

/LCM

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L

H.Q.S. 7375-6 (Trg 1)

OTTAWA, 23 May 45

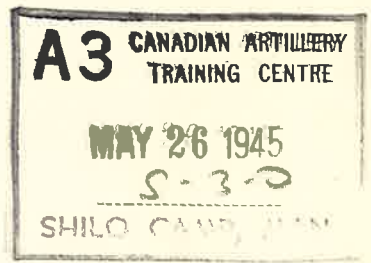
GOC-in-C Pacific Command,
Vancouver, B.C.

District Officers Commanding,
All Military Districts.

Comd,
Camp Border,
Camp Borden, Ont.,

Comd,
Petawawa Military Camp,
Petawawa, Ont.,

Comd,
Royal Military College,
Kingston, Ont.,



Cdn Ops - North-West Europe (Series No 21)

1. Fwd herewith a copy of the m/n, for your infm and retention.

2. These extracts are fwd for gen infm only and opinions stated are not to be considered as necessarily expressions of official doctrine.

3. No increase in circulation can be made. Should insufficient copies be allotted to allow for complete distribution as you desire, it is suggested that a copy should be circulated by you.

Edmund Cole
Lieutenant-General,
Chief of the General Staff.

Copies To:

- Comd, Trg Bde Gp
- Transit Camps
- OTC
- Corps TCs
- Basic TCs
- Central Schools
- Conditioning Centres.

REF.	Action	Inf	INITIAL	DATE
C.O.			<i>[Signature]</i>	26 May 45
2 Vc				
Adj.				
C.I.	✓		<i>[Signature]</i>	12 Jun 45
C.O.T/W		✓	<i>[Signature]</i>	
OC S of I		✓	<i>[Signature]</i>	

A-Ed.
B-AB.
C-L
D-...
E-...
F-...
G-RIP.

C.O.T/W.

Please make available to all Blys.

C.I. A3.

11 Jun 45 Done. [Signature]

[Signature]
LT. COL. R.C.A.
CHIEF INSTRUCTOR
A 3. CANADIAN ARTILLERY TRAINING CENTRE

CONFIDENTIAL

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE (CANADA), and is issued for the information of officers and responsible officials.

The officer or official in possession will be responsible for its safe custody and that its contents are not disclosed to any unauthorized person.

The documents will be kept under lock and key when not in actual use.

Officers commanding units and establishments, etc., are responsible that appropriate circulation is given to this document.

CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN NORTH-WEST EUROPEEXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARIES AND MEMORANDA

(SERIES 21)

.....

1. OPERATION "BLOCKBUSTER" - THE ROLE OF 6 CDN INF BDE, 26 FEB 45:
(ACCOUNT BY BRIGADIER R.H. KEEFLER, C.B.E., D.S.O., E.D.,
GIVEN TO HIST OFFR 2 CDN INF DIV, 15 MAR 45).

1. On 18 Feb 45, 6 Cdn Inf Bde was warned that it would be required to seize the high ground some 4,000 yards due east of our FDLs. This high ground was the ~~X~~ key feature dominating the whole Corps front and the approaches to the HOCHWALD.

2. A plan was made to carry out this operation with a tentative D-day of 21 Feb. On 20 Feb the objective of the Bde attack was modified slightly, in view of much increased enemy resistance, and it was decided to consider the domination of CALCAR, rather than the approach to the HOCHWALD, as the goal. D-day was to be notified later.

3. By 21 Feb a decision had been taken to extend the scope of the operation to make it a Corps battle and, in effect, the task of 6 Cdn Inf Bde reverted to the original objective. D-day was set tentatively for the night 25/26 Feb and the operation was to be known as "BLOCKBUSTER".

4. While there were a number of changes in the planning, as far as 6 Cdn Inf Bde was concerned, the changes were only modifications of the same basic attack. The time made available permitted units and supporting arms to carry out mutual planning on a most intimate basis. Sand tables were constructed and personnel down to Section Leaders were briefed carefully and "kept in the picture" from day to day.

5. On the evening of 22 Feb the final outline plan was filed and a conference of comds of all units and supporting arms

took place with a sand table model. On the following morning Field-Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, K.C.B., D.S.O., C.-in-C., 21 Army Group, accompanied by General H.D.G. Crerar, C.B., D.S.O., G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, visited H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde. After the Commander-in-Chief had met the unit C.Os., the Bde Comd reviewed the plan of attack with him. Field-Marshal Montgomery expressed his satisfaction with the plans as presented.

6. A last conference of all arms was held on the afternoon of 24 Feb, and at that time the final orders for the attack to be carried out on 26 Feb were issued. In view of the time available and the large number of supporting arms involved a written confirming order was distributed at the conference. H-hr was set for 0430 hrs.

7. The planning contemplated a night attack with "artificial moonlight" and "Bofors" tracer as a directional aid. In order to take full advantage of the large scale arty barrage, the three bns of 6 Cdn Inf Bde were to advance simultaneously. The two flanking bns were to be mounted in "Kangaroos" and the centre bn was to ride on tanks.

8. The object of the plan was to land elements of the largest possible fighting force simultaneously on the objective, and thus prevent the enemy from stopping the assault by being able to concentrate on single points of attack in progressive stages.

9. Owing to the soft and wet ground the forming up was by no means a simple procedure. It was commenced immediately after dark (night 25/26 Feb) and, in spite of fairly heavy enemy shelling, which had been a continuous process in the only available and obvious FUP, the movement was accomplished satisfactorily. In addition, a counter-attack developed at 0330 hrs. There was rather a tense moment but RHLI (4 Cdn Inf Bde) continued to "do their stuff" and had quietened the front down just 15 minutes before H-hr. All three bns crossed the SL at H-hr.

10. It was known that German paratroops were holding the position being attacked and, in spite of fairly heavy arty fire, it was a case of the infantry fighting their way forward right from the outset against SA fire, A tk weapons and SP guns, which were present in fairly large numbers.

11. There was one sqn of 27 Cdn Armd Regt in support of each bn and the work of these sqns was outstanding. A very close liaison with the infantry had been established so that at no time was there any question of how the support would operate.

12. Fus MR, in the centre, got along extremely well and found their way onto the objectives practically on the scheduled timing, taking a heavy toll of the enemy and capturing many PW.

13. On the left, S Sask R had somewhat more difficult going, but they were able to advance fairly steadily and they benefitted throughout most of the distance from covering fire supplied by the arty. Fighting their way to a high pimple feature (near the intersection of the 01 easting and 48 northing lines), S Sask R made a very quick consolidation by first light 26 Feb. In this area a sqn of tanks accompanied the infantry right on the pimple, along with Bn HQ, and a small fortress was formed.

14. Apparently, in this sector, the enemy was so shaken by the assault that he could not put in a counter-attack until noon the next day. When this counter-attack did develop it came up a deep gully from the north-east at MR 009482, exactly where it had been expected. A tp of tanks was waiting for them, as well as the Bren guns of a Pl, and the 35 enemy, out of a coy, who survived were all taken PW.

15. Except for some sniping there was no further difficulty in connection with this objective, which had been looked upon as the key to the final Bde position. In the course of the fighting, S Sask R captured three 88 mm guns with their tractors and ammunition all intact.

16. On the right, Camerons of C encountered very soft ground and mines on the CALCAR - UDEM road shortly after crossing the SL. It soon became obvious that an extensive delay would result if they continued on their original axis. Therefore, at 0540 hrs, 26 Feb, they were ordered to follow Fus MR and approach their objective through the Fus MR position which, by that time, was getting under definite control.

17. It was apparent that Camerons of C were faced with a difficult operation. The carefully-studied landmarks no longer served to guide them and, in spite of the SLs, the visibility was becoming extremely bad, due to many burning buildings. At this point, the determination and resourcefulness of all concerned were destined to be taxed to the limit, as the immediate barrage support had disappeared.

18. The column changed direction and got on its new axis, some 800 yards to the north, and by 0700 hrs this column was making good progress with the leading coy fighting their way towards their objectives. About this time Lt-Col E.P. Thompson, D.S.O., C.O., Camerons of C, was killed and his I.O. was wounded by a direct hit on the "Kangaroo" in which they were riding.

19. By 0830 hrs, 26 Feb, the three forward coys were on their objectives but the area to be occupied by the rear coy and Bn HQ was being held by a coy of German paratroops. When he lost wireless touch with Bn HQ, Major D.M. Rodgers, of "A" Coy, Camerons of C, returned on foot and, discovering what had happened, personally took charge of the situation. In conjunction with Major E.G. Brooks, the arty representative, Major Rodgers succeeded in completing the occupation of all unit objectives and dealing with successive enemy counter-attacks on the forward coys which continued throughout the day.

20. In order to get Bn HQ established, it was necessary to clear a number of strongly-held enemy posts. It was at this stage that Major Rodgers personally performed acts of the greatest gallantry, such as clearing two houses, in the course of which he killed 5 Germans, wounded 4 others, and took 12 PW. Subsequently, "B" Coy, Camerons of C, assisted by a tp of tanks and a coy from Fus MR, attacked and cleared the remaining coy objectives and captured 85 PW.

21. By 0830 hrs, 26 Feb, the Bde objectives were sufficiently under control to permit 4 Cdn Armd Div to pass through in Phase II of operation "BLOCKBUSTER". By 1230 hrs on D-day, all twelve coy objectives had been completely consolidated, in accordance with the planning of the attack.

22. Between 400 and 500 PW were taken and, up to this time, casualties of 6 Cdn Inf Bde had amounted to only some 85,

with approximately the same number from supporting arms. While the casualties continued to build up during the next 24 hrs, as a result of enemy defensive fire, it is nevertheless evident that the assault was accomplished with relatively small losses. This is attributed primarily to the detailed preliminary planning by units, which resulted in a total absence of any disorganization and which permitted the infantry to dig in quickly in their final, and correct positions of consolidation. Not one of the seven enemy counter-attacks launched during the first 24 hrs had any success.

23. In addition to the planning there is a little doubt that the high standard of training which the units had been able to reach during the relatively quiet winter months enabled them to carry out a night operation which would have been most risky to have attempted with anything but first class and determined troops.

2. THE STRUGGLE FOR THE GOCH-CALCAR ROAD - THE ROLE OF 4
CDN INF BDE, 19-20 FEB 45: (ACCOUNT BY BRIGADIER
F.N. CABELDU, D.S.O., E.D., GIVEN TO HIST OFFR 2 CDN
INF DIV, 28 FEB 45). (See Sketch Map "A".)

1. Prior to the attack made by 4 Cdn Inf Bde on 19 Feb 45, the enemy controlled the main GOCH-CALCAR road, south-west of CALCAR, in squares 9949, 9948, 9847, 9747 and 9646. The enemy held a line on the outskirts of CALCAR including MOYLAND (square 9651), the wood in squares 9650, 9750, GR. HESELER FELD (square 9749) and continuing to the south-west from approximately MR 972492. The latter portion of this line ran parallel to, and about a mile north-west of the main GOCH-CALCAR road.

2. Originally, the intention was to secure the prominent feature, south of CALCAR, in squares 0048 and 0147, but there were three major changes in the planning of the operation during the 24 hour period immediately preceding the attack. These changes were necessary because of the threat of the left flank of 4 Cdn Inf Bde from the enemy-held woods in squares 9650 and 9750. Until these woods were secured no road existed which could be kept open as a maintenance route.

3. The first change was made when it was decided to capture the ridge south-west of CALCAR in squares 9949, 9948. Later, the objective selected for 4 Cdn Inf Bde was an area which had as its centre the intersection of the 98 easting and 49 north-ing lines, and which touched the main GOCH-CALCAR road at MR 985485.

4. The third, and final decision was made when the Corps Comd directed 4 Cdn Inf Bde to capture the final objectives shown on Sketch Map "A". The attack was to be made on a two battalion front, with Essex Scot on the right and RHLI on the left, each unit having two coys up and two coys in reserve. The contemplated objectives for the forward coys of Essex Scot were the BRUNSHOF and GOTTERN areas, at MR 968460 and MR 974464 respectively. The reserve coys were to establish themselves astride the GOCH-CALCAR road at the intersection with the track, MR 965466, and northeast along the road at MR 971470. The forward coys of RHLI were given objectives with centres at SCHROANENHOF, MR 986477, and immediately north-east of EBBEN, at MR 980468, while the reserve coys were to consolidate in the areas of the T-road junctions at MR 981479 and MR 975473. In reserve, R Regt C were to occupy Coy positions on the left at the road and track intersections at MR 970479 and MR 966484, and on the right at MR 963474 and MR 957475. The planning for the operation was

completed on 18 Feb, by which date the preliminary move to an assembly area south of BEDBURG, in square 9351, had been effected.

5. The attack involved an advance over open country, and sufficient "Kangaroos" from 1 Cdn Carrier Regt were used to lift one bn. In support of 4 Cdn Inf Bde for the operation were: 10 Cdn Armd Regt, less one sqn; Tor Scot (MG); 14 field and 7 medium regiments; and two btys of heavy guns.

6. The "Kangaroos" were split so as to lift two coys of each leading bn, and each unit was supported by one sqn of tanks. This disposition meant that the leading coys were to go straight to their objectives at tank pace; the reserve coys of each assaulting bn were to move forward their objectives as quickly as possible -- leaving the mopping up to be done by the reserve bn (R Regt C). The inter-bn boundary, along the axis of advance, was well defined by the road running south-east from MR 961489 to MR 975473.

7. The artillery plan included a rolling barrage, with the guns of 10 field and 6 medium regiments lifting at tank pace -- that is, 100 yards every two minutes. The remaining 4 field and 1 medium regiments, together with the 2 heavy btys, were free to engage known enemy targets on the high ground to the left (east), and immediately in front of the attacking troops. The 4.2" mortars of Tor Scot (MG) were to engage the enemy positions in the BRUNSHOF-GOTTERN area.

8. The success of the operation depended on the ability of the tanks and "Kangaroos" to get over the open ground along the axis of advance, and this ground was very boggy in places. The latter condition was aggravated by rain that fell on the night 18-19 Feb. However, both the tanks and "Kangaroo" commanders were confident that they could get most of the armour to the objectives. Consequently, early on the morning of 19 Feb, it was decided to launch the attack at the armoured pace, although an alternative plan had been worked out for the troops to advance on foot.

9. H-hr was set for 1200 hrs, 19 Feb, and between 1030 hrs and 1130 hrs on that date, units of 4 Cdn Inf Bde moved forward to the FUPs. The SL was the road and track running north-east from MR 953480 to MR 971498. A tk guns were hauled by "Kangaroos" as it seemed unlikely that carriers could get over the ground.

10. The troops experienced very little difficulty in forming up, and the opening barrage took the enemy by surprise. On the other hand, movement over the soft ground was difficult and, on each axis of advance, soon after passing the SL, several "Kangaroos" and tanks became bogged down.

11. It soon became evident that the enemy had a screen of A tk defences, including many 88 mm guns, along the GOCH-CALCAR road and that his positions were held by fresh troops of 12 Para Recce Regt. In rear of these positions, were elements of Pz LEHR Div.

12. On the left, in the RHLI sector, there were 3 "Kangaroo" and 6 tank casualties and, altogether, there were 11 tank casualties. Some of the tanks, particularly on the left flank, were knocked out by mines. While, for the most part, the "Kangaroos" were able to drop the troops near the objectives, these vehicles were unable to get right onto the objectives because of severe A tk fire.

13. Communications with the Essex Scot were difficult. About 1300 hrs, the C.O.'s set was hit, and later another set was knocked out. Finally, a third set was put in operation. During the intervals, C.O., Essex Scot, had to rely on artillery communications to maintain contact with HQ 4 Cdn Inf Bde.

14. RHLI had been quick in forming up and moving forward and, after heavy fighting, they managed to secure ground almost on their objective; on the right flank the Essex Scot situation became obscure early in the battle because of communication casualties. The coys of the latter unit continued to fight toward their objectives and these were actually secured although the information was not available at the time.

15. At 1416 hrs, 19 Feb, the enemy made his first counter-attack on positions held by Essex Scot. The counter-attack was made frontally and from the right (south) with a considerable force of infantry supported by tanks; this was the first indication of the arrival of Pz LEHR Div in that sector. At approximately 1530 hrs, the situation was as shown in the attached Sketch Map. On the left, RHLI were 200 yards short of their objectives, with one coy centred at the intersection of the track and grid line, MR 980473. On the right, Essex Scot had one coy 150 yards short of the GOTTERN objective, with the other forward coy centred at MR 972463.

16. The German counter-attacks continued throughout the night 19-20 Feb, growing in fury with the passage of time. The enemy's effort was made in such strength that his troops infiltrated as far as the bn HQ locations of both Essex Scot and RHLI; the struggle continued into the next day (20 Feb). On many occasions, coys were completely isolated. At one time, the two left coys of RHLI were over-run; but Lt-Col W.D. Whitaker, D.S.O., C.O., RHLI, put his counter-attack force into the battle and the situation was restored. Once the situation was so desperate that one coy comd, Major J.M. Pigott, D.S.O. called for fire support right on his own headquarters.

17. In the course of this fighting, the enemy paid dearly for the temporary success which he achieved. One SP tp of 18 Cdn A Tk Bty, in action for the first time, destroyed 6 "Panthers" on the front of RHLI and 1 on the front of Essex Scot.

18. Essex Scot were over-run during the night 19-20 Feb, and, about 2300 hrs, 3 tanks and 40 infantry were firing directly into Bn HQ. "A" Coy, under Maj KW MacIntyre, held out for a full day, in the vicinity of GOTTERN, with only the coy comd and 36 men, although they were surrounded and were without support. No communications with the C.O. existed after 2400 hrs.

19. In view of the enemy's repeated counter-attacks late on 19 Feb, the Bde comd decided to hold R Regt C firm, but to send one coy forward to assist Essex Scot. This coy went forward at 2300 hrs, 19 Feb, but was not able to contact Essex Scot because of the strong fire from enemy tanks and infantry, and eventually the coy had to be withdrawn. Previously, the supporting armour from 10 Cdn Armd Regt had been moved back in rear of R Regt C to be available as a counter-attack force. The tanks were not launched against the enemy at night because of the confusion which prevailed and the very soggy condition of the ground.

20. As the morning of 20 Feb approached, RHLI succeeded in improving their positions, although they had suffered heavy casualties. At 0800 hrs, it was decided to launch a counter-attack using R Regt C to recover the positions held formerly by Essex Scot. The plan for this attack necessitated bringing supporting fire down on the area which contained the remnants of Essex Scot. However, by means of a No. 18 set, C.O., R Regt C, was able to warn C.O., Essex Scot, who continued to hold out in the basement. Camerons of C became the reserve bn, when R Regt C advanced.

21. The counter-attack launched by R Regt C at 1030 hrs was successful and the ground which had been lost in the Essex Scot sector was all regained. By 1200 hrs, 20 Feb, the coy positions south of the main GOCH-CALCAR road had been re-established.

22. During the heavy fighting of 19-20 Feb, units of 4 Cdn Inf Bde suffered severe casualties..... On the other hand, 4 Cdn Inf Bde had accounted for 11 German tanks, 6 88mm guns, and 2 75mm guns, and more than 275 PW from crack German paratroop and Pz units had been captured. The Bde had obtained control of the GOCH-CALCAR road in its sector. The determined resistance shown by RHLI, in particular, at this time and subsequently during the five days they occupied this position, was commended in letters addressed to the C.O. by both the Corps and Army Comds.

3. OPERATION "BLOCKBUSTER" - THE ROLE OF THE LINC & WELLD R., 25 FEB - 10 MAR 45; (ACCOUNT BY LT-COL. R.C. COLEMAN, M.C., FORWARDED BY HIST OFFR, 2 CDN CORPS) (See Sketch Map "B")

SITUATION

On 22 Feb 45 the drive of the First Cdn Army SE from NIJMEGEN stood along the line roughly SOUTH from EMMERICH to MOYLAND to KEPPELN to GOCH.

The enemy intention was apparently to fight a stubborn rearguard action as he withdrew the main portion of his force across the Rhine at WESEL. For this purpose he left behind a comparatively strong inf force well supplied with automatic weapons, bazookas, hy A tk guns, sp by a small number of tks and SP guns. Mines were used liberally by the enemy throughout the area.

4 Cdn Armd Div was originally committed with the intention of passing through the inf with a quick drive, to clear to the banks of the Rhine. Enemy resistance, together with unsuitable tk conditions necessitated more limited objectives, further plans being formulated on the completion of each individual op.

The LINC & WELLD R left their billeting area at LOON OP ZAND in HOLLAND on 22 Feb 45 and proceeded to a conc area in the CLEVE forest. The Regt was up to str and in spite of many new rfts was in good fighting shape.

NARRATIVE

The regt arrived in the CLEVE area MR 920495 at 2300 hrs after an uneventful trip from HOLLAND. At 0900 hrs 23 Feb 45 infm was received from bde that we were in an area allotted to another unit and a short move was made to MR 920505.

At 1100 hrs orders were received relative to the attack, the op to be known as BLOCKBUSTER. Briefly, the op was to be divided into four phases with five individual forces taking part, listed as follows:

PHASE I

2 Cdn Inf Div.

PHASE II

JERRY FORCE

28 Cdn Armd Regt less one sqn with under comd A and C Coys LINC & WELLD R, twenty-four Ram Towers and one tp Flails.

SNUFF FORCE

22 Cdn Armd Regt less one sqn with under comd two coys of A & SH of C, twenty-four Ram Towers and one tp Flails.

COLE FORCE

LINC & WELLD R less A and C Coys with under comd one sqn 28 Armd Regt, one tp 5 A Tk Regt (SP) and one tp Crocodiles.

JOCK FORCE

A & SH of C less two Coys with under comd one sqn 22 Cdn Armd Regt, one tp 5 A Tk Regt and one tp Crocodiles.

PHASE III

SMITH FORCE

LAKE SUP R (MOT) with 21 Cdn Armd Regt and one tp 5 A Tk Regt.

PHASE IV

Force as PHASE II.

Objectives were as follows:

PHASE I and II Clearing up to high ground NE of UDEM MR 0146.

PHASE III Clearing of high ground NE of UDEM.

PHASE IV Pass through HOCHWALD Forest in the area of the gap.

Should the enemy be on the retreat PHASE IV was to carry on to the Rhine.

The unit moved at 1500 hrs 23 Feb 45 to conc area WEST of CLEVE MR 880556. A and C Coys reported to 28 Cdn Armd Regt to be under comd for the op.

The regt remained in the conc area during 24 Feb 45. The weather was fair and warm.

On 25 Feb 45 orders were given for the move to contact, to start at 1745 hrs. JERRY FORCE followed by COLE FORCE moved

off. The latter was under way at 1830 hrs in pouring rain, with inf riding the tks.

The route from the area at CLEVE to the conc area was through mud fds and the going was extremely hy, many tks and vehs becoming bogged. A short stop for regrouping was made in area MR 9449. JERRY FORCE moved into the attack at 0900 hrs 26 Feb 45 passing through 2 Cdn Inf Div, COLE FORCE following JERRY to mop up any enemy. Little opposition was met. The regt consolidated in the area of MR 006457 with B Coy fwd at MR 012453.

At 1900 hrs an enemy counter-attack from the right front of B Coy posn was driven back. Lt mortar fire was experienced during the afternoon and night. At 2300 hrs the RHLI relieved the regt but lacking another suitable conc area the coys remained in their dug-in posns.

On 27 Feb 45 at 1000 hrs orders were received for carrying out PHASE IV which was the seizure of the gap in the HOCHWALD FOREST at MR 0340. A & SH of C were to attack at 0230 hrs 28 Feb 45 and seize known enemy posns at the Eastern mouth of the gap. The LINC & WELLD R were to pass through the A & SH of C at first lt and secure the rly track from MR 044405 to MR 052406 as well as take the ground immediately SOUTH of this stretch centred about MR 048404. At 2015 hrs the regt moved off having under comd A sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt. The going was again extremely difficult and spasmodic mortar and rocket fire added to the troubles of extricating vehs and tks. At 0600 hrs 28 Feb 45 the inf was assembled in area MR 032407 but was without supporting arms of any kind with the exception of two F00 tks. The posn of the A & SH of C at this time was confused. They had no tps fwd of MR 043408. It was appreciated that the LINC & WELLD R would have to make a two prong attack with two coys, one on each side of the gap to take A & SH of C fourth objective at MR 052407, while the remaining two coys would go fwd along the rly and would seize the regt's objectives. At 0900 hrs meds and air sp attacked reported SP guns on the LINC & WELLD R's objectives, this continued until 1100 hrs. At this time the LINC & WELLD R had one tp of 28 Cdn Armd Regt and were able to "borrow" one more from 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt who were supporting the A & SH of C. Orders were therefore given for the attack to go in at 1200 hrs. B and C Coys, each with a tp of tks would move east, on each side of the gap, B Coy on the left and C Coy on the right. Their task was to secure the A & SH of C fourth objective MR 052407. At the same time A and D Coys were to remain in their posns but teed up ready to move SOUTH of the gap and secure the rly track and the area SOUTH of it which was the regt's objective, as soon as B and C Coys reported success.

At 1200 hrs B and C Coys moved off. When they were in the woods at MR 0340 a hy conc of mortar, rockets and HE shells fell in the area forming airbursts in the tree tops. Hy cas were suffered and the attack disorganized. Both coys were forced to retire to their dug-in posns. Difficulty was experienced in evacuating cas due to spasmodic mortar fire and MG fire.

At first lt, 1 Mar 45, the SOUTH SASK R relieved the LINC & WELLD R who moved back to area MR 007417. The regt stayed in this conc area during 1st and 2nd Mar during which time occasional shelling by hy arty caused some damage and cas. Enemy sneak bombers were also active in the general UDEM area.

At 2200 hrs 2 Mar 45 orders were received to move to a conc area NORTH of UDEM MR 990430 to come under comd 28 Cdn Armd Regt. At 0830 hrs 3 Mar 45 the regt moved off to this area. At 1630 hrs, orders were issued by CO 28 Cdn Armd Regt relative to the coming op and the force was put on a one hr notice to move. The force, known as CHUBB FORCE, was composed of 28 Cdn Armd Regt under comd LINC & WELLD R, two tps 17 prs A Tk SP guns and in sp fd and med arty. It would pass through 3rd Cdn Inf Div and sweep on to VEEN MR 1135. 3rd Cdn Inf Div was to take all the high ground up to areas MR 0836 and MR 0837 before CHUBB FORCE was to move.

CHUBB FORCE remained in the conc area NORTH of UDEM during the 4th and 5th Mar 45. During this time the plan was changed to include a force composed of A & SH of C and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt who were to take VEEN, and CHUBB FORCE which was to pass through them to take WINNENTHAL MR 1336 and GINDERICH MR 1739, and clear the ground between these pts. The weather during the 4th and 5th Mar 45 continued cloudy and cool with occasional showers. All ground except first class rds continued to be extremely hy going for tks.

At 0800 hrs 6 Mar 45 CHUBB FORCE moved off, the inf riding on tks. A stop was made at an intermediate conc area MR 0439 and at 1430 hrs moved on again to a conc area WEST of SONS-BECK MR 051361. The force was kept on short notice to move awaiting developments ahead.

On 7 Mar 45 at 0300 hrs A Coy LINC & WELLD R and one sqn of 28 Cdn Armd Regt moved off to X rds at MR 093355 in order to be close and ready when the A & SH of C had taken VEEN. Infm coming back indicated strong resistance in VEEN from SP guns, MG fire and mines.

At 0900 hrs a further change of plan was made. The attack on VEEN was to be made as a bde op with the ALQ R with under comd 29 Cdn Armd Recce Rect on the left attacking towards VEEN through the woods 1000 yds NE of the town, while the LINC & WELLD R with under comd one sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt would clear the areas SOUTH of the main rd running to WINNENTHAL. In sp of the bde were three fd and three med regts with MGs and mortars of the N B Rang keeping HF on the woods in area MR 1038. The op was known as "BASHER". The attack by LINC & WELLD R was divided into 3 phases as follows: -
PHASE I buildings and rds at MRs 106348, 114347 and 115345;
PHASE II X rds at MR 113354 and PHASE III X rds at MR 121356 and 129350.

At 1200 hrs orders were issued for the attack and move. H hour was set at 1600 hrs. The attack would go in under cover of arty fire. D Coy was to take out first part of PHASE I, B Coy the second and C Coy the third part. On completion of PHASE I D Coy would pass through B Coy to PHASE II then C Coy through D Coy to first X rds in PHASE III. In the meantime A Coy with under comd one sqn tks would do a right flanking attack to take out the second X rds in PHASE III.

At 1330 hrs the regt moved off, the coys FUP along rd running SOUTH from MR 093354 and Tac HQ at MR 078359. The coys crossed the SL on time and Comd Post moved up to MR 092352 at 1745 hrs. At the FUP by mortar and rocket fire was experienced with some cas. Comd Post was a target for arty and rockets. At 1745 hrs D Coy was on their first objective having taken it against hy MG and mortar fire which caused some cas. At 1830 hrs B Coy was running into strong enemy opposition but were advancing slowly. C Coy's comn failed but they were in contact with B Coy. At 1950 hrs A Coy had reached MR 128348 somewhat short of their objective the force was still mobile in spite of hy going for the armour.

B and C Coys were on their objectives at MRs 112349 and 115345 at 2035 hrs and D Coy started fwd to MR 113354. All coys were under hy MG, mortar, rocket and shell fire and were encountering mines. Tks tried to move fwd but a SP gun, mines and mud made the going extremely slow and costly. At 2350 hrs D Coy reported that they were unable to gain second objective and had returned to original first objective posns. Our arty was brought down on MR 113354 and engrs were sent fwd to clear mines.

At 0135 hrs 8 Mar 45 C Coy moved off by direct route across country to take out first X rds in PHASE III at MR 121357. One tp of tks proceeded by southern route through A Coys posn to join C Coy as soon as possible.

At 0610 hrs A and C Coys were on their objectives but being under hy MG and mortar fire withdrew slightly to allow our arty be brought down on enemy posns. A Coy dug in at MR 128348 and C Coy at MR 121355. Several of their sp tks had been knocked out.

At 1230 hrs B and D Coys moved fwd with tks in sp. D Coy reached MR 107351 by 1300 hrs but were pinned down by MG and mortar fire and had lost four tks, knocked out. One pl of B Coy was pinned down in a house at MR 113347 next door to a house full of enemy, where they were forced to stay till darkness fell, at which time they rejoined their own coy. They reported two Sherman tks in the vicinity manned by the enemy.

At 2245 hrs a recce patrol from the Scout Pl reced houses along rd in area MR 1134. They reported houses from MR 114345 to SOUTH unoccupied while SA fire was coming from X roads at MR 111351. D Coy examined a route for tks MR 105352 to MR 115337 which was found to be clear. All this infm was passed on to A & SH of C and supporting arms.

At 0430 hrs 9 Mar 45 two coys of A & SH of C arrived at D and B Coys posns ready to put in an attack at first lt. They attacked at 0530 hrs and found their objective unoccupied and dug in, in area MR 114348. ALQ R on the left was reorganizing to put in an attack on the town VEEN. At 0935 hrs C Coy LINC & WELLD R had cleared to X rds at MR 121357. A Coy were holding their posn at MR 128350.

At 1200 hrs infm was received that the enemy was retreating across the Rhine. Orders were issued covering the LINC & WELLD R's task. A Coy was to remain as a firm base for the LAKE SUP R (MOT) which was mopping up woods at MR 135350. The remaining 3 coys would mop up area MR 1236 and MR 119365. D Coy would take X rds at MR 119365. B Coy to pass through C Coy and continue to rly line to link up with 2 Cdn Inf Div which was coming down from the NORTH.

At 1500 hrs Comd Post was moved to house at MR 121335, along seriously congested rds. Mines were lifted at T junc MR 117359 in order to get tks fwd in sp of coys. Two tks had been knocked out by mines at this corner. At 1730 hrs D and B Coys moved off from SL on rd MR 117359. D Coy reached their objective with only lt opposition.

1630 hrs No 3 Pl were in action posn with one sec MMGs at 087369 and the other at 088369.

1630 hrs No 5 Pl (MMGs) were ordered to stand to in area 082365 to be prepared to engage enemy in general target area if necessary.

101000 It was announced by HQ 10 Cdn Inf Bde that the two forests were clear of enemy and our tps were ordered to stand down.

STATISTICS:

There were no cas during the operation.

Total Amn expenditure:

70000 rds MK VIIIIZ amn
65000 rds MK VII "
2720 rds 4.2" mcr HE

5. ROADS TO THE RHINE: PROBLEMS OF THE R.C.E., 8 FEB - 12 MAR 45:
(ACCOUNT BY LT.- COL. L.G.C. LILLEY, C.R.E., 2 CDN INF DIV,
GIVEN TO HIST OFFR 2 CDN INF DIV, 15 MAR 45.). (See Sketch Map
"D")

1. In operation "VERITABLE", R.C.E., 2 Cdn Inf Div carried out the normal task of opening road communications. This role comprised two distinct phases, coinciding with first, the original assault and, subsequently, the maintenance of the roads which had been opened.

2. Mine clearance and the repair of craters constituted the main problems that were encountered. Of necessity, progress was slow because of the types of mines used by the enemy and because of the ingenuity he displayed in their installation.

3. The first priority task given to the Divisional engineers, during the opening phase of operation "VERITABLE" (8 Feb 45), was to open the road running south-east from BERG EN DAL to RICHTERS GUT, The importance of opening the road through WYLER to RICHTERS GUT arose from the fact that the reserve brigade of 15 (S) Div could not advance on its eastern axis until this route had been made available.

4. The second priority was to open the main NIJMEGEN-WYLER route from approximately M.R. 764599 to WYLER and south along the road between M.R. 778586 and 779579. In addition to the foregoing, the engineers were to support 15 (S) Div during the latter's advance along the KRANENBURG-NUTTERDEN axis. In the latter capacity, R.C.E 2 Cdn Inf Div were to act not as Divisional, but as Corps troops. 7 Cdn Fd Coy was in support of 5 Cdn Inf Bde and 2 Cdn Fd Coy operated with 15 (S) Div.

5. Owing to the fact that 5 Cdn Inf Bde made a reverse attack on WYLER, from the south-east, the engineers had to clear the road from BERG EN DAL without infantry in front of them. On this, as on other occasions, it was necessary for the engineers to form their own combatant parties in order to get forward with the work in hand.

6. It had been intended that 2 Cdn Fd Coy would open a road to the east that ran parallel to, and was south of the GROESBEEK - KRANENBURG railway. However, the condition of the ground immediately east of GROESBEEK was so bad that the plan of opening a road through this area was changed, and 2 Cdn Fd Coy was switched to open the GROESBEEK-WYLER lateral.... The intention was to use this road as the divisional maintenance route.

7. The work of the engineers was hampered by the prevalence of minefields, particularly in the vicinity of the GROESBEEK - WYLER lateral. Numerous belts of mines were encountered, including one 200 yards in width that stretched from approximately M.R. 777583 across the GROESBEEK - WYLER lateral to 778570. In spite of these difficulties the first priority road (from BERG EN DAL) was open by 1500 hrs, 8 Feb 45, in exceptionally good time and before WYLER had been cleared by the infantry.

8. The opening of the second priority road, along the southern bank of the WYLER MEER, was delayed due to the enemy holding out in WYLER. But this phase of the operation was less important because the first priority task had been performed in good time.

9. After the initial assault, insofar as the engineers were concerned, the operation boiled down to a maintenance problem. Constant maintenance was necessary, owing to the heavy traffic over the roads and the fact that in many cases the latter were merely dirt tracks. The flooding of the main WYLER - KRANENBURG road was the principal source of trouble and, eventually, this difficulty necessitated closing that route.

10. When it was discovered that the flooding in the WYLER area was reaching a point at which vehicles could not use the road, four class 9 ferries were constructed with a landing site near WYLER. These ferries existed for the purpose of carrying priority traffic around the flooded portion from WYLER to a point 300 yards east of KRANENBURG. The ferries were built by 2 Cdn Fd Coy and were taken over on the evening of 10 Feb 45, by Army Troops. These ferries traversed areas that were flooded to a depth from 8 to 10 feet. The only serious problem that arose in connection with their use was the necessity of a careful survey of the route which they took in order to clear hedges, fence posts, and other obstructions.

11. The second phase of operations during the thrust towards the RHINE occurred after 2 Cdn Inf Div had been concentrated at CLEVE. With the resumption of activity and the beginning of operation "BLOCK-BUSTER" (26 Feb), it became evident that use could not be made of the main CLEVE - CALCAR road, which was under enemy observation. Accordingly it was necessary to use some of the minor roads south of the main route as a divisional axis of advance.

12. H.Q., R.C.E., 2 Cdn Inf Div, found that these minor roads were very poor; in fact, they were much worse than previous intelligence had indicated. The damage resulting from the heavy traffic of large numbers of vehicles and tanks required 24 hrs maintenance per day by the whole of 2 Cdn Inf Div engineers. During a three or four day period, about the time of operation "BLOCKBUSTER", everyone was on 24 hr duty without sleep.

13. 43 (W) Div had the running rights on the main CLEVE - CALCAR road and, eventually, certain arrangements had to be made for the use of the latter by 2 Cdn Inf Div. The problems in connection with these roads afforded an excellent example of the fact that at least one good road per division is necessary during operations.

14. During the movement across this portion of the country a large number of enemy mines of all types was discovered. R.C.E. personnel encountered the start of a very wide demolition belt, some 15 to 20 miles in width, which ran from the RHINE to the MAAS and which consisted of very large craters and mines. These demolitions took the form of three to five overlapping craters, each from 20 to 30 feet in diameter and 6 to 10 feet deep. Usually, they were sited on cross-roads and embankments and, because of the soggy nature of the ground, they were frequently filled with water.

15. Another aspect of these demolitions was the cleverness with which they were sited. They were usually located where it was impossible for tanks and vehicles to get around them and, consequently, where vehicle movement was tied up completely until they were repaired.

16. The most satisfactory method of repairing the craters was found to be the use of an armoured bulldozer well forward. The bulldozer was used to fill the craters with loose earth and rubble, of which there was a good supply. Where water was flowing freely through the area of the demolitions, steel culverting was used to carry it away. Thereafter, earth and rubble were bulldozed over the top. Originally, the craters were repaired for the use of one-way traffic only, and they were repaired just sufficiently to allow vehicles to get through them. Follow-up troops improved and widened the repairs to make two-way routes

17. There is no fixed allotment of bulldozers, the number depending on how many brigades are involved and what roads have to be opened. During operation "BLOCKBUSTER", R.C.E. 2 Cdn Inf Div had a total of three bulldozers at their disposal. The performance of this type of equipment was quite satisfactory and, owing to the fact that they were well armoured, they could begin work on a crater during the initial stages of an attack and carry on for a time without assistance. Thus it was possible to carry out repairs during the first hour or two while an area was still very "hot". Later, troops could be brought up to finish the job.

18. In connection with the problems arising out of demolitions, the alternative methods of repair were to fill in or bridge the craters. Generally, it was easier to fill in the craters with rubble. If bridging methods are to be employed it is necessary to wait until the requisite personnel and equipment can get to the scene. But the use of an armoured bulldozer means that the job can be started and performed much more quickly.

19. During the course of operations approaching the HOCHWALD the major problem of the engineers was to discover the best route along which the advance could be maintained. This problem necessitated constant reconnaissance to determine and report back upon the most favourable routes. During this period sapper officers with the leading troops reported back to C.R.E., 2 Cdn Inf Div, who then advised the G.O.C. The state of the routes over which the advance was made such that it was necessary to employ the entire divisional R.C.E. on the task of keeping the divisional axis open.

20. On 2 Mar five craters each 40 feet in diameter and 10 feet deep were discovered at the road junction, on the western edge of the HOCHWALD, at M.R. 031434. Under heavy mortar fire, an armoured bulldozer worked for four hours to effect sufficient repairs to permit the leading brigade to get through.

21. The third phase, during the advance of 2 Cdn Inf Div to the RHINE, occurred in connection with the capture of XANTEN. 2 and 7 Cdn Fd Coys were involved in this operation. The task of 2 Cdn Fd Coy was to open a route along the railway running south of the HOCHWALD and roughly parallel to the 40 northing line. 7 Cdn Fd Coy had the task of opening the main road leading south east from MARIENBAUM to XANTEN. The latter road had craters about every half mile.

22. Owing to the poor conditions of the different routes it was decided to use the road bed of the GOCH-XANTEN railway. Consequently, as the attack progressed, rails and ties were stripped from this road bed and the ballast was smoothed out and covered with sand, thus making an excellent road. It was necessary to remove both rails along the railway as they were fastened to steel ties. Again, the bulldozer

was used to great advantage in this work. The blade of a bulldozer was inserted under the rails and they were then peeled off very quickly. Along that portion of the line in squares 0540, 0640 and 0740 approximately 3,000 yards of rails were taken up, and three craters in the road bed were repaired, in 14 hrs, using one and a half pls and one bulldozer.

23. The Divisional engineers were well aware of the importance attached to opening these vital routes. As evidence of this keenness to get forward, mention may be made of Lt. R.H. Cannon, 7 Cdn Fd Coy, who got into a bulldozer and went ahead of the infantry in the eastern outskirts of XANTEN while attempting to hasten the opening of the route in that area. Unfortunately the bulldozer was hit by an enemy "Bazooka", Lt Cannon was killed and the operator was wounded.

24. Work along the railway south-east of the HOCHWALD continued and, about 1800 hrs 8 Mar 45, that route was linked up with the lateral road running north-east to XANTEN in square 1040. As the attack progressed beyond XANTEN the main road from MARIENBAUM was opened for the use of the infantry.

25. There were three large craters discovered along the road between XANTEN and BIRTEN. The first two were repaired easily enough but work on the third was held up by heavy shell and mortar fire. With respect to this demolition the decision was taken to launch a "Jumbo" bridge. The latter is a 30 foot, Class 40, bridge mounted on a "Churchill" tank, and the bridge can be lowered without anyone getting out of the tank. Unfortunately, due to a defect, the bridge collapsed when it was launched and the crater was not repaired until some two hours later, when an armoured bulldozer was used.

26. The difficulty of using special bridging equipment, such as the "Churchill Bridge", is that very accurate information, not always readily available, is necessary in advance as to the size and condition of the gap. In the absence of this information such equipment cannot be used with a guarantee of success.

27. In general, the work of the sappers during an advance is taken up entirely with the opening of the divisional axis. Very few men are available for other work. Roads require constant maintenance and, unless Corps Troops engineers are available to follow up very closely behind the leading formations, the work of the sappers becomes a 24 hr proposition.

28. The divisional sappers are prepared to work, and are required to work, very closely behind the assaulting infantry, and the speed with which the axis of advance is opened up is very often a great factor in determining the speed of the advance. To accomplish this goal the greatest co-operation with all other arms is necessary.

