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Cdn Ops - North West Europe (Series 22)

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CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN NORTH-WEST EUROPEEXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARIES & MEMORANDA(SERIES 22)

1. OPERATION "VERITABLE": (REPORT PREPARED BY HIST OFFR 3 CDN INF DIV, 17 MAR 45). (See Sketch Maps)

1. Operation "VERITABLE" was designed to achieve three main objectives:

- (a) To maintain pressure on the enemy, and to keep him from building up either tactical or strategic reserves.
- (b) To strike him at a point where we would gain decisive results, i.e. the RUHR.
- (c) To force him to engage in mobile warfare at which he would be at a disadvantage, due to shortage of petrol, motor transport, and tanks.

2. The area considered most suitable to achieve these objects was that situated between the RHINE and the MAAS. It was further decided that the break-in, and break-through, East and Southeast, could best be effected from the NIJMEGEN salient.

3. In December 1944 the direction of this undertaking was allotted to First Cdn Army. The operation was to be on a large scale. 30 (Brit) Corps was placed under command First Cdn Army. The initial break-through was to be achieved on a one Corps front; for this purpose 2 Cdn Inf Div and 3 Cdn Inf Divs were placed under command 30 Corps. Further, as Headquarters 30 Corps had studied this move in October 1944, Lt.-Gen. B.G. Horrocks D.S.O. was given the task of mounting the attack, with a target date of 1 Jan 45.

4. On 16 Dec 44 Von Rundstedt opened his offensive in the Ardennes, thus gaining the initiative. Accordingly on 19 Dec Veritable was postponed, but not cancelled. One month later, on 16 Jan 45 the C. in C. 21 Army Group gave the order to remount the operation with a target date of 10 Feb. This date was subsequently set forward two days.

5. The composition of 30 Corps for the initial assault was as follows:-

- Guards Armd Div (in res)
- 79 Armd Div (full resources allotted to other divs)
- 15 (S) Inf Div
- 43 Inf Div (in res)
- 51 (H) Inf Div
- 53 (W) Inf Div
- 2 Cdn Inf Div (limited use only from D minus 1)
- 3 Cdn Inf Div (from D minus 1)
- 6 Guards Tk Bde
- 8 Armd Bde
- 33 Armd Bde
- 34 Armd Bde
- 2 Cdn A.G.R.A.
- 3 A.G.R.A.
- 4 A.G.R.A.
- 5 A.G.R.A.
- 9 A.G.R.A.

This force totalled over 200,000 men, 1,300 armoured fighting vehicles and over 1,000 guns.

Planning

6. The plan envisaged a two Corps front as the operation developed, with 30 Corps on the right, and 2 Cdn Corps on the left.

7. The detailed planning for an offensive on this scale was an important consideration. GRAVE barracks, temporarily renamed "EDINBURGH CASTLE" was established as the Corps planning centre.

8. Surprise was essential. The wholesale movement of troops and the subsequent concentration in a small area could hardly fail to attract attention. In order to divert this from the main concentration, a cover plan was developed to give the impression that the force was concentrating along the WAAL prior to an attack Northwards. Movement was done largely by night and all formations crossing North of the MAAS were required to remove their formation markings.

Enemy Defences and Force

9. The enemy defences on the Corps and Divisional front conformed to his usual style. They were sited in three linear zones:

- (a) THE FORWARD LINE
- (b) THE SIEGFRIED LINE
- (c) THE HOCHWALD "LAY-BACK".

The FORWARD LINE was itself in two lines: the first consisted of a series of slit trenches and defended posts, running South from ERLEKOM (7762) to the QUER DAMM; the second comprised a series of defended localities in the villages and hamlets in the low country to the East, and an anti-tank ditch running Southeast from DUFFELWARD (8760) through the REICHSWALD.

10. The North end of the SIEGFRIED LINE was anchored at DUFFELWARD. It was composed of a series of defended localities mutually supporting and sited on all commanding ground. These defences consisted of slit trenches, concrete emplacements, reinforced dwellings, wire and mines. They extended Eastward to a line CALCAR (0050) - UDEM (9842) - GOCH (9337). This line protected the low open country before the CALCAR - UDEM escarpment.
11. Behind this came the HOCHWALD "LAY-BACK". This position consisted of an anti-tank ditch and a double line of trenches, protected by wire and mines.
12. The problem was therefore to force a passage through these defences. Once this was accomplished the country West of the RHINE would be open, and the remaining two objects of Veritable could be achieved - namely a drive on the RUHR and mobile warfare.
13. The forces employed by the enemy to hold the Northern end of his line consisted of two Battalions of 84 Div; SICHERUNGS Bn Munster VI and II/1052 Bn. Neither formation was composed of high quality troops.
14. The fact that the enemy was short of troops and uncertain of our intentions was borne out as the battle developed. It was known that a strategic reserve no longer existed on the Western Front, therefore any reserves that were brought into action must, of necessity, be taken from an operational role in some other sector.
15. The efforts made to achieve surprise were amply repaid by the way in which the enemy handled his reinforcement problem. He was apparently undecided where the main effort would be made in the Western offensive. Therefore he adopted a policy of "plugging holes" and committing new troops in "penny packets", wherever he could most readily gather them up. In this fashion he had committed no less than eleven Divisions by the end of Operation "VERITABLE."
16. An interesting fact relating to the enemy FORWARD LINE developed when the attack was made. The enemy had breached the dyke between the RHINE and the low country, earlier in the winter. Now, because of an abnormal rise in the RHINE, this low country was inundated; further, he had so weakened the QUER DAMM by excessive digging that it broke, allowing the flood as far East as the SIEGFRIED defences. There was fighting in the defended localities still above water, but the efficacy of his anti-tank ditch, wire and mines was largely lost, as the units of 3 Cdn. Inf Div floated over most of them, to assault their objectives in Buffaloes.

The Plan

17. The plan was based on the assumption that the enemy would fight strongly. It was therefore divided into three phases.

Phase I. The initial assault on a one Corps front with the object of clearing the REICHSWALD and low country to the North and gaining the line GENNEP (7845) - ASPERDEN (8745) - CLEVE (8955) - WARDHAUSEN (8959)

Phase II. The expansion of the break-in to a two Corps front; the bridging of the enemy's second defensive system East and Southeast of the REICHSWALD, and the capture of the line WEEZE (9337) - UDEM (9842).

Phase III. The break-through of the HOCHWALD "LAY-BACK" defence line and advance to secure the road GELDERN (0225) - WESEL (2240) and the final objective of the general line VENLO (E9109) - ORSOY (A2625)

18. 2 Cdn Inf Div were detailed for a limited role in the first phase. This consisted of clearing the DEN HEUVEL (7757) triangle including WYLER (7857), and opening the road to KRANENBURG (8056). 3 Cdn Inf Div were placed under command 30 Corps till Phase I was completed at which time they were to revert to 2 Cdn Corps. Starting with Phase II 2 Cdn Div were responsible for the left portion of the two Corps drive South-east up the RHINE. 30 Corps were given the right flank, with their right boundary the river MAAS. All available air power was to be made available to support the operation, although the attack would be launched regardless of air support. D day was set for 8 Feb 1945.

Phase I

19. The plan for the initial assault by the Corps was as follows. The R.A.F. of Bomber Command would strike CLEVE and GOCH on the night of D minus 1/D. There had been no prolonged softening-up by the artillery. It was considered that an overpowering concentration immediately before the attack would be more effective; accordingly the artillery, with a total of 1030 guns was to put down a concentration of fire on known enemy positions, from 0500 hours D day to 0740 hours. This was to be supported by lighter calibre weapons with a concentration known as "PEPPER-POT". The latter comprised the A.A. Guns, and anti-tank guns of the Division, 4.2" mortars, and M.M.Gs. of the Support Battalion, and 3" mortars of the assaulting Battalions. At 0740 hours the complete fire programme was suspended for ten minutes. This dramatic lull was to enable our counter battery staff to plot any enemy guns still in action for further attention. The concentration was resumed at 0750 hours and continued until 0940 hours when, for a period of ten minutes, a forming-up smoke screen was laid down. The barrage covering the attack began at 0950 hours and continued on the opening line until 1030 hours, the first lift was then made and the infantry attack started.

20. The opening attack was made on a three Divisional front with 51 (H) Div on the right, 53 (W) Div in the centre, and 15 (S) Div on the left. 2 Cdn Inf Div moved forward to their objective at the same time.

Attack by 3 Cdn Inf Div

21. The task allotted to 3 Cdn Inf Div on the left flank of 30 Corps was to secure the low country bounded on the right by the NIJMEGEN (6270) - KRANENBURG (8056) - CLEVE (8955) road exclusive, and on the left by the River WAAL. This area contained the Northern end of the defence lines already described. The fact that the area was largely under water did not change the original plan to any appreciable extent; an amphibious operation was not unforeseen, nor was it new to this Division. 114 Buffaloes of 79 Armd Div were available for the operation. It did, however, deprive the infantry of much of the pre-arranged armoured support.

22. H hour for this Division was 1800 hours D day. The attack was divided into two phases. During Phase I, on a two Brigade front, 7 Cdn Inf Bde on the right and 8 Cdn Inf Bde on the left were to advance to the line of the anti-tank ditch. In Phase II 9 Cdn Inf Bde, in reserve, would pass through 7 Cdn Inf Bde to break into the SIEGFRIED LINE and advance to the SPOY KANAL (9057 - 9060).

23. The units of 7 Cdn Inf Bde moved forward at 1800 hours. Regina Rif secured the South end of the QUER DAMM; then, with one flail tank and a troop of 13/18 Hussars, they moved to the next objective, ZYFFLICH (7859).

24. B Coy, 1 C. Scot R. encountered difficulties in their initial assault on "LITTLE TOBRUK" (777614), but the remainder of the Battalion moved forward, in Buffaloes, to attack NIEL (8160). It was in this attack that the Buffalo carrying the Commanding Officer was hit. The C.O. his I.O. and C.R.A.'s representative were wounded. The second-in-command took charge. By 1200 hours 9 Feb "LITTLE TOBRUK" and NIEL were in our hands. R. Wpg Rif, previously in reserve, moved forward to NIEL, and sent two Companies towards KEEKEN (8462). Regina Rif meanwhile moved forward to MEHR (8558) which fell to them without resistance by 1715 hours 9 Feb.

25. 8 Cdn Inf Bde moved forward at 1845 hours. N. Shore R. moved off first on the left flank, followed by R. de Chaud on the right. The attack opened well, although not without opposition and casualties. The dyke 788616 - 794626 was taken by N. Shore R. who then pushed on to ZANDPOL (8062) which they captured and held, despite a counter-attack. The advance was difficult, the troops in places being obliged to wade through water three feet deep. R. de Chaud captured LEUTH (8061) where they consolidated.

26. N. Shore R. continued to push on during the night 8/9 Feb against lessening opposition. KEKERDOM (8063) was taken and the Battalion exploited along the WINTER DYKE and Southeast along the dykes SPILDROPSCHE STRAAT and MOLEN STRAAT. They then pushed on to the Northwest part of MILLINGEN (8264). Q.O.R. of C. were brought forward through LEUTH, and by 1400 hours 9 Feb were established in MILLINGEN (8364).

27. The evening of D plus 1 saw the completion of Phase I of 3 Cdn Inf Div attack save for the area of the CUSTOMS HOUSE (8662). The rising flood was causing further difficulties. The Brigades already on their objectives were virtually cut off and, for the greater part, only able to exist by keeping along the dykes. The vehicles of R. de Chaud were evacuated and plans made to bring the Regiment back into Divisional reserve.

28. The flood was still rising when 9 Cdn Inf Bde moved from their concentration area, two Battalions forward, to begin Phase II. The forward Battalions, S.D. & G. Highrs on the right, and H.L.I. of C. on the left, were carried over their start line in Buffaloes. There could be no supporting armour, and as the artillery was unable to get forward, the barrage that had been planned was eliminated. Artillery support was confined to a series of concentrations and "STONKS".

29. The attacking Battalions crossed the start line at 1630 hours, 10 Feb 45. On the right S.D. & G. Highrs made good progress meeting at first only light opposition. They made contact with 15 (S) Div on their right, near DONSBRUGGEN (8657). Considerable opposition was met at RINDERN (8858) from a system of trenches on fortified houses. The Battalion was counter-attacked here by paratroops. Their right front also came under M.M.G. fire from the vicinity of the TIERGARTEN CLEVE (8757), as they had advanced more quickly than the formation on their right.

30. On the left H.L.I. of C. ran into opposition at DUFFELWARD early in their advance. This took the form of pill boxes and fortified houses. DUFFELWARD formed the North end of the SIEGFRIED LINE. Despite artillery concentrations this position continued to hold out. Leaving one Company to contain it, H.L.I. of C. pushed on to their objective. By 2140 hours 11 Feb 9 Cdn Inf Bde reported both leading Battalions firm on the line of the SPOY KANAL with patrols forward to the CLEVE - GRIETHAUSEN (9159) railroad. This was the planned end of Phase II of the operation for this Division.

31. Meanwhile the rising flood had forced the evacuation of 7 Cdn Inf Bde from their positions to their original concentration area. 8 Cdn Inf Bde were given the task of guarding the South bank of the RHINE and ALTER RHEIN as far South as DUFFELWARD, where a platoon of Q.O.R. of C. relieved H.L.I. of C., to the gap in the WINTER DYKE at 723628. This gap was blown on 12 Feb by the R.C.E. to relieve the flooding. Here voice contact was made with 7 Cdn Recce Regt (D.Y.R.C.H.) on the left, who patrolled the WAAL Westwards to NIJMEGEN.

32. The question of maintenance was becoming increasingly difficult. The breaking of the QUER DAMM flooded the whole of the low country, including the main NIJMEGEN - CLEVE road. This was the only supply route available to the 53 (W) Div, 15 (S) Div, 43 (Brit) and 3 Cdn Inf Divs. The troops of this Division, who had not already been withdrawn, were being maintained with great difficulty by Buffaloes.

33. The next step in the main operation was taken on 12 Feb. On the right 51 (H) Div captured GENNEP (7846) and HEKKENS (8348), thus providing another maintenance route through the REICHSWALD where 53 (W) Div were completing its clearance. 15 (S) Div were withdrawn into Corps reserve after capturing CLEVE and 43 Div passed through them to move Southeast. 7 Cdn Inf Bde was then brought forward to garrison CLEVE. 8 Cdn Inf Bde continued to guard the RHINE bank with minimum strength. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to advance its objective to include KELLEN (9157) GRIETHAUSEN (9160) and patrol to the KALFLACH CANAL.

34. Nth N.S. Highrs moved forward to KELLEN. S.D. & G. Highrs patrolled as far forward as WARBEYEN (9457) where they met some opposition and took prisoners. On 14 Feb Nth N.S. Highrs advanced across the ALTER RHINE, which at the point of crossing was about 300 yards wide, to attack HURENDEICH (9659) and the ferry crossing site opposite EMMERICH (9781). 40 paratroops resisted the advance, but were soon dealt with, in a very hot fight. "C" Squadron 7 Cdn Recce Regt (D.Y.R.C.H.) occupied HUISBERDEN (9655) without opposition.

35. At 1200 hours 15 Feb 3 Cdn Inf Div reverted to under command 2 Cdn Corps. The situation was somewhat involved as regards the positioning of the forces in the Corps area. 7 Cdn Inf Bde was in CLEVE. Q.O.R. of C. with two Companies N. Shore R., and one Company C.H. of O. (M.G.) were guarding the left flank of the Division along the RHINE. The remainder of 8 Cdn Inf Bde was concentrated in the NIJMEGEN area. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was considerably extended with H.L.I. of C. holding the area GRIETHAUSEN with a post on the RHINE at STATION SPYCK (923614). S.D. & G. Highrs were concentrated about KELLEN. Nth N.S. Highrs were guarding the KALFALCH CANAL and the HURENDEICH (9659) area. 46 Bde which came under command 3 Cdn Inf Div, were fighting in MOYLAND WOOD (9552). 129 and 130 Bdes of 43 (WX) Div were in the area HAU (9152) and Forest CLEVE (9248).

36. On 16 Feb, 46 Bde were still fighting in MOYLAND WOOD. The enemy on their front were identified as part of 346 Fus Bn and 2 Bn 60 Pz Gren Regt, 116 Pz Div. This enemy held up the advance of 46 Bde by continued counter-attacks. At 1330 hours 7 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to advance. This was done on a two Battalion front with R. Wpg Rif, and Regina Rif leading. Their axis was between the two secondary roads immediately South of MOYLAND WOOD. Regina Rif were, however, fired on from the wood (9551) before reaching their start line. They attempted to clear up this enemy post to secure their start line but were unsuccessful. It was appreciated that to clean this wood would necessitate a set piece attack....

37. The battle for this wood became a matter of ever increasing importance. The enemy were able to reinforce it from CALCAR (0049) the road being dead ground to us. This resistance came just at the time 30 Brit and 2 Cdn Corps were adjusting their Corps boundaries and sorting out formations. Regina Rif mounted a further attack in the wood on 17 and 18 Feb. These were unsuccessful. On 19 Feb 1 C. Scot R. with one Company of two Platoons attempted to penetrate the Southeast and of the wood. The enemy allowed them to come right in before opening fire. The attacking force was, with the exception of the CSM and eight other ranks, killed or taken prisoner.

38. Simultaneously the regrouping continued. 43 Div started to relieve 8 Cdn Inf Bde who was in turn to relieve 9 Cdn Inf Bde. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to replace 30 Bde on the right flank of the Division. 43 Div would then become 2 Cdn Corps reserve. 15 (S) Div less 46 Bde were withdrawn to replace 43 Div who had been fighting on the East end of the REICHSWALD towards GOCH (9043).

39. On 19 Feb 45, 4 Cdn Inf Bde of 2 Cdn Inf Div advanced Southeast of 7 Cdn Inf Bde, who were still containing the enemy in the wood. Their attack took them to the line of the road (963473 - 980489). 9 Cdn Inf Bde now relieved, gave depth to 4 Cdn Inf Bde positions. R. Wpg Rif relieved by S.D. & G. Highrs were drawn back in preparation for another attack on MOYLAND WOOD.

40. The enemy attack 4 Cdn Inf Bde on the night of 19/20 Feb in considerable force, including supporting armour. The Essex Scot were overrun. R.H.L.I. and 1 C. Scot R. held firm. R. Regt C. regained most the ground lost by the Essex Scot by a counter-attack. The attack on the wood by R. Wpg Rif on 21 Feb was successful and the enemy were finally driven out.

41. The grouping of the 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs on the evening of 21 Feb was most involved. This could not, however, be avoided owing to the complex system of relief dictated by circumstances. The plan behind each move was clear enough and by the evening of 22 Feb the situation was neatly arranged.

42. This arrangement was brought about by an attack by Nth N.S. Highrs on a two Company front which regained the positions 969460 and 976465 previously held by Essex Scot. The remaining Battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde moved East taking over from the Battalions of 4 Cdn Inf Bde which, moving Northeast, relieved 7 Cdn Inf Bde, which, in turn, moved back into Divisional reserve. 8 Cdn Inf Bde relieved by 130 Bde, were positioned in rear of 9 Cdn Inf Bde. 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs were now each on their own axis, on a one Battalion front.

43. This last attack and repositioning of the units concluded Operation "VERITABLE." 3 Cdn Inf Div was in its place for the attack by 2 Cdn Corps on the CALCAR - UDEM escarpment and assault on the HOCHWALD "LAY-BACK" line. The total number of prisoners taken on the whole front to 22 Feb was over 11,450; of this total 3 Cdn Inf Div took 22 officers and 1,090 other ranks.

Supporting Arms and Services

44. Artillery. The Divisional Artillery was included in the extensive Corps artillery programme which opened this operation. It is beyond the scope of this narrative to evaluate the results of this concentration. It is sufficient to note that in many posts the enemy had to be dug out of cellars in which they had been sheltering for the previous 12 hours.....

45. Engineers. As in the case of the artillery, this narrative does not attempt to cover in detail the widespread and invaluable work of the supporting arms and services involved in this operation. Probably the best definition of the part played by the engineers is given in the intention of their Operation Order which reads, "R.C.E. 3 Cdn Inf Div will open and repair all routes required by the div during the advance to the div objective."

46. The attainment of this objective envisaged three possibilities:
(a) Hard going
(b) Soft going (which implied the probable break up of existing roads)
(c) Flooding.

It can be easily seen that the problem of selecting suitable stores for these three eventualities was a most difficult task.

47. However, the timing of this operation gave adequate opportunity to the various staffs to plan their work and brief their troops as to what was expected of them.

48. The wide front for which this Division was responsible made 3 Cdn Inf Div engineers responsible for the lion's share of the road maintenance in 30 Corps area. Flooding, however, undid much of the preparatory work and a new series of tasks had to be undertaken. The Divisional operation was an amphibious nature. For the engineers this meant the preparation of landing ramps for Buffaloes, the clearing and marking of lanes and the clearing of under-water mine fields.

49. The disposition of the engineers on D day was as follows: two Platoons of 16 Fd Coy were placed under command 8 Cdn Inf Bde. Two Platoons 6 Fd Coy were placed under command 7 Cdn Inf Bde. Two Platoons 18 Fd Coy were placed under command of the reserve, 9 Cdn Inf Bde.

50. The detachment from 16 Fd Coy embarked with R. de Chaud. On arriving at the first objective they proceeded to build a Buffalo landing ramp. Then, following in rear of the infantry, they cleared the road and repaired a blown culvert. Possibly the most spectacular feat, though hardly in the line of engineering, was the capture of over 100 Germans who first surrounded and later surrendered to a party of one N.C.O. and three men.

51. 6 Fd Coy ran into difficulties on the QUER DAMM. This dam, weakened by enemy digging, broke under pressure of water from the West. An attempt was made to bridge the break, which however kept widening until the bridging effort became futile.

52. On 9 Feb orders were received to make a two-way class 9 road between BERG EN DAL (749597) and WYLER (781580). This task was given to 18 Fd Coy less the detachment under command 9 Cdn Inf Bde. It was operationally impossible to close this road to traffic, and while the task had not been completed before this Division left the area much progress had been made.

53. On 12 Feb it became apparent that a breach in the WINTER DYKE would alleviate the extreme flooding over the Divisional area, a 100-foot breach was blasted at point 723628 by 16 Fd Coy. This was later enlarged to one of 900 feet.

54. When CLEVE was captured and became a divisional responsibility, the clearing of routes through this badly bombed city was done by the engineers. On completion of this task the clearing of the route to UDEM was undertaken.

55. Signals. To facilitate control Divisional Headquarters was positioned well forward, before "VERITABLE" started. Here Divisional Signals immediately established an exchange in a reinforced basement. To ensure good communications a quad cable was built to each Brigade. All lines were built well up to clear traffic, and where they crossed main axes were either buried or built to a minimum height of 30 feet. This avoided disruption of line communications to Brigades despite very heavy traffic.

56. When the attack started the flooding had rendered useless the cable buried to 8 Cdn Inf Bde. Communications were maintained by wireless sets carried in Weasels or carriers transported by Buffaloes. This became unsatisfactory as the Headquarters moved forward. Contact was only maintained by intermediate relay stations. The same wireless experience was common to 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes. Wireless communication was extremely difficult on account of the many frequencies on a narrow front. Again relay stations were used to maintain communications between Tac and Main Headquarters.

57. As the battle progressed a signal centre was established at NUTTERDEN (8456) thus connecting 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, two Field and one Medium Regiment R.C.A. Further, after great difficulty, the line along the WYLER - KRANENBURG road which was under water was restored to use. A line belonging to 2 Cdn Corps and one laid by First Cdn Army made a total of six circuits to this centre. A high power wireless act was also located here for relaying on the Divisional Command net.

58. Despatch rider service was maintained where flooding permitted. It was established from NIJMEGEN to CLEVE when the engineers opened a rafting service between WYLER and KRANENBURG.

59. Medical. Like all other arms and services the Divisional medical plan had to be radically revised due to the flood and consequent disappearance of routes by which casualties could be evacuated. Experience proved, however, that the established practice is flexible, and that by making use of available equipment it works well. The Divisional medical units were as follows:

- (a) 14 Cdn Fd Amb
- (b) 22 Cdn Fd Amb
- (c) 23 Cdn Fd Amb
- (d) 7 F.D.S. for sick and battle exhaustion cases.

60. Behind Division, First Cdn Army had made all arrangements for the care of wounded within 30 Corps. The following units were pooled for this operation:

- (a) 3 (Brit) C.C.S.
- (b) 3 (Cdn) C.C.S.
- (c) 6 (Cdn) C.C.S.
- (d) 5 F.D.S. with two Advance Surgical Units and one Fd Transfusion Unit.

To these units battle casualties were directed by an Ambulance Control Point. Behind the C.C.S.s. cases were evacuated to hospitals under command First Cdn Army.

61. Weasels were allotted to Pd Ambs for the evacuation of casualties to Casualty Collecting Posts. There were three evacuation routes in use for the early part of the operation.

- (a) On the left flank by Weasel along the WINTER DYKE from KERKERDOM via ZANDPOL to point 719627.
- (b) In the centre, through Brigade Distributing Centre by Buffalo to Divisional Beach Area (746609).
- (c) Through an A.D.S. established by 15 (S) Div at 889566, thence by D.U.K.W. to 3 (Brit) C.C.S. from which sick and exhaustion cases were sent to 7 F.D.S. and other casualties directed where space permitted.

62. Casualty Collecting Posts established at the start of Buffalo and D.U.K.W. routes did excellent work. Often during much more than their normal role in resuscitating casualties to enable them to withstand long journeys. The effort was well repaid as casualties, despite these difficulties and necessary movement in slow vehicles, arrived at the C.C.Ss. in good condition.

63. The chief difficulty in the evacuation of the wounded was first to find them, then to remove them to the Casualty Collecting Posts. Once this was done there little delay in their rearward move. The number of casualties suffered by this Division from 8 Feb - 25 Feb (both dates inclusive) is:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Missing</u>	<u>Total</u>
Officers	13	30	6	49
Other rank pers	117	511	115	743
	<u>130</u>	<u>541</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>792</u>

64. The provision of potable water proved a new problem. Normally the sources which the engineers provided water for medical approval have a suitable origin. During the operation flood water had to be used. The water purifying equipment for this type of water proved entirely satisfactory.

65. System of Supply. The original plan for maintaining the forward troops was based on a dry operation. The flooding, however, did not change the basic plan but did alter some of the detail. An Advance Ammunition Point was established in the BEEK area at 747619. When it became apparent that formations and units could not be maintained by the dyke roads this point was expanded to a composite point, carrying a complete second line of ammunition, petrol, oil, and lubricants and two days' rations. This point became the Divisional Beach Area (D.B.A.), locally known as "WAINWRIGHT PARK". Buffaloes based on the D.B.A. acted as general carriers. Brigades established Brigade Distributing Centres (B.D.C.) replenished by Buffaloes from the D.B.A. Units were supplied from the B.D.C. Demands were passed by signal from Brigade Tactical Headquarters to the Main Headquarters each Brigade had left in rear.

66. 7 Cdn Inf Bde were soon evacuated from the area they had captured, and later moved to CLEVE. A second composite point, stocked by D.U.K.Ws. was opened here. This point was expanded as formations and Units were phased forward from NIJMEGEN to the CLEVE area.

67. A G/Q conference held every evening allocated the Buffaloes of 5 Aslt Regt to formations for the coming day according to operational or supply needs. Formations therefore had Buffaloes with them at all times, for distribution forward from the B.D.C., operations, and the evacuation of casualties and prisoners.

68. The system proved adequate and flexible. When 9 Cdn Inf Bde moved to the CLEVE area it became based on that Divisional point. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, which relieved it, took over the B.D.C. at DONSBRUGGEN. 130 Bde after relieving 8 Cdn Inf Bde did not take over this D.B.C. hence both D.B.C. and D.B.A. were closed. The only unit of 3 Cdn Inf Div left behind was 7 Cdn Recce Regt, (D.Y.R.C.H.) less one squadron, who were guarding the dyke running East of NIJMEGEN. This unit was allocated one Buffalo daily to administer itself from its own A Echelon in NIJMEGEN.

Lessons Learned

69. Artillery

- (a) General. The artillery fire plans in support 3 Cdn Inf Div in this operation consisted of timed programmes followed by concentrations on call. A few interesting points arose, some new, and some testifying the value of lessons already learned.
- (b) Support of Infantry in Wood Fighting. On 21 Feb 45 R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div supported an attack by R. Wpg Rif on a wood due South of MOYLAND (E9650 - E9750). The fire plan was unorthodox. It was appreciated that it would not suffice to saturate the wood with fire prior to the infantry attack. The C.R.A. therefore planned to support the infantry through the woods by a programme of timed stonks on the woods and cut-off fire on all approaches. The following safety precautions were taken:
- (i) The support fire in the woods was ordered as a close target.
 - (ii) 14 Cdn Fd Regt, firing the stonks was positioned so that the axes of the the stonks were at right angles to the line of fire. It was considered that the risk of a line error was more acceptable than the known 100% zone of the gun combined with the danger of rounds bursting in the trees over our own troops.
 - (iii) The target height ordered was based on ground height plus mean height of trees. This ensured that no fire fell short owing to rounds bursting in the trees.
 - (iv) The fire plan was entirely successful. The infantry followed the fire closely. No rounds fell among our own troops. All data was predicted.

This fire plan demonstrated that infantry fighting in woods can be given direct support by a timed programme by artillery if the risk is understood by the infantry and is considered justifiable in the circumstances.

- (c) Support of R.C. Sigs. On night of 11 Feb 45 a mechanical jammer appeared on several frequencies including the C.R.A.'s Command net. A check with A.P.I.S. attached 3 Cdn Inf Div revealed a large enemy wireless transmitting station at E924646. The next day the Special Wireless Section, 2 Cdn Corps, was asked to get a fix. Due

to technical difficulties it was only possible to get one ray. This passed through the installation located by A.P.I.S.

On the evening of 12 Feb 45 when the jammer resumed its activities a 'Y' target was fired by 5 A.G.R.A., scale one airburst, followed five minutes later by scale on percussion. The jamming ceased and was not resumed.

- (d) Selection of Targets. Proof again was given of the value of examining all available sources of information, patrol reports, defence overprints and air photos.

On more than one occasion it was possible to produce a very satisfactory fire plan at short notice. Later ground reconnaissance showed that targets which had been selected were on enemy positions.

- (e) Air Observation Post. The Air Observation Post was frequently used for contact reconnaissance and dropping messages to isolated G.R.A. representatives and Headquarters. On three occasions, letter mail was delivered to forward Field Regiments in this manner.

The Air Observation Post was also used for Royal Engineers and infantry reconnaissance, particularly for reports on flooding. It was found that the most satisfactory system was to use an observing officer who had been briefed to obtain answers to specific questions.

70.

Engineers

- (a) Flooding Conditions. With the prospect of the Divisional plan being radically changed in part or in whole because of various possible flooding conditions, a too detailed engineer plan is not practicable. Engineers in an operation of this sort must be prepared to regroup quickly and be in a position to carry out many unforeseen tasks with a minimum loss of time.
- (b) Dyke Breaching. Attempts to repair breaches in the dyke and bridge over breaches are futile with Divisional engineer resources. Early reconnaissance of forward dykes, intelligent appreciation of unusual rise of water, thorough knowledge of road levels so that extent and depth of flooding may be assessed, are essential in order that the Division may be quickly warned and advised.
- (c) Division Maintenance Axis. In a Corps battle it is customary for the various Divisional axes to be selected by Corps. Occasions arise whereby an axis, plotted from a map and/or air photo is impassable. It is suggested that appropriate Division representatives attend Corps conferences regarding future routes and submit recommendations and estimates of time required to open a route.
- (d) Town Clearance. Conditions of streets in "liberated" German towns is such that, for early and rapid clearance, one-way routes only can be opened up. As it is impossible to foresee the condition of the streets in town a traffic system cannot be prepared until the arrival of troops. It is suggested therefore that it be automatic that the A.P.M. accompany the Fd Coy Commander responsible for the opening up so that an early traffic control can be established.

(e) Main Divisional Harbour Area. Whenever possible, and when necessary, advance engineer work in preparing Division harbour areas should be permitted before Division moves in. This would:

- (i) Permit roads and tracks to be laid out before area is ruined by motor transport.
- (ii) Allow mechanical equipment to move about freely without danger of breaking signal lines.

71. Signals.

The lessons learned from this operation are not all new; some of them were as follows:

- (a) A reserve of wireless sets must be kept in hand to replace losses immediately and for employment as relay stations. Communications would have been impossible in some instances if relay sets had not been available.
- (b) When a large number of sets are employed on a narrow front as in this operation, perfect netting is essential. This can only be assured by continual checking of the frequencies by wavemeter.
- (c) From the Monitor Reports on this operation it is evident that the standard of R.T. procedure has deteriorated. This is probably due to very little use of wireless in the past three months. Practice in R.T. procedure must be kept up when the wireless is not in use.
- (d) Quad cable can be used across water obstacles if the junction boxes are sealed with bostic. If Buffaloes are employed in the operation, however, they soon break any cable that is laid out.

72. Infantry.

The advance notice of Operation "VERITABLE" gave all staffs and commanders adequate time to make reconnaissance and plans. All ranks were told of their units' part in the coming operation. This was a lesson learned from previous experience and it has proved its worth.

- (a) The amphibious nature of this operation, while not new to the Division, proved again the necessity of a careful choice of assembly area in relation to a nearby launching point.
- (b) Buffaloes were found excellent carriers. Their weakness proved to be
 - (i) Bogging in deep mud
 - (ii) Necessity for thorough daily maintenance
 - (iii) Vulnerability to mines, enemy fire, and underwater obstacles as cables, fencewire etc.
 - (iv) Noisy engine.

On the credit side it was generally felt that the operation could not have been successfully undertaken without them. Further the 20 mm gun proved a welcome addition to the unit fire power.

- (c) Communications. All Brigades and formations had difficulty in maintaining wireless communications. The relay system proved to be the only solution.
- (d) Pepper Pot. 7 Cdn Inf Bde report this plan of "employing all weapons NOT otherwise engaged in Division fire plan was definitely a success". This Brigade used the "Pepper Pot" to support their final attack on MOYLAND WOOD, as well as their initial assault on D day. The question of concentrating the same amount of fire into a shorter period, merits consideration.
- (e) Artificial Moonlight was considered a definite help in the operation.

73. R.C.A.S.C.

This operation brought out new lessons. However it confirmed the fact that the system is sufficiently flexible to accommodate itself to unusual circumstances, given adequate equipment.

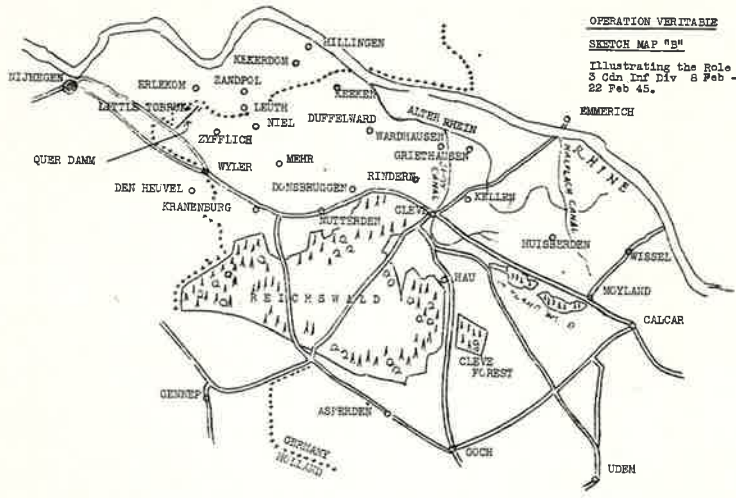
74. R.C.A.M.C.

The flooding necessitated several changes of plan. These were accomplished by coordinating the evacuation of wounded through B.D.Cs. and the employment of amphibious vehicles, instead of the normal vehicles used to evacuate the wounded. Like the R.C.A.S.C. the system can meet the occasion.

Conclusion

75. "VERITABLE" ended on 22 Feb 45. It had reached Phase II of the original plan. The Division was in position on the Corps front to carry out its share of the next operation - "BLOCKBUSTER".

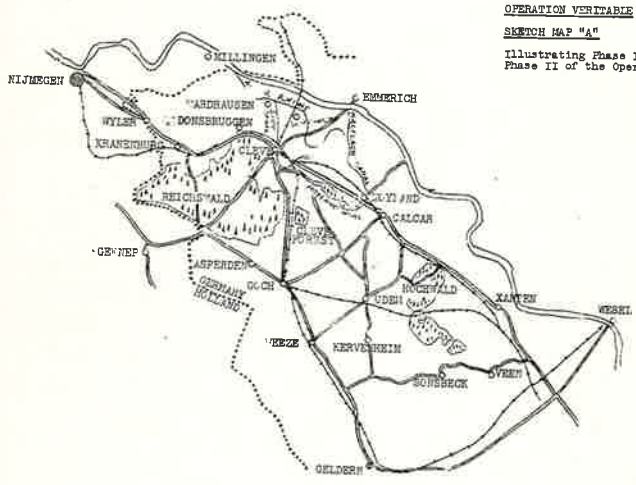
76. The Division had successfully performed another amphibious operation, justifying the sobriquet, "Water Rats". Weather conditions throughout the operation were most unfavourable. This deprived the infantry of much of the planned armour support; nevertheless, by 26 Feb everything was in readiness for the final effort which was to lead to the ousting of the enemy from the West side of the RHINE.



OPERATION VERITABLE

SKETCH MAP "B"

Illustrating the Role of
3 Cdn Inf Div 8 Feb -
22 Feb 45.



OPERATION VERITABLE

SKETCH MAP "A"

Illustrating Phase I and
Phase II of the Operation.