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**Bitter Harvest:**  
**A Case Study of**  
**Allied Operational Intelligence**  
**for Operation Spring**  
**Normandy, July 25 1944.**

by  
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**to the required standard**

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David R. O'Keefe  
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**INTRODUCTION**  
**The Eleventh Hour**

**"I considered at the time (and I have found no evidence since to change my view) that the objectives May-sur-Orne, Verrieres, and Tilly-la-Campagne could and should have been taken without heavy casualties and that in the event, the casualties of certain units were excessive. That we failed to capture and hold May-sur-Orne and Tilly-la-Campagne and that we suffered what were, in my opinion, excessive casualties was due to a series of mistakes and errors of judgment in minor tactics"**

**- Lt.Gen. G.G. Simonds -**

## Introduction:

### **The Eleventh Hour**

When C.P. Stacey reflected on his career as the Canadian Army's Official Historian he singled out operation Spring as a historical problem that would continue to rear "its unprepossessing head" for a long time.<sup>1</sup> "Spring," Stacey recalled, "was the final episode of the long pounding battle which the British and Canadians fought on the Eastern flank of the Normandy bridgehead to keep the German armour tied up...so as to assist the Americans to breakout in the West." The Canadian contribution to this strategy, according to Stacey, was simply to "run their heads against the formidable defence south of Caen."<sup>2</sup> Four days earlier, Spring was designed by 2nd Canadian Corps commander Lt. Gen. Guy Simonds as a three-phase plan to capture the high ground south of the Verrières Ridge and if the opportunity presented itself, to exploit towards Falaise.<sup>3</sup> As darkness descended over Normandy on July 25 1944, the uncomfortable results of operation "Spring" were revealed. Over 500 Canadians soldiers lay dead and 1000 had been wounded or captured in their attempt to wrestle Verrières ridge away from its

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<sup>1</sup> Stacey, Date With History P.176.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. P.176

<sup>3</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,712, 2nd Canadian Corps, Operation Instruction No.3: Operation Spring, July 23 1944. RG24 Vol.10,808, Drafts of Operation Spring. Due to popular misconception, many histories treating the battle have mistakenly put 2nd Canadian Corps under the command of General H.D.G. Crerar's First Canadian Army for Spring. This is no doubt due to the fact that First Canadian Army did become operational in the bridgehead on July 23rd but, at this time, it had only one corps, Crocker's British first, under its command. 2nd Canadian Corps was still under the command of General Miles Dempsey's 2nd British Army which it had been attached to for the 10 days leading up to Spring. 2nd Canadian Corps did not come under Crerar's command until the end of the month well after the failure of Spring.



German defenders.<sup>4</sup>

The Allied reactions to the dismal results of Spring were far reaching. Upon his return from touring the bridgehead in Normandy, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was forced to address the British War Cabinet as a result of a press report announcing that the Canadians had suffered a "serious set-back" and had been driven from 1,000 yards of hard-won ground.<sup>5</sup> While Churchill passed the report off to the Cabinet as the work of an overzealous war correspondent, 21 Army Group Commander General Bernard Law Montgomery, answered to Churchill on July 27. In true Montgomery fashion, he placed the best possible spin on the results and dismissed any notion of a reverse. "I know of no serious set-back" he wrote, "very heavy fighting took place yesterday and the day before and as a result the troops of Canadian Corps were forced back 1,000 yards from the furthest position they had reached."<sup>6</sup> This, according to Montgomery, did not constitute a "set-back." Later, Montgomery wrote to Field Marshal Alanbrooke in London that "very heavy fighting took place south of Caen on 25 and 26 July and on the front of 2nd Canadian Infantry Div(ision),, *which was fighting its first battle in Normandy*, (was) forced back 1000 (yards) in two places, i.e. May and Tilly."<sup>7</sup>

For Simonds, the fact that Maj.Gen. Charles Foulkes's 2nd Canadian Infantry Division was new to the Normandy battlefield spared its commanders from becoming the scapegoat for Springs failure. Instead, the axe fell on the long-suffering 3rd Canadian Infantry Division as a result of their actions at Tilly-la-Campagne. After meeting with Second British Army Commander General Miles Dempsey, and later with 3rd Canadian Infantry

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<sup>4</sup> C.P. Stacey, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War Vol. III The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe 1944-1945. (Ottawa:1960) P.194.

<sup>5</sup> Nigel Hamilton, Master of the Battlefield (London:1984); PRO, CAB/65, War Cabinet Minutes 44 97 conclusion July 27 1944; Imperial War Museum (IWM), Bernard Law Montgomery Papers (BLM), BLM Diary, July 27 1944.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, Master of the Battlefield. P. 759

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., P. 758; IWM, BLM Papers, BLM Diary.

Division Commander Maj.-General Rod Keller, Simonds convened a court of inquiry removed the commanders of the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade and the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. As an indirect result of this inquiry the commander of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders was also removed from command. Simonds also gave serious consideration to ending the careers of both his divisional commanders but refrained for morale considerations.<sup>8</sup>

Over the weeks and months following Spring, the cost of the failed attack filtered throughout the ranks of the Canadian and Allied Armies and into Canada as well. Although press reports were primarily centered on the gallant Defence of Verrières village, what these reports did not report was that it was the only one of Spring's six preliminary objectives to be captured and held on July 25.<sup>9</sup> However, what was clear from the press reports and the letters home from the front, was that each of the seven infantry battalions involved in the 2nd Canadian Corps attack had suffered heavily in a struggle more reminiscent of 1914 than 1944 - none more so than the Royal

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<sup>8</sup> According to Maj.-General George Kitching, who was with 2nd Corps at the time of Spring, Simonds wanted desperately to get rid of Foulkes after Spring. "On at least three occasions" Kitching wrote, "Guy Simonds confided in me that he was going to get rid of Charles Foulkes. I can only assume that General Crerar must have intervened and insisted that Charles remain because nothing happened". Foulkes was not the only divisional commander to be in Simonds dog house after Spring. The other Canadian divisional commander Maj.-General R.F.L. Keller, whose 3rd Division had been fighting continually since it hit the beaches on June 6, was under review for dismissal by Simonds at the request of 2nd British Army commander General Miles Dempsey. Simonds had stuck up for Keller and felt that he had to give Foulkes at least as much leeway as Keller received besides, the political ramifications of removing both Canadian divisional commander so close together, some argue would have been catastrophic. In the end, before Simonds could pull the plug on either, Keller was wounded and Foulkes was promoted to command the I Cdn Corps in Italy. Foulkes only returned with his Corps in the spring of 1945 to finish the war in North-West Europe. G. Kitching Mud and Green Fields: The Memoirs of Maj.-General George Kitching (St.Catherines: 1992) P.189., J.L. Granatstien., The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War. (Toronto:1993) P.53 Stacey, Date with History: The Memoirs of Canadian Historian. (Ottawa:1982) P.147., J.A. English., Failure in High Command: The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign. (Toronto:1991) P.132

<sup>9</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,712, 2nd Canadian Corps, Operation Instruction No.3: Operation Spring, July 24 1944; RG24 Vol.10,808, Drafts of Operation Spring; McAndrew, Bill. "The Historiography of Operation Spring" in Bercuson and Wise The Valour and the Horror Revisited. (Montreal:1994) P.47 Roy, R. 1944 P.201, English J.A. Failure in High Command P.147

Highland Regiment of Canada (the Black Watch), whose loss of 300 of its 315 men has become synonymous with the debacle. Upon the cessation of hostilities and amid the tenacious prompting of his constituents from Montreal, the Minister of National Defence, Douglas C. Abbott, ordered the Canadian Army's official historian Col. C.P. Stacey, to examine what happened to the Black Watch in Operation Spring. Stacey's historical investigation, conducted over the next eighteen months, revealed a controversy between Simonds and Foulkes over the conduct of the operation - an operation that Stacey would later refer to as "the costliest single-day operation for the Canadian Army in the Second World War." after Dieppe.<sup>10</sup>

According to Stacey, the costly and meager results of Spring led to a heated debate in the immediate postwar years between the two commanders most associated with the operation - Simonds and Foulkes.<sup>11</sup> This controversy, Stacey recalled, played out during the formulation of a series of reports for the official history of the Canadian Army and for the Minister of National Defence.<sup>12</sup> Stacey's report for the Minister of National Defence, focusing primarily on the fate of the Black Watch, was completed after a drawn-out process in January 1946 and sent to Simonds and Foulkes for their comments.<sup>13</sup> While Foulkes seemed to have no major objections to the

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<sup>10</sup> Stacey, The Victory Campaign P.194.

<sup>11</sup> DHist, "AHQ Report No.95: Historical Activities Within the Canadian Army" (Ottawa:1962). The Official History of the Canadian Army in The Second World War was approved on 18 October 1945 by Minister of Defence Douglas C. Abbott. After a preliminary 100,000 word Sketch History (of which *Canada's Battle in Normandy* was part) a four volume history would be written "within five years unless unforeseen obstacles arise." Volume 1 would deal with the organization and training of the Canadian army in the United Kingdom and would carry operations up to and including Dieppe. Volume 2 would cover Sicily and Italy, while Volume 3 would discuss the campaign in North-West Europe. Finally Volume 4 would cover General Military Policy. This program was augmented in 1948, after the completion of the Historical Sketch. The revised programmed called for a 3 volume set devoted to the Army while the fourth volume on policy, would be written taking into account all branches of service. Stacey's Volume 3 was finally published in 1960.

<sup>12</sup> Stacey, Date With History P.176.

<sup>13</sup> Simonds, who had been senior corps commander in Europe, had been passed over for the position of Chief of the Defence Staff in the summer of 1945 in favour of his subordinate of July 25 1944, Charles Foulkes. Simonds in turn had been left in the political wilderness as C-in-C Netherlands. Dominick Graham, Price of Command: The

reports findings, Simonds felt it necessary to issue his own statement intended strictly "for the record."<sup>14</sup> In Clausewitzian fashion, Simonds rationale weighed equally between an astute judgment of events, a slight of his subordinates (including Foulkes) and unabashed self-justification.<sup>15</sup> For the last 50 years this rationale has remained the cornerstone of "Spring" historiography. Taking their cue from Simonds rationale, historians have addressed in some detail, his contention that Spring was designed as a sacrificial holding attack designed to draw the German armour away from the Americans; and that faulty tactics at the lower levels played a fundamental role in the downfall of his plan.<sup>16</sup> Despite Spring's prominence, or possibly because of it, those associated with its conduct and its historiography have dealt with the battle wearing kid gloves. Due to Spring's appalling costs, Bill McAndrew argues, many explanations have been advanced over the years to describe what went wrong. Some of them, he stresses, were self serving, some critical, some exculpatory, and others conspiratorial. But what has yet to be provided, according to McAndrew, is understanding of, rather than illusory definitive answers for, the disaster

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Biography of General Guy Simonds. (Toronto:1993) P.210.

<sup>14</sup> DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No. 150: Operation "SPRING" - The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regt) of Canada in - 25 Jul 44 - with comments by Lt.Gen. G.G. Simonds". (Ottawa:1946). As per Simonds' instructions, Stacey accepted a manuscript set of comments intended "for the record, but not publication" which were appended to the report.

<sup>15</sup> David Bercuson, Maple Leaf Against the Axis: Canada's Second World War. (Toronto:1995) P.154.

<sup>16</sup> DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No. 150". Simonds wrote "I considered at the time (and I have found no evidence since to change my view) that the objectives May-sur-Orne, Verrières, and Tilly-la-Compagne could and should have been taken without heavy casualties and that in the event, the casualties of certain units were excessive. That we failed to capture and hold May-sur-Orne and Tilly-la-Compagne and that we suffered what were, in my opinion, excessive casualties was due to a series of mistakes and errors of judgment in minor tactics." As for the "holding attack" theory, Simonds stressed, was the "least understood by the layman for casualties seem to be out of all proportion to apparent gains." This theory, along with the attempt to blame the high cost and subsequent failure of "Spring" on his subordinate commanders, have been the main points of contention in the Spring argument." In all the operations of war" Simonds wrote "the Holding Attack is that least understood by the layman for casualties seem to be all out of proportion to apparent gains."

on July 25 1944.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, what remains as a common thread throughout the contemporary literature is Simonds' palatable concept that Spring was victimized by poor and incomplete operational intelligence. Despite contesting Simonds notions of faulty tactics at the lower levels and his "Holding attack" thesis, what has yet to be challenged is Simonds' implication that his intelligence failed to provide him with a complete picture with regards to German strength, dispositions and intentions. "Based upon the enemy strength as known *prior* to the attack," he wrote, "the attainment of the objective was feasible." Simonds implied in his statement that information concerning the enemy was at best ambiguous, and that verification was only disclosed during the initial stages of contact - *after* the fateful die had been cast. Accordingly, Simonds believed the sudden appearance of strong German armoured elements on the 2nd Canadian Corps front compromised what otherwise was a sound plan: "In view of the eleventh-hour reinforcement of the German positions east of the Orne, as revealed in the early stages of the attack, there will be doubt whether the original objective was attainable."<sup>18</sup> Despite refuting Simonds' claims of errors in minor tactics and his holding attack thesis, contemporary historians have continued to accept Simonds' notion of poor intelligence and continue to advance it as a fundamental determinant when assessing "Spring". By examining files of the historical research undertaken by Stacey and his historical section, it can be established that that Simonds intentionally meddled with Stacey's portrayal of Spring for the official history and advanced intelligence, among other aspects, as the perfect whipping boy for the failure of his operation.

However, what Simonds failed to acknowledge, and historians have overlooked, is the existence of evidence from intelligence sources which cast new light on Simonds' palatable concept. By tracing the development of intelligence in the Canadian army and its relationship to high command, a picture begins to emerge in the days leading up to Spring which indicates that not only was Simonds well aware of a significant

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<sup>17</sup> McAndrew, Bill. "The Canadians on Verrières Ridge: A Historiographical Survey" Bercuson and Wise, Valour and the Horror Revisited. PP.129,142.

<sup>18</sup> DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No.150".

enemy reinforcement, but that this intelligence impacted on his planning for the operation well before "the eleventh hour."

**HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY**  
**"A Most Difficult Bit of History"**

**"The discovery of uncomfortable facts has never been encouraged in armies instead, their history has been treated as a sentimental treasure rather than a field of scientific research"**

**- Sir Basil Liddell-Hart**

## Historiographical Essay:

### **“A Most Difficult Bit of History”**

Within two weeks of the debacle in Normandy, National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa had contacted Lt.Col. C.P. Stacey, the official Army historian at Canadian Military Headquarters in London, to investigate the "misfortune" of the Black Watch on July 25 1944.<sup>19</sup> Apparently, a "lurid" report concerning the event had filtered its way into the Montreal press, and politically well-connected constituents associated with the regiment were demanding an official statement from the Minister of Defence.<sup>20</sup> Immediately, Stacey's section set to work producing a preliminary study of Canadian operations in Normandy during the fall and winter months of 1944. However, it took eight months before Stacey could interview the commander of 2nd Canadian Corps, Lt.Gen. Guy Simonds.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,756, Historical Officer: Weekly Progress Reports, 18 August 1944. The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment of Canada) RHC, lost 300 of their 315 men who assaulted Verrières Ridge on the morning of July 25. Stacey was caught off-guard by the request from Ottawa concerning the Spring issue. He felt that this was due to a communication difficulty between Sesia's section and Simonds' Corps. In a letter to Sesia, Stacey urged him to "suggest to them (2nd Corps) that a little more detail with reference to operations like 'Spring,' which have not gone well and which we might be asked for information, might be in order".

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Stacey, Date With History P.176; NAC, RG24 Vol.20,275. The Black Watch was the cream of the Canadian Army Militia which recruited its officers from the higher social circles of Montreal and Canada's business and political elite. For instance, the Price, Molson, Oglivie and Bennett family's were all associated with the regiment. Capt. E. Bennett, the former Prime Minister's nephew, was one of the few RHC survivors of Spring. The "lurid" newspaper reports indicated that the RHC was "almost wiped out" in the May-sur-Orne area.

<sup>21</sup> DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No.131: Canadian Participation in North-West Europe, 6 June - 31 July 1944. (Preliminary Report 1945)" (Ottawa:1945). Within six months Stacey's section was able to complete a preliminary study on Canadian operations in Normandy during July. The report, CMHQ Report No.131, was based primarily on the files of Maj. A.T. "Gus" Sesia, the 2nd Canadian Field Historical Section commander, attached to 2nd Canadian Corps in Normandy. Although the report did not deal in depth with the actions of the Black Watch on July 25, it did provide the context in which the ill-fated attack took place. In February 1945, when the report was issued, Spring was lamented as the "abortive thrust up the Caen-Falaise Road." Having attended most of the orders groups before Spring, Sesia recorded that Spring was intended to be "the third major phase" of the July operations



Stacey met with Simonds at his headquarters in the Rhineland in April 1945, in what proved to be the first of a series of communications concerning Spring. The main topic of conversation of their first meeting centered around the question of policy for Stacey's proposed official history. "After some discussion," Stacey wrote, "General Simonds agreed that it was desirable that the official history should be directed at the Canadian public rather than at military students." In addition, he stated that "such a history should bring out unmistakably the fundamental lessons of war," particularly that "Canada must learn that it is utterly absurd to try to fight a major war on a basis of limited liability." Simonds also stressed the necessity for the official history to be "essentially factual," and, on points of fact, to be "quite unchallengeable."<sup>22</sup>

Two weeks after this discussion, Stacey obtained ministerial approval to produce a sketch history series of

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aimed at achieving a breakthrough on 21 Army Groups' eastern flank. Using evidence from Sesia's war diary, the report emphasized that the first phase of Spring would see "the creation by two infantry divisions of a gap through which two armoured divisions should 'break'" to seize Verrières Ridge. Once this was completed, the eastern flank would be cleared by the capture of the woods near La Hogue. Following this, a further exploitation southward down the Caen-Falaise road would take place. There was no implication of a holding attack in Sesia's notes. However, the report did conclude that although "Spring had failed" it achieved one positive end by default: it forced "the enemy to concentrate the bulk of his armour on one front" enabling the Americans to go on the offensive west of St. Lo. The 2nd Cdn Field Historical Section was commanded by Maj. A. T. "Gus" Sesia and had two sub-sections attached to each Canadian division in Spring. Sesia's section reported directly to Stacey's office at CMHQ in London. According to Maj. general George Kitching, Gus Sesia was a GSO 3 on Simonds staff at 1st Canadian Division in Sicily until he was plucked for historical duties with Stacey and was quite familiar with the Corps Commander. Simonds, told Stacey in April 1945 that he enjoyed having Sesia on his staff and hoped that he would not be removed. Kitching, Mud and Green Fields, P. 156. and NAC, RG24 Vol. 17,515. WD DHS (Stacey) April 10 1945 NAC, Crerar Papers (CP), MG30 E157 Vol.3. Proposed Employment - 2nd Canadian Field Historical Section 15 April 1944. The evidence for Report No 131 was taken from the July 23 war diary entry of 2nd Canadian Field Historical Section. As early as July 21, Sesia was put into the Spring picture when Simonds outlined that the plan would be to seize the high ground south of Caen in the area Fontenay-Le-Marmion - Rocquancourt - La Bruyere area (Verrières Ridge) to strip the enemy from this "favourable position from which he had excellent observation of our movements.." NAC, RG24 Vol. 17,506. WD 2nd Canadian Field Historical Section, July 21 1944.

<sup>22</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol. 17,515. WD DHS (Stacey) April 10 1945. Simonds did not comment on Spring directly but continued instead on points concerning the postwar Canadian Army, reflecting on issues he expected to deal with as he prepared to take office as the first post war Chief of the General Staff. In connection with his statement on limited liability, Stacey recorded that Simonds felt Canada should adopt some form of universal service after the war and that such a policy would simplify Canada's problems in any future war.

the Canadian Army in World War II to be published shortly after the cessation of hostilities. This sketch history was intended to fill the void in public demand until an "official" history of the Canadian Army in the Second World War could be produced.<sup>23</sup> The numerous preliminary investigations, interviews and reports were conducted and prepared by Stacey's historical section, were used in the formulation of the sketch history. These would later serve as the historical foundation for the official history, including the findings of Stacey's investigation into Operation Spring for the minister.<sup>24</sup>

As a draft version of the sketch history volume on Normandy neared completion, Stacey received word that his petition to be named Official Historian by Order in Council (giving him academic freedom as a writer and the right of access to government circles) was not acceptable. Instead, the minister decided that Stacey's work would be "carried out within the framework of the active Army and by Army personnel as an Army project."<sup>25</sup> However, as a concession, Stacey was given "the privilege of direct access" to the newly appointed Chief of the General Staff to fulfill his historical duties.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of the war, many people expected that Guy Simonds, the senior Corps commander in the Canadian Army overseas, would become the first postwar Chief of the General Staff. Instead, it was his subordinate in Operation Spring, Lt.Gen. Charles Foulkes (who then went on to command 1st Canadian Corps in

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<sup>23</sup> DHist, "AHQ Report No.95: Historical Activities Within the Canadian Army" (Ottawa:1962). Final approval for Stacey's program came on October 18 1945 from Defense Minister Douglas C. Abbott. Stacey was to prepare immediately a Historical Sketch, "primarily a story of events overseas" to be followed in five years "unless unforeseen obstacles arise" of a four volume Official History. The third volume of the set was to cover operations in North-West Europe. Stacey, The Official History of the Canadian Army 1939-1945 Volume I: Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific. (Ottawa:1955), Volume II: Nicholson, Lt.Col. G.W.L. The Canadians in Italy 1943-1945 (Ottawa:1956). Volume III: The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North West Europe 1944-1945 (Ottawa:1960)

<sup>24</sup> Stacey, Date With History P.175

<sup>25</sup> DHist, "A.H.Q. Report No 95: Historical Activities within the Canadian Army". (Ottawa:1962).

<sup>26</sup> Stacey, Date With History P.177. NAC, RG24 Vol.17,515 WD DHS (Col. Stacey) July 20 1945.

Italy and the Netherlands), who was chosen. On July 20 1945, Foulkes was named the new Canadian Chief of the General Staff, a position Simonds thought to be rightly his in view of his service as the senior Corps commander overseas.<sup>27</sup> To Simonds's regret, the retiring commander of First Canadian Army, General H.D.G. Crerar, suggested that Foulkes would be more temperamentally suited for dealing with politicians in a peace-time environment than Simonds, and the Cabinet in Ottawa agreed. As a result of this decision, the "subordinate of July 1944 had now become the Chief" and the controversy surrounding Spring intensified.<sup>28</sup>

A week after this announcement, Stacey sent Simonds, who remained the Canadian commander in the Netherlands, a draft copy of the Normandy volume of the sketch history (*Canada's Battle in Normandy*) for his comments.<sup>29</sup> Simonds responded by "complaining rather strongly" about passages about Spring, stating that it "gives the wrong impression."<sup>30</sup> Among various complaints, Simonds pointed out that misfortunes of the day were "due in great part to the inexperience of the troops involved" and that the casualties suffered were "less than either Dieppe or Hong Kong."<sup>31</sup> Feeling that a booklet based upon a preliminary examination of records was not the best place for "arguing with an ex-Corps commander smarting under a recent slap from his government," Stacey

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<sup>27</sup> Graham, The Price of Command, P.212.

<sup>28</sup> Stacey, Date With History, P.177. NAC, RG24 Vol.17.515. WD DHS (Col. Stacey) July 20 1945.

<sup>29</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol 17,515, WD DHS (Col. Stacey) July 30 1945.

<sup>30</sup> Stacey, Date With History, P.175, Canada's Battle in Normandy (Ottawa: 1946); NAC, RG24 Vol. 17,515 *WD DHS (Col. Stacey) July 30 1945*. RG24 Vol.17,506. Sesia, Maj. A.T. Resume of Remarks by Lt.Gen. G.G. Simonds, CBE, DSO, GOC 2 CDN Corps, at O Group Conference Held at 2 Cdn Corps Conference Room, the Chateau, Cairn. On July 30 1944 at 1000. On Page 3 Sesia recorded that "General Simonds said that effective 1730 hours this evening (July 30) 4 Cdn armoured div. will have completed their take-over from 3 Cdn Inf div. who are going back to rest, and that to ease this division gradually into "the feel of things", he is contemplating a small-scale operation to recover Tilly La Campagne. he considered that it would be advantageous for us to dominate the feature on which this town stands and it would minimize enemy observations of our movements."

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* In Stacey's diary he lists Simonds as saying that Verrières Ridge had been captured not the village. This is obviously a mistake which has been remedied for the sake of readability.

acquiesced and modified the text in accordance with Simonds's points.<sup>32</sup>

Two weeks later, the two met face to face to discuss the changes to the draft. Simonds was still not satisfied and there was "considerable force in his criticisms", as he insisted that Stacey's account of Spring was "misleading." Simonds pointed out to Stacey that the German reactions to the two operations preceding Spring (Goodwood and Atlantic) had brought about reinforcement in the German line and, under these circumstances, "there was very little hope of making much actual progress."<sup>33</sup> Simonds added that the two British armoured divisions attached to the corps "were kept available in case (Spring) went better than expected."<sup>34</sup> Simonds closed the meeting by suggesting strongly that "since all the documentary sources" had yet to be examined, Stacey's general historical policy should "avoid including anything of a controversial nature."<sup>35</sup>

With the return of the Black Watch Regiment to Montreal in the fall of 1945, public pressure, which had

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<sup>32</sup> Stacey, Date With History P.176; Lt.Col. C.P. Stacey to Lt.Gen. Simonds, 1 August 1945. NAC, RG24 Vol.12,750. On 1 August, Stacey wrote to Simonds "I have now re-drafted four pages...on the basis of your remarks, and a copy of the new draft is enclosed...The new version eliminates, I hope, any possibility of offenses to Second Army; and on the account of Operation "Spring" I have included the points you made and I trust the account will now strike you as better balanced.

<sup>33</sup> Stacey, Date With History P.117,140-141, Victory Campaign P.195. NAC, RG24 Vol.17,508, WD DHS August 15 1945; University of Toronto Archives (UofT) B91-0013/00, Impressions of Simonds Fall 1945. Nevertheless, Simonds reiterated that the inexperience of the troops was a major factor contributing to the high casualties, and that the Black Watch had failed to patrol and mop-up correctly and therefore had "paid the penalty for these weaknesses.

<sup>34</sup> Lt.Gen. Simonds to Lt.Col. Stacey, 1 August 1945. NAC, RG24 Vol.12,750.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.; Stacey, Victory Campaign P.195. Throughout the remainder of August and September, work on the revision of Spring continued along the lines of General Simonds's suggestions. However, Stacey could not completely satisfy him and wrote Simonds to inform him that: "I have greatly shortened the reference to the losses of the Black Watch in "Spring." I have felt, however, that it would not be good policy to omit all reference to them, in view of the considerable amount of newspaper publicity in Canada at the time." The casualties in Spring were always a controversial point. In 1983 Stacey wrote about his 1945 account of Spring that "he (Simonds) particularly didn't like the emphasis on the losses," when precise figures were not known. For the Victory Campaign the "statistical experts", as Stacey calls them, had "ground out" a total of 1500 dead, wounded, missing, and prisoner - one third of these alone were from the Black Watch.

caused the investigation of Operation Spring to begin a year before, was reinvigorated. Once again, under pressure from the minister's office, Stacey advanced the inquest by establishing a program in which every available survivor of the operation was interviewed.<sup>36</sup> The reluctance of some ex-officers to answer letters about the operation led to delays until January 1946, when a draft statement, entitled CMHQ Report No.150, was produced.<sup>37</sup> In a covering letter for the draft statement, Stacey doubted "whether any single battalion operation (had) been more thoroughly investigated than this one."<sup>38</sup> The report portrayed Operation Spring as a qualified achievement in accordance with Simonds's wishes.<sup>39</sup> Despite this enhancement, Simonds was still not satisfied. While suggesting "no amendments to the statement for publication" he thought it would be "desirable to put on record for historical purposes certain additional points."<sup>40</sup> As per Simonds' instructions, Stacey accepted a manuscript set of comments intended "for the

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<sup>36</sup> Lt.-Gen. Murchie to Lt. Gen. Charles Foulkes. 8, February 1946, NAC, RG24 Vol.20,275. Stacey's staff interviewed 30 odd survivors (some recently released prisoners) from the Black Watch as well as members of other units that were associated with the Black Watch on that day. One of the officers of the 6th Armoured regiment supporting the Black Watch, Major W.E. Harris, was by 1946, a Member of Parliament.

<sup>37</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.17,508, WD DHS August 15-16 1945. UofT, Impressions of Simonds; Stacey, Date With History P.176. On August 16 Stacey was injured in an automobile accident in Holland and spent the next four months in Hospital, where he penned his impressions of the General officer corps including the one on Simonds. In his absence Lt. Col. Sam Hughes Jr. took over temporarily as director of the Historical Section. This interview with Simonds left an indelible mark in Stacey's mind concerning Simonds loyalties. Simonds' criticisms interested Stacey "in their direction and specific content". Particularly on the grounds that Stacey's pamphlet had been "overkind to the Canadian Army at the expense of the British". This, Stacey felt, "was symptomatic of the general trend of his thought." Stacey also pointed out that Simonds "thought of himself as a Corps Commander doing an operational job in a British Army Group than as a general with special responsibilities to Canada."

<sup>38</sup> DHist. "C.M.H.Q. Report No. 150"

<sup>39</sup> DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No.150" and "C.M.H.Q. Report No.131"; NAC, RG24 Vol.12,745 Stacey: Memorandum of Interview with Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds, at CMHQ 19 March 1946. The new report, "C.M.H.Q. Report No.150" portrayed the operation in strict accordance with Simonds definition that Spring was "legislated both for success and the lack of it. This was in marked contrast to the "abortive thrust" as referred to in "C.M.H.Q. Report No.131". In addition, the draft concluded that "the real fruits of the gallant but ill-fated attack on 25 July" were viewed by the assistance which the Canadian effort gave the American breakout in the west.

<sup>40</sup> DHist "C.M.H.Q. Report No.150". (Cover Letter); Lt. Gen. G.G. Simonds to the COS, CMHQ, Feb. 8 1946 NAC, RG24 Vol.20,275.

record, but not publication" and appended them to the report.<sup>41</sup> In his comments, Simonds' remarks were pointed, particularly concerning Charles Foulkes' handling of the battle. In response to Simonds, Foulkes penned his own set of "sharp and direct" comments for inclusion in the report.<sup>42</sup> However, before this disagreement could become public or historical knowledge in 1946, Simonds and Foulkes agreed that both sets of comments for Report 150 should be destroyed.<sup>43</sup>

Although both sets of comments for Report 150 were extracted and destroyed, the report was eventually incorporated, along with two other historical section reports, into Stacey's chapter concerning Operation Spring for the third volume of the official history.<sup>44</sup> Although the attached comments were removed from the report, it seems

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<sup>41</sup> DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No.150"

<sup>42</sup> DHist, 83/269, Stacey, Comments Regarding Official History Second World War - General Charles Foulkes 24 April 1959; Lt.Col. E. Harrison to Lt. Col. C.P. Stacey, 10 April 1946, DHist 917.009 (D1). Stacey, Date With History P.177. Foulkes wrote his own set of comments for incorporation into the report in which, as he told Stacey, he confronted Simonds and told him he "disagreed with his opinions on the failures of units in minor tactics" for after all, "no one really knew what happened on the occasion so far as minor tactics were concerned." In fact Foulkes, whose 2nd Division suffered the most in Spring, resented Simonds's "tendency to blame the inefficiency of our troops for our misfortunes" and refuted Simonds's claims that Spring was a sacrificial holding attack designed to aid the Americans. According to Stacey, "Foulkes said he had never been told it was a holding attack, but that Spring had always been represented to him as a break-through operation with prospects of success - and he doubted whether Simonds had been told either." As late as 1959, Foulkes continued to refute Simonds's account and denied that Spring was a holding attack: "certainly if he did know he did not disclose this to his subordinates." Foulkes comments that "General Simonds wrote a very blasting account of the failure of the Black Watch to capture Andre-sur-Orne and he and I had some strong words about this as he had accused the Black Watch on the day of this battle of surrendering to the enemy because there were so few left. However, after we finally captured Andre-sur-Orne I took general Simonds to the ridge where the Black Watch had been stopped and had him count with me the casualties. He then, some years later pointed out, that his was due to lack of management and junior officer leadership. This remains a very gruesome memory with the Black Watch."

<sup>43</sup> Lt.Col. E. Harrison to Lt.Col. C.P. Stacey 10 April 1946 DHist, 917.009 (D1),. Stacey was notified of Foulkes's destruction order by Lt.-Col. Eric Harrison who prepared a memorandum on the destruction of the appendix and appealed to Stacey to salvage what little written record was left on this "most difficult bit of history". Although both sets of comments were extracted and destroyed, copies of Simonds' comments have continued to show up in various historical files but Foulkes' treatise was never seen again.

<sup>44</sup> The two other studies concerning Canadian Operation in Normandy were "A.H.Q. Report No.58" and "C.M.H.Q. Report No.162".

as though echoes of the comments and "suggestions" made by Simonds and Foulkes were used judiciously by Stacey to formulate his measured chapter for *The Victory Campaign*, a chapter that would serve as the Historiographical bench mark for Operation Spring.<sup>45</sup>

Using intelligence as a "whipping boy" to explain and excuse failure was not an uncommon tool for a commander attempting to distance himself from a disagreeable situation. Likewise, this expediency was also used to an extent by Stacey to extricate himself from what his colleague referred to as "a most difficult bit of history."<sup>46</sup> In the *Victory Campaign*, Stacey chose to advance the notion that intelligence had somehow not given the full picture of German forces before the operation commenced. Stacey argued that, to fully understand the nature of Operation Spring, it was "important to establish the enemy situation on the eve" of the battle. In his post facto and palpable argument, he recorded that "it was clear from the Germans' records that they were expecting a further heavy attack on the Caen front."<sup>47</sup> As a result of the corresponding reinforcement of the LSS Panzer Korps by the 2nd Panzer and 9SS and 10SS Panzer Divisions, Stacey wrote that "2nd Canadian Corps was confronted by a most

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<sup>45</sup> Stacey, *Victory Campaign*: DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No.150" along with the revised "C.M.H.Q. Report No.131" were incorporated into a study undertaken in 1951 and concluded by 1954 and entitled "A.H.Q. Report No.58: Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe, 1944. Part II: Canadian Operations in July" (Ottawa:1954). It was written in most part by then Lt. Reginald Roy. This report served as the basis for Stacey's Chapter in the *Victory Campaign* which included operation Spring.

<sup>46</sup> Lt. Col. E. Harrison to Lt.Col. Stacey 10, April 1946. DHist, 917.009 (D1). Stacey's role as official historian did not provide him with the intellectual protection needed to tackle this issue head , both Simonds and Foulkes had risen to the highest level in the Canadian Armed Forces while Stacey was writing the Victory campaign. However, this is not to say that Stacey neglected his duties to the historical community. Although the politically charged situation provided constraints on Stacey, he left "historical footprints" dotted through the files of the Historical section. This is particularly evident with his retention of copies of Simonds comments and his detailed recording of all their conversations. On the other hand, no record of Foulkes comments have surfaced, leading one to question whether Foulkes may have been more thorough than Simonds, or whether they may have yet to be discovered in Stacey's papers at the University of Toronto, or the historical sections files at the National Archives or at the Directorate of History in Ottawa.

<sup>47</sup> Stacey, *Victory Campaign* P.184

formidable array."<sup>48</sup> However, this revelation was tempered along the lines of Simonds's comments written for CMHQ 150. "We did not know," Stacey wrote, "the full strength of these dispositions before the operation, and in particular did not know the 2nd Panzer had moved east from Caumont; but it was clear, and is still clearer today, that 'Spring' was a very difficult proposition."<sup>49</sup>

Stacey's conclusions, although delicately measured, have been accepted by historians for over a generation. Two years after the publication of *The Victory Campaign*, the British released their official history written by Maj. L.F. Ellis.<sup>50</sup> In his preface to *Victory in the West Vol I: The Battle of Normandy*, Ellis thanked Stacey's staff for "describing Canadian operations under British command." Basing his assessment of Spring on the same accounts used by Stacey and his team for *The Victory Campaign*, Ellis refrained from including even a veiled reference to Stacey's suggestion of an intelligence failure, but declared simply that the battle was a "bloody and abortive fight."<sup>51</sup>

One of the reports used by Stacey and Ellis was prepared by then Lt. Reginald Roy of the historical section. Although it does not directly mention the role intelligence played in the battle, Roy's report makes clear that there was no failure in gathering or providing information, but in appreciating it.<sup>52</sup> In 1984, Roy extended this

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. P.184

<sup>50</sup> Major L.F. Ellis, *Victory in the West vol. I: The Battle of Normandy*. (London:1962).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. P.379

<sup>52</sup> In his study, "A.H.Q. Report No. 58" Roy lists Spring under the heading "*The Holding Attack by 2nd Corps*" and portrays the action as the first of a series of limited attacks down the Caen-Falaise road to "keep the enemy in uncertainty." Stacey agreed with this assessment of the origins of Spring and included it in his account. Although he accepted that Spring was a holding attack, Roy's interpretation of the evidence removed references to the sacrificial nature of the operation. The report listed some positive aspects of the operation such as heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy and the capture of Verrières village, but concluded that Spring had little effect on the enemy's strategy. The Previous operation Goodwood had drawn the German armour in front of the Canadians and therefore, Spring had been launched to perform a task which in part had in fact been completed the report also



argument by writing in his commemorative work *1944: The Canadians in Normandy* that, if "Churchill had examined the operational maps at Army headquarters, a few days later, he would have seen the intelligence officer marking in the 2nd Panzer Division coming into the area north-west of Falaise, and the 9SS Panzer occupying the triangle of land formed by the Odon and Laize Rivers."<sup>53</sup>

Touching on, but not delving into the intelligence question surrounding Spring was not solely the domain of Roy. During his research work for *In Desperate Battle: Normandy 1944*, the Normandy installment of the controversial documentary *The Valour and the Horror*, R.J. Jarymowycz noticed that 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps planners appeared to have all the information about the German movements behind Verrières Ridge, but seemed not to appreciate its significance.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, despite the questions raised by Roy and Jarymowycz, there have been no written accounts that deal with the role intelligence played in Operation Spring.

Over the years, Guy Simonds' command in Normandy has become a microcosm of the controversy which surrounds Field Marshal Haig's command in the First World War, and Simonds's "master" in the Second, Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery. Some authors who deal with Simonds's handling of Spring condemn the failure of intelligence and advance it as an apologetic scapegoat, while some others, like Roy and Jarymowycz, raise, but never deal with the persistent question of intelligence. Still, there are other authors who simply choose to

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overturned the fundamental argument that the operation had succeeded by holding German forces east of the Orne and away from the Americans. Roy attributed this to German miscalculation rather than "fear of the Canadian attack." Despite including the basic points of this report in the official history, Stacey portrayed the results of Spring as "merely the last and not the least costly incident of the long 'holding attack' which the British and Canadian forces had conducted in accordance with General Montgomery's plan to create the opportunity for a decisive blow on the opposite flank of the bridgehead.

<sup>53</sup> Roy, *1944* P.99

<sup>54</sup> Senate of Canada, *The Valour and the Horror. Proceedings of the Standing Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the CBC Series the Valour and the Horror. Appendix A, September 1992*. It was a passage buried in a footnote in this appendix which sparked this authors interest in the study of intelligence and Operation Spring.

ignore the issue altogether and accept the standard interpretation by Stacey that Spring was a victim of faulty intelligence.

One of the most important works on Guy Simonds and his command in Normandy is a master's thesis written by W.E.J. Hutchinson under the tutelage of Professor Reginald Roy at the University of Victoria in 1982.<sup>55</sup> Hutchinson's efforts have remained key to any study of Simonds for the simple reason that he was the first historian to have access to the Simonds papers (which reside with the Simonds family in Ontario) until Dominick Graham wrote his authorized biography a decade later.<sup>56</sup> In his thesis, Hutchinson puts the responsibility for the failure of Spring (and for that matter, any of Simonds's questionable plans), squarely on the shoulder of faulty intelligence. In particular, Hutchinson argues that Simonds was "keenly aware of the need for information and intelligence on which to base his decisions. Simonds was continually seeking it and, when he failed to acquire timely and accurate data, his operations faltered." Hutchinson pointed out that this was "particularly noticeable" during Spring, when Simonds was victimized because the "mine shafts and the tunnel system under Verrières Ridge had not been detected nor had the reinforcement of the 272nd Division" by elements of the 2nd Panzer Division.<sup>57</sup>

Ironically, the question of inadequate intelligence that Stacey portrayed also found its way into the semi-official history of the Canadian Intelligence Corps by Maj. S.R. Elliot.<sup>58</sup> Basing his information about intelligence

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<sup>55</sup> W.E.J. Hutchinson, "Test of a Corps Commander Lt-General Guy Granville Simonds: Normandy 1944" University of Victoria 1982. Another M.A. thesis about Simonds was written by Christopher Hull in 1989 but contained no reference whatsoever to operation Spring. Hull, Christopher. "A Case Study in Professionalism in the Canadian Army in the 1930's and 1940's: Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds. Purdue University 1989.

<sup>56</sup> Graham, The Price of Command. The author never received a reply from Col. Charles Simonds (Guy Simonds son) to phone calls and letters requesting access to the family holdings.

<sup>57</sup> Hutchinson, "Test of a Corps Commander". P.275

<sup>58</sup> Major R.S. Elliot, Scarlet to Green: A History of the Canadian Intelligence Corps 1903-1963. (Ottawa:1981)

for Spring on Stacey's official history, Elliot wrote "Second Army did not know that 2nd Panzer Division had come forward, nor did they know the full story of the dispositions."<sup>59</sup> Although Elliot's work was published in 1981, the manuscript was completed in the early 1970s before the release of Ultra into the public domain and before its impact on the battlefield could be assessed thoroughly.<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, for example, Elliot's statement that "intelligence did not learn until later that the German High Command had been expecting a further attack in the Caen area" was revised with the release of Ultra decrypts, which revealed that 2nd British Army, and possibly Simonds, knew that the Germans were indeed anticipating an attack in that area.<sup>61</sup> As a result of this guiding principle, Elliot qualified the perceived failure of intelligence by explaining that "the enemy was filling his line with whatever random reinforcements he could get....the moves and reorganizations he had to make in order to set up short-term Defence positions produced for intelligence an unconventional, varied, and puzzling mixture of identifications."<sup>62</sup>

In 1988, the second part of volume three of Sir F.H. Hinsley's *Official History of British Intelligence in the Second World War* was released. Although the history does not delve into individual battles at length, the raw material needed for investigating the intelligence picture for Operation Spring is provided. However, unlike other works that accepted Stacey's thesis, Hinsley wrote: "The Germans expected that Second Army would resume its offensive east of the Orne." In response, "they brought 9th SS Panzer Division, which had been relieved in the Evrecy sector by 277th Infantry Division, across the Orne into the woods west of Bretteville-sur-Laize; moved 2nd Panzer Division, which was relieved in the Caumont sector by 326th Infantry Division from Fifteenth Army, in the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. P.267

<sup>60</sup> Maj. S.R. Elliot to author, 23 March 1996.

<sup>61</sup> F.H. Hinsley, British Intelligence in the Second World War Volume Three Part II Its Influence on Strategy and Operations. (London: 1988) P.227

<sup>62</sup> Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.267

same direction; assembled 116th Panzer Division, also from Fifteenth Army, in the area of St. Sylvain; reinforced their anti-tank artillery; and began to bring 271st Infantry Division, which had come up to Fifteenth Army from the south at the beginning of July, into the line just west of the Orne." All of these moves, with the exception of that of the 326th Infantry Division and the 116th Panzer Division, had been spotted but "intelligence had been kept well abreast of the enemy's expectations and alterations in his order of battle by high grade sigint."<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, Hinsley's labour seemed to be for naught, as it applies to Canadian military historians, as most prefer to rely on Stacey's assessment of intelligence for Spring.

This notion continues to pervade the contemporary realm of historiography as is the case with John English's 1992 work *Failure in High Command: The Canadian Army in Normandy*. In this landmark study devoted primarily to the tactical and operational upbringing of the Canadian Army, English states that, although Simonds was "roughly aware of the opposition he faced," the degree to which the German line had been strengthened did "not appear to have been appreciated."<sup>64</sup> Although it would seem that appreciation of intelligence, and the importance that the commander attaches to that information would be a key determining factor in assessing a commander's ability, English unfortunately chose not to venture in that direction.

Although alluding to Simonds's knowledge of Ultra, Dominick Graham did not discuss the role played by intelligence for Operation Spring, or Simonds's handling of intelligence in general for his biography of the 2nd Canadian Corps commander. However, Graham did advance the broad notion that intelligence was lacking but shifted any blame for this deficiency from the corps level to the divisions under command.<sup>65</sup> Although Graham does conclude that Simonds should be among those to blame for the failure of Spring, his treatment of the

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<sup>63</sup> Hinsley, British Intelligence. PP. 226-227

<sup>64</sup> English, Failure in High Command. P.241

<sup>65</sup> Graham, Price of Command. P.142.

intelligence issue seems to be a bid to temper the degree of Simonds's responsibility. The "Crux of their (the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions) difficulties," Graham writes, "was that they neither demanded, sought for themselves, nor received accurate and timely information on which to conduct their battles."<sup>66</sup> Graham fails to recognize that it was not just the responsibility of the divisions under Simonds's command to seek out their own intelligence, but that 2nd Canadian Corps was also responsible for providing intelligence to subordinate units under command.

In the early 90's, Terry Copp and David Bercuson released works that dealt in part with Operation Spring and both continued to advance the theory of deficient operational intelligence.<sup>67</sup> In his 1992 offering, *The Brigade: The 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade 1939-1945*, Copp, who is critical of Simonds's handling of the operation, simply expresses the reoccurring trend that Spring was marred by poor operational intelligence: "Allied intelligence on the enemy defence in the area was limited by poor weather which prevented photo reconnaissance. Prisoners of war from the 272nd Division brought news of the attempted assassination of Hitler, order of battle information, and stories of their ten-day trek to Normandy from the Spanish border, but nothing was learned about the strength or location of the battle-groups of 9th SS and 2nd Panzer Divisions."<sup>68</sup> Bercuson, also critical of Simonds's handling of Spring, was equally critical of intelligence, again based on Stacey's assessment: "Simonds intelligence also underestimated the German strength on the ridge as badly as he overestimated the abilities of his subordinates."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Terry Copp, *The Brigade: The 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade 1939-1945*, (Ontario 1992) and David Bercuson, *Battalion of Heroes: The Calgary Highlanders in World War II*, (Calgary:1994) and *Maple Leaf Against the Axis: Canada's Second World War* (Toronto:1995).

<sup>68</sup> Copp, *The Brigade*, P.86

<sup>69</sup> Bercuson, *Maple Leaf Against the Axis* P.226

One of the main reasons that the notion of incomplete intelligence retained such longevity was that it was only with the release of Ultra, and of the corresponding intelligence documents into the public domain, that the door to further investigation could be pried open. Although the Ultra decrypts were released in 1977, documentation surrounding its use on the battlefield was only released to the public in 1995, while the intelligence reports and summaries were opened in the late 80s and early 90s. As a result, historical reinterpretation based on this information is just in its infancy.

The resulting absence of the intelligence dimension in the works that provide the framework for the Normandy campaign is certainly evident in the major studies and memoirs on the subject. As a result, almost all efforts to date revolve in some form or another around Montgomery's handling of the campaign.<sup>70</sup> One of the factors that complicates the historian's investigation of Spring was that the operation played a small, but significant role, in the larger and more controversial Montgomery saga. Dealing with the failure of Spring also reveals that some in Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) used the dismal results of Spring to create and circulate the story of the "serious set back" in an attempt to have Montgomery fired. As a result, not only would an investigation of Spring reveal the feud between Foulkes and Simonds but also between members of

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<sup>70</sup> For a broad perspective of the Normandy campaign see Chester Wilmott, Struggle for Europe (London:1952), Russel Weigley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany 1944-1945 (Bloomington:1981), and Max Hastings, Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy (New York:1984). For a look at the Normandy campaign through the eyes of Montgomery's champions and critics see Carlo D'Este, Decision in Normandy: Montgomery and the Normandy Campaign (New York:1983), Nigel Hamilton, Master of the Battlefield (New York:1983), Alistair Horne, and David Montgomery, Monty the Lonely Leader, 1944-1945 (Great Britain:1994), Richard Lamb, Montgomery in Europe 1943-1945: Success or Failure? (New York:1984), Ronald Lewin, Montgomery as Military Commander (London:1968), R.W. Thompson, Montgomery the Field Marshal: A Critical Study of the Generalship of Field-Marshal, the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K.G. and the Campaign in North-West Europe 1944-1945 (London:1969). As for memoirs, Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York:1951); and with Clay Blair A General's Life (New York:1983); Bernard Law Montgomery, The Memoirs of Field Marshal, The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K.G. (Cleveland:1958); Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic (Boston 1948), Lord, A. Tedder, With Prejudice: The War Memoirs of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder G.G.B. (London:1966), D.D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (Surrey:1948). Martin Blumenson, Battle of the Generals (New York:1993), David Irving, The War Between the Generals (New York:1981).

the Allied High Command. Unfortunately, the connection between the two seems to have been missed as historians have focused on the higher level of command.

Although the debate continues to rage back and forth over the degree of Montgomery's martial skill, not one of these works mentions nor investigates the planning and execution of operation Spring nor its intended place in the overall context of the Normandy campaign. The dismal results of the operation play a significant part in its obscurity, as does Stacey's version of events ensconced in *The Victory Campaign*. Although the works in question mention that the Canadians did in fact do something on July 25, their gaze shifts to the more appealing, and more successful, American Operation Cobra on the opposite flank. As a result of these interrelated factors, Operation Spring has simply fallen through the cracks of historical re-investigation.

When penning his memoirs in the early 80s, C.P. Stacey recalled that the only direct instruction he ever received from anybody on how to write the official history came from Charles Foulkes. Although quoting from memory, and having no record of the date, Foulkes's words rang clear in his memory: "We must on no account conceal our failures."<sup>71</sup> How Stacey rationalized this instruction in relation to Foulkes's role in the Spring investigation was not revealed. Undeniably, Stacey found himself in an awkward position with respect to writing the official history. Denied full academic freedom and compelled to write an "Army project within an Army framework", he delicately walked an historical tightrope without a net. Stacey could not avoid the constraints of Simonds's "suggestions", nor could he re-direct the focus of research to a higher level without "turning the knife in old wounds" and revealing a blood feud between Canada's two most powerful postwar military figures.<sup>72</sup> Yet, despite Simonds's meddling and suggestions and Foulkes's culpability in the destruction of his personal comments,

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<sup>71</sup> Stacey. *Date With History*. P. 199

<sup>72</sup> Stacey got around the "political" constraints of Simonds suggestions by leaving scores of references to them for posterity and future historians alike. This however was not the case when it came to any other officer involved in Spring, particularly Charles Foulkes.

Stacey avoided a direct concealment of the events. However, as a result, an indirect obfuscation developed due to Stacey's acceptance of Simonds's notion of faulty operational intelligence and advanced it as a palpable remedy. Unfortunately, despite Stacey's altruistic intentions, his portrayal of intelligence in Spring has actually performed a disservice to the historical community by preventing a thorough understanding of all aspects of the operation. Although he left footprints in the files and war diaries of the historical section for future historians to track, his deep-rooted circumvention of unsettling fact, galvanized in the *Victory Campaign*, has served as a guide for a generation of military historians and continues to pervade contemporary historiography. As a result, for the last 50 years, Spring has been shrouded, misunderstood and at times misrepresented, particularly with reference to and as a result of the question of operational intelligence, and indeed continues to be " a most difficult bit of history."



**PART I**  
**INTELLIGENCE AND HIGH COMMAND**

**"A large portion of reports which are received in war are contradictory, still a large proportion are false and by far the greatest proportion are subject to some uncertainty. One must, therefore, expect from officers a certain discrimination which only professional skill, knowledge of human nature, and sound judgment can give"**

**- Carl Von Clausewitz -**

**Quoted in the Intelligence Precipis of the Canadian Junior War Staff Course**

## Chapter One:

### **Doctrinal Dependence**

In his concluding statement concerning the development of Canadian Military Intelligence during the First World War, General Sir Arthur Currie wrote that, "by the Armistice in November 1918....the Canadian Corps Intelligence service (was) very complete", with a "system of collecting and coordinating information" in place that "could almost be categorized as perfect."<sup>73</sup> Unfortunately, this foundation, based on experience gained at Ypres, the Somme and at Vimy Ridge, was neglected during the interwar period. As a result of budget constraints coupled with the increasing role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in intelligence matters, and an underlying notion that intelligence was at best "ungentlemanly", resources for Canadian Army Intelligence, became easy targets for Defence cuts.<sup>74</sup> As with other arms of the Canadian Army that showed a "wholesale reliance" on the British for organizational and doctrinal "guidance", no attempts were made by the Canadian Army to keep its intelligence service abreast of current techniques, doctrine or planning.<sup>75</sup> Although there were some limited interwar discussions along the lines of organization, establishment, strategy and tactics within the Canadian Army, discussion concerning Army intelligence matters was simply nonexistent. In fact, the only Canadian source that the Army could draw on for intelligence matters came from Currie's experiences in the Great War found in copies of

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<sup>73</sup> DHist. J.E. Hahn, "The Intelligence Service within the Canadian Corps 1914-1918" (Ottawa:ND).

<sup>74</sup> Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.63

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., P.86 and S.J. Harris, Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army 1860-1939 (Toronto:1982) P.204. There was a limited debate between Lt.Col. E.L.M. Burns and Capt. G.G. Simonds in the pages of Canadian Defense Quarterly in 1938-1939 concerning the relevant merits of the British Divisional organization and doctrine. Burns Lt.Col. E.L.M. "A Division that Can Attack" Canadian Defence Quarterly (CDQ) XV April 1938 pp.282-298, "Where do the Tanks Belong?" CDQ XVI October 1938 pp.28-31, and Simonds Capt. G.G. "An Army that Can Attack a Division that Can Defend" CDQ XV July 1938 413-417, "What Price Assault Without

Hahn's *History of The Intelligence Service within the Canadian Corps*.<sup>76</sup>

To fill this void, the Canadian Army adopted the establishment, organization, and doctrine of its British intelligence counterpart at the onset of the new war.<sup>77</sup> Although there were some "minor differences", which developed as a result of Canadian tinkering with other British doctrines, the interwar neglect, combined with the lack of an existing military intelligence organization, and a general reliance "through and through" on British doctrines, made reliance on the British doctrine even more necessary and more rigidly true to form.

Unfortunately for the Canadian Army, the wholehearted adoption of the British doctrine proved to be a choice between the lesser of two evils, as neglect of military intelligence was by no means strictly a Canadian affair. Dogged by its own financial constraints, which saw the primary focus of British intelligence move more and more into the strategic realm, the War Office took 16 years to update its 1922 *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field*. Although it was finally ready in late 1938, the Canadian publication of the British manual only made its appearance in early 1940. As a result, the Canadian Army found itself for the first few months of the war without a knowledge of the updated British intelligence doctrine.

When Capt. N.E.H. Rodger (later Chief of Staff to Lt.Gen. Guy Simonds at 2nd Canadian Corps in Normandy) arrived in London in February 1940 to organize the intelligence component at Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ), he found that the updated version of the British intelligence doctrine had been produced

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Support?" CDQ XVI January 1939 pp. 142-147, "The Attack" CDQ XVI July 1939 pp 379-390.

<sup>76</sup> Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.86. Only two versions of the manual were published between the wars, one in 1922 and one in 1938. Going into the war the Anglo-Canadians had to rely on the 1938 version of this manual which paled in comparison to the 1943 version which took into account 4 years of practical battlefield experience which they began using in January 1944. Haswell, J, British Military Intelligence (London:1972) P.159, Jeffrey, Keith, "British Military Intelligence Following World War I" in Robertson K.G. (ed.) British and American Approaches to Intelligence. (New York 1984) PP.55-56.

<sup>77</sup> Maurice Pope, Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lt. Gen. Maurice Pope. (Toronto:1963) P.53.; Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.86.

and had been made available to the Canadian Army.<sup>78</sup> Although the Canadian staff relied heavily on British intelligence officers for their education and guidance on intelligence matters in the first few years of the war, by the winter of 1942-43, the dependency on British personnel ended. Although the physical dependence ceased as a result of the establishment of First Canadian Army Headquarters, the formation of the Canadian Intelligence Corps, and the establishment of the Canadian Junior War Staff Course, reliance on the British for their intelligence doctrine and expertise continued.<sup>79</sup>

The foundation of the Anglo-Canadian operational intelligence doctrine was enconced in a series of War

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<sup>78</sup> DHist, Col. F.F. Walter, "General Report Regarding Military Intelligence Section C.M.H.Q. London", (Ottawa:1945). Then Capt. N.E.H. Rodger would soon rise up the staff ranks to Brigadier and become for the Normandy operation and the campaign in North-West Europe, Chief-of Staff to Lt.-General Gut Simonds at 2nd Canadian Corps. When he arrived in England in February 1940 he described his functions as "a General dog's body." although being an exceptional officer Rodger had no Intelligence background or training and he was not even staff trained. In short order he was put in charge of the physical security of CMHQ as well as host of other not necessarily related functions: Rodger was responsible for the codes and ciphers where he had to develop courses for the cipher staff, checking the establishments of the unit; working out trade statistics for Scandinavia; devise security procedures with MI5 for subversion within the Canadian forces; development of the press censorship bureau; general security for the First Division on their short trip to France in summer of 1940; Administration was also part of his "job description". In May 1940 he organized transmissions of intercepted enemy Radio traffic to MI2 in Ottawa. He arranged for British intelligence training centers to accept Canadian candidate - then he had to canvass the units for students. Elliot, Scarlet to Green PP.89-90.

<sup>79</sup> DHist, Walter, "General Report Regarding Military Intelligence Section C.M.H.Q. London". Canadian Intelligence officers in England were sent to British Intelligence schools. To qualify for the school as an Intelligence Officer the candidate was expected to be "Staff College caliber, with a firm knowledge of tactics, staff duties, organization and administration, and to be able to make quick decisions. he was to have a university education or equivalent, and be able to speak or read German or Japanese in addition to English and French. If he qualified in all respects except service experience, he was sent for six months to a field unit. Other ranks had to be fluent linguists, but lower military and educational standards were excepted." By August 1942 the dependency of the Canadians on the British for intelligence guidance had developed into the adoption of closer links between the Intelligence training center in Kingston Ontario and the British intelligence training school at Matlock. According to S.R. Elliot the lessons learnt of a visit by Maj. Charley Krug from R.M.C to CMHQ and Matlock was the basis for the program he eventually developed at the Canadian College. In addition towards the end of 1942 the British offered Canada 10 spots for Canadian Intelligence officers with First British Army in North Africa to gain practical experience. The support and guidance of the British officers and staffs inspired within Canadian intelligence a "willingness to learn and to develop the capabilities they had developed in themselves." Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.103, 128.

Office pamphlets produced in 1938 and updated in 1943.<sup>80</sup> By 1943, the manual had been re-designed and re-issued based on the experiences of higher British formations in North Africa, Sicily and Italy.<sup>81</sup> At First Canadian Army Headquarters, Lt.Col. P.E.R. Wright recalled that, in general terms, the manual did "not deal with a great number of practical problems which arose" and that there were "slight differences" on the lower levels, but, nonetheless, there was indeed "unanimity with the British on substantial matters."<sup>82</sup> Although there were indeed some cosmetic differences, the head of intelligence at 2nd Canadian Corps in North-West Europe, Major W.H. Broughall, seemed to damn the manual with feint praise when he reported that, in his experience, "the basic

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<sup>80</sup> DHist, War Office. *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field 1938 and Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field 1943*. Under the general heading *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field*, the 1938 manual included sub-components which dealt with: *Part I General Principles, Sources, Distribution and Recording of Information; Part II Intelligence in Formations, Units and Areas, Reconnaissance and Reconnaissance Units; Part III Engineer and Signals Intelligence, The Survey Service in the Field, The Intelligence Corps and Training* while in 1943, the manual was updated and reissued as *Part I General Principles and Organization; Part II Battle Intelligence; Part III Security (Counter-Intelligence)*. According to British Manual, there are two broad types of military intelligence. War Office (or Strategic Intelligence) and Military Intelligence in the field (or operational intelligence). War Office intelligence is essentially Strategic intelligence produced by the intelligence staff of the general Staff. Its gaze is focused on the theatre level of war upwards and incorporated such information as political, economic and religious trends in addition to the military aspects of the enemy's armaments, and human and technical and natural resources. It also examines the broad framework of morale, leadership and training on a and used this information to form military policy and strategy in relation to that of the enemy's.

<sup>81</sup> DHist, War Office *Manual of Military Intelligence 1943*. According to the Manual, Military intelligence in the field or operational intelligence is a microcosm of the war office but played out at levels running down from theatre level to the front line. The British however break this section down into two aspects, offensive and defensive. Offensive is concerned with the acquisition, examination and distribution of information "that will increase the commanders knowledge of the situation, capabilities, and intentions of an opposing enemy force, and the local conditions which effect operations undertaken against that force." In its defensive aspect the reverse of the above is essential. To deny the enemy the information that he desires is paramount. Therefore, military intelligence in the field is based on the acquisition of true information for the "home team" and denial of such information to the enemy. In the British tradition, military intelligence in the field was broken down into five distinct, but interrelated, sections: Operational (or Battlefield) Intelligence I(a); Wireless Intelligence I(s); Counterintelligence I(b); Censorship I(c) and Intelligence Organization I(x). The scope of this study however, prohibits detailed investigation of any sections other than that of operational I(a) intelligence.

<sup>82</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report"(Ottawa:1945).

principal of the manual proved sound".<sup>83</sup> Despite some criticisms of the doctrine, S.R. Elliot argues in his history of Canadian Intelligence Corps that the "fact that the Canadian Army generally conformed to British practise" actually saved it the trouble of cycling through a series of "evolving doctrine and establishing routines of its own without a pattern to draw on."<sup>84</sup>

In the wake of the debacle at Dieppe in August 1942, criticism concerning the failure of intelligence in the operation provided the first attempt to focus serious attention on the needs of Canadian operational intelligence. This focus culminated in March 1943, when Canadian Army Intelligence put its theoretical knowledge to the test during Exercise "Spartan". Col. Felix Walter, the head of intelligence at CMHQ viewed the exercise and felt that "indulgent umpires gave intelligence fairly good marks at the conclusion of the exercise." However, this did not sit well with Walter, for he felt, as did most of his colleagues, that "there was still an awful lot to learn."<sup>85</sup>

According to Lt. Col. P. Henderson, the GSO 1 Int at First Canadian Army Headquarters during "Spartan" a number of serious weaknesses within the intelligence system came to light. The main weakness, according to Henderson, was that there were still "not enough staff-trained intelligence officers" working within First Canadian Army.<sup>86</sup> As a consequence of the results of Spartan, combined with his critical analysis of intelligence in the

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<sup>83</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 12,342, Maj. W.H Broughall, "Intelligence at Headquarters 2 Canadian Corps" in "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report"(Ottawa: 1945).

<sup>84</sup> Elliot, Scarlet to Green. P.133

<sup>85</sup> DHist, Walter, "Military Intelligence Section C.M.H.Q"..

<sup>86</sup> Elliot, Scarlet to Green. P.129 For example, only one of his intelligence officers had been to the staff school and only three others had previous experience at a headquarters. This deficiency was to be offset to some degree however, by the despatch of over 150 Canadian officers (ten from the newly formed Canadian Intelligence Corps) to review the operations of the First British Army in North Africa. The experience gained by these Canadian officers in North Africa paralleled the British intelligence experience which became the impetus for updating Manual of Military intelligence.

exercise, Lt.Col. Henderson was replaced as GSO I Intelligence at First Canadian Army by Lt.Col. P.E.R. Wright.<sup>87</sup>

Although Wright had attended the British War Staff Course at Camberley and served at Dieppe and with the Canadian Planning Staff for the Sicily invasion, he, "on his own admission," had no detailed knowledge of intelligence.<sup>88</sup> The qualities he did possess, a "retentive memory," a "logical mind" and the "ability to inspire others", coupled with a strong personality, quickly gained him the confidence and support of his British counterparts. Soon, "Colonel Peter's Team" was at work wedding Canadian Army Intelligence to the British doctrine in which a certain "uniformity on intelligence matters" with the British developed.<sup>89</sup> This uniformity, Wright pointed out, was due to the influence of Brig. E.T. "Bill" Williams, the Oxford Don who was the Chief Intelligence Officer at 21 Army Group.<sup>90</sup> Not only did Wright and Williams become good friends but, when it came to intelligence matters, they were "hand in glove."<sup>91</sup> If, as John English argues, Field Marshal B.L. Montgomery was the guiding hand, or "godfather", for the Canadian Military's tactical doctrine in Normandy, then

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<sup>87</sup> Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.132-133. Henderson also reported that Signals security was constantly being breached, for which he recommended an increased use of land lines. Also, he felt that his allotment of signals intelligence was inadequate. He had been given three type B special wireless but felt that what was required at the Army level was a Type A. In addition he recommended that a direct line from the wireless intelligence sections to the their "intelligence masters." He also pointed to serious shortcomings in the Air Photo and tactical reconnaissance systems as well. In his conclusion, Henderson recommended that the whole intelligence system with the First Canadian Army be re-examined. He called for tighter central control, for an organization large enough and flexible enough to be divided into small groups and for improvements in disseminating information to the various commands. As a result of the problems found within the Air Recce system, Henderson recommended that intelligence should control both Air Photographs and Air Reconnaissance. Some of his recommendations did produce, changes whether officially or unofficially. The direct line between the Wireless Intelligence sections and their intelligence masters was erected, while under the guidance of 21 Army Group Intelligence in January 1944, Air Recce and Air Photo were "unofficially" placed within the intelligence organizations in formations under 21 Army Group.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. P.132. The extent of his intelligence knowledge was confined to one year of German while at university and a "short familiarization course on the German Army."

<sup>89</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report".

<sup>90</sup> PRO, WO208/3575, Brig. E.T., Williams, "Notes on the Use of Ultra at 21 Army Group" (London:1945).

Williams was the patriarch for Canadian intelligence.<sup>92</sup>

Upon his return to England after serving with the Eighth Army in North Africa and Italy in January 1944, Williams met with Canadian intelligence officers on a regular basis. In March, Williams attended an intelligence conference at First Canadian Army Headquarters at Headly Court, which included the chiefs of staff from First Canadian Army and 2nd Canadian Corps (Brig C.C. Mann and Brig N.E.H. Rodger, respectively), along with other members of the intelligence "community." In his address to the conference, Williams stressed close cooperation of the British and Canadian intelligence staffs and the "need for teamwork" at the various headquarters, which would be of the utmost importance in the difficult days ahead.<sup>93</sup> It was due to his "inspiration", Wright recorded, "that directly or indirectly, all of us learned the important basics of the job."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Brigadier G.E. Beament, Col. GS First Canadian Army, interview by author, March 12 1996, Ottawa.

<sup>92</sup> Sir Edgar Williams served on Montgomery's staff at Eighth Army in the Desert and in Italy until he went to 21st Army group in December 1943 to continue his successful partnership with Montgomery. In his memoirs Montgomery paid high tribute to Williams not only for his work with intelligence but also for selling him (Montgomery) on the concept of intelligence in the desert in 1942. "In the Second World War", Montgomery wrote, the best officers in the intelligence branch of the staff were civilians; they seemed to have the best brain for that type of work, trained in the 'rules of evidence' fertile with great imagination...and Bill Williams stood out supreme among them all." It was not just his talent but the impact that Williams had on Montgomery's views towards intelligence, that impressed Montgomery the most about their relationship: "As the campaign developed" Montgomery wrote "I learnt the value of Intelligence. Bill Williams was the main source of the inspiration; intellectually he was far superior to myself or to anyone on my staff...he saw the enemy picture whole and true; he could sift a mass of detailed information and deduce the right answer." The praise for Williams cannot be overestimated, for the egocentric Montgomery rarely elevated anyone to such heights, particularly subordinates. Montgomery, P.167; English, Failure in High Command P.153, P.137.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.134.

<sup>94</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 12,342, "First Canadian Army, Final Intelligence Report". Although the intelligence section at Canadian Military Headquarters (C.M.H.Q.) in London under Col. F.F. Walter was both interested and responsible for Canadian Battlefield Intelligence, its main purpose was for administration, liaison and to link the intelligence organization in European Theatre with N.D.H.Q. in Ottawa. The CMHQ intelligence section did not have any operational control over intelligence in Canadian formations. This was entirely the concern of 21st Army Group and the intelligence teams at the various levels of command in Normandy. In fact according to Walter "The closest personal liaison was maintained between C.M.H.Q. and first Canadian Army in two ways: the first by meetings between the ADMI, C.M.H.Q. and the GSO 1 Intelligence First Canadian Army which in the field took place at



In late 1943, the "important basics" were being incorporated into a revised manual that would dictate Anglo-Canadian intelligence doctrine for the remainder of the war. For the intelligence staff at First Canadian Army in the fall of 1943, the task was to revise the standing intelligence policy along the lines of the new British manual. To ease this situation, the revision was done under the general guidance of Williams's intelligence staff at 21 Army Group, with the operational needs of the upcoming invasion of Normandy in mind.<sup>95</sup> Not only did this manual serve as the bible for intelligence officers in the Canadian Army, but it also formed the backbone for the intelligence curriculum at the Canadian Junior War Staff Course, where future staff officers and commanders would learn their trade.<sup>96</sup>

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First Canadian Army: the second by the constant interest and assistance given by the MI section at C.M.H.Q. to all Intelligence personnel from the theatres of operations when in Great Britain. Thus it can be said that from 1943 onwards there was never any serious divergence in policy or aim between Intelligence in the field and Intelligence in Great Britain. NAC, RG24 Vol. 12,344; Elliot, Scarlet to Green P. 114.

<sup>95</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 13,645, First Canadian Army Intelligence War Diary: September 1943-May 1944.

<sup>96</sup> The First update after the 1922 manual was in 1938 and was ready just in time for the outbreak of the war. The second update was in produced in late 1943 and lasted throughout the war until a post war version could be produced in 1946.

## Chapter Two:

### **Three Stages to Daylight: Intelligence and High Command**

As the British manual formed the backbone for intelligence doctrine, the staff colleges provided the "spine" for the Anglo-Canadian field formations, which in turn assisted the commander with the execution of his plans. It was through the staff system, via the staff school, that a uniformity of doctrine was imparted and maintained throughout the British Army and, consequently, the forces of the dominions.<sup>97</sup> At the staff school, students were taught that the staff existed to "serve two masters - the commander and the troops." The staff was to assist the commander, and help the "fighting troops and their services, in the execution of their tasks."<sup>98</sup> Staff officers were to be flexible and interchangeable in the various types of staff duties if necessary. With this in mind, candidates attending the staff colleges were introduced to all aspects of staff workings.

The staff system was divided into four main categories, which combined formed the general staff. It dealt with Operations, Intelligence, Organization, and Training and Movement. In essence, the general staff was responsible for the functioning of the formation in battle. This "G" staff, while in the field, was aided in their

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<sup>97</sup> English, Failure in High Command. P.97

<sup>98</sup> DHist, Major J.B.D Smith, Staff Duties: General Organization and Duties of the Staff, in Canadian Junior War Staff Course (CJWSC) No.1. January 1941. The Operational intelligence I(a) component of the general staff, provides the basic environment, or nerve center, for the commander and his staff to be informed of the situation, capabilities and intentions of the enemy forces facing them as well as any other details on the general enemy situation which may be necessary for the commander to accomplish his allotted task. The I(a) section acts as a collection and distribution centre, acquiring, collating and disseminating processed intelligence between staffs of all arms at various levels so that maximum advantage can be had by all concerned. The object of operational intelligence was to assist the commander by providing him with a "balanced, accurate and up to date appreciation of the situation, capabilities and intentions" of the enemy. The "ultimate success of any plan made by a commander" will largely depend on the extent and accuracy of the information concerning the enemy that a

function by the Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, and Master General of Ordnance, all combined as the "A&Q" staff, whose duties were primarily to support the "G" staff.<sup>99</sup> This system was prevalent at all levels of the Army, although at some lower levels, one officer would be responsible for two or more duties, while at higher headquarters, i.e. corps and army, teams of staff officers would be required to perform the allotted duties. From the corps level upwards, a chief of staff's system was introduced formally by Field Marshal Montgomery for higher level formations operating under 21 Army Group. The chief of staff's responsibility was to coordinate the work of all the branches of the staff, to permit the commander to "devote his full attention to prosecution of operations."<sup>100</sup>

For the first few months of the Second World War, intelligence staff duties at Canadian formations were undertaken by British officers who had gained practical, albeit brief experience in France and Belgium during the disastrous Western Front Campaign of 1940.<sup>101</sup> However, by April of that year, the small provision of competently trained Canadian staff officers, and the consequent reliance on the British Staff College at Camberley, had become a serious concern at CMHQ.<sup>102</sup> In the winter of 1940, Maj. Gen. A.G.L. MacNaughten organized the first Canadian Junior War Staff Course to educate Canadian officers for staff duties within the rapidly expanding Canadian Army. As progressive as this educational forum seemed to be at first glance "the harsh reality remained," as John English recorded, that "the primary function of war staff courses was to impart doctrine."<sup>103</sup> Consequently, an examination of the staff school, with particular reference to the intelligence aspects of the curriculum, serves as a good medium for examining the impact and development of intelligence within the Canadian Army, and its subsequent use on

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commander had at his disposal.

<sup>99</sup> English, Failure in High Command P.94

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Walter, "Military Intelligence Section C.M.H.Q. London".

<sup>102</sup> English Failure in High Command P.98

the battlefield.

The first Junior War Staff Course, consisting of 61 students, was held at Ford Manor in Surrey, from January 2 until April 12 1941. Of the 13 officers instructing the course candidates, nine constituted the directing staff of which all arms were represented. Three of these were British officers "with recent combat arms experience", and nine were staff qualified, while another nine had held staff appointments with field formation headquarters.<sup>104</sup>

In command of the course, and responsible for its organization and curriculum, was Lt.Col. Guy Simonds, who graduated from the British Staff College at Camberley in 1937.<sup>105</sup> The work of the course reflected Simonds's experiences at Camberley, with the determining scope principally a matter of deciding what "could be covered with reasonable thoroughness in a period of about three months."<sup>106</sup> With this in mind, the focus of the course was intended to give more attention to "elementary staff duties," and functions at corps headquarters were given cursory treatment, while the subject of duties at the Army level was nonexistent.<sup>107</sup>

When the course began in early January, there were 10 members of the directing staff, but by March, Maj.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. P.99

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.; DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No.19: Visit to Canadian Junior War Staff Course by C.P. Stacey (London:1941).

<sup>105</sup> After the First World War the Staff College at Camberley ceased its instruction of intelligence during the interwar years, leaving Simonds, amongst other members of the Canadian General staff, devoid of Intelligence education. It was only with the outbreak of the war in 1939 that the Staff school include a section in Intelligence in the Camberley curriculum. Despite this eleventh hour inclusion, there was, according to N.E.H. Rodger "no special emphasis placed on intelligence" when he attended Camberley in 1940. N.E.H. Rodger to author February 29 1996. Haswell, British Military Intelligence P.43

<sup>106</sup> DHist, "C.M.H.Q. Report No.19: Visit to Canadian Junior War Staff Course". According to Lt-Gen. Brian Horrocks who commanded 30th British Corps in North-West Europe, and appointment to instruct at the Staff College, or in this case on the Staff Course, was "usually reserved for brilliant young officers who were destined to rise to the highest ranks in the service." Horrocks, Sir Brian, A Full Life (London:1974) P.73.

<sup>107</sup> DHist, 000.7 (D8) CJWSC No.1

C.C. Mann, a Canadian GSO 2 at 7th British Corps Headquarters who Simonds tasked with teaching the courses on intelligence, withdrew near the end to command the reconnaissance regiment of the 2nd Canadian Division.<sup>108</sup> Mann, who was a Camberley graduate in 1940, designed a course of instruction that, at best, could be described as elementary and, at worst, comic opera.<sup>109</sup> The focus of Mann's course lay within the framework of the division and the brigade, although, there was some discussion of corps level intelligence later in the course.<sup>110</sup> In Mann's prepared lecture, a heavy reliance was placed on the 1938 version of the British Intelligence Manual, which his precis was designed to "amplify, but not replace."<sup>111</sup> "Intelligence" had, as Mann wrote, "the responsibility of getting information, collating it, and passing it on to those who (could have made) use of it in time."<sup>112</sup> Presumably, the ones that could make use of it were either the formation's commander, his chief of staff, or senior operations officer. The role of intelligence was to gather information, assemble it into some sensible form, so as not to "clog communications," and see that it was distributed to all concerned.<sup>113</sup> A good portion of the lecture was also devoted to listing the sources of information available at the division and brigade levels. However, the precis

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<sup>108</sup> Mann served as the GSO II at 1st Canadian Division upon its arrival in England in 1939-1940. By the time Normandy came around he was the Chief of Staff to General H.D.G. "Harry" Crerar at First Canadian Headquarters. Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.98

<sup>109</sup> Major C.C. Mann had just finished the 1st Senior War Staff course at Camberley in December 1940 when he joined the directing staff of the first CJWSC. RG24 Vol.9873. This humoristic style was characteristic of Mann's approach. During the Corps study week in January 1942, C.P. Stacey was told by the officers in attendance that Mann's contribution to the 2nd Canadian divisions demonstration "combined amusement and instruction" much to the pleasure of General Bernard Law Montgomery in attendance. Dhist, "CMHQ Report No.21: Canadian Corps Study Week: January 19-25" (London:1942).

<sup>110</sup> Dhist, Maj. C.C. Mann, CJWSC No.1: Intelligence Work Within Divisions and Intelligence Within the Infantry Brigade (1941).

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

did not elaborate on how they were to function, what priority they had, or how the information gleaned by a source was to be assessed properly. There were no provisions for analytical assessment of the "mass information" obtained, but rather "modern business methods" were to be applied as a way to "get over the difficulty."<sup>114</sup>

As the intelligence aspects of the staff course progressed, it went from the sublime to the ridiculous. The object of Maj. Mann's exercise concerning the role of intelligence at the corps level was to impart a "general knowledge of the subject desirable in all staff officers - within fifteen minutes."<sup>115</sup> With a scripted hoax and a rhyming exercise in hand, the students were assembled in the lecture hall where a microphone was set up. According to the exercise, Simonds was to greet the students with the announcement that Maj. Mann had been summoned to Camberley to deliver the same lecture to the British Staff School. As per the text of the hoax, Simonds was to greet the students and announce "I believe you have had (a) precis however, and Maj. Mann assured me that if you have studied the precis and read the references you will be in the I(ntelligence) picture quite well." At this point, the hoax was to start with the Canadians in Ford Manor listening to the proceedings at Camberley unfold via wireless and loudspeaker. When the address was tuned in, a very embarrassed Major Mann was to be portrayed, fumbling around for something to say, as he was supposed to have left his prepared text outside in his staff car. In his haste, Mann was to declare "I seem to be giving you a good example of the staff officer who loses, or mislays important documents. May I suggest that this is a very awkward predicament? Corps I is quite a detailed show, but has a definite pattern, and I presume you have read the Manual of Military Intelligence, so that, in general, you will have the main essentials."<sup>116</sup> The vaudevillian act then proceeded towards its crescendo with Mann offering to "try and answer any points which were not quite clear." With this cue,

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> DHist, Major C.C. Mann, CJWSC No.1: Introduction to Intelligence Exercise.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

the script slipped into what Mann referred to as a "versicle explanation."<sup>117</sup> In reality, this "explanation", reminiscent of a Gilbert and Sullivan musical, portrayed Mann and the fictitious Camberley commandant exchanging lines, while in the background, the occasional chorus consisting of Sherwood Foresters, Grenadier Guards, Royal Engineers, Service Corps personnel, and an unidentified Australian, would pop in and out with various points of information.<sup>118</sup>

When all was said and done, it appears that the points that Mann and company were attempting to get across did not address the fundamental question of the role of intelligence at the staff level but instead pointed out the division of responsibility between I(a) operational intelligence and I(b) counterintelligence. Although Mann stressed the use of all sources for maintenance of the order of battle, (considered the primary function of operational intelligence), photographic interpretation and prisoner of war interrogation were the only sources covered. In addition, Mann advocated the retention of orderly records and logs for use in the production of the intelligence summaries. At no time however, did Mann's "versicle lecture" address the fundamental problems concerning the function of the intelligence staff in relation to the operations staff, nor the questions of how the commander prioritized his intelligence, or for that matter, what the commander needed to know.

Two other exercises, authored by Mann, were also conducted during Simonds's staff course. Both, not unlike the training schemes for other arms and services, were based on the scenario of a German invasion of Britain and were very basic in their scope. One dealt strictly with the interrogation of prisoners of war, while the other was a divisional level intelligence exercise designed to "give officers some idea of the intelligence aspect in the event of Germany invading Great Britain, and the variety of problems which (would) confront them."<sup>119</sup> Again,

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> DHist, Major C.C. Mann, CJWSC No.1: The Adventures of Lt. McE Mouse - a Graduate of the CJWSC.

Mann chose the farcical approach as he entitled it the "Adventures of Lt. McE Mouse - a Graduate of the "CJWSC".

There is no mention in Simonds's final report as to just how effective, or entertaining, these exercises were.<sup>120</sup> However, after reviewing the intelligence precis of the first CJWSC, it is easier to understand Lt.Col. P.E.R. Wright's point in his postwar report on Canadian Army Intelligence that the "one thing that was not appreciated in training and preparation for battle was how important intelligence really was."<sup>121</sup> Yet, despite Mann's approach, the messages imparted on the students in this exercise were a harbinger of intelligence development. The intended goals of this exercise were to familiarize the students with the order of battle of the German Army in the field, and "impress on them that they must use their experience in training to meet the unexpected"<sup>122</sup> by pointing out to the interruptions that can occur at a formation headquarters. Most important though was the realization of the need to show the students "the practical necessity for sorting out the wheat from the chaff and getting down to essentials."<sup>123</sup> With this last point, the move from information gathering to analysis was under way.

After wrapping up the first CJWSC and moving the school from the English countryside to the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, Maj. Mann's intelligence precis was overhauled. The new precis, included in the curriculum of the second Canadian Junior War Staff Course, was to serve as the main text for the following

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<sup>120</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.9873, Lt.Col. G.G. Simonds, "Report on No.1 CJWSC, April 21 1942".

<sup>121</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, Lt.Col. P.E.R Wright, "Practical Principles - Section I: Intelligence at First Canadian Army, Final Intelligence Report". In Wright's opinion there was a "defect in the training of Staff Officers." He felt that "insufficient attention was paid at staff courses and in exercises to practical training of operational Staff Officers in the use of information about then enemy."

<sup>122</sup> DHist, Major C.C. Mann, CJWSC No.1: Introduction to Intelligence Exercise.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.



five courses.<sup>124</sup> Only when the War Office was in the process of issuing a new manual of Military Intelligence, in late 1943, did the staff course precis change again. It was during this interim that a more professional approach towards intelligence developed. It was this new approach that greeted the future head of 2nd Canadian Corps Intelligence, then Lt. W.H. Broughall, upon his arrival to Kingston in the spring of 1942.<sup>125</sup>

The crux of the intelligence precis for the second CJWSC was built on the 1938 manual, as had the first course under Simonds. The intelligence portion of the course was designed to teach the students like Broughall the organization and methods of the intelligence service up to the corps level. This would "enable S(taff) O(fficers) to co-operate with the Intelligence branch, and to advise the com(mander)."<sup>126</sup> This, however, was not in itself considered adequate to qualify staff officers to head the intelligence staff.<sup>127</sup> That qualification could only be obtained by attending specialized training courses in intelligence offered by the Director of Military Intelligence.

In the introduction to the intelligence precis, the students were told that the nature of intelligence was "to collect and distribute information" and "to deny information to the enemy".<sup>128</sup> Theories of obtaining, recording, collating and distributing information were the main focus, while a good portion of time was devoted to counterintelligence and intelligence organization. However, for the first time, questions concerning the

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<sup>124</sup> The first Canadian Junior War Staff course given in England was also the last in that location. Simonds told C.P. Stacey that he was disappointed that the course was moving from English countryside to the remoteness of RMC in Kingston Ontario. During the closing exercises, Simonds voiced his objections to the planned move citing access to British weapons, doctrine, tactics and experience as the primary reasons for keeping the nascent staff school in England. When the school reopened in August of 1941, at RMC where it would remain throughout the war. DHist, 000.7 (D8-23), CJWSC No. 1-15; NAC, RG24, Vol.9874, Major C.P. Stacey, Closing Exercises, Canadian Junior War Staff Course 24 April 1941.

<sup>125</sup> DHist, 009. (D77) Biography of Major W.H. Broughall.

<sup>126</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.9873. Lt.Col. S. Sanford, "G.S.O. 1's Report on Fourth Canadian Junior War Staff Course". (London:ND).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

relationship of the intelligence staff within a formation, and its analytical responsibilities were broached.<sup>129</sup>

Broughall was instructed that the intelligence staff was indeed an integral part of the general staff, although its priority within that framework was dependent upon the full confidence of the commander and the "closest cooperation" between the operations and intelligence staffs.<sup>130</sup> With this confidence and cooperation in hand, the emphasis of the intelligence staff was based on providing the commander with information from the study of the enemy's intentions, order of battle, defences and rear organization. In order for the intelligence staff to accomplish these tasks, they first had to obtain information and then collect, collate, make deductions and distribute the end product.

In contrast to the first course, which stressed only collection and distribution, a subtle form of analysis was now called for as members of the intelligence staff were prepared to present the commander with an "appreciation of the situation from the enemy's point of view, i.e., as it would appear to the enemy operations staff."<sup>131</sup> However, this new responsibility, which eventually would become the standard staple of contemporary intelligence work, was still couched within a Clausewitzian contempt for intelligence. A reminder of the Prussian theorist's treatise on the contradictory nature of information in war was quoted in the same section as the new demand for deductions.

Although the need for analysis was evident, the veracity of these results was still suspect. In the existing staff school structure, the training in deductive reasoning for intelligence matters was left to the staff school candidate himself. This doctrine of autonomous training did nothing to provide a framework for the creation of an appropriate level of confidence necessary for an analytical response. There were no specific guidelines in place with regards to the needs of a commander from which a candidate could draw support. Instead, the guidelines

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<sup>128</sup> DHist, 000.7 (D12.) CJWSC No.4: Intelligence - General Considerations. April, 1942.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

provided were broad, theoretical, and reflected the British manual, and only informed the intelligence staff officer of what to do, but not necessarily how to do it. The successful intelligence officer, Broughall was told, was to make deductions from each item of information he received, and then try to pass them on, if, in his opinion, they were sufficiently definite. This was to be done at all times with an open mind so as not to "force the information into a preconceived picture." This point was to be driven home by introducing Broughall to the concept that a "carefully built structure of semi-facts (would) be upset by the receipt of a single fresh item."<sup>132</sup>

Unlike the previous course, the intelligence precis extended its organizational coverage to include the corps level. In what was merely an inventory of duties at the corps level, candidates were shown the suggested division of duties among the GSO 2 (major), the GSO 3 (captain) and the three I(a) and one I(b) intelligence officers attached to the headquarters. The precis also introduced candidates to the necessity, at the corps level, of liaison with other branches, such as the artillery, engineers, R.C.A.F. and the Special Wireless Sections Type B. Each paragraph concerning the relation of these branches to operational intelligence impressed what use they could be to the other arms of the service. However, no attempt was made at all to explain what each of these services could do in exchange to further the intelligence effort.<sup>133</sup>

For the major intelligence exercise for the course, students were introduced to "a small part" of the workings of an intelligence staff at a corps headquarters. This was the first CJWSC that dealt with the corps level in detail. The scenario in the exercise called for the Canadian Corps, composed of two infantry divisions, to establish a bridgehead over a river that formed the main defence belt in the German front line. Attention was focused at first on the identifications of German units in the line with the object of establishing a complete order of battle opposing the fictitious Canadian Corps. The students were also introduced to all media used for collating and

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

distributing information to higher, lower and lateral formations, as well as to the use of defence overprints and captured maps.<sup>134</sup>

During the various stages of the exercise, students were introduced to the sources of intelligence that existed strictly at the corps level. For the first time in the Canadian Junior War Staff Course, the Directing Staff (DS) were instructed to emphasize the role of the Special Wireless Section Type B attached to the corps. "Its function", the class was told, "was twofold: A) to obtain information regarding the enemy's plans from the interception of his messages, and B) to locate his Headquarters by pinpointing the location of the transmitting station."<sup>135</sup>

Attention was also placed on revealing the intentions of the opposing German forces. The DS impressed upon their class the importance of artillery intelligence in revealing enemy intentions. Particularly, the early shell reports (shellreps) registering on various Canadian targets. As the scenario unfolded, Canadian intelligence officers received word that German artillery had registered the entire Canadian front-line, as well as bridges in the rear, isolating the battlefield and indicating a forthcoming German counterattack. This was part of the scenario designed to introduce the candidates to artillery intelligence, and to make the students aware of proper liaison with other arms of the service.

Broughall passed out of the fourth CJWSC with a grading of B, which put him among the average of a very strong class.<sup>136</sup> His results from the course meant that he could assume the responsibilities of a GSO 2

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> DHist. 530.03 (D1) Results Canadian War Staff Courses A Wing Courses 1-12. There were five Scores of A+ in the course, which meant that recipients were ready for immediate appointment as GSO 2 (Majors) and would make suitable members of the Directing Staff for future CJWS courses. Among the high scorers was Major Bert M Hoffmeister who later went on to lead the 5th Canadian Armoured Division in Italy and was considered one of the

(normally a captain) immediately upon completion of the course. While Broughall assumed his posting with the newly created 2nd Canadian Corps, the next three sessions of the CJWSC continued into the fall of 1943 following the same program, each with the same basic exercises devoted to imparting intelligence doctrine at the corps level. In the fall of 1943, a noticeable progression concerning the role of intelligence within the Canadian Army had begun to take hold. The reasons for this were fundamental and interrelated.

According to Brian Bond and Williamson Murray, the approach to doctrine in the British Army leading up to the Second World War was "thoroughly idiosyncratic - driven by individuals rather than a coherent though out program".<sup>137</sup> Although by the time the Anglo-Canadian forces arrived in Normandy, their doctrine was for the most part coherent, it nonetheless remained idiosyncratic. Both the intelligence doctrine and the operational doctrine which the Canadian forces would take into Normandy in June 1944, were based on British, or to be more exact, General B.L. Montgomery's experience during the campaigns in North Africa, Sicily and Italy.<sup>138</sup> In the fall of 1943 the general lessons learned after four years of fighting were incorporated into a revised *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field (1943)* and consequently, the new intelligence precis for the forthcoming CJWSC in November. The origins of this step in the evolutionary process of intelligence and its relation to high command can be traced back to Montgomery's first attack at El Alamein in the fall of 1942.<sup>139</sup> It was during the planning of Operation Supercharge that the intrinsic value of intelligence in relation to the Eighth British Army commanders' doctrine of the attack was amply demonstrated. According to Montgomery's philosophy for the Attack, the main German

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best Canadian divisional commanders of the Second World War. Granatstein, The Generals P.134

<sup>137</sup> Brian Bond and Williamson Murray, "The British Armed Forces 1918-1939" in Allan R. Millet and Williamson Murray, *Military Effectiveness Vol II: The Interwar Period* (Boston:1988) P.121.

<sup>138</sup>English, Failure in High Command. P.182.

<sup>139</sup> Since this work is devoted to the study of a set-piece attack, the examination of the role of intelligence in relation to high command will focus on the part of British operational doctrine which deals strictly with offensive operations, or in particular, the *Attack*.

fighting weight was contained in their armoured spearheads. For any British attack to succeed, the German armoured capability would have to be destroyed. As a result, Montgomery's doctrine of the attack took on the appearance of "Dog eat rabbit" as Montgomery felt the best way to destroy the German armour was to lure it onto a tactically enticing piece of ground make it attack the defending British armour.<sup>140</sup> Montgomery's first aim in the battle of El Alamein (Operation Supercharge) was a methodical destruction of the infantry divisions holding the front lines of the German defensive system. This would be accomplished by what Montgomery called a "crumbling process."<sup>141</sup> This process comprised a break-in battle designed to gain a foothold on the flank or the rear of the

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<sup>140</sup> Montgomery, Memoirs PP.138-139.

<sup>141</sup> B.L. Montgomery, *El Alamein to the River Sangro*. (London:1948) P. 20. Despite the various names that Montgomery gave to the various elements in his strategy (i.e. crumbling process, holding attack etc..) in reality they were elements of a battle of attrition not unlike Haig's doctrine in the First World War. For Montgomery there were three distinct phases in a an attack: The first was the *Break-in*, which was a battle for position or to gain the tactical advantage and establish a balanced position for the second phase the *Dog Fight or Break-through*. This phase was to be a "hard and bloody killing match" designed to cripple the enemy's strength preparing the way for the *Break out*, which was a terrific blow directed at a single spot that would rupture the enemy's lines. For Montgomery, war was a battle of wills in which morale, determination and the drive of a commander, would dictate the outcome of a battle. According to Tim Travers Haig inherited from the nineteenth century and the British Staff School that war was mobile, structured and decisive. Haig's battles were fought like Montgomery's in three stages: preparations and wearing out of the enemy reserves; rapid, decisive offensive; and cavalry exploitation. Haig was instructed at the Staff college that the commander who hung on the longest would win. If this strategic outlook of Haig's was considered a policy of attrition on the western front in 1915-1918, then the same must apply to Normandy in 1944. However, by the Second World War, the word *attrition* in the western psyche had become synonymous with stalemate, excessive and nonsensical offensive losses and indifferent, bungling, generalship. According to Dominick Graham, the battle of Normandy was a battle of attrition in the First World War mold but, unlike 1914-1918, three factors led to a clear Allied victory. "First was the ratio of troops to space in Normandy which was more favourable to the attacking Allied in 1944 than it had been in 1914; second, flanks were created and exploited; and third, German communications were precarious in Normandy making their movement and reinforcement difficult, whereas the railway system behind the German front in the First World War served them well in defence and attack until the end. Attrition proceeded in both wars until the ratio of the number of German troops to the length of their front made their hold so tenuous that they could not prevent an Allied breakout. Nevertheless, the Allied strategy in Normandy was similar to that used on the Western Front from July until November 1918, namely to keep the German reserves moving and their commanders off balance. But when the break came in 1944 German annihilation followed because of the speed with which modern divisions moved around the German flank and the vertical envelopment by the Allied Air Forces. Attrition paid in Normandy; it did not in 1915-1918 because it was conducted over too long a period in adverse conditions and

German infantry in the front-line Defences. Once the supply routes of the German infantry divisions had been cut or threatened, the natural reaction of the German armour would be to launch a series of counterattacks with the intention of rescuing the outflanked German infantry. If Montgomery could get his British armour between the trapped German infantry and the counter attacking German panzers, on ground of his choosing, the German armour counterattack could be halted, broken and routed.<sup>142</sup> For this strategy to work, intelligence needed to provide the relative strengths, dispositions, and locations of the defending German infantry units in the front line and German panzers in reserve. In addition, it also had to provide an indication as to the intentions of the German commander whether he would counterattack, retreat, or hold and fight for his present positions. At Alamein, Williams and his intelligence staff provided Montgomery with the information necessary to execute his plan effectively, catching Rommel off balance and eventually breaking through the Axis lines and bringing the British a much needed victory.<sup>143</sup>

At the Supreme Commanders Conference on January 22 1944, Montgomery made it abundantly clear that the task of the Anglo-Canadian forces in Normandy would be to defeat the German armour in a battle of attrition, and to effect this outcome, he sought to entice the German armour to counterattack on the ground of his own choosing as he had done at Alamein.<sup>144</sup> When Simonds laid out his operational policy for 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps a

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because the Allies could advance only at the pace of the infantryman when the German front gave way. To Graham's astute analysis I would add a fourth element to this mix, intelligence. The highly developed intelligence organization which the Allied planners and commanders took to the field in Normandy which provided them with a firm and detailed grasp on German strength and reinforcements in Normandy. This in turn gave the Allied high command the confidence to proceed with a policy of attrition that could be brought to a successful conclusion in a finite amount of time. Graham, Price of Command P.129; Montgomery, Memoirs, P.139. Tim Travers, "Sir Douglas Haig and the First World war" in David Chandler and Ian Beckett, The Oxford History of the British Army. (Oxford:1996) PP. 214-215.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ronald Lewin, Montgomery as Military Commander. (New York:1974) P.88., Nigel Hamilton, Monty: The Making of A General 1887-1942. (London:1982) P.827.

month later, his philosophy for the attack was a microcosm of the Montgomery-influenced doctrine.<sup>145</sup> Simonds indicated that the probable role his corps would be to pass through a beach-head, attack, wear down and destroy German troops within the corps "corridor." Fully schooled in the Montgomery doctrine, Simonds informed his subordinates the essence of the German system of defence is the counter-attack, and that success of the offensive battle hinges on the defeat of these counterattacks. To accomplish this, Simonds felt that allowance in the original plan for defeating the inevitable German counterattack while must be made while a strong reserve was to be kept at

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<sup>144</sup> English, Failure in High Command. P.182.

<sup>145</sup> On February 17 1944, Simonds laid out his operational policy to be followed by 2nd Canadian corps in the forthcoming invasion of the continent. "The probable role of 2 Cdn Corps" Simonds wrote "will be to pass through a beach-head which has been secured by assaulting forces and attack, wear down and destroy German troops which oppose it, within the corps "corridor" defined by the Army commander." The ATTACK: "When the Germans decide to stand and fight a defensive battle, attack without adequate reconnaissance and preparation will not succeed. The attack must be carefully organized and strongly supported by all available artillery. The frontage of attack must be limited to that on which really heavy support may be given. The essence of the German system of defence is the counter-attack. His forward defence are not thickly held in terms of men, but are strong in automatic weapons and well supported by mortars, sited up to three or four thousand yards in rear of forward defended localities. These mortars are capable of bringing very heavy fire to bear in front of, or within, the German defensive position. A well planned infantry attack, with ample fire support, will penetrate such a position with comparative ease, but the first penetration will stir up a hornets nest. As long as fresh reserves are available the Germans will counter-attack heavily and continuously, supported by self-propelled guns brought up to close range and by any mortars which have not been over-run in the initial assault. The success of the offensive battle hinges on the defeat of the German counter-attacks, with sufficient of our own reserves on hand to launch a new phase as soon as the enemy strength has spent itself. The defeat of these counter-attacks must form part of the original plan of attack which must include arrangements for artillery support and the forward moves of infantry supporting weapons - including tanks - on the objective. Further, in selecting the objectives, the suitability of the front from the point of view of fighting this "battle of Counter-attacks" must receive important consideration. The following points must be considered in the initial planning: A) The depth of the initial objectives. To over run the German mortar positions requires penetration of this forward defence to a depth of some four thousand yards...b) The phase of the attack at which the bulk of the artillery is to be moved forward must receive early consideration....C) The way in which the German support their infantry in the counter-attack must be clearly understood...."Operations should be "phased" accordingly....A sound simple plan based upon: a) the ground b) Enemy dispositions and probable intentions c) the support available d) The characteristics and capabilities of our own arms and troops and pressed home with resolution, will usually succeed. Complicated, involved plans seldom succeed." NAC, RG 24 Vol. 10,799. Simonds, Lt.Gen. G.G. Operational Policy 2nd Canadian Corps.



hand to launch a new phase after the Germans counterattack had been defeated.<sup>146</sup>

As a reflection of the North African experience, and the Montgomery-influenced British doctrine, particular attention was paid to the relationship between the consumer's needs (i.e. the commander), and the provider (i.e. the intelligence staff). In the fall of 1943, a classmate of Maj. W.H. Broughall's at the fourth CJWSC, Maj. G.B. MacGivillray, was assigned the task of preparing Canadian Army candidates for the intelligence portion of eighth CJWSC, running from November 1943 until March 1944. For the first time, Canadian staff officers were being introduced to the essence of intelligence in high command - namely, what does the commander want to know?

In his postwar report, Lt.Col. P.E.R. Wright was critical of the Canadian adoption of the British intelligence method. To Wright, the Canadian intelligence officer was "constantly being told in the words of British military teaching that it (was) his job to put himself in the shoes of the enemy and to tell his commander what course the enemy (was) likely to take." As a result of this teaching, a "number of commanders" according to Wright, "conclud(ed) that this (was) the main job of intelligence." However, in Wright's opinion, most commanders "could tell intelligence what the enemy would do, having in mind the ground, weather and the course of the fighting, far better than the intelligence staff officer who (was) seldom given the privilege of commanding men in battle."<sup>147</sup> For students entering the eighth CJWSC, the curriculum was designed strictly along the lines of the new

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<sup>146</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol. 10,799, Lt.Gen. G.G. Simonds Operational Policy:2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps.

<sup>147</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report". In Wright's view the primary function of intelligence was to report what was know of the enemy and find out more. This distinction was in Wright's opinion "fundamental" and he provided the intelligence work done for Totalize as an example. A memorable occasion was the tactical situation before 8 August 1944 when we drove Southward from Caen. Then form the point of view of Field Marshal Von Kluge it was evident that he should not imperil the safety of his right wing to the East and South of Caen. The escape of his whole force operating further to the west depended on security there. In fact, the enemy did weaken his right wing and suffered disaster in the Falaise Gap. It seems to me that the job of intelligence was first to report the evidence of what the enemy was doing and only secondly to appreciate what he should be doing....In the whole Intelligence method there is of course a proper mingling of the reporting of facts and the appreciation of future courses, but it is wrong to place the stress on the appreciation of

British doctrine, and, consequently, in the words of British military teaching.

In the prestaff course lecture, the candidates were introduced to what, from the British viewpoint, the commander needed to know. The lecture dealt with the handling of information at a formation headquarters - particularly sources, collection, collation and dissemination. The first question that had to be answered concerned the immediate enemy order of battle in front of the commander. The location of subunits was next on the list, followed by a list of equipment that the enemy had at their disposal.

Another reflection of the new manual was that Canadian staff officers were encouraged to assess the German tactical methods. Particular reference was made to the early recognition of enemy offensive or defensive pattern, and the way the armour, artillery, and reconnaissance were used. Long-term questions such as the state of the enemy morale, reinforcement, casualties, topography and the enemy supply situation were addressed as well. Drawing the proper deductions from this collection of information was stressed in an effort to provide the commander and his planning staff with a confident assessment of enemy intentions.<sup>148</sup>

Although the above questions were considered universal to all commanders, the section relating to sources of intelligence available to a commander was broken down by level. In addition, the staff school candidates were given a preliminary outline to assess the degree of reliability and probability of a particular source and the information obtained. At each level, from battalion to Army, the students were afforded insight as to what was expected at the respective levels with regards to collation and dissemination. Included in the precis were appendices that introduced the prospective candidates to the various sources of intelligence.<sup>149</sup>

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what it would be best for the enemy to do. That has its place but our first job is to state the evidence we have of what the enemy is in fact doing."

<sup>148</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 12,416 First Canadian Army Headquarters, Pre Staff Course Lectures Serial 12: Intelligence. Information: Sources, collection, collation, Dissemination.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. These were the Y service, the J Service. Phantom, Ground contact, POW interrogation, Photographic interpretation. Also attached were examples of intelligence summaries and intelligence appreciations.

At the opening of the staff course instruction on intelligence, students were to learn that, in the First World War, there were "many cases (when) orders were based on such bad information that the troops could not carry them out."<sup>150</sup> The directing staff was instructed to make sure this would no longer be the case in the Second World War. "Intelligence," it was stressed, was "an integral part of the General Staff", which should collaborate with all other staffs avoiding at "all costs" the tendency to compartmentalize. To effect better results, the intelligence staff was to be informed continually of the commander's objectives, which in turn formed "the basis on which all information" would be collected.<sup>151</sup> This intimacy with the planned operation would make it easier for the intelligence staff to focus on the collection of information, and to "think and plan ahead."<sup>152</sup>

The students also learnt that not only were the standard intelligence functions of collecting, sifting, and distributing information required to enable the commander to create and implement plans, but they were also needed to anticipate enemy actions or reactions. By the end of 1943, intelligence had begun to focus its efforts on obtaining information that would predict enemy intentions. Unlike earlier courses that stressed the primacy of the order of battle, enemy intentions drawn from that order of battle were now the key. At all times, the intelligence staff was to be able to present a commander with an appreciation "forecasting the capabilities and probable action of the enemy."<sup>153</sup> As a result, the staff level curriculum for intelligence changed to suit the new demands.

By the start of the eighth CJWSC, a large part of the intelligence curriculum was devoted to the study of German Army morale, order of battle, organization, equipment and tactical doctrine, with the hope that the sum of

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<sup>150</sup> DHist. 000.7 (D17), Kirke Committee, quoted in the opening paragraph to CJWSC No.8: DS Notes for Syndicate Discussion

<sup>151</sup> DHist. 000.7 (D17) CJWSC No.8: Organization and Duties of Intelligence in the Field. Section 1: Organization and Intelligence Staff Duties - General.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

these parts would reveal German intentions.<sup>154</sup> Although the students were lectured intensely on the role of wireless intelligence and air photography, they did not contain any instruction on how to obtain the information required from these sources to reveal German intentions. Instead, a heavy emphasis was placed for the first time on the study of German tactical doctrine as the main source for predicting their actions. Once identifications could be made and the order of battle established, the tactical posture of the German forces in the line was used to indicate their intentions.<sup>155</sup>

Staff course candidates were taught to assess the German dispositions based on fundamental principles and certain tactical factors. Tactics of the German Army were in essence flexible in organization. Ad hoc forces could and were easily created rapidly to meet special conditions, while surprise, all-arms coordination, concentration, skillful use of ground (particularly reversed slopes), and counterattack (first by fire and then by local reserves) were the general tactical principles followed.

On defence, students were instructed that, in principle, the "Germans believe that attack (was) the best means of defence." Only when "the enemy (was) worn out and beaten back, (and) attacked from the flank," would an engagement be decided.<sup>156</sup> Tactically, the students were warned that a German commander selects terrain for the defence based on the availability of natural anti-tanks obstacles, suitability for the combined operation of infantry, supporting arms and armour, and ground with good fields of observation for concentrated and coordinated fire in depth. The lay-out of the German commander's anti-tank Defences stressed the siting of "every

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid. This course also seemed to be the first course that took the eventuality of an end to the war in Europe into consideration. Along with the standard lectures on the German Army, lectures were given on the Japanese, Russian and American Armies as well.

<sup>155</sup> DHist, 000.7 (D17), CJWSC No.8: Section III - German Tactics. The lecture on German tactics were drawn from experiences in the desert and from the Russian front and were contained in notes from the Theatres of War, as well as from the War Office and Middle East Intelligence summaries and Periodical Notes on the German Army.

suitable weapon and targets engaged at short ranges," while German armour was positioned in echelons on "the most dangerous flanks" or sighted to cover gaps in the defensive position. Attention was drawn to the fact that the Panzers may be kept in two separate groups to develop a pincer movement with supporting arms while counterattacking. The students were also warned that tanks had been used as "decoys and as dummy or silent anti-tank guns." But the most revealing indication was the German commander's selection of terrain, which was based generally on what he considered to be the most vital for his main effort".<sup>157</sup>

As mentioned above, the candidates were taught that the key to determining German tactical posture resided with the layout of the German positions.<sup>158</sup> The German tactical doctrine was designed to create a defensive zone with four distinct areas: the advanced position (Vorgeschoben Stellung), battle outposts (Gefechtsvorposten), main zone of resistance (Hauptkampffeld), and the rear position (Ruckwartige Stellung). Also, the Germans used the term main battle zone, which ran from the forward edge of the main battle zone to the rearward edge of the rear position. It was in this area that the reserves for the counterattack - and the counterattack itself - would be held.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. Although the students were also taught the principles and the organization of the German attack, the scope of this study only permits a brief examination of the Defense and the Withdrawal.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. The advanced position (vorgeschoben Stellung) were sighted approximately 5,000 to 7,000 yards in advance of the main defense zone. Here, the advanced positions were usually occupied by reconnaissance troops whose purpose it was to delay the enemy from obtaining suitable ground from which to launch an attack. By holding centers of communications, denying the high ground, and by directing artillery fire down on advanced enemy and friendly units alike, these advanced positions forced the enemy to deploy prematurely and waste time. Like the advanced positions, the battle outposts were covered by artillery and were only 2,000-3,000 yards ahead of the main defense zone. These were held with as few men as possible but with the strongest volume of fire possible. The main tasks of these outpost were to prevent the enemy surprising the main defense zone and to gain time for its preparation; forcing the attacking enemy to deploy early exposing himself to fire prematurely and to provide protection for forward observation. The Main zone of resistance, was in reality a defensive position lay out in-depth with mutually supported "islands of resistance" or strongpoints. Sometimes the main zone of resistance

As the students were reminded constantly, the counterattack formed the cornerstone of the German defensive doctrine. German commanders on all levels maintained a mobile counterattack reserve to restore immediately any overrun sector by fire and then by the commitment of reserves. The students were cautioned that this differed sharply from a "deliberate counterattack (Gegnangriff)," which required "time and careful preparation" to obtain full support of other arms. For the immediate counterattack, attention was drawn to the fact that a Panzer battalion was often allotted to an infantry division for support, while the remainder of the Panzer formation was held in reserve for "concentrated use at a threatened point."<sup>160</sup> After the students had absorbed the lecture, they were given two exercises designed to establish the identifications of the units facing them. Once these were completed, the students attended a demonstration given by the GSO 2 Operations, and were given an idea of how intelligence would fit into a corps level attack under the Montgomery-influenced British doctrine.

The scenario in the demonstration was based upon a corps level attack where the infantry, supported by

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could be a series of fortified towns and villages connected by strong points and located on important roads and tracks," These "islands" the students were warned "were often found in threes, two astride and one to the rear of the vital ground, usually on reverse slopes." These positions would be occupied by regiments of infantry, with ample support from mortars, machine guns and infantry guns (artillery). The students were instructed that the only exception to this situation was when "high ground of value as O(bservation) P(osts) (was) to be denied to the enemy, the main zone of resistance (would) be sited well forward so that fire directed at the defenses (did) not destroy the O(bservation) P(osts). The students were instructed that in cases where the main zone was overrun, a rear position, (ruckwartige Stellung) may have also been prepared in case the main zone was overrun. This position would be situated well behind the main defense zone so as to require the enemy to redeploy his artillery before attacking this position in strength. This definition was very similar to the one given by the directing staff concerning German defensive action in a withdrawal. These withdrawals were made to areas far enough back from the enemy, so that again like the rear position, would force the enemy to redeploy his artillery. However, the German forces do not allow themselves to be involved in major actions and "offer maximum resistance" only at those points which offer no possibility of defeat. The suitability of the ground for defense against tanks was of prime importance and the fighting in these situation was usually categorized in typical British understated fashion as "very stubborn." The rearguards, were usually mobile and very strong in fire power, employing long range artillery, assault guns, and heavy anti- tank guns. Two types of mobile reserve were available for the German rearguard to call on for support. Anti-tanks guns could be used to strengthen any part of the defensive position while tanks with support could be used for an immediate counterattack to restore the status quo in any sector while a withdrawal took place.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

artillery and tanks, would break into the German line and create a breach for armour to breakthrough and rather eerily, it also resembled almost identically Simonds's plan of attack for Operation Spring the following July. Once this had been accomplished, and the inevitable German counterattack had been beaten off, the armour would exploit into German territory.<sup>161</sup> The lecture was designed along the similar scripted approach used by Maj. C.C. Mann's in the first CJWSC. But this time, there was no versicle accompaniment, although the various "experts" on each service were called upon to explain their roles in the battle.<sup>162</sup> The majority of the demonstration was dominated by "experts" from the infantry, armour and artillery, who were repeatedly leapfrogged as the demonstration progressed. At the end, the A&Q staff officer was called upon to complete the demonstration. Only once in the demonstration was the intelligence "expert" queried for his advice, and this consisted of him simply defining the tactical posture of the German Defences. The intelligence "expert", without going into detail, reminded the audience of the earlier lecture on German tactics, and then proceeded to point out the German advanced position, battle outposts, and main defensive zones. He then pointed out possible gun areas and minefields, and then proceeded to affix the two defending infantry regiments in their positions and mark their divisional boundaries.<sup>163</sup>

Despite intense efforts to fit intelligence firmly within the framework of the general staff system, this exercise on the eve of the Normandy invasion revealed that intelligence was still akin to fitting a square peg in a round hole as far as operations were concerned. The role of intelligence remained simply to provide the operations staff and the commander with an assessment of German intentions based on the general lay-out of the German formations in the line and nothing more. As this exercise revealed, recognition of German intentions were limited

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<sup>161</sup> DHist 000.7 (D17) CJWSC No.8:Intermediate Wing Assault Lecture.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

to a narrow view of German doctrine. In some ways, the views expressed in this exercise mirrored the Anglo-Canadian tactical doctrine, for only infantry and artillery positions were affixed on the map and there was no discussion of armour, nor the possibility of counterattack. The question of what role intelligence could play during the various phases of the corps attack was never addressed. The possibility that intelligence could predict the time and strength of the "inevitable" German counterattack, or reveal a major change in the German defensive posture and, consequently, their intentions before an attack commenced or during the attack itself, was also lost on the operations staff. Once the plan had been made and the operational orders given, the job of intelligence in relation to the enemy forces was over. Once the battle had started, the relationship between the operations staff and intelligence shifted focus to reveal the movements and locations of friendly forces afforded by Phantom and the J Service.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Interview Brigadier G.E. Beament. March 12 1996. This probably would not have come as a surprise to Sir Edgar Williams who remarked to Carlo D'Este in 181 that Canadian Officers went to staff school - and conducted their battles like a staff school exercise. Brig G.E. Beament, the Col. G.S. at First Canadian Army reported that this was certainly true of Harry Crerar in Belgium and Holland in the fall of 1944. In Beament's opinion, these were "conducted like a series of TEWTs" (Tactical Exercise Without Troops) until Guy Simonds arrived to take over for the ailing Crerar - and this was like "a breath of fresh air."



## **PART II**

### **THE SOURCES OF INTELLIGENCE IN THE FIELD**

**"A general should neglect no means of gaining information of the enemy's movements, and, for this purpose, should make use of reconnaissance, spies, bodies of light troops commanded by capable officers, signals, and questioning deserters and prisoners...Perfect reliance should be placed on none of these means.**

**- Henri Jomini, *The Art of War***

## Chapter One: Assessing Priority

It is rare in intelligence, as it is with the study of history, that a single item of information will be in itself conclusive. Military Intelligence, like the historical argument, is built up mainly from small pieces of evidence. While these pieces by themselves can appear insignificant, it is the collection of these items and their position within the proper context that will be most revealing. It is a combination of the information itself and the veracity of the source combined with time, speed, and accuracy, that determines the amount of influence the information will have.<sup>165</sup>

In the Canadian prestaff course in the fall of 1943, candidates were introduced to the sources of information or "tools of the trade" available from battalion to army level. The priorities were introduced in a

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<sup>165</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 12,416, Maj. G.B. MacGillivray, First Canadian Army HQ GS Intelligence: Pre Staff Course Lecture Serial 12 - Intelligence: Information, Sources, Collection, Collation, Dissemination, 8 September 1943. For Canadian and Allied commanders and their intelligence staffs in the Normandy campaign, a simple codified grading system was in place to judge the degree of reliability and veracity of intelligence. To judge the reliability of the source, the system had five possible levels ranging from A-E. A was the designate for "very reliable source" whereas B was for "reliable source, C=fairly reliable, D=not very reliable, E=unreliable. To assess the probability and veracity of the information, numeric grading system from 1-5 applied (1=very probable, 2=probable, 3=fairly probable, 4=not very probable, 5=improbable). Therefore a source such as Ultra or Y Service for example, would be receive an A rating while the information it provided could be anywhere from 1 to 5 (0 was used if the probability could not be judged or assessed.) Likewise, intelligence from Air reconnaissance and Air Photo also had a high degree of reliability. Contact on the front lines would be somewhere in the A 3 range, while information obtained from a POW might be D2 but a deserter with the same information might be classified C2 due to his lack of martial zeal. Civilians and informants would probably fall under E1 or E2 (For any information rating an E5 would not be information worth obtaining in the first place). These grading were not designed to be hard and fast solutions for the intelligence staff but simply guidelines. It was recognized that the priorities at various levels of command depended upon the type and numbers of sources available as well as their physical reliability to produce useful information. As Canadian Staff Officers were instructed, "the sources having the highest grading would be those which provided the greatest amount of accurate and collated information bearing most directly on the immediate tactical situation."

## **NOTE TO USERS**

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summaries.<sup>168</sup>

At the corps level, two additional sources of intelligence were added to the mix, which changed the order of priority at this level. The Special Wireless Section Type B (the corps part of the Y Service) and the J Service and Phantom replaced ground contact as the primary sources of information. Photo reconnaissance also played an increasingly important role for the corps battle, as did tactical air reconnaissance. Information from ground troops in contact with the enemy (provided by Phantom and J Service) retained a certain amount of importance but more in relation to other sources as corroborative evidence. Likewise, prisoner of war identification maintained its status for the same reason. Prisoner of war interrogation, which was vital for the lower levels, dropped a level of importance as a source, due to the time lag involved with the process of interrogation.<sup>169</sup>

At all times, information from higher headquarters was essential for the success of the intelligence effort. However, this was more prevalent at the corps level than anywhere else. According to the allied command structure, the "tools of the trade" were invested primarily at the army level. Sources such as Ultra and Special Wireless Type A were only available to the Army intelligence staffs. Although the focus at Army level was more strategically oriented than the corps operational focus, the operational fruits of signal intelligence (sigint), for example, were invaluable to corps operations. In this vein, information from these sources, without the source itself being formally disclosed to corps intelligence, was provided in a disguised form, through an information or intelligence summary (Isum or Intsum) or even in some circumstances, verbally.<sup>170</sup>

At the army group level, the focus was on information of strategic importance and signals intelligence,

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.; Maj. S.R. Elliot to author, 23 March 1996.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.; PRO, WO208/3575 Williams, "Use of Ultra".

and Ultra was the main source.<sup>171</sup> The interest of the intelligence staff at army group might have been, as Bill Williams noted, "in the battle" but its function was "to see beyond."<sup>172</sup> To remedy this situation, the intelligence effort was divided between a tactical headquarters (TAC HQ), from which Montgomery would command, and a main headquarters. At Tac HQ, the senior intelligence officer "stuck to the battle stuff," whereas at main headquarters, the BGS (I) would "beat the strategic drum."<sup>173</sup> Through regular visits and guidance from the intelligence staff at army group, a firm basis of knowledge or a "corpus of doctrine" was developed for use at Army level on down. On two occasions in the Normandy Campaign, Williams pointed out the clear need for guidance from 21 Army Group concerning intelligence. The first occurred while keeping track of the German build-up in Normandy before and after the invasion, while the second was the "realization that the battle, not merely of Normandy, but of France itself, was being fought south of the Seine." While it was the function of the intelligence staff at army group in situations like these to provide the Army commander and his staff with information concerning the various sources of intelligence available, in reality, it was signals intelligence which was the defining source and set the pattern for the Allied intelligence effort in Normandy.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> PRO, WO208/3575 Williams. "Use of Ultra".

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* Williams stayed for the most part at 21 Army Group main Headquarters, while the tactical headquarters was in the capable hands of 29 year old Col. Joe Ewart. Unfortunately little is known about Ewart as he was killed in Germany in a road accident the day after the war ended. Norman Kriby, 1100 Miles With Monty: Security and Intelligence at TAC HQ. (London:1989) P.111 Clayton, Forearmed P.98

<sup>174</sup> PRO, WO208/3575, Williams, "Use of Ultra".

## Chapter Two:

### **Signals Intelligence: Ultra, Y Service, J Service and Phantom**

Signals intelligence is a general term of reference for the process of interception and decryption of enemy codes and cyphers, coupled with the intelligence that is produced from the results of these efforts.<sup>175</sup> During the Second World War Signals intelligence was the quickest source of intelligence available in the Allied arsenal. Its value lay in the fact that it was not only rapid, but the information it produced was also extremely reliable. Since the information produced by signals intelligence was, in essence, provided by the German forces themselves, its authenticity (minus any attempts at deception), was of extreme import. Also, the messages intercepted by the British at their Bletchley Park outstations and the Special Wireless sections in the field, were done, at or about the same time that the German operators would receive theirs. Hence, the information signals intelligence provided was timely and permitted the Allies the opportunity for timely reaction.<sup>176</sup>

During the European War, the allied signals intelligence effort was controlled by the British Government Code and Cipher School (GC&CS) at Bletchley Park, which dealt with diplomatic, commercial, Naval, Abwehr, police, *Luftwaffe* and military traffic.<sup>177</sup> Under the auspices of GC&CS, Military Signals Intelligence was divided

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<sup>175</sup> PRO, WO208/5048, *The Y Service Handbook*.

<sup>176</sup> Hinsley, British P.xiii; PRO, HW3/86, *Intelligence in G.C.&C.S.: German and Italian War*.

<sup>177</sup> Bradley Smith, The Ultra-Magic Deals. (Harper-Collins:1992); NARA, RG457, H. McDonald Brown, "The British Y Service (Land and Air) July 1942". The coordination and control of the Signals Intelligence was effort was divided between the British and the Americans as part of the BRUSA agreement of 1943. The Americans being responsible for the signals intelligence doctrine in the Pacific while the British set the tone for operations in the European theatre. Although each service was responsible for is own Y service, it was the opinion of G.C.&C.S.(Station X or Bletchley Park) on the coordination of their efforts (the allotment of frequencies), which

into two distinct but fundamentally interrelated parts: Ultra and Y Intelligence.<sup>178</sup> Ultra, the more popularly known of the two, referred to the British security classification under which all highgrade sigint (special intelligence) derived from the reading of high-level German communications enciphered on the Enigma machine.<sup>179</sup> In addition, any messages dealing with special intelligence, whether containing the actual information, or summaries, appreciations, queries and comments, all came under the security classification Top Secret Ultra.<sup>180</sup>

In the British system, the Y Service was military parlance for wireless intelligence (WI).<sup>181</sup> Despite what

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helped shape Y policy. For the purpose of formulating such a policy the Y Committee, an inter-service committee would meet and reach decisions upon all matters affecting the policy of interception in the U.K., the Dominions, and in the theatres of operation. Represented on the Y Committee were the Admiralty, The War Office (MI8 and Signals 4) The Air Ministry (AI4), Home Forces (I(s)GHQ), Radio Security Services and The Foreign Office (G.C.&C.S. Bletchley). (Special sub Committees of the Y Committee serve to discuss matters of specialized or technical importance). Directing the major policy matters of the Y committees was the Y Board. The Y Board had the responsibility of obtaining through interceptions, intelligence concerning the movement, concentration, or intentions of the enemy forces, concerning the state of his civilian morale, his economic conditions. Some of this material will be of use to those in whose hand rests the major strategy of the war, while some will concern subordinate commands and departments. The Y Board, consisting of the Chiefs of Intelligence of the various services met on occasion to discuss items of intelligence affecting major issues of the war and to convey its findings to the Prime Minister.

<sup>178</sup> Ultra and the "Y" service should not be confused with "J" service or Phantom. The "J" and Phantom service was a direct communications channel for commanders in the rear to receive uninterrupted information from what is happening on the front lines. For example, a "J" or Phantom patrol would be sent forward with the divisions, brigades, or battalions to report directly to the Corps, Army or, Army Group commander of the allied situation at the front. Ultra and "Y" intelligence, on the other hand, dealt strictly with enemy communications, movements etc.

<sup>179</sup> Hinsley, British Intelligence P. xiii and Bennett R. Ultra in the West. (London:1979) P.34

<sup>180</sup> PRO. HW3/85, *The History of Hut 3: Appendix B - Regulations for Maintaining the Security of Special Intelligence*. Ultra has become the more common term for Special Intelligence and for interests of this study it will remain as such. Special Intelligence however, was the "agreed name for the resultant most secret information obtained by cryptographic means from enemy high-grade codes and ciphers, or those for security reasons placed in this category."

<sup>181</sup> NARA, RG457, Brown, "The British Y Service (Land and Air) July 1942". For more on this administrative struggle see PRO 208/5024, *The Reorganization of the Y Services 1943*. The set up of the Military Y Service came under the direction of the Y Committee. The broad policy of the Military Y service intercept stations, whether fixed or mobile, is under the direction of the Director of Military Intelligence. However the more immediate control

most of the popular histories of Ultra portray, Ultra could not have functioned, in the military sense, without the support of the Y service, and was not as distinct an entity as some imagine.<sup>182</sup> Ultra was reliant on the Y Service to provide it with the context within which to operate. For Ultra to continue to be the highly efficient intelligence weapon it proved to be on the battlefield, it needed the support of the Y Service in the areas of interception, decryption of wireless traffic in low- and medium-grade codes and ciphers, traffic analysis (noting the volume and direction of traffic and the number of priority messages) and direction finding (to locate the sender and recipient and establish a general plan of the German wireless links).<sup>183</sup> Although at times the information produced by Y alone was often enough to guide the decisions of a commander in the field, combining the products of Y and Ultra provided a highly potent intelligence weapon.<sup>184</sup> This "fusion" of the Y Service and Ultra was used extensively by Bletchley Park, which compared the Y and the Ultra products to "insure that the interpretation of the former was (consistent) with the substance of the latter."<sup>185</sup> In addition, the product of this combined effort was then meshed

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of the Y effort lies with the Deputy Director of Military Intelligence Organization DDMI(O). At his disposal were a specialist section of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (MI8). The provision of equipment, transportation and intercept personnel is there responsibility of the Director of Signals. The provision of Intelligence personnel was the responsibility of (MI8). This division of power set up a power struggle for control of the Special Wireless Sections in the Field which was only remedied in the Summer of 1943.

<sup>182</sup> George F. Howe, United States Cryptologic History Series IV World War II Volume I American Signal Intelligence in Northwest Africa and Western Europe. (Washington:1980) Unlike Ultra, "Y" (Yorker) was produced in the field at Special Wireless Sections as well as at GCCS from traffic in cryptographic systems of medium or low grade, or in plain language. It consisted largely of messages between lower echelons of command, coupled with Direction Finding (DF) techniques and from the externals of messages otherwise known as traffic analysis. The Y service helped to identify enemy links of the greatest priority for surveillance, and furnished the cryptanalysts with clues to the subject matter by identifying the sender, receiver, and time of transmission.

<sup>183</sup> Hinsley, British Intelligence.; PRO, HW 3/126, Nomenclature for Activities Relating to the Study of Foreign Signals 18 June 1944. There term "low grade" does not imply that the traffic in it was either unimportant or easy to break and interpret but rather refers to the degree of security provided by a code or cipher.

<sup>184</sup> Howe, American Signal Intelligence. P.47. Sometimes knowing the exact location of a specific enemy formation was sometimes more of a "benefit to a commander than the substance of the very message that had revealed the location."



further with other sources of intelligence to fill in the intelligence canvas.

In his postwar report on Ultra, Brig. Williams felt strong enough about the role of the Y Service in Ultra's success that he devoted a significant passage to its relationship.<sup>186</sup> Williams stressed that Y provided a "rounder pattern" of events and "built up the day-to-day" knowledge of the enemy, which enabled his intelligence staff to handle Ultra with more confidence, and provided them with a check against the possibility that a particular bit of Ultra information was dead wrong.<sup>187</sup> While Ultra and Y had notable successes on their own, it was, essentially, the end product of these combined efforts that gave signals intelligence such tactical prominence among commanders in the field. For the commander in the field, sigint provided general, and in some cases, precise, locations and movements of German units and front lines, as well as details of the German order of battle, reinforcements, casualties, morale and intentions.<sup>188</sup>

While the security classification Ultra was given to intelligence derived from high-level German communications, the fruits of the Y Service were also divided according to security levels. The code words, Ciro-

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> PRO, WO208/3575, Williams, "Use of Ultra"; PRO, AIR40/2323 Group Captain R.H. Humphreys, "The Use of Ultra in the Mediterranean and Northwest African Theatres of War." (London:1945). According to Humphreys' report the fusion of Ultra and Y service was the subject of keen study at Bletchley Park by the Ultra and Y intelligence sections: "the co-ordinated collation of U and Y was by then producing substantial pictures of G.A.F. activity, of the greatest use for background and Intelligence assessment purposes. Opportunities of tactical application arose under secure conditions, and were taken, with good results, on an increasing scale." Apparently, a fusion party of Y and Ultra information was set up to serve Allied headquarters in the Mediterranean theatre but Williams did not mention anything of this type in use with 21 Army Group in Northwest Europe.

<sup>187</sup> PRO, WO208/3575, Williams, "Use of Ultra".

<sup>188</sup> DHist, War Office, *Manual of Military Intelligence in The Field - Pamphlet No.2: Battle Intelligence 1943* P.17 and Major. R.S.E. Grant, "The Second World War Experiences of Major R.S.E. Grant." Canadian Forces Communications and Electronics Newsletter Special Wireless Edition No 446 P.12 Major Grant was the Officer Commanding the 2nd Canadian Special Wireless Section Type B attached to Simonds' Corps for the Normandy Campaign. Although most of the work done by his unit dealt with plain language, Three letter codes and Direction Finding (which to him was the most revealing and important of the three) any intercepted cipher messages "were passed back in signal intelligence channels for others to work on and became part of the signal intelligence output

Pearl and Pearl (which until early 1944 were known simply as Pearl) were assigned to the end products of decryptations of medium- and low-grade German traffic, respectively. Unlike Ultra, which was classified as Top Secret Ultra, Ciro-Pearl, Pearl and Thumb were classified as Secret.<sup>189</sup> Ciro-Pearl was allocated to the products of decryption of medium-level codes by the Special Wireless Section Type A, which worked at Army level.<sup>190</sup> The code name Pearl, on the other hand, was assigned to the results of the work by Special Wireless Section Type B on low-level codes at the corps level.<sup>191</sup> The code word Thumb was assigned to the products of direction finding and any plain language messages intercepted by either level of special wireless sections.<sup>192</sup> Although both levels of special wireless sections did not have the capacity nor the security clearance, to decipher and utilize Enigma traffic, they did have the capability to intercept it and transmit it back to Bletchley where it was deciphered, translated and transformed into Ultra.<sup>193</sup>

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known as Ultra.

<sup>189</sup> PRO, HW3/86, *Intelligence in G.C.&C.S.: German and Italian War*.

<sup>190</sup> PRO, WO208/5024, *The Function of a Special Wireless Section Type A*; PRO WO208/5085, *Notes on the Organization and functions of Field Y Units: DMI Visit to North Africa June 1943*.

<sup>191</sup> PRO, WO208/502, *The Function of a Special Wireless Section Type B*; NARA RG457, Brown, "The British Y Service (Land and Air) July 1942". There were also plans for a Special Wireless Section Type F which was to accompany armoured divisions into battle to intercept enemy armour transmissions. In reality the distance between the battling armoured divisions was too close to permit the cost effective application of a Special Wireless Section dedicated strictly to armour. The Type F was scrapped and the various armoured divisions used the Corps allotted Type B when necessary.

<sup>192</sup> NARA RG457, Brown, "The British 'Y' Service (Land and Air) July 10 1942". This liaison report was written by Capt. Brown after a visit to the British War Office MI8 (Signals Intelligence) for the United States Signal Corps. Although he visited the War Office Y Group, several Special Wireless sections, The Foreign Office y Group, the Intelligence training center and the main RAF Y station at Cheadle, he was not introduced to G.C.&C.S Bletchley Park by his British host, Major G.R.J. Watkins-Pitchford of MI8.

<sup>193</sup> Grant, "The Second World War Experiences of Major R.S.E. Grant." Major Grant was the Officer Commanding the 2nd Canadian Special Wireless Section Type B attached to Simonds' Corps for the Normandy Campaign. Although most of the work done by his unit dealt with plain language, Three letter codes and Direction Finding (which to him was the most revealing and important of the three) any intercepted cipher messages "were passed back in signal intelligence channels for others to work on and became part of the signal intelligence output

## ULTRA:

From the beginning of the war until late 1942, Brig. E.T. "Bill" Williams felt that intelligence was the "Cinderella" of the general staff and that information up to that time concerning the enemy was treated as "interesting" rather than "valuable".<sup>194</sup> According to Williams, it was "Ultra and Ultra only" that "put intelligence on the map."<sup>195</sup> Anthony Clayton, in his history of the Intelligence Corps, agrees with Williams's assessment that 1941-1942 marked the turning point in the history of operational intelligence. The old sources, prisoners, desert reconnaissance (LRDG and SAS) and even photographic intelligence were becoming, according to Clayton, "increasingly outclassed in value by signals intelligence." Ultra was proving to be, as Williams recorded, "the answer to an intelligence officer's prayer."<sup>196</sup>

By the time the critical battles in Normandy were under way in July 1944, the immense contribution of Ultra was evident. On July 22, just days before the breakout by the Americans at St.Lo and the launching of Operation Spring, Maj.Gen. Kenneth Strong (Chief Intelligence Officer at SHAEF) wrote to Bletchley Park on behalf of General Eisenhower to express his appreciation of the Ultra service afforded to allied commanders in the field. Strong wrote: "we, who use the finished article, would like you to know that, without it, our task would have been immeasurably more difficult, if not impossible. Never in the history of warfare has any commander been in the unique position in which your organization has placed our Commanders today." Strong went on to state that the current battles in Normandy "which may well prove decisive in world history" were fully dependent on the

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known as Ultra.

<sup>194</sup> PRO. WO208/3575, Williams "Use of Ultra".

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

Ultra output from Bletchley.<sup>197</sup>

The main selling point of Ultra to commanders in the field was that it was based on verbatim translations of orders and reports from the "horse's mouth." The "exclusive merit" of Ultra according to Ralph Bennett was "its capacity to keep a finger on the pulse of German strategy."<sup>198</sup> As former RAF intelligence officer at Bletchley park and postwar historian Peter Calvocoressi wrote: "Nobody handling Ultra was allowed to forget the single most crucial point about it: that what it said was what the Germans themselves were saying to and about themselves."<sup>199</sup>

There were serious potential drawbacks to this source, however. As the war progressed, the allied intelligence effort became increasingly dependent upon Ultra for its success. According to Williams, "instead of being the best, it tended to become the only source."<sup>200</sup> Fascination with authenticity of the source clouded, in some cases, the judgment of the intelligence staffs as to the significance of the information. "The information purveyed was so remarkable," Williams reported, "that it tended...to engulf not only all other sources but that very commonsense which forms the basis of Intelligence."<sup>201</sup> As a result, in some cases, a tendency prevailed at Army and Army Group headquarters to "await the next message" before resuming the intelligence effort.<sup>202</sup>

In other cases, Ultra took on the guise of the proverbial "carrot" as intelligence staffs strove to beat Ultra to the punch or face the prospect of feeling that they had failed to do their jobs adequately. "This," according to Williams, was "a falsification of the situation because in beating Ultra, we very often were relying on previous

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<sup>197</sup> PRO HW 3/126. Appreciation of Ultra Service by Maj. Gen. Kenneth Strong 22 July 1944.

<sup>198</sup> Bennett Ralph., Behind the Battle: Intelligence in the War with Germany, 1939-1945. (London: 1995) P.239.

<sup>199</sup> Peter Calvocoressi, Top Secret Ultra (London: 1980) P.60.

<sup>200</sup> PRO, WO208/3575, Williams, "Use of Ultra".

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

Ultra as part of the picture that we built up, and therefore, it couldn't be that a new piece of information, not supplied by Ultra, which would have made a substantial difference."<sup>203</sup> The full collection of evidence, or what Williams referred to as "corpus of doctrine," was an "amalgam" of information from Ultra, which in turn formed the backbone of the intelligence summaries at Army and Army Group headquarters.<sup>204</sup>

Despite the amazing speed at which the field commands received Ultra, it was usually out of date when the information arrived. By the time the Ultra messages arrived, they revealed information that had already occurred or that was in the process of occurring, and the fact that it was less out of date than other sources tended to make intelligence staffs in Williams's assessment "forget this time lag."<sup>205</sup> At the strategic level, this might be permissible, but at the operational and tactical level it was courting danger.

Although Ultra became much more of a tactical weapon in Normandy than it had been in Africa or Italy, its main contribution lay in providing the overall context to German reaction to allied moves in Normandy.<sup>206</sup> Not

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Sir Edgar Williams, interview by Carlo D'Este, July 28 1981 (The interview was graciously loaned to the Author by Col. D'Este); Williams, "Use of Ultra". According to Williams, Ultra formed the backbone of the Intelligence and information summaries sent out by at Army Group and Army level.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> PRO, HW 3/126, Hut 3 Directive 722 June 6 1944. In the emotion of the day of the invasion of Normandy, a message went out to all hut 3 personnel congratulating them for a job well done in the days leading up to D-Day. "Whatever your part may do once the operation begins" the unnamed author quoted an anonymous but informed source as saying "one KV (message to the field command via SCU/SLU) has already saved a division from annihilation." Jones went on to state "One KV saved a division (15,000 Men)....one of probably 120 kv's that day...small wonder that with this to add to my other though at this moment I find peculiarly deep feelings rounded in me; and I make no excuses for any that may find expression in this note... I repeat: one KV has already saved a division! As it happened the signal was in ample time, and would have been even had it been seriously delayed here. In different circumstances it could, of course, have been too late even though dealt with by us with the utmost despatch. But that is besides the point. On another occasion a message may be just in time or just too late according to our handling of it - with the fate of 15,000 men or more depending on it... Need I say more? Except perhaps to remind you of the need for complete secrecy. If the enemy - and for this purpose we must treat any person not on our staff as enemy - got so much as a whisper of the fact we had saved a division our chances of saving others in

only could Ultra reveal movements, locations and intentions of German units, but it proved to be the main source for information concerning the strengths of German armoured forces - forces that were expected to make a major counter thrust to defeat the invasion.<sup>207</sup>

Dissatisfied with the handling of Ultra in the desert campaign, Williams felt it was necessary to visit Bletchley Park before D-Day in order to bring Hut 3 in line with what was desired by 21 Army Group and maximize the potential of this crucial source. As a result of his meeting with representatives of GC&CS, Williams arranged to send a nightly situation report to Bletchley so that intelligence officers in Hut 3 could affix the proper priority to the incoming intercepts and outgoing messages to the SLUs. Each signal that Williams sent contained information about Montgomery's intentions for the next day and what Hut 3 was to look for or expect in relation to these intentions.<sup>208</sup> With the battlefield so close to home in the summer of 1944, and with the cooperation of Bletchley Park and Williams, Ultra extended its role to serve as a main provider of tactical intelligence until the Y Service could come into full operation in late July.<sup>209</sup> However, before the Ultra information could get to the

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the future would probably be lost - just when far more divisions than ever will be in need of us."

<sup>207</sup> PRO, HW11/8 *Air and Military History*, PRO HW3/85 *History of Hut 3 Appendix B "Regulations for maintaining the Security of Special Intelligence*. The information from Ultra was to be regarded at all times as reliable and action may be taken upon its information with the appropriate security instructions consulted. According to the General G.C.&C.S. *Air and Military History on Ultra and the western front*: "Special intelligence was superior in quality and usually in quantity to that from any other source. An agent might report that fifty tanks passed through a given rail junction behind the front at a date several weeks in the past; a prisoner of war might give a current estimate but one difficult to evaluate, or the number of tanks in his battalion; Special Intelligence (Ultra) did give reliable statements of the number of tanks in one or more divisions, even though at an arbitrary and sometimes no longer current date."

<sup>208</sup> Sir Edgar Williams, interview by Carlo D'Este, July 28 1981. The Author wrote to the Government communications Headquarters (formerly G.C.&C.S.) in Cheltenham about the likely release into the public domain of these historically crucial situation reports which could establish once and for all Montgomery's true intentions in Normandy. However, according to the departmental historian, who went on to describe the sitreps in detail, they were destroyed because the PRO apparently had no use for them!

<sup>209</sup> Clayton, *Forearmed* P.147; PRO, WO208/5116, According to the June 1944 a Hut 6 report from Bletchley Park. "The quantity of information received during the first month of the operations in the west has been very

commander in the field, it first had to take a tortuous journey.

After the Y sections, which had been scanning the airwaves for enemy transmissions, had intercepted one, it would be sent to Bletchley for decryption and translation. Once this was completed in Hut 6, the contents of the message was passed to Hut 3, which was responsible for keeping track of the enemy intelligence picture, and for the distribution to the field commands of the end product of their intelligence efforts. Due to the high level of security, information was only passed from Hut 3 via a Special Communications Unit (SCU) to the field commands. It went out from Whaddon Hall via the SCU link to each command in the field at army level and above.<sup>210</sup> On the receiving end was a Special Liaison Unit (SLU) attached to each field command, which was responsible for the security and implementation of Ultra material.<sup>211</sup>

Since this source was so valuable to the allied war effort, the most stringent security precautions were placed on the use of the information provided by Ultra. "Preservation of the source of Ultra information is of the utmost importance in the conduct of the war" the security regulations warned.<sup>212</sup> In this fashion, Ultra was very much a double-edged sword. A commander in the field who received Ultra could not act upon its information unless it was corroborated by another source. In this way, it was hoped, suspicions on the part of the Germans that their communications were being read would be allayed, and give no cause to change cryptographic and signals security systems. In short, any form of contact, aerial reconnaissance, low- and medium-level code breaking, spies,

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satisfactory indeed, and the quality has been high. Order of Battle information had been admirable and there have been some good high-level appreciations which have given us an excellent picture of German reactions to our landing and fears of a subsequent landing." There were only two point which the report suggested could improved upon: "(a) more returns of tank and guns strength and (b) more information on supply in general."

<sup>210</sup> Lewin, Ultra Goes to War. P.140.

<sup>211</sup> PRO HW3/165 *The History of the Special Liaison Units*. The first name of the SLUs was Special Signals Unit (SSU) but the uninitiated frequently assumed that it meant "Secret Service Unit" and for security reasons it was considered wise to change the name to Special Communications Unit (SCU). As the organization grew it was split into two sections: The SCU for signaling and Transport and the SLU responsible for ciphers, security and liaison.

informants etc., which could make the Germans think that their moves were being observed by anything other than breaking their high-level codes, provided the necessary cover for Ultra. "On many occasions," Williams remarked, "some apparently futile prisoner formed an all too convenient peg on which to hang an essential explanation."<sup>213</sup>

To ensure that these security precautions were followed, Wing Commander F.W. Winterbotham developed the SCU/SLU system mentioned above.<sup>214</sup> Each SLU was attached to, but was independent of each command in the field that received Ultra.<sup>215</sup> The task of each officer in charge of the SLU was to "tactfully ensure" that no risks were taken.<sup>216</sup> At each SLU, an *Ultra Recipients List* was kept and was, in essence, the Ultra "bible". According to the security regulations, only those on this list were considered "indoctrinated" and could see or discuss Ultra

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<sup>212</sup> PRO HW3/85, *History of Hut 3 Appendix B Regulations for Maintaining the Security of Special Intelligence*.

<sup>213</sup> PRO, WO208/3575, Williams, "Use of Ultra"; Howe, *American Signals Intelligence*. Many Ultra or Y successes were attributable to other sources for security reasons. In his history of American Signals intelligence in the Second World War, George F. Howe writes: "Voice traffic among the German pilots could be heard well before Allied radar scopes disclosed their positions. The extent to which Sigint successes were masked from the beneficiaries by attribution to radar or other sources of intelligence was to leave largely unappreciated the actual role of Sigint teams"

<sup>214</sup> Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret*, P.21.; PRO HW3/165 *The History of the Special Liaison Units*. Making the information available to commands overseas ran a "grave risk that the new Ultra initiatives might either treat this as merely another form of Top Secret information, to be handled in accordance with the rather mechanical rules for such information, or use it with such enthusiasm that it would become evident to wider circles outside the picture - and thus in all probability eventually to the enemy - that a new form of intelligence had become available, which was having a profound influence on the conduct of operations. It was therefore necessary that the dissemination of this information abroad and measure of control over its use should remain in the hands of the Organization."

<sup>215</sup> PRO, HW3/165 *History of the Special Liaison Units*. The commander of the SLU had the responsibility for the complete security of the material from the time of its arrival until its actual delivery to recipients. The commander of the SLU was responsible to in all its phases to "C" Sir Stewart Menzies, the head of the British Secret Service.

<sup>216</sup> Winterbotham, *Ultra Secret*, P.21. The strict precautions concerning Ultra became more intense as the invasion of Normandy neared as Ralph Bennett writes: "The passage of time has almost erased the memory of one aspect of the anxiety which pervaded the months before D-Day: that Ultra might be lost just when it was most needed. for Ultra was by now far and away the chief source of intelligence, and the possibility that the invasion might be marred by the loss of it...was frightening to contemplate." Bennett, *Behind the Battle*, P.239.



information.<sup>217</sup>

As per the Hut 3 regulations for indoctrination into Ultra, the guiding principle for the distribution, dissemination and security of Ultra was on the time-honoured basis of "need to know."<sup>218</sup> Hut 3 made the distinction between distribution and dissemination along security lines. Only commanding officers and their staffs at the Army level and above were to be indoctrinated into Ultra and placed on a list of primary recipients from Hut 3. Recipients for dissemination of the Ultra information were, for example corps commanders and were fed this information from the primary recipients following the strict GC&CS security regulations.<sup>219</sup> The responsibility for indoctrinating the commanders and staffs and allotting the SLUs to various commands was given to Group Captain F.W. Winterbotham.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> PRO, HW3/165 *History of the Special Liaison Units*. The main regulations for the Use of Ultra were: a) No action could be taken on Ultra information, unless this could have been obtained from some other sources or adequate cover manufactured, e.g. by arranging a reconnaissance flight over some area, containing a target already disclosed by Ultra. b) No Ultra records could be kept at a lower formation than Army Group. c) A list of authorized recipients was available at each SLU and Ultra information could only be discussed with and by such persons. d) New readers could only be admitted if they held positions authorized by the Regulations to admission or if special permission had been granted by Home. e) All new readers had to be guaranteed by their commanders; they had to be briefed by the Senior SLU Officer or an officer of the rank of Brigadier (or equivalent) already in the picture; and they had to sign a declaration that they had read and understood the Regulations. f) Readers who left such positions had to sign a declaration that they realized that they were no longer entitled to see or discuss Ultra and that they would not divulge its existence. They were debarred from taking on any position which might involve their capture by the enemy; they were never to take part in operational flights. g) The use of the telephone was only permitted in the U.K. and even then a scrambler had to be used. Note: Occasionally it became vital in operations in France for this rule to be relaxed, but a scrambler had to be used and conversation camouflaged so as to give no indication of the source.

<sup>218</sup> PRO HW3/86 *The History of Intelligence in G.C.&C.S.: German and Italian War*; USAMHI *History of the Operations of Special Security Officers Attached to Field Commands 1943-1945: Regulations for Maintaining The Security of Special Intelligence*. All officers who were authorized to receive Ultra were initiated into the nature of the source and briefed regarding its security regulations. After reading these regulations the officers had to sign a form stating that they have done so and fully understand the penalties for infringement of the secrecy acts both during and after the war. This is still, fifty years after the fact, the reason that most Ultra indoctrinated personnel are still reluctant to speak in detail about their experiences.

<sup>219</sup> PRO HW3/165 *History of the Special Liaison Units*.

When Winterbotham arrived at Eighth Army headquarters in Egypt in August 1942, he received the distinct impression from Montgomery that he was not at all welcome.<sup>221</sup> Fortunately for Winterbotham, Brig. E.T. Williams (Montgomery's Chief Intelligence Officer at Eighth Army) was a great exponent of Ultra and the Y services.<sup>222</sup> Williams "devoured as much as he could" about Ultra, and Winterbotham felt comfortable that its fruits would reach Montgomery in "some form."<sup>223</sup>

The arrival of Winterbotham in the desert in August 1942 coincided with the arrival of Montgomery and the blossoming of Ultra and Y Service as an intelligence source.<sup>224</sup> Since Montgomery considered confidence and

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<sup>220</sup> Winterbotham, Ultra Secret. P. 3. "It was interesting and sometimes frustrating" Winterbotham wrote "to find the different attitudes the varying personalities adopted towards the information - those with rigid ideas on orthodox methods of fighting an enemy seemed to think it was not quite right to know what he was going to do; those, on the other hand, with more flexible minds were ready to take every advantage the information offered." Winterbotham also felt that some commanders knew the political ramifications as Ultra was also sent to the Chiefs of Staff, the principal ministers and the Prime minister at home. This consideration, Winterbotham reasoned, caused some commanders to operate with undue caution while others, would throw caution to the wind and "have a go."

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. P. 74. Winterbotham suspected that Montgomery was not too receptive of Ultra at first because of its relations to the Chiefs of Staff and Churchill.. In fact, Winterbotham reports that Sir Stewart Menzies briefed Montgomery on Ultra before he went to the desert and turned down Montgomery's insistence that he be the only one to have this source. As a result of the judgment, Montgomery seemed skeptical of Ultra upon Winterbotham's arrival in the desert and "never appeared to recognize the Ultra source as such."

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.; Sir Tom Normanton, "Diary of Sir Tom Normanton". (private). I must thank Sir Tom for letting me read the part of his unfinished memoirs concerning his Mission to North Africa April 18- June 5 1943. Normanton who was in Sigint from 1937-1946, was sent by 21 Army Group to meet with and study "Y" at British First and Eight Armies. When Montgomery took over 21 Army Group Normanton stayed on as GSO II I(S) until the end of the war.

<sup>223</sup> Winterbotham, Ultra Secret. P. 74.

<sup>224</sup> Clayton, Forearmed P.98 According to Howe, American Signal Intelligence it was in May 1942 where Sigint first made its mark on commanders: "Sigint provided an interpretation of the enemy's dispositions and probable intentions. It was based on the correlation of readable messages in low and medium-grade systems with compromises of enemy code names, with DF fixes, reconstruction of enemy nets, and data gleaned from interrogating prisoners of war. The Eighth Army's operations officer, like most British commanders then, was inclined to discount Army sigint unless it took the form of a readable message text disclosing significant information. Compared with Sigint from deductions, he preferred to trust inferences derived from other forms of

morale paramount for victory in the context of his tactical doctrine, he capitalized on the information that Ultra provided to "predict" the German attack at Alam Halfa.<sup>225</sup> After two days of waiting, the attack unfolded according to Montgomery's "premonition" and at once, the morale of the Eighth Army and his own reputation as a commander, were solidified.<sup>226</sup> By the time he took command of 21 Army Group, he had over a year and a half of combat experience with Ultra's yield and was sold on it as a battle winner.<sup>227</sup> His lieutenants in 21 Army group on the other hand, were just getting their feet wet.

As a run-up to the invasion of Europe, Winterbotham was charged with the indoctrination of all senior commanders in SHAEF down to the Army level.<sup>228</sup> Winterbotham met with Gen. Sir Miles Dempsey, the

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intelligence. After the attack came, and the interpretations by the Sigint staff had been wholly confirmed while that from other intelligence was shown to have been incorrect, the validity of Sigint was much more readily accepted than before....By October 1942, the British Eighth Army was receiving strong field Sigint (Y) support as well as SI (Ultra)."

<sup>225</sup> Stephen. A. Hart. "Field Marshal Montgomery: 21 Army Group and North-West Europe 1944-45". Phd Dissertation. King's College London 1995.

<sup>226</sup> PRO, WO208/3575. Williams, "Use of Ultra": Sir Edgar Williams, interview by Carlo D'Este, July 28 1981. In the wake of Alam Halfa, Montgomery attempted to jealously guard the source for himself and this evidently was not lost on his chief intelligence officer. Williams told Carlo D'Este in his interview for *Decision in Normandy* that "Montgomery took all the credit for himself, the inspiration was not in fact self-induced but very afforded by Hut 3 (Bletchley Park)." Since the existence of signals intelligence, Ultra and Hut 3 could not be revealed until 30 years after the fact, Williams felt it convenient for "Monty to grab the praise: partly because he was determined to grab it; partly because it effected the morale of the soldiers and partly because it provided a cover." All three reasons, according to Williams, were reasons for "dishing out the credit one-sidedly."

<sup>227</sup> Deutch, Harold. C. "Commanding Generals and the Use of Intelligence" in Intelligence and National Security 3 No.3, 1988. PRO HW 3/126, Hut 3: Directive No 590 January 25 1944. As one of his first acts as Army Group commander Montgomery was to call Bletchley to request, to their dismay, the Ultra service for his headquarters. This as recorded in Hut 3 directives, did not sit well with Bletchley. "Arrangements were in hand for a VL service to all commands concerned in the Western Front Offensive by a target date which we shall still comfortably achieve, when some of our old customers were appointed to certain of the Commands. They, "Monty" in particular, demanded an immediate service of the information "on which we plan our battles". Probably they did not realize that whereas they had been accustomed to a 90% Ultra diet for strategic planning in the Mediterranean, they would have to get used to no more than a very slight Ultra seasoning in the new theatre". In the end the demand was agreed to.

Commander of Second British Army, in his London flat and discussed Ultra informally over Scotch and Sodas. According to Winterbotham, Dempsey was "a newcomer to the source", and was filled in on all facets of the service and what he might expect once the SLU became operational at his headquarters.<sup>229</sup> Dempsey's first response was "to laugh outright at the thought of reading Hitler's signals," but later warmed to the prospect.<sup>230</sup> At the end of the discussion, Winterbotham "felt sure that he would use Ultra to the full and be meticulously careful of this precious source."<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> In the interests of this study only the use of Ultra at 21 Army Group, Second British Army, First Canadian Army and 2nd Canadian Corps' will be discussed. Bradley's First American Army played no direct role in the intelligence gathering before SPRING and therefore is omitted from this survey.

<sup>229</sup> PRO, HW3/165 *History of the Special Liaison Units*; PRO, HW11/8 *Air and Military History VIII: The Western Front 1944-1945 Part I*; PRO HW 3/126. Hut 3: Directives Nos. 648 2 April 1944, 668 6 May 1944, 723 6 June 1944, 731 7 June 1944, 738 9 June 1944, and 747 12 June 1944. The prefix or address for the SLU that served to 2nd Army and 83 Group headquarters was ON. This SLU was set up on April 2nd 1944 to give Dempsey's Intelligence staff practice in handling Ultra material. ONA (A for advanced) was set up in Normandy on the evening of the 6th, to be followed 3 days later by the rest of ON which remained in Portsmouth on partial service. At the time of the arrival of the rest of ON to the continent, ONA would shut down operations and the Second Army service would be carried by ON. Three days after the invasion things did not go according to plan and ON was given full service in Portsmouth once again while ONA continued its work in the beachhead. Eventually on the 11th ON joined ONA in Normandy. In May 1944 the SLU for 21 Army Group designated "AG" was moved from St. Paul's school in London to Portsmouth. Montgomery's tactical headquarters in Normandy was served by "ONA" and then "ON" until "AGA" (21 Army Group advanced) reached the beachhead in early July. As mentioned above, the German battle doctrine emphasizes a combined arms approach with intense cooperation between the Luftwaffe and ground units with particular emphasis placed on the German armoured formations. Each Wehrmacht and SS unit at division level and above had a Luftwaffe liaison officer or "Flivo" attached to keep the local air command up to date concerning the units strength, location and intentions. Since the Luftwaffe keys were proving easier to break than their Wehrmacht counterparts, the Flivo system provided a "back door" for Bletchley (and eventually the Allied field commands) into the units activities. Hinsley Sir Harry British Intelligence in the Second World War (abridged edition) 1993 Flivo stood for Fliegerverbindungs-offiziere.

<sup>230</sup> Winterbotham, Ultra Secret. P. 124.

<sup>231</sup> Winterbotham, Ultra Secret. PP. 138, 142; PRO, HW3/85 *History of Hut 3*; Roy, 1944 P. 132. PRO, HW3/165 *History of the Special Liaison Units*. Dempsey was so impressed with Ultra that he would select the Ultra signals personally when the SLU officer arrived at his headquarters with them. In early July, Winterbotham visited Dempsey in Normandy to see how the service was functioning. At Dempsey's headquarters he was greeted with a warm welcome and told by Dempsey that he was "completely sold on Ultra" and had "no idea, when the show started, that he would be kept so completely in the picture about the Germans." Upon arrival at Montgomery's

Approximately one month before the invasion, Winterbotham was summoned to First Canadian Army Headquarters, located at Lord Beaverbrook's house near Leatherhead, to brief its commander, Gen. H.D.G. Crerar on Ultra. At the time of this meeting, Crerar requested that due to ill health, Winterbotham should brief his proposed successor as Army commander, Guy Simonds. This, according to Winterbotham, he did, and Simonds was to prove in his estimation not "only an outstanding commander, but an enthusiastic Ultra customer." There was "no doubt" in the mind of Brig N.E.H. Rodger (Chief of Staff at 2nd Canadian Corps) that "Simonds would have found it a highly useful source."<sup>232</sup>

Since its publication in 1974, Winterbotham's *Ultra Secret* has been criticized by the historical community for his reliance on memory without corroborating evidence.<sup>233</sup> The case concerning the indoctrination of Guy Simonds to Ultra is no different. In 1993, Dominick Graham included a footnote in his biography of

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headquarters he received the same icy reception from Montgomery that greeted him in the desert two years before. Brigadier Williams, on the other hand, was "as enthusiastic as ever" about Ultra. To Winterbotham, this should have been the proper greeting afforded him upon arrival, for in his estimation, Bletchley "had, after all, given him very full information about the opposition and also the main enemy intentions ever since D-Day, and now the numbers and strengths of the panzer units, even if unpleasant reading, were pretty accurate accounting." Winterbotham's claims that he made this trip just over three weeks after D-Day which would date the trip around June 29. However he mentions the disparity of treatment of the SLU's at 2nd Army and 21 Army Group which seems impossible at first glance because Montgomery was being served by Dempsey's SLU's on June 29. One of the first visits Winterbotham made was his trip to Bradley's headquarters at First American Army, where Bradley confided that he never expected to get "such concise information about my opponents." in addition to discussing the Ultra service they also discussed the replacement of Field Marshal Gerd Von Rundstedt with Field Marshal Gunther Von Kluge. This removal had happened on July 2nd and this discussion must have taken place between July 3 and July 6, by which time Montgomery's own SLU was up and operating. When Winterbotham visited Montgomery's tactical headquarters earlier on the same trip, he found that Montgomery had banished the SLU to a quarry half a mile away with the excuse that the enemy could locate the headquarters by the transmissions of the SLU equipment. In contrast, when Winterbotham reached Dempsey's HQ he was sure to note that the SLU was only "some fifty yards away." Winterbotham felt that Montgomery's banishment of the SLU to the quarry was because by this time, early July he distrusted anyone in an RAF uniform. He was also still quite sensitive that the Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister, who according to the History of hut 3, "made not infrequent use" of their services, would looking over his shoulder and breathing down his neck.

<sup>232</sup> N.E.H. Rodger to the author, January 2 1996.

<sup>233</sup> Winterbotham's claims, at least concerning the section on Normandy and the SLU's seem for the most part to be borne out with the release of the files of G.C.&C.S. in 1995.

Simonds, to the effect that he could not confirm, or for that matter dispel, the rumours that Simonds was indeed indoctrinated. As a result of the recent releases of GC&CS material into the public domain, it can now be confirmed that Simonds was Ultra indoctrinated. In September 1944, when Simonds became acting Army commander due to Crerar's illness, he was put on the *Ultra Recipients List* where he remained until the end of the war. The indoctrination of a corps commander into Ultra upon his promotion to acting Army commander was not unusual, and, in this circumstance, obviously quite necessary, but to stay on that list, even after returning to his corps, certainly was unusual. But as Bill Williams later pointed out, Guy Simonds "was an unusual one."<sup>234</sup> For the interests of this investigation, Simonds's indoctrination begs the question: Was he "in the know" officially or otherwise, for the campaign in Normandy?

In his book, Winterbotham states that he informed Simonds at the same time that he informed Crerar of Ultra - in May 1944. On the *Ultra Recipients List* issued by Hut 3 at Bletchley in March 1944, not one member of the Canadian Army was listed. By the same time the following year, Crerar and his general staff are all listed, along with Simonds.<sup>235</sup> Since First Canadian Army started to receive the Ultra service via its SLU in May at Portsmouth, and then on the continent in early June, Crerar would definitely have been briefed before this service was activated. So Winterbotham's claim that he indoctrinated members of First Canadian Army between the end of March and the beginning of the invasion are valid. In fact, Brig. Rodger, although not indoctrinated himself,

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<sup>234</sup> Sir Edgar Williams to the author, April 14, 1995.

<sup>235</sup> PRO HW3/126 *Hut 3 Watch: Ultra Recipients List* March 7 1944, March 23 1945. These seem to be the only extensive official lists in existence and were produced annually. Any additions or subtractions from the list would have been reported to Hut 3 via the SCU/SLU link. Although there is no record of Crerar or Simonds being added to the list, there is a record of the opening of SLU operations at First Canadian Army Headquarters on June 10 1944 or for that matter any mention of Simonds being added officially to the list either before or during Normandy or at the time of his temporary command of First Canadian Army. The author also examined Winterbotham's papers in the Imperial War Museum and failed to locate any list what so ever.

agreed that it was possible that Simonds was "in the know" prior to D-Day.<sup>236</sup> It is also in May that Crerar engages in correspondence with Montgomery concerning possible replacements for him as Army commander should he fall victim to enemy action or become ill. At the top of the list was Simonds' name.<sup>237</sup>

Even if Simonds was not put onto the *Ultra Recipients List* by the time he took 2nd Canadian Corps into Normandy on July 11 1944, the evidence suggests that he would certainly have had what Williams refers to as a "suspicion that Army had something up its sleeve."<sup>238</sup> As a rule, corps commanders were not indoctrinated because of their relative proximity to the front and possible capture. Some exceptions were made if the corps was operating independently of an army but, in most cases, if Ultra information was to be used by a corps staff, it came in packaged form from army level by way of a sidelined passage in the daily intelligence summary which, under no circumstances was to be revealed to lower commands.<sup>239</sup> One of the problems with this system was that intelligence staffs at corps were not likely to believe for long that intelligence at the army level had, in Williams's estimation "the habit of being right...due to the intellectual capabilities of the officers on the Army staff."<sup>240</sup> Indeed, it was fully recognized by the corps staffs and corps commanders that Army had "something up its sleeve."<sup>241</sup>

To circumvent the possibility of corps commanders bypassing their own intelligence staffs to get better information from Army intelligence, two alternatives were available. The first alternative was to indoctrinate the

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<sup>236</sup> N.E.H. Rodger to the author, January 2, 1996.

<sup>237</sup> On the list with Simonds was Lt.Gen. E.L.M. "Tommy" Burns the commander of 1st Canadian Corps in Italy. Montgomery, and for that matter, Crerar, both preferred Simonds to Burns as commander. See The Crerar Correspondence for further.

<sup>238</sup> PRO WO208/3575, Williams, "Use of Ultra".

<sup>239</sup> ]Professor Sir Harry Hinsley interview by author, Cambridge, November 12, 1995.

<sup>240</sup> PRO WO208/3575 Williams, "Use of Ultra".

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

entire corps level intelligence staff, which, due to the strict security precautions, was for the most part forbidden, while the second was to have the intelligence staff simply place their trust in the superior "element in the glandular make-up" of the Army intelligence officers.<sup>242</sup> In practice, Williams revealed that 21 Army Group "hedged" between the two. The army staff would simply admit that they did have something up their sleeve, but would not reveal what it was exactly. Williams admits that "it was a difficult game to play...it depended on the confidence of the GSO II (I) at Corps and upon rigid discipline in controlling one's wish to be helpful with the very pressing realization that to be too helpful on one occasion might mean that one would never be able to be so helpful again."<sup>243</sup> Williams felt that it was better to explain the nature of Ultra than to pretend that the information came from a less convincing source such as an agent. "Agent reports," Williams wrote, "tended to become gossip and were highly unconvincing." To explain the nature of Ultra would "slam a door on the approach to the problem."<sup>244</sup>

A good example of this "hedging" process or "door slamming", occurred when Maj.Gen. George Kitching (who later went on to command the 4th Canadian Armoured Division in Normandy) was Simonds's Chief of Staff at 1st Canadian Division in Italy in early October 1943:

"General Dempsey, who commanded the 13th Corps of which we were a part, came to our division headquarters. He had hoped to see Brigadier Vokes, but the latter was forward with one of the brigades, so instead he gave me a verbal message which he asked me to pass on to Vokes when he returned. The message was that Termoli had been captured by commandos (and that the) 78th British Division was moving forward to reinforce them and he ordered our Three Rivers Regiment to join the 78th Division. The reason for this urgent reinforcement, he said was that 8th Army intelligence had reported that 16th Panzer Division was on the move to regain Termoli. General Dempsey hastened to add that he thought the knowledge of the German moves was the result of air reconnaissance reports. I remember thinking at the time the air reconnaissance must have taken off very early, but not knowing any of the mysteries of

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.



higher intelligence, I accepted his surmise....I am sure that the information of the German move must have come from Ultra because the loss of Termoli quickly reached the ears of Hitler himself who personally ordered its recapture. Whether General Dempsey, as a corps commander, would have any knowledge of ULTRA is doubtful as the existence of that code-breaking apparatus was known to very few, and certainly it would not be known to commanders who might fall into the hands of the enemy."<sup>245</sup>

The importance of this passage is not so much Kitching's allusion that Dempsey, or for that matter other corps commanders, were privy to that source of the information, but rather that information of that magnitude was indeed reaching the appropriate level of command and being ruled important enough for immediate and appropriate action to be taken.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Kitching, Mud and Green Fields PP. 160-161. The author traced Kitching's claims of the 16th panzer moving towards Termoli in the First week of October 1943. This, according to the files in PRO class HW1/2078 substantiate that Ultra was the original source from which Dempsey received his information. The only other corps commander who would have been indoctrinated was Gen. Sir Neil Ritchie who commanded the Eighth Army in the desert for a brief time before Montgomery assumed command in August 1942.

<sup>246</sup> Clayton, Forearmed P.126, Kitching, Mud Green Fields P.161. Fourteen months after this meeting with Dempsey, Kitching, now Chief of Staff to Lt-Gen. Charles Foulkes at 1st Canadian Corps Headquarters in Italy, was given a revealing answer to his query about the source to a revealing message. Kitching queried Brigadier Harry Floyd, the GSO I Int at Eighth Army Headquarters about the source of a report that warned of the approach of two German divisions to his front. Floyd informed Kitching that the two German divisions had made their way through the alpine tunnels and would soon turn up at the front. While inquiring as to the veracity of the report, which was more detailed than usual, Floyd warned that this information was only for the ears of Kitching and Foulkes and then took Kitching into his confidence. "George, I'll let you into a secret which you must not pass to anyone except your commander. When 8th Army overran Rommel at Alamein they captured, intact, a vehicle in which were special wireless sets and all the codes of the German High Command. There were two operators in it, one of whom tried to destroy the ciphering system. He was shot dead on the spot' the other German put his hands up and had been with us ever since. We never originate messages because Rommel reported to his superiors that the vehicle had been destroyed together with all codes. However, we listen and can decipher all messages to and from Kesselring, the German Commander in Chief, and that's why we know about the arrival of the two divisions." Despite whether the details of the story, or the story itself were true, Floyd, who as Chief of Staff and indoctrinated into Ultra, felt that this revealing form of packaging would provide Kitching with the confidence to put this information to good use. As with the other claim by Kitching the author has checked the files from the PRO Class HW1/3367A and finds that on December 9 1944 Ultra was reporting the arrival three days earlier of the 710 Division to Italy from Norway. As for Brigadier Floyd's "cover story" it seems to be closer to the truth than Kitching imagined. In his History of the British Intelligence Corps Anthony Clayton makes mention that the breaking of the German enigma keys from Army to Corps and Corps to Divisions was due to "the location, by Y service, of Rommel's intelligence Unit at Tel el Eisa, a successful raid by an Australian battalion killed the units's

Another unofficial way in which corps commanders could get their hands on Ultra information was, by personal contact with the Army commander, or his headquarters, and the SLU. If the the Corps and Army headquarters were in close proximity to each other, corps commanders could either view or be briefed on Ultra and other high-level intelligence developments.<sup>247</sup> In the five days leading up to Spring, Simonds visited Dempsey's headquarters on a daily basis. It probably does not seem out of the ordinary for a new corps commander to be taken by the hand by his Army commander on the verge of his first battle, but what does seem out the ordinary is that, with the existence of line and wireless communication from 2nd Canadian Corps headquarters to Second British Army, Simonds insisted on daily personal visits to Dempsey headquarters. Since the security regulations for Ultra forbade the passing of Ultra to corps commanders, a special wireless link was not set up, and the standard Y Service landline from corps to army could not be used. The only way to get information from Ultra was in person.<sup>248</sup> Each of Simonds's visits, recorded for posterity by his ADC Marshal Stearns, usually lasted 30 minutes and took place in the evening. Unlike other descriptions of meetings that shed some light on the matters discussed, each visit to Dempsey was simply noted but contained no relevant detail. Most revealing, however, was a conversation on July 20 between Simonds and Dempsey concerning the arrival of the 7th and Guards Armoured Division to 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps' command. A conversation concerning the movement of two armoured divisions would certainly be fruit for the German Y Service, and was obviously discussed over a secure line. Yet, just two

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commander and captured a valuable records. These revealed lapses in British signals security which were put right and more valuable still, documents which exposed one of the main sources of German intelligence, their interception of the daily situation report sent to Washington by the American Military Attaches in Cairo."

<sup>247</sup> Professor Sir Harry Hinsley interview by author, Cambridge, November 12, 1995.

<sup>248</sup> PRO, WO208/3575, Williams, "Use of Ultra". Williams noted that it was forbidden to discuss Ultra on the telephone overseas. "This rule" Williams states was eventually "daily and hourly disobeyed." If every attempt was made in intelligence summaries to cut down on "I jargon", every attempt was made in the telephone conversation to be cryptic. Breaking the rules was something that had to be done because the rules, according to Williams were "unworkable." They were "like most rules about security of Ultra, drawn up so far as one could see without consultation with the consumer."

hours after that conversation with Dempsey, Simonds felt it necessary to make a personal visit to Dempsey's headquarters for some undisclosed reason.<sup>249</sup> Most revealing however, was Simonds actions during the planning to Operation Totalize which followed Spring on August 8. Two days before Totalize, Simonds sent a letter to both Crerar and Lt. Gen. John Crocker (1<sup>st</sup> British Corps) reporting his changes to Totalize as a result of the relief of 1 and 12 SS Panzer Divisions by the 89 and 272 Infantry divisions respectively. Although in the letter he stated that this information came from "various sources," in reality it came directly from Ultra and no other intelligence source.<sup>250</sup> Even if Simonds was not privy to Ultra per se, it would be safe to say that he was certainly no stranger to its yield or to that of its lesser known, but equally revealing cousin - the Y Service.

### The Y Service:

The history of Y Intelligence in the early part of the war was one of trial and error. As a result of its nascent nature, the service suffered in the first three years of the war from a lack of existing precedents. As a result of much infighting and squabbling between the British Intelligence Corps and the Royal Signal Corps, over the

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<sup>249</sup> NAC, RG24 10,798, GOC's Activities July 16-August 7 1944. The only interruption to these private meetings occurred on July 22 when Simonds toured Caen with Churchill, Montgomery and Dempsey, only to return to Second British Army for tea with Churchill, Montgomery, Dempsey and the other corps commanders in Second British Army. It is now known from various interviews with Bill Williams, that Churchill had arrived in Normandy with the "raw" or "naked" Ultra in a strong box and proceeded to share information concerning the assassination attempt against Hitler with Montgomery and Williams on at least one occasion in Montgomery's caravan. It is hard to imagine that, in the privacy of a staff car, with discussions of Simonds's impending operation in the air, that Ultra or information from Ultra, did not emerge in some form at a time as crucial and critical as this. Hamilton, Master of the Battlefield; Lewin, Ultra Goes to War; Sir Edgar Williams, interview by Carlo D'Este 1981.

<sup>250</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.10.634, Letter, Simonds to Crerar, 6 August 1944. The similarity between the information which Simonds gave and the Ultra decrypts is remarkable. On August 6, Simonds reported that in the last 24 hours "272 Infantry division had side-stepped south-westwards to take over the front previously held by 12 SS Panzer division" while the 12 SS Panzer had "stepped back to the area of Valmeray." As for the 1SS Panzer Division, Simonds reported that the 89 Infantry division had relieved the 1 SS Panzer which in turn had "stepped back to the Bretteville-sur-Laize-St.Sylvain position." On August 5 a series of Ultra decrypts provided this information. Just after midnight Ultra decrypt XL 4743 reported that the "272 Division took over sector from left neighbor" while at 1040 hours Decrypt XL4795 reported that the 1SS Panzer Divisions began to pull out during the night. Near midnight, another decrypt (XL4873) reported that 1SS Panzer Division would "be relieved stage by stage by 89 infantry division and would assemble in area north of Falaise." Other decrypts which confirm this

control of Special Wireless Sections in the field, a clear statement of policy only emerged from the War Office in December 1942.<sup>251</sup> This policy, found to be satisfactory by the intelligence staff at First Canadian Army, was adopted and instituted later that same year.<sup>252</sup> In the spring and early summer of 1943, both Simonds and future 2nd Canadian Division commander Charles Foulkes wrote intelligence directives for the use of wireless intelligence at the corps and army levels, respectively.<sup>253</sup>

Before leaving on a liaison visit to Montgomery's headquarters in North Africa, Simonds prepared a directive on the use of Type B wireless at the corps level.<sup>254</sup> In the draft copy he penned while the BGS at First

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information are: XL4803, XL4833, XL4842, XL4843, XL4864. PRO, DEFE3/113.

<sup>251</sup> PRO, WO208/5024, The Reorganization of Y 1943; PRO, WO208/5132 Review of Military Y Organization at Home and Abroad and Division of Responsibilities between M.I. Directorate, GSI(S) Staffs, Signals and G.C.&C.S.. PR and "Notes on Wireless Interception (Y) Organization in the Field September 8 1942. The War Office Department responsible for Signals intelligence was MI8. For more on the inter-arm struggle for the control of the Wireless Sections.

<sup>252</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12.342 First Canadian Army, Intelligence Directive No 3: Instruction on the Training, Control and Employment of Wireless Interception (Y) Organization in The Field April 1943. In his critique, appended to the directive, Lt. J.K. Starnes (MIx) at CMHQ noted that the problems that the British were having concerning command and control of the Y units was also being experienced by the Canadian Counterparts as a result of the strict adherence to the contradictory directives on Y intelligence from the War Office in the early part of the War. As a result of experiences in North Africa, War Office introduced new guidelines in December 1942, and Starnes recommended that Canadian policy be along similar lines. Starnes recommendations were accepted by Foulkes and incorporated into the final version of the instructions for Wireless intelligence which became Intelligence directive No 4 issued on June 10 1943, superseding No 3 from April.

<sup>253</sup> Major C.D. Kingsmill to Lt-Col. P.E.R. Wright January 2 1945. NAC, RG24 Vol.10,708. Foulkes' use of intelligence was summed up by the senior Canadian Intelligence Corps officer Major C.D. Kingsmill in January 1945 after Foulkes had taken command of the 1st Canadian Corps in Italy. Kingsmill wrote: "We are very happy about our corps commander. He has the right outlook on Intelligence and is the first General I have had the plans n operation then does not sit back and watch how it goes. General Foulkes keeps his finger of the pulse all the time, and continually directs the battle...."

<sup>254</sup> Grant, "Second World War Canadian Army Signal Intelligence Experiences of Major R.S. Grant" in Canadian forces Communications and Electronics Newsletter No. 446 1986. The Special Wireless Sections was a unique command consisting of two components. The first was the signals component, Special Wireless Section Type A (Army) or type B (Corps) manned by Personnel of the Royal Signals Corps (Royal Canadian Signals) who were responsible for the administration and the technical facilities of the unit. The intelligence component, Special Wireless Intelligence Type A or Type B, consisted of personnel from the Intelligence Corps (Canadian Intelligence Corps) who directs the intelligence efforts of the combined unit known as the Special Wireless section. As Major R.S. Grant, OC of 2nd Canadian Special Wireless Section, wrote "These two components functioned as one unit with the Senior Signals Officer being the nominal commander and administrative Officer, as well as running the signals side from a technical and unit movement point of view." The officer responsible for the Intelligence section controlled and assigned the frequency coverage of the various radios and the Direction Finding(DF) tasks. The other intelligence personnel did the analysis and compilation of signals intelligence and at Major Grants level

Canadian Army Headquarters, Simonds wrote that "the essential role" of the Type B section was to "serve the general staff intelligence." Its primary role was to intercept "enemy wireless communications" and provide "any information so obtained with any resulting deductions" to corps intelligence "without delay."<sup>255</sup> For this, Simonds stressed that the "operational activities must be directed and controlled" by corps intelligence, who will issue the wireless section its operational orders "from an intelligence point of view," firmly reflecting the requirements and interest of the corps commanders and his general staff.<sup>256</sup>

Foulkes's brief dealt primarily with Type A Wireless Intelligence at First Canadian Army and addressed some aspects of the corps level operations as well. At the army level, the wireless sections engaged in general interception intended to provide the general staff at First Canadian Army and other Y units with intelligence about enemy operations. This was combined with direction and position finding, and information from other Y units in 21 Army Group, in an effort to produce intelligence of direct interest at Army headquarters. The corps Y units, on the other hand, were primarily devoted, in terms of interception, to material that could be dealt with on the spot. This, combined with the results of direction finding (which in mobile warfare was often over-estimated but retained a high degree of reliability in a static situation), provided information of direct interest to the corps. Unlike at corps headquarters where the Type B units dealt strictly with short-range interception and direction finding, the Army level Type A Y units intercepted "strategical material" for research purposes (i.e., Enigma intercepts or new ciphers to be worked on at Bletchley).<sup>257</sup>

In his concluding remarks, Foulkes wrote that the "extent to which the Y service would be useful to the commander (was) in direct proportion to the amount of information, both technical and tactical, which (was) supplied to the unit". Cooperation with higher and neighbouring headquarters was essential for the smooth functioning of the intelligence source." The information produced by Y units was, he cautioned, "often vital and

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passed it to the intelligence staff at 2nd Canadian Corps.

<sup>255</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342 Brig. G.G. Simonds, Draft copy of First Canadian Army Intelligence Directive No.3: Instruction on the Training and Employment of W.I. and S.W. Sections Type B. 3 April 1943.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342 Brig. Charles Foulkes, First Canadian Army Intelligence Directive No 4: "Instruction On The Training, Control and Employment of Wireless Interception (Y) Organization in the Field" 10 June 1943.

urgent but (was) only part of the wider picture, the details of which usually have to be filled in from some other sources of intelligence." Consequently, for the wireless sections to accomplish their task of providing intelligence, the Y unit itself must be kept in the operational picture at all times, and therefore constantly in touch with the commander's intentions.<sup>258</sup>

In his postwar report, Simonds's GSO 2 Intelligence, Maj. William Broughall, reflected that "wireless intercept was regarded as a highly specialized branch of intelligence and (could) be discussed here only from the point of view of the consumer of its products."<sup>259</sup> So important was this source of intelligence to Simonds that a "direct line was maintained between the Intelligence Office and the Section at all times."<sup>260</sup> The 2nd Canadian Special Wireless Section Type B was attached to the corps throughout the whole campaign and, "whenever there was enemy wireless traffic to intercept, it provided the commander with extremely valuable intelligence".<sup>261</sup> Although Broughall's summation points to the importance of the source to commanders and in this case to Simonds in particular, it did not reflect accurately what in reality was a qualified success.

After a successful run in the flat and arid climate of the North African Desert, the Y Service found the move to the European continent difficult. As a result, the service was noticeably absent from the battle for Sicily as Ultra and air photographs came to the forefront as sources. "Some time was to pass," wrote Anthony Clayton, "before its primacy as an agency was reasserted."<sup>262</sup> Even after the invasion of Normandy, the allied commanders still relied on Ultra and air photography as the Y Service only came into its own in late July.<sup>263</sup> The main difficulty was the newly tightened security measures developed by the German signals service after the fall of Tunisia and

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> DHist. Maj. W.H. Broughall, "Intelligence at HQ 2 Canadian Corps" in First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report Vol. 1. Part I Operational Intelligence Section 3: Intelligence at a Corps H.Q."

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Clayton. Forearmed. P.126

<sup>263</sup> Ibid. P.147.

the increased use of landlines. However, in Normandy this difficulty was offset by the continual and necessary use of wireless by the mobile panzer formations.<sup>264</sup>

In October 1944, Lt.Col. B.E. Wallace of the signals intelligence staff at 21 Army Group wrote that German low-grade wireless activity had been "exceedingly disappointing."<sup>265</sup> Unlike the experience in North Africa, the contribution of Y to the Normandy campaign concerned for the most part enemy dispositions and order of battle information produced by direction finding, but not "the minute to minute operational picture that was enjoyed in Africa."<sup>266</sup> A fundamental shift had occurred as the main tool of Y shifted from intercept to an increasing dependence on direction finding and traffic analysis. Maj. A.H. MacKenzie, the head of signals intelligence at First Canadian Army Headquarters, reported that, compared with the experiences of North Africa,

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<sup>264</sup> Lt.Col. P.E.R. Wright to Major C.D. Kingsmill, 18 November 1944. NAC, RG24 Vol.12,344. In November 1944 with the front now congealed at the German border there were calls for the disbandment and the redistribution of the Type B sections. In response to a letter from the senior Canadian Intelligence Officer in Italy, Major C.D. Kingsmill, Lt-Col. P.E.R. Wright had to defend the use of wireless at the Corps level in North-West Europe. "At the start" Wright parleyed "we got some fairly good results from Y — not as extensive as yours but of the same character and its DF activity was of great practical value...It was not then as it is now — no operational traffic. There was some traffic and it was caught by the sec(tion)s. Then there as a fundamental change. The armies we were fighting were broken in the f(iel)d. The result of this was that they lost quantities of sig(nals) eq(ui)p(men)t and numbers of trained signaler and other personnel. We have continued to question the prisoners on their use of wireless and no case have we found any report of any extensive use of wireless. On the other hand we have had prisoner after prisoner who has stated they are not using it and not using VHF(Very High Frequency). In Normandy they had to use it because they had panzer formations. moving from place to place and did not have the line resources available to them here."

<sup>265</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,677. Notes on the Present Sig Int Situation with Special Reference to Corps Sig Int Units, 26 Oct 1944. The author did not sign his name to the report but did list the author as a Lt.Col. GS in I(s) at 21AG. Wallace was the only Lt-Col in I(s) at Montgomery's headquarters, and therefore must have been him. The reason for the report was in reality a bid to have the corps level Type B Y Units stricken from the establishment, or have their resources restricted and reduced. This seemed to stem from the reduced intercept traffic at the Corps level and showed no faith in the DF and traffic analysis successes.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*; Grant, "Second World War Canadian Army Signal Intelligence Experiences of Major R.S. Grant". In fact the only reliable low level intercept success came during the Normandy campaign when Three Letter code of the 21st Panzer Divisions was intercepted. The reconnaissance battalion was providing, as it had in the desert, the German version of the Allied Phantom network - passing operational information directly to Rommel bypassing the conventional signals setup. According to Major Grant "The two years we spent in England were invaluable in preparing us for field operations. We were working against the 7th and 15th German Armies across the English Channel. We worked against them every day of the week for two years and got to know them like the backs of our hands. When we went to the West India Dock in London to go on the landing ship and land in Normandy, it was just a case of closing down the sets and reopening them in France with all of our favorite customers." On of the favprite customers was the 21st Panzer Reconnaissance Regiment which Grant recorded that his unit could "identify the unit immediately and read the code (three letter)... We felt we were clearing the German messages to

"intelligence producing traffic (had) been disappointingly low."<sup>267</sup> This, "to some extent, (had) been offset by the predominant role of D(irection F(inding), the findings of Traffic analysis, and the quality and quantity of captured documents."<sup>268</sup> The resultant emphasis on direction finding (DF) called for technical changes to the units in the field, which restricted the use of direction finding until the last weeks of July.<sup>269</sup>

Although the experience of the Second British Army in Normandy had shown that DF had indeed become the main source of Y Intelligence, the difference in the nature of intelligence produced caused intelligence staffs and commanders to treat this information gingerly with the consequent forfeit of the crucial element of speed. Due to the relatively unknown nature of the source that they found themselves dependent upon, the signals intelligence staff would compile DF results from all sources for use by the operational intelligence staff, where, as a general rule, "every effort was made" to confirm any "startling or "scoop type" from other sources before this intelligence could be utilized. Adding to the delay imposed by this ad hoc level of security, were the normal delays inherent in the standard security system.<sup>270</sup>

One month before D-Day, Bill Williams issued a memoranda on the use of Y Intelligence in 21st Army Group. Some doubts had been expressed by staff officers from units under the command of 21 Army Group concerning the correct method of handling and disseminating Y Intelligence to units below Corps level. The fundamental problem with the security measures according to Williams, "was to conceal the existence of Y information of all sorts, whilst allowing it to have its full weight in the minds of those commanders who have to act on it."<sup>271</sup> Any action based on Y information must be carefully considered. Under no circumstances were the Germans to conclude from "the proposed action or course of action that certain information was available to the commander, and that this information could only have been obtained from Y." If this was the case confronting an

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the 2nd Canadian Corps Headquarters faster than the Germans were to Rommel."

<sup>267</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10.677. Maj. A.H. MacKenzie. "Sig Int Report First Canadian Army, Fall 1944." (London:1944)

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Clayton, Forearmed. P.147

<sup>270</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10.677. MacKenzie. "Sig Int Report First Canadian Army, Fall 1944".



Intelligence staff and commander, then "the success of the operation must be weighed against the possibility of prejudicing all future operations, and a decision taken accordingly." This was a very difficult tight rope to walk for a corps intelligence staff with no operational experience and a commander fighting his first major battle.<sup>272</sup>

### "J" Service and Phantom:

As a result of the experiences of the British First and Eighth Armies in North Africa, a specialized signals intercept system was established for allied commanders in Normandy.<sup>273</sup> Both the J and Phantom services were developed to give corps and army commanders up-to-date information on the progress of their subordinate units during operations. In theory, this information, would allow extra time for appreciation, planning and decision making by the commander, who was holding resources capable of influencing the battle. According to Guy Simonds, who visited Eighth Army Headquarters in North Africa in the early summer of 1942, "the Eighth Army consider(ed) the J Service the most valuable source of information about our troops available as it is indispensable to the successful control of the air arm when the tactical situation changed quickly."<sup>274</sup> In layman's terms, the service would equate listening to a live sporting event than a recap of its results on a later newscast.

What made this service different from the Y Service was its intended target. The J Service was responsible for the interception of friendly communications between the forward brigades, divisions and corps in the front line. The results of these interceptions leapfrogged over the normal communications net to the commander and his intelligence staff in charge of the operation. Information obtained in this fashion often provided a highly detailed

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<sup>271</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,677. Brig. E.T. Williams, Notes on Signals Intelligence 6 May 1944.

<sup>272</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,677. Williams, Notes on Signals Intelligence 6 May 1944.

<sup>273</sup> Howe, American Signal Intelligence; DHist, 000.7 (D17), CJWSC No.8: Intelligence Bulletin Part I: Special Wireless Intercept Sections.

<sup>274</sup> DHist, Maj. Gen. G.G. Simonds. "Report on Visit to Eighth Army 10 June 1943" (London: 1943)

picture of events along the front. Unfortunately, the information provided could not be checked for accuracy or queried for more information and, as a result, had to be classified as unconfirmed information.<sup>275</sup>

The task of the Phantom Service, or GHQ Liaison Regiment, was similar to that of the J Service. However, instead of just listening to the communications of subordinate headquarters, the "Phantom patrols," consisting of all officers, would visit the appropriate headquarters of the units involved and report directly to the corps or army commander and his intelligence staff - once again bypassing normal channels of communication. In this respect, Phantom differed from J Service because the Phantom representatives, being physically up with the units involved, could be queried for further information if necessary. The officer patrols were trained to get the information from the "most senior and reliable source possible," such as the commander or the senior operations officer. However, most times they were too busy conducting the operation and the Phantom patrol had to rely on the intelligence staff which in most cases sufficed. The only drawback to relying on the intelligence officer was that, in matters of "immediate attention" - intentions for the next day's plans for example, this information was only known by the commander and possibly the operations officer.<sup>276</sup> Since the Phantom officers were trained to report facts unfolding before them and not their own conclusions, the picture provided might not always have been complete, but was assumed on the whole to be accurate. In this respect, the information obtained from Phantom was considered confirmed in relation to that provided by the J Service and, in the case of 2nd Canadian Corps, it was considered "invaluable."<sup>277</sup> Unlike other sources of intelligence, the J service and Phantom were unique in that they only began to make their mark when the battle had started, whereas other sources were used in varying degrees in the planning process. Their existence seems a good example of the natural extension of British doctrine: once the plan has been made and the operational orders given, the focus of intelligence shifts from the enemy to the actions/reactions of friendly units during the battle.

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<sup>275</sup> DHist, Simonds, "Report on Visit to Eighth Army 10 June 1943". Simonds's trip lasted for about a month over which time he viewed Eighth Army operations. What is interesting about the report is that J Service is the only Intelligence related matter that is brought up in this report. Either Simonds had no interest, or was forbidden from viewing or reporting on their operations, or a separate report could have been written, or a separate visit made, by some other Canadian officer.

<sup>276</sup> PRO WO215/37. Account of Officers About Phantom in Overlord.

<sup>277</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, Broughall, "Intelligence at 2nd Canadian Corps Headquarters: First Canadian Army



## Chapter Three:

### **The Traditional Sources: Prisoners, Contact, Captures, Spies and Civilians**

#### Prisoners of War:

According to Maj. W.H. Broughall, the "most dominating source" of "reliable operational intelligence" throughout the campaign in North-West Europe came from prisoners of war and deserters.<sup>278</sup> Unlike the Y Service, whose contribution of speed and accuracy was felt primarily during a battle, prisoners of war and deserters proved a constant and methodical source during the run up to a battle. To improve this situation, the handling of prisoners was divided into four categories (identification, preliminary interrogation, detailed interrogation, and long-term strategic and technical detailed interrogation) designed to minimize the inherent time lag in this source.<sup>279</sup>

Upon capture, intelligence staffs were instructed to make an immediate identification from any documents or unit markings worn on their prisoners' uniforms.<sup>280</sup> This proved to be a quick and valuable method for gathering intelligence used to build up, or round out, the order of battle picture. The fact that elements of a certain

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Final Intelligence Report Vol. I Part I: Operational Intelligence Section 3 Intelligence at a Corps HQ".

<sup>278</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 12,342, Broughall, "Intelligence at 2nd Canadian Corps" in "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report". According to the 12th British Corps, "most valuable information" was given by prisoners and deserters of enemy dispositions, particularly from Poles, who "frequently were able to pin point on air photos such targets as HQ, transport lines, guns positions and so on. This enabled offensive action to be taken against these targets." PRO, WO171/310 WD 12 British Corps July 1944. After reading Howe and Williams, it becomes apparent that some of this success could also be traced to signal intelligence successes which were attributed to prisoners.

<sup>279</sup> DHist, War Office. *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field. 1943*; NAC, RG24, Vol. 12,416. First Canadian Army HQ Pre Staff Course Lectures: Serial 12, Intelligence: Information, Sources, Collection, Collation, Dissemination.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

unit had been captured in a particular place at a specific time provided strong evidence of German dispositions and a lead as to their intentions. After the identification of a prisoner was established, he was sent to a forward interrogation center where a specially trained interrogator from corps was waiting. Here, the interrogator applied what was known as the "tactical squeeze."<sup>281</sup> The object of the questioning was to produce answers to five basic questions needed for the order of battle: unit, captured (where, when, how), flanks, reserves, intentions and casualties.<sup>282</sup> If, during the questioning, it was ascertained that this was a new identification on the front, a special message concerning that fact was to be sent immediately to higher headquarters with relevant details.<sup>283</sup> After the "squeeze," prisoners were sent for detailed interrogation at army headquarters, where they were interrogated at length about the subjects above. If the prisoner was from any of the specialist services (i.e. engineers, signals, intelligence, administration, etc.) he was then sent back for the fourth phase of interrogation known as the long term strategic and technical detailed interrogation.<sup>284</sup>

The value of the information obtained depended largely on the treatment accorded to it, the speed at which it was obtained and transmitted, coupled with the skill of the interrogator involved. The second phase of the interrogation process was, however, designed essentially to provide the commanders of formations in contact with the enemy with tactical information necessary for the conduct of the battle. As S.R. Elliot states, "there (was) a limit to what use can be made of badges and paybooks....even prisoner of war interrogation can produce data on the unit of the man one has, but, given the confusion, it is unlikely to produce much in the way of data on the units he

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<sup>281</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.12,416. First Canadian Army HQ Pre Staff Course Lectures: Serial 12, Intelligence: Information, Sources, Collection, Collation, Dissemination.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

may have served beside....and interrogations take time!"<sup>285</sup> The briefer the interrogation at this stage, the quicker the vital information would reach the commander in the field.<sup>286</sup> Unfortunately, when it came to this process, particularly among the units of Foulkes's 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, prisoners arrived at the divisional collection point (or cage) "with no identification whatsoever of where and when they were captured," while others simply were sent to the corps cage bypassing division intelligence altogether.<sup>287</sup>

On a mobile battlefield, this source of intelligence, other than in the immediate stage of identification, pales in comparison to signals intelligence for its lack of speed. However, in the run up to an operation, and given enough time, information from prisoners and deserters helped fill out the order of battle requirements and gave useful information on certain intangibles not available to the more technically reliant sources.

### Ground Contact at the Front:

Throughout the British manual of intelligence, it was stressed constantly that intelligence was not solely the responsibility of the intelligence staffs, but also the domain of all ranks in contact with German forces.<sup>288</sup> The

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<sup>285</sup> Maj.S.R. Elliot to author, 23 March 1996.

<sup>286</sup> DHist, War Office, *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field 1943*.

<sup>287</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,750. WD 2 Canadian Infantry Division July 1944: Passage of Information, July 27 1944. Unfortunately, in Foulkes 2nd Canadian infantry division a serious problem existed with the passage of information. As a result of the experiences in operations Atlantic and Spring, the GSO 3 Int Captain H.S.C. Archbold issued a memorandum concerning the passage of information to all intelligence personnel. "The two major battle in which this formation has been involved in recently" he wrote, "have brought out to the full, the vital importance of obtaining the greatest amount of information about the enemy immediately opposed to us, and absolute necessity for passing that information to everyone concerned by the quickest means." Unfortunately, according to a review of his actions as GSO 3 in early August, this was not entirely his fault, but the fault of an intelligence staff which "tended generally to sit division headquarters." NAC, RG24, Vol.10,707. Minutes of a Meeting Held in the Joint Battle Room Main HQ First Canadian Army 4 August 1944.

manual reminded the reader that the relationship between the intelligence staff and the commander was reciprocal. Since the intelligence staffs were responsible for providing the commanders with information on enemy casualties, dispositions, intentions, etc., it was important that the units themselves send back information from the front to round out the overall intelligence picture.<sup>289</sup> The information that the forward troops were ordered to report were: enemy activities concerning their forward troops along the front, the location and nature of the forward Defences, and the details of the local topography. To accomplish this, the units in the front lines were directed to keep in close observation with the enemy at the front, as well as to gain information, through observation or capture, by the use of patrols.

#### Captured Documents and Agents/Civilians:

While in contact with the enemy, there was a good chance, particularly as the allied armies pushed forward into German lines, that a document of interest would be captured. Some documents were used to provide intelligence, in some cases with detailed information concerning the enemy's strength, dispositions, Defences, organization, supplies, equipment, armament, intentions and signals communications. In particular, the latter became quite important in the functioning of the special wireless intelligence sections due to the limited use by the Germans of wireless as the North-West European campaign developed. All documents were treated as authentic until proven otherwise. However, the manual warned that "the information acquired from documents will generally be too late to affect operations in progress." Although the capture of a marked map, an operational order, or a code or cypher book could be, in some instances, of immediate tactical importance, none of these seem to have played a

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<sup>288</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.12,416. First Canadian Army HQ Pre Staff Course Lectures: Serial 12, Intelligence: Information, Sources, Collection, Collation, Dissemination.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

role during the planning for Operation Spring.<sup>290</sup>

For the Normandy campaign, the use of the traditional intelligence source, the agent, was virtually nonexistent at the operational level. However, there were some members of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) that were dropped behind German lines in France to coordinate resistance activities but their effect on the operational situation was negligible.<sup>291</sup> Civilians however, were a different story.

Although some of the information that came to light from civilian sources (which was considerable in France) was of tremendous importance, civilians as a rule were treated generally as a suspect source.<sup>292</sup> Even if their political affiliation could be established after extensive investigation by counterintelligence I(b), their military knowledge was usually limited to the point where the context of their information was also suspect.<sup>293</sup>

Although it was rare that civilian information made it into the operational intelligence mix, it did occur at times, but only after extensive interrogation and investigation by the I(b) staff and only if the need was great enough to justify the risk. According to Canadian Military Intelligence, one of the main methods for the Germans to introduce their agents behind allied lines was to pass them off as cooperative civilians and this was the reason

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<sup>290</sup> DHist, *War Office Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field 1943*. German Maps were of particular interest to those in Signals Intelligence. It was one thing to break a code and cipher and read the contents of the message, but many times names of geographical locations were not mentions only a map reference for a German map; Grant, "Second World War Canadian Army Experiences Of Major R. S. Grant."

<sup>291</sup> Clayton, *Forearmed* P. 132; PRO, WO208/3575, Williams, "Use of Ultra". Agents made a tremendous contribution to the strategic intelligence picture in Normandy. This was particularly felt in during the Fortitude deception operations where agents were responsible for gathering information on the effect that "bogus" agents were having on the Germans.

<sup>292</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 13,750 WD 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Operational Standing Orders Section 6: Intelligence, 17 June 1944 - Appendix A - Treatment of Resistance Groups and Other French Civilians Who May Be Contacted During Operations.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.



for the extensive counterintelligence investigation.<sup>294</sup> However, if the commander at the front felt that the information provided by the civilian was valuable, he could accept it at his discretion bearing in mind that he was now responsible for the veracity of that information.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Four:

### **The Sources from the Skies: Air Reconnaissance and Air Photo Interpretation**

#### Air Reconnaissance:

Along with the advent of signals intelligence in the First World War came, with the introduction of the aircraft to the battlefield, aerial reconnaissance as an intelligence source. Early in the war, aerial reconnaissance was regarded as one of the principle sources of intelligence in the allied arsenal but by 1944, claims of its primacy as a source were disputed.<sup>296</sup> Although the information that this source could produce was reliable, its consistency was limited. The combination of a highly bureaucratic process, unpredictable effects of weather, and enemy counter measures, removed the factor of consistency necessary to make it *the* intelligence source.<sup>297</sup>

For a commander, aerial reconnaissance provided, through the use of visual and photographic evidence, detailed information concerning the movement and disposition of friendly and enemy forces, as well as detailed topographic information concerning the battlefield.<sup>298</sup> However, as rewarding as these benefits may have been, weather conditions that prohibited flying or restricted visual and photographic reconnaissance, coupled with the density of enemy air activity or anti-aircraft concentrations, seriously limited its effectiveness.<sup>299</sup>

At the corps level, the political constraints of aerial reconnaissance had to be dealt with, as the air

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<sup>296</sup> Elliot, Scarlet to Green P. 124

<sup>297</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12.342, Lt.Col. P.E.R. Wright, "Intelligence at Army Headquarters: The I(a) Branch at Army Headquarters" in "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report" (Ottawa:1945).

<sup>298</sup> DHist, War Office *Army/Air Cooperation Pamphlet No 1 General Principles and Organization 1944*; DHist, War Office, *Pamphlet No 2 Direct Support 1944*.

intelligence resources were controlled at the Army level under the command of the RAF.<sup>300</sup> In effect, two levels of command had to be cleared before a reconnaissance mission could be flown for the benefit of the corps.<sup>301</sup> The demands from corps and army levels had to take into consideration the following guidelines: demands for all air reconnaissance had to be made at least one day before the mission was flown and these demands would then be "considered" at a daily conference where the "demanding formations (would be) advised whether their demands (had) been accepted or refused."<sup>302</sup> For a demand to be accepted, sorties could only be requested for a short duration if there was any possibility that the reconnaissance aircraft would be vulnerable to enemy air or ground fire.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> DHist, War Office, *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field 1943*.

<sup>300</sup> Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.134; NAC, RG24 Vol.10,808. First Canadian Army Intelligence Directive No.6: Air Recce 20 April 1944. The R.C.A.F. and the Canadian Army developed aspects of aerial recce during the interwar period. Early in the war both the R.C.A.F. and the Canadian Army created their own Air Intelligence Liaison sections whose officers were assigned to either corps, (in the case of the R.C.A.F) or the reconnaissance squadron (Army liaison officers). Initially the air force liaison officers were to work closely with the corps intelligence staffs providing all information necessary of the enemy air force picture which might be required by the corps staff. In addition the air force liaison officers would at as a medium through which information acquired by the Corps could be passed back to GHQ and the Air Ministry. However, for the Army Liaison officers attached to the reconnaissance squadrons their work was not so cut and dry. It was felt at first, according to Elliot, that the Army liaison team needed to "sell" its role to the air force, by outlining the ways in which the Air Force could support the Army and providing "detailed instructions in the methods used for making that support effective." By the fall of 1943 the Army liaison sections had become, in effect, ancillary intelligence staffs for the Air Force and their links with Corps began to fade. As a result, the formations were separated into two distinct sections responsible for reconnaissance and intelligence. But before this reorganization could gain full prominence, 21 Army Group unofficially reversed the trend and placed Air reconnaissance within intelligence in the field, seeing British Second and Canadian First Armies following suit

<sup>301</sup> DHist, War Office, *Army Air Operations Pamphlet No 2 Direct Support 1944*.

<sup>302</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,808 First Canadian Army Intelligence Directive No.6: Air Recce 20 April 1944.

<sup>303</sup> Greenhous, Brereton, Harris, Stephen J., Johnston, William C., and Rawling, William G.P. The Crucible of War 1939-1945: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force Volume III. University of Toronto Press and the Department of national Defence and the Canadian government Publishing Center, Supply and Services Canada 1994 P.297 This was certainly the case in Normandy as the Germans relied on the units of Flak Korp III for protection against the overwhelming Allied air threat. In volume III of the official history of the Royal Canadian

The demands forwarded by the corps had to include the intentions, as well as the general and particular tasks to be accomplished. These tasks could be requested only when absolutely necessary, as routine reconnaissance was avoided and continual coverage of the battlefield was judged by the RAF as impractical, uneconomical and rarely necessary.<sup>304</sup> Only after approval was obtained could the details of the missions be forwarded. For example, details of a tactical reconnaissance mission or rocket projectile attack on artillery positions for Operation Spring had to be at Second British Army Headquarters at 2200 D-1, while details of the armed reconnaissance had to arrive by noon the same day.<sup>305</sup> However, there were provisions for urgent requests, but these were "dealt with on their merits, having regard for the general (reconnaissance) policy and the availability of aircraft."<sup>306</sup> Although, according to Broughall, there was "normal daily coverage of the immediate battle front for intelligence purposes", it was only during the planning of a set-piece attack that the corps succeeded in influencing the flying program in any fashion.<sup>307</sup>

Even when the weather and the bureaucracy cooperated, the results of the missions had to be carefully analyzed carefully by the intelligence staff bearing in mind some of the limitations of the source. As with signals intelligence, a negative result did not translate into the obvious conclusion that a given area was devoid of enemy activity. On the contrary, intelligence staffs had to bear in mind that aircraft could not initiate contact the way an

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Air Force in the Second World War, Bill Rawling writes that "Flak was everywhere; the German front-line bristled with concentrations of small caliber (20 and 30 millimeter) anti-aircraft artillery made invisible (until they opened fire) by the arts of camouflage; and, though flying above three thousand feet put pilots out of range of light flak, they were still within the range of heavier guns, so that maintaining a straight course was hazardous, if not suicidal." This was very hard for a photo reconnaissance pilot not to do, particularly if the pictures were to be of any use to intelligence.

<sup>304</sup> DHist, War Office, *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field 1943*.

<sup>305</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,820. Air Programme for Operations July to October 1944: Air Aspects of Operation Spring.

<sup>306</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,808 First Canadian Army Intelligence Directive No.6: Air Recce 20 April 1944.

<sup>307</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, Maj. W.H. Broughall, "APIS at Headquarters 2 Canadian Corps." in "First Canadian

armoured car or infantry patrol could, particularly if the enemy forces were determined to remain hidden. Aircraft were also prohibited from searching builtup areas or clumps of woods where groups of men and material could be concealed. It was also difficult for aircraft to spot machine guns, mortars and small artillery pieces from the sky.<sup>308</sup>

The reconnaissance pilot was also susceptible to camouflage and deception, which made the already difficult task of discerning friendly activity from enemy activity that much harder. To guard against these possibilities, photo verification was required, but this caused an undue delay that greatly hampered the raison d'être of the reconnaissance flight.<sup>309</sup>

By the time 2nd Canadian Corps became operational, tactical reconnaissance and information from direct aircraft support were the two main types of air intelligence available.<sup>310</sup> For the tactical reconnaissance mission, corps intelligence could request both visual and photographic evidence from any of three possible missions. The first was an "area sortie," which was designed to obtain information of a general nature as the pilot examined a defined area of terrain with special attention placed on selected features (forrest, river, ridge etc.). In the "mission sortie," the pilot was instructed to fly to one or more given places and fly straight back, providing detailed information on a specific target (bridge, town, etc.). The third was the "contact sortie," which was used to keep in contact with friendly troops who lose contact during a battle. This, according to the manual, was seldom successful due seemingly to the risk of friendly fire. For all three types of sortie, the main objective was to locate enemy

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Army Final Intelligence Report" (Ottawa:1945).

<sup>308</sup> DHist, War Office, *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field 1943*.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid. In addition to the three type listed here was a fourth that concerned strategic Reconnaissance which was flown by bombers from bomber command. They were mandated to fly reconnaissance operations only in areas beyond those covered by the squadrons of the Tactical Air Forces and therefore were not involved at all in the Corps or Army level reconnaissance picture.

dispositions and any movement of forces in the immediate battle area.<sup>311</sup>

Since all fighter and light bomber crews of the 2nd Tactical Air Force were also trained in general reconnaissance, they had some idea of what to look for while flying over the battle area. In some instances, the crews were put into the tactical ground picture by their attached liaison officers, who informed them of what to look for in a desired area. Many times, photographs taken by bombers or fighter bombers to record their actions also revealed items relevant to the corps battle. Since this was a secondary role, any information from this source could not be relied upon regularly but was a welcome addition to the overall intelligence picture when available.<sup>312</sup>

#### **Army Photographic Interpretation Section (APIS):**

Before reconnaissance pilots took to the skies on photo reconnaissance sorties, they were given detailed guidance by an Army liaison officer and his air force counterpart, who "plotted positions of the objectives for the pilots' map traces and arranged them in order of priority."<sup>313</sup> The pilots were also briefed concerning "the coverage required and the altitude at which pictures should be taken, while the wing intelligence officer provided information about flak concentrations and enemy air units."<sup>314</sup> When the pilot returned to his base, he filed a report that accompanied the photos he had taken. This evidence was then sent to the Army Photographic Interpretation Section (APIS) for development and analysis.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid.; DHist, War Office, *Army/Air Operations Pamphlet No 2 Direct Support 1944*.

<sup>312</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, Broughall, "APIS at Headquarters 2 Canadian Corps." in "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report".

<sup>313</sup> Greenhous et al. *The Crucible of War 1939-1945* P.296.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. P.297

<sup>315</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, Broughall, "APIS at Headquarters 2 Canadian Corps" in "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report".

Although each branch placed a heavy demand on photographic intelligence, the results were of greatest importance to the operations staff and, as a consequence of the artillery-dominated operational doctrine, to the corps artillery as well.<sup>316</sup> The operations staff and the corps artillery commander used the photos, along with a defence overprint based on the photographs, to locate enemy batteries for counter fire and formulate the artillery plan for the coming operation.<sup>317</sup>

At the APIS, the process of photo interpretation was divided into three phases. The first phase was carried out at the airfield, and at corps or division if the processing equipment was available. Photos of immediate importance reporting the general locations of equipment, troop movements, support and any emergency defensive works of sudden increase in enemy activity were printed and distributed with a brief written report subjected to the following priority: the movement of artillery batteries into firing positions, signs of concentrated or hastily erected defensive lines where the enemy could fall back, and any signs of general abnormal activity, which could affect the immediate outcome of the battle.<sup>318</sup>

The second phase of interpretation involved a more detailed study of the battle area and attempted to ascertain any change in the intentions of the enemy. Priority in the second phase was given to the identification and locations of defensive works, supply dumps (particularly ones that increased in size) and artillery batteries that may have escaped the first phase of interpretation. These were to be reported along with any changes in enemy dispositions, locations of headquarters, demolition activities or any abnormal increase in the size and numbers of the forward troops.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> English, Failure in High Command PP. 160-162.

<sup>317</sup> DHist, War Office, *Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field 1943*.

<sup>318</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.12,416. First Canadian Army HQ Pre Staff Course Lectures: Serial 12, Intelligence: Information, Sources, Collection, Collation, Dissemination.

For the third phase of the interpretation process, the APIS team delved deeply into the detail of the defensive positions seen in the earlier phases, and addressed and cross-checked all items of military interest found on the photographs and in reports from ground formations on the front and the flanks. Any topographical information required for the engineer's staff and for the defence overprint was also noted in this phase for incorporation into appreciations for upcoming operations like Spring.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.



**PART III**  
**COLOURING THE MAP BLUE**

**“The most difficult thing is to discern the enemy's plans, and to detect the truth in all reports one receives:  
the remainder required only common sense.”**

*- Napoleon -*

## Chapter One:

### **Preliminary Intelligence - "Tennis over the Orne"**

In 1951, reflecting on operations Goodwood and Atlantic, Second British Army commander Gen. Miles Dempsey told Sir Basil Liddell-Hart that the operations had been designed to seize all the crossings over the Orne river running from Caen to Argentan.<sup>321</sup> As part of an attritional strategy he called "tennis over the Orne", Dempsey hoped that by capturing and holding these crossings, the main German armoured forces to the west of the river would be shut off and either forced to retreat or destroyed.<sup>322</sup> According to Dempsey, the natural German reaction to an allied thrust east of the Orne would have been a strike eastward over the river where, if blocked, the German armour "would have had to retreat southwards - the only course left open to them."<sup>323</sup> Dempsey was confident that his forces, coupled with the overwhelming allied air superiority, would be able to check any German counterattack once the Orne crossings had been seized.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Operation Goodwood was the Second British Army's breakout attempt which started on July 18. Operation Atlantic was the 2nd Canadian Corps subsidiary operation on the eastern flank of Goodwood, along the Orne river. Atlantic started the following day.

<sup>322</sup> PRO, CAB106/1061, Liddell-Hart, Sir Basil, Notes Made By Captain Liddell-Hart on his 21/2/1952 Interview with General M.C. Dempsey. Operation Goodwood 18 July 1944. "By striking first on one side of the Orne and then on the other" Dempsey told Liddell-Hart "we should force him to bring divisions across, and be able to hit them with our air force in the process of crossing, when they were particularly vulnerable." Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives (LHCMA) King's College London, Liddell Hart Papers (LHP)1/679, Liddell Hart to Lord A. Tedder with attached questionnaire of interview with General Miles Dempsey. 1 May 1952. LHCMA, LHP1/679.

<sup>323</sup> Liddell Hart to Lord A. Tedder with attached questionnaire of interview with General Miles Dempsey. 1 May 1952. LHCMA, LHP1/679.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid. According to the Second British Army Intsum No 43 of July 7 1944 German lateral communication over the river Orne had been considerably curtailed between Caen and Thury Harcourt by the bombing of the bridges. Apart from two road and one rail bridge in Thury Harcourt, all bridges were damaged, some seriously. Although many of the road bridges were unserviceable, the rail bridges had "probably been or can be" adopted for road

During the two violent and hectic days of operations Goodwood and Atlantic, Simonds's 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence staff (under the command of Maj. W.H. Broughall) had been afforded a somewhat detailed introduction to the German defences south of the Orne River. On July 20, Second British Army issued an intelligence summary (Intsum) based on information acquired over the past two days: "Enemy resistance still remains strong - based as it is on French villages and hamlets. These are not really prepared positions for they were left behind when we crossed the Caen-Mezidon railway. Nevertheless they are strong tactically and so close together as to prevent freedom of movement to armoured forces, and are very suitable for Defence by small numbers of men with a few tanks".<sup>325</sup>

Over the last 48 hours, 2nd Canadian Corps had been tangling with elements of Dietrich's 1SS Panzer Korps in conditions such as these. During this period allied intelligence managed to establish, mostly through prisoner of war reports, detailed profiles of both the 272nd infantry and 1SS Panzer Divisions facing them.<sup>326</sup>

Prisoners from the 272nd division captured during Goodwood and Atlantic informed Allied interrogators that their unit had been reduced seriously over the three-day battle and, as a result, morale had plummeted.

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traffic. In addition to the remaining bridges there were fords. "It must be remembered" the intelligence staff recorded "that the River Orne is at present very shallow and in parts only 2-3 feet deep and very readily fordable." In an appendix to the Intsum two road and one rail bridge were in tact in Thury Harcourt, while one road bridge was in tact farther north in the Forest de Grimboisq. Everything Else was either destroyed or limited to one-way traffic. PRO, WO 171/221. Second British Army Intsum No 43 July 17 1944 Enemy Communications: State of Bridges over the Orne and State of the Bridges Over the River Orne between Caen and Thury Harcourt as of July 13.

<sup>325</sup> PRO, WO171/221. Second British Army Intsum No.46: 20 July 1944. There were four principle media for passing intelligence information. The Intsum; The Isum; Telephone; and Liaison. The Intsum was an in-depth summary of intelligence matters in the corps area as well as notes on general interest concerning the German Army its tactics, equipment and personalities. The Isum was a lengthy (24-35 lines) wireless message that dealt strictly with both enemy and friendly situation reports and information of utmost urgency. The distribution at the Corps level included "the Divisions, the Flanking Corps, Army, the Artillery and AGRAs as well as the Commander, Chief of Staff, CCRA, and others actively interested in the enemy situation". NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report, Vol.1, Part 1 Operational Intelligence Section 3: Intelligence at a Corps H.Q." (Ottawa:1945).

<sup>326</sup> PRO, DEFE3/49 XL3288; XL3488, Ultra had intercepted the orders from Commander-in Chief West to move

Consequently, most prisoners were quite willing to expound on recent events. The Information obtained provided 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence with a complete unit history, composition and organization of the 272nd division, as well as the names of all commanders down to the company level.<sup>327</sup> The division was reported correctly to have a large make-up of "foreigners" in its ranks - that is, soldiers from Eastern Europe who either volunteered or were conscripted into service with the Wehrmacht, as well as a large content drawn from the reserves.<sup>328</sup> Despite the fact that the 272nd was still considered an "infant" division in terms of unit cohesion (it was formed in November 1943), almost all of the original cadre had seen previous action on other fronts "some for, some against, others both against and for Germany".<sup>329</sup> As optimistic as this material seemed at first glance, the interrogations also produced the first indication of a major movement along the German line. One prisoner eagerly revealed that his unit had "relieved all SS (troops) in (the)area west of the Orne approximately (three) days ago".<sup>330</sup>

While a constant stream of information concerning the 272nd division was flowing in, the status of the 1SS Panzer Division was a little more confused. Due to a lack of immediate information, the 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence staff was forced to rely on data that ranged from July 14 to July 19 for its assessment. Simonds intelligence received word from interrogators at 2nd Canadian Division that the Panzer Division was committed in the Verrières area but to what extent was open to speculation.<sup>331</sup> Some early accounts had it fully committed along

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the 272nd and 1SS divisions to the Normandy sector on July 1 and July 2 respectively.

<sup>327</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 13,750. 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Intsum No.4: 18 July 1944.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid. According to Friedrich Schack, the division commander the 272nd was formed from veterans of the 216 division after the battle of Orel-Gomel on the Russian front. After forming in St.Nicholas south of Antwerp the 272nd was transferred to the South of France for coastal defense duty. On July 2nd it was ordered north to the Normandy Front and took almost 10 days to reach its destination. NARA, Center for Captured German Records, MS# B-540, "272nd Infantry Division: Normandy from 5-26 July 1944."

<sup>330</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.14,345, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade Message Log, 0100 19 July 1944.

the Verrières line but, according to 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's Intsum No. 4, part of the division had been relieved on the banks of the Orne by the 272nd. These elements had then been sent for rest and refit in the Bretteville-sur-Laize area.<sup>332</sup> On July 20, Ultra decrypts were able to pinpoint the new front line positions of the 1SS Panzer strung eastward from Hubert-Folie to Frenouville, north of La Hogue. The intercepts also revealed that the Panzer division was intending to hold this position in the face of an expected allied armoured thrust down the Caen-Falaise Road.<sup>333</sup>

Despite the ability of 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence to construct a solid picture of 1SS Panzer Division's intentions and composition, it was unable to gather specific information regarding disposition of its subunits. Although Simonds's intelligence knew that 1SS Panzer Division contained three regiments, reports that its 1SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment was west of the Orne on July 14 was now considered suspect in light of the Ultra intercepts, and by reports from 8th British Corps that tanks from the 1SS Panzer Regiment were operating near Bourguebus.<sup>334</sup>

On the basis of their losses during Goodwood and Atlantic, the diminishing strength and fighting ability of both the 272nd and the 1SS Panzer Divisions were thus reported optimistically. To temper possible overestimation in the wake of this evaluation, British Second Army Intelligence issued a sobering message concerning the state of the German Defence: "German forces are very depleted and in need of regrouping, and the more we harass and delay that process the better...to talk freely in terms of divisions under strength opposing us is

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<sup>331</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,750, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Intsum No.4: July 18 1944.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> PRO, HW5/535; DEFE3/59, XL2752; XL2878; XL 2691, This was reconfirmed on July 21 when Ultra reported that on July 18 the Flivo of the 1 SS Panzer Division was moving to a new battle headquarters in Remesnil, south of St.Sylvain. Three other decrypts, (XL2623, XL2628 and XL2646) revealed on July 18 and 19 that as of the 1840 on July 18, the 1 SS Panzer Division was to attack the line Manneville to Mondeville after reaching the Cagny Caen road and that the front line was the north edge of Frenouville-Poirier-Soliers north of Garcelles.

to give a false picture for they are backed by the Corps troops of 86 Corps, I SS, II SS, and 47 Panzer Corps and a large number of Flak troops. The strength of these latter is difficult to estimate. They are sufficient for our air forces to find them a menace and have delayed our armour to no small degree."<sup>335</sup>

While aggressive German rearguard actions were occupying 2nd Canadian Corps in the "villages and hamlets" south of Caen, intelligence discovered the boundaries of I SS Panzerkorps east of the Orne, its artillery headquarters in Bretteville-sur-Laize and its main line of resistance on the crest of the ridge: "Prepared positions exist not far in the rear, roughly along the 59 northing grid from May-sur-Orne to the Caen-Falaise railway. Here, there is ample evidence of infantry field defence, AA guns, both heavy and light, and field artillery further back. The so-called tank country doesn't really exist - there are too many inhabited places and the very successful armoured breakthrough had now had to give place to infantry with tank support".<sup>336</sup>

Later in the day, Ultra revealed to Second British Army Intelligence that, on July 13, SS operations headquarters had agreed to send I SS Panzer Korps 1000 replacements as quick as possible. However these would be the last available, for as Ultra revealed, "SS Operations HQ was unable to foresee when it could make good the losses of 12 and I SS Panzer Divisions by bringing up personnel replacements of any considerable size."<sup>337</sup> The only help that I SS Panzer Korps was likely to get in the immediate future was from the Panzer Divisions west of

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<sup>334</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intelligence Log 0250, July 19 1944.

<sup>335</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.46: 20 July 1944.

<sup>336</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.46: 20 July 1944. A Tactical Reconnaissance report at 2000 July 19 confirmed the existence of a zigzag pattern trench system on the ridge and also reported the possibility of camouflaged tanks farther to south around St.Sylvain. I(s) at Second Army that there was "much activity" in the area St. Sylvain but gave no further details. Second Army Int Log 1900 July 19 1944 WO171/221 PRO. These tanks turned out to be part of the 116th Panzer Division which had crept into the area south east of Verrières. Despite its availability on July 25 the 116th was not needed to counter 2nd Canadian Corps attack. Sauer R.J. Germany's I SS Panzer Corps: Defensive Armoured Operations in France, June-September 1944. Dissertation Boston College 1992.

<sup>337</sup> PRO, HW5/536, XL2797, 1340 July 20 1944

the Orne river.

By the second day of Goodwood, British and Canadian intelligence had appreciated that Bourguebus Ridge was the key to the German defensive position east of the Orne and expected that the Germans would "make all efforts possible to retain it by bringing all available troops to this sector."<sup>338</sup> The arrival of I SS Panzer Division to the front seemed to confirm this suspicion and the 10SS was expected to follow.<sup>339</sup> This suspicion was supported by reports from Ultra that the 10SS had opened a new battle headquarters near Thury Harcourt on the morning of 18 July and that the Orne river, particularly in that area, could still be crossed. Second British Army Intelligence judged that the 10SS was moved to this area for a much-needed rest but which all "too often had meant but a transfer to a new battle."<sup>340</sup>

On July 19, there was no sign that 10SS had crossed the Orne, as reports from the Special Wireless Section Type A at Second British Army established that elements of 10SS Panzer Division were in the vicinity of Evrecy west of the river. This report was confirmed four hours later when 21 Army Group was able to DF elements of the Panzer Division in the same area and reconfirmed these locations at noon the following day.<sup>341</sup> Near midnight on July 20, signals intelligence at Second British Army reported that elements of 10SS were west of the Orne River near Evrecy and north of Thury Harcourt but just across the river from the Forêt de Grimboisq. SHAEF intelligence corroborated that 10SS was still south of Evrecy and although uncommitted, it would "probably react

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<sup>338</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Int Log 0530 July 19 1944.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> PRO, WO171/221. Second British Army Intsum No 44 July 18 1944. Both the 1st and 8th British Corps were expecting that the 10 SS would come east of the Orne.

<sup>341</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second Army Int Log GSI(s), Second British Army I(s) 1900 July 19; 21 Army Group Sigint Sitrep for July 19 2245 July 19. NAC, RG24 Vol. 13,465. First Canadian Army Intelligence WD July 1944.

to whichever flank of the bridgehead develops most dangerously."<sup>342</sup>

The sister division of 10SS in IISS Panzer Korps, 9SS Panzer Division, was also sought actively by allied intelligence for signs of movement east of the Orne. Signals intelligence had obtained some remarkable results on July 17 by intercepting a series of medium-grade communications between its commander, Sylvester Stadler, and the division's tactical and main headquarters. The intercepts revealed that two armoured Kampfgruppe (Zoellhoffer and Meyer) were operating as the division's counterattack force and had been called in by Stadler for defensive action at Evrecy.<sup>343</sup>

On July 18, as Goodwood commenced, Second British Army reported that 9SS was fully engaged west of the Orne. By noon the following day, reports were being received from Gen. N.M. Ritchie's 12 British Corps that both the 9SS and 10SS had withdrawn from the front line near Evrecy but 12 British Corps later reported that the panzers of 9SS were still at the front.<sup>344</sup> This was later confirmed by Second British Army Intelligence which also reported that the small number of 9SS tanks encountered was a reflection of the depleted state of the Panzer Division.<sup>345</sup> During the night of July 19-20, Ultra revealed that the situation and the front line of the 9SS Panzer Division remained unchanged in the early evening on July 19. However, by noon the next day signals intelligence at Second British Army reported that it had not heard anything from 9SS Panzer Division during the night or early morning hours.<sup>346</sup> This was supported by Williams's Intelligence staff at 21 Army Group, which reported at

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<sup>342</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 13,645, EXFOR Isum No 44 First Canadian Army Intelligence WD July 20 1944. PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intelligence Log 2320 July 20 1944.

<sup>343</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 13,645. 21 AG I(s) Ciropearl sitrep No 47 1400 July 17 1944. WD First Canadian Army Intelligence. The intercepts also reveals calls by Stadler for all serviceable tanks to be sent forward for the fight for Evrecy as well as a call for a Sitrep from the 20 SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment.

<sup>344</sup> PRO, WO171/221. Second British Army Int Log 0250, 1100, and 2245 July 19 1944.

<sup>345</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No 44 July 19 1944.



midnight that the 9SS Panzer was still "unheard," but there were no concrete reports that any elements of 9SS were moving east of the Orne.<sup>347</sup>

Only after the start of Goodwood was Second British Army Intelligence interested in the immediate whereabouts of the 2nd Panzer Division. On July 19, signals intelligence at Second British Army reported that 2nd Panzer was still facing the Americans west of Aunay near Caumont.<sup>348</sup> This was confirmed by the 30 British Corps on the afternoon of July 20, while intercepts later revealed that the division had set up its signals center on July 18 near Campain, outside Caumont.<sup>349</sup> As was the case with the 9SS Panzer Division, the British efforts in Goodwood had yet to stir the 2nd Panzer Division to move east to counter the allied onslaught.

On the same afternoon, as Operation Goodwood was grinding to a halt, Dempsey arrived at Simonds's headquarters at the foot of Verrières-Bourguebus Ridge.<sup>350</sup> When Dempsey arrived, Simonds was busy preparing to attack Verrières Ridge that afternoon as called for in Operation Atlantic. Upon reviewing the situation, it became evident to Dempsey that Goodwood had devolved into a costly infantry struggle as the British armoured divisions were unable to break the German tank and anti-tank gun concentrations around La Hogue and the woods to the east.<sup>351</sup> "North of this wood," Dempsey's intelligence reported, "the enemy contrived to set up some form of

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<sup>346</sup> PRO, HW5/535, XL2764 0459 July 20 1944; PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Int Log 1150 July 20 1944.

<sup>347</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13.465, First Canadian Army Intelligence WD July 20 1944. Ciropearl Sitrep No 62 July 20.

<sup>348</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Int Log 1900 July 19 1944.

<sup>349</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Int Log 1319 July 20 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.13,645, WD First Canadian Army Intelligence 1940 July 20, 21 Army Group Ciropearl Sitrep No.62.

<sup>350</sup> The Verrières Bourguebus Ridge was the same topographical feature which ran from the banks of the Orne river east to the woods east of La Hogue. On the western side on the Caen Falaise road the feature was known as Verrières ridge while on the opposite side of the road it was referred to as Bourguebus. Atlantic was a 2nd Canadian Corps subsidiary operation in Second British Army's Operation Goodwood.

<sup>351</sup> Second British Army Intelligence had received word from Lt. Gen. Richard O'Connor's 8th British Corps on

defence line...which delayed our advance considerably." The importance of this wood to the German High Command was not lost on Dempsey nor on his intelligence staff: "The Bourguebus area is still the most important sector of the front. To lose it is to risk total destruction of the forces in West Normandy. To hold it is to at least have insurance towards withdrawal before 1st U.S. Army."<sup>352</sup>

Although Operation Goodwood was winding down, the success of Simonds's 2nd Canadian Corps in Operation Atlantic had revealed that the flank of the 1SS Panzer Division was partly uncovered along the Verrières end of the ridge running along the Orne.<sup>353</sup> If this area could be breached, the key German defence on Bourguebus Ridge would be in jeopardy of being outflanked and attacked from behind. In this event, the Second Army Intelligence surmised that the German reaction would be to "prevent us moving up the rising ground south of Bourguebus and to that end he will contest every inch of ground."<sup>354</sup> If the German efforts to defend this area were to fail, Second British Army intelligence warned that another defensive line running from May-sur-Orne to Garcelles was being prepared but that it had not yet reached any formidable proportions and was judged to be "still in embryo."<sup>355</sup>

As a result of the sluggish response of German armour, the acute shortage on German infantry and

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July 19 that at least 40 Panther tanks aided by some MKIV's and self-propelled guns were in the area and were probably part of the 1 SS Panzer Division which was expected to move east of the Orne. PRO, WO171/221, Second British Intelligence Log 0250 July 19 1944; Liddell Hart to Lord A. Tedder with attached questionnaire of interview with General Miles Dempsey. 1 May 1952 LHCMA, LHP1/679.

<sup>352</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.44: July 18 1944.

<sup>353</sup> The vulnerability of the German defence in front of the 2nd Canadian Corps was also evident to the intelligence staff SHAEF and to Col. Joe Ewart at Montgomery's TAC headquarters: "The enemy stabilized the situation for the moment on the higher ground", the intsum for July 20 reported "Whether he can continue to do so remains to be seen, for the rapid advance of Canadian troops on the east banks of the river (Orne) to well south of St. André suggest that 1SS had left its flank partly uncovered." PRO WO171/131, 21 Army Group Intsum No 147 Part I July 20 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.13,465. WD First Canadian Army Intelligence .EXFOR Isum No 44 0015 July 21 1944.

<sup>354</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.45: July 19 1944.

plummeting morale, it seemed the only thing impeding further operations down the Orne river by nightfall on July 20 was torrential rain and the formidable German forces on Bourguebus Ridge.<sup>356</sup> To breach this line, and open the way for the British Armour to continue what operations Goodwood and Atlantic had started, a determined assault by 2nd Canadian Corps was required.<sup>357</sup> While Simonds was preparing to continue down the Orne River valley as required in Operation Atlantic, Dempsey ordered Simonds to prepare a preliminary plan to take the Cramesnail spur, south of the Verrières-Bourguebus Ridge on the next day.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,645, First Canadian Army Intelligence WD July 1944, EXFOR Isum No 44 0015 July 21 1944. Other than the 1SS Panzer Division and the 272nd Infantry divisions, only the decimated 12SS and 21st Panzer Divisions, reinforced by a Tiger battalion were the only units judged by SHAEF intelligence to be countering the British offensive.

<sup>357</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,798, GOC's Activities July 20 1944; PRO, WO285/9, The First Hundred Days of Operation Overlord" The War Diary of General Miles Dempsey July 20 1944.

<sup>358</sup> PRO, WO285/9, The First Hundred Days of Operation Overlord - The War Diary of General Miles Dempsey, July 20 1944. A Liaison Officer from Montgomery's tactical headquarters informed the 21 Army Group commander that 2nd Canadian Corps had an "unconfirmed plan" to the Cramesnail spur that night and that artillery concentrations had been ordered on Fontenay and Rocquancourt and that Simonds had gone forward to "recce for the attack." A few hours later, 21 Army Group received word that this attacks would only go in some time the following day. According to Montgomery's diary, which was written after the fact for posterity, he recalled "In the afternoon I went to see Second British Army and gave Dempsey my orders about his front. I had been thinking over the problem and it was clear to me that there was no real objective at the moment to the south east of Caen (for) we now had the bottleneck of Caen, and a good bridgehead over the Orne, an this gave us the ability to operate strongly towards Falaise when a good opportunity was created." This change of plan formed Montgomery's new directive (M512) for July 21. According to Dempsey, these directive were written confirmation after the fact of discussions between himself and Montgomery, but their primary function was political. Copies of these directive were sent to the British Chief of the General Staff Field Marshal Alanbrooke to help him sooth any political ill feelings on the part of Churchill or the British War Cabinet. According to Canadian General H.D.G.Crerar, who met with Montgomery on the evening of July 20 2nd Canadian Corps could not be inserted into First Canadian Army until the general line of Vimont -Bretteville-sur-Laize - Bully - Evrency had been reached which corresponded more or less to those laid out in Montgomery's directive. 21 Army Group TAC HQ Log 2010 and 2306 July 20 1944 WO171/112 PRO. Tactical Directive M512 21 July 1944. Dempsey Papers WO285/2 PRO. Crerar, Gen. H.D.G. memo of Conference with CinC 21 AG held at TAC 21 AG. 2100 20 July 1944. BLM Diary July 20 1944. BLM Papers. IWM. Crerar Papers (CP) Vol. 2 MG30 E157. NAC.

## Chapter Two:

### July 21 - The Outline of Spring

Unlike most other allied corps commanders who left the initial planning of an operation to their chief of staff, Guy Simonds wrote his own outline plan as a basis for further detailed study.<sup>359</sup> As C.P. Stacey wrote in the fall of 1945, this was "clearly the most important stage in the planning and the one at which the basic decisions are taken."<sup>360</sup> According to Stacey, the officers who were close to him during the campaign in North-West Europe, in particular his chief of staff Brig. N.E.H. Rodger, had nothing but admiration for Simonds intellectual qualities when it came to planning an operation: "His mind was swift, penetrating and analytical; he instantly perceived what were the essential elements of any problem and he knew what resources were at his disposal, he would produce his plan for an operation almost instantly."<sup>361</sup>

According to Brig. Rodger, "Simonds basically did his own operational planning and called on his heads of arms and the staff for information and advice as needed," as Rodger "acted mainly as a coordinator and to ensure that others were informed of developments in planning and during operations."<sup>362</sup> As for the role played by

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<sup>359</sup> UofT, B90-0020/017/041, Stacey, Impressions of Guy Simonds Fall 1945.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid. According then Lt. David Wiens when he joined Broughall's intelligence team at 2nd Canadian Corps he found that it was quite a change from First Canadian Army. "Under its dynamic commander Guy Simonds it seemed to move at a faster pace. Tasks had to be completed yesterday and there was always a lot of coming and going and people working around the clock. The intelligence section was headed by Major W.H. (Bill) Broughall, competent, exacting and fair - a first class staff intelligence officer." DHist, Wiens, David, *Intelligence Officer*. Unpublished manuscript P.91. The author is thankful for the use of Col. Wiens' manuscript.

<sup>362</sup> N.E.H. Rodger to the author, January 2, 1996.

intelligence in Simonds's planning, Rodger recalled that Simonds "would attempt to integrate his various sources of intelligence" although different circumstances "might cause greater weight to be given to one or another source."<sup>363</sup> Simonds's GSO II Intelligence, Maj. W.H. Broughall, , was "a very component person" and "very much of the planning team" in Rodger's estimation.<sup>364</sup> According to Broughall, living in Simonds's mess provided him with three opportunities each day (which was one more than recommended by the *Manual of Military Intelligence*) for bringing the corps commander's attention to "any items of importance" concerning the enemy situation while

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid. On February 17 1944, Simonds laid out his operational policy to be followed by 2nd Canadian corps in the forthcoming invasion of the continent. "The probable role of 2 Cdn Corps" Simonds wrote "will be to pass through a beach-head which has been secured by assaulting forces and attack, wear down and destroy German troops which oppose it, within the corps "corridor" defined by the Army commander." The ATTACK: "When the Germans decide to stand and fight a defensive battle, attack without adequate reconnaissance and preparation will not succeed. The attack must be carefully organized and strongly supported by all available artillery. The frontage of attack must be limited to that on which really heavy support may be given. The essence of the German system of defence is the counter-attack. His forward defence are not thickly held in terms of men, but are strong in automatic weapons and well supported by mortars, sited up to three or four thousand yards in rear of forward defended localities. These mortars are capable of bringing very heavy fire to bear in front of, or within, the German defensive position. A well planned infantry attack, with ample fire support, will penetrate such a position with comparative ease, but the first penetration will stir up a hornets nest. As long as fresh reserves are available the Germans will counter-attack heavily and continuously, supported by self-propelled guns brought up to close range and by any mortars which have not been over-run in the initial assault. The success of the offensive battle hinges on the defeat of the German counter-attacks, with sufficient of our own reserves on hand to launch a new phase as soon as the enemy strength has spent itself. The defeat of these counter-attacks must form part of the original plan of attack which must include arrangements for artillery support and the forward moves of infantry supporting weapons - including tanks - on the objective. Further, in selecting the objectives, the suitability of the front from the point of view of fighting this "battle of Counter-attacks" must receive important consideration. The following points must be considered in the initial planning: A) The depth of the initial objectives. To over run the German mortar positions requires penetration of this forward defence to a depth of some four thousand yards...b) The phase of the attack at which the bulk of the artillery is to be moved forward must receive early consideration...C) The way in which the German support their infantry in the counter-attack must be clearly understood...."Operations should be "phased" accordingly....A sound simple plan based upon: a) the ground b) Enemy dispositions and probable intentions c) the support available d) The characteristics and capabilities of our own arms and troops and pressed home with resolution, will usually succeed. Complicated, involved plans seldom succeed." NAC, RG 24 Vol. 10,799, Simonds, Lt.Gen. G.G. Operational Policy 2nd Canadian Corps.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

keeping himself "continuously informed" of Simonds's requirements.<sup>365</sup> Although Simonds seemed to have integrated his intelligence staff fully, none of the officers on Broughall's operational intelligence staff had any previous operational experience. As a result, a heavy reliance was placed upon the intelligence staff at Second British Army who provided 2nd Canadian Corps with "invaluable guidance and cooperation."<sup>366</sup>

At 1000 on July 21, Simonds held his first conference on Spring at the Prefecture in Caen. The conference was attended by the commanders and staff officers of the 2nd and 3rd Canadian infantry divisions, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, the staff of the 7th British Armoured Division, and Maj. A.T. Sesia of Col. Stacey's historical section. After being brought up to date by Major-General Foulkes and Major-General Keller on the situation on their respective fronts, Simonds issued his outline plan for Spring, which would commence on July 23.<sup>367</sup> "In view of the enemy's favourable position from which he had excellent observation of Allied movements,"

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<sup>365</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.12,342, Broughall, "Intelligence at 2nd Canadian Corps" in "First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report".

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> UofT, B90-0020/017/041, Stacey, Impressions of Guy Simonds Fall 1945; IWM, Erskine Papers, Erskine Diary July 21 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.17,506. WD 2nd Field Historical Section 1000 21 July 1944. In Stacey's remarks from the fall of 1945 he wrote: "Part of General Simonds' success may well have been due to his capacity for taking decisions which some might deem ruthless - decisions in which the needs of the tactical situation were placed before "human" considerations." On 16 July 1944 Simonds, addressed the officers of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde at the chateau near Cairon: "The Russian offensive in the East is going extremely well. From the latest reports the Russians are some thirty to forty miles from the East Prussian frontier. Here in the West, The German formations fare all committed including two which arrived recently from Russia. As far as we can determine, the German are short of men and equipment, and we have not so far encountered any fresh formations, nor do there seem to be any in sight. Opposite us is the "works" so to speak. I think you will remember General Montgomery's remarks when he spoke to all formations prior to D-Day and said that we had the war "in the bag" if we made an all-out effort. My view is that we will have the war "int the bag" this summer or at least in a matter of weeks if we pursue the advantage we now hold. I cannot stress too highly what effect this all-out effort will have on the enemy and its advantages to us particularly from the point of view of our own troops. If the war drags out, normal wastage will ensue an casualties will mount up. On the other hand, by making use of an all-out effort our casualties may be initially high, but in the long run they will be less. I think that it is safe to compare the enemy in his present situation to a boxer who is groggy on his feet, and needs but the knockout blow to finish him off. I ask all commanders here present to put first and foremost into their minds the idea of the all-out effort. You must always

Sesia recorded that another operation would be planned to "seize the high ground south of Caen" in the area Fontenay-le-Marmion, Rocquancourt, Le Bruyere (Cramesnil spur).<sup>368</sup> For the immediate future, Simonds ordered that, due to heavy counterattacks through the night of July 20-21, Foulkes's 2nd Canadian Infantry Division should be reorganized and hold its present ground while 2nd Canadian Corps artillery was moved south of Caen.<sup>369</sup>

Part of the Second British Army intelligence summary issued the previous night had reported that, due to bad weather conditions over the previous two days, air observation along the front was apparently "minimal to non-

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remember that if you rest, so does the enemy; and the final outcome takes considerable longer. You must therefore call on your troops for this all-out effort...I want it to be absolutely clear in your minds that occasions will arise when I will make heavy demands from you at a time when your troops are tired, but the enemy is groggy. This produces great results and saves casualties. There is always a tendency on our part to look at our troops after a particularly stiff engagement and consider them tired without appreciating, at the same time, that the enemy is more so. I think that the German's position as a whole is not far from the point of cracking up unless he produces fresh formations. His prospects of producing fresh formation from Russia are at present very slim although he may produce some from Italy. There is no doubt that he may have a certain amount of reinforcements to draw from but there cannot materially alter his present position.

Operational Points: .."I have always found the troops tired when the Commander is tired, yet one has only to mingle in with the troops themselves to find that the offensive spirit and the will to carry out an all-out effort is always present with the Canadian soldier, and it should not be destroyed by the flagging spirit of a commander who is tired. The offensive spirit does not mean running up against a stonewall. If a Commander finds himself up against stiff opposition he must keep finding a way to break through the enemy. It is fatal to stop. He must never sit down. He must always be doing something...Secondly, once you are committed to an offensive operation there is no holding your hand, regardless of casualties. As a commander you must consider at the outset whether the losses incurred are going to be worth the final assault. you must determine whether these losses are going to be the minimum you can afford in relation to the value of the objective...We can't fight the Boche without incurring casualties and every soldier must know this. My point of view is that if I can't embark upon an operation to take a certain feature, for example, unless it will be useful to me later, the operation is not worthwhile. But for the operation which is worthwhile and I call it off with 50% casualties incurred, the I have achieved nothing but a waste of lives; if I continue, and incur a further 20% casualties and bring the operation to a successful conclusion, then the operation is worth while. I speak of casualties in grossly exaggerated figures. In no operation yet have I participated where casualties were not between 15 and 25% an even at that 25% is still a grossly exaggerated figure." NAC, RG24 Vol. 17,506. Report on the Address by Lt Gen. G.G. Simonds, CBE, DSO, GOC 2nd Cdn Corps, to Officers of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2nd Cdn Armd Bde at the Chateau near Cairon by Major A. T. Sesia.

<sup>368</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.17,506. WD 2nd Field Historical Section 1000 21 July 1944.

<sup>369</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.17,506. WD 2nd Field Historical Section 1000 21 July 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.14,319, WD 2nd Canadian Corps RCA 21 July 1944.

existent".<sup>370</sup> This lapse, the summary warned, had provided the enemy with unrestricted movement in the rearward areas and enabled him to fortify his line east of the Orne with armour.<sup>371</sup>

Although photo and tactical reconnaissance resources had been restricted during this period, signals intelligence continued to be productive. Ultra had intercepted a report that the LSS Panzer Korps was strengthening its anti-tank defence east of the Orne, obviously sensing that once the weather cleared, a renewal of a Goodwood-style offensive would take place.<sup>372</sup> Ultra also provided an update on the front line positions of the 1SS Panzer Division. Intercepts from the Flivo attached to 1SS reported that the divisional front line had been moved south, basing itself on the towns of La Houge and Tilly-la-Campagne and to the area just south of Frenouville.<sup>373</sup> On the front lines, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Intelligence revealed that, during the German counterattacks, elements of 2 Panzer Grenadier Regiment from 1SS Panzer Division had been located in the Frenouville end of the Verrières-Bourguebus defensive line, as well as in the "factory" area of St.Martin.<sup>374</sup>

On that same morning, interrogation of prisoners revealed detailed locations of anti-tank defence of 272nd division situated on the crest of Verrières Ridge east of May-sur-Orne and Panther tanks in covering positions 1500 yards from the town itself.<sup>375</sup> Other interrogations disclosed that artillery from 1SS Panzer Korps was assisting the 272nd division from positions west of the Orne, while its divisional artillery was ensconced in a

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<sup>370</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Ops Log July 21st 1944.

<sup>371</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.47: July 21 1944.

<sup>372</sup> Hinsley, British Intelligence P 431; PRO, DEFE 3/59, XL 2923 21 July 1944.

<sup>373</sup> PRO, DEFE 3/59, XL2942 21 July 1944.

<sup>374</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,750, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Intsum No 5 2000hrs 24 July 1944.

<sup>375</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.14,455, WD 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade message log serial 104a 21 July 1944.



quarry on the outskirts of Rocquancourt.<sup>376</sup> Interrogations of two officers from the 980 and 982 Grenadier regiments of the 272nd Infantry Division, revealed that the remaining regiment had been absorbed by the other two regiments. 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence interpreted this to mean that the remaining regiments of the 272nd Infantry Division were "very much under strength" with their "reinforcements poorly trained."<sup>377</sup> Despite the bad weather, reconnaissance flights were ordered to confirm these reports. The resulting air photos could not confirm the artillery locations but did reveal that the area running May-Fontenay-Rocquancourt-Verrières was strewn with mortar positions, the heaviest concentration of which were in the May-sur-Orne area.<sup>378</sup>

While Simonds delivered his outline plan for Spring, allied intelligence, while assessing the news of the assassination attempt on Hitler, was also uncovering indications that a major reshuffle along the German line was beginning. Although still looking for the first signs of movement east by the armour of the IISS Panzer Korps, most sources continued to report that the 9SS, 10SS Panzer and 2nd Panzer divisions were still west of the Orne. By the time Simonds finished at the Prefecture in Caen, the first news of an eastward movement was reported by his own intelligence section.

During the afternoon and early evening, a series of DF results established that the 10SS divisional headquarters was 6 km west of the Forêt de Grimbosq, two other elements were on the banks of the Orne overlooking the forest, while one was in the forest and another was located west of Evrecy. Although the DF revealed that part of 10SS had a station operating east of the Orne near St.Sylvain, it reasoned that the main body

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid. According to Friedrich Schack, the Commander of the 272, he had to rely on ISS Panzerkorps artillery to support his division until July 23rd. The bulk of his artillery was stuck in the Falaise area after detraining from southern France. NARA, Center for Captured German Records, MS# B-540, 272 Inf Div: Normandy from 5-26 July 1944.

<sup>377</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intelligence Log 1325 July 22 1944.

<sup>378</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Cdn Corps Ops Log July 21;NAC, Vol.13,750 2 CID Counter Mortar Intelligence Summary July 22 1944.

was still to the west.<sup>379</sup>

In addition to the movement of the 10SS, 2nd Canadian Corps sent a message to Second British Army in the afternoon stating that elements of the 2nd Panzer Division were scattered east of the Orne from the Foret de Cinglais northward to Laize-la-Ville, just south of May-sur-Orne. This information however, was considered "unlikely" by Second Army Intelligence.<sup>380</sup> At 1820, Second Army Signals Intelligence intercepted what they assumed to be a Kampfgruppe from the 2nd Panzer east of the Orne near May-sur-Orne and Fontenay-le-Marmion communicating with the rest of the division 10 km west of the Orne.<sup>381</sup> An hour after the original message by the Canadians, a series of signals intelligence successes by Second Army revealed that the Panzer regiment from the 9SS was near the Cramenil spur. Although this could not be confirmed, its appearance in the east was not considered "impossible."<sup>382</sup> This report was supported 90 minutes later as 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Special Wireless Section Type B, attached to Simonds Corps, made the same finding.<sup>383</sup>

After lunching with Dempsey and speaking to him on the phone in the early evening, Simonds visited his tactical headquarters at 2115 for half an hour. If Simonds had inquired about the latest intelligence picture, he

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<sup>379</sup> NAC, WO171/221, Second British Army Intelligence Log 1903, 1912 and 1920 July 21 1944.

<sup>380</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.14,991, Technical WD 2nd Canadian Wireless Intelligence Section Type B July 21 1944. PRO, WO171/221, Second Army Intelligence Log 1500 July 21 1944. According to Major R.S Grant he recalled "being awakened by Major Mackenzie to discuss an urgent operational situation. He explained that our DF information had identified the movement of a new German division from the U.S. Army front. He asked me to reconfirm it with absolute certainty...as it turned out, it was not DF from my unit but from the 3rd Canadian Special Wireless Section Type A, the army unit. It was confirmed that the division had moved, and it was only a matter of a few days when the Americans launched the attack and broke out at St.Lo. Grant, S.R. Maj. "Second World War Canadian Army Signal Intelligence Experiences of Major R.S. Grant, MBE, CD." Canadian Forces Communications and Electronics Newsletter No 446 Special Wireless edition 1986.

<sup>381</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intelligence Log 1820 July 21 1944.

<sup>382</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intelligence Log 1600 July 21 1944.

<sup>383</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intelligence Log 1715 July 21 1944.

would have noticed that Second British Army Intelligence, although establishing that the bulk of the 2nd, 9SS and 10SS Panzer Divisions were still west of the Orne, was suggesting that their interest in events east of the river had been aroused. According to the intelligence summary, the bad weather had afforded German transport "liberty of action by day" for the first time in the last week.<sup>384</sup> The resulting pause had provided the LSS Panzer Korps with both the opportunity to "tidy" the front line, and "fill some of the gaps" torn in its formations east of the Orne with armour. Although the intelligence summary placed the bulk of the 9SS and 10SS Panzer Divisions on the west bank of the Orne, Second Army Intelligence admitted that there were "signs that the 10SS Panzer Division is taking an interest East of the Orne", but the nature and the size of the element was still unknown. Without further evidence, it was considered "unlikely" that 10SS had moved in any strength.<sup>385</sup> As for 2nd Panzer division, Second British Army Intelligence revealed that although the bulk of the Panzer division was west of the Orne "it too has an element between the Laize and the Orne about Clinchamps." The size and composition of the element could not be determined but Dempsey's intelligence staff felt that anything as "large as the bulk of the division" was still in the Caumont area.<sup>386</sup>

Despite the lack of concrete evidence demonstrating that an armoured build-up east of the Orne was under way, indications of one were laced throughout the Second Army's daily intelligence summary: "It is probable that

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<sup>384</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No 47 21 July 1944.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence provided a somewhat less ambiguous assessment of the situation when it informed its sub-units that the "enemy has reacted strongly to the continuous pressure of our forces and has as yet displayed no intention of withdrawing to a new line further south" and added later that "Indications to-night show that the enemy is bringing in further armour to beat off our attacks". As for specific units, 2nd Canadian Corps reported that "elements of the 10th SS were reported today in the forest of Grimbosq. How much of its is there, we can not say at the present time. It may be that the armour is re-organizing to move East to support the infantry on our front...There have also been indications that bits of it are in Bretteville-sur-Laize" NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Intsum No 11 2000 21 July 1944; PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No 47 21 July 1944. NAC, RG24 Vol.14,443, 2 CIB message log 1510 21 July; NAC, RG24 Vol.14,332, 2nd Canadian

at least the infantry of the 9SS is still in the line, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that some of its armour is in the Garcelles Secqueville area.....With 12SS Hitler Jugend watching us in the Vimont area and the Adolf Hitler (1SS Panzer Division) and 21 Panzer backed by the 272 Infantry Division from the Emieville to the Orne it would be reasonable to place a reserve of armour astride the Caen-Falaise road, if a reserve is available, and 10SS "Frundsberg" should be able to provide it. Why then, 2nd Panzer and 9SS are interested is difficult to say especially as 2 and certainly 9 probably is still in the line."<sup>387</sup>

When Simonds returned to his headquarters that night, he learnt that another part of the intelligence puzzle had been revealed. While units from 2nd Canadian Infantry Division were fending off counterattacks in the St.André area, they captured a prisoner from the 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 2nd Panzer Division, while at the same time a vehicle from the same regiment was discovered south of Etavaux.<sup>388</sup> Just after midnight, two reports added to the mix. Ultra revealed the front line of 272nd Infantry Division running from the Orne river, through St.André and St.Martin across Verrières ridge to the Caen-Falaise Road. An hour earlier, 2nd Canadian Corps reported that MKIV tanks from the 2nd Panzer were supporting elements of the 272nd Infantry Division in the St.André area of the line. By the early morning on July 22, allied intelligence had its first concrete collection of evidence that a major component of the 2nd Panzer Division was operating east of the Orne and that the German defensive focus was shifting there too - directly into the intended path of 2nd Canadian Corps' advance.<sup>389</sup>

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Infantry Division Intelligence log 1800 21 July.

<sup>387</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No 47 July 21 1944.

<sup>388</sup> NAC, RG24 Vo.14,322, 2nd Canadian Armored Brigade Message Log July 21 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.14,445, 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade Message Log serial 156 2035hrs July 21.

<sup>389</sup> NAC, RG24. Vol.14,221 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade Message log July 21 1944. NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Cdn Corps Intsum No 11 2000hrs 21 July 1944.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **July 22 - The Pivotal Day**

At 0915, Major A.T. Sesia arrived at the Prefecture in Caen for Simonds's second planning conference for Spring. Upon arrival, Sesia was met by Brig. Rodger, who informed him that the meeting was for study purposes and of no immediate importance to the historical officer.<sup>390</sup> Indeed, since the first meeting 24 hours earlier, much had surfaced to be examined. During the conference with the commanders of 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions, and the 7th British and Guards Armoured divisions, Simonds called in his arms advisors from time to time.<sup>391</sup> Heavy German counterattacks for the second straight night in the St. André area confirmed that Panthers and MKIVs of the 2nd Panzer division were operating in support of 272nd Infantry Division's 981 Panzer Grenadier Regiment. According to Simonds's intelligence, the 981 PGR was now fully committed in that area, and the window of opportunity presented two days earlier was beginning to disappear.<sup>392</sup> Concern for his own exposed flank along the Orne River, and for the whereabouts of the 9SS and 10SS, led Simonds to cooperate with 12 British Corps on a set of combined operations.<sup>393</sup> The objective of these operations were to clear the Orne valley and

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<sup>390</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.17,506, WD 2nd Canadian Field Historical Section 22 July 1944

<sup>391</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,798. GOC's Activities; PRO, WO285/9, The First Hundred Days - the War Diary of General Miles Dempsey.

<sup>392</sup> PRO, WO171/221. Second British Army intelligence Log 0920 July 22 1944.

<sup>393</sup> PRO, WO171/310, WD 12 British Corps July 22 1944. On the night of July 22/23 July 12 Corps carried out two limited operations Express and Pullman. The object was to gain ground west of the River Orne in step with the 2nd Can Corps advance on the East side. Pullman was an extension of Express with the dual objects of straightening the line west of the Orne between Hill 112 and Maltot to establish that the 10SS was still in the area of Esquay, while its II battalion of the 21 SS PGR was in the line at Le Bon Repos while tanks of II Bn 10 SS Pz Regt were also in the area.

capture the town of Maltot, west of the Orne, and provoke a reaction from one or both Panzer Divisions.<sup>394</sup>

According to his notes from the July 22 conference, Simonds's intention was not simply to capture the woods near Garcelles. Simonds's outline plan called for the capture of the high ground in the Cramesnil area followed by an exploitation to Bretteville-sur-Laize, Bretteville-le-Rabet and St.Sylvain no earlier than July 25. The method by which the operation was to be carried out was separated into three phases. The first phase would see infantry under the cover of darkness capture Fontenay-le-Marmion, Rocquancourt and Tilly-La-Campagne. The second phase, upon capture of Fontenay and Rocquancourt, would see the 7 British armoured pass through this breach at first light and capture the town of Cramesnil and the "spur". In the third phase, the Guards Armoured Division was to exploit through the "spur" to Cintheaux and then to Bretteville-sur-Laize, Bretteville Le Rabet and Cauvicourt.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> PRO, WO171/112. 21 Army Group TAC HQ LOG 0700 July 22.

<sup>395</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,808, Simonds G.G. Notes from Conference at 1000 July 22 1944. General Simonds "told the assembled officers that he proposed to review the position of the campaign in Normandy up to date, and that he would deal with the present an attempt to forecast the future. He said that the war situation in general is very favourable and that it is doubtful if a more favourable situation will arise for us. The enemy are disorganized on the Eastern Front and it looks as though they will not be able to pull themselves together. He expressed it as his personal opinion that he felt that the enemy was making a determined stand here in Normandy because there was a possibility that Hitler had in the back of his mind a faint hope of dickering for a separate peace with Russia, and for that reason, the will to fight still existed among his troops who face us.....reviewing the recent battles South of Caen where we were forced to give ground to the enemy, General Simonds emphasised that it will be most difficult for Commanders to put across to front line soldiers who are constantly being shot at the notion that the Boche is groggy, and also that our task in this recent battle was successful in its primary end despite the losses entailed.....It depended upon our officers to put the idea across to the men that , however fluid the situation may seem on the Russian front and even on the present American front, here in Normandy the Boche, although well on the way to defeat, will still put up a determined resistance....Repeating what he had said on previous occasions General Simonds pointed out that if the war is prolonged normal wastage will continue, and in the long run our casualties will be much higher. He said that at present 2 Cdn corps is suffering casualties at a rate of 100 per day. These casualties arise from such causes as shelling, mortaring, sniping and patrol activity. If we sat as we are doing for twenty days our casualties would amount to approx. 2,000 which are more, if not equal, to the normal casualties sustained by a corps in a stiff battle. Our present situation has got to be exploited tot he fullest extent no matter how tired out troops are. When is physically possible to do so opportunities must be given to the troops for rest, and General Simonds emphasized that he realized how much reorganization of the fighting units and

As Simonds and Dempsey departed the planning session for their tour of Caen with Montgomery and the visiting British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, interest in the movements of the 2nd Panzer Division intensified.<sup>396</sup> A collection of interrogations from prisoners captured in the St. André area revealed some interesting items: one prisoner from the 2nd Panzer told his Canadian interrogators that he had traveled 40-50 km three days ago to the area around Clinchamps and Laize-la-Ville, while another captured from the 1 battalion of the 2PGR did not have any knowledge of the rest of his regiment, let alone the rest of his division.<sup>397</sup> A prisoner from the 981 GR of the 272nd Infantry Division reported that his regiment had been supported on July 21 by tanks of the 12SS and then by tanks of the 2nd Panzer that night.<sup>398</sup>

Although the information that the interrogations produced was interesting, it was only when fused with other sources, particularly the signals intelligence section attached to Simonds's corps, that Simonds's intelligence staff confirmed that the 2nd Panzer Division was operating east of the Orne. At 1400, 2nd Canadian Corps issued an information summary that stated: "together with information from other sources, this confirms the presence of elements of 2 Panzer Division (on) this front although no confirmation yet of tanks, believed from interrogation of (prisoner) from 272nd Division, that counterattacks on the afternoon of July 21 were supported by unidentified SS tanks but last night by tanks of 2nd Panzer division."<sup>399</sup>

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formations under his command was required. But the second best must be accepted and battle tired troops must be pushed to the bitter end if need be. He would make no promises for rest, nor the duration of such rest, as it was up to the Commanders to give their best until the war finishes— in this theatre, in any case." NAC, RG 24 Vol. 17,506. Report on the Resume of Remarks by Lt Gen. G.G. Simonds, CBE, DSO, GOC 2nd Cdn Corps, at O Group Conference Held at 2nd Canadian Corps Conference room, the Chateau Cairon on 30 July 1944 at 1000 by Major A.T. Sesia. 30 July 1944.

<sup>396</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,798, GOC's Activities 1245 July 22; PRO, WO285/9, The First Hundred Days: The War Diary of General Miles Dempsey.

<sup>397</sup> PRO, WO171/221. Second British Army Intelligence Log 1125 and 1240 July 22 1944.

<sup>398</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intelligence Log 1225 July 22 1944.

Although confirming that part, and possibly all of the 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment was operating in the environs of St. Andre, intelligence still could not ascertain if any of the division's armoured elements had accompanied the infantry. The arrival of 2nd Panzer Division's armour was acknowledged later that morning by 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Intelligence: "Confirmed 272 fully committed and small packets of tks(tanks), MK IV's from the 2 Pz Div in support".<sup>400</sup> 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade Intelligence then issued a separate confirmation that tanks of 2nd Panzer were operating east of the Orne.<sup>401</sup> Later, a message from 3rd Canadian Infantry Division to its 9th brigade reported that the 2nd Panzer Regiment had joined the 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment operating in St. Andre.<sup>402</sup> After assessing these developments, Second British Army Intelligence correctly assumed that if both the tanks and Panzer grenadiers from 2nd Panzer Division were operating east of the Orne they would be doing so in a mixed battlegroup providing local support on the ridge.<sup>403</sup>

Although Simonds's intelligence staff had built a solid case, Dempsey's more experienced intelligence staff felt that there was still "nothing to explain the sudden appearance" of 2nd Panzer Division in the St. André area, and set to work resolving other events east of the Orne.<sup>404</sup> That morning, Second British Army established

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<sup>399</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Isum 1400 July 22 1944.

<sup>400</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.13,750, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Message log July 22, 1944; NAC, RG24, Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps July 22 1944.

<sup>401</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.14,355, 2nd Canadian Armored Brigade Intsum 41 0600hrs 22 July 1944.

<sup>402</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.14,212, 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade message log 22 July 1944.

<sup>403</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.48 2400 July 22 1944. The Second Army intelligence summary had reported that it was elements of the 3 Pz Regt that may be operating east of the Orne under the command of a Col. Brassert. During investigation for the "Valour and Horror" R.J. Jarymowycz established that it indeed was a battle group from the 2 Pz that was operating in the St. Andre area - the only difference was that it was commanded by a Major Sterz not the Col Brassert that Second Army had reported.

<sup>404</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No 48 July 22 1944.



that the 980 regiment of the 272nd division was back in the line at St. André after spending two days in reserve.<sup>405</sup> Now all three regiments of the 272nd had been identified in action on the Canadian front. An Ultra intercept later in the day provided further indication that the three regiments were fully deployed along the St. André-Hubert Folie road.<sup>406</sup>

Despite gaining some information on the dispositions of 2nd Panzer, the whereabouts of the 9SS Panzer Division remained a mystery to Second British Army Intelligence. It could not confirm the location of the 9SS as yet, but it did admit that "reports of its tank regiment operating in the St. Andre area were being received again today".<sup>407</sup> The 7th British Armoured Division marked the 10SS in positions straddling hill 112 west of the Orne but could not find the 9SS active along that line and cautiously assumed it was on its way to the 2nd Canadian Corps front.<sup>408</sup>

Likewise, Simonds's headquarters could not offer any substantial information concerning an eastward movement of the 9SS, but did report that its Panzer regiment was across the river from St. André in the area of Feuguerolle-sur-Orne. However, 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence did elaborate on the location of the 1SS positions. Building on intelligence from the previous day, 2nd Canadian Corps Intelligence had been able to identify three of "Der Leibstandarte" battalions east of the Caen-Falaise Road. The 3rd battalion of the 1SS PGR was straddling the Route Nationale while its 1st battalion took up defensive positions in the area of Bourgebus village. The 1st battalion of the 2SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment was spotted near the woods southwest of

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> PRO, DEFE 3/60, XL3020 July 22 1944.

<sup>407</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No 48 July 22 1944.

<sup>408</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.14,355, 2nd Canadian Armored Brigade Message Log, July 23 1944. The information was supplied by 12th Corps who passed it on to 7 British Armoured and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade. NAC, RG24 Vol.14,314, 2nd Canadian Corps Counter Battery Intelligence Summary 1800 July 22 1944.

Frenouville, while concentrations of artillery were found in that area and, to a lesser extent, at Fontenay-le-Marmion.<sup>409</sup>

Once again, air reconnaissance was nonexistent on July 22, but Ultra was able to provide a crucial piece of evidence concerning future German intentions. Intercepts established that the Germans were aware of a large concentration of allied armour south-east of the Orne and were strengthening their anti-tank defences to meet a renewed offensive when weather permitted.<sup>410</sup>

In the evening, Simonds and Dempsey returned to 2nd Canadian Corps Headquarters to discuss Spring.<sup>411</sup> In light of the growing evidence, allied intelligence acknowledged that the focus of the German defence was shifting to the east bank of the Orne.<sup>412</sup> According to Second British Army Intelligence daily summary, the sudden transfer of small elements of 2nd Panzer and 9SS Panzer divisions, and possibly part of the 10SS east of the Orne, had become easier to understand: "The vital ground is East of the river. Hitler Jugend (12SS Panzer Div) stops our drive on Vimont and 1SS with 272 Infantry Division and 192 PGR of 21 Panzer Division have failed to hold us in our drive for Bretteville. Here infantry and armour are required and the least important sector, Caumont, provides what it can in a Battle Group from 2 Panzer Division. This however, may not be enough and so 9SS is asked to contribute too and although not committed, has moved some tanks and probably some infantry east of the Orne."<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> Both Luftflotte 3 and Flak Korps III were awaiting the resumption of a "Goodwood" type drive towards Falaise. PRO, DEFE 3/60, DEFE 3/59, XL3102, 22 July XL, XL2923, 21 July 1944.

<sup>411</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.10,798 GOC's Activities.

<sup>412</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13.645. WD First Canadian Army Intelligence July 23 1944, EXFOR Isum for July 22 stated that "the enemy already feels main threat east of the Orne and had moved across river battlegroups 2Pz, 9SSpz and 10SS Pz Divs." 2nd Canadian Wireless Intelligence section Type B at 2nd Canadian Corps remarked in its technical war diary for July 22 that indications of eastward Movement of several formations was detected by DF. NAC, RG24 Vol. 14,991. Technical WD 2nd Canadian WI section Type B July 22 1944.

The possibility that 10SS would support actions east of the Orne was considered risky because it was already committed in the line around Esquay fending off attacks by Ritchie's 12<sup>th</sup> British Corps attacks.<sup>414</sup> "After our capture of Maltot this evening," Dempsey's intelligence deduced, "the enemy can have no illusions concerning our future intentions there....(he) can take away from his reserve formations in less vital sectors but cannot deplete 10SS Frundsberg to any great degree, if he is to prevent us driving South from Maltot and Esquay."<sup>415</sup>

Earlier in the day, Simonds had informed the planning session that Spring would commence no earlier than July 25. A specific reason for the two day postponement was not given, but the pause in operations to bring the artillery south of Caen, coupled with stiff German counterattacks in the St.André area, undoubtedly played a part in this decision. In addition, the heavy rains that brought Goodwood to a halt had made the ground too wet for armoured operations.<sup>416</sup> Not only did the extra 48 hours afford the front-line Canadian units a chance to consolidate their positions and give the ground a chance to dry, but they also provided Simonds and his intelligence staff with the opportunity to solidify their assessment of events along the German line.

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<sup>413</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.48: July 22 1944; PRO, WO171/112. 21 Army Group Sigintstrep for July 22 located by DF one element of the 9SS Panzer regiment in the area south or southwest of Bourguebus.

<sup>414</sup> PRO, WO171/310, WD 12th British Corps July 22 1944.

<sup>415</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.48 July 22 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.10,715, 3rd Canadian Wireless Intelligence Section Type A Daily Report. 3rd Canadian Special Wireless Intelligence Section Type A reported that up to 1800 on July 22 elements of the 10SS were east of the Orne but control of these elements were still exercised from Thury Harcourt, while other elements were located by DF east of Thury Harcourt, north of Amaye-sur-Orne and north of Forest de Cinglais.

<sup>416</sup> IWM, Erskine Papers, Erskine Diary July 21 and 22 1944; Nicholson, The Gunners of Canada P.172.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **July 23 - The Die is Cast**

After assessing the days events and revising his plan accordingly, Simonds issued the final orders for the attack on the morning of July 23. At 1000 Simonds delivered his directives for "Spring" to his subordinates gathered at the "Prefecture" in Caen.<sup>417</sup> According to Maj. Sesia, who was allowed to attend this conference, Simonds stated that the task of his Corps was to capture the Cramesnil spur, exploit to widen that gap, and then clear the Eastern flank by capturing the woods north of Garcelles. Finally, a further exploitation southwards was ordered to seize the high ground around Cintheaux.<sup>418</sup> To the officers present who had attended the previous planning session, they noted that, in this version of Spring, the role of the Guards Armoured Division, and the exploitation phases of the operation had been changed. No longer was the role of the Guards Armoured in phase four definite and neither was their objective of exploitation. Now, according to Simonds plan, only if things went well in the initial phases, would the Guards Armoured exploit into enemy territory.<sup>419</sup> Along with legislating "both for and against success" he also introduced into the plan a new first phase that was the result of the discovery of the main German defensive line running along Verrières Ridge. In his version of Spring a day earlier, Simonds had called for the capture of Fontenay-le-Marmion and Rocquancourt in the first phase. In this final version, the capture of May-sur-Orne, Verrières village and Tilly-la-Campagne was deemed necessary before Fontenay and

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<sup>417</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Ops Log July 23 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.10,798. GOC's Activities.

<sup>418</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.17,506, 2nd Canadian Field Historical Section WD 1000 July 23 1944.

<sup>419</sup> IWM, Erskine Papers, Erskine Diary 1000 July 23. PRO, WO171/620, WD 22 Armoured Brigade July 23 1944; LHCMA, O'Connor Papers 5/3/22, Letter O'Connor to Adair July 24 1944.

Rocquancourt could be assaulted in the second phase.<sup>420</sup>

In the first phase of the revised plan of attack, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division on the western flank of the assault, and under the cover of darkness, would capture the towns of May-sur-Orne and Verrières village, while the 3rd Canadian Infantry division captured the village of Tilly-la-Campagne. When these objectives were attained, the Royal Regiment of Canada and the Royal Highland Regiment of Canada (the Black Watch) would move on the towns of Rocquancourt and Fontenay-le-Marmion respectively, in the pre-dawn light. While these battalions were consolidating on their objectives, the 7th British Armoured Division would burst between these two units and plunge down the Caen-Falaise road to seize the tactically enticing road hub known as the "Cramesnil Spur." If, after capturing the "spur," the opportunity arose, 7th Armored was to exploit further south to Cintheux. However, once the tanks of the 7th armored had reached the spur, part of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division would move from Tilly-la-Campagne onto Garcelles-Secqueville. According to Simonds plan, only if these first two phases were accomplished, would the British Guards Armored division, along with the rest of the 3rd Canadian Infantry division, would then attack woods to the east of Tilly la Campagne. The last phase, also tentative, could only be ordered personally by Simonds, and would see the Guards Armoured Divisions and the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division consolidate the ground captured by the 7th Armored earlier in the day.<sup>421</sup>

For air support, 2nd Canadian Corps was given 60 medium bombers, which Simonds applied to the woods east of Garcelles, while fighter bombers were to attack the bridges over the Orne while armed reconnaissance aircraft roamed the skies watching both the Laize and Orne rivers for signs of a German armoured counterattack

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<sup>420</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.14,116 WD 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade July 1944: Notes from Corps Commanders Conference 1000 July 23 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.13,765. 3rd Canadian Infantry Division Operational Order No.6: Operation "Spring" 23 July 1944 July 1944

<sup>421</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,712, 2nd Canadian Corps, Operation Instruction No.3: Operation Spring, July 23 1944.

from the south-west.<sup>422</sup> Air support was considered a "bonus" for the attack, which was to go in regardless of weather conditions.<sup>423</sup> With air support only a possibility, each phase of the operation relied on artillery support. For Spring, a large artillery program based on a strict time table was created. Each step in the program required that the attacking infantry and armour be in the right place at the right time along each step to reap its benefits.<sup>424</sup>

After outlining the phased plan and distributing the divisional objectives and timings, Simonds addressed the issue of enemy dispositions. The 2nd Canadian Corps commander indicated that the German main line of resistance would be based on the towns of Fontenay-le-Marmion, Rocquancourt and Garcelles Secqueville with covering positions in May-sur-Orne, Verrières village and Tilly-la-Campagne. He then impressed that the German Defence would comprise a series of counterattacks conducted by infantry with tanks in support once the Canadian attack was over and stressed the usual violent nature of these reactions.

In his concluding remarks, Simonds proceeded to furnish a rundown of enemy units opposing his corps.<sup>425</sup> He acknowledged that tanks from the 2nd Panzer and 9SS were in support of the 1SS Panzer and the 272nd divisions. He also revealed that elements of the 9SS seemed to be spread out across the entire front. Alluding to the success of operations Express and Pullman, Simonds concluded that the 10SS was still in position on the west bank

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<sup>422</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,712, 2nd Canadian Corps, Air Programme for Operation Spring, July 23 1944; PRO, WO171/376 Guards Armored Division Operational Order No.2: Operation Spring

<sup>423</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.133,711, 2nd Canadian Corps, Air Programme: Operation Spring; Even though no specific details concerning air-strikes on targets in the Laize area appear in the conference notes 7th British Armoured division lists the air programme as: "medium bombers on La Houge Woods; Rocket firing Typhoons on all possible gun areas and; Fighter Bombers on Fords and Bridges in the valley of the Laize River." PRO, WO171/439, 7th British Armored Division, Operational Order No.6: Operation Spring, July 24 1944.

<sup>424</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.13,712, 2nd Canadian Corps, RCA Operation Order No.1: Operation Spring, July 24 1944; RG24 Vol.14,328, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, RCA Operation Instruction No.2: July 24 1944. For artillery support, Simonds had under command the divisional artillery of the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions and the 7th British Armoured division as well as the 2nd Canadian AGRA and the 8 British AGRA.

<sup>425</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,765.3rd Canadian Infantry Division Operational Order No.6: Operation "Spring" 23 July

of the Orne.<sup>426</sup> To deal with the possibility of a largescale counterattack by ISS Panzer Korps, tactical air strikes were ordered across the front - weather permitting. Medium bombers were to attack the woods south of La Hogue on July 24 and again on July 25, to pin down the suspected ISS reserves. From first light on July 25, air reconnaissance was to patrol the area from the river Laize to Bretteville and "attack all enemy movement approaching the battle area from the southwest" and to "shoot up any movement on the roads," while also attacking enemy gun and mortar emplacements," and reporting on any movement of German reserves from the Thury Harcourt-Falaise-Liseux line.<sup>427</sup>

While Simonds was issuing his final orders for "Spring" at 1000 at the Prefecture in Caen, news was

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1944 July 1944.

<sup>426</sup> NAC, RG 24 Vol. 14,116 WD 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade July 1944 Notes from Corps Commanders Conference 1000 July 23 1944. Apparently what Simonds referred to as "all along the front" was in actuality the movement of the 9SS in small groups from IISS Panzers Corps control west of the Orne into the hands of the ISS Panzer Corps east of the River. Sylvester Stadler, the commander of the 9SS stated: "After the large-scale attack on 19 July south of Caen, it became quite evident that the enemy no longer had any intentions of breaking through in the sector of the IISS Pz. Corps.....The less likely an enemy large-scale offensive in our sector appeared, the more we anticipated such an operation in the sector of the ISS Panzer Corps... On the strength of this presumption, the 9SS Pz Div was relieved during the night of the 22/23 July by the 10SS Pz Div in the eastern—and by the 277 Inf Div in the western-part of the sector, and then pulled out. At the same time, the division was subordinated to the ISS Pz Corps and assembled in the area of Offjieres, where it was assigned the task of reconnoitering possibilities of commitment in the event of an enemy breakthrough in the sector of the ISS PZ Div and, particularly, in the sector of the 272 Inf Div". The movement to the east of the river could not have come at a better time for ISS Panzer Corps: "Already on 24 July 1944, the 272 Inf Div had to be reinforced by a tank battalion and a Panzer Grenadier battalion, because the situation had taken an alarming turn there. When, on 25 July, the enemy made a new large-scale attack in the sector of the 272 Inf Div, and managed to achieve a deep penetration, the 9SS Pz Div launched a concentrated counterattack east of the Orne, which was successful and prevented the breakthrough of the Canadian forces". NARA, Center for Captured German Records, MS# B-470 Combat Report of the 9SS Panzer Div: Period 3-24 July 1944. Furbringer, L'Histoire de le 9me SS Panzer. Tieke, II SS-Panzerkorps.

<sup>427</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Air Programme: Operation Spring. Even though no specific details concerning air-strikes on targets in the Laize area appear in the conference notes 7th Armoured division lists the air programme in its Operational Order No.6: Operation Spring as : Medium Bombers La Hogue Woods; Rocket firing Typhoons on all possible gun areas and; Fighter Bombers on Fords and Bridges in the valley of the Laize River.

received at Second British Army confirming suspicions about the location of the 9SS.<sup>428</sup> Although the Ultra intercepts did not provide detailed information, they reported that the division battle headquarters was moving to a new location to set up operations - presumably east of the Orne.<sup>429</sup> Throughout the morning, a wide-ranging flow of intercepts was received revealing German intentions and preparations in the Verrières sector. 3rd Canadian Wireless Intelligence Section Type A reported a general "spread eagling" of the German armoured formations along the front line, while other intercepts revealed that 1SS Panzer Korps was continuing to increase its anti-tank defences east of the Orne river and that the guns of Flak Korps III were in the line from Fontenay to Garcelles.<sup>430</sup> It was revealed that 1SS Panzer Division was intending to hold its newly expanded defensive positions, which now included Troteval farm and the part of Verrières Ridge overlooking St.Martin.<sup>431</sup> Ultra also informed allied intelligence that the enormous build-up leading to "Spring" was making an impression on the Germans. The Flivo from 12SS Panzer Division reported that "In St.Aubin - large military camp seen - tents being put up on edge of locality. All roads of advance crowded with vehicles - shipping concentrations on scale not seen before - even in last few weeks."<sup>432</sup>

While Simonds was delivering his orders in Caen, his intelligence team was assessing enemy strengths for

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<sup>428</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 10,798. GOC's Activities.

<sup>429</sup> RPO, WO171/221. Second British Army Intsum No 48 July 22 1944; PRO, DEFE3/60 XL3149 23 July 1944 XL3160 23 July 1944.

<sup>430</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 10,715, 3rd Canadian Wireless Intelligence Section Type A Daily Report July 23 1944. Results from DF indicated the "spreadcagling of armoured formations components" across Second Army front. Elements of 10SS HQ were tentatively identified north of Thury Harcourt and unidentified elements discovered in the general area Amaye sur Orne. The main elements of 2nd Panzer division still appeared to be in the "general area west of Aunay sur Odon", while other elements were located by DF east of the Orne near Bretteville sur Laize but could not be definitely identified, but was considered "a good possibility" in light of other sources.

<sup>431</sup> PRO, DEFE 3/60, XL3146 23 July 1944.

<sup>432</sup> PRO, DEFE 3/60, XL3157 23 July 1944.



its daily report. Over the last 48 hours, 2nd Canadian Corps Intelligence had determined through prisoner interrogations that the 272nd division had been "considerably reduced by casualties".<sup>433</sup> It estimated that the remainder of the division consisted of four battalions of 600 men each backed up by a battalion of infantry and a squadron of tanks from the 2nd Panzer Division, Tiger tanks from the 503rd and 101SS tank battalions and possibly elements of the 9SS.<sup>434</sup> Despite acknowledging the existence of only one infantry battalion and some tanks from the 2nd Panzer Division on Verrières, corps intelligence took nothing for granted concerning the arrival of the remainder of the division on its front. As an appendix to its daily Intsum, it included a full schematic of the division similar to the detailed information provided for the 272nd and the 1SS Panzer.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Intsum No 13 2000 July 23 1944.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid. NAC, RG24 Vol.13,750, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Intsum No 5 Part I July 23 1944.

<sup>435</sup> As with the 2nd Canadian corps summary, 2nd Division intelligence concurred with Corps' assessment of German strength but offered a tempered prediction of the expected conduct of the German defense in its Intsum: "The confused state of the enemy order of battle in our sector suggests very strongly that elements of the above formations (272 inf Div, 1 SS, 9 SS, 2 Pz Divs.) which have suffered casualties, together with lesser elements of the severely mauled 12 SS and 21 Panzer Divisions, have been formed into battle-groups.....There must be no misconception, however, regarding the fighting effectiveness of such battle groups. Mustering all they can from wherever they can they will contest our advance hill by hill, village by village". This counsel was echoed again in the second part of the Intsum: "Although there have been definite reports of the enemy digging in along new defensive lines as indicated in part I of this summary, it appears that the scarcity of infantry will require him to depend more upon rapid and aggressive defensive tactics of his army". With this in mind, divisional intelligence inferred that German intentions were designed to keep its battalions deployed along its present line on the foot of Verrières ridge in order to facilitate preparations of a defensive line running through May-sur-Orne, Fontenay-le Marmion, Rocquancourt, Garcelles Secqueville and the woods to the east. While this position was fortified, intelligence suspected that the enemy would be "gathering his scattered armour for a heavy counterattack based upon Bretteville-sur-Laize". An officer from the 272nd division offered an ominous warning about future German operations to his Canadian captors. He reported that he had been told to expect a large scale counterattack on the Canadian front between July 24 and July 28 spearheaded by large numbers of SS troops brought in from the eastern front. This claim of an impending movement of SS troops from the eastern front to Normandy was deemed possible by operational intelligence. 2nd Canadian Corps Intsum No 12 for July 22 warned of the sudden appearance of the Totenkopf, Viking and the Hohenstaufen divisions at any time. 2nd Canadian Corps Intsum No 13 on 23 Jul reported that "Panther tanks of SS Totenkopf might easily turn up anytime". NAC, RG24, Vol.14,334, WD 4 Canadian Infantry Brigade July 23 1944; NAC RG24 Vol.13,750, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Intsum No 5 Part I and Part II 23 July 1944; 2nd Canadian Corps Intsum No.13 July 23 1944.

In addition to prisoner interrogations, a sharp increase in enemy activity along the Verrières sector supplied Simonds's intelligence staff with a wide array of developments to assess. The 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment reported that it had knocked out 21 enemy tanks that day, a considerable rise in the amount of enemy armoured activity over the last few days.<sup>436</sup> Later on, while on reconnaissance in May-sur-Orne, "A" squadron pinpointed 18 Panzers on a road east of the town and requested an air strike.<sup>437</sup> After waiting two hours, the typhoon strike was refused and the Panzers moved back out of the May-sur-Orne area and into the woods to the southwest, which according to a prisoner, had been a harbour for 30 tanks the night before.<sup>438</sup>

Air photos of the same area did not locate the tanks but did disclose 25 *Nebelwerfers*<sup>439</sup> in the main German positions between May-sur-Orne and Verrières village. The photos also confirmed the existence of infantry positions in Verrières village, multiple machine guns in Troteval farm and tanks and infantry in Tilly-la-Campagne.<sup>440</sup> Operational intelligence then learnt from a "reliable source" that the Germans were using a tunnel under the ridge as part of their defensive works. Reportedly, the tunnel ran under the eastern flank of the German defences from the Quarry west of Rocquancourt to the woods east of May-sur-Orne. This information was recorded by operational intelligence and relayed to 2nd Canadian Corps emphasizing that the Germans were using the tunnel as either a storage facility or as part of their defensive system.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Ops Log July 23 1944.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Ops Log 24 July 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.14,556, 2 Canadian Armoured Brigade message log 23 July 1944.

<sup>439</sup> Multiple rocket projector that delivered either a 150mm or 210mm high explosive load.

<sup>440</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.14,153, 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade Message Log 23 1245 23 July 1944. NAC, RG24 Vol.14,556, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade message log 1430 23 July 1944.

<sup>441</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Intsum No.13 2000 July 23. 2nd Canadian Corps passed this

Late in the afternoon, another important piece of intelligence information came to light by way of the local population. A French civilian reported the existence of an underground mine network in Gouvix near Bretteville. In the same area, he also reported that the Forest de Cinglais was being employed as an ammunition dump by the Germans. To what extent the mine network and forest were being used by the Germans was not reported.<sup>442</sup> Desperate for information concerning reinforcement east of the Orne, intelligence ordered a further investigation. Within a few hours it had the answer. The intelligence officer from the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade was now reporting that the Forest de Cinglais was not just an enemy supply dump. Large quantities of tanks and armoured vehicles had been spotted in the forest.<sup>443</sup> Soon after, Ultra located the battle headquarters of 9SS Panzer Division on the southern fringe of the forest.<sup>444</sup> During the evening, Ultra provided another "break" for operational intelligence concerning the reinforcement question. A decrypt revealed that the remainder of the 2nd Panzer Division had been relieved in the Caumont sector and was en route to the Moulines area east of the Orne to act as corps reserve.<sup>445</sup>

On the afternoon of July 23, Simonds met with Maj. Gen. Allan Adair commander of the Guards Armoured

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information to 2nd Canadian division and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade. Why Foulkes division did not pass this information on to its subordinate brigades still remains a mystery.

<sup>442</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.14,355, 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade Message log July 23 1944.

<sup>443</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.13,711, 2nd Canadian Corps Message Log July 23 1944. The Forest de Cinglais turned out to be the main repair shop for German armoured vehicles east of the Orne as well as the harbour for the tanks of the 9SS. This should not have come as a surprise to Canadian intelligence. The 3rd Canadian infantry division received word in its pre-D-Day planning that "an excellent source reports an immense park of armoured vehicles...600 in Forest de Cinglais...south west of Bretteville-sur-Laize on May 7th." Elliot, Scarlet to Green P.78. I SS Panzerkorps commander Joseph "Sepp" Dietrich was so impressed with the ability of the mechanics to repair his tanks in record time during "Goodwood" that he awarded an Iron Cross second class to them for their role in stopping the British offensive. Dietrich considered their performance to be one of the main reasons for the success of the German defense. D'Este, Decision in Normandy P.234.

<sup>444</sup> PRO, HW5/538, XL3149 July 23 1944.

<sup>445</sup> PRO, DEFE3/60, XL3213 July 23, 1944.

at Adair's headquarters, presumably to discuss the division's evolving role in Spring. Excitement mixed with trepidation concerning the operation seemed to be growing within Adair's division as his intelligence staff recorded that the picture along the front was "not a nice neat one with the divisional boundaries markable in prominent blue chinagraph."<sup>446</sup> Although able to establish that the German armour east of the Orne was operating in three mixed battlegroups, divisional intelligence could not give details on their composition, but suggested that the formation of battlegroups signified a weakness in the German defence.<sup>447</sup> This weakness, however, had been bolstered by the appearance of three battalions of Tiger tanks east of the Orne.<sup>448</sup> According to estimates from Adair's intelligence staff, Simonds' 2nd Canadian Corps was already facing 275 German tanks and assault guns east of the Orne, while another 205 tanks from the three Panzer Divisions were on their way to the east bank of the river.<sup>449</sup> "This number", the intelligence staff warned, was the "estimated paper strength" only and "losses coupled with petrol shortages and mechanical problems could reduce this number by about 2/3rd." Even if this optimistic assessment was accurate, it still left roughly 130 battle ready-panzers in front of 2nd Canadian Corps.<sup>450</sup> While Simonds was

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<sup>446</sup> PRO, WO171/376, Guards Armoured Division Intsum No 14 2000 July 23 1944.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid. The Guards Armoured intelligence summary indicated that Tiger tank battalions from the 101 and 102SS Bn belonging to I SS and II SS Panzer Korps respectively and the 503 Heavy Tank to the 86th Korps were operating east of the Orne.

<sup>449</sup> PRO, WO171/439, 7th British Armoured Division Special Intelligence summary No 43 24 July 1944. The Special Intelligence Summary issued by the 7th British Armoured Division for operation Spring estimated that the I SS Panzer Division had 20 Panther and 60 MKIV tanks and was well stocked in infantry, while 9SS was estimated to have 50 Panthers and 20 MKIV's. No account was taken of the tanks of the 2nd Panzer or of the three Tiger battalions that were operation east of the Orne but each were estimated at battalion strength.

<sup>450</sup> PRO, WO171/376, Guards Armoured Division Intsum No 14 2000 July 23 1944. The Intelligence summary for July 23 also provided some information on the Rocquancourt Defence line and the German method for holding it: "This line, which is probably the main German defence line East of the Orne, is sited in open country and mostly avoids following conspicuous features such as hedges etc. It consists of twisted trenches about 10 yards long often in the shape of a W and generally about 60 yards apart. Many of the trenches have positions suitable for machine

meeting with Adair and the other divisional commanders, Dempsey was having a tête-à-tête with Montgomery at Second British Army Headquarters where Montgomery informed him that the American Operation Cobra was set for the next day, and "wished" that Second British Army would "keep up the maximum activity during the next few days."<sup>451</sup> According to Montgomery's intelligence, German anxiety in the Normandy bridgehead was centered on two areas - Bourguebus and St.Lo but since the "enemy was too stretched and his reserves too scanty" it would be impossible to counter both threats and a decision must be taken to defend one or the other. According to 21 Army Group Intelligence, the moves over the last two days were evidence that the Germans appeared "to have taken a decision."<sup>452</sup> "These", according to 21 Army Group, were "expected reactions", but the arrival of the battlegroup from 2nd Panzer Division from the Caumont area was considered more significant.<sup>453</sup> To Williams and Montgomery, this arrival signified that "once more the enemy's main defensive weight" was on the eastern flank of

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guns, mortars or anti-tanks guns, but on the last available photograph (19 July) there appeared to be little attempt at defence in depth....the beginnings of this line were seen before last week's attack started. Once the enemy had sopped the attack it is unlikely that he manned the immediate front line in great strength. Certainly all the infantry of the 1 SS Pz Div were not brought forward and some are still presumably back manning the Main Defence Line....up to now the crust around the bridgehead has been a thin cordon NOT sited in any depth. Now is the first time we are up against even the beginnings of a German prepared position which will no doubt be arranged in the normal German way with the Main Line of Resistance, battle outposts etc."

<sup>451</sup> PRO, WO285/9, "The First Hundred Day of Operation Overlord - The War Diary of General Miles Dempsey" 1600 July 23 1944. PRO, HW5/537, XL2986, XL2150 July 21, 1944. Part of Montgomery's decision to launch Cobra was eased late on July 21 when an Ultra intercept sent at ZZZZ priority revealed an appreciation by the II Para Korps which indicated that an Allied regrouping designed to extend the constricted area round St. Lo for the purposes of a further thrust forward to the South West or South East, was under way. "Should Allies continue their attempts at breakthrough" the intercept revealed "with their well known expenditure of material, having regard to low German battle strength, it must be expected that such breakthrough would succeed."

<sup>452</sup> PRO, WO171/131, 21 Army Group Intsum No 148 Part I July 23 1944. The intsum reported that "at least a battlegroup of 9SS and elements of 10 SS Panzer Divisions have crossed the Orne Eastward: the former to halt the Canadian advance round the flank of 1 SS aimed at St.André; the latter further to the west...once the divisions of the 270 class had taken their place in the line armoured bolstering was necessary rather than the presence of complete Panzer Divisions."

<sup>453</sup> PRO, WO171/131, 21 Army Group Intsum No 148 Part I July 23 1944. The Intsum recognized that "a battalion of Panzer grenadiers has yielded prisoners at St.André and according to their statements some tanks also,

the Normandy bridgehead.<sup>454</sup>

On his way back to 2nd Canadian Corps Headquarters, Simonds, as per routine, stopped by Dempsey's headquarters and finalized the details of Spring.<sup>455</sup> By this time, Second Army Intelligence had fallen into line with the feeling at 21 Army Group that the valley east of the Orne was the main focus of the German Defence: "For the present, on the Second Army sector, the enemy appreciates that his greatest danger lies in the valley of the Orne, and the move of the 9SS Panzer Division from its rest area in the upper Odon valley may soon be translated from probability to fact".<sup>456</sup> The likely commitment of 9SS Panzer east of the Orne led Dempsey's intelligence staff to postulate that I SS Panzer Korps had committed what little armoured reserve it had left. Yet, like the Guards Armoured Division, Second British Army also issued a cautionary note concerning this eventuality: "Re-shuffle as he will, the enemy still has little to spare, and his recent losses have taken heavy toll. But he is a past master at making a little go a long way, and in using limited resources as well, and accordingly there is no ground whatever for expecting him to give way in any sector of the front without a struggle.....Enemy offensive capabilities at the present time are nil, but defensively he is strong in weapons and thin in men. He can still plug holes locally, with some success too and his real weakness will only become apparent when there are too many holes to plug at the same time. Then he must stay and be destroyed - be reinforced or carry out a planned withdrawal".<sup>457</sup>

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perhaps as much as a battalion, are present."

<sup>454</sup> PRO, WO171/131, 21 Army Group Intsum No 148 Part I July 23 1944. Montgomery's intelligence assessed that from the Orne as far as Hottot the infantry divisions were stiffened by elements of 10 SS in the Evrecy area, while a regiment of 9 SS was reported to be preparing a second line position on the high ground near Fontenay. From Hottot Westwards, everything was "in the shop window" with the bulk of 2nd Panzer division, 17 SS Panzer Grenadier and 2 SS Panzer Division taking their place in the line beside the infantry.

<sup>455</sup> PRO, WO285/9, The First Hundred Days of Operation Overlord - The War Diary of General Miles Dempsey 2130 July 23. NAC, RG24 Vol.10,798, GOC Activities 2115 July 23.

<sup>456</sup> PRO, WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.49 July 23 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.13.645, WD First Canadian Army Intelligence July 23 1944.

## Chapter Five:

### **The Uncomfortable Results**

Throughout the morning of July 24, Simonds spent his time at his headquarters finalizing details of "Spring" and then met with Montgomery, Dempsey, and 2nd Canadian Corps divisional commanders for lunch.<sup>458</sup> Although the issue of the operational order for Spring on the morning of July 23 meant that Simonds could not make serious changes to the plan materially, the degree to which the optional exploitation role of the British armour could be and was augmented spiritually was a result of the intelligence discoveries.<sup>459</sup> In the afternoon, 8th British Corps commander, Lt.Gen. Richard O'Connor spoke with Simonds concerning the two British armoured divisions under Simonds's command which had served O'Connor's corps during Goodwood. As a result of these discussions, O'Connor sent a letter to Adair, carefully balanced between advice and encouragement, urging him to exercise the most conservative stance in Spring's exploitation phase: "Now I've seen General Simonds and I know what you are being asked to do" O'Connor wrote, "It is a difficult job and will require very careful thinking out. I told him that your people were difficult to hold and not difficult to push on, and that a certain lack of battle

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<sup>457</sup> PRO. WO171/221, Second British Army Intsum No.49: July 23 1944.

<sup>458</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.10,798, GOC's Activities July 24 1944.

<sup>459</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.14,116, WD 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade, July 1944: Notes from Corps Commanders Conference" 1000 July 23 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol.10,808, 2nd Canadian Corps Operation Instruction Number Three July 24 1944: Operation Spring; NAC, RG24, Vol.13,712, Drafts of Operation Spring. The author has checked the notes from the Corps commanders conference at Caen on July 23 with the Corps operational order on July 24. There have been no alterations to the plan in any major form. Likewise, the four drafts of the plan worked on between July 23 and 24 were also examined. The substantial change to "Spring" was done during the first of four revisions on July 22; these were: the inclusion of the line May-sur-Orne-Verrières village as the Phase I objective; the change of role for the Guards Armoured division; and the continent nature of phases three and four which were definite until the night of July 22/23.

experience may bring you still some unnecessary casualties. I do caution you in this case of course not to be sticky, but to go cautiously with your armour, making sure that any area from which you could be shot up by Panthers and 88s are engaged. Remember what you are doing is not a rush to Paris - it is the capture of a wood by combined armour and infantry; so it has, as an operation, not quite the same background as the last...Finally, I am confident you will do your show well. Do it as a careful operation and think out every move - don't make a wild rush of it."<sup>460</sup>

All during the day on July 24, reports were received at 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps headquarters that the German Defence on Verrières Ridge was coming to life. All along the front, movement of German armour was recorded as I SS Panzer Korp continued to plug holes in its front.<sup>461</sup> At noon, units of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division reported that enemy tanks concealed as "haystacks" had been observed along Verrières Ridge.<sup>462</sup> Later the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division would send word that the "haystacks" had been moved into the intended path of the 2nd division's advance.<sup>463</sup> All through the day and into the early morning of July 25, messages and reports from night patrols continued to flow in concerning German preparations for the coming offensive.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Lt. Gen. R. O'Connor to Maj. Gen. A. Adair, July 24 1944. LHCMA, O'Connor papers 5/3/22.

<sup>461</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 14, 116, 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade Message Log July 24 1944. At 0535 the RHC (Black Watch) sent word that tank engines and the movement of tanks could be heard in the area immediately south of St. André. At 0640 the RHC sent a second message concerning the sound of tanks but could not see them due to a very heavy ground fog. A little over 2 hours later the 4th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery reported that sounds of tanks in Verrières village could be plainly heard the previous hour.

<sup>462</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol. 13, 711, 2nd Canadian Corps Ops Log 24 July 1944; NAC, RG24, Vol. 13, 750, 2 CID Message Log July 24th 1944. The tank destroyers of the TD company were apparently part of the tanks that were camouflaged as "Haystacks" that were reported by Black Watch survivors. NAC, RG24, Vol. 12, 750; NARA, Center for Captured German Records, MS# B-540, "272 Inf Div Normandy from 5-26 July 1944."

<sup>463</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol. 14, 331, 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade Message Log July 24th 1944.

<sup>464</sup> Reports of digging and hammering in the German defensive positions in St. Andre were reported by 6th brigade units. A patrol from Les Fusiliers Mont Royal reported that it saw no sign of infantry at Troteval farm but did discover one tank in the ground and a machine gun firing from the right of the farm. The patrol also noted that the enemy was sensitive to movement in the area. At 2125 the FMR captured a number of "French-speaking" prisoners



By the time H-Hour arrived at 0330 on July 25, the efforts of 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence had provided Simonds with a harvest of information about the German forces in front of his corps and provided him with an accurate picture of the formidable defence stacked against him. On his corps' immediate front lay two dug-in divisions (one a crack SS division) in a prepared natural Defence position supported by a sizable amount of artillery, anti-tank guns and rockets.<sup>465</sup> Although these front-line units had been reduced in the last week, they had been bolstered with tactical armoured support from two Tiger tank battalions and battle-groups of the 2nd, 9SS and 10SS Panzer Divisions. In reserve positions east of the Orne, intelligence had discovered the bulk of the 9SS and

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who admitted that "tanks are waiting to counterattack". At 2328 3rd Canadian division reported that the enemy had been shelling the town of Bourgebus very heavily during the evening but found it "unusual" that no mortar fire had been encountered. NAC, RG24, Vol. 14,557, 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade Message Log July 24 1944; NAC, RG24 Vol. 13.516, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Intelligence Log 0415 July 24 1944.

<sup>465</sup> PRO, WO171/439, 7th British Armoured Division Special Intelligence Summary No.43: July 24 1944. The 7th British Armoured Division Intelligence summary for July 24 was an attempt "to consider strengths and dispositions on our particular front in more detail." Emphasis was drawn to the fact that for the last three days there was no Tac R or Photo reconnaissance. The intsum warned that the "enemy may have used the opportunity to move troops into the area either from north of the Seine or from other parts of the front." The intsum pointed out that an infantry screen by units of the 272nd Div lay immediately east of the Orne, with either the 980 or 982 Rgt up to strength and 981 GR completely written off. "In any case the mentality of PW from 272nd Division plumbs a hitherto unprecedented depth of deficiency." Intsum surmised that this gives the Germans five battalions of infantry positioned in-depth from the Orne to the Falaise road, the 1 SS panzer divisions forms the counterattack force in this area. 1 SS was suspected to have 20 Panthers and 60 MK IV's and fairly well stocked in infantry "we should expect again to find four or five tanks supporting every infantry company position....the enemy's reactions to our attack on 18 July, so far as we know them, were slow. We must expect however to find that he now has some reserve armour in the background. Two divisions immediately spring to the mind, 2 Pz because a PW was taken on the front from I Bn 2 PGR, and 9SS Pz because it has not lately been seen on 12 Corps front....Now 2 Pz Div has been identified within the last 3 days still on the American front, and although, the Americans are prepared to see it relieved, there is no reason that a relief has in fact taken place....2 Pz has however before sent a Bn of tanks to help out flanking formations and it is likely to have provided a battle group on this occasion....9SS Pz is suspected to have troops digging in East of Villers Bocage and its armour was thought to be immediately West of the Orne ready for counterattack in that sector. But our advance on Maltot and Feuguerolles provoked no armoured interference and it is therefore possible that 9 SS is now East of the Orne. 9SS Pz Div may have 20 MK IV and 50 Panthers....To sum up, the enemy's efforts to contain our bridgehead have so far met with considerable success and there can be no doubt that every attempt we make to break out will meet fierce resistance."

2nd Panzer and part of the 10SS as well.<sup>466</sup> More importantly, intelligence had revealed the threat of a strong armoured response from the southwest and that German intentions were focusing for a renewed allied attack east of the Orne as early as July 23.<sup>467</sup>

July 24 also marked the fourth consecutive day that Sigint had been collecting decrypts from the *Luftwaffe's JK II* and *Fliegerkorps LX* confirming preparations for night operations in the Caen area designed to disrupt the coming attack. As the history of the Royal Canadian Artillery notes: "This programme was well advanced when the *Luftwaffe* struck with one of the most effective raids of the war against Canadian Artillery."<sup>468</sup> With German aircraft dropping flares to mark the guns positions, German bombs inflicted casualties on men and equipment and effected the all-important lines of communication needed to control the battle.<sup>469</sup>

Just after this raid by the *Luftwaffe*, and before the first phase of the operation could get under way, repeated attacks on the western flank by 2nd Canadian Infantry Division were needed to secure the Corps start line in the town of St. Andre and the "Factory" area of St. Martin de Fontenay. Each time the Cameron Highlanders of

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<sup>466</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13.711, 2nd Canadian Corps Intsum No 14 2000 July 24 1944. Although not confirmed it looks as though the information concerning the disposition of the 10SS Panzer Division was obtained from Ultra intercepts. See DEFE 3/60 XL3256 and XL3268. Simonds intelligence staff issued its last summary just before the kickoff of "Spring" and reported that "during the last twenty-four hours there has been no reported change in the enemy situation on our front." The order of battle was estimated to be the same as reported in the night before with the possible exception that on the right flank, the relief of 10SS Panzer Division by 271st infantry division most likely had been completed and 10SS was now in reserve while a small part of it overlapped the Orne.

<sup>467</sup> PRO, DEFE3/59; XL2988 July 21 XL3132 XL3139 July 23; PRO, DEFE3/60; XL33271 XL3379 July 24 PRO, DEFE3/60 XL3577 23 July; PRO, DEFE3/63 XL3273 July 24 1944. Decrypts also discovered that the 12 SS and the 21 Panzer Divisions, positioned on the eastern fringe of Second British Army were expecting a full scale attack as early as July 23 or when the weather would permit.

<sup>468</sup> Col., G.W.L. Nicholson., The Gunners of Canada: The History of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery: Vol. II 1919-1967 (Toronto and Montreal:1972) P.300.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.; NAC, RG24 Vol.14.328, WD 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. The 3rd Canadian infantry Divisions recorded in its war diary for the night of July 24/25 that "during the early hours of this morning Hun planes were over and dropped Butterfly bombs in Divisional area, these bombs cut most of out line communications."

Canada would clear one part of the town German troops (reported to be using a mine network under the ridge) would infiltrate back into the supposedly secure start line and upset the delicate time table of Simonds plan.<sup>470</sup> On the eastern flank, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division fared no better. Each attempt to take the village of Tilly-la-Campagne met with a stiff and bloody rebuff from the defending units of 1SS Panzer Division.<sup>471</sup>

With each phase of the plan contingent on the success of the previous, H-Hour on the morning of July 25 revealed that the operation was in jeopardy of collapsing. By first light, reports came back to Simonds that the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (R.H.L.I) had taken Verrières village in the center and that the Calgary Highlanders were in May-sur Orne on the West. With this news in hand, Simonds ordered the second phase of Spring to begin. Although there was uncertainty within the Black Watch as to who held the town of May-sur-Orne, a stream of urgent messages from Simonds and 2nd Canadian Infantry Division commander Maj.-General Charles Foulkes arrived demanding that the battalion "get going."<sup>472</sup> When things did not move fast enough for Simonds, he sent one of his Brigadiers down to the front to get the Black Watch moving.<sup>473</sup> Four hours after its scheduled start, and without the benefit of darkness, phase two began. Moving across a beet field towards Fontenay without armour or artillery support, the Black Watch was quickly cut off from its start line by accurate German artillery, mortar, rocket, and machine-gun fire, and was forced up the ridge into the teeth of an armoured counterattack by a Kampfgruppe (battlegroup) from 2nd Panzer Division. In the center, tanks from the 7th Armoured Division and Infantry from the Royal Regiment of Canada moved through Verrières village towards Rocquancourt, but were checked and forced back to Verrières by tanks from the 1SS Panzer Division dug in along the ridge between

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<sup>470</sup> Reginald Roy, 1944: The Canadians in Normandy. (Ottawa 1984) P.119.

<sup>471</sup> Rudolf Lehmann, and Rolf Tiemann, Die Leibstandarte. Band IV/1. (Osnabruck: 1986) P.302.

<sup>472</sup> NAC, RG24 Vol.13,750 WD 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, July 1944.

<sup>473</sup> Terry Copp, The Brigade: The 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade 1939-1945. (Ontario: 1992) P.44

Fontenay and Rocquancourt.<sup>474</sup> With much confusion and little progress, Simonds and Foulkes spent the afternoon making arrangements for further attacks to take place that evening and early the next morning. At 1700, as per German doctrine, the main counterattack struck.

While units of the I SS Panzer Korps were fending off Anglo-Canadian attacks in the days leading up to Spring, Panzer Group West had been steadily sending armour from the II SS Panzer Korps on the west bank of the Orne over the river to buttress General Josef "Sepp" Dietrich's I SS Korps defence of Verrières.<sup>475</sup> By the afternoon of July 25, Dietrich could call upon various Kampfgruppe from 9 SS Panzer Division and the 2nd Panzer Division, as well as the reconnaissance battalion of 10 SS Panzer Division and the Tiger tanks of the 503 and 102 SS heavy tank battalions for immediate support. Further south, he could also call upon, if necessary, the remainder of 9 SS and parts of 10 SS as well as that of the 116th Panzer Division, which had just arrived in the St. Sylvain area.<sup>476</sup> Supported by the artillery of the II SS Panzer Korps, and guns of the Tiger tanks and assault guns west of the Orne, 9 SS Panzer Division launched a two-pronged counterattack towards the Canadian penetrations at May-sur-Orne and Verrières village.<sup>477</sup> At May-sur-Orne, 9 SS Panzer found that the remaining regiments of the 272nd Infantry Division, had already cleared the Calgary Highlanders from the outskirts of the town. With this, 9 SS pushed down the road and into St. Martin de Fontenay and its "Factory" area. A small counterattack by the Regiment De Maissonneuve delayed, but did not prevent 9 SS from recapturing St. Martin, most of St. Andre and point 67, a mile

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<sup>474</sup> Stacey, Victory Campaign P.191.

<sup>475</sup> E.J. Sauer, "Germany's I SS Panzer Korps: Defensive Operations June - September 1944." Diss. Boston College, 1992.

<sup>476</sup> DHist, "AHQ Report No 50. The Campaign in North-West Europe: Information from German Sources Part II. Invasion and Battle of Normandy 6 June - 22 August 1944." (Ottawa:1952).

<sup>477</sup> Ibid.; NARA, Center for Captured German Records, MS# B-470, "Combat Report of the 9 SS Panzer Div: Period 3-24 July 1944", (Washington:1947); H. Furbringer, l'Histoire de le 9me SS Panzer. (France:1984) P.119 and Wilhelm. Tieke, Im Feuersturm Letzer Kriegsjahre: II.SS-Panzerkorps mit 9. und 10.SS-Division "Hohenstaufen" und "Frundsberg". (Osnabruck:1975) P.345.



**CONCLUSION**  
**The Bitter Harvest**

**"The soundness and ultimate success of any plan made by a commander in the field will largely depend on the extent and accuracy of the information concerning the enemy that he has at his disposal."**

**- British Manual of Military Intelligence in the Field -**

## Conclusion:

### **The Bitter Harvest**

Next to the debacle at Dieppe, Operation Spring was not only Canada's most costly battle but also its most controversial.<sup>480</sup> Over the last fifty years the historiography pertaining to Simonds's handling of "Spring" has managed to season his responsibility for the failed operation by maintaining his victimization at the hands of incomplete intelligence and "eleventh hour reinforcement". It is obvious from the evidence that neither point, in fact, is valid. The safety and comfort of the high level of secrecy placed on the various sources of intelligence used by Simonds to formulate Spring, provided him with a "whipping boy" to excuse the dismal results of the operation in his post-war treatise. Equally, C.P. Stacey seemed to feel that the murky intelligence picture provided the best means for extricating himself out of an historical clinch during the writing of the official history. Judging this collection of intelligence material with the benefit of hindsight certainly precludes the notion of surprise and eleventh hour compromise. Equally in 1944, this information should have had that effect. In light of this harvest of information it is impossible to continue to attribute the tragic fate of operation "Spring" to Simonds's shallow claims. Likewise, no longer will the historian be able to use intelligence as a "whipping boy" and simply dismiss it as a factor when assessing operation Spring.

In the days and hours preceding Operation Spring, life at 2nd Canadian Corps headquarters was "hectic" as the situation, in Brigadier N.E.H. Rodger's estimation, was "both serious and urgent."<sup>481</sup> Despite the frenzied pace at Simonds's headquarters, Rodger admitted that he would have found it "surprising" if Simonds was not

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<sup>480</sup> NAC, RG24, Vol.18,826, Statistic and Explanations 11 December 1956. The official casualty toll for "Spring" was: 1634 total casualties of all ranks; 475 of which were fatal; 1011 were wounded; and 148 taken prisoner.

<sup>481</sup> N.E.H. Rodger to the author Feb 29, 1996.

"thoroughly aware of the available information about the enemy."<sup>482</sup> According to Rodger, the integration of Broughall's intelligence team into 2nd Canadian corps' General Staff was so complete by this stage that "even if by chance Broughall was absent another member of the (intelligence) staff would have passed information along."<sup>483</sup> As the evidence strongly suggests, Simonds was indeed aware of this information, if not from his own intelligence staff, then from Dempsey's intelligence staff at Second British Army or the combination of both.

On each day leading up to "Spring," 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence had tapped every available source of information at its disposal to provide Simonds with an accurate picture of German strengths, dispositions and intentions. Reports from ground troops, patrols, prisoner of war interrogations, air reconnaissance and above all signals intelligence, were able to locate and identify all the units of the 272nd infantry division and the 1SS Panzer Division along with their front line positions. Simonds was also provided with a complete divisional history of the 272nd division, a unit composition, and location of its sub-units in the St.André/St.Martin area along with its supporting mortar, rocket and artillery positions further south. Although the fluid movement of the 1SS Panzer Division provided a somewhat confusing picture in the last days of Goodwood and Atlantic, intelligence managed to locate the division's forward positions astride the Caen-Falaise road and in the Verrières village area. More importantly, however it also provided Simonds with a constant tab on the panzer divisions intentions to hold that position as well.

The exact location of the German main line of resistance south of Caen was also furnished. After crossing the Orne, intelligence had alluded to the construction of a defensive system based on the Verrières-Bourguebus feature. Soon after, the main defensive line was confirmed to exist based on the towns of Fontenay-le-Marmion, Rocquancourt and Garcelles Secqueville with covering positions in May-sur-Orne, Verrières village and Tilly-la-

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> N.E.H. Rodger to the author March 26, 1996.



Campagne. Along this line, reports had been continuously received that the anti-tank Defences had been strengthened and that a heavy concentration of mortars, rocket launchers, and artillery had been incorporated into the Defence. Adding to this was a report two days before the attack that the Germans were making use of an mine network under the ridge, either as a storage facility or as part of their main defence line.

Not only did this collection of information reveal that the Germans had, and were continuing to, reinforce the area east of the Orne, but it also revealed that this information had an impact on Simonds's planning of Operation Spring. The sluggish response of German armour to Goodwood and Atlantic was the impetus for the original incarnation of Spring, which envisioned an Allied armoured breakout down the Falaise road and a withdrawal of the German forces west of the Orne. By the evening of July 22, however, it became clear to Simonds and his staff that the window of opportunity, presented two days earlier in the St. André area of Verrières Ridge, was rapidly evaporating. It also became evident at this time, that the Germans were considering Verrières-Bourguebus Ridge and the area east of the Orne, the focal point of their Defence in Normandy, and that the German tactical posture east of the river was designed for that purpose, and not for a major counterattack or withdrawal.

As a result of this information, coupled with Simonds's post-war admission that Spring was legislated both for success and the lack of it, suggests that the 2nd Canadian Corps Commander knew of the impending threat which his Corps faced before the planning had ceased and the final operational orders issued. Certainly the changes Simonds introduced at the July 23 conference, (setting new objectives for the first phase and changing the role of armoured exploitation from definite to contingent), were due to the adept assessment of this information by his intelligence staff. Simonds's concern about the threat of a German armour response from the south west was also evident on July 23 when he announced his "Air Programme" for Spring. In Dempsey's "Tennis Over the Orne" approach, German armour was to be subjected to the overwhelming might of the Allied Air Forces and, accordingly, Simonds requested strikes on the Bridges over the Orne and armed reconnaissance to locate and delay

the expected arrival of the German Panzers in 2nd Canadian Corps' path. However, Simonds was not the only one concerned with the impact which these panzer divisions would have on Spring. As a result of reports that the Panzer Divisions were either out of the line west of the Orne or on their way east of the river, Dempsey ordered a set of operations to be carried out on the west side of the Orne by 12 British Corps, the intentions of which, were to draw the German armour away from the planned proceedings east of the river.

The evidence also shows that, not only was Simonds aware of the highly secret and highly revealing sources of intelligence available at Dempsey's headquarters, but that he tapped into them while planning Spring. Even if Simonds was not indoctrinated into Ultra for the Normandy campaign, it is certain that he was privy to its information through the various forms of intelligence summaries at Second British Army, and from personal contact with Dempsey and his intelligence staff. Also, Simonds's intimacy with the Y service shows that he found the information provided by this source to be of the utmost importance. From the fact that the operations of the 2nd Canadian Wireless Intelligence Section Type B were dictated by 2nd Canadian Corps intelligence, it is evident that the locations of 9SS, 10SS and 2nd Panzer divisions, and the effect which they could have on operations, were of primary interest at Simonds's headquarters in the days leading up to Spring.

According to Major W.H. Broughall, the intelligence staff at 2nd Canadian Corps was operationally inexperienced and Simonds knew this. As a result, not only did Broughall and the intelligence staff lean on Second British Army intelligence, but so did Simonds. The inexperience of Simonds's intelligence staff was not only apparent to Broughall and Simonds, but to Dempsey and Second British Army as well. This proved to be crucial in the case of the 2nd Panzer division. Although the arrival of 2nd Panzer east of the Orne was confirmed by 2nd Canadian Corps, Second British Army was hesitant about accepting this assessment from an inexperienced intelligence staff. In response, Dempsey's intelligence adopted "a wait and see" attitude before confirming from other sources (such as Ultra) the veracity of 2nd Canadian Corps' information. The delay imposed by Second British Army proved crucial as Simonds based his revised plan for July 23 on Second British Army's assessment

that the movement of the armour from 2nd Panzer east of the river was unconfirmed and incomplete. It was only after Simonds had delivered his orders on July 23 that Ultra revealed that all of 2nd Panzer division was indeed moving east of the Orne. At this stage, and according to doctrine, another major revision of Spring would not be permissible. Spring would go in on July 25, hopefully before the full weight of the German armour had arrived east of the Orne.

Although Simonds's intelligence staff was forced to learn on the job, their intelligence training leading up to Normandy afforded them with the highest level of instruction that reliance on British doctrine could provide. Although Simonds and Broughall did not receive their staff school training under the revised intelligence doctrine of 1943, they were both responsible for the integration of it into Canadian Army intelligence policy, and therefore, both were familiar with it when they went into battle in the summer of 1944. As a result, if any failure on the part of intelligence in Spring is apparent, it cannot be blamed on the work of the intelligence staff themselves, as they simply adhered to their prescribed doctrine. Any fault, it seems, would have to lie within the British doctrine itself.

In the early stages of the war, intelligence was considered the pariah of the General Staff. By 1944 however, its relationship to high command had evolved from its early design, based strictly on collection and distribution, to a subtle form of analysis. Although the integration of this subtle form of analysis into high command had made great strides by 1944, there still was some room left for improvement. In accordance with what the staff school candidates had been taught leading up to the summer of 1944, the integration of intelligence into operations ended once a commander had issued operational orders. However, from July 23 until the opening of Spring at 0330 on July 25, intelligence continued to obtain information that the bulk of 9SS, 2nd Panzer and part of 10SS Panzer Divisions were either east of the Orne or would arrive around the time Spring was to start.

Brigadier N.E.H. Rodger, acknowledged that "at the time the picture of enemy locations became clear it

may have been too late to order serious changes to the plans."<sup>484</sup> Although Brig. Rodger could cast no light on how the plan was changed when Simonds's staff learned of the arrival of the German armour onto 2nd Canadian Corps' front, he suggested that the military adage "order counter-order, disorder" might apply.<sup>485</sup> Rodger's comments were a reflection the British doctrine of the attack, which made no provision for commanders to make significant changes to their plans on the basis of new intelligence, other than the cancellation of the operation altogether. With Montgomery's "wish" that Second British Army keep up the pressure east of the Orne in support of the American Cobra operation in the west, cancellation of Spring was not an alternative for Simonds.<sup>486</sup>

Although not directly in the scope of this study, assessing the impact of intelligence on the planning process of Spring also affords the historian with a glimpse into the question of what role Spring played in connection with the larger framework of the Normandy campaign. From the intelligence information, Spring, it is revealed was originally designed as a breakout operation, but as the rains and the German armour arrived, it became a race against time to capture the Verrières-Bourguebus and the high ground to the south, before the Germans could block the Anglo-Canadian effort and escape the impending results of a simultaneous breakout by the American First and the British Second Armies. With this said, the impact of intelligence on Spring, shows the was certainly a key bolt in the hinge of Montgomery's strategy in Normandy and its historiography. The failure of Spring confirmed what Montgomery's intelligence had been uncovering all along, that the Germans, although slow at first, were strengthening east of the Orne River in response to Goodwood and Atlantic, while depleting their

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.; NAC, RG24 Vol.14,328, WD 3rd Canadian Division RCA July 24 1944.

Rodger also recalled the frequently muttered expression among the 2nd Canadian Corps General Staff "HYHIABC" (Haven't you heard its all been changed). This sentiment seemed to be felt in the 3rd Canadian division as the artillery commander recorded on July 24, that he "had gone to what he hope(d) (was) his last coordinating conference for Operation Spring.

<sup>486</sup> In the operations of Montgomery's 21 Army Group, a "wish" was a politely couched term for "order" and this

defence in the St.Lo area facing the American First Army to do so. By the time the intelligence could be assessed, the changes to Spring made the operation resembled many of the battles of attrition fought during the First World War, and again for political and morale reasons, this could not be admitted, particularly in light of the World War I style massacre of the Black Watch.

As it was 9SS Panzer Division that did the most of the damage to his Corps, Simonds could have survived in the military sense, even if he had conceded in the post-war that his intelligence staff had given him prior notice that 2nd Panzer Division was east of the Orne. However, for political reasons, Simonds could not admit that he had waited for confirmation from the more experienced Second Army Intelligence staff, particularly when it would be revealed that it was tanks from the 2nd Panzer division which had crushed the Black Watch as they advanced up Verrières ridge under Simonds's specific orders. Likewise, Stacey preferred to accept Simonds's notion, partly as a result of Simonds's pressure, partly due to his ignorance of the high level sources of intelligence, and partly due to his "humanistic" feeling that information of this sort, intended for the general public, would turn a knife in the old wounds of those associated with the Black Watch, and lead to investigations of other misadventures.

In this respect, if Simonds was victimized by poor intelligence, as he claimed, it was not as a result of the information provided, or by the deductions drawn by his own staff, but by a combination of the evolving nature of intelligence in relation to high command, and his own assessment of events. Although Simonds chose to blame the outcome of Spring on faulty intelligence, he in turn cannot be blamed for the shortcomings of his doctrinal upbringing or for his decision to rely on the experienced intelligence staff at Second British Army instead of his inexperienced, but adept, intelligence staff at 2nd Canadian Corps. However, the ultimate decision to plan and execute Spring based on the information provided, was Simonds's - and as commander of 2nd Canadian Corps and the architect of Spring, the responsibility for that decision, and the fate of his Corps in that operation, resides solely with him.

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should not give the impression that Simonds had any alternative but fulfill Montgomery's "wish".

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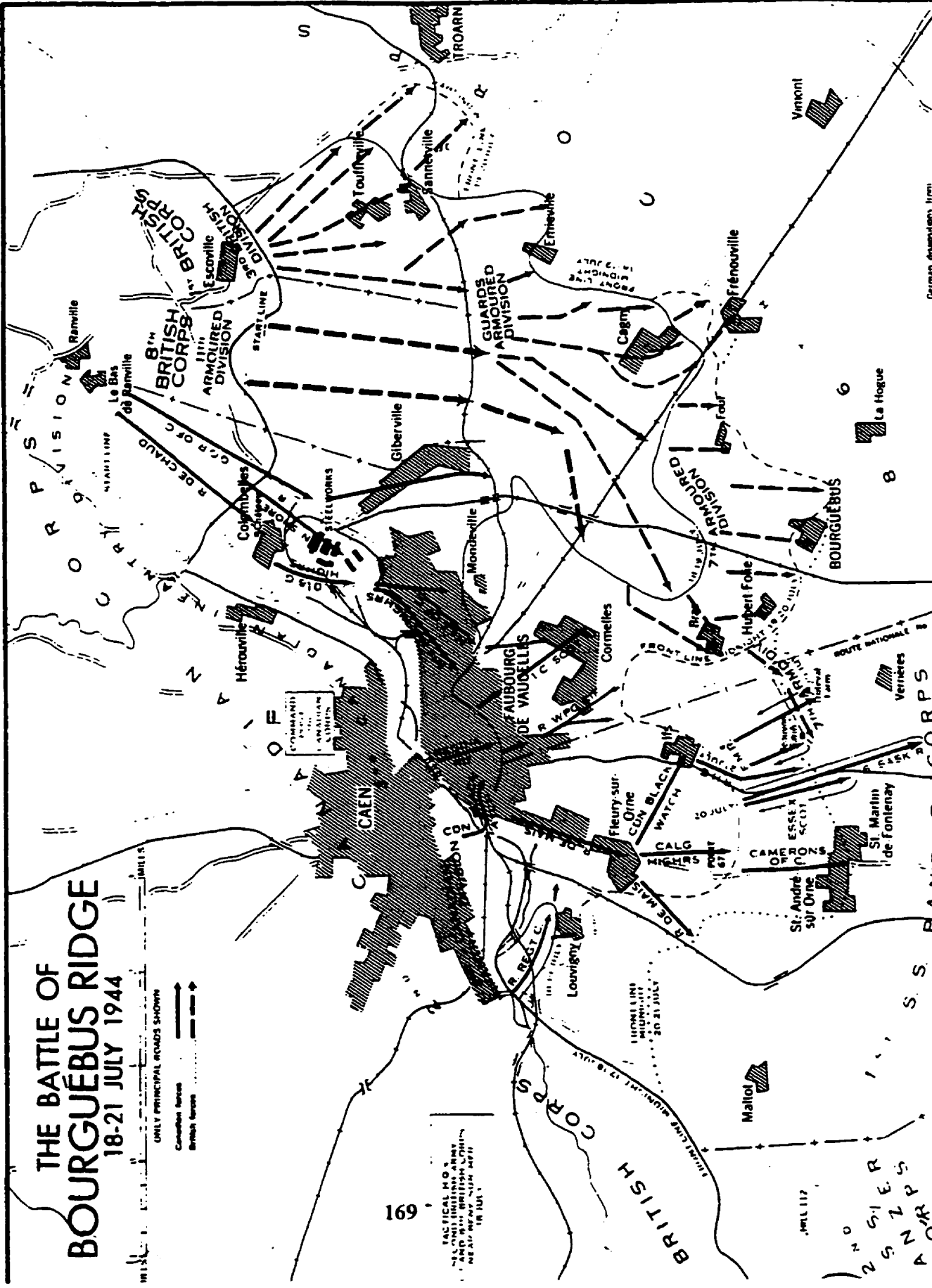
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**THE BATTLE OF  
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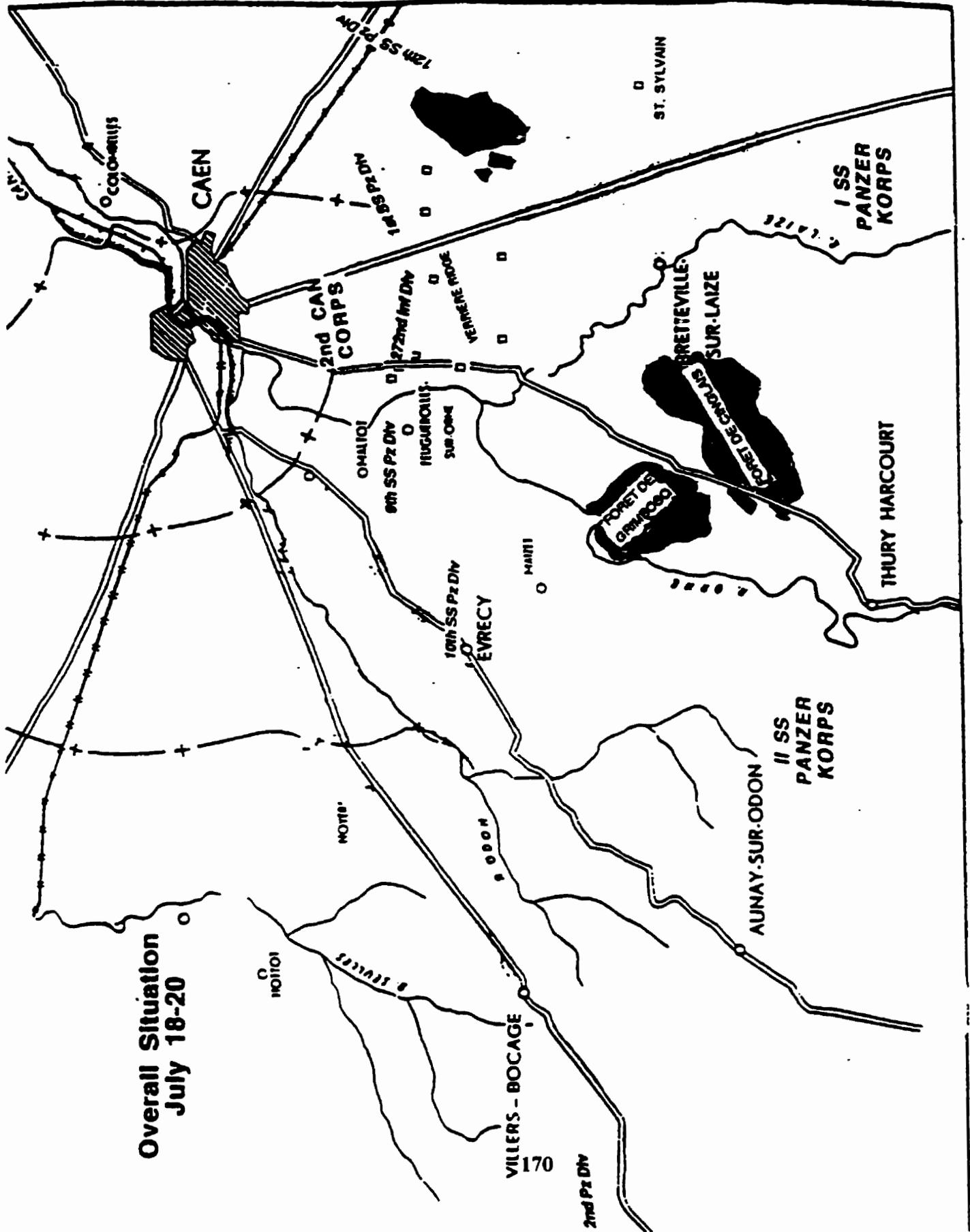
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 Canadian Forces  
 British Forces

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 "THE BATTLE OF BOURGUÉBUS RIDGE"  
 AND THE BRITISH CORPS  
 NEAR MONTMAYEUR, 18 JULY 1944

JULY 1944

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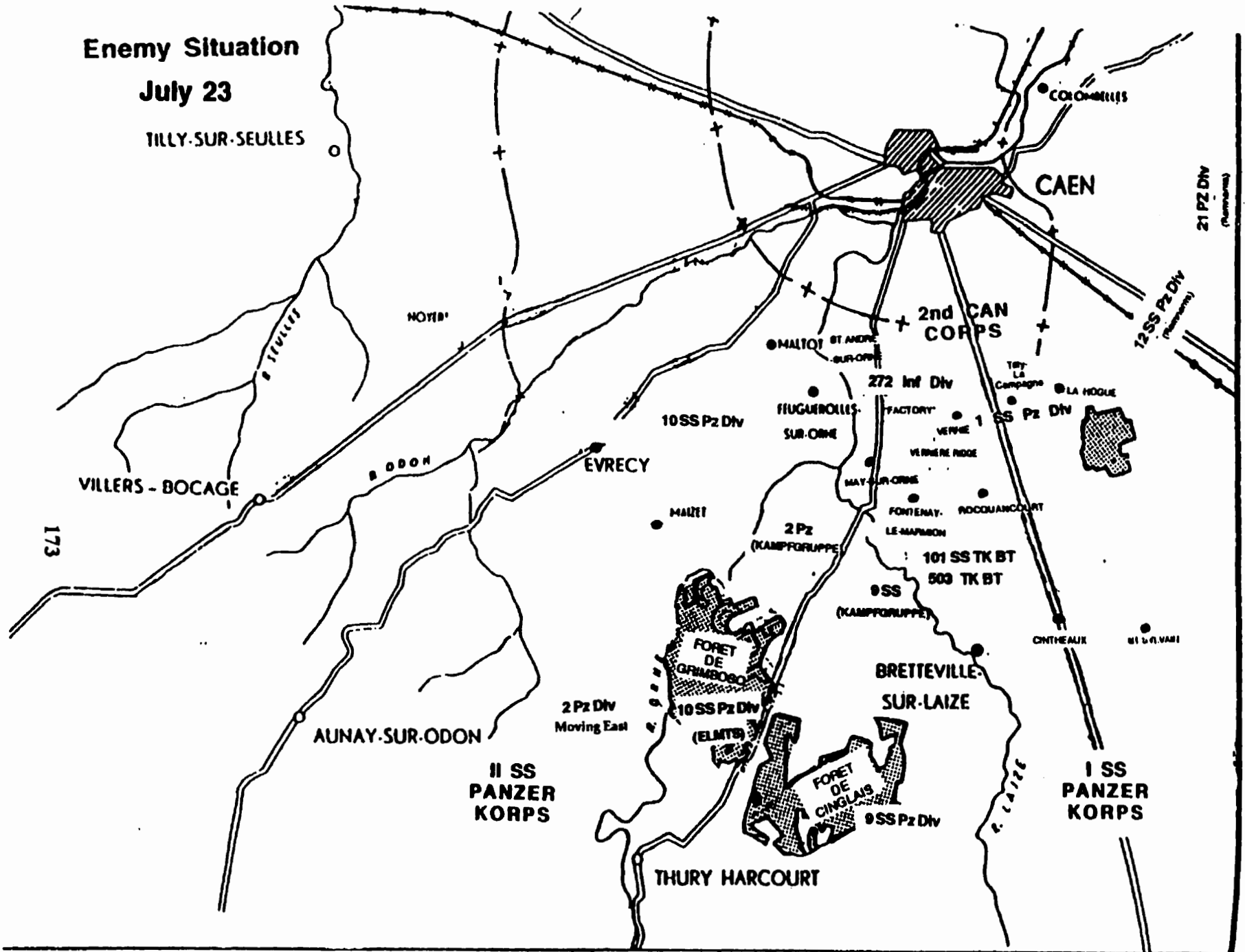


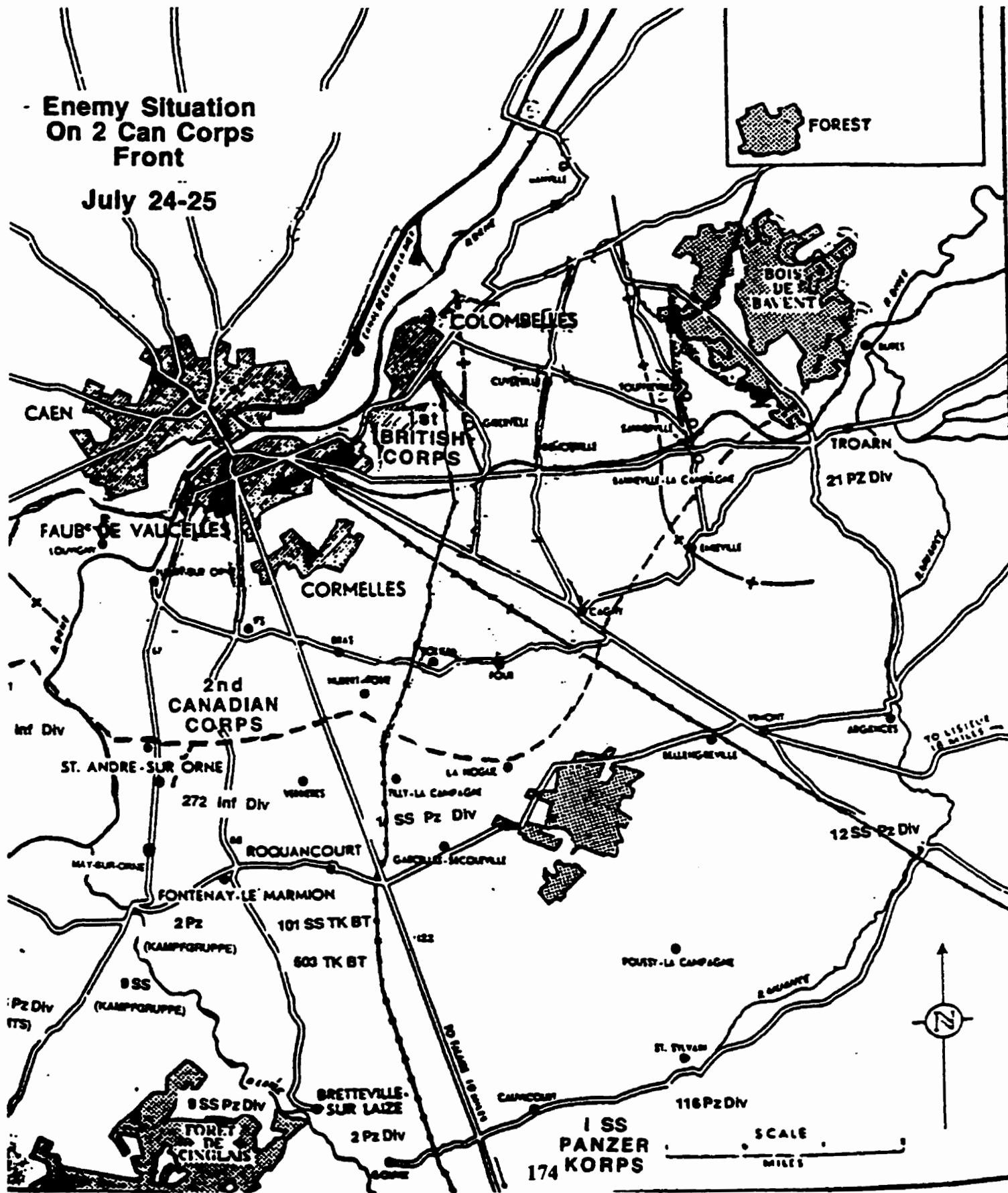


# Enemy Situation

## July 23

TILLY-SUR-SEULLES





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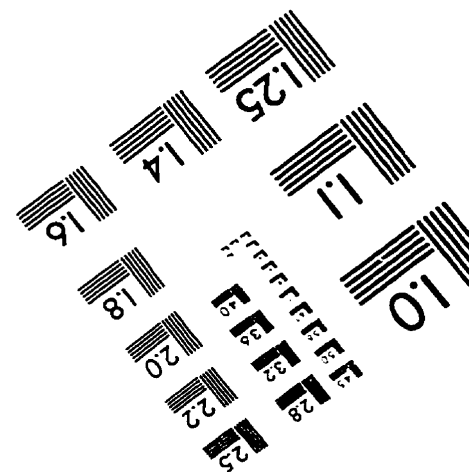
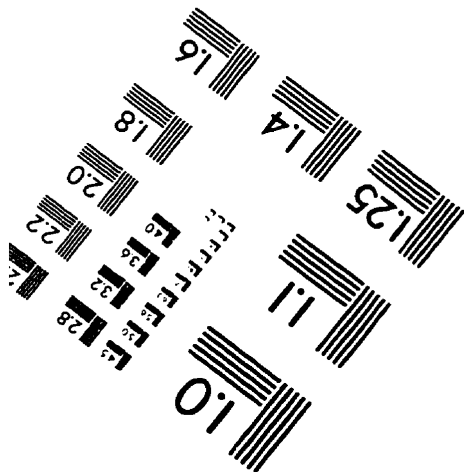
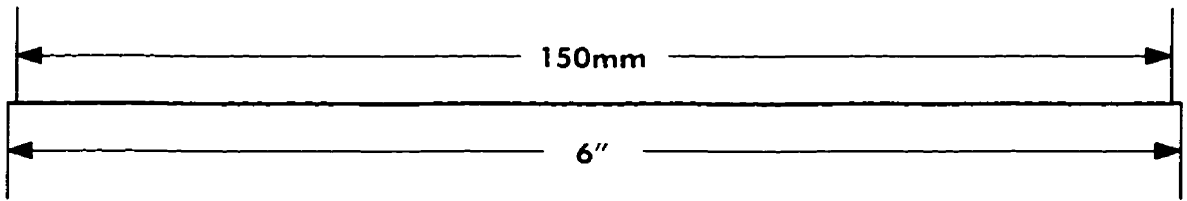
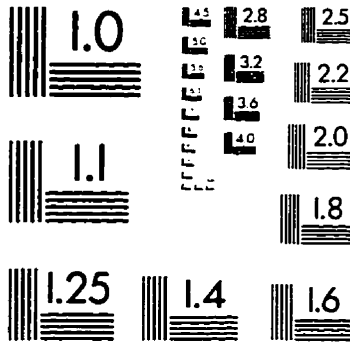
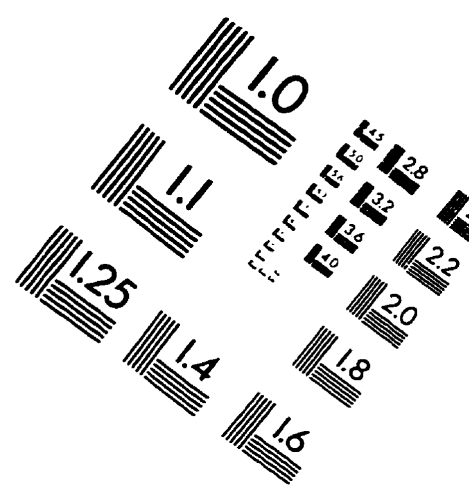
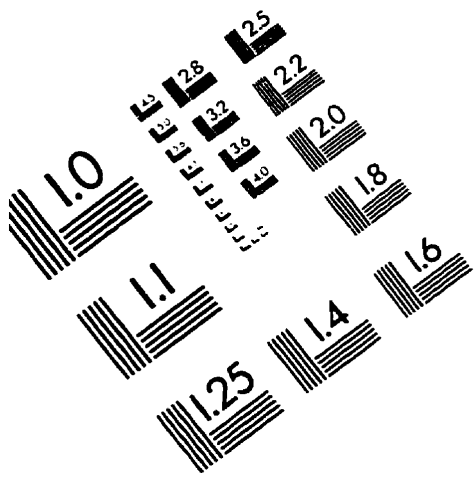
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