

From D-Day to Aug. 17, Canadian troops encountered stubborn opposition and bitter fighting. This was particularly true of the Carpiquet Airfield, the city of Caen taken on July 9, and the town of Falaise which fell to Canadian arms on Aug. 17. It was here that the Germans had massed the greatest concentration of armour ever achieved in such small space. The intensity of the operation can partially be measured by the attempt of a Canadian battalion to capture Maysur-Orne on the morning of Aug. 8. Failing in the initial attack, flame throwers were brought into action later in the day and, before this threat, enemy resistance was completely disorganized.

The crossing of the Seine and Somme Rivers and the recovery of the Channel ports became one of the fastest moving operations of the War. By Sept. 1, Dieppe had been occupied by troops who had been there two years before. Boulogne and Cap Gris Nez fell to the Canadians on Sept. 22 and 29, respectively. Again flame throwers went into action to dislodge stubborn opposition on Mont Lambert which consisted of a series of concrete bunkers covering the approaches to Boulogne. The closing days of September found Calais in Canadian hands.

Besides opening these ports, the swift operations along the coast cleared numerous enemy rocket-bomb sites, thereby nearly eliminating the robot bomb menace to the southeastern counties of England.

Antwerp, overrun in the rapid advance by British troops, was vital to Allied supply lines; but to make its use possible as a seaport the Scheldt Estuary had yet to be cleared. The task of removing this thorn from the Allied flank devolved upon the First Canadian Army. It was decided to launch a three-pronged attack: one would sweep the coast on the south bank of the West Scheldt; the second prong, striking along the northern bank of the West Scheldt towards Walcheren, would be combined with an attack from the sea; while the third was to operate north of the East Scheldt, striking in a northerly and northwesterly direction. Despite the exasperating and exhausting conditions of sodden ground, innumerable canals and dykes, half-flooded land and rainy weather, the First Canadian Army, by Nov. 7, established a line from the bridgehead at Nijmegen, along the Maas River, to Walcheren on the North Sea coast.

There followed a well-earned respite for the Canadian Army and its Allies from Nov. 9, 1944, to Feb. 8, 1945. Constant patrolling, however, was necessary and brisk local actions were frequent. Particularly was it essential to be on the alert during the critical days of the German break-through in the Ardennes in December, 1944.

Meanwhile, the Allied Armies to the south were pressing towards the Rhine—the main obstacle to be overcome during 1945. In order to provide a satisfactory take-off, it was decided that the strongly fortified area between the Maas and Rhine Rivers must be cleared. This operation was completed successfully in February and March by the First Canadian Army and its attached Allies which included British, American, Polish, Dutch and Czech troops. It is interesting to note that from D-Day to the capitulation of Germany, many formations and units served under Canadian command at various times. Included in these were components of the 1st and 30th British Corps; the 15th Scottish, 51st Highland, 52nd Lowland, 53rd Welsh, 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions; the 49th West Riding, 50th Northumbrian and 43rd Wessex British Infantry Divisions served in some of the critical operations. In addition to this, the following British units served with the First Canadian Army; 6th Airborne Division; 7th Armoured Division; Guards Armoured