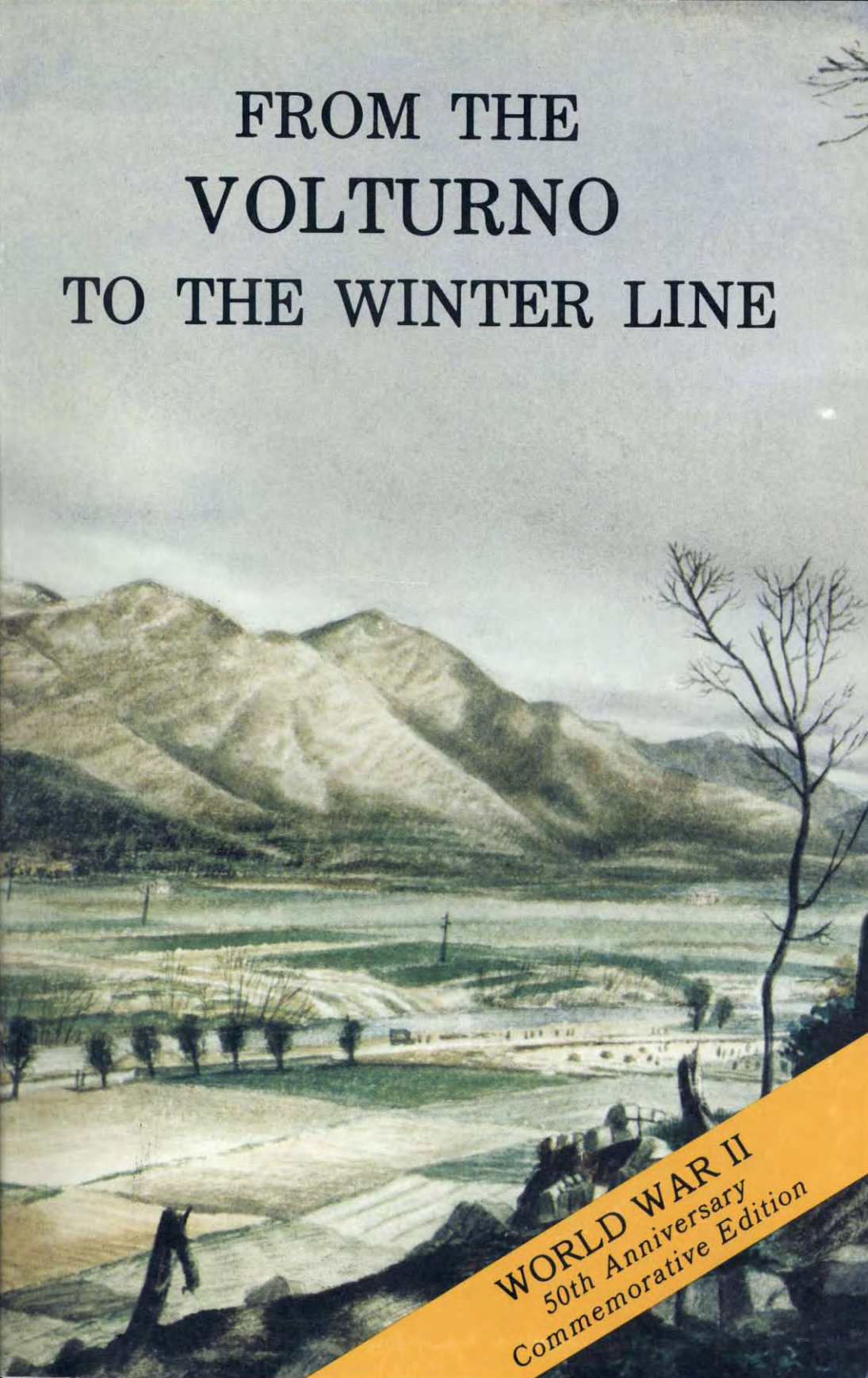
FROM THE VOLTURNO TO THE WINTER LINE



WORLD WAR II
50th Anniversary
Commemorative Edition

FROM THE VOLTURNO TO THE WINTER LINE

6 October – 15 November 1943



CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

UNITED STATES ARMY

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Foreword to CMH Edition

From the Volturno to the Winter Line (6 October–15 November 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.

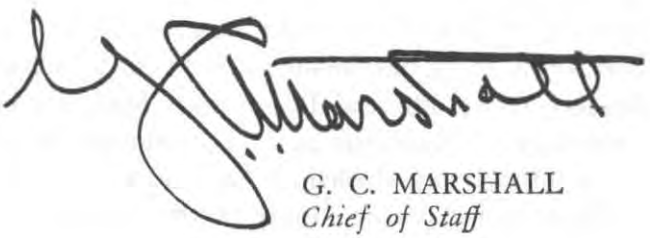
Washington, D.C.
15 September 1989

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.
11 December 1944

From the Volturno to the Winter Line is a sequel to *Salerno: American Operations from the Beaches to the Volturno.* After Fifth Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, had established the Salerno beachhead and captured Naples, it pushed the Germans northward across the Volturno River and into the mountain defenses of the Winter Line. The actions of the American VI Corps, which served as right flank of Fifth Army during the six weeks of this advance, are here narrated in detail. Closely related actions of the British 10 Corps, Fifth Army's left flank, and of the British Eighth Army, operating on the Adriatic coast, are summarized briefly.

This study is the fourth 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.

Volturno is based on the best military records available. The manuscript, terrain photographs (pp. 12, 29, 35, 37, 63, 67, 77, 78, 86), and one painting (p. 15) were prepared in the field by the Fifth Army Historical Section. The aerial photographs are by the U. S. Army Air Forces (pp. 17, 23, 62); all others 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, criticisms, and additional information which may be of value in the preparation of a complete and definitive history of the Volturno crossings.

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MAP NO. 1


10°
14°
18°
46°
42°
38°
ADRIATIC SEA
TYRRHENIAN SEA
ROME
TERMOLI
FOGGIA
VOLTURNO R.
BARI
BRINDISI
NAPLES
SALERNO
TARANTO
XXXX
FIFTH
XX
I
BRITISH
XXXX
EIGHTH
BRITISH
REGGIO DI CALABRIA
ADVANCE IN ITALY
3 SEPTEMBER - 6 OCTOBER 1943
GERMAN DEFENSE LINE
6 OCTOBER 1943
20 10 0 10 20 30 40 50
MILES

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Moving to the Volturno

Introduction

BEFORE DAWN ON THE MORNING OF 13 OCTOBER 1943, American and British assault troops of the Fifth Army waded the rain-swollen Volturno River in the face of withering fire from German riflemen and machine gunners dug in along the northern bank. Water-soaked and chilled to the bone, our troops fought their way through enemy machine-gun pits and fox holes to establish a firm bridgehead. This crossing of the Volturno opened the second phase of the Allied campaign in Italy. Five weeks earlier the Fifth Army had landed on the hostile beaches of the Gulf of Salerno. Now it was attacking a well-defended river line.

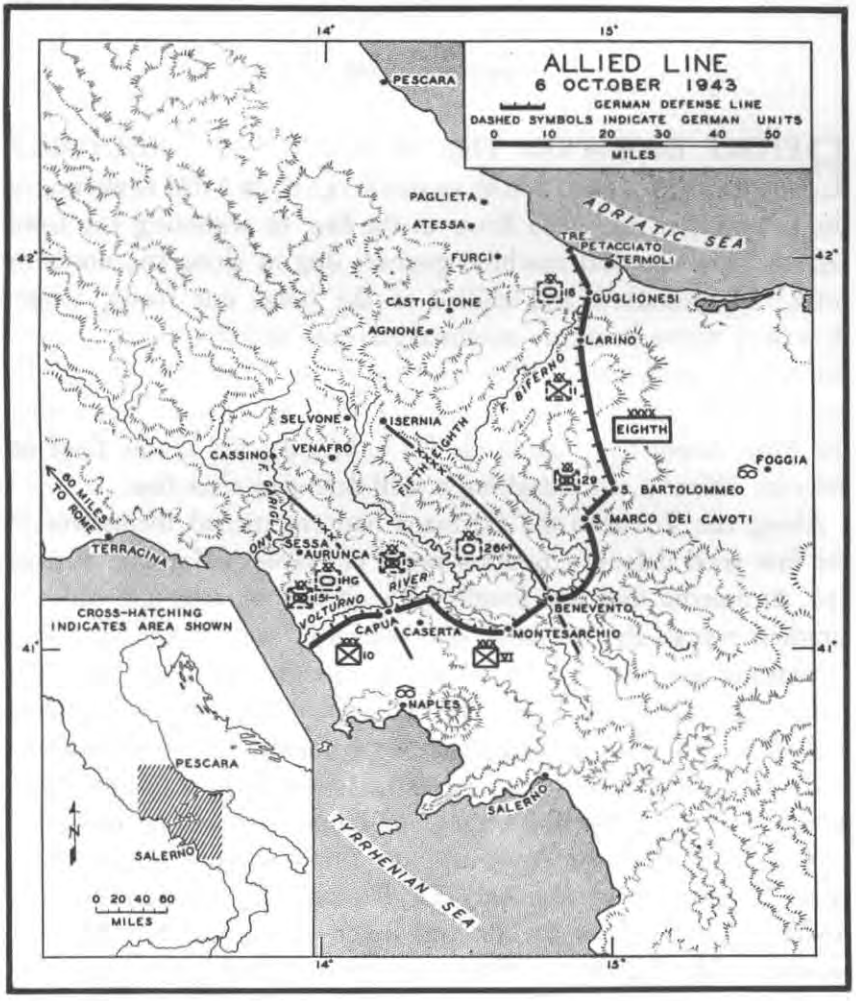
Along the Volturno the Germans had entrenched themselves in the first good defensive position north of Naples (Map No. 2, page 2). At Salerno they had fought for each foot of sand and counter-attacked repeatedly, but after our beachhead was secure, they had carried out an orderly withdrawal. Under pressure from the Fifth Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, their rearguards had relinquished the great port of Naples with its surrounding airfields, providing us with the base necessary for large-scale operations west of the rugged Apennine mountain range, backbone of the Italian peninsula. East of the Apennines the British Eighth Army, under General (now Field Marshal) Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, had reached the mouth of the Biferno River during the first week of October. The Eighth and Fifth Armies now held a line across the

peninsula running south from Torre Petacciato on the Adriatic Sea for some sixty-five miles, then west to a point on the Tyrrhenian Sea just south of the Volturno. Along this line of rivers and mountains the Germans clearly intended to make a stubborn stand, hoping to delay, perhaps to stop, our northward advance.

Fifth Army Prepares for the Second Phase of the Italian Campaign

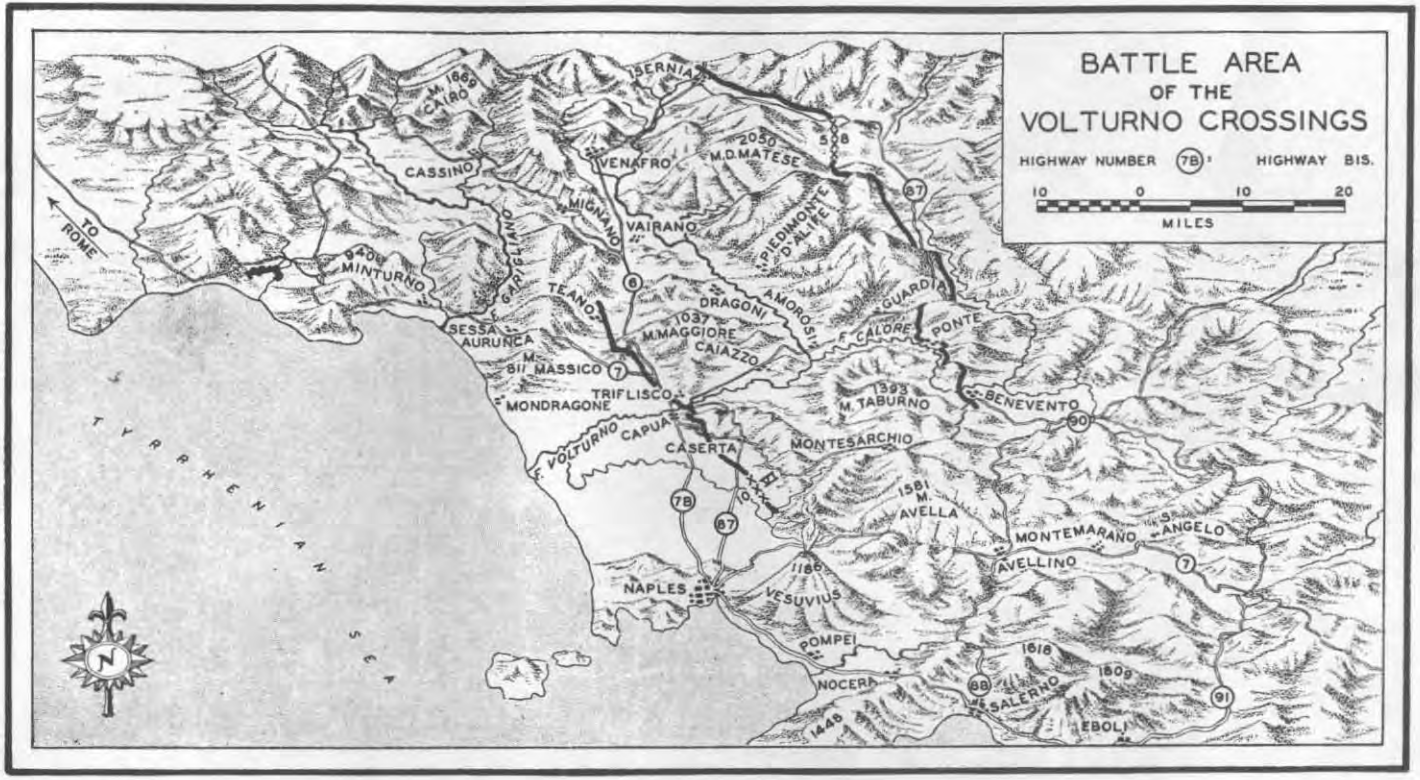
On 15 September, 15th Army Group, under General Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander, instructed Fifth Army to cross the Volturno

MAP NO. 2





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


BATTLE AREA
OF THE
VOLTURNO CROSSINGS
HIGHWAY NUMBER (7B) HIGHWAY BIS.
10 0 10 20
MILES
TO ROME
M. CAIRO 1669
CASSINO
ISERNIA
VENAFRO
M.D.MATESE 2050
528
87
MIGNANO
VAIRANO
PIEDIMONTE D'ALIFE
MINTURNO
GARIGLIANO
TEANO
6
DRAGONI
AMOROSI
GUARDIA
SESSA AURUNCA
M. MAGGIORE 1037
CAIAZZO
CALORE
PONTE
M. MASSICO 811
7
TRIFLISCO
MONDRAGONE
M. TABURNO 1393
BENEVENTO
90
VOLTURNO
CAPUA
CASERTA
MONTESARCHIO
7B
87
10
M. AVELLA 1581
MONTEMARANO
S. ANGELO
AVELLINO
7
NAPLES
1186
VESUVIUS
POMPEI
NOCERA
1618
88
SALERNO
1809
91
EBOLI
1448
TYRRHENIAN SEA
N

MAP NO. 3

River and drive the enemy some thirty miles northward into the mountains which extend from Sessa Aurunca, near the Tyrrhenian coast, through Venafro to Isernia, the point of junction with the Eighth Army (Map No. 3, opposite page, and Map No. 30, inside back cover). For the task of carrying out army group instructions General Clark had U. S. VI Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas, and the British 10 Corps, commanded by Lt. Gen. Sir Richard L. McCreery. VI Corps was composed of three of the finest battle-tested divisions in the U. S. Army: the 3d Division, under Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr.; the 34th Division, under Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder; and the 45th Division, under Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton. The British 10 Corps was also composed of three seasoned divisions: the 46 Division, under Maj. Gen. John L. I. Hawkesworth; the 56 Division, under Maj. Gen. Gerald W. R. Templer; and the 7 Armoured Division, under Maj. Gen. George W. E. J. Erskine. Together with their supporting units the two corps constituted a force of over 100,000 fighting men. (See chart, page 118.)

To oppose the Fifth Army, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander of the German Tenth Army, had the 3d and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, the Hermann Goering Division, and elements of the 26th Panzer Division. Kesselring's force was smaller than Fifth Army, but it was fighting a delaying action in terrain and weather which gave every advantage to the defense.

The western part of the area from which Fifth Army had to drive the enemy in order to reach the line of mountains designated as its objective is a broad stretch of level farm land fifteen to twenty miles wide extending northwest along the coast approximately thirty miles from Naples to the Mount Massico ridge line. It is a fertile region of vineyards, olive groves, and carefully tilled fields, dotted with towns. This coastal plain was the zone of advance assigned by General Clark to 10 Corps. The Volturno River, flowing west across it, provided the enemy with a strong defensive position. General Clark ordered 10 Corps to drive to the Volturno, force a crossing of the river, and continue through the plain to seize the Mount Massico ridge.

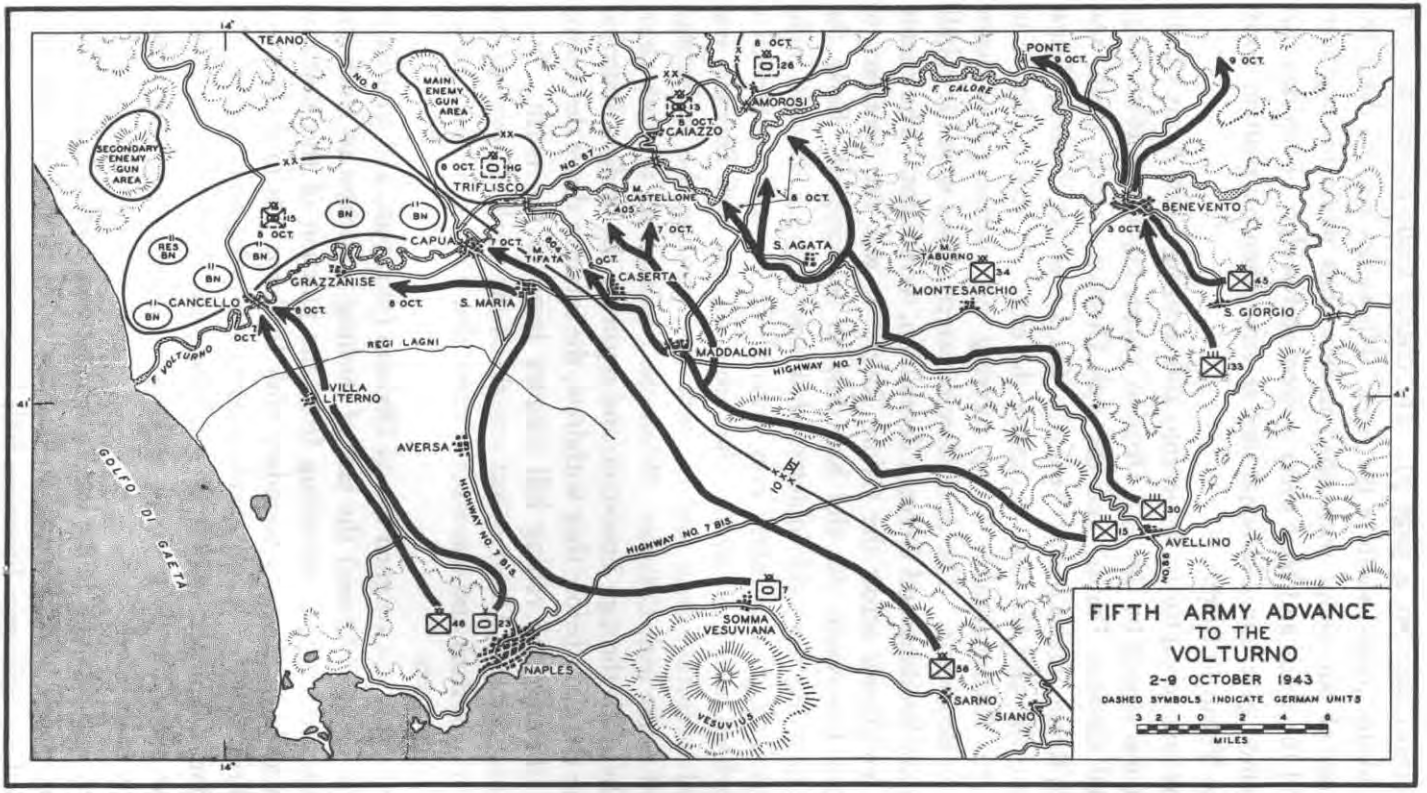
To VI Corps was assigned the area of mountains and valleys stretching some thirty-five miles east from the coastal plain to include the eastern slopes of the massive Matese range, watershed of the peninsula. This mountain country varies from low hills covered with olive

orchards and terraced fields to barren rocky peaks about two thousand meters high. Villages of tightly crowded gray stone houses cling to the steep slopes, and crumbling ruins of ancient castles here and there look down on the green valleys below. The rugged mountains are a formidable obstacle to the movement of troops, and the Volturno and Calore rivers reinforce the barrier. The Volturno, rising in the high mountains north of Venafro, follows an erratic course southeast to Amorosi, where it is joined by the Calore. Then, turning west, it cuts through a narrow gap in the mountains at Triflisco and flows out into the coastal plain. The Calore rises in the mountains southeast of Benevento and flows generally westward to its junction with the Volturno. The lower reaches of the Volturno and Calore form a continuous obstacle, almost sixty miles long, lying directly in the path of any advance on Rome from the south. If the Fifth Army should breach the river defenses, the enemy would have to fall back to the range of mountains behind Sessa Aurunca, Venafro, and Isernia. There the Germans were already building even stronger defenses later known as their "Winter Line." Time was vital. Delay favored the enemy. He had more time to improve his defenses, and the continual autumn rain, swelling the river and turning the valleys to mud, made his defenses more difficult to approach.

A preliminary objective of VI Corps was Benevento, which it was ordered to capture with one division. This division was then to drive north and west twenty-two miles down the Calore Valley to the Volturno, turn northwest up the valley of the Volturno, and advance some thirty miles to the mountains behind Venafro. The two remaining divisions of the corps were to cross the Volturno on a 15-mile front between the junction of the rivers and the Triflisco Gap. Then they were to push northwest through the hill mass lying between the upper Volturno and the coastal plain to the army's immediate objective, the mountain complex just north of Sessa Aurunca. General Clark's orders to the two corps under his command established the over-all plan for the second phase of the Italian campaign.

Getting Into Position

Before detailed plans for an attack on the river line could be worked out it was first necessary to capture Benevento, the key road and rail center on Fifth Army's right flank, and to bring all units up to the


TEANO
MAIN ENEMY GUN AREA
SECONDARY ENEMY GUN AREA
TRIFLISCO
CAIAZZO
AMOROSI
PONTE
BENEVENTO
M. CASTELLONE
405
S. AGATA
M. TIFATA
CAPUA
CASERTA
GRAZZANISE
CANCELLO
S. MARIA
MADDALONI
M. TABURNO
MONTESARCHIO
S. GIORGIO
REGI LAGNI
F. VOLTURNO
VILLA LITERNO
AVERSA
HIGHWAY NO. 7
HIGHWAY NO. 7 BIS
GOLFO DI GAETA
SOMMA VESUVIANA
VESUVIUS
NAPLES
AVELLINO
SARNO
SIANO
F. CALORE
FIFTH ARMY ADVANCE TO THE VOLTURNO
2-9 OCTOBER 1943
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE GERMAN UNITS
MILES

MAP NO. 4

Volturno (Map No. 4, page 7). The enemy made no serious effort to hold the ground south of the river. His tactics were to delay the advance of our troops with small mobile units while his engineers mined the roads and blew every culvert and bridge. Each day that he gained gave him additional time to strengthen his position north of the Volturno River.

The task of capturing Benevento and securing Fifth Army's right flank was shared by the 34th Division (133d, 135th, and 168th Regimental Combat Teams) and the 45th Division (157th, 179th, and 180th Regimental Combat Teams). On 2 October, General Lucas ordered the 34th Division to capture the city. At 1200 a platoon of the 45th Reconnaissance Troop carrying out routine patrol duties entered Benevento. The debris-littered streets, filled with the rubble from our bombing and German demolition, were silent. The enemy had withdrawn across the Calore River. It was not necessary to capture Benevento; the city had only to be occupied. Early the next morning the 133d Infantry, after completing a difficult night march through a drizzling rain, entered the city and established a bridgehead across the river. That same day the 34th Division was placed in corps reserve and the task of expanding the bridgehead passed to the 45th Division. While the engineers set to work clearing the roads through Benevento and repairing the bridges destroyed by the Germans before they withdrew, the infantry drove the enemy back through the rolling hill country lying to the north. By 9 October, the 45th Division had completed the work of securing the army's right flank and was ready to drive west down the Calore Valley to the Volturno.

General Lucas assigned the 3d Division (7th, 15th, and 30th Regimental Combat Teams) the task of pushing northwest to reach the Volturno on a front extending from the junction of the Volturno and Calore rivers to the boundary with 10 Corps, just to the west of the Triflisco Gap. On 2 October, when the order was received, the division was in the vicinity of Avellino, some thirty miles southeast of the river and deep in the mountains. The troops took immediately to the road.

The 15th Infantry on the left flank drove west down Highway 7 Bis to the coastal plain. Then skirting the edge of the mountains, it entered the light gray limestone hills lying north and east of Caserta.



ROYAL PALACE AT CASERTA

On the west side of the town, troops of the 1st Battalion passed by the royal palace of Caserta built by King Charles III of Naples in the eighteenth century. A huge structure containing nearly twelve hundred rooms, the palace is large enough to have housed the whole 3d Division, but the troops had no time to enjoy the luxuries of a royal estate. Pushing on across the formal gardens, which extend back for a mile and a half to the hills, the 1st Battalion, on 6 October, occupied Mount Tifata, a sharp-peaked mountain overlooking the Triflisco Gap where the Volturno enters the coastal plain. The next day the 2d Battalion, fighting through the hills east of Caserta, reached the rocky crest of Mount Castellone. From their excellent observation posts on Mount Tifata and Mount Castellone 15th Infantry observers could look down on the brush-covered banks and turbulent waters of the river across which they would soon fight their way.

On the division's right flank the 30th Infantry was engaged in clearing the V-shaped valley lying between the hills east of Caserta and the junction of the rivers. The broad belt of farm land on the south side of the Volturno offered no covered routes of approach to the river; on the north side, however, brush-clad hills come down almost to the

river bank, giving the enemy concealment as well as excellent observation over the whole valley. After two days of hard fighting, the 30th Infantry on 8 October completed the work of driving the last enemy rearguard units across the river.

While the 45th Division was expanding its bridgehead across the Calore River at Benevento and the 3d Division was working its way through the mountains to the Volturno, 10 Corps had been driving north across the coastal plain. By 7 October it had reached the Volturno and had cleared the whole area from the mountains to the sea. Before withdrawing across the river, the enemy destroyed what was left of the bridges. The important bridges had already been knocked out in September by our air force, blocking the enemy supply lines to the south. With all bridges out, the 200- to 300-foot-wide river, swollen by the almost daily rains of the first week of October, presented a formidable obstacle. A pause in the operations was necessary so that the Fifth Army could bring up bridging equipment and prepare for a coordinated attack.

Orders Are Issued for the Attack on the Volturno

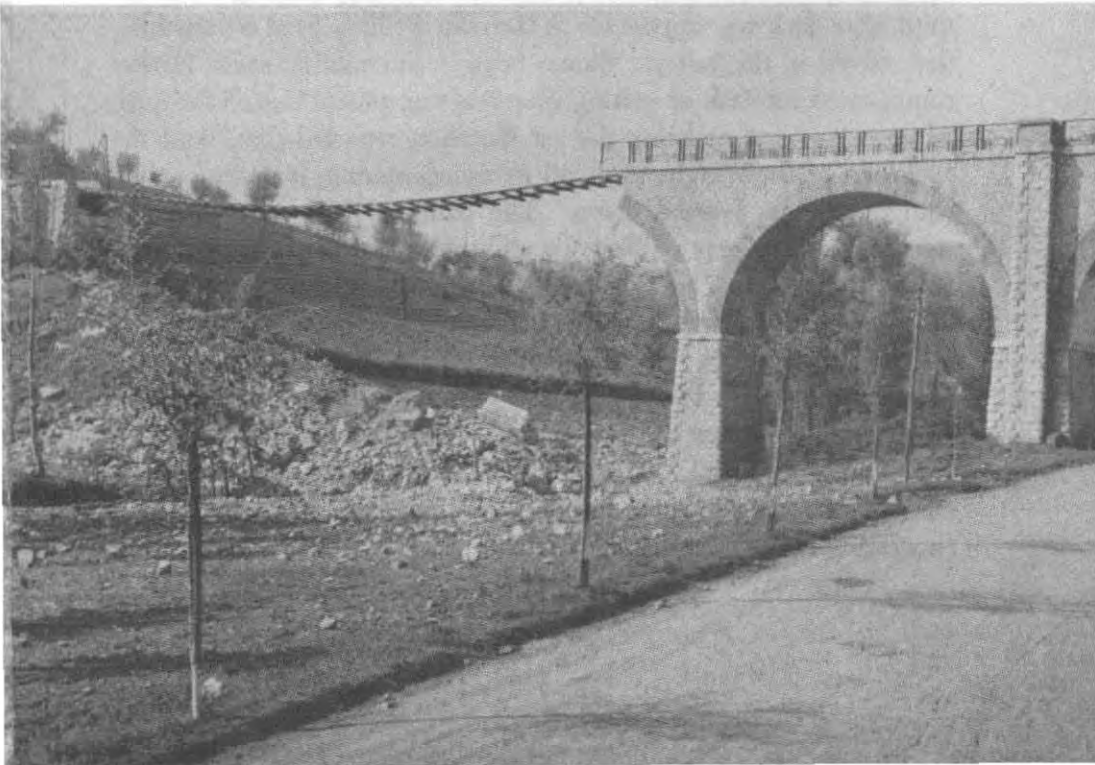
With 10 Corps and the 3d Division holding the ground on the south bank of the river, General Clark, on 7 October, issued his orders for the attack on the Volturno (Map No. 4, page 7). VI Corps was instructed to force a crossing of the river on the night of 9/10 October in the vicinity of the Triflisco Gap and drive along the ridge line running northwest from Triflisco in the direction of Teano. 10 Corps was to attack the next night. In working out the details of VI Corps' part in the attack General Lucas was faced with the fact that the 3d Division was holding a front of almost fifteen miles extending from the Triflisco Gap to the junction of the Volturno and Calore rivers. If the 3d Division was to launch an effective attack at Triflisco, concentration of its forces was necessary. Accordingly, General Lucas ordered the 34th Division, which was in corps reserve, to take over the sector held by the 30th Infantry and to make immediate preparations to join the 3d Division in a coordinated assault on the enemy defenses across the river. The 45th Division also had an important role to play. If it could drive the enemy down the Calore Valley as far as the upper Volturno Valley, it would be in position to threaten

the flank of the enemy opposing the 34th Division. By 8 October the over-all plan of attack was set. There remained only the question of how quickly the 34th Division could move into line.

The 34th Division Moves Into Line

After the 133d Infantry had taken Benevento on 3 October, the 34th Division had been ordered to assemble in the vicinity of Montesarchio, eighteen miles to the east of Caserta (Map No. 4, page 7). Although the march to this new area involved no fighting with the enemy, combating the weather and the rough mountain roads was a battle in itself. Beginning with a terrific thunderstorm which struck the area on the evening of 28 September, rain followed day after day. The curse of rain and mud dogged the footsteps of our troops all the way to the Volturno. When VI Corps orders for the relief of the 30th Infantry reached General Ryder, the 34th Division was still in the process of assembling its troops around Montesarchio.

A BRIDGE NEAR MONTESARCHIO *was wrecked by the withdrawing enemy. Demolitions have reduced the stonework to rubble; the rails remain hanging in mid-air. Orders to the Goering Engineers were comprehensive, "Destroy: bridges, stations, water, gas and electricity works, factories, mills. Mine: roads, houses, and entrances to villages."*





MONTESARCHIO, ON HIGHWAY 7, *has a narrow plain intensely cultivated. The trees support vines above the stubble of a grain field in this view near a 34th Division bivouac. Mount Taburno, with olive trees terraced on its lower slopes, rises in the background.*

At 1510 on 8 October the 30th Infantry, in the valley east of Caserta, received the news that it was to be relieved. Any shifting of troops until after dark was impossible as German artillery fired on anything that stirred in the valley. Blown bridges and muddy roads further complicated the task of getting men and equipment out of the area. At 0720 the next morning the 1st Battalion reported that, with the exception of about eight jeeps, all its transportation, including signal equipment, was bogged down. The battalion had suffered heavy casualties from enemy artillery fire and the wounded had to be moved out on stretchers. The tasks of clearing out the Germans, patrolling the river banks for crossing points, and trying to keep dry and warm in the rainy weather were impossible. When the regiment was relieved, the first two tasks were nearly completed, but not the third. The men had not yet received their barracks bags which, owing to lack of shipping space, had been left in Sicily. Still dressed for summer weather, they shivered through the cold, rainy fall nights. Col. (now Brig. Gen.) Arthur H. Rogers, the commander, reported on

the afternoon of 8 October that four of his officers had just been evacuated "mainly due to overexposure." Fortunately, the relief of the 30th Infantry gave the men an opportunity to dry out and to eat a hot meal. Instructions were issued that in the new bivouac area west of Caserta each battalion was to occupy one public building in which the men could dry their clothes.

The task of relieving the 30th Infantry was assigned by General Ryder to the 135th Infantry. All the difficulties of rain, mud, and poor roads which slowed the work of drawing the 30th Infantry out of line delayed the advance of the 135th Infantry. For the 34th Division to launch an effective attack across the river, more time was needed than original plans allowed. Since 10 Corps also required further time to get set, General Clark postponed the crossing to the night of 12/13 October. This shift gave the 34th Division an additional three days in which to complete the assembling of troops, reconnoiter the river line, and work out the details of its plan of attack.

Preparations by 3d Division

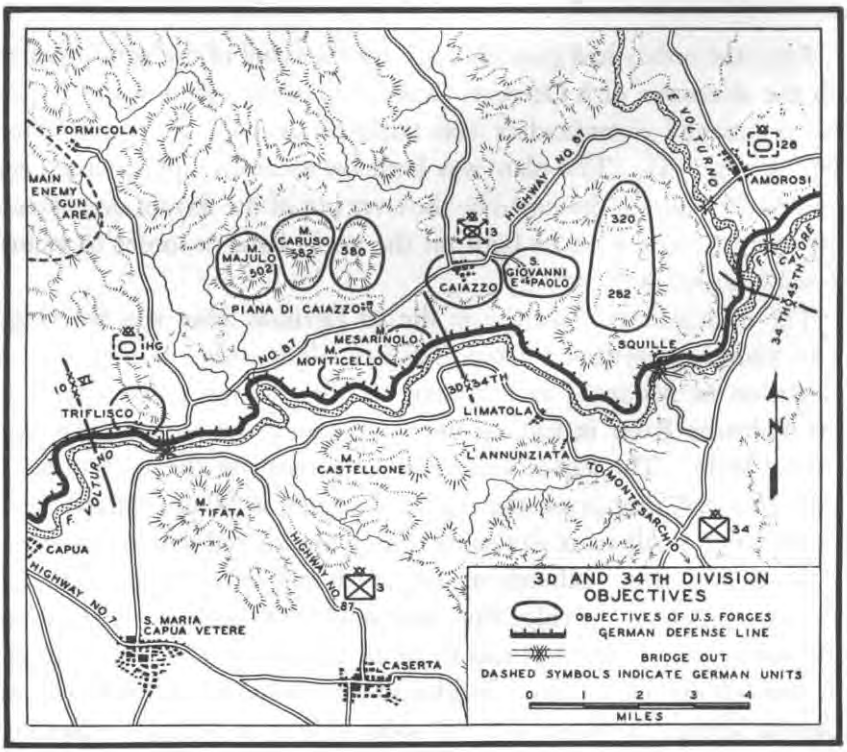
After the orders had gone through for the relief of the 30th Infantry on the afternoon of 8 October, General Truscott called a meeting of his regimental commanders and outlined his plan of attack (Map No. 5, page 14). The plan was built on a careful appreciation not only of the obstacle presented by the river but of the terrain over which his troops would have to fight on the north bank in order to secure a necessary bridgehead.

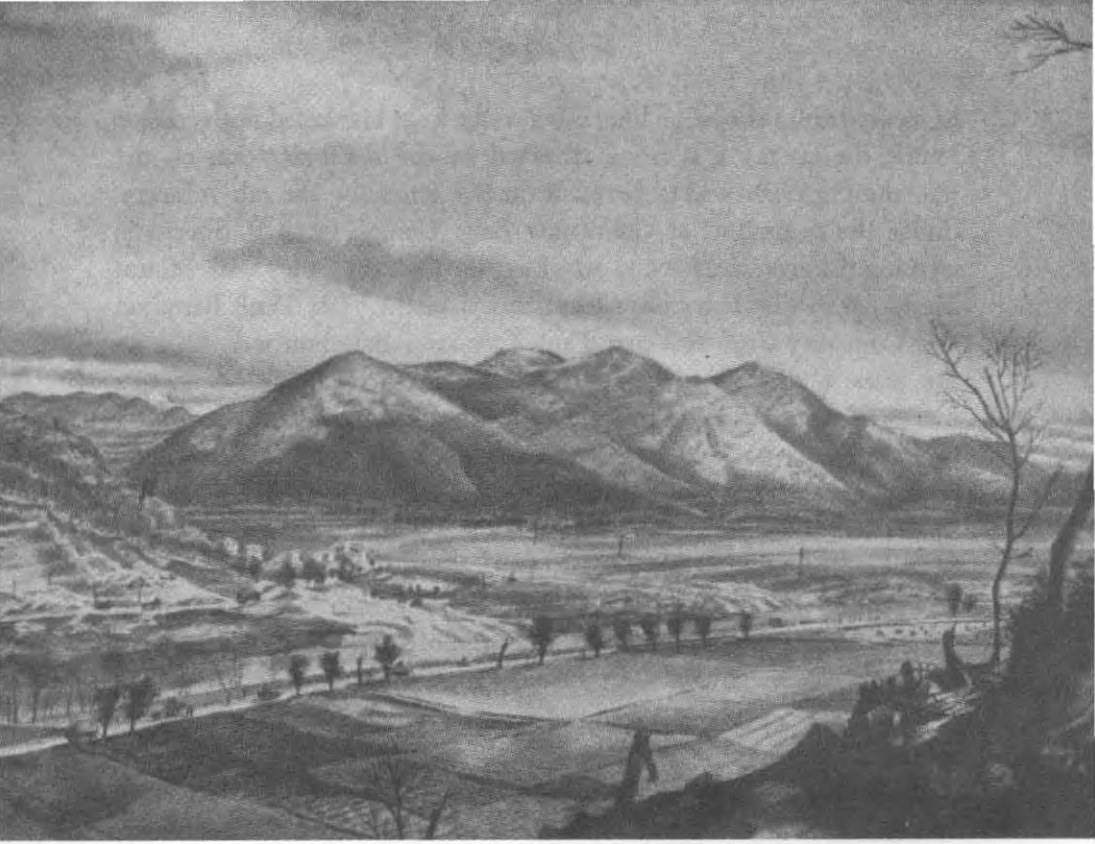
The critical terrain feature in the 3d Division zone was the ridge line running northwest from Triflisco. The ridge is actually an extension of Mount Tifata broken by the narrow gap formed by the Volturno River in forcing its way through the mountains to the coastal plain. The gap is so narrow that troops of the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, dug in on the northern slopes of Mount Tifata, were exchanging small-arms fire with enemy troops hidden in the stone quarries and olive orchards on the north side of the gap. As long as the enemy held the ridge line, he would be in position to dominate the valley lying to the east and to command the best site for a bridge in the 3d Division zone. Highway 87, running northwest from Caserta along the east and north sides of Mount Tifata, crosses the

river within the Triflisco Gap and then cuts east across the valley toward Caiazzo. The natural site for the engineers to build a bridge for heavy vehicles was somewhere within the gap where the road parallels the river on both sides.

Of almost equal importance with the Triflisco ridge was the hill mass to the east, Mount Caruso. It overlooks the Volturno Valley stretching two miles south to the river and dominates the narrow valley leading northwest along the 3d Division's axis of advance. Just north of the river on the division's right flank are two smaller hills, Mount Monticello and Mount Mesarinolo. Rising from the level valley like solitary outposts, they serve to guard the approach to the Mount Caruso hill mass. Air photographs indicated that these two hills, as well as the nose of the ridge at Triflisco, were strongly defended by the enemy. Almost surrounded by the hills, the fertile valley of the lower Volturno, through which the river follows its winding course, presents a peaceful scene of cultivated fields and pink or blue farmhouses. It is a beautiful valley, but for the soldier trying to work

MAP NO. 5





THE VOLTURNO VALLEY *stretches out below the forward slopes of Mount Tifata. In the foreground Highway 87 runs parallel to the river as far as Triflisco Gap, then doubles back along the north bank. In the central background is the Mount Caruso hill mass.*

his way forward under the fire of enemy machine guns and mortars there was only an occasional stone wall, sunken road, or stream bed to offer protection. A rapid advance into the hills overlooking the valley was therefore essential to the success of the 3d Division attack.

Aware that the enemy would be well prepared for any attack made across the Triflisco Gap, General Truscott planned to fake an attack on the left flank while making his main effort across the valley in the center. To effect this deception, the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, and the heavy weapons companies of the 30th Infantry were to concentrate all their available fire power on the enemy defenses across the gap. The demonstration was to start at midnight, two hours before the main assault, and continue for the remainder of the night. If the enemy showed any sign of withdrawing, the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, was to cross the river, but, until such time as the enemy could

be cleared from the ridge line, it was to be kept blanketed with smoke. While the enemy was being diverted by the demonstration on the left, the big push was to be made in the center by the 7th Infantry, under the command of Col. (now Brig. Gen.) Harry B. Sherman, crossing the river at 0200 and attacking through the valley with Mount Majulo as its first objective. Company A of the 751st Tank Battalion and Company C of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion were to cross the river at daylight to support the 7th Infantry attack. Sufficient materials were available to waterproof the tanks and tank destroyers of these two companies, and it was expected that they would be able to ford the river. On the division right flank, the 15th Infantry (less the 1st Battalion), under the temporary command of Brig. Gen. (now Maj. Gen.) William W. Eagles, was to attack north from Mount Castellone. Its first objectives were the German strongpoints on Mount Monticello and Mount Mesarinolo. Once these hills were taken, the regiment was to capture the high ground above the village of Piana di Caiazzo, secure the division right flank, and move west behind the 7th Infantry.

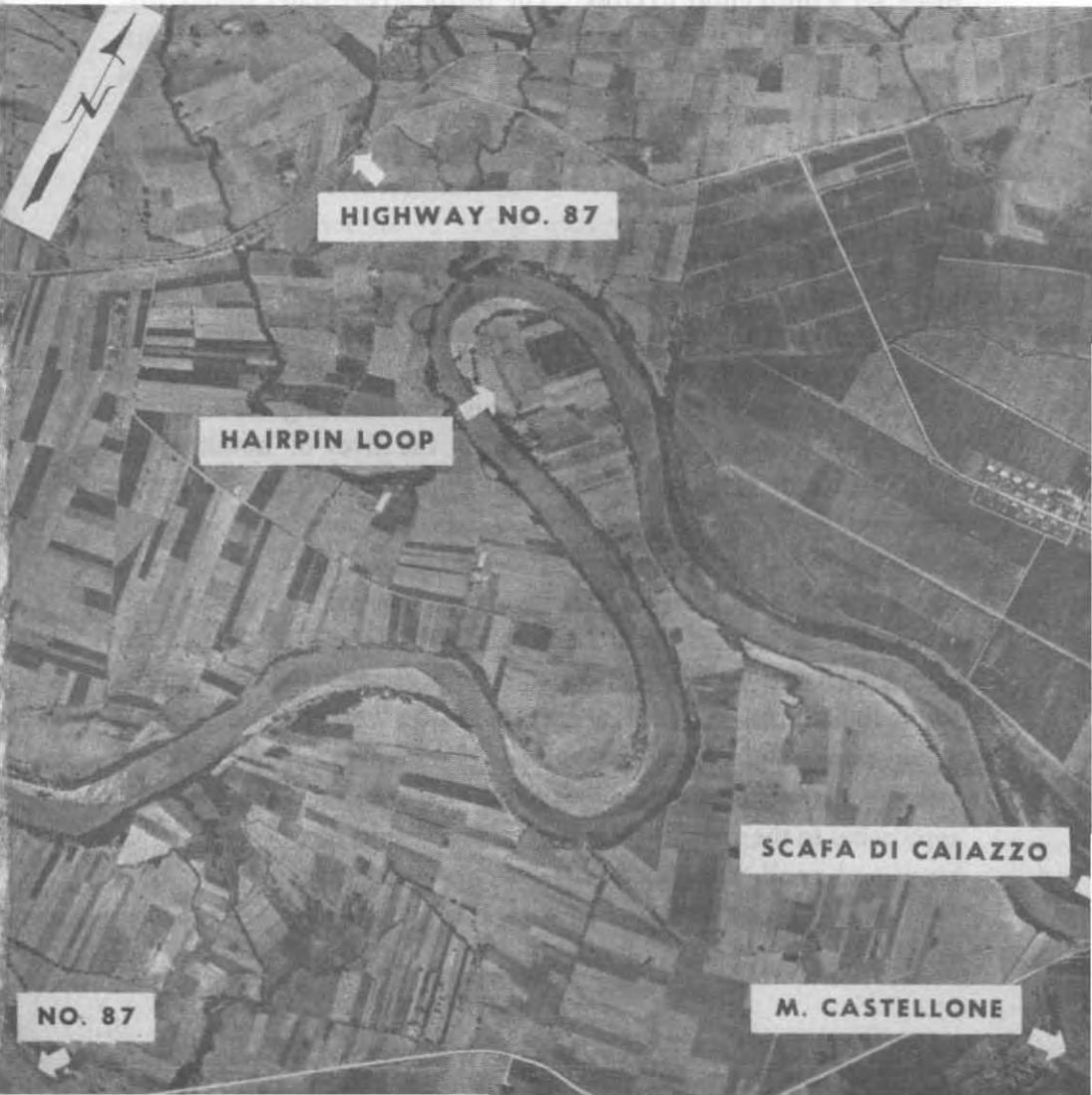
The key to the strategy of the 3d Division attack was surprise. Only the 15th Infantry had units along the front chosen for the division attack. The 7th Infantry had been kept in its concealed bivouac area east of Caserta, and the 30th Infantry had been in contact with the enemy only in the area now assigned to the 34th Division. The strength of the artillery, which was to fire a massed concentration for an hour before the infantry jumped off, was also unknown to the enemy. Instructions were issued on 9 October that the artillery was to fire each morning for an hour but that not more than half of the guns were to be used. Every effort was being made to keep the enemy from knowing where the blow would fall and the amount of punch behind the blow. Once the attack was started, however, there was to be no pause. As General Truscott expressed it to his officers, "This is undoubtedly going to be our first real battle—we must have the men imbued with the idea that they have to get to their objective and they won't stop."

The decision to delay the attack to the night of 12/13 October gave the regiments time to make a detailed study of the river. Although air photographs proved an invaluable aid in locating enemy defenses and in selecting possible sites for bridges, the only sure method of

finding the depth of the river, locating good crossing points, and feeling out the enemy defenses along the river banks was to send out patrols. With the enemy guarding the river along the north bank and often sending his own patrols across the river into our lines, almost every one of our patrols encountered enemy fire at some point, and few came back intact.

A patrol from the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry, sent out on the night of 11/12 October, may be described as typical of dozens of others which probed the river for crossing points. After reaching the river a short distance upstream from the hairpin-shaped loop in the center of the division zone, the men waded out into the dark, swirling

HAIRPIN LOOP



stream. Although the water was not over chest deep, the current was very swift, and the men found it impossible to get rope across. The bank on the south side was sloping. The bank on the north side was ten feet high, straight up, and lined with bushes and trees. Moving downstream to the bend in the river just below the hairpin loop, the patrol again waded out into the river. Before the men were across, enemy troops on the far bank opened fire. One man fell. The patrol succeeded in getting back to the south bank, and a fire fight ensued between our machine guns and enemy machine guns and mortars located on both sides of the hairpin loop. Nevertheless, the bend in the river appeared to be a good place to cross since vehicle tracks leading into the water suggested that the enemy had once operated a ferry or a raft there. Although two possible crossing points had been tested, the patrol moved farther downstream and made yet a third effort to cross. The patrol report states simply that "one man was across when fired on point-blank. He did not return but crossing by wading is possible." Seven members of the patrol were casualties, including three missing in action. The men who patrolled are the real heroes of the Volturno crossings: men who waded alone across a flood-swollen river 200 feet wide, never knowing when they might sink over their heads in the icy water or when the crack of an enemy rifle would spell sudden death; men who had to lie helpless and shivering on a muddy bank and watch a comrade be shot as he struggled with the current and who could then themselves move downstream and wade out into the river. It was grim work, but for every man who lost his life searching for crossing points and probing the enemy defenses the lives of hundreds of other men were saved when whole battalions had to fight their way across the river.

Back at battalion, regimental, and 3d Division Headquarters the patrol reports were fitted together with the information gained from other sources, such as aerial photographs, the excellent observation posts established on the high ground south of the river, enemy prisoners, Italian civilians, and our own men who escaped from German prison camps and filtered through the enemy lines. The essence of these reports may be summarized briefly: open fields giving no covered approaches to the river, high and steep mud banks often covered with brush and small trees, water waist-to-chest deep, current swift, Ger-

man patrols equipped with rifles and machine pistols guarding the north bank, and German machine-gun emplacements all along the river. There was one bright spot in the picture: despite the increased depth of the water caused by the continual rains, it was still possible for infantry to ford the river at points within each regimental sector.

In the bivouac areas the infantry was assembling equipment needed for the assault battalions. The most important item proved to be rope for guide lines, but there were a number of other items, some standard, some improvised. Nearby a thousand Italian kapok life-preserver jackets were found in a local warehouse, and rubber life rafts were borrowed from the Navy. The engineers provided assault boats and rubber pneumatic floats. Some of the units constructed improvised rafts from the wooden bows and canvas covers of ¾-ton weapon carriers to be used to ferry machine guns, mortars, and ammunition across the river. While this equipment was being assembled, the engineers were selecting sites for the bridges which were to carry vehicles and supplies across behind the attacking infantry.

The 34th Division Prepares To Attack

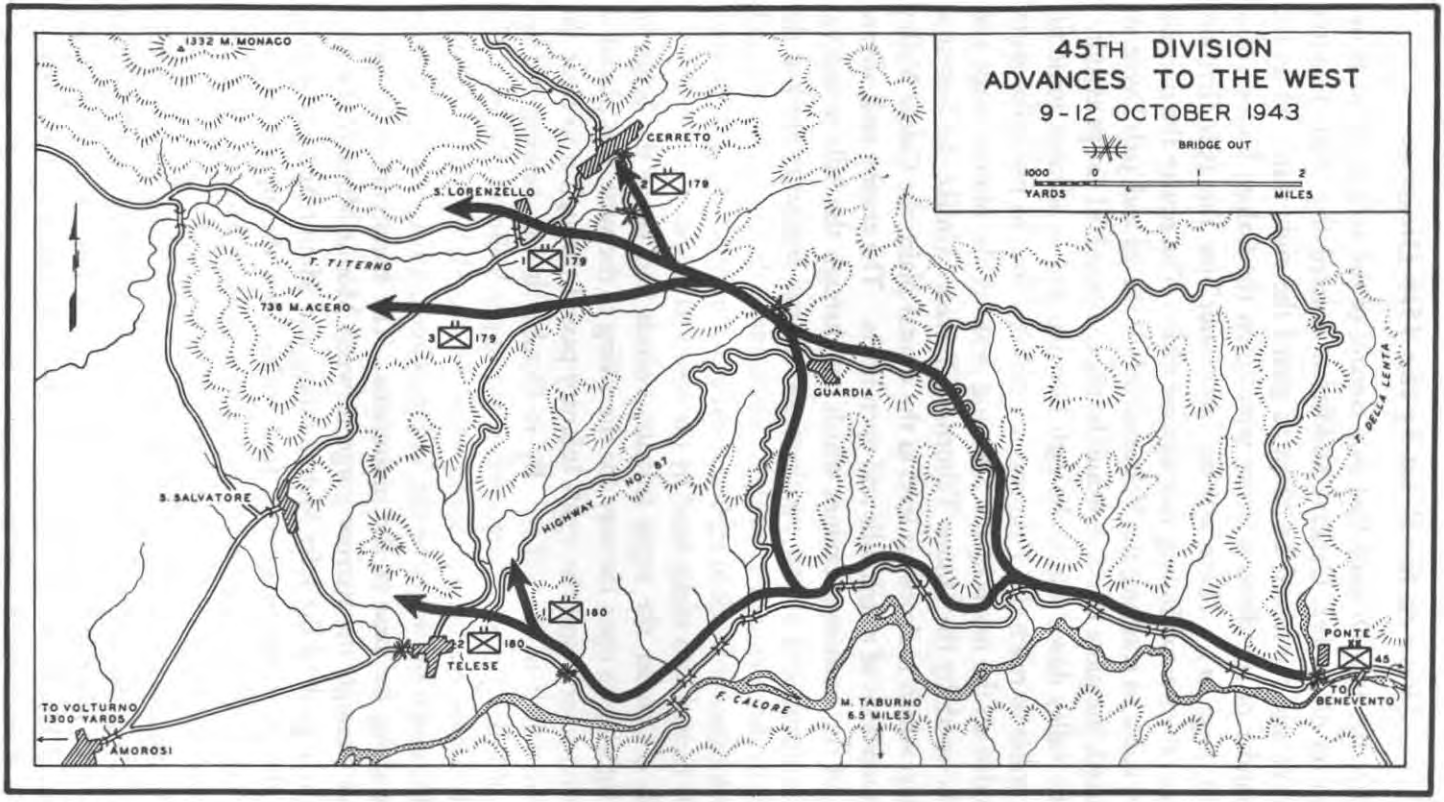
By 10 October the 34th Division had completed the relief of all 3d Division troops in its sector of the front and was working out the details of its plan of attack (Map No. 5, page 14). Ahead of the division lay a jumbled mass of low hills resembling a clenched fist thrust out toward the high mountains to the southeast. At the foot of this hill mass the Volturno River flows in an irregular half circle like a moat protecting a medieval fortress. With the 34th Division troops in the valley and the enemy holding the hills behind the river, all the advantages of observation lay with the enemy. He would have to be driven back from the forward line of hills before it would be possible to put in bridges or even to make use of the roads leading to the bridge sites.

General Ryder's orders for the attack, issued on 11 October, divided the division front of approximately eight miles between the 168th Infantry, which was to make the main effort on the left toward Caiazzo, and the 135th Infantry, which was to attack on the right. The 133d Infantry was to be held in division reserve, with one battalion prepared to move whenever directed. Since the high ground directly

north of the river prevented any immediate use of tanks, the 756th Tank Battalion was ordered to remain in its assembly area.

The plan of attack of Col. (now Brig. Gen.) Frederic B. Butler, commanding officer of the 168th Infantry, called for a crossing by the 1st and 2d Battalions with the first objectives of capturing the high ground around San Giovanni. From there they were to move northwest through Caiazzo to contact the 3d Division. Crossing sites were selected on the basis of the experience gained from two nights of patrol reconnaissance. On the night of 10/11 October a 1st Battalion patrol consisting of two officers and seven enlisted men probed the area west of Limatola. The patrol followed a ditch between two rows of trees to within fifteen feet of the river bank. Three enlisted men, roped together, went on to wade the river. As they crossed, four enemy machine guns started firing bursts of tracer ammunition. The fire appeared to be high as though coming from the second floor of a building. They saw two lights in a nearby building and heard German voices. As the patrol left the scene, snipers inland and downstream fired at the deployed men. The patrol reported that this was a good place to ford the river, but that it was well guarded. The next night a patrol, accompanied by engineer officers, reached the river six hundred yards downstream from the ford. The engineers located a place where assault boats could be used to ferry the infantry across the river, and it was decided that the 1st Battalion, less one company, would cross at this point, the remaining company to cross at the ford. The 2d Battalion located a good ford north of L'Annunziata where the engineers planned to build a bridge. During the day of 12 October men of all companies of the 1st and 2d Battalions were given dry-land practice with assault boats.

Foot troops of the 135th Infantry on the right flank of the division also found points to ford the river. In most places the steep muddy banks and the sandy bottoms made use of vehicles impractical though at one spot near an old dam it appeared that waterproofed vehicles could cross. Col. Robert W. Ward, commanding officer of the regiment, ordered the 1st Battalion and E Company to lead the assault to their objective, the high ground behind the village of Squille. When this objective was taken, the 2d Battalion was to pass through and continue the advance. To assist the men in keeping together in the darkness, all troops were directed to wear a strip of white tape down the center of their packs.


45TH DIVISION
ADVANCES TO THE WEST
9-12 OCTOBER 1943
BRIDGE OUT
1000 YARDS
0
1
2
MILES
1332 M. MONACO
CERRETO
S. LORENZELLO
T. TITERNO
738 M. ACERO
GUARDIA
T. BELLA LENTA
S. SALVATORE
HIGHWAY NO. 87
TELESE
PONTE
TO BENEVENTO
TO VOLTURNO
1300 YARDS
AMOROSI
T. CALORE
M. TABURNO
6.5 MILES

MAP NO. 6

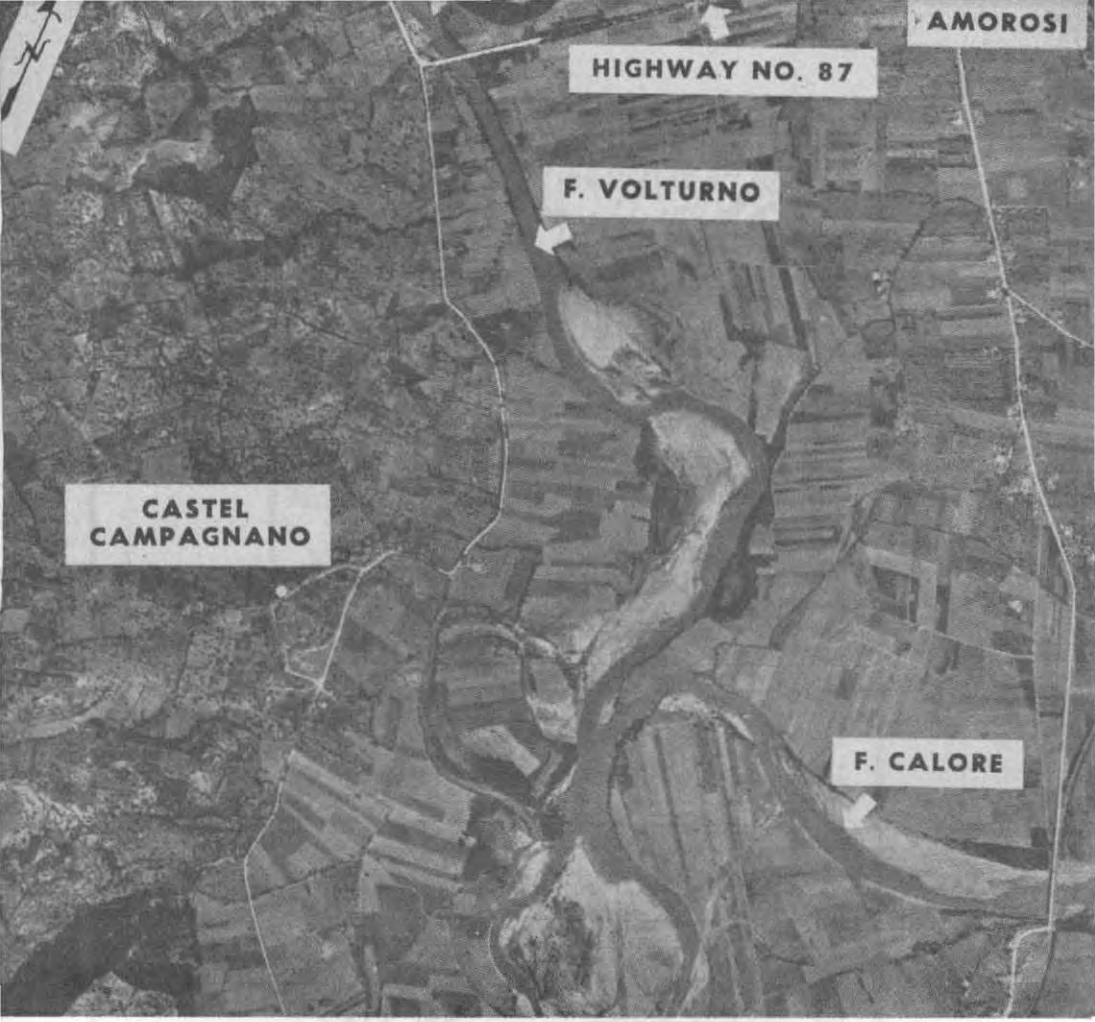
Drive to the West by the 45th Division

After the 45th Division had won control of the area north of Benevento on 9 October, General Middleton ordered the 180th Infantry to leave one reinforced battalion to guard the right flank while the remainder of the division drove west down the Calore Valley (Map No. 6, page 21). There was no "zero hour" for the 45th Division. It was rather a continuing race against time. The nearer the division could come to reaching the Volturno before the 3d and 34th Divisions attacked, the more effective would be the combined VI Corps assault.

The valley down which the 45th Division had to advance some fifteen miles to reach the Volturno is a corridor four to five miles wide, bounded on the north by the towering peaks of the Matese range and on the south by the Mount Taburno hill mass. Unlike the Volturno Valley, which is almost as level as the coastal plain, the Calore Valley is a succession of rough hills and open fields. The enemy took advantage of the numerous ravines which cut through the hills to conceal machine-gun and mortar positions, and enemy engineers blocked the roads by destroying every bridge. Even where the bridges were small, it took hours of work to replace them or to construct bypasses through fields turned into sticky mud by the continual rains.

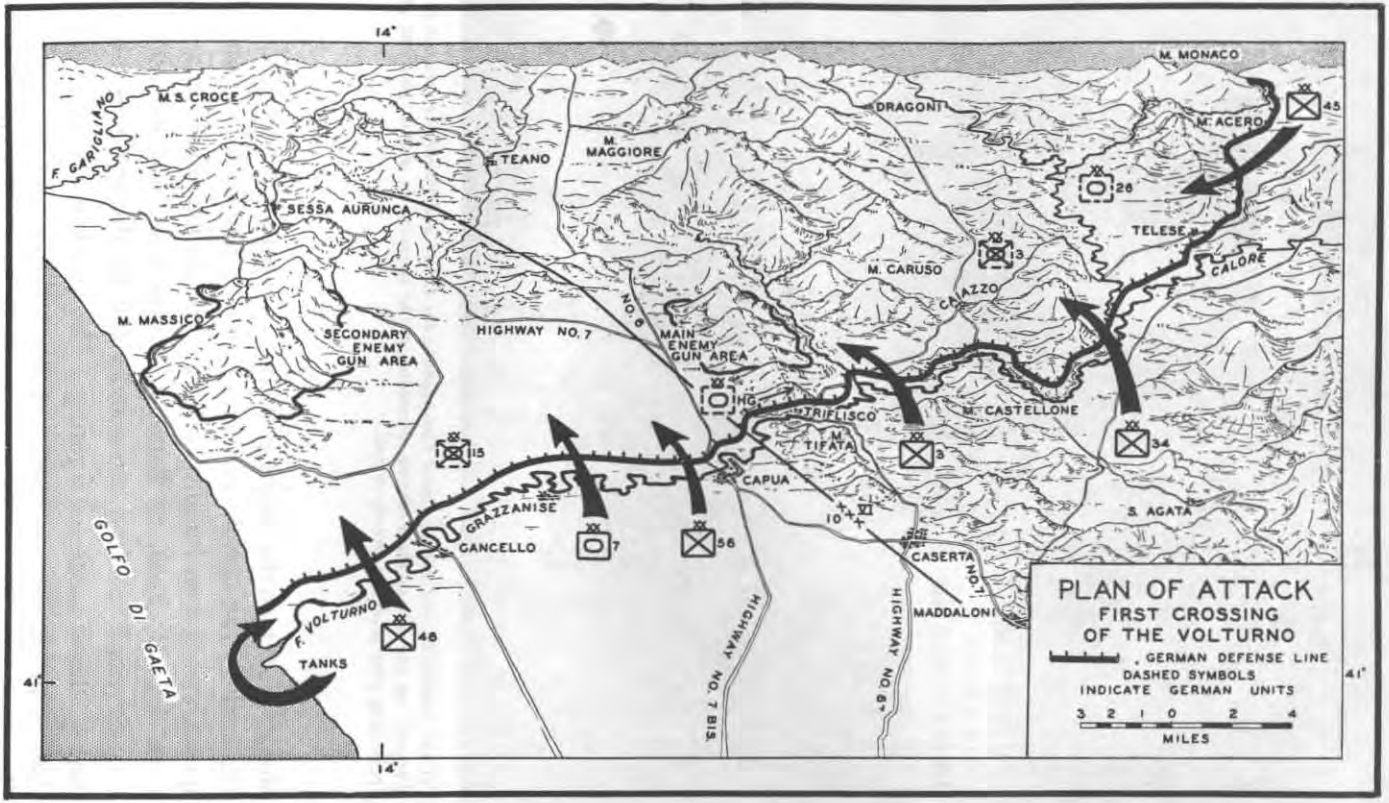
On 9 October the 157th Infantry, which had borne the brunt of the fighting to open the way for the swing to the west, was placed in division reserve and the 179th Infantry passed through it to clear the northern half of the valley. By 12 October it was nearing the last line of hills barring the approach to the upper Volturno Valley. The 1st Battalion reached the lower slopes of the Matese range and proceeded down the valley of the Titerno Creek, a small stream flowing west along the base of the mountains. The battalion's task was to break through the narrow gorge between Mount Monaco, the most southern peak of the lofty Matese range, and Mount Acero, a wooded round-topped mountain only four miles from the upper Volturno. The 3d Battalion marched cross-country to attack Mount Acero from the east and from the south.

The 1st and 2d Battalions, 180th Infantry, following the road which runs along the north bank of the Calore, also made good progress. On 12 October the 2d Battalion reached the line of low hills lying south of Mount Acero. For a moment it appeared that the drive to the Volturno would beat the schedule, but it was only for a moment.



SOUTH OF AMOROSI *and east of Castel Campagnano the Calore and Volturno rivers join in this plain. The 45th Division, on the east of the Volturno, encountered the Germans in dug-in positions and supported by tanks protecting river crossings already mined.*

Shortly after 1400 the enemy poured small-arms, machine-gun, mortar, and artillery fire into the positions of the 2d Battalion and then threw approximately two hundred men against the battalion's right flank. Capt. Jean R. Reed, 2d Battalion commander, was wounded. He was the third battalion commander lost by the regiment in twelve days of almost continual fighting. The attack was beaten off before dark with the able assistance of the artillery and the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The 27th Field Artillery Battalion alone fired three thousand rounds during the engagement, and reserve ammuni-


14°
M. MONACO
M. S. CROCE
F. GARIGLIANO
TEANO
M. MAGGIORE
DRAGONI
M. ACERO
45
26
SESSA AURUNCA
TELESE
13
M. CARUSO
CALORE
CAIAZZO
M. MASSICO
SECONDARY ENEMY GUN AREA
HIGHWAY NO. 7
NO. 6
MAIN ENEMY GUN AREA
HG
TRIFLISCO
M. CASTELLONE
M. TIFATA
15
3
34
CAPUA
10
S. AGATA
GRAZZANISE
GANCELLO
7
56
CASERTA
NO. 7
GOLFO DI GAETA
F. VOLTURNO
46
TANKS
HIGHWAY NO. 7 BIS.
HIGHWAY NO. 6
MADDALONI
41°
PLAN OF ATTACK
FIRST CROSSING
OF THE VOLTURNO
GERMAN DEFENSE LINE
DASHED SYMBOLS
INDICATE GERMAN UNITS
3 2 1 0 2 4
MILES
14°
41°

MAP NO. 7

tion of the 158th and 160th Field Artillery Battalions had to be brought up to relieve the shortage. No ground had been lost, but the power behind this German attack indicated that the 45th Division would not reach the Volturno without a fight.

Fifth Army Is Poised To Strike

When the decision was made to postpone the date of the attack to the night of 12/13 October, it became possible to launch a coordinated attack by 10 Corps and VI Corps striking simultaneously along the whole extent of the forty-mile-long Volturno-Calore line (Map No. 7, opposite page). 10 Corps had originally planned to concentrate its main attack at Capua near the 3d Division left flank. As reports came in that this was a difficult place to cross the river, it was decided that the attack should be made along a wide front with the main effort on the left, where tanks loaded on LCT's (Landing Craft, Tanks) were to make an amphibious landing north of the river mouth. The assault was to be made with one brigade (equivalent to U. S. regiment) of the 56 Division attacking on the corps' right flank at Capua, one brigade of the 7 Armoured Division in the center at Grazzanise, and two brigades of the 46 Division on the left at Cancello. The amphibious tank landing was to assist the 46 Division. Thus, 10 Corps, as well as VI Corps, was attacking with a three-division front. Together they made Fifth Army a powerful striking force.

On the north side of the Volturno, Kesselring's troops were waiting for the impending battle. During the days when Fifth Army was moving up to the river and completing preparations for the attack, the enemy had been hard at work laying mines, digging gun pits, and organizing a system of machine-gun emplacements to cover the river banks with interlocking bands of fire. Enemy artillery was zeroed in on the most likely sites for the construction of bridges, and mobile units, held back from the river line, were prepared to move to any threatened sector. Near the coast, in 10 Corps zone, concrete pillboxes and road blocks, built by the Italians as part of a system of fixed coastal defenses, served to reinforce the more hastily constructed German field works. Finally, before our men could reach the enemy defenses, they must first battle their way across the swift waters of the

Volturno and up the steep mud bank on the far side. Their only advantage lay in their numerical superiority; and their hope of quick success lay in surprise. The enemy did not know at what time or at what point the blow would come.

On the evening of 12 October as darkness settled over the Volturno, a full moon rose, lighting up the sharp peak of Mount Tifata and spreading an eerie glow over the open fields in the valley. For once there was to be no rain. The enemy had no reason to suspect that a major battle was impending. Our customary night patrols worked their way down to the river, drawing an occasional burst of machine-gun fire from the enemy bank or causing a nervous German outpost to shoot off a colored signal flare. This had been going on for days and signified nothing out of the ordinary to the enemy troops in their fox holes and gun emplacements. Back in our rear bivouac areas, it was a different story. Here was all the bustle and ordered confusion which accompany the movement of troops. Tank drivers warmed up their motors, engineers loaded rubber pontons onto trucks, artillerymen studied their fire plans, and long lines of infantrymen marched out to their forward assembly areas. The preparatory phase of the Volturno crossing was over; Fifth Army was ready to strike.

First Crossing of the Volturno

3d Division Attack

AT MIDNIGHT ON 12 OCTOBER the uneasy silence which had settled over the Volturno Valley on the 3d Division sector changed suddenly to an inferno of fire and noise (Map No. 8, page 28). All along the northern slope of Mount Tifata within the Triflisco Gap, rifles and machine guns spouted lead at German positions across the river, and exploding mortar shells covered the slope with puffs of smoke. With the assistance of all the heavy weapons companies of the 30th Infantry, the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, dug in just south of Highway 87, was carrying out Col. Rogers' order to "demonstrate vigorously" on the 3d Division left flank. An hour later, at 0100, the 3d Division artillery opened fire against the north bank of the river. The targets were enemy machine-gun and mortar positions which had been spotted during the days of preparation. For an hour shells plowed up the dirt and crashed into farmhouses all along the division front. Then, at 0155, smoke shells were mixed with the high explosives to screen the crossing areas. Five minutes later the infantry began the attack against the German river line.

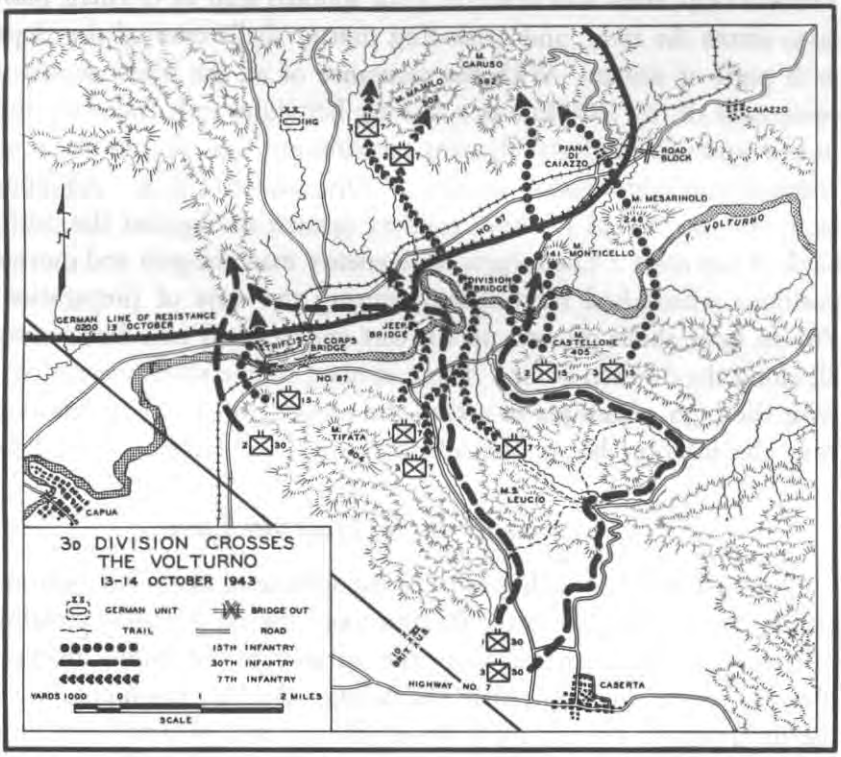
Breakthrough at the Hairpin Loop

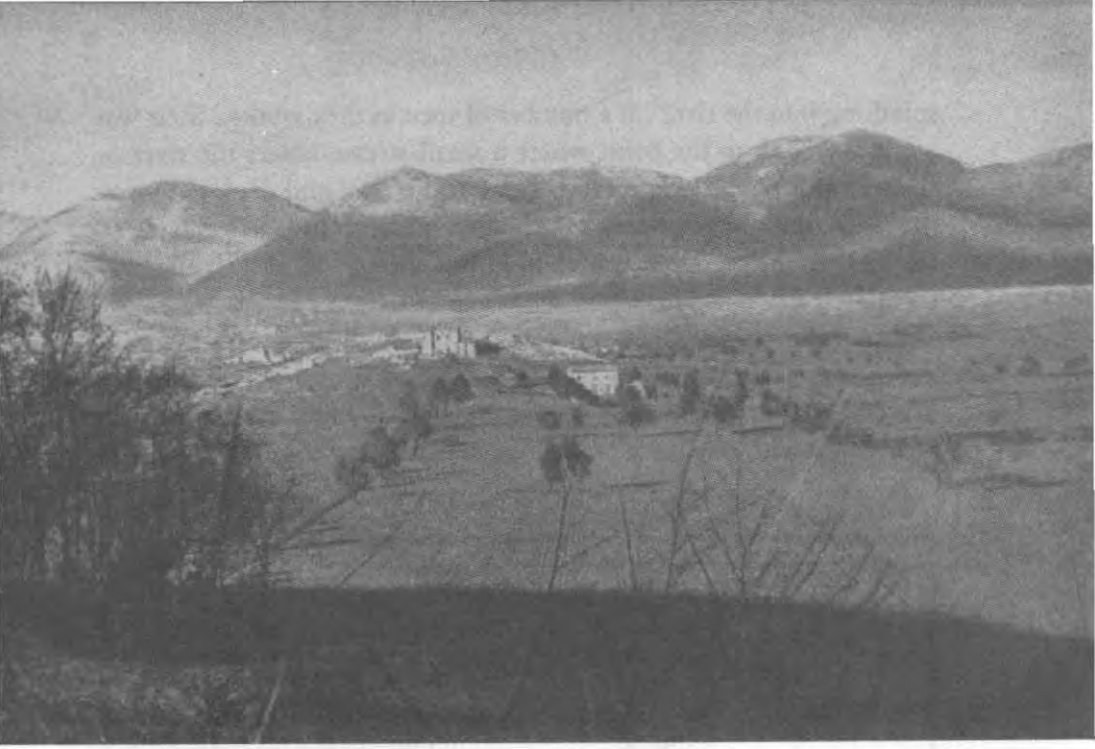
The 7th Infantry which was to be the spearhead of the 3d Division attack crossed the river at the hairpin loop: the 1st Battalion crossing just downstream from the loop, the 2d and 3d Battalions crossing upstream from the loop (Map No. 9, page 30). At midnight, when the diversion on the left commenced, the 1st and 3d Battalions were

occupying a forward assembly area concealed in a deep gully on the eastern slope of Mount Tifata. The 2d Battalion and the regimental command post were on the east side of Mount San Leucio hidden along a dirt trail which the 10th Engineer Battalion had improved to get the tanks and tank destroyers down into the valley.

The 1st Battalion started pulling out of its assembly area at 0045, the men carrying their guide ropes, rubber pontons, and improvised rafts. Off in the distance, looming out of the misty, smoke-wreathed valley, was the rocky mass of Mount Majulo (Hill 502), their objective. Slogging across the muddy, plowed fields, they reached the river bank. While carrying parties struggled to get the boats and heavy rafts down the slippery bank to the water's edge, assault parties waded and swam the bitter-cold, rushing stream to anchor guide ropes on the far bank. Tracer bullets from enemy machine guns formed a criss-cross pattern of red flashes over the heads of the men as they worked feverishly to shuttle boats and rafts across. Crossing by boats on a narrow front, the 1st Battalion encountered many difficulties. Many of the trees

MAP NO. 8





FROM MOUNT SAN LEUCIO *the Volturno Valley stretches toward the Caruso hill mass, objective of the 3d Division. Before the attack General Truscott's message to his commanders ended, "Every man must keep going until we get to the objective. The tank destroyers and tanks firing from the near shore will use direct fire. . . . I want them to make the area (shown above) . . . a very unpopular place."*

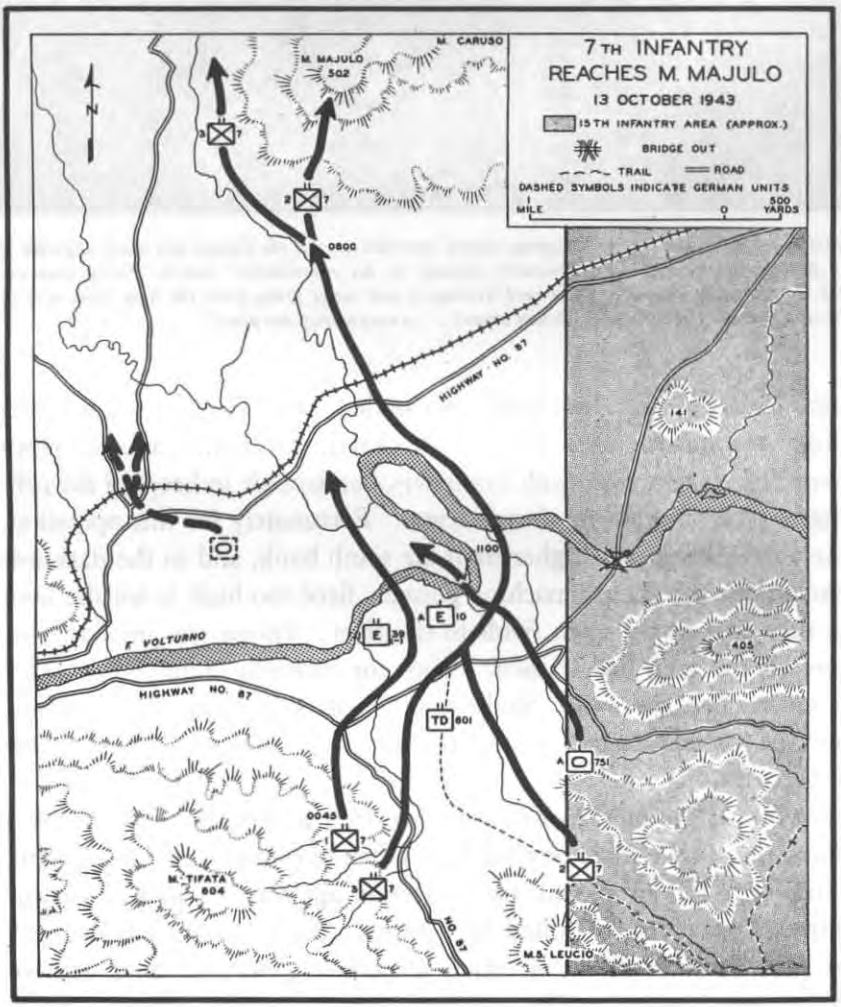
used for anchoring the guide ropes pulled out. The improvised rafts broke up, one by one, in the swift current; and the engineer party from the 1st Battalion, 39th Engineers, had trouble in keeping the rubber boats from drifting downstream. Fortunately for this operation, the enemy bank was higher than the south bank, and in the darkness and smoke the enemy machine gunners fired too high to hit the men as they crossed the open fields to the river. Dawn was breaking before all the men had crossed. With the morning light the accuracy of enemy fire improved. Shells began landing all along the river line, and the last boat to pull away from the south bank was the target for a direct hit.

As fast as the men crossed the river, they gathered along a sandbar under the cover of the north bank and then moved upstream in column, clinging to the river bank for protection against the enemy machine guns. One man was killed by a mine. Several other men stepped on mines which threw up small geysers of sand and mud without doing any damage. The artillery fire was more serious. Shells

splashing into the river hit a number of men as they worked their way along the bank to the point where a small stream enters the river on the west side of the loop. Here they left the river and deployed across the fields south of Highway 87. Late in the morning, orders were received that the battalion was to hold this ground to protect the regiment's left flank.

While the 1st Battalion was crossing on the west side of the loop, the 2d Battalion, followed by the 3d Battalion, crossed on the east side of the loop. The men waded the river holding their rifles over their heads with one hand and clinging tightly to the guide ropes with

MAP NO. 9



the other to keep from being swept off their feet by the current. Scrambling up the muddy bank, they went after the enemy machine gunners. In the darkness and confusion of the crossing it was not easy to locate every machine-gun nest. Enemy snipers were still firing along the river until late in the morning. Without waiting to mop up these pockets of resistance, the 2d and 3d Battalions pushed on across the valley toward Mount Majulo, following the general line of the stream which flows south to enter the river at the north end of the loop. By 0800 the forward elements of the 2d Battalion had almost reached the mountain, and the 3d Battalion, under heavy artillery fire, was working slowly across the fields behind it.

If the morning light improved the accuracy of enemy fire, it also enabled 3d Division observers to call for artillery fire on enemy guns and tanks in the valley. Tank destroyers of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, firing from dug-in positions in the valley below Mount San Leucio, added the deadly fire of their high-velocity shells. Enemy tanks quickly learned that the area south of the highway was too hot for safety. They gradually pulled back to the north following the sunken dirt roads leading into the mountains. But they did not give up without a fight. At 1012 a British intelligence officer reported that an enemy radio message had been intercepted revealing that the 3d Panzer Battalion was ready to counterattack. Orders were immediately sent to the 751st Tank Battalion to get the tanks of Company A across the river. The waterproofed tanks and tank destroyers were to cross at daylight, but each time the bulldozer approached the river to break down the bank, it was driven back by enemy machine-gun and artillery fire. So men of Company A, 10th Engineer Battalion, using picks and shovels, tore down the bank at a point just below the hairpin loop sufficiently to allow the tanks to slither down to the water's edge. Shortly after 1100 the first tank climbed up the low sand bank on the far side of the river. By early afternoon, despite occasional enemy artillery fire on the ford, fifteen tanks and three tank destroyers had crossed the river. In the meantime the artillery and tank destroyers had broken up the enemy counterattack.

As the enemy tanks withdrew to the north, they continued to harass the 7th Infantry, but the abortive counterattack in the morning was the only serious effort made to regain the ground which had been lost.



BULLDOZERS FERRIED TANKS ACROSS THE RIVER, *cleared wrecked vehicles from vital roads, and improved bridge and ford sites. One bulldozer, working on the river bank, was fired on each time it showed itself; others had to give up operations because of enemy artillery attacks. The ponton bridge in the upper left corner of the picture had been constructed hastily for light traffic only.*

Making full use of surprise and driving forward swiftly and relentlessly, the 7th had given the enemy no opportunity to reorganize his shattered defenses. A second enemy radio message, intercepted by British 10 Corps, was sent to 3d Division Headquarters with the comment that "Hermann Goering thinks you people are doing too well in that sector." General Clark expressed his opinion of the 7th Infantry's victory the next morning when he called Col. Sherman and personally congratulated him on his work in crossing the river. The cold, water-soaked men on the brush-covered slopes of Mount Majulo deserved to be congratulated. In one day's fighting they had crossed the Volturno and had won the commanding height, Mount Majulo (Hill 502), in the center of the 3d Division front.

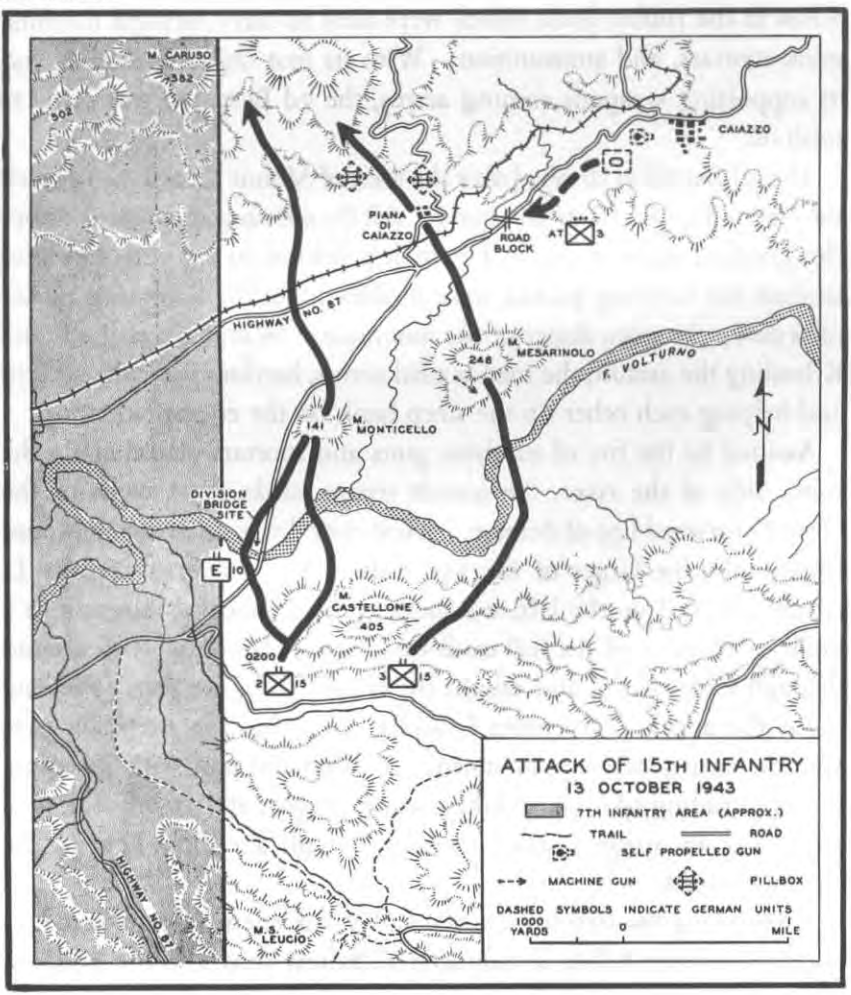
Drive Toward Mount Caruso

While the 7th Infantry was moving down into the valley to cross the river at the hairpin loop, men of the 15th Infantry (less the 1st Battalion, which was creating a diversion on the division left flank)

were climbing around and over the rocky slopes of Mount Castellone (Map No. 10, below). Their objective, the hill mass rising behind the little town of Piana di Caiazzo on the other side of the valley, proved to be many hours fighting away. The immediate problem was to get across the river and knock the Germans off Mount Monticello and Mount Mesarinolo, the two hill fortresses lying in the valley just across the river.

The 2d Battalion, after leaving its assembly area behind Mount Castellone, worked around the west side of the mountain to a draw which leads down to the river near the site where the 10th Engineer Battalion was preparing to put in the division bridge. Here the battalion split.

MAP NO. 10

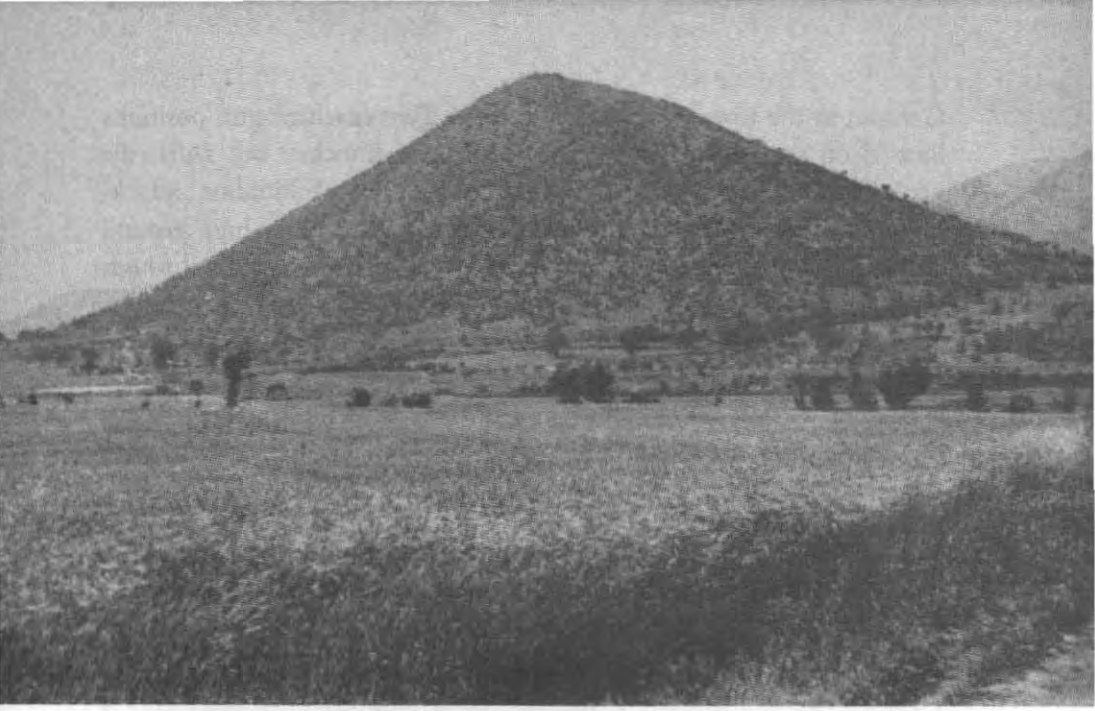


Company E crossed the river just west of the bridge site, and Company F, followed later by Company G, crossed below a small island about one thousand yards upstream. From these positions they converged on Mount Monticello, the smaller of the two hills. From zero hour at 0200, when the attack jumped off, to 0300, fierce close-in fighting raged along the river bank. The battalion suffered heavy losses before the men broke through the enemy's forward line of defense and swept on to capture Mount Monticello. Here the battalion paused to reorganize, bring up ammunition, and lay communication wire. A stone quarry, located on the south side of the hill, served as a command post and as an evacuation point for the men who had been wounded. From the quarry the wounded were carried back to the river and shuttled across in the rubber boats which were used to carry forward machine guns, mortars, and ammunition. With its first objective secured and its supporting weapons coming across, the 2d Battalion was ready to push on.

The 3d Battalion climbed over the crest of Mount Castellone to reach the river upstream from the island. All the crossing equipment except the essential guide ropes had been left behind in the assembly area because the carrying parties were unable to get the boats and rubber rafts down the steep slopes of the mountain. With Companies L and K leading the assault, the men waded across, battling the swift current and helping each other up the steep bank on the enemy side.

Assisted by the fire of machine guns and mortars placed along the south side of the river, the assault troops made short work of the enemy's forward line of defense. Then they drove on to attack Mount Mesarinolo, the larger of the two hills in the valley. Company L, which attacked on the left, was held up by a machine-gun nest in a house at the base of the hill until the reserve platoon worked around through Company K and caught the enemy from the rear. Pressing home the attack, Companies L and K swept up the steep slopes to take the enemy defenses by storm. A command post with its equipment, including two motor-bikes, was captured, and among the prisoners was an artillery spotter equipped with a radio. Few of the enemy escaped.

After losing the two hills in the valley, the enemy troops who had not already been killed or captured withdrew slowly to the north of



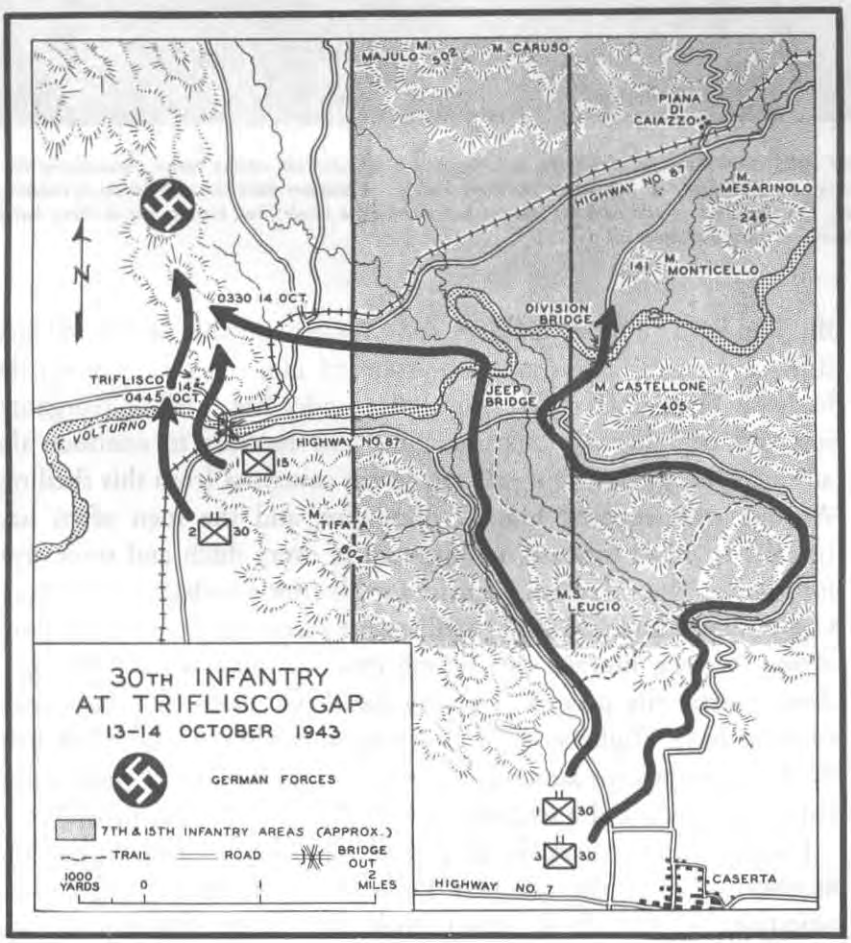
MOUNT MESARINOLO, *an island-like hill formation, afforded the enemy sparse concealment but excellent observation for free fields of fire across the level valley. A prisoner from the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment reported, however, that on the 14th his platoon had not fired a single shot, because our artillery had forced the men to stay in their fox holes all day.*

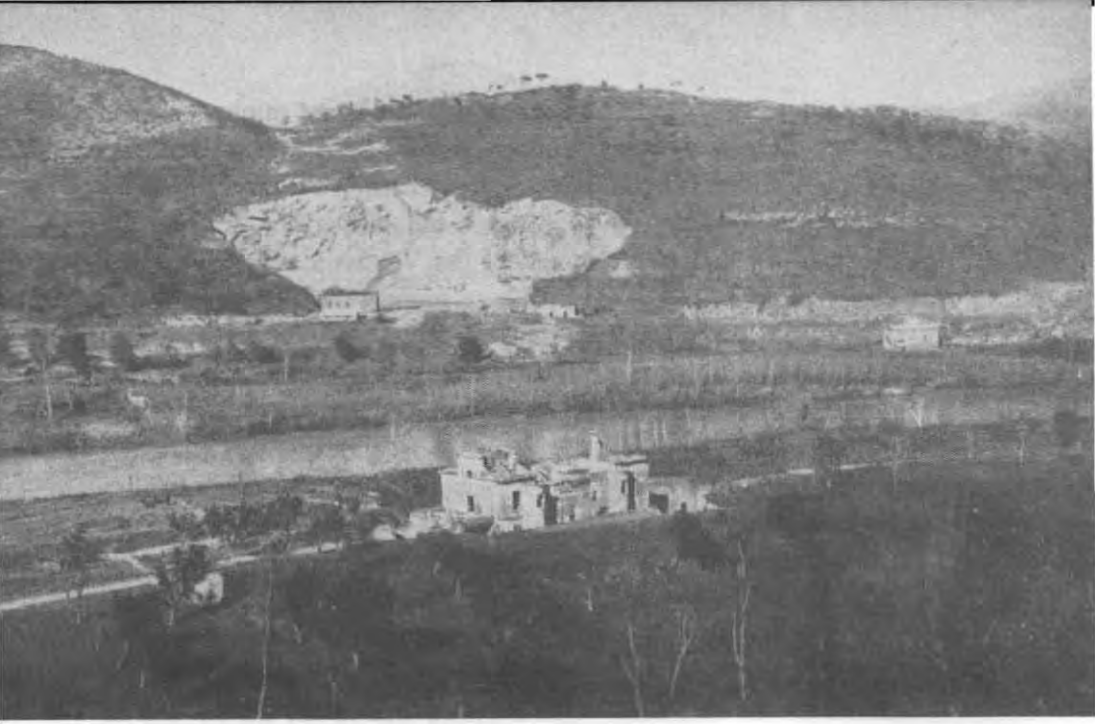
the highway. Enemy artillery concentrated on the two abandoned hills, and enemy tanks and self-propelled guns operating down the highway from Caiazzo kept the valley under fire. While reorganizing and bringing up machine guns and mortars to continue the advance, the 3d Battalion suffered severe casualties from this shelling. Anyone who exposed himself drew fire, and the men often had literally to crawl forward, making use of every ditch and stone wall for cover. The enemy paid a price for his efforts to delay the advance. One tank was knocked out by artillery fire directed by the 2d Battalion. When the crew jumped out and ran into a house, our troops brought down mortar fire promptly, setting the house afire. A second tank, coming down Highway 87 from Caiazzo, ran into a road block held by the 3d Battalion's antitank platoon. Three direct hits were scored with a bazooka, and a sergeant picked off the crew with his rifle.

During the afternoon the 2d and 3d Battalions pushed up into the mountains behind the village of Piana di Caiazzo to seize their final objectives. Company L, which took the village, found only one

German in the town. He surrendered. Two machine-gun positions located on the hillside above the town were knocked out with rifle grenades, and enemy resistance was ended. The 2d Battalion, attacking up the draw to the left of Piana di Caiazzo, cleared the high ground around Mount Caruso with equal ease. There are no roads through these mountains, and the rocky slopes offer little cover for troops fighting a delaying action. Once the enemy lost control of the valley and Highway 87, he was forced to pull back either to the east or the west. As the 7th Infantry had closed his route of escape to the west, the enemy had no choice but to withdraw up Highway 87 toward Caiazzo, leaving our troops in control of the Mount Caruso area.

MAP NO. 11





THE RIDGE NORTH OF TRIFLISCO GAP *was an important enemy strongpoint. By 9 October the 3d Division knew that at least eight self-propelled 105-mm howitzers defended the gap and that other weapons were dug in on the rock formation.*

Triflisco Gap

The successful attacks launched by the 7th Infantry and the 15th Infantry cleared the hills dominating the Volturno Valley from the north; there still remained the key ridge line running northwest from the Triflisco Gap along the 3d Division's left flank (Map No. 11, opposite page). General Truscott had assigned this area to the 30th Infantry, assisted by the 1st Battalion of the 15th Infantry. Their task was actually threefold: first, creating a diversion to make the enemy believe that the main attack would be aimed at this strongpoint across the Triflisco Gap; second, keeping the ridge line north of the river blanketed with smoke to neutralize the enemy observation posts; and third, taking the ridge line itself.

The accomplishment of the first two tasks contributed greatly to the success of the attack launched by the 7th Infantry, but because the enemy's attention was drawn to the left flank, the task of driving him off the ridge line was made more difficult. It had been hoped that the British 56 Division would effect a crossing of the river at Capua and clear the area to the west of the ridge line. This move would

relieve the pressure on the 3d Division left flank and might force the enemy to withdraw from his positions opposite the Triflisco Gap without a fight. All such hopes were destroyed when the 56 Division attack was beaten back. Thus, although the 46 Division, leading the main 10 Corps attack at the mouth of the Volturno, was progressing favorably, the 56 Division was unable to support the 3d Division with anything but artillery fire and smoke.

Since there appeared to be little chance of an immediate crossing within the Triflisco Gap, orders were issued during the morning directing the 3d Battalion and then the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, to march from their bivouac area west of Caserta to the high valley behind Mount Castellone where they would be in position to cross behind the 15th Infantry. Then, at noon, after discussing the situation with Lt. Col. Lyle W. Bernard, commanding officer of the 2d Battalion, General Truscott ordered him to make an effort to put troops across the gap, sending one company across first and then following with the remainder of the battalion. Col. Bernard started the 2d off and at 1340 the attack was going well, but after two platoons had crossed, they ran into a hail of machine-gun fire and had to pull back across the river. Artillery and mortar fire was concentrated on the enemy positions. Again the men reached the river only to be pinned down a second time by the deadly fire. Because casualties were unusually severe, the attack was postponed until after dark.

Meanwhile the 1st Battalion, after marching two miles toward Mount Castellone, had been turned back to support the 2d Battalion. When the effort to get the 2d Battalion across the Triflisco Gap failed, the 1st Battalion was ordered to cross the river at the tank ford below the hairpin loop and make a night attack on the ridge line from the east flank. Leaving their trucks where Highway 87 turns west around the base of Mount Tifata, the troops marched across the fields toward the river. Here they had a lucky break. By the time they reached the river the engineers had completed a light bridge near the tank ford and the men crossed with dry feet. At 0100 the battalion was in position to attack; by 0330 it was signaling to the 2d Battalion that the objective had been taken. The enemy, with his left flank laid open by the sweeping advance of the 7th Infantry, had pulled back after dark from the exposed knoll at the end of the ridge. At 0445 the 2d Battalion crossed the river and after daybreak the 1st Bat-

talion, 15th Infantry, followed it. The strongpoint across the Triflisco Gap had been taken and all units were across the river.

In hardly more than twenty-four hours of continuous fighting, General Truscott's hard-driving infantrymen had won control of the Volturno Valley from the Triflisco Gap to Mount Mesarinolo; they held the whole of the hill mass dominating the valley from the north; and they were in the process of driving the enemy off the ridge line on the division's left flank (Map No. 8, page 28). By the morning of 14 October there was not an infantry battalion in the 3d Division which was not across the river and in position to continue the attack. But troops cannot operate effectively without ammunition, food, and their supporting weapons. Before the infantry's hard-won gains could be considered secure or further advances made, it was necessary to get supplies through. That depended on the engineers.

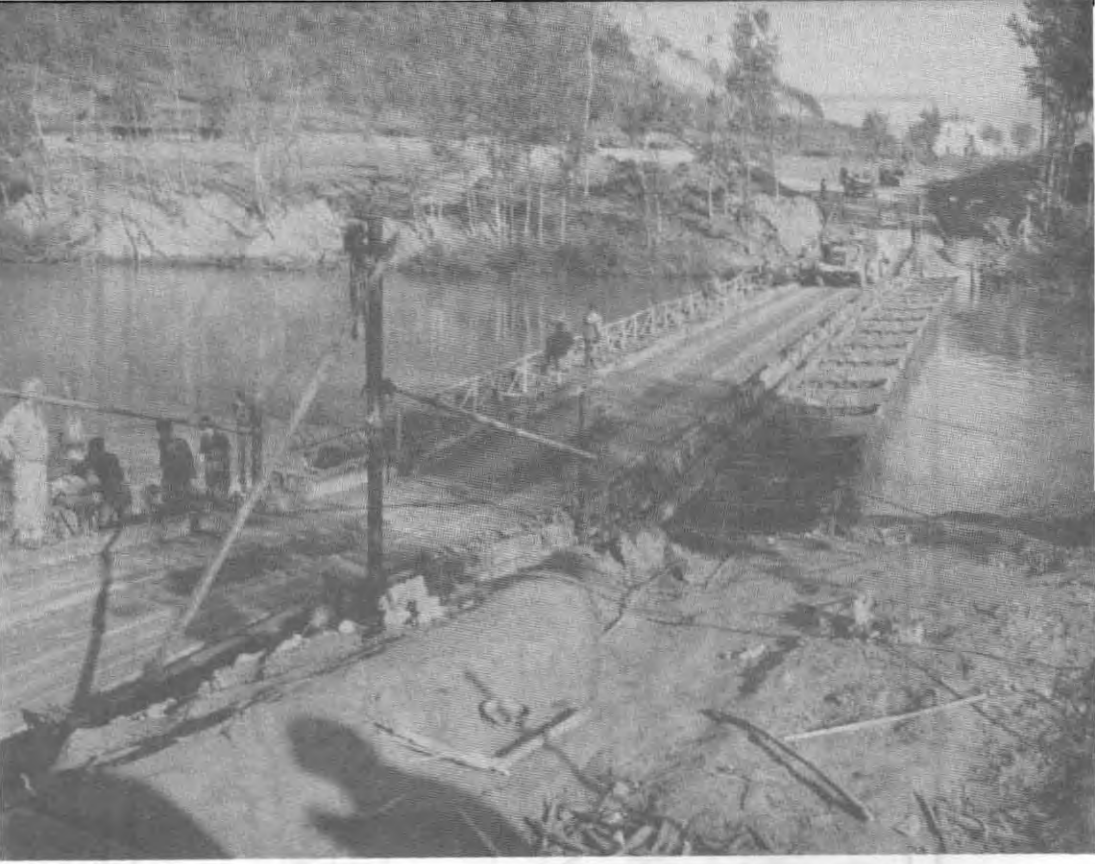
The 3d Division Bridges

During the early morning hours of 13 October while the infantry was fighting its way through the enemy machine-gun nests along the river banks, engineer bridge-construction parties began moving their equipment down to the river (Map No. 8, page 28). Casualties and delays were inevitable, for the men were working under shell fire. Mines blew up trucks, shells damaged the rubber floats, and the engineers repeatedly had to seek cover from enemy fire. Yet the bridges were built with remarkable speed. By the end of the day a light bridge for jeeps and an 8-ton bridge capable of carrying 2½-ton trucks had been completed.

The jeep bridge, built by Company A, 10th Engineer Battalion, at the bend in the river below the hairpin loop, was a marvel of Yankee ingenuity. Since there was not enough standard equipment available, the engineers used a hodge-podge of construction track found in a hospital yard near Caserta, steel matting intended for airfield runways, and heavy floats borrowed from Company B, 16th Armored Engineers, to put together an unorthodox but highly successful bridge capable of carrying all the division's jeep traffic. By the end of the afternoon minesweepers were clearing the dirt trail leading from the bridge site to Highway 87, and jeeps loaded with ammunition and supplies were rolling across the bridge.

The division 8-ton bridge was built at the base of Mount Castellone by Company B, 10th Engineer Battalion. Fully aware that this was the only good bridge site in the area, the enemy had his guns zeroed in on it. Much of our equipment was damaged by shell fragments, and many of the rubber floats had to be patched on the spot while the bridge was under construction. By the time it was completed at 2200, Company B had suffered thirteen casualties and had lost five trucks. Building the bridge was not the whole job; it had to be kept in operation. Some of the patches on the punctured floats came loose, making it necessary for the air compressors to be operated constantly to keep the floats from collapsing. On the morning of 14 October enemy planes bombed and strafed the bridge. Although the bombs all fell wide of the mark, four pontons were riddled with bullets and had to be replaced. Enemy mines and prepared charges laid in the roads and in the fields on each side of the roads were a final obstacle. The second vehicle to cross the bridge, a 2½-ton truck hauling a pack howitzer, struck a buried charge which exploded with terrific force. The motor was blown completely out of the truck, and a crater three or four feet deep and eight feet across was blasted out of the road. Twenty yards farther up the road, a mule in a pack train set off another charge. The mule was hurled thirty feet, a second mule was killed, and there were eight casualties among the men who had begun to drive the frightened animals across the bridge. In spite of these accidents, which blocked the roads and piled up traffic, a steady stream of equipment and supplies was pouring across the river by the morning of 14 October.

The big 30-ton corps bridge, designed to carry loads as heavy as tanks, could not be built on 13 October, for the enemy was not driven from his strongpoint across the Triflisco Gap until that night. Under cover of a smoke screen Company B, 16th Armored Engineer Battalion, started work the next day. The men of the company were experts in the handling of heavy equipment, and the bridge took only six hours to build. While it was being completed, the 1st Battalion, 39th Engineers, worked on approaches across the muddy fields to connect the bridge with Highway 87 and operated a ferry to assist the advance of the 30th Infantry.

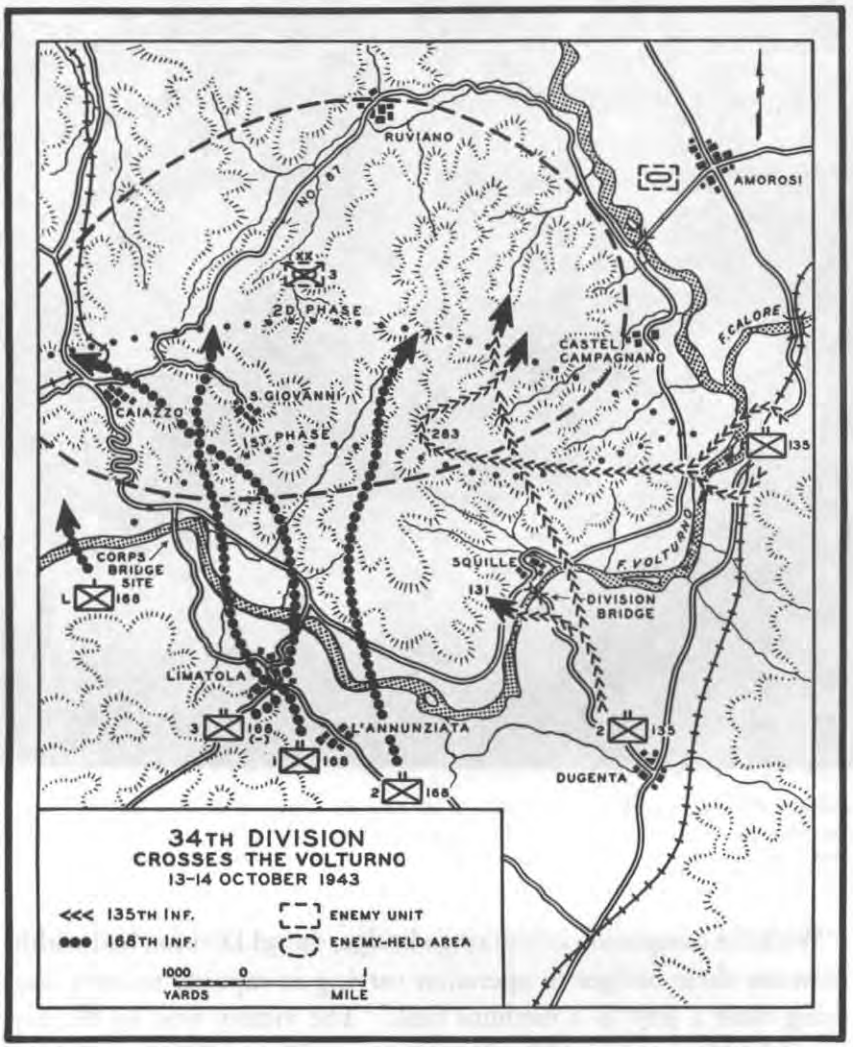


THE VI CORPS BRIDGE AT TRIFLISCO GAP *was used by the British 56 Division, moving on 15 October toward the ridges occupied by the 30th Infantry. That morning Focke-Wulf 190's, flying low, had attempted to bomb and strafe this bridge and motor traffic along Highway 87 in the same vicinity.*

With the completion of this corps bridge, the 3d Division had within its sector three bridges in operation varying in capacity to carry anything from a jeep to a medium tank. The victory won by the foot troops had been matched by the engineers. The 3d Division's bridgehead was secure.

On the 34th Division Front

While the 3d Division was fighting its way across the Volturno and into the hills dominating the valley from the Triflisco Gap to Mount Mesarinolo, the 34th Division was penetrating the rolling hill country lying between the 3d Division right flank and the upper reach of the Volturno (Map No. 12, page 42). Up the slopes of these hills, on the morning of 13 October, assault troops of the 168th and 135th Infantry were pressing forward to win a bridgehead for the 34th Division.



MAP NO. 12

Taking Caiazzo

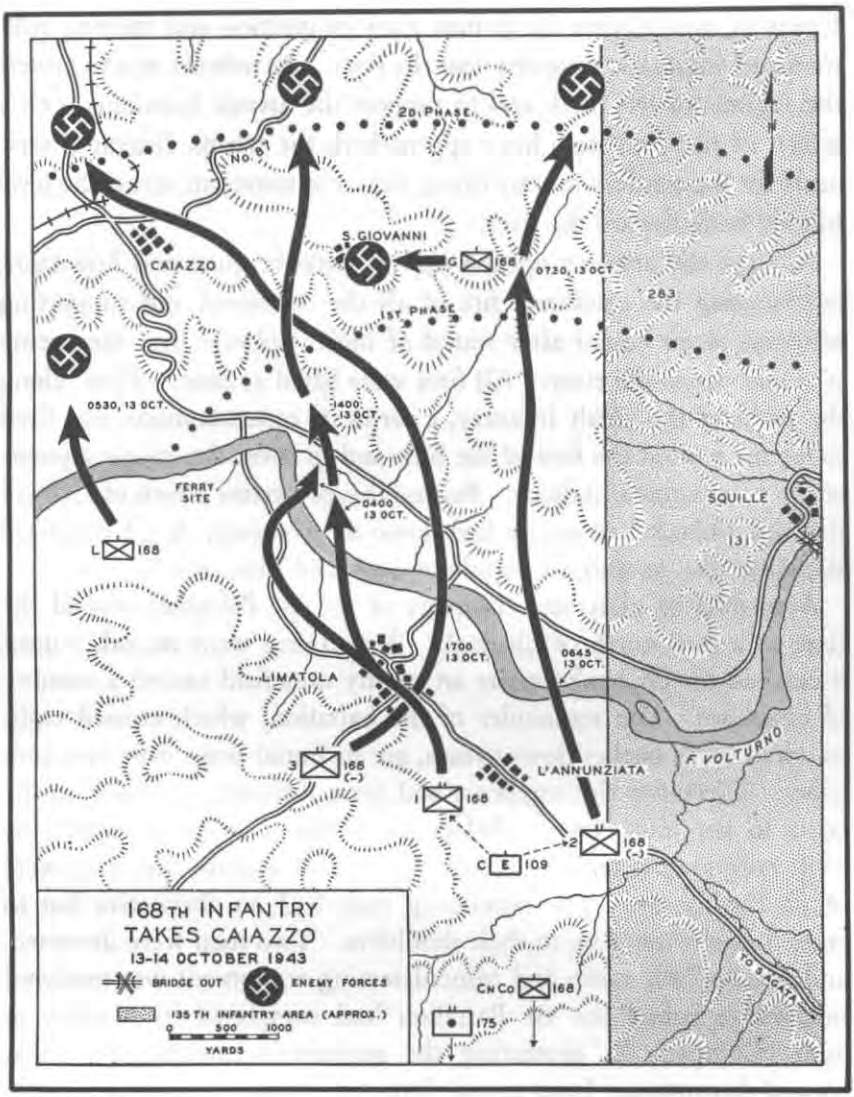
On the evening of 12 October, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 168th Infantry were joined in their bivouac areas near San Agata by engineers of Company C, 109th Engineer Battalion, who were to assist them in crossing the Volturno (Map No. 13, page 44). After dark the troops marched quietly forward to assembly areas along the gravel road which passes through Limatola on its way to Caiazzo. At the same time the 3d Battalion, located along the rock-strewn slopes of the hills above

Limatola, was placing its 37-mm guns in position and moving riflemen and automatic weapons near the river. Its mission was to protect the regiment's left flank and to support the assault battalions with a screen of fire. As zero hour approached, the troops, listening nervously for the artillery to start firing, began to move out across the level muddy fields toward the river.

At 0145 the artillery opened up. Ninety-six guns and howitzers, representing the combined fire of all the divisional and supporting artillery, threw round after round of high explosive into the enemy positions across the river. All fires were lifted at 0200. Then, along the front of the 168th Infantry, a series of concentrations was fired to hit the road at the foot of the hills and to cover the crossing points of the two assault battalions. Behind this protective screen of artillery fire and a blanket of smoke laid down by Company A, 2d Chemical Battalion, the 1st and 2d Battalions launched their attack.

According to plan, one company of the 1st Battalion crossed the river at a ford north of Limatola. Everything went smoothly until it reached the far bank, where an enemy minefield caused a number of casualties. The remainder of the battalion, which crossed eight hundred yards farther downstream, got its initial wave over in assault boats. Thereafter the engineers had great difficulty in returning the boats to the south bank. Before the crossing was completed, the swift current had swept the boats so far downstream that they were of no further use. The remaining men had no alternative but to cross through water up to their shoulders. Two men were drowned, and much of the radio and mine detecting equipment was rendered inoperative before the 1st Battalion had completed its crossing at 0400. Company L, protecting the regiment's extreme left flank, crossed downstream from an old ferry site below Caiazzo at 0530.

The 2d Battalion in column of companies crossed the river at a ford northeast of the little village of L'Annunziata. In the darkness and smoke the engineers missed the crossing point which had been selected on the basis of reconnaissance reports. As a result, the guide ropes were strung over water which was deeper than anticipated. The north bank was steep and slippery; the assistance of five men was required to hoist one man up out of the water. Although the lead company crossed quickly and was successful in closing up to the covering artillery fire, it was 0645 before the entire battalion was across.



MAP NO. 13

Meeting little resistance at the river, advance elements pushed on up into the brush-covered hills. At 0730 the battalion reported that it had reached its first objective: the high ground east of San Giovanni.

The enemy, determined to hold the dominating heights between San Giovanni and Caiazzo, was prepared for the 1st Battalion when it started across the flat fields lying at the foot of the hills. At dawn the battalion, under heavy machine-gun fire from the left, was held up at the road only four hundred yards from the river. Company L,

which had crossed on the left flank, could offer no assistance as it was making little progress in mopping up the flat lands below Caiazzo. Shortly after noon it was decided to advance the troops by covering the ridge running into San Giovanni with a rolling barrage laid down by the 175th Field Artillery Battalion and the Cannon Company of the 168th Infantry. The division artillery was also ordered to fire concentrations that had been computed for fire on call. The artillery commenced firing at 1400, and the 1st Battalion, following closely behind the screen of exploding shells, crossed the road and fought its way up into the hills. By dark the troops had reached their objectives above San Giovanni.

Although the men of the 1st Battalion struggling up the slopes toward San Giovanni were probably not aware of the fact, a platoon of Company G contributed materially to the success of their attack. During the morning Company G was sent over to the 2d Battalion's left flank to assist the 1st Battalion with the fire of its weapons. One platoon penetrated all the way into the streets of San Giovanni only to be caught in the fire of our own artillery. Some casualties were suffered in this misdirected effort, but the enemy was induced to withdraw more rapidly than he expected.

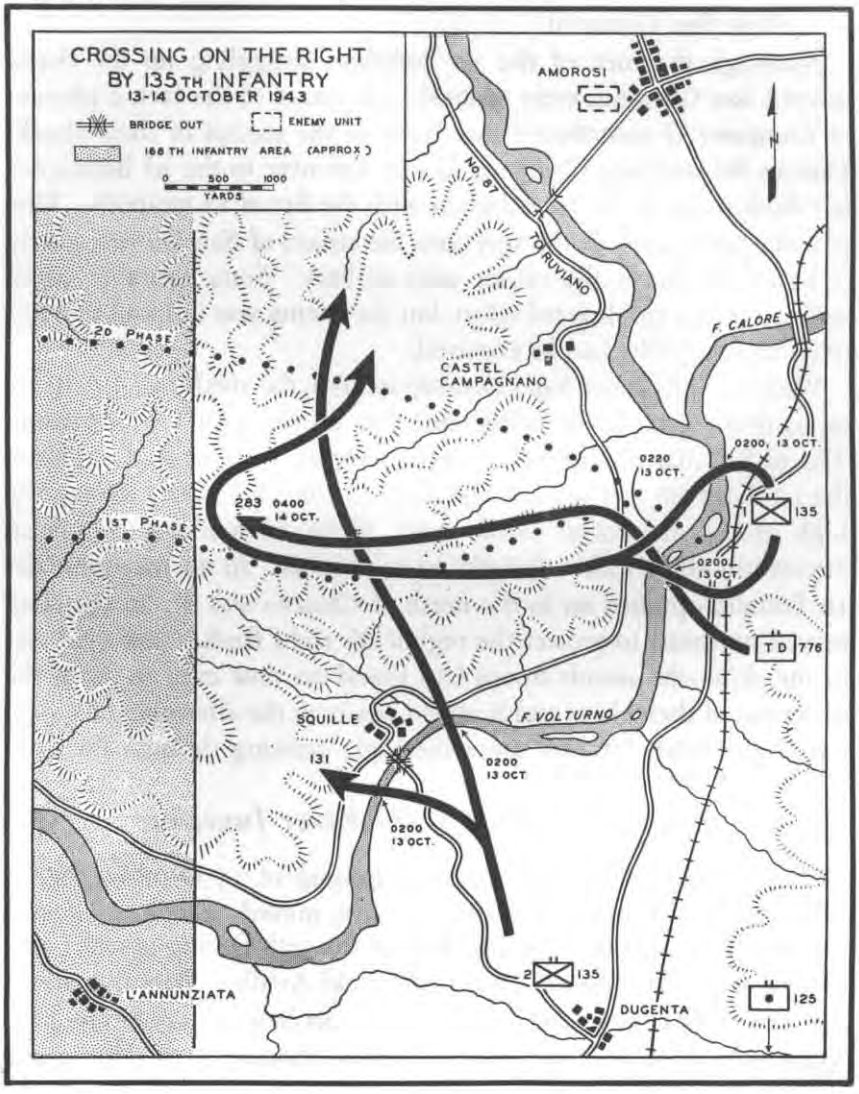
With the hills above San Giovanni secured, the 168th Infantry drove on against Caiazzo, the major objective on the 34th Division front. The 3d Battalian was ordered, at 1700, to cross the river on the right of the 1st Battalion and then swing around through Caiazzo toward the high ground northwest of the town. This mission was completed successfully shortly after daylight on 14 October. In the meantime the 1st Battalion pushed on to the north of Caiazzo and the 2d Battalion moved northeast to protect the regiment's right flank. Cold and wet to the skin—the assault troops had found no time even to drain the water out of their shoes and it rained again on the afternoon of 13 October—the 168th Infantry spent the night fighting through the hills.

In the Hills East of the River Junction

Shortly before zero hour on the morning of 13 October, the 1st Battalion and Company E, 135th Infantry, moved to their designated jumping-off points on the right flank of the 34th Division front (Map No. 14, page 46). At 0145 the 125th Field Artillery Battalion added the roar of its guns to the thunder of the artillery firing all along the Volturno–Calore line and at 0200, just as thousands of other grim-

faced men were doing at many other points along the Volturno, infantrymen of the 135th slipped and slid down the steep river banks and waded out into the cold, swift water. The enemy made no serious effort to oppose the crossing; once past the river, the troops moved forward rapidly. At 0220 Company A, which crossed just below the junction of the Volturno and Calore rivers, was already advancing over the plowed fields lying at the foot of the hills, and Company E, crossing at the other end of the regimental front, was

MAP NO. 14



sending back prisoners at 0250. Company E was soon in possession of its objective, Hill 131, just to the west of the little town of Squille.

Company A reached the first phase line called for in the regiment's plan of attack at 0527, Company B followed at 0600, and Company C, at 0712. Still encountering little opposition, the 1st Battalion pushed on toward the second phase line. Shortly after dawn the engineers had a ferry in operation, making it possible to get light vehicles across the river. In the early morning hours it appeared that the enemy would not attempt to make a determined stand. Then, as the morning wore on, enemy mines and fire began to slow down the advance of the 135th Infantry. The 1st Battalion reported at 0930 that a tank in Amorosi was firing on the ferry, and a few minutes later tanks in the same vicinity were firing on the battalion command post. Hindered by enemy minefields and continually under fire, the 1st Battalion made little progress during the afternoon; the 2d Battalion, moving up after dark, had to fight its way through a pocket of Germans which had been bypassed during the morning advance. The day closed with the 135th Infantry still short of the second phase line.

Continuing the attack early the next morning, the 1st Battalion occupied Hill 283 at 0400. Shortly after daybreak four tank destroyers from the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion managed to ford the river. Placed in hull-down positions on Hill 283, the tank destroyers were used to support the advance of the infantry. By the end of the morning the area south of the second phase line had been cleared and the regiment had patrols operating in all directions. Patrols from Company C made contact with the 168th Infantry. Other patrols reached Highway 87 to the north and crossed the upper reach of the Volturno to make contact with the 45th Division on the right flank. All indications pointed to a general enemy withdrawal.

Battle for Supplies

After a day and a half of stubborn resistance, the enemy had been driven back from his positions all along the 34th Division front by 14 October (Map No. 12, page 42). There remained only the question of how quickly the division could exploit its victory. Before the troops could go farther it was essential here, as on the 3d Division front, that the engineers bridge the river so that supplies and support-

ing weapons could be brought up. The major struggle on the 34th Division front proved to be a fight for supplies.

At 0700 on the morning of 13 October, Company A, 36th Engineers, began moving the divisional light bridging equipment from its assembly area to the previously selected bridge site north of the village of L'Annunziata. Before the trucks were loaded, the rubber floats had been inflated, but this effort to speed up the operation almost proved disastrous. When the head of the column had reached L'Annunziata, the enemy opened up with an artillery barrage. Three trucks were disabled on the highway, and others were hit by shrapnel which punctured the inflated floats, damaging many of them beyond repair. Sticking grimly to their work, the men drove the trucks, three at a time, from L'Annunziata down a dirt road to the unloading point one hundred yards from the river, and went ahead with the work of building the bridge. Twelve trucks had been unloaded and three floats launched when the enemy fire became so accurate that the bridge itself was hit, completely destroying the three floats in the water and causing heavy casualties to the men. Operations had to be stopped.

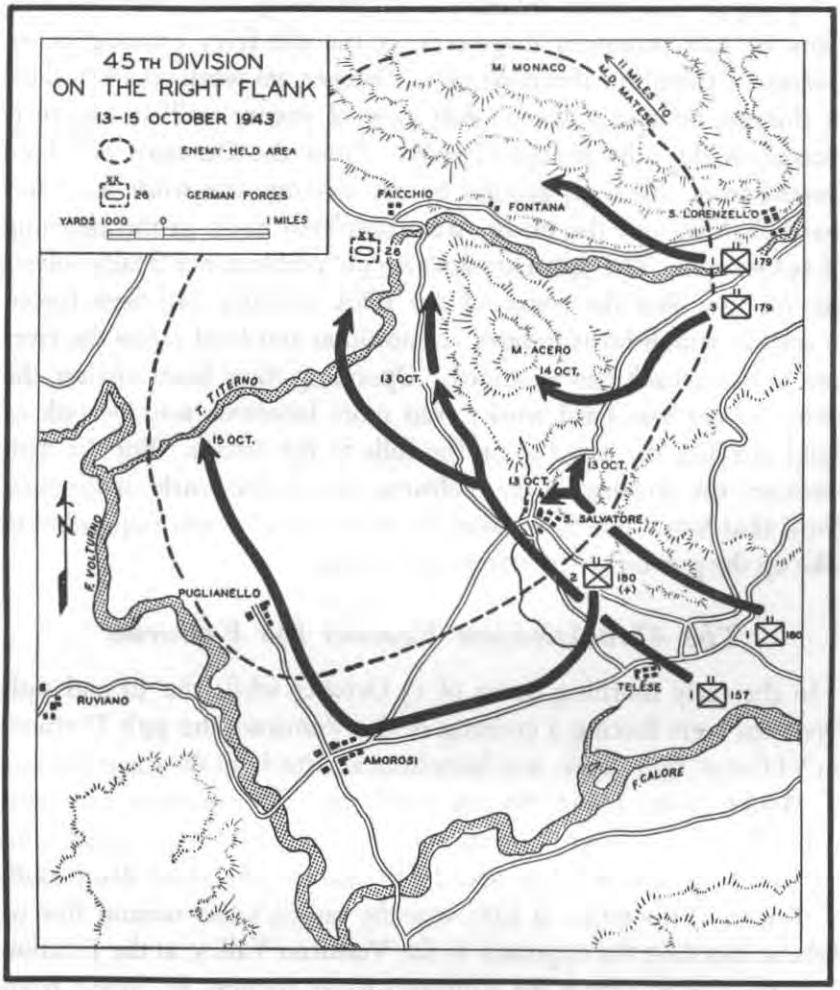
During the afternoon the damaged equipment was pulled back from the river bank to a concealed assembly area behind L'Annunziata, and those floats which could be salvaged were patched up. In the evening smoke pots were moved down to the river to screen a second effort to put in the bridge. No sooner had these been set off than the enemy again poured artillery fire into the area, making construction impossible. In the meantime a reconnaissance party reported that the bridge could be put in near Squille. Consequently, at 0300 the company began moving its equipment to the new site. This position provided defilade from the enemy artillery fire, but the approach roads were poor and the river was seventy feet wider than at the former site. The increased width of the river, coupled with the loss of nearly half of the floats, presented a difficult problem. Exhibiting the same ingenuity which had characterized bridging operations on the 3d Division front, the men of Company A borrowed 12-ton floats and what was left of the 6-ton floats to produce a workable bridge, ready for use by 1030 on 14 October. As soon as the muddy approach roads had been improved and mines cleared on the enemy side of the river, trucks began pouring across with supplies for the 135th Infantry.

To supply the 168th Infantry a 30-ton bridge was built by Company B, 16th Armored Engineers, at the old ferry crossing below Caiazzo. Until the afternoon of 14 October, no work could be done at this site because it was in full view of enemy artillery observers located in the hills around Caiazzo. Once the Germans had been cleared from this high ground by the infantry, the work went forward rapidly, and the bridge was completed early in the morning of 15 October. The 34th Division's supply problem was finally solved, but for two days the troops of the 168th Infantry had been forced to rely on assault boats to ferry ammunition and food across the river and to carry back the wounded. Operating these boats against the swift current was hard work; even more laborious was the task of hand-carrying the supplies up the hills to the troops. For the 34th Division, the crossing of the Volturno was a true battle of supplies. Until that battle had been won on 15 October, it was impossible to take up the pursuit of the retreating enemy.

The 45th Division Reaches the Volturno

In the early morning hours of 13 October while the 3d and 34th Divisions were forcing a crossing of the Volturno, the 45th Division, on VI Corps' right flank, was launching an attack up the rugged slopes of Mount Acero (Map No. 15, page 50). The division had been assigned the task of breaking through enemy defenses extending from the towering Matese range above Faicchio to the Calore River south of Telese. This series of hills was the enemy's last natural line of defense blocking the approach to the Volturno Valley, at the junction with the Calore where the Volturno River changes its course from north–south to east–west. Once the line was breached, the way would be open for General Middleton's troops to make contact with the 34th Division and then swing northwest through the upper valley of the Volturno.

On 12 October a good start had been made toward unhinging the southern anchor of the enemy line, when the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, took the high ground northeast of Telese, a resort town famous for its sulphur baths. Continuing to advance the next morning, the 1st Battalion occupied the hill to the east of San Salvatore. From this position it was able to lay mortar fire on the German defenses on the south slopes of Mount Acero which were under attack by Companies



MAP NO. 15

I and K, 179th Infantry. Under cover of darkness Company K penetrated the enemy positions on the southeast slope of the mountain but was unable to clear them out. Just before dawn it pulled back. When enemy troops, unaware of this withdrawal, launched a counterattack into the area which our troops had just evacuated, Company K caught them in a fire trap and inflicted heavy casualties on them. Following up its advantage, Company K then proceeded to mop up the remaining enemy troops on the southeast slopes of Mount Acero, while Company I attacked from the south. Late in the evening the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, occupied San Salvatore just to the south

of the mountain. This success opened the way for the 157th Infantry to launch an attack around the west side of Mount Acero, forcing the enemy to give up the whole southern flank of his line.

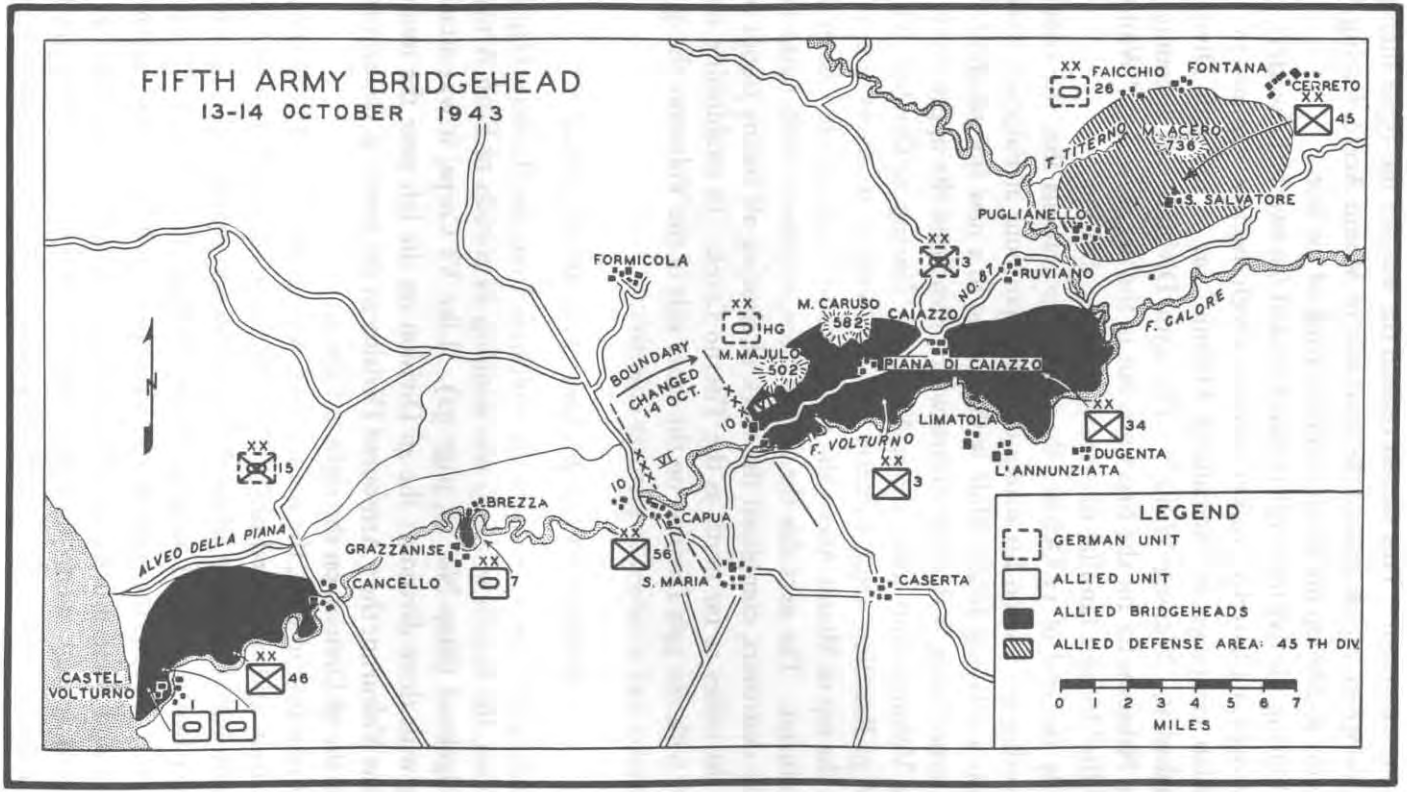
During the day the artillery had knocked out two Nebelwerfers, the German six-barreled rocket mortar which became famous in the Italian campaign as "Screaming Meemie" or, as the 45th Division dubbed it, "Wailing Willie." The 45th Division had encountered the Nebelwerfer for the first time, but in the next few days "Wailing Willie" became familiar to every man in the division.

By the end of 13 October there were indications that the enemy, pivoting his line on his strong defensive positions at Faicchio, would fight a delaying action while withdrawing to a new line north of the Titerno Creek, a shallow stream which flows into the upper reach of the Volturno four miles above Amorosi. During 14 October, while the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, was establishing an observation post on the top of Mount Acero, the 180th Infantry sent patrols west to the Volturno. The next day the 2d Battalion, reinforced with tanks and tank destroyers, completed the work of clearing all enemy troops out of the valley as far north as the Titerno Creek. In establishing contact with the 34th Division on the other side of the Volturno, the 45th Division had achieved its primary objective.

British 10 Corps Secures a Bridgehead

Along the lower reach of the Volturno from the Triflisco Gap to the sea, the British 10 Corps was winning its portion of Fifth Army's bridgehead (Map No. 16, page 52). Like VI Corps, it was attacking with three divisions: the 46 Division on the left near the mouth of the Volturno; the 7 Armoured Division in the center at Grazzanise; and the 56 Division on the right at Capua.

According to plan, the main attack was made on the left by the 46 Division and succeeded brilliantly. By dawn on 13 October infantry assault battalions were across the river and two squadrons of Sherman tanks had completed an amphibious landing just north of the river mouth. Before the end of the day, the 139 Brigade had reached the canal three miles north of the river. Paths for the tanks were cleared through enemy minefields and repeated enemy counterattacks were beaten back. By 14 October a firm bridgehead extending from the sea east to Cancello was secured.


FIFTH ARMY BRIDGEHEAD
13-14 OCTOBER 1943
FAICCHIO
26
FONTANA
CERRETO
45
M. ACERO
736
T. TIERNO
S. SALVATORE
PUGLIANELLO
13
RUVIANO
NO. 81
FORMICOLA
M. CARUSO
582
CAIAZZO
HG
F. CALORE
BOUNDARY
CHANGED
14 OCT.
M. MAJULO
502
PIANA DI CAIAZZO
LIMATOLA
34
DUGENTA
L'ANNUNZIATA
F. VOLTURNO
3
15
BREZZA
CAPUA
ALVEO DELLA PIANA
GRAZZANISE
7
56
S. MARIA
CASERTA
CANCELLO
46
CASTEL VOLTURNO
LEGEND
GERMAN UNIT
ALLIED UNIT
ALLIED BRIDGEHEADS
ALLIED DEFENSE AREA: 45 TH DIV.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
MILES

MAP NO. 16

The 7 Armoured Division, attacking at Grazzanise, met determined opposition. The assault troops, reaching the river just after dark on the night of 12 October, had hardly succeeded in stretching a cable across the river when an enemy counterattack forced them back. At 0200 a second attempt was made to cross in boats pulled along the cable which had previously been secured. The enemy countered with air-burst artillery fire, and again the men had to withdraw. But they refused to admit defeat; a third, and this time successful, effort was made. By dawn on the 13th the assault troops of the 7 Armoured Division had secured a small foothold on the far bank, and on the 14th they established a firm foothold by advancing about a thousand yards north.

The 56 Division, on the right flank of 10 Corps, was the only unit which was unable to force a crossing of the river on 13 October. In the meantime the 3d Division, on the east side of the boundary between VI Corps and 10 Corps, was moving forward so rapidly that there was danger of VI Corps' left flank becoming exposed. A solution to the problem was found on 14 October, when General Clark changed the boundary between VI Corps and 10 Corps to give the 56 Division responsibility for the ridge line on the 3d Division's left flank. Arrangements were then made to move the 56 Division troops across the 30-ton bridge within the Triflisco Gap.

The Battle Is Won

Early on the morning of 14 October the 39th Field Artillery Battalion, moving into new positions across the Volturno on the 3d Division front, captured two German 150-mm guns in perfect condition, a tracked vehicle, a light vehicle, and an enemy gun crew of six men (Map No. 16, opposite page). Cut off during the fighting of the day before, the prisoners explained that they were waiting to surrender. Although only a minor incident in a great battle, the surrender of this German gun crew to an American gun crew bears witness to the speed and overwhelming power of our attack.

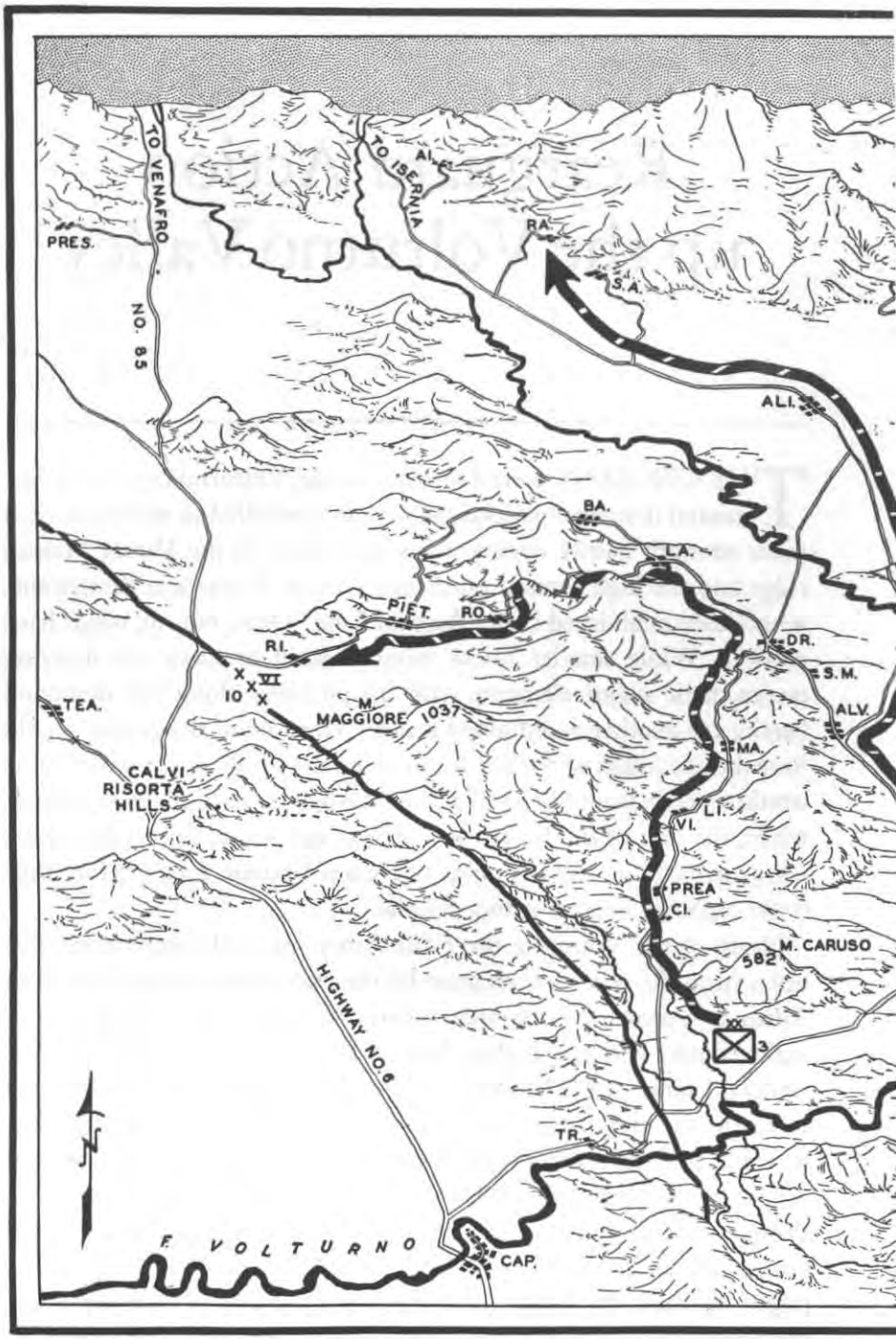
Before daybreak on 13 October, six Allied divisions had struck four German divisions along a forty-mile front. The enemy had tried to delay the crossing as long as possible. He had placed his artillery to cover the river, and his infantrymen, supported by tanks and mortars, in position to counterattack. For the Fifth Army, the long days of

careful planning and the rainy nights when patrol after patrol risked their lives to find crossing points and to probe the enemy defenses along the river had borne good fruit. By night on 14 October, our forces held all but fifteen miles of the river line, between Cancello and Triflisco. Allied air superiority and the weakness of the Luftwaffe prevented enemy planes from interfering seriously with the crossing and the establishment of the bridgehead. A large proportion of the enemy's available fighters and fighter-bombers tried but failed to stop the amphibious landing of 10 Corps' Sherman tanks. Although the enemy was shelling the engineers as they rushed work on vital supply bridges, the backbone of German resistance had been broken. In two days of fighting Fifth Army was across the Volturno, holding a bridgehead from one to three miles deep in three strategic sectors and preparing to pursue the enemy.

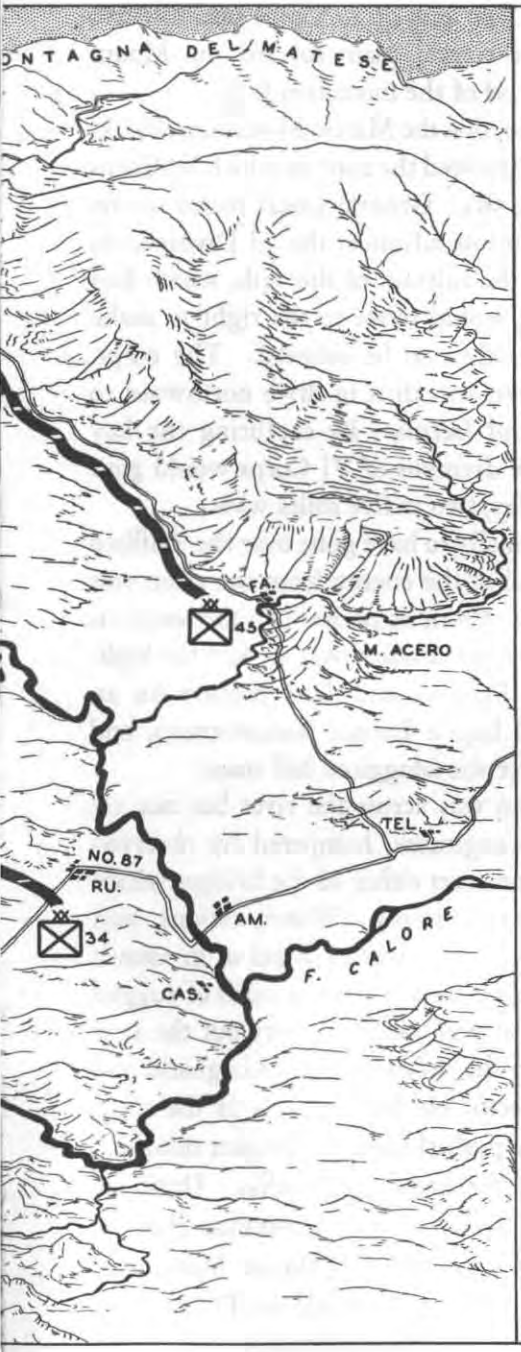
Rearguard Action up the Volturno Valley

THE GERMANS, forced to abandon the Volturno Line, their first natural defensive position, were now compelled to withdraw their main strength hastily twenty miles northward to the Mount Massico ridge and the high ground north and west of Teano and Presenzano, where they established their "Barbara Line" (Map No. 30, inside back cover). While smaller forces stayed behind to carry out delaying tactics, their major elements took up positions along the mountain barrier for another coordinated stand. Once more the enemy would have the advantage of terrain, for here the steep hills and narrow defiles would severely limit the speed and strength of an Allied assault. Meanwhile, the task of the British and Americans was to overcome enemy rearguard actions and to engage the main German forces before they could organize another strong defense.

North of the Volturno, the Fifth Army was still some twenty-five miles from the objective assigned by the 15th Army Group, the Sessa Aurunca–Venafro–Isernia area, where the army's right flank was to make contact with the Eighth Army. In preparation for the advance, General Clark, on 14 October, had altered the corps boundaries, giving 10 Corps the ridges northwest of Triflisco. The new boundary line widened 10 Corps' area by about three miles and gave the 56 Division a chance to move east where a bridgehead was already established. Prevented from crossing at Capua, the division might now use the bridge which had been built by VI Corps at the Triflisco Gap and might outflank the Germans still holding sections of their river line west of Capua. By advancing across the ridges to the Calvi Risorta


TO VENAFRO
TO ISERNIA
PRES.
NO. 85
RA.
S.A.
ALI.
BA.
LA.
PIET.
RO.
RI.
DR.
S.M.
ALV.
TEA.
10
VI
M. MAGGIORE 1037
MA.
CALVI RISORTA HILLS
LI.
VI.
PREA
CI.
M. CARUSO
582
3
HIGHWAY NO. 6
TR.
F. VOLTURNO
CAP.

MAP NO. 17



VI CORPS
CHANGE OF PLANS
14 OCTOBER 1943

LEGEND

AI.	AILANO
ALI.	ALIFE
ALV.	ALVIGNANO
AM.	AMOROSI
BA.	BAJA E LATINA
CAI.	CAIAZZO
CAP.	CAPUA
CAS.	CASTEL CAMPAGNANO
CI.	CISTERNA
DR.	DRAGONI
FA.	FAICCHIO
LA.	LATINA
LI.	LIBERI
MA.	MAJORANO DI MONTI
PIED.	PIEDIMONTE D'ALIFE
PIET.	PIETRAMELARA
PRES.	PRESENZANO
RA.	RAVISCANINA
RI.	RIARDO
RO.	ROCCAROMANA
RU.	RUVIANO
S.A.	S. ANGELO D'ALIFE
S.M.	S. MARCO
TEA.	TEANO
TEL.	TELESE
TR.	TRIFLISCO
VI.	VILLA

PLANNED MOVEMENTS

1000 0 1 2 3 4

YARDS MILES

Hills, 56 Division would control one end of Highway 6, a paved road running from Capua to Rome. The rest of 10 Corps was to drive north some seven miles over the coastal plain toward the Mount Massico hill mass at the western end of the mountain line.

North of the Volturno–Calore junction the Matese Mountains, blocking off any movement to the east, narrowed the zone in which VI Corps was to operate (Map No. 17, page 56). General Lucas issued orders for the divisions to shift their routes of advance: the 3d Division, on the extreme left, would take over the mission of the 34th, which had held the center; the 34th, in turn, would move to the right to make contact with the 45th, which was then to be relieved. The corps, advancing on both sides of the river, was then to drive northward to the mountains around Venafro and Isernia. By capturing the key hill positions along their route, the divisions of VI Corps would gain control of the upper Volturno Valley, two to five miles wide.

The 3d Division, which was originally to have gone over the Triflisco ridges to force the final withdrawal of the enemy from the river, was now free to concentrate on pursuit. From its position on the southern slopes of the Mount Maggiore range, the division was to skirt the highest peaks by turning northeast to Dragoni and there prepare for an advance to the mountains around Baja e Latina, Roccaromana, and Pietramelara, at the northern end of the Maggiore hill mass.

On 14 October the 34th Division was across the river but not yet ready to move. In its sector the engineers, hampered by observed artillery fire, had been unable to construct either of the bridges which had been planned for the division's supply. Water, rations, and ammunition had to be brought across the river by hand or in assault boats and then transported by carrying parties over six miles of rugged terrain. Nevertheless, preparations were made to carry out the new orders. The 34th was to move up the valley beyond Alvignano and then cross to the 45th Division sector on the east side of the river, where the enemy had already been pushed from the heights dominating the Volturno–Calore valley as far north as Faicchio. Until the 34th came into this area, the 45th Division was to continue clearing the valley between the upper Volturno and the Matese Mountains. At Piedimonte d'Alife the 45th, which had landed on D plus 1 at Salerno and fought through the entire Italian campaign, was to go into corps reserve.

During the next four weeks the men had to fight their way into the forward limits of a great system of mountain defenses. The terrain through which the 3d and 34th Divisions were ordered to move is a series of high, rocky, brush-covered ridges, interspersed with deep ravines, narrow farm valleys, and small broken tablelands. The only road across the mountains west of the river branches off from Highway 87 northeast of Triflisco and winds past small, scattered villages until it descends at Dragoni to the valley of the upper Volturno. Another road, from Caiazzo to Dragoni, runs along the valley itself, just east of the Maggiore range. Continuing from Dragoni, this road crosses the river and leads northward along the base of the Matese range. These precipitous mountains, sealing off the area on the east, restricted the American advance to a course along their foothills.

The natural difficulties of terrain were heightened by the changeable late autumn weather and the enemy's determination to prevent our troops from moving swiftly northward. Fog, rain, and mud hampered the bringing up of supplies and added to the weariness of the men. In his rear areas the enemy built bunkers and emplaced weapons, skillfully camouflaging these positions by blending them with the stone walls which criss-cross the slopes and valleys. Meanwhile, other German units mined and demolished roads and bridges and ambushed the many circuitous mountain trails along which our units would have to pass.

The 3d Division Drives Toward Dragoni

The 7th Infantry was in the hills southeast of Pontelatone on the afternoon of 14 October, when it was ordered to change its course and drive up the road through Liberi to Dragoni along which the enemy was reported to be withdrawing (Map No. 18, page 61). At 1645 the 3d Battalion, supported by tanks and tank destroyers, led the attempt to take Liberi before dark, but at 2250 the report came in that heavy resistance was holding up the battalion's advance on the southwest side of Mount Fallano. Artillery fire was falling on the road south of Cisterna, a little stone village on the forward slopes of the mountain. While one platoon of the battalion attempted to go through the town in the face of small-arms and machine-gun fire, Company I circled around to outflank the enemy from the northwest, following a road which winds above the valley between Mount Nizzola and Mount



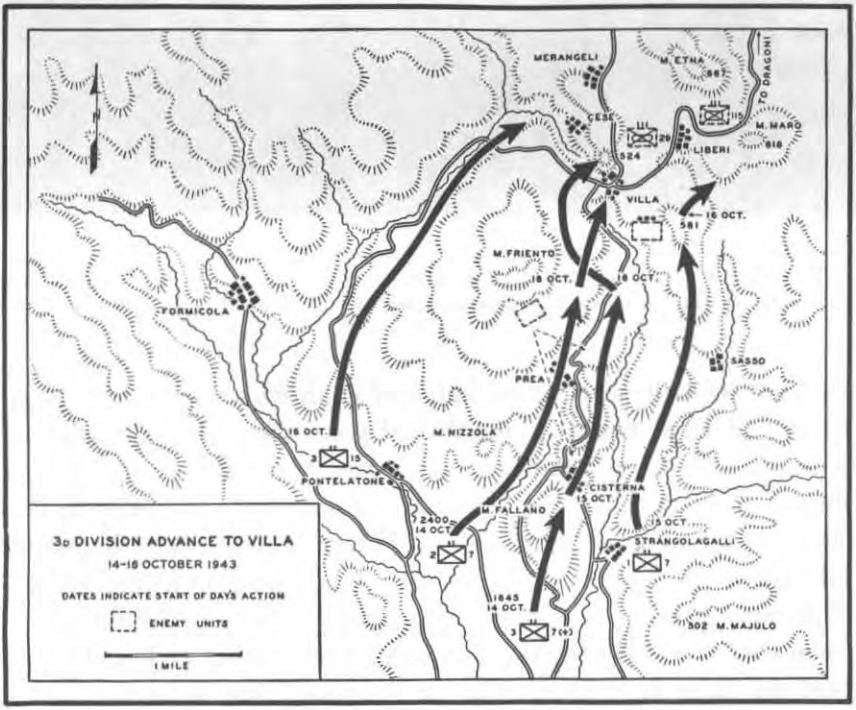
AN AMERICAN PATROL FOLLOWS A STONE-PAVED TRAIL *on the outskirts of a village. In a typical delaying action the enemy attempted to halt the advance of a rifle platoon by posting two light machine guns on either side of a trail such as this and stationing men farther in the rear to lob grenades at our troops. According to the platoon leader, the Germans had a perfect ambush.*

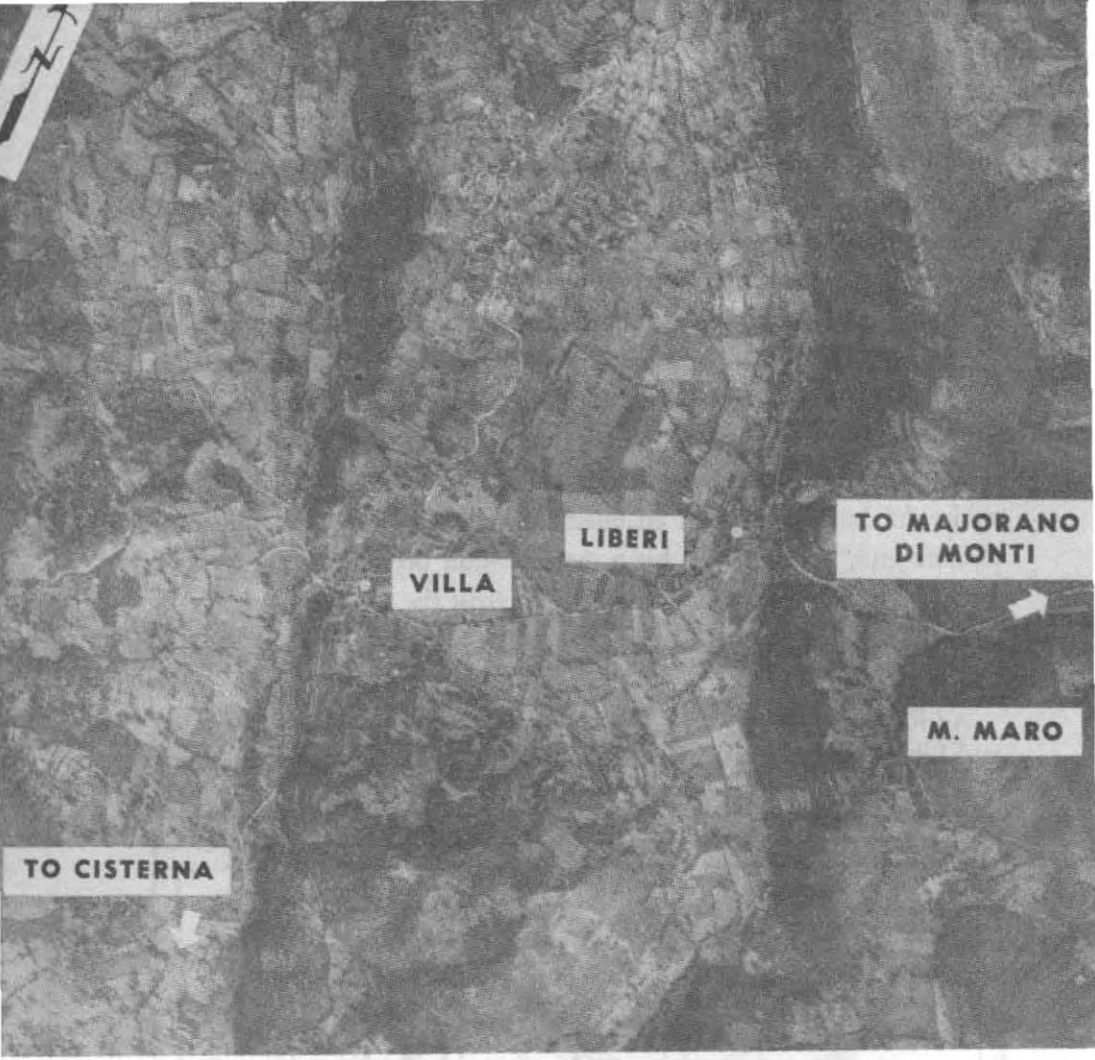
Fallano. Company K was to move forward on the right, along a mountain trail at the edge of the ravine dividing Mount Fallano from Mount Majulo to the south. The effort to flank Cisterna was unsuccessful, for in the darkness the men became scattered on the steep, brush-covered ground. The enemy continued to defend the village. Three tanks came up to fire on enemy machine-gun positions, but the first was hit by a mortar shell which knocked a track off. Infantrymen who tried to repair the damage met heavy fire, and the tank had to be abandoned. At midnight the 2d Battalion was committed to bypass Cisterna on the left and reach the high ground above Prea, the next village in the regiment's line of advance. Climbing over the stone terraces in the valley northwest of Mount Fallano, the men made their way to the broken tablelands north of Cisterna. Here they were delayed by enemy tanks, used as roving artillery, but by daylight the 2d Battalion was above Prea, on the slopes of Mount Friento, and overlooking the road to Liberi.

At 0830 on 15 October, the 1st Battalion prepared also to bypass the 3d Battalion at Cisterna. Moving up the ravine southeast of Mount Fallano, the battalion went through Strangolagalli and reached the broken country on the right of the Cisterna–Liberi road without drawing any fire. Later, on the ridges west of Sasso, the men were opposed by small arms and mortars, but during the afternoon they gained a footing on Hill 561. At 1500 Cisterna was reported captured, and the 3d Battalion was ordered to reorganize and remain in reserve, ready to assist either of the advance units. Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion made steady progress around the slopes of Mount Friento. Shortly after midnight, having overrun an enemy 6-inch gun and a 20-mm antiaircraft gun, the battalion hit a machine-gun protective line west of Villa and suffered heavy casualties. To assist the 1st Battalion, which was still fighting south of Liberi, the 3d Battalion was sent up at 0330 on the 16th.

All three battalions of the 7th Infantry were in the vicinity of Villa and Liberi by the morning of 16 October and were engaged in sharp

MAP NO. 18





CISTERNA, LIBERI, AND MAJORANO *were centers of resistance where the enemy, with small forces, usually of platoon, occasionally of company size, delayed the advance of the 3d Division. At these towns the delaying units could easily maintain communication and from them they could withdraw quickly.*

fighting with elements of the 29th and 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiments. The 3d Battalion, which had gone along the road south of Villa behind the 2d Battalion, was twice repulsed by artillery and mortar fire in its efforts to storm Hill 524, a knob less than fifty meters above the tableland between Villa and Liberi. Preceded by an intense artillery and mortar barrage, an enemy platoon counterattacked on Hill 561 but was beaten off by the 1st Battalion. In the afternoon the Cannon Company was sent up the road past Prea to support the drive on Liberi. The 3d Battalion, 15th Infantry, was at

this time attached to the 7th Infantry, with instructions from General Truscott that it be used to attack the high ground north of Villa before daylight of the 17th. Before dark the battalion was west of Villa, having come from Pontelatone. The 7th Infantry's attack was set for early the next morning. During the night the Germans made no more counterattacks against these units and seemed to be preparing to pull out of Liberi.

At 0615 the next morning the attack was renewed (Map No. 19, page 64). The enemy had withdrawn beyond Liberi and the 2d Battalion met no resistance when it entered the village at 1000. Pushing on to the right and left, the assault battalions occupied Mount Etna and Mount Maro. The leading elements of the 1st Battalion then made their way down into the narrow farm valley beyond which the Liberi–Dragoni road winds around the base of Mount Etna to the town of Majorano di Monti. As the battalion approached the village at 1145, however, it was pinned down by rifle, machine-gun, and artillery fire from both sides and was held south of Majorano di Monti until dark. The 2d Battalion followed by the 3d climbed the hills behind Liberi to bypass the 1st and took the road through a high pass between Mount Etna and Mount Maro. Throughout the after-

THE TOWN OF VILLA *and the surrounding hills were held by enemy troops instructed to man their positions indefinitely. On the evening of 16 October American artillery fired a concentration against tanks in Villa and personnel on the flats to the north. That night the enemy, threatened also by the 3d and 34th Divisions' advance, abandoned the town.*

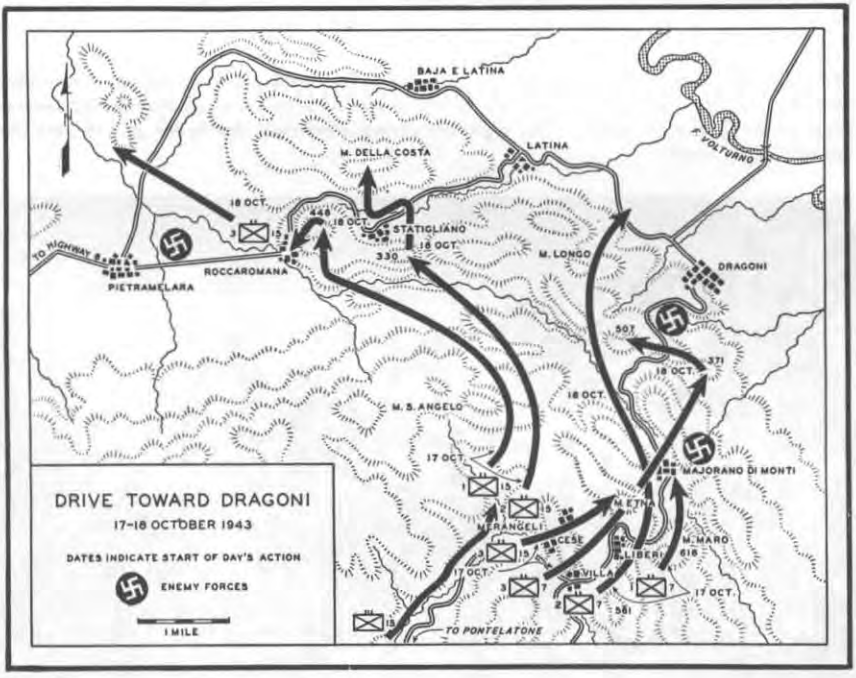


noon the 2d Battalion fought along the forward slopes of Mount Etna in an effort to envelop Majorano di Monti. On the right the 3d Battalion, instructed to reach Dragoni by the morning of 18 October, made fair progress.

While the 7th Infantry drove toward Liberi, the 15th advanced on the left. On 16 October there had been continuous fighting along the ridges west and southwest of Pontelatone, but during the night the regiment had moved steadily forward. By noon of the 17th, the 15th Infantry was around Villa, preparing to push north across the mountains to seize the high ground east of Pietramelara, a town on the lateral road connecting Highway 6 with the upper Volturno Valley. This move over rocky slopes, across deep valleys, and through wooded ravines was made to protect the left flank of the division.

At midnight the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, reached the slopes of Hill 446. At the base of the hill, along a deep stream, lay the village of Roccaromana, which was held by the enemy. The 2d Battalion occupied Hill 330 to the southeast and sent patrols to block the road between Statigliano and Latina. The 1st Battalion moved over Hill

MAP NO. 19

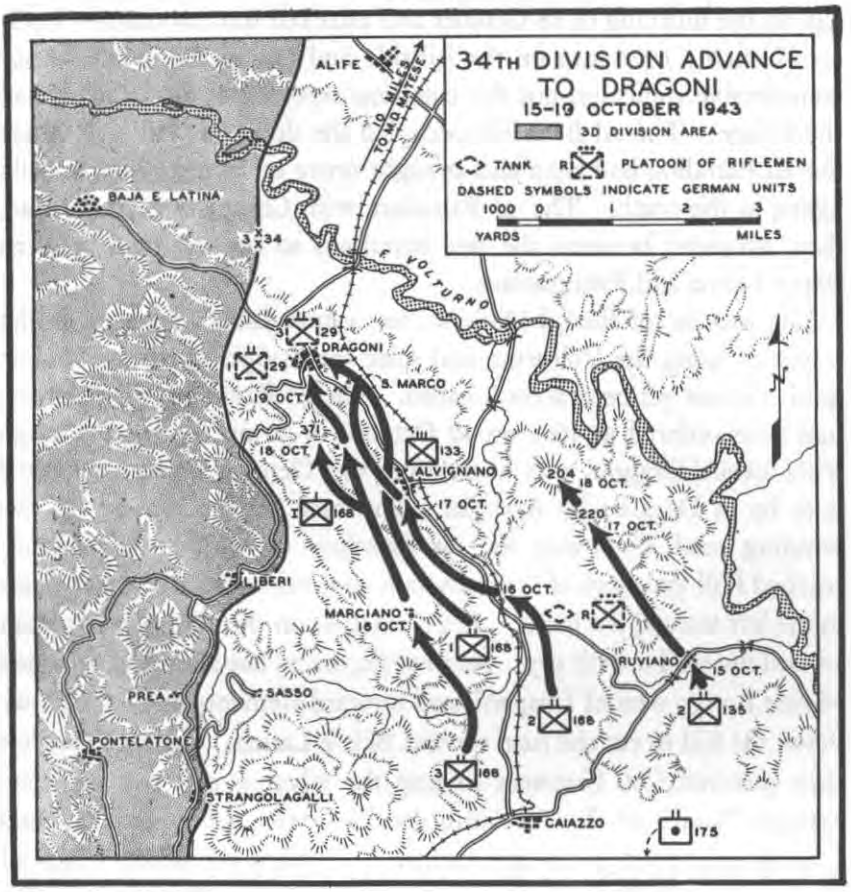


446 on the morning of 18 October and attacked Roccaromana. Pockets of enemy resistance on the hillside and out in the valley caused considerable difficulty, but the battalion reported at 1520 that it had the village. The 2d Battalion occupied the slopes on Hill 446 where the 1st Battalion had been and at night drove on to seize Mount della Costa, to the north. The 3d Battalion, with Company L in the lead, then advanced between the two battalions to cut the road between Baja e Latina and Pietramelara.

The mission of the 3d Division, to capture Liberi, advance to the highway along the Volturno, and seize the bridges northeast of Dragoni, had not yet been accomplished. The 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, had been ordered at 1600 on 17 October to go up the road through Villa toward Dragoni with instructions that General Truscott expected it to be in Dragoni by daylight. The men moved rapidly up the winding road, bypassing the 1st Battalion at Majorano di Monti, reached Hill 371 south of Dragoni soon after midnight, and sent patrols to the left toward the town. After daylight on the 18th, the battalion crossed the road to Hill 507. Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion had occupied Mount Longo west of Dragoni, and forward elements made their way down the hill to cut the road toward Baja e Latina. General Truscott then directed Col. Sherman to stop the advance and rest his men, saying: "You have done a damn good job with those battalions and I don't want them to go any farther. . . . They are within reach of that road, and if they can put up their mortars where they can interdict it, then that will be all I want from them."

The 34th Division Advances Along the River

The immediate task of the 34th Division after it took Caiazzo was to drive the enemy up the valley beyond Dragoni (Map No. 20, page 66). The 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, moved up to the low ridge south of Ruviano on the night of 14 October and prepared to take the village. Shortly after midnight General Ryder, still unable to get sufficient supplies and artillery across the Volturno, postponed plans for the attack on Ruviano. Meanwhile, General Clark had received information that the enemy was withdrawing before VI Corps and ordered all divisions to continue on their missions without delay. General Ryder then directed the 135th Infantry to resume its advance,



MAP NO. 20

and the 2d Battalion captured Ruviano on the morning of 15 October. Throughout the day our troops met stiff resistance in the rolling grain fields, vineyards, and olive groves north of the village. During the night the enemy withdrew, and the regiment swept on up the valley for the next two days. By morning, 18 October, it had reached a line from Hill 204 east of Alvignano to the Volturno. The tired infantrymen were more than halfway to their first objective. Some two miles ahead of them, at the base of the hill mass on their left, was Dragoni; to their right across the valley were the forbidding Matese Mountains.

Before daylight on 16 October, the 168th Infantry, on the left of the 135th, had moved past the stone farmhouses in the valley and along the brush-covered ridges to seize Alvignano. The 3d Battalion met some resistance at Marciano, a hamlet high on the slopes above the

road, but drove the enemy off. Late in the afternoon the 2d Battalion beat back a platoon of German riflemen supported by a tank, but both battalions were on the dominating hillsides south of Alvignano shortly after dark. On the morning of the 17th, after patrols had reported the town clear of the enemy, the 2d Battalion moved up and occupied Alvignano. Orders were then received to outpost the area until the 133d Infantry should be brought from reserve and sent up on 19 October to capture Dragoni.

On the morning of 18 October, General Ryder ordered the 168th Infantry to drive on toward Dragoni, and the 133d Infantry, commanded by Col. Ray C. Fountain, to cross the valley to seize the highway-railway bridge over the Volturno north of the town. The 135th Infantry would clear the valley and use one battalion that night to force a bridgehead across the Volturno. These movements, if successful, would cut off the German escape in the vicinity of Dragoni.

Elements of the 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry, started forward at 1100 toward Dragoni, followed by the 1st Battalion. Company I was sent along the ridge west of Alvignano to pass above Hill 371, which had been reported in the hands of the 7th Infantry, and flank Dragoni from the left. While the 133d Infantry was pushing through

NORTH OF CAIAZZO *the road from Highway 87 to Dragoni, route of the 34th's advance, runs through this valley. A German prisoner of war reported that on 11 October the men of his company were told they would move to Caiazzo if the Americans should cross the Volturno. At Caiazzo they would try to make a stand and, if necessary, fight their way back along this highway to the rear, even if the unit were encircled.*

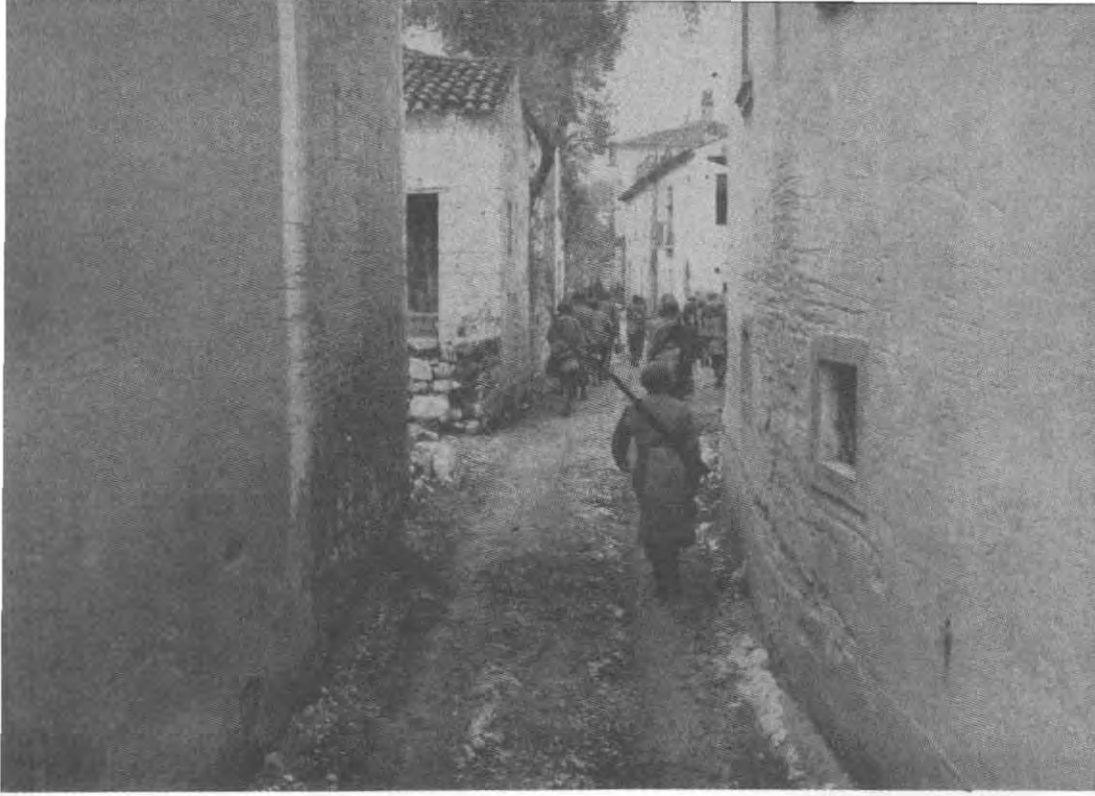


the vineyards and farms of the valley to take the bridges across the Volturno on the road to Alife, the patrols of the 3d Division were trying to block the road northwest of Baja e Latina.

The 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry, moved on up the valley abreast of Company I toward San Marco on the road to Dragoni. Rifle, machine-gun, and artillery fire was encountered a few hundred yards southwest of San Marco, and the 1st Battalion was sent around to the right to outflank the village. At 1530 the Germans laid a smoke screen across the front of both battalions and intensified their machine-gun, mortar, and artillery fire. The enemy appeared to be getting ready for one of his typical late-afternoon counterattacks. In Alvignano elements of the 2d Battalion were released to move up and help repel the expected counterattack. When a second smoke screen was laid a few minutes after the first, elements of the 3d Battalion were alerted. Col. Butler and Lt. Col. Joseph E. Kelley, commander of the 175th Field Artillery Battalion, were in direct observation from the hills above Alvignano and placed accurate artillery concentrations on enemy self-propelled guns seen firing on our troops.

The Germans, elements of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, fired a green flare, the signal for an attack. The 168th Infantry intensified its rifle and machine-gun fire and continued firing from the artillery positions. The enemy troops, who had been ordered to hold positions in the area for a counterattack during the afternoon, could not face our fire. A white flare, the signal for a withdrawal, was soon observed, and the enemy attack was over. After our artillery forced back the three supporting self-propelled guns, the enemy withdrew toward Dragoni. In the meantime, Company I had worked its way through scrub oaks to Hill 371, which was found to be held by the Germans. With the aid of an artillery concentration, the company reached the crest at 1800, only a mile from the road junction southeast of Dragoni. The 2d Battalion moved on past San Marco, but the 1st Battalion in the valley on the right was pinned down until after dark.

Late in the afternoon of 18 October, the commanders of the 3d and 34th Divisions, which were converging on Dragoni, agreed to combine their efforts to take the town and seize the bridges beyond. The 3d Division asked General Ryder's permission to fire on the town and



INFANTRYMEN MARCH THROUGH DRAGONI. *Early on 19 October a message came from a 3d Division observation post, "Heavy fog along west side of river. . . . Can't see Dragoni but heard bells ringing." At almost the same time elements of the 168th Infantry reported that they had entered the town without opposition.*

was told: "It is your sector. Go ahead and knock hell out of it." General Truscott and General Ryder then reached the agreement that the 3d Division would keep the town interdicted during the night. The 34th Division would try to take it the following morning. The 168th Infantry advanced on Dragoni before daylight on the misty morning of 19 October and occupied it without opposition. The enemy had made his escape from a precarious position and was preparing for another delaying action farther up the valley.

Second Volturno Crossing of the 34th Division

On 18 October while the 133d Infantry was getting ready to pass through the 168th Infantry at Alvignano and drive on Dragoni, Col. Fountain returned from the divisional command post at noon with orders to advance immediately into the sector of the 45th Division and establish a bridgehead across the Volturno just north of the highway-



THE HIGHWAY BRIDGE ACROSS THE VOLTURNO *on the road from Dragoni to Alife was blown by the Germans just before the 34th Division reached it. By 21 October trucks were crossing over the ponton bridge, seen in the center.*

railway bridge on the road to Piedimonte d'Alife (Map No. 21, opposite page). The 1st Battalion was to cross the river, sweep around to the right, and seize the bridge from the northeast, while the 100th [1] and 3d Battalions drove on it from the southeast. Battalion commanders were cautioned to be on the alert for tanks and to take the bridge intact. General Ryder had directed that the regiment move with all possible speed in order to sever the enemy's route of escape from Dragoni and prevent the demolition of the bridge.

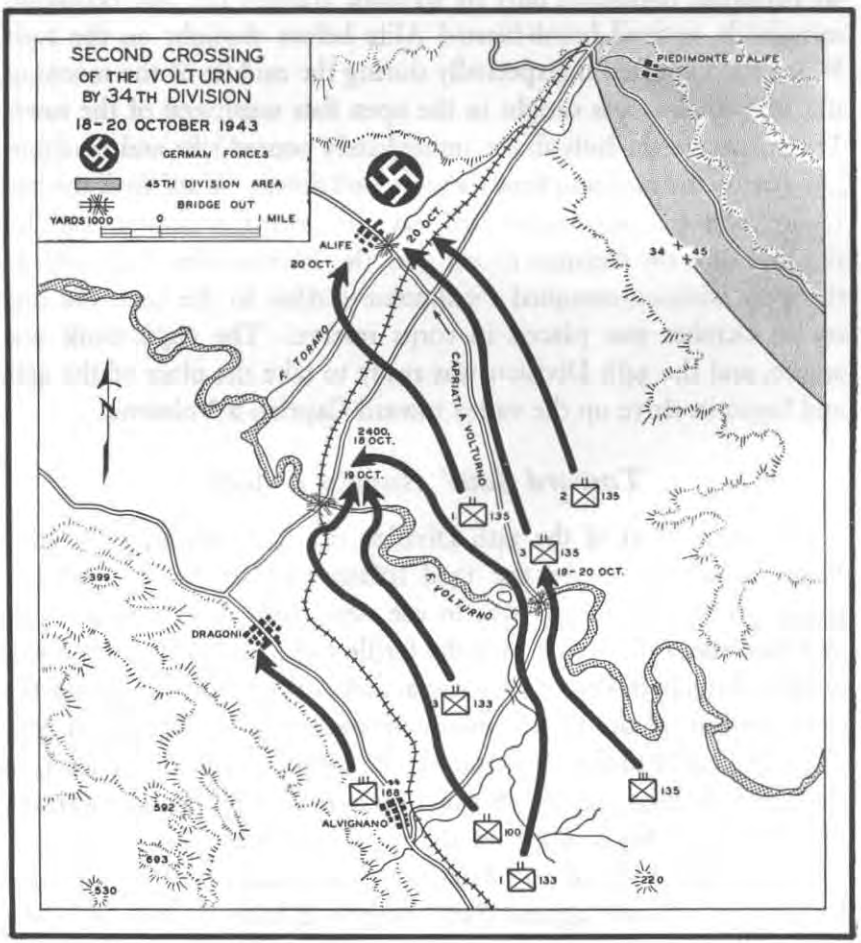
The battalions moved out through the vineyards and grain fields of the flat valley. The orchards, the high stumps supporting the grapevines, and the trees along the small streams provided some concealment but also denied our troops observation. The 1st Battalion reported at 1600 on the 18th that it had taken the wrong route to the river but that it was pushing on to establish the bridgehead. The battalion forded the waist-deep Volturno late that afternoon under

[1] The 100th Infantry Battalion was activated on 12 June 1942 as a separate unit whose members were all to be native American citizens of Japanese ancestry. The battalion was initially composed of men from the Hawaiian Provisional Infantry Battalion. Men of the 100th Infantry trained in the United States and reached North Africa on 2 September 1943. On 29 September the battalion was attached to the Fifth Army.

intense but inaccurate artillery fire and reached its goal about midnight. The enemy had observed or anticipated the action and withdrawn his main elements. The 3d Battalion reached the railway-bridge site after midnight, and the 100th Battalion came up at dawn. The German demolition experts had been thorough, for only the stone abutments and one arch of the bridge remained.

Leading elements of Company I, 135th Infantry, began their crossing of the Volturno at 0230 on the morning of 19 October. They met no opposition as they slipped down the low banks and waded through the icy water to the plain on the other side. The remainder of the 3d Battalion crossed after daylight and took up positions on the road to Alife. During the day, patrols went into the old walled town and

MAP NO. 21



found it full of mines and booby traps. The bridge across the swift mountain stream was demolished. The streets were filled with rubble, for the town had been hit with good results by B-25's of the Tactical Bomber Force on the night of 12/13 October. The 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, and the 100th Battalion forded the river after dark and closed in on the flats south of Alife, with the enemy in the olive groves on the high ground overlooking them. The 135th Infantry completed its crossing at 0155 on the foggy morning of 20 October.

As soon as the 135th Infantry was across the river, it advanced toward Alife. The infantry was delayed during the morning as it crossed the valley, which is cut by deep and swift canals. Demolition of bridges slowed the progress of the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, which moved along the poplar-lined road to support the attack. The 3d Battalion, hampered only by sporadic artillery fire and occasional minefields, entered bomb-blasted Alife before daylight on the 20th. When the fog lifted unexpectedly during the middle of the morning, the 1st Battalion was caught in the open flats southwest of the town. The enemy, in the hills above, immediately poured rifle and machine-gun fire on the men and kept them pinned down. Until dark the battalion received considerable artillery fire and also encountered for the first time the German rocket gun, the Nebelwerfer. Meanwhile, the 45th Division occupied Piedimonte d'Alife to the northeast and on 20 October was placed in corps reserve. The right flank was secure, and the 34th Division was ready to take the place of the 45th and begin its drive up the valley toward Capriati a Volturno.

Toward Sant' Angelo d'Alife

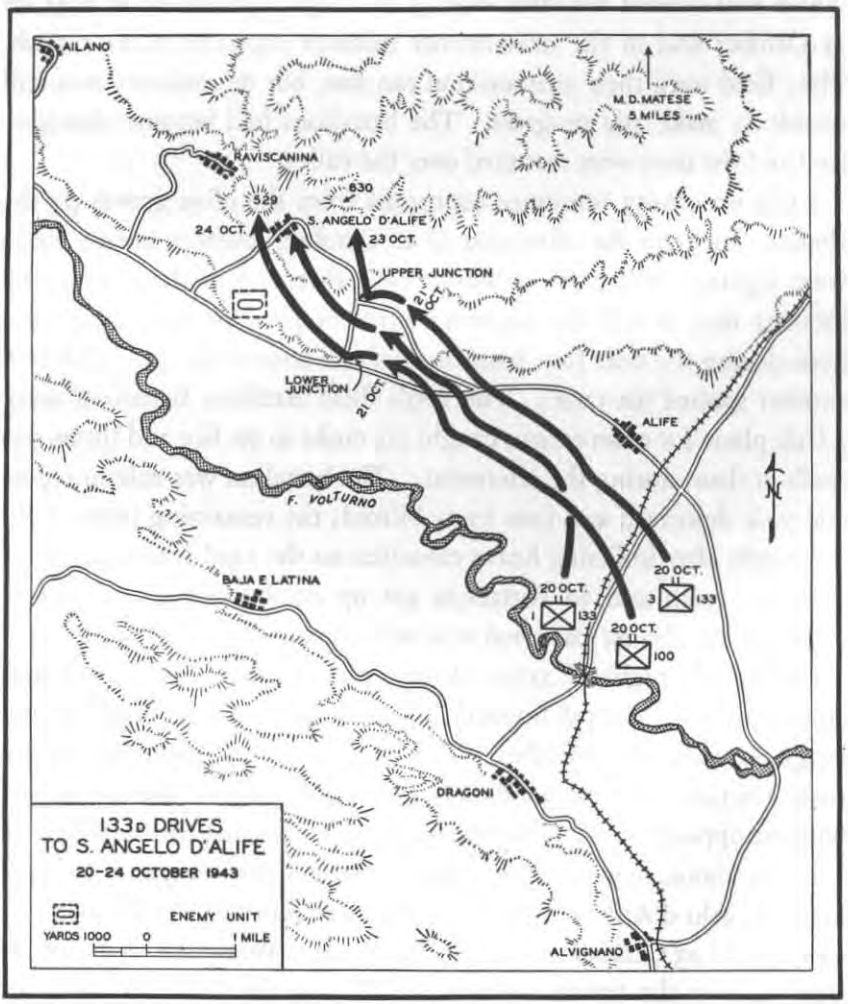
The main effort of the 34th Division up the northeast side of the Volturno was begun by the 133d Infantry (Map No. 22, opposite page). The road that it was to use runs from Alvignano to Alife and then turns northwest over the fertile farm land below the towns of Sant' Angelo d'Alife, Raviscanina, and Ailano, nestling against the steep foothills of the Matese mountain range. This valley road runs roughly parallel to the Volturno, on the northeast side of the river, to connect with Highway 85. Smaller roads branch off laterally to reach villages on the lower slopes of the mountain mass.

On the afternoon of 20 October, Col. Fountain ordered the 133d Infantry to advance against Sant' Angelo d'Alife at 1800 from the

vicinity of the blown bridge. The 100th Battalion was directed to seize the upper road junction, while the 1st Battalion followed to take the lower junction. Col. Fountain warned his battalion commanders that they could expect strong opposition that night and instructed them not to let their men be caught out in the flat, open terrain after daylight. The artillery opened up before 1800, and the sound of shells exploding in enemy positions crashed and echoed up and down the valley as the leading battalions started their advance.

The 100th Battalion made excellent progress in the early part of the evening of 20 October but was caught by crossfire of enemy machine

MAP NO. 22



guns about midnight. The enemy positions on the slopes were extremely difficult to locate and mortar fire directed on them was ineffective. The 100th Battalion became disorganized, and the 1st Battalion was ordered to move to the right and advance along the lower road. The 3d Battalion, which had followed the 1st, was then committed to drive along the upper road toward Sant' Angelo d'Alife. Rifle, machine-gun, multi-barreled-mortar, and artillery fire was heavy throughout the night, but the advance continued.

The Germans in this sector were engaging in one of their determined delaying actions and were throwing everything they had at our troops. To support the advance, the 125th and 151st Field Artillery Battalions, which had crossed the river during the night, opened up at 1041 on 21 October and in the next twenty minutes expended 1,134 rounds. They fired until their ammunition ran low, but the infantry was still unable to make any progress. The battalions had become disorganized and the men were scattered over the valley.

Stubborn enemy resistance continued from the olive groves on the slopes. Early on the afternoon of 21 October, fourteen enemy tanks were sighted among the willows in the direction of the river. The infantry dug in and the divisional artillery fired periodic concentrations during the next four hours as first one observation post and then another spotted the tanks. The 125th Field Artillery Battalion, using a Cub plane for observation, caught six tanks in its fire and threw 736 shells at them during the afternoon. The battalion was able to report one tank destroyed and four immobilized; the remaining tanks withdrew only after inflicting heavy casualties on the 133d Infantry. After dark the 100th and 3d Battalions got up on the slopes southeast of Hill 630, but the 1st Battalion was still out in the open valley.

During the night of 21/22 October the enemy made no counterattacks against the 133d Infantry, which continued its advance on the foggy morning of 22 October. The 100th Battalion reached the lower road junction, and the 3d Battalion was soon astride the upper one without opposition. During the night the Germans had withdrawn. The battalions then outposted their position and prepared to take Sant' Angelo d'Alife and Hill 529 the next morning. Through the morning of 23 October the attack continued. While the 3d Battalion climbed over the terraced slopes of Hill 630, the 100th Battalion at-

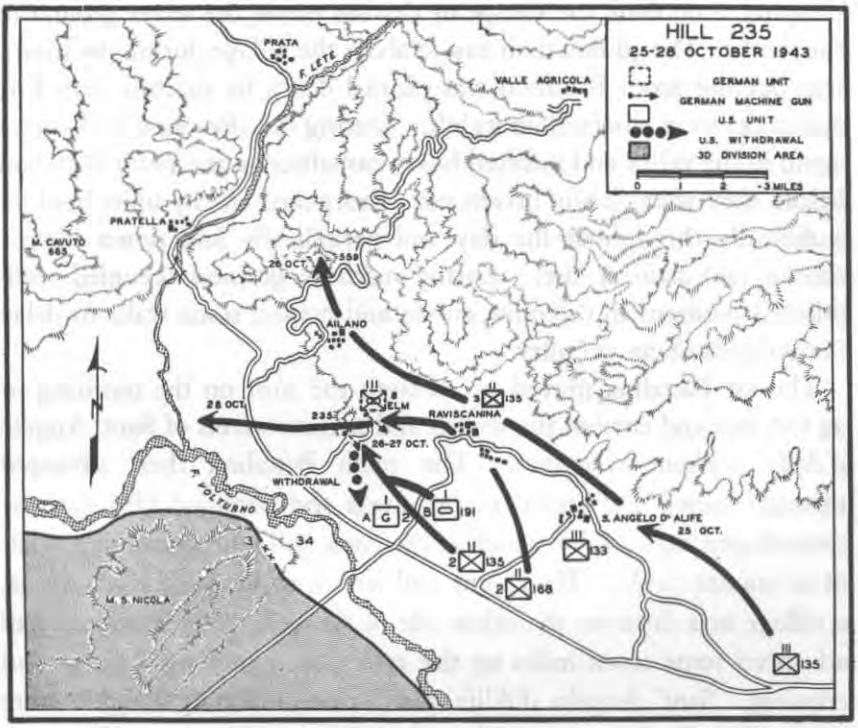
tempted to outflank the village by driving across the lower ground to the south. The 3d Battalion passed above the village during the morning, but the 100th Battalion was pinned down by machine-gun fire, and tanks were observed on its left. During the afternoon tanks were again in the valley and inflicted heavy casualties on the 100th Battalion before they were finally driven off. Rearguard enemy units held on stubbornly throughout the day and periodically laid down intense mortar and artillery fire. Enemy machine gunners occupied well-selected positions in the olive groves and behind stone walls to delay the progress of our infantry.

The 1st Battalion moved up through the mist on the morning of 24 October and entered the walled and narrow streets of Sant' Angelo d'Alife without resistance. The 100th Battalion then advanced through mined and booby-trapped areas and occupied Hill 529, the cone-shaped bare top of which is crowned with the crumbling walls of an ancient castle. The enemy had withdrawn beyond Raviscanina, a village in a draw on the other side of the hill. The battalions had advanced some seven miles up the valley, after making their second crossing. Sant' Angelo d'Alife and its commanding heights were secure, but the four days and nights of fighting had cost the 133d Infantry 59 men killed and 148 wounded.

The Battle for Hill 235

The next objective of the 34th Division was the high ground around Ailano and Mount Cavuto (Map No. 23, page 76). West of the Volturno the 3d Division was preparing to drive across the valley and over the mountains toward the Mignano Gap. During the afternoon of 25 October, the 135th Infantry moved up to Sant' Angelo d'Alife to pass through the 133d Infantry and take up the chase. The 3d Battalion of the 135th was to climb the steep slopes of the hills, flank Ailano to the north, and cut the road from Ailano to Valle Agricola. The 2d Battalion was to drive up the valley over more broken terrain and flank Ailano to the south.

The 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, moved up during the night of 25/26 October and advanced before dawn over the hills above Raviscanina. At 0530 divisional artillery began firing successive concentrations that progressed at the rate of one hundred yards every six



MAP NO. 23

minutes. The 185th Field Artillery Battalion alone expended 828 rounds in the next two hours. Meanwhile, men supplied by the 100th Battalion to guide the 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, to its line of departure became lost in the darkness and fog of the early morning, and at 0530 the battalion was several hundred yards to the rear of the line. When the 2d Battalion finally jumped off at 0605, it left positions several hundred yards too far north.

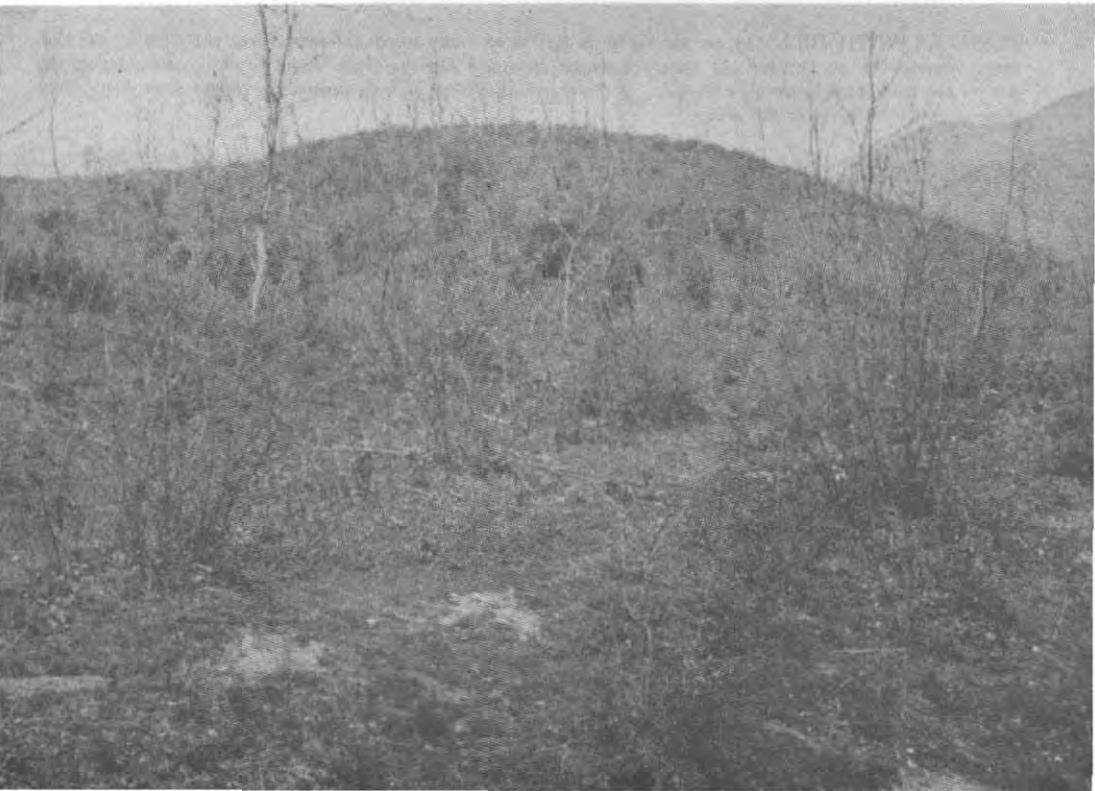
The 3d Battalion climbed slowly over the wooded mountainsides above Raviscanina and Ailano. Enemy opposition was slight, and the battalion crossed the road between Ailano and Valle Agricola during the afternoon and occupied Hill 559. As soon as the fog lifted, the 2d Battalion was pinned down by rifle and machine-gun fire from Hill 235, rising less than twenty-five meters above the broken valley. This rolling hill, several acres in size and covered with brush and small evergreens, commands the area from the foothills to the river. A deep ravine runs along the east side of Hill 235; toward the west the terrain is broken and rough.

Unsuccessful efforts were made during the morning to maneuver

men over the open ground around both flanks of the 2d Battalion. Company A, 2d Chemical Battalion, battered the hill with high explosive shells, but the infantry could make no headway against enemy fire from well-hidden positions. Meanwhile, Generals Clark, Lucas, and Ryder visited the regimental observation post on Hill 529, and General Ryder attached Company B, 191st Tank Battalion, to the 2d Battalion for a continuation of the attack the next morning, 27 October. During the afternoon an observer sighted troops south and southeast of Hill 235. His message specified an area previously reported held by the 2d Battalion, and the troops were assumed to be ours.

The 2d Battalion, preceded by tanks, was to resume the attack at 0530, but the tanks were held up by the difficult terrain, and the attack was delayed. An observer saw troops moving west over the hill and immediately reported that it had been taken. The battalion soon discovered that these were Germans who had been south and southeast of the hill the day before. The tanks arrived and tried to move to the right to attack the north nose of Hill 235, but one hit a mine, one turned over, and one was knocked out by artillery. On the hill

HILL 235, *two knobs joined by a shallow saddle, provided the Germans with defilade for tanks and concealment for infantrymen. The larger of the two knobs is shown. The Alife–Pratella highway is about one thousand yards to the left (west); a narrow ravine some twelve feet deep runs across the base of the hill to the right. Shell fragments from American artillery literally cover the ground.*



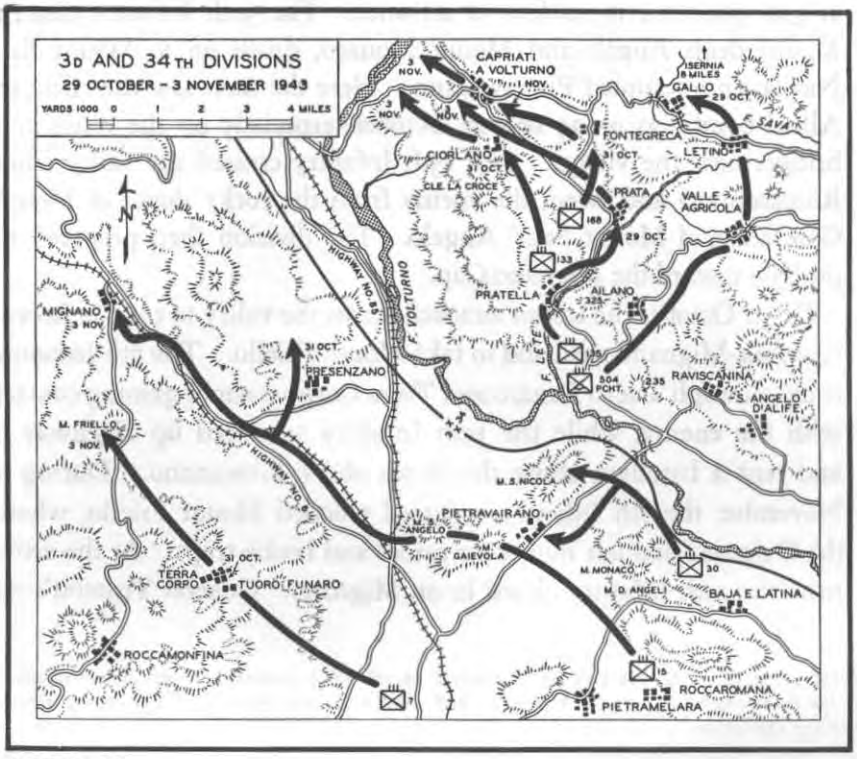
the enemy had machine-gun positions well hidden in the brush and was using from seven to ten tanks in hull-down positions as artillery. The 2d Battalion organized for another effort after noon, but twelve enemy tanks came up on the left flank and prevented the attack.

By nightfall on 27 October, elements of the 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment on Hill 235 had shown the strength and stubbornness of their resistance. General Ryder ordered the 168th Infantry, which was in reserve, to pass through the 135th Infantry and renew the attack next morning. A heavy artillery concentration started at 0930; at the same time twenty-four A-36's bombed Pratella and the bridge to the south over the Lete River. The 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry, assaulted Hill 235 at 1000. The Germans had withdrawn during the night. From this small hill in the center of a valley twelve hundred yards wide, flanked by the mountain and the river, the enemy had for two days successfully held up the advance of the 34th Division. Another typical enemy delaying action was over, and our troops plunged on west to the Lete River.

After the enemy retreated from Hill 235, the 34th Division advanced north beyond the junction of the Lete and Volturno rivers. During 29 October the 135th Infantry drove up the road and occupied Pratella and Prata along the river, finding that Hill 325 in the narrow valley

PRATELLA, WITH HILL 325 *on the right, is typical of many small hill towns near the head of the Volturno River. On 30 October the enemy harassed the 34th Division from 0830 to 1600, concentrating his fire on the road running through Pratella. Reports indicated that at least twenty-five pieces were firing from seven different locations in this area.*





MAP NO. 24

by Pratella was fortunately not held by enemy rearguard troops. On 31 October the 133d and 168th Infantry continued up the Lete Valley and then into the valley of the little Sava River (Map No. 24, above). To protect the division left flank, the 133d Infantry climbed over the steep, brush-covered mountains on the left and occupied Ciorlano, a village clinging to the terraced slopes of La Croce Hill. The 168th Infantry took Fontegreca and drove on to Capriati a Volturno on 1 November. During the next two days the 34th Division drove the remaining enemy forces northwest toward Highway 85. To continue the pursuit the division would have to make a third crossing of the Volturno River.

Advance Toward the Barbara Line

While the 34th Division was struggling forward along the northeast side of the Volturno, the 3d Division was driving the enemy from the mountains and valleys on the other side (Map No. 24 above). The division was aided by Allied fighter-bombers which struck heavily

at gun positions in its line of advance. The 30th Infantry cleared Mount degli Angeli and Mount Monaco, drove on to Mount San Nicola, and occupied Pietravairano. Here the men saw the effect of Allied bombings on 19 and 26 October, especially on the roads and bridges near the village. The 15th Infantry crossed the valley from Roccaromana and swept the enemy from the rocky slopes of Mount Gaievola and Mount Sant' Angelo. The division then prepared to push on toward the Mignano Gap.

On 31 October the troops attacked across the valley to cut the Roccamonfina–Mignano road and to take Mount Friello. The 7th Infantry drove through Tuoro Funaro and Terra Corpo without gaining contact with the enemy, while the 15th Infantry advanced up Highway 6 and sent a battalion along the slopes above Presenzano. During 3 November the 7th Infantry occupied wooded Mount Friello, where the Germans had left numerous mines and booby traps. At the same time the 15th Infantry closed in on Mignano. General Truscott's 3d

INFANTRYMEN OF THE 3D DIVISION *advance in the scrub-covered hills near Pietravairano. Instructions to the men assigned to capture the high ground above the town were to "dig in, group well, and play hell with any infiltration."*



Division had secured the left flank of VI Corps and was in contact with the British 10 Corps.

To guard the army's right flank, the 504th Parachute Infantry, 82d Airborne Infantry Division, under the command of Col. Reuben H. Tucker III, came up the Volturno Valley, turned northeast through the mountains from Ailano to Valle Agricola, and advanced through Letino and Gallo. The 45th Division, which had been in reserve, prepared to pass around the left flank of the 34th Division and cross the river south of Venafro.

Along the 10 Corps front the British had overcome their initial handicap, when strong enemy attacks had forced them back west of the Triflisco Gap, and by 17 October were able to move tanks of the 7 Armoured Division across the river at Grazzanise (Map No. 30, inside back cover). By 19 October, the 56 Division had patrols on the Calvi Risorta Hills, overlooking Highway 6. The strain on the temporary bridging limited the development of a swift thrust anywhere in the 10 Corps zone, however, and it was a week before the 56 Division was in complete command of the hills. Meanwhile, the 7 Armoured Division prepared to exchange sectors with the 46 Division and to drive on the left flank of the corps to Mondragone. By 31 October elements of the 56 Division had captured Teano; the 46 had advanced to the town of Santa Croce, and the 7 Armoured occupied Mondragone. In two more days, 10 Corps reached the Massico ridges and pushed a short distance farther into the Mount Santa Croce hill mass. The Barbara Line was already under attack.

Between the Volturno and the Barbara Line the enemy had planned his actions to gain the greatest amount of time with the least expenditure of force. Outnumbered by the Allies and facing superior air and fire power, the Germans had to depend on their skill in using the advantages of the terrain. The nature of the operation, a planned withdrawal, enabled them to make a careful study of the areas which they expected the British and Americans to occupy. In defiladed or densely wooded ground, their effective shelling showed that they had precise registrations on likely approaches, gun positions, and troop locations, and could fire on these targets without direct observation. Wherever the Fifth Army might move or bivouac, the enemy placed mines and booby traps, across roads and railways, blocking the way around demolitions, in streams and river banks, and in towns

AUTUMN IN ITALY *is by far the wettest season of the year. October and November rainfall in the country through which the VI Corps was fighting will usually exceed four inches in each month. The picture above shows wire being laid through the rain-flooded country in the vicinity of Pietravairano. In the one below a jeep is trying to get through the mud.*

and villages. Anti-personnel mines lay concealed along hedges and walls, and booby traps were set in haystacks, ravines, and olive groves, and on hillsides and terraces.

To counteract the limitation in strength caused by commitments to other fronts and by previous losses, the Germans had primarily used small, mobile infantry units for these rearguard actions, reinforcing them with heavy weapons. Self-propelled guns, which could be hidden against walls or among trees and quickly moved back after covering the infantry's withdrawal, were effective and economical weapons. Along the coast in the British zone, where the open plain offered few natural defensive positions, the enemy had concentrated his strength in the towns. Inland, his troops had held on to the heights above the villages, from which they could command Allied approaches and cover their own escape. If they were driven from these heights, they counterattacked only when there was a chance of imposing further delay; otherwise they withdrew to selected positions, waiting always until darkness hid their movements from Allied air patrols.

Against these tactics the Fifth Army had, in twenty days of fighting, secured its bridgehead along the entire length of the lower Volturno River and had advanced fifteen to twenty miles along a forty-mile front. Despite the bad weather, Allied fighter-bombers had struck the enemy again and again in the area at the head of the valley. The Fifth Army had not engaged the main enemy forces, but the fact that its advance elements had overrun several enemy gun positions indicated that the Germans were withdrawing faster than they had intended.

Across the Volturno and Against the Winter Line

ON 3 NOVEMBER VI CORPS, in pursuit of the retreating German divisions, was making careful preparations for its third crossing of the Volturno River, where the headwaters of that winding stream run through a flat valley between Venafro and Isernia (Map No. 30, inside back cover). The enemy had withdrawn west of the river, laying minefields and destroying bridges, and was waiting in the bald and rugged mountains which formed the eastern flank of the well-defended Barbara Line.

The German defense of this line, extending along the entire Fifth Army front from these heights overlooking the upper Volturno through the Mount Massico ridge to the sea, was designed to delay the attacking force until maximum construction could be completed on the Winter Line to the northwest. To reach its Sessa Aurunca–Venafro–Isernia objective, Fifth Army had to break enemy resistance along the whole Barbara Line. 10 Corps had already penetrated the line on the west coast, where patrols of the 46 Division and the 7 Armoured Division had reached the Garigliano River and the 56 Division was moving up against Mount Camino. VI Corps, to the east, was to encounter the heaviest fighting during the entire campaign before it could force the Germans to retire from the hills commanding the upper Volturno.

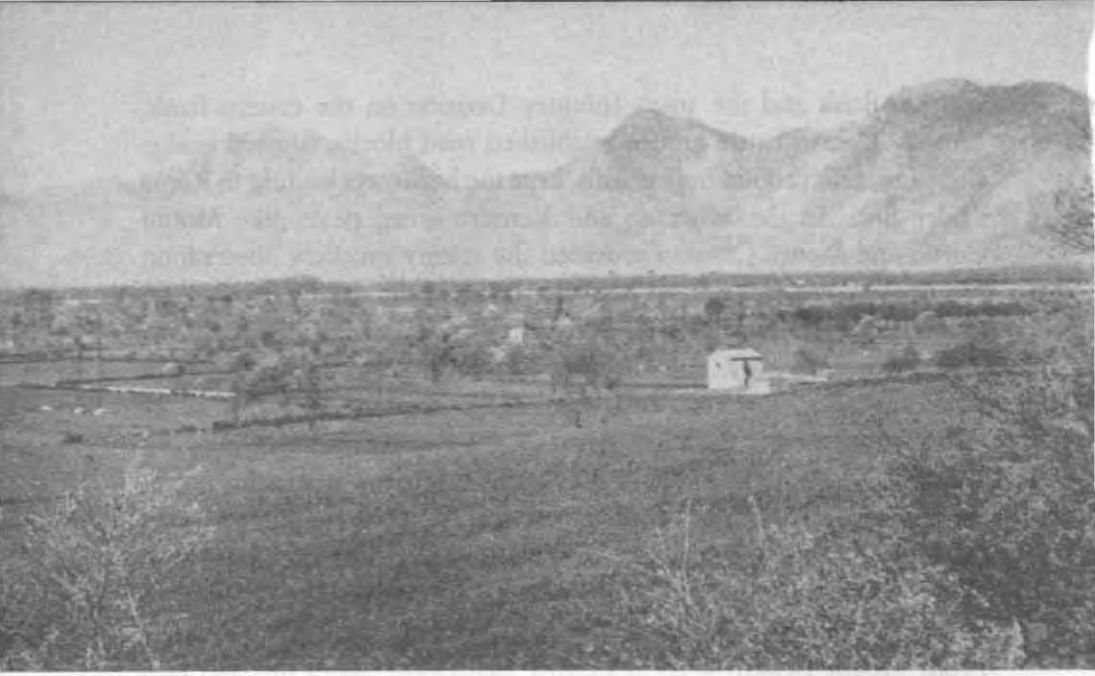
Between 1 and 3 November the Germans had reinforced the Barbara Line against Fifth Army's attack with two new divisions from Rommel's command in the north, bringing the total enemy strength to five divisions.[2] The 94th Infantry Division went into position on the

[2] The 26th Panzer Division, which had defended the Germans' east flank at the Volturno River against the attack of Fifth Army on 13 October, had moved into the Eighth Army's area two days later.

western flank and the 305th Infantry Division on the eastern flank. Strong German battle groups established road blocks, covered bridge sites, and, from commanding hills, kept the highways leading to Rome under fire. In the Mignano and Venafro areas, peaks like Mount Corno and Mount Camino provided the enemy excellent observation for artillery fire control. Whenever they withdrew the Germans exploited the precipitous cliffs, deep canyons, and high tablelands to make their delaying action effective. From these positions their artillery, automatic weapons, and small arms harassed the advance of forward elements of the Fifth Army.

In its continued drive to push the Germans into the mountains northwest of Sessa Aurunca, Venafro, and Isernia, Fifth Army was next expected to reach a line six to ten miles distant. The line starts high on the slopes at Isernia and runs across the headwaters of the Volturno and over mountains 1,200 to 1,300 meters high to Mount Passero. From Mount Passero it turns sharply southwest, passes through tangled hills and desolate mountains about thirteen miles to a point on the Garigliano River west of Mignano, and then follows the Garigliano to the sea. The area inclosed between this line and the upper Volturno is a great arc of mountains, beginning on the east side with the Roccaravindola spur, curving around Venafro, and ending in the high hills between Presenzano and Mignano. The brush-covered hills north and northwest of Roccaravindola rise from 400 and 600 meters above sea level, drop off into the narrow valley of the Ravindola River, and then rise to 1,036 meters at Alto Hill. The great rocky barriers of Mount Santa Croce (1,083 meters) and Mount Corno (1,052 meters) tower above the olive groves around Venafro. Northwest of Presenzano the peaks reach 1,170 meters in height at Mount Cesima. Only unpaved roads and mule tracks cross the area. The march to this new line, through the forward limits of German mountain defenses in depth, was to be a difficult uphill advance, where improvised mule columns carried supplies to forward battalions and infantrymen hugged the ledges as they crept along precarious routes.

The Volturno River itself, though flooded at this season, was not to be a difficult obstacle in front of the mountains. Here, at the headwaters, it flows in numerous streams, varying in depth from ten to twenty inches, through clumps of willows and over a gravel bed reaching a width of eight hundred feet. The valley on both sides is cut



MOUNT SANTA CROCE AND MOUNT CORNO *mark an abrupt end to the Volturno Valley. Our troops advanced so high into the mountains that litter bearers of the 120th Medical Battalion, carrying the wounded from a forward aid station to an ambulance loading post in the valley, were three full hours on the trail.*

by many other streams and by sunken roads and is covered with grain fields, vineyards, orchards, and olive groves. At Roccaravindola the intensively cultivated valley is less than two miles across. It widens to five miles at Venafro and narrows down to less than two miles northeast of Presenzano.

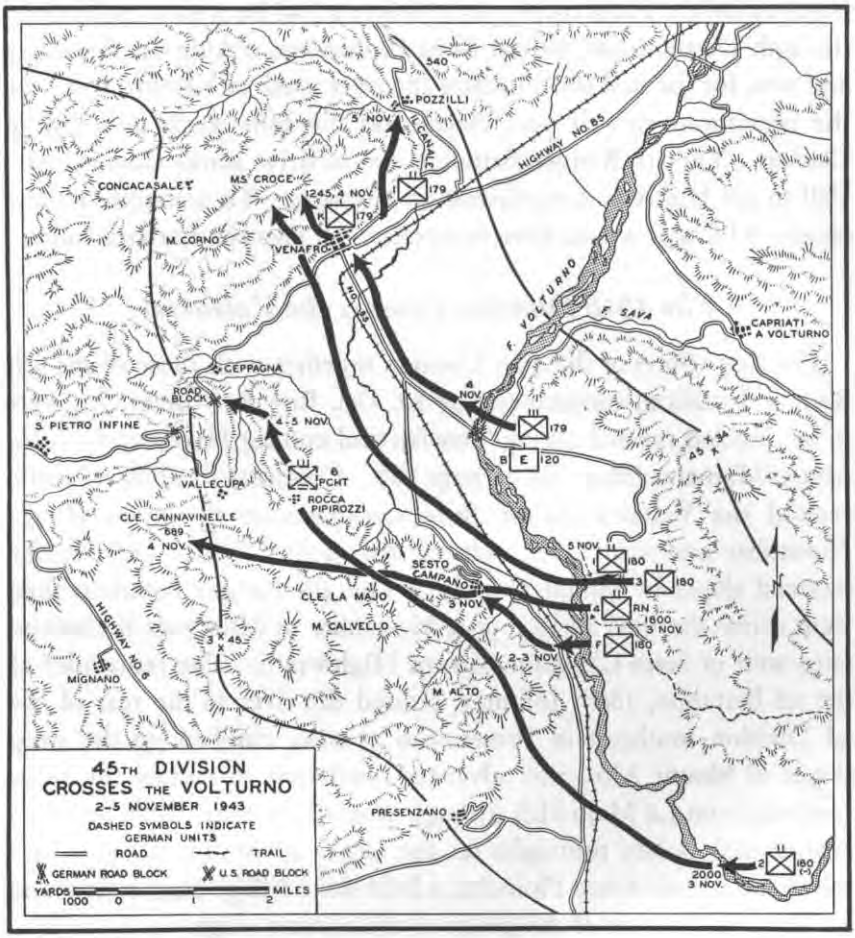
Carrying out Fifth Army's order to advance to its objective, VI Corps was directed to cross the Volturno on the night of 3/4 November and seize the ground along a line extending from Isernia through Mount Passero and Cervaro to Mignano. The corps was to push light forces to the phase line, making its main effort on the left and maintaining contact with the British Eighth Army across the Matese ranges. On the right, the 504th Parachute Infantry had moved into the great gray Gallo bowl high in the mountains and was advancing northwest through Monteroduni and Isernia in contact with the Eighth Army. It was to guard Fifth Army's right flank. On the left, the 3d Division was following slowly retreating elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division over the valley and through the lower hills toward Mignano. It was to guard the corps' left flank. The 34th Division, poised in the olive groves on the slopes overlooking the flat Volturno Valley, was to cross the river east of Venafro to drive

north to Colli. From corps reserve where it had been since 20 October, the 45th Division had moved from Piedimonte d'Alife up the valley and was, for the first time, to cross the river south of Venafro and seize the mountains east of San Pietro and the hills south and east of Cardito. The 4th Ranger Battalion was to drive across Cannavinelle Hill to cut Highway 6 northwest of Mignano. To accomplish these orders, VI Corps would have to envelop the enemy's Barbara Line.

The 45th Division Crosses the Volturno

The first efforts of the 45th Division together with those of the 4th Ranger Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Roy A. Murray, Jr., were to be directed toward taking Venafro and cutting Highway 6 northwest of Mignano (Map No. 25, page 88). Company F, 180th Infantry, crossed the Volturno below Sesto Campano on the night of 2/3 November and went into position around that village high on the terraced slopes of Mount Calvello. The 4th Ranger Battalion then went across the river at 1800 on 3 November to drive over the mountains west of Sesto Campano toward Highway 6. The remainder of the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, crossed the river to the rear of the 3d Division southeast of Presenzano at 2000, climbed up the steep slopes of Mount Alto, and advanced northwest to occupy the ridge running from La Majo Hill through Rocca Pipirozzi. The battalion reorganized before midnight on the slopes of Mount Calvello and moved on to take Rocca Pipirozzi, a little stone village clustered around an old castle on one of the peaks of the narrow ridge.

The terrain over which the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, moved on the night of 3/4 November is extremely rugged. Men often had to use the bushes and rocks to pull themselves up the steep mountainsides. Maps were of little value in the darkness, and by dawn no one knew his exact location. Capt. Howard C. Crye and Capt. Elmer C. Dugger, climbing to reconnoiter the top of a ridge to the front, discovered over a crest a group of German officers. Capt. Crye waved to them and they politely returned the greeting. The two American officers walked off as nonchalantly as possible, gradually increasing their speed as they approached a nearby stone wall, and finally made a break toward it for cover. Capt. Crye's subsequent plan for capturing the officers failed, and the attempt started a fierce conflict for Rocca Pipirozzi.



MAP NO. 25

The battalion worked its way down the slopes of La Majo Hill and out onto the ridge. Small delaying forces of the 6th Parachute Regiment, which had reinforced the area the day before, clung tenaciously to their positions in and around Rocca Pipirozzi and counterattacked repeatedly under cover of tank and artillery fire. During the morning the enemy was driven from the ridge, and one of our artillery observers made his way into the village with the assault troops. When the street fighting was over at 0630 on the morning of the 4th, a German artillery observer at the other end of the village was a prisoner. The battalion continued northwest along the ridge and was ordered

late in the afternoon to dig in and hold that area. Contact was then made with the 4th Ranger Battalion, which had reached Cannavinelle Hill on the left but had not been able to advance to Highway 6.

Early in the morning on 4 November, Company K of the 179th Infantry, the regiment on the division's right flank, forded the Volturno near a destroyed bridge south of Venafro as advance guard for the 3d Battalion, the remainder of which crossed at 0545 ready to launch its attack on Venafro. The battalion advanced rapidly after dawn over the grain fields and through the vineyards of the flat valley but was pinned down about the middle of the morning a mile southeast of the town by machine-gun fire from the olive groves on the slopes of Mount Corno. Company K stubbornly continued forward and by 1245 had forced its way through the town, the center of German defenses in this section of the Volturno Valley, and into positions on the lower slopes of Mount Santa Croce. The rest of the battalion, held up by fire from the left, was unable to get above Venafro until after dark. Meanwhile, Company B, 120th Engineer Combat Battalion, was to complete a ponton bridge across the river south of Venafro. When it was finished at 2145, it bridged the river for all traffic, including tanks, and provided an approach to Highway 85, the main road south of Venafro.

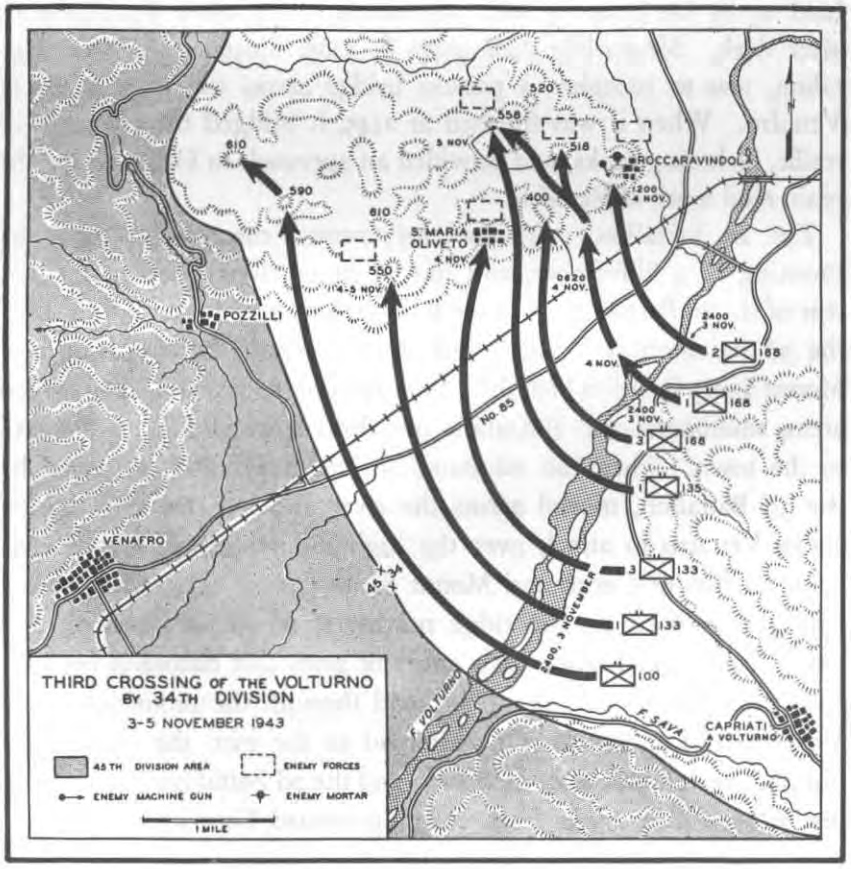
The 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, crossed the river at 0900, the morning of 4 November, and moved in echelons to the right and rear of the 3d Battalion. On the following morning it passed through the 3d Battalion at Venafro and climbed along the steep slopes of Mount Santa Croce to Pozzilli. Enemy minefields and booby-trapped areas, small-arms and automatic fire slowed the battalion's advance to the town. Then the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, followed by the 3d Battalion, moved across the river and into the olive groves above Venafro to attack over the high saddle toward Concacasale between Mount Corno and Mount Santa Croce. The 2d Battalion held its positions on the ridge northwest of Rocca Pipirozzi and maintained a road block with antitank guns and bazookas between Vallecupa and Ceppagna on the road through the mountains from Venafro to San Pietro. On this road to the east, the enemy was holding, with tanks, a counterblock, and the 2d Battalion was attempting to keep these tanks from escaping toward Ceppagna.

Third Crossing of the 34th Division

The immediate objectives of the 34th Division across the wide Volturno, to the right of the 45th, were the villages of Santa Maria Oliveto and Roccaravindola in the hills to the northwest (Map No. 26, below). The 168th Infantry was to cross northeast of Venafro and seize Roccaravindola, a village around the ruins of an old castle on a high spur jutting out in the valley. The 133d Infantry was to cross east of Venafro and drive northwest to take Santa Maria Oliveto and the ridges to the southwest. Reconnaissance had been thorough and every effort had been made to insure surprise.

Shortly before midnight on 3 November, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 168th Infantry, and the 133d Infantry moved carefully down out of the hills and through the farms of the muddy valley to their posi-

MAP NO. 26



tions along the low river banks. Men of the 133d Infantry spread out in the vineyards and orchards of the delta formed by the junction of the Sava and the Volturno. The divisional artillery opened up at 2330 with a terrific concentration on enemy positions across the river and in the hills. The infantrymen, waiting on the banks of the river, could see great flashes through the murk of the night and could hear the crash of exploding shells which continually beat back and forth across the valley, dying away like the distant rumble of thunder. Thirty minutes later, a few hours after the first troops of the 45th Division had crossed on their left, the men of the 34th Division waded through the swift and cold waters of the Volturno River for the third and last time.

The 2d and 3d Battalions, 168th Infantry, forded the Volturno abreast. Mortar and artillery fire from the hills was heavy, but mines and booby traps were even greater hindrances. S-mines and Teller-mines, separately and together, were planted thickly in the valley and along the embankment leading up to Highway 85. Trip wires were numerous, and many were attached to grapevines, fruit trees, and haystacks. At the regimental command post, high in the hills east of the river, the progress of both assault battalions could be followed in the darkness by the explosions of the mines. The 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, waded quickly across the wide and shallow stream and advanced rapidly through the valley to the hills. The 1st Battalion followed on the left, and the 100th Battalion splashed across toward Pozzilli to get astride the road net in the valley and to protect the left and rear of the division.

The 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, reached Hill 400 at 0620 on 4 November and quickly mopped up its area. The 2d Battalion was on the rocky saddle between Hill 400 and its objective, Roccaravindola, by the middle of the morning, but was held up by a mortar and a machine gun in a draw north of this village. After a white flag was reported waving above Roccaravindola, T/Sgt. Rudolf C. von Ripper, acting intelligence officer of the 2d Battalion, went with a twelve-man patrol to investigate. He and four men climbed the southeast slope of the hill into the village and gained a position above the draw. On their way through the village, members of the patrol heard directions shouted in English by the officer commanding the enemy position and were almost deceived into revealing themselves. Just before they

reached the crest, they had to silence a wounded German. Sgt. von Ripper then called down to the officer to surrender. When he did not yield promptly, the patrol started throwing hand grenades and firing down on the position. Sgt. von Ripper shot the officer through the shoulder with his pistol, and the young Germans immediately surrendered. Seventeen prisoners were then rounded up, and the 2d Battalion was in Roccaravindola at noon.

The two assault battalions reorganized on their objectives, but their heavy losses from mines and booby traps prevented an immediate renewal of the attack. The 1st Battalion then came across the river after dark to pass between them and seize the ridge extending from Hill 518 to Hill 558 northwest of Roccaravindola. The men of this unit were delayed by severe losses from mines but reached the brush-covered base of Hill 558 at daylight on 5 November. Four platoons were directed against this obstacle and three platoons were sent to the right to take Hill 518. The assault platoon sent to Hill 518 was in position on its northwest slope and attacked at 1400. After our men had maneuvered among the rocks and scrub oaks for three and one-half hours, often within fifteen yards of the enemy, an artillery concentration was directed on Hill 520 to the north to reduce enemy fire and to cut off reinforcements. All three platoons delivered intense rifle fire on the enemy while he was being shelled, and the Germans decided they had had enough. Hill 518 was ours. Thirty-eight prisoners, thirty rifles, eight machine pistols, four machine guns, and stocks of supplies were captured on the hill. Although one of our men had a grenade thrown under him as he crouched behind a stone wall and another had a grenade discharger shot off the end of his rifle, we suffered no casualties in taking Hill 518. The attack on Hill 558 made slow progress during the day. The 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, came up from division reserve to assist, and the last pockets of resistance were wiped out late the next afternoon.

The 1st and 3d Battalions of the 133d Infantry and the 100th Battalion were across the Volturno shortly after midnight of 3 November and made good progress through minefields, booby-trapped areas, and against small-arms, machine-gun, and artillery fire. Enemy delaying elements were disposed along Highway 85 and the railroad, and resistance stiffened as the troops neared the hills. The 3d Battalion climbed the slopes up to Santa Maria Oliveto after daylight on the



ONE OF OUR PLATOONS, *advancing along a similar mountain trail, met a German coming around a curve where the slope was so steep that he was forced to cling to the brush with his right hand. He held a machine pistol in his left hand, but if he had let go to fire it, he would have rolled down the hill. His only choice was to surrender. Along many other approaches the Germans laid mines and sited their weapons to place direct fire down the trails.*

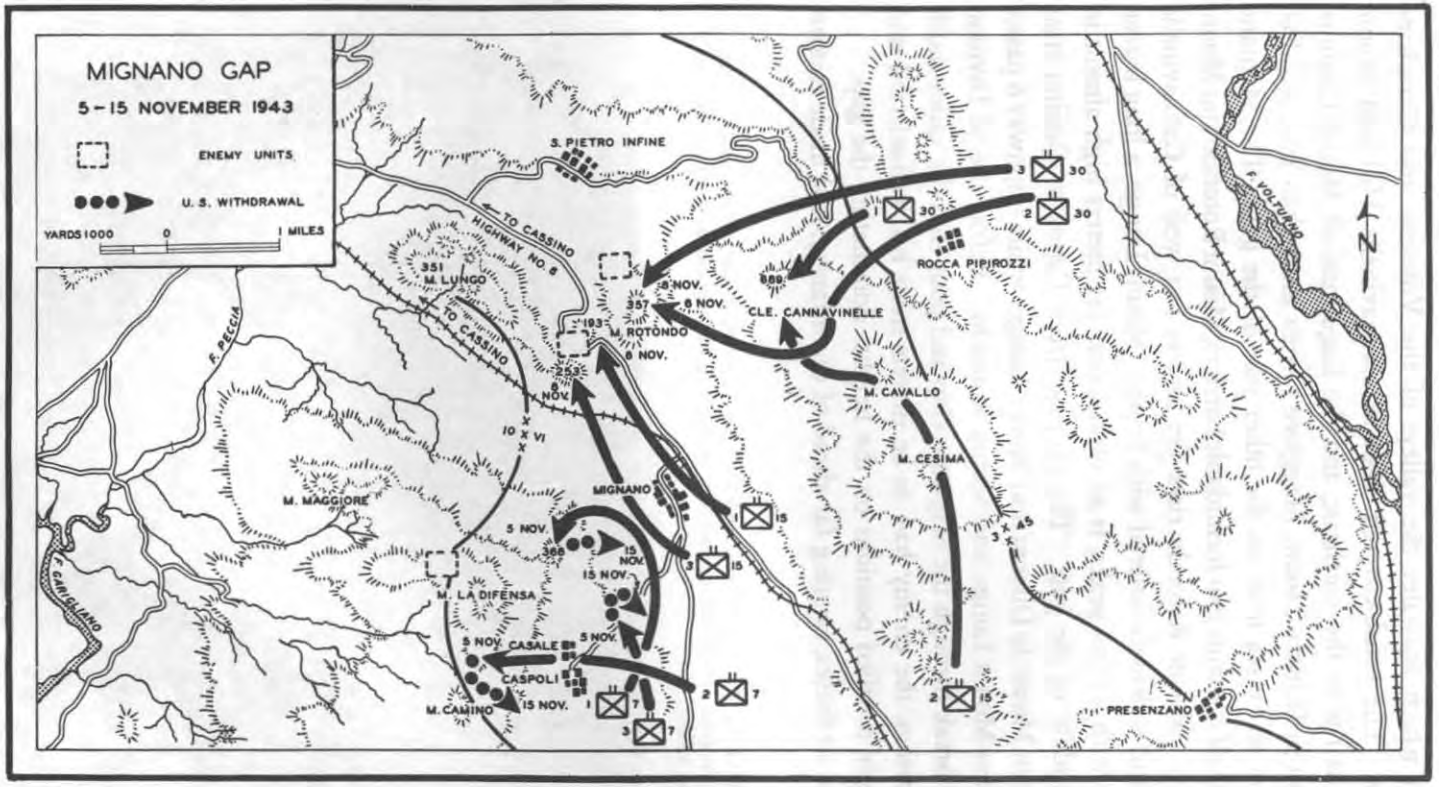


AN OBSERVER OF THE 100TH BATTALION *reconnoiters the conditions forward. On 5 November the men of this unit had to reach their objectives, Hills 590 and 610, through mines and booby traps and then help defend these hills against the Germans' last attempt to retake them.*

4th, and the 1st Battalion was on Hill 550 to the southwest by the middle of the morning. Casualties from mines and booby traps were particularly heavy in the 3d and 100th Battalions, and little progress was made during the afternoon. The 1st Battalion was driven from Hill 550 at daybreak on 5 November, and the enemy infiltrated back into Santa Maria Oliveto and caused the 3d Battalion further difficulties. The 1st Battalion regained the hill during the morning, and the 100th Battalion made an end run to the left to occupy Hills 590 and 610 to the northwest.

The 3d Division at the Mignano Gap

While the 34th and 45th Divisions were advancing into the mountains on the right, the 3d Division was driving on Mignano and against the heights on either side of the town (Map No. 27, opposite page). Mignano is situated in a wide gap through the mountain


MIGNANO GAP
5 – 15 NOVEMBER 1943
ENEMY UNITS
U. S. WITHDRAWAL
YARDS 1000 0 1 MILES
S. PIETRO INFINE
TO CASSINO
HIGHWAY NO. 6
M. LUNGO
351
TO CASSINO
F. PECCIA
193
M. ROTONDO
357
8 NOV.
8 NOV.
8 NOV.
259
8 NOV.
10 X VI
M. MAGGIORE
MIGNANO
5 NOV.
15 NOV.
15 NOV.
M. LA DIFENSA
5 NOV.
5 NOV.
5 NOV. CASALE
CASPOLI
M. CAMINO
15 NOV.
CLE. CANNAVINELLE
M. CAVALLO
M. CESIMA
3 X 45
ROCCA PIPIROZZI
F. VOLTURNO
PRESENZANO
F. GARIGLIANO
N

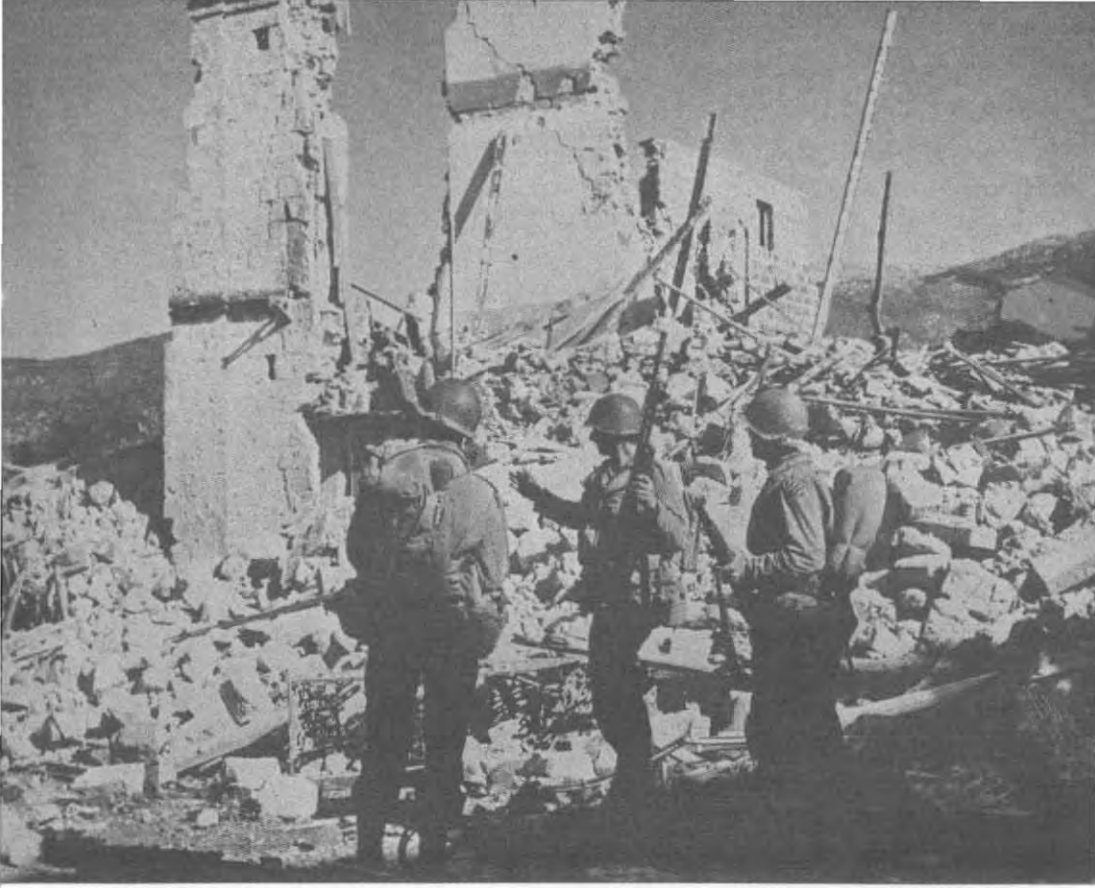
MAP NO. 27

chain which separates the valleys of the Volturno and Garigliano rivers. The brush-covered sides of Cannavinelle Hill and Mount Cesima rise to the northeast, and the huge mass of Mount Camino–Mount la Difensa–Mount Maggiore towers more than nine hundred meters above sea level on the other side of the gap. The Mignano Gap itself contains two formidable barriers, Mount Rotondo and Mount Lungo. Mount Rotondo rises 357 meters just west of Cannavinelle Hill and is densely covered with brush. Mount Lungo, a long barren ridge with several peaks, is an obstruction 343 meters high almost in the middle of the gap. The railroad from Capua to Cassino runs between Mount la Difensa and Mount Lungo, while Highway 6 passes between Mount Lungo and Mount Rotondo. Before the 3d Division could break through the Mignano Gap and pour into the valley south of Cassino, the enemy had to be driven from his well-selected and strongly fortified positions on the heights dominating the gap.

The air forces, ranging far ahead of the infantry, had made numer-

THIS GERMAN DUGOUT *in the Cannavinelle Hill area is typical of the enemy's effective defensive works. Simplicity and crudeness of construction and skill in blending the positions with the mountainous terrain were their outstanding features.*





RUINED BUILDINGS IN MIGNANO *are surveyed by a three-man patrol from the 3d Division. Because of its location on Highway 6 and the rail line to Cassino, both of great importance to the Germans and the Allies, the town was subjected to an unusual amount of bombing and shelling.*

ous attacks on enemy communications and installations north and south of the Mignano Gap. On 21 October, for example, A-36's of the 86th Fighter-Bomber Group strafed ten prime movers on Highway 6, four miles south of Mignano, and dropped eighty-three 500-pound bombs on a railroad bridge north of that town. In October our bombers dropped more than two hundred tons of explosives on targets in and around Mignano and Cassino. The bombing and strafing missions during this month must have slowed, but did not stop, the enemy's preparations for delaying our ground troops. Patrols found that minefields had been laid, tank traps set, and machine-gun positions built on Mount Rotondo and Mount Lungo, east and west of Highway 6; for the infantrymen an attack through the gap would be a hazardous operation.



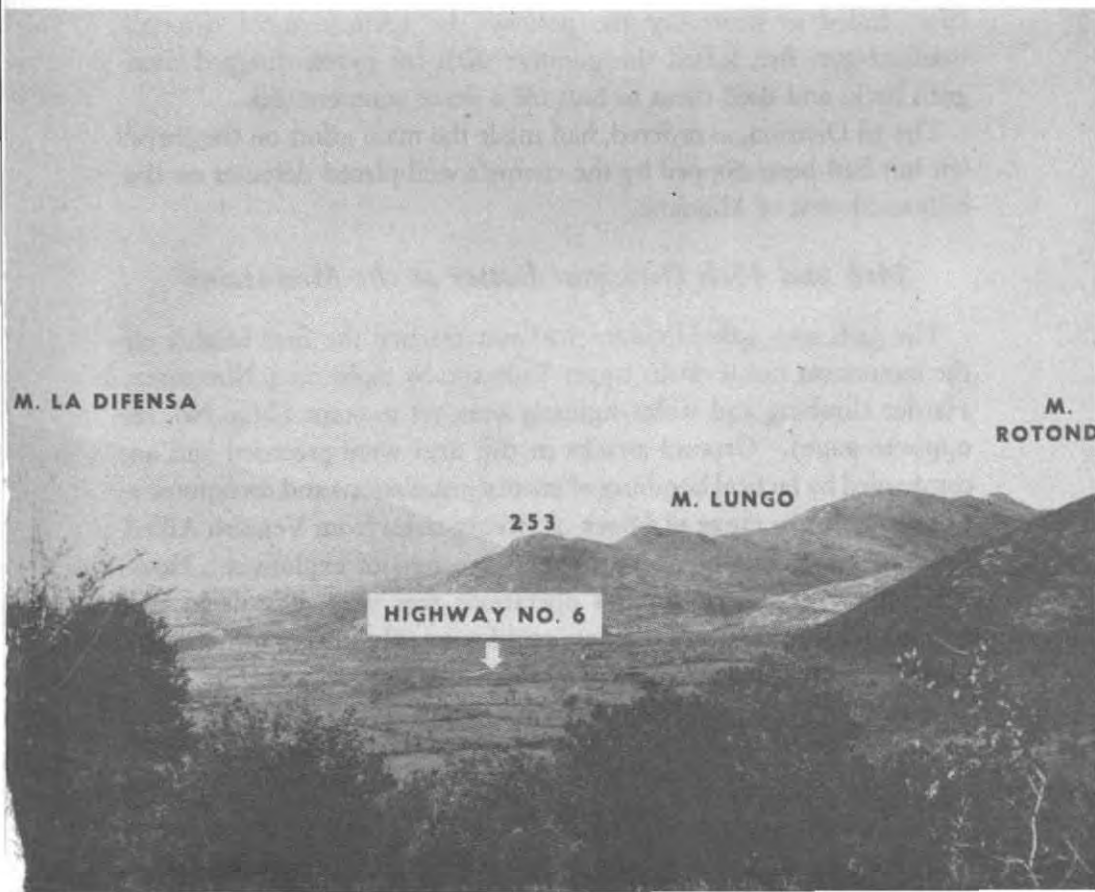
155-MM HOWITZERS *throw a barrage of smoke and high explosive shells on Mount Lungo. A captured letter written by a German private first class says, "The Americans are no sissies, and we are retreating 'victoriously.' The amount of material the Americans are using seems incredible. He pours planes and artillery shelling on us, in such a manner that we get tears in our eyes."*

Since a frontal assault through the Mignano Gap would undoubtedly be costly, General Truscott planned to approach it from the heights on both sides. He sent the 2d Battalion, 15th Infantry, over Mount Cesima to Cannavinelle Hill, which overlooks the gap from the northeast, while the 30th Infantry went around to Rocca Pipirozzi in the 45th Division zone to launch an attack across Cannavinelle toward Mount Rotondo. The regiment passed through the 180th Infantry during the night of 5/6 November and climbed the brush-covered slopes of Cannavinelle. The 2d Battalion then moved down the other side of the hill toward Mignano and made an unsuccessful attack during the afternoon on Mount Rotondo. At the same time the 3d Battalion, 15th Infantry, tried, but failed, to seize the southeast nose (Hill 253) of Mount Lungo. On the foggy morning of 8 November

another coordinated attack was launched, under cover of the fire of eight battalions of artillery. The 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, then pushed on to the crest of Mount Rotondo against medium resistance, and the 3d Battalion, 15th Infantry, took Hill 253. The 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, next moved up and beat the enemy from Hill 193 in the horseshoe curve of Highway 6. Both regiments spent the following few days in repulsing German counterattacks, in digging in deeper for protection against mortar and artillery fire, and in trying to keep reasonably warm and dry.

Meanwhile, on the left the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry, attacked on 5 November through Caspoli and Casale toward the high ridge between the jagged peaks of Mount Camino and the perpendicular cliffs of Mount la Difensa. The 3d Battalion came up to assist, and the 1st Battalion moved southwest from Mignano to hit the northeast slopes of Mount la Difensa. During the next ten days these battalions tried

IN THE HILLS NORTHWEST OF MIGNANO *the enemy was determined to block our advance along Highway 6 toward Cassino. The enemy defending the gap between Mount Lungo and Mount Rotondo used an increasing amount of direct high-velocity fire which had previously been noted only prior to or during the early stage of a withdrawal.*



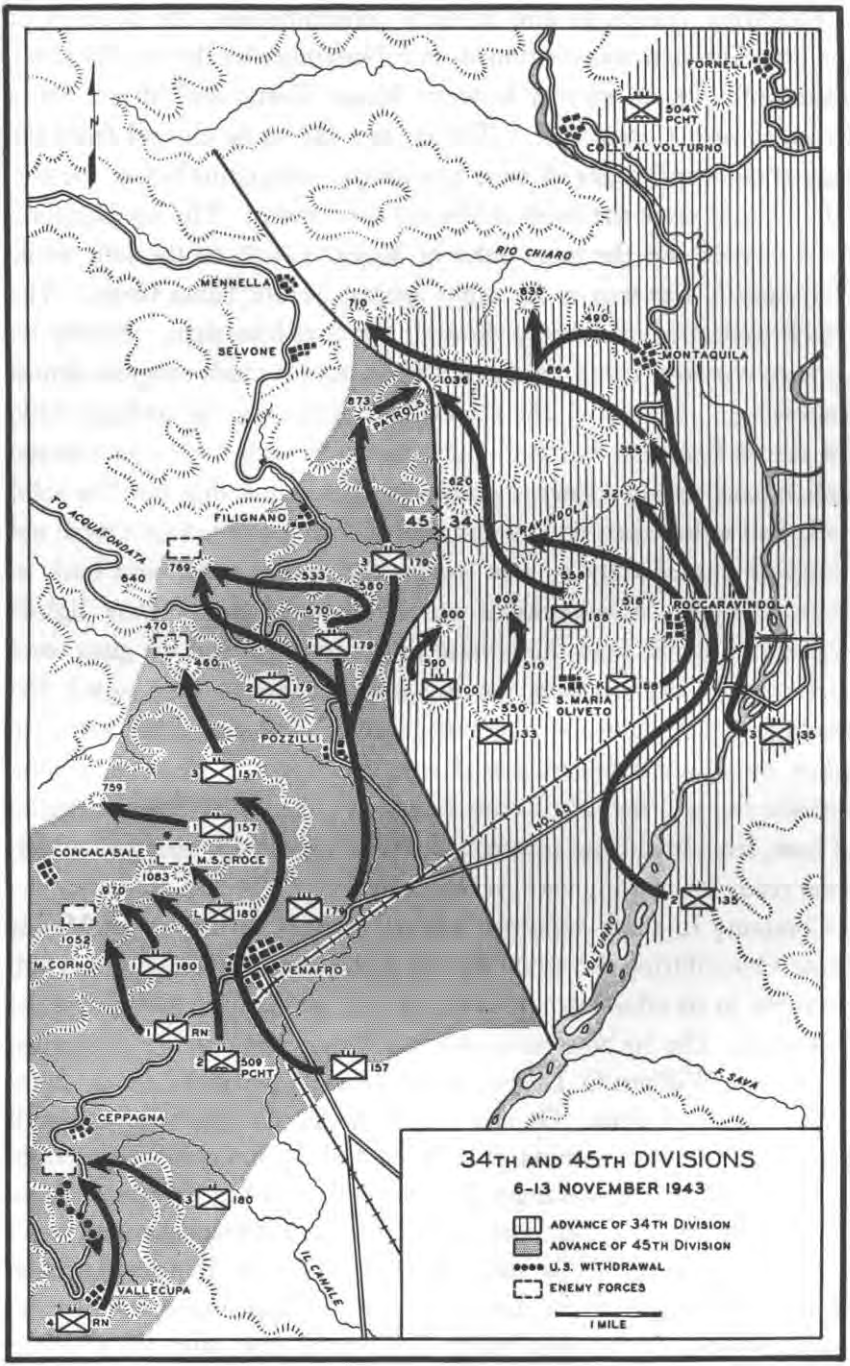
in vain to scale the heights of Mount la Difensa. Their every effort was balked by a cliff fifty to sixty feet high running north and south some fifteen hundred yards along the top of the mountain. They met at every turn rifle and machine-gun fire from holes blasted in the rocky slopes and accurate mortar and artillery fire directed from commanding heights. The enemy paid heavily for holding his ground, and his counterattacks were often costly, but he was always able to shift his reserves to replace his losses. Supplying the troops was very difficult in this terrain cut by deep gorges and precipitous ridges. Food, ammunition, and equipment had to be brought up by carrying parties, and a man could manage only a small amount, for he needed both hands for climbing. Six hours were required to carry down the wounded. The men of all battalions suffered severely from exposure to rain and cold and from a lack of proper food and clothing.

Soldiers on Mount la Difensa endured hardships and demonstrated bravery on its perilous slopes. One of them, Pvt. Floyd K. Lindstrom, of the 3d Battalion, was leading his platoon up the steep slopes of Mount la Difensa on 11 November when it was stopped by machine-gun fire. Pvt. Lindstrom charged through the rocks to within ten yards of the enemy and engaged the gunners in a duel. When this effort failed to neutralize the position, he again charged through machine-gun fire, killed the gunners with his pistol, dragged their guns back, and used them to beat off a fierce counterattack.

The 3d Division, as ordered, had made the main effort on the corps' left but had been stopped by the enemy's well-placed defenses on the hills southwest of Mignano.

34th and 45th Divisions Batter at the Mountains

The 34th and 45th Divisions had just reached the first heights on the mountains north of the upper Volturno by night on 5 November. Harder climbing and stiffer fighting were yet to come (Map No. 28, opposite page). Ground attacks in this area were preceded and accompanied by tactical bombing of enemy installations and communications. Within a range of fifteen or twenty miles from Venafro Allied fighters and fighter-bombers dropped 150 tons of explosives. However, close support of ground operations was very difficult in this mountainous region, where pilots could not easily distinguish one terrain feature or village from another.


FORNELLI
504 PCHT
COLLI AL VOLTURNO
RIO CHIARO
MENNELLA
SELVONE
MONTAQUILA
PATROL
FILIGNANO
TO ACQUAFONDATA
RAVINDOLA
ROCCARAVINDOLA
S. MARIA OLIVETO
POZZILLI
CONCACASALE
M.S.CROCE
M. CORNO
VENAFRO
F. VOLTURNO
F. SAVA
CEPPAGNA
VALLECUPA
IL CANALE
34TH AND 45TH DIVISIONS
6-13 NOVEMBER 1943
ADVANCE OF 34TH DIVISION
ADVANCE OF 45TH DIVISION
U.S. WITHDRAWAL
ENEMY FORCES
1 MILE

MAP NO. 28

Following bombings and artillery concentrations, the advance of the 45th Division was continued on 6 November by the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, on its way between Mount Corno and Mount Santa Croce toward Concacasale. The enemy had to be cleared from the jagged cliffs and peaks of these precipitous mountains before the battalion could cross the high saddle between them. The 1st Battalion tried to drive up the steep sides of Mount Corno to the left, while Company L was sent to the right against Mount Santa Croce. The attack continued stubbornly through the next four days. Enemy resistance was strong and the mountainous terrain made progress almost impossible. Supplying the forward elements was an arduous task, for the 1st Battalion reached heights too steep even for the sure-footed Italian pack mules. Enemy positions, blasted and dug into the solid rock, had to be taken one by one, and if these prepared sites were not occupied immediately by our troops, the enemy infiltrated back to them at night. His positions on the forward slopes were lightly organized, but he held the reverse slopes strongly and his guns were sited to wipe out anything coming over the crests. One squad that worked its way up to a strongpoint near the peak was much surprised when the occupants surrendered without a fight. Inside their comfortable dugout, furnished with mattresses, the squad found a larder of ham, fresh bread and potatoes, and packages of silk hose and underwear ready for mailing back to Germany.

Company L, 180th Infantry, worked its way to the top of Mount Santa Croce during the next three days and assisted Company I, 179th Infantry, in its efforts to wipe out pockets of enemy resistance on the mountain. On 10 November the 1st Ranger Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. William O. Darby, relieved the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, on Mount Corno. On the following day the 2d Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. William P. Yarborough, was attached to the 1st Ranger Battalion. It attacked up Mount Santa Croce before noon and by dark had driven the infiltrating enemy from the saddle between Hills 1083 and 970. The 4th Ranger Battalion occupied the slopes above the road between Ceppagna and Vallecupa on 10 November but was driven back three days later by a strong counterattack. The 3d Battalion, 180th Infantry, then moved up and regained the lost ground against the fiercest resistance.

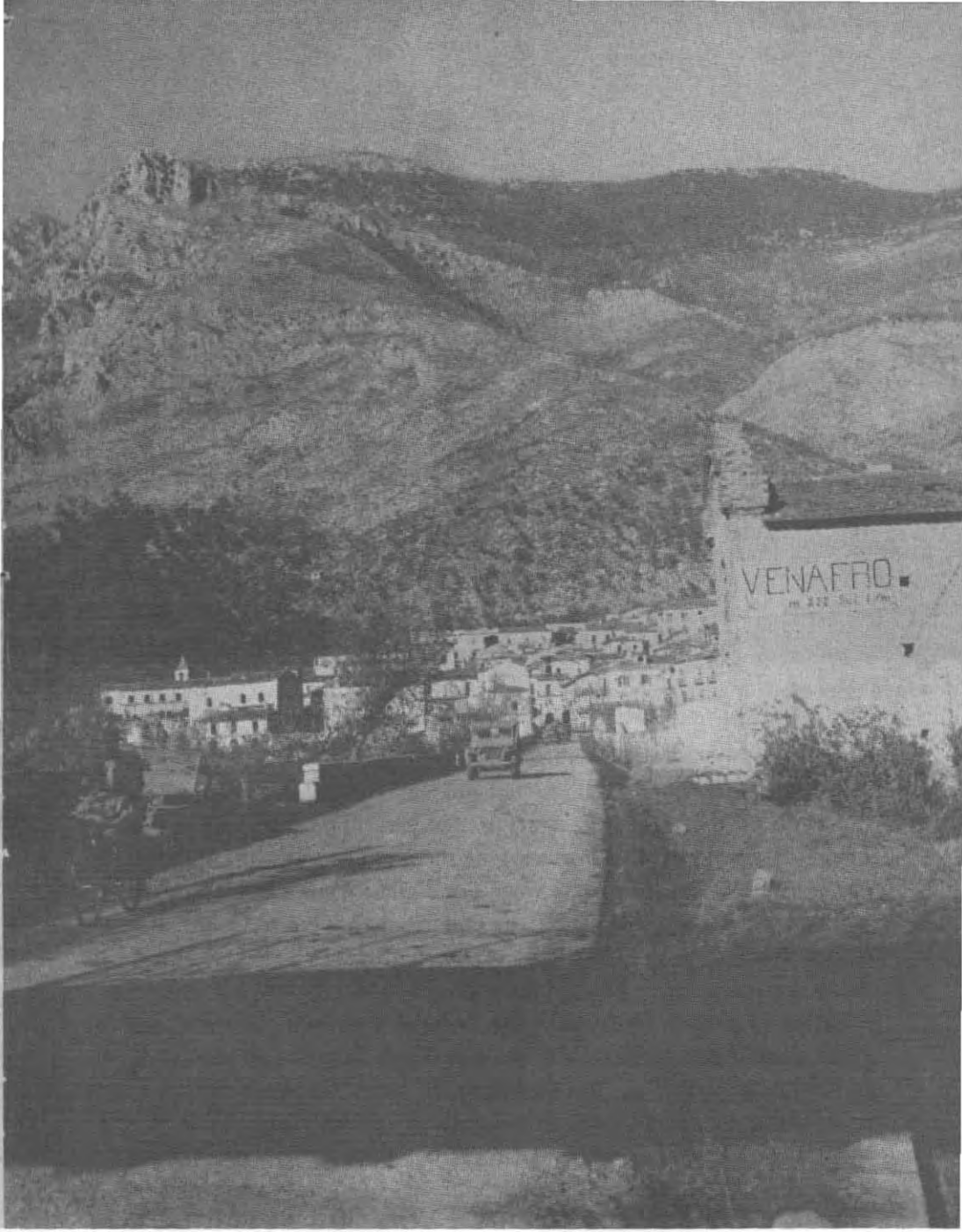


A GERMAN PILLBOX *guards an approach to Mount Lungo. Machine-gun bunkers, mortar emplacements, and personnel shelters were made of local stone and in a setting of rock walls were invisible at a distance. Timbers and ties supported their overhead cover. Direct hits of heavy mortar shells did not penetrate them.*

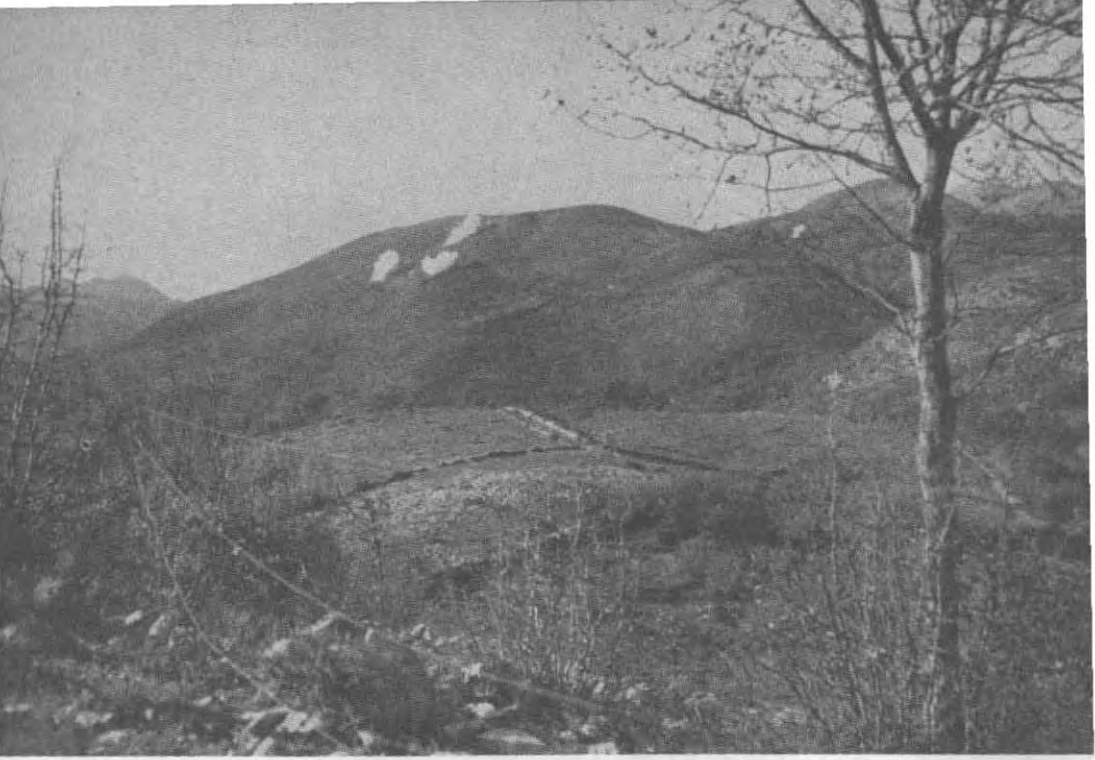
On the morning of 6 November, the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, passed through the 1st Battalion at Pozzilli to seize the great dome-like mass of Hill 769 southwest of Filignano. Stiff opposition was encountered from the brush-covered hillsides, and numerous casualties were suffered from artillery fire, S-mines, and Tellermines. Fighting over the slopes and through the valleys was fierce, for the enemy stubbornly defended every inch of ground. During the next six days the battalion pushed steadily forward and upward across mined ravines and valleys, over bullet-swept slopes, and through rain, fog, and bitterly cold weather. The 3d Battalion moved up on 7 November and advanced through the mist the next morning to take Hills 570, 580, and 533. Fighting was intense throughout the day, and the battalion was driven back toward Pozzilli at dusk. The 1st Battalion then occupied Hills 570 and 580 on 10 November without opposition and three days later moved over to the east slopes of Hill 769. The 3d Battalion moved on to Hill 873 northeast of Filignano and sent patrols to Hill 1036 to contact the 168th Infantry.

The 157th Infantry reached Venafro on 7 November and prepared to pass between the 180th and 179th Infantry after dark and drive across the desolate hills toward Acquafondata. Threats of counter-attacks on the 45th Division front delayed the commitment of the last regiment until 11 November, when the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, jumped off to take Hill 759 southwest of Hill 769, which was being attacked by the 179th Infantry. The terrain was extremely difficult, but the battalion reached the crest of the hill the next day. Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion pushed forward at daylight on 12 November to seize Hill 640, a massive knob on the southwest side of Hill 769. In order to reach Hill 640, the battalion had to pass over Hills 460 and 470, which are slight rises on a ridge running southeast from Hill 640, and then cross the road running from Pozzilli to Acquafondata. The top of Hill 460 is flat and partly cultivated and its left side falls away steeply into a narrow valley of a rippling mountain stream. The 3d Battalion made little progress during 12 November, for its line of advance was dominated by Hill 769. The 3d Battalion continued the attack the next day, and early in the morning Company L climbed the steep slopes of Hill 460 and chased a score of enemy across the road toward Hill 640. The company then reorganized to continue its drive but soon began to receive intense mortar and artillery fire. The men were advancing, open to fire from three sides. At noon, at 1330, and again during the middle of the afternoon the enemy counterattacked with about fifty men. He followed his artillery concentrations closely and was supported by small-arms fire from Hill 769. Company L suffered heavy casualties, and the artillery fire finally forced it to withdraw late in the afternoon. Col. (now Brig. Gen.) John H. Church, commander of the 157th Infantry, then decided that Hill 460 was untenable for both sides and advised Col. Robert B. Hutchins, commander of the 179th Infantry, that he could advance no farther until Hill 769 was cleared of the enemy.

The 133d Infantry continued its struggle northwest of Santa Maria Oliveto over a series of scrub-covered hills, where even pack mules could not carry supplies. The stubborn enemy was no longer retreating but was holding his position on the reverse slopes of the hills as long as he could. When driven from a position, he would infiltrate back to it through the ravines and valleys. Fighting and patrolling



IN VENAFRO, *at the foot of Mount Santa Croce, engineers removed over two thousand pounds of explosives from mined buildings.*



WHITE PHOSPHORUS SHELLS, *thrown by the 2d Battalion 179th Infantry, burst on the northeast slopes of Hill 769. This hill was taken only after fire fights and hand-to-hand combat by Companies B and E.*

went on steadily until the 133d was pinched out on 12 November by the 135th on the right and 179th on the left. The casualties of the 133d Infantry in the third crossing of the Volturno and the fighting around Santa Maria Oliveto were not light. Four officers and 81 enlisted men were killed, 24 officers and 216 men were wounded, and 6 men were missing. Exposure to rain and cold, however, struck down even more men than did the enemy.

On 7 November, General Ryder ordered the 135th Infantry, the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 191st Tank Battalion, Company A, 3d Chemical Battalion, and Company B, 109th Engineer Battalion, to assemble in the vicinity of the highway-railway crossing in the valley southeast of Roccaravindola. This group, designated as Task Force A and commanded by Brig. Gen. Benjamin F. Caffey, was to drive up the road to Montaquila. The 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, led the attack the next morning and took the town and Hill 864 to the west. On 9 November, Company K, 168th Infantry, supported from Hill 558 by the fires of the 2d Battalion, seized the high ground

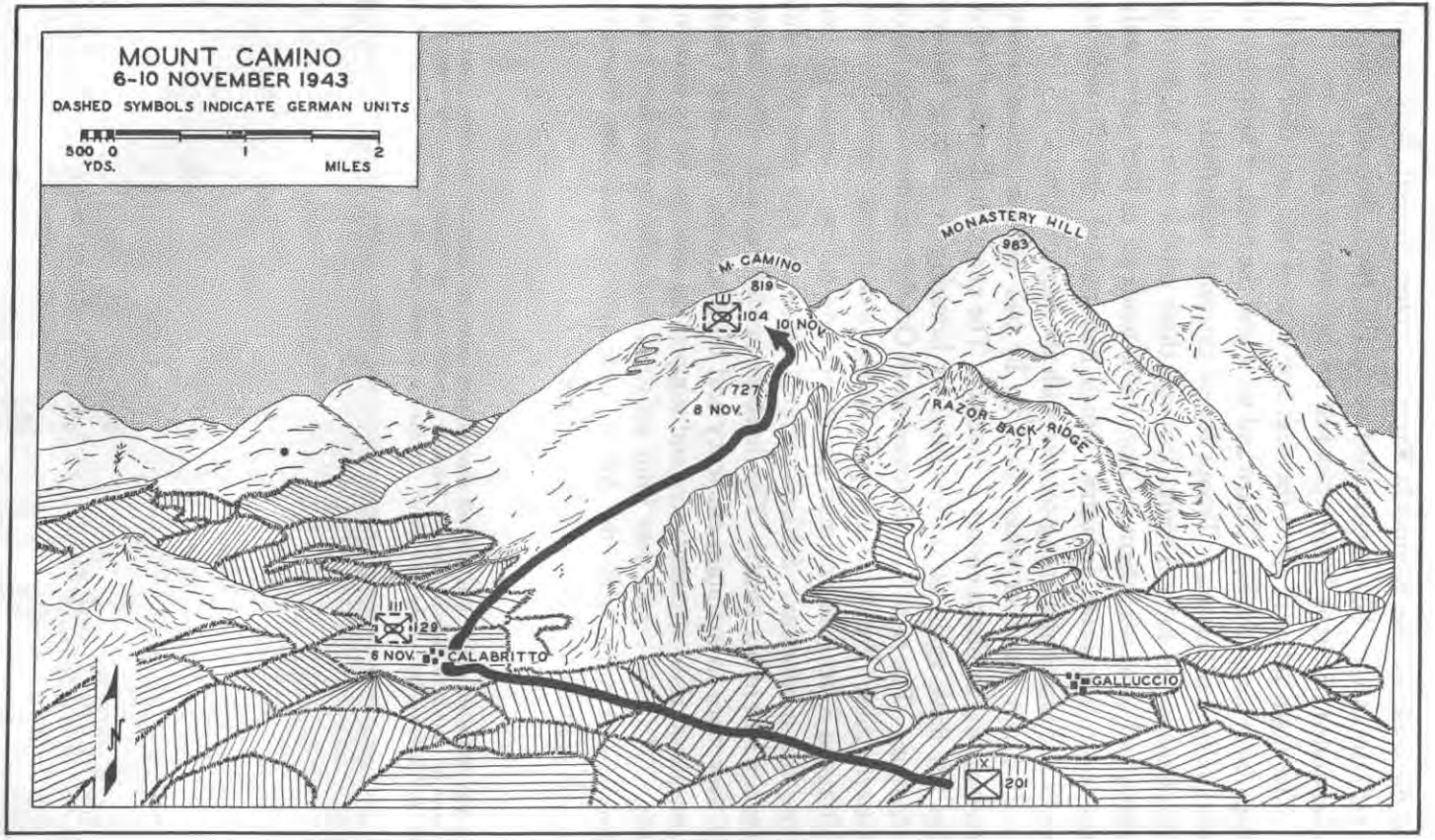
in the forks of the Ravindola River to protect the left flank of the 135th Infantry. The enemy fled so hastily from this area that he abandoned chickens freshly plucked for his evening meal.

The 135th Infantry spent the next few days of rain and cold patrolling north across the Rio Chiaro and west over the terraced hills toward Mennella and Selvone. Troops found extensive minefields north of Rio Chiaro and located routes through these mined areas by driving sheep and goats over them. Contact was made on 12 November with the 504th Parachute Infantry, which had pushed past Fornelli to Colli and was maintaining contact with the Eighth Army.

VI Corps was everywhere held up by bad weather, mountainous terrain, and stubborn enemy resistance. The enemy had strengthened his left flank again on 9 November by bringing in the 26th Panzer Division. The rains had increased since October and the nights were bitterly cold. Problems of supply became increasingly difficult as the Volturno River rose, the mud got deeper, and the men pushed farther into the mountains. Soldiers suffered from the rain and cold and from a lack of hot meals. The divisions needed rest and replacements if they were to maintain efficiency and high morale. General Clark considered these circumstances and stopped the advance on 15 November. VI Corps could now limit activities to patroling the front and holding its gains, while the Allied command laid plans for the next move against the German Winter Line.

TRUCKS TRY TO FORD THE VOLTURNO *after autumn rains had destroyed a bridge north of Venafro. On 15 November the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion reported that all bridges across the Volturno upstream from Alife had been washed out by high water. In the foreground, near the jeep, are two ponton units.*



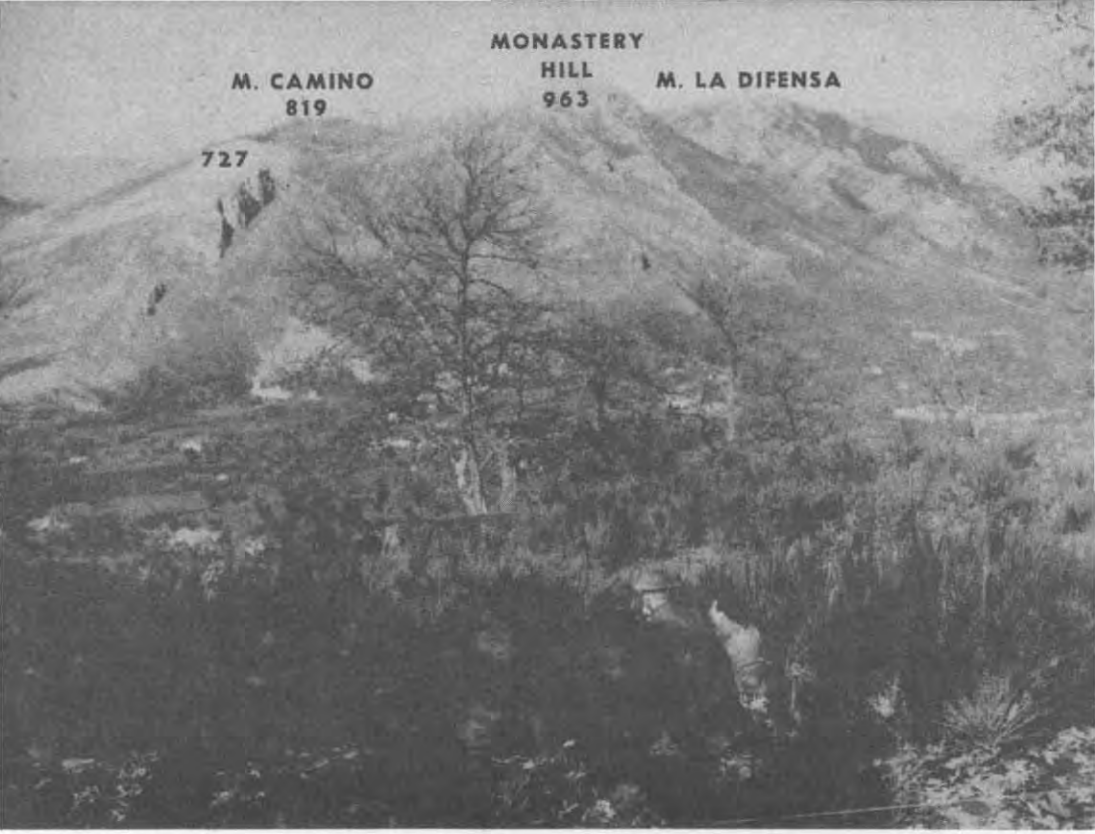

MOUNT CAMINO
6-10 NOVEMBER 1943
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE GERMAN UNITS
500 0 1 2
YDS. MILES
MONASTERY HILL
983
M. CAMINO
819
104
10 NOV.
727
8 NOV.
RAZOR BACK RIDGE
29
6 NOV.
CALABRITTO
GALLUCCIO
X
201

British 10 Corps Attacks Mount Camino

From 3 to 15 November British 10 Corps found the enemy strongly entrenched on Mount Camino, on the high ground southwest of Mignano, and along the Garigliano River (Map No. 30, inside back cover). The longer the enemy delayed us in this area, the stronger he could build his defenses in depth on the Winter Line. He had prepared well for this delaying action: buildings were destroyed and trees felled to clear fields of fire; antitank ditches were dug; pillboxes were constructed; and machine guns, mortars, and artillery were sited so that fire could be directed on all approaches. The 7 Armoured Division, on the coast, discovered on 4 November that the enemy was flooding the lowland southeast of the Garigliano to prevent an easy advance to the river and to block a possible way of outflanking Mount Camino. From the fact that its patrols were now more closely restricted, 10 Corps suspected that the enemy might be stronger here than at previous delaying positions.

While the British 7 Armoured and 46 Divisions patrolled to the Garigliano River, the 56 Division moved up from the southeast against Mount Camino. (See sketch opposite). The part of this mountain mass facing the division consists of two main spurs running approximately north and south. The westernmost of these razor-backed ridges runs from Hill 819 down to Hill 727, and the eastern spur descends from Hill 963 (Monastery Hill). There is little cover on these jagged ridges and the surmountable approaches to them are few. The 201 Guards Brigade seized Calabritto on 6 November and continued the assault the next night up the slopes against formidable enemy defenses of weapons pits blasted out of rock, heavily wired obstacles, and mined and booby-trapped approaches. On 8 November, the 201 Guards Brigade beat back fierce counterattacks on Calabritto and gained a footing on Mount Camino by the seizure of Hill 727, northeast of the town.

The 201 Guards began to show signs of exhaustion by 10 November. The weather was becoming colder and the rains more frequent. Enemy counterattacks and probings disturbed the troops constantly. During the day reinforcements arrived, and the brigade took and held Hill 819 for a few minutes that night. The two forward com-



THE MOUNT CAMINO HILL MASS *was the barrier between the British 10th Corps and the Cassino plain during the first of November. Of the German units defending this high ground the 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, opposing the 201 Guards Brigade, did most of the fighting and suffered heavy losses.*

panies, attacking 819, suffered sixty percent casualties; almost all their officers were killed or wounded. During five nights and four days they had only a 24-hour haversack ration, an emergency ration, and one water bottle per man. Their wounded lay on the ground without blankets in cold that was almost freezing.

At least two more battalions would be required to take Hill 819 and Razor Back Ridge to the east. Maintenance of troops was becoming more difficult, although a divisional mule company with 120 mules had been formed, and a battalion of infantrymen manhandled supplies, water, and ammunition to positions on Mount Camino. On 12 November the decision was made and approved by General Clark to withdraw from the mount, and that somewhat hazardous operation was accomplished on the night of 14/15 November without the enemy's learning of the withdrawal. For forty-eight hours he continued to shell the positions the brigade had just abandoned.

Extremely bad weather, exhaustion from long fighting, and the determined resistance of the enemy had forced the 56 Division to halt for rest and reorganization. The fact that the tired men of the 201 Guards Brigade could scale the steep slopes of Mount Camino in the rain and darkness and in the face of a stubborn enemy is noteworthy, and their maintaining themselves in positions dominated by the Germans was an outstanding feat. They and the men of the other brigades of 10 Corps could now rest and prepare for a second assault on the forward edge of the German Winter Line.

Strategic Air Missions

THE ENEMY'S LONG LINES OF COMMUNICATION leading to the battle area in Italy were vital targets for Allied bombing. Beginning on 17 August 1943, the Northwest African Air Forces started bombing strategic points on the Italian peninsula, and thereafter these forces ranged at will over the Balkans and Italy as well as the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian seas. The German airdromes and landing grounds in Italy and the Balkans were hit repeatedly. Railroad tracks, stations, marshalling yards, and bridges were the principal targets of the heavy bombers, operating at times in groups of 120 or more.

On 3–4 October, Wellingtons hit marshalling yards forty miles up the coast from Rome, and Flying Fortresses caused great destruction in the yards at Pisa. Bologna's oil storage plants, warehouses, and yards were wrecked on 5 October by 124 Fortresses which dropped 365 tons of bombs. On 21 October the air forces attempted to cut both coastal and lateral communications to Rome from the north by bombing the railroad on the western coast and a highway bridge at Terni. A week later 133 Fortresses disrupted the coastal communications again, this time by attacking the marshalling yards at Genoa. Industrial works in northern Italy were also the targets for major attacks. At Turin the factory rated as the third most important producer of ball-bearings in Axis Europe was practically destroyed by 81 Fortresses dropping 183 tons of bombs on 8 October. The Fiat motor works and the railway yards adjacent to the plant were also badly damaged.

In November the Air Forces reached out to attack industrial targets in Austria, ball-bearing factories in other parts of occupied Europe, and railway bridges and tunnels leading from France into Italy. Raids on ball-bearing factories at Annecy, France were coordinated with those of British-based bombers against Schweinfurt in Germany. The 15th Strategic Air Force on 2 November took off from Tunisian fields to bomb the ME–109 factory at Wiener–Neustadt, south of Vienna. The 112 planes dropped 336 tons of bombs and destroyed 50 enemy fighters.

Although the Strategic Air Force concentrated its efforts generally to the north of Rome, it also cooperated with the Tactical Air Force in bombing targets in central Italy. In October the Northwest African Air Forces flew from nine airfields in Italy, and by 1 November eleven more Italian fields were available for use. During these two months, this air force unloaded approximately six thousand tons of bombs on strategic targets. Three-fourths of this effort came during the period of the Volturno operations.

In contrast to Allied strategic and tactical bombing, the enemy effort was very weak in Italy. Over the battle areas the Luftwaffe flew from twenty to seventy sorties daily, averaging about twenty-five. In missions of one-quarter the size of the Allied formations, their bombers attacked the harbor at Naples, the airfields at Foggia, and during one night a convoy off the North African coast. Four raids on Naples caused slight damage to military and harbor installations.

Our strategic bombing benefited both the Fifth and Eighth Armies by disrupting traffic, reducing the effectiveness of the German Air Force, cutting communications, and destroying large quantities of supplies. The Luftwaffe was forced to concentrate much of its available fighter strength far from the front to ward off our bombers.

Conclusion

THE ALLIED ARMIES from 6 October to 15 November had won an area twenty to sixty miles in depth across the Italian peninsula (Map No. 29, opposite page). On the east the Eighth Army had parelleled the Fifth Army's advance on the west, against similar enemy delaying and rearguard action. Both Fifth and Eighth Armies had reached the outer defenses of the German Winter Line and now paused for a well-earned rest before renewing the attack. The second phase in the Italian campaign was ended. Rain and mud and cold nights, long marches, and hard fighting over country often so rugged that only foot troops and mules could get through had not stopped the relentless drive northward.

Within six weeks, Fifth Army troops had driven the Germans back to the Volturno, had executed a difficult river crossing in the face of a well-entrenched enemy, had gone on to cross the river a second and a third time, and had forced Kesselring's hard-pressed army back into the chain of mountains which formed his next strong defensive position (Map No. 30, inside back cover). Whether fighting across rivers, through valleys, or up steep mountain slopes, our men had everywhere proved their ability to defeat Hitler's vaunted master race.

The victories of the Fifth Army were not won without a grievous expenditure of American lives. The total battle casualties of the army from 7 October to 15 November were 9,693. American units suffered 6,846 casualties, of which 1,360 were killed, 5,189 wounded, and 297 missing in action. Casualties by divisions were 2,699 for the 3d Division, 1,658 for the 34th, and 1,370 for the 45th. The heaviest losses

in U. S. VI Corps occurred on 13 October and 4 November, the days during which the first and third Volturno crossings were made. The first assault cost VI Corps 545 men, while 493 casualties were incurred in the last. British 10 Corps had a total of 2,847 battle casualties, of which 443 were killed, 2,007 wounded, and 397 missing. Nonbattle casualties during the period were about equal to battle losses.

The losses inflicted on the enemy cannot be estimated with accuracy. A total of 1,994 enemy prisoners fell into the hands of the Fifth Army during the period from 1 October to 15 November. VI Corps accounted for 1,617 of these, while 10 Corps took 377. The enemy order

MAP NO. 29



of battle remained somewhat confused during the period, but nearly all prisoners reported that heavy casualties had been suffered by their units, some of which had been reduced to half strength. The constant pressure was taking a steady toll of Kesselring's troops. In the

INSIGNIA OF ARMY, CORPS,



Fifth Army



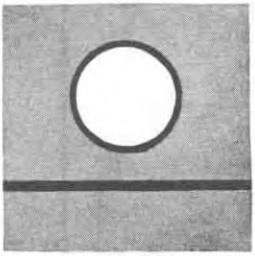
VI Corps



3d Division



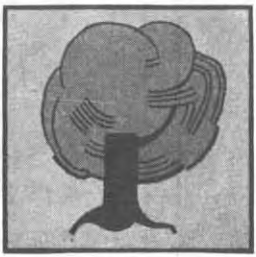
34th Division



10 Corps



56th Division



46th Division

past six weeks, Fifth Army had done more than win a sizeable portion of the road to Rome. By forcing the German high command to put more and more divisions into Italy, it had made an important contribution to the destruction of Hitler's military machine.

AND DIVISIONS IN THE VOLTURNO CROSSINGS



45th Division



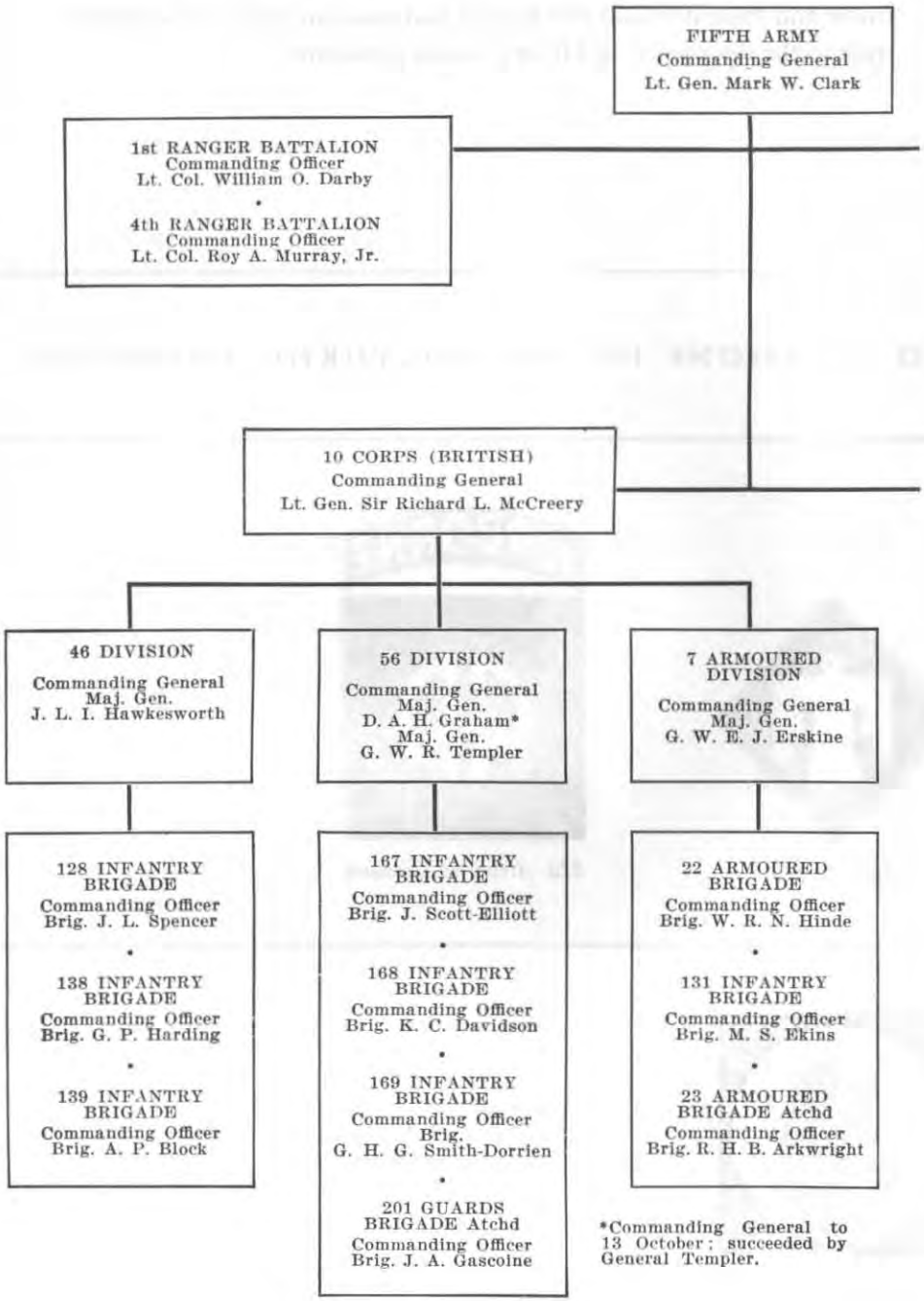
82d Airborne Division



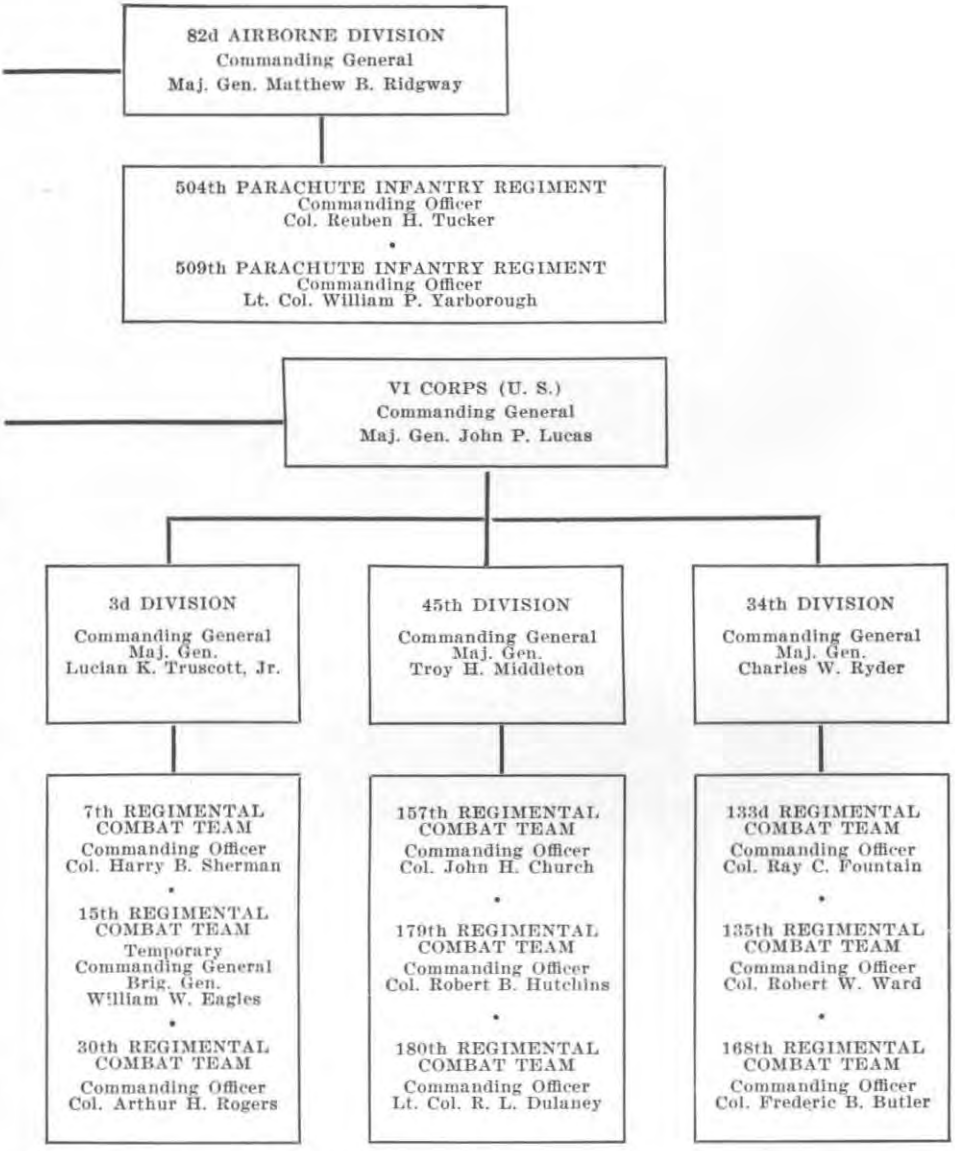
7 Armoured Division

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

ORGANIZATION OF THE FIFTH ARMY FROM THE VOLTURNO



*Commanding General to 13 October; succeeded by General Templer.



 ☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1990 249-063

MAP NO. 30

SUMMARY OF FIFTH ARMY OPERATIONS
12 OCTOBER–15 NOVEMBER 1943

ALLIED UNITS
ALLIED LINES
MOVEMENT INTO POSITION
ENEMY UNITS

0 5
MILES

ATINA
1689
F. RAPIDO
CARDITO
M. PASSERO
CLE. ALTO
T. RAVINDOLA
COLLI
MONTAQUILA
ISERNIA
ROCCARAVINDOLA
MONTERODUNI
POZZILLI
M. S. CROCE
M. CORNO
CASSINO
CERVARO
VENAFRO
CAPRIATI A VOLTURNO
GALLO
M. D. MATESE
2050
S. PIETRO INFINE
CLE. CANNAVINELLE
PRATA
VALLE AGRICOLA
M. LUNGO
F. LIRI
MIGNANO
PRATELLA
SEPINO
1822
M. CAMINO
PRESENZANO
HIGHWAY NO. 6
NO. 85
RAVISCANINA
S. ANGELO D' ALIFE
PIEDIMONTE D'ALIFE
SIPICCIANO
1553
ALIFE
F. VOLTURNO
M. MONACO
BAJA E LATINA
ROCCAMONFINA
FAICCHIO
M. ACERO
PONTELANDOLFO
ROCCAROMANA
RIARDO
PIETRAMELARA
DRAGONI
TO ROME
MINTURNO
WINTER LINE 15 NOVEMBER
F. GARIGLIANO
TEANO
M. MAGGIORE
ALVIGNANO
SESSA AURUNCA
VILLA FORMICOLA
LIBERI
RUVIANO
F. CALORE
AMOROSI
3 NOVEMBER
HIGHWAY NO. 7
M. MAJULO
CAIAZZO
SPARANISE
M. CARUSO
S. CROCE
M. MASSICO
VILLA VOLTURNO
S. ANDREA
TRIFLISCO
LIMATOLA
BENEVENTO
GOLFO DI GAETA
MONDRAGONE
CAPUA
M. TABURNO 1395
CORPS BOUNDARY 14 OCTOBER
CANCELLO
GRAZZANISE
CASERTA
14 OCTOBER
12 OCTOBER
TO NAPLES
MADDALONI

305 305 29 26 HG ? 29 3 29 HG 15 82 94 15 94 15 7 46 36 3 4 34 45 29 EIGHTH
FIFTH
EIGHTH
VI
X

(Fols. p. 119)