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Personal Message from the Army Commander

Today we celebrate the sixth Christmas Day since the outbreak of war. Many of us in Eighth Army have spent the majority of these away from home and this Christmas is no exception. But now two things dominate our minds. First we know that victory is assured, and secondly we have every reason to believe that next Christmas we shall look back on the end of the war with Germany.

Great successes have been achieved on all fronts during the past year. The Eighth Army has again fought decisively in the great struggle. With the assistance of our gallant American Allies you have accomplished memorable feats of arms by breaking through the Gustav Line, the Hitler Line and the Gothic Line. These great defensive positions were sited in country which favoured the defence to a remarkable degree, and in addition the enemy employed every device of modern war to strengthen the natural obstacles. In spite of these great difficulties you, by your gallantry, determination and endurance, drove a determined enemy from his defences and pursued him for many hundreds of miles through some of the most difficult campaigning country in Europe.

Above all you have rendered incalculable assistance to your comrades fighting on the Western Front by compelling the enemy to keep a large number of good divisions in Italy. The Eighth Army is playing a decisive part in hastening the final collapse of the enemy.

These are achievements of which the Empire and you yourselves may well be proud.

I congratulate and thank you all. I wish you and your families a Happy Christmas, and I hope with you that the coming year will bring the final overthrow of Germany.

R. L. McCreery

ITALY,
Christmas Day, 1944.

Lieut.-General,
G.O.C., Eighth Army.

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Personal Message from the Corps Commander

Today we are spending yet another Christmas away from home, for many of us the sixth. Christmas Day is traditionally the day when families and friends gather together, and no Christmas away from home can be truly happy. I can only wish you and your families the happiest Christmas possible under the circumstances, and join with you in hoping that all of us may be able to celebrate next Christmas at home in Canada.

A year ago, the end of the war with Germany seemed remote. Today, the fight has been carried into Germany itself, and we can feel reasonably certain that on Christmas Day 1945 the war with Germany will be over. You who have been fighting for a year and a half in Italy may think that your part in bringing a certain victory within sight has been overshadowed by more spectacular fighting on the Western front. I can assure you that your comrades in Belgium and Holland realize how much you have contributed to the defeat of the Hun. The Fifth and Eighth Armies are containing more than twenty-five German divisions, divisions which Hitler desperately needs to defend Germany itself. Since the bitter Christmas Day at Ortona, you have smashed through two strong prepared German defence lines, the Hitler and the Gothic Lines, and have carried the fighting onto the plains of Lombardy, making it possible for allied aircraft to bomb Germany from Italian bases.

You have now completed your part in the first phase of the present operation, under adverse weather conditions and over water-logged terrain. Since 1 Dec you have cleared the enemy from more than 145 square miles of Italian territory - sufficient for a two and one-half acre allotment for each Canadian soldier in Italy. You have forced the enemy from three strong natural defence lines, liberated a city, Ravenna, four towns, thirty villages and nearly one thousand smaller inhabited places, and you have materially assisted 5 Corps in the capture of Faenza. You have forced the enemy commander to withdraw a division from another part of the front in order to reinforce this sector and you have now severely mauled this new division.

You have taken more than 1600 prisoners and have killed or wounded probably twice that number of enemy. All arms and services have done their part in this task. The gunners have smashed the enemy's defences with over 1200 3-ton lorry-loads of shells -- 184,000 rounds -- and on more than one occasion have broken up enemy counterattacks. In addition to opening more than 200 miles of road, the sappers have erected more than a half a mile of bridging. Many of the twenty-nine bridges were completed under hostile mortar and artillery fire. The Signals have laid some 2600 miles of field cable, providing communications without which control of the battles would have been impossible. Despatch riders have delivered since 1 Dec

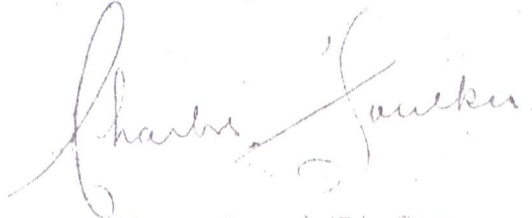
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no less than 28,000 packets.

I fully appreciate that the going has been hard, the tempo fairly fast and tough but your determination, skill at arms and guts has again seen the Hun off. I am more than ever confident that you and I will see the next short stage of the operation to a successful conclusion.

I congratulate you all on the fine job you have done and will, I am certain, continue to do, and once again I extend to you and to your families my wishes for a happy Christmas and Victory in the New Year.



(C Foulkes) Lt Gen
Comd, 1 Cdn Corps.

Italy,
Christmas Day, 1944.

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