

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

29 Jun 44

CANADIAN OPERATORS - MEDITERRANEAN AREA  
Extracts from Memoranda (Series 20)

1. Further to my 24/AAI/1/3 (Hist), dated 8 Jun 44, attached are further extracts from Memoranda forwarded by Historical Officers dealing with the operations of Canadian formations and units in the Mediterranean Area.
2. These extracts contain further information concerning Canadian participation in the offensive which began 11 May 44. They deal with the operations in which 1 Cdn Inf Div broke through the centre of the Adolf Hitler Line and 5 Cdn Armd Div subsequently exploited across and beyond the River Molfa.
3. These extracts are circulated for general information only, and opinions stated are not to be considered as necessarily expressions of official doctrine.

Sgd for

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CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS.

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CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

MAY 1944

EXTRACTS FROM MEMORANDA

(SERIES 20)

1. REPORT BY CCRA 1 CDN CORPS ON OPERATIONS  
AGAINST THE ADOLF HITLER LINE ON 23 MAY 44.

30 May 44

1. This is a preliminary report and covers the following main points:-

- (a) Outline Plan 1 Cdn Corps
- (b) Allotment of Arty for Operations
- (c) Grouping of Arty for Operations
- (d) Outline Arty Plan
- (e) Method of production of orders
- (f) Method of Control of Fire
- (g) Ammunition
- (h) Lessons Learnt

2. Outline Plan 1 Cdn Corps

The operation was carried out in two phases:-

- (a) Phase I - 1 Cdn Inf Div was to break through the HITLER LINE and secure the high ground approx 3000 yds beyond with a view to fanning out to destroy the enemy. This attack was made on a two bde front supported by 25 Arme Tk Bde. There was an intermediate objective approx 1000 yds from the SL and 2000 yds from the final objective. On intermediate objective there was a pause to re-group.
- (b) Phase II - 5 Cdn Armd Div was to pass through 1 Cdn Inf Div and seize the crossings over the River Melfa.

3. Arty Available.....

The exact number of guns used is now being checked but from the infm available at the moment the total is 798 guns.....

5. Outline Arty Plan

The broad plan was to have all arty that could bear on the front directly s p in turn, the attack of 1 Cdn Inf Div and then the follow through of 5 Cdn Armd Div. The Arty of Pol Corps was to fire cones on the high ground to the RIGHT of 13 Corps. 10 Corps was responsible for CB on the "ATINA gun group", which is not silenced could harass the gun areas of the s p arty of 13 Corps. 1 Cdn Corps was responsible for CB on its own and 13 Corps front.

(a) 1 Cdn Inf Div Plan

- (i) Arty preparation on HITLER LINE on 13 Corps front from H-55 to H-45 mins with the objective of deceiving the enemy as to the place of attack and to have the enemy man his guns.

- (ii) Fire plan consisting of a barrage on a 3100 yd front and conc commenced at H-3 mins, and to continue for 187 mins incl a pause of 60 mins. The pause actually lasted for 575 mins during which the barrage continued on the pause line.
- (iii) A separate CM task table was issued and the CMO was given one tp from three div fd regts firing in the upper register, four tps 3.7" HAA guns firing airburst and the 4.2" mortars of the 1 Cdn Inf Div Sp Bn.
- (b) 5 Cdn Armd Div Plan
  - (i) A pre-arranged fire plan consisting of a series of "STONKS" covering an area of 3000 yds in width and 6500 yds in depth was drawn up by CRA 5 Cdn Armd Div. These were prepared in two Group a fwd and a rear group, to be fired on a pre-arranged code word.

(This was changed during the battle and a fresh plan issued but was NOT fired due to the fact that the follow through of 5 Cdn Armd Div did not take place until 24 May. A third fire plan was issued using only the arty of 1 Cdn Corps for this adv).

(c) Counter Bty

- (i) The CB consisted of a pre-arranged programme of concs varying from 16 to 1 down to 5 to 1 and averaging approx 10 to 1. This programme commenced at H-52 with part of the arty and all the med and hy arty was available from H-40 to H-3 mins.
- (ii) After zero there was no pre-arranged programme and certain arty was available to the CBO for use as required.

6. Method of Production of Orders

- (i) A preliminary conference was called by CCRA 1 Cdn Corps at HQ 1 Cdn Corps at 1500 hrs 20 May 44. Reprs from all fmns attended together with CARA of Cdn Div and Comd 1 Cdn AGRA. At this conference the following points were taken up and settled:-

(a) Allotment of Arty,

(b) Responsibility for fire plans:-

- (1) 1 Cdn Inf Div attack - CRA 1 Cdn Inf Div
- (2) 5 Cdn Armd Div attack - CRA 5 Cdn Armd Div
- (3) CB Cdn Corps and 13 Corps fronts - Comd 1 Cdn AGRA.
- (4) Fire sp on high ground on RIGHT flank - CCPA pol Corps.
- (5) CB ATINA gun group - Comd 2AGRA 10 Corps.

(c) Amn allotted to comds responsible for fire plans.

(d) Arty/R for ATINA gun group under Comd 2 AGRA. Arty/R for 1 Cdn Corps and 13 Corps front under Comd 1 Cdn AGRA but briefing remained under Comd 6 AGRA. AOP for CB left under each corps for its own corps front.

(e) CSRA and Comd AGRA were told air effort available and told to prepare demands for next day.

(f) Comms required were decided and responsibility for laying lines was laid down.

(iii) A coordinating conference was called by CCRA 1 Cdn Corps to be held at RCA 1 Cdn Inf Div at 1600 hrs 21 May. Reps from all fms concerned attended. The outline plans of 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div were given by the CsRA and the following points were then taken up:-

- (a) Additional arm requirement of 1 Cdn Inf Div.
- (b) Control of reps and reps required.
- (c) Time and place of issue of final orders.

(iii) Final orders were prepared and issued as follows:-

- (a) Corps Arty Order - CCRA 1 Cdn Corps.
- (b) Task tables 1 Cdn Inf Div - CRA 1 Cdn Inf Div.
- (c) Task tables 5 Cdn Armd Div - CRA 5 Cdn Armd Div.
- (d) Task tables CC - Comd 1 Cdn AGRA.

All task tables were submitted to HQ RCA 1 Cdn Corps and complete order issued by LO.

## 7, Method of Control of Fire

### (i) 1 Cdn Inf Div Attack

CRA 1 Cdn Inf Div was at the Div Tac HQ with line comn to his own HQ and back to 1 Cdn AGRA and through AGRA to CCRA at HQ 1 Cdn Corps. CRA 1 Cdn Inf Div called for fire of superimposed arty as he required from 1 Cdn Inf Div arty regts and 1 Cdn AGRA only. Calls for fire from other arty and any matter affecting the arty as a whole, as required by GOC 1 Cdn Inf Div, were made by CRA 1 Cdn Inf Div to CCRA 1 Cdn Corps.

### (ii) 5 Cdn Armd Div Attack

CRA 5 Cdn Armd Div for his attack was to work on the same system from Tac HQ 5 Cdn Armd Div.....

(iv) Reps required for this operation at Div HQ and Corps HQ level were:-

RCA 1 Cdn Inf Div - Rep from 1 Cdn AGRA  
- Rep from 1 DIM on LEFT flank#

RCA 5 Cdn Armd Div- Rep from 1 Cdn AGRA

1 Cdn AGRA - Rep from 6 AGRA #  
- Rep from 13 FA Bde #

CCRA 1 Cdn Corps - Rep from RCA 1 Cdn Inf Div  
- Rep from RCA 5 Cdn Armd Div  
- Rep from 1 Cdn AGRA  
- Rep from RA 4 Brit Div  
- Rep from RA 78 Brit Div  
- Rep from RA 8 Ind Div  
- Rep from 6 AGRA

# These reps could have been with CCRA 1 Cdn Corps but were left with fms as the liaison was already established.



(v) The following LOs were also with CCRA 1 Cdn Corps throughout the operation:-

LO from CCRA Pol Corps  
LO from Comd Arty CEF.

LOs were also called in from fmns to deliver fire plans when required.

(vi) One "WILLIAM" tgt was successfully fired. T.O.T. was 53 mins after the request for the fire was received from CRA 1 Cdn Inf Div. Nineteen fd regts, nine medium regts and two hy regts fired on this tgt. A T.O.T. was required otherwise this time could have been greatly reduced.

(vii) Pauses in the fire plan were changed, minor alterations and even fairly major alterations in the fire plan were carried out using this system of comms and reps. Any major alterations in fire plan were in fact confirmed in writing and sent out by LO.

### 8. AMMUNITION.....

(ii) Dumping was carried out in a period of 72 hrs although daily expenditure amounted to approx 116 rpg fd, and 66 rpg med, during this period. There was no difficulty in dumping the fd arty amn. The med amn was a little more difficult but was successfully accomplished.

(iii) Actual expenditures for 1 Cdn Corps during the period were:-

	20 May	21 May	22 May	23 May	24 May	25 May	Total for Periods
25-Pr	90	132	126	377	75	10	810
105 mm	-	20	47	155	52	36	308
4.5"	59	88	27	137	105	70	486
5.5"	56	139	30	207	63	7	507
155 mm	24	19	3	44	15	41	146
7.2"	29	3	1	84	15	1	133
75mm PAK	-	1	-	77	-	-	78
How							

### 9. Lessons Learned

(i) For an attack on such a scale as this operation 72 hrs preparation is only just sufficient. It would be difficult to do it in less but it might be carried out in 48 hrs.

(ii) CRA 1 Cdn Inf Div was involved in making a fire plan for a minor attack the night the task tables for the major attack were being drawn up. This was very difficult and he should have appointed one of his COs as A/CRA. Two extra staff offrs and clerks were supplied to the CRA from Cdn Corps RCA.

(iii) In any battle the Staff of all HQs RCA must have extra officers brought in and a duty offr appointed to answer phone calls and take minor matters off the hands of the staff. It is not good for one of the senior staff officers to have to

work on a wireless set continuously or answer the telephone as he cannot get on with this proper job. It has been found in operations from day to day that it is necessary to augment all staffs RCA at all levels and to provide LOs. This is a continual drain on the regts and staffs should be increased and LOs permanently provided on the establishment of all HQs RCA.

- (iv) Cones such as "WILLIAM" tgts can be called for and brought down as quickly as UNCLE tgts provided the control outlined above is used.
- (v) The CCRA must be at Corps HQ if there is more than one attacking div involved.
- (vi) Corps HQ must be close up behind the gun areas otherwise the comms will not be sure. One line to the AGRA which is the hub of all comms is too risky.
- (vii) The CRA of the attacking div must be with his GOC. It would be safer from the comm standpoint if this was at Div HQ and not at Tac HQ.
- (viii) Large fire plans can be altered using the above system of control. Major alterations are always risky and should be confirmed by LO.
- (ix) A running check must be kept on amm expenditures through reps from fms.
- (x) It is most satisfactory if the CRA handles only his own div arty and has a direct call on one AGRA during the battle and any matters of control for arty beyond this or matters which affect all the arty are handled by the CCRA.
- (xi) Arty/R should be controlled on a fairly wide front under one AGRA and continuous coverage should be provided. In this case 1 Cdn Corps and 13 Corps were treated as one front and Arty/R comms controlled by 6 AGRA.
- (xii) AOPs doing CB work under the AGRA should work on a narrower front. One AOP worked with each AGRA on its own corps front.
- (xiii) Div HQs should be sufficiently far back that they are not shelled and mortared too often otherwise conferences and preparation of fire plans are made much more difficult.
- (xiv) It has been found that having a gun shop detachment form an AWD and establish this in the gun area or just in rear has proved of tremendous value. As a result of this no guns of Cdn AGRA have been out of action for more than a brief period except one per regt which is always in wksp undergoing a routine check. After three weeks intense operations the guns are now in better condition than they were at the start, as certain necessary modifications have been carried out.



2. EXTRACTS FROM "THE ENEMY ON THE ADOLF HITLER LINE, MAY, 1944",  
PREPARED BY G.S. (LIT), HQ, 1 CDN INF DIV

.....The object of the Hitler Line when first constructed must have been to duplicate the GUSTAV LINE: a second impregnable line in the offchance the GUSTAV LINE should not hold.

The German Command intended to hold the line primarily only as a delaying position but with the proviso that if our impetus was lost or the line held for some few days the delaying position might be turned into a permanent defensive line. This had been the case on the ARIELLI LINE.

After our unsuccessful attempts to pierce the GUSTAV LINE the enemy's confidence led to his downfall. He neglected the further construction of the ADOLF HITLER LINE. Though the main A/Tk emplacements in the form of Panther turrets on concrete emplacements were complete and manned, neglect was evident in the lack of infantry positions. Apart from a few concrete dugouts with only one uncovered opening for one man, there were hardly any trenches, firing positions or crawl trenches when we hit the line. The crops had not been cut and therefore fields of fire were very restricted.

To compensate for these disadvantages the German Command needed more infantry than was originally intended for the line. In actuality less than the minimum were immediately available when the actual battle started, due to losses on and behind the R GARI....

By the 21 May it was apparent that the calibre of troops on parts of the HITLER LINE was poor, that the defences were not as complete as air photos suggested, and that Teller and S mines had only been laid in the area of the PORTECORVO road, and in small belts across the front. Many wooden Italian box mines were laid. As soon as the 4 Cdn Recce Regt had pushed some of their armoured cars through the minefield at 725155 the 44 Div Ersatz Bn became thoroughly alarmed and broke, losing 86 PW and suffering some 25 casualties. As the pressure continued against this unit it virtually ceased to fight. During the night the enemy was active trying to strengthen his defences.

On the 22 May the first test in strength of the HITLER LINE was made.....

Although mortaring and Nebelwerfer bombs were causing the majority of casualties it soon became evident that a small number of enemy in armoured LMG pillboxes and firing from concrete emplacements were offering sufficient protection to the enemy A/Tk defences to make the going extremely difficult and slow for all arms. Many enemy infantry were in hastily dug slits and suffered heavy casualties. Once through the mines the tanks in support found that they were up against a very strong A/Tk defence, particularly the well camouflaged Mk V turret on concrete emplacements. By last light however, the southern end of the HITLER LINE was turned although resistance had by no means ended.....

The construction of the HITLERLINE was an emphasis on A/Tk defence in depth. All fixed defences were well built, had good fields of fire and capable of resisting most shell fire. Although the A/Tk ditch was passable in many places it was still an obstacle as it was covered by fire and only traversable by tanks moving in lowest gear.

and exposing their under bellies to the enemy. That nine belts were not complete was a point of over-confidence in the GUSTAV LINE. The heavy casualties suffered emphasized the lines' weaknesses, too few infantry, poor long range fields of fire for LMGs because of thick and abundant crops, and the incompleteness of the unfixed positions. Artillery had caught A/Tk guns above ground and the crews poorly protected. Enemy infantry found themselves outflanked because of undetected movement through the crops.....

On the morning of the 25 May, the day of the main attack, the enemy infantry only numbered 775 all ranks. In addition to this there were the supporting arms. By last light the Division had captured 15 officers and 547 other ranks. 500 enemy dead were left to be buried. Mopping up was still going on, and PW coming in. Of the infantry involved in the attack hardly any escaped. Of the supporting arms over 80% were killed or captured. 25% of the PW captured were from staffs and supporting arms. Presumably this is true of the killed too.

The main attack went in against 361 PGR. By the end of the first phase of our attack the infantry were beaten. The A/Tk defence had been penetrated and was badly hit but was still firing. A few of the Panther turrets on concrete bases were still firing, but the towed BAK 75 mm were mostly deserted. By noon, because of the pressure from the main attack and because of the threatening encirclement from the south, the enemy had made up their minds to withdraw in the south. On the right flank extremely heavy mortar fire was still coming down from that still intact part of the HITLER LINE. This too, provided a relatively safe haven from which enemy tanks, Sps and infantry could emerge as the situation permitted. Thus while the withdrawal was slowly in progress it went undetected. Further to the south the situation was more apparent and by a quick change in our plans so that phase two of our attack struck at the centre of our front these tactics were effectively neutralized. Because of poor communications and the difficulty of movement the withdrawal was extremely slow and so by 1630 hours when the second attack was launched the enemy were just in the midst of their withdrawal movement. The artillery stopped further movement and killed many. Our troops were in full pursuit of the enemy by the time the artillery had stopped and the battle turned into a mopping-up phase...

It must have been realized by the Germans early on the day 24 that the situation was beyond repair, serious to the point that a full scale withdrawal was necessary on to the next natural obstacle, to reorganize their sadly depleted and dejected troops. But already a bridge had been established across the MELFA R by the 5 Canadian Armoured Division.

### 3. THE CROSSING OF THE MELFA AND THE SECURING OF A BRIDGEHEAD BY 5 CDN ARMED BDE GP (REPORT BY COMD 5 CDN ARMED BDE)

#### GOC's INTENTION

1. The GOC 5 Cdn Armd Div issued orders that 5 Cdn Armd Bde Gp would adv to the RIVER MELFA and secure crossings and a covering posn for the passage of 11 Cdn Inf Bde over the MELFA.

#### FORCE

2. 5 Cdn Armd Bde Gp consisted of:

5 Cdn Armd Bde with under comd:

Ir R C  
8 Cdn Fd Regt (SP) RCA  
64 Bty (75 mm Jeep Bty)



Two btys (SP) T tk guns - 4 Cdn A Tk Regt RCA  
10 Fd Sqn RCF  
7 Lt Fd Amb RCAMC  
Two Sgns CGHG

and in Sp:

4 A Tk Regt RCA (less two tractor-drawn btys)  
Remainder of Div RCE resources  
Remainder 5 Cdn Armd Div Arty resources plus  
all the Corps Arty in sp of 5 Cdn Armd Div.

APPRECIATION AND PLAN - COMD 5 CDN ARMD BDE GP

3. Due to the width of the front and the depth to which the attack had to go, it was appreciated that any plan for the crossing of the RIVER MELPA had to be very flexible. Secondly it was appreciated that with an exposed right flank and with the uncertainty as to what would happen on that portion of the HITLER LINE NORTH of the AQUINO a firm base must be established between the HITLER LINE and the line of the RIVER MELPA in order that enemy posns in any direction could be dealt with. It was also appreciated that due to the difficulty of ascertaining accurately at the H hr the exact posn of the break through of 1 Cdn Inf Div on the HITLER LINE, no form of fixed arty sp could be utilized.

(i) Accordingly Comd 5 Cdn Armd Bde Gp divided the force into the following gps:

Gp 1 - BCDs with in sp: Ir RC (two coys of which were lifted in carriers, the remainder on the res sqn of tks)  
One bty SP A Tk guns

Gp 2 - LASH with in sp: One coy Westar R (M) plus two scouts pls,  
One bty SP A Tk guns  
One bty 8 Cdn Fd Regt (SP) RCA

Gp 3 - Bde res which consisted of:

Westar R (M) (less one coy and two scout pls)  
8 NBH  
8 Cdn Fd Regt (SP) RCA (less one bty)  
64 Jeep Bty  
10 Fd Sqn RCE (less dets)  
7 Lt Fd Amb (less three secs)

NOTE 1 - One sec of the 7 Lt Fd Amb moved with each armd regt.

NOTE 2 - A det of six sps per armd sqn, three in each of two Stuart tks of the armd sgns, moved with all three armd regts. These parties carried mine lifting eqpt, gapping eqpt, marking eqpt and demolitions.

(ii) The plan in brief was as follows:

Gp 1 would move through breach formed by 1 Cdn Inf Div and secure a firm base in the gen area of MANCINI 7122. Once this firm base was established gp 2 would pass through the firm base or on one flank of the firm base depending upon the situation, and cross the RIVER MELPA at pt 688243. This crossing to be effected by the Mot Coy and if possible by the armour of the gp. Immediately the crossing spot was found, the remainder of the Westar R ready to go fwd and enlarge the breach.

The 8 NBH were to be prepared to cross the RIVER MELFA through the brhead if a suitable crossing was found and exploit in the gen direction of CEPRANO. During the move fwd of Gp 2, one sqn of the GWHG was to cover the right flank and one sqn was to cover the left flank in order to ensure that the Westmr R (less one coy) could proceed to the river line without exposed flanks. As soon as the brhead had been established and the 8 NBH been able to cross and move up towards CEPRANO, it was anticipated that Gp 1 would be relieved on their firm base by 11 Cdn Inf Bde and would then go into bde res.

### GROUPING

3. Anticipating that there would be difficulties in the fwd assembly area, grouping as outlined above was carried out EAST of the FORME d'AQUINO in the gen area 7917. The force grouped as above moved during the night 23/24 May into the fwd assembly area in rear of 3 Cdn Inf Bde. A late change in plan rendered it impossible to assemble in the area previously laid down by Div and as a result the move fwd went on practically all night. The move into the assembly area was made more difficult by the fact that 25 Armd Bde which had been supporting 1 Cdn Inf Div on 23 May, had to return for refuelling and rearming. The net result of the change in assembly areas, plus the difficulties of move on congested rds, was a deferment of two hrs in the time laid down for the leading tps to pass through the fwd elements of 3 Cdn Inf Bde.

#### (i) The Move Fwd - Gp 1

As stated above, the start time laid down was 0600 hrs but due to the conditions which existed plus the fact that the assembly area was being shelled and mortared, the leading tks were not able to get fwd to their SL and did not cross it until 0800 hrs. The BCDs moved with two sqns up, each sqn being supported by a coy of inf in carriers. Although no direct contact was made with the enemy at first, the units were subjected to heavy fire both from front and from their right rear in the gen area of AQUINO. The first enemy were encountered in the gen area of 7120 which was reached at approx 1030 hrs. Having dealt with the enemy inf and A tk guns in this area, they regrouped and reorganized and pushed on to their objective in the area of MANCINI which they reached at 1220 hrs. During this latter move they came under intense heavy shelling and encountered enemy Panther tks and SP 88 mm guns which they engaged destroying three Panther tks and capturing one SP A Tk gun. 90 odd Paratroopers were rounded up during this action and were sent back through the R 22c R of 3 Cdn Inf Bde, through which unit the right sqn had passed.

#### (ii) The Move of Gp 2 to the RIVER MELFA

Anticipating that speed was essential in reaching the RIVER MELFA and that the enemy resistance at this particular time was not well organized, the Comd 5 Cdn Armd Bde Gp ordered the LdSH to move fwd from the assembly area in rear of 3 Cdn Inf Bde at 1130 hrs with a view to getting this force through the firm base as soon after it was established as possible. At this time the firm base had not been established but it was considered that this was a legitimate risk to push the striking force fwd and that bold action was necessary. Gp 2 moved fwd and passed through the firm base established by Gp 1 at 1340 hrs. This force moved with one sqn up, a not coy moving in rear of the leading sqn and flanked by the two rear sqns. On either side of the rear sqns, moved



one sqn of the GGHG (Armd Recce Regt). As soon as Gp 2 passed through the firm base, the recce tp was sent fwd with all speed to the line of the RIVER MELFA which they reached at 1500 hrs. Following the recce tp the head of the main force encountered, firstly, a lt inf posn which they destroyed and then found themselves in very bad going, caused by sunken rds and cross tracks. It was very difficult to maintain direction. In the gen area 6924 the leading tks encountered approx a sqn of Panther tks and SP guns. There ensued a very heavy tk vs tk action. Our tks were subjected to direct fire not only from the enemy tks on this side of the river, but also to enemy tks and SP guns on the enemy side of the river where the ground overlooked the country to the EAST and SE of the RIVER MELFA. While this tk battle was in progress, the recce tp managed to get three Stuart tks across the river and were in posn on the opposite side of the river at 1520 hrs. The coy of the Westmr R moved fwd through the centre of this tk battle and the leading secs of the coy were across the river at 1530 hrs. The remainder of the Westmr R were already on the move fwd to the RIVER MELFA, having been ordered to move fwd at 1540 hrs to the area of the firm base from which pt they continued their fwd move.

After the enemy tks and SP guns had been engaged and destroyed, and those which had managed to escape destruction had retired across the RIVER MELFA at a pt some 1000 yds SOUTH, the LdSH were positioned with one sqn in the gen area 693242 covering the approach to the crossing, one sqn covering Highway 6 on the right flank and one sqn covering the open ground to the SW of the crossing place.

After the enemy tks had been dispersed, an attempt was made to get our tks across the river. This was not possible because of the steepness of the river banks and also because the river bank on our side of the MELFA was dominated by enemy A tk guns from the opposite side.

The remainder of the Westmr R reached the line of the river at 1700 hrs and despite very heavy shelling and MG fire, succeeded in crossing the river before darkness. The situation at last light was as follows:

The Estmr R was across the river but it had not been possible to get A tk guns or SP eqpt across to them.

The leading coy which had crossed at 1530 hrs had been subjected to two counter attacks each supported by tks, and had suffered heavy cas. The LdSH were in the posns as outlined above on our side of the river.

8 NBH had moved to the general area 7120 and were concentrated there, having recalled one sqn which had been sent wide on the right to cover the rear of the HITLER LINE AND HIGHWAY 6. Bde HQ was at 714200 to which place it had moved at 1600 hrs.

Two sqns of the GGHG had been concentrated, one in the gen area 7024, and the other in the gen area 7022.

At 2030 hrs OC Westmr R reported that one coy was badly placed and that he recommended its withdrawal back across the river that night with a view to attacking at first light. 8 6-pr A tk guns of the Westmr R had been man-handled across the RIVER MELFA under



the most difficult conditions and it was felt that as two counter attacks had been turned back earlier in the afternoon, the se A tk guns with the two coys and the three Stuart tks would be firm in the small brhead which they held.

It was realized, however, that the brhead would not be sufficiently strong by day and it was decided to attack fwd at first light with a view to getting at least a two bn brhead. Accordingly at 1949 hrs the Ir RC wer e ordered to move fwd from their firm base to the line of the river, preparatory to an attack at first light on the left of the brhead. This attack would cover the crossing w hich the enemy had used earlier in the afternoon and it would enable us to get tks across. While it was desirable to get the Ir R C across by night, on the advice of the OC Westminster, who pointed out the difficulty of ground and a tee up for an attack in that particular place, it was recommended to the GOC that the attack should be deferred until 0600 hrs the following morning as outlined above. In this the concurrence of the GOC was obtained.

- (iii) By 1235 hrs 25 May 44 the brhead was finally established on a two bn front together with a sqn of BCD which had been sent across to provide A tk def. This sqn had been reduced by enemy A tk guns to two tps.
- (iv) From the time the leading tps hit the RIVER MELFA at 1500 hrs on the 24 May until 1230 hrs on the 25 May 44 the gen area of the crossing was subjected to exceptionally heavy shelling and mortaring which continued without a pause throughout this period. It was evident that although the enemy had not intended to stand and fight in front of the brhead, he intended to prevent and delay as long as possible the formation of a secure footing on the N W side of the RIVER MELFA.

#### THE CAPTURE OF POFI

##### GOC's INTENTION

- 1. On the 23 May 44, G OC 5 Cdn Arms Div issued orders that 5 Cdn Armd Bde would attack and capture POFI and exploit in the gen direction FROSINONE.

##### FORCE

- 2. The 5 Cdn Armd Bde Gp. The force consisted of:

5 Cdn Armd Bde with under comd

8 Cdn Fd Regt (SP) RCA

142 Fd Re gt (SP) RA

Two SP btys 4 Cdn A tk Regt RCA

1 Fd Sqn RCE

1 Sqn GGHG

##### APPRECIATION AND PLAN

- 3. Due to the very enclosed nature of the country it was appreciated that it would not be possible to deploy more than one armd regt. Similarly it was considered that with the ground practically impassable for tks and consisting of a series of razor-back hills running at right angles to the line of adv, it would be necessary to adv on two CLs in order to take advantage of any possible

route fwd which might be found. It was realized further that in this close country, the immediate sp of the mot bn would be most essential to the armour.

- (i) Accordingly the BCDs with under comd two coys of the Westmr R and with two btys of SP guns, were ordered to adv on two CLs, the right hand CL running parallel to HIGHWAY 6 and passing NORTH of POFI, the left hand CL running SW from CEPRANO parallel to the line of the rly for approx two miles and then swinging NW towards ARNARA passing SOUTH of POFI. The objective was the high ground running approx NORTH and SOUTH 1000 yds EAST of ARNARA. By this plan it was hoped to out-flank and cut off POFI and once this had been done, mop it up with the Westmr R less two coys. The remainder of the bde was to move on both CLs on orders from Bde HQ as opposed to a time programme. This was considered necessary, because of the difficulty of judging the progress of the leading regiment due to the difficulty of ground.
- (ii) The BCDs, with tps under comd, crossed the SL, which was the rd CEPRANO - CEPRANO STA, at 0500 hrs. Little enemy opposition was met and the adv continued unopposed except for heavy shellfire until it reached the gen area of the R FORNELLI 5527 and the RIVER MALTINGO 5525. Both these rivers proved to be serious obstacles and it was only after Scissors Brs had been used together with demolitions that the force was able to move fwd. However, from here on, going was practically impossible and the progress was exceptionally slow for the tks. The mot coys on our right adv to the gen area of POFI where they came under very intense heavy shellfire which, from its accuracy, was being brought down by direct observation. The sqn of the GCHG was ordered to move along the right flank of the right CL with a view to protecting that flank from any threat from HIGHWAY 6 and also, if possible, to locate crossings of the numerous obstacles transverse the line of adv. The force eventually reached its objective at 1930 hrs, having suffered several tk cas through mines and SP A tk guns which were situated NORTH and NW of HIGHWAY 6. The Westmr R were sent fwd and consolidated on the objective. The 8 NBH were moved fwd to a conc area in the gen area 5227 and the LdSH in the gen area 5428 with Bde HQ at 545257.
- (iii) During the night the Perth R moved through the objective and occupied ARNARA.

#### MOVE FROM POFI TO FROSINONE

4. This phase in the action was a combination of both the efforts of 5 Cdn Armd Bde and 11 Cdn Inf Bde. The divisional plan was that one inf bn and one armd regt would move to the high ground in the gen area 4833; another armd regt and an inf bn to the gen area high ground 4532 forming two firm bases through which 2 Cdn Inf Bde, which was now under comd 5 Cdn Armd Div, would move fwd to the line FROSINONE - FROSINONE STA. At 0500 hrs the LdSH moved fwd to the right firm base area and the 8 NBH moved fwd to the left firm base area. In both cases the routes fwd presented the worst possible type of tk going. On the right, the LdSH were held up by cratered rds on either side of which it was not possible to move tks, due to the narrowness of the ground on either side of the rd, and the steepness of the ground. On the left the 8 NBH found themselves confined to a very narrow rd through very thick country and spent most of their time clearing mines off the rd. Shortly before 1500 hrs an urgent message from Div ordered



the LdSH to move with all possible speed to TARTARELLA Xrd 498349 with a view to cutting off enemy tks which were known to be withdrawing along HIGHWAY 6. The LdSH were ordered to continue their progress with the utmost speed to this pt. Eventually one sqn was moved fwd along the very narrow razor-back hills leading to this pt and were engaged by enemy tks and SP guns which were well sited along HIGHWAY 6 and also along the lateral rd in the valley approx 1000 yds to the WEST OF their axis of adv. They were silhouetted against the sky line for the most part and could not get good cover. However, as soon as the enemy tks opened fire, the LdSH from their posn engaged them and although they lost five tks, succeeded in knocking out three Panther tks, one Mk IV and one SP 47 mm gun.

(i) On the left flank as the 8 NBH were moving fwd to their objective very slowly, they were diverted to the gen area 4331 on instrs from Div. Here they were to link up with the FEC and to move fwd along the gen line of the rd and rly leading from CECCANO - FROSINONE STA. To do this they had moved fwd to the gen area CECCANO and then NW again to the area detailed. Contact was made with the FEC but here again the going was confined to a single rd which was heavily mined. The mines were lifted under constant conditions of sniping and at last light, as it was not possible to leave the regt in this posn, they went into a laager in the gen area 459293.

(ii) The BCDs and the Westmr R remained in res during that day in the posns which they had held the night previous. During the afternoon of the 30 May 44, 2 Cdn Inf Bde went fwd and on the following day 5 Cdn Armd Bde came into res.

#### PERSONNEL CAS

1. During the period 24 May - 31 May 44, the Bde suffered the following cas:

Killed in Action	5 Offrs	51 ORs
Missing presumed		
killed in action	1 Offr	3 ORs
Wounded	39 Offrs	203 ORs

#### TK STATE

2. During the period 24 May - 31 May 44, 5 Cdn Armd Bde Gp incl 8 Cdn Fd Regt (SP) RCA and the GGHG had the following cas:

- (a) Totally destroyed - 32 tks
- (b) Cas from all sources other than totally destroyed 141. Of the 141 cas 99 were recovered and returned to units and the remaining 42 are accounted for as follows:

- 11 tks turned over to 5 Cdn Armd Bde Wksp
- 12 tks sealed "C" Cas - pending evac
- 10 tks in AWD in process of repair and
- 9 tks still awaiting rec as at 31 May 44.

NOTE: During any 24 hrs period between 24 May and 31 May 44, the unit average tk str was 50.

#### LESSONS

Out of the actions which took place between 24 and 31 May 44, the following lessons have been drawn:



### ASSEMBLY AREA

1. The assembly area in rear of 3 Cdn Inf Bde in the initial attack was too small. In addition it was allotted so late that time did not permit of a recce by Div. Recce of an assembly area by night presents too many hazards when it is necessary to get tps across the SL at a definite time. In this particular instance, it was necessary to defer the time of crossing the SL by two hrs, because of the impossibility of getting tks and inf into their correct posns in the assembly area.

### TRAFFIC CONTROL

2. It is realized that centralized TC is the ideal to be aimed at, but when plans are changed on short notice and time does not permit for the existing TC to be made aware of change in plan, it is considered that secs of the Pro should be allotted to the bde concerned, in order that the eqpt can be brought fwd. Mov into the assembly area in rear of 3 Cdn Inf Bde was a case where secs of Pro working with bde would have been of the greatest possible assistance.

### TANKS

3. (a) The country between CEPRANO and FROSINONE is very close country. The only method of getting tks fwd in this type of country is for individual tk comds to dismount and carry out recces on foot. This, naturally, is a very slow procedure and results in holding up the gen adv of the force. It is considered that gen progress can be made much better by using, in this type of country, inf who can go fwd clearing rds of mines, or with spr assistnce creating diversions around obstacles, all of which facilitates the fwd mov of tks to sp them when they require that sp.

(b) Regimental Frequency - There still exists a difference of opinion as to the value of regimental frequency. The LdSH who had most of the tk vs tk action, used the regimental frequency throughout and are convinced that it is the answer in an armd regt; on the other hand, the other two armd regts continued to use sqn frequency.

### SCISSORS BR

4. The present WE of Scissors Brs in an armd bde is three. During the move fwd from CEPRANO towards FROSINONE two brs were used and served a very useful purpose. However, after being crossed by an armd regt, unless it has been possible to put in firm bank seats, the brs go out of alignment and are rendered unserviceable. Had the armd bde been sent fwd again on the 31 May, its resources of Scissors Brs would have been exhausted. It is recommended, therefore, that for an armd fmn working in country such as this, the WE be increased from three to six.

### SPR RECCE AND WORKING PARTIES

5. In the initial move from the HITLER LINE to the RIVER MELFA dets of 18 sprs per armd regt were carried by each armd regt in Stuart tks on the basis of 6 sprs per armd sqn, 3 sprs being carried in each of 2 Stuart tks. These parties were able not only to carry out spr recce but to assist in clearing mines, carrying out demolitions and creating diversions where necessary.

### MAINTENANCE OF DIRECTION

6. In close country where tree foliage prevents land marks on the flanks or in front being seen by tk comds, the maintenance of direction is most difficult. Two methods

were tried out during the latter phase of the 5 Cdn Armd Bde action and both proved to be of good value. The first method was the use of air bursts over definite pts along the CL. Several variations of this were used consisting of high and low angle shots and also using salvos of air burst varying in number from two to five rds. The second method tied in with the type of arty sp which was used by the bde and which consisted of a Series of numbered targets. By calling down fire on these numbered targets it was possible for comds to determine their relative posn.

#### CLOSE SP BY INF AT NIGHT

7. In the action NORTH of POPI an instance arose where the remnants of an armd sqn which had been engaging enemy tks found itself in a posn which it was not possible to leave, due to the tactical situation. The plan of the inf bde did not include protection on this flank by night. It was necessary to liaise with 2 Cdn Inf Bde in order to obtain inf personnel from them to patrol and cover the area in which the tks remained for the night. It is recommended that as far as possible, where units of the armd bde are sent on special tasks, thought be given by higher firms as to whether or not armour is to be withdrawn by night and if not what readjustment of the plan can be made to provide the necessary protection for the tks.

#### HOT BN

8. While it is realized that efforts have been made to obtain half-track vehs for the hot bn, as a lesson of the battle, it is necessary to record the necessity of having the hot bn and preferably all inf personnel in half-track vehs.

#### 6 PR A TK GUN PORTEE VEH

9. The 6 pr A tk gun PORTEE veh is most unsatisfactory because of its performance and its size. It is recommended that it be replaced by carriers universal.

#### ARTY

10. (a) AOP - The AOP proved to be of the greatest possible value in all actions in which the 5 Cdn Armd Bde was involved. Not only from a straight gunner's point of view, but particularly from its value as a means of immediate and med recce. The AOPs were used to obtain infm about the immediate front of the bde as well as the area approx 5000 to 8000 yds in rear of the enemy FDLs. It is recommended that an AOP flt be made available to the armd bde, this flt being in addition to the normal flt working directly with the arty.

(b) Jeep Drawn 75 mm. - In country where rds are few and comprise mostly tracks, the Jeep Drawn 75mm gun is undoubtedly the answer. The bty which worked under comd of 5 Cdn Armd Bde was able to move fwd at all times despite bad rds and heavy traffic conditions. In order to keep pace with fast moving armd action, it is recommended that when possible Jeep btys be included as part of arty sp.

(c) SP Arty - The value of SP arty became most evident during the period 24 -31 May 44 when due to rd conditions and heavy traffic it was not possible to move fwd tractor drawn arty when required. During the entire period, the armd bde had at all times the sp of the SP arty and at many times this was the only SP available and ready to fire.

### ARTY FIRE PROGRAMME

11. In armed action where due to ground conditions and to situations which require quick and flexible change of plan it was found that the most suitable form of arty sp was that employed during the latter stages of the action. This consisted of selecting targets off the map by study of aerial photos, a knowledge of the method used by the enemy in sighting -Atk guns and also posns likely to be used as OPs. Without registration, these targets were numbered and recorded as Murders and Stonks by the CRAs HQ. The target numbers together with their map co-ordinates were then given to units on a basis of one list per tp leader. Not only did units use these numbered targets for arty sp which when required came down very quickly, but also used them as an easy and quick method of reporting their posns.

### AIR TENTACLE

12. The Air Tel with 5 Cdn Armd Bde Gp HQ was used constantly, and proved to be of the greatest value in dealing with targets which were of immediate importance. It is understood from the air tel that this fm made greater use of the air tel than has any previous fm. It is recommended that all comds be advised of the usefulness of this means of sp and considers it as another form, of very effective and very quick arty sp. However, it is felt that when armour is being employed CABRANK should be full as far as air force resources will permit. There were many occasions when the AOP spotted targets which either could not be dealt with by the arty or which arty fire could not effectively neutralize. When Air Sp was requested it was found that the CABRANK was not functioning and as a result this in some cases meant loss of target.

### LOS WITH FLANK FMNS

13. The necessity of obtaining quick and accurate infm regarding the action of flanking fmns was most evident throughout the entire period. Although 5 Cdn Armd Bde had LOs with both 78 Div on the right and FEC on the left, the distance involved rendered transmission of infm by the 19 set most difficult. It is recommended as a result of this experience that a service similar to the PHANTOM organization consisting of trained offrs on the high powered sets at all leading bde HQs be submitted for approval to higher authority.

### INFM

14. In an armed regt where action demands that RHQ be constantly on the move, it is not possible for the IC to collate or compile or obtain from PWs the infm which might be of very real value. Armd Bde HQ IC is available for collecting identities and documents from PWs. But any form of interrogation does not take place until either:

- (a) the PW is sent back to the Div cage, or
- (b) The IC from Div comes fwd to Bde HQ.

In both cases there is a considerable delay in time. It is recommended that a pool of interrogators be made available within Corps resources and the trained interrogators within this pool be allotted to armed bdes, when the armed bde is the leading fm in an action.



TAC HQ

15. As a result of the action the value of having comds of supporting arms at the HQ of the fm which they are supporting long before the action takes place, cannot be over emphasized. Throughout the action comds of supporting arms were not only in the picture but were in the mind of the cmd, knew his methods and in practically every case were able to anticipate demands required of them.

PHOTOS AND MAPS

16. It is realized that the rate at which the fm moved off the 1/25000 sheets made the distribution of maps a difficult task. In the case of an armd cmd a map means a great deal more than the provision of a layout of rds. Most mov is done across country and for a successful op much detailed study must be made from the maps of the area. Similarly with photos. The photos used in the initial action up to the RIVER MULFA were 1/12500 scale. This is by far the best scale for armd fms and it is recommended that these photos be produced, long ahead of the time required in anticipation of the requirements of armd regts.

ADM

17. (a) RCAMC - The plan of placing one sec under cmd of each armd regt in the initial action from the HITLER LINE to the crossing of the RIVER MULFA was undoubtedly a bad mistake. This became evident as soon as secs were opened and the extra assistance of the ADMS's resources were required. It is considered that the best method of moving the medical resources was that used by the ADMS in the succeeding phases of the action, when all of his resources were retained under cmd and disposed as he deemed necessary. The suggestion that the original plan was a mistake does not in any way suggest that the armd bde received none but the best of medical attention throughout the action; it is only included here as a lesson of the battle which has already been rectified and put into effect.

(b) LOBs - Any argument which previously has been put fwd with regard to not wishing to create LOB personnel in each unit has now been nullified. This fm in accordance with the Corps Cmd's policy, now that it has completed its first battle will maintain the number of LOB personnel as directed.

(c) Rations - The value of the compo pack cannot be over emphasized. Throughout the period 24 - 31 May 44, units of 5 Cdn Arm'd Bde together with those units which came under cmd of the bde and for which it was possible to provide compo packs, were able to carry on with the minimum of adm vchs i.e. petrol, amm and fitters. In addition tps were always fed with the resultant high morale which was evident throughout.

18. In conclusion it is desired to point out that the biggest lesson of the entire battle period was the value of knowing well the comds of supporting arms. There existed at all times constant and full co-operation and rather than having a bde supported by so many arms, the force consisted of a large family of all arms, each cmd and each unit feeling and knowing that he was a very definite part of the force and that the success of the force was made possible only through the efforts of his own cmd.