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Operation "JUBILEE" : The Raid on Dieppe,
19 Aug 42

Part III : Some Special Aspects.

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**Operation "JUBILEE" : The Raid on DIEPPE, 19 Aug 42.
Part III : Some Special Aspects.**

1. Earlier reports have dealt with the preliminaries of the DIEPPE operation of 19 Aug 42, and with the execution of the operation. The present report deals with certain additional aspects of the operation.

THE PLAN AND ITS RESULTS

2. It is of special interest to observe the comments of senior officers on the manner in which the plan for the operation served its purpose, and on the various weaknesses which appeared in practice. In this connection attention is directed to the section of the Combined Report (C.B.04244) dealing with Lessons Learnt (paras. 324-375). These lessons are presented in summarized form in paras.324-42, and those of them which bear most closely on the experience of the Canadian troops at DIEPPE may be quoted here:

324. The need for overwhelming fire support, including close support during the initial stages of the attack.

325. The necessity for the formation of permanent naval assault forces with a coherence comparable to that of any other first line fighting formations.....

328. The necessity for flexibility in the military plan and its execution.

To achieve this, the assault must be on the widest possible front limited only by the possibilities of control and the amount of naval and air support available.

329. The allocation to the assault of the minimum force required for success and the retention of the maximum force as a reserve to exploit success where it is achieved.....

333. The necessity for fire support in any operation where it has not been possible to rely on the element of surprise. This fire support must be provided by heavy and medium Naval bombardment, by air action, by special vessels or craft working close inshore, and by using the fire power of the assaulting troops while still sea-borne.....

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335. Tanks should not be landed until the anti-tank defences have been destroyed or cleared.....

336. Great and continuous attention must be paid to security problems.....Only important extracts from Operation Orders should be taken ashore. These should be kept in manuscript form and have their official headings removed.

337. Briefing of the troops should take place as late as possible.....

338. Unless means for the provision of overwhelming close support are available, assaults should be planned to develop round the flanks of a strongly defended locality rather than frontally against it.

339. A far higher standard of aircraft recognition is essential both in the Royal Navy and the Army.....

341. The importance and necessity of using smoke cannot be over-emphasized and larger quantities of smoke must be carried in any operation of the size of the assault on Dieppe.

342. Some form of light or self-propelled artillery must be provided once an assault has got across the landing place and is making progress inland.

3. These extracts may be said to provide an official commentary on the operation; and they summarize the operational experience obtained from it, the gaining of which was one of its main objects.

4. Some of the special comments of Canadian officers should be noted. General Roberts, in his report on the operation sent to G.O.C. 1 Cdn Corps on 27 Aug 42 (file S-3-5/Ops from H.Q. First Cdn Army, at present in the custody of Historical Section, C.M.H.Q.; printed in C.B.04244, pp. 142-3) writes in part as follows:

10. Recommendations

(i) Tks

The employment of tks in a raid of short duration is not recommended and it is considered that a bridgehead must be est prior to the disembarkation of tks.

(ii) Landing Craft

All landing craft should have heavier armament, which should be shielded and so positioned that it can support the assaulting tps.

(iii) Support Landing Craft

Some form of heavily armoured and heavily armed support craft is necessary...

(v) Bomber Support

The effect on the population of coastal towns of heavy bombing as a preliminary to a landing must be accepted.

When a suitable measure of air superiority is attained, Bomber Comd should be prepared to employ accurate and heavy day bombing on targets such as towns, and heavily defended beaches.

This appears to be the only way of obtaining the equivalent of heavy arty concentrations in land operations.....

(viii) Flexibility

It is considered that in all operations of this nature the initial assault should be made by light forces to feel out the soft spots, with strong and flexible reserves quickly available.

5. On 28 Aug 42 General Crerar wrote to General Roberts acknowledging this report, and making some observations concerning sub-para.(viii), above. He wrote in part as follows:

.....I am not convinced that the tactics you here indicate are suitable for "all operations of this nature". There are practical limitations, in the way of technical interservice difficulties which are bound to impose a certain degree of rigidity in the plan of Combined Operations. It must also be accepted that if our intelligence concerning the enemy is complete, we shall be able to frame an effective plan in advance of the operation. This situation is unlikely but not impossible.

(Copy on file 8-3-5/Ops, from H.Q. First Cdn Army).

6. In connection with this discussion on the question of planning for the use of reserves, the Official Historian may perhaps take note of the fact that it is impossible to use large reserves to real advantage unless the commander is armed with full and accurate information concerning the course of operations as they develop. Examination of the sections of Reports Nos. 101 and 108 dealing with communications and information in the various sectors at DIEPPE may suggest that such information was frequently not available to the commander in this operation.

7. After the operation, General Roberts prepared a very detailed set of answers to a lengthy questionnaire drawn up at Combined Operations Headquarters. A copy of this document is on file Ops-3-3-1-2 Div from H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, now at Overseas Records Office, ACTON. Some of General Roberts' observations in this report should be noted here.

8. Among the points made was (para.5) the fact that the weight of shell used in the preliminary naval bombardment "was hardly heavy enough for such strongly built posns". In answer to a question concerning the value of the support of the actual assault by cannon fighters, General Roberts (para.7) observed that it appeared that in this case this support "was not of sufficiently long duration" to meet the purposes of the attack. He added:

It is questionable whether Cannon fire in itself is adequate for an operation of this nature against fixed defs such as pillboxes, houses, etc. It is considered that Cannon fire against open defs would be of great value and in case of fixed defs the effect would be increased greatly when used in conjunction with dive bombing.

9. In answer to a question as to whether "we were wrong in not arranging for a heavy air raid before the assault took place", General Roberts wrote (para.8) as follows:

This question has been discussed at length. The advantages of accurate bombing are obvious. The reasons against were:

- (i) effect on the French population.
- (ii) could only be done in the hours of darkness and would therefore be most inaccurate.
- (iii) This (ii) would only alarm the defs and probably would do more harm than good.
- (iv) inaccurate bombing might block the streets and thus bar the way for our tks.
- (v) fires would also be started which would bar both tks and inf.

10. In answer to the question whether the frontal attack was justified "in view of the fact that we were not taking any steps to pulverise the defences that would oppose such an attack", General Roberts replied (para.6):

Very questionable if a frontal attack is justified. Defences were stronger than anticipated and failure at blue beach altered the whole situation.

