

PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY

REPORT ON OPERATIONS

from

SAVIGNANO to the F. RONCO

14 Oct - 28 Oct 1944.

APPENDIX - Story of the part played by A Coy P.P.C.L.I.  
In the Crossing of the SAVIO R.  
as written by Maj E. Cutbill, OC A Coy, PPCLI.

During the first part of OCT P.P.C.L.I. had enjoyed a period of rest, re-organization and training in CATTOLICA.

On Oct 12 a series of moves began with the object of manoeuvring the Bn into position for the next operation.

16 Oct found the Bn concentrated just south of S.GIOVANNI on Highway 9 about two kilometers west of SAVIGNANO.

1 Cdn Inf Div was in it again. 1 Cdn Inf Bde had been committed on a very narrow front and were slowly pushing along the axis formed by Highway 9 toward CESENA. 2 Cdn Inf Bde job would be either to relieve 1 Cdn Inf Bde or swing right with the intention of by-passing CESENA to the north. P.P.C.L.I. were reserve Bn at this time.

At an O Gp on the 16 Oct the Bde Comd, Lt Col M.P. Bogert, DSO, gave the Bde plan of attack to the Bn Comds. Seaforth Highlanders of C were to lead off and swinging north of Highway 9 would attack with the intention of forcing the enemy from the PISCIATELLO R. Loyal Edmonton Regt would follow up and take over if the going became too tough. The attack was launched the night of 16/17 Oct but the Seaforths of C were halted short of the PISCIATELLO by stiff ground resistance.

2 NZ Div on the right was keeping pace, while 1 Cdn Inf Bde continued to exert pressure toward CESENA.

Rain during the afternoon of the 17 Oct did not help matters; however, the Loyal Edmonton Regt attacked at last light 17 Oct and a two Coy bridgehead was established by first light 18 Oct. The day was spent in enlarging the bridgehead and a bridge was established over the PISCIATELLO by 19 Oct.

P.P.C.L.I. then moved through the bridgehead and advanced on the intermediate obj S.EGIDIO 611085. The Bn obj was the F. SAVIO with the intention of forcing a bridgehead over this river in square 5910.

During the advance, after a series of Coy leapfrog actions, D Coy was leading when the enemy was first encountered in strength 300 yds east of codename UPPERCHURCH (X rds 613088).

At 1415 hrs D Coy had one Pl pinned down and due to the close contact with the enemy it was not possible to use arty. Two of the tks supporting D Coy had been knocked out by an enemy SP gun at close range.

A Coy at 1500 hrs was sent around on a left hook to take S.EGIDIO, 300 yds south-west of UPPERCHURCH, to relieve the pressure on D Coy. The Pl of D Coy had been withdrawn and the whole Coy was withdrawn 1200 yds from UPPERCHURCH. Arty was now brought to bear and unit A Tk guns dispatched to D Coy to cover right flank.

A Coy had reached S. EGIDIO at 1800 hrs and a pincer movement was started on UPPERCHURCH, D Coy from the east and A Coy from the south-west. A Coy reached a group of houses near UPPERCHURCH with a strong patrol while D Coy cleared the place in stiff house to house fighting from the east.

The unit tank hunting Pl had accompanied D Coy and, on the obj being cleared, had scoured the area for the SP gun reported there, but nothing was contacted. The enemy had been firmly entrenched in this locality but there were an abundance of escape ~~tr~~<sup>ts</sup> leading north and north-west.

By midnight the area of S. EGIDIO had been firmed up and D Coy had sent a fighting patrol north-east to 619095 La CHIAVICHE.

B Coy now advanced through A Coy to 605096 reaching there at 0515 hrs having encountered only occasional sniper fire. Shelling and mortaring was still heavy. C Coy following up were ordered forward to rd junc 595100 (codename SNAKE) and again no opposition was encountered during this advance on SNAKE, which was snug at 0635 hrs 20 Oct.

B Coy was now moved to rd junc 596109 (TAY), again no opposition. TAY was reported snug at 0845 hrs. B and C Coys were now overlooking the SAVIO and each had 1 troop 12 RTR with them.

La CHIAVICHE was reported clear by B Coy at 0735 hrs.

Patrols sent to the F. SAVIO by C and B Coys had contacted the enemy on the west side. The river was somewhat swollen with the recent rain and the current was swift. The banks were steep on both sides with little cover. The patrols were unable to cross.

Coy positions at noon 20 Oct were: A Coy S. EGIDIO, B Coy TAY, C Coy SNAKE, D Coy 605096, Tac Bn HQ S. EGIDIO.

At an O Gp at 1430 hrs, the CO, Lt Col R.P. Clark, laid down the plan for the establishment of a bridgehead over the F. SAVIO. It was to be a limited two Coy bridgehead with A Coy crossing left at 592104 where the bridge was to be built and D Coy right about 300 - 400 yds north. H hr for the attack was 1700 hrs.

The attack went in on time but immediately both Coys ran into heavy MG fire from the west bank. Intense enemy mortar and shellfire also rained down on the river and the east bank.



A Coy 18 set was put out of action and their progress was uncertain until daybreak, but from the noise of the battle they were judged to be in close contact. D Coy was pinned down almost immediately but pushed on to the east bank of the river. However, due to the precipitous banks, lack of cover from fire, and the presence of enemy armour on the opposite bank, D Coy were unable to cross and consolidated on this side.

A Coy was a mystery machine for some time and it was not known whether or not they had gained the other side but it was found later that they had and were firmly entrenched two PIs strong, on the west bank of the river at 591102. A Sgt of A Coy re-crossed the river and gave the score to the CO who had moved to B Coy at TAY for better communications. The Sgt then took a new radio set back, along with some stragglers who had not crossed. The Coy strength on his return was 35, the whereabouts of the third PI was then unknown.

The CO had made a fresh plan to move D Coy across the river but orders from Bde at 2312 hrs cancelled this with instructions to firm up in the present positions.

A Coy was threatened by counter attacks several times but managed to discourage them and clung perilously but tenaciously to the slim bridgehead. With A Coy correcting, many destructive arty shoots were laid on threatening enemy movements with good effect. The Sgt from A Coy again re-crossed the river and was taken by the CO with Capt Robinson, OC D Coy, to Bde HQ where much valuable information was given to the Bde Comd and the COs of the Loyal Edmonton Regt and the Seaforths of C who were to attack on a two Bn front at 2000 hrs 21 Oct. The situation had quietened down somewhat but patrols from A Coy confirmed that the enemy was still very much alive only 100 yds to their front. DF fire was called down several times during the day and each time it caused a considerable pause in enemy activity.

At 2000 hrs the Seaforths of C on the right, Loyal Edmonton Regt left, attacked, and by midnight had considerably enlarged A Coy's bridgehead. As in the case of P.P.C.L.I. attack, no supporting arms were able to cross the river.

Information given by A Coy to Coy Comds of the right Bn was of great assistance; A Coy also provided valuable covering fire for the attack.

The continued rain had made it impossible for the R.C.E. to bridge the river and it was not until 0900 hrs 22 Oct that a ferry service of two assault boats was operating to evacuate cas and PW. P.P.C.L.I. role was now that of supply and transport and assistance in evacuating cas and PW.

On the right, 2 NZ Div had reached the line of the F. SAVIC, while south of CESENA 4 Br Div had crossed the river.

On the receipt of a report of a possible Xing slightly north at 590123 D Coy was dispatched to cover this point with one troop of 145 RAC.

The West Nova Scotia Regt had been placed temporarily under comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde and D Coy under comd West Nova Scotia Regt; D Coy made the primary assault followed by the WNSR. It was planned to establish a bridgehead at 590123 where the Engineers believed a bridge could be built to cross supporting arms.

D Coy, leading the WNSR attack, went in at midnight and the RCE promised to have a suitable bridge in position by first light if the attack was successful. Due to more rain during the evening, which made it difficult to find suitable crossing places, and the presence of an enemy standing patrol on the east bank of the river at 590123, some delay was caused in the D Coy attack, but by 0200 hrs D Coy had one Pl across and a limited bridgehead. The first coy of WNSR crossed then and swung right to their obj at 587126. D Coy was at 588124 in a group of buildings, and was pushing one Pl forward to the left to 585123. The second Coy of the WNSR crossed at 0534 hrs and things began to look brighter. Dawn was breaking however, and both sides were able to see each other. The enemy having the advantage with armour, counter attacked and cut off the Pl of D Coy P.P.C.L.I. at 585123. The close contact did not allow the use of our arty and rather than be systematically cut off sub unit by sub unit, the remainder of D Coy was forced to withdraw to the east side of the SAVIO. The forward Coy of the WNSR had also been counter attacked but beat it off. Later, acting on orders from the Bde Comd, this coy was withdrawn and by 0800 hrs all were back on the east side. D Coy had brought 3 PW with them and were re-organizing and consolidating at rd junc at 597122. Lt Shone and 24 ORs were missing.

Again due to the rising river and the caving banks the Engineer recon party had pronounced it impossible to bridge the SAVIO at this point. The lack of supporting arms on the other side had placed the bridgehead Coys at a decided disadvantage in the face of enemy armour and dug-in positions which covered all approaches to the river.

Toward noon of the 23 Oct the CO, Lt Col R.P. Clark, called an @ Gp where the details of the next move were placed before the Coy Comds. A plan to cross the WNSR at the A Coy PPCLI crossing place, and move north on the west bank to form a bridgehead for the Engineers was cancelled due to the condition of the river. P.P.C.L.I. were now to take up positions occupied by the Loyal Edmonton Regt. On completion of this plan, four 2-pounder (taper bore) A Tk guns were ferried across th the lead Bns.



The form now was for A Coy to remain in their present position, B Coy to move to 585104, C Coy to C.SALADUTI 589099, and D Coy to 596109.

By late afternoon the shelling of the crossing had diminished enough to allow the Engineers to employ bull-dozers to improve the approaches and to start erecting a pontoon bridge at 592109.

C Coy at 1850 hrs were in position at 589099. B Coy were not to move until ordered as the Loyal Edmonton Regt were still meeting with some resistance in trying to enlarge the bridgehead.

At 1940 hrs the good news was received that Lt Shone with ten men had returned.

At 2100 hrs B Coy was ordered forward to occupy the area of 585104.

3 Fd Coy RCE were going ahead with the bridging in good style and anticipated having a bridge suitable for jeeps and carriers by first light of 24 Oct.

By 0330 hrs B Coy was in their new position and the bridge completed. It was still raining and the Engineers were kept at it maintaining the crossing.

The Bn was now positioned as follows: A Coy still in their original position on the west bank, B Coy at 585104, C Coy 589099, D Coy on east side of river at 596109. Tac Bn HQ was now at 601101. The unit A Tk and MMG Pls had crossed.

As the enemy had broken contact with both the Loyal Edmonton Regt and West Nova Scotia Regt who had now crossed the river at 590123, a further move forward was ordered by the Bde Comd.

In a series of leapfrog actions, P.P.C.L.I. by 2200 hrs was in a position as follows: A Coy 553125, B Coy 565105, C Coy 561115, D Coy 585105, Tac Bn HQ 567106.

No opposition had been encountered although four PW were taken. The MMG and A Tk Pls and the SLI MMG Pl were with A Coy at 553125. A patrol from the Scout and Sniper Pl were sent forward from A Coy to recce 550135, 541126 and later to 531136 the Xing point over the BEVANO.

On 550135 and 541126 being reported clear by the patrol over their 18 set, A Coy was sent to 550135 codename CHAUDIERE, reaching it at 0135 hrs. B Coy was pushed forward to 541126 (DROMARA). The Scout patrol then moved on to 531136 OTTERY, from where they reported the bridge blown, and no enemy at 0850 hrs. C Coy was moved to this point immediately. The Xing over this small river was not difficult to repair and the stream was readily fordable. An Engineer recce party reported that it was an ARC bridging job but as no ARCs were then available a barrel culvert bridge was to be put in.

Tac Bn HQ moved forward to 555120 while D Coy was advancing to LONAN at 516150. The Scout patrol preceding D Coy to LONAN bumped the enemy there and withdrew to a position from which they directed very effective arty fire on the target. An enemy armoured car and MC had been sighted. Tks were now able to cross at OTTERY and reached D Coy after the arty cone on LONAN. D Coy with in support one troop of tks moved into LONAN reporting it snug at 1530 hrs.

Permission to put a coy in S.LEONARDO 503156 was at first refused, but later owing to a Div change of plan, the Bde Comd ordered P.P.C.L.I. forward to the F. RONCO to be in position on the near side by first light of the 26 Oct.

The CO went forward to each Coy in turn and issued orders for this advance which was aimed at 478171, a possible bridging site over the RONCO.

A Coy led off and pushing through B, C, and D Coys returned, reached CHERWELL 495158 at 2320 hrs having encountered no opposition. B, C, and D Coys were each moved forward in turn and by 0340 hrs 26 Oct the Bn was in position as follows: A Coy 495158, B Coy from area 499166 to 434169 (codename ANNAVERNA), C Coy 479164 (400 yds east of the F. RONCO), and D Coy 485173 (600 yds east of the river). The tks, during the hrs of darkness moved, and by 0610 hrs each coy had one troop of tks in support.

Engineers had been busy all night sweeping the rds from B Coy position to the north and north-west, these rds had been reported heavily mined by D Coy. A Tk guns, M 10s and MMGs, positioned on the right flank and front, made the position very secure.

Patrols, both Engineers and Infantry, had contacted the enemy across the F. RONCO. The river was swollen to a width of 200 yds in places with a swift current and the banks were found to be very steep. Civilians were very co-operative in this area and volunteered some valuable information and disclosed a point in the F. RONCO where the enemy were able to cross at 480193.

Patrols to BAGNOLO 480187 reported the bridge blown. Small parties of snipers were busy sniping across the river at enemy who had become less cautious with a wide river protecting them. Several hits were recorded.

During the afternoon 26 Oct, a standing patrol of 1 officer and 15 ORs was established at 498182 on the main lateral rd from BAGNOLO about one kilometer north of B and D Coys. Taking this point as a base three recce patrols were sent out. One recce patrol went to BAGNOLO, another to 491193 - a point on the rd leading east from the suspected enemy Xing place. A recce patrol from the Scout and Sniper Pl made a round trip through PIEVE QUINTA 521191 to ROTTA 502195 and return.

All patrols had nothing to report except civilian stories of slight enemy activity in the area further north.



The standing patrol remained at 498182 all night, returning at first light 27 Oct. They had nothing to report.

On the morning of the 27 Oct the Bde Comd, Lt Col M.P. Bogert, DSO, arrived with the good news that the Bn would be relieved, possibly by 28 Oct, by 12 Lancers. An advance party from the 12 Lancers arrived at 1200 hrs and the CO conducted them around the Bn positions and arranged details of the takeover.

The relief was completed by 1200 hrs 28 Oct and P.P.C.L.I. moved back approx three miles to where the remainder of 2 Cdn Inf Bde were concentrated and there awaited the word to move to billets in RICCIONE.

During the whole operation the Bn had taken 43 PW mostly by A Coy across the SAVIO.

The total distance covered operationally was approx twenty-five miles from SAVIGNANO to the F. RONCO, of which distance about ten miles had been an advance without the support of the other Bns of 2 Cdn Inf Bde.

The Bn suffered the following total cas during the operation from the 14 - 28 Oct.

Officers	- Lt M.O. Scott wounded.
Other Ranks	- 9 killed
	55 wounded
	<u>14 missing</u>
Total	78 + 1 offr = <u>79</u>

#### LESSONS LEARNED DURING RECENT ACTION from SAVIGNANO to F. RONCO 14 - 28 Oct 44.

- (1) More time should be allowed for detailed recon of crossings before an attack across a river.
- (2) Information from civilian partisans should be treated with suspicion although often of great value.
- (3) In an attack at night our searchlights, shining behind the attacking troops over their heads, tend to silhouette them. It is suggested that the direction of the beam of searchlights be changed while the attack is going in so that the beam is not directed over the heads of the troops from their rear.
- (4) Tanks can move at night, even on a dark cloudy night over trails, if guides are provided.
- (5) 6 pdr A Tk guns are most useful used aggressively, well forward, against known enemy positions - e.g; buildings and MG nests. They apparently do not draw any more retaliatory fire than one would normally expect.



- (6) The 2 pdr A Tk guns in a pursuit role were found to be most useful due to great mobility.
- (7) Toggle ropes would be of great assistance to assaulting troops when crossing a river. It is suggested that they be part of Coy stores.
- (8) In an advance against a retreating enemy, Scouts proved most useful, particularly when provided with an 18 set. By sending word back that an objective is clear of enemy, the marching troops following up are able to make better time without necessitating complete deployment.
- (9) To adequately supply a formation that has established a bridgehead over a swollen, unbridgeable river, personnel from some other formation should be used, to avoid weakening bridgehead forces. Meeting places or supply points should be established, UC of a responsible officer, on both sides of the river. This officer can organize and correlate carrying parties going either way and would ensure supplies reaching the formation they were intended for and do away with useless double effort.
- (10) A unit Comd should make every effort to cross his main means of communication, E.G. his 18 set, over a river once the bridgehead has been established.
- (11) Although it is appreciated that for purposes of control, limited objectives are normally necessary, it is considered that, where there is danger of losing contact with a retreating enemy, Comds should be given more scope e.g. temporary loss of contact between the SAVIO and RONCO rivers.

APPENDIX - Story of the Part Played by A Coy in  
the Crossing of the SAVIO R.  
as written by Maj E. Cutbill,  
OC A Coy, P.P.C.L.I.

During the morning 20 Oct the Coy moved up to an area 600 yds south of "RIMIN" and there made itself comfortable. At about 1500 hrs I attended CO's O Gp dealing with orders for an attack to be launched across the R. SAVIO this afternoon. Two coys are to form the bridgehead. My Coy attacks on the left, using the road immediately in front of C Coy at SNAKE as a SL. The Coy bridgehead is very limited and includes C. MEDRI and C. SALADNA both of which are about 350 yds west of the river. Fd and A Tk arty, MMGs, mortars, together with fire from "B" and "C" are to paste the area and known enemy positions in rear from H-10 to H hr. After that harassing fire and fire on demand will be brought down. H hr is set for 1630 hrs which will mean a mad rush with little time for recce and orders. This is later changed to 1700 hrs which still means not a moment to spare. The CO offers a "touch of the whip" then I meet my Pl Comds and quickly give them the story. CSM Wood marches the coy to the FUP some 2300 yds distant while my O Gp goes ahead by carrier. At that time there is only 40 mins until H hr.

We make a brief recce of the route, river crossing, and objective from C Coy area, then await the Coy in the FUP.

The barrage comes, H hr arrives but no Coy. Owing to the distance they had to march and the amount of bogged traffic to by-pass they reach the FUP twelve mins late. I get the old man on the set and he says "push off when ready, but don't count on sp fire".

In a few minutes we are set. The lead Pl under Lt Scott moves off followed by the second Pl (L/Sgt Whitford), then coy HQ and the reserve Pl (Sgt Buckberry).

The Jerry doesn't waste any time. No sooner has the lead Pl crossed the SL than all hell comes down on them and the balance of the Coy. My three stretcher bearers are committed then and there and do not marry up with the coy until many hrs later. We push on under observation from the enemy 600 yds away until the forward Pl just can't go forward any further owing to Mg, mortar and arty fire.

I try the set but heavy interference prevents asking for arty fire. There is only one thing to do so we do it, that is to deploy well and move around on the right where there is the odd bit of cover. It is a slow job and a number of the lads get shot up or step on mines which are all over the place.



As we draw near the river an MG 42 opens up from about 50 yds range and really lets us have it. I wonder what percentage of tracer he uses. It looks like a silver arrow flying at one.

The river crossing is a mad scramble but as the current is swift we make a slow crossing and that "42" doesn't seem a bit embarrassed in our presence nor do his arty and mortars.

Arriving under the friendly protection of the west bank I count our strength. We are 17 all ranks. That is not good. CSM Wood, L/Sgt Whitford, Sgt Sparrow, and myself are the only ones above Cpl rank in the party. The fire is still heavy on the other side of the river and it is now nearly dark. We wait a short time then one man is sent to recce back to find out the reason for the delay. He returns but is alone. We assume the remainder of the coy to be either pinned down or wounded.

A quick recce and I decide to shove on to our objective. There is a draw leading towards C. MEDRI. A small recce patrol goes ahead, but has not gone far before it draws a burst from an MG 42 which is covering that line of approach. Pte Davis, out ahead, volunteers to sneak up on the position. He is a brave fellow but his courage unfortunately is halted by a burst received in the stomach and before many minutes he is dead.

There is nothing to be gained by waiting so we decide to follow the river bank south until we can find another line of approach to C. MEDRI.

About 200 yds further on a thick wedge running back from the river looks like just the thing. The searchlights are on now and I am afraid we will be silhouetted unless we follow a covered approach. It seems that we make a lot of noise but either Jerry is resting or just allowing us to enter his parlor. Anyway, we get about 60 yds distant from the cassa and there hold up to see the lay of the land. Our 18 set by the way was knocked out in the crossing so we don't know if the coy on our right was successful.

The cassa looks very big and imposing and might well put up a couple of Pls. I ask Sgt Whitford to send out a two man patrol from his Pl to find out the score. The two stout hearted men melt into the "artificial moonlight" and all is still. They return shortly and report that four sentries guard the building and there is considerable movement nearby.

What to do next. Attack the house with the benefit of surprise (perhaps) and hold on until relieved? It sounds OK but suppose he is strong or suppose he counter attacks at dawn, and besides, we have no communications to Tac and it is doubtful if any tactical success could be achieved by holding one cassa in the middle of Jerryland and not be able to poke our nose outside the door without drawing fire.

Still, we can't sit doing nothing so lets continue the recce, then find a good position and send back a runner with the "gen".

That decided, off we push in a northerly direction. We almost trip over what looks like a dug-in position before covering more than 400 yds. Quite right, that's what it is. We form a rough ring around it pronto and the CSM hauls some grenades out of his belt and chucks them in the entrance. Result - three Jerry prisoners and two others permanently out of action.

The racket must have been terrific so we grab the Hitlerites and run hell bent for leather towards the river. Our next step is now solved. What could be simpler than to send the PW back under escort, the escort them to return here with a new 18 set after reporting to the CO and getting further orders. Sgt Sparrow volunteered to re-cross that bleak, fireswept 600 yds over mine fda to C Coy area and deliver the goods.

Off he goes and the rest of us, finding a good spot where the bank is quite high commenced that old fashioned past time of digging in. We of course take all the usual precautions of posting guards etc and within an hour we feel secure. We wait and wait. Finally at 0400 hrs Sgt Sparrow returns and brings with him a few of our lads who had been pinned down earlier. Our strength is now 35 all ranks. Sparrow has an 18 set and orders from the CO for us to hold the fort here until relieved. Thats OK by us.

21 Oct came the dawn and spasmodic enemy mortar fire of the "moaning minnie" variety. Jerry, I think, is wondering what the score is and does not yet know we are still here right in his lap. On the other hand we are not sure he hasn't pulled out. I get Sgt Buckberry (now with us again) to send out a recce patrol. It returns with the news that von Hun has some beautiful dug-in positions all around us at about 75 yds distance and is there with flags flying so to speak.

From then on things begin to happen. Over comes the big stuff. He says to hell with 20 RPG per day and just lets it slide right over with no economy at all. The worst of all is "Moaning minnie" which is also the most accurate. We spit dirt. He then gets nasty and takes up a position on a wooded promontory 50 yds away ~~infiltrating~~ <sup>ENGINEERING</sup> our position and lets fly with an MG 42. That's no bwana. One of my better shots keeps that position peppered up while we resume our watch.

Sure enough, on the other flank he is trying to counter attack. We threw a wall of steel at him and he withdraws. Meanwhile C Coy can bring down MMG fire on the flat open ground immediately beyond the bank where we are dug in. This duelling continues on and off all day. Several times the situation gets quite critical.



Fortunately we silence the position on the promontory, but it is necessary to send out a fighting patrol under Cpl Baker in order to quieten the other positions which are troublesome. This patrol killed four and captured six Jerries. Good show!

Higher formation wants information of enemy defences etc, so Sgt Sparrow again volunteers to make the perilous trip. He delivers the information but on his return trip is wounded.

We are all very hungry and thirsty having had no food since noon yesterday. Worse still our ammunition is getting low. It makes you think!

Arty DF fire proved its worth to us more than once. The enemy seems to take a dim view of it and shuts up like a clam for a while after each pounding.

Another trouble we have is the rain. It has already caused two of our caves to collapse and it was a race to dig out the occupants before they smothered.

About 1530 hrs the CSM goes over to C Coy and thence to Tac HQ to keep the "A" wheels rolling - ammunition and ration arrangements, cas, etc. He returns later with news that the SHofC and LER will attack through us tonight. That makes us very happy. The weather also approves because it stops raining for a half hour (but not longer).

2000 hrs rolls around preluded by a barrage of terrific proportions. Our arty shells and MMG bullets whiz overhead and miss us by what seems a hairs breadth. Lets hope there are no "shorts" and I hope to God our own infantry don't attack us.

We see the advancing troops some distance away silhouetted clearly against the searchlights. D Coy SHofC arrive in "cave avenue". I give their Coy Comd full particulars of the enemy and the ground.

His coy moves out but is stopped by heavy MG fire. He then calls for 3" mortar ap and covered by fire from every weapon in our coy he is then able to move forward from the bridgehead.

Shortly after, a carrying party from C Coy arrives with much needed ammunition and supplies. Multi bwana.

We remained put until 0800 hrs 24 Oct by which time the bridgehead had been sufficiently enlarged for us to move into cassas and there dry out and stretch the legs and start anticipating what the next job will be. I hope it's not a river crossing.

Signed: (E.W. Cutbill) Maj  
OC A Coy, PPCLI

## LESSONS LEARNED IN THE SAVIO RIVER CROSSING.

1. SURPRISE was definitely obtained in this battle due to the following reasons:
  - (a) Weather - Extremely boisterous weather compelled the enemy to remain in their dugouts making a complete alert impossible.
  - (b) Crossings - were made at very unlikely places. The banks of the river were very steep on both sides and the bed, very muddy. Obviously, the enemy did not expect a crossing at these points.
2. ARTILLERY. This was completely covered in detail in a report sent to Col. Ross at the Corps discussion. The value of having all officers, and not merely Company Commanders, able to call down and direct fire cannot be too strongly stressed.
3. 3" Mortars. A M. F. C. should be with each of the assault companies. This would relieve the Coy Comd. of the responsibility of directing fire when he should be directing operations. 3" Mortars are the fastest support weapons available other than the normal Coy weapons. Fire can be obtained in 2 or 3 minutes, is very accurate and can be used to advantage as a close support weapon. Both accuracy and speed of their support should be stressed to Coy Comd.'s and more use made of this weapon.
4. 2" Mortars. It was found that this weapon drew considerable small arms fire when used at night. It is a very effective weapon and can be used to far greater advantage by the Pl Comd. It should be stressed to the Pl Comd. that it is his closest and quickest form of support and should always be taken into consideration in any plan of attack or consolidation, instead of merely a piece of G 1098 equipment. Mortar men should be given plenty of training and its use at 'low angle' brought to the fore.
5. Inter-Communication. The following points were noted:
  - (a) The most experienced Signallers should operate Control Set, as this position is the more important.
  - (b) Officer to officer conversation should be stressed as it has proven most satisfactory. An officer is always available at BHQ and can speak on the set immediately.
  - (c) Present wireless sets are worn out and are badly in need of replacements.
6. ANTI-TANK WEAPONS. Tank hunting with PIAT's and #75 Grenades has been covered separately, but the use of these weapons should be stressed, as a result of their success in the SAVIO R. action, in the training of Rifle Coys.
7. P.W. These were used for evacuating both our own, and enemy casualties. During the later stages of the action, they could have been used for burying enemy dead.
8. CASUALTIES. In river crossings, where bridging operations are likely to be delayed, stretcher parties should cross with the rifle coys to collect the wounded on the far side. This would speed up evacuation when a bridge was completed.

The Fd. Ambulance driving between the RAP and the CCP was delayed, while carrying a serious case. This man later died. Delaying of an ambulance should be made impossible.

In siting the RAP, considerable attention should be given to a channel of evacuation from RAP to CCP in addition to the obtaining of casualties from the forward companies.
9. ENGINEERS. It is felt that the first ferry and eventual bridge across the SAVIO, took a little more time than necessary, though it is realised that tremendous difficulties were imposed by the casualties to the Recce party. It is suggested that an R.E. rep might profitably remain at the HQ of the crossing battalion. In light of infantry progress and river reports he could, as they come in, quickly organise a detailed recce, plan the appropriate type of crossing and institute supply of necessary materiel. It is felt that one officer to do the recce is not sufficient in such an important case.