canadian and British troops were forced back from their objectives, the former by an attack by elements of 12 SS Pz Div. 3 Brit Inf Div's thrust to Caen on 7 Jun doubtless met with 21 Pz Div's attempt to launch an attack towards Douvres, an attack supposed to be coordinated with Meyer's attack on the Canadians. (Special Interrogation Report - Generalleutnant Edgar Feuchtinger, op cit) The battle on Lebissey ridge evidently cancelled the intentions of both friend and foe. Nevertheless, if during the first week of the assault the British were denied Caen, it was equally clear to the enemy "that the Allied consolidation ...had progressed to the point where it could no longer be defeated with forces within reach" (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 66).

514. It was in this first week of battle, sometime between 10-13 Jun, that SS Brigade-Fuhrer Fritz Witt, officer commanding 12 SS Pz Div, was killed. (Ibid, para 58) On 13 Jun, Major-General T.G. Rennie, D.S.O., M.C., commanding 3 Brit Inf Div, was seriously wounded when his Jeep ran over a mine near Cambes. (Scarfe, op cit, p. 104) His place was taken on 22 Jun by Major General L.G. Whistler, D.S.O. (Ibid, p. 110)

515. (iii) 4th Special Service Brigade 48
and 41 R.M. Cdos, charged with clearing the enemy from the

coastal strip separating "Juno" and "Sword" landing beaches, had both suffered heavy casualties during the run-in and during the D Day fighting. (Supra, paras 285 and 345) By the end of D Day, 48 R.M. Cdo had entered, but had not cleared, Langrune. Attacking from the east, 41 R.M. Cdo was unable to advance beyond the Hermanville - Lion-sur-Mer line by last light on 6 Jun.

516. On 7 Jun, aided by 5 Centaurs and 1 Sherman tank, 48 R.M. Cdo (now reduced to 210 all ranks) attempted to clear the remainder of Langrune but was unsuccessful ((HS) 285.CD4.018(D1): Chronology of 4 Commando [Special Service]* Brigade, 6-11 June 1944; W.D., 4 S.S. Bde, June 1944. The following account is based on these two documents). In the afternoon it was planned to have 46 R.M. Cdo** attack through 48 R.M. Cdo to seize Luc-sur-Mer. This attack was successful. Contact was made with patrols from 41 R.M. Cdo in Luc late in the afternoon, and shortly thereafter 48 R.M. Cdo reported the end of organized resistance in Langrune.

517. On 8 Jun 4 S.S. Bde, came under command 51 (H) Div. After clearing the remaining small pockets of enemy resistance in the coastal area, the brigade was concentrated in the La Délivrande-Douvres area. In the afternoon of the next day 1 Corps placed 46 R.M. Cdo under command 3 Cdn Inf Div to assist the Canadians in the Anguerny area. This Commando later helped clear the Mue valley. (Supra, paras 481-85) On 10 Jun 4 S.S. Bde was given the responsibility of laying siege to the Douvres Radar Station, a commitment which had been held up to this time by 51 (H) Div. 4 S.S. Bde was reinforced on this day by the arrival of 47 R.M. Cdo which had completed its task for 30 Corps at Putot-en-Bessin on D plus 2. A number of Centaurs and Shermans from 30 Assault Unit, Royal Marines, were also placed under the brigade's command on the same day.

518. On 11 Jun further orders were received from 1 Corps. 41 R.M. Cdo was to continue to lay siege to the Radar Station under command 1 Corps, but the remainder

*4 S.S. Bde became 4 "Commando" Bde on 15 Dec 44 ((HS) 225B1.042(D1): Organization of 1 Brit Corps, Circular Notice 529/G of 15 Dec 44 from B.G.S. 1 Corps).

**46 R.M. Cdo had been held in Army Reserve "with alternative tasks, the destruction of one or other of two formidable batteries east of the Crne [Merville and Houlgate batteries]. ...Owing to the success of the bombardment directed against the batteries, it was cancelled and the Commandos came under command of 4 S.S. Brigade on D plus 1" (Royal Marine Commandos in Normandy, op cit).

of the brigade (less 46 R.M. Cdo, still with the Canadians) was ordered to move east of the Orne and take up a position on the left flank of 1 S.S. Bde. (W.D., 4 S.S. Bde, June 1944: Appx "C", 4 S.S. Bde O.O. No. 3) The Radar Station consisted of two heavily defended localities, each built around the huge coast-watching and anti-aircraft-reporting installations. Locality "A", centred on 004800, was the larger; it was surrounded by wire and mines and equipped with guns in concrete and open emplacements. Locality "B", farther north at 006808, was similarly defended. 41 R.M. Cdo, ordered to capture the Radar Station, started its attack at 1700 hrs, 17 Jun, after a half hour intensive artillery programme had been fired on the defenders. A.V.R.E. teams flogged gaps through the minefields and planted "Beehive" charges on the emplacements. The enemy at once sought shelter in the deepest concrete structures and the infantry who followed the armour were confronted with almost no opposition. Organized resistance in both localities ceased at about 1830 hrs. Casualties were very light, and prisoners taken numbered about five officers and 200 other ranks. ((HS) 225Bl.013 (D1): 1 Brit Corps, Immediate Report No. 9, "Capture of Enemy Radar Station Douvres La Délivrande") Of these the majority were German Air Force personnel, the remainder coming from 11 Bn, 736 Gren Regt (716 Inf Div) and 1 Bn, 192 Pz Gren Regt (21 Pz Div) ((HS) 225Bl.023 (D1): 1 Brit Corps Intelligence Summary No. 5) On 19 Jun, 41 R.M. Cdo rejoined 4 S.S. Bde east of the Orne. 46 R.M. Cdo, released from 3 Cdn Inf Div, rejoined the brigade on 17 Jun.

(f) 30 British Corps

519.

Realizing that Caen could not now be taken by direct assault and that his attempt to by-pass it to the west was in danger of being frustrated, Montgomery determined to keep the battle mobile. 'If the Germans wish to be offensive,' he wrote to his Chief of Staff, de Guingand, on the 9th, 'and drive in our lodgement area between Bayeux and Caen, the best way to defeat them is to be offensive ourselves.' He intended, he said, that the 7th Armoured Division should strike through Tilly 'to secure Villers-Bocage and Evrécy and then exploit south-east.' Meantime, the 51st Highland Division would 'attack southwards, east of Caen, towards Cagny.' When these gains had been made, he planned 'to put down the 1st Airborne Division somewhere south of Caen in a big 'air lock' and to link up with it from Evrécy and Cagny', thus enveloping the city.

This was a bold and ambitious plan, in which the first essential was the capture of the Villers-Bocage ridge. Accordingly, Dempsey ordered 7th Armoured to crack the German defences at Tilly before they crystallized further and told the Canadians to seize the Cheux ridge south of the Caen-Tilly road so as to protect the flank of the 7th when it thrust on to Villers-Bocage.

(Wilmot, op cit, p. 302)

.....

520. On 7 Jun 50 (N) Div, as with the other assault divisions, was concerned with enlarging its bridgehead to the D Day objective line and with linking up with the American V Corps bridgehead on its right. The enemy's 352 Inf Div, whose right wing 50 (N) Div had pried from its coastal fortifications on D Day, was given no time to recover. Fortunately, the enemy's closest armoured reserves were committed in the Caen area and during the day 50 (N) Div was able to advance south and west without encountering the armoured resistance met by 1 Corps. On the morning of 7 Jun Bayeux was entered and early in the afternoon of the same day was firmly secured. The division also occupied the high ground immediately north and south of the city. (Clay, op cit, pp 251 ff; (HS) 235B50.015 (D1): 50 (N) Div-Extracts from Ops Log, 7 Jun 44) On the morning of 7 Jun elements of 7 Armd Div were landing at Arromanches. (Captain Martin Lindsay and Captain M.E. Johnston, History of 7th Armoured Division (B.A.O.R., 1945), p. 31) During the first few days, 7 Armd Div "assisted 50th Division to hold and improve its positions around Bayeux..." (Lt-Col R.M.P. Carver, "The Seventh Armoured Division," The Army Quarterly, October 1948, p. 53).

521. It was not until late on D plus 1 that 8 Armd Bde was given orders to prepare to launch its attack south to Villers-Bocage through Tilly-sur-Seulles early on the morning of 8 Jun (Extracts from 50 (N) Div Ops Log, 7 Jun; supra, para 351). This armoured thrust made fair headway and by last light on 8 Jun the advance elements of the column had positioned themselves on Point 103, a dominating feature about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Tilly. (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 81)

522. This attack, as might be expected, stirred up a hornet's nest. We have already noted the attack on 7 Cdn Inf Bde by 26 Pz Gren Regt (of 12 SS Pz Div) on the same day. (Supra, paras 458-66) The only force of 12 SS Pz Div west of 26 Pz Gren Regt was the division's reconnaissance battalion. ((HS) 981A7 (D3) (c): Seventh Army Situation Map- 8 Jun 44) This force, together with the leading elements of the Panzer Lehr Division (the main body of which had reached the Thury-Harcourt area on 7 Jun) were the main effective German elements in the Tilly area opposing the attack by 8 Armd Bde, and thus the first enemy armour encountered on 50 (N) Div front. (It can also be appreciated that the weight of the enemy's armoured attack absorbed by 7 Cdn Inf Bde in Bretteville and Putot proved very advantageous to 8 Armd Bde. The axis of advance of 26 Pz Gren Regt lay roughly along the line of the Caen-Bayeux road, while that of 8 Armd Bde lay directly across this road).

523. On the night of 8 Jun, the main body of 8 Armd Bde was consolidated in an area north of Audrieu which was as yet uncleared. The next day, reinforced with additional infantry, the advance was continued. Audrieu and St. Pierre were cleared but Tilly was too strongly held. An enemy counter-attack made "by tanks and infantry of the 130th Panzer Lehr and the 12th SS Hitler Jugend Divisions..." to clear 8 Armd Bde from St. Pierre failed to dislodge it (Clay, op cit, pp 253-58). At this point it was decided to consolidate the ground gained and reorganize for further operations.

524. On 9 Jun General Montgomery stated his intention "to launch 7 Armd Div...[on 10 Jun] southwards through BAYEUX to secure VILLERS-BOCAGE and NOYERS 8762 and then EVRECY; then to exploit to the S.E."* (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 16). 56 Inf Bde, formerly under the command of 50 (N) Div, came under command 7 Armd Div for this operation. On the morning of 10 Jun 22 Armd Bde Gp made its attack west of the Seulles roughly parallel to the main Bayeux-Tilly road. Owing to the nature of the Bocage country**, to stiffened enemy resistance from additional Pz Lehr Div troops which had reached the Hottot-Tilly area, and to an "unholy mix-up" in the control of the battle, the attack slowed down until by 12 Jun it came to a standstill on the outskirts of Tilly*** (Ibid, pp 103 ff).

525. Even before 7 Armd Div's attack on Hottot ground to a halt, 30 Corps' Commander had "instructed Commander 7 Armoured Division to consider transferring the axis of advance of his division further west, in order to effect deeper and easier penetration into enemy held territory" (Ibid, p. 126). On 12 Jun, hearing that V U.S. Corps was meeting little resistance on their drive to Caumont, 30 Corps's Commander received General Dempsey's permission

...to disengage 7 Armoured Division and

*This operation would be launched at approximately the same time as 51 (H) Div's breakout from the Orne bridgehead towards Cagny (supra, para 506), and if both thrusts were successful General Montgomery envisaged dropping 1 Airborne Div south of Caen to close the pincers. (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 16; supra, para 518)

**Of the area around Tilly, 50 (N) Div's historian writes: "This country was true bocage. It was closer than any country in which the Division had ever fought before -- steep hills, deep valleys, small fields and tall hedges, ditches, and narrow, twisting lanes were its characteristics. It was difficult country for tanks and nerve-racking country for infantry, and called for a battle technique of its own" (Clay, op cit, p. 252).

***The attacks on Tilly-sur-Seulles by 8 Armd Bde and 7 Armd Div caused Pz Lehr Div, already badly battered from our air attacks, to be committed in a piecemeal fashion similar to 12 SS and 21 Pz Divs on 1 Corps front.

with this Division to launch a right hook round the western flank of Second Army through the American sector towards Villers Bocage.

(Ibid, p. 128)

50 (N) Div was to take over the responsibility for the whole 30 Corps front and provide a firm base for the Corps.

526. The new plan was quickly implemented, and during the afternoon of 12 Jun 22 Armd Bde, the division's leading formation, began its southward thrust along the new axis to Villers. "The move was skilfully carried out without encountering other than light opposition..." ((HS) 215A21.013 (D11): 21 Army Group Reports - Immediate Report No. 5, "Operations 30 Corps"). Contact with 1 U.S. Inf Div (advancing on a parallel axis to Caumont east of the Aure) was made at Livry, a short distance from Caumont, at the end of the day and early on the morning of 13 Jun "Villers Bocage was entered without incident" (Lindsay and Johnston, op cit, p. 36). The town, however, soon became the scene of a fierce battle.* After entering Villers 22 Armd Bde sent out a small force to secure the high ground to the northeast (Point 213). Scarcely had the group set out to accomplish this task when it was ambushed by a number of Tiger tanks, one of which almost wiped out the small group.** Later that morning 22 Armd Bde (the division's own infantry brigade, 131 Inf Bde, was still north of Livry) was attacked by what was soon identified as the leading elements of 2 Pz Div. This Panzer division, in reserve near Amiens when the invasion was launched, had been moved south to Normandy during the intervening days and was approaching Villers from the Mortain-Vire area during 11-12 Jun. (Seventh Army Situation Maps, 10-12 Jun) As part of XLVII Pz Corps, the object of 2 Pz Div was to close the gap between Pz Lehr Div and 352 Inf Div -- a gap opened by the assault formations and widened by 7 Armd Div's attack on Villers. ((HS) 981SOM. (D122): Report of the Commander, Panzer Group West (Gen Pz Geyr von Schweppenburg), p. 37)

527. Unable to hold Villers with the small forces at hand, 22 Armd Bde withdrew to the commanding high ground east of Amaye-sur-Seulles, hoping to hold on until the advance of 50 (N) Div on the left relieved them. (Lindsay and Johnston, op cit, p. 38)

*"Which was much complicated", writes a war correspondent, "by the local fire brigade turning out in a mistaken effort to put out fires in knocked-out tanks" (The Times (London), 22 July 49).

**For a description of this battle, see Major R.H.W.S. Hastings, The Rifle Brigade in The Second World War (Aldershot, 1950), pp 349-52.

528. By last light on 13 Jun the bulk of 22 Armd Bde was in position east of Amaye, while 131 Inf Bde remained in Granville (7664). Early on the morning of 14 Jun, 131 Inf Bde set out from Granville to clear the road to Amaye. 2 Pz Div's attempts to isolate 22 Armd Bde were frustrated and the Livry-Amaye road was kept open. After visiting 22 Armd Bde's position during the afternoon, however, the Divisional Commander,

...in view of the increasing enemy strength and also on account of the disappointingly slow progress of 50 Division to the north, ...made up his mind to withdraw 22 Armoured Brigade during the night 14/15 June.

(Liberation Campaign North
West Europe, op cit, Ch III,
Book I, p. 146)

Later that afternoon, orders were issued for a withdrawal of the division from its exposed position.

529. 2 Pz Div made another attack on 22 Armd Bde before it could extricate itself through 131 Inf Bde. The attack was beaten off, and during the late evening the brigade withdrew successfully. By 15 Jun the division had established itself in the Briquesard - Ste. Honorine-de Ducy area.

530. Although 7 Armd Div's 'right hook' against Villers was unsuccessful, the two-day battle with 2 Pz Div had important results:

...2 Panzer Division's intention was to drive a wedge between the British and American armies through Balleroy and the Forêt de Cérisy beyond. In fact, to their great surprise they met the Division at Villers Bocage, and were forced to fight an offensive battle in close country which undoubtedly favored anti-tank defence, particularly the six-pounder anti-tank gun

.....

The result was that, temporarily, 2 Panzer Division, at a crucial stage in the landing, when the build-up was much delayed by the weather, was severely crippled for a time as an effective offensive force.

(Lindsay and Johnston, op cit, p. 40)

General Montgomery, writing to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the time, commented as follows on the setback as it affected his plans: