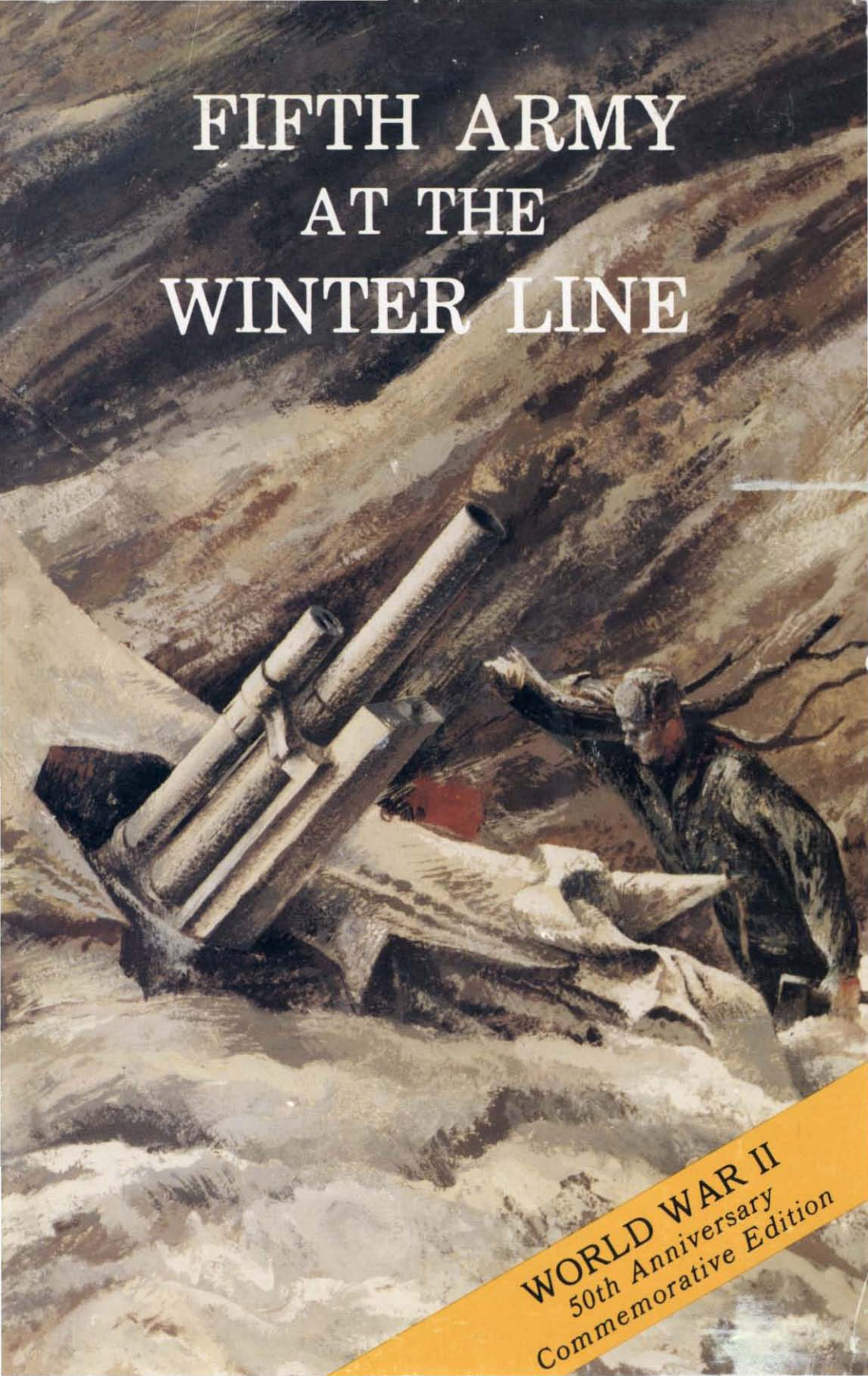
FIFTH ARMY AT THE WINTER LINE



WORLD WAR II
50th Anniversary
Commemorative Edition

FIFTH ARMY AT THE WINTER LINE

15 November 1943 – 15 January 1944



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UNITED STATES ARMY
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Foreword to CMH Edition

Fifth Army at the Winter Line (15 November 1943–15 January 1944) 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.
14 June 1945

Fifth Army at the Winter Line is a sequel to *From the Volturno to the Winter Line.* The actions of the United States II and VI Corps are told here in detail. They were aided by other Allied units under Fifth Army: British 10 Corps on the left flank, and the French Expeditionary Corps, for the last two weeks of the period, on the right flank. The actions of these units and of the British Eighth Army on the Adriatic coast are summarized briefly.

This study is the sixth of a series called AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION, designed exclusively for military personnel. 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.

The Winter Line is based on the best military records now available. The manuscript was prepared in the field by the Fifth Army Historical Section. The oblique terrain photographs (pp. 10, 11, 13, 19, 20, 39, 46, 47, 74, 80, 95, 99, 111,) are by the Joint Intelligence Collecting Agency; 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 this operation.

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MAP NO. 1


ADRIATIC SEA
TYRRHENIAN SEA
TERMOLI
FOGGIA
BARI
BRINDISI
VOLTURNO R.
NAPLES
SALERNO
TARANTO
FIFTH
BRITISH
EIGHTH
BRITISH
REGGIO DI CALABRIA
ALLIED ADVANCE IN ITALY
3 SEPTEMBER-15 NOVEMBER 1943
ALLIED LINE
15 NOVEMBER 1943
40 20 0 20 40
MILES

Preparations for the Attack

Allied Decisions

THE WINTER LINE operations, lasting from 15 November 1943 to 15 January 1944, continued the Allied campaign to drive the Germans out of southern Italy. The underlying plan was to keep pressure on the enemy and, if possible, to break through toward Rome. Both the terrain and the season reduced the chances for effecting a breakthrough. By maintaining pressure, however, the Allies would prevent the Germans from resting and refitting the tired and depleted divisions which they might hold as a mobile reserve for the close defense of Rome in the event of a new Allied landing on the west coast or for use in a possible counteroffensive in the opening months of 1944. Then too, the fighting in Italy had its effects on the over-all military situation in Europe. As long as the Germans were actively engaged on the Italian front, they would be forced to feed in men and supplies which would otherwise be available for the war in Russia or for strengthening their Atlantic Wall against an expected Allied invasion in 1944. Continuation of the Italian campaign was not in question; the problem was how best to carry it on.

The Allied effort was therefore maintained in an offensive planned to break the enemy's Winter Line, a series of well-prepared positions along the shortest possible line across the waist of Italy—from the Garigliano River on the west through mountains in the center to the Sangro River on the east. For the individual soldiers of the Fifth Army, the attack resolved itself into the familiar pattern of bitter fighting from hill to hill.

The Drive to the Winter Line

The Allied armies had reached the Winter Line as a result of operations which began early in September 1943 (Map No. 1, oppo-

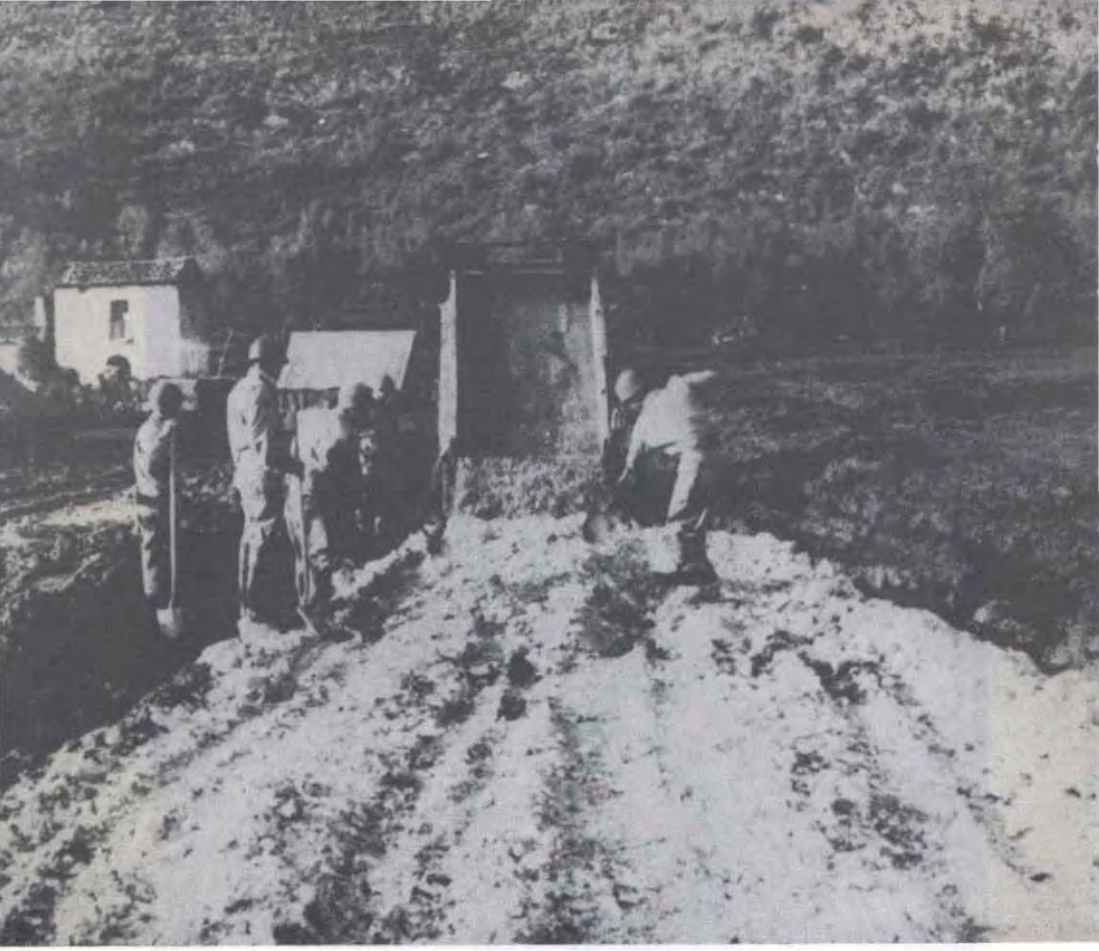
site). On 3 September the British Eighth Army, under General (now Field Marshall) Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, began the drive up the toe of Italy. The U.S. Fifth Army, under Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, struck the main blow on 9 September by landing at Salerno. The German forces in the peninsula at that time were widely scattered, for the enemy high command could not be sure of our plan of attack and also had to safeguard rear lines of communications made uncertain by the Italian armistice. Confronted by these problems, the Germans managed to hold us below Naples until their troops could evacuate the south; thereafter they retreated up the boot of Italy, yielding the port of Naples and the airfields at Foggia but skillfully delaying us wherever the terrain favored a temporary stand. Their chief holding effort had been made on the Volturno River, which Fifth Army crossed successfully the night of 12/13 October. As the Germans resumed their forced withdrawal, the Eighth Army on the right and the Fifth Army on the left drove steadily forward.

Our push up the west coast, however, grew increasingly difficult as winter approached. The fall rains, which had begun early in October with unusual force, slowed down our advance. On the vital supply routes, flooded streams washed out temporary bridges, built hastily to take the place of the hundreds of spans blown by the enemy. Vehicles and men had to struggle through deep mud, and morale declined as rain continued to pour down from leaden skies. From the damaged port of Naples to forward units battling on precipitous hills, the entire supply chain creaked under the burdens imposed by demolitions and bad weather. Worst of all was the lack of reserve divisions, for without fresh troops to exploit a possible breakthrough Fifth Army had to rely on cautious tactics. The troops grew weary, and they had no hope of immediate relief.

Early in November the German XIV Panzer Corps, which had been holding on with barely enough troops to man the line, was strengthened by two divisions. At the same time our advance elements reached the outskirts of a strong line of fortifications on the Garigliano River and in the mountains to the northeast. Our momentum, already affected by weather, terrain, and supply problems, was first slowed and then stopped by the tenacious enemy defense in this area. The drive which began at Salerno came to a temporary halt by 15 November. It was time for the Allies to reorganize and consolidate their gains in preparation for an attack against the enemy's well-prepared positions.



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



ENGINEERS SPREAD ROCK . . . .

At the Winter Line

By the end of October, German prisoners of war were talking vaguely about their *Winterstellungen* or winter positions, which were being prepared by reserves and forced civilian labor to the rear of their immediate front. In that month, on the basis of the successful delaying action in progress, the German high command apparently had decided that our forces could be held south of Rome for the winter. The enemy had therefore set about the construction of a defensive line from the Tyrrhenian Sea straight across to the Adriatic. Conflicting reports at first made it difficult to determine the exact course of this line, and the subsequent fighting showed that not one but two systems of fortifications awaited Fifth Army troops.



TO PREVENT SCENES LIKE THIS

The main positions, making up the Gustav or Cassino Line, began at the Tyrrhenian coast, ran along the Garigliano River, then up the west bank of the Rapido River to the heights above Cassino (Map No. 2, page 6). Here the Germans planned to halt us definitely, but in front of Cassino, to protect the work of fortification and to gain time, they had constructed a system of temporary positions which eventually was called the Winter Line proper. Hinging on the Garigliano River ten miles from the sea, the system extended north-east through the hills barring access to the Rapido Valley into the high Apennines where neither side could operate in force. Though this forward line was planned only to delay us, the success of the enemy in stopping our advance units at its approaches in the first part

MAP NO. 2


15°
PESCARA
ORTONA
AVEZZANO
42°
42°
SANGRO
ROME
70 MI.
CASSINO
VENAFRO
LIRI
VOLTURNO
GARIGLIANO
GAETA
WINTER LINE TERRAIN
GUSTAV LINE
WINTER LINE
5 0 10
MILES
F. VOLTURNO
NAPLES
12 MI.
15°

of November led to a decision to hold it as long as possible before falling back to the main defenses. However temporary in original plan, the Winter Line presented a formidable barrier to General Clark's army. It was a succession of interlocked defenses in depth, and no single key position presented an opportunity for a brilliant stroke that could break the entire system. Each mountain had to be taken, each valley cleared, and then there were more mountains ahead and still another main defense line to be broken.

In Eighth Army's zone, what was called the Winter Line was not a series of strong forward positions but the main belt of defenses on which the Germans planned to hold after mid-November. The Sangro River, from its mountain headwaters to the Adriatic, served as a natural barrier in front of this system.

During the period up to mid-November, Fifth Army had delivered the main attack in the Italian campaign and had, as a result, drawn against itself the bulk of the enemy forces. If the weight of Allied effort were suddenly shifted now to Eighth Army on the east coast, there was a chance to surprise the enemy; upon this chance the plans of General (now Field Marshal) Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander, commanding 15th Army Group, were based. Fifth Army was ordered to halt and to reorganize in preparation for an attack about 30 November; Eighth Army was meanwhile to begin an attack up the east coast toward Ortona. On reaching this area, Eighth Army was to swing west on Highway No. 5 toward Rome; this threat to the rear of the main German forces engaged by Fifth Army might compel the enemy to pull back well north of Rome. Eighth Army, in accordance with these plans, began to regroup its forces for an attack through the Winter Line on the lower Sangro River and jumped off on the night of 19/20 November. It was immediately engaged in heavy fighting by the enemy, who contested every yard of the hills overlooking the river.

Shortly after Eighth Army began its part of the operation, Fifth Army moved forward to break the Winter Line south of the Apennines. Plans for this attack had been under way since October and had been frequently changed, but they all revolved about the necessity of smashing through the forward defenses of the enemy so as to place our troops at the entrance of the Liri Valley. Rome would thus be threatened from the south by General Clark's forces and from the east by Eighth Army.

Fifth Army's Problem

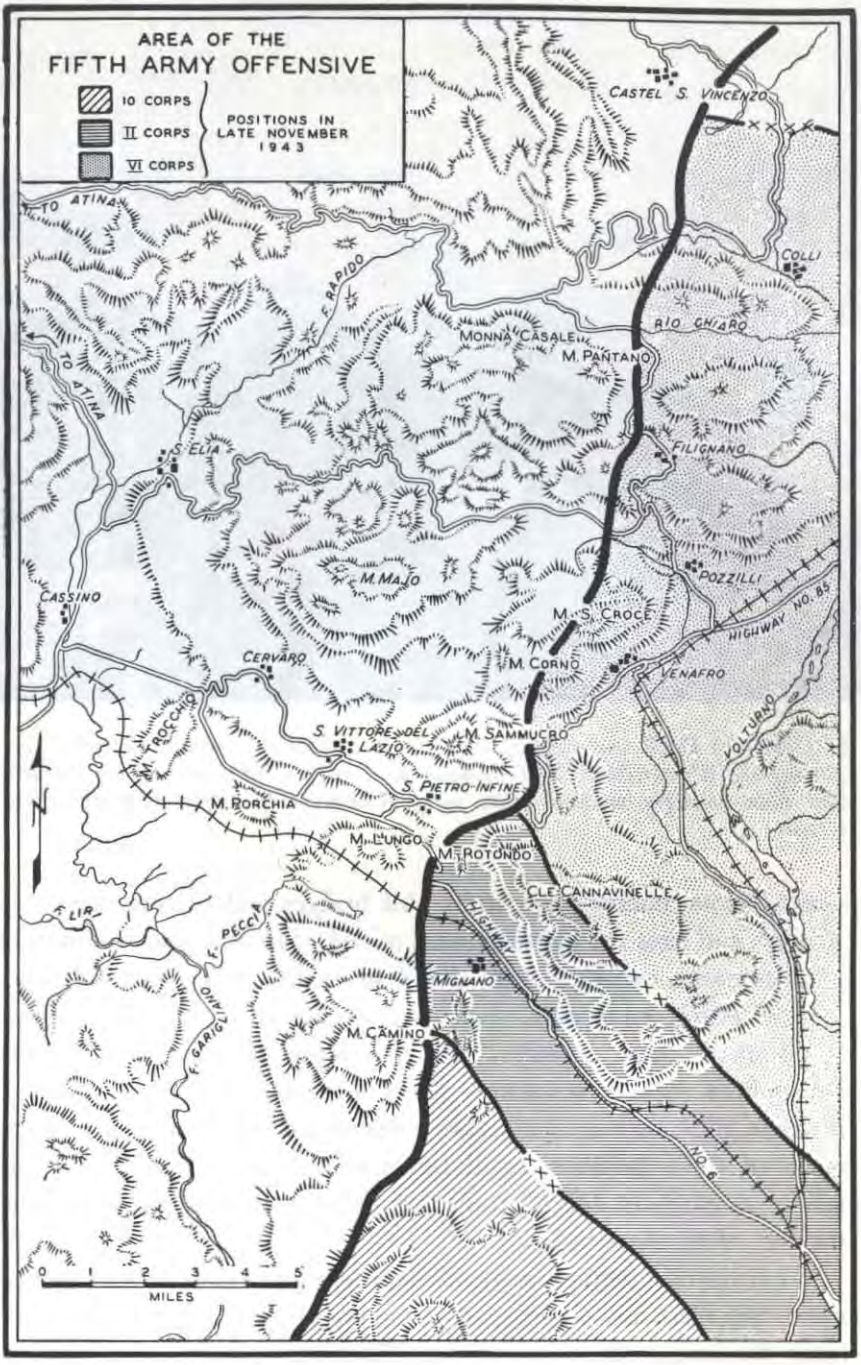
Less than eight miles in front of the center of Fifth Army lay the beginning of the Liri Valley, the "gateway to Rome" and the ultimate objective of the coming attack. The gateway, however, has all the defensive advantages that nature can bestow. To the south, it is flanked by steep mountains which border the western side of the Garigliano River all the way from the sea to the bend of that river into the Liri Valley. Near the Garigliano mouth, a flood-plain five miles wide lies on the eastern side of the stream; attack across this plain, toward dominating hills behind a river barrier, would be exceedingly difficult.

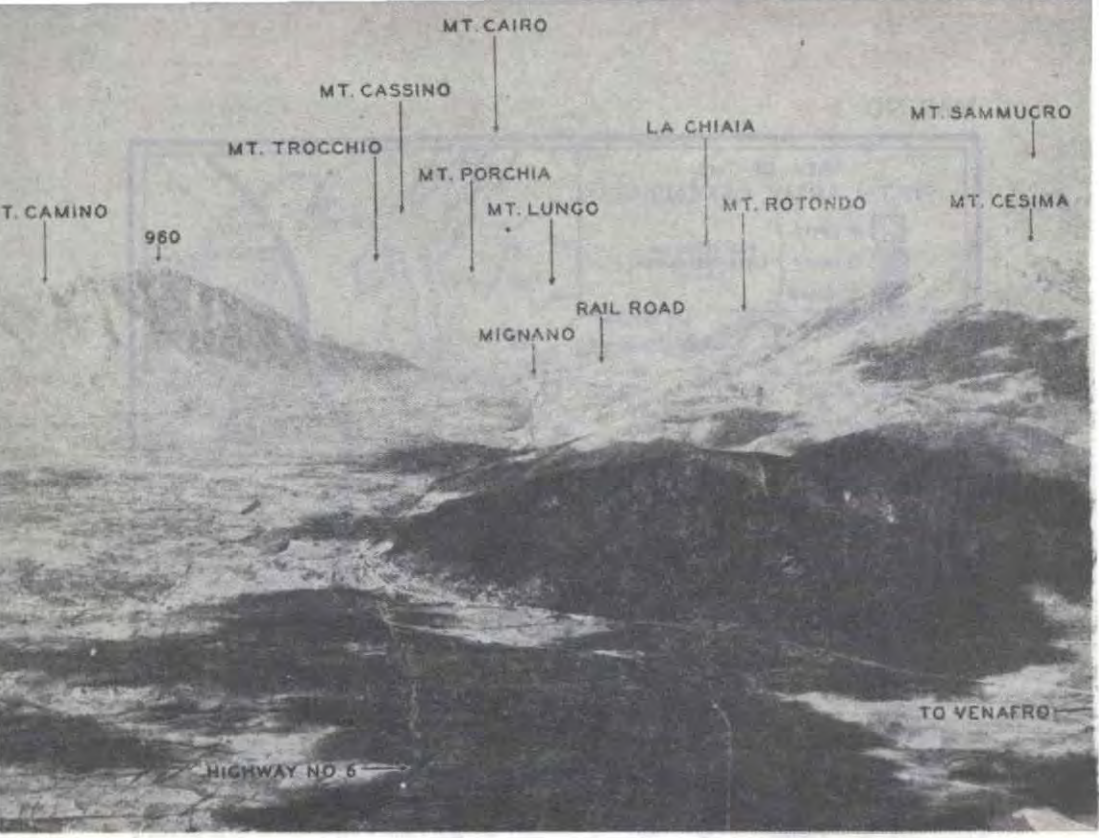
Near the center of Fifth Army's sector the terrain presented opportunities and problems of a different order (Map No. 3, page 9). Leaving the Volturno plains, Highway No. 6 follows a natural corridor through the north-south mountain barrier. Near Mignano the corridor narrows to a mile-wide gap, six to seven hundred feet above sea level. South of it lies the hill mass of Mount Camino, about three thousand feet high; even higher ridges tower to the north. Just beyond the Mignano Gap, as the valley begins to widen out again toward the Rapido River plain, two small but prominent hills lie athwart the corridor. Rising six hundred feet above the valley floor, Mount Rotondo and Mount Lungo resemble natural "stoppers" obstructing exit from the mountains. As a final hurdle, troops attempting to debouch into the Rapido Valley would find themselves facing two isolated hills, Mount Porchia (850 feet) and Mount Trocchio (1,400 feet), which lie directly on the approach to Cassino and flank the plain leading across the Rapido River into the Liri Valley.

On the right flank of Fifth Army a wedge of rough mountain upland widens north from Mount Sammucro to the main ridge of the Apennines, effectively protecting the approach to the Liri Valley from the north, via the Rapido Valley. Dominated by peaks nearing the four thousand foot level, this region of bare knobs and brush-covered swells is scantily inhabited and poorly provided with natural routes of advance. Only two roads, one from Filignano to Sant' Elia and the other from Colli to Atina, penetrate the desolate country. Both roads are narrow and tortuous and are dominated everywhere by the hills.

Along the whole Fifth Army front, German engineers made very skillful use of terrain and fortifications to hold our forces back. They laid mines on the roads and trails, at the heads of gullies, and in the

MAP NO. 3


AREA OF THE
FIFTH ARMY OFFENSIVE
10 CORPS
II CORPS
VI CORPS
POSITIONS IN LATE NOVEMBER 1943
CASTEL S. VINCENZO
TO ATINA
F. RAPIDO
COLLI
RIO CHIARO
MONNA CASALE
M. PANTANO
S. ELIA
FILIGNANO
M. MAIO
POZZILLI
CASSINO
M. S. CROCE
HIGHWAY NO. 85
CERVARO
M. CORNO
VENAFRO
M. TROCCHIO
S. VITTORE DEL LAZIO
M. SAMMUCRO
VOLTURNO
S. PIETRO INFINE
M. RORCHIA
M. L'UNGO
M. ROTONDO
CLE CANNAVINELLE
F. LIRI
F. PECCIA
HIGHWAY
MIGNANO
F. GARIGLIANO
M. CAMINO
NO. 6
0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES



MIGNANO GAP *was one of the few breaks in the natural defenses supporting the Winter Line. The flanking positions on both sides of the corridor had been strongly manned since early November in expectation of Allied attacks.*

natural cross-country approaches. All bridges and culverts were destroyed, and sites for bypasses were mined. Machine-gun and mortar emplacements, many of them dug four or five feet into solid rock, covered nearly every path. Not even intense artillery concentrations could smash these positions. On the slopes of mountains, behind stream beds, and across narrow valleys, dozens of mutually supporting machine guns were sited to weave a deadly pattern of cross fire. As a result of these defenses, small forces of the enemy could hold the gullies, draws, and difficult trails that led into the mountains, even in the face of strong attacks.

Where terrain features were not sufficient barriers to military movement, the Germans constructed strongpoints, especially in the relatively flat land of the Mignano Gap. Fifteen hundred yards northwest of Mignano, for example, a minefield guarded an important trail

north of a creek bed. Beyond the mines was first a belt of concertina wire, fifty to seventy-five feet deep, then log-and-earth bunkers, which provided cover for riflemen and served as blocks against armor. This strongpoint, hastily prepared in October or early November, was well supported by machine guns emplaced on the slopes of neighboring heights. Although only about five hundred yards long, it covered one of the few open spaces in the valley. The Winter Line depended primarily on defenses of this type. Concrete and steel pillboxes were not met by our troops until they had driven to the Gustav Line.

Although the Germans' main concern was to control the dominating mountains in the path of the Fifth Army, they also used the few small towns on the mountain slopes for organized defense and delaying tactics. The Italian houses, built of solid masonry, could be transformed into effective strongpoints, forcing us in many cases to reduce by artillery fire or by street fighting a town which otherwise might have been bypassed. Demolitions, mines, and booby traps were used to full effect in delaying tactics afforded by the village fortresses.

THE MOUNTAINS FACING VI CORPS *stretch some sixteen miles between the upper Volturno and the upper Rapido valleys.*





"EXPRESS HIGHWAY" *near Mignano runs generally parallel to Highway 6. American engineers ripped up the tracks of the railroad made useless by demolitions and transformed the stone bed into a supply route to the front.*

Enemy howitzers and long-range guns, often self-propelled and well defiladed behind protecting crests, could reach nearly every area held by the Allied troops. The trails and roads they had to use, bivouac sites, and the front lines were all subjected to harassing fires. Peaks, such as Camino and Sammucro, provided posts from which enemy forward observers could see every movement made by our forces in daylight. Rain, snow, and fog limited visibility much of the time, but still most of our movements had to take place under cover of darkness. Behind the mountain barrier, on the other hand, the Germans could supply their troops with relative ease and could maneuver almost at will to reinforce the comparatively small detachments that manned individual defenses.

After 18 November, Fifth Army was made up of three corps. British 10 Corps, with the 46 and 56 Divisions, controlled the high ground east of the Garigliano Valley for a distance of fifteen miles from the sea; then the British line left the valley and skirted the eastern edge of the imposing Camino hill mass, meeting the U. S. II Corps sector just south of Mignano. II Corps, composed of the 3d

and 36th Divisions, held a five-mile front across the corridor followed by Highway No. 6 on its way toward Cassino. Starting at the lower slopes on the shoulder of the Camino mountains, the corps positions neared the foot of Mount Lungo, then crossed the highway to include Mount Rotondo and Cannavinelle Hill. VI Corps' sector, with nearly fifteen miles of front, started at the low saddle connecting Cannavinelle with Mount Sammucro. Beyond, the 45th Division held hard-won positions along the eastern slopes of Sammucro and on high ground above Venafro. North of Pozzilli, the 34th Division's outposts lay in rough upland along the Pozzilli road and north to the army boundary near Castel San Vincenzo (chart, page 116).

Fifth Army was opposed by five enemy divisions, under XIV Panzer Corps. The 94th Infantry Division held the enemy right flank facing British 10 Corps along the Garigliano; the 15th Panzer Grenadier

THE UPPER VOLTURNO VALLEY *was cleared of enemy troops by VI Corps, before 15 November. While German rearguards carried out delaying actions, main forces had been strengthening defenses in these mountains.*



Division held the sector on the left of the 94th to within a mile of Mignano; the zone between Mignano and Venafro was occupied after 17 November by the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. From Venafro to Filignano the line was held at the end of November by the 44th Grenadier Division; and the enemy's left flank, from Filgnano on into the Eighth Army zone, was defended by the 305th Grenadier Division. After the Allied offensive began early in December, the enemy reinforced his line, first by elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division at the Mignano Gap and then in the middle of the month by units of the 5th Mountain Division west of Filignano. Though our offensive wore down several units to remnants of their former strength, the Germans resisted bitterly under direct orders from the Führer to hold their ground.

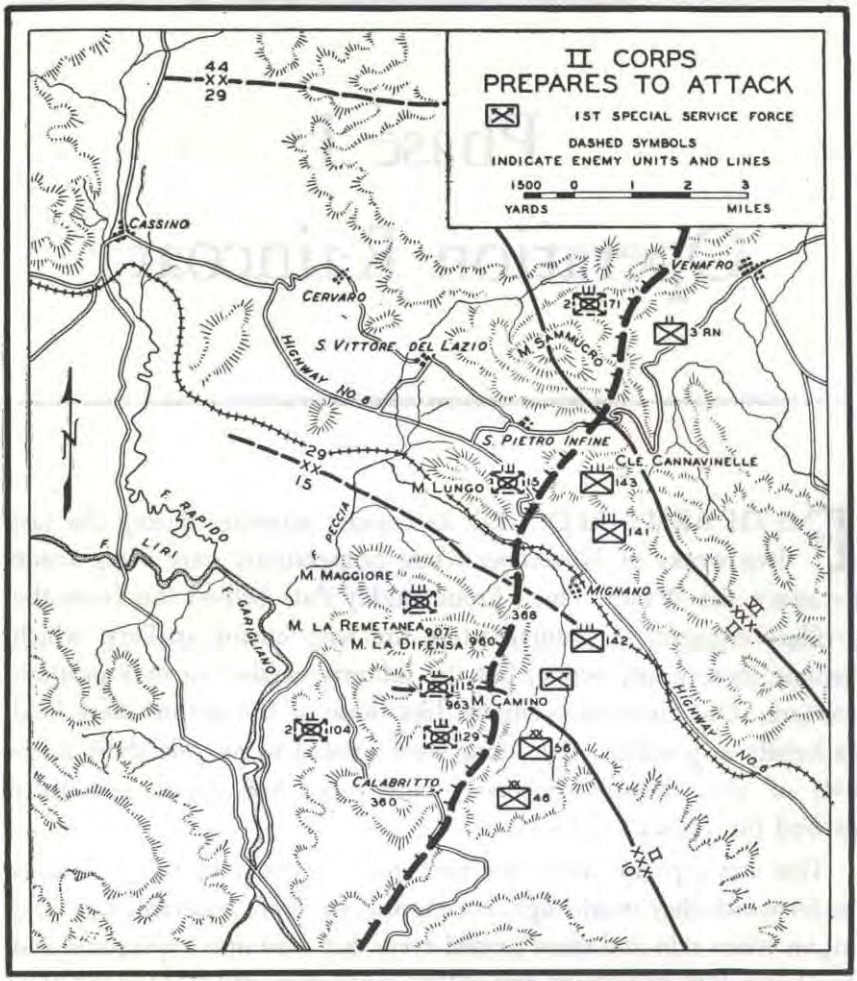
The Fifth Army attack orders divided the operation into three phases. The first was a blow on the left of the Mignano Gap to capture the Camino hill mass; then would come a thrust at the Sammucro heights on the right of the Gap, supported by a simultaneous penetration along the two east-west roads on the north flank; and in the third phase the main attack was to drive into the Liri Valley. British 10 Corps on the left flank was to capture part of the Camino feature during the first phase, as well as to make a feint along the lower Garigliano River. U. S. II Corps was to carry out the offensive in the Mignano Gap sector. VI Corps had the task of pushing through the mountains toward Sant' Elia and Atina, with the high ground north and northwest of Cassino as its ultimate objective. Plans had also been laid for the introduction of French troops into the Italian theater. The 2d Moroccan Infantry Division arrived at Naples by 1 December, and the 3d Algerian Infantry Division was scheduled to arrive at the end of the month. Both divisions had been trained in mountain fighting, and both were eager to vindicate the old glory of French arms. With the addition of these two divisions and the U. S. 1st Armored Division, which came to Italy in November, Fifth Army would have nine divisions for the grueling drive which lay ahead.

Phase I
Operation Raincoat

FIFTH ARMY REDUCED its combat activities during the last two weeks of November while preparations were being made to attack the Winter Line. From muddy flats behind the front the artillery engaged in counterbattery fire with enemy artillery, which became increasingly active; but the infantry carried on only position warfare. Our forward positions, like those of the enemy, were held as lightly as possible. Battalions were rotated to provide short intervals of rest. Patrols, however, both large and small, constantly probed the enemy's defenses.

This was a period when the men got a foretaste of the conditions under which they would fight for months to come: miserable days and nights when rain and snow turned every dirt road into a quagmire and fog hung over mountains and valley, when men struggled along slippery trails too steep even for pack mules. Stamina, perseverance, and courage in full measure were required of those who outposted the lines, slogged through the endless mud to repair broken telephone lines, carried the wounded down from the mountains, patrolled into enemy-held territory, and went on about their duties when the normal risks of warfare were intensified by the winter weather. As one soldier wrote:

These things . . . constitute war and battle: rain and mud, cold and discomfort . . . of digging and of sleepless nights and tiring days, of being afraid and of being hungry, of repairing roads and of building bridges, of being lonely . . . of an endless number of little things.



MAP NO. 4

During the two-week pause after the middle of November, the three divisions which had fought their way up from the Volturno received some rest, and the 36th Division, comprising the 141st, 142d and 143d Regimental Combat Teams, under Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker, was brought up on 16 November to relieve the 3d Division in the Mignano Gap (Map No. 4, above). The command group of II Corps, under Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes, had arrived from Sicily in October and on 18 November took over the 3d and 36th Divisions. The 3d Division, which had been in action since the middle of September, moved back for rest and training. VI Corps, under the command of

Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas, continued to include the 34th and 45th Divisions on the right flank of Fifth Army. The 1st Special Service Force, composed of six battalions of highly trained Canadian and American troops under the command of Col. (now Maj. Gen.) Robert T. Frederick, was attached to the 36th Division on 23 November.

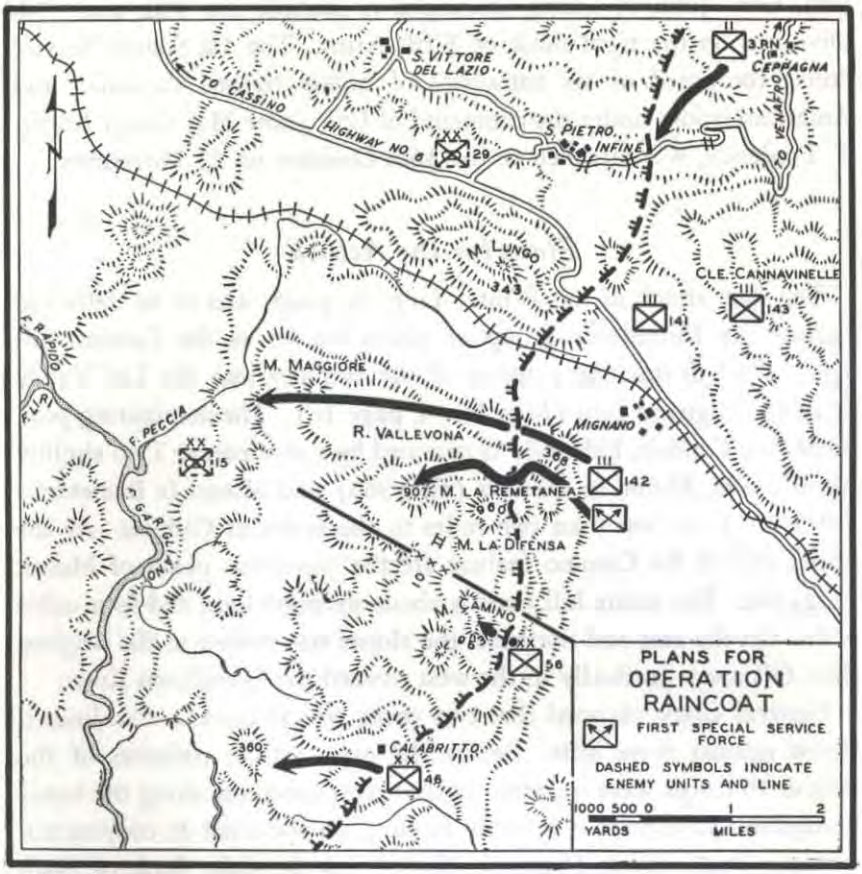
Plans for the Attack

The first attack in the Winter Line campaign was to be delivered against the formidable group of peaks known as the Camino hill mass, which forms one gatepost at the entrance into the Liri Valley from the Mignano Gap (Map No. 4, page 16). The dominating peak on Mount Camino, Hill 963,[1] is crowned by a monastery. Two slightly lower peaks, Mount la Difensa (Hill 960) and Mount la Remetanea (Hill 907), lie less than two miles to the north of Camino. At the upper end of the Camino feature are the numerous peaks of Mount Maggiore. The entire hill mass is about six miles long and four miles wide. On the east and northeast the slopes rise steeply to the heights, then fall away gradually to the west toward the Garigliano River.

General Clark planned that two corps would make a coordinated thrust against these hills. Before the main attack, elements of the British 10 Corps were to carry out deceptive measures along the lower Garigliano to suggest a possible landing on the coast in conjunction with an attack along Highway No. 7. On the right flank of Fifth Army, VI Corps was to harass the enemy by offensive probing of his mountain positions along the entire corps front. For the main effort in the center, 10 Corps would drive from the southern slopes toward the peak of Mount Camino, while II Corps attacked from the northeast corner of the hill mass, aiming at Mount la Difensa and Mount Maggiore. As soon as all the high ground around Camino was occupied, 10 Corps was to be prepared to relieve II Corps units as far north as Mount Maggiore. Together these operations made up Phase 1 of our assault on the Winter Line. They were planned to unhinge the southern part of the line, to pave the way for opening the Liri Valley, and to bring the enemy's lateral supply road, running through Cassino and down to the coast, within range of our observation and artillery.

In order to cover the movement of troops to assembly areas and to draw enemy forces from Mount Camino, the British 46 Division was

[1] The figures identifying hills and points designate elevation in meters above sea level.



MAP NO. 5

ordered to take Hill 360, the southernmost spur of Camino, during the night of 1/2 December (Map No. 5, page 18). Then the 56 Division would attack the highest points of Mount Camino during the night of 2/3 December. The timing of these moves was a vital factor, for if 10 Corps could succeed before daylight of 3 December, the enemy would be deprived of the high ground from which he could threaten II Corps units in their assaults on the peaks further north.

H Hour for II Corps was set for 0620 on 3 December. The base for the attack was our position on the lower end of a ridge sloping down from Mount la Difensa to form the northeast corner of the mountain mass above Mignano. Hill 368 on this spur marked the line of departure. From it, the 1st Special Service Force was to push along the ridge toward Mount la Difensa and then beyond to take Mount

la Remetanea. This attack would cover the movement of the 142d Regimental Combat Team from 368 across the northern slopes of the mountains against Maggiore. Only diversionary action was planned on the corps' right flank, where the 141st and 143d Regimental Combat Teams held the northern side of the corridor.

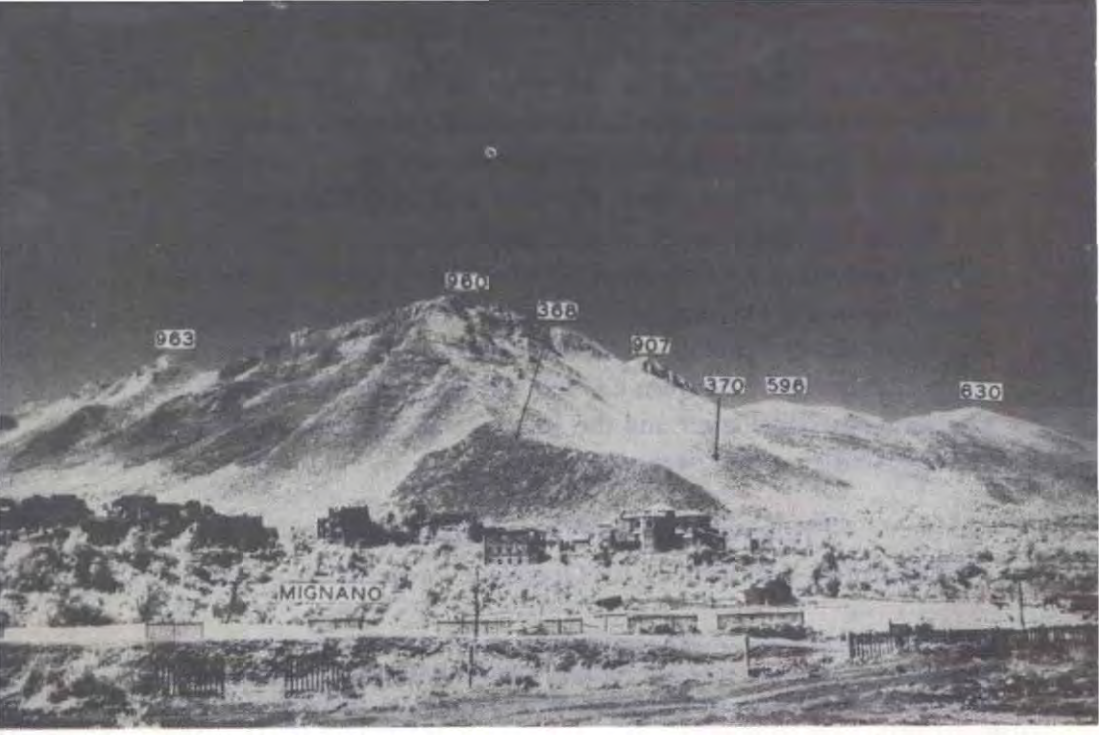
The enemy force which would oppose these operations, the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, held the sector of the Winter Line stretching from Mount Camino to Mount Maggiore. The German XIV Corps had in reserve between Cassino and the coast two divisions, the Hermann Goering Panzer and the 3d Panzer Grenadier, which could reach this front within twenty-four hours.

Preparations for Operation Raincoat

Fifth Army's preparations for Operation *Raincoat,* the code name

CAMINO PEAKS *were objectives in the first phase of the Winter Line operations. The attacking force included Allied units which had landed on D Day at Salerno and were now working together to take this hill mass.*





II CORPS OBJECTIVES IN PHASE I *were the northern peaks of the Camino hill mass. The 1st Special Service Force attacked Mount la Difensa* (*Hill* 960) *and Mount la Remetanea* (*Hill* 907), *while the* 142*d Infantry, on the right, seized Mount Maggiore* (*Hill* 630).

for the assault on the Camino hills, were extensive and thorough. First came the movement forward of supplies, accomplished by herculean efforts of the quartermaster and engineer units. The engineers swept trails, roads, and bivouac sites for mines; hauled gravel, railroad ties, and poles for road improvements; constructed bypasses, culverts, and bridges; and kept up jeep and foot trails. The roads, maintained with so much difficulty, reached only to the base of the mountains. Here numerous dumps were established where carrying parties assembled to pack food, water, and ammunition up to the troops. To reach Cannavinelle Hill, 270 men of the 143d Infantry carried up supplies from the foothills over a hazardous trail so rough that a good pair of shoes could stand only three trips. Mules were being used here and elsewhere, but the number was not yet sufficient to meet the urgent demand. Although these difficulties were heightened by the continued rainy weather, they were so successfully met that by the end of November the front-line units had raised supply levels sufficiently to support the forthcoming attack.

Meanwhile, artillery battalions prepared for the greatest "shoot" thus far of the Italian campaign, the air force got ready for its part in the attack, and deceptive measures were begun. The latter were intended to mislead the enemy as to the exact point where Fifth Army would strike in force. Elements of 10 Corps carried out the planned feint on the lower Garigliano; on the right flank VI Corps launched diversionary attacks four days before the Camino drive started; and even in the center of Fifth Army front, efforts were made to confuse the enemy by increased patrolling activity on the right flank of the main assault units. Division and corps artillery fire on known targets from San Pietro to San Vittore became more intense. Smoke was used daily on Mount Lungo, and, when the weather permitted, the air force bombed targets in the San Pietro-San Vittore area.

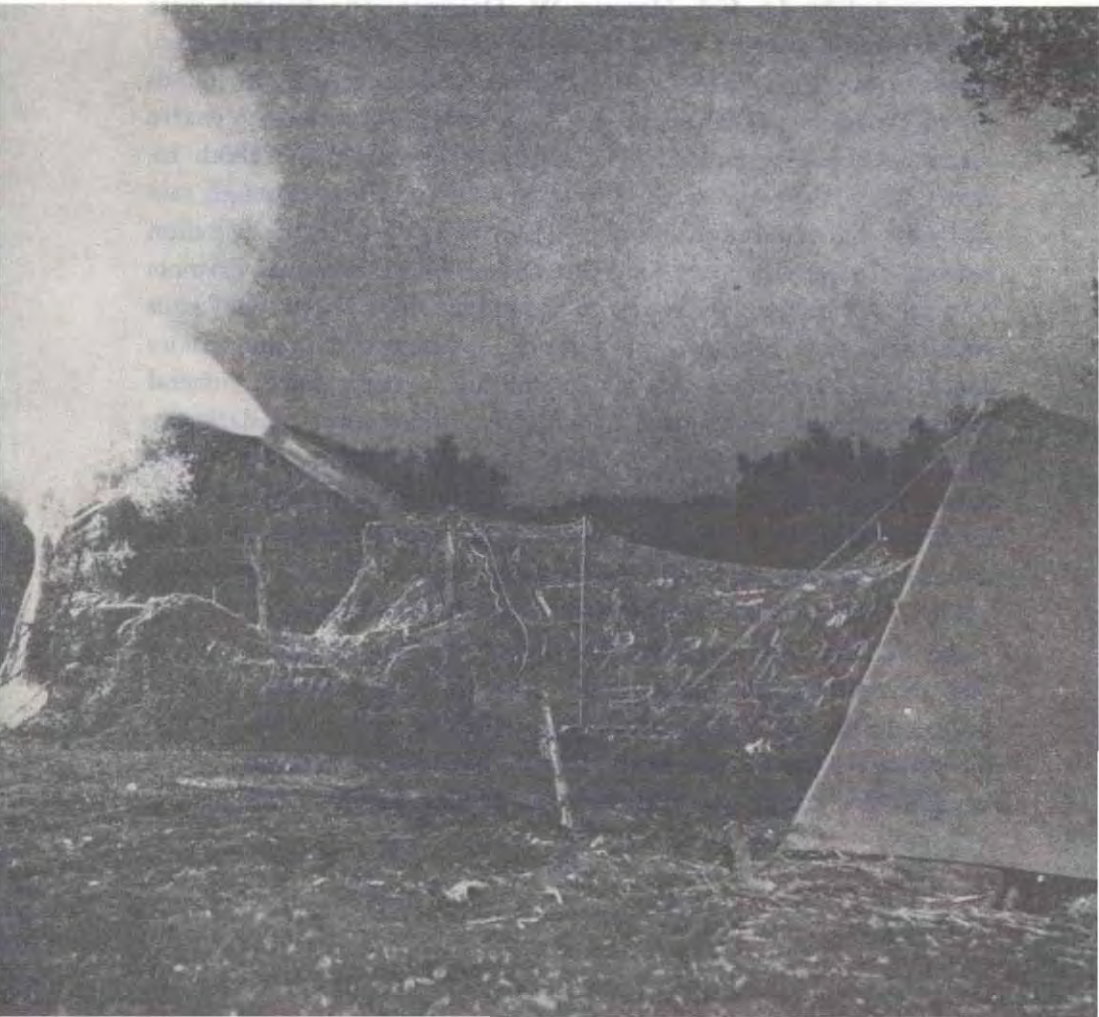
A reconnaissance in force was made toward San Pietro, to lead the enemy to believe that our main effort would be directed against that area. The mission was assigned to the 3d Ranger Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Herman W. Dammer. The Rangers were to have close support from Company B, 83d Chemical Battalion, and from the 133d Field Artillery Battalion which fired 2,218 rounds on 29 November. That night the Rangers moved up from Venafro through Ceppagna, and at 2230, led by guides from the 180th Infantry, they began the steep descent toward San Pietro through rain and mist that reduced visibility to a few feet. By 0530 the battalion reached a point about one mile east of San Pietro. Frequent attempts of patrols to reconnoiter routes to the village drew heavy small-arms and mortar fire. By noon, when it was apparent that nothing more could be accomplished without committing a major force, General Walker ordered the Rangers to withdraw under cover of darkness. Meanwhile the 133d Field Artillery fired 2,600 more rounds. The enemy reacted to the reconnaissance by increasing artillery and mortar fire in the San Pietro area, and a strong enemy combat patrol attacked during the night of 1/2 December against the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, on the southeastern tip of Mount Lungo.

Air activity was severely restricted by the bad weather. On the few days when our planes could take the air, bombers attacked bridges in the Liri Valley, artillery installations, and mountain towns on various parts of the front. On 26 November, thirty-six planes bombed the enemy on hills west of Mount Camino, and on the

next day twenty-four P-40's bombed the Vallevona plateau. On 1 and 2 December, XII Air Support Command reached its high point of activity for the month in preparation for the assault against the Camino hills. Although rain canceled part of the extensive bombing program, 274 sorties were carried out on 1 December and 612 sorties on the following day against targets in front of Fifth Army's main forces, from the Liri River to the mountains in front of VI Corps.

Artillery preparation for Operation *Raincoat* was the most formidable thus far in Fifth Army's campaigns. Starting at 1630 on 2 December, 925 pieces poured ton after ton of high explosive and white phosphorus shells into enemy positions. Against Mount Camino alone, 820 pieces ranging from 3-inch guns to 8-inch howitzers fired

A CAMOUFLAGED 8-INCH HOWITZER *of the 194th Field Artillery Battalion fires against Mount Camino at night on 3 December. This type of artillery weapon, heavy, yet mobile, was used for the first time in the Italian campaign during the heavy concentration for Operation Raincoat.*



some of the most powerful and intense concentrations ever used in battle against a small area. In the one-hour "serenade" from 1630 to 1730 on 2 December, 346 pieces, including twenty-four 8-inch howitzers, fired 22,500 rounds in the II Corps sector — an average of sixty-five rounds per gun. For two days this terrific fire continued until by 1800 on 4 December the three corps in Fifth Army had fired 206,929 rounds weighing 4,066 tons. The effect of this massed artillery fire on the enemy is difficult to appraise. Prisoners captured on Camino testified that although the shelling hampered reinforcements, it also revealed clearly our intentions. Heavy casualties were reported by some prisoners, and there was much evidence that enemy morale suffered from these attacks, but those troops who were well protected in caves and deep dugouts escaped with little inconvenience other than loss of sleep.

Capture of the Main Camino Peaks

On 1 December units of 10 and II Corps were ready to launch their attack. Making their planned diversion, the 139 Brigade in the 46 Division sector led off at dusk against the Calabritto ridge barring the way to Hill 360. During the night, assault battalions met heavy opposition from machine guns and ran into minefields and wire. The British troops overcame enemy obstacles and continued the attack after daylight on 2 December, supported by heavy artillery fire and by elements of the 40 Royal Tank Regiment. The enemy held stubbornly and at the close of the day Calabritto village remained in his hands. Nevertheless, the 56 Division jumped off to attack Mount Camino and the hills below it (Map No. 6, page 24). Here too the Germans resisted strongly, and the British were unable to reach Monastery Hill (Hill 963) on 3 December.

Timing their assault with 10 Corps' drive against Camino, units of II Corps moved out to attack the northern part of the Camino hill mass. Col. Frederick's 1st Special Service Force advanced to Ridge 368 from bivouac areas after dark on 2 December. By midnight the 2d Regiment was well up the slopes of Mount la Difensa just below the cliffs of Hill 960 and before dawn had forced the enemy to give up the hill and pull back along the ridge. While the 2d Battalion organized for defense on Hill 960, the 1st Battalion moved on to take Hill 907. The Germans could not stop the mo-



MAP NO. 6

mentum of our attack, and by 0945 on 3 December, the ridge as far as Mount la Remetanea was in our hands. A German counterattack, coming on 4 December, drove the 1st Battalion back from Hill 907 to a defensive position on Mount la Difensa. The 1st Battalion of the 3d Regiment, which had been held as force reserve, was badly shot up on its way to Hill 907 by enemy artillery fire coming from the north and northeast. During the day a cold rain fell constantly, limiting visibility and adding to the great difficulty of supply and evacuation.

A prisoner had revealed that the enemy would counterattack Hill 960 at 0330 on 5 December. At about 0300 a forward observer reported a concentration of German troops in the draw west and south of Hill 907 and artillery fire was laid on those areas. When six hundred of the enemy launched the attack at 0335 the 1st Special

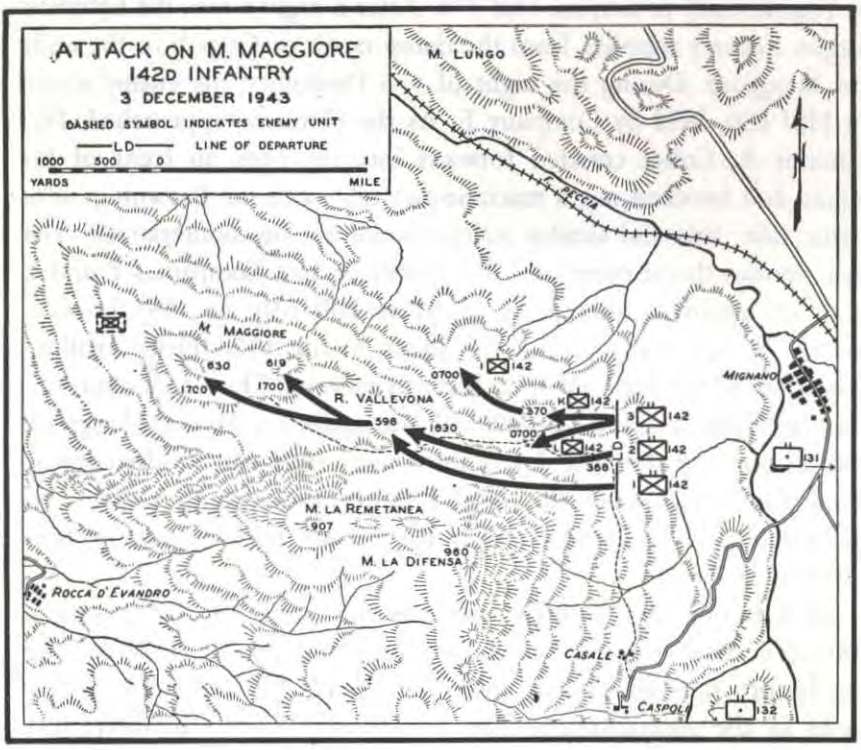
Service Force broke up the assault. Later in the day the 1st Regiment came up to support the 2d Regiment and during the next three days cleared the mountain of enemy troops. On the afternoon of 8 December Hill 907 was retaken; organized resistance ceased in that area.

10 Corps in the meantime had captured Monastery Hill. On 6 December in the 56 Division sector the 2/5 Queen's Infantry Battalion of the 169 Brigade occupied this feature on the crest of Camino to climax very bitter fighting, and other units drove the fiercely resisting Germans from the west slopes and out of Rocca d'Evandro by 9 December.

Mount Maggiore

The 142d Infantry had the mission of capturing the ridge which forms the northwest shoulder of the Camino hills and faces Mount Sammucro across the Mignano corridor (Map No. 7, below). Mount Maggiore (Hill 630) marked the end of this ridge. The attack commenced on 3 December, with Hill 368 as the line of de-

MAP NO. 7



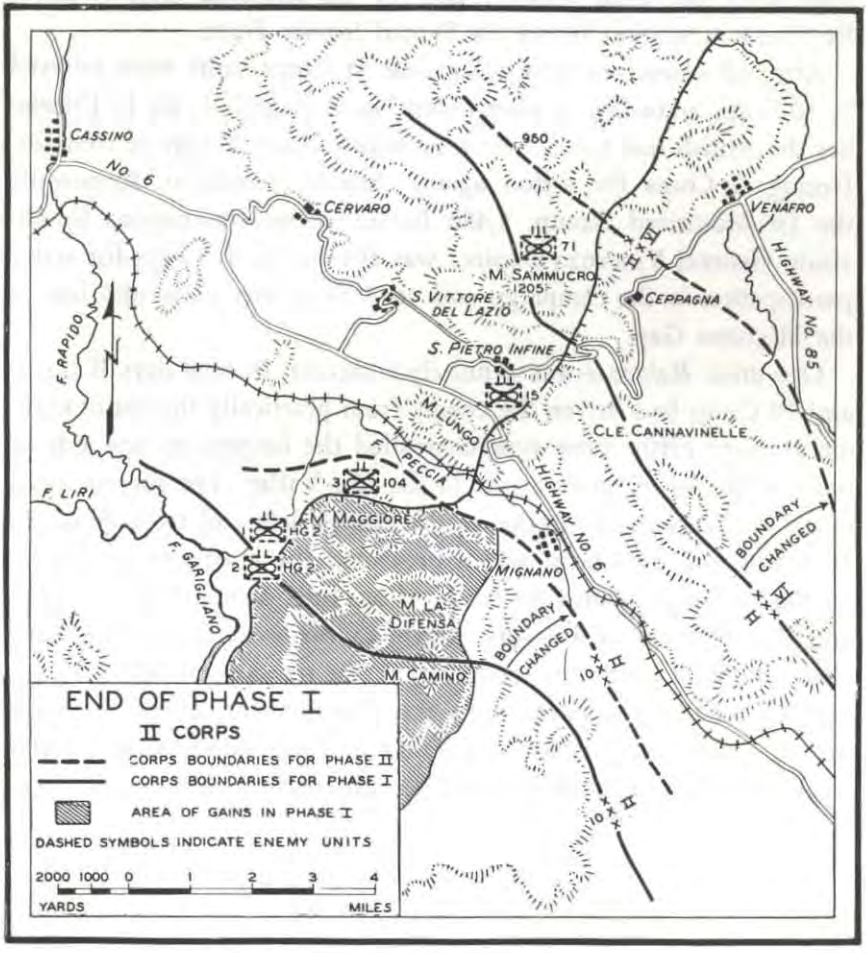
parture, a few hours after the 1st Special Service Force had left that point on its way toward Mount la Difensa. The 3d Battalion of the 142d Infantry led off at 0300, followed an hour later by the 2d Battalion. By 0700 Company K was clearing the enemy from Hill 370, and Company I had reached a knoll five hundred yards to the northwest. Mount Lungo was smoked by the artillery to hinder observation from across the valley. While the 3d Battalion worked along the lower slopes, the 2d was striking westward to gain the main ridge leading toward Mount Maggiore. Hill 596, halfway to Maggiore, was taken at 1030; by 1700 the battalion had skirted the Vallevona plateau and gained the final heights, which were immediately organized for defense. The 1st Battalion had crossed Ridge 368 at 0730, mopping up bypassed pockets of resistance, and prepared Hill 596 for defense.

The 142d Infantry had to make ready for almost certain German counterattacks after the swift capture of its objective. Since the situation was well in hand on the eastern slopes of Maggiore, Col. George E. Lynch, commanding the 142d Infantry, ordered the 3d Battalion to withdraw after dark on 4 December, leaving Company L (reinforced) to outpost Hill 370. After a night's rest, the battalion began to carry supplies from the dump north of Caspoli to the units on Maggiore. During the night of 5/6 December, the enemy struck at Hill 630, held by Company E. As the Germans approached, Pfc. Charles A. Collet crawled forward into the open in front of his squad and knocked out a machine-gun nest with his Browning automatic rifle; this and similar actions broke up the counterattack. The next serious threat came on 7 December against Companies E and F and was again an attempt to recapture Hill 630. At 1635 Lt. Col. Samuel S. Graham reported the attack to the 132d Field Artillery Battalion, which fired 338 rounds in ten minutes. The attack diminished after this fire, and by 2300 all was quiet on Mount Maggiore. Patrols sent out the next day counted more than one hundred enemy dead. On 8 December the 142d Infantry extended its position to include Mounts la Difensa and la Remetanea, relieving the 1st Special Service Force.

As it turned out, *Raincoat* was a fitting name for the operation. Rain fell steadily from 2 to 4 December and greatly increased the discomfort suffered by our men. Their only shelters were a few caves in the mountainside. The 2d Battalion, 142d Infantry, had

gone up on Maggiore carrying all the ammunition possible, only a few mortars, and no food but the "D" ration chocolate bar. There was no way of getting other supplies to forward positions except by packing laboriously over rough, muddy trails constantly under enemy fire and so steep that men had to crawl some of the distance and haul the packs up by rope. In such terrain mules could not be used. Two companies of the 141st Infantry and half of the 142d Infantry carried supplies to the troops on Mounts la Difensa and Maggiore. Corps supplied additional litter squads to evacuate casualties, which were relatively light. The round trip of three miles between a point near Mignano and Mount Maggiore required twelve

MAP NO. 8



hours. Several attempts were made to drop rations by plane to the troops in these almost inaccessible positions, but the 142d Infantry on Maggiore was able to recover only one pack of "K" rations from three drops. For three days men lived on one "K" ration each and obtained water from snow or shell holes. Sleep was impossible.

In this difficult period of organizing and holding the captured mountains one of the endless chores was laying wire for communications. Artillery fire tore gaps in the lines as fast as they were repaired. For example, at 2000 on 5 December, lines to all but one company of the regiment were out. They were repaired by midnight, only to be knocked out again by nearly 150 rounds of artillery that fell on the principal trail. Our own artillery kept up a heavy fire on enemy targets, with the 131st and 132d Field Artillery Battalions in direct support of the 142d Infantry and the 1st Armored Field Artillery Regiment in support of the 1st Special Service Force.

After all objectives were taken, the II Corps units were relieved by 10 Corps according to plan (Map No. 8, page 27). By 11 December the British had taken over the entire Camino-Maggiore complex, freeing II Corps for action against Mount Sammucro. Meanwhile the 1st Motorized Group, 5,486 Italian troops commanded by Division General Vincenzo Dapino, was attached to II Corps for active participation in the campaign and on 7 December came into line at the Mignano Gap.

Operation *Raincoat* was definitely a success. In nine days II Corps and 10 Corps had driven the enemy from practically the entire Camino feature; Fifth Army now controlled the heights on one side of the corridor which gives access to the Liri Valley. The success owed much to diversionary attacks on the Army's left and right flanks by 10 Corps and VI Corps, which prevented the enemy from concentrating his forces against the center of our line. Although bad weather and the difficulty of locating targets in the mountains limited the effectiveness of air-ground cooperation, the missions of XII Air Support Command, combined with the concentration of our artillery fire on enemy gun positions, undoubtedly contributed to the general weakness of German artillery during our infantry attacks.

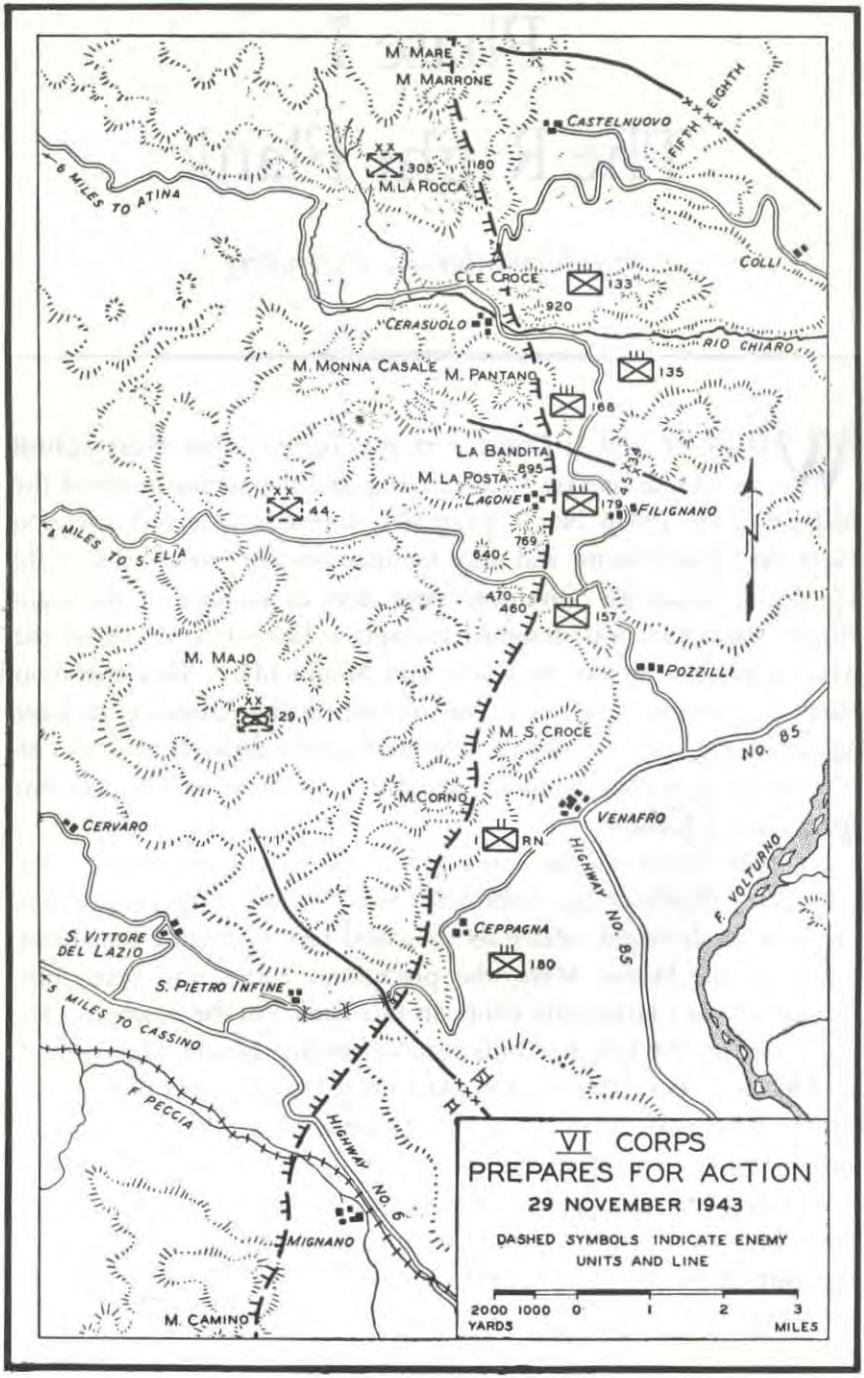
Phase I
The Right Flank

(29 November–9 December)

WHILE 10 and II Corps were making the main effort against the Camino peaks, VI Corps engaged the enemy north of the Mignano Gap (Map No. 9, page 30). Intended to divert attention from the Camino sector and draw German reserves toward the north, the action began 29 November, four days in advance of the main effort. The attack was designed to capture limited objectives in the mountains between Mount Corno and Mount Mare. This operation would test enemy defenses in the area where the Allies, in the later phases of the offensive, would attempt to drive through ten miles of continuous mountain highland and bring pressure on German positions above Cassino.

On both flanks of the corps sector the terrain presented major difficulties. North of the Colli-Atina road the main Apennine peaks begin to reach heights above six thousand feet. Centering on Mount Marrone and Mount Mare, the precipitous ridges and bare cliffs discouraged any large-scale effort on this flank. In the southern part of the sector, the trackless hills leading toward Mount Majo would be difficult to penetrate. Attack plans were therefore focused on the center; here two mountain roads, however poor, would facilitate supply during an advance. On this stretch the enemy front lay several miles east of the dominant peaks, Mount Monna Casale and Mount Majo, both near four thousand feet in height. Irregular ridges slope unevenly from each of these peaks toward the east, ending in prominent spurs and knobs such as Mount Pantano and Hill 769 overlooking the Filignano Valley. The two east-west roads, struggling through rough upland on either side of Monna Casale, reach eleva-

MAP NO. 9


M. MARE
M. MARRONE
CASTELNUOVO
FIFTH
EIGHTH
6 MILES TO ATINA
305
1180
M. LA ROCCA
COLLI
CLE CROCE
133
920
CERASUOLO
RIO CHIARO
M. MONNA CASALE
M. PANTANO
135
168
LA BANDITA
695
M. LA POSTA
LAGONE
179
FILIGNANO
44
4 MILES TO S. ELIA
769
640
470
460
157
M. MAJO
POZZILLI
29
M. S. CROCE
No. 85
M. CORNO
VENAFRO
CERVARO
RN
HIGHWAY
F. VOLTURNO
CEPPAGNA
180
S. VITTORE DEL LAZIO
S. PIETRO INFINE
5 MILES TO CASSINO
F. PECCIA
HIGHWAY No. 6
MIGNANO
M. CAMINO
VI CORPS
PREPARES FOR ACTION
29 NOVEMBER 1943
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE ENEMY UNITS AND LINE
2000 1000 0
YARDS
1
2
3
MILES

tions of more than two thousand feet on their way toward the Rapido watershed. The broken terrain is marked by rocky ravines and steep ascents with scant cover.

The attack into this rough country had to start from the lowest foothills, on the edges of the Pozzilli-Filignano Valley, reached by the Allied offensive that had come to a temporary halt on 15 November. Even after that date, positions along the VI Corps sector had not become stabilized. On the left flank the heights above Venafro, commanding the upper Volturno Valley and the Allied supply routes, were bitterly contested by both sides. Night patrols of both armies frequently penetrated well behind positions normally held by hostile troops. Enemy artillery was active in harassing fire, while our own artillery units operated under most unfavorable conditions. For a shift in position, guns must be winched out of the clinging mud. To clear the masks presented by mountains looming dead ahead, barrels had to be elevated and range tables improvised on the spot.

Hill 769

The mission of the 45th Division, comprising the 157th, 179th, and 180th Regimental Combat Teams, was to open a portion of the Filignano-Sant' Elia road and, by attacking northwest of the road, to support the 34th Division's left flank. The men of the 45th were already familiar with the terrain ahead of them, for from 6 November they had struggled for positions in these hills, and their patrols had felt out enemy defenses all along this front (Map No. 10, page 33).

Before the division lay a complex hill pattern which gave the Germans every advantage. Hill 769, a scrub-covered plateau southwest of Filignano, was the keystone of the enemy forward defenses. Its reduction would open the way to ground which rises abruptly to the northwest toward La Bandita (Hill 855) and Mount la Posta (Hill 970). In the village of Lagone, partly encircled by these hills, buildings were strong enough to withstand everything but direct hits from heavy caliber shells. A single trail winding through the village gave the enemy an excellent covered route of communication. On forward slopes of hills in this sector were mutally supporting light and heavy machine-gun bunkers. Riflemen, posted as sentinels on the trails, covered dead spaces in the bands of machine-gun fire. To the rear, sometimes on reverse slopes, the enemy had emplaced mortars.



MOUNTAINS ON FIFTH ARMY'S RIGHT (*above*) *were extremely rough. Seen from a plane flying over Scapoli, Mount Marrone in the middle ground and Mount Mare behind it rise to more than* 5500 *feet.*

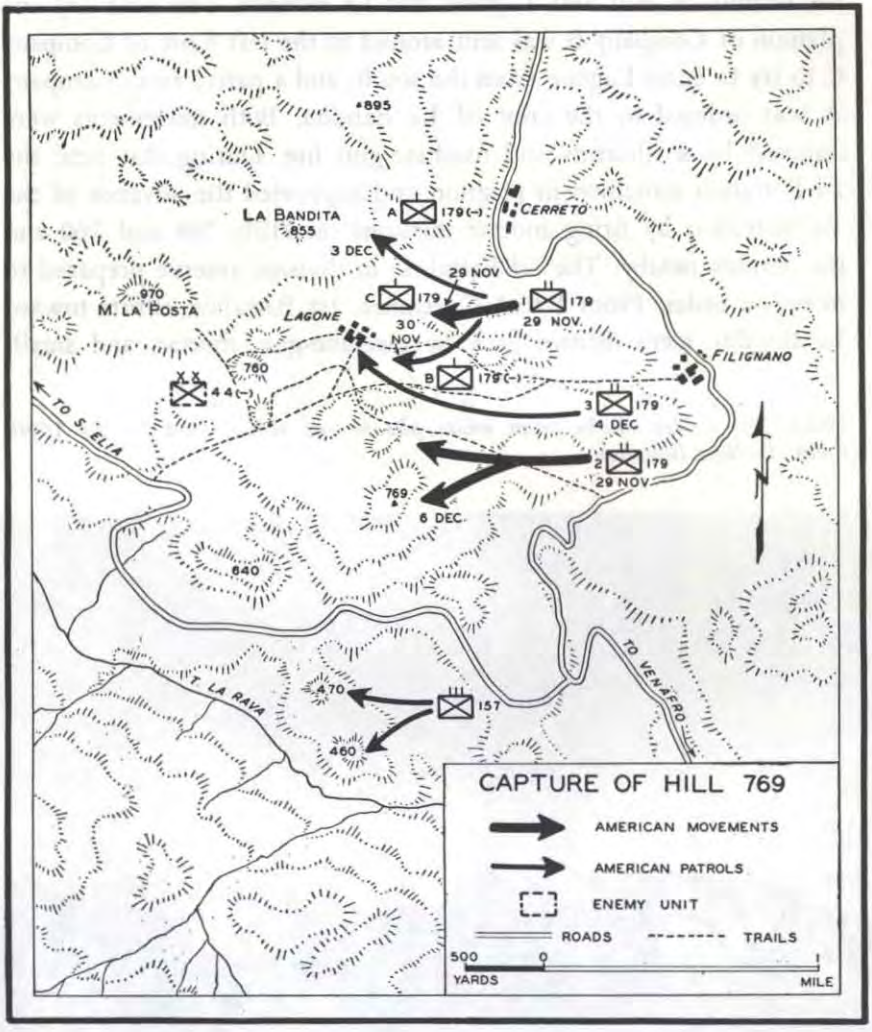
LAGONE (*below*), *with Mount la Posta looming in the background, lies in a barren and rocky area. Approach by jeeps was possible only after the rough trail leading up to the town had been improved.*



This area was held by elements of the 44th Grenadier Division, which had recently relieved the 26th Panzer Division.

Plans for the 45th Division directed that the 179th Infantry would make its initial effort against positions from La Bandita southward

MAP NO. 10



beyond Hill 769, with the dual purpose of supporting the 34th Division's attack further north and of getting astride the road through the mountains to Sant' Elia. The 1st Battalion would move toward Lagone and northwest to La Bandita. One company of the 2d Bat-

talion would attack toward Hill 640, just north of the Sant' Elia road, after capturing Hill 769. The 157th Infantry was meanwhile to use one company against hills 460 and 470 south of the road.

At 0600 on 29 November the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, began the attack on the right flank but met small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire from the front and right. The enemy front appeared to be in the vicinity of Hill 769, Lagone, and La Bandita. The next day one platoon of Company B was sent around to the left flank of Company C to try to enter Lagone from the south, and a patrol from Company A was ordered to the crest of La Bandita. Both movements were opposed by small-arms and machine-gun fire. During this time the 2d Battalion remained in position and supported the advance of the 1st Battalion by firing mortar missions on Hills 769 and 760 and the heights nearby. The 3d Battalion in division reserve prepared to move on order. From 1 to 3 December, 1st Battalion efforts toward La Bandita were thrown back by machine-gun, mortar, and small-

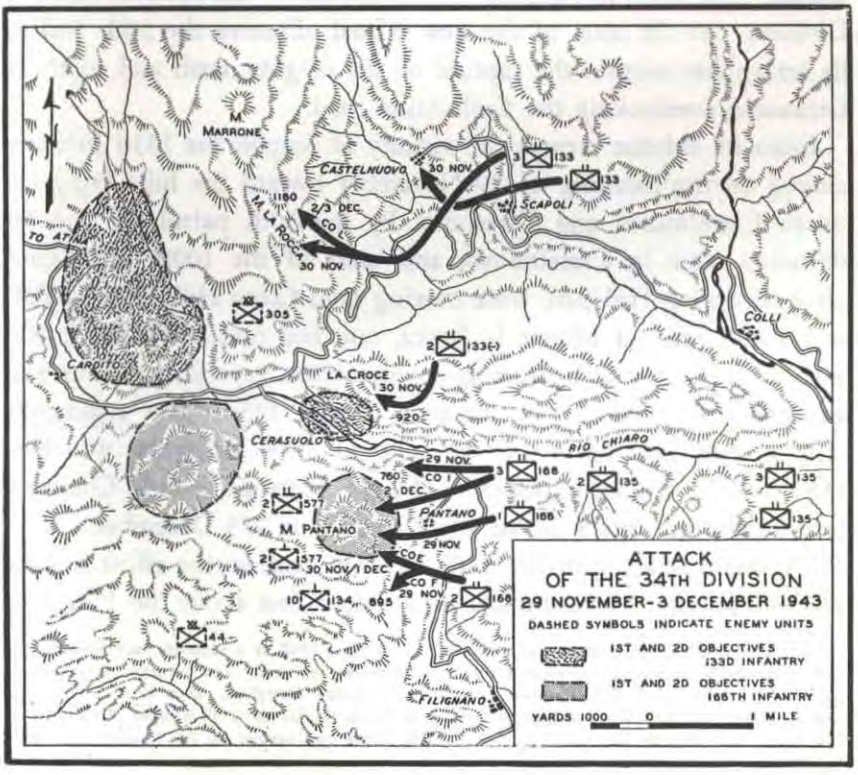
HILL 769, *under smoke from white phosphorus shells, fired by the* 160*th Field Artillery Battalion.*



arms fire from the tops of that hill and the neighboring height, 895. Day after day was filled with small unit actions; patrols from the 179th went toward Lagone, La Bandita, and the draws leading to enemy positions, only to be driven back by enemy fire.

Our troops already held the forward slopes of Hill 769 at the start of the offensive. To capture the rest of the position it was necessary to clear the enemy from the hills and draws on either side, which he was strongly defending. The 2d Battalion began on 1 December by testing the enemy's strength in the vicinity of Hill 769. Patrols worked their way to the crest of the hill and onto a knob just north. When the companies moved out to follow the advance elements, however, the enemy counterattacked fiercely. This set the pattern of fighting for several days following. By 6 December our troops were on the top of Hill 769, but the Germans still had a toehold on the reverse slope. For three more days they kept their positions in pillboxes and reinforced dugouts, before withdrawing

MAP NO. 11



from the hotly contested ground. Fifteen rock and wood emplacements on the reverse slope of Hill 769 had been used as shelters and gun positions. Our infantry had knocked out at least three of them with rifle grenades, hand grenades, and bazookas.

By 9 December La Bandita and Lagone were still held by the enemy, though our troops had entered Lagone and engaged in house-to-house fighting with German delaying forces. On the left the 157th Infantry had meanwhile carried out diversionary stabs at Hills 460 and 470. Both the 157th Infantry and the 180th, maintaining contact with the 36th Division and the 1st Ranger Battalion, had been sending aggressive patrols into enemy-held territory.

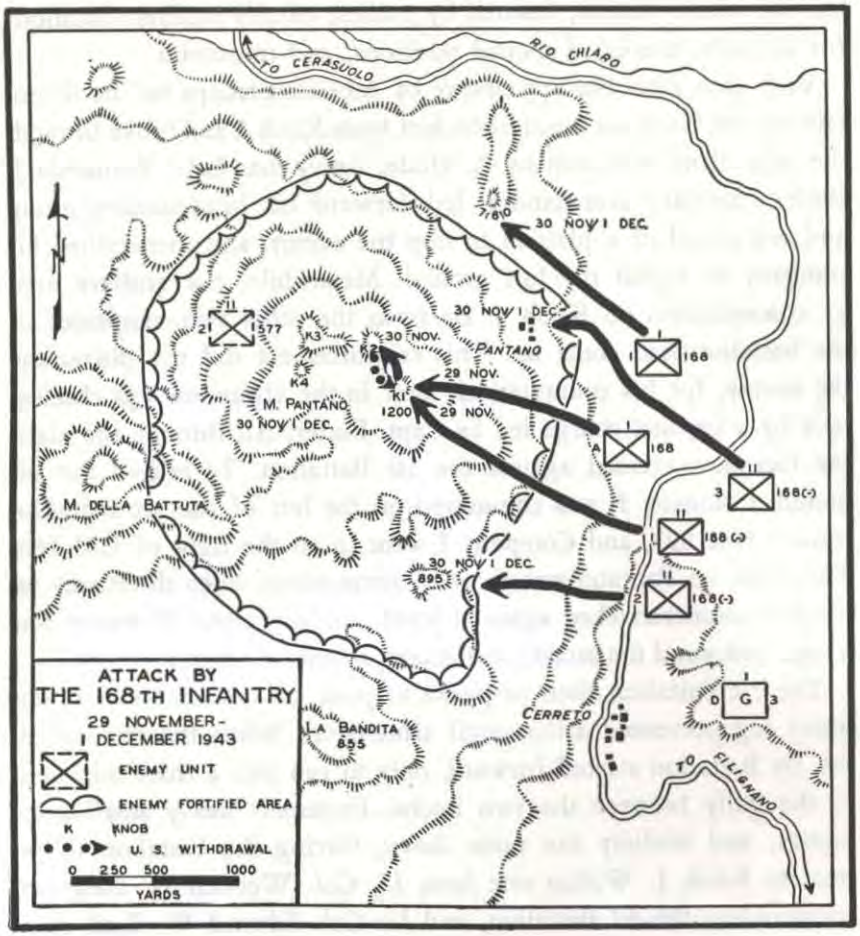
Mount Pantano

To the right of the 45th, the 34th Division, including the 133d, 135th, and 168th Regimental Combat Teams, occupied forward positions along a seven-mile front (Map No. 11, page 35). Before it on a line extending south from Mount Marrone, across the Rio Chiaro, and down to Pantano were elements of the 305th Grenadier Division. At the start of the new Allied offensive the 34th had as its immediate mission the capture of key heights north and south of Cerasuolo overlooking the Colli-Atina road.

From its defense area in the vicinity of Scapoli the 133d Infantry moved on the morning of 29 November toward the hills lying between Castelnuovo and Cerasuolo. By the 30th patrols of the 1st Battalion were in Castelnuovo, and units of the 100th Battalion,[2] after occupying Hill 920, were moving onto Croce Hill. The 3d Battalion had reached Mount la Rocca, one and one-half miles northwest of the latter point. Enemy counteraction, especially mortar and artillery fire, checked the advance of the 133d. The regiment's only further gain before it was relieved on 9 December was Hill 1180, on the southern slopes of Mount Marrone, which Company L took by night attack across snow and ice on 2/3 December.

The main fighting of the 34th Division came in the effort to take Mount Pantano. Towering sixteen hundred feet above the Filignano

[2] 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 and served as the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry.



MAP NO. 12

Valley and flanking the Atina road, this height was the objective of the 168th Infantry (Map No. 12, page 37).

Before dawn on 29 November, the 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, moved along the ridge just north of Filignano, across the road and up the brush-covered, rocky slopes of its objective. Aided by surprise, Company A took the southeast knob (Knob 1) of Mount Pantano shortly after daylight. This success did not end the battle. Three other knobs rise from the plateau which forms the mountain top, defended by the 2d Battalion, 577th Grenadiers. The main enemy strength lay on a nose jutting out from Knob 3, from which the Germans could sweep knobs 1 and 2 and the draws between them,

but the whole plateau, fissured by gullies, offered excellent locations for dugouts, concealed mortar positions, and minefields.

Very soon after the appearance of American troops on the mountain top the Germans counterattacked from Knob 2 and broke through the right flank of Company A. Under heavy fire, Capt. Benjamin J. Butler, company commander, led forward his headquarters group and one squad of a platoon to stop the enemy, and then rallied his company to regain the lost ground. Meanwhile, our artillery fired a concentration on Knob 4. By noon the other two companies of the battalion had come up. This reinforcement did not discourage the enemy, for his counterattack later in the afternoon was checked only by a bayonet charge led by Capt. Butler. All through the night the Germans pressed against the 1st Battalion. To relieve the situation, Company F was committed on the left of the 1st Battalion toward Hill 895, and Company I went in on the right of Hill 760. The 168th on Pantano was short of ammunition when the enemy on Knob 2 counterattacked again at 0530, 30 November. However, our troops withstood the attack, and enemy activity slackened.

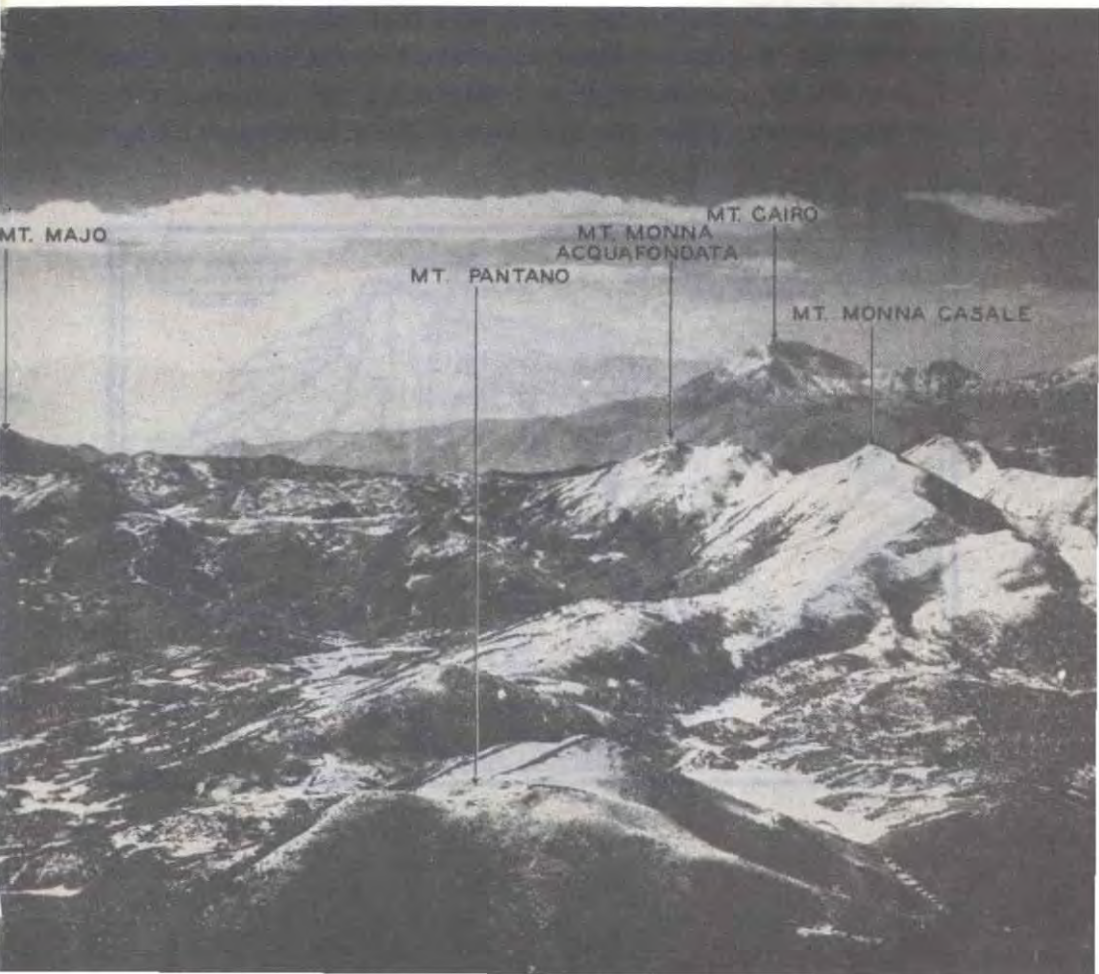
The 1st Battalion then prepared to push on toward Knob 2, but heavy fog prevented action until after noon. When the mist lifted, the 1st Battalion started forward, only to run into a thick minefield in the gully between the two knobs. Extremely heavy small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire came down, forcing the battalion to retreat to Knob 1. Within one hour Lt. Col. Wendell H. Langdon, commanding the 3d Battalion, and Lt. Col. Edward W. Bird, commanding the 2d Battalion, were wounded, and heavy casualties were suffered throughout all companies on the mountain top.

Toward evening on the 30th the divisional artillery and Company D of the 3d Chemical Battalion prepared extensive protecting and harassing fires, and the 1st Battalion dug in for the night. At 2130 enemy mortar fire was concentrated on Mount Pantano, and artillery fire with a high percentage of white phosphorus was added to it. At about 2240 a new enemy attack broke, in the greatest force so far. Capt. Fred D. Clarke, Jr., now commanding the 1st Battalion, sent a brief appeal for help through the radio of his forward artillery observer, the only means of communication left, and then the battalion set grimly about beating off the onslaught of the German infantry, whose strength was estimated at two companies. Throughout the wild night on the top of the mountain our men held their

fox holes. Once two squads of Company C had to crawl over to aid Company A. As daylight approached, the Germans, pounded with heavy concentrations of our artillery, broke and fell back.

Other elements of the regiment were moving to support of the 1st Battalion on Mount Pantano. Company E, carrying food and ammunition, started up after midnight of 30 November. The 3d Battalion moved to the draw by the village of Pantano, where the houses were booby-trapped and the fields strewn with S-mines. Maj. Floyd E. Sparks, the battalion commander, went on ahead just before dawn on 1 December to take over command of the 1st Battalion. Heroic efforts were made to restore communication with our hard-pressed forces. The 1st Battalion message center chief, Sgt. Edward G. Jones, volunteered to repair the wire and crawled up the mountain through darkness and rain. Close to his goal he was wounded fatally

ON MOUNT PANTANO *and the heights beyond, weapons were emplaced on reverse slopes and in ravines to bring fire on any approaching force. Observation posts controlled fire and gave information to troops.*

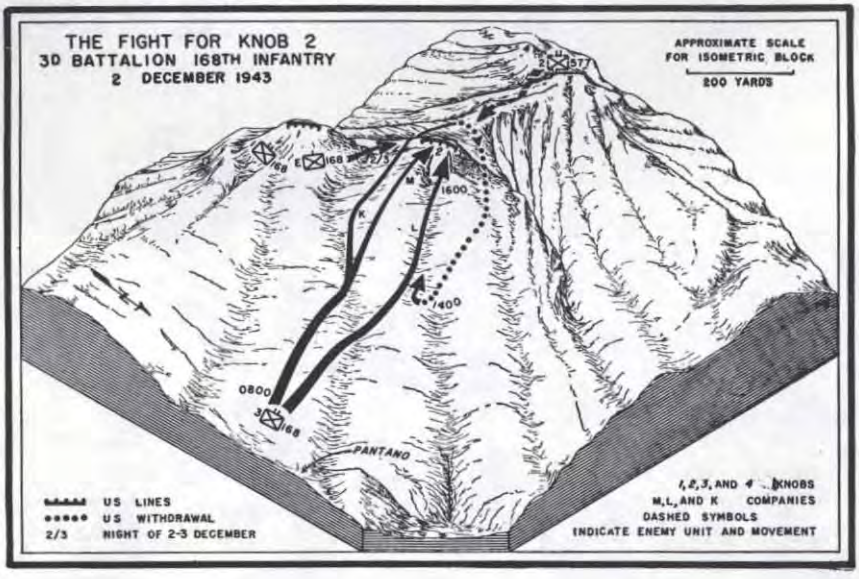


by mortar fragments. Others continued the effort, but mortar fire kept cutting the line throughout the following day and night.

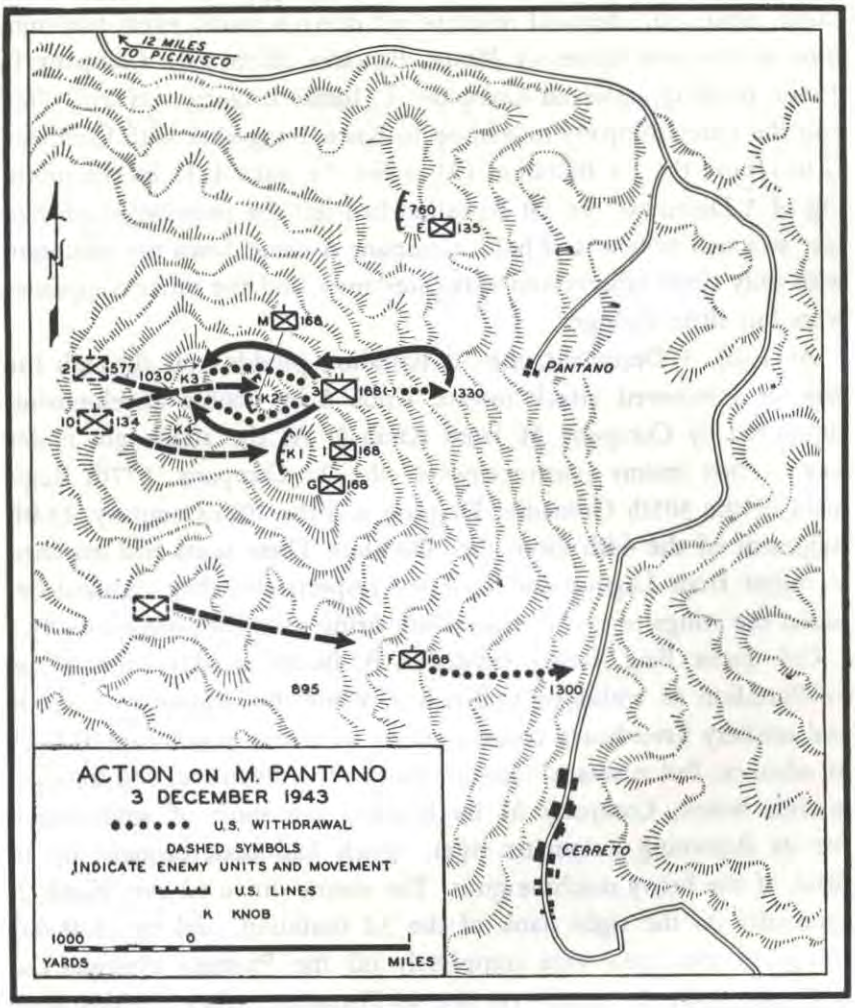
On 1 December Mount Pantano was almost quiet, as falling snow drifted across the rocks and the first-aid men sought out the wounded. All through the Pantano battle the medical personnel displayed the utmost bravery. Evacuation by litter was a four-hour carry down the steep mountainside, but the litter bearers from Company C, 109th Medical Battalion, carried their loads carefully despite casualties from the constant mortar fire. Even off the slopes of Pantano the wounded soldier was not in safety, for the enemy artillery hammered all the rear areas and arrival at a hospital was sometimes delayed for many hours. Extensive first aid had accordingly to be administered in the thick of the fight. Capt. Emile G. Schuster crept forward under fire to an enemy minefield to treat men wounded by the antipersonnel mines and carried out plasma transfusions on the scene of battle Once a bottle was shot out of his hand, and the tree beside him was cut down by machine-gun fire; but Capt. Schuster got more supplies and continued his work.

The 2d of December was cloudy and cool with good visibility. At 0800 the 3d Battalion launched an attack up the slopes of Knob 2, preceded by a one-hour artillery preparation and accompanied by a rolling barrage (Map No. 13, below). The enemy yielded Knob

MAP NO. 13



MAP NO. 14



2 to Company K without a fight. Then our men moved on down toward the ravine between Knobs 2 and 3, leaving one platoon with a section of Company M on Knob 2; but the Germans rallied, counterattacked, and pushed Company K back over and down Knob 2 to the east edge of the Pantano plateau by 1400. At that point Company L reinforced Company K. Together they drove up again and in another two hours regained Knob 2, where Company E, with only one officer and twenty men left, joined them from Knob 1. A simultaneous attack by the rest of the 2d Battalion to the south of Knob 1 had meanwhile been stopped on an enemy minefield.

The three companies on Knob 2 held their ground throughout the night, while our chemical mortars put down a round every five minutes on the west slopes of Mount Pantano. After dark Company E, 135th Infantry, relieved Company I, 168th Infantry, on Hill 760, and the latter company moved up to Knob 1 together with Company G to relieve the 1st Battalion (Map No. 14, page 41). By the morning of 3 December the 1st Battalion had left the position which had cost so much to take and hold. Company A came down the mountain with only three officers and fifty-three men, and the other companies were but little stronger.

At 1030, 3 December, the 3d Battalion plodded off through the rain in a renewed attack toward Knob 3 by double envelopment, supported by Company M from Knob 2. As the attack got under way, it met enemy reinforcements—the 2d Company, 577th Regiment of the 305th Grenadier Division and the 10th Company, 134th Regiment of the 44th Grenadier Division. These units had marched all night from Lagone and Picinisco respectively; they attacked between the wings of our envelopment, firing machine-pistols rapidly.

Col. (now Brig. Gen.) Frederick B. Butler quickly ordered the 3d Battalion to withdraw to Knob 2, while the supporting mortars and artillery fired heavy concentrations on enemy positions and lines of advance. But it was too late to assume the defensive, and to make matters worse, Company M on Knob 2 ran short of ammunition for its Browning automatic rifles, which had been brought up in place of the heavy machine guns. The enemy drove on over Knob 2, especially on the right flank of the 3d Battalion, and by 1330 our troops in this area were completely off the Pantano plateau. Coordinated with the attack on the 3d Battalion, other assaults were launched against Knob 1. Cpl. Zannie M. Reynolds, voluntarily exposing himself in order to return hostile fire, had first one rifle and then a second shot from his hands by enemy machine guns. With a third he fired for several minutes and then threw hand grenades at the advancing Germans until the attack was broken up. Companies G and I on Knob 1 maintained their line. On the far left, however, Company F was pushed back by 1300 with severe losses.

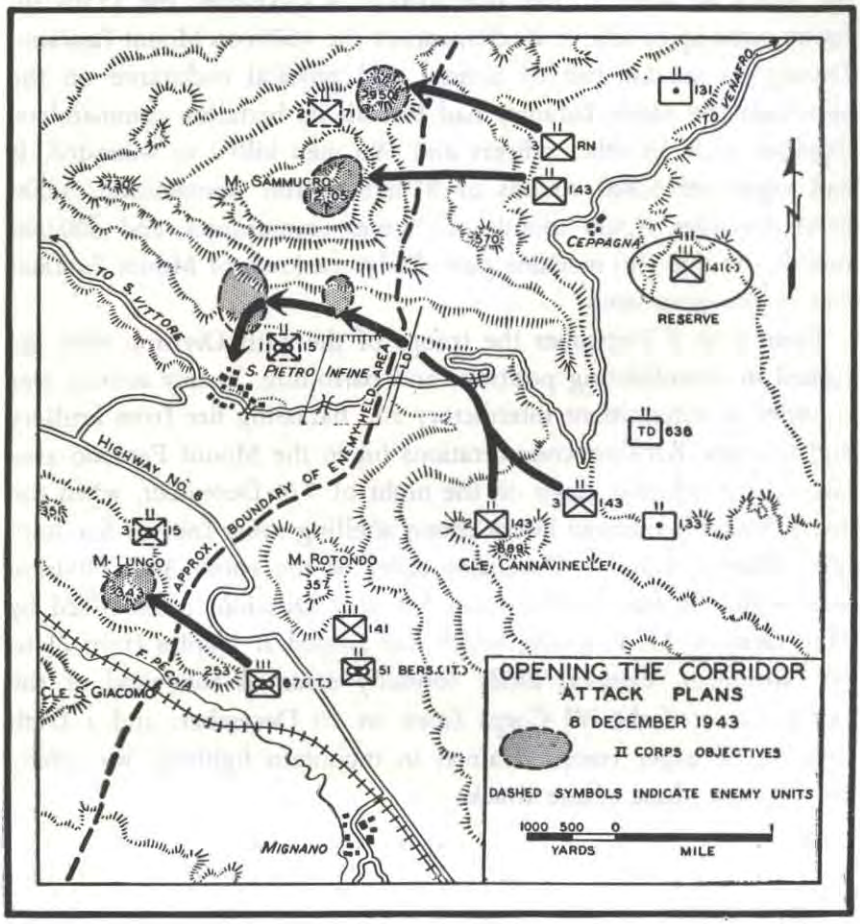
A disaster was in the making, and our supporting fires came down hard. In seventy-five minutes one chemical mortar fired 370 rounds of smoke and high explosive, even though enemy rifle fire was falling on the mortar positions east of Hill 895. The antitank platoons of

the 168th Infantry hauled up ammunition. Plans for organizing a rifle platoon from the rear echelon of the 2d Battalion were dropped in favor of getting reinforcements from the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry. With a fresh supply of ammunition the 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, rallied and came back up to the lip of the plateau east of Knob 2, where it was relatively safe from enemy mortar fire.

The enemy, having restored his positions on Knob 2, broke off the attack at 1830. In the afternoon of 4 December the 135th Infantry came up to relieve all elements of the 168th on Mount Pantano. During its six-day test of mental and physical endurance on the mountain the 168th Infantry had lost all its battalion commanders, together with 33 other officers and 386 men killed or wounded. It had expended 6,800 rounds of 81-mm mortar ammunition, 3,000 hand grenades, 7,500 rounds of 75-mm ammunition, and 400,000 rounds for rifle and machine gun. Only one knob of Mount Pantano was in our possession.

From 5 to 9 December the troops of the 34th Division were occupied in consolidating positions and patrolling. Enemy activity was confined to intermittent interdictory and harassing fire from artillery and mortars. Artillery concentrations hit in the Mount Pantano area late on the 6th and again on the night of 7/8 December, when the 135th Infantry received heavy enemy shelling every four or five minutes. During 8 and 9 December relief of the entire 34th Division was begun by the 2d Moroccan Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. A. M. F. Dody, which had landed at Naples from 21 to 30 November. General Dody formally assumed command of the north sector of the VI Corps front on 10 December, and a fresh division of eager troops, trained in mountain fighting, was ready for the next phase of the attack.

MAP NO. 15

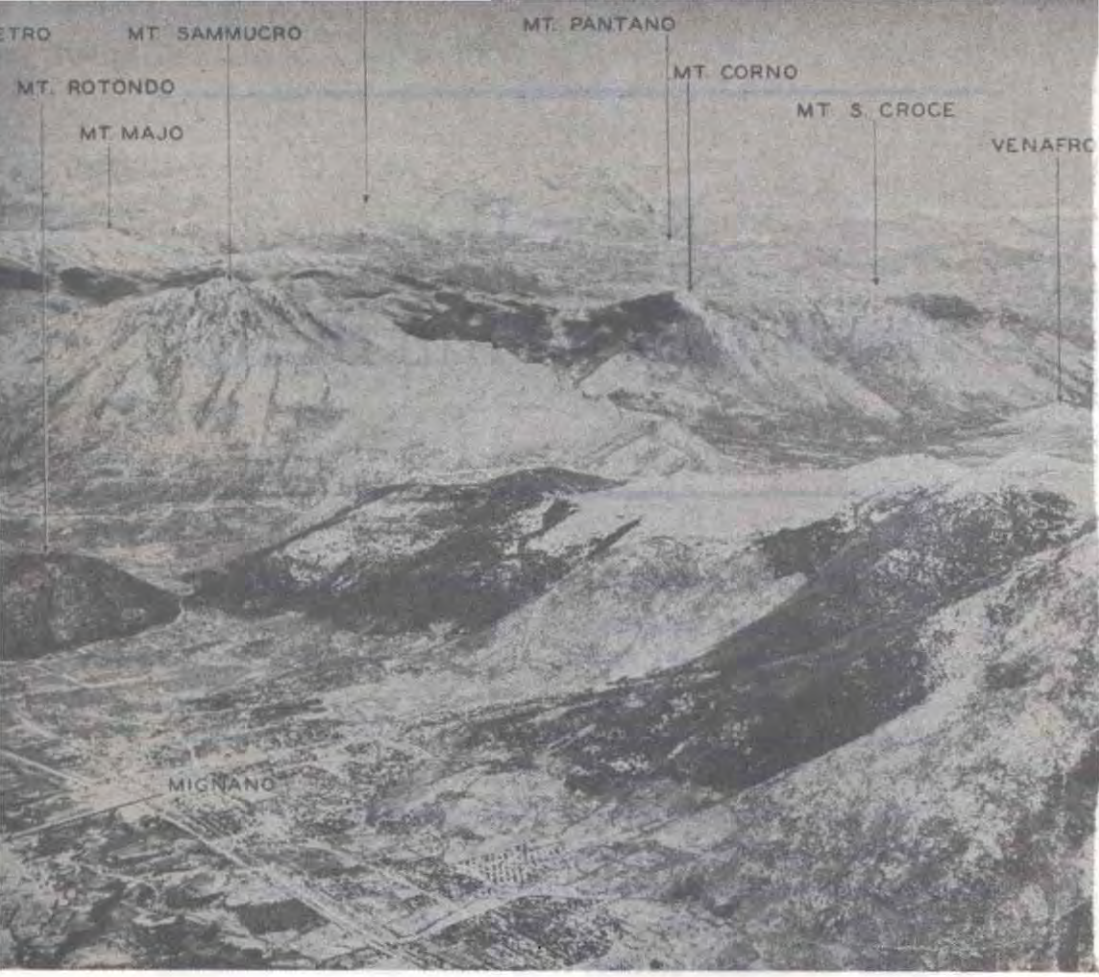

M. SAMMUCRO
1205
S. PIETRO
INFINE
TO S. VITTORE
TO VENAFRO
CEPPAGNA
RESERVE
141(-)
TD 636
HIGHWAY NO. 6
BOUNDARY OF ENEMY HELD AREA
APPROX.
M. LUNGO
1243
M. ROTONDO
357
CLE. CANNAVINELLE
889
CLE. S. GIACOMO
F. PECCIA
MIGNANO
OPENING THE CORRIDOR
ATTACK PLANS
8 DECEMBER 1943
II CORPS OBJECTIVES
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE ENEMY UNITS
1000 500 0
YARDS
MILE

Phase II
The Battles for San Pietro

FIFTH ARMY'S BLOWS IN THE FIRST PHASE of the offensive had seriously weakened the German Winter Line in a vital area (Map No. 8, page 27). The capture of the Camino hills, however, represented only half of the job that must be done in order to gain access from the Mignano corridor to the plain of the Liri Valley. The enemy still held the northern wall above the exit from the corridor; from dominating positions on Mount Sammucro and its slopes he could flank any Allied move through the exit and support his own positions on Mount Lungo, barring the mouth of the corridor. During the second phase of the Winter Line drive, Fifth Army's main effort was against the German defenses from Mount Sammucro to Mount Lungo; in the narrow valley between, the village stronghold of San Pietro was a key point in these defenses and became a symbol for success or failure in the early attacks.

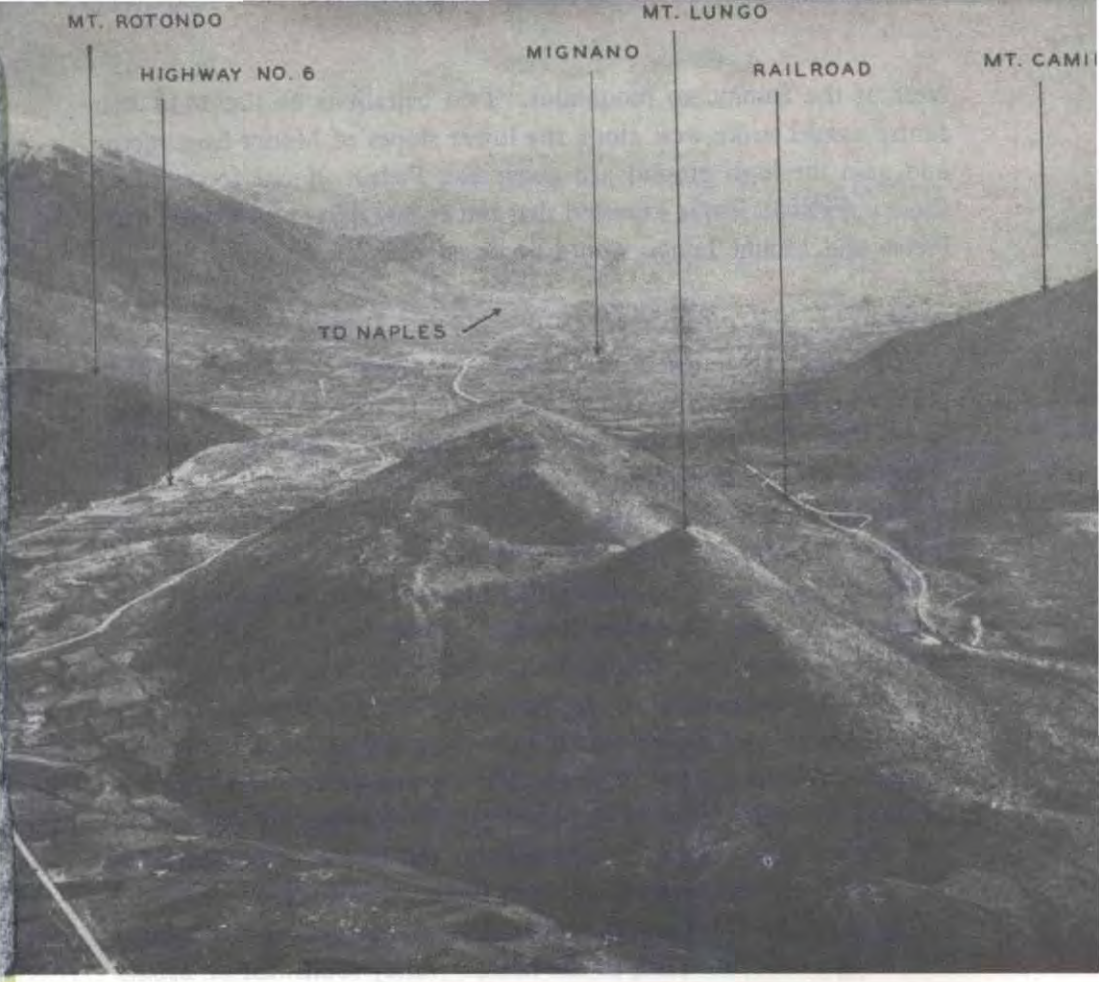
Starting on 8 December, with the battles of Camino barely ended, the second phase of the offensive was timed so as to give the enemy no chance to recover from the earlier blows. Striking northwest along the axis of Highway No. 6, II Corps began the main assault against the formidable German positions on both sides of San Pietro. Meanwhile, 10 Corps was taking over the defense of the Camino hills, relieving the units of II Corps which had been holding Mounts la Difensa and Maggiore. Once again, VI Corps was to extend the pressure north of the main effort, by an attack starting 15 December and aimed as before into the mountains north of Mount Corno.

German defenses, planned to prevent a break through along Highway No. 6, extended from the rocky, orchard-covered terraces east of



PEAKS AND SLOPES OF MOUNT SAMMUCRO (*seen from the southwest*) *command the area of II Corps' advance through "Death Valley" and along the Venafro—San Pietro road.*

San Pietro across the valley to Mount Lungo (Map No. 15, page 44). Two battalions of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment held the main line of resistance behind an outpost line of mutually supporting pillboxes, staggered in depth. These emplacements, almost impervious to our constant artillery fire and to frequent attacks by A–36 fighter-bombers, were deep pits covered by three layers of logs and further protected by earth and rocks. Each had only one opening, just large enough for a man to crawl through. To approach these pillboxes, our troops had first to go through a field of S-mines, then through barbed wire and more S-mines. If these outer defenses were penetrated, the enemy could bring down artillery, mortar, and heavy machine-gun fire



THE MIGNANO CORRIDOR *viewed from the German side. This shows the importance of Mount Lungo as a block at the exit from the corridor.*

without danger to his own troops hidden in their shelters. The center of resistance was the village of San Pietro on the lower slopes of Mount Sammucro. From its stone buildings enemy observers could look across a narrow valley, less than a mile wide, and watch for activity on Cannavinelle Hill, Mount Rotondo, and Mount Lungo.

From their higher positions on Mount Sammucro and Mount Lungo, the Germans had every approach to San Pietro covered; and along Highway No. 6. II Corps' attack was designed to capture these heights and thus outflank the strong enemy positions in the valley. To the south, the 1st Italian Motorized Group would drive for Mount Lungo. On the north flank of the sector, the 3d Ranger Battalion and the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, were given the mission of capturing the

crest of the Sammucro mountains. Two battalions of the 143d Infantry would strike west along the lower slopes of Mount Sammucro and gain the high ground just above San Pietro. If our forces took these objectives, it was expected that the enemy defenses between San Pietro and Mount Lungo would be untenable.

Italian Attack on Mount Lungo

The blow at Mount Lungo, which dominated San Pietro on the southwest, was timed to coincide with the attack on the hills to the north. On 7 December the 1st Italian Motorized Group completed the relief of the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, on Hill 253, the southeastern nose of Mount Lungo. The Italian group included the 67th Infantry Regiment, the 51st Bersagliere Battalion, and the 11th Field Artillery Regiment. The enemy held Mount Lungo with the 3d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (Map No. 16, page 49).

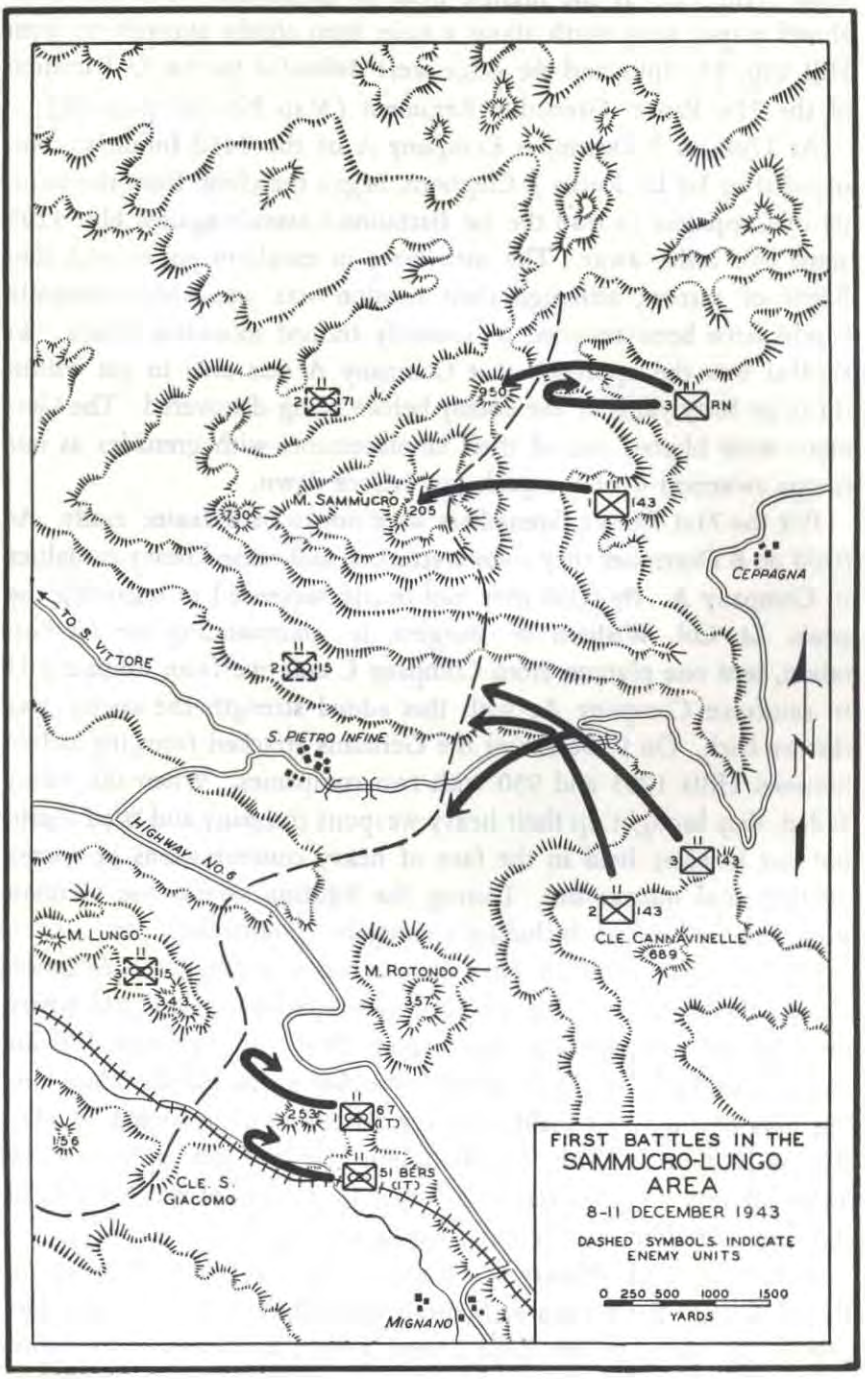
Artillery preparation for the Italian attack on Mount Lungo began at 0550 on 8 December. A very heavy fog came in after the close of the "serenade" and settled over the barren, rocky knobs of Lungo like a huge smoke screen. At 0630 the Italians jumped off. The 1st Battalion of the 67th Infantry Regiment moved through the fog toward Hill 343 but could make little progress in the face of heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, even after an artillery concentration was placed on the hill. The 51st Bersagliere Battalion attacked along the railroad toward San Giacomo Hill, in the narrow valley southwest of Mount Lungo. By 1130 the forward elements had suffered heavy casualties, but they courageously reformed for another attack.

All the II Corps artillery was made available to support the effort, but by 1215 it was apparent that the drive would not succeed. Early in the afternoon, while the Italians reorganized for defense on Hill 253, the 2d Battalion of the 141st Infantry got into position on Mount Rotondo to guard against a possible enemy counterattack. Eight-inch howitzers of the 194th Field Artillery Battalion swept the crest of Lungo and the draw on the southwest side at 1530, and an hour later the 155th Field Artillery Battalion fired the first of five concentrations on Hill 343. Against this terrific fire the enemy was unable to attempt a counterattack.

Gaining a Foothold on Mount Sammucro

Towering high above San Pietro, the cliffs and massive ridges of

MAP NO. 16


M. SAMMUCRO
1730
1205
950
CEPPAGNA
TO S. VITTORE
S. PIETRO INFINE
HIGHWAY NO. 6
M. LUNGO
M. ROTONDO
1457
CLE. CANNAVINELLE
689
CLE. S. GIACOMO
MIGNANO
FIRST BATTLES IN THE SAMMUCRO-LUNGO AREA
8-11 DECEMBER 1943
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE ENEMY UNITS
0 250 500 1000 1500
YARDS

Mount Sammucro were extremely important in the enemy's Winter Line. Hill 1205 is the highest peak of Sammucro; from its lower slopes a spur runs north about a mile, then climbs abruptly to form Hill 950. The hills and the ridge were defended by the 2d Battalion of the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (Map No. 16, page 49).

At 1700 on 7 December Company A of the 143d Infantry, commanded by 1st Lt. Rufus J. Cleghorn, began the climb from the vicinity of Ceppagna to lead the 1st Battalion's assault against Hill 1205 some two miles away. The men were in excellent spirits and confident of success, although their mission was one which normally would have been assigned to specially trained mountain troops. So skillful was the approach that Company A was able to get within thirty or forty yards of the enemy before being discovered. The Germans were blasted out of their emplacements with grenades as our troops swarmed over the peak just before dawn.

But the 71st Panzer Grenadiers were not to be defeated easily. At 0700 on 8 December they counterattacked and caused heavy casualties in Company A. By 0930 they had nearly succeeded in regaining the peak. Lt. Col. William W. Burgess, Jr., commanding the 1st Battalion, sent one platoon from Company C and one from Company D to reinforce Company A; with this added strength the enemy was thrown back. On 9 December the Germans attacked from the saddle between Hills 1205 and 950 with two companies. When this effort failed, they brought up their heavy weapons company and tried again, but our infantry held in the face of heavy concentrations of enemy artillery and mortar fire. During the fighting twenty-one German prisoners were taken, including a company commander.

On the night of 9/10 December a heavy artillery concentration cleared the enemy from the pocket between Hills 1205 and 950 where most of the counterattacks had begun. Much of the credit for our success in holding the high ground was due to the excellent supporting fires of the 133d Field Artillery Battalion, commanded by Maj. Roscoe D. Gaylor. The 133d Battalion was in direct support of the 143d Infantry and also reinforced on call the fires of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion, in direct support of the Rangers.

While the 143d Infantry was consolidating the peak of Sammucro, the 3d Ranger Battalion was fighting for Hill 950. At dusk on 7 December the Rangers left their assembly area southwest of Venafro, went down the road to Ceppagna, then turned north out of the vil-

lage along the lower slopes of a ridge running northwest to Hill 950 At 0400 the next morning, Companies E and F ran into machine-gun and mortar fire four hundred yards short of their objective. To gain the position the Rangers had to cross a saddle east of Hill 950 which the enemy controlled by fixed fire from strongly emplaced machine guns. By 0750 some troops had reached the crest of the hill, despite the enemy's stubborn defense of the saddle. An hour later a counterattack from the northwest drove them back to the northeast slopes, where they reformed for another attack. After dark the battalion again attempted to reach the hill but was unsuccessful. At 0600 on 10 December, supported by two battalions of artillery which fired sixteen hundred rounds, the Rangers once more attacked the crest of Hill 950. This time the saddle was cleared and they succeeded in gaining the crest. By 2000 the situation was well in hand, although the Rangers had taken severe losses.

With the crest of Sammucro in our possession, the enemy's positions were threatened all the way to San Vittore. Although they had already suffered heavy losses without regaining any of the ground they had been ordered to hold at all costs, the Germans made desperate attempts to recapture Hills 1205 and 950 during the next three days, from 11 to 13 December. At 0045 on 11 December a heavy counterattack supported by artillery and mortar fire was launched against Hill 1205 from the west and southwest. Our artillery fired white phosphorus shells which gave the infantry sufficient light to use their weapons in breaking up this assault. Forward observers, greatly aided by the dominating terrain II Corps now held, brought accurate fire on the enemy, scattering the counterattack and causing an estimated one hundred casualties. A smaller counterattack on Hill 950 between 0400 and 0600 was repulsed, but long-range fire fights continued in this area. On 11 and 12 December our artillery continued to discourage the enemy's effort to retake Hill 1205.

Repelling the counterattacks was costly to our units because of the heavy concentrations of enemy supporting fires. The fighting strength of the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, was down to 340 men on 10 December. Its commander, Col. Burgess, was wounded on the morning of 9 December and his command was taken over by Maj. David M. Frazior. Capt. Lewis S. Horton, Jr., commanding Company C, was fatally wounded by sniper fire on 8 December. Five days later Capt.

Henry T. Waskow was killed while leading Company B in an attempt to push west toward Hill 730.

Between 11 and 13 December, the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment took over the sector north from Hill 1205 to the slopes of Mount Corno, relieving the Rangers and reinforcing the 1st Battalion of the 143d Infantry.

The 143d Infantry Batters at San Pietro

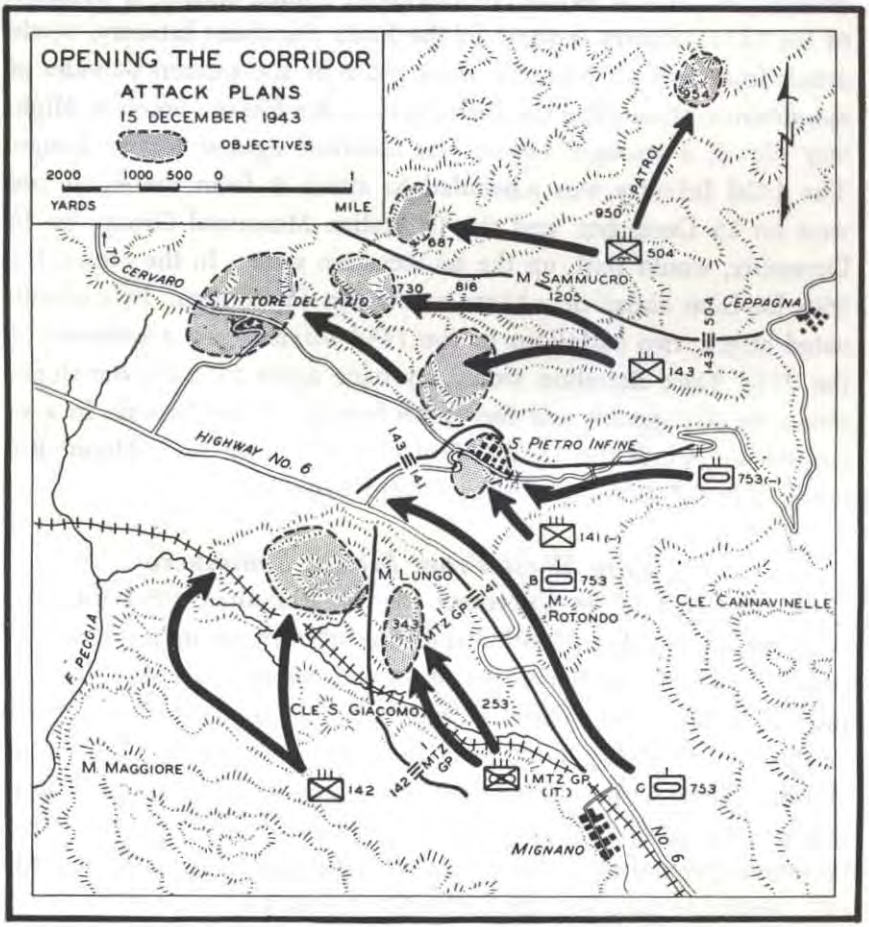
In the attack that started on 8 December, the 143d Infantry had the mission of capturing not only the Sammucro peak but also the slopes of that mountain just above the enemy strongpoint at San Pietro (Map No. 16, page 49). The 2d and 3d Battalions were used for the effort toward San Pietro. A draw one mile east of the village was the line of departure for the 2d Battalion, which was to lead the assault. 2d Lt. John J. Kline, leader of the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon, went forward with his men at 2200 on 7 December to set up an ammunition dump in this draw. To carry out its mission the platoon had to cross terrain actively patrolled by the enemy, and Lt. Kline established the dump at the cost of his own life. In order to arrive on time at the line of departure, a mile and a half from the summit of Cannavinelle Hill, the 2d Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Charles J. Denholm, moved out at midnight. Its route, almost straight down the mountain, involved "one big slide" through the mud. A white tape laid the previous day to mark the route was almost invisible in the rain and darkness.

Crossing the line of departure on schedule at 0620, the assault companies reached a point about four hundred yards out when the enemy pinned them down with heavy small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire. The infantry had come to mined and booby-trapped barbed-wire defenses in front of pillboxes. While a hail of bullets ripped the olive trees to shreds, many of our men jumped through the wire in an attempt to throw hand grenades through the firing slits of the pillboxes. Col. William H. Martin then committed the 3d Battalion, sending one company on the left and two on the right of the 2d Battalion. Company L, led by 1st Lt. John C. Morrisey, moved southwest across the Venafro-San Pietro road in an attempt to get around the strongpoint and protect the 2d Battalion's left flank. The company was stopped after going some five hundred yards. At 1130, in order

to restore the momentum of the drive, Companies I and K went in on the right of the 2d Battalion to work along the higher ground toward San Pietro, but they made little headway. The German defenses were too strong, and accurate artillery and mortar fire from Mount Lungo fell on our men. At nightfall the enemy lines remained essentially unchanged.

Shells from the 131st and 133d Field Artillery Battalions pounded the enemy positions during the night and early morning hours. At 0845 on 9 December the 2d and 3d Battalions resumed the attack. All day the effort continued, but progress was measured in terms of a few hard-won yards. At 1918 the troops were ordered to all back behind the line of departure while our artillery again poured shells

MAP NO. 17



into the almost impregnable emplacements. From 10 to 14 December there was little action against San Pietro itself. Above, on the right flank, our troops consolidated their gains on Mount Sammucro's crest and eastern slopes.

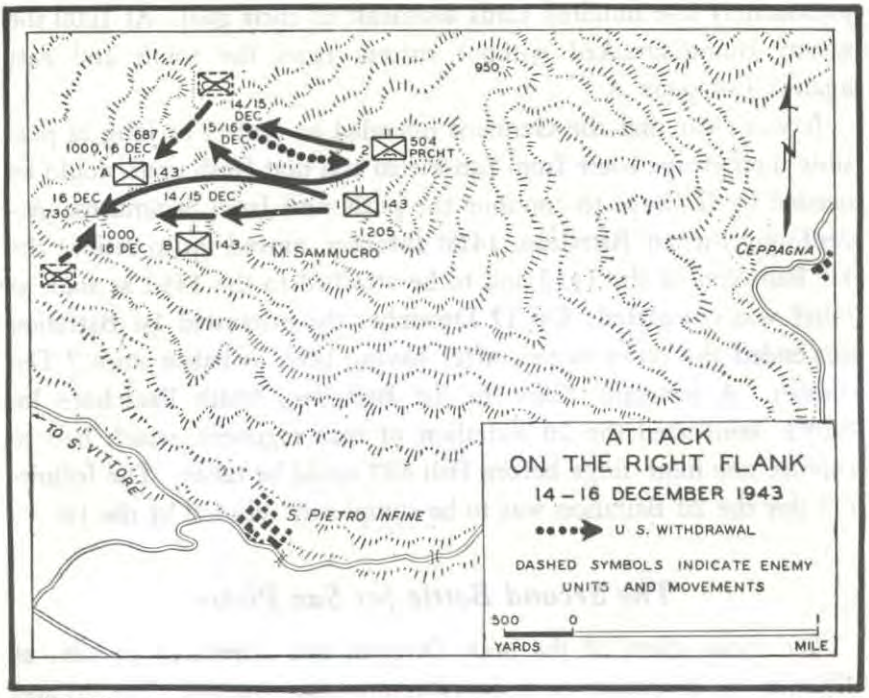
Plans for Further Attack

The first week of II Corps' attack had netted results only on the right flank, where the highest peaks in the Sammucro mass were now in our hands. The 36th Division planned a further effort to capture Mount Lungo and San Pietro for 15 December, coinciding with the renewal of VI Corps' operations in the mountains to the north (Map No. 17, page 53).

Once again, the enemy was to be hit hard all along the division front, and this time in greater force. On the mountain flank, General Walker planned to exploit the foothold gained earlier; a battalion of the 143d Infantry, assisted by the 504th Parachute Infantry, would attack from Hill 1205 to seize three peaks on the western shoulder of Sammucro commanding the valley behind San Pietro. South of Highway No. 6, a stronger assault was mounted against Mount Lungo. The 142d Infantry was scheduled to attack it from the south and west on 15 December, and the 1st Italian Motorized Group, on 16 December, would push up the southeastern slope. In the center, the 36th Division aimed new blows at the San Pietro area. In a coordinated attack, two battalions of the 143d Infantry and a company of the 753d Tank Battalion would try once again to reach the slopes above the strongpoint and then push beyond to San Vittore. In a simultaneous attack the 141st Infantry would move from Mount Rotondo directly across the valley toward San Pietro

Fighting West From Mount Sammucro

By the night of 14 December the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, with the 2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, on its right, was in position high up on the slopes of Mount Sammucro (Map No. 18, page 55). The 143d's objective was Hill 730, from which fire could be directed on enemy movements along the road between San Pietro and San Vittore. To reach it, the assault troops had to cross a deep saddle with precipitous sides. A less difficult approach would have been from the north, but this route was blocked by the enemy on Hill 687, which the parachute troops had been ordered to capture.



MAP NO. 18

Shortly after midnight the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, started forward with Company B in the lead; according to plan the 2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, followed at the right. As the troops of the 143d reached the saddle they were caught in heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, which pinned the battalion down two-thirds of the way to its objective. Moonlight gave the enemy good visibility, and the bare slopes of the saddle offered little concealment. Casualties were heavy. Meanwhile, the parachute troops were unable either to gain Hill 687 or to assist the 1st Battalion of the 143d. By 1000 on 15 December the fighting strength of the latter unit was about 155 men—with no ammunition. The 2d Battalion of the 504th Parachute Infantry was back on Hill 1205.

In preparation for renewing the attack, supply officers assembled carrying parties and sent them up Mount Sammucro; by morning of the 16th all units were amply supplied. Company A of the 143d Infantry, which had joined the parachute troops during the night in another unsuccessful attempt to take Hill 687, had reached a knoll close to Hill 730. On the right the paratroopers were dug in ap-

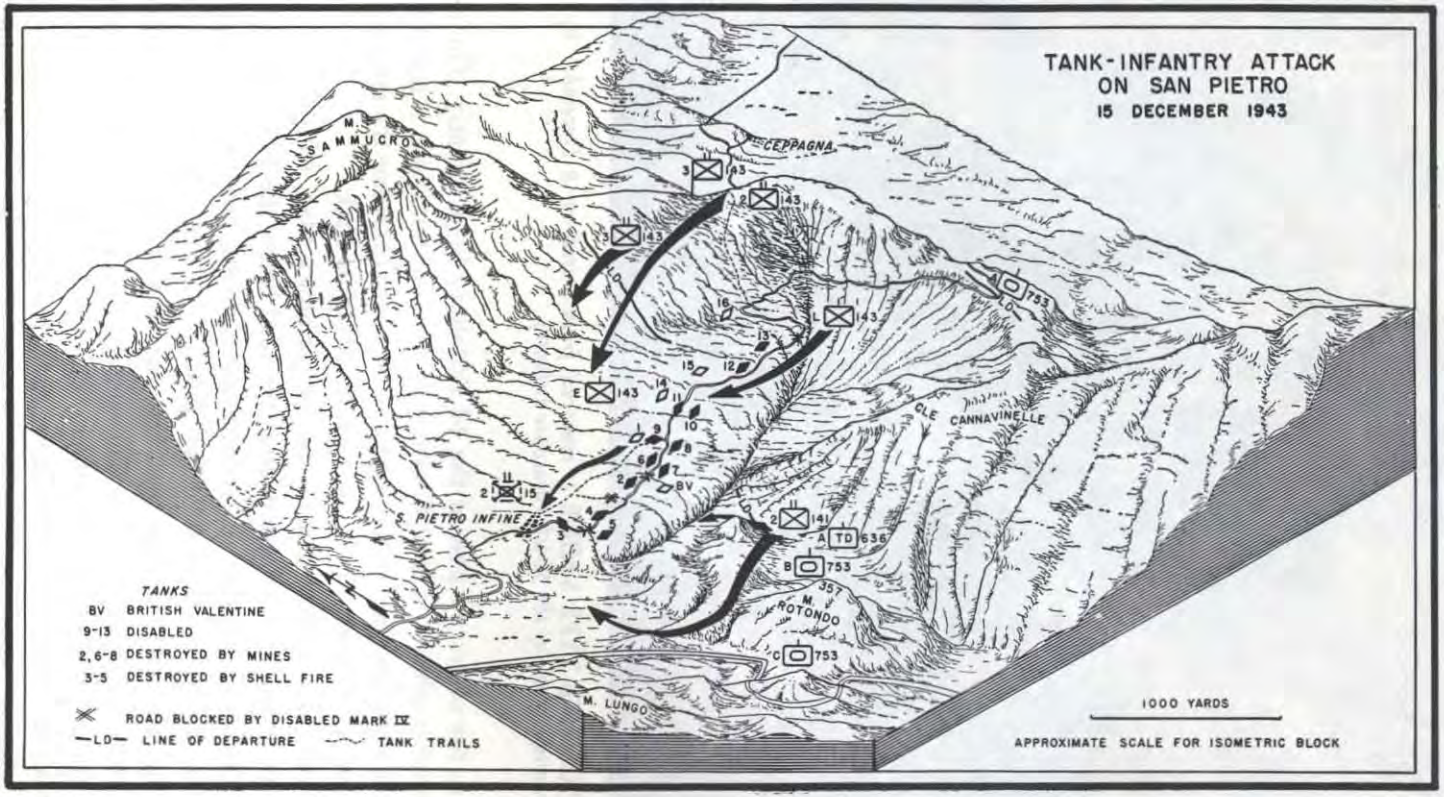
proximately five hundred yards southeast of their goal. At 1000 the enemy counterattacked without success from the south and east against Company A.

It was clear that the Germans intended to protect as long as possible their escape route from San Pietro and that fresh units would be needed by II Corps to continue the push west from Sammucro. Accordingly the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, moved up to relieve the 1st Battalion of the 143d and to be attached to the 143d as soon as relief was completed. On 17 December the exhausted 1st Battalion descended the rocky slopes, after having been in battle since 7 December. A company from the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, reinforced the 2d Battalion of that regiment, which had to capture one more ridge before Hill 687 could be taken. The following day the 2d Battalion was to be completely relieved by the 1st.

The Second Battle for San Pietro

The main effort of the 36th Division was scheduled to start at 1200 on 15 December, with San Pietro as the objective. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 143d Infantry would try once more to work along the slopes of Sammucro to a point above the village. From positions between Mount Rotondo and Cannavinelle Hill, the 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, had the mission of crossing the valley and entering San Pietro from the south (Map No. 17, page 53).

The use of tanks in this attack presented special problems. It was hoped that the armor would get through the formidable defenses and clear the way for the infantry; however, even had there been no enemy opposition, the terrain itself would have been almost impossible for cross-country movement by the tanks (Map No. 19, page 57). First plans called for Company A, 753d Tank Battalion, to move with the 143d Infantry along the Sammucro slopes, well above the San Pietro-Venafro road. The ground on either side of the narrow road was a series of rock-walled terraces, three to seven feet high, covered with olive trees and scrub growth, and broken by stream beds, gullies, and other irregularities. One attempt was made to get the tanks high enough up on the slopes so that they could move forward to the attack along the upper terraces, pass through our forward positions, and then drop down from one terrace to the next. The 111th Engineers broke down terrace walls to make a trail


TANK-INFANTRY ATTACK
ON SAN PIETRO
15 DECEMBER 1943
M. SAMMUCRO
CEPPAGNA
S. PIETRO INFINE
M. LUNGO
M. ROTONDO
CANNAVINELLE
TANKS
BV BRITISH VALENTINE
9-13 DISABLED
2,6-8 DESTROYED BY MINES
3-5 DESTROYED BY SHELL FIRE
ROAD BLOCKED BY DISABLED MARK IX
LD LINE OF DEPARTURE
TANK TRAILS
1000 YARDS
APPROXIMATE SCALE FOR ISOMETRIC BLOCK

MAP NO. 19



A PRESSURE TYPE S-MINE *is removed from a trail on* 8 *December by a detonation squad of the* 504*th Parachute Infantry.*

up to the command post of the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry. On 12 December when a tank of Company A tried out this route, it got only as far as the second terrace; repeated efforts to overcome the mud and the grade resulted only in the tank throwing its track.

This failure led to modification of the attack plan, with Company A now scheduled to operate along the road below the 143d Infantry. The armored advance, in column of platoons, would split about twelve hundred yards east of San Pietro on a trail that turned north off the road and then ran west into San Pietro. While one platoon proceeded on the road, a second would turn up the trail and reach a position overlooking the village. The third platoon would follow in reserve. With main movement restricted to the road, success of this armored operation depended on whether the Germans had mined

the route and were prepared to blow the bridges. Nothing could be done about the mines. The battalion obtained a British Valentine treadway tank, specially equipped with a scissors bridge, to help if the enemy destroyed the bridges.

Prior to H Hour—noon on 15 December—the artillery fired its prearranged concentrations and smoked Mount Lungo to screen the attack from observation on the left. Company B, 753d Tank Battalion, supported with fire from the north slopes of Mount Rotondo. Company A, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, on the western slope of Cannavinelle Hill, had a similar mission. Company C, 753d Tank Battalion, was prepared, on division order, to move along Highway No. 6 past Mount Lungo to the road junction, where it was to support the attack by firing on targets west of San Pietro.

At 1100 Company A, 753d Tank Battalion, moved along the road east of Mount Sammucro and crossed the line of departure an hour later. The sixteen medium tanks, with the British Valentine tank, reached the trail cut-off leading to San Pietro without receiving any artillery fire. This much surprise was partly due to the effective

ON THE ROAD TO SAN PIETRO *an American infantryman passes one of the tanks lost by Company A, 753d Tank Battalion, in its unsuccessful attempt to reach the village along this road. The stone retaining wall at the right limited tank operations to the road.*



smoking of Mount Lungo. The leading tank turned off to climb the trail, which proved to be too narrow. The tank edged off the trail to the slope below and with great difficulty traversed the terraces toward San Pietro. The crew fired on groups of Germans, including officers from an enemy command post, and destroyed several machine-gun nests before reaching the north edge of the ruined village. By this time darkness was setting in, and the crew was ordered to bring the tank back to the trail junction.

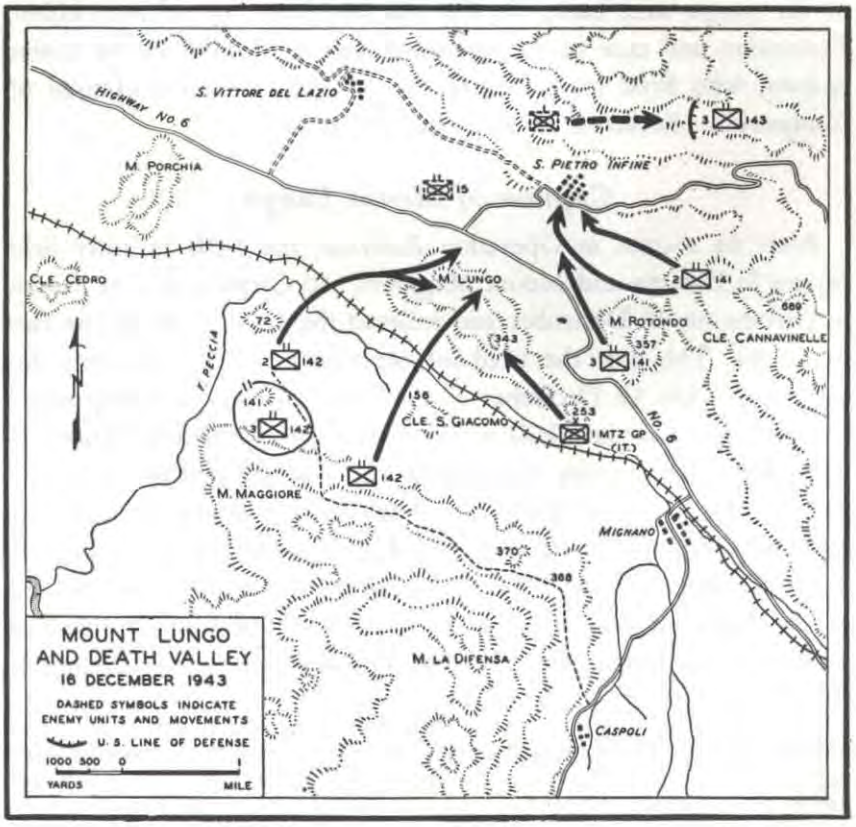
The second tank, moving along the road, crossed the bridge one thousand yards east of town and was disabled by a mine. From this time on the enemy brought artillery and mortar fire down on the area. The crew stayed with their tank to fire on any targets appearing on the terraces above. The third armored vehicle passed the disabled tank and moved down the road to another trail cut-off which was blocked by a destroyed Mark IV. An enemy shell exploded on this tank when it reached the south edge of San Pietro, but several of the crew proceeded on foot into the village where they were supposed to join the troops of the 141st Infantry. Shells set fire to the next two tanks. In front of the bridge beyond the trail cut-off, where the British tank had stopped, three more hit mines and blocked the road, while two tanks turned over trying to follow the route across the terraces, and two more threw their tracks.

At the close of the day only four of the sixteen tanks were able to return to their assembly area, carrying thirteen crews and part of the British tank crew. Seven tanks were destroyed and five disabled. Because of mines and bad terrain, the tank company had not been able to carry out its mission.

The infantry attack north of the Venafro road had no better fortune than in the earlier effort along the same high ground. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 143d Infantry were stopped three hundred yards from their line of departure by mines, mortar fire, and the automatic weapons in enemy resistance nests. At 1400, reserves were ordered by Col. Martin to aid the tanks by attacking west along the axis of the road. Company E was stopped in the wired-in and mined area, covered by defensive fires. When Company L attacked south of the road, it met the same intense fire. By the end of the day, Company E, reduced to seven riflemen, and Company L, with only nine, were forced to pull back. Withdrawing to its line of departure, the 2d Battalion went into reserve; 3d Battalion took over its front.

The attack on San Pietro from the south meant crossing the valley below the village, on ground exposed to enemy observation and fire from both sides of Highway No. 6. The attempt was made by the 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry. Maj. Milton J. Landry, commanding the battalion, had moved his men to positions northeast of Mount Rotondo before the jump-off at 1253. Heavy artillery fire was immediately encountered by the two attacking companies, and Company F was forced to shift southwest at the line of departure. Fire from enemy positions on the terraces of San Pietro and near the base of Mount Lungo caused severe casualties to units struggling to get across what came to be named "Death Valley." Capt. Charles H. Hamner was killed while leading Company F, and Capt. Charles M. Beacham, commanding Company G, was wounded. After reorganizing, the battalion renewed the attack at 1730 and Company E was committed. Again casualties were heavy, and again Maj. Landry ordered a re-

MAP NO. 20



organization. At 2000 the rifle companies were down to an average of fifty-two officers and men each.

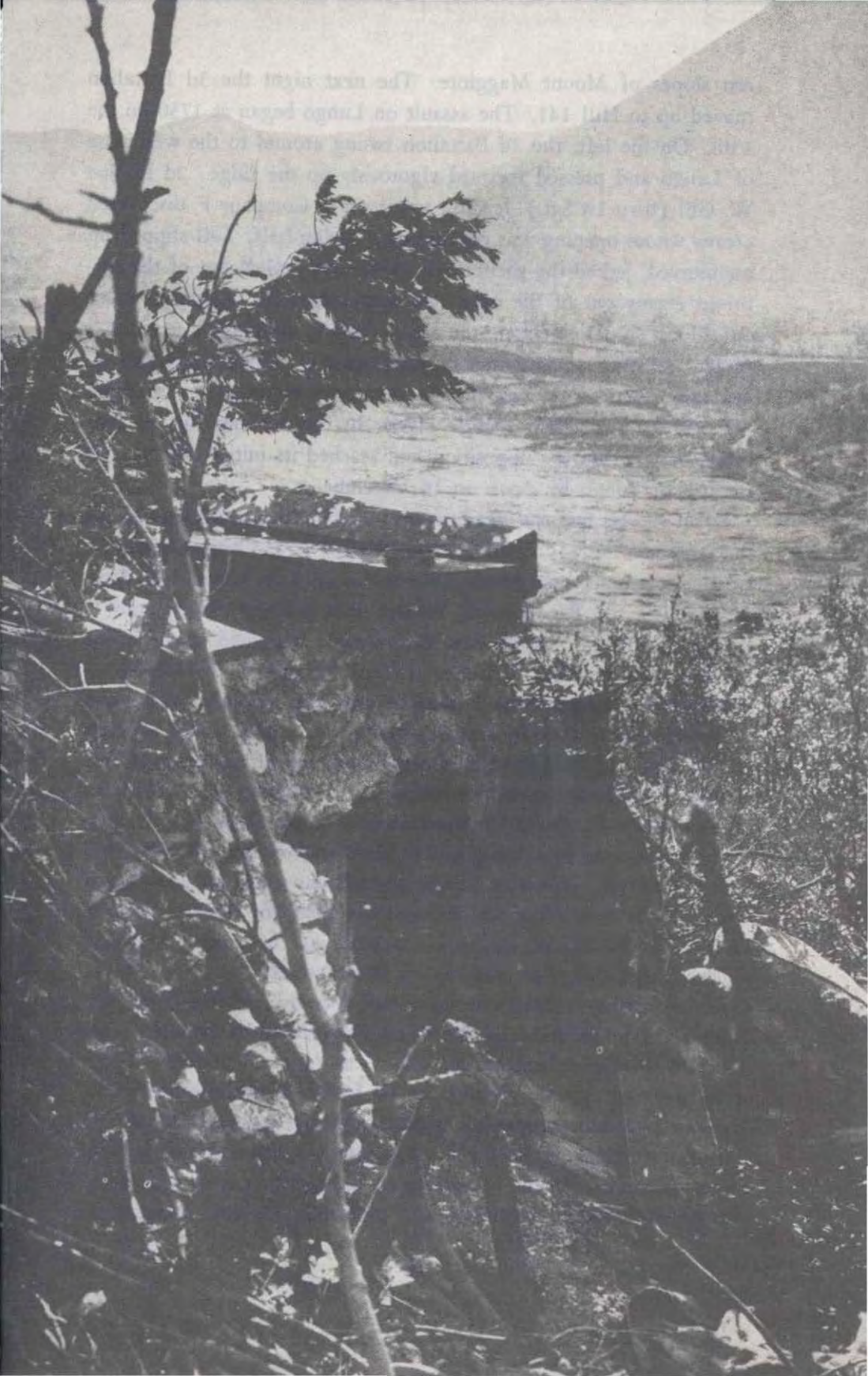
Maj. Landry ordered a third attack to start at 0100 on 16 December. By that time all communications had been destroyed and no supporting fires could be arranged. Aided only by mortar fire from Company H, the infantry stormed the defenses with grenades and bayonets. A few men from Companies E and F penetrated San Pietro. A third reorganization, ordered at 0200, revealed that the three rifle companies had a total strength of 130 officers and men. Lt. Col. Aaron W. Wyatt, Jr., then sent in Company L, with 102 officers and men, to reinforce the 2d Battalion's drive. The fourth attack began at 0600, with Companies E and F leading the assault. Again the deadly machine-gun fire took its toll, and at 0730 Maj. Landry called for smoke to cover the men, caught at daylight in exposed positions. Col. Wyatt ordered the depleted battalion to retreat to its line of departure at 0940, but it was nearly three hours before Maj. Landry received the order by messenger. By 1530, most of the troops were back. Of the 166 casualties, 35 had been killed. Evacuation and care of the wounded were made difficult by enemy snipers, who fired on the battalion aid station until a platoon of Company L eliminated them in the afternoon.

Capture of Mount Lungo

After its success in Operation *Raincoat,* the 142d Infantry held Mount la Difensa and Mount Maggiore. 10 Corps took over Mount la Difensa on 10 December and relieved the 142d on Maggiore two days later. This gave the 142d Infantry time to prepare for the coming attack. On 12 December a reinforced platoon of Company G occupied San Giacomo Hill in the valley east of Mount Maggiore. That night other troops occupied Hill 141 on the northwest nose of Mount Maggiore and Hill 72. With these positions secured, the regiment was ready to attack Mount Lungo (Map No. 20, page 61).

During the night of 13/14 December, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 142d Infantry left their bivouac north of Caspoli, marched up the trail to Ridge 368, and went into assembly area on the north-

STONE PILLBOXES *were typical of Winter Line defenses. This well-hidden dugout, reinforced with rock and railroad ties, guards the slopes of Mount Lungo* (*photograph at right*).



ern slopes of Mount Maggiore. The next night the 3d Battalion moved up to Hill 141. The assault on Lungo began at 1730 on the 15th. On the left, the 2d Battalion swung around to the west nose of Lungo and pressed forward vigorously up the ridge. 2d Lt. Joe W. Gill (then 1st Sgt.), leading a platoon of Company F, discovered a cave whose opening was covered by a shelter-half. Gill slipped up unobserved, jerked the shelter-half aside, and yanked one of the surprised enemy out of the cave. He then forced his captive to point out all the emplacements in the area, enabling the platoon to capture fifteen well-entrenched gunners. Pvt. Gerald D. Wood, a sharpshooting infantryman of Company G, destroyed three enemy machine guns by firing at their muzzle blasts. In this manner the 2d Battalion mopped up the opposition and reached its initial objective on the top of Lungo by dawn on 16 December.

Equal success met the efforts of the 1st Battalion attacking toward the center of Lungo. Again individual exploits and well-coordinated small-unit actions won the objective with minimum losses. Cpl. John L. Waddell and Pfc. John C. Peralez, in a platoon of Company C leading the battalion's advance, discovered a minefield in the valley south of the railroad. Without waiting for orders, they cleared a route for the troops behind them by crawling, clipping wires, and removing mines. Pvt. Peralez was mortally wounded while working at this task. 2d Lt. David O. Gorgol's platoon of Company A was pinned down by the cross fire between two machine guns. With an enlisted man, Lt. Gorgol worked around to the flank of one gun, threw a grenade into the position, then walked into the nest and killed the crew. After his success the platoon could maneuver and wipe out the remaining gun. One of the Company A's snipers, Pfc. Gordon R. Bondurant, kept such accurate fire on forty entrenched Germans that they were surrounded and captured.

Enemy trucks, rushing reinforcements forward, suffered direct hits from accurate shooting by the 132d Field Artillery Battalion. By 1000 on 16 December the mountain was captured and our troops were mopping up. Meanwhile, the 1st Italian Motorized Group, delayed in its attack, jumped off at 0915 on 16 December to assault the southeastern ridge between Hills 253 and 343 and occupied it early in the afternoon. In the operations on Lungo, the enemy lost nearly two hundred killed, wounded, and captured; our own losses were



AMERICAN INFANTRY ENTER SAN PIETRO, *which was almost completely destroyed by artillery and mortar concentrations during the long battle for the town.*

light. The success of II Corps on this flank undoubtedly influenced the German decision to abandon San Pietro.

The Germans Pull Out of San Pietro

The Germans could no longer expect to hold San Pietro when the dominating ground on both flanks, Mount Lungo and the Sammucro peaks, was in II Corps' possession. On 16 December, within three hours after the last positions on Mount Lungo were captured, the Germans launched a counterattack from San Pietro to cover their withdrawal (Map No. 20, page 61). The main thrust was directed against the 3d Battalion of the 143d Infantry north of the San Pietro-Venafro road, where the enemy had maximum concealment. Shortly after dark, while rumors were circulating about a German

THE ROAD TO ROME *stretches across this valley northwest from Mount Lungo. Mount Porchia is the smaller hill on the left of Highway No. 6 with Mount Trocchio behind it. In the background rises the snow-capped peak of Mount Cairo behind Cassino. Mount la Chiaia is on the right.*

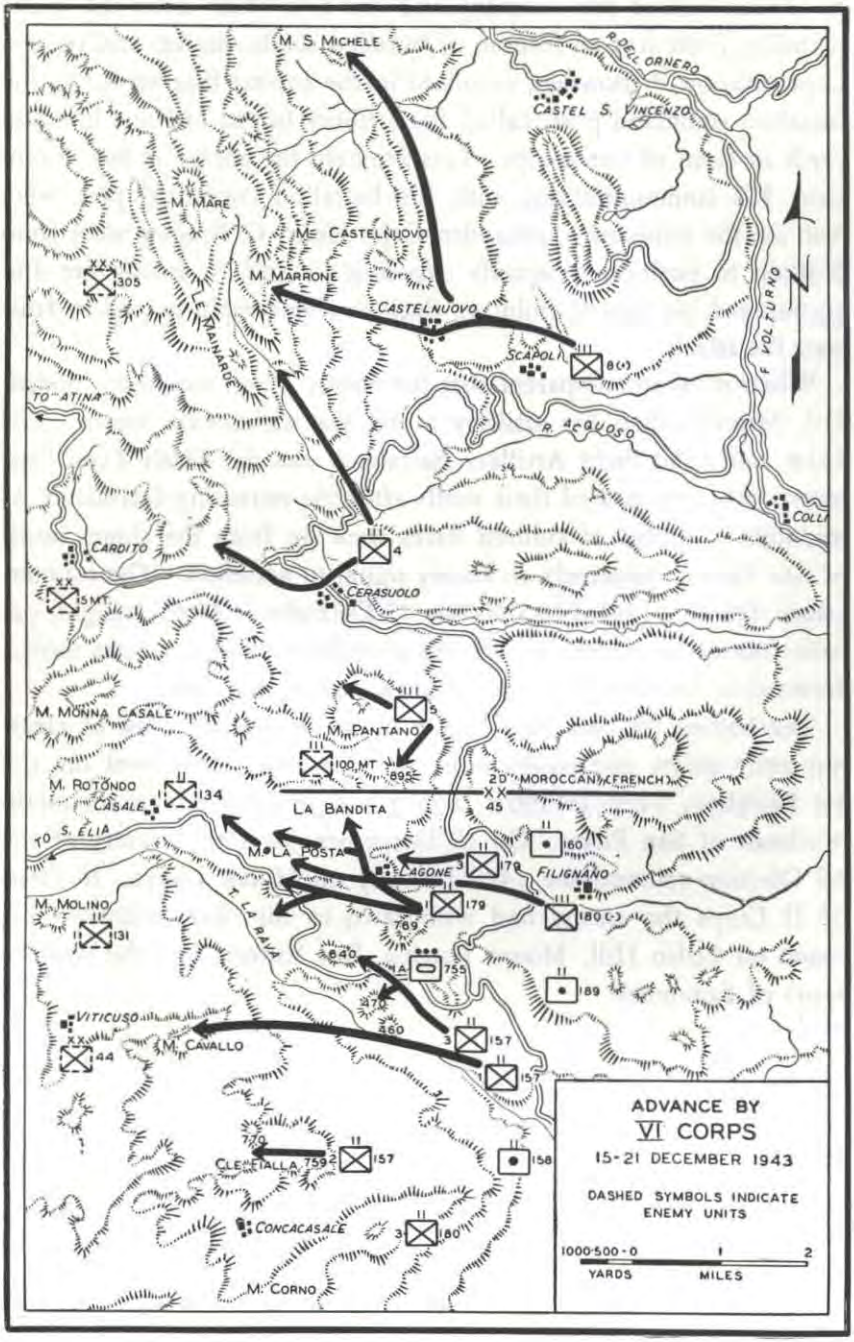


retreat, the counterattack broke in all its fury. Company I, which at first bore the brunt of the push, lost its last officer; but Pfc. Charles F. Dennis rallied the company and our line held. Soon the entire battalion front was an inferno of bursting shells, smoke, and tracers. Capt. Marion P. Bowden, crouched in the culvert that served as the battalion command post, called for artillery fire to fall one hundred yards in front of our troops. This fire held the enemy at bay. Company K's communications with the battalion command post were lost, but the company commander, Capt. Henry C. Bragaw went from position to position constantly exposing himself to enemy fire and encouraged his men to hold on. Such fine leadership helped to frustrate the attack.

When it became apparent that the enemy effort was nearly ended, Col. Martin called for artillery to hit the withdrawal routes. The 131st and 133d Field Artillery Battalions and the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion poured their shells after the retreating Germans. At midnight a cluster of colored flares went up from the slopes north of San Pietro, apparently an enemy signal to withdraw. The counterattack definitely ended by 0100 on 17 December. After daylight, patrols found the elaborate defenses abandoned, and our lines moved forward to the town and the high ground to the north.

The battles for San Pietro were over. While the work of clearing away mines and booby traps and repairing roads went on, the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, moved into position on the mountain northeast of San Pietro. On 19 December the 15th Infantry of the 3d Division relieved the 142d Infantry on Mount Lungo. In front of II Corps the enemy had withdrawn to his next defensive line based on Cedro Hill, Mount Porchia, San Vittore, and the western spurs of Sammucro.

MAP NO. 21


M. S. MICHELE
R. DEL ORNERO
CASTEL S. VINCENZO
M. MARE
M. CASTELNUOVO
M. MARRONE
CASTELNUOVO
SCAPOLI
8 (-)
F. VOLTURNO
TO ATINA
R. ACQUOSO
CARDITO
4
CERASUOLO
15 MT
M. MONNA CASALE
M. PANTANO
5
100 MT
89
20 MOROCCAN (FRENCH)
XX
45
M. ROTONDO
CASALE
134
LA BANDITA
TO S. ELIA
M. LA POSTA
LAGONE
3
179
160
FILIGNANO
M. MOLINO
131
T. LA RAVA
769
180 (-)
640
755
189
VITICUSO
M. CAVALLO
44
460
157
ADVANCE BY
VI CORPS
15-21 DECEMBER 1943
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE
ENEMY UNITS
1000-500-0
YARDS
1
MILES
2
CLE'TALLA
759
158
CONCACASALE
180
M. CORNO

Attack by VI Corps

(15—21 December)

THE DRIVE BY II CORPS in the San Pietro area was to be accompanied by a full-scale offensive on the part of VI Corps in the mountains to the north (Map No. 21, page 68). As in Phase I, the main effort in this sector was made along the two east-west roads, but this time the fighting would spread over a wider area. Ultimate objectives, to be reached as the offensive continued into Phase III, were the heights north of Cassino at the head of the Rapido River Valley. Ten miles of rugged mountain country lay between VI Corps and these objectives.

For the opening attack, the French 2d Moroccan Infantry Division, which had relieved the 34th Division on the right flank, received the mission of taking the high ground east of Cardito, overlooking the Colli-Atina road, while the 45th Division on the south was ordered to launch a secondary attack to gain dominating terrain east and southeast of Casale on the first stretch of the road to Sant' Elia. The day set for VI Corps' assault was 15 December.

Although the rainy weather early in the month had hampered movement of troops, the 8th Moroccan Rifle Regiment was in position on the Army's north flank by the morning of 11 December. During that day its patrols west of Castelnuovo and Scapoli contacted elements of the 305th Grenadier Division and were successful in the first French-German encounter on the Italian front. Along with patrolling, activity in the VI Corps sector during the lull before the offensive included artillery duels and also air strikes by our planes whenever they could leave the ground. Ammunition restrictions imposed at the beginning of December put some limitation on artillery



HIGH ANGLE FIRE *was necessary in the mountains. French artillerymen of the 2d Moroccan Division emplace an American* 105-*mm howitzer near Mount Castelnuovo* (*center*).

but the weather permitted extensive air missions in front of VI Corps during the five days preceding the drive of the 15th. Throughout this period, as well as during the first few days of the offensive, principal targets of our aircraft were enemy-held towns on the main roads as far west as Sant' Elia and Atina, a forward supply point at Viticuso, German gun positions near Cardito, and the road net behind the enemy lines. These roads were pounded all day on 14 December by P-40's in preparation for the corps' attack.

The 2d Moroccan Infantry Division had made plans for a wide envelopment of the enemy left flank. A maneuvering force com-

posed of the 8th Moroccan Rifle Regiment, two battalions of the 4th Rifle Regiment, and two tabors or battalions from the 4th Group Tabors, the famed Goumiers from the Moroccan tribes,[3] was to move across San Michele Pass and, advancing west through the mountains by towering Mount Mare, to sweep toward Cardito. After the enveloping force had made sufficient progress, the 5th Moroccan Rifle Regiment on Knob 1 of Mount Pantano would try to clean up that hill mass and then push farther west. The 45th Division, on the left, was to make a drive toward Casale. The 179th Infantry would clear the Lagone draw, while the 157th Infantry attacked along the sector from Hill 640 down to Fialla Hill just north of Concacasale. The German opposition before the 45th Division consisted of fresh units from the 44th Grenadier Division: the 1st Battalion, 134th Grenadiers, in the Lagone area and the 1st Battalion, 131st Grenadiers, south of the Sant' Elia road.

Advance in the Lagone Area

During the night of 14/15 December the French forces of VI Corps on the north assumed the offensive, and by early morning elements of the 8th Rifle Regiment had taken over Mount Castelnuovo and gone on to seize San Michele Pass. At that point, however, the French troops received heavy automatic weapons fire and were stopped in their projected flanking maneuver toward Cardito.

VI Corps' offensive farther south opened with an attack toward the village of Lagone, lying within a draw running west between Hill 769 and La Bandita. During the previous fighting in this area units of the 45th Division had gained Hill 769 and had driven to the vicinity of Lagone. Progress, however, had been slow and difficult. Within the draw the enemy had excellent opportunities for interlocking bands of machine-gun fire on all avenues of approach. Well protected in rock dugouts which merged with the rude stone walls of the hillside terraces, he could wait in comparative safety during our preparatory fires before coming out to meet the infantry attack. The enemy, furthermore, having hidden access to almost any part of the draw, could shift positions quickly; and any local gain

[3] Members of a "goum" or military unit roughly equivalent to a U. S. infantry company. Three goums make up a tabor, and three or four tabors combine to form a group. Highly skilled in both mountain and desert warfare, the Goumiers are noted for the fierceness and speed which characterize their operations. In addition to their native knives, they are armed with light infantry weapons. The Goumier is an individualist, difficult to lead but fiercely loyal to trusted officers.

on our part might be expected to produce a swift counterattack along the sunken trails of the district.

The 1st and 3d Battalions of the 179th attacked at 0630 on 15 December after a ten-minute preparation by the 160th and 189th Field Artillery Battalions. While the 3d Battalion struck directly at Lagone, the 1st Battalion moved from the north slopes of Hill 769 to take Hill 760 west of Lagone and thus threaten the German route of escape. Despite heavy small-arms fire, Company B got close to its objective on Hill 760 shortly after daylight and put down mortar fire on the hill until the enemy was eliminated. The company then moved up to consolidate its gains, and Company A dug in on a little knob to the south of Hill 760. In the 3d Battalion's attempt to take Lagone, Company L reached the north edge of the village by going around a low knob, called the "Pimple," but neither it nor Company I on the south was able to take the objective during the day. Both companies pulled back at nightfall.

LITTER BEARERS OF A MOROCCAN RIFLE REGIMENT *carry a wounded comrade down the difficult slopes of Mount Pantano to the village of Pantano where casualties could be evacuated to hospitals.*



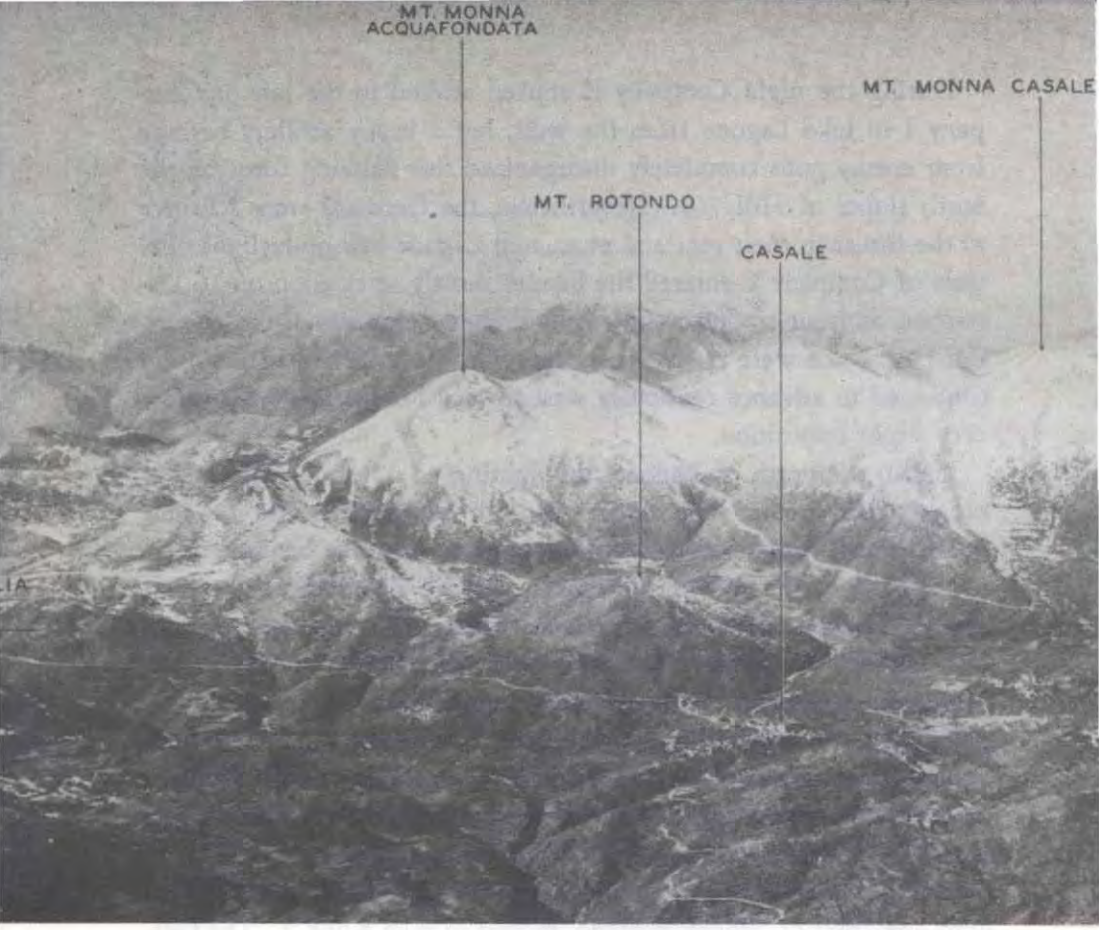
During the night Company K started around to the left of Company I to take Lagone from the west, but a heavy artillery barrage from enemy guns completely disorganized this flanking force on the north slopes of Hill 769. Nevertheless, the Germans were sensitive to the threat in their rear and evacuated Lagone before daylight. Patrols of Company L entered the hamlet shortly after noon on 16 December, and our troops occupied the timbered dugouts of the enemy, some of which were twelve feet deep. On the 17th the 3d Battalion continued to advance cautiously west toward Mount la Posta against very slight opposition.

Just to the north of Lagone, the fighting on 15 and 16 December brought first contact with the German 5th Mountain Division, a unit of Austrian-Tyrolian origin which had moved from the Leningrad sector to Italy at the end of November. Before daybreak on the 15th the 1st Platoon, 45th Reconnaissance Troop, went out on a volunteer mission to capture Hill 895, held by elements of the 100th Mountain Regiment. Although the enemy broke up the platoon's gallant assault, his hold along this sector was weakening. After dark a platoon of Company C, 179th Infantry, was able to take La Bandita without opposition, and the next day the Germans also yielded Hill 895 to French troops of the 5th Rifle Regiment.

On 16 December the 5th Rifle Regiment, which still controlled only one knob of Mount Pantano, moved to take Knob 2. The Germans brought heavy artillery fire down on the attacking troops, but the French were also well supported by field weapons. According to a prisoner of war, our fire killed more than two hundred of three hundred men in one enemy unit. Yet the Germans could not be driven off at once. From dug-in positions and well-placed pillboxes they continued to hold the western portion of the Pantano hill mass for two more days.

The 157th Applies Pressure

Between the main mountain masses surrounding Mount Majo and Mount Monna Casale lies an area of lower hills, hardly definable as a pass. La Rava Creek, a small mountain torrent, cuts its way back into the hills toward the village of Casale. Taking advantage of this valley, the road to Casale runs on the slopes above the creek and just to its north. The mission of the 157th Regimental Combat Team was to open this route into the mountains by capturing the



ALONG THE FILIGNANO—SANT' ELIA ROAD, *Mount Rotondo and the village of Casale marked the farthest points reached by VI Corps before it went out of the line early in January.*

high ground on both sides of La Rava Creek. North of it, the first task was to clear a group of hills immediately commanding the road, with Hill 640 as the most prominent feature. South of the La Rava Valley the 157th aimed at Fialla Hill on the spurs of Mount Majo, overlooking the hamlet of Concacasale.

The regiment had already tested out the German defenses around Hill 640. In the first phase of the offensive, the 157th had made diversionary thrusts into this area, in support of the attack on Lagone. A steep ridge runs southeast from Hill 640, with slight knobs marking Hills 470 and 460 as the ridge nears La Rava Creek. On 29 November elements of the 157th had managed to get to Hill 460 but had been unable to work through murderous machine-gun fire

on the saddle leading to Hill 470. Exposed to fire from higher ground on three sides, the 157th troops, had, nevertheless, clung to Hill 460 and had endeavored to drive the enemy off the 470 knob by artillery fire and combat patrols. After one of the heaviest concentrations of mortar and artillery fire, patrols reported on 11 December that they found "some arms and legs but no personnel" on the knob. But the Germans were back the next day and were not dislodged by night attacks on 13 and 14 December.

This stubbornly held ridge was the first objective in the 157th's attack on 15 December, employing the 1st and 3d Battalions. No artillery preparation was used except for smoke by the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, intended to prevent enemy observation from Mount Cavallo. Company B, backed by Company K, jumped off at 0515 for Hill 640 and was on its objective by noon. Company C launched a daylight push at 0805 toward Hill 470, supported by medium tanks of the 1st Platoon, Company A, 755th Tank Battalion, which cruised through enemy artillery fire up and down the road to the east of the hill. The tanks drove the enemy into dugouts on the steep reverse slope, and two machine-gun crews which were holding up our infantry had to withdraw.

By noon our troops, aided by smoke, reached the top of Hill 470 only to be forced back to the east side by enemy artillery fire. Company C moved up La Rava Creek to get around the hill. One platoon was cut off by the Germans and no one returned. The remainder of the company came under heavy fire from across the valley and withdrew at nightfall. Just after midnight, Nebelwerfer ("Screaming Meemie") fire came down on Hill 640, and the enemy regained the west slopes of that hill.

On 16 December attacks by Company C on Hill 470 were again supported by the medium tanks but failed to clean out the enemy, though twenty-four prisoners were taken. By the middle of the afternoon the company was back on Hill 460. As it turned out, this withdrawal was fortunate, for at 1430, eight A–36's bound for Casale hit Hill 470 by mistake. Our infantry gleefully reported that the enemy suffered heavy casualties, but we did not launch another attack.

Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion of the 157th had been fighting for the commanding terrain south of La Rava Creek and had encountered equally tough resistance. Fialla Hill and Hill 770 were the key objectives. The battalion started its attack at 0500 on 15 De-

cember from positions on Hill 759. As the leading elements moved forward, colored flares were sent up by the enemy, and his artillery began to pound the attacking troops. Company E swung south and placed one platoon on Fialla Hill by 0830, but the German guns shelled it off the hill and back to its original positions by 1600. Company G on the battalion's right attacked up the draw south of Hill 770 and cut north toward the crest of the hill, only to bog down on the southwest slopes by noon. During the night the company tried to take the rest of Hill 770 but, after running into heavy cross fire from machine guns, received an enemy thrust on the left flank which pushed it entirely off the hill. By daybreak of 16 December, Company G was back at its original positions on Hill 759 with a loss of almost half of its men and all its officers.

Company E's turn came next. During the night it regained Fialla Hill; two minor counterattacks in the early morning of the 16th were beaten off with the aid of mortar and artillery fire. At 1055, however, the enemy hit the company hard. After severe fighting which reduced one platoon to an effective strength of five men, the 2d Battalion had to yield ground under the threat of encirclement. Our artillery put down a smoke screen; on the left, the mortars of the 3d Battalion, 180th Infantry, stopped the enemy's flanking thrust long enough for Company E to withdraw to Hill 759. During the afternoon three local counterattacks were made against Hill 759, but our troops repulsed them.

Though the Germans had driven the 157th back from all gains except Hill 640, the pressure of our attack had its effect. From midnight of the 16th, the sector of the 157th Infantry was quiet, and the enemy artillery activity decreased. On the next afternoon our patrols on the western slopes of Hill 640 found empty fox holes and abandoned enemy equipment. The Germans had also given up Hill 470, after an almost continuous nineteen-day fight. To the south the 2d Battalion reported Fialla Hill clear by late evening. Not a single shot was heard in the drab hills before the 157th Infantry throughout the day.

The Enemy Withdraws to New Positions

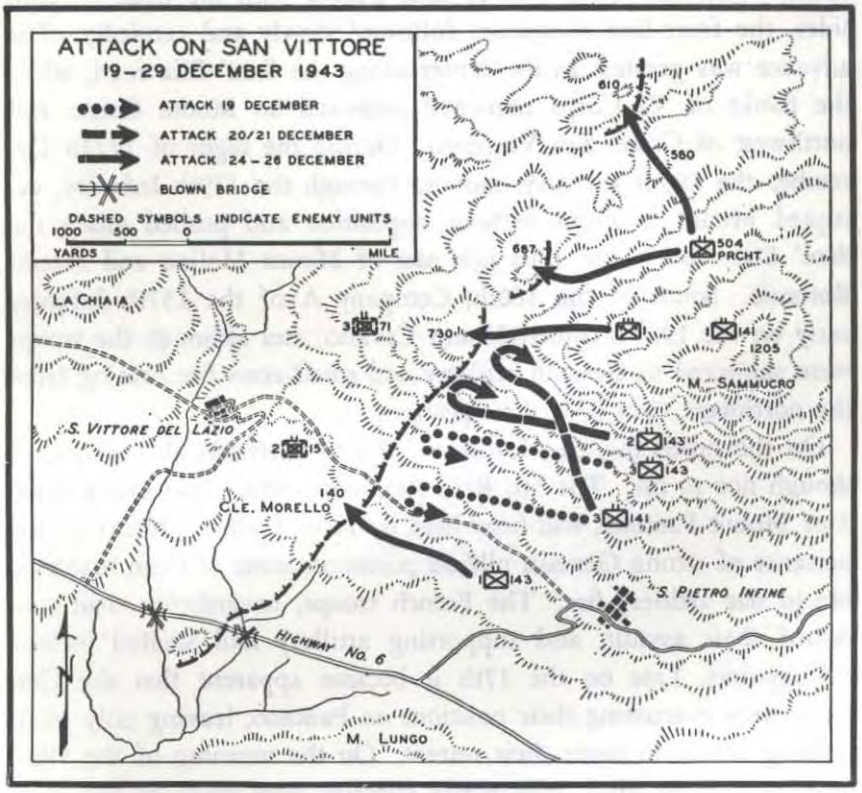
Evidence on 17 December from all other front-line units of VI Corps corroborated the indications reported by the 157th Infantry; the Germans were making a general withdrawal along the center of

the corps front. Though our penetrations were nowhere deep enough to cause the enemy great alarm, the positions on which he stopped us in November had become increasingly difficult to hold as a result of our attacks; accordingly, the enemy decided to make a limited withdrawal, regroup on a new line, and thus gain a breathing spell. His retreat would also lengthen our supply lines through the mountains and bring us into new and unfamiliar terrain.

Beginning on 18 December, our patrols filtered forward to regain contact with the enemy. Over hills strewn with the dead of both sides, the front-line companies followed slowly and carefully. The advance was greatest in the center along the Sant' Elia road, while the flanks of VI Corps remained anchored on Mount Corno and northwest of Castel San Vincenzo. During the night of 17/18 December the 180th Infantry, moving through the 179th Infantry, occupied Mount la Posta without opposition and pushed along the Sant' Elia road to the hills just east of Mount Molino and Mount Rotondo. South of the 180th, Company A of the 157th Infantry early on the 19th occupied Mount Cavallo, and although the troops were subjected to German artillery and small-arms fire coming from the northwest, they held their position.

On the north the 2d Moroccan Infantry Division also advanced, though not so far. The 5th Rifle Regiment, which had taken Knob 2 of Mount Pantano, had been held up in its further advance by the presence of strong German pillbox positions, some of them inaccessible to our artillery fire. The French troops, nevertheless, had continued their assault, and supporting artillery had shelled located strongpoints. Late on the 17th it became apparent that the Germans were evacuating their positions on Pantano, leaving only small holding forces to cover their retreat. On the morning of the 18th, after a night in which only patrol contacts were made on the western slopes of Mount Pantano, the 5th Rifle Regiment occupied the rest of the hill mass. On the same day the 4th Rifle Regiment took the Cerasuolo flat with the hills ringing it on the north; Cerasuolo itself had been left free of mines and booby traps by the departing Germans. The 11th Tabor of Goumiers was committed on the east slopes of Mount Monna Casale during the favorable opportunity created by the German withdrawal. By 21 December the troops of VI Corps were dug in on a line running just east of Viticuso and Casale and extending up to the south slopes of Le Mainarde.

MAP NO. 22


ATTACK ON SAN VITTORE
19–29 DECEMBER 1943
ATTACK 19 DECEMBER
ATTACK 20/21 DECEMBER
ATTACK 24 – 26 DECEMBER
BLOWN BRIDGE
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE ENEMY UNITS
1000 500 0
YARDS MILE
610
560
667
504 PRCHT
LA CHIAIA
730
141
1205
M. SAMMUCRO
S. VITTORE DEL LAZIO
143
143
140
CLE. MORELLO
141
143
S. PIETRO INFINE
HIGHWAY NO. 6
M. LUNGO

End of Phase II

SUBSTANTIAL GAINS HAD been made by Fifth Army in the period from 8 to 19 December; then the offensive effort gradually slackened. The next two weeks were marked by operations of local importance, designed to round out the gains made earlier or to improve positions in preparation for the next phase. The period was also used for regrouping of units. Winter fighting, under the conditions imposed by the mountainous terrain, had taxed the worn Fifth Army units to their limit. Non-battle casualties showed an increase, further reducing the combat strength of front-line units; fresh reserves were lacking to follow up initial successes. Supply and evacuation became more and more of a problem, and increasing efforts were needed in the struggle with snow and mud in the mountains, mud and rain in the valleys.

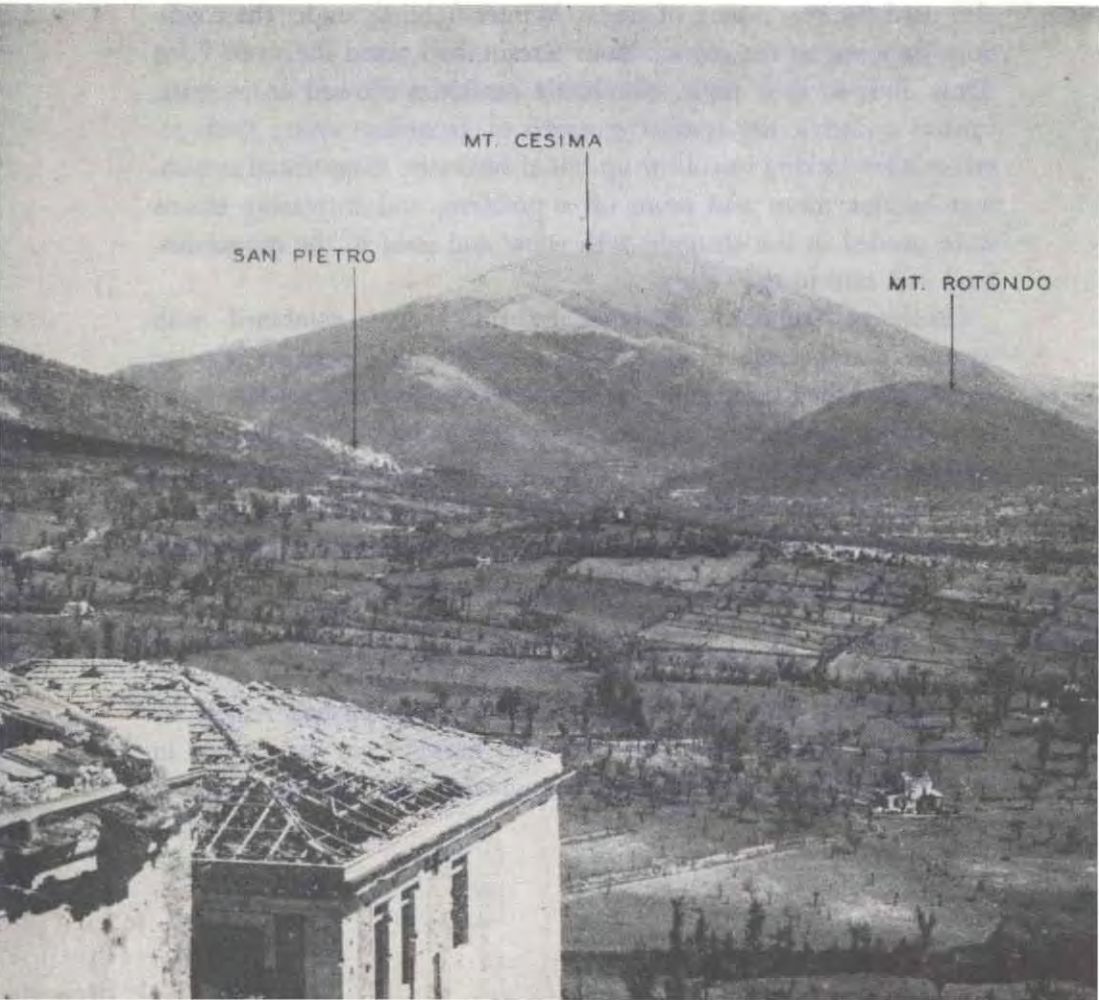
Continued stubborn resistance by the enemy, combined with weather that became progressively worse during December, slowed the whole Allied campaign. Eighth Army's push along the east coast had almost completely stopped; from the middle of December the communiqués of Eighth Army day after day reported delays caused by mud and rain. The Canadian 1 Division reached the outskirts of Ortona by 13 December, but German reinforcements rushed from Venice held the advance there for two full weeks.

II Corps Tries for San Vittore

Capture of a key hill mass was seldom accomplished merely by gaining the highest peak; this fact was brought out once again in the effort of II Corps to seize the mountains north of the Mignano

gateway. The Sammucro peak, Hill 1205, had fallen early in the offensive, but the Germans clung both to the southern slopes and to the ridges on the western side of the peak (Map No. 22, page 78). Their positions flanked any maneuver out of the Mignano Gap along the axis of Highway No. 6. Hard fighting then dislodged the enemy from San Pietro and the mountainsides just above it, but this victory left II Corps short of the objectives assigned. There were still two miles of lower slopes to clear, ending at the village of San Vittore, and above these terraced slopes the western spurs and ridges of Sammucro. When patrols of the 36th Division pushed out on 18 December, following the capture of San Pietro, they found the Germans ready to contest this last corner of the mountain. The enemy now held positions about a mile west of San Pietro. Anchored in the

NORTH OF HIGHWAY 6, *the slopes of Sammucro flanked the route of advance toward Cassino. San Vittore, in the foreground, was the next objective after II Corps captured San Pietro.*



mountains, the defenses extended down the slopes to Morello Hill and on across Highway No. 6, barring the way to San Vittore.

On 19 December, the 36th Division tested the strength of these positions. The 141st Infantry attempted to capture Morello Hill while the 143d fought for the slopes higher up. Aided by accurate artillery fire, the 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, broke up the attack. The 141st Infantry was not able to hold ground which they occupied close to Morello Hill.

A second attack toward San Vittore was planned for the night of 20/21 December. This time the main effort was to be made on the higher ground. The 3d Battalion of the 141st was to assault Hill 730, then move west down the ridge toward San Vittore. Their right

JUNCTION OF HIGHWAY 6 AND THE ROAD TO SAN PIETRO *was a favorite target for the artillery of both sides. Even after the Germans lost San Pietro (at right) they could direct artillery fire from positions high on the western slopes of Mount Sammucro.*



flank protected by this maneuver, two battalions of the 143d would move west along the slopes well above Morello Hill, then strike southward to capture that strongpoint.

The assault companies moved out under a sky heavy with clouds that threatened rain. The 143d Infantry, reduced to an average fighting strength of thirty-five men per company, could make no progress. On the right the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, started up a trail to the ridge dominated by Hill 730. Enemy artillery and machine-gun fire hit the advancing column, forcing the men to disperse among the rocks, and by morning the battalion was back at its line of departure. Up on the slopes Company B, 141st Infantry, tried to clear a trail to Hill 730 to aid the advance of the 3d Battalion but was held up by deadly machine-gun fire which covered the approach to the hill.

Stopped on the lower slopes, the 36th Division shifted the axis for its third attack to still higher ground. The units which held the Sammucro crest would again attempt to drive the enemy from Hill 730 and his remaining positions on the western shoulders of the mountain. This effort was postponed until the night of 24/25 December by difficulties of supply and movement. Early Christmas morning the 1st Regiment of the 1st Special Service Force overran Hill 730, but only after fighting that caused severe casualties on both sides. Fifty enemy dead were counted. Further north, the 504th Parachute Infantry had equal success, taking a series of enemy-held hills as far north as Hill 610. On 26 December the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, took over Hill 730. Below it, the 1st Battalion of the 143d succeeded in capturing Morello Hill.

The enemy still held in San Vittore and showed no intention of withdrawing. On 29 December two combat patrols and Company B of the 143d Infantry fought their way into San Vittore but had to withdraw. Nevertheless, the Sammucro hills were now fully cleared, and II Corps had secured its main objectives for Phase II. On 30 December the 34th Division came in to relieve the 36th, which was nearly exhausted after six weeks of almost constant mountain fighting. The 142d Regimental Combat Team was attached to the 34th Division; the units of that combat team had enjoyed a brief rest after the capture of Mount Lungo, and now remained in line to garrison the hills of Mount Sammucro.



MAP NO. 23

Probing Along the VI Corps Front

During the last ten days of December there was no large-scale offensive effort by VI Corps, and much of the line saw little activity. Along the center of the corps front the enemy had withdrawn to an outpost line of defense in the hills overlooking Viticuso, Casale, and Cardito (Map No. 23, above). Here patrol groups of the 45th Division and the 2d Moroccan Division tested his new positions.

Over rocky slopes, small patrols frequently went out to reconnoiter, while combat patrols of platoon strength moved forward occasionally to occupy some little knob or to raid a German post. Enemy mines and machine guns made the twisting trails too dangerous for use. With cover scarce and footing uncertain on the rough hillsides, surprise was almost impossible. Time after time patrols would stalk an enemy hill, only to be spotted by a sentry whose alarm sent German defenders dashing across the crest into prepared positions.

When snow covered the mountains, our men were conspicuous in the moonlight against the dazzling white background; but the German mountain troops, wearing reversible white and brown uniforms, were well camouflaged. Though the enemy shifted his positions from hill to hill, his outpost observers everywhere watched for patrols and brought down coordinated machine-gun and mortar fire when they discovered good targets. Usually, however, the Germans remained quiet in an effort to escape detection and opened fire only when a patrol approached within very close range.

On several days the VI Corps artillery did almost no firing, and the rounds it did send across to the enemy were usually bunched in "bingos," heavy concentrations in which every gun in the divisional artillery fired two or more rounds on a small target. The leaflet war continued. By means of special shells from its 105's our artillery "shot the news" weekly, delivering the *Frontpost* and other propaganda sheets to the enemy's fox holes. Sometimes the pamphlets were scattered from a plane. When the propaganda was accompanied by successful offensive action on our part, it had some effect; but in static warfare only a few enemy soldiers were induced to slink over to our lines through the snow on the mine-covered mountains, waving leaflets as they approached.

In place of a large-scale offensive, units of VI Corps during the last week of December conducted piecemeal operations up and down the front. On 22 December the 8th Moroccan Rifle Regiment began to relieve the 4th. Four days later, with two tabors of Goumiers, the 8th moved toward the Mainarde ridge. The enemy countered with machine-gun, mortar, and small-arms fire and threw back the assault units. The French renewed the attack on the morning of the 27th and at noon were in possession of the western slopes. Although no rations could be delivered to the men, they continued to push along the western slopes of the ridge through three feet of snow and on

the 28th occupied Hill 1190. By the 29th, however, the weather and supply problems combined to halt the drive. On the morning of the 29th the 5th Rifle Regiment attacked south of the Atina road and took three hills on the east end of Mount Monna Casale. Further advance was impossible; the Moroccans dug in on their gains.

On the 45th Division front the only important action was an assault by the 1st and 3d Battalions, 180th Infantry, on 30 and 31 December. Their objectives, the hills astride the Sant' Elia road from Mount Molino north to Mount Rotondo, were held by the 3d Battalion, 134th Grenadiers, and the 2d Battalion, 100th Mountain Regiment. At 0615, 30 December, seven battalions of artillery put down a fifteen-minute concentration on Mount Molino and the town of Acquafondata. Then the artillery fire was shifted closer to the enemy front lines, and at 0630 the assault companies of the 180th Infantry jumped off.

As the men moved forward, they fired heavily, but the enemy remained quiet; for a while all went well. On the north of the road Company K was on Mount Raimo by 0815; at the same time Company L gained Mount Rotondo. To the south Company B, moving through smoke and early morning fog, got on the first knob of Mount Molino's northeastern slope; Company C on its left reached the east nose of Hill 960 by 0900. Tanks from Company A, 755th Tank Battalion, moved up an engineer-cleared path through Casale and supported the attack. About 0920 the tanks retired for more ammunition, and artillery fire was lifted from Mount Molino in the belief that our troops were progressing satisfactorily.

Everywhere along this front, however, the enemy had only allowed the 180th Infantry to advance to within the most effective range of his heavy weapons. His artillery then opened up in force; machine guns laid down interlacing bands of fire; mortars delivered such effective counterbattery that the 3d Battalion mortars could fire only two rounds during the whole day. Under the additional pressure of enemy counterattacks, all the assault units were forced to withdraw to their initial positions except for Company L, which continued to hold Mount Rotondo.

On 31 December rain began and later turned to snow. During the afternoon the 1st Battalion made another unsuccessful try at Mount Molino. By dark the attack of the 180th Infantry was over, and our troops had gained only one hill, Mount Rotondo. Both battalions





were utterly exhausted by the most grueling fight they had yet experienced; the rifle companies were left with an average of sixty-six men apiece. To cap their defeat, a blizzard struck on New Year's Eve, sending snow-edged winds over the mountains and down into the men's fox holes. All through the first day of 1944 the officers of the 1st Battalion kept their troops busy making limited patrols, chopping wood, or digging deeper fox holes to keep from freezing. The men, piling on all the clothes they had, crowded into the few available bunkers or huddled about fires to await better weather before resuming the offensive.

"Mud, Mules, and Mountains"

Winter in the mountains greatly aided the enemy's determined efforts to delay the Allied advance. The miserable weather increased the discomfort of the men and more than doubled the disease total. At night the temperature frequently dropped below freezing; the rain changed to sleet or snow; and often the only shelters were those which the men dug in on the rocky hillsides when tactical operations permitted. To counteract these hardships our command took measures to protect health and maintain morale. Wool underwear had been issued early in November, and extra blankets and shelter-halves were available in the early part of December. Even more useful were the two-piece combat suits with which many front-line units were equipped. By December the men also had overshoes, and the battalion surgeons ordered the aid stations to keep a supply of dry socks. A double coffee allowance was issued, and wherever possible hot meals took place of the "K" or "10-in-1" ration.

Despite these efforts, the cold and wet weather and loss of sleep during weeks of continual fighting contributed to the great amount of sickness among the troops. Disease removed far more men from combat units than did enemy action. During December, a month when unusually heavy fighting took place, 5,020 Fifth Army men

A BAILEY BRIDGE ON HIGHWAY 6, *near Mignano, is under construction by engineers of Company A, 235th Engineer Battalion. Possible bypasses through the olive trees on either side of the highway had to be cleared of mines* (*top left*).

FLOOD WATERS OF THE VOLTURNO RIVER *on 5 December damaged equipment and interfered with the transport of supplies* (*bottom left*).

were wounded, but the total of admissions to hospitals and quarters was 22,816. Jaundice, fevers, and trench foot were prevalent.

The institution of Fifth Army Rest Camps at Naples was perhaps the most successful step toward maintaining high morale. Men received new uniforms; hot showers were always available, and hot food was served at any hour. There were movies and band concerts daily, and soldiers were completely on their own so long as they maintained good behavior. From the end of November on, divisions sent about three thousand men to the rear every five days so that in little more than a month the entire personnel would have a five-day rest away from the front line.

As the cold and wet weather increased the needs of the troops, the task of supplying them became more and more difficult. The front lines were generally several hours away from the dumps, so that carrying an emergency load often required the time and labor of large units of combat troops. In the case of the 157th Infantry, to take an example, Company D discovered on 22 December that water soaking through the fibre cases had ruined all of its 81-mm mortar ammunition. The whole regiment had to labor for an entire day to replace the ammunition, for the last part of the 157th Infantry's supply route was a five-mile mule trail through the mountains. The length of this trail was exceptional, since the engineers were usually able to build jeep roads forward; but even where roads existed the supply problem was grave.

The road net itself was not only limited but had the further disadvantage of being intersected by the Volturno River, a stream capable of sudden fury. High water from 15 to 18 November washed out the temporary bridges which our engineers had thrown across the upper river, and a flash-flood again closed the upper bridges from 5 to 7 December. Rain, traffic, and the enemy combined to keep the road system in a condition that required constant work. On the II Corps front, road and bridge maintenance was the principal task of the 111th Engineer Battalion, for whom "Mignano mud" made life a nightmare. Heavy traffic moving over the roads turned them into streams of mud, full of seemingly bottomless pits. Ton after ton of gravel and rock was spread in the worst places. At otherwise impassable spots the engineers laid corduroy, which they obtained by laboriously cutting poles from the banks of the Volturno



MULES *of a 157th Infantry pack train, high above the Pozzilli valley, carry supplies forward.*

River. Enemy artillery not only harassed the men at work but blew craters that had to be filled.

A very large part of VI Corps traffic had to pass Venafro. Every twenty-four hours in December, four thousand vehicles were moving through this bottleneck; as a result convoys had to be controlled strictly to keep unnecessary motor movement down to a minimum. To lighten the load on Highway No. 85 and the narrow road to Pozzilli, the 120th Engineers constructed two additional roads from Venafro to Pozzilli and followed close behind the combat troops to repair the Sant' Elia road. Eventually, however, the engineer roads came to the steep mountains where mules and men with pack-boards

had to take over on the narrow, twisting trails which were the only supply and evacuation routes for most of the infantry.

Without mules our winter campaign in Italy would have been impossible. On the flats, motor vehicles could churn through the mud; on the worst slopes, only men, climbing upward a few inches at a time with a case of rations or a can of water on their pack-boards, could make the ascent. Between these two extremes were miles of trails where the mule became an exasperating necessity. At the beginning of November the 45th Division had thirty-two animals; at the end of December the number exceeded four hundred with an additional 140 in a section of an Italian pack troop. Still more mules were needed, for 250 animals were required to supply the basic needs of an infantry regiment in the line.

Mules were a novelty for many American soldiers, and at first everything had to be improvised, including the mule skinners. Each division had a provisional pack troop with personnel drawn principally, but not exclusively, from the service companies. The 3d Division had brought mules from Sicily, but all other units had to find their animals in Italy by purchase in rear areas or by requisition from the farmers. At the outset the shortage of pack animals was so great that those on hand were quickly worked to death or worn out. Not only were mules scarce, but there was also a lack of halters, shoes, nails, and packsaddles. Italian packsaddles were issued wherever possible, since those from the United States proved to be too large for the average-sized Italian mule and reduced the load he could carry, which normally totaled about 220 pounds. By the end of December Fifth Army had brought in a French veterinary hospital which helped conserve the scanty mule stock, and the arrival of regular French and Italian pack units from Africa and Sardinia relieved many infantrymen from supply duties.

Regrouping

Fifth Army objectives for Phase II had been attained by the last week of December. By victories won at heavy cost, II Corps had finished the job of opening the route followed by Highway No. 6 through the mountain barrier. Mount Lungo had been taken, and the Sammucro hills to the north were clear of enemy. On the right flank, VI Corps had pushed three miles into the mountains along

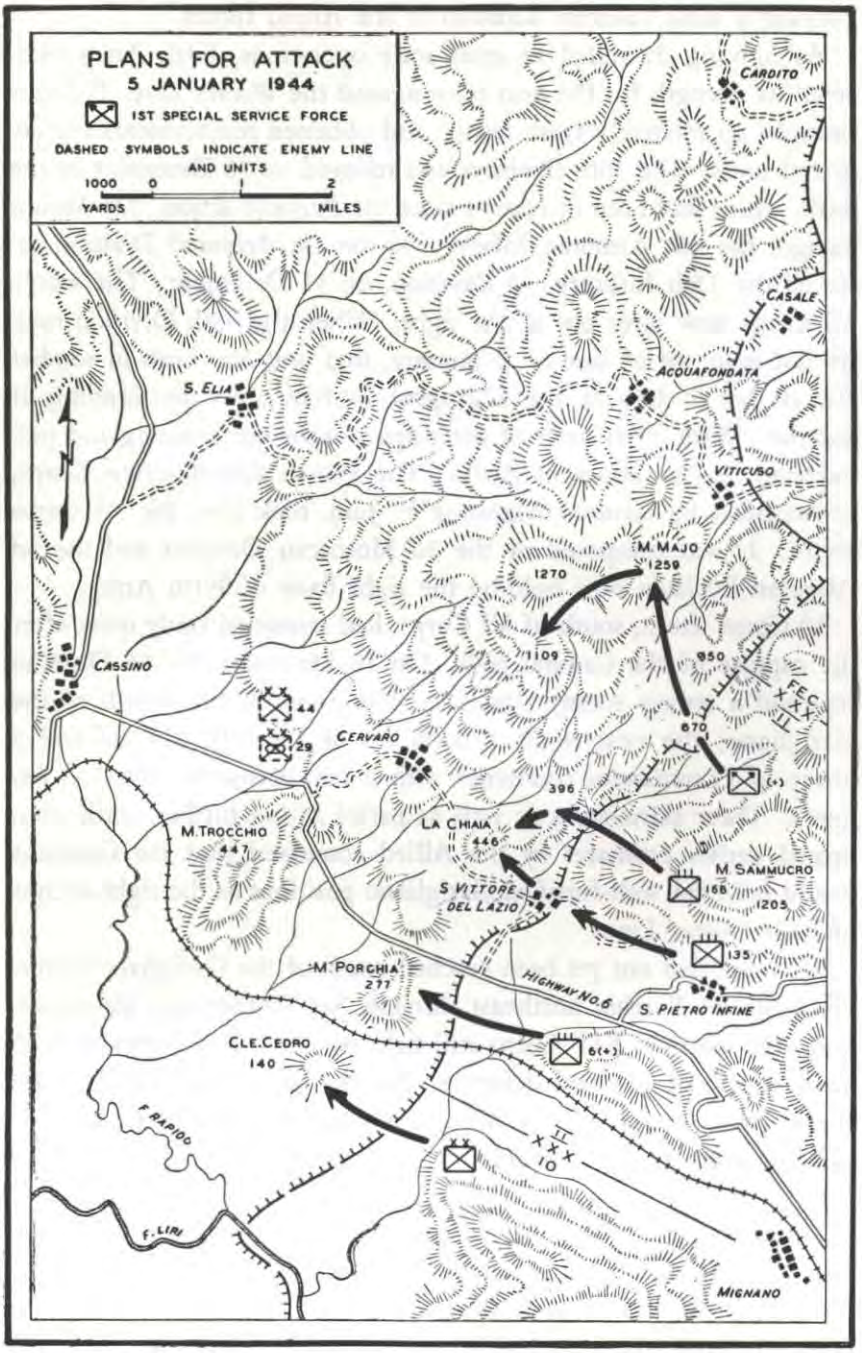
the east-west roads that led to the upper Rapido Valley. French troops had acquitted themselves with distinction and were once again proving a most valuable addition to the Allied forces.

As fighting dwindled to small-scale operations, Fifth Army mustered its strength for the next blow against the Winter Line. II Corps brought up relatively fresh troops and obtained replacements for depleted units. The 36th Division was relieved on 30 December by the 34th, which had been in reserve since the Pantano action. On Mount Lungo, the 6th Armored Infantry of the 1st Armored Division relieved the 15th Infantry, 3d Division, on 31 December. The whole VI Corps now went out of the fight. When the 45th Division took its last man out of line on 9 January, that unit had been in combat for all but 7 days of the 122 spent in Italy since the landing at Salerno. With other units of the corps it went into training and preparation for the attack at Anzio. The French Expeditionary Corps, commanded by General Alphonse P. Juin, took over the VI Corps sector. It was composed of the 2d Moroccan Division and the 3d Algerian Division now holding the right flank of Fifth Army.

10 Corps' front, south of VI Corps, had remained fairly quiet after the capture of the Camino hills. On 28 December the 56 Division repulsed a strong enemy attack on Pontifiume at the mouth of the Garigliano; the next night a battalion of the 201 Brigade and a group of Commandos countered with a raid across the river on Argente. These skirmishes, as well as patrol action further north, confirmed earlier estimates by the Allied command that the Germans would hold the well-fortified Garigliano positions as the right anchor of their Gustav Line.

This line had not yet been reached north of the Garigliano sector. From Mount Porchia northeast through San Vittore into the mountains, the German XIV Corps still held positions well forward of its main system of planned defenses. No change was indicated in the enemy policy of forcing the Allies to an unspectacular battle of attrition for every yard of advance.

MAP NO. 24


PLANS FOR ATTACK
5 JANUARY 1944
1ST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE
DASHED SYMBOLS INDICATE ENEMY LINE AND UNITS
1000 YARDS 0 1 2 MILES
CARDITO
CASALE
ACQUAFONDATA
S. ELIA
VITICUSO
M. MAJO
1259
1270
1109
950
670
CASSINO
44
29
CERVARO
396
M. TROCCHIO
447
LA CHIAIA
446
M. SAMMUCRO
168
1205
S. VITTORE DEL LAZIO
135
M. PORCHIA
277
HIGHWAY NO. 6
S. PIETRO INFINE
CLE. CEDRO
140
6(+)
F. RAPIDO
F. LIRI
10
MIGNANO

Drive Up to the Gustav Line

THE FINAL PHASE of the Winter Line campaign opened on 5 January. Fifth Army was to complete its task of destroying German positions east of the Rapido and of forcing the enemy back into his principal defensive system at the mouth of the Liri Valley (Map No. 24, page 92). II Corps continued its effort along the axis of Highway No. 6 toward Cassino, its objectives the series of hills which barred the way to the Rapido-Liri plain. Protecting the flank of this drive, attacks would be made to clear Mount Majo and the hills surrounding it above Cervaro. Still further north, on 12 January, the French Expeditionary Corps would resume the offensive toward the upper Rapido Valley and the high ground north of Cassino. The right wing of British 10 Corps would advance in conformity with II Corps toward the Liri Valley.

In the period just before the new assault, German ground forces attempted no offensive efforts beyond the usual patrolling. The enemy was regrouping to meet the attack. His exhausted forces protecting the approaches of the Liri Valley needed bolstering to prevent a possible breakthrough into that key area, and the process involved reshuffling units in a way that produced a confused order of battle. Shifting southward from VI Corps' sector, the 44th Grenadier Division began to reinforce parts of the front held by the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. Units of the 44th Division took over key positions all the way from Mount Majo to Mount Porchia; 29th Panzer Grenadier Division elements were interspersed over the same broad front.

Winter weather continued to hamper II Corps during the first days of January. Until 4 January, when the 1st Special Service Force made the preliminary move in the final offensive, infantry activity in the corps sector was limited to patrolling. The field artillery, too, had been restricted and its efforts were confined mainly to harassing and propaganda missions. On 1 January the entire II Corps artillery fired three rounds per gun on definite targets during the "New Year's Shoot." The Germans had prepared a similar celebration and returned the greeting but in smaller volume.

The bad weather also held air activity to a minimum, just as it had during most of December. When the clouds lifted, however, Allied bombers struck at Cervaro, San Vittore, Mount Trocchio, and other objectives along the front. On 2 January XII Air Support Command completed two bombing missions over Mount la Chiaia, and by 6 January it had flown 145 sorties over Mount la Chiaia and Mount Porchia.

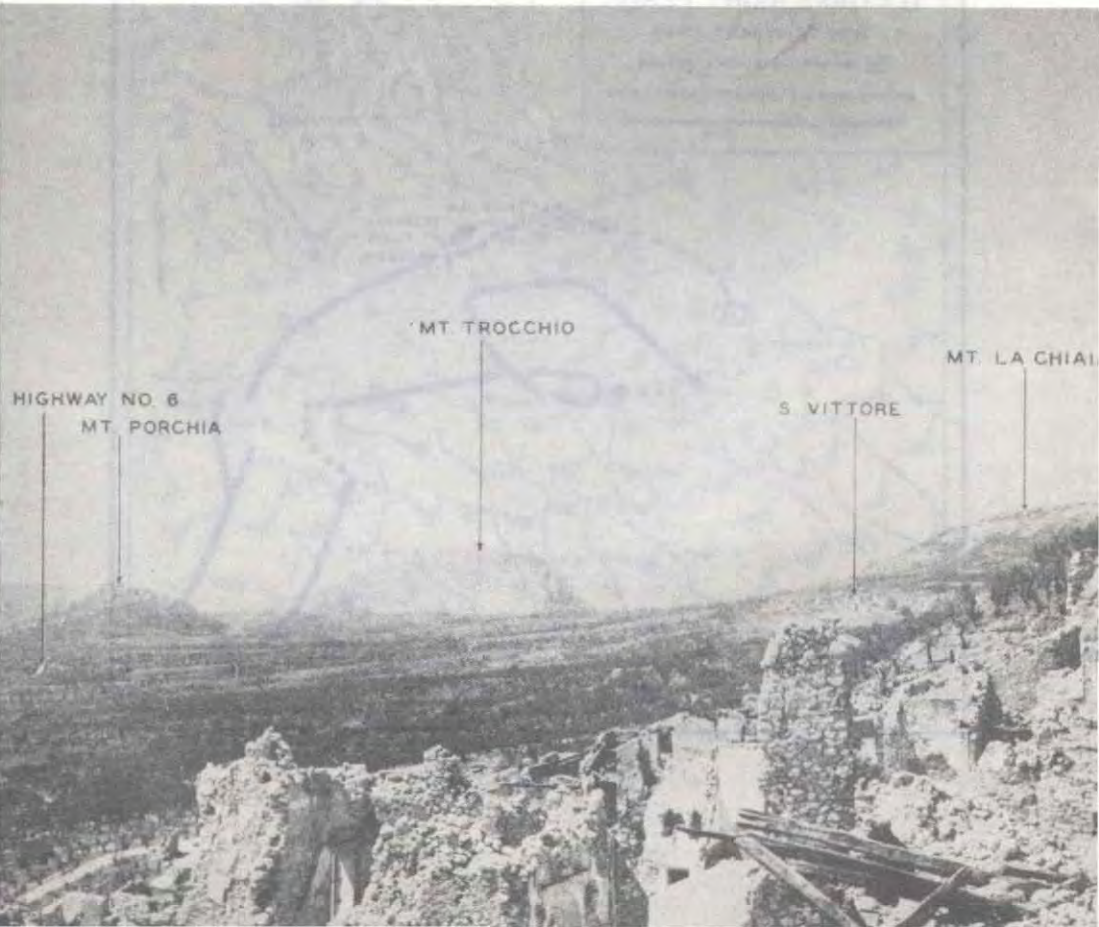
Plans for the Opening Attack

Only a few miles now separated II Corps' front from the Rapido River, but the terrain still gave the enemy excellent opportunities for defensive action. As our advance debouched from the Mignano corridor, it faced three isolated, prominent hills, in a row almost south to north across the route toward Cassino. The smallest was Cedro Hill, five hundred feet high and to the south of the railway line. Between the railway and Highway No. 6 lay the much more impressive Mount Porchia, seven hundred feet above the level of the plain. A mile and a half still further northeast, rising behind the enemy strongpoint at San Vittore, Mount la Chiaia completed the row of hills and anchored it to the edge of the higher mountain mass. Beyond la Chiaia, the German defenses extended into these mountains and included the dominating peaks around Mount Majo.

The three hills barring Allied advance along Highway No. 6 offered the enemy good observation and cover for strong defensive positions. Behind them rose a last isolated ridge, Mount Trocchio, keystone of the German defenses forward of Cassino. One thousand feet above the valley floor, Trocchio dominated the row of lower hills to the east and made easier their defense. It was the final objective in II Corps' drive to reach the Rapido.

The weight of II Corps' opening attack was planned to hit north of Highway No. 6, breaking the enemy defenses where they anchored into the mountains. The Mount la Chiaia area was the focus of the main effort, a coordinated attack by the 135th and 168th Infantry Regiments. The 135th was to take San Vittore and start toward Mount la Chiaia; the 168th would then drive from Sammucro across the headwaters of San Vittore Creek and attack Hill 396. This hill ended a spur from the main mountains, almost connecting them with Mount la Chiaia. With the capture of Hill 396, Mount la Chiaia would be outflanked and could more easily be taken. Still higher in the mountains the 1st Special Service Force (reinforced) had the mission of clearing Mount Majo and its accompanying peaks. On the left flank of II Corps, Task Force A (6th Armored Infantry, reinforced, of the 1st Armored Division) aimed its blow at Mount

FROM THE RUINS OF SAN PIETRO *could be seen the last hills barring the way to Cassino. While troops on the right fought to outflank San Vittore and Mount la Chiaia, others would drive toward Mount Porchia for a combined assault on Mount Trocchio, the final position in the Rapido Plain.*



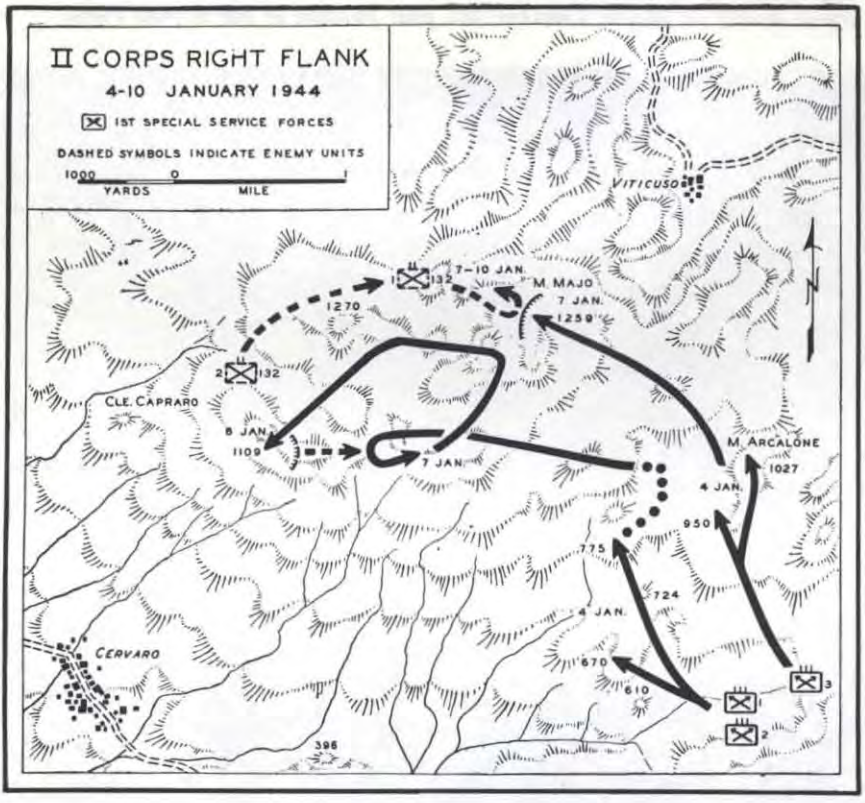
Porchia; meanwhile, Cedro Hill would be attacked by elements of British 10 Corps.

Artillery, air, and armored support for II Corps was available on a large scale. The 6th Field Artillery Group of five battalions supported the 1st Special Service Force; the 34th Division artillery and corps units supported the 168th Infantry; the 1st Armored Division artillery, three tank battalions, and one tank destroyer battalion supported Task Force A. XII Air Support Command was prepared to carry out offensive operations whenever the weather permitted.

Capture of the Mount Majo Hills

Beyond Sammucro and the Mignano Gap, the western edge of the mountain mass slants toward the Rapido River, with long rough slopes that reach down nearly to Highway No. 6 (Map No. 25, below). Possession of these slopes gave the Germans great advantage

MAP NO. 25



in defending the Rapido Valley; their positions here covered the whole left flank and rear of the chain of outpost hills to the south. II Corps plans therefore included an effort to drive the enemy from the mountains flanking the axis of our advance toward Cassino. While the main battle took place on the lower slopes, above San Vittore and toward Cervaro, the 1st Special Service Force would operate high in the mountains. In its larger aspects, the maneuver planned for that unit was a wide end run north toward the dominating peaks around Mount Majo (Hill 1259) and then west on the ridges overlooking Cervaro. Success in this mission would add to the effect of the 34th Division's attack along the lower slopes toward Cervaro. The 1st Special Service Force was trained for mountain fighting, and its abilities would be fully tested. From footholds in the Sammucro heights it would have to cross several miles of mountain upland, over a maze of ridges held by the enemy. Supplies for this operation were carried by pack trains; by 11 January these were using nearly seven hundred mules.

On the night of 3/4 January the three regiments of the 1st Special Service Force had moved from their bivouac area near Ceppagna to assembly areas some three miles northwest in the mountains. Patrols of the 157th Infantry, 45th Division, in the zone which was being taken over by the French Expeditionary Corps, protected the right flank and made limited attacks to keep the enemy occupied. At 2120 that night, the 1st and 2d Regiments of the 1st Special Service Force pushed forward to capture the ridge running north from Hill 610 (Map No. 25, page 96). By 2000 on 4 January they had taken Hills 670, 724, and 775 against opposition consisting mainly of machine-gun and mortar fire. On their right the 3d Regiment drove enemy outposts from Hill 950 and Mount Arcalone. The 1st Special Service Force moved with such speed that the artillery forward observers, packing heavy radios through snow-covered gullies and up rocky slopes, had difficulty keeping pace. Activity on 5 January was limited to patrols on Mount Majo; these were met by mortar fire. Company E of the 142d Infantry moved up during the night of 5/6 January to the ground gained by the 1st and 2d Regiments.

On 6 January the 100th Battalion and the 3d Battalion of the 133d Infantry, 34th Division, were placed under Col. Frederick, commanding the 1st Special Service Force; and on the 7th the 36th Divi-



THE 1st SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE *moves swiftly through the mountains west of Mount Majo. Lt. David Cuddy leads elements of the 3d Regiment.*

sion Artillery was added to his command. These units combined with the 1st Special Service Force to form Task Force B, whose specific mission was to continue the flanking maneuver, establish a base near Hill 1109 to further the attack against Mount Trocchio, and protect the right flank of II Corps. The 142d Infantry, which had been posted on Sammucro, was detached from II Corps and returned to the 36th Division in reserve.

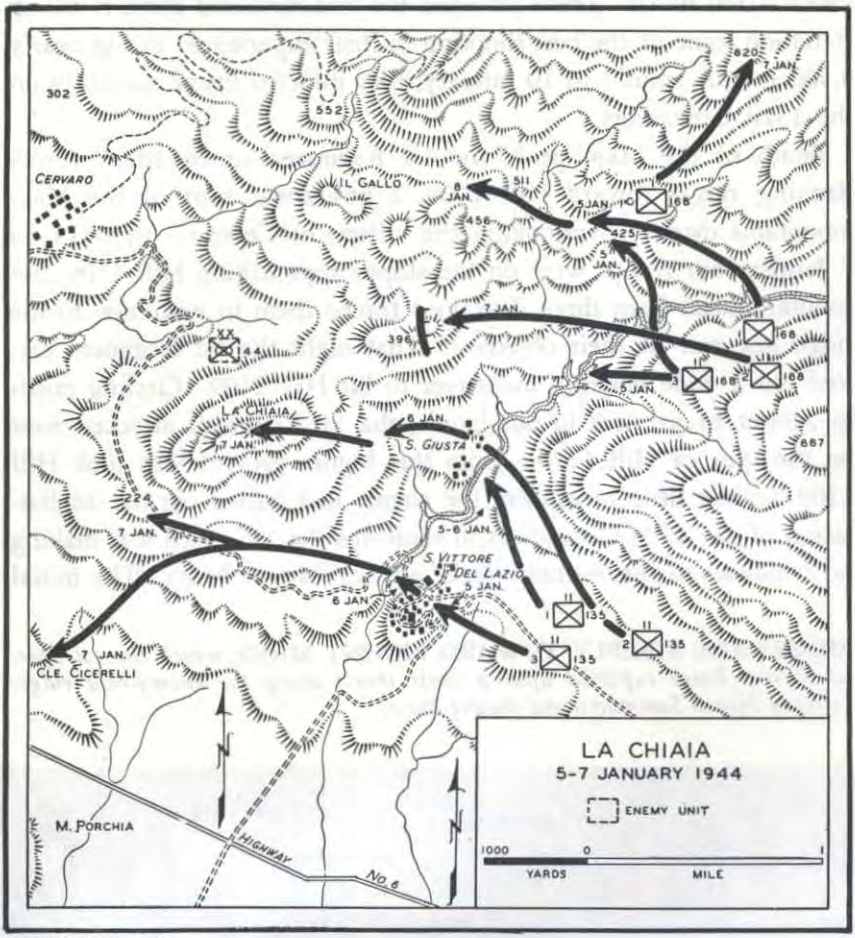
Task Force B made its next move on the night of 6/7 January, starting from the positions won on Mount Arcalone. On the right, the 3d Regiment of the Special Service Force, followed by Company I of the 133d Infantry, struck over snow-covered terrain for Mount Majo and by 0520 had gained the peak. The enemy reacted strongly; a counterattack at 0800 by the 1st Battalion, 132d Grenadiers, was broken up. In the German attempt to recover the mountain, reserves were rushed up and for the next three days hurled at Majo in

attack after attack. These afforded the 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion some of the best shooting in their experience. Firing nearly 8,500 rounds from 7 to 10 January, they inflicted heavy casualties on the 132d Grenadiers.

South of the Majo peak, the 1st Regiment aimed attack across flanking ridges toward Hill 1109, a prominent spur of the Majo mountains directly overlooking the village of Cervaro. By 0415 on 7 January our troops were on the slopes approaching Hill 1109, but counterattacks from three directions forced them to withdraw to the ridge just east of their objective. That night the 1st Regiment carried out a wide flanking maneuver to hit Hill 1109. Circling north to Mount Majo, now in our hands, the 1st Regiment attacked west on the spur of Hill 1270. From this higher ground they took Hill 1109 against little resistance; the enemy had pulled out the 2d Battalion of the 132d Grenadiers to reinforce the 1st which was making no headway in the counterattacks against Mount Majo. The initial

RIDGES RISE STEEPLY TOWARD MOUNT MAJO, *which the 1st Special Service Force captured after a swift thrust along the enemy-held ridges between Mount Sammucro and Mount Majo.*





MAP NO. 26

objectives had been taken, and the 1st Special Service Force drew back for a night's rest, while the 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, occupied the captured heights.

The 168th Outflanks Mount la Chiaia

While Task Force B was winning the heights, the 168th Infantry had the task of driving the Germans from the middle and lower slopes of the mountains flanking the Rapido Valley (Map No. 24, page 92). It was a difficult assignment, for small creeks had carved the mountainsides into a series of ridges separated by narrow gullied valleys and lying at right angles to the axis of advance. One of these ridges, marked by several prominent knobs, extended almost to

Mount la Chiaia; possession of the ridge would threaten the enemy defenses on that hill from flank and rear. Hill 396, marking the end of the ridge, was the first main objective of the 168th in an attack coordinated with the attack of the 135th Infantry against Mount la Chiaia itself.

The assembly area for the attack was near Hill 687, a western spur of Sammucro (Map No. 26, page 100). Between there and the ridge to be conquered lay the difficult valley made by San Vittore Creek and its forking tributaries. The main creek ran in a gorge thirty to forty feet deep, with almost vertical sides. Patrols had reported no contact with enemy troops in this area, and the creek was set as the line of departure. The 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, was to make the main effort. At 1820 on 4 January, Company I started toward the ravine to secure the line of departure and ran into an ambush. Enemy forces at the gorge allowed part of Company I to get through, then closed in, capturing two officers and sixty-seven men. Preparations for the attack were nevertheless carried through, including demonstrations further up San Vittore Creek in an attempt to deceive the enemy concerning the direction of the effort.

At 0550 on 5 January, Company I and Company K jumped off behind a rolling barrage fired by the 185th Field Artillery Battalion. They were pinned at the creek line by fire from a stone farmhouse bristling with machine guns. The situation improved during the afternoon when Company L and Company C, on the right flank, crossed the creek farther up in the mountains and reached Hill 425. This spur dominated the lower reaches of the creek and capture of it freed Companies I and K. The 3d Battalion was then able to secure the gorge. Pressing the advantage gained on the higher ground, the 1st Battalion moved beyond Hill 425 and threatened the northern end of the key ridge which was the 168th's objective.

The morning of 6 January saw no progress. Attacking at 0900 after a rolling barrage laid by the 175th and 185th Field Artillery Battalions, the 3d Battalion made little headway against well-directed machine-gun and mortar fire. On the higher flank, the 1st Battalion tried for hills 456 and 511, knobs on the 396 ridge, and was stopped five hundred yards short. The 3d Battalion, 132d Grenadiers, was holding grimly all the way along the ridge to the area where it merged into the mountain upland near Hill 820.

That night a renewed attack broke the enemy defenses at the



SMOKE LAID BY A-36'S on the ridge above San Vittore on 6 January *screens the 135th Infantry's attack on the village from enemy artillery observers.*

lower end of the ridge. During the afternoon the 2d Battalion moved up to the gorge and passed through the 3d Battalion. At 2230, Company E spearheaded the effort under orders to capture Hill 396 at all costs. In the bitter, close-in fighting with grenades and small arms, thirteen riflemen of Company E were killed; thirty-three dead Germans were later counted on the hill. The enemy fell back before daylight, only to bring down heavy mortar and artillery fire on the knob. The 2d Battalion had consolidated its position well, and three furious counterattacks before 0600 were unsuccessful. Many men of the 2d Battalion had distinguished themselves in the fighting for Hill 396. Sgt. Rafael T. Hernandez of Company E disposed his squad to counter a flanking movement, then alone went forward and

destroyed a machine gun and its crew. 1st Sgt. John A. Hayes, Jr., going forward on Company G's right, corrected the fire of his platoon so accurately that a counterattack was broken up. During the last enemy attempt to recapture Hill 396, S/Sgt. Fred Trotter's platoon of Company E ran short of ammunition. Trotter left his trench and recovered ten bandoleers from the battlefield. Shot in the leg, he crawled thirty yards back to the trench. Sgt. Trotter was killed by machine-gun fire when he raised himself to throw the ammunition to his men, but with the recovered ammunition his platoon helped break up the final counterattack.

During 7 January, the 168th extended its hold on the ridge above Hill 396. In stopping the 1st Battalion's attack against the higher knobs, the enemy had profited by excellent observation from Hill 820, overlooking the valley across which our troops had to advance. The 1st Battalion postponed further efforts at the ridge while Company C assaulted this flanking height. One platoon was on Hill 820 by noon, and at 1815 the position was secure. This success settled the issue of the fight for the ridge below; the enemy withdrew that night from the knob at Hill 456. The next morning the knob at 511 was occupied without difficulty, and patrols reported the ground to the west clear of enemy as far as Il Gallo Hill.

The 168th had done more than take just another ridge. Its victory at Hill 396 contributed to unhinging the whole enemy defensive system at the junction of his positions in the mountains with those barring the plain. On 7 January Mount la Chiaia fell to the 135th Infantry, marking the complete success of the 36th Division's coordinated attack.

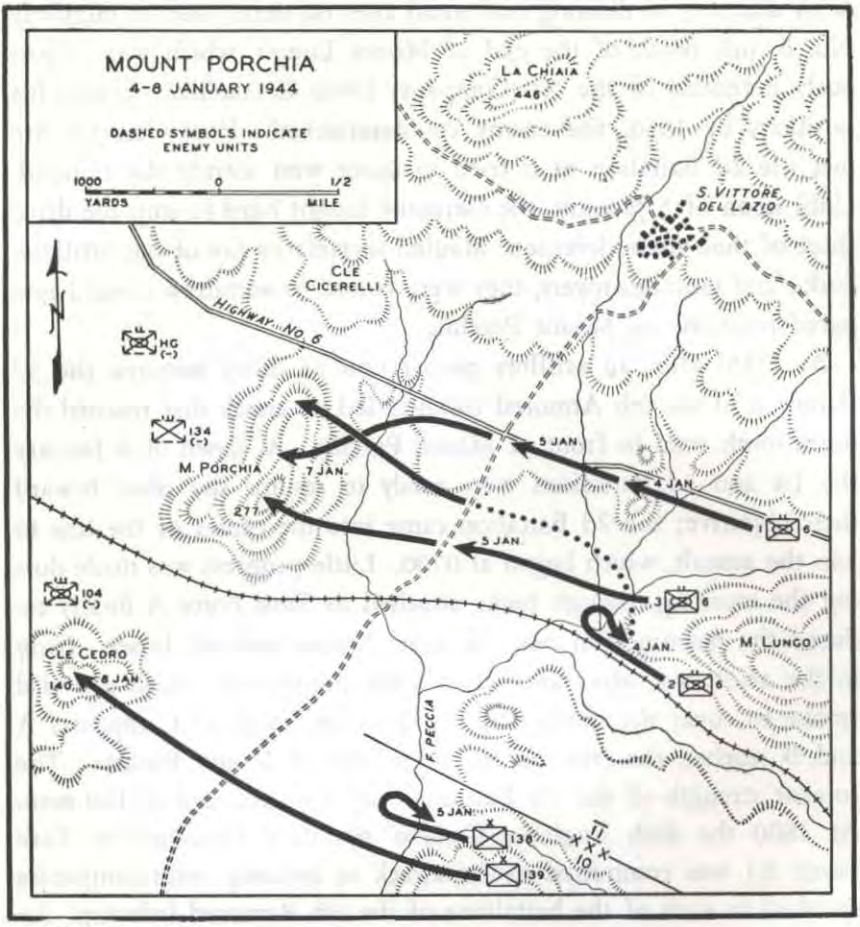
San Vittore and Mount la Chiaia

The village of San Vittore, with its closely packed stone houses and narrow streets, had been converted into a main enemy strongpoint, lying near the base of Mount la Chiaia and guarding the approaches against a frontal attack. The 135th Infantry planned to use the 3d Battalion against this position while the 1st Battalion, crossing San Vittore Creek further north, assaulted the northeast shoulder of the hill itself.

Once again a village stronghold had to be taken. The 3d Battalion planned a night assault by Company K, starting at 2330 on 4

January, without the customary artillery preparation. Two platoons of Company K led off. The 2d Platoon attempted to come in from the south but, after making slight progress, was stopped by machine-gun fire. The 1st Platoon, attacking from the northeast, captured several houses before dawn, then spent the day in house-to-house fighting with hand grenades. Snipers fired on our troops from the stone houses; some buildings were booby-trapped. By nightfall of 5 January one-half the town had been captured. Capt. Emil Skalicky then sent the 3d Platoon of Company K to aid the assault on the north while Company I attacked from the southwest. Another day was required to clean out the enemy. By 1700 on 6 January the last of the bitter street fighting had ended, and 170 prisoners from the 44th Grenadier Division had been captured. Our own casualties were very light for such an operation.

The 1st Battalion met with equally stiff resistance in its attack on the hill behind San Vittore. During the night of 4/5 January it moved to the gulch of San Vittore Creek north of the village. Seven hundred yards further up the creek, the 3d Battalion of the 168th was waiting for the jump-off toward Hill 396. At 0630 the 125th Field Artillery Battalion opened a rolling barrage, firing 1,634 rounds in ninety minutes. Despite this support the 1st Battalion was stopped on the line of departure by enemy fire from well-protected positions in ravines and rock pillboxes. Machine guns were causing trouble from emplacements in the stone houses of the hamlet of Santa Giusta; the 1st Battalion withdrew to allow for finer adjustment of artillery fire on these positions. On 6 January the battalion tried and failed again to cross the creek line. The 2d Battalion, which had been in reserve, took over the attack and succeeded in making a rapid thrust across the face of the hill. On 7 January, with San Vittore and Hill 396 lost, enemy resistance faded and Mount la Chiaia was occupied by the 135th. The 3d Battalion moved promptly west from San Vittore and drove the enemy from Hill 224 and Cicerelli Hill, low knobs between Mount la Chiaia and Highway No. 6. A German troop concentration west of Mount la Chiaia was dispersed at noon by sixteen A–36's and an equal number of P–40's. As a result of the combined efforts of the air force and the infantry, the remnants of the 134th Grenadiers withdrew westward in confusion. Bypassed enemy groups were mopped up and minefields cleared, especially from the San Vittore area. On the trail from Santa Giusta



MAP NO. 27

our men encountered a new type of German weapon, a concrete mine with plastic fuse, which could not be located by dectectors.

Mount Porchia and Cedro Hill

On the left wing, II Corps' offensive involved taking Mount Porchia, just south of Highway No. 6 (Map No. 27, page 105). Task Force A was given the assignment of attacking this isolated hill. One mile southwest, the smaller companion height, Cedro Hill, lay in 10 Corps' zone and would be difficult for the enemy to hold after the fall of Mount Porchia.

The 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, moved on the afternoon of 4 January to secure its line of departure. The battalion encoun-

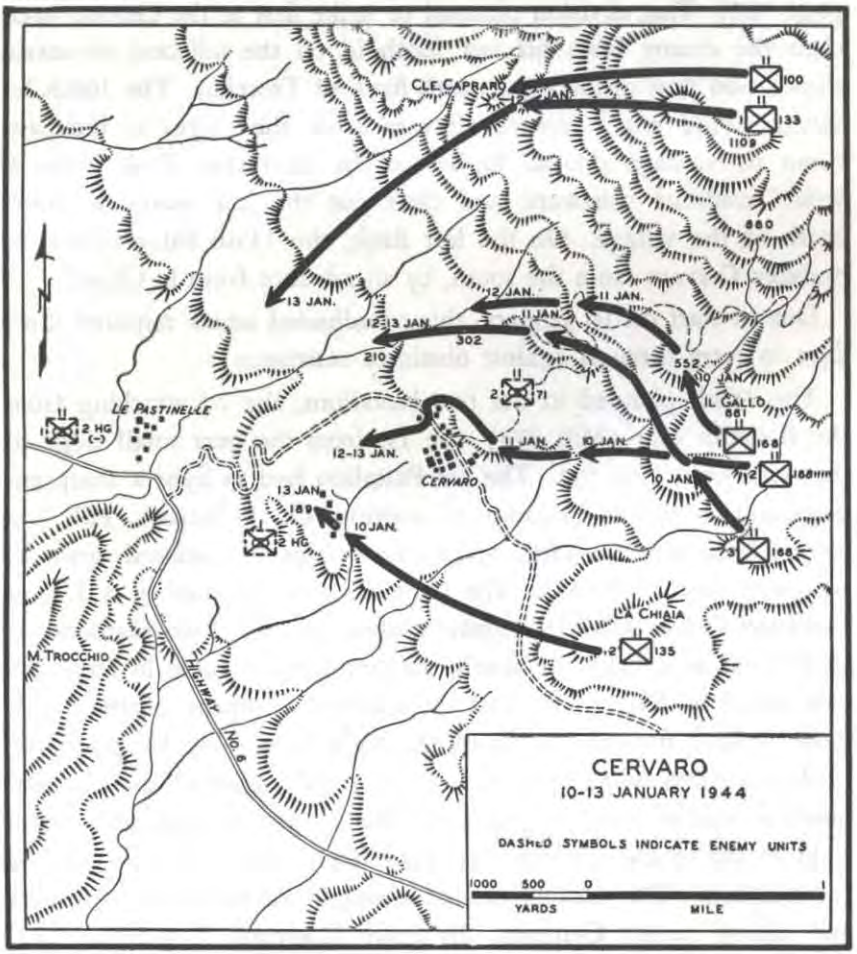
tered difficulty in clearing two small rises on either side of Highway No. 6, just north of the end of Mount Lungo, which were vigorously defended by the 5th Company, 134th Grenadiers. Losing his positions by 1930, the enemy counterattacked. Heavy mortar fire met the 2d Battalion as it tried to move west astride the railroad. Until noon of 5 January, the Germans fought hard to stop the drive short of their main defenses. Mauled severely by fire of our artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers, they were forced to withdraw toward prepared positions on Mount Porchia.

At 1515, after an artillery preparation of thirty minutes, the 3d Battalion of the 6th Armored Infantry led an attack that reached the north-south road in front of Mount Porchia. At dawn of 6 January the 1st and 3d Battalions were ready to resume the effort toward their objective; the 2d Battalion came into the center of the line to join the assault, which began at 0700. Little progress was made during the morning, though tanks attached to Task Force A finally reduced the machine-gun nests in stone houses and pill boxes. Early in the afternoon, after another artillery preparation which included smoke to cover the north flank of the zone, parts of Companies A and B reached the crest on the north end of Mount Porchia. The combat strength of the 1st Battalion had been reduced to 150 men. At 1800 the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion (attached to Task Force A) was committed to the attack as infantry, with companies attached to each of the battalions of the 6th Armored Infantry. An enemy counterattack was launched at 2210 from the northwest by three infantry companies of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division which had been rushed from reserve positions, six miles west of Cassino, to help defend Mount Porchia. The Germans reached positions behind American units on Porchia and caused considerable confusion, but the reinforced 6th Armored Infantry held its gains.

Despite the enemy efforts, the entire hill fell on 7 January. During the morning the Germans continued to resist from positions near the summit and the southwest edge, but all three battalions of the 6th Armored Infantry succeeded in fighting their way to the crest all along the hill by noon. At 1500 the enemy counterattacked and was beaten off; strong artillery support helped the 6th Armored Infantry hold Mount Porchia. After one more effort to take the hill that night the Germans withdrew.

South of this battle, the 46 Division of the British 10 Corps had been fighting for Cedro Hill against the same type of enemy resistance. During the night of 4/5 January the 138 Brigade established a bridgehead across the Peccia River against strong opposition by the 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment; but, with Mount Porchia still uncaptured and their supporting tanks unable to cross the river, the British troops fell back to the east bank at dusk. The 139 Brigade took over the assault and reached Cedro Hill by daylight on 8 January, but enemy mortar fire pushed it back. After the fall of Mount Porchia, the Germans evidently judged their positions on Cedro untenable; that night they abandoned this last of their outpost hills in front of Mount Trocchio.

MAP NO. 28



The Final Advance: Cervaro and Mount Trocchio

By 8 January, the Germans had lost their best positions for defending the approaches to the Liri Valley and their Gustav Line. The la Chiaia-Porchia-Cedro hill barrier had fallen; further north, II Corps had secured the higher mountain ground above Cervaro. Nevertheless, possibilities for a last line of forward defense were offered by Mount Trocchio and the rough hills at the edge of the mountains near Cervaro. There was every indication that the enemy would continue his stubborn delaying tactics and that II Corps would have to fight all the way to the Rapido River.

Attack orders for the final drive were issued by II Corps on 9 January, with Mount Trocchio as the main objective and the 34th Division still carrying the main weight of the assault (Map No. 28, page 107). That division planned to strike first at the Cervaro area, clear the enemy from his last foothold on the adjacent mountain slopes, and thus uncover the north flank of Trocchio. The 168th Infantry would attack toward Cervaro from the ridges to the east. From its vantage ground higher in the mountain, Task Force B would continue westward and clear out the last mountain spurs north of the village. On the left flank, the 135th Infantry was to threaten Cervaro from the south, by an advance from la Chiaia.

Due to start on 10 January, this coordinated attack required three days to carry through against obstinate resistance.

The 168th planned to use two battalions, the 2d attacking from the Il Gallo spur (Hill 497), the 1st from the next small ridge to the northwest, Hill 552. The 1st Battalion had to fight a sharp engagement to secure its jump-off position. On 9 January, Hill 552 having been reported clear of enemy, Company C started down to occupy it from Hill 820. The Germans had returned to 552, and Company C was forced to make a night assault. Two platoons attacked the spur from the south, another platoon came in from the east across a deep gorge, and the Cannon Company of the 168th gave decisive fire support from the right flank. 1st Lt. James G. Nielson, commanding Company C, had reconnoitered the German positions and was able to direct fire that ranged in fifty yards to the right of the attacking troops and completely neutralized the enemy's fortifications. The assault carried through, taking thirty prisoners and killing twenty Germans. By dawn Company C had Hill 552,

but further difficulties arose to delay the 1st Battalion's attack, scheduled for noon. Enemy fire opened unexpectedly from the right flank; higher up the mountainside, some bypassed German positions on Hills 661 and 860 were in a good situation to command the approaches to 552 from the east. It took Company A most of the day to mop up these small nests, killing twenty Germans in the process. This nuisance resistance on its flank prevented the 1st Battalion from moving past Hill 552 toward Cervaro in support of the 2d Battalion of the 168th. Attacking alone, in columns of companies, the 2d Battalion got to within a half mile of Cervaro and dug in for the night.

By morning of 11 January the 168th Infantry was in position for direct assault on Cervaro. Like San Pietro and San Vittore, this little mountain town had been reduced to a mass of rubble and shattered walls, but the wrecked stone houses and cellars gave excellent protection for the enemy, who had organized firing positions to cover all the approaches. The 2d Battalion, 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, held this sector, reinforced on the night of 10/11 January by elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division.

Before the attack of 11 January our planes bombed and strafed Cervaro, after which artillery took over and covered the area with a heavy barrage. At 1230 the 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, started a push west from 552 to seize the ridges a half mile north of Cervaro, thus covering the right flank of the main effort and threatening the enemy's rear. Elements of the 1st Battalion were moving west from Hill 552, following the advance of the 3d. When the 2d Battalion jumped off at 1300, driving straight for the town, Mount Trocchio had been smoked and tanks were in position to give supporting fire from south of the town. The battalion attacked in column of companies under continuous artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire. They reached the corner of Cervaro at dark, while the 3d Battalion gained the slopes overlooking Cervaro from the north as far as Hill 302. During that night the 2d Battalion worked around the northern edges of the village and by dawn was on a small hill at the northwest corner. The Air Observation Post in communication with the 175th and 185th Field Artillery Battalions directed effective fire on enemy troops and vehicles in Cervaro. At 1100 the 2d Battalion launched a final assault from the north and captured the village after two hours' fighting in the ruins. On the northern flank, the 3d Battalion met opposition when it tried to advance further

west, but reached Hill 210 at the end of the afternoon of 12 January.

Cervaro had been taken, but there was no collapse of enemy resistance. Whether to cover a withdrawal or to attempt a counterattack, elements of the 1st Battalion, 2d Hermann Goering Panzer Grenadier Regiment, came up that night on the road from Cassino, only to stumble into a costly meeting engagement with the 2d and 3d Battalions a few hundred yards west of Cervaro. A battalion volley of artillery fire on the gorge near Le Pastinelle helped to stop the enemy. The next morning, 13 January, the 168th reached the slopes overlooking Le Pastinelle and the Rapido plain. The regiment was only a mile from Mount Trocchio and in position to threaten it from the northeast.

The 168th Infantry had been helped in its success at Cervaro by supporting attacks both to the north and south. Task Force B had kept pace in the mountain area, attacking west from Hill 1109 and covering the 168th's right flank. In two days' fighting the 100th Battalion and the 1st Battalion of the 133d Infantry gained Mount Capraro on 12 January and began to push the Germans down the last mountain slopes north of the Cassino-Cervaro road. When Task Force B was broken up on 13 January, its mission completed, the 133d Regimental Combat Team stayed in line on the right flank of the advance threatening Mount Trocchio.

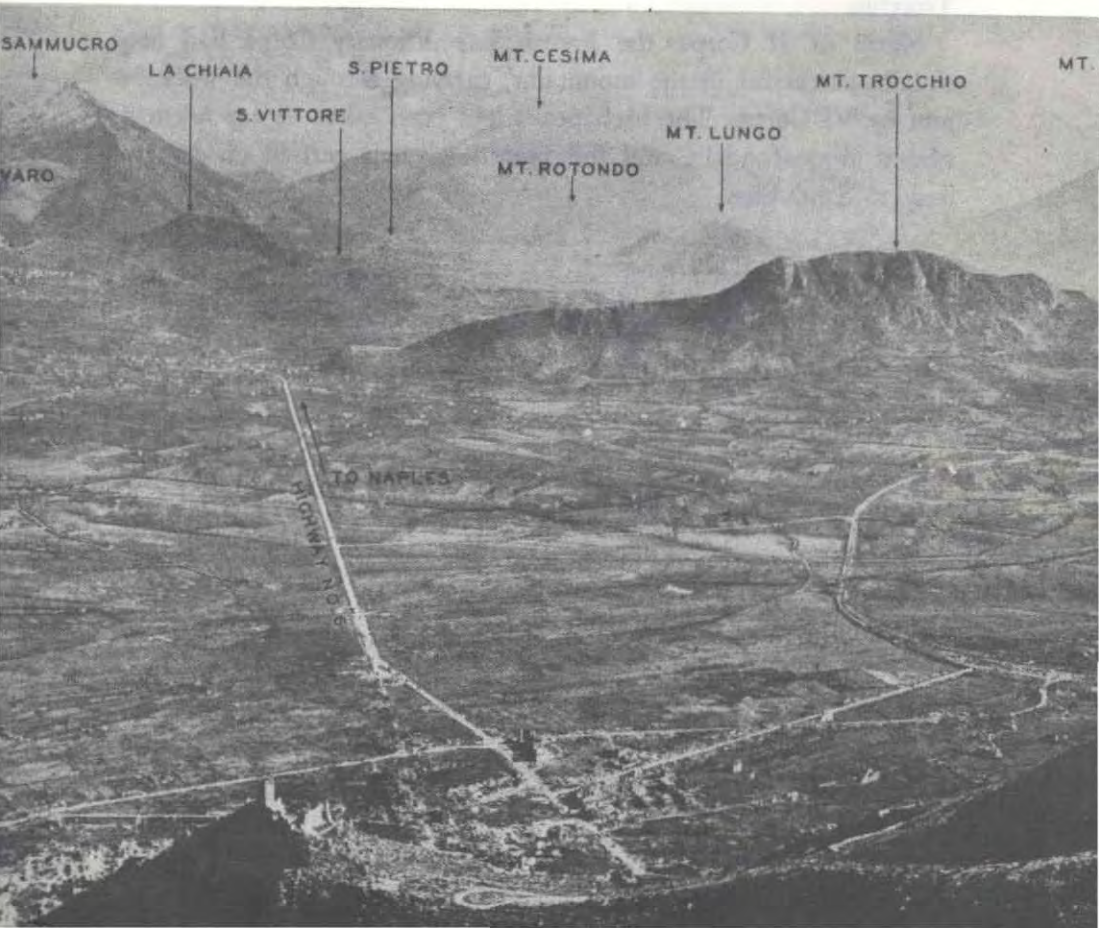
South of Cervaro, the 135th had been aiding the 168th's fight by making a limited attack from Mount la Chiaia toward Le Pastinelle, thus threatening an encirclement of the Cervaro strongpoint. The 2d Battalion of the 135th, making this effort, found a center of enemy resistance at Point 189, where a company of the 2d Hermann Goering Regiment had converted some stone houses into pillboxes. Although Company G of the 135th captured a part of the position on 10 January, the enemy held on tenaciously for three days, preventing a penetration behind his defenses at Cervaro. Finally, on 13 January when the 168th was advancing north and west of Cervaro, the 2d Battalion of the 135th carried the 189 strongpoint.

Always, in fighting out from the Mignano Gap toward Cassino

A PATROL ENTERS CERVARO *on 12 January. Sgt. Charles Russell covers Sgt. Barney Wright as they search for snipers. Two men of this patrol were killed by snipers a few minutes later (top right).*

THE GROUND WON BY II CORPS *in the Winter Line Drive. Picture (bottom right) was taken from above Cassino after the fall of the city*




SAMMUCRO
LA CHIAIA
S. PIETRO
MT. CESIMA
MT. TROCCHIO
MT.
S. VITTORE
MT. LUNGO
MT. ROTONDO
TO NAPLES
HIGHWAY NO 6

and the Liri Valley, II Corps had seen Mount Trocchio looming ahead of them as the last and most formidable obstacle. Now, by 14 January, our troops had driven the Germans from all their intermediate defenses and were facing Trocchio itself, main objective of the attack that began on 10 January. To capture the enemy's last stronghold in front of the Rapido River, II Corps prepared a blow in great force for 15 January. The 34th Division would direct its main effort against the northern flank of Trocchio, with the 168th Infantry striking through Le Pastinelle on the axis of the Cervaro-Cassino road. Two battalions of the 135th Infantry had Mount Trocchio itself as their assignment. On the left flank, two battalions of the 141st Infantry, 36th Division, which had relieved the 6th Armored Infantry, would take the southwest corner of the hill.

But the enemy for once was ready to yield ground without a fight. Evidently considering Mount Trocchio a hopeless position when its north flank was uncovered, he had withdrawn his main forces across the Rapido. II Corps' attack on 15 January encountered no resistance other than harassing artillery fire; three hours after the start, advance elements were neutralizing booby traps on the crest of Trocchio.

North of II Corps, the French Expeditionary Corps had been equally successful in the mountains, carrying through the work begun by VI Corps. The high peaks had been taken as far north as Mount Acquafondata, and the French advance carried on 16 January to Sant' Elia.

Conclusion

THE WINTER LINE campaign ended in mid-January with Allied gains on both sides of the Apennines. To the east, the British Eighth Army had crossed the Sangro and Moro rivers and made a thirteen-mile advance, principally in the area near the Adriatic coast. On a thirty-five mile front, Fifth Army had forced the enemy back into his Gustav Line and reached the edge of the Liri Valley, main corridor for advance to Rome from the southeast. In both zones, a stubborn and skillful enemy had limited the Allied success, and his defense had never disintegrated; neither Fifth nor Eighth Army had been given an opportunity to make the hoped-for breakthrough, either by opening up the Liri Valley or by a northeast flanking maneuver past Ortona toward Rome.

Nevertheless, in view of difficulties faced, Fifth Army's accomplishment was notable. Measured in miles of advance the gain may not seem great for two months of fighting. But this progress had been made against an enemy who was defending with his main forces the strongest system of fortifications yet encountered in Italy. The enemy had been defeated on ground of his own choosing, whatever difficulties this ground presented. He would have plenty of opportunity, in the rugged mountains of central Italy, to stand and fight on other organized defensive systems, but the Allies had shown their determination to assault such lines, and their ability to carry them under the most adverse conditions of weather and terrain.

Winter, ideal defensive ground, and the enemy's hard fighting made the Winter Line operations not only slow but costly. Combat units paid heavily for local successes, which they could not exploit fully because reserves were never sufficient to force a breakthrough.

Fifth Army battle losses from 15 November to 15 January were 15,930 men. Over half this number—8,844—came from American divisions and represented a casualty rate of ten percent. Non-battle casualties were much higher, numbering nearly fifty thousand for all the American elements of Fifth Army.

Enemy strength had been even more severely taxed, the two thousand prisoners taken in this campaign by Fifth Army representing only a small part of German losses. Their local reserves had been used to the point where the Germans could not mount a counter-offensive; moreover, their defense of Rome and central Italy became



Fifth Army

INSIGNIA OF ARMY, CORPS AND DIVISIONS IN THE WINTER LINE CAMPAIGN.



II Corps



36th Division



3d Division



VI Corps



45th Division



34th Division

increasingly difficult, however strong the defensive lines. The value of the Allied effort and the damage done to German military strength became clearer in the course of 1944. In the larger background of the European theater, every victory by the Allies in Italy, every increase in pressure on the Germans holding the Italian front, made it less and less possible for Hitler's high command to draw from Kesselring's twenty-two divisions for reinforcement of other fronts against the mounting Allied threat. The enemy having decided to fight it out in Italy, Allied armies were waging offensive warfare calculated to make him pay a maximum price for his decision.

Insignia of the 1*st,* 3*d, and* 4*th Ranger Battalions,* 201 *Guards Brigade,* 23 *Armoured Brigade, and French and Italian Forces not shown.*



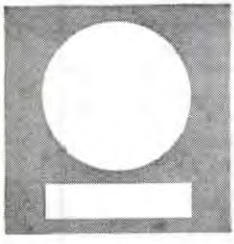
1*st Armored Division*



1*st Special Service Force*



82*d Airborne Division*



10 *Corps*

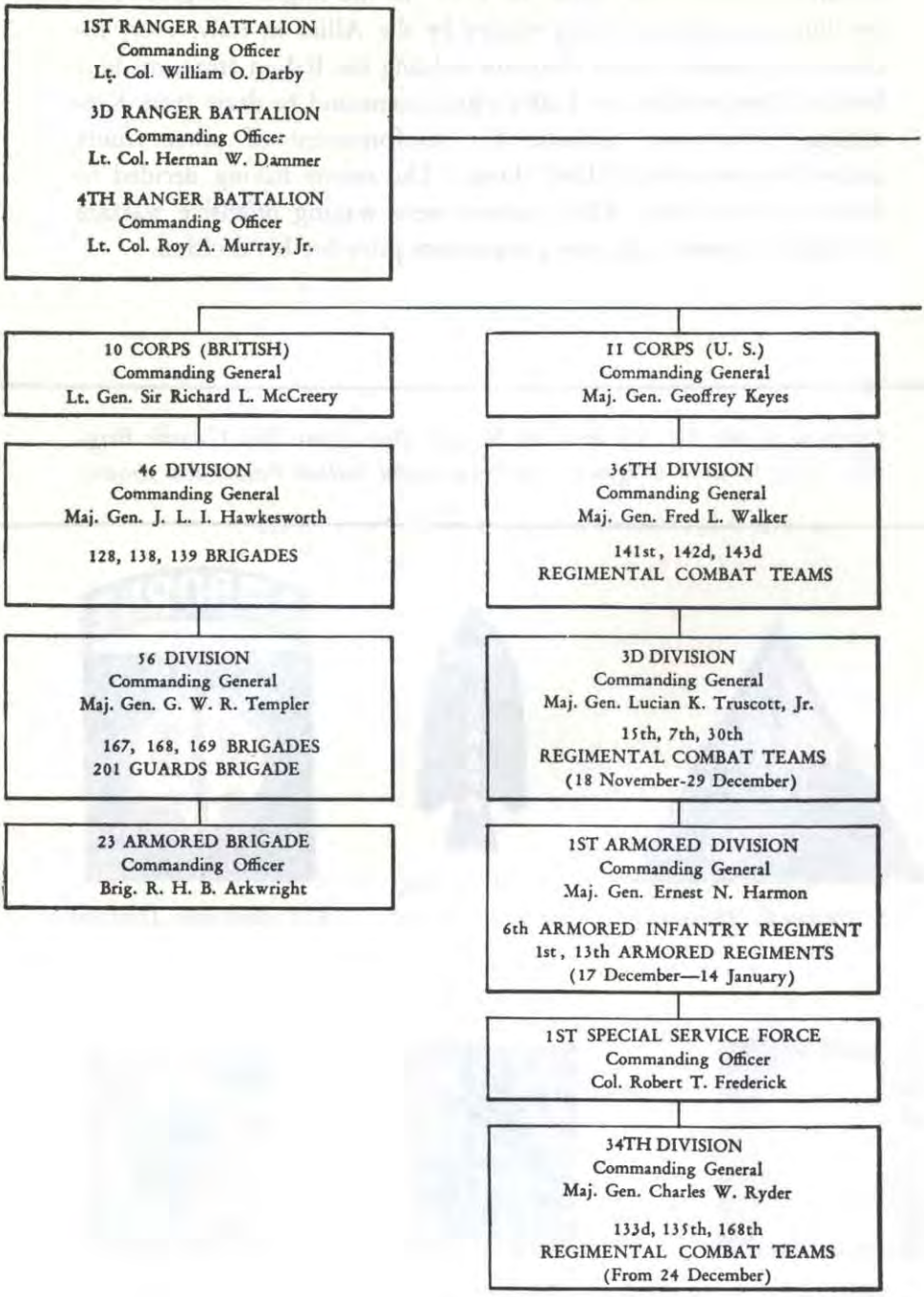


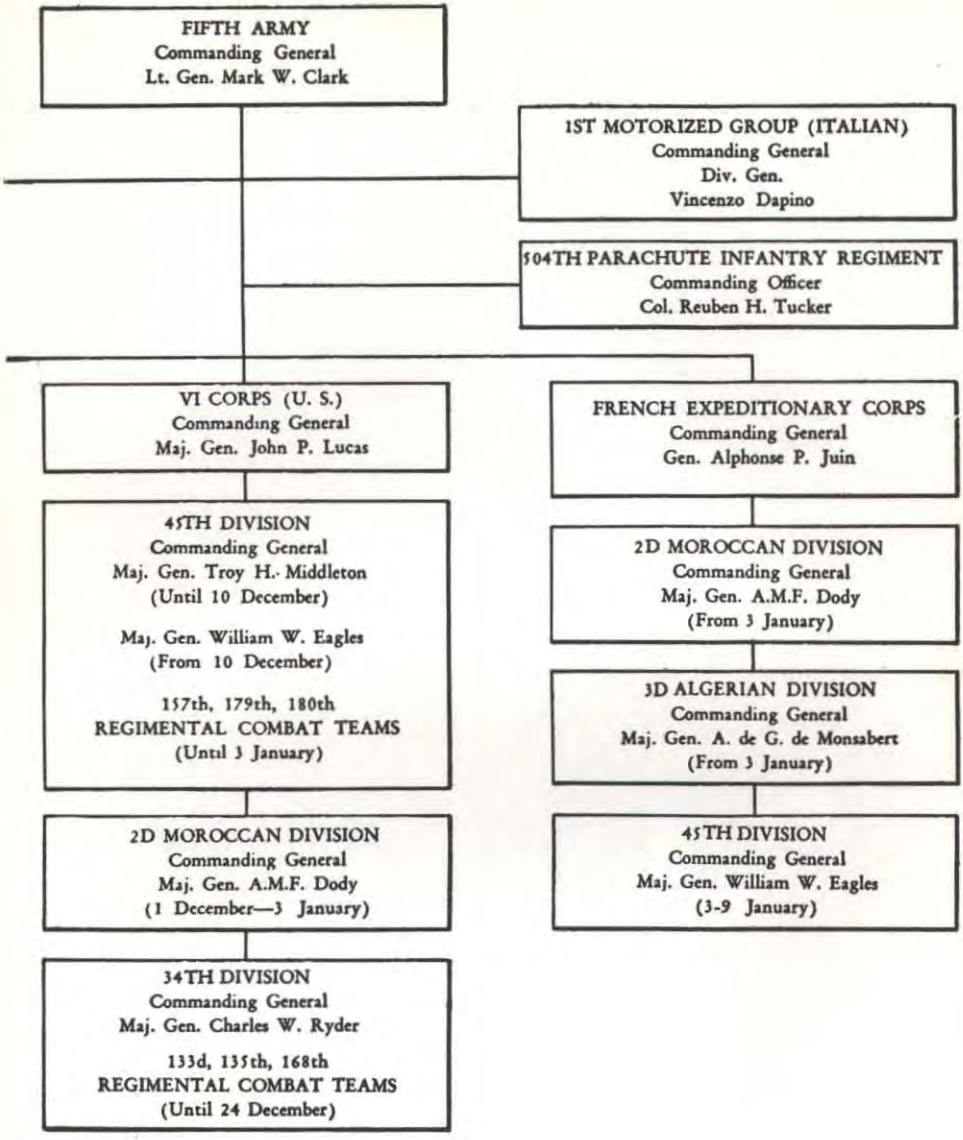
56 *Division*



46 *Division*

ORGANIZATION OF FIFTH ARMY
(15 November 1943 - 15 January 1944)





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