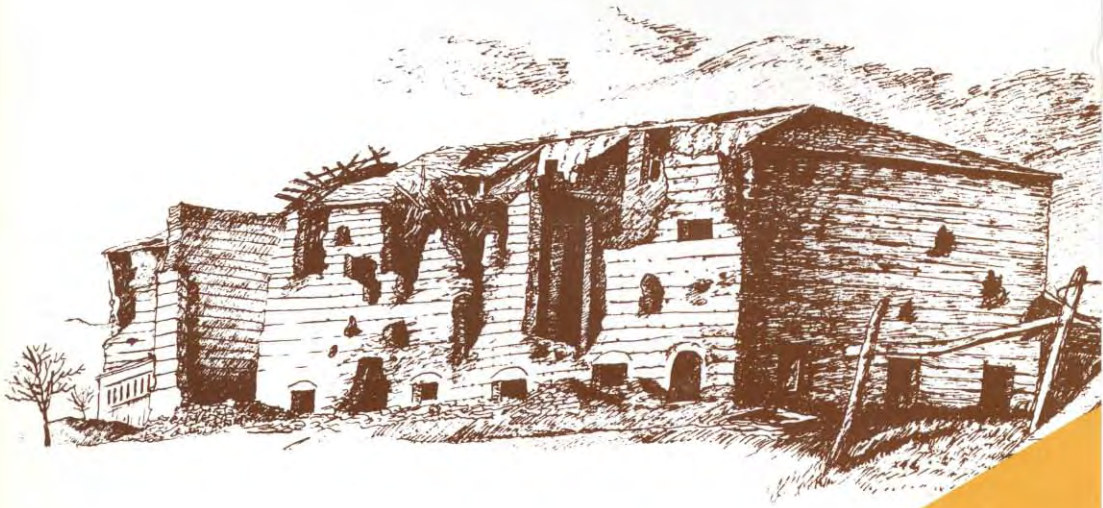
SALERNO



F. Duncan Jr.

WORLD WAR II
50th Anniversary
Commemorative Edition

SALERNO

American Operations From the Beaches to the Volturno

9 September – 6 October 1943



CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

UNITED STATES ARMY

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1990

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Foreword to CMH Edition

Salerno: American Operations From the Beaches to the Volturno (9 September–6 October 1943) is one of a series of fourteen studies of World War II operations originally published by the War Department's Historical Division and now returned to print as part of the Army's commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of that momentous clash of arms. These volumes, prepared by professional historians shortly after the events described, provide a concise summary of some of the major campaigns and battles fought by American soldiers. The skillful combination of combat interviews with primary sources, many of which are now lost, gives these unassuming narratives a special importance to military historians. The careful analysis of key operations provides numerous lessons for today's military students.

I am pleased that this entire group of studies will once again be available. I urge all military students and teachers to use them to enhance our collective awareness of the skill, leadership, daring, and professionalism exhibited by our military forebears.

Washington, D.C.
15 September 1989

HAROLD W. NELSON
Colonel, FA
Chief of Military History

Foreword

In the thick of battle, the soldier is busy doing his job. He has the knowledge and confidence that his job is part of a unified plan to defeat the enemy, but he does not have time to survey a campaign from a fox hole. If he should be wounded and removed behind the lines, he may have even less opportunity to learn what place he and his unit had in the larger fight.

AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION is a series prepared by the War Department especially for the information of wounded men. It will show these soldiers, who have served their country so well, the part they and their comrades played in achievements which do honor to the record of the United States Army.



G. C. MARSHALL,
Chief of Staff.

WAR DEPARTMENT

Military Intelligence Division
Washington 25, D. C.
26 August 1944

Under the command of Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, the Fifth Army, a great Allied force composed of the British 10 Corps and the United States VI Corps, carried out the first large scale invasion of the European mainland and secured a firm base for future operations in Italy. *Salerno: The American Operations from the Beaches to the Volturno* is an account of the American forces who landed on the beaches in the Gulf of Salerno. The actions of our British allies have been duly recorded by their command.

This study is the third of a series called AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION, designed exclusively for military personnel and primarily for wounded soldiers in hospitals to tell them the military story of the campaigns and battles in which they served. No part of this narrative may be republished without the consent of the A. C. of S., G–2, War Department, Washington 25,. D. C.

Salerno is based on the best military records available. The manuscript, paintings, and sketches were prepared in the field by the Fifth Army Historical Section. The panoramic sketch of the Salerno battleground is by Col. W. P. Burn, C.W.S. Photographs are by the U. S. Army Signal Corps. Readers are urged to send directly to the Historical Branch, G–2, War Department, Washington 25, D. C., comments, criticism, and additional information which may be of value in the preparation of a complete and definitive history of the action at Salerno.

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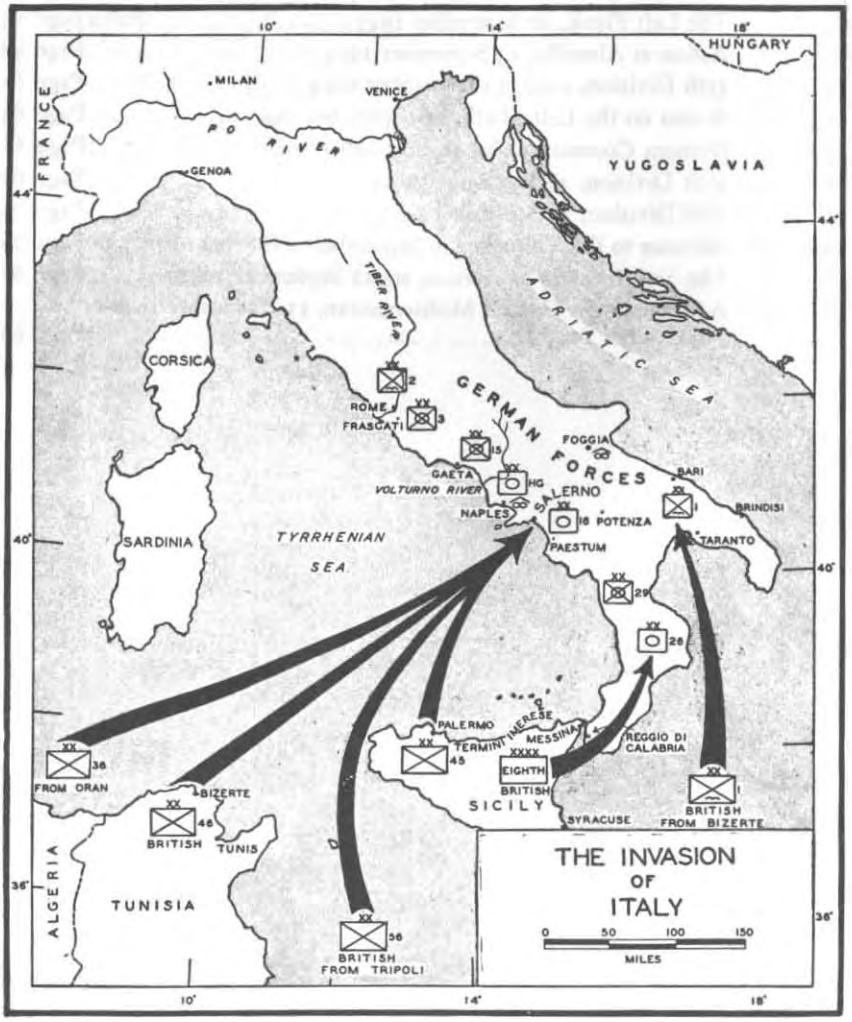
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MAP NO. 1


10°
14°
18°
HUNGARY
MILAN
VENICE
FRANCE
PO RIVER
GENOA
YUGOSLAVIA
44°
TIBER RIVER
ADRIATIC SEA
CORSICA
ROME
FRASCATI
GERMAN FORCES
FOGGIA
GAETA
VOLTURNO RIVER
LERNO
BARI
NAPLES
POTENZA
BRINDISI
40°
SARDINIA
TYRRHENIAN
SEA
PAESTUM
TARANTO
PALERMO
TERMINI IMERESE
MESSINA
REGGIO DI CALABRIA
FROM ORAN
BIZERTE
EIGHTH
BRITISH
SICILY
BRITISH
TUNIS
SYRACUSE
BRITISH
FROM BIZERTE
ALGERIA
TUNISIA
36°
BRITISH
FROM TRIPOLI
THE INVASION
OF
ITALY
0 50 100 150
MILES

Preparations for Invasion

From Africa to Italy

EARLY IN SEPTEMBER 1943, British and American armies invaded southern Italy, striking at the heart of a major Axis nation and breaching Hitler's "Fortress Europe." Behind the invasion lay long months of hard-won Allied victories. The Axis was cleared out of Africa in May, when British and American armies annihilated the German and Italian forces cornered in Tunisia. Sicily, the stepping stone from Africa to Europe, was next conquered in a 38-day battle, and on 17 August the last of its German garrison fled across the Strait of Messina to the Italian mainland. On 3 September the British Eighth Army crossed the Strait in pursuit and drove up the Calabrian Peninsula. Coordinated with the Eighth Army's attack, Allied landings at Salerno by the United States Fifth Army and at Taranto by the British 1 Airborne Division were made on 9 September. In the Salerno landings, strong American forces were fighting on the continent of Europe for the first time since 1918.

Even before the beginnings of the Sicilian operations, the staffs of Allied land, naval, and air forces had been planning an invasion of Italy. Once established on the Italian mainland, we might hope to secure complete naval and aerial domination of the Mediterranean and to obtain strategic ports and airfields for future operations against continental Europe. If we could knock Italy out of the war, we would force the Germans to retreat north of the Alps or to use in Italy armies which might be fighting on the Russian front.

The extent and timing of the invasion depended on factors which could not be estimated accurately. In the early summer the Allied Chiefs of Staff did not know how strong Italian and German resistance in Sicily would be, or what direction political developments in Italy would take. First plans had called for an assault across the toe with a coordinated amphibious attack on the instep of Italy. In July and August, however, indications of changing temper of the Italian people dictated the bolder strategy of assaults farther up the west coast. After the fall of Mussolini from power on 25 July, the Fascist Party lost control in Italy, and the new government showed more and more clearly its desire to withdraw from the war. As our campaign in Sicily moved successfully ahead, the Italians, soldiers and civilians alike, gave further signs that they had grown war weary. Italy was ripe for attack.

The invasion across the Strait of Messina was the mission assigned to the British Eighth Army under General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery (Map No. 1, faces page 1). To take full advantage of the political and military situation, a landing of other forces farther up the west coast north of the toe was directed by the Allied Chiefs. Naples and Rome were obvious objectives, but a landing near Rome would be too far from air support based in Sicily. Naples, moreover, possessed the best harbor along the western coast, as well as excellent airfields. The mission of capturing the port and airfields of Naples as a base for future operations was assigned to the United States Fifth Army under Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark and was scheduled to follow a week or so after the Eighth Army had crossed the Strait. While the Fifth Army was landing at Salerno, the British 1 Airborne Division was also to land from the sea at the port of Taranto in the heel of Italy. As the Eighth Army drove up the west and center of Italy, the airborne division would push north along the east coast. Elements of both forces would then join to capture the important airfields at Foggia. If the Fifth Army could strike eastward sharply and quickly enough, it might establish a barrier across the boot and trap the enemy forces facing the Eighth Army in the south.

To secure Naples the Fifth Army could land either some 25 miles northwest of the city near the mouth of the Volturno River or 40



LT. GEN. MARK W. CLARK
Commanding General, Fifth Army, United States Army

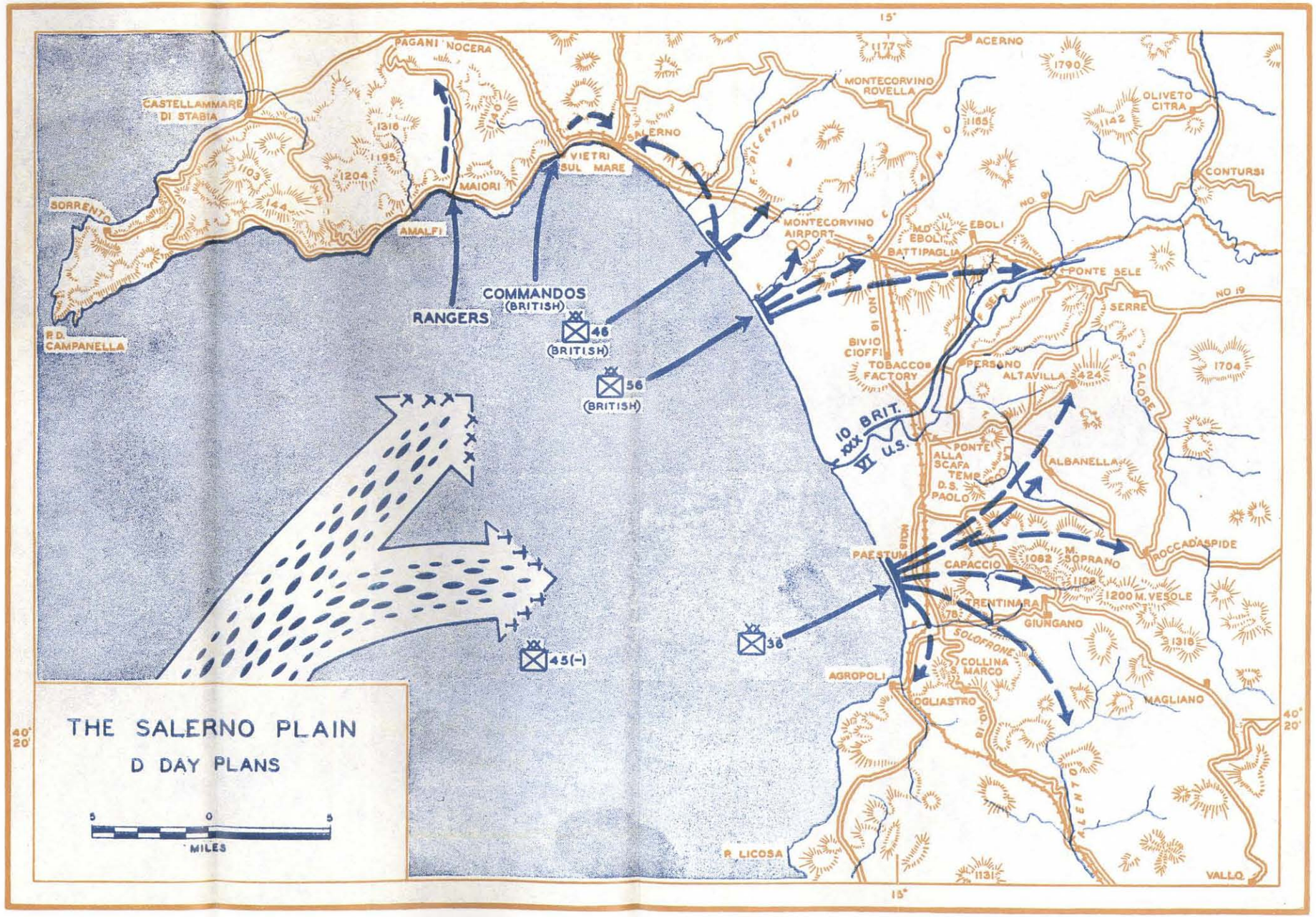
miles southeast of the city on the beaches of the Gulf of Salerno. A landing in the Volturno area would put our troops on an open plain within easy reach of Naples but farther from necessary air support. This support would be difficult to provide, for our land-based fighter planes would have to operate from airdromes in Sicily, at least 200 miles from Naples, and could remain over the beaches only a short time. A landing southeast of Naples would entail almost the same difficulty of distance for air support. Furthermore, the invasion forces would have to establish a beachhead on the narrow Salerno plain, which is commanded by lofty mountains. If our troops did not secure the passes in these mountains during the first rush, the enemy would have an excellent chance to make our drive on Naples slow and costly.

On the other hand, the Gulf of Salerno offered the most favorable conditions for landing (Map No. 2, faces page 5). Careful reconnaissance studies by the Navy revealed beaches with many practical advantages. In good weather there is little surf. The offshore gradient would permit transports to come close to shore; the narrowness of the strip of sand between water and dunes would make easy the construction of exit routes. The road net, lying close to the beaches, would be useful for transportation of troops and supplies; the terrain immediately behind the beaches would be suitable for supply dumps. Because of these advantages, the Gulf of Salerno was finally chosen.

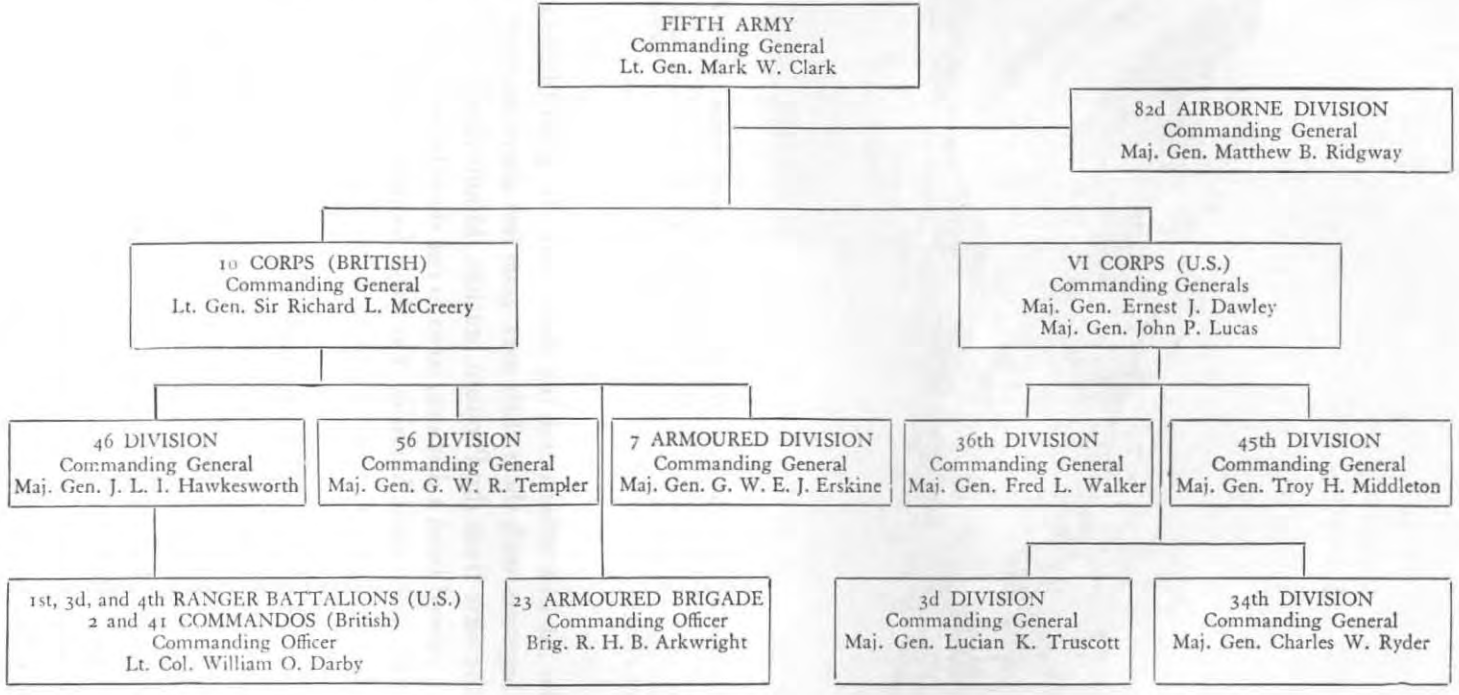
The narrow Salerno plain, lying between the beaches and a great wall of mountains, was to become familiar ground to thousands of American soldiers. The steep and rocky Sorrento Peninsula, with the town of Salerno at its base, is the northwest bastion of the mountain wall, which sweeps inland and southward in a great bow to meet the sea again at Agropoli. From Salerno to Agropoli the line of beaches runs almost straight for 26 miles from northwest to southeast. The plain is roughly crescent-shaped, narrower at either end and some 10 miles wide in the center along the River Sele.

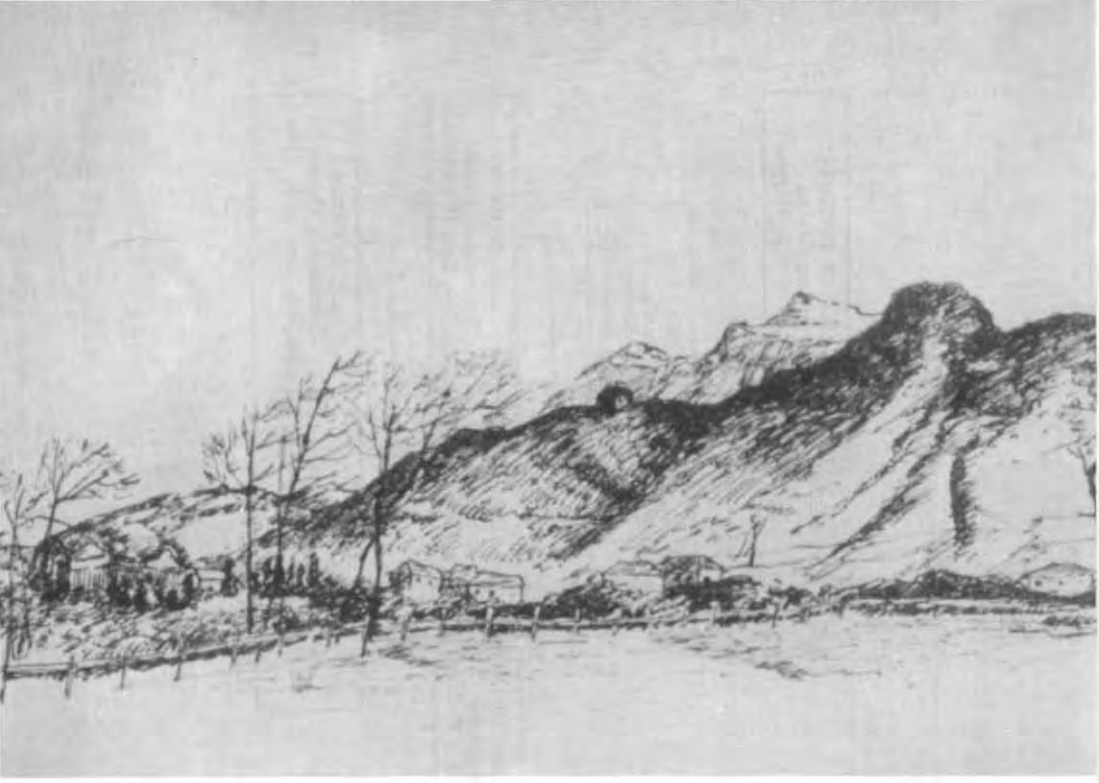
Mount Eboli, stretching westward more than 8 miles just north of the Sele, divides the plain into a northern half, where the British 10 Corps was to operate, and a southern half assigned to the United States VI Corps. On the lower western slopes of Mount Eboli is the town of Eboli. Southeast of the town, across the river plain of the Sele and Calore, lies a chain of hills running north and south. At the northern end of the chain, halfway up Hill 424, is the little town of

MAP NO. 2


15°
PAGANI
NOCERA
CASTELLAMMARE DI STABIA
SORRENTO
AMALFI
MAIORI
VIETRI SUL MARE
SALERNO
MONTECORVINO ROVELLA
ACERNO
1177
1790
OLIVETO CITRA
1142
1165
CONTURSI
MONTECORVINO AIRPORT
EBOLI
BATTIPAGLIA
PONTE SELE
SERRE
NO 19
SILE
BIVIO CIOFFI
TOBACCO FACTORY
PERSANO
ALTAVILLA
424
1704
CALORE
10 BRIT.
XXX U.S.
VI
PONTE ALLA SCAFA
TEMP. D.S. PAOLO
ALBANELLA
SELE
PAESTUM
CAPACCIO
1082
M. SOPRANO
1200
M. VESOLE
ROCCADASPIDE
TRENTINARA
GIUNGANO
1318
SOLOFRONE
COLLINA MARCO
AGROPOLI
MAGLIANO
OGLIASTRO
NO 18
TANAGRO
P. LICOSA
1131
VALLO
RANGERS
COMMANDOS (BRITISH)
46 (BRITISH)
56 (BRITISH)
45(-)
36
P.D. CAMPANELLA
THE SALERNO PLAIN
D DAY PLANS
5 0 5
MILES
40° 20'
40° 20'
15°

ORGANIZATION OF THE FIFTH ARMY AT SALERNO (9 September—6 October 1943)

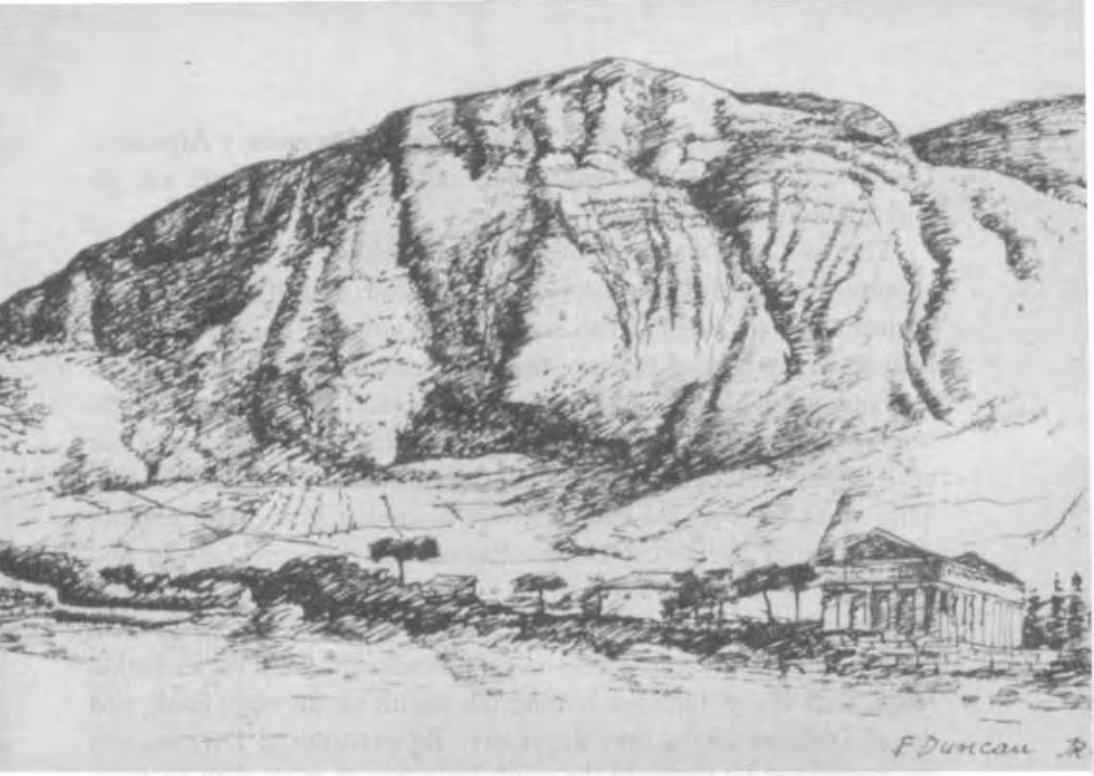




MOUNT SOPRANO, *towering over* 3000 *feet above sea level, dominated the Paestum beaches where the Americans landed. Together with the knoll on its western slope, known as Hill 386, it was a guide point for the troops. The ancient Greek Temple of Neptune, at the lower right, and the ruins surrounding it were used by the 111th Medical Battalion for its headquarters and clearing station.*

Altavilla. At its southern end, the chain joins the great tilted table of Mount Soprano, with sheer cliffs over 3,000 feet above sea level dominating the view from the Paestum beaches. Mount Eboli and Mount Soprano, viewed from a distance, seem to rise sheer from the plain and tower high above their foothills. On these foothills, which jut westward from the mountain wall, much of the heaviest fighting took place.

Through the plain the two principal rivers, the Sele and Calore, run parallel for some 7 miles and join 4 miles from the coast. Each is fordable at several points before their junction. Two of the major north-south roads of lower Italy cross the plain. Highway 18, the coastal road, and Highway 19, which was to be the chief German route of approach from the south and east, meet at Battipaglia on the mountain slopes north of the Sele. Two railway lines follow almost the same paths as the roads.



The only settlement on the Salerno plain is at Paestum, near an ancient Greek temple. Battipaglia, Eboli, Albanella, Capaccio, and the other villages that were to figure so prominently in the battle are either at the very foot of the mountains or sprawled on their slopes. Below the hills, covered with olive orchards, stretch the orange groves and well-cultivated fields of the plain proper. The American forces were to fight their way from the beaches, across the level plain, over the foothills to the mountain passes, and through the passes to Naples.

Fifth Army Plans

General Clark's plans for the Fifth Army called for coordinated assaults on the Salerno beaches by two corps, one British and one American. After securing the beaches, the army was to advance inland to the mountains, then swing northwest to Naples. The Sele River, which bisects the Salerno plain, was to be the boundary between the British 10 Corps on the left and the United States VI Corps on the right. Under the command of Lt. Gen. Sir Richard L. McCreery, the

British 10 Corps included the British 46 and 56 Divisions, 7 Armoured Division, the 2 and 41 Commandos, and the United States 1st, 3d, and 4th Ranger Battalions.

The 10 Corps was to deliver the main blow; its mission was to capture Naples. In its zone, which extended nearly 25 miles from Maiori along the coast to the Sele River mouth, the immediate objectives were the port of Salerno, the Montecorvino airfield, the important rail and highway center of Battipaglia, and Ponte Sele on Highway 19. The left flank of the zone was entrusted to three battalions of Rangers and two battalions of Commandos, all under Lt. Col. William O. Darby. The Rangers were to land at Maiori and advance north to seize the broad Nocera–Pagani pass between Salerno and Naples. The Commandos were to land at Vietri sul Mare, turn east along the coastal road, and enter Salerno. Meanwhile, the bulk of 10 Corps assault forces would land on three beaches south of the Picentino River, with the 56 Division leading the assault on the right flank, and the 46 Division taking over the center. Between the 56 Division and the beaches of VI Corps to the south lay a gap of more than 10 miles which must be closed without delay as the two corps moved inland. The forces were to join at Ponte Sele.

The United States VI Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Ernest J. Dawley, was to operate on the right of the 10 Corps and had the mission of establishing a beachhead south of the Sele River. Regimental combat teams of the 36th Division (reinforced), under Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker, were to launch simultaneous assaults on the Paestum beaches, advance inland to seize the high ground commanding the southern half of the Salerno plain, and prevent the movement of the enemy into the plain from the east and south.

Additional strength as floating reserve was to be provided by two American forces, a reinforced regimental combat team of the 45th Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, and a reinforced regimental combat team of the 82d Airborne Division, under Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway. General Middleton's combat team was to be ready to land on D Day over any of the previously established beaches; General Ridgway's troops were to be prepared to land with light equipment on beaches which had not been previously established. Follow-up troops included the balance of the 45th Division and of the 82d Airborne Division, together with the 34th Division,

the 3d Division, the 13th Field Artillery Brigade, one armored division, one tank battalion, and supporting troops.

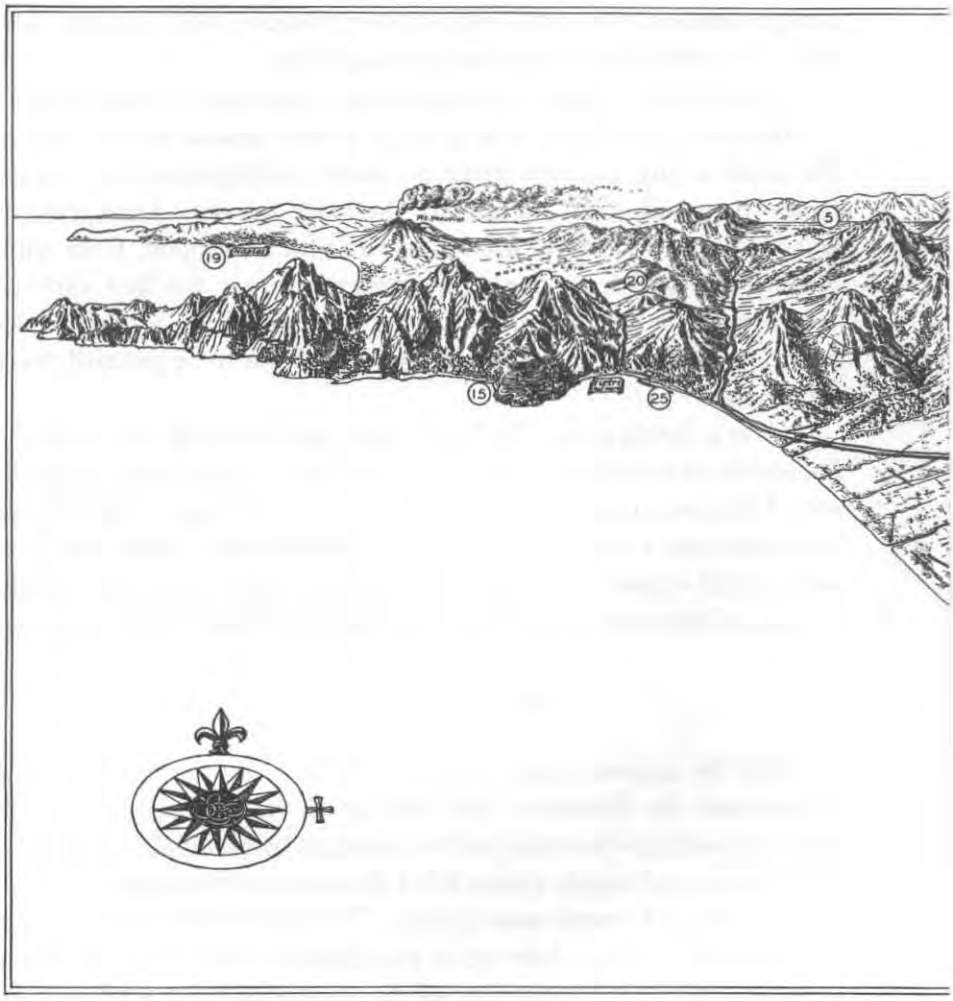
A special naval force, placed under the command of Capt. Charles L. Andrews, Jr., U.S.N., was to make a feint against the beaches at the mouth of the Volturno River, northwest of Naples, to draw enemy forces there and divert them from the main assaults. Arrangements were completed for naval fire support and for air support, from land-based planes and from one naval carrier and four auxiliary carriers, commanded by Rear Adm. P. L. Vian, R.N. Until the port of Naples became available, maintenance for both corps was to be primarily over the beaches.

It was a daring plan. The Fifth Army was to invade Italy with the equivalent of four divisions on D Day and was to double that strength with follow-up troops. Success depended on the ability of the British and American forces to establish a firm beachhead before the Germans could oppose them with units shifted from the east and south. General Clark chose 9 September as D Day; H Hour was set for 0330.

Preparing for D Day

With the approach of D Day, the Fifth Army was making final preparations for invasion. The loading of vessels assigned to each unit, the landing rehearsals, and the strategic bombing of enemy communications and supply routes filled the last days before the invasion. The shortage of vessels was critical. The British contingent of the expedition had already been set at two divisions (the 56 and 46, forming the 10 Corps), but the size of the American force could not be determined finally until just before D Day. At first it consisted only of the 36th Division; then vessels for one regimental combat team of the 45th Division were made available, and finally it proved possible to include nearly two regimental combat teams of the 45th in the D Day convoy. The 3d and 34th Divisions were to wait for subsequent convoys. Vehicles and equipment for every unit in the D Day convoy were cut to the bare minimum.

Final landing rehearsals to familiarize officers and men with the conditions they were soon to face were held at invasion training centers and amphibious training centers. British units and the 36th Division held "dry runs" on beaches in North Africa. The 36th Division, for



From an orthographic projection, observation point 10,000

PANORAMA OF THE SALERNO BATTLEGROUND, *above, shows the beaches, the mountains, and the plains over which soldiers of the Fifth Army fought for 28 days to make good their invasion of western Italy.*

KEY:

1. Acerno
2. Agropoli
3. Albanella
4. Altavilla
5. Avellino
6. Battipaglia
7. Bivio Cioffi
8. Calore River
9. Capodifiume River
10. Casa Vannulo



meters above Punta Licosa, by Col. W. P. Burn, C.W.S.

11. Contursi
12. Eboli
13. Fiumarello River
14. Grataglia
15. Maiori
16. Mount del Bosco
17. Mount San Chirico
18. Mount Soprano
19. Naples
20. Nocera
21. Paestum
22. Persano
23. Ponte Sele
24. Roccad'aspide
25. Salerno
26. Sele River
27. Serre
28. Solofrone River
29. Tempone di San Paolo
30. Tobacco Factory

example, carried out a practice operation called *Cowpuncher* between Porte aux Poules and Arzew, about 30 miles east of Oran, in an area especially selected to duplicate or at least to approximate the beaches at Paestum. Troops of the 34th Division played the enemy roles, wiring the beaches and manning the defenses. The 45th Division, already veterans of one amphibious operation, held a similar rehearsal on beaches in Sicily.

Air operations preparatory to the landings began several weeks before D Day. Bombings of important enemy airfields in southern and central Italy and of supply routes, railroads, and highways leading to the beachhead area and Naples took place late in August. On the night of 3/4 September a series of especially intense and well-coordinated attacks were begun against fighter bases at Capodichino and Capua, near Naples, and at Foggia. From 15 August until D Day the Northwest African Air Force destroyed 248 planes on the ground and damaged 93, reducing enemy air strength which might have been used against the landings. Reconnaissance planes patrolled the coasts to catch any changes in shore defenses or in the location of troops.

On the Convoys

When training had been completed, the divisions of the Fifth Army waterproofed their equipment and embarked in the ships. The Allied navies had set up three major convoys, sailing from Oran, Tripoli, and Bizerte on staggered schedules in order to converge in the Gulf of Salerno opposite their objectives on D minus 1 (Map No. 1, faces page 1). Secondary and follow-up convoys were to sail from the same ports and from Sicily.

The Western Naval Task Force, under Vice Adm. Henry K. Hewitt, U.S.N., was responsible for the protection of the convoy and for support of the military operations by naval gunfire. Admiral Hewitt's command consisted of the Northern Attack Force, under Commo. G. N. Oliver, R.N., and the Southern Attack Force, under Rear Adm. John L. Hall. The Southern Attack Force, with the 36th Division on board, constituted the Eighth Amphibious Force. A United States Task Group, under the command of Rear Adm. Richard L. Conolly, U.S.N., which had trained with the British 46 Division

at the Advance Training Base in Bizerte, was to support the landing of the 46 Division.

The main body of the United States convoy sailed from Oran at 1700 on 5 September. Although its departure was reported by enemy reconnaissance, the convoy was not attacked. In clear, fine weather the ships plowed past the western tip of Sicily and into the Tyrrhenian Sea. Moving in 4 columns 1,000 yards apart, they were protected by the cruisers *Philadelphia, Savannah,* and *Boise* and circling destroyers. The Bizerte convoy, which sailed on 6 September, was attacked by 3 enemy aircraft on the 8th at 1400 and again at 1650 by 10 enemy planes, with the loss of one LCT (Landing Craft Tank).

Aboard the convoys, commanders distributed maps and orders and explained the landing plans in detail. Soldiers looked over the small booklets on Italy which they had received soon after embarkation. At 1830 on 8 September the most tense moment for all the convoys came with a radio announcement by General Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Hostilities between the United Nations and Italy have terminated, effective at once." Military commanders on each ship immediately made it clear to their bewildered men that the invasion was to go ahead as ordered. The armistice between the United Nations and Italy had been concluded on 3 September at Syracuse. Accepting terms of unconditional surrender, the Italian government agreed to transfer to the Allies its air and naval units and to withdraw its army from occupied territory and from the front line in Italy. Announcement of the surrender was delayed until the last minute to permit the Italian army to stop fighting and still not allow the Germans time to occupy the coastal defenses. The commanding officers, however, believed that even with such short notice the Germans might have been able to take over the entire defense and that resistance to the invasion would stiffen.

Twelve minutes after General Eisenhower's announcement, the Oran convoys formed in approach disposition about 20 miles off Salerno and started in for the transport area, some 8 miles nearer shore. The Tripoli and Bizerte convoys moved as ordered into the transport area. By 2000 on the evening of the invasion, the navy mine sweepers had already been at work, continuously for 30 hours, sweeping or repairing gear, and making the lanes safe for the transports and landing craft.

At 2350 the flagship *Samuel Chase* stopped her engines and lay

about 10 miles from the beaches south of the Sele River. The transports formed in three lines, followed by three more lines of landing ships and landing craft. The moon set at 0057, making concealment easier but increasing the difficulties of navigation to shore. The sea was smooth, the wind north to northeast, and the sky almost clear. An armada of 450 vessels lay ready for H Hour. Some fifty more vessels of all types were prepared for the first follow-up. The Fifth Army of 100,000 British troops and 69,000 American troops, with some 20,000 vehicles, was poised for a major attack over the Salerno beaches.

Enemy Opposition

Enemy reactions to the landing of the Eighth Army at Reggio di Calabria on 3 September had indicated that the foot of Italy would not be strongly defended. Resistance to the landing was slight. Both German and Italian forces avoided major engagements and fell back rapidly after carrying out extensive demolitions. By 8 September British advance units were already halfway up the toe of the Italian boot. With the announcement that evening of the unconditional surrender of the Italian government, hostile action by the Italian Army in the south ceased, and the Italian fleet sailed from Taranto to surrender in Allied ports.

Without question, however, the landing of the Fifth Army at Salerno would cause an immediate and strong reaction from the Germans. It was expected that they would fight hard to prevent or at least delay a penetration inland which would trap their forces moving up from the south. The Fifth Army planners estimated that on D Day in the Salerno area, they would have to deal with 39,000 Germans and with more than 100,000 by D plus 3. With their forces in favorable defensive positions, the Germans would probably make a desperate effort to hold the invaders within the confines of the Salerno plain until their units from the south could pass around the danger zone. Then the German army could fall back to the Volturno River, fighting delaying battles which would be costly to the Allied troops.

Although after the Sicilian defeat some eight German divisions had been placed where they could move to meet an invading army in the extreme south, in the center, or in the north of the peninsula, it is apparent that the Germans expected the principal Allied landing to be

in the south. The 16th Panzer Division (armored) was in the Eboli–Battipaglia area, where it had moved late in August from the southeast coast of Italy near Bari. The Hermann Goering Division was on the plains of Naples, and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division (armored infantry) was probably northwest of this force, in the general neighborhood of Gaeta. Both units had been reorganizing after heavy losses in personnel and equipment in Sicily. The 2d Parachute Division garrisoned the vicinity of Rome; some elements of the 3d Panzer Grenadier were at Frascati, 13 miles south of Rome, guarding the headquarters of Field Marshal Kesselring. Three other divisions were well to the south. The 1st Parachute Division held the Adriatic coast south of Bari; the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and the 26th Panzer Division were in Calabria but, for the most part, not in direct contact with the Eighth Army. Of these three divisions in the south, the 1st Parachute and the 29th Panzer Grenadier were veterans of the Sicilian campaign.

In the Salerno area, the 16th Panzer Division was assigned the defense of the beaches from the Sorrento Peninsula to Agropoli, sharing the defense of this coast with Italian troops (Map No. 2, faces page 5). On 7 September the German high command, learning of the Italian armistice, ordered the division to assume the entire coastal defense. Information gathered after D Day revealed that the Germans had placed artillery and mortars in a semicircle covering the whole coastal area. A concentration of heavy antiaircraft guns was emplaced in the Salerno port and in the Montecorvino–Battipaglia areas. Included in the mobile defenses was a railway battery of three cars mounting 132-mm guns, usually kept on a track just north of Agropoli. Observation from such dominating terrain features as Mount Soprano enabled the enemy to direct fire on the gulf, the beaches, and the plain.

The defenses on the beaches and on the plain were not so well organized. The Germans relied most heavily on small groups of tanks that could rove east of the beaches to throw any landing operation into confusion. Teller mines, however, were laid at random 10 to 15 yards from the water's edge in a belt extending 60 to 100 yards inland. Barbed-wire obstacles were placed to the front and rear of numerous machine guns, sited to cover the most likely landing spots. A few trees had been felled and the stumps wired.

On 8 September, the German forces in southern Italy were still

widely dispersed. As the result of enemy aerial reconnaissance reporting the Fifth Army approach, warning orders were undoubtedly transmitted to all units; at 1600 the 16th Panzer Division was ordered to be "ready for battle." It does not appear, however, that any major enemy units were shifted to the Salerno area until after the Allied landing early in the morning of the 9th. Then German motors began to roar, and column upon column swung onto the roads of southern Italy, heading for the Salerno plain. There the first decisive battle of the Allied assault on Fortress Europe was already beginning.

D Day

The First Hours on the Beaches

AT ONE MINUTE PAST MIDNIGHT on 9 September, loudspeakers on the transports called the first boat teams to their stations. Soldiers clambered down the nets into landing craft. Motors sputtered and then roared as the first boats pulled away. Soon the calm sea was alive with snub-nosed craft, circling to reach their proper positions. In the darkness some of the coxswains failed to locate their leaders. Lanes had been previously swept through the mine fields, but occasionally mines broke free and drifted into the paths which the boats were trying to follow. Spray drenched the men and their equipment. Many of the soldiers became seasick. But at length the LCM's (Landing Craft, Mechanized) and LCVP's (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel), carrying the first assault waves, turned east behind the guide boats toward the rendezvous deployment line, 6,000 yards from the Salerno beaches.

Under orders from General Clark, the VI Corps and, in turn, the 36th Division had prepared landing plans. The 141st and 142d Regimental Combat Teams (36th Division) were to land as assault forces, in six waves on the Paestum beaches, advance to the railroad about 2,500 yards inland, reorganize in assembly areas, then move on to their objectives—the hills 10 miles distant (Map No. 2, faces page 5). Once established on the hills, they would control the entire southern half of the Salerno plain. The 143d Regimental Combat Team (36th Division) was to land after the first two and be prepared to replace the



THE BEACHES AT PAESTUM *were extensively mined. German defenses also included machine guns, wire, and 88-mm guns placed within 400 yards of the beach. In the foreground of this sketch of Yellow and Blue beaches is the dune line with an exit road leading from the water's edge. Mountains near Agropoli are in the background* (*See Map. No. 3, page 20*).

assault forces on either flank. While the infantry worked inland, engineer beach groups of the Army and Navy were to organize the beaches for following landings, communication, and supply. If the plan operated successfully, American soldiers of VI Corps would hold a beachhead of 100 square miles, within the 25-mile mountain arc from Ponte Sele south to Roccad'aspide and thence southwest to Agropoli on the coast.

Three and a half hours after the first call to stations, all the assault troops and necessary vehicles had left the transports. Behind them came other craft with tanks, antiaircraft artillery, ammunition vehicles, and heavy weapons. Dukws (2½-ton amphibian trucks) were carrying crews with light artillery and antitank guns. From the north, where the British were firing a bombardment on 10 Corps beaches, came the dull boom of heavy naval guns. In the vicinity of Salerno the sky was lighted by flares and fires burning on the mainland.

South of Salerno, the VI Corps made its assault on the beaches at Paestum without previous naval or air bombardment (Map No. 3, page 20). According to plan, the four landing areas, designated by colored lights and panels, were to extend southward from the Fiumarello for a distance of 2 miles. Red Beach was to be 800 yards in length; Green, 500 yards; Yellow, 1,000 yards; and Blue, 1,500 yards. In actual operation, the frontage was narrowed because of initial heavy opposition, particularly on Yellow and Blue, so that each of the beaches was about 600 yards long.

Ahead of VI Corps, the beaches of Paestum were dark and silent. Then a strident voice over a loudspeaker, apparently from the landing area, called out in English, "Come on in and give up. We have you covered." Our troops came in. The first wave grated on all four beaches exactly at H Hour, 0330.[1] Flares went up immediately, and enemy guns opened fire as our soldiers leaped into the shallow water, waded to the narrow strip of sand, and started inland for the assembly areas (Map No. 2, faces page 5). On the left at Red and Green beaches, the 142d Regimental Combat Team, commanded by Col. John D. Forsythe, began the push that was designed to take it eventually to the high ground extending from Ponte Sele through Altavilla, Albanella, and Roccad'aspide to Mount Vesole and Magliano. On the right at Yellow and Blue beaches, the 141st Regimental Combat Team, under Col. Richard J. Werner, was already meeting fire as it moved to maintain contact with the 142d at Mount Vesole and Magliano and to occupy key points in the mountain arc as far as Agropoli at the southern end of the Gulf of Salerno.

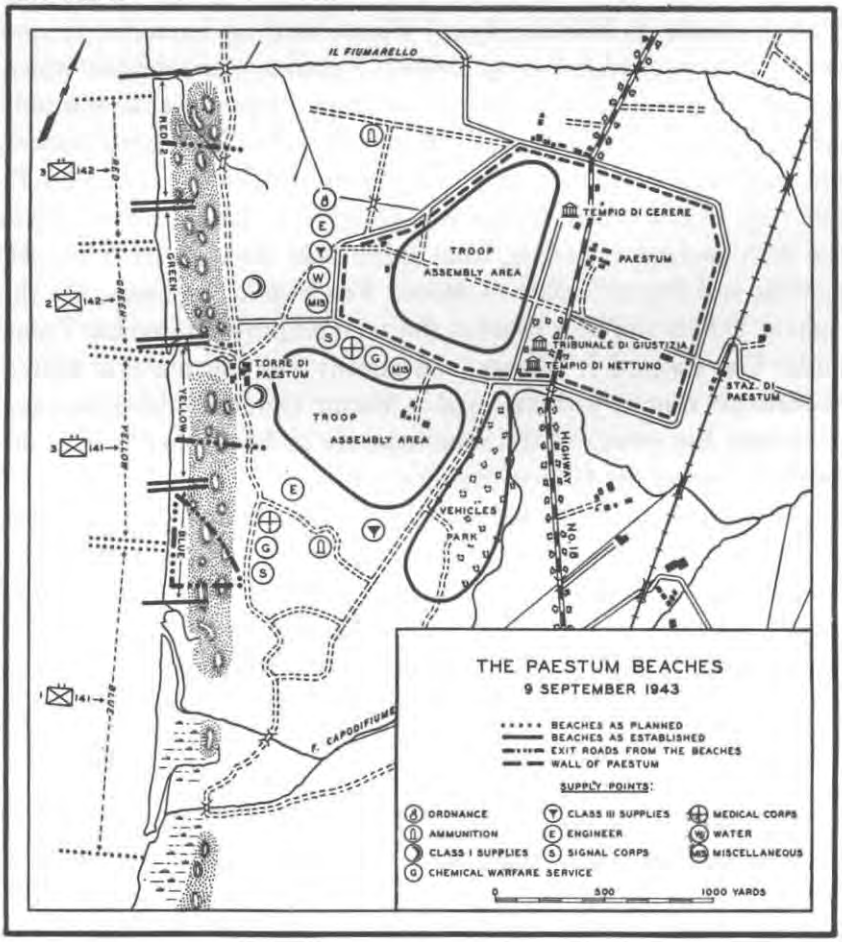
After H Hour the second and third assault waves hit the beaches at 8-minute intervals. On Red and Green beaches, the men of the 142d, creeping, crawling, and running, worked their way through barbed wire and around enemy machine guns and tanks dimly silhouetted in the light of flares. Behind them shells formed geysers in the water, and equipment from stricken craft floated offshore. On the left flank of the regiment, the 3d Battalion Combat Team, com-

[1] On the 10 Corps left flank an American unit had landed 20 minutes earlier. The 4th Ranger Battalion, operating with the 1st and 3d Ranger Battalions and the 2 and 41 British Commandos, reached the coast at Maiori at 0310, meeting no opposition. The battalion secured the beachhead by 0345. The 1st Ranger Battalion arrived at Maiori at 0355; the 3d at 0400. By 0900 the 1st and 3d Battalions were on hill positions, 4 to 5 miles inland, commanding the Nocera–Pagani pass, while the 4th, having cleared Minori at daybreak, advanced west toward Amalfi.

manded by Lt. Col. Thomas H. McDonald, was to reorganize at the railroad east of Paestum, advance north about 3 miles, then turn east to Tempone di San Paolo (Hill 140). On the right flank of the regiment, the 2d Battalion Combat Team, under Lt. Col. Samuel S. Graham, was also to reorganize at the railroad, then to advance inland along the Capodifiume River to occupy the nose of Mount Soprano, northwest of Hill 386. Under Lt. Col. Gaines J. Barron, the 1st Battalion, in reserve at the beginning of the assault, was to land later than the 2d and 3d Battalions, assemble, and take up a position at the southeast end of Hill 140.

The first heavy weapons of the 142d Regimental Combat Team were brought in at 0345. The 1st and 2d Squads of the Mine Platoon,

MAP NO. 3

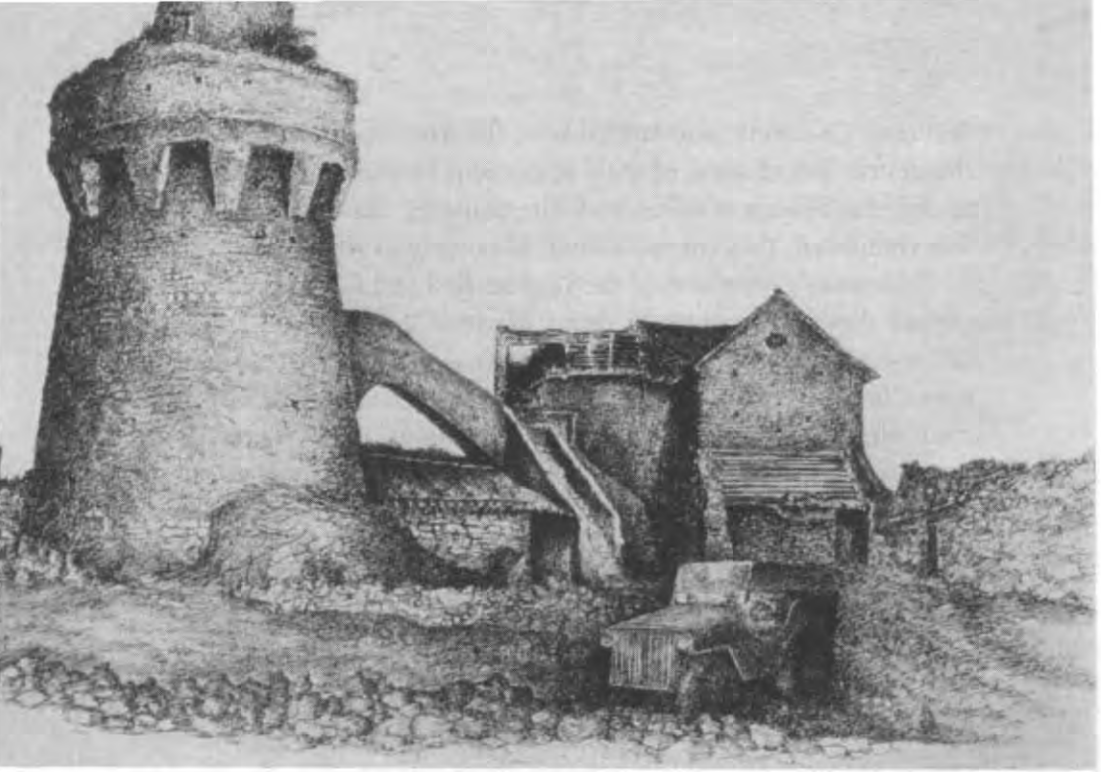


Antitank Company, also landed with the first assault waves. Despite the destruction of some of their equipment by enemy fire they began to clear the beaches of mines and wire obstacles. As soon as their work was completed, they moved inland, advancing as riflemen.

Both assault battalions of the 142d on Red and Green beaches were pinned down from time to time. Machine gunners and snipers in the 50-foot Tower of Paestum and in two-story buildings north of the tower fired on them. To the northwest they met similar opposition from Germans concealed in a grove of saplings and sheltered by the dunes overlooking the beach. Officers and men were separated. Nevertheless, elements of the 2d and 3d Battalions worked their way toward the railroad.

During the first hour of the landings, Pvt. J. C. Jones of Company E found about 50 leaderless men from various companies and guided them off the beaches through falling shells and small-arms fire. As they went, they destroyed several machine-gun positions, although when the reserve forces of the 143d landed, between 0640 and 0800, enemy machine gunners and snipers were still active in the Paestum area. T/Sgt. Manuel S. Gonzales of Company F discovered an 88-mm gun firing from the dunes toward our landing craft. Machine-gun tracers set fire to his pack, but he wriggled out of it and crawled on past exploding grenades toward the gun. Then he threw his own grenades, killed the crew, and blew up their ammunition.

On the right flank of the division, the assault battalions of the 141st Infantry landed on schedule and began working through wire obstacles and mines. Intense fire from machine guns, field pieces, mortars, and tanks made their progress difficult. On Yellow Beach, the area assigned to the 3d Battalion, under Lt. Col. Edward D. McCall, the first three assault waves were pinned down after advancing about 400 yards inland and could move only by crawling under fire. Part of Company L, however, led by Capt. Edgar Ford, headed toward its objective. Companies I and K were unable to reform, but the men fought forward singly and in groups of two or three. At one point the movement to reassemble was held up by an enemy machine gun, firing from behind a rock wall 200 yards forward. Pvt. James M. Logan, of Company I, advanced alone from an irrigation canal 800 yards from shore. With bullets hitting around him, he killed three Germans who rushed from a gap in the wall. Then, running through



THE TOWER OF PAESTUM, *a medieval watch-tower, is a 50-foot stone structure with excellent view of the VI Corps beaches. From the balcony at its top German machine gunners and snipers fired on the troops of the 36th Division.*

a stream of fire to the machine-gun position, he shot the gunners and turned the weapon on the rest of the crew as they fled.

The 1st Battalion, under Lt. Col. Carlos C. Smith, landed about 500 yards south of Blue Beach, and the first two waves proceeded inland; but after the third wave resistance was so heavy that the subsequent landings had to be made farther north. In the third boat wave of the 1st Battalion three 75-mm self-propelled howitzers of the Regimental Cannon Company had attempted to land. The landing craft carrying one cannon was turned back; a mine destroyed another of the guns before it could clear the beach, killing four men who were bringing it in. The third pulled up in a defile on the dunes and went into action, with 1st Lt. Clair F. Carpenter directing the fire and Cpl. Edgar L. Blackburn manning the gun. The defile was swept by enemy machine-gun fire from both flanks, but the gun destroyed one machine-gun nest and knocked out a tank before a hit damaged its gunsight. Lt. Carpenter ran across the beach and took the sight from the cannon which had struck a mine. With the help of Cpl. Black-

burn he tried to adjust the new sight, but both men were exposed to machine-gun fire, which killed Cpl. Blackburn and seriously wounded Lt. Carpenter.

At 0415 enemy fire became especially strong. Some of the boats suffered direct hits and drifted helplessly while the men shed their equipment and swam to shore. A few vessels turned back or changed direction and landed at other beaches, but most of them came on with their cargoes of men, guns, and supplies. For a while the scene was one of great confusion. Flares dropped by enemy planes shed an unnatural light over the beaches and the ships at sea; the sky was laced by patterns of tracers. Meanwhile from Blue Beach, elements of the 1st Battalion worked their way to the vicinity of the railroad bridge over the Solofrone River, but the remainder were pinned down.

Scrub growth scattered over the area and shallow irrigation ditches provided the only available protection. As our men sought cover, the Germans poured machine-gun fire directly down the ditches and swept the patches of scrub. We had many casualties. To evacuate the wounded, a boat was sent out from Yellow Beach but was sunk by mortar fire before it could get in to load. Two other craft which made a similar attempt were forced to turn back.

Assault troops continued to come in. The 2d Battalion of the 141st, commanded by Maj. Norman A. Webster, landed at 0530 on Yellow Beach, 50 minutes late, under the same type of fire that earlier waves had encountered. Passing through and to the left of elements of the 3d Battalion dug in near the dune line, the companies slowly reorganized. The 1st Battalion was cut off. Col. Werner, coming ashore with the regimental combat team command group at 0550, began to coordinate the attack of the other two battalions. It was clear that heavier fire would be needed to throw the enemy back. In order to get support from offshore, Capt. Frederick A. Booth, commanding the Cannon Company, returned to the beach to look for Ens. Alistair Semple, naval gun observer. While searching on the beach he was hit by shell fire and seriously wounded. Col. Werner then went down to the beach himself and found the observer. Semple tried many times to reach the naval gunboats by radio, but the ships were too far out at sea for contact.

On all beaches, provisional batteries of antiaircraft artillery had come in with the first waves, supplying .50-caliber defense until the



DUKWS COME ASHORE ON D DAY. *These 2½-ton amphibian trucks made it possible to bring in artillery early for direct fire missions against tanks and guns. Dukws making for the shore were exposed to machine-gun and shell fire but were partially protected by smoke screens laid down by the Navy.*

heavier guns could be emplaced. Light artillery and antitank guns, all on dukws, and antiaircraft guns on LCM's arrived shortly after dawn. As enemy opposition stiffened, boat schedules were upset, making it difficult for radio teams and gun crews to operate effectively. Men were separated from the crew-served weapons to which they were assigned; boats carrying needed parts of equipment were forced off their course. But the landing craft continued to pour men on the beaches and into the fight.

In the two crowded hours between 0530 and 0730, 123 dukws came ashore. The 133d Field Artillery Battalion brought in twelve 105-mm howitzers. Each of these guns was loaded on a dukw, together with 21 rounds of ammunition and a gun section of seven men. Other dukws carried additional ammunition and were equipped with small cranes for unloading the howitzers. At 0800, immediately upon landing, the dukws were driven over the dune line and unloaded. Ammunition was transferred to the gun dukws, and the ammunition dukws were sent back to the beach to assist in unloading the transports.

Guns of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion had reached the mainland with the fifth and sixth waves at 0555 and 0615, just in time to beat off an early German tank attack. The sixth wave also brought in our first tanks. By 0615 all six assault waves had reached the shore.

At 0640 the 143d Regimental Combat Team, commanded by Col.

William H. Martin, arrived at Red and Green beaches on schedule. Operating between the 142d and the 141st, this combat team was to cross the beaches, reorganize at the railroad east of Paestum, and then move to the road junction south of Hill 140, ready to assist the infantry on either flank. The ultimate objectives of the 143d were Hill 386 and the little town of Capaccio, less than 3 miles to the southeast, from which the routes to the east could be controlled.

By 0800 the 2d Battalion of the 143d Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Charles H. Jones, Jr., and the 3d Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col Joseph S. Barnett, Jr., had arrived in four waves, landing under considerable artillery and mortar fire. The men were scattered on various beaches and organization was difficult. Singly, by pairs, and in small groups they worked toward the railroad. Enemy machine gunners were still firing on the beaches and snipers in the houses north of Paestum kept up their harassing of the 143d, but eventually the men reached the reorganization line and were ready to move toward the nose of Mount Soprano. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion, under Lt. Col. Fred L. Walker, Jr., had landed after the 2d and 3d and had gone north to guard the Division Command Post which had been set up at Casa Vannulo.

While the first elements of the infantry combat teams were hurrying from the landing craft to the dunes, engineers began their work of organizing the beachhead area for communication and supply, cutting gaps in the barbed wire, and searching for mines. The initial plans had directed that the 531st Shore Engineers, reinforced, a regiment of veterans from the African and Sicilian campaigns, under the command of Lt. Col. Russell S. Lieurance, was to support the assault troops on the beaches. One company of engineers was to work with each battalion combat team; one battalion in reserve was to be available for defense and assistance wherever needed.

Only veterans could have gone about their work coolly, handling supplies, setting up dumps, and fighting off the enemy at the same time. First Lt. George L. Shumaker, commanding Company D, 531st Shore Engineers, led a small group of his men in an attack against the Tower of Paestum where enemy snipers were firing on Green Beach. With the help of several infantrymen, the party destroyed the machine guns and even drove off tanks hidden behind the buildings. Cpl. Howard J. Tucker picked off the snipers. Shumaker was



BULLDOZERS CONSTRUCT ROADS *to carry heavy traffic across the beach, while infantry reinforcements race to the dunes. Mines had to be cleared in the areas selected for the roads, then bulldozers went to work, followed by the engineers laying the wire mesh necessary to surface the sand roadways for the use of heavy vehicles.*

wounded in both arms; but Tucker, Tec. 5 Nathan S. Perlman, and Sgt. John J. Schneider carried on the fight until all the Germans in these positions were killed or captured.

In the construction of exit routes the engineers had one of the most dangerous tasks, for the bulldozers were especially vulnerable targets for enemy fire. Ignoring the shells bursting around them, Tec. 5 Nolan D. Green and Pfc. Clarence F. Taylor operated their bulldozer on Red Beach until an 88-mm shell hit their machine and killed both of them. Even on Blue Beach, where resistance was so strong that positions there were abandoned the next day, the engineers, under fire from artillery as well as from tanks within 200 yards of the shore, completed an exit route before they were forced to leave.

Although enemy fire had forced some of the vessels out to sea, and many radios had been lost in the landing, ship-to-shore communications were established under the direction of the 4th Naval Beach Battalion, led by Lt. Comdr. James E. Walsh. Shore fire control parties landed and began to direct effective naval gun fire. At daybreak, naval support against tanks on the southwest slopes of Hill 140 was twice requested by the 3d Battalion of the 142d. Fire from the *Philadelphia* destroyed or routed the tanks. Offshore, a scout boat, commanded by Lt. (j.g.) Grady R. Calloway, U.S.C.G., supported the 142d by launching rockets at Green Beach, where enemy machine

gunners and snipers were concealed in the grove and behind the dunes. Shortly before dawn army units ashore and support boats laid down a smoke screen which proved effective in protecting landing craft against shell and machine-gun fire.

Some hostile planes slipped through our defenses to bomb and harass troops on the beach and in landing craft; but from 0605, when the first flights of our fighter planes began to roar overhead, enemy air operations were very much hampered. Four different types of aircraft made up our aerial umbrella. A-36's and British carrier-based Seafires covered from 6,000 to 10,000 feet; P-38's from 10,000 to 14,000 feet; and Seafires and Spitfires from 15,000 to 22,000 feet. Squadrons, varying in number from 6 to 12 planes, patrolled a 15- to 20-mile area, receiving warnings of approaching enemy planes from control boats and ground control stations.

German Tank Attack

Almost from the moment of landing, enemy tanks in scattered positions had made it difficult for all combat teams to reach their objectives, but not until about 0700 did they attack on a large scale. The exact plan of the tank operations which developed on all beaches is not known; it is clear, however, that the Germans hoped to pin down and destroy our forces before they could reach favorable positions in the hills surrounding the plain.

The troops on Yellow and Blue beaches suffered the first concentrated tank assault. At 0700, the battalions of the 141st were still attempting to reorganize after their landing when they were attacked by 15 or more Mark IV's, belonging to the 2d Tank Regiment, 16th Panzer Division. Some of these tanks had apparently just come from the south; others had been stationed close by when our troops landed. Five or more were on each flank and four were in the center. Maneuvering back and forth across the flat terrain along the regimental front, the Mark IV's had the advantage of protection from machine guns, set up in the shelter of 4-foot stone walls and inside many small farm buildings.

Shortly after 0700, Flying Column No. 2 of the 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop landed on Yellow Beach and helped to fight off seven Mark IV's which were firing opposite our right flank. One

tank was destroyed; the others drew back to a peach orchard 600 yards from the shore. At 0800 four enemy tanks tried to break through the left flank. By this time two 105-mm howitzers, brought in on the sixth assault wave, were set up and, with this artillery support, the infantry again forced the enemy to retreat. Two tanks returned to attack through the center, but Sgt. Paul B. Walsh and Sgt. Delbert L. White, both of the 531st Shore Engineers, drove them back with horizontal fire from antiaircraft weapons.

Enemy snipers and machine gunners kept up their fire while the tanks were attacking. On the left flank, Capt. Hersel R. Adams, Operations Officer of the 3d Battalion, led a group of Company K men in an infantry charge against the oncoming vehicles. Capt. Adams was wounded but he urged his men to leave him beside a nearby canal and continue the fight. Their steady resistance broke up the tank formation for a time. Later when the tanks reformed and came back, Capt. Adams was exposed to their fire and killed. Pfc. Edward L. Rookey and Pvt. Lavern Counselman, members of a machine-gun squad of Company M, saw four enemy tanks approaching their position. Obtaining a bazooka from a wounded man, they crawled within 30 yards of the tanks and fired on them. Their fire and that of other men in their squad forced the Mark IV's to withdraw. Company L, which had moved forward out of contact with the battalion, now established communications by radio and directed mortar fire, forcing the tanks back several hundred yards. First Lt. William G. Brown, forward observer of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion, crept up to an observation point and obtained naval gunfire on the tanks in front of the 2d and 3d Battalions.

In the center of the 141st line, the men of the 2d Battalion beat off the tanks with infantry weapons. The regimental history reports the action:

Pfc. Juan R. Padilla effectively used his rocket gun against the tanks, and as the tanks withdrew he followed them, continuing to fire his weapon. Pvt. Manuel C. Gonzalez, in closing in on a tank position, was observed by the enemy and shot through the legs. As he lay helpless to move, one of the tanks ran over him and killed him. Pfc. Tirso F. Carrillo tried to remove Pvt. Gonzalez from the path of the tank and narrowly escaped being run over. Pfc. Salomon Santos, Jr., and Pfc. Abner E. Carrasco . . . placed their machine gun on top

of a rock wall while under fire from enemy machine guns and fired upon the German tanks menacing the front-line position. Their fire was effective in forcing the tanks to withdraw. Pvt. Harold B. Beaver scored a hit with his antitank grenade by slipping in close to an enemy tank. Pfc. Juan Pruitt placed his Browning automatic rifle on top of a stone wall and maintained a heavy volume of fire against the enemy, until his position was located by a German gunner who opened fire and killed him. Pvt. Ramon G. Gutierrez was wounded while firing his Browning automatic rifle at the enemy. Two bullets pierced Pvt. Gutierrez' helmet in such a place as not to injure him, but a third bullet caught him in the arm. Gutierrez, although wounded, moved forward, located an enemy machine gun and knifed the German gunner to death. First Sgt. Gabriel L. Navarrette, having been given the mission of reaching the battalion objective and determining the enemy strength if the enemy was encountered, was wounded in the hand when a German machine gun knocked the signal projector from his hand. . . . Pfc. Alfredo P. Ruiz, a member of Sgt. Navarrette's patrol, closed in on a tank and exchanged fire with a member of the tank crew who was firing with a machine pistol from the turret. Pvt. Ruiz approached so close to the tank that he was caught in the camouflage of brush used by the Germans and pulled for about 10 yards before being able to break loose.

The enemy tanks did not get through the 2d Battalion to the beach.

At least seven tanks threatened the 1st Battalion in the fields south of Blue Beach. Five Mark IV's went back and forth across Company C's position three times, firing point-blank with machine guns. A detachment of Company B, caught in an open field, suffered severely. Leading one platoon of Company B, Sgt. James A. Whitaker emptied a clip of his submachine gun through the aperture of a tank, apparently disabling the driver. The tank lurched but its weapons continued to operate and Whitaker fell, wounded in the legs. Reloading his gun, he too kept up his fire until he forced the tank to turn away.

By noon the main tank assault on the southern beaches had been brought virtually to a standstill. Naval gunfire and fire from mortars and howitzers had helped to make the operations costly for the enemy, but to a large extent the battle had been fought by the infantrymen, using infantry weapons. Meanwhile, the Regimental Command Post was moved 500 yards directly inland from Yellow Beach. By this time, communications were through to the 2d and 3d Battalions, but patrols

had been unable to reach the 1st Battalion because of enemy sniping, machine-gun and artillery fire.

On the north, the principal tank attacks against the infantry combat teams fighting their way inland developed somewhat later than the attacks against the teams of the 141st. At about 1020, 13 Mark IV's rumbled down from the direction of Battipaglia between Highway 18 and the beaches, approaching the 142d Infantry Command Post which had been set up at Capaccio Station. At the same time a dukw came up the road, pulling a 105-mm howitzer of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion. The gun crew went into action immediately with absolutely no cover. Observers disagree on the details, except in one particular: when the fight was over, 5 enemy tanks had been knocked out, and the remaining 8 had withdrawn.[2]

Another attack from the north came about 1145, when personnel from the 36th Division Command Post in the tobacco warehouse at Casa Vannulo saw 13 German tanks approaching. From the ditches along the railroad, where they had taken cover, the men watched the enemy come within easy range. The tanks opened fire at noon, but the attack was broken up by the combined opposition of bazooka teams of the 142d and 143d Infantry Regiments; a 75-mm self-propelled howitzer of the Cannon Company, 143d Infantry; two 105-mm howitzers of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion; and a 37-mm antitank gun of the 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop. The 75-mm howitzer crew, commanded by 2d Lt. John W. Whitaker, destroyed 3 tanks. The 37-mm antitank gunners claimed 2 tanks knocked out at 170 yards. By the time the next attack occurred in this area, at about 1300, three howitzers of the 133d Field Artillery Battalion were also available and 3 of the 10 enemy tanks were destroyed. The attempt to break through on our left had cost the enemy at least 13 tanks, and his armor made no more threats from the north against the beaches.

Progress of the Combat Teams

After the concentrated tank attacks shifted from Yellow and Blue beaches to those farther north, the 2nd and 3d Battalions of the 141st were able to proceed inland and reorganize at about 1000 (Map No. 4,

[2] It is probable that the howitzer shattered two tanks, and that one was destroyed by an A-36 fighter-bomber and two by naval fire.



HIGHWAY 18, *through the coastal plain, skirts the beaches and runs close to the Tobacco Warehouse at Casa Vannulo, seen on the right. The Fifth Army landings at Salerno prevented the enemy from using this macadam highway, which extends from the toe of Italy to Naples, as an escape route from the south.*

page 32). Maj. Webster moved units of the 2d Battalion across the Capodifiume and stopped to complete the reorganization 300 yards east of Highway 18. Col. McCall assembled the 3d Battalion along the Capodifiume about 1,000 yards from the shore, in a position which it held until midnight.

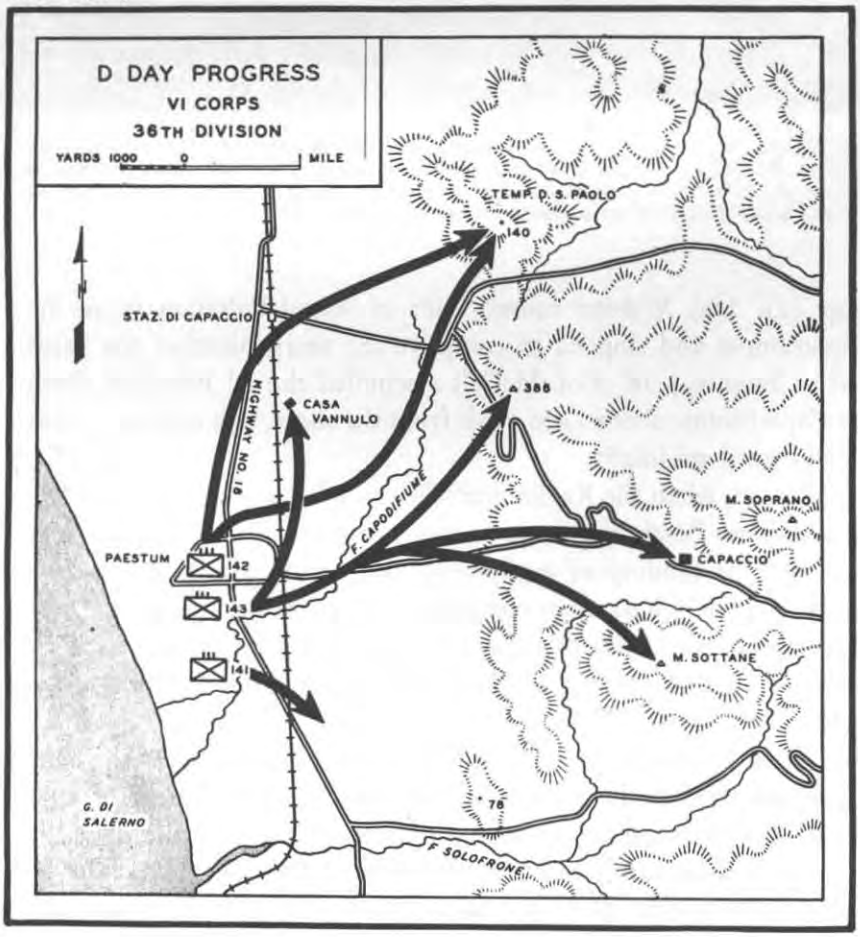
At noon, when the Regimental Command Post was moved inland from Yellow Beach, the shore and dunes were still swept by artillery fire, and the landing of equipment and personnel was proceeding under extremely hazardous conditions. Even the command post was bracketed by fire from 88's, but no direct hits were made. Artillery and naval gunfire began to silence the enemy guns on Hill 78 and Collina San Marco.

The 1st Battalion remained pinned down all day north of the Solofrone and west of the railway tracks. The companies tried to reorganize, but the slightest movement of grass or brush or the snapping of a twig immediately brought enemy fire down on them. The 2d Platoon of Company D, led by 2d Lt. Stanley Schuyler, operated with

more freedom than other elements of the battalion and reduced several German machine-gun positions. The platoon observed the machine-gun fire, crept in close and used grenades with excellent results. Strongly entrenched machine guns and mortars of the enemy, however, kept patrols from reaching this unit, and it was not until the morning of D plus 1 that radio contact with the 1st Battalion was finally established.

On the left flank of the division, Col. Graham had assembled elements of the 2d Battalion, 142d Infantry, near Paestum station at 0645 and with them moved east to the Capodifiume River a half hour later. In the vicinity of Paestum a tank approached with one of the crew firing his machine pistol from the open turret. A rifleman picked off

MAP NO. 4



the German; then Sgt. John Y. McGill, a member of Company H, jumped on the tank and dropped a hand grenade down the turret, putting the tank out of action. Throughout the morning, as the battalion worked northeast along the river, the men were forced to dodge in and out of the cold stream to escape sporadic tank attacks.

The 3d Battalion had advanced inland on the left regimental flank. Companies I and K turned north on Highway 18 and at 0730 arrived at Hill 140, their initial objective. Company L had at first headed north toward Ponte alla Scafa, but machine guns and tanks had forced it back to the railroad crossing. The 1st Battalion in reserve had been unable to make orderly landings owing to floating mines and enemy fire. During the day, however, it had moved to its position at the southeast end of Hill 140, less Company B, whose mission was to destroy enemy installations between Green Beach and the Sele River and join the battalion later.

Various units attached to the 142d had come ashore and prepared for action. Each of them had met opposition from machine-gun and sniper fire, artillery, tank attacks, and bombing and strafing from the air, but most of their artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers were ashore and organized before nightfall. Brig. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, Assistant Commander of the 36th Division, landed during the morning about a mile north of Red Beach and ordered a fifth beach, called Red North, to be opened there. The 191st Tank Battalion (M), commanded by Lt. Col. Percy H. Perkins, assembled in the afternoon and moved up Highway 18 toward Ponte alla Scafa to take a position about a mile south of the bridge. The 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Van W. Pyland, moved into the area where the Mark IV's had been successful earlier in driving back Company L, 142d Infantry. This time our destroyers upset an attack and knocked out four tanks. The Germans then blew up Ponte alla Scafa, a clear indication that they considered Highway 18 south of that point no longer usable by their forces.

Throughout D Day, while the 142d, on the left flank, fought toward Hill 140, and the 141st on the right struggled to reorganize, the 143d Regimental Combat Team was forced to scatter widely as it advanced. On Red Beach and around Paestum, the 2d and 3d Battalions had to clear the area of snipers and machine gunners before



A GERMAN 88-MM DUAL-PURPOSE GUN, *emplaced on the north of the VI Corps beaches, was demolished on D Day. This type of gun, designed in 1934 as an antiaircraft-antitank weapon, was used in the Spanish Civil War in 1936, against Poland and France in 1939 and 1940, and against Russia. In North Africa and Sicily, British and American tank forces met its effective fire.*

they could reach the railroad where they were to reorganize. The 1st Battalion, landing later than the others, went north to guard Division Headquarters at Casa Vannulo. By 1000, Col. Martin, commanding the 143d Regimental Combat Team, had assembled the men of the two attack battalions at the railroad. Their objective was Hill 386, a projection running northwest from Mount Soprano and ending abruptly in a cliff just above the junction of the roads to Capaccio and Roccad'aspide. Mount Soprano, the most dominant height in the entire area, was to be the focal point for both flanks of the 36th Division.

From Hill 386 every movement on the plain and the beaches could be seen by the enemy, who had set up an observation post and stationed three artillery pieces on the cliff. These pieces fired steadily on the invading forces until naval gunfire silenced them on the afternoon of D Day. At 1530 members of the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 143d moved to take Hill 386. One company was to occupy Capaccio to forestall any danger that the units advancing toward Hill 386 might be cut off from the rear. The Germans had pulled out of Capaccio,

and at 1815 the town fell without opposition. Meanwhile Company F captured Hill 386, after a 2-hour attack. Company K occupied the base of Mount Sottane, more than a mile southeast of Capaccio. By nightfall on D Day the 143d controlled the southeast slope of Mount Soprano and a vital stretch of the road leading to the plain.

At the End of D Day

While the 36th Division was battling the enemy south of the Sele River, the British 10 Corps on the Fifth Army left flank faced a critical situation but was making slow progress (Map No. 2, faces page 5). Even before the first waves of the 46 and 56 Divisions hit the beaches, the enemy opened fire. Allied warships took up the challenge and blasted the areas behind the beaches; nevertheless, troops of the 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (16th Panzer Division) held on stubbornly. In the face of extremely bitter resistance, British troops slowly slugged their way inland. Before nightfall 10 Corps, supported by naval gunfire, pushed forward more than 3 miles to the Montecorvino airfield just west of Highway 18 and had patrols in Battipaglia. The Ranger force on the left flank had landed unopposed at Maiori. The Commandos had met some opposition at Vietri sul Mare but succeeded in establishing a beachhead and moved east into Salerno.



THE WALL OF PAESTUM.



LST's BRING IN TRUCKS AND TANKS. *On the right are rolls of beach matting used in building roads over the sand. In the center are members of the medical battalions, which had collecting companies on the beaches as early as 0400 on D Day.*

Throughout the day practically no communication existed between 10 Corps and VI Corps, and a dangerous 10-mile gap lay between them.

On the whole, VI Corps met with considerable success on D Day. The 36th Division, untried in battle, had landed under fire, overcome prepared beach defenses, and reached its initial objectives. Our troops controlled the plain south of the Sele River and occupied the high ground, an average distance of 5 miles from the beaches. Only on the right flank was the issue in doubt. But there, too, the infantry had absorbed vicious enemy attacks without being routed and were ready to reorganize on 10 September. Men, vehicles, artillery, and supplies continued to pour on to the beaches where the engineers labored efficiently under constant fire. The hours of confusion had passed. Dumps were set up, exit roads were operating, antiaircraft batteries were in position, and communications were finally working. VI Corps had won a beachhead.

Expansion of the Beachhead

(10-11 September)

THE SALERNO BEACHES had been won from an enemy who had been prepared and alert. The Fifth Army had control of a narrow beachhead from Maiori to Agropoli at the end of D Day; its next objective was to secure the dominating mountain heights inland from the beaches. With these heights in its possession the army could protect and develop the beachhead as a base for the drive toward the port and airfields of Naples.

On the left flank of the Fifth Army, where the main enemy strength was concentrated, 10 Corps met stubborn resistance and heavy counterattacks from infantry, tanks, and artillery as it attempted to push inland from Salerno to the north and east. Except in the center of the beachhead, VI Corps had little opposition. The 36th Divison occupied the important hills from Altavilla to Ogliastro on the south and southeast of the beach area. The enemy forces had withdrawn from this area after their tank attack on D Day had failed to stop the invasion. But in the center the 45th Division, meeting the enemy southwest of Ponte Sele in the corridor formed by the Sele and Calore rivers, was to receive a savage blow which completely stopped its advance.

The Advance of the 10th

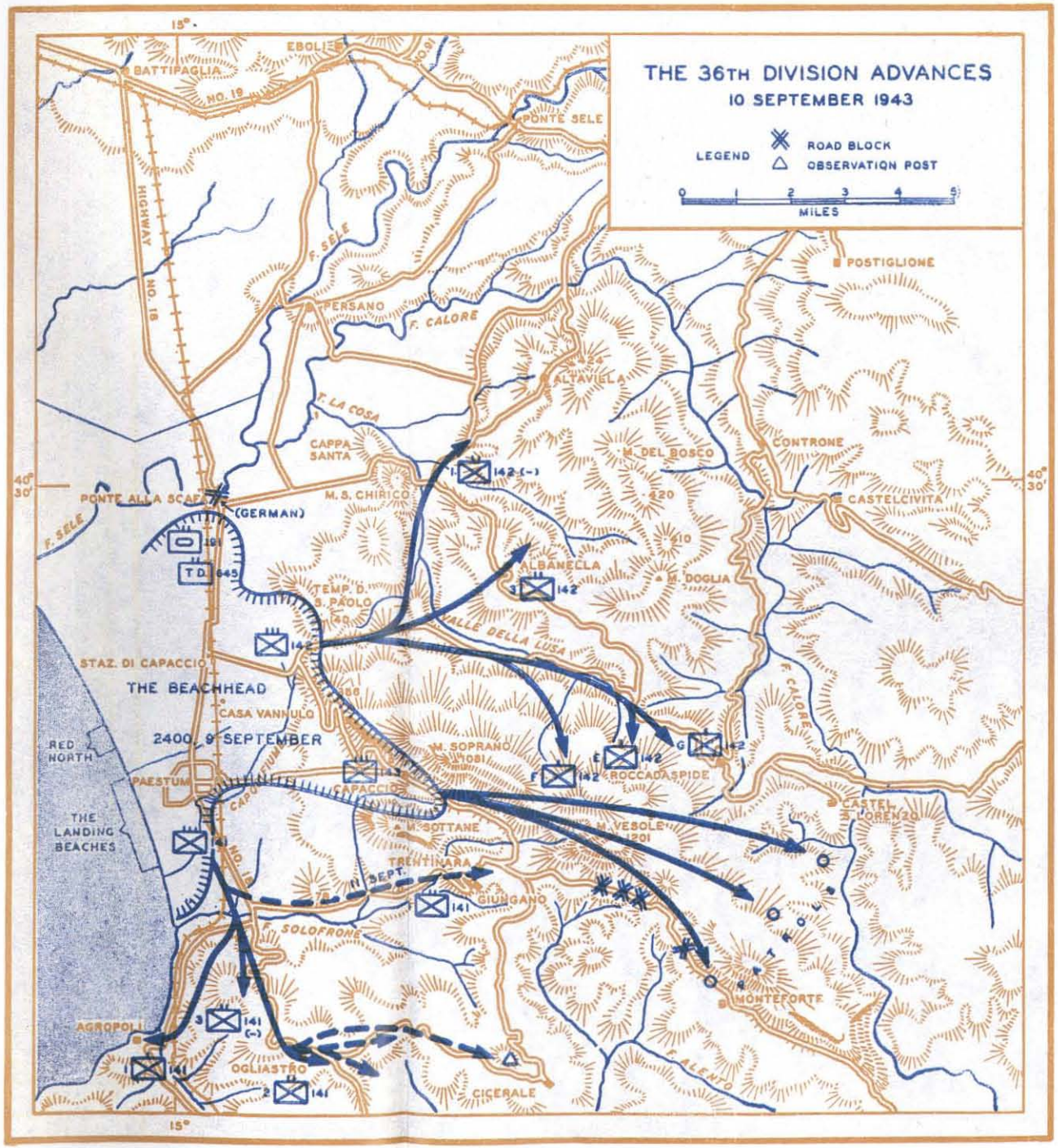
The principal task of the 141st Regimental Combat Team was to protect the VI Corps right flank by blocking the two main routes of access to the Salerno plain from the south and southeast (Map No. 5, faces page 39). Early in the morning of the 10th the 2d and 3d Battalions occupied before daylight the hills by Ogliastro in position to command Highway 18. On the way, the 3d Battalion met a small amount of sniper fire which failed to slow its movement; the 2d Battalion completed its march without incident. The 1st Battalion reorganized during the night of the 9/10, and on the 10th, after cleaning up the last enemy positions near the railroad east of Blue Beach prepared to advance into the lofty ground of the Trentinara area, to block the road through Capaccio to the plain. After these long marches up rocky roads and steep slopes, the men of the 141st now had a breathing spell of 2 to 3 days that left them in good condition to reinforce more active parts of the Fifth Army line.

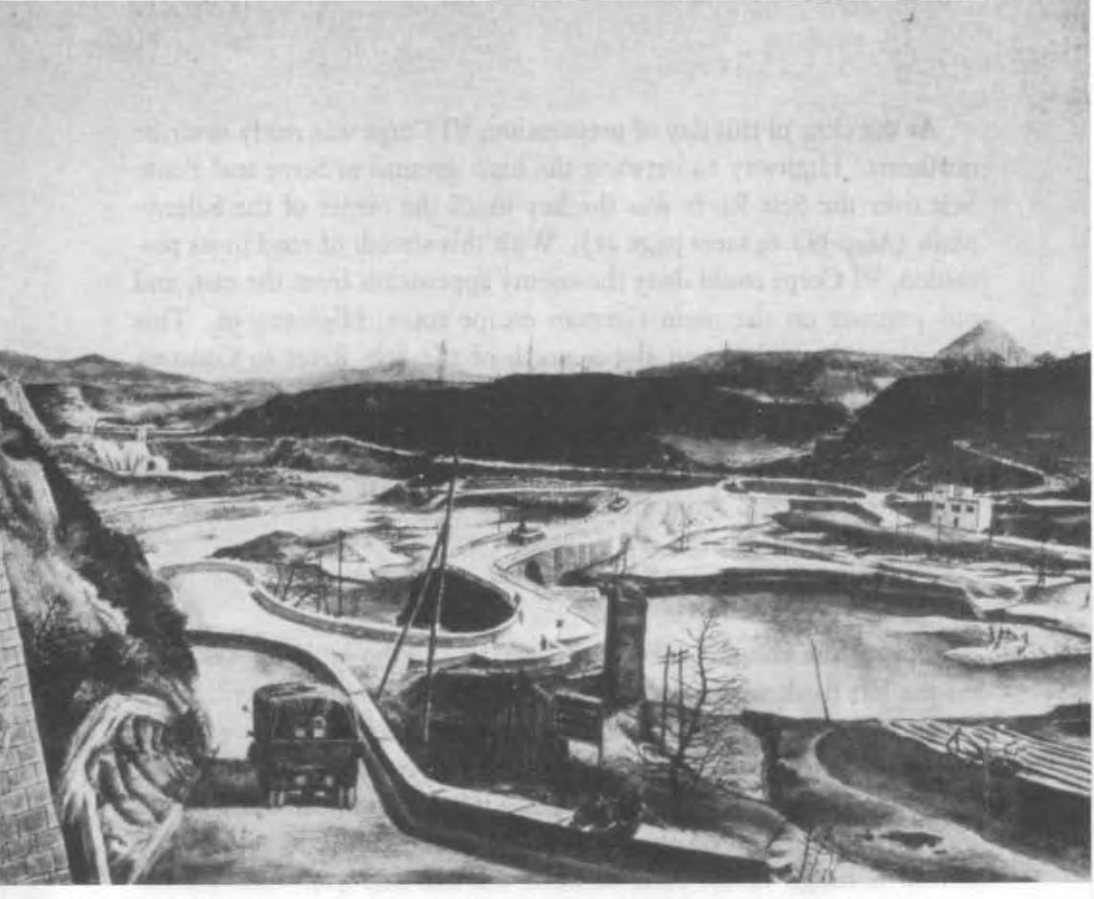
From reserve positions near Capaccio the 143d Regimental Combat Team assisted in guarding the right flank by sending patrols east and southeast across the upper Calore River. The patrols found no indication of enemy movements anywhere south of Mount Soprano; abandoned, burned, and wrecked German vehicles on Highway 18 as far as Ogliastro were evidence of the hasty departure by the Germans during the previous night. The tanks and artillery which had harassed the 141st Regimental Combat Team on the 9th had withdrawn to concentrate in the more important northern areas.

In the center and on the left flank, the 10th of September was a day of calm, as units of VI Corps took up positions to launch a coordinated attack the next day. The 179th Regimental Combat Team of the 45th Division began landing on Blue Beach late in the morning of the 10th. It then proceeded north on Highway 18 to an assembly area along the highway near Paestum. From there it prepared to attack up the valley between the Sele and Calore rivers. Artillery of the 45th Division, consisting of the 158th, 160th, and 189th Field Artillery Battalions, came ashore during the day and went into positions generally southwest of the Sele–Calore junction.

Meanwhile the 142d Regimental Combat Team moved forward in preparation for an attack on Altavilla and Hill 424. Early in the

MAP NO. 5


THE 36TH DIVISION ADVANCES
10 SEPTEMBER 1943
LEGEND
ROAD BLOCK
OBSERVATION POST
0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES
15°
40° 30'
EBOLI
BATTIPAGLIA
NO. 19
PONTE SELE
HIGHWAY NO. 18
F. SELE
PERSANO
F. CALORE
ALTAVILLA
F. LA COSA
CAPPA SANTA
M. DEL BOSCO
CONTRONE
POSTIGLIONE
CASTELCIVITA
M. S. CHIRICO
PONTE ALLA SCAFA
(GERMAN)
T.D.
ALBANELLA
M. DOGLIA
TEMP'D S. PAOLO
VALLE DELLA LUSA
STAZ. DI CAPACCIO
THE BEACHHEAD
CASA VANNULO
2400, 9 SEPTEMBER
RED NORTH
PAESTUM
CAPACCIO
M. SOPRANO
ROCCADASPIDE
THE LANDING BEACHES
M. SOTTANE
M. VESOLE
CASTEL SAN LORENZO
TRENTINARA
11 SEPT.
GIUNGANO
F. SOLOFRONE
MONTEFORTE
AGROPOLI
OGLIASTRO
CICERALE
F. ALENTO
15°



PONTE SELE *is the only crossing over the 10-foot deep Sele River north of Persano. It is part of Highway 19, the German route of approach to the Salerno area from the east and south. Originally assigned to 10 Corps, it later became an objective of the 45th Division.*

morning of the 10th the 2d Battalion, advancing on Roccad'aspide to protect the right flank of the regiment, dispersed over the rugged slopes of Mount Soprano. The 3d Battalion, ordered to take Albanella, left its assembly area on Tempone di San Paolo and marched cross-country, because the roads were mined at strategic spots. After they had crossed the Lusa, their route led up very steep slopes in full view of the Albanella ridge road, but only scattered machine-gun fire impeded the march. By 2000 the 3d Battalion occupied Albanella with little difficulty. Paralleling this advance, the 1st Battalion (less Company B) moved northeast on the regimental left flank toward the Altavilla hill mass, and by nightfall was at the edge of the slopes 2½ miles southwest of Hill 424. The 132d Field Artillery Battalion displaced to support the battalion's advance.

At the close of this day of preparation, VI Corps was ready to strike northeast. Highway 19 between the high ground at Serre and Ponte Sele over the Sele River was the key to all the center of the Salerno plain (Map No. 6, faces page 41). With this stretch of road in its possession, VI Corps could deny the enemy approaches from the east, and put pressure on the main German escape route, Highway 91. This route ran along the open slopes north of the Sele River to Contursi and then turned north into the mountains. Our plan called for the 179th Infantry to move directly against Ponte Sele and the high ground at Serre while the 142d Infantry struck at Hill 424, which dominates this area from the south.

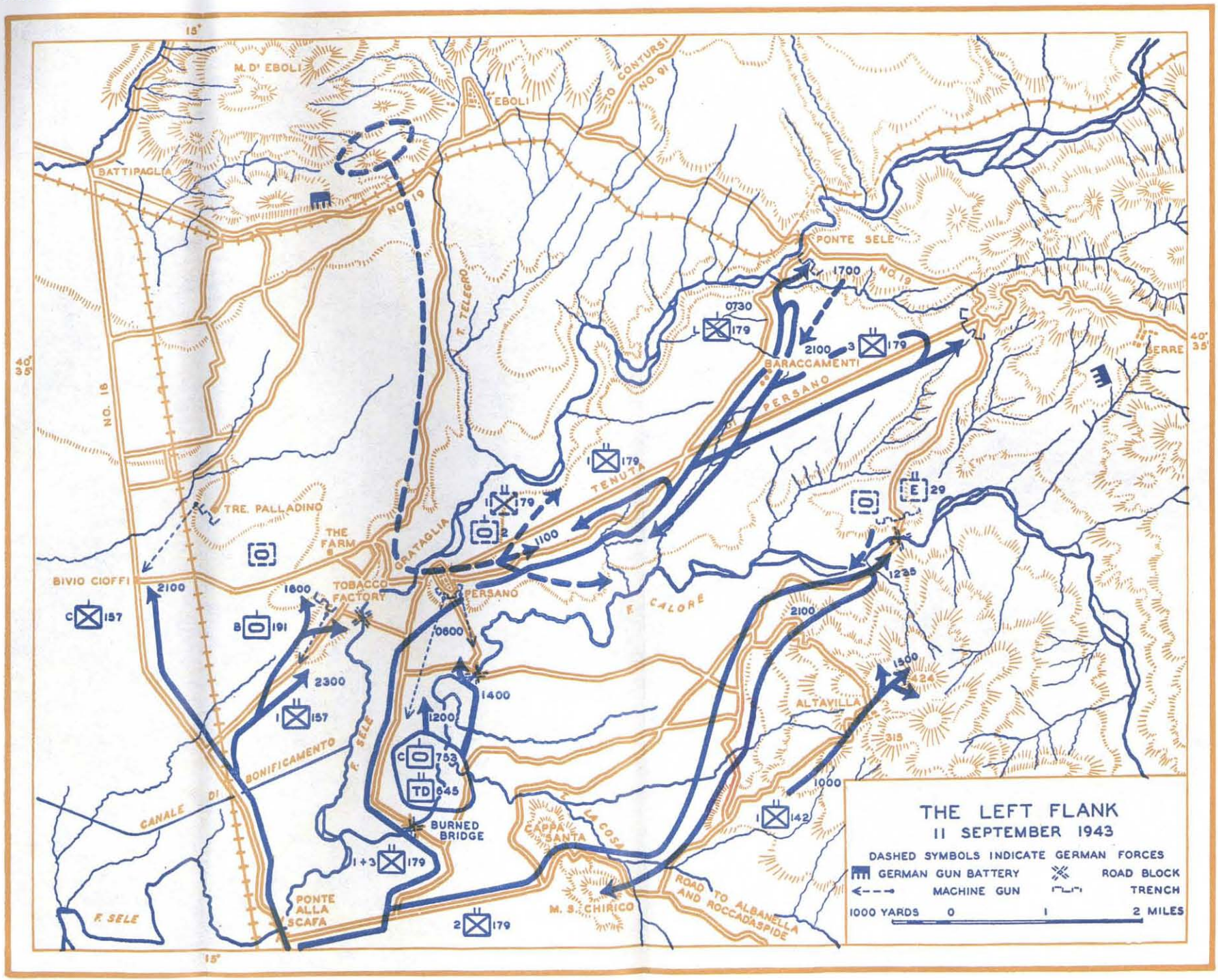
High Tide at Altavilla

During the coming critical days of the Salerno battle, the conflict on the left flank was to sweep back and forth over the Altavilla hills (Map No. 6, faces page 41). This extensive complex, as viewed from the valley to the west, apparently consists of two hills—424 and 315—joined by a saddle. But from Hill 424, a third, unnumbered hill comes into view jutting up on the eastern side of the saddle ½ mile to the south. A rough ravine runs between this hill and 424. Altavilla lies sprawled on the southwest slopes of Hill 424 and is in itself unimportant. The higher slopes of the hill command the village completely.

From various points on Hill 424, it was later discovered that the Germans could observe east into the upper valley of the Calore, north into the corridor between the Sele and Calore rivers, west into the valley between Altavilla and La Cosa hills, and on over those hills to the sea. The enemy had superb observation of every part of the central sector of the Salerno plain; but he could not see the lower slopes of Hill 424 itself, which are divided into many ridged noses by wooded ravines, providing only poor fields of fire. The enemy had garrisoned all the projections in order to retain the entire hill. A stone shed commanding much of the hilltop was used for a machine-gun position.

The only good approach to the summit of Hill 424 is by a steep, stony trail about 9 feet wide, terraced every 10 feet. This trail from Altavilla runs between perpendicular rock and earth walls from 2 to

MAP NO. 6


15°
M. D' EBOLI
EBOLI
TO CONTURSI
NO. 91
BATTIPAGLIA
NO. 19
PONTE SELE
1700
0730
179
2100
3
179
BARACCAMENTI
T. TELEGRO
PERSANO
40° 35'
SERRE
NO. 18
TENUTA
1
179
TRE. PALLADINO
THE FARM
GRATAGLIA
2
1100
E
29
BIVIO CIOFFI
2100
C
157
1600
TOBACCO FACTORY
B
191
PERSANO
0600
F. CALORE
1235
2100
1500
424
2300
1
157
1400
1200
ALTAVILLA
315
F. SELE
C
753
TD
645
BONIFICAMENTO
CANALE DI
BURNED BRIDGE
1000
1
142
CAPPA SANTA
LA COSA
1+3
179
PONTE ALLA SCAFA
F. SELE
M. S. CHIRICO
2
179
ROAD TO ALBANELLA AND ROCCADASPIDE
15°
THE LEFT FLANK
11 SEPTEMBER 1943
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE GERMAN FORCES
GERMAN GUN BATTERY
MACHINE GUN
ROAD BLOCK
TRENCH
1000 YARDS 0 1 2 MILES

6 feet high, is bordered on the right by several small terraced fields, and is protected from view at various points by olive trees and young oaks. The hilltop itself is extremely irregular.

On the morning of 11 September the 142d Regimental Combat Team prepared to carry out the divisional order to capture Hill 424 and secure the high ground as far south as Roccad'aspide. Our initial attack against these objectives succeeded with deceptive ease. At 1000 the 1st Battalion, supported by two platoons of the Cannon Company, advanced from positions about a mile southwest of Altavilla. Forward elements entered the village of Altavilla before noon. The battalion dispersed widely over the hill mass: Company B occupied the high ground above the road; Company A went on over the trail to the summit of Hill 424; and Company C occupied the south slope. All companies sent out patrols to the Calore River and prepared for defense. Meanwhile the 3d Battalion, which was receiving scattered artillery fire, sent out patrols along the Albanella ridge and watched for enemy movements toward Altavilla from the south. The 2d Battalion extended the line along the ridge toward Roccad'aspide. Except for sporadic artillery fire, all was quiet on Hill 424 and on the ridges at Albanella and Roccad'aspide.

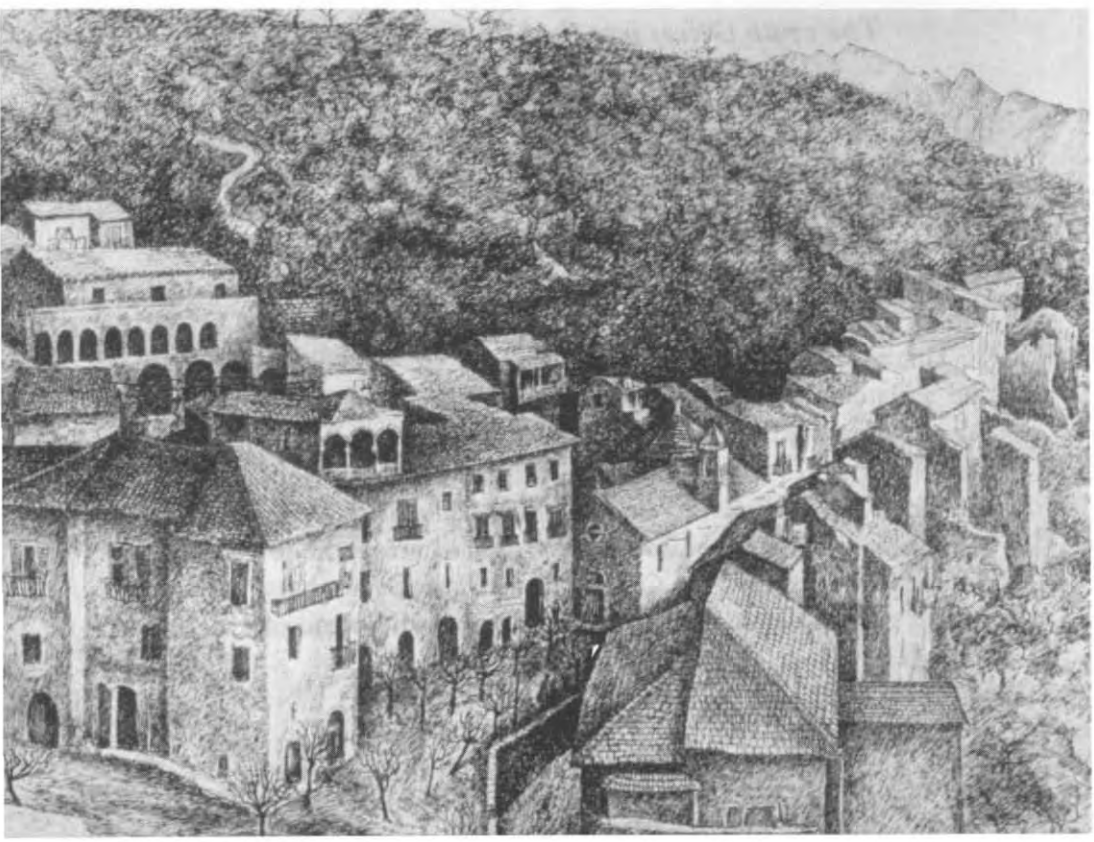
The 179th Drives into the Sele–Calore Corridor

To accompany the 142d's push at Altavilla, General Dawley had ordered the 179th Regimental Combat Team to advance on the left flank, with the mission of securing Ponte Sele and the steep hills at the end of the valley near Serre, where they block the corridor between the Sele and Calore rivers. Col. Robert B. Hutchins issued the attack order at 1600 on 10 September, and at 1925 the regiment moved out.

The 2d Battalion, with Battery B, 160th Field Artillery Battalion, and a platoon of tanks was at the head of the column. The route of march followed Highway 18 to the road just south of Ponte alla Scafa. Here it turned east for a mile, then forked. The regiment divided at the fork. The 2d Battalion under Lt. Col. Charles D. Weigand, leading the southern column, continued eastward across the low hills on the west bank of La Cosa Creek and then moved northeast over the rolling ground below Altavilla to skirt the northern end of Hill 424.



VIEW OF ALTAVILLA *(above) shows the terraced ground which made the capture of this objective difficult. From the center of the town (below) a road extends to the summit of Hill 424.*



From the Calore crossing north of that hill it was to strike northeast to the high ground at Serre. The northern column, consisting of the 1st and 3d Battalions and led by the 3d Battalion under Lt. Col. Earl A. Taylor, turned off north to the Calore just above its junction with the Sele, and moved up through the corridor toward Highway 19 to attack Serre from the west.

All night the march continued. The 2d Battalion, advancing south of the Calore, drove back a few enemy detachments and reached the bridge north of Altavilla at about 1000 on the 11th, just as the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, was moving against Altavilla itself. The men of the 2d Battalion found the bridge destroyed, but they used hand tools and vehicles to break down the 10-foot banks of the Calore so that the infantry elements, a platoon of tanks, and a platoon of tank destroyers were soon able to ford the shallow stream. On the north bank a heavy enemy counterattack by tanks and infantry of the 29th Pioneer Battalion, supported by artillery, hit them hard and by 1235 drove them back across the river. Throughout the afternoon the 2d Battalion, under intensive artillery fire from hills to the northeast, struggled with the German pioneer battalion for the river crossing.

Within the corridor, the rest of the 179th Infantry met even tougher opposition. A pile-and-plank bridge over the Calore south of La Cosa Creek was in flames when the northern column reached it. Crossing the river at a bypass constructed downstream from the burning bridge, the 1st and 3d Battalions continued north through the flat, marshy land of the lower corridor and passed, without stopping to occupy, the knoll on which the few large buildings and stables of Persano stand. Here the column turned northeast and marched over the gently rising ground and tree-lined fields of the upper corridor. Dawn of the 11th found the infantry well past Persano, moving up the straight and narrow Tenuta di Persano road. Company L, on the left, branched off to follow the main road leading to Ponte Sele. It drove out an enemy detachment and temporarily controlled the river bluffs overlooking Ponte Sele; but a German counterattack with tanks soon threw the company back. The rest of the 3d Battalion, acting as advance guard on the Tenuta di Persano road, met resistance which held the infantry all day at the ridges near the junction of the Tenuta road with Highway 19.

Though the main column of the 179th, the 1st and 3d Battalions, had reached the northeast corner of the upper corridor and threatened the Germans' hold on the highway, an enemy thrust at its exposed left flank and rear would make the position of these two battalions extremely precarious. Shortly after daybreak this danger materialized, when the regimental support column came under such heavy machine-gun fire from the small knoll at Persano that no men or vehicles could get past the settlement. The main body of the regiment was almost completely cut off and its threat to the enemy's control of Highway 19 became ineffective.

The Germans then counterattacked up the corridor from Persano to strike at the rear of the 1st and 3d Battalions. By 1100 eight enemy tanks and a battalion of infantry, coming from the vicinity of Eboli, had crossed the Sele near Persano and turned northeast, the tanks leading the attack. Company C, which had been ordered to meet the threat to the rear by organizing a defensive position in the open ground northeast of Persano, was hit before it could dig in and was severely mauled. The tanks moved on and nearly reached the Command Post of the 179th, near the intersection of the Tenuta di Persano and Persano–Ponte Sele roads, before halting temporarily. The rest of the 1st Battalion faced about to hold off the attack. Strong enemy combat patrols pushed in all along the rear and the flanks, and the two battalions of the 179th Infantry, nearly encircled, went into an all-round defense.

The enemy thrust at the rear had cut off most of the regiment's attached units, which remained in the tip of the Sele–Calore corridor below Persano. Company C, 753d Tank Battalion, had crossed the Calore at 0645 over a ford prepared by engineers below the burned bridge. Together with the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the tanks halted just beyond the river, and Battery A, 160th Field Artillery Battalion, joined them. The commanders of these units decided to remain in their positions to hold the ford against the apparent enemy threat to secure it and thereby completely encircle the 179th. When enemy fire lessened about noon, one platoon of tanks and Company C of the tank destroyers attacked Persano. Stopped by road blocks and 88-mm fire, they fell back with a loss of one tank and seven destroyers. In the afternoon a force of tank destroyers, tanks, and infantry tried to cross the Calore near a blown steel-trestle bridge a mile north of La

Cosa Creek; but the enemy crushed the attempt and knocked out three of our tank destroyers.

By late afternoon on 11 September, the main body of the 179th Infantry was hard-pressed. Many of the companies were without food and water; the Regimental Aid Station, crowded with casualties, was under shell fire. Batteries A and C, 160th Field Artillery Battalion, had exhausted their ammunition supply except for 10 rounds per gun kept as reserve for a last emergency. At 1700 aircraft began to strafe and bomb the 3d Battalion, and the enemy launched a tank-infantry attack, supported by artillery fire from Eboli, starting from Highway 19 just east of Ponte Sele. The relatively open ground in the upper corridor proved untenable, and heavy artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire forced the 3d Battalion to retreat toward the 1st Battalion northeast of Persano. By midnight the battle for the Sele–Calore corridor remained undecided; but the enemy had a definite advantage, and Highway 19 was still open to his troops.

First Battle of the Tobacco Factory

Although the Germans may not have been aware of the fact, their attacks on 11 September struck the weakest part of the Fifth Army line. The British 56 Division, already hard-pressed on a wide front, could not extend to its right to fill the gap between 10 Corps and VI Corps. Consequently, General Clark moved the Corps boundary north of the Sele and assigned the left flank of VI Corps to the 45th Division under General Middleton. The 157th Regimental Combat Team under Col. Charles Ankcorn, committed from Army reserve, was ordered to advance on the west side of the Sele River on 11 September to secure the fords north and west of Persano, and thus cut off the enemy attacks on the rear of the 179th.

This plan would bring American troops into the area north and west of the Sele for the first time during the operations. The land here displays long, gentle swells with scattered buildings and a few small patches of woods. The tops of the swells furnish long fields of fire, but draws could be used for covered approaches to many parts of the district. Close to the Sele is a tobacco factory (Tabacchificio Fiocche), consisting of five large buildings arranged about three sides of a square. The Tobacco Factory crowns the large flat top of



THE GRATAGLIA *borders the Sele River northwest of Persano. Buildings at Persano appear on the right behind the plain, and Hill 424 with Altavilla on its eastern slopes is in the center background. On 11 September German tanks went through this plain, crossed the Sele by a ford, and attacked the rear of the 179th Regiment.*

a swell providing excellent observation to the south along the road connecting Highway 18 with Eboli, to the east across the Sele bridge into the lower part of the Sele–Calore corridor, and to the north for a distance of 1,000 yards to a farm with a set of substantial buildings. But it is not possible from any vantage point to see up the Eboli road beyond the little river plain called the Grataglia, or to observe very far into the draws which approach the Factory swell from the northwest.

The gravel road, leading northeast from Highway 18 to Eboli, is the main route of the area. From the highway it runs across open fields, until about 700 yards north of the Tobacco Factory it drops sharply to the Grataglia plain. Here the Eboli road meets a minor road, coming straight east from Bivio Cioffi on Highway 18, and another smaller track which cuts east through the Grataglia to a ford across the Sele to Persano. The river plain is cultivated but there are scattered trees; on the west it is bounded by wooded hillsides, with a draw to the northeast of the road junction. From this junction the

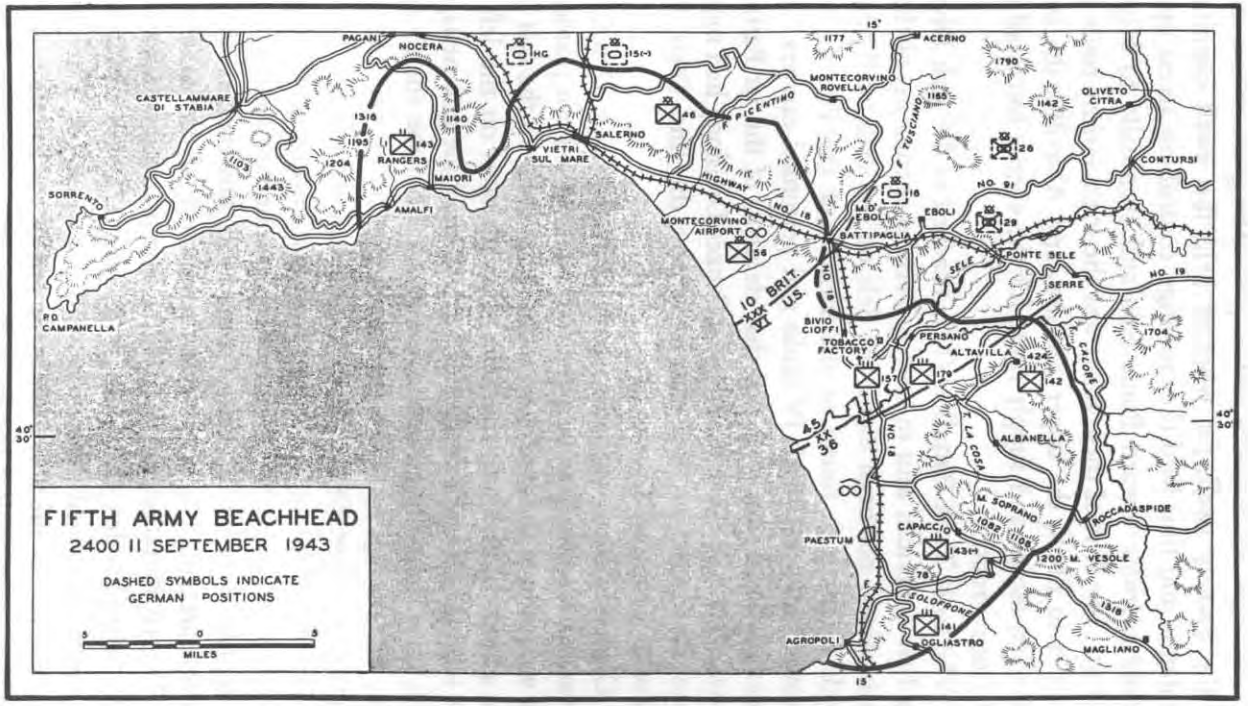
Eboli road bends to the northeast around the corner of a hill and gradually rises into the more broken country toward Eboli.

The fight for this area was to prove the great tactical importance of the Factory swell, for whoever held this swell commanded the Grataglia and thus held the crossings, controlling access up the Sele–Calore corridor toward Ponte Sele and eventually to Highways 19 and 91. The first of these roads was the main enemy route from Battipaglia to Eboli, the upper corridor, and Altavilla; the second was the main escape and supply route for the enemy forces all along the VI Corps front.

The 191st Tank Battalion (M), attached to the 45th Division, was the first American unit to contest German occupation of the Factory. As it moved northeast along the Sele on the 11th, well ahead of the 157th Infantry, it found in the vicinity of the Factory a German bivouac area with Mark IV tanks and personnel carriers. An enemy order captured later indicated that elements of the 1st Battalion, 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (16th Panzer Division) had moved down from Battipaglia on that day to outpost the line Torre Palladino–Tobacco Factory–Persano.

Company B of our tanks, commanded by Capt. Donald H. May, advanced cautiously against the Factory at 1600, two platoons out on the west side of the swell and the third platoon on the east just above the 40-foot bluff along the Sele. The platoons on the left knocked out several half-track personnel carriers, machine-gun nests, and antitank guns in buildings and in strawstacks; but the enemy apparently had laid a trap with the personnel carriers as bait. As our tanks approached close to the Factory they met devastating fire of heavy caliber. In addition, small arms from the Factory on the east and the farm on the north finally put seven of our tanks out of action. Of these, five were burned out. Company B, however, remained in the general area until 2130 to assist the advance of the infantry.

The 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Preston J. C. Murphy, led the main push north. Company C moved up Highway 18 toward the gentle swell at Bivio Cioffi which dominated the west side of the zone, while the rest of the battalion advanced up the Eboli road against the Factory. At 1530 Company C met enemy fire at the Bivio, but pushed on to take the crossroads despite opposition from the strongpoint at Torre Palladino 1 mile to the north-


FIFTH ARMY BEACHHEAD
2400 11 SEPTEMBER 1943
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE
GERMAN POSITIONS
5 0 5
MILES
PAGANI
NOCERA
HG
15(+)
CASTELLAMMARE
DI STABIA
SALERNO
PICENTINO
MONTECORVINO
ROVELLA
ACERNO
OLIVETO
CITRA
CONTURSI
RANGERS
MAIORI
VIETRI
SUL MARE
SORRENTO
AMALFI
HIGHWAY
NO. 18
NO. 91
EBOLI
BATTIPAGLIA
MONTECORVINO
AIRPORT
FONTE SELE
SELE
SERRE
NO. 19
10 BRIT.
U.S.
NO. 18
BIVIO
CIOFFI
TOBACCO
FACTORY
PERSANO
ALTAVILLA
CALORE
PT.
CAMPANELLA
ALBANELLA
LA COSA
M. SOPRANO
ROCCADASPIDE
CAPACCIO
PAESTUM
M. VESOLE
SOLOFRONE
AGROPOLI
OGLIASTRO
MAGLIANO

MAP NO. 7

east. At 2100 the company set up road blocks north and west of the Bivio to hinder enemy movement and thus protect the advance of the rest of the regiment up the Eboli road.

Companies A and B had much more difficult fighting as they advanced against other strongpoints of the enemy outpost line to the east. Well-sited machine guns and mortars kept them under fire. Enemy tanks maneuvered in the open area between Highway 18 and the Factory and pinned down Company B at 1715. Fire from our artillery made the enemy more cautious and reduced his pressure on us. At dusk Company A went in on the left of Company B, but by 2300 these units had gained only the edge of a little draw 500 yards south of the Factory. At midnight the Germans still held the Factory and the Sele crossings.

The General Situation, Evening of 11 September

By the evening of 11 September, VI Corps had made significant advances from the Paestum beaches (Map No. 7, page 48). The right flank was securely anchored on the hill positions in the Trentinara and Ogliastro areas gained by the 141st Regimental Combat Team. In the center we had driven to the vicinity of Roccad'aspide without opposition, and the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, held Hill 424. But the situation on the left flank was dangerous. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, had been unable to advance beyond the Calore crossing north of Hill 424, and enemy pressure had forced the battalion to fall back to La Cosa Creek during the night. A slashing enemy counterattack had cut off the 1st and 3d Battalions from their support, which was held in the lower Sele–Calore corridor. In an effort to relieve the 179th Infantry from the effects of the enemy counterattack, the Fifth Army had thrown in the 157th Regimental Combat Team to attack the Tobacco Factory area west of the Sele River. This attack had bogged down. At the end of the day the issue in the area from Bivio Cioffi east through the Sele–Calore corridor was unsettled.

To our north, 10 Corps had been meeting even more stubborn resistance and heavy German counterattacks. Though these thrusts had not penetrated the British lines, they had slowed the advance and stopped it in several sectors. On the far left of 10 Corps, the Rangers

above Maiori held their lines, which overlooked the Nocera–Pagani valley. To insure the retention of this valuable position, General Clark had sent substantial reinforcements of infantry, artillery, and other arms on the night of 10/11 September. On the 11th the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, was shifted by LCI's from Paestum beaches, where it was guarding Division Headquarters, to Maiori and arrived just in time to help beat off an enemy attack south of Pagani.

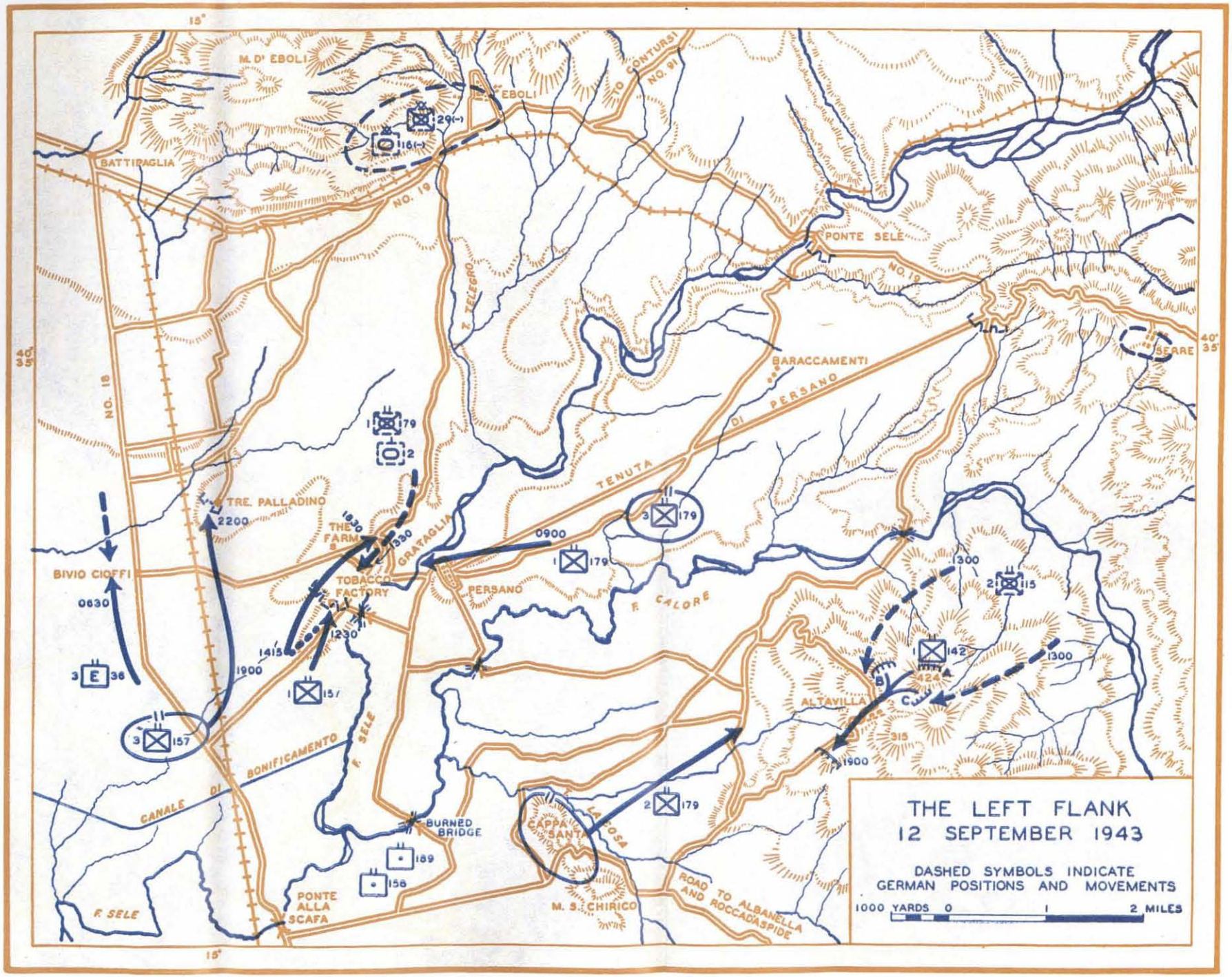
Farther east, the 46 Division tightened its hold on the port of Salerno and attempted to drive north into the mountains, but could make little progress. Just north of VI Corps the 56 Division had pushed patrols into Battipaglia before dawn on the 10th. The enemy brought up tanks and two battalions of infantry which threw advanced British elements out of the town. The British came at the town again and managed to work their way into its streets by the evening of the 11th; other units on the left of the 56 Division line had heavy fighting at a tobacco factory 2 miles west of Battipaglia and at Montecorvino airfield, which they finally secured.

Enemy artillery fire from the hills prevented our use of the Montecorvino landing strip, and all air support still had to come either from a squadron of airplane carriers in the Gulf or from the distant airfields of Sicily. The air forces had not planned to run long fighter missions for more than 2 days, but they continued until United States Aviation Engineers and detachments from almost every engineer unit in VI Corps, working night and day, completed on 13 September a new landing strip west of Highway 18 and north of Paestum. Enemy air activity was at its height during the night of 10 September and throughout the next day; in this period the Germans flew about 120 sorties, concentrating mainly on shipping and naval craft in the Gulf. A bomb or rocket from one enemy plane landed squarely on the *Savannah,* which was on station in the fire support area, causing heavy casualties and forcing the cruiser to withdraw. Though some damage was caused by these attacks, our antiaircraft batteries and barrage balloons kept the enemy bombers high, where squadrons from the force of 196 Spitfires, 119 A-36's, and 326 P-38's patrolling the beachhead intercepted them.

The Fifth Army beachhead had been expanded on the 10th and 11th along a 35- to 40-mile coastline to an average depth of 6 to 7 miles. Only in the center, in the Sele–Calore corridor, was the beach-

head insecure; here the successful enemy attack on the 45th Division threatened to separate 10 and VI Corps. If this threat could be averted and the beachhead maintained intact, the Fifth Army would have a substantial base in which to build up its strength for further advance.

MAP NO. 8


15°
40° 35'
M. D' EBOLI
EBOLI
TO CONTURSI
NO. 91
29(-)
16(-)
BATTIPAGLIA
NO. 19
PONTE SELE
NO. 18
T. TELEGRO
BARACCAMENTI
DI PERSANO
SERRE
TENUTA
179
2
TRE. PALLADINO
2200
THE FARM
1830
1330
GRATAGLIA
0900
BIVIO CIOFFI
0630
TOBACCO FACTORY
1230
PERSANO
F. CALORE
1300
115
142
424
1415
1900
E 36
157
ALTAVILLA
315
BONIFICAMENTO
F. SELE
CANALE DI
BURNED BRIDGE
189
158
CAPPA SANTA
LA COSA
M. S. CHIRICO
PONTE ALLA SCAFA
ROAD TO ALBANELLA AND ROCCADASPIDE
THE LEFT FLANK
12 SEPTEMBER 1943
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE GERMAN POSITIONS AND MOVEMENTS
1000 YARDS 0 1 2 MILES

The German Counterattack

(12-14 September)

WHILE THE SOLDIERS of VI and 10 Corps were pushing doggedly from the beaches across the plain and up the slopes of surrounding hills, German reinforcements were gathering in the mountains to the east. Savage counterattacks were coming.

By 12 September elements of the 26th Panzer Division and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, arriving from the south, had reinforced the 16th Panzer Division in the Battipaglia–Eboli area (Map No. 8, faces page 53). These forces entered the battle of Salerno against VI Corps. From the north the Hermann Goering Division with detachments of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division had also come to form another concentration in the Nocera district, facing 10 Corps. The 3d Panzer Grenadier Division had at least one battalion in the line on 14 September. Units from these divisions, organized in battle groups resembling our combat teams, were preparing to counterattack the Fifth Army.

The enemy divisions in the south had escaped the trap which the Fifth and Eighth Armies were trying to set. They had, in fact, arrived so quickly in the Salerno area that they might hope, with the divisions from the north, to turn on the Fifth Army and drive it into the sea before the Eighth Army could come up. The Eighth Army could be delayed by small rear-guard actions, destroyed bridges, and blocked roads, except on the broad plain of the east coast from Bari

past the Foggia airfields. Here, accordingly, the 1st Parachute Division was ordered to hold the British army as long as possible. Meanwhile, from the mountains, the rest of the German forces could throw all their might down upon our troops spread throughout the plain of Salerno. A force composed of units from six divisions, completely motorized, and with heavy strength in fire power and in armor, was poised to strike against our beachhead.

After preliminary attacks on the 12th against the VI Corps to regain Altavilla and Battipaglia, the main enemy strength was unleashed on the 13th in a drive through the 45th Division and down the Sele–Calore corridor. The following day the enemy attempted to push still farther south against the 45th Division and west against the 36th Division with the possible intention of uniting his forces south of the Sele for a drive on the beaches. By this time, however, our troops, established in a solid defensive line, hurled back every thrust. After the 13th, the tide of the German offensive ebbed away all along the VI Corps front.

The tactics employed by the enemy on these 3 days made full use of his advantage in position and in mobility. Tanks, followed by infantry carried in half-tracks, concentrated quickly at exposed parts of our line and made quick stabs. Whenever the positions reached did not offer opportunity for further exploitation, the enemy withdrew to original concentration areas, ready to strike in a few hours in another direction. If the position were important for future plans, the enemy immediately fortified it with a small group of infantry, strong in machine guns and mortars, and held it against all odds, even when bypassed by our counterthrusts.

Uncertainty at Altavilla

Such a position was the all-important hill mass at Altavilla, which the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, had occupied shortly after noon on the 11th. The Battalion Commander, Col. Barron, had disposed his companies in the best defensive positions possible; but the slopes were difficult to cover, and the battalion line was necessarily thin. The hill itself was a weak position as long as the unnumbered hill to the south remained unoccupied; yet there was not enough strength to hold both hills.

During the night of 11/12 September enemy units of the 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, began to infiltrate around Hill 424. At daybreak on the 12th our troops received fire from so many directions that the enemy seemed to be everywhere. Our artillery, lacking definite targets on Hill 424, fired concentrations on enemy troops and tanks between the Sele and Calore rivers. Enemy artillery was also active, and fired for 2½ hours on Hill 424, beginning at 1100. Communications were severed; no amount of work could keep the lines open.

At this time Company B, 142d Infantry, held the forward slope of the hill on the northwest side; Company A was disposed near the summit; and Company C was on the south slope facing the unnumbered hill across a ravine to the south. By 1300 German infantry were enveloping Company B's line. Enemy machine-gun crews were working through a small olive grove to attack this company. Two of these crews came within range of Pvt. Clayton I. Tallman's rifle. Tallman leaped up on a rock wall to get better observation and coolly picked off three men of one crew, then repeated the performance a few minutes later against another crew. Pvt. Paul C. Gerlich went through heavy fire to destroy another machine gun and its crew with two grenades. The storm of bullets that swept over the hill left hardly a tree in the whole of Company B's zone unscarred.

The main enemy attack was apparently directed toward Company C's position. As the pressure on this company grew, Col. Barron ordered the other two rifle companies of the battalion to shift to its support. Company A, which was to pull back to support Company C on its right flank, was pinned by the enemy attack. From its position on the north slopes, Company B moved around through Altavilla, where it was hit by the enemy in the rear. Col. Barron went forward to direct the action in Company A's sector, but was lost en route.

The fight grew steadily more bitter; the enemy broke through and pushed down to Altavilla, cutting the battalion in two parts. The battalion executive officer, Maj. William B. Mobley, withdrew Company D and the Battalion Command Post at 1530; each of the rifle companies, surrounded and isolated, fought its own fight until dusk. Portions of various companies then collected and dug in for the night on a knoll a mile southwest of the summit of Hill 424. During the

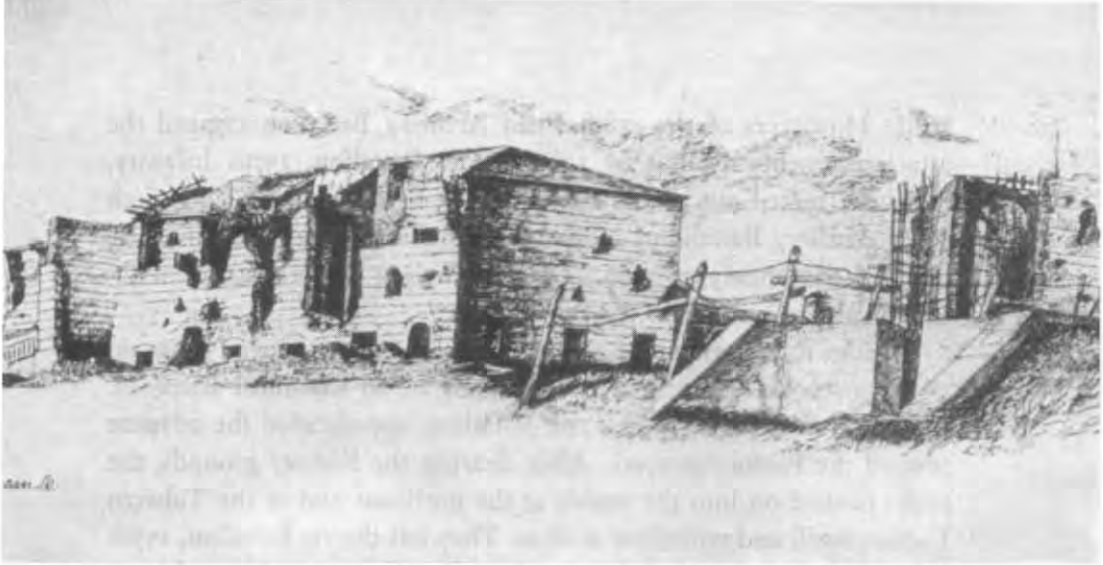
hours of darkness small groups of men from the battalion drifted in throughout the regimental sector. The enemy had driven back the battalion with heavy losses and had regained Hill 424. The 1st Battalion had made a magnificent defense of a position which would have been tenable only if the unnumbered hill was under the control of VI Corps.

A greater force was needed to retake and hold Altavilla from the enemy. While the fight was still in progress, Col. Forsythe, Commander of the 142d Regimental Combat Team, had tried to get enough trucks to bring in another battalion to support the 1st Battalion. Everywhere in VI Corps, however, there was a critical shortage of transportation, and he was unable to bring in the needed reinforcements.

The Second Battle of the Tobacco Factory, 12 September

While the main German effort was being directed against Hill 424, our situation improved considerably in the Sele–Calore corridor. The enemy had driven the 179th Infantry from the river bluffs overlooking Ponte Sele and Highway 19 on 11 September, but his forces at Persano were exposed to attack by the 157th Infantry west of the Sele. During the night of 11/12 September, he withdrew from Persano. The German line now ran from Torre Palladino to the Tobacco Factory, then up the Sele to Ponte Sele, and across to the Calore 2,000 yards east of the Altavilla crossing. The western part of the line was a series of outposts in front of the Eboli concentrations; the hills southwest of Serre formed a strong defensive position.

At daybreak on 12 September, the 45th Division prepared to establish contact with the 179th Infantry in the corridor and to strengthen its line east of the Sele. Company C, 753d Tank Battalion, carried out the first of these moves. At 0700 the tanks pushed up the corridor from the burned bridge, hugging the north bank of the Calore. An hour later they had gained contact with the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry. The combined force then occupied Persano without opposition by 0900. The mine field east of Persano was cleared, and ambulances and the supply column were coming through at 1030. After contact had been regained, the main body of the 179th held its defensive positions in the corridor through the rest of the day.



THE TOBACCO FACTORY, *five stone buildings on the road between Highway 18 and Eboli, commands the roads and river crossings which give access to Highways 19 and 91, principal enemy supply and escape routes in this area. From the 12th to the 18th of September, German armored and infantry units holding the Factory blocked the advance of the VI Corps left flank.*

West of the Sele the situation likewise improved. The 3d Battalion, 36th Combat Engineers, came in on the left flank of the 157th Infantry at 0630 to relieve Company C in the area about Bivio Cioffi and to establish contact with 10 Corps by patrols. An enemy tank attack, supported by artillery, almost surrounded the position in the afternoon; but the engineers held their ground. Heavy machine-gun fire from Torre Palladino temporarily stopped when naval guns shelled the strongpoint.

Meanwhile Companies A and B, 157th Infantry, continued the attack on the Tobacco Factory. Patrols of Company A reached the blown bridge just east of the Factory, and some of the company forded the Sele River to its east bank. But the enemy still held the Factory, and the main body of infantry advanced slowly against 88-mm and machine-gun fire. Assault guns of the 191st Tank Battalion shelled the farm north of the Factory itself, while a company of tanks put 180 rounds into the Factory. After a fight of more than an hour and a half the enemy withdrew up the Eboli road. Company B held the Factory at 1130.

A German counterattack followed very quickly. At 1305 eight enemy tanks and a battalion of infantry attacked down the Eboli

road. Howitzers of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion stopped the attack momentarily, but by 1340 the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, had been forced out of the Factory. Fire from the 158th and 189th Field Artillery Battalions, supported by three naval gunfire missions, checked the enemy at 1500. Then, following his practice of withdrawing after quick jabs, he retreated.

Late in the afternoon of 12 September our troops moved up again under a smoke screen fired by Company C, 2d Chemical Battalion. Companies A and C, 191st Tank Battalion, spearheaded the advance toward the Factory at 1700. After clearing the Factory grounds, the tanks pushed on into the woods at the northeast end of the Tobacco Factory swell and withdrew at 1830. They left the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, in command of the area from the Factory to the road junction in the Grataglia. The 3d Battalion paralleled the advance by moving into positions west and south of Torre Palladino by 2200.

While the 157th Regimental Combat Team was doggedly gaining the key area northwest of Persano, the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, started to advance from La Cosa Creek. But General Dawley halted this advance and ordered extensive shifts of front-line units to take place during the night of 12/13 September.

Our Troops Change Positions

The shifts were made to strengthen the left flank of VI Corps (Map No. 7, page 48). A gap between American units near the Sele and the British units in the vicinity of Battipaglia, at times extending as much as 5 miles, had never been completely closed. It was held only by reconnaissance units of the British 23 Armoured Brigade. As the German threat grew more menacing, this open area became more dangerous. On the night of the 12th, units of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, led by 40 tanks, launched a powerful attack between the flanks of the Fifth Army and drove the 167 Brigade (56 Division) out of Battipaglia with heavy losses to the British. Although the attack had been stopped at the outskirts of the town and the 201 Guards Brigade, under the command of 56 Division, took over the sector, the British could not recapture Battipaglia.

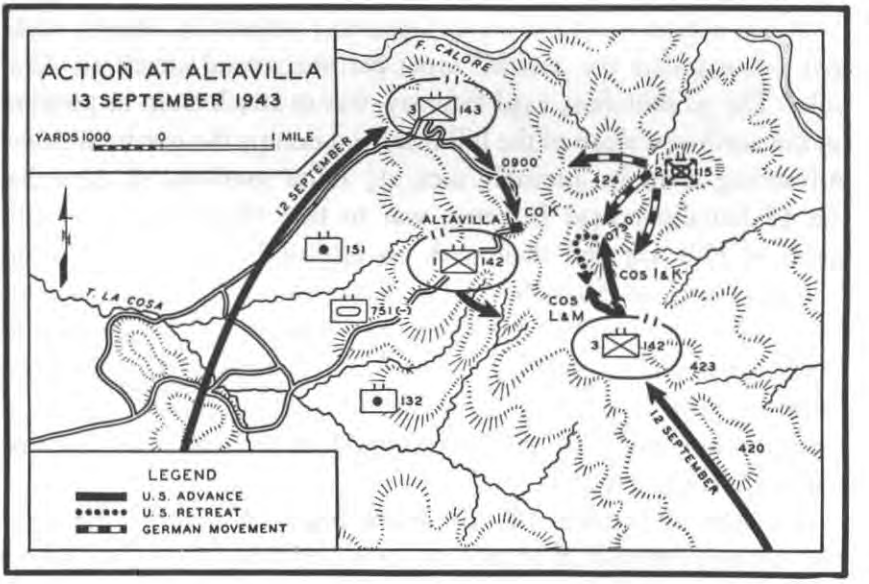
Even before this attack had revealed the German strength in this area, General Dawley had begun to reinforce the left flank of VI

Corps. He ordered the 179th Regimental Combat Team with all its attached units to leave the Sele–Calore corridor after nightfall on the 12th and move to the left of the 157th Regimental Combat Team by the Factory. Before daybreak on 13 September the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, had taken up a line between the engineers at Bivio Cioffi and the left flank of the 157th Regimental Combat Team. The 1st and 3d Battalions went into reserve immediately behind the line.

The German capture of Battipaglia made further reinforcement of the left flank seem necessary. In the early morning of the 13th the 36th Division was ordered to withdraw the 2d and 3d Battalions, 141st Infantry, from their defensive mission in the hills by Ogliastro on the right flank and dispatch them by truck to the extreme left flank northwest of Bivio Cioffi. The motor column ran into enemy artillery fire north of the Sele at 1700 and had to turn off Highway 18 onto a coastal track, so the two battalions did not begin to detruck and occupy their positions until dusk.

The withdrawal of the 179th Regimental Combat Team from the Sele–Calore corridor left a gap which had to be filled. The only unit available was the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, which had shifted earlier in the day from Tempone di San Paolo to an area south of Mount San Chirico. Lt. Col. Charles H. Jones, Jr. accordingly re-

MAP NO. 9



ceived orders to take up positions after dark in the corridor between the rivers about 2½ miles northeast of Persano. As the battalion moved north across the Calore east of La Cosa Creek, a German infantry patrol spotted its approach and brought down artillery fire which caused several casualties. By early morning of the 13th the battalion had reached its defensive sector. Company G outposted the line; Company F held the left flank of the main line, Company E the right flank. On neither flank was the battalion in contact with our units, but Col. Jones had been informed that the 157th Regimental Combat Team on the west bank of the Sele would attack abreast of him to protect his north flank. In any case, the 2,000-yard front assigned to the battalion was too great to allow any reserve for the Persano knoll.

Attack and Counterattack at Altavilla, 13 September

While these operations were strengthening the left flank of VI Corps, Col. Martin was assembling a force for an assault on Altavilla and Hill 424 (Map No. 9, page 58). The 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, marched from Albanella; the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, moved from the vicinity of Capaccio to Hill 140 and then on to an assembly area northwest of Altavilla.

It was almost midnight on 12 September before Col. Martin could give commanders the detailed order for our second attack on Altavilla. The 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, was to attack from its position on the northwest slope of the hill mass and occupy the northern ridge. Advancing from its assembly area 1½ miles southeast of Altavilla, the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, was to take the unnumbered hill south of Hill 424 and then push on against Hill 424 itself. Held as reserve west of Altavilla, the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, at this time reduced by losses to 260 officers and men, was to be prepared to attack the town, or extend to either flank. Company A, 751st Tank Battalion, was to counter enemy armor and to protect against a break-through north of the hill mass. More than two battalions of artillery were in support.

Artillery preparation for the attack began at 0545 on the 13th. The infantry jumped off 15 minutes later, and the artillery fired a new

concentration 600 yards forward until 0630. On the right flank Companies I and K, 142d Infantry, fought their way up the slopes of the unnumbered hill. All the way they met rifle and machine-gun fire. Pvt. William J. Crawford, a squad scout of Company I, attacked three machine-gun emplacements, dug in on terraces in front of his company. Crawling through intense enemy fire, he got close enough to the first two to throw hand grenades at the crews, killing them and destroying their guns. At the third emplacement, Crawford's grenade killed only one of the crew. The others abandoned their post and attempted to flee, but Crawford took over their gun, turned it around, and fired on them while they were making their escape.

After neutralizing machine-gun positions which held them up, Companies I and K neared the top at 0730. At the summit the enemy in other positions, reinforced by artillery, pinned them down. Companies L and M, cut off from the assault troops by artillery fire and enemy infiltration, could not advance beyond the lower slopes of the hill. Later in the morning Companies I and K fell back before a strong German counterattack and dug in with the rest of the battalion. Then the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, moved to reinforce the 3d Battalion; but at 1715, when it was passing through the draw south of Altavilla, the length of its column was raked by artillery. The companies were completely disorganized, and it was nearly midnight before the battalion could be pulled together.

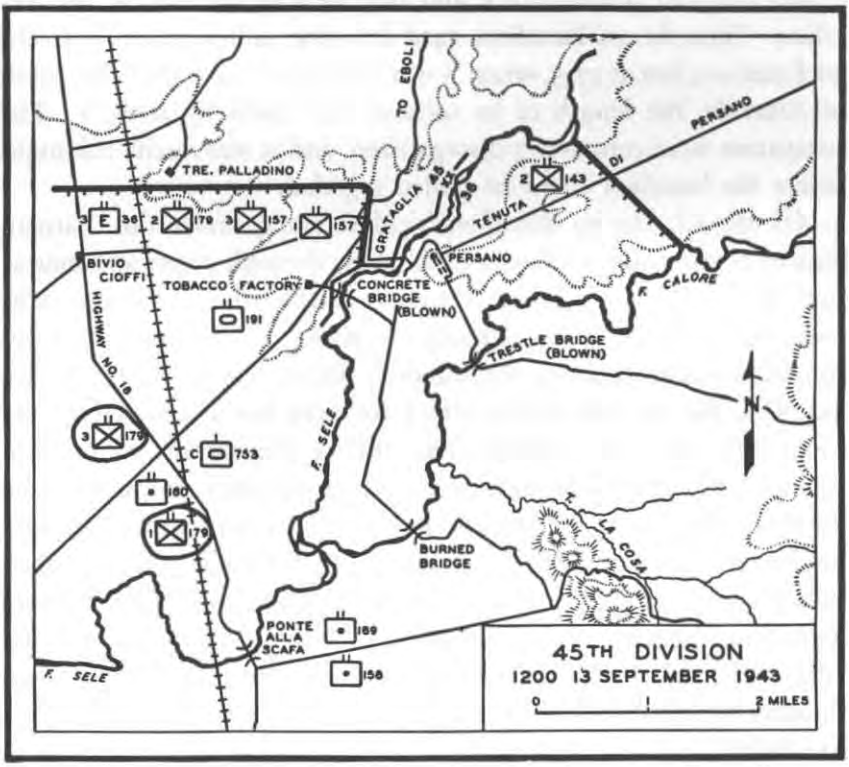
On the left the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, under Col. Barnett, pushed up the ridge northwest of Altavilla through sniper and mortar fire. Shortly before 0900 the battalion reached the top of the ridge and sent Company K into Altavilla to protect the right flank. After consolidating its position, the battalion planned to go on up to Hill 424. Col. Barnett ordered the attack for 1715, but at 1700 the enemy counterattacked after mortar and artillery preparation. Time and again the Germans beat against our hasty defenses, and every time they were thrown back. After darkness, snipers and machine gunners fired on the battalion from the rear, but part of Company K continued to hold on in Altavilla. When, about midnight, the order came to withdraw, Company K was hemmed in and had to remain at Altavilla while the rest of the battalion and the battalions of the 142d Infantry retreated to La Cosa Creek. Our effort to recapture Hill 424 had failed.

Sparring on the Left Flank

The morning of the 13th opened quietly on the VI Corps left flank (Map No. 10, page 61). The 29th Panzer Grenadier Division apparently was resting after its night attack on the British at Battipaglia, and a large part of our own troops were just moving into new positions. At 0725 the divisional artillery reported that Germans were bridging the Sele north of Persano, and a patrol corroborated the information. Front-line units received a warning from Fifth Army about 0950 that the enemy might attack southwest from Eboli in the afternoon.

The 157th had attempted to drive forward in the night but had not succeeded. Late in the morning the regiment began to advance in accordance with orders to keep up with the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, across the Sele northeast of Persano. By 1200 leading elements of the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, were well into the woods

MAP NO. 10



north of the road junction in the Grataglia. The enemy, however, held firmly; the 157th was stopped.

At this time the line of the 45th Division ran from a point north of Bivio Cioffi to the Eboli road and south along the hills about the Grataglia to the Sele River. The 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, about 2 miles northeast of the 45th Division, was dangerously exposed in the Sele–Calore corridor. While units on the left flank were so dispersed, the enemy prepared to attack. At 1310 the 158th Field Artillery Battalion detected German tanks and infantry moving in the vicinity of the Eboli–Battipaglia road and fired on them. Fifty minutes later, German tanks near the Eboli road were firing on the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry. Further reports of enemy activity were confirmed. By 1530 the heaviest attack on the VI Corps front during the whole Salerno battle was unleashed.

The Storm Breaks at the Tobacco Factory

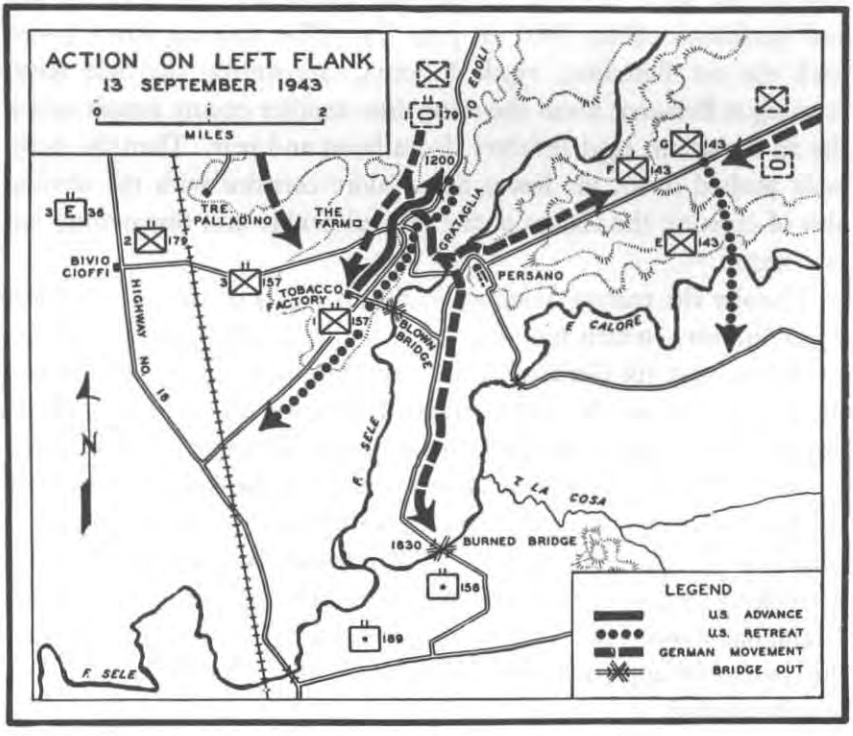
This attack followed the pattern of attacks during the 2 preceding days in the same area, but it was distinguished by far greater force and persistence (Map No. 11, page 63). The opening drive forced back the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, uncovering the Sele River crossing at Persano; about the same time another enemy assault struck the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, from front and rear. Then the main body pushed down the lower Sele–Calore corridor with the obvious aim of crossing the Calore at the burned bridge and threatening our rear areas.

Initially the enemy drove against both flanks of the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, which was dug in on the north slopes of the Factory swell. At 1542 six German tanks were approaching the left flank of the battalion from the east of Torre Palladino. The principal effort, however, was against the right flank of the battalion and had begun at 1517 when 15 enemy tanks were reported moving southwest on the Eboli road north of the Grataglia. Behind the main tank force came the 1st Battalion, 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which was detrucking at 1552 in the draw just around the hill to the north of the Grataglia. Towed field pieces followed the enemy infantry. During this period of approach, the 1st Battalion of the 157th Infantry was heavily shelled.

Our troops took countersteps immediately. Tanks, tank destroyers, Cannon Company howitzers, and 37-mm guns were moved up hastily. During this tense afternoon the division artillery Fire Direction Center used two aerial observers, as well as ground observers, to keep four battalions of artillery firing almost continuously. But the enemy advance continued, and by 1600 it had struck with full force. Two Mark IV tanks with six scout cars came down the draw northeast of the road junction and were within 150 yards of our men before they were discovered. Our infantry gave way. Battalion headquarters was temporarily trapped by the enemy tanks, and control of the action grew difficult.

The Germans followed up, putting all their pressure now between the Eboli road and the Sele against the right flank of the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry. By 1715 enemy tanks were outflanking Company A along the river. Company I was alerted to aid Company A, and two of our tank companies helped to prevent a complete break-through at this point, while divisional artillery and the chemical mortars put

MAP NO. 11



down a smoke screen to delay the enemy advance. In another hour, however, the men of the 1st Battalion, despite desperate resistance, had been pushed back over the open ground 1½ miles from the Factory and had drifted to the west toward the 3d Battalion. This unit, also heavily engaged, faced toward the east to help hold the thrust.

Enemy pressure on the 157th then slackened, although fighting continued until after dark, for the enemy had gained his objective in this sector: he had driven our troops from the Factory swell and could put his main forces across the Sele to drive down into the Sele–Calore corridor. A force of tanks and infantry had already cleared the way by coming down the corridor and smashing at the left flank of the outpost line established by the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry. This force of tanks then fanned out, hitting the main line on both flanks, and other tanks crossed near Persano to take our troops in the rear. The battalion was completely surrounded. Most of Company G, on outpost, escaped south across the Calore, but few of the rest ever came back; the total loss for the battalion was 508 officers and men.

Meanwhile the enemy attack rolled on relentlessly down the lower corridor. At 1715 the main body of tanks was east of the Sele. Enemy artillery was in Persano by 1800, and at the same time an artillery aerial observer reported that 15 enemy tanks were headed south from Persano on the road to the burned bridge—straight into a gap in our lines held only by the 189th Field Artillery Battalion, under Lt. Col. Hal L. Muldrow, Jr. and the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, under Lt. Col. Russell D. Funk. By 1830 the enemy was established in a heavy growth along the north bank of the Calore and was firing into the 189th positions.

Both artillery battalions gathered all available men, stripping their gun crews to the minimum, and posted them on the gentle slope south of the burned bridge to dig in and hold with rifles and machine guns, supported by six 37-mm guns of the 189th. Members of the divisional artillery staff went out on the roads and commandeered every soldier they found. They put Divisional Artillery Headquarters Battery and Band into the line and scraped together a reserve of 15 mechanics and truck drivers to reinforce the most threatened sectors. The sweating gun crews poured artillery fire on the ford by the bridge and on the road leading to it, firing 8 rounds per minute per gun at the

height of the attack. Altogether the two battalions fired 3,650 rounds, and seven M-7's of Battery B, 27th Armored Field Artillery, came up in time to add another 300 rounds. This devastating fire pulverized the roads and fields in the tip of the corridor and, combined with the dogged resistance of the artillerymen at the ford, hurled back every enemy attack. At sunset, the enemy admitted failure and pulled back his tanks. The artillery had stopped the most serious break-through attempted during the whole Salerno beachhead fight.

VI Corps Goes on the Defensive

The situation was critical as the commanders assembled at VI Corps Headquarters at 1930, 13 September (Map No. 12, page 66). The 1st and 3d Battalions, 142d, and the 3d Battalion, 143d, had been thrown back from Altavilla. Company K, 143d, was cut off; the 1st Battalion, 142d, had lost all except some 60 of its men. The 2d Battalion, 143d, had been smashed in the Sele–Calore corridor; the 1st Battalion, 157th, had been hit hard at the Tobacco Factory. Our line had been dented, even pierced; and only the artillery had prevented a complete break-through. Worst of all, there were almost no reserves available to mend the line.

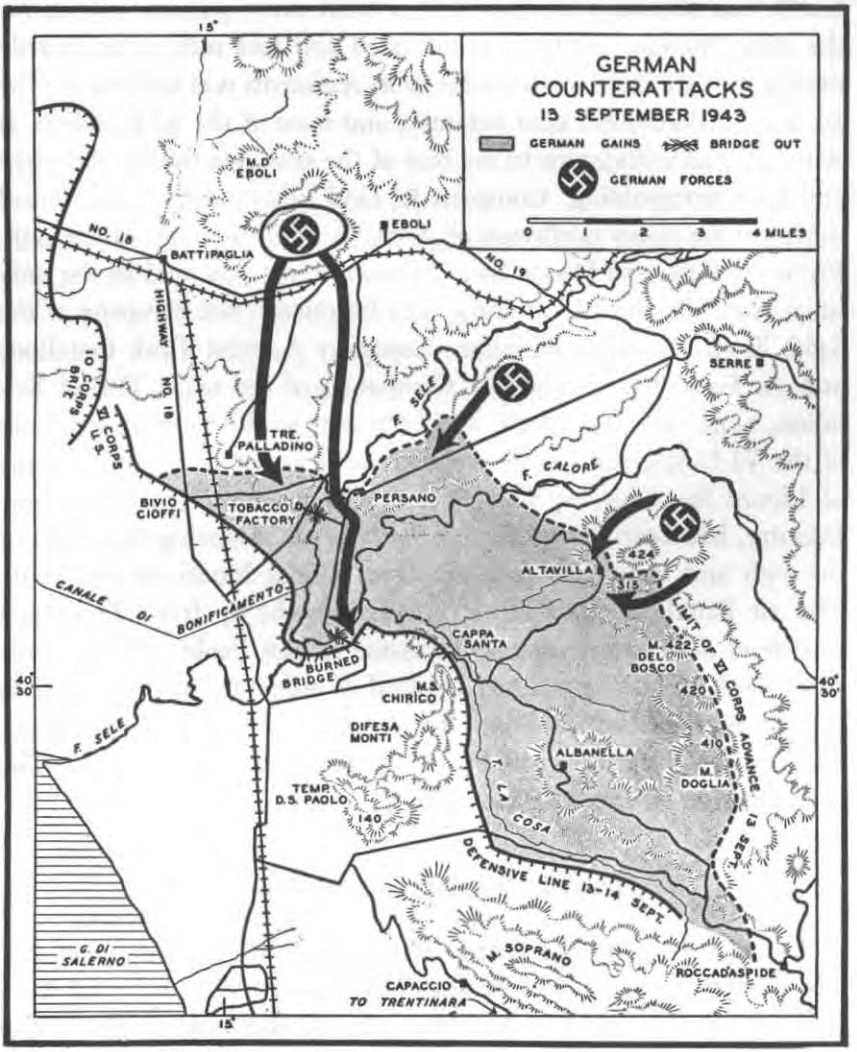
The near-disasters of the 13th had not been the fault of the soldiers, who had fought well at every point against the overpowering mass of enemy armor and infantry firepower. Our troops were too extended to be able to meet the attacks that the enemy launched. The only thing to do was to pull back into the best defensive line available, dig in, and hold until the situation could be improved. Orders were issued, and all through the night of the 13th the weary commanders and men worked to reassemble their units and fortify the line.

The 45th Division was ordered to refuse its right flank by pulling parts of the 157th and 179th back along the Sele. The 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, was put into the line at the base of the Sele–Calore corridor to relieve the artillerymen of the 158th and 189th Field Artillery Battalions. On the extreme left the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, was now in position on miserable terrain, mosquito-ridden and full of swamps and wallows for the water buffalo of the Salerno plain. To the southeast of this area, the 3d Battalion, 36th Engineers, still held Bivio Cioffi. From Highway 18 the line ran to the junction of the

Sele and the Canale di Bonificamento, then along the Sele to its junction with the Calore, and up the Calore to La Cosa Creek.

The 36th Division took up a defensive line west and south of La Cosa Creek. This position, selected for what might well have become a last stand, was not naturally very strong; but there was nothing else to fall back on. The creek itself is not much of a barrier, and the hills behind it from Cappa Santa through Mount San Chirico and on to Tempone di San Paolo, are neither high nor very rugged. From the high ground at Altavilla the enemy had excellent observation over

MAP NO. 12



these hills; but to reach them, German troops would have to cross a plain fully exposed to our fire. The weakest spot in the Cosa line lay at the junction of La Cosa Creek and the Calore, where there is a stretch of low ground nearly a mile in width, sparsely timbered, with heavier growth along the banks of the Calore. Most of our tank destroyers, tanks, and artillery were placed so as to deliver heavy fire on this area.

From the Calore to Mount Soprano, the Cosa defenses were divided into three sectors under Brig. Gen. William H. Wilbur, Brig. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, and Brig. Gen. Otto F. Lange. To man the line it was necessary to draw troops from every possible source, for the 36th Division had been so extended and had suffered so heavily during the 13th that reconstitution of its regiments was impossible. The 1st and 3d Battalions, 142d Infantry, and most of the 3d Battalion, at Altavilla had withdrawn to the rear of the new line during the night and were reorganizing. Company K, 143d Infantry, remained pinned down on the slopes northwest of Altavilla until the night of the 14th. From the Calore to Mount San Chirico the line was held by the only units available: the 2d Battalion, 36th Engineers; one company of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company A, 751st Tank Battalion; and the Cannon and Antitank Companies of the 143d. The 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry, which had been sent to the extreme left flank of the VI Corps, was hastily recalled and garrisoned the south slopes of Mount San Chirico. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 504th Parachute Infantry, had been dropped near the beachhead during the night of the 13th and went into positions from Difesa Monti on the south. The 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, was brought up from Trentinara to defend the eastern nose of Tempone di San Paolo. The extreme right flank of VI Corps, thus stripped of infantry, was entrusted to the 3d Battalion, 531st Shore Engineers, with other detachments. The divisional artillery moved back to new supporting positions. The 36th Division awaited the morrow.

Holding the Line, 14 September

On 14 September the enemy attack continued in a series of stiff jabs to feel out our new defenses. The enemy command must have been very disappointed in the results, for nowhere did our line bend



MOUNT SAN CHIRICO *was the center of the low hill barrier on the west of the 36th Division defensive line, 14 September. La Cosa Creek, flowing from the Calore River, passes Mount San Chirico on the east. Between the creek and the hill, men of the 36th Division made their stand.*

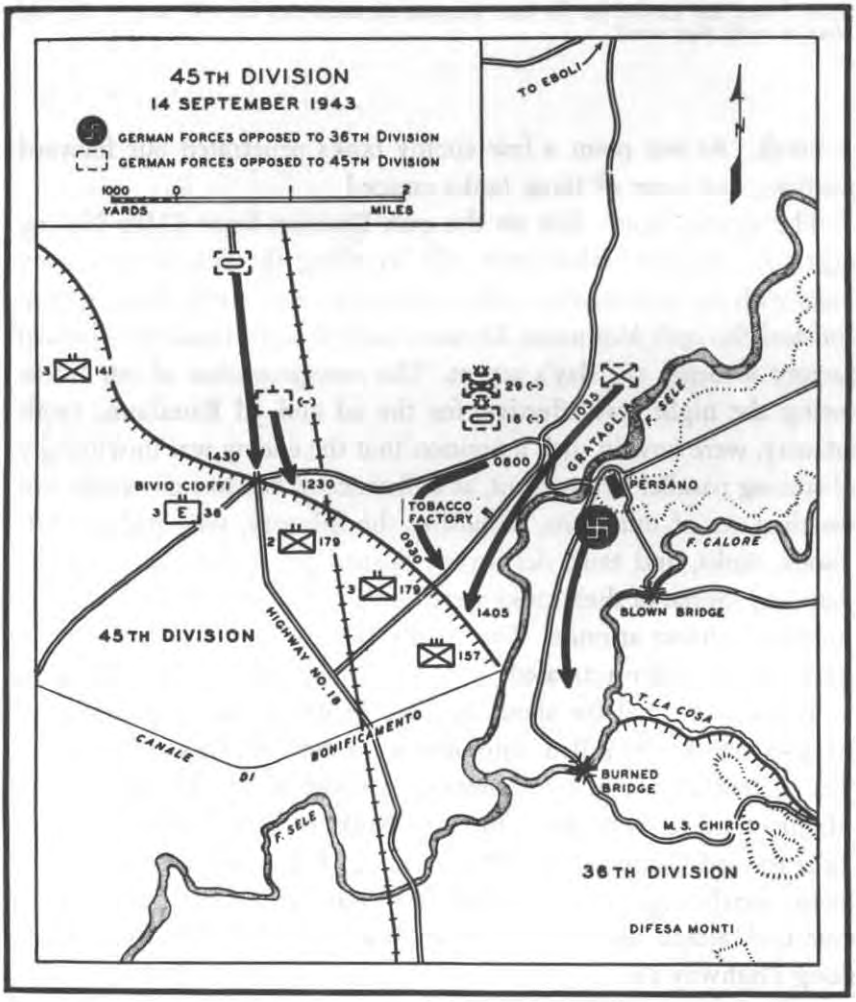
or break. At one point a few enemy tanks penetrated our forward positions, but none of those tanks escaped.

The attacks began first on the 45th Division front (Map No. 13, page 69). At 0800, while mist still lay along the Sele, eight enemy tanks with an estimated battalion of infantry of the 16th Panzer Division and the 29th Motorized Division moved south from the Tobacco Factory to begin the day's action. The reorganization of our forces during the night was effective, for the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, were now in such a position that the enemy was unwittingly advancing parallel to our front, at a distance of 600 to 1,000 yards. No less than six of our units, including the infantry, two artillery battalions, tanks, and tank destroyers, opened fire immediately on the Germans. Seven of their tanks were destroyed, and the eighth was immobilized almost at once. The enemy infantry continued the attack until 0930 and then retreated.

There was a lull for about an hour in which the early tank and infantry action dwindled into minor probes by tanks. Then the enemy struck again at two points on a wider front. At 1035 enemy infantry tried to work down the west bank of the Sele from the Grataglia toward Company A, 157th Infantry. Eight minutes later heavy enemy machine-gun and artillery fire prepared the way for a large-scale tank attack against the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, in position along Highway 18.

The men on the VI Corps left flank were alert for more attacks. First Lt. Hilston T. Kilcollins, forward observer of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, saw six enemy tanks assembling in the vicinity of the Tobacco Factory and brought down the fire of his battalion on them. Five of the six tanks burned. At 1230 about one-half a company of Germans carrying white flags approached the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry. As these men came within range they dropped their flags and fired on the 2d Battalion. Our troops, sighting this group of Germans at a distance, were prepared for their attack and killed about forty of them.

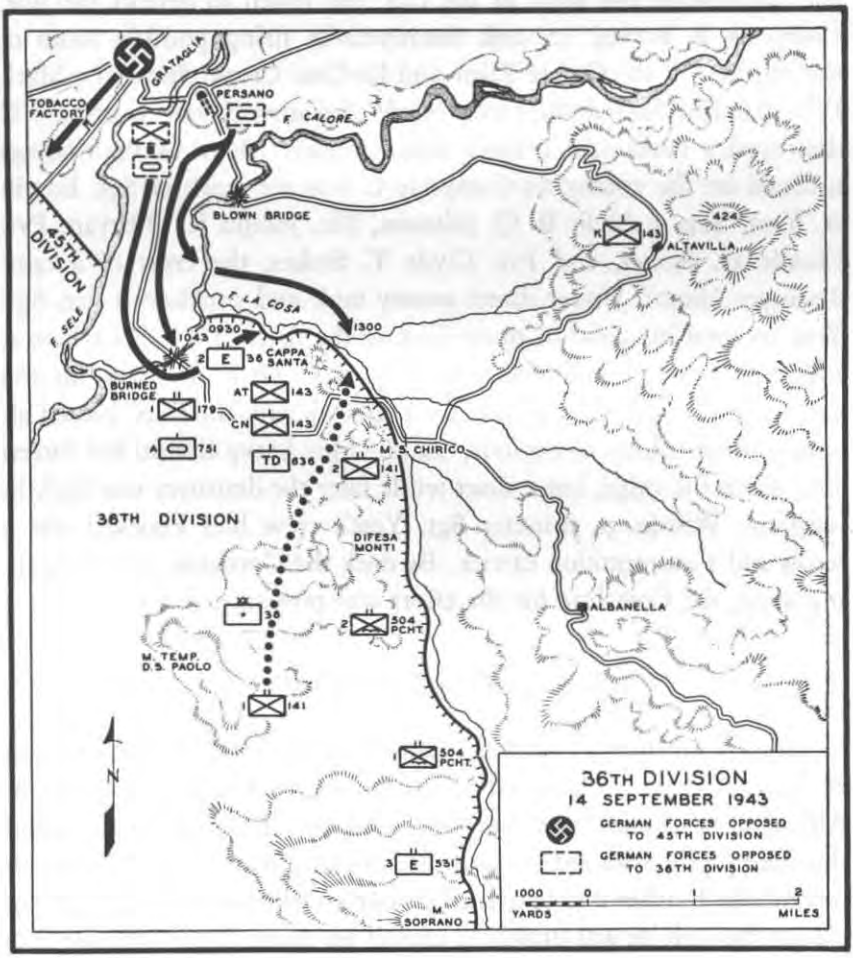
MAP NO. 13



But our alertness did not discourage the enemy. Two attacks by tanks and infantry followed. The 179th and supporting units knocked out all the eight tanks on Highway 18 just above Bivio Cioffi by 1430; the 157th, aided by the 158th Field Artillery Battalion and naval gunfire, repelled the attack along the river southeast of the Factory at 1405. These rebuffs were enough for the enemy, and he gave up serious action west of the Sele for the day.

His success on the Cosa line was no greater (Map No. 14, page 71). At 0930 on the 14th, infantry and a company of Mark IV Specials attacked across the Calore toward Mount San Chirico. Six tanks of Company A, 751st Tank Battalion, moved up to meet the attack and

MAP NO. 14



knocked out eight Mark IV's with the loss of only one of our own. At 1043 at least three more tanks, supported by a battery of self-propelled guns, attempted to cross the Calore at the burned bridge and northeast of it. Our supporting fires repelled the whole attack. The enemy withdrew. At about 1300 the enemy attacked again, this time from an area near the Calore north of La Cosa Creek and against the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, which had arrived by truck from Tempone di San Paolo to buttress the infantry line. Naval and artillery gunfire struck the German formation. Although several enemy tanks managed to penetrate our positions during the next few hours, they were all destroyed.

The 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, although under artillery and small-arms fire most of the day, did much to defend the line. Company B, having 12 tank destroyers in firing position south of the junction of the Calore River and La Cosa Creek, disabled 5 Mark IV's that had forded the creek north of Cappa Santa. Company C destroyed 7 tanks and 1 ammunition vehicle. Most of the damage inflicted on the enemy by Company C was the work of Sgt. Edwin A. Yost, Tec. 5 Alvin B. Q. Johnson, Pfc. Joseph R. O'Bryan, Pvt. Claude H. Stokes, and Pvt. Clyde T. Stokes, the crew of a tank destroyer "Jinx." Under direct enemy tank and small-arms fire, Sgt. Yost ordered his crew to move Jinx to the crest of a ridge where it might threaten approaching enemy armor. Their first shot hit 200 yards from the target; the next set a tank on fire; the third caused an ammunition vehicle to explode. At one time heavy 88-mm fire forced Jinx down the ridge, but a short while later the destroyer was back in position. Within 30 minutes Sgt. Yost's crew had knocked out 5 tanks and 1 ammunition carrier. By dusk the Germans ceased attacking along the Cosa line for the effort was proving too costly.

Fifth Army Position, 14 September

At dark on the 14th, VI Corps lines remained where they had been at dawn. On the 12th and the 13th the enemy had forced us out of Altavilla, the Sele–Calore corridor, and the Tobacco Factory, and thus had partly achieved his purpose both to threaten a break-through toward our beaches and to neutralize our attacks toward Highway 19; but on the 14th he was unable to exploit his gains. Our defensive fires

were better integrated, and the artillery, with the invaluable assistance of the heavy rifles on the cruisers and destroyers in the Gulf, broke up several enemy threats. On the 14th the artillery of the 36th Division fired more than 4,100 rounds; the 3 battalions of the 45th Division artillery topped this with 6,687 rounds—the most fired in one day during the Salerno landings. The enemy, moreover, had suffered severely on the 13th, and on the 14th his armor met further losses. The number of enemy tanks which we destroyed from the 9th through the 14th cannot be given exactly, but it must have been almost half the German strength.

While VI Corps had been fighting desperately, the British 10 Corps on our left had also been meeting heavy opposition. The main German strength, consisting of elements of the 16th Panzer Division north of the Sele, the 29th Panzer Division near Contursi, and 30 tanks in Battipaglia, could be turned on 10 Corps front. Dug in on the hills about the town of Salerno, the 46 Division had reason to fear an enemy infiltration into the area north of Vietri. Every unit was in the line. The 56 Division was in the open plain southeast of Battipaglia, its positions in full view of the enemy on nearby hills. On the night of the 13th the Germans shelled Salerno with artillery and attacked again with tanks from Battipaglia. The tanks persisted for 3 hours, but the Coldstream Guards, of 201 Guards Brigade (56 Division), and the 9 Royal Fusiliers, of 167 Infantry Brigade (56 Division), resisted stubbornly and held their ground.

By the evening of the 14th, the situation of the Fifth Army on the Salerno plain was much improved. The gap between VI and 10 Corps had been effectively closed, for as the corps had moved inland their left and right flanks had joined southeast of Battipaglia. Reinforcements were arriving. The 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment was already in the line, and the 180th Infantry of the 45th Division, which landed early on the 14th, was in reserve near Mount Soprano. The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment dropped during the night of September 14/15, and the 325th Glider Regimental Combat Team came in by LCI's on the 15th. The British 7 Armoured Division began landing in the 10 Corps sector on the 14th, and the American 509th Parachute Battalion, under Lt. Col. Doyle R. Yardley, dropped near Avellino on the night of 14/15 September to harass enemy lines of communication on the 10 Corps front.

The Strategic Air Force had been diverted on the 14th from its long-range hammering of railroads, dumps, and of movements far behind the lines; together with the Tactical Air Force it dropped as many tons of bombs as possible on Eboli, Battipaglia, and other key points. On the 14th alone 187 B-25's, 166 B-26's, and 170 B-17's of the Strategic Air Force operated over the Salerno plain. Throughout the night of the 14th the heavy bombing continued. Meanwhile 2 British battleships had been ordered to the Gulf of Salerno to add the power of their 15-inch rifles. The Fifth Army had held its beachhead against the full weight of the German counterattack and could now build up its strength for further advance toward Naples.

Pursuing the Enemy

(15 September-6 October)

WHEN OUR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE on the 14th indicated that the Salerno beachhead was safe, General Clark, in a letter to General Dawley, commanding VI Corps, congratulated every officer and enlisted man of the Fifth Army. He wrote:

We have arrived at our initial objective; our beachhead is secure. Additional troops are landing every day, and we are here to stay. Not one foot of ground will be given up.

Winning that fight, however, was not the end of the battle, for the Fifth Army had not yet captured the Naples port and airfields, its main objectives (Maps Nos. 15, 16, pages 76, 77). These objectives lay 30 miles northwest of our front lines, beyond the Campanian Apennines. In planning the Salerno attack the Allied commanders had reckoned with the dangers of crossing these mountains on roads winding through narrow passes. They had hoped that the initial rush of the landings would secure the routes north from Salerno and Vietri into the Nocera plain, but the toughness of the German resistance smashed these hopes. Now the Fifth Army must regain the offensive and fight its way across the mountains toward Naples.

General Montgomery's Eighth Army was approaching on the left flank of the German forces at Salerno. Units of the 1 Airborne Division entered Bari on 14 September and moved on north toward Foggia. Leading elements of the 5 Infantry Division made contact

with the Fifth Army at Vallo, southeast of Agropoli, on the 16th. If the enemy was to avoid being outflanked, he must withdraw. It is believed that the German high command accordingly directed XIV Panzer Corps in front of the United States Fifth Army to fall back toward the northwest in a vast pivot movement based on the Sorrento Peninsula. The enemy forces on this flank were to hold the mountain passes as long as possible to permit a thorough wrecking of Naples harbor and to safeguard their evacuation of the Campanian plain. Then they too would fall back to the Volturno River and link up with LXXVI Panzer Corps retreating before the Eighth Army to form a solid line across the Italian boot. The enemy plans called for stubborn resistance against 10 Corps and rear-guard action against VI Corps; the Germans would have almost no contact with the Eighth Army until they had pushed north of Foggia.

The plan of our advance on Naples was the complement of the German plan for withdrawal. Through the chain of the Campanian Apennines along the Sorrento Peninsula, where the enemy held most strongly, the Fifth Army attacked most fiercely. Once beyond the difficult passes of this chain, the army would travel the rest of the way over the Campanian plain. This was the shortest and easiest approach to Naples.

Within 10 Corps on the left flank the principal attack was assigned to the 46 Division, moving from Vietri sul Mare toward Nocera. On the right the 56 Division pressed straight north from Salerno to take the enemy on his right flank. The bulk of the 82d Airborne Division eventually went in on the extreme left of 10 Corps; together with the Ranger force and the British 23 Armoured Brigade, it followed the narrow road north from Maiori to flank the enemy defenses at Nocera from the west. Behind the 46 Division lay the British 7 Armoured Division, ready to pass through and strike for Naples as soon as our advance units had reached the Nocera plain.

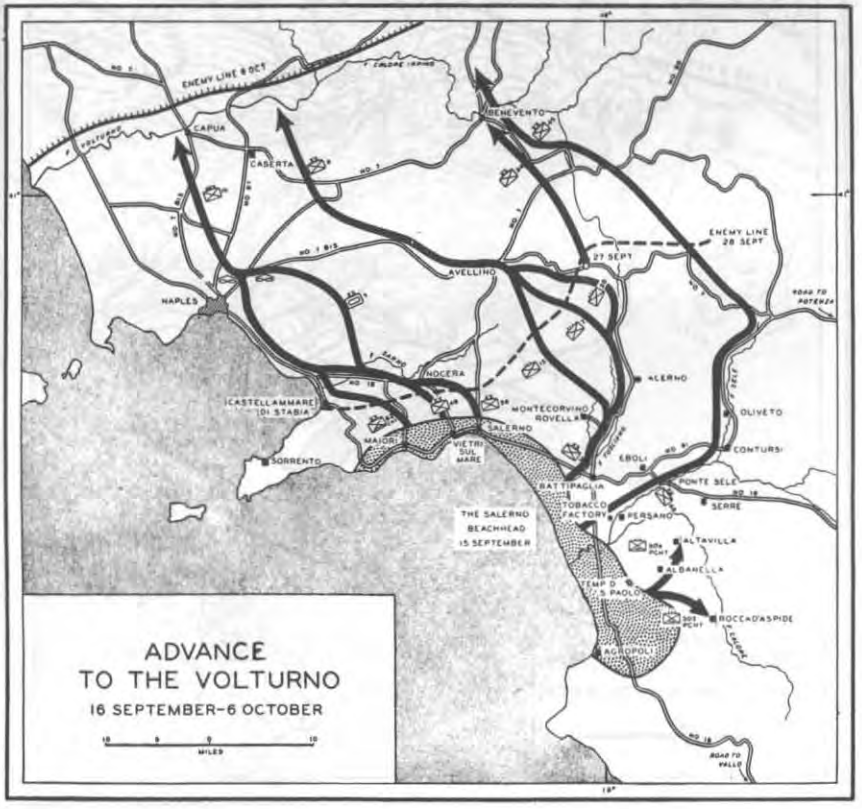
VI Corps, under the command of Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas from 20 September, received the mission of sweeping around the extreme right flank of the Fifth Army to maintain contact with the Eighth Army and to take the mountains east of Naples, thus threatening the German defense of the Campanian plain. Speed here was vital, both to put pressure on the main German forces in front of 10 Corps and also to discourage enemy demolitions.

Our Right Flank Advances, 15–19 September

VI Corps still had to drive the enemy from the Tobacco Factory and Hill 424 before it could enter the mountains. On 15 September enemy infantry were dug in all along the front of the 45th Division, but there were indications that the Germans might be pulling out on our extreme right flank. From positions on Mount Soprano the 505th Parachute Infantry sent patrols to Roccad'aspide on 16 September and found no Germans in the town; other patrols from the 504th Parachute Infantry reported only a few enemy in the vicinity of Albanella. The way seemed clear for a fresh attack on Altavilla.

During the afternoon of the 16th, Col. Reuben H. Tucker of the 504th led his 1st and 2d Battalions on the long, arduous march cross-country from Tempone di San Paolo up the Albanella ridge. After a brief rest there, the paratroopers moved out at 1630, the 1st Bat-

MAP NO. 15



talion in the lead, to launch a night attack against Hills 424 and 315 from the south. As night fell, enemy artillery became more active. Its intensity and accuracy hampered the advance and caused units to lose contact with each other, but the 1st Battalion drove back enemy outposts in the vicinity of Mount del Bosco, and there the troops bivouacked for the night. In the morning of the 17th the 1st Battalion moved to the unnumbered hill east of Altavilla, while the 2d Battalion held the north slopes of Mount del Bosco. Regimental Headquarters was cut off with severe losses. The 1st Battalion repelled a particularly heavy attack at 1100, but the Germans continued minor attacks. Enemy artillery pinned down the paratroopers.

The men of the 504th spent the day and night of 17 September crouched in foxholes, with artillery shells exploding everywhere. They had neither food nor water for more than 36 hours because their can-

MAP NO. 16





COMBAT ENGINEERS OF THE 142d INFANTRY *patrol the streets of Altavilla. The Germans were difficult to rout. On the 14th the Navy had fired 100 rounds of ammunition on their positions to clear the way for our final occupation on 18 September.*

teens had been emptied on the long trek from Tempone di San Paolo. Split into small groups, they had fought hard and had suffered heavy casualties, but had not recaptured Hills 424 and 315. The Germans were not ready to give them up. Finally the enemy began to withdraw, and his artillery fire diminished. Altavilla was deserted by late afternoon of the 18th, and tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion accompanied paratroopers into the town. On the third try Altavilla was ours for good.

The German evacuation of Altavilla and Hill 424 had been delayed as long as possible in order to protect the general enemy withdrawal from Eboli along Highway 91 through Contursi and then north. Units of the 45th Division west of the Sele found on the 17th that their patrols had increased freedom. Enemy artillery, however, continued active and a covering screen still remained well dug in on the old German line. During the night of the 17th the last Germans moved out from the immediate front of the division, and the morning of the 18th revealed motor vehicles and dust on Highway 91.

Strong patrols of the 45th Division promptly started north and soon reported that the enemy had completely broken contact. In the late afternoon and early night of the 18th our infantry pushed forward to the Tobacco Factory. Just after midnight Company K, 157th Infantry, entered Persano. The advance guard reached the high ground between Battipaglia and Eboli without opposition during the night. News that British reconnaissance units had entered Battipaglia made it clear that the enemy had abandoned the whole area.

All units of the 45th Division began to displace forward on the morning of the 19th, and by nightfall they held the high ground dominating Eboli, which had for so long been the center of enemy concentrations. During the same day elements of the 36th Division pushed east to Serre and also to Ponte Sele. Every part of the Salerno plain was firmly in our hands.

German Delaying Tactics

Moving forward from the Salerno plain to the Volturno River line, the VI Corps faced mountains and an enemy skilled in mountain warfare. As the Germans, chiefly from the 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (16th Panzer Division), withdrew north they used the shrewd delaying tactics which American soldiers had experienced in central and northern Sicily. Yet the terrain in Italy was even more rugged, and the fall rains were soon to prove an additional hindrance. The pattern of enemy rearguard action was clear. At chosen hillsides, small rearguard detachments of motorized infantry dug in their machine guns; the riflemen, placed higher up on either side, forced our troops to deploy and make time-consuming wide envelopments along the mountainsides.



BLOWN BRIDGES *were familiar sights to our advancing troops on the road to Acerno. At Olevano, the Germans blew this stone bridge. Engineers have constructed a bypass and steel treadway bridge upstream. An antiaircraft gun is in position on the demolished bridge.*

Enemy artillery pieces, mostly self-propelled, well forward in echelon, harassed our columns and interdicted the roads at critical spots. The mountains afforded excellent positions for this practice. One 88-mm gun, for example, strategically placed on a bare nose along Highway 91 north of Contursi, delivered direct fire on almost the entire length of the valley floor. The piece apparently was not camouflaged, but the light haze in the mountains and the flashhider so concealed the gun that only an observer directly in line with the barrel could spot it. Four to five hundred yards behind, a tank armed with a 75-mm gun supported the 88. From this position the enemy caused us the greatest possible delay; then he pulled out and moved farther back up the road.

Both in the approaches to the mountains and in the mountains themselves, blown bridges and mine fields were numerous. By-passes were always difficult and at times impossible. Occasionally an enemy detachment protected a demolition; more often blown bridges were merely left as time-consuming and troublesome problems for our engineers. When the enemy began finally to run out of high

explosive charges, he substituted artillery shells or mines. All the way up to the Volturno, our troops kept hearing the roar from German demolitions.

The 3d Division Takes Acerno, 20–27 September

Ahead of VI Corps there were only two routes north through the mountains. One of these leads almost straight north from Battipaglia through Acerno; the other is Highway 91, which bends east through Contursi and then north along the upper Sele River. Both roads meet Highway 7, the main east-west route from Avellino to Potenza. Since the 36th Division had suffered severely in the beachhead defense, it was detached from VI Corps and placed in Army reserve to refit and rest. The 3d Division, under Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, which had begun landing 18 September, took its place and moved up along the western route toward Highway 7 and Avellino; the 45th Division advanced on the right along Highway 91.

Toward midnight on 19 September, the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the 30th Infantry, advance guard of the 3d Division, moved through the ruin-encumbered streets of Battipaglia. At 0245 on the 20th, the platoon met a small detachment of enemy infantry where the road forks left to Montecorvino Rovella and right to Acerno and drove the detachment out. Our advance guard turned northeast on the Acerno road; the first elements of the 3d Division had entered the mountains.

It would be almost impossible to find terrain more unsuited to offensive warfare. The steep and narrow road follows the slopes of mountains as rugged as anything in the Rockies; it so swings about that a mile of its sinuous course can be observed from each curve. There are wind-swept passes, cliffs that fall away hundreds of feet to narrow valleys, and canyons where the sun penetrates only a brief time during the day. All these make rapid advance impossible. Nevertheless, this was our route.

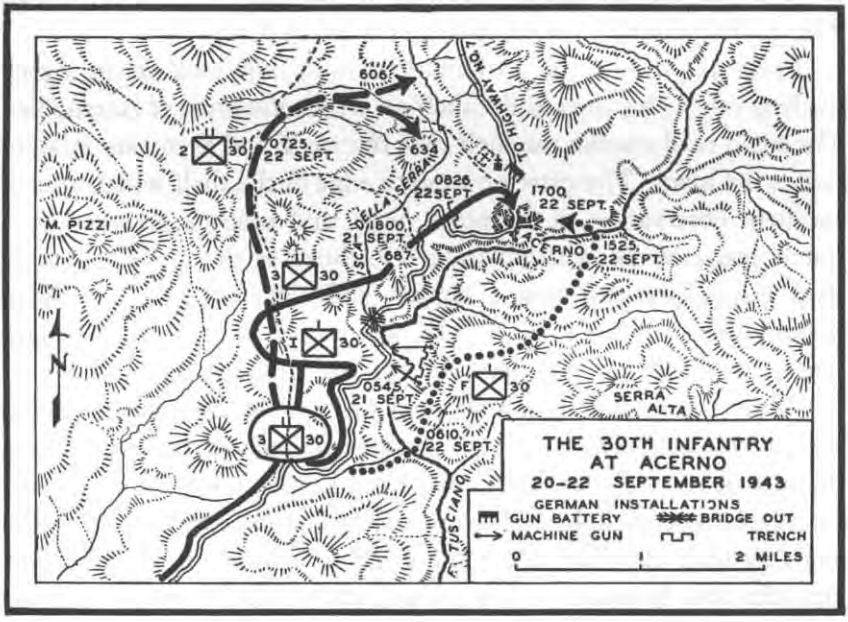
Our men pushed ahead without opposition until they came to a reverse curve 2 miles southwest of Acerno (May No. 17, page 82). Here the Isca della Serra plunges out of a narrow canyon and falls into the Tusciano. The road crosses a 60-foot gorge by a single-arch concrete bridge, the only major bridge along the entire stretch to

Acerno. The Germans had effectively blown it. Moreover, they commanded the curve of the road to the south by fire from machine gunners and riflemen placed on a hilltop across the Tusciano valley, which is here 300 feet deep. The platoon reported the facts, established an observation post, and waited for the rest of the regiment. The enemy, consisting of the 1st Battalion, 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, also waited, in a well-nigh impregnable position.

The 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, under Lt. Col. Edgar C. Doleman, left Battipaglia at 1030, 20 September. It reached the saddle just west of the Tusciano by 1925 and halted for the night. At daybreak on the 21st, Company I resumed the advance up the road, but the German command of the curve south of the bridge proved complete. Enemy artillery from positions just north of Acerno put down harassing fire occasionally on stretches of the road and pounded the 3d Battalion bivouac area shortly after our men had left it.

To strike at Acerno our troops clearly had to get off the road into the mountains, leaving the 9th and 41st Field Artillery Battalions to knock out the enemy artillery and to fire on enemy truck and tank movements in the vicinity of Acerno. A-36's of the Tactical Air Force flew a mission at 1245 along the road north of Acerno.

MAP NO. 17



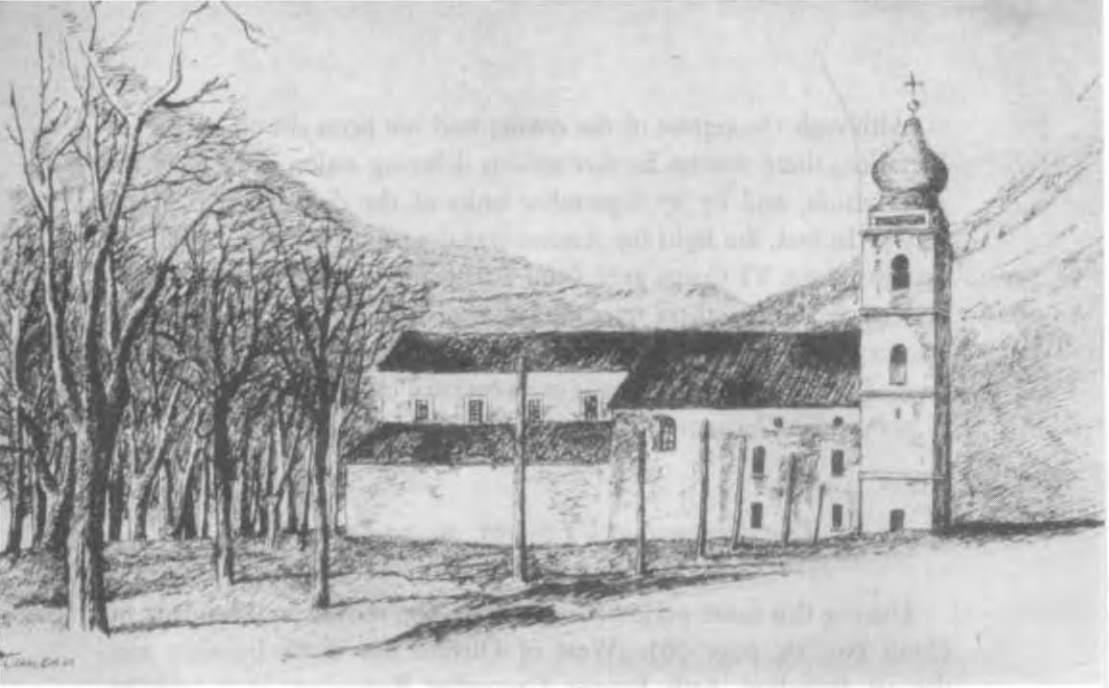
During most of the 21st, the 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, met slight enemy opposition as its men clambered and slid over the wild mountains west of the road. Company I zigzagged up the mountainside and joined Company L, which had moved up a rough trail leading north from the saddle. Then both companies advanced east across the hill just above the blown bridge. By 1800, Company I in the lead had gained the southern nose of Hill 687, northeast of the bridge.

Meanwhile the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, came up. Company G pushed north along the trail from the saddle with the mission of bypassing Acerno and cutting the escape route of the Germans north of the town. The rest of the battalion at first planned to advance along the main road to Acerno, but the advance guard drew artillery fire as it approached the blown bridge. It was then decided to reinforce Company G with the bulk of the 2d Battalion. Company F, however, was ordered down the precipitous slopes into the Tusciano valley and up the east side to drive out the enemy delaying force in that area and then to strike at Acerno from the south.

Through the night these units stumbled across the mountains. Shortly after daybreak on 22 September, Company F was on the heights east of the Tusciano, and the 2d Battalion held Hill 634 to the northwest of Acerno. One platoon of Company G was moving on toward Hill 606, across the valley on the main road north of Acerno. The 3d Battalion had occupied the rest of Hill 687.

From its position the 3d Battalion could now look across a relatively gentle valley toward the shelf on which the town of Acerno lies. The main road reaches the shelf by a reverse V and then runs straight east to the town. The extreme western edge of the shelf which affords excellent observation to the north, west, and south is crowned by a stately grove of tall chestnut trees. Northeast of the grove, generally level ground extends past a church and cemetery to the wooded mountainside behind Acerno. The only escape route of the Germans ran north along this mountainside toward Highway 7.

While the 2d Battalion attempted to cross the deep valley on the west of this escape route, the 3d Battalion launched an attack on the chestnut grove. At 0800 Companies I and L, with L on the left, moved out against enemy light and heavy machine guns, supported by riflemen; by 0842 they had taken the grove in a bitter fight with hand grenades and bayonets. After reorganization, the companies moved



THE CHURCH AT ACERNO.

northeast toward the cemetery and church, but an enemy 75-mm battery to the right behind the church, together with mortar fire, forced them to give ground. A small enemy counterattack against Company L was beaten off at 1030. Our troops attacked again and were again driven back by the artillery-mortar combination, which was keeping open the route of escape for the last German infantryman in the vicinity of the town. The main body of the enemy had pulled out in the middle of the morning, after the chestnut grove was lost.

At 1300 our attack began anew. The 2d Battalion continued its attempt to cross the valley toward the main road, and the 3d Battalion hit at Acerno from the northwest. The three light artillery battalions of the division put down a concentration on Acerno at 1310; during the period 1252–1325 our artillery poured a total of 1,016 rounds into the town. Under this pressure the remaining German infantry withdrew in armored vehicles. But enemy mortar fire continued to pin the 3d Battalion. At 1525 Company F to the south and the 3d Battalion on the northwest attacked again, and at 1700 the 3d Battalion reached the town. Twelve prisoners were captured in an antitank position to the southeast, and twenty others were rounded up on the hillsides to the north.

Although the retreat of the enemy had not been cut off by the 2d Battalion, there was no further serious delaying action in front of the 3d Division, and by 27 September units of the division held Highway 7. In fact, the fight for Acerno was the most protracted of all the actions in the VI Corps area from Battipaglia to the Volturno. The pattern of all the others resembles that of Acerno: enemy motorized infantry and self-propelled guns were well-emplaced, close to the road of escape, forcing arduous cross-country movement by our troops to get on the German flanks.

The Advance of VI Corps, 20–27 September

During this same period the 45th Division moved up Highway 91 (Map No. 15, page 76). West of Oliveto the 180th Infantry met the 1st Battalion, 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, in a position which forced our troops to deploy widely, but on 22 September the 180th took the enemy strongpoint with the aid of tanks from Company A, 191st Tank Battalion, and from the 756th Tank Battalion. On 23 September the 179th passed through the 180th and advanced up the west bank of the Sele parallel to the 157th Infantry on the east bank. These regiments met a more persistent enemy delaying action than that encountered by the 3d Division, but by the morning of the 26th the 45th Division securely held the junction of Highways 7 and 91.

VI Corps had met the requirement of speed. In 8 days the 3d Division had advanced 28 miles, measured along the road from Battipaglia to Highway 7, though the mountain detours made the actual distance much greater. The 45th Division, swinging east, had moved 34 miles from its position on the morning of the 20th. Each division had pushed the enemy out of excellent positions and had kept the advance rolling in spite of every difficulty. Frequently the infantry advance guard was beyond the supporting range of the artillery, struggling to get its guns up over the crowded roads full of bottlenecks. Units of the 3d Division got so far into the mountains that they could be supplied only by mule trains, which they had brought from Sicily, and at one point even mule trains had to give way to human pack trains from the reserve companies.



A BRIDGE SOUTHWEST OF ACERNO *after our engineers had repaired it.*

The 10th and 120th Engineer Battalions, with resourcefulness and endurance, did much to aid the VI Corps advance. The engineers swept the roads for mines. They operated supply dumps and maintained water points. They filled in road craters and kept the surfaces passable under the heavy burdens imposed by the restricted road net. Wherever possible they constructed new roads to increase our freedom of action. They posted signs, laid out cemeteries, and at Acerno even constructed a landing strip for the divisional artillery airplanes. They built bridges and bypasses on almost every mile of the roads used by the two divisions.

Each enemy demolition cost our engineers labor. The magnitude of their task may be indicated by the fact that on 2,200 yards of the Acerno road north of that town the enemy blew five bridges. Bypasses, moreover, were not always possible in the mountains. In 2 days Company C, 10th Engineers, rebuilt a bridge south of Acerno, completing on 23 September at 1500 a two-story, two-bent trestle span 80 feet long, capable of carrying 18 tons.

Two days later Company A of the same battalion was confronted by an even more difficult job. In the canyon north of Acerno the Germans blew not only a bridge but also the cliffside, so that for a total

of 100 feet the road ceased to exist. After 2 days' work the company reopened the road at 1900, 26 September. Forty feet of it was steel treadway bridge; the rest had been cut out of the sheer cliffside.

Supported by the 36th Engineer Regiment (Combat) of VI Corps, the two divisional engineer battalions thus patched up the roads behind the infantry and kept the supply lines open. From the night of the 26th on, their work was made immeasurably more difficult by heavy rains which turned every bypass into a sticky bottleneck, damaged some of the temporary bridges, and washed rocks and dirt down the mountainsides onto all the roads. Infantrymen were pressed into service to clear the way, and traffic was cut to a minimum, but it went through. Between German demolitions and the fall rains the advance of VI Corps was undeniably retarded, but the engineers kept that delay to a matter of days rather than of weeks.

Avellino, Naples, and the Volturno, 28 September–6 October

While VI Corps had been struggling in the rain-swept mountains, 10 Corps had forced its way through the passes south of Nocera. By the 28th our troops all along the line were ready for a swift rush forward, the British on Naples, the Americans on the important road junction of Avellino (Map No. 15, page 76).

The regiments of the 3d Division were by the 28th poised in a great arc about Avellino, with the 133d Regimental Combat Team of the 34th Division north of Highway 7. (This division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder, had begun landing at Paestum 21 September.) Our troops converged quickly on the objective, and by a sudden night attack 29/30 September we pounced on the town before enemy demolition parties could finish their work.

At the same time 10 Corps swooped down on Naples, led by 7 Armoured Division. At nightfall on the 30th, units of 10 Corps were on either side of Mount Vesuvius; at 0930, 1 October, the King's Dragoon Guards, under command of 10 Corps, entered Naples without opposition. They found a city more terrified than destroyed, although the damage was grave enough. Previous Allied air raids had smashed most of the harbor installations, and the Germans completed the wreckage before they left, scuttling ships at the piers and sinking obstacles in the harbor. The waterfront itself was a mass of crumbled



INFANTRY OF THE 3D DIVISION MOVE NORTH FROM AVELLINO, *an important road junction, captured on 29/30 September. The 30th Infantry, 3d Division, covered the distance between Acerno and Avellino in 8 days, despite the delaying tactics of the enemy. Their sudden attack on Avellino had caught the enemy before demolition parties could complete their work.*

stones and fire-twisted steel. The main aqueduct was cut; all public utilities had suspended operation; hidden time bombs made every quarter dangerous. Yet the Fifth Army now had a harbor which could be quickly restored to service, and supply of its units was now shifted north from the Salerno beaches. The 82d Airborne Division entered Naples, 2 October, and took over police and reconstruction work in the city.

The occupation of the city, however, was not enough. To defend

Naples harbor and the vital airports in the plains nearby required a substantial natural barrier. We must hold the Volturno River, 20 miles to the north. So our troops drove on without delay. While 10 Corps moved up the Campanian plain, VI Corps secured the mountain slopes on the northeast. The 34th and the 45th Divisions advanced on the focal road junction of Benevento. The 45th Reconnaissance Troop reached it first, at 1210 on 2 October; at 2330 on the same day the 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, entered the town and pushed on to hold a bridgehead across the river. The 3d Division advanced into the mountain mass above Caserta, and by 6 October our troops everywhere commanded the south bank of the Volturno. Now Naples was secure, and the main objective of the Salerno landings had been achieved, 27 days after D Day on the Paestum beaches.

THE VOLTURNO RIVER VALLEY *and the hills beyond were to be the scenes of the second phase of the invasion of Italy. In the background, artillery fire against German defenses prepares the way for the next attack.*



MAP NO. 18


10°
14°
18°
HUNGARY
MILAN
VENICE
PO RIVER
FRANCE
GENOA
YUGOSLAVIA
44°
ADRIATIC SEA
TIBER RIVER
CORSICA
OCTOBER 1943
ROME
FOGGIA
GAETA
9 OCTOBER 1943
BARI
NAPLES
BRINDISI
SALERNO
21 SEPTEMBER 1943
TYRRHENIAN SEA
FIFTH
TARANTO
BRITISH
40°
SARDINIA
MESSINA
PALERMO
EIGHTH
BRITISH
17 AUGUST 1943
SICILY
BIZERTE
TUNIS
11 NOVEMBER 1942
ALGERIA
13 MAY 1943
TUNISIA
36°
ADVANCE
IN THE CENTRAL
MEDITERRANEAN
11 NOVEMBER 1942–8 OCTOBER 1943
0 50 100 150
MILES

Conclusion

OUR ARRIVAL AT THE VOLTURNO did not end the Italian campaign; hard winter months of mountain fighting still lay ahead (Map No. 18, page 90). By 6 October, however, the Fifth Army under General Clark had achieved its first objective. Together with their British allies, Americans had again successfully stormed enemy-held beaches, this time on the coast of Europe. They had beaten off determined German counterattacks by a stubborn defense in which the infantry, the artillery, the engineers, and all the other arms had added new laurels to American battle records. When the enemy finally admitted failure and withdrew before the flanking threat of the Eighth Army, American and British divisions swept forward rapidly from the plains up into the mountains. Despite every obstacle of nature and the enemy, they had pushed on to their goal.

The Salerno campaign was not won without its casualties, and the American units in the Fifth Army had paid for their success. From 9 September to 6 October, 727 American soldiers were killed in action, 2,720 wounded, and 1,423 reported missing—a total of 4,870. Most of these casualties were incurred by the 36th Division and the 45th Division in the beachhead fight. The 36th Division alone, during the period 9–20 September, lost 267 killed in action, 679 wounded, and 984 missing. The British units in 10 Corps, delivering the main thrust

on the left flank, suffered even more heavily with a total of 6,847 killed, wounded, and missing. The Germans likewise paid a heavy price, and enemy divisions retreated to the Volturno with their strength far reduced.

While the Fifth Army stood poised at the Volturno for the next blow, the full meaning of the Italian invasion became clearer. All Italy south of the Volturno was in our hands. Supplies and men

INSIGNIA OF ARMY, CORPS,



Fifth Army



VI Corps



36th Division



45th Division



10 Corps



56th Division



46th Division

could now pour in through Naples, and our bombers could soon fly missions over Europe from Italian airfields. Absorbed in the Salerno campaign, the enemy could not send reinforcements to Sardinia and Corsica, which fell to a French expeditionary force. Allied control of the central Mediterranean was nearly complete. The outer ramparts of Hitler's Fortress Europe were crumbling under the blows of two Allied armies in Italy.

AND DIVISIONS AT SALERNO



82d Airborne Division



34th Division



3d Division



7 Armoured Division

Insignia of U.S. Ranger Battalions, Commandos, 23 Armoured Brigade, and 201 Guards Brigade not shown