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PART VI

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in the  
LIRI VALLEY BATTLE  
by  
COMD 2 CDN INF BDE

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## 2 CDN INF BDE

### SECTION 1 TRAINING PERIOD AND CONCENTRATION

1. 2 Cdn Inf Bde was relieved by 25 Ind Inf Bde on 23/24 Apr after a long winter spent under very trying and depressing circumstances.
  2. The tps were not in good physical condition and their trg had been limited to manning of def posns and patrolling.
  3. It was realized that the bde would require intensive offensive trg before it would be battle worthy for the summer campaign.
  4. The bde moved to the area of VINCHIATURA and spent ten days on intensive trg. The tps were pressed at all times and got little rest, but at the end of the trg period they were fit, all the pts of adm were tidied up and eqpt was brought up to WE.
  5. The pts stressed during the trg were:
    - (a) hardening
    - (b) rapid movement to the attack followed by rapid consolidation and exploitation
    - (c) carrying of battle loads
    - (d) scaling down of tpt and eqpt
- Trg took place on the coy level so that junior comds could take hold of their comds and develop a team spirit within them. Bde HQ supervised the trg and submitted reports on all coys within the bde which gave bns an impartial report on the state of trg of their coys. Faults were then rectified.
6. The sp arms were also sorting out their own problems during this period. It was found that the 1 A tk Regt guns could get across rough ground much better than the unit A tk Pl guns hauled by 15 cwt veh.
  7. When the bde left VINCHIATURA, all ranks were superbly confident in their leaders, wpns, and above all, themselves.

### LUCERA

8. The bde gp moved to LUCERA (sq J12, ref BENEVENTO sheet 1/250,000) on 8 May for three days tk and inf trg. This bde was fortunate in being allotted the NORTH IRISH HORSE, a regt that distinguished itself at LONGSTOP HILL. The NIH were equipped with both Churchill and Sherman tks. The regt had just arrived from N AFRICA and were the first Churchill tks to be employed in ITALY.



9. The trg was on a coy - sqn level. All rifle coys had time to learn the technique of tk co-op and in particular comn problems were worked out. The result was that, by the end of trg, all units were confident that the troublesome problem of 'marrying up' tks and inf had been largely solved. This would leave comds at all levels free to make a quick co-op plan if tks were allotted in sp of inf at short notice.

10. The tps also were given great confidence in their tks by being able to see what fire sp they could get from them. Use of smoke from close sp tks was made a feature of the inf adv over open ground during the schemes. The schemes were done with live amn on a fd firing range, 10 miles SW of LUCERA.

11. A very important feature of this tk trg was that the inf were able to get together after hrs and really get to know each other personally. A very happy partnership resulted.

12. All this time the equipping of the bde continued. Unfortunately the bde was travelling three days behind the rest of the div and being separated from the main div adm installations, got 'last choice' on what stores were available. Although clothing stores were not available on a wholly satisfactory scale, all wpns and essential fighting gear were received and put in first rate condition.

#### CONCENTRATION

13. The Bde Gp moved from LUCERA to CASERTA on 12 May and enroute were informed that the offensive had started the previous night with 4 British Div and 8 Ind Div forcing the RAPIDO below CASSINO.

14. The Bde Gp arrived in the area of VERRONI, about three miles NORTH of S AGATA, N4276, and were given the role of res bde. The policy for the Div was to move fwd as more tps of 13 Corps were committed to battle. 1 and 3 Bdes were ahead of 2 Bde working up to a conc area near MIGNANO G9812.

15. Now that the battle had begun, security was lifted and it was possible to study, in more detail, the battle the bde might have to fight. The Army Comd's plan was to maintain the momentum at all costs. Sufficient fmns were available to make this possible by passing fresh fmns through.

16. The Bde Comd was given three days for trg with the object of studying the problems of the LIRA VALLEY battle fd. For the first time an adequate sup of Air Photos and maps were available and a study period was held for offrs of the bde down to coy comds. The ADOLF HITLER LINE was studied from an excellent def overprint on sheet 160 III NE PONTECORVO. The solution arrived at by all syndicates favoured a two bn up attack cutting the PONTECORVO rd by seizing the high ground, pts 106 733175 and 107 738181 and passing the third bn through to exploit to pt 726185. It will be interesting to remember the plan later.

17. The adm set-up was drastically altered at this time. This Bde was only allowed to take 104 vehs into the valley. These 104 vehs were divided into F, A, and B echs. The remainder of the vehs were placed under div control in "2" area. We were not to expect to see them for five weeks.

How sound.....



How sound was the policy of restricting tpt in the valley is vividly illustrated later. This restriction of tpt, although not crippling 2 Bde units, did stretch them and a great deal of thought had to be given to loading tables and deciding what was essential to the battle. It was fortunate that at least we could foresee the approx type of battle the Bde Gp would fight.

18. At this time bns were given 4 VICKERS MMGs each and ordered to produce at once, an MMG pl within the unit with an all rank strength of 27. This meant a re-org within units at the last moment. The Sask LI, MMG Coy, assisted in trg the men but only two days were available. In addition, the guns were in poor shape and missing essential parts. No increase in personnel was made. Bns had to find personnel from rifle coys and the Carrier Pl.

19. The bde sorted itself out and moved fwd to a conc area at G9630 on 17 May. "Z" vehs were left in the area formed by triangle of rds sq H00 and "B" ech was brigaded moving in rear of the coln. The move went without incident but as bde entered the Army area the need for a rigid traffic control became more apparent.

20. Fwd from COX's CORNER (924150), the rds degenerated into tracks badly chewed up by the hy fighting. Movement off rds was prevented by mines. Large numbers of arty units, REs etc, were jockeying for rd space. Bottlenecks caused by blows and hrs occurred every few miles. Once we entered the stream, progress was very slow.

21. The bde crossed the GARI and moved to a conc area SOUTH of PIGNATARO following close behind 1 and 3 Bdes who by this time were engaged in a running battle between the GUSTAV and ADOLF HITLER lines. The bde moved tactically with under comd each bn, one A tk tp and one MMG pl.

22. 1 and 3 Bdes were being delayed by demolitions, mines and stiffening opposition. In particular the rds were chock full of tpt and routes were few and narrow. At this time 2 Cdn Inf Bde orders were to keep well up and be prepared to pass through either 1 or 3 Bde. The appreciation of the strength of the HITLER LINE varied, but generally, a very optimistic view was taken and the tendency was to underestimate it's strength. There was no doubt that the enemy was badly disorganized and suffering hy casualties, but he still has not committed his available res. All ranks were cheered on by the remarkable progress of the French on our left who had pressed on well beyond S GIORGIO.

23. The war was brought home to the bde that night by a conc air raid on the bde area. The rds were packed with tpt and presented a wonderful target. The rds selected as routes in the traffic control plan were often suitable only for single line traffic. The alternative routes were not controlled from the beginning. Deployment off the rds was hampered by sunken rds and mines.

24. As 2 Bde HQ was very close behind the leading bns, the Bde Comd decided to work fwd tactically from one firm base to another. In the PIGNATURO area the bde was disposed as follows: PPCLI area 826156, Seaforth of C 823146, L Edmn R 836145, Bde HQ 852137. "B" ech remained back at

the Speedway.....

the Speedway near the div adm installations. The traffic on the rds made maintenance to bns very difficult but dvrs and QMs managed somehow to maintain their units. In addition the bde got lots of sleep and in no case did bns receive orders and counter orders nor move unnecessarily.

25. On the morning of 18 May the L Edmn R moved to area 812138 and the PPCLI to 805148. Bde HQ moved to the other side of PIGNATURO at 816144. The Seaforth of C remained at their old locn. The NIH had moved by rail from LUCERA and detrained at the Speedway. By great drive their CO had managed to get them fwd two days earlier than had been expected. The sqns moved up in the afternoon and joined their bns at approx 1800 hrs.

26. At 1500 hrs 1 Bde had adv sufficiently to permit a further move. The CLUB route was blocked by mines and demolitions. When the route was opened, the bns moved fwd slightly, to the following areas: PPCLI 789138, Seaforth of C to 786137 and the L Edmn R to 800140. Bde HQ remained at it's old locn. The bde had been remarkable free from enemy shelling and mortaring. The German guns had not really been dug in after his withdrawal from the GUSTAV LINE. 2 Bde move was very hampered by 1 Bde tpt. A clear rd had been promised but 1 Bde tpt had not been able to get through and blocked the adv. In addition much arty was moving up. However, the Bde was in posn by 2130 hrs.

27. Bde HQ moved off early on the 19 May following close behind the leading bns, and was seriously handicapped by no traffic control in the fwd areas. A nasty traffic jam occurred at br 783132. However, the marching tps could press on and by afternoon were est as follows: Seaforth of C 760165, PPCLI 768166 and L Edmn R at 768153. Bde HQ 768144. Difficulty was experienced in getting tks fwd but alternative routes were found.

28. During this day, 1 and 3 Bdes reached posns approx 1000 yds from the ADOLF HITLER LINE. They encountered strong opposition and by nightfall received orders to consolidate and patrol fwd to get infm of the line. The 4 PLDG were moved to the left flank and probed fwd along the axis of the CLUB route with their left flank on the LIRI R. The Seaforth of C had been moved up in anticipation of 1 Bde being clear of their area, but this was not so and they were forced to draw back some 1000 yds to the area 769155. The tps soon got dug in and spent a good night although shelling and mortaring increased.



2 CDN INF BDESECTION II THE BATTLE OF THE ADOLF HITLER LINEPLANNING, RECONNAISSANCE AND FORMING UP

1. During the day of 20 May, 1 Bde and Recce made good progress and found an E-SATZ Bn holding the approaches to PONTECORVO. The GOC decided that the main thrust would be made against the sector 742198 to 739189. The attack would be made by 2 Bde. During the afternoon the Bde Comd was ordered to relieve 3 Bde that night, patrol vigourously and be in posn to attack the line at first light 22 May.
2. An "O" Gp was held at Div HQ at 1700 hrs 20 May and the above plan was given out. In the meantime the bns had contacted the bns they were to relieve in 3 Bde. 3 Bde was to cover the relief with their patrols. In addition tk and sapper parties were to go out to recce the routes and minefds. The RCE were to be in charge of these recces with covering parties from 3 Bde.
3. The Bde Comd gave his orders at 1900 hrs to the Bde "O" Gp. Bns were to begin moving after dark. However, before bns moved, the move was postponed to the following night.
4. The Bde Comd was recalled to Div HQ shortly after his own orders. The Div Comd had received infm which prompted him to form an alternative plan for piercing the ADOLF HITLER LINE. During the day, 1 Bde had made good progress. The Div Comd felt that if this momentum could be maintained 1 Bde could secure a firm base in the area pt 106 738185, pt 111 727185 and area 722200. In this way the enemy in the line would either have to withdraw or be emasculated from front and rear. However the original plan stood but the date was adv to 23 May.
5. During the night 20/21 May, higher authority directed the GOC to attack on a broader front. It was then decided that 2 Bde would attack as planned. 3 Bde would sidestep to the left and attack on a one bn front simultaneously. A new "O" Gp was held at Div 0800 hrs 21 May and both plans were given out; 2 Bde in addition to the NIH were allotted 51 RTR in sp.
6. The order was passed on to the Bde Gp at 1330 hrs. Strong fighting and recce patrols were arranged by both the PPCLI and Seaforth of C for night 21/22 May. In addition, sapper and tk recces were to be made of routes through the woods in front of the line and of minefds.
7. Bns got off their patrol parties to contact 3 Bde units during the morning. In addition, scouts were sent out in daylight to study the posns. They were able to approach the far edge of the woods area 746194 because of the dense undergrowth and short fds of fire.
8. The Bde Comd was called to Div in the evening at 1900 hrs and was told that 2 Bde would not move until evening 22/23 May. The bns were ordered to remain in their present locns. Patrols were to go out provided they were in by 0300 hrs so that 3 Bde could send out fighting patrols into the line afterwards.

9. Owing to casualties suffered by 51 RTR during 21 May, Comd 25 Tk Bde could only allot one sqn in addition to the NIH. It was decided that the allotment should be one sqn NIH in sp PPCLI, two sqns NIH in sp Seaforth of C and one sqn 51 RTR under comd NIH in sp the L Edmn R.

10. Patrols were sent out on the PPCLI front and reported the woods up to 748193 clear of mines and suitable for tks moving on a 'Tp up' front. The patrol was not able to go further as it had to be in by 0100 hrs. It was to appear during the action that there were tk mines in the area 746194. Owing to a misunderstanding the patrol scheduled to go out on the Seaforth of C front did not go out.

11. On the morning 22 May a coord conference was held at Div HQ. The CRE was able to state that his recce parties had been up to the wire on the div front, (excl Seaforth of C front). The wire was single concertina, 4-5 ft thick. The conference tidied up all pts and the plan of the combined 2 and 3 Bde attacks was decided upon. The CRA was hard pressed in having to produce two major fire plans.

12. During the day, 3 Bde launched a coy attack sp by tks but were repulsed with hy casualties. 1 Bde continued to make steady progress on the left as also did the 4 PLDB.

13. All was ready for the battle. Bde HQ est a TAC HQ close to TAC 3 Bde and TAC Div, at 772198.

#### FINAL PLAN

14. The attack was to be delivered with two bns up, PPCLI on the right and Seaforth of C on the left. The Seaforth of C had two sqns of the NIH in sp, PPCLI had one and the sqn from 51 RTR was in sp of the L Edmn R. The plan was simple and divided into two phases. Phase 1 provided that the first objective would be the line of the rd from AQUINO to PONTECORVO, roughly along the inner edge of the def. This was to be up by a hy and elaborate barrage with conc. After a sixty minute pause the L Edmn R would pass through PPCLI. In phase 2, the Seaforth of C were to adv on the left and L Edmn R on the right, PPCLI making a firm flank to the NORTH. The final objective was to be the PONTECORVO rd WEST of the 73<sup>0</sup> grid.

15. Sp arms were as follows; 3 Fd Regt, RCA would be in close sp and would if necessary be called off the barrage for emergency tasks. Lt Col Ross was at Bde HQ. For A tk arty, bde had the 111 SP A tk Bty, RCA less one tp, with 90 A tk Bty, RCA under comd. In order to reduce the amount of wh tpt in the fwd areas a limited number of A tk guns were taken up in the initial stages. The PPCLI had a limited objective and a good rd leading to it so they took their regt A tk guns with them. The Seaforth of C were allotted a composite tp of 90 A tk Bty consisting of two 6 pdrs and two 17 pdrs because of the considerable amount of cross country going ahead of them. Half-track vehs and quads were more suitable for cross country work and the same arrangements were made for the L Edmn R. Two SP A tk tps were allotted in sp of the Seaforth of C and PPCLI in the first stage and for the L Edmn R and Seaforth of C in the second.



16. The A tk plan provided that as soon as possible after the capture of each objective the SP guns would relieve the tks to enable the latter to consolidate. Similarly, as soon as the wh guns got up they would relieve the SP guns. The MMG coy of the Sp Gp was given a task of protecting the right flank near the SL looking up the FORME d'AQUINO. They had observation of the valley and the gully to the right of the PPCLI and were warned that they would probably be required to move fwd to the right of PPCLI on consolidation.

17. Bns began to take over from 3 Bde at 1700 hrs. Tks moved fwd at 2100 hrs and all were soon in posn and shaken out in the Bde assembly area.

18. The SL was reced and routes marked. Engr patrols covered by inf cleared a minefd on the Seaforth of C front just over the SL. Patrols probed deep into the woods up to 744193 on the right and 746186 on the left without making contact.

19. Int on the line before the battle was guardedly optimistic. It was known however that additional tps, A tk guns and SP guns had been brought up to strengthen the line. Air photos still had not revealed the nature of camouflaged objects in the line. Tk mines which later bothered the tks on the right flank were not found nor suspected.

#### THE BATTLE

20. On the morning of 23 May, a CB programme lasting 30 mins was fired and four mins before 11 hr (0600 hrs) the barrage came down. Both fwd bns reported the SL and later PPCLI reported that the two fwd coys had reached the wire and were meeting brisk opposition. Infm was scanty at the outset but it became apparent that the leading inf were making good progress although the tks with both bns had encountered mines. Although mines had been cleared earlier more were found further fwd. The inf continued to fight fwd through hy enemy arty and mortar def fire. Mist, smoke and the dust of the barrage increased the original control problem created by woods, vegetation and tall grain.

21. Wireless comn with the L Edmn R was lost early in the action and Lt Col RC Coleman, MC, was wounded while moving with fwd elements of his bn close behind PPCLI. Unfortunately the res coys of the fwd bns were unable to get fwd for mopping up because of the enemy def fire covering the open ground beyond the minefd. The whole area was eminently suited for def, the crops and trees providing cover for the defenders and concealment for A tk and machine guns. The tks made repeated attempts to get through the mines with sappers working in the face of very hy fire. Bde HQ was kept infm by Lt Col C.B. Ware, DSO, and Lt Col S.W. Thomson, DSO, MC, but there was still no comn with the L Edmn R. Although each bn had two 22 sets, neither bde nor the arty could get the L Edmn R on the air. Capt R.N. Good, Bde Sigs Offr took up another set in a scout car. He was at first unable to locate the BnHQ and toured the fwd area having a very narrow escape when the veh was hit by mortar fragments. During this period bde was constantly in touch with div and from time to time the starting time for phase 2 was postponed. It was not until about noon that the Bde Comd got confirmation that two Seaforth of C coys were on the first objective but

without tks .....



without tks. Two coys of PPCLI had been seen to go through the wire into the def but there was no word from them. The Bde Comd had several conversations with the GOC on the phone and told him that the situation was not considered sufficiently firm for phase 2.

22. In the meantime the fwd bns continued to try to fight fwd. Comm with the L Edmn R was finally re-established and it was found that they had suffered by casualties from def fire. The leading coys of the L Edmn R had passed through the res coy of the PPCLI in the period when comm with bde was out and were in the area 746194 where re-entrant from the NORTH cut in toward the rd axis and narrowed the already narrow front, squeezing elements of two bns into an area some 300 yds broad. As usually happens during a battle various garbled reports of extremely high casualties came in from all bns. The tks had also suffered heavily from A tk guns sited both in the line and on high ground in the AQUINO area 7421. Lt Col Strickland comd the NIH had gone fwd and org a sqn from the remnants. This was being refuelled and re-armed and it was decided to send it well around the left flank following the Carlt & YR who were on their objective. Lt Col Thomson assured the Bde Comd that his men were holding out but had no A tk wpns except their PIATs. Despite the efforts of Major H Burnett, MC, of the 90 A tk Bty, it was impossible to remedy this situation.

23. In this period the Bde Comd wished to extricate the L Edmn R but found this res bn had pushed fwd hoping to start phase 2 and were out of contact. Their fwd sets had all been knocked out as had those of the arty rep with Lt Col Coleman.

24. The GOC had appreciated that advantage should be taken of the left flank success of the Seaforth of C and the Carlt & YR and at about 1330 hrs issued orders for 3 Cdn Inf Bde to re-gp and launch a flanking attack through the latter. This attack was put in very quickly and was completely successful. A fair number of tks got up into the area of the objective and reported that the Seaforth of C were not there. Since they were suffering from A tk fire they tried to withdraw slightly for cover but were engaged by SP guns from behind as they withdrew and the tks lost heavily. The report on the Seaforth of C was later found to be erroneous and it is probable that they had gone to ground. After the 3 Bde attack got well on tks did reach the fwd Seaforth of C coys but these in the meantime had been attacked by enemy tks and were badly cut up.

25. During the afternoon the MMG coy and the third tp of 90 A tk Bty moved into posn on the SL area to form a stop line in the event of counter attacks with armour from the AQUINO area. enemy counter attacks were launched on at least two occasions and were effectively dealt with by arty conc. From this pt on, once the Div res had completed its task, the bns were ordered to consolidate. The L Edmn R

was ordered.....



was ordered to leave one coy under comd PPCLI, the rest of the bn being ordered into the gap on the right flank of the Carlt & YR. Lt Col S.W. Thomson, DSO, MC, reported his casualties as extremely severe, the two fwd coys having been decimated by the adv and the enemy counter attack with tks. Lt Col C.B. Ware, DSO, had no word of his two fwd coys and the remainder had hy casualties. The bns consolidated on the ground they had reached. A tk def was co-ordinated by Major H Burnett, MC, and the tks were relieved for refuelling and rearming.

26. Strong patrols were sent out that night by PPCLI and the L Edmn R. Incessant sniping and hy mortar and arty fire continued until dark and into the night. Both patrols pushed fwd to the objective and could find no trace of the fwd coys of the Seaforth of C or PPCLI except for dead and wounded. Pockets of enemy resistance remained active over the whole objective area and the patrols did a good deal of mopping up and took a number of PsW.

27. To sum up, it was a very tough and steady fight by the fwd elements all day long. The res bn and the rear elements of the two fwd bns took hy punishment from hy mortar and machine gun fire. While it was not possible to consolidate on the objective the fwd bns and tks hammered away all day at the sec of the line generally considered to have been the strongest. Continued pressure by 2 Cdn Inf Bde and the fact that the inf penetrated the def where they inflicted hy casualties enabled the left hook to be delivered successfully.

28. Casualties were h, but during the night and the next morning quite a number came in from the fwd coys and the picture looked brighter. The total casualties were approx twenty offrs and five hundred and sixty ORs, but the bulk of the wounded were fortunately minor casualties. As a result of close ground and the hy and continuous fire the bns were considerably disorganized. It was remarkable how quickly this was put right. The vigour of patrols during the night is sufficient proof. By next morning offrs and men were in pretty good heart although at the end of the day very few rifle coy offrs and WOs were left in any bn. Of the two coys of the PPCLI, one wounded coy comd and some fifty of his men were found next day. He and they had been well through the enemy wire in the area 743197.



2 CDN INF BDESECTION III LESSONS FROM THE "SET-PIECE" ATTACKINFANTRY

1. There is no substitute for thorough coord recce by inf. The def overprint provided a good guide to the posn of the enemy def and strong patrols, op throughout the night of 22 May would have produced a great deal of infm. The infm might have resulted in a more deliberate inf adv plan with tks held back until a measure of mopping up of A tk guns was accomplished.
2. The paramount lesson of the battle was that where the ground, as here, made control and recce particularly difficult, the res on coy, bn and bde level should have been held well back and committed according to the development of the fight. Timings of barrages and conc are flexible and must be recognized as being subject to drastic alterations. The HQ controlling must be well back from the line of contact. All Bn HQ were too far fwd during this action. Wireless failures with consequent loss of control would thereby be reduced. A very high proportion of vital links were knocked out in this action.
3. It was proved that inf rifle coys cannot sup accurate infm on the source of hostile mortar, machine gun or arty fire when op on level terrain. Perhaps one or more Air OP aircraft specifically allotted for counter mortar work would have helped. It was chiefly the intense mortar fire which produced casualties.

TANKS

4. The lesson of tk employment when under comd of inf adv in a close and heavily def area is that the bulk of them must be held well back and only committed when inf and engr parties have breached the def minefds in several places and put out of action a proportion of the enemy A tk arty. The bulk of the sp tks were out of action before the best tk adv axis was known.
5. The comn lesson is that great care must be taken to ensure that all tks are on the same net and more alternative sets to comn with inf must be carried to cover the situation where the comds tks is knocked out. The sets in tks comn with inf should be manned by inf sigs personnel.
6. Finally, meteorological infm must be furnished if tks are to be employed early in the day on low ground as mist can hamper them greatly.

ARTILLERY

7. The arty plan brought down hy conc on the bde front and slightly NORTH of the front but there was no corresponding hy blanket of fire on the open right flank of the bde in AQUINO area 7420, 7421, 7320, 7321. As a result the German fire from the right flank of 2 Cdn Inf Bde, particularly by

mortars,.....

mortars, was hy and sustained. The lesson is the need for coord of the fire plans for the area assaulted and the area on the static flank. Pre-arranged smoke def fire tasks would also help where, as here, the open flank contains high ground held by the enemy.

#### AIR INFORMATION

8 It is felt that excellent work was done by the air photo interpreters who supplied the infm contained on the PONTECORVO def overprint dated 4 May 44 which was used. However they plotted posns from air photo cover taken only up to and incl 3 May 44. Later air photo cover at good interpretation scale if provided about 20 May should have assisted in neutralizing known and suspected mortar, arty and A tk posns.

#### ENGINEERS

9. It is suggested that larger and more thorough engr and pnr recce parties could have located more mines on nights 21 and 22 May. In particular tk mines in area 746194 might then have been located and lifted. This night task would have been easier than the similar task engr were required to do on the 23 May in daylight under the guns of the enemy. It reflects the greatest credit upon the engr that so many mines were lifted under the terrific handicaps and hazards of 23 May.

#### 4.2 MORTARS

10. After the battle the bde A/CMO made a survey on foot of suspected enemy gun posns engaged by our mortars on 23 and 24 May. It was found that 12 mortar and Nebelwerfer posns had been neutralized. The lesson on hy mortar use is that the maximum number available must take on the area in which enemy mortars can possibly be located. If more than 24 4.2 mortars had been used they would have helped, particularly if op to the right flank.

#### SIGNALS

11. The chief lesson brought out was the need for appreciation by all offrs of the alternative comn facilities provided by the several comd nets present on the fd of battle. The arty, A tk, tk and hy mortar nets were all available for passing back infm. These can only help the inf to give higher comd the picture if unit HQ down to a coy level are so located that these sp arms can keep physical contact with inf comds and put their wireless at his disposal when it is needed. It may also help solve the comn problem within bns if a larger pool of 18 sets tuned on the frequency

of the day are held at rear Bn HQ of units ready to go fwd when needed to adv Bn HQ or coys which have set failure.



ADMINISTRATION

12. It is essential that an early appreciation, based on the projected "G" plan, be made in order to avoid last min rushing. If it is obvious, as it was on the night 22 May that no hot meals could be prepared fwd, then one of two things must be done. "B" echs must be instructed to prepare hot meals and take them fwd. In this respect the use of a jeep and trailer sec sup by CRASC proved invaluable. The alternative is to draw from Sup P a number of assault pack or "sandbag pack" rations. These are 8 man packs on a hard ration basis to maintain for 24 hrs and are made up at Sup P. Therefore rations should not be drawn for any more than are necessary for rifle coys and fwd tps. Usually sp arms are self contained in their own vehs, however on this occasion it proved necessary to likewise ration the MMG coy. In connection with this ration procedure a two day issue of fresh rations was drawn the same day and by the time they could be consumed a portion of the ration was no longer palatable. An earlier appreciation of this difficulty would have stopped this waste.

13. From an "A" pt of view several lessons were learned. It is essential that Orderly Room staffs are so org by unit Adjts that the reporting of casualties continues unhampered no matter how hot the battle. This was not the case and it was difficult to get a clear picture of rfts required. It also made the picture presented by the returns submitted to higher fmns from this level look sometimes better and often worse than was actually the case. It is necessary to report immediately all known casualties.

14. The problem of sup water to fwd tps was a difficult one and had units been allowed both water trucks fwd it would have eased things considerably. It is felt that this is such an essential service that permission should have been granted by higher authority to bring these vehs fwd.

15. The shoe repair appreciation on the 20 May had considerably changed by 1 Jun. The type of country made wear and tear on shoes far above normal. Had units been able to have shoemakers fwd the necessary repairs could have been effected but with only 1 - 3-ton lorry per rifle coy already overloaded the carrying of coy shoemakers was impossible. It is therefore felt in cases of inf bdes and units that 1 lorry carrying unit shoemakers should be fwd in B ech and not back in "X" area.

16. In the pursuit battle traffic discipline, routes and TCV moves played a large part in the op. The necessity for cutting down to a minimum tpt soon was obvious and had not non-essential vehs been thrown out the state of rds as bad as they were would have been infinitely worse, and something approaching chaos. The necessity for clock timings for moves of even small packets of vehs is stressed, likewise priorities in writing or even verbally must be given to everyone but the inf who are to do the attack. In order to keep the res bn clear of the battle yet readily available and fresh it was retained on wheels. When the time came to move this bn up to pass through the then leading elements, the traffic jam made it impossible to get them fwd. The reason

for this .....

for this was the Bde had not been infm of the movement of guns fwd. Had this infm been available it would have enabled the Bde Comd to move his res closer to hand and still ahead of the guns. Important time, which is all essential in the pursuit battle was lost. Traffic discipline on the part of dvrs must be perfect. Offrs must assist in straightening out traffic blocks and not be content to merely sit in their vehs. If a veh breakdown occurs and there is no recovery post within 200 yds then it must be pushed right off the rd and if necessary over a cliff. Complete ruthlessness is necessary in order that traffic is kept moving. No matter how slowly the coln moves if it moves you will eventually get there. If it is doubtful that a veh will make the trip without breaking down then it must not be allowed on the rd. Having a sec of the Div Pro Coy under comd Bde proved the best way in which to control routes. It is felt that in an op of this type that this procedure must be adopted. Too often dvrs had not been properly briefed and too many vehs were ambling about the rds causing unnecessary congestion.

17. The large numbers of dead suffered in the battle for the **HITLER LINE** raised a problem. It is felt that a Bde Cemetery is the only answer to the problem and unpleasant as the task is, it prevents scattering of graves and makes the job of documentation much easier. This also serves to raise morale in the remaining members of secs when they can see that steps are being taken to give proper burials in a decent plot which all so rightly deserve.



2 CDN INF BDESECTION IV THE PURSUIT BATTLE AND THE CAPTURE OF FROSINONE

1. Following the break through of the ADOLF HITLER LINE by 1 Cdn Div, 5 Cdn Armd Div was launched through and pursued the enemy up the LIRI VALLEY. On the 28 May 44 a warning order was received for 2 Cdn Inf Bde, then at rest around G715174 (see map sheet No 160 III NE 1/25,000), to move fwd on 29 May and take over from 11 Cdn Inf Bde. At this time the pursuit was still in progress and 5 Cdn Armd Div in contact about CEPRANO (G6027). The 90 A tk Bty, 2 MMG Coy, 2 Hy Mortar Coy were under comd of 2 Cdn Inf Bde and the bde gp was placed on 2 hrs notice to move to an assembly area along rd G514284 - G515263 from 0800 hrs 29 May.
2. On the morning of 29 May, Comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde reported to Comd 1 Cdn Div for orders. The GOC was unable to give full details as the battle was still fluid. He did, however, specify that 2 Cdn Inf Bde would come under comd 5 Cdn Armd Div on arrival in new area and until 1 Cdn Div had taken over. He outlined his tentative plan, i.e. to make good, in succession, the areas of high ground 1000 yds NW of POFI, 1000 yds NW of ARNARA and 1000 yds SE of FROSINONE.
3. The bde was placed on 2 hrs notice to move and Comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde sent recce parties fwd under the SC to contact 11 Cdn Inf Bde and then went fwd himself to report to Comd 5 Cdn Armd Div at 1030 hrs. During the day the hrs over the LIRI R at CEPRANO were failing and the move had to be delayed. However, by 1300 hrs 30 May a decision was reached for 2 Cdn Inf Bde to move fwd. This it did.
4. Comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde went fwd to HQ 5 Cdn Armd Bde at G543259. HQ 11 Cdn Inf Bde was on the move to the same area. Our recce parties, meanwhile, were moving with 11 Cdn Inf Bde.
5. Prior to this, Comd 5 Cdn Armd Div gave orders for 2 Cdn Inf Bde to assemble in the area SOUTH of POFI (G514284 - G515263). Elements of 5 Cdn Armd Div were in contact with the enemy fwd of the town. The recce parties were contacted by the Comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde en route and halted at HQ 5 Cdn Armd Bde (G543259). Comd then met Comd 5 Cdn Armd Div there and received order to pass through 11 Cdn Inf Bde when they had secured the objective TOM (G487336 - G496342) and DICK (G458327 - G469330). 2 Cdn Inf Bde with 5 Cdn Armd Bde in sp was then to secure the area HARRY (G460348 - G480353).
6. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, meanwhile, was on the move and was completely settled in its new area by 0300 hrs 30 May.
7. At first light Comd and his three COs met at an OP at POFI to look over the ground. The rds were clogged with tpt and 11 Cdn Inf Bde were in contact short of the objective. Comd outlined his plan: The L Edmn R and PPCLI to move by march route, bounding in rear of 11 Cdn Inf Bde. Essential tpt was moved fwd by Bde to successive staging areas. Seaforth of C were to remain in present area in res with TCVs ready to move fwd as required. By approx 1400 hrs Comd 5 Cdn Armd Div assured Comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde by phone that 11 Cdn Inf Bde had secured objectives TOM and DICK. By

this time....



this time PPCLI and the L Edmn R had marched to their first staging areas (G498293 and G507300 respectively). LOs were sent to order them through to their objectives at G474320 and G497334.

8. The Bde Comd went fwd to find the rds completely blocked with tpt from 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 Cdn Div and 1 Can Corps tps. Movement by jeep was just possible but slow. Calling at the tpt areas of the fwd bns he ordered F echs to work fwd to staging areas as soon as traffic permitted.

9. Beyond ARNARA the L Edmn R had halted along the rd in rear of the CBH who were disposed at G489326 some 1000 yds short of their objective. The rd was being shelled intermittently and sks of the Ld SH from the rd were engaging the enemy in the area of the L Edmn R's objective. On the rd the Bde Comd contacted Comd 5 Cdn Armd Bde who requested inf assistance in the task of clearing the opposition. He also agreed to sup at least one sqn of the Ld SH to sp an inf attack. The Bde Comd then issued instrs through the Scout Offr of the L Edmn R, Lieut Taplin, to his bn comd to push on through the CBH to his objective, despite the fact that the area TOM had not been firmed up. He then went fwd and located Major Milroy, T/Comd Ld SH and told him that Major Stone, T/Comd the L Edmn R, would be visiting him to tie up details of the attack. Major Stone was then located and given verbal orders by the Bde Comd and infm of the locn of T/Comd Ld SH. By now it was approx 1710 hrs. Major Stone considered that the attack could not be mounted before 1830 hrs. Bde Comd then returned to Tac HQ 5 Cdn Armd Bde and joined the Comd of that Bde. 5 Cdn Armd Div HQ was infm of the proposed activities and Bde Comd spoke personally to GOC 5 Cdn Armd Div on the wireless. On the tk net he contacted Major Milroy who reported that the attack would be delayed some considerable time.

10. The big problem at this time was arty sp as most of the Div and Corps arty was moving fwd. CR 5 Cdn Armd Div was called in and it was decided to send out LOs to clear the rd for the guns. This was done. By 2000 hrs adequate arty was available.

11. HQ 2 Cdn Inf Bde had meanwhile moved fwd to the area 482299 SW of ARNARA. Shortly after arrival some twenty 105 mm shells landed in the Bde HQ area. There were no casualties and the digging of slit trenches was continued with vigour.

12. During the afternoon the PPCLI were subjected to delays as well. The IrRC were in contact and being mortared, sniped and machine gunned by enemy established in the woods on the IrRC objective, area DICK. Some difficulty was encountered by Lt Col C.B. Ware, DSO, in locating the HQ of the IrRC but by late afternoon he had obtained the local picture and was prepared to push fwd and mop up the enemy pockets. This mopping up continued during the night. The axis of the PPCLI adv did not permit movement of vehs due to the absence of rds or tracks. It was slow going but by first light the bn was firmly est on it's objective and had patrolled to the line of the rd G45204. Some casualties had been suffered during the adv but a fair number of the enemy was killed or wounded.



13. To return to the L Edmn R's battle, Major Stone completed arrangements and the bn adv with two coys up at 2000 hrs, sp by one sqn Ld SH with arty sp on call. One pl was det and sent to protect some tks of Ld SH which had pushed fwd toward HIGHWAY 6. Thus the L Edmn R attack was launched from a firm base. Lt opposition was encountered and dealt with. Ld SH were unable to proceed with tps due to blown br and gave some sp from rear. Dawn 31 May saw L Edmn R firm on their objective G468354 to G477354, having taken 1 PW and patrolled to FROSINONE. Their patrol of four into the town did not return. Two of the four escaped and returned 4 Jun to report that there were Germans in FROSINONE night of 30/31 May and that the whole patrol had been taken prisoner.

14. Due to minefids and the lack of adequate rds and track neither bn had any vehs for A tk guns on their objectives.

15. From the Bde HQ pt of view the main problem was getting tpt and the res bn fwd. Traffic had thinned somewhat during the night and Lt Col S.W. Thomson, DSO, MC, reported that his bn was moving fwd at 0500 hrs. It was an MT move and tps debussed at ARNARA at about 0800 hrs. He was given the task of passing through and cutting in behind FROSINONE from the left flank to secure the area of X rds G456381. The fwd bns were ordered to est coy localities to give Seaforth of C a SL. Comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde arranged with Comd 5 Cdn A rmd Bde for at least a sqn of tks from Ld SH to be available when routes fwd were cleared. Fwd bns were told to make a thorough spr recce.

16. Meanwhile D Coy, L Edmn R, captured FROSINONE which they reported clear by 1500 hrs. 2 Bde bdy had been originally exol HIGHWAY 6 but since 78 Div encountered opposition at RIPI and TORRICE it was decided to take FROSINONE. The enemy, however, still had SP guns and inf dets beyond the town. These were engaging the PPCLI fwd elements and the Seaforth of C as they passed through. This forced the Seaforth of C to mop up the area as they adv. While consolidating at approx 2200 hrs an excellent ambush was carried out on the rd where one pl netted the gratifying bag of 7 vehs, 17 PW and 4 ene y dead. By 0100 hrs 1 Jun the Seaforth of C reported themselves completely consolidated on their objective with BnHQ at G453376. Mortar fire had been fairly hy and 19 casualties were suffered, 3 killed.

17. At Bde HQ there was great difficulty in comprehending the picture during the day due to a typographical error in MEMR code sheets as issued by 8th Army HQ. Those of both PPCLI and Seaforth of C were incorrect. Thus PPCLI, who had received their orders over the air, finished the day directly SOUTH of FROSINONE instead of around G450363. Fortunately Lt Col S.W. Thomson, DSO, MC, had been personally briefed by the Bde Comd in the early morning as to his objectives and carried out these orders to the letter. Lt Col C.B. Ware, DSO, was called to Bde HQ in the late afternoon since his bn was then in pos. The error in the code sheet then came to light. PPCLI sent a strong standing patrol at 2200 hrs to the area G444363 and the remainder of the bn moved over approx 10 yds to the WEST at 0700 hrs 1 Jun.



18. At 2100 hrs 31 May, NIH sqns allocated to units began moving up. Units were ordered to provide guides at DP, rd junc G470363. The head of tk coln arrived at DP at 0135 hrs and went into harbour in unit areas.

19. The night 31 May/1 Jun was a hectic one for 90 A tk Bty and unit A tk guns, NIH, whose recce offr had arrived fwd in the afternoon, and above all for the sprs of both 1 and 5 Divs. Demolitions had to be cleared, routes recce'd, mines swept and traffic navigated. All concerned worked their hardest and bns had A tk guns completely in by 0315 hrs. First light 1 Jun saw the bde firmly est covering FROSINONE (see trace), having cleared the immediate area of enemy.

20. 78 British Div was by this time pouring through the town from HIGHWAY 6 and moving NORTH toward ALATRI. PPCLI and Seaforth of C patrolled actively during the night and located no enemy up to their patrol limits. Contact was est with flanks, 78 Div right and the RCR left. PLDG and 1 Cdn Inf Bde were adv SOUTH of HIGHWAY 6 directed on FERENTINO, by-passing FROSINONE on 1 Jun.

#### MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS

21. During the battle no serious difficulties presented themselves in so far as evacuation of casualties was concerned. The 5 Cdn Fd Amb, ADS was located at G515263 and the CCP at G484296 during the first phase. Small secs of SBs with stretcher carrying jeeps from the Fd Amb were att to the bn RAPs. Constant contact was kept up between the RMOs and the CCP by personal contacts or wireless through their Tac Bn HQ. When the bns marched across country, the stretcher carrying jeeps were not able to accompany them, however, Fd Amb SBs were kept in readiness for cross country carrying of casualties. Fortunately casualties were lt. The PPCLI held casualties over night rather than subject them to a long rough carriage. None of these casualties was serious and they were evacuated next morning by jeep. When the Seaforth of C received their heaviest casualties stretcher carrying jeep were able to reach the RAP and the RMO evacuated these casualties very quickly as well as a number of PW wounded.

22. As the bns adv a sec was sent fwd of the CCP to locate at G488327 to facilitate evacuation. Stretcher carrying jeeps only were used to evacuate back to the CCP as traffic on the rds was hy and therefore it was difficult for amb cars to work fwd of the CCP. Amb cars however could be used to evacuate to the ADS. As the adv continued the CCP moved up to locate at G464368 just SOUTH of FROSINONE, leapfrogging the adv CCP sec at G488327. The ADS moved up to G486351. The ADS evacuated all casualties back to SUFRANO to an FDS and CCS located there. All casualties resulting from the battle incl fwd inf bns, local sp gps, sigs casualties and wounded PW were evacuated without any serious delays in spite of the hy veh traffic on the rds and the fluidity of the battle.



2 CDN INF BDESECTION V CAPTURE OF MT RADICINO

1. The GOC phoned Comd 2 Cdn Inf Bde at approx 0630 hrs and ordered the bde to occupy MT RADICINO (sq 4142) to secure the right flank of 1 Bde who were adv on FERENTINO on the SOUTH side of HIGHWAY 6. The Bde Comd arrived at 0745 hrs 1 Jun 44 at Bn HQ the L Edmn R and ordered the bn to assault and hold the feature.
2. The plan called for D Coy to be vanguard followed by B Coy, BnHQ, A Coy, C Coy. One sqn NIH under comd Major P. Welsh was in sp. 2 MMG Coy and 2 Hy Mortar Coy were also in sp. One med regt was also in sp. The SL was crossed at 1130 hrs with the bn moving in bounds along the axis of HIGHWAY 6. At rd junc 457384 the plan was changed and A Coy became vanguard on the left followed by Bn HQ and C Coy. D Coy continued as vanguard on the right followed by B Coy. A blown br was encountered at 446387 but within 30 mins of the first tks arriving the pnr pl under Lieut R. Hayter had prepared a diversion and the adv continued. Within one hr and 15 mins the tks were all across and the diversion was fit for whs to pass. At 1440 hrs the final bound, line 415404 to 443413 was reached and D Coy went into the assault of MT RADICINO reaching their objective at 1520 hrs without meeting opposition. The coy consolidated at 416424 and sent a fighting patrol out at once to search the rocky summit of the mountain. B Coy reached its objective 418423 at 1500 hrs where they captured one MG 42 and 3 Germans. Several Germans were killed. A Coy reached its objective at 425425 at 1615 hrs. A number of rounds of hy mortar fell in D Coy area killing two men and wounding two. It was impossible to dig on the rocky slope.
3. A sharp engagement took place on the right flank where C Coy with a tp of tks in sp had been ordered to take a small isolated hill at 433427. At the base of this hill stood a very large convent cut out of the native rock and from this strong pt machine gun fire was met at 1610 hrs. There were two casualties. The coy was held up. Four prisoners were taken to Bde HQ by the A/2 i/c, Major A.F. Macdonald and the Div IO interrogated them at once. They stated that the convent at 433427 was held by 200 tps with 4 hy mortars who were ordered to fight a delaying action until dark and then withdraw. With this info C Coy made efforts to get fwd and tks, med arty, 4.2 mortars and 3" mortars were laid on the feature and the convent. C Coy attacked at 2200 hrs and the feature was found deserted. The enemy had retired. C Coy's success sig was shot up at 0020 hrs and the feature was completely cleared by 0050 hrs.
4. In the short action 18 PW were taken and several enemies were killed. The L Edmn R had six casualties, only two fatal. By coincidence 13 Pl of C Coy had taken 13 PW since leaving the POFI area. During the action one PW had volunteered to direct arty fire on his own posns, and he was used to good effect. After 0050 hrs all was quiet and the weary bn settled down for a night of comparative quiet. Rear Bn HQ and "B" ech had moved up at 1700 hrs. In the def posns for the night Bn HQ was at 420414, A Coy 413434, B Coy 411412, C Coy 433427, D Coy 421431 and Sp Coy 432399.



2 CDN INF BDESECTION VI LESSONS FROM THE PURSUIT BATTLE

1. An absolute minimum of tpt with fwd tps was proven to be an essential of quick movement. Even with the minimum of ops and adm vehs on the narrow cratered rds TC had to be carefully org. Carriers proved useful as usual for adm runs.
2. Particularly in a 'follow up' and 'pass through' role, unit recce parties must be well fwd with the bn through which the unit will pass. This practice saved time in take over and expedited the close pursuit.
3. It was proven that the res bn is best held well out of the battle with the bn comd remaining at Bde HQ. This drill allowed the Bde Comd to personally brief the res bn comd and prevented misunderstandings due to map ref difficulties and wireless failure.
4. It was demonstrated that inf and tks can 'marry up' very effectively and get fwd quickly if inf pnrs can be employed well up sweeping the tk axis to keep the armour mobile. Personal liaison between the respective comds was frequent and allowed no misunderstandings.



2 CDN INF BDE

APPENDICES

UNIT NARRATIVES OF THE ADOLF HITLER LINE ACTION

- A. PFGLI NARRATIVE
- B. SEAFORTH OF C NARRATIVE
- C. L EDMN R NARRATIVE
- D. THE 90 A TK BTY NARRATIVE

APPENDIX "A"

PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY

BATTLE  
of  
THE HITLER LINE

11 MAY - 2 JUN 1944



Prior to H hour 11 May 1944, when a gen offensive was launched on the Eighth Army and Fifth Army fronts from CASSINO to the sea, all ranks of Patricia's had been given the main outline of the Army Commander's plan: an attack on a wide front involving the crossing of the GARIBOLDI and RAPIDO to breach the GUSTAV LINE; this phase to be followed up with an assault on the ADOLF HITLER LINE, making a bridgehead for armoured formations to debouch onto the tank-going country along the axis of HIGHWAY 6.

On the 16 May the Battalion was ordered to move from its concentration area near FRASSO M4584. Battle transport was cut to a bare minimum, a total of 35 vehicles incl of carriers. The remainder were brigaded into an improvised "X" Echelon. At 1100 hrs the Battalion proceeded via CAIAZZO - DRAGONI - PIETRAMALERA - HIGHWAY 6 - MIGNANA to a concentration area at the foot of MONTE MAGGIORE G9513.

Maj D.F. Rosser was in command up to this time in the absence of Lt Col C.E. Ware, DSO, who reassumed command night of 16/17 May.

The general situation was made known to us at this time. The GUSTAV LINE had been breached throughout its length, and only CASSINO and MONASTERY HILL were still holding out against the POLCORPS. The 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade forward elements were approaching PIGNATARO G8344. In the mountain regions south of the LIRI, French troops were pushing far ahead of the main advance.

The Battalion was ordered forward again on the 17 May though it was understood that the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade would not be committed until the 1st and 3rd Brigades met solid resistance. We crossed the GARIBOLDI, and, continuing along a maze of new tracks, contacted The Royal Canadian Regiment who were meeting some resistance south-east of PIGNATARO. The town actually fell to the West Highland Light Infantry about two hours before the Battalion arrived, and tactical positions were taken up north of the town astride the CASSINO - PIGNATARO road. Our positions were under observation from the high ground to the north and we drew considerable shelling and mortaring that day. During the night our area was bombed and machine-gunned. Three casualties were suffered.

The Battalion moved forward again in the next day along the 1st Brigade axis, and made a second move that evening to occupy positions vacated by The Royal Canadian Regiment. Mines were encountered along the tracks, and one casualty was suffered from a booby-trapped German "Faustpatrone", a hand-operated anti-tank projector. MONASTERY HILL was captured by the POLCORPS and HIGHWAY 6 cut in three places.

On the 19 May both 1st and 3rd Brigades, though tired, were still pushing ahead and in high spirits. We were informed that they would continue on and feel out the HITLER LINE defences between MONTECASSINO and AQUINO and that the assault on the LINE would be carried out by our Brigade. We moved on to MASSA TAVERNA G7617. Here all the evidence of German preparations for a protracted stand was visible. We found deeply dug gunpits and heavy mortar emplacements. Battalion HQ was provided with reinforced underground living quarters containing two tiers of bunks and complete furnishings. In one dugout flowers in a vase on the writing table were still fresh.

There was considerable shelling and mortaring of the area that day. Casualties were 3 dead and 5 wounded.

9. Intelligence was received that the French on the left of the Division had reached MOUNT CLIVA, the right hinge of the HITLER LINE. The CO visited the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment positions at 744162, overlooking the HITLER LINE and about 2000 yards east of MONTECASSINO. In view of the success on our left there was now a strong possibility that the Battalion would pass through either 1st or 3rd Brigade positions to hit the right flank of the LINE.



...tentative plan for an attack the following day, 20 May, was cancelled in view of stiffening enemy resistance and the arrival of enemy reserves on the HITLER LINE. However, an attack around the left flank was still a possibility, and a marked air photograph showing axis and objectives was sent from Brigade.

On the 20 May we suffered fairly concentrated shelling and mortaring. B and C Companies were most affected. Casualties were 4 dead and 3 wounded. The CO made two reconnaissances of West Nova Scotia Regiment forward localities preparatory to an expected takeover on the right of the Division. PONTECORVO was attacked by Kittyhawk fighter-bombers this afternoon with good effect.

The order for a takeover from the West Nova Scotia's was cancelled at 1830 hrs. Plan "CHESTERFIELD" was given out at a Brigade O Group for a frontal attack on the HITLER LINE, at H hr 23 May, by 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, with Patricia's right. Seaforths left and Loyal Edmn Regiment to pass through on the right. Total artillery resources to be brought to bear on this front, firing a "block" barrage 500 yards deep on a 2000 yard frontage. One squadron of tanks, one troop of SF guns, one troops anti-tank guns, one company 4.2" mortars and one section of Engineers completed the supporting arms to be allotted to the Battalion.

21 May was another day of uncertainty for the Battalion. At 0600 hrs we were on one hour's notice to move. At 1000 hrs this was changed to three hours notice. At 1730 hrs the move was postponed till 22 May. These changes were partly occasioned by events on our left. Plan "CHESTERFIELD" was later expanded to include 3rd Brigade in the attack. On our right 78 Division was to create a diversion but not to move forward. A similar task was assigned to 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade.

The morning of 22 May an attack by 1st Brigade met with some success. Two companies of 48 Highlanders actually passed through the LINE and outflanked PONTECORVO. However, the penetration was not considered substantial enough to warrant a breakthrough in this sector, and the forward 48th Highlander Companies were later withdrawn. Details of plan "CHESTERFIELD" were given out at a Brigade O Group at 0930 hrs. Tank and engineer recon parties with infantry protection were ordered to be pushed out as far as the wire obstacle that night.

The CO conferred with Lt Col Holton commanding 51st Royal Tank Regiment this afternoon and drew up the infantry tank plan. Report lines were christened corresponding to tactical features at about 300 yard intervals. It should be pointed out at this time that, owing to the nature of the ground, with the un-tankable slope dropping away to the FORT D'AQUINO on our right, and the track that was our inter-battalion boundary on the left; the tanks were allowed a maximum of 250 yards frontage in which to manoeuvre, while at the wire the tank frontage bottlenecked down to a mere 150 yards.

16 No sooner was the tank commander's plan completed than word came that 51st Royal Tank Regiment was to be committed elsewhere and that A Squadron, North Irish Horse was to support the Battalion. Hasty liaison had to be made with this unit and the troop leaders called in to confer with leading rifle company commanders. Large scale annotated air photos of the LINE were issued and last minute details completed.

At 0100 hrs Lt Browne-Clayton returned from tank engineering recon and confirmed that ground falling down to FORT D'AQUINO not suitable for tank going. Engineers reported NO mines in wooded area immediately just short of the wire.

23. May -- The Attack H hour was 0600 hrs. Rate of advance set at 100 yards in 5 mins to first objective, AQUINO - PONTECORVO road, a distance of 1500 yards. C Company right and A Company left led the attack to the first objective. One hour was allowed for reorganizing, during which the barrage was to lift. Then B Company was to go through on the right to an intermediate objective, closely followed by Loyal Edmn Regiment whose objective was the HIGHWAY 6 - PONTECORVO road. 6 Armoured Division were then to push forward and exploit the break-in.



The move to the FUF, marrying-up with tanks and move of leading companies to the SL proceeded without a hitch, and the element of surprise was maintained. The barrage came down a few minutes later in good order. Enemy counter-barrage came down a few minutes later, chiefly heavy mortar. First wireless report from forward companies came through at 0638 hrs when A Company reported on FEBRUARY, the second line. No wireless contact with C Company was made from this time on. The signaller had stopped to make a minor adjustment to his set and never regained contact, with his company.

Meantime B Company moved forward to FEBRUARY, and were ordered to contact A by runner. The Battalion HQ moved up to FEBRUARY, but was unable to regain contact with leading companies.

Enemy artillery and mortar fire now became intense and there was considerable IMG fire. The tanks had moved forward behind the infantry but at 0745 hrs the squadron command reported his tanks held up on minefield forward of FEBRUARY. Engineers and the Battalion pioneers were working swiftly, but their task was rendered difficult by deeply laid box-mines which could not be detected. The two leading tanks had already struck mines and were being engaged by well-camouflaged SF guns. Enemy fire was now taking heavy toll of both forward and reserve elements. Particularly heavy enemy concentrations were laid on FORME D'AQUINO draw.

Runners sent to contact forward companies either became casualties or were pinned down by fire. A couple of returning wounded reported that elements of both companies had crossed the wire prior to 0800 hrs. A Company set had been knocked out. Elements of C Company were reported well forward, but widely dispersed due to intense fire. On our left the Seaforth's were reported through the wire at 0750 hrs. Reopening of the barrage was delayed by 30 minutes. Meantime the situation forward remained confused. The Battalion HQ moved forward to MARCH to obtain a clear field of vision beyond the wire, but was still unable to get a clear picture. Twice again the barrage was delayed by 30 minute periods. Counter-battery was called for on the AQUINO area, but observation from our positions was negligible. Our FOO was killed about this time and the Artillery Rep wounded.

Engineers and pioneers were well forward clearing lanes for tanks, and tanks were reported getting forward at 0900 hrs. At this time the clearing party came under severe fire and casualties neutralized them. Two tanks which had moved forward of the wooded area at MARCH were knocked out and one set afire. Exploding ammunition added to the discomfort of the Tac Battalion HQ. Attempts of one troop leader to move around to the right flank met with no success owing to mines and enemy ant-tank fire from across FORME D'AQUINO draw.

At 1155 hrs our control set became a casualty after direct hits on a Churchill tank behind which Tac Battalion was situated. "C" Company set assumed control and contact to Brigade via Rear Battalion was resumed.

23 "B" Company was held up at the wire. Casualties were now coming back in considerable numbers. Immobilized tanks continued to use their guns until their tanks were set ablaze by enemy fire. Counter-battery was again called for on AQUINO area where the enemy seemed to have best observation on us. Enemy tanks were heard approaching on AQUINO - PONTA COUKVO road and one "Tiger" tank observed on our objective.

Loyal Edmonton Regiment went through us about 0900 hrs Lt, Col. R.C. Coleman MC became a casualty about this time. No progress made beyond the wire. Meantime the Seaforth's had two companies on the first objective but their positions became g ave.

Battalion 22 set was called up from Rear Battalion and the Commanding Officer established direct communication with the Brigade Commander. His previous forward position had become untenable owing to burning tanks and exploding ammunition. A dug in position was found on FEBRUARY which also provided some protection for the set.



The situation in the early afternoon was critical. Two forward companies were temporarily written off and heavy casualties had been sustained by "B" Company. "D" Company were also under heavy fire. Tanks had been unable to get forward and 10 out of an original 18 had been knocked out. Only three rifle company officers remained in action and two of these later became casualties. Some reinforcements and stragglers were available at Rear Battalion, and scout and MG platoon personnel were later employed in evacuating casualties.

At 1600 hrs the Brigade Commander gave the general picture over the air. The ADOLF HITLER LINE had been penetrated all along its length with enemy in full retreat. All routes back were clogged with traffic which was being engaged from the air. The ANZIO bridgehead had broken out and was enjoying outstanding success.

"B" Company was ordered back into a tight defensive position around FEBRUARY. An estimated 49 all ranks were available for this task, but this force was increased when stragglers from all companies reported in. One company Loyal Edmonton Regiment came under command to cover our exposed left flank. Anti-tank guns were deployed in the area. IMG fire now much more sporadic but artillery and mortar fire continued violently throughout the night. At 2015 hrs the Brigade Commander ordered Lt. Col. Ware out of battle Maj. D.H. Rosser assumed command.

During the night a counter-attack threatened on our right from LE FORME D'AQUINO. DF fire brought down across the gully and the threat did not develop. Our patrol to the wire encountered some enemy SA fire.

By morning of the 24 May enemy artillery and mortar fire became less concentrated. Ammunition and weapons were brought forward and rations came up in the late afternoon. Whenever troops appeared in the open heavy fire came down in the area and it was evident the enemy still had guns and observation available. Evacuation of wounded from the battlefield was hindered by sniper fire on stretcher bearers. During the late afternoon 5th Canadian Armoured Division tanks were heard passing through on our left and shortly after rearguard troops from 3 Paratroop Regiment surrendered to our patrol. These confirmed that remaining units on the LINE had withdrawn leaving light rearguards. Lt. Col. Ware reassumed command that evening.

By first light 25 May 6 Armo Div had moved up to pass through us. Deeply laid box mines caused five more tank casualties and 3 mines accounted for some troops engaged in picking up wounded in the area of the wire. Major W. De. N. Watson MC, O.C. "A" Company was picked up this morning suffering from bullet wounds and a tremendous appetite.

322 An opportunity was now afforded to inspect German defensive positions on the LINE. These were mainly underground concrete and steel pillboxes equipped for ground-level MG and Anti-tank fire. A clear field of fire had been effected to a depth of 400 yards, and this frontal fire was augmented with similar positions across the FORME D'AQUINO draw which commanded the area of our advance by fire and observation. Some depth was afforded these positions by more hastily prepared anti-tank and MG positions behind our first objective, and almost every position contained an allotment of Faustpatronen for close-in attack on tanks. At least two enemy tanks had been knocked out and abandoned on our objective.

The Battalion moved forward to an area beyond FONTECORVO the morning of 26 May and the period to 29 May was spent in reorganizing, receiving reinforcements, straightening out records, as more information came in via evacuating channels of our missing. Total casualties to this time were Dead, 58; wounded 162; missing 27.

At 1730 hrs 29 May the Battalion was ordered to move to CEFRANO G6055 area. Armour and Infantry had crossed the R MEITA and it was planned to leapfrog infantry brigades forward to maintain the impetus of the advance and quickly to deal with enemy rearguards and demolition parties.



We met our recon party in area FOPI G5429 where we concentrated for the night and Brigade were to follow and pass through 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade the following day. Extensive demolitions were encountered on all roads forward and every route was clogged with traffic.

The Battalion moved forward on foot and without supporting arms by cross-country route. At 1800 hrs rd CECCANO - HIGHWAY 6 was crossed and we contacted the Irish Regiment of Canada who had been stopped all day by scattered MG and rifle fire. The Battalion prepared to move through this unit.

"B" Company leading came under MG and Mortar fire on the exposed high ground, while a heavy concentration of large calibre artillery was laid down on the road behind us. Before midnight the Battalion was able to push on again. Some delay was caused by one company losing contact in the dark, and the inevitable failure of the No. 18 set out daylight found us on high ground overlooking FROSINONE about 7 Km away.

The Brigade plan as received by this Battalion was for Patricia's to consolidate in positions near the SE approaches to FROSINONE while Loyal Edmonton Regiment sat astride HIGHWAY 6 on our right, after which Seaforth's were presumably to pass through and capture the town.

As it turned out, a typographical error was made in the passing down of the map reference code and the position allotted to us placed our forward elements in the eastern end of the town itself. By 0945 hrs two companies had reached HIGHWAY 6 with no opposition. The Battalion then consolidated on the SE approaches to the town and astride HIGHWAY 6. A patrol was pushed into the town and suffered one casualty from sniper fire and an IMG position in the far end of town. The Seaforth's later in the afternoon passed through to the far end of the town and beat off a counter-attack with tanks.

Recon were brought up in the afternoon. The Battalion had been without food for more than 24 hrs.

On 2 Jun the Battalion moved through FROSINONE where we received the news of the fall of ROME three days later. The Division went into Army reserve, and were ordered back to PIEDEMONTE M3304 for about a month of reorganizing and training.

APPENDIX 1934

SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA

BATTLE  
of  
THE MTDLER LINE

21 MAY - 24 MAY 1944



1. 22 May 44 was the eve of battle for the ADOLF HITLER LINE. Preparations had been made, plans completed. The enemy situation was somewhat vague, conflicting reports had come from Int re the enemy tps on our front, and the enemy strength and disposns were very uncertain. However, regarding the ADOLF HITLER LINE itself, both from PW and air photography it had been est that it consisted of two belts of wire, about 20 ft deep, and about 1 ft to 18 inches high. The belts were about 50 yds apart, and were designed to prevent our tps from crawling up to the guns. Concerning the enemy's A tk def very little was known. Many slit trenches and large wpn pits were known to exist but as to what they contained we knew nothing. It was at this time believed that the enemy intended to make only a delaying action and that stubborn resistance would not be encountered. Subsequent events proved this appreciation was fallacious.

2. The cracking of the ADOLF HITLER LINE was a 1 Cdn Div task. The break-through was to be exploited by the 5 Cdn Armd Div. The attack was on a two bde front. 2 Cdn Inf Bde right, 3 Cdn Inf Bde left, 1 Cdn Inf Bde making a diversionary show at the SOUTH end of the line, area PONTECORVO. 2 Bde attack was on a two bn front, PPCLI right, Seaforth of C left with L Edmn R in res. The front was approx 1500 yds. The Seaforth of C had the following in its sp: B and C sqns the NIH, 90 A tk Bty and a det RCE. By nightfall on 22 May, rifle coys and sp arms were in a posn close to the SL. At 2100 hrs the CO held an "O" Gp of all arms and all changes and debatable pts were cleared up. A hot sultry day was followed by a dark, moonless night. The night was occasionally shattered by desultory harrassing mortar fire, and the tenseness of anticipation permeated the air.

3. 0400 hrs 23 May was reveille for the bn. A cold breakfast was finished by 0430 hrs. Rifle coys and tks moved to the FUP and liaison commenced at 0500 hrs. At 0600 hrs the arty barrage came down - some 400 guns, and the bn swung across the SL into the 1 phase of the attack. A and D coys, comd by Majors J.F. McLean, DSO, and L.N. McBrien respectively were leading, followed by B and C coys, comd by A/Major J.C. Allan and Capt J.J. Conway respectively. B Sqn of the NIH sp A and D coys and stayed with them throughout. C sqn sp B and C coys similarly.

4. Enemy mortar and arty fire was intense, and from the outset the bn casualties were hy. Bn HQ and the RAF were in a building and survived the German barrage all day without getting one direct hit. The unit MO, Capt C.G. Preece deserves special mention for the cool capable manner in which he handled the sometimes overwhelming influx of casualties throughout the whole day. Amb facilities were excellent and the wounded were evacuated promptly. At about 0630 hrs the unknown German A tk guns came into play and wrought havoc with the NIH who also encountered mines. Our inf were therefore obliged to continue for some time without sp of the tks until a route to continue around the belt was found. RCE personnel suffered casualties finding the route.



5. By 0700 hrs the "fog of war" had really descended on the situation -- W/T comm was intermittent with some coys and with one, D Coy, non-existent. Casualties were still streaming in, with tales of pls and coys decimated and all offrs dead or wounded. The enemy mortar and arty fire continued with undiminished fury and the sound of SA indicated that our tps were close to the first objective. At 0840 hrs A/Major J.C. Allan, reported by wireless that he had gathered the remnants of all four rifle coys, together numbering himself, Lieut T.E. Woolley, Lieut W.R. Artindale and about 100 other ranks, and was consolidated on the objective. Mr Woolley had been wounded on the SL and was sent back for treatment. This org and collection of scattered gps took some time. When Major Allan considered he had at his disposal all the effectives in the vicinity, he called an "O" Gp. This was about 1645 hrs. Wireless comm had ceased completely about 1630 hrs. As the "O" Gp was progressing the little band was counter attacked by three German tks and some inf. Those who were fortunate enough to have slit trenches or shelters fought from there. Others took refuge from the tk cannon and MG fire in the ditch alongside the rd which was their objective. Major Allan was wounded by one of the tks and fell in the ditch. The bn had exhausted its sup of PIAT bombs by this time and could not effectively engage the tks. The tks moved down the rd pouring MG fire into the ditch, causing many casualties. Then they came up with their guns depressed, to each individual survivor in the ditch and took him prisoner. Lieut Artindale and two CSMs were among the captured. Major Allan lay as if dead in the ditch and the Germans missed him. The greatest gallantry and determination was displayed by all ranks during this engagement as throughout the whole battle.

6. It is tragic that after fighting the grimmest battle this Bde has known, being the only tps in the Bde to gain the objective, and then hanging on all day, the fwd coys could not be sp by A tk wpns. About 20 of these men returned to the bn firm base posn at BnHQ that night. When the smoke cleared and the lost had been found, the Seaforth of C rifle coy situation was no offrs and about 100 all other ranks.

7. During the day 24 May, twenty-six other ranks drifted back. Some had spent the night several hundred yds beyond the objective, and had infiltrated through the Germans, returning to us.



APPENDIX "C"

THE LOYAL EDMONTON REGIMENT

BATTLE  
of  
THE HITLER LINE

22 MAY - 24 MAY 1944

1. On 22 May an early breakfast was served in anticipation of orders to move, but the warning was changed to 1 hrs notice from 1000 hrs on. At 1100 hrs Lt Col R.C. Coleman, MC, was called to the "O" Gp at 2 Cdn Inf Bde HQ, where it was learned the 1 Cdn Inf Bde was making very good progress in their attack at the PONTECORVO end of the ADOLF HITLER LINE. However, orders were still given for the attack by 2 Bde on the Divisional right flank. The broad plan for the attack was a bde attack on a two bn front, PPCLI right and Seaforth of C on the left. SLI a track at 747183 running NE to Le FORME d'AQUINO, axis of adv and inter bdy was the main track running from the SL NW to the main PONTECORVO - AQUINO rd where phase 1 of the battle would be completed. The two bns would consolidate there. There was a one hr pause in the barrage, and at H hr plus 135 mins, phase 2 would commence, when the 1 Edm R on the right, Seaforth of C on the left would attack and consolidate on the high ground astride the rd PONTECORVO-HIGHWAY 6 at 731210 and 724202 respectively. PPCLI were then to remain in res and act as a firm base on the first objective. Two hrs after the final consolidation of the Bde and sp arms, the 5 Cdn Armd Div would pass through to est a brhead across the MELFA R. Both phase 1 and 2 were to be covered by an arty barrage sup by 5 Cdn Armd Div, 8 Ind Div, 78 British Div and all of 1 Cdn Div Arty, 6 AGRA, 51 Med Regt and a bty of 155 mm "Long Toms".

2. At 1215 hrs Lt Col Coleman held his bn "O" Gp where the broad plan of battle was given. Recce parties were to make a final recce of the conc area and the bn was put 1/2 hrs notice to move. During the afternoon, while the Gps made last min preparations, Lt Col Coleman made a final coord with Lt Col C.B. Ware, DSO, CO PPCLI, and with the OC "D" Sqn 51 RTR. At 1730 hrs the unit moved off by march route to the conc area at 761161. At 2000 hrs Lt Col Coleman gave his OO for the attack tomorrow morning. The "O" Gp was interrupted by a German 15 cm Nebelwerfer, affectionately known to our tps as "Moaning Minnie", but no damage was done. The disposn of the coys on 23 May was to be A coy left, C coy right, D coy mopping up, Tac Bn HQ with D and B coys in res. Under comd were B sqn 51 RTR, 1 tp A tk guns, 1 tp SP guns and 1 sec sprs. Sp arms of the SLI gp were under Bde comd. With the unit was Major G.P. Cowan of 3 Fd Regt, RCA, and Capt D. Kehoe as FOO, also of 3 Fd Regt.

3. Phase 1 was to consist of the movements of units to the Bde FUP in the vicinity of the house at 752189. At 0830 hrs the unit would leave its present location for the FUP in the following order, A, C, BnHQ, D, B, rear BnHQ and tpt, arty tpt, 1 A sk (RCA), SP guns. The 3" mortar pl and the MMG pl were to arrive at the FUP not later than 0615 hrs. Phase 2 was to be the move from the FUP to our own FUP at 743197 to 744199 within the PPCLI consolidation area. Phase 3 was to commence at H hr plus 135 mins the rate of adv being 100 yds in 3 mins on an axis of 316° to the final objective at the rd and track junc 731209.

4. Assault teams of sprs and the unit pnrs were ordered to move with A and C coys to breach any wire encountered. The adv RAP was to move with rear Bn HQ and rear RAP was to remain in the conc area with "A" ech under cpd Capt W.G. Roxborough. During the "O" Gp the tps dug slit trenches and turned in to get as much rest as possible. The area was under intermittent mortar fire, during the night, but only 2 casualties resulted.



5. At 0530 hrs 23 May the bn moved fwd from the ennc area 761181 to the Bde SL, A Coy leading, followed by C Coy Bn HQ, D, B, the arty and 4 tk vehs, B own 51 RTR, the SP guns, 3" Mortar Pl and the MMGs. Lt Col R.C. Coleman, MC, with the Tac HQ consisting of the CO's rep, Major G.P. Cowan, 3 Fd Regt, TMA, the assistant adjt, Capt L.V. McGourran, the IO Lieut E.B. Beamish, a No 18 set, and two scouts, moved to the SL before the PPCLI began their attack. At 0600 hrs the barrage opened up and the Scaforth of C and PPCLI moved fwd. As the res coy of the PPCLI crossed the SL, our bn swung into posn - A Coy right, C Coy left, D Coy and B Coy in res. Bn HQ moved with them. The tks and inf had married up and the whole force crossed the SL without any great difficulty. Before we had moved 100 yds it was seen that PPCLI were encountering opposition and the hy enemy mortar and shell fire was going difficult as we were slowed down by their res coy. The Bde pushed on through very hy fire, but the going was slow and it was quite evident that the bn would not reach its SL by 0815 hrs. At 0730 hrs a message came from 2 Bde HQ that phase 2 would be given an adv of half an hr making the time over our SL as 0845 hrs. The enemy shelling mortaring and MMG fire increased in intensity and even when the woods were reached it still continued with unabated fury. By this time, the bn was passing through the rear coy of the PPCLI who were on the edge of the woods on the edge of the gully at 750193. Due to the artificial defile formed by the woods, the gully, and the valley of Le Fosse, A Coy on our right, C Coy was forced to stop in the follow A Coy urging A and C coys fwd to make the SL. As A Coy burst through the woods into the wheat fd on the far side of the gully, Capt P.G. Wright, the Coy Comd was wounded by a fragment which struck him in the head. He carried on, but was stopped by a mortar bomb, which exploded a min later, and wounded him seriously in the lower part of the body. Lt Col Coleman pressed further fwd to encourage A Coy and gave comd of the Coy to Lieut W.B. Langston. During this time the Coy was subjected to a murderous fire of arty, mortar and MMG. Enemy snipers were also extremely active, some of them being hidden in the lower branches of the trees. A coy pressed on but upon reaching a pt about 20 ft from the enemy's wire, was forced to go to ground, owing to the intensity of the fire, and the casualties inflicted upon us. It was here that Lt Col Coleman was shot through the hand and leg. However, he still urged A Coy on, who, led by Lieut W.B. Langston, and Lieut B.P. Lange arose to make the final assault on the wire and the enemy posts behind it. Two scouts crossed the wire, and then, owing to the hy volume of fire and large number of "S" mines sown in and about the wire, they were pinned down helpless. Both Lieuts Langston and Lange were wounded in the charge. Lt Col Coleman ordered Major F.H. McDougall, OC D Coy, to take comd of the bn and rear Bn HQ to move fwd, which they did, and began ops from the edge of the woods at 750193. At this pt, wireless com to the tk sqn comd failed and as the tks were not in sight, Capt L.V. McGourran was ordered back to contact them and bring them in to deal with the MG posts, of which there were an estimated 5 firing on A and C Coys. Major G.P. Cowan, CO's rep, also went back to get comd re-est with his regt, as the "White Scout" car wireless set had received a direct hit just previous to this time.

6. The posns of the other bns at this time were not clear, it was known that the Seaforth of C on the left, though suffering very hy casualties, had two coys on the first objective the rd MONTECORVO - AQUINO, in the vicinity of 739195. These two coys were fighting for their lives, and could give us no help. The PPCLI also had two coys fwd of us and behind the ADOLF HITLER LINE, but all contact was lost with them. They were believed to be somewhere near 740197. Another coy of the PPCLI was pinned down immediately left of A Coy and the battle appeared to have reached a deadlock.

7. The disposns of the coys which due to wireloss comm difficulties were unknown at that time to Lt Col Coleman, were as follows: C Coy lining the gully and the edge of the woods behind A Coy with one pl on the left of the rd. D and B coys were still in the centre of the woods, where the the had run into an extensive minefd, suffering fairly hy casualties, and were unable to move fwd. The situation fwd at A Coy remained very much the same, with no lessening of the enemy fire, although our men were returning fire, but due to the excellence of the enemy's posns, were only able to inflict few casualties. One coy of the PPCLI had been contacted immediately to the left of A Coy and astride the rd. Three NIH tks on the edge of the woods behind A Coy, although knocked out, were still able to bring MMG fire to bear on some of the enemy posns.

8. Lt Col Coleman repeatedly called for tk sp, not knowing they were stopped by the minefd and at about 1100 hrs an enemy Mk V Panther tk put in an appearance about 500 yds in front of A Coy and brought gun and MMG fire to bear on our tps also setting the 3 NIH tks ablaze. About this time Lieut L.G. Sherman was killed while leading his pl after being hit three times by an enemy sniper. Major A.F. Macdonald, the A/2 i/c had now reached rear Bn HQ and was ordered to take over comd from Major F.H. McDougall, OC D Coy. On his way fwd to Lt Col Coleman, Major Macdonald contacted Lt Col C.B. DSO, OC PPCLI, at his HQ, which was situated on the right side of the rd in the centre of the woods at 746193. He the disposns of the two units were compared and it became apparent that unless the enemy on the Seaforth of C from folded up the Bde would be held in its present posn for some time. Realizing that most of the enemy shelling came from our right, where the high ground NORTH of HIGHWAY 6 had excellent observation of all our movements, Major Macdonald called for smoke to be laid down on our right flank in the vicinity of AQUINO. He then proceeded on to contact Lt Col Coleman, informing the sqn comd of our tks of the situation on his way fwd. In attempting to reach Lt Col Coleman, Major Macdonald was shot in the heel by a sniper, while running across the wheat fd. He pressed word fwd to Lt Col Coleman, informing him of the gen situation and the location of Lt Col Ware's HQ. The message unfortunately did not reach Lt Col Coleman. Major F.A. Macdonald then returned to rear Bn HQ and turned over comd to Major F.H. McDougall and then drove back to 2 Cdn Inf Bde HQ. There he called for more smoke on our right flank, for it was noticed that under the protection of smoke the shelling was considerably lessened. While at Bde it was learned that the Seaforth of C had suffered very hy casualties, and there remained of their fighting strength only 100 men, 1 CSM and 2 offrs.



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9. At noon, the adv RIF which was at 753189 and which had been under hy shell fire almost continuously, was forced to move back and occupied a building at 758186, which was shared with the RAP of FPCLI. During this time A Coy now under comd of Lieut B.P. Lange, had withdrawn its secs from the enemy's side of the wire, and taken up a posn of all round def as they were in an exposed posn and in imminent danger of counter attack. At 1330 hrs Lt Col Coleman had recovered sufficiently to crawl a short distance and decided to move the Tac HQ back to the gully, as the wireless net had been out of action for some time then. On reaching the gully Lt Col Coleman was so exhausted he had to be carried back to the rear Bn HQ where he was taken to the RAP by jeep and evacuated.

10. Around 1600 hrs Major McDougall ordered the bn to consolidate in posns which ringed the main woods. A tk and SP guns were incorporated in the consolidation as were the remainder of the tks. A Coy was withdrawn from its isolated posn to the woods. The withdrawal was effected under cover of MG fire from the tks firing through the woods. Capt Roxborough, OC Sp Coy, who had been away during the day brought up dry rations late in the afternoon, and the men were able to make a meal, although the water situation was acute. At 1800 hrs orders were received from Dde HQ that B coy would come under comd of the FPCLI to help in their consolidation, also that the bn would move to an area near 766147, the FPCLI and Secd th of C remaining in posns at 746193 and 750183 respectively.

11. By 1900 hrs the enemy fire slackened off and seemed to be confined to a bty of hy guns possibly 17 or 21 cm, which were firing from somewhere NORTH of us. These guns systematically searched the woods and areas of both the FPCLI and L Edm R and caused several casualties before 2000 hrs, when the fire ceased with the exception of the odd round. From 0600 to 1900 hrs the enemy fire had been terrific, with very little let up. It has, without doubt, been the worst enemy fire the bn has ever experienced. At 1930 hrs Major Macdonald who had returned from Dde, Capt W. G. Roxborough set out to recon the new area. The bn less B Coy, moved off for the new area at 2100 hrs under cover of darkness. On reaching A ech 761181, hot tea was served, and the unit remained in that area until Major Macdonald returned from his recon. A check of the remaining fighting strength was made here and the unit had suffered hy losses as only 161 all ranks remained. The IO, Lieut E.L. Bradish, went to 2 Dde HQ to report on the days fighting and there found that the MR of the new area was wrong and should have been 746187. On his return to the unit Major MacDougall was informed and the unit prepared to move back up again. Major S.A. Knox, of the Irish T, who had come to A ech that afternoon on attachment to the regt as observer, took over as T/Comd of A Coy as they had no offrs left. The unit then marched back to the correct area where they dug in Bn HQ being est at 746186. By this time it was 0330 hrs and the men lay down for a well earned rest before "stand-to" to be prepared for what may yet come.

APPENDIX "D"

90th ANTI TANK BATTERY, RCA

BATTLE  
of  
THE HITLER LINE

20 MAY - 24 MAY 1944



20 MAY 44

1. Bty HQ was situated at MR 768142 in close proximity to 2 Cdn Inf Bde HQ with tps under comd bns (wef 1300 hrs) as follows: "J" Tp (17 pdrs) with L Edmn R in res, "K" Tp with PPCLI, "L" Tp with Seaforth of C. A tk disposns were coord and an amended trace submitted to Bde HQ at 1800 hrs.

2. Two casualties occurred from mortar fragments in "J" Tp during the evening. BC (Major H. Burnett, MC) and LO (Lieut H.K. MacDonald) attended Bde Comds conference at 1900 hrs where broad plan was outlined, details to follow.

21 MAY 44

3. Locations were unchanged until RHQ at 1600 hrs reported enemy AFVs moving SE from PONTECORVO when "K" Tp in comd Lieut G.E. Weidmark was sent to take up posns in depth in the Div Tac HQ area. This tp rejoined its bn before dark as soon as enemy force was reported retired.

4. BC and 2 i/c (Capt J.S. Mulkerns) attended Bde Comds O Gp at 1400 hrs followed by BCs conference at 1500 hrs where the following allotment was made:

- (a) PPCLI A tk Pl responsible for own area
- (b) Seaforth of C Comp Tp (two 17 pdrs and two 6 pdrs) under comd Lieut J.T. Wimble
- (c) L Edmn R Comp Tp under comd Lieut R.L. Nelles
- (d) L Edmn R and Seaforth of C A tk Pls and "K" Tp to be held in res. Lieut G.E. Weidmark ("K" Tp) to assist in deploying PPCLI guns during the attack.
- (e) Coord of all A tk to be responsibility of Major H. Burnett, MC.

22 MAY 44

5. Locations unchanged. Final coord conference by Bde Comd at 1400 hrs attended by BC and 2 i/c followed by own O Gp at 1500 hrs. Tps under comd bns and Bty HQ moved to 3 Cdn Inf Bde area in the late afternoon.

6. BC reported to Bde HQ at 0545 hrs and when fwd elements reported they had passed through wire and minefield and LO left at 0630 hrs by jeep with dvr, wireless set and op, one DR and proceeded under fairly heavy shelling and mortar fire to where CO PPCLI (Lt Col C.B. Ware, DSO), with Lieut G.E. Weidmark, A tk rep, was located at corner of wood MR 749191. Shelling became heavier so it was decided to leave jeep and 22 set at edge of wood 747193 and BC, LO and DR proceeded with Lt Col C.B. Ware, DSO, and party on foot.

7. Shelling and mortaring continued and the party made their way slowly along the edge of the wood to beginning of clearing at 744195 where they were pinned down by MG fire and sniping. DR was hit by MG fire in the arm and shoulder and was unable to make his way back to jeep on foot. Several other casualties were incurred at this pt incl Major Rankin, 3 Fd Regt up with PPCLI and Lieut Carr Harris, RCE. First aid was administered by BC and they went back on foot.



8. Lt Col C.B. Ware, DSO, and party then moved to a posn behind a knocked out Sherman about 20 yds in front of wood accompanied by BC. At this pt contact by 18 set was lost with their fwd coys and runners were despatched from time to time without result. Sniping, shelling and mortaring seemed to become heavier and in addition the enemy started to fire AP at the tk behind which the party was sheltering. After the fifth shot which knocked part of the turret off, they retired once more to the edge of the wood. At this pt a Churchill which was endeavoring to lay smoke in the area from which the enemy A tk fire was coming, was set on fire presumably by a hit from same gun and Lt Col Ware and party moved further along the edge of the wood out of danger of exploding tk amr. The enemy gun was inspected next day and found to be a long barreled 75 mm on a PANTHER turret mounted in a formidable concrete emplacement and well camouflaged.

9. At this pt the BC decided that until the situation clarified, the area of the wood should be made tk proof so in cooy of Lieut Weidmark and Lieut Gower PPCLI, posns were reced and guns ordered up at once. BC could not find his jeep which it was later disclosed had been used to evacuate casualties. The 22 set having been knocked out by a mortar bomb, the BC was without comm and proceeded with LO on foot to area of wood 780190 where he met Sgt Brown, made a quick recce and ordered the latter's guns into posns in depth and on the left flank with the two 17 pdrs covering the open area to the left of the rd forming the axis of adv. Lieut Nells at this time was still fwd with Maj Tucker and was pinned down by snipers at a pt about 200 yds along the rd from the edge of the wood. It was then found out that the DR sent to replace the casualty had himself become a casualty so the BC, leaving Lieut MacDonald who was assisting a casualty to the RAP, made his way by amb jeep to Bde HQ to report the situation and action taken as regards to A tk to Bde Comd and to find out if there was any change of plan. After conferring with Bde Comd he returned by jeep to Seaforth of C HQ and ordered Lieut J.T. Wimble's guns into posn in that area.

10. The BC then returned to HQ PPCLI and reced new posns of A tk guns to conform with Comd PPCLI plan and adjusted Lieut Nells gun posns with slightly changed locations of L Edmn R followed by a coord conference of tp comds in the L Edmn R area.

11. It was the considered opinion of the BC that it was at no time possible to bring guns further fwd on either the PPCLI or Seaforth of C fronts as the area between the fwd and rear coys was controlled by enemy A tk and SA fire. Tks were knocked out on the edges of the clearing where the Pz had been and furthermore the engrs had not been able to clear a gap through the minefd on this front. In the case of Seaforth of C front the Comd Seaforth of C had not seen fit to allow the guns to attempt to proceed to the area of the fwd coys for similar reasons.

12. At approx 1700 hrs the BC again reported to the Bde Comd and was infm of the plan for consolidation of posns which mainly affected the L Edmn R who were to move across the rd to a posn at 745185. On returning to the PPCLI area to

Liaise with.....



Liaise with Major Rosser and locate BnHQ L Edman R, he was told that they had had orders to move to posns across the gully in the 78 Div area. As it was apparent that some mistake had been made or last min changes of plan ordered, he contacted Capt Roxborough, explained the situation and had them halt on the rd while he checked with Bde HQ. Having ascertained that the original plan was unchanged, he returned with instrs to the L Edman R who retraced their steps and occupied their posn. Plan for A tk def was given to Lieut Nelles, who received the posn and brought his guns in at first light. Egt casualties through enemy action received during the day amounted to 1 quad destroyed by fire and one PPCLI 6 pdr gun which received a direct hit. Capt J.S. Mulkerns, 2 i/c remained at Bde HQ but unfortunately could not be infm of progress of the battle owing to the breakdown of comms.

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13. BC visited gun posns at 0730 hrs. Shelling was lt and seemed to be confined to shelling of the rd and wood in the PPCLI area with odd salvos of nebelwerfers throughout the gen area. Lieut G.E. Weidmark resumed comd of his own tp in res at approx 1400 hrs. The area was quiet during the afternoon and night.