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HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

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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, 6-30 Jun 44.

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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, 6-30 Jun 44.

1. Report No. 131 was a preliminary account of the operations of Canadian formations during the campaign in Normandy from the assault on 6 Jun 44 to First Cdn Army's assumption of responsibility for the CAEN sector on 31 Jul 44. The present report is the first of a series of two dealing with the same operations in greater detail and on the basis of a more thorough examination of sources. The period covered is from 6 to 30 Jun 44. The second of the series will consider operations during July 1944.
2. This report is strictly an account of operations. Its starting-point is the plan for Operation "OVERLORD"; it does not attempt fully to describe the planning, -- the very lengthy and complicated preliminaries of the operation, which will be dealt with in their Canadian aspects in a subsequent separate report.
3. For Canada and the Canadian Army these operations have a special significance. Over a long period, it will be recalled, the main Canadian field army was denied action against the enemy, its role being limited to what might be termed "garrison duty" in the British Isles. Apart from the raid on DIEPPE (19 Aug 42) (cf. Reports Nos. 100, 101, 108, 109, 116, 128 and 130) Canadian overseas military forces had no opportunity for large-scale operations until the despatch of 1 Cdn Inf Div to the Mediterranean for the attack on Sicily in July 1943 (cf. Reports Nos. 126, 127 and 135). This was followed by the concentration in that theatre of a two-division Canadian Corps (1 Cdn Corps, comprising 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div), which subsequently distinguished itself in operations on the Italian mainland (cf. Reports Nos. 121 and 129). Even after 1 Cdn Corps was so committed, however, the greater part of the available Canadian force (including H.Q. First Cdn Army, H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 4 Cdn Armd Div) still remained in Britain. Only with the commencement of Operation "OVERLORD" on 6 Jun 44 did the Canadian Army Overseas come fully to grips with the enemy.
4. It is of course with the actions of the Canadians in Normandy that this report is primarily concerned. But it would be most inadequate to consider their important but relatively small contribution as divorced from the general course of events, for to ignore the broad pattern would be to miss the significance of the whole great enterprise. The operations here treated can certainly be said to mark the opening of the final phase of the war in Europe. They represent the return of Allied forces to the mainland of Western Europe, from which the British Armies were driven in the early summer of 1940.
5. For this reason, the method followed in the preparation of this report has been always to keep in sight the progress of events generally, so as to provide the background against which Canadian participation may be viewed in its proper perspective. Conversely, detailed accounts of the actions of Canadians will serve, where applicable, to illustrate experiences shared by all members of the Allied Expeditionary Force.

