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Directorate of History  
National Defence Headquarters  
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K1A 0K2

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ERRATA

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| Page | Para          | Line     | Correction   |
|------|---------------|----------|--|
| 39   | 103           | 2        | For "fifteen" read "about eight".  |
| 41   | 109           | 2        | For "southeast" read "southwest".  |
| 42   | 111           | 6        | For "twelve" read "about four".  |
| 48   | 120           | 10<br>11 | For "Canadinas" read "Canadians"<br>For "Becomming" read "becoming".           |
| 70   | Section Title |          | For "Cattenanuova" read "Catenanuova".   |
| 75   | 173           | 5        | For "west" read "east".  |
| 94   | 205           | 5        | For "west" read "east".  |
| 103  | 224           | 4<br>23  | For "Commanders'" read "Commander's".<br>For "Biancaville" read "Biancavilla". |
| 110  | 234           | 17       | Same. (So also in Montgomery message p. 111, para 235.)                        |
| 115  | 243           | 26       | For "east" read "west".  |
| 116  | 247           | 14       | For "Sicily" read "Italy".   |

There are also a number of slips in abbreviations in the references; e.g. "H.Q., G.S." instead of the reverse; in some places the form "H.Q." or "Main H.Q." is left out; etc.



SECRET

R E P O R T NO. 135

HISTORICAL OFFICER

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

Canadian Operations in Sicily, July - August 1943

Part II: The Execution of the Operation by 1 Cdn Inf Div  
Section 2: The Pursuit of the Germans from VIZZINI to ADERNO  
15 Jul - 6 Aug.

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S E C R E T

R E P O R T N O. 135

HISTORICAL OFFICER

C. CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

MAY 4 1945

Canadian Operations in Sicily, July - August 1943

Part II: The Execution of the Operation by 1 Cdn Inf Div.

Section 2 : The Pursuit of the Germans from VIZZINI to ADERNO  
15 Jul - 6 Aug.

1. Earlier reports have dealt with the planning of the Sicilian campaign and with the beginning of the actual operations. The first stage of the fighting, up to the withdrawal of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division into Corps Reserve during 13 and 14 Jul, was described in Report No. 127, entitled "The Assault and Initial Penetration Inland", while the separate operations of the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade were detailed in Report No. 132. The present Report will continue the Division's story throughout the rest of the campaign, and, since the Canadians did not operate in a vacuum, it will also briefly sketch the general progress of operations throughout the Army Group.

2. Before going any further, however, it is well to recall certain things to mind. In telling the story of so large a group of men as a division, much of the detail has to be taken for granted. This report seeks to give the broad picture of the operations within a reasonable compass. It goes down to battalion level, and in some cases to company level, but in all the actions described it should be remembered that it was what the individual man in each unit and sub-unit did that brought about the result recorded. The narrative may simply record that in the face of stiff opposition a certain feature was taken by the execution of some particular tactical movement. Such a sentence sums up the tactical picture, but the reader must use his imagination and realize that the job was only done by human beings displaying judgment, coolness and courage. Many such small actions resulted in awards for gallantry - one hundred such awards were earned in Sicily - but even the Battalion War Diaries rarely told the individual stories for they were too numerous; bravery becomes almost commonplace. In the following pages reference has been made to some of these deeds where they fit into the operational account, but many others must needs go unmentioned. The complete list of honours and awards for the campaign is, however, included in Appendix A. But for each brave deed recognized by an award there were doubtless several more that passed unnoticed. On the other hand, there were probably some occasions where lack of decision or adequate action lost the day, but that these were much less common is attested by the fact of the Division's speedy advance in the face of continual opposition.

3. Two other factors must also be kept constantly in mind, namely the great heat and the rugged nature of the country. Every day the Diaries make comments such as "hot and dry", "very hot", "hot again", etc. It was the same day after day, for the sky was always cloudless except for one sharp rainstorm of a few hours' duration. After almost a month on shipboard, not to mention over three years in the chilly climate of the British Isles, it took stamina to march and fight in this unending heat. Troop carrying vehicles were used as much as possible, but there was still much marching for the Canadians on the Eighth Army's outer



flank. Added to this, once they had left the Pachino Peninsula, the country was hilly or mountainous all the way, and the roads were always going up or down, twisting and turning. The hills were for the most part rugged and bare of trees, so there was little shade except in some valley orchards. Small towns were fairly numerous along the way but invariably full of squalor and bad smells. They were depressing places to pass through, for the Germans frequently chose them as standing points, with the result that many suffered badly from bombing and shelling, bringing in their wake misery and destruction for the civilian population. All this, however, is incidental to the main story of the operations; it is mentioned now because it is the background against which the military events took place.

4. A discussion of "Sources" is included in Appendix B, but it is well to note here that the source material is uneven. As a result, in places this account may lack details that might properly be expected, while elsewhere a fuller story is given of a matter of less importance. For example in a few cases there is little or no recorded information of the formation commander's intention or plan, but the units involved record their execution of the operation in detail; and this narrative must be shaped accordingly. There are also frequent discrepancies between various accounts, most of them minor and the result of lapses in memory by the various witnesses, telling their stories some time after the event. Where the discrepancy is serious, it is noted, but otherwise the most probable or the most commonly asserted version is taken. Finally, it must be stressed that since this is primarily the operational story of the campaign, it is mainly that of the infantry and the tanks. The more important feats of the "other arms" are mentioned, but much of their work must also be taken for granted. A casual reference to an artillery concentration or barrage covers the hard work of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of men, each playing his own part. The Engineers were always working, repairing roads, bridges, and other demolitions, etc. Signals operated 24 hours a day throughout, but it is their misfortune that, in this age, quick communications are taken for granted, and it is only their absence that is noted. The same is true of the Services - R.C.A.S.C., R.C.O.C., R.C.E.M.E., R.C.A.M.C., C. Pro C., etc. A separate report will deal briefly with the work of the supporting arms and with the "A" and "Q" story, but any detailed or technical account must be left to the various Corps' own historians and to specialized studies.

5. By 15 Jul the Allied Armies had obtained a good foothold all around the Southeastern corner of Sicily, and were rapidly penetrating inland. (1) The Italian coastal divisions, and to a lesser extent, the two Italian field divisions engaged, were disintegrating or had already done so. It was becoming apparent that the only real resistance would be from the limited number of German troops in the island, which by the end of the first week of fighting were almost the equivalent of four divisions. The Hermann Goering (Armoured) Division which had only arrived the previous month had originally been operating in two groups on a wide front between GELA and CATANIA. The group which had counter-attacked unsuccessfully against the Americans in the GELA region on 11 Jul was now withdrawing across the path of 30 Corps to join with the rest of the Division on the Catania

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(1) Paras 82 - 89 of Report 127 outline the general progress of the operations of both Allied Armies, and the enemy situation during these first five days.



THE CANADIANS MEET THE GERMANS:

GRAMMICHELE AND CALTAGIRONE, 15 JUL

7. The Canadian Division resumed its advance on the night of 14/15 Jul. After facing considerable opposition outside VIZZINI, the 51st (Highland) Infantry Division had finally entered the town during that night and reported it deserted. 1 Cdn Inf Div was ordered to pass through it at first light 15 Jul, and continue to advance in the direction of CALTAGIRONE about 15 miles to the northwest. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 51 (H) Div, 14-15 Jul; W.D., G.S., Main H.Q., 30 Corps, July, Appendix "A", 30 Corps Log, 2200 hrs, 14 Jul.) 51 (H) Div now changed its axis of advance north and northeast so that 1 Cdn Inf Div was once more on the left flank of the Corps advance which was also the left flank of the Army front. Their original role had been to protect this left flank while the main drive was developed towards CATANIA, but as that advance began to slow down the Canadians were ordered to press towards ENNA as quickly as possible. (See paras 10, 11 and 17 below.)

8. The Division advanced on a two brigade front with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade on the road TRAGUSA-CHIARAMONTE-LICODIA and the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade on the road GIARRATANA-VIZZINI. The Royal Canadian Regiment, embussed in motor transport, led the 1st Brigade across the start line at midnight with their Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. R.M. Crowe, heading the column in his carrier. At 0300 hrs the Battalion deployed in an area (square 6639) (2) just to the south of VIZZINI. 51 (H) Div approaching from the east had shelled the town and were now entering it, but the mixed German and Italian garrison had already withdrawn all their survivors westward towards CALTAGIRONE. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde and R.C.R., 14-15 Jul.)

9. The advance through VIZZINI towards CALTAGIRONE was resumed at 0600 hrs with the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment now in the lead, mounted on tanks, carriers and in motor transport. Major General G.G. Simonds, the G.O.C., who was frequently to be found with the advance elements of the Division, was forward watching them as they set off. About 0900 hrs they passed over the crest of a high ridge and saw the town of GRAMMICHELE perched on a very high feature some two miles beyond. There was no sign of the enemy as the "recce" group advanced into the outskirts of the town with the main body of the Battalion close behind. Several detachments of the Hermann Goering Flak and Panzer Regiments had, however, remained hidden in the town and its immediate vicinity, and at this point they suddenly opened fire on the Canadian column with 20 mm multiple flak guns and 88 and 75 mm guns. One tank and three carriers of the 12th Canadian Tank Regiment recce element at the head of the column were knocked out, while further enemy fire was brought down on the main body of the column as it came to a halt on the road outside the town. A tractor towing a 17-pounder anti-tank gun and several more carriers were hit and two ammunition trucks destroyed. The leading infantry companies with their armoured support and self-propelled guns immediately deployed to left and right of the

(2) All map references are to the three series of gridded sheets commonly used in Sicily, 1:50,000, 1:100,000 and 1:250,000, all of which are marked with the same grid lines. The sheets referred to are:

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Italy 1:250,000   | sheets 50, 51, 55 and 56    |
| Italy 1:100,000 ) | sheets 261, 268, 269, 270   |
| Italy 1:50,000 )  | 272, 273, 274, 276, and 277 |
|                   | and sub divisions           |



road and proceeded to engage the enemy. During the ensuing fight an Armoured Corps subaltern (Lt. R.W. Ryckman) (3) riding in one of the leading carriers acted with particular coolness and courage, when under enemy fire he lost wireless contact with his tanks. In order to indicate to them from where the enemy were firing and to cover the deployment of the column, he proceeded to engage the enemy tanks with tracer bullets from his Browning machine guns. This courageous action resulted in the subsequent destruction of several German tanks and guns. Meanwhile, the leading company of Hast & P.E.R., which had deployed to the right of the road, succeeded in entering the town which the enemy at once began to evacuate. Two other Companies made a wide sweeping movement to the left and cleaned out enemy positions in that sector. The remaining company gave covering fire to these operations and was itself very exposed to enemy fire until the supporting mortars, self-propelled artillery and tanks had silenced the enemy guns. Some of the German mortar positions were knocked out under the direction of a private from the Battalion Intelligence Section, who had observed their location and returned under heavy fire to report it (4). Another private, armed with a Bren gun, distinguished himself by attacking a group of some 30 enemy, all of whom were killed or captured (5). By noon the town had been cleared and a considerable amount of enemy equipment captured. The enemy losses included several multi-barrelled self-propelled 20 mm flak guns, one of them intact, two Pz Kw Mk IV tanks and one Mk III tank as well as many vehicles and stores. Canadian casualties were light with only three other ranks killed. At 1330 hrs a heavy artillery barrage was brought down on the retreating Germans beyond the town. During the afternoon the G.O.C. visited the Battalion, who were now resting and reorganizing, and congratulated them on their success in this, their first action against the Germans. (W.Ds., Hast & P.E.R., 12 Cdn Tks and 1 Cdn A. Tk Regt, 15 Jul; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account of Maj. A.R. Campbell and Capt. N.R. Waugh, M.C., Hast & P.E.R.; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Armd Bde/C/D, Account of Lt. J.E. Steinbuckl, 12 Cdn Tks, which is virtually the same account as the Regiment's War Diary; C.M.H.Q. (M.S. 2) file of citations for awards in Sicily, Citations for Lt. Ryckman, Pte. Brant and Pte. Gunter.)

10. That evening General Simonds received the following letter from the Corps Commander:

My dear Guy,

Many congratulations on your capture of Grammichele. I am glad you have competed with their mines and demolitions.

I believe that the Germans have blown the bridge over the SIMETO facing 13 Corps. It is therefore all the more vital for us to get on quickly. I know you are doing this. I hear rumours that the Americans are in Caltagirone. If opportunity occurs push a mobile mechanised force with tanks quickly through towards Enna.

- 
- (3) Lt. Ryckman was awarded the Military Cross for this action (Official Citation for Lt. Ryckman).
  - (4) C.4992 Pte. I.J. Gunter, who was awarded the Military Medal for this action (Official Citation for Pte. Gunter).
  - (5) C.5569 Pte. H.E. Brant, who was also awarded the Military Medal for this action (Official Citation for Pte. Brant).



I will come up to see you tomorrow. All our experience in this island has been that if you are held up, put in a well supported attack in strength. Best of luck and many congratulations on the long marching and good fighting of your Division in their first fight today.

Yours ever,

(Sgd) Oliver Leese.

(Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div;  
G.O.C., Lt.-Gen. Leese to Maj.-Gen.  
Simonds, 15 Jul.)

11. General Montgomery wrote General Leese the same day describing the stiff fighting on 13 Corps front. The concluding paragraphs of his letter were as follows:

So operations are a bit slow and sticky on the right, and all indications are that enemy troops are moving eastwards from the CALTAGIRONE - ENNA area and across to the plain of CATANIA. He is trying desperately to hold us off from getting to the airfields about CATANIA.

As we are held temporarily on the right, it is now all the more important to swing hard with our left; so push on with all speed to CALTAGIRONE, and then to VALGUARNERA-ENNA-LEONFORTE. Drive the Canadians on hard. Keep this LO, and send him back at dawn tomorrow with your situation.

(ibid., Gen. Montgomery to Lt.-Gen.  
Leese, 15 Jul.)

12. During the night 14/15 Jul 2 Cdn Inf Bde had advanced as ordered through RAGUSA and CHIARAMONTE GULFI towards LICODIA by a road parallel to that which 1 Cdn Inf Bde had taken through GIARRATANA and VIZZINI. The Edmonton Regiment, supported by one squadron of 12 Cdn Tks (later called 12 Cdn Armd Regt), led the Brigade's advance, embussed on tanks and in motor vehicles. 3 Cdn Fd Regt and Brigade Headquarters came next, while the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry followed on foot. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde and Edm R., 14-15 Jul.) The Seaforth's Dairy gives the following picture of the night march:

As the Bn moved off the side of the hill to the valley heavy MG fire from the opposite hillsides had opened up; the EDMN REGT in front sent out patrols to deal with these snipers and in doing so suffered some casualties.

The town of RAGUSA, like all others is a natural fortress. The road running through the town winds up and up; at midnight the Regt was still toiling up into the town, streets deserted. The moon was casting sinister shadows about where you expected enemy snipers at any mo-



ment. It is a most depressing feeling to tired men.

(W.D., Seaforth of C., 15 Jul.) (6)

13. The Edmontons suffered seven casualties, including three killed, from this sniping (W.D., Edmn R., 14 Jul). As a result of the incident, 30 Corps Headquarters sent an officer to the town the following day with instructions to "mark down 6 or 12 hostages who will be shot if this happens again". The instruction went on to say that: "He is to tell the town and other towns this. In future hostages will be taken in each town after its surrender". The same instructions were issued to 51 (H) Div in VIZZINI. (30 Corps Log, op. cit., messages 1620 and 2325 hrs., 15 Jul.)

14. No enemy were encountered between RAGUSA and LICODIA, but according to one witness, due to the winding switchback nature of the road, tanks at either end of the column, mistaking each other for the enemy, started to fire before the error was discovered and some infantry also joined in the mix-up. Early in the morning Edmn R. debussed just east of LICODIA (square 6140), and took up a defensive position in the vicinity whence that night they made contact with the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment in the neighbourhood of GRAMMICHELE. In LICODIA they met American troops (from 45 U.S. Inf Div), who reported that they had been ordered back from GRAMMICHELE in order to conform with the move of the Canadian Division. The Americans had discovered a large dump of medical stores in the town, which were later sent to 5 Cdn Gen Hosp in SIRACUSA. (Throughout the course of their advance the 2nd Brigade had been surprised at the amount of equipment, stores, etc., that they found abandoned by the enemy.) During the afternoon, Seaforth of C. and P.P.C.L.I. arrived in the same area, very tired after a 35 mile march on foot. (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 15 Jul; Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account of Capt. C.H. Pritchard, Edmn R. Capt. Pritchard makes the only reference to the mix-up on the road.)

15. On the 1 Cdn Inf Bde front 48 Highrs, supported by a section from the Brigade Support Group (Sask. L.I.) and a squadron of 12 Cdn Tks, proceeded to pass through Hast. & P.E.R. early in the afternoon, followed by R.C.R. About two miles beyond GRAMMICHELE the leading carrier struck an enemy mine on the shoulder of the road, and was blown up. Both battalions thereupon debussed and moved across country on either side of the road, while Engineers and pioneers started the laborious process of mine clearing along the road towards CALTAGIRONE. By sunset they reported the road open, so the advance continued at a quicker pace. About midnight the two battalions proceeded to bivouac along the road to the east of CALTAGIRONE, since it was planned to send 2 Cdn Inf Bde through 1 Cdn Inf Bde to take the town. The orders were changed, however, and at 0400 hrs 48 Highrs entered the town without opposition. (W.Ds., 48 Highrs and R.C.R., 15 Jul, Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account of Lt.-Col. I.S. Johnston, O.C., 48 Highrs.)

(6) The Seaforth of C. and the P.P.C.L.I. Diaries oddly enough both make the same mistake of referring to the march through RAGUSA as taking place on the night 15/16 Jul, but all other accounts and messages refer to the night of the 14/15th. These two Diaries must have been written some time after the event. Indeed the P.P.C.L.I. Diary continues to be a day out in its dates until 19 Jul.



16. Battle casualties for 15 Jul as reported by the A.D.M.S., 1 Cdn Inf Div, were five officers and 58 other ranks. (W.D., A.D.M.S., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 15 Jul.) (7)

17. Orders came from Corps during the night to the following effect:

1 Cdn Div will continue the advance vigorously directed on ENNA. 51 (H) Div will form firm base in area SCORDIA - FRANCOFONTE - BOUCHERI - VIZZINI - PALAGONIA and will send out fighting patrols NORTH and NORTHWEST. 231 Inf Bde Gp will be prepared to occupy CALTAGIRONE as firm base as soon as 1 Cdn Div moves out of it. It will move on orders from this HQ through 51 (H) Div but NOT before 1000 hrs 16 July. 231 Inf Bde will be prepared to come under command 1 Cdn Div at a future date.

(Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/H  
1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, serial 38, 15 Jul.)

In accordance with these instructions the Divisional Commander gave orders to the three brigades as follows: 2 Cdn Inf Bde, with under command 12 Cdn Tks, 142 Fd Regt (S.P.) and 3 Cdn Fd Regt, was to go through CALTAGIRONE on the following morning, 16 Jul, "press on and secure the area ENNA". 33 three-ton lorries were provided "in order that the Bde can be lifted tactically". 1 Cdn Inf Bde was to move to some high ground northwest of CALTAGIRONE (square 4053) and send out strong fighting patrols to reconnoitre the roads northwards to MIRABELLA and ADIONE (406535 to 386688) and northeast towards RADDUSA (446509 to 460714). This Brigade was to be prepared to move by motor transport and "secure the communications in the area VALGUARNERA". 3 Cdn Inf Bde was to be ready at one hour's notice to follow 2 Cdn Inf Bde and "secure communications in the area LEONFORTE", with one reconnaissance squadron and one field regiment under command. A strong force was to be attached to clear the road through VALGUARNERA while the rest of the Brigade was to continue on the main highway to ENNA, and then east to LEONFORTE. When 1 Cdn Inf Bde had cleared CALTAGIRONE, 231 Inf Bdes was to move into the town in order to form a firm base in that area. (Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, Draft Orders, 15 Jul.) In light of what actually happened it seemed an ambitious programme but the distance from CALTAGIRONE to ENNA was no greater than from RAGUSA to CALTAGIRONE which 2 Cdn Inf Bde had covered in the previous 24 hours.

18. CALTAGIRONE, a town of more than 30,000 people, had been heavily hit by Allied air raids. Fires were burning in parts of the town when the Canadians arrived and the roads were badly blocked, but the Engineers immediately set about clearing them. During the morning the 48th Highlanders, who had taken up defensive positions around the town, discovered two petrol dumps and a large amount of ammunition. They

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(7) The A.A. & Q.M.G. diary for 16 Jul reports casualties for 15 Jul as ten officers wounded and one missing, one other rank killed, seven wounded and 42 missing; but these figures sound less reliable than those quoted which are only battle casualties. On the other hand, it is uncertain whether the latter include killed and missing. They can only be taken as a general indication of the intensity of the fighting.



also acquired a number of Italian vehicles. (W.Ds., 48 Highrs and H.Q., R.C.E., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 16 Jul.)

SAN MICHELE di GANZARIA and PIAZZA ARMERINA

16 - 17 JUL

19. Early on 16 Jul, 2 Cdn Inf Bde passed through 1 Cdn Inf Bde with Edm R. (less "D" Company in RAGUSA) still in the lead, ambushed on tanks of "C" Squadron, 12 Cdn Tks, and in Service Corps troop-carrying vehicles. About seven miles to the northwest they entered SAN MICHELE di GANZARIA without opposition, although a large party of Italian soldiers endeavoured to stop them in order to surrender. Delay was caused for a time by lack of maps, and then by enemy demolitions and mines. About noon the advance guard reached a turn in the road at the base of a hill (310613) about eight miles beyond S. MICHELE and three miles south of PIAZZA ARMERINA, where they stopped to investigate what appeared to be a smoke signal coming from a house on the hillside. German infantry (now the reinforced 2 Bn of 1 Pz Gr Regt, 15 Pz Gr Div) were occupying well organized and concealed machine-gun positions on the high feature south of the latter town, and were supported by 88-mm and 10.5-cm artillery and by mortars. When the Canadians resumed their advance the German machine-guns opened fire and a crater was blown in the road ahead (319618). The forward Edmonton companies began to deploy on either side of the road, which now came under enemy artillery and mortar fire. The Artillery support was not yet available, but the three-inch mortars, anti-tank guns and the supporting tanks at the head of the column quickly went into action against the enemy positions and knocked out a machine-gun post in a nearby house. The enemy, however, succeeded in pinpointing the Canadian gun locations and inflicting some casualties. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde and Edm R., 16 Jul and Appendix 3 of latter; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/L/F, Int Summary, No. 3, 17-18 Jul; Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Accounts of Lt.-Col. R.A. Lindsay P.P.C.L.I., and Capt. Pritchard, op.cit.; 30 Corps Log, op.cit., Message 2000 hrs, 16 Jul.)

20. Lt.-Col. J.C. Jefferson, the officer commanding Edm R., had by this time made a reconnaissance, appreciated the situation and issued orders to the two leading companies to seize the high ground on either side of the road. Both companies had reached their objectives but "C" Company on the west side (310606) were shortly forced to move to an alternative position due to the enemy's intense mortar fire. It now became apparent that the enemy had concentrated his force on two large features between one and two miles to the north and northeast. "A" Company, on the east side of the road (315608), was therefore directed forward to occupy the feature to the north (317630), and "B" Company ordered to attack the second hill on the right flank, (probably square 3362), while "C" Company moved forward on the axis of advance, ready to reinforce success. Despite heavy enemy fire, "A" Company made good progress, supported by mortar fire and reinforced by "C" Company. The accompanying Forward Observation Officer of the attached battery of self-propelled field guns, which had now come into action, quickly brought down artillery fire on the enemy's positions. "B" Company experienced rather more difficulty and was out of touch with the rest of the Battalion for two hours. This Company's headquarters and one platoon were pinned down in an orchard by enemy fire, suffering casualties. They were cut off from the rest of the company, which was taken over by a subaltern and eventually reached its objective. Both features were now in the Edmonton's possession, and from there PIAZZA



ARMERINA was plainly visible. During the engagement and just as the G.O.C. arrived on the scene, the Battalion Headquarters and the Regimental Aid Post came under enemy gun fire, but only one vehicle was reported damaged. The Germans continued to blaze away with their 7.5-cm self-propelled guns until finally they were silenced by the guns of the 7th Medium Regiment, R.A., supporting the Canadian Division. By 2100 hrs, the enemy withdrew to the north. This was the Edmonton's first action against the Germans and it was fought with spirit under trying conditions, since they had been on the road for two nights and a day. Their total casualties were reported as only 27 all ranks including six other ranks killed. The enemy was believed to have suffered fairly heavy casualties and during the night a patrol captured a number of prisoners of war said to include Germans, Italians, Jugo-Slavs, Czechs and Alsations. (ibid.) (8)

21. While Edm R. were engaging the Germans, the rest of their Brigade, some four or five miles behind, had taken up positions to the west of the highway (in square 3255, 3355 and 3455). Meanwhile 1 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes had been clearing up in the vicinity of S. MICHELE, a few miles to the east of the 2 Cdn Inf Bde positions (9). At 1845 hrs, 1 Cdn Inf Bde reported that about five miles northeast of S. MICHELE in the vicinity of MIRABELLA, patrols had captured 200 prisoners, mostly Italians from 4 LIVORNO Div which appeared to be attempting to move northeast diagonally across the Canadian advance. Polish, German and Czech prisoners were also reported. (1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 16 Jul, serials 72, 74, 76, 81 and 95; W.Ds., H.Qs., 1 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes, P.P.C.L.I., Seaforth of C. and R.C.R., 16 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 2, 16-17 Jul.) (10)

22. At 2230 hrs, 16 Jul, the G.O.C. held a conference with his Brigade Commanders and detailed his plan of action. His intention was that 1 Cdn Inf Div would continue to advance to the area ENNA-LEONFORTE - VALGUARNERA. If the enemy were to withdraw during that night, 2 Cdn Inf Bde was to occupy the town of PIAZZA ARMERINA and secure the high ground north and northwest (in square 3267 and 3065). They were to "maintain contact with the enemy regardless of the situation". 3 Cdn Inf Bde was to move to an area (square

- (8) 7 Med Regt, which had landed on 12 Jul in 51 (H) Div's Sector, came under command 1 Cdn Inf Div 0500 hrs 15 Jul and remained with the Canadians until 8 Aug. 93 Bty of 70 Med Regt R.A., which landed with 1 Cdn Inf Div remained attached until 18 Jul, when it was transferred to 51 (H) Div (W.Ds., 7 Med Regt, R.A. 12-15 Jul, H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 18 Jul.)

Again there is a conflict in casualty figures. The Edmonton Diary reported 27 all ranks. The A.D.H.S. Diary reported one officer and 32 other ranks as Canadian battle casualties for the day, while the A.A. & Q.M.G. Diary listed two officers killed and one missing, 53 other ranks killed, ten wounded and 25 missing. The latter was obviously incorrect.

- (9) The War Diary of 12 Cdn Tks refers to an action that was supposed to have taken place between the Carlt & York R. supported by "B" Squadron, 12 Cdn Tks, and Germans near PIAZZA ARMERINA. Since there is no other evidence to be found concerning such an action, it is quite likely that the diarist was confusing it with the action fought by Edm R. who were supported by tanks from "C" Squadron. This diary reported 11 casualties including three killed, plus one tank disabled and one ammunition truck hit.

- (10) The War Diary of H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde notes that Lt.-Col. R.M. Crowe took over temporary command of the Brigade on 16 Jul; Brig. Graham resumed command on the following day. (W.Ds., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde and R.C.R., 16-17 Jul.)



3060 - 3357) along the road south of PIAZZA ARMERINA, and were to be prepared to advance by 0500 hrs the following morning through 2 Cdn Inf Bde in the direction of ENNA. On the other hand, if the enemy were still in position at first light, 2 Cdn Inf Bde was to attack, supported by the whole of the Divisional Artillery, and gain the above mentioned objectives. 1 Cdn Inf Bde was to stand by on one hour's notice from 1000 hrs to move to the area of PIAZZA ARMERINA, or further, as the situation developed. The following day they were to take up the lead. (W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, Appendix 26, Notes on G.O.C.'s conference, 2230 hrs, 16 Jul 43.)

23. Some firing continued during the night and patrols from Seaforth of C. and P.P.C.L.I. penetrated to the vicinity of PIAZZA ARMERINA which was reported clear. By 0600 hrs 17 Jul, 2 Cdn Inf Bde was in possession of the town and had consolidated the high ground dominating it. They remained in the vicinity all day, holding positions to the north and south of the town. The Headquarters of the Italian 16th Corps had at one time been established in PIAZZA ARMERINA, and a great deal of signal equipment as well as a large quantity of petrol, reported to be 52,000 gallons, were taken as booty. Throughout the day there was serious traffic congestion in this area due to 1 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes passing through 2 Cdn Inf Bde. Had it not been for Allied air superiority the Luftwaffe would have been able to do considerable damage, so great was the congestion on the road. (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Jul; 1 Cdn Div Int Log, 16 Jul, serials 83 and 92, and 17 Jul, serials 17, 29 and 33.)

24. The Diary of Seaforth of C. gives the following description of their entrance into PIAZZA ARMERINA and their much welcomed rest in the vicinity:

Everyone up before first light and the Bn moved forward at 0400 hrs, marching the whole morning. PIAZZA ARMERINA was entered after much trouble with traffic. As the enemy vacate each town the civilians immediately start to pick up everything in sight, beds, and boxes out of barracks, water pails, anything they can lay their hands on.

Around noon just NORTH of PIAZZA ARMERINA the Bn took up posns on the high ground at 327664. At the base of the hill was actually a running stream where many tired feet were washed as well as dirty clothes. Carrying parties came down to the ration point and a meal was made post haste. In a short while our vehicles moved into the area and out came the small packs. The heat is still bothering most of us but slowly we are getting accustomed to it. The vehicles now have a coating of white dust that has covered everything inside and out. Many enemy vehs have now been salvaged and are serving under CDN colors. The R.A.P. has set up at Bn H.Q. and many cases of burnt feet have been attended to. Everyone has settled down to a few hours sleep in the cool of the evening.....

(W.D., Seaforth of C., 17 Jul 43.)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION, 15-17 JUL

25. The enemy opposition on the whole Eighth Army front was now becoming much stiffer as the line ENNA-CATANIA was approached. General Montgomery notified the Army Group Commander on 16 Jul that: "On right flank determined German



resistance is making extension of bridge-head over SIMETO River a slow business. Bridge-head will be expanded tonight and strong attack launched towards CATANIA night 17/18 July". The following day he elaborated his plan for 30 Corps:

51 Div are moving north from SCORDIA and will capture PATERNO tomorrow with luck. Canadians should reach ENNA tonight and will then operate from LEONFORTE to secure ADRANO. I will then operate with 30 Corps round the West and North of ETNA and will cut off any enemy who stay East of ETNA and about CATANIA. Suggest Americans having secured PETRALIA should cut coast road North of that place and should make faces Eastwards along coast so as to strike enemy still further.

(W.D., Main H.Q., Eighth Army, Jul 43, Appx "Z", Gen Montgomery to Gen Alexander, 17 Jul.)

26. On 15 Jul, 51 (H) Div had borne northeast from VIZZINI, passed through MILITELLO and SCORDIA and reached the GORNA LUNGA River. On the following day, they had spread westwards to PALAGONIA and MINEO and eastwards to the LAGO DI LENTINI where they had made contact with 13 Corps. On 17 and 18 Jul they secured crossings over the River Dittaino, and from PALAGONIA pushed north through RAMACCA, about 18 miles east of PIAZZA ARMERINA. (W.D., H.Q., 51 (H) Div, 15, 16 and 17 Jul; W.D., G.S., Main H.Q., 30 Corps, July 1943, Appx "B", 30 Corps sitreps 15, 16, 17 and 18 Jul.)

27. Meanwhile 231 Infantry Brigade had been brought up from VIZZINI through MINEO to CALTAGIRONE (see para 17 above). On 17 Jul on orders from the Corps Commander this Brigade was given the independent role of moving northward in the direction of RADDUSA to fill in the gap between the Highland and Canadian Divisions. It was held up for some time by enemy demolitions, but by 1800 hrs the road was cleared, and an hour later the leading battalion had made contact with the enemy who were holding the line of the Gorna Lunga River about a mile south of RADDUSA. (W.D., H.Q., 231 Inf Bde, 17 Jul.)

28. To the west, the American Seventh Army was advancing with less opposition, for the Germans had given up any idea of holding that part of the island, while the Italians seemed chiefly interested in surrendering. By 17 Jul, 1 (U.S.) Inf Div was abreast of 1 Cdn Inf Div about eight miles to the west of PIAZZA ARMERINA and approaching CALTANISSETTA, while on their left 45 (U.S.) Inf Div was approaching the same town from the southwest. On the coast 3 (U.S.) Inf Div had extended their bridgehead to AGRIGENTO and PORTO EMPEDOCLE, and had penetrated inland as far as CANICATTI. (30 Corps Log, op.cit., sitreps from 2 U.S. Corps, 2100 hrs, 17 Jul; 15 Army Gp, Account of Operations, op.cit.)

#### VALGUARNERA, 17-18 JUL

29. It was still a race between the American and Canadian troops as to which would reach the town of ENNA first. The Canadians were on the main highway leading to the town from the southeast, but they were now running into more determined opposition than they had hitherto experienced. The German force was still 2 Bn of 1 Pz Gr Regt but thought to be reinforced on 18 Jul by the 1st Battalion of the same Regiment. They were now holding their position in strength around the road junction southwest of VALGUARNERA, where the road from that town joined the main PIAZZA ARMERINA - ENNA highway.



(30 Corps Int Summary No. 369, 18 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 4, 18-19 Jul.)

30. About noon 17 Jul, 3 Cdn Inf Bde began to pass through PIAZZA ARMERINA, with Carlt & York R. in the lead, and all the Divisional Artillery under the command of the C.R.A. in support. Four miles to the north of the town (at 329712) their motor transport and the tanks of the squadron of 12 Cdn Tks supporting them were held up by a blown bridge, but by 1630 hrs the Engineers had the road open again. (W.D., H.Qs., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, R.C.A. and R.C.E., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 17 Jul.) The enemy were reported to be holding a line (278731 - 330745) across the above mentioned road junction. From here they opened fire on the Canadian column with mortars and machine-guns. The infantry dismounted and the tanks deploying to the west of the road took up hull-down positions along the crest of the hill (square 3172) overlooking the valley towards ENNA. The Tank Regiment reported that they located and engaged the enemy position successfully and forced the Germans to withdraw, leaving three Italian guns and three small tanks out of action. In the meantime, part of West N.S.R. had come up on foot and occupied the same hill (312725). The 12 Cdn Tks Diary expressed surprise that the infantry did not take advantage of their success, but the Carlt & York R. Diary took a different view of the matter, commenting that the tanks "moved up but were of no help to our infantry". Actually West N.S.R. were planning to advance on a further hill called M. della Forma, from which the Germans were firing on them. The Brigade Commander, however, ordered this Battalion to withdraw from their hill, while Carlt & York R. resumed the advance up the road. A short distance further the latter Battalion again halted, and took up positions off the highway at a point (square 3274) a mile short of the road junction and about eight miles southeast of ENNA. Meanwhile, R. 22e R. moved into a concentration area (333691) about four miles further south. During the same afternoon, 1 Cdn Inf Bde followed 3 Cdn Inf Bde through PIAZZA ARMERINA, but north of the town they were delayed by bad traffic congestion on the road. (1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, serials 15, 25, 30, 35, 37, 38, 50 and 58; W.Ds., H.Qs., 1 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes, Carlt & York R., West N.S.R. and 12 Cdn Tks, 17 Jul and Appx 10 of 3 Cdn Inf Bde Diary - a marked map.)

31. About 1700 hrs, 17 Jul, the G.O.C. held a conference at 3 Cdn Inf Bde Headquarters. For the first time since D-day he decided to launch a two-brigade attack in which all six infantry battalions plus all the Divisional Artillery and some tanks were involved. 3 Cdn Inf Bde was to press on along the axis of the ENNA highway, while 1 Cdn Inf Bde was to strike across country toward VALGUARNERA. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was to be at two hours readiness to follow behind 3 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div and H.Qs., 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes, 17 Jul.)

32. At 2000 hrs, R. 22e R. were ordered to lead the 3rd Brigade's advance. The Battalion passed through Carlt & York R. and proceeded up the road mounted in troop-carrying vehicles, but ready to debus and engage the enemy as soon as contact was made. On the way up they were delayed for a short time while their pioneers filled in a road crater. The advance was then continued by the light of the moon along the narrow winding road, bordered on the right by the steep slope of a hill, and on the left by a deep ravine. Just past the Carlt & York R. positions and a few hundred yards short of the road junction at a spot called GROTTA CALDA, the road took a big bend which was dominated by high ground rising several hundred feet above it on either side. While proceeding along this strip the column was stopped by a heavy volley of M.M.G. fire which caused casualties among the troops in the T.C.Vs. (Hist Sec file Sicily/3 Cdn Inf



Bde/C/D, Account by Capt. F. Potvin, M.C., R. 22e R.)  
 Capt. D.H. Cunningham, Transport Officer at 3 Cdn Inf Bde  
 Headquarters, described the ensuing action as follows:

Two Infantry battalions, the Brigade Headquarters and portions of the A/A Regiment, all in Motor transport, were involved. Firing was immediately general along the whole column, with even the anti-aircraft guns joining in the fire directed upon the hill. A large fire was burning on the hill which was the enemy's position. Whether this had been started deliberately to mask the fire of his mortars on the reverse slope was not known, but it is quite probable. Fortunately, it was fairly dark, Thus, despite the heaviness of the enemy's fire and the narrowness of the road, the Headquarters and the A/A Battery were able to withdraw to a safe position. In the meantime the Royal 22e Regiment had become completely committed. They had dug in and were returning the fire.

(C.M.H.Q. file 24/Episodes/10.)

R. 22e R. had quickly debussed, proceeded to engage enemy machine-gun posts with their L.M.Gs., and succeeded in silencing several of them. One party of Germans, seeking to close the trap, was itself surprised and put to flight by machine-gun fire, suffering heavy casualties. (Account by Capt. Potvin, op. cit.) It was the first time in action for the "Vingt-Deux" in this war, and although they were held up by the opposition, the valour of individual officers and other ranks earned the Battalion five decorations for the night's fighting (See Appx "A").

33. The advance was halted for the rest of the night, however, and in the morning it was discovered that the enemy was strongly ensconced on either side of the road, especially on M. della Forma, which was immediately southwest of the road junction, and from which he was bringing heavy mortar fire on the Canadian positions. The G.O.C. arrived on the scene in the early hours of the morning and made a reconnaissance with the Brigade Commander, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale. A plan of attack was evolved in which West N.S.R., who had come up the road during the night (to 320735) were ordered to withdraw openly in order to make a wide left flanking attack on the enemy position which would cut off his retreat towards ENNA. Carlt & York R. were to co-ordinate with a right flanking attack, and R. 22e R. to remain in contact with the enemy in the centre - square 3174. (W.Ds., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, R. 22e R. and West N.S.R., 17 and 18 Jul; Account of Capt. Cunningham, op. cit.; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 18 Jul, serials 1, 3, 4, 5, and 11.)

34. A Fire Plan was prepared in which all the Divisional Artillery were involved except 142 Fd Regt (S.P.) supporting 1 Cdn Inf Bde. During the morning the Artillery engaged a number of enemy machine-guns, mortars and 75 mm guns and early in the afternoon the main fire plan was carried out. Divisional concentrations were brought down on four points, with fire at 68 rounds per gun; the results were reported to be very effective and the infantry well pleased. (W.Ds., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 1 and 3 Cdn Fd Regts and 7 Med Regt, R.A., 18 Jul and Appx 1 of the H.Q. Diary; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 18 Jul, serials 10, 13, and 16.)



35. At 1030 hrs, West N.S.R. began their withdrawal down the highway to a point about one and one half miles behind where R. 22e R. were engaged. Thence they proceeded across country about two miles westward. From here they turned north along the course of a small river, which ran between two high hills. The river bed was impassable to all vehicles, except the tanks which were supporting the operation, so that all weapons, including three-inch mortars, had to be man-handled. The terrain was very difficult and the heat overpowering, but there was no enemy to hold up their progress except for one machine-gun post (at 280737). By 1600 hrs the Battalion succeeded in occupying a hill (in square 2874), dominating the ENNA highway to the west of the German position on M. della Forma. Patrols penetrated down and across the highway and captured a German field kitchen, taking a number of prisoners. (W.D., West N.S.R., 18 Jul.)

36. R. 22e R. fought continuously for about 14 hours, suffering from heavy enemy mortar fire, until during the afternoon Carlt & York R., supported by the artillery, attacked on their right flank. The latter Battalion cleared the enemy from positions northeast of the highway, taking 45 German prisoners at a cost of 46 casualties including two officers and nine other ranks killed. (11) By 1700 hrs they had occupied positions past the hard-won road junction, and on the road to VALGUARNERA (about 310750). During the night R. 22e R. were withdrawn about a mile (to 314724). (W.Ds., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde and Carlt & York R., 18 Jul.)

37. On the right flank of the Divisional attack, 1 Cdn Inf Bde had gone through a difficult day's fighting. On the night 17/18 Jul, the two attacking battalions had come up the road from PIAZZA ARMERINA to the rear of 3 Cdn Inf Bde, whence they proceeded to strike overland against VALGUARNERA, R.C.R. from the west and Hast & P.E.R. from the south. (W.D., R.C.R. 17-18 Jul.)

38. The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, which was in the van of the 1 Cdn Inf Bde advance, had reached a road junction two miles north of PIAZZA ARMERINA (340685) during the evening of 17 Jul. At this point they received orders to start immediately on their cross country march. By midnight, the Battalion had progressed about five miles. The country was extremely mountainous and the ground interspersed with deep ravines and dried-up water courses, the only available roads being goat paths along the sides of the mountains. As a result, the mortars and carriers had to leave the infantry in order to seek a more passable route around to the left. Worse still the tank carrying the artillery Forward Observation Officer and his wireless set was unable to get forward so that the Battalion was without artillery support throughout the day (verbal evidence of Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir). Before dawn the rifle companies had reached the hills surrounding VALGUARNERA, but the companies

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- (11) During the engagement a platoon officer and two men advanced on a machine-gun post that was holding up the platoon. The officer was killed and one of the men seriously wounded, but the other man, G.21012, Pte. M. Brisson, carried on by himself, got to the rear of the post, shot two of the enemy and killed the third with the butt of his rifle. He was awarded the D.C.M. for this courageous action. (Citation for Pte. Brisson.)



had become somewhat separated in the process. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 17-18 Jul; Account of Major Campbell and Captain Waugh, op.cit.)

39. "B" and "D" Companies found themselves together to the southwest of the town (in square 3376). An enemy machine-gun post on an opposite hill was causing trouble, so two N.C.Os. from "D" Company crawled down the hill across the intervening valley and up a very steep cliff on the opposite side under bursts of enemy machine-gun fire. They then assaulted the post with grenades and charged with rifle and bayonet, killing ten Germans and capturing two machine-guns. (12) "D" Company then advanced to the road leading into the town, and proceeded to build a road-block across it, while "B" Company ensconced themselves on a commanding feature well to the left. During the morning, "D" Company, under the personal direction of the Battalion Commander, successfully engaged about a dozen enemy vehicles coming along the road, including an armoured personnel carrier which received a direct hit from a PIAT (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank), killing all the occupants, and knocking out an 88 mm gun which it had in tow. One platoon, led by Lt.-Col. B.A. Sutcliffe, went forward in an attempt to enter the town, but, meeting stiff resistance, was forced to withdraw. Meanwhile, an enemy force of approximately one company of lorried infantry attacked the road-block and forced its defenders to retire. The Battalion Commander then decided to withdraw both companies back into the hills. It may be noted that Lt.-Col. Sutcliffe was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his conduct in this action. Not only did he take a very active part in the fighting throughout the day, but at one point under enemy fire he dressed the wounds of a man who had been seriously hit and himself got the man under cover and eventually to safety. (ibid., and Citation for Lt.-Col. Sutcliffe.)

40. "A" and "C" Companies had become separated from the rest of the Battalion during the night. They had kidnapped a farmer and forced him to lead them to the outskirts of the town. Here they succeeded in gaining valuable information from other local inhabitants regarding the position of enemy guns and billets. Lacking the supporting arms to put in an attack, both companies dug in some 600 yards in front of the enemy guns, on a hill commanding the town to the north and the road to the south, and waited for the general attack which they expected to begin later in the morning. Shortly afterwards, at about 0630 hrs, they saw the enemy limbering up their guns and a column of lorried infantry moving along the road which ran across their positions. Both companies opened up with heavy fire at short range, causing great havoc among the Germans. Capt. A.R. Campbell (a legendary figure among the "Hasty Ps" who was later killed in Italy) was himself reported to have accounted for 18 Germans, whom he caught in a truck at very close range with a Bren gun fired from the hip. (ibid.)

41. The rest of the enemy, who were thought to be about battalion strength, had debussed and taken cover. They were now beginning to attack the hill on which "A" Company was dug in. A sharp engagement ensued, but the attack was beaten off with further heavy losses to the

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(12) One of the two men, C.6078 Sgt. W.J.R. McKnight was awarded the D.C.M. (Citation for Sgt. McKnight)



Germans. However, since the latter appeared to considerably outnumber the Canadian force, and since they showed signs of bringing artillery up against the Canadians' exposed positions, the two company commanders decided to withdraw across the road to the edge of the main line of hills. Despite heavy enemy fire one company remained on this line covering the other company's further withdrawal. Finally, however, with their ammunition running low, they too withdrew into the hills "leaving the seriously wounded in the care of a peasant hidden in one of the valleys". Their casualties had been relatively light, but later reports indicated that the enemy had suffered between 80 and 90 killed and an equivalent number wounded, in addition to 18 taken prisoner. During the action, Captain Waugh distinguished himself by rescuing a wounded man under intense fire, a deed for which he later received the Military Cross. (ibid. and Citation for Capt. Waugh)

42. That evening the Battalion reorganized on the original start line positions, and rested for the remainder of the night (ibid.). Many small sections had become cut off from the rest during the day and when heads were counted it was found that some 60 all ranks including Lt.-Col. Sutcliffe were missing, but the following day the Battalion Commander and the majority of the others turned up (Verbal evidence of Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir).

43. The Royal Canadian Regiment had not begun their attack as early as Hast & P.E.R. They had come up the main highway from PIAZZA ARMERINA after the latter battalion, arriving at the road junction (340682) about 0100 hrs, where they too received their orders for the advance across country. They continued along the highway, however, to a point (323740) a short distance behind where R.22e R. were engaged. They did not begin their advance overland until 0530 hrs, 18 Jul. As was the case with Hast & P.E.R., their vehicles and supporting arms were unable to accompany them because of the difficult nature of the ground. The rifle companies proceeded to move along a ridge which was parallel to the road running west from VALGUARNERA, and passed through some enemy machine-gun positions, with the result that they suffered a considerable amount of sniping from the rear. The Battalion regrouped on the reverse slope of a high feature overlooking the road (square 3375), but a series of small hills and knolls still separated them from the town. On a ridge in front and to their right, a small group of Hast & P.E.R. were seen pinned down by enemy fire. These were rescued by a section under Major J.H.W.T. Pope, second in command of the Battalion. Another platoon from Hast & P.E.R. was also contacted by one of the forward companies. They revealed how their Battalion had become rather dispersed during the night with resultant lack of control. Therefore a co-ordinated attack on the town seemed unlikely. Moreover, R.C.R. was out of contact with Brigade Headquarters and unable to get any artillery support. (W.D., R.C.R., 17-18 Jul and Appx "A" a message written by Lt.-Col. Crowe to the Brigade Commander, 1400 hrs, 18 Jul; Hist Sec file Sicily/C/D, Account of Major T.M. Powers, 2IC R.C.R.)

44. The Battalion was subject to sniping from both the front and the rear so the Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. Crowe, proceeded to direct an attack by two companies, covered by the fire of the remaining two, on the enemy positions among the knolls ahead. The enemy were few in number but well hidden and able to bring machine-gun and mortar fire on the R.C.R. as they advanced, well deployed, down the open hillside. Lt.-Col. Crowe, himself, walked



between his two attacking companies "eager to keep the action rolling". (*ibid.*)

45. There was some spirited fighting, but most of the enemy withdrew in haste, and the Canadians reached a knoll (square 3476) directly overlooking the entrance to the town half a mile away to the north. Here they came under the fire of three German tanks which were guarding the road leading into the town. Major Pope again took a patrol forward to attack these tanks, and fired three bombs from a PIAT at them, but unfortunately the bombs failed to explode. The patrol was forced to withdraw under M.M.G. fire from the tanks, and Major Pope was killed. The enemy tanks then withdrew into the town. Shortly afterwards, at about 1200 hrs, enemy motor transport was seen withdrawing to the north, and their oil and petrol dumps were set on fire. (*ibid.*)

46. During the afternoon, the Battalion dug in on the position they had won, expecting a counter-attack. Lacking supporting arms, the Battalion Commander did not feel he could enter the town before dark. The padre, Captain R.O. Wilkes, made his way back under sniper fire, alone and on foot, to Rear Battalion Headquarters where he gave a sitrep on the Battalion's position to the Brigade Commander. A patrol was organized from the R.C.R. Support Company, which succeeded in bringing rations out to the rifle companies just before last light - the first food they had seen that day. (*ibid.*)

47. The 48th Highlanders, who were in Brigade reserve for this action, had been ordered to occupy a ridge two miles south of VALGUARNERA during the day. They ran into some opposition from enemy machine-guns and snipers, about a company in strength, who were occupying a ridge covering the advance. Some artillery fire was laid down on the ridge which was then attacked by the leading company of 48 Highrs. They took the feature, killing 35 enemy and wounding 20 more, at a cost of four dead and six wounded. That night they advanced into VALGUARNERA, which they found quite deserted, and took up a position one mile to the north of the town. (13) (W.D., 48 Highrs, 18 Jul.)

48. This day's fighting had been the most extensive that the Division had so far experienced. The battle casualties as reported by the A.D.M.S. were the highest to date, - five officers and 100 other ranks. Estimates of enemy casualties varied. According to a report sent to 30 Corps Headquarters, 120 prisoners-of-war had been taken while 180 Germans were believed to be killed or wounded (30 Corps Log, op.cit., 1104 hrs, 19 Jul). The War Diary of the A.A. & Q.M.G., 1 Cdn Inf Div for 19 Jul on the other hand reported that 280 prisoners-of-war, including 30 Italians had been taken on 18 Jul, while 1 Cdn Inf Bde claimed to have killed approximately 240 Germans and wounded or captured 30 more, at a cost of only 30 to 40 casualties to themselves. The actual gains made by the various battalions engaged seemed very limited, yet by the end of the day, the enemy had begun to withdraw from VALGUARNERA toward LEONFORTE, enabling the 48th Highlanders to enter VALGUARNERA without opposition.

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(13) During the action U.1834 Cpl. W.F. Kay led a section of five men against the main enemy position, which contained three machine-guns and seventeen men. Although wounded Cpl. Kay killed eight Germans with two grenades and his "Tommy Gun", while the section accounted for the rest. Cpl. Kay was awarded the D.C.M. for this feat. (Citation for Cpl. Kay.)



THE BY-PASSING OF ENNA, 19-20 JUL

49. The axis of the Division's advance was now shifted northward towards LEONFORTE and the ENNA-CATANIA highway, by-passing ENNA itself. It would be well, therefore, to consider the topography of the country through which the Division was now to operate eastwards from ENNA to the Catania Plain. Study of the map shows that this is a very rugged country almost entirely covered by hills and low mountains, for the most part ranging in height from 500 to 3000 feet above the sea level but becoming higher in the north and northeast where they culminate in the massive form of Mount Etna, which rises to over 10,000 feet. This hilly country is pierced by the valleys of three rivers running roughly parallel from west to east, and by a fourth running from north to south - the Salso, Dittaino, Gorna Lunga and Sineto. The Salso River has its origin northwest of NICOSIA, about 20 miles north of ENNA, whence it flows southeast towards AGIRA, on the ENNA-CATANIA highway, and then east to its junction with the fourth river, the Sineto, less than two miles short of the key town of ADERNO (also spelt ADRANO). The Sineto has its origin northwest of Mount Etna and flows south past ADERNO and PATERNO into the Catania Plain, where it swings east and joins the Dittaino before emptying into the sea south of CATANIA city. The Dittaino River has its origin in the mountains immediately north of ENNA. It crosses the ENNA-CATANIA highway south of LEONFORTE and continues down a valley roughly eight miles south of the Salso Valley, past DITTAINO Station, LIBERTINA and CATENANUOVA. From here it turns southeast and enters the Catania Plain where it gradually approaches the Sineto. The third river, the Gorna Lunga, rises in the vicinity of VALGUARNERA and runs generally eastwards about another eight miles south of the Dittaino until it also joins the other two rivers in the Catania Plain. Two tributaries of this river form separate valleys to the southwest towards CALTAGIRONE and PIAZZA ARMERINA. These rivers valleys are a very marked feature of the terrain, but the rivers themselves are practically dried up in the heat of the summer season. The Plain begins about eight miles south of ADERNO, which was the keystone of the Mount Etna defences, and about six miles southeast of CATENANUOVA, the chief town in the Dittaino Valley. It might be compared to a rather skinny hand with the thumb pointing up to ADERNO, the index finger to CATENANUOVA and the other three fingers west and southwest along the line of the Gorna Lunga and its tributaries.

50. The highway (No. 121) from ENNA to CATANIA runs northeast to LEONFORTE and then east through AGIRA and down the Salso Valley to ADERNO whence it turns southeast through PATERNO to CATANIA on the coast. A secondary road links up Highway 117 and 121, running from No. 117 through VALGUARNERA into No. 121 south of LEONFORTE. Another secondary road branches out from this one and leads down the Dittaino Valley through DITTAINO, RADDUSA-AGIRA and LIBERTINA Stations to CATENANUOVA and thence to SFERRO and the CATANIA Plain. (The section between DITTAINO and LIBERTINA Stations was apparently new since only a track is marked on the map whereas according to Capt. Cunningham it was a good road.) Other secondary roads run down to it from LEONFORTE past ASSORO to DITTAINO Station, from AGIRA to RADDUSA-AGIRA Station and from REGALBUTO to CATENANUOVA. A highway of importance to the Americans, ran from NICOSIA through TROINA to RANDAZZO, roughly parallel to the road between LEONFORTE and ADERNO and some eight to twelve miles to the north of it.



51. It is interesting to note that in this country many of the towns are perched on the tops of the highest hills. Thus VALGUARNERA is about 2000 feet, ENNA over 3000 feet, LEONFORTE over 2000 feet, ASSORO almost 3000 feet, AGIRA about 2700 feet, REGALBUTO about 2000 feet and CENTURIPE about 2400 feet above sea level. The approaches to most of these towns are very steep so that the roads have to wind considerably to reach them. The terrain is rocky with few trees, but there are some vineyards on the hillsides, and orchards in the river valleys. The line of advance was pretty well limited to the roads, but in some places mountain tracks were discovered and exploited to advantage. More than once the Canadians obtained their objective by taking a route that the enemy considered impassable. (These paragraphs are based on a study of the maps referred to in footnote 2 above, of a captured Italian map, scale 1:100,000 sheet 260, 261, 268 and 269, and of sheet J.33/8 - CATANIA 1:250,000 - Supplementary Topographical Information prepared by Inter-Service Topographical Department, December 1942.)

52. During the afternoon of 18 Jul, the G.O.C. held an "O" Group (at 322721), at which he ordered 2 Cdn Inf Bde to advance through 3 Cdn Inf Bde that night along the VALGUARNERA road (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Jul). The advance started at 2100 hrs with Seaforth of C. in the lead, followed by P.P.C.L.I. Half a mile south of VALGUARNERA (at 343764), the enemy had blown a bridge which forced the infantry to proceed on foot, without motor transport or supporting arms. They passed through the town about 0430 hrs and after a short rest just to the north, they continued on towards LEONFORTE, passing another demolition about one and a half miles further (at 339794). About 1000 hrs, as they reached a point (343807) where a railway bridge crossed the road the Battalion Commander's suspicions were aroused and he gave orders for the Battalion to deploy off the road. Almost immediately the enemy opened up with artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire on the Canadian column. The Germans were dug in about two miles to the north on a hill which immediately commanded a point (square 3582) where four roads, a railway and a small river met. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde and Seaforth of C., 18-19 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 19 Jul, serials 93, 96, 103 and 121.)

53. 3 and 4.2-inch mortars were quickly brought into action against the enemy positions, but for some time progress was slow for lack of immediate artillery support. The field artillery, still held up by the blown bridges, was out of range, but some fire support was received from the Medium Regiment. By noon, however, with the bridge repaired, the whole Divisional Artillery, less 142 Fd Regt (S.P.) fired an "Uncle" (i.e. divisional) target of ten rounds. Several concentrations were also fired during the early afternoon, while forward observation officers conducted observed shooting throughout the day. (W.D., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div, Int Log, 19 Jul, serials 124 and 143.)

54. P.P.C.L.I., who had reached a hill half a mile to the south of Seaforth of C., were ordered to attack. Both Battalions made rather slow progress, but during the afternoon the Germans, who were probably greatly outnumbered, decided to withdraw. When P.P.C.L.I. reached the enemy positions early in the evening, they found them evacuated, although a considerable amount of German equipment had been jettisoned in the area. Several bridges in the vicinity.



(square 3582) had been left intact, but mines had been laid (14). Battle casualties reported by the A.D.H.S. for the day were four officers and 51 other ranks. (W.Ds., H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Seaforth of C., P.P.C.L.I., and A.D.H.S., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 19 Jul, serials 123, 124, 125, 126, 159, 160 and 169.)

55. Throughout 19 Jul, 3 Cdn Inf Bde remained in the vicinity of the ENNA-VALGUARNERA road junction (3074) for which they had fought so strenuously all the previous day. Patrols were sent out to the north and the west, and West N.S.R. made contact with American reconnaissance elements which were some three miles to the west. The Americans reported that there had been a terrific explosion in ENNA the previous night, an indication that the enemy were withdrawing from the town. Carl & York R. ran into some enemy mortar and artillery fire about a mile to the north; otherwise the day was quiet on this flank. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde and West N.S.R., 19 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 19 Jul, serials 107, 139, 145, 146 and 172; 30 Corps Int Summary, No. 370, 19 Jul.)

56. 1 Cdn Inf Bde remained around VALGUARNERA resting and reorganizing after their battle for the town. 48 Highrs, in position a mile to the north of the town, suffered from some enemy shelling. (W.D., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde and 48 Highrs, 19 Jul.)

57. While 1 Cdn Inf Div was advancing north through VALGUARNERA towards LEONFORTE, 231 Inf Bde had been advancing on a parallel axis towards AGIRA and about six miles to the east (see para 27 above). On 19 Jul, this Brigade had secured a bridgehead across the Dittaino River at RADDUSA - AGIRA Station and from here they had moved to within three miles of AGIRA. In less than three days, they had advanced about 30 miles through difficult country and had taken over 1000 prisoners (mostly Italians from LIVORNO Div), but not without suffering casualties. (W.D., H.Q., 231 Bde, 19-20 Jul.)

58. The cross-roads (square 3582) reached by 2 Cdn Inf Bde on the eve of 19 Jul were of some tactical importance. From here secondary roads branch out, one northwest to ENNA, a second north to LEONFORTE, and a third northeast to DITTAINO Station. About five miles north of the junction the middle road runs into the main ENNA - CATANIA highway some two miles short of LEONFORTE itself. Roughly parallel to it a fourth road runs northeast from DITTAINO Station, past ASSORO, to the highway east of LEONFORTE. Southwest of the latter town the upper Dittaino River crosses the highway and the centre road and flows southeast past DITTAINO Station. (As already indicated (para 50 above) still another road branching off from the "middle" road where it crosses the Dittaino, follows the course of that river down through DITTAINO Station on to CATENANUOVA.)

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(14) Had these bridges been blown the advance would have been delayed for some hours. Therefore, previous to the attack an Engineer N.C.O., Sgt. W.J. Brooks, had crept forward along the dry stream bed to see if they had been prepared for demolition and if so remove the charges. He returned safely with his report and was later awarded the Military Medal for this action. (Citation for Sgt. Brooks.)



North of the river the ground rises sharply to over 2000 feet and then flattens out into a high plateau between LEONFORTE and AGIRA. ASSORO, an almost inaccessible town a mile and a half southeast of LEONFORTE, is perched on a 3000 foot mountain which forms a southern bastion of this plateau. (Maps, op.cit.)

59. That afternoon, the Divisional Commander outlined his plans at an "Ops" Conference. He had decided to advance on a two-brigade front with 2 Cdn Inf Bde continuing towards LEONFORTE and 1 Cdn Inf Bde branching out to the right to take ASSORO, whence they would push on to the highway east of LEONFORTE. The task was not an easy one, for both towns were on very high ground and the attackers had to cross the Dittaino Valley many hundreds of feet below. As a result, the Germans, with observation posts on the ridge between the two towns, were able to keep the advancing Canadians continually under fire. While there was no pre-arranged artillery barrage, Forward Observation Officers were to call for fire within their own boundaries when asked for by the infantry. Also, from darkness to 0100 hrs a harassing fire programme was to be laid on by the C.R.A. along a four mile stretch of road between LEONFORTE and AGIRA. Intense bursts of fire and heavy concentrations were to be put down periodically on this stretch of road. 3 Cdn Inf Bde was to remain in reserve in its present area, while "A" Squadron, 4 Cdn Recce Regt, with a battery of anti-tank guns under command, was positioned on the third road leading towards ENNA to guard the left flank of the Division's advance. 231 Inf Bde was now to come under command 1 Cdn Inf Div (see para 27 above). Its advance on AGIRA was postponed until LEONFORTE and ASSORO had been secured, and 1 Cdn Inf Div was ready to advance on this strongly-held position from the west. (Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, "GOC's" OPS" CONFERENCE, 19 Jul 43"; W.Ds., H.Q.s, 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Jul and 231 Inf Bde; Hist Sec file Sicily/C/D, Account of Capt. F.N. Pope, I.O., 2 Cdn Inf Bde.)

60. The ensuing operations did not develop as speedily as was hoped, but it is interesting to note the following "Forecast of the Future" which the G.O.C. made at this Conference:

As soon as we have ASSORO and LEONFORTE and AGIRA, 231 Bde will re-org in AGIRA area. 3 Cdn Inf Bde will be picked up from present area and lifted fwd to about rd June 463324 (sic). If the situation has been cleared up to the East, they may be bounded further fwd than that. The adv Eastward will then commence with 3 Cdn Inf Bde on Right and 231 Bde on the Left. Whether or not I put both remaining bdes along the Northern route or one bde between each leading bde I will decide later but it is quite likely that 3 Cdn Inf Bde will not be followed up and it will in effect become a det which will have to operate on its own.

3 Cdn Inf Bde will have under cond the whole of the SP Regt and the 3.7 How Bty which joined us today and one sqn tks.

Adv along Northern route will be supported by the whole of the remaining Div Arty including the Med Regt. That adv will have to be on a very narrow front and the whole of the sp can be concentrated on a narrow front.

("GOC's" OPS" CONFERENCE, 19 Jul 43", op.cit.)



61. The 2 Cdn Inf Bde advance was resumed about midnight. The Edmonton Regiment were ordered to push forward and establish control of the road junction and river crossing where their road ran into the main highway near where the latter crossed the Dittaino River. The Seaforth Highlanders were to maintain the position they then occupied, while the P.P.C.L.I. were to move forward and consolidate a firm base on the high ground astride the road north of the road and rail junction (square 3582). (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 19 Jul.)

62. The Edmontons made their advance on a wide front with the Battalion extended in line, due to reports of enemy minefields. At 0445 hrs, as they were reaching their objective, enemy machine-gun positions were encountered, and the advance temporarily halted. One company managed to establish a bridgehead across the dry bed of the Dittaino, but came under enemy fire. Artillery fire was quickly brought down on four enemy gun positions that were observed to be firing on this company from the vicinity of ASSORO. The results were most effective, and another company was sent forward to consolidate the bridgehead position astride the main highway. The Battalion remained there for the rest of the day and carried out active patrols on their flanks. The main road towards LEONFORTE was reconnoitred and a large crater was discovered half a mile beyond the road junction (at 344905). (W.Ds., 2 Cdn Inf Bde and Edm R.; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 20 Jul, serials 193, 197, 204 and 244.)

63. Seaforth of C. remained dug in on the positions they had occupied the previous evening. They were more exposed to enemy observation than Edm R. in front of them, and throughout the day they were subject to heavy shelling and mortaring from the direction of ASSORO. The Divisional Artillery sought to check this enemy fire, but found counter-battery work very difficult due to lack of observation. (W.Ds., Seaforth of C., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, and H.C., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul.)

64. During the afternoon, P.P.C.L.I. were ordered to attack Mount Desira Rossi (330870) a hill, about two miles south of the Edm R. position, from which they could command the further advance of the other two battalions. The attack was launched about 1630 hrs supported by the Divisional Artillery, the Brigade Support Group's mortars and machine-guns, and a troop of tanks. Once again no enemy were encountered although the attackers were shelled and suffered a few casualties. The hill was taken with no other opposition and the Battalion was reported consolidating about it by 1832 hrs. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 20 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 20 Jul, serials 241, 245, 246, 249 and 251.)

65. 48 Highrs led the 1 Cdn Inf Bde advance. The route lay eastward along a broad valley with high hills on both sides. This Battalion also spread out in extended line to sweep the valley thoroughly, but reached DITTAINO Station without meeting any opposition. R.C.R. were then ordered to continue the advance north to ASSORO by taking two hill features on the right and left of the road, supported by "C" Sqn of 12 Cdn Tks. The advance, unfortunately, drove right into a minefield and nine tanks were quickly put out of action, with their tracks blown off before the crews realized what was happening. They also came under heavy mortar and artillery fire so that they were forced to stay in their tanks for nearly five hours. The danger was further increased when some stubble was set afire and petrol and ammunition dumps in the vicinity went up in flames and exploded. The Engineers distinguished themselves by starting



to clear the mines under enemy fire (15). R.C.R. captured their objectives, but came under fire from strong enemy positions on the high hill leading up to ASSORO. (W.Ds., 48 Highrs, R.C.R., 12 Cdn Tks and H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jul.)

66. Meanwhile, on the Division's left flank the Reconnaissance Squadron had been ordered to send out a patrol towards ENNA to endeavour to enter the town before the Americans, who were advancing rapidly on it from the southwest (16). This is a story that can be told in somewhat lighter vein. The carrier troop that was sent on the mission was held up about five miles from the town by a badly cratered road which made the further use of motor transport impossible. A patrol of one sergeant, two corporals and a trooper, therefore, went ahead to complete the operation. The Regiment's account describes their accomplishment as follows:

They had a 4½ mile walk continually up-hill and after about 1½ miles got "browned off" and commandeered a donkey to carry them in turns. A pretty sight they were, a patrol led by a man on a donkey to capture ENNA for the Canadians. After about 1½ hours plodding they came to the outskirts of the town and .... saw two truckloads of troops just going into the town. Were they Yanks or Germans? - that was the question. They were a very, very thankful patrol indeed when the Germans turned out to be Yanks, who had just arrived at the edge of the town. The patrol scrounged a ride into

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(15) Lt. W.K. Heron, R.C.E., was awarded the Military Cross for his part in this operation (Citation for Lt. Heron).

(16) 1 (U.S.) Inf Div had informed 1 Cdn Inf Div that they would recce ENNA on 20 Jul and attack the town on the night 20/21 Jul (1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 20 Jul, serial 181). W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, for 21 Jul made the following observations regarding the fall of the town:

Reports that ENNA has fallen to elements of 1 U.S. Division who are on our left, brings to a close a small chapter of friendly rivalry between two Allied Forces. It had at first been the GOC's intention to capture ENNA, then it was decided to bye-pass the town and leave it to the 2 U.S. Corps to deal with. The Americans drew up a plan whereby the town would be attacked on the two flanks by the 16th and 18th Regiments with the 26th Regiment in reserve. In the meantime, we had evolved a plan whereby we would cut off the enemy's line of retreat by taking LEONFORTE, ASSORO and AGIRA. When the Hun saw this he evacuated ENNA and reinforced LEONFORTE where he made a tough stand thereby allowing the bulk of his forces to slip away. When it was learned that ENNA had been evacuated by the enemy we decided to send a patrol in to take the town before the Americans reached there. From what could be observed it was a tie with perhaps our patrol getting the edge. In any case the credit went to the Americans.



town on a Yank jeep and so arrived deep in the heart of ENNA with the American vanguard... Who took the town? Who knows? Actually I think Cpl. Jackson was the first out of the jeep when it arrived at the town square and to him should go the honour of the capture of ENNA by Canadians.

The town had already been evacuated by the Germans and was now left safely in the hands of the American Allies. (Hist Sec file, Sicily/4 Cdn Recce Regt/C/D, "A Trip to Enna", 20 Jul.)

67. The G.O.C. held his daily "O" Group Conference at 1800 hrs, 20 Jul. His intention remained the same, namely a two-fold attack on the hill towns of ASSORO and LEONFORTE by 1 and 2 Cdn Inf Bdes respectively. The advance was to be resumed at 2240 hrs and the Divisional Artillery was to put down intermittent harassing fire from 2100 to 0100 hrs on the road east from LEONFORTE to AGIRA, and particularly on the road junction (356941) where the road from ASSORO joined the highway. (W.D., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jul.) Since the ensuing operation was carried out in two distinct parts, each lasting several days, they will be dealt with separately.

#### LEONFORTE, 21-22 JUL

68. Seaforth of C. were ordered to take over the lead from Edmn R. on the 2 Cdn Inf Bde front. The craters previously reported as blocking the road into LEONFORTE had by now been repaired by the Engineers, and the Battalion went ahead without difficulty as far as a large bend in the road immediately south of the town. During the early morning hours of 21 Jul they took up positions on the high ground east of the road. A deep ravine still separated them from the hill on the western shoulder of which the town was situated, about a mile to the northwest. The main bridge across the ravine was demolished and the approaches completely denied by enemy fire. As the light grew, the Canadians came under heavy machine-gun fire, but for the time being this was effectively dealt with by their three-inch mortars. Meanwhile, the artillery began ranging on the southern slope of the town and on various enemy targets with considerable success. Indeed, the infantry were now as pleased with the artillery support as they had been displeased the day before. Desultory fighting continued throughout the morning. A few casualties were inflicted by the enemy's guns and a few Germans were taken prisoner. The Battalion was to open its main attack on the town at 1630 hrs, following a Divisional Artillery concentration. The attack never started, however, for by ill fortune some of this concentration fell short and landed right on the Battalion's Headquarters, causing considerable casualties and confusion. The Brigade Commander on hearing of the incident decided to postpone the attack until 2130 hrs and substituted Edmn R. for Seaforth of C. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, and Seaforth of C., 20-21 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 21 Jul, serials 274, 279, 302 and 362.)

69. The Edmontons were in a good position to take over from the Seaforth, because during the day they had advanced on to the forward slope of Mount Stella (square 3591) less than a mile to the southeast of the latter Battalion. The night attack was preceded by another Divisional Artillery concentration reported to have been the heaviest to date. This was followed by mortar and machine-gun fire by the Brigade Support Group (Sask. L.I.) which included a certain number



of smoke bombs. The effect of both was described as "terrific and accurate". Seaforth of C. also supplied covering fire and a company of this Battalion was detailed to watch the road leading out of the town to the northeast, while 3 Fd Coy, R.C.E., was given the difficult task of bridging the ravine on the road to the south, as soon as the infantry had gone into the town. This company had already filled in craters and improved the road to within two miles of the town, and during the previous night had reconnoitred the blown bridge. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, Edin R. and 3 Cdn Fd Regt, 20-21 Jul; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/RCE/C/F, History of 3 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E.)

70. At 2100 hrs the two leading rifle companies set off towards the town, closely followed by the Engineers. They clambered down the side of the steep ravine and crossed it near the blown road bridge. The infantry followed the direction of the road up the hill on the other side and under a steep cliff that rose up even higher than the town itself. At first, thanks to the bombardment, resistance seemed slight and the company on the right passed through the town without difficulty, followed by the rest of the Battalion. Soon, however, a strong enemy counter-attack developed supported by tanks and by machine-gun fire from the rooftops. Fierce fighting ensued in the dark streets and houses, illuminated only by the lurid lights of battle. Wireless communications failed so that the hard-pressed Battalion was unable to call for much needed anti-tank gun fire to confront the enemy armour. The Battalion also became split up, the various parts losing contact with each other. Battalion Headquarters and several platoons from two of the companies, under the leadership of Lt.-Col. Jefferson, cleared some buildings in the centre of the town, destroyed a large number of the enemy and took up defensive positions in these houses (17). Meanwhile, one of the companies on the left, overcoming opposition in their way, captured the high ground to the north of the town. Finally, however, being quite out of contact with the rest of the Battalion, they had to fight their way back to where they had started. Another company fought its way through to the final objective, had considerable success in knocking out enemy strong points and in killing at least 24 of the enemy at a cost of only eight casualties. They then moved to positions on the high ground south of the town (18). (*ibid.*; Account of Capt. Pritchard, *op.cit.*; Citations for Lt.-Col. Jefferson and Capt. Tighe.)

71. The Commanding Officer of P.P.C.L.I., whose Battalion was shortly called upon to come to the Edmonton's relief, described the situation in the town as follows:

The fighting that ensued was considerable. It soon deteriorated down to house to house fighting and

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- (17) Lt.-Col. Jefferson was awarded the D.S.O. for his aggressive leadership in this action (Citation for Lt.-Col. Jefferson).
- (18) Captain H.D.P. Tighe, commanding this company, was awarded the Military Cross for the bravery and leadership he displayed in this action (Citation for Capt. Tighe).



there was much confusion. Whole companies seemed to be missing and each small group thought itself the sole survivor of the larger body - everybody seemed to think that all was lost and that the enemy was really in much greater strength than had originally been reported. Little by little, however, small groups began to come back and it was found the picture was not as black as it seemed.

(Account of Lt.-Col. Lindsay, op.cit.)

2/22  
+ 2/22  
According to the Brigade War Diary, Lt.-Col. Jefferson finally found it necessary to order his Battalion to withdraw, but he himself with about 100 men remained cut off in the centre of the town. All this time the sappers of 1 Pl, 3 Cdn Fd Coy, had been working valiantly in the dark and under continual enemy fire. Witnesses pay glowing tributes to their feat in bridging the ravine under these conditions, but their own account nonchalantly reported that "the fire was slightly high and the work continued as though the platoon was on a training exercise". Because of its importance, the C.R.E., Lt.-Col. G. Walsh, himself came forward and supervised the job. Before morning a 40-foot Bailey Bridge had been completed, thus opening the road into the town and making possible the speedy relief of the troops trapped inside. Meanwhile, the Commander of 3 Cdn Fd Coy, Major K.J. Southern, with a few privates from the Edmonton Regiment advanced beyond the bridge to the entrance of the town where they came upon a German force consisting of two tanks, a machine-gun post and some 20 infantry. By a display of small arms fire they stopped the tanks from moving forward and interrupting the bridging work, which they could have done. At this point, Major G.A. Welsh, Commanding 90 Cdn A.Tk Bty, arrived on the scene. Appreciating the situation he returned to his Battery under machine-gun fire to get one of his six pounders into action against the enemy strong point. A subaltern, Lt. C.H. Murdoch, wheeled the gun into position, manned it himself and, although under heavy fire, destroying the enemy machine-gun post and forced the tanks to withdraw. Meanwhile, Major Welsh had again gone forward to the enemy positions and with the help of two engineers captured 20 German prisoners (19). (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Jul; Account of Capt Pope and 3 Cdn Fd Coy Account, op.cit.; Citations for Lt.-Col. Walsh, Major Southern, Major Welsh, Lt. Murdoch, Lt. Dickson, Sgt McPhee and Spr. Johnston.)

72. During the night "C" Company of P.P.C.L.I. and a squadron of 12 Cdn Tks had been moved up the road to the Rear Battalion Headquarters of Edm R. (at 348922) about a quarter of a mile short of the bridge, in order to protect the left flank of the attacking forces and to deal with enemy mortar and machine-gun nests interfering with the Engineers' bridging work. During the early morning both tanks and infantry along the road were under intense enemy mortar fire. About this time Brigadier Vokes came forward in order to find out what was happening. Since there was still no wireless communication to Edm R. an officer from the Reconnaissance Squadron had been sent forward into

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- (19) Lt.-<sup>C</sup>ol. Walsh, Major Southern, Major Welsh, Lt. Murdoch, Lt. N.W. Dickson, No. 1 Platoon Commander D.16076 Sergeant, R.R. McPhee and a Sapper, C.2027 L.A. Johnston, all received awards for the night's work (Citations, op.cit.).



the town, and at great personal risk had returned with valuable information regarding the situation (20). On receipt of this news the Brigade Commander decided to risk sending a "flying column" to enter the town by the main road in broad daylight. This column was to consist of a troop of four Sherman tanks, a troop of four anti-tank guns and "C" Company of P.P.C.L.I. Part of the latter were mounted on the "quad" tractors and guns of the anti-tank troop, while the remainder marched behind. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, P.P.C.L.I. and 12 Cdn Tks, 22 Jul; Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Accounts of Lt.-Col. Lindsay, op.cit. and Maj R.C. Coleman, P.P.C.L.I.; Citation for Lt. H.T. Carson.)

73. At 0900 hrs the tanks, followed by the "quads" and guns, raced down the road across the newly built bridge and up the long hill into LEONFORTE. They were under heavy machine-gun fire most of the way, but thanks to the break-neck speed, they reached the town with only one casualty, and the enemy machine-gun posts quickly surrendered. Surprise and speed had made the initial attack most effective (21). (ibid.; Citations for Capt. R.C. Coleman, Lt. G.C. Evans, Sgt. J. Towe and L/Bdr R.A. Bennet.)

74. The infantry now dismounted from the guns and immediately engaged in house to house fighting, working their way into the centre of the town, where, by 0945 hrs, they found the lost band of Edmn R. holding out in a wine cellar. The anti-tank guns were particularly effective in support, firing some 20 rounds and knocking out several enemy machine-gun posts and mortar positions at close range. The remaining companies of P.P.C.L.I. were now sent forward to exploit this success. "C" Company continued on up the main road against stiff opposition. At the northern end of the town they were unable to advance further in this direction, but one platoon was sent around to the right where it succeeded in seizing the railway station and forcing the enemy to withdraw several hundred yards up the tracks. (ibid.)

75. Back near the centre of the town the Canadian tanks had met an enemy tank and destroyed it at the point-blank range of ten yards. Unfortunately, however, the wreckage of this tank blocked the main road to all Canadian vehicles for some time. When the road was eventually cleared, the Shermans again advanced, but the leading tank was knocked out by a dual-purpose enemy gun which had been causing the infantry considerable trouble and which was finally disposed of by mortar fire. Two more German tanks were also destroyed during the day. By early afternoon, "A" and "B" Companies of P.P.C.L.I. had reached the centre of the town and made contact with "C" Company. It now appeared that the enemy held positions on two high features, one to the east and one to the west, from which they commanded the town. These positions would have to be stormed and taken before

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(20) The officer, Lt. H.T. Carson, was awarded the Military Cross (Citation, op.cit.).

(21) Capt. (shortly afterwards Major) R.C. Coleman in charge of this force was awarded the Military Cross for his "leadership and skill" in carrying out the task. Lt. G.C. Evans, G.4030 Sgt. J. Towe and G.4164 L/Bdr Bennet all of 90 Cdn A.Tk Bty also received awards for the outstanding part they played in the operation. (ibid.)



LEONFORTE could be considered tenable. "A" Company, therefore, attacked to the left and "B" Company to the right. By 1730 hrs, after several hours' hard fighting and at the price of a considerable number of casualties, both these objectives were attained. "A" Company, supported by machine-gun fire and smoke from one Sherman tank, had made a most spirited attack. No. 7 Platoon, under Lt. R. Carey, reached the company objective through some dead ground, surprising and clearing out three enemy machine-gun posts with grenades. For their conduct in this particular action, Lt. Carey and one of his men, H.17188 Pte. W. Reilly, were later awarded the Military Cross and the Military Medal respectively. (*ibid.*; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 22 Jul, serial 480; Citations for Lt. Carey and Pte. Reilly.)

76. Perhaps even more spectacular was the feat of H.16736 Pte. S.J. Cousins, who was recommended for the Victoria Cross (22). His Platoon Commander described the incident as follows:

An N.C.O. and two men, including Pte. Cousins, from 8 Platoon, moved forward under cover with an L.M.G., in an attempt to neutralize one post on the platoon front. Moving to within 25 feet of the M.G. post, they were unable to bring effective fire on it. The N.C.O. was seriously wounded and one man killed.

Pte. Cousins then picked up the gun and rushed this post, firing from the hip. He knocked it out and killed 5 of the enemy therein. He then went to ground, changed magazines, and repeated his performance on another post, again knocking out 5 of its occupants.

As a result of his gallant action, the whole of the enemy line collapsed; and the Coy successfully gained and held the ridge. Later, while on duty with his machine-gun, he was killed by a direct hit on his post.

(W.D., P.P.C.L.I., Jul 43, Appx 17.)

77. By evening, the whole of the Battalion was in the town. The Regimental Aid Post was set up in LEONFORTE hospital and numerous casualties were soon pouring in; the P.P.C.L.I. losses were reported to be 64 killed and wounded, the Edmonton 22. At last light the Battalion's anti-tank guns were moved forward to guard the northern entrance to the town, while the companies consolidated on their positions for the night. The task of clearing the town of snipers, for there was still sporadic firing, continued during the hours of darkness, but the battle had been won and LEONFORTE was now safely in Canadian hands. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, P.P.C.L.I., and 12 Cdn Tks, 22 Jul.)

(22) He was subsequently given a posthumous mention in despatches. (The D.C.H. and M.M. cannot be awarded posthumously.) Altogether 21 awards were made for the battle of LEONFORTE, five D.S.Os., eight M.Cs. and eight M.Ms. Five went to 90 A.Tk Bty, R.C.A., four to 3 Fd Coy, R.C.E., four to P.P.C.L.I., four to Edm R., two to H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde (Brigadier Vokes and Capt. McLean, S.C.), one to H.Q., R.C.E. and one to 4 Cdn Recce Regt. (Citations op.cit.)



ASSORO, 20-22 JUL

78. It will be recalled that on 20 Jul, 1 Cdn Inf Bde had reached DITTAINO Station and turned up the road leading past ASSORO to the ENNA-CATANIA highway, just to the east of LEONFORTE. Hast & P.E.R. were instructed to prepare for an attack on ASSORO that night. The Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. B.A. Sutcliffe, E.D., and his Intelligence Officer, Capt. M.H.B. Cockin, went forward into the R.C.R. area to make a reconnaissance. In order to get a good view of the ground they moved to a forward position where they took shelter in a shallow weapon pit, for a steady harassing fire from enemy mortars and 88 mm guns was raking the R.C.R. positions. About 1430 hrs an 88 mm shell hit a branch and burst a few feet over their heads killing Lt.-Col. Sutcliffe and mortally wounding Capt. Cockin. Major the Lord Tweedsmuir took over command of the Battalion and with the company commanders went forward to make another reconnaissance to determine the route for the advance. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 20 Jul; Account of Maj. Campbell and Capt. Waugh, op.cit.)

79. The light was failing, but all along the horizon to the north they could see the main escarpment running from LEONFORTE through ASSORO on eastwards toward AGIRA. Directly ahead was the enormous silhouette of the ASSORO feature rising above everything else. The only direct approach was by the winding road to the left, but they knew that the Germans would have this well covered and that such a direct attack would be suicide. A conceivable alternative seemed to be a cross-country approach around to the right and a climb up the very steep eastern slope of the mountain. From where they stood, it was hard to tell whether this would be possible, but Major Tweedsmuir felt that it was worth making an attempt. He hoped that the Germans would think that an attack from this side was impossible and would leave it unguarded. To further deceive the enemy, arrangements were made with 48 Highrs to send three carriers racing up the road with instructions to turn around as soon as they were shot at. This was done about last light and the carriers got half way to ASSORO before the Germans opened fire on them, at which point they withdrew as ordered. (Verbal evidence of Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir given in conversation with the writer, 9 Mar 45.)

80. From 2100 hrs until 0100 hrs the Divisional Artillery and 7 Med Regt R.A., under its command, brought down intermittent harassing fire on the highway east of LEONFORTE and especially on the road junction, 356941 (W.D., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jul; see para 67 above). At 2130 hrs Hast & P.E.R. moved off, led by a specially formed "assault" company composed of twenty of the fittest men from each of the rifle companies, armed with rifles, and a few brens, and carrying bandoliers and no other equipment. The Battalion followed a circuitous cross-country route over very difficult terrain around to the eastern slope of the mountain on which ASSORO was built. They marched silently in brilliant moonlight, but from time to time, the silence was broken by the barking of dogs in the farm houses which they passed along the way. Once they heard a bell tinkle and a boy, fast asleep on the back of a mule, passed right through their ranks, woke up as if in a dream to see these foreign helmeted men all around him and dropped back to sleep again, little realizing how close he had come to being shot by the tense soldiers. Three quarters of an hour before first light, the Battalion found itself at the base of the main feature which still towered about 1000 feet above them, divided by forty-seven steep terraces and topped by an old medieval castle. Moreover, immediately ahead there lay a forty foot deep ravine with absolutely



smooth sides forming a natural moat to the stronghold which they were going to assault. It looked impossible but they went ahead, discovered a goat track down the ravine, and clambered up the other side. So far they had been unobserved by the enemy who, as had been hoped, assumed an attack on this side of the town was humanly impossible. However, the Canadian Battalion, led by Major Tweedsmuir, who was himself an experienced mountaineer, proceeded to demonstrate that such was not the case. (ibid.; W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 20 Jul; Account of Maj. Campbell and Capt. Waugh, op.cit.; Evidence of Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir, op.cit.)

81. Time was growing short and they immediately began the climb, the special company on the left commanded by Capt. A.R. Campbell and the other three companies led by Major Tweedsmuir on the right. It was a very steep climb and the men were so tired that it seemed impossible to continue. However, it was imperative that they reach the top before the increasing daylight gave away their exposed position on the steep mountain side. By super-human effort they reached the summit within half an hour from when they started the climb. Major Tweedsmuir leading his group cautiously looked around the corner of the old castle and to his surprise saw no enemy. Further to the left, however, they could hear the Bren gun fire where the special company had come upon a German observation post and quickly disposed of its personnel. (ibid.)

82. From here they could see a convoy of enemy vehicles coming along the road which wound up the western side of the hill towards the town which also lay on the hillside immediately below and to the north of the Canadian positions. They opened fire, knocking out at least eight of these vehicles and forcing the enemy to withdraw to positions beyond the town. One company then moved into ASSORO itself, but shortly the enemy counter-attacked and confused fighting resulted. Snipers, some of them civilians, remained in the town and caused considerable trouble. A temporary lull ensued but after a short time the whole Battalion area, which was extremely small, came under a very heavy and concentrated mortar and artillery bombardment from the enemy guns which had been firing on LEONFORTE. During the three hours that followed, it was estimated that between two and three hundred shells of all calibres fell in this area, but despite the fact that the rocky nature of the mountain top made digging impossible, casualties were miraculously light. The Germans hoped to force the Canadians to withdraw, but were quite unsuccessful. On the contrary several more patrols succeeded in penetrating into the town and taking a large number of prisoners. A good observation post was established and fire from the supporting Artillery was brought down on the enemy gun positions which could be clearly seen across the road below them. By 1500 hrs the German fire had become "spasmodic and ineffective". (ibid.; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 21 Jul, serial 302.)

83. Meanwhile an attempt had been made by the "F" and "A" Echelon vehicles of the Battalion to reach the town via the road which wound up the western side of the hill. It had been arranged that when the hill was cleared the Infantry on top would fire a green Very light. Unfortunately the Germans used this same signal in calling for mortar fire with the result that the Canadian vehicles came up the road under circumstances that were never intended. They ran into very heavy enemy fire and were forced to turn around and withdraw, suffering many casualties. (ibid.)



During the day R.C.R. and 48 Highrs had remained on either side of the road about three miles south of ASSORO (at 390880 and 389861 respectively). (1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 21 Jul, serial 348.)

84. By last light the enemy, under cover of mortar fire, attempted to counter-attack. The Canadians were so tired that they were practically asleep and the Germans advanced almost to the top of the hill. Artillery fire was immediately called for and the first shells landed on the Hast & P.E.R. positions. Corrections were quickly sent over the wireless, and the artillery then proceeded to break up the enemy attack with most successful concentrations. It had been a close call. The remainder of the night was uneventful except for an occasional salvo of enemy artillery which was answered by the guns of the Medium Regiment. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 21 Jul; Evidence of Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir, op.cit.)

85. By evening, Hast & P.E.R. were without food and running short of ammunition, and were still out of touch with the rest of the Brigade. Capt. W.K. Stockloser, and R.S.M. Duffy, volunteered to return by the difficult cross-country route to Brigade Headquarters, where they notified the Brigade Commander, Brigadier H.D. Graham, of the situation. Lt.-Col. Crowe, who was present at once offered to provide an R.C.R. party to carry in the rations and ammunition. During the afternoon, this Battalion had sent several patrols towards ASSORO, but they had been held up and suffered some casualties. The carrying party organized that night, fared better. It consisted of about a hundred volunteers, stripped of all their equipment and carrying a full day's rations and ammunition for the Battalion, stowed in their small packs, which they had emptied of all their personal possessions, in some Everest packs and in bandoliers around their necks. By midnight they were ready and started off over the difficult uphill route, escorted by another company of R.C.R. After a three hour march, they got through undetected by the enemy and returned without incident during the early morning, while the troops in ASSORO received their first rations in 36 hours. (Account by Maj. Powers, op.cit.; W.Ds., R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R., 21 Jul; Evidence of Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir, op.cit.)

86. At the Brigade "O" Group meeting on the afternoon of 21 Jul, the Brigade Commander ordered 48 Highrs to move forward to assist Hast & P.E.R. in ASSORO. The Highlanders moved up the valley by way of the road, and shortly after midnight the two leading companies began to attack the heights to the southwest and southeast of the town. At dawn they were able to clear the enemy from this sector thus permitting the Engineers to fill in a road crater (at 372911) which had prevented the supporting arms from getting their transport forward. The remaining two companies now advanced and the Battalion took up a position on the main road west of ASSORO, where it was mortared and shelled by the enemy throughout the day, suffering a number of casualties. One company entered the town and contact with Hast & P.E.R. was made. Several enemy vehicles and one 88 mm gun were captured and 60 Italian prisoners taken. (W.D., 48 Highrs, 21-22 Jul; Hist Sec File Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account of Lt.-Col. I.S. Johnston, 48 Highrs; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 22 Jul, serial 448.)

87. A squadron of 12 Cdn Tks was ordered to assist 48 Highrs in their assault. Although the road was now repaired and the infantry were on the ASSORO heights ahead of them, the advance of the tank squadron was by no means easy



for there were still dangerous enemy machine-gun and mortar posts concealed on the rugged hillside. Moreover, the road the tanks now had to ascend would have been a difficult route for that type of vehicle at any time. The Tank Regiment's Diary described the situation as follows:

The ridges, along the approaches to ASSORO, were heavily defended by mortar and machine gun fire, which the infantry could not locate. The deadly fire from these concealed positions had blocked the roads with dead vehicles of all types. To even show a portion of one's anatomy to these ridges meant a terrific fusillade of enemy fire. The approach to the mountain positions held by the enemy consisted of a steep, narrow winding road, with many "U" turns. The outside of the road was unprotected and with sheer drops of two or three hundred feet in many places. It looked impossible but Lieut. Waldron, commanding No. 1 troop, led his troop up a boulder strewn cutting and, with steady blasts of 75 mm H.E., succeeded in clearing the enemy from their positions in the many coves in the mountain side. The enemy had not considered that anyone would be foolhardy enough to take tanks up there. They were mistaken ... and paid for it. Unable to contact the infantry, the troop had to remain in their positions for several hours. Eventually contact was made, and, at approximately 1100 hours, the infantry advanced under the covering fire from the tanks and secured the ridge. Lieut. Waldron's troop was forced to stay on the ridge all night, amid a ghastly mess of burned and shot up vehicles, with burned bodies strewn about them and breathing the unforgettable stench of burned human flesh. .... The road had broken away under the weight of (one of the tanks) and it was balanced on the edge of the cliff with a good 500 foot drop immediately beside it. It looked like an impossible job to recover it, but after several hours work it was finally got back on the road again by a British Heavy Recovery party, who had claimed that it was the most difficult job they had ever attempted.

(W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 21 Jul; actually this entry should have been made under 22 Jul.)

88. The Hast & P.E.R. position was now somewhat healthier, although spasmodic mortaring and small arms fire from snipers continued. The artillery whose excellent observation post commanded an area far to the enemy's rear, kept up a ceaseless harassing fire against his communications and gun positions, many of which were knocked out. During the day, most of the wounded were evacuated, and the Battalion's padre buried the eight men who had been killed during the stay on the hill as well as the enemy dead in the vicinity. Hast & P.E.R. also took a large number of Italian prisoners who were put to work evacuating the wounded and helping with supplies, tasks which they were reported to have performed most willingly. By 1400 hrs ASSORO was at last reported clear of the enemy. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 22 Jul.)



89. The Hast & P.E.R. action at ASSORO was one of the most significant as well as one of the most dramatic events of the whole campaign. (23) According to the Divisional Commander their surprise penetration into the strong enemy positions on the mountain upset the whole German plan of defence and forced a large withdrawal on the ASSORO front which made it impossible to hold LEONFORTE much longer. (ibid.) LEONFORTE and ASSORO were really two phases of the same battle for the Germans had to hold the whole ridge or withdraw from it altogether. However, since LEONFORTE commanded the main road they had committed the better part of their force (1 Pz Gr Regt) to the defence of this town. The Divisional Intelligence Summary of 23 Jul made the following observations concerning the German positions:

For the first time, the Germans fought all three bns of 1 Pz Grn Regt as one tactical formation. After the fall of ASSORO the coys (3 Bn?) fighting there were moved in to defend LEONFORTE. During 22 Jul all three bns were identified in and about the latter town. At first light 5 tks and about 75 inf penetrated back into LEONFORTE. This resolute defence is something new. Hitherto the German rearguard has pulled stakes cleanly and retired some 8 or 10 miles to a new posn. The fact that they are not voluntarily retiring from their latest strong point but are fighting for every yd of ground indicates that we are nearing something like a serious defence zone. Beyond doubt they would have held LEONFORTE had they not been driven out of it.

Regarding 1 Pz Gr Regt (15 Pz Gr Div) the summary remarked:

The condition of this Regt must now be serious. Captured document shows losses of 2 Bn up to 21 Jul to be 7 offrs, 230 ORs. 1 Bn is estimated to have lost 385 all ranks. We have just recently met 3 Bn, but already PW total over 100, and 10 Coy appears all but wiped out. We must expect a re-organization of the Regt anytime now....

(Hist Sec File Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/L/F,  
Int Summary No. 5, 23 Jul.)

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- (23) Oddly enough while there were 21 awards for LEONFORTE, there was only one for ASSORO which went to Capt. R.M. Dillon of R.C.R. who led a carrier patrol in the vicinity. There were no awards to Hast & P.E.R. Ten recommendations were made by Major Tweedsmuir from North Africa, where he had been evacuated as a result of a wound received a few days later. But by the time these reached the Battalion the deadline for nominations had been passed and as a result Hast & P.E.R. failed to receive the decorations which they would seem to have well deserved.



90. A total of 435 prisoners of war was reported taken by 1 Cdn Inf Div in the four days, 19-22 Jul. Canadian casualties were around 300 all ranks. (W.D., A.A. & Q.M.G., Rear H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 20-23 Jul.) (24)

THE GENERAL SITUATION 17-22 JUL

91. While the Canadians had been engaged in the hard fighting from VALGUARNERA to LEONFORTE and ASSORO, the situation in the rest of the island had changed considerably. On 20 Jul, 2 (U.S.) Corps had reached ENNA (para 66 above), and along the coast the newly formed American Provisional Corps had reached SCIACCA about 50 miles southwest of PALERMO. By this time all the German force had been withdrawn from the western half of the island, but there still remained the equivalent of four Italian divisions which had to be "mopped up" in order to secure the Allied left flank. Moreover, PALERMO, an important port, was very much needed as a base of supply for the other operations of the American Seventh Army. Therefore, the capture of PALERMO and the clean-up of western Sicily was immediately directed. Lightning blows were struck from the south, southeast and east so that by 22 Jul elements of three American divisions had converged on the port which surrendered at 2000 hrs the same day. On 23 Jul the remaining ports of TRAPANI, CASTELLAMMARE and MARSALA were captured and the conquest of western Sicily was completed; the opposition had been very light, but a large number of prisoners of war were taken. Meanwhile 2 (U.S.) Corps had struck north from the ENNA region, cut the coast road west of TERMINI IMERESE and were now advancing eastwards towards MESSINA. (Fifteenth Army Group, Account of Operations, op.cit.)

92. In the east, however, the Germans continued to hold with grim tenacity. The situation was described by the Fifteenth Army Group Account of Operations as follows:

It was plain now that the enemy had concentrated his main forces in the Catania plain opposite 13 Corps and intended to retain possession of Catania as long as possible. The terrain was admirably suited to defence, being cut by numerous rivers, drainage ditches and canals, rendering the employment of armour extremely difficult. The enemy's positions in the plain were backed by the foothills of the Mt Etna mass, giving the enemy superior observation. In the plain lay the largest group of airfields in Sicily. Although our advance to the Simeto had rendered these airfields virtually unserviceable to the enemy, they were strategically the most important and vital objectives which the enemy sought to deny us the use of by his prolonged defence in Sicily.

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(24) The A.D.M.S. War Diary reported 19 officers and 265 other ranks battle casualties for these four days, while the A.A. & Q.M.G. reported 27 officers and 316 other ranks casualties including 6 officers and 61 other ranks killed. It would appear the latter were not included in the A.D.M.S. figures.



93. The 13 Corps attack through the PRIMOSOLE bridge-head on the night 17/18 Jul (para 25 above) proved abortive, and the general line of this Corps' front remained unchanged. 51 (H) Div on the right flank of 30 Corps, after crossing the DITTAINO River (para 26 above) drove through GERBINI (742748) and SFERRO (705785). On 21 Jul, however, this Division was counter-attacked in the GERBINI area and forced to withdraw to the line of the DITTAINO. Thus, it should be realized, that by 22 Jul 1 Cdn Inf Div and 231 Inf Bde were considerably farther north than the rest of the Eighth Army. (*ibid.*; W.D. G.S., Main H.Q., 30 Corps, July, Appx "B", Sitreps, 18-23 Jul; 30 Corps Int Summaries 19 and 20 Jul.)

94. In the air, the Allies were greatly superior to the enemy. By 21 Jul 27½ squadrons of Spitfires and Kittyhawks were operating from captured airfields on the island, while heavy bombers were on overnight call from North Africa, 51 (H) Div and 1 Cdn Inf Div now each had a section of 654 Air O.P. Squadron under command; two other sections were in Corps Reserve. The enemy's situation in the air was summed up by the 30 Corps "Air Note" of 17 Jul:

The enemy is now outnumbered in SICILY by our fighters; his available bomber force has always been smaller. He has not enough fighters to escort bombers and it is unlikely that the Luftwaffe will appear again in force. All enemy aircraft now return to the mainland of Italy for the night.

(W.D., Main H.Q., 30 Corps,  
Appx "D", Air Notes 17 & 21 Jul.)

95. Every day attacks were made on enemy held towns such as CATANIA, ADERNO, PATERNO, RANDAZZO, NICOSIA, TROINA and MISTERBIANCO with the general intention of creating road blocks and consequent confusion. Enemy transport on the roads between these towns was continually bombed and strafed. The story was much the same from day to day, but perhaps 22 Jul was one of the best. On this day, a large column of 300 enemy vehicles and guns was seen moving west from RANDAZZO through TROINA. It was bombed and strafed continuously while in the afternoon smaller groups of vehicles on roads in the LEONFORTE - NICOSIA - TROINA area were also attacked by Kittybombers. By 1800 hrs, 156 sorties had been flown, 65 "flanders" scored and at least as many vehicles damaged. Roads were cratered at a number of points. Fighter bombers also hit a 5000-ton ship in CATANIA Harbour while 120 Mitchell sorties were made against other enemy held towns. During the same day, unfortunately, some vehicles of 1 Cdn Inf Div were bombed by mistake by the R.A.F.; one plane was shot down. (*ibid.*, Air Notes 19, 20, 21 and 22 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 22 Jul, serial 427; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, Note on "Action by R.A.F." appended to Instructions for 22-23 Jul.)

96. It had now become apparent that to take CATANIA and its airfields by a frontal assault would be a long and costly operation. Therefore, on 21 Jul the Army Commander held a meeting at his headquarters at which he outlined the situation and proceeded to direct as follows:



- (1) 13 Corps and 51 (H) Div. were to reorganize, maintain their present gains and "keep the Germans in the area by periodical small attacks"; 1 Cdn Inf Div was "to continue without restraint directed on ADRANO."
- (2) All field artillery was to be limited to 30 rounds per gun per day except that with 1 Cdn Inf Div; S.P. ammunition was even shorter and was to be limited to 2 rounds per gun per day except in the case of a German attack.
- (3) 78th Infantry Division was being ordered over from North Africa; it was to come under 30 Corps and to be brought by motor transport to a tentative concentration area around RAMACCA.
- (4) 30 Corps to prepare for a Corps offensive on the road centres in the ADERNO area and thence north on RANDAZZO as soon as two brigade groups of 78 Div were ready in the Corps area which would be until after 1 Aug.

(W.D., G.S., Main 30 Corps,  
July, Appx "BB".)

Two messages from General Montgomery to General Alexander, dated 21 and 22 Jul, further indicate the situation. In the first he said:

Enemy resistance about CATANIA and in foot-hills through MISTERBIANCO and PATERNO was found last night to be very great (.) I have won the battle for the plain of CATANIA and am in possession of practically the whole of it (.) We are making new airfields on South edge of plain but these will be in range of long range artillery from MISTERBIANCO area (.) Heat in the plain is very great and my troops are getting very tired (.) During the past 10 days we have driven enemy into North-East corner of island (.) He is determined to hold fast on his left flank about CATANIA and further attacks here by me will mean heavy losses (.) I am therefore going to hold on my right and will continue operations on my left against ADRANO (.) Will give 78 Div to 30 Corps so that 30 Corps can have greater strength into operation north towards BRONTE (.) Two things are now very important (.) First (.) American thrust Eastwards along North coast road towards MESSINA (.) Second (.) The full weight of all air power that can be made available from North Africa must be turned on to the enemy army now hemmed in to the North East corner of SICILY.

On the following day he wrote:

After very heavy fighting against German troops Canadians captured LEONFORTE today (.) Enemy reinforcing column of 200 MT and guns moving on NICOSIA was smashed up by air attack (.) Local enemy counter attacks at LEONFORTE were beaten off (.) This important centre of road communication is being firmly held and the thrust of Canadian Div Eastwards from LEONFORTE towards AGIRA and ADRANO has now begun (.) 231 Bde moving against



AGIRA from the South is now within two miles of that place (.) When 78 Div has arrived I shall put in a BLITZ attack supported by all possible air power on thrust line ADRANO - BRONTE - RANDAZZO (.) Date for this will be about 1 August (.) This attack if successful should almost finish the business provided American thrust Eastwards along Northern coast road is heavy and sustained.

(W.D., Main H.Q., Eighth Army, July, Appx "Z")

97. On 22 Jul, General Montgomery visited 1 Cdn Inf Div Headquarters where he conferred with Major General Simonds and afterwards met some war correspondents (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 22 Jul).

#### PRELIMINARIES TO THE EASTWARD DRIVE, 22-23 JUL

98. While 1 and 2 Cdn Inf Bdes were attacking ASSORO and LEONFORTE, 3 Cdn Inf Bde, which had moved up around VALGUARNERA during the night 19/20 Jul, was sent east to cooperate with 231 Inf Bde, and attack down the DITTAINO Valley towards LIBERTINIA and CATENANUOVA. The Brigade began to leave the VALGUARNERA area early on 21 Jul, and moved east by a secondary road which, two miles north of RADDUSA, ran into the RADDUSA - AGIRA road that 231 Bde had come up two days before. During the afternoon all three battalions took up positions on the high ground on either side of the latter road (in squares 4580, 4581 and 4681) and about a mile south of RADDUSA - AGIRA Station. (W.Ds., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, West N.S.R. and H.Q., 231 Bde, 21 Jul; Appx 47 West N.S.R. Diary, shows the route taken from VALGUARNERA. Some other maps marked by Divisional Headquarters show another route via DITTAINO Station, but Capt. Cunningham, who directed the convoy out of VALGUARNERA confirms the West N.S.R. map.)

99. That night West N.S.R., with one battery of artillery in support, were ordered forward to seize LIBERTINIA a village about four miles further east (see para 164 below). The Battalion made a right flanking movement by a cross country track through the hills south of the river, reached the village by 0200 hrs and reported it clear. They then dug in on the high ground to the south and east. Throughout the following day, however, they were subjected to enemy artillery fire and suffered some casualties. During the afternoon the Brigade Support Group's mortars were brought into action. (W.D., West N.S.R., 21-22 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 21-22 Jul, serials 363, 383, 394, 462, 471, 473, 477 and 478.)

100. During 22 Jul, R. 22e R. moved a short distance down the valley about a mile to the east of RADDUSA - AGIRA Station, while Carlt & York R. crossed the river in order to take over a position held by 1 Harps (231 Bde) at 478850 just east of the road to AGIRA. The latter Battalion then joined the rest of 231 Bde which had remained in contact with the enemy throughout 21-22 Jul in the country to the north, about four miles south of AGIRA. (W.D., H.Q., 231 Bde, 21-22 Jul and H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Jul and Appx 13-Map.)

101. At 1800 hrs, 22 Jul, the Divisional Commander issued written instructions to the four brigades under his command.



His intention remained the same, namely to capture AGIRA, reorganize and "move EAST to secure ADERNO in conformity with the Corps plan". 231 Bde, with 142 Fd Regt (S.P.) in support, was to advance that night up the RADDUSA - AGIRA road and secure hills on either side of the road (480915 and 463907) about two miles south of AGIRA. From here they were to exploit to a line on the high ground about half a mile southeast of the town, extending from the RADDUSA road to the main highway (from 468944 to 488950); but they were not to pass beyond this line for fear of coming under the fire of artillery supporting the advance of 1 Cdn Inf Bde from the west. 1 Cdn Inf Bde was to send one battalion along the highway to assault AGIRA from the west. When in position, this battalion was to be supported by the full Divisional Artillery. Another battalion from 1 Cdn Inf Bde was to hold a line (368950 to 361950) across the highway leading north to NICOSIA. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was to reorganize in the area northeast of LEONFORTE and 3 Cdn Inf Bde were to remain in their present area until further notice. The Divisional Artillery was to move under cover of darkness to positions south of ASSORO in order to support 1 Cdn Inf Bde attack on AGIRA and generally to be able to fire "D.F. tasks" as required by 1 and 2 Cdn Inf Bdes. 12 Cdn Tks, less one squadron which was with 3 Cdn Inf Bde near RADDUSA - AGIRA Station, was to move to an area south of the railway tracks (square 3588). "A" Squadron, 4 Cdn Recce Regt, was to maintain contact with the enemy on the road LEONFORTE - AGIRA and was to pass all the information obtainable to the commander of the battalion of 1 Cdn Inf Bde which was to assault AGIRA on 23 Jul. Divisional Headquarters were to move to the area northeast of LEONFORTE early the following morning. (Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/1, "INSTRUCTIONS FOR BDE GPS COVERING PERIOD 1800 hrs 22 July to 1800 hrs 23 July".)

102. At 0305 hrs 23 Jul, 231 Bde reported: "objectives gained but fwd tps subject to hy mortar fire." During the day they held a line (4992 - 4892 - 4490) across the north-south road, where they had good observation over the main highway, but they did not exploit to the second line. Patrols from 3 Cdn Inf Bde during the same night failed to find any enemy, but German artillery was reported in positions to the north and east. During the following day, a patrol was sent to contact a battalion of 51 (H) Div in the area of M. Judica (5678); after some difficulty, this patrol reported making contact on the morning of 24 Jul. (1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 23-24 Jul, serials 497, 502, 518, 553, 561, 569 and 591; 30 Corps Log, 23 Jul, Messages 0600, 0905, and 1925 hrs.)

103. On receiving instructions to attack AGIRA, which was fifteen miles east of LEONFORTE, the Commander of 1 Cdn Inf Bde ordered 48 Highrs to advance from ASSORO to the road junction where the main highways from AGIRA and NICOSIA met one mile east of LEONFORTE. R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. were then to pass through. (W.Ds., R.C.R. and 48 Highrs, 22 Jul.)

104. 48 Highrs were shelled by German heavy artillery in their forming up area and suffered 14 casualties. However, by midnight their advance elements moved off to the north. En route one of the leading companies suffered several more casualties from enemy shelling, but the advance continued until they reached the road junction where they ran into heavy machine gun and mortar fire from enemy tanks and infantry. After some heavy fighting they were forced to withdraw and reorganize but when daylight came it was discovered that the enemy had also withdrawn so the Battalion took up a defensive position just east of the junction which it maintained throughout the day. Battalion Headquarters



were subject to 88 mm and mortar shelling which made them think that the enemy was locating their wireless sets by "direction finding" apparatus. (W.D., 48 Highrs, 21-22 Jul.) At 1235 hrs, 1 Cdn Inf Div informed 231 Bde and 3 Cdn Inf Bde that the first tasks of 1 and 2 Cdn Inf Bdes had been completed with the occupation of the road junction (367947). Further advance, however, was postponed for 24 hours. (1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 23 Jul, serials 527, 528 and 541.)

105. During the night 22/23 Jul, R.C.R. followed close behind 48 Highrs and, when the latter became involved with the enemy, deployed to the south of the highway. Hast & P.E.R. remained in ASSORO resting and relaxing after the heavy strain they had undergone during the previous 48 hours. (W.Ds., R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R., 23 Jul.)

106. During the day, 23 Jul, the Divisional Recce Squadron went forward, as ordered, through LEONFORTE to reconnoitre the main roads east to NISSORIA (which was halfway to AGIRA) and north to NICOSIA. One troop reached the western limits of NISSORIA, made contact with the enemy there and fired on a small enemy tank. They were forced to withdraw, however, due to enemy mortar fire. Another troop which had turned off on the NICOSIA highway also ran into enemy positions and returned under cover of darkness. (W.D., "A" Squadron, 4 Cdn Recce Regt, 23 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 23 Jul, serials 554, 557, 559, 560, 562 and 563.)

#### NISSORIA and AGIRA, 24-28 JUL

107. The following morning, 24 Jul, the G.O.C. held another conference at which he gave detailed instructions for the attack on AGIRA by 1 Cdn Inf Bde. The leading troops were to cross the start line in the vicinity of the main road junction three miles west of NISSORIA at 1400 hrs and subsequent report lines on a set time-table thereafter. Artillery and air support were to be closely tied in with the infantry's attack. The whole Divisional Artillery was to fire concentrations on specific target areas and by a set time-table. Further targets would be engaged as requested by the Commander of 1 Cdn Inf Bde. A smoke bombline about 2000 yards long was also to be laid down by the Divisional Artillery at Zero plus 5 across the road in front of the infantry. This was to be lifted 1000 yards each 20 minutes. The artillery supporting 231 Inf Bde to the south of AGIRA was also to be prepared to fire certain "D.F." tasks as assigned. Air support was scheduled by Kittybombers which were to bomb selected targets and strafe the enemy on the roads, and by medium bombers which were to bomb AGIRA and its vicinity. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was to take over 1 Cdn Inf Bde's positions in ASSORO and around the road junctions east of LEONFORTE (in square 3694). (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, July, Appendix 16, Copy of Div Operations Instruction, 24 Jul.)

108. Reports regarding the enemy's dispositions were vague, but it was thought that due to the overwhelming artillery and aerial support there would not be much opposition before AGIRA was reached. Actually a force consisting of 2 Battalion (two companies) of 1 Pz Gr Regt, stragglers from 1 and 3 Battalions and a number of artillery sub-units, had taken up strong positions on hills on either side of the road about a mile east of NISSORIA. (Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/L/F, 1 Cdn Div Int Summary, No. 6, 26 Jul; W.Ds., R.C.R. and 12 Cdn Tks, 24 Jul.)



109. The ruined castle on the summit of ASSORO, two miles southeast of NISSORIA, furnished an ideal observation post from which to watch the operation. General Simonds and the B.G.S., 30 Corps, Brigadier Walsh, as well as several other senior British and Canadian Officers spent the afternoon on this height looking down on the battle below. Far to the east the massive bulk of Mount Etna could be seen looming out of the haze, covering a large sector of the horizon although it was 40 miles away. (Personal Notes and Observations - Sicily, by Major A.T. Sesia, pages 48 - 51.)

110. The Divisional Historical Officer was also watching from this hilltop and some observations are quoted from his diary:

The artillery barrage commenced at about 1500 hrs. A lot of the shells passed over our heads. We could see the target quite plainly below us. It was a large open field surrounded on three sides by a heavy wood. The artillery fire was fairly accurate, and from the bursts one could easily determine its concentrated nature .... There was a fresh breeze blowing across the field at the time and the smoke concentration did not seem effective in spite of the number of shells dropped. The General ordered more of it (25)....

During the shooting, the valleys below us were filled with a haze raised by the smoke and dust from the exploding shells and this rendered visibility poor particularly for the Air Force. When the Kitty-bombers arrived on the scene, some British Army Air Co-operation officers stationed in the castle ruins sent up red smoke as a recognition signal.....The Kitties peeled off one by one and dropped their bombs along the road. The medium bombers did not show up and this was probably due to the haze. (26)

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- (25) Numerous messages in the Divisional Intelligence Log (serials 618, 619, 624, 628, 631, 632, 633, 634 and 636) bear out the fact that the subject of smoke caused considerable concern during the afternoon.
- (26) The R.C.R. War Diary says that there was no sign of the air support and a Divisional Operation Instruction issued that evening likewise comes out with the bald statement: "The Air Sp allotted to this Div today did not materialize". The explanation of this apparent contradiction is perhaps to be found in a cryptic message in the Corps Intelligence Log for 24 Jul (from Army Air Sp, 1610 hrs). "The air blitz has failed owing to R.A.F. signal arm trouble, there will be no light bombers, only some Kitty-bombers".



.....While speaking of (this) battle, Sprung (27) remarked that he had never seen troops so eager to get into battle as our fellows despite the fact that they are completely poohed out.....

I learned later from Sprung that in this attack our Infantry had a tendency to advance after the artillery barrage had ceased, with the result that there was nothing to keep Jerry's head down when our chaps came into view and he played merry hell with them with his mortars and M.M.G. fire. (Sprung) said that German prisoners had told him that we Canadians are very much like the British in that we are slow in following up any advantage we may have gained by an artillery barrage.

(ibid.; Pages 49 - 51)

111. Down in the valley, R.C.R. led the 1 Cdn Inf Bde attack with a squadron of 12 Cdn Tks under command. The Battalion plan was to send two rifle companies forward, marching off the road, to take NISSORIA. The other two companies were then to follow through and take the high ground east of the town. It was twelve miles to AGIRA so it was expected that if there was opposition, Hast & P.E.R. would probably pass through them to complete the final phase of the operation. At 1400 hours, the forward companies crossed the start line with the Battalion Commander, Lt.-Col. Crowe, proceeding along the road abreast of them. NISSORIA was reached and cleared according to plan, but at the eastern edge of the town the advance troops came under heavy

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(27) Capt. G.M. Sprung was a Divisional Intelligence Officer and a rather exceptional one. He was awarded the Military Cross for his conduct in the battle south of VALGUARNERA, when he penetrated some 200 yards under fire to the position of an isolated platoon of Carlt & York R. in order to interrogate some senior prisoners of war who had just been captured. He had then returned under fire bringing back valuable information. (Citation of Capt. Sprung.) The Divisional Historical Officer tells another story concerning this Officer:

.....Sprung drove up on his motorcycle with a German M.M.G. slung across his back and a Hun prisoner riding pillion with him, holding on his lap the tripod mounting for the gun. Spike (Sprung) captured this chap who was manning the M.M.G. single-handed. He also captured three other M.M.Gs., three thousand rounds of ammunition and some mortar bombs. (ibid., Page 54.)



enemy machine gun and mortar fire which indicated that the main German positions were on the hills immediately to the east (28). Unfortunately, at this crucial point, when it was necessary to coordinate the further attack of the four rifle companies, wireless communications began to break down and it became necessary to relay messages from one company to another. One company was ordered to continue the advance on the left or north side of the road onto the enemy held hill feature while the other leading company continued to advance to the south of the road where brisk fighting ensued. Thinking that the latter company had succeeded in securing the enemy position, Lt.-Col. Crowe ordered the remaining two companies to "push on" in the same direction. Up to this point the advance had been covered by good fire support from the Brigade Support Group. When NISSORIA was reported secure, "F" Echelon vehicles and advance Battalion Headquarters moved forward to an olive grove on the outskirts of the town where they were subject to heavy enemy artillery fire during the rest of the day, but fortunately casualties and damage were not excessive. (W.D., R.C.R., 24 Jul and Appx V-Company Accounts; see also Account of Major Powers, op.cit., but this is not as complete as the W.D. which is the chief source of information.)

112. Meanwhile, the company attacking the hill to the north of the road had been under heavy fire and suffered casualties. The platoons had become separated, and communication with Battalion Headquarters had failed. On the south of the road considerable firing to the right rear of the enemy position led the Battalion Commander to believe that his companies were successful in this area. Therefore, accompanied by a Signals and an Engineer subaltern and seven other ranks, he moved forward to make contact with these companies.

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(28)

According to his citation, it would appear to have been at this point that Lt. Col. H.M. Hague, O.C. 2 Cdn Fd Regt, came forward in a carrier and discovered that his Forward Observation Officer had become a casualty. In the words of the citation: "Lt.-Col. Hague immediately went forward on foot crossing difficult terrain without cover under heavy enemy fire, obtained exact locations of the enemy positions holding up the advance, returned through the same difficult ground under increasing heavy fire, and passed back his exact orders to engage the enemy strong points." (Citation for Lt.-Col. Hague.)



Actually the three companies had passed up a valley to the south of the road, by-passing the enemy positions, and had continued on in the direction of AGIRA (29). As a result, Lt.-Col. Crowe and his party walked right into the enemy area. The Battalion Commander, a corporal and two privates were some distance ahead of the rest of the party when the Germans opened fire. Calling out "R.C.R.", Lt.-Col. Crowe pressed on hoping to reach his troops. An enemy machine gun then opened fire and wounded him. He proceeded, however, to engage the enemy with a signaller's rifle, but was killed by another enemy bullet. Two of the three other ranks were also killed while the third was wounded and presumably taken prisoner. The rest of the party managed to withdraw to the town. (*ibid.*)

113. Major Powers, the officer second-in-command of the Battalion, who had remained in NISSORIA, took over command. He was unable, however, to regain contact with the three forward companies which by now had reached a point a few miles short of AGIRA. Here the company commanders, realizing that the Battalion was out of control, held a council-of-war and decided to consolidate where they were for the night. One of the companies sent a fighting patrol out against a nearby enemy position, but in the darkness the Germans withdrew hurriedly towards AGIRA in motor transport. Another company reported successfully ambushing a number of enemy vehicles along the road, but later German tanks began to fire on their positions and forced a withdrawal to cover. Two R.C.R. privates actually penetrated into the outskirts

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(29) "C" Company, south of the road, in attempting to attack the enemy held hill, had been forced to ground by heavy enemy mortar fire. "A" Company, following up, had sought to come to the former company's aid, but were ordered to withdraw as an artillery concentration was to be brought down. It was at this point that Lt.-Col. Crowe's orders to proceed to the next point was received. The two follow up companies "A" and "B", carried out the order and were followed shortly afterwards by "C" Company. Thus the enemy were left in positions on a hill between these three companies and NISSORIA. (W.D., R.C.R., July, Appx V.)

In these proceedings 9 Platoon had become detached from the rest of "A" Company and had independently attacked one of the enemy positions under the skilful and daring leadership of its commander, Lt. M.C.D. Bowman, who was subsequently awarded the Military Cross for this action. During the attack the platoon came under heavy fire from an enemy machine gun about 75 yards distant. Three other ranks from the platoon skilfully encircled the post and while one created a diversion the other two assaulted it, killing a German officer and six men, wounding another and taking the remaining German prisoner. A.4049 L/Cpl L.F. Meister and A.3396 Pte. N. Kowalchuk were each awarded the Military Medal for this action. (Citations of a/m officers and other ranks.)



of the town during the night and managed to capture the driver of the District Commandant's car, who later provided information which proved valuable in planning the final attack on AGIRA. (ibid.)

114. The fourth rifle company which had attacked on the north side of the road had been finally forced to withdraw to NISSORIA where they joined the support company and elements of the other three rifle companies which had become separated (ibid.).

115. During the day, "A" Squadron of 12 Cdn Tks were also heavily engaged but to judge from the lack of references in the Diaries of the two units their fighting seemed to be quite independent of that of the infantry, probably because the latter were for the most part operating off the road. The Tank Regiment's Diary claims that the tanks got ahead of the infantry in NISSORIA where they silenced an 88 mm gun and advanced one mile east of the town. Here heavy fire was encountered from the slope overlooking the valley on their left flank and one of the tanks was knocked out, blocking the road for the remainder. The tanks returned the fire and claimed successful hits on four 88 mm guns. Enemy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire was heavy and ten Canadian tanks were put out of action but six were repairable and eventually evacuated. Eighteen casualties were suffered by the squadron, including the squadron commander and his second-in-command wounded, and four other ranks killed. The squadron commander, Major J.D. Pearson, was badly wounded in the hip when he got out of his tank to administer morphine to a seriously wounded trooper from another tank. His crew managed to pull the wounded officer back into the tank, but shortly afterwards it was hit and he had to be taken out again under heavy fire. Later he was "carried out on a stretcher, under heavy fire, by the C.O., M.O., I.O., and I'Sgt." The Regiment Commander, Lt.-Col. Booth, was in the vicinity throughout the action and "directed the operations of extricating the squadron, until all tanks had returned to harbour, area 3794". Brigadier Graham was also close to the scene of action riding in one of the Regimental Headquarters' tanks. (I.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 24 and 25 Jul.)

116. Further details of the action are quoted from the Unit's War Diary to illustrate the fierceness of the fight:

....Enemy fire was brought to bear on these two tanks and the crew of the I.O's tank attempted to evacuate. At this moment an 88 mm shell hit the loader operator's side of the tank breaking loose the ammunition and fittings, also slightly wounding the operator, driver and co-driver. The driver and co-driver were getting out of the tank when another 88 mm shell penetrated the top corner of the driver's compartment. However, both managed to get out safely. A fire was started in the tank but the driver, Tpr Cushing, remained inside and gave first aid to the operator. While evacuating the tank, Tpr Cushing had a Thompson Sub-Machine Gun shot out of his hands. Both he and the operator cleared the tank without further injuries. The crew of the tanks managed to reach safety, under cover of the dust and smoke from exploding H.E. shells. The I.O's tank had been out of action for one hour previous to this



when his batteries had been damaged by a 5 c.n. A/T shell. The crew continued to fire, using hand control, until only two rounds of H. E. remained.

Lieut. Roberts, the I.O., had accompanied "A" Squadron with his tank, acting as rear link to the C.O. His tank was shot up and burned furiously. He and the crew fought it until it was no longer possible and then the crew managed to escape under heavy fire. Lieut. Roberts reported to Col. Booth, who was at the edge of the town, and requested permission to go back and help out some wounded men. He returned three times under fire and helped wounded men out. Then later in the evening, armed with a Bren gun, endeavoured to locate and silence an Anti-tank gun which was firing across the valley. He later organized a party of R.C.R.s to cover the valley with M.G. fire from excellent fire positions in houses on the extreme edge of the town of NISSORIA, which he had previously discovered. (30) (ibid.)

The Diary also contains an account by one of the squadron's N.C.O's. (31) He relates how his troop ran into a road block in NISSORIA and continues:

The fact that the road was blocked necessitated No. 1 and 5 troops to advance down the main street of the town, which was a bottle-neck. At the outskirts of the town we were fired upon by a 76.5 (sic) mm A/T gun. On being fired upon we backed down the road to cover and reported the anti-tank gun to the Squadron Leader. The firing eased a little and we were ordered to advance. On proceeding up the hill, we came under heavy mortar fire and my tank (Sgt. Allen's) was hit by a 76.5 mm shell. The gun position was then known to me and the gunner was able to silence it with H.E. fire. Still proceeding under fire, I came to another corner, where there was an enemy harbour to the right.

In the meantime all tanks were being fired upon and one tank had been hit and was burning furiously. I remained in my tank and covered the left flank to try and neutralize the heavy mortar fire from that direction....I asked for permission to make a foot recce of the situation. From

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- (30) Capt. O.L. Roberts was awarded the Military Cross for his conduct in this action (Citation of Capt. Roberts.)
- (31) This N.C.O., D.71213 Sgt J.A. Allen, was awarded the Military Medal for his conduct on this occasion (Citation of Sgt. Allen).



a position on the hill to the right, I was able to obtain the positions of two A/T guns, and ..... to report their positions so that the artillery could bring fire to bear on them. ....(separated from his own troop, he then came upon two tanks of another troop, got out of his tank to administer first aid to some wounded, returned and netted the other two tanks on his wireless thus forming an ad hoc troop to carry on the battle.) I noticed a truck leaving the enemy harbour and asked permission to proceed and put it out of action while the other two tanks covered my advance. On turning the corner I was fired upon from all angles but succeeded in putting two tanks out of action as well as the truck. On my right, Sgt. Stewart knocked out a carrier and a half tracked vehicle. Cpl. Ceaserine destroyed a carrier on the left flank. The heavy fire ceased and the occasional burst of machine gun fire was all that remained....(He then proceeded) to make a recce of the bend ahead.... On rounding the corner, I saw an enemy tank and S.P. gun which fired on me but I managed to get one shot in before returning.

It was then decided to out-flank that obstacle, and we proceeded along a steep road to our right. My tank was fired upon by an A/T gun from an unknown position and I replied with several shots in the general direction of his position. On finding that only 9 rounds of H.E. remained in the tank, I ordered the crew to evacuate. Sgt. Stewart's position seemed hopeless although he was still firing so I told him to evacuate the tank. Cpl. Ceaserine's tank had stalled and he also evacuated. The crews were ordered to contact the infantry and advise them of the situation but encountered enemy infantry and were forced to retire to the town. Sgt. Stewart, Cpl. Ceaserine and myself remained to recover the tanks and we returned to harbour with them after dark.

(W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 24 Jul.)

117. This somewhat lengthy account of a relatively small part of the action serves to illustrate how impossible it is to give any complete description of a battle in which hundreds of officers and soldiers are involved. At the risk of repetition it is again emphasized that the history of a formation cannot detail the innumerable achievements of individuals or small groups that are occurring throughout the campaign and still remain a reasonable length.(32)

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(32) The War Diary of 12 Cdn Tks alone devotes eight pages (about 3500 words) to this action near NISSORIA. The R.C.R. account is about four pages. Brigade and Divisional Headquarters Diaries on the other hand have only a few lines each.



Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the big picture is made up of these little ones; that the many actions often related in a few casual sentences or paragraphs, are all full of noise and horror, valour and death.

118. When it became obvious that R.C.R. had failed to dislodge the enemy, the G.O.C. ordered 1 Cdn Inf Bde to renew the attack during the night. 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes were to remain in their present positions and patrol actively to the north and east respectively. 231 Bde was ordered to (a) "send one bn immediately to sit astride the rd three kilometres EAST of AGIRA", (b) be prepared to move up to AGIRA and advance east through REGALBUTO, and (c) send detachments to hold each of the road and river crossings (at 465975 and 430989) on the roads from AGIRA northeast to TROINA and northwest to NICOSIA. (Hist Sec File Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, "Operation Instruction" 2045 hrs, 24 Jul.)

119. Brigadier Graham ordered Hast & P.E.R. to take over the attack. Major Tweedsmuir went forward to make contact with Major Powers, R.C.R., who had taken up a defensive position southeast of NISSORIA, and to inform him of the new orders. He obtained what information he could regarding the situation and returned to the town where he met his battalion and gave the necessary instructions. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div & Hast & P.E.R., 24 and 25 Jul.) Major Tweedsmuir had not seen the ground by daylight, but he decided to advance south of the road and cut it about a mile west of AGIRA (Verbal evidence of Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir, op.cit.).

120. The Battalion then advanced under cover of darkness and less than a mile east of the town reached the high ground south of the road (square 4194) where the enemy still remained in strength. One of the leading companies soon ran into a German gun position which it succeeded in overrunning. The remaining companies deployed and pressed on against the German positions but the enemy were now wide awake, and numerous machine gun posts and mortars, supported by three Mk III tanks which had been dug in on commanding points, opened fire on the Canadinas. It was becoming light but the rocky nature of the ground made it impossible to dig in. Fourteen German machine guns fired on them from all directions while the tanks were firing at point blank range. For an hour and a half Hast & P.E.R. returned the fire, taking what cover they could behind stonewalls. Casualties were very heavy, however, and finally all their ammunition was expended, so the commanding officer, who had himself been wounded in the leg, by a mortar bomb ordered a withdrawal which took place before his own evacuation. The Battalion withdrew through NISSORIA in daylight and re-organized in a narrow valley near the main road on the other side of the town. Their casualties were reported to be six officers and 63 other ranks, including nine other ranks killed and missing. One platoon of Hast & P.E.R. was cut off and remained behind all day. It later came back with valuable information regarding the enemy's dispositions which aided the subsequent attack of 2 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 24-25 Jul; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Accounts of Maj. Campbell and Capt. Waugh, op.cit.; and of Maj. C.S. Nickel and Capt. W.K. Stockloser, Hast & P.E.R.; Verbal evidence of Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir, op.cit.)



121. While this action was taking place, R.C.R. were still in the process of re-organizing, following their dislocation on the previous day. Contact was finally made with the three forward companies on the early afternoon of 25 Jul, and they were called back to join the rest of the Battalion. The latter, still holding a position southeast of the town, had been under fire during the morning, both from enemy machine guns and mortars and from Canadian artillery. The whole Battalion was now ordered to withdraw back to their concentration area at 377949 about two miles west of NISSORIA, where they spent the rest of the day reorganizing, collecting stragglers and replenishing their ammunition. During the afternoon a carrier section was sent forward in an attempt to recover the bodies of Lt.-Col. Crowe and the other ranks who were killed with him, but they came under terrific enemy fire and were forced to withdraw, suffering several casualties (33). (Account of Maj. Powers, op. cit.) Total R.C.R. casualties for the action at NISSORIA were reported by Maj. Powers to be four officers and 64 other ranks, including one officer and 32 other ranks killed and missing but according to the Unit War Diary casualties were about 15 killed and 30 wounded.

122. 12 Cdn Tks also spent the day re-organizing and recovering their lost tanks. During the morning Lt.-Col. Booth with one officer and two other ranks inadvertently penetrated the enemy positions while inspecting the scene of the previous day's fight. They suddenly discovered German soldiers about 75 yards distant just as the Germans noticed them. They beat a hasty retreat amidst a hail of enemy bullets, and after an exciting few minutes managed to reach their jeep and get away unscathed. (W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 25 Jul.)

123. During the night 24/25 Jul, 1 Hamps of 231 Bde had succeeded in reaching their objectives astride the main road east of AGIRA. These positions, however, were overlooked by higher ground in the possession of the enemy and during the afternoon, 25 Jul, the Battalion was attacked and forced to withdraw again to the south of the road. (W.D., H.Q., 231 Bde, 24-25 Jul.)

124. That evening the remaining battalion of 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 48 Highrs, was launched against the positions which the Germans were holding so stubbornly. The action is best described in the words of the Battalion Commander, Lt.-Col. I.S. Johnston, who gave a clear and concise account of it to the Divisional Historical Officer:

During the morning of 25 Jul the posn in front of us seemed quiet and a tp of 4 Cdn Recce Regt (4 PLDG) were able to pass through the town and onto the ridge with-

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(33) Lt.-Col. Crowe's body was recovered and buried on 27 Jul.



out contacting the enemy. It was accordingly felt that the enemy had withdrawn. Two patrols were sent out from "C" Coy and they reported back at 1300 hrs that they had found enemy tks and an 88 mm gun on this posn. It was too late at this time to lay on an arty barrage. The RCR and Hast & PER had both reported the enemy on the face of the ridge in caves. MMG fire from the Bde Sp Gp was thereupon arranged together with arty concentrations and this was directed towards the caves. The bn was ordered to attack at 1800 hrs. In view of the condition of the other two bns, the RCR and Hast & PER, the bde cmd ordered that we attack on a one coy frontage and as success was met with the other coys were withheld to form a firm base against possible counter-attack. It was then decided to attack up a defile on the left of the posn with "D" coy leading who were to wheel out and take the high ground to the N of the feature which was thought to command it. This coy was to be followed by "B", "C" and "A" coys who were to wheel to the right and pass through each other thereby allowing "A" coy to lay S of the posn. The attack went in as ordered with apparently little opposition.

During the commencement of the attack the coys were shelled in the forming up areas but without casualties. "D" coy reported themselves on their objective and "B" coy was then launched in its attack, followed by "C" coy. After "C" coy had gone into the attack "D" coy reported by opposition on their objective and requested sp. "B" coy also reported opposition on reaching their objective. All of this opposition was found to be on the top and reverse slopes of this feature and not on the fwd slopes as reported by the other two bns. The arty concentrations were to be called down by 18 sets from bn HQ. This comm failed so the arty fired a second conc on a time plan previously agreed upon in the event of such failure occurring. This turned out to be too early as "D" coy had not yet reported on its objective. It was then impossible to arrange for arty fire, as originally planned, to sp "B" coy but the conc in sp of "C" coy was laid on twice. "C" coy failed to take the route following "D" and "B" coys so did not make contact with "B" coy. After nightfall "D" and "B" coys were both out of comm with bn HQ. They had failed to attack their objectives and found their posns untenable and they



both withdrew. "C" coy in the meantime had proceeded slowly and laid up after being overtaken by darkness until about midnight when they attacked towards their objective. They found the posn closely held by enemy tks in hull down posns and by other MG fire. At about 0200 hrs 26 Jul, Capt. Whitelaw, OC "C" coy, reported to bn HQ and with the consent of the bde cmd. was allowed to withdraw with little, if any, casualties. The bn then took up its original def posn where it remained during the next two days.

(Account of Lt.-Col. Johnston, op. cit.)

125. According to the Battalion War Diary 51 casualties were suffered during this action, including one officer and ten other ranks killed.

126. 231 Bde had been ordered to regain their positions across the road east of AGIRA in conformity with the attack of 48 Highrs. 1 Dorset and 1 Hamps carried out these orders successfully during the night, 25/26 Jul, and reached the road junction (475957) just east of AGIRA. On the failure of the Canadian attack, however, they were again forced to withdraw since "these forward positions were dominated by the heights of AGIRA and were untenable during daylight". (W.D., H.Q., 231 Bde, 25-26 Jul.)

127. From 24 to 26 Jul, 2 Cdn Inf Bde remained in reserve, P.P.C.L.I. at LEONFORTE, Seaforth of C. at ASSORO and Edmn R. in the vicinity of the road junction (square 3694). The latter Battalion patrolled north towards NICOSIA and was in contact with the Americans who were swinging eastward and attacking parallel with the Canadian drive. An excellent observation post was established several miles north of the road junction, from which enemy movement on the NICOSIA - AGIRA road was observed. Ten enemy vehicles and a tank were knocked out by artillery fire while an enemy occupied building was also observed and hit. 90 Italian soldiers thereupon emerged and gave themselves up as prisoners. The bulk of the Brigade were able to rest during this period, although subject to some enemy shelling from the north. On the night of 25 Jul they heard of the fall of Mussolini. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, P.P.C.L.I., Edmn R. and Seaforth of C.; Account of Capt. Pritchard, op. cit.)

128. The chatty Diary of Seaforth of C. gives some interesting sidelights on the short period of rest:

Many planes have gone over this morning heading NORTH. The ARTY is behind us, firing on targets on and around AGIRA and NISSORIA.

The men are resting and cleaning up today, a well needed rest it is.

One of our trucks was unloaded today and sent out to gather corn for the population of ASSORO - the GERMANS they say took everything they had.



Last night our Town Picquet in ASSORO, Pte. FISHER, G. acted as escort to a midwife who had 4 expected jobs to do. During the night the M.O., CAPT W.K. MACDONALD was called upon to give medical aid for the mothers. Reports say that "all are doing fine".

.... The Bn as a whole spent a restful day, nothing out of the ordinary to report today. Much work at Bn H.Q. was caught up on. Mail censored, casualty returns made up to date and the WAR DIARY written up as much as possible.

(W.D., Seaforth of C., 24 Jul.)

129. Early in the morning of 26 Jul, the G.O.C. issued fresh orders for the capture of AGIRA. 2 Cdn Inf Bde were now to take over the attack and pass through 1 Cdn Inf Bde at 1800 hrs that same day. The attack was to be made in two stages. First of all, one battalion under cover of an artillery barrage, was to capture a firm base east of NISSORIA. This was to include two objectives, the first called "LION" which was the ridge across the highway (squares 4095 - 4096) and the second called "TIGER" which was a still higher ridge a mile further east (squares 4295 - 4296). On completion of this task the second battalion was to exploit forward to the high ground immediately west of AGIRA which dominated the approaches to the town and was to be known as objective "GRIZZLY". 231 Inf Bde were to supply the same infantry support as on the previous nights, namely 1 Hamps were to get astride the main road east of AGIRA (at approximately 490950) and 1 Dorset were to capture the hill feature (in square 4794) immediately southeast of AGIRA, from which they were to send a strong fighting patrol forward to the road junction east of the town; these positions, however, were not to be held if the Canadians had not captured AGIRA by daylight. (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 17, "The Battle for AGIRA" (an account which is also in Hist Sec File Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D under Brig Vokes' name), Appx 18, a trace of the attack on AGIRA, Appx 19, H.Q., R.C.A., Barrage Notes, 26 Jul; W.D., H.Q., 231 Bde, 26 Jul.)

130. On being informed that 2 Cdn Inf Bde were to take over from 1 Cdn Inf Bde, Brigadier Graham sent the following written message to Brigadier Vokes:

Enemy in front of NISSORIA. Patrols of 48th and party of H. & P.E.R. who remained concealed throughout yesterday indicate enemy positions are farther east than was at first thought - although they saw movement from one position to another indicating that at one time they may have m.g.'s. on one slope and then move to another. Dug in tanks and A TK guns are in vicinity of the road 406959.



Col. Johnston attacked from the left, i.e. to get the high ground at the left of the feature 405967 - his left coy. reached that ground but was mortared off. His experience was that the enemy were in positions on reverse slopes and the arty concentns. on the fwd slopes & top did not damage the enemy too much. His tps were also attacked by the tanks. 2 tps "C" Sqn. 12 C.T.R. went in but could not get into postn to engage enemy and night fell very quickly so they had to withdraw. 48th state enemy are using tanks with our markings. They may be mistaken as some of our tanks were lost in that area in our first attack.

Col. Johnston's opinion is that a wide right flanking move toward the rear of the enemy postn with deep concentns. from right & left would give best chance of success. Our tanks might be able to reach high ground on right by track shown on mosaic and on map.

(W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 14.)

131. Brigadier Vokes ordered P.P.C.L.I., supported by "C" Squadron of 12 Cdn Tks, to carry out the first phase of the attack, namely the capture of the two objectives "LION" and "TIGER". All available artillery under command of 1 Cdn Div was to be used, namely 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Fd Regts, R.C.A., 165 Army Fd Regt, R.A., (34) 7 Med Regt, R.A., and also the Brigade Support Group's 4.2" mortars. The initial artillery plan consisted of two minutes intense followed by fifteen minutes normal fire on the opening line just west of NISSORIA, by the guns of four field regiments less two batteries. This was to be followed in turn by sixteen 100-yard lifts at three-minute intervals with a further five minutes on the last line. The barrage was to pause for 20 or 30 minutes after the first objective to permit the reserve infantry companies to come up and prepare to advance on the second objective. Then it was to continue five minutes on a new start line followed by twelve 100-yard lifts at three-minute intervals. Seaforth of C. were to be prepared to advance to the third objective, "GRIZZLY", from an assembly area within one hour's march of "TIGER". Exploitation was to be supported by all available artillery. (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Appendices 17, 18 and 19, op. cit.; W.D., P.P.C.L.I., Appx 18, "NISSORIA". The latter account by Maj. Coleman is also in Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D.)

(34) It appears that 165 Fd Regt, R.A., had recently come directly under command of 1 Cdn Inf Div from 231 Bde; 142 (S.P.) Fd Regt, R.A., was at this point operating with 231 Bde (W.Ds., H.Q., 231 Bde and 142 Fd Regt, 26 Jul).



132. Later in the day, Zero hour was postponed from 1800 hrs to 2000 hrs in order to give the artillery time to complete the elaborate barrage programme. Before P.P.C.L.I. began to advance they were informed by 48 Highrs that their objectives were strongly held and that the enemy had penetrated into the town itself. At 1845 hrs the two leading companies moved forward under cover on either side of the road to reach their forming-up positions. Promptly at 2000 hrs the artillery opened fire in what proved to be the biggest and most successful shoot of the campaign up to that time (35). Seventeen minutes later the two leading companies advanced across the start line following the smoke and H.E. barrage very closely and, despite enemy fire, managed to keep up and seize their objectives in short order. The company on the north of the road came under fire immediately the attack started but only suffered nine casualties during the night, two killed, and seven wounded including the company commander; the company on the south of the road advanced with less opposition, taking a number of prisoners demoralized by the artillery barrage, and suffering even fewer casualties. Firing and patrolling continued throughout the night, but the enemy failed to counter-attack and the two companies with their supporting tanks, remained on objective "LION". (Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Accounts by Lt.-Col. R.A. Lindsay and Major R.C. Coleman, P.P.C.L.I.; W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 17, op. cit., and R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jul (This entry should be under 26 Jul) and 12 Cdn Tks, 26 Jul.)

133. Lt.-Col. Lindsay, commanding P.P.C.L.I., later gave an account of the action in which he said:

... in half an hour both features were taken. Large numbers of the enemy were found on these features. In addition to prisoners taken, approximately 70 to 80, many more were killed. The Hun appeared to be dazed by the audacity of our attack. One German, in fact, who was taken prisoner, said that in all his experience as a soldier, which totalled more than six years and during which he fought on many fronts, he never saw the likes of our chaps for their tenacious fighting spirit in the face of heavy concentrated fire. Of the remaining Germans, it was found that the majority, by far, had been killed or wounded. (36)

(Account of Lt.-Col. Lindsay, op. cit.)

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(35) According to the War Diary of 3 Cdn Fd Regt, for 26 Jul, "Enemy prisoners captured after the attack stated that the barrage was so terrific and our infantry followed so closely behind that they had no alternative but to lay down their arms. They were shaken and demoralized".

(36) The War Diary of 12 Cdn Tks for 26 Jul noted that 126 prisoners were taken in the vicinity of NISSORIA.



134. The two support companies of P.P.C.L.I. unfortunately became lost in the dark and did not secure the second objective, "TIGER", that night. As a result, the enemy were able to recover from the first demoralizing effects of the barrage and, from their positions on "TIGER", to deny the road east of NISSORIA to the Canadian anti-tank guns and the M.M.Gs. and mortars of the Brigade Support Group (37). A troop of 12 Cdn Tks, however, managed to get through just beyond the "LION" objective where the tanks went into a hull down position on ground north of the road which greatly strengthened the infantry's position. They lay low until daylight and as a result were able to spot and destroy enemy anti-tank and machine guns as soon as the latter divulged their positions by fire. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 17, op. cit. and Seaforth of C. 27 Jul.)

135. During the night at Brigade Headquarters information as to the situation was confused and it was uncertain whether or not objective "TIGER" had been attained. At about midnight, however, the Brigade Commander decided to commit Seaforth of C. in the exploitation task, in the hope that aggressive action would clear up the situation. The Seaforth advanced by road through NISSORIA and when clear of the town deployed on either side of the road. In passing through "LION" they came under very heavy fire from enemy M.M.Gs. and tanks which held them up for some time. One company of Seaforth finally succeeded in knocking out the well concealed M.M.G. posts which were giving the most trouble. Anti-tank guns of 90 Cdn A. Tk Bty came forward to deal with the enemy tank threat and, together with the tanks of 12 Cdn Tks already there, destroyed two or three enemy tanks. In the meantime the leading company of infantry continued towards the second hill feature known as "TIGER" and assaulted the ridge under fire from flanking enemy machine gun posts and from tanks in hull down positions over the crest (38). As soon as they secured a footing,

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(37) During the night, however, the Group had completed a very successful M.M.G. and mortar shoot which had earned them especial congratulations from the Brigade Commander (W.D., 2 Cdn Inf Bde Sp Gp, 26 Jul and Appx 2).

(38) According to Lt.-Col. Lindsay, P.P.C.L.I. also participated in the final capture of "TIGER". After describing how Seaforth of C. came forward during the night and the "terrific pummelling" they withstood after "attaining the first objective (LION)" he went on to say that they (i.e. Seaforths):

"...nevertheless held to their ground and fought all night and by morning had dug in in a position a little short of the second objective, (TIGER). On the morning of 26 Jul I ordered "A" and "B" Companies to take objective "TIGER" at all costs. After bitter fighting this objective was finally attained and positions were taken to enable the Seaforths to get through."

Doubtless both Battalions participated in the morning's fighting, but it would appear from the Brigade Commander's account that Seaforth of C. were chiefly responsible for attaining objective "TIGER".



anti-tank guns and an artillery Forward Observation Officer were quickly rushed forward, followed by another infantry company. By 1100 hrs, 27 Jul, the Seaforth had consolidated objective "TIGER" and were in a good position to carry out the next phase of the operation, namely the attack on objective "GRIZZLY". The "TIGER" feature commanded the road towards AGIRA and the country to the north, so that Canadian artillery, tanks and infantry had an excellent field of fire on the retreating Germans. As a result between them they were able to shoot and destroy several more enemy tanks and machine gun posts and a considerable number of enemy vehicles and infantry which were caught in the open. (Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account of Battle for AGIRA by Lt.-Col. B.M. Hoffmeister, O.C., Seaforth of C.; Accounts of Brig. Vokes and Lt.-Col. Lindsay, op. cit.; more details are also to be found in W.D., Seaforth of C., 27 Jul.)

136. During the previous night, 26/27 Jul, a patrol of Edmn R. had carried out a flanking movement to the north, and by daylight had placed themselves astride the road AGIRA - NICOSIA about three miles northwest of AGIRA (425006) where, with Hawkins grenades and PIAT bombs, they destroyed three enemy Mk IV tanks, a tank transporter and three or four lorries. They also effectively machine-gunned the soldiers riding in these vehicles, and set fire to a large enemy oil and ammunition dump. During the day, the patrol was strengthened by two other platoons, and the combined force, now a company in strength, remained in this position the rest of the day in order to prevent any enemy traffic between AGIRA and NICOSIA (39). (W.D., Edmn R., 27 Jul; Accounts of Brigadier Vokes and Capt. Pritchard, op. cit.)

137. 231 Brigade for the third successive night came down from their hills and crossed the road east of AGIRA, but once again withdrew in the morning since the Canadians were still several miles west of the town (W.D., H.Q., 231 Bde, 27 Jul).

138. Late in the morning of 27 Jul, the Brigade Commander came forward to where the Seaforth were consolidating on "TIGER" and ordered this Battalion to proceed on to objective "GRIZZLY". "GRIZZLY" consisted of two separate features, "a square topped" hill called M.Fronte on the south of the main road (squares 4594 and 4595) and a somewhat more extensive and wooded ridge to the north of the road (squares 4595 and 4596). This ridge

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(39) Major W.G. Bury who was in charge of this operation was awarded the Distinguished Service Order as a result of it. According to the official Citation:

By map and compass, on this dark and moonless night, this officer unerringly led his men, cross country over the six mile stretch of rugged precipitous rock. Reaching the post at dawn Major Bury personally led the bayonet charge which captured the post; then the company dug in.

Maj. Bury was killed the following day in the battle for AGIRA (para 141 below). (Cont'd at foot of next page.)



had three separate peaks, the northern and more isolated of which was called Mount Capruzza, while the southern end was known as Cemetery Hill. AGIRA itself was built on the western slope of a still higher cone shaped hill lying astride the highway about half a mile further east. These features, it was later found out, were held by fresh troops from a battalion of 15 Pz Gr Regt (29 Pz Gr Div). At approximately 1200 hrs, Allied medium bombers bombed AGIRA while Kittyhawks successfully strafed and bombed enemy positions on the eastern extremity of objective "GRIZZLY". From their positions on "TIGER" the Canadian infantry were able to observe the bursts of the big bombs as they fell in the northern and western sections of the town. (Accounts of Brigadier Vokes and Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister, op. cit.; Map, Italy 1:50,000, Sheet 269-IV; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summaries 28 and 30 Jul.)

139. The Seaforth of C. attack on "GRIZZLY" was further supported by concentrations fired by the Divisional Artillery and also by one platoon of M.M.Gs. from the Brigade Support Group, one troop from 90 A/Tk Bty, and two troops of Sherman tanks. Leading troops of the Battalion crossed the start line at 1400 hrs, advancing on a two-company front. "A" Company advanced on the south side of the road toward the right sector of "GRIZZLY" and came under very heavy fire on approaching the objective. Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister described the subsequent actions of this company as follows:

The company commander, Major Bell-Irving, however, had his company well in hand and by building up heavy fire support was able to extricate a platoon that had been pinned down by enemy fire. He appreciated that the feature could not be captured by a frontal assault and decided to do a right flanking movement, scaling the cliff at the SOUTHERN extremity of the feature. By making the best possible use of the ground

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(39) Cont'd

During the fighting around AGIRA - the official Citation is confused as to the exact occasion - M.17017 Cpl. A.G. Cheshire conducted another Edmonton patrol under circumstances which resulted in his winning the Distinguished Conduct Medal. While half way up a rugged feature some 300 feet high his section was fired on from a nearby German position. According to the official Citation:

Cpl. Cheshire quickly appreciated the situation, disposed his section in a position from which it could give him covering fire and, heedless of his own safety, went on alone.

By skilful use of cover he got behind the feature, then scaled in the semi-darkness an almost vertical cliff 50 feet in height, stalked his quarry, and with grenades, rifle and bayonet charged the post, killed six and captured six German prisoners.



the leading platoon of this company was able to approach this point under cover and scale the cliff, taking the enemy completely by surprise and establishing a foothold on the feature. This success was quickly reinforced by Major Bell-Irving with the rest of his company and the company established itself on the SOUTHERN tip of the feature. They now came under terrific M.M.G. and mortar fire from high ground on the same feature overlooking their position. They held on, however, and fought their way forward by fire movement and plenty of guts until they had gained the small rise that overlooked their former position. They then consolidated and resisted repeated enemy counter-attacks during the night until reinforced by "C" company early in the morning. During this time they were under constant mortar fire by heavy enemy mortars and were also shelled by our own artillery during the shelling of AGIRA. Following the arrival of "C" company Major Bell-Irving decided to attack and succeeded in capturing the entire feature, killing many of the defenders and routing the rest. The position was then consolidated and reinforced by "B" company.

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In the above mentioned engagement particular mention must be made of the magnificent show put on by "A" company under the command of Major Bell-Irving, in scaling a cliff and capturing the ground above it, strongly held by an enemy well supplied with fire power and who made every possible use of it. In spite of tremendous odds against them Major Bell-Irving and his men completely surprised the enemy and routed them. The defeat becomes all the more remarkable when one considers the casualties sustained by both sides as shown below:

|             |              |                       |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| "A" Company | - 2 killed,  | 5 wounded             |
| Enemy       | - 75 killed, | wounded unknown,      |
|             | prisoners,   | one officer, 14 O.Rs. |

The Hun had, in fact, fled in complete disorder, literally and actually screaming in terror. We followed them up with hand grenades and played particular hell with them (40).

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(40) Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister and Major Bell-Irving were both awarded the Distinguished Service Order for the outstanding part they played in directing and carrying out this operation. According to the official Citation, Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister "made his way from Company to Company and though under very heavy fire, personally directed the attack on the enemy position." Brigadier Matthews, C.R.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, was also awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his part in the battle. According to the official Citation, 'due to

(Cont'd at foot of next page.)



(Account by Lt.-Col. B.M. Hoffmeister, op. cit.; further information regarding this action is to be found in W.D., Seaforth of C., 27 Jul and Appx 27 which contains a detailed account entitled "The Battle of GRIZZLY HILL".)

140. The company of Seaforth attacking on the northern side of the road had also come under heavy enemy fire and for sometime had been out of communication with Battalion Headquarters, since their wireless set had been smashed by mortar fire and the operator killed. When a runner eventually arrived with this news, the Battalion Commander decided that the northern end of "GRIZZLY" was too strongly held to be captured by one company so he ordered them to withdraw into Battalion reserve in order to concentrate all the efforts of the Battalion on the southern end of "GRIZZLY" as described in the quotation above. (ibid.)

141. During the afternoon, the Brigade Commander came forward to survey the situation. Appreciating the need for a stronger attack on the northern sector of "GRIZZLY", he ordered the Edmonton Regiment, under cover of a Divisional Artillery concentration, to attack at this point. During the day 27 Jul, Edmn R., less the company on the NICOSIA road, had moved forward to positions a few miles west of AGIRA. Following the Brigadier's orders, the Battalion moved off at 2000 hrs and proceeded to swing wide to the left through hill country in order to outflank the enemy positions and attack the objective from the north. The route was difficult and their maps proved inadequate, so that progress in the dark was slow and the Battalion did not reach the point from which it was intended to launch the attack until several hours after the artillery concentration had been completed. "A" Company was then directed against Mount Capruzza and "B" and "D" companies against Cemetery Hill about half a mile further south. Captain E.H. Pritchard, Adjt., Edmn R., later described the ensuing fight, that took place in the early morning of 28 Jul, as follows:

The NORTHERN side of this cemetery hill proved to be very steep, at some places amounting to an absolute cliff, at which the enemy poured heavy concentrations of mortar fire and threw "potato mashers". "B" company was unable to advance and the

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(40) Cont'd

the hilly nature of the country he came forward himself among the leading infantry in order to reconnoitre suitable gun areas and observation posts, although under heavy enemy fire. (Citations of a/m officers.) Four other ranks of Seaforth of C. were awarded the Military Medal for acts of bravery during the same battle. (See Appx A.)



company commander, one platoon commander and about 15 O.Rs were wounded and 2 O.Rs killed. "D" company commander sent one section around to the right to endeavour to feel out enemy defences on that flank and, if possible, to get in at their rear. Immediately after this section was despatched the balance of "D" company came under fire and the company commander, Major W.G. Bury, E.D., was killed by a mortar bomb. The 2 i/c, Capt. Smith, came forward to take over and rallied the remainder of the company. He noted that fire had broken out from the rear of the position, from which he deduced the section had been successful in getting into position; he then led the greatly reduced company in an assault up the cliffs and by the use of 2" mortars, hand grenades, and LMG's carried the hill against a much numerically superior opposition estimated at 150 of the enemy as against his own total strength of about 40 all ranks. The section behind the hill was particularly effective in distracting the enemy and contributed in no small measure to the success of the engagement. The enemy had, in fact broken their lines under this assault and their flight into the town was nothing more nor less than a disorganized retreat. Meanwhile "A" company had attained its objective to the East of Cemetery Hill without opposition and at daylight were in position.

(Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D  
Account of the Battle for Agira by Capt.  
E.H. Pritchard.)

142. From Mount Capruzza, "A" company engaged the enemy who were fleeing from Cemetery Hill and inflicted further casualties upon them. The remainder escaped into AGIRA. "A" company then sent a patrol into the town which came upon a house in the outskirts that proved to be full of German and Italian soldiers fully armed, probably badly frightened survivors of the battle on Cemetery Hill. Lt. L.T. Swan, the platoon commander, went forward alone with a "Tommy" gun and succeeded in capturing the entire lot, namely 17 Germans and four Italians. While marching back these prisoners the platoon came under enemy machine gun fire from the town and several of the prisoners became casualties. Battalion mortars laid down a smoke screen which enabled the party to complete their return safely. (Accounts of Brigadier Vokes and Captain Pritchard, Edmn R., op. cit.)



143. The tank squadron that attacked with 2 Cdn Inf Bde on 27 Jul appears to have penetrated an enemy held area between the Seaforth and Edmonton positions on either end of "GRIZZLY". The tanks remained under fire throughout the hours of darkness but did not withdraw. A Seaforth platoon attacked the enemy positions under cover of fire from the Shermans; but on discovering that the German fire was coming from tanks, the platoon was forced to withdraw. The Canadian tanks then moved into strategic positions from which, at first light, they proceeded to knock out two or three Mark IV tanks as well as a loaded lorry, a tracked carrier, a petrol dump and several machine guns posts. (W.D., 12 Cdn Tks; the entry appears under 26 Jul but from the context it appears to refer to the attack on "GRIZZLY" carried out on 27 Jul.)

144. During the night, 231 Inf Bde also attacked east of the town for the fourth time. This time they were able to stay and during the morning they began consolidating a firm base across the road in preparation for an advance eastward to REGALBUTO. Opposition was encountered north of the road on M. Camparelli, but this was cleared up with the aid of artillery and a squadron of 12 Cdn Tks. (W.D., H.Q., 231 Bde, 28 Jul.)

145. Meanwhile west of AGIRA the Commander of 2 Cdn Inf Bde decided to bombard the town with all available artillery and mortars and then to immediately send in two rifle companies of P.P.C.L.I. The bombardment was to commence at 1545 hrs, 28 Jul, but at 1330 hrs a Forward Observation Officer of 1 Cdn Fd Regt, who had entered the town by mistake, came back and reported that he had seen no Germans, but that civilians were out in the streets en masse and that in his opinion the Germans had gone. The bombardment was therefore postponed and infantry patrols from P.P.C.L.I. entered the town. No immediate opposition was met so the rest of the two leading companies also came forward at about 1430 hrs, and received quite an ovation from the local population on the outskirts of the town. As soon as the companies entered the town, however, pockets of enemy resistance were discovered and brisk hand to hand fighting ensued. The two companies divided the town between them and proceeded with the work of systematically clearing it of snipers. The company on the right ran into opposition half way up the hill and spent two hours in fairly stiff house to house fighting. The enemy were eventually outflanked, however, and with the help of smoke bombs and hand grenades, which proved particularly useful, they were wiped out and their positions taken (41).

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(41) K.62299 A/Cpl. S.C. Butterick although wounded in both legs in an attempt to clear one of these positions single-handed, distinguished himself by continuing to direct the fire of his section from where he had fallen until the enemy were finally dispersed. He was awarded the Military Medal. (Citation of A/Cpl. Butterick.)



The company on the left was held up by several well placed enemy machine gun posts. One of these was cleared up by taking an L.M.G. onto the roof of a nearby house, while further on another house was cleared with PIAT bombs and hand grenades. The advance was then continued towards the top of the town to a point where a cliff, which was the summit of the hill on which the town was built and which was swept by enemy machine gun fire, prevented further progress. Several casualties were suffered from snipers but the position was finally cleared with the help of mortars and of a third rifle company which had in the meantime arrived on the scene and worked its way through the centre of the town up to the summit of the hill. A squadron of tanks had entered the town with the infantry, but been forced to withdraw. However, it continued to assist the infantry with directed fire on enemy machine gun posts from the outskirts of the town. During the same afternoon Edm R. had sent patrols to the north and northeast of the town, and at one point elements of P.P.C.L.I. in AGIRA had come under fire from them. By dark, P.P.C.L.I. had consolidated on top of the hill and at the foot of it in the main square of the town, and the night passed uneventfully except for one salvo of mortar bombs which landed in the area of Battalion Headquarters, but inflicted no casualties. Estimates of enemy losses in killed and taken prisoner varied from 80 to 210, while P.P.C.L.I. losses were only one officer killed, one officer and ten other ranks wounded (42). Three guns, approximately 20 M.M.Gs., and thousands of rounds of ammunition were also captured. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 28 Jul and Appx 20, "Street Fighting in AGIRA" - this story is also in Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D; Account of Lt.-Col. Lindsay, op. cit.; W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 27 (28) Jul.)

146. In commenting on this action, Lt.-Col. Lindsay remarked:

From the above fighting and from statements of prisoners when questioned we learned that the Hun dislikes intensely hand to hand and night fighting. They consider that our troops are not only

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- (42) According to the War Diary total enemy losses amounted to 80. Lt.-Col. Lindsay's Account on the other hand refers to 60 enemy killed and 150 prisoners. The Divisional Intelligence Summary No. 8 of 1 Aug, in referring to the action at AGIRA, put the German losses at "Approximately 125 P W" and "the same number killed", but this probably includes the fighting on "GRIZZLY".



too persistent in their manner of fighting but also extremely unorthodox - that is to say, they do not fight nor manoeuvre in the manner the enemy expects them to.

(Account of Lt.-Col. Lindsay, op. cit.)

147. So AGIRA was finally taken after five days of hard fighting in which practically the whole Division, less 3 Cdn Inf Bde, had been engaged. It had been hoped to take the town much more quickly for the speedy advance from VIZZINI to VALGUARNERA had made it appear that the enemy always kept withdrawing. At LEONFORTE and ASSORO, NISSORIA and AGIRA, however, it was a different story. Here the Germans were fighting their hardest and using their slender resources to the utmost to stave off further Allied advances. Although the defending forces were considerably inferior in numbers, they were greatly aided by the terrain and were always able to take up defensive positions on high ground so that the Canadians invariably had to make uphill attacks. Moreover, the rugged nature of the country made it impossible to deploy the whole Division for battle at any one place, as for instance was done later in the LIRI Valley in Italy where all nine infantry battalions fought in one day's action against the HITLER LINE (see Report No. 121). The Sicilian campaign consisted of a series of brigade "shows", and usually the brigade in action only committed one battalion at a time, but it may be noted that 2 Cdn Inf Bde brought the drawn out battle for AGIRA to a close by using more than one battalion at the critical moments. Thus the Seaforth were sent in while the Patricias were still fighting east of NISSORIA and the next day the Edmontons were sent against the northern end of objective "GRIZZLY" as soon as it was appreciated that this task was too big for the Seaforth alone. The backbone of the German resistance was broken on "GRIZZLY" so that the Patricias were able to clear up the town of AGIRA by themselves the following day. 3 Cdn Inf Bde was also in action during the final stages of the AGIRA battle but on another sector of the front and in an independent role (see paras 164-186 below). Indeed, throughout this operation, 231 Inf Bde, under command of 1 Cdn Inf Div, had taken the place of the 3rd Brigade in the Division, but its role was secondary to that of 1 and 2 Cdn Inf Bdes in turn. The main attacks were on the western approaches of the town probably because they were not as steep as the eastern approaches; moreover the artillery was deployed so as to support an attack from the west.

148. AGIRA was taken at some cost to the Canadians but in proportion, the Germans had to pay a much higher price. Canadian casualties in the five days' fighting, 24-28 Jul, (which include those suffered by 3 Cdn Inf Bde, see paras 166-173 below) were reported as 40 officers and 531 other ranks, including 229 all ranks killed and missing. During the



same period 691 prisoners of war were taken, although 260 of these were Italian. (W.D., A.A. & Q.M.G., Rear H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 25-29 Jul.) At ASSORO and LEONFORTE the Germans had committed all three battalions of 1 Pz Gr Regt (15 Pz Gr Div) to action and this Regiment had suffered heavily. (See para 89 above). Only 2 Bn was left to fight at NISSORIA, but on 26 Jul, 1 Bn was sent back to reinforce them. 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary of 28 Jul reveals how hopeless this formation's position had become by the end of the battle:

The plight of 1 Pz Gren Regt is clear from the fact that the sapper pl and the MC/DR pl from Regt HQ Coy were thrown into the fight as inf. Even so the total strength of 1 and 2 bns was not more than 350 - 400. Estimated enemy killed is 200. PW number 125 - 150. It is clear that nothing but stragglers can remain from these two bns. For the first time the Germans were fleeing from their MG posns leaving thousands of rounds of belted amm beside the guns. One abandoned MG nest had 3 LMGs and 1 MMG the barrel of which had never had a round fired through it.

3 Bn was not engaged on 26 and 27 Jul. According to PW it was withdrawn beyond AGIRA to rest (ref 1 Cdn Div Int Summary No. 6). PW are sure it is not more than 200 strong. It is safe to say that 3 Bn is the only cohesive force left to 1 Pz Gren Regt.

With the collapse of 1 Pz Gr Regt on 27 Jul, the defence of AGIRA had fallen to 1 Bn, 15 Pz Gr Regt (Mot) from 29 Pz Gr Div (see para 138 above). As already indicated this Battalion did not last for long. In referring to it the Divisional Intelligence Summary dated 30 Jul states:

Approximately 125 PW were taken and the same number killed. There may be 250 left. No order had been given to withdraw, but from the fact that the coys had their tpt lines along the rd to TROINA it is safe to assume that the remnants fled in that direction.

149. On the same day that the Canadians took AGIRA, 1 (U.S.) Inf Div had taken NICOSIA, eight miles north of LEONFORTE, but only after three days' hard fighting. On 31 Jul, following similar stiff resistance, 45 (U.S.) Inf Div took SAN STEFANO on the coast 17 miles north of NICOSIA. (15 Army Gp Account, op. cit.) LEONFORTE, which may be considered as a hinge of the American turning movement, was



taken over from 1 Cdn Inf Bde by 9 (U.S.) Inf Div on 27-28 Jul (W.D., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Jul; Personal Notes of Major Sesha, op. cit., p. 56.)

150. Following their mauling at NISSORIA, 1 Cdn Inf Bde had spent several days recuperating, R.C.R. at LEONFORTE, Hast & P.E.R. at ASSORO and 48 Highrs at NISSORIA. On 28 Jul, on the arrival of the Americans in the LEONFORTE-ASSORO area, R.C.R. and Hast & P.E.R. joined 48 Highrs in the vicinity of NISSORIA where the Brigade continued to rest and carry out maintenance of their equipment until 30 Jul. In the words of Hast & P.E.R. War Diary, "The order of the day consisted of cleaning up, eating large quantities of food and resting, an order which was conscientiously adhered to by the troops." The only event which broke the tranquillity of these four much appreciated days of rest was the first rain storm that the troops had run into since their landing. However, following all the heat and dust they had been through, this storm was welcome and according to the Diary of 48 Highrs, "All ranks including the C.O. took advantage of it and held impromptu shower baths out in the rain, at the same time attempting to keep their kits dry with complete lack of success." (W.Ds., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, R.C.R., Hast & P.E.R. and 48 Highrs, 26-30 Jul.)

151. Directly after the fall of AGIRA, 231 Inf Bde pressed on towards REGALBUTO while 2 Cdn Inf Bde spent several days resting on the ground which they had won. During 29 Jul, there was some occasional enemy mortaring and shelling on the latter Brigade's positions and on the road west of the town, which had a considerable nuisance value. Remnants of the enemy force which had escaped from the battle were observed digging in on the high ground called M. Grisostono (square 4599) several miles north of AGIRA and on the other side of the River Salso. During 29 Jul, 2 Cdn Inf Bde patrolled to the line of the river and the Brigade Commander ordered the Edmonton Regiment to send a strong fighting patrol across that night to deal with the enemy contingent which was estimated to be about 80 strong. The patrol, which was supported by one battery of medium artillery, numbered 40 other ranks under command of a sergeant, and consisted of a platoon of infantry, a detachment of 3" mortars and a detachment of carriers. Some shelling during the night by the battery of medium guns caused the enemy who actually numbered about 200 to withdraw from their dug-in positions with the result that, when the patrol attacked at dawn, they were caught while on the move and completely by surprise. The patrol's mortar detachment immediately opened fire causing havoc among the Germans. Many started to flee only to come under the fire of two well-placed Bren guns which did considerable damage. About half the enemy remained to fight, and according to one account of the action "they were successively mortared from one position only to be machine-gunned on the next."



When the patrol's ammunition ran low they proceeded to carry out an orderly withdrawal under cover of smoke from their mortars, and when a stronger patrol returned shortly afterwards it was found that the enemy force had decamped. During the action nine enemy prisoners were taken while reports on enemy killed varied from 20 to 50. The patrol's casualties were only two killed and three wounded. (W.Ds., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde and Edm R., 29-30 Jul; Account of Captain Fritchard, op. cit., and his "Notes on Patrols" in the same file; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log 29-30 Jul, serials 210, 212, 236, 237 and 255.)

152. Apart from this incident these three days passed quietly while plans were made for the next operation. During this period the G.O.C. visited both Brigades, and spoke to all available officers about the campaign to date and the Division's role in the future. It may be noted that each time he appeared in AGIRA the inhabitants greeted him with enthusiastic hand-clapping. Another incident causing much interest, not to say amazement among the townspeople, occurred when the Pipe Band of the Seaforth played "Retreat" in the town square. This dramatic ceremony was broadcast to the world by the B.B.C. (W.Ds., H.Qs., 1 and 2 Cdn Inf Bdes, P.F.C.L.I., and Seaforth of C. and the other Battalions, 29-31 Jul.)

153. About this time reinforcements began to arrive from the beach area where they had been waiting since they landed on 13 Jul. Their arrival was opportune for the infantry battalions were beginning to feel their losses. Large packs, kitbags and sleeping rolls also began to arrive from the beaches enabling men and officers to get a change of clothing and replenish their stocks of cigarettes. Unfortunately, however, a number of these kits were missing, while many others had been rifled while lying on the beaches, which naturally caused considerable indignation. (W.D., A.A. & Q.M.G. Rear Headquarters, 1 Cdn Inf Div, 22-30 Jul; also numerous Unit Diaries and Major Sesia's Personal Notes, op. cit., p. 53.)

154. On 29 Jul, a personal message from General Montgomery was read to all the troops. In it he summed up the campaign to date as follows:

1. The Allied Armies landed in Sicily, on Italian soil, on 10th July, magnificently supported by the Royal Navy and the Allied Air Forces, and are, today, in possession of the whole island except for the north-east corner, where the enemy is now hemmed in.

2. I want to tell all of you, soldiers of the Eighth Army, that this has been a very fine performance. On your behalf, I have expressed to the Commander of the Seventh American Army on our left the congratulations of the Eighth Army for the way the American troops have captured and cleaned up more than half the island in record time. We are proud to fight beside our American Allies.



3. The beginning has been very good, thanks to your splendid fighting qualities and to the hard work and devotion to duty of all those who work in the ports, on the roads, and in rear areas. We must not forget to give thanks to "THE LORD MIGHTY IN BATTLE" for giving us such a good beginning towards the attainment of our object.

4. And now let us get on with the job. Together with our American allies we have knocked MUSSOLINI off his perch. We will now drive the Germans out of SICILY.

5. Into battle with stout hearts. Good luck to you all.

(Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, Personal Message from the Army Commander.)

155. The following day, 30 Jul, the first issue of the "RED PATCH", a daily newspaper prepared at Divisional Headquarters, was distributed and read out to all the troops. This paper contained extracts from the news written by War Correspondents which enabled the men to get some idea of what their friends and relatives in Canada and the United Kingdom were hearing about their campaign. (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Jul.)

#### OPERATION "HARDGATE" - THE PLAN

156. The stage was now set for the final operation that was to finish off the Sicilian campaign (para 96 above). On 25 Jul, General Alexander held a conference with his two Army Commanders, Generals Montgomery and Patton, at which arrangements were completed for the dual offensive, and a new inter-Army boundary was laid down. (W.D., Main H.Q., Eighth Army, July "Narrative", 25 Jul.)

157. On 27 Jul, 30 Corps Headquarters issued its operation order for Operation "HARDGATE". It indicated that the enemy were now holding an "out-post position" on an approximate line from the coast two miles south of CATANIA (square 9574), west and northwest along the line of the railway to CATENANUOVA and thence north to AGIRA. The main enemy positions were on a general line from a strong point on the coast just south of CATANIA through PATERNO, ADERNO, TROINA to SANT'AGATA on the northern coast (square 5442). An enemy operation order dated 29 Jul and captured a few days later confirmed this appreciation of his position although the final main line of resistance reached the east coast of ACIREALE, twelve miles north of CATANIA. Indeed, by 30 Jul, it was observed that behind the troops manning the outposts in the triangle REGALBUTO-CATENANUOVA-CENTURIPÉ the bridges over the Salso and the Sineto, west of



ADERNO, had been blown. No doubt adequate alternate crossings existed over these almost dry streams, but the demolitions indicated that the Germans did not intend to hold their outposts long. The 30 Corps Intelligence Summary for 30 Jul commented "past experience has shown that without pressure, however, Germans do not withdraw; and the possibility of a limited counter-attack ... is always there." (Hist Sec file Sicily/C/I, 30 Corps Operation Order No. 7, 27 Jul; W.D., H.Q., Main 30 Corps, Appx "C", Intelligence Summaries Nos. 382, 383, dated 30-31 Jul.)

158. To the north of 30 Corps, Seventh U.S. Army were to advance east towards MESSINA in conjunction with 30 Corps' advance. They were to use two parallel routes, the coast road and the inland highway from NICOSIA to RANDAZZO, which in turn was roughly parallel with the AGIRA-REGALBUTO-ADERNO road. Seventh Army start line for the offensive, which was to begin on 1 Aug, was to be the line NICOSIA-MISTRETTA-SAN STEFANO; (it will be remembered that this start line was finally secured on 31 Jul, para 149 above). On the right flank of 30 Corps, 13 Corps were preparing to carry out an attack with a limited objective in the coastal area towards CATANIA or MISTERBIANCO should it become necessary; the exact time and direction of this attack were dependent on the progress of operations in 30 Corps area. (30 Corps Operation Order, 27 Jul, op. cit.; 15th Army Gp Account, op. cit., p. 10.)

159. The 30 Corps intention was to "break through the main enemy position and capture ADRANO". The attack was to be carried out by two divisions, 78 Div on the right and 1 Cdn Div on the left; the former division was in the process of arriving in Sicily and assembling astride the road southwest of PALAGONIA, 15 to 20 miles south of CATENANUOVA. 51 (H) Div was to enlarge its present bridgehead across the Dittaino in conformity with the advance of 78 Div in order to secure deployment areas for artillery within range of CENTURIPPE and later on of ADERNO. (30 Corps Operation Order, 27 Jul, op. cit.)

160. As a preliminary operation, 1 Cdn Div was to capture and secure a bridgehead at CATENANUOVA which 78 Div was to take over on the night 29/30 Jul. 1 Cdn Div was then to operate northwards towards REGALBUTO, while 78 Div was to be prepared to attack from the CATENANUOVA bridgehead towards CENTURIPPE from the night 30/31 Jul onwards. 1 Cdn Div was allotted 142 and 165 Fd Regts and 70 Med Regt under command, while 51 (H) Div and 78 Div were each given an additional field regiment. 78 Div and 1 Cdn Inf Div were also allotted one light battery each. 5 A.G.R.A. under command 30 Corps retained three medium regiments. (ibid.)

161. Special efforts were to be made to ensure that the approach of 78 Div was not observed by the enemy. 51 (H) Div was to concentrate on making the enemy think that the Corps' intention was to renew



the attack on the SFERRO bridgehead directed on FATERNO. Two further deception schemes were also planned, one by 13 Corps involving the use of dummy tanks forward of LENTINI and bogus wireless conversations (see Report No. 132); the second by the Headquarters of the S.S. Bde which, in conjunction with ships of the Royal Navy, staged several fake landing attempts on the CATANIA beaches (43). (ibid.; W.D., Main H.Q., Eighth Army, July "Narrative", 27 Jul; Report by Brigadier Laycock, being part of a Combined Operations Report in custody of C.O.H.Q.)

162. A further operation order was issued by 30 Corps Headquarters on the following day, 28 Jul. This laid down a tentative timetable of operations as follows:

| <u>Date</u>         | <u>Operation</u>  |
|---------------------|---|
| Night 29/30 July    | Capture of CATENANUOVA bridgehead by 3 Cdn Inf Bde under command 78 Div   |
| Night 30/31 July    | 78 Div take over CATENANUOVA bridgehead and start enlarging it.   |
| Night 30/31 July    | 1 Cdn Div attack REGALBUTO  |
| Night 31 July/1 Aug | 78 Div complete enlargement of CATENANUOVA bridgehead.  |
| Night 31 July/1 Aug | 51 (H) Div carry out preliminary operations and enlarge bridgehead. Objectives - Ft. 224 in 6881 and Ft. 193 in 6681. |
| Night 1/2 Aug       | 78 Div attack CENTURIPE   |
| Night 1/2 Aug       | 51 (H) Div enlarge bridgehead. Objectives - high ground 6683 and 6785.  |
| Night 2/3 Aug       | Guns move forward for continuation of operations NORTH-EAST of CENTURIPE.   |

(Hist Sec file Sicily/C/I, 30 Corps Operation Order No. 8, 28 Jul 43.)

To enable 51 (H) Div to carry out its operation on the night 1/2 Aug, Eighth Army was requested to arrange for the SFERRO bridgehead to be taken over

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(43) Later reports indicated that these sham landings succeeded in drawing off German tank and infantry forces to guard the Catania beaches (Brigadier Laycock's Report).



by 13 Corps on the assumption that 51 (H) Div left one battalion there. Eighth Army was also requested to arrange an aerial bombardment programme to fit in with the preliminary operations. This was to consist of a full-scale all day bombing of PATERNO on 31 Jul, a full-scale bombing of CENTURIPE from noon onwards on 1 Aug and a full-scale bombing of ADERNO and the villages around it "from any time from now onwards". (ibid.)

163. It should be remembered that when this operation order was being prepared the battle for AGIRA had not yet been won. It will be noted that the main 30 Corps attack was to come from the south rather than from the west and that 78 Div fresh from Africa, was to carry through the main attack. Likewise on the American sector, 1 and 45 (U.S.) Inf Divs, which had been in continuous action since landing, were being relieved by 3 and 9 (U.S.) Inf Divs which were to carry out the final American assault from the west. (15 Army Gp Account, op. cit.)

M. SCALPELLO, M. SANTA MARIA and CANTENANUOVA

26 Jul - 3 Aug

164. The preliminary operations assigned to 1 Cdn Inf Div in the vicinity of CATENANUOVA were obviously to be the task of 3 Cdn Inf Bde. It is therefore necessary to go back several days in order to bring this Brigade's story up to date. It will be remembered that, while 1 and 2 Cdn Inf Bdes were fighting along the axis of the road from LEONFORTE to AGIRA, 3 Cdn Inf Bde was following a parallel axis down the Dittaino Valley toward CATENANUOVA (paras 98 - 102 and 118 above). On 22 Jul, the Brigade was positioned on either side of the Dittaino River about eight miles south of AGIRA with R. 22e R. near RADDUSA - AGIRA Station, West N.S.R. about three to four miles further down the valley in the vicinity of LIBERTINIA (44) and Carlt & York R. north of the river on the AGIRA road. The Brigade was preparing to advance further east when orders were received from Divisional Headquarters instructing it to remain in that vicinity until the situation was cleared up between LEONFORTE and AGIRA. Throughout 23 Jul, enemy movement was observed in the hills to the east on either side of the river (squares 5482, 5287 and 5588). West N.S.R., closest to the enemy positions, were subject to intermittent shelling which caused them

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(44) LIBERTINIA is only marked on the 1:100,000 map (512813). LIBERTINIA Station is marked on most maps (522832) but on some it is called SARACCNI Station.



frequently to change their positions. The Germans took this to mean that the Canadian Battalion had become disorganized and leaderless and presumed to send out two N.C.Os. under cover of a white flag to demand the Canadians' surrender. The "West Novas" were naturally indignant and despatched these two "emissaries" to Divisional Headquarters where they were interrogated by one of the Divisional Intelligence Officers. The latter informed them that the Geneva Conventions notwithstanding he would have to take them as prisoners of war because they had not been brought to him blindfolded. They did not appear to show any opposition to this decision, and it was thought that they were quite possibly deserters who had fabricated the whole story. (W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 22-23 Jul and Appx 13, a marked map; W.Ds., West N.S.R., R. 22e R., and Carlt & York R., 22-23 Jul; Hist Sec file Sicily/3 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D Account by Major G.F.C. Pangman, B.M., 3 Cdn Inf Bde; Personal Notes of Major Sesia, op. cit., p. 51.)

165. That night, 23 Jul, Carlt & York R. sent out a patrol towards Mount Scalpello about five miles east of their position, but south of the river. The patrol failed to return but the bodies of some of the men were later discovered and the remainder were presumed to have been taken prisoners. (W.D., Carlt & York R., 24 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 25 Jul, serial 795.)

166. Late on 24 Jul, R. 22e R. and Carlt & York R. moved forward to take up positions abreast of West N.S.R. on either side of the Dittaino River to the east and north of LIBERTINIA Station respectively. Some mortar fire and numerous Teller mines slowed up the move, but it was completed by an early hour the following morning without further opposition. During 24 Jul, West N.S.R. had contacted 2/4 Hamps of 51 (H) Div on Mount Judica, four miles southwest of LIBERTINIA (para 102 above). On 25 Jul the latter Battalion advanced north to occupy Mount Scalpello, where they were contacted by a patrol from R. 22e R. Later, however, a German counter-attack forced them to give some ground. (W. D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 24-25 Jul and Appx 13; W.Ds., R. 22e R., West N.S.R. and Carlt & York R., 24-25 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 25 Jul, serials 806, 829 and 854.)

167. On 26 Jul, 3 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to advance as quickly as possible and take CATENANUOVA (45); 2/4 Hamps in the Mount Scalpello area were placed under command for the operation, and artil-

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(45) It is assumed that these orders followed verbal orders from Corps issued previously to the written orders referred to in paras 158 - 162 above.



lery support was promised from 51 (H) Div. 4 Fd Coy, R.C.E., were given the two tasks of clearing mines along the road to CATENANUOVA and at the same time developing a mule track parallel to this road and to the south of it, in order that "F" Echelon (fighting vehicles) traffic could be moved forward without being exposed to observed fire. (Account of Maj. Pangman, op. cit.; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 26 Jul, serials 901, 942 and 945; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/R.C.E./C/F., 4 Fd Coy, R.C.E., "History of the Sicilian Campaign.")

168. R. 22e R. led the Canadian advance which was along the axis of the road LIBERTINIA Station - CATENANUOVA. In the first phase of the attack, "A" Company was to cross the Dittaino River, which was practically dried up, and take the hill called M. Santa Maria which lay slightly over a mile west of the town. "B" Coy on the right was to occupy the country south of the road and river, to the north and northeast of M. Scalpello. Mules were to be used for carrying water, rations and ammunition. (W.D., R. 22e R., 26-27 Jul; both the Diary and other accounts submitted by R. 22e R. are confused with regard to the exact dates of the ensuing operation; the dates given in this narrative are those in Major Pangman's account and in W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde.)

169. "A" Company on the left, advanced by way of the dried-up river bed to a point some 550 yards short of their objective. From here they could see the enemy moving about on the summit of the hill so the company commander called for an artillery concentration before attacking. Following 15 minutes heavy bombardment on the enemy positions, and under cover of an excellent smoke screen laid down by their own mortars, the infantry attacked with fixed bayonets. They were greeted by the usual heavy machine gun and mortar fire, and in the opening phase of the action the company commander was killed by a fragment of an enemy mortar bomb while one of the platoon commanders was seriously wounded (46). Another of the

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(46) The latter, Lt. G. Robitaille, was twice hit, in the thigh and in the arm, during the attack, but continued to lead his platoon until just before reaching the summit of the hill. He was finally stopped by a third wound, this time in the chest. However, according to the official citation he continued to direct and encourage his men. He was awarded the Military Cross. (Citation of Lt. Robitaille.) E.5575 A/Cpl. J.B. Montniny, one of the section leaders in "A" Company, was awarded the Military Medal for the same battle. The section's Bren gunner was killed so Cpl. Montniny took over the Bren gun and proceeded, single handed to outflank and knock out three enemy positions, and "routed the enemy who were holding up the advance of the entire platoon". (Citation of A/Cpl. Montniny.)



platoon commanders, Lt. C. Simard took charge of the company and directed one of the platoons to advance up the hill from the left in order to engage the enemy and allow another of the platoons to continue the main advance. Lt. Simard led this assault himself, and the enemy were forced to withdraw from the heavy fire of the attackers. Meanwhile the third platoon of the company had been pinned to the ground by fire from a German pillbox. Lt. Simard and his men thereupon made a right flanking attack on the pillbox, came up from the rear and took the ten German occupants prisoners. The young officer then proceeded to reorganize and consolidate the company in order to establish a firm base on the hill. Once this was done, he reported by wireless to Battalion Headquarters that Santa Maria had been captured and a company of Germans had been wiped out. He also urgently requested ammunition and rations since the men had been fighting with neither food nor drink for twenty hours. (Hist Sec file Sicily/3 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, "Accounts of R. 22e R. of the battles of M. Scalpello and Santa Maria"; W.D., R. 22e R., 26-27 Jul.)

170. Meanwhile, "B" Company had advanced on the right from LIBERTINIA Station. First of all they penetrated behind the hill called Nicoletta northwest of M. Scalpello. There they found an evacuee from SIRACUSA, an Italian woman who spoke French fluently, who gave them valuable information regarding the enemy positions facing them. During the night they climbed Mount Scalpello and in the early hours of the following morning took up positions on the eastern extremity of the mountain. They seemed to have taken the enemy unaware for in the early morning light they could see quite a number of Germans sitting under trees, some twenty or thirty yards away from their machine gun posts. An effort was made to get artillery fire on the enemy position, but communications with Battalion Headquarters had unfortunately broken down. Therefore, the company attacked on its own with the support of its mortars. The initial bursts of the mortar bombs caused considerable havoc among the enemy and those who attempted to escape across the fields were quickly engaged by L.M.G. fire and by snipers. The Germans, however, recovered from their surprise and soon forced the French Canadians to take cover from mortar and 88 mm gun fire. The position became critical, so the company commander, Major G.A. Turcot, decided to counter-attack. This was done with great vigor and the enemy was finally dislodged from the mountain with heavy losses. Major Turcot was himself wounded in the right foot, but continued to direct the battle. As in all these engagements, there were numerous other incidents of individual bravery and courage recorded. (*ibid.*) By the end of the afternoon of 27 Jul, the company reported to Battalion Headquarters:



Communications are shot up. 2 strong enemy positions are located. Up to now Coys casualties are: O.C. Coy and 24 men. Men have been without food and sleep for 36 hrs.

(I.D., R. 22e R., 27 Jul.)

171. During the day, "C" Company had advanced slowly under fire and occupied positions on the left flank of "B" Company. At nightfall, this company was forced to retire to higher ground having suffered more than seventeen casualties. By 1745 hrs, R. 22e R. were holding the whole of M. Scalpello ridge (562830 - 589836) and a small area immediately to the northeast (579839 - 580846), while "A" Company remained isolated on M. Santa Maria a mile further north and without artillery support. The whole Battalion was hard pressed, for difficulties of terrain and the presence of a large number of enemy mines had made it impossible to bring the necessary supplies forward immediately. So when the Brigade Commander, Brigadier Pehhale, visited them late in the afternoon, he authorized the Battalion Commander, Lt.-Col. J.P.E. Bernatchez, to withdraw the forward troops. However, at 1800 hrs before these orders could be executed, the enemy began to counter-attack "A" Company's position on Santa Maria under cover of a barrage of mortar and artillery fire. The barrage lasted about an hour and a half during which the company stood fast to ward off any attack, inflicting considerable losses on the enemy. Finally, at 2130 hrs, the company withdrew. (*ibid.*, 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 27 Jul, serials 35, 51, 58 and 62.)

172. During the afternoon of the same day, 27 Jul, West N.S.R. were ordered to advance across country to an area southeast of M. Scalpello (square 5882) in preparation for an attack on CATENANUOVA. The Battalion left their position on the high ground near LIBERTINIA and moved under cover of the hills towards their objective, with their No. 22 wireless set, water, tools and some rations carried on mules. A temporary halt was made near LIBERTINIA (SARACONI) Station, and the Battalion Commander, Lt.-Col. Bogert, and his company commanders went forward to reconnoitre the area before darkness. The advance was then continued and "A" and "F" Echelon vehicles were brought forward and placed under cover south of the mountain (square 5782). Early in the morning of 28 Jul, this Battalion took up a position in the area (5882 - 5883) east of the mountain, which was only two miles southwest of CATENANUOVA. Contact was made with part of R. 22e R. to the north. The Battalion, however, remained under cover throughout the day. Special emphasis was laid on concealment with the result that they were apparently unseen by the enemy, for in contrast to R. 22e R., they were not subject to any shelling during this period. The latter Battalion,



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on the other hand, continued to suffer from enemy shelling throughout 28 Jul. Its operations were mainly confined to observation of the enemy and passing back of information obtained to the supporting artillery, which used it to good effect. The third battalion in the Brigade, Carlt & York R. still remained in reserve near LIBERTINIA Station. (W.Ds., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, West N.S.R., R. 22e R., 27 and 28 Jul.)

173. The Engineers continued their work in preparation for this final attack on CATENANUOVA. By 1015 hrs, 27 Jul, although under mortar fire, they had cleared the road of mines to a point two miles west of LIBERTINIA Station. That night a further enemy bombardment forced them to withdraw, but the following night, 28/29 Jul, covered by a platoon of R. 22e R., they continued the work, picking up several more small minefields and clearing prepared charges from nearly all culverts along the route. (47) Recce patrols were also sent out to reconnoitre possible crossings of the river as the road bridges were known to be blown. The required information was obtained, but it was found impossible to get satisfactory information regarding the rail crossing, due to enemy action in the vicinity of that bridge. (Account of 4 Fd Coy., R.C.E., op.cit.; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 27 Jul, serial 990; W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Jul.)

174. By 1910 hrs, 28 Jul, 78 Inf Div was reported two thirds complete, with 11 and 36 Inf Bde Gps concentrated immediately behind 3 Cdn Inf Bde in the area southwest of M. Scalpello. (The following afternoon, 11 Bde was reported in squares 5479 - 5782 - 5681 - 5480 - 5080, 36 Bde in square 5381 and 38 Bde in square 5273.) On 28 Jul, the Corps Commander ordered 3 Cdn Inf Bde to be placed under command of 78 Div from 0800 hrs 29 Jul, until 1 Cdn Div was in a position to gain control and support the Brigade. During the previous afternoon, Maj.-Gen. Eveleigh, G.O.C., 78 Div, had visited 3 Cdn Inf Bde Headquarters to discuss the coming operations with the Brigade Commander. Plans were drawn up for the final attack on CATENANUOVA and the Santa Maria feature, but on 28 Jul the attack was postponed until the following night, 29/30 Jul. West N.S.R. were to attack through the

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(47) "The mines were nearly all No. 2 Tellers, and the fixed charges consisted of an 88 mm shell and standard 1 Kg German fixed charge with a friction igniter, the whole being fixed on the keystone of the arch ring." (Account of 4 Fd Coy, R.C.E., op.cit.) K.16059 Sgt. H.P. Chartres in charge of this work was awarded the Military Medal for similar work north of PIAZZA ARMERINA and for leading numerous Engineer reconnaissances parties under fire 14 to 21 Jul (Citation of Sgt. Chartres ).



town itself and establish a bridgehead from a bend in the river southwest of the town to the high ground immediately north of the town (from 612862 to 620842). On the left flank, R. 22e R. were to retake M. Santa Maria and another hill about 1000 yards to the northeast, and to join up with West N.S.R. north of CATENANUOVA (from 583859 to 612862). Carit & York R. were to send one company to patrol the REGALBUTO and the CENTURIPPE roads. 78 Div were to exploit to the northeast and take CENTURIPPE. (48) The artillery support for the attack was to be coordinated by 5 A.G.R.A. and consisted of five field regiments, two medium regiments and one light howitzer battery. (49) The main attack on CATENANUOVA was to be covered by a lifting barrage 1200 yards wide which was to commence 24 minutes before the zero hour of midnight on the line of the river south of the town, then at the zero hour to begin advancing 100 yards every four minutes to a line about two thirds of a mile north of the town. Medium concentrations were to be fired according to a fixed time table on eight set targets, including the northern entrance to the town and M. Santa Maria. (30 Corps Log, op.cit., 28 Jul, Messages 1100, 1600 and 1910 hrs; and 29 Jul Messages 1430, 1700 and 1915 hrs; W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jul and Appx 18, Trace of 5 A.G.R.A. barrage and concentration; Account of Major Pangman, op.cit. The latter account mistakenly puts the attack as taking place on the night 28/29 Jul.)

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(48) 3 Cdn Inf Bde was to sub-allot areas east and northwest of M. Scalpello - squares 5883, 5584 and 5583 - to 11 Inf Bde, while 36 Inf Bde and other troops were to take over positions south of LIBERTINIA Station - 5282, 5382, 5181 etc. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 78 Div, July, Appx "C"; Operation Instruction No. 1 with traces.

(49) These consisted of: 7 Army Fd Regt, R.A. 132 Fd Regt, R.A., 142 Fd Regt (S.P.), R.A., 11 H.A.C. (S.P.), R.A., 126 Fd Regt, R.A., (from 51 (H) Div), 64 and 70 Med Regts, R.A., and 457 Lt How Bty, R.A., (Maj Pangman's Account, op.cit. and W.D., 5 A.G.R.A.)



175. Operation "HARDGATE" commenced at 2336 hrs, 29 Jul, with the opening of the artillery barrage in support of 3 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., 5 A.G.R.A., 29 Jul). The R. 22e R. tasks were assigned to "C" and "D" Companies which so far had not been engaged as heavily as the other two rifle companies of the Battalion. The attack on the left flank did not begin until 0300 hrs 30 Jul at which time the artillery switched their fire to the selected targets in this area. Following the artillery shoot, "C" Company, which had assembled in the dried up river bed, advanced on its objective, M. Santa Maria, and started to scale the hill. According to the company's account of the operation "they met nothing in the way of enemy except for a few corpses" and at about 0430 hrs they took up a position on the northern slope of the hill where they remained throughout the day, harrassed by enemy artillery fire. "D" Company was to advance on the second objective, called Hill 204, on receiving "C" Company's success signal. Wireless communications between the companies unfortunately broke down, so at 0345 hrs, assuming "C" Company's success, they proceeded without further word.

176. From the start, this company met more opposition than their comrades on the left flank. In crossing the river south of M. Santa Maria, they were held up for a short time by a small enemy force, but this was rapidly dispersed by fire from the leading platoon and the advance was resumed. Shortly afterwards the company reached a gully, which was to be used as a forming up place from which to attack their final objective. Here they were engaged by machine gun and rifle fire from the left flank and from the front, which once again forced them to deploy. By this time, it was daylight, but the attack continued. The enemy M.M.G. post on the left flank was engaged and silenced and the main enemy position ahead was fired on with PIAT and mortars. The company was now under enemy small arms and 88 mm fire but the attack was pressed on by two platoons which secured the company's objective in short time.

177. Meanwhile, the remaining platoon moved to the left of the enemy position. Its story is worth quoting in full as a striking example of the bravery and initiative of a junior commander and his men:

During this time Lt. Langlais commanding No. 17 platoon, leaving one section to protect his advance, led the rest of his platoon to the left of the enemy position and proceeded to the railway tunnel which ran across the company's axis of advance.



Just beyond the railway tracks he placed another section to cover the advance of the remaining section which he accompanied along with his platoon Sergeant up to a point some 15 yards from the 88 mm gun. There, covered by the fire of this section, Sergeant Drapeau and L/Cpl. G. Gagnon rushed the gun position, killing its personnel with hand grenades and capturing the emplacement. They then tried to train this gun onto an enemy 105 mm gun which was some 100 yards to the south of them but were unsuccessful. During this time both the Sergeant and the Lance/Corporal and the section covering them were fired upon by an enemy MG post which had taken up position about 150 yards on their left flank. In spite of the spirited enemy fire Sergeant Drapeau and Lance Corporal Gagnon advanced towards this enemy post to within 50 yards of it and attempted to knock it out by hand grenades. Since this post was at the time being heavily shelled by our artillery and as they were unable to obtain any cover from our own shells and enemy MG fire they were forced to withdraw to the railway track and rejoin their section. At this time Lt. Langlais, perceiving that the LMG which furnished covering fire for his leading section was knocked out of action, ordered the remainder of the section to withdraw under cover to re-organize.

L/Cpl Gagnon and Ptes Lachance and Gregoire remained and as soon as our artillery fire ceased L/Cpl Gagnon once more occupied the site of the 88 mm gun thereby cutting off the retreat of the enemy with the assistance of his two companions. Pte. Gregoire then covered L/Cpl Gagnon and Pte Lachance as they advanced towards the 105 mm gun from one slit trench to another. Gagnon then ordered Gregoire to return for an LMG. Without waiting for his return both he and Pte Lachance, covering each other by rifle fire, advanced to within 35 yards of the gun position. At this moment they both perceived a figure emerging from the enemy position carrying a white flag. L/Cpl Gagnon then sat down and covered the German with his rifle as he approached. Just at this point he was struck by a rifle bullet fired by another occupant of the enemy position. Pte Lachance rushed to L/Cpl Gagnon's assistance but found that he was dead. At the same time he saw the last of the enemy flee from the gun position firing at him as they left.



Having run out of ammunition he then returned to his section to report the gun position was unoccupied. Later on Sgt. C. Dechene and a small body of ten men who had been sent to reinforce the attackers found the gun position free of enemy on their arrival.

Due to the great courage and devotion to duty of Lt. Langlais and his platoon under heavy enemy fire and also that of our own artillery the enemy's resistance was first neutralized and then annihilated. The bravery of Sgt. Drapeau, L/Cpl. Gagnon and Pte Lachance prevented the enemy from making devastating use of his 88 mm gun against this company and also prevented the enemy from organizing an orderly retreat. Another important factor which assisted materially in the capture of Hill 204 was the covering fire furnished by No. 17 platoon on the right flank of the company. Officers, N.C.Os. and Private soldiers of "D" company had accomplished the task given to them. (50)

(Account of R. 22e R. op.cit.)

178. On the right flank, West N.S.R. crossed their start line shortly after midnight advancing with two companies forward. The barrage seemed to have stupefied the enemy at first, and practically no opposition was met with. During the early morning hours, the leading companies advanced into the town along the axis on the main highway still meeting very little resistance. Unfortunately, the barrage had not lifted sufficiently to allow them to press on immediately to the final objective north of the town. In the town itself, some opposition in the form of machine gunning and mortaring was met and dealt with; physical obstacles also made progress difficult. As a result of this slight delay, the follow-up companies closed in on the forward companies and took over the job of mopping up the enemy around the town. The forward companies pressed on and reached their final objectives about 0300 hrs. The company from Carlt & York R., under command, carried out its task of clearing up the enemy from the east of the town without difficulty, but they subsequently came under some severe shelling. During the action, some of the supporting artillery fire fell short,

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(50) D.51078 Sgt. R. Drapeau was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (Citation of Sgt. Drapeau); L/Cpl Gagnon was not even mentioned in despatches, although he had been recommended for a Victoria Cross (W.D., R. 22e R., July, Appx 6).



causing several casualties, including one of the forward company commanders. This company was taken over by the senior platoon commander, Lt. G. R. Guy, (51) who led the troops on to their objective where they began to dig in. At this point some two platoons of German infantry, supported by an S.P. gun, began to counter-attack and for a time the West N.S.R. company became divided, but Lt. Guy, assisted by the platoon commanders, succeeded in reorganizing it. He then directed the fire of a troop of S.P. guns which had been placed in support of the company, and they regained the weapon pits from which the enemy had driven them. In the course of the fighting, an estimated 35 casualties were inflicted on the enemy at the cost of only twelve casualties. The position was maintained throughout the day, but under heavy enemy fire. Battalion Headquarters was kept well informed of the situation. Through observation carried out by this company and relayed by wireless to Battalion Headquarters, two or three enemy targets were successfully engaged by the supporting artillery. (W.D., West N.S.R., 29-30 Jul and Appx 1 - Company Accounts; Hist Sec file Sicily/3 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Notes given verbally by Brig. M.H.S. Penhale; Account of Lt.-Col. Bogert op.cit.; 30 Corps Int Log, op.cit., 30 Jul, Messages 0140, 0535, 0605, 0850, 1230 and 1840 hrs, and 31 Jul, Message 0100 hrs.)

179. On the left, two platoons of the enemy advanced towards the other forward company's position shouting out that they were "Vingt Deux". The ruse was discovered, however, and they were driven into a wadi, where one of the follow-up companies saw them trying to dig in. This company opened fire on them and followed up with a spirited bayonet charge under the personal leadership of the company commander, Capt. G.L.F. McNeil (51). The Germans were completely routed; some were killed, and the remaining 21 taken prisoners. The Battalion held on to the objectives that they had gained but the enemy still held the high ground north of the town which enabled them to keep the river valley under observation and all companies of West N.S.R. suffered from continuous and heavy shelling throughout the day. Moreover, a strong enemy post armed with a 2 cm gun, held out to the southwest of the town and prevented any transport or guns from being brought across the river until late on

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(51) Capt. McNeil and Lt. Guy were both awarded the Military Cross for this operation (Citations for a/m Officers.)



the afternoon of 30 Jul. Total West N.S.R. losses for the day were reported as 36 all ranks including eight other ranks killed or missing. Ninety-nine prisoners were taken, three of them Italian, while it was estimated that about 66 enemy were killed. (ibid.)

180. During the day, 30 Jul, the balance of Carlt & York R. moved into the area south of M. Scalpello (square 5783) and patrols of 11 Inf Bde penetrated up the road toward CENTURIPPE (square 6387). Ten F.W. 190s attacked 78 Div concentrations southwest of M. Scalpello, causing some casualties and damage. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 78 Inf Div, Appx "R", sitrep, 30 Jul.)

181. 4 Fd Coy, R.C.E., also took part in the battle for CATENANUOVA. One platoon was divided between R. 22e R. and West N.S.R., accompanying these Battalions in order to clear the route and lift mines as required (52). The other two platoons made attempts during the night and the course of the following day, to build a crossing over the dry river bed west of the town in order to open the way for vehicles across the river. One troop of tanks from 12 Cdn Tks moved up to within a mile of the town to cover this work but one of the tanks was knocked out and the rest were forced to withdraw by heavy mortar and H.E. fire. The Engineers finally completed the crossing by 1900 hrs at the price of several casualties including Lt. G. E. Atkinson, commanding No. 1 Platoon, who lost both his arms from enemy fire. He was later awarded the Military Cross for his gallant conduct on this occasion. (History of 4 Fd Coy., op.cit.; W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 30 Jul; Citation for Lt. Atkinson; Brig Penhale's Account op.cit. also pays special tribute to the work of the Engineers in this action.)

182. On the night 30/31 Jul, 11 Inf Bde of 78 Inf Div moved two battalions through West N.S.R. towards CENTURIPPE. At midnight the Canadian Battalion came temporarily under command 11 Inf Bde while at the same time the remaining battalion of this Brigade, 5 Northhamptons, came under command of 3 Cdn Inf Bde. This English Battalion and Carlt & York R. were now ordered by 3 Cdn Inf Bde to exploit the bridgehead to the northwest of CATENANUOVA. 5 Northhamptons were to seize a hill about one and one half miles northwest of M. Santa

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(52) The party attached to R. 22e R. became separated from their commander and from the Battalion. D.16185 Spr (L/Cpl) B. O'Reilly thereupon "took command of both the engineer party and the infantry covering party and reorganized them for their task. Under extremely heavy fire, he led this party forward to clear mines from the route". He was awarded the Military Medal for his action. (Citation: for Spr O'Reilly.)



Maria, while Carlit & York R. were to occupy several other features between this hill and the road from CATENANUOVA to REGALBUTO. Both Battalions occupied their objectives during the night 30/31 Jul encountering very little enemy opposition. 11 Inf Bde succeeded in making a similar advance to the northeast of CATENANUOVA (to a line 634864 - 618861). Meanwhile, on 31 Jul, R. 22e R. and West N.S.R. rested and received their first rations in thirty-six hours. During the day there were several attacks by enemy aircraft on 78 Div and 3 Cdn Inf Bde Headquarters but little damage was done. (W.Ds., H.Qs., 78 Div and 3 Cdn Inf Bde, West N.S.R., Carlit & York R. and R. 22e R., 30 - 31 Jul.; Account of Major Pangman, op.cit.; 30 Corps Int Log, 31 Jul, Messages 0540 and 2330 hrs.)

183. On the night 31 Jul/1 Aug, 5 Northhamptons and West N.S.R. returned to the command of their respective Brigades. R. 22e R. took over the hill occupied by 5 Northhamptons and the latter Battalion withdrew to CATENANUOVA, while West N.S.R. were sent forward to occupy M. Peloso (square 5790) a mile further north. In the dark the Battalion dug in on a feature short of its objective, but when daylight came the error was realized and quickly rectified. More shelling was experienced during the day but patrols were pushed on to occupy a further feature called 399 (square 5992). A corporal from 3 Battalion of 3 Parachute Rifle Regiment, who was taken prisoner in this area, supplied some valuable information concerning enemy dispositions. During the day Carlit & York R. consolidated along the road east of M. Peloso occupying a hill east of the road (609909) (ibid., 1 Aug.)

184. On the 78 Div front the forward troops were within 1000 yards of CENTURIPE by 1500 hrs, 1 Aug, despite difficulties of terrain and resistance from troops of 923 Fortress Battalion and 3 Para Regt. During the night 31 Jul/1 Aug elements of 51 (H) Div had captured features north of the Dittaino River, six miles southeast of CATENANUOVA (squares 6781 and 6881). During 1 Aug they sustained heavy counter-attacks supported by 20 to 25 German tanks, the largest number encountered by the Allies since GELA. Over 200 prisoners including 50 Germans were taken. (W.Ds., Main H.Q., 30 Corps, Aug, Appx "B", Sitrep to 2 U.S. Corps, 2000 hrs, 1 Aug; Appx "C", 30 Corps Int Summary No. 384, 1 Aug; Main Eighth Army Narrative, 1 Aug.)



185. On the night of 1/2 Aug, West N.S.R. were ordered to advance to occupy M. Criscina about three miles northeast of M. Peloso and the same distance southeast of REGALBUTO. En route, however, the order was countermanded and the Battalion consolidated in the area already occupied by their forward companies straddling the REGALBUTO road (square 5991). At the same time Carlit & York R. advanced about a mile on the other side of the road to occupy a hill east of the West N.S.R. position (square 6191) and suffered nine casualties, while R. 22e R. took over the M. Peloso positions vacated by West N.S.R. Meanwhile on the 78 Div sector patrols of 38 Inf Bde entered CENTURIPPE about 0300 hrs 2 Aug but were driven out by the enemy who held the town in some strength. That evening, 38 Inf Bde attacked the town. After a night's fighting the whole town was reported cleared by 0700 hrs, 3 Aug. To the southeast troops of 51 (H) Div occupied M. Pietra Perciata (square 6583) and patrolled to M. Serra di Spezia (five miles east of CATENANUOVA) where they again made contact with the enemy. (Account of Major Pangman, op.cit.; W.Ds., H.Q., Main 30 Corps, Aug, Appx "B", Sitreps 1000 hrs 2 and 3 Aug; 78 Div, G.S., H.Q., Aug, Appx "O", Sitreps 2 and 3 Aug; H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde and West N.S.R., 1 Aug.)

186. The Commander of 3 Cdn Inf Bde still intended to attack M. Criscina and the high ground to the south of it with two companies each from West N.S.R. and Carlit & York R. In the early morning, 2 Aug, a patrol from West N.S.R. penetrated as far as the mountain but could not discover any enemy. However, when the two companies of this Battalion moved forward, they were heavily engaged on high ground (604923), half a mile southwest of their objective. No further progress was made during the day and about 43 casualties including 17 killed were suffered by the Battalion (53). The Brigade Commander, in consultation with the C.R.A. of 78 Inf Div considered the possibility of continuing the attack on this mountain objective with the support of 78 Inf Div artillery. However, due to the

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- (53) F.40151 Pte T. K. Martell was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for the part he played in this action. During the advance his section's Bren gun crew were knocked out. Pte Martell picked up the loads of these two men, Bren gun and ammunition, and retaining his one rifle and ammunition as well "came forward 100 yds over open ground continuously swept by M.G. and rifle fire to his section who were in an advanced position and isolated without an automatic weapon". (Citation for Pte. Martell.)



difficulties of the terrain the fatigue of sub-units which had done so much active patrolling for the past few days and the probability of the Brigade returning to the command of 1 Cdn Inf Div on the following day, it was finally decided to abandon the plan. That night the forward companies of West N.S.R. returned to the Battalion position on the main road under cover of darkness. During the night, however, artillery concentrations were put down on the enemy position to give them the impression that an attack would be made. The following day, 3 Aug, patrols from West N.S.R. again penetrated to M. Criscina but found the feature was now unoccupied. The three battalions, however, remained in the same positions that they had occupied the previous day. At 1800 hours the Brigade reverted to command of 1 Cdn Inf Div and on 4 Aug moved up to the vicinity of REGALBUTO. (*ibid.*, 2-4 Aug and Account of Lt.-Col. Bogert, *op.cit.*)

REGALBUTO, 29 JUL - 3 AUG

187. At this point it becomes necessary to go back a few days to resume the main story of 1 Cdn Inf Div in its final operations east of AGIRA. It will be remembered that, while 3 Cdn Inf Bde was operating around CATENANUOVA, 231 Inf Bde, under command of 1 Cdn Inf Div, was, in accordance with the "HARDGATE" plan, leading the Division's drive on REGALBUTO. (See paras 147, 151 and 159 to 162.) At REGALBUTO 1 Cdn Inf Div once again came in contact with the H.G. Armd Div, for 15 and 29 Pz Gr Divisions had by now withdrawn to the northeast where they were opposing the American Advance. All the German troops between REGALBUTO and the coast were now under command of H.G. Armd Div (e.g. 923 Fortress Battalion and 3 Para Rifle Regt which 3 Cdn Inf Bde contacted in the vicinity of CATENANUOVA). After the fall of REGALBUTO an H.G. Armd Div operation order, dated 27 Jul, was captured which revealed the enemy plan of defence in this sector. The following paragraphs of this order are of interest:

1. The enemy has attacked 27 Jul only on the right flank. He was thrown back at pt 246 (M. Santa Maria) West of CATENANUOVA (5886) with heavy losses.

15 F.G.Div, under strong enemy pressure, is taking up posns adjoining H.G. Armd Div back on the general line REGALBUTO - GAGLIANO - East of NICOSIA, leaving a standing patrol in area AGIRA. REGALBUTO inclusive to H.G. Armd Div.

2. H.G. Armd Div will hold its present posns, will strengthen the REGALBUTO flank and will take over command of the coastal sector to incl ACIREALE.



3. H.G. Armd Engineer Bn with sp tps will accordingly take over the defence of REGALBUTO under direct comd of the Div. It will retain / assume command of 3 Tp Armd Arty Regt.

one Flak detachment

one sqn Tank Regt, to be provided by 11 Bn by 0600 hrs 28 Jul

Units of this REGALBUTO force will cease to be under comd of von CARNAP Battle Group. Armd Engineer Bn will not recall demolition parties already posted at demolition points.

Contact will be established and maintained between REGALBUTO and the left flank of 15 P.G. Div and any enemy elements infiltrating between the flanks of the two divs will be spotted and wiped out. This will apply likewise to contact between the left of the Armd Engineer Bn Gp and von CARNAP Battle Gp.

(Hist Sec file, Sicily/L/F, 30 Corps  
Int Summary No 387, 4 Aug, Appx "A".)

231 Inf Bde also reported meeting troops from 3 Para Rifle Regt at REGALBUTO (W.D., 231 Bde, 31 Jul).

188. On 29 Jul, 231 Bde advanced between five and six miles east of AGIRA. Some opposition was struck on a hill a little more than a mile southwest of REGALBUTO, but the feature was successfully attacked and captured by 1 Dorset and 1 Hamps supported by a squadron of 12 Cdn Tks, 3 Cdn and 165 Fd Regts. That night, 1 Dorset attacked another hill commanding REGALBUTO from the south (565946) but they were forced to withdraw by heavy enemy machine gun and mortar fire. The following night, 30/31 Jul, 2 Devon repeated the attack with heavy artillery support from 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Fd Regts, 165 Fd Regt, R.A., and a medium regiment (probably 7 Med Regt, R.A.). The attack was successful, but early the following morning enemy infantry supported by three tanks, counter-attacked with great vigor. 2 Devon lost the first crest of the feature that they had occupied, but fought hard to retain the second crest, and at the price of heavy casualties, succeeded in restoring the situation. During the day, reinforcements were sent in to strengthen the positions on this feature. Meanwhile, 1 Dorset, with artillery support, successfully attacked another hill north of the road and immediately west of REGALBUTO. During this operation, "A" Sqn, 12 Cdn Tks, continued to support the infantry, giving covering fire where possible. On 30 Jul, they came under very heavy mortar fire and suffered casualties. (W.Ds., H.Q., 231 Inf Bde, H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div and 12 Cdn Tks, 29-31 Jul, - the R.A.A. Diary seems confused in its dates; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 29-31 Jul, serials 166, 190, 198, 209, 230, 273 and 304.)



189. There was some doubt as to the whereabouts of the enemy in the hilly country between REGALBUTO and CATENANUOVA, so on 30 Jul, the G.O.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div, ordered the Divisional Reconnaissance Squadron to send a troop out to investigate the area immediately northwest of M. Peloso and southwest of REGALBUTO (squares 5691, 5692 and 5693). The rugged terrain forced the patrol to complete its task on foot but no enemy were contacted. The following day, 31 Jul, another patrol was sent on to the REGALBUTO - CATENANUOVA road - square 5990. (W.D., "A" Sqn, 4 Cdn Recce Regt, 30-31 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 31 Jul, serial 297.)

190. During this same two days, 30 and 31 Jul, the three battalions of 1 Cdn Inf Bde were moved up east of REGALBUTO in support of 231 Inf Bde. During the morning of 31 Jul, 48 Highrs were ordered to take over from 1 Dorset the long ridge about one mile northwest of REGALBUTO which dominated the whole area north of the town. From its twin peaks, observation was possible over the northern and eastern exits from the town. To reach their objective, the Battalion had to debus about four or five miles east of AGIRA and march across country in a north-easterly direction, leaving their vehicles and supporting weapons behind. During the early afternoon, 31 Jul, they secured their objectives which included the REGALBUTO Cemetery and railway station. They occupied the northern slope of the ridge, while 1 Dorset, two companies of which had just been forced back from another hill north of the town, dug in on the southern side. Throughout the evening, 48 Highrs were in constant contact with enemy infantry and tanks. (W.Ds., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde and 48 Highrs, 31 Jul; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 31 Jul, serial 276; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Accounts of Major G.E.B. Renison and Lt.-Col. I.S. Johnston.)

191. The stage was now set for a direct attack on the town of REGALBUTO. During the morning of 31 Jul, the Divisional Commander came forward into 231 Inf Bde's area to reconnoitre the situation, and at 1700 hrs that afternoon he held a conference with his brigade commanders at which he outlined his plan of attack. He explained the position of 231 Bde which had one battalion and one company firmly established on the high ridge immediately south of the highway as it entered REGALBUTO (562945) and another battalion on the high ground astride another road at the northern entrance of the town (563953). He added that an attempt to occupy the ridge immediately east of the town (572948, also called "Tower Hill") was stopped by cross fire from tanks sited in the valley south of REGALBUTO. 231 Bde were at present trying to get six pounder guns into position to deal with these tanks.



192. General Simonds then went on to order his brigades as follows:

(a) 231 Bde was again to attempt to seize the ridge southeast of the town (572948) that night. (Accounts of the operation indicate that this was to be a reconnaissance in force to feel out the enemy positions for the main attack by R.C.R.)

(b) The battalion (48 Highrs) of 1 Cdn Inf Bde, which was relieving 1 Dorset at the road junction immediately northwest of REGALBUTO (562953) was to patrol to the north as far as the River Salso. A second battalion (R.C.R.) from 1 Cdn Inf Bde was to be held in readiness to act in accordance with the success or failure of 231 Bde's advance. If the latter were successful, this battalion, on receipt of the appropriate code word from 231 Bde, was to advance to the ridge (572948) establish a firm base and patrol actively along a further ridge east of the town (586950 to 609955). On the other hand, if the preliminary operation was not successful, this battalion was to attack the ridge (572948) at 0200 hrs, supported by Divisional Artillery concentrations on the ridge itself and on M. Tiglio a mile to the south (square 5793).

(c) 2 Cdn Inf Bde was to send patrols during the night to the high ground across the Salso about five miles northeast of REGALBUTO (squares 6000, 6001, 6100 and 6101). (Hist Sec File Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, Notes from Orders by G.O.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 1630 hrs, 31 Jul.)

193. Preparatory to the attack, R.C.R. advanced by the main road to within a mile of REGALBUTO, whence they branched off to the right by a side track running south of the hill occupied by 2 Devon (see para 188 above) and parallel to the main road. They moved along this road without any vehicles, (54) except for two carriers which attracted a few enemy shells, and reached the outskirts of the town immediately opposite their objective. Here they contacted the officer in charge of 231 Bde's patrol (see para 192 above) who reported that he had become lost approaching the enemy's positions, whose

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(54) Maj. Renison said that R.C.R. formed a mule train in an attempt to bring forward supplies during this engagement and that it suffered heavily from mortar fire but there is no mention of this in R.C.R. accounts.



defences he was to test. Consequently, the artillery support (55) was cancelled when this was reported, and the R.C.R. had to proceed on their own. During the night, however, from another source, it was learned that about 100 paratroops had moved into the town supported by about 20 tanks. (W.D., R.C.R., 1 Aug - this diary is one day out in its reckoning; W.D., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 3, Int Log 31 Jul, 2215 hrs, 1 Aug, 0010 hrs, 0050 hrs; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 1 Aug, serial 332; Accounts of Major Renison and Major Powers, op.cit.)

194. One company remained in the southwest corner of the town in order to give covering fire to the other three companies which proceeded to advance against the eastern ridge which was their objective. It was found, however, that the line of approach was cut by a ravine far deeper than expected. On the other side of this ravine, and along the shoulder of the ridge, ran the road south to CATENANUOVA. All three companies proceeded to climb down the ravine and move towards the ridge, with one company directed on the centre and the other two at either flank. The centre company managed to get part way up the other side of the ravine only to find that the houses of the town, covering the crest of the ridge, extended much further east than marked on the map. Enemy tanks were hidden among the buildings and prevented any further advance, and with the advent of daylight, the company was forced to withdraw again to the bottom of the ravine. One platoon, which had been sent on a left flanking movement against the enemy tanks, was cut off, but during the day under the skillful management of its platoon commander, it managed to work its way through the town, which was still in enemy hands, and join up with 48 Highrs on the other side. (ibid.; W.D., R.C.R., July, Appx 5, Company Account of Operations; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 1 Aug, serials 333, 342, 346 and 350.)

195. Meanwhile, the company on the right flank had also sent out tank hunting patrols but without success. With the advent of day, all three forward companies were forced to withdraw to take what cover they could on the western side

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(55) It might be mentioned here that at 2130 hrs an Officer from a reconnaissance element of 1 (U.S.) Inf Div arrived at Divisional Headquarters and asked for some artillery support in the area of GAGLIANO four miles north of AGIRA. One battery of 2 Cdn Fd Regt was assigned to fire several concentrations. (W.D., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 31 Jul.)



of the ravine which was completely dominated by the enemy holding the escarpment above them. The reserve company remained in the southwest corner of the town also under enemy observation and fire. During the day, several attempts were made to get on to the road south of the town, but without success for every movement drew down machine gun and mortar fire. The Battalion was forced to remain in these exposed positions all day suffering, not only from enemy fire, but also from the great heat of the August sun, the stench of the town and of the dead lying around, and from lack of food and water. According to one company's account, "it was a very helpless feeling for there was very little we could do and we were continually being sniped at, shelled and mortared" (W.D., R.C.R., Jul, Appx 5, Account of "C" Coy). During the early afternoon, one of the Battalion's anti-tank guns was man-handled into a position on the outskirts of the town in an endeavour to knock out the enemy's tanks which were causing so much trouble. Unfortunately, just as the gun was about to fire, one of the enemy tanks spotted it, darted out from behind a building and registered a direct hit on the gun killing one of the crew and wounding the rest and the Anti-Tank Platoon Officer. (W.D., R.C.R., 1-2 Aug and Company Accounts in July Diary; Account of Maj. Powers, op.cit.)

196. To the north of the town, 48 Highrs, temporarily under command of 231 Inf Bde, were also engaged throughout the day. Following receipt of the Divisional Commander's orders of the previous evening, one company was sent to patrol the high ground two or three miles to the north. They found this feature partly held by enemy infantry supported by tanks and during the rest of the day, the company was in constant contact with them. The rest of the Battalion patrolled actively throughout the day and carried out a series of minor skirmishes with enemy patrols. Both sides fought cautiously and for the most part shooting was confined to L.M.G. and rifle fire. However, a number of enemy tanks were seen from time to time throughout the day. These shelled the Battalion's position from the town, but did not attack. (W.D., 48 Highrs, 1 Aug; 1 Cdn Inf Bde Int Log, messages 0745, 0920, 1100, 1115, 1210, 1700, 1830, 2310 hrs, 1 Aug; Accounts of Lt.-Col. Johnston, Maj. Renison and Capt. McEachren, op.cit.) A message sent by the Battalion to 1 Cdn Inf Bde Headquarters at 2000 hrs summed up their activities for the day.



B.H.Q. below warehouse at terminus of railway area 557952. "A" Coy on ridge 554954 - 557954. "C" Coy on both sides of road at entrance to cemetery 558953. "B" Coy in reserve area 557953. "D" Coy patrolling area 563973 where they are in contact with enemy in sniping contest which is stalemate. F.O.O. has reported tanks on rd 561953 which engaged fwd elements apparently withdrawn. Dorsets have all withdrawn into this Bn area and are resting. No supporting arms able to get up. Casualties killed 1 and 2 wounded 1 and 8. Water supply fair. Ration not.

A second message at 2100 hrs added:

Enemy counter-attacked and captured 1 offr and one man at 559952. Will keep you informed.

(1 Cdn Inf Bde Int Log, 1 Aug.)

197. Engineers from 1 Fd Coy, R.C.E., had worked all day under shell fire developing an emergency track from the highway (square 5394). By utilizing some existing trails, they completed the job that night and supporting arms and rations finally arrived during the early morning of 2 Aug. (W.D., 48 Highrs, 2 Aug; Account of Maj. Renison, op.cit.; W.D., 1 Fd Coy, R.C.E., 1 Aug, makes no reference to this job but speaks of completing a by-pass on the main road at 534940.)

198. Due to the break-down of the Forward Observation Officer's vehicle, 48 Highrs were without artillery support. Late in the afternoon, however, support was obtained via a Brigade wireless link from a British medium regiment (probably 7 Med Regt, R.A.), which had an observation post on the same feature as the Brigade command post. This unit put down several regimental concentrations which greatly heartened the infantry and, moreover, forced the enemy infantry and tanks to shift their positions. (Account of Maj. Renison, op.cit.) (56)

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(56) Major Renison refers to the supporting fire of the British Medium Regiment and to the building of the track by 1 Fd Coy, R.C.E., as both taking place on 31 Jul, but the other accounts seem to indicate that 1 Aug was the actual date. Chronological mistakes are fairly common which is not surprising considering that the accounts were given some time after the event.



During the day, 7 Med Regt, R.A., directed by the Air O.P., also carried out two successful counter-battery shoots against enemy artillery east of REGALBUTO (points 587949 and 625963). 1 Cdn Fd Regt also reported firing constantly throughout the day at targets of opportunity in the town. (W.Ds., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div and 1 Cdn Fd Regt, 1 Aug.)

199. At 1530 hrs, 1 Aug, the Divisional Commander issued new orders. He explained how the attack of the previous night on the ridge at the southeastern corner of REGALBUTO had been stopped by "enemy tanks skilfully sited as pill boxes". He added:

There are definite indications that the enemy EAST of REGALBUTO will not withdraw unless ordered to do so by his own higher comd. He is well sited and possesses about 8 tks. It is probably that he will fight hard to hold his present posns.

(Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, Notes from Orders given by G.O.C., 1530 hrs, 1 Aug.)

In his revised plan of attack, he ordered 231 Inf Bde with 48 Highrs under command to establish a firm base west and northwest of REGALBUTO and then to clean up the town itself. 1 Cdn Inf Bde with full Divisional Artillery in support, was to secure M. Tiglio a high hill on the western side of the CATENANUOVA road (574934) and about a mile south of REGALBUTO. This was to be a silent attack under cover of darkness, unless surprise were lost before the zero hour. (The artillery prepared a task table in case it was needed.) Then at about noon the following day, the advance was to be made northeast from M. Tiglio behind a barrage to secure the western end of a ridge (588950) lying due east of REGALBUTO. From this point, part of the assault troops were to turn west along the ridge towards REGALBUTO, to where R.C.R. had been held the previous day, and clean up the enemy they found there. The remainder were to advance east to secure the main ridge to a point (607955) two miles east of the town. (*ibid*; W.D., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 1 Aug.)

200. After dark on 1 Aug, R.C.R. withdrew from their exposed positions and retired to rest and reorganize in an area about two and a half miles to the west (square 5394). Hast & P.E.R. were given the task of carrying out 1 Cdn Inf Bde's part of the Divisional plan.



During the afternoon a patrol had been sent out to explore the country to the southeast, but it had lost contact with Battalion Headquarters, and at 2200 hrs, the Battalion had to set out before the patrol could report. Although no opposition was met in the first task, the operation was a difficult one for the route lay through some of the roughest country that the Battalion had yet encountered. By first light, 2 Aug, however, they had scaled and occupied their first objective, M. Tiglio. There were no enemy on the hill but from equipment captured, it appeared that they had moved out a short time before the Canadians' arrival. Once again, lack of roads made it impossible to bring up any vehicles and "all food, water, ammunition, wireless sets, mortars and other necessary equipment had to be man-packed over a mule track which went twice as far up and down as it went along". (Account of Maj. Renison, op.cit.) The Battalion was now ordered to rest for a few hours while the final details of the second part of the plan for the attack northwards were worked out. The attack was to be supported by a heavy artillery barrage (by 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Fd Regts), and by concentrations of observed fire (by 165 Fd and 7 Med Regts, R.A.), while all available air support was directed against traffic and movement on the high ground running east of the objective (i.e. east from grid line 59). According to Major Renison: "It was believed that the enemy would withdraw when the assault developed and it was hoped that the air attack would pin him down to the ground and prevent this operation". (1*bid.*; also W.Ds., Hast & P.E.R., 1-2 Aug and H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 1-2 Aug and Appendices 1, 2 and 3 being task table and trace.)

201. During the night, at 0020 hrs, 7 Med Regt had put down harassing fire in the area north of the road running east from REGALBUTO (580950 - 640954) in the belief that it was harbouring enemy motor transport and guns. Then, at 0645 hrs, 1 Cdn Fd Regt laid down a smoke line for 24 Kittyhawks which bombed and strafed in the same vicinity. During the day, the Air Force reported hitting over 40 enemy motor transport between REGALBUTO and ADERNO as well as 50 more at CESARO to the north. Eight light bomber attacks were also made on ADERNO where a large fire was started, and two attacks made on both BRONTE and RANDAZZO. (W.D. H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 2 Aug; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, 2 Aug, serials 416 and 418; W.D., Main 30 Corps, Aug, Appx "D" Air Notes, 2 Aug.)



202. The difficult nature of the ground and trouble with wireless sets slowed up the preparations for the final attack, and the zero hour had finally to be put back from 1400 to 1600 hrs. In the meantime, however, a patrol of 48 Highrs had penetrated REGALBUTO from the north and discovered that the enemy had evacuated (57). Two companies of 2 Devon took over the town, and 48 Highrs remained in defensive positions for the rest of the day. (Account of Maj. Renison, op. cit.; W.D., 48 Highrs, 2 Aug; 1 Cdn Inf Bde Int Log op. cit., 1225 hrs, 2 Aug.)

203. As a result of this information, the artillery barrage was cancelled at the last minute and Hast & P.E.R. were ordered to move forward and occupy their objective. They crossed the CATENANUOVA road and en route occupied M. Giorgio (square 5893) which appeared to have been recently evacuated. The Germans, reported to be two companies of paratroops (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 2 Aug), were, however, still holding out on the ridge east of REGALBUTO, and as the leading company of Hast & P.E.R. began to swing north from M. Giorgio and penetrate the valley between the mountain and the ridge, the enemy opened up with fierce machine gun and mortar fire. Heavy casualties were avoided by quickly bringing 3" mortar fire down on the enemy positions. The leading company then ascended M. Giorgio in order to give covering fire for the other three companies, which proceeded to move northwards across the valley. For once, wireless communications with the forward companies worked well throughout the attack, with the result that the Forward Observation Officer of 2 Cdn Fd Regt was able to bring down very accurate artillery concentrations on the enemy. The infantry advanced quickly behind the artillery fire and secured the ridge in spite of stiff opposition. The remainder of the enemy withdrew, and Hast & P.E.R. consolidated the high ground immediately west of REGALBUTO. (W.D., Hast & P.E.R., 2 Aug; Accounts of Maj. Renison, and Maj. Campbell & Capt. Waugh, op. cit.)

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(57) The town itself was reported badly damaged by bombs and shell fire. Capt. Cunningham described what 3 Cdn Inf Bde saw when they entered it two days later:

The town of Regalbuto was found to have been badly smashed by the British. Attacked several times by aircraft and heavily shelled by artillery, hardly a building remained intact. One section of the main road through the town was completely blocked with rubble, though the engineers, with the aid of bulldozers, had forced a one-way route through a side street. The town was deserted; most of the inhabitants had fled to the hills or the railway tunnels, but with the entry of the Allied troops they were beginning to return. They were a pitiful sight, dirty, ragged, frightened and apparently half-fed. They were accompanied by the town's canine population and hordes of flies.

(Capt. Cunningham's Account, op. cit.)



204. The following day, 3 Aug, 1 Cdn Inf Bde completed its task of occupying REGALBUTO and the three battalions concentrated in the area, 48 Highrs a mile to the north of the town, Hast & P.E.R. on the ridge east of the town and R.C.R. on M. Giorgio south of the town. 48 Highrs and Hast & P.E.R. rested for most of the day, while R.C.R. moved into their new positions and made contact with 3 Cdn Inf Bde to the south. (Account of Maj. Renison, op. cit., and Battalion War Diaries.)

205. At the G.O.C.'s. conference that afternoon, 1 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to move clear of REGALBUTO and of the road south to CATENANUOVA, and to reorganize in an area (squares 5894, 6195 and 6193) west of the town and south of the main road to ADERNO. Patrols were to be pushed east along the lateral road to gain contact with 78 Inf Div. 231 Inf Bde was also to leave REGALBUTO and reorganize in an area several miles to the west. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, which reverted to the command of 1 Cdn Inf Div at 1800 hrs that day, was to move into the REGALBUTO area and take up positions immediately northwest of 1 Cdn Inf Bde. (Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/I, Notes on G.O.C.'s. conference, 1500 hrs, 3 Aug.)

206. These moves took place as ordered and early on 4 Aug, 48 Highrs took up positions (595955) about two miles east of REGALBUTO. Later in the day, R.C.R. advanced two miles overland without their vehicles, from M. Tiglio to M. Criscina, (square 6193), in order to protect the left flank of 78 Inf Div. Hast & P.E.R. remained on the ridge (579944) east of the town. All three Battalions sent out patrols to the east contacting 2 Cdn Inf Bde and 78 Div. (W.Ds., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, R.C.R., 48 Highrs, Hast & P.E.R., 3 & 4 Aug; 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Log, serials 556 and 612, 4 Aug.) On 4 Aug, 3 Cdn Inf Bde took up their positions around REGALBUTO, R. 22e R. to the northwest (square 5596), Carlt & York R. and West N.S.R. immediately east of the town (squares 5795 and 5895 respectively). For the second successive day, American planes bombed Canadian troops in this area, but there were, fortunately, few casualties. (W.Ds., H.Q., 1 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes, 3 and 4 Aug; Hist Sec file Sicily/3 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account of Capt. R.D. Prince, I.O. 3 Cdn Inf Bde.)

NORTH OF THE SALSO -- HILL 736,  
M. REVISOTTO and M. SEGGIO,  
1 - 6 AUG

207 The axis of 1 Cdn Inf Div's advance now swung north of the main highway in order to avoid collision with 78 Inf Div. Indeed while 1 Cdn and 231 Inf Bdes had been taking and consolidating REGALBUTO, 2 Cdn Inf Bde had already set about their



task of penetrating the mountainous and almost roadless country to the northeast, which commanded the northern and western approaches to ADERNO (see G.O.C.'s orders of 31 Jul, para 192 above). At the same time, the Divisional Engineers were to develop a route in this direction (W.D., 1 Fd Coy, R.C.E., 1 Aug).

208. It will be remembered that the Salso River runs into the Simeto river a few miles west of ADERNO (see para 49 above). The Salso has various tributaries running into it from the north, the most important of which is the Sotto di Troina, which flows from the town of TROINA, about twelve miles northwest of REGALBUTO, southeast and south to its junction with the Salso at a point five miles west of ADERNO. Four miles further east the Simeto also joins the Salso, running roughly parallel to the lower Troina. West of the Troina and north of the Salso the country is very mountainous and there are no roads. The most easterly of these mountains, best called Hill 736 (its height in metres), was to play an important part in the coming operations. From it a ridge extended down to the junction of the Salso and the Troina rivers. East of the Troina there is one secondary road running down from TROINA along the eastern bank of that river and then turning east along the Salso valley through the village of CARCACI (square 6896) and entering the main AGIRA - ADERNO highway, where it crosses the upper Simeto. North of this road are more mountains, the chief of which are called M. Revisotto (square 6400) rising from the east bank of the Troina and M. Seggio (square 6800) rising from the west bank of the Upper Simeto. On the other side of the Simeto another road runs northwards from ADERNO to BRONTE and from thence on to RANDAZZO. North of REGALBUTO, the Salso valley is very narrow and steep but a few miles further east it broadens out into open rolling country covered with orchards. The main highway follows the general line of the Salso from AGIRA to ADERNO, but at AGIRA and again at REGALBUTO it is divided from the river by some low hills. A few miles west of ADERNO it crosses the Salso and then the upper Simeto a short distance above the junction of these two rivers. South of the REGALBUTO - ADERNO road there are more hills, on the highest of which is perched CENTURIPPE six miles southwest of ADERNO. Northeast of ADERNO the ground rises continuously culminating in the peak of Mount Etna some ten miles away. (This paragraph is based on a study of the maps referred to in para 49 above.)

209. 1 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary of 7 Aug reveals the German dispositions in this area:

With the Germans holding TROINA and the massif running East from the town South of the TROINA - ADERNO rd, they sat on



our left flank during the days of the advance on ADERNO. 1 Bn 382 (Regt) occupied this posn and fought with some stubbornness. II Bn 382 had three coys defending the TROINA river crossings at 6299, 6001, 6400, when these posns were broken 4 Aug our units then met I and III Bns 3 Para Regt defending the SIMETO River and the approach to ADERNO. These two bns had been appreciatively (sic) strengthened by the absorption of 923 Fortress Bn into their coys.

210. On the night 31 Jul/1 Aug, a strong patrol from Edmn R. was sent out to reconnoitre a route to the high ground (in square 6001), already referred to as Hill 736 (see para 208) and to ascertain whether there were any enemy in this area. The Brigade plan, as amended on 1 Aug, provided that following its return this patrol was to lead the rest of the Battalion to the first objective, Hill 736; the Edmontons would then send out further patrols towards the second objective, M. Revisotto across the Troina river. Finally a third objective M. Seggio another two miles east of M. Revisotto, was also to be occupied. Since there were no roads west of the Troina river, mules were to be substituted for motor transport for the first time on a large scale. According to the War Diary of 2 Cdn Inf Bde Headquarters, "the Bde had at its disposal all the mules of the Div in order that each battalion might carry 48 hours rations, amm, 3" mortars and the Sup Coy their M.Gs." (58) Vehicles were not to be moved "until the R.C.E. are able to construct a sufficiently good track for their passage up to the mountains and across the Salso river". (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 31 Jul and 1 Aug; Hist Sec File Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Accounts of Capt. F.N. Pope, I.O., 2 Cdn Inf Bde and Capt. C.H. Pritchard, Edmn R.)

211. The Edmonton patrol returned on the morning of 1 Aug and reported that "the trails were dried up stream beds filled with rocks, and going would be difficult even for personnel and mules" (W.D., Edmn R., 1 Aug). While the route along the river bed of the Salso was just passable, it was considered better to cut overland parallel to the

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(58) It may also be noted that on 30 Jul, the War Diary of Seaforth of C. noted that "the Int Section was enlarged to 38 all ranks, 30 of them riding horses and acting as scouts."



river through a valley north of REGALBUTO (59). They had reached the foot of Hill 736 and had fired several bursts from a Bren gun towards the summit, but had received no reply; nor had they encountered any enemy on the way. (Accounts of Capts. Pope and Pritchard, op. cit.)

212. The Battalion was, therefore, ordered to carry out its task that night, with one Medium Machine Gun Platoon of the Brigade Support Group under command. During the afternoon, the rifle companies marched to an assembly area about four miles east of AGIRA where the river Salso comes close to the road (square 5295). The business of harnessing and loading the mules, however, proved slow and difficult, so that at midnight the commanding officer decided to go forward without the mule train which carried the 3-inch mortars, medium machine guns, wireless sets, reserve ammunition and supplies. The exceptionally difficult terrain slowed progress down to about one mile per hour, while further delay was caused by enemy aircraft dropping flares which forced the Battalion to deploy in an effort to escape observation. It seemed that the Germans had wind of the operation, probably as a result of spotting the reconnaissance patrol on the previous night. At any rate, when the Battalion paused shortly after dawn to reorganize on some high ground north of the Salso (square 5800) and less than two miles short of their objective, enemy self-propelled artillery opened fire on them from the south side of the river. Shortly afterwards enemy medium machine guns and mortars also opened up from the high ground on their left, i.e. to the north. The enemy had forestalled them and occupied Hill 736 and its approaches in considerable force. Nevertheless, three rifle companies were sent forward in an endeavour to take the high ground in front. Some progress was made under heavy machine gun fire, but consolidation was impossible. For the remainder of the day these forward companies held their positions under rocks and cliffs, but they were unable to dig slit trenches because of the rocky nature of the ground. During the late afternoon, they were withdrawn from their untenable positions to reorganize on the low ground to the south for a new attack. (ibid., and W.D., Edmn R., 1-4 Aug.)

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- (59) It is not clear which route was followed by the rifle companies, but Capt. W. A. Ogilvie, Canadian War Artist with the Division, who accompanied the mule train carrying the Battalion's supplies, states the latter definitely followed the river bed during part of the journey.



213. Meanwhile, the mule train had finally got under way and were following slowly behind the Battalion. The leading section, consisting of 38 mules laden with machine guns of the Brigade Support Group, came under heavy artillery and mortar fire and was badly scattered, losing three of its guns. During the evening, 3 Aug, the balance of the mule train, after experiencing considerable difficulty in finding the Battalion, managed to catch up and supply them with some water and rations, as well as the rear link No. 22 wireless set and the 3-inch mortars. The Battalion had been out of communication with the rest of the Brigade throughout the day, but late that evening, Lt.-Col. Jefferson, the Battalion Commander, made his way back to Brigade Headquarters, calling at Divisional Headquarters on the way. (*ibid.*) Despite the difficulties the Battalion was encountering, he was optimistic about the situation, saying that "the task was well in hand, and the problem of supply was the only one which presented any difficulty." (Account of Capt. Pope, *op. cit.*)

214. Reconnaissance indicated that it would be easier to attack the enemy's position from the southeast rather than from the west, so during 3 Aug, careful preparations were made for such an attack in three stages, great care being taken to keep the plan hidden from the enemy (W.D., Edmn R., 3 Aug.) That afternoon at his daily conference, the G.O.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div, referred to this operation in which Edmn R. on the night 3/4 Aug were to secure a feature (612996) which was actually a spur running about a mile south southeast of the summit of Hill 736. The rest of 2 Cdn Inf Bde were to pass on down the Salso valley, advancing in three stages. That same night they were to secure the line of the River Sotto di Troina (called "BLUE LINE"). Patrols were to be pushed forward to "tap out" the high ground east of this river and on the following night, 4/5 Aug, the Brigade was to be prepared to advance to secure the second line (called "BROWN LINE") which was a stream running around the eastern flank of M. Revisotto and roughly parallel to the Troina River (653021 - 663953). On the night 5/6 Aug they were to secure a third line ("BLACK LINE") which was the Sineto river (squares 7001 - 7096). One squadron of 12 Cdn Tks and one 3.7 inch Howitzer Battery were to come under 2 Cdn Inf Bde for the operation, while the four (60) field regiments were to move to an area west of REGALBUTO to support the attack. The rest of 12 Cdn Tks and "A" Sqn of 4 Cdn Recce Regt were to move to an area northeast of AGIRA to protect the flank of the Division. (Notes of G.O.C.'s. conference, 3 Aug, *op. cit.*, para 194 above and W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 3 Aug.)

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(60) 165 Fd Regt, R.A., was still under command  
1 Cdn Inf Div.



215. At 2300 hrs, 3 Aug, one company of Edmn R. advanced toward the hill which was the Battalion's first objective in the new attack on Hill 736, and in the face of considerable opposition captured it by 0430 hrs. This company spent the rest of the day, 4 Aug, consolidating and patrolling while two other companies proceeded on down the Salso valley preparatory to attacking M. Revisotto. Meanwhile, supplies and water were again sent forward by mules. (W.D., Edmn R., 3-4 Aug, and Account of Capt. Pritchard, op. cit.) The outcome of this operation is described in para 236 below.

216. On the same night, 3/4 Aug, the remainder of the Brigade moved forward from the AGIRA area. The route led into the Salso valley near a point northeast of REGALBUTO where a railway bridge provided a crossing of the river (61). The Engineers using bulldozers supplemented this by completing a ford, but the crossing was subject to intermittent howitzer fire from long range enemy artillery. (Account of Capt. Pope, op. cit.) Seaforth of C. were ordered to take the lead and capture the high ground west of the Troina River. They left their rest area by motor transport at 2000 hrs, and debussed shortly after dark at a point about a mile north of REGALBUTO but three quarters of a mile short of their intended debussing point, due to the enemy shell fire. Two hours later, P.P.C.L.I. acting as reserve battalion of the Brigade, followed the Seaforth but stopped short on a hill (square 5897) on the south bank of the river immediately south of the crossing, and took up positions there for the night. (W.Ds., Seaforth of C. and P.P.C.L.I., 3 Aug.)

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(61) It is difficult to give the exact map reference of this bridge since neither it nor the railway are marked on any of the maps used during the campaign. A railway sketch map, 1:500,000, prepared by the Interservice Topographical Department, does, however, show a proposed sketch of a railway line between CARCACI and REGALBUTO running through this general area. Capt. Pope's account says the crossing is at 581981 but marked maps prepared by different units differ on this point. It is variously shown in squares 5798, 5898, 5998 and 6097 (Appendices to W.Ds., H.Qs., 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes, P.P.C.L.I., R. 22e R., and West N.S.R.). An Engineer sitrep, 4 Aug, says the railway bridge was "at approx 565883" and that a river crossing was constructed at 571883 (W.D., H.Q., R.C.E., 1 Cdn Inf Div, Aug, Appx 5.). Obviously the northing in each of these references should have been 983, so one cannot put too much trust in the rest of the references.



217. The Seaforth crossed the River Salso on foot, and under cover of darkness made their way eastward down the valley. Since the river was as yet passable only to marching troops, all vehicles had to be left on the south bank. The No. 22 Wireless set (a rear link set to Brigade Headquarters) was, however, brought forward in a hand-cart with considerable difficulty. An hour before daylight the Battalion was fired on from a feature (square 6099) which a company of Edmontons had attacked earlier the same night (para 215 above). The two forward companies of Seaforth of C. then advanced up the feature. According to the Battalion War Diary, "Upon arriving at the top, EDMN Tps were met, but only after a near battle between the unsuspecting men". A few Germans were discovered on the north slope, but they quickly withdrew when fired upon. The time was now approaching 0500 hrs so the advance was resumed immediately. (Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account of Lt.-Col. B.M. Hoffmeister, O.C., Seaforth of C.; W.D., Seaforth of C., 4 Aug.)

218. As dawn began to break in the eastern sky, the Seaforth found themselves looking northwards towards their main objective, "a high rugged hill topped on the left by a rocky crag jutting straight up to the clouds." (62) A range of rocky hills filled the rest of the horizon, while to the west on their left flank they saw the river bed of the Salso winding up through the hills till it passed out of sight north of AGIRA. In places they could see the track from REGALBUTO to the river, and far away they could hear the bulldozers working on the river crossing. Throughout the day enemy mortars continued to shell this point trying to prevent the supporting arms from coming forward. To the south-east, and on their right flank, they could see the river winding on down to the Catania Plain, while to the east and northeast other rugged hills were visible, and beyond them the massive outline of Mount Etna. To their rear on the south side of the valley they could see still more hills with the town of CENTURIPPE crowning the highest one. Closer at

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(62) Again it is difficult to give a map reference. The map shows a spur of Hill 736 extending over two miles southeast of its summit. There is also a second peak (square 6100) which is doubtless the "rocky crag" on the left referred to above. But the Seaforth were primarily concerned with occupying the southeastern tip of the spur (square 6299) which commanded a Troina crossing.



hand patches of corn and orange trees dotted the valley, which was furrowed by irrigation ditches, but "away from any water the ground was as bare as a desert". According to their Diary, Battalion Headquarters "dug in behind rocks in the dead ground and set up for the duration of the day in the blistering heat." (W.D., Seaforth of C., 4 Aug.)

219. In the early morning light, one of the two reserve companies, supported by fire from the remaining rifle company and from a platoon of medium machine guns of the Brigade Support Group, was sent in to take the feature ahead which was the Battalion's objective (see footnote 62 above). The company managed to reach the base of this feature undetected and then, executing a right flanking movement, gained a foothold on the right southern tip of the hill after a stiff fight. (Account of Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister, op. cit.) According to the Battalion War Diary:

The sections had a field day working sometimes independently throwing out Jerry from his M.G. posts and sniper posts. Many sections rounded rocky crags and came face to face with German sections - slowly the enemy posts were knocked out one by one.

The Sask L.I. had one platoon of M.Gs. situated on the knoll in front of Bn H.Q. but the range was too great; they could not distinguish friend from foe and they did not do much firing. During the morning the mortars of the enemy either laid their shells in our Coy areas or against the river crossing at 590997 (sic). What little he has got in the way of mortars etc he makes good use of.

(W.D., Seaforth of C., 4 Aug.)

220. P.P.C.L.I. were now ordered forward to leapfrog Seaforth of C. and consolidate a bridgehead across the Troina River in order to cover the construction of a crossing (in square 6497) and to secure a position astride the TROINA - ADERNO road (in square 6498). They were to be preceded by one company of Seaforth of C. This company crossed the Troina about 1700 hrs, supported by tanks firing from hull down positions, and by a platoon of M.M.Gs. They came under heavy fire, but after an hour's fighting captured and cleared the high ground east of the river and overlooking the TROINA road. In the meantime, the Patricias crossed the Salso River, and moved down the valley to a forming-up position (square 6397) south of the main Seaforth area, where they came in for some enemy mortaring, but suffered no casualties. At 1930 hrs, the



Battalion began to advance across the river, two companies at a time, supported by more fire from the tanks ensconced on the main Seaforth's feature, and by an artillery concentration. By 2045 hrs all companies were on their objectives; thanks to the work of the Seaforth patrol which had preceded them they met no opposition. The two companies of Edmn R. (referred to in para 215 above) were discovered to the southeast of the Battalion objective, and "through force of circumstances" they came under command of P.P.C.L.I. for the time being. The Battalion maintained these positions throughout the night. (W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 4 Aug; Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D, Account by Major R.C. Coleman, 2IC, P.P.C.L.I. and Account of Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister, op. cit.)

221. Before dealing with the third phase of the Brigade's operation north of the Salso, it becomes necessary to consider the general picture briefly in order to appreciate the significance of the Canadian movements. The loss of AGIRA, REGALBUTO, CATENANUOVA and CENTURIPE had forced the enemy at last to begin withdrawing from the Catania Plain to his final defence line (see para 157 above), and on 3 and 4 Aug, 13 Corps reported such a withdrawal on their front accompanied by the blowing up of ammunition dumps and by extensive demolitions. In the northern sector, U.S. troops had reached TROINA, ten miles north of REGALBUTO, but 15 and 29 Pz Gr Divs were putting up fierce resistance here and on the coast where the Americans had advanced about six miles east of their start line at S. STEFANO. That the campaign was reaching its climax was shown by a message from General Montgomery to Admiral of the Fleet Cunningham and Air Chief Marshal Tedder in which he warned them that there were indications that the Germans were making preparations for withdrawal to the mainland, perhaps before their front actually collapsed. (15 Army Gp Account, op. cit.; W.D., H.Q., Main Eighth Army, August, Appendix of "Most Secret and Personal Messages", General Montgomery to Admiral Cunningham and Air Marshal Tedder, 3 Aug.)

222. On 4 Aug, General Montgomery held a conference at his Headquarters at which a plan was outlined for the final reduction of northeast Sicily; it was summarized by the Army War Diary as follows:

13 Corps to push forward on right without incurring heavy casualties.  
30 Corps on left to do the punching.  
Eighth Army to move around WEST and NORTH of ETNA. AMERICAN Seventh Army to be directed on MESSINA.

(W.D., Main H.Q., Eighth Army, 4 Aug.)



223. On 3 Aug, 30 Corps Headquarters circulated an Outline Plan for the attack on ADERNO, and the following day the Corps Commander held a conference to consider the plan in detail. (W.D., Main 30 Corps, August, Appendix "H", Outline Plan of Attack on ADERNO, 3 Aug). On the morning of 4 Aug, General Simonds accompanied by Brigadier Matthews (C.R.A.) met General Leese and General Eveleigh at 78 Inf Div Headquarters, south of CENTURIPE (square 6287), whence they ascended the CENTURIPE Hill to look over the ground for the coming attack. (W.D., H.Q., G.S., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 4 Aug; Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/E, Message 30 Corps to Comd 1 Cdn Div, 3 Aug.)

224. They then returned to 78 Div Headquarters where they met the Army Commander. During the afternoon the plan was fully discussed at the Corps Commanders' conference. The Corps intention was to capture ADERNO as early as possible and exploit towards BRONTE. On that night, 4/5 Aug, 78 Div were to secure a bridgehead over the Salso River, and on the following night a second bridgehead over the Simeto River (63) north of its junction with the Salso (see para 208 above). 1 Cdn Inf Div were to secure M. Saggio on the second night, 5/6 Aug, and also push a bridgehead across the Simeto. On the third night 6/7 Aug, 78 Div were to attack ADERNO if the situation was favourable while 1 Cdn Inf Div were to secure their bridgehead over the Simeto in order to be prepared to launch a joint attack on the town with 78 Div on the fourth night, 7/8 Aug, should it be necessary. 51 (H) Div were to protect the right flank of 78 Div, crossing the Simeto south of ADERNO, at a point (in square 7387) six miles below its junction with the Salso. They were then to develop operations directed on BIANCAVILLE, a town five miles southeast of ADERNO, in conjunction with the main attack by 78 Div. 78 Div were to have artillery priority on the nights 5/6 and 6/7 Aug. (W.D., Main 30 Corps, August, Appendix "J", Corps Commanders' Conference, 4 Aug.)

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(63) The names of Italian rivers seemed to cause the military staffs some trouble, owing no doubt to the way the Italians printed their maps. Thus the 30 Corps order referred to the Salso and the Simeto respectively as the western and eastern branches of the FIUME River (FIUME the Italian word for river is marked against each one). 1 Cdn Inf Div (G.O.C.'s notes, 3 Aug) on the other hand refers to the Simeto as the river REGNE CARROBA probably because a name similar to this is printed along the bank of this river on some maps. General Simonds' letter to Brigadier Vokes (para 225 below) uses the correct names it will be noticed.



225. General Simonds then returned to 1 Cdn Div and, according to Capt. Pope's Account and to the Divisional War Diary, went forward to the 2 Cdn Inf Bde Command Post to discuss the situation with Brigadier Vokes. He placed 12 Cdn Tks and "A" Sqn, 4 Cdn Recce Regt, under command of 2 Cdn Inf Bde in order to make possible an infantry-cum-tank attack the following morning. It was to be made through the Troina bridgehead to link up with 78 Div crossing of the Salso about two miles below its junction with the Troina. A few hours later he amplified his plan in a letter to Brigadier Vokes which is quoted in full:

4 August 1943

Dear Chris.

As you already know 78 Div this afternoon crossed the River SALSO about 6695 and it was the Div Comd's intention to push his recce forward towards Mt. SEGGIO 6700 to relieve pressure on our front.

I consider that once the feature Pt.332 in 6498 is in your hands (64) and crossings across the River TROINA are available, that a quick blow can be struck in the undulating country North of the river which will carry you right up to the Western bank of River SIMETO. Though the features Mt. REVISOTTO 6700 (65) and Mt. SEGGIO 6700 are necessary to cover the Left flank of an attack towards ADERNO, the spurs running Southwards from these main features defilade the undulating country in the river valley itself. A quick blow towards the SIMETO can therefore be adequately covered on its Northern front and Mt. REVISOTTO and Mt. SEGGIO can then be taken by operations simultaneously South and West. I consider therefore that you should organize a striking force under Lt.-Col. Booth, 12 C.T.R. and composed of 12 C.T.R., One S.P. Bty, One or Two Tps A Tk guns, one bn inf, one recce sqn, to strike Eastward along the Northern bank of River SALSO tomorrow morning with its final objective the Eastern bank of River SIMETO. I think that such a move will startle the enemy and will probably result in a good mix up in the open country where the Tanks will really be able to manoeuvre. I think Booth will handle such a party well.

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(64) The hill occupied by P.P.C.L.I. that evening (para 220 above)

(65) Actually square 6400.



I have asked Corps for 105 S.P. Bty from 11 R.H.A. and it is due to arrive about 0830 hrs tomorrow morning and will be placed immediately under command 12 C.T.R. One inf bn (or an inf bn less two coys might be sufficient) should be available to follow up the Tanks, and a part of these might be carried, in the instance, on the Tanks of a reserve sqn. One or two tps of A Tk guns should be available to back up Booth's tanks, preferably some 6 and 17 pdrs. As a follow up on this mobile force your operations against Mt. REVISOTTO and Mt. SEGGIO could proceed as you already planned.

You must be the final judge as to whether or not the local situation presents an opportunity for the blow I envisage but indications today are that enemy resistance is crumbling and I think we can afford to take bigger chances than we have been able to in the last few days.

Congratulations on the good work today and best of luck for tomorrow.

Sincerely

Guy

P.S. Owing to the re-positioning of the artillery in preparation for the ADERNO battle, you will only have 3 Fd, 165 Fd, 7 Med Regt, to support you up to about noon tomorrow. (Fd Regt can only support you up to BROWN LINE). Of course you will have the Lt. Bty and the S.Ps to support you during this period.

From about noon, the CRA or his rep will liaise closely with you and advise you of the availability of regts in their new positions.

(W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde,  
August, Appendix 11.)

A note in Brigadier Vokes' handwriting is added at the bottom of the letter as follows:

This letter arrived after 2300 hrs 4 Aug 43. Almost identical orders had already been issued by me and arrangements were already under way. No alteration was necessary. The attack was successful.

C. Vokes, Brig.

5 Aug 43

(ibid.)



226. It was a busy day for Lt.-Col. Booth. During the afternoon he had reconnoitred the railway crossing of the Salso and just missed some enemy mortar bombs in doing so. After meeting Brigadier Vokes at the 2 Cdn Inf Bde Command Post, he ordered his Regiment, less "C" Sqn already across the river with Seaforth of C., to move forward to a new harbour south of the river (square 5695) and in the vicinity of the crossing. At 2100 hrs he attended the Brigade Commander's orders group (referred to in Brigadier Vokes' note above), following which he went forward to the Headquarters of Seaforth of C. which was the infantry battalion placed under his command for the operation. He met Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister, and according to the Tank Regiment's War Diary "plans were made and orders issued in a deserted farm house at 0200 hours under sporadic mortar fire and flares". He then returned to his own harbour area and orders were issued to the balance of the commanders at 0300 hrs. (W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 4-5 Aug.)

227. His orders provided that the tanks and supporting arms were to cross the Salso via the railway bridge and the ford. By first light this part of the force was to join the Seaforth at the Troina crossing which was to be the start line. The force was then to circle south of the TROINA - ADERNO road (see para 208 above). The country between this road and the Salso was covered by orchards and vineyards and passable to tanks. The force was then to swing north of the village of CARCACI to take the high ground (square 6898) on the west bank of the Simeto, which dominated ADERNO. The Recce squadron was to lead the column, followed in order by an Engineer reconnaissance section, a squadron of tanks carrying a rifle company of infantry, anti-tank guns and another squadron of tanks carrying another infantry company and the Seaforth mortars. The rest of the force was to follow in reserve; artillery support was as indicated in General Simonds' letter above. It seems that one squadron of tanks and a detachment of infantry were left behind to protect the high ground on the left flank (66). (ibid.)

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(66) The War Diary of 12 Cdn Tks is rather vague on this point. It says "C" Squadron of the 12 C.T.R. would occupy and hold high ground North of the Salso at all costs". A few paragraphs later without any further explanation it continues: "During the action in this area No. 7 Platoon of the Seaforths showed extreme devotion to duty by remaining in a position they were ordered to hold for 48 hours without food or water and in continuous action with the aid of our tanks, against German infantry". No other account refers to this. (See also para 235 below.)



228. The start was delayed about two hours due to some difficulty of the Reconnaissance Squadron in crossing the railway bridge (67). The Troina river crossing was found to be mined but according to the Tank Regiment's War Diary, the Engineers "did magnificent work in clearing it up for the Recce and Tanks". Once under way, about 0830 hrs, everything went according to plan, and the Recce Squadron set off down the road towards CARCACI. The enemy paratroops from 3 Para Regt according to Capt. Pope, a battalion of H.G. Armd Div according to Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister (see para 209 above) -- were scattered in nests about the high ground which constituted the objective. They were well ensconced among the rocks on the hillside and in an ideal position to fire on their attackers with the machine guns and mortars with which they were equipped. They held their fire, however, until the Recce carriers had reached a point about 500 yards short of the objective, and the infantry and tanks followed in. They then opened fire and the Recce Squadron was unable to make further progress. (*ibid.*; W.D., "A" Sqn, 4 Cdn Recce Regt, 5 Aug and Appx 2, "Summary of Operations", 5 Aug.)

229. The infantry had just dismounted from their tanks, and now both advanced to join battle with the enemy. Heavy fighting ensued in a model infantry-cum-tank action, where both arms provided excellent mutual support. The enemy had the advantage of position, but apparently had no anti-tank guns, little expecting a tank attack from that direction. According to the 12 Cdn Tks Diary, "It was found that the best way to deal with them was to have the tanks scout around the terrain and clean out all suspicious looking places with 75 mm. H.E. and with blasts of machine gun fire." One squadron of tanks and one company of infantry gained a foothold on the southern tip of the objective and a second infantry company assaulted the enemy position from the extreme right flank to exploit the first success. (W.Ds., 12 Cdn Tks and Seaforth of C., 5 Aug; Account of Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister, *op. cit.*)

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(67) The Squadron's War Diary makes constant reference to the inadequacy of its vehicles for the tasks that it was supposed to accomplish.



230. The remainder of the battle was described by Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister as follows:

The position was held in strength by the enemy but with close support of the tanks both companies captured a greater part of the enemy stronghold and methodically mopped up the rest of the position. In the meantime "D" Company had been ordered forward to reinforce the position and came under heavy fire from the extreme left flank and were pinned to ground. Again tank support had been valuable and enabled "D" Company to get on to its objective on the right flank. The entire position was then completely cleared of the enemy. He attempted a counter-attack but failed.

(Account of Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister,  
op. cit.)

231. Canadian casualties were remarkably light; Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister speaks of "fairly heavy" casualties on each side, but 12 Cdn Tks reported only two other ranks killed while Seaforth of C. only had a total of four killed and eight wounded according to their Diary (W.Ds., 12 Cdn Tks and Seaforth of C., 5 Aug). The enemy, on the other hand, suffered heavily; according to one account, "troops of No. 3 Para Regt fought to the last man and the last round. Not more than 12 prisoners were taken" (Account of Capt. Pope, op. cit.). But some Germans managed to withdraw to the northeast (W.D., Seaforth of C., 5 Aug; see also para 233 below). According to the Tank Regiment's Diary, "the objective was later found to have been occupied by a German Bde Group and desks and telephone wires were found which were strung to every high feature surrounding the area of the objective and covering all approaches" (W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 5 Aug).

232. Wireless communications between the Tank Regiment's Headquarters and 2 Cdn Inf Bde Headquarters were excellent all the day, so that the Brigade Commander was kept constantly in the picture. Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister rode in Lt.-Col. Booth's tank throughout the action, and between them they were able to keep excellent control over both tanks and infantry. According to the 12 Cdn Tks War Diary, "This is an excellent method of controlling a combined action of tanks and infantry and proved highly successful". Communications with the supporting artillery were also excellent. During the action the Artillery, firing from the vicinity of CENTURIOPE, brought



down concentrations on the enemy positions as directed by the Force Commander through his artillery Forward Observation Officer, who was riding in one of the tanks and who was in perfect wireless communication with the Artillery Headquarters (68). (ibid.)

233. "A" Squadron, 4 Cdn Recce Regt, also took an active part in the day's fighting. At 0740 hrs they sent a patrol south to CARCAI where they made contact with a company of the London Irish on the left flank of 78 Div, which had reached CARCAI almost simultaneously with the Reconnaissance Squadron's arrival 700 yards to the north. Liaison with the London Irish was maintained throughout the day and mortar support was obtained from them during an enemy attempt at a counter-attack in the morning. (It would appear that at this point the Reconnaissance Squadron was still fighting ahead of the main body of infantry and tanks.) During the afternoon the Squadron made some attempt to reconnoitre the west bank of the Sineto. They reported that the enemy had retired up the valley in sizeable numbers and apparently in some disorder. The Squadron's Account of the battle makes some further comments of interest:

A feature of the fighting was the good effect of burning out buildings and lighting the grass and brush with tracer amm. In a number of instances this drove out enemy who could then be picked off by ordinary small arms fire. ...

The ragged condition of the enemy when knocked off our objective was shown by the fact that German orders were still coming over the line telephone 15 minutes after the capture.

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(68)

Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth (who was later killed in France while commanding 4 Cdn Armd Bde at Falaise) was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for the "dash and determination" with which he carried out this operation. Three other ranks of Seaforth of C. also received awards for valour in this battle K.98595 A/Cpl. G.L. McParlon and K.53254 A/Cpl. R.J.P. Donahue were both awarded the Military Medal. According to the official citation, "Together they crawled 500 yards under enemy fire towards the enemy position; then firing skilfully and boldly from point blank range Cpl. Donahue and Cpl. McParlon cleared the post, enabling the advance to continue." M.37034 Cpl. D. Hadden was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. According to his citation on the morning of 6 Aug during an attack on a 600 foot high rocky ridge his section came under heavy fire from an enemy machine gun post. The citation continues:

(Continued on next page)



The action of the Squadron on this occasion was the first in which suitable country for manoeuvre had been found and that the Sqn had worked well and efficiently was well indicated by the hearty thanks which Major Duck received from Lt-Col Booth, O.C. 12 Cdn Tank Regt., under whose command the Sqn was working for the day. Col. Booth expressed a desire that a Recce Sqn work with his tanks on all possible occasions, as our vehicles were able to seek out information for the tanks and were able to get the information back in time to be of use to the tanks and also to the inf. ...

(W.D., "A" Sqn, 4 Cdn Recce Regt, Appx V)

234. The action had been watched by the Army Commander and by the G.O.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div, probably from the hilltop of CENTURIOPE. According to the 12 Cdn Tks' War Diary it was described as "the most ideal tank and infantry action ever seen by them, and later in an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Company, General Simonds declared that he counted this action the most successful of the First Canadian Division's campaign." (W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, 5 Aug; the G.O.C. made the reservation, however, that the fighting was not the hardest.)

235. The squadron of tanks left to protect the left flank (para 227 above) had to fight throughout the day to prevent the lines of communication of the whole force from being cut off. (*ibid.*) The Canadians' right flank was safe, however, since about a mile to the southeast of the Canadian objective on the other side of the village of CARCACI, two battalions of 78 Div were across the Sineto only **two miles from ADERNO** (squares 7095 - 7096) strongly supported by artillery and aircraft. It may be noted that this was the first time since PACHINO that 1 Cdn Inf Div was fighting right alongside a British Division; (in the Dittaino valley 3 Cdn Inf Bde was detached from the rest of the Division). Two miles still further to the southeast 51 (H) Div had sent a patrol across the river which had pushed on towards BIANCAVILLE. It will be noticed that all three divisions were operating ahead of the original schedule set by 30 Corps Headquarters (para 224 above). The biggest

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(68) During the 700 yard advance on the post he inflicted sufficient casualties with his Bren to keep the enemy heads down and then brought his section still further forward. Continuing on alone, still under the same heavy fire, he reached grenade range, threw five grenades at the position, with his section assaulted at the point of the bayonet and routed the enemy.

(Citations for a/m officer and other ranks.)



news of the day, however, came from 13 Corps, which at long last entered CATANIA. PATERNO, eight miles southeast of ADERNO, was also taken. (W.D., Main 30 Corps, August, Appx "B", Sitrep to 2 U.S. Corps, 5 Aug.) At 1655 hrs, General Montgomery signalled the good news to General Alexander: "Have captured CATANIA, MISTERBIANCO and PATERNO ... on left leading troops 30 Corps now within 2,000 yards of BIANCAVILLE and within 1,000 yards of ADRANO. Am keeping up the tempo of operations and once ADRANO secured will strike rapidly towards BRONTE and RANDAZZO." (W.D., Main Eighth Army, August, General Montgomery to General Alexander, 5 Aug.)

236. Meanwhile the Edmonton Regiment continued to attack toward Hill 736 (see paras 214 and 215 above). During the morning 5 Aug, "C" Company which had been assigned this task, captured its second objective, the high ground (point 609005) about half a mile short of the final objective the top of Hill 736, which the Germans had been holding with such determination. By this time, however, "C" Company troops were exhausted for they had been under continuous fire for almost four days in a blazing sun and with practically no sleep. Two platoons of "D" Company were, therefore, sent up to assist them. "C" Company Commander, Major A.S. Donald, then planned an attack on the final objective with the support of a regiment of artillery, a detachment of mortars and two medium machine guns (69). The supporting fire involved a very elaborate chain of shouted commands and No. 18 wireless sets in order to relay the fire orders from the observation post to the gun positions.

Registration proved slower with this form of communication but nevertheless accomplished what was expected and at 1630 hrs two platoons of "D" Company attacked. In spite of excellent artillery, mortar and M.M.G. support of our troops the enemy were able to put up a very strong resistance but the attack was pressed home and the enemy were driven from the feature.

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- (69) It will be remembered that the mule train carrying the Brigade Support Group's M.M.Gs. had been scattered by enemy fire (para 213 above). L.2197 Cpl. M.J. Taje had later retrieved two of these M.M.Gs. single handed along with the necessary ammunition and subsequently engaged enemy M.G. posts with them. He was awarded the Military Medal. (Citation for Cpl. Taje.)



Conservative estimates place the enemy numbers at over 100 which force was routed by 45 of our own troops. One of the outstanding points of the attack was that while one officer was killed and another badly wounded and both platoon sergeants were killed, the junior N.C.Os. carried the attack through to success. Immediately on capturing the objective "C" Company was moved forward to occupy the position ... "D" Company had captured 21 Ps.W. and 12 were known killed and other casualties were inflicted on the fleeing enemy.(70).

(Account of Capt. Pritchard, op.cit.)

237. The remaining two companies of Edmn R., which had crossed the Troina River, attacked towards M. Revisotto during the day. They got well forward, but were again met with very heavy opposition and it was decided they should hold the position they were in until artillery support could be arranged. The final attack was launched at 0930 hours the following morning, 6 Aug, under a very heavy artillery barrage from the Divisional Artillery as well as fire from 17 pounders, a troop of tanks and a platoon of medium machine guns. The infantry then took the objective and discovered it had been vacated by the enemy.  
(ibid.)

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(70) Major Donald, who according to his citation "led the company up across and around the bullet swept feature into a position from which the height was assaulted and captured", was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for the action. One of "D" Company subalterns, Lt. S.A. Dougan, was awarded the Military Cross. According to the citation although wounded in both arms and both hands and in intense pain, he led the forward platoon across the final 300 yards of open ground under continuous observed fire, led the charge on the objective and captured it." (Citations for Maj. Donald and Lt. Dougan.) Three Edmn R. other ranks also earned the Military Medal in the fighting north of the Salso (see Appx "A").  
Capt. D.J. Watson, F.O.O. of 3 Cdn Fd Regt, was also awarded the Military Cross for the part he played in this action and when his Regiment supported Edmn R. on the NICOSIA road, 26 Jul - para 136 above. (Citation for Capt. Watson.)



238. P.P.C.L.I. had remained in their positions east of the Troina River throughout 5 Aug, suffering several casualties from enemy harassing mortar and artillery fire. In the evening, two companies were sent forward to take M. Seggio north of the newly won Seaforth positions, while the remainder of the Battalion stayed where they were to form a firm base for the Edmontons' attack on M. Revisotto. The two companies moved down the valley under cover of darkness and contacted the Recce Squadron en route which gave them a good picture of the situation. According to a Battalion account, "the night was very dark but along the hills on both sides were large fires -- burning straw stacks, houses and in one spot an ammunition dump which flared up every once in awhile. There were flashes of gun fire and shell explosions in several areas to add to the picture." About 2300 hours they reached the Headquarters of Seaforth of C. where they met Lt-Col. Hoffmeister. The same account gives the following vivid picture of the meeting.

The old room at the back of the farm presented a strange sight. A very dirty oil lamp "scrounged" from somewhere, was burning on a ledge; the C.O. was sitting on a dilapidated straw chair munching at some hard tack spread with jam, and looking very tired. In another corner was Capt. Gowan beside an open box of hard tack, supervising a can of hot tea, from which we were given a very welcome drink; while against the far wall, on a pile of straw, lay a couple of wounded officers waiting to be evacuated.

(W.D., P.P.C.L.I., 5 Aug, & Appx 12, "Advance to M. Seggio", Account by Major D. Brain, also in Hist Sec file Sicily/2 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D.)

239. The Seaforth told them of their hard fight to gain the feature during the day and said that to the best of their belief M. Seggio was still occupied in strength by the enemy. After the P.P.C.L.I. Company Commanders had discussed their plan with Lt.-Col. Hoffmeister, the force continued on its way toward the Seaforth's forward company area. A squadron of tanks coming up to relieve the squadron already on the feature gave them a lift. Unfortunately, the tanks took a wrong turn which delayed the advance for some time. They then moved forward again, but after some discussion with the Seaforth's forward company commander, they decided to wait until first light before attacking their objective. It was hoped to get some support from the tanks as well as



from a forward observation officer in order to deal with the enemy posts, which had been engaging the Seaforth the previous evening. Accordingly the attack was made in the morning supported by artillery, medium machine guns and 4.2" mortars, but without tanks. There was no opposition, however, and the hill was taken without casualties. Later in the day, three German paratroops were captured who declared that the enemy had broken up into groups of two and three with instructions to make their way back as best they could to rejoin the main body of German troops on the ADERNO - BRONTE road. (ibid.)

240. During the day, the remainder of the Battalion followed along the TROINA - ADERNO road suffering several casualties from enemy shelling (670978) northwest of CARCACI. They joined the two companies on M. Seggio and their positions were consolidated by 1930 hours. (ibid.) Seaforth of C. remained in the area south of M. Seggio and Edmn R. on M. Revisotto and Hill 736 throughout the day. (W.Ds., Seaforth of C. and Edmn R., 6 Aug.)

#### ADERNO AND THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN

241. While 2 Cdn Inf Bde were securing the high ground between the Salso and the Simeto, the rest of the Division was preparing for the final "show", the attack on ADERNO in conjunction with 78 Div (para 224 above). On the afternoon of 5 Aug, General Simonds held a conference on the CENTURIPE hilltop. The view was magnificent and while he was pointing out the situation, the on-lookers could see the fighting in the valley below. All the Divisional Artillery was ordered to go forward during the night and early the following morning, 6 Aug, to deploy into "battle positions" in the relatively flat country west of ADERNO. These positions were very close to the front line and the artillery fully expected to come under enemy fire. They were ordered to dig gun pits, slit trenches, ammunition pits and command posts. Ammunition to the amount of 400 rounds per gun was to be dumped at the gun positions, and traces were made for a large scale barrage. (W.Ds., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, and 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Fd Regts., 5 and 6 Aug and Appx 5 of the H.Q. Diary, Operation Instruction dated 5 Aug.)

242. 3 Cdn Inf Bde, still in the REGALBUTO area, were ordered to take over the lead from 2 Cdn Inf Bde. R. 22e R. were to lead the Brigade, mounted in troop carrying vehicles. They were to follow the 2 Cdn Inf Bde route across the railway bridge north of REGALBUTO, down the Salso valley, across the Troina ford and on down the TROINA - ADERNO road to a debussing point (662978)



a short distance northwest of the village of CARGACI. From there they were to move forward on foot towards ADERNO and establish a bridgehead across the Sineto, east of the P.P.C.L.I. and Seaforth positions and north of the 78 Div bridgehead. They were to be followed by West N.S.R., also carried in T.C.Vs., and later by Carlt & York R. on foot. (W.Ds., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde and R. 22e R., 5 and 6 Aug; Hist Sec file Sicily/3 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D Account of Capt. R.D. Prince, I.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde.)

243. The "Vingt-Deux" reached their debussing point after a long and tiring move, at 0301 hrs, 6 Aug, and secured a bridgehead across the Sineto by 0700 hrs. They found all the enemy machine gun positions abandoned, and there was evidence of a fast evacuation. At about 0800 hrs, General Simonds arrived at 3 Cdn Inf Bde Headquarters and ordered R. 22e R. to push on to ADERNO immediately saying "that if they reached this town first it would be a feather in their cap and put them up on 78 Div who were also racing to capture the town" (Capt. Prince). Following receipt of these orders the Battalion sent out several patrols east to the outskirts of ADERNO, and north up the far bank of the Sineto (to 708985). At 1030 hours, however, the Corps Commander stepped in and said that 1 Cdn Inf Div was to stay out of the town of ADERNO and let 78 Div pass through. So, much to their disappointment, R. 22e R. were ordered to move back to the ground immediately east of the river (squares 7098 and 7198), while West N.S.R., who had arrived in the vicinity by this time, were ordered to pull up to the north of R. 22e R. -- squares 7099 and 7000 (Account of Capt Prince, op. cit.) Carlt & York R. came up during the afternoon to the high ground east of the Sineto and relieved Seaforth of C. who withdrew to positions on the east bank of the Troina. (W.Ds., Carlt & York R. and Seaforth of C., 6 Aug; W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 16 shows these positions on a 1:50,000 map.)

244. According to the R. 22e R. Diary one of their patrols, due to faulty wireless communications, failed to receive the order to withdraw, and penetrated into ADERNO which they discovered to be empty (W.D., R. 22e R., 6 Aug; but the 3 Cdn Inf Bde map op. cit. marks a point (729972) a few hundred yards west of ADERNO as the "furthest point reached by R. 22e R. patrol, 1030 hrs, 6 Aug"). 78 Div patrols also reached the town during the day, but it was not occupied by 78 Div until that night (W.D., H.Q., G.S., 78 Div, 6-7 Aug). As a result of this unexpected enemy withdrawal, the plans for the big artillery shoot were cancelled (W.D., H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Aug). The aerial bombardment of ADERNO on 6 Aug was also cut short (W.D., Main 30 Corps, August, Appx "D", Air Note, 6 Aug).(70)

(70) But according to the R.C.R. War Diary, 6 Aug, 78 Div bombarded the town that night before entering it.



245. Had the Germans stayed to fight, it had been intended to send 1 Cdn Inf Bde through 3 Cdn Inf Bde after the latter had secured their bridgehead across the Simeto. On the night 5/6 Aug, 48 Highrs had marched across country from their position near REGALBUTO to an assembly area a mile west of CARCACI, where R. 22e R. must have passed them during the night. Next day, the former Battalion crossed the Simeto and took up positions (square 7096) south of R. 22e R. That evening, 6 Aug, R.C.R. also moved into positions near CARCACI, while Hast & P.E.R. moved to an area a few miles further up the Salso near its junction with the Troina. Because of the enemy withdrawal, however, 1 Cdn Inf Bde did not proceed beyond these positions. (W.Ds., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, R.C.R., 48 Highrs and Hast & P.E.R., 5 and 6 Aug.)

246. Edmn R. and P.P.C.L.I. remained on M. Revisotto and M. Seggio respectively and sent out patrols to the north and northeast. The Edmontons reported making contact with American troops about two miles along the Troina road, while a P.P.C.L.I. patrol went as far forward as the high ground immediately south of BRONTE, a town eight miles north of ADERNO, without meeting any enemy. There was some mortaring of the forward Canadian positions by German multi-barrelled mortars during 7 Aug, but that evening a lance corporal in a P.P.C.L.I. observation post spotted the point from which this fire was coming. The information was promptly relayed to the Artillery, via Brigade Headquarters, and within half an hour the target was effectively engaged by field and medium regiments and ceased to give trouble. (W.Ds., Edmn R. and P.P.C.L.I., 7 Aug.)

247. 1 Cdn Inf Div had reached the end of their long advance through the interior of Sicily. On 6 Aug the Division passed into Army reserve (W.D., H.Q., G.S., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Aug), for with the capture of ADERNO the zone of 30 Corps, around the north side of Mount Etna, had narrowed to a one division front. 51 (H) Div was also withdrawn and concentrated on the coastal sector under command of 13 Corps where they took over from 5 Inf Div. 30 Corps Headquarters then took command of 50 & 51 Divs and became responsible for the entire Eighth Army front, while 13 Corps withdrew to prepare for the forthcoming invasion of the mainland of Sicily. 1 Cdn Inf Div came under command of 13 Corps for this operation. (15 Army Gp Account, op. cit.)

248. The fighting in Sicily was almost over, but difficult terrain and extensive enemy mining and demolitions deferred the complete occupation of the island another ten days. 78 Inf Div pressed on to the north after the retreating



enemy, but their route was a narrow one bounded on the right by the high trackless mountain side of the Etna massif and on the left by the Sineto River. As a result, the enemy was able to employ his delaying tactics to the best advantage. BRONTE was captured on 8 Aug and MALETTA, a few miles further north, on 12 Aug, after strong enemy resistance had been overcome. Meanwhile, 9 (U.S.) Inf Div, which had experienced very heavy opposition at TROINA, attacked and captured RANDAZZO on 13 Aug, aided by 78 Div attacking from the south. (ibid.)

249. Progress on the eastern coastal sector was slow owing to the narrow defile of the coastal strip, which the enemy had attempted to block by every conceivable type of obstacle. RIPOSTO, 16 miles north of CATANIA, was, however, captured by 11 Aug. According to the 15 Army Group Account "At this stage it became apparent that the enemy was withdrawing completely from the island and the coastal sector in the east in front of Eighth Army offered little opportunity for rapid pursuit due to the difficult roads and the extensive enemy demolitions." By 14 Aug, the enemy had broken contact entirely all along the front. By 15 Aug, 50 Div occupied TAORMINA, while 51 Div and 78 Div joined up north of Mount Etna. Meanwhile on the northern coast, 3 (U.S.) Inf Div had been advancing against considerable opposition. (ibid.)

250. Amphibious landings east of SANT'AGATA and at BROLO on the night 7/8 Aug and 10/11 Aug had, however, undermined the enemy positions. The advance continued against some enemy rear-guard opposition, but by 15 Aug this had virtually ceased. Elements of 3 (U.S.) Inf Div cutting overland from BARCELLONA reached the outskirts of MESSINA by the night of 16/17 Aug. Most of the enemy, however, had made good their escape as related in the following paragraph quoted from 15 Army Group Account:

After the fall of Cesaro and Adrano it was apparent that the enemy was evacuating his forces in stages to the mainland of Italy. In spite of all our efforts to block the passage of troops across the Messina Straits, the enemy was able to carry out an evacuation by infiltration -- individual small craft slipping across in darkness. The enemy had set up a fortress area on both sides of the narrows fairly bristling with anti-aircraft and coastal guns for the purpose of holding open his back door to the Italian mainland. Our naval and air forces operated in and over the Messina area attacking every means of transport used by the enemy



in negotiating the strait and daylight traffic was virtually stopped, but by night enemy troops continued to make their way across the narrows. They carried with them as much equipment as could be loaded into small boats and what could not be carried was destroyed.

On August 14th the Mediterranean Air Command was informed that indications were that the German evacuation had really started. Thereafter until the end of the campaign the air effort was concentrated on making this evacuation as costly to the enemy as possible. Untold numbers of the enemy were destroyed as they attempted passage across the Straits, but in spite of all our efforts, the distance across the straits was too short to permit of being completely denied the enemy and he did succeed in getting a large proportion of his force to Italy.

(ibid.)

251. During the night 16/17 Aug, the last of the enemy forces were evacuated by sea across the Straits of Messina and the next morning 3 (U.S.) Inf Div took possession of the town where they were shelled by enemy batteries on the Calabrian Peninsula opposite. At approximately the same time, elements of the 4th (British) Armoured Brigade, coming up from the south, also joined the Americans in MESSINA. This force had been landed from the sea during the night 15/16 Aug, but had been delayed by some opposition and by the usual demolitions. By the night of 17 Aug, all the enemy forces in Sicily were liquidated and the island was completely in Allied hands. (ibid.)

252. The following day a personal message from the "Army Commander" issued to the whole Eighth Army was read out to all the troops. It ran as follows:

1. The Campaign in SICILY is over. We landed in the island on 10 July. By 20 July, together with our American allies, we had driven the enemy into the north-east corner of the island.

On 30 July I told you we would now drive the Germans out of SICILY. And by 17 August the Germans had been driven out, and the Allied Armies, American and British, were in possession of the whole island.

2. In February last the Italian overseas empire had ceased to exist. Today,



17 August 1943, we have captured our first slice of the Italian home country.

In these tremendous events, you, the soldiers of the Eighth Army, have played a very notable part. By your splendid fighting qualities and devotion to duty you have helped to change the whole course of the war.

3. It is difficult to find words to tell you my true feelings. Since I assumed command of the Eighth Army in August 1942, exactly one year ago, you have given me your confidence, and you have never failed to respond to all calls I have made on you.

I thank you all, and I say to you:

WELL DONE. WELL DONE, INDEED. TOGETHER YOU AND I, WE WILL SEE THIS THING THROUGH TO THE END.

GOOD LUCK TO YOU ALL.

Sicily - 18 August 1943

B.L. Montgomery  
General  
Eighth Army

(W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Div, August, Appx 21.)

THE PAUSE WEST OF ADERNO AND THE MOVE TO  
MILITELLO - FRANCOFONTE - LENTINI

253. For a few days after their withdrawal into reserve, 1 Cdn Inf Div remained in the area west of ADERNO resting and cleaning up, preparatory to their move to join 13 Corps. Before leaving 30 Corps, the G.O.C. received the following letter of congratulation from General Sir Oliver Leese:

Main Headquarters,  
30th Corps, C.M.F.,  
6th August, 1943.

My Dear Guy:-

Now that you are shortly to leave 30 Corps I would like to write and congratulate you and the Division on your magnificent fighting since you landed in Sicily.

The landing operations went extremely smoothly and reflect the greatest credit on your planning and training before you sailed. The Division then marched many miles inland to the Ragusa area, fighting its way forward in great heat, to which your men were unaccustomed. This reflected particular credit on the infantry, who had only just finished a long sea voyage. You



then took up the forefront of the Corps battle from Vizzini. For three weeks, with the Malta Bde under your command, you have fought continuously against a stubborn German resistance, both by day and night.

Your battle training has stood up extraordinarily well to the high tests demanded in the constant advances and attacks, both by day and night. The gunners have supported their infantry closely and well and the Divisional concentrations have proved the adequacy of your training. The sappers have worked with great devotion to duty, to establish tactical routes and to maintain your supplies. Finally, you forced your way from Regalbuto to the River Salso and joined up under the most difficult physical conditions with the 78th Division in time for the attack tonight. I cannot thank and congratulate you enough on all these performances.

I would like to add one personal word of thanks to you for your unfailing help during these operations; and to congratulate you on the manner in which you handled your Division.

My whole Staff tell me how extraordinarily well their opposite numbers in your Division have done and how much they have enjoyed working with them. It has made the whole difference to us to have had this very close and helpful co-operation with you. We are all very sad that you are leaving the Corps.

We hope you will soon come back to us, and in the meantime we wish you a great success and the very best of luck in your next venture.

Yours ever,

(Sgd) Oliver Leese

Major-General G.G. Simonds, C.B.E.,  
Commander, 1st Canadian Division

General Simonds in turn addressed a circular letter to the Division in which he quoted the first three paragraphs of General Leese's letter. He also attached a copy of an interview which he gave to the C.B.C. about this time (see Appx "C"). He went on to say:

I am passing these to you instead of a Special Order of the Day at the present juncture for I think that the views which I have expressed in the interview are much the same as I would have said in an Order of the Day. I feel that copies of the interview might be more appreciated by the troops in



that they will know that these views have been publicly expressed and will be broadcast throughout Canada.

I feel very strongly that the successes which we have had have been the result mainly of the will of every individual to do his best, and I would like to thank you for your loyal support throughout the operation.

(Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/GOC.)

254. On 7 Aug, Maj.-Gen. Simonds visited Lt.-Gen. Dempsey, 13 Corps, under whose command the Canadian Division was to come. He then proceeded to reconnoitre the concentration area MILITELLO - SCORDIA - FRANCOFONTE - LENTINI to which the Division was to move. On 8 Aug, he held a conference with his formation commanders and the heads of services following which brigade and unit reconnaissance parties were sent to reconnoitre their allotted areas. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div and H.Qs., 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes, 7-12 Aug.)

255. The Division moved by motor transport to its new concentration area on 11, 12 and 13 Aug, following two routes. 2 Cdn Inf Bde set out in T.C.Vs. at 0715 hrs, 11 Aug, taking the western or "Red" route via AGIRA, RADDUSA, RAMACCA, PALAGONIA and MINEO to an area west of MILITELLO. It was a tiring journey of about 75 miles over indifferent roads, but they arrived without event early that afternoon. 1 Cdn Inf Bde followed by the same route on 12 Aug and took up positions immediately to the east of MILITELLO. 3 Cdn Inf Bde and Main Divisional Headquarters moved by the eastern or "White" route via REGALBUTO, CATENANUOVA, SFERRO and SCORDIA and took up positions around FRANCOFONTE on 11 Aug. Artillery and "Admin" units followed by both routes on 12 and 13 Aug. (ibid.; Movement Table and Trace appended to W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde.) An air raid on the new Divisional Headquarters area the night of their arrival reminded the staff that they were still close to the theatre of operations. There was no mention of damage or casualties. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 11 Aug.)

256. Meanwhile, 12 Cdn Tks reverted to the command of their parent formation, 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde, which they joined in the vicinity of SCORDIA on 11 Aug. Before they left the ADERNO area, General Simonds paid them a special visit, and congratulated them on their part in the campaign under his command. On 11 Aug the whole of 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde in turn came under



command of 1 Cdn Inf Div. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Cdn Tn, and H.Q., 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde, 9-12 Aug.)

257. The troops quickly settled down in the new area. There were many olive and orange grove in the vicinity, but most units complained of a lack of shade and of the scourge of flies. However, for the most part, they were situated on high ground, above the malarial area, from which they could see the Mediterranean far off to the east. The prevailing wind also helped at times to alleviate the intense heat of the sun. (Brigade and Battalion War Diaries.)

258. There was plenty of fruit to be had--figs, grapes, lemons and oranges, but some of the latter were still green. Dry rations had now replaced compo packs, and these were further augmented by local fruits and vegetables. Local wine (vino) was also obtainable, but its purchase was forbidden except by Messes. (ibid.)

259. The three main objects pursued in the ensuing few weeks were:

- (a) rest and recreation;
- (b) resumption of normal training and discipline;
- (c) planning for the next operation.

260. Following the gruelling conditions of the campaign an effort was made to obtain the maximum comfort that the situation would allow. Recreation largely took the form of organized sports and a divisional sports committee was set up under the presidency of Brigadier Vokes. Unit sports days were held and many inter-unit softball games arranged. Towards the end of the month 1, 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes and 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde all held brigade sports meets. Time did not allow, however, the holding of a divisional sports meet as was planned. There were also organized swimming parades in the Mediterranean which were highly popular. Other entertainment was limited, for all towns were out of bounds, -- not that Sicilian towns had much to offer. (But various units had the tiresome job of patrolling some of these towns.) Moving pictures and ENSA entertainments were conspicuous by their absence, but a small Italian circus which was travelling in the vicinity was greatly enjoyed by those troops who saw it. Visits were also paid to two American Air Force stations at SCORDIA and PALAGONIA which proved both interesting and instructive. 2 Cdn Inf Bde War Diary of 17 Aug noted these visits as follows:



This evening the first of the 'sight-seers', 15 men from each unit went to visit 79 Fighter Gp. The Americans proved most hospitable, and besides letting the men climb all over the Planes, they put on some stunt flying, as well as later on a film show for the men. The visits are to continue until such time as the Fighter Gp could no longer handle them due to operational work.

Before they had left the vicinity many of the troops had visited the stations and seen the movies. Social contact was also established between various Officers Messes and Nursing Sisters of 5 Cdn Gen Hosp in SIRACUSA. But perhaps the outstanding event in the social line was the visit of Seaforth of C. to CATANIA on 25 Aug, where they joined the 2nd, 5th and 6th Battalions of their allied Regiment in an historic Regimental reunion. The massed pipes and drums of the four battalions played, and the salute was taken by the commanding officers of the Seaforth Highlanders' battalions and of the Seaforth of Canada.

261. The arrival of a limited shipment of N.A.A.F.I. stores including soap and a very small issue of liquor was appreciated as far as it went. No doubt still greater importance was attached to the first mail since they left England. During this period most units were also visited by Canadian war reporters seeking stories for their papers back in Canada. Summing up, it may be concluded that the rest and relaxation and the general opportunity to clean up must at first have been a welcome change from the exertions and hardships of the recent operations; but it appears that before they left this rest area the troops were becoming "browned off" by its monotony and were looking forward to the next campaign. (*ibid.*)

262. It must have seemed strange to the troops after their first taste of actual fighting to have to go back to training similar to that which they had carried out for years in England. Various courses were organized -- a Company Commanders Course, a Junior Leaders Course, a Tactics Course for unit and sub-unit commanders, and special courses in administration, weapon training for instructors, intelligence, field engineering, signals and hygiene. Stress was, of course, laid on the lessons learned in the recent operations, and reports were required on various minor tactical operations for the purpose of circulation and study. Many officers of the Division also attended lectures on Air Operational Control at one of the nearby American Air Force stations. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, August, Appendices 9 and 13; W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Appen-



dices 18, 19, 20 and 21.) Because of the midday heat, training hours were restricted from 0800 to 1000 hrs and from 1600 to 2000 hrs. (W.D. & H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Aug.)

263. Discipline in matters of dress, saluting and the like, which naturally tends to become of secondary importance during battle, was tightened up (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 13, Letter from Brigadier Vokes). According to the R.C.R. War Diary, "There is a very noticeable return of the 'spit and polish' atmosphere since arriving at this area". Equipment was checked and insofar as possible an effort was made to bring all weapons and motor transport up to establishment. Instructions were also issued to weed out any personnel found "wanting". (W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 12, Brigade Commanders' Conference Notes.) The Part I Orders which all units and formations now found time to publish were full of rules and regulations arising from the new circumstances under which the Division was operating. These covered such subjects as currency, price control, prevention of malaria and venereal diseases, water supply, dress, civil relations, mail and telegraph facilities and many other matters. The first Honours and Awards lists were also published, while on the other hand, the first Court Martials were held since arriving on the island. Sundays which during "Ops" had been as any other day, were once more marked by Church Parades and by special Thanksgiving Services. (Unit and Formation Diaries.)

264. The planning of Operation "DAYTOWN" which kept all the headquarters staffs occupied during this period will be dealt with in a subsequent report on the Invasion of Italy.

265. General Simonds was kept busy during these few weeks. On 11 Aug, he visited 5 (Drit) Inf Div and 5 Cdn Gen Hosp, and on 12 Aug, 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde. Then in the following six days he inspected the three infantry brigades of 1 Cdn Inf Div, the Divisional Artillery and other Divisional troops. His Headquarters were visited in turn by the Corps Commander, General Dempsey, on 13 Jul, and by the Army Commander, General Montgomery, on 17 Jul. Three days later, General Montgomery returned to pay a formal visit to the whole Division and to the Army Tank Brigade. As on a previous occasion (see Report 127), the troops were drawn up in seven different areas to meet him, and as before, he visited each group in turn, speak-



king to them in his usual informal manner. (W.D., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Aug, and Appx 14 and 15.) The following account is probably typical of all these visits:

At approx 1430 hrs Gen Montgomery arrived accompanied by Major General Simonds and Brig Vokes. General Montgomery immediately drove to the centre of the square, and called everybody around his car. As soon as we were all settled and as comfortable as possible and smoking, he said that having us around his car did him more good and us more good than being on a formal parade. In a few brief words he covered the Sicilian campaign, and then with regard to the Canadian share and conduct in it he reminisced as to what our fathers would have said - those that lost their lives in the last war - and then he came to what he himself had to say to us, the descendants of the Canadians of the last war. He said, "You did magnificently, magnificently - my friends all know that when I say a thing I mean that thing - so, when I say you did magnificently I mean magnificently". He paid the Canadians further compliments among which was his statement, "I now consider you one of my veteran Divisions". When General Montgomery had finished the Bde Comd called for three cheers, and the Bde then reformed its ranks.

(W.D., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Aug 43.)

266. On 21 Aug, another distinguished visitor arrived at 1 Cdn Inf Div Headquarters in the person of Lieut-General A.G.L. McNaughton, G.O.C.-in-C., First Canadian Army. General McNaughton had been in Malta some weeks previously but he had been back to the United Kingdom in the interim since General Montgomery would permit no visitors in Sicily until operations had ceased. General McNaughton's visit was a short one, but on 22 Aug he visited units of the Division and spoke briefly to the troops, telling them how proud Canada was of their achievements. The following day, accompanied by General Simonds and Brigadier Walford, he attended the opening of 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde sports and then made a tour of the axis of advance of 1 Cdn Inf Div, starting from ISPICA. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 21-23 Aug and other Diaries.)



267. Note should also be made of various changes in command that took place during this period. In 1 Cdn Inf Bde, Lt.-Col. D.C. Spry, who was flown out from England, took over command of R.C.R., and A/Lt.-Col. T.M. Powers reverted to the rank of Major and resumed his former position as second in command of the Battalion. In 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Major C.B. Ware who was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel, replaced Lt.-Col. Lindsay as Commanding Officer of P.P.C.L.I. In 3 Cdn Inf Bde, Lt.-Col. J.E.C. Pangman, a brother of the Brigade Major, replaced Lt.-Col. F.D. Tweedie as Officer Commanding Carlt and York R. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div, 13 Aug, R.C.R. 12-13 Aug, P.P.C.L.I., 9-10 Aug and Carlt & York R., 13 Aug.)

#### CONCLUSION

268. Less than two months after its initial landing in Sicily, 1 Cdn Inf Div left the island behind it, and the vivid drama of the short summer campaign became only a memory as the longer and grimmer struggle on the Italian mainland developed. In many ways the Sicilian campaign was an ideal one from the Canadian point of view. In the assault on 10 Jul they participated in the greatest combined operation up to that time, but the price of landing was very low. The subsequent campaign was not a "walk over", but the Division was introduced to active warfare in gradual stages. In the first three days, they faced an enemy who had no heart for fighting, so that the initial stage was almost a bloodless success. Nevertheless it gave the troops experience in facing a real enemy for the first time. When they went ashore on that historic night of 9/10 Jul they fully expected to fight for a beachhead. There was, as it turned out, just enough opposition to ensure that the assault troops kept continually on the alert; then there was a definite "mopping up" job to do and plenty of prisoners to be taken care of. As they advanced inland, they had to be ready to meet opposition at any moment. It came when they made their first contact with the Germans at GRAMMICHELE. Although only a small rearguard action, it lacked the comic opera touch that marked most of the earlier clashes with the Italians. The action south of PIAZZA ARMERINA was much the same, and between them they helped to pave the way to stiffer fighting ahead.

269. It is interesting to note that the original Eighth Army plan was to strike on the right and hold on the left, while, as we have seen it was the reverse that happened. In any



campaign plans must be altered as the tactical situation changes, and General Montgomery rightly saw that to continue the frontal attack on the Catania Plain was not worth the high price it would involve. As a result, the Canadians on the left flank of the Eighth Army were pushed hard from 16 Jul to the time they went into reserve on 6 Aug.

270. The GROTTACALDA - VALGUARNERA battle was on a larger scale than the previous rear guard actions, with six infantry battalions and the Divisional Artillery involved. Doubtless many lessons were learned in this action, but despite considerable superiority in numbers, most of the Canadian battalions "bogged down", chiefly, it seemed, due to lack of control. Considerable casualties were inflicted on the Germans, however, and once again the latter withdrew. At LEONFORTE and ASSORO, holding excellent natural positions, the enemy made a longer stand. Again two brigades were involved and the fighting was stiff. Both halves of the dual battle were definite Canadian victories. Once more considerable superiority in numbers must be admitted, but the Germans had a very great advantage in position. As already indicated, the capture of ASSORO was one of the most dramatic incidents of the Canadian operations in Sicily. NISSORIA, on the other hand, was certainly the unluckiest. Here three battalions attacked and were thrown back successively before a breakthrough was eventually achieved by 2 Cdn Inf Bde which proceeded to capture AGIRA itself by dint of heavy fighting. By the end of the battle for AGIRA, which was probably the Division's biggest action in Sicily, the German units which had been opposing the Canadian advance had been virtually wiped out.

271. The 3 Cdn Inf Bde operations in the Dittaino Valley were secondary to the main Divisional drive on the northern axis but were an essential part of 78 Div's drive toward ADERNO, and R. 22e R. and West N.S.R. had some stiff fighting in this sector. After AGIRA came REGALBUTO, but it could scarcely be called a Canadian victory, for the 231st Infantry Brigade had done most of the fighting there and in the end the Germans had withdrawn from the town before the final attack, planned by 1 Cdn Inf Bde was put in. The operation north of the Salso was, however, carried out very effectively. It was perhaps the most spectacular and successful Canadian enterprise on the island. It combined mountain fighting in roadless country, the use of pack mules, clever improvisations in the river crossings and roadbuilding by the Engineers, and a model infantry-cum-tank action in the open country at the base of the mountains.



272. Canadian casualties in Sicily amounted to 173 officers and 2261 other ranks, making a total of 2434 all ranks. This figure was about one-fifth the total Eighth Army casualties (which amounted to 12,843 all ranks) and was not excessive considering the amount of fighting and the lack of battle experience of the troops (71). 38 Canadian officers and 447 other ranks were killed or fatally wounded, 125 officers and 1671 other ranks wounded and 10 officers and 143 other ranks were reported missing. (C.M.H.Q. file, 22/Casualties/1/2, A.G. (Stats), Canadian casualties, Sicily - Start of Ops to 2 Sep 43, corrected to 24 Feb 45; Eighth Army figures supplied by A.G. (Stats), War Office, 24 Sep 43.) (See Appendix "D".) A separate report will deal briefly with several matters, especially the "A & Q" story, which it has not been possible to treat in the present report.

273. In summing up, it may be said that in the four weeks since they had landed, the 1st Canadian Infantry Division had marched about 120 miles through mountainous and difficult country, in continuous and extreme heat, and in contact for most of the way with a stubborn foe. They had marched further than any of the British Divisions and, during their last two weeks in the line, they would seem to have borne the brunt of the fighting on the Eighth Army front, so that their relief on 6 Aug was well earned. To a campaign involving two Allied Armies, Canada had contributed only an infantry division and a tank brigade. Nevertheless, this Division had performed an important role on the left flank of the Eighth Army and it seems clear that no other Division in the Allied force made a larger contribution to the victory. That the Canadians had done well was the more creditable in that they were fighting their first campaign. In the next operation they could be no longer called "untried troops".

274. This Report was prepared by Capt. J.B. Conacher, R.C. Sigs.

*J.B. Conacher, Capt*

(C.P. Stacey) Colonel,  
Historical Officer,  
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS.

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(71) Seventh (U.S.) Army casualties were 7,560 all ranks (according to information supplied by M.O.I Records at the War Office).



APPENDIX "A"

CANADIAN HONOURS AND AWARDS FOR THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN

(Based on Official Citations in possession of M.S.(2),  
C.M.H.Q. and Overseas R.O. 3866, 28 Sep 43; 4008, 10  
Nov 43; 1129, 25 Dec 43; 4453, 6 Apr 44 and 4541, 29 Apr 44.)

COMMANDERS OF THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT  
ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Brig. M.H.S. Penhale  
Comd 3 Cdn Inf Bde  
Brig. R.A. Wyman, D.S.O., E.D.  
Comd 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER

|   |                    |           |
|---|--------------------|-----------|
| Maj.-Gen. G.G. Simonds, C.B.E.<br>G.O.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div | Sicilian campaign  |           |
| Brig. H.D. Graham, E.D.<br>Comd 1 Cdn Inf Bde           | Valguarnera        | 18 Jul    |
| Brig. A.D. Matthews<br>C.R.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div            | Agira              | 28 Jul    |
| Brig. C. Vokes<br>Comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde                    | Leonforte          | 21/22 Jul |
| Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth<br>O.C. 12 Cdn Tks                  | West of Aderno     | 5 Aug     |
| Lt.-Col. W.P. Gilbride<br>A.A. & O.M.G., 1 Cdn Inf Div  | Piazza Armerina    | 16-17 Jul |
| Lt.-Col. H.M. Hague<br>O.C. 2 Cdn Fd Regt               | Nissoria           | 24 Jul    |
| Lt.-Col. B.M. Hoffmeister<br>O.C. Seaforth of C.        | Agira              | 28 Jul    |
| Lt.-Col. J.C. Jefferson<br>O.C. Edmn R.                 | Leonforte          | 21/22 Jul |
| Lt.-Col. G. Kitching<br>G.S.O. 1, 1 Cdn Inf Div         | West of Aderno     | 5 Aug     |
| Lt.-Col. B.A. Sutcliffe<br>O.C. Hast & P.E.R.           | Valguarnera        | 17 Jul    |
| Lt.-Col. G. Walsh<br>C.R.E., 1 Cdn Inf Div              | Leonforte          | 21/22 Jul |
| Major H.P. Bell-Irving<br>Seaforth of C.                | Agira              | 28 Jul    |
| Major W.G. Bury<br>Edmn R.                              | Northwest of Agira | 26 Jul    |
| Major A.S. Donald<br>Edmn R.                            | Hill 736           | 3-5 Aug * |
| Major K.J. Southern<br>O.C. 3 Cdn Fd Coy                | Leonforte          | 21/22 Jul |
| Major G.A. Welsh<br>O.C. 90 Cdn A. Tk Bty               | Leonforte          | 21/22 Jul |

OFFICERS OF THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT  
ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Lt.-Col. F.B. Bowman  
O.C. 1 Cdn Fd Amb  
Lt.-Col. J.K. Bradford  
A.D.O.S., 1 Cdn Inf Div  
Lt.-Col. D.G.J. Farquharson  
C.R.E.M.E., 1 Cdn Inf Div



OFFICERS OF THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT  
ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE (Cont'd)

Lt.-Col. V.S.C. McClenaghan, M.C., E.D.,  
OIC Cdn Sec, G.H.Q., 2 Ech, (North Africa)  
Lt.-Col. H.L. Pease  
C.R.A.S.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div  
Lt.-Col. D.K. Tow  
Senior Officer, Cdn Sec, G.H.Q., 1 Ech, Att H.Q., 15 Army Gp  
Major N.L. Elvin  
5 Cdn Gen Hosp  
Major H.A. Millen  
2IC 1 Cdn Inf Div Sigs  
Major R.H. Noble  
R.C.O.C., 1 Cdn Inf Div  
Major J.M. Robinson  
H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div (C. Int C.)  
Major F.E.D. Wallace  
D.A.A.G., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div

MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT  
ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Capt. L.E. Sarantos, R.C.A.S.C.  
Capt. J.A.G. de S. Lewis, G.L.  
Lt. W.V. Cann, R.C.O.C.  
Lt. J.I. Nicol, C.A.C.  
M.20638, C.S.M. H.W. Jeynes, R.C.A.S.C.

THE MILITARY CROSS

|   |                            |           |
|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| Capt. (A/Maj) D.W. McLean, Staff Captain<br>H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde | Leonforte                  | 21 Jul    |
| Capt. R.C. Coleman<br>P.P.C.L.I.                                | Leonforte                  | 21/22 Jul |
| Capt. R.M. Dillon<br>R.C.R.                                     | Assoro                     | 23 Jul    |
| Capt. W.K. MacDonald<br>R.C.A.M.C. (Att Seaforth of C.)         | North of<br>*Valguarnera * | 19 Jul    |
| Capt. G.L.F. McNeil<br>West N.S.R.                              | Catenanuova                | 30 Jul    |
| Capt. H.D.P. Tighe<br>Edmn R.                                   | Leonforte                  | 21/22 Jul |
| Capt. D.J. Watson<br>3 Cdn Fd Regt                              | Hill 736                   | 4/5 Aug   |
| Capt. N.R. Waugh<br>Hast & P.E.R.                               | Valguarnera                | 18 Jul    |
| H/Capt. J.L. Wilhelm<br>C.C.S. (Attached to 12 Cdn Tks)         | Agira                      | 29 Jul    |
| H/Capt. R.O. Wilkes<br>C.C.S. (Attached to R.C.R.)              | Nissoria                   | 24 Jul    |
| Lt. (A/Capt) L. Bouchard<br>R. 22e R.                           | Grottacalda                | 18/19 Jul |
| Lt. (A/Capt) G.M.C. Sprung<br>H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div (C. Int C.)   | Grottacalda                | 18 Jul    |
| Lt. (A/Capt) M.J.A. Trudeau<br>R. 22e R.                        | Grottacalda                | 18/19 Jul |
| Lt. G.E. Atkinson<br>4 Cdn Fd Coy                               | Catenanuova                | 30 Jul    |



THE MILITARY CROSS (Cont'd)

|   |                         |           |
|---|-------------------------|-----------|
| Lt. M.C.D. Bowman<br>R.C.R.                 | Nissoria                | 25 Jul    |
| Lt. R. Carey<br>P.P.C.L.I.                  | Leonforte               | 22 Jul    |
| Lt. H.T. Carson<br>4 Cdn Recce Regt         | Leonforte               | 21/22 Jul |
| Lt. N.W. Dickson<br>3 Cdn Fd Coy            | Leonforte               | 21/22 Jul |
| Lt. J.A. Dougan<br>Edmn R.                  | Hill 736                | 5 Aug     |
| Lt. G.C. Evans<br>90 Cdn A. Tk Bty          | Leonforte               | 22 Jul    |
| Lt. G.R. Guy<br>West N.S.R.                 | Catenanuova             | 30 Jul    |
| Lt. W.K. Heron<br>1 Cdn Fd Coy              | North of<br>Valguarnera | 20 Jul    |
| Lt. E. St. J.C. Murdoch<br>90 Cdn A. Tk Bty | Leonforte               | 22 Jul    |
| Lt. E.W.S. O'Toole<br>4 Cdn Recce Regt      | Agira                   | 28 Jul    |
| Lt. P.F. Potvin<br>R. 22e R.                | Grottacalda             | 18/19 Jul |
| Lt. O.L. Roberts<br>12 Cdn Tks              | Nissoria                | 24 Jul    |
| Lt. G. Robitaille<br>R. 22e R.              | M. Santa Maria          | 28 Jul    |
| Lt. R.W. Ryckman<br>12 Cdn Tks              | Grammichele             | 15 Jul    |

Overseas R.O. 4319, 1 Mar 44, lists Capt. G.D. Mitchell, R.C.A., as receiving the Military Cross for "gallant and distinguished services in the field." According to Maj. S.H.S. Hughes, one time Historical Officer with 1 Cdn Inf Div in Italy, this award was for services as a Naval F.O.O. at Modica, 11 Jul 43, and was based on a recommendation made by the Royal Navy.

ASSOCIATE OF THE ROYAL RED CROSS, SECOND CLASS

Lt. (Dietitian) K.I. McDole  
5 Cdn Gen Hosp

THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL

|   |                         |        |
|---|-------------------------|--------|
| D.51078, Sgt. (A/CQMS) Drapeau, R.<br>R. 22e R. | Catenanuova             | 30 Jul |
| C.6078, Sgt. McKnight, W.J.R.<br>Hast & P.E.R.  | Valguarnera             | 17 Jul |
| M.17017, Cpl. Cheshire, A.G.<br>Edmn R.         | Agira                   | 29 Jul |
| M.37034, Cpl. Hadden, D.<br>Seaforth of C.      | West of Aderno          | 6 Aug  |
| U.1834, Cpl. Kay, W.F.<br>48 Highrs             | South of<br>Valguarnera | 18 Jul |
| G.21012, Pte. Brisson, M.<br>Carlt & York R.    | Grottacalda             | 18 Jul |
| D.105811, Pte. Grigas, J.<br>R.C.R.             | Pachino Airfield        | 10 Jul |
| M.57061, Pte. Low, J.<br>Edmn R.                | Hill 736                | 2 Aug  |
| F.40151, Pte. Martell, T.K.<br>West N.S.R.      | La Rosamarina           | 2 Aug  |



THE MILITARY MEDAL

|  |                             |              |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|
| D.71213, Sgt. Allen, J.A.<br>12 Cdn Tks                    | Nissoria                    | 24 Jul       |
| F.91715, Sgt. Brooks, W.J.<br>3 Cdn Fd Coy                 | North of                    | 20 Jul       |
| D.16059, Sgt. Chartres, H.P.<br>4 Cdn Fd Coy               | North of Piazza             | 14-21<br>Jul |
| L.10187, Sgt. Evoy, E.M.<br>2 Cdn L.A.A. Regt              | Grottacalda                 | 18 Jul       |
| D.73210, Sgt. Fraser, C.D.<br>48 Highrs                    | Leonforte-Agira             | 23 Jul       |
| D.16076, Sgt. McPhee, R.R.<br>3 Cdn Fd Coy                 | Leonforte                   | 21/22 Jul    |
| G.4030, Sgt. Towe, J.<br>90 Cdn A. Tk Bty                  | Leonforte                   | 23 Jul       |
| D.106004, L/Sgt Beauregard, R.<br>R. 22e R.                | Grottacalda                 | 18/19<br>Jul |
| A.3780, Cpl. (L/Sgt) Hawke, F.R.<br>R.C.R.                 | Nissoria                    | 24 Jul       |
| M.15655, Cpl. Ellenwood, R.W.<br>Edmn R.                   | Leonforte                   | 21 Jul       |
| K.53836, Cpl. Meade, D.<br>Seaforth of C.                  | Agira                       | 28 Jul       |
| H.16422, Cpl. Middleton, R.C.<br>P.P.C.L.I.                | Leonforte                   | 22 Jul       |
| G.19036, Cpl. Pelletier, T.J.<br>Carl't & York R.          | Southwest of<br>Valguarnera | 18 Jul       |
| L.2197, Cpl. Taje, M.J.<br>Sask L.I. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Sp Gp) | Hill 736                    | 4 Aug        |
| K.52631, Cpl. Terry, F.W.<br>Seaforth of C.                | Agira                       | 27 Jul       |
| K.62299, A/Cpl. Butterich, S.C.<br>P.P.C.L.I.              | Agira                       | 28 Jul       |
| K.98595, A/Cpl. McParlon, G.L.<br>Seaforth of C.           | West of Aderno              | 5 Aug        |
| E.5575, A/Cpl. Montminy, J.B.<br>R. 22e R.                 | M. Santa Maria              | 27 Jul       |
| A.3994, A/Cpl. Mowers, F.C.<br>R.C.R.                      | Nissoria                    | 25 Jul       |
| G.4164, L/Bdr Bennett, R.A.<br>90 Cdn A. Tk Bty            | Leonforte                   | 23 Jul       |
| A.4049, L/Cpl. (A/Cpl.) Meister, L.F.<br>R.C.R.            | Nissoria                    | 24 Jul       |
| G.7280, L/Bdr. Mitton, A.A.<br>3 Cdn Fd Regt               | Nissoria                    | 25 Jul       |
| E.4828, L/Cpl. Patenaude, G.E.<br>R. 22e R.                | Grottacalda                 | 18/19<br>Jul |
| K.52299, L/Cpl. Story, R.R.<br>Seaforth of C.              | North of<br>Valguarnera     | 19 Jul       |
| A.3112, Pte Bancroft, J.A.<br>R.C.R.                       | Regalbuto                   | 1/2 Aug      |
| A.3286, Pte. Blackman, D.H.<br>R.C.R.                      |                             |              |
| C.5569, Pte Brant, H.E.<br>Hast & P.E.R.                   | Grammichele                 | 15 Jul *     |
| M.16567, Pte Davies, W.<br>Edmn R.                         | Hill 736                    | 3/4 Aug      |
| C.3010, Sgmn Dehler, J.H.M.<br>1 Cdn Div Sigs              | Libertinia                  | 22 Jul       |



THE MILITARY MEDAL (Cont'd)

|  |                              |              |
|--|------------------------------|--------------|
| K.53254, Pte (A/Cpl) Donohue, R.J.P.<br>Seaforth of C.           | West of Aderno               | 5 Aug        |
| D.69794, Pte. Fortman, F.J.T.<br>Sask L.I. (2 Cdn Inf Bde Sp Gp) | Nissoria                     | 26 Jul       |
| K.65324, Pte. Gallagher, G.R.<br>4 Cdn Fd Amb                    | Nissoria                     | 24/25<br>Jul |
| A.4502, Pte. Gardner, J.W.<br>R.C.R.                             | North of Pachino<br>Airfield | 10 Jul       |
| C.4992, Pte. Gunter, I.J.<br>Hast & P.E.R.                       | Grammichele                  | 15 Jul *     |
| G.19397, Pte. Hathaway, E.W.<br>Carl't & York R.                 | North of<br>Catenanuova      | 30 Jul       |
| C.2027, Spr. Johnston, L.A.<br>3 Cdn Fd Coy                      | Leonforte                    | 22 Jul       |
| F.39750, Pte. King, J.W.<br>West N.S.R.                          | Libertina                    | 22 Jul       |
| A.3396, Pte. Kowalchuk, N.<br>R.C.R.                             | Nissoria                     | 25 Jul       |
| G.17056, Pte. Leblanc, L.<br>Carl't & York R.                    | Catenanuova                  | 2 Aug        |
| K.52518, Pte. McBride, J.G.<br>Seaforth of C.                    | North of<br>Valguarnera *    | 19 Jul       |
| M.15538, Pte. Melton, S.L.<br>Edmn R.                            | M. Revisotto                 | 5 Aug        |
| D.16185, Spr. (L/Cpl) O'Reilly, B.<br>4 Cdn Fd Coy               | Catenanuova                  | 29/30<br>Jul |
| K.53544, Pte. Rae, M.<br>Seaforth of C.                          | Agira                        | 28 Jul       |
| H.17188, Pte. Reilly, W.<br>F.P.C.L.I.                           | Leonforte                    | 22 Jul       |
| F.40727, Pte. Spinney, G.F.<br>West N.S.R.                       | M. Crisina                   | 2 Aug        |
| M.16620, Pte. Tuppen, L.J.<br>Edmn R.                            | Leonforte                    | 21 Jul       |
| K.76078, Pte. Webster, F.<br>Seaforth of C.                      | Agira                        | 28 Jul       |

THE BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL (MILITARY DIVISION)

A.9947 Sgt. S.C. Wright, R.C.A.S.C.  
P.3518, Sgt. H.L. Hatch, C. Pro C.

The following were "Mentioned in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in Sicily" (Overseas R.O. 4453):

CANADIAN ARMoured CORPS

Capt. D.M. Irwin  
D.36001, SSM N. Christofferson  
C.70727, SQMS R. W. Forster  
D.4563, QMS L.H. Toder  
E.61097, Sgt. G.L. Bastien  
C.58282, Cpl. E. Noonan  
B.61184, Tpr. A.E. Street



ROYAL CANADIAN ARTILLERY

Capt. G.E. Baxter  
Capt. B.H.M. Tedman  
H.5139, Ddr. W.J. Pinniger

THE CORPS OF ROYAL CANADIAN ENGINEERS

Capt. J. Winn

THE ROYAL CANADIAN CORPS OF SIGNALS

Capt. V.E. Aksim  
C.3067, Sgt. M.L. Weber  
P.40256, Sgt. W.E. Wheeler

CANADIAN INFANTRY CORPS

Lt.-Col. R.M. Crowe (since killed in action)  
Lt.-Col. E.J.S. Dudley  
Major (A/Lt.-Col.) R.S. Malone  
Major (A/Lt.-Col.) G.F.C. Pangman  
Major J.H.W.T. Pope  
Capt (A/Major) P.R. Bingham  
Capt M.H.D. Cockin  
Capt F.K. Reesor  
M.15585, RQMS C.A. MacDonald

ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Capt H.C.P. Green, M.D.E.  
Capt R.E. Maze  
P.27946, CSM (A/RSM) C.C.D. Cheshire  
D.91551, S/Sgt. J. High  
M.63240, Sgt. R.F. Torpy  
B.88095, Pte. A.W. Brunger  
M.28191, Pte. E. McKay

ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

Colonel C.H. Playfair, O.D.E.  
Major W.A. Oille  
Capt W.H. Clare  
Capt (QM) R.D. Schoales  
H.2975, Sgt. J.A. Bartlett  
B.92647, Pte. G.R. Blackadder  
H.35767, Pte. J.N. Lenton  
M.42127, Pte. W. Prime  
F.21310, Pte. F.E. Quigley

ROYAL CANADIAN ORDNANCE CORPS

Major S.J. Deery  
Capt (A/Major) T.J. Green  
Capt J.C. Martin  
Lt. E.F. Merkel  
P.35129, Condr D.M. Dorward  
P.35201, Armt SM E.W. Cole  
D.94412, CSM E. Henson  
C.15570, Sub-Condr J.T. Tighe  
D.94347, Cpl. H.J. Welsh



CANADIAN ARMY DENTAL CORPS

Lt.-Col. G.L. Frawley

CORPS OF MILITARY STAFF CLERKS

Capt (A/Major) V.W. Mills  
H.16371, QMS M. Thomson  
M.16547, CSM H.H. Ragan

CANADIAN PROVOST CORPS

Major N. Cooper  
C.42044, Cpl. M.R. Stewart

NOTE 1 There are several mistakes in date and place in the official citations which have been corrected in the above list. These have been marked with an asterisk.

NOTE 2 It is interesting to note that 13 of the 47 M.Ms. were for actions involving aid to the wounded under fire.



APPENDIX "B"

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. As already indicated, the sources for this narrative are uneven. The two main groups are unit and formation war diaries on the one hand, and the personal accounts of various officers interviewed by the Divisional Historical Officer on the other. Intelligence summaries and intelligence (Ops) logs, written operation orders and instructions and other miscellaneous documents gathered by the Divisional Historical Officer were also available.
2. The War Diaries vary greatly in value. Most of the battalion diaries are good and tell the day-to-day story of the unit in reasonable detail. In the account of any particular action in which the whole unit is engaged, they are often likely to become uneven, depending upon how much of the action the writer saw and how much he was able to find out afterwards. Several of the better diaries, e.g. those of R.C.R. and P.P.C.L.I., have company accounts to supplement the regimental one and since these are generally written by the company commanders, added together they are bound to contain most of the essential facts, not to mention many unessential ones.
3. The formation diaries are much poorer. The War Diary of G.S., H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div has very little information regarding the operational story or the G.O.C's. intentions. It is, rather, a chatty account of what went on at headquarters and little more. The August volume, however, contains very complete appendices including most of the orders and instructions, etc., issued by the Division during that month. July, on the other hand, is blank, for the original diary was lost in transit and there are no appendices available. Fortunately, the Historical Officer had sent back copies of various orders and instructions that would normally have been appended to the diary. These are now in the files of Hist Sec, C.M.H.Q.
4. The Diaries of H.Qs., 1 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes are not much better, but that of H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde has a fair narrative and numerous appendices. W.D., H.Q., 3 Cdn Inf Bde has some useful appendices and a good set of marked maps, showing brigade positions for the whole campaign. The artillery diaries are fair but often inconclusive. In several cases, the diary of H.Q., R.C.A., 1 Cdn Inf Div, was found to be the best source of information regarding the divisional plan. This diary is sound in the matter of detailing plans and intentions, but pays less attention to what actually happened. W.D., H.Q., R.C.E., 1 Cdn Inf Div, is very poor and even with the help of the field company diaries, which are somewhat better, it is often difficult to find out what the Engineers were actually doing on certain occasions. Their work was always good, but they seemed inclined to hide their light under a bushel. The Signals Diary is adequate, but being of a more technical nature it is not so necessary to the operational story. W.D., 12 Cdn Tks, is most detailed



in describing the various actions but the account is often poorly tied together.

5. The Diary of A.A. & Q.M.G., Rear Headquarters, 1 Cdn Inf Div, is a much better one than the G.S. Diary, while that of the Commander, R.C.A.S.C. is one of the best in the division.

6. The accounts collected by the Historical Officer form a very useful supplement to diaries. In many places their story is the same but one will add certain details not found in the other. Moreover where an account is by a battalion commander it is likely to be a good deal broader in scope than the story in the diary. Indeed the diaries are remarkably narrow in their outlook, e.g. in the case of infantry battalions rarely mentioning the work of tanks supporting an action, or what might be taking place on the battalion's flanks.

7. There are "accounts" from all battalions except Carlt & York R., but none at all from the Artillery, nor are there any adequate accounts from "G" Branch, Divisional Headquarters. Naturally, what one Historical Officer could do was limited.

8. As may be seen from the references, the intelligence summaries of various formations have been most useful in describing the enemy's position. The divisional intelligence log is a very bulky volume containing many hundreds of messages, most of which simply confirm what is told in the various diaries and often provide map references. Other miscellaneous documents collected by the Divisional Historical Officer are also contained in the Historical Section's files. Casualty figures were supplied by A.G. (Stats), and citations for honours and awards by M.S.(2), C.M.H.Q. The latter are in some details of place and date inaccurate.

9. Finally, reference should be made to British Army sources. A short account prepared at H.Q., Allied Armies in Italy by Lt.-Col. R. Kittoe of the British Historical Section and entitled "The Conquest of Sicily: Account of Operations - 15th Army Group" proved most useful for filling in much of the background of the general operations.

10. British Army War Diaries were also consulted. The Canadian War Diaries Section is in possession of photostatic copies of W.Ds., G.S., Main H.Q., 30 Corps, July 1943; H.Q., 231 Inf Bde and the battalions of this Brigade, July 1943; 142 Fd Regt (S.P.) and 70 Med Regt, R.A., July 1943. Other British Diaries were seen at the Public Records Office and at the office of Historical Section, War Cabinet. Major F. Jones, who is engaged in writing the British narrative of the Sicilian Campaign, has been most helpful in supplying information concerning the general story, and indeed the Historical Section, War Cabinet Secretariat, has been most generous at every point.

11. Other sources of information are as indicated in the references. On the whole it may be said that there has been abundant information available to tell a fairly comprehensive story. It will be noted that references have been gathered together at the end of each paragraph.



APPENDIX "C"

C.B.C. INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL SIMONDS

STURSBURG

This is Peter Stursberg reporting from the Sicilian front. The Canadian Commander - General Simonds - has kindly agreed to the first radio interview since the campaign began. We have set up our portable equipment at his headquarters and the General and I are sitting under some olive trees. From where we are - I can see the dark mass of Mount Etna which is smoking now as I can see a little wisp like a white cloud clinging to its peak. It was the Canadian push through the virtually roadless country just in front of us which cracked the German defences before the volcano and forced the enemy to withdraw from his so-called bridgehead line. That is **true** - is it not - General Simonds?

SIMONDS

No, it is a great exaggeration to say that. The victory in front of Etna was an Eighth Army victory. The First Canadian Division contributed to it in that it effectively carried out its allotted task. Our role was probably more spectacular than that of some of the other Divisions, and I believe that our drive into the hills brought us to the enemy position from a direction that he did not expect - but all this would have been ineffective except as part of a concerted effort by a number of divisions - and to exaggerate our share is to detract from the efforts of other formations, some of which had heavier fighting than we have had.

STURSBURG

But you would call it the greatest achievement of the Canadians in the campaign so far - wouldn't you, sir?

SIMONDS

In its results, yes, though fighting was not as heavy as it has been in some of our previous engagements. It is a good example of facing up to the difficulties of the country and so striking at the enemy where he is weak. The enemy cannot be strong everywhere and he naturally puts his greatest strength to cover the best approaches to his position. Our success in this case was due more to overcoming the difficulties of movement across rugged country than to heavy fighting.

STURSBURG

General Simonds - I understand that the western battalions in the First Division played a great part in the manoeuvre outflanking ADRANO?

SIMONDS

That is true - though it is difficult to fairly apportion praise to individual units. The Edmontons and the Sea-forths do deserve special mention for the fighting in the hill tops. It was a real junior leaders battle with grim fighting between company and company and platoon and platoon. The Royal Vingt Deuxieme Regiment also deserves special mention for it was their active patrolling and initiative that gained us the first crossing of the



SIMONDS  
(Cont'd)

Simeto River and they were our first battalion to establish a bridgehead on the east bank. It is very hard to single out individual units when all have played their part. For instance - the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment was outstanding at Valguarnera and Assoro and the Hampshires and Devons, of a British brigade, fought most gallantly and effectively at Regalbuto. Though from a general description of the country - it may appear mountainous, you can see for yourself - from here - that the ground between the Troina and the Simeto Rivers forms an undulating plain rising towards the peaks of Mount Revisotto and Mount Segio to the north.

This plain afforded the first bit of ground on which it was possible to employ tanks with maximum effect - and it was due very largely to the operations of the Twelfth Canadian Tank Regiment that we were able - so quickly - to gain the west bank of the Simeto after crossing the Troina. In turn - it was the fine work of the sappers in building the crossings and tracks from the Salso to the Troina that enabled the tanks to get forward - and these crossings were constructed in spite of the fact that at times the men were under heavy artillery fire. Again - the sappers could not have started the crossings until the infantry, supported by guns, had gained a bridgehead and the operation as a whole could not have been undertaken unless the services of supply from behind had provided the means. What I want to emphasize is that all these operations have been successful because each arm and service has gone full out to do its share - and though the spectacular actions sometimes fall to individual units, and the infantry bear the brunt of the fighting, the ultimate success has resulted because of the contributions made by all.

STURSBURG

It is true that accurate and concentrated artillery fire has had a devastating effect on the enemy?

SIMONDS

Yes. The gunners have worked almost unceasingly and I would be unfair if I did not mention the work of the staffs at division and the other formation headquarters. Instructions have been conveyed by personal contact between commanders by the use of Liaison Officers and coded wireless messages. The uninitiated may think that the lack of written orders means that the staffs are having a holiday. The exact contrary is the case and it requires a far higher standard of alertness to ensure that there are no slips when situations are changing so quickly that there is no time to record orders and instructions on paper. Throughout this period - there has been no serious slip - and it is greatly to the credit of the staffs at this and other formation headquarters. Like the administrative services - theirs is not spectacular work, but it is vital work and failure can ruin the most carefully planned operation.

STURSBURG

What do you consider the other important engagements which the Canadians have fought in Sicily, sir?



SIMONDS

Aside from the outflanking of Adrano;

Valguarnera

Leonforte and Assoro which was really one battle

Agira

Cantannuova (sic)

and Regalbuto - which was captured by a British Brigade temporarily under my command. The heaviest fighting was between Valguarnera and Regalbuto. Every unit in the division has distinguished itself in one or other of these engagements - and I hope that in the future we shall see these names among our battle honors.

STURSBURG

How have the Canadians compared with the Veteran troops in the Eighth Army, General Simonds?

SIMONDS

I cannot be the judge of that. The Corps Commander under whom we have served - and General Montgomery - have been most complimentary of our efforts - and I believe them to be sincere.

STURSBURG

From what I have heard - the boys are mighty proud to be part of the Eighth Army, sir?

SIMONDS

Yes. The Eighth Army has a great fighting reputation. The First Canadian Division joined it as new boys beside seasoned formations that had fought with it since El Alamein. As a result of our efforts we have been accepted both by its commander and by the formations in it as fully fledged members, and I can say - without fear of contradiction - that every officer and soldier in the First Canadian Division is very proud of that fact. General Montgomery has generously given credit to the Division in his communiques and the troops are grateful that their efforts, as Canadians, have been given recognition. The fact that we take a pride in belonging to the Eighth Army in no way detracts from our pride in being Canadian soldiers of the Canadian Army.

STURSBURG

Thank you, sir. You have just heard an interview with the Canadian Commander - General Simonds - at his headquarters in the foothills of Mount Etna. This is Peter Stursberg reporting from the Sicilian front.



APPENDIX "D"

CASUALTY FIGURES

Casualty figures vary somewhat according to the manner in which they are prepared. Those given in the text are the most up-to-date and seem to be the most official. Figures are also available prepared by C.M.H.Q. Records. These provide the basis of the figures available from A.G. (Stats), C.M.H.Q. but they are not kept up-to-date in the same way. Figures supplied by A.F.H.Q. on 10 Sep for release to the public totalled 176 officers and 2117 other ranks, while figures produced in Ottawa were 171 officers and 2216 other ranks. There was considerable correspondence between N.D.H.Q., C.M.H.Q., the War Office and A.F.H.Q. concerning the release of these figures, and, when that was decided upon, in determining which set of figures should be released. (First Canadian Army file P.A. 1-14-1, Cables dated 23 Jul, 17 Aug, 10, 12, 13 Sep, etc.) Attached in this appendix is the A.G.(Stats) Casualty table for Sicily, prepared by arms and by totals. It is dated 11 Apr 44 and as a result the totals are slightly different from those quoted in the text and also noted on the following page. The latter included corrections made after that date. A table by Units is also included, based on the Records return of 30 August 1943. A.G. (Stats) do not supply these figures by units.



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APPENDIX "D"

CUMULATIVE CASUALTIES FOR CANADIAN FORCE IN SICILY JULY-AUGUST 1943  
(Taken from A.G. (Stats) file 22/Casualties/1, 11 Apr 44)

| PART I<br>BY ARMS | F A T A L  |     | W O U N D E D |      | MISSING AND P.O.W. |     | TOTAL      |      | PART II<br>BY TOTALS  |                        |
|-------------------|------------|-----|---------------|------|--------------------|-----|------------|------|---|------------------------|
|                   | Offrs O.R. |     | Offrs O.R.    |      | Offrs O.R.         |     | Offrs O.R. |      | Offrs O.R.  |                        |
| C.A.C.            | 1          | 27  | 10            | 93   | -                  | 3   | 11         | 123  | KILLED  | 26 317                 |
| R.C.A.            | 3          | 28  | 10            | 165  | 1                  | 16  | 14         | 209  | DIED OF WOUNDS  | 9 96                   |
| R.C.E.            | 2          | 12  | 4             | 63   | -                  | 8   | 6          | 83   | DIED WHILE POW  | - -                    |
| R.C.SIGS          | -          | 10  | 1             | 18   | -                  | 12  | 1          | 40   | PRESUMED KILLED   | - -                    |
| R.C.A.S.C.        | -          | 1   | -             | 21   | 1                  | -   | 1          | 22   | ORDINARY DEATHS   | - 20                   |
| R.C.A.M.C.        | 1          | 7   | 1             | 38   | -                  | 5   | 2          | 50   | TOTAL FATAL CASUALTIES  | 35 433                 |
| R.C.O.C.          | -          | 5   | 1             | 21   | -                  | 1   | 1          | 27   | WOUNDED   | 114 1631               |
| R.C.A.P.C.        | -          | -   | 1             | -    | -                  | -   | 1          | -    | MISSING   | 10 153                 |
| C.PRO C.          | -          | -   | -             | 10   | -                  | -   | -          | 10   | P.O.W.  | - -                    |
| C.D.C.            | -          | -   | -             | 1    | -                  | -   | -          | 1    | TOTAL NON FATAL CASUALTIES  | 124 1784               |
| C.I.C.            | 28         | 341 | 85            | 1196 | 8                  | 96  | 121        | 1633 | TOTAL ALL CASUALTIES  | 159 2217               |
| FMN HQs &<br>MISC | -          | 2   | 1             | 5    | -                  | 12  | 1          | 19   | NOTE: Canadian Casualties in Sicily 10 Jul -<br>2 Sep 43, as adjusted by A.G.(Stats) 24 Feb 45,<br>were as follows: |                        |
|                   |            |     |               |      |                    |     |            |      | TOTAL   | KILLED <sup>☆</sup>    |
|                   |            |     |               |      |                    |     |            |      | Offrs ORs   | Offrs ORs              |
|                   |            |     |               |      |                    |     |            |      | WOUNDED   | MISSING <sup>☆☆</sup>  |
|                   |            |     |               |      |                    |     |            |      | Offrs ORs   | Offrs ORs              |
| TOTAL             | 35         | 433 | 114           | 1631 | 10                 | 153 | 159        | 2217 | 173 2261  | 38 447 125 1671 10 143 |

☆ Including natural deaths and died of wounds  
☆☆ Including P.O.W.



APPENDIX "D" (Cont'd)

CASUALTIES BY UNITS

(Based on figures supplied by C.M.H.Q. Records, Appendix to "A" List Nos. 321, 322, 323 and 324, dated 0600 hrs, 30 Aug.)

| UNIT                    | GRAND TOTAL |      | FATAL CASUALTIES |      |
|-------------------------|-------------|------|------------------|------|
|                         | Offrs       | O.R. | Offrs            | O.R. |
| H.Q., FIRST CDN ARMY    |             | 1    |                  |      |
| H.Q., 1st CDN INF DIV   |             | 19   |                  | 1    |
| 10 CDN TK REGT          |             | 1    |                  |      |
| 11 CDN TK REGT          |             | 12   |                  | 1    |
| 12 CDN TK REGT          | 7           | 78   | 1                | 20   |
| 14 CDN TK REGT          | 2           | 5    |                  |      |
| 1 CDN TK DEL SQN        |             | 2    |                  |      |
| 4 CDN RECCE REGT        | 3           | 18   |                  | 2    |
| 1 C.B.R.D. (C.A.C.)     |             | 2    |                  |      |
| H.Q., R.C.A., 1 CDN DIV | 1           | 6    |                  |      |
| 1 CDN A. TK REGT        | 3           | 60   | 1                | 6    |
| 1 CDN FD REGT           | 1           | 16   |                  | 3    |
| 2 CDN FD REGT           | 4           | 44   | 2                | 10   |
| 3 CDN FD REGT           | 3           | 31   |                  | 5    |
| 2 CDN L.A.A. REGT       | 1           | 47   |                  | 1    |
| 4 C.B.R.D. (R.C.A.)     | 1           | 3    |                  |      |
| H.Q., R.C.E., 1 CDN DIV |             | 1    |                  |      |
| 1 CDN FD COY            | 1           | 21   | 1                | 5    |
| 2 CDN FD COY            |             | 16   |                  | 2    |
| 4 CDN FD COY            | 5           | 32   | 1                | 3    |
| 2 CDN FD PK COY         |             | 5    |                  |      |
| 4 C.B.R.D. (R.C.E.)     |             | 1    |                  | 1    |
| SIGS 1 CDN DIV          | 1           | 46   |                  | 9    |
| H.Q., 2 CDN INF BDE     | 2           | 2    |                  |      |
| H.Q., 3 CDN INF BDE     |             | 6    |                  |      |



| <u>UNIT</u>                  | <u>GRAND TOTAL</u> |             | <u>FATAL CASUALTIES</u> |             |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
|                              | <u>Offrs</u>       | <u>O.R.</u> | <u>Offrs</u>            | <u>O.R.</u> |
| R.C.R.                       | 12                 | 139         | 2                       | 29          |
| 48 HIGHRS                    | 13                 | 163         | 5                       | 34          |
| HAST & P.E.R.                | 12                 | 236         | 2                       | 35          |
| P.P.C.L.I.                   | 8                  | 131         | 2                       | 27          |
| SEAFORTH OF C.               | 25                 | 247         | 6                       | 55          |
| EDMN R.                      | 18                 | 216         | 4                       | 47          |
| R. 22e R.                    | 10                 | 164         | 2                       | 34          |
| CARLT & YORK R.              | 9                  | 138         | 3                       | 31          |
| WEST N.S.R.                  | 6                  | 128         | 1                       | 31          |
| 1 CDN DIV SP BN (S.L.I.)     | 3                  | 28          | 1                       | 3           |
| 1 CDN INF BDE SP GP (S.L.I.) |                    | 7           |                         | 2           |
| 2 CDN INF BDE SP GP (S.L.I.) | 3                  | 9           |                         | 2           |
| 3 CDN INF BDE SP GP (S.L.I.) |                    | 3           |                         | 1           |
| 1 CDN INF BDE DEF & EMP PL   |                    | 4           |                         | 2           |
| H.Q., R.C.A.S.C., 1 CDN DIV  |                    | 2           |                         |             |
| 1 CDN INF BDE COY            | 1                  | 5           |                         | 1           |
| 2 CDN INF BDE COY            |                    | 7           |                         |             |
| 3 CDN INF BDE COY            |                    | 2           |                         |             |
| 1 CDN ARMY TK BDE COY        |                    | 3           |                         |             |
| 1 CDN INF DIV TPS COY        |                    | 2           |                         |             |
| 4 C.B.R.D. (R.C.A.S.C.)      |                    | 1           |                         |             |
| 5 CDN GEN HOSP               | 1                  | 1           |                         |             |
| 2 CDN LT FD AMB              |                    | 1           |                         |             |
| 4 CDN FD AMB                 |                    | 6           |                         |             |
| 5 CDN FD AMB                 |                    | 15          |                         | 4           |
| 9 CDN FD AMB                 | 1                  | 23          | 1                       | 2           |
| 1 CDN F.D.S.                 |                    | 1           |                         | 1           |



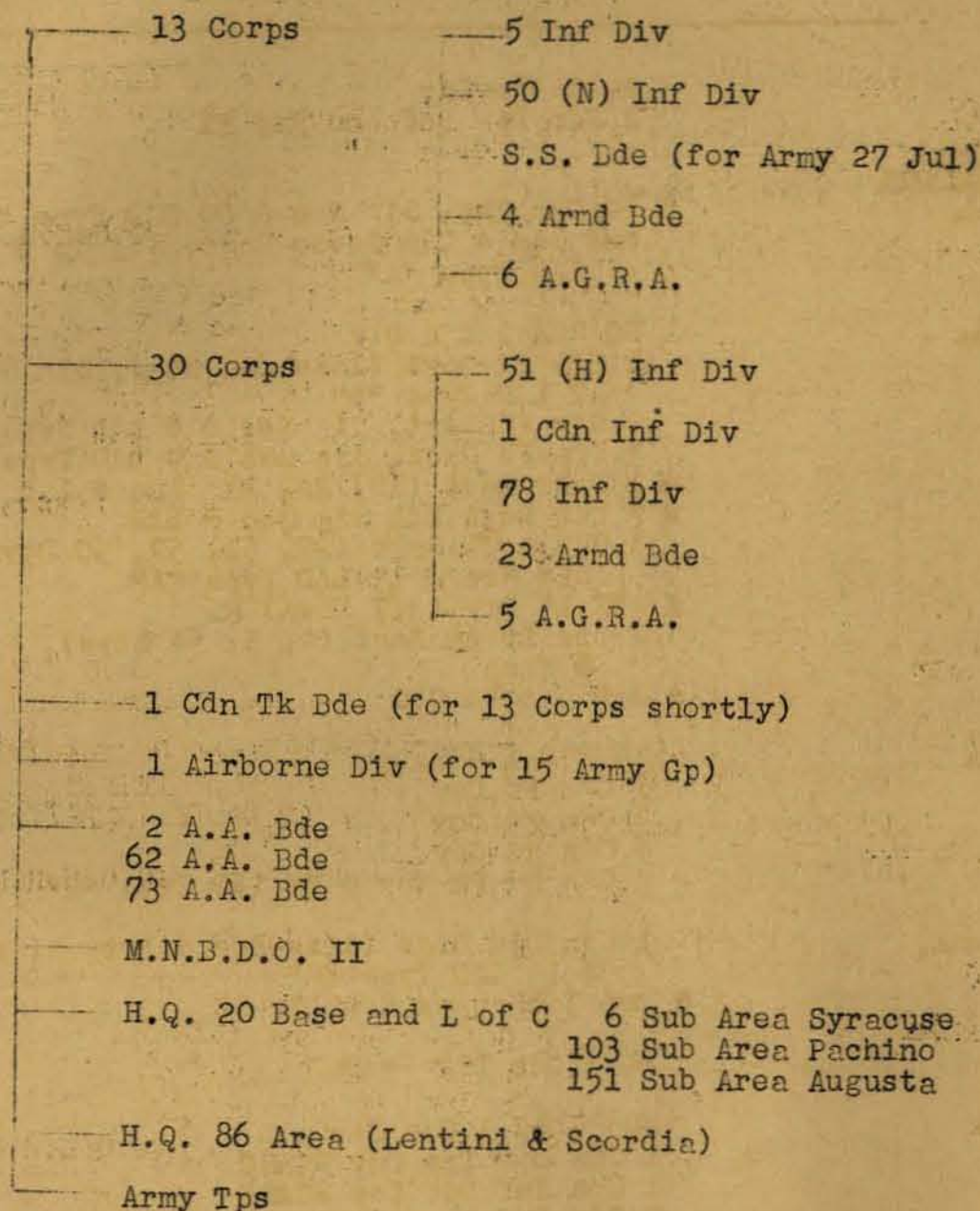
| <u>UNIT</u>               | <u>GRAND TOTAL</u>       | <u>FATAL CASUALTIES</u>  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                           | <u>Offrs</u> <u>O.R.</u> | <u>Offrs</u> <u>O.R.</u> |
| 2 CDN F.D.S.              | 1                        |                          |
| 1 CDN CONV DEP            | 1                        |                          |
| 1 CDN DENTAL COY          | 1                        |                          |
| H.Q., R.E.M.E., 1 CDN DIV | 1                        |                          |
| 1 HY REC SEC, R.C.O.C.    | 2                        |                          |
| 1 CDN ARMY TK BDE SUB PK  | 1                        |                          |
| 1 CDN DIV SUB PK          | 4                        |                          |
| 13 CDN L.A.D.             | 1                        |                          |
| 14 CDN L.A.D.             | 1                        |                          |
| 61 CDN L.A.D.             | 1 1                      |                          |
| 1 CDN INF BDE WKSP        | 3                        |                          |
| 2 CDN INF BDE WKSP        | 2                        |                          |
| 1 CDN INF TPS WKSP        | 1                        |                          |
| 2 L.A.A. REGT WKSP        | 2                        | 2                        |
| 1 CDN ARMY TK TPS WKSP    | 6                        | 1                        |
| 1 CDN PRO COY             | 10                       |                          |
| 1 CDN FD CASH OFFICE      | 1                        |                          |
| AUX SERVICE (CDN LEGION)  | 1                        |                          |



APPENDIX " E "

EIGHTH ARMY ORDER OF BATTLE - 26 JUL 43  
(W.D., Main H.Q., Eighth Army, Jul 43, Appx "L")

EIGHTH ARMY



NOTE 1. 231 Inf Bde is omitted from this outline order of battle, perhaps because at this time it was under command of 1 Cdn Inf Div.

NOTE 2. M.N.B.D.O.: Mobile Naval Base Defense Organization.



APPENDIX "F"

1 CDN DIV ORDER OF BATTLE NO. 1

25 Jul 43

(Copy on Hist Sec file Sicily/1 Cdn Inf Div/C/N)

HQ 1 Cdn Div  
1 Cdn Div Def and Emp Pl

Div Troops  
C.A.C.

- ★ 12 Cdn Tks, Sig Sec & 60 LAD Type "C"
- One Sqn 4 Cdn Recce Regt, Sig Tp & Det 68 LAD Type "A"

R.C.A.

- HQ RCA 1 Cdn Div
- 1 Cdn Fd Regt (less one Bty), Sig Sec & 7 LAD Type "B"
- 2 Cdn Fd Regt, Sig Sec & 8 LAD Type "B"
- 3 Cdn Fd Regt, Sig Sec & 9 LAD Type "B"
- ★ 142 Fd Regt (SP) RA, Sig Sec & LAD
- ★ 7 Med Regt RA, Sig Sec & LAD
- 1 Cdn A Tk Regt (27, 51, 57, 90 Btys). Sig Sec & 13 LAD Type "A"
- ★ 457 Lt Bty (3.7 Hows) RA
- 2 Cdn Lt AA Regt (2, 5, 54 Btys), Sig Sec & Wksp
- ★ Det 5 AGRA CBO

R.C.E.

- HQ RCE 1 Cdn Div
- 1 Cdn Fd Coy
- 3 Cdn Fd Coy
- 4 Cdn Fd Coy
- 2 Cdn Fd Pk Coy & 15 LAD Type "B"

R.C.C.S.

- 1 Cdn Div Sigs (less Bde & Arty Sigs Secs) & 14 LAD Type "B"
- ★ Two Tentacles 2 A Air SC

Inf

HQ 1 Cdn Div Sp Bn

S. & T.

- HQ RCASC 1 Cdn Div
- 1 Cdn Div Tps Coy RCASC
- 1 Cdn Inf Bde Coy RCASC
- 2 Cdn Inf Bde Coy RCASC
- 3 Cdn Inf Bde Coy RCASC
- ★ One Pl 83 Cdn Army Tk Bde Coy RCASC

Medical

- 4 Cdn Fd Amb
- 5 Cdn Fd Amb
- 9 Cdn Fd Amb
- 1 Cdn F.D.S.
- 2 Cdn Fd Hyg Sec
- ★ 1 Cdn Fd Surgical Unit
- ★ 2 Cdn Fd Surgical Unit
- ★ 1 Cdn Fd Transfusion Unit

Int

1 Cdn Fd Security Sec

Ord

- ★ Det Sec 1 Cdn Tk Bde Sub Pk
- Div Sec 1 Cdn Div Sub Pk



REME

HQ REME 1 Cdn Div  
★ Det 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde Wksp  
1 Cdn Inf Bde Wksp  
2 Cdn Inf Bde Wksp

Provost

1 Cdn Div Pro Coy

Postal

★ 1 Cdn Div Postal Unit

Misc

★ 1 Cdn Fd Cash Office  
★ Det Cdn Graves Registration Unit  
★ Det Civil Affairs  
★ Det Cdn Public Relations  
★ 4 Bn Cdn Special Base Depot

1 Cdn Inf Bde

HQ 1 Cdn Inf Bde, Sig Sec & 1 LAD Type "A"  
1 Cdn Inf Bde Sp Gp (less 20 mm AA Coy)  
R.C.R.  
Hast & P.E.R.  
48 Highrs

2 Cdn Inf Bde

HQ 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Sig Sec & 2 LAD Type "A"  
2 Cdn Inf Bde Sp Gp (less 20mm AA Coy)  
P.P.C.L.I.  
Seaforth of C.  
Edmn R.

3 Cdn Inf Bde

HQ 3 Cdn Inf Bde, Sig Sec & 3 LAD Type "A"  
3 Cdn Inf Bde Sp Gp (less 20mm AA Coy)  
R. 22e R.  
Carlt & York R.  
West N.S.R.

★ Attached troops under command; no distinction is made on the original document.



APPENDIX "G"

SENIOR COMMANDERS AND STAFF OFFICERS  
1 CDN INF DIV - SICILY  
JULY - AUGUST 1943

H.Q., 1 Cdn Inf Div

G.O.C.  
G.S.O.I  
C.R.E.  
O.C. Div Sigs  
O.C. Div Sp Bn (Sask L.I.)  
A.A. & Q.M.G.  
C.R.A.S.C.  
A.D.M.S.  
A.D.O.S.  
C.R.E.M.E.

Maj.-Gen. G.G. Simonds  
Lt.-Col. G. Kitching  
Lt.-Col. G. Walsh  
Lt.-Col. J. H. Eanan  
Lt.-Col. E.J.S. Dudley  
Lt.-Col. W.P. Gilbride  
Lt.-Col. H.L. Pease  
A/Col. C.H. Playfair  
Lt.-Col. D.G.J. Farquharson  
Lt.-Col. J.K. Bradford

Artillery, 1 Cdn Inf Div

C.R.A.  
1 Cdn Fd Regt  
2 Cdn Fd Regt  
3 Cdn Fd Regt  
1 Cdn A.Tk Regt  
2 Cdn Lt A.A. Regt

Brig. A.D. Matthews  
Lt.-Col. J.N. Lane  
Lt.-Col. H.M. Hague  
A/Lt.-Col. J.S. Ross  
Lt.-Col. G.O. Hutchison  
Lt.-Col. K.B. Lockett

1 Cdn Inf Bde

Commander  
Brigade Major

R.C.R.

Hast & P.E.R.

48 Highrs

Brig. H.D. Graham  
Major R.G. Kingstone until 30 Jul  
Major G.E.D. Renison from 30 Jul  
Lt.-Col. R.M. Crowe until 24 Jul  
A/Lt.-Col. T.M. Powers until 13 Aug  
A/Lt.-Col. D.C. Spry from 13 Aug  
Lt.-Col. B.A. Sutcliffe until 20 Jul  
A/Lt.-Col. Lord Tweedsmuir until 25 Jul  
A/Lt.-Col. A.A. Kennedy from 25 Jul  
A/Lt.-Col. I.S. Johnston

2 Cdn Inf Bde

Commander  
Brigade Major

P.P.C.L.I.

Seaforth of C.  
Edmn R.

Brig. C. Vokes  
Maj. R.S. Malone until 18 Jul  
Maj. P.R. Bingham from 18 Jul  
Lt.-Col. R.A. Lindsay until 9 Aug  
A/Lt.-Col. C.B. Ware from 10 Aug  
Lt.-Col. D.M. Hoffmeister  
Lt.-Col. J.C. Jefferson

3 Cdn Inf Bde

Commander  
Brigade Major  
R. 22e R.  
Carlt & York R.

West N.S.R.

Brig. M.H.S. Penhale  
Maj. G.F.C. Pangman  
Lt.-Col. J.P.E. Bernatchez  
Lt.-Col. F.D. Tweedie until 13 Aug  
A/Lt.-Col. J.E.C. Pangman from 13 Aug  
Lt.-Col. M.P. Dogert



Units under Command 1 Cdn Inf Div

12 Cdn Tks  
142 Fd Regt (S.P.) R.A.  
7 Med Regt, R.A.

Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth  
Lt.-Col. P. Crosthwaite  
Lt.-Col. E.H. Stanfield



# ROUTE OF 1 CDN INF DIV - SICILY

## 10 JUL - 6 AUG 1943





(8)

# NISSORIA TO ADERNO 26 JUL — 7 AUG

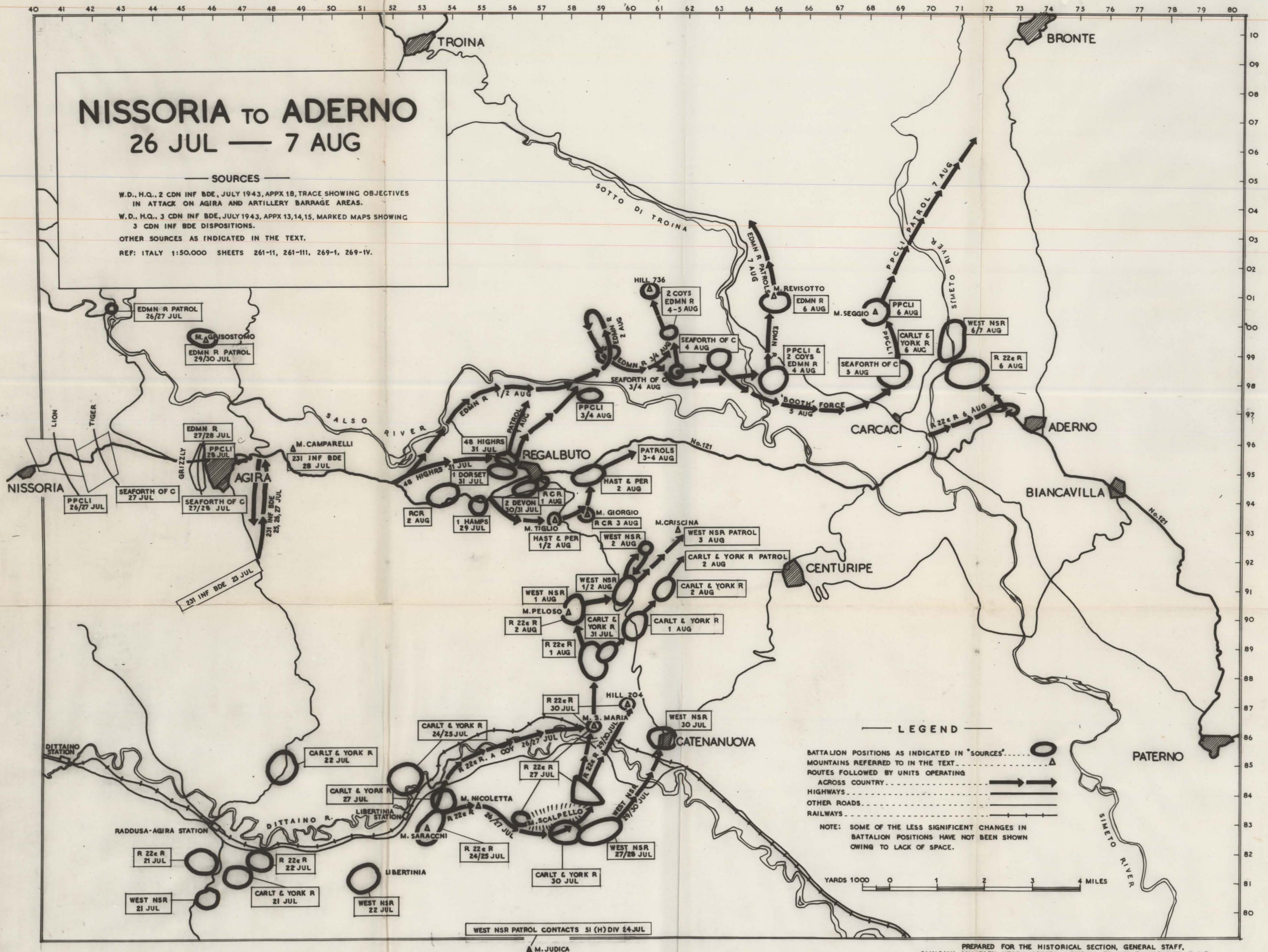
## SOURCES

W.D., H.Q., 2 CDN INF BDE, JULY 1943, APPX 18, TRACE SHOWING OBJECTIVES IN ATTACK ON AGIRA AND ARTILLERY BARRAGE AREAS.

W.D., H.Q., 3 CDN INF BDE, JULY 1943, APPX 13, 14, 15, MARKED MAPS SHOWING 3 CDN INF BDE DISPOSITIONS.

OTHER SOURCES AS INDICATED IN THE TEXT.

REF: ITALY 1:50,000 SHEETS 261-11, 261-111, 269-1, 269-IV.







# THE CONQUEST OF SICILY — JULY-AUGUST 1943

