

587. Previous to this time, plans for an armoured break-out from 7 Cdn Inf Bde's sector had led to a stripping of supporting weapons from the left sector (a process described by the brigade diarist as "the rape of 9 Cdn Inf Bde") (Ibid, 12 Jun 44). But the switch to a purely defensive role reversed the procedure, and efforts were soon being made to strengthen 9 Cdn Inf Bde at the expense of the other two brigades. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Jun 44, Serial 38) Most important was the thickening of anti-tank defences: to this end the divisional anti-tank regiment was re-deployed so as to place two of its batteries at the disposal of 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., 3 Cdn A tk Regt, 12 Jun 44)

588. After several days, when no battle had manifested itself (supra, para 507), the situation was described by a diarist:

The battle has, in the main, developed into a counter-battery one. Our reinforcements in personnel and equipment have brought us up to strength except for about 35 tanks. We are ready to re-assume the offensive. At present, however, our role is a holding one....

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 14 Jun 44)

In truth, it had become a counter-battery battle, in which the odds were certainly against the enemy. Seldom if ever did he produce a sustained or weighty artillery concentration, whereas his every observed movement brought down on him an instantaneous and heavy volume of shellfire. A typical instance is recorded of an enemy meal parade, "complete with mess-tins," being made the target of a regimental concentration (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, June 1944: Appx 6, 14 Cdn Fd Regt Int. Summary No. 4, 25 Jun). One may conclude that the enemy's mode of life in forward areas was not of the most carefree sort. But if artillery concentrations on the grand scale were beyond his sphere, the enemy was able nonetheless to engage in a certain measure of counter-battery fire in an attempt to limit the effectiveness of our guns. The diaries of field regiments contain such entries as this: "At 1500 hrs our daily enemy CB shelling" (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 13 Jun 44). In addition, enemy harassing fire was directed against air landing strips, headquarters and similar targets; on 17 Jun Lt-Col J.R.W.T. Bessonette, C.R.A.S.C., was killed when rounds fell in his headquarters. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A.S.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 17 Jun 44) It is of interest to note that a proportion of the enemy's shells were "blinds", a possible indication of sabotage. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 17 Jun 44, Serial 56; and 25 Jun, Serial 40; W.Ds., Hist Offr, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 18 Jun 44; Q.O.R. of C, 28 Jun 44; and 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 12 Jun 44) German fire-power, although inferior as regards artillery, was given added weight by the skilful use of mortars. To counteract the effectiveness of these weapons, arrangements

were begun to add a counter-mortar staff to H.Q.R.C.A.  
(W.D., H.Q.R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jun 44)

589. The arrival of the 49th (West Riding) Infantry Division as part of 30 Corps introduced a new formation on the right flank of 3 Cdn Inf Div, when 146 Inf Bde relieved 69 Inf Bde on 13/14 Jun. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Jun 44) At this time, 50 (N) Div was holding a line from Point 103 (856703) to La Belle Epine, having withdrawn its forward elements from St. Pierre. A week later, after some severe fighting, 50 (N) Div had pushed south to capture Tilly-sur-Seulles and was on the outskirts of Hottot. (Clay, op cit, pp 258 ff) 49 (WR) Div, meanwhile, began to make its presence felt on the Canadian right flank. On 16 Jun it made a successful attack on Cristot, while a simultaneous feint toward Bronay resulted in the occupation of that village as well. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Jun 44) The attack was given the support of three regiments of the Canadian divisional artillery (12 and 14 Fd Regts, R.C.A. and 79 Med Regt, R.A.), which fired concentrations in the area of Le Mesnil-Patry. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 16 Jun 44, Serial 25)

590. As a result of these advances on the right there seemed good reason to believe that the enemy was withdrawing from Le Mesnil-Patry. This appears first to have been suggested by the G.O.C. 49 (WR) Div, and was confirmed by information from other sources. (W.D. and Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Jun 44) At about 1700 hrs, therefore, 1 C. Scot R. was ordered to send out a patrol south of the Caen-Bayeux railway in order to investigate the area. (Ibid) The patrol, consisting of a platoon of infantry and three section of carriers, entered the wood (9071) midway between Putot and Le Mesnil and found it empty. The carriers continued forward into the town and discovered that it too was clear of enemy. Much of it was in flames as a result of the artillery bombardment earlier in the day. At 2200 hrs, "C" Company proceeded to enter Le Mesnil. (Ibid; W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 16 Jun 44) As early as 1735 hrs, R. Wpg Rif had been warned to be ready to move forward at an hour's notice. When word came that the company of 1 C. Scot R. was in position, the order was given to advance through Putot-en-Bessin to Le Mesnil. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Jun 44) The leading company moved off at 2300 hrs and the whole battalion was in position by 0400 hrs, 17 Jun. R. Wpg Rif also remarked on the devastation caused by the shelling, and from the number of German dead concluded that the enemy had had to conduct his withdrawal under this fire. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 18 Jun 44; the date is clearly in error) The pioneer platoon at once set to work clearing away the booby-traps and mines with which the buildings had been liberally furnished. "C" Company of 1 C. Scot R. was withdrawn to Putot, and by virtue of these changes in disposition that battalion now became the reserve unit. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 17 Jun 44) In their new area in Le Mesnil-Patry, R. Wpg Rif were subjected once more to shelling and mortaring, and enemy attempts at infiltration were broken up by our

artillery. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 18 Jun 44) 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts had also moved, having been brought forward from Bray to positions near Putot and Bretteville respectively. Their proximity to the enemy can be judged from the fact that the first target engaged by the latter regiment was at a range of only 1800 yards. (W.Ds., 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts, 17 Jun 44)

591. Since a period of rest was plainly in order for 7 Cdn Inf Bde, arrangements were made for 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes to exchange positions. Thus it occurred that 7 Cdn Inf Bde had no sooner adjusted its new brigade area (Le Mesnil-Patry - Bretteville - Putot-en-Bessin) than it was compelled to vacate it. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Jun 44) The changeover was carried out during the night 17/18 Jun, one of the shortest during the year. It was not merely a case of a reserve brigade moving into a forward position, but was rather a transfer between two areas, both in the face of the enemy. The units of 8 Cdn Inf Bde were the first to move. As they arrived in their new areas, the battalions of 7 Cdn Inf Bde departed to occupy the positions vacated by their reliefs. Thus Q.O.R. of C. relieved Regina Rif in Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse and Norrey-en-Bessin, and the latter thereupon proceeded to Bray; when R. de Chaud had arrived in Putot-en-Bessin, 1 C. Scot R. moved to Rots and Le Hamel; and R. Wpg Rif, on being relieved by N. Shore R. in Le Mesnil-Patry, moved to Lasso and Rosel. By 0700 hrs, 18 Jun, these moves had been accomplished without incident despite the danger of enemy intervention, for during the night the battalion areas in the Mue valley had been occupied only by reconnaissance parties. Luckily the enemy had chosen to lie dormant. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Inf Bde, and battalions 17-11 Jun 44) "B" Squadron, 7 Cdn Recce Regt, was placed under the command of 7 Cdn Inf Bde as an interim measure. It took up a position at the chateau (945713), 500 yards north of La Villeneuve. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 4, Sitrep, 18 Jun 44) This regiment's history describes briefly the role of 7 Cdn Recce Regt during the remainder of the month:

On Sunday 25th Jun, the ["B"] Squadron, fully acquainted with German artillery fire, sniping and night patrols, was relieved by "A" Squadron who had just arrived in France. "B" Squadron, needful of a rest, moved to a reserve area near Anguerny, under command of 2 Canadian Armoured Brigade, where it remained for two days. It then returned to 3rd Division and took over from the Highland Light Infantry at Villons-les-Buissons. This take-over was typical of many the Regiment was to do in the months to come; that is, a squadron taking over the positions of an Infantry Battalion or the Regiment taking over from a Brigade. This, of course, was due to the great number of automatic weapons and firepower carried by the Regiment. However, as our numbers were approximately the same as the Infantry it meant little, or, sometimes, no

sleep for the troops.

(Pavey, op cit, p. 45)

(b) Plans for Operations

592. The details of a proposed attack by 8 Cdn Inf Bde were arranged on 18 Jun. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "G", 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 1) The operations of 30 Corps on the right flank had brought 50 (N) Div to a line north of Tilly-sur-Seulles. In order to improve the corps situation, and in line with General Montgomery's intentions (supra, para 530) a new attack by 49 (WR) Div, to the east of that town, was designed to capture Fontenay-le-Pesnel (8767) and Rauray (8865). When Fontenay was secured, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to make an advance in three bounds to capture the high ground north of Grainville-sur-Odon -- the same objective as that for the unsuccessful operation of 11 Jun. This move would cover the left flank of 49 (WR) Div in its capture of Rauray. Considering the limited nature of this venture, it is perhaps a little surprising to find that it was to be supported by the fire of five field regiments, two cruisers and a battleship. (Ibid) But on 19 Jun it was announced that that attack was cancelled. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Jun, Serial 39) This was occasioned by a change in plans for the employment of 8 Corps, with whom we must now deal.

593. The advance party of 8 Corps Headquarters\* landed in Normandy on 12 Jun. (Lt-Col G.S. Jackson, Operations of Eighth Corps (London, 1948), p. 17) The first two divisions of the corps to land in France -- 11 Armd Div and 15 (Scot) Div -- began arriving very shortly thereafter, but the corps' rate of build-up was slow owing to poor weather conditions. (Lt-Gen H.G. Martin, The History of the Fifteenth Scottish Division (London, 1948), pp 27 ff; "E.W.I.P.", A History of 11th Armoured Division (B.A.O.R., 1945), p. 12) The former division was centered near Cully, the latter in the St. Gabriel area. From 15 Jun onward, while the corps was building up in the bridgehead,

... some brief attention was paid to planning an operation entitled 'Dreadnought' which involved a breakout east of the River Orne, by 15 (Scottish) Division and 11 Armoured Division, through the eastern sector held by 31 (Highland) Division. In view of the confined area of the Orne bridgehead, it was at length decided that this manoeuvre was not a feasible proposition, and finally the idea was abandoned on 18th June.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 20)

594. On 18 Jun, General Montgomery issued the

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\*8 Corps was commanded by Lt-Gen Sir Richard O'Connor, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

following directive to Second British Army:\*

11. The immediate task of this Army will be to capture Caen, and provide a strong eastern flank for the Army Group.
12. The operations against Caen will be developed by means of a pincer movement from both flanks.

The object will be to establish the 8 Corps, strong in armour, to the S.E. of Caen in the area Bourguebus 0761 - Vimont 1561 - Bretteville-sur-Laize 0553.

13. From Vimont northwards the flank of the army will be established on the general line Troarn - thence along the R. Dives to the sea at Cabourg.
14. The right flank of the Army, forming the western half of the pincer movement against Caen, will swing south-eastwards through Aunay-sur-Odon 8351 and Evrecy 9259 towards the bridges over the R. Orne between incl Thury-Harcourt 9447 and Amaye-sur-Orne 9757.
15. While carrying out the operation outlined in para 14 it will be essential to ensure firm touch with the left of First US Army.
16. The above operations will be begun on 18 June, and will work up to a crescendo on 22 June - on which date 8 Corps will pass through the bridgehead east of the R. Orne on its task vide para 12.

((HS) 215A21.016 (D9): Operations-21 Army Group; Directive from Commander-in-Chief, 21 Army Group, to Commanders, Second British Army and First US Army, 18 Jun 44)

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\*Commenting later on this directive, which was addressed also to the First U.S. Army, General Montgomery stated: "With all the Allied forces facing south the enemy would be confronted with a very difficult problem, and it was to be expected that he would then make the threat in Normandy take precedence over other potential threats, including his fear of a thrust in the Pas de Calais. 'It was then that we might have a mighty chance to make the German Army come to our threat, and to defeat it between the Seine and the Loire'" (Montgomery, op cit, p. 61).

595. The report from 8 Corps that the bridgehead east of the Orne was too confined an area from which to launch a corps attack, the desire to avoid wasting the time it would involve to undertake preliminary operations against the strongly entrenched enemy to widen and extend this bridgehead, and the hold-up (due to the weather) of "certain essential units and types of artillery ammunition" resulted in General Montgomery modifying his plan (Montgomery, op cit, p. 62). In a directive issued the following day he ordered:

It has ... been decided that the left wing of the pincer movement, from the bridgehead over the Orne, shall be scaled down and be only of such a nature as can be done by the troops of 1 Corps already there.

8 Corps will be switched to form part of the right, or western, wing of the pincer movement .... The final objective of 8 Corps will remain as given in para 12 of M 502 [i.e., as the directive of 18 Jun 44], but the corps will advance to this objective on the general thrust line:

St. Mauvieu 9269 - Esquay 9460 - Amaye sur Odon 9757

(Directive from Commander-in-Chief... op cit, 19 Jun 44)

In this same directive General Montgomery ordered the operation to begin "at or about dawn on 22 June. 8 Corps will be launched on its task on the morning of 23 June" (Ibid).

596. On receipt of this directive, General Dempsey called a conference at Creully.

At the Creully meeting, General Dempsey, on instructions from the Commander-in-Chief announced that he proposed as soon as possible to initiate a three corps attack (though not as a co-ordinated army operation), in which 1 and 30 Corps would conduct subsidiary operations, designed both to help the main effort, and to divert the enemy's attention from it, whilst the major attack was to be carried out by 8 Corps with its fresh, if untried, troops. This would be known as Operation 'Epsom', and was to take place as soon as possible, being provisionally fixed for 23rd June.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 22)

After General Dempsey had outlined his plan,

A series of staff conferences were then held with Second Army and subordinate formations, and at 1500 hours on 23rd June, the [8] Corps

Commander explained the general situation and his plan to all officers in the Corps of the rank of lieutenant-colonel and above, at Corps Headquarters at Lantheuil.\*

The weather, which in general had been changeable since 'D' Day, had greatly hampered the unloading of stores and the disembarkation of troops. The result was, therefore, that some of 8 Corps' subordinate formations, notably 15 (Scottish) Division were not as yet at their full strength, whilst there had also been a temporary ammunition shortage.

.....

'Epsom' was therefore postponed, first for twenty-four hours, and then tentatively to 26th June, so that the deficiencies in manpower and material could be made good. Formations moved forward to their assembly areas and forming-up points, however, on 24th and 25th June, and at 2205 hours on 25th June, confirmation was received from Second Army Headquarters that the operation would take place at 0730 hours on the following morning, 26th June. A telephone call a short while afterwards depressed everyone somewhat with the information that in view of the steady deterioration in the weather in England, the full programme of air support, arranged between the R.A.F. and the Corps Headquarters, could not be carried out. This was a considerable disappointment, but it made no difference to the decision to launch 8 Corps into its first battle on the next day.

(Ibid)

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597. The main effort of Second Army, the attack by 8 Corps, was to be launched through 8 Cdn Inf Bde's sector west of the River Mue, and as mentioned, would have as its objective the establishment of a bridgehead over the Orne south of Caen and the seizure of the high ground northwest of Bretteville-sur-Laize. The offensive by 30 Corps -- once, but no longer, the main effort of the army -- was to be continued; and 49 (WR) Div, in order to protect the right flank of 8 Corps, was to establish itself on the Rauray feature (its original objective in the previous plan), and thence to exploit southwards to Noyers and Aunay-sur-Odon. 1 Corps was charged with keeping active its bridgehead east of the Orne so as to attract the enemy to that sector and also to provide a base for a left-flanking movement around Caen. This limited operation which was to be made by 51 (H) Div as a preliminary to "EPSOM", was

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\*8 Corps' plan of operations is dealt with in some detail in Jackson, op cit, pp 28-32.

named "PERTH", and was to be launched first. Later, when the effect of the operations of 8 Corps became apparent, 1 Corps was to eliminate the enemy's salient north of Caen and clear the city itself. ((HS) 225Bl.016 (D7): 1 Corps Op Instr No. 4, 19 Jun 44)

598. For this latter task two separate operations were envisaged: (i) Operation "ABERLOUR", by 3 Brit Inf Div with 9 Cdn Inf Bde under command, was to clear the salient north of Caen; (ii) Operation "OTTAWA", by 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, was to capture Carpiquet village. The dates of "ABERLOUR" and "OTTAWA" were of course dependent on the progress achieved by 8 Corps in Operation "EPSOM". (Ibid)

599. As must inevitably be the case when preparations are under way to set in motion a chain of interdependent operations, there now followed a period of readjustment and regrouping. The first event affecting 3 Cdn Inf Div was the move of 154 Inf Bde to rejoin 51 (H) Div in the sector east of the Orne. The news of this formation's departure from Basly and Anguerny was not received cheerfully, for it was felt that 9 Cdn Inf Bde had been left "out on the limb" (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Jun 44). It was seen that the enemy was thus given access to two possible "tank runs" which were now left unguarded: one on the right between Vieux Cairon and Les Buissons and another on the left along the Caen-Basly road. To rectify this situation certain precautions were taken. The motor battalion of 4 Brit Armd Bde (2 K.R.R.C.) was disposed astride the road in question, and on the other flank one company of H.L.I. of C., with a troop of 17-pounders, was ordered to move from Les Buissons and take up a position in the wood northeast of Le Vey (984757). These alterations, which were completed by first light on 19 Jun, sealed off, if only lightly, the two dangerous avenues leading into the divisional area. (Ibid; W.D., H.L.I. of C., 18 Jun 44) One company of Nth N.S. Highrs was moved back into Villons-les-Buissons to fill the gap left in that position. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 18 Jun 44)

600. The next change in disposition affected the armoured reserve. Since 4 Brit Armd Bde formed part of 8 Corps it became necessary to shift it to the west into the sector from which the corps attack would eventually be mounted. Thus, on 19 Jun 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 4 Brit Armd Bde were ordered to exchange positions. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Jun 44, Serial 60) The changeover began on the following day, with 27 Cdn Armd Regt proceeding to Colomby-sur-Thaon, a move which was greeted with delight by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.Ds., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, and H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jun 44) The unit was joined in that area by the remainder of the brigade on 21 Jun. The departure of brigade headquarters from Le Fresne-Camilly was solemnly described by the diarist:



As the two ACVs moved out of the courtyard where they had stood for 10 days, the household of French women and children came out to wave a friendly good-bye. The waving was in full swing both ways when the ACV clipped a stone wall, going out through the narrow gateway; the parting gesture was the slow, stately, and complete collapse of the wall....

(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 21 Jun 44)

601. Meanwhile 9 Cdn Inf Bde proceeded to acquire greater depth in its defensive position. This was accomplished by moving H.L.I. of C. out of Villons-les-Buissons altogether and placing the battalion south of Colomby-sur-Thaon, astride the Caen-Basly road (9977-0077), for the withdrawal of 2 K.R.R.C. had left this troublesome avenue open once again. The move was begun on the evening of 20 Jun and was completed by 1000 hrs on the next day. The battalion was no sooner in position, however, than orders were received to dispose the brigade as before, and H.L.I. of C. returned forthwith to Villons-les-Buissons, leaving one company northeast of Le Vey and one company guarding the Caen-Basly road. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 20-21 Jun 44) S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs remained in Vieux Cairon and Les Buissons respectively. This reversal of plans followed a visit by the corps commander, when it was decided that the new disposition in depth was not to be preferred to the more linear one previously employed. (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Jun 44) The net result of these goings and comings was that the enemy, evidently suspecting that an attack was forth coming, heavily shelled Villons-les-Buissons during the night 21/22 Jun with guns of large calibre. Although certain casualties were sustained, it was remarked that many of the projectiles had failed to detonate. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 22 Jun 44)

602. Still another outcome of the decision to pass 8 Corps through 3 Cdn Inf Div was that the right boundary of 1 Corps would have to be shifted some distance to the east. Inasmuch as divisional headquarters was located at Camilly, a warning was issued that it must soon move to a new site so that it should not be on the "wrong side" of the new boundary. (Message Log, G.S. H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jun 44, Serial 59) Two days later headquarters was opened at the Château de Thaon (9777). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 22 Jun 44)

603. After a long series of conferences and discussions, the operation orders for "ABERLOUR" were issued on 25 and 26 Jun. The operation itself was scheduled to commence not before 27 Jun, i.e., as soon as Operation "EPSOM" on the right flank should have made sufficient progress. The general intention, as outlined above (supra, para 598), was that 1 Corps was "to mop up the area north and northwest of Caen" ((HS) 235B3.016(D2):

3 Brit Inf Div O.O. No. 2, 25 Jun 44). This task was the responsibility of 3 Brit Inf Div with the following additional troops under command: 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Cdn Armd Regt, two squadrons of 5 Assault Regt R.E. (A.V.R.E.), one squadron of 22 Dgns (Flails), and one squadron of 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles). The following units were placed in support: two field regiments of 51 (H) Inf Div, three field regiments of 3 Cdn Inf Div, 4 A.G.R.A. (two field, three medium and one heavy regiment), and units of R.N. Bombardment Squadron. Extra support was to be provided by Naval bombardment and air attack. (Ibid)

604. The intention of 3 Brit Inf Div was to capture the high ground in the area Authie-Cussy-St. Contest and to exploit forward to the Bayeux-Caen road. This was to be executed in four phases. In Phase I, 9 Brit Inf Bde was to capture Galmanche (0073). During Phase II, while 9 Brit Inf Bde captured St. Contest, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to move forward in conjunction with it from Vieux Caen and Les Buissons to seize Gruchy and Buron. The objectives in Phase III were Authie for 9 Cdn Inf Bde and Bitot for 9 Brit Inf Bde. Lastly, Phase IV was to see the capture of Cussy by 9 Brit Inf Bde while 9 Cdn Inf Bde pushed patrols forward to the Caen-Bayeux road. One feature of the plan requires explanation. It was planned that, as a preliminary, 8 Brit Inf Bde should first clear the area La Bijude-Epron (Operation "MITTEN"), so as to prevent enemy interference with the opening stages of the main attack. (Ibid; W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 2, 9 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 2, 26 Jun 44)

605. Here, although involving a violation of chronological sequence, it will also be useful to consider the plans subsequently drawn up for Operation "OTTAWA", which was to follow closely on the heels of "ABERLOUR". In order to appreciate its relation to the general situation it may be pointed out that "OTTAWA" presupposed not only the acquisition of a large area to the west of Carpiquet, extending through the Cheux feature across the Odon (Operation "EPSOM"), but also the removal of "the St. Contest salient", north and northwest of Caen (Operation "ABERLOUR"). These prior advances would assure both a firm base and a secure left flank for the assault on Carpiquet. Indeed, by the time the divisional operation order was issued (28 Jun), the first of these two premises -- the advance by 8 Corps -- had already been realized.

606. That the capture of Carpiquet would be the responsibility of 3 Cdn Inf Div had been recognized for some time, even before plans had actually become firm. The chief point of discussion seems to have been the direction the attack should follow. The corps instruction of 19 Jun (at which time arrangements were still in a fluid state) had specified that the axis of advance was to be from the northwest (1 Corps Op Instr No. 1, 19 Jun 44, op cit); on the following day a message from B.G.S., 1

Corps, had informed 3 Cdn Inf Div that the corps commander considered an attack on Carpiquet from the west to be "too complicated". (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jun 44, Serial 59) Apparently the division's General Staff began the actual planning for "OTTAWA" on 24 Jun. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 24 Jun 44) The operation order, which was produced four days later, shows that in effect "OTTAWA" was to be a continuation of "ABERLOUR", in that the attack was to be based on Authie, following the prior capture of that village by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. It was thus to come from almost due north. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "L", 3 Cdn Inf Div O.C. No. 2, 28 Jun 44) The operation was to be carried out by 8 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by a considerable force of armour and guns. The brigade was to advance in three bounds across the Caen-Bayeux road and establish itself in Carpiquet with its forward troops along the southern perimeter of the airfield. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was at the same time to extend its position south of Authie by occupying the village of Franqueville, just north of the highway. (Ibid) But in time the course of events was to render it necessary to revert to the more 'complicated' method of attack from the west.

(c) The Opening of the Offensive in the Caen Sector,  
(Operation "EPSOM")\*

607. Before these final arrangements had been completed, the stage was set for the opening of the series of operations described above. The first of these, the limited advance by 51 (H) Div (Operation "PERTH"), commenced early on the morning of 23 Jun, after one day's postponement. 152 Inf Bde successfully attacked and captured Ste. Honorine-La Chardonnerette (0970). The enemy's reaction, as expected, was vigorous and sharp; and a determined counter-attack by infantry and tanks created for a time a critical situation. But by nightfall the town was still firmly held by the Highlanders after many hours of fluctuating fighting. All three brigades of 51 (H) Div planned active patrols so as to induce the enemy to believe that future attacks were impending. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 23 Jun 44, Serials 53 and 108; 24 Jun, Serial 6)

608. Meanwhile, within 8 Cdn Inf Bde's area there had been a continual influx of troops of 8 Corps who were making ready for Operation "EPSOM". As early as 20 Jun, officers of 15 (S) Div were visiting battalion localities to conduct preliminary reconnaissance. (W.Ds., Q.C.R. of C., 20-21 Jun 44: and N. Shore R., 21 Jun 44; see also Martin, *op cit*, pp 31 ff) In preparation for the advance of this division through their areas, the Canadian troops commenced lifting their protective minefields. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Jun 44) The great concentra-

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\*A map illustrating 8 Corps advance during Operation "EPSOM" is attached as Appendix "P".

tion of troops, vehicles and guns\*, which soon spread even into forward areas, caused the brigade commander to order that "enemy infiltration be countered by most vigorous means" (Ibid, June 1944: Appx 2, Patrol Instructions, 22 Jun 44). Special fighting patrols of platoon strength were despatched by N. Shore R. and Q.C.R. of C. on their respective battalion fronts. These were charged with the task of capturing prisoners for purposes of identification, of killing enemy sentries, and of pinpointing enemy mortar, machine-gun and rifle positions so that these could be subsequently engaged by heavy weapons. (W.D., Q.C.R. of C., June 1944: Appx 84, Patrol Instructions, 23 Jun 44) Satisfaction was expressed over the results obtained by these patrols which were said to have "kept the enemy on the jump" (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944; Appx 2, Daily Int Summary, 24 Jun 44). On 25 Jun, General Keller received from the commander of 8 Corps a letter of appreciation for the work done by these special fighting patrols:

My Dear General,

Thank you so much for all the help you are giving my Corps and in particular the 15th (Scottish) Division who can't say enough in gratitude.

I know these reconnaissances must have been the devil for your troops and I can only say how sorry I am that they should have caused casualties.

I hope, and believe, all will go well in our operation provided the German has not brought up a number of formations which we know nothing about.

Yours ever

R.A. O'Connor

(W.D., N. Shore R., June 1944; Appx 2)

On the eastern sector of the divisional front, patrolling likewise continued to be the most important task undertaken by the battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, until such time as preparations should be complete for the mounting of Operation "ABERLOUR". It is easy to underestimate the

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\*15 (S) Div, attacking on a two brigade front, had under command the 31st Tank Brigade, two squadrons of "Flails" and a squadron of A.V.R.Es. "The attack was to be supported by close on 900 guns, which included the guns of three cruisers and a monitor. In the barrage alone 344 field and medium guns were to be employed" (Martin, op cit, p. 32).

importance of what was described merely as "normal patrol activity". Of all the enemy-held positions facing the division, Gruchy and Duron were given most attention; each night brought fresh information about the enemy in and around these two shattered villages. (See W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944; Appx 4, Patrol Reports) The knowledge of the enemy thus laboriously pieced together did much to build up the Intelligence appreciation of his strength and dispositions.

609. The attack by 49 (WR) Div, which was the second in the series of operations and as such the immediate prelude to "EPSOM", began at 0415 hrs, 25 Jun. The first objective of 49 (WR) Div, it will be remembered, was the capture of Rauray, a small village on a spur overlooking Cheux. The following day it was to seize Noyers, thus protecting the flank of 8 Corps. "Concentrations and a barrage from nine field and four medium regiments supported the attack, plus two companies of 4.2" mortars, who neutralized enemy pockets on the flanks" ((HS) 215421.013 (D11): 21 Army Group, Immediate Reports - "Immediate Report No. 9; Capture of Fontenay-le-Pesnel by 49 Inf Div 25/26 June 1944") Three Canadian field regiments provided a smoke screen for the attack. (W.D., H.Q.R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jun 44 and Appx 5) Heavy mist condition, supplemented by smoke, restricted visibility to a minimum. However,

The enemy too was finding conditions difficult. The Lincolns came upon about eight armoured cars and half-tracks which were trying to break harbour and encountered a German officer in the leading vehicle who was trying to rally his men by blowing a bugle. A 36 grenade put an end to this musical interlude....

("Capture of Fontenay-le-Pesnel by 49 Inf Div....")

610. The attacking forces met with severe enemy resistance in Fontenay, and by evening confused tank and infantry fighting was still going on in the town making it impossible for the moment to advance against Rauray. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jun 44, Serial 199) Fontenay was finally cleared by the morning of 26 Jun and tanks of 8 Armd Bde, supporting 49 (WR) Div, pushed on to Rauray. That evening, after a day of heavy fighting, tanks and infantry reached the outskirts of Rauray. It was not until 28 Jun, however, that Rauray was firmly consolidated, too late to be of great use to 8 Corps' attack. Sufficient progress had been made by 49 (WR) Div by the evening of 25 Jun however, to allow Operation "EPSOM" to commence the following day.

611. For the opening phase of operation "EPSOM", 8 Corps numbered upwards of 60,000 strong and was composed of the following formations:

Headquarters 8 Corps and Corps troops  
11 Armoured Division  
15 (Scottish) Infantry Division  
43 (Wessex) Infantry Division  
4 Armoured Brigade  
31 Tank Brigade  
8 A.G.R.A.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 27)

The 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division was really part of 12 Corps, and was the first formation of that corps to arrive in France. It was placed under command of 8 Corps since the second armoured division of 8 Corps (the Guards Armoured Division) had not yet received their tanks. 4 Armd Bde and 31 Tk Bde, however, placed under command 8 Corps for the operation, more than made up for the missing armour of Gds Armd Div.

612. The intention of 8 Corps was to

...break out of the existing bridgehead on the front of 3 Canadian Division with a view to the Corps forcing crossings over

- (a) The River Odon
- (b) The River Orne

so that at a subsequent date the Corps can be positioned on the high ground north-east of Bretteville-sur-Laize, thereby dominating the exits from Caen to the south.

(Ibid, p. 28)

The operation was to take place in successive phases:

- (a) Phase I  
The capture of the area Evrecy-Esquay and the seizure or construction of crossings over the River Orne.
- (b) Phase II  
Positioning 8 Corps on the high ground north-east of Bretteville-sur-Laize, from which area it was in a position to exploit towards Falaise if called upon to do so.

(Ibid)

613. The opening attack was to be launched by 15 (S) Div, which was to secure the crossings over the River Odon between Gavrus and Verson. The first objectives of the division were the villages of St. Mauvieu and Cheux. When these had been gained, 11 Armd Div was to attempt to rush the crossings over the River Odon and establish itself east of the river. If this was impossible for the armour, 15 (S) Div would undertake the task. If for any reason the crossings over the river were destroyed or unusable, units under command of the division were responsible for constructing sufficient crossings for the

passage of the armour. After crossing the Odon, 11 Armd Div was to be prepared first to dominate the area Evrecy-Esquay and then to force a passage over the River Orne. 43 (W) Div "provided the firm base for the Corps, so necessary in an operation of this nature, and was later to relieve 15 (Scottish) Division in the area of Cheux and St. Mauvieu" (Ibid, p. 30).

614. 8 Corps was given strong artillery support. Within the corps, "a total of 240 field guns, 16 medium guns, 16 heavy guns and 24 A.A. guns" would support the operation (Ibid). Giving additional weight to this firepower would be nine field, two medium and one heavy regiments from 1 Corps and four field, four medium and one heavy regiments from 30 Corps. (Ibid, pp 30-31) All field regiments of 3 Cdn Inf Div were involved in either the opening barrage or in counter battery tasks of Operation "EPSOM". (W.Ds., 12, 13, 14, and 19 Cdn Fd Regt, 25 Jun 44) Three cruisers and a monitor were also to fire in support of "EPSOM". Supplementing the artillery, a heavy programme of air attacks by heavy, medium and fighter bombers had been planned. As we have seen (supra, para 596), because of weather conditions in England immediately prior to the attack, it was impossible for the Air Force to carry out all its commitments. The fighters and fighter-bombers of 83 Group, R.A.F., however, operating from the airstrips and landing grounds\* on the beachhead in Normandy, were fortunately unaffected by adverse weather conditions. (Jackson, op cit, p. 31)

615. At 0730 hrs, preceded by an intense artillery barrage, 15 (S) Div commenced to advance on a narrow front from Le Mesnil-Patry to Norrey-en-Bessin with 46 (Highland) Bde on the right and 44 (Lowland) Bde on the left. (This account of Operation "EPSOM" is taken from Jackson, op cit, pp 32 ff; Martin, op cit, pp 29 ff; and A History of 11 Armoured Division, op cit, pp 14 ff) Although its supporting armour was delayed, the infantry made steady progress against enemy opposition which stiffened as built-up areas were reached. By midday, the two leading battalions of 46 (H) Bde were engaged in clearing Cheux and Le Haut du Bosq. At about the same time, the leading units of 44 (L) Bde were engaged in similar tasks in St. Mauvieu and La Gaule, but it was evening before St. Mauvieu was cleared.

616. With 15 (S) Div thus on its objective, 29 Armd Bde (of 11 Armd Div), which had followed up the Scottish advance, attempted to advance through the Cheux area to Gavrus and Tourmauville -- two small villages a few miles southeast of Cheux on the south side of the Odon River.

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\*By 27 Jun, there were ten airfields in the British sector of the Normandy front. (Royal Engineers Battlefield Tour, Normandy To The Seine, op cit, p. 48)

Stiff opposition from enemy tanks and infantry south of Cheux prevented the armour from rushing the Odon crossings. At 1800 hrs, therefore, the reserve brigade of 15 (S) Div (i.e., 227 (Highland) Bde) set out to secure Grainville-sur-Odon and Colleville in an armour-supported attack. Colleville was reached, although not occupied, that evening, but a combination of enemy resistance, rainy weather and approaching darkness resulted in the main weight of the operation being postponed until the following morning.

617. Canadian field artillery had maintained its supporting fire throughout the day, engaging targets of opportunity after the initial timed programme had been completed. 13 Cdn Fd Regt answered 35 calls for fire, and at one period during the day the detachments served their guns for four hours without "Stand Easy" once being ordered. (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 26 Jun 44) Their labours went on unabated the next day, commencing with a fire plan of 100 rounds per gun on Carpiquet\* from 12, 13 and 14 Fd Regts, R.C.A., and 6 Fd Regt, R.A. (W.Ds., 12, 13 and 14 Cdn Fd Regts, 27 Jun 44) According to C.R.A., 15 (S) Div,\*\* the Canadian gunners did some "damn fine shooting" (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 26 Jun 44).

618. 8 Corps' intention for 27 Jun remained the development of the original plan.

At first light 15 (Scottish) Division supported by 29 Armoured Brigade and two battalions of 31 Tank Brigade was to resume the advance and establish a bridgehead over the River Odon. As soon as crossings had been secured, 11 Armoured Division would pass through the Scots ... first dominate the general area of Evrecy and Esquay and subsequently force a passage over the River Orne four miles to the south.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 37)

The left assaulting battalion of 227 (H) Bde (leading the Scottish offensive) ran into stiff enemy opposition south and west of Cheux immediately after leaving its start line and was unable to advance. The armour supporting the

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\*The Canadian shoot on Carpiquet was ordered to compensate for the failure of R.A.F. medium bombers to attack Carpiquet that morning as planned. Weather once again grounded the aircraft. (Jackson, op cit, p. 37)

\*\*The C.R.A. of 15 (S) Div was badly wounded on 27 Jun when he "manned a 17-pounder A tk gun which he had found in the offing and had taken on ...[a] tank" (Martin, op cit, p. 42)



infantry drove back small enemy armoured attacks. "During the morning a number of reports had come in of 'Tiger' tanks operating on various parts of the front, and as these tanks were always organized in corps tank battalions it was clear that the enemy was concerned to do everything possible to halt the advance" (Ibid, p. 38). British tanks, however, reached the outskirts of Grainville that afternoon and held on there for several hours until the infantry arrived. On the left, the brigade met with less resistance, and shortly after noon, Scottish infantry were in Tourville, thus cutting the main Caen - Villers-Bocage highway. That afternoon a bridge over the Odon was seized and a small bridgehead established by 2 Argylls. The bridgehead was immediately reinforced by tanks from 11 Armd Div. During the night the bulk of 11 Armd Div's infantry brigade (159 Inf Bde) moved into the bridgehead along with additional armour from 29 Armd Bde.

619. The other two brigades of 15 (S) Div had been relieved by 43 (W) Div early on the morning of 27 Jun. Against one of the 43 (W) Div's battalions there

... came at 0930 hours the sharpest and heaviest armoured counter attack yet experienced, delivered by a full company of the 2 Panzer Division 'Panthers'. Striking from the west, this attack penetrated Cheux itself, knocking out several 6 and 17-pr anti-tank guns and inflicting some personnel casualties ... before it was beaten off .... Smaller enemy thrusts were also repulsed from the east.

(Ibid, p. 39)

4 Armd Bde was given the responsibility of protecting the western flank of the salient against similar attacks. 29 Armd Bde, meanwhile, protected the southeastern flank. 46 (H) Bde, after reorganizing north of Cheux, moved up in the wake of 227 (H) Bde to 'thicken up' the Colleville-Grainville area. Summing up the day's fighting, the corps' historian writes;

The increasingly spirited German counter attacks, the continued presence of the enemy in various bitterly defended localities west of the river, the fact that no bridges had been destroyed and, most significant of all, the stream of traffic towards the Odon battlefield, revealed by last light Tac R, showed clearly that the enemy proposed to make a still bigger effort to halt 8 Corps.

(Ibid, p. 40)

620. Early on 28 Jun, an armoured force from 29 Armd Bde left the Odon bridgehead and established itself on the crest of Hill 112 (9562) (a flat topped feature dominating the Odon valley and the country to the north) about a mile southeast of the bridgehead. Although additional armour and the infantry were sent to the feature during the day, it was impossible to drive the enemy from

its southern slopes or from Esquay, a small town between Hill 112 and Hill 113 (a somewhat similar though higher feature over a mile to the southwest).

621. While this engagement south of the Odon was in progress, the Corps Commander, apprehensive over the possibility of an attack from the west, determined to improve his position north of the Odon before ordering 29 Arm'd Bde to advance to the Orne. This task was undertaken by 15 (S) Div and 43 (W) Div, the latter with 32 (Guards) Bde now under command. At the same time, 2 Argylls extended the Odon bridgehead westward by seizing Gavrus, thus securing another crossing over the Odon. Contact was made with troops north of the river that evening, but the Gavrus-Cheux route was still not clear. In the evening an enemy counter-attack with a battalion of tanks against 29 Arm'd Bde was beaten back, but by last light neither side had full possession of Hill 112. During the day, strong resistance was met (from 2 SS Pz Div) as attempts were made to improve and extend the western flank of the corps. The eastern flank was somewhat less active. The enemy had pulled back to a line running approximately from Carpiquet airfield to the Odon, but enemy armour prevented 8 Corps from extending its boundary east of the Mouen-Marcelet line.

622. The fighting on 28 Jun had improved 8 Corps position. The flanks of the narrow corps salient had been widened and strengthened. On the left rear 8 Cdn Inf Bde took over the Marcelet area (infra, para 628), while on the right rear 49 (WR) Div was secure on the Rauray feature. The Odon bridgehead had also been improved, and many pockets of resistance north of the river had been eliminated. 12 SS Pz Div had suffered severely, but it was quite apparent also that Operation "EPSOM" was achieving one of its most important objectives -- "that of attracting enemy armoured strength to the British sector" (Ibid, p. 44).

623. The inability of 30 Corps to advance to Noyers and so give stronger protection to 8 Corps' western flank left the corps salient in an exposed position at a time when the possibility of a major enemy counter-attack loomed increasingly larger. On 29 Jun, therefore, 8 Corps went on the defensive. A general consolidation of the area was ordered with particular stress being laid on anti-tank defence and the positioning of the armour. At this point, it would be pertinent to review the situation in the rear of 8 Corps, i.e., the operations of 3 Cdn and 3 Brit Inf Divs.

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624. The entry of 8 Corps into the battle for

Caen had at once reduced the front of 3 Cdn Inf Div by half its length and deprived 8 Cdn Inf Bde of an operational role. The boundary between 8 Corps and 1 Corps now ran south along the Chiromme Rivolet and thence southeast through Marcelet (9468) and Verson (9665). (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jun 44, Serial 101) The relief of 8 Cdn Inf Bde by 130 Inf Bde of 43 (W) Div, as previously arranged, was carried out on 27 Jun, the day following the opening of the attack by 8 Corps. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 26 Jun 44 and H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Jun 44) The new brigade area selected for the former lay around Bouanville (9776), at some distance from the enemy. The move of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, which began in the early afternoon, was completed by 1830 hrs, by which time Q.O.R. of C. were in Cairon, R. de Chaud in Le Vey and N. Shore R. and brigade headquarters in Bouanville. (Ibid; W.Ds. of battalions, 27 Jun 44) 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts were likewise withdrawn east of the new corps boundary. (W.Ds. 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts 27 Jun 44) It was understood that the brigade was to remain in this area until the time came for the attack on Carpiquet. To the infantry the new location seemed like a rest area, and bath parades were soon organized. But the enemy, still on the alert, shelled the vicinity of Cairon and some casualties were sustained. (W.Ds. Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud, 28 Jun 44).

625. In preparation for its role in "ABERLOUR", arrangements were made for H.L.I. of C. to move forward into Les Buissons near the proposed start line. This move was made after dark on 27 Jun. (W.D., H.L.I. of C. 27 Jun 44) Once again there arose the question of guarding the vulnerable entries into the rear areas, for the removal of the battalion from its position astride the road (9977) left "nothing between Caen and Southampton except some LCTs, the Cdn Army HQ, a refugee camp and a mobile bath unit" (W.D. H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 26 Jun 44) It should be noted however that the area Anguerny - Colomby-sur-Thaon - Basly was at this time being occupied by 71 Inf Bde of 53 Inf Div. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jun 44, Serial 108; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 27 Jun 44) The position vacated by H.L.I. of C. was, moreover, now taken up by "B" Squadron, 7 Cdn Recce Regt. (Ibid)

626. At 1530 hrs on 27 Jun, 8 Brit Inf Bde commenced Operation "MITTEN", the preliminary attack to clear La Bijude and Epron. It was soon discovered that enemy opposition was too formidable, especially in the area of the Château de la Londe (032737). No substantial progress was made during the night or the following morning, the enemy bitterly resisting every effort of the British brigade with its armoured support to penetrate their defences. As a result, the Corps Commander decided to cancel Operation "ABERLOUR" during the afternoon of 28 Jun. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 28 Jun 44; Serial 6; "G Ops Log - 3 Brit Inf Div", 27-28 Jun 44) 9 Cdn Inf Bde once more returned to its old defensive

positions in Villons-les-Buissons and Vieux Caen. Despite their very natural disappointment at thus seeing plans for offensive action evaporating, the troops were aware that the decision not to continue with the operation under the circumstances was a wise one. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and Nth N.S. Highrs, 28 Jun 44) 9 Cdn Inf Bde, which had been under command of 3 Brit Inf Div since 1800 hrs, 27 Jun, reverted to its parent formation. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 27 Jun 44, Serial 63 and 28 Jun 44, Serial 125).

627. With the cancellation of "ABERLOUR", the entire Corps plan to clear the enemy from his positions around Caen underwent thorough revision. In the evening of 28 Jun word was received at H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde to suspend further preparations for the attack on Carpiquet, which was now clearly an impossibility from the north. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Jun 44) The revised plan, which was issued soon after, specified that the corps' intention was to be achieved by three divisional attacks: (1) the capture of Carpiquet by 3 Cdn Inf Div (Operation "WINDSOR"); (2) the capture of Lebisey and the high ground northeast of Caen by 3 Brit Inf Div (Operation "SHERWOOD"); (3) an attack by 51 (H) Div from its bridgehead east of the River Orne to clear Colombelles (0870) and the factory area (0769). ((HS) 235B3.016(D2): 3 Brit Inf Div O.O. No. 3, 20 Jun 44. The date should read 29 Jun) The attack on Carpiquet was now visualized as being mounted by 8 Cdn Inf Bde from the west, i.e., from Marcelet (which had been occupied by 43 (W) Div), so that in effect the brigade should 'stand on the shoulders' of 8 Corps. D Day was to be 1 Jul. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "M", 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 3, 29 Jun 44) The date of "SHERWOOD" was then set at 2 Jul. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 29 Jun, Serial 49)

628. After the necessary conferences, the units of 8 Cdn Inf Bde commenced to move to the assembly area near Marcelet from which the attack had been mounted. (W.D. H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jun 44) Even while these moves were in progress, however, the first confused reports were being received of a powerful enemy counter-attack against the advanced units of 8 Corps near Grainville-sur-Odon. By evening it was reported that German tanks had broken through to Le Haut du Bosq. (Message Log, G.S.H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 29 Jun, Serial 109) Brigadier Blackader was hurriedly summoned to divisional headquarters where orders were issued for the regrouping of his brigade in a defensive position. Because the battalions were on the move the brigade commander took personal charge of the matter and at once proceeded to allocate areas of responsibility. By 2330 hrs, 8 Cdn Inf Bde had established its new dispositions without confusion. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jun 44) Each battalion prepared a "tank-proof locality" to await possible further enemy penetration: N. Shore R. in La Villeneuve, R. de Chaud in St. Mauvieu and Q.O.R. of C. in Marcelet (W.Ds. of battalions named, 29 Jul 44)

10 Cdn Armd Regt, which was to have supported the attack on Carpiguet, took up a position near Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse. (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Jun 44)

629. By the time these preparations had been completed, the expected German counter-attack had been launched, met and defeated. At this point therefore, it would be appropriate to review the effect of Operation "EPSOM" on the enemy and his reaction to it.

630. As we have seen (supra, paras 572 ff), the build-up of the enemy during June was restricted (by the operations of the Allied Air Forces) to a far greater extent than that of the Allies, whose build-up was restricted by weather. One major result of this was that Rommel was forced to commit his panzer divisions into battle piecemeal to contain the aggressive Allied corps in the bridgehead. Moreover, apprehensive over the possibility of a link-up between a second landing in the Pas de Calais and a breakout in the Caen sector, the great majority of German armour was concentrated on the British front. The tactical and strategical mismanagement of the German forces, and more especially of their panzer divisions, was due partly to Allied deceptive measures, partly to the burdensome German chain of command, and partly to General Montgomery who retained the initiative in his own hands. It should not be forgotten that the prime task of the Second Army was to protect the eastern flank of the American First Army. A major method of providing this protection was to draw German armour to the British front\* and so permit the American forces to operate with much greater freedom. This policy was stated by General Montgomery on 14 Jun in his letter to the Chief of the Imperial Staff (supra, para 530):

My general policy remains unchanged. It is as follows:

- (a) To increase and improve our own build-up through the beaches.
- (b) To do everything possible to hamper and delay the enemy build-up, by air action and other means.
- (c) To pull the Germans on to Second British Army, and fight them there, so that First US Army can carry out its task the easier.

(Liberation Campaign North West Europe, Ch III, Book 1, p. 42; see also "Operations-21 Army Group", Directive from C-in-C, 21 Army Group to Commanders, Second British Army and First US Army, 30 Jun 44 and (in same folio) "Notes on Conference given by C-in-C 21 Army Group on 22 Jun 44")

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\*Writing on the same theme, General Eisenhower states: "Our strategy ... was to hit hard in the east in order to contain the enemy main strength there while consolidating our position in the west. The resulting struggle around Caen, which seemed to cost so much blood for such small territorial gains, was thus an essential factor in insuring our ultimate success" (Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 30).

631. Operation "EPSOM" had somewhat the same effect of attracting and holding enemy armour on the British front as had previous operations by 1 and 30 Corps. A week prior to "EPSOM", Field Marshal Rommel sent to Panzer Group West (then almost recovered from its 10 Jun disaster) two map studies, each indicating a possible method of attacking the Allied bridgehead. One dealt with an attack in the event of the Calvados front remaining more or less stable, while the second dealt with an attack to be considered in the event of an Allied push in the direction of Falaise-Paris. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 102) The attack considered for a stable front would be launched in two phases:

In the first phase 47 Pz Corps and 2 SS Pz Corps\* were to break through across the road Caen-Balleroy whilst the enemy north of Caen was being kept pinned down.

In the second phase the combined armoured forces were to launch an attack with Bayeux as the focal point. This to drive a wedge into Montgomery's forces at the boundary between Second British Army and First American Army. Subsequently the main forces were to move westwards, 1 SS Pz Corps eastwards.

(Ibid)

On the following day, 20 Jun,

... O.B. West informed the Panzer Group of the receipt of an OKW Order ... according to which the Fuehrer desired an attack with the combined forces of 1,2,9,10 SS Pz, 2 Pz and Pz Lehr Div to destroy the Third American Corps in the Balleroy area. Prior to the attack it would be necessary to relieve 2 Pz Div and Pz Lehr Div with the first infantry divisions to reach the area. In addition the enemy east of the Orne was to be destroyed in order to free the G.H.Q. troops concerned for the main attack.

(Ibid, para 104)

632. Of the attacking forces mentioned by Hitler, however, 1 SS (Leibstandarte) Pz Div and 2 SS Pz Corps

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\*At this time 47 Pz Corps had but one armoured formation under command - the 2nd Panzer Division. Its other panzer division had been placed in Seventh Army reserve on 17 Jun. (German Seventh Army Situation Map, 20 Jun 44; Report of the Commander, Panzer Group West, op cit, (Mid 43-5 Jul 44) p. 39) 2 SS Pz Corps, now nearing the battle area en route from the Eastern Front, consisted of 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs.

(supra, para 572) were just beginning to reach their assembly areas.\* Moreover, infantry replacements were still on the approach-march and experiencing great difficulty while running the Allied air blockade of the battle area.

633. On 24 Jun a conference was held between Generals von Geyr and Gause\*\* and the commanders of 47 Pz Corps, 1 SS Pz Corps and 2 SS Pz Corps, over the armoured attack ordered by the Fuehrer. The plan which emerged was not very dissimilar from the map study of an attack against a stable front suggested by Rommel a few days beforehand. Although the attack aimed at eliminating the Allied beachhead, General von Geyr believed that the primary task was "a matter of defeating 1 USA Army first of all as the weaker element" (Ibid, Appx "H", "Ops No. 111/44, dated 26 Jun 44-Panzer Group West to Army Group B"). Thus although the attack was to be launched on a broad front from Carpiquet to St. Lô, with "the heights on either side of Bayeux" as the objective, presumably the armour would then swing west against the American forces north of Caumont (Ibid). (It should be mentioned also that at this conference, Von Geyr made it plain that the plan of attack originated primarily with Hitler. Moreover, not only was it felt the armour would bog down in the face of Allied naval fire, but further, it was felt probable that 21 Pz, 12 SS Pz and Pz Lehr Divs, at the current rate of wastage, would scarcely be fit for defensive, much less offensive, operations (Ibid, para 108).)

634. By 25 Jun, the main body of 2 SS Pz Corps and about one half of 1 SS Pz Div had reached their concentration areas west of Paris. The infantry replacements were nearer the battle-field but still in no position to relieve the armoured formations around Caen. On the same day 49 (WR) Div launched its attack against Fontenay-le-Pesnel as a prelude to "EPSOM". 1 SS Pz Corps reported to O.B. West its inability to restore the situation with its own forces and requested the use of elements of 1 SS Pz Div. That evening permission was granted, and once more a familiar situation began to appear, that is, German assault formations were to be used piecemeal to plug gaps in the front caused by an enemy who retained the initiative. (Ibid, para 110)

635. The first day of "EPSOM" led the enemy to estimate, correctly, that the British attack

... might be the opening phase of an

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\*The assembly area of 2 SS Pz Corps at this time was approximately just north of the Falaise-Vire line positioned roughly between the British-American army boundary. (German Seventh Army Situation Map, 20 Jun 44)

\*\*Von Geyr's Chief of Staff

operation in east-south-easterly direction for a later push on Paris and with the immediate tactical goal of cutting off the Caen area.

(Ibid, para 111)

As the British drive gained momentum and the area of penetration deepened, all available elements of 1 SS Pz Div and 2 SS Pz Corps were ordered to the threatened area. Meanwhile, stop-gap battalions from 2 Pz Div and 2 SS Pz Div were rushed to the area of the Odon bridgehead late in the evening of 27 Jun in order to aid the badly battered 12 SS Pz Div. Up to this time, the only infantry reaching the front were elements of 16 GAF Div which entered the line facing the southern portion of the Orne bridgehead. However, 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs were now close at hand, although it was becoming very apparent that there would be no time to marshal the troops and properly mount the attack suggested by General von Geyr.

636. It had been planned that Panzer Group West, commanded by von Geyr, would assume command of the German forces between the Rivers Seine and Drome on the afternoon of 28 Jun. This would place him in command of one of the most important sectors of the Seventh Army. Moreover, von Geyr was not to be responsible to the commander of the Seventh Army, but to Rommel, commanding Army Group "B". Before this plan could be made operative, however, the commander of the Seventh Army, Col-Gen Dollman, died of a heart attack. (Ibid, para 116) He was replaced, on Hitler's orders, by the commander of 2 SS Pz Corps, General Hausser, whose corps was to be used in the attack against the Allied bridgehead the next day. This awkward situation was made more complicated by the departure of Field Marshals von Rundstedt and Rommel following a hurried summons to Berchtesgaden. Thus

General von Geyr had barely announced his assumption of command over 1 SS Pz Corps, 2 SS Pz Corps, 47 Pz Corps and 86 Corps\*when he received word not only of General Hausser's appointment to the command of Seventh Army but also of the Panzer Group's temporary subordination [during the absence of the two Field Marshals] to Seventh Army.

(Ibid, para 117)

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* 1 SS Pz Corps:	1 SS Pz Div	
	12 SS Pz Div	
2 SS Pz Corps:	9 SS Pz Div	
	10 SS Pz Div	
47 Pz Corps:	Pz Lehr Div	
	2 Pz Div	
	276 Inf Div	[en route]
	277 Inf Div	[en route]
86 Corps:	711 Inf Div	
	346 Inf Div	
	21 Pz Div	
	16 GAF Div	[en route]

(A.H.Q. Report  
No. 50, para 117)



This, in effect, made Von Geyr responsible to one who, a day previously, was to have been one of his corps commanders. Meanwhile, 1 SS Pz Corps had informed the Panzer Group of its inability to cope with the British thrust even with the help of 1 SS Pz Div. It had been planned that

... during the night of 28-29Jun, 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs and two projector brigades would assemble and, attacking across the Gavrus-Noyers line, recapture the Baron-Mouen-Cheux area, subsequently destroying the enemy on the near side of the Caen - Villers-Bocage road.

(Ibid, para 118)

But 1 SS Pz Corps was now informed that this attack could not now take place until the following day. This delay not only gave the British corps commander time to take the necessary steps to prepare for the armoured attack which his air reconnaissance warned was in the preparatory stage (supra, para 621), but moreover, clearing weather during 28-29 Jun gave the Royal Air Force an excellent opportunity to strike at the concentrations of enemy armoured vehicles which jammed the roads leading to the battlefield.

637. Despite these difficulties, the attack by 2 SS Pz Corps got underway early in the afternoon of 29 Jun. The attack is described by 8 Corps' historian as follows:

North of the River Odon, 9 SS Panzer Division made the best progress, for two companies of 8 Royal Scots were quickly over-run...and heavy fighting ensued, which involved, in addition to 44 (Lowland) Brigade, 31 Tank Brigade and 4 Armoured Brigade. The complementary attack south of the river by 10 SS Panzer Division was so disrupted by shelling that it never got going at all, though a number of small tank and infantry sorties were launched against 29 Armoured Brigade from the Esquay area, and there was some localized but heavy fighting there. However, the main attack was held, and by last light the enemy had been driven back and the situation restored. Some Panther tanks did nevertheless get through as far as Cheux where they were destroyed. A threat to the eastern flank failed to materialize at the same time, since a concentration of approximately forty tanks which had moved from the outskirts of Caen to Carpiquet was shot up by R.A.F. Typhoons and did not venture to make any further movement.

(Jackson, op cit, pp 50-51)

638. During the evening of 29 Jun, the new commander of 2 SS Pz Corps, General Bittrich, was instructed to pursue the attack during the night as long as his forces were able to do so. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 118) On the British side, meanwhile,

...General Dempsey, believing these attacks to be rehearsals for a more co-ordinated effort on the following day, confirmed the [8] Corps Commander's appreciation of the general situation and ordered 8 Corps to consolidate in its present area. In addition, in view of the exposed position of 29 Armoured Brigade, he instructed that it was to be withdrawn north of the River Odon. The bridgehead was not, however, to be given up but indeed maintained at all costs by the infantry holding it, 159 and 129 Infantry Brigades.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 51)

639. The fighting during 30 Jun did little to change the position of either side. O.B. West reported:

After several hours of fluctuating fighting the attack by 2 SS Pz Corps was smothered by superior enemy forces in the line north of Esquay-Gavrus-Grainville. Our forces suffered grievous losses. It is intended to continue the attack during the night 30 Jun/1 Jul.

(A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 120)

Nevertheless, it was apparent to the German field commanders that the counter-attack was a failure, and during the day the commander of Panzer Group West sent in a report recommending "the evacuation of Caen North and the bridgehead" (Ibid). For further information regarding the results of this proposal and also of the outcome of the Berchtesgaden meeting, see A.H.Q. Report No. 50, paras 119 ff.

640. The day's operations had also showed that "EPSOM" had now "achieved its maximum offensive usefulness..." (Jackson, op cit, p. 53). Almost all of the German panzer formations earmarked for the attack to split the British-American forces had been drawn to the British front and committed piecemeal. The mass of armour facing the Second Army, however, still presented a serious threat to the Army in general and 8 Corps in particular. 8 Corps, therefore, regrouped itself so as to withstand further attacks. At the same time, the operations which had been planned for 1 Corps ("WINDSOR" and "SHERWOOD") were postponed. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jun 44, Serial 11)

641. In the Canadian sector, defensive preparations were also underway. On the afternoon of 30 Jun, General Keller issued further instructions for the reorganization of 3 Cdn Inf Div against a renewal of enemy attacks from the east, south or southeast. 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes were directed to continue to hold their present areas, the former placing one battalion in La Villeneuve, on the Caen-Boyeux road. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to withdraw once more into divisional reserve in the Bouanville area, from which position it was

to be prepared to restore any loss of ground in either of the two forward brigade areas. An additional reserve was to be furnished by 2 Cdn Armd Bde, which would be concentrated around Colomby-sur-Thaon. ((HS) 235C3.016 (D13): 3 Cdn Inf Div, Notes on O Gp held 1430 hrs, 30 Jun 44) In fulfilment of these directions, Regina Rif relieved N. Shore R. in La Villeneuve and the latter rejoined the remainder of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, now once more established near Bouenville. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Jun 44) These defensive arrangements led to extensive regroupings of 7 Cdn Inf Bde. R. Wpg Rif moved to Bray, which had been vacated by Regina Rif, and 7 Cdn Recce Regt (now risen to three squadrons under brigade command) took over the former battalion's positions in Lasson and Rosel. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 6, Confirmatory Notes, Bde Comd's Conference, 30 Jun 44; W.Ds. of units named, 30 Jun 44)

642. The disposition of 3 Cdn Inf Div on this date is illustrated by the map at Appndix "P", which gives also an approximate indication of the front line held by flanking formations. It demonstrates more effectively than lengthy description the gradual tightening of the Allied grip on the German salient around Caen.

643. At the same time, while anti-tank defences were further improved, a heavy blow was struck at the enemy forces still remaining in the area. The air attack of 30 Jun against a concentration of German armour at Villers-Bocage marks the first use of heavy bombers in direct support of the ground forces on a target situated in the immediate vicinity of the enemy's front line. (Bomber Command Quarterly Review, No. 9, Apr-Jun 44) Long after the attack, dense clouds of smoke drifted far over the country side, reducing visibility to a few hundred yards and puzzling the forward troops, who reported the presence of "mist, fog or smoke" (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jun 44, Serial 88; W.D., Hist Offr, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jun 44).

FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

644. It will be recalled that the "OVERLORD" plans respecting the employment of First Cdn Army were based on the principle that that formation would remain in the United Kingdom until the bridgehead should be firmly established (Supra, para 39). It was intended that Second Army, comprising eventually 1, 30, 8 and 12 Corps, should first reach a line extending from the sea along the River Dives through Argences, and thence to the high ground near Falaise. These objectives, provisionally estimated to require three weeks of operations, had not been reached by 30 Jun owing to factors which we have already examined. As yet only three corps (1, 30 and 8) were in action, and with 12 Corps still in the process of building up it became unlikely that First Cdn Army could assume an immediate operational role.

645. Earlier in the month it had appeared, however, that the concentration of First Cdn Army in Normandy would proceed as planned. On 14 Jun, Tactical H.Q. left Headley Court, Leatherhead, Surrey, for its marshalling area, arriving on 17 Jun in France to establish itself at Amblie (9480). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, June 1944) On 18 Jun, Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, G.O.C.-in-C., left Portsmouth with a small party aboard H.M.C.S. Algonquin. Later in the day he landed in Normandy on MIKE Sector, where less than two weeks before 7 Cdn Inf Bde had made its assault. During the days following his arrival, General Crerar found time to visit the troops of 3 Cdn Inf Div, 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 1 Cdn Para Bn. (W.D., Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, June 1944) At 2400 hrs on 19 Jun, Main and Rear H.Q. First Cdn Army were closed in the United Kingdom and at the same moment opened (theoretically) at Amblie. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, 19 Jun 44) But the actual moves of these headquarters to France were soon to be postponed, at first owing to the gale (which began on 19 Jun) and subsequently because it was decided that the operational situation did not yet permit the introduction of another army.

646. At a series of conferences at his headquarters, General Montgomery, C.-in-C., 21 Army Group, explained to General Crerar why it had become necessary to "phase back" the concentration of the Canadian Army in Normandy. Briefly, the reason for the postponement was that until Second Army had been fully brought up to strength and had completed its planned expansion of the bridgehead area there was simply not room in which to deploy another army with its vast complement of army troops. (W.D., Lt-Gen Crerar, June 1944: Appendices "H" and "I") On 24 Jun, therefore, it was announced that further moves of H.Q. First Cdn Army from the United Kingdom were postponed indefinitely, but that Tactical H.Q. would remain in France. In consequence, Main and Rear H.Q. were closed on the continent at 0001 hrs, 26 Jun, and re-opened simultaneously at Headley Court. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, 26 Jun) For the time being, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde would remain the only Canadian formations engaged in Normandy and would continue to function under British command. The grouping of Second Army at the end of June is outlined at Appendix "E".

NORMANDY 30 JUN

647. A study of the maps illustrating the British Advances up to 30 Jun (Appendices "K" to "P") indicates the progress made by the British forces during the first 24 days of battle in France. From a review of the month's operations one can observe a number of broad patterns or phases of the struggle and see in them the events which were to lead to the eventual success of "OVERLORD".

648. The plan of the invasion, in all of its aspects, had been generally sound. The long, hard months of training and experimentation in the United Kingdom produced a winning combination of fire power and assault technique on the beaches of Normandy which crumbled the 'Atlantic Wall' and gained the Allies a foothold in France. Most important was the strategical and tactical surprise achieved. The success of the sea and airborne assault was thus made even brighter by the comparatively small number of casualties incurred.

649. Once ashore the first problem of the troops was to connect the beachheads into one continuous bridgehead and to expand that bridgehead inland. This phase of the battle lasted approximately a week and was fought, in large measure, by the assault troops themselves. It was a critical period of hard and continuous fighting. Enemy armoured counter-attacks were beaten back, rear areas were cleared of enemy strongpoints and consolidated, and ground was wrested from the enemy as Allied troops pressed inland. By 11 Jun the bridgehead was secure. The build-up, although delayed, provided General Montgomery with sufficient means to retain the initiative. The enemy, by accepting the Allied deception scheme, was placed at a disadvantage which together with Allied air superiority, severely restricted his fighting efficiency and potentiality.

650. The second phase of the operations was carried out mainly by the build-up formations. This period, which lasted throughout the remainder of the month, saw the bridgehead expanded and the defeat of a major enemy effort to split and defeat the Allied forces. During this phase the American forces met with greater success than the British. The Cherbourg peninsula was cut at its base on 18 Jun and First U.S. Army captured Cherbourg itself eight days later. British thrusts to Villers-Bocage and south of Caen, although they gained ground, were blunted by enemy armoured formations gathered around Caen. It was the concentration of German armour on the British front, however, which gave the Americans the opportunity to manoeuvre and the security on their front which allowed them to gain the successes they did.

651. If the territorial gains of the Allied forces by 30 Jun were not as extensive as the Allied commanders had hoped (and as the public expected), the German reaction to the assault and subsequent operations followed an anticipated pattern. The enemy had tried to throw the assault

troops back into the sea on D Day, he had tried to prevent the link-up of the bridgeheads, he had tried to halt the expansion of the bridgeheads and the capture of a major port, and he had tried to interrupt and stop the stream of reinforcements and supplies to Normandy by his air, naval and rocket attacks. In all these attempts he had failed. Battered by the Allied Air Forces, bewildered by the Allied deception scheme, and bedevilled by the chaotic orders of Hitler, the German forces in Normandy were committed piecemeal to a battleground where the enemy had the initiative and was able, in great part, to mold German tactics and strategy to serve his own purposes. With German armour concentrated on the British front, the stage was now set for the break-out by the First U.S. Army whose lines were to swing like a door with its hinge on Caen.

652. The three weeks' fighting in Normandy had made veterans out of the 'green' and untried Canadian troops who had landed on D Day. In that short time they had experienced a great deal -- the assault from the sea on the coastal fortifications, the armoured counter-attacks, and finally the days and nights of active patrolling and frequent skirmishes of a 'static' front. In all these activities the Canadians had borne themselves well. Their success, both as individuals and as a formation, was second to none. This, however, was but the beginning. Nevertheless, it was a good beginning and foreshadowed a successful end.

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653. This report has been prepared by Lieutenant R.H. Roy. Considerable use has been made of C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147, written in 1945 by Major J.R. Martin, formerly Historical Officer, 3 Cdn Inf Div. In some cases certain sections of C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147 have been reproduced in this report in toto. This has occurred where further historical material has not come to light since Report No. 147 was written.

654. In order to meet the varying requirements of the text, which ranges from the strategic to the tactical level, maps of widely different scale have been used. In general, the following principle has been observed: where Allied operations as a whole were under discussion, small-scale maps (1:250,000) were found adequate; the 1:100,000 scale has served to cover the British assault area; and in the Canadian sector reference has been made to sheets both