

SHARPENING THE SABRE:
CANADIAN INFANTRY COMBAT TRAINING
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By

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ABSTRACT

**“Sharpening the Sabre:
Canadian Infantry Combat Training during the Second World War”**

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During the Second World War, training was the Canadian Army's longest sustained activity. Aside from isolated engagements at Hong Kong and Dieppe, the Canadians did not fight in a protracted campaign until the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The years that Canadian infantry units spent training in the United Kingdom were formative in the history of the Canadian Army. Despite what much of the historical literature has suggested, training succeeded in making the Canadian infantry capable of succeeding in battle against German forces. Canadian infantry training showed a definite progression towards professionalism and away from a pervasive prewar mentality that the infantry was a largely unskilled arm and that training infantrymen did not require special expertise. From 1939 to 1941, Canadian infantry training suffered from problems ranging from equipment shortages to poor senior leadership. In late 1941, the Canadians were introduced to a new method of training called “battle drill,” which broke tactical manoeuvres into simple movements, encouraged initiative among junior leaders, and greatly boosted the men's morale. The Canadians participated in numerous military exercises of varying sizes that exposed problems with their senior leadership. The replacement of unsuitable officers greatly enhanced the fighting potential of Canadian units and formations. As time went on, infantry training became more rigorous and realistic, and tactical concepts became increasingly sophisticated. By the time of the

invasion of Normandy in June 1944, infantry training was intense, suited to units' assigned tasks, and highly technical, which belied the false prewar assumption that the infantry was an unskilled arm. By the time Canadian divisions entered battle, they were as prepared as they would ever be. The exception to this was the training of the overseas reinforcement units, which reached an acceptable standard only in the last months of the war. This study ultimately represents a substantial contribution to understanding the history of the Canadian Army and its role in the Second World War.

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ABBREVIATIONS

2 i/c	Second in Command
A/	Acting (<i>precedes rank or title</i>)
AAG	Assistant Adjutant General
ACGS	Assistant Chief of the General Staff
Adm	Administration <i>or</i> Administrative
ADAG	Assistant Deputy Adjutant General
Adj	Adjutant
Adv	Advanced
AG	Adjutant General
AHQ	Army Headquarters
Alq R	The Algonquin Regiment
Armd	Armoured
Atl Comd	Atlantic Command
Bde	Brigade
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BGS	Brigadier, General Staff
BM	Brigade Major
Bn	Battalion
Brig	Brigadier
CAB	Records of the Cabinet Office (<i>UK</i>)
Calg Highrs	The Calgary Highlanders
Camerons of C	The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada
Carlt & York R	The Carleton and York Regiment
CASF	Canadian Active Service Force
Capt	Captain (<i>army rank</i>)
Capt (N)	Captain (<i>naval rank</i>)
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CDIRU	Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit
Cdn	Canadian
CE	Chief Engineer
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CI	Chief Instructor
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CIHU	Canadian Infantry Holding Unit
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CIRU	Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit
CITB	Canadian Infantry Training Battalion
CITR	Canadian Infantry Training Regiment
CMGC	Canadian Machine Gun Corps
CMHQ	Canadian Military Headquarters
CNE	Canadian National Exhibition
CO	Commanding Officer

Col	Colonel
Col (GS)	Colonel (General Staff)
COS	Chief of Staff
Comd	Commander (<i>title</i>)
Comdt	Commandant
COSSAC	Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander
Coy	Company
CRU	Canadian Reinforcement Units
CTAA	common to all arms
CTC	Combined Training Centre
CTS	Canadian Training School
CWM	George Metcalf Archival Collection, Canadian War Museum
DA & QMG	Deputy Adjutant and Quartermaster General
DAG	Deputy Adjutant General
DCGS	Deputy Chief of the General Staff
DHH	Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence
Div	Division
DMO & I	Director of Military Operations and Intelligence
DMT	Director(ate) of Military Training
DMT & SD	Director of Military Training and Staff Duties
DND	Department of National Defence
DOC	District Officer Commanding
Ech	Echelon
Edmn R	The Edmonton Regiment
Eqpt	Equipment
Essex Scot	The Essex Scottish Regiment
Ex	Exercise
FM	Field Marshal
Fus MR	Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal
Gen	General
GHQ	General Headquarters
GO	General Order
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOC-in-C	General Officer Commanding-in-Chief
Gp	Group
GS	General Service <i>or</i> General Staff
GSO1	General Staff Officer, Grade I
GSO2	General Staff Officer, Grade II
GSO3	General Staff Officer, Grade III
Hast & PER	The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment
HF	Home Forces
Hist	Historical
HLI of C	The Highland Light Infantry of Canada
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
HQ	Headquarters

IG	Inspector General
IG (A) (WC)	Inspector General (Army) (Western Canada)
Inf	Infantry
Instr	Instruction
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LCA	Landing Craft, Assault
LCM	Landing Craft, Mechanised
LCol	Lieutenant-Colonel
LCpl	Lance Corporal
LCT	Landing Craft, Tank
LGen	Lieutenant-General
LMG	light machine gun
LSI	Landing Ship, Infantry
Lt	Lieutenant
M & SWTC	Mountain and Snow Warfare Training Centre
Maj	Major
MD	Military District
MG	Manuscript Group <i>or</i> Machine Gun
MGA	Major-General in Charge of Administration
MGen	Major-General
Mit	<i>Mitrailleuses (Fr. "Machine Gun")</i>
MND	Minister of National Defence
MTP	Military Training Pamphlet
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NDHQ	National Defence Headquarters
NPAM	Non-Permanent Active Militia
NRMA	National Resources Mobilization Act
N Shore R	The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment
Nth NS Highrs	The North Nova Scotia Highlanders
OC	Officer Commanding
OCTU	Officer Cadet Training Unit
Offr	Officer
OIC	Officer in Command
OO	Operation Order
Op(s)	Operation(s)
ORs	other ranks
Org	Organization
OTC	Officers Training Centre
PA	Personal Assistant
Pac Comd	Pacific Command
Pers	Personnel
PF	Permanent Force
PIAT	Projector, Infantry, Anti-tank
PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
PT	physical training
Pte	Private

QOR of C	The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada
R 22e R	Royal 22 ^e Régiment
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCA	Royal Canadian Artillery
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
RCR	The Royal Canadian Regiment
ret'd	retired
Rft(s)	Reinforcement(s)
RG	Record Group
RHC	The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada
RHLI	The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment)
Regina Rif	The Regina Rifle Regiment
RN	Royal Navy
R Regt C	The Royal Regiment of Canada
R Wpg Rif	The Royal Winnipeg Rifles
SD & G Highrs	The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders
Seaforth of C	The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada
Sec	Section
SECO	South Eastern Command
Secy	Secretary
SO	Senior Officer
Sp	Support
S Sask R	The South Saskatchewan Regiment
SS	Schutzstaffel (<i>Ger. "Protection Squadron"; Nazi paramilitary forces</i>)
tel.	telegram
TEWT	tactical exercise without troops
Tk	tank
TNA	The National Archives (<i>UK</i>)
T(s)OET	test(s) of elementary training
Tps	Troops
Trg	Training
VC	Victoria Cross
TWTEC	Trench Warfare Training and Experimental Centre
WD	War Diary
WE	War Establishment
West NSR	The West Nova Scotia Regiment
Wg	Wing
WO	War Office

INTRODUCTION

On 10 September 1939, Canada went to war with Germany for the second time in a quarter-century. It began to mobilize an expeditionary force, the first elements of which arrived in the United Kingdom in December. While the Canadian government was concerned with recruiting young men to fight, the military had the added conundrum of how best to train them in the quickest and most effective way. It would not be an easy task as the existing Canadian Militia was small, underfunded, and undertrained, and lacked a sizeable and professional officer corps. Shortages of weapons, vehicles, and instructors, as well as the need to defend the British Isles once German forces captured France in the spring of 1940, inhibited efforts to train Canadian troops. But gradually, the Canadians overcame these problems, as well as replace inadequate officers, use new training methods, and conduct increasingly realistic and rigorous training exercises to become a modern fighting force. When the war ended in 1945, the Canadian Army was nothing like its former self. The years spent training were a defining period in the history of the Canadian Army. Without understanding this, the picture of Canada's wartime experience is incomplete.

This study is an examination of infantry training because the infantry was the main combat arm. Since the infantry suffered the highest casualties, it also needed the largest number of trained reinforcements. Though the focus of this work will be on Canada's three overseas infantry divisions, some attention will also be devoted to its armoured divisions because they also contained infantry components. Even within the infantry, however, there were many different occupations, such as signalmen, drivers, and

clerks, to name a few. Furthermore, staff training was needed for officers who showed promise. The focus here will be on training that prepared men, namely the rank-and-file and junior officers, for combat. Moreover, the emphasis will be on Canada's field units, those units posted to divisions and intended to fight, which did most of their training in the United Kingdom.

Wartime Canadian infantry training touches upon numerous related subjects such as Prime Minister Mackenzie King's war policies, Canada's relationship with the United Kingdom, the process of developing and refining British military doctrine, British opinions regarding Canadian generalship, and Canadian public opinion. There were also many types of training in the Canadian Army for the various arms, military trades, and leadership and staff positions throughout the war. These are all important subjects and examining each in great detail is tempting. However, doing so would not only be unwieldy, it would also take considerable focus away from understanding the evolution throughout the war of the training that Canadian infantry units received.

This study argues that despite what much of the historical literature has suggested, training was effective in making the Canadian infantry capable of succeeding in battle against German forces. Ultimately, Canadian infantry training showed a definite progression towards professionalism and away from a pervasive prewar mentality that the infantry was a low-skilled arm and that training infantrymen did not require special expertise. This development was much less evident, though, in the training of the overseas reinforcement units, which reached an acceptable standard only the last months of the war. From 1939 to 1941, Canadian infantry training suffered from problems ranging from equipment shortages to bad senior leadership. But as time went on, new

doctrine and training methods emerged, tactical manoeuvres were tested and critiqued, unsuitable commanders were replaced, and tactical concepts became increasingly sophisticated. The depth of knowledge and skill required of Canadian infantrymen expanded greatly as the war went on. It was not enough to be able to march long distances, shoot straight, and follow orders. The Canadian infantryman of the Second World War had to have a thorough understanding of small-unit tactics, had to be able to think and solve problems quickly, and had to be able to use and maintain modern equipment. By 1944, infantry training was intense, suited to units' assigned tasks, highly technical, and as realistic as possible. By the time Canadian divisions entered battle, they were as prepared as they would ever be.

Canadian infantry training during the Second World War was complicated for two main reasons. First, turning a Canadian recruit into an infantryman was not a simple undertaking. Far from being a military arm which contained expendable troops, the infantry required a high degree of technical skill, stamina, and resourcefulness. To become an infantryman, a recruit first had to undergo basic training. During basic training, he learned discipline following hours of close-order drill on the parade square and uniform inspections, the fundamentals of military life, and the basics of how to use his weapons and equipment. If he was an officer candidate, he would undergo months' more training in leadership, administration, and the principles of modern warfare. It was during his advanced training that a new soldier would learn to be an infantryman. An infantryman had to be physically fit as he was expected to spend most of his time in the field, night and day, functioning for long periods with little sleep, and carrying his own supplies. He needed to be a master in the use of his weapons, the Lee-Enfield bolt-action

rifle, the Bren light machine gun, grenades, and anti-tank weapons. All infantrymen had to know first aid and how to use a map and compass. But as a soldier, he also needed to function as part of a team, chiefly his section of ten to twelve men and his platoon of nearly forty. In collective training, he learned how to fight in combination with his comrades in a wide variety of tactical scenarios including attacking a prepared enemy position, clearing an enemy-held village, and staging a withdrawal. He had to know what to do when the enemy launched an aerial or poison gas attack, when taking heavy enemy mortar and machine gun fire, and when one of his comrades was wounded. He had to be able to think quickly, maintain his composure in the face of grave danger, and overcome his fears. In short, there was no dearth of skills at which an infantryman had to become expert.

Second, crafting and administering the principles of war, of which the infantry was a prime instrument, was a complicated task. Doctrine, the officially prescribed principles and methods of conducting operations, defined what and how men were taught. With its professional officer corps too underdeveloped at the outbreak of the war, Canada left the development of doctrine to the United Kingdom, alongside whose forces Canadian troops operated. Tactical and operational doctrine, the types of doctrine that governed the battle procedures of small units and large formations, respectively, evolved throughout the war, as did the methods for imparting such procedures to civilian volunteers, the vast majority of whom had no military experience. While it was up to individual units to train their men, they were guided by the overall training policy set by senior headquarters. Because Canadian soldiers were spread across both Canada and the United Kingdom throughout the war, there were many headquarters that had to

coordinate with each other to ensure that these men were properly trained. In Canada, National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa coordinated with the government to determine the country's military needs and to set overall military policy. The Chief of the General Staff (CGS) was the head of the Canadian Army and worked closely with the Minister of National Defence. To administer the policies instituted by NDHQ, including training, Canada was divided into military districts. When Canadians arrived in the United Kingdom, they were subject to the authority of Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) in London. Established in the autumn of 1939 in advance of the main body of 1st Canadian Division, CMHQ provided administrative oversight to and organized the quartering and supply of Canadian formations in the United Kingdom. Rather than allow the British to handle these responsibilities, CMHQ's existence was a means of maintaining a degree of Canadian autonomy. On major issues of policy, CMHQ coordinated with NDHQ via telegraph.

The basic infantry unit was the battalion, composed of about 850 men. Battalions were grouped by threes into brigades, which in turn were grouped into divisions. When Canadian divisions arrived in the United Kingdom, they normally remained under the direct authority of CMHQ until they were fully equipped and staffed, at which time they were placed under the command of a higher formation, the corps. During the war, Canada's expeditionary force grew large enough to comprise two corps commanded by an even higher headquarters, First Canadian Army, which was established in 1942. Canadian formations often served under British territorial commands where they helped defend the British Isles while completing their training. The training of Canadians in the United Kingdom was therefore subject to policy set forth by CMHQ, Canadian corps and

army headquarters, and British command headquarters. Thus, Canadian infantry training was a complicated affair that required coordination between various levels of command in two countries. This complex system exerted negative effects on the training of Canadian infantry battalions. Throughout the war, Canadian units were subject to new doctrine and training methods and had to contend with numerous reorganizations, shifting roles, and changes of command. For the historian, then, Canadian infantry training is a complex subject that cannot be reduced to generalizations.

Canadian military historians have generally been preoccupied with understanding the operations and battlefield performance of the Canadian Army during the Second World War at the expense of understanding the army's institutional history. In other words, there has been more interest in examining what the Canadian Army did during the war than what kind of army it was. Shockingly, few historians have paid much attention to the training process. This neglect is even more surprising when considering that training was the Canadian Army's longest sustained activity of the war, longer even than its combat operations. Aside from isolated engagements at Hong Kong (December 1941) and Dieppe (August 1942), the Canadians did not fight in a protracted campaign until the invasion of Sicily in July 1943, almost four years into the war. The existing literature offers only a cursory understanding of infantry training. Historians who have characterized the years spent training in the United Kingdom as a wasted opportunity came to that conclusion through superficial analyses of the subject, usually with the aim of blaming poor training for Canadian tactical errors in battle.

The historiography of Canadian Army training stretches back to the closing days of the war. In May 1945, the Department of National Defence issued a series of three booklets briefly outlining the history of the Canadian Army during the war. The first installment of this “official” history, *The Canadians in Britain, 1939–1944*, emphasized that the Canadians spent most of the war training and did not enter protracted operations until the summer of 1943. The booklet devoted a chapter to training and stated proudly that “First Canadian Army was by 1944 certainly the best-trained army the Dominion had ever possessed.”¹ It divided the training years into three broad phases: from the outbreak of war in September 1939 to the fall of France the following June; training as a counterattacking force for the defence of the United Kingdom; and training for offensive operations on the continent from mid-1942 to the invasion of Normandy in 1944. The chapter offered a general overview of the training the Canadians underwent in these years, including various large-scale exercises, but it could not provide much detail due to space limitations. Interestingly, the booklet included an account of “battle drill,” an intensive and methodical type of training that the Canadians first encountered in late 1941 and that became controversial among historians after the war. But *The Canadians in Britain, 1939–1944*, like the other volumes in the series, shied away from being critical of military doctrine, Canada’s unpreparedness for war in 1939, and key military figures who left their mark, for better or for worse, on the training process.

The booklet series was part of a larger effort to provide the Canadian public with at least some official account of the war while the army’s historical staff worked at producing a multi-volume history of the war based on official documents. The First

1. Canada, Department of National Defence, *The Canadian Army at War*, vol. 1, *The Canadians in Britain, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1945), 49.

World War generation had waited twenty years to see the first instalment of a projected eight-volume history of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, a venture that was never completed. Colonel C. P. Stacey, who had spent the war as the lead historian on staff at CMHQ, became the chief of the Army Historical Section (AHS) in 1945 and set to work on a one-volume historical summary of the Canadian Army at war. Owing again to space limitations, *The Canadian Army, 1939–1945* (1948) did not treat any particular topic in exhaustive detail, but it served its purpose as an historical summary. The focus of the book was clearly on operations; Canadians wanted to read about battles rather than the laborious and sometimes monotonous years spent training. Hence, it is not surprising that the book devoted only a handful of pages to the subject of training.²

The first true study appeared in 1955 with the publication of Stacey's *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific*, the first volume of the army's official history. Unlike other Allied nations, Canada's official history programme was limited in scope. The American official history numbered nearly 100 volumes, one of which was devoted exclusively to the training of the United States Army.³ Canada's was limited to just three volumes on the army.⁴ *Six Years of War*, plus the two volumes that followed, superseded the booklet series and the summary volume. It covered the mobilization, training, organization, command, and equipment of the Canadian Army at home and

2. C. P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939–1945: An Official Historical Summary* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1948), 31–32, 59–60, 88–90.

3. See Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*, United States Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces (Washington: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1948).

4. The three volumes are C. P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955); G. W. L. Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956); and C. P. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe, 1944–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960). For more on the production of Canada's official history of the Second World War, see Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), chaps. 3–5.

overseas in the United Kingdom and elsewhere as well as the disastrous Battle of Hong Kong and the Dieppe Raid. Though Stacey devoted a chapter to collective training in the United Kingdom, he admitted that “the story can be told only in outline.”⁵ Indeed, Stacey’s staff at AHS had done considerable work researching training,⁶ but very little could be used in the final product because there was already so much material on the Canadian Army at home, in the United Kingdom, and in the Pacific to cover in one volume. Stacey was only able to briefly explore some of the key large-scale exercises in which Canadian formations participated during their time in the United Kingdom. He took a critical view of the Canadians’ training, concluding that “there is no doubt that training can do just so much and no more; there is no umpire and no instructor like the bullet. . . . The Canadians did well in Normandy; they would have done better had they not been fighting their first battle and learning as they fought.” He continued, “It is the present writer’s impression, however, that the Canadian Army also suffered from possessing a proportion of regimental officers whose attitude towards training was casual and haphazard rather than urgent and scientific.”⁷ In volume 3, *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe, 1944–1945* (1960), Stacey echoed his earlier contention that regimental officers were the weak link in the training process.⁸ Although the official history provided a good overall summary of training, it did not delve into complex questions of doctrine, the role of key personalities in shaping training policy, or

5. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 230.

6. The various historical reports used to produce the official history appeared in two series, Canadian Military Headquarters Reports (1940–1948) and Army Headquarters Reports (1949–1959), which are available in the archives of the Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence.

7. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 253.

8. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 275.

adequately explain the training of reinforcements. Nevertheless, it remained the main reference on the training of the Canadian Army during the war.

The only significant study of relevance to appear after the publication of the official history and before the end of the twentieth century was John A. English's *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign* (1991). He argued that the Canadian high command, neglecting to learn the lessons of the First World War, instead focused on subsidiary endeavours like administration and technology rather than preparing men for combat. As he wrote, "Having forsaken its Great War professional legacy and military *raison d'être* during the interwar years, the Canadian high command proved incapable of conducting worthwhile training in Britain" throughout the Second World War.⁹ He concluded that "the years of preparation and training in Britain prior to D-Day did not entirely expunge either those weaknesses in the Canadian military system that existed before 1939 or those attributed to rapid expansion after war was declared."¹⁰

Stacey and English's views have been influential in historians' perception of the Canadian Army during the Second World War. In *Clash of Arms* (2001), Russell A. Hart accurately conveyed how badly the Canadian Militia (until 1940, the name of Canada's ground forces, most of which was part-time) was neglected during the interwar period and how this hindered mobilization and training in the early years of the war. He characterized the Canadian Army's fighting prowess in Normandy as mediocre at best and worse than the British Army's, a failure that he blamed on insufficient training. However, Hart never actually provided a meaningful analysis of the Canadians' training. Instead, he relied heavily on the conclusions of Stacey and English and paid little

9. John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), xiii–xv, 3–4.

10. *Ibid.*, 310–311.

attention to how the training of Canadian field units actually progressed. Thus, his contention that “there was little improvement in training quality before D-Day” was largely unsupported.¹¹ These works are part of the larger historiographical trend of criticizing the performance of the British and Canadian Armies’ in battle, especially in Normandy. The target of historians’ criticism has ranged from weak leadership, cautious doctrine, and insufficient training, but they have generally agreed that Commonwealth forces showed great timidity in the heat of battle.¹² Only in the twenty-first century have historians begun to challenge this view.¹³

While other Canadian historians have paid some attention to training, they have mostly done so only as it related to other subjects, such as military leadership, combat motivation, regimental heritage, and wartime manpower policy, rather than making it the focus of concerted study. Leadership is inextricably linked to training, since it is the responsibility of senior commanders to coordinate and implement training policy and standards for their forces. Stephen J. Harris demonstrated in *Canadian Brass* (1988) that since Confederation, the Canadian military profession failed to foster expertise, cohesiveness, and responsibility in the Militia. The Militia was prone to patronage and was dominated by amateurs. And while it made great developments in the early twentieth century, its problems with professionalism were not fully solved by the time Canada went

11. Russell A. Hart, *Clash of Arms: How the Allies Won in Normandy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001). See especially chaps. 3–4, 8–9. Quotation on 179.

12. See for example Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (London: Collins, 1952); L. F. Ellis, with G. R. G. Allen, A. E. Warhurst, and Sir James Robb, *Victory in the West*, vol. 1, *The Battle of Normandy*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1962); Carlo D’Este, *Decision in Normandy* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1983); and Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944* (London: Michael Joseph, 1984).

13. See for example Stephen Ashley Hart, *Montgomery and “Colossal Cracks”: The 21st Army Group in Northwest Europe, 1944–45* (Wesport, CT: Praeger, 2000); Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Terry Copp, *Cinderella Army: The Canadians in Northwest Europe, 1944–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); John Buckley, *Monty’s Men: The British Army and the Liberation of Europe* (London: Yale UP, 2013); and Marc Milner, *Stopping the Panzers: The Untold Story of D-Day* (Lawrence, KS: UP of Kansas, 2014).

to war in 1939.¹⁴ The literature on Canada's Second World War generals has grown substantially in recent years and has paid greater attention to their abilities to organize and oversee the training of the men under their command. Historians have generally agreed that Andrew McNaughton, the senior Canadian soldier in the United Kingdom from December 1939 to December 1943, was ill-suited for the role of military trainer. In fact, this failing was one of the reasons for his dismissal. His first biographer, John Swettenham, did his best to portray McNaughton's attitude toward training as focussed, reasonable, and realistic rather than neglectful.¹⁵ Still, the volume devoted to this period of McNaughton's life was filled with examples of the general's obsession with new technology as well as his devoting his energies to his many other responsibilities as the senior Canadian commander. In his study of Canada's wartime generals (1993), J. L. Granatstein ominously titled his chapter on McNaughton "The God that Failed." Granatstein cogently demonstrated that McNaughton had taken on too many responsibilities that should have been delegated to others. The general did not take an active interest in the training of his forces.¹⁶ In a recent biography of McNaughton (2010), John Nelson Rickard provided a more thorough analysis of the general's record as a trainer. McNaughton was not to blame for every hindrance to training that emerged, especially in the war's first year when the Canadians in the United Kingdom were subject to factors beyond McNaughton's control such as equipment shortages and the need to defend the British coast from invasion. McNaughton found himself in command of an

14. Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 5–7.

15. John Swettenham, *McNaughton*, vol. 2, 1939–1943 (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), 163, 213.

16. J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 70–71.

entire army corps in mid-1940, before he ever had the chance to practice commanding a division in the field.¹⁷

Other Canadian generals have received more positive assessments of their abilities to train large formations of men for battle. The man who would eventually command First Canadian Army in Northwest Europe was General H. D. G. “Harry” Crerar. Though Granatstein characterized Crerar as an ambitious and creative officer, he did not provide much detailed discussion of his approach to training.¹⁸ This omission was rectified in Paul Douglas Dickson’s magisterial *A Thoroughly Canadian General* (2007). Dickson demonstrated that when Crerar became CGS in 1940, he greatly improved the functioning of NDHQ and organized a realistic basic training policy for the large numbers of young men who would soon be entering the army. In 1942, Crerar took command of I Canadian Corps, even though, like McNaughton, he had no experience commanding so much as a division, but he paid closer attention to the corps’s training. Crerar replaced McNaughton as the commander of First Canadian Army and guided the formations under its command in the final preparations for the invasion of Normandy.¹⁹

While he commanded I Canadian Corps, Crerar’s Brigadier, General Staff (BGS) was Brigadier Guy Simonds, a talented young officer who went on to command II Canadian Corps in Northwest Europe. Only recently have historians sought to understand Simonds’s role as a military trainer. Both Granatstein and Simonds’s biographer, Dominick Graham, focused on the general’s role as a battlefield commander and

17. John Nelson Rickard, *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), chaps. 6–7.

18. Granatstein, *The Generals*, chap. 4.

19. Paul Douglas Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H. D. G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 152–153, 158–162, 171, 184–188, 194, 208, 246–249, 261.

tactician, even though Simonds spent the first half of the war as a staff officer.²⁰ In *Corps Commanders* (2011), Douglas E. Delaney, profiling three Canadian and two British corps commanders, noted that despite their varied backgrounds and levels of experience, all led their formations in the same manner thanks to their common staff education. Simonds was a staff officer in 1st Canadian Division in the autumn of 1939 and he energetically organized the division's training programme upon its arrival in the United Kingdom, although due to equipment shortages and the overall inexperience of even its senior officers, training was difficult. According to Delaney, Simonds clashed with McNaughton throughout the war due to the latter's lack of interest in training. Later, as Crerar's BGS, Simonds played a key role in improving the training standard of I Canadian Corps. Delaney also profiled Charles Foulkes, a rival of Simonds. What he lacked in personality, Foulkes made up for in his aptitude for training. Foulkes served as Brigade Major of 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade at the war's start and in September 1940 became general staff officer, grade I of 3rd Canadian Division. In both positions, he was responsible for crafting training policy. From then until early 1944, Foulkes climbed up the chain of command of First Canadian Army, becoming the commander of 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, although he never strayed far from his preferred task to oversee training.²¹ But in all of these works on Canadian generals, training was never the main focus.

20. See Granatstein, *The Generals*, chap. 6 and Dominick Graham, *The Price of Command: A Biography of General Guy Simonds* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993). Additionally, Terry Copp, ed., *Guy Simonds and the Art of Command* (Kingston, ON: CDA Press, 2007) provides key documents on Simonds's ideas on leadership and command.

21. Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 196–198, 202–203, 262–265.

Other accounts of training feature the experience of units or individuals. Regimental histories are normally commissioned by regimental associations around the time of important regimental anniversaries. However, these books often are of variable quality. Most often, a regimental history focuses mainly on battle, pays little attention to training, and is essentially the unit war diary put into a narrative, with no attempt to look beyond to the wider operational and strategic contexts.²² A handful of well-written and researched histories have appeared over the years, such as Reginald H. Roy's histories of the Canadian Scottish Regiment (1958) and the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada (1969), Robert Tooley's account of the Carleton and York Regiment's wartime experience (1989), and new histories of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles (2010) and the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (2011). These regimental histories are among the very few that addressed training during the Second World War.²³ Likewise, Terry Copp's *The Brigade* (1992) provided a brief but informative chapter on the training of a single brigade from 2nd Canadian Division that hinted that English's depiction of training was too harsh.²⁴ Training at the unit level was also the subject of a limited number of graduate theses, notably Richard Mark Dykeman's study of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada (1984)

22. See for example G. R. Stevens, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry*, vol. 3, 1919–1957 (Montreal: Southam, [1957]); G. R. Stevens, *A City Goes to War: History of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment (3 PPCLI)* (Brampton, ON: Charters, 1964); G. R. Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment*, vol. 2, 1933–1966 (London, ON: London Printing and Lithography, 1967); and Sandy Antal and Kevin R. Shackleton, *Duty Nobly Done: The Official History of the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment* (Windsor, ON: Walkerville, 2006).

23. Reginald H. Roy, *Ready for the Fray: The History of the Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's), 1920–1955* (Vancouver: Evergreen, 1958), chaps. 3–4, 6; *The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, 1919–1965* (Vancouver: Evergreen, 1969), chaps. 2–5; Robert Tooley, *Invicta: The Carleton and York Regiment in the Second World War* (Fredericton, NB: New Ireland, 1989), chaps. 3–7; Brian A. Reid, *Named by the Enemy: A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles* ([Montreal]: Robin Brass Studio, 2010), chaps. 15–16; and Kenneth W. Reynolds, *Capital Soldiers: The History of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa* (Ottawa: Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa Regimental Foundation, 2011), chap. 11.

24. Terry Copp, *The Brigade: The Fifth Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1939–1945* (Stoney Creek, ON: Fortress, 1992), chap. 2.

and Douglas R. Benneweis's study of the South Saskatchewan Regiment (2007).²⁵ But these studies suffered from the same problem as the published regimental histories: the experience of one battalion's training did not represent that of all battalions.

In a similar fashion, personal memoirs give a very narrow view of training. There is no shortage of veterans' accounts of their wartime experiences, but even the most renowned ones give different levels of prominence to training. Strome Galloway, an officer in the Royal Canadian Regiment, wrote several books about his wartime experiences, the most popular being *The General Who Never Was* (1981). Galloway described a number of disconnected experiences during his years spent in the United Kingdom, but he mostly omitted details about what training was like. He characterized training in the United Kingdom as boring until his unit received battle drill training in early 1942.²⁶ Conversely, in his memoir *Not All of Us Were Brave* (1997), Stanley Scislowski of the Perth Regiment questioned the usefulness of battle drill, recalling that he only ever used the skills he learned from it once in battle.²⁷ Farley Mowat reduced his experience with training to a handful of anecdotes in *And No Birds Sang* (1979).²⁸ C. Sydney Frost, an officer in Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, gave the clearest understanding of the structure of the training system in Canada in *Once a Patricia* (1988). Three chapters chronicle his journey through officer training at the Royal Military College of Canada, infantry training at Camp Shilo, Manitoba, and tactical training at Vernon, British Columbia, where he soon served as an instructor before being

25. See Richard Mark Dykeman, "Highland Light Infantry of Canada 1940–1944" (MA thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1984), chap. 1 and Douglas R. Benneweis, "Training as per Syllabus: Readyng the South Saskatchewan Regiment for War, 1939–1944" (MSS thesis, University of Calgary, 2007).

26. Strome Galloway, *The General Who Never Was* (Belleville, ON: Mika, 1981), chaps. 3–4.

27. Stanley Scislowski, *Not All of Us Were Brave* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1997), 50.

28. Farley Mowat, *And No Birds Sang* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 25–26, 33–34.

sent overseas in early 1943.²⁹ As engaging as these recollections are, they do not explore the complexity of infantry training during the war or set training in its broader context. Like the regimental histories, memoirs do not tell the full story of infantry training in the broader history of the Canadian Army.

The historiography of a related facet of training, Canada's manpower policy during the war, is much more robust. In 1956, E. L. M. Burns, who had commanded I Canadian Corps in Italy during the war, released a short book entitled *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939–1945*. Burns concluded that the Canadian Army could have produced a higher number of trained combat soldiers had it not been for poor planning, administrative redundancies, and over-optimistic casualty projections.³⁰ While Burns made convincing points, he relied heavily on published sources rather than documents. A thorough study of the military's manpower would have to wait until the publication in 1970 of the relevant volume of the official history.

In the meantime, historians were interested in the political aspects of wartime manpower. Before his death in 1958, R. MacGregor Dawson, working on a biography of William Lyon Mackenzie King, had completed three draft chapters on the conscription crisis of 1944. The chapters were published three years later as *The Conscription Crisis of 1944*. The short book was based only on publicly available sources such as newspaper articles and Parliamentary debates. Dawson was unable to consult military records that would have provided insight into how the army had allowed its pool of trained infantry reinforcements to diminish to such dangerously low levels so as to provoke the crisis in

29. C. Sydney Frost, *Once a Patricia: Memoirs of a Junior Infantry Officer in World War II* (St Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 1988), chaps. 1–3.

30. E. L. M. Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1956), 159–161.

the first place. Instead, Dawson's book simply presented King as a shrewd, talented Canadian political hero. C. P. Stacey's *Arms, Men and Governments* (1970), the volume of the official history concerned with Canada's war policies, provided a much more comprehensive analysis of manpower by focusing on the relationship between the King government and the military. Stacey rightly concluded that by the time the government ordered up to 16,000 home defence conscripts overseas in November 1944, the shortage of trained infantrymen had already resolved itself in the previous month. He generally held back from criticizing the army, whose leadership had allocated too few recruits to the infantry. He noted, however, that as no one then knew when the war against Germany would end, so the decision to send conscripts overseas to alleviate the situation was prudent.³¹

J. L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman's *Broken Promises* (1977) put the conscription question from the Second World War into the wider context of conscription in Canadian history. Its chapters on the Second World War offered a leaner, more accessible analysis than the official history, and like Dawson, Granatstein and Hitsman emphasized King's sharp political wit.³² In *Battle Exhaustion* (1990), a study on the Canadian Army's wartime experience with treating neuroses suffered incited by combat stress, Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew demonstrated that when front-line infantry battalions did not receive enough reinforcements or got men who were insufficiently trained, morale and combat effectiveness suffered greatly.³³ Finally, Daniel Byers's 2000

31. C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 481–482.

32. J. L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1977), chaps. 5–6.

33. Terry Copp and William J. McAndrew, *Battle Exhaustion: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Canadian Army, 1939–1945* (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's UP, 1990), 101–102, 154.

doctoral thesis on compulsory service during the Second World War argued that the National Resources Mobilization Act of 1940 gave the Canadian Army the means to defend Canada with conscripts while simultaneously helping build a “big army” to fight overseas. The result was that the overseas army grew too large to maintain and the generals, by 1944, inadvertently had produced a shortage of trained volunteers.³⁴ The one weakness in this body of literature is that it has never gone into serious detail into the actual that these training reinforcements received or why it took so long to prepare them for service with a front-line unit. Instead, these works have focussed on the political and legal ramifications of the shortage of trained infantrymen.

Meanwhile, in 2000, the British Army’s Second World War training experience saw a much higher level of historiographical interest when two major works appeared: Timothy Harrison Place’s *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944* and David French’s *Raising Churchill’s Army*. Place’s book examined the training between Dunkirk and the start of the Normandy campaign. He focused on doctrine at the tactical level — i.e., the movements of troops on the ground — and went deeply into the war diaries at every level for selected units and formations that had no action prior to D-Day. Believing that the British Army’s performance in Normandy left much to be desired, he sought to determine if unsuitable doctrine and training were to blame. He concluded that the problem was that the British tended to view infantry “minor tactics” — infantry tactics without the direct input of other arms, such as armour or artillery — and artillery-based tactics as mutually exclusive rather than complementary. As most commanders thought that artillery was a substitute for infantry minor tactics, they paid little attention to it.

34. Daniel Byers, “Mobilizing Canada: The National Resources Mobilization Act, the Department of National Defence, and Compulsory Military Service in Canada, 1940–1945” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2000), 12–13.

Moreover, there was no office independent of the chain of command that could assess the infantry's conformity to doctrine or identifying clear problems in training.³⁵

French took a different approach in *Raising Churchill's Army* by focusing on operational doctrine, which involves all facets of military operations including the cooperation between units and combat arms, logistics, and communications. He argued that though previous "explanations of the limitations of the British army's combat capability are not wrong, they are in some respects superficial, incomplete, and based upon a limited analysis of the available evidence." He aimed "to provide a fuller and better documented account of why the British army fought the war against Germany in the way that it did."³⁶ The book emphasized three trends that plagued the British Army in the early years of the war: doctrine emphasized discipline and discouraged initiative among subordinates; as it was wide open to interpretation, units trained their men differently; and the British badly misjudged how their doctrine would fare against German doctrine in battle. French concluded that the British Army did not win with the "brute force" reminiscent of the First World War. The British strove to make the best use of scarce resources and by 1942 were beginning to learn how to use their weapons to the greatest advantage. Despite the improvements made from 1942 to 1945, however, the British remained committed to an autocratic command and control system that discouraged junior leaders from using their initiative on the battlefield.³⁷

Fortunately, some Canadian historians have begun to study training as a subject in its own right. In his dissertation on the recruitment and selection of Canadian officers

35. Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2000), 2–5, 168–170.

36. David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War against Germany 1919–1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 1–4.

37. *Ibid.*, 277–279, 283–284.

(1992), Geoffrey W. Hayes concluded that the army devised increasingly scientific methods to determine which candidates would make the best officers and that education was valued over any prior combat experience that a soldier might have had as an enlisted man.³⁸ Yves Tremblay's *Instruire une armée* (2007) was the first full-length study of army training during the war. Tremblay focussed on training in Canada, with a particular emphasis on officers. He sought to determine whether the army's organizational culture was conducive to integrating new doctrinal developments, whether the training system in Canada effectively conveyed skills to all levels of command, and to what degree the training system managed the interaction between theoretical instruction and experience in the field. He concluded, "*Les réformes substantielles réalisées entre 1940 et 1943 n'ont fait de l'Armée canadienne qu'une force en forme physique, plutôt capable en défensive, mais aux capacités offensives très dépendantes des moyens matériels d'appui.*" In other words, the Canadian infantry never quite broke free of its dependence on artillery support.³⁹ In a very recent doctoral thesis, Caroline D'Amours has offered the first exhaustive study of the training of Canadian non-commissioned officer (NCO) reinforcements. She established that the Canadian high command badly mismanaged the reinforcement training system for much of the war and charged that it was not until reforms were instituted in 1944 that the system began to provide Canada's fighting units overseas with properly trained replacements.⁴⁰

38. Geoffrey W. Hayes, "The Development of the Canadian Army Officer Corps, 1939–1945" (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1992), chap. 9.

39. Yves Tremblay, *Instruire une armée: Les officiers canadiens et la guerre moderne, 1919–1944* (Outremont, QC: Athéna, 2007), 16–17, 338–339.

40. Caroline D'Amours, "'Notre tâche est de rendre les hommes prêts au combat': La formation des sous-officiers de renforts d'infanterie du Canada pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale" (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2015), 7–14.

Thus far, the historiography has provided a fragmented appreciation of the training of the Canadian Army during the Second World War. A reassessment of the training of the Canadian Army is needed to better understand the years that Canadian soldiers spent training in the United Kingdom, waiting for their turn to meet Axis forces in battle in continental Europe. The conclusions of Place and French, while convincing for the British Army, are not wholly transferable to the Canadian Army. It is true that Canada was largely dependent on the United Kingdom for military doctrine prior to and during the war. When Canada raised its expeditionary force in September 1939, the country lacked the industrial capacity to provide it with equipment as well as the facilities and qualified officers needed to train it. Canada's utter dependence on the United Kingdom in these affairs allowed for extensive inter-operability between both nations' armies during the war. It is tempting, then, to simply accept Place and French's analyses of the training of the British Army and assume that their conclusions are applicable to the Canadian Army, but this would be erroneous because the two armies had fundamentally different experiences during the war. The Canadian Militia was in a much more deplorable condition than the British Army at war's outbreak and had to expend considerable effort just to catch up. None of the Canadian formations that participated in either the Mediterranean or Northwest Europe theatres of operation in 1943–1944 had any experience in battle, whereas many British formations had seen action in North Africa and elsewhere. Canadian formations essentially spent the first two-thirds of the war training. Canada had a much different political landscape, in no small part due to the duality of its English- and French-speaking populations. Thus the Canadian government had different policies on recruitment, conscription, and overseas service.

It is clear that the existing historical literature leaves too many unanswered questions when it comes to training Canada's infantrymen: What affect did doctrine, defence policy, and funding during the interwar years have on Canada's ability to raise and train an expeditionary force in the Second World War? How was the training system structured and how well was it administered? How did events in the wider context of the war affect the training that the Canadians received? How effective were certain types of training, notably battle drill and amphibious or "combined operations" training, in preparing men for battle? The present study aims to provide insight into these important questions.

Plunging through the available records on training is a daunting task as the Canadian Army generated an enormous amount of wartime documentation. Nearly every activity was somehow recorded and filed. Training, especially, required copious documentation since it involved detailed planning, reporting, staffing, and requests for equipment, supplies, and accommodation. The most valuable source for Canadian military historians is the war diary. Upon mobilization, each unit was required to maintain a war diary that logged its daily activities. Subsections of headquarters at the division level and higher each had their own diary as well. Officers bound war diary entries together into monthly dockets to which they also attached various appendices. In addition to daily routine orders, memoranda, meeting minutes, and nominal rolls, these appendices normally included training syllabi, training reports, plans and records for exercises and operations, and orders from higher headquarters. These documents are invaluable for studying the Canadian Army at war. What little literature on Canadian infantry training exists has not made full use of the available records. Stacey and English,

for instance, primarily focused on documents from the higher levels of command. A full understanding of how infantry units were trained requires researching not just of the records at the army, corps, and division levels, but also at the brigade and battalion levels. The present study has benefitted from an examination of all of these records.

In addition to war diaries, there are several major sources necessary for establishing a clear conception of Canadian infantry training. Canada's two major headquarters — NDHQ and CMHQ — produced vast quantities of paperwork. Documents from these files that are pertinent to training include telegrams between Ottawa and London, orders, memoranda and meeting minutes on training policy, and reports and papers on major exercises. Of course, the army also made use of a wealth of published doctrinal literature. This included the training manuals used by instructors as well as various periodicals circulated to senior officers on trends in training and ongoing operations in the war. Almost all of this literature originated in the United Kingdom and was often reprinted in Canada. Analyzing all of these documents together is vital to provide a thorough understanding the Canadian infantry's experience with training throughout the war.

The chapters that follow, therefore, will provide a greater understanding of the Canadian Army's experience during the years it spent training in the United Kingdom. For the most part, this study is organized chronologically. Chapter 1 provides an overview of developments in military doctrine in both Canada and the United Kingdom between the world wars. The Canadian Militia relied almost entirely on the British Army for military doctrine. The interwar years saw very thin defence budgets in both countries. The Militia devoted less than two weeks per year to summer training for reservists. The

Depression only made the Militia more undertrained and underequipped in the early 1930s. When the government began its rearmament programme in the middle of the decade, it was not enough to prepare Canada's military forces for war in 1939.

The next two chapters cover the mobilization and expansion of Canada's expeditionary force and the serious hindrances to training from September 1939 to late 1941. Chapter 2 offers an account of the first year of war, during which training in the Canadian Active Service Force was infrequent and only elemental in nature because equipment was scarce. This was because after France surrendered, the first Canadian division to be sent overseas became preoccupied with defending the British coast from a German invasion. As chapter 3 will show, Canadian forces both at home and overseas were able to conduct more training beginning in the autumn of 1940 because more equipment became available. It was possible to hold training manoeuvres on an increasingly large scale as the second year of the war went on. At the same time, under Crerar's leadership as CGS, Canada began to build a large army and training policy at home became more efficient and realistic.

Chapter 4 demonstrates that from the autumn of 1941 to the spring of 1942, the Canadian Army (Overseas) saw a fundamental shift in the type, quality, and intensity of training. Canadian forces in the United Kingdom began experimenting with a new method of training called battle drill that became an immediate sensation. Battle drill was a dramatic improvement over the kind of training Canadians had previously received because it was challenging, stimulating, and taught them how to master tactics. In early 1942, British Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery provided the Canadians with a reprieve from their monotonous coastal defence duties and also identified problems with

the senior leadership of Canadian units and formations at all levels. All of these developments had a categorically positive effect on the infantry's combat training.

Canadian forces were chosen to participate in the Dieppe Raid in August 1942 and the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. Both of these operations required special amphibious or combined operations training, which is the subject of chapter 5. Each Canadian division that underwent combined operations training achieved entirely different levels of preparation for combat. Whereas the Canadian force that landed at Dieppe had a very short combined operations training programme and worked with undertrained naval crews, 1st Canadian Infantry Division had the benefit of a much more thorough training programme prior to its role in the invasion of Sicily.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the preparation of 3rd Canadian Infantry Division for its role in storming the beaches of Normandy in June 1944. Of all of Canada's infantry divisions, this division reached the highest level of training proficiency by the time of its deployment to combat and was entirely ready to confront German forces despite what some historians have suggested. The division's experience suggests that, as long as they were given ample training for a specific task, the Canadians could be successful in battle against the Germans.

Finally, chapter 7 deviates somewhat from the chronology by providing an analysis of the training of Canadian infantry reinforcements in the United Kingdom from the summer of 1940 to war's end in May 1945. The reinforcement units were the exception to the Canadian infantry's otherwise impressive transformation from a woefully untrained and underequipped militia to a skilled fighting force. These units spent the war training replacements for the men who would be lost once Canadian forces

entered battle. For almost the entire conflict, the reinforcement units overseas had great difficulty in training their men largely because Canada kept sending unprepared troops to them. In the autumn of 1944, the Canadian Army faced an apparent shortage of trained infantrymen not simply because of casualties suffered in battle, but because of poor manpower planning in Canada.

This study demonstrates the evolution of the Canadian Army from an underequipped and undertrained militia to a highly capable wartime fighting force. Training was the army's most prolonged experience during the war and Canadian soldiers could not enter battle without it. Yet too many histories of Canadian military operations in the Second World War have paid insufficient attention or outright ignored the training that Canadian soldiers received prior to their introduction to battle. An appreciation for training is crucial for making sense of the Canadian battles from 1943 to 1945. This study thus hopes to help elucidate a formative period in the history of the Canadian Army and its development as a national institution.

CHAPTER 1

BEFORE THE STORM: THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The training of Canadian infantry during the Second World War cannot be properly understood without first considering key developments that took place in the interwar period. Without a substantial professional officer corps or sizeable military of its own, Canada relied heavily on the United Kingdom for tactical and operational doctrine. Hence, it is vital to understand military thinking in both Canada and the United Kingdom as well as the wider political and economic context during those years.

British historians have closely examined the interwar period in an effort to account for the British Army's tactical problems in the early years of the Second World War. In *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (1980), Brian Bond argued that budgetary issues and the painful memories of the First World War were powerful incentives in the 1930s for avoiding war on the continent. He remarked that "the appalling way in which the Army was allowed to degenerate in the 1920s [meant] that by 1933 it was incapable of providing in reasonable time an Expeditionary Force equipped to meet even a second-class opponent outside Europe."¹ Recovering from the First World War and without an industrialized enemy to confront, the British believed that their army should revert back to its role as a colonial police force. In the interwar years, the army failed to develop a coherent combined arms doctrine, did not take training seriously, and was still stuck in a rigid class hierarchy. The men were poorly educated and thus difficult to train while the General Staff did not make exercising the leadership of junior leaders a priority. The time-honoured regimental system, though good for morale, often devolved

1. Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 8.

into parochialism.² American historian Alvin D. Coox went so far as to propose that the British, along with the other victors of the First World War, saw their success as reason enough to trust their methods of fighting and did everything to suppress innovation. Thus, while the totalitarian powers spent the 1930s developing military ideas and building up their military muscles, the rest of Europe's armies struggled against budgetary restrictions.³

Canada, too, had longstanding problems that inhibited military innovation following the First World War. Like the United Kingdom, Canada preferred to keep a small army. The Canadian Militia was largely composed of reservists, with only a small nucleus of full-time soldiers. Canadian historians tend to agree that the interwar years featured low budgets, an aversion to imperial commitments at a time of growing national affirmation, and a lack of a coherent defence policy, all of which left the Militia in disrepair. C. P. Stacey attributed this to successive Canadian governments' belief since Confederation that Canada did not need to invest much in defence; when a war came, then Canada would worry about building an army.⁴ While this situation did not make developing a professional officer corps impossible, an overreliance on the United Kingdom for direction in doctrine and planning crippled Canadian military training and preparedness during these years.⁵ The Militia, failing to learn the lessons of the First

2. Ibid., 59–62; David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War against Germany 1919–1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 3–4.

3. Alvin D. Coox, "Military Effectiveness of Armed Forces in the Interwar Period, 1919–41: A Review," in *Military Effectiveness*, vol. 2, *The Interwar Years*, ed. Alan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, rev. ed. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010), 262–264.

4. C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 1, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 3.

5. Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), chap. 10.

World War, instead focused on bureaucracy and political, strategic, and technological pursuits rather than combat effectiveness.⁶

Regrettably, the British experienced difficulty with integrating new technology into their tactical and operational doctrine and with letting go of deeply entrenched beliefs. The infantry, in particular, faced an existential crisis: what was its place in modern warfare? How was it supposed to work with the other combat arms? Canadian theorists were no more successful in answering such questions. Combined with lean budgets and a lack of clear direction from the top, Canadian infantry training during the interwar years was paltry and unsophisticated. The end result, as this chapter demonstrates, was that the Canadian Militia, like the British Army, found itself unprepared for war in 1939. The country's meagre army was underequipped, undertrained, and had little idea of how to fight against a sophisticated, modern, and industrialized enemy.

The Lean 1920s

Despite its significance in Canadian military history, the experience of the First World War “had almost no long-term influence on the country's military policy,” according to Stacey.⁷ After the war, defence budgets were cut back to their prewar levels. Stacey wrote later that “the hard experience of 1914–18 worked no change in Canada. The country's defence policy remained very much as it had been, founded upon an apparently

6. John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), xiii–xv.

7. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 4.

deep-rooted reluctance to spend money on military preparation in time of peace.”⁸ In other words, there was little need in the 1920s to spend much money on the Militia. The German Empire had been crushed and Canada occupied a very safe geopolitical place in the world. Canadian society was thoroughly disgusted with war and the thought of raising another large force was unacceptable. Consequently, it is no surprise that a cash-starved Militia spent the 1920s unable to conduct much serious training of any kind. While the United Kingdom tried hard to discern the correct lessons from the First World War and test new technologies and theories, Canada produced no valuable doctrinal developments throughout the decade.

It is important to realize that the 1920s saw a worldwide shift toward disarmament. Statesmen rightly saw militarism as one of the contributing causes of the First World War. The electorates of the democratic nations that had suffered grievous casualties during the conflict were adamantly opposed to high defence budgets while expenditures on other matters seemed desperately needed. The new League of Nations, many hoped, would allow for disputes to be resolved peacefully. The Washington Naval Treaties restricted the sizes of the world’s most powerful navies. The United States returned to a largely isolationist stance. The only real international security concern in the 1920s was keeping the new Soviet state contained.

Throughout the decade, training in the Canadian Militia, particularly the reservists of the Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM), was very basic. The local armoury was the primary setting for NPAM training. Training was up to a unit’s officers and NCOs, most of whom had seen service during the First World War, and weapons and equipment

8. C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970), 1.

were of wartime vintage. Hence, most tactical training was in First World War linear tactics. The other setting for training was at summer camp. One of the principal duties of the Permanent Force (PF), the Militia's professional cadre, was to provide summer training for the NPAM. Summer training, which lasted up to two weeks, took place at base such as Camp Petawawa, Ontario, or Camp Valcartier, Quebec.⁹ But there was never much money for either type of training throughout the decade. When William Lyon Mackenzie King became prime minister in December 1921, the Militia budget began to fall. The previous government's Militia budget had been \$11,016,939; in 1922–1923, that was cut to \$9,797,406. In the next fiscal year, it was cut again to \$9,668,671, and then to \$8,819,743 in 1925.¹⁰ These thin budgets had a direct effect on Militia training. For much of the decade, NPAM units trained an average of only nine days per year at their local armouries and another nine days at camp. The number of NPAM men trained in the late 1920s fluctuated from a low of 20,616 in 1926–1927 to a high of 24,094 in 1928–1929.¹¹ When a wage decrease for the PF in 1924–1925 produced a significant exodus of professional soldiers, NPAM units competed for the remaining PF instructors. Otherwise, unqualified NPAM officers and NCOs would have to substitute.¹² The Militia remained small for the entire decade as a part- or full-time career in the Militia was certainly not lucrative and because Canadians generally wanted little to do with it in the years immediately following the First World War. The PF's authorized strength was 7,000 in

9. Reginald H. Roy, *Ready for the Fray: The History of the Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's), 1920–1955* (Vancouver: Evergreen, 1958), 11–12.

10. James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, vol. 1, *From the Great War to the Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 304–305.

11. Canada, DND, *Report of the Department of National Defence, Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1940* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1940), 48–49.

12. Roy, *Ready for the Fray*, 11–12.

1919 and 5,000 in 1920, but its actual strength peaked at 4,125 in 1920.¹³ Even those veterans who would have been willing to remain in the NPAM often did not do so because they were more focused with rebuilding their civilian lives. A typical NPAM regiment with 150 men on its nominal roll was lucky if 100 men arrived at the local armoury for training nights.¹⁴

The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada's experience during the 1920s was typical. Training was conducted at the Beatty Street Armoury in Vancouver from September to May. It usually had two or three PF officers available to help with training, which usually consisted of close-order drill, first aid, weapons training, and map reading, as well as sports and physical training (PT). Funds were not available for the Seaforths to conduct field manoeuvres until 1927.¹⁵ The Canadian Scottish Regiment in nearby Victoria had a similar experience. Training nights at the Bay Street Armoury lasted two hours and included instruction in close-order drill, rifle practice at the small range in the basement, and occasionally familiarization training with the light machine gun or a lecture on a military topic.¹⁶

Summer camp was just as elemental, normally involving practicing battle formations, range practice, and route marches in preparation for a cumulative exercise in conjunction with other units.¹⁷ Usually, there was not much time for advanced training in infantry tactics or working with other arms, such as cavalry and artillery. However, there were some anomalies. One in particular occurred during summer training in 1929 when

13. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 40.

14. Roy, *Ready for the Fray*, 7–9.

15. Reginald H. Roy, *The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, 1919–1965* (Vancouver: Evergreen, 1969), 24–27.

16. Roy, *Ready for the Fray*, 12–13.

17. G. R. Stevens, *A City Goes to War: History of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment (3 PPCLI)* (Brampton, ON: Charters, 1964), 165.

the Canadian Scottish and the Seaforths took turns conducting, and defending against, an amphibious attack on a coastal position at Maple Bay. This use of ground and naval forces was known as a “combined operation,” a subject covered in greater detail in chapters 5 and 6, and in which both regiments would receive extensive training during the Second World War. It was a live-fire exercise, meaning that the men fired blank ammunition at each other, sometimes at ranges close enough to cause minor burns. A similar exercise was held during the next year’s summer training. However, this was the only time during the interwar period that NPAM units experienced this kind of training. The only reason these two regiments were able to have combined operations training was because the Royal Navy (RN), Royal Marines, and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) had a presence at nearby Esquimalt. The rest of the time, summer training gave troops only a basic understanding of tactics and living in the field. Often, time was devoted to sports, Sunday worship, and entertainment.¹⁸

A contributing factor to the Militia’s minimal training during the 1920s was that Canada lacked a coherent military strategy. There were too many uncertainties throughout the decade associated with new technologies, while the highest echelon of the Militia created some problems for itself. There was little agreement among the General Staff over the Militia’s peacetime size and how it should be equipped. Some proposals were particularly bizarre. For instance, Colonel James Sutherland Brown, the director of military operations and intelligence, demanded a 15-division force to protect from an American invasion, as per his Defence Scheme No. 1. Brigadier Andrew McNaughton, as deputy chief of the General Staff (CGS), wisely recognized how unrealistic and

18. Roy, *Ready for the Fray*, 29–31; Roy, *The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, 1919–1965*, 27–28.

outlandish Defence Scheme No. 1 was and preferred to start with one infantry, one cavalry, and one artillery brigade. Cavalry proponents insisted that horses would still be suitable for a war in North America because of the rugged terrain, while proponents of mechanization stressed the use of motorcycles and trucks to make forces more mobile if tanks were too expensive. With such inconsistent direction from the top, there could be no clear training policy to follow. Thus, according to historian Stephen Harris, the 1920s were “lost years from the standpoint of equipment.”¹⁹ The same could be said for defence policy, training, and operational doctrine.

Just as Canada depended heavily on British leadership in military organization, staff functions, and technology, it was content also to allow the United Kingdom to handle much of the burden of determining how to avoid the attritional battles that had been fought on the Western Front. The main question was how to restore mobility on the battlefield so that warfare could once again produce quick, decisive victories. But except in mechanization, the British Army had more trouble modernizing than other armies during the interwar period. This was because though the British had some brilliant military thinkers, the British Army suffered from systemic issues that prevented the development of any kind of coherent doctrine.

Doctrine forms the foundation upon which any military is structured, equipped, and trained. By the end of the First World War, the British were able to conduct meticulously planned attacks that coordinated multiple arms of service, such as infantry, artillery, engineers, and air forces. Significantly, the war had seen the advent of the tank and had proved to the General Staff that manpower was not enough to win a conflict.

19. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 198–200.

Machine power had to be embraced. It is incorrect to suggest, as some historians have,²⁰ that the British did not make any serious efforts to learn the lessons of the First World War until the early 1930s. In fact, the British began examining their wartime experience in 1918 to determine the postwar structure of the army and the proper role of each of the arms of service. The introduction of the tank confounded British efforts to modernize doctrine because it prompted theorists to rethink basic tactical concepts, including the infantry's future role. If the tank really had changed the face of warfare, then where did it fit into tactical doctrine *vis-à-vis* the infantry?

In the 1920s, various committees were formed to revise the *Field Service Regulations*, the army's main doctrinal manual, to ensure that the entire army adhere to the same intellectual framework. Updated editions of the *Field Service Regulations* appeared in 1920, 1924, 1929, and 1935, with the role of the infantry changing in each successive edition. The 1920 *Field Service Regulations* stated bluntly that "Infantry is the arm which in the end wins battles" and its job was "to close with the enemy and destroy him by killing or capture."²¹ By 1929, the *Field Service Regulations* emphasized the importance of tank and artillery support, conceding that the infantry alone could not win a battle: "The proper co-operation of all arms wins battles and enables the infantry to confirm victory."²² The infantry remained more adaptable and manoeuvrable than tanks, but no one could deny its vulnerability.²³

20. See for example Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars*, 36–38; Brian Bond and Williamson Murray, "British Military Effectiveness, 1918–39," in *Military Effectiveness*, vol. 2, *The Interwar Period*, ed. Millett and Murray, 116–117, 120–124; and English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 24–25.

21. UK, WO, *Field Service Regulations*, vol. 2, *Operations 1920 (Provisional)* (London: HMSO, 1920), 22.

22. UK, WO, *Field Service Regulations*, vol. 2, *Operations 1929* (London: HMSO, 1929), 10–11.

23. See discussion in David French, "Doctrine and Organization in the British Army, 1919–1932," *Historical Journal* 44, no. 2 (2001): 497–515 and *Raising Churchill's Army*, 27–28.

But the two most influential British military thinkers in the interwar period, J. F. C. Fuller and Basil H. Liddell Hart, could not agree on the infantry's role on the modern battlefield, although both saw the value of the tank. A staff officer during the First World War, Fuller argued in *The Reformation of War* (1923) that since the advent of the tank, the infantry's only role was to fight where armoured vehicles could not go, such as swamps and wooded areas.²⁴ He saw the tank as the ideal land weapon system because it presented a smaller target than columns of infantry. It could be made air-tight to protect against poison gas, it could be bulletproof, it had a longer range and greater speed than infantry, and it was not confined to roads and railways.²⁵ Though careful not to publicly deride the infantry as useless, *The Reformation of War* made it clear that Fuller saw a minimal future role for it.²⁶ To Fuller, the tank was “*the* weapon of the future.”²⁷ He predicted that armour would return the initiative to the offensive and hopefully reduce the size of armies, shorten wars, and lower overall casualties.²⁸ Fuller's ideas were so optimistic about a central role for armour that he did not seem to envision much of a role for the infantry at all. Consequently, he never provided much insight into how the infantry should be trained.

Liddell Hart, another First World War veteran, possessed a favourable view of the tank, but believed that the infantry should form the backbone of the army. In his writings in the early 1920s, Liddell Hart clearly held the infantry to be the decisive arm of service, of which all others were in support, because the infantry was the only arm capable of

24. J. F. C. Fuller, *The Reformation of War* (London: Hutchinson, 1923), 161–164.

25. *Ibid.*, 154.

26. Brian Holden Reid, *J. F. C. Fuller: Military Thinker* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), 78–79.

27. J. F. C. Fuller, *On Future Warfare* (London: Sifton Praed, 1928), 128. Emphasis in original. *On Future Warfare* was a collection of Fuller's essays and lectures from the 1920s. Chap. 6, “Tanks in Future Warfare,” had originally been published in *The Nineteenth Century and After* (Jul 1921).

28. *Ibid.*, v–vii.

actually dislodging an enemy.²⁹ He believed that, in the future, every effort had to be made not to compromise the infantry's mobility. Thus, the infantry should be armed with tanks in the same way that it was armed with the Lewis gun, the light machine gun used by the British Empire during the First World War. This would allow the infantry's overall rate of advance to increase because the tank could supply covering fire, thus neutralizing enemy opposition. Liddell Hart believed that using the tank as an infantry weapon would result in lower casualties because combined tank-infantry units used less manpower. He concluded that whether or not this proposal was accepted, the tank would undoubtedly be an important part of warfare, but also that the infantry should have greater striking power if it was to retain its role and not simply be regarded as the "mere moppers-up for the other arms."³⁰

Thus, there was confusion in the 1920s over how the infantry should work with armour and what the former's place was on the modern battlefield. Until these questions were settled, there could be no clear idea about how to train the infantry. Developing a coherent combined-arms doctrine and an adaptable system of command and control on the battlefield turned out to be nearly impossible largely because the organizational culture of the British Army was not conducive to trusting initiative at the unit level. The General Staff preferred an inflexible and autocratic command and control system. The experience of the First World War seemed to suggest that the army needed unity of control and careful coordination with supporting arms to ensure full cooperation. This widely held mentality was based on the General Staff's assumption that soldiers, especially infantrymen, being largely unskilled and lacking the intelligence to interpret

29. Basil H. Liddell Hart, "Are Infantry Doomed?" *National Review* 79 (May 1922): 455–457.

30. Basil H. Liddell Hart, "Suggestions on the Future Development of the Combat Unit: The Tank as a Weapon of Infantry," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 64, no. 456 (1919): 667–669.

tactical situations properly, needed constant supervision. Commanders should issue a “master plan” that all subordinate leaders must read and follow perfectly. Once opposing forces met in battle, the commander would have little control over its progress. Subordinate leaders were to follow the plan as ordered as there was little room for independent judgement in the face of changing local circumstances. Understandably, majors and lieutenant-colonels, senior officers at the unit level, despised having all of their actions dictated from above. In practice, all of this meant that division and higher formation commanders interpreted their authority broadly, had little faith in the men under their command, and believed they had considerable latitude to lead their formations as they saw fit. Paradoxically, training was still the purview of unit commanding officers and there was very little central oversight when it came to standards. The General Staff assumed that infantry training was something facile enough for any regimental officer to deliver effectively. It was also entirely possible for unit commanding officers to completely ignore the War Office’s directives. It was thus impossible for there to be a common doctrine for the entire army.³¹

This is not to suggest that attempts were not made to modernize the British Army’s tactical doctrine. In 1919, the army formed of an Experimental Brigade at Aldershot to test theoretical solutions to tactical problems on a modern battlefield. In its first season of operation in 1921, the brigade concluded that the only way to improve the mobility of the infantry was to lighten the men’s load and that the best way to protect infantry from enemy tanks was to give infantry units their own anti-tank detachments. In 1927, an Experimental Mechanized Force consisting of a medium tank battalion, a light

31. French, *Raising Churchill’s Army*, 19–22; French, “Doctrine and Organization in the British Army, 1919–1932,” 514–515.

tank and armoured car battalion, a mounted machine gun battalion, and supporting artillery and engineers, was assembled to test doctrinal ideas. Exercises in 1927 showed promising results for the role of armour, but the force (renamed the Experimental Armoured Force) did not repeat its successes during exercises in the following year. The 1928 manoeuvres seemed to show that there was a limit as to how much armour could really accomplish on the battlefield. These experiments demonstrated that tanks still needed infantry for protection from enemy forces armed with anti-tank weapons. The problem was that even if the infantry were transported in trucks, both arms travelled at different speeds and therefore could not accomplish intimate cooperation. Until the infantry could have its own armoured vehicles, tanks and infantry were to be kept separate and only to aid each other when necessary.³² At the very least, the Experimental Brigade showed that, contrary to Fuller's theories, the infantry was still a vital arm. Still, the conundrum of how infantry and armour were supposed to operate together, and thus how each was to be trained, remained unsolved. There were efforts to modernize in the 1930s, such as the 1932 committee under Lieutenant-General Sir Walter Kirke formed to analyze the lessons of the First World War and see if they were being properly incorporated in the army's manuals and training programme. Successive chiefs of the Imperial General Staff subsequently instituted many of Kirke's recommended reforms, but these efforts failed to redress the autocratic command system so entrenched in the British Army that discouraged initiative in junior commanders.³³

32. Harold R. Winton, "The Evolution of British Mechanised and Armoured Doctrine 1919–1938," *RUSI: Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* 130, no. 1 (1985): 60–61; French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, 27–29; French, "Doctrine and Organization in the British Army, 1919–1932," 506–514.

33. French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, 29–32.

Exacerbating the difficulties in establishing a coherent combined-arms doctrine was that the British had an unclear concept of what kind of enemy it might have to fight in the future. The four editions of the *Field Service Regulations* published during the interwar period were primarily written with a well-equipped and highly trained enemy in mind. But until the late 1930s, there simply was no such enemy. Despite what the *Field Service Regulations* said, the hope that the United Kingdom would not have to fight a major protracted war on the continent in the foreseeable future was, in fact, the government's official policy. In 1919, the British had adopted what was later called the "Ten Year Rule" as a guideline for planning military projects and expenditures. As the rule assumed that the United Kingdom would not need to raise an expeditionary force in the next ten years, it implied that the army's role was home security and imperial defence. The Ten Year Rule did not actually have an expiry date. Rather, it simply meant that in any given year, the country would not likely be at war for another ten years. Nevertheless, a decade was far too long a time to plan ahead militarily and diplomatically and it was naïve to think that the United Kingdom's potential enemies would do anything but exploit the policy. In 1932, after several years of doubting its continued use, the chiefs of staff successfully urged the government to abandon the policy. By then, as discussed later in this chapter, the British Army was in such disrepair that the United Kingdom had little hope of defending its possessions, particularly in the Far East, or responding to a crisis in continental Europe.³⁴

34. The relevant works on the Ten Year Rule are Peter Silverman, "The Ten Year Rule," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 116, no. 661 (1971): 42–45; K. Bell, "The Ten-Year Rule: An Unfinished Debate," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* 116, no. 663 (1971): 58–63; Stephen Roskill, "The Ten Year Rule: The Historical Facts," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* 117, no. 665 (1972): 69–71; N. H. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, vol. 1, *Rearmament Policy*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1976), 3–6, 44–62; John Ferris, "Treasury Control, the Ten Year Rule and British Service Policies, 1919–

The infantry in both Canada and the United Kingdom spent the 1920s suffering from a profound existential crisis. No one seemed to know where it fit into the modern battlefield, how to train it, or even believed that it deserved to be considered a skilled arm, like the artillery or engineers. Compounding these questions for the British Army, despite its overt attempts at innovating, was that it had too many problems embedded in its organizational structure and culture to develop a clearly defined operational doctrine and train the infantry in it. Meanwhile, Canada's problem was that the Militia was simply not a priority throughout the decade. As the next section will demonstrate, the situation would not improve during the 1930s.

Rearmament

From 1929 until the start of the Second World War in 1939, the Canadian Militia struggled with problems ranging from indifferent senior political and military leadership, a lack of funding, and increasingly ominous developments on the international scene. Canada's three armed services fought over scarce financial resources throughout the decade. The economic climate and Mackenzie King's apprehension over rebuilding the military kept defence budgets low until tensions in Europe became intolerable. Under such conditions, the Militia struggled to conduct what little training it could with what little equipment it had. It was not until the last years of peace, when Germany became

1924," *Historical Journal* 30, no. 4 (1987): 859–883; and Christopher M. Bell, "Winston Churchill and the Ten Year Rule," *Journal of Military History* 74, no. 4 (2010): 1097–1128.

increasingly aggressive, that it made political and strategic sense to start modernizing the military.

The year 1929 was a major turning point for the Militia for two reasons. First, McNaughton became CGS in January. An academically trained engineer and an ingenious artillery officer in the First World War, McNaughton used his intellectual faculties to devise new ways of bringing money to the Militia. Yet he had shortcomings as the Militia's senior commander, including a marked inattentiveness to training. Second, the Militia's problems from 1929 onward were exacerbated by the government's inability to spend much on the military during the Depression years. The Militia had to compete with the RCN and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) for scarce funds, and there was hardly any money for large-scale exercises for the PF or for more than ten days' summer training for the NPAM. The government, hoping international tensions would resolve themselves, made a belated attempt at rearming in the last months of peace.

McNaughton likely deserves a good part of the blame for allowing Militia training to atrophy during the interwar period. Under his leadership, the General Staff was more preoccupied with defence planning than tactical training thanks largely to his strongly held beliefs about education.³⁵ A scientist and engineer, McNaughton believed the likely scenario was that Canada would fight its next war in Europe against a highly industrialized enemy and that the next war would be a very technological one. For that reason, acquiring modern technology became a priority. McNaughton emphasized officer, NCO, and specialist training. Training was a matter of education, he believed, and much of the scientific training needed for a modern army was better obtained outside

35. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 55–56.

the army itself. He reasoned that citizens educated in science and engineering would function better on the modern battlefield than military professionals; if their citizen minds were developed, tactical training would be much easier. The Canadian Corps had been a mass citizen army that did wonders on the Western Front in 1917–1918. This seemed to prove to McNaughton that rigorous peacetime tactical training was not necessary. As long as Canada had a scientifically literate population, McNaughton believed that mobilization for a future war would simply be a matter of properly selecting recruits and providing some tactical training.³⁶ As his biographer, John Nelson Rickard, wrote, “Though he was the professional head of the Canadian Army, McNaughton demonstrated little enthusiasm for training it.”³⁷

The second major development in 1929 for the Militia was the Great Depression’s onset in October. The economic situation made large military expenditures impossible. The government was naturally wary of purchasing new equipment and weapon systems because such spending would seem wasteful at a time of rampant unemployment. The emphasis shifted simply to individual training in the PF and NPAM. With little else to do, the PF became increasingly bureaucratic. The government agreed that the military could acquire the equipment necessary to defend Canada, but nothing further. In the end, however, updating coastal defences only involved cannibalizing other units.³⁸ During the early Depression years, the NPAM’s budget fell from \$2,324,000 in 1930–1931 to \$1,606,000 the following year. This cut meant that there was no longer money for

36. Ibid., 43–46; Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 201, 206; J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army’s Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 59; Bill Rawling, “The Generalship of Andrew McNaughton: A Study in Failure,” chap. 4 in *Warrior Chiefs: Perspectives on Senior Canadian Military Leaders*, ed. Bernd Horn and Stephen Harris (Toronto: Dundurn, 2001), 75–77; John Nelson Rickard, *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 33.

37. Rickard, *The Politics of Command*, 29–30.

38. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 200–203.

training at summer camps. Regiments had enough money for only four or five training days per year at their local armouries. Concerns over what this was doing to the NPAM's morale prompted a budgetary increase in 1931–1932 to \$2.6 million. The NPAM budget once again fell in 1932–1933 to \$1,837,400.³⁹ By the time McNaughton's tenure as CGS ended in 1935, when he left to head the National Research Council, the country was still mired in the Depression and the Militia was too poorly equipped and trained to serve as even a credible home defence force.

The result of all of this was that training the NPAM barely improved in the early 1930s. Men did not always join NPAM regiments because they were eager to serve in combat. Many joined as a means of recreation, social interaction, or as a way of supplementing their incomes during the Depression. They were paid only during their time at summer camp, which they saw as mostly fun and adventurous. For instance, the Calgary Highlanders usually trained in August at Camp Sarcee. The camp lacked many permanent structures, excepting those for the PF men and horses. The NPAM men lived in bell-shaped tents. Training followed a similar syllabus to that in the 1920s: range practice, familiarization with machine guns, and mock battles. While the men enjoyed the camaraderie, the time spent outdoors, and the physical activity, they barely thought about actual combat and the training was too simplistic and unrealistic to be of much use.⁴⁰ Like any other skill, infantry training required repetition and reinforcement for it to be retained. Summer camp was the only time urban-based regiments ever had a chance to do field training and whatever men learned over their ten or eleven days there was easily forgotten by the next year.

39. Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, 1:309–310, 315–316.

40. David J. Bercuson, *Battalion of Heroes: The Calgary Highlanders in World War II* (Calgary: Calgary Highlanders Regimental Funds Foundation, 1994), 6–9.

Admittedly, the poor state of the Militia's training in the early 1930s was not entirely the fault of McNaughton or the economic climate. The NPAM had certain qualities that made it inherently difficult to train. The best examination on the difficulties of training the Militia was a 1939 article published in the *Canadian Defence Quarterly* titled "How to Train the Militia." Its author was Lieutenant-Colonel E. L. M. "Tommy" Burns, an engineer. Written under the pseudonym "A. B. C.,"⁴¹ Burns maintained that the entire Canadian Militia was a "second-line force." This meant that much of the NPAM's training would necessarily take place *after* the outbreak of war and would always require more training and equipment before it could fight. No matter what, there was a limit to the amount and type of training that could be accomplished in peacetime. The NPAM was primarily a volunteer force. Since its members had full-time careers and families, Militia work always had to be fit into their spare time. If the Militia asked men to give up any more time, very few would join or stay in it for very long. Canada's climate only allowed for about five months during the year in which training could take place. As training centres were normally located far away from population centres, transportation time always infringed upon training time unless the government built more training centres. There were things that the government could fix more easily if the funds were available, such as the poor state of the Militia's equipment and the lack of sufficient numbers of permanent instructors to satisfy regiments' demands.⁴²

The PF had its own problems when it came to training during the 1930s. At the Royal Military College of Canada, cadets received theoretical and practical training in

41. Burns was undoubtedly the author, as a draft of his submission appears in his records. See LAC, MG 31 G 6, vol. 6, file "Articles, Papers, Speeches E-I": A. B. C. [LCol E. L. M. Burns], draft, "How to Train the Militia."

42. A. B. C. [E. L. M. Burns], "How to Train the Militia," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1939): 148–149.

weapons handling, military topography, military geography, imperial and international affairs, military history, and military administration and organization. The tactics department taught the *Field Service Regulations* and provided tactical training up to the company level, although this was done through tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs) and the use of sand table models rather than commanding actual troops. Training for regulars stressed basic tactics in preparation for the PF's role as a training cadre for the NPAM.⁴³

The United Kingdom's revocation of the Ten Year Rule in 1932 did little to motivate Canada to improve its military preparedness as the Depression lingered. In the 1932–1933 fiscal year, Canada spent \$8,718,880 on the Militia; the next fiscal year, Militia expenditure amounted to \$8,773,545, a decline from \$11,026,363 in 1930–1931 and \$9,700,464 in 1931–1932.⁴⁴ Canada's defence policy still remained based on the optimistic hope that peace would prevail in the foreseeable future.⁴⁵ Defence budgets were so low up to 1933–1934 that the modest increases of the next three fiscal years only managed to repair the damage of years of neglect rather than actually improve Canada's armed services.⁴⁶ The average number of days the NPAM spent training at camp in 1933 was 7.6. Though training increased to 8.87 days by 1936, this only approached the 1920s average of 9 days.⁴⁷

However, there were still important developments in the Militia. By the time the British abandoned the Ten Year Rule, the Canadian Militia had already begun a

43. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 49–54.

44. Canada, DND, *Report of the Department of National Defence, Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1934* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1934), 12–13.

45. Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, 1:315–319.

46. James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, vol. 2, *Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 134.

47. Canada, DND, *Report of the Department of National Defence, Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1940*, 48–49.

substantial reorganization programme. Its “establishment” — authorized strength, organization, and equipment complement — had been based on Defence Scheme No. 1, which envisioned mobilizing a force of eleven infantry and four cavalry divisions. By 1931, McNaughton believed that given Canada’s positive relationship with the United States, it was past time to discard Defence Scheme No. 1. He used the preparations for the 1932 World Disarmament Conference as an opportunity to restructure the Militia’s mobilization scheme to a much more reasonable six infantry and one cavalry division. The reason for this was that the old establishment gave the Militia a glut of infantry and cavalry but a severe shortage of everything else. Under McNaughton’s plan, Defence Scheme No. 3, which envisioned a major war overseas, the Militia had to become a leaner force. Units for the first two divisions of an expeditionary force would be preselected. The new Militia would have 20 cavalry regiments (four of which had armoured cars) instead of 35, 110 field batteries instead of 67, and the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers would be expanded. For the infantry, 135 rifle and machine gun battalions were to be reduced to 91, six of which were tank battalions even though they had yet to be outfitted with tanks. Significantly, tank battalions were considered part of the infantry rather than the cavalry at the time. The reorganization generally followed McNaughton’s initial proposal at the conference and was complete by December 1936.⁴⁸

Before McNaughton retired as CGS in 1935, he wrote “The Defence of Canada (A Review of the Present Position),” a memorandum for the government in which he

48. LAC, RG 24, vol. 2740, file H.Q.S. 5902, pt. 1: GS, “Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Non-Permanent Active Militia,” 29 Jan 1931; MGen A. G. L. McNaughton (CGS), memorandum to Donald Matheson Sutherland (MND) re: “Conference for the Limitation of Armaments: Limitation of Personnel of the Land Forces,” 21 Dec 1931; MG 30 E 133, vol. 16, file McN (M) 87: “A Scheme for the Reorganization of the Canadian Militia: Second Revise,” 20 Oct 1933; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 18–19; John Swettenham, *McNaughton*, vol. 1, 1887–1939 (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), chap. 7; Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 177–189; H. W. Thomas, “The Reorganization of the Canadian Militia, 1936,” AHQ Report No. 64, 20 Aug 1953.

outlined the deficiencies of Canada's ground and air forces. Since 1932, the international situation had once again become tense, especially with respect to Japan and Germany. While Japan, Germany, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States were all increasing their military budgets, the United Kingdom alone did not, hopeful that problems could be solved diplomatically. Canada was even less prepared to intervene in a crisis. As of the memorandum's writing on 28 May 1935, Canada did not have a single anti-aircraft gun, there was only enough ammunition for each field gun to fire for 90 minutes, and Canada had an abundance of harnesses, which were useless since horse cavalry was already considered unlikely to have much of a role in future conflicts. McNaughton concluded that the Militia and RCAF should receive steady budget increases over the next five years to make up for Canada's martial deficiencies.⁴⁹

The government's response to McNaughton's memorandum was hardly enthusiastic. As Germany and Japan did not pose any immediate threat, there was simply no need to increase military spending in 1935. Rebuilding the military was a very low priority in Canada during the Depression years as there were many pressing problems domestically. Canada had a new government in October. King, prime minister for the third time, resolutely refused to commit Canada to British imperial endeavours. While not an isolationist, King preferred diplomacy and multilateral approaches to maintain peace. To King, instead of building and maintaining a substantial military, it was better that Canada's contribution to imperial defence be limited to preserving positive relations with the United States and avoiding embroiling the empire in problems with other countries. If war ever came, it was up to Parliament to determine how Canada should act and it would

49. DHH, file 014.014 (D1): MGen A. G. L. McNaughton (CGS), "The Defence of Canada (A Review of the Present Position)," 28 May 1935, 6–13, 18, 22–23.

make that decision according to the circumstances of the time. A sizeable military budget would only give the government incentive to adopt an actively interventionist foreign policy to justify the expense. Above all, King hoped at all costs to avoid repeating the conscription crisis that had nearly rent the country in 1917.⁵⁰

Following Germany's remilitarization of the Rhineland in March 1936, King realized that the situation in Europe was indeed worsening. A modest increase to the defence budget and a rearmament strategy resulted. The government's rearmament programme can be traced to August 1936 when the defence estimates for the 1937–1938 fiscal year were prepared. The Canadian Defence Committee was formed in that month to discuss considering defence problems and budget estimates. It was similar to the British Committee of Imperial Defence, although it never met very often. It was a leaner version of the Cabinet, consisting of the prime minister, the defence minister, the finance minister, and the justice minister. The Canadian Defence Committee met with the service chiefs on the 26th. On 5 September the officers filed a report in which the service chiefs admitted that there was indeed a possibility that Canada would have to send substantial forces overseas, most likely to Europe.⁵¹

The government balked at the price tag: over a five-year period, the cost of updating Canada's armed forces would be \$199,351,333. The Militia was to receive \$98,872,075 over that time. The first year was to be the most costly, roughly \$65 million for all three services. But by the time this estimate reached Parliament, it had been

50. J. W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record*, vol. 1, 1939–1944 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 11–12; J. L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, "'A Self-Evident National Duty': Canadian Foreign Policy, 1935–1939," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3, no. 2 (1975): 212–233; Norman Hillmer, "Defence and Ideology: The Anglo-Canadian Military 'Alliance' in the 1930s," *International Journal* 33, no. 3 (1978): 588–612.

51. Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, 2: document 1, "Extract from Memorandum by the Joint Staff Committee, Department of National Defence, 5 September 1936 (Army Records)," 218; Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 69, 113.

reduced to \$34,091,873.42. Supplementary estimates brought the total up to \$36,194,839.63, of which \$18,703,636 would go to the Militia. Priority was given to the RCAF. British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin had suggested to King that he should invest heavily in the RCAF. As Canada had little risk of suffering an invasion, its air force would be of the greatest help to imperial defence. This resonated with King. The Militia was the largest service in terms of manpower. An expeditionary force committed to a major war would suffer heavy casualties and need even more men as reinforcements. The RCAF, as well as the RCN, needed fewer personnel; their costs were instead driven by expensive assets such as aircraft, ships, and port facilities rather than servicemen's pay. Should war erupt in Europe, King wanted Canada's main contribution to be supplying food, raw materials, and finished goods to its allies, while limiting its military involvement to air and naval support. This way, he hoped, heavy casualties, and a need for conscription, could be avoided. Historians have referred to this policy as one of "limited liability." But although the Militia had the lowest priority, as proportionately the other two services received greater increases, the funds it received still represented a substantially higher budget. Nevertheless, the rearmament programme began so modestly given the poor economic conditions and the government's growing deficit. The public was still very much against the idea of going to war again and would never approve of massive defence spending.⁵²

52. Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, 2:138–140; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 11–14; *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, vol. 2, *1921–1948: The Mackenzie King Era* (1981; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 199–201; Roger Sarty, "Mr. King and the Armed Forces," in *A Country of Limitations: Canada and the World in 1939*, ed. Norman Hillmer, Robert Bothwell, Roger Sarty, and Claude Beauregard (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1996), 217–246.

The military budget for 1937–1938, the first year of the rearmament programme, was \$32,835,000.⁵³ The Militia spent \$17,222,804 that year, a healthy increase from \$11,345,741 the previous year. The additional funds were spent on construction and expansion of coastal fortifications, training facilities, new equipment, particularly coastal defence artillery and ammunition.⁵⁴ At fiscal year-end on 31 March 1938, the government contracted with the John Inglis Company to produce 7,000 Bren guns, the “largest and most significant step towards the re-armament of the Canadian land forces before the war,” according to Stacey.⁵⁵ However, the company did not expect to be able to produce the first of these weapons for another two years. Moreover, the nature of the transaction led to accusations of government corruption, since the government did not issue a formal request for tenders.⁵⁶

For the next fiscal year (1938–1939), the defence budget was \$34,799,000; the Militia spent \$15,768,166.⁵⁷ With a higher budget, the Militia could conduct more training in the field. In 1938, Militia training focused on defensive battles, including responding to counter-attacks and withdrawing. At the time, Canada was divided into eleven military districts, regional headquarters that oversaw administrative and logistical matters under their jurisdiction. Among other duties, district officers commanding (DOCs) were responsible for inspecting and overseeing the training of every unit in their

53. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 2:219–220.

54. Canada, DND, *Report of the Department of National Defence, Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1938* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1938), 8–9.

55. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 25–26.

56. Henry Hague Davis, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Bren Machine Gun Contract* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1939); David MacKenzie, “The Bren Gun Scandal and the Maclean Publishing Company’s Investigation of Canadian Defence Contracts, 1938–1940,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, no. 3 (1991): 140–162.

57. Canada, DND, *Report of the Department of National Defence, Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1939* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1939), 8; Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 2:219–220.

respective districts.⁵⁸ NPAM infantry units were allotted six days' local training and five days' field training for the year at district camps.⁵⁹

The increase in funding allowed the units of the Permanent Force to train together in the field for the first time since 1929. From 8 August to 3 September 1938, PF units concentrated as a brigade group and conducted exercises at Camp Borden, Ontario. Most PF units — with the notable exceptions of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) and Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) — were involved, including supporting arms as well as the RCAF. Though the three culminating exercises were ambitious, the results were disappointing. The final, and largest, exercise, which ran from 31 August to 3 September, was designed to test a partially mechanized force in an approach march (including a river crossing), consolidation of a defensive position, and a counter-attack against a skeleton "enemy" force. Two NPAM units, the Royal Regiment of Toronto Grenadiers (later known as the Royal Regiment of Canada) and the Toronto Scottish Regiment (MG), joined the brigade for this exercise. Having had no chance to apply the doctrine they had been taught over the previous eight years, the men performed sloppily. For the infantry's part, units were found to have insufficient assault bridging experience, and consolidation in the southern portion of Camp Borden was slow. To its credit, the Royal Regiment of Toronto Grenadiers was deliberately put in a situation in which it had to launch an immediate counter-attack. The battalion was able to put in the counter-attack, supported by artillery fire, within 95 minutes, which the final report of the exercise considered to be good as the battalion had only just arrived at Camp Borden and

58. Canada, Canadian Militia, *King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1939), par. 30 (a).

59. LAC, RG 24, vol. 6288, file H.Q. 33-202-1: LGen E. C. Ashton (CGS), "Forecast of Training, 1938-39," 12 Jan 1938, pars. 2, 7.

had never participated in such a large-scale exercise. The exercise had also included many new things with which the men were unfamiliar such as dummy tanks, armoured cars, self-propelled guns, and anti-tank guns. Overall, the exercise served to expose the extent to which the PF had been allowed to degenerate after years of neglect. The exercise did little to teach the Militia anything about how combat arms were supposed to function together on the battlefield. Rather, it revealed how badly the PF needed constant practical experience in applying doctrine. One major exercise in nearly a decade was too infrequent by any reasonable measure.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the situation in Europe was deteriorating. Canada had remained cautious when the international situation showed signs of deteriorating in the 1930s: the Japanese in China, the Italians in Abyssinia, and the League of Nations' impotence. Canadians seemed to remain optimistic that, in the end, peace would prevail.⁶¹ But in the summer of 1938, Germany aggressively pushed to annex portions of Czechoslovakia that contained some 3 million ethnic Germans. While the United Kingdom and France, wanting to avoid a major war, defused the situation by appeasing Hitler's demands in September at a meeting in Munich, the situation remained tense.

In light of Europe's worsening situation, Canada attempted to rearm, but political considerations interfered with the Militia's training for war. While King remained committed to keeping Canada out of an expensive and bloody war, and his belief in Parliamentary supremacy in deciding such matters, after Munich, he could not ignore the

60. DHH, file 324.009 (D449): "Abridged Report on Permanent Force Collective Training, Camp Borden, 1938," pars. 1, 5, 9–12, 16–18 and app. 20; Brereton Greenhous, *Dragoon: The Centennial History of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, 1883–1983* (Belleville, ON: Guild of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, 1983), 290–293; Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 198; Yves Tremblay, *Instruire une armée: Les officiers canadiens et la guerre moderne, 1919–1944* (Outremont, QC: Athéna, 2007), 52–54.

61. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 1–2.

very real possibility that Europe could descend into war in the near future. Canada's economic prosperity depended on safe and open seas for exports, which would be threatened by a Europe dominated by Nazi Germany. Canadians, especially the English-speaking majority, also had a strong sense of duty to the United Kingdom. Canada would never declare war on Germany if the United Kingdom did not do so first, but if the United Kingdom went to war, so would Canada. The United Kingdom was certainly edging closer to war with Germany; Canadian neutrality in the event the British went to war was unthinkable.⁶² Thus, Canada needed a more extensive rearmament programme. But the Militia again fared the worst because King's government still adhered to the "limited liability" policy. When the CGS, Lieutenant-General E. C. Ashton, submitted an estimate of \$28,657,795 in November 1938, the deputy minister of national defence cut it to \$20,775,600 to permit greater funding for the other services. This crippled the Militia's ability to purchase ammunition and stores, thereby making training more difficult. Despite the CGS's protest that the Militia could no longer respond to a crisis without substantial funds, the revised estimate did not change.⁶³

In early 1939, while Canada struggled to rearm, Germany's behaviour became even more alarming. On 16 March, Germany annexed the rest of Czechoslovakia. As the policy of appeasement had failed, the United Kingdom and France pledged to safeguard Poland's independence as Europe crept closer to a continental war. In a speech in the House of Commons on 30 March, King announced that if an aggressor threatened the United Kingdom, Canada could not remain neutral. But he also promised that there would be no conscription for overseas service if Canada went to war: "so long as this

62. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 2:264–269; Granatstein and Bothwell, "A Self-Evident National Duty," 220–222.

63. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 15–17.

government may be in power, no such measure will be enacted.”⁶⁴ Canada’s defence budget continued to increase. For the 1939–1940 fiscal year, it was \$64,666,874; the RCAF received \$29,733,000 and the Militia a modest \$21,397,000, although the new CGS, Major-General Victor Anderson, had asked for \$28,657,000. While this was the largest defence budget in peacetime, it was too little, too late, as only \$13,712,000 was spent by the time Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939.⁶⁵ Because Canada had virtually no armaments industry, it relied on foreign suppliers, namely the United Kingdom. It had received its first two light tanks in 1938 and 14 others in the summer of 1939. Though every infantry battalion was supposed to have two 3-inch mortars, there were only five in the entire country in the spring of 1939. In September, Canada had only 23 anti-tank rifles and 29 Bren guns.⁶⁶ Without the proper weapons and equipment or the funds to purchase them, training the Militia realistically for war was impossible.

Hence, the gradually increasing budgets during the 1930s resulted in only a modest improvement in the NPAM’s training standard. From 1933 to 1937, the number of NPAM soldiers reported as trained averaged 5,144 officers and 34,867 other ranks.⁶⁷ In 1938–1939, those figures were 5,272 officers and 41,249 other ranks.⁶⁸ Even though the number of authorized paid training days had not changed — it was still no more than ten or eleven days per year — there were improvements in the number of men allowed to attend summer training. From 1934 to 1936, the number of NPAM soldiers attending summer camp averaged 13,715. In 1937, 17,997 men trained at summer camp, followed

64. Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (30 Mar 1939), 2408–2428 (King, MP).

65. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 33; Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 2:219–220; Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, 2:152–153.

66. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 20.

67. Figures compiled from Canada, DND, *Reports of the Department of National Defence, Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1934–1938* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1934–1938).

68. Canada, DND, *Report of the Department of National Defence, Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1939*, 40.

by 29,103 in 1938 and 30,648 in 1939.⁶⁹ The Militia's summer training for 1939 consisted mainly of physical fitness, close-order drill, driving and maintenance of vehicles, small arms, anti-gas, communications, and map reading.⁷⁰ For collective training, the theme for the year was the attack, with an emphasis on assembly, reconnaissance, use of ground, and tank-infantry cooperation. Infantry units were to focus on weapons training, section leading, platoon tactics, and measures against poison gas and air attacks. Tactical exercises were left up to military districts to organize.⁷¹

The 1930s were thus characterized by several years of slim budgets followed by hurried attempts at modernizing the Canadian armed forces once the international situation soured. The 1938 manoeuvres proved that the PF had much work to do, particularly in the area of tank-infantry cooperation. Although the NPAM was able to train more men per year by the time the decade was over, there were never enough funds during the interwar period to provide more than 13 days' training. Raising and training an expeditionary force of any appreciable size would prove to be a serious challenge.

Doctrinal Debates in Canada in the 1930s

While the Canadian Militia used the same organization, regulations, and doctrinal literature as the British Army during the interwar period, that did not mean that

69. Canada, DND, *Report of the Department of National Defence, Canada for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1940*, 48–49.

70. LAC, RG 24, reel C-8353, file H.Q.S. 8122: MGen T. V. Anderson (CGS) to DOCs MDs 3, 5, 10, and 12, 18 Aug 1939.

71. DHH, file 114.1 (D75): Anderson, "Policy of Training, 1939–1940," 20 Apr 1939, pars. 2 (a–b), 29 (a), 59.

Canadians were uninterested in thinking about the future of warfare. In the 1930s, Canadian officers debated the same doctrinal questions that Fuller and Liddell Hart had attempted to answer a decade before. What was the infantry's job on the battlefield? Where did new technologies fit into doctrine? Unfortunately, despite some heated debates, the Militia did not fully answer these questions in time for the outbreak of war. Instead, it adhered faithfully to British doctrine, the state of which by 1939 had deprived the infantry of initiative and firepower.

The leading forum for discussing critically discussing military trends and developments from a Canadian perspective was the *Canadian Defence Quarterly*. Founded in 1923, it was an important mechanism for developing the intellect of the officer corps.⁷² One author, writing under the pseudonym "Infanteer," published several articles in the early 1930s on the infantry's purpose and capabilities in the post-Great War world. In "A Ray in the Outer Darkness," Infanteer argued that while the more technical arms of service such as the engineers and artillery had seen new technologies, the infantry still employed weapons from 1918. This was a problem since the contemporary opinion was that a battle could not be won without the infantry, and yet, while the other arms had evolved better technology for putting the infantry on the enemy's position, the infantry was unable to do the job envisaged for it, weighed down by the same bulky supplies and equipment of the First World War. The infantry needed to be able to operate on any kind of terrain. To do that, it needed functional portable machine guns more

72. For more on the early years of the *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, see James H. Lutz, "Canadian Military Thought, 1923–39: A Profile Drawn from the Pages of the Old *Canadian Defence Quarterly*," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1979): 40–48 and Serge Marc Durflinger, "The *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 1933–1935: Canadian Military Writing of a Bygone Era," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 20, no. 6 (1991): 43–47.

reliable than the Lewis (the Bren gun currently being introduced) and reorganized so that infantry units to get the most out of these weapons.⁷³

Two issues later, *Infanteer* published a lengthier article on the relationship between the infantry and the machine gun. The piece bore the strange title “The Story of the Two Snakes,” alluding to a proverb in which two snakes bit each other on the tail and began to swallow the other. This metaphor, in *Infanteer*’s view, was useful for illustrating the blurring of the distinction between the Canadian infantry and the Canadian Machine Gun Corps (CMGC). At the time, the infantry battalion was being so increasingly armed with light machine guns that it was becoming “a machine gun battalion under another name.”⁷⁴ The anonymous author, who wrote from a Canadian perspective, believed that Canada should train its infantry to fight anywhere in the world as Canadians should be prepared to fight alongside British troops in small colonial wars, a stance that conflicted with the Canadian government’s policies on imperial defence. He pointed out that the infantry’s main advantage over any kind of vehicle was that it could operate on any terrain. Furthermore, to consolidate battlefield gains, infantrymen would have to build, dig, and man fortifications, things that armoured vehicles could not do. So, the role of the infantry, the author argued, was to attack over country that vehicles could not traverse and to hold gains. If an infantryman was “a man who fights on his feet and carries his own weapons into action,” *Infanteer* argued that the infantry battalion be equipped with

73. *Infanteer* [pseud.], “A Ray in the Outer Darkness,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1931): 62–64.

74. *Infanteer* [pseud.], “The Story of the Two Snakes,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1932): 344.

only light machine guns, rifles, and pistols because anti-tank guns, mortars, and heavy machine guns were each too bulky for one man to carry and operate.⁷⁵

To Infanteer, there was little need for a separate machine gun corps as the machine gun should be considered the infantry's primary weapon. He proposed equipping every infantry section with a light machine gun. Currently, platoons had four sections, but only two of them deployed the Lewis gun. This idea was controversial at the time: there were fears that if every section had a Lewis gun of its own, the men would be prone simply to hang back and try to hit the enemy with machine gun fire, thereby failing to take ground. Infanteer argued that this problem could be solved with adequate training. More Lewis guns meant that the section could fight with fewer men exposed while allowing platoons to carry more firepower and cover more ground.⁷⁶ These ideas would have afforded infantry subunits great mobility, impetus, and considerable self-reliance, particularly over rough terrain. But, as discussed below, British doctrine served to discourage the infantry's battlefield initiative and encourage its overdependence on other arms. As for the CMGC, it was disbanded in 1936, after which select infantry regiments were given a machine gun role.

In the last years of peace, the *Canadian Defence Quarterly* was home to a famous dispute. Two officers, both of whom became corps commanders in the Second World War and, oddly, were not infantrymen themselves, engaged in a war of words over the proper use of tanks and infantry. One of them was Lieutenant-Colonel Burns, the author of "How to Train the Militia." In "A Division that Can Attack" (1938), Burns criticized the prevailing doctrinal assumption that the infantry was, and always would be, the main

75. Ibid., 343–347.

76. Ibid., 348–349.

assaulting arm. To him, the First World War had demonstrated that while the infantry could hold ground, it was very costly to capture it. Instead, he argued that as history proved that the infantry had not always been the main assaulting arm, the Commonwealth desperately needed an arm that could close with the enemy. He thus proposed replacing one of the infantry brigades in the existing divisional structure with a tank brigade to make every division into a self-contained attacking force. He recommended divisions be equipped with medium tanks rather than the new British “Infantry” tanks. Specially designed for close cooperation with the infantry, Infantry tanks had less speed and range than medium tanks but were more heavily armoured. But Burns saw the Infantry tank as going backward: why slow the tank down to the infantry’s speed? Rather than asking whether the infantry needed help, Burns believed the real question was whether the tank needed the infantry’s help. If the infantry could not neutralize machine guns, why could they be expected to neutralize an anti-tank gun? It made more sense simply to put more tanks in the attack to take care of the anti-tank guns themselves. The infantry could be left with the job of consolidating captured ground.⁷⁷

Burns’s fiercest critic was Guy Simonds, a young artillery captain. Burns’s proposed divisional structure, Simonds argued, would put tanks into the attack without adequate support. As he saw it, it was common knowledge that sending infantry into the attack without support was wasteful and foolish. However, Burns seemed to be suggesting that putting tanks into the attack without adequate support would somehow be better.⁷⁸ Simonds agreed with Burns that tanks should be considered the main attacking

77. E. L. M. Burns, “A Division that Can Attack,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1938): 289–293.

78. G. G. Simonds, “What Price Assault without Support?” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1939): 146–147.

arm as they had more advantages than the infantry on the battlefield, even when allowing for the possibility of anti-tank obstacles. But Simonds was adamant that tanks would always need the infantry for support. In a 1939 article called “The Attack,” Simonds argued that the British Commonwealth had to master tank-infantry cooperation to defeat a first-rate enemy. Tanks could not attack by themselves. Infantry was not only needed to consolidate ground, it was needed to deny positions to enemy infantry that could use cover to fire on the tanks.⁷⁹

Most Canadian officers, however, did not critique British doctrine in this way for fear that complete doctrinal independence would only make integration with British forces needlessly difficult in wartime. In fact, this fear was so well-entrenched that Canada’s General Staff constantly checked in with the War Office to see if the Canadian organization was up to standard. Canada’s dependence on British military thought did nothing to stimulate critical thinking in its military profession.⁸⁰ Canadian troops would fight under British operational control in the next war. Indeed, the Canadian Army would integrate very well into British formations during the war because of the common doctrine and organization.⁸¹ But the easiness of following the British lead came at the high price of failing to develop an imaginative officer corps. There were not enough officers like Burns and Simonds who were willing to challenge British orthodoxy. Thus, on matters of doctrine, organization, administration, and training, the Militia never strayed far from the British model.

79. G. G. Simonds, “The Attack,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1939): 387.

80. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 203–206.

81. See Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

The situation was compounded by the fact that the British themselves still had little grasp on how the infantry should be employed. By 1939, the British Army had failed to address the structural problems in its tactical doctrine. For the infantry, this was most evident in the last infantry training manuals to appear before the outbreak of war, *Infantry Training: Training and War* (1937) and *Infantry Section Leading* (1938). Such manuals were intended for instructors rather than trainees.⁸² *Infantry Training: Training and War* placed significant emphasis on the need for discipline among the infantry: “Above all, he [the infantryman] *must be highly disciplined* . . . It is the ingrained habit of cheerful and unhesitating obedience that controls and directs the fighting spirit, and is the backbone of a unit in a moment of crisis.” The manual also included an entire chapter on close-order drill, whose purpose was “to compel the habit of obedience. During drill it becomes instinctive and automatic for the leader to impress his will on his subordinates, and for them to carry out his intentions exactly.” The manual stressed that during an attack, the infantry was to focus on manoeuvre, while the artillery’s job was to provide covering fire. Therefore, the infantry was not supposed to open fire with its own weapons “unless it is found that progress cannot be made without it.”⁸³ *Infantry Section Leading* agreed: “Whatever outside assistance may be provided, *platoons and sections detailed to capture an objective must continue to advance and must not stop to fire as long as they can get forward.*”⁸⁴ In other words, official doctrine stipulated that the infantry was supposed to abdicate the responsibility of firepower to the other arms. There was no

82. Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2000), 9.

83. UK, WO, *Infantry Training: Training and War* (London: HMSO, 1937), secs. 8, 19 (1), 66 (8).

84. UK, WO, *Infantry Section Leading* (1938; repr., Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1940), sec. 56. Emphasis in original.

provision for infantry sections or platoons to master their own firepower. Moreover, while the pamphlets did mention that small-unit commanders were to be trained to analyze situations rapidly and respond to tactical situations automatically,⁸⁵ they did not go into much detail as to how to train men to do this.

Thus, British and Canadian infantry doctrine on the eve of war was woefully deficient and provided few clues as to how to conduct tactical training. After years of study, both nations could not develop a clear concept as to what the infantry's role on a modern battlefield would be and they had failed to produce a workable combined arms doctrine. Infantry doctrine was hopelessly vague and favoured caution; the infantry's initiative and mastery of its own firepower had been sacrificed to discipline and reliance on artillery support.

The British Army and the Canadian Militia were intellectually unprepared for the Second World War and they lacked the funds and equipment necessary to train their peacetime forces. In the Canadian Army's official history, Stacey concluded that "much had been done to improve the state of the Canadian Militia before war came, and . . . at the same time . . . the preparations were utterly inadequate by comparison with the scale of the coming emergency." But, as he cautioned, historians have hindsight, and the Canadian public's reluctance to spend more on defence in the middle of such a severe economic depression could be ignored. If anything, Stacey argued, King deserved credit for doing more for the military in peacetime than any previous government.⁸⁶

85. UK, WO, *Infantry Training: Training and War*, sec. 13 (5).

86. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 35.

Nevertheless, the failure of British and Canadian military authorities to learn the correct lessons from the First World War, as well as the poor condition in which both countries' armies found themselves during the tight budget years of the 1930s, would lead to disaster for the British Commonwealth during the early years of the Second World War. The United Kingdom suffered major setbacks in the war against Germany until 1942, and Canadian ground forces did not see sustained action until 1943. The following chapter will show how difficult it was for Canada to raise an expeditionary force in 1939 and 1940. The Canadian Militia lacked the facilities and instructors to train a large volume of troops. The end result was that its first two divisions sent overseas were virtually untrained.

CHAPTER 2

THE CANADIAN ACTIVE SERVICE FORCE

In the late summer of 1939, Canada found itself once again counting down until the outbreak of yet another industrialized war. While Canadians still carried the painful memories of the First World War, they could not ignore the threat posed by a Nazi-dominated Europe. But this time, the government hoped that things would be different, that Canada might avoid heavy casualties by contributing naval and air forces, and producing raw materials and manufactured goods. As for raising an expeditionary ground force, there were already plans in place to do so that would streamline the mobilization and recruitment process.

No amount of planning, however, could easily mend the years of neglect the Canadian Militia had experienced. Mobilizing and training Canada's second expeditionary force in 25 years was a slow undertaking, exacerbated by the Militia's emaciated condition in 1939. Acute shortages in clothing, weapons, ammunition, equipment, and vehicles, which plagued Canadian units for an entire year, seriously delayed training. That Canada lacked sufficient numbers of trained officers further complicated matters. Once units reached the United Kingdom, they had to rely heavily on the British Army to share equipment and provide officer training. The deficiencies of British tactical doctrine became all too apparent in the spring of 1940, when British forces were expelled from continental Europe. Even the earliest Canadian brigade exercises in the summer of 1940 demonstrated that training with the prevailing doctrine

produced lacklustre results. Training during Canada's first year of war was largely elementary, inconsistent, and sluggish.

Mobilizing the CASF

As war seemed increasingly likely throughout the summer of 1939, the Canadian government had to consider what role the country would play, although the unspoken understanding was that Canada, as in 1914, would have to raise an expeditionary force. National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa looked to Defence Scheme No. 3, the approved plan for a major conflict and the dominant contingency in the minds of Canada's senior commanders and staffs. The generals wanted to avoid the mobilization chaos of 1914. But mobilizing for war was no simple undertaking. The expeditionary force that Canada raised in September 1939 expanded quickly and volunteers had to be recruited, selected, equipped, trained, and shipped overseas.

The government hoped that, unlike in 1914, the Canadian Militia would mobilize for the next war with greater coordination. Mobilization instructions for the Militia had been published in 1937. The plan was based on the prevailing Militia organization. Upon the outbreak of war, the Militia had to mobilize units to man coastal defences, protect vulnerable points throughout the country, and raise a "Mobile Force" of 60,000 men — a corps of two infantry divisions — in accordance with Defence Scheme No. 3. Units would be built at the regimental level as much as possible and shortfalls in personnel and matériel would be rectified once the unit was concentrated at a training camp. Under the

terms of the Militia Act, members of the NPAM would not be obliged to serve overseas. Instead, the Mobile Force was to be composed of men who had volunteered for the duration of the war. It would be up to unit commanding officers to work out mobilization tasks, such as recruiting drives, temporary accommodations, and elementary training. Each DOC already had mobilization plans to ensure the smooth transportation of men and equipment.¹

By August 1939, the diplomatic situation in Europe had already reached a boiling point. Germany's constant threats against Poland over the course of the year showed no signs of abating. On 23 August, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact, signalling to the Western democracies that Poland would soon be invaded. The United Kingdom and France, having guaranteed Poland's territorial integrity, would soon be at war with Germany. The Canadian government thus made precautionary arrangements to partially mobilize the NPAM. On 26 August, 99 units not earmarked for the Mobile Force were ordered to mobilize detachments and begin guarding various strategically vulnerable sites such as power stations and railway bridges in their communities.²

In a 29 August memorandum, the Chiefs of Staff Committee, composed of the chiefs of each of the three services, outlined its planned course of action for when war erupted. If the United Kingdom declared war, Canada would not remain neutral, but Parliament would have to decide on the nature and scope of the military commitment it

1. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 23, file 958C.009 (D425): Chiefs of Staff Committee, memorandum re: "Canada's National Effort (Armed Forces) in the Early Stages of a Major War," 29 Aug 1939, pars. 8, 22–27; Canada, NDHQ, *Mobilization Instructions for the Canadian Militia, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937), pars. 1–15, 31 (a). Even though there were only 11 military districts, they were numbered up to 13 because MDs 8 and 9 had been disbanded during reorganizations in the interwar period.

2. GO 124, "N.P.A.M. Units Called Out on Service," 26 Aug 1939; C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 1, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 40–41.

would provide. At the very least, Canada would have to defend its own territory. While an expeditionary force for service overseas was considered secondary in importance until Parliament decided to raise one, the chiefs were confident that Canada would indeed come to the United Kingdom's aid in this way. The memorandum predicted that manpower would not be a problem in the short term and that the Militia could send its Mobile Force, partially equipped and trained, overseas within three months.³

Military training would occur in two broad phases. The first phase was individual training, its purpose to accustom new soldiers to military life, instill discipline, and provide instruction and practice in the use of weapons and equipment. Such fundamental training always began at the unit level. Once a unit earmarked for inclusion in the expeditionary force had received enough recruits to bring it up to strength and had provided them with elementary training, it would proceed to a major camp for training in subjects that could not be taught at an armoury in an urban environment such as field manoeuvres. Such camps included Borden and Petawawa, Ontario; Valcartier, Quebec; Dundurn, Saskatchewan; and Shilo, Manitoba, where NPAM units normally received their summer training. They also had schools for more advanced training, including courses for officers, in a particular arm of service. As noted in chapter 1, the facilities at these camps were usually not very developed. When war came, it would take time for the training system in Canada to evolve to a point where it could accommodate, equip, and train thousands of young men in various roles and at different levels of instruction. The second phase, collective training, taught men how to fight as a team. Collective training began at the lowest level of command, the rifle section, and as sections mastered their

3. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 23, file 958C.009 (D425): Chiefs of Staff Committee, memorandum re: "Canada's National Effort (Armed Forces) in the Early Stages of a Major War," pars. 4, 9, 17–18.

manoeuvres, collective training would progress to the platoon, company, and battalion levels. Thus, before collective training at the brigade level or higher could take place, individual, subunit, and unit training had to be mastered.⁴

On 30 August, Colonel Ernest W. Sansom, the director of military training and staff duties, submitted a plan for training a large force to Major-General Anderson, the CGS. The plan was as illustrative of the apparent inevitability of war as it was of the Militia's gross unpreparedness for conflict. Should an emergency arise in late autumn or winter, Sansom wrote, very little field training could be done until the weather permitted it. Instead, units would have to stay in their home cities. But if a crisis occurred in late summer or early autumn, units training at the camps would progress from individual training to collective training. Before collective training could begin, staff training would have to be completed by senior officers and staffs of higher formations. However, Sansom's plan admitted that "no arrangements have been made for the qualification of new officers and N.C.Os. required to complete War Establishments of units selected for the Field Force." The rush of new junior leader candidates and the need to get them trained quickly would put a terrible strain on the training staffs at schools across the country. It seemed, Sansom went on, that the best course of action was to use PF members to train, even though this would mean that these men would be prevented from joining the battalions mobilized from their own regiments for the field force. Canada had to avoid allowing most of its PF personnel to join the field force and leave the country. One alternative was allowing PF officers to accompany their units until they reached a major camp for collective training, at which point a handful of officers would be made part of the training cadre. Or, some officers could be allowed to go overseas but would

4. UK, WO, *Training Regulations 1934* (London: HMSO, 1934), sec. 31 (1–2).

return as instructors after a short period of active service. A third possibility was using retired officers or officers who were too old for deployment overseas as instructors.⁵

Anderson's position was that unit commanding officers, not NDHQ, should arrange training for their own officers. He wrote, "While individual training is being carried on, it should be a simple matter for Commanding Officers to train their officers as the latter will not be required in any numbers in connection with the individual training."⁶ This policy was symptomatic of the general mentality, both in Canada and the United Kingdom, that infantry training was a simple enough undertaking that it could be left almost solely up to regimental officers to administer without much oversight. It did not seem to occur to Anderson or anyone else that decentralizing officer and NCO training in this way guaranteed inconsistency across the entire CASF. It is telling that such important questions had not been considered beforehand. On the very eve of war, though the Militia had a plan for mobilizing a large field force, many important details still had to be considered and training the force would be a serious challenge, particularly in the short term.

On the morning of Friday, 1 September, hours after German forces had crossed the Polish border, the Canadian government recalled legislators for an emergency opening of Parliament scheduled for 7 September. In the meantime, both the United Kingdom and France formally declared war on Germany on the 3rd. To avoid accusations that it had prematurely raised an expeditionary force before Parliament had authorized a declaration of war, the government no longer used the term "Mobile Force" to refer to the wartime expeditionary force and instead ordered the Militia to mobilize and raise a

5. LAC, RG 24, reel C-8353, file H.Q.S. 8122: Col E. W. Sansom (DMT & SD), memorandum to MGen T. V. Anderson (CGS) re: "Policy of Training in an Emergency," 30 Aug 1939, pars. 2–5, 9–11.

6. Ibid.: Anderson, memorandum to Sansom, 2 Sep 1939, par. 7.

“Canadian Active Service Force” (CASF). The CASF would include the two divisions of the former Mobile Force as well as units tasked with defending coastal positions and other vulnerable locations.⁷

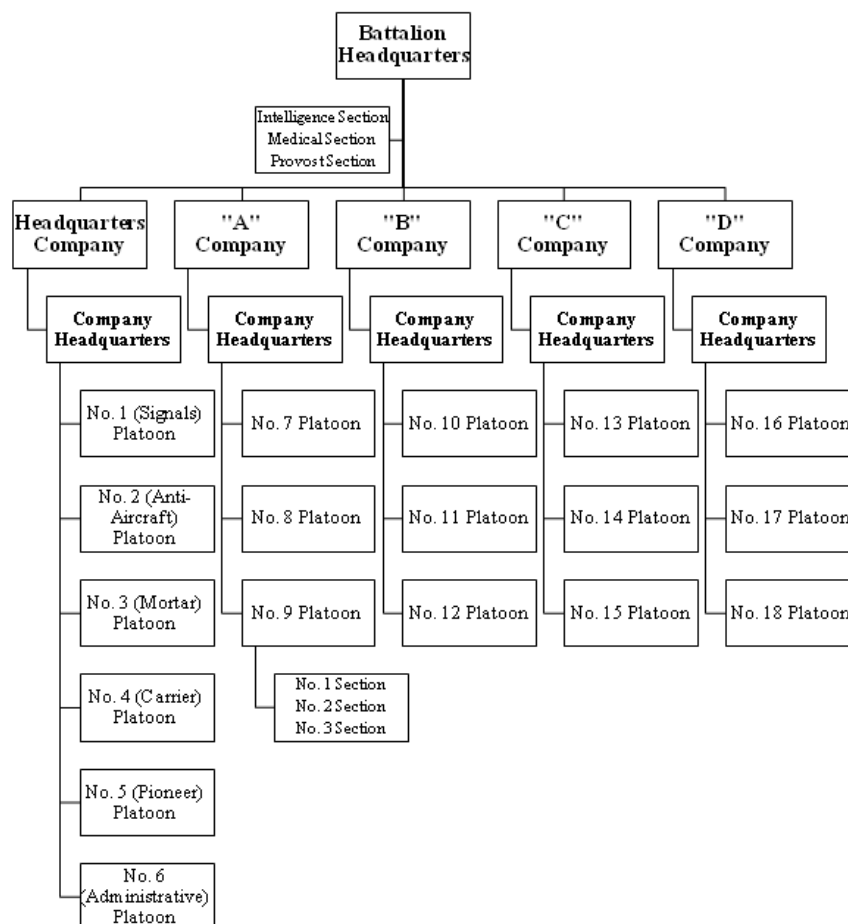
The CASF’s composition had been carefully planned so that all parts of the country could be represented. Regiments were mainly earmarked because they were based in population centres. This way, they would be able to quickly raise full battalions for the CASF. Both divisions would contain three brigades of four battalions each, including three rifle battalions along with one machine gun battalion to provide them with fire support. The rifle battalions would adopt the 1938 British establishment. In addition to a headquarters, each battalion had four rifle companies composed of three platoons, plus a headquarters battalion consisting of specialist platoons. The latter of these included platoons in support roles, such as the administrative and signals platoons, as well as platoons for the weapon systems that were under the battalion headquarters’ control, such as mortars and “carriers” — tracked armoured vehicles with open tops designed to provide mobile machine gun support for the rifle companies. In the rifle companies, each platoon was divided into three sections of seven men led by a corporal. The whole battalion had a strength of 21 officers and 641 other ranks (figure 2.1). In 1st Canadian Division, each brigade would have one battalion from each of the PF regiments. Figure 2.2 shows the order of battle for the CASF as of 1 September. Later developments would see the Calgary Highlanders and Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal switch places in the order of battle.⁸

7. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 42–45.

8. LAC, RG 24, vol. 2646, file H.Q.S. 3498, pt. 11: Anderson, circular letter re: “Defence Scheme No. 3 – Amendments,” 10 Jul 1939, par. 4 (b); vol. 2647, file H.Q.S. 3498, pt. 13: Col K. Stuart (DMO & I) to Anderson re: “Defence Scheme No. 3 – Amendment,” 24 June 1939, encl., “Composition of the

Figure 2.1

Organization of a Canadian Infantry (Rifle) Battalion, September 1939–April 1940



	Officers	Other Ranks
Battalion HQ	4	43
HQ Company	5	210
Rifle Companies (each)	3 (×4)	97 (×4)
	21	641

Source: R. B. Oglesby, "A Summary of Major Changes in Army Organization 1939–1945," AHQ Report No. 57, 22 Dec 1952, par. 34

Mobile Force – Canadian Field Force"; GO 135, "Calling Out of Troops on Active Service," 1 Sep 1939; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 42–45; Terry Copp, *The Brigade: The Fifth Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1939–1945* (Stoney Creek, ON: Fortress, 1992), 8–9; R. B. Oglesby, "A Summary of Major Changes in Army Organization 1939–1945," AHQ Report No. 57, 22 Dec 1952, par. 34.

Figure 2.2**Order of Battle: Infantry Units, Mobile Force, 1 September–22 November 1939**

1st Canadian Division	2nd Canadian Division
1st Canadian Infantry Brigade	4th Canadian Infantry Brigade
The Royal Canadian Regiment	The Essex Scottish Regiment
48th Highlanders of Canada	The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment)
The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment	The Royal Regiment of Canada
The Toronto Scottish Regiment (MG)	The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG)
2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade	5th Canadian Infantry Brigade
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry	The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada
The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada	Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal
The Edmonton Regiment	Le Régiment de Maisonneuve
The Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG)	Le Régiment de la Chaudière (Mit)
3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade	6th Canadian Infantry Brigade
Royal 22 ^e Régiment	The South Saskatchewan Regiment
The West Nova Scotia Regiment	The Calgary Highlanders
The Carleton and York Regiment	The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada
The Royal Montreal Regiment (MG)	The Winnipeg Grenadiers (MG)

Source: GO 135, "Calling Out of Troops on Active Service," 1 Sep 1939

The DOCs, well-acquainted with the mobilization plans, sent orders to selected regiments to mobilize battalions for the CASF. Typically, this involved assembling the men on the parade square, informing members of the mobilization order, and asking for volunteers. Units began recruiting from the general public immediately and the CASF grew quickly. Within five days of mobilization, the CASF numbered 22,878 men, half of whom were in the Mobile Force. By the end of the month, the CASF had 58,256 men, plus 81 women nurses. Accommodations were a problem for most units. In cities, men simply had to reside at their homes, only reporting for unit assemblies. Naturally, this impeded discipline and training.⁹

9. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 49–50, 56.

The British declaration of war was not binding on Canada. Under the Statute of Westminster (1931), though Canada and the other Dominions shared a monarch, they now had legislative independence from the United Kingdom. Thus, it was up to the Parliament of Canada to determine the nature and scope of the country's participation in a war.¹⁰ When the House of Commons met to discuss the Canada's response to the situation in Europe on 8 and 9 September, there was very little debate. All but four members agreed that supporting the United Kingdom and France was the right thing to do. King assured Parliament on the 8th that Canada's focus would be to provide raw materials and expanded facilities for training the RCN and RCAF. The subject of whether to send the CASF overseas when it was fully assembled could wait until later; securing Canada's coastlines was more urgent. He also reiterated his promise from earlier in the year (chapter 1) that his government was against compulsory service because it was unnecessary.¹¹ On the night of 9 September, Parliament adopted the government's position to declare war on Germany. The motion was given Royal Assent the following day. Canada was at war. Upon hearing of German successes in Poland, the government decided on the 16th that while it was not yet committed to sending a large expeditionary force overseas, it would despatch 1st Canadian Division later in the year to the United Kingdom.¹²

Meanwhile, the CASF continued to expand. Anderson's office issued formal training instructions for the CASF on 19 September. Units would be responsible for

10. C. P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, vol. 2, 1921–1948: *The Mackenzie King Era* (1981; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 133–135.

11. Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8–9 Sep 1939), 6–88.

12. According to Stacey, this decision was made “after, undoubtedly, considerable thought and discussion, of which no official record seems to exist,” (C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 13).

individual training until such time as they were moved to training centres. He instructed units to focus on physical fitness, close-order drill, driving and maintenance of vehicles, small arms training, map reading, anti-gas training, and tactics, as well as special training for the more technical arms. Military districts would arrange for the training of regimental instructors. Individual training was to be done with a view to selecting the most capable candidates for promotion to junior leadership positions.¹³

The training of the Essex Scottish Regiment in October was typical of most infantry regiments mobilized for the CASF. The Windsor, Ontario-based regiment was slated to provide a battalion for 2nd Canadian Division. The regiment's CASF battalion was at full-strength within a month, although uniforms and personal equipment were in short supply. Men from nearby regiments that had not been mobilized such as the Kent Regiment and the Essex Regiment (Tank) turned over their uniforms and equipment to the Essex Scottish. There also was no room at the armoury on University Avenue for the entire battalion to be housed. While the "Markatorium," a four-storey building in the city, was being renovated to serve as the battalion's accommodations, men spent their evenings at home. A formal training syllabus for a course in elementary training was issued for October. Training was conducted five days a week plus Saturday mornings. Each training day normally started with PT followed by two periods of instruction until lunch and another two after lunch at the armoury or the Markatorium. The first week of training included lectures on army customs and regimental history as well as close-order drill. The following week saw rifle drill and basic rifle handling lectures. The battalion had its first route march on the afternoon of 11 October in Wigle Park. Route marches

13. LAC, RG 24, reel C-8353, file H.Q.S. 8122: Anderson, CASF GS Trg Instr No. 1, 19 Sep 1939, pars. 1-2, 4-6.

were normally held at least once a week and were a staple of training throughout the war. Though they imparted no real skills, they developed men's stamina, maintained discipline, and enhanced unit cohesion. NCOs received special training in the evenings, after the men had gone home. Their syllabus included lectures on leadership and instruction. By the fourth week, the battalion syllabus was dominated by rifle training.¹⁴

Not all NPAM infantry regiments were mobilized. For instance, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles eagerly anticipated receiving orders from Military District 10 to mobilize when war broke out, only to be disappointed as weeks went by without any such orders. The regiment lost men who joined active service units or the RCN or RCAF. Nevertheless, the regiment welcomed enlistees and studied the experiences of nearby regiments that had mobilized so that when the orders came, mobilization would go smoothly. Losing experienced men to other units hurt training efforts at first, but the Royal Winnipeg Rifles adapted. In October, the regiment began a school to train officers and NCOs three nights per week. Training in close-order drill and small arms was conducted one night per week. The order to mobilize did not come until 1 June 1940.¹⁵

Some regiments were ordered to mobilize, but not for membership in either of the divisions. For example, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment in St Catharines, Ontario, had been one of the regiments ordered to defend vulnerable points on 26 August 1939. The regiment received orders to mobilize small guard detachments rather than a full battalion. By that evening its men were assembled along the Welland Canal to defend against

14. WD, Essex Scot, Oct 1939, app. 1, Syllabus, 2–7 Oct 1939; app. 2, Syllabus, 9–14 Oct 1939; app. 4, Syllabus, 16–21 Oct 1939; app. 14, Syllabus, 23–28 Oct 1939; app. 15, Syllabus, 30 Oct–4 Nov 1939; Sandy Antal and Kevin R. Shackleton, *Duty Nobly Done: The Official History of the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment* (Windsor, ON: Walkerville, 2006), 354–359.

15. WD, R Wpg Rif, 1 Sep–29 Nov 1939, LCol J. K. Bell (CO, R Wpg Rif), "Memorandum of the Activities of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, a Unit of the N.P.A.M., which has not been mobilized, from the 1st day of September 1939 to date," 29 Nov 1939; Brian A. Reid, *Named by the Enemy: A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles* ([Montreal]: Robin Brass Studio, 2010), 130.

sabotage. But this role meant that the Lincs would not be part of the CASF. This was a low point for the regiment because it seemed that its canal duties would prevent it from contributing a unit in a formation bound for overseas. Canal duty itself was a disappointment because the regiment's predecessors had been tied down guarding the canal during the First World War. When not on guard duty, training in this period was simplistic: close-order drill, basic weapons training, and route marches in the morning and sports in the afternoon. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police gradually took over guarding the canal throughout the autumn. But without much to do, the Lincs lost some 400 men who left to serve in other units.¹⁶

To command 1st Canadian Division, the government had to find a general who was highly intelligent, had staff training and leadership experience, and could lead the division (and possibly a Canadian corps) in training and ultimately in battle. There were very few men in the Canadian Militia who had these qualifications. The one man who stood out as the logical choice was Major-General Andrew McNaughton, the former CGS, owing to his distinguished career as a soldier and as an engineer. As CGS, he had proven to be a conscientious organizer and his scientific background made him uniquely knowledgeable of the equipment that a modern army would need. In a meeting on 6 October, the prime minister offered him the position, which McNaughton dutifully accepted.¹⁷

16. R. L. Rogers, *History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment* (Montreal: Industrial Shops for the Deaf, 1954), 95–97; Geoffrey W. Hayes, *The Lincs: A History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at War*, 2nd ed. (Waterloo, ON: LCMSDS, 2007), 6.

17. J. W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record*, vol. 1, 1939–1944 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 37–38; John Swettenham, *McNaughton.*, vol. 2, 1939–1943 (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), 3–5.

At the end of October, the new general officer commanding (GOC) 1st Canadian Division set out on an inspection tour of the units under his command. However, in his reports on the tour, McNaughton was not very specific about how he assessed these units. His comments tended to be qualitative and vague; it is not clear why he found some units to be efficient while judging others to be poor. He did not include any examples of what he saw or what standard he used to measure units' state of training or the quality of their officers. Instead, his notes on the tour contain more detailed information about the state of units' equipment deficiencies and accommodations than their state of training or the quality of their officers. McNaughton's preoccupation with equipment over training would become a serious problem later in the war (chapter 4). On 25 October, McNaughton started his tour with units in Military District 5, headquartered in Quebec City, and Military Districts 6 and 7 in the Maritime provinces. He noted that there were acute shortages in clothing, particularly boots. In Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, he found that the West Nova Scotia Regiment was short 200 field service caps. The men desperately needed winter clothing, new boots, and underwear. The only specific information on training during this part of the tour concerned the Carleton and York Regiment at Woodstock, New Brunswick, with McNaughton noting that this unit had completed a qualifying course for new officers and all men had practiced firing rifles.¹⁸

McNaughton made similarly general comments later that week on the second leg of his tour when he inspected units in Military Districts 2 and 4, headquartered in Toronto and Montreal, respectively. In Toronto, he visited the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) grounds, where the Toronto Scottish Regiment (MG), the 48th Highlanders of

18. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, 5 Oct–17 Dec 1939, app. 10-4, [MGen A. G. L. McNaughton (GOC 1 Cdn Inf Div)], "Report on Inspection of Quebec and Maritime Province Units – 25–28 Oct., 1939," pt. 2, pars. 2 (a, c), 6 (d).

Canada, and “B” Company, RCR were accommodated at the Horse Palace. This was the first exposure to barracks life during the war that these Militia units had. The Horse Palace had been quickly renovated to accommodate military units and the sleeping, cooking, and sanitary facilities were generally in good working order. Although the CNE grounds were not large enough to allow for much field training, they did afford newly formed units with a suitable environment for instilling discipline and teamwork among the men and providing classes in a lecture setting, practice in camp routine, close-order drill, and rifle training at the ranges in nearby Long Branch.¹⁹ In his report on the inspection, McNaughton remarked that “the spirit and standard of efficiency shown are worthy of the highest praise.” Two days later at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, he judged that “D” Company, RCR was “composed of personnel of doubtful quality.”²⁰ Overall, McNaughton believed 1st Canadian Division’s units from Military Districts 2 and 4 had reached a “satisfactory” standard of individual training, notwithstanding shortages in equipment, especially rifles and training manuals.²¹

While in the western provinces, McNaughton focused his attention on the artillery units but made time for the infantry. He rated the Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG) as “in very good shape” and two companies of PPCLI in Esquimalt as “well trained.” He considered the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada to be remarkable: “The men are of excellent type and physique and the C.O., and all his officers very well qualified. This is one of the best Infantry battalions hitherto inspected and should give a good account of

19. Kim Beattie, *Dileas: History of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, 1929–1956* (Toronto: The Regiment, 1957), 49–52.

20. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, 5 Oct–17 Dec 1939, app. 11-2, [McNaughton], “Report on Inspection of Units of the 1st Division in M.Ds. 2 and 4, 31 Oct.–4 Nov 39,” 5 Nov 1939, pars. 2, 5, 21.

21. *Ibid.*, app. A, “Notes on Training,” pars. 1, 3, 8.

itself.”²² McNaughton considered the western units to be of comparable quality to those in eastern Canada.²³ Again, however, it is unclear how he made such judgements, what exactly he was measuring or what he believed was an acceptable level of skill or efficiency in these units. His comments should be interpreted in their proper context. These inspection tours took place only about ten weeks after mobilization. By that time, CASF units generally had only done the most elementary individual training. Though McNaughton may have been satisfied with their progress thus far, not one Canadian unit was close to being combat-ready.

With its order of battle complete, 1st Canadian Division was due to be sent to the United Kingdom to complete its training and then see action in Europe when the opportunity came. In November, NDHQ decided that Canadian divisions should follow the same establishment as British divisions so as to maximize inter-operability between the two armies. So, a machine gun battalion was not required for each brigade. Still, the three machine gun battalions of 1st Canadian Division nevertheless would be sent overseas, their role to be determined later.²⁴ The first “flights” of the division occurred on 10 and 22 December 1939. In all, 15,908 Canadian troops sailed across the Atlantic by year’s end.²⁵ When the division left Canada, it lacked modern weapons and equipment. Because of the miniscule defence budgets during the interwar period (chapter 1), Canada had to send its first division overseas without anything approaching modern equipment. When it left Canada, 1st Canadian Division was largely armed with weapons from the

22. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, 5 Oct–17 Dec 1939, app. 11-4, [McNaughton], “Report on Inspection of Units of the 1st Division in M.Ds. 10, 11, 12 and 13 – 7 to 14 Nov. 39,” pars. 15, 39, 41.

23. Ibid., app. A, “Notes on Training,” par. 1.

24. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, 5 Oct–17 Dec 1939, app. 11-8 (b), NDHQ, tel. 562 to Vincent Massey (High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain), 22 Nov 1939, pars. 1–2.

25. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 72, 189–191.

First World War, including Lewis guns and 18-pounder field guns rather than the newer Bren guns and 25-pounder gun-howitzers that British divisions sported.²⁶ It also had very limited motor transport: just 17 15-cwt. trucks and 25 1-ton vans for the whole division. More Canadian-built trucks, perhaps 50 to 70 15-cwt. trucks, were expected to be available in the new year.²⁷ Ultimately, the British would have to take on the responsibility to equip Canadian units once they arrived until Canadian industry could begin producing weapons, equipment, and vehicles in sufficient quantities. Once the division arrived in the United Kingdom, new equipment would trickle in throughout the winter.

Given the poor state of the Militia during the interwar period, the little training that the units of 1st Canadian Division accomplished by December 1939 was commendable. Preselecting Militia regiments to raise entire battalions for the CASF was a more efficient strategy than assembling volunteers from multiple regiments into generic battalions. But the dearth of proper equipment, particularly vehicles, would seriously hinder training. As 1st Canadian Division would find out in the spring, the more progress its units made in training, the harder it was to keep going without new equipment.

26. C. P. Stacey, "Situation of the Canadian Forces in the United Kingdom, Summer, 1941: V. The Problem of Equipment," CMHQ Report No. 46, 19 Sep 1941, par. 6.

27. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, 5 Oct–17 Dec 1939, app. 11-15, LCol G. R. Turner (GSO1, 1 Cdn Div), memorandum re: "Vehicles," 29 Nov 1939, pars. 1 (b), 5–7.

1st Canadian Division's First Winter Overseas

Almost the entire 1st Canadian Division reached the United Kingdom by the last day of 1939. The troopships landed in Scotland and the men were immediately transported by rail to Aldershot, Hampshire. The traditional home of the British Army, Aldershot had the largest concentration of permanent barracks in the country. There, the division resumed its individual training. "Aldershot is a wonderful training area," Howard Mitchell of the Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG) remembered. "In an area of about fifteen miles square there are training facilities literally for an army. There are areas for manoeuvres. There are all sorts of firing ranges."²⁸ McNaughton planned to begin collective training in two months' time. But this proved easier said than done as the harsh winter weather limited the time spent on field training. Worse, all throughout the winter of 1939–1940, 1st Canadian Division continued to acutely feel the neglect of the Militia during the interwar years.

In a meeting on 22 December, General Edmund Ironside, the chief of the Imperial General Staff (IGS; i.e. the most senior member of the British Army) told McNaughton that he had already given orders that 1st Canadian Division should receive priority in the supply of training equipment.²⁹ Accordingly, while waiting for new vehicles and weapons to arrive, McNaughton devoted the period from 27 December 1939 to 28 February 1940 to individual training. As long as individual training was complete and sufficient equipment had arrived by the end of February, McNaughton planned to begin

28. Howard Mitchell, *"My War": With the Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.), 1939–1945* (s.l.: The Author, [1980?]), 11.

29. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, 18–31 Dec 1939, app. 12–22, memorandum re: "Visit of G.O.C. 1 Cdn Div to C.I.G.S., 22 Dec 1939," pars. 3–4.

unit collective training in March and formation training in April. Ironside hoped that the division would be able to take its place in the line on the continent with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) sometime in early May.³⁰ To that end, McNaughton issued the division's first training instruction on 26 December. Formal training instructions were the standard means by which a headquarters established training objectives and policy, usually for a period of a month or more. At the division level, they were drafted by the general staff officer, grade I (GSO1), the officer who oversaw the work of the division headquarters staff.³¹ According to 1st Canadian Division's Training Instruction No. 1, written by McNaughton's GSO1, Lieutenant-Colonel G. R. Turner, all ranks had to master anti-gas training, fieldcraft, passive air defence, and appreciable skill in small arms training by the end of February. Turner also ordered that all units submit reports detailing their training progress to their superior headquarters every Monday. These reports were to contain a summary of the training covered during the week, difficulties encountered, and a forecast of whether the training objectives set out in Training Instruction No. 1 were likely to be met on schedule.³²

Units made slow but steady progress over the winter months. Training in January focused on small arms, anti-gas measures, and even simple exercises. Though the infantry brigades reported that their units were progressing, getting the individual training completed was still slow owing to deficiencies in motor transport, ammunition, the number of trained officers, and the availability of timeslots on outdoor ranges, as well as

30. Ibid., app. 12-21(a), "Forecast on Progress of Training – 1 Cdn Div," n.d.

31. US Army, *Handbook on the British Army 1943*, rev. ed., ed. Chris Ellis and Peter Chamberlain (London: Arms and Armour, 1976), 13.

32. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, 18–31 Dec 1939, app. 12-27, Turner, 1 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 1, 26 Dec 1939, pars. 1–2, 17.

widespread colds among the men.³³ Bad weather frequently shut down all outdoor training. Equipment shortages were severe enough that by early February it was clear that all brigades would need an extra two weeks to complete individual training. Unit collective training would have to be pushed back to 18 March. Fortunately, all of the division's infantry units completed their individual training on schedule on the 16th.³⁴

McNaughton consolidated unit progress reports into a weekly report to NDHQ. As they provide a week-by-week picture of the division's training progress, they are critical historical documents for understanding training as well as arrivals of new equipment during this stage of the war. By 11 March, enough British-built Bren guns had arrived to supply each infantry battalion with 40 of them.³⁵ This was nearly up to establishment: the carrier platoon needed its share of Bren guns and each of the battalion's 36 rifle sections needed one. With 40 Bren guns, each battalion could at least practice basic tactical manoeuvres. More serious was the lack of motor transport, which inhibited unit collective training. In fact, the shortage in vehicles was probably the single greatest hindrance to 1st Canadian Division's training in the spring of 1940 because it limited the kind of training that could be accomplished. Constantly loading and unloading a small number of trucks to shuttle even a company's worth of men and equipment between the barracks and the different training areas in Aldershot took so long that there

33. Ibid., Jan 1940, app. 1-22, Turner, "Minutes of Meeting Held at H.Q. 1 Cdn. Div. at 1500 hours Thursday, 25 January, 1940 for the Purpose of Discussing Matters Pertaining to Training," 26 Jan 1940, pars. 4-5, 8-9; app. 1-25, "Summary of Training Progress Reports for Week Ending 27 January, 1940," sec. 1

34. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Feb 1940, app. 24, "Summary of Training Progress Reports for Week Ending 10 Feb., 1940," sec. 1; app. 10, "Summary of Training Progress Reports for Week Ending 3 Feb., 1940," sec. 1; app. 25, Turner, "Minutes of Divisional Conference No. 4 Held in Lecture Room of Sask. L.I. at 0900 hours, 12th February, 1940," 19 Feb 1940, par. 3; LAC, RG 24, reel T-17988, vol. 12385, file 4/Progress/2: McNaughton, tel. GS 235 to Norman Rogers (MND), 11 Mar 1940; McNaughton, tel. GS 246 to Rogers, 16 Mar 1940.

35. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17988, vol. 12385, file 4/Progress/2: McNaughton, tel. GS 235 to Rogers, 11 Mar 1940.

would be little time left in the day for actual training. Even though the British had granted 1st Canadian Division priority in the supply of vehicles, units were still terribly underequipped. Throughout the spring, McNaughton complained weekly to Ottawa that the lack of vehicles was inhibiting training progress.³⁶ British- and Canadian-built vehicles began to trickle in during March. By the 16th, each battalion had received three Universal carriers, followed by another shipment of three carriers two weeks later.³⁷ The official British establishment called for each battalion to have ten of these vehicles. Having six was certainly better than none, but the real problem was the lack of trucks. The establishment also called for nine 8-cwt. trucks for headquarters use and 30 15-cwt. trucks to transport supplies and equipment.³⁸ Since 1st Canadian Division had nine rifle battalions, its infantry alone needed 351 trucks; artillery and transport units needed even more.

While 1st Canadian Division was busy absorbing new equipment and made the best progress that it could in training, the BEF was on the Franco–Belgian border guarding against German invasion. This was the heart of the “Phoney War,” the phase of the conflict in which both the United Kingdom and France had declared war against Germany but had yet to engage the enemy in ground combat. The BEF had already encountered weaknesses in the way in which infantry battalions were structured. Namely, battalions were too small. They needed more men to hold long frontages at night and in poor visibility, digging slit trenches, and conducting patrols. Consequently, the British

36. See progress reports for April and May in LAC, RG 24, reel T-17988, vol. 12385, file 4/Progress/2.

37. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17988, vol. 12385, file 4/Progress/2: McNaughton, tel. GS 246 to Rogers, 16 Mar 1940; McNaughton, tel. GS 273 to Rogers, 30 Mar 1940.

38. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9942, file 5/Inf Bn/1: WO Letter 20/Infantry/3120 (S.D.1.(b)), 4 Apr 1940, encl., WE No. II/1931/12F/1, “An Infantry Battalion (Higher Establishment).”

adjusted the infantry battalion war establishment such that each section was expanded by three men plus an increment of three extra cooks per battalion, or an additional 111 men. There was no corresponding increase in the authorized number of vehicles.³⁹ Canadian infantry battalions adopted this establishment over the summer.⁴⁰

In the spring, the warmer weather and the gradual intake of new equipment allowed for more training outdoors as well as more collective training. The Canadians remained stationed in Hampshire, south and southwest of London. The division's units were billeted in various communities throughout the county, from Aldershot in the west to Westerham in the east. The infantry battalions, kept in the same general areas as their brigade headquarters, mostly were accommodated in barracks. Adjacent fields were used for training. The Edmonton Regiment,⁴¹ for instance, resided in the Morval East Barracks at Farnborough. The battalion's experience serves as an example of Canadian infantry units' shift from individual to unit collective training during the spring. Battalion headquarters would craft and issue a syllabus for the week. Since training facilities, such as lecture rooms, fields, and the parade square, were finite and there always had to be one company on duty to maintain the camp, each company had to rotate through the syllabus. Thus, while one company spent the morning in lecture, another would undertake a tactical exercise while yet another would be on duty completing various camp "fatigues." In April, the Edmonton Regiment's syllabus featured a wide range of activities. For the week of the 8th, "A" Company was the duty company on Monday. On Tuesday, the

39. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9942, file 5/Inf Bn/1: WO Letter 20/Infantry/3120 (S.D.1(b)), 4 Apr 40, pars. 1 – 2, 4 and encl., WE No. II/1931/12F/1, "An Infantry Battalion (Higher Establishment)."

40. GO 169, "War Establishments," 21 Aug 1940, effective 15 Mar 1940.

41. The Edmonton Regiment is better known to history as "The Loyal Edmonton Regiment." The name change occurred in October 1943 (G. W. L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 2, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956), 246n).

company conducted a joint exercise with “C” Company in which each took turns attacking while the other withdrew. On Wednesday, the company spent the morning in another exercise, this time practicing attacking in conjunction with tanks and artillery support. After lunch, the company spent the rest of the day playing sports, which maintained men’s physical fitness, improved morale, and developed company cohesion. Thursday was spent in lecture, during which the men’s performance in the exercises earlier that week were critiqued. Other lecture topics that day included gas training and protection against aerial attack. Friday morning, “A” Company did 45 minutes of PT and then did a route march and spent the rest of the day doing another exercise. On Saturday, after another morning PT session, the company was once again the battalion’s duty company. Sundays were normally reserved for time off, except for religious services (“church parade”) in the morning.⁴² A new training week would start on Monday.

The exercises in this period gave companies practice in different elements of a unit engagement, with a view to more intricate exercises in the future. For instance, companies practiced men in marching, mounting vehicles, being transported to a new site and then dismounting. While this might seem like a simple process, it was vital that units and subunits conduct such movements smoothly and efficiently. Companies also practiced organized withdrawals from field positions, another skill that had to be mastered. Platoons had to be able to provide cover for one another when making a tactical withdrawal on the battlefield. Usually, a small number of men would act as the “enemy” and report to the company what they had seen during the withdrawal. Were men using proper cover, or were they visible against the skyline? Rehearsing simple

42. WD, Edmn R, Apr 1940, app. 66, “Progress Report for Week Ending 13 Apr 40,” 12 Apr 1940; app. 67, Syllabus, Week Ending 13 Apr 1940.

movements like these would hopefully give NCOs and junior officers an opportunity to develop their leadership skills and prepare units for more complex schemes in the near future.⁴³

Seven months after mobilization, while the BEF and the French Army were at the ready on the continent to defend against a German attack westward, 1st Canadian Division's infantry units were still struggling to train at the battalion level. The miserable winter weather and the slow intake of new weapons, equipment, and vehicles had all contributed to rendering unrealistic the hope that the division would be ready to join the BEF in early May. Officers and men had little choice but to make the best of the circumstances and hope for better training opportunities over the coming months.

Crisis in Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and France

The Canadians in the United Kingdom looked forward to continuing their training throughout the spring and summer, when the better weather would provide improved conditions for field training. As time went on, more equipment would pour in to 1st Canadian Division. Of course, soldiers waited anxiously for the Phoney War period to end so that they could see action. Seven months into the war, no Canadian units or formations were ready for combat and it was unclear where and when the ground war between Germany and the Allies would begin. The answer came in April 1940. The Phoney War ended on the 9th when the Germans attacked Denmark and Norway. As the

43. Ibid., app. 15, OC A Coy, Edmn R, "Progress Report for Week Ending March 30, 1940"; app. 16, OC A Coy, Edmn R, "'A' Company in Withdrawal Scheme"; app. 17, OC A Coy, Edmn R, "Report on 'A' Company Withdrawal Scheme of Thursday March 28, 1940."

German offensive unfolded over the course of the spring of 1940, 1st Canadian Division found itself being shifted between various roles and locales. Despite its equipment shortages before, the division ironically became the most equipped formation on British soil by default when, in late May and early June, the BEF was expelled from France and forced to leave behind almost all of its tanks, trucks, artillery pieces, and other heavy equipment. Suddenly, there was very little time for the Canadians to train as the chief concern was no longer preparing to meet the Germans on the continent, but defending the United Kingdom from invasion.

The Canadians' first possible chance at seeing action occurred during Germany's simultaneous invasions of Norway and Denmark in April. Norway was Germany's main target as bases there would give the Kriegsmarine (German Navy) a means to break out of the North Sea. Capturing ports in Norway was also important because during the winter, the Gulf of Bothnia would freeze over; shipments of iron ore from Sweden would thus have to be sent by rail to the port of Narvik and shipped from there along the Norwegian coast. Bases in Norway, therefore, would also give the Kriegsmarine the means to protect these vital shipments. Occupying Denmark, too, would allow Germany to control access to the Baltic. On 9 April, German ships landed ground troops at key Norwegian coastal cities such as Narvik, Bergen, and Trondheim, while the Luftwaffe (German Air Force) dropped paratroopers into Oslo. Meanwhile, ground and naval forces seized Denmark. Copenhagen fell before its coastal batteries were even alerted to the Germans' presence. The Danish government surrendered just hours into the invasion.⁴⁴

44. T. K. Derry, *The Campaign in Norway*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1952), chaps. 2–3; Earl F. Ziemke, "The German Decision to Invade Norway and Denmark," chap. 2 in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington: CMH, 1987).

Though the Allies could not save Denmark, they believed that they could reverse German gains in Norway. The British organized a plan, Operation HAMMER, to capture Trondheim. The main assault, codenamed “Hammerforce,” would make its way up the Trondheimsfjord and attack Trondheim itself. Subsidiary landings to the north and south would advance southward and northward, respectively, to support the capture of the city. As the Germans already held the forts guarding the entrance of the Trondheimsfjord, the British planned to neutralize them by landing eight infantry parties of about a hundred men each. Intelligence estimated that there were some 3,500 to 5,000 Germans in the vicinity of Trondheim. On the 16th, the War Office asked Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ, the senior Canadian headquarters in the United Kingdom) if Canadians could assemble these parties and be ready to depart Aldershot for a northern port in 48 hours.⁴⁵ The French had suggested the use of Canadian troops because they regarded them “as peculiarly fitted for warfare under Norwegian conditions.”⁴⁶ McNaughton authorized the use of about 1,000 Canadian troops from units that had achieved the highest level of training. Since individual and collective training up to the battalion level were the responsibility of individual units, variance in units’ progress throughout the division was inevitable. The men selected to participate in the operation came from PPCLI and the Edmonton Regiment, the two units with the highest degree of

45. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Apr 1940, app. 35, Turner, memorandum re: “Proposed Operations of Canadian Forces in Norway,” 16 Apr 1940, app. A, LCol E. L. M. Burns (GSO1, CMHQ), “Memorandum on Proposed Combined Operations in which Canadians may Participate,” 16 Apr 1940 and app. C, Turner, 1 Cdn Div Op Instr No. 1, 16 Apr 1940; app. 36, “Verbatim Notes on Conference Held in G.O.C.’s Office 1400 hrs,” 17 Apr 1940; LAC, RG 24, reel T-17905, vol. 12304, file 3/Norway/1: Burns, “Memorandum on Proposed Combined Operation in which Canadians May Participate,” 16 Apr 1940; WO, “Estimate of German Intentions and Forces in Trondheim Area,” 18 Apr 1940.

46. Derry, *The Campaign in Norway*, 62.

training.⁴⁷ According to historian John Nelson Rickard, there was no way that McNaughton could have refused such a request from the British. Anything less than an affirmative response during the Norway crisis would have risked the War Office's trust in the Canadians and McNaughton's working relationship with his British superiors.⁴⁸ Indeed, after the war, McNaughton himself recalled that HAMMER "was an operation of war where our assistance should be given without question."⁴⁹ However, despite the progress PPCLI and the Edmonton Regiment had made in training, they were still hardly ready for combat as they had not yet completed their collective training.

Upon receiving McNaughton's orders, Canadian commanders set to work preparing to send the Canadian force to Scotland for embarkation to Norway. By the 17th, 1st Canadian Division headquarters had formulated detailed plans for the operation, including the selection of command staff personnel, attachment of key technical personnel, allotments of weapons, ammunition, vehicles and other equipment of supplies. Each of the infantry battalions would provide 20 officers and 559 other ranks for the operation.⁵⁰ Shortly after midnight on 19 April, the Canadian force had successfully moved to Dunfermline, Scotland, to prepare for embarkation. But the British changed their plans. The supremacy of the Luftwaffe in Norway made an attack on Trondheim too

47. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Apr 1940, app. 35, Turner, memorandum re: "Proposed Operations of Canadian Forces in Norway," 16 Apr 1940, pars. 6–8

48. John Nelson Rickard, *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 41.

49. LAC, MG 31 E 42, vol. 3, file "Interview – Transcript, 'McNaughton and the First and Second World Wars,' 1965," pt. 1: Gen A. G. L. McNaughton (ret'd), interview by CBC, ca. 1965, sess. 2, tape 1, 6.

50. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Apr 1940, app. 38, Turner, 1 Cdn Div Op Instr No. 2, 17 Apr 1940 and app. A, 2–4.

dangerous to ground and naval forces. On the 20th, HAMMER was cancelled. The Canadian battalions were no longer needed.⁵¹

Aside from the abortive Trondheim operation, Canadian infantry units were largely unaffected by the Germans' attack on Scandinavia. The division's weekly training progress reports for the rest of April indicate that the infantry units had begun their collective training. Units practiced basic manoeuvres, including moving to assembly areas, withdrawing under the cover of darkness, and even simple attack schemes. By the end of the month, field firing exercises, manoeuvres in which the infantry practiced coordinating with live artillery fire, had started. However, all units complained about the shortage of available vehicles.⁵² 1st Canadian Division's Training Instruction No. 3, issued on 27 April, ordered that brigade collective training was to be completed by 5 June, with divisional collective training to begin the following day. Exercises for the month of May were to emphasize the attack and cooperation between all arms. But the British, haunted by the spectre of the First World War, still believed that, this time, there might be an initial trench warfare phase. In fact, on the continent, the British had already begun digging in to some extent. Thus, Training Instruction No. 3 also warned that each infantry brigade would soon spend time at the Trench Warfare Training and Experimental Centre at Imber, Wiltshire. The training programme there involved a week-long course

51. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Apr 1940, app. 62f, McNaughton, tel. GS 330 to Rogers, 18 Apr 1940; HQ, 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1940, app. 1, Col E. W. Sansom (A/Comd, 2 Cdn Inf Bde), "Narrative of Events Leading up to the Despatch of H.Q. 2 Cdn. Inf. Bde. with P.P.C.L.I. and Edmn. Regt. with Hammer Force," n.d., 4-5; LAC, RG 24, reel T-17905, vol. 12304, file 3/Norway/1: Burns, memorandum, "Information given to Lt.-Col. Burns, G.S.O.1 C.M.H.Q. by Lt.-Col. R. N. Gale, G.S.O.1 G.S. (P), at the War Office, 1245 hrs," 20 Apr 1940; Derry, *The Campaign in Norway*, 77; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 259-260; G. R. Stevens, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry*, vol. 3, 1919-1957 (Montreal: Southam, [1957]), 28-29; G. R. Stevens, *A City Goes to War: History of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment (3 PPCLI)* (Brampton, ON: Charters, 1964), 191-193.

52. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Apr 1940, app. 28, "Progress Report for Week Ending 13 Apr 40," 19 Apr 1940; app. 65, "Training Progress Report for Week Ending 27 Apr 40."

per brigade in various trench operations, such as nighttime raids, reconnaissance patrols, and defensive preparations.⁵³

The Canadians, though, would not have the chance to focus on training over the spring and summer months as they had hoped. On 10 May, German forces swept through the Netherlands and Belgium into France, smashing their way through the Ardennes Forest, overwhelming French defences and outflanking Allied forces in Belgium. Within a week, the Germans had punched through the British and French forces and reached the coast, leaving the Allied armies dangerously cut in two. On the 23rd, the British ordered McNaughton to prepare a brigade group for immediate deployment to France to provide protection for the BEF's supply lines. 1st Brigade, plus supporting units, worked feverishly to collect supplies and load the first flight — including the RCR, the 48th Highlanders, and the brigade headquarters — only to have the operation cancelled on the 25th.⁵⁴

With the Germans gaining ground in France every day, the British became increasingly anxious at the possibility that the United Kingdom might soon come under direct attack. 1st Canadian Division was one of the few remaining formations left in the British Isles, even though it was not yet combat-ready. McNaughton ordered the division to halt its training and began to prepare it for an anti-invasion role. On 26 May, he reorganized the division into nine “flying columns,” mobile battlegroups with an infantry battalion at the core of each, able to respond quickly to an enemy landing. The next day, the division, plus all Canadian ancillary units, came under General Headquarters (GHQ)

53. Ibid., app. 63, Turner, 1 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 3, 27 Apr 1940, pars. 1–2, 4, 14 (b); app. 74, Comdt, TWTEC to McNaughton, 30 Apr 1940, app. A, “Outline Day by Day Programme for Training of Units of 1st Canadian Division at Imber”; John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 76–77.

54. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 265–268.

Reserve (the reserve component of GHQ Home Forces). The Canadians received orders to move to Northampton, from where they would reinforce the British troops defending a stretch of coastline between the mouths of the rivers Thames and Humber.⁵⁵

Unfortunately, the Allied position in France only worsened. With little hope of reversing Germany's gains, the most sensible course of action for the British was to withdraw from the continent and preserve its manpower for the defence of the realm and for future engagements. Most of the BEF was evacuated at Dunkirk by 4 June, and the British were already preparing their next move. A Second BEF, under Lieutenant-General Sir Alan Brooke, was being constituted to demonstrate that the British were willing to stand by France, take some German pressure off beleaguered French forces, and perhaps maintain a foothold in Brittany. The new force was comprised of the battered 1st Armoured and 51st (Highland) Divisions, the only remaining British divisions in France, and 52nd (Lowland) and 1st Canadian Divisions, the only two divisions in the United Kingdom in any condition to be quickly despatched to the continent. Consequently, the Canadians did not stay long at Northampton.⁵⁶

Though the Canadians excitedly moved to Plymouth and Falmouth for embarkation, only 1st Brigade and some ancillary units made it to France, landing at Brest early on the 14th, the day that Paris fell. The units made it to positions at Laval and Le Mans by rail but then were promptly recalled. On the 15th, recognizing that nothing could be done to save France, Brooke cancelled all further embarkations to France and

55. Ibid., 273–276.

56. For more on the fall of France, see L. F. Ellis, *The War in France and Flanders, 1939–1940*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1954); Guy Chapman, *Why France Fell: The Defeat of the French Army in 1940* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1968); Alistair Horne, *To Lose a Battle: France 1940* (London: Macmillan, 1969); and Brian Bond, *France and Belgium, 1939–1940* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975).

ordered all elements of the Second BEF not fighting under French command to evacuate. 1st Brigade made it back to the United Kingdom but had to leave its sorely needed vehicles in France. Two days later, all remaining British forces in France were recalled.⁵⁷ France formally surrendered on the 22nd, leaving the British Empire and Commonwealth alone against the Axis powers (Italy having joined Germany on 10 June).

With the Germans occupying the French coast, the British had to cope with the horrifying possibility that the British Isles might soon face an invasion. The rate at which motor transport came in to 1st Canadian Division accelerated after the Germans opened their offensive against France. By 1 June, the entire division had taken in about 700 British-built vehicles in addition to 344 Canadian-built vehicles. A week later, McNaughton reported to Ottawa that 1st Canadian Division was nearly up to establishment in equipment.⁵⁸ It had taken an unreasonably long time for Canada to have a battle-worthy force. Already nine months into the war, 1st Canadian Division was only just receiving its full vehicle and equipment complement. It still needed time for training at the battalion, brigade, and division levels. Still, the division became an important part of the British defence strategy in the early summer of 1940 as it was the only division left that was up to full strength and had most of its equipment. Immediately after the fall of France, the Canadians returned to their place in GHQ Reserve, this time in Oxford. There, under IV Corps, the Canadians formed a mobile reserve, ready to respond to invasion crises in all directions, whether they were in England, Scotland, or Wales. But

57. WD, RCR, Jun 1940, app. 22, LCol V. Hodson (CO, RCR), "Report on Recent Operations in France – R.C.R. (CASF)," 21 Jun 1940; Strome Galloway, "*55 Axis*": *With the Royal Canadian Regiment, 1939–1945* (Montreal: Provincial, 1946), 32–36; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 276–283; G. R. Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment*, vol. 2, *1933–1966* (London, ON: London Printing and Lithography, 1967), 22–27; Beattie, *Dileas*, 105–113, 120–129.

58. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17988, vol. 12385, file 4/Progress/2: McNaughton, tels. GS 456, 481, 534, and 577 to Rogers, 18 May–8 Jun 1940.

the stay in Oxford was very short as the Canadians' role in the defensive plans was revised. There would be a mobile corps (IV Corps) north of the Thames and another, the new VII Corps, south of the Thames composed of 1st Armoured and 1st Canadian Divisions, plus the New Zealand Force. The Canadians moved from Oxford to Surrey beginning on 2 July. Lieutenant-General Bernard Paget (CGS, Home Forces) chose McNaughton to command VII Corps. McNaughton was promoted to lieutenant-general. Brigadier George R. Pearkes, a Victoria Cross recipient from the First World War, was promoted to major-general and given command of 1st Canadian Division.⁵⁹

The operations and movements that 1st Canadian Division undertook throughout May and June interrupted training. As McNaughton reported on 3 June to Norman Rogers, the minister of national defence, every effort had been made to keep training going despite the chaos.⁶⁰ On 23 June, McNaughton cabled C. G. "Chubby" Power, the acting minister following Rogers's death in an air crash on the 10th, that "in all essentials individual and company training has now reached a satisfactory standard,"⁶¹ although he never elaborated on what he meant by this. The truth was that 1st Canadian Division was not ready for combat and its training was progressing slowly. Whereas during the autumn of 1939 through the winter, the division's training had been hampered due to difficulties in supplying it with equipment, training was inhibited during the spring and summer of 1940 because Allied setbacks on the continent had a direct effect on the division's role. British requests for Canadian participation in operations in Norway and France during the spring of 1940 reflected the desperate nature of the Allies' position against Germany's

59. WD, GS, 7 Corps, 19–31 Jul 1940, app. 1, Col G. R. Turner (GSO1, 1 Cdn Div), circular telegram, 18 Jul 1940; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 287–290.

60. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17988, vol. 12385, file 4/Progress/2: McNaughton, tel. GS 534 to Rogers, 3 Jun 1940.

61. Ibid.: McNaughton, tel. GS 652 to C. G. Power (A/MND), 23 Jun 1940.

attacks and should not be seen as an endorsement of 1st Canadian Division's readiness for battle.

The Expansion of the CASF

German victories in 1940 had a serious effect on Canada's strategic position. France's defeat in June meant that the United Kingdom no longer had any strong allies left and the British homeland faced aerial bombardment. While the Canadian government had originally wanted to keep 2nd Canadian Division at home as a precautionary measure,⁶² the crisis in Europe demanded that this division be committed at once to overseas service as well. The Canadian government's attention thus turned to readying 2nd Canadian Division for despatch overseas and raising further divisions. The need for more Canadian formations was urgent, putting great demands on a war effort that was already straining to mobilize and train its two-division expeditionary force. Training 2nd Canadian Division was fraught with constant delays due to a recruitment freeze, equipment shortages, and some units' deployment as garrison troops.

On 10 May, as German forces cut through the Low Countries, the government decided to despatch 2nd Canadian Division to the United Kingdom beginning in June and July, as opposed to July and August as planned. A Canadian Corps would be formed and would take command of 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions overseas. The Cabinet also decided to raise a third division, though it was not expected to go overseas in the immediate future. Just as with the first two divisions, the units of 3rd Canadian Division

62. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 17; Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 62, 70–71.

were selected to represent as many parts of Canada as possible.⁶³ Figure 2.3 shows its order of battle upon mobilization on 24 May.

Figure 2.3

Order of Battle: Infantry Units, 3rd Canadian Division, 24 May 1940

The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG)

7th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles

The Regina Rifle Regiment

1st Battalion, The Canadian Scottish Regiment

8th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

Le Régiment de la Chaudière

The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment

9th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Highland Light Infantry of Canada

The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders

The North Nova Scotia Highlanders

Source: GO 184, "Calling Out of Troops on Active Service," 5 Sep 1940, effective 24 May 1940 (GO 50, "Calling Out of Troops on Active Service," 27 Feb 1941)

But the situation in Western Europe deteriorated much more quickly than the Allies expected. After Dunkirk, the Canadian Parliament passed the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), giving the government special powers to mobilize the country's human and material resources for defending Canada and support the United Kingdom. All able-bodied men had to register and report for 30 days' training at their local NPAM unit. Chapter 3 covers the NRMA in greater detail. The government also

63. GO 184, "Calling Out of Troops on Active Service," 5 Sep 1940, effective 24 May 1940 (GO 50, "Calling Out of Troops on Active Service," 27 Feb 1941); Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 76–80.

decided that a fourth division was necessary. There was no trouble recruiting for 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions as recruiting centres were flooded with men seeking to enlist after France fell. 3rd Canadian Division was up to war establishment, including division and brigade headquarters and ancillary troops, by late autumn. It would be concentrated in the Maritimes to provide a reserve for Atlantic Command and to facilitate proper training. Units of 3rd Canadian Division would train at an existing camp at Sussex, New Brunswick, and a larger one under construction at Debert, Nova Scotia. 4th Canadian Division saw considerably more delays in its organization; it would not be fully formed until June 1941 (chapter 6).⁶⁴

Canada also assumed more responsibilities in the defence of Allied interests in the North Atlantic, namely Iceland and Newfoundland. After nine months of war, the only units that were even remotely prepared to garrison either place were in 2nd Canadian Division, then preparing to go to the United Kingdom. In other words, some units in 2nd Canadian Division would have to interrupt their training programme and even see their deployment to the British Isles delayed. Unfortunately, 2nd Canadian Division was having a hard enough time simply getting organized. The government had halted recruiting for 2nd Canadian Division on 11 October 1939, largely because 1st Canadian Division had to have priority in recruits and equipment and because it was unclear what 2nd Canadian Division's role would be. Recruiting resumed for the division on 18 March 1940. Three brigade headquarters had been established in April: 4th Brigade at Camp Borden, 5th at Camp Valcartier, and 6th at Camp Shilo. Their units had moved to their respective camps shortly thereafter. For the first time, they could undergo real training.⁶⁵

64. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 77–80.

65. *Ibid.*, 58, 75.

In June, the United Kingdom asked Canada to provide troops to bolster the British garrison in Iceland. The small Danish possession was strategically important for its position in the North Atlantic. If Germany landed an amphibious or airborne force in Iceland and established an aerodrome, the Luftwaffe could devastate the vital convoy routes between North America and Europe. The British, already having one brigade stationed in Iceland, initially wanted Canada to provide the whole 2nd Canadian Division, thereby releasing the existing British brigade to defend the British Isles. But eventually, it was decided that it would be better to send 2nd Canadian Division to join 1st Canadian Division in the United Kingdom; Canada would only send “Z” Force — one machine gun and two rifle battalions, plus a small brigade headquarters — to Iceland for a brief period.⁶⁶

The Royal Regiment of Canada, the first Canadian unit sent to Iceland, arrived at Reykjavik on 16 June. Soon thereafter, each company was sent to a different area to defend against German air attacks or landings. Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal and the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG) arrived over the next three weeks. From guard duty to digging gun emplacements, there was not much time for training in the first months in Iceland. The Royal Regiment’s experience illustrates the poor prospects for training while serving in “Z” Force. The battalion could not spare a single company from work for a day to conduct a tactical exercise until 3 August. Poor weather only made matters worse. Nearly every time an attempt was made to conduct a training exercise, intense rain and gale force winds either forced cancellation or the withdrawal of Royal Air Force (RAF) cooperation. The battalion could not even issue weekly training syllabi until 16 September and its training from then on consisted mainly of route marches,

66. Ibid., 83–85.

close-order drill, anti-gas training, small arms training, and practicing moves by motor transport. In short, there was little to no tactical training. At the very least, the men were able to hone their weapons training before they and Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal left Iceland for the United Kingdom on 28 July. The Camerons of Ottawa remained in Iceland over the miserable winter months. There was but a single incident in which the battalion was engaged with the enemy. In February 1941, a German reconnaissance plane flew overhead, and though the Camerons opened fire, the aircraft escaped. On 27 April 1941, the Camerons left Iceland.⁶⁷ Each of “Z” Force’s units had to make up for lost training time once they rejoined their division in the United Kingdom.

Germany’s victory over France so alarmed the Canadian government that it feared that the East Coast was dangerously exposed. In cooperation with the government of Newfoundland, Canada began sending units, designated “W” Force, to garrison the British colony. It was crucial to defend the airports at Gander and Botwood from enemy air attack or sabotage. Again, 2nd Canadian Division had to sacrifice one of its infantry battalions. The unit selected, the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada, arrived on 22 June. Conditions were miserable as facilities were primitive and the wet weather and insects made life unpleasant. Luckily for the highlanders, their stay in Newfoundland was short. The Black Watch rejoined its brigade and deployed overseas

67. WD, R Regt C, Oct 1940, app. 6, Syllabus; Richard M. Ross, *The History of the 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG)* (Ottawa: Runge, [1946]), 11–12 and chap. 2; D. J. Goodspeed, *Battle Royal: A History of the Royal Regiment of Canada, 1862–1962* (Toronto: Royal Regiment of Canada Association, 1962), 367–378; Reynolds, *Capital Soldiers*, 148–150; J. C. Newlands, ““Z” Force in Iceland: An Account of the Despatch of Canadian Troops to Iceland and their Subsequent Operations There,” AHQ Report No. 33, 16 Dec 1949, pars. 47–51, 63–70.

largely on schedule. On 11 August, the unit moved to Aldershot, Nova Scotia, to prepare to sail to the United Kingdom.⁶⁸

The Black Watch's relief, the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, had only been mobilized in May as part of 3rd Canadian Division; it stayed longer in Newfoundland. Throughout its time on the island, which lasted until late November, the isolated unit had to do everything by itself while contending with harsh weather, rugged conditions, and an absence of recreational facilities. The men rotated between outpost duty, airport defence duty, training, and completing the camp's construction. Accommodations in Newfoundland remained spartan. Men lived in tents until huts could be built, with some officers remaining in tents until mid-October, after the first snowfall. Given the poor conditions and the lack of sufficient equipment, instruction was limited to individual training, particularly weapons training. As the weather grew colder, training was moved indoors to a lecture setting where men could gain familiarity with the Bren gun but without chances to fire it. Collective training, especially in the field, became impossible by the end of October because the ground became muddy and slushy and most of the men, having already worn through one pair of issued boots, only had one pair left.⁶⁹ At the very least, the Queens Own Rifles' experience in Newfoundland enhanced unit cohesion. Because the battalion was so isolated, men had to rely only on each other to complete tasks and solve problems. According to their regimental history, "adversity was

68. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 178–180; Paul P. Hutchison, *Canada's Black Watch: The First Hundred Years, 1862–1962* (Montreal: The Regiment, 1962), 189–190.

69. WD, QOR of C, Oct 1940, app. B, Syllabus; Mar 1941, app. B, LCol H. C. MacKendrick (CO, QOR of C) to HQ, Atl Comd re: "Weekly Short Progress Report," 19 Oct 1940, par. 7; MacKendrick to HQ, Atl Comd re: "Weekly Short Progress Report," 26 Oct 1940, pars. 1–3; MacKendrick to HQ, Atl Comd re: "Weekly Short Progress Report," 2 Nov 1940, pars. 1–2.

the touchstone” to produce “a tremendous corporate spirit.”⁷⁰ Nevertheless, when their garrison assignments were complete, units left Iceland and Newfoundland no more proficient in infantry tactics than when they had arrived.

In the summer of 1940, 2nd Canadian Division made very slow progress in training overall. Its GOC, Major-General Victor Odlum, sent a letter to Power. Odlum complained that because infantry and support units had been taken to serve with “W” and “Z” Forces and because of shortages in equipment and motor transport, 2nd Canadian Division was “not only not gaining ground but is actually deteriorating. No advanced training has been possible.” That his division was still spread across three camps meant that collective training at the divisional level was impossible. Nor did it help that it was still unclear to Odlum what role the division would have: would it join 1st Canadian Division in the United Kingdom, would it be used to garrison Iceland, or would it stay in Canada as a home defence formation?⁷¹ Odlum sent Power a second letter on 4 July, explaining that “while the officers and men (on the whole) are splendid in both physique and in spirit, the units have had instruction in only the more elementary subjects and are no further advanced than they should have been in two months of effective training.”⁷² Until the infantry battalions had been concentrated as brigades, they had mostly been quartered in their home towns, close to family, and had frequent leave. Absenteeism had been serious. Since mobilization in September 1939, the men had yet to get accustomed to military life or serious training.⁷³

70. W. T. Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, 1860–1960: One Hundred Years of Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Ontario Publishing, 1960), 146–156, 158–160.

71. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Div, Jul 1940, app. 1, MGen V. W. Odlum (GOC 2 Cdn Div) to Power, 3 Jul 1940, pars. 4–9.

72. Ibid., app. 3, Odlum to Power, 4 Jul 1940, par. 5.

73. Ibid., par. 9

The units of 2nd Canadian Division completed the basics in some training subjects by the summer but were behind in others. A report on the training state of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada serves as an example. As of 8 June, the Camerons had completed their rifle and bayonet training. As the battalion had access to the Boys anti-tank rifle for several months, consequently some NCOs became proficient instructors in that weapon. Progress was slower when it came to light machine gun training. Companies had completed familiarization training with the obsolete Lewis gun, but only "A" Company actually had the opportunity to fire it on the range. Bren guns were only available to the battalion for about a month, during which time NCOs and select men from each company were trained in the basics of the new weapon, but had no chance to fire it. Similarly, only NCOs and a handful of other men were trained in map reading. The Camerons lacked access to the 2-inch mortar and the mortar platoon was able to train with the 3-inch mortar for only a month. Only the platoon sergeant was fully trained in the 3-inch mortar. He had to train his men as best as possible, but there was not enough ammunition to allow them to fire it. The men had some instruction in throwing dummy grenades and the battalion had 39 gas masks with which to carry out elementary anti-gas training. But the Camerons were especially behind in elementary field tactics. Nine months after mobilization, the battalion was only just beginning to conduct basic platoon schemes in the field.⁷⁴

Clearly, it was going to take time for 2nd Canadian Division to be ready to take its place beside 1st Canadian Division overseas. For the war's first ten months, its recruitment and concentration had stalled. Because there had been such a delay in

74. WD, Camerons of C, Jun 1940, app. 1, Maj G. F. Dudley (2 i/c, Camerons of C), "Training Carried out by the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, C.A.S.F. To-date," 8 Jun 1940.

concentrating the brigades at training centres, units had been unable to conduct tactical training of any kind. Those units selected for garrison duty in Iceland and Newfoundland essentially lost several months' time that otherwise would have been spent on training.

Summer Training, 1940

While the CASF in Canada grew ever larger and the Canadian government began sending 2nd Canadian Division overseas, 1st Canadian Division settled into its new role in the United Kingdom as an anti-invasion force. But without air superiority, a German amphibious invasion of the British Isles was highly impracticable in the summer of 1940. Throughout July, the Luftwaffe tested the RAF's capabilities with a series of isolated raids, graduating to more concerted bombing operations in August. The British feared the Germans might attempt an invasion by German paratroopers. As part of the GHQ Reserve, 1st Canadian Division had the responsibility of launching a counter-attack against such an invasion. Training intensified throughout the summer until the division had reached the point where it could at least attempt exercises at the brigade level. It had originally been planned that the division would reach brigade training months earlier, in April. Also, as the British Army had yet to divine the doctrinal lessons of its first engagement with the Germans and since Canada depended on the United Kingdom for doctrine, both Canadian divisions still trained using the same old prewar principles. Nearly a year after mobilization, neither division was ready to fight.

Exercises were one of the most important training tools. They could be held at any level of command and were a form of practical training to test what men had learned during regular classes and to give them experience working in field conditions. An exercise was usually supervised by a higher headquarters. For example, a corps headquarters might hold an exercise for one of its divisions. Exercises situated subunits, units, or even entire formations in a scenario and they were expected to achieve objectives such as capturing territory or repelling an enemy attack. Safety and feasibility considerations put an upper limit on how realistic an exercise could be. It would have made little sense, for instance, to have men actually destroy tanks or fire at each other with real ammunition. Units often progressed from “one-sided” or “two-sided” exercises. In the former, there was either only a skeleton “enemy” force or the enemy was entirely imagined. Umpires, officers appointed to act as referees and well-acquainted with the battle plans of both the participating force and the imagined enemy, were there to inform troops of developments during the exercise that would have been obvious in a real battle but could not be simulated. For example, an umpire, aware of the enemy’s capabilities, might inform a platoon that its area was under mortar fire. He would then assign a number of casualties based on the troops’ efficiency and effectiveness in responding to the situation. Did the men take cover quickly? Did the platoon commander report back to his company commander about his platoon’s status? In a two-sided exercise, the enemy was live rather than imagined and neither side was controlled by the headquarters overseeing the exercise. Thus, two forces could be trained in the same exercise, one in the attack and the other in the defence. The purpose of these exercises was chiefly to test command and logistics rather than give units operational practice. Sometimes officers

were informed of their enemy's expected movements and were even allowed to conduct TEWTs in advance to prepare. Though that practice diluted the realism of the exercise and left little room for innovation, the War Office encouraged it so that errors could be avoided and junior officers instilled with confidence.⁷⁵

1st and 3rd Brigades were involved in a two-sided exercise on 17 July. With tanks provided by the British 1st Armoured Division, 3rd Brigade's job was to attack a position defended by 1st Brigade.⁷⁶ But the exercise was far from a success, particularly on the attacking side. In a conference to discuss the exercise, McNaughton noted that "points of minor tactics and field craft which have been repeatedly stressed during exercises and in training instructions were ignored." Men failed to use available cover, standing in open ground and silhouetted against the sunlight. Critically, McNaughton noted that

there was a considerable lack of initiative on the part of leaders. The country over which the operations took place was ideal for the work of a skilful and inquisitive infantry. When stopped by fire, instead of exploring wide to the flanks and trying to find a way around, leading troops halted and asked for reinforcements. There is an evident need for further platoon and company training.⁷⁷

He continued, "It is again emphasized that when infantry have been stopped by fire they must take energetic action to get all the information that will enable the higher commander to formulate a tactical plan." Though the results were disappointing,

75. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div, Aug 1941, app. 13, 3 Cdn Inf Div Trg Instr No. 4, app. F, "Notes on Setting Exercises," 18 Aug 1941; UK, WO, *Training Regulations 1934*, sec. 39; Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2000), 19–20, 27.

76. WD, HQ, 1 Cdn Inf Bde, Jul 1940, app., Maj H. W. Foster (BM, 1 Cdn Inf Bde), 1 Cdn Inf Bde OO No. 11, 16 Jul 1940

77. WD, GS, 7 Corps, 19–31 Jul 1940, app. 4, Brig G. R. Turner (BGS (SD), 7 Corps), memorandum re: "Conference on Two-Sided Exercise Held on 17 Jul 40," 23 Jul 1940 and app. A, "Points for Conference on Two-Sided Exercise Held on 17 Jul 40," pars. 2–4, 10.

McNaughton considered the exercise beneficial because it provided so many lessons.⁷⁸ As McNaughton recalled in an interview in 1965, the first exercises for the Canadian Corps in July 1940 were important precisely because they went so badly.⁷⁹

Since the Canadians were so inexperienced, it is not surprising that 1st Canadian Division's first two-sided exercise was a failure. But the difficulties encountered during the exercise were not simply the result of inadequate training or green troops. If anything, the Canadians had been only too well instilled with faulty doctrinal principles and an inefficient command system that hindered the offense. As the Canadians were largely unpracticed in collective training at the brigade and divisional levels, mistakes such as the men's failure to use cover were inevitable. But the more serious problems McNaughton described were symptoms of weaknesses in doctrine. The Canadians were using the only doctrinal literature available to them: the training manuals from the prewar years, including *Infantry Training: Training and War* and *Infantry Section Leading* (chapter 1). Training had thus far conditioned the men of 1st Canadian Division to exercise great caution on the battlefield. Junior leaders failed to demonstrate initiative because doctrine actively discouraged it. The command system emphasized letting senior officers make tactical decisions rather than allowing junior officers solve problems themselves. When they met resistance, subunits instinctively sought assistance rather than employing their own firepower.

The British had produced a new set of numbered training manuals that supplemented the prewar literature. While two Military Training Pamphlets (MTPs), Nos.

78. WD, GS, 7 Corps, 19–31 Jul 1940, app. 5, LGen A. G. L. McNaughton (GOC 7 Corps), tel. GS 780 to J. L. Ralston (MND), 20 Jul 1940.

79. LAC, MG 31 E 42, vol. 3, file "Interview – Transcript, 'McNaughton and the First and Second World Wars,' 1965," pt. 2: Gen A. G. L. McNaughton (ret'd), interview by CBC, ca. 1965, sess. 3, tape 4, 1–2.

33 and 37, were particularly pertinent to the infantry, unfortunately, the MTP series did not introduce new doctrine. MTP No. 33, *Training in Fieldcraft and Elementary Tactics*, appeared in March 1940. Whereas *Infantry Training: Training and War* and *Infantry Section Leading* were vague and provided little detail on tactics, MTP No. 33 was intended to guide NCOs and junior officers in applying the principles from the prewar manuals. The new manual emphasized how much knowledge and experience were needed to command sections and platoons in battle. It outlined various fieldcraft techniques such as the use of ground, camouflage and concealment, reconnaissance, and movement by night as well as methods of training men in these techniques. Lessons were to be formulaic: explain the object of the lesson, demonstrate the tactic, have men practice the tactic and provide corrective criticism, and then have men or sections compete against each other in the application of the tactic. For instance, as a lesson on conducting a section patrol might envision an enemy force in the process of withdrawing, the section's job was to venture out to see if the enemy was occupying a certain farm. Demonstrating the "wrong way" of conducting such a patrol might involve starting the patrol without adequate reconnaissance and encountering an obstacle or having men move in bunches and come under simulated machine gun fire.⁸⁰ MTP No. 37, *The Training of an Infantry Battalion*, was published in June and was intended to provide guidance to battalion and company commanders in training their men. Like MTP No. 33, it did not introduce new doctrine. But it set out very clear directions for organizing training from the individual level to the company and battalion levels as well as guidelines for training specialist troops such as carrier and mortar platoons. The new

80. UK, WO, *The Training of an Infantry Battalion*, MTP No. 37 ([London: HMSO], 1940), secs. 1–2, 28. See also discussion in Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944*, 43–46.

training manuals were a big improvement on the previous state of affairs, when inexperienced officers were expected to craft a training programme for their men using only the vague prewar manuals. However, the underlying doctrine was still the same as in the late 1930s: junior initiative was implicitly discouraged and the infantry was expected to rely heavily on other arms.

The British General Staff, at the very least, recognized that the army had to make changes following the disastrous battles in 1940. Unfortunately, as historian David French's research has shown, the British Army's more serious systemic problems were unaddressed. Upon analyzing the lessons of the Battle of France, the General Staff concluded that its command system could not handle the Germans' rapid pace of operations. A committee comprised of senior commanders who had led the campaign in France was established to analyze the experience and suggest modifications to organization and training. In its report submitted on 2 July, the committee concluded that defence had to be deep to counter German panzers and all soldiers had to be prepared to protect their lines from any direction. To do this, the army needed a more flexible organization, improved reconnaissance capabilities, and more effective fire support. The committee suggested a flexible division with a centralized command that could easily be broken into brigade groups, each of which would have three infantry battalions, an anti-tank battery, a field regiment, a machine gun company, and an anti-aircraft platoon of heavy machine guns. The existing division organization was kept, with the understanding that artillery and engineer units must keep a close liaison with specific brigades. These changes began to be implemented by the autumn. However, the report did not suggest that there was any problem with autocratic command and control. Only one member of

the committee, Major-General N. M. S. Irwin (GOC British 2nd Division), advocated allowing officers to exercise more initiative. Thus, the disasters of 1940 did little to change the mindset of the British General Staff.⁸¹

According to French, there were several reasons the army was unwilling to re-evaluate its doctrine. Firstly, it lacked the time. Given an immediate threat of invasion, it was only natural that the British would want to emphasize the defence. There was also confusion over what lessons the Battle of France had provided. Defeat could all too easily be blamed on the French or Belgians. Moreover, because intelligence had overestimated German tank strength, it was tempting to believe that the Germans had been victorious by virtue of their technological strength rather than any deficiencies in British doctrine or coalition strategy. Lastly, it was difficult for senior commanders to admit that they had erred prior to 1939.⁸²

In the meantime, 2nd Canadian Division had begun transport to the United Kingdom in late May though many of its infantry units remained in Canada until August. By the time they left for overseas, 6th Brigade's units, at the very least, had received instruction in basic section tactics and had practiced basic schemes at the platoon, company, and battalion levels, although shortages had hampered training with the Bren gun and anti-tank rifle.⁸³ The lack of Bren guns might come as a surprise given that, in 1938, the government had ordered 7,000 of them from a Canadian manufacturer (chapter

81. David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War against Germany 1919–1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 189–194.

82. *Ibid.*, 194–196.

83. LAC, RG 24, reel C-8353, file H.Q.S. 8122: MGen W. A. Griesbach (IG (A) (WC)) to MGen H. D. G. Crerar (CGS) re: "Training Memoranda, 6 C.I.B.," 8 Aug 1940, encl. 1, Brig D. R. Sargent (Comd, 6 Cdn Inf Bde) to Griesbach re: "Training," 5 Aug 1940, encl., "Summary of Training to 4th August, 1940."

1). But production of these weapons did not start until the spring of 1940.⁸⁴ By the time most of 2nd Canadian Division's infantry units embarked for the United Kingdom, there were still serious deficiencies that had to be addressed. While most battalions had reached a reasonable standard of rifle training, many reinforcements who had only just joined their units needed more practice. According to one assessment in mid-August, the division's units would need another four and a half weeks of individual training and another three weeks of company- and battalion-level collective training before brigade- and division-level training could begin.⁸⁵ The division's prolonged embarkation process, which lasted until December 1940, further impeded collective training at the brigade and divisional level. As the BEF had left behind most of its vehicles and equipment in France during the evacuation at Dunkirk, British divisions needed to be completely rearmed. This meant that 2nd Canadian Division could expect to be equipped as slowly as 1st Canadian Division had been during the previous winter and spring.

Upon arriving in the United Kingdom, 2nd Canadian Division's infantry units resumed their training. None of them were ready for collective training at the battalion or brigade level, let alone combat. Training in September and October focussed on weapons, map reading, fieldcraft, close-order drill, and practicing basic field exercises at the company level. Time was also devoted to route marches, PT, and sports.⁸⁶ The division's first training instruction, issued on 4 September, ordered that infantry units have their individual and battalion-level collective training completed by 31 December.⁸⁷

84. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 102.

85. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Div, Aug 1940, app. 16, LCol H. L. N. Salmon (GSO1, 2 Cdn Div), memorandum to Odum re: "Training," 14 Aug 1940.

86. See for example WD, RHC, Sep 1940, app. 1, Syllabus.

87. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Div, Sep 1940, app. 6, Salmon, 2 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 1, 4 Sep 1940, pars. 2-3.

One subject on which units spent considerable time was anti-gas training. Paget had issued a circular letter to all of his subordinate commands on 31 July stating that “many reports, some from very reliable sources, have recently been received of Germany’s intention to use gas in an invasion of the U.K.” and that the Germans would likely spray poison gas via aircraft.⁸⁸ Thus, anti-gas training was an integral part of 2nd Canadian Division’s training. The training syllabus of the Essex Scottish Regiment, for example, devoted periods to practicing decontamination procedures, proficiency with working with respirators and other anti-gas equipment, and administering first aid to gas casualties.⁸⁹ 2nd Canadian Division had several months of hard work ahead to reach 1st Canadian Division’s level of training.

CMHQ was also painfully aware of the CASF’s lack of trained officers of any kind. It had been decided at a conference on 2 May during Rogers’s visit to CMHQ that about 25 percent of Canadian officer reinforcements should come from personnel serving in the ranks of the units in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the decision had been made to replace all warrant officers class III (a senior NCO rank; see appendix A) with subalterns, which meant that there was an even greater need for officers.⁹⁰ As British facilities could not fully accommodate all of the Canadians, McNaughton was insistent that Canadian officer candidates be trained at Canadian-run schools. A Canadian Training School (CTS) with an officer training wing was needed in the United Kingdom; on 12 July, NDHQ

88. Ibid., app. 45, Salmon, circular letter re: “Chemical Warfare,” 17 Sep 1940, encl., LGen B. C. T. Paget (CGS, HF), circular letter HF/4008 (S.D.), 31 Jul 1940.

89. WD, Essex Scot, Oct 1940, app. 1, Syllabus, 29 Sep–4 Oct 1940; app. 3, Syllabus, 7–12 Oct 1940; app. 7, Syllabus, 14–19 Oct 1940; app. 10, Syllabus, 21–26 Oct 1940; app. 12, Syllabus, 28 Oct–2 Nov 1940.

90. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9884, file 2/Trg School/1: Col G. R. Turner (GSO1, Cdn Force) to MGen H. D. G. Crerar (SO, CMHQ) re: “Training of Officer Reinforcements,” 23 Jun 1940, pars. 1–2.

gave its approval for the establishment of this new school.⁹¹ No. 1 (Officer Cadet Training Unit) Wing, as it was called, began its first course at St Lucia Barracks, Bordon, on 5 August. Candidates would spend four weeks in a standard “common to all arms” course. Those from rifle and machine gun units would then stay an additional eight weeks for advanced training, whereas candidates from other arms of service went to British schools for their advanced training until the CTS could be expanded.⁹²

The summer of 1940 was a learning experience for the Allies. The British General Staff eagerly studied the defeat of France in an effort to discover what had gone wrong, but it would take time for changes to be made and new doctrine to be developed. Even though Canadian units had not seen action at the continent, it is clear that the training conducted overseas during the summer of 1940 revealed problems with British military doctrine. The problems McNaughton identified in his assessment of 1st Canadian Division’s two-sided exercise in July, in hindsight, can be seen as symptoms of larger problems in British and Canadian doctrine and training. It was also clear that owing to the emaciated condition of the prewar Militia and equipment shortages, turning the Canadian divisions into fighting formations was going to take much longer than anyone expected. Nearly one year after mobilization, 1st Canadian Division was only beginning to practice manoeuvres at the brigade and division levels and 2nd Canadian Division was close to six months behind. Since both divisions had the added task of actively participating in the defending the United Kingdom, time for training over the next year would be at a premium.

91. Ibid.: NDHQ, tel. GS 862 to CMHQ, 12 Jul 1940.

92. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 236–238; “Closing Exercises, Second Course, Canadian O.C.T.U.; Training of Junior Officers,” CMHQ Report No. 21, 12 Aug 1942, pars. 20–22; Geoffrey W. Hayes, “The Development of the Canadian Army Officer Corps, 1939–1945” (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1992), 104.

The mobilization of the CASF had been reasonably smooth. Yet after just over a year of war, Canada's expeditionary force had hardly conducted any combat training beyond simplistic company schemes. 1st Canadian Division's individual training was largely complete, but once France fell and the United Kingdom faced the threat of invasion, the division found itself in a largely defensive role against an enemy that had just proven to be vastly superior in combat effectiveness. In the meantime, while 2nd Canadian Division was in the process of being prepared for an operational role as soon as possible, there had not been much time for unit training at any higher than the company level in either division. Neither division had conducted a divisional exercise or had any experience working with tanks.

It is difficult to hold the CASF's senior officers responsible for the lack of training progress in 1939 and 1940. The CASF faced significant situational factors that inhibited training. While the government struggled to convert the Canadian economy into a war economy and recruit as many fit young men as possible, general officers did their best to prepare the CASF for embarkation overseas and train it. Facing limited equipment allotments and a largely untrained crop of junior officers and NCOs, the brigadiers and battalion commanders did what they could to train the men under their command. Most importantly, the events of 1940 had demonstrated to everyone that British military doctrine had serious weaknesses. Unless doctrine could be overhauled, there was no hope of reversing Germany's swift gains. But though the Canadians looked forward to better training in 1941, it was undeniable that formulating new doctrine was going to take time.

For the foreseeable future, the Canadians would have to trudge ahead with the same old training methods.

CHAPTER 3

GROWING PAINS

While Canadian forces were busy training at home and overseas in 1940, the Canadian government worked to put the country on a full war footing. For the second time in a generation, Canada revisited the idea of compulsory military service. The events in Scandinavia and France gave the Canadian military's expansion and training a new urgency. With France conquered and Italy allied to Germany, the United Kingdom needed all the help that it could get. Not only did Canada need to provide more field formations, including the new 3rd Canadian Division, it also had to train thousands of young men to replace those already overseas who would be found unfit for combat after a period of training plus replace any future battle casualties. In the meantime, Canada's two divisions overseas continued to balance their need for training with their responsibility to defend the United Kingdom against a German invasion. When they were not manning coastal defence positions, the Canadians spent much of the winter of 1940–1941 honing their individual skills and practicing small-unit tactics. The warmer springtime weather brought exercises on a much grander scale.

In Canada's second year at war, beginning in the autumn of 1940, its strategy for prosecuting the war shifted from one of "limited liability" to one of raising a "big army." This chapter establishes that the training of Canadian troops at home and overseas showed a logical and complex forward progression during this period. But even after a handful of large-scale exercises, none of Canada's divisions were close to being ready for combat by the end of it. Canadian troops had their first experience of combat during this

period, but the results were catastrophic. At home, Canada's new CGS, Major-General H. D. G. Crerar, proved to be talented at building and training the army in Canada. Under his leadership, the training of the Canadian Army became more coordinated and organized.

The National Resources Mobilization Act and Training in Canada

The crisis in Europe in the spring of 1940 had seriously jolted Canadians. The previous chapter explored what the fall of France meant to 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions. But the focus here concerns the much wider ramifications for the Canadian Militia as a whole as well as the government. With German forces occupying the French coast, the CASF would have to be expanded to help defend the United Kingdom. Thus, that summer, Canada's military forces began to grow at a quickened pace. Though King had tried to avoid it, Canada would raise the so-called "big army" after all. Crerar had big plans for the big army and energetically began reforming the Militia. Decrying the government's proposed training plan, Crerar reorganized the training system in Canada to make it more efficient and effective at supplying the army with well-trained men.

While German troops were still subjugating France, the idea of giving the government emergency powers to conscript men for the defence of Canada gained popularity in the King government. The Cabinet War Committee decided that the government should do all it could to mobilize the country's human and material resources to aid the United Kingdom and defend the Canadian homeland. On 17 June, the

committee drafted the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA). As noted in the previous chapter, the NRMA gave the government emergency powers to require

persons to place themselves, their service and their property at the disposal of His Majesty in the right of Canada, as may be deemed necessary or expedient for securing the public safety, the defence of Canada, the maintenance of public order, or the efficient prosecution of the war.

The main caveat, however, was that the act explicitly did not give the government the authority to order “persons to serve in the military, naval or air forces outside of Canada and the territorial waters thereof.”¹ At first, all the Cabinet War Committee wanted to do was to require young people to register for selective service and for single, able-bodied men to undergo 30 days’ training with their nearest NPAM unit. It was unclear at first whether there were plans to incorporate these men into the military after the 30-day period, but at the very least the act did not allow the government to send men overseas against their will. Conscription, then, at this stage of the war was only for service in Canada for a limited time. Though King had wanted the bill passed immediately as the United Kingdom had done with its Emergency Powers Act, the House of Commons debated it for three days. The act received Royal Assent on 21 June.²

The NRMA was clearly a political move rather than a military one as 30 days was hardly enough to train a man for military service, let alone combat. But King wanted to assure the public that the government was taking measures to protect the country and support the United Kingdom at so perilous a juncture.³ Generally, the Canadian

1. *National Resources Mobilization Act, 1940, Acts of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada*, 4 Geo VI (1940), chap. 13, secs. 2–3.

2. Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (18–20 Jun 1940), 853–865, 868–907, 913–932, 938–976; C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970), 32–34; J. L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1977), 140–145.

3. Daniel Byers, “Mobilising Canada: The National Resources Mobilization Act, the Department of National Defence, and Compulsory Military Service in Canada, 1940–1945,” *Journal of the Canadian*

population supported the NRMA, but Quebec politicians were immediately suspicious of the act. It seemed that King was already reneging on his promise from the previous year that Canada would not be mobilizing a massive expeditionary force for this war and that the act might be a first step toward full conscription for overseas service. A new Department of National War Services was established to administer the NRMA. By August, all Canadians aged 16 and older were required to register and single men aged 19 to 45 had to complete special forms. After registration showed that Canada had over 800,000 single men and childless widowers aged 21 to 45, an Order in Council issued on the 27th by the Cabinet declared these men liable for military service in the defence of Canada.⁴

New training centres had to be constructed across the country and they were often finished just as the first recruits arrived. These training centres, varying in size from one to four companies, were staffed by NPAM men. The first 30-day training serial began on 7 October. Theoretically, in eight 30-day serials, Canada could provide elementary training to 240,000 men. Training for men called up under the NRMA was not nearly as rigorous as for those who had volunteered for the CASF. It consisted of close-order drill, marksmanship, anti-gas measures, and basic fieldcraft. There was not much equipment available for serious training, as 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions had priority. The

Historical Association 7, no. 1 (1996): 177–181; Daniel Byers, “Mobilizing Canada: The National Resources Mobilization Act, the Department of National Defence, and Compulsory Military Service in Canada, 1940–1945” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2000), 33–41.

4. J. L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1975), 99–102; Michael D. Stevenson, *Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle: National Selective Service and the Mobilization of Human Resources during World War II* (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001), 18–20.

government hoped that the 30 days of training, at the very least, might accustom men to military life and entice them to volunteer for active service.⁵

To oversee the Militia at large and organize the 30-day programme, the new defence minister, J. L. Ralston, recognized the need to replace Anderson as CGS. Anderson, who had never demanded high administrative standards at NDHQ, during the crafting of the NRMA had “failed to produce the kinds of crisp, detailed advice the politicians wanted,” according to historian J. L. Granatstein.⁶ At McNaughton’s suggestion, Ralston chose Major-General Crerar, then serving as the senior combatant officer at CMHQ, as Anderson’s replacement, effective on 22 July. Crerar was an ideal choice. A skilful manager, Crerar was determined to reorganize the Canadian military establishment. To prevent the Militia from reverting to its miserable prewar condition once the war was over, Crerar wanted Canada’s ground forces to play a large role in the war. He hoped that raising an entire field army would legitimize the Militia as a key national institution. In the short term, though, his aim was to bring a degree of coordination to the recruitment, training, and supply of Canada’s ground forces. It was obvious to Crerar that the 30-day programme did very little to meet Canada’s military needs. Thus, he set out to reform the NRMA system.⁷ In a 3 September memorandum to Ralston, he explained that the German successes had demonstrated that Germany could not be defeated by manpower alone. Instead, Canada should focus on mechanizing its armed forces and developing its manufacturing capacity. Since men would need

5. Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 147–148; J. M. Hitsman, “Manpower Problems of the Canadian Army,” AHQ Report No. 63, 17 Aug 1953, par. 40; Byers, “Mobilizing Canada,” 47–48, 55–57.

6. J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army’s Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 93.

7. Paul Douglas Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H. D. G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 139–141; Byers, “Mobilizing Canada,” 41–43.

considerable advanced training for the modern battlefield, it made little sense to provide several hundred thousand men with such token military training. This was especially true considering that industry and agriculture were also crucial to the nation's war effort. In other words, rather than fielding a large army of poorly trained men, Canada should aim to have a well-armed and highly trained army. One month of basic training was not enough to prepare even home defence forces; recruits needed at least four months' basic training. To be effective in the field, a unit needed at least six months' collective training.⁸ Once men had received four months' training, Crerar believed, they should be deployed to a home defence formation rather than letting them go back to their civilian lives as the 30-day programme allowed.⁹ Having a trained home defence force remain in Canada would allow CASF volunteers the opportunity to be sent overseas.

Crerar saw the remainder of 1940 and much of 1941 as an opportunity to raise a sizeable, modern army. By his estimation, a German invasion of the United Kingdom over the winter months seemed unlikely. And since it would be at least until 1942 that the British could hope even to attempt to re-establish a foothold on the continent, the only operations Crerar saw in the near future for the CASF were small-scale raids against occupied coastal ports.¹⁰ In the meantime, he recommended that an armoured brigade, 3rd Canadian Division, a corps headquarters, and corps ancillary troops should arrive in the United Kingdom by April 1941 and 4th Canadian Division sometime soon afterward. Since they were going overseas, these formations would be filled with volunteers rather

8. LAC, RG 24, reel C-8372, file H.Q.S. 8675: [MGen H. D. G. Crerar (CGS)], memorandum to J. L. Ralston (MND), 3 Sep 1940, pars. 4, 13–18, 22–25.

9. Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 148–149.

10. LAC, RG 24, reel C-8372, file H.Q.S. 8675: Crerar to Ralston, 25 Sep 1940, encl. 1, Crerar, "Appreciation: What Should Be the Nature of Canada's Military Effort during the Next Year?" 25 Sep 1940, pars. 13, 16, 18–19

than conscripts. At least two home defence divisions, one for each coast, would also have to be raised. The network of training centres across Canada could accommodate 14,000 volunteers and another 30,000 conscripts at the same time, but if they were going to provide the proper training to both classes of men, the training centres would have to be closed for three months and reorganized. Most of the new NRMA training centres would be reformed as basic training centres, which would train all personnel in subjects applicable to all arms. Advanced training centres — formed from training centres originally established to train reinforcements for the CASF as well as from some of the NRMA camps — would provide volunteers with training in the arm for which recruiters deemed them most suited. Once men finished their training, they would be posted to a home defence or NPAM unit, volunteer for overseas service and be posted to a CASF reinforcement unit, or be given technical training depending on their volunteer status and the military's needs.¹¹

Consistent with his aim of making Canada's ground forces a more visible national institution, Crerar suggested that the designation "Canadian Militia" was anachronistic. He believed that the name of Canada's ground forces should convey their professionalism just as Canada already had a Royal Canadian Navy and a Royal Canadian Air Force. The name "Canadian Army" would also reflect the country's status as an independent nation as no other country referred to its first line of defence as a "militia."¹² With effect from 7 November, Canada's ground forces were accordingly renamed the "Canadian Army."

11. Ibid., pars. 19–20, 22 and encl. 2, Crerar, memorandum to Ralston re: "Canadian Army Programme for 1941," 24 Sep 1940, pars. 3–4, 8, 11; LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 23, file 958C.009 (D418); Crerar, memorandum to Ralston re: "Extension of Period of Compulsory Training to Four Months," 26 Jan 1941, pars. 3–11; Crerar, memorandum re: "The Training of the Canadian Army," 3 Sep 1941, par. 6 (a).

12. LAC, RG 24, reel C-8372, file H.Q.S. 8675: Crerar to Ralston, 25 Sep 1940, encl. 2, Crerar, memorandum to Ralston re: "Canadian Army Programme for 1941," 24 Sep 1940, pars. 5–6.

The CASF ceased to exist. Instead, all units on active service in Canada would be part of the “Canadian Army (Active)” while those outside of Canada comprised the “Canadian Army (Overseas).” The NPAM was renamed the “Canadian Army (Reserve).”¹³

Ralston supported Crerar’s proposal to extend the period of training from one to four months, although this would have to be approved by the Cabinet War Committee.¹⁴ Still, Ralston also altered Crerar’s plan considerably. During a visit to the United Kingdom in December, Ralston met with British officials who impressed upon him their need for more armoured forces. Specifically, the British hoped Canada might furnish an entire armoured division in 1941. A fourth infantry division could wait to be sent overseas. Ralston accepted to the British request.¹⁵

After lengthy debates throughout the winter, the Cabinet War Committee approved Crerar’s training plan in January 1941 with the stipulation that men could opt to join the RCN or RCAF after their four months of individual training was complete.¹⁶ Ralston unveiled the new programme to the House of Commons on 11 March. Since the training programme was the same regardless of whether men were general service (GS) volunteers in the Canadian Army (Active) (“A’ men” or “GS men”) or conscripts under the NRMA (“R’ men,” “NRMA men,” or, pejoratively, “Zombies”), the two classes of recruits could be trained together. Men would spend two months at the basic training centres before moving to advanced training centres.¹⁷

13. GO 273, “Military Forces of Canada — Designation,” 29 Nov 1940, effective 7 Nov 1940.

14. LAC, MG 27 III B 11, vol. 38, file “Army Programme, 1940–41”: Ralston to Crerar re: “Canadian Army Programme for 1941,” 18 Oct 1940.

15. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17496, vol. 12205, file 1/Conf/10: “Note of Meeting Held in the War Office at 10-15 a.m. on Thursday, 2nd January, 1941,” 3 Jan 1941.

16. Byers, “Mobilizing Canada,” 68–71.

17. Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (11 Mar 1941), 1428–1431. See also LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 23, file 958C.009 (D418): Crerar, memorandum to Ralston re: “Extension of Period of Compulsory Training to Four Months,” 26 Jan 1941, pars. 7–11.

While Crerar was becoming settled in his position as CGS in the summer of 1940, the infantry battalions of Major-General Ernest Sansom's 3rd Canadian Division were busy with elementary training and preparing to be concentrated as brigades, and by autumn, as a division. The Highland Light Infantry of Canada, for instance, spent the summer focusing on close-order drill, basic fieldcraft, anti-gas measures, and small arms training along with the usual route marches and morning physical training.¹⁸ Unlike its predecessors, 3rd Canadian Division would have the benefit of being concentrated as a division relatively early. In the autumn, each of its brigades would move to Camp Sussex, New Brunswick, and the larger Camp Debert, Nova Scotia. Having the entire division concentrated would hopefully make logistics and training much simpler, and when it came time for the division to go overseas, it was not far from Halifax.¹⁹

Unfortunately, Sussex was being enlarged while Debert, a new facility, was still under construction when 3rd Canadian Division's units, namely those from 7th Brigade, began to arrive in October. Consequently, they faced primitive conditions and had to help complete the camp's construction. Sussex and Debert were less than ideal locations for training as the climate was unsuitable for outdoor training in the autumn. The rain and mud made life miserable. Moreover, the Atlantic Provinces were generally deficient in stores of weapons and equipment,²⁰ and neither camp yet had outdoor ranges. Debert especially had very few permanent buildings. Upon reaching Debert, one soldier from the Canadian Scottish Regiment wrote:

18. WD, HLI of C, Jul 1940, app. 3, Syllabus; Aug 1940, app. 3, Syllabus.

19. C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 1, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 80.

20. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Div, 14 Sep–27 Oct 1940, app. 1, LCol C. Foulkes (GSO1, 3 Cdn Div), "Memorandum on Training of 3 Cdn. Division at Debert and Sussex Camps, 1940–41," 23 Oct 1940, par. 6.

This camp is one of the most colossal messes I have ever seen. The camp is not finished — that is the source of our grief. We are a month early. . . . The place was a mess . . . acres and acres of semi-cleared land, churned up by bulldozers; mud and dirt everywhere; the huts only half finished.²¹

Ronald Shawcross, a soldier from the Regina Rifle Regiment, recalled:

There were no roads, just gravel trails. The huts were not finished; rolls of tar paper were lying outside the huts. . . . There were no rifle ranges in the area and there were many hours of clearing tree stumps for a parade ground.²²

Naturally, morale suffered as men settled into the monotony of barracks life, and without the comforts of even a single canteen at Debert.

Despite these problems, the division was expected to spend November through March completing its individual training. Absolutely no tactical training beyond basic section movements was to occur.²³ April would be devoted to section and platoon training, May to company and battalion training, and hopefully brigade exercises could be conducted by summer. “Conditions of modern warfare,” said a memorandum from 23 October, “now demand that all personnel, irrespective of their employment, be capable of defending themselves against attack from ground or from the air.” Individual training during the winter, therefore, would emphasize small arms training, anti-gas measures, and “passive air defence,” which included actions such as digging slit trenches and taking cover.²⁴ Individual training was the purview of the battalions. In early December, for

21. Quoted in Reginald H. Roy, *Ready for the Fray: The History of the Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's), 1920–1955* (Vancouver: Evergreen, 1958), 94.

22. Ronald Gendall Shawcross, “*What Was It Like??*” *A Rifleman Remembers: The Royal Regina Rifle Regiment “Swift and Bold”; Some Memories of World War II, 1939–1945* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2004), 36.

23. WD, HQ, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Oct 1940, app. 2, Maj R. M. Crowe (BM, 8 Cdn Inf Bde), “Memorandum of Conversation between Lt.-Col. C. Foulkes (GSO I, 3 Cdn Div.) and Major R. M. Crowe (B.M., 8 Cdn Inf. Bde) Held at Sussex Camp, N.B. at 1415 hrs., 16 Oct. 40. Subject: Training and General Administration,” par. 2 (d).

24. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Div, 14 Sep–27 Oct 1940, app. 1, Foulkes, “Memorandum on Training of 3 Cdn. Division at Debert and Sussex Camps, 1940–41,” 23 Oct 1940, pars. 1–5.

example, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders began retraining recruits in all that they had learned thus far in an effort to hone their proficiency. Over a two-week period, the North Novas devoted 21 40-minute periods to marching, 23 periods on firearms (including Bren guns), five periods on fieldcraft, five periods on map reading, and three periods on anti-gas training.²⁵

The division's first training instruction, issued on 21 December, acknowledged that the standard of training varied among the infantry battalions. Part of the disparity of progress between units was due to the unequal distribution of equipment. For instance, in the very week that the training instruction was issued, 9th Brigade's infantry battalions reported vastly different levels of proficiency in Bren gun training. The Highland Light Infantry of Canada reported that all but 40 of its 902 members had undergone their Bren test of elementary training (TOET, a standardized practical examination) and that 677 had passed. The North Novas, meanwhile, had only tested 16 men, and complained to brigade headquarters that the battalion badly needed more Bren guns. The training instruction held units to completing individual training by 1 April 1941. Every man in the division was to have passed all of his TsOET in anti-gas measures, small arms training, and fieldcraft by that date.²⁶

The poor weather and equipment shortages plagued units throughout the winter. As a weekly progress report by the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in January 1941 stated:

25. WD, HQ, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Oct 1940–31 Jan 1941, app. 5, LCol H. W. Murdock (CO, Nth NS Highrs) to Maj W. S. Rutherford (BM, 9 Cdn Inf Bde) re: "Unit Training," 24 Dec 1940, par. 4 and encl., Murdock, "New Training Programme."

26. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Div, Jan 1941, app. 1, Foulkes, 3 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 1, 21 Dec 1940, pars. 1–4; WD, HQ, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Oct 1940–31 Jan 1941, app. 5, LCol R. J. McPherson (CO, HLI of C), "Progress of Training Laid Down in Training Instructions No. 5 CASF," 28 Dec 1940; Murdock to HQ, 9 Cdn Inf Bde re: "Training," 28 Dec 1940, pars. 3–4 and encl., Murdock, "Progress of Training Laid Down in Training Instructions No. 5 CASF," 27 Dec 1940.

Lack of training space and severe weather were the principal difficulties encountered. More training equipment is badly needed. It is unfortunate that, owing to its suitability for outdoor work, bayonet fighting is restricted by the fact that only two dummies are available.²⁷

A subsequent report lamented that “boredom, on account of so much indoor work, is difficult to combat but every means available is used. Lack of training stores is marked.”²⁸ Though men were kept indoors as much as possible, outdoor training continued over the winter. Men were trained in measures for protecting themselves against the cold and given instruction in skiing.²⁹ Officers conducted TEWTs indoors regularly throughout the winter.³⁰

The men of 3rd Canadian Division spent the spring honing their skills in preparation for collective training and embarkation overseas in the summer. They made steady progress in getting all men to pass their TsOET. By the end of March, the division had a new GOC, Major-General Basil Price, and the infantry units had reached highly uneven standards of training. Whereas all of 7th Brigade’s infantrymen except for new recruits had passed all of their TsOET on time, 75 percent of 8th Brigade’s infantrymen had completed their TsOET for rifle and Bren gun, and only 21 percent had completed their TOET for the anti-tank rifle. 9th Brigade had done slightly better, with 83 and 77 percent having completed their TsOET for rifle and Bren gun, respectively, by 29 March.³¹ 9th Brigade did not have all of its men complete their TsOET until mid-April.³²

27. WD, QOR of C, Mar 1941, app. B, LCol H. C. MacKendrick (CO, QOR of C) to HQ, 8 Cdn Inf Bde re: “Training Progress Report,” 19 Jan 1941, par. 2.

28. Ibid., MacKendrick to HQ, 8 Cdn Inf Bde re: “Training Progress Report for Week 20–25 Jan,” 27 Jan 1941, par. 2.

29. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Div, Feb 1941, app. 4, Foulkes, circular letter re: “Winter Training,” 3 Feb 1941, encl., “Notes on Winter Training,” 15 Jan 1941.

30. Ibid., Jan 1941, app. 3, Foulkes, circular letter re: “Tactical Exercises,” 23 Jan 1941.

31. Ibid., Apr 1941, app. 1, Brig J. P. U. Archambault (A/GOC 3 Cdn Div) to Secy, DND re: “Weekly Progress Report 3 Cdn. Div, Week Ending 29 March 1941,” 2 Apr 1941, pars. 6–8.

One factor that slowed training was that men found unsuitable for military service were continuously being removed from units and replaced with new recruits. In early April alone, the division needed about 1,500 new men from all arms.³³

The division's Training Instruction No. 2, issued on 7 May, stressed that the rest of the month would be devoted to subunit training, June to battalion training and skeleton brigade exercises, and July to brigade group exercises, including field firing exercises. Progress had been steady. By the end of April, 8th Brigade reported that 90 percent of its men had completed their rifle TOET and 76 percent had completed their Bren gun TOET. Only 34 percent had completed their anti-tank rifle TOET because there was a limited supply of anti-tank rifles and ammunition, and the division would not receive any more of these weapons until it reached the United Kingdom.³⁴

3rd Canadian Division's infantry battalions finished their collective training at the company level and were ready to begin battalion exercises by mid-June. Colonel J. K. Lawson, the director of military training (DMT), visited Sussex and Debert that month on an inspection tour. He found that 8th Brigade, which was at Sussex and thus separate from the other two brigades and division headquarters, was the weakest as the training facilities at Sussex were poor and it was difficult for the division headquarters to supervise its training because of the distance between the two camps. The weakest battalion, Le Régiment de la Chaudière, was notably behind. This unit, the only French-speaking infantry battalion in the division, had had problems since it was first mobilized

32. WD, HQ, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1941, Brig E. W. Haldenby (Comd, 9 Cdn Inf Bde) to GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div re: "Weekly Training Report for Week Ending 19 Apr," 21 Apr 1941, par. 1.

33. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Div, Apr 1941, app. 5, "Weekly Progress Report 3 Cdn. Div, Week Ending 5 April 1941," par. 11.

34. Ibid., May 1941, app. 3, "Weekly Progress Report, 3 Cdn. Div, Week Ending 26 April 1941," pars. 7-8; app. 4, Foulkes, 3 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 2, 7 May 1941, par. 2 and app. G, "Equipment Available," par. 3.

at the war's start. It had great difficulty attracting enlistees and many of those who did volunteer were rejected as unfit. Replacements for these men were equally hard to find. By the end of January 1940, the battalion had only 250 men, less than a third of its full strength. A month later, it suffered another setback when an outbreak of mumps swept through the ranks, leaving the unit quarantined and unable to train at Camp Valcartier for three weeks. Le Régiment de la Chaudière finally reached full strength in the autumn, at which time it was assigned to 3rd Canadian Division. But its earlier difficulties kept it behind the other infantry battalions in the division. In May 1941, for instance, its NCOs had to take a course in tactics, putting the entire battalion behind in its training by three weeks.³⁵

Nevertheless, the division had to be moved overseas during the summer months, and it was in good shape overall. At the end of June, Crerar wrote to McNaughton:

I believe that you will be very favourably impressed with the 3rd Division when it arrives. It comprises a fine body of men, well-disciplined, and the units are considerably further advanced in their training than was the 2nd Division at the end of the first year of its mobilization.³⁶

He made similar comments in a letter to his old colleague, Brigadier E. L. M. Burns, then serving as the brigadier, general staff (BGS) of the Canadian Corps:

Price's formation is the first to have a decent run for its money, and within the limitations imposed by climate and restricted equipment, the units impressed me most favourably. I believe that if they can be issued with their war equipment in two or three months, that Division will be quite up to the standard of the Corps.³⁷

35. LAC, RG 24, reel C-5071, file H.Q.S. 4729, pt. 1: Col J. K. Lawson (DMT), "Report on Visit to Sussex, Debert, Aldershot and Halifax," 9 Jun 1941, pars. 1 (a), (c), 3 (f); WD, GS, 3 Cdn Div, May 1941, app. 6, "Progress Report for Week Ending 3 May, 1941, 3 Cdn Div"; Jacques Castonguay and Armand Ross, *Le Régiment de la Chaudière* (Lévis, QC: The Regiment, 1983), chap. 7.

36. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 1, file 958C.009 (D12): Crerar to LGen A. G. L. McNaughton (GOC Cdn Corps), 26 Jun 1941.

37. *Ibid.*, vol. 19, file 958.C009 (D333): Crerar to Brig E. L. M. Burns (BGS, Cdn Corps), 13 Jul 1941.

The bulk of the division arrived in the United Kingdom in July along with its complement of corps troops, and the entire division was settled there by September.³⁸

The Canadian Army was also in the process of raising two other divisions, a fourth infantry division and an armoured division. 1st Canadian Armoured Division was officially raised in February, its headquarters established at Camp Borden the following month. The two newest divisions competed for scarce resources and because Ralston had committed the Canadian Army to providing more armour for overseas service, 4th Canadian Division lost a number of its ancillary units to hasten the formation of what was redesignated as 5th Canadian Armoured Division in July. The new formation was composed of two armoured brigades and a support group that included artillery and a single infantry battalion, the Cape Breton Highlanders. It was not until the summer of 1941 that the building of 4th Canadian Division resumed. So, though 4th Canadian Division's units were mobilized in the summer of 1940, its brigade headquarters were not raised until the winter and its division headquarters was not established until June 1941. This division was also not raised with the same level of attention to representing all of Canada as with the previous three divisions. Unlike its predecessors, 4th Canadian Division had no French-speaking battalions, and its only components from east of Montreal were a handful of artillery batteries.³⁹ By late September, 4th Canadian Division was concentrated at Sussex and Debert, forming Atlantic Command's general reserve, and 5th Canadian Armoured Division was at Borden, awaiting orders to be

38. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 92.

39. LAC, MG 27 III B 11, vol. 38, file "Army Programme, 1940–41": Brig M. A. Pope (ACGS) to Crerar re: "Army Organization (A Survey as of September, 1941)," 23 Sep 1941, pars. 11–13; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 80, 90–93; "Arrival of Fifth Canadian (Armoured) Division in the United Kingdom, October–November, 1941," CMHQ Report No. 54, 30 Nov 1941, par. 9.

transported overseas.⁴⁰ Virtually all of 4th Canadian Division's units had completed their basic training, although new recruits continued to trickle in throughout the autumn.⁴¹

As effective as Crerar was as CGS in organizing military training in Canada, he was not without his critics. The *Globe and Mail* ran an article on 15 July complaining that Canada was moving in the wrong direction in the war against Germany. The article read:

On Friday the Minister of National Defence announced that, upon completing their four months of elementary training, the young men called up under the compulsory training scheme would be posted to units of the Reserve Army for the duration of the war. . . . We had been led to suppose that graduates of the four months' training course would be retained in service for the duration of the war under some plan which would ensure that they would become better and better fitted for service in the field.⁴²

This, of course, was untrue. Such men would generally be posted to the Canadian Army (Active) and retained for home defence, thereby freeing up volunteers for overseas service. NRMA men would not automatically revert to reserve status. Crerar suspected that George A. Drew, the Ontario Conservative leader and an ardent critic of the King government's handling of the war, was the anonymous author of the articles. While the *Globe and Mail* denied this, but as Crerar speculated in a letter to C. G. Power, who was by this time the minister of national defence for air, "there is ample evidence to indicate that Drew was sitting beside the man who was using the typewriter."⁴³ "He calls for large scale manoeuvres and a lot of other window dressing and eye wash," Crerar wrote to

40. LAC, MG 27 III B 11, vol. 38, file "Army Programme, 1940-41": Pope to Crerar re: "Army Organization (A Survey as of September, 1941)," 23 Sep 1941, par. 16 (e-f)

41. WD, GS, 4 Cdn Div, Oct 1941, app. 19, MGen L. F. Page (GOC 4 Cdn Div), Trg Directive, 25 Oct 1941, par. 4 (a).

42. (*Toronto*) *Globe and Mail*, War Problems Affecting Canada, 15 Jul 1941.

43. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 19, file 958.C009 (D333): Crerar to C. G. Power (MND for Air), 11 Aug 1941 and encl., criticism of "War Problems Affecting Canada," 1-2.

Burns, “which means less than nothing in military value until the individual soldiers know their jobs, and platoon, company and battalion training has first been completed.”⁴⁴

The pressure was severe enough that Crerar reached out to McNaughton for support. In a 26 June letter, he asked McNaughton to talk to the press and explain how important it was that men not leave Canada until they had mastered certain skills and that there was great coordination between himself, NDHQ, and CMHQ on the issue.⁴⁵ In his carefully worded reply, which was obviously intended to be made public, McNaughton assured Crerar that

it is most satisfactory to know that attention in Canada is being concentrated on basic training which is of fundamental importance . . . The beneficial effects of this policy are already being observed here in the standard of the reinforcements now being received.⁴⁶

McNaughton’s remarks were published in a DND press release issued on 22 July.⁴⁷ The point of securing McNaughton’s public endorsement of Crerar’s training programme was intended to halt criticism of it. If McNaughton supported the programme, as Crerar explained to his brother John, no politician would dare publicly challenge the commander of Canada’s military forces overseas.⁴⁸ Crerar, who understood the importance of public opinion, took time to write to editors of major publications, including *Maclean’s* magazine, entreating them to emphasize the positive aspects of the four-month training programme and the policy against large-scale exercises.⁴⁹

In the summer of 1941, it was difficult to assess how successful Crerar’s plan for the year had been as the four-month training programme had only begun in March.

44. Ibid.: Crerar to Burns, 13 Jul 1941.

45. Ibid., vol. 1, file 958C.009 (D12): Crerar to McNaughton, 26 Jun 1941.

46. Ibid.: McNaughton, tel. GS 1410 to Crerar, 19 Jul 1941.

47. Ibid., vol. 19, file 958.C009 (D333): DND Press Release No. 765, 22 Jul 1941.

48. Ibid.: Crerar to A. John Crerar (brother), 24 Jul 1941.

49. Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 161–162. See Crerar’s 27 July letter to Napier Moore (Editor, *Maclean’s*) in LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 19, file 958.C009 (D333).

Training the instructors also took time. The politics of manpower would only intensify throughout the war, especially once Canadian forces suffered casualties in action and the need for reinforcements became acute (chapter 7). For Crerar's part, he managed to expand the Canadian Army (Overseas) considerably. 3rd Canadian Division was sent to the United Kingdom with a higher standard of training than its predecessors and two new divisions were taking shape. It is also undeniable that Crerar's four-month training programme was a much more realistic means of building a force of trained reinforcements, specialists, and home defence troops than the government's original 30-day programme. Significantly, his policy of completing men's individual training in Canada and waiting until they were overseas before beginning collective training was consistent with McNaughton's own needs in the United Kingdom.

Division-Level Training in the United Kingdom

While Crerar worked diligently in the autumn of 1940 on his army programme for the following year, Canadian units in the United Kingdom continued their training through the winter. By the spring of 1941, 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions were ready for exercises at the division level. It will be recalled from chapter 2 that 1st Canadian Division had been scheduled to conduct division-level exercises the year before, but the disaster on the continent had thrown these plans in disarray. The division exercises in early 1941 were the first times either division conducted schemes as whole divisions and they revealed key areas in which these formations needed to improve.

1st Canadian Division had to balance training with new operational duties defending the British coast. A progress report from the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada from the last week of October states that the battalion held “several” periods of weapons training during the week along with one period of physical training per day, two periods of close-order drill, and two periods of anti-gas training. “The health and morale of the Battalion is excellent,” the report declared.⁵⁰ The Edmonton Regiment’s reports from the same period indicate that individual training emphasized the bayonet, close-order drill, firearms, and fieldcraft.⁵¹ Collective training had progressed to allow for exercises involving entire brigades. One such exercise on 1 November, for example, saw PPCLI acting as an enemy force which, having just invaded the southeastern coast of Great Britain, was preparing to meet a counter-attack by Allied forces represented by the rest of 2nd Brigade.⁵² At the same time, the division’s brigades took turns defending a stretch of coast at Brighton for several weeks at a time. While they formed the first line of defence against a German seaborne invasion, the fortifications were hardly sophisticated, amounting to little more than machine gun nests. As officers often left their units to serve in other units or commands, the infantry battalions always had new people coming in from a holding unit (chapter 7) or freshly from Canada.⁵³

Meanwhile, the units of 2nd Canadian Division spent the autumn months working to complete their individual and battalion-level training by 31 December as per the division’s Training Instruction No. 1. Throughout September, route marches remained a

50. WD, HQ, 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Nov 1940, app. 39, LCol J. B. Stevenson (CO, Seaforth of C), “Progress Report – Week Ending 2 Nov 1940,” 3 Nov 1940, pars. 1–4, 10.

51. Ibid., app. 39, Maj G. M. Beaton (A/CO, Edmn R), “Progress Report, Week Ending 2nd Nov. 1940”; app. 43, Beaton, “Progress Report, Week Ending 9th November, 1940,” 9 Nov 1940.

52. WD, PPCLI, Nov 1940, app. 4, Capt R. S. E. Waterman (Adj, PPCLI), PPCLI Trg OO No. 32, 31 Oct 1940.

53. Reginald H. Roy, *The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, 1919–1965* (Vancouver: Evergreen, 1969), 103–106.

staple of training. A 5th Brigade progress report states that its battalions averaged six to seven miles marching per day.⁵⁴ Tactical training was still in its initial stages for, as another progress report admitted, “Training in tactics is not yet sufficiently advanced to permit fair criticism.”⁵⁵ The experience of the Essex Scottish Regiment was typical of the division’s infantry units in October. The battalion focussed on individual and section training and was on course to meeting the 31 December deadline for individual and battalion training. Much of the battalion’s weapons training had reached a satisfactory standard. Still, as the battalion had had limited experience with some weapons such as the Bren gun and mortars owing to equipment shortages, more training was still needed. In terms of tactical training, the battalion was making progress at the section level but no higher.⁵⁶ By the end of November, section-level tactical training was completed and the battalion had begun practicing company-level exercises in a variety of roles such as defensive tactics while on the move and at rest and the consolidation phase of an attack.⁵⁷

2nd Canadian Division issued its second training instruction at the end of December. It noted that the standard of physical fitness had to be improved, blaming the men’s “degree of slovenliness” on modern warfare’s new reliance on motor transport. Consequently, units were encouraged to hold more route marches. It also said that “it is felt that a portion of time should be allotted to drill and Commanders should take steps to improve the turnout of their men.” Critically, the training instruction stated that “every effort must be made to further develop the chain of command and encourage the initiative

54. WD, HQ, 5 Cdn Inf Bde, Dec 1940, app. 9, Maj M. Noel (BM, 5 Cdn Inf Bde) to GS, 2 Cdn Div re: “Training, Week Ending 28 Sep 40, Progress Report No. 2,” 29 Sep 1940, par. 6.

55. Ibid., Noel to GS, 2 Cdn Div re: “Training Week Ending 5 Oct 40, Progress Report No. 3,” 29 Sep 1940, par. 2.

56. WD, Essex Scot, Nov 1940, app. 1A, “Essex Scot. Training Report, 28 Oct. to 2 Nov. 40,” 31 Oct 1940.

57. Ibid., app. 13A, “Essex Scot. Training Report, 25–30 Nov. 40,” 1 Dec 1940, par. 4.

of the junior leader.” Moreover, each brigade would take turns occupying a stretch of coastline as a first line of defence against invasion for three weeks. Although this job would limit training to a degree, it was also an opportunity to get the men accustomed to working under operational conditions.⁵⁸

On 25 December, McNaughton’s command was redesignated as the Canadian Corps, containing all units previously under VII Corps including 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions.⁵⁹ Corps headquarters issued a training instruction on 19 January emphasizing the importance of all units being ready to move by truck, night or day, at short notice, and that they had to be ready for such tasks when the likelihood of an invasion would become more acute in the spring. In February, each division would conduct a full exercise with the corps’s ancillary troops.⁶⁰

Once again, the training instruction stated the importance of anti-gas measures,⁶¹ a major fixture in the Canadians’ training in the new year. As a Canadian Corps memorandum that explained, summarizing intelligence from the British, there was still a serious possibility that the Germans might attack the United Kingdom with poison gas. German prisoners captured on the continent told interrogators that Germany did intend to use gas and there were reports that the Germans had shipped large quantities of chemicals into their newly occupied territories in the west. Intelligence also made it clear that the

58. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Div, Dec 1940, app. 54, LCol H. L. N. Salmon (GSO1, 2 Cdn Div), 2 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 2, 21 Dec 1940, pars. 3 (a), 5, 18 (a).

59. WD, Cdn Corps, 25 Dec 1940.

60. Ibid., Jan 1941, app. 51, Brig G. R. Turner (BGS, Cdn Corps), Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 3, 19 Jan 1941, pars. 1–8, 10.

61. Ibid., par. 9.

Germans themselves were investing in anti-gas equipment and training, indicating that they expected the RAF to employ gas in raids on the continent.⁶²

As per the 19 January Canadian Corps training instruction, the two Canadian divisions would soon begin large-scale exercises. Exercises beyond the brigade level required meticulous planning and vast stretches of land. The exercises during the spring of 1941 exposed areas in which the Canadians needed improvement. The first exercise under the supervision of the Canadian Corps was Exercise FOX, held from 11 to 13 February. By this point, the units of 1st Canadian Division had finished their individual training and were well into their collective training.⁶³ FOX's intent was to test the division in moving to a concentration area by road, gaining contact with the enemy, and preparing an attack. The emphasis was on traffic control and communications rather than testing units' speed or their ability to launch attacks. The scenario envisioned an enemy invasion, including airborne and seaborne elements, with the main effort south of the river Thames. The imagined enemy had made substantial gains in Dover. It was a one-sided exercise, with the umpires describing enemy actions, and live ammunition would not be used. Corps headquarters ordered 1st Canadian Division to prepare attacks on key locations under enemy control.⁶⁴

At a large conference of about 150 officers held at corps headquarters on the 15th, McNaughton assessed the exercise. The exercise had exposed serious shortcomings that were apparent to every participant. The Canadians were supposed to launch immediate

62. Ibid., app. 55, "Collected Information Concerning the Possible Use of Gas by German Forces," 20 Jan 1941.

63. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Jan 1941, app. 35, LCol R. F. L. Keller (GSO1, 1 Cdn Div), 1 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 4, 12 Jan 1941, par. 1.

64. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9791, file 2/Exercises/5: Cdn Corps Ex FOX, 1 Feb 1941, General Idea; General Instructions, pars. 1–2, 4–5; Course of the Exercise, pars. 3–6.

counter-attacks should an invasion at Dover occur. The major lesson learned from the exercise was the importance of traffic control; according to McNaughton, the traffic map in the Second World War was just as important as the artillery barrage map of the previous conflict. Indeed, every major problem during the exercise, including the failure of the artillery to move up and an inability to feed some of the men, was attributed to traffic problems. Even Major C. P. Stacey, the historical officer at CMHQ, who was allowed to personally observe the exercise, had encountered a serious traffic jam during his tour on the 12th. Moreover, the channels of command did not work properly as orders were either not passed along or were not followed.⁶⁵ The problems encountered during the exercise were due to poor staff work at the corps levels rather than the fault of the troops on the ground. McNaughton was not to blame for the poor planning of the exercise's road movement plan, which was a staff function. Overseeing the staff at the corps level was not the responsibility of the GOC but the BGS — in this case, Brigadier Miles C. Dempsey, an inexperienced British officer who had gone from commanding a brigade to being a principal corps staff officer.⁶⁶ Dempsey went on to command a corps in Italy and an army in Northwest Europe (chapters 5–6).

Exercise DOG, held from 26 to 28 February, followed FOX's template except that it was 2nd Canadian Division's turn to be tested while the exercise took place in the South Downs rather than Dover.⁶⁷ The exercise produced similar results to FOX. In a conference held on 5 March, McNaughton stated that there had been a serious problem

65. C. P. Stacey, "Canadian Corps Exercise 'FOX'; Redhill By-Pass," CMHQ Report No. 11, 22 Feb 1941, pars. 9, 17–19, 21–25.

66. John Nelson Rickard, *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 100–103.

67. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9791, file 2/Exercises/5: Cdn Corps Ex DOG, 17 Feb 1941, General Idea; General Instructions, pars. 1–2, 4–5; Course of the Exercise, pars. 1–6.

with taking the wrong routes to the concentration area. In one instance, an entire brigade took a different route than ordered. The exercise had also demonstrated the importance of the reconnaissance battalion's cooperation with the machine gun battalion. McNaughton commented on how slowly the division deployed for the attack. It had not been ready to cross the start line at the required time, something that could be improved with practice. McNaughton had a neutral view of the division's performance: he understood that it was its first time in "action" as a division and he was pleased that the officers had actually looked after their men quite well.⁶⁸ Both FOX and DOG demonstrated that the Canadians still were not yet ready for combat.⁶⁹ They needed more practice in large exercises, and only when they could consistently conduct manoeuvres without careless mistakes could they be considered prepared for real operations.

2nd Canadian Division issued its third training instruction at the end of March outlining the collective training programme for the next two months. There would be a series of exercises at all levels, including a divisional exercise at the beginning of April. While the training instruction noted that DOG had demonstrated the need to practice movement by truck, it also stated in no uncertain terms that "the standard of training of junior leaders still requires improvement. They must be given every opportunity to accept responsibility and special efforts will be made to develop their initiative and confidence."⁷⁰

Both divisions got their chance to improve upon their performance in subsequent exercises in April. 1st Canadian Division participated in Exercise HARE, held from 9 to

68. C. P. Stacey, "Canadian Corps Exercise 'DOG,'" CMHQ Report No. 13, 8 Mar 1941, pars. 17–27, 36.

69. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 238.

70. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Div, Mar 1941, app. 74, Salmon, 2 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 3, 22 Mar 1941, pars. 3–4, 8 and app. A, "Proposed Programme of Collective Training, 1 Apr–31 May 41."

11 April, and which followed the same scenario as the previous two exercises. The division was to be tested in its counter-attacking role, again in conjunction with the Canadian Corps headquarters and ancillary troops and without live ammunition or an actual opposing force. This time the attack phase itself took place.⁷¹ Unlike FOX and DOG, the official report for HARE had helpful critiques of the infantry's performance. It stated that the attack "suffered from certain units losing direction. Steps, thought to be adequate, had been taken to prevent this, and it is probable that it would not have occurred had the real artillery support been fired."⁷² Clearly, while having battle conditions relayed by the umpires made it difficult for men to visualize the attack, it could be some time before the Canadians were ready for a live-fire exercise. Though units generally did a good job concentrating in the assembly area, the infantry needed to master the task of efficiently conveying information to all ranks during an operation. On the subject of battle discipline, another report noted that "very considerable improvement necessary if heavy casualties are to be avoided. . . . Junior Officers and N.C.Os show a serious lack of sense of responsibility and lack of control. Senior officers must exercise more supervision on the ground."⁷³ However, it is interesting that the report's suggested solution to this was for senior officers — i.e. company and battalion commanders — to supervise their subordinates better rather than instil initiative among junior officers and NCOs themselves. This was symptomatic of the British Army's autocratic command system, which the Canadian Army had inherited and which did little to develop the resourcefulness of junior leaders.

71. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9791, file 2/Exercises/5: Cdn Corps Ex HARE, 29 Mar 1941, General Idea; General Instructions, pars. 1–2, 4–5; Course of the Exercise.

72. Ibid.: Report on Cdn Corps Ex HARE, 22 Apr 1941, par. 10.

73. Ibid.: Cdn Corps Ex HARE, Notes for Conference, pars. 6 (a), 10, 16 (a).

2nd Canadian Division held its own exercise, BENITO, from 16 to 19 April. As a divisional exercise, the corps headquarters and ancillary troops were not involved, except for a field regiment of artillery and the Royal Montreal Regiment (MG), the machine gun battalion under corps command. Like the preceding exercises, it was a one-sided exercise without the use of live ammunition, with its object to test the division in its counter-attacking role. Again, the situation involved a German airborne and seaborne attack, this time in Sussex. The division was to spend the first day moving to the concentration area, the second day moving to the assembly area, launch its attack on the morning of the third day with the consolidation phase that afternoon, and withdraw on the morning of the fourth day.⁷⁴ The weather was wet and cold.⁷⁵ Because the umpires came largely from the units themselves and many officers away on courses could not attend the exercise, the infantry battalions had to conduct the exercise with a reduced number of officers. Le Régiment de Maisonneuve, for instance, was down to 16 officers from its complement of 33. During BENITO, most of its platoons were commanded by NCOs.⁷⁶ Overall, though, traffic was less of a problem than in DOG and the division showed great improvement.⁷⁷

The official “lessons learned” from the exercises in the spring of 1941 are notable because they generally did not promote new developments in tactical doctrine. This was

74. Ibid.: 2 Cdn Div Ex BENITO, General Instructions, pars. 4, 8–9, 15 and app. C, “Report on General Situation up to 1600 hrs on 31 Mar 41, issued as a General Idea for 2 Cdn Div Exercise ‘BENITO’”; Proposed Timetable.

75. Clarence Bourassa to Hazel Bourassa, 20 Apr 1941, in *One Family's War: The Wartime Letters of Clarence Bourassa, 1940–1944*, ed. Rollie Bourassa (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2010), 144–145.

76. WD, HQ, 5 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1941, app. 7, Capt J. M. Vezina, Lt J. Langevin, and Lt R. Beullac (Fus MR), “Umpires Report on Régiment de Maisonneuve, C.A. (O.),” 19 Apr 1941; R. B. Oglesby, “A Summary of Major Changes in Army Organization 1939–1945,” AHQ Report No. 57, 22 Dec 1952, par. 37. This was the number of officers per battalion following the promotion of warrant officers class III to second lieutenant, as per chapter 2.

77. WD, HQ, 4 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1941, app. 12, LCol G. Hedley Basher (A/Comd, 4 Cdn Inf Bde) to GS, 2 Cdn Div re: “‘BENITO’ Exercise,” 22 Apr 1941, par. 5; WD, HQ, 5 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1941, app. 7, Maj F. H. Johnson (CO, Calg Highrs) to HQ, 5 Cdn Inf Bde re: “‘BENITO’ Tactical Exercise,” 24 Apr 1941.

mainly because no one was looking for them. Generals and staff officers needed as much practice in conducting operations as the combat arms. Consequently, matters of senior leadership, command, and management were usually the focus of large-scale exercises. Hence, the headquarters directing the exercise were usually more interested in testing command, control, communications, and logistics than in providing practice for the troops themselves or in assessing their movements on the ground. As such, the official lessons learned in Exercises FOX and DOG, saying nothing of tactical doctrine or the performance of the infantry's battle prowess, focussed instead on the management of the complexities of moving an entire division by road.⁷⁸ There were no comments regarding how well companies and platoons executed attacks and captured their objectives. Even when senior commanders noted areas for improvement among the infantry units, the criticism was usually vague and did not provide unambiguous direction on how to fix problems. For instance, in the spring 1941 exercises, the general staffs at the division and corps levels clearly detected a problem with junior leadership. Just as McNaughton had noted after the exercise in July 1940, junior leaders were not showing enough initiative. And yet, despite this criticism recurring over multiple exercises in both divisions, the exercise reports and subsequent training instructions only briefly stated the need for better junior leadership. Records from the winter and spring of 1941 do not contain much guidance from the division or corps level regarding *how* battalions were supposed to develop the initiative of junior officers and NCOs. Worse, no one thought to question whether the prevailing doctrine itself was preventing junior leaders from developing initiative on the battlefield.

78. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9791, file 2/Exercises/5: Reports on Cdn Corps Exs FOX and DOG, 8 Mar 1941, 6.

Exercise WATERLOO

The British Army, having spent the past year rebuilding after leaving the bulk of the BEF's vehicles and equipment on the continent, also needed experience with large-scale manoeuvres. In the summer of 1941, its exercises involved entire territorial commands such as Southern Command and Eastern Command, which were effectively army-level formations each responsible for defending a region of the United Kingdom. Grand exercises were important for testing staffs, communications, and logistics, as well as practicing units and various arms of service in working with one another. The Canadian Corps was still part of GHQ Reserve, but it was able to participate in Exercise WATERLOO, held from 14 to 16 June. WATERLOO was the first exercise that involved the entire Canadian Corps and the largest exercise in which the Canadians had participated to date. Overseen by the new South Eastern Command under Lieutenant-General Paget, it was also the first time that McNaughton commanded a whole corps in an exercise and the first time that the Canadian infantry divisions cooperated with an armoured division. The purpose of the exercise was to practice the Canadian Corps and British 8th Armoured Division in their mobile counter-attacking role in an area occupied by enemy airborne troops and to practice the infantry in attacking an armoured force. The Canadian Corps would fight alongside IV Corps. As usual, the exercise envisioned a German invasion on the east and south coasts. The "enemy" would be represented by elements of 47th (London) and 55th (West Lancashire) Divisions, borrowed from IV Corps for the

exercise. The instructions forbade withdrawal for both friendly and “enemy” troops. Troops would use blank ammunition, so umpires would not have to simulate small arms fire.⁷⁹ Given the number of troops involved, WATERLOO required an extremely large amount of land. Units would have to use public roads and manoeuvre on private property. Consequently, such exercises were very much in the public eye and units had to take care not to damage their surroundings.

The exercise began badly when it took several hours for orders to advance to reach 1st Canadian Division because McNaughton’s presence was required at South Eastern Command headquarters for two conferences. Further, confusion ensued over what time the Canadians would be released by GHQ Reserve to the new command. Consequently, “enemy” troops had already occupied the division’s concentration area by the time the Canadian Corps reached the northern outskirts of Horsham and many Canadians were “captured.” There was confused fighting throughout the night, during which 3rd Brigade, in the vanguard, fared poorly. The enemy force, “81st Infantry Regiment,” was ousted from Horsham the next morning by 2nd Brigade, attacking from the rear. Meanwhile, 2nd Canadian Division was also slow to start. It received its orders to move at 1555 hours. But despite being on two hours’ notice, its reconnaissance battalion did not go underway until 1830 hours. One brigade moved on carriers, while another moved on foot and the third waited for the carrier company to return. “Enemy” action disrupted this arrangement as a parachute regiment landed and impeded the advance of reserves. At first light on the 15th, 8th Armoured Division was to launch a

79. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9791, file 2/Exercise/1: SECO Ex WATERLOO, index 1, Exercise Instrs, pars. 1–2, 4, 27; index 3, Opening Narrative; Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 34, par. 2.

subsequent attack. This would hopefully drive the enemy westward right into the awaiting Canadian Corps.⁸⁰

C. P. Stacey personally observed Exercise WATERLOO. In the late morning of 15 June, after observing the British units in action, Stacey and his party drove north to observe the Canadians. He found evidence that the situation was badly confused. Speaking with an umpire from the Carleton and York Regiment, he learned that many Canadians, including Brigadier H. N. Ganong, the brigade commander, had been captured. Additionally, the town of Horsham had been cleared several times overnight but was repeatedly retaken by enemy forces. The Carleton and York Regiment had suffered about 75 percent casualties. Nevertheless, the umpire told Stacey that the Canadians had held up as best they could.⁸¹

The Canadian Corps was to attack at 0400 hours the next morning in cooperation with 8th Armoured Division. However, the armoured division was delayed seven hours because a bridge needed to be constructed over the river Adur, which meant that 1st Canadian Division, on 8th Armoured Division's left, lacked armoured support. Stacey recounted in his report that PPCLI had taken serious casualties to take a number of farm buildings just a few hundred yards from the enemy and that the battalion worked with the artillery to neutralize an "enemy" gun. Meanwhile, 2nd Canadian Division, facing its own transport problems, managed to push forward against the enemy by the exercise's end.⁸²

80. Ibid.: FM Sir J. Dill (CIGS), "Closing Address by the Army Commander: Final Conference South Eastern Command Exercise 'WATERLOO,'" par. 6; C. P. Stacey, "South-Eastern Command Exercise 'WATERLOO,'" CMHQ Report No. 34, 21 Jul 1941, pars. 11, 19–25.

81. Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 34, pars. 32–33, 36.

82. Ibid., pars. 38, 40–41, 43.

Exercise WATERLOO revealed numerous lessons for conducting future large-scale exercises. For instance, the final conference on WATERLOO on 19 June decided that it would have been better had 8th Armoured Division been placed directly under the Canadian Corps's command. Paget mentioned that 1st Canadian Division's slow start demonstrated the need for being ready to fight at a moment's notice.⁸³ In a memorandum, Field Marshal Sir John Dill, the CIGS, stressed the need to reduce the number of conferences prior to and during exercises so that commanders could be with their headquarters, thus avoiding the delay that befell 1st Canadian Division.⁸⁴ However, missing from the post-mortems of WATERLOO was any discussion about the infantry's use of tactics. The minutes of 1st Canadian Division's own conference on the exercise stated in passing that "the inf[antry] worked well. They must always be quicker in the follow-up."⁸⁵ Such glib comments were of little use to battalion headquarters, which were directly responsible for the training of infantrymen in tactics. WATERLOO also exposed not only how ill-prepared the Canadians were for battle, but also how the British were almost in the same position. Though British forces were already in action in the Middle East, there was much work to be done to refine British doctrine, command system, and overall combat effectiveness if the British and Canadians were ever going to be a match for the Germans in battle.

83. *Ibid.*, pars. 50, 63.

84. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9791, file 2/Exercise/1: Dill, "Closing Address by the Army Commander: Final Conference South Eastern Command Exercise 'WATERLOO,'" pars. 5–6.

85. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Jun 1941, app. 40, LCol C. Vokes (GSO1, 1 Cdn Div), "Minutes of G.O.C's Conference on Exercise 'WATERLOO' at Adv H.Q. 1 Cdn Div on 17 Jun 41 at 1700 hrs," 18 Jun 1941, par. 8.

Exercise BUMPER

The Canadian Army (Overseas) continued to expand in the summer of 1941, as did the size of its exercises. 3rd Canadian Division began to arrive in the United Kingdom, joining its sister divisions, both of which were beginning to grow tired of the monotony of training and stints guarding sections of the British coast. At the start of the autumn, 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions participated in another grand exercise, BUMPER, which produced significantly better results than WATERLOO.

The bulk of 3rd Canadian Division — namely the division headquarters and 8th and 9th Brigades — arrived in the United Kingdom at the end of July. The division immediately came under the command of the Canadian Corps.⁸⁶ To bring 3rd Canadian Division's standard of training up to that of its sister divisions, its training programme for the next three months included battalion field firing exercises, weapons training, and fieldcraft. Brigade exercises were scheduled to begin at the end of September, with division exercises commencing by 20 October.⁸⁷ While awaiting its turn to embark overseas, 7th Brigade would spend the next month conducting daily exercises in company attack, company defence, battalion moves to a concentration area, and battalion defence and withdrawal.⁸⁸

As of 1 August 1941, the Canadian Army had 5,903 officers and 81,059 other ranks in the United Kingdom; 747 officers and 14,821 other ranks were in 1st Canadian Division, 764 officers and 14,748 other ranks were in 2nd Canadian Division, and 489

86. C. P. Stacey, "Arrival of Main Body of Third Canadian Division in the United Kingdom, July, 1941," CMHQ Report No. 43, 15 Aug 1941, pars. 1, 4, 27.

87. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Div, Aug 1941, app. 10, Foulkes, 3 Cdn Div Trg Instr No. 4, 8 Aug 1941.

88. WD, HQ, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Jul 1941, app. 8, Maj J. H. W. T. Pope (BM, 7 Cdn Inf Bde), 7 Cdn Inf Bde Trg Instr No. 2, 21 Jul 1941, app. A, "Tactical Training for Period 21 Jul–18 Aug."

officers and 9,268 other ranks were in 3rd Canadian Division. The remainder comprised corps ancillary troops, reinforcements, and miscellaneous units.⁸⁹ None of these troops, however, had yet seen combat, a situation which was having an adverse effect on morale. The Western Desert Force in Cyrenaica had defeated a much larger but poorly trained Italian force over the winter of 1940–1941. Other British and Commonwealth forces had seen action in Greece in the spring of 1941. A major turning point in the war occurred on 22 June when Axis forces invaded the Soviet Union, which took pressure off of the British. Even Canadians in the other services were having more exciting experiences: the RCN was safeguarding the vital convoys across the north Atlantic while the RCAF had seen action in the skies over the British Isles. But by July, though Canada had been at war for twenty-two months, the Canadian Army had seen no action. Training and serving as a mobile reserve in the United Kingdom seemed to be the war's backwater.⁹⁰ According to a postal censorship report from 10 June 1941, Canadian soldiers complained in their letters home about the problems they experienced. Most of their complaints concerned matters such as lost parcels or the need for more cigarettes, but they also expressed dissatisfaction with training. Many felt that training was going sluggishly because new equipment arrived too slowly and in insufficient quantities and because of inadequate training facilities. They also resented serving alongside newly received undertrained recruits from Canada.⁹¹

89. C. P. Stacey, "Situation of the Canadian Forces in the United Kingdom, Summer, 1941: IV. Growth of Canadian Military Force in the United Kingdom; Progress of Canadian Overseas Army Programme, 1941; Notes on Sea Transport," CMHQ Report No. 45, 2 Sep 1941, par. 4.

90. C. P. Stacey, "Situation of the Canadian Forces in the United Kingdom, Summer of 1941: I. Position and Role of the Canadian Forces," CMHQ Report No. 33, 21 Jun 1941, pars. 29–34.

91. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17920, vol. 12318, file 4/Censor/4/2: MGen P. J. Montague (SO, CMHQ) to HQ, Cdn Corps re: "Postal Censorship," 10 Jun 1941.

There was a stark contrast between Canada's experience in the first half of the war and that of its sister Dominion, Australia. Like the Canadian Militia, the Australian Army had deteriorated during the interwar years and its regular and militia troops were just as undertrained and underequipped in 1939. In February 1940, the Australian 6th Division arrived in Palestine to reinforce the British garrison guarding the eastern Mediterranean and complete its training there before joining the BEF in Europe. After France's collapse disrupted this plan, the division was joined by the Australian 7th Division in October of that year. Australian forces began seeing action in North Africa at the start of 1941.⁹²

Conversely, no Canadian division was committed to continuous action until the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. There were two reasons for such dissimilar experiences. First, the Canadians' training was badly disrupted by their duties defending the United Kingdom from a possible German attack. As chapter 4 will demonstrate, this responsibility bled substantial time away from training through early 1942. Consequently, the Canadians saw no action in 1941 as the Australians did because they were not ready. Even if they had been fully trained, it is unlikely that the British would have been willing to deploy a Canadian division to an active theatre while the British Isles were at risk of invasion. Second, there were matters of policy that prevented any Canadian division, or indeed even a brigade, from being deployed to an active theatre. As of late 1940, the Canadian government had not authorized the deployment of Canadian forces outside of the United Kingdom (including Newfoundland), Iceland, or Western Europe. In any case the British had not requested that Canada send troops to serve in the Middle East. The

92. For the mobilization of Australia's expeditionary force and its first operations, see Gavin Long, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945*, ser. 1, *Army*, vol. 1, *To Benghazi* (1952; repr., Canberra: AWM, 1961), chaps. 1–8.

government was divided on the issue. While King was reluctant to send Canadian forces to active theatres solely for the sake of getting them into battle, Ralston was anxious to get the army any combat experience that it could. Officially, the government was open to any British proposal for Canadian participation anywhere they might be needed in the fight against Germany and its allies, but it reserved the right to consult with its own military advisers. King was inclined to listen to the army's most senior soldier, McNaughton, instead of Ralston, and the general insisted that Canadian formations fight together as they had during the First World War.⁹³ The British had no need for an entire Canadian corps in North Africa at this stage and the Canadian Army (Overseas) was only going to grow as time went on. In this context, the Canadians entered battle so late into the war because policy dictated that the United Kingdom was where they were to stay. But while they were there, their training was subordinated to coastal defence duties.

While 3rd Canadian Division was busy preparing for brigade and division exercises, the units of 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions occupied the rest of their summer training and taking turns guarding a section of the British coast. Company exercises and route marches became routine. TsOET continued in order to keep men's individual proficiency high. In the Calgary Highlanders, for instance, all men consistently passed their TsOET for small arms, battalion weapons such as the anti-tank gun, and anti-gas. Sections, platoons, and companies did the same in TsOET of moves by truck and tactics.⁹⁴

The last major undertaking for the season was an exercise even larger than WATERLOO. Exercise BUMPER, held from 29 September to 3 October, was the largest

93. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 40–42.

94. WD, Calg Highrs, Aug 1941, app. 6, Syllabus; app. 7, LCol J. F. Scott (CO, Calg Highrs), "Training Progress Report, Month Ending 31 Aug 41," 31 Aug 1941.

exercise conducted in the United Kingdom to that time, with about a quarter of a million men participating in total. It involved two army headquarters, four corps, and twelve divisions. Figure 3.1 provides the orders of battle for the opposing forces. The Canadian

Figure 3.1

Exercise BUMPER: Opposing Forces

Southern Command ("Southern Army")	Eastern Command ("German Sixth Army")
Canadian Corps	II Corps
1st Canadian Division	1st Division
2nd Canadian Division	46th Division
V Corps	XI Corps
3rd Division (less 1 brigade)	43rd (Wessex) Division
4th Division	54th (East Anglian) Division
48th (South Midland) Division	
8th Armoured Division	6th Armoured Division
21st Army Tank Brigade	9th Armoured Division
25th Army Tank Brigade	
24th Guards Brigade	

Source: C. P. Stacey, "Home Forces Exercise 'BUMPER' (Army Manoeuvres), 29 Sep–3 Oct 41," CMHQ Report No. 49, 27 Oct 1941, pars. 2–3, 5–9

Corps, including 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions, fought under Lieutenant-General Harold Alexander's Southern Command (the "Allied" side). The exercise, under the direction of General Sir Alan Brooke, the commander-in-chief, Home Forces, had three overall objectives: to give higher commanders experience commanding large forces; to test army organization; and to experiment with the idea of using an entire command (in this case, Southern Command) as a striking force. The scenario was that the Germans had launched a major attack on the British Isles on 20 September in four main thrusts, each

against one of the major commands — Northern, Eastern, South Eastern, and Southern — but only the thrust against Eastern Command had achieved any success. South Eastern Command, for its part, had repelled the attack by 26 September with counter-attacks by the Canadian Corps. The enemy “German Sixth Army,” represented by Eastern Command, was advancing to the north of London to destroy British reserves and attack the southern coast defences from the rear. Southern Command received a warning order at 1800 hours on 27 September that it would be called upon to move into East Anglia and destroy “Sixth Army.” The exercise, then, was essentially an engagement between Eastern and Southern Commands. Alexander had access to troops from South Eastern Command, including the Canadian Corps, 8th Armoured Division, and three independent brigades.⁹⁵

At 2200 hours on 28 September, Southern Command was ordered to move against “Sixth Army.” While Alexander reasoned that the enemy would use his armoured divisions in a wide swing through the Northampton area, it was also important for Southern Command to secure the more rugged area of the Chilterns. So, Alexander concentrated his forces south of the river Thames. The Canadian Corps, under Alexander’s command, was moved to a concentration area beginning on the 26th and received orders to move into the Chilterns so that the corps could attack in any direction Alexander desired. The Canadian Corps completed the move to the Chilterns on the morning of 29 September. Alexander then regrouped his forces: 2nd Canadian Division

95. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17902, vol. 12300, file 3/Ex Bumper/1: Maj C. P. Stacey (Hist Offr, CMHQ), memorandum to Brig J. C. Murchie (BGS, CMHQ) re: “Conference on Exercise ‘BUMPER,’” 10 Oct 1941, par. 4; Gen A. F. Brooke (C-in-C, HF), “G.H.Q. Exercise ‘BUMPER,’ 27 Sep.–3 Oct., 1941: Comments by Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces,” par. 4; WD, Cdn Corps, Oct 1941, HF Ex BUMPER, index 1, Exercise Instructions, par. 1 and index 7, Opening Narrative; C. P. Stacey, “Home Forces Exercise ‘BUMPER’ (Army Manoeuvres), 29 Sep–3 Oct 41,” CMHQ Report No. 49, 27 Oct 1941, pars. 2–3, 5–9.

was taken from the Canadian Corps and placed in reserve and the British 4th Division took its place in the Canadian Corps, which was ordered to take over the frontage of V Corps eastward of Lee.⁹⁶

At dawn on 30 September, the Canadian Corps, delivering a counter-attack to check the enemy's advance at Luton, stabilized the front at 1300 hours. The Canadians launched another counter-attack later in the afternoon, but they could not push 54th (East Anglian) Division back. Meanwhile, Alexander ordered 2nd Canadian Division forward to fill the gap between 8th Armoured and 48th (South Midland) Divisions and come under the command of V Corps. Even though Alexander was still insistent on holding firm with his left and attacking with his right, the most decisive events of the day took place on the left, which did not include the Canadians. The plan for the next day was for a general advance along the entire front. But the Canadian Corps encountered stiff resistance from 54th (East Anglian) Division and made slow progress. In the afternoon, that division became surrounded, partly thanks to the Royal 22^e Régiment's (the "Van Doos") successful advance through an inadequately guarded enemy inter-formation boundary to capture Hitchin, its final objective. That night the enemy tried to expel the Van Doos with field artillery fire but to no avail. The "enemy" position was dire, and "Sixth Army" received orders on the afternoon of 1 October to withdraw to East Anglia. 54th (East Anglian) Division had yet to withdraw and was still surrounded by the Canadian Corps. There was reportedly "fierce guerrilla fighting" that day, with pockets of resistance remaining until the afternoon of 2 October. The Carleton and York Regiment

96. Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 49, pars. 10–13.

even managed to capture the GOC 54th (East Anglian) Division. The exercise concluded at 0600 hours on 3 October.⁹⁷

Stacey attended the post-exercise conference on 10 October. According to his report, the commanders mostly discussed the role of armoured forces. Brooke was displeased that corps and army headquarters sat too far back and that all of the attacks during the exercise were done primarily by brigade groups. He considered this too much of a burden on brigade headquarters and that better results could be achieved with coordinated divisional attacks.⁹⁸ In his own report on Exercise BUMPER, Brooke was satisfied with the men's stamina as they conducted operations for three days after lengthy marching. He wrote, "There was a marked fighting spirit and keenness displayed by all ranks taking part in the exercise. The spirit displayed by all ranks throughout was the main contributing factor to the success of the exercise."⁹⁹

From the Canadian infantry's point of view, BUMPER was a clear success. "All officers and men thoroughly enjoyed the scheme and felt that a great deal had been learned," read a report by Lieutenant-Colonel J. Fred Scott, commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders. "Very considerable disappointment was shown by members of the Imperial forces . . . at the fact that the Canadian forces had been able to push back the British forces practically at will."¹⁰⁰

It is interesting to note that planners had made provisions for simulated casualties during the exercise. Men deemed as wounded in action were moved first to casualty

97. Ibid., pars. 18–20, 25–26, 31–36.

98. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17902, vol. 12300, file 3/Ex Bumper/1: Stacey, memorandum to Murchie re: "Conference on Exercise 'BUMPER,'" 10 Oct 1941, pars. 2, 8, 11.

99. Ibid.: Brooke, "G.H.Q. Exercise 'BUMPER,' 27 Sep.–3 Oct., 1941: Comments by Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces," pars. 33–34.

100. WD, Calg Highrs, Oct 1941, app. 12, Scott, "Report on 'BUMPER' Scheme," 6.

clearing stations and then to holding units where they would await movement back to the front. This was done to give medical units practice in processing wounded men and sending them to field hospitals and holding units practice sending forward reinforcements.¹⁰¹ However, the exercise also demonstrated that training could be lethal. Nineteen men were killed in accidents, though none were Canadian. But the Canadians suffered nine men seriously injured and another 18 men slightly injured. Considering the size of the exercise, McNaughton considered these figures to be quite low and attributed this to the state of the men's training and discipline.¹⁰²

Exercise BUMPER was a suitable conclusion to the Canadian Army's second summer overseas. That the British high command considered the Canadians sufficiently trained to participate in such large-scale exercises as WATERLOO and BUMPER alongside British forces was significant. Though BUMPER had gone much better than WATERLOO, it was only one exercise. The Canadians needed more practice and more exciting training if their morale was to be sustained.

Disaster at Hong Kong

Crerar spent the autumn of 1941 continuing to expand the army and prepare formations for despatch overseas. In consultation with McNaughton, he found that Canada did not need to raise any more infantry divisions. The British, still in the process of studying how they might beat the Germans on the battlefield, wanted more armoured formations. Crerar

101. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17902, vol. 12300, file 3/Ex Bumper/1: Brig A. W. Beament (DAG, CMHQ), "C.M.H.Q. Instructions – Exercise 'BUMPER,'" 24 Sep 1941, pars. 4–5.

102. Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 49, par. 39.

duly set to work creating new tank brigades and converting infantry battalions to armoured regiments, with a view to sending them overseas in 1942. However, he also had a key role in the despatch of two infantry battalions to Hong Kong, a decision that led to one of the worst disasters of the war for Canada.

Crerar's army programme for 1941 was largely completed on schedule. Sansom's 5th Canadian Armoured Division arrived in the United Kingdom over a five-week period beginning on 16 October. Unlike 3rd Canadian Division, 5th Canadian Armoured Division was not placed under the Canadian Corps's command upon its arrival, but rather would remain under the command of CMHQ until its training was complete and it had received its full complement of Canadian-built Ram I and II tanks.¹⁰³

Just as the 1941 army programme was concluded, the 1942 programme was taking shape. During 1942, Crerar planned to expand the army further. In consultation with the War Office, McNaughton had told him that the despatch of a second armoured division and an independent tank brigade — a brigade of Infantry tanks rather than an armoured brigade of heavier tanks — to the United Kingdom would render the Canadian Corps capable of meeting any operational task placed upon it. The most straightforward means of raising an armoured division was to restructure 4th Canadian Division. Thus, Crerar's programme for 1942, submitted to the defence minister on 18 November, was to send overseas a converted 4th Canadian Armoured Division, a new tank brigade, and additional ancillary troops. Converting the division to an armoured role would not be a speedy process. As the division would need to be restructured while it was still in

103. Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 54, pars. 2, 23, 25.

Canada, Crerar estimated that it would not be ready for despatch overseas until July.¹⁰⁴ In December and January, NDHQ decided to convert six of the division's infantry battalions into armoured regiments and place them into 3rd and 4th Canadian Armoured Brigades. Two others would be converted into motor battalions. The only battalion that would retain an infantry role was the Irish Regiment of Canada.¹⁰⁵ This configuration of an armoured division — two armoured brigades of three regiments and one motor battalion each, plus a support group that included an infantry battalion — would be dramatically altered later in the war. Thus, most of the units under 4th Canadian Division's command at the end of 1941 would not remain there. The infantry units that would eventually fight with the division in Northwest Europe in 1944 — the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, the Algonquin Regiment, and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's) — were all on guard duty in Newfoundland, Ontario, and Jamaica, respectively, at the time.¹⁰⁶

The Canadian troops in the United Kingdom may have been surprised to learn that they would not be the first Canadian soldiers in action. Though the British were focused on Europe, they also were concerned about recent Japanese aggressive behaviour, especially in French Indochina, and what it meant for British possessions in

104. LAC, MG 27 III B 11, vol. 38, file "Army Programme, 1942–43": Crerar to Ralston, re: "Army Programme, 1942–43," 18 Nov 1941, pars. 10–11, 13.

105. WD, GS, 4 Cdn Div, Feb 1942, app. 53, "Conversion of the 4 Cdn Div to the 4 Cdn Armd Div," app. 5, "Minutes of a Meeting Held at N.D.H.Q., Monday 29 Dec 41," par. 2 and app. 6, "Notes on Conference Held in Administration Building, 4 Cdn Div, Debert, N.S., at 0930 hours, Friday, 16 Jan 42, to Discuss the Conversion of 4 Cdn Div to 4 Cdn Armd Div"; GO 132, "Conversion and Redesignation — Units of the 4th Armoured Division and 2nd Army Tank Brigade," 17 Apr 1942, effective 26 Jan 1942.

106. G. L. Cassidy, *Warpath: The Story of the Algonquin Regiment, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1948), 23–30; H. McG. Jackson, ed., *The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's) 1928–1953* (Montreal: Industrial School for the Deaf, 1953), 32–47; Geoffrey W. Hayes, *The LinCs: A History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at War*, 2nd ed. (Waterloo, ON: LCMSDS, 2007), 9–13.

the Far East, namely Singapore and Hong Kong.¹⁰⁷ The British already maintained a small force in Hong Kong consisting of four battalions from the British and Indian Armies as well as a local defence corps and they were interested in augmenting the garrison with two more infantry battalions. On 19 September 1941, the Dominion Office issued a formal request to the Canadian government asking if Canada might supply these battalions. Crerar saw no reason not to consider the request.¹⁰⁸ On 8 October, the Canadian chiefs of staff authorized the despatch of two battalions, which would serve together under the designation “C” Force with an attached brigade headquarters. Colonel Lawson, the DMT, was promoted to brigadier and given command of the force.¹⁰⁹

The primary consideration in the decision of which battalions to despatch was their level of training. The Directorate of Military Training narrowed the field of choices by compiling a list of active battalions according to their training status. The ten best battalions, those slated to form 4th Canadian Division, fell under Class “A.” Class “B” included seven units that were acceptable for assignment to 6th Canadian Division — a home defence formation based in British Columbia — or for other coastal defence establishments. Another nine units under Class “C” required “refresher training.” As 4th

107. For British–Japanese relations in the 1930s, see Christopher G. Thorne, “The Shanghai Crisis of 1932: The Basis of British Policy,” *American Historical Review* 75, no. 6 (1970): 1616–1639 and Ian H. Nish, “Japan in Britain’s View of the International System, 1919–37,” chap. 2 in *Anglo-Japanese Alienation, 1919–1952: Papers of the Anglo-Japanese Conference on the Second World War*, ed. Ian H. Nish (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982). For Hong Kong’s place in British strategic plans, see S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War against Japan*, vol. 1, *The Loss of Singapore*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1957), chaps. 1–4 and Christopher M. Bell, “‘Our Most Exposed Outpost’: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921–1941,” *Journal of Military History* 60, no. 1 (1996): 61–88.

108. For an intriguing analysis of Canadian intelligence and strategic planning prior to the Japanese offensive in December 1941, see Timothy Wilford, *Canada’s Road to the Pacific War: Intelligence, Strategy, and the Far East Crisis* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

109. For a study of Lawson’s early life and career leading up to his appointment to command “C” Force, see Tyler Wentzell, “Brigadier J. K. Lawson and Command of ‘C’ Force at Hong Kong,” *Canadian Military History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 14–26. The article corrects numerous inaccurate statements about Lawson that are found in previous accounts of the Battle of Hong Kong.

Canadian Division was intended to serve in Europe, Crerar did not wish to deprive it of two Class “A” battalions. He instead selected the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers. Though both were Class “C” battalions, they had just completed garrison assignments in Newfoundland and Jamaica, respectively. Crerar’s hope was that Lawson would resolve the “C” Force’s deficiencies in training long before it ever fought the Japanese.¹¹⁰

These units were nowhere near the training level that Canadian units in the United Kingdom had achieved. In *No Reason Why* (1981), Carl Vincent provided a critical assessment of the battalions’ readiness for battle. Both battalions’ garrison duties had prevented much collective training. In the Winnipeg Grenadiers’ case, companies were kept separate in Jamaica and alternated between training, guard duty, regular camp duties, and sports. While men in both units had experience training with rifles, neither unit had more than elementary training with Bren guns, anti-tank rifles, and mortars. Many of the men passed their TOET in some of these weapons, but that only meant that they knew how to load, unload, and partially disassemble them. Because of ammunition shortages — or in the case of mortars, a shortage in the quantity of the weapons themselves — the men did not have much experience *firing* these weapons. Just as serious was the lack of tactical training as the battalion conducted very few exercises. In Newfoundland, meanwhile, the Royal Rifles’ companies were also separated and rotated through different assignments. Though the Royal Rifles were able to devote much more time to range practice, 21 percent had not passed their rifle TOET and 36 percent had not

110. For Crerar’s role in the Hong Kong expedition, see Sir Lyman P. Duff, *Report on the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1942), 13–22 and Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 163–173.

passed their Bren gun TOET. Moreover, the battalion was just as deficient in tactical training as the Winnipeg Grenadiers.¹¹¹

“C” Force arrived at Hong Kong on 16 November, bringing the colony’s defensive strength up to 14,000 men. But within weeks it became horribly clear that this was too small a force to hold Hong Kong. The Japanese launched their major offensive in the Pacific with an attack against Pearl Harbor, with simultaneous attacks on Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaya, and other positions. On 8 December, Japanese troops crossed the border into mainland Hong Kong, clearing it by the 13th, and advanced to the island five days later. The weak garrison was unable to withstand the Japanese onslaught. The colony fell on 25 December. Hong Kong garrison’s lost 1,589 killed, of which 23 officers and 267 other ranks were Canadian, including Lawson. Those who did not fall during the battle spent the rest of the war suffering as prisoners of war in inhumane camps. Another 267 Canadians would die or be illegally executed in captivity.¹¹²

Canadians at home were appalled at the Japanese aggression and anxiously consumed news about the Battle of Hong Kong as it unfolded. Conservatives used the battle as evidence of the need for conscription. On 12 January 1942, George Drew gave a speech in Toronto, saying that the government had sent “a large number” of undertrained troops to their deaths at Hong Kong. Canada’s need for trained men was “doubly

111. Carl Vincent, *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy; An Examination* (Stittsville, ON: Canada’s Wings, 1981), 44–52, 57–66; cf. Duff, *Report on the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong*, 25–34.

112. The best histories of the battle itself include Kirby, *The Loss of Singapore*, chaps. 7–9; Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour: The Fall of Hong Kong, 1941* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978); and Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003). Works that treat the battle from the Canadian perspective include Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 461–491; Brereton Greenhous, “C” Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941–1945 (Toronto: Dundurn, 1997), chaps. 5–9; and Terry Copp, “The Defence of Hong Kong: December 1941,” *Canadian Military History* 10, no. 4 (2001): 5–20. A good review of the literature on “C” Force is Tony Banham, “A Historiography of C Force,” *Canadian Military History* 24, no. 2 (2015): 235–254.

desperate,” he said, arguing for compulsory military training.¹¹³ Ralston gave his official statement about “C” Force to the House of Commons on 21 January 1942. He stated that both battalions were reasonably well-trained, but also disclosed that they had taken on 439 additional men from other units and training centres prior to their departure to bring them up to establishment and have a body of reinforcements. He admitted that at least 138 of these reinforcements had less than 16 weeks’ training — the minimum requirement for overseas service — prior to embarkation.¹¹⁴ The next day, Richard Hanson, the leader of the Opposition, called for an official inquiry. He believed that the number of undertrained men was cause for concern over Canada’s reserves of trained men. “It must be assumed that if trained man-power was available, they would have been sent,” he said:

How can we as members of parliament, and how can the people of this country pass upon the question of compulsory service and kindred subjects until we and they have full, exact and precise information regarding the present standing of trained man-power in Canada?¹¹⁵

Hanson did not get an inquiry into Canada’s manpower situation generally, but a Royal Commission was nevertheless formed under Sir Lyman P. Duff, the chief justice of Canada, to investigate the government’s decisions regarding the Hong Kong expedition. Training was the subject of considerable debate during the proceedings, which occurred throughout March. In his report released in early June, Duff largely absolved the government and Crerar from blame. He concluded that Crerar’s belief that the men would have sufficient time to train before ever meeting the Japanese in battle was reasonable

113. “Meighen’s Plea Merits Support Drew Declares: Charges Present System of Raising Recruits Has ‘Failed Miserably’; Cites Hong Kong,” (*Toronto Globe and Mail*, 13 Jan 1942)

114. Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (21 Jan 1942), 4470–4473 (Ralston, MP). Ralston stated that at least 138 men had less than 16 weeks’ training, but that the number could have been as high as 148, as his department had yet to ascertain ten men’s training level.

115. *Ibid.* (22 Jan 1942), 3–4 (Hanson, MP).

given the information available to him at the time on Japan's intentions and capabilities.¹¹⁶ But as chapter 7 will show, the report did little to defuse the conscription debate in 1942.

Canada's first ground battle of the war was a disaster and the result of underestimating Japan's intentions and capabilities. The country had wilfully sent an inadequately trained force overseas to an outpost that it had hoped would never have to meet an enemy attack. While it is difficult to imagine even well-trained Canadian troops being able to withstand the overwhelming Japanese superiority in numbers and air support during the Battle of Hong Kong, the units of "C" Force might have been able to minimize the casualties they suffered had they been properly trained in tactics.

The Hong Kong catastrophe did not wound Crerar's career. Ever ambitious, he hoped that Canada would raise an entire field army overseas. If McNaughton would command such an army, perhaps Crerar could lead one of its corps. But McNaughton did not support raising an army headquarters at first; thus, the idea was left out of the approved army programme for 1942. Crerar, though, was transferred overseas. On 23 December 1941, he was appointed GOC 2nd Canadian Division, replacing Major-General Victor Odlum, while Crerar in turn was replaced as CGS by Lieutenant-General Ken Stuart. This would have been the first time Crerar had ever commanded an entire division. However, he never actually took command of 2nd Canadian Division for McNaughton had gone on medical leave in November. Crerar therefore took temporary command of the Canadian Corps on the same day that he was made GOC 2nd Canadian

116. Duff, *Report on the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong*, 3–8. The aftermath of the Hong Kong disaster in Canada is explored in further depth in Vincent, *No Reason Why*, 215–227.

Division.¹¹⁷ Over his 17-month term as CGS, Crerar had successfully set Canada on a path that produced its largest field force ever, First Canadian Army. His reshaping of the training system in Canada was far more realistic than anything the King government envisioned. However, as will be seen in chapter 7, there remained unresolved coordination problems between NDHQ and CMHQ that would not be fixed until the war's last months.

Canada had made important strides since the fall of France. Abandoning King's forlorn hope for a "limited liability" war against Germany, Canada had begun to shift its economy to one of unlimited war. The military forces swelled with thousands of young men — volunteers and NRMA men alike — all of whom required training. Amid criticism from the press, which greatly distracted him from his work, Crerar did much during his tenure as CGS to reform military training in Canada into a more organized, sensible system in order to suit the needs of the Canadian Army (Overseas). His only major blunder was underestimating the threat that Japan posed to British possessions in the Pacific and committing two undertrained infantry battalions to defend Hong Kong.

Canadian forces in the United Kingdom were still not ready for active operations by the end of 1941. Though British and Canadian commanders judged Exercise BUMPER a success for the Canadians, this did not mean that the Canadians were prepared for combat. Canadian formations would have to consistently succeed in exercises before they could be considered ready. Even then, the policy of keeping all Canadian divisions together made it difficult for any one of them to be deployed to a combat zone.

117. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 96; Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 175–180.

Additionally, using the same doctrine and training methods from the prewar years to beat an identically trained “enemy” in a simulated exercise was not the same as meeting a real enemy in battle. Though exercises had gotten bigger since the Canadians’ arrival and the threat of a German invasion of the British Isles was subsiding, the Canadians had not seen much innovation in training or tactics. What was lacking in training was an emphasis on aggression and initiative among junior leaders, and formation headquarters could not explain how battalions were supposed to address this. More than two years into the war, the Canadian Army’s only experience in battle involved two battalions that were promptly destroyed. The only action the Canadians infantry in the United Kingdom had yet seen was engaging enemy aircraft, while their generals and staffs were still largely untested except for a handful of exercises.

The year 1941 had seen major upsets for the Allies, but there were also signs of hope. Germany had made impressive gains against the Soviet Union throughout the summer, but the Russian winter and the Red Army’s steadfastness at Moscow had blunted the German invasion by December. While the Battle of Hong Kong was a terrible blow to Canada, it was not the most decisive part of the grand Japanese offensive in December 1941. The attack on Pearl Harbor and Germany’s subsequent declaration of war on the United States brought Canada’s southern neighbour firmly into the war on the Allied side. As far as training was concerned, Canadians began to experiment with a new type of training near the end of the year that would radically alter the infantry’s mindset toward combat: battle drill.

CHAPTER 4

TURNING POINTS

Exercise BUMPER was the last major exercise in 1941. During the autumn, with no large-scale exercises slated until the spring, the Canadians reverted back to unit training in Sussex. Brigadier Guy Simonds, the Canadian Corps BGS, issued a training instruction on 21 November outlining the training plan until the end of March. To improve battle procedure and fieldcraft, units were ordered to devote at least three days per week to tactical training. Senior officers, too, would undergo continuous training with TEWTs and signals exercises. There would be no brigade-level exercises until March.¹ The idea was to hone individual, subunit, and unit skills to be ready for more large-scale exercises in the warmer spring and summer months of 1942.

Previous chapters have demonstrated the difficulties the Canadian infantry faced training during the first two years of the war. This chapter will show that the seven months from late October 1941 to the end of May 1942 proved to be a time of transition during which weaknesses in training began to be seriously addressed. Canadian infantry units became acquainted with “battle drill,” a new form of tactical training with which British units had been experimenting. Far from the uninspired tactical training during the previous two years, battle drill tested men’s resolve, forced them to think like warriors, and gave them a real sense of accomplishment, making its introduction a major development in the Canadian infantry’s training. Another development in this period was the transfer of the Canadian Corps to South Eastern Command under the skilled British

1. WD, Cdn Corps, Nov 1941, app. 35, Brig G. G. Simonds (BGS, Cdn Corps), Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 5, 21 Nov 1941.

field commander Bernard Montgomery at the end of 1941. Montgomery, noticing serious problems in Canadian leadership at all levels, immediately took measures to correct them, including the replacement of poor senior officers and devoting more time to training over guard duty. Indeed, deficiencies in Canada's senior commanders were further revealed in large-scale exercises in the spring of 1942.

Battle Drill

In the autumn of 1941, the Calgary Highlanders became the first Canadian unit to be exposed to "battle drill." This new type of training was a major departure from the tactical training to which the Canadian infantry had grown accustomed. What made battle drill so different was that it aimed to promote initiative and problem-solving skills. After over two years without seeing action, this kind of training that held men's interest and boosted their sagging morale. Indeed, it was the single most significant development in infantry training in the United Kingdom throughout the war. By December, the battle drill sensation began spreading throughout the Canadian Corps.

Fundamentally, battle drill was a procedure for training a small unit to function as a team under fire by introducing it to a variety of tactical situations.² Breaking manoeuvres into components and simulating the conditions of battle was one way that citizen soldiers could be trained to function in combat. Major William Boss of the Canadian Army Historical Section (AHS) defined battle drill as "the reduction of military

2. An earlier version of the description on the following pages of battle drill and its origins previously appeared in R. Daniel Pellerin, "Battle Drill Comes to Canada, 1942–1945," *Canadian Army Journal* 16, no. 1 (2015): 50–57.

tactics to bare essentials which are taught to a platoon as a team drill, with clear explanations regarding the objects to be achieved, the principles involved and the individual task of each member of the team.”³ It formed a part of “battle drill training,” which, according to *The Instructors’ Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill* (October 1942), comprised a more comprehensive system consisting of “fieldcraft, the battle drills proper, battle discipline and battle inoculation,” as well as a high standard of weapons training.⁴

The concept of battle drill had its origins in the interwar period. The famed British military theorist Basil H. Liddell Hart advocated replacing ceremonial drill with simple tactical movements; he even used the term “battle drill” to describe this concept.⁵ But nothing came of Liddell Hart’s idea until after Dunkirk when some progressive commanders looked for innovative ways to train the British Army to remake it into a modern fighting force that could rival Hitler’s armies. Lieutenant-General Harold Alexander presented battle drill as a solution to the infantry’s deficiencies in tactical skill. He distributed his notes on tactical training drills through his I Corps in October 1940. Junior officers and NCOs studied and practiced them in the corps’s schools. By the following spring, a much more enthusiastic movement emerged thanks to the efforts of one of Alexander’s disciples, Major-General J. E. Utterson-Kelso. The latter had commanded a brigade in France, during which time he became acquainted with Alexander and shared Alexander’s interest in minor tactics. Upon taking command of IV

3. W. Boss, “Battle Drill Training,” CMHQ Report No. 123, 31 Aug 1944, par. 2.

4. UK, WO, *The Instructors’ Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill* (repr., [Ottawa: King’s Printer], 1942), 3.

5. See for example Basil H. Liddell Hart, “The Soldiers’ Pillar of Fire by Night: The Need for a Framework of Tactics,” *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 66, no. 464 (1921): 625 and *The Future of Infantry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 58–59.

Corps's 47th (London) Division in April 1941, Utterson-Kelso oversaw the establishment of a divisional battle school at Chelwood Gate, Sussex.⁶

According to a précis on battle drill (as informal manuals had to be used prior the publication of *The Instructors' Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill*), the purpose of battle drill was "to inculcate into a fighting body a system of Battle Discipline and Team Spirit and to give every man a knowledge of certain basic team 'plays' which will guide him in any operation which he may undertake in Battle." Whereas in the First World War, it was possible to introduce men to battle gradually on quieter sectors of the front, circumstances prevailing in the Second World War did not allow for such training. Thus, battle drill sought to "translate the discipline of the [parade] square into the operations which will be carried out in battle."⁷ Aggression was essential, as one report stated bluntly:

Until every soldier looks on himself as a ruthless killer, using cover with the facility of an animal, using his weapons with the practised ease of a professional hunter and covering the ground on the move with the agility of a deer-stalker, infantry battle training will be based on false foundations.⁸

Battle drill thus promised to cultivate discipline, teamwork, and aggression in small units that would translate to success on the battlefield.

Battle drill training lessons usually began with a short lecture. After a demonstration, the students would practice movements on the parade square. Much of the

6. The advent of battle drill in the United Kingdom is further explored in John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 108–112; Timothy Harrison Place, "Lionel Wigram, Battle Drill and the British Army in the Second World War," *War in History* 7, no. 4 (2000): 442–462; Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2000), 49–59; and Yves Tremblay, *Instruire une armée: Les officiers canadiens et la guerre moderne, 1919–1944* (Outremont, QC: Athéna, 2007), 189–192, 209–214.

7. LAC, RG 24, reels C-5236–C-5237, file H.Q.C. 8542-7, pt. 1: Col R. G. Whitelaw (A/DOC, MD 11), circular letter re: "Battle Drill," 18 May 1942, app. A, 1 (OCTU) Wg, CTS, Battle Drill précis, 1.

8. Ibid.: "Report on First Course at G.H.Q. Battle School," par. 4.

available literature on battle drill fails to fully illustrate how tactical manoeuvres could possibly be practiced as if they were ceremonial drill movements. As an example, in “Battle Drill for Attack,” the instructor would have the section commander order his men to fall in and announce their role in the section (“No. 1 Bren,” “2 i/c,” etc.). The instructor then would order the section commander to move his men into an arrowhead formation. The section would then advance and after a short time the instructor would call “Under fire!” at which point the men would halt, order arms and stand at ease, shouting, “Down, crawl, observe, fire!” The section commander then would order his Bren group to “fire” on an imaginary group of enemy soldiers, simulated simply by having the Bren group march into position and stand to attention. The section commander then would order his rifle group to turn to the left (or right) and stand at ease. Once the section commander moved to the head of the group, he would call “Follow me!” and the men of the rifle group would move at a right angle to the direction they were facing to the parade ground’s front. Movements would continue in this manner until the rifle group was in position to charge the “enemy,” allowing the Bren group to move forward to consolidate. This drill involved no less than 36 discrete actions, most of them made up of close-order drill movements.⁹ Once they had mastered the basic movements, soldiers could move to the field where they would first practice on ground that perfectly suited the tactical situation for which the drill was designed. Then, they would practice on ground that was less than ideal, which was an important part of developing their own initiative and problem-solving skills. Once the men had learned a number of drills, instructors tested them by putting them through a large exercise in which men had to work through a

9. Ibid.: Whitelaw, circular letter re: “Battle Drill,” 18 May 1942, app. A, 1 (OCTU) Wg, CTS, Battle Drill précis, “Battle Drill for Attack.”

series of tactical situations. In between each “leg,” men were to change positions within the platoon so that each man fully understood everyone else’s role.¹⁰

An important part of the advanced stages of battle drill training was “battle inoculation,” which was primarily psychological in nature. Its objective was twofold. First, it was designed to accustom men to the sights and sounds of battle by teaching them that loud noises and traumatic sights, of themselves, were harmless. For instance, the use of live ammunition during tactical schemes would help soldiers to gain practical experience in fire and movement, using ammunition efficiently, hitting the enemy, and avoiding hitting one’s own troops.¹¹ The second objective of battle inoculation was to counteract over twenty years of the public’s perception of the horrors of the First World War. A War Office pamphlet from 1942 entitled “Notes for Psychiatrists on Battle Inoculation” argued that the horrors of war had been “exaggerated” to the point that “the individual has a false inner mental picture of it as an overwhelmingly terrifying thing.” For battle inoculation to work, the pamphlet continued, it had to be administered gradually lest the training only confirm men’s “false inner mental picture” as accurate. Rather, by gradually increasing the level of danger during training, men would hopefully come to realize that the sensations of combat were not so terrifying.¹² The psychological literature on the subject also insisted that candidates not be given excessive warning or reassurance before and during war noise training because this would only make them more apprehensive. Telling men not to be afraid would only inform them that there was something they ought to fear in the first place. Likewise, telling men that battle

10. UK, WO, *The Instructors’ Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill*, 54.

11. Ibid., 3, 45; *Infantry Training*, pt. 8, *Fieldcraft, Battle Drill, Section and Platoon Tactics* (repr., Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1944), par. 63.

12. DHH, file 322.009 (D472): UK, WO, “Notes for Psychiatrists on Battle Inoculation,” 1942, 1.

inoculation was a test of their manhood only made them more contemptuous of the training.¹³ Thus, to instil masculine attributes in the men with battle inoculation, instructors had to be careful not to let them believe that their masculinity was at stake.

Battle inoculation was administered in a number of ways. The simplest method involved introducing men to loud noises. During such training, men would be exposed to the detonation of two pounds of explosives with progressively closer proximity. Explosions were to be made part of tactical manoeuvres while troops were in the open or under cover.¹⁴ Other methods accustomed men to the sound of projectiles. Men could gradually be exposed to small arms fire by first having them stand still while a Bren gun fired rounds five feet over their heads. In the next phase, the men were forced to crawl while a Bren gun fired rounds three feet over their heads. Finally, rifles and Thompson submachine guns would be fired over their heads while they were not expecting it. The men would be ordered to continue in their daily tasks and ignore the noise.

There were also some suggested techniques to desensitize men to the sights that they would see on the battlefield. To get men past their fear of encountering enemy armoured vehicles, psychiatrists suggested that they be allowed to examine a tank first-hand so that they would understand that it was simply a human-made vehicle. Later, men would sit in slit trenches while a tank rolled overhead harmlessly. Efforts to get men accustomed to the sight of blood, though, were controversial because they never seemed to work. The psychiatrists recommended against taking men to visit a slaughterhouse as

13. Ibid.; LAC, RG 24, vol. 2165, file H.Q. 54-27-35-218, pt. 1: DMT to DCGS (B), memorandum re: "Training of Personnel against War Noises," 20 Jun 1942, app. 3, "Psychological Notes for the Guidance of Officers Conducting Training in Noise," par. 2.

14. LAC, RG 24, vol. 2165, file H.Q. 54-27-35-218, pt. 1: DMT to DCGS (B), memorandum re: "Training of Personnel against War Noises," 20 Jun 1942, pars. 1–2 and app. 2, "Suggested Practice for O.R.T.U.s."

the amount of blood and flesh that they would see there might only make them more fearful of battle. If the men saw gruesome scenes at the slaughterhouse, they would easily reason that combat would be even worse. Hence, such training would be unhelpful in desensitizing them to the trauma they would see on the battlefield.¹⁵

Historians have paid surprisingly scant attention to battle drill. The few works that have examined it in any detail have presented mixed views. During the war, the AHS did preliminary work on the history of battle drill in the Canadian Army, but very little of it found its way into the official history.¹⁶ The first proper analysis of battle drill did not appear until the publication of John A. English's *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign* (1991). English found that battle drill left much to be desired and considered it to have been a "pedagogical dead end" as Canadians latched onto it simply because it was a change from their usual training. According to English, it may have detracted from more worthwhile training efforts.¹⁷

The problem with English's criticism of battle drill is that it did not appreciate how much of an improvement battle drill brought to the fighting capabilities of the British and Canadian Armies. In recent years, two historians have re-examined battle drill and have offered a more positive opinion of it. In *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944* (2000), Timothy Harrison Place contended that it was not battle drill but the longstanding British Army doctrine that was to blame for the infantry's caution on the battlefield.¹⁸ That the British Army's training system during the interwar years stressed

15. DHH, file 322.009 (D472): UK, WO, "Notes for Psychiatrists on Battle Inoculation," 1942, 2–3, 5.

16. Boss, CMHQ Report No. 123; cf. C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 1, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 240–241.

17. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 107–108.

18. Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944*, 79.

obedience and discouraged initiative is well-established.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Place maintained that since large set-piece attacks with artillery barrages were never rehearsed in conjunction with battle drill, as no one believed that this was practicable, battle drill failed to break free of the overreliance on artillery and artillery-based tactical planning. It “underestimated its own potential.”²⁰ Most recently, in *Instruire une armée* (2007), Yves Tremblay argued that battle drill was just what the Canadian infantry needed: “*Ce qui est indéniable . . . c’est qu’un entraînement plus réaliste accroissait la confiance ; les soldats n’étaient pas des idiots et ils comprenaient bien que les défilés et les marches ne serviraient pas à grand chose une fois sur le champ de bataille.*”²¹

The one element of battle drill training that has drawn particular criticism from historians is battle inoculation. As English’s research has shown, exposing men to realistic sights and sounds often served only to confirm citizen soldiers’ worst fears of battle. Also, there was some doubt that firing at men with the intention to miss did anything to prepare them for combat. While battle inoculation was designed to go beyond preparing men for the sounds of battle by developing their skills in identifying and locating enemy weapons, English noted that this was not always achieved in practice.²² However, these should not be regarded as criticisms of battle drill or battle inoculation themselves, but rather as assessments of the degree to which they were taught effectively. Training men to identify and pinpoint enemy weapons correctly was vulnerable to logistical problems since it depended on a ready supply of captured enemy weapons and

19. David French, *Raising Churchill’s Army: The British Army and the War against Germany 1919–1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 55–61, 283–284.

20. Place, *Military Training in the British Army*, 77–78.

21. Tremblay, *Instruire une armée*, 202.

22. UK, WO, *Current Reports from Overseas* No. 71 (Jan 1945), par. 2; English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 114–115.

ammunition. More importantly, none of battle drill's doctrinal literature precluded training men to discern the type or location of an enemy weapon, nor employing battle drill in large exercises with realistic artillery simulation. Battle drill may not have been perfect, but there did not seem to be any better alternatives.

Battle drill reached the Canadians when 2nd Canadian Division worked closely with 47th (London) Division in the autumn of 1941. At the end of October, the Calgary Highlanders sent three officers to attend a demonstration at Chelwood Gate and they returned as enthusiastic battle drill supporters. As their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel J. Fred Scott, was impressed with the new training, the officers established battle drill school for the regiment.²³

Other units were introduced to battle drill when officers took courses at British schools. Three officers from the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, for instance, upon returning from courses at British battle drill schools or assault courses in Scotland in early December, immediately established a regimental battle drill school. The Seaforths' first battle drill course, which began on 15 December, was designed to train representatives from each company who would then spread battle drill throughout the battalion. The Seaforths boasted that their school was "guaranteed to make a 'man out of a mouse' in two weeks — or kill him."²⁴

But the greatest part of the credit for spreading battle drill throughout the Canadian Corps belonged to the Calgary Highlanders, and Scott in particular. Scott worked diligently to export battle drill to senior headquarters and other units. The Calgary Highlanders held a battle drill demonstration on 30 December for battalion and

23. WD, Calg Highrs, 22 Oct 1941.

24. WD, Seaforth of C, 15 Dec 1941; Reginald H. Roy, *The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, 1919–1965* (Vancouver: Evergreen, 1969), 121–122.

company commanders from 2nd Canadian Division's infantry units. The demonstration was a hit: orders poured in for copies of "Battle Drill and its Evolution," the battle drill "bible" inherited from 47th (London) Division.²⁵ By January 1942 most Canadian units were conducting their own battle drill training.

The popularity of battle drill among infantry battalions did not mean that it enjoyed support throughout the British Army. Battle drill was controversial within the British high command. The debate was focused on the issue of what effect the new training method would have on soldiers' initiative. At first, the War Office was generally against the establishment of 47th (London) Division's School of Battle Drill and had even strongly discouraged tactical drills since 1939. That battle drill advocated standardized solutions to tactical problems suggested that it was dangerous to initiative. As battle was inherently unpredictable and chaotic, critics were concerned that if men spent their time rehearsing tactical drills, they would not know how to respond to real tactical situations if they differed from the scenarios presented in battle drill training. This criticism was ironic: the British high command had spent the interwar years ensuring that doctrine emphasized obedience above all else. The damage to infantrymen's initiative had already been done.²⁶ Supporters of battle drill argued that it was designed to help officers to develop initiative and tactical skill. Battle drill taught infantrymen to solve their own tactical problems rather than automatically relying on artillery to resolve every situation. Men who already had initiative would use it regardless of what they had been taught. As for the critique about standardized tactics, it was better that the troops learned standardized tactics than no tactics at all. Eventually, official opposition subsided. After

25. WD, Calg Highrs, 29–30 Dec 1941.

26. French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, 55–61, 283–284; Place, *Military Training in the British Army*, 79

Lieutenant-General Paget, as commander-in-chief, Home Forces, visited Chelwood Gate in December, he ordered all divisions to establish similar schools. By early 1942, the GHQ Battle School was established at Barnard Castle in Durham to train battle drill instructors.²⁷

CMHQ established a battle wing at the Canadian Training School to train instructors for unit and divisional battle schools. The school's No. 5 (Battle) Wing opened on 1 May 1942 at Rowlands Castle in Hampshire. Brigadier Howard Penhale (BGS, CMHQ), who visited the camp in June, was impressed with the keenness of the instructors and students after he witnessed an exercise complete with Bren gun fire, grenades, pyrotechnics, and smoke. In July, the battle wing was reorganized into three sub-wings: rifle, carrier, and mortar.²⁸

Thus, what had started as a training fad in October 1941 had swept through the Canadian Army (Overseas) and became part of its official training programme within six months. Battle drill also marked a shift in the perception of the infantry's status. Whereas the high command had long treated the infantry as a largely unskilled arm, battle drill gave rise to the need for highly qualified instructors in infantry tactics. Infantry training could no longer entirely be left up to regimental officers. Simply having rank was not enough; any officer or NCO who trained men in tactics would have to be an expert in the subject and would thus require specialized training himself. The rigorous nature of battle drill prompted the creation of schools that specifically addressed infantry tactics. In short,

27. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 110–112; Place, *Military Training in the British Army*, 53–55.

28. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9764, file 2/Battle Sch/1: Brig M. H. S. Penhale (BGS, CMHQ) to DAG, 10 Apr 1942; Penhale to MGen P. J. Montague (SO, CMHQ), 13 Jun 1942, par. 3; Brig H. A. Young (BGS, CMHQ) to Comdt, CTS re: "Re-organization – No. 5 (Battle Drill) Wing, C.T.S.," 14 Jul 1942; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 246.

battle drill helped to discredit the myth that the infantry was a lowly combat arm consisting of expendable men. For the infantry to succeed in battle, it had to be treated as a highly skilled arm.

How did infantrymen feel about battle drill? Firstly, they were impressed with the severity of the new training. Very few had ever experienced such physical exertion. As one NCO from the Calgary Highlanders wrote home:

Every man now must be able to use every weapon . . . and be in the best of shape because now it is all speed and more speed . . . you would not know this Battalion now, they have really toughened us up, the training has been so severe that over 25% have returned to Canada with weak hearts, very few of our older officers stuck it, now they want nothing but young men.²⁹

Men were indeed pushed to their limits with battle drill, and some proved unfit for front-line service, especially among older men. As one member of “A” Company, Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada wrote home, “in all my football career I never had to train so hard and to make me at my age do more than that is impossible and we just cant [*sic*] do it and that includes many more besides me.” The rifleman had collapsed during training and three doctors diagnosed a heart murmur, making him unsuitable for combat duty.³⁰

Despite its rigour, battle drill improved the sagging morale among Canadian troops rather than diminishing it further. Battle drill was a welcome change for those who had grown weary of their usual training. As Strome Galloway, a captain in the RCR in 1942, wrote years later:

Training had become boring. For two years, in the case of some of us, barrack square routine and large scale manoeuvres, which nobody below the Commander Home Forces seemed to really understand, had started to turn us into a fed-up, browned-off, disillusioned band of volunteer

29. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17920, vol. 12318, file 4/Censor/4/4: OC Field Censors (Home), Canadian Army (Overseas), “Conditions in Units – Canadian Corps,” n.d. [ca. autumn 1941], 3.

30. Ibid.: OC Field Censors (Home), Canadian Army (Overseas), “Notes on Mail Examined during Period 5th–19th January, 1942,” 27 Jan 1942, par. 1 (vii) (a).

warriors. We were getting to the point where we couldn't have fought our way out of a paper bag. . . . It [battle drill] was the best thing that could have happened. For most of us, that is. The strong excelled and it did their egos good. The weak grew strong. Or, if this did not happen, they were weeded out.³¹

The men found battle drill stimulating and interesting. It eliminated boredom and it seemed to indicate that they might be thrown into action in the near future. On 31 December, Scott gushed in the unit war diary about how battle drill was transforming his battalion. Before battle drill, he wrote, men

had nothing in the way of training that interested them outside of parade hours. Now they talk, eat and sleep Battle Drill. Their morale is higher than at any time in the past two and one-half years. A man is proud to say "I have taken Battle Drill" because without a doubt it is a physical accomplishment, particularly to the private. To the junior leader who has added Battle Drill to his training, it is both a physical and mental achievement. . . . Come right ahead, 1942! — The Calgary Highlanders are ready for anything you can hand out.³²

Both men's assessments of battle drill's ability to boost personal morale were accurate. Field censorship reports from the winter and spring of 1942 show that men wrote about battle drill — or as they called it, the "new commando training" — excitedly to their families. One such report from 27 January 1942, reviewing mail from a two-week period that month, stated outright that the men were "in fairly high spirits and mostly contented. Complaints are fewer and in view of the new form of arduous training which they are now undergoing, and apparently enjoying, there is now more anticipation of action soon."³³ Letters that mentioned training typically said that battle drill was a

31. Strome Galloway, *The General Who Never Was* (Belleville, ON: Mika, 1981), 72–73.

32. WD, Calg Highrs, 31 Dec 1941.

33. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17920, vol. 12318, file 4/Censor/4/4: OC Field Censors (Home), Canadian Army (Overseas), "Notes on Mail Examined during Period 5th–19th January, 1942," 27 Jan 1942, par. 1 (i).

welcome change from the training before it. As one PPCLI officer commented, “We are definitely getting the right kind of training at last and are working hard.”³⁴

Even as the months went on, battle drill kept men’s spirits high. A censor’s report of 11,757 letters from the Canadian Corps sent during the last two weeks of February 1942 stated that roughly 2.7 percent of letters mentioned training and 81.5 percent of these had a favourable view towards it.³⁵ The enthusiasm for training remained high over an extended period: of 13,186 examined letters between 19 May and 2 June, 3.9 percent mentioned training, 94.9 percent favourably. By contrast, 9.65 percent wrote of their mood, with three-quarters of these letters expressing contentment and the remainder mentioning boredom.³⁶ A morale report from 9th Brigade noted accurately in February, “Interest in training has increased tremendously since the introduction of ‘Battle Drill’ and ‘Field Firing.’”³⁷

Battle drill thus exposed Canadian soldiers to new ways of responding to tactical situations and made training more demanding than anything that they had yet experienced. Far from making men’s lives miserable, battle drill training contributed to a marked improvement in morale throughout the Canadian Corps. But it would take more than new tactical training methods to prepare the Canadians for battle. They also required better direction from the top.

34. Ibid.: OC Field Censors (Home), Canadian Army (Overseas), “Conditions in Units – Canadian Corps,” 9 Feb 1942, 4.

35. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17921, vol. 12319, file 4/Censor/4/5: OC Field Censors (Home), Canadian Army (Overseas), “Notes on Mail Examined during Period 16th February to 1st March 1942,” 4 Mar 1942, pt. 1.

36. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17921, vol. 12319, file 4/Censor/4/6: OC Field Censors (Home), Canadian Army (Overseas), “Notes on Mail Examined during Period 19th May–2nd June, 1942,” 4 Jun 1942, pt. 1.

37. WD, HQ, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Aug 1942, app. 14, Brig E. W. Haldenby (Comd, 9 Cdn Inf Bde) to GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div re: “Morale of Troops,” 2 Feb 1942, par. 3 (a).

The Montgomery Touch

The winter of 1941–1942 was a period of transition for the Canadians in the United Kingdom not simply because of battle drill. Chapter 3 discussed the appointment of Harry Crerar to the temporary command of the corps at the close of 1941, but the arrival of a British senior commander at the same time had an even more significant effect on the Canadian Corps's training. Lieutenant-General Bernard L. Montgomery took over South Eastern Command in November 1941, about the same time that the Canadian Corps was transferred to Sussex and found itself under his authority. Montgomery found serious problems with Canadian leadership at the division, brigade, and unit levels. Crerar became Montgomery's protégé and, under his guidance, instituted more demanding training and higher standards for Canadian officers at all levels of command.

A veteran of the First World War, Montgomery had risen through the ranks during the interwar period to command the British 3rd Division in 1939. While deployed with the British Expeditionary Force in France, he impressed his superior, Lieutenant-General Alan Brooke, the GOC II Corps. Even without much experience commanding a division, as he had only been given command of 3rd Division in July 1939, Montgomery quickly set to work training the "Iron Division" over the winter of 1939–1940. That Montgomery was considered so highly skilled at training formations for battle was a serious indictment of the British high command's lack of professionalism during the interwar and early war years for none of his core training principles were particularly revolutionary. In fact, they were surprisingly simple. Ever since his days as a company

commander in the mid-1920s, Montgomery believed that every man had to fully understand his job and that officers especially had to understand their superior's vision if they were to perform well in the field. He had no patience for inept officers, valued youthful and energetic battalion and company commanders, and demanded professionalism at all levels. If an exercise was to be of any use, it had to be rigorous, well-organized, and realistic. This logical approach to training was what the British Army sorely needed.

Montgomery's reputation as a field commander was forged in France. On the night of 27/28 May 1940, while the BEF began evacuating from the continent, Brooke, noticing a major gap in the front line on his left flank in Belgium and ordered Montgomery to move his division, on the right flank, to prevent the Germans from denying the bulk of the BEF access to Dunkirk. Montgomery completed the movement in a matter of hours, an astounding feat considering it involved disengaging from contact with the enemy and moving across the lines of communication of three other divisions in the dark. But it was only possible because he had practiced his division in such moves in exercises over the winter and spring. After Dunkirk, Montgomery was promoted and given command of V Corps in July 1940 and XII Corps in April 1941 where he solidified his reputation as a talented and energetic military trainer.³⁸ In November 1941, he was charged with South Eastern Command, a territorial formation equivalent to a field army.

38. A thorough account of Montgomery's time as a division and corps commander appears in Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: The Making of a General, 1887–1942* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), pt. 4, chaps. 1–12. For his experience as a company commander, see pt. 3, chap. 3. Montgomery's own account in his memoirs of the interwar period and the Second World War prior to the Battle of El Alamein is unfortunately very brief; see Bernard Law Montgomery, 1st Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery* (London: Collins, 1958), chaps. 3–5.

Montgomery sought to foster confidence and an enthusiasm for battle among all ranks under his command. He had little tolerance for lethargic training and held that it was absolutely essential that every man know his job and what was expected of him. The sooner that they could be trained in elementary subjects, the better. As he told Harry Crerar — by December, a lieutenant-general and in temporary command of the Canadian Corps — he backed a practice that he called “piece work,” in which individuals, or even entire sections, were dismissed from instructional periods as soon as it was clear that they were proficient in the subject being taught. He believed that this provided “a great incentive to all ranks to get on with the business of learning their jobs.”³⁹

Though there is no evidence that such arrangements were ever made in the Canadian Army (Overseas), Crerar was nonetheless keen on bringing his troops up to standard. On 14 January 1942, he issued a letter to all brigade commanders and unit commanding officers in the Canadian Corps impressing upon them the import of rigorous training. That the likelihood of a German invasion was remote did not matter, he explained; at some point, Canadians would definitely engage the Germans in battle. As he wrote:

We must attain an even higher standard of training than the Germans possessed in 1940. Our lack of practical experience must be compensated by perfection in military knowledge and accomplishment. And, in developing this extremely high standard, I set great importance on each commander, down to the junior leaders, training his own subordinates and troops.⁴⁰

As it turned out, Crerar remained in command of the Canadian Corps even after McNaughton recovered from his illness and returned from a lengthy visit to Canada. It

39. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 1, file 958C.009 (D17): LGen H. D. G. Crerar (A/GOC, Cdn Corps) to Simonds, 11 Jan 1942, par. 4.

40. Ibid., vol. 1, file 958C.009 (D18): Crerar, circular letter, 14 Jan 1942, par. 4.

had become clear in December that Crerar's wish for Canada to furnish an entire field army of two corps in 1942 was coming true. In a 25 December meeting, Paget, newly appointed as commander-in-chief, Home Forces, told McNaughton and Crerar that the size of the Canadian Army (Overseas) warranted raising an army headquarters and ancillary troops.⁴¹ The Canadian government approved the idea in January and authorized the creation of First Canadian Army, the headquarters of which came into existence on 6 April, although just as a small nucleus. It would take months for the headquarters to be built up and to be able to have formations placed under its command. McNaughton, who had returned to the United Kingdom on 28 March, would command the new formation and Crerar would remain the GOC Canadian Corps, which was renamed I Canadian Corps once the army headquarters was raised in April. Although Crerar was originally supposed to take command of 2nd Canadian Division when McNaughton returned, this promotion meant that Crerar would command a corps without ever having had commanded a division. Major-General J. Hamilton Roberts would command 2nd Canadian Division instead. Owing to a lack of trained staff officers, the creation of a headquarters for II Canadian Corps did not occur until January 1943.⁴²

That the Canadian Corps and South Eastern Command received new commanders at roughly the same time was significant. The Canadian infantry experienced changes to their training that went beyond battle drill and it became apparent that infantry units

41. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1: LCol N. E. Rodger (PA to LGen A. G. L. McNaughton), memorandum, 27 Dec 1941; LGen A. G. L. McNaughton (GOC Cdn Corps), tel. 2496 to J. L. Ralston (MND), 27 Dec 1941.

42. Ibid.: McNaughton, tel. GS 1135 to Ralston, 31 Mar 1942; McNaughton, tel. GS 1136 to LGen K. Stuart (CGS), 31 Mar 1942; Rodger, "Memorandum of a Meeting Held in Lt.-Gen. McNaughton's Office, Headley Court, at 1720 hours, 3 Apr 42," 4 Apr 1942. A summary of the changes in command and staff officers in the Canadian Army (Overseas) over the winter and spring of 1942 can be found in C. P. Stacey, "Situation of the Canadian Military Forces in the United Kingdom, Spring, 1942, Part I: Part I Recent Changes in Commands and Staffs," CMHQ Report No. 65, 31 Mar 1942.

needed better leadership and instructors. In February and March, Montgomery undertook a series of inspections of the units under Crerar's command. He visited every infantry battalion and brigade headquarters in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Canadian Divisions, but not 5th Canadian Armoured Division, which was still under CMHQ's command, or any of the machine gun battalions. In a series of reports, Montgomery gave his frank assessment of every unit, headquarters, and officer that he encountered.⁴³

Montgomery's inspection tour exposed serious deficiencies in training and leadership throughout the Canadian Corps. It did not reflect well on McNaughton. Historians generally agree that McNaughton's greatest failure as GOC Canadian Corps was his obsessive attention to technology at the expense of training his men. McNaughton had seen the development of new weapon systems as a significant part of his job and he tended to relegate training to his staff and his division commanders.⁴⁴ His personal war diary is filled with reports and minutes of conferences on weapons and equipment, but contains little on training.⁴⁵ To be fair, McNaughton also had responsibilities that other corps commanders in the United Kingdom did not. In addition to his job as GOC Canadian Corps, McNaughton was also the senior Canadian officer in the United Kingdom and thus had an abundance of other administrative responsibilities. Even if he had been inclined to devote more energy to training, he simply did not have enough time. But with the Canadian Corps under Crerar and part of South Eastern Command until the fledgling First Canadian Army headquarters was fully functional,

43. Montgomery's assessment of Canadian units has been previously discussed in English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 128–131 and John Nelson Rickard, *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 123–124.

44. John Swettenham, *McNaughton*, vol. 2, 1939–1943 (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), 167–172; J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 70–71.

45. See records in LAC, MG 30 E 133, vols. 248–250.

McNaughton could dedicate all of his time and energy to administration. Training the corps would be Crerar's responsibility.⁴⁶

Among the problems that Montgomery found during his inspection tour was that a number of battalion commanders had little idea of how to train their men and that some brigade and division commanders paid scant attention to the training progress of units under their command. In his first report, for instance, Montgomery offered a scathing review of Lieutenant-Colonel William Hendrie, the commanding officer of the 48th Highlanders of Canada:

This is the worst and most ignorant C.O. I have met in my service in the Army. He is completely ignorant of how to train a battalion. He does not train his officers. He does not train his N.C.Os. His individual training is badly organized and men are bored with it; he admitted that this was so. His collective training is unorganized. He has no method, no system, and leaves everything to his Company Commanders.⁴⁷

This is not to suggest that Montgomery simply criticized everyone. In fact, he gave credit where it was due and, interestingly, was able to separate an officer's martial quality from his value as a person. Most of those he deemed lacking were nevertheless "nice people" in Montgomery's view. He gave glowing reviews of two battalion commanders, Lieutenant-Colonel Sherwood Lett of the South Saskatchewan Regiment and Lieutenant-Colonel Eric Snow of the RCR, both of whom finished the war as brigadiers. Overall, the leadership of much of the Canadian Corps needed to be replaced. Of the eight brigade commanders he observed (Brigadier Rod Keller of 1st Brigade was absent), Montgomery gave six favourable reviews and two unfavourable reviews (Brigadiers Arthur E. Potts of 2nd Brigade and Charles B. Topp of 4th Brigade). Of 26

46. Rickard, *The Politics of Command*, 116–119.

47. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182): LGen B. L. Montgomery (GOC-in-C SECO), "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps," 3 Feb 1942, 2.

battalion commanders (with one on sick leave), Montgomery considered 13 to be good officers, eight others to be poor, and another five showed promise as long as they received strong guidance from their brigade commanders.⁴⁸

Montgomery believed that the Canadian Corps had many great company commanders and subalterns but that the training standard in most units needed improvement. The problem in these units, according to Montgomery, was that despite the quality of the officers, there was too much emphasis on training men how to fight and too little attention on teaching officers how to train their men. Complicating matters was that most battalion staffs were overwhelmed with excessive paperwork. For instance, Montgomery criticized the administrative requirement that units prepare their weekly training syllabi nearly a week in advance just to ensure that a copy would reach corps headquarters on time. This practice was pointless for units inevitably fell behind schedule, leaving corps headquarters with an inaccurate picture of the training that was actually taking place.⁴⁹ Worse were the infrequency and poor quality of exercises. None of the units he visited in February had conducted a battalion exercise since November, something that Montgomery found unacceptable. He recommended battalions conduct an exercise at least once a month. He also noted that company commanders had a terrible habit of designing a company exercise and then having their second-in-command actually lead the company during it. This meant that most company commanders had very little experience leading their men in the field.⁵⁰ While units did do battle drill training, this

48. Figures compiled from Montgomery's seven reports on the brigades and infantry battalions of the Canadian Corps in *ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*: Montgomery, "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps," 3 Feb 1942, 3–4.

50. *Ibid.*: Montgomery, "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps No. 2," 24 Feb 1942, 2.

was often at the expense of company exercises, implying that company commanders were confusing battle drill, the practicing of a procedure, with formal exercises.⁵¹

Another major issue facing the Canadian Corps's training was the burden of defending the Sussex coast. On 28 February, Montgomery inspected 2nd Brigade. Though disappointed with the brigade commander, Potts, he was most impressed with the battalions. "This is an interesting Brigade. The Seaforths have the best officers. P.P.C.L.I. have the best N.C.Os. Edmontons have the best men. A really high class Brigadier would make this Brigade the best in all the armies of the Empire." More serious was that the brigade's training was badly inhibited by its coastal defence duties:

The division of time as between work, training, etc., in the Brigade is as follows in a 7 days week:

4 days work on defences.

1½ days training.

½ day recreation.

1 day off duty.

This is having very serious consequences and is ruining the training . . . Good and well trained men are far more important in battle than good defences. The balance between work and training does not seem to be properly held.⁵²

In a subsequent report, Montgomery said the same thing about 3rd Brigade.⁵³ His estimation of the time spent on training and working on defences was inaccurate. For example, in a typical week in February, companies in the Royal 22^e Régiment allotted about 2.5 days to field works rather than four and 2.5 days to training periods and range practice rather than 1.5 days, not including nighttime training periods.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, garrison duty was a serious drain on training time. The Canadian Corps was responsible

51. Ibid.: Montgomery, "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps No. 5," 1 Mar 1942, 2.

52. Ibid.

53. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182): Montgomery, "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps No. 6," 3 Mar 1942, 3.

54. WD, R 22e R, Feb 1942, app. B, Syllabus.

for maintaining some 15 miles of defensive positions. While Crerar wanted his corps to build training camps for the spring in a short amount of time, building supplies arrived infrequently and unexpectedly, so stoppages in training were the norm.⁵⁵

Crerar, who took a much keener interest in the training of the Canadian Corps than McNaughton, was receptive to Montgomery's input. After all, since Crerar had no experience directly overseeing the training of a field formation, he could use any guidance that he could get. He approached his new assignment cautiously and sought the input of both Montgomery and Simonds in crafting training policy at first.⁵⁶ In January, Simonds extended the corps's training schedule by a month, so that battalion training would occur in March, brigade training in April, and division training in May.⁵⁷ After what he had seen during his inspection tour, Montgomery backed this policy.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, Crerar was concerned about his men's morale. Though they were enthusiastic about battle drill, the Canadians in the United Kingdom were still dismayed that they had yet to see any action against the enemy. As quoted in a censorship report, someone from the Canadian Training School wrote home in late January that "This damn waiting gets monotonous. If we invaded the French shores, the 'mad Canadians' (as the English call us) would feel a lot better, but this sitting down and waiting in our own back-yard [*sic*] gets even soldiers browned off."⁵⁹ Crerar noticed that Canadian troops had displayed a lack of proper discipline and deportment after training hours and often

55. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182): Crerar to Montgomery, 25 Feb 1942.

56. Paul Douglas Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H. D. G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 186–189.

57. WD, GS, Cdn Corps, Jan 1942, app. 39, Simonds, circular letter re: "Extension of Training Period," 23 Jan 1942.

58. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182): Montgomery, "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps No. 4," 28 Feb 1942, 2.

59. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17921, vol. 12318, file 4/Censor/4/4: OC Field Censors (Home), Canadian Army (Overseas), "Notes on Mail Examined during Period 19th January to 1st February 1942," 5 Feb 1942, par. 1 (i) (a).

exhibited rowdy behaviour when on leave, definite signs of deteriorating morale. He issued a letter to every formation and unit headquarters in the corps explaining that the lack of combat was no excuse for misconduct and that it was their responsibility to improve the discipline of their men. Officers who could not do so were unfit for command.⁶⁰

Throughout the winter of 1942, under Crerar's leadership, the bulk of the Canadian Army (Overseas) underwent the most extensive progressive training programme the men had yet experienced. "Before the next three months have elapsed, it [the Canadian Corps] must be capable of meeting every requirement of battle," Crerar wrote in a 16 March letter to the officers under his command. "The training of the individual, the unit, and the formation is, necessarily, an unceasing process. Nor does individual training come to an end when sub-unit training commences, or when unit and formation exercises are initiated."⁶¹ Commanding officers were fully responsible for training the men in their units. Crerar's programme for the spring was designed to prepare men for a wide variety of scenarios, including exercises that practiced fighting in the daytime and nighttime, that lasted in excess of 24 hours, and that tested administrative arrangements. During company-level training, he recommended an exercise every 10 days; during unit training, he recommended an exercise every 14 days.⁶² Crerar also emphasized the importance of maintaining men's stamina. On 26 March, he ordered that exercises be conducted with as little motor transport as possible since vehicles would not always be available to transport troops during active operations. The infantryman would have to be able to travel long distances on foot and fight with the weapons and equipment

60. WD, GS, Cdn Corps, Feb 1942, app. 10, app. 10, Crerar, circular letter, 5 Feb 1942, pars. 4, 6.

61. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Mar 1942, app. 26, Crerar, circular letter, 16 Mar 1942, pars. 1–2.

62. Ibid., pars. 6–7.

he could carry. Also, Crerar ordered that no exercise was to be cancelled on account of bad weather or muddy terrain as there would be no such respite once Canadians were committed to battle on the continent.⁶³

The change in command at the army and corps levels had clearly shaken infantry training in the Canadian Corps in the early winter of 1942. Montgomery, a renowned expert in training field formations, and Crerar, an inexperienced Canadian field commander who was nevertheless more attentive to training matters than his predecessor, aimed to replace ineffective officers, reduce burdensome paperwork, and improve professionalism throughout the Canadian Corps. Springtime would show the results of these changes.

Spring Exercises, 1942

Montgomery was eager to test the formations under his command in field exercises, which had to wait until the warmer springtime weather to offer the best conditions. He demanded that all ranks be physically fit, enthusiastic for battle, and professional in their duties. Infrequent large exercises were going to be of little help. Thus, from March to May 1942, the Canadians underwent a series of exercises, progressing from the brigade to the corps level, ending with Exercise TIGER at the end of May. These exercises demonstrated that the introduction of battle drill and the arrival of Montgomery had already begun to yield positive benefits for the Canadians.

63. WD, HQ, 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Mar 1942, app. 23, Crerar, circular letter re: "Training Policy, Spring-Summer, 1942," 26 Mar 1942, pars. 4, 7.

Simonds was receptive to Montgomery's influence. As I Canadian Corps's BGS, his Training Instruction No. 6, issued at the end of February, reflected the sense of rigour and professionalism that Montgomery wanted in South Eastern Command. During unit training, which began on 16 March, Simonds ordered each infantry brigade to complete an exercise in combination with the divisional artillery against a skeleton opposing force. During brigade training, divisions would arrange inter-brigade exercises, either two exercises of one brigade against one brigade, or an exercise of one brigade against two brigades. From 22 to 27 April, there would be a two-sided exercise (BEAVER III) involving 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, and elements of 3rd Canadian Division and I Canadian Corps ancillary troops. From 10 to 15 May, there would be another two-sided exercise (BEAVER IV) involving 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, and elements of 1st Canadian Division and Canadian Corps ancillary troops. Finally, from 25 to 30 May, there would be a two-sided exercise (TIGER) pitting I Canadian Corps against XII Corps.⁶⁴

Exercises BEAVER III and BEAVER IV were designed to accustom the divisions of I Canadian Corps to mobile operations. BEAVER III would involve 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions. The scenario was that, in March, I Canadian Corps had been withdrawn from Sussex and placed in GHQ Reserve. An invasion force, the "German 88th Division," represented by 1st Canadian Division, had established a bridgehead in the Littlehampton-Worthing area of Sussex. Its instructions were to capture Horsham and to entice a defending reserve division into battle and destroy it. Major-General Roberts's 2nd Canadian Division, representing a division from GHQ Reserve, had the task of launching

64. WD, GS, Cdn Corps, Feb 1942, app. 34, Simonds, Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 6, 25 Feb 1942, pars. 6–8.

a counter-attack against “88th Division” on the morning of 22 April; 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade would be available at noon the next day.⁶⁵ As the invading division was only allowed a limited scale of motor transport, troops would have to march into battle. Because the exercise required 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions to be withdrawn from their real coastal defence duties, 3rd Canadian Division took their place.⁶⁶

BEAVER III was supposed to last from 22 to 27 April, but it proceeded so rapidly that it concluded by the 24th. Major-General Pearkes pushed his “88th Division” forward rapidly on the morning of 22 April, making contact with 2nd Canadian Division south and southeast of Horsham by noon, the most notable part of the exercise for the division had a limited number of transport vehicles at its disposal. To confuse his opponent’s intelligence, Pearkes shuffled the infantry battalions between brigades in the order of battle. Roberts decided to concentrate his division for a counter-attack instead of sending his mobile units forward to forestall the invaders temporarily. The situation became confused over the course of the night as Pearkes ordered a heavy bombardment followed by an infantry attack. By morning, about three-quarters of Horsham was in 1st Canadian Division’s hands. 2nd Canadian Division had also launched an attack on the morning of 23 April, which meant that the two forces became intermingled. In one instance, the Essex Scottish and the 48th Highlanders were enmeshed for several hours because either they did not receive or understand the umpire’s instructions to separate themselves. Though the tank brigade attempted to put in an attack by the evening of the 23rd, the

65. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17902, vol. 12300, file 3/Ex Beaver/3: Simonds, “Cdn Corps Inter-Divisional Exercises BEAVER III, 22–27 Apr 42 and BEAVER IV, 10–15 May 42,” 21 Mar 1942, pars. 1 (a), 3 (a–b), 4–11, 12–17, 20, 23–25; Simonds, “Cdn Corps Inter-Divisional Exercise Beaver III – 22/27 April: Special Idea – 1 Cdn Div (German),” 4 Apr 1942.

66. C. P. Stacey, “Situation of the Canadian Military Forces in the United Kingdom, Spring, 1942, Part II: Training Programme of 1st Canadian Corps; Exercises ‘BEAVER III,’ 22–24 Apr 42, and ‘BEAVER IV,’ 10–13 May 42,” CMHQ Report No. 70, 18 May 1942, pars. 19, 21.

umpires suspended it because they ruled that the attack could not have been delivered before dark. In accordance with the prearranged plan, 1st Canadian Division, receiving word that a reinforcing convoy was on its way, was ordered to withdraw.⁶⁷

The exercise ended officially at noon on the 24th. It seemed to suggest that an infantry formation could advance at great speed even without the benefit of a full complement of transport vehicles if for no other reason that traffic problems could be avoided.⁶⁸ But Montgomery was not impressed with 1st Canadian Division's swift drive to Horsham. In fact, he roundly criticized Pearkes's handling of his division throughout the exercise. Rearranging his order of battle had been a mistake as it put brigade headquarters in command of battalions with which they had no experience working. Sacrificing teamwork between brigades and their battalions was not worth any marginal advantage derived from confusing enemy intelligence. Worse, neither Pearkes nor Roberts had used reconnaissance troops properly or put advance guards of infantry behind them to take offensive action when the enemy held up the reconnaissance troops. In trying to seize Horsham so quickly on the 22nd, Pearkes had allowed a growing threat to develop on his right flank.⁶⁹

BEAVER IV had the same scenario except that the forces involved would be different. This time, 2nd Canadian Division represented the invading German force while 3rd Canadian Division represented the defending reserve force. This was the first time Major-General Basil Price's 3rd Canadian Division would participate in corps-level

67. *Ibid.*, pars. 18, 23–27. For the situation between the Essex Scottish Regiment and the 48th Highlanders of Canada, see WD, HQ, 4 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1942, app. 24, 1 Cdn Corps Ex BEAVER III, Message Log.

68. Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 70, pars. 28–29.

69. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182): Montgomery, "Some Notes on the Broader Aspects of BEAVER III," 23 Apr 1942, pars. 3–5, 9, 15.

exercise. 2nd Canadian Division had landed between Bexhill and Beachy Head and established a deep bridgehead. 3rd Canadian Division would launch a counter-attack on 10 May, with the help of 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade once it arrived the next day.⁷⁰ The exercise was much less rapid than its predecessor, in part because BEAVER III had taken place during a month-long drought whereas it rained before and during BEAVER IV, producing terrible mud. On 10 May, 2nd Canadian Division advanced with orders to strike northwest and secure bridgeheads across the river Ouse between Uckfield and Lewes, seize Haywards Heath, and destroy any Allied force it encountered. The division managed to attain the line of the Ouse in good time. Meanwhile, 3rd Canadian Division was assembled to the northwest of Horsham and advanced against the attackers. Price held off from actually engaging the enemy, possibly because he wanted to wait until 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade came under his command at noon the following day. Corps headquarters, acting as “Control” for the exercise, ordered Price to put in his attack. To avoid situations like the one that befell the Essex Scottish and the 48th Highlanders in BEAVER III, the invading force was expected to withdraw so that the defenders’ counter-attack hit nothing. On the 12th, Control ordered 3rd Canadian Division to launch an attack into the left flank of 2nd Canadian Division’s bridgehead. This attack saw serious traffic problems in 3rd Canadian Division. The British 11th Armoured Division, returning from an exercise of its own, made matters worse when it attempted to pass through Lewes at the same time as 3rd Canadian Division.⁷¹

70. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17902, vol. 12300, file 3/Ex Beaver/3: Simonds, “Cdn Corps Inter-Divisional Exercises BEAVER III, 22–27 Apr 42 and BEAVER IV, 10–15 May 42,” 21 Mar 1942, pars. 29–41, 50–52.

71. Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 70, pars. 30–38.

3rd Canadian Division devised a plan to launch an attack on 13 May. 8th Brigade would cross the river Cuckmere and establish a bridgehead so that the engineers could build a bridge across the river. Then 7th Brigade would attack on the right and 9th Brigade on the left, each supported by a tank regiment in three echelons. The plan was poorly executed as the centre advanced 10 minutes before the right flank and 30 minutes before the left flank. The infantry in the centre even reached the approaches to the final objective before the tanks did, leaving the infantry unsupported. This attack concluded the exercise.⁷²

Both BEAVER III and BEAVER IV exposed glaring deficiencies in the quality of Canadian division, brigade, and battalion commanders. Since I Canadian Corps had reached the stage of brigade- and division-level collective training, problems with senior leadership were becoming more evident than before. As Montgomery noted in his report on BEAVER IV, “the training of commanders such as Brigadiers, C.R.A. [commanders, Royal Artillery], unit commanders, has not made the same progress as that of the lower levels; it has been neglected and has not been tackled properly.”⁷³ He noted that division commanders often hesitated before committing their troops to battle rather than seizing the initiative. Relying on aerial or ground reconnaissance alone would never provide perfect knowledge of the enemy; division commanders had to push his troops forward to gain contact with the enemy.⁷⁴ Montgomery was especially displeased with Price. He had suspected Price was unfit for command in February after inspecting 7th and 8th Brigades,

72. WD, HQ, 6 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1942, app. 23, Crerar (GOC 1 Cdn Corps), “Points Arising out of BEAVER IV Requiring Consideration and Action, Bn Commanders, 1 Canadian Corps,” 18 May 1942, par. 16; Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 70, pars. 39–45.

73. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182): Montgomery, “Notes on BEAVER IV,” 13 May 1942, par. 11.

74. *Ibid.*, par. 1.

given clear evidence that 3rd Canadian Division was behind the others in training. Price had not properly coordinated training for his division, instead delegating that responsibility to his subordinates.⁷⁵ After BEAVER IV, Montgomery was adamant that Price be replaced. In his report to Crerar, Montgomery included an entire appendix outlining Price's ineffectiveness as a field commander, citing his inability to train and lead his troops and referring to him as "a complete amateur."⁷⁶ Even battalion commanders struggled with common-sense thinking as in both exercises they had a bad habit of overburdening infantrymen with extraneous kit and supplies. Montgomery was particularly frustrated with this. To move with speed and aggression, the infantry needed to be as lightly loaded as possible, but during BEAVER III, Canadian soldiers had carried both blankets and overcoats, and some even had carried 48 hours worth of food on their person.⁷⁷ In BEAVER IV, men of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the Queen's Own Rifles, and the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment marched into battle with 60 to 70 pounds of kit.⁷⁸ If Canadian division, brigade, and battalion commanders were so unqualified, how could they be expected to properly train their men?

Exercise TIGER (19–30 May 1942), one of the largest exercises in which the Canadians had yet participated, represented the culmination of I Canadian Corps's training programme of the previous winter and spring. Directed by South Eastern Army (Montgomery had changed the name of South Eastern Command to foster offensive-mindedness among his men) the exercise was to test mobile operations when

75. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 2, file 958C.009 (D182): Montgomery, "Notes on Inf. Bdes of Canadian Corps No. 2," 24 Feb 1942, 3.

76. Ibid.: Montgomery, "Notes on BEAVER IV," 13 May 1942, app. A, "Notes on Commander 3 Div."

77. Ibid.: Montgomery, "Some Notes on the Broader Aspects of BEAVER III," 23 Apr 1942, pars. 3–5, 9, 15–18.

78. Ibid.: Montgomery, "Notes on BEAVER IV," 13 May 1942, par. 2.

commanders had complete freedom of manoeuvre.⁷⁹ The exercise pitted forces in Sussex against those in Kent. In Sussex, Crerar's I Canadian Corps had 1st Canadian, 3rd Canadian, and the British 3rd Divisions (the latter without one brigade) and 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade under command. The bulk of 2nd Canadian Division could not participate because it was preparing for a highly secretive operation (chapter 5); only its 5th Brigade participated in the exercise, replacing the absent brigade in the British 3rd Division. To allow the Canadian formations to participate in TIGER, they had to be replaced in their anti-invasion role on the Sussex coast by members of the Canadian reinforcement units. An ad hoc formation of nine battalions, known as "Wolf Force," was established for this purpose.⁸⁰ Lieutenant-General James Gammell's XII Corps, representing Kent, had 11th Armoured, 43rd (Wessex), and 53rd (Welsh) Divisions under command. In XII Corps's case, the exercise also tested a new organization for divisions: armoured divisions with one armoured brigade, one motorized infantry brigade, and one support group, and an infantry division with two infantry brigades and an armoured brigade. The scenario for the exercise was that Kent and Sussex were countries hostile to each other. A neighbouring country, Surrey, though neutral, was free to threaten intervention at Control's behest. At the exercise's start, it was understood that while both forces were preparing for war, no overt action had yet occurred. Both sides were ordered to attack the other no earlier than 25 May.⁸¹

79. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17903, vol. 12301, file 3/Ex Tiger/2: LGen B. L. Montgomery (GOC-in-C, SE Army), "S.E. Army Exercise 'TIGER': Final Conference – 4 June, 1942: Remarks by Army Commander," par. 1.

80. C. P. Stacey, "South Eastern Command Exercise 'TIGER', 19–30 May 42," CMHQ Report No. 73, 24 Jun 1942, pars. 9, 46–59.

81. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17903, vol. 12301, file 3/Ex Tiger/2: "Exercise 'TIGER' – Final Narrative," pars. 1–4.

Crerar's plan was to advance immediately upon the commencement of hostilities. Once contact was made with the enemy, I Canadian Corps would stage a withdrawal in hopes of taking a toll on the enemy's superior armour. Once the enemy armour was reduced, the corps would launch a counter-attack. Crerar would hold on his left and attack with his right into Kent.⁸² On the 22nd, Crerar issued orders detailing the action to be taken at 0001 hours on the 25th. The Sussex attack would take place in three phases, each line of advance being given a codename: MONTREAL, QUEBEC, and HALIFAX. On the 25th, the attack began, with 1st Canadian Division on the right, 3rd Canadian Division in the centre, and the British 3rd Division on the left.⁸³ At the same time, Gammell launched his own attack, albeit with only his infantry divisions. The Canadians reached their first two objectives by the end of the day. It was around QUEBEC that I Canadian Corps encountered the Kent forces, at which point the Sussex advance was halted. Crerar ordered his forces to withdraw to MONTREAL as planned.⁸⁴

Throughout the 26th, the Canadians had continuous contact with the Kent forces along the MONTREAL line. Crerar was already planning his counter-attack when Control intervened. As Surrey, opposed to the Kent's invasion of Sussex, threatened war, Gammell ordered his forces to withdraw from Sussex territory. The Sussex forces learned of the withdrawal through good reconnaissance work. During the night of 26/27 May, the Sussex forces pursued the retreating enemy and were in contact with them at the frontier line shortly after noon on the 27th. That day relations between Surrey and Kent deteriorated further and Gammell ordered a further withdrawal of his forces to protect his

82. Ibid., par. 6.

83. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, May 1942, app. 38, Simonds, 1 Cdn Corps OO No. 2, 22 May 1942.

84. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17903, vol. 12301, file 3/Ex Tiger/2: "Exercise 'TIGER' – Final Narrative," pars. 11–14, 17–18.

country's vital areas, particularly the Ashford region.⁸⁵ The idea behind all of this moving was to expose all participants to intense physical strain as the distance from QUEBEC to the Ashford area was 35 to 40 miles by road. Indeed, infantry units were forbidden from moving by motor transport and many infantrymen marched over 150 miles.⁸⁶ By the time intelligence of the withdrawal arrived, the Sussex forces were already deep into Kent territory because the original plan stipulated that there was to be an attack into Kent by the 28th. Once it was confirmed that the enemy was concentrating at Ashford, Crerar ordered the advance sped. The 29th saw some intense fighting. 3rd Canadian Division managed to surround Ashford, but could not capture it. For the first time, Gammell put 11th Armoured Division into action and smashed it into the flank of the British 3rd Division. The Sussex air reconnaissance did not pick this up. 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade managed to inflict serious casualties on 29th Armoured Brigade, reducing its tank strength to 70. But it suffered high casualties against 11th Armoured Division's motorized infantry brigade.⁸⁷

While Crerar planned further action into the 30th, Control again upset these plans. As Surrey also had designs on Sussex, Crerar himself would have to withdraw his forces. During the night of 29/30 May, I Canadian Corps made it to the planned withdrawal line, except for the British 3rd Division, which experienced severe traffic problems. On the morning of the 30th, the division was largely destroyed; only the British 9th Brigade made it back to friendly territory. During that day, 3rd Canadian Division also

85. *Ibid.*, pars. 21, 23–26, 31–33

86. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17903, vol. 12301, file 3/Ex Tiger/2: Montgomery, "S.E. Army Exercise 'TIGER': Final Conference – 4 June, 1942: Remarks by Army Commander," par. 3; Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 73, par. 22.

87. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17903, vol. 12301, file 3/Ex Tiger/2: "Exercise 'TIGER' – Final Narrative," pars. 39, 44–47.

experienced hardship as its headquarters thought it was supposed to hold fast at the withdrawal line. As a result, 29th Armoured Brigade made it around the division's left flank, joined with the advancing 53rd Division to destroy all but two of 3rd Canadian Division's battalions. The exercise concluded at 1830 hours on 30 May.⁸⁸

The conference to discuss TIGER was held on 4 June. Much of Montgomery's commentary related to air support, artillery, and the newly proposed divisional organization. The infantry, in Montgomery's view, should carry as few supplies as possible to maximize mobility. TIGER had pushed men's feet to the limit and those who had not waterproofed their boots often saw them crack open during the exercise given the alternating wet and dry weather. Overall, Montgomery was satisfied with the state of training in the corps under his command and the ability of the men to withstand rigorous operations, but he cautioned against complacency.⁸⁹

For their part, the Canadians did well in the exercise. Montgomery was certainly pleased with their performance and warmly congratulated Crerar: "When I say you did well I mean it. . . . I am very satisfied with the Corps; if we can now put the polish on, there will be no other Corps to touch it." He especially complimented Simonds's work as BGS.⁹⁰ However, the Canadians mostly remembered TIGER for the amount of marching it required.

TIGER's purpose was mainly to test the troops' endurance, generalship, and the prototype division organization in XII Corps, though it would take time before the doctrinal lessons from the exercise and from operations overseas could be analyzed by

88. Ibid., pars. 49, 51–64; WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, May 1942, app. 48, Brig G. G. Simonds (BGS, 1 Cdn Corps), 1 Cdn Corps OO No. 7, 29 May 1942; Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 73, pars. 24–31

89. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17903, vol. 12301, file 3/Ex Tiger/2: Montgomery, "S.E. Army Exercise 'TIGER': Final Conference – 4 June, 1942: Remarks by Army Commander," pars. 42–47, 60.

90. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 7, file 958C.009 (D172): Montgomery to Crerar, 30 May 1942.

the high command and disseminated throughout the forces in the United Kingdom. Indeed, the organization of armoured and infantry divisions, as well as how to configure a well-balanced corps, were of particular concern to the British.

The Canadians' performance during the exercises of early 1942 showed a marked improvement over the previous year. They had demonstrated in Exercise TIGER that they could endure days of active operations at a time, that their training was at the same level as their British counterparts, and that they possessed tremendous endurance. The intensive training over the winter and early spring, including battle drill and Exercises BEAVER III and IV, had clearly conditioned the Canadian infantry to operate efficiently for days on end. The deficiencies in Canada's infantry divisions were not with the troops themselves but with their senior leadership.

From late October 1941, when the Calgary Highlanders first experimented with battle drill, to the end of May, when Exercise TIGER concluded, was the most significant seven-month period in the war when it came to the training of Canadian infantry overseas. At the start of the period, training had become frustratingly boring for the men. Owing to his joint responsibilities as GOC Canadian Corps and as the senior Canadian officer in the United Kingdom as well as his disinterest in training, McNaughton effectively had allowed the Canadian Corps to atrophy. The two decisive factors that effected positive change in late 1941 and the first months of 1942 were the advent of battle drill and the influence of Montgomery. Both battle drill and the Montgomery "touch" set the Canadian

Corps, and later First Canadian Army, on a much more rigorous, organized, and aggressive training regimen than ever before.

This did not mean that the Canadians were fully prepared for combat. It is striking that by the spring of 1942 even though some units had been in the United Kingdom for two years or more, the Canadians' main job remained the same: defending the British Isles. In the meantime, British and other Commonwealth ground forces already had seen action in Greece, the Middle East, and North Africa. The burdensome task of manning coastal defence positions in the southern England diverted considerable time away from training. Moreover, the Canadian infantry had virtually no training in seaborne landings and little experience working directly with tanks. As Montgomery had noted, Canadian officers at the brigade level and higher were not as well trained as the men under their command. It would take time, numerous exercises, and the replacement of inadequate officers before Canadian formations could function as fine-tuned machines on the battlefield.

CHAPTER 5

COMBINED OPERATIONS: DIEPPE TO SICILY

Following Exercise TIGER, the Canadians in the United Kingdom anticipated yet another long summer of training. Unlike previous years, training started in the spring of 1942 increasingly emphasized preparing for offensive operations. The major training theme was “combined operations,” the British term for amphibious landings. When a combined operations training programme was announced in March 1942, it signalled the likelihood that active operations would take place in the near future. As it turned out, this was true. 2nd Canadian Division was the first to receive this kind of training in preparation for a raid on the French port town of Dieppe in August 1942, while 1st Canadian Division was selected in April 1943 to participate in an invasion of Sicily planned for July. Each division had an entirely different experience with combined operations. The Dieppe Raid was a disaster, the result of bad operational planning exacerbated by the inexperience of the RN’s landing craft crews. Conversely, 1st Canadian Infantry Division enjoyed a highly successful landing in Sicily because it had a better organized training programme and the benefit of working with more experienced naval crews.

The Canadians also experienced several major changes in the organization of divisions and infantry battalions at this point, all part of a wider British effort to reform doctrine. Command, too, was an issue. Several changes in key positions occurred over the course of the year and Exercise SPARTAN in March 1943 demonstrated McNaughton’s weaknesses as a field commander. Ultimately, training from the spring of 1942 to that of

1943 showed a serious commitment to continuous improvement in doctrine, cooperation between the infantry and other arms, and rigour that was not evident earlier in the war.

The Dieppe Raid

The most significant event for the Canadian Army in 1942 was the infamous Dieppe Raid, a nine-hour attack on the French coast in August, one of the costliest catastrophes in Canadian military history. What most histories of the operation have lacked is a detailed examination of the training that the units involved underwent in advance of the raid. Amphibious operations required specialized training because of their complexity. Preparation for the raid represented the first time Canadian brigades underwent combined operations training. Two brigades from 2nd Canadian Division spent weeks on a difficult programme on the Isle of Wight. Though the infantry responded well overall to the training, the concluding exercises revealed weaknesses in naval forces' abilities to land ground troops at assigned beaches at the correct time.

The Dieppe Raid formed part of a programme to conduct diversionary attacks against German-occupied territories in Western Europe to draw German resources from the Eastern Front and to reassure the Soviet Union that the Western Allies remained committed to the war. The Soviets had borne the brunt of the fighting against Germany since June 1941. Though the Red Army had averted defeat at Moscow the previous winter, the Germans were preparing for their 1942 spring offensive, Operation BLAU, a drive to the rich oilfields of the Caucasus. The Soviets eagerly anticipated the Western

Allies' re-engagement of German forces in Europe. In April 1942, the Western Allies began planning for a large-scale invasion of the continent, a subject covered in greater detail in chapter 6. Though the United States was already engaged with the Japanese in the Pacific, it had agreed with the United Kingdom that Germany had to be defeated first. The Americans wanted to open a "second front" against the Germans as soon as possible (Operation SLEDGEHAMMER), but the British deeply opposed launching such an operation prematurely. An invasion of the continent before they were ready would only damage the Allied cause. In any case, the Americans were in no position to demand a cross-Channel invasion as they had minimal forces in the United Kingdom at the time and there were not nearly enough amphibious vessels available to launch a full-scale invasion. The British, meanwhile, were preoccupied with the struggle against the Germans and Italians in North Africa. Thus, for the summer of 1942, cross-Channel operations would be limited to raids. Canada did not participate in Allied planning at the grand strategic level.

The idea for the operation against Dieppe originated in April with Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, the chief of combined operations. Codenamed Operation RUTTER in the early stages of planning, the raid's purpose was to test both the feasibility of capturing a major port intact and, for the first time, landing tanks on a beach. Dieppe had a suitable harbour and was within range of Allied air cover. The operation required one infantry division from South Eastern Command, armoured and commando elements, and generous air support. Two infantry brigades, with the support of a tank battalion, would stage an attack against Dieppe and its surrounding communities, Pourville to the west and Puys to the east. The attacks on the flanks of the main assault would be supported by British commandos, elite special operations units that were each about half

the size of an infantry battalion. The raid would destroy the enemy's defences at Dieppe, retrieve German documents, eliminate vital targets including a radar station, and capture prisoners. The landing force would evacuate later the same day. British intelligence estimated German defences to be weak. Montgomery approached McNaughton about the possibility of providing the infantry division. At Crerar and Montgomery's nomination, McNaughton selected Major-General Roberts's 2nd Canadian Division for the task.¹

The theory and doctrine behind combined operations deserves some explanation. Because the Western Allies' base of operations in Europe was the United Kingdom, any attempt to engage the Germans on the continent, whether to stage a raid or roll back their conquests, would necessarily involve combined operations. By their very nature, combined operations involved meticulous planning and coordination. Whereas set-piece battles on land required knowledge of the terrain and the enemy's positions, well-organized logistical and command and control systems, and cooperation between the combat arms, combined operations also had to consider tidal and weather conditions, the suitability of beaches for landing, close cooperation with the navy, and the absence of any easy means of withdrawal in the face of overwhelming enemy defences. Combined operations called for several types of specialized landing craft in order to accommodate the many different elements that had to be landed. While the details of an operation could vary substantially, combined operations followed a general pattern. Often under the cover of darkness, troops would travel much of the way to their targeted beach in large Landing

1. For details of the origins and planning of the Dieppe Raid, as well as the selection of a Canadian division for the operation, see C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 1, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 310–330. A study critical of Mountbatten is found in Brian Loring Villa, *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP, 1989). Crerar's role is explored in Paul Douglas Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H. D. G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), chap. 12.

Ships, Infantry (LSIs) and board the landing craft at a short distance from the beach. The first wave involved Landing Craft, Assault (LCAs), which could each land a platoon of about 35 men. The first wave of infantry would be followed by Landing Craft, Tank (LCTs), which would provide armoured support. This landing force would penetrate inland, destroy any enemy opposition, and secure a beachhead to make room for the main body of troops to land without enemy interference. All throughout, naval and air forces would provide fire support.² Regardless of the particulars of a combined operation, all parties had to adhere to a rigid timetable. Delays at any point would badly ruin the plan for the rest of the operation as it was nearly impossible to postpone the landing of follow-on craft once the operation was underway.

Because combined operations required such precision, troops required special training. Combined operations doctrine in 1942 was detailed in a series of training pamphlets that the War Office published that year. Pamphlet No. 37 was devoted to the infantry. For the initial assault wave in particular, specific subunits or even individual men would be allotted to specific landing craft. The concepts of combined operations themselves were not hard to grasp, but the infantry was required to perform many discrete movements that had to be executed expertly. Mastering such skills required extensive practice. Training, then, would be repetitive and exhausting.³ As there were a limited number of combined training centres (CTCs) which could only train a certain number of men at a time, units and formations had to learn the theory of combined operations and practice the basic movements on land. Before men ever set foot on a

2. UK, WO, *Combined Operations*, Pamphlet No. 1, *General* ([London: HMSO], 1942), 7 and app. A.

3. UK, WO, *Combined Operations*, Pamphlet No. 37, *Infantry, 1942* (1942; repr., [Ottawa: King's Printer], 1943), 12.

landing craft, Pamphlet No. 37 recommended that they first be given introductory lectures in naval organization and customs plus what to expect living on a landing ship for days while an armada assembled.

Preliminary practical training could be conducted in a normal training area. This was known as “dryshod” training. Only once a unit had practiced the basic movements and arrangements of a combined operation could it move on to a CTC and conduct “wetshod” training with the actual landing craft at sea. For example, on a simple parade square, companies could practice forming up properly to prepare for boarding LCAs from the deck of an imaginary LSI. Wooden mock-ups of landing craft would help men rehearse boarding and disembarking LCAs as quickly as possible. The same was true for vehicles embarked on Landing Craft, Mechanised. Men could also get practice ascending and descending rope ladders, a task that demanded appreciable upper-body strength since they would be clad in “full battle order” with all of their personal equipment and supplies. There were also exercises that could be done in the field to prepare men for what they were expected to do once they left the LCA and had to storm a beach under fire. Standard tactical principles applied: men were to use cover, not gather in bunches, and junior officers and NCOs were to organize their men to push inland toward their objectives as fast as possible. All of this was to be taught in daylight and at night.⁴

The British high command hoped that men would have a solid understanding of the basic mechanics of a combined operation so that by the time a unit was sent to a CTC, the training there would go smoothly and on schedule. Combined operations training was rigorous and required men to be in peak physical condition. During a course at a CTC, men would get accustomed to life at sea, including seasickness, and get thorough practice

4. Ibid., 15–16.

boarding real landing craft from a real LSI, travelling to a beach, ideally one in the United Kingdom that mimicked the terrain of the actual beach to be attacked in a future operation, and storming it.

The Canadian Army (Overseas) had some experience with combined operations training. In the autumn of 1941, small detachments of Canadian troops attended training at South Eastern Command's Assault Landing Craft School at Havant, Hampshire. At the time, it was intended to train the equivalent of one company per brigade and then eventually train one company per battalion, but this plan never materialized.⁵ In March 1942, Brigadier Simonds issued Canadian Corps Training Instruction No. 7, which outlined the plan for combined operations training in the corps over the spring. While a new combined operations training centre was under development at Newhaven, Sussex, the new training centre's opening was delayed owing to a lack of suitable naval personnel and equipment. As a compromise, detachments of 17 officers and 173 other ranks from each of the three Canadian divisions were to attend courses at combined operations schools outside the corps area in Sussex. These courses would last from six to eight weeks, half of which would be spent on land and the other half at sea. Selected men included those who had undergone preliminary combined operations training the previous autumn, and two weeks would be allotted to train select men as instructors. 2nd Canadian Division would send the first detachment in mid-April, while 1st Canadian Division's detachment would finish its land training by mid-May and 3rd Canadian Division's detachment would finish its land training by mid-June.⁶

5. C. P. Stacey, "Situation of the Canadian Forces in the United Kingdom, Winter, 1941-42, Part II: Position and Role of Canadian Forces," CMHQ Report No. 58, 19 Jan 1942, par. 86.

6. WD, GS, Cdn Corps, Mar 1942, app. 25, Brig G. G. Simonds (BGS, Cdn Corps), Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 7, 16 Mar 1942.

2nd Canadian Division's detachment finished its land training as scheduled, then moved to Gourock, a Scottish town on the river Clyde, aboard the landing ship HMS *Princess Josephine Charlotte*, a converted merchant vessel which held seven landing craft. The men lived on the ship for ten days conducting intense combined operations training. During the day, they repeated landing exercises; at night, they staged practice attacks. The men got very little sleep. The work was made all the heavier due to the fact that the naval personnel were also undergoing training as well. The highlight of the training was the mock attack on the Isle of Bute, in the Clyde, which was "defended" by two commandos. The 2nd Canadian Division detachment was declared to have completed four of its six objectives.⁷

Training Instruction No. 9, issued at the end of April, significantly altered the plan for I Canadian Corps's combined operations training. Rather than train skeleton detachments, the new programme called for entire units and formations to be instructed in combined operations. 2nd Canadian Division would begin intense training immediately upon the conclusion of Exercise TIGER.⁸ However, though the training instruction mentioned that the other two divisions would undergo the same training, this was actually a ruse. Instead, 1st and 3rd Canadian Divisions were mentioned in the document only to obscure the fact that 2nd Canadian Division specifically would undertake combined operations training as it had been selected for a special assignment later that summer.⁹ Simonds issued a subsequent order in May stating that combined operations training was

7. C. P. Stacey, "Situation of the Canadian Military Forces in the United Kingdom, Spring, 1942, Part II: Training Programme of 1st Canadian Corps; Exercises 'BEAVER III,' 22–24 Apr 42, and 'BEAVER IV,' 10–13 May 42," CMHQ Report No. 70, 18 May 1942, pars. 14–15.

8. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Apr 1942, app. 47, Brig G. G. Simonds (BGS, 1 Cdn Corps), 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 9, 30 Apr 1942.

9. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 329; Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 203.

to take priority. “Owing to unavoidable changes in Naval arrangements,” certain elements of 2nd Canadian Division had to begin their advanced combined operations training by 20 May if it was to be completed on schedule. As a result, these forces would not be able to participate in Exercise TIGER.¹⁰ In practice, this meant that 5th Brigade, as noted in chapter 4, was the only part of the division to participate in TIGER.¹¹

The special assignment that precluded the bulk of 2nd Canadian Division’s participation in TIGER was the Dieppe Raid. The two brigades selected for the main assault were Brigadier Sherwood Lett’s 4th Brigade and Brigadier William Southam’s 6th Brigade. Tank support for the main assault would be provided by 14th Canadian Army Tank Battalion (The Calgary Regiment), a unit from 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade sporting brand-new Churchill tanks. As neither the infantry brigades nor the Calgary tanks had experienced combined operations training before, the force had to undergo an intensive combined operations programme on the Isle of Wight beginning on 20 May. The island was chosen as the training area because its terrain made it appropriate for combined operations and because it was easier to maintain operational secrecy on an island. While some civilians were allowed to remain in their homes and businesses, otherwise the island was effectively quarantined. No one was allowed on the island who was not one of the 5,000 Canadian troops and 4,000 naval and air personnel involved in RUTTER. Nor were the troops told that they were training for a specific operation in the near future. The codename for the move to the Isle of Wight, and which the training

10. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, May 1942, app. 19, Simonds, circular letter re: “Training – Combined Operations,” 12 May 1942.

11. C. P. Stacey, “South Eastern Command Exercise ‘TIGER’, 19–30 May 42,” CMHQ Report No. 73, 24 Jun 1942, par. 9.

programme was generally called, was SIMMER. Hence, the elements of 2nd Canadian Division involved in the operation were referred to as “Simmerforce” at this stage.¹²

The first week of training did not go smoothly as the headquarters, brigades, and units of Simmerforce had not had a chance to do much preparatory work. Normally, when moving to a new training area, advance parties from headquarters down to the battalion level would arrive before the main body of troops in order to plan setting up the bivouac area. But the need for secrecy meant that Simmerforce had little opportunity to perform this preparatory work, with the result that it had to be done while training was underway. Consequently, the first eight days of training were somewhat disorganized. A divisional training report from the 28th noted that, after eight days,

Although the condition of the men is reasonably good, the assault courses and speed marches have shown that there is a great improvement to be made in this direction. In the speed marches units are able to do five miles in 45 mins but took from 1½ hrs to 2 hrs to do the remaining 6 miles. In the Assault courses tps [troops] were able to complete the course but were, in many cases, unable to fight or fire effectively when finished.¹³

The war diary of the Royal Regiment of Canada provides a detailed account of the training. On the first day, 20 May, companies ran through an obstacle course twice and practiced bayonet fighting and unarmed combat. The next day, the battalion scaled cliffs and practiced for working with the LCAs at Yarmouth the following day. The lack of preparatory work became evident on the 25th when the battalion practiced street fighting in Yarmouth. However, no one had consulted the locals about it beforehand. “Most of the

12. Terence Robertson, *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe* ([Toronto]: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), 76; Denis Whitaker and Shelagh Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph* (Whitby, ON: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), 124; C. P. Stacey, “Operation ‘JUBILEE’: The Raid on Dieppe, 19 Aug 42, Part I: The Preliminaries of the Operation,” CMHQ Report No. 100, 16 Jul 1943, par. 63.

13. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Div, Aug 1942, app. 54, LCol C. C. Mann (GSO1, 2 Cdn Div), “Memorandum on Combined Operation Trg on Isle of Wight,” 9 Jul 1942, par. 2 (a) and app. A, “Memorandum on Trg Areas and Locations on Isle of Wight,” 9 Jul 1942; quotation from app. F, “Report on Trg – 2 Cdn Div, Period Ending 28 May incl,” par. 13 (d).

value of this exercise was lost,” read the war diary, “owing to the objection of the local people to the use of their back gardens and roofs to the troops participating.” Problems arose again the next day when there were not enough tanks for an exercise that was intended to practice the battalion cooperating with them in an inland attack from a bridgehead. The battalion’s own carriers had to be used instead. That afternoon, another attack exercise in the town of Totland was compromised because a company from the Essex Scottish Regiment was conducting an exercise of its own at the same time.¹⁴

Training went more smoothly the following week. The Royal Regiment trained in wall-scaling and the use of Bangalore torpedoes, explosive charges in the form of long pipes, to clear obstacles. The battalion practiced assault landings and withdrawals in Colwell Bay at Yarmouth, including a demonstration for Crerar on 5 June. There was also ample time devoted to “hardening training” to maintain men’s fitness such as long marches and obstacle courses, which were all the more arduous thanks to hot weather. That week, for the first time ever, Canadian troops were issued with the new Sten submachine gun, a cheaply mass-produced weapon that soon became notorious for its unreliability.¹⁵

As rigorous as the training programme was, it left much to be desired. This was the first time that the men of 4th and 6th Brigades had undergone combined operations training, but the training period was only a span of three weeks between the commencement of training and the first exercise that involved all of Simmerforce. Could the infantry really be expected to master combined operations in such a short period?

14. WD, R Regt C, 20–26 May 1942.

15. Ibid., 29 May–10 Jun 1942; WD, GS, First Cdn Army, Nov 1942, app. 15, Brig C. R. Stein (BGS, First Cdn Army), First Cdn Army Trg Directive No. 2, 18 Nov 1942; Whitaker and Whitaker, *Dieppe*, 131; Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 100, par. 68.

Despite the raid's emphasis on landing tanks on a beach for the first time, there was little opportunity for the infantry battalions to practice movements with the fire support of the tanks. Officers had to balance their administrative duties with their own need for training, even after the chaotic first week. For example, the NCOs of Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal commanded subunits during street-fighting exercises while the junior officers acted as umpires, thereby depriving the officers of the experience of handling their platoons themselves.¹⁶

Exercise YUKON, held from 11 to 12 June, was essentially a dress rehearsal for RUTTER. As far as the troops knew, though, it was just another divisional exercise. The RAF conducted a simulated bombing overnight. At dawn on the 12th, 4th and 6th Brigades would assault a section of the British coast in Dorset that closely resembled Dieppe. "Intelligence" reported that a first-rate infantry battalion, comprised of troops stationed in the area, were defending Bridport and its adjacent communities. The assaulting brigades' objectives were to seize West Bay and Bridport, destroy an enemy aerodrome, capture a division headquarters at Bradpole, and capture prisoners. The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment) (RHLI) and the Essex Scottish Regiment would stage a frontal assault on WHITE and RED Beaches, respectively, with the support of the tanks and push into town. On the flanks, the Royal Regiment attacked BLUE Beach to the west and the South Saskatchewan Regiment attacked GREEN Beach to the east. Once the South Saskatchewan had secured GREEN Beach, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada would land and push forward to destroy an aerodrome in

16. Caroline D'Amours, "Training for Operation Jubilee: Tactics and Training in the Fusiliers Mont-Royal and the Dieppe Raid, 1939–1942," *Canadian Military History* 22, no. 4 (2013): 28.

conjunction with the tanks from WHITE Beach. Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal were held in reserve, able to support the landings on WHITE, RED, or GREEN Beach if necessary.¹⁷

The exercise went terribly wrong, the most serious problems being on the naval side. The LCTs arrived at WHITE and RED Beaches more than an hour late. The attacks on the flanks did not go according to plan for both battalions were landed at the wrong locations.¹⁸ The problems stemmed from the fact that the RN did not have permanent forces dedicated to combined operations. The landing craft pilots, like the infantry, needed practice. “A feature of this exercise was that the assault craft landed some two miles to the west of their proposed landing beach,” according to the Royal Regiment’s war diary, although “the error was quickly discovered by the Battalion, and objectives were gained without undue loss of time.”¹⁹ The South Saskatchewan had the same experience on the other side of the front: “Arrived and landed on beach at 0430 hrs ¾ mile from proper beach, Coys [companies] moved into position and did the tasks allotted to them.”²⁰

McNaughton, who had attended the exercise along with General Paget, took note of the RN’s problems with identification and navigation. According to McNaughton’s report on the exercise, Paget told him that “the physical condition of the men was excellent; that they cleared the landing craft quickly but that they showed themselves unnecessarily beforehand; [and] that on shore they moved rapidly and in order without

17. WD, GS, First Cdn Army, Jul 1942, app. B, Mann, 2 Cdn Div Ex YUKON, General Instructions, 8 Jun 1942, pars. 1–2; 2 Cdn Div OO No. 1, 9 Jun 1942.

18. The most detailed account of Exercise YUKON appears in Bill Rawling, *Dieppe 1942: La catastrophe* (Outremont, QC: Athéna, 2012), 64–68.

19. WD, R Regt C, 12 Jun 1942.

20. WD, S Sask R, 12 Jun 1942.

bunching.”²¹ The latter observation may have been inaccurate, as Major-General Roberts explicitly stated at his conference following the exercise that there was too much bunching on the beaches immediately after men left the LCAs.²² Though the infantry performed as well as it could in YUKON, the exercise made it plain that the units of Simmerforce needed more practice in the skills that they had just learned.

One person who was absent during Exercise YUKON was Lord Mountbatten, who was in the United States. Upon his return and hearing of the outcome of the exercise, he ordered that RUTTER, originally scheduled for 21 June, be postponed until early July when the tidal conditions would be right. Before then, another dress rehearsal could be performed. This way, Mountbatten would be able to see for himself whether the RN and 2nd Canadian Division were ready while the men would have the opportunity to refine their skills.²³ Thus, Exercise YUKON II was scheduled for 22–23 June. The plan was nearly identical to that for YUKON.²⁴ The flank attacks began to land at about 0430 hours on 23 June. “On this occasion,” read the Royal Regiment’s war diary, “the landing was effected at the proper beach, and all went smoothly and according to plan.”²⁵ The same was not true for the main assault at West Bay: the RHLI and the Essex Scottish landed at 0610 and 0630 hours, respectively, nearly an hour late. Nevertheless, the Canadians captured their objectives and began to withdraw by 1000 hours.²⁶

Overall, the results were better than in the previous exercise. The Canadians had done their part, but there were still problems with the naval forces landing the infantry at

21. LAC, MG 30 E 133, vol. 248, file “War Diary 1/6/42–30/6/42”: app. F, LGen A. G. L. McNaughton (GOC-in-C First Cdn Army), memorandum, 22 Jun 1942, pt. 1, par. 7.

22. WD, HQ, 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Jun 1942, app. 17, “Brigade Major’s Notes on G.O.Cs Conference, Exercise YUKON I,” n.d., par. 15.

23. Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 100, par. 75.

24. WD, GS, First Cdn Army, Jul 1942, app. B, Mann, 2 Cdn Div OO No. 1, 18 Jun 1942.

25. WD, R Regt C, 23 Jun 1942.

26. WD, GS, First Cdn Army, Jul 1942, app. B, 2 Cdn Inf Div Ex YUKON II, Narrative.

the wrong beaches. Generals McNaughton, Montgomery, and Paget, all in attendance, agreed that it was the RN the needed improvement in combined operations, not 2nd Canadian Division. If the RN could land troops at the correct spot, the senior commanders were confident that RUTTER would be a success. On 2 July, Simmerforce was loaded onto ships and the men were told why they had been training. Until then, only officers had known, although only senior officers knew that Dieppe was the target. But the weather refused to cooperate and Simmerforce spent the next week sealed aboard landing ships except for a brief period on the 6th when the troops came ashore for marches for exercise. A German aerial attack on the 7th damaged two of the landing ships, HM Ships *Princess Astrid* and *Princess Josephine Charlotte*, but fortunately the bombs punched through the hulls and detonated underwater, killing no one. This setback was not enough to cancel the operation, but the weather was. When the RN concluded that the operation would not be practicable on 8 July, the last day of favourable tidal conditions, Admiral Sir William James (Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth) ordered RUTTER cancelled.²⁷

As far as the men of 2nd Canadian Division knew, their August would consist of combined arms training as per instructions from the corps headquarters. Brigadier Churchill Mann, who replaced Simonds as BGS, I Canadian Corps,²⁸ issued a training instruction in mid-July stating that training in August would focus on field training for subunits. The intention was for junior officers to practice their abilities in the tactical

27. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 334–336, 338–340; Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 192–193; CMHQ Report No. 100, pars. 77–88, 97–103.

28. Simonds was given a special project to complete for the British Chiefs of Staff during the summer, assessing Operation JUPITER, a plan for an invasion of northern Norway to secure airfields from which the Luftwaffe had been able to wreak havoc on Allied Arctic convoys. Subsequently, he was given command of 1st Brigade, which took effect on 11 September. See Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 408–410 and Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 203–204.

handling of their troops. By the end of the month, exercises were to progress to the battalion level, with a particular emphasis on addressing any problems encountered during the July field firing exercises.²⁹ Accordingly, Roberts planned to divide 2nd Canadian Division into three training groups to facilitate combined arms training. Each infantry brigade was joined with a field artillery regiment, a field engineering company, an anti-tank battery, and a light anti-aircraft battery. Subunit training would last until 22 August, and the rest of the month would see exercises involving entire battalions with elements of the supporting arms.³⁰

RUTTER's cancellation did not assuage the Western Allies' need to do something to reassure the Soviets that they were committed to fighting the Germans. Thus, before July was over, the plan to raid Dieppe was resurrected as Operation JUBILEE. To Combined Operations Headquarters, reviving the raid made sense as the plan was already formulated and the landing force was already trained. The raid would take place the next time that tidal conditions were ideal, the period from 18 to 23 August. Thus, 19 August was selected and the units involved began moving to the embarkation ports three days earlier. JUBILEE would involve some 6,100 ground troops, 4,963 of whom were Canadian. The assigned landing beaches were the same as before, even down to the same codenames as the YUKON exercises. Landing at Dieppe itself were the RHLI at WHITE Beach and the Essex Scottish at RED Beach. The town of Puys to the east would be attacked by the Royal Regiment at BLUE Beach. At Pourville to the west, the South Saskatchewan would secure GREEN Beach while the Camerons would pass through and

29. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Jul 1942, app. 25, Brig C. C. Mann (BGS, 1 Cdn Corps), 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 13, 18 Jul 1942, pars. 1–6.

30. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Div, Jul 1942, app. 19, LCol W. S. Rutherford (GSO1, 2 Cdn Div), 2 Cdn Div Trg Instr, 20 Jul 1942, pars. 1–4; Aug 1942, app. 2, Rutherford, circular letter re: "Summary of Training for Aug," 4 Aug 1942.

destroy the aerodrome further inland. British commandos would storm the extreme flanks to neutralize German artillery batteries that might threaten the infantry landings. The new plan also called for far more generous tactical air support than had been allocated for RUTTER: 74 squadrons including 48 fighter squadrons, representing nine Allied nationalities.³¹

The operation went badly from the start. Shortly before 0400 hours, roughly an hour before the first infantry were due to set foot on the beaches, part of the Allied armada encountered a German coastal convoy. A fierce battle erupted, badly disrupting the landing of No. 3 Commando. By this time, it was too late to abort the operation as the infantry had already boarded the LCAs. The Royal Regiment arrived at BLUE Beach late thanks to problems navigating the LCAs in the dark. The beaches at Puys were dominated by cliffs on both sides and only a small German force managed to inflict appalling casualties on the landing Royal Regiment. The battalion surrendered at 0830 hours after suffering 207 fatal casualties and 264 taken prisoner; only 65 men made it back to the United Kingdom. At the other end of the front, the South Saskatchewan landed on time but on the wrong side of the river Scie, which meant that the men had to stage a river crossing under fire to get to their objective. The Camerons, who were supposed to pass through the South Saskatchewan's bridgehead and attack the aerodrome, were half an hour late in landing. The two battalions evacuated at about 1330 hours after suffering serious losses. At the main Dieppe beaches in the centre, both the RHLI and the Essex Scottish struggled their way forward in vain. Major-General Roberts decided to commit Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal, his reserve unit, in support of both forward units at RED and WHITE Beaches. The sole French-speaking unit in the operation suffered

31. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 340–348.

casualties from machine gun fire from the cliffs to the west. Meanwhile, 15 of the 29 tanks committed to the operation made it to the coastal promenade but were blocked by anti-tank obstacles from entering the town itself. All were eventually immobilized but acted as fire support for the evacuating infantry. The operation was costly: 1,946 men of 2nd Canadian Division were taken prisoner, and 56 officers and 851 other ranks were killed in action or died in captivity.³²

The outcome of the Dieppe Raid was a major shock to the Canadian Army and the Canadian people. The Canadian Army's first test of battle in Europe, like the Battle of Hong Kong the previous December, was a disaster. 4th and 6th Brigades suffered such grievous losses that they both had to take in hundreds of reinforcements and begin unit training all over again. It took at least a year for 2nd Canadian Division to be rebuilt and to gain its former training standard and even longer for it to be ready to participate in sustained operations on the continent. The operation's plan had been based on an underestimation of the Germans' defences of the area. The cliffs overlooking the beaches turned out to be a much greater problem than anticipated. Though the infantry had undergone a rigorous course, it was clear that it would need even more practice for an operation as risky and complicated as an amphibious assault. On the naval side, the infantry had been given insufficient fire support, and worst of all the RN still needed practice identifying landing beaches in the dark.

32. There is a considerable amount of literature on the Dieppe Raid. Stacey provides a detailed study in *Six Years of War*, 358–412. Other helpful histories of the raid include Whitaker and Whitaker, *Dieppe*; Greenhous, *Dieppe, Dieppe* (Montreal: Art Global, 1992); and Rawling, *Dieppe 1942*. Popular accounts include Robertson, *The Shame and the Glory* and Mark Zuehlke, *Tragedy at Dieppe: Operation Jubilee, August 19, 1942* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2012).

Offensive Training, June–October 1942

While 2nd Canadian Division was preparing for the Dieppe Raid, the rest of I Canadian Corps was busy refining its fighting skills. Compared to the previous two years, in the spring and summer of 1942 infantry training in the United Kingdom took on a much more offensive character. While battle drill could train men in minor infantry tactics, battalions and brigades had to be able to fight in combination with other arms. Thus, training during this period emphasized combined arms training as well as correcting faults.

On 4 June, Crerar issued a circular letter to his subordinate commanders stipulating the importance of detecting and addressing weaknesses in weapons proficiency and fire and movement tactics. “The best troops in the world may fail to succeed,” he wrote, “if they are not properly launched into battle.” To improve on command and staff work in the wake of Exercise TIGER, Crerar called for a series of exercises for senior commanders and their staffs beginning in mid-June.³³ Simonds released a series of training instructions in June to put Crerar’s training plans into effect through the summer. Training Instruction No. 10 announced a series of TEWTs and signals exercises during which headquarters down to the battalion level would participate.³⁴ As for the infantry, Crerar’s letter mentioned that use of special training areas had been reserved for the Canadians. These areas were for practicing “fire and movement,” or using artillery fire to neutralize the enemy, then having the infantry advance, capture ground, and destroy any remaining resistance. To that end, Training Instruction No. 11, issued on 17 June,

33. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Jun 1942, app. 5, LGen H. D. G. Crerar (GOC 1 Cdn Corps), circular letter, 4 Jun 1942.

34. Ibid., app. 11, Simonds, 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 10, 9 Jun 1942.

concerned a series of brigade field firing exercises to take place in a designated training area in the South Downs during the month of July. Each brigade in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Canadian Divisions, having three days to use the training area, would plan and execute an attack with their divisional artillery support as well as with a tank battalion under their command. Each battalion would get the chance to be the forward battalion advancing with supporting artillery fire. Companies would practice their fire and movement tactics.³⁵ Finally, Training Instruction No. 12, issued on 27 June, outlined the overall training policy within the corps: detect and remedy weaknesses in staff work and the tactical handling of subunits, conduct realistic training in fire and movement, and develop junior leadership.³⁶

The July field firing exercises went well. 4th and 6th Brigades, upon returning from the Isle of Wight, partook in the programme later in the month. For the first time, each infantry brigade in the corps had the opportunity to operate with the full complement of their division's artillery firing live ammunition. A division had three field artillery regiments, each fielding 24 towed 25-pounder guns.³⁷ The purpose of these exercises was to provide the infantry with experience in operating under more realistic battle conditions and in cooperating with other arms of service. 1st Brigade, for instance, carried out its exercise from 7 to 9 July. The morning of the 7th was devoted to reconnaissance patrols and TEWTs down to the platoon level. That afternoon, the exercise was rehearsed without artillery fire. The next morning, the exercise was conducted with artillery fire. The same programme was repeated over the next day and a

35. Ibid., app. 27, Simonds, 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 11, 17 Jun 1942, amended by app. 39, Simonds, minute re: "Bde Battle Shooting," 23 Jun 1942.

36. Ibid., app. 47, Simonds, 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 12, 27 Jun 1942.

37. R. B. Oglesby, "A Summary of Major Changes in Army Organization 1939–1945," AHQ Report No. 57, 22 Dec 1952, par. 54.

half with the added element of tank support from 12th Canadian Army Tank Battalion (The Three Rivers Regiment).³⁸ The training area in the South Downs allocated for these exercises was excellent. As the war diary of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment explained, it consisted of

four ridges extending over an area of about three miles. The first feature, used as the start line in the attack, is covered with gorse and scrub which continues up part of the slope of the next hill from where on, the ground is largely either grassland or Wheat or Barley fds [fields] and there is little cover for the advancing tps [troops] except in the ground itself.³⁹

The brigade objective was to seize the third ridge. According to the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment's war diary:

The whole attack went off satisfactorily [*sic*] and was extremely spectacular. The Arty [artillery] concentrations were thickened up by three inch mortar fire and what with the smoke and dust caused by these and rifle and M.M.G. [medium machine gun] fire a realistic picture of the fog of battle was given.⁴⁰

Clearly, the July field firing exercises were of great value to the infantry brigades as they fulfilled their intended purpose of providing the men with a realistic simulation of operational conditions.

Other than 2nd Canadian Division's training for Dieppe, the Canadians participated in only one large-scale exercise in the summer of 1942. From 25 to 31 July, the British XII Corps held Exercise HAROLD, which pitted 3rd Canadian Division against the British 46th Division. The purpose of the exercise was to give the troops and division staffs practice in a mobile battle and to test reconnaissance regiments in operating on wide fronts with their flanks exposed. The scenario was that 3rd Canadian Division had

38. WD, HQ, 1 Cdn Inf Bde, Jul 1942, app. 6, Maj H. W. J. Paterson (BM, 1 Cdn Inf Bde), 1 Cdn Inf Bde Trg Instr No. 5, 1 Jul 1942, pars. 1–4.

39. WD, Hast & PER, 6 Jul 1942.

40. Ibid., 8 Jul 1942.

been part of a large cross-Channel invasion, landed in German-occupied Europe, and had established a bridgehead between Brighton and Portsmouth. 46th Division, representing a German division, was tasked with destroying the Canadian invaders. Both sides were given secret instructions not known to their opponents. The Canadians were informed that the Allies were to strike north toward London and 3rd Canadian Division's job was to capture the port of Rye and prevent enemy forces in East Kent from interfering with the main operation to the west. Of course, the rest of the Allied force was not represented in the exercise itself. The "Germans" were informed that the Canadians may try to capture Rye and thus it had to be denied to them at all costs; that way, the Canadians would have to rely on Newhaven for a port, which was over thirty miles to the west.⁴¹

After the exercise, Crerar criticized the plan drafted by Major-General Price, who remained in command of 3rd Canadian Division despite Montgomery's denigration of his leadership abilities. Price's plan practically ignored the first objective, the capture of Rye, and assumed that the enemy would bypass the Canadians and try to block the main offensive taking place in the west. On the morning of 26 July, Price had allowed 9th Brigade to get so far ahead of the rest of the division that the enemy could have destroyed it. That afternoon, Price was informed that Rye had sustained such serious damage that the Canadians would have to use Newhaven after all. Fighting was light on the 27th and the morning of the 28th because both sides had failed to maintain contact with the enemy. Price managed to withdraw 9th Brigade and launch a successful attack with 7th and 8th Brigades in the afternoon of the 28th. The exercise closed on the 31st with a well-executed attack by 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, which had been placed under 3rd

41. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9792, file 2/Exercises/8: 12 Corps Ex HAROLD, index 1, Exercise Instructions, par. 2; index 2, General Narrative, pars. 1–2; index 4, "Secret Instructions Issued to Comd 3 Cdn Div Only," pars. 1–3; index 6, "Secret Instructions Issued to Comd 46 (German) Div Only," pars. 1–4.

Canadian Division's command.⁴² Clearly, the problems in senior leadership within the corps that Montgomery had identified in the winter had not yet been addressed. No matter how well trained the infantry were, their success in battle still depended on competent generalship.

In the wake of the Dieppe Raid, Crerar became obsessed with training and morale in his corps. He issued several circular letters reminding commanding officers of their responsibility to train.⁴³ One of these letters, issued on 16 October, emphasized the importance of realism in training and the need to develop a competitive spirit among the men. "The object in view," he wrote,

is to produce individuals, sub-units, units and formations which can move quickly, quietly, and distantly, which can fight skillfully and aggressively and which possess, individually and collectively, an unbeatable spirit. The standard reached in training is a measure of future performance in battle.⁴⁴

As 2nd Canadian Division was no longer at the same training standard as the other Canadian divisions, Roberts's headquarters immediately set out a training programme to rebuild 4th and 6th Brigades. Over a six-month period, reinforcements would be absorbed by the depleted units and trained as front-line troops. The first six weeks, from 31 August to 11 October, would be devoted primarily to individual training, including range practice, battle drill, and "hardening." The rest of October would feature TEWTs at the platoon, company, and battalion levels to train junior officers and NCOs. Platoon training was scheduled to begin on 2 November, followed by company training on the 23rd and battalion training on 21 December. For the company and battalion training, exercises would focus on the attack with and without tanks and cooperation with

42. Ibid.: Crerar, "Remarks by Comd, 1 Cdn Corps on Exercise 'HAROLD,' 25–31 Jul 42," 6 Aug 1942.

43. Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 208.

44. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Oct 1942, app. 14, Crerar, circular letter, 16 Oct 1942.

other arms. Brigade training would begin on 18 January 1943. Battle drill would feature in every level of collective training. Hopefully, this training programme would be completed by 28 February.⁴⁵ 5th Brigade was still fully operational as it had not been involved in the Dieppe Raid except for three platoons from the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada that were attached to the Royal Regiment of Canada and were captured during the operation. While its sister brigades were rebuilding, 5th Brigade would continue training for its anti-invasion role.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the other divisions of I Canadian Corps continued with their normal training programmes. Both 1st and 3rd Canadian Divisions had received new GOCs, Major-Generals Harry Salmon and Rod Keller, respectively. That the corps was due for intense combined operations training in the near future was confirmed when I Canadian Corps Training Instruction No. 16, issued on 24 September, directed units to pay close attention to practicing for tactical scenarios such as beach landings and street fighting.⁴⁷ 1st Canadian Division conducted a beach landing exercise during the second half of the month — without the use of landing craft. Exercise VIKING was a dryshod exercise designed to give brigade staffs experience in drafting landing tables — i.e. plans for which men, vehicles, and supplies would be loaded on specific landing craft, and when and where each craft would land — to give officers experience in handling their troops in landing on a beach, securing a bridgehead for follow-on troops, and penetrating inland. It was not a full divisional exercise. Rather, individual brigade groups took turns conducting it alone. Men were transported in trucks standing in for LSIs to an assembly

45. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Div, Aug 1942, app. 47, Rutherford, "Training Instruction for 4 & 6 Cdn Inf Bdes – Commencing 31 Aug 42," 29 Aug 1942.

46. Ibid., app. 48, Rutherford, "2 Cdn Div Trg Instr: Trg Period – 1 to 30 Sep 42," 30 Aug 1942.

47. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Sep 1942, app. 17, Mann, 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 16, 24 Sep 1942, pars. 1, 3.

area where they were organized into figurative LCAs represented simply by being grouped together in formation. They were then marched by road to their landing beach to conduct a frontal attack. Each “LCA” included a man in a black beret to represent the pilot.⁴⁸ To illustrate the unpredictability of a combined operation, the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada’s “D” Company was purposely landed a mile and a half from its appointed beach during 2nd Brigade’s turn at VIKING because of “choppy seas.” Fortunately, the Seaforths rectified the situation and completed their objectives.⁴⁹

Owing to I Canadian Corps Training Instruction No. 16’s provision that during October, “Comds [commanders] will concentrate on the correction of any weaknesses which have revealed themselves in the trg [training] of individuals and sub-units under comd [command],”⁵⁰ 1st and 3rd Canadian Divisions spent the month on routine training to maintain men’s physical fitness and provide constant practice in tactical manoeuvres. Companies were repeatedly given tests of elementary training. Battle drill and weapons proficiency remained staples of training. Though training was primarily the purview of the unit, it was common for battalions to assist one another within the brigade. For example, in the first week of October, the Seaforths supplied a company to act as the enemy for PPCLI during a two-day tactical exercise. To ensure objectivity, TsOET were assessed by officers from other battalions.⁵¹

I Canadian Corps’s focus on continuous improvement over the summer and autumn of 1942 is clearly evident. Training had taken a notably more offensive spirit than

48. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Div, Sep 1942, app. 4, 1 Cdn Div Ex VIKING, Exercise Instructions, pars. 1–5, 9.

49. WD, Seaforth of C, 18 Sep 1942.

50. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Sep 1942, app. 17, Mann, 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 16, 24 Sep 1942, pars. 1–4.

51. WD, HQ, 2 Cdn Inf Bde, Oct 1942, app. 16, Brig C. Vokes (Comd, 2 Cdn Inf Bde), “Training Report, 2 Cdn Inf Bde – Week Ending 10 Oct 42,” 8 Oct 1942; “Training Report, 2 Cdn Inf Bde – Week Ending 17 Oct 42,” 15 Oct 1942.

ever before because the corps was training to invade Europe at some unspecified point in the future. Despite lingering problems in senior leadership, training was also becoming more rigorous while exercises such as those in the July field firing programme were getting more realistic. While 2nd Canadian Division rebuilt after its harsh initiation to battle, the remaining divisions continued to hone their skills. They, too, would have turns at combined operations training.

Seasons of Transformation

The winter and early spring of 1942–1943 was a transition period for the Canadian Army (Overseas) in terms of new organization and doctrine, increased combined operations training, and the beginning of the end for McNaughton's military career. After over a year of experimentation, the British made major changes to the composition of divisions and units of all arms, particularly the infantry battalion. This, plus the advent of new doctrinal literature based on operational experience in North Africa and elsewhere, indicated that the British had realized that they had to take a methodical approach to fighting the war and could not be afraid of trying new ideas. While 2nd Canadian Division recovered from the wounds of Dieppe, 1st and 3rd Canadian Divisions were due for combined operations training in the winter and early spring. Most importantly, in March 1943, McNaughton irrevocably exposed to his British superiors his limitations as a field commander during Exercise SPARTAN, a large-scale exercise comparable to BUMPER and TIGER.

This was also a transition period in the war's wider context as the Allies began to roll back Axis conquests. The Americans had begun their "island hopping" campaign in the Pacific, starting with the Solomon Islands in early August. The Germans and Soviets spent the autumn of 1942 locked in bitter fighting at Stalingrad. Meanwhile, the Allies were making progress in North Africa. Montgomery had left the United Kingdom in the summer to take command of Eighth Army. In October and November he became famous for leading his forces in the first successful British ground offensive of the war at El Alamein, where his army halted the Axis advance into Egypt. On 8 November, the British and Americans launched Operation TORCH, an invasion of Morocco and Algeria. The senior Allied powers had not invited the Canadians to participate. This omission made sense, however, since 2nd Canadian Division needed to be rebuilt and none of the other Canadian divisions had undergone serious combined operations training at a CTC.⁵² A handful of Canadians, however, managed to see action in North Africa under a programme designed to give Canadian officers and NCOs operational experience with the British First Army. Nearly 350 Canadians went on three-month tours in five batches from January to May 1943 as British and American forces were subjugating the remaining Axis forces in Tunisia. These were not simply observation tours as 25 Canadians became casualties, eight of which were fatal.⁵³

Meanwhile, doctrine continued to evolve and to take operational experience into account. The War Office finally released a provisional training pamphlet on battle drill in

52. Stacey, *Six Years of War* 322–323.

53. C. P. Stacey, "Attachment of Canadian Officers and Soldiers to First British Army in Tunisia, 1942–1943," CMHQ Report No. 95, 12 May 1943. One Canadian's diary of his experiences in North Africa was published after the war, while another's is available at the Canadian War Museum. See Strome Galloway, *With the Irish against Rommel: A Diary of 1943* (Langley, BC: Battleline Books, 1984) and CWM, 20100088-025: Maj A. R. Campbell (Hast & PER), "Diary of North African Interlude," respectively.

late 1942, entitled *The Instructors' Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill*, with a view to producing a more authoritative pamphlet later in the war. The pamphlet cautioned that battle drill did not “teach any new or revolutionary tactics” and that “it does not, if properly taught, cramp initiative nor lead to stereotyped action,”⁵⁴ sentiments intended to assuage the anxieties of battle drill’s critics. But *The Instructors' Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill* had a distinctly different tone than the prewar doctrinal manuals. As historian Stephen Bull has noted:

The old *Infantry Training* addressed itself primarily to majors and lieutenant colonels speaking the language of regulations, “paragraphs,” and issuance of orders, whilst *Instructor's [sic] Handbook* aimed at the platoon commander and senior NCO instructor and was couched in the speech of practicality, with quickly grasped simple diagrams and cartoons.⁵⁵

It is important to note, however, that doctrine did not come solely from training pamphlets. There were instances when there was no need to change or add to doctrine but information still needed to be brought to forces training in the United Kingdom. The War Office had two series dedicated to exploring the British and Commonwealth battle experiences overseas: *Notes from Theatres of War*, which began in February 1942, and *Current Reports from Overseas*, which began in September. *Notes from Theatres of War* featured the “official” lessons learned from various theatres of war and were endorsed by the relevant senior headquarters and the War Office. Copies were normally issued on a scale of one per company. *Notes from Theatres of War* always cautioned readers that lessons from one theatre were not always applicable in others. Meanwhile, *Current Reports from Overseas* was for lessons that were not yet endorsed by a senior

54. UK, WO, *The Instructors' Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill* (repr., [Ottawa: King's Printer], 1942), 1.

55. Stephen Bull, *Second World War Infantry Tactics: The European Theatre* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2012), 73.

headquarters or the War Office and therefore was considered secondary in importance to *Notes from Theatres of War*. Issues were not distributed below brigade level until April 1944 when they were given to lieutenant-colonels. While the *Notes from Theatres of War* was based on material that had come to the War Office from a senior headquarters, *Current Reports from Overseas* employed a wide variety of material. *Current Reports from Overseas* normally had straightforward factual accounts that were assembled by a senior officer, who would then draw conclusions.⁵⁶

Notes from Theatres of War No. 14, published in June 1943, was a typical issue. It covered the events in Egypt and Cyrenaica in the second half of 1942. After providing a narrative of operations, the anonymous author provided preliminary conclusions. *Notes from Theatres of War* No. 14 emphasized the importance of an extremely close relationship between armour and infantry, down to the platoon commander and platoon sergeant with the troop commander and troop sergeant. To achieve this, the issue called for intensive combined arms training, including battle drills, well prior to operations. This had been done between the infantry divisions of XXX Corps and 23rd Armoured Brigade before the Second Battle of El Alamein in late October 1942. The infantry especially needed the support of tanks when they seized an objective and were attempting to consolidate their position as this was when the infantry was most vulnerable to counter-attack. The author attributed the success of the British infantry against the Germans at night to “constant practice and by the development of simple and well-tested battle drills,” one of which the pamphlet provided as an appendix.⁵⁷

56. Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2000), 12–14.

57. UK, WO, “Western Desert and Cyrenaica, August–December, 1942,” *Notes from Theatres of War* No. 14 (Jun 1943), 1–19, 45–49, 83–92 and app. A.

The War Office could not print material on new tactical developments without reviewing and testing them. Publication delays were to be expected. The six-month gap between the close of 1942 and the publication of *Notes from Theatres of War* No. 14 was typical. The War Office produced so many pamphlets and manuals that officers, daunted by the task of reading such a large volume of material, often opted not to read any of it. In any case, the War Office knew that reading was not a tactical skill in itself. As stopping in battle to check the doctrine before making a decision might be the last thing an officer or NCO ever did, the War Office cautioned against it. Doctrine had to become second nature by the time a soldier reached the battlefield.⁵⁸

Along with refinements to doctrine, the second half of 1942 had also seen important developments in the organization of divisions and infantry battalions. In the autumn, after experimenting with various divisional organizations all summer, as in Exercise TIGER, the British Army Council decided on three standard types of divisions: infantry divisions, consisting of three infantry brigades; armoured divisions, consisting of one armoured brigade and one mechanized infantry brigade; and simply “divisions,” later known as “mixed divisions,” consisting of one armoured brigade and two infantry brigades.⁵⁹ McNaughton did not care much for the new mixed divisions when they were first proposed in the summer as he believed that they lacked flexibility. The armoured and infantry units would constantly have to be assembled into ad hoc battlegroups in the field. For that reason, First Canadian Army would have none of these mixed divisions.⁶⁰

58. Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944*, 16–17.

59. LAC, RG 24, reel T-18729, vol. 12445, file 6/Br Army/1: WO Letter 20/Gen/6059 (S.D.1), 1 Oct 1942, app. A, “Comparative Layout of Divisions.”

60. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1: McNaughton, tel. GS 1998 to LGen K. Stuart (CGS), 12 Jun 1942, pars. 1–3.

Accordingly, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Canadian Divisions were redesignated as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions, respectively, in January 1943.⁶¹

At the same time, the Canadian armoured divisions had to be reorganized to conform to the new British establishments. The units of 4th Canadian Armoured Division had begun arriving in the United Kingdom in July 1942.⁶² Both 4th and 5th Canadian Armoured Divisions would each need an infantry brigade to complement their armoured brigades.⁶³ The reorganization resulted in six surplus armoured units, each of which was given a new role. To create 5th Canadian Armoured Division's 11th Infantry Brigade, the division's original sole infantry battalion, the Cape Breton Highlanders, was joined with the Irish Regiment of Canada, taken from 4th Canadian Armoured Division, and the Perth Regiment in January 1943.⁶⁴ 4th Canadian Armoured Division's 10th Infantry Brigade would have to be built later in the year.

The infantry battalion establishment also was revised at the same time. Until the summer of 1942, an infantry battalion had four rifle companies, a headquarters company consisting of a signal platoon, an administration platoon, a 3-inch mortar platoon, a carrier platoon, an anti-aircraft platoon, and a pioneer platoon. In June, the British elected to add an anti-tank platoon, armed with six anti-tank guns.⁶⁵ The British made further changes to the infantry battalion establishment in September. The headquarters company was eliminated by moving the signal, anti-aircraft, and administration platoons into the

61. GO 283, "Redesignation — Active Units," 3 Jul 1943, effective 7 Jan 43.

62. H. D. Martin, "Training of the 4th and 5th Canadian Armoured Divisions in the United Kingdom, October 1941–July 1944," AHQ Report No. 43, 6 Sep 1951, par. 15.

63. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1/2: McNaughton, tel. GS 4182 to Stuart, 21 Dec 1942 pars. 7 (c)–8; Stuart, tel. CGS 693 to McNaughton, 23 Dec 1942.

64. Alex Morrison and Ted Slaney, *The Breed of Manly Men: The History of the Cape Breton Highlanders* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1994), 93; J. E. A. Crake, "The Organization of First Canadian Army," CMHQ Report No. 168, 12 Dec 1946, par. 28.

65. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1: McNaughton, tel. GS 1998 to Stuart, 12 Jun 1942, par. 9; Oglesby, AHQ Report No. 57, par. 39.

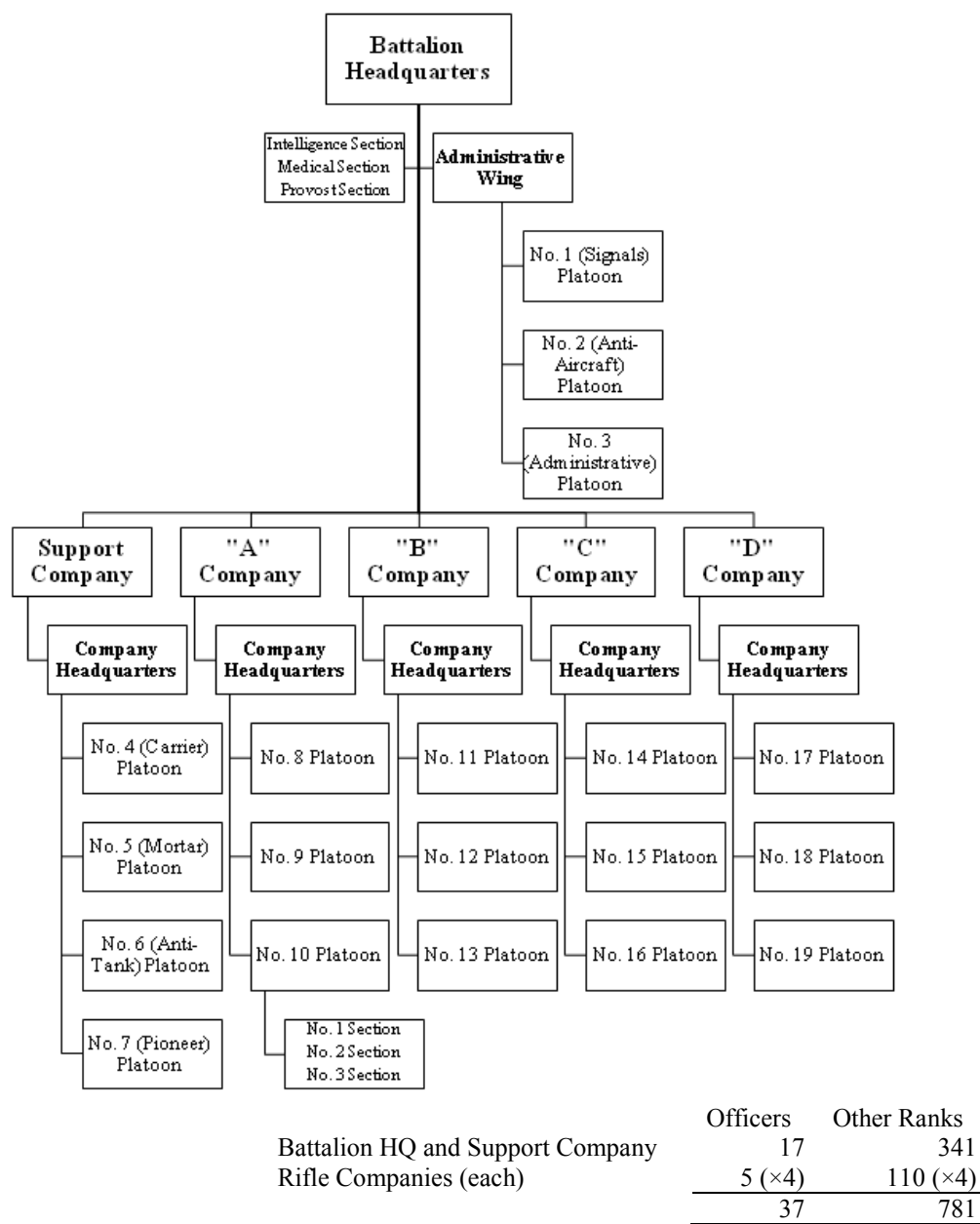
battalion headquarters and by combining the remaining specialist platoons into a new support company. These changes, duly adopted by the Canadian Army, brought the battalion strength to 37 officers and 781 other ranks (figure 5.1).⁶⁶ The new infantry battalion thus would have more firepower concentrated within a single special company and the headquarters would have direct control over administration and communications. The end result was a battalion that could better coordinate its own firepower in support of its rifle companies.

Still, what the Canadian forces in the United Kingdom needed most was combined operations training if they were ever going to serve in an operational theatre. While 2nd Canadian Division, replete with new reinforcements, would need time before it was ready for another attempt at combined operations training, the other Canadian formations were long overdue. On 2 November 1942, after coordinating with the British, I Canadian Corps issued its plan for providing 1st and 3rd Canadian Divisions with courses at CTCs Inveraray and Castle Toward in Scotland over the late autumn and early winter. According to the original plan, four brigades at a time could undergo training at these facilities. 1st Brigade would train at Inveraray from 1 to 15 December, after which 7th Brigade would begin its two-week course. In January, 2nd and 3rd Brigades would have their turn at Inveraray and Castle Toward, respectively. 8th and 9th Brigades would receive their training in Scotland sometime in mid-January.⁶⁷ However, the plan was subject to repeated delays and revisions, in no small part because the landing craft at the CTCs needed repairs. Not until mid-December did 1st Brigade begin its course.

66. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9942, file 5/Inf Bn/1: CMHQ, tel. GS 3278 to NDHQ, 19 Sep 1942; GO 472, "War Establishments," 14 Dec 1942, effective 3 Sep 1942.

67. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Nov 1942, app. 2, Mann, circular letter re: "Training at Combined Training Centres," 2 Nov 1942, encl. 1, "Combined Training Programme, Schedule I."

Figure 5.1
Organization of a Canadian Infantry (Rifle) Battalion,
September 1942–January 1943



Source: R. B. Oglesby, "A Summary of Major Changes in Army Organization 1939–1945," AHQ Report No. 57, 22 Dec 1952, par. 39

2nd and 3rd Brigades did not get their turn until mid-February and early March, respectively.⁶⁸

The training programme at Inveraray can be illustrated by 3rd Brigade's experience there. The brigade was originally scheduled to do its combined operations course at Castle Toward, but this was changed to Inveraray in late December.⁶⁹ The basic syllabus at Inveraray had units practice landings with the LCAs during the first week and conduct exercises during the second. The Royal 22^e Régiment's syllabus shows that the unit spent the first five days practicing landings in daylight and at night, climbing scramble nets, and disembarking from LSIs.⁷⁰ The next week saw a barrage of battalion and brigade schemes that practiced troops in all of the elements of combined operations, including establishing a bridgehead and pushing inland. Exercise EAGLE, held on 13 March, called for the brigade to land at St Catherines on the shore of Loch Fyne opposite Inveraray and then seize the aerodrome at Lochgoilhead five miles inland. The Royal 22^e Régiment landed on the right and the Carleton and York Regiment on the left. Once the beaches were secure, the West Nova Scotia Regiment landed, widened the beachhead, and led the advance to the aerodrome.⁷¹ The exercise was a success and the infantry battalions completed their objectives without delay.⁷² An even larger scheme, Exercise DALMALLY, was held on 17 and 18 March. The scenario was that "Southland" was invading Scotland and 3rd Brigade, under the command of an imaginary division, had the task of landing on the south shore of Loch Awe at 0130 hours on the 18th, severing the

68. C. P. Stacey, "Combined Operations Training, 1st Canadian Corps," CMHQ Report No. 93, 29 Apr 1943, pars. 5–7.

69. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9771, file 2/Comb Ops/1: Mann, circular letter re: "Training at Combined Training Centres," 23 Dec 1942.

70. WD, R 22e R, Mar 1943, app. 4, "R. 22e. Regt Programme 7 Mar–19 Mar," 6 Mar 1943.

71. WD, HQ, 3 Cdn Inf Bde, Mar 1943, app. 6, Ex EAGLE, Outline Plan, 8 Mar 1943; app. 8, Maj C. B. Ware (A/BM, 3 Cdn Inf Bde), "Instructions – Exercise 'EAGLE,' 13 Mar 43," 10 Mar 1943.

72. WD, R 22e R, Mar 1943, app. 5, Ex EAGLE, Int Log; WD, Carlt & York R, 13 Mar 1943.

rail link from the village of Dalmally westward to the vital port of Oban, and capturing the airfield at Taynafead.⁷³ The Royal 22^e Régiment acted as the reserve battalion. The landings went successfully and the West Novas reached the airfield just after 0500 hours and captured it within the hour. With all objectives held, the exercise was over at 0915 hours.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division underwent only patchy combined operations training throughout the winter. In March, the division's programme was postponed indefinitely.⁷⁵ However, its units did manage to receive some combined operations training, but some received more than others. In late November and early December, 8th and 9th Brigades had completed short three-day combined operations courses in the south. Tactical training was not a priority for these courses. Instead, the objective was to familiarize troops with life aboard LSIs and to practice with the Landing Craft, Personnel (Large), a newer American-designed landing craft similar to the LCA.⁷⁶ On 4 December, I Canadian Corps issued orders to 3rd Canadian Division to assemble special assault units for combined operations training throughout December and January. Each unit, consisting of 588 men derived from the battalions of 9th Brigade, would undergo a three-week course at CTC Dorlin in Scotland. The purpose of this training was to prepare small assault units to land on an enemy beach with stealth in preparation for the subsequent landing of brigade groups. Exercises for this training envisioned capturing

73. WD, R 22e R, Mar 1943, app. 6, Ex DALMALLY II, index 1, General Idea; index 8, Detailed Instructions for the Conduct of the Exercise.

74. WD, HQ, 3 Cdn Inf Bde, Mar 1943, app. 18, Ex DALMALLY, Int Log.

75. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9771, file 2/Combined Ops/1/2: Gen Sir B. C. T. Paget (C-in-C, HF) to CMHQ re: "Training Programme at CTCs," 13 Mar 1943.

76. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Nov 1942, app. 14, Mann to GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div re: "Combined Ops Trg," 12 Nov 1942.

a vital port and penetrating inland by up to 20 miles to secure an airfield, so the programme also emphasized hardening training.⁷⁷

For the higher echelons of command, the biggest training event of 1943 was Exercise SPARTAN, directed by GHQ Home Forces during the first half of March. Though slightly smaller than BUMPER, SPARTAN was still one of the largest exercises ever held in the United Kingdom, involving four armoured divisions, six infantry divisions, and various corps and army troops. Given its size and scope, much was at stake, not least the reputations of the commanders of each of the participating field armies. SPARTAN proved to be of minimal tactical value to the Canadian infantry units involved, but was instrumental in McNaughton's downfall as the commander of First Canadian Army and the senior Canadian officer in the United Kingdom.

The exercise was intended to grapple with the problems associated with an advance from an established bridgehead, to practice the handling of the new types of divisions, and to practice cooperation between ground and air forces. The infantry were issued blank ammunition and artillery regiments were issued with "thunderflashes," pyrotechnics designed to simulate the firing of guns and mortars. Smoke generators were used to simulate the smoke yielded by exploding shells.⁷⁸ McNaughton commanded First Canadian Army, designated "Second Army" for the exercise, the larger of the two opposing armies. In fact, it was the largest force ever commanded by a Canadian to that time. All Canadian field formations took part except 1st Canadian Infantry Division as two of its brigades were occupied with combined operations training. Figure 5.2 shows

77. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9771, file 2/Comb Ops/1: Mann to GS, 3 Cdn Div re: "Special Assault Trg," 4 Dec 1942; encl., "Training of Canadian Assault Units at CTC Dorlin: General Idea"; and encl., "Suggested Assault Unit for Training at Dorlin."

78. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9792, file 2/Ex Sparton/1: GHQ HF Ex SPARTAN, index 1, General Exercise Instructions pars. 1, 65–67.

the opposing forces involved in the exercise. Making its operational debut was the newly raised II Canadian Corps under Lieutenant-General Sansom. Sansom's corps contained the bulk of Second Army's armoured capabilities, with the Guards Armoured Division

Figure 5.2

Exercise SPARTAN: Opposing Forces

First Canadian Army ("British Second Army")	Eastern Command ("German Sixth Army")
I Canadian Corps	VIII Corps
2nd Canadian Infantry Division	9th Armoured Division
3rd Canadian Infantry Division	42nd Armoured Division
1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade	
	XI Corps
II Canadian Corps	49th (West Riding) Infantry Division
5th Canadian Armoured Division	61st Infantry Division
Guards Armoured Division	Buckinghamshire Brigade Group
XII Corps	
43rd (Wessex) Division	
53rd (Welsh) Division	
31st Army Tank Brigade	
34th Army Tank Brigade	
"Z" Mobile Composite Group, RAF	"X" Mobile Composite Group, RAF

Source: C. P. Stacey, "G.H.Q. Exercise 'SPARTAN', March 1943," CMHQ Report No. 94, 12 May 1943, par. 8

and 5th Canadian Armoured Division under command. In total, "Second Army" consisted of two infantry divisions, two armoured divisions, two mixed divisions, and three independent army tank brigades. Representing the "German Sixth Army" was Eastern Command under Lieutenant-General James Gammell. Gammell's force consisted

of two infantry and two armoured divisions, plus the Buckinghamshire Brigade Group, a force of infantry and armoured units.⁷⁹

Unlike BUMPER, this was an offensive exercise for the British units. The scenario involved the British landing at “Southland” and establishing a bridgehead there.⁸⁰ McNaughton’s instructions (from GHQ Home Forces, which represented the BEF) were to launch an attack through Southland to destroy the “German” forces in “Eastland.” This was to be carried out in two phases: first, capturing bridgeheads in Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire; second, by invading Eastland through the unfortified border between it and Southland. McNaughton had to capture Huntingdon, the Eastland capital, as quickly as possible. Conversely, Gammell, advised that such an attack was probable, had to hold Huntingdon at all costs. The “Germans” were not allowed to cross the border into Southland.⁸¹ McNaughton, informed that the enemy was disposed in two groups, at Wash and Fen, decided to attack between them. He would send I Canadian Corps through the area between Northampton and Huntingdon, while II Canadian Corps would cover its left flank while destroying German armour in the area. XII Corps would cover I Canadian Corps’s right flank. In phase 2, the two Canadian corps would destroy “German” forces to the north and west, while XII Corps held the east flank. The British forces were assembled in their proper places by 3 March as ordered.

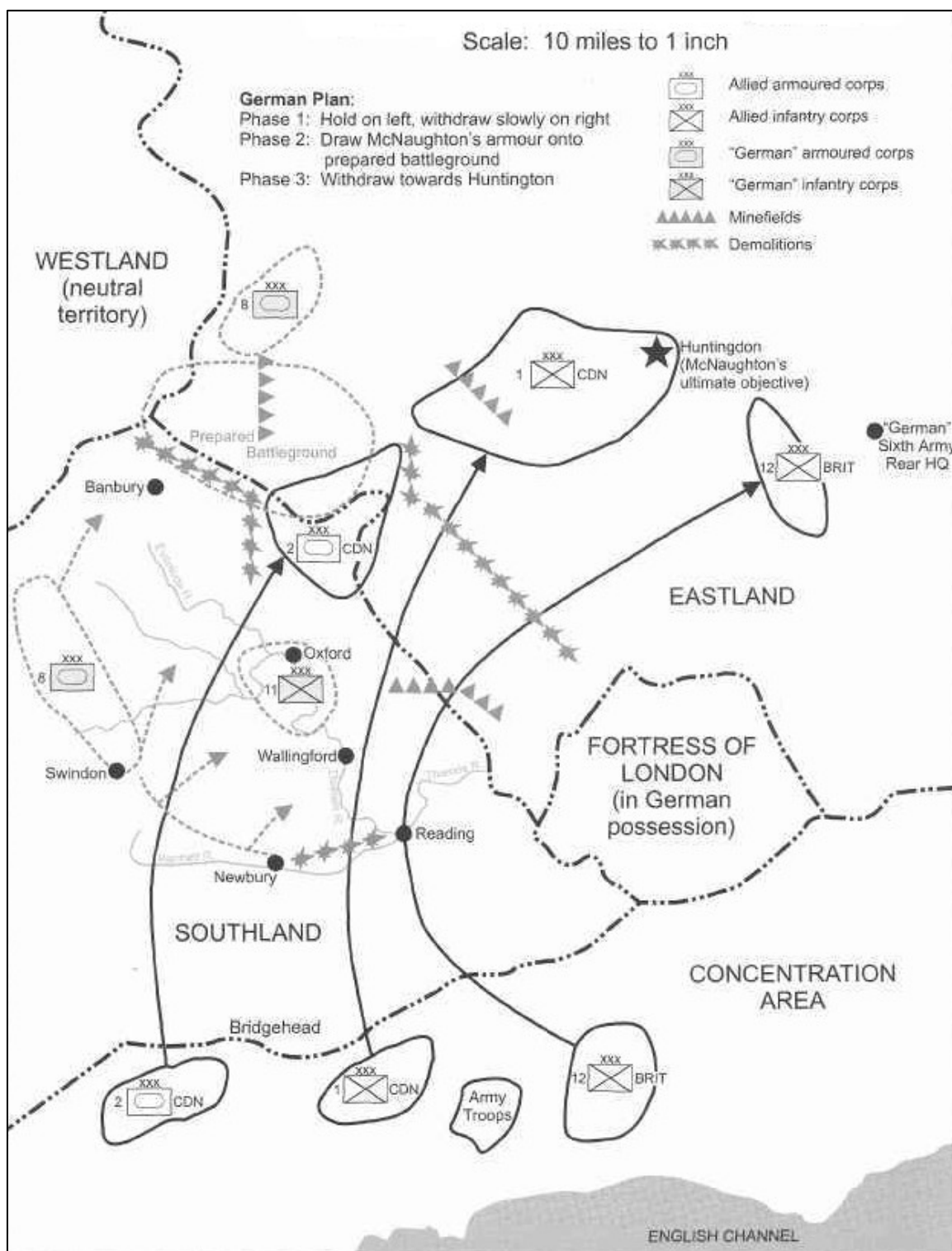
79. C. P. Stacey, “G.H.Q. Exercise ‘SPARTAN’, March 1943,” CMHQ Report No. 94, 12 May 1943, pars. 1–9.

80. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9792, file 2/Ex Spartan/1: GHQ HF Ex SPARTAN, index 6, Narrative.

81. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9793, file 2/Ex Spartan/1/2: Paget, “G.H.Q. Exercise ‘SPARTAN,’ March, 1943: Comments by Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces,” apps. A and B.

Figure 5.3

Exercise SPARTAN: "German" Commander's Initial Plans

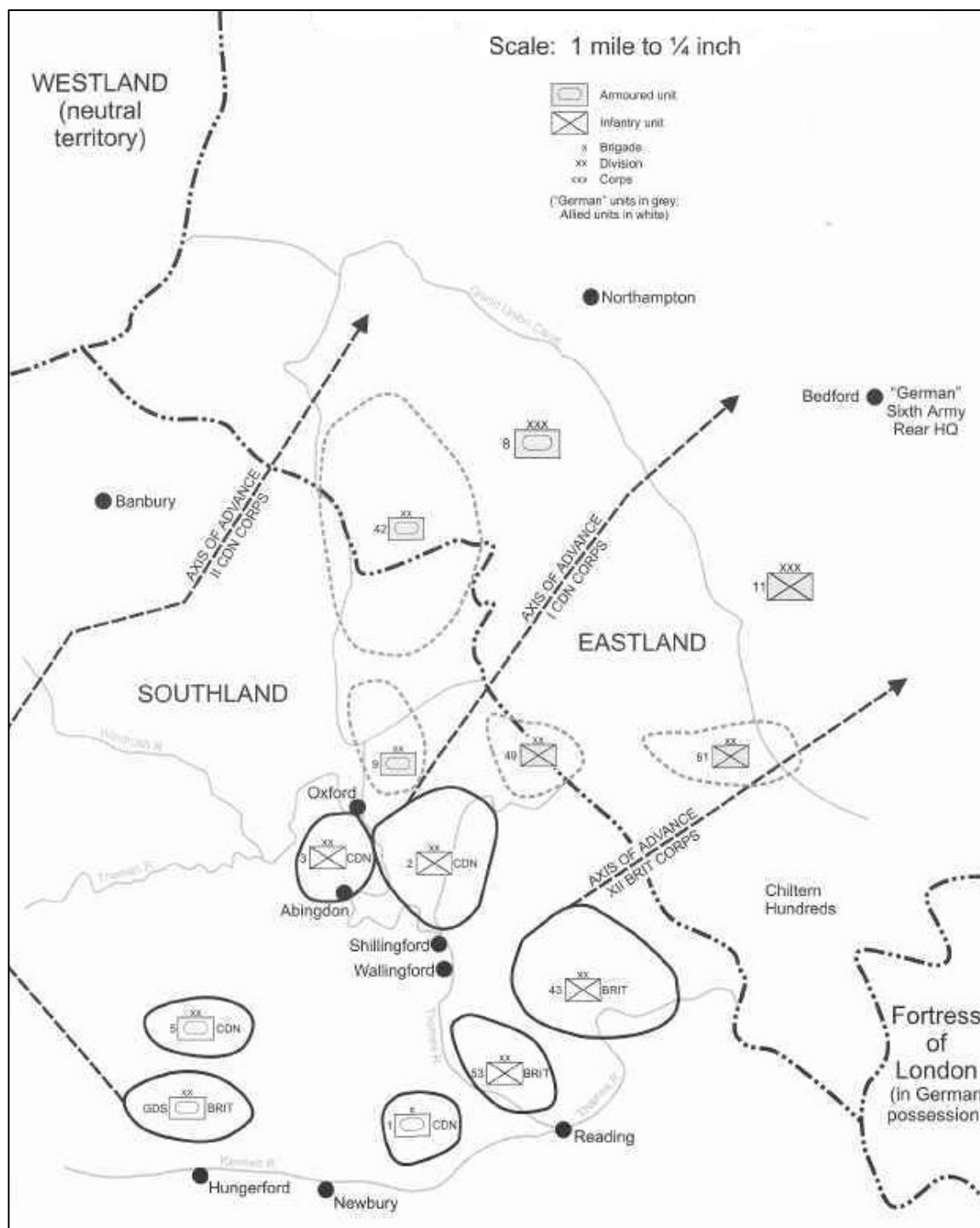


At 2140 hours on 2 March, McNaughton ordered his formations to move from the bridgehead at first light on 5 March.⁸² But on the morning of the 4th, McNaughton received word from Control (GHQ Home Forces) that the “Germans” had crossed into Southland. McNaughton ordered I and II Canadian Corps to make their advance at noon. McNaughton’s forces made contact with enemy reconnaissance elements immediately. By 0000 hours on 5 March, “Second Army” had reached a line along the rivers Kennet and Thames. After battling the Buckinghamshire Brigade, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division seized a bridge across the Thames at Sonning. By 1110 hours, two brigades were across and the bridgehead was six miles deep. To the west, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division had secured a bridgehead across the Kennet, near Newbury. Gammell ordered two withdrawals on 5 and 6 March. During the 6th, McNaughton kept moving forward with his right, withholding his armour. He made at least two potentially fatal tactical errors. First, on the 6th he ordered II Canadian Corps east across the Thames, putting all three of his corps in a tight concentration between Oxford and Reading. Second, he passed II Canadian Corps through I Canadian Corps on the night of the 7th, wreaking havoc on logistics and communications. The rest of the exercise saw constant delays for the “British” as Gammell’s troops destroyed bridges in their withdrawals and because of traffic congestion. 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, bearing the brunt of most of the fighting on the British side, suffered terrible simulated casualties as a result. Control called “cease fire” at 0900 hours on 12 March and declared Second Army as the “winner” as the destruction of the “German Sixth Army” was imminent.⁸³

82. Ibid.: Brig G. G. Simonds (BGS, “Second Army”), “Second Army” OO No. 3, 2 Mar 1943, pars. 4–7, 10–24.

83. Detailed accounts of the exercise can be found in *ibid.*: GHQ, HF, “G.H.Q. Exercise ‘SPARTAN,’ March, 1943: Narrative of Events,” Mar 1943; Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 94; and John Nelson

Figure 5.4
Exercise SPARTAN: Situation, 2400 hours, 7 March 1943



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Rickard, *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), chap. 9.

Though the “British” side technically won, this did not mean the exercise as a whole was a success. Rather, the British high command considered SPARTAN a disappointment. The exercise revealed that though some problems in the British Army had been rectified since Dunkirk, more serious ones still existed at the top. General Paget issued a lengthy assessment of the general points that arose from the exercise. Command was clearly lacking as neither army commander put enough thought into their plans and gave insufficient notice of movements to their corps commanders. Bridging was also a serious issue, particularly in Second Army, which built some sixty bridges during the exercise but only used half of them because the situation changed so quickly. Second Army’s bridging plans, the responsibility of the chief engineer, Major-General C. S. L. Hertzberg, were based on the erroneous assumption that no bridging was necessary up to the Eastland border and that the enemy demolition of bridges would be minimal. Better bridging plans would have resulted in fewer traffic and logistical problems throughout the exercise.⁸⁴

Historians have largely accepted Paget’s assessment without conducting any deep analysis of the exercise on their own. The Canadian official history emphasized the traffic jams, fuel shortages, and communications problems throughout the exercise. Though C. P. Stacey recognized that the Canadians’ performance during such a large exercise reflected very badly on McNaughton, he did not focus on generalship in his brief discussion of the exercise. Rather, he emphasized the inexperience of II Canadian Corps and 5th Canadian Armoured Division.⁸⁵ This might be due to Stacey’s self-censorship. The official historian was close to McNaughton and later wrote that “it is not easy to

84. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9793, file 2/Ex Spartan/1/2: Paget, “G.H.Q. Exercise ‘SPARTAN,’ March, 1943,” pars. 11–15, 51–54, 77–81.

85. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 250–251.

write pontifical comments about one's friends, especially those who ran risks and carried responsibilities that one did not share." With respect to McNaughton's performance during SPARTAN, Stacey wrote, "Andy, I think, was looking at the affair from the point of view of its training value; a very secure person, I doubt whether he ever considered the possibility that a poor performance by the army might reflect on himself."⁸⁶

Much of the subsequent historiography of SPARTAN has been highly critical of McNaughton. Historian John A. English argued that SPARTAN made plain that McNaughton had very clearly demonstrated to his British superiors that he did not have the capacity to command an army in the field.⁸⁷ McNaughton's most recent biographer, John Nelson Rickard, in what is certainly the most thorough study of the exercise and its aftermath, challenged this view. Though McNaughton's performance left much to be desired, Rickard argued that there were numerous mitigating factors. For instance, the fledgling II Canadian Corps headquarters was included in the exercise prematurely but McNaughton had supported its inclusion because the exercise itself was a rare opportunity. In addition to being based on faulty assumptions, Hertzberg's plans were never more than a day ahead of the divisions' advance whereas these plans should have been made with a view four days in advance.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, McNaughton's performance did not inspire much confidence among his British superiors.

Left largely unexamined is what SPARTAN meant for the infantry battalions. Paget complimented the troops' battle discipline, stating that "the initiative of junior leaders has improved markedly and needs every encouragement, as it is they who in the end do most

86. C. P. Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa: Deneau, [1982?]), 116, 233.

87. John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 144–146.

88. Rickard, *The Politics of Command*, chap. 10.

to win battles,” and “I noticed that the fighting spirit in most units was of a high order.”⁸⁹ Infantry battalions had mixed reactions to the exercise. As the war diary of the RHLI exclaimed, “The general opinion of all ranks is that this was the most successful exercise the bn [battalion] has ever participated in. It was the most realistic and in not a few cases the most entertaining.” Even though 4th Brigade was destroyed,

All ranks feel that the scheme has been most successful. We have learned not only a lot about tactics but something about strategy as well and first and foremost we have learned to look after ourselves in the field and we know that we can withstand very strenuous operations without effectively lowering our efficiency.⁹⁰

The Black Watch was just thankful that the exercise was over: “There had been no real hardship but the discomforts had been many and the lack of any straight opportunity for sleep was beginning to affect the behaviour of every one.”⁹¹ British units generally felt that SPARTAN did nothing to test the infantry’s tactical skills and was more useful for testing the battalion’s command and control. Minor tactical skills were simply not needed for such large exercises as umpires determined the victor according to which side had the best fire plan, the most firepower, the necessary logistical preparations to implement it, and whose troops crossed the start line at the right time and speed. Thus, exercises like SPARTAN were not evidence of whether troops were well-trained in all of their tactical roles.⁹²

Amidst the new doctrinal literature and battalion establishment, SPARTAN demonstrated that the Canadian infantry battalions were more prepared for battle than their senior commanders. The exercise was a clear indication to the British that

89. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9793, file 2/Ex Spartan/1/2: Paget, “G.H.Q. Exercise ‘SPARTAN,’ March, 1943,” pars. 111–112.

90. WD, RHLI, 1–12 Mar 1943.

91. WD, RHC, 12 Mar 1943.

92. Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944*, 33, 36–39.

McNaughton was not a skilled field commander. He and others at First Canadian Army headquarters had exercised poor judgement throughout that led to disorganization, delays, and high casualties. While formation headquarters throughout the Canadian Army (Overseas) absorbed the lessons of SPARTAN, plans were underway to include Canadian troops in the impending opening of a new front in the war: Italy.

On to Sicily

In July 1943, after three and a half years at war, the Canadian Army would finally get its chance to engage the enemy in protracted operations. 1st Canadian Infantry Division and 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade were selected to take part in a large Allied operation in the Mediterranean. The island of Sicily was the target. Once taken, it would serve as the base from which further operations against the Italian mainland could be launched. Training for the operation, however, was complicated by further changes to unit establishments, changes of command, and poor weather. Nevertheless, the units of 1st Canadian Infantry Division underwent a rigorous training programme that was more thorough than 4th and 6th Brigades had endured the previous spring in preparation for the Dieppe Raid.

While the Americans and Soviets eagerly pushed for a “second front” to be opened in Western Europe in 1943, the British did not believe that the Allies were ready for a cross-Channel attack. Instead, they preferred to weaken the Axis powers systematically. A campaign in the Mediterranean hopefully would knock Italy out of the

war and force the Germans to reinforce the Italian mainland, thereby diverting considerable forces away from Western Europe and relieve pressure on the Soviets. The idea for invading Sicily originated in November 1942 when the British War Cabinet met to decide on operations in 1943. The British initially believed that it might be feasible to invade either Sicily (Operation HUSKY) or Sardinia (Operation BRIMSTONE).⁹³ Recognizing that either operation would require American assistance, the British spent the rest of the year developing outline plans for both operations. At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, British and American military chiefs agreed that, owing to its more suitable landing beaches, Sicily should be the major invasion target in the Mediterranean that summer, once the campaign in Tunisia was completed. The Combined Chiefs of Staff — a body composed of the service chiefs of staff of the United Kingdom and the United States — worked on the plan for HUSKY throughout the spring. After months of discussion between the British and Americans, the plan was finalized in early May. Even at this late stage, the Americans were in favour of limiting operations in the Mediterranean and focusing on a cross-Channel invasion.

American General Dwight D. Eisenhower would command the operation, which was set for 10 July. The plan called for preliminary efforts to gain air and naval superiority in the region prior to the night of 9/10 July, when parachute and glider landings would secure airfields and disrupt the enemy's ability to launch counter-attacks against the landing infantry. In the dark, the first wave of assault forces would land on the south of the island. General Sir Harold Alexander, Eisenhower's deputy, would command the ground forces in the newly created 15th Army Group. Montgomery's Eighth Army,

93. TNA, CAB 66/31/23: Winston S. Churchill (Minister of Defence), memorandum re: "Plans and Operations in the Mediterranean, Middle East and Near East" to the Chiefs of Staff, 25 Nov 1942, pars. 8–12.

consisting of the veteran XIII and XXX Corps fresh from their victory in North Africa, would land between Syracuse and Pozzallo on the southeastern coast of the island, establish a bridgehead, and prepare to advance on Catania. On Sicily's southwestern coast, Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr.'s Seventh United States Army would land between Licata and Pozzallo and protect the airfields in the vicinity of Gela and Montgomery's left flank.⁹⁴

The Canadian infantry knew nothing about the impending invasion of Sicily or Canada's eventual participation in it. While the Combined Chiefs of Staff planned HUSKY, Canadian infantry units were busy adjusting to new organizational changes. There was still some debate in early 1943 as to the establishment of an infantry battalion. At the end of January 1943, the number of rifle companies was reduced from four to three and the anti-aircraft platoon was eliminated from the administrative wing. The headquarters company consisted of a signal platoon and an administration platoon, while the support company consisted of a 3-inch mortar platoon, a carrier platoon, an anti-tank platoon, and a pioneer platoon. This left the infantry battalion with 32 officers and 741 other ranks.⁹⁵ In April, the British decided to reintroduce the fourth rifle company to the establishment of the infantry battalion, giving the battalion a strength of 37 officers and

94. For details on the planning of Operation HUSKY and its place in the Allies' grand strategy, see Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smyth, with Martin Blumenson, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, United States Army in World War II: The Mediterranean Theater of Operations (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, US Army, 1965), chaps. 1, 3, 5; Michael Howard, *Grand Strategy*, vol. 4, *August 1942–September 1943*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1970), chaps. 11–14, 19; C. J. C. Molony, with F. C. Flynn, H. L. Davies, and T. P. Gleave, *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. 5, *The Campaign in Sicily, 1943 and the Campaign in Italy, 3rd September 1943 to 31st March 1944*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1973), chap. 1; and Carlo D'Este, *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily, 1943* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), chaps. 1, 3–8.

95. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1/2: Brig G. G. Simonds (BGS, First Cdn Army), "Reorganization – Infantry," 25 Jan 1943; Brig A. W. Beament (DAG, CMHQ), CMHQ Adm Order No. 18, 27 Jan 1943; Oglesby, AHQ Report No. 57, par. 40; Crake, CMHQ Report No. 168, pars. 156–157.

811 other ranks (figure 5.5).⁹⁶ The infantry battalions of 1st Canadian Infantry Division immediately adopted this establishment once the decision was taken to include the division in HUSKY. The battalions in the remaining Canadian divisions would not adopt the new establishment until July.⁹⁷ This was the last major revision to the infantry battalion establishment during the war.⁹⁸

At the same time, the British also conceived of a new type of infantry unit, the “support battalion,” to provide mortar and machine gun support for infantry brigades. Each support battalion would have a company-sized “support group” for each infantry brigade in the division equipped with medium machine guns, 20-millimetre anti-aircraft guns, and 4.2-inch heavy mortars. Once the British settled on an establishment in April, First Canadian Army converted the machine gun battalions in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions into support battalions, each with a support group devoted to an infantry brigade.⁹⁹ As units needed time to adjust to the newly adopted establishments, Simonds issued a training directive following Exercise SPARTAN stating that the period from the exercise’s conclusion to 30 April would be devoted to unit training. The only formation exercises would be TEWTs at brigade and division headquarters and combined operations exercises.¹⁰⁰

96. LAC, RG 24, reel T-18730, vol. 12445, file 6/Br Army/1/2: WO Letter 20/Inf/3502 (S.D.1), 11 Apr 43, par. 1; Oglesby, AHQ Report No. 57, par. 41.

97. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17853, vol. 12252, file 1/Org Inf/1: Maj D. C. Spry (PA to LGen A. G. L. McNaughton) to MGen P. J. Montague (SO, CMHQ) re: “Conversion of Infantry Battalions,” 30 Apr 1943; LCol C. R. Archibald (GSO1 (SD), CMHQ), memorandum re: “Adoption WE II/233/2 by Inf Bns – 2nd & 3rd Inf Divs and 4th & 5th Armd Divs” to AAG (Org), 16 Jul 1943, par. 1.

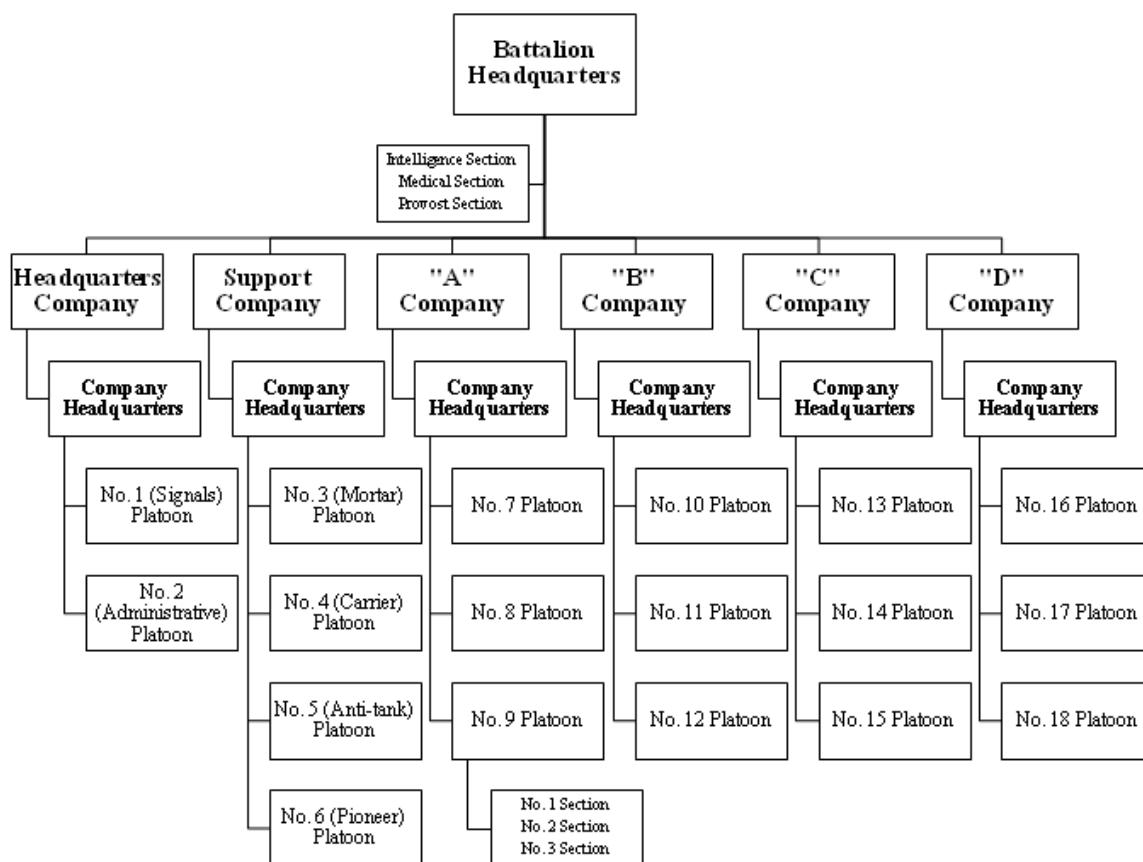
98. Crake, CMHQ Report No. 168, par. 158.

99. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17863, vol. 12260, file 1/Org Support/1: Maj C. J. Laurin (GSO2 (SD1), CMHQ), memorandum to SD, 5 Apr 1943; CMHQ, tel. GS 963 to NDHQ, 2 May 1943, pars. 1–2; GO 21, “Conversion and Redesignation — Active Units,” 14 Jan 1944, effective 1 May 43; Crake, CMHQ Report No. 168, pars. 161–162; Oglesby, AHQ Report No. 57, par. 17.

100. WD, GS, First Cdn Army, Mar 1943, app. 20, Simonds, First Cdn Army Trg Directive No. 12, 13 Mar 1943, par. 2.

Figure 5.5

Organization of a Canadian Infantry (Rifle) Battalion, April 1943–May 1945



Battalion HQ, HQ Company, and Support Company
Rifle Companies (each)

Officers	ORs
17	323
5 (×4)	122 (×4)
37	811

Source: R. B. Oglesby, "A Summary of Major Changes in Army Organization 1939–1945," AHQ Report No. 57, 22 Dec 1952, pars. 40–42

The spring of 1943 also brought a number of key changes of command in the Canadian Army (Overseas). On 13 April, Simonds, promoted to major-general, replaced Roberts as GOC 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, becoming the youngest general officer in the Canadian Army at 39 years old. Roberts went on to command the Canadian

Reinforcement Units though he kept his rank of major-general.¹⁰¹ Roberts did not lose his division as a delayed punishment for the failure of the Dieppe Raid. According to a 9 April letter from Crerar to McNaughton, Roberts was transferred because he had been found to be unsuitable for command of a division in the field after his performance during SPARTAN: 4th Brigade had been said to have been destroyed, and 5th and 6th Brigades had suffered 40 and 80 percent casualties, respectively.¹⁰² Taking Simonds's place as First Canadian Army's BGS was Brigadier Charles Foulkes, Price's GSO1 in 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. Just prior to Price's dismissal on 7 September 1942, Foulkes had served as the Commander of 3rd Brigade. Foulkes was particularly adept at coordinating training.¹⁰³ He issued his first training instruction as BGS on 17 April and it was largely straightforward, logical, and authoritative. Under McNaughton's direction,¹⁰⁴ he extended the period of unit training to cover all of May; June would be devoted to brigade training. During these two months, the emphasis of all training was to be placed on the offensive, developing the initiative of junior leaders, teamwork, and fostering instinctive and immediate responses to tactical situations.¹⁰⁵

Little did the men of 1st Canadian Infantry Division know in April that provisions were being made for them to participate in HUSKY. To Canadian soldiers in the United Kingdom, it appeared that they were in for a fourth summer of training. While they had been training, the army's inaction had become a serious problem for Mackenzie King's government. All this time, King had adhered to McNaughton's adamant stance that all

101. C. P. Stacey, "Situation of the Canadian Military Forces in the United Kingdom, Spring, 1943, Part I: Recent Changes in Commands and Staffs," CMHQ Report No. 96, 20 May 1943, pars. 6–7.

102. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 1, file 958.009 (D23): Crerar to McNaughton, 9 Apr 1943.

103. Foulkes's career to April 1943 is detailed in Delaney, *Corps Commanders*, 255–265.

104. LAC, MG 30 E 133, vol. 249, file "War Diary 1/4/43–31/4/43": app. N, Spry, "Army Comd's Conference with Principle Staff Officers," 8 Apr 1943, par. 144 (f).

105. WD, GS, First Cdn Army, Apr 1943: Brig C. Foulkes (BGS, First Cdn Army), First Cdn Army Trg Directive No. 14, 17 Apr 1943, pars. 2–3.

Canadian forces fight together. Ralston and Power had long believed the army's inaction was having a terrible effect on morale at home and had been urging the prime minister to insist that the British include Canadian troops in active operations. Idleness was also deteriorating the morale of the soldiers. As Captain Alex Campbell of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment wrote to his mother in April 1943:

Sometimes I get so fed up with this sitting around while there is a real job to do I feel like transferring to the English army. At least they do see some action. . . . I don't think there has ever in the history of the world been another case where a volunteer army has been left idle for three years during a war.¹⁰⁶

Even Crerar was concerned about his men's morale. As he wrote to Montgomery — by this time a full general and a knight commander of the Order of the Bath — on 8 April:

I am quite certain that the 1 Canadian Corps has never been so fit for battle, in every respect, as it is now. The quality of my Commanders and Commanding Officers is much higher than it was a year, or even six months, ago. The troops are better trained in their weapons, fieldcraft and tactics, are very fit (as was shown during Exercise 'SPARTAN') and discipline is excellent. All the same, there is an increasing impatience amongst all ranks to "get cracking" and a pressure building up, which is bound to become more difficult to control.¹⁰⁷

This is not to suggest that discipline was breaking down. While there were incidents of drunkenness, criminality, rowdiness, and other forms of destructive behaviour early in the war, the Canadians' relationship with the British people actually improved with time.¹⁰⁸ Morale in the Canadian Army (Overseas) never deteriorated to the point that the combat effectiveness of its units was compromised.

106. CWM, 20100088-030: Capt A. R. Campbell (Hast & PER) to Sarah Jane Railton Campbell (mother), n.d. (ca. Apr 1943).

107. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 7, file 958C.009 (D172): Crerar to Gen Sir B. L. Montgomery (GOC-in-C Eighth Army), 8 Apr 1943.

108. C. P. Stacey and Barbara M. Wilson, *The Half-Million: The Canadians in Britain, 1939–1946* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 34–40, 45–46, chap. 6.

Nevertheless, by the autumn of 1942, King's government had begun to face strenuous criticism from the media and the Opposition for the army's inaction, especially as forces from other Dominions long had been fighting in North Africa. The policy of keeping Canadian divisions together was keeping all of them from seeing combat. So, in October, Ralston had asked the British for Canadian forces to be put into action and assured them that there was no requirement that the entire First Canadian Army be kept together, despite McNaughton's wishes. On 31 December, General Sir Alan Brooke (CIGS) informed McNaughton that Canadian troops might have the opportunity to participate in an invasion of Sicily or Sardinia in the near future. On 23 April 1943, he formally asked McNaughton for a Canadian division to participate in HUSKY. Two days later, McNaughton accepted the invitation as he believed that once the battle for Sicily was over, the division would be returned to the United Kingdom to prepare for the campaign in Northwest Europe along with the rest of First Canadian Army. In this way, his dream of having all Canadian formations fight under one army headquarters would be preserved. 1st Canadian Infantry Division seemed to be the logical choice for HUSKY as it had been training in the United Kingdom since its arrival in December 1939 and neither of the two other Canadian infantry divisions was prepared: 2nd Canadian Infantry Division was still recovering from Operation JUBILEE and 3rd Canadian Infantry Division had yet to have a concerted combined operations training programme. 1st Canadian Infantry Division would be part of Lieutenant-General Miles Dempsey's XXX Corps and land at Pachino on the island's southern apex. The Canadians would take the place of the British 3rd Infantry Division, originally selected for the operation in February. Canada would also contribute Brigadier R. A. Wyman's 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade to the

operation. Unfortunately, 1st Canadian Infantry Division received an abrupt change of command right after the decision to include it in HUSKY had been made when Salmon was killed in an airplane crash on 29 April. Simonds succeeded him as GOC, after having commanded 2nd Canadian Infantry Division for just over two weeks. Major-General E. L. M. Burns took command of that division.¹⁰⁹

In May, 1st Canadian Infantry Division and 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade resumed combined operations training to prepare them to face an opposed landing and subsequent operations in mountainous territory. Brigadier Mann, the BGS of I Canadian Corps, issued a letter to the entire corps stating that once 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the tank brigade had completed their combined operations training, the other divisions would get their turn in the near future. Like the security measures that had been adopted prior to the Dieppe Raid, this was to avoid disclosing that Canadian formations had been selected for an upcoming operation.¹¹⁰ In reality, there were no firm plans for combined operations for 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions.

1st Canadian Infantry Division's brigades would undergo a week's advanced combined operations training at Inveraray. 1st and 2nd Brigades would be trained as assault brigades and 3rd Brigade would be trained as a follow-up brigade. Simonds thus wanted his division, particularly 3rd Brigade, to have as much mountain training as possible. He felt that combined operations training too often emphasized the beach

109. G. W. L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 2, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956), 20–26; Stacey, CMHQ Report No. 96, pars. 5, 8. 1st Canadian Infantry Division's plan for the operation can be found in WD, GS, 1 Cdn Inf Div, Jun 1943, app. 9, 1 Cdn Inf Div OO No. 1, 7 Jun 1943.

110. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Apr 1943, app. 16, Mann, circular letter re: "Advanced Combined Training, 1 Cdn Div and 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde," 25 Apr 1943, par. 4.

landing whereas pushing inland was just as critical a phase.¹¹¹ Hence, 3rd Brigade spent the first half of May undergoing training at the Mountain and Snow Warfare Training Centre in Perthshire, Scotland. The Royal 22^e Régiment trained at Dunblane while the Carleton and York Regiment and the West Nova Scotia Regiment trained at Crieff. The emphasis of mountain training was getting the men accustomed to moving quickly across the steep terrain that they would encounter in Sicily. Men were taught to keep their balance while in full battle order, move as fast as possible, and be able to fight when they made contact with the enemy. They were expected to cover 1,000 feet of ground or a 300-foot climb in one hour.¹¹² This tough job was made easier with the introduction of the Everest carrying frame, which enabled men to carry heavy loads on their backs. “This is an ingenious device,” recorded the West Novas’ war diary, “with which a man can take the load of a mule, or almost.”¹¹³ Men were also trained in judging distance over mountainous terrain, a crucial skill for light machine gun fire or calling in artillery fire on an enemy target. Companies also conducted compass marches lasting six hours or more to practice navigating in the rugged terrain.¹¹⁴ On the 18th, the brigade moved to Inveraray for its turn at combined operations training.

For the other two brigades, the training program at Inveraray, assisted by the headquarters of the British I Corps, involved hardening training, hill climbing, practice with scramble nets, assault landings, fast marches, and sniper training, along with daily physical training, bayonet practice, cross-country runs, unloading from large ships into an

111. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Inf Div, May 1943, app. 57, MGen G. G. Simonds (GOC 1 Cdn Inf Div), circular letter re: “Operational Trg,” 15 May 1943, par. 2.

112. WD, R 22e R, May 1943, app. 6, M & SWTC, “Hill Walking and River Crossing.”

113. WD, West NSR, 10 May 1943.

114. WD, R 22e R, May 1943, app. 6, Maj M. E. P. Garneau (A/CO, R 22e R), Training Programme, Week Ending 15 May 1943, 9 May 1943; WD, Carlt & York R, 1–18 May 1943.

LCA at night, and unarmed combat. Special instruction was given on beach exit drill, using Bangalore torpedoes, and using the new Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank (PIAT).¹¹⁵ The highlight of the training programme was the aptly named Exercise WETSHOD on the Ayrshire coast. WETSHOD's purpose was to test 1st and 2nd Brigades' ability to stage an attack on a defended beach and establish a beachhead, as well as testing the landing craft crews. 3rd Brigade did not participate because its role in HUSKY called for landing on a beach that had already been secured. The objective was to capture an aerodrome and the port of Ayr and to destroy the enemy presence in the area. 1st Brigade would land at TARE Beach and 2nd Brigade would land at UNCLE Beach, south and north of Troon, respectively. The 48th Highlanders of Canada and the Edmonton Regiment would be the reserve battalions of their respective brigades. The exercise lasted from 18 to 22 May, with the first four days devoted to disembarking in LSTs and practicing loading into landing craft.¹¹⁶ Though the weather was miserable, the exercise went on as planned. The brigades landed at 0130 hours on the morning of the 22nd, the realism of the exercise enhanced by a squadron of Spitfires firing over the heads of the landing troops.¹¹⁷ The exercise revealed that there were still problems with the RN's navigation, as a portion of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada's "B" Company, including its commander, arrived on the beach at 0545 hours, after their landing craft got lost and wandered around the Irish Sea in the dark for nearly six hours.¹¹⁸

115. A. T. Sesia and J. B. Conacher, "Canadian Operations in Sicily, July–August 1943, Part I: The Preliminaries of Operation 'HUSKY' (The Assault on Sicily)," CMHQ Report No. 126, 16 Nov 1944, pars. 146–147.

116. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Inf Div, May 1943, app. 15, 1 Cdn Inf Div Ex WETSHOD, 4 May 1943, pars. 1, 3, 7; WD, HQ, 1 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1943, app. 6, "Joint Outline of Exercise 'WETSHOD,'" 11 May 1943, 1, 7, 20.

117. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Inf Div, 22 May 1943.

118. WD, Seaforth of C, 22 May 1943.

The Canadians' last training phase before leaving the United Kingdom was a dress rehearsal of the operation. In Exercise STYMIE, the Canadians would land on a section of the Ayrshire coast that resembled the terrain of the beaches near Pachino, although the troops were told it resembled part of France. The plan corresponded closely with that for HUSKY: 1st and 2nd Brigades would land and secure a beachhead while 3rd Brigade would push inland. Only 1st and 2nd Brigades' landings could be rehearsed until the exercise was cancelled on 18 June due to bad weather. A second attempt, STYMIE II, scheduled for the 22nd, again had to be cancelled due to the weather. To give 3rd Brigade a chance to practice its role in the operation, it carried out a landing in the river Clyde on the 23rd.¹¹⁹

But while the Canadians' rehearsal for the operation was inadequate, the Allies could not allow this to delay HUSKY. In the remaining days prior to embarkation, the Canadians spent their time doing physical training, attending lectures, and performing routine tasks. Beginning on 1 July, when all Canadian troops were aboard their transport ships, they were fully briefed on their destination and the invasion plan. While en route to Sicily, the men continued physical training and time in lectures that usually reviewed matters of first aid, sanitation, the treatment of prisoners of war and civilians, and strategies to avoid malaria.¹²⁰

For the men of 1st Canadian Infantry Division, their lengthy training in the United Kingdom was over and they would soon experience battle for the first time. The division, which had spent the longest of any Canadian formation overseas to that point in the war, had spent years training for various combat roles: as a mobile counter-attacking force, as

119. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Inf Div, 18 Jun 1943; WD, HQ, 3 Cdn Inf Bde, 23 Jun 1943; Sesia and Conacher, CMHQ Report No. 126, pars. 257–262.

120. Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*, 41–45.

a coastal defence formation, and, since the autumn of 1942, as an amphibious invasion and consolidation force. Training had changed accordingly. Whereas the division accomplished very little training early in the war, training became more arduous over the years with the introduction of battle drill, new regimental officers, and combined operations training. The combined operations training programme in advance of the invasion of Sicily was customized to prepare each brigade for its specific task during the operation. It was unfortunate that the STYMIE exercises could not be completed to satisfaction and that the RN still had trouble with navigation. However, it is undeniable that 1st Canadian Infantry Division's training for Sicily had been more organized and successful than had 2nd Canadian Division's training for Dieppe. On 10 July, the infantry would find out how prepared they were for the storm that awaited them at Sicily.

The first waves of Canadian infantry landed in Sicily in the early hours of 10 July. There were some navigational errors because of the darkness and three of the Canadians' supply vessels were sunk by enemy submarines en route, sending over 500 vehicles, 40 guns, and the division headquarters' signals equipment to the bottom of the Mediterranean.¹²¹ Infantry battalions thus had to push forward with limited motor transport and artillery support and use their own firepower to gain ground. Nevertheless, both advance brigades, meeting limited enemy resistance on the beaches, were ready to take their phase 2 objectives — the Pachino airfield and a major artillery battery — by dawn. The infantry of 3rd Brigade and the Sherman tanks of 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade were ashore

121. Ibid., 45–46; William J. McAndrew, "Fire or Movement? Canadian Tactical Doctrine, Sicily — 1943," *Military Affairs* 51, no. 3 (1987): 141; Mark Zuehlke, *Operation Husky: The Canadian Invasion of Sicily, July 10–August 7, 1943* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008), 79–85.

by 1015 hours and 1100 hours, respectively. Italian resistance collapsed and the phase 2 objectives were captured without great difficulty. The day was a complete success for the Canadians and casualties on the first day were very light: seven other ranks killed and three officers and 22 other ranks wounded. The Canadians killed an estimated 100 enemy troops and captured some 650 prisoners by 1845 hours.

Fighting in the Sicilian hills inland over the next four weeks, however, proved much more challenging and costly. The Germans easily anticipated the Allies' strategy and shifted their forces against Montgomery's sector in an effort to prevent Eighth Army from capturing Catania. Advancing to the centre of the island, the Canadians earned a series of hard-won victories against German troops in such hilltop towns as Caltagirone, Piazza Armerina, Valguarnera, Leonforte, and Agira, which overlooked roads that led eastward to the Catania plain.¹²²

The Canadian infantry truly exhibited some impressive tactical feats in Sicily. The episode that showed how well Canadian infantry could solve tactical problems was the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment's assault on Assoro on 20–22 July. Assoro rested on the western slope of a mountain with cliffs guarding the eastern approaches. The summit, the site of an ancient Norman castle whose ruins remained, rose 100 feet above the town. The Germans never believed the Allies would dare stage an attack against such an easily defended position. But the Hasting and Prince Edward Regiment sent one company and a special "assault company" under Major Alexander Campbell to scale the steepest of the castle hill's cliffs while the rest of the battalion approached from the

122. For details on the Canadians' participation in Operation HUSKY, see Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*, chaps. 3–6; Daniel G. Dancocks, *The D-Day Dodgers: The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), chaps. 1–5; William J. McAndrew, *Canadians and the Italian Campaign, 1943–1945* (Montreal: Art Global, 1996), chap. 2; and Mark Zuehlke, *Operation Husky*.

northeast. In the early hours of the 21st, the battalion quietly scaled the cliffs and captured the feature, much to the surprise of the German defenders. Throughout the day, the battalion used its elevated position to call in artillery strikes and conduct attacks into the town. On the 22nd, the 48th Highlanders of Canada, scaling cliffs to the west, helped the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment expel the Germans from Assoro.¹²³

Sicily was a successful campaign for the Canadians, who were withdrawn from fighting on 6 August. However, as historian Bill McAndrew has noted, the Canadians' experience in Sicily exemplified the weaknesses of British attack doctrine. Fire and movement with large artillery barrages conserved manpower but because artillery plans were so rigid, they often inhibited the infantry's manoeuvrability and commanders' flexibility.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, 1st Canadian Infantry Division's experience in Sicily demonstrated that Canadian infantry could succeed in landing on an enemy-held beach and advance deep inland to take key objectives in difficult terrain. Success came at a high price: 1st Canadian Infantry Division suffered 2,310 casualties throughout HUSKY, including 40 officers and 522 other ranks killed in action or died of wounds, 124 officers and 1,540 men wounded, and eight officers and 76 other ranks captured.¹²⁵

It is important to note also that there was a marked difference between the training for the Dieppe Raid and training for the invasion of Sicily. Like other types of training discussed in previous chapters such as minor infantry tactics and field exercises, combined operations training began rather poorly for the Canadians but evolved to

123. Maj A. R. Campbell (OC A Coy, Hast & PER) and Capt N. R. Waugh (OC D Coy, Hast & PER), "The Hasty Pees in Sicily," *Canadian Military History* 12, no. 3 (2003): 68–70; Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*, 103–107; Farley Mowat, *The Regiment*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), chap. 8; Zuehlke, *Operation Husky*, 255–264, 284–287.

124. McAndrew, "Fire or Movement?" 142–145.

125. Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*, 174–175.

become more coordinated and professional. Though 2nd Canadian Division's programme on the Isle of Wight was intense, the absence of thoroughly trained RN crews was one aspect of Operation JUBILEE that robbed the division of any chance of success at Dieppe. But amphibious training improved enough by 1943 that the men of 1st Canadian Infantry Division had much better preparation for HUSKY than their brethren had for JUBILEE. Though the STYMIE exercises before the operation had failed, the Canadians' success in Sicily shows that they were nevertheless sufficiently trained for combat. The infantry knew how to conduct a seaborne landing, push inland, coordinate with artillery and armour, and attack heavily defended enemy positions. Sicily's invasion was the first time in the war that the Canadian infantry's training was truly tested in combat. Despite their inexperience, the infantry of 1st Canadian Infantry Division achieved its objectives in Sicily without delay.

Prior to deployment to Sicily, the men of 1st Canadian Infantry Division often had complained about their long gestation period spent in the United Kingdom since December 1939. But nearly four years were necessary for training. There were many delays along the way, such as equipment shortages, problems with senior leadership, and time wasted on coastal defence duties. McNaughton's adamant policy against separating Canadian forces only made it more difficult for any division to be deployed outside of the United Kingdom. With all of these factors combined, the division was simply not ready for sustained combat until the invasion of Sicily. The years spent training were well-spent. The Canadians were fully trained by the time they entered battle in Sicily.

CHAPTER 6

INTO THE BREACH: NORMANDY

By the second half of 1943, the Western Allies had recaptured North Africa and had begun the conquest of Sicily, with a view to invading the Italian mainland. The Italians were ready to surrender. Following their decisive victory at Stalingrad in February, the Soviets delivered another crippling blow to the Germans at Kursk in July. In the Pacific, the Americans had scored a series of victories against the Japanese. As the threat of a German invasion of the British Isles had evaporated, this meant that the Canadians in the United Kingdom could focus on preparing for an offensive role in the Western Allies' next strategic move: the long-awaited invasion of Northwest Europe.

Historians have been highly critical of the Canadians' preparation for the Normandy campaign. In his final analysis of the Canadians' training for battle, C. P. Stacey concluded that notwithstanding the considerable training that the Canadians received prior to Normandy, "it is possible also to look back and say that the Canadian Army, though it got tremendous dividends from its long training period in England, still got less than it might have had."¹ John A. English similarly concluded that the Canadian high command had squandered its chance to adequately train the army in the years prior to D-Day.² Russell A. Hart wrote that "the Canadians were unable to compete tactically or operationally with the Germans in Normandy in 1944, and they could not replicate the Canadian triumphs of the Great War. The Canadian Army on the eve of D-Day was thus

1. C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 1, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 253.

2. John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 310–311.

a poor imitation of the British Army.” While 3rd Canadian Infantry Division succeeded on D-Day because of months of combined operations training, he argued that the division was ill-prepared for fighting inland.³

The problem is that none of these authors provided a detailed analysis of the final year of training before the invasion of Northwest Europe. An in-depth study of the summer of 1943 to the spring of 1944 reveals that far from being inadequate, training in this period was much more organized and coordinated than ever before and was effective because it was customized to each Canadian division’s role in the Normandy campaign. 3rd Canadian Infantry Division did very little training in cooperation with armour and instead focused primarily on combined operations. Owing to the benefit of the RN’s specially trained landing craft crews and the prolonged training programme, the division received better and more extensive amphibious training than its sister divisions had prior to their landings at Dieppe and Sicily. Meanwhile, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, its training badly set back at Dieppe, prepared for its role in expanding the Allied beachhead. Canada’s least developed division, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, had the challenge of catching up to the others’ training standard. Its infantry brigade focused on tank-infantry cooperation. The idea that the Canadians were undertrained for the invasion of Normandy is not supported by the evidence.

3. Russell A. Hart, *Clash of Arms: How the Allies Won in Normandy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 187, 343.

The Invasion Plan

Before delving into the Canadians' training in preparation for the Normandy campaign, it is helpful to discuss the plans for the Allied invasion of Northwest Europe and the Canadians' place within them. The Western Allies began drafting their first plans for an invasion of Northwest Europe as early as the end of 1941. Whereas the British had deep misgivings about confronting the Germans on the continent, the Americans had been enthusiastic about it since their entry into the war. The British successfully convinced the Americans that the Allies were wholly unprepared to launch a cross-Channel attack in 1942. Expelling Axis forces from North Africa (Operation TORCH) was a much more reasonable goal for 1942 and would provide an opportunity for British and American troops to gain valuable combat experience before daring to fight the Germans in Europe, where they were strongest. In 1943, British uneasiness about prematurely invading Northwest Europe again won out and the Allies opted to continue their efforts in the Mediterranean (Operation HUSKY).

By the summer of 1943, British and American staffs were already working on a new plan, this time for a cross-Channel attack in 1944. The only two real landing options were the Pas de Calais and Normandy for they were the only parts of France that could be attacked with the full benefit of tactical air support. The Pas de Calais was much closer to the coast of the United Kingdom, which would seem to make for an easier combined operation. But for that reason it was also the most obvious invasion target. Indeed, German coastal fortifications were nowhere stronger than in Calais. The plan that emerged, Operation OVERLORD, called for invading and establishing a lodgement area in

Normandy, from which future operations could be staged. OVERLORD was tentatively scheduled for 1 May 1944.

Since the United States would eventually supply the most troops for the campaign in Northwest Europe, it was only fitting to have an American as the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. On 6 December 1943, the Americans selected General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had experience commanding large forces in the Mediterranean and who had the necessary personal qualities to keep the British and Americans working together amicably. To maintain balance between the Allied powers and because the initial assault phase, Operation NEPTUNE, would depend heavily on British forces, the commander of ground forces would be British. General Montgomery was the only clear choice to command 21st Army Group, the new headquarters established for the operation. He was informed of his new appointment on 24 December.

At this time, the plan for NEPTUNE called for an amphibious assault by three divisions on a narrow front and an airborne assault to capture the city of Caen. The paltriness of this plan was not due to naïveté on the part of the Allied planners. The author of the plan was British Lieutenant-General Frederick Morgan (Chief of Staff of the Supreme Allied Commander, COSSAC). As he began his task before a supreme Allied commander had been named, Morgan had to work without the guidance of a superior. Instead, the British chiefs of staff had instructed him to base the scope of the operation on the number of landing craft available at the time. Upon seeing Morgan's plan in late December, both Montgomery and Eisenhower balked as an invasion would require a much larger force landing on a wider frontage than Morgan's three-division assault plan. Montgomery pushed immediately to expand the assaulting force to no fewer

than five divisions, with airborne divisions in support. During the initial stages of the campaign, 21st Army Group would be composed of two armies: First United States Army under Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley in the west and the British Second Army under Lieutenant-General Miles C. Dempsey in the east. Each army would have a frontage of two corps. The NEPTUNE plan featured amphibious landings of infantry and armoured forces at five codenamed beaches stretching from the Cotentin Peninsula to the river Orne: UTAH and OMAHA Beaches for the Americans and GOLD, JUNO, and SWORD Beaches for the British and Canadians. Airborne landings would protect the main assault from enemy counter-attack from the flanks. Once a lodgement had been established, the Allies could begin rolling back Germany's conquests in Western Europe.⁴

Since they had started arriving in the United Kingdom in December 1939, there was a widely held assumption among British and Canadian military planners that the Canadians would have a role in operations on the continent. These hopes were dashed after the terrible summer of 1940. But once the threat of a German invasion of the British Isles began to wane in subsequent years, Canadian participation in an Allied invasion of the continent once again became a more likely eventuality. In fact, First Canadian Army had a special place in the 1943 invasion plan (Operation ROUNDUP) as the follow-up force in an American-held beachhead. In short, that Canadian formations would be involved in a cross-Channel campaign was never in doubt. ROUNDUP evolved into

4. For detailed accounts of the planning for Operation OVERLORD, see Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, United States Army in World War II: The European Theater of Operations (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, US Army, 1951), chaps. 1–3, 5; John Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, vol. 5, *August 1943–September 1944*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1956), 53–57, 105–121, 231–242 and chap. 8; L. F. Ellis, with G. R. G. Allen, A. E. Warhurst, and Sir James Robb, *Victory in the West*, vol. 1, *The Battle of Normandy*, History of the Second World War: United Kingdom Military Series (London: HMSO, 1962), chaps. 1–2, 4; John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy: From D-Day to the Liberation of Paris* (1982; repr., New York: Penguin, 1994), 34–38, 55–59; Carlo D'Este, *Decision in Normandy* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1983), chaps. 2–6; and Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944* (London: Michael Joseph, 1984), 19–39.

OVERLORD, and once it was in development the only question was where the Canadians would fit into the overall plan. In July 1943, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was given another chance at combined operations training in anticipation of its use in NEPTUNE. This division would land at JUNO Beach. In October, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade came under its command. The armoured brigade would support the division in the landing and subsequent fighting inland. The rest of First Canadian Army, including its headquarters, would not participate in the assault phase but would be used to break out of the established beachhead.⁵

Canadian soldiers, then, would play a significant role in NEPTUNE, which would prove to be one of the most complicated military operations in history. It was also one of the riskiest. If it failed, the Western Allies would likely not get another chance at invading Northwest Europe before either Germany or the Soviet Union brought the war in Europe to a conclusion. Preparing 3rd Canadian Infantry Division — a formation that had no combat experience — for its arduous task would take a comprehensive training programme in combined operations.

3rd Canadian Infantry Division in Scotland

To the Canadian soldiers remaining in the United Kingdom, it appeared that the summer of 1943 would be yet another summer of training. 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, having been selected for Operation NEPTUNE, had to be given special attention. The summer of

5. C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 3, *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe, 1944–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960), 28–30.

1943 was a decisive period in Canadian infantry training because during this time the groundwork was laid in the division's preparation for the all-important assault phase of the invasion of Normandy. The division's officers spent the summer months studying combined operations while its infantry brigades underwent dryshod and wetshod training. First Canadian Army's training policy for the summer, according to a 22 June training directive by the BGS, Brigadier Foulkes, emphasized formation training. July would be devoted to brigade-level training and August to division-level training. Particular areas for focus were crossing obstacles and night attacks. Even at this late stage in the war, though the Germans had not used poison gas, forces in the United Kingdom were still training in anti-gas measures. Foulkes's directive specified that units were to address deficiencies in gas training and that all exercises during the summer would include some element of gas training. Finally, Foulkes announced that units would receive reinforcements, both officers and other ranks, who had not yet completed their individual training. These were to replace infantrymen who had been found unsuitable for combat or officers who had been appointed to staff or command positions.⁶

Because of its role in the cross-Channel attack, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's training programme was distinct from that of the other Canadian divisions remaining in the United Kingdom. The programme consisted of four stages. The first stage, preliminary training, began in the first week of July and lasted four weeks. During this stage brigade and battalion officers had to study combined operations literature and all ranks practiced drills boarding and disembarking LSIs and LCAs. The second stage, originally scheduled to begin in August, was basic combined operations training at CTCs

6. WD, GS, First Cdn Army, Jun 1943, app. 46, Brig C. Foulkes (BGS, First Cdn Army), First Cdn Army Trg Directive No. 15, 22 Jun 1943, pars. 1, 5, 8, and app. A, "Memorandum on Gas Trg."

Inveraray and Castle Toward. This was to ensure that all ranks were proficient in the peculiarities of combined operations. Once brigade groups were done training in Scotland, the third stage of the programme called for assault training in the Portsmouth area with Force “J,” the same RN unit that would land the Canadians in Normandy. In the fourth and final stage, the entire division would rehearse its role in the invasion.⁷

Crerar’s I Canadian Corps headquarters was responsible for 3rd Canadian Infantry Division’s training during the first two stages. Infantry officers studied the principles of combined operations, practiced giving target coordinates to the artillery, developed the ability to make quick appreciations of combat situations, issue orders accordingly, and take on the responsibilities of a killed or wounded superior officer. Infantry battalions practiced on mock-ups of landing craft while battalion staffs conducted TEWTs.⁸ Staffs from the army, corps, and division levels spent part of July analyzing the challenges of landing a large force on a heavily defended beach, paying particular attention to the lessons of the Dieppe Raid. It is worth noting that since OVERLORD had the object of establishing a lodgement in enemy-held territory, successful combined operations such as Operations TORCH or HUSKY might appear to have been more appropriate. Still, the Dieppe Raid was still a useful topic for the officers’ study. In his notes on the study period from 26 to 31 July, Crerar noted that Dieppe, though a single-day raid, was chosen as the topic precisely because it had failed so badly and that it was beneficial to task officers with determining what had gone wrong. It was also an attempt to salvage at least

7. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Jul 1943, app. 12, Brig W. J. Megill (BGS, 1 Cdn Corps), “Memorandum of Situation Regarding Combined Ops Trg of 3 Cdn Inf Div and Attached Tps as at 1000 hrs 6 Jul 43,” 6 Jul 1943, pars. 1–4, app. A1, “Military Training for the Assault,” and app. A2, “Notes for Training within Bde Gps for a Four Week Period Immediately Prior to Proceeding to Combined Training Centre.”

8. WD, HQ, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Jul 1943, Brig C. C. Mann (Comd, 7 Cdn Inf Bde) to GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div re: “Progress Report, 25 Jul–31 Jul 43,” 29 Jul 1943.

some benefits from the disastrous operation. Crerar correctly identified what should have been obvious to the planners of Operation JUBILEE: that large-scale combined operations, whatever their object, required overwhelming fire support as well as flexibility, especially in the event of poor weather.⁹

While Canadian staff officers immersed themselves in studying combined operations over the summer, reports arrived concerning the Canadians' experience in Sicily. Doctrinal literature suggested to contemporaries that HUSKY had been a success. The first issue of *Current Reports from Overseas* to cover Sicily appeared very quickly. Issue 10 was published on 7 August, while the battle was still ongoing, and it concerned the initial beach landings. It concluded that the combined operations doctrine was generally sound.¹⁰ Crerar received news of 1st Canadian Infantry Division's performance directly from Montgomery. Known for his candour, Montgomery seemed quite pleased with the Canadians under his command. As he wrote to Crerar on 23 July, while the battle was still raging:

They were a bit soft when they landed and had too many fat officers and men; the heat is great and many of them got badly burnt by the hot sun; after two days they were clearly exhausted and I decided to give them two days [*sic*] rest in reserve. That did them good; I then put them in the lead on the left flank and they have never looked back since . . . their work is up to the best Eighth Army standards.¹¹

If Montgomery was displeased with the Canadians under his command, he would have said so as he was not one to keep such comments to himself. He gave no indication that the Canadian troops were in any way unprepared for combat. Both *Current Reports from*

9. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9771, file 2/Comb Ops/1/2: LGen H. D. G. Crerar (GOC 1 Cdn Corps), "Summing Up by Comd 1 Cdn Corps: Combined Operations Study Period, 26–31 Jul 43," 31 Jul 1943, pars. 1, 7–9, 12.

10. UK, WO, *Current Reports from Overseas* No. 10 (Aug 1943), par. 13.

11. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 7, file 958C.009 (D172): Gen Sir B. L. Montgomery (GOC-in-C Eighth Army) to Crerar, 23 Jul 1943. The date on which Crerar actually received this letter is unknown.

Overseas No. 10 and Montgomery's remarks were clear signs that the Canadians were heading in the right direction.

For the second stage of 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's training for the invasion, the War Office allotted the division space at CTCs in Scotland. Finally, after delays throughout the winter and spring, the division would undergo a thorough combined operations training programme. In September, 7th and 8th Brigades would train at Inveraray, while 9th Brigade trained at Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute. Training had to take various operational realities into account. For instance, as the Germans were vigilantly guarding the coast, the Allies likely would not have tactical surprise in the invasion of Northwest Europe. Hopefully, the aerial and naval bombardment would neutralize, at least temporarily, the enemy defences. But since results could not be guaranteed, the infantry would have to deal with obstacles and strongpoints that survived. Lastly, the infantry's main concern was not the landing itself but pushing inland and withstanding the inevitable German counter-attack.¹²

At Inveraray, companies practiced for two days at a dryshod facility at Dubh Loch, which had five LCA mock-ups and a makeshift beach. Companies had the opportunity to practice clearing belts of barbed wire and an anti-tank wall with Bangalore torpedoes, while firing live ammunition, enough of which was provided to rehearse the assault four times per company. After that, companies would then undergo LCA training and practice beach landings and live-fire exercises. In the last week of the course, each

12. WD, HQ, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Sep 1943, app. 27, Mann, circular letter re: "Combined Operations," 19 Sep 1943, par. 2.

battalion, with elements from supporting arms, conducted day-long exercises in the assault and in fighting inland. Finally, a brigade exercise concluded the course.¹³

The detailed war diary of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders is particularly illustrative of 9th Brigade's experience. The battalion arrived at Rothesay on 4 September. After three of days unloading supplies, settling into new quarters, and attending lectures and training films, the men were taken 50 yards offshore and ordered to jump into the cold water in full kit and swim ashore. While some had no experience with swimming and needed the help of their comrades, the provision of inflatable life preservers — cheekily dubbed “Mae Wests” in honour of the shapely film star — ensured that no one drowned. Next was dryshod training with dummy LCAs and scramble nets. By the 9th, companies were conducting simple beach landings and by the second week of training, they were working with LSIs. On the 26th, the entire battalion staged Exercise ULYSSES, which tested its abilities as an assault unit. The leading companies landed at 0800 hours; the supporting “C” Company landed at 0830 hours and “B” Company, the floating reserve, landed at 0945 hours. By noon, the battalion had pushed inland and reached its objective, Ambrismore Farm. The entire brigade participated in Exercise NEPTUNE (not to be confused with the operation of the same name) three days later, bringing training at Rothesay to a close.¹⁴

This phase of combined operations training went smoothly overall, but there were still areas for improvement, even outside the realm of combined operations. Crerar issued a circular letter in late September addressing problems encountered during exercises over the summer. Chief among them was that in exercise conditions, during which

13. WD, HQ, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Dec 1943, app. H, GS, CTC, circular letter re: “Training – 8 Cdn Bde,” 6 Sep 1943.

14. WD, Nth NS Highrs, 4–30 Sep 1943; app. 4, Syllabus.

thunderflashes were used instead of real artillery shells, the infantry had a bad habit of moving forward slowly at an even pace and walking upright — decisions that would result in heavy casualties in a real battle.¹⁵ Indeed, the need for discipline in the field needed constant emphasis. Training itself could be dangerous as the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment found out when an explosion during an assault landing exercise seriously wounded four men.¹⁶ In a similar incident, a lieutenant from the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders was mortally wounded during a live fire exercise.¹⁷ Thankfully, such incidents were rare. But as Brigadier K. G. Blackader noticed in his 8th Brigade, men were careless in other ways as some smoked during training exercises, a clear indication that they were not taking training seriously. Worse, while his brigade was training at Inveraray, its headquarters received complaints that troops had been sighted stealing chickens, fishing with explosives, and shooting rabbits.¹⁸ It is unknown how widespread such misbehaviour was, but the reports served to illustrate the importance of maintaining discipline at all times.

Despite its issues with discipline in the field, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's combined operations programme had a promising start. Of course, the division needed much more practice not just in the initial assault landing, but also in pushing inland and consolidating a firm position. An optimistic Crerar had great faith in Canada's two remaining infantry divisions in the United Kingdom. In his belated reply to Montgomery's letter from Sicily, Crerar wrote on 20 September:

15. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Sep 1943, app. 19, Crerar, circular letter, 28 Sep 1943, par. 1–2.

16. WD, N Shore R, 11 Sep 1943.

17. WD, SD & G Highrs, 17 Sep 1943.

18. WD, HQ, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Sep 1943, app. 5, Brig K. G. Blackader (Comd, 8 Cdn Inf Bde), circular letter re: "Smoking," 11 Sep 1943; circular letter re: "Discipline," 14 Sep 1943.

I would say that 3rd Canadian Division, if given a decent break, will certainly do as well and probably better than the 1st Canadian Division. The 2nd Canadian Division, under Burns, is now receiving first class training. It will also measure up to expectations.¹⁹

Crerar's remarks were premature. As 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was not nearly finished training for its role in the invasion, there was no way to tell in September 1943 how well it would do in Normandy. Training would only get tougher in the third and fourth stages.

Training with Force "J"

By the time 3rd Canadian Infantry Division had completed the second stage of its combined operations programme at the end of September, the weather was already beginning to get colder. Conditions at sea were bound to worsen as winter approached, and combined operations training, though possible, would be much more difficult. The division still needed far greater practice in combined operations as its work in Scotland only provided the foundation. During the autumn months, the division underwent the third stage of its combined operations training, important because it marked the beginning of a close relationship between it and the landing craft crews that would land it on JUNO Beach.

With the basics of combined operations training complete, the emphasis shifted to increased realism and collective training at the brigade level. From this point forward, the men would carry the full complement of equipment and supplies that they would use in

19. LAC, MG 30 E 157, vol. 7, file 958C.009 (D172): Crerar to Montgomery, 20 Sep 1943.

the assault. Most significantly, the division would work with Force “J” for the first time. Force “J” was a special naval force raised in October 1942 after the Dieppe Raid had made it brutally apparent that highly trained landing craft crews were needed for combined operations. From its creation until the invasion of Normandy, Force “J” acted as a training unit in the English Channel for Combined Operations Headquarters. In fact, its commander until late 1943 was Commodore John Hughes-Hallett, the naval force commander at Dieppe. The establishment of such a force represented one of the few lessons from Dieppe that was directly applicable to the invasion of Normandy. Dieppe not only taught that specially trained naval crews were essential to the success of a combined operation, but also that ground forces should train and have a close relationship with the same crews that would land them. Thus, Force “J” would land 3rd Canadian Infantry Division in Operation NEPTUNE.²⁰

It was during a series of key exercises that took place outside the confines of CTCs in the autumn of 1943 that combined operations’ dependence on favourable weather became only too evident. Exercise PIRATE, scheduled for 15 to 20 October, was the division’s first real test of all of the elements of a combined operation. Taking place in Studland Bay, Dorset, the purpose of PIRATE was to exercise all three services in their roles in the landing of a brigade group against a heavily defended beach. 7th Brigade was selected for the assault role. But PIRATE also tested the build-up phase, so 3rd Canadian Infantry Division’s other two brigades also participated as follow-on forces. In the assault phase, 7th Brigade would land with a beach group of Force “J,” with Nos. 11 and 83 Groups, RAF in support. The exercise had great significance for all three services,

20. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 9.

especially for the ground and naval forces, for it was the first time that the headquarters of either I Canadian Corps or 3rd Canadian Infantry Division had worked with Force “J.”

Unfortunately, the weather was miserable and the landing had to be postponed to 16 October. Although the weather improved enough for the exercise to take place, it made coordinating fire support difficult. The assaulting troops did the best that they could, but the landing craft scraped against a sandbar and the crewmen lowered their ramps prematurely, forcing men and vehicles to wade through several feet of water. But the men were able to land and successfully secure the beachhead. However, it became apparent that junior leaders had been insufficiently briefed about their task prior to the exercise. As a result, platoon commanders were often indecisive once they landed on the beach, blunting momentum. As far as the infantry was concerned, this was the most serious problem encountered during the exercise. Furthermore, the men still had a tendency to gather in bunches on the beach and wasted time because they preferred to use wire cutters instead of Bangalore torpedoes to cut wire obstacles. The infantry often failed to properly protect the engineers conducting demolitions. The weather only worsened on the 17th and as a result the build-up phase had to be cancelled.²¹

Clearly, the division still needed more practice in combined operations as well as continuous sharpening of elementary tactical skills. A training instruction issued on 22

21. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div, Oct 1943, app. 12, LCol M. McLellan (CTA, 3 Cdn Inf Div), “Exercise ‘PIRATE’: Senior Observers Report,” 20 Oct 1943, 3–4; Nov 1943, app. 1, “Report: Exercise ‘PIRATE,’” 31 Oct 1943, pt. 2, par. 1, pt. 9, par. 3–pt. 10, pt. 12; WD, HQ, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Oct 1943, app. 5, Mann, “7 Cdn Inf Bde Gp Report on Part I of Exercise ‘PIRATE,’” 25 Oct 1943, sec. 1, par. 7 and sec. 8, app. A, pars. 8, 10; Reginald H. Roy, *Ready for the Fray: The History of the Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary’s), 1920–1955* (Vancouver: Evergreen, 1958), 191; T. M. Hunter, “Preliminary Planning for Operation ‘OVERLORD’: Some Aspects of the Preparations for an Allied Re-entry to North-West Europe, 1940–1944,” AHQ Report No. 42, 5 Mar 1952, pars. 315–344; J. R. Martin and Reginald H. Roy, “Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe, 1944, Part I: The Assault and Subsequent Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde 16–30 Jun 44,” AHQ Report No. 54, 30 Jun 1952, pars. 88–90.

October set the training policy for 3rd Canadian Infantry Division until the end of the year. Training during that period would focus on four broad areas: combined operations, accuracy of artillery fire, “man management” or improving junior leaders’ job of caring for and training the men under their command, accuracy of rifle fire, and improving fire and movement. The overall objectives were to perfect the division in the attack and consolidation phases of an operation. For combined operations, the division would continue dryshod training with a view to improving the techniques used in major exercises. Platoon commanders would carry out regular inspections of their men’s billets, weapons, and equipment. Range practice would be intensified to bring every man up to standard and there would be exercises to practice fire and movement. Each company was to conduct an exercise that involved a 20-mile march with periodic tactical scenarios that tested small unit tactics.²² Infantry units duly followed these instructions and found the marching exercises to be most valuable for keeping companies sharp and developing the initiative of junior officers.²³

Because the incomplete PIRATE chiefly tested only 7th Brigade, it was necessary to organize a follow-up double exercise for 8th and 9th Brigades in Studland Bay in December. Exercise VIDI practiced 8th Brigade in its assault role against a heavily defended beach while Exercise PUSH similarly practiced 9th Brigade in its role as the division’s reserve brigade in such an operation. Essentially, 8th Brigade would stage an assault landing and secure the beachhead and then 9th Brigade would land, pass through its sister brigade, and advance to objectives inland. PUSH also gave 9th Brigade practice

22. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div, Oct 1943, app. 18, LCol W. J. Moogk (GSO1, 3 Cdn Inf Div), 3 Cdn Inf Div Trg Instr No. 20, 22 Oct 1943, pars. 1–18 and app. D, “Fire & Movement – Fire Control.”

23. WD, HQ, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, Nov 1943, Mann to GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div re: “Progress Report for Week Ending 20 Nov 43,” 17 Nov 1943.

working with 27th Armoured Regiment (The Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regiment). Both were one-sided exercises but would still have fire support from air and naval forces.²⁴

8th Brigade mounted VIDI on 28 November, a day late because of bad weather. As with PIRATE, the landings went according to plan, but the weather once again interfered with the fire plan and the RAF was unable to participate. The infantry performed admirably at sea, embarking in LSIs and then LCAs like clockwork, although once in the LCAs some 70 percent of the men became seasick. Force “J” landed 8th Brigade quite accurately, both on time and at the right locations, a considerable feat given the choppy seas. The brigade landed with two battalions up, Le Régiment de la Chaudière serving as the reserve, and captured its objective, a rail line beyond the beach. There were still problems, however, with junior officers being indecisive once they landed on the beach. Exacerbating this problem was the tendency for the infantry to wait for support vehicles and units to arrive before engaging the enemy on the beach. This would be unfeasible in a real operation as the infantry might have to use their own firepower for some time before self-propelled artillery would come ashore. In other words, the infantry had mastered combined operations training, but it could not afford to let its proficiency in elementary tactics degrade.²⁵

PUSH was originally supposed to take place 24 hours after VIDI, with 8th Brigade still on the beach. The men of 9th Brigade had been on board the LSIs since the 27th, but the 24-hour postponement of VIDI and worsening weather meant that PUSH did not occur

24. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div, Oct 1943, app. 31, Moogk, “Exercises ‘VIDI’ & ‘PUSH,’” 31 Oct 1943, pars. 1 (b–c), 9; 3 Cdn Inf Div OO No. 1, 31 Oct 1943.

25. Ibid., Dec 1943, app. 21, “Report: Exercises ‘VIDI’ & ‘PUSH,’” 14 Dec 1943, pt. 1; WD, HQ, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Nov 1943, app. 6, Maj G. L. Boone (BM, 8 Cdn Inf Bde), 8 Cdn Inf Bde OO No. 4, 15 Nov 1943, pars. 9–10, 15, 21; Dec 1943, app. B, Capt J. L. Dampier (GSO3 (Ops), 3 Cdn Inf Div) to Moogk re: “Exercise ‘VIDI,’ 8 Cdn Inf Bde Conference,” 10 Dec 1943, pars. 6 (j), 10 (b).

until 3 December. The good news was that the men endured the discomfort of having been at sea for five days without losing their spirit. But as the units of 8th Brigade had already been evacuated on the 30th, their presence had to be simulated by umpires. Nevertheless, the advance inland and consolidation on the objective went according to plan, even though visibility got so bad after 1530 hours that observers could not see the final attack at 1800 hours.²⁶

It should be noted that combined operations training clearly dominated 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's training syllabus in the autumn of 1943. There was a surprising lack of emphasis on training in tank-infantry cooperation. While the division developed an encouraging relationship with Force "J," the unit that would bring the division to the continent, there was much less of an effort to do the same with 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, the formation that would support 3rd Canadian Infantry Division in the battles inland. One explanation for this may be that the division's role in OVERLORD amplified the importance of combined operations training over training with the tanks. As part of the assaulting force in NEPTUNE, successfully landing on and consolidating the beachhead was crucial; tank-infantry cooperation would not matter at all if the landings failed on D-Day.

PIRATE, VIDI, and PUSH demonstrated that the procedure for embarking in LSIs, then smaller landing craft, and landing on a beach with the necessary weapons, equipment, and support personnel was sound. In an actual operation, though, the weather would have to be better. Otherwise, accurate fire support would be impossible and the

26. WD, GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div, Dec 1943, app. 21, "Report: Exercises 'VIDI' & 'PUSH,'" 14 Dec 1943, pt. 2; HQ, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Nov 1943; WD, HQ, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Nov 1943, app. 3, Maj N. Kingsmill (BM, 9 Cdn Inf Bde), Ex PUSH, "9 Cdn Inf Bde – Exercise Instrs," 8 Nov 1943; LAC, RG 24, vol. 10439, file 212C1 (D66): Capt (N) A. F. Pugsley (Comd, Force J), "Report on Exercise 'PUSH,'" 9 Dec 1943.

landing craft would certainly land at the wrong places at the wrong time. At the very least, the British decision to devote special units like Force “J” exclusively to combined operations was yielding positive results. After years of training, the landing craft crews were highly adept at navigation. For the Canadians, however, the combined exercises in the autumn of 1943 showed that they needed to sharpen the infantry’s tactical skills.

The Armoured Divisions

Other Canadian formations continued to prepare for operations on the continent during the autumn of 1943. At this point, each of Canada’s remaining formations was at a different state of training. 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, thanks to a difficult year rebuilding after the Dieppe Raid, trailed behind 3rd Canadian Infantry Division’s progress. But Canada’s armoured divisions deserve attention for while they were fundamentally different than infantry divisions, each had an infantry brigade. Unlike those found in infantry divisions, the infantry battalions in armoured divisions were meant to fight in combination with tanks. Meanwhile, after repeated reorganizations in previous years, 5th Canadian Armoured Division was ready for combat. At Ralston’s urging, this division was sent to fight in Italy. This was the source of extreme tension between the defence minister and McNaughton, whose future as the commander of First Canadian Army was already in doubt because he had lost the confidence of the British high command. Finally, 4th Canadian Armoured Division needed the most work. During

the autumn of 1943, it was still being built and had only just completed its individual training over the summer.

The general policy for 2nd Canadian Infantry Division was to continue with dryshod combined operations training throughout the autumn. I Canadian Corps ordered the division to continue with combined operations training up to the brigade level until the end of October.²⁷ At the same time, the division joined 5th Canadian Armoured Division and 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade in I Canadian Corps's Exercise HARLEQUIN (1–15 September), a test of administrative and logistical arrangements for moving a landing force to embarkation ports for an invasion of Northwest Europe. McNaughton considered the exercise to be a success because the movement of men and vehicles went smoothly overall. The planning and logistical staffs had done their jobs well.²⁸ Despite its importance to the division and corps staffs, HARLEQUIN did not interrupt 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's training as might be expected as there was time available for the division to pursue its normal training syllabus: dryshod training on mock-ups, bayonet and grenade training, and hardening training.²⁹ To boost the division's skills in night fighting, Burns called for a week of night training from 7 to 13 November. The infantry worked on night marches, range practice, and river crossings.³⁰ Division headquarters considered the night training week to be beneficial and that more night training was necessary. The next division training instruction ordered all units to have

27. WD, GS, 1 Cdn Corps, Aug 1943, app. 22A, Megill, 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 29, 19 Aug 1943, pars. 3, 8; Sep 1943, app. 3, Megill, 1 Cdn Corps Trg Instr No. 31, 6 Sep 1943, pars. 2–3.

28. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9792, file 2/Exercises/10: LGen A. G. L. McNaughton (GOC-in-C, First Cdn Army), "First Cdn Army Report – Exercise HARLEQUIN," 8 Oct 1943, par. 1 (a).

29. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Inf Div, Aug 1943, app. 28, LCol W. S. Rutherford (GSO1, 2 Cdn Inf Div), 2 Cdn Inf Div Trg Instr No. 14, 20 Aug 1943, pars. 1–5.

30. Ibid., Oct 1943, app. 42, LCol J. S. Lind (GSO1, 2 Cdn Inf Div), 2 Cdn Inf Div Trg Instr No. 17, 19 Oct 1943; Nov 1943, app. 22, MGen E. L. M. Burns (GOC 2 Cdn Inf Div), "Trg Report for the Week Ending 12 Nov 43," 12 Nov 1943.

one night-training period per week, with appropriate measures to ensure that men were well-rested beforehand.³¹

The biggest development for the Canadian Army (Overseas) in the second half of 1943 occurred in October, when Canada's commitment to the Mediterranean Theatre increased dramatically. As of August, 1st Canadian Infantry Division and 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade (redesignated as 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade that month) were already in the Italian theatre. Ralston and Lieutenant-General Ken Stuart, the CGS, prodded McNaughton over the summer to allow a Canadian corps headquarters, corps ancillary troops, and another division to be transferred to Italy to join them.³² Stuart, along with Ralston, hoped that this would give the deployed troops and staffs operational experience as well as serve as a source of pride for the Canadian Army (Overseas) and the Canadian public. This was contrary to McNaughton's plans for First Canadian Army. It will be recalled from the previous chapter that McNaughton had only been supportive of sending an infantry division and a tank brigade to the Mediterranean in the first place because he believed that they would promptly be returned to the United Kingdom once HUSKY was over. Ultimately, though, it was not his decision, but the Canadian government's. The Cabinet War Committee had raised the prospect of sending more Canadian troops to the Mediterranean with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the QUADRANT Conference held in August in Quebec City. While Churchill looked into the matter, the British Chiefs of Staff refused at first. The need for building up forces in the United Kingdom in preparation for OVERLORD meant that shipping could not be spared for transferring such a large force to Italy. But after continued pressure from the

31. Ibid., Nov 1943, app. 60, Lind, 2 Cdn Inf Div Trg Instr No. 20, 25 Nov 1943.

32. LAC, MG 27 III B 11, vol. 45, file "Employment of Canadian Troops": LGen K. Stuart (CGS), tel. GS 2385 to McNaughton, 31 Aug 1943.

Canadian government, the British devised a solution: there were already plans to bring the British XXX Corps headquarters and four divisions back to the United Kingdom; a Canadian corps headquarters and ancillary troops and a division could be moved to Italy without putting undue pressure on shipping as long as it was a swap of personnel and not equipment. The British formations could leave their equipment in Italy to be used by the Canadians. As Crerar's I Canadian Corps, the more experienced of the two, was the obvious choice of corps headquarters to send, the only matter was selecting which division would go: with 3rd Canadian Infantry Division devoted to NEPTUNE and 4th Canadian Armoured Division unprepared, the only options were 2nd Canadian Infantry and 5th Canadian Armoured Divisions. Since sending 2nd Canadian Infantry Division would leave II Canadian Corps with a hopelessly lopsided force of one infantry and two armoured divisions, 5th Canadian Armoured Division was the best choice to deploy to Italy. Bowing to political pressure, on 7 October McNaughton grudgingly signed the order sending the division and the corps to the Mediterranean, killing his dream of a united Canadian field army fighting in Northwest Europe.³³

Upon arriving in Italy, 5th Canadian Armoured Division did not go into action right away because it took time to equip. Taking over the British 7th Armoured Division's equipment was not easy because the "Desert Rats" had been in action for so long that their vehicles needed considerable repairs. The British division had also made refinements to its equipment scales and establishment to the extent that it was a logistical

33. LAC, MG 27 III B 11, vol. 45, file "Employment of Canadian Troops": McNaughton, tel. 2486 to Stuart, 7 Oct 1943. For more on the despatch of additional Canadian troops to the Mediterranean, see G. W. L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 2, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956), 340–355; John Swettenham, *McNaughton*, vol. 2, 1939–1943 (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), 290–294, 306–314; J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 74–77; and John Nelson Rickard, *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), chap. 12.

nightmare for the Canadians to take possession of it. For example, as 7th Armoured Division used more vehicles than it was authorized to have, 5th Canadian Armoured Division did not have enough trained drivers to use all of them. These problems with equipment kept the division out of combat until mid-January 1944.³⁴

Operation TIMBERWOLF — as the despatch of I Canadian Corps and 5th Canadian Armoured Division to Italy was called — caused McNaughton serious worry about the future of the headquarters of First Canadian Army itself. Crerar's forces were going to stay in that theatre for the foreseeable future and would thus be unavailable for operations in Northwest Europe. After TIMBERWOLF, First Canadian Army comprised only a corps headquarters, two infantry divisions, an armoured division, and an armoured brigade remaining in the United Kingdom, not enough to warrant an army headquarters. But General Paget reassured him that First Canadian Army would be given command of a British corps when the beachhead in Normandy was sufficiently large.³⁵

But McNaughton had more immediate problems. His reputation had been crippled by his lacklustre performance during Exercise SPARTAN and his deteriorating relationship with the Canadian government and the British senior commanders over sending Canadian formations to the Mediterranean. His weaknesses as a field commander could no longer be concealed. McNaughton also had done much during the summer to irritate British commanders on a personal level. He had insisted on visiting his troops in Sicily, but both Montgomery and Alexander initially refused to accept him as they were busy conducting the battle and did not have time to receive dignitaries. McNaughton pressed the issue, though. He was the senior officer in the Canadian Army (Overseas) and had a duty to see

34. Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*, 355–359.

35. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 30–31.

his troops in the field. Montgomery bitterly relented and McNaughton toured Sicily in the last week of August.³⁶ This incident only served to further stretch the British senior commanders' impatience with McNaughton. After the British — first among them General Sir Alan Brooke, the CIGS — had spent months fuming to themselves about their dissatisfaction with the Canadian general, they finally voiced their concerns to Ralston, who spent weeks gingerly urging McNaughton that there needed to be a change of command. Weakened by the stress of the ordeal, McNaughton resigned his command on 26 December.³⁷ Despite being Canada's most visible general and most senior military authority in the United Kingdom since arriving with 1st Canadian Division in December 1939, McNaughton would not command First Canadian Army in battle.

While most of Canada's divisions in the United Kingdom had reached a high standard of training, 4th Canadian Armoured Division lagged behind. This was because all of Canada's other divisions had existed in their full form for years and had had the time and resources available to properly train them as fighting formations. It is helpful to briefly recapitulate 4th Canadian Armoured Division's experience here. In chapter 3, it was shown that as 4th Canadian Armoured Division had been originally envisioned as an infantry division, its construction had been slow. Many of the units selected for it were mobilized in the spring of 1940, but the brigade and division headquarters were not raised for another year. Building the division was further slowed in 1941 because priority was given to 5th Canadian Armoured Division since the British specifically requested that

36. For more on McNaughton's visit to Sicily and the ensuing tension with the British, see Swettenham, *McNaughton*, 2:318–322; Nigel Hamilton, *Master of the Battlefield: Monty's War Years, 1942–1944* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 332–333; Carlo D'Este, *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily, 1943* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), app. L; and Rickard, *The Politics of Command*, chap. 11.

37. C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 224–227. For more on McNaughton's resignation, see Swettenham, *McNaughton*, 2:314–350; Granatstein, *The Generals*, 75–79; and Rickard, *The Politics of Command*, chap. 13.

Canada send an armoured division as soon as possible. In 1942, the division was converted to an armoured division, a task made all the more difficult because the establishment for an armoured division dramatically changed at the same time.

Even though elements of the division began arriving in the United Kingdom in the summer of 1942, its infantry brigade was not formed until September 1943. Under Stuart's orders as CGS, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada were scheduled to be despatched to the United Kingdom in the summer and then be broken up to act as reinforcement units. But since the division was in need of two infantry battalions and both of these units had been mobilized since 1940 and had thus completed their individual training and some rudimentary subunit training, they were the logical choices. The units began training with the division in August. The order of battle for 10th Infantry Brigade was finalized on 28 September 1943: the Lincs and the Argylls, along with the Algonquin Regiment, would comprise the brigade until war's end.³⁸

The infantry brigades of the armoured divisions received different training than those of the infantry divisions because they would have to work very closely with tanks. Fortunately, 4th Canadian Armoured Division's GOC, Major-General F. F. Worthington, was a pioneer of Canadian armoured warfare and paid close attention to training. Whereas divisional training instructions were normally written by the GSO1,³⁹ Worthington tended to write them himself. He often sought to inspire energy and confidence in his men. One training instruction, written in August to announce that the

38. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1/3: LCol D. C. Spry (PA to LGen A. G. L. McNaughton), "Minutes of a Conference Held at H.Q. First Cdn Army, 1645 hrs, 3 May 1943," 5 May 1943, par. 3; CMHQ, tel. GS 2401 to NDHQ, 28 Sep 1943, par. 1.

39. US Army, *Handbook on the British Army 1943*, rev. ed., ed. Chris Ellis and Peter Chamberlain (London: Arms and Armour, 1976), 13.

division would be moving to a new training area for September and October, reflected on the confusion and setbacks the division had experienced over the past year: reorganizations, loss of officers to other units, and being without its complement of infantry units for so long. For the upcoming months, Worthington wrote:

It is imperative that every hour must count. I want the same spirit to be inculcated into our trg [training] as if we were on active ops [operations]. This I know is hard but if every offr [officer] and man gives his very best realism can be achieved. Night and day there must be no relaxation in keeping the tempo up.

The training instruction divided the two-month period into four two-week training phases, progressing from company training in early September to division training in late October.⁴⁰

The division spent much of the autumn in Norfolk conducting brigade and division-level exercises. Exercise BRIDOON, which commenced on 2 November, was probably the most memorable exercise because it rigorously challenged 10th Brigade's abilities as a fighting force. The objective was to invade the fictitious neutral territory of Heathland and destroy a chromium mine. The attack would involve simple river crossings. Enemy troops, represented by the British 9th Armoured Division, occupied Heathland and served as the only opposition. Worthington's plan called for his forces to assemble before the river Thet while the engineers built bridges. Then, the armoured regiments would cross the rivers and then the infantry would push forward into Heathland and capture Frog Hill, which 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade would use as a pivot point.⁴¹ On 2 November, the units of 10th Brigade crossed into Heathland without

40. WD, GS, 4 Cdn Armd Div, Aug 1943, app. 9, MGen F. F. Worthington (GOC 4 Cdn Armd Div), 4 Cdn Armd Div Trg Instr No. 16, 12 Aug 1943, pt. 1, pars. 4, 7.

41. Ibid., Oct 1943, app. 37, Worthington, "Exercise BRIDOON: Appreciation of the Tactical Situation by Maj Gen F F Worthington CI MM, at 1800 hrs 29 Oct," pars. 1–2 (c, f), 4 (a–d); WD, HQ, 10

much difficulty. The lead battalion, the Algonquin Regiment, easily made it to its first objective at Frog Hill. The Argylls, following behind the Algonquins, were counter-attacked, driven off the road, and split into two forces. The headquarters, one rifle company, and two carrier sections of the Argylls made it to Frog Hill while the remainder stayed and carried out successive attacks against the “enemy” forces throughout the rest of the day. To everyone’s surprise, the Argyll force made it to Frog Hill by 2200 hours; they had been fighting so hard during the day that 10th Brigade headquarters had plans to withdraw them entirely. The Argylls’ action also held up the enemy’s attempts at routing the entire division. The next day, the enemy attacked Frog Hill and overran the infantry’s position with tanks. Even though this was the first time that these units had experienced such an attack, they took cover in their slit trenches while the tanks rolled overhead and continued to fight on. The exercise was over that evening.⁴² As well as the infantry performed, BRIDOON was also a good learning experience for 10th Brigade. In his report, one lieutenant from the Algonquins’ “C” Company noticed that the officers overall “did not keep cover as well as their men, and it is unfair to expect men to keep down when officers are walking around bolt upright.” Worse, the same report complained that senior officers had a tendency to interfere with platoon commanders’ handling of their men.⁴³ Such behaviour on the part of officers was a problem because it had a deleterious effect on junior officers’ initiative. 10th Brigade had much work to do before it was ready for combat.

Cdn Inf Bde, Nov 1943, app. 1, Maj J. G. Armstrong (BM, 10 Cdn Inf Bde), “Notes of Verbal Orders by Lt-Col JD Stewart,” 1 Nov 1943.

42. WD, HQ, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Nov 1943, app. 1, Ex BRIDOON, Narrative of Events.

43. WD, Alq R, Nov 1943, app. 5, Lt W. L. Liscombe (C Coy, Alq R), “Report on Bridoon,” 7 Nov 1943.

Despite the value of exercises like BRIDOOON, 10th Brigade remained the most inexperienced brigade in the Canadian Army (Overseas). Its units had not been grouped together for very long and its battalions had all been preoccupied with garrison work for much of the war. From the autumn of 1943 to the early spring of 1944, the brigade had to be brought up to standard as the division would be needed for the Normandy campaign. Worthington hoped that all individual training, particularly of NCOs and officers, in the brigade would be complete by January. Collective training until then would focus on realism and developing the initiative of junior leaders. Battle drill was an integral part of this programme. Most important of all was developing close cooperation between all arms, critical for any modern fighting formation but especially so for units in an armoured division. Worthington stressed close liaison between units of different arms. Even though infantry battalions could hardly be expected to work with the same armoured or artillery regiments in every battle, it was nevertheless important that the men of each arm understood the technical capabilities of the other arms.⁴⁴

10th Brigade spent most of December on weapons training.⁴⁵ Worthington issued a training instruction at the end of the month covering the first three months of 1944. Individual training still had priority. Most men had completed their individual training by this point, but the spring would probably be the last time that commanding officers would have to perfect the skills and fitness of their men. Tactical training emphasized street fighting. At the same time, collective training would be progressive: platoon schemes in

44. WD, GS, 4 Cdn Armd Div, Sep 1943, app. 37, Worthington, circular letter re: "Cooperation between All Arms," 20 Sep 1943, pars. 1–3; Nov 1943, app. 1, Worthington, 4 Cdn Armd Div Trg Instr No. 17, 7 Nov 1943, pars. 1–2, 9 (b); WD, HQ, 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Dec 1943, app. 1, Armstrong, 10 Cdn Inf Bde Trg Directive No. 4, 1 Dec 1943, par. 1.

45. WD, GS, 4 Cdn Armd Div, Dec 1943, app. 2, "Highlights of Training – Week Ending 10 Dec 43"; app. 9, "Highlight of Trg Week Ending 18 Dec 43"; app. 19, "Highlights of Trg Week Ending 26 Dec 43"; app. 30, "Highlights of Trg Week Ending 1 Jan 44."

January, company schemes in February, and battalion schemes in March. This would prepare units for brigade and division training in the spring.⁴⁶ Throughout January, 10th Brigade's units spent much of their time on field firing exercises, weapons training, and street fighting.⁴⁷

Collective training progressed somewhat ahead of schedule, as February saw battalion exercises. That month, the infantry brigade and the division's artillery participated in Exercise STAMMER, a three-day affair that served to enhance the relationship between the infantry and the gunners. From 13 to 22 February, the brigade travelled to Inveraray for a week of training in following up an amphibious assault, the brigade's first taste of combined operations training.⁴⁸ The Algonquin Regiment's "C" Company called it "the most interesting trg [training] taken by 'C' coy [Company] since mobilization." As usual, combined operations training was rigorous, but the weather remained good throughout.⁴⁹

Considering that the units comprising 10th Brigade were selected less than a year before 4th Canadian Armoured Division would be sent to Normandy, these units made rapid progress in the autumn and winter of 1943–1944. With the brigade's inclusion in the order of battle, First Canadian Army had nearly reached its final form some two years after its formation. Its constituent formations were working harder than ever to prepare for battle. McNaughton would not command the army in battle as he had hoped, but there

46. WD, GS, 4 Cdn Armd Div, Dec 1943, app. 31, Worthington, 4 Cdn Armd Div Trg Instr No. 18, 24 Dec 1943, pars. 1–2, 20.

47. Ibid., Jan 1944, app. 8, "Highlights of Trg, Week Ending 16 Jan 44"; app. 13, "Highlights of Trg, Week Ending 23 Jan 44"; app. 17, "Highlights of Trg, Week Ending 30 Jan 44"; app. 20, "Highlights of Trg, Week Ending 6 Feb 44."

48. Ibid., app. 31, Worthington, 4 Cdn Armd Div Trg Instr No. 18, 24 Dec 1943, pars. 1–2, 21; Geoffrey W. Hayes, *The Lincs: A History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at War*, 2nd ed. (Waterloo, ON: LCMSDS, 2007), 16–17; Frank R. McGuire, "Training of First Cdn Army (Less 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde), December 43–May 44," AHQ Report No. 66, 12 Jan 1954, par. 5.

49. WD, Alq R, Feb 1944, app. 2, C Coy, "War Diary – 14 Feb to 23 Feb 44," 25 Feb 1944.

was no time to think about the old general's pride: in January 1944, D-Day was only five months away. This was the Canadians' last chance to perfect their fighting skills.

Final Preparations

With the advent of 1944, the Canadians in the United Kingdom entered their final phase of training before the invasion of Normandy. McNaughton's departure necessitated a series of promotions and transfers in order to fill First Canadian Army's senior command positions. Command of II Canadian Corps went to Simonds, who oversaw the training of the remaining divisions. In the spring, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division prepared for its role of deepening the Normandy beachhead by focusing on river crossing and tank-infantry cooperation. At the same time, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division underwent the fourth and final stage of its amphibious training programme (divisional exercises in conjunction with Force "J"). In the end, while this division's skill at combined operations could not be matched, it once again spent very little time training to fight alongside tanks.

Foulkes's Training Directive No. 18, issued on 15 December 1943, stated that all units had very little time left to complete their preparations for operations on the continent. Covering the first three months of 1944, the directive stated in no uncertain terms that this was the last opportunity to make the combat arms ready to fight. For the infantry divisions, refresher individual training was the top priority, with collective training up to the platoon level to be completed in January 1944, the company level in February, and the battalion level in March. Tests of elementary training would be

conducted for all weapons. Subunits would continue with battle drill and pay particular attention to street fighting. Meanwhile, 4th Canadian Armoured Division would continue with its brigade and divisional training.⁵⁰

With D-Day just a mere five months away, the British continued to introduce changes to unit establishments and organization. In January 1944, Montgomery decided to have the support battalions revert back to their roles as machine gun battalions. The new organization consisted of a headquarters, three machine gun companies (“A,” “B,” and “C”), a mortar company (“D”), and a defence employment company. First Canadian Army readily accepted this new establishment for the Toronto Scottish Regiment and the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, the relevant units of 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions. Their counterpart in 1st Canadian Infantry Division, the Saskatoon Light Infantry, made the same changes once 15th Army Group followed 21st Army Group’s example in July.⁵¹ This was the latest in a long string of reorganizations and reassignments for the machine gun units. The previous reorganization in the spring of 1943 had transformed these units into divisional support battalions equipped with medium machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, and heavy mortars. These units had thus trained for nine months for this role, not an easy job considering that they had not even

50. WD, GS, First Cdn Army, Dec 1943, app. 16, Foulkes, First Cdn Army Trg Directive No. 18, 15 Dec 1943, pars. 1–2, 5 (c), 6 (a–b).

51. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17863, vol. 12260, file 1/Org Support/1: GS, First Cdn Army, tel. O 123 to Brig M. H. S. Penhale (BGS, CMHQ), 14 Jan 1944; Penhale to McNaughton re: “Reorganization Inf Sp Bns, etc., Canadian Army Overseas,” 22 Feb 1944; GO 222, “Conversion and Redesignation — Active Units,” 9 May 1944, effective 24 Feb 44; GO 120, “Conversion and Redesignation — Active Units,” 14 Apr 1945, effective 1 Jul 1944; J. E. A. Crake, “The Organization of First Canadian Army,” CMHQ Report No. 168, 12 Dec 1946, par. 164; R. B. Oglesby, “A Summary of Major Changes in Army Organization 1939–1945,” AHQ Report No. 57, 22 Dec 1952, par. 17.

received their anti-aircraft guns yet. With this latest reversion back to machine gun battalions, nine months of training had effectively been squandered.⁵²

More important were the changes to the top positions at CMHQ and in First Canadian Army and its constituent formations, which had not been settled following McNaughton's departure. The question of who was to command First Canadian Army ultimately fell to Ralston, who consulted with Crerar and senior British government and military officials and whose decision was approved by the Cabinet War Committee. Of all candidates, Crerar had had experience as CGS as well as the GOC I Canadian Corps but he lacked experience commanding so much as a brigade in the field. The British were open to his eventual command of First Canadian Army as long as his performance as a corps commander in Italy was satisfactory. But who would command the army in the interim? The solution was to have Stuart step down as CGS whereupon Ralston appointed him chief of staff at CMHQ (the position of senior officer having been abolished at the same time) and simultaneously the acting GOC-in-chief First Canadian Army. Though no longer CGS, the shuffle effectively meant that Stuart still had the most senior position in the Canadian Army except that he was in London instead of Ottawa.⁵³ As for the command positions of the field formations, CMHQ filled some of these with officers who were serving in Italy. For all of the difficulties that Operation TIMBERWOLF had caused, at the very least it gave a host of senior officers operational experience that would prove beneficial to First Canadian Army in Northwest Europe. On 4 January 1944, First Canadian Army was placed under the command of 21st Army Group. On 20 March, Crerar was finally recalled from commanding I Canadian Corps in Italy to become

52. Kenneth W. Reynolds, *Capital Soldiers: The History of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa* (Ottawa: Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa Regimental Foundation, 2011), 158–159.

53. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 222–223.

McNaughton's permanent replacement. On 30 January, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, with 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade under command, was transferred from First Canadian Army to the British I Corps for training and operations. The Canadians would remain under I Corps until the end of the initial stages of the Normandy campaign.⁵⁴ That same day, Simonds, who had commanded 1st Canadian Infantry Division in Sicily and later 5th Canadian Armoured Division upon its arrival in Italy, was promoted to lieutenant-general and given command of II Canadian Corps, replacing Lieutenant-General Sansom who was ill. Burns took over I Canadian Corps from Crerar. Foulkes was given command of 2nd Canadian Infantry Division to replace Burns. Major-General George Kitching, who had served as 1st Canadian Infantry Division's GSO1 in Sicily, replaced Major-General Worthington commanding 4th Canadian Armoured Divisions as the latter was considered too old to command a division at age 54.⁵⁵

Simonds deserves credit for overseeing the last stages of the training of Canadian troops dedicated to the upcoming invasion of Normandy. Upon taking command of II Canadian Corps, he immediately found problems in the leadership and training of the formations under his command and he only had a short time to address them. Like Montgomery, Simonds had little patience for incompetent officers. In a circular letter issued only a few weeks after assuming command of II Canadian Corps, Simonds made it clear that officers lacking in intelligence, leadership, or efficiency had to be removed. The only criterion that mattered when determining if a man should be replaced, according to Simonds, was his skill as an officer in the present; whether he had many years of loyal service behind him, whether he was a nice person, and what effect his dismissal would

54. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17905, vol. 12304, file 3/Op Old/1: LGen K. Stuart (A/GOC-in-C First Cdn Army) to GS, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jan 1944.

55. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 32–33.

have on his family were of no consequence. If a commander was unsure if he should remove a subordinate officer, Simonds believed that it was better to remove him than risk disaster on the battlefield.⁵⁶ He was also displeased when he saw that there was not enough training that practiced cooperation between arms.⁵⁷ Particularly worrisome was that even at this extremely late period — as OVERLORD was slated to begin on 5 June, when the tides would be ideal — the infantry battalions of Foulkes's 2nd Canadian Infantry Division still had limited experience working with armour. To remedy this, on 27 April, Simonds ordered 4th Armoured Brigade to send squadrons to the division so that the infantry could practice movements with the tanks.⁵⁸

Working in combination with tanks was just one subject that was vital to 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's task of penetrating deep into Normandy after the initial landings. Another was traversing rivers in force. To prepare for such tasks, the division conducted a series of brigade and battalion exercises codenamed KATE in late April and early May. The purpose of the exercises was to test selected units from 4th and 5th Brigades in the crossing of a tidal river like those that they might face in Normandy and to develop better techniques. The scenario was that First Canadian Army, composed of two British corps and II Canadian Corps, had invaded the United Kingdom in the Lincolnshire area. II Canadian Corps, on the right flank, had been ordered to force a crossing of the river Trent and establish a bridgehead for a British corps to exploit. The Trent was, on average, 720 feet wide at high tide and 540 feet wide at low tide and had a

56. LAC, RG 24, vol. 10799, file 225C2.012 (D2): LGen G. G. Simonds (GOC, 2 Cdn Corps), circular letter re: "Efficiency of Command," 19 Feb 1944, pars. 3–6.

57. LAC, RG 24, vol. 10800, file 225C2.013 (D18): Simonds, notes re: "Corps Commander's Conference 4 Mar 44."

58. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Corps, Apr 1944, app. 109, Simonds, "Weekly Progress Report to Canada," 30 Apr 1944.

current no faster than 4.5 knots per hour. Each headquarters and arm of service had their own subjects on which they were to concentrate. Brigade and battalion staffs were responsible for developing their own plans. The infantry were to focus on weapons and equipment handling, loading 6-pounders onto the boats, and working in muddy terrain. Twenty-seven storm boats and rafts were available for the exercise.⁵⁹

As none of the infantry units involved in the KATE exercises had any prior experience with the storm boats, they underwent preliminary training between 17 and 22 April.⁶⁰ While mechanized units required bridges to cross a river, the infantry usually used storm boats. These collapsible boats, made of plywood and canvas, 12 feet long and over 4.5 feet wide, could hold seven infantrymen plus two ferrymen. Engineers normally provided the boats although it was usually the infantry that operated them. The training was not nearly as intense as for combined operations, but it did require close coordination between the infantry and engineers. In a river crossing, surprise was vital. The brigade commander would work with his commander, Royal Engineers to determine the general area in which the assault would occur. Cover and a wide front were desirable because rivers were natural defensive positions and the enemy undoubtedly would be on the watch for an attack. The crossing had to be done at night or, if during the day, only if a smokescreen and artillery support were available. With a wide frontage, the enemy's discovery of one crossing site would not betray the others. Battalion commanders would

59. LAC, RG 24, vol. 10439, file 212C1 (D61): 2 Cdn Inf Div Ex KATE, LCol C. R. Archibald (GSO1, 2 Cdn Inf Div), "Preliminary Instrs," 17 Apr 1944, pars. 1–2, 4 and app. C, "Problems for Consideration and Trg"; "Brief – Exercise 'KATE,'" pars. 5–6; WD, GS, 2 Cdn Corps, Apr 1944, app. 71, Brig N. E. Rodger (COS, 2 Cdn Corps), Ex KATE, 17 Apr 1944, pars. 1–4 and app. D, "Eqpt Available" and app. E, "Gen Narrative"; GS, 2 Cdn Inf Div, May 1944, app. 28, MGen C. Foulkes (GOC 2 Cdn Inf Div) and Brig G. Walsh (CE, 2 Cdn Corps), "KATE: Trg in Crossing of a Tidal Estuary; Joint Report," 24 May 1944, par. 2 (c) (i–ii).

60. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Inf Div, Apr 1944, app. 8, Archibald, 2 Cdn Inf Div Trg Instr No. 22, 16 Apr 1944.

do their own reconnaissance with the engineers to determine a more precise embarkation point. The engineers were responsible for arranging the transportation of the storm boats to the water's edge, which usually required the infantry's assistance. Two ferrymen, preferably engineers but more often than not infantrymen from a reserve company, constituted the crew and would be the first to enter the boat, followed by the rest of the infantry. It was up to company commanders to give the order to launch dependent on the operation's zero hour. After paddling to the other side of the river, the section commander would jump out and the ferrymen would follow and hold the boat steady while the rest of the section disembarked. Once on the opposite shore, platoons reformed and proceeded to their objectives.⁶¹

KATE I began on 28 April with the Calgary Highlanders assaulting the east bank of the Trent opposite Amcotts, with the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada following up. The Calgary Highlanders were across the river 33 minutes after the start of the exercise and the Black Watch passed through them to seize their objective on the opposite shore. The two battalions spent the next 24 hours repelling counter-attacks by 4th Brigade. During KATE II on 1 May, the Black Watch assumed the assault role, but this time there was no follow-up force. In the meantime, the two battalions selected from 4th Brigade, the Royal Regiment of Canada and the Essex Scottish Regiment, practiced embarking in storm boats, crossing the Trent, and disembarking on the opposite bank in preparation for their upcoming turns in the KATE programme. On 3 May, the Essex Scottish conducted KATE III across from Burton-upon-Strather, again with no follow-up force, with 5th Brigade acting as the enemy. The next morning, KATE IV began, with the

61. Ibid., app. 19, Ex KATE, "Sequence of Events: Assault Storm Boat Crossing," 26 Apr 1944; UK, WO, *Operations*, pt. 8, *River Crossings*, MTP No. 23 (1940; repr., [Ottawa: King's Printer], 1941), 5–12, 16–19, 22–26.

Royal Regiment crossing at 0425 hours on the right and the Essex Scottish following two hours later on the left. All landings were successful and the attacking troops attained their objectives by 1000 hours. The two battalions then held their positions against counter-attacks by 5th Brigade until “cease fire” was called at 1100 hours the next day.⁶²

On 6 May, the RHLI and Le Régiment de Maisonneuve joined the rest of their brigades in the Scunthorpe area for two weeks of continued river crossing training. All units under both brigades became “Kate Force” under the command of Brigadier Sherwood Lett from 4th Brigade. From the 7th to the 19th, battalions conducted their own river crossing exercises, including KATE V by the RHLI on the 16th. With a machine gun company and mortar platoon from the Toronto Scottish and an anti-tank battery under command, the RHLI successfully crossed the Trent, repelled a counter-attack, and established a bridgehead in less than five hours.⁶³

The KATE exercises yielded important lessons regarding river crossings, operations that would surely occur on the continent. In his preliminary assessment of the KATE exercises, Lett was particularly disappointed with the level of training of the storm boat coxswains:

It is unsafe, unsound and unreasonable to consider entrusting the lives of trained inf[antry] men to the incompetence of boat crews in their present state of trg [training]. During the exercise, displays of such incompetence had a serious effect upon the confidence of and the morale of the assaulting tps [troops].⁶⁴

62. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Inf Div, May 1944, app. 28, Foulkes and Walsh, “KATE,” 24 May 1944, app. “Scope of Trg and Exercise”; WD, HQ, 4 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1944, app. 1, Ex KATE, Int Log and Essex Scot Comd Diary; WD, HQ, 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Apr–5 May 1944; WD, R Regt C, 4–5 May 1944 and app. 4, “Training Diary Exercise KATE 26 Apr 44–6 May 44.”

63. WD, RHLI, May 1944, app. 2, LCol W. D. Whitaker (CO, RHLI), RHLI OO No. 1, 10 May 1944; app. 3, Ex KATE V, Int Log; McGuire, AHQ Report No. 66, pars. 17–19.

64. WD, HQ, 4 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1944, app. 1, Brig S. Lett (Comd, 4 Cdn Inf Bde), “Crossing of a Tidal Estuary: Some Points for Consideration,” 4 May 1944, par. 2 (h).

Foulkes and Brigadier Geoffrey Walsh (Chief Engineer, II Canadian Corps) completed an interim report on the 24th on the KATE exercises. They concluded that a tidal river crossing should be made on a two-brigade frontage with two battalions from each brigade forward. Many of their conclusions echoed some of the points Lett raised in his report. To train for such operations, Foulkes and Walsh recommended a nine-day syllabus. Training should be done in teams of all arms working together and even being quartered together. Each arm and each team had to be able to depend on each other to complete their tasks, day or night and in any possible tidal conditions. The preparation phase should also allow for reconnaissance from the division all the way down to the platoon level so that each officer would intimately know the conditions facing his formation, unit, or subunit. All ranks should have the operation explained to them with a model or diagram and time would be needed for dryshod and wetshod rehearsals. In short, as river crossings required considerable preparation and the close coordination of multiple arms and levels of command, they could not be improvised in a short time.⁶⁵

The final training phase for 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was collective divisional assault training to be conducted concurrently with training at the brigade group level. There was no single dress rehearsal for NEPTUNE for 21st Army Group. This was an unfortunate omission as such a rehearsal could have provided valuable experience not only for the landing infantry but also the naval, air, and army staffs that had to work together. However, too large a dress rehearsal might have been detected by German reconnaissance. The most complete British exercise preceding the invasion, Exercise

65. WD, GS, 2 Cdn Inf Div, May 1944, app. 28, Foulkes and Walsh, "KATE," 24 May 1944, pars. 21 (c-e, h-k), 22 (a) (i-ii), (c) and app. L, "Draft Outline Planning and Action: Schedule for Deliberate Assault Crossing of Tidal Estuary." Cf. WD, HQ, 4 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1944, app. 1, Lett, "Crossing of a Tidal Estuary," 4 May 1944, par. 2 (h).

FABIUS, took place in early May. The exercise was divided into six parts: FABIUS I was for Force “O,” which would land the American forces at OMAHA Beach; FABIUS II, III, and IV were for Forces “G,” “J,” and “S,” landing the British and Canadian forces at GOLD, JUNO, and SWORD Beaches, respectively; and FABIUS V and VI were for practicing the buildup of supplies, equipment, and personnel in British ports. Force “U,” landing the United States VII Corps at UTAH Beach, had held its own exercise, TIGER, in April.⁶⁶

The Canadians only participated in FABIUS III, which took place at Bracklesham Bay, east of Portsmouth, on the Sussex coast. In addition to rehearsing the assault landing, the exercise also practiced the logistical arrangements and the push inland.⁶⁷ 3rd Canadian Infantry Division’s task was to establish a beachhead and capture and hold a line codenamed CONCLAVE. The enemy forces holding the beach were said to be a low-tier infantry brigade made up of men wounded on other fronts, young conscripts, and men considered unfit for service on the Eastern Front — much like the real German 716th Infantry Division holding the Normandy coast in the British–Canadian sector — although the enemy had mobile reserves further inland. 9th Brigade’s job was to land two and a half hours into the exercise, advance with 7th Brigade to seize CONCLAVE, consolidate, and prepare to repel an enemy counter-attack.⁶⁸

In his exceedingly brief account of FABIUS III in the Canadian official history, Stacey erred when he wrote that the naval authorities had to end the exercise prematurely because of bad weather and “put a stop to disembarkation before the exercise was

66. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 36–37.

67. WD, HQ, 9 Cdn Inf Bde, Apr 1944, app. 3, Kingsmill, 9 Cdn Inf Bde Ex Instr No. 1, 20 Apr 1944, pars. 1–2.

68. Ibid., Brig D. G. Cunningham (Comd, 9 Cdn Inf Bde), Ex FABIUS III, Outline Plan, 22 Apr 1944, pars. 4–19; Kingsmill, 9 Cdn Inf Bde OO No. 1, 25 Apr 1944, pars. 3, 7–28, app. A, ISUM, and app. B, pars. 1–4.

completed.”⁶⁹ This conflicted with every other account of the exercise. The Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada’s war diary stated that the weather on the 4th was “rather dull” and “a little cooler” than the day before, but “Fortunately, the water is quite calm.” The war diary went added that the rifle companies began landing at 0705 hours and were on the 8th Brigade objective, SHRUBBERY, by noon.⁷⁰ 8th Brigade’s war diary similarly noted that although the exercise went slowly at first, it gradually made its way back on schedule and that “senior offrs [officers] who were watching the exercise expressed themselves as quite satisfied with events.”⁷¹ The same was true on 7th Brigade’s sector as the Regina Rifle Regiment’s intelligence log for the exercise commented that all companies began landing between 0705 and 0724 hours and were on their objective, SIDEWAYS, by 1152 hours and CONCLAVE by 1645 hours. The battalion dug in that night and held the position through the next day, until it received the ceasefire order at 2230 hours on the 6th.⁷² Contrary to Stacey’s conclusion, FABIUS III indeed did take place and was not cancelled on the 4th. It was also a complete success as the division captured and consolidated its objectives as planned. The exercise was the closest that 3rd Canadian Infantry Division came to a dress rehearsal for NEPTUNE and it demonstrated that the infantry battalions were capable of fulfilling their assigned roles in the invasion.

3rd Canadian Infantry Division had received months more combined operations training than had 2nd Canadian Division prior to the Dieppe Raid and 1st Canadian Infantry Division prior to the invasion of Sicily. Whereas combined operations training in 1942 had been plagued by inexperienced naval forces, Force “J” was thoroughly prepared

69. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 36.

70. WD, QOR of C, 4 May 1944.

71. WD, HQ, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 May 1944.

72. WD, Regina Rif, May 1944, app. 6, Ex FABIUS III, Int Log.

for its role on D-Day. Unlike its sister divisions, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division thus had the benefit of working with the exact same naval crews that would take them to Normandy. From a combined operations standpoint, there was nothing that could make the division more prepared for an amphibious landing. Once again, however, the absence of emphasis on training in tank-infantry cooperation for the division during this period is apparent. 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's prowess at combined operations came at the expense of its experience working alongside tanks, a problem which explains some of the criticisms that some historians have levelled against the Canadians' performance in Normandy. But while the two remaining Canadian divisions would not land in Normandy for several weeks after D-Day, there was no more time to train 3rd Canadian Infantry Division.

D-Day was scheduled for 5 June. But Eisenhower's meteorologists forecasted stormy weather in the English Channel, making the operation even more risky than expected. In such weather, landing craft would be tossed about in the choppy waters and land in the wrong location at the wrong time. The infantry would be so stricken by seasickness that they would be in no condition to fight. So, on the evening of 4 June, Eisenhower postponed D-Day until the 6th.⁷³ The weather on the 6th improved and allowed the operation to take place. In the early morning hours, Force "J" successfully crossed the English Channel. Unfortunately, the Allied aerial and naval bombardment programme in support of the landings was disappointingly inaccurate, leaving the German defensive positions guarding the beaches largely intact. In the western sector of JUNO Beach at

73. Ellis, *The Battle of Normandy*, 140–144.

Courseulles-sur-Mer, 7th Brigade landed shortly before 0800 hours against a storm of German machine gun and mortar fire. The tanks had landed some 20 minutes beforehand, with mixed results. Only seven of “A” Squadron, 6th Armoured Regiment’s amphibious tanks made it onto the beach in support of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, and 14 of “B” Squadron’s 19 tanks did so in support of the Regina Rifle Regiment. Some of 7th Brigade’s rifle companies experienced heavy opposition, but by nightfall all of 7th Brigade had landed, had pierced the Atlantic Wall, and was consolidating its position in anticipation of the inevitable German counter-attack. Meanwhile, 8th Brigade landed at about the same time in the eastern sector of JUNO Beach. The Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada stormed the beach at Bernières-sur-Mer while the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment did the same at Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer. On this side of the Canadian front, the tanks landed after the infantry. The German defences were completely intact, and “B” Company of the Queen’s Own Rifles landed 200 metres east of its target and right in front of a German stronghold. Behind them, Le Régiment de la Chaudière, the brigade’s reserve battalion, began to land at about 0830 hours but could not move forward until the Queen’s Own Rifles had neutralized the strongpoint stalling their advance. 8th Brigade gained control of the sector by the afternoon. Finally, 9th Brigade received orders at 1050 hours to support 8th Brigade’s sector and began landing about 50 minutes later. That afternoon, 9th Brigade passed through 8th Brigade and advanced to Beny-sur-Mer, where it would dig in for the night. Though the Allies did not achieve all of their D-Day objectives, they nevertheless managed to land over 155,000 men in France in a single day. Fortunately, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division suffered lighter casualties than expected: 340 killed or died of wounds, 574 wounded, and 47 taken prisoner.⁷⁴

74. The literature on the Normandy landings is extensive. For works that focus on the Canadians

In the days that followed, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division held firm against repeated counterattacks by German forces that aimed to quash the invasion. One event that historians have often used as evidence of the Canadians' alleged unpreparedness for battle occurred on 7 June. A battlegroup consisting of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders and 27th Armoured Regiment (The Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regiment), comprising the vanguard of 9th Brigade, had its advance southward halted by 12th SS Panzer Division. C. P. Stacey concluded that "the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group had fought its first battle with courage and spirit, but somewhat clumsily. Encountering an unusually efficient German force of about its own strength, it had come off second-best."⁷⁵ Russell A. Hart claimed that the Germans "soundly defeated" the battlegroup because of the Canadians' inferior doctrine and inexperience.⁷⁶ But new scholarship by Marc Milner has convincingly shown that Canadian setbacks on 7 June were "not a reflection of incompetence of Allied leadership or tactical ineptness among the troops." Rather, contrary to Stacey's assertion that the opposing forces were equal in strength, the Germans had a three to one advantage and the Canadian infantry were without artillery support for most of the day. And yet, working together, the North Novas and Sherbrooke tanks succeeded in blunting the German counterattack.⁷⁷

3rd Canadian Infantry Division had been training for battle for nearly three years. It went into action with more years of training than any of the British divisions that had fought in North Africa in 1941 and 1942. While it is true that the division's initial

at JUNO Beach, see Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, chap. 5; Reginald H. Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1984), 10–24; William J. McAndrew, Donald E. Graves, and Michael Whitby, *Normandy 1944: The Canadian Summer* (Montreal: Art Global, 1994), chap. 2; and Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 42–58.

75. See Stacey's account of the engagement in *The Victory Campaign*, 126–133.

76. Hart, *Clash of Arms*, 344.

77. Marc Milner, *Stopping the Panzers: The Untold Story of D-Day* (Lawrence, KS: UP of Kansas, 2014), chap. 5.

combined operations training had been delayed in early 1943 (chapter 5), it underwent the most comprehensive combined operations training programme of all the Canadian divisions during the war, with the added benefits afforded by having the opportunity to work and develop a close relationship with Force “J.” If anything, it had undergone too much combined operations training and not enough tank-infantry training. But the emphasis on combined operations training rather than tank-infantry training made sense for 3rd Canadian Infantry Division given its role in the initial assault. Skill in cooperating with armour would be of little use if the division was destroyed on the beach.

The divisions tasked with the expanding the beachhead also underwent training to prepare them for their roles. That 2nd Canadian Infantry Division never used its river crossing training in Normandy is beside the point; the need to cross a tidal river during the campaign was a very real prospect and as such the training was necessary. At Simonds’s behest, the division was given more practice in tank-infantry cooperation. Finally, 4th Canadian Armoured Division’s delayed progress compared to the other divisions stemmed not from a lack of effort but from its very late formation. Once its infantry brigade was fully constituted, it wasted no time delving into training in combination with its armoured brigade. While the Canadians undoubtedly suffered from serious training delays early in the war, as chapters 2 and 3 showed, by 1943 infantry training was decidedly professional in character and rigorous in action. Though the Canadians lacked a flawless record in Normandy, it is untrue that the time spent training in the United Kingdom had been wasted.

CHAPTER 7

ORGANIZED CHAOS: INFANTRY REINFORCEMENTS, 1940–1945

The preceding chapters dealt with the training of the infantry units in Canada's field formations. But these were not the only units that required infantry training. Once the field units went into action and began to experience "wastage," they would need their ranks to be refilled with reinforcements. Based on actual casualty statistics, as of September 1944, a Canadian infantry battalion could expect 13 percent wastage, all ranks, per month in "normal" periods, and 30 to 45 percent wastage in "intense" periods for other ranks and officers, respectively.¹ Without reinforcements, it did not matter how large a field force Canada raised or how well-trained it was. It would not last long unless it could be maintained with men trained to take the place of those killed and wounded.

In 1940, CMHQ began establishing special holding units in the United Kingdom that would supply the field units of all arms with reinforcements. Ideally, infantry reinforcements would be every bit as skilled as the infantrymen in the fighting divisions. Studying the Canadian reinforcement system during the Second World War presents challenges not found in analyzing the field forces. The war diaries of reinforcement units are notoriously poor compared to the infantry battalions. Entries are brief and appendices are few, making it difficult to get a complete picture of training. The frequent reorganizations of the reinforcement system throughout the war only make the study of reinforcements even more complicated. But given their importance, the reinforcement

1. C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 452–453.

units cannot be ignored when examining Canadian infantry training during the Second World War.

C. P. Stacey neatly summarized the reinforcement system in the United Kingdom in the first volume of the army's official history, *Six Years of War* (1955). But space limitations prevented him from providing a detailed analysis of reinforcement training.² In 1956, Major-General E. L. M. Burns published his own analysis of what had gone wrong with manpower management during the war. He concluded, rightly, that the Canadian Army was overstaffed with officers in administrative roles and had too few men in the combat arms and too many in others. He devoted a chapter specifically to reinforcement training in which he questioned whether reinforcement units and training centres were efficiently structured.³ However, much of the historiography since has focused primarily on the problems in supplying sufficient manpower, especially with reference to the "conscription crisis" during the autumn of 1944, not the training in reinforcement units in the United Kingdom themselves.⁴ Only very recent scholarship has begun to reveal the problems of training infantry reinforcements.⁵

This chapter does not attempt to answer every question regarding manpower planning or the politics of conscription. Rather, it examines the training of infantry reinforcements, the reasons for which there appeared to be a shortage of them in the

2. C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 1, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 203–206, 242–243.

3. E. L. M. Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1956), 159–160 and chaps. 3–4, 6.

4. Studies primarily concerned with manpower include R. MacGregor Dawson, *The Conscription Crisis of 1944* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961); Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, pt. 7; J. L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1977), chaps. 5–6; and Daniel Byers, "Mobilizing Canada: The National Resources Mobilization Act, the Department of National Defence, and Compulsory Military Service in Canada, 1940–1945" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2000).

5. Caroline D'Amours, "'Notre tâche est de rendre les hommes prêts au combat': La formation des sous-officiers de renforts d'infanterie du Canada pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale" (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2015).

autumn of 1944, and the steps that the Canadian government took to address the situation. This research has uncovered that, in accordance with the existing historiography, the training of reinforcements did not show nearly the same level of improvement as the field units throughout the war. It was not until after the Normandy campaign was underway that training in the reinforcement units could be said to be well-organized and effective. The training difficulties that Canadian reinforcements faced did not result from deficient doctrine or a lack of diligence among the men but poor military management.

The Reinforcement System Takes Shape

Canada began to organize holding units for reinforcements overseas in the winter of 1940. For their first two years, training in these units was demonstrably poor. While the field units had their own problems (chapters 2–3), the holding units had it even worse. Not only did they have lower priority when it came to access to weapons and equipment, their training was interrupted more often as senior commanders could not resist using them as a source of general labour. Further, the Canadian Army was growing more quickly than Canada's budding war economy could supply it. Thus, new active units and training centres at home all had to compete for uniforms, weapons, equipment, and accommodations. The result was that reinforcements often arrived in the United Kingdom with a conspicuously low training standard, thereby shifting the responsibility for training upon the burdened holding units.

The idea behind fielding special reinforcement units was that once Canadian field units began to suffer casualties in battle, men from holding units would immediately take their place. Hence, they were supposed to be depots for field units' "first reinforcements," the authorized increments of men who would replace a battalion's first battle casualties. These were not, therefore, pools of general duty troops but units that held trained troops capable of serving with field units. On 19 February 1940, No. 1 Artillery Holding Unit, No. 1 General Holding Unit, Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Infantry (Rifle) Holding Units, and No. 1 Infantry (Machine Gun) Holding Unit came into existence, with their establishments settled in May.⁶ Each holding unit had a headquarters company and an instruction wing with three training companies, each of which corresponded to an infantry battalion. These companies were grouped on a geographical basis so a given holding unit, for instance, would hold the companies for Ontario units. The six holding units came under the command of CMHQ on 30 June. They were divided into two groups, each with a headquarters: "A" Group held the three infantry units and "B" Group the remainder. The time lag between when the holding units were created and when their establishments were finalized is explained by the fact that their roles had already changed. Though they were originally intended strictly as reinforcement pools, it became clear that the holding units would have to be heavily involved in training; there simply were not enough trained troops to fill them and no casualties for them to replace at the time. Thus, the holding units were to be used to train fresh troops from Canada to provide a reinforcement reserve in the United Kingdom capable of supplying enough men to the field units to

6. GO 32, "Calling Out of Troops on Active Service," 19 Feb 1940, effective 1 Sep 1939; GO 72, "Establishments — Holding Units, C.A.S.F.," 20 May 1940, effective 1 Sep 1939.

replace losses incurred for three months of intensive combat.⁷ Essentially, the holding units were simultaneously training units and pools of trained men.

It was not long before the holding units began to notice serious systemic problems. “A” Group headquarters held a conference on 3 and 4 October 1940 attended by 1st Canadian Division’s brigade and battalion commanders in order to maintain a close relationship between the division and its holding units and to discuss some problems that the holding units had experienced during training over the summer. The conference yielded important insights into the problems of administering and training the reinforcements. Lieutenant-Colonel A. Hamilton Gault, the commander of “A” Group, opened the proceedings by stating bluntly that using the holding units as a “dumping ground” for unsuitable personnel was unacceptable. Whenever 1st Canadian Division went into action and suffered casualties, it was going to need quality reinforcements. But Brigadier Arthur Potts, commander of 2nd Brigade, announced that he would continue to send his misfits to the holding units anyway. He was not going to tolerate unsatisfactory soldiers in his battalions. Hopefully, they could be retrained and returned to the field units, but if some of them had no hope of becoming good soldiers, it was the holding units’ problem to get rid of them. The concern was that if men who made poor soldiers could not be transferred from the field units to the holding units, then what were the field units supposed to do with them?⁸ CMHQ had failed to provide a clear policy on this issue.

7. G. F. G. Stanley and R. J. C. Hamilton, “Organization of the Canadian Reinforcement Units (United Kingdom): Historical Outline, 1940–45,” CMHQ Report No. 133, 29 Mar 1945, pars. 2–4.

8. WD, A Gp HQ (HU), Oct 1940, app. 1, “Notes on Conference Held at Headquarters, ‘A’ Group Holding Units, C.A.S.F., 3rd and 4th October, 1940.”

The battalion commanders also voiced concern that whenever they received reinforcements to replace misfits, these also were almost always poorly trained. They often had only a basic familiarity with most subjects. Part of the problem was that the reinforcements, many of whom would make great soldiers, were given general labour tasks that took time away from training. Gault suggested that an officer exchange between field and holding units would give the holding unit officers a better understanding of the level of training that the front-line units required. But the battalion commanders were against this. It will be recalled that in 1940, Canadian infantry officers were frequently undergoing their own training at their units, were away from their units on course, or were posted to formation staff positions. Field units could not spare any officers for an exchange.⁹ However, the holding units could always send their commanding officers and chief instructors periodically to the field units. On 16 November, Brigadier G. R. Turner, the Canadian BGS of the British VII Corps (McNaughton's command at the time) ordered the holding units to make such arrangements.¹⁰

In the autumn, the Canadian reinforcement system in the United Kingdom underwent the first of several reorganizations. The arrival of 2nd Canadian Division in the United Kingdom meant that the holding units had to be able to support both divisions. In September, they were reorganized such that "A" Group contained the infantry holding units, "B" Group held one each of engineer, signals, and general (medical, provost, and ordnance) holding units, and the new "C" Group held two artillery holding units. A new Headquarters, Canadian Base Units (CBU), was formed on 1 November. In January, the

9. Ibid.

10. WD, 7 Corps, Nov 1940, app. 66, Brig G. R. Turner (BGS (Cdn), 7 Corps), circular letter, 16 Nov 1940.

infantry holding units would be expanded by three companies each to accommodate the reinforcement demands for 2nd Canadian Division (figure 7.1).¹¹

Figure 7.1

Order of Battle: “A” Group, Canadian Holding Units, 31 January 1941

- No. 1 Canadian Infantry Holding Unit
 - Headquarters Company
 - Instructional Wing: Royal Canadian Regiment; Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment; 48th Highlanders of Canada; Royal Regiment of Canada; Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment); and Essex Scottish Regiment Companies
- No. 2 Canadian Infantry Holding Unit
 - Headquarters Company
 - Instructional Wing: Royal 22^e Régiment; Carleton and York Regiment; West Nova Scotia Regiment; Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada; Le Régiment de Maisonneuve; and Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal Companies
- No. 3 Canadian Infantry Holding Unit
 - Headquarters Company
 - Instructional Wing: Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry; Seaforth Highlanders of Canada; Edmonton Regiment; Calgary Highlanders; Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada; and South Saskatchewan Regiment Companies
- No. 1 Canadian Machine Gun Holding Unit
 - Headquarters Company
 - Instructional Wing: Saskatchewan Light Infantry (MG); Toronto Scottish Regiment (MG); and Royal Montreal Regiment (MG) Companies

Source: G. F. G. Stanley and R. J. C. Hamilton, “Organization of the Canadian Reinforcement Units (United Kingdom): Historical Outline, 1940–45,” CMHQ Report No. 133, 29 Mar 1945, app. A

The holding units had just as much training to do as the field units. No. 1 Infantry (Rifle) Holding Unit set an ambitious syllabus for the month of November, with about 184 hours of training scheduled. But these men were not yet ready for intensive combat training. Further, even if they were ready, the field units had priority when it came to

11. Stanley and Hamilton, CMHQ Report No. 133, pars. 6–9 and app. A.

equipment. The syllabus allotted 26 hours and 15 minutes of physical training, 43 hours and 55 minutes of close order drill, 15 hours and 30 minutes of route marches, and 15 hours and 10 minutes of sports. In other words, more than 100 hours were devoted to subjects that required only the minimum amount of equipment. Physical training, route marches, and sports were designed to develop men's physical stamina, while close-order drill, by far the dominant subject in the syllabus, was intended to instill discipline.¹²

However, just because the syllabus called for a certain number of hours of training did not mean that they ever took place in their entirety. Indeed, there was good reason to suspect that the holding units were not getting much training done. Allen H. Bill, an *Ottawa Evening Citizen* correspondent, began a series of ten articles profiling the holding units on 28 December. The first instalment exposed the problems wracking the Canadian reinforcement system, particularly the condition of those sent to the holding units directly from Canada:

There have been innumerable cases of officers, N.C.O.'s and men arriving at the Holding Units at little better than the recruit stage. They have had little or no training in Canada. Others have had considerable training in Canada and still are no better than recruits. N.C.O.'s have arrived with no apparent qualifications for their job.

Many "bad actors" have been dumped on the Holding Units from Canada, with their crime sheets already filled. The suspicion is that they're shoved over here by their C.O.'s in Canada to get rid of them.¹³

The rest of Hill's series, which ended on 9 January, portrayed the holding units quite favourably. But NDHQ informed CMHQ about the first article a week after it appeared. The government was naturally worried about what such bad press would do to morale in

12. WD, 1 Inf (Rif) HU, Nov 1940, app. 4, Syllabus.

13. Allen H. Bill, "Finds Many Canadian Soldiers Arriving Overseas Poorly Trained: Holding Units Receive Men as Reinforcements," *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 28 Dec 1940.

Canada, especially since the article was vague on the causes of the holding units' problems and the manner in which CMHQ was handling the situation.¹⁴

Fortunately, an investigation into reinforcement training in Canada and overseas was already underway. In December 1940, Colonel Lawson, as DMT, visited the United Kingdom to assess the training progress of the holding units first-hand. He submitted his report at the end of January 1941. Given the Canadians' role as a counter-attacking force in the event of a German invasion, Lawson considered it vital that all troops, regardless of their arm, obtain a basic understanding of infantry tactics. The training of officer reinforcements, in Lawson's view, needed to be altered. Junior officers needed much better instruction in how to train the troops under their command without the constant supervision of senior officers. On the subject of the training level of the holding units, Lawson confirmed that it was true that they had yet to do much training. This was because holding units were often employed in other duties. Also, the time between a soldier's completing training in Canada, receiving embarkation leave, and departing for and arriving at the United Kingdom was at least a month, during which time he would lose much of what he had been taught. Lawson also confirmed that the holding units were receiving men from Canada who had extensive disciplinary problems. When he looked into the matter, he found that training centres in Canada had not discharged such men because it was administratively difficult to do so. In one military district, there was an erroneous attitude that any man could be made into a soldier. In his report, Lawson strenuously recommended that training centres in Canada never allow men overseas who

14. LAC, RG 24, reel C-8353, file H.Q.S. 8122: NDHQ, tel. GSD 229 to CMHQ, 3 Jan 1941.

did not respond to corrective discipline, had great difficulty learning, or who showed no promise of becoming a soldier.¹⁵

There was not much that CMHQ, or anyone in the United Kingdom for that matter, could do about the problem. From the point of view of the holding units, a more pressing concern was that training was constantly hindered by equipment shortages and duty assignments. The most detailed accounts of reinforcement training over the winter and spring of 1940–1941 are the weekly training reports from No. 3 Infantry (Rifle) Holding Unit, stationed at Bordon, Hampshire at the time. In December, their route marches were starting to incorporate rudimentary tactical schemes. In the new year, the unit began anti-gas training but still gave high importance to route marches even in the cold weather. However, shortages in training supplies were becoming acute. Notably, the unit had a conspicuous lack of training manuals to suit its needs, even though it had put in requests for them. One of 2nd Brigade's battalions had requested the holding unit provide it with 50 copies of an issue of the *Army Training Memorandum*, a British training bulletin, but the unit had to decline because it had only one copy for all of its officers to share. Much of the unit's stocks of ammunition, including hand grenades, could not be used for training as they were being saved to defend the United Kingdom. This had a dramatic effect on weapons training. The chief instructor noted in his report that even though dummy grenades and mortar shells were available, using the real thing had a positive psychological effect on the men. They would tremble when handling a live grenade. He believed that they had to be provided with live explosives if the training was to have any value. Moreover, the unit's equipment stores had not been expanded to

15. DHH, file 112.3S2009 (D181): Col J. K. Lawson (DMT), "Report on Visit to the United Kingdom 11th Nov. 1940–4th Jan. 1941," 27 Jan 1941, pars. 2 (a), 3 (a, c), 4 (d).

account for the transition from three to six training companies and the unit was consequently short of Bren guns, anti-tank rifles, and mortars.¹⁶

The Canadian holding units had their names changed in March 1941 to include the word “Canadian,” the first of many redesignations throughout the war. Thus, Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Infantry (Rifle) Holding Units became Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Canadian Infantry Holding Units (CIHU), respectively, and No. 1 Infantry (Machine Gun) Holding Unit became No. 1 Canadian Machine Gun Holding Unit (CMGHU).¹⁷ By this point, the training companies for 1st Canadian Division had finished their basic training and began to engage in more stimulating subjects, namely fieldcraft, which coincided with the return of warm weather. Exercises became more frequent and demanding. For instance, from 7 to 13 April, a platoon from 1 CMGHU held a route march from Bordon to Portsmouth to Chichester, and finally back to Bordon, during which the men held various tactical schemes.¹⁸ While the equipment situation was getting better, the holding units still had deficiencies. 3 CIHU was supposed to have eighteen Bren guns and nine anti-tank rifles, but had only twelve and six, respectively. Also, other duties continued to interfere with training. Just when it appeared that 3 CIHU was going to remain on schedule for the week in mid-April, the unit was assigned increased duties to maintain Bordon Camp. The training companies removed brush, a task that took up so much of one company’s time

16. WD, 3 Inf (Rif) HU, Jan 1941, app. 3, CI, 3 Inf (Rif) HU, “Weekly Training Report, Week Ending 4.1.41,” pars. 2, 8; “Weekly Training Report, Week Ending 11.1.41,” pars. 9, 12; “Weekly Training Report, Week Ending 18.1.41,” pars. 3, 8; “Weekly Training Report, Week Ending 25.1.41,” par. 5; Feb 1941, app. 3, CI, 3 Inf (Rif) HU, “Weekly Training Report, Week Ending 21.12.40,” pars. 1, 4.

17. GO 62, “Redesignation — ‘Active’ Units,” 13 Mar 1941.

18. WD, 1 CMGHU, Apr 1941, app. 5, Commentaries by LCpl J. Fantie, LCpl D. Greyeyes, LCpl A. Pettitt, and Pte W. Jenkins.

that only a single platoon could train for most of the week.¹⁹ Most of these duties fell on the 1st Canadian Division companies, which were already into their advanced training, but the 2nd Canadian Division companies completed their basic training syllabus in late May, leaving them open to duty assignments too.²⁰ The duty assignments continued to interfere with training for the rest of the year. A survey of September revealed that 1 CIHU had lost 9,650 man-days of training to general duties, 2 CIHU 7,927, and 3 CIHU 5,760. In October, these figures were 8,950, 9,090, and 5,022, respectively. Thus, in a two-month period, the infantry holding units lost a combined 46,399 man-days of training!²¹

Canadian Base Units' original organization had been based on supplying a corps of two infantry divisions and an army tank brigade. Once the Cabinet War Committee confirmed in January 1941 that the Canadian Army (Overseas) would soon increase to a full corps of three infantry divisions, an armoured division, and a tank brigade, the holding units had to be reorganized. While the original geographical basis of organization made sense for supplying a single division, this no longer seemed workable. A divisional organization seemed more prudent because it would make the holding units easier to manage. Holding units would be affiliated with field units. A holding unit of about 1,000 to 1,250 men would have three training companies, each of which would feed reinforcements to a specific field unit.²² In July, NDHQ approved the idea of having each

19. WD, 3 CIHU, Apr 1941, app. 6, LCol D. L. Redman (CO, 3 CIHU) to HQ, A Gp, CHU re: "Weekly Training Report, Wk Ending 5 Apr 41," 7 Apr 1941, par. 5; "Weekly Training Report, Wk Ending 12 Apr 41," par. 3; "Weekly Training Report, Wk Ending 19 Apr 41," 22 Apr 1941, par. 1.

20. Ibid., May 1941, app. 4, Redman to HQ, A Gp, CHU re: "Weekly Training Report, Wk Ending 10 May 41," 12 May 1941, par. 4.

21. WD, HQ, A Gp, CRU, Nov 1941, app. 1, "Summary of Man Days Lost from Training through Extra-Unit Duties."

22. LAC, RG 24, reel T-21414, vol. 12534, file 6/Reinf/2: Brig F. R. Phelan (DAG, CMHQ), memorandum to Brig G. R. Turner (BGS, Cdn Corps), 18 Jul 1941, pars. 1, 3-4.

infantry holding unit supply reinforcements to an infantry brigade. There needed to be two infantry holding groups: one group of six holding units for 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions and a second group of three holding units for 3rd Canadian Division, one unit for the machine gun units, and another unit for the infantry brigade of 5th Canadian Armoured Division.²³

As of 1 August 1941, there were 5,903 Canadian officers and 81,059 other ranks in the United Kingdom. Seven hundred forty-seven officers and 14,821 other ranks were in 1st Canadian Division; 764 officers and 14,748 other ranks were in 2nd Canadian Division; 489 officers and 9,268 other ranks were in 3rd Canadian Division; and 879 officers and 12,374 other ranks were reinforcements, not including the permanent staffs of the holding units. The remainder were miscellaneous troops under CMHQ's command.²⁴

Brigadier F. R. Phelan, the deputy adjutant general (DAG) at CMHQ, also suggested in July that the term "holding unit" be reconsidered. Even though the holding units were essentially an extension of the field units, Canadian troops had come to view the holding units as something inferior to field units. Men resented being posted to a holding unit, viewing it as a humiliation, thanks in great part to 1st Canadian Division's early habit of relegating its poorest or most troublesome soldiers to the holding units. The term "holding unit" was part of the problem. Though it had been chosen to signify that they were depots for field units, the name implied that men were surplus general duties

23. LAC, RG 24, reel T-21414, vol. 12534, file 6/Reinf/2: Col A. W. Beament (A/DAG, CMHQ, "Memorandum Regarding Re-organization of Cdn Base Units with Particular Reference to Holding Units," 16 Aug 1941, par. 2 and exhibit C, "Proposed Grouping – Canadian Base Units"; Stanley and Hamilton, CMHQ Report No. 133, pars. 11–13.

24. C. P. Stacey, "Situation of the Canadian Forces in the United Kingdom, Summer, 1941: IV. Growth of Canadian Military Force in the United Kingdom; Progress of Canadian Overseas Army Programme, 1941; Notes on Sea Transport," CMHQ Report No. 45, 2 Sep 1941, par. 4.

troops rather than infantrymen and that they were being “held” apart from their regiments. That the Canadians were not in action and thus did not need many reinforcements contributed to the sense that once a man was transferred to a holding unit it was hard for him to get out of it. To counter such a negative attitude toward the holding units, Phelan suggested redesignating them as “reinforcement units” to emphasize that they had a very important role.²⁵ The misnomer “holding unit” even made it difficult to receive equipment. In December 1940, when requesting training equipment from the Deputy Assistant Director Ordnance Services (the office responsible for supplying weaponry), the staff of No. 3 Infantry (Rifle) Holding Unit was told “that we were a holding unit and not a training unit and that we were therefore not entitled to this equipment.”²⁶ The question of changing the names of holding units to something else came up again in a conference at CMHQ in mid-August. Colonel A. W. Beament, the acting DAG following Phelan’s reassignment, pointed out that although the term “holding unit” was consistent with the British usage, there was an important distinction between British and Canadian holding units. The British holding units were essentially fully trained reserve units whereas the Canadian holding units were designed to train the “first reinforcements” of their affiliated field units. In other words, the Canadian holding units were extensions of the field units and therefore required more training.²⁷ The holding units’ names were thus contributing to their negative image. To too many commanders and staff officers, “holding units” signified men who did not need training.

25. LAC, RG 24, reel T-21414, vol. 12534, file 6/Reinf/2: Phelan, memorandum to Brig G. R. Turner (BGS, Cdn Corps) re: “Nomenclature, Holding Units,” 18 Jul 1941, pars. 2–7.

26. WD, 3 Inf (Rif) HU, Feb 1941, app. 3, CI, 3 Inf (Rif) HU, “Weekly Training Report, Week Ending 21.12.40,” par. 2.

27. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17496, vol. 12204, file 1/Conf/8: Maj D. K. Tow (DAAG, CMHQ), “Minutes of Conference at C.M.H.Q., Wednesday 13 Aug 41 at 1600 hrs,” 14 Aug 1941, par. 5 (a).

NDHQ formally authorized the reorganization programme in October. The reorganization began when No. 3 Canadian Division Infantry Holding Unit was formed on the arrival of 3rd Canadian Division and had nine rather than six companies. To reflect the discouragement of the term “holding unit,” CBU became the Canadian Reinforcement Units (CRU). On 1 December 1941, 1 and 2 CIHUs were redesignated as Nos. 1 and 2 Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Units (CDIRUs). They would each swap companies so that all of 1st Canadian Division’s battalions would have their reinforcement companies in 1 CDIRU and the same for 2nd Canadian Division’s battalions and 2 CDIRU. At the same time, 3 CIHU was disbanded and its training companies for PPCLI, the Edmonton Regiment, and the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada were moved to 1 CDIRU while its training companies for the Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, the Calgary Highlanders, and the South Saskatchewan Regiment were moved to 2 CDIRU. This reorganization took until mid-1942 to be fully implemented. Each of these new infantry reinforcement units had a headquarters, an administration wing, and three training wings, each of which corresponded to brigades and held the companies. The reinforcement units were also placed into new groups. “A” Group consisted of 1 CDIRU, 2 CDIRU, and 5 CDIRU (the latter formed to provide reinforcements to 5th Canadian Armoured Division’s infantry units) and “D” Group consisted of 3 CDIRU and No. 1 Canadian Machine Gun Reinforcement Unit (figure 7.2).²⁸

28. LAC, RG 24, reel T-21414, vol. 12534, file 6/Reinf/2/2: MGen P. J. Montague (SO, CMHQ), CMHQ Adm Order No. 190, 28 Nov 1941, pars. 1–3; Stanley and Hamilton, CMHQ Report No. 133, pars. 14–17, app. B.

Figure 7.2

Orders of Battle: “A” and “D” Groups, Canadian Reinforcement Units, 1 May 1942

“A” Group

No. 1 Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit

Administration Wing

“A” Training Wing: Royal Canadian Regiment; Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment; and 48 Highlanders of Canada Companies

“B” Training Wing: Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry; Edmonton Regiment; and Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Companies

“C” Training Wing: Royal 22^e Régiment; Carleton and York Regiment; and West Nova Scotia Regiment Companies

No. 2 Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit

Administration Wing

“A” Training Wing: Royal Regiment of Canada; Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment); and Essex Scottish Regiment Companies

“B” Training Wing: Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada; Le Régiment de Maisonneuve; and Calgary Highlanders Companies

“C” Training Wing: Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal; Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada; and South Saskatchewan Regiment Companies

“D” Group

No. 3 Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit

Administration Wing

“A” Training Wing: Royal Winnipeg Rifles; Regina Rifle Regiment; and 1st Battalion, Canadian Scottish Regiment Companies

“B” Training Wing: Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada; Le Régiment de la Chaudière; and North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment Companies

“C” Training Wing: Highland Light Infantry of Canada; Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders; and North Nova Scotia Highlanders Companies

No. 1 Canadian Machine Gun Reinforcement Unit

Administration Wing

Training Wing: Saskatchewan Light Infantry (MG); Toronto Scottish Regiment (MG); Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG); and Royal Montreal Regiment (MG) Companies

No. 5 Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit (Armoured)

Administration Wing

Training Wing: Westminster Regiment (Motor); Perth Regiment (Motor); and Cape Breton Highlanders Companies

Source: G. F. G. Stanley and R. J. C. Hamilton, “Organization of the Canadian Reinforcement Units (United Kingdom): Historical Outline, 1940–45,” CMHQ Report No. 133, 29 Mar 1945, app. B

In the early spring, the situation with regard to undertrained troops arriving from Canada did not substantially improve. At the same time, a large number of officers and

NCOs were shifted back to Canada to train 6th and 7th Canadian Divisions for home defence. According to 2 CDIRU's monthly summary for March 1942, "Judging from the large number of personnel who have been returned to Canada, one would almost feel that the evacuation of the Cdn Army had started." Duty assignments continued to consume time for training.²⁹ The good news was that training did not completely stop. Men from reinforcement units were often attached to field units during large exercises, both for their own edification and to maintain liaison between the field units and the reinforcement units.³⁰ Interestingly, the reinforcement units' training syllabi focused on weapons training and featured comparatively little close order drill. Of a total of 144 hours, 1 CDIRU's three-week basic training course allotted only 15 hours each to close order drill and hardening, but an impressive 56 hours to weapons training and range practice as well as seven hours of fieldcraft and twelve hours of night training. The first mention of battle drill in 1 CDIRU's advanced syllabus appeared in May and the unit instituted its own battle drill course in July. Hence, battle drill reached the reinforcement units at about the same time as the field units.³¹

For their first two years, Canadian reinforcement units had a terrible time trying to train their men even though training was their primary purpose. While field units that received priority in the provision of equipment, they too had tasks that took time away from training (chapter 4), the reinforcement units seemed to have constant demands for general duties. This, as well as the arrivals from Canada who needed retraining, contributed to a very low training standard for the reinforcement units. Unfortunately,

29. WD, 2 CDIRU, Mar 1942, app. 4, Monthly Summary, 31 Mar 1942.

30. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9791, file 2/Exercises/5/2: Brig M. H. S. Penhale (BGS, CMHQ) to HQ, CRU re: "Training Exercises – Attachments of C.R.U. Personnel," 31 Mar 1942, pars. 1–2.

31. WD, 1 CDIRU, May 1942, app. 6, Syllabus, Basic Trg; app. 7, Syllabus, Advanced Assault Trg; Jul 1942, app. 1, Syllabus, Battle Drill Course.

these matters would all take time to address and there was little the reinforcement units could do about any of them. The next two years, from the spring of 1942 to June 1944, brought their own challenges.

Estimates, Shortages, and Doubts

By 1942, Canadian authorities in Ottawa and London still had to determine the final form of the Canadian Army (Overseas). Axis successes in the previous year, especially Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, greatly alarmed Canadians. Was Canadian soil safe? Canadian forces would have to be large enough to protect Canada and also make a meaningful contribution to the Allied war effort but not so large that they could not be resupplied or reinforced. But what if Canadian forces took serious casualties and there were not enough volunteers to replace them? Thus, in the spring of 1942, Canada found itself in the midst of its first conscription crisis of the conflict. Meanwhile, from then to the invasion of Normandy, CRU did its best to train reinforcements. Several factors complicated this task. First, there was still a disparity between the quality of reinforcements CRU was seeking and the quality Canada was sending overseas. There were systemic reasons for this, but mainly training centres in Canada were not very discriminating when deciding which men to send overseas and were inconsistent when it came to training standards. NDHQ was slow to correct this. Second, CRU would have to be restructured to account for the changing size and composition of the Canadian Army (Overseas). Finally, once Canadian forces in the Mediterranean began taking casualties,

the reinforcement system was greatly tested. In early 1944, the first indications emerged that the Canadian reinforcement system could not meet the needs of forces in both the Mediterranean and Northwest Europe. Predictions of how many casualties each arm could expect proved to be terribly inaccurate and Canada soon faced a serious shortage of trained infantry reinforcements.

There was no question that the wider war was going badly for the Allies. By the summer of 1942, Axis forces had already taken Poland, Scandinavia, France, the Low Countries, and the Balkans, made gains in North Africa, and had penetrated deep into Soviet territory. Ralston believed that the only guaranteed means for Canada to raise and maintain a strong field force was through conscription. To him, the voluntary system was too inefficient and could result in a severe manpower shortage at a critical time. The Opposition, seizing upon Canadians' worry that the Japanese might bring the war to Canadian soil, began clamouring loudly for the National Resources Mobilization Act to be amended to allow for sending conscripts anywhere in the world to fight. The disaster at Hong Kong (chapter 3) certainly bolstered the Conservatives' case for conscription. The conscription debate was exactly what the prime minister wanted to avoid for it threatened to divide his government along pro- and anti-conscriptionist lines and the country along language lines. King reasoned that the best way to ease tensions was to let the Canadian people decide. A plebiscite was held on 27 April 1942 asking Canadians if they were willing to release the government from its promise not to force conscripts to serve overseas. The results were predictable: Canadians outside Quebec were open to conscription, but Quebec voters overwhelmingly opposed it. The government responded on 8 May by introducing Bill 80, an amendment to the NRMA. Specifically, the bill

would remove section 3 of the NRMA, which restricted the government's power to conscript men for home defence only. King preferred this strategy instead of amending the NRMA to explicitly allow the government to send conscripts overseas. Thus, even with the amendment, he would have to go to Parliament for approval whenever the time came to actually send conscripts overseas. Ralston saw this as embarrassingly indecisive; once there was a dire need for more troops, there would be no time for Parliament to debate the issue. With no way to resolve the impasse, Ralston submitted his resignation on 7 July, the same day the House of Commons passed Bill 80. King managed to convince him to remain in the Cabinet, at least for the time being. King thus had skilfully managed to defuse the conscription debate, but not permanently. However, Ralston did not withdraw his resignation altogether. Both the apparent shortage of men and Ralston's resignation letter would re-emerge in 1944.³²

Canada successfully had weathered its first conscription crisis of the war. From CMHQ's perspective, the problem was not simply a matter of obtaining soldiers for overseas service, whether by volunteer or by compulsory means. Regardless of how men made it to the United Kingdom, they had to have a definite standard of training if they were going to be of any use. The quality of reinforcements being sent from Canada had not improved since Hill made his unflattering comments in the *Ottawa Evening Citizen* at the end of 1940. On 11 July 1941, Major-General Price Montague, the senior officer at CMHQ, wrote to Ottawa that the Canadian Army (Overseas) still needed more than 11,000 men to bring it up to strength. But this number was actually even larger because

32. For more on the 1942 conscription crisis, see J. W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record*, vol. 1, 1939–1944 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), chaps. 13–14; J. L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1975), chap. 6; Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 158–180; and John R. Campbell, "James Layton Ralston and Manpower for the Canadian Army" (MA thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1996), 94–116.

there were so many men who were unfit for military service. Montague estimated, based on tests that had been administered, that 10,717 other ranks were of “low mental capacity,” their cognitive abilities so weak that they were “incapable of performing effectively the duties of a soldier.” Another 1,890 were illiterate and therefore difficult to train. Just as worrisome was that men were arriving in the United Kingdom with a much lower training standard than expected, thus putting an extra burden on the reinforcement units which were already struggling to find more time for training.³³

McNaughton did not seem to share Montague’s concerns regarding reinforcements. If anything, he seemed quite detached from the difficulties that they faced. In July, he wrote to Ralston and the CGS, Stuart, to update them on the status of the reinforcement units. McNaughton was satisfied overall with the reinforcement units’ improved organization and efficiency as well as the close liaison between them and the field units. He mentioned the problems of insufficient equipment stores and accommodations, the latter becoming especially acute because of the arrival of American forces, but McNaughton assured the minister and CGS that “these matters are all being resolved and need cause you no particular anxiety.”³⁴

What McNaughton was more concerned with was building the army overseas. There was no doubt that fielding an army would require a massive manpower commitment to keep it at full strength. As the Canadians had no battle experience, McNaughton decided to use British estimates for wastage.³⁵ How big a force could

33. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17841, vol. 12239, file 1/Manpower/2: Montague to Secy, DND, 11 Jul 1942, pars. 1–4, 7.

34. LAC, MG 27 III B 11, vol. 51, file “McNaughton, Lt.-Gen. A. G. L. – General, 1939–45”: LGen A. G. L. McNaughton (GOC-in-C First Cdn Army), tel. GS 2345 to J. L. Ralston (MND) and LGen K. Stuart (CGS), 6 Jul 1942.

35. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 425.

Canada reasonably sustain? Stuart held a meeting on 3 August with senior CMHQ and First Canadian Army officers to discuss this question. They determined that the largest field force Canada could hope to maintain throughout the war was an army consisting of three infantry divisions, two armoured divisions, and two independent tank brigades, plus the necessary corps and army ancillary troops.³⁶ First Canadian Army was slated to have 175,655 men by 1 May 1943. Using British wastage projections, a force this size would need 38,869 men as reinforcements in any three-month period, assuming a high casualty rate in combat. CMHQ and the units directly under its command also needed 31,829 men plus another 1,910 reinforcements. Forecasts also had to allow for up to 40,866 men who turned out to be poor soldier material, including 2,500 “illiterates,” and thus had to be replaced. Some of these men could be put into labour units to free others for service in a field or reinforcement unit. All of this meant that the Canadian Army (Overseas) would need 290,412 men. As of 22 July, there were already nearly 160,000 Canadian soldiers in the United Kingdom. To make every single Canadian unit up to strength, including headquarters and reinforcement units, 123,047 men were needed.³⁷ Canada could send about 10,000 men per month, but there would always be men found to be unacceptable for service overseas. A realistic estimate was that Canada could provide as many as 80,000 men by the target date, leaving a deficit of just over 43,000 men.³⁸ After a series of meetings in August at CMHQ, the figures were debated and adjusted and it was determined that the Canadian Army (Overseas) would need an additional 41,376 men.

36. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1: “Proposed Composition, Canadian Army (Field Force) in the United Kingdom,” 16 Jan 1942.

37. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17487, vol. 12194, file 1/Cdn Army/2: “Composition Cdn Army Overseas (Third Proposal),” 5 Aug 1942.

38. LAC, MG 30 E 133, vol. 184, file P.A. 5-3-8, pt. 1: Maj E. H. Jones (A Branch, CMHQ), “Notes of Conference with Chief of General Staff, Department of National Defence at C.M.H.Q. on 3 Aug 42 at 1000 hours,” pars. 3, 10, 13–14.

Once the force was fully formed, the reinforcement pool in the United Kingdom would need to be 42,646 men.³⁹ According to the army's estimates, Canada would have about 638,000 men of military age up to 1945. Of these, and allowing for the needs of industry and agriculture, 302,650 were literate, able-bodied men aged 19 through 35.⁴⁰

At the same 3 August meeting between Stuart and the senior Canadian commanders in the United Kingdom, they also discussed reorganizing the reinforcement units once again. Beament, promoted to brigadier and appointed DAG, suggested that an administrative infantry corps be created along the same lines as the Canadian Armoured Corps. That is, rather than connecting reinforcements to a specific field battalion, it would be much simpler to post reinforcements to any battalion as needed. A territorial basis of organization seemed most suitable for this; if a battalion needed a replacement, it would get one from the same general region of Canada rather than worrying about whether he was from the same regiment. McNaughton agreed.⁴¹ The Canadian Infantry Corps was formed in late 1942. Reinforcements could be posted to any field unit in any division as needed, although efforts would be made to at least try to respect the territorial affiliations.⁴² The divisional organization was officially scrapped on 1 February 1943. Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 5 CDIRUs became Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 5 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Units (CIRUs), respectively; 1 CMGRU became 4 CIRU; and two new CIRUs, Nos. 6 and 7, were introduced. "A" Group consisted of 2 and 6 CIRUs, "D"

39. LAC, RG 24, reel C-5483, file H.Q.S. 20-1, pt. 4: Stuart, memorandum to Ralston, 20 Aug 1942, pars. 7, 13.

40. LAC, MG 30 E 133, vol. 184, file P.A. 5-3-8, pt. 1: "Notes on a Conference Held in Lt Gen A G L McNaughton's Office HQ First Cdn Army on Morning of 10 Aug 1942," 13 Aug 1942, par. 14.

41. Ibid.: Jones, "Notes of Conference with Chief of General Staff, Department of National Defence at C.M.H.Q. on 3 Aug 42 at 1000 hours," pars. 35-38.

42. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1/2: Maj D. C. Spry (PA to LGen A. G. L. McNaughton), "Minutes of a Conference Held at H.Q. First Cdn Army at 1130 hrs, 10th January, 1943," par. 19; GO 466, "Organization — Canadian Infantry Corps," 3 Dec 1942, effective 2 Sep 1942.

Group of 3, 4 and 7 CIRUs, and “G” Group of 1 and 5 CIRUs and No. 1 Canadian General Reinforcement Unit.⁴³

Fortunately, Canada was taking steps to make the training system more efficient. The government authorized the expansion of training centre capacity, including the construction of new centres, earlier in the year. Throughout 1942, the number of basic training centres swelled to 40, including two educational centres for men who lacked the requisite literacy. In fact, by the end of May 1943, the training centres could accommodate 78,000 men combined. On 6 November 1942, the Army Council authorized a new “Link Training Plan” whereby basic and advanced training centres for the infantry, armour, and medical personnel were linked so that men could get both types of training done in the same region according to their arm of service. While this change was intended to help streamline the administrative and logistical systems, it was not fully implemented until August 1943. It also had the benefit of fostering *esprit de corps* among units, since men would be concentrated at a district depot and then stay together throughout the training process. With this streamlined system, 13 basic training centres could be closed, and others could be reduced in size.⁴⁴

However, it would take time for the fruits of these changes to be realized. Meanwhile, from CMHQ’s point of view, training centres in Canada did not seem to be very good at training. There was no question that training had to begin in Canada as it provided men with a foundation of military skills. It was a means to filter out unsuitable candidates as it made little sense to waste shipping space sending overseas men who

43. LAC, RG 24, reel T-21414, vol. 12534, file 6/Reinf/2/2: Montague to DA & QMG, First Cdn Army re: “Infantry Reinforcement Units,” 1 Jan 1943, chart “Reinforcement Units, Infantry”; GO 465, “Conversion and Redesignation — Active Units,” 20 Nov 1943, effective 1 Feb 1943; Stanley and Hamilton, CMHQ Report No. 133, par. 18.

44. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 134–135.

would never make good soldiers. But there was a great discrepancy between the standard of training that the reinforcement units in the United Kingdom wanted and that of the men Canada was sending over. As the Canadian Army had done throughout the war, reinforcements were assessed in their proficiency in each subject according to a lettered “class” rubric. Men who were Class “A” were considered ready for assignment to a field unit. Class “B” men needed more advanced training, but were at least ready to be posted to a reinforcement unit overseas. Class “C” men needed basic training and Class “D” men were considered untrained. In most subjects, the fresh reinforcements arriving in the United Kingdom were either at the Class “B” or “C” level. Whereas Class “B” was acceptable, the number of men at Class “C” in so many subjects caused concern. For instance, a draft of reinforcements from A14 Canadian Infantry Training Centre in Aldershot, Nova Scotia, that arrived at 7 CIRU in July 1943 had disappointingly few Class “A” men in any subject. Of 345 men, 317 were Class “C” and two were Class “D” when it came to physical fitness. In fieldcraft, four were Class “A,” 31 were Class “B,” 298 were Class “C,” and eleven were Class “D.” In fact, the men’s proficiency was not evenly distributed in any subject. They were either mostly up to standard, as in rifle training with 324 men at Class “B,” or decidedly below standard. Even in close order drill, the most elementary military subject, 273 were at Class “C.” Major-General J. Hamilton Roberts, who had taken command of CRU in the spring, told Montague that this batch was “considered to be slightly better than previous drafts.”⁴⁵

CRU headquarters held a conference in June 1943 with representatives from all the reinforcement units to discuss these problems. It seemed that training centres in

45. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9840, file 2/Reinf Inf/1: MGen J. H. Roberts (Comd, CRU) to Montague re: “State of Trg – Rfts – Draft AT 56, CIRU,” 7 Oct 1943, par. 3 and encl., “Summary of State of Training Reinforcements,” 5 Oct 1943.

Canada thought it beneficial to train men in a well-rounded fashion so that they knew a little about a wide variety of subjects. This was in contrast to what the reinforcement units wanted: men who were thoroughly trained in the basics. If men did not know proper military discipline and conduct, it would be nearly impossible to begin more advanced training. Some men reported having been told in Canada not to even bother with saluting! Training centres in Canada also tested men on specific parts of the subjects that they had been taught, whereas the practice in the reinforcement units was to test them on entire subjects. Thus, men usually failed tests of elementary (TsOET) training on their arrival. The significant time lag between a soldier's completion of basic training and his arrival in the United Kingdom still existed. But a new training depot at Debert was under construction that would minimize the delay because of its proximity to Halifax, the main embarkation port. But even this would not solve the problem as there was never any guarantee that shipping would be available when a cohort of freshly trained troops finished their courses. It was not uncommon for men who had completed eight weeks of "common to all arms" (CTAA) training at a basic training centre and four weeks of "special to arm" training at an advanced training centre to be posted to guard duty or other roles for several weeks while waiting for shipping space to be available, by which time their skills had begun to degrade. Brigadier Milton Gregg, VC, the commandant of the Officers Training Centre (OTC) (Eastern Canada) in Brockville, Ontario, asked what problems the reinforcement units were having with new officers so he could correct it. The biggest problem, he was told, was that they often had swollen egos. "Many of them considered they had been ordained by God to be an officer, they have no desire to work or to improve their military knowledge," said Major C. O. Dalton, one of the chief

instructors in 3 CIRU.⁴⁶ No matter what, troops arriving from Canada would need a significant adjustment period in the United Kingdom.

When 1st Canadian Infantry Division left the United Kingdom for the invasion of Sicily in July 1943, few questioned whether the reinforcement system could produce enough trained infantrymen. There was no apparent shortage of men. Still, when Ralston visited London in August, he learned that the manpower problem facing the Canadian Army (Overseas) was that there were too few skilled tradesmen and specialists and too many men who were unsuitable for military service, usually because they were too old, illiterate, or had trouble learning anything. While Montague had complained about this state of affairs a year earlier, there were still about 15,000 of these “unabsorbable” Canadian personnel in the United Kingdom, all of whom had to be replaced by volunteers from Canada.⁴⁷ As of the end of July 1943, Canada had 14,684 officers and 205,308 other ranks in Europe (including nurses and members the Canadian Women’s Army Corps, of whom there were fewer than 2,000), so the “unabsorbable” figure represented about 6.8 percent of the Canadian Army (Overseas).⁴⁸ The rest of Ralston’s meeting at CMHQ concerned equipment, weapons, and administrative matters. There was no mention of the possibility that Canadian forces in Italy might exhaust the supply of infantry reinforcements.

By this point, the Canadian Army (Overseas) was practically complete. Its overall structure had been finalized and no new units were needed. Since Canadian formations

46. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9884, file 2/Trng Conf/1: “Minutes of a Meeting Held at CRU 6 Jun 43,” 11 Jun 1943.

47. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17496, file 1/Conf/10/4: Brig N. E. Rodger (BGS, CMHQ), “Record of a Meeting Held in the Office of the Minister of National Defence at CMHQ on 4 Aug 43,” sec. 13.

48. J. R. Martin, “Situation of the Canadian Military Forces Overseas, Autumn, 1943, Part II: Growth of the Canadian Army Overseas, October 1942–October 1943,” CMHQ Report No. 110, 20 Dec 1943, apps. A and B.

were engaged in combat, what the Canadian Army (Overseas) required was a steady flow of reinforcements from Canada. In fact, reinforcements were already being used up in the United Kingdom because the remaining Canadian formations there needed to be brought up to full establishment in preparation for formation training. The reinforcement units themselves needed to be reorganized, yet again, so that men who had completed their individual training could move on to collective training. This was done in March 1944 when 2 and 6 CIRUs were put under “A” Group; 1, 3, and 4 CIRUs were put under “D” Group; and 5 and 7 CIRUs were disbanded.⁴⁹ New war establishments for the reinforcement units were adopted at the same time to make them easier to manage. Each reinforcement unit would have an Instructional Wing responsible for training six companies lettered “A” through “F.” Men would be transferred from company to company as they were trained. “A” Company would receive and assess new men from Canada. “B” and “C” Companies would provide two weeks of refresher CTAA training, except for officers, who would head to the Canadian Training School for their course. After this, each man would be evaluated and a board would determine if he was ready to progress to the next stage or must stay in basic training. “D” Company would provide advanced (special to arm) training, during which the infantry would receive special instruction in the 6-pounder anti-tank gun and the 3-inch mortar. “E” Company was reserved for trained men in technical trades, such as drivers and mechanics. Once a man was thoroughly trained, he would be placed in “F” Company and await assignment to a field unit. The CIRUs’ “F” Companies would supply reinforcements to field units on a geographic basis. In “A” Group, 2 CIRU would supply men to units from Ontario and

49. LAC, RG 24, reel T-21414, vol. 12534, file 6/Reinf/2/2: MGen P. J. Montague (MGA, CMHQ), CMHQ Adm Order No. 55, 8 Mar 1944.

Manitoba, while 6 CIRU supplied men to motorized units for the armoured divisions, the machine gun units, and the French-speaking units. In “D” Group, 1 CIRU would supply men to units from Western Canada; 3 CIRU to those from Ontario units; and 4 CIRU to those from the Atlantic provinces, the English-speaking units from Quebec, plus the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment. “D” Group also held No. 1 Canadian General Reinforcement Unit, which supplied reinforcements to medical, intelligence, military police, dental, and pay units and other miscellaneous troops (figure 7.3).⁵⁰

While this reorganization was helpful, the reinforcement units were having a hard time training men for combat. As Montague wrote to Ottawa in September 1943, reinforcements were arriving in the United Kingdom with widely inconsistent levels of training due to a lack of uniformity among training centres in Canada as well as poor coordination between basic and advanced training centres there. By this point in the war, CMHQ and NDHQ had devised a workable policy regarding the training of reinforcements. Training centres in Canada were responsible for men’s individual training and the reinforcement units were responsible for testing them and providing refresher training until they were needed in a field unit. But the training standards of new arrivals in the United Kingdom were so varied that the reinforcement units had to offer refresher training syllabi of two, four, or even six weeks. This made managing the reinforcement units difficult because they were running so many courses simultaneously.⁵¹

50. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CRU/1/2: LCol J. E. C. Pangman (GSO1, CRU), HQ, CRU Trg Instr No. 6, 9 Mar 1944, pars. 5, 8–11, 14, 18–19, 27; reel T-17861, vol. 12258, file 1/Org RU/1: Montague, CMHQ Adm Order No. 46, 23 Mar 1944 and app. A, “Reorganization of CRU.”

51. DHH, file 112.21009 (D205): MGen P. J. Montague (SO, CMHQ) to Secy, DND re: “Trg – Basic and Advanced,” 11 Sep 1943, pars. 1–2, 4.

Figure 7.3**Orders of Battle and Field Unit Affiliations:****“A” and “D” Groups, Canadian Reinforcement Units, 20 March 1944**

“A” Group	“D” Group
No. 2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit Royal Canadian Regiment; Essex Scottish Regiment; Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada; Royal Winnipeg Rifles; Highland Light Infantry of Canada; Algonquin Regiment; Perth Regiment; Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment)	No. 1 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit 2nd Canadian Corps Defence Company (Prince Edward Island Light Horse); Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry; Calgary Highlanders; Seaforth Highlanders of Canada; Loyal Edmonton Regiment; South Saskatchewan Regiment; Regina Rifle Regiment; 1st Battalion, Canadian Scottish Regiment
No. 6 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit Support and Motor Battalion Wing: 1st Canadian Division Support Battalion (Saskatchewan Light Infantry)*; Toronto Scottish Regiment (MG); Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG); Lake Superior Regiment (Motor); 10th Canadian Independent Machine Gun Company (New Brunswick Rangers); Westminster Regiment (Motor); 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade Support Company (The Princess Louise Fusiliers)* French Speaking Wing: Royal 22 ^e Régiment; Le Régiment de Maisonneuve; Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal; Le Régiment de la Chaudière	No. 3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit 48th Highlanders of Canada; Royal Regiment of Canada; Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment); Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada; Lincoln and Welland Regiment; Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise’s); Irish Regiment of Canada No. 4 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment; Carleton and York Regiment; West Nova Scotia Regiment; Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada; North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment; North Nova Scotia Highlanders; Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders; Cape Breton Highlanders No. 1 Canadian General Reinforcement Unit Canadian Chaplain Service; Canadian Dental Corps; Canadian Intelligence Corps; Canadian Provost Corps; Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps; Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps; Miscellaneous
* Did not revert to machine gun battalion status until July 1944	

Source: LAC, RG 24, reel T-17861, vol. 12258, file 1/Org RU/1: MGen P. J. Montague (MGA, CMHQ), CMHQ Adm Order No. 46, 23 Mar 1944, app. A, “Reorganization of CRU”

Stuart agreed with Montague’s comments. There were extenuating factors as certain types of weapons and equipment such as grenades, anti-tank weapons, and mines were still not nearly as available in Canada as they were in the United Kingdom,

shortages that naturally limited the training centres' ability to be thorough. Sometimes, undertrained men were purposely sent overseas simply to use up shipping space. Nevertheless, there were measures that could be taken to ensure that the Canadian Army (Overseas) received a steady flow of able reinforcements. The Link Training Plan had already proven beneficial. To prevent inadequately trained reinforcements from ever leaving Canada, NDHQ was creating a training brigade group at Debert. This brigade group would be staffed with the best instructional and administrative personnel. It would help screen out poor reinforcements by testing them on arrival to see if their training reports, provided by training centres, accurately reflected their proficiency.⁵² To achieve better consistency with officer training, the training system in Canada was also altered to account for the different needs of each of the arms of service. Previously, men underwent ten weeks of CTAA training and then advanced training special to their arm of service. Infantrymen needed eight weeks, but engineers needed twelve and signalmen needed 24. Under the new arrangements, officer candidates would undergo their basic training and eight weeks of special-to-arm training and then report to OTC Brockville for officer training. They would then be given a provisional commission and return to an advanced training centre to complete their courses there. Plans were drawn up to have another eight-week refresher course for infantry officer candidates, focusing on leadership and administration.⁵³

In a subsequent letter to Stuart in December, Montague recommended that Canada supply 5,000 reinforcements per month for the first six months of 1944 and 3,000 for each of the last six months. The advantage of this proposal was that it provided

52. Ibid.: Stuart to Montague re: "Training – Basic and Advanced," 30 Sep 1943, pars. 2–5, 9–10.

53. LAC, RG 24, vol. 2284, file H.Q.S. 20-3-A, pt. 2: Brig S. Lett (DCGS (B)), memorandum to Col J. G. K. Strathy (DMT) re: "Officer Training: Cadets and Rft Offrs," 29 Oct 1943, pars. 1–6.

enough reinforcements to cover periods of intense casualties, expected to be high in the summer months, and that it reduced the total number of reinforcements to 48,000. The problem with this plan, as Montague acknowledged, was that if casualties mounted in the latter half of 1944 and Canada could not provide enough reinforcements, it would result in a national embarrassment.⁵⁴

Supplying so many fresh infantry reinforcements was going to be a challenge. To be sure, there were enough young men in uniform but too many of them were in the RCAF, the RCN, or in arms other than the infantry. While the army was struggling to find trained infantrymen, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was churning out more pilots and aircrew than either the RAF or RCAF needed chiefly because bombing missions over Europe had sustained fewer casualties than expected. The RCAF began curtailing recruiting in early 1944 and suspended it in the summer. The RCN, meanwhile, had been recruiting 2,600 men per month by June 1944, when it only needed about 1,700 or fewer per month.⁵⁵ Exacerbating the matter was that only a limited number of trained infantrymen in Canada were willing to volunteer for general service (GS), that is, active service, including overseas, until the end of hostilities. That Canada might not be able to maintain its ground forces in Europe on a voluntary basis began to become evident in early 1944 when updated casualty projections demanded higher numbers of men but recruiting in Canada had begun to stagnate. There were several

54. LAC, MG 31 G 21, vol. 6, file "Reinforcements – requirements at end of war and to provide for a continuing presence in U.K. in the post-war period. Memoranda, 1944–1946": Montague to Stuart re: "Reinforcement Requirements, Cdn Army Overseas," 11 Dec 1943, par. 6.

55. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 417–418; F. J. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: DHH, 1983), chap. 9; W. A. B. Douglas, *The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force*, vol. 2, *The Creation of a National Air Force* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 291–293; J. M. Hitsman, "Manpower Problems of the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War," AHQ Report No. 67, 15 Jan 1954, pars. 71–84.

possible remedies: “remustering,” or retraining men from other arms as infantrymen; run an aggressive campaign in Canada to induce NRMA men to volunteer for overseas service; or order NRMA men to serve overseas. In the end, all of these measures had to be used.

Canadian casualties in the Mediterranean had been mercifully light until the Battle of Ortona began in December 1943. From 5 December 1943 to 4 January 1944, Canadian forces in Italy suffered 809 killed, 2,053 wounded, and 100 taken prisoner.⁵⁶ Reinforcement pools already in the Mediterranean were remustering men from other arms to the infantry and retraining them there as best they could. With the fighting in Italy intensifying over the autumn and winter and the invasion of Northwest Europe looming, it became clear that while there would not be enough infantry reinforcements for both corps to operate effectively, there was an excess of other types of reinforcements. As of 13 March 1944, the infantry reinforcement pool was short nine officers and 9,000 other ranks. Projections showed that by 1 May, arrivals of new reinforcements would still leave a deficiency of 5,063 men. But as of 29 February, there was a glut of 1,334 armour reinforcements, 2,878 artillerymen, 2,453 engineers, and 3,732 miscellaneous troops. The natural solution was to remuster some these surplus personnel as infantrymen.⁵⁷ On 28 March, CMHQ duly ordered that 1,000 artillery, 500

56. J. M. Hitsman, “Manpower Problems of the Canadian Army,” AHQ Report No. 63, 17 Aug 1953, par. 357. For more on the Battle of Ortona, see G. W. L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 2, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1956), chap. 11; Daniel G. Dancocks, *The D-Day Dodgers: The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), chap. 8; and Mark Zuehlke, *Ortona: Canada’s Epic World War II Battle* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1999).

57. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1/4: Brig W. N. Bostock (ADAG (A), CMHQ) to MGen P. J. Montague (MGA, CMHQ) re: “Remustering,” 28 Mar 1944, pars. 1–3; reel T-17897, vol. 12295, file 1/Wastage/2: Bostock to DAG, 13 Mar 1944, pars. 2, 4.

engineer, and 500 armour personnel be sent to the infantry reinforcement units for training and remustering as infantrymen.⁵⁸

How did it get to this point? Why did CRU run out of infantry reinforcements so quickly? Why was Canada not supplying enough infantrymen in the first place? A significant cause of the problem was that NDHQ had set quotas on the number of men to train in each arm. Prior to 26 August 1943, 35 percent of all enlistments were trained as infantrymen. That steadily increased to 40 percent until 25 January 1944 and 50 percent after that. This meant that reinforcements that were currently being sent overseas were in the proportions of quotas that were in effect a year before, which were not enough to meet the war's hunger for infantry.⁵⁹ I Canadian Corps was running through infantry reinforcements faster than CRU could supply them, all because the percentage of infantry candidates had been set too low long before. By underestimating the number of infantry reinforcements needed, the army had created a grave problem for itself.

As it would take time for the newly remustered men to be fully trained, a quicker solution would be to send trained infantrymen who were currently assigned to home defence units in Canada. There was even still an understrength division, the 6th, in British Columbia. With the prospect of a Japanese attack on the west coast being very remote, why not reallocate some units from this division or elsewhere in Canada to Europe? The trouble with this option was that as most of these units were composed of NRMA men, they could not be sent overseas unless they volunteered or without an explicit order from the government. The compulsory option carried the risk of political uproar, but adhering to a voluntary policy was not as effective in generating the numbers

58. Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, par. 297.

59. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17487, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1/5: Brig M. H. S. Penhale (DCGS, CMHQ) to LGen K. Stuart (COS, CMHQ) re: "Manpower and Training Policy," 24 Jul 1944, pars. 14–16.

of men needed. Canada's regimental system made it difficult to get NRMA men to volunteer as individuals. Most of those who were open to overseas service were not willing to do so if it meant leaving their units. The general consensus among the commanders of the military districts across Canada was that large numbers of NRMA men would volunteer for overseas service if only they went as units. This was especially true in French-speaking units, which was important because French-speaking reinforcements were especially in limited supply.⁶⁰ The question thus turned to how to go about transferring entire infantry battalions of NRMA men to the Canadian Army (Overseas) while maintaining the voluntary basis of overseas service.

One potential source of infantry reinforcements was 13th Canadian Infantry Brigade. This formation consisted of the Canadian Fusiliers (City of London) Regiment, the Winnipeg Grenadiers,⁶¹ the Rocky Mountain Rangers, and Le Régiment de Hull. As a home defence formation, many of its men had been enrolled under the NRMA. In August 1943, the brigade, plus supporting arms, had participated in a joint United States–Canadian attack on Kiska, an Aleutian island that was held by Japanese forces for a time. Kiska's proximity to Canada made the operation part of the defence of Canada proper and thus did not constitute sending conscripts "overseas." The operation was a mess: the Japanese had actually quit Kiska 18 days before the attack, a fact that American intelligence had failed to discover. Despite no enemy opposition, the Allies nevertheless suffered casualties. Four Canadians were killed in accidents and due to remaining

60. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17897, vol. 12295, file 1/Wastage/2/2: MGen J. C. Murchie (VCGS) and MGen H. F. G. Letson (AG), tel. GS 249 to LGen K. Stuart (COS, CMHQ and A/GOC First Cdn Army), 16 Apr 1944, par. 2.

61. A new active battalion from this regiment was raised after the original was lost at Hong Kong.

Japanese mines and booby traps. The Canadian brigade group remained on the island through November.⁶²

Nevertheless, the men of 13th Brigade were trained infantrymen and had operational experience. Major-Generals J. C. Murchie, the vice CGS, and H. F. G. Letson, the adjutant general, believed 13th Brigade could generate a sizeable pool of volunteers for overseas service. Stuart, by this time the chief of staff at CMHQ, agreed. Though the most straightforward option would have been to break up 13th Brigade's units upon arrival in the United Kingdom and simply place the men into CRU's units, this would badly damage morale. These men had been promised that they would serve together and if their units were cannibalized as soon as they arrived, they would feel betrayed. These unit, and any future repurposed home defence units eventually would have to be broken up and used as reinforcements, but that did not mean that they would necessarily have to fall under CRU right away. The generals reached a compromise: 13th Brigade's battalions would stay together in the United Kingdom for as long as possible, continue training, and ultimately be used as reinforcement pools. CRU would instead be used to train reinforcement drafts from Canada.⁶³

It was already proving more difficult than expected to get NRMA men to opt for GS. For the 1943–1944 fiscal year, Ralston had pledged that the army would send 4,000

62. For more on the campaign in the Aleutians, see Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. 7, *Aleutians, Gilberts, and Marshalls, June 1942–April 1944* (New York: Little, Brown, 1951), chaps. 1–4; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, chap. 15; Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1962), 421–433; Reginald H. Roy, *For Most Conspicuous Bravery: A Biography of Major-General George R. Pearkes, V.C., through Two World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977), 185–197; Galen Roger Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy, 1867–1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), chap. 6; and Byers, “Mobilizing Canada,” 268–279.

63. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17486, vol. 12193, file 1/Cdn Army/1/4: Murchie and Letson, tel. AG 290 to Stuart, 28 Mar 1944, pars. 2–3, 5; reel T-17897, vol. 12295, file 1/Wastage/2: Stuart, tel. COS 28 to Murchie and Letson, 29 Mar 1944; file 1/Wastage/2/2: Brig M. H. S. Penhale (BGS, CMHQ) to LGen K. Stuart (COS, CMHQ), 17 Apr 1944, pars. 4–5; Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, pars. 301–303.

reinforcements per month. But not enough NRMA men were volunteering for GS. In the first three months of 1944, while there were 9,606 new voluntary enlistments, only 1,256 NRMA men switched to GS. At this rate, Canada would fall short of its reinforcement target by several hundred each month. In April, the government duly began an aggressive campaign to entice NRMA men to volunteer.⁶⁴

Stuart, Murchie, and Letson had overestimated the willingness of NRMA men in 13th Brigade to volunteer. Morale in the brigade had declined substantially since its return from Kiska. The NRMA men were tired of being in the army and the GS men were losing faith that they would ever get to fight. While the GS men were excited to learn that the brigade was going overseas, the NRMA men were unmoved. The English-speaking battalions generated about 100 volunteers each on the first day, then ten to fifteen men daily for the next three weeks. The response was much worse in Le Régiment de Hull, which was made up almost entirely of NRMA men. Speeches by commanding officers, regimental chaplains, and even invited Victoria Cross recipients were slow to stimulate interest in volunteering throughout the brigade. On 1 April, 13th Brigade had only 370 GS men. By the 19th, it had 1,973 GS men, including 477 from the Canadian Fusiliers, 579 from the Rocky Mountain Rangers, 484 from the Winnipeg Grenadiers, 295 from Le Régiment de Hull, and the rest from the headquarters, signals unit, and defence platoon. This did not mean that the drive had worked: only 676 NRMA men from the brigade had actually been enticed into turning GS; the other 927 were volunteers transferred from other units in Pacific Command. Another hundred men had to be dismissed because of their disciplinary records, but by 1 May, the brigade had generated about 800 volunteers, hardly the response Murchie and Letson had expected. With the volunteers and transfers

64. Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, pars. 312–327.

from other units, 13th Brigade had a total of 2,432 GS men.⁶⁵ The brigade left Halifax for the United Kingdom on 26 May 1944. Units all across Canada had a similarly difficult time getting NRMA men to “go active.”⁶⁶

Thus, the beginnings of a reinforcement crisis were already in place prior to the invasion of Normandy. It was not enough for men in Canada to volunteer for overseas service; they had to be in the army and from the infantry. Men who were willing to go GS from other arms or the RCAF had to be completely retrained if they were going to be infantry reinforcements. Using 13th Brigade was the quickest option because it was the only sizeable source of trained infantrymen left in Canada. The Canadian Army had badly miscalculated how many men from each arm it would take to maintain two field forces in different theatres, just as the British had overestimated how many pilots and aircrew were needed from the BCATP. Although King had started the war intending to avoid sending a large expeditionary force overseas, by the spring of 1944 the Canadian Army (Overseas) seemed like it was too big to maintain. The summer campaign season was going to be very costly for the Canadian Army in both the Mediterranean and Northwest Europe and would prove to be the most arduous test for the reinforcement system, as well as the King government.

65. WD, HQ, 13 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1944, app. 7, Brig W. H. S. Macklin (Comd, 13 Cdn Inf Bde) to MGen G. R. Pearkes (GOC-in-C Pac Comd) re: “Mobilization of 13 Bde on an Active Basis,” 2 May 1944, pars. 12, 23–40, 43, 47.

66. Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, pars. 339–341.

The Conscription Crisis of 1944

By the end of July, the only Canadian troops left training in the United Kingdom were in the reinforcement units. On D-Day, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade had landed in Normandy. In early July, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division and the headquarters and ancillary troops of II Canadian Corps arrived on the continent, followed by 4th Canadian Armoured Division and the headquarters and troops of First Canadian Army. What alarmed CMHQ and the Canadian government in the autumn was how rapidly the reinforcement pool seemed to be drying up. Requests from both theatres for infantry reinforcements never stopped arriving at CMHQ. By late September it appeared that Canada might be unable to maintain its forces in the field after the end of the year. This was the “conscription crisis” of 1944. It occurred largely because CMHQ and NDHQ had vastly underestimated the number of trained infantry reinforcements and overestimated the number of men in other arms that would be needed once Canadian formations were put into action. It turned into a serious political débâcle that threatened to bring down Mackenzie King’s government, which had to abandon its promise not to despatch conscripts overseas. However, the “crisis” was found to be an illusion: there only appeared to be a serious systemic problem in the reinforcement system because of high casualties in August, September, and October, which rapidly depleted the supply of trained infantrymen. The problem began to be alleviated in December due to developments on the continent rather than the Canadian government’s actions. Because Canadian forces in Northwest Europe participated in no major operations from November 1944 to early February 1945, overall Canadian casualties

declined. Units in both theatres were able to replenish their ranks while the reinforcement units accumulated more men.

Training in the reinforcement units changed in the summer of 1944 due to their newfound status as the only remaining pool of Canadian combat troops left in the United Kingdom. The training staffs at the reinforcement units were kept reasonably up to date on the progress of the fighting on the continent through publications such as *Current Reports from Overseas* (chapter 5). Sometimes, such publications featured Canadians. *Current Reports from Overseas* No. 48, published on 29 July, recounted the actions of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada's "D" Company during its landing at Bernières-sur-Mer on D-Day, although the unit's name was censored. The same issue contained one corps's report of the lessons learned thus far in the Normandy campaign. It was already clear that tanks required much more infantry protection than anticipated, owing to the Normandy countryside's terrain, which gave the enemy ample opportunities for concealment and ambush. The ground was more favourable to the infantry. Infantry battalions could expect to clear villages and other pockets of enemy resistance regularly. In Normandy, the report read, the infantry needed to learn to dig in immediately after taking a position because the automatic German response was to pummel their old position with mortar fire. The original author of the report recommended using the Germans' vacated slit trenches, but the editors of *Current Reports from Overseas* corrected this, because then the enemy would know the exact positions to shell.⁶⁷ Based on this type of literature and instructions from CMHQ on the fighting on the continent, reinforcement units aimed to emphasize night training, patrolling, weapons training (particularly grenades and anti-tank weapons), and dealing with mines and booby traps. To maintain men's stamina, there were usually

67. UK, WO, *Current Reports from Overseas* No. 48 (Jul 1944), pars. 1–19.

one or two 10-mile route marches per week.⁶⁸ Also, with no Canadian field units remaining in the United Kingdom, there was no longer anywhere to post reinforcements temporarily to receive collective training. Reinforcements units, then, would have to provide collective training up to the company level.⁶⁹

Sending reinforcements from CRU to France involved a highly organized procedure. Once Canadian field units suffered losses, they reported them to a special Canadian section attached to 21st Army Group, which in turn submitted a request every Saturday at noon to CMHQ detailing the number of reinforcements needed. CMHQ would send an order to CRU headquarters by 1400 hours on Monday specifying how many men were needed from each reinforcement unit according to their field unit affiliations. CRU immediately would forward the order to the reinforcement groups, which were not allowed to deny such requests; if they had men available, they had to supply them. Upon receiving orders for men, the reinforcement units would report to their group headquarters by 1500 hours on Tuesday as to how many men they could send. By Thursday, the reinforcement units would move men by rail, fully equipped, to a port to await a transport vessel to the continent. Upon arriving in France, the men were sent to No. 2 Canadian Base Reinforcement Group, which would then arrange transportation to the field units.⁷⁰ Thus, when an infantry battalion in Northwest Europe suffered casualties, it took about a week to receive new men. Because France was closer and

68. WD, HQ, A Gp, CRU, Jun 1944, app. 4, "Highlights of Trg"; WD, HQ, D Gp, CRU, Jul 1944, app. 4, Maj D. C. Henderson (BM, D Gp, CRU), D Gp, CRU Trg Letter No. 5, 3 Jul 1944, par. 12.

69. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17861, vol. 12258, file 1/Org RU/1: Col J. G. K. Strathy (Col (GS) DS & T, CMHQ) to Brig M. H. S. Penhale (DCGS, CMHQ) re: "Appreciation of Trg Requirements for Cdn Army Rft Pers in UK," 30 May 1944, par. 3; Penhale to Strathy re: "Reorganization CRU," 5 Jun 1944; Stuart, "Minutes of Working Staff Committee Held at CMHQ, 1000 hrs 6 Jul 44 to Consider Re-Organization of CRU," par. 10.

70. WD, 1 CIRU, Jun 1944, app. 8, Capt S. J. Fowler (Adj, 1 CIRU), "Procedure of Weekly Reinforcement Demands and Despatching Rfts to 21 Army Gp," 19 Jun 1944.

because forces in the Northwest European theatre of operations had priority, the procedure for receiving reinforcements was not nearly as timely for forces in Italy: Canadian battalions there waited at least a month for a demand for reinforcements to be fulfilled.⁷¹

In July, CRU's ranks started to become badly depleted due to the challenges of supplying troops to two casualty-intensive theatres. Commanders in Italy were disappointed that the forces in Northwest Europe took priority in reinforcements. At the same time, Canada's field forces in Italy were about to get larger because something had to be done to alleviate the stress on 11th Brigade, which had struggled to keep up with the momentum of the advance from the Hitler Line in the rugged Italian terrain during the spring. Burns, Crerar's replacement as GOC I Canadian Corps, requested CMHQ provide 5th Canadian Armoured Division an additional infantry brigade; that way, the division's two infantry brigades could alternate working with its armoured brigade. Of course, it was out of the question that a Canadian brigade be sent from the United Kingdom since all of them were devoted to OVERLORD. Burns opted simply to form his own brigade by reorganizing and remustering his forces. He converted the division's reconnaissance regiment, 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, along with an anti-aircraft artillery regiment, to infantry, the latter taking the name of the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment. The Westminster Regiment, the division's motor battalion, was also moved to the new 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade with no change to its status, as a motor battalion would be beneficial to the brigade. On 12 July, Stuart allowed this with the understanding that while it would make operations smoother, I Canadian Corps would not receive a

71. LAC, MG 30 E 537, vol. 2, LGen E. W. Sansom (IG), "Report on Survey of Reinforcement Situation, Canadian Army Overseas," 29 Mar 1945, pars. 23, 26.

greater allotment of reinforcements to maintain the new brigade. After a month of training as an infantry brigade, 12th Brigade was put into action against the Gothic Line on 25 August.⁷² The situation did nothing to help the strain on the reinforcement pool in Italy. From 21 August to 18 September, I Canadian Corps suffered 2,850 infantry battle casualties. After filling units with reinforcements, there were only 35 officers and 688 other ranks left in the infantry pool. And as long as the forces in Northwest Europe received priority in reinforcements, there was no chance of getting many more.⁷³

Casualties were also mounting in Northwest Europe. Thankfully, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division's losses early in the campaign were much lighter than expected. For the entire month of June, the division's casualties were 301 officers and 3,142 other ranks, whereas estimates issued May had feared the division and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade would suffer 481 officer and 7,092 other rank casualties in just the first 17 days of fighting.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division remained in continuous action for 55 days, and its cumulative losses were crippling its infantry battalions' ability to fight while the reinforcement network struggled to get new men forward speedily. The Queen's Own Rifles, for instance, had taken the heaviest casualties of any Canadian unit in the amphibious assault on D-Day: 63 killed in action or died of wounds and 76 wounded, all ranks. By 31 July, the battalion had suffered 169 dead, 295 wounded, and 39 men evacuated as psychological casualties.⁷⁵ That day, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division

72. Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*, 478–481; Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 108–109; Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, pars. 364–367.

73. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17508, vol. 12215, file 1/COS/19: MGen E. L. M Burns (GOC 1 Cdn Corps) and Brig E. G. Weeks (OIC, Cdn Sec, GHQ 1 Ech, 15 Army Gp), tel. ACA 3975 to Stuart, 20 Sep 1944, par. 1.

74. Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, par. 376.

75. WD, QOR of C, 31 Jul 1944; W. T. Barnard, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, 1860–1960: One Hundred Years of Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Ontario Publishing, 1960), 197.

was briefly withdrawn from the front line and was found to be more than 600 men below strength. Once 2nd Canadian Infantry Division arrived in Normandy in July, it too took serious losses. In the disastrous Operation SPRING on 25 July, the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada had the worst experience by far: the unit suffered 307 killed in one afternoon, thereby rendering it unable to fight for the next week and a half. That operation cost II Canadian Corps 1,500 casualties, roughly 450 of them fatal.⁷⁶

Because infantry units had the highest casualty rates, the type of reinforcements that the Canadian field forces in both theatres needed most were infantry. Prior estimates had predicted a loss of 132 infantry officers and 2,150 other ranks in Normandy by 10 July, but the actual losses were 220 officers and 3,885 other ranks. The same projections indicated that the infantry would constitute 63 percent of battle casualties. But by 10 July, the real figure turned out to be 78.6 percent. Even cases of sickness and non-battle injuries were highest among the infantry.⁷⁷ At reinforcement depots set up on the continent to hold incoming reinforcements and assign them to field units, specialists and men from other arms were piling up while there was a constant dearth of infantrymen. Artillery other rank casualties in Italy and Northwest Europe were at 52 and 34 percent of predicted levels, respectively. One factor that contributed to this difference was that the Luftwaffe was nearly nonexistent in Normandy, thus there was a reduced need for anti-aircraft artillery. The figures for the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC), the

76. Casualty figures from Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 179, 279. For more on Operation SPRING, see C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, vol. 3, *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe, 1944–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960), 186–196; Reginald H. Roy, *1944: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1984), chap. 4; John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 241–250; and Copp, *Fields of Fire*, chap. 7.

77. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17897, vol. 12295, file 1/Wastage/2/2: Brig A. W. Beament (OIC, Cdn Sec, GHQ 1 Ech, 21 Army Gp) to Stuart re: "Reinforcements," 15 Jul 1944, pars. 1–2, 7.

arm responsible for transportation and supply, were even lower: 13 percent of projections in Italy and 20 percent in Normandy. Up to 25 percent of artillery reinforcements and 60 percent of RCASC reinforcements could safely be remustered as infantry.⁷⁸ CRU could not do this remustering as its units had ceded their accommodations in Surrey and Hampshire to the invasion force prior to D-Day and had not yet returned. But the recently arrived 13th Brigade was perfectly capable of training surplus artillery and RCASC reinforcements. So, on 5 August, CRU was ordered to post thousands of these men to the brigade. Hopefully, within six weeks of conversion training there would be 2,000 to 3,000 new infantry reinforcements. Brigadier Matthew Penhale, the deputy CGS at CMHQ, duly ordered CRU to begin converting troops to infantry, with a focus on teamwork at the section and platoon levels, marksmanship, and digging — a lifesaving infantry task.⁷⁹

Remustering was not a simple undertaking. The artillery and RCASC men selected for remustering would undoubtedly be disgruntled. Owing to the urgent need for infantrymen, infantry training for these men would have to be speedy, about four weeks. The training syllabus therefore would only include the essential infantry subjects: discipline, physical fitness, weaponry, fieldcraft, and collective training up to the platoon level.⁸⁰ A handful of men, particularly artillery officers, were adamantly opposed to

78. Ibid.: LCol E. G. Pullen (GSO1, SD (O), CMHQ), memorandum to Penhale, 24 Jul 1944, pars. 8 (c, e), 10 (e).

79. Ibid.: Penhale to Strathy re: "Conversion Training, Surplus RCA and RCASC Rft Personnel," 1 Aug 1944, pars. 2–3; Stuart to Beament re: "Rft Holdings – Arty and RCASC," 3 Aug 1944, par. 10; Montague to Roberts re: "Remustering to Infantry: Rft Holdings – Other Arms," 5 Aug 1944, par. 4; LAC, MG 31 G 21, vol. 6, file "Reinforcements – requirements at end of war and to provide for a continuing presence in U.K. in the post-war period. Memoranda, 1944–1946": Strathy, memorandum to Penhale, 9 Aug 1944, app. C, Penhale to GSO1, HQ, CRU, 9 Aug 1944, pars. 2, 6.

80. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9840, file 2/Reinf Inf/1: LCol B. B. King (SD (A), CMHQ), memorandum to Strathy re: "Appreciation of Situation in Regard to Conversion of Re-Mustered Personnel into Inf," 2 Aug 1944, par. 2 (b–d); Penhale to Pangman re: "Conversion Trg for Re-Mustered Personnel," 9 Aug 1944,

becoming infantrymen and deliberately failed the conversion course.⁸¹ Something also had to be done to stop producing officers in specialties that were not needed and instead churn out more infantry officers. Canadians were still undergoing officer training at various officer cadet training units (OCTUs) in the United Kingdom and in the summer of 1944, there was a surplus of 600 officer cadets in non-infantry arms, particularly armour and artillery. There was little choice but to put strict limits on officer candidates entering armour or artillery OCTUs and to induce as many as possible to opt to become infantry officers. By mid-September, those cadets in the OCTUs who could not be absorbed by their own arm would have to accept infantry commissions or remain in their arm as other ranks.⁸²

The government's spring and summer push to induce more NRMA men to turn GS ended on 30 September. It had been a moderate success overall. From July to September, there were more GS volunteers than in the same months in 1943, largely due not to enlistments from the public but by NRMA conversions to GS (figure 7.4).⁸³ These men would make their way overseas as part of the regularly scheduled reinforcement drafts. Meanwhile, the men who were ahead of them in the reinforcement stream had an increasingly long voyage to travel from the United Kingdom to the field units. As the Allies gained ground in Northwest Europe over the summer, the distance that incoming reinforcements had to travel from the D-Day beaches to the forward units increased. As the logistical system could not respond to urgent requests for new men, the situation

pars. 3–5, 8; Pangman to 4 CIRU re: "Conversion Trg for Remustered Personnel," 31 Aug 1944, encl., Maj D. J. McDougall (CI, 4 CIRU), Syllabus, "4 Weeks' Remuster Trg."

81. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9840, file 2/Reinf Inf/2: Col F. J. Fleury (ADAG (MS), CMHQ), memorandum re: "Officers Failing Infantry Conversion Course," 5 Dec 1944, pars. 1–2.

82. LAC, RG 24, reel T-21380, vol. 12503, file 6/OCTU/1/4: Bostock to DAG, CMHQ re: "Officer Reinforcements," 15 Sep 1944, pars. 1–5.

83. Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, par. 343.

became critical in September. The British had captured the Belgian port of Antwerp intact on the 4th. But Antwerp lay nearly 30 miles inland and the approaches to it on both sides of the Scheldt estuary were still held by the Germans. The task of securing the approaches and making Antwerp usable fell to the Canadians. Until the job was complete, supplies and reinforcements would still have to be shuttled from Normandy.

Figure 7.4

Volunteers for General Service, July–September 1943 and 1944 Compared

	Public Enlistments		NRMA Conversion		Total	
	1943	1944	1943	1944	1943	1944
July	3920	4324	433	1308	4353	5632
August	4069	5163	446	1595	4515	7758
September	4321	4774	392	1164	4713	6938

Source: J. M. Hitsman, "Manpower Problems of the Canadian Army," AHQ Report No. 63, 17 Aug 1953, pars. 203, 343

Casualties over the summer had been higher than anyone anticipated. They continued to erode infantry units in both theatres and showed little sign of subsiding. While the Battle of the Scheldt raged, Stuart wrote to Ralston on 11 October explaining the reinforcement situation. The news was dire. Forecasts showed that by the end of the year, there would be an overall surplus of 13,435 reinforcements but a deficit of 2,038 infantry reinforcements. As estimates from July had put total Canadian casualties for the last six months of the year at 40,000, it made sense to maintain a pool of 40,000 reinforcements. But by the end of September there had already been about 34,000 casualties, with new estimates for another 29,000 casualties by year's end. In other words, there would only be about 40,000 reinforcements to replace 63,000 casualties suffered from 1 July to 31 December. Allowing for scheduled drafts arriving from

Canada and wounded men returning to the field after convalescence, both I Canadian Corps in Italy and First Canadian Army in Northwest Europe could be comfortably supplied reinforcements at the same rate only until 31 December. After then, formations would have to be withdrawn from the front unless a new source of manpower was found. These figures, as Stuart wrote to Ralston, painted “the darkest picture deemed to be possible.”⁸⁴

Another topic of intense discussion related to reinforcements was their quality. A common complaint among combat veterans during the autumn was that the reinforcements that their units received were terribly undertrained and often unable to perform the simplest infantry tasks. Major Conn Smythe, the famed owner of the Toronto Maple Leafs, was convalescing in Canada from wounds he had suffered in Normandy in July as an artillery officer. Since then, he had spoken to many officers in hospital about the quality of the reinforcements that they had received. On 19 September, the *Globe and Mail* featured on the front page his statements critical of the state of reinforcement training:

The reinforcements received now are green, inexperienced, and poorly trained. Besides this general statement, specific charges are that many have never thrown a grenade.

Practically all have little or no knowledge of the Bren gun and, finally, most of them have never seen a Piat anti-tank gun, let alone fired one. These officers are unanimous in stating that large numbers of unnecessary casualties result from this greenness, both to the rookies and to the older soldiers, who have the added task of trying to look after the newcomers as well as themselves.⁸⁵

84. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17508, vol. 12215, file 1/COS/20: Stuart to Ralston re: “Reinforcements – Cdn Army Overseas,” 11 Oct 1944 and app. A, “Breakdown by Theatres and UK Separately of Reinforcement Situation as at 23 Sep 44,” pars. 11–12, 15–18.

85. “Untrained Troops Hazard at Front, Smythe Complains,” (*Toronto*) *Globe and Mail*, 19 Sep 1944.

Smythe's comments received widespread coverage and were just the beginning of the conscription crisis that worsened over the next two months. George Drew, the Progressive Conservative premier of Ontario, seized upon Smythe's remarks as an opportunity to criticize King's Liberal government.⁸⁶ Though Smythe had been far removed from the front line for months and Drew had absolutely no first-hand knowledge of the situation, the belief that reinforcements were poorly trained was shared by Canadian infantrymen during the Battle of the Scheldt. In his account of the battle, Lieutenant-Colonel Denis Whitaker, the RHLI's commanding officer, devoted an entire chapter to the reinforcement issue and included his and his comrades' recollections of their poor state of training. Men appeared to have little experience with anti-tank weapons and did not know how to disassemble a Bren gun.⁸⁷

However, combat veterans' perception of the reinforcements might have been more severe than was really the case and perhaps only made matters worse. Lieutenant-General Simonds, who led First Canadian Army during the battle as Crerar was ill, was not convinced that there was a serious problem with the quality of reinforcements. He believed that when a soldier got posted to a field unit, he was effectively a stranger among men who had lived and trained together for years and had already been in combat for months. A new reinforcement naturally would feel like an outsider. The stress of joining a unit, in Simonds's view, was enough to diminish a reinforcement's abilities in action. The problem was not a matter of training but of how a unit accepted a reinforcement into its ranks. To make the transition from "reinforcement" to "field

86. "Drew Upholds Smythe Claim about Training," (*Toronto Globe and Mail*, 22 Sep 1944).

87. Denis Whitaker and Shelagh Whitaker, *Tug of War: The Allied Victory that Opened Antwerp*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Stoddart, 2000), chap. 10.

soldier” smoother, Simonds ordered that reinforcements not be posted to a unit’s fighting echelon until he had already spent 48 hours in its rear echelon.⁸⁸

Simonds might have too readily dismissed the complaints about the quality of the reinforcements as they often needed refresher training once they were deployed to a theatre of battle before being posted to a unit, and even then it took time for them to adjust.⁸⁹ At the very least, veteran infantrymen did not view newcomers as completely unskilled. In a survey of 142 Canadian officers taken during the war, 32.3 percent of the 93 surveyed in Northwest Europe indicated that the quality of reinforcements they received was “low” while 16.3 percent of those surveyed in Italy said the same. About two-thirds of Canadian officers believed that their reinforcements displayed a “moderate” (59.9 percent) or “high” (5.6 percent) standard of efficiency.⁹⁰ Although the reviews were not overwhelmingly positive, they indicated that the officers believed the reinforcements were adequate.

Stuart wanted to make sure that CRU was doing everything it could to ensure reinforcements were properly trained for anything less would be a disservice to Canadian forces in both theatres. Stuart issued a directive on 3 November specifying that CRU was responsible for overseeing the standard of training of all reinforcements. No reinforcement was to be sent to the continent unless he had passed all TsOET, mastered subjects such as grenades, digging in, and handling mines and booby traps, and had completed collective training so that he would fit seamlessly into any infantry section. Infantry drafts from Canada would complete a three-week refresher course and men who

88. LAC, RG 24, vol. 10799, file 225C2.012 (D2): LGen G. G. Simonds (A/GOC-in-C First Cdn Army), circular letter re: “Absorption of Reinforcement Personnel,” 28 Oct 1944.

89. D’Amours, “Notre tâche est de rendre les hommes prêts au combat,” 273–277, 300–303.

90. Robert Engen, *Canadians under Fire: Infantry Effectiveness in the Second World War* (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2009), 126–133, 177.

had been remustered from other arms would complete a six-week conversion course. Those who had recovered from wounds and were capable of going back into combat would receive special training. While their skills and experience meant that they needed less technical training, their physical condition had to be restored.⁹¹

Improving CRU's training was the easy part; there was still the problem of where to find more infantry volunteers. The government and the army worked hard to preserve the voluntary system but efforts to get NRMA men, the best available pool of potential reinforcements, to volunteer were failing. Rather than having unit commanding officers harangue their men en masse, which had served only to create division within the unit, in November the army tried a new approach: commanding officers met the NRMA men in their units individually and tried to convince them that they should go active. But it was no use. Anyone who wished to volunteer for overseas service had already done so. The NRMA men remaining in Canada represented a pool of nearly 60,000 who adamantly refused to become GS. The army concluded that the voluntary system simply could not meet the army's reinforcement needs.⁹²

The Canadian reinforcement crisis was not just a problem for the military. Seeking to avoid the same political uproar over conscription that had taken place in 1917 and which had nearly torn the country apart, King had promised in 1939 that there would be no conscription (chapter 2). As the war progressed, however, King's government gradually moved toward conscription for overseas service. In June 1940, the government

91. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9804, file 2/Instrns CMHQ/1: Stuart, CMHQ Trg Directive No. 1, 3 Nov 1944, pars. 3–4, 6–7. The syllabi for drafts from Canada and remustered personnel can be found in LAC, RG 24, vol. 9896, file 2/14 Inf Trg Bde/1: LCol J. C. Anderson (GSO1, CRU), "Trg of Rfts in 14 Cdn Inf Trg Bde," 13 Jan 1945, app. A, "Combined Syllabus, Two-Week Refresher and One-Week CIC Trg" and app. B, "Conversion Syllabus for Remustered Personnel."

92. Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, pars. 497–521.

passed the NRMA, which made conscription legal for home defence only (chapter 3). Then, in July 1942, the passage of Bill 80 had removed the NRMA's restriction of sending conscripts to serve outside of Canada. By the autumn of 1944, it appeared that without some kind of compulsory overseas service, Canadian forces in Europe could not continue to operate. After Ralston visited both theatres, when he returned to Ottawa on 18 October he reported to King that there was indeed a shortage of infantry reinforcements. He echoed Stuart's fears that the reinforcement pool would be dry by 31 December and that the only solution was to send NRMA men overseas. Neither Ralston nor Stuart seemed to be willing to admit that casualties would be much lower during the winter months because of the reduced operational tempo, a respite that surely would relieve some of the strain on the reinforcement system. Nevertheless, Ralston's stubborn insistence on conscription greatly disturbed the prime minister. King had succeeded in maintaining his anti-conscription stance and held the country together for this long; it would be terrible if it were to all collapse when the Allies were so close to victory in Europe. The Cabinet War Committee spent the next two weeks trying to find an alternative solution. After all, there were some 88,526 Canadian soldiers still in the United Kingdom and over 135,000 GS men in Canada.⁹³ Could another 15,000 infantrymen not be found among all of these soldiers? Some 67,000 GS men in Canada were medically unfit for overseas service while other GS men in Canada and overseas were not trained infantrymen or even in the army. It would take weeks or even months to

93. Precise figures for the number of Canadian soldiers in Canada and the United Kingdom at any given time are nearly impossible to determine. The 88,526 figure for the number of Canadian soldiers in the United Kingdom as of 30 September 1944 is from Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 452. Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939–1945*, 12–13 gave the number of GS men in Canada at 135,631 as of 29 November. At the time, the government used a lower estimate of 120,000 GS men in Canada for discussion.

remuster non-infantrymen, especially men from the RCAF. But King would have none of this; Ralston was too divisive in the Cabinet and had to go. Fortunately for King, there was an easy means of accomplishing this: at a Cabinet meeting on 1 November, he finally accepted Ralston's resignation from July 1942.⁹⁴

King had already selected a replacement. Andrew McNaughton had been promoted to full general upon his retirement from the army on 30 September.⁹⁵ Since then King had already approached him about the possibility of becoming the first Canadian-born governor general. But the conscription issue made McNaughton's extensive experience in the military more immediately valuable. His role as the senior Canadian commander overseas from 1939 to 1943 made him recognizable to the Canadian public. Chiefly important to King was that McNaughton believed that pressing NRMA men into service overseas would be detrimental to Canada and the wrong way to conduct the war. McNaughton, accepting the post on 2 November, set to work on a strategy to get more NRMA men to volunteer for GS status.

Changing the defence portfolio's leadership had no effect. After three weeks of studying the matter, the General Staff came to a conclusion. On the morning of 22 November, Murchie, by this time a lieutenant-general and appointed CGS, informed McNaughton unequivocally that the infantry's reinforcement needs could not be met

94. For more on the steps leading to Ralston's dismissal, see Dawson, *The Conscription Crisis of 1944*, 41–54; J. W. Pickersgill and D. F. Forster, *The Mackenzie King Record*, vol. 2, 1944–1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 125–194; Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 441–460; Granatstein, *Canada's War*, 340–357; Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 207–224.

95. John Swettenham, *McNaughton*, vol. 3, 1944–1966 (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), 15; Pickersgill and Forster, *The Mackenzie King Record* 2:117–125. McNaughton was only the third Canadian, after Sir Arthur Currie and Sir William Otter, to hold the rank of general.

through the voluntary system.⁹⁶ The House of Commons convened that very day, having been recalled at King's behest since its adjournment in August, specifically to address the question of manpower for the armed forces. King explained the circumstances surrounding Ralston's resignation and McNaughton's appointment as defence minister. On the 23rd, King announced that his government had decided to send conscripts overseas. Earlier that morning, King told the House, the governor general had approved an Order in Council authorizing and directing McNaughton to send up to 16,000 NRMA men overseas to fight, 5,000 in December and January each, plus 6,000 total over the subsequent months. The same day, in his first speech in the House of Commons, McNaughton explained the current state of the reinforcement situation and why the voluntary system was no longer a reliable means of securing the necessary manpower. He announced that the Canadian Army (Overseas) needed that many infantrymen and that the only way to get them was to use NRMA men.⁹⁷ Though the House of Commons spent the next two weeks debating the issue, the inescapable fact was that Canada had abandoned the voluntary system. Sixteen thousand conscripts, men already in uniform, would be going overseas.

The largest concentration of trained NRMA men was in Pacific Command, under which home defence units in British Columbia served. Its GOC was Major-General Pearkes, who had been dismissed from commanding 1st Canadian Division in September 1942 (chapter 5). Pearkes received orders on 25 November to shuffle 6th Canadian Division's order of battle and prepare two brigades, 14th and 15th, for deployment

96. LAC, RG 24, reel C-5501, file H.Q.S. 20-6, pt. 81: LGen J. C. Murchie (CGS) to A. G. L. McNaughton (MND) re: "Provision of Reinforcements in the Canadian Army Overseas," 22 Nov 1944, par. 4.

97. Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (22–24 Nov 1944), 6504–6510, 6514–6560, 6567–6591.

overseas (figure 7.5).⁹⁸ But the NRMA men of 6th Canadian Division did not take kindly to the news. It seemed obvious that many of those destined for overseas service would come from their division. At Vernon on the 23rd, before anyone even knew which units were affected, about 200 men from the camp marched into town, shouted anti-

Figure 7.5

Home Defence Units Selected for Overseas Service, 25 November 1944

Original Order of Battle 6th Canadian Division	Selected Units
The Saint John Fusiliers (MG)	14th Canadian Infantry Brigade
	The Oxford Rifles
14th Canadian Infantry Brigade	The Winnipeg Light Infantry
The Winnipeg Light Infantry	The Saint John Fusiliers
Les Fusiliers de Sherbrooke	The Royal Rifles of Canada
The Oxford Rifles	Les Fusiliers de Sherbrooke
15th Canadian Infantry Brigade	15th Canadian Infantry Brigade
The Prince Albert Volunteers	The Prince Edward Island Highlanders
Les Fusiliers du St-Laurent	The Midland Regiment
The Prince Edward Island Highlanders	The Prince of Wales' Own Rangers (Peterborough Regiment)
16th Canadian Infantry Brigade	Les Fusiliers du St-Laurent
The Midland Regiment	
The Royal Rifles of Canada	
The Prince of Wales' Own Rangers (Peterborough Regiment)	

Sources: LAC, RG 24, reel C-5501, file H.Q.S. 20-6, pt. 81: GS, tel. GSO 850 to MGen G. R. Pearkes (GOC-in-C Pac Comd), 25 Nov 44, pars. 1-2; J. M. Hitsman, "Manpower Problems of the Canadian Army," AHQ Report No. 63, 17 Aug 1953, par. 548

conscription slogans, and then returned to the camp after military police ordered them to do so. The situation was brought under control. While forgiving of their men, officers assured them that what they had done was serious and that the consequences would be severe if it happened again. Men did threaten to demonstrate again and the military police were able to stop another parade, but other than that, there were no other disturbances at

⁹⁸ LAC, RG 24, reel C-5501, file H.Q.S. 20-6, pt. 81: GS, tel. GSO 850 to Pearkes, 25 Nov 44, pars. 1-2.

Vernon. Media outlets gave wildly exaggerated reports that it had been nearly 1,000 men marching on Vernon. Once news of the incident spread to other formations, it inspired disturbances elsewhere in British Columbia. In Terrace, 15th Brigade, having a large proportion of French Canadians, mutinied. Two companies from Les Fusiliers du St-Laurent refused to go on parade on the morning of the 24th. That night soldiers broke into quartermaster stores and took weapons and ammunition. The next day the mutiny spread to 19th Field Ambulance, Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, another predominantly French-speaking unit, as well as the Prince Edward Island Highlanders. These units paraded through town and were later joined by the Prince Albert Volunteers, who had heard an erroneous report that they would be going overseas even though this unit was only due to move to a different camp in the province. The men were further incensed that the media had mischaracterized their views by incorrectly reporting that they wanted all NRMA men in the country to be deployed so that the 16,000 were not the only ones who had to go overseas. These demonstrations, too, were brought under control.⁹⁹

The “first flight” of NRMA men sent overseas consisted of the units of 14th Brigade — 5,624 men — which left Canada in mid-December. Pacific Command estimated that roughly half of these men were fully trained infantrymen while another 15 to 20 percent had only completed their individual training. Accompanying this flight was a regularly scheduled draft of 1,600 volunteer reinforcements. The second flight, 15th

99. For more on the disturbances, see Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 474–478; Roy, *For Most Conspicuous Bravery*, 229–237; Daniel German, “Press Censorship and the Terrace Mutiny: A Case Study in Second World War Information Management,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 31, no. 4 (1996–1997): 124–142; and Peter A. Russell, “BC’s 1944 ‘Zombie’ Protests against Overseas Conscription,” *BC Studies* 122 (1999): 49–76.

Brigade, consisting of 3,849 men plus another regular draft of 695 men, left Canada in early January.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, after extensive discussion during the summer, the Canadian reinforcement system in the United Kingdom underwent its final major reorganization to streamline the system and reconcile 13th Brigade with “A” and “D” Groups, CRU. On 18 November, the brigade, along with the headquarters of “A” and “D” Groups, were all wound up as they were no longer needed and reformed as the new 13th Canadian Infantry Training Brigade. The battalions of 13th Brigade and the reinforcement units were consolidated as 1, 2, 3, and 4 Canadian Infantry Training Regiments (CITRs), each with one depot battalion and one training battalion. The former were the successors to the reinforcement units and handled the intake of new reinforcements while the latter perpetuated 13th Brigade’s units and conducted refresher and collective training up to the battalion level. This structure enabled the new infantry training regiments to function more like field units. On 23 November, the number of training battalions per regiment was doubled, making eight such battalions in total. On 18 December, a 5th Canadian Training Regiment was formed.¹⁰¹

The reorganization continued into January 1945 when the headquarters of 14th Canadian Infantry Training Brigade was formed upon the arrival of 14th and 15th Canadian Infantry Brigades, which were immediately reorganized into the new training formation. 14th Training Brigade had four infantry training regiments, each of which was

100. Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, pars. 564, 570, 572, 575.

101. LAC, RG 24, reel T-17861, vol. 12258, file 1/Org RU/1/2: LCol B. B. King (SD (A), CMHQ), “Notes from Conference at HQ CRU 18 Oct 44,” 23 Oct 1944, pars. 5–7; Stuart to LGen H. D. G. Crerar (GOC-in-C First Cdn Army) re: “Reorganization CIRUs and Units 13 Cdn Inf Bde,” 28 Oct 1944, pars. 2–4, 7 and app. A, “Proposed Reorganization – 13 Cdn Inf Bde, ‘A’ & ‘D’ Gps CRU & CIRUs,” 27 Oct 1944; WD, HQ, 13 Cdn Inf Trg Bde, 18 Nov 1944; GO 78, “Conversion and Redesignation — Active Units,” 12 Mar 1945, effective 1 Nov 1944; Stanley and Hamilton, CMHQ Report No. 133, pars. 22–25, app. D.

organized in the same manner as those in 13th Training Brigade (figure 7.6).¹⁰² Upon being posted to 14th Training Brigade, the GS and NRMA men's levels of training were assessed and they were accordingly placed in a two- or four-week training course before being posted to 13th Training Brigade, where they would continue training for one or two weeks until needed on the continent. In March, 14th Training Brigade began training men in the full three or six weeks of training.¹⁰³

Unlike previous years, the training syllabus for reinforcement units in 1945 left no room for miscellaneous duties and was not hindered by a lack of equipment. Thus, the training battalions functioned much like the field battalions did beginning in mid-1942 after the invasion threat had abated and there was less need for coastal defence duties. The January 1945 syllabus for 10th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion, part of 5 CITR, was representative of the training that reinforcements received in the final stretch of the war in Europe. Each morning after breakfast, men had a three-mile route march before beginning their morning lessons, which always started with a 40-minute close order drill period. The remaining periods, depending on the day of the week, were devoted to weapons training, battle drill, map reading, first aid, and fieldcraft. Time was also devoted to night training and tactical schemes. The last period was usually twenty minutes of physical training.¹⁰⁴

102. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 204; Stanley and Hamilton, CMHQ Report No. 133, pars. 26–27.

103. Hitsman, AHQ Report No. 63, par. 600.

104. WD, 5 CITR, 1 Dec 1944–31 Jan 1945, app. 4, 10 CITB Syllabus.

Figure 7.6**Order of Battle: 13th and 14th Canadian Infantry Training Brigades, January 1945**

13th Canadian Infantry Training Brigade	14th Canadian Infantry Training Brigade
1st Canadian Infantry Training Regiment	6th Canadian Infantry Training Regiment
1st Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion	6th Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion
1st Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Rocky Mountain Rangers)	11th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Oxford Rifles)
5th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion	12th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Prince of Wales Rangers)
2nd Canadian Infantry Training Regiment	7th Canadian Infantry Training Regiment
2nd Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion	7th Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion
2nd Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Canadian Fusiliers)	13th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Winnipeg Light Infantry)
6th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion	14th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Midland Regiment)
3rd Canadian Infantry Training Regiment	8th Canadian Infantry Training Regiment
3rd Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion	8th Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion
3rd Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Winnipeg Grenadiers)	15th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (St John Fusiliers)
7th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion	16th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Prince Edward Island Highlanders)
4th Canadian Infantry Training Regiment	9th Canadian Infantry Training Regiment
4th Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion	9th Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion
4th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Régiment de Hull)	17th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Régiment de Châteauguay)
8th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion	18th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion (Fusiliers de Sherbrooke)
5th Canadian Infantry Training Regiment	
5th Canadian Infantry Depot Battalion	
9th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion	
10th Canadian Infantry Training Battalion	

Source: G. F. G. Stanley and R. J. C. Hamilton, "Organization of the Canadian Reinforcement Units (United Kingdom): Historical Outline, 1940–45," CMHQ Report No. 133, 29 Mar 1945, pars. 23–24, 26–27 and app. D; WD, HQ, 14 Cdn Inf Trg Bde, 5 Jan 1945

Meanwhile, an investigation into Canada's reinforcement problems was underway. In December, McNaughton had recalled his old colleague, Lieutenant-General Sansom, the inaugural GOC II Canadian Corps (chapter 5), from retirement and appointed him inspector general. In January, McNaughton tasked him with compiling a comprehensive report on the reinforcement situation overseas. Specifically, he was to examine how many reinforcements were available for both theatres, the standard of

training of those reinforcements, how men were being remustered to the infantry from other arms, and recommendations for finding and training more reinforcements.¹⁰⁵ Sansom spent the period from 20 January to late March in Europe researching the reinforcement situation. He consulted with CMHQ in London, the First Canadian Army in the Netherlands, and I Canadian Corps in Italy. His report, filed on 29 March, revealed that the worst of the reinforcement crisis had passed and that it had not been nearly as bad as it had appeared in the autumn. Though reinforcement pools in both theatres held fewer men than they wanted, they had enough to meet current demands, which were much lighter than they had been in the summer and autumn. During September 1944, total weekly deficiencies in field units averaged 3,427 men in Northwest Europe, all arms, all ranks, and both English- and French-speaking personnel. By January 1945, this figure had fallen to just 357. The deficiency situation worsened in Italy, from 592 men in September 1944 to 1,048 in January 1945, but there were enough reinforcements immediately available in theatre to cover these losses. Gross casualty figures only exceeded the most severe estimates from August through October in Northwest Europe and never in Italy. Encouragingly, Canadian divisions in both theatres were never so depleted that they had to be completely withdrawn from operations. In other words, the reinforcement situation never prevented the Canadians from meeting their objectives, although manpower deficiencies certainly made doing so difficult.¹⁰⁶ The quality of the

105. LAC, MG 30 E 537, vol. 2, Sansom, "Report on Survey of Reinforcement Situation, Canadian Army Overseas," app. 1, McNaughton to Sansom re: "Survey of Reinforcements," 15 Jan 1945, par. 3; Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 480.

106. LAC, MG 30 E 537, vol. 2, Sansom, "Report on Survey of Reinforcement Situation, Canadian Army Overseas," pars. 10–13, 25, 27, 29, 48 and app. 11, "Statement of Field Unit Deficiencies and Reinforcement Holdings by Weeks – 3 Jun 44–3 Mar 45: Canadian Inf Corps (Eng Speaking)," 23 Mar 1945 and "Statement of Field Unit Deficiencies and Reinforcement Holdings by Weeks – 3 Jun 44–3 Mar 45: Canadian Inf Corps (Fr Speaking)," 23 Mar 1945.

reinforcements that the field units received was not intolerable, even if they had been remustered from other arms:

Some of the Commanders interviewed in the field recalled past instances of having received some remustered personnel as reinforcements, whose training in infantry weapons had not been up to their standard. All agreed, however, that despite the alleged deficiency in training, the men had been of a good type and had soon settled down in their new unit and developed into very satisfactory soldiers.¹⁰⁷

This conclusion echoed Simonds's belief that there was no real problem with the quality of reinforcements. Sansom's report found that if there were ever problems with their infantry skills, they were usually temporary. Sansom was also satisfied with the performance of the two infantry training brigades in the United Kingdom and the new policies that Stuart had instituted in December, namely that CRU was not to send any man to the continent unless he was fully trained.¹⁰⁸

By the time Sansom submitted his report, Canadian forces had already been withdrawn from Italy. In January 1945, British and American planners had agreed to reinforce the Northwest Europe theatre with troops from the Mediterranean to exert maximum pressure on Germany. CMHQ put pressure of its own on the British to select I Canadian Corps as one of the formations to be transferred so that all of Canada's field forces could fight together. Thus, in February, the corps began Operation GOLDFLAKE, the name of the move, and would join First Canadian Army in the coming weeks during which time the war-weary Italian campaign veterans could take comfort in being out of

107. Ibid., par. 38.

108. Ibid., pars. 40–41.

harm's way. Canadian formations gradually arrived in Northwest Europe throughout March and were ready for active operations in their new setting by 3 April.¹⁰⁹

The reinforcement situation in the spring of 1945 thus was much better than it had been the previous November. Casualties were much lighter than they had been during the previous summer and autumn. The question was whether further drafts of men, including conscripts, were necessary in April and May as it was becoming clear that Germany would fall in a matter of months. McNaughton was concerned that trained troops were needed in Canada to deal with disturbances that might result if there was an economic depression once veterans started returning to the civilian workforce. Murchie believed that it was still necessary to send reinforcements for several reasons. There would still be a series of "mopping up" operations to neutralize pockets of German resistance. Morale in First Canadian Army would also suffer if veteran soldiers were not relieved and replaced. There was also the consideration that inter-Allied negotiations, particularly with the United States, had produced a set plan for shipping; any departure from these agreements would badly disrupt shipping. McNaughton agreed and the April despatch of 2,600 troops would proceed as planned.¹¹⁰

The conscription crisis of 1944 was not the result of any inability of Canada to find able-bodied young men, nor was it the result of excessive battle casualties. Rather, the shortage of trained infantry reinforcements appeared worse than it really was during the late summer and occurred because the army had allocated too few men to the infantry and too many to other arms. Nor was there a serious problem with the training standard

109. Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*, 656–666; Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 529–530.

110. LAC, RG 24, reel C-5501, file H.Q.S. 20-6, pt. 83: Murchie to McNaughton re: "Despatch of Reinforcements Overseas," 4 Apr 1945, par. 3; "Extract from Minister's Morning Conference, Wednesday, 5 Apr 1945."

of the reinforcements when they reached the field units. That King had been pushed into fixing a problem that the army had brought on itself meant that the effects of the crisis were more significant politically than militarily.

Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Allies on 7 May, ending hostilities the following day. While the thousands of Canadian soldiers in Europe looked forward to repatriation home over the coming months, the Canadian government's attention turned to the war in the Pacific. The Japanese military had pledged to fight to the death and the Americans began plans for an invasion of the Home Islands by the end of the year.¹¹¹ The Order in Council from 23 November 1944 that had authorized the government to send 16,000 NRMA men overseas specified that they were only to serve in Northwest Europe and the Mediterranean. King announced on 4 April that the Canadian Army Pacific Force (CAPF) would be raised from men currently deployed in Europe who volunteered for service in the Pacific. The CAPF would be comprised mainly of the resurrected 6th Canadian Infantry Division, which would employ an American-style staff and organizational system. Its infantry battalions would be numbered sequentially, as per the American practice, but they would also bear the names of the regiments represented in 1st Canadian Infantry Division (e.g. "1st Canadian Infantry Battalion (The Royal Canadian Regiment)"). The force had an establishment of 1,180 officers and 17,819 other ranks. By 17 July, 9,943 officers and 68,256 other ranks had volunteered, fewer than half of whom were considered suitable for fighting in the Pacific on account of their age or

111. See Wayne A. Silkett, "Downfall: The Invasion that Never Was," *Parameters: United States Army War College Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1994): 111–119.

health. 6th Canadian Infantry Division needed 375 infantry officers and 9,276 other ranks, but only 996 infantry officers and 18,399 other ranks volunteered, leaving a very small reinforcement pool.¹¹² Of course, by August, the CAPF was not needed at all for the United States obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic bombs on 6 and 9 August, respectively, forcing the Japanese to sue for peace just days later. The war formally ended on 2 September, with Japan's formal surrender signed at Tokyo Bay.

The war's last year had been the most stressful for the Canadian Army. With forces taking considerable casualties in two theatres, the need for trained reinforcements, especially infantrymen, could not be understated. Unfortunately, Canadian reinforcement units spent most of the war struggling to train their men. Training in the reinforcement units was not nearly as rigorous or organized as it was for the field units, even after 1942 when the latter's training became noticeably more professional. This was not the fault of the reinforcement units themselves but due to situational factors beyond their control. While the Canadian Army (Overseas) grew, drafts of men from Canada were notoriously undertrained and had forgotten much of what little they had learned at training centres in Canada. Training and retraining these men became the primary responsibility of the reinforcement units. At any given time, Canadian reinforcement units had men at entirely different levels of training: some were very green, others had more experience, and still others were surplus troops who had been transferred from field units whenever battalion establishments were altered. Because of this, reinforcement units never functioned like regular infantry battalions regardless of how many times they were completely reorganized. Thus, they hardly ever did battalion-level exercises and never did formation

112. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 512–518; *Arms, Men and Governments*, 61–62, 482–484; R. B. Oglesby, "The Canadian Army Pacific Force, 1944–1945," AHQ Report No. 16, 15 July 1947.

training. In comparison, the British holding units were composed of men who were already trained and only had to train in order to maintain their skills. Moreover, the only experience anyone from a Canadian reinforcement unit received in large-scale exercises was whenever a handful of reinforcement officers were used as umpires. Training did not reach an acceptable standard until the last year of the war when equipment was more plentiful and CMHQ adopted policies to ensure only qualified men were sent to the field units.

CMHQ and the government's concern in the summer and autumn of 1944 that Canada might exhaust its entire supply of trained infantry reinforcements was not an unreasonable one at the time. Indeed, the crisis called into question the wisdom of Crerar's earlier efforts to build a big army. The tough campaigns in both theatres naturally caused a deficiency in manpower reserves for several months. Fortunately, the conscription crisis of 1944 was not nearly as bad as the army believed and the government feared. Its political consequences were more serious than its military consequences, even though the problem originated with the army. Notwithstanding the army's faulty wastage predictions, Canadian field forces had enough trained reinforcements to continue operations on the continent. The training standard of the reinforcements that the field units received may not have met commanding officers' high expectations at first. But it would have been impossible to provide the reinforcement units in the United Kingdom with the level of skill that men had reached after weeks or months of combat experience. Simonds never believed for a moment that there was a problem with the quality of reinforcements, and Sansom's study confirmed that upon

further reflection commanding officers came to recognize that fresh men could make excellent infantrymen after a short adjustment period.

In the final analysis, the difficulties that the Canadian reinforcement system suffered throughout the war were the result of poor management from the top rather than doctrinal or training problems. The government had authorized a large overseas army and overoptimistically believed that it would be easy to reinforce that force with only volunteers. Both NDHQ and CMHQ relied heavily on wastage projections that underestimated the number of infantry casualties and grossly overestimated those for other arms. NDHQ waited until mid-1943 to address CMHQ's complaints that reinforcement drafts were arriving in the United Kingdom severely undertrained. Ironically, CMHQ seemed to hold reinforcement training in low priority until after D-Day. Indecision and poor coordination between the government and the military, and Ottawa and London, left their mark on the reinforcement units throughout the war.

CONCLUSION

The Canadian Army trained longer for combat than that of any other belligerent of the Second World War. The experience of the Canadian Army (Overseas) had been entirely different than that of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Canadian troops in 1914–1918 had been put into combat soon after their mobilization and a surprisingly brief training period. The static nature of the Western Front allowed for divisions to be periodically pulled from the front for rest and, just as importantly, training for the next major assault. Canadian soldiers of the First World War learned their craft as they performed it. This contrasted sharply with the Canadian Army's experience during the Second World War. It was nearly four long years from the declaration of war to July 1943 before a Canadian division was finally committed to battle on a continuous basis. The only combat experience that any Canadian units had until the invasion of Sicily were disasters: two battalions annihilated at Hong Kong in December 1941 and two brigades crippled at Dieppe in August 1942. While the men of the RCN and the RCAF confronted the enemy in the North Atlantic and the skies of Europe, Canadian soldiers spent most of the war training for battle.

Had those four years been worth it? Did such a long gestation period translate into an army of highly trained and capable warriors or was this time squandered? The Canadian infantry managed to overcome serious obstacles to training throughout the war. By the time they were put into action in 1943 in the Mediterranean and in 1944 in Northwest Europe, Canadian infantrymen were prepared to meet the Germans in battle. The wartime experience helped the Canadian infantry foster a degree of professionalism

it had not seen since 1918. Furthermore, studying infantry training during the Second World War is important because its value was made manifest in the postwar period, namely during the Korean War, a testament to its worth and appropriateness.

At the end of the Second World War, Canadian front-line soldiers could look back upon their time fighting in the Mediterranean and Northwest Europe with pride and also with a sense of relief. The men of I Canadian Corps had experienced more than their fair share of hardship in Italy during such savage engagements as the Battle of Ortona and the fight for the Gothic Line. In Northwest Europe, Canadian divisions had suffered 20 percent more casualties on average than any British division in 21st Army Group because they had been kept in action for much longer in a string of difficult assignments: Normandy, the Channel ports, the Scheldt, and the Rhineland.¹ The cost had been high: the Canadian Army suffered 17,682 killed in action or died of wounds and another 5,235 killed in accidents or by disease. Another 52,679 soldiers had been wounded. The Allied victory complete, it was time for Canadian soldiers to return home. By December 1945, 184,054 Canadian soldiers had come home. Some men remained in Europe as part of the Allied occupation force, but these men, too, would be home by the spring of 1946.²

In designing the demobilization and repatriation plan, the government had to consider what kind of army it should have in the postwar years. In June 1945, the army's leadership put forth a plan for conscription and the maintenance of a peacetime Active Force of 55,788 men organized into an infantry brigade group, coastal defence units, and supporting units, plus a Reserve Force of 177,396 men organized into two corps of six

1. Terry Copp, *Cinderella Army: The Canadians in Northwest Europe, 1944–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 289.

2. J. L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 311–314.

divisions and four armoured brigades. This preposterous plan was politically impossible as Canadians, veterans and civilians alike, were tired of war and wanted to get back to living their lives. Nor was it clear what Canada's defence priorities should be in the immediate postwar period. Thus, the country's postwar defence policy was unsurprisingly a return to the traditional Canadian approach: maintain a small peacetime force that could defend Canada, act as a training cadre for the reserves, and form the nucleus of an expeditionary force if and when one was needed. The defence budget would fall from a wartime peak of \$4.2 billion in 1943 to less than \$400 million in 1946 to \$196 million in 1947. In December 1945, the Cabinet Defence Committee (formerly the Cabinet War Committee) approved the army's plan to maintain an Active Force of 25,000 men and a Reserve Force of about 180,000 men, all ranks, once the Second World War force was demobilized. This was adjusted in 1947 to a maximum of 26,329 men in the Active Force and 187,865 men in the Reserve Force, although the actual strength of the two components was restricted to 20,079 and 90,000 men, respectively. In practice, the army had difficulty maintaining even these numbers since there were few Canadians willing to enlist. In the 1947–1948 fiscal year, the strength of the Active Force was only 18,970 men and the strength of the Reserve Force was only 36,311 men, all ranks. Only about 7,000 men in the Active Force were in the combat arms.³

With the Cold War international system solidifying in the late 1940s, the Canadian military showed an interest in professionalism at the highest levels. The

3. Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein, *Victory 1945: Canadians from War to Peace* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1995), 244–246; David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 12–24; J. L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1977), 246–249; Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 311–317; J. M. Hitsman, "Canada's Post War Defence Policy, 1945–1950," AHQ Report No. 90, 1 Mar 1961, pars. 31–32, 36–38.

opening of the National Defence College in Kingston in 1948 as well as the nearby Canadian Army Staff College obviated the need for Canada to send candidates to British schools for staff and defence policy training. In the 1950s, the increasing technological aspect of warfare demanded highly trained military personnel. To that end, each of the three services began to tighten their commission criteria. While each service had its own requirements, they each favoured officer candidates who had tertiary education, often from a military college but, in some cases, from a civilian college or university.⁴

At first glance, it might seem that with Canada's eagerness to demobilize and the small size of the postwar army, the positive developments in wartime infantry training would be lost. However, this was not the case as two key postwar developments demonstrated the enduring legacy of the progress that Canada had made in training its infantry. The first was battle drill. Although the British and Canadian Armies removed battle drill from their doctrinal literature for a decade during the Cold War, it nevertheless became the foundation of a professional school of infantry in Canada. The second was the Korean War. Canadian volunteers who had been trained during the Second World War once again found their skills in demand when, in 1950, Canada sent ground forces to fight in Korea.

Battle drill proved to be one of the war's legacies, albeit an uneven one. Its advent was undoubtedly a turning point in the history of Canada's infantry, both on the battlefield and in changing the prewar perception that the infantry was a largely unskilled arm. As noted in chapter 4, John A. English concluded that the full potential of battle drill

4. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 19–20; Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 317–319; D. J. Goodspeed, "Canadian Army 1950–55, Part I: Defence Policy," AHQ Report No. 93, 1 Jun 1961, par. 103.

in developing skills in minor infantry tactics was not realized.⁵ But this view only too readily dismisses battle drill for the immense improvement to training that it represented. Battle drill was the first training that Canadian infantrymen received that made them believe that they were actually preparing for combat. Prior to battle drill, they had not received any instruction in how to analyze or respond to a tactical situation other than scripted exercises. While battle drill always had the risk of teaching men standardized solutions to tactical problems, truthfully, it was better than nothing. As historian Timothy Harrison Place wisely put it:

A suit that does not fit perfectly is of more use than one that would fit like a glove but is never made. The critics of battle drill offered no better alternative. Without battle drill the minor tactical skills of most British [and Canadian] infantrymen would have been of little more immediate use than a tailor's paper patterns are to his client. They would have gone into battle naked.⁶

Battle drill was all the more significant because it prompted the army to stop thinking of the infantry as an unskilled arm. Too often in 1940 and 1941 the Canadian infantry was diverted from its training to perform menial general labour tasks with the implication that their job involved only simple skills and that they could easily make up for lost time. And whereas the British had long considered infantry training to be so basic that regimental officers were capable of delivering it without any oversight, becoming a battle drill instructor required specialized training.

The method of training that had become so popular among Canadian troops starting in late 1941 certainly proved its worth in actual combat in the years to follow. In surveys conducted in 1944–1945 of Canadian infantry officers who served in battle, 84.8

5. John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 107–108.

6. Timothy Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2000), 168.

percent said that they used in combat the tactical principles that they had practiced during battle drill training. Nearly two-thirds said that they used it “often” (26.6 percent) or “fairly often” (37.5 percent), with the results roughly consistent across the Mediterranean and Northwest European theatres.⁷ Moreover, battle drill greatly contributed to the professionalization of the Canadian infantry. In May 1942, Canada opened its own battle drill school at Vernon, British Columbia, to train battle drill instructors, who would then train their home units. The school was led by Lieutenant-Colonel Fred Scott, the former commanding officer of the Calgary Highlanders, the first Canadian unit to undergo battle drill training. In October 1943, the school was used as the basis for the creation of the Canadian School of Infantry, which was devoted to studying infantry tactics and developing infantry training standards, in addition to producing trained infantry instructors.⁸

Battle drill remained controversial in the British Army, however. Indeed, the training method almost did not survive the war. Since the Canadian Army still looked to the British Army for doctrine well into the postwar years, the British high command’s apprehensions regarding battle drill had an effect on Canadian infantry training throughout the 1950s. It will be recalled that the British high command had deep misgivings over battle drill given concerns that it would teach men formulaic solutions to tactical problems. The British generals preferred the old autocratic command system that left decision-making to senior officers. In the spring of 1944, while British and Canadian troops trained for their roles for Operation OVERLORD, the British began publishing a

7. Robert Engen, *Canadians under Fire: Infantry Effectiveness in the Second World War* (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2009), 108–111, 178–179.

8. R. Daniel Pellerin, “Battle Drill Comes to Canada, 1942–1945,” *Canadian Army Journal* 16, no. 1 (2015): 57–65.

new series of manuals, *Infantry Training*. Part 8, *Fieldcraft, Battle Drill, Section and Platoon Tactics* was published in March and was the official battle drill manual that replaced *The Instructors' Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill* from 1942. According to Place, writing the manual had begun in April 1942 but was not finished until October 1943 because the War Office requested so many amendments.⁹

At an infantry training conference held from 20 to 24 April at Barnard Castle, some representatives criticized the new manual's dogmatism. For instance, Major-General J. E. Utterson-Kelso, the GOC 76th Infantry Division and one of the earliest battle drill enthusiasts, addressed the manual's section on flanking movements. According to the manual, a platoon might meet opposition and then, while trying to outflank it, encounter more opposition and discover that it had stumbled upon a network of mutually supporting enemy posts. In that scenario, the manual instructed that the platoon should pursue its original objective and neutralize the position that had first disrupted its advance.¹⁰ Utterson-Kelso disagreed with this kind of doctrine as it compelled the platoon commander to "fight his battles by rules rather than reason." In other words, by making it seem as though engaging the original enemy position was a platoon commander's only option, the manual inhibited the initiative of junior officers. He argued that once a junior officer learned that the situation was different than expected, he "should be at liberty to take such measures as he considers would further his comd's [commander's] intention."¹¹ This was six weeks after the publication of *Fieldcraft, Battle*

9. Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940–1944*, 9–10.

10. UK, WO, *Infantry Training*, pt. 8, *Fieldcraft, Battle Drill, Section and Platoon Tactics*, pars. 109–110.

11. LAC, RG 24, vol. 9884, file 2/Trng Conf/1: "Record of Discussions, Infantry Training Conference Held at the School of Infantry, Barnard Castle, 20–24 Apr 1944," 15 May 1944, 23. Although Utterson-Kelso was not mentioned by name in the minutes of the conference, he was indeed the GOC 76th

Drill, Section and Platoon Tactics and it was already clear to the champions of battle drill that the War Office had written the manual cautiously and without heeding the input of those who were actually involved in teaching the subject. The high command's interwar habit of emphasizing obedience had crept into battle drill, thus dampening its effect. Though none of these discussions had any immediate effect on the Canadians' training for Normandy, the new manual was used in the training of infantry reinforcements for the remainder of the war.

After the war, the *Infantry Training* series was again replaced and for a decade the high command's discomfort with battle drill seemed to have prevailed. In 1950, under volume 4, *Tactics*, the manual *Infantry Section Leading and Platoon Tactics* appeared and the Canadian Army duly adopted it.¹² This time, battle drill was completely excised from official doctrine. Instead, the manual referred to "battlecraft," which it defined vaguely as a means of solving tactical problems. It reduced tactical training to four steps: a short explanation of a tactical manoeuvre; a demonstration of the correct and incorrect method of executing it; practicing the manoeuvre in slow-motion; and repeating it on different types of ground. It did not make any mention of beginning lessons on the parade square. Instead of breaking them down into discrete movements, the manual outlined basic battlecraft principles and stages for only general types of manoeuvres, such as the platoon and section in the attack and in clearing villages.¹³ Battle drill did not return to British infantry training until the *Infantry Training* series was updated in 1960. Although

Infantry Division as of 14 March 1944, according to H. F. Joslen, *Orders of Battle: United Kingdom and Colonial Formations and Units in the Second World War, 1939–1945*, vol. 1 (London: HMSO, 1960), 99.

12. [UK, WO], *Infantry Section Leading and Platoon Tactics* (1950; repr., [Ottawa: Queen's Printer], 1954) was the reprint produced for Canadian use. It was identical to the British edition.

13. UK, WO, *Infantry Training*, vol. 4, *Tactics: Infantry Section Leading and Platoon Tactics* ([London: HMSO], 1950), secs. 23, 64–66, 101.

it continued to use the term “battlecraft,” omitted the close-order drill portion, and used the same four-step method as the 1950 manual, *Tactics: The Infantry Platoon in Battle (Provisional)* reintroduced tactical drills for a variety of situations and broke them down into simple movements.¹⁴

Battle drill thus disappeared and reappeared during the Cold War. It deserved a prolonged legacy given its usefulness as a method of training. But its legacy was unfortunately blunted by the same British apprehension that had almost completely killed it at its inception during the war. Nevertheless, battle drill had a much clearer role in bringing professionalism to the Canadian infantry. The Canadian School of Infantry, which had battle drill training at its core school, closed in February 1946 and was subsequently reformed as the Royal Canadian School of Infantry at Camp Borden, Ontario. In 1966, it was amalgamated with the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps School to form the Combat Arms School. Battle drill was a factor in the Canadian Army’s realization that the infantry, just like the technical arms, required specialized training and a school dedicated to standardizing doctrine.

Another demonstration of the level of quality that infantry training attained during the Second World War was how it continued to be useful just five years later during the Korean War. The Korean War was unique in Canadian military history in that it came so shortly after a preceding conflict. Whereas twelve years separated the South African War and the First World War and another 20 years ensued between the end of that conflict and the Second World War, the same generation that had fought the 1939–1945 conflict also fought the Korean War. This proximity, however, was not the only explanation for the

14. UK, WO, *Infantry Training*, vol. 4, *Tactics: The Infantry Platoon in Battle (Provisional)* ([London: HMSO], 1960), secs. 29, 32–33

battlefield performance of the Canadian infantry in Korea, as it was the veteran volunteers of the previous war that showed greater skill and offensive spirit than their professional counterparts. The veterans' combat experience proved useful in Korea in part because of the training these men had received during the Second World War.

In August 1950, Canada authorized a small expeditionary force for service in Korea. At the Canadian Army Special Force's core was 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade. Even though the army's Active Force had an infantry battalion from each of the three PF regiments, the force was not initially composed of these units. Instead, recruiting began for volunteers. Thus, the brigade was initially composed of the second battalions of each of the PF regiments plus supporting units. The reason the government opted to raise a special force for Korea rather than simply employ the Active Force battalions was that the CGS, General Charles Foulkes, recommended against depleting the army of virtually all of its trained, professionals, which he wanted to keep for the defence of North America. Recruiting was hasty, with some "undesirable" men making it through the selection phase, but overall, the army had no problem attracting men willing to fight. What is significant is that about half of the men that made up the brigade's first rotation of infantry battalions were Second World War veterans, many of whom had combat experience and all of whom had received collective training and battle drill training. Leading the brigade was Brigadier John Rockingham, who was recalled from civilian life for the job because he had a stellar combat record in Northwest Europe as an infantry battalion commander and, subsequently, as a brigade commander. While the brigade headquarters was largely staffed with Active Force members, 86 of the 113 officer positions in the infantry battalions were volunteers, many of them Second World War

veterans including all three commanding officers. For example, in 2nd Battalion, RCR, all company commanders, all captains, and half of all junior officers had either been officers or other ranks during the previous conflict. About 65 percent of the battalion's members were veterans. Similarly, 26 of the 36 section commanders in 2nd Battalion, PPCLI, were veterans. The brigade's infantry component was thus largely composed of trained and experienced soldiers.¹⁵

In late August, the second battalions' other ranks were sent to the training depots of their regiments' first battalions, while commanding officers trained their own officers separately, in order to quicken training overall. This was a strange arrangement as it deprived the junior officers from bonding with the men under their command. Nevertheless, since such a large proportion of the force had previous military experience, basic training went even faster than expected: the men were ready weeks before the mid-November goal. Meanwhile, in Korea, American-led United Nations forces erroneously believed that they had beaten the Communist forces in October, unaware that Chinese troops had begun to pour into the peninsula. The UN only needed one Canadian battalion for occupation duties; the rest would continue to train at Fort Lewis, Washington, where the weather was more conducive to collective training. Lieutenant-Colonel James R. Stone's 2 PPCLI was selected for this role because his unit was stationed closest to the west coast. While 2 PPCLI was en route to Korea, the remaining battalions settled into advanced training. There were some problems training these units over the winter, in part

15. Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada*, Official History of the Canadian Army (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), 27–34; Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 35–39, 51–52; Brent Byron Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950–1953* (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's UP, 2002), 7–11; William Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operations in Korea* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 23–27, 29–32.

because of Rockingham's high expectations. Since there were so many volunteers, third battalions were established to replace the second battalions on rotation. With a large supply of replacements, Rockingham never hesitated to replace men who needed more time to hone their skills. Regardless, the second battalions were able to conduct brigade group exercises by mid-February 1951.¹⁶

By the time 2 PPCLI arrived at Pusan, South Korea on 18 December 1950, the situation had changed for the worse. Chinese armies had been pushing down the Korean Peninsula and launched a powerful offensive against UN forces, forcing a general retreat. The entirety of Canada's brigade would be needed after all. The men of 2 PPCLI would have not an opportunity to complete their training in Korea as the circumstances demanded that they be employed in a fighting role. Stone declined American requests to deploy the battalion on the front line lest Canada suffer a repeat of the Battle of Hong Kong. Following a hasty training programme, Stone committed his unit to front-line service with 1st Commonwealth Division in February. The battalion spent the next month clearing the enemy from a series of hills at a cost of 14 killed and 43 wounded. In early April, 2 PPCLI, along with British and Australian battalions, chased enemy forces in the mountainous terrain until the Communists launched a major counter-attack aimed at capturing Seoul. On 24–25 April, in the Kap'yong Valley, the vastly outnumbered 2 PPCLI and 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment successfully blunted the Communist attack in one of the most gallant and celebrated tactical victories of the war.¹⁷

16. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, chap. 4; Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 52–55; Johnston, *A War of Patrols*, 31–38, 45–49, 51–52.

17. The early engagements of 2 PPCLI, including the Battle of Kap'yong, are covered in greater detail in Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 53–57, 62–67, 72–79; Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, chaps. 3–4; Brent Byron Watson, "Recipe for Victory: the Fight for Hill 677 during the Battle of the Kap'yong River, 24–25 April 1951," *Canadian Military History* 9, no. 2 (2000): 7–24; and Johnston, *A War of Patrols*, chaps. 3–4.

While the experience at Kap'young and the operations of the entire 25th Brigade after it arrived in Korea later in the spring of 1951 have been controversial, new scholarship has suggested that the performance of the second battalions, replete with Second World War veterans, actually performed better than any of the rotations that followed as well as the first battalions primarily made up of Active Force personnel. Much of Canadian historiography on the Korean War has held that Canada was woefully unprepared for combat, just like the world wars. In *Blood on the Hills* (1999), David J. Bercuson highlighted some of the training deficiencies of Stone's battalion in March 1951 and argued that the first battalions, which replaced the second battalions in the line in the spring of 1952, were "probably the best-trained ground force that Canada ever put directly onto a field of battle" while the third battalions that replaced them as the least prepared rotation. He concluded that the Canadians "were sent to Korea improperly armed, under-trained, and ill-prepared."¹⁸ Brent Byron Watson's *Far Eastern Tour* followed in 2002 and shared many of the same sentiments. Watson argued that the second battalions received wholly inadequate training in weapons and patrolling and accepted the view that the first rotation of 25th Brigade was outfought by the Chinese.¹⁹ But subsequent scholarship disputed this view. William Johnston's *A War of Patrols* (2003) is, to date, the most comprehensive account of the Canadian Army's experience in Korea. Johnston argued that the second battalions exhibited greater combat skill and professionalism on Korea's battlefields than their Active Force successors thanks to the training and experience of the officers and NCOs had received during the Second World War. In contrast to Bercuson, Johnston held that it was the second battalions, not the first,

18. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, xiii, 96–97, 222, 225–226.

19. Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 23–31, 77.

that comprised the best-prepared combat force that Canada ever produced at the outset of a war. Even though the first battalions also had officers who had previous wartime experience, the difference was that they had opted to remain in a peacetime army, were in Korea as part of their jobs, and were less willing to risk their lives in a limited war. Thus, the officers of the first battalions preferred to stay in their command posts rather than lead from the front, ordered fewer patrols, and their men consequently eschewed “active defence” for “inactive defence.” By comparison, those who volunteered for the Canadian Army Special Force in 1950 did so specifically with the intention of fighting.²⁰

Canadian infantry training during the Second World War, then, provided the army with a core of officers who knew how to train and lead their men in battle during the next conflict. The rotation of second battalions was filled with men who had previous military training and combat experience that made their battlefield performance superior to that of the rotations that followed.

The study of training is crucial for understanding the Canadian Army’s history during the Second World War. Collectively, historians have not paid sufficient attention to training. But the few who have done so have conveyed an unduly harsh view of the end result. Canada’s reliance on British doctrine, which had inadequacies of its own, the financial neglect of the Militia during the prewar years, deficiencies in senior leadership, and poor coordination between senior headquarters all made the task of training the infantry during the war an arduous one. But there were plenty of successes, too. As the war progressed, so did the infantry’s skills and expertise, a development that did much to kill the widespread prewar assumption that infantrymen did not need extensive training.

20. Johnston, *A War of Patrols*, xix–xx, 255–256, 269–270, 274, 282, 374–377.

And far from being a “pedagogical dead end,” as English characterized it,²¹ battle drill significantly improved the Canadian infantry’s fighting prowess even if it had its share of drawbacks. Exercises became more realistic and strenuous as time went on, preparing men for the challenges ahead. Thorough combined operations training made the difference on JUNO Beach. And, once corrective action was taken, Canada was able to supply trained reinforcements to the front and minimize the political repercussions of sending a limited number of NRMA men overseas in 1944–1945. Far from a failure, the years of training in the United Kingdom gave the Canadian infantry the skills and motivation it needed to succeed.

21. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign*, 107.

APPENDIX A

BRITISH AND CANADIAN ARMY RANK STRUCTURE, 1939–1945

		Rank	Commands a(n) . . . (or <i>NCO Position</i>)	Consisting of . . .	Size ¹ (approx.)	
Commissioned Officers	General Officers	Field Marshal ²	Army Group ³	1 Army Group HQ 2+ Armies Ancillary Troops	600,000+ men	Formation
		General	Army	1 Army HQ 2+ Corps Ancillary Troops	200,000– 400,000 men	
		Lieutenant-General	Corps	1 Corps HQ 2+ Divisions Ancillary Troops	60,000– 100,000 men	
		Major-General	Division	1 Division HQ 2–3 Brigades ⁴ Ancillary Troops	15,000– 25,000 men	
	Senior Officers	Brigadier	Infantry Brigade	1 Brigade HQ 3 Battalions	3,500 men	Unit
		Colonel				
		Lieutenant-Colonel	Infantry Battalion	1 Battalion HQ 1 Support Company ⁵ 4 Rifle Companies	850 men	
		Major	Company	3 Platoons ⁶	130 men	
	Jr. Off- icers	Captain				
		Lieutenant Second Lieutenant	Platoon	3 Sections	37 men	
Other Ranks (ORs)	Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs)	Warrant Officer Class I	<i>Regimental Sergeant Major</i> ⁷			Subunit
		Warrant Officer Class II	<i>Company Sergeant Major</i> ⁷			
		Warrant Officer Class III ⁸	<i>Platoon Sergeant Major</i> ^{7,8}			
		Staff Sergeant	<i>Company Quartermaster Sergeant</i> ⁷			
		Sergeant	<i>Platoon Sergeant</i> ⁷			
		Corporal	Section	6 Riflemen LMG Group	10 men	
	Men	Lance Corporal ⁹	LMG Group		3 men	
		Private ¹⁰				

1. Sizes of subunits (sections, platoons, companies) include commanders. For example, a section is 10 men, including the section commander, light machine gun group, and six riflemen. Establishments changed during the war, so these figures can only provide an approximation. Formation ancillary troops (signals, engineering, supply units etc.) add considerably to the overall size of a given formation level.

2. No Canadian has ever held the rank of field marshal.

3. Canada has never raised a formation as large as an army group.

4. As of October 1942, an infantry division had three infantry brigades, whereas an armoured division had one armoured brigade and one infantry brigade.

5. Prior to September 1942, Canadian infantry battalions had a headquarters company and four rifle companies.

6. Battalion headquarters companies had six platoons until June 1942, when an anti-aircraft platoon was added. In September 1942, four of the specialist platoons were moved to new support companies and the remainder were added to the battalion headquarters.

7. Senior NCOs do not command subunits themselves, but occupy key positions as senior enlisted personnel, as listed here.

8. Abolished in 1944.

9. An appointment, not a rank.

10. Some arms of service had alternate terms for private (e.g. “gunner” in the Royal Canadian Artillery, “sapper” in the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers). Indeed, there was variation even within the infantry: rifle regiments refer to privates as “riflemen.”

APPENDIX B

CANADIAN INFANTRY UNITS OVERSEAS, 5 MAY 1945

First Canadian ArmyFirst Canadian Army Headquarters Defence Battalion (Royal Montreal Regiment)

I Canadian Corps1st Canadian Corps Defence Company (Lorne Scots)¹

II Canadian Corps2nd Canadian Corps Defence Company (Prince Edward Island Light Horse)

1st Canadian Infantry Division

The Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG)

No. 1 Defence and Employment Platoon (Lorne Scots)

1st Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Royal Canadian Regiment

The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment

48th Highlanders of Canada

1 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade

Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry

The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada

The Loyal Edmonton Regiment²

2 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

3rd Canadian Infantry BrigadeRoyal 22^e Régiment

The Carleton and York Regiment

The West Nova Scotia Regiment

3 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

2nd Canadian Infantry Division

The Toronto Scottish Regiment (MG)

No. 2 Defence and Employment Platoon (Lorne Scots)

4th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Royal Regiment of Canada

The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth
Regiment)

The Essex Scottish Regiment

4 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

5th Canadian Infantry BrigadeThe Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of
Canada

Le Régiment de Maisonneuve

The Calgary Highlanders

5 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

6th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal

The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada

The South Saskatchewan Regiment

6 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

3rd Canadian Infantry Division

The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG)

No. 3 Defence and Employment Platoon (Lorne Scots)

7th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles

The Regina Rifle Regiment

1st Battalion, The Canadian Scottish Regiment³

7 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

8th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

Le Régiment de la Chaudière

The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment

8 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

9th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Highland Light Infantry of Canada

The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders

The North Nova Scotia Highlanders

9 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

4th Canadian Armoured Division

No. 4 Defence and Employment Platoon (Lorne Scots)

10th Canadian Infantry Brigade⁴

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment

The Algonquin Regiment

The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's)

10th Independent Machine Gun Company (The New Brunswick Rangers)

10 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

5th Canadian Armoured Division

No. 5 Defence and Employment Platoon (Lorne Scots)

11th Canadian Infantry Brigade

The Perth Regiment

The Cape Breton Highlanders

The Irish Regiment of Canada

11th Independent Machine Gun Company (The Princess Louise Fusiliers)

11 CIB Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

1. The Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment) furnished detachments to defend headquarters at the corps, division, and brigade levels, with the exception of 2nd Canadian Corps Defence Company (The Prince Edward Island Light Horse) (GO 151, "The Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment)—Organization," 10 Jul 1941). See Richard E. Ruggle, *For Our Heritage: A History of the Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment)* (Brampton, ON: Lorne Scots Regimental Museum, 2008), 80–105, 109–111.

2. "The Edmonton Regiment" until October 1943.

3. Technically, *all* infantry battalions in the Canadian Army (Overseas) were the first battalions of their regiments. Some regiments raised multiple active battalions during the war. Normally, according to GO 42, "Nomenclature of Active and Reserve Units," 19 Feb 1941, a regiment's active battalion was numbered as its first battalion, its reserve battalion was its second, and any further active battalions mobilized were numbered sequentially thereafter. In addition, the Canadian Scottish Regiment had two NPAM battalions prior to the war; the unit that served overseas took the name of its 1st Battalion from Victoria.

4. 10th and 11th Canadian Infantry Brigades also had "motor" battalions from the Lake Superior Regiment and the Westminster Regiment, respectively. Though both of these were infantry regiments, their overseas components functioned as mechanized units and are not included here. Similarly, some infantry regiments, such as the Governor General's Foot Guards, furnished armoured units during the war, and are thus also not included here.

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