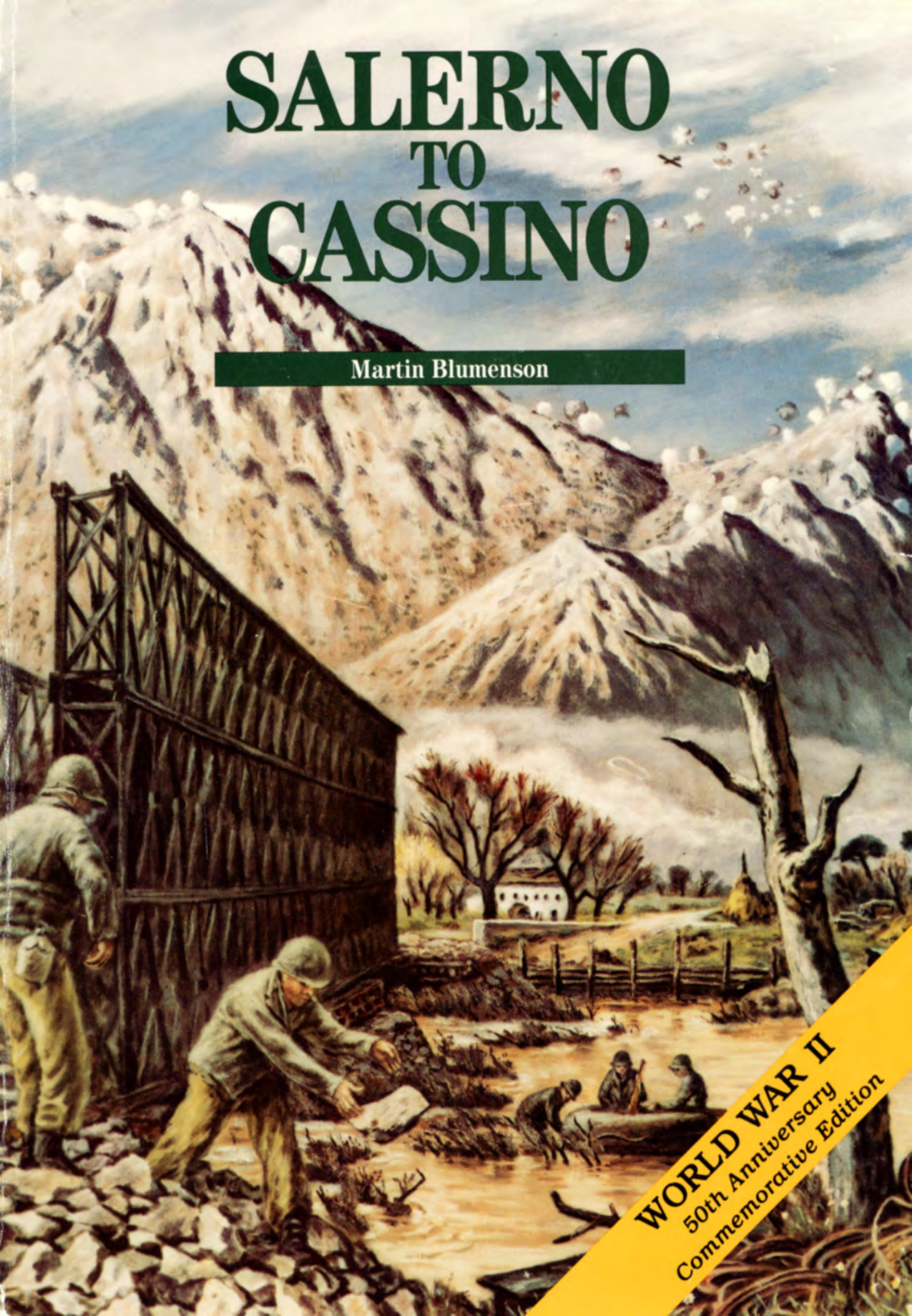
SALERNO TO CASSINO

Martin Blumenson



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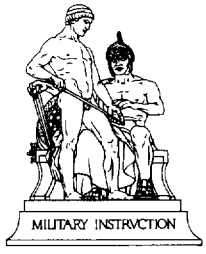
UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II

The Mediterranean Theater of Operations

SALERNO TO CASSINO

by

Martin Blumenson



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. . . to Those Who Served

Foreword

The focus of the American and British war effort in 1943 was on the ancient lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea where in May victory came at last in Tunisia and where in July Allied armies began a five-week campaign to conquer Sicily. The invasion of Italy in September sharpened that focus as Allied troops for the first time since 1940 confronted the German Army in a sustained campaign on the mainland of Europe.

The fighting that followed over the next eight months was replete with controversial actions and decisions. These included apparent American peril during the early hours in the Salerno beachhead; a British advance from the toe of the peninsula that failed to ease the pressure at Salerno; the fight to cross a flooded Rapido River; the bombing of the Benedictine abbey on Monte Cassino; and the stalemated landings at Anzio. The author addresses these subjects objectively and candidly as he sets in perspective the campaign in Italy and its accomplishments.

It was a grueling struggle for Allied and German soldier alike, a war of small units and individuals dictated in large measure by inhospitable terrain and wet and cold that soon immersed the battlefield. The methods commanders and men employed to defeat the terrain and a resourceful enemy are instructive now and will continue to be in the future, for the harsh conditions that were prevalent in Italy know no boundary in time. Nor do the problems and accomplishments of Allied command and co-ordination anywhere stand out in greater relief than in the campaign in Italy.

The role of United States forces in earlier operations in the Mediterranean has been told in previously published volumes of this series: *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* and *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*. A volume in preparation, Cassino to the Alps, will carry the operational story through the last year of the fighting. The strategic setting is described in detail in *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*.

Washington, D.C.
15 June 1967

HAL C. PATTISON
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Military History

The Author

Martin Blumenson, a graduate of Bucknell University, received M.A. degrees in History from Bucknell in 1940 and from Harvard University in 1942. Commissioned in the Army of the United States, he served as a historical officer of the Third and Seventh Armies in the European theater during World War II. After the war he taught history at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point) and at Hofstra College. Recalled to active duty with the U.S. Army in 1950, he commanded a historical detachment in Korea, served with the Office of the Chief of Military History, and was the Historian of Joint Task Force SEVEN. From 1957 to 1967, he was a civilian historian in the Office of the Chief of Military History. He is now engaged in independent research and writing. His published works include *Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington, 1961) in the series UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II, *The Duel for France* (Boston, 1963), *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed* (New York, 1963), *Kasserine Pass* (Boston, 1967), two essays in *Command Decisions* (Washington, 1959), and numerous articles in military and historical journals. Several of his works have been published as well in London and Paris editions. A lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, he is Visiting Professor of Military and Strategic Studies at Acadia University, Nova Scotia, for the academic year 1969–70.

Preface

Salerno to Cassino tells the story of the first eight months of the Italian campaign, from the Allied invasion of the Italian mainland in September 1943, through the battles of the autumn and winter of 1943–44, to the eve of the Allied spring offensive launched in May 1944. The period was grim, not only for the Allies but also for the Germans, for difficult terrain, bad weather, and chronic shortages of resources hampered both opponents. What the Allies had hoped would be a swift advance from Naples to Rome and beyond became a war of position, static warfare at its worst, which led directly to the risky amphibious operation at Anzio and to the climactic struggle in the shadow of Monte Cassino.

The focus of the account is tactical, specifically on the operations of the Fifth U.S. Army, though a strategic framework has been provided to give meaning to the battlefield. The German point of view has also been presented, and the activities of the Allied ground forces and of the naval and air forces have been sketched in where pertinent to the narrative.

Many persons have helped in preparing this book, and my thanks go to them. Those whose assistance transcended the normal bounds of duty include Mr. Ralph S. Mavrogordato, who gave me the benefit of his research in the German records; Miss Mary Ann Bacon, Chief of the Editorial Branch, and Mrs. Loretto C. Stevens and Mrs. Marion P. Grimes, who edited the book; Mr. Elliot Dunay, who drew the maps; Mrs. Lois Aldridge of the Federal Records Center, who helped provide the documents; Mrs. Constance B. Parham and Miss Barbara J. Harris, who typed the manuscript; and, most of all, Mr. Charles B. MacDonald, Chief of the General History Branch during the research and writing of this project, whose generous assistance at every stage in the development of the project was a major source of inspiration.

For all errors of fact and interpretation, I alone am responsible.

Washington, D.C.
15 June 1967

MARTIN BLUMENSON

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PART ONE
BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

The Origins

The weather was perfect, Mediterranean climate at its September best. The sea was calm. Despite crowded decks and congested quarters, the troops began to feel almost like passengers on a vacation cruise. Hardly anyone was sick. The food was good. The showers worked. There was lots of time to sleep. What a relief after months of training, C rations, grime, dust, and mud, scorching days and impossibly cold nights. The men preferred to remember the receding coast of North Africa and the nurses bathing in the surf.

Ahead lay the beaches of Salerno, and the men learned about them at sea as they clustered about their platoon leaders to discuss missions and study newly issued maps.

But combat belonged to the future. For the moment the scene was reassuring. The convoys moved along in parallel lines, the ships several hundred yards apart. "All around the compass," an officer later wrote, "as far as we could see in the clear sunlight, there were ships and more ships . . . ugly but comfortable LSTs, low slung LCTs, sharp, businesslike LCIs . . . so many ships . . . that we all had a feeling of security." Barrage balloons floating above some of the vessels heightened the impression.[1] Occasionally, escorting planes appeared.

In his cabin aboard ship, Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker wrote in his diary:

> The sea is like a mill pond. I hope we have as calm and peaceful a day tomorrow for our work in Salerno Bay. . . . At first light this morning I looked out the port hole of my stateroom . . . and could see ships in all directions . . . an inspiring sight. . . .
>
> Our plans are complete and it is only a matter of executing them. Everyone is cheerful and full of confidence. I expect the division to do well.[2]

Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark was also confident, and he impressed observers with his composure and youthful appearance.[3]

The campaign of southern Italy was getting under way. Launched by the armed forces of the Anglo-American coalition against the Axis Powers of Germany and Italy, it would develop into one of the most bitter military actions of World War II. Through the autumn and winter months of 1943–44, in discouraging weather conditions, in rough

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[1] Lt. Col. Norman Hussa, "Action at Salerno," *Infantry Journal* (December, 1943), p. 24. See also Engineer History, Fifth Army, Mediterranean Theater, vol. I (n.d.), p. 6; Maj Cader C. Terrell, The Operations of the 142d Infantry at Salerno, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, Ft. Benning, Ga., 1949–50 (hereafter referred to as Terrell Monograph); 141st Inf AAR, Sep 43. For an explanation of LCI's, LCT's, and LST's, see the Glossary.

[2] Walker Diary, 8 Sep 43. General Walker kindly made his diary available to the author.

[3] Quentin Reynolds, *The Curtain Rises* (New York: Random House, 1944), p. 283. See also Richard W. Tregaskis, *Invasion Diary* (New York: Random House, 1944), p. 113.

terrain, against a skillful enemy, Allied troops would fight across the beaches of Salerno and into the city of Naples, across the Volturno River and in the rugged mountains below Rome, across the plain of Anzio and around the abbey of Monte Cassino. When spring arrived, some would wonder what they had accomplished.

The Strategic Background

The consecutive Allied campaigns in northwest Africa, Sicily, and southern Italy, geographically so logical, came about only after spirited strategic debate—after arguments over alternative courses of action, discussion of relative advantages and risks, disagreement and compromise on purpose and method. Using some of the men and matériel being assembled in the United Kingdom for a cross-Channel attack, the Allies invaded northwest Africa in November 1942 in order to help embattled British forces in Egypt. Having secured the northern coast of Africa by May 1943, the Allies invaded Sicily two months later to insure the safety of the sea lanes between Gibraltar and Suez and make voyages around the African continent unnecessary. In August 1943, with Sicily taken, the Allies gained indisputable control of the southern Mediterranean; the corridor between Tunisia and Sicily became a protected avenue.

The invasion of southern Italy in September, an immediate extension of the Sicily Campaign, had a broader aim. It was the opening act of a drama that was to reach its climax in Normandy nine months later. General Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander wrote afterward that when the Germans withdrew across the Strait of Messina to the Italian mainland in August 1943,

> . . . the first aim of Allied strategy had been achieved: to clear the enemy from Africa and to open the Mediterranean to the shipping of the United Nations without fear of interruption; in the next phase the Mediterranean theater would no longer receive the first priority of resources and its operations would become preparatory and subsidiary to the great invasion based on the United Kingdom.[4]

The men responsible for the strategic decisions were Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States, and Winston S. Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain. Their military advisers were the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the British Chiefs of Staff (COS), who together comprised the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS). General George C. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, and General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, were probably the most influential members.[5] From the periodic meetings of the CCS evolved the strategy of the war, and from the Casablanca Conference in French Morocco during January 1943 emerged the origins of the decision to invade southern Italy.

At Casablanca, while the campaign in North Africa was still in progress, the

---

[4] Field Marshal the Viscount Alexander of Tunis, *Despatch*, 19 Apr 47, published as "The Allied Armies in Italy from 3rd September, 1943, to 12th December, 1944" in the *Supplement to the London Gazette* of Tuesday, 6th June, 1950 (referred to hereafter as Alexander *Despatch)*, p. 2879.

[5] The membership and operations of the CCS have been explained, for example, in Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1959), pp. 6–7, and in John Ehrman, *Grand Strategy, V, August 1943–September 1944*, "History of the Second World War," United Kingdom Military Series (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956), pp. 18ff.

Allied leaders decided to invade Sicily. Interested in securing their lines of communication in the Mediterranean, they also wanted to divert German strength from the Soviet Union during the summer of 1943 and to force Italy out of the war.[6] In view of their intention to achieve ultimate victory in Europe by means of a cross-Channel operation, should they plan any other undertaking in the Mediterranean area after Sicily? Further Mediterranean ventures would drain men and matériel from the resources being collected in the United Kingdom for the cross-Channel attack and thus postpone the action envisaged as the decisive blow against Germany. On the other hand, the Axis nations occupied southern Europe between Spain and Turkey, and that shore line was immediately at hand and a tempting target for invasion. This became the vital issue: was it better to halt Mediterranean operations after Sicily and conserve the cross-Channel build-up for the advance into northwest Europe, or was it better to exploit success in the Mediterranean and maintain offensive momentum by striking the underbelly of Europe?[7]

The question would plague the Anglo-American coalition during the first six months of 1943, and even later, for the answer depended on fundamental decisions regarding the conduct of the entire war. Until these decisions were made at the highest level, military planners at all echelons could do little but try to crystallize their thoughts by drafting tentative plans.[8]

The Americans, conscious of the demands of the war in the Pacific, generally staked their hopes in Europe on an early cross-Channel invasion of France and a decisive meeting with the enemy forces along the most direct route to Germany. The British, in general, looked upon a cross-Channel attack as the climactic blow against an enemy exhausted by Soviet resistance, Allied bombings, and operations along the vast periphery of Europe, including the Mediterranean.

A main effort on the Channel coast of

[6] *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1941, to June 30, 1943, to the Secretary of War* (Washington, 1943), p. 10; Eisenhower Dispatch, The Italian Campaign, 3 September 1943–8 January 1944 (hereafter cited as Eisenhower Dispatch), pp. 65–67, copy in OCMH.

[7] The strategy of 1943 has been examined in detail and with varying interpretations in the following volumes of UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944;* Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943–1945* (Washington, 1968); Lt. Col. Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, 1965); Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington, 1951). See also Richard M. Leighton, "OVERLORD Revisited," *American Historical Review* (July, 1963).

[8] The rest of this section, unless otherwise noted, is based on the following sources: Unnumbered JCS Paper, United Nations Course of Action Subsequent to HUSKY, 8 Apr 43; Memo, Brig Gen Albert C. Wedemeyer for Maj Gen Muir S. Fairchild, 2 Apr 43; OPD Papers, Allied Invasion of Italy, 25 Feb 43, Collapse of Italy, 2 Apr 43, and Outline Plan for Seizure of Heel of Italy, 8 Apr 43, all in ABC 384; JCS 288/1, 8 May 43, title: Invasion of the European Continent From Bases in the Mediterranean in 1943–44; AFHQ Appreciation and Outline Plan for Assault on Sardinia, 1 Dec 42; AFHQ G–3 Memo, Plans for Opn BRIMSTONE, 23 Jan 43; AFHQ Preliminary Directive, 2 Feb 43; AFHQ G–3 Memo, Reorganization of North African Theater After Clearance of Tunisia, 10 Feb 43; AFHQ G–3 Memo, Action in the Mediterranean in the Event of the Collapse of Italy, 7 Mar 43; AFHQ G–3 Paper, Alternative Action If HUSKY Becomes Impracticable, 16 Mar 43; AFHQ G–3 Memo, Action on Collapse of Italy—Availability of Forces and Timing, 17 Mar 43; AFHQ Log P 50/26, 22 Mar 43; AFHQ G–3 Memo, Opn HUSKY as an Immediate Follow-up to VULCAN, 2 Apr 43. See Bibliographical Note for file locations.

France would limit Mediterranean operations, for Allied resources were insufficient to support major campaigns in both areas simultaneously. As it became clear during the spring of 1943 that shortages in landing craft and assault shipping, no less than the estimated strength of the enemy opposition, would prevent a cross-Channel effort that year, continuing the offense in the Mediterranean area after the conquest of Sicily seemed increasingly desirable as a means of employing the considerable forces assembled in the theater. Furthermore, significant Mediterranean operations beyond Sicily would help the Russians by drawing German forces from the Eastern Front.

If, then, it was expedient to continue offensive operations in the Mediterranean beyond Sicily, where should the action take place? Americans who regarded European strategy in terms of a cross-Channel attack looked for a complementary and diversionary maneuver useful to that main effort. They tended to favor an invasion of southern France, with conquest of Sardinia and Corsica as preliminary steps.

British strategists were inclined toward the Adriatic and Aegean areas of the Mediterranean. They wished to support the guerrillas active in the Balkans, lure Turkey into the war on the Allied side, and open a shorter sea route to the USSR for lend-lease supplies. They saw airfields and logistical bases in southern Italy as preliminary requirements.

These divergent courses, one leading from Sicily toward the western Mediterranean and the other toward the eastern Mediterranean, offered little basis for Anglo-American compromise. Each had serious disadvantages.

An Allied invasion of Sardinia and Corsica would pose no direct threat to Germany. Nor would it, as the single major post-Sicily effort in 1943, be large enough to satisfy public expectations and to provide hope of quick liberation of the occupied countries. Furthermore, conquest of Sardinia and Corsica would point toward an invasion of southern France, which in turn was bound to a cross-Channel attack. The limited shipping and amphibious equipment available in the Mediterranean and elsewhere would so restrict the size of a landing force in southern France as to prohibit a strong and immediate drive into the interior. No objective vital to the Germans would be directly threatened, and only a minimum diversion of German forces from the Eastern Front could be expected.

Prospects of a Balkan campaign were just as discouraging. The Allies would first have to seize the toe and heel of Italy, open airfields and ports, and accumulate resources, then launch an amphibious operation across the Adriatic. The Italian foot, no strategic objective in itself, was mountainous country with poor communications and small harbors of only limited usefulness; if defended, it would be difficult to take. In the relatively barren Balkans, Allied forces would be far from the United States and Great Britain, they would require a massive logistical effort for their nourishment, and they would be embarked on a slow and tedious march into Central Europe, where decisive objectives were absent. A Balkan penetration would change the whole direction of European strategy, make no contribution to the cross-Channel endeavor, and cause a wholesale shift of air power to the eastern

Mediterranean that would disrupt plans to intensify strategic bombing against Germany from the United Kingdom.

Despite the differences in American and British thinking, one hope united the Allies—that Italy, the weaker of the European Axis partners, could be forced out of the war.

The benefits of an Italian capitulation were well worth securing. Twenty-nine Italian divisions in the Balkans and five in France would no longer be available to the Germans for occupation duties and coastal defense. Faced with the burden of fulfilling commitments formerly delegated to the Italians, the Germans would have to decide whether they could remain in Italy or whether they would have to withdraw behind the Alps. In either case, they would have to transfer divisions from the Russian front or from France to insure, at the least, the defense and internal security of the Balkans. Stretched over the European continent, they would be more vulnerable to attack from any quarter. If they withdrew from Italy, they would lose the naval bases in Italy and along the eastern shore of the Adriatic, as well as the use of Italian supply routes to the Balkans. They would forfeit to the Allies air bases in central and northern Italy that were within range of the Rumanian oil fields, the Danubian supply route, and the main Axis industrial centers in southern Germany and Czechoslovakia.

How then, if conquest of Sicily failed to do so, could the Allies force Italy out of the war? The British, in general, were willing to spend more time and resources in the Mediterranean than the Americans, who, generally, were looking for some place to halt Mediterranean operations in order to regain resources for the campaigns in the Pacific and the build-up in the United Kingdom. And in reconsidering their strategic aims, the Allies fell back to their earlier positions —the Americans looking beyond Sicily toward Sardinia and Corsica, on the way, possibly, to southern France, the British toward southern Italy, on the route, perhaps, to the Balkans.

There was much to be said in favor of each course. Conquest of Sardinia and Corsica would represent a major commitment that was feasible in terms of the resources already in the theater. This operation would continue the momentum of the Allied offensive, protect still further Mediterranean shipping, provide advanced air bases, pose a threat to southern France and to the whole western coast of the Italian mainland, and perhaps compel Italian capitulation.

A Balkan invasion also had certain advantages. It would deny the Axis essential oil, chromium, copper, and other war commodities; menace Axis lines of communication to the Eastern Front; demoralize the nations of eastern Europe that were wavering in loyalty to the Axis; and might accelerate guerrilla action in Greece and Yugoslavia to the point of making the German occupation untenable.

A third possibility was an invasion of southern Italy, followed by a campaign up the peninsula. This, like the other alternatives, had its pros and cons. If the Axis forces resisted effectively in the mountainous ground, major and protracted operations would be necessary. Since Allied resources in the Mediterranean were insufficient to guarantee decisive success, additional troops and matériel would have to be brought to a theater that the Combined Chiefs of

Staff had relegated to subsidiary importance. Furthermore, an advance all the way up the Italian mainland would impose on the Allies the liability of maintaining internal security in hostile territory, perhaps even the obligation of directing the entire civil administration of the country; and it would bring Allied forces to the formidable barrier of the Alps. If the Allies restricted their sights to the capabilities of their available forces, they would have to limit their efforts to the southern portion of the Italian peninsula. Though operations confined to the south promised some advantages—a relatively small commitment of resources, without the obligation of extensive political and economic commitments, would gain air bases for bombing targets in the Balkans and southern Germany—they would lead to no decisive objective beyond producing, perhaps, the surrender of Italy.

Although a campaign up the Italian peninsula would be difficult for the ground forces, it had certain attractions for Allied air commanders. Bases in central Italy would permit heavy bombers to attack vital targets in southern Germany and in Rumania without having to cross the great belt of fighter and antiaircraft defenses along the northern and western approaches to Germany. No comparable defensive barrier existed along the southern entrance, and the Germans were probably incapable, because of their already stretched resources, of erecting one. Thus, an Allied air offensive from Italy, if co-ordinated with intensified bombing from the United Kingdom, would have a particularly destructive effect.[9] Whether this advantage would offset the costs of a long and difficult ground campaign was another matter.

If the Allies decided to launch operations in the Mediterranean beyond Sicily in 1943, they thus had two possible immediate invasion areas: Sardinia and Corsica, leading eventually to southern France; and southern Italy, leading ultimately to a mainland campaign or to the Balkans. Only the President and Prime Minister, with the help of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and on the basis of worldwide strategy, could make the decision, and upon that decision the CCS would set theater objectives, allocate theater resources, and approve theater plans.

Toward a Decision

When the Allied leaders met in Washington in May 1943, as the fighting in North Africa was coming to a victorious end, they confirmed—in meetings known as the TRIDENT Conference—their plans for the invasion of Sicily and scheduled the operation for July. They also came to a decision on their goals in the Mediterranean: knock Italy out of the war and tie down the maximum number of German forces.

But how to accomplish these aims and specifically where to make the next effort after Sicily were subjects on which they could still reach no agreement.[10] In the hope of clarifying the issues, Mr. Churchill and Generals Marshall and Brooke traveled at the end of May to Algiers to meet with the commanders who were

[9] Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder to Gen Eisenhower, 8 May 43, ABC 384.

[10] For a detailed account of the TRIDENT Conference, see, for example, Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*, Chapters V, VI; Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943–1945*, Chapter III.

directing the war in the Mediterranean.

There, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was the Commander in Chief, Allied Force. His chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, headed the integrated Anglo-American Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ), organized in accord with American staff principles and doctrine.[11] In exercising his authority, General Eisenhower worked under the close supervision of his immediate superiors, the Combined Chiefs of Staff. This command conception was more British than American, since the Americans regarded a theater commander as a rather independent figure.[12] To a certain extent, perhaps, the CCS, and particularly General Marshall, offered somewhat more than the usual guidance, not only because of General Eisenhower's and their own relative inexperience but also because of the magnitude of Eisenhower's task.

Under Eisenhower's command were combined ground, naval, and air forces of the United States and of the British Commonwealth of Nations, as well as those French forces in North Africa that no longer followed the Vichy Government. To the problems of prosecuting coalition warfare were added the commitment by the United States to reequip French military units and employ them in combat and the need to protect North Africa against possible Axis incursion through Spain and Spanish Morocco.

In performing his operational tasks, General Eisenhower followed the British practice of command in committee to the extent of generally making his decisions after conference with his subordinate service commanders. These were General Alexander, who was Deputy Commander in Chief, Allied Force, and Commander in Chief, 18 Army Group, and who in the latter capacity directed the operations of the ground forces; Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, who commanded the Mediterranean Air Command; and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, who, as Commander in Chief, Mediterranean, directed naval operations.[13]

Where to seek the enemy after the Sicily Campaign was a subject that had undergone much tentative exploration by

[11] General Eisenhower was also Commanding General, North African Theater of Operations, U.S. Army (NATOUSA), a headquarters dealing with purely American matters—personnel, supply, and discipline. Maj. Gen. Everett S. Hughes, Deputy Commander, NATOUSA, also commanded the NATOUSA Communications Zone. Maj. Gen. Thomas Larkin commanded the Services of Supply, NATOUSA, which controlled the base sections in the theater. The British Middle East Command, with headquarters in Cairo, was responsible for a theater that was not engaged in active ground operations but performed service and training functions; several U.S. service and Air Forces units were under its operational control. See Ehrman, *Grand Strategy, V*, 21ff.; Leo J. Meyer, Strategic and Logistical History of the Mediterranean Theater, MS, OCMH.

[12] An example of Anglo-American differences in thought on the role and function of the theater command may be found in the British suggestion that planners be sent from London and Washington to Algiers in order to help the AFHQ Planning Staff formulate post-Sicily plans. The American members of the CCS persuaded the British members to the contrary view, and the CCS finally disapproved the suggestion on the grounds that the function of CCS planners was to advise the CCS and not to assist the theater commanders, and that the presence in Eisenhower's headquarters of planning teams from London and Washington might interfere with the functions of the theater command. Sending planners or technical advisers to Algiers, the CCS decided, must depend entirely on Eisenhower's wishes. Lt Gen Joseph T. McNarney to Gen Eisenhower, 2 Jun 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 6. On the close supervision exercised by the CCS, see, for example, CCS to Eisenhower, 20 Jun 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 6.

[13] Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 39–42. Though in actual practice Alexander held the title of Deputy Commander in Chief, there is some question whether the title was ever formally confirmed. Ehrman, *Grand Strategy, V*, 21.

the commanders and planners in the Mediterranean. To them it was clear that the course of operations would depend in large measure on two enemy reactions impossible of accurate assessment before the event: how the Italians would react to the invasion of Sicily and how the Germans would react if Italian demoralization and disintegration continued.

Eisenhower's planners were inclined to favor a course of action beyond Sicily that would not bind the Allied forces to a single unalterable line of advance. Invasion of Sardinia and Corsica seemed to them to meet this condition best. If the larger situation suddenly changed—if, for example, developments on the Eastern Front affected the extent of German help to the Italians, or if the CCS decided to concentrate the Mediterranean resources elsewhere in the world—the Allies would not be irretrievably committed so long as they were engaged only in seizing the two islands. Nor would such a campaign divert Allied resources from the build-up in the United Kingdom. The principal disadvantage was that if conquest of Sardinia and Corsica failed to precipitate Italian surrender, further action would be necessary, probably an assault on the mainland. In that case, it was doubtful whether another amphibious operation could be mounted in 1943, for winter weather would compel postponement of a landing until the spring of 1944.[14]

These were among the topics discussed during the visit of Churchill, Marshall, and Brooke to Eisenhower's headquarters at the end of May 1943, though the central question remained how best to force Italy out of the war. Recognizing that Italian morale had seriously declined since the Axis defeat in Tunisia, the Allied leaders believed that increased pressure during the next few months might well force Italian capitulation.

In General Eisenhower's opinion, steps to eliminate Italy should be taken immediately after the Sicily Campaign. Although Sardinia and Corsica were, as his planners had pointed out, tempting invasion targets, he felt that the Allies ought to go directly onto the Italian mainland if Sicily was easily won. Mr. Churchill, who had a strong desire to get Italy out of the war and Rome into Allied hands, agreed.

Wary lest an Italian campaign absorb resources needed for a cross-Channel attack, General Marshall felt that a decision should await an appraisal of enemy strength and intentions as revealed in the reaction to the invasion of Sicily and the subsequent fighting there. He proposed and the others agreed that General Eisenhower should set up two planning staffs, each to plan a separate operation, one against Sardinia and Corsica, the other against southern Italy. When experience in Sicily indicated the strength of the opposition, Eisenhower would have a better basis for recommending to the CCS the more appropriate course of action.[15]

[14] AFHQ G–3 Memos, Opns After HUSKY, 7 May 43, and Mediterranean Strategy, 7 May 43; AFHQ G–3 Paper, Opns After HUSKY, 29 May 43. See also Rpt, JCS Joint Strategy Survey Committee, Opns Subsequent to HUSKY, 24 Apr 43, and Memo, COS, Opns in the European Theater Between HUSKY and ROUNDUP, 14 May 43, both in ABC 384.

[15] Summary, Min of Mtg, Eisenhower's Villa, Algiers, 29 May–3 Jun 43, ABC 384. Accounts of the Algiers conference may be found in Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*, pp. 153–55; *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff . . . July 1, 1941 to June 30, 1943 . . .*, p. 11; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1948), pp. 193–95.



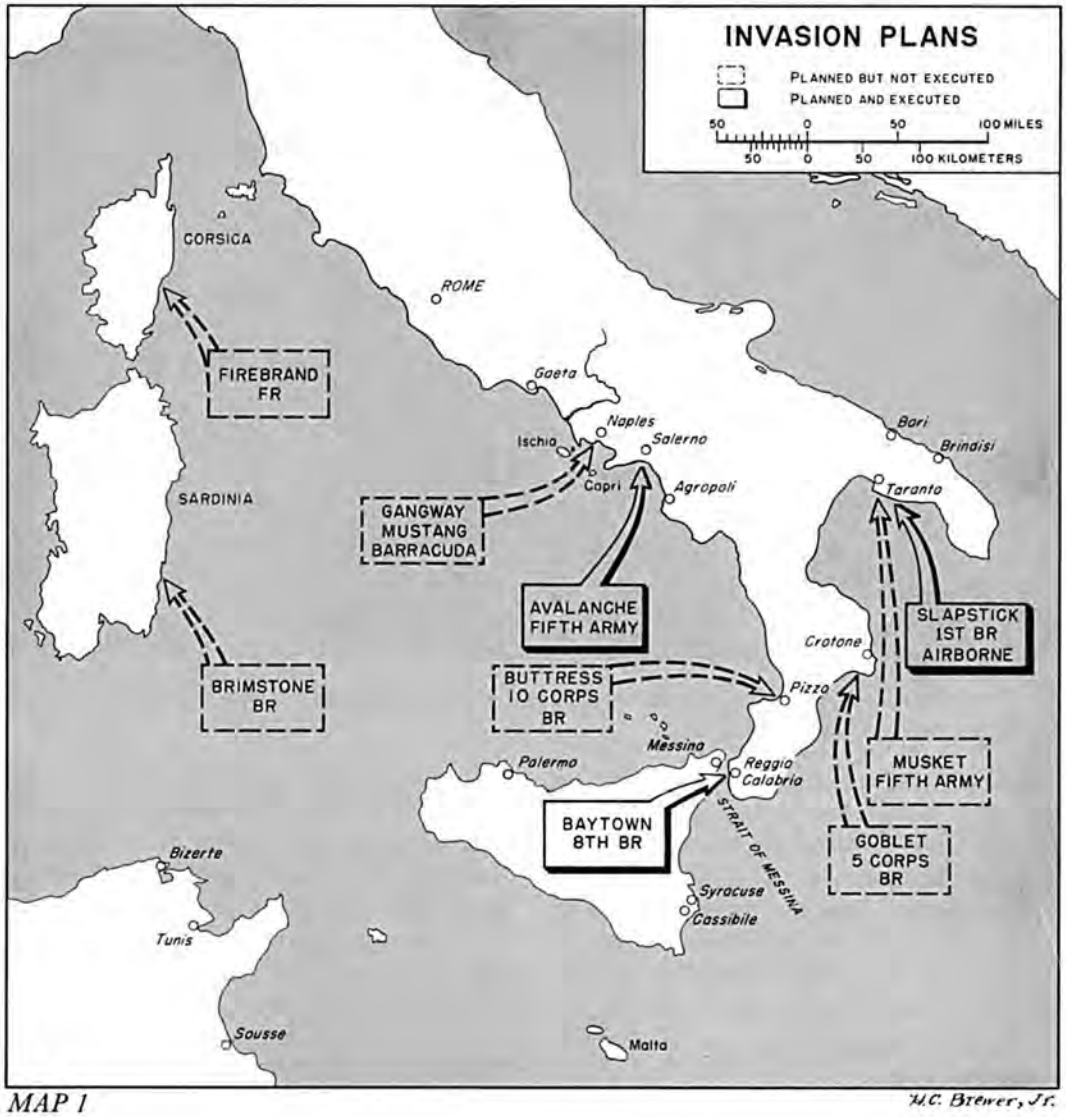
THEATER COMMANDERS. *General Eisenhower, Air Chief Marshal Tedder, General Alexander, and Admiral Cunningham.*

Although it was still by no means certain that the Allies would initiate any further operations in the Mediterranean after Sicily, General Eisenhower on 3 June began to prepare for two possible amphibious assaults after Sicily, one alternative to the other—a landing on the Calabrian toe of Italy and a landing on Sardinia.[16] Corsica he would handle separately.

The easiest way to invade the mainland was from Sicily, across the Strait of Messina, barely two miles of water at the narrowest point. But since the troops engaged in the Sicily Campaign might be exhausted at the end of the fighting and incapable of carrying the war to the mainland, and since it might even be desirable to invade Italy before the Sicily Campaign ended, Eisenhower assigned the mission of planning that invasion to the British 10 and 5 Corps headquarters, which were not to be involved in Sicily. The 10 Corps headquarters was to plan to mount an assault from North Africa around 1 September: a landing in Calabria to seize the minor ports of Reggio and San Giovanni, followed by an advance overland to take the small port of Crotone and nearby airfields. If enemy resistance delayed the advance, 5 Corps was to be ready to carry out, thirty days later, an amphibious assault near Crotone. (*Map 1*)

For the other possible invasion, Eisenhower on 10 June directed General Clark, who commanded the Fifth U.S. Army, to prepare for a descent on Sar-

[16] AFHQ G–3 Memo, Opns After HUSKY, 3 Jun 43, ABC 384; Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2882. See also History of Allied Force Headquarters and Headquarters NATOUSA (n.d.) (cited hereafter as History of AFHQ), Part 2, sec. 1, p. 141.



MAP 1 *M.C. Brewer, Jr.*

dinia. If Sardinia rather than the Italian toe was chosen as the invasion target, the American assault force—one corps with four divisions—would be strengthened by the addition of the troops preparing to land on the toe—10 Corps with three divisions. Eisenhower also instructed Clark to look into the possibility of a landing on the heel near Taranto. Several days later, on 15 June, he asked General Henri Philippe Giraud, commander in chief of the French forces in North Africa, to plan a wholly French operation to seize Corsica.[17]

[17] Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 105–06; Alexander *Despatch*, pp. 2882–83; *Fifth Army History*, Part I, *From Activation to the Fall of Naples* (Florence, Italy: L'Impronta Press, 1945), pp. 16–17.

As planning for the most probable target areas beyond Sicily thus began a month before the invasion of Sicily, CCS and AFHQ planners continued to survey other possible courses of action in the Mediterranean, though there was still no assurance that any would be initiated.[18]

It was at this time that a new idea became prominent. Instead of invading the toe for the purpose of advancing to the heel and perhaps moving to Naples and possibly even to Rome, the planners began to think of driving directly from the toe to Naples, then to Rome. The whole of southern Italy, as far north as Naples certainly, and perhaps as far as Rome, came to be regarded as a desirable objective.[19]

Extending this concept, the British Chiefs of Staff began to see a campaign in southern Italy as an end in itself and far more useful than an invasion of Sardinia. It would shake Italian morale more profoundly and tie down more German forces. In contrast, the American Joint Chiefs remained disturbed over the possibility of drifting into a major land campaign that would unfavorably affect a cross-Channel assault. They preferred Sardinia and Corsica, which required fewer resources.[20]

At this point, General Henry H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces, and a member of the JCS and CCS, interjected a suggestion made earlier. Would a valid air argument, he asked, prove of sufficient weight to prompt the selection of one post-Sicily choice over the others? As far as he was concerned, the Italian mainland was the most attractive target area because of the air bases located there. If the Allied ground forces could advance from southern into central Italy, they would gain additional airfields that would permit maximum bombardment of vital enemy targets still substantially immune from attack.[21] Arnold's recommendation had no immediate consequences.

No one during the early months of 1943 seems to have been thinking of Sardinia and Corsica as steppingstones to northern Italy, even though the islands would offer staging areas for amphibious operations and airfields for short-range bombardment and close support.

On the last day of June, ten days before the invasion of Sicily, General Eisenhower summed up his thoughts for the CCS. A selection of any operations after Sicily, he said, would depend on the opening phases of the Sicily Campaign, as well as on certain limiting factors. Aside from the enemy reaction in Sicily, the principal determinant was the CCS directive to eliminate Italy from the war and to engage the maximum number of German forces. Hardly less important was a CCS directive that applied after the Sicily Campaign came to an end—

[18] See, for example, AFHQ G–3 Memos, Outline Plan for Assault on Italian Mainland, 7 Jun 43, and Post-HUSKY Opns, 28 Jun 43; Memo, Roberts for ACofS OPD, 3 Jul 43, ABC 384. As late as 26 June, AFHQ planners were considering the possibility of moving from southern Italy across the Adriatic to Yugoslavia. AFHQ G–3 Memo, Post-HUSKY Opns, 26 Jun 43.

[19] AFHQ G–3 Memos, Opns After HUSKY, 3 Jun 43, Post-HUSKY Opns, 26 Jun 43, and Occupation of Italy, 1 Jul 43; AFHQ G–3 Memos, Occupaton of Italy, 3, 14 Jun 43, and Rpt by Combined Staff Planners, Post-HUSKY Opns North African Theater, 13 Jul 43, both in ABC 384; AFHQ Msgs, 17 Jun 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 6.

[20] Memo, 6 Jul 43, and Notes on CCS 101st Mtg, 9 Jul 43, ABC 384.

[21] Memo, Arnold for JPS, Comparison of Various Post-HUSKY Opns in Relation to Allied Air Capabilities, 3 Jul 43, ABC 384.

it required the movement from the Mediterranean theater to the United Kingdom of four American and three British divisions, all with supporting units, to augment the build-up of the cross-Channel forces. Contributing to the current uncertainty over post-Sicily alternatives was Eisenhower's lack of exact knowledge of the extent of American naval support and the amount of assault shipping he was to receive. Nor did he know whether the CCS would furnish certain American troop units he had requested. Among lesser handicaps were deficiencies in antiaircraft artillery troops, which he hoped the British Middle East Command would make good. Some British units lacked equipment, which could perhaps be obtained by stripping divisions in the Middle East. He needed military police units in North Africa to relieve combat troops who were guarding prisoners of war. Not enough landing craft and shipping were available to permit adequate amphibious training. Too few long-range fighter planes were on hand to protect contemplated amphibious assault areas. And if Italian resistance collapsed, he would require more than 900 military government officers.

With these needs in mind, General Eisenhower figured that if a successful invasion of Sicily failed to bring Italy to surrender, he had two alternatives: to carry operations to the Italian mainland by invading the toe, followed perhaps by an amphibious assault against Crotone; or to invade Sardinia. He had discarded the possibility of an amphibious landing in the heel near Taranto for several reasons. The weather in early November, probably the soonest the operation could be launched, would make prolonged maintenance over the beaches a risky proposition; planners estimated that the serviceable landing craft remaining after the operations in Sicily would be far too few to permit an assault in the size and strength deemed appropriate; and Taranto was too far from airfields in Sicily to permit fighter aircraft to give the assault forces adequate cover.

Much of his recommendation on where to go after Sicily, Eisenhower declared, would depend on the strength and location of the German forces and on the morale of the Italian Army. If effective and prolonged Axis resistance seemed unlikely, he would probably favor invading the toe. But if the six British divisions tentatively slated for that invasion appeared too small a force to exploit overland to the heel or to Naples, he would probably incline toward Sardinia.

In pursuit of flexibility, Eisenhower had plans prepared for four possible invasions: (1) landings in Calabria to be executed by British forces; (2) Calabrian landings developed overland to the heel and, in the event of Italian collapse, to Naples and Rome, carried out by British units, these to be reinforced by three American divisions brought by ship into a captured Naples; (3) a landing on Sardinia by American and British troops; and (4) a landing on Sardinia together with a French invasion of Corsica. If strong Axis resistance on Sicily made it unwise to invade the mainland, Eisenhower would probably recommend launching a full-scale assault to capture Sardinia, but this would probably be impossible before 1 October.[22]

Strong opposition was what Eisenhow-

[22] Eisenhower to CCS, 30 Jun 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5. See also AFHQ G-3 Memo, Post-HUSKY Opns, 28 Jun 43, ABC 384..

er expected on 9 July as Allied convoys approached the coast of Sicily. In the light of that estimate, he informed General Marshall that "our resources" for post-Sicily "are very slender indeed." Hospital capacity in North Africa, for example, was less than half the number of beds The Surgeon General of the Army recommended as a minimum figure. Also, the theater was so lacking in service units that combat troops were performing general labor, guard duty, and port work. Thus, despite his earlier impulse to descend on the Italian mainland, he now hesitated to recommend any operation beyond Sicily.[23]

[23] Eisenhower to Marshall, 9 Jul 43, and Smith to Marshall, 6, 11 Jul 43, all in OPD Exec 3, Item 5. General Eisenhower eventually obtained more French troops to perform service functions in North Africa.

Yet the inherent logic of the situation required another operation. The exploration of alternative possibilities beyond Sicily was primarily contingency planning in the event the Sicily Campaign failed to eliminate Italy from the war. But granting the campaign achieved the first part of the dual CCS directive: knock Italy out of the war, the second part of the directive would still be in force: contain the maximum number of Germans. What was far from clear was what the Germans would do if Italy surrendered. The most widespread assumption among Allied planners was that an Italian collapse would move the Germans to withdraw from Italy. In that case, the Allies would have to be ready to make a swift follow-up.

There would be another blow in the Mediterranean area, then, but where?

CHAPTER II

The Choice

The Concept

The invasion of Sicily on 10 July 1943 was unexpectedly easy. Directed by General Alexander's 15th Army Group headquarters, the landings by General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery's British Eighth Army and Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.'s, U.S. Seventh Army succeeded with relatively light losses in men and matériel. It became quickly apparent in the Allied camp that Italian military power had seriously deteriorated.[1]

By 15 July, the fifth day of the Sicily Campaign, Maj. Gen. George V. Strong, the U.S. Army G–2, considered the time right for bold action and the assumption of great risks in conducting the war in Europe. In view of the decline of Italian combat efficiency, he believed that the Allies had more than enough resources in the Mediterranean theater to invade the mainland and force Italy out of the war. The best place to strike a blow of this sort, he suggested, was Naples. Good beaches in the vicinity offered landing sites. The prospect of quickly overrunning Sicily promised airfields from which planes might cover landing forces. The advantages of gaining lodgment at Naples were indisputable. A successful landing at Naples would avoid protracted land operations in Calabria and rule out the possibility of a stubborn Axis defense at the short and naturally fortified line between Naples and Taranto. It would place the large and modern port of Naples in Allied hands and make possible the logistical support of sustained operations in southern Italy. For these reasons, Strong recommended that planners investigate at once the feasibility of an amphibious assault to capture Naples as the first step toward securing Rome.[2] Unmentioned by Strong, but possibly conditioning his thinking, was the fact that the Germans had launched a large-scale offensive in the Soviet Union ten days earlier, on 5 July, thereby prompting concern among Allied leaders that the USSR might be knocked out of the war. Allied operations on the mainland of Italy would tie down far more German forces than an invasion of Sardinia and Corsica, would satisfy better the requirement of the CCS directive governing activities in the Mediterranean area, and would perhaps help the Russians by drawing German troops from the Eastern Front.

Favorably impressed by Strong's suggestion, General Marshall brought it to the attention of the Combined Chiefs on the following day. He pointed out that

[1] For a detailed account of the campaign, see Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*.

[2] War Dept G–2 Memo, Strong for Marshall, HUSKY Exploitation, 15 Jul 43, ABC 384.

since losses in shipping and landing craft had been negligible during the invasion of Sicily, and since the Allies would probably gain possession of Sicilian ports earlier than expected, an amphibious assault on Naples might be mounted before the onset of winter weather and launched without unreasonably great risks. He recommended that the Combined Chiefs of Staff advise General Eisenhower to study the matter. Admiral Ernest J. King, U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, commented that an invasion at Naples might serve in lieu of a landing on Sardinia.

Marshall's suggestion, supported by King, was adopted. While accepting the tentative operations General Eisenhower had outlined on the last day of June—the four possibilities he listed in his quest for flexibility—the Combined Chiefs also expressed interest in a direct amphibious landing against Naples in place of an attack on Sardinia, if, in Eisenhower's opinion, the Italian resistance in Sicily was so weak as to make acceptable the hazards of a mainland invasion farther north than the toe.[3]

Aside from the appearance of considerable strength in the Italian Army order of battle, the principal risks of an invasion at Naples came from two limitations —lack of air cover and too few assault vessels. Naples itself was just outside the effective range of single-engine fighter aircraft that would be operating from airfields in Sicily, and theater resources in assault lift seemed altogether inadequate, despite the negligible losses during the invasion of Sicily, to support a substantial landing.[4]

American planners who studied a possible Naples operation hesitated to endorse it. Conceding that it represented a sudden shift from conservative to bold strategy and therefore might surprise the enemy, admitting that it might well lead to the collapse of Italy, and recognizing that, even without the surrender of Italy or the capture of Rome, it would give the Allies air bases for strategic bombing of Germany and the Balkans, the planners in Washington could not ignore the disadvantages. Because land-based fighter planes flying from Sicily lacked the range to provide adequate air cover for the assault force, the Allies would have to depend on aircraft carriers. In a theater where the Allies had a distinct two-to-one superiority in shore-based aircraft, it seemed unsound to tie the success of a ground venture to carriers, particularly since the vessels were vitally needed elsewhere. Employing carriers offshore at Naples would not only lower the number of ships in the Pacific and Indian Oceans to unacceptable minimums but would also be an extremely dangerous use of a valuable resource. Furthermore, failure to capture Rome or to precipitate Italian collapse would probably mean a long and indecisive peninsular campaign that might well require additional resources in the Mediterranean to the extent even of vitiating the cross-Channel attack being planned for the spring of 1944. Finally, hurried operational planning and the use of assault forces insufficiently trained for amphibi-

[3] Extract, Min, CCS 102d Mtg, 16 Jul 43, ABC 384; CCS to Eisenhower, 16 Jul 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5. See also Memo, Maj Gen Thomas T. Handy for Gen Marshall, 17 Jul 43, ABC 384.

[4] See Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943–1945*, Chapter VII.

ous warfare would invite failure, if not disaster.

A successful operation near Naples, American planners believed, might advance the collapse of Italy by a few months, but a setback would prejudice the cross-Channel build-up, postpone progress in the Pacific for several months, and delay operations in Burma for a year. The Allies could meet the requirements for aircraft carriers and for additional amphibious equipment only by disrupting the entire global strategy and logistics developed during the conferences at Casablanca in January and in Washington in May. Interference with the agreed-upon and projected worldwide strategy for 1943 and 1944, the Americans concluded, was therefore unacceptable because seizure of Naples would not assure what had become the primary object of Mediterranean operations—eliminating Italy as a belligerent.[5]

British planners in London were attracted to the Naples concept, and they expanded it into an assault on the Italian west coast with the object of capturing Rome as well as Naples. They recognized and admitted the disadvantages of such an operation, but saw the advantages as overriding. Seizure of Naples would be a serious blow to the Axis, and capture of Rome would be decisive for Italy. Compelled in all likelihood by an Allied landing on the west coast to extricate their forces from Sicily and the toe of Italy, the Germans would find it difficult to withdraw if the Allies held Naples and Rome.

In line with their expanded view, which they code-named AVALANCHE, the British planners suggested three general areas where Allied forces might go ashore: Rome south to Terracina; the Gulfs of Gaeta, Naples, and Salerno; and the Gulfs of Eufemia and Gioia. The first, the Rome area, was the most attractive, but an invasion there would be very much a gamble. No land-based air support of the assault forces would be possible. Should the operation fail to take Italy out of the war, the Allies would probably have to withdraw. In the second, the Naples area, a direct seaborne assault on Naples itself would be impossible because of strong defenses—at least fifty dual-purpose guns, with batteries on the flanking islands of Ischia and Capri. But landings were conceivable north of Naples at Gaeta and south at Salerno. Gaeta gave good access to Naples but was just outside the effective range of fighter aircraft. Salerno, barely within range of single-engine fighter planes, was separated from Naples by rugged terrain. Landings in the third area, the Gulf of Eufemia or the Gulf of Gioia, just above the toe, would pinch off German forces in Calabria, but Allied troops subsequently advancing to Naples would have to cross very difficult ground. At the same time, a landing on the beaches of Eufemia or Gioia would offer little advantage over an assault on Reggio and San Giovanni and on nearby Crotone for which the headquarters of the British 10 and 5 Corps were then planning. But if the German Air Force could operate effectively from bases in southern Italy, an Allied invasion anywhere north of Gioia would be in jeopardy.

The forces slated for the attacks on the toe, those under the 10 and 5 Corps headquarters, could together do AVALANCHE, the planners believed, but a

[5] Rpt, Joint War Plans Committee to the JPS, Rapid Exploitation of HUSKY, 19 Jul 43, ABC 384.

switch would disrupt the earlier planning. And if at the last moment some untoward event made AVALANCHE impracticable, it would probably prevent mounting and launching the other operations. "Only the Commanders in the field," the British planners concluded, "can judge the chances."[6]

The commanders in the field—Eisenhower, Alexander, Cunningham, and Tedder—noted that the Italians were largely ineffective in Sicily but that the Germans were bitterly contesting the invasion and rapidly reinforcing their troops. The Allied commanders estimated that the Sicily Campaign would end some time in mid-August. They decided, therefore, to defer until then a final decision on what to do afterward, but they agreed that the mainland of Italy, somewhere between Reggio di Calabria in the toe and the Naples area, was the best place to exploit success in Sicily. A study made more than a month earlier had concluded that, because of the air cover problem, the west coast would be impractical for landings anywhere north of the toe. Consequently the Allied commanders inclined as before toward an invasion of the toe, followed perhaps by a landing at Crotone, both then developed overland toward Naples and the heel. Realizing that the unexpectedly light losses in landing craft and shipping during the invasion of Sicily might permit mounting an assault on the mainland before winter, they reconsidered a landing near Taranto. And in accordance with the CCS instructions, they re-examined an assault on Naples, an area earlier regarded as entirely too risky. Unwilling to make a final selection until the Sicily Campaign developed further and until his planners looked again at all the post-Sicily possibilities, Eisenhower nevertheless inclined toward a landing on the Italian mainland. He therefore, on 18 July, requested advance approval from the CCS to carry the war to the Italian mainland immediately after the end of the fighting on Sicily should he so decide. He had in mind a landing on the toe.[7]

Two days later the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved Eisenhower's request. But they reminded him that amphibious operations against the Italian mainland ought to be launched as far north as shore-based fighter cover would allow. The CCS also made available some shipping and landing craft but provided no additional long-range fighter aircraft, even for temporary use, because the planes were needed in the United Kingdom as escorts for the intensified air attacks of the Combined Bomber Offensive.[8]

The decision to carry the war to the Italian mainland brought planning for operations against Sardinia to an end. Sardinia, like Corsica, became a French responsibility, and these islands—until landings in southern France became a possibility in 1944—lost their strategic importance.

[6] Post-HUSKY Opns: Opn AVALANCHE, 19 Jul 43, ABC 384.

[7] Eisenhower to CCS, 18 Jul 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5; Draft Telegram, Gen Eisenhower to Gen Sir Henry Maitland Wilson (Middle East), 20 Jul 43; AFHQ G–3 Paper, Opns After HUSKY, 29 May 43, and AFHQ G–3 Memo, Outline Plan for Assault on Italian Mainland, 7 Jun 43, all in ABC 384.

[8] CCS to Eisenhower, 20 Jul 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 4. The Combined Bomber Offensive, a sustained air bombardment, in the words of the CCS, was "calculated to materially and perhaps fatally impair Germany's capacity to logistically support her armed forces." CCS Study, Additional Bomber Groups for AVALANCHE, 29 Jul 43, ABC 384.

As the Allies turned toward the Italian mainland, two questions remained to be answered: where specifically should the assault be made? and how much, in terms of resources, should be expended?

In general, British planners favored AVALANCHE, a Naples operation, more than the Americans did. The British had been partial to a landing at Taranto in the heel, which was very much like AVALANCHE. A major port was the objective of each, and Taranto and Naples were about the same distance from Allied airfields in Sicily. Although AVALANCHE demanded greater resources, the benefits were bound to be greater. Even the use of aircraft carriers now appeared a justifiable risk in an operation expected to have a decisive effect. It would be wrong, the British believed, to deprive General Eisenhower of anything he might need to invade the mainland, a mistake to permit any resources to leave the Mediterranean for the United Kingdom, India, or the Pacific until Eisenhower could determine what he needed. They proposed that the CCS instruct Eisenhower to prepare a plan for a direct attack on Naples on the assumption that the necessary additional resources would be forthcoming. And they recommended that the movement of forces and equipment away from the Mediterranean theater, previously directed by the CCS, now be halted.[9]

The Americans demurred. According to agreements on strategic plans, operations projected in Burma primarily to keep China actively in the war required that some amphibious craft be released from the Mediterranean at the end of the Sicily Campaign; without these vessels, plans for Burma would be delayed or perhaps canceled. More important, the build-up for the cross-Channel attack had already drawn troops away from the Mediterranean. An admission of the attractiveness of AVALANCHE and the desirability of seizing Naples, the Americans believed, were no justification for changing global allocations to increase Eisenhower's resources.[10] If sufficient means were available to seize Sardinia, why were more needed for Naples?

The CCS accepted the American point of view. They instructed Eisenhower "to prepare a plan, as a matter of urgency, for direct attack on Naples, using the resources which have already been made available. . . ."[11]

Dramatic news from Radio Rome heightened the urgency. King Victor Emmanuel III removed Benito Mussolini from power on 25 July and appointed Maresciallo d'Italia Pietro Badoglio head of a new government. Though Badoglio immediately announced Italy's intention to continue in the war, the elimination of Italy seemed much closer at hand.[12]

Since the Allies had no plans to exploit a sudden removal of Mussolini from

[9] Memos, Reps of COS for CCS, 19, 21, 22 Jul 43, ABC 384. On the British regard for a Taranto operation, see Memo, Roberts for ACofS OPD, 3 Jul 43, ABC 384.

[10] Memo, JCS for CCS, 22 Jul 43, and Rpt by Joint Staff Planners, 23 Jul 43 (with Appendix, Memo, JCS for CCS), both in ABC 384.

[11] Extract, Min, CCS Mtg, 23 Jul 43, ABC 384. See also Memo, Reps of COS for CCS, 24 Jul 43, ABC 384. The British apparently issued a stop order on 24 July 1943 halting all movements of their own troops and shipping from the Mediterranean until Eisenhower could stipulate what he needed for an invasion of the Italian mainland. Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943–1945*, ch. VII.

[12] A detailed account of the events leading to the surrender of Italy can be found in Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*.

power, military leaders in Washington and in Tunis met the next day to discuss what they might do. In Washington, increasing Eisenhower's resources now seemed altogether unnecessary. A swift Allied descent on the mainland near Naples would strengthen any action the new Italian Government might wish to take to embarrass the Germans in Sicily, southern Italy, Sardinia, and Corsica. A short campaign appeared possible. The Combined Chiefs of Staff therefore reiterated their directive to Eisenhower to plan, though not necessarily to launch, AVALANCHE, a landing on the west coast north of the toe, for the earliest possible date with the object of expediting the withdrawal of Italy from the war. To help solve the problem of air cover in the assault area, the CCS granted him the use of one light and four escort carriers.[13] In Tunis, General Eisenhower and his subordinate commanders came to the conclusion that AVALANCHE was becoming increasingly feasible—so much so that it could now be considered an alternative of equal practicality with a landing on the toe.[14]

From the original and somewhat vague conception of an assault landing on the west coast of Italy oriented on Naples and Rome, Eisenhower's planners began to develop and refine AVALANCHE into an amphibious operation designed to capture the port of Naples and nearby airfields. Exactly where the assault should be made was still under study during the latter part of July, but it began to seem that a landing on the beaches around Salerno, just south of Naples, offered the best prospect of success. Although the mountains of the Sorrento peninsula between Salerno and Naples would block direct access to Naples, the minor port of Salerno would be an asset during the initial stages of an opposed landing, as would the Montecorvino airfield, only three miles inland.[15] There matters rested until the definitive decision could be made upon the completion of the Sicily Campaign.

The Decision

A prerequisite for AVALANCHE, the planners agreed, was a beachhead on the Calabrian toe of Italy. Since conquest of Sicily would secure the western shore of the Strait of Messina, a beachhead across the strait would open the narrow waters for Allied ships. Airfields in Calabria would increase the shore-based air cover available for an assault on Naples. And Allied troops in Calabria would tie down German reserves that might otherwise be rushed to the Naples assault area.[16]

How gain a beachhead in the toe? The British 10 Corps headquarters was in North Africa and preparing plans for an invasion of the toe, but the forces it directed were needed, in combination

[13] Extract, Min, JCS Mtg, 26 Jul 43, Memo, CofS for CCS, 26 Jul 43, and Extract, Min, Special CCS Mtg, 26 Jul 43, all in ABC 384; CCS to Eisenhower, 26 Jul 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 4. A few days later the CCS turned down Eisenhower's request for four squadrons of Flying Fortresses (B–17's), even on a temporary basis to disrupt enemy communications during the period immediately preceding the assault. Eisenhower to CCS, 28 Jul 43, and Memo, Brig Gen John R. Deane for Gen Marshall, 1 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[14] Eisenhower to CCS, 27 Jul 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[15] AFHQ G–3 Paper, Appreciation of an Amphibious Assault Against the Naples Area, 23 Jul 43.

[16] Eisenhower to CCS, 28 Jul, 5 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5. See also Extract, Min, JPS Mtg, 7 Aug 43, dated 9 Aug 43, ABC 384.

with American units, for the larger AVALANCHE operation. Could some of the troops actively engaged in Sicily cross the strait immediately after the campaign in an *ad hoc* operation? There was a drawback. If an improvised crossing proved unsuccessful, formal landing operations would become necessary. The 10 Corps would have to launch its invasion, and this would deprive AVALANCHE of a major component and might cause it to be canceled.

During the early days of the Sicily Campaign, when optimistic forecasts envisaged a very quick end to the fighting, Eisenhower and Alexander had talked of launching an offhand invasion of Calabria. They discussed having the British Eighth Army, immediately at the close of the campaign, send a brigade of infantry, plus commandos and paratroopers, across the strait. The 10 Corps would then carry out its landing as a follow-up, not on the toe but just above the toe in the Gulf of Gioia. But when stiff German resistance in Sicily dissipated the optimism, the commanders abandoned the idea.

In late July and early August, when Allied intelligence agencies anticipated an early end to the combat in Sicily and the withdrawal of German forces across the Strait of Messina, they estimated that the Germans would keep but few forces in the toe of Italy. In all likelihood, they would withdraw those forces if the Allies invaded the mainland. Since Italian resistance could be "ignored, except possibly for coast defense batteries," and since the opposition from enemy fighter aircraft based in the heel would probably be "negligible," the theater planners reconsidered an assault from Sicily across the strait to Reggio di Calabria. Forces occupying a beachhead there would safeguard the Sicilian port of Messina and the Sicilian coastal road from German gunfire; open the strait to Allied shipping; gain an airfield at Reggio from which planes could support AVALANCHE; tie down the German forces in the toe; and perhaps even draw German forces from the AVALANCHE area. A very limited advance in Calabria would gain all the benefits except the last. And if an assault across the strait prompted the Germans to withdraw from Calabria, the Allied forces would be in position to pursue vigorously. In that case 10 Corps might come ashore in the Gulf of Gioia and cut off the German withdrawal.[17]

On 1 August General Eisenhower still favored a 10 Corps landing in the toe, the operation to be mounted from North Africa; he still considered AVALANCHE to have only secondary priority. But on the following day, with his subordinate commanders in agreement, he decided to plan to rush "substantial parts" of the British Eighth Army across the strait from Sicily, while "going full out on the more ambitious plan," AVALANCHE, which would require the participation of the British 10 Corps, together with American forces.[18]

On 10 August, as the Sicily Campaign entered its final week, General Eisenhower stopped the planning for a more or less impromptu crossing of the Strait of Messina. He now wanted a well-prepared operation by the British Eighth Army. Although he was thinking strong-

[17] AFHQ G–3 Estimate of the Situation for BAYTOWN, 31 Jul 43.

[18] AFHQ CofS Mtg 35, 2 Aug 43, Salmon Files, OCMH; Eisenhower to CCS, 2 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5 (also cited in Summary of Corresp, ABC 384).

ly of launching AVALANCHE, he told the British 10 Corps commander to continue planning for a landing on the toe—just in case a shortage of landing craft or the prospect of strong enemy opposition made AVALANCHE impracticable. But no matter whether 10 Corps landed somewhere in Calabria by itself or entered the mainland as part of a larger AVALANCHE invasion force, Eighth Army troops in Operation BAYTOWN were to make the first landing across the strait from Sicily to secure a beachhead on the tip of the toe.[19]

The timing of an AVALANCHE invasion would depend to a large extent on the moon. If airborne troops were to participate, they would need moonlight for their drops. The naval forces to carry the assault troops to the beaches would require darkness for their offshore approaches. The period between 7 and 11 September would be suitable for both—during these nights a few hours of moonlight would precede total darkness.[20]

The availability of assault shipping also would affect the timing. On 26 July, the day after Mussolini's fall from power, when the commanders in the theater had considered whether they could exploit the event by launching some, almost any, amphibious operation, Maj. Gen. Lowell W. Rooks, the AFHQ G–3, dashed their hopes. Enough landing craft and ships, he reported, could not be released from Sicily in time for refitting and redeployment for another major operation before 7 September at the earliest. This date coincided with the favorable phase of the moon.[21]

Because of the shortage of assault shipping in the theater, some vessels used in the Eighth Army crossing of the strait would have to be employed in AVALANCHE. A reasonable time interval between the two operations was, therefore, important. Yet accumulating the necessary artillery and naval support and the needed supplies for the Eighth Army crossing would take until the end of August. Even though commanders, according to Eisenhower, were "straining every nerve" to make the first landing at the earliest possible date, even though General Alexander hoped to launch it "before the end of August or early September," the Eighth Army assault appeared unlikely until some time between 1 and 4 September.[22]

On 16 August, the day before the Sicily Campaign came to an end, General Eisenhower made his final decision. He would send the Eighth Army across the Strait of Messina as early as possible, the date to be decided by General Alexander; he would launch AVALANCHE on 9 September.[23]

The Allied leaders, then meeting in Quebec, approved, although they agreed that AVALANCHE was "the riskiest one that we have yet undertaken." What con-

[19] Eisenhower Msg, 7 Aug 43, and Eisenhower to CCS, 10 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5; Extract, Min, JPS Mtg, 7 Aug 43, dated 9 Aug 43, and Gen Smith to Gen J. F. M. Whiteley, 10 Aug 43, Summary of Corresp, both in ABC 384. See also Alexander *Despatch*, pp. 2883–84.

[20] See Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, pp. 106, 110. The tide in the Mediterranean is negligible and had no effect on planning.

[21] Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943–1945*, ch. VII.

[22] Eisenhower to CCS, 16 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[23] Eisenhower to CCS, 16, 18 Aug 43, and Smith to Whiteley, 17, 22 Aug 43, both in OPD Exec 3, Item 5; Eisenhower to Alexander, 16 Aug 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

cerned them primarily was the lack of resources in the Mediterranean theater, which would preclude what was deemed to be sufficient immediate follow-up forces.[24] Adding to the hazards was the one great Allied failure of the Sicily Campaign—the failure to keep the Germans from successfully evacuating their forces across the Strait of Messina to the mainland.[25] Allied estimates of German troops on the mainland increased from 60,000 on 7 August to 102,000 ten days later. If the Italians fought alongside the Germans, a total of thirty-five enemy divisions would oppose the Allies, a force far superior to the strength the Allies could put into the field. On the other hand, if Italy surrendered, the Germans would probably give up the southern part of Italy and retire slowly to the Pisa-Rimini line in the north.[26]

Italian surrender seemed near. The Badoglio government had made contact with General Eisenhower and was trying to come to terms. The negotiations were secret, for if the Germans learned of the discussions they might well occupy Italy in greater strength. General Eisenhower naturally wished to keep the German troop commitment in Italy to a minimum, but he also hoped that if Italy agreed to an armistice the Italian Army, though demoralized and lacking equipment, might hold up the movement of certain German divisions for one or two days during the critical stage of the AVALANCHE landings. Oddly enough, AVALANCHE, a blow at the mainland, originally conceived as a means of forcing Italian surrender, had now—because of the air cover problem, the shortage of seaborne lift, and the strength of the opposition—become contingent on the prior elimination of Italy by military diplomacy.[27]

Since the main purpose of the invasion was to eliminate Italy from the war, why, in view of Italian willingness to surrender, invade Italy at all? Because there was no guarantee that the Italian Government, under the opposing pressures of potential German occupation and threatened Allied invasion, would be able to capitulate. Invading the mainland seemed the best way to catalyze the events. A subsequent campaign in Italy would then comply with the CCS directive to tie down German forces that might otherwise be used on the Eastern Front or to strengthen the Channel coast defenses of northwest Europe.

Despite the Allied victory in Sicily and the general satisfaction in the Allied camp with the developing situation, Eisenhower waited until 19 August to cancel the 10 Corps landing in the toe (BUTTRESS). Even then, he directed that sealed orders be delivered to appropriate commanders to reinstate the operation if some unexpected event at the last moment made it desirable or necessary to suspend AVALANCHE.[28]

[24] Smith to Whiteley, 22 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[25] Accounts of the German evacuation may be found in Samuel Eliot Morison, "History of United States Naval Operations in World War II," vol. IX, *Sicily—Salerno—Anzio, January 1943–June 1944* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954), pp. 209–18; Major-General Sir Francis de Guingand, *Operation Victory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 310; Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, chs. XIX, XX, XXI.

[26] G–2 Annexes to Fifth Army AVALANCHE Outline Plan, 7, 17 Aug 43.

[27] Smith to Whiteley, 22 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[28] Eisenhower Msg, 19 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

The Place

All the risks of AVALANCHE were intensified by the terrain in southern Italy. The rugged mountain ranges below Rome are highest along the west coast, rising steeply from the sea and confining major communications to coastal routes. Although a relatively short invasion thrust would cut the main roads, force the enemy into difficult mountainous ground, and obstruct the escape of those enemy troops south of the invasion area, the invaders would be hampered by narrow valleys unsuited to military operations conducted by mechanized forces. The rough country would hinder deployment off the roads, restrict maneuver to the relatively few plains, and favor the defense.[29]

Looking at the terrain in detail to determine where to land the AVALANCHE forces, the planners narrowed the choice to the beaches fronting the Gulfs of Gaeta, Naples, and Salerno. They soon rejected the Gulf of Naples. Its beaches were unsuitable for landing operations, the adjacent ground, particularly the slopes of Mount Vesuvius, dominated the shore, and the sea approaches were strongly fortified. "Thank the Lord we did not have to make that landing," a division commander later remarked.[30]

Just north of Naples, the Gulf of Gaeta was better. No nearby mountains command the coast. The beaches merge into the Campanian plain around Naples, and relatively level ground would permit the rapid deployment of large forces and the use of armor. Troops could come ashore less than thirteen miles from Naples and find neither hills nor other obstacles to impede their approach to the city. Quick success might cut off a considerable number of enemy units south of Naples and perhaps force the Germans to evacuate Naples before they could destroy the port. The Volturno River on the north would give flank protection. Airborne troops dropped to secure the Volturno bridges could prevent enemy reinforcement of the Gaeta defenses and provide bridgeheads for a subsequent drive to Rome.

But Gaeta had its disadvantages. It was too far from the toe of Italy to allow mutual support between the AVALANCHE forces and those of the Eighth Army landing at Reggio. The sea approaches to Gaeta and the beaches were known to be heavily fortified with mines, pillboxes, gun emplacements, and barbed wire. The beaches were soft, the gradients of the slope unfavorable. A sandbar would prevent landing ships and craft from coming close to shore. Last, Gaeta was beyond the effective range of fighter aircraft based on Sicilian airfields.

As late as 12 August, less than a month before the invasion, commanders and planners were still discussing the possibility of an invasion at Gaeta. But whether the deciding factor was the offshore sandbar or the inability of land-based air forces to provide adequate cover, the Gaeta area was rejected.[31] "I thanked my lucky stars that we did not land in that area," wrote the same division commander.[32]

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[29] As one example of many terrain studies, see AFHQ G–3 Memo, Outline Plan for Assault on Italian Mainland, 7 Jun 43, ABC 384.

[30] Walker Diary, 1 Oct 43.

[31] *Fifth Army History,* Part I, pp. 20–21; Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 177; Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 110–11; AFHQ G–3 Planning Mtg 38, 12 Aug 43, Salmon Files, OCMH.

[32] Walker Diary, 19 Oct 43.

Almost by default, the 20-mile stretch of beach south of Salerno was chosen.[33] Excellent sea approaches, with no shoals and good underwater gradients, would permit ships to come close to land. A narrow strip of sand between water and dune and numerous beach exits leading to the main coastal highway—from Agropoli through Salerno to Naples and eventually to Rome—would facilitate shore operations. The small port of Salerno, about fifty miles south of Naples, and the tiny harbor of Amalfi, nearby on the Sorrento peninsula, would be helpful for receiving supplies. Coastal defenses in the Salerno area were almost exclusively fieldworks rather than permanent installations. Fighter craft based on Sicily, though operating at extreme ranges, could cover the assault landings. An excellent airfield, Montecorvino, capable of sustaining four fighter squadrons, was close to the shore line.

Inevitably, there were also serious disadvantages. As at Gaeta, the distance of Salerno from the toe precluded mutual support by the two invasion forces. The Sele River, which empties into the gulf about seventeen miles south of Salerno and divides the plain into two distinct sectors, would split the AVALANCHE invasion forces. The steep vertical banks of the Sele and of its principal tributary, the Calore, would hamper maneuver and require the assault troops early in the landing phase to bring ashore enough bridging to span the streams and provide communication between the two invasion forces. Mountains enclosing the Sele plain would limit the depth of the initial beachhead and expose the troops to enemy observation, fire, and attack from higher ground; but since there was no solution to this problem, the planners simply refused to dwell on it.[34] Finally, the principal ridge system in the Naples-Salerno area, the rocky spur of the Sorrento peninsula, blocks access to Naples except for two narrow gorges piercing the Sorrento hill mass; to capture Naples quickly, the Allies would have to take control of these corridors very soon.

Altogether, the prospect for AVALANCHE was mixed. Though the Italian political situation dictated an invasion and though the time was propitious, the hazards were great. Not only was the Italian mainland forbidding, but other obstacles stood in the way of a successful amphibious operation.

[33] Engineer History, Fifth Army, Mediterranean Theater, vol. III, Appendix G, Tactical Study of the Terrain, Naples and Vicinity, 7 August 1943.

[34] Lecture by Col Robert J. Wood, The Landing at Salerno, at Army and Navy Staff College, presented various times, 1944–46, copy in National War College Library, Washington, D.C. (Hereafter cited as Wood Lecture.) (A copy of a slightly different version is in ABC 384, Post-HUSKY, Sec 2).

CHAPTER III

The Preparations

In an offhand remark President Roosevelt once characterized military planners as conservative. They saw all the difficulties, he said, yet more could usually be done than they were willing to admit.[1] This conservatism of military commanders and planners grows out of the complexities of warfare and the burden of responsibility carried by those who plan and execute it. In World War II, no military operation was more hazardous and complicated than an amphibious assault landing, and none required more careful and painstaking preparation in every detail. Troops had to be selected, trained, rehearsed, placed aboard vessels, transported through hostile waters, landed on an enemy-held shore on the proper beach in the proper order at the proper time, then supported in the face of opposition.

Weapons, ammunition, equipment, vehicles, and supplies had to be collected, packed, crated, waterproofed, and marked for identification, moved to assembly areas, then to points of embarkation, and loaded and stowed on vessels. Space available had to be reconciled with room needed; pages of manifests, troop lists, and loading tables prepared. Key individuals and vital matériel had to be dispersed among several ships so that loss of any one vessel would not imperil the entire expedition. Decisions had to be made on what to take, how soon it would be needed on the hostile shore, and where to put it aboard ship so that it could be unloaded in the desired order. Throughout all these activities, men had to be fed and housed, equipment serviced, information disseminated, missions assigned, security and morale maintained.

Once afloat, the ground troops were militarily powerless and needed naval and air support. Not until initial objectives were taken and the beachhead was secure, not until men, weapons, and supplies flowed to the front in adequate quantities and without interruption could an amphibious operation be considered successfully completed.

Meanwhile, more men, supplies, and equipment had tó be brought across the water in the build-up. Planners had to count on ships allocated or promised, reckon the time needed to make turnaround voyages between rear area bases and the beach, try to employ suitable types of craft for a multitude of tasks; provide sufficient men to handle cargo on the beach and enough motor transport to carry supplies from beach to inland dumps; use the available road nets to assure the flow of adequate tonnages from dumps to combat areas without hindering the movements of troops and weapons.

[1] Memo, Marshall for Handy, 9 Aug 43, ABC 384.

The assault troops had to be able to meet and overcome any resistance that hostile forces could be expected to offer. Planners had to weigh the capabilities of their own forces against intelligence estimates of enemy strength derived from agents, air and naval reconnaissance, photographs, and the interrogation of prisoners.

Over all these actions hovered the menace of inclement weather, fatigue, equipment breakdown, enemy reaction, and bad luck.[2]

To organize and manage men and matériel in dispersed locations in Africa and Sicily for water movement to Italy so as to get them there at an appointed time and in condition to overcome hostile forces, and to arrange the details of an amphibious operation eventually involving 450 vessels of all types, hundreds of aircraft of various kinds, 100,000 British troops, almost 70,000 Americans, and 20,000 vehicles—this was the task of the AVALANCHE planners, who had their work further complicated by the uncertainty of units and resources to be allocated to the operation and by the short time available.[3]

Forces

The American ground headquarters charged by General Eisenhower with planning AVALANCHE was the Fifth U.S. Army. Activated in North Africa early in January 1943 to counter possible enemy action launched from Spain and Spanish Morocco and to safeguard the integrity of French Morocco and Algeria, the Fifth Army, under Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, had opened and operated several training centers, among them one for amphibious operations, where American, French, and some British troops practiced amphibious techniques.[4]

The Fifth Army commander was a graduate of West Point and had been wounded in action in World War I. He had been on the staff of Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair's Army Ground Forces, becoming AGF chief of staff in May 1942. General Clark took command of II Corps in June 1942, was appointed commander of the American ground forces in the European theater in July, and in November became the deputy commander in chief of the forces executing the North African invasion. As General Eisenhower's second in command, Clark performed the hazardous task of establishing contact with French officials before the landings, and did much afterward to ensure the success of the invasion of North Africa and the subsequent campaign.

When the question of setting up the Fifth Army was being considered, Gen-

[2] Lucas Diary, 7 Jun 43, photostat copy in OCMH; NATOUSA Ltr, Standing Instructions for Movements by Water, 30 Jan 44, and Capt R. A. J. English, USN, Navy Appreciation of Force 163 ANVIL Plans, 6 Feb 44, both in Force 163 AG File 370.26.

[3] The best sources on the planning for AVALANCHE are: *Fifth Army History*, Part I, pp. 15ff.; Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 71ff.; Alexander *Despatch*, pp. 2879ff.; Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno, Operation AVALANCHE—September 1943," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, vol. 79, No. 9 (September, 1953), pp. 959–76. See also John G. Westover, Planning AVALANCHE, draft MS, OCMH.

[4] *Fifth Army History*, Part I, pp. 6ff.; *Seventh Army Report of Operations*, 3 vols. (Heidelberg, Germany: Aloys Graf, 1946), I, 1. The Fifth Army eventually handed over its training responsibilities to NATOUSA, its antiaircraft and civil defense functions to AFHQ. AFHQ CofS Mtg 34, 30 Jul 43, Salmon Files, OCMH.

eral Clark, Eisenhower noted, "was very anxious to have that command instead of his then title of Deputy Commander-in-Chief." Although Eisenhower warned him that the Fifth Army would be a training organization for some months and nothing else, and although he assured Clark that he would probably get a front-line command of approximate corps strength soon, "the title of Army Commander was too attractive." Within a month after Eisenhower placed him in command of Fifth Army, Clark and some of his staff began, as Eisenhower said, to "plague" him for action. Fearful that the war in the Mediterranean would be over before they had a chance to participate, they were "most unhappy" throughout the spring of 1943 as the Tunisia Campaign drew to a close. Eisenhower became concerned with the state of their morale.[5]

Aggressive, hard-working, with a flair for public relations, General Clark impatiently awaited the opportunity to lead his Fifth Army in combat. In early June, as the possibility of Axis incursion through Spanish Morocco faded and the integrity of French Morocco and Algeria seemed assured, Clark became involved in post-Sicily planning as AFHQ sought flexibility in order to be ready to exploit, without recourse to the forces engaged in Sicily, a sudden breakdown of Italian resistance. While the British 10 and 5 Corps worked on their plans for landings on the Italian toe, the Fifth Army planned BRIMSTONE, the invasion of Sardinia. Later, the army drew plans for a landing at Taranto, on the heel of Italy, and for a variety of operations involving a swift descent on Naples in the event of sudden Italian collapse.[6]



GENERAL CLARK

Near the end of July, when the Allies were seriously looking toward the Italian mainland and beginning to consider AVALANCHE, Fifth Army seemed the logical headquarters to conduct the operation. A campaign on the mainland, no matter how short, would probably require from six to twelve divisions—British, American, and French—and considerable administrative and logistical overhead. Only an army headquarters could properly manage both operational and logistical matters of such scope. The Seventh Army was engaged in the Sicily Campaign; the Fifth was relatively free.

[5] SHAEF Diary, Book XI, 22 May 44, OCMH.

[6] AFHQ G–3 Memos, Occupation of Italy and Opns After HUSKY, both dated 3 Jun 43. See also AFHQ CofS Mtgs 33 and 34, 29 and 30 Jul 43, Salmon Files, OCMH; AFHQ Ltr, 16 Jul 43, Opns Records File, and GANGWAY Plan, 27 Jul 43, Opn GANGWAY File; Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2883; Clark, *Calculated Risk*, pp. 142–45.



GENERAL DAWLEY



GENERAL HARMON

The choice was officially made on 27 July.[7]

General Patton, who had planned two amphibious operations, or Maj. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, commander of II Corps, would have been more obvious choices to direct AVALANCHE, but both were involved in Sicily. Because General Eisenhower wanted to make sure of getting an American army into Italy if operations developed on the mainland, he told General Marshall, "I had no recourse except to name Clark to command that expedition." Bradley was kept familiar with the AVALANCHE planning so he could step in as Fifth Army commander if Clark became a casualty. The only possible disadvantage in using Clark was that he had not been at the front during the past few months and as a result had not become an intimate member of the Anglo-American team that was beginning to function so smoothly in combat. But he was, as Eisenhower informed Marshall, "the best organizer, planner and trainer of troops that I have met"; "the ablest and most experienced officer we have in planning amphibious operations. . . . In preparing the minute details of requisitions, landing craft, training of troops and so on, he has no equal in our Army. His staff is well trained in this regard."[8] A senior offi-

[7] Memo, Rooks for Smith, Employment of Fifth Army in Future Opns, 23 Jul 43, and AFHQ Ltr, Whiteley to Clark, Opns on the Italian Mainland, 27 Jul 43, both in AFHQ G-3 Div Ops 38/9, Ops in Italy (10C 189D), ser. 534.

[8] Eisenhower to Marshall, 24 Aug 43, Mathews File, OCMH; Eisenhower to Marshall, 27 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5. Principal staff officers of the Fifth Army were Maj. Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, chief of staff; Col. Cheney L. Bertholf, G-1; Col. Edwin B. Howard, G-2; Brig. Gen. Donald W. Brann, G-3; Col. Ralph H. Tate, G-4; and Brig. Gen. Thomas E. Lewis, artillery officer. *Fifth Army History*, Part I, p. 12. "The [Fifth] Army Staff is a hand picked one," an observer commented, "and is a collection of very brilliant men, exceptionally so, and after a bit of real battle experience it will be as capable as any in the world. More so than most." Lucas Diary, 30 Aug 43.

cer reinforced Eisenhower's judgment. "Clark impresses men, as always, with his energy and intelligence," he remarked. "You cannot help but like him. He certainly is not afraid to take rather desperate chances which, after all, is the only way to win a war."[9]

Given the mission of seizing the port of Naples and airfields nearby, General Clark was to assume that the British 10 Corps would not be used in the toe of Italy and that its forces—the 1st Airborne, 7th Armoured, and 46th and 56th Infantry Divisions—would be part of the AVALANCHE force. His American component was to be the VI Corps, with the 82d Airborne, the 1st Armored, and the 34th and 36th Infantry Divisions.[10]

The senior American ground commander under General Clark was Maj. Gen. Ernest J. Dawley, commander of VI Corps. A graduate of the Military Academy, he had participated in the Punitive Expedition into Mexico in 1916 and during World War I had been a staff officer assisting General Marshall in France. As commander of the 4oth Division in 1941 and of the VI Corps in 1942, Dawley had attracted favorable notice from Generals Marshall, McNair, and Clark, who judged him a vigorous and aggressive officer. In early 1943 General Dawley brought the VI Corps headquarters to North Africa, where it was placed under the Fifth Army. General Eisenhower, who knew Dawley only slightly, was skeptical of his ability, but Clark assured him that Dawley was performing



GENERAL WALKER

his planning and training duties in a capable manner.[11]

Of the four divisions immediately available to VI Corps for AVALANCHE, all but one had had battle experience. The 82d Airborne Division had taken part in the invasion of Sicily and had operated effectively in the campaign under Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, who had been with the War Department's War Plans Division before taking command of the division in 1942 and bringing it to North Africa in the spring of 1943.

The 1st Armored Division had fought in North Africa from the invasion to the end of the campaign. Its commander,

[9] Lucas Diary, 30 Aug 43.

[10] AFHQ Ltr, Whiteley to Clark, 27 Jul 43, cited above, n. 7.

[11] See Interv, Sidney T. Mathews, Lt Col Roy E. Lamson, Jr., Maj James D. T. Hamilton, and Howard McGaw Smyth with Gen Marshall, 25 Jul 49, and Intervs, Mathews with Clark, 10–21 May 48, OCMH. Listing those officers who, in his opinion, were capable of commanding a corps, Eisenhower included "possibly Dawley." Eisenhower to Marshall, 24 Aug 43, OCMH.



GENERAL RYDER



GENERAL MIDDLETON

Maj. Gen. Ernest N. Harmon, had served in France during World War I, had commanded the 2d Armored Division, and had acted as deputy commander of II Corps before assuming the 1st Armored Division command in the spring of 1943.

The 34th Division, a National Guard unit with troops originally from North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Minnesota, entered federal service in 1941 and sailed for Northern Ireland early in 1942, the first Army division to go to the European theater. It participated in the North African landings and fought through the campaign under Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder, who had had combat service in France during World War I.

The 36th Division, a Texas National Guard unit inducted into federal service in 1940, was the only unit without combat experience. Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker, an infantry battalion commander in France during World War I, had taken command of the division in 1941 and brought it to North Africa in the early months of 1943.

Draft plans, later discarded, for the invasion of Sicily had envisioned the VI Corps headquarters and the 36th Division as participants, but when they were removed from the troop list in favor of experienced troops, they became available for AVALANCHE. General Clark had no choice of a corps headquarters, for the VI was the only one in the theater that was free, but he could select either the 34th or the 36th Division to make the assault, for they were in about the same state of combat readiness. He preferred the 36th. General Dawley and General Walker, the corps and division commanders, had worked well together in North Africa. And perhaps Clark felt that a successful operation brought off by inexperienced troops would demonstrate how effective their training had been.[12]

[12] Clark, *Calculated Risk*, p. 175; AFHQ Memo, Archibald for Rooks, 24 Jul 43.

Two divisions in Sicily, in addition to the 82d Airborne, would also take part in the Italian campaign. The 3d Division, which had fought in North Africa and in Sicily, was commanded by Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., who had served as deputy chief of staff to General Eisenhower in North Africa and who had taken command of the division in March 1943. The 45th Division, a National Guard unit from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Oklahoma, had sailed from the United States combat loaded in June 1943 and after a short training interval in North Africa had taken part, under Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, in the Sicily landings and campaign.[13]

Three Ranger battalions, joined into a Ranger Force under Lt. Col. William O. Darby, were also available. The first Ranger battalion, patterned after the British Commandos, had been organized in June 1942 in Northern Ireland. Some members took part in the Dieppe raid, and the unit fought in North Africa. Near the close of the Tunisia Campaign, Darby organized and trained two more battalions, and the entire Ranger Force took part in the Sicilian landings and campaign.[14]

The support and service units of the Fifth Army were to be drawn largely from the Seventh Army in Sicily—artillery battalions, for example, field hospitals, and Quartermaster truck companies.[15] The cannibalization of the Seventh Army eventually reached such proportions that the army was reduced to a skeleton headquarters; its commander, General Patton, was depressed because there seemed no place for him or his staff in the current scheme of operations.[16] A message from General Eisenhower early in September appeared to be confirmation—the Seventh Army would probably go out of existence. Until then, Patton was to maintain the efficiency of those units scheduled for assignment to the Fifth Army.[17]

General Patton had another duty. He appeared conspicuously in a variety of places throughout the Mediterranean theater, his movements deliberately planned by AFHQ to keep German intelligence guessing on the location of the next Seventh Army strike. Even as late as November, long after the AVALANCHE landings, Patton and his army were being used in the hope of deceiving German intelligence.[18]

The British contingent of AVALANCHE was 10 Corps. Lt. Gen. Sir Brian G. Horrocks, its commander, was wounded during an air raid on the eve of sailing for

[13] The 45th Division was originally selected for movement to the United Kingdom, but it was replaced by the 9th, which—along with the 1st Infantry, 2d Armored, and (later) 82d Airborne Divisions, all participants in the Sicily Campaign—left the theater to become part of the build-up for the cross-Channel Attack.

[14] Lt. James J. Altieri, *Darby's Rangers* (Durham, N.C.: The Seeman Printery, 1945), pp. 10, 27. Darby was offered command of a regiment of the 45th Division but turned it down to stay with the Rangers. Lucas Diary, 13 Jul 43.

[15] See 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI, 9–25 Aug 43. The Seventh Army also furnished support for air force maintenance in connection with the assault across the Strait of Messina.

[16] For Seventh Army cannibalization, see 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI, Aug, Sep 43, and *Seventh Army Report of Operations*, I, 1. For a description of Patton's frame of mind, see Lucas Diary, 3 Sep 43.

[17] Eisenhower to Patton, 5 Sep 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

[18] *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff . . . July 1, 1941 to June 30, 1943 . . .*, p. 20; Eisenhower to Marshall, 23 Nov 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

Salerno and was replaced by Lt. Gen. Sir Richard L. McCreery. Two infantry divisions scheduled to make the assault under the 10 Corps headquarters were the 46th, which had had much combat experience, and the 56th, which had fought in Tunisia for only a few days. Several Commando units augmented these forces. The 7th Armoured Division, which had fought in North Africa, was to come ashore as follow-up.[19]

On the echelon immediately above the Fifth Army was the 15th Army Group, a combined Anglo-American headquarters organized along the lines of the British staff system. The commander was General Alexander, a man of great personal charm who was, in General Brooke's words, always "completely composed and appeared never to have the slightest doubt that all would come out right in the end." He had demonstrated his fitness for high command as a division commander early in the war in France, as theater commander in Egypt, and as the commander of the Allied ground forces in Tunisia and Sicily.[20] Some Americans thought Alexander biased about American troops, with little confidence in their combat ability, but General Eisenhower thought him "broad-gauged," a commander who worked on an Allied rather than on a national basis.[21] Brig. Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer headed the U.S. contingent of the army group headquarters and was Alexander's deputy chief of staff.

General Alexander would direct not only Fifth Army in AVALANCHE but also the Eighth British Army in BAYTOWN, its assault across the Strait of Messina. The Eighth Army was under General Montgomery, who, according to General Brooke's characterization, was a "difficult . . . brilliant commander."[22] To Montgomery, Alexander delegated authority for determining the priority of his unit movements from Sicily and also the date of his invasion of the toe. To Clark he gave authority for determining the assault loading of his convoys. The 15th Army Group controlled the Fifth Army during the planning period, while AFHQ retained responsibility for mounting AVALANCHE. Once the operation got under way, the Fifth Army was to be, temporarily, under its own full operational command.[23]

The naval forces that would carry the ground troops to the AVALANCHE beaches and support them were under the general control of Admiral Cunningham. When General Eisenhower asked him to name a commander for the operation, Cunningham designated Vice Adm. H. Kent Hewitt, U.S. Navy. In command of the Western Naval Task Force, Hewitt would be responsible for planning the employment and directing the operations of a fleet of warships, assault transports, landing ships and craft, and other vessels that would perform such diverse tasks as gunfire support, escort duty, mine sweeping, air support, motor boat

[19] Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2895.

[20] Quote is from General Brooke's diary in Arthur Bryant, *The Turn of the Tide* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1957), p. 82. See also *Turn of the Tide*, p. 525, and History of AFHQ, Part 2, Sec. 1, p. 146.

[21] Eisenhower to Marshall, 24 Aug 43, Mathews File, OCMH; Lucas Diary, Jun, Jul 43; Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, pp. 89–91, 210–11, 235–36.

[22] Bryant, *Turn of the Tide*, p. 525.

[23] 15th AGp Ltr, 16 Aug 43, AG 540; Eisenhower to Alexander, 17 Aug 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

patrol, and diversionary or cover operations.

Subordinate commands of the Western Naval Task Force were: the Northern Attack Force (Commodore G. N. Oliver, Royal Navy) and the Southern Attack Force (Rear Adm. John L. Hall, Jr., U.S. Navy), which were the assault convoys; a Naval Air Support Force (Rear Adm. Sir Philip Vian), which was to provide air cover; and a separate Naval Covering Force (Vice Adm. Sir Algernon Willis), which was primarily to protect the assault convoys from the potentially dangerous Italian Fleet.[24]

Upon Eisenhower's request for an air commander, Air Chief Marshal Tedder designated Lt. Gen. Carl Spaatz, commander of the Northwest African Strategic Air Force, as the officer responsible for the AVALANCHE plans and operations. While the Northwest African Coastal Air Force, composed of British, French, and American units, was to protect the convoys for part of the voyage to the beaches, Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham's Northwest African Tactical Air Force, and more specifically Maj. Gen. Edwin J. House's U.S. XII Air Support Command, was to provide protection and cover during the latter part of the voyage and at the assault area. On the amount of available airlift—transport aircraft and gliders—would depend whether the 82d Airborne Division, the 1st British Airborne Division, or both would participate in the operation.[25]



GENERAL MONTGOMERY

Presiding over the entire combined (American and British) and joint (land, sea, and air) venture designed to put Allied troops into southern Italy was General Eisenhower. His was the ultimate responsibility for planning in a very short time, then executing a risky and complicated operation. Immediately below Eisenhower were three British officers, who commanded combined forces: Alexander, Cunningham, and Tedder, for land, sea, and air, respectively. Just below them and on the working echelon of AVALANCHE were Clark, Hewitt, and House, three Americans in command respectively of combined land, sea, and air forces.

[24] Admiral of the Fleet Andrew B. Cunningham, *Operations in Connection with the Landings in the Gulf of Salerno on 9th September, 1943*, 8 Mar 45, dated 2 May 50, Supplement to the *London Gazette*, 28 Apr 50 (referred to hereafter as Cunningham *Despatch*), p. 2172. Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, September, 1943).

[25] Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., "The Army Air Forces in World War II," vol. II, *Europe: TORCH to POINTBLANK, August 1942 to December 1943* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 416–17, 492ff.



ADMIRAL HEWITT

Since Admiral Hewitt's mission was to land the ground troops and support them until a secure beachhead was established, he would command the joint and combined forces executing the AVALANCHE operation. Once a beachhead was secured, General Clark would become the *de facto* commander of the combined and joint forces, and Hewitt would revert to a purely supporting role as commander of the combined naval forces. Hewitt would be responsible to Cunningham, Clark to Alexander.

General House, commander of the U.S. XII Air Support Command, was charged with the mission of furnishing air cover over the assault area and was, in effect, the on-the-spot air co-ordinator. He was to request assistance from two other air force headquarters, Northwest African Strategic Air Force and Northwest African Tactical Air Force. As far as Hewitt and Clark were concerned, House was an independent commander who could, at least theoretically, be asked but not required to furnish air support.

This procedure for air support followed British practice rather than American doctrine. While American ground commanders were accustomed to having at least some air forces under their direct control, the British regarded the air forces as coequal with the land and sea forces. In the British system, air force commanders were expected to co-operate. Although Eisenhower had accepted the British form to govern the air arrangements for AVALANCHE, some of the senior American commanders agreed among themselves that if they failed to obtain what they regarded as necessary results, they would apply the American doctrine.[26] General House's place in the AVALANCHE command structure guaranteed the feasibility of their informal decision.

General House would have no responsibility until D-day. The protection of the convoys en route to the beaches was in the hands of the Coastal Air Command, and since no representative of that command would accompany the assault elements to Salerno, House would lack not only the knowledge of whether adequate air cover would be provided for the convoys but also the power to obtain additional protection if needed. General Clark could only assume that adequate preparations were being made, but "such assumptions," he remarked, were "far from satisfactory" to him.[27]

The joint planning generally took place on three echelons: on the theater level by AFHQ and the staffs of the senior service commanders; on the oper-

[26] See Lucas Diary, 5 Jul 43.

[27] Clark Diary, 7 Sep 43. General Clark kindly made his diary available to the author.

ational command level by Western Naval Task Force, Fifth Army, and XII Air Support Command; and on the subordinate levels by corps, division, and naval task group staffs. No special air planning staffs worked at the subordinate levels with ground and naval planners, and as a consequence the air plans were not so closely integrated as were the ground and naval plans. Defects would later become apparent in the areas of communications and supply, particularly in the air effort over the beaches, for Navy fighter-director ships would control Army aircraft during the assault landings.

Commanders, staffs, and units were widely dispersed in four areas in North Africa—Oran, Algiers, Bizerte-Tunis, Tripoli—and in Sicily. The Fifth Army headquarters was at Mostaganem, near Oran, where the VI Corps and its American divisions, plus an American naval headquarters, were located. General Clark moved a small planning staff of his army to Algiers to be close to AFHQ and the theater naval and air staffs. British ground and naval headquarters and units were near Bizerte and Tripoli. The 15th Army Group and the British Eighth Army were in Sicily, as were three U.S. divisions eventually to be involved in AVALANCHE. Shortly after the end of the Sicily Campaign, General Alexander moved a small tactical headquarters of his army group to Bizerte, leaving the main 15th Army Group headquarters in Sicily. Air planners were in the vicinity of Algiers and Constantine.[28]

Because the dispersed locations of headquarters placed a heavy load on communications, Eisenhower and Tedder moved from Algiers to the Tunis area during the first week in September to be near Alexander and Cunningham at Bizerte and make feasible the daily meetings, emergency conferences, and direct communications necessary among high commanders immediately before an invasion.[29] In the case of AVALANCHE this was particularly necessary, for there was much uncertainty about the exact forces and resources to be committed, principally because of assault shipping problems.

Lift

Throughout the AVALANCHE planning period, no one knew exactly how much assault shipping was available.[30] This lack of definite knowledge was bad enough, but, worse, all estimates of vessels and landing craft on hand seemed much too low for the number of troops deemed necessary for the initial assault and the immediate follow-up. "All our operations are strictly regulated by the availability of ships and landing craft," Eisenhower reported, and he complained

[28] As an example of the wide dispersion of headquarters, major air force headquarters were located in North Africa at Algiers, La Marsa, Tunis, and Sousse, and in Sicily at Cassibile and Syracuse. Northwest African Air Force Station List and Order of Battle, 31 Aug 43, OCMH.

[29] History of AFHQ, Part 2, sec. 1, p. 142. General Gruenther, Fifth Army chief of staff in 1943, said jokingly in 1946 that probably some couriers were still trying to deliver AVALANCHE messages to dispersed troop locations. Discussion following Wood Lecture.

[30] The best discussion is found in Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943–1945*, Chapter VII. See also Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September, 1943).

frequently about this "constantly annoying and limiting factor." [31]

Landing ships and craft deteriorate rapidly under normal conditions, and those in the Mediterranean were almost constantly in use. LCT's (landing craft, tank), LCM's (landing craft, mechanized), and DUKW's (2 1/2-ton amphibious trucks) lightered cargo from freighters to the Sicilian shore. LST's (landing ships, tank), LCI (L)'s (landing craft, infantry, large), and LCT's ran a cargo shuttle between Sicily and Bizerte-Tunis, a round trip of five or six days. More LCI (L)'s and personnel craft were busy with harbor duties. Several impromptu amphibious landings on the northern and eastern shores of Sicily during the campaign had absorbed additional vessels. Consequently, the bulk of the assault shipping was engaged until well past the end of the Sicily Campaign instead of being released for refitting and repair by the beginning of August, as had been hoped, in order to prepare for AVALANCHE.[32]

Another problem was the task of juggling the available vessels—the figure changed constantly—among the various operations being planned against southern Italy. During the early part of August in particular, difficulty arose from the fact that 10 Corps was preparing plans for two operations, one alternative to the other: its landing in the toe (BUTTRESS), and its participation in AVALANCHE. Because Eisenhower had assigned priority to AVALANCHE as late as 19 August, and because there was a distinct possibility that the landing in the toe might at the last moment still be chosen over the landings at Salerno, the Fifth Army had to accept for AVALANCHE the 10 Corps loading plan for BUTTRESS.[33] Although commanders hoped to be able to switch the 10 Corps from one operation to the other without upsetting the detailed planning, they discovered the actual shift to be far less simple than they had imagined.[34] The shipping requirements to get ashore in Calabria and at Salerno were quite different, and until the very end of the planning period, when the invasion of southern Italy got under way, the responsible commanders were uneasily compromising over the conflicting assault lift needs.

During the latter part of August planning for the Eighth Army crossing of the Strait of Messina interfered with the shipping allocations for AVALANCHE. General Montgomery viewed the problems of crossing the strait far more seriously than did General Eisenhower, who declared that rowboats would be enough. Montgomery's initial request for landing craft far exceeded the number tentatively allotted him, and General Alexander whittled it down. After the first crossing, Alexander stripped Montgomery of virtually all landing craft and transferred them to the Fifth Army for AVALANCHE.

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31 See, for example, Eisenhower to Marshall, 13 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5. For a description of the vessels employed, see Office of Naval Intelligence 226, Allied Sailing Ships and Craft; U.S. Fleet Publication, LST Landings with N.L. Pontoon Gear, 1943, AG 560; Characteristics of Transports, in file labeled simply "Plans"; the excellent discussion in Col. C. P. Stacey, "Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War," vol. III, *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in Northwest Europe, 1944–1945* (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1960), ch. I.

32 See Cunningham *Despatch*, p. 2172.

33 See AFHQ CofS Mtg 36, 5 Aug 43, and AFHQ G–3 Planning Mtg 37, 7 Aug 43, both in Salmon Files, OCMH.

34 Cunningham *Despatch*, p. 2174.

As late as the first few days of September, Alexander was increasing the AVALANCHE D-day lift at Montgomery's expense—on 4 September, for example, he shifted four LST's and three LCT's.[35]

Since the Eighth Army and 10 Corps had priority over the Fifth Army, their calls on the available assault vessels in the theater left the Fifth Army very little. There was a short time early in August when it appeared that no assault shipping, only transports, would be available for the American contingent participating in AVALANCHE—the army headquarters, the VI Corps headquarters, and the U.S. assault troops.[36] For a while the absurd situation developed in which it seemed impossible to include the VI Corps headquarters in the invasion. As late as 20 August, landing craft assigned to carry the 36th Division to the beaches were too few to accommodate all the men, vehicles, and cargo of the assault regiments.[37]

As a matter of fact, General Clark had wanted to have at least two American divisions in the initial assault under VI Corps, the same number that 10 Corps was planning to put ashore. He continually pressed General Eisenhower for more shipping. Eisenhower requested additional craft from the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the basis that he needed to speed the follow-up. Alexander kept a sharp eye on British demands. And naval repair facilities performed an exceptional job of exceeding their normal maintenance and repair schedules. Yet the result of scraping and scrimping and of rigorous controls exercised by senior commanders was merely enough craft for a single reinforced American division.[38]

Eventually, out of the stock of vessels in the theater, logisticians produced an unexpected bonus. In the early days of September—too late to augment the initial assault forces of VI Corps—they accumulated enough lift to provide AVALANCHE with a floating reserve, a flotilla of boats to be held immediately offshore at the invasion beaches carrying troops available for quick commitment. Some of these boats were craft to be released by General Montgomery after BAYTOWN, his initial assault crossing of the Strait of Messina. They could accommodate a regimental combat team of the 82d Airborne Division, which, because of its relatively light weaponry, senior commanders hesitated to use as D-day follow-up. But as additional vessels somehow appeared, the commanders were able to substitute a standard and more heavily armed infantry regiment. Both the 3d and 45th Divisions were in Sicily, and elements of either could be staged through the port of Palermo for transport to Salerno. General Eisenhower selected the 45th, or as much of it as could be carried in the vessels made available, and this eventually turned out to be two regimental combat teams.[39]

[35] 15th AGp Msg, 1330, 4 Sep 43, AG 560, Vessels; Richardson to McGrigor, 5 Sep 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

[36] Wood Lecture.

[37] Annex 1 to 36th Div Admin Order 33 to accompany FO 33, 20 Aug 43.

[38] See, for example, Memo, COS for CCS, 2 Sep 43, Slowness of Build-up for AVALANCHE, and Extract, Min, CCS Mtg, 3 Sep 43, both in ABC 384.

[39] COMNAVNAW Msg, 2317, 3 Sep 43, AG 540; Fifth Army Msg, 4 Sep 43, and Lemnitzer to Clark, 4 Sep 43, AG 560; Eisenhower to Alexander, 22 Aug 43, and Alexander to Patton, 25 Aug 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI; Eisenhower to CGS, 6 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5; AFHQ G–3 Planning Mtg 40, 19 Aug 43, Salmon Files, OCMH.

AVALANCHE planners tried to assign the smaller landing craft—LCVP's (landing craft, vehicle and personnel), LCA's (landing craft, assault), and LCP's (landing craft, personnel)—in a way that would enable all infantry battalions to land in assault formation. They dispersed LCT's throughout the assault convoys to facilitate direct landing of beach roadway equipment, to make it possible to get tanks and guns ashore regardless of LST discharge facilities, and to place LCT's in positions to help unload LST's if necessary. LST's were similarly dispersed to land early priority vehicles.[40]

Although planners could easily determine the best way to employ the various vessels, the shortage of lift as well as of time complicated the whole process. Eisenhower had directed Clark on 27 July to have ready by 7 August—in eleven days—an outline plan for a complex operation scheduled to begin a month later. As the planning progressed, orders were issued and changed, sometimes faster than they could be disseminated. To include last-minute changes of plans, amendments and addenda became commonplace. Allocations and reallocations of vessels continued to be made to the moment of loading, a situation that further plagued already harassed planners. As late as 5 September, four days before D-day, planners were still working on the amount of lift that was, or was expected to become, available.[41]

This uncertainty affected the entire planning. Such matters as waterproofing assault vehicles, deciding the amounts of rations and individual equipment to be carried, and selecting the precise landing beaches had to await final decisions on the amount of shipping available. Amphibious training for the assault troops was thus less thorough than desired. A decision by Clark on 24 August to advance H-hour by thirty minutes involved considerable alterations in convoy sailing plans; and by then all operational orders were already being distributed.[42]

Late receipt of orders from higher authorities and changes in unit compositions adversely affected an orderly development of the preinvasion process. For example, General Walker, the 36th Division commander, was less worried about the comfort of his troops aboard ship than about getting his units on shore in the proper order and with proper equipment. Yet naval regulations, and probably safety measures, restricted the number of men and the amount of equipment he could load aboard specific vessels. Having settled his loading plans, he then received word from General Clark directing him to make place for additional noncombat equipment, visitors, and observers. He could comply only by removing a portion of the matériel he had deemed necessary to accompany the assault convoys. Reluctantly and rather uncomfortably, Walker left behind some Signal Corps equipment and some vehicles. Not long afterward, only a few days before sailing time, an air force request arrived for bombs to be carried on the decks of several ships. Walker objected and found support among the naval authorities. The air

[40] LCI's were generally not considered assault craft. Fifth Army Memo, Principle Use in Allocation of Shipping, 2 Jul 43, AG 560.

[41] Clark to Larkin, 5 Sep 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

[42] Cunningham *Despatch*, p. 2172.

force representative insisted. Together, Walker, a naval officer, and the air force officer brought the matter to General Eisenhower for resolution. Finding them unwilling or unable to compromise, Eisenhower sent them into the next room and ordered them to come back to him with a decision. The air force representative was quick to admit that he was outnumbered two to one.[43]

"Men of calm dispositions after having rewritten their [loading] schedules several times," General Walker later wrote, "became quite irritable. Men of sensitive natures became unapproachable. . . . I myself gave way to expressions of disgust." [44]

During this difficult time of preparation, General Montgomery's Eighth Army was making ready its crossing of the Strait of Messina. On the basis of intelligence reports that the Germans intended to withdraw from the toe of Italy, AFHQ expected the British to push up the Calabrian peninsula and along the west coast of Italy to the Naples area. But having never received a directive outlining the long-range course of BAYTOWN, Eighth Army planners had no clear idea of what was expected of the Eighth Army.[45] The trouble was that Eighth Army was under 15th Army Group control, and AFHQ apparently never received the army's detailed plans. As a result of a lack of co-ordination, no one was entirely sure whether the army was simply to land in Calabria to open the Strait of Messina, whether after landing it was to prepare for a major advance, or whether it was to make an effort to contain the enemy in order to assist the Salerno invasion. As General Eisenhower's chief of staff, General Smith, saw it: "We are confident here that the BAYTOWN attack will get ashore but I think it will probably bog down and that some [amphibious] end runs may be required. Progress will certainly be slow because of the nature of the terrain, but the operation may attract [enemy] Divisions from the more critical area [Salerno]." [46] How General Montgomery saw his course of action beyond the landings was unknown. The distance that separated the Eighth Army and Fifth Army assault areas prevented mutual support in the opening stages of the operations, and this fact may well have weighed heavily on General Montgomery's mind.

A new development early in September affected the final invasion plans for southern Italy. During the surrender negotiations, the Italian Government offered to open to the Allies the ports of Taranto, in the heel, and Brindisi, on the east coast. Few Germans were in Apulia and they were expected to withdraw. To take advantage of this opportunity, General Eisenhower hastily planned an operation code-named SLAPSTICK to move the British 1st Airborne Division and a limited amount of equipment into Taranto on warships just as soon as the Italian capitulation took effect and the Italian Fleet surrendered. The troops were to open the port and set up minimum air defenses. Eventually,

[43] General Walker to author, Aug 57.

[44] General Walker's Comments Relating to Salerno, 4 Feb 28, OCMH.

[45] Extract, Min, JPS Mtg, 7 Aug 43, dated 9 Aug 43, ABC 384; De Guingand, *Operation Victory*, pp. 314ff.

[46] Smith to Whiteley, 22 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

additional forces would be brought into the heel to seize ports on the east coast.[47]

Unless an untoward event at the very last moment provoked cancellation of AVALANCHE and reinstatement of the 10 Corps descent on the toe, the invasion of the Italian mainland would be a three-pronged affair—BAYTOWN in the toe, AVALANCHE at Salerno, and perhaps unopposed SLAPSTICK landings at Taranto. In all calculations, the surrender of Italy, promised for the eve of the Salerno invasion, loomed large.

[47] Eisenhower to CCS, 6 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

CHAPTER IV

The Start

The Plans

With General Montgomery's Eighth Army planning to land on the toe of Italy, it would have been logical to place the British 10 Corps on the right or south of the Salerno assault forces to facilitate its eventual transfer to Montgomery's control after the Eighth and Fifth Armies had made contact. But 10 Corps had two divisions for the landing and VI Corps only one. Since the major objective of the operation was Naples, 10 Corps was placed on the left, where it would be closer to Naples and in position to make the main effort once the Fifth Army was firmly established ashore.

To help the 10 Corps secure the passes through the mountainous Sorrento peninsula between Salerno and Naples, General Clark proposed landing glider-borne troops the night before the invasion. The Troop Carrier Command at first agreed, and earmarked all available gliders for the operation, but then demurred. Not only were air currents around nearby Mount Vesuvius dangerous, but the need to concentrate the tow planes along a narrow path at low altitudes during the approach flight would make them vulnerable to strong enemy antiaircraft defenses in the area. On 12 August the project was abandoned. The task of securing the mountain passes went to Ranger and Commando units, which were to go ashore in landing craft.[1]

The 10 Corps, with the 46th and 56th Divisions, three Ranger battalions, and two Commando units, was to land north of the Sele River, seize the port of Salerno, capture the Montecorvino airfield, take the little rail and road center of Battipaglia, secure the Sele River bridge fourteen miles inland at Ponte Sele, and gain possession of the mountain passes leading to Naples. The 7th Armoured Division was to follow, beginning to go ashore on the fifth and sixth day of the invasion.

The VI Corps, with the 36th Division, was to land south of the Sele River and protect the Fifth Army right flank by seizing the high ground dominating the Salerno plain from the east and the south—an arc of mountains marked by the villages of Altavilla, Albanella, Rocca d'Aspide, Ogliastro, and Agropoli. After the floating reserve—two regiments of the 45th Division—and the rest of the 45th had landed, the 1st Armored and 34th Infantry Divisions, and later the 3d Infantry Division, were to go ashore through the captured port of Naples,

[1] John C. Warren, Airborne Missions in the Mediterranean, 1942–1945 (USAF Historical Studies, 74) (Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., September 1955), ch. IV. See also Clark to Alexander, 25 Aug 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

which the Allies hoped to have by the thirteenth day of the invasion.

Although the 82d U.S. and 1st British Airborne Divisions were also available, the total airlift on hand was about 300 aircraft and somewhat less than 400 gliders, enough to transport only one division. When the 1st British Airborne Division was nominated for seaborne movement to Taranto in Operation SLAPSTICK, the 82d, which had been under consideration for an amphibious mission in AVALANCHE, was selected for an airborne assignment.[2]

Denied an airborne operation to seize the mountain passes in Sorrento, General Clark proposed on 18 August and General Alexander approved an airdrop along the Volturno River. Coming to earth on the night before the invasion and concentrated near Capua, forty some miles north of Salerno, twenty some miles north of Naples, the paratroopers were to create a diversion and, in order to block reinforcement of the Salerno defenders, destroy the Volturno bridges from Capua to the sea. As the concept developed, General Ridgway planned to send a glider regiment by sea to the mouth of the river. This unit was to fight its way inland and join the paratroopers in an airhead. Supplied by air, these troops were to carry out one of three alternatives: hold, fall back on Naples and eventually make contact with the main Allied forces, or move southeast into the rugged Apennines and await the arrival of the main body of Allied troops.

The Troop Carrier Command favored the operation, but some airborne commanders and some AFHQ planners viewed it with considerable misgivings. In their opinion, the troops would be too far from the main forces to receive effective support and too scattered for effective employment. Furthermore, because aerial resupply in the theater could sustain only five battalions, the force committed would be too small to operate independently so deep in the enemy rear. A recovery of one-third of the troops dropped, the planners estimated, would be fortunate. Nevertheless, with General Clark and General Ridgway endorsing the operation, the drop along the Volturno was projected.

Not long afterward, the discovery of sandbars at the mouth of the Volturno made the seaborne portion of the plan impractical. That, together with the other unfavorable aspects, was about to prompt a reluctant cancellation of the entire operation when another idea arose to overshadow the Volturno plan.

The new idea emerged from negotiations leading to the Italian surrender. Because the Italians feared a German occupation of Rome and capture of the royal family and government upon the announcement of the armistice, General Eisenhower agreed to send the 82d Airborne Division to the capital. The airborne troops, with the help of Italian forces, were to safeguard the city against the Germans.

As a consequence, the 82d was withdrawn from the AVALANCHE troop list on 3 September despite General Clark's shocked protest. Several days later, Eisenhower sent the division artillery commander, Brig. Gen. Maxwell A. Taylor, and Col. William T. Gardiner of the

[2] Provisional Outline Air Plan for Opn AVALANCHE, 18 Aug 43, AFHQ Microfilm Reel 123D. See also AFHQ G-3 Memo, Requirements of Airborne Troops and Craft for Future Opns, 5 Jul 43; Extract, Min, JPS Mtg, 7 Aug 43, dated 9 Aug 43, ABC 384.

Troop Carrier Command on a hazardous journey to Rome to co-ordinate the operation with the Italian Army. Unable to secure satisfactory guarantees of Italian co-operation, Taylor recommended that the Rome operation be canceled. On the evening of 8 September, the eve of the Salerno D-day, the airborne operation was scratched. By then it was too late to employ the troops of the 82d in AVALANCHE.[3]

The participation of two corps in the Fifth Army amphibious assault made it logical to organize Admiral Hewitt's Western Naval Task Force similarly. Admiral Oliver's Northern Attack Force, composed mainly of British vessels, would carry 10 Corps; Admiral Hall's Southern Attack Force, mostly American ships, would transport VI Corps. The VI Corps was to sail from Oran in a single convoy, but the 10 Corps was to be loaded into many different types of ships and craft and leave Tripoli and Bizerte in a series of convoys of various speeds and compositions. Those convoys composed of LCT's and LCI(L)'s would stop in Sicily to refuel and allow the troops to debark briefly and stretch their legs—the meager accommodations aboard these craft made extended trips impractical and a direct voyage to Salerno unwise. All vessels were to pass west of Sicily and go north on the day before the invasion, then turn east toward Salerno after the last light of the day. Much of the route was through narrow lanes swept clear of mines, and no deviation was possible even though enemy ships might oppose the movement or submarines and aircraft might attack.

Admiral Vian's Support Carrier Force, composed of a British Fleet aircraft carrier and four escort carriers, was to protect the convoys during the approach to Salerno and reinforce the land-based fighter cover there, particularly during the early morning and evening twilight hours, when reliefs between day and night fighters took place. Admiral Willis' protective or cover force, consisting of 4 battleships, 2 aircraft carriers, and a cruiser squadron, was to guard against the Italian battle fleet of 5 battleships and 9 cruisers based at Taranto, La Spezia, and Genoa. Two battleships at Malta were to watch Taranto; after the Italian surrender, they would be available to replace casualties in the Salerno fleet.[4]

Although naval air was to make a valuable contribution toward solving the air cover problem in the assault area, the naval planners could guarantee only eighty sorties during the first day of the operation and a rapidly decreasing number thereafter. The British aircraft carriers could keep at least fifteen fighters aloft during the first two days of the invasion, but their pilots were notoriously short on training and experience in ground support operations. In all, the naval air could sustain an effective effort for little more than three days. But by then, the planners hoped, land-based planes would be using Montecorvino airfield.

The air forces were to protect not only the convoys en route to and in the

[3] A detailed account may be found in Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, Chapter XXVI. See also Warren, Airborne Missions in the Mediterranean, ch. IV; Clark, *Calculated Risk*, pp. 180–81.

[4] Annex A to Western Naval Task Force Plan 7–43, 18 Aug 43, Enemy Strength, Sea Forces, AFHQ Microfilm Reel 123D; Opn AVALANCHE, Rpt of Flag Officer Commanding Force H (Willis Despatch), 4 Dec 43, Salmon Files, OCMH.

Gulf of Salerno but also the ground troops ashore. They were to do this by trying to neutralize the enemy air forces and by blocking the movement of German ground forces. Opening their operations before the Sicily Campaign ended, the air forces would attempt to render useless the Axis airfields close to the assault area, thereby compelling the enemy to evacuate them; they would also try to disrupt traffic on the roads and rail system in southern and central Italy.

Allied heavy bombers had sufficient range to strike targets anywhere in Italy, but few tactical planes could remain in the air long enough to give effective cover during the landings. The A–36 fighter-bomber and the night fighter Beaufighter would be effective in the Naples area, and the twin-engine P–38 could remain over Salerno for an hour. But the P–39 fighter escort and the P–40 fighter-bomber could provide only short-range convoy cover. The Spitfire, probably the best Allied fighter for escort and interceptor duty, could operate from Sicilian airfields only as far as Salerno; even with an extra gasoline tank, it could patrol over the Gulf of Salerno for only twenty minutes, and if it became engaged in combat, could remain only ten minutes. Nevertheless, the air forces promised to keep thirty-six aircraft over the assault area at all times on D-day and to build up their units in the Salerno area as rapidly as possible.

To achieve better air cover, the Allied air forces would expand the number of airfields in northeast Sicily. After Montgomery crossed the Strait of Messina, they would establish airstrips on the tip of the Calabrian toe. Most important, the air forces hoped to gain Montecorvino on D-day, which would enable them to fly in seventy-five aircraft on the following day. Since additional airstrips in the Salerno area would be useful, aviation engineers and their bulky equipment to build and repair air facilities would accompany the assault troops. By the sixteenth day of the invasion, air service troops ashore were expected to number 3,500 men.[5]

Three distinct supply phases were envisaged in the Salerno invasion. During the preparatory phase, the Fifth Army, assisted by the Services of Supply, North African Theater of Operations, U.S. Army (SOS NATOUSA) and the British Supply Agency of AFHQ, would equip units and determine initial maintenance supplies to be stocked at ports of embarkation for loading on the assault convoys. Once the invasion of Sicily was launched, SOS NATOUSA would begin the task of remedying shortages in equipment and in basic loads for the units designated for post-Sicilian operations. When the Sicily Campaign had ended, the Seventh Army would turn over supplies and equipment to units of the Fifth Army.[6]

During this first, or preinvasion, phase of supply, AFHQ had great difficulty supplying the British forces. The detailed planning for AVALANCHE had started after 10 Corps preparations for operations in the toe were well under

[5] Extract, Min, JPS Mtg, 7 Aug 43, dated 9 Aug 43, ABC 384; Eisenhower to CCS, 28 Jul, 19, 31 Aug 43; Memo, Deane for Marshall, 1 Aug 43, and Eisenhower to Marshall, 17 Aug 43, both in OPD Exec 3, Item 5; Allied Aircraft Participating in Current Opns, VI Corps Outline Plan, Opn AVALANCHE, 19 Aug 43; Northwest African Air Force Provisional Outline Air Plan for Operation AVALANCHE, Annex E, 18 Aug 43.

[6] SOS NATOUSA Ltr, 1 Jul 43; Clark to Patton, 2 Sep 43; Patton to Clark, 4 Sep 43, all in AG 400.

way, and though 10 Corps was under AFHQ for logistical planning, it was under 15th Army Group for the Salerno operational planning. The switch from one operation to the other, which, among other things, added extra ground troops and Royal Air Force (RAF) personnel to the assault units, complicated matters to the point where the build-up for the Salerno invasion seemed quite unbalanced. Because supplies were in Sicily under 15th Army Group control, in North Africa under AFHQ control, and in the Middle East under British control, simple solutions to logistical problems were the exception.[7] During this earliest phase of supply operations AFHQ provided troop replacements for the invasion units by progressively closing secondary ports in North Africa, reducing garrison forces, and entrusting garrison and port duties increasingly to the French forces, which eventually manned all the African ports except Bizerte, Algiers, and Casablanca.[8]

During the second phase, the assault phase of supply, estimated to last twelve days, the invasion forces were to receive their supplies over the beaches except for a small amount to be put through the port of Salerno for 10 Corps. Beachhead commanders and beach groups would be responsible for receiving, stocking, and issuing supplies. In the VI Corps zone the reinforced 531st Engineer Shore Regiment would unload the landing ships, clear the beaches, and move supplies inland to dumps.[9] Fortunately, the regiment was experienced in beach operations; it was released from duties in Sicily too late to rehearse for Salerno. Together with the 540th Engineer Shore Battalion and attached Signal, Quartermaster, Ordnance, and Medical units, the regiment hurriedly made ready to take part in the invasion without even knowing the stowage plans of the ships and boats it was to unload.[10]

The technique of maintaining large forces over invasion beaches was by this time considered relatively satisfactory. Good weather, a reasonable assurance of safety for the ships, and an adequate number of small craft and DUKW's—at least 400 DUKW's were considered necessary for the American beaches alone—were major requirements.[11] Special mats and tracks of mesh, burlap, wire, and wooden palings in rolls would accompany the first troops for constructing and maintaining beach roads and landing facilities. If the ships were able to anchor close to shore, unloading would be facilitated since short turnaround voyages for the small craft and DUKW's re-

[7] AFHQ Quartermaster Maint Br Summary, 27 Aug 43, AG 400.

[8] Extract, Min, JPS Mtg, 7 Aug 43, dated 9 Aug 43, ABC 384.

[9] The shore regiment, attached to the 36th Division for the landing, consisted of three engineer battalions, each reinforced with signal and service elements of various types and a naval beach party. A battalion, containing about 1,900 men with attachments, was to land with each infantry regiment. The British organization improvised to work the beaches was usually built around an infantry battalion, with signal, engineer, and service personnel, as well as light and heavy antiaircraft artillery, attached; Navy personnel worked in conjunction with Army beach personnel but not under their command. Wood Lecture; Note on Working Sicilian Beaches (Observations, Jul 43), AG 400.

[10] Fifth Army Ltr, 14 Nov 43 (with Incls), Hq Fifth Army File; Brig Gen John W. O'Daniel, Rpt on Opn AVALANCHE, 11 Oct 43 (hereafter referred to as O'Daniel Rpt), AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

[11] See Fifth Army G–4 Annex to Outline Plan AVALANCHE, 8 Aug 43; AFHQ to SOS NATOUSA, 24 Aug 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

sulted in faster cargo discharge as well as less wear and tear on equipment, lower fuel consumption rates, and less strain on personnel.

During the initial phase of the assault, vehicles could be unloaded from LCM's, which could go up on shore. Later, LCT's would be able to land, and still later, LST's. DUKW's, which could travel directly from ship to beach dump, would provide the simplest and most economical method of moving supplies if the ships were reasonably close to shore—not more than two miles out—and if dumps were not far inland. But usually, when LCM's were unable to discharge directly onto the beach or into trucks, unloading would be accomplished from ship to small craft to shore, then by DUKW or truck to the dump.

The landing craft to be employed most often at Salerno were LCM's for vehicles; LCVP's, initially to transport personnel, then vehicles and equipment, finally gas, oil, water, and other supplies easily manhandled; and DUKW's, which arrived in LCM's on ships, to move guns and ammunition, rations, and almost anything else except bulky equipment.

How "times and methods have changed," commented one observer. "Not long ago the troop transport (AP), the cargo transport (AK), and the converted four-stacker were considered suitable as personnel and cargo carriers. Now the . . . LST . . . LCI . . . LCVP and other modern types of landing craft relegate the AP and its kindred types to the days of the triremes. . . ." [12]

The third supply phase of the invasion was to start when the port of Naples was opened to receive shipping. The ultimate objective of AVALANCHE, Naples was the second largest city in Italy and could receive at least 16,000 tons of military cargo per day. It had ample warehouse space and cargo-handling equipment.[13] Frequent Allied bombings had damaged the city, even though the Allies had exempted it from air attack after 12 August.

Service troops to repair and operate the port formed a special convoy of seven ships carrying 5,000 men, 500 vehicles, and 7,800 tons of construction equipment and supplies. The convoy was to sail from North Africa to Sicily and there await the capture of Naples. When the port was opened, American and British contingents would set up their own base sections and lines of communication. During this final supply phase, the Fifth Army was to assume complete administrative responsibility, operating ports, railways, base depots, fixed-bed hospitals, and other rear area installations.[14]

While plans and preparations were under way, intelligence agencies were gathering information about the enemy. The Fifth Army was the main collection center, and the data it disseminated to its subordinate units included about 150,000 aerial photographs, many annotated with enemy installations and terrain features. The army also furnished maps overprinted with enemy defenses and beach terrain information. Cover and deception plans devised earlier for operations against Sardinia and Corsica

[12] Hussa, "Action at Salerno," *Infantry Journal* (December, 1943), p. 28.

[13] See Engr Annex to AVALANCHE, 7 Aug 43, Tactical Study of the Terrain, Naples and Vicinity, AFHQ Microfilm, Reel 123D.

[14] Fifth Army G–4 Annex to Outline Plan AVALANCHE, 8 Aug 43.

were found, with slight modifications, to be suitable for Salerno.[15]

By mid-August, as the Sicily Campaign came to an end, Allied intelligence officers were still unable to predict confidently German intentions in Italy. They believed that the Germans were aware of the vulnerability of their forces south of Rome; that they would be averse to committing larger forces in southern Italy; and that they would not move their units in northern Italy to oppose an invasion south of Rome.[16]

According to Col. Edwin B. Howard, the Fifth Army G–2, the Salerno invasion would force the Germans to a decision of major importance: should they fight to repel the landings, which meant concentrating troops at the assault beaches? or should they retire to the north, which meant accepting the risk of sacrificing their troops south of Salerno? Their choice would shape the development of the Italian campaign. Yet there was no way for the Allies to know in advance of AVALANCHE precisely how the Germans would act.

If the Germans had already made their decision and if they were planning to fight, they had plenty of time to strengthen their defenses. Newspapers, magazines, radio announcers, and government officials, as well as the course of the operations in Sicily, more than indicated, it seemed obvious to Colonel Howard, the Allied intention to invade the Italian mainland. The security of the landing plans could well "have been impaired thereby." Examination of the map alone, he believed, must have made evident to German intelligence officers the same fact that weighed so heavily on Allied planners—that the range of Allied land-based fighter aircraft precluded an invasion of Italy anywhere except between Naples and Taranto. On this long shore line, Naples was unquestionably the most desirable objective, particularly since an invasion near Naples would threaten to cut off the German divisions in the south. There, as well as at the few other logical points of entry, the Germans might well be prepared to repel invasion. Perhaps the defenses in the Salerno area —about 150 machine gun positions, 17 pillboxes, 3 casemates, 8 roadblocks, 39 light guns, and 3 heavy railroad guns, according to Allied estimates—indicated this intention. Furthermore, because the Germans had an armored division nearby, the Allied troops coming ashore would have to expect early tank resistance and would have to bring artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers quickly ashore.[17]

Anticipating that 39,000 German troops would be near Salerno on D-day and perhaps a total of 100,000 three days later, the planners hoped to send about 125,000 Allied troops ashore. However, the Allied build-up to that figure would be progressive and relatively slow compared with the German capability of reinforcing the defenders.

In the VI Corps zone, the 36th Division, with infantry components 20 percent overstrength, was to land with two

[15] *Fifth Army History*, Part I, p. 21; Fifth Army Answers to Questions by Lt Gen Courtney Hodges, 16 Dec 43, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO; Ltr, Fifth Army to 12th Air Support Comd, Reconnaissance Missions, 23 Aug 43, and Ltr, Comdr U.S. Naval Force Northwest Africa to CinC Allied Force, 15 Aug 43, AG 37e.

[16] Betts Memo, 18 Aug 43, ABC 384.

[17] Fifth Army G–2 Estimate, Appendix 1 to Annex 1 to AVALANCHE Outline Plan, 7 Aug 43; Fifth Army AVALANCHE Intel Summaries 2 and 3, 21 and 23 Aug 43.

regiments abreast, the third in immediate reserve. Each assault regiment, including attachments, had the enormous strength of about 9,000 men, 1,350 vehicles, and 2,000 tons of supplies. Each was to carry in reserve about seven days of all classes of supply, plus a 20-percent safety factor. All vehicles were to be waterproofed, have their gas tanks and radiators full, and carry five quarts of oil and enough gasoline in cans for fifty miles of travel. All units were to carry basic loads of ammunition plus additional ammunition both combat and cargo loaded, which together would provide an estimated three days of fire. Ammunition to accompany the assault troops totaled 240 rounds per 60-mm. mortar, 300 rounds per 81-mm. mortar, 840 rounds per 105-mm. howitzer, 400 rounds per 155-mm. howitzer, and 300 rounds per 155-mm. gun. For the first three days of the landing operations all convoys were to be combat loaded, thereafter convoy loaded for more economical utilization of ship space.[18]

The Navy had established load limits for each vessel, and each ship's captain was responsible for insuring that his cargo was properly and safely stowed. The actual loading was done by Army personnel in accordance with Army-established tonnage priorities, leaving space aboard ships for Navy and Air Forces items.

On 31 July the 36th Division commander had received word to prepare at once for combat, "apparently," General Walker noted, "in some contemplated operation against Italy." [19] Fifteen days later chaos had replaced order. Loading plans were formulated and put into writing only to be superseded by changes as additional vessels became available, as the capacity of some ships was found to have been inaccurately recorded, as the number of vehicles had to be decreased because of intermittent demands by corps and army for space, as observers and newspapermen arrived unannounced and demanded accommodations.

In late August and early September, the assault troops marched to staging areas to prepare for embarkation. Divided into craft and ship loads, the units then moved to port assembly areas, where mess facilities, medical aid, water, and minor vehicle maintenance were provided. From there the troops marched to the loading docks and embarked on the vessels, which soon were crowded and overloaded, their decks obstructed. The largest loadings were made at Oran, Bizerte, and Tripoli. Others took place at Algiers, and in Sicily at Palermo and Termini.

When General Walker and General Dawley visited General Clark at his headquarters early in September, they found the army commander optimistic—Italian resistance was bound to be meager, Clark said. "This is all good news," Walker observed, "but it remains to be seen whether it is correct."

Walker expected to meet at least one German armored division at Salerno,

[18] 36th Div Admin Order 33 to accompany FO 33, 20 Aug 43; Annex 1 to Change 1 of Fifth Army G-4 Admin Instrs 1 and 2, 5 Aug 43, Fifth Army Admin File. The 141st Infantry, with 8,835 men and 1,390 vehicles, needed 6 ships, 16 LCA's, 93 LCVP's, 36 LCM's, and 8 LCI's; the 142d Infantry, with 9,112 men and 1,332 vehicles, required 5 ships, 16 LCA's, 85 LCVP's, 30 LCM's, and 10 LCI's. The 143d Infantry, initially in reserve, had 6,567 men and 1,174 vehicles and required 5 ships, 85 LCVP's, 23 LCM's, and 10 LCI's. Regimental AAR's, Sep 43.

[19] This and the two following quotations are from the Walker Diary, August and September 1943.



PART OF THE 45TH DIVISION BOARDING LST'S AT PALERMO, SICILY

perhaps two. He was somewhat concerned by the extent of the beachhead he was supposed to secure—a line from Agropoli to the Calore River, more than twenty miles—but he hoped to seize the key points along the high ground edging the Sele River plain. Although he was not altogether satisfied with the way his division had been placed aboard the ships, he had "every confidence of success if the Navy will put my artillery and tanks ashore . . . as I have requested." [20]

The Preliminaries

The invasion of Italy actually began before the end of the Sicily Campaign, when Allied strategic bombers attacked Axis airfields below Rome with good results. By the end of the campaign, the strategic bombing attacks had forced Axis commanders to remove their planes from all the major fields in southern Italy except the important Foggia airfield complex near the east coast.

The Allied tactical air force added its weight immediately after the Sicily Campaign, attacking enemy airfields and lines of communication.[21] Daily attacks started on 2 September, the planes striking targets in a large area to avoid premature disclosure of the invasion plan.

In these air operations, the Allies enjoyed a conclusive superiority over the Axis. Counting 75 percent of planes serviceable, the Northwest African Air Forces could employ about 350 heavy

[20] General Walker's Comments Relating to Salerno, 4 Feb 58, OCMH.

[21] Eisenhower to CCS, 19 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.



DUKW's Crossing the Strait of Messina *with supplies for the British Eighth Army in Calabria.*

bombers, almost 400 medium day bombers, 120 medium night bombers, and 670 fighters—more than 1,500 aircraft.[22] The Axis had about the same number of planes in the theater, but they were dispersed over Italy, Sardinia, Corsica, and southern France. In southern Italy, there were about 670 planes, of which 380 were fighters, but the Italian planes were of little value, and many German craft were unserviceable because of shortages in spare parts.

Despite Axis weakness in the air, German and Italian planes engaged in continual reconnaissance and made several attacks on critical ports in North Africa during the month preceding the invasion. The German long-range bomber force was at a low ebb because trained crews were in short supply—fuel could not be spared for flight training and many instructors were performing air transportation duties; consequently training schedules broke down. On the other hand, the fighter and fighter-bomber force, despite shortages in ground personnel, was a distinct menace to the Allied invasion.[23]

On the heels of the Allied air attacks came the first offensive of the Allied ground forces. The initial landing in the three-pronged invasion of southern Italy occurred on 3 September, four years to the day after Britain had gone to war. At 0130, the Eighth Army began Oper-

[22] Eisenhower to Marshall, 17 Aug 43, and Eisenhower to CCS, 19 Aug 43, both in OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[23] Craven and Cate, eds., *Europe: TORCH to POINTBLANK*, ch. 15; Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2886; Fifth Army Avalanche Intel Summary 2, 21 Aug 43.

ation BAYTOWN as the 13 Corps, with the 1st Canadian and 5th British Divisions, reinforced by an armored brigade and an infantry brigade, as well as by various Commando units, moved across the Strait of Messina into Calabria.

Support was massive. Six hundred Army and Navy guns delivered fire. In addition to the artillery normally available to Eighth Army, Royal Artillery units of the 15th Army Group, the 30 Corps Artillery, and four battalions of American medium artillery from the Seventh Army fired in support.[24] Naval forces, including battleships, had bombarded the coastal defenses around Reggio before the crossing; 3 cruisers, 3 monitors, 2 gunboats, and 6 destroyers supported the crossing with gunfire. The British Desert Air Force, reinforced by elements of the U.S. XII Air Support Command and of the Tactical Bomber Force, gave support from the air.

There was no German opposition, and Italian resistance was practically nonexistent. Some Italian troops volunteered to unload Allied landing craft.[25]

The ease of the Messina crossing prompted considerable disappointment that General Montgomery had not launched his operation earlier. A gain in time of as little as one or two days would have facilitated the transfer of landing craft to the Salerno forces. But General Montgomery, acknowledged master of the set battle, was perhaps not the best commander for an impromptu operation. He may even have been unsympathetic with the AVALANCHE concept, for he believed passionately in the concentration of forces, and Salerno was distant from Calabria.[26] Perhaps, too, he saw an opportunity to gain publicity by making an assault on the anniversary date.

It was soon evident that the natural obstructions of the terrain and German demolitions would be the main obstacles to an Eighth Army advance. For a while there was reason to hope that British troops would be closer to Salerno by the time of the AVALANCHE invasion than had earlier been expected, but the roads proved few and inferior, the army lacked sufficient transportation, and the farther the troops advanced into Calabria the more difficult their progress would become.

On the same day as the Calabrian landings, 3 September, the amphibious movement to Salerno started. The first AVALANCHE convoy—33 British LCT's carrying part of the 56th Division—left Tripoli for Termini on the north shore of Sicily. On 4 September a similar convoy of American LCT's departed Bizerte with troops of the 46th Division, destined to stage on Sicily at Castellammare, west of Palermo. A convoy of 34 British LCI(L)'s left Tripoli for Termini at daylight, 5 September. That afternoon a skeleton VI Corps headquarters of about thirty officers and the 36th Division left Oran on 9 APA's (transports, attack), 4 AKA's (cargo ships, attack), and 3 British LST's, escorted by 3 light cruisers, 11 destroyers, 8 minc

[24] Artillery had been firing across the strait since 16 August, when the 36th Field Artillery Battalion delivered 100 rounds of high explosive against enemy batteries near San Giovanni. Report of Operations of the United States Seventh Army in the Sicilian Campaign, 10 July–17 August 1943, Sep 43, p. b–22.

[25] 15th AGp Msg, 4 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[26] Ehrman, *Grand Strategy, V*, 58ff. Accounts of the landing are in De Guingand, *Operation Victory*, pp. 311ff.; Field Marshall Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, *El Alamein to the River Sangro* (Germany: Printing and Stationery Services, British Army of the Rhine, 1946), ch. XV.

sweepers, and a British fighter-director ship. On 6 September, as 20 LST's, plus supply ships and auxiliaries, sailed from Tripoli, the USS *Ancon,* Admiral Hewitt's flagship (with Generals Clark and House and their staffs aboard), a fighter-director ship, and three destroyers left Algiers to join the 36th Division convoy. Nine British LSI's with escort departed Tripoli that afternoon, and an LCI (L) convoy got under way from Bizerte.

Practically all of the Western Naval Task Force was on the move by this time, and an enemy air raid of about 180 planes against Bizerte during the evening of 6 September thus had no effect on the operation.[27]

September 6th was also the day that General Eisenhower inaugurated SLAPSTICK, the quick movement of cruisers carrying part of the British 1st Airborne Division from Bizerte to Taranto. The operation required Admiral Hewitt to detach several cruisers from his force and necessitated, as he later said, "considerable last minute rearrangement of the gunfire support plans of both . . . [Salerno] Attack Forces." [28]

The convoys bound for Salerno steamed around the west coast of Sicily, the landing craft that had staged on the north shore joining the convoys on 7 and 8 September. Proceeding north in calm seas and bright weather, they turned east toward the Gulf of Salerno at nightfall on the 8th. Mine sweepers ahead made contact with a British submarine, which had been in the gulf since 29 August to locate mine fields. At 2200, 8 September, the convoys sighted the beacon lights of ships sent ahead to mark the assault transport area twelve to twenty miles off the Salerno beaches. Once the vessels were assembled there and the approaches to shore swept of mines, the fleet would move closer to the beaches to facilitate unloading and support.

To guard the northern flank of the convoys against sneak attack by small boats, a picket group of 16 PT boats under Lt. Comdr. Stanley M. Barnes headed into the Bay of Naples to cause a diversion.[29] Another diversionary group under Capt. Charles L. Andrews, Jr.—1 destroyer, 2 Dutch gunboats, 6 motor launches, 4 subchasers, and 5 motor boats equipped with deception devices and carrying a small detachment of the 82d Airborne Division—entered the Gulf of Gaeta to make a demonstration off the beaches near the mouth of the Volturno River. This force hoped to draw hostile ground forces from Salerno and at the same time to capture Ventotene Island, where a German radar station was located.[30] Both operations were carried out as planned, and the island of Ventotene surrendered at midnight, on the 8th.

At 1830 on 8 September, General Eisenhower announced the surrender of Italy.[31] Ships' radios tuned to the Algiers

[27] Hospital ships did not accompany the convoys. Because they were not permitted in the assault area before H-hour of D-day, they took up preliminary positions from which they would later move into the Gulf of Salerno. AFHQ Movement Instr 503, Control of Hospital Ships (n.d.), AG 560.

[28] Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, U.S. Navy (Retired), "The Allied Navies at Salerno, Operation AVALANCHE—September, 1943," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings,* vol. 79, No. 9 (September, 1953), p. 965. Reprinted from *Proceedings* by permission; Copyright © 1953 U.S. Naval Institute.

[29] WNTF Opn Order 1–43, 26 Aug 43, Rpts of Opn (Navy).

[30] Annex 1 to Opn Plan 7–43, Diversion Directive, Rpts of Opn (Navy).

[31] Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy,* p. 508.



TROOPS OF THE INVASION FLEET CHEER THE NEWS OF ITALY'S SURRENDER

station carried Eisenhower's words over loudspeakers to the troops on the invasion fleet bound for Salerno. The reaction was immediate. "I never again expect to witness such scenes of sheer joy," an observer later wrote. To the sounds of cheers, "speculation was rampant and it was all good. . . . we would dock in Naples harbor unopposed, with an olive branch in one hand and an opera ticket in the other." [32]

There was an "immediate general letdown among the troops, and cries of 'another dry run' could be heard." [33] That the landing would be easy became a commonplace idea.[34] Some thought it unfair to General Walker and the 36th Division to "walk in," to lose the opportunity for action after months of training and preparation.[35] A holiday mood and carefree optimism took possession of most of the soldiers.

The senior officers were far from happy. They now anticipated that Germans instead of Italians would meet the land-

[32] Maj Warren A. Thrasher, The Invasion of Italy, Infantry School Advanced Officers Course, 1946–47, Ft. Benning, Ga. (Hereafter cited as Thrasher Monograph.)

[33] Terrell Monograph.

[34] Hussa, "Action at Salerno," *Infantry Journal* (December, 1943), p. 24.

[35] Rpt, Lt Harrie A. James, USNR, to Adm Hewitt, Observations During Operation AVALANCHE, 24 Oct 43 (hereafter referred to as James Rpt), AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

ings. Although they tried to warn the troops to expect opposition, thoughts of a painless landing permeated the invasion force and dulled the fighting edge of many men.[36] Any resistance on the beaches, no matter how light, would now, because of its unexpectedness, seem worse.

The Italian surrender posed another problem. Was a preliminary naval bombardment of the shore defenses justified? On moral grounds, the answer would have to be no. But if the Germans took over the coastal defenses from the Italians, naval gunfire preparation was desirable unless, of course, the landing force could achieve surprise.

General Clark expected to gain neither strategic nor tactical surprise at Salerno.[37] How could anyone hope for surprise when a convoy covering 1,000 square miles of sea had been steaming in the general direction of Salerno for two days?[38]

The decisions on prior naval bombardment of the shore defenses were different for the two attack forces. Because the Northern Attack Force carrying 10 Corps had been bombed and strafed by enemy aircraft, though with little effect, during the voyage, the British concluded that surprise had been lost. They decided in favor of a naval bombardment.

The Americans decided otherwise, and it was the decision of the 36th Division commander, General Walker, to whom Generals Clark and Dawley had delegated responsibility for establishing the beachhead. Walker had considered the matter during the planning period and had discussed it with Admiral Hall, the Southern Attack Force commander. At that time, he had asked Hall to refrain from firing a preparation. He had two reasons: the naval task force had listed and numbered 173 possible targets ashore—crossroads, fords, bridges, towns, defiles, towers, pillboxes, culverts, railroad guns, antiaircraft guns, artillery positions—but General Walker thought that the targets selected demonstrated a lack of understanding of ground force operations. Also, he had no wish to subject his troops to the possibility of being struck by short rounds from naval guns.[39]

Aboard Hall's flagship, Walker reconsidered his decision and talked again with the naval commander. From his study of the most recent air photos of the beaches and the surrounding high ground, Walker could find no fixed or organized defenses in his zone. A three-gun railroad artillery battery, reported to be Italian, obsolete, and unmanned, was within rifle range of the beach, and it was the only defensive installation of consequence; if the guns turned out to be manned, riflemen of the first wave could disperse the gun crews. As for the panzer division reported in the Salerno area, Walker thought that the naval bombardment in the British area might draw the tanks away from his beaches. In that case, his initial waves would achieve surprise and move quickly inland under cover of predawn darkness. If supporting tanks and artillery were landed on schedule, they would be ashore in time

[36] Cunningham *Despatch*, p. 2173; Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 123–24; Maj. Gen. W. H. Morris, Jr., "Salerno," *Military Review*, vol. XXIII, No. 12 (March, 1944), p. 6; Clark Diary, 8 Sep 43.

[37] See Reynolds, *The Curtain Rises*, p. 283.

[38] Hussa, "Action at Salerno," *Infantry Journal* (December, 1943), p. 29.

[39] Interv, Westover with Walker, 15 May 53. See also 36th Div Appendix 3 to Annex 4 to FO 33, 21 Aug 43.

to meet a counterattack. Because naval vessels were ten miles offshore and because naval observers were to be ashore only after daylight, a preliminary bombardment, Walker concluded, might be poorly co-ordinated with a landing taking place during the hours of darkness. Naval gunfire might intensify the normal confusion of such an operation. Rejecting the psychological value of a preliminary bombardment, Walker reaffirmed his decision not to use the naval guns, though he counted on them to help deal later with opposition beyond the beaches.[40]

"In view Italian armistice," read the message making the decision a matter of record at 2035, 8 September, "no repeat no shore bombardment will be undertaken [in the American zone] unless there is evidence that landing is being opposed."[41] Despite the moral issue, hope of gaining surprise on the Salerno beaches south of the Sele River was the deciding factor. Thus, "the relative importance attached to surprise," as one observer wrote, motivated both British and American decisions, the British feeling that all surprise had been lost or that the value of supporting naval fire outweighed the possible advantage of partial surprise, the Americans hoping that enough chance of surprise remained to warrant withholding naval fire.[42]

Those who anxiously awaited the passage of the few hours before the assault and the resolution of their suspense—would the beaches be deserted? would jubilant Italians receive the troops with open arms? or would grim Germans seek to repel them?—might have remembered Garibaldi. At the end of a triumphant campaign in Sicily he had stood, eighty-three years earlier, on the sands of Point Faro, fabled Charybdis, looking across the Strait of Messina to Scilla in Calabria, where the water seemed little more than a wide river with but slight current and only a legendary whirlpool. Garibaldi, too, had been bound for Naples. Lacking troops and transports for a direct descent on the city, he had sent 200 men in rowboats across the narrows on a cloudy night early in August. But the invaders were discovered, and when the alarm was given, they scattered and escaped into the mountains. Not long afterward, on 18 August 1860, Garibaldi marched 3,000 soldiers aboard two steamers and crossed the strait at its widest place, this time successfully. Reggio and San Giovanni soon fell to him, whereupon he set out across mountain and malarial plain toward Mount Vesuvius. He entered Salerno unopposed on the night of 6 September. His enemy, Francis II, having left Naples and retired to Gaeta, Garibaldi arrived at his goal on the following day.[43] His campaign had lasted three weeks.

How long would it take the Allies in 1943?

[40] General Walker's Comments Relating to Salerno, 4 Feb 58, OCMH.

[41] Quoted in Thrasher Monograph, p. 9. Thrasher was General Clark's aide-de-camp and saw the message. See also Hussa, "Action at Salerno," *Infantry Journal* (December, 1943), p. 29.

[42] Morris, "Salerno," *Military Review* (March, 1944), p. 6.

[43] George Macaulay Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy, June–November, 1860* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1919), pp. 110ff.

CHAPTER V

The Opposition: The Germans in Italy

News of the Italian surrender came as no complete surprise to Adolf Hitler and the German High Command.[1] Months of suspicion and distrust of their ally had led the Germans to make elaborate plans to cope with Italy's possible withdrawal from the war or switch to the Allied side. Yet uncertainty over Italy's intentions complicated German preparations for the defense of the Mediterranean area, which were primarily concerned with Allied capabilities.

All political and military authority in Germany rested with Hitler. No unified command or joint staff existed to direct the national war effort except as embodied in the person of Hitler himself as German Chancellor, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and Commander in Chief of the Army. Nor did Hitler consider it necessary or desirable to keep his military associates informed of his political goals and his schemes to attain them. The military had been reduced to tools, with which Hitler, regretfully it seemed, could not dispense.

Hitler had assumed leadership as early as 1938 over the Armed Forces High Command, the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW), which acted as a personal staff for Hitler in his capacity as head of the armed forces and, at least theoretically, exercised the prerogatives of formulating grand strategy and conducting joint operations. Actually, the power of OKW was limited because the Army, Navy, and Air Force refused to acknowledge its supremacy. Each military service maintained its own separate high command — *Oberkommando des Heeres* (OKH), *Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine* (OKM), and *Oberkommando der Luftwaffe* (OKL)—and the Navy and Air Force sent only low-ranking liaison officers to represent them in the OKW. Though OKW was responsible in theory for all theaters of operation, OKH directed operations in the east. Differences over the strategy to be followed against the Soviet Union and the failure of the Moscow offensive in November 1941 prompted Hitler to take for himself the title and functions of the Commander in Chief of the Army. His absorption in the eastern campaign led him to give more or less perfunctory attention to the other theaters. Thus OKW, with Generalfeldmarschall Wilhelm Keitel in charge of its day-to-day concerns and Generaloberst Alfred Jodl at the head of its planning section, served as Hitler's instrument for directing operations in the Mediterranean area.

By the spring of 1943, Hitler had lost the strategic initiative. He had no overall war plan, for he lacked the basic prerequisite, a substantial strategic re-

[1] This chapter is based on Ralph S. Mavrogordato, Germany's Strategic Position in Italy, 1943, MS # R-85, OCMH.

serve. Losses at Stalingrad and in North Africa precluded accumulating a reserve unless he called off offensive operations in the Soviet Union and established a relatively short front. Mussolini had urged Hitler as early as December 1942 to end the war in the east by negotiation, or at least to withdraw behind an "East Wall" that would permit a concentration of forces against the Western Allies, specifically in the Mediterranean area. But Hitler refused to consider retrograde movements in the USSR. He would neither abandon his "historic mission" in the east nor forego any of his war aims in an attempt to find a political solution in the east. He would not even make concessions to the occupied countries in exchange for greater co-operation, which would lighten his troop commitments.

His vision in the summer of 1942 of his armored columns advancing through North Africa and the Caucasus to a meeting somewhere in the Near East in the most gigantic pincer movement in history having failed him, Hitler had no positive plan for victory beyond an *"Endsieg,"* a final triumph founded on irrational hope and mystic faith. Earlier he had believed that he could defeat the Soviet Union by attrition, but by 1943 he was counting on an eventual split between the USSR and the Western Allies to change the fortunes of the war.

Even as Hitler saw his prospects of defeating the Soviet Union diminish, his outlook elsewhere darkened. The battle of the Atlantic was turning in favor of the Western Allies. The air superiority Germany once enjoyed was gone, and German lines of communication were becoming increasingly vulnerable to Allied bombing. Efforts to build an army in France capable of meeting an expected Allied invasion conflicted with the demands of the active theaters in the USSR and in the Mediterranean, as well as with the requirements of the inactive theaters elsewhere in Europe. And if Italy collapsed, Hitler would have to fill a vacuum in the Balkans and southern France, where Italian troops occupied the coastal regions.

Hitler had long been aware of Italy's weakness. Italy had been ill prepared for the economic and industrial requirements of modern warfare, and as the best Italian divisions were destroyed in Greece, the Soviet Union, and North Africa, criticism of Mussolini's conduct of the war mounted at home. The loss of 150,000 Italian troops in North Africa, along with 100,000 Germans, seriously depressed Italian morale. In May 1943, when the Axis Powers were expelled from North Africa, Hitler recognized that the unstable internal situation in Italy was moving toward a crisis. He realized that he might have to face Allied operations in the Mediterranean without being able to rely on Italy for a share of the defense.[2]

If Italy withdrew from the war, several strategic alternatives were open to Hitler: he could assume the defense of all of Italy and the Balkans; he could surrender all Italian territory to the Allies and thereby avoid committing strong forces in what could be only a secondary theater of operations; or he could defend Italy along some geographic line to prevent loss of the rich agricultural and industrial resources of the Po Valley.

Hitler never seriously considered evacuating all of Italy. He disliked giving up

[2] A detailed discussion of German-Italian relations during 1943 can be found in Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy.*

the Po Valley, and he had no desire to see Allied troops on his southern border. Although the Alps provided an obstacle to ground invasion of Germany, air bases in northern Italy would place Allied bombers within easy striking range of southern and central Germany, and staging areas would make possible Allied amphibious operations against southern France and Dalmatia. A German withdrawal to the Alps might also suggest to some of the German satellites, Hungary and other Balkan countries, that they could disengage from the war; it might have an adverse effect on Turkish neutrality.

To occupy and defend all of Italy and the Balkans in the event of Italian withdrawal from the war was Hitler's first idea. In May 1943, he ordered plans to be drawn to these ends should Italian resistance collapse or Italy reach what he called a "treacherous" agreement with the Allies. Yet Hitler was loath to take the first step toward an open break with his ally or to give the Italians an excuse for defection. There was some chance that the Italian Government would refuse the unconditional surrender demanded by the Allies. Thus, all German plans designed to cope with the possibility of an Italian defection were prepared in great secrecy.

Specifically, Hitler instructed Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel to activate in Munich a skeleton army group headquarters disguised as a rehabilitation headquarters.[3] Rommel was to be ready to move into Italy and take over the defense of the country. To carry out the operation, he was to receive six good divisions from the eastern theater, eight reconstituted divisions from France, and two parachute divisions from Germany, all of which were to assemble in southeastern France and in Austria for subsequent entry into Italy. But when offensive operations in the USSR threatened to take some of the divisions Rommel was counting on, he informed Hitler that without all the promised units he could not guarantee the occupation and defense of all of Italy. When Jodl agreed with Rommel, Hitler decided to defend only part of the country. He would establish a defensive line in the Northern Apennines and hold there. By July Hitler was admitting openly, "We cannot hold the entire peninsula without the Italian Army."[4]

While Hitler, the OKW, and Rommel made plans in anticipation of Italian defection, the senior German commander in Italy, Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, Commander in Chief, South (*Oberbefehlshaber Sued—OB SUED*), remained for the moment uninformed of these activities. Kesselring, who had gone to Italy in December 1941 as commander of *Luftflotte 2 (Second Air Force)* and whose command had subsequently been enlarged, was working in close co-operation with *Comando Supremo,* the Italian Armed Forces High Command. In agreement with *Comando Supremo* and independently of Rommel's mission, OKW had been build-

[3] *OKW/WFSt/Op. Nr. 661138/43,* 22 May 43, *Westl. Mittelmeer, Chefsachen.* Rommel's staff was composed of officers who had served with him in Africa and members of *Army Group B,* recently inactivated in the USSR. *OKW/WFSt KTB,* 1 Aug 43; *OKH/GenStdH/Org. Karteiblatt Nr. 11/12307,* 9 Jul 43.

[4] Quote from Fuehrer Conferences on Matters Dealing with the German Navy, 1943, issued by the Office of Naval Intelligence (hereafter cited as Fuehrer Conferences, 1943). See also MS # P–049 (Warlimont), OCMH.

ing up Kesselring's strength for action against the Allies.

The Allied invasion of Sicily in July prompted an immediate increase in Kesselring's forces. Officially attached to the Italian forces, the German units were under the operational direction of *Comando Supremo*. Actually, German subordination to Italian command was a nominal matter, and Kesselring was in fact the responsible commander of German troops and held accountable by OKW for their proper use and deployment.[5]

A natural optimist with distinct Italophile views, Kesselring was convinced that Italy would continue in the war. Hitler's distrust of the Italians was repugnant to him and talk of evacuating southern Italy even more so. He objected strongly to uncomplimentary remarks reportedly made by Rommel about Italian officers, and he resented the fact that while his own influence with Hitler seemed to be declining, Rommel's was increasing. Shocked by Mussolini's fall from power and imprisonment in July, Kesselring believed Badoglio's declarations that Italy would continue in the war to be in good faith. He was convinced that even if Sicily were lost, all of Italy could and should be defended.[6]

Mussolini's downfall greatly disturbed Hitler. In his immediate excitement he inclined toward quick action—a *coup d'état* by German troops to seize Badoglio and the King, liberate Mussolini, and re-establish the fascist regime under German protection. To take whatever military measures might be necessary, Hitler dispatched to Rome by air elements of a parachute division, together with a corps headquarters. He selected a young and adventurous officer who had attracted his attention, Capt. Otto Skorzeny, to go to Rome to locate and rescue the Duce.[7]



FIELD MARSHAL KESSELRING

Before any of his wild ideas could be carried out, Hitler grew more cautious, restrained by ignorance of Mussolini's whereabouts and by the apparent willingness of the Italian Government to maintain the alliance and continue in the war. Instead of making a sudden and dramatic move, Hitler decided to occupy Italy unobtrusively by gradually increasing the number of German divisions in the country, if possible with *Comando Supremo*'s agreement. This coincided

[5] *OKW/WFSt KTB*, 10 Jul 43; MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

[6] Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, *Kesselring: A Soldier's Record* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1954). See also MS # T–1a K1 (Kesselring), OCMH.

[7] Fuehrer Conferences, 1943, pp. 102–06; Min of Conferences between Hitler and members of the German High Comd, Dec 42–Mar 45, Nos. 14 (1) and 16 (1), 25 and 26 Jul 43, OCMH. See also Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*.

with the requirements of the final plan developed by OKW from the previously rather vague studies of how to cope with an Italian collapse. The German forces in Italy needed reinforcement if they were to disarm and disperse Italian troops, destroy the Italian Navy, render the Italian Air Force inoperative, and seize or destroy key installations and communications.[8]

The German plans for moving into Italy in strength were complicated by the threat of what the Allies might do. If they invaded the mainland before the end of the Sicily Campaign, they would cut off and perhaps isolate the German forces fighting in Sicily and those stationed on the mainland south of the invasion area. An Allied amphibious operation against northern Italy, unlikely as it was, if made in conjunction with an attempt by strong Italian forces to block the Alpine and Apennine passes, would bottle up most of the German forces in Italy. A landing near Rome, where at least five Italian divisions could assist, would cut off a substantial number of German forces in the south. An invasion of Calabria with or without Italian co-operation, would imperil the forces in Sicily.

Other possibilities, though dangerous, were less menacing: an Allied invasion of Sardinia as a prelude to operations in northern Italy or southern France, or landings in the heel to secure the air bases at Foggia in order to simplify later operations in the Balkans. Although an Allied assault near Naples was within the realm of possibility, the Germans judged that other areas offered the Allies greater strategic and tactical advantages.

[8] *OKW/WFSt/Op. Nr. 661763/43*, 1 Aug 43, *Westl. Mittelmeer, Chefsachen.*

Estimating that any large-scale Allied invasion of the Italian mainland would come only after agreement with the Italian Government in order to capitalize upon that concord, the Germans believed that the Balkans rather than Italy would be the Allied strategic goal. "At present," Hitler stated on 17 July, "it appears that the next enemy landing will be attempted there [in the Balkans]. It is as important to reinforce the Balkans as it is to hold Italy." [9]

To Hitler, an Allied campaign in Italy as an end in itself made little sense. German forces could use the terrain and the communications network to great defensive advantage, and an Allied march up the peninsula would reach a dead end at the Alps. Allied landings in Greece, on the other hand, would impose great difficulties on the Germans—all German reinforcements and supplies would have to be shipped over a single rail line of limited capacity; 1,300 kilometers long, the line was vulnerable to attack from the air and from partisan forces on the ground; political repercussions in Hungary and Rumania, allied to Germany, were likely; and Allied success might persuade Turkey to give up neutrality. The economic dependence of Germany on the Rumanian oil fields and on the bauxite, copper, and other resources of southeastern Europe also led the Germans to anticipate an Allied invasion in that area, while the Ljubljana Gap offered an invasion route into Central Europe that would enable the Western Allies and the Soviet Union to join in a co-ordinated strategy. Finally, the presence of British and American troops

[9] Fuehrer Conferences, 1943, II, 94. See also *OKW/WFSt KTB*, 9, 15, 20 Jul, 3, 11 Aug 43; MS # C-093 (Warlimont), OCMH.

in the Balkans might check Russian ambitions, a point Hitler thought to be of particular concern to the British.[10]

Thus, to cope with an Italian surrender that, in German estimates, would open the door to new Allied operations in the Mediterranean, OKW divided its plans into two parts, one for the Balkans, the other for Italy and southern France.[11] In Italy there would be no German defense south of Rome. Effective on OKW order, to be issued upon news of Italian capitulation or collapse, Rommel was to occupy all the important mountain passes, roads, and railways in northern Italy, disarm Italian Army units, and secure the Apennine passes. Kesselring was to move his forces out of Sicily and southern Italy to the north, disarming the Italian Army and crushing any resistance as he went. As soon as the units "in northern Italy became operationally connected with those in southern Italy," as Hitler put it, Rommel was to assume command over all the German forces in the Italian peninsula. By this time, the German troops on Sardinia and Corsica were to have reached the mainland.[12]

Kesselring remained convinced that all was well in Italy. He saw no danger to his forces or to his lines of communication, and little reason to withdraw. He needed reinforcements for the proper defense of the toe and the heel, and made repeated requests for more troops. "At the moment," he stated in a memorandum to OKW on 5 August, "it is certain that the Italian leadership and armed forces want to cooperate with us. . . . I repeat my previously expressed opinion that Calabria (the toe) and Apulia (the heel) are not sufficiently secure. Also, in view of the strategic importance of these regions as a springboard to the Balkans, I ask again for reinforcements of German troops in southern Italy." As late as 19 August, he was of the opinion that Italian "commands and troops will do everything possible to frustrate [Allied] attacks." [13]

Hitler refused to send more troops into southern Italy. Enough forces, he felt, were already imperiled there by the double danger of Italian defection and Allied invasion. In any event, evacuation of the German units from Sicily to southern Italy would sufficiently strengthen Kesselring's forces to make possible the orderly withdrawal Hitler had in mind.

Hitler's disregard of Kesselring's views and Kesselring's knowledge that Rommel was eventually to succeed him in command led Kesselring to submit his resignation on 14 August. Hitler refused to accept it.[14] He needed Kesselring in Italy to guarantee a continuation of the superficially smooth relationship with the Italians and watchfulness over Allied intentions.

In August OKW began to send German units into northern Italy, some with the consent of *Comando Supremo,* some without. When Rommel's forces—three corps headquarters, five infantry divisions, and two panzer divisions—crossed the border into northern Italy, Rommel opened his headquarters at Lake Garda

[10] *OKW/WFSt KTB,* 9 Jul 43; Fuehrer Conferences, 1943, II, 117.

[11] MS # P–049 (Warlimont). The Germans increased the number of their divisions in the Balkans from six in January 1943 to more than thirteen in July.

[12] *OKW/WFSt KTB,* 1 Aug 43.

[13] *OKW/WFSt KTB,* 5, 19 Aug 43.

[14] *OKW/WFSt KTB,* 14 Aug 43.

as *Army Group B*.[15] Although tension between OKW and *Comando Supremo* mounted, neither wished to assume responsibility for an open break. The Italians felt insecure because no agreement had yet been reached with the Allies, while the Germans wished to move as many troops as possible into Italy before open hostility on the part of the Italians made movement more difficult. The Italians had no doubt that the troops in the north were in effect an occupation force, but, not daring to protest, they pretended to accept the German explanation that *Army Group B* and its forces comprised a strategic reserve for action in the Balkans, southern France, or Italy. And while *Comando Supremo* urged OKW to use these forces to strengthen the defenses in southern Italy where an Allied attack was more likely, OKW suggested that *Comando Supremo* move some Italian divisions from northern to southern Italy for the same reason.[16]

The successful evacuation of German forces from Sicily to the mainland substantially strengthened the German units in the south. To relieve Kesselring and his headquarters of the increasing detail of tactical command and to tighten control over the units, OKW created the *Tenth Army* headquarters on 8 August and made it operational two weeks later.[17] The army commander, Generaloberst Heinrich von Vietinghoff genannt Scheel, had commanded a corps on the Eastern Front before taking command of an army in France. Soon after his appointment but before he actually assumed command of the *Tenth Army*, Vietinghoff reached the conclusion that "Allied landings in the Naples-Salerno sector represent the main danger to the whole of the German forces in Southern Italy." [18]

Meeting with Hitler on 17 August, the day the Sicily Campaign ended, Vietinghoff learned that his primary mission was to assure the withdrawal of German forces from southern Italy to the Rome area when Italy surrendered—only a matter of time so far as Hitler was concerned. Despite Hitler's apprehension that the Italian Army might co-operate with the Allies and block the Germans in the south, Vietinghoff was to give the Italians no excuse for defection. He was not to begin his withdrawal prematurely. He was to hold the Naples-Salerno area with three divisions, evacuate Calabria (the toe) only under Allied pressure, and keep the *1st Parachute Division* in Apulia (the heel), where an Allied attack seemed less probable, for observation and security duties.[19]

These views of Hitler's reached Kesselring in the form of an OKW order on the following day, 18 August. Assuming Italian capitulation "sooner or later," Hitler wanted Kesselring to be sure that the *Tenth Army* could withdraw all its forces to the vicinity of Rome in the

[15] Moving into northern Italy were the headquarters of the *II SS Panzer Corps*, the *LI Mountain Corps*, and the *LXXXVII Corps;* the *1st SS Panzer* and *24th Panzer Divisions;* and the *44th, 305th, 76th, 65th,* and *94th Infantry Divisions*. Ralph S. Mavrogordato, Order of Battle and List of Commanders, MS # R–76, OCMH.

[16] *OKW/WFSt KTB*, 16 Aug 43.

[17] *Tenth A KTB*, 22 Aug 43.

[18] Capt A. G. Steiger, Campaign in South Italy (September–December 1943), Information from German Military Documents, Canadian Historical Section Report 18 (hereafter referred to as Steiger MS), OCMH.

[19] Steiger MS; Vietinghoff, in MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH; *Tenth A* Memo, *Vermerk ueber Besprechung beim Fuehrer am 17.8.43, Tenth A KTB*.

event the Allies landed in Italy or the Italians turned on the Germans. The German troops on Sardinia and Corsica were to defend those islands against invasion and evacuate them only if Italian troops collapsed or if Italy surrendered.[20]

By the end of August the decision was firm. Kesselring was to be ready to disarm the Italian Army and withdraw all his forces to the Rome area, holding there only until his troops had escaped from the south and from Sardinia and Corsica. He would then move his units northward to a line somewhere along the Apennines. In the meantime, Rommel was to secure and occupy all the Alpine and Apennine passes and the major ports in northern Italy.[21]

Thus the Germans had plans to deal with two different situations. If the Italians surrendered, the *Tenth Army* was to disarm Italian units in southern Italy and withdraw to the Rome area; if the Allies invaded the mainland before an Italian capitulation, the *Tenth Army*, with Italian support, was to repel the landings in order to guarantee the routes of withdrawal to Rome. What the Germans lacked was a firm plan of action if the two events should occur simultaneously.

For all their suspicions of Italian intentions, the Germans had no real intimation of the negotiations between the Badoglio government and the Allied high command. Extensive Italo-German conversations, discussions, and correspondence on all military and diplomatic levels continued normally even though the Germans judged the Italian will to fight as virtually nil, even though *Comando Supremo* had vehemently opposed, before reluctantly agreeing to, the activation of the *Tenth Army*. Harmony and co-operation, mutual trust and regard characterized the relations between Vietinghoff, the *Tenth Army* commander, and the Italian *Seventh Army* commander, whose areas of responsibility coincided.



GENERAL VON VIETINGHOFF

When the British crossed the Strait of Messina and invaded Calabria on 3 September, Kesselring ordered Vietinghoff to fight a delaying action while withdrawing to the north. When the Italian *Seventh Army* commander inquired whether German forces would support a counterattack he contemplated launching, Vietinghoff replied in the negative.[22] The Germans, in accordance with their plans, began to retire from the toe

[20] *OKW/WFSt Order Nr. 661966/43*, 18 Aug 43, *Westl. Mittelmeer, Chefsachen.*

[21] *OKW/WFSt KTB*, 29, 30 Aug 43.

[22] *Tenth A* Order, *Armeebefehl Nr. 2*, 4 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl; Tenth A KTB*, 3 Sep 43; CSDIC/CMF/M296, Detailed Interrogation Rpt of Thirteen German Intel Officers, n.d. (about Aug 45), Intel Activities, AG 383.4.

of Italy, their movements facilitated by Italian help.[23]

In order to clear his decks for action against the stronger Allied invasion of the Italian mainland he still expected, Hitler decided to resolve the uncertainty hanging over the German-Italian alliance by requiring Italy to accede to certain demands. They were not new—the Germans had made them before—but the Italian Government and *Comando Supremo* had in the past been evasive without refusing altogether to make them at least the basis of discussion.[24] On 7 September Hitler instructed OKW to have the demands incorporated into an ultimatum ready for his signature by 9 September. If Italy refused to submit, Hitler would take the steps necessary to insure the safety of the German troops stationed in the Italian peninsula, particularly those in the south.

One of the steps he contemplated was withdrawing the *Tenth Army* to the Rome area, the first move toward establishing a relatively short front in the Apennines north of Rome. North of this Apennine line, German troops would pacify the country and clear it of Italian forces. Three or four divisions would then become available for dispatch to the Balkans, which were, as Hitler said, "vulnerable to an Anglo-Saxon attack from Apulia [the heel]." [25]

As for the major Allied invasion that the Germans expected, opinion had fluctuated on the exact place of the landings. Gaeta, Salerno, Rome, Apulia, northern Italy, Sardinia, even a direct invasion of the Balkans were among the sites considered. Reports from intelligence agents were useless—according to them, attacks were likely against all possible targets and some impossible ones too.

Lacking reliable strategic intelligence, Kesselring variously stressed Calabria, Apulia, and Naples as the most likely invasion sites. His inconsistency was perhaps motivated as much by real concern as by his desire to strengthen his forces in southern Italy at the expense of Rommel's troops in the north. When Kesselring informed OKW on 29 August that five heavily guarded Allied aircraft carriers had departed Gibraltar and were proceeding eastward, this piece of evidence tied in with observations regarding the relocation of Allied landing ships in Sicily. New Allied attacks were obviously imminent.

The concentration of Allied strength in the western Mediterranean appeared to rule out a direct invasion of the Balkans. But whether the blow would fall on southern Italy, Sardinia and Corsica, or the Rome area remained in doubt. OKW inclined toward the Salerno or Naples area, but Kesselring, who was disturbed by the inadequacy of his aerial reconnaissance, concluded that the invasion site was "entirely unpredictable."[26]

[23] *Tenth A KTB*, 6, 7, 8 Sep 43.

[24] The German demands included: complete freedom of movement for German units, which was aimed at the reluctance on the part of Italian authorities to allow German troops near major ports and naval installations; withdrawal of all Italian troops from the Italo-German border area and subordination of Italian divisions in the Po Valley to *Army Group B*; creation of a strong Italian force in southern Italy to free *Tenth Army* for counterattacking the main Allied invasion; and modification of command arrangements, in effect Italian acknowledgment of the supremacy of German leadership over the Axis combined forces operations in Italy. *OKW/WFSt/KTB*, 7, 8 Sep 43.

[25] Jodl Memo, *OKW/WFSt Nr. 662214/43*, 8 Sep 43 (T–373, Naval Archives).

[26] *OKW/WFSt KTB*, 29 Aug 43; MS # C–093 (Warlimont).

To meet an Allied invasion and also the threat of Italian attack, Kesselring had considerable forces in southern and central Italy. The successful evacuation from Sicily had added 60,000 men and all their individual equipment to the 75,000 troops already in the southern portion of the mainland. The troops were organized as follows: the *26th Panzer* and *29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions* (about 30,000 men) were under the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* headquarters and withdrawing from Calabria; the *Hermann Goering Division* (reconstituted after its losses in Tunisia with troops available in Italy), the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* (activated in Italy), and the *16th Panzer Division* (which had been destroyed at Stalingrad and reconstituted in France) totaled about 45,000 men and were deployed along the Italian west coast between Gaeta and Salerno under the *XIV Panzer Corps* headquarters. Both corps, as well as the *1st Parachute Division* (about 17,000 men), which was stationed in the heel around Foggia, were under the *Tenth Army* headquarters. In the Rome area, under the *XI Flieger Corps* headquarters, which was controlled directly by *OB SUED*, were the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* (which had also been destroyed at Stalingrad and reconstituted in France) and the *2d Parachute Division*—about 43,000 men.

When reconnaissance pilots on 7 September spotted an Allied convoy north of Palermo moving on a northeasterly course, destination unknown, Vietinghoff, the *Tenth Army* commander, ordered the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* to accelerate the withdrawal of its two divisions from Calabria. Specifically, he wanted the *26th Panzer Division* to hold off the British Eighth Army at the Catanzaro neck, while the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* hurried to Castrovillari, ready to go from there either northeastward to Apulia or northward to Naples, preliminary steps to a withdrawal to Rome.[27]

As pilots confirmed the movements of a large Allied convoy on the morning of 8 September, *Tenth Army* began to look for landings at Salerno or Naples. When reports on the size and composition of the convoy came in about noon—80 to 100 transports, the pilots suggested, and 90 to 100 landing craft, escorted by 10 battleships, 3 aircraft carriers, as well as cruisers and destroyers—Vietinghoff placed the *XIV Panzer Corps* on the highest alert status. But since the destination of the convoy remained unclear and since the Allies might land at several points, Vietinghoff kept the three divisions of this corps guarding the Naples area—the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* at the Gulf of Gaeta, from Terracina in the north to the mouth of the Volturno, the *Hermann Goering Division* stretched from the Volturno to Castellammare on the northern shore of the Sorrento peninsula, and the *16th Panzer Division* along the Gulf of Salerno as far south as Agropoli.[28] Vietinghoff also, after conferring with the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* commander, General der Panzertruppen Traugott Herr, and with the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* commander, Generalmajor Walter Fries, ordered the withdrawal from Calabria once more accelerated. Fries was now

[27] *Tenth A KTB*, 8 Sep 43.

[28] *XIV Pz C KTB*, 8 Sep 43. See also CSDIC/CMF/M296, Interrogation Rpt of Thirteen German Intel Officers, n.d. (about Aug 45), Intel Activities, AG 383.4.

to move his division to the head of the Gulf of Policastro to protect that part of the Italian west coast. The *26th Panzer Division* was to retire from the Catanzaro neck, but slowly enough to insure the evacuation of all its matériel, especially its antiaircraft guns.[29]

While Vietinghoff prepared to meet an Allied invasion in southern Italy, Kesselring remained apprehensive over the likelihood that the Allies would land near Rome. His headquarters at the suburban town of Frascati had been bombed and destroyed by Allied aircraft on 8 September in a one-hour attack at noon. Air sightings of several large invasion formations, heavily protected by warships and carriers and heading toward the west coast, continued to be reported. The German naval command buttressed Kesselring's feeling by believing as he did that the Allies would come ashore immediately north or south of Rome, perhaps both.

Although the German naval command later that day revised its estimate and indicated an expectation of Allied landings in the Gulfs of Gaeta or Salerno, Kesselring remained concerned about Rome. At last becoming uneasy about the presence of several Italian divisions near Rome, he instructed Vietinghoff to alert the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* for a possible shift from Gaeta to the capital city. Later he advised Vietinghoff to look for landings near both Rome and Naples. But above all, Kesselring emphasized, Vietinghoff was to be ready to move one or two divisions of the *XIV Panzer Corps* to help the *XI Flieger Corps* in "the decisive fight against enemy landings and Italian troops near Rome."[30]

Neither Kesselring nor Vietinghoff had apparently worked out detailed plans on how to meet an Allied invasion anywhere. The reasons for this state of affairs were the recent activation of the *Tenth Army,* which had become operational only two weeks before; the recent redeployment from Sicily of divisions that were still reorganizing and making up losses in personnel and equipment; and the necessity for the Germans to coordinate their planning, at least officially, with the Italians, whom they expected to assume responsibility for coastal defense while the Germans mounted a counterattack with their mobile and armored forces.

Nor had the German commanders in Italy given much attention to meeting an Allied invasion without Italian help. Advance preparations consisted simply of alerting certain divisions for certain movements—the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* to be ready to move to Rome, the *Hermann Goering* and *16th Panzer Divisions* to Apulia. If the Allies landed north of the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* and threatened to cut off the troops withdrawing from Calabria, or if Italian units attacked the corps, the German forces were to follow the previous instructions: they were to fight their way northward as best they could to Rome.[31]

When *Tenth Army* at 2000, 8 September, picked up a London broadcast announcing the Italian armistice, Vieting-

[29] *Tenth A KTB,* 8 Sep 43.

[30] Telegrams, Kesselring to Vietinghoff, 8 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.;* War Diary, German Naval Command—Italy, 8 Sep 43, OCMH.

[31] Rpt, *XIV Pz C* to *Tenth A,* 27 Aug 43, and *Tenth A Chefbesprechung bei AOK 10,* 2 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl., Chefsachen; XIV Pz C KTB,* 8 Sep 43.

hoff immediately called his Italian counterpart, who in good faith labeled the news a crude propaganda maneuver. Vietinghoff was on the point of issuing a message to his troops to deny the truth of the broadcast when confirmation of the Italian capitulation came from *OB SUED*.[32]

In a telegram to Vietinghoff, Kesselring could hardly restrain his indignation. The Italians had "committed basest treachery . . . behind our backs." But the Germans would continue to fight to the utmost "*zum Heil*," for the salvation of Italy and Europe.

> If we retain our fighting spirit and remain dead calm, I am confident that we will continue to perform the tasks entrusted to us by the Fuehrer. Italian troops will be asked to continue the fight on our side by appeals to their honor. Those who refuse are to be ruthlessly disarmed. No mercy must be shown the traitors. Long live the Fuehrer.[33]

A message issued by the German naval command in Italy was more direct. "Italian armistice does not apply to us," the naval headquarters announced. "The fight continues."[34]

The Italian *Seventh Army* commander in the south, disconcerted and embarrassed by the action of his government, made no trouble for his former allies. He turned over to the Germans fuel and other supplies they needed. Some Italian units allowed themselves to be disarmed by the Germans after brief negotiations, others after an ultimatum or a skirmish. In Naples, a hungry civilian population supported some Italian soldiers who threatened an antiaircraft installation manned by the only German unit in the city, but the arrival two days later of the combat troops quickly smothered the flare-up. In the Rome area Kesselring faced several hostile Italian divisions, but after a few days of confrontation, including a clash of arms, he became master of the situation. Italian units for the most part dissolved themselves, the troops throwing away their weapons and uniforms and disappearing overnight into the countryside. The threat of Italian resistance that the Allied command had hoped to raise against the German defenders at Salerno failed to materialize.[35]

News of the Italian surrender on the evening of 8 September came the day before Hitler planned to sign the ultimatum and deliver his demands to the Italian Government. Had the surrender announcement been made several days later, Hitler would probably have already dispatched his paper. Having signed the armistice with the Allies, Italy would have had to stall for time. By then, all of the *Tenth Army* would probably have started its withdrawal to Rome.

Instead, upon news of the Italian surrender, German units began to disarm the Italian Army and take over the coastal defenses. When the Allied invasion force arrived off the beaches of Salerno, the Germans were getting into position to oppose landings anywhere along the west coast of Italy. Thus, despite Hitler's earlier intentions, the Germans found

[32] Telegram, *Tenth A* to *LXXVI Pz C* (not dispatched), 8 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[33] Kesselring to Vietinghoff, 8 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[34] War Diary, German Naval Command—Italy, 8 Sep 43, OCMH.

[35] A detailed account may be found in Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*. See also Rpt, *XIV Pz C* to *Tenth A*, 18 Sep 43, *XIV Pz C KTB Anl.*

themselves defending Italy south of Rome. Hitler's reluctance to withdraw his troops as long as the slightest possibility remained that Italy would continue in the war, the timing of the armistice announcement, which prevented the delivery of Hitler's ultimatum, and the Allied invasion itself—these made inevitable the battle on the beaches of Salerno.

PART TWO

SALERNO

CHAPTER VI

The Landings

The Last Few Miles of Sea

The darkened ships of the Allied assault convoys, maintaining radio silence, reached their destination near the Salerno beaches after dark on 8 September. At 2300 the call to general quarters sounded. Soon thereafter ships' winches began to move landing craft into position for their descent into the water. Troops placed ammunition, weapons, and radios inside the craft, collected their packs and individual equipment, and awaited the signal to depart. In the first minute of 9 September, loudspeakers called boat teams to their stations. Soon afterward assault craft and landing nets were lowered, and the men clambered from the transports into the boats "with the usual orderly confusion." [1]

The Americans wore wool uniforms. Each man had a full canteen hanging from his cartridge belt. On his back he carried a light pack with his toilet articles and mess kit, two chocolate bars known as D rations, and one boxed K ration meal. Each rifleman had two extra bandoleers of ammunition. Blanket rolls and one suit of fatigues he had left with his company supply sergeant aboard the transport, to be brought ashore later.[2]

The first boat waves pulled away from the transports and headed for the rendezvous area three to five miles offshore. As they arrived, the craft formed behind the faint red taillights of wave-leaders' boats, which had navigational equipment, and began to circle slowly. The moon had set and the night was pitch black. Water gently slapped the sides of the boats. The smell of diesel oil was in the air. Despite the smooth sea and slight wind, a good many soldiers were seasick. (*Map I*)

It took about three hours to get all the assault troops and their equipment to the rendezvous area. Behind them came more craft and DUKW's carrying tanks, guns, heavy weapons, artillery and antitank pieces, crews, and ammunition.

At 0200 on 9 September, in the Northern Attack Force area, enemy shore units opened fire on the ships carrying and supporting 10 Corps. The warships replied with a steady bombardment.

Among the 10 Corps forces, the U.S. Ranger battalions, which were to land on the northernmost beaches at the extreme left, were experienced in amphibious operations. Their commander, Colonel Darby, had, as he later said, got "together with the Navy and decided that we had to have closer cooperation and closer communications than we had ever had before, because we had another situation of finding a bad beach in the

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[1] Thrasher Monograph. See also Eighth Amphibious Force Task Unit 81.2.3 Opn Order 4–43, 1200, 3 Sep 43. Rpts of Opn (Navy).

[2] 36th Div Admin Order 33, 20 Aug 43.

darkness." [3] A British destroyer was to render direct gunfire support for the Rangers, and because it was to deliver fire over the heads of his troops, Darby was concerned about maintaining good signals between ship and shore. He told the destroyer captain he would feel more comfortable if he knew that his own radio operator and his own radio set were on the bridge of the ship during the landings. The sympathetic captain obliged.

Rangers climbed into British LCA's while the craft were still on the transport davits and hanging over the sides of the ships. When a boat was full, a sailor called "Off gripes," and released the brakes on the davits. The LCA then fell about eight feet into the water with a resounding splash.

When all the LCA's were in the water, they came alongside the destroyer and moved forward in two columns, Darby in the leading boat with the flotilla commander. Abreast of the bridge of the destroyer, Darby "hollered up."

"Are you there?" the destroyer captain shouted back.

"We are here," Darby said. "Let's go."

Locating a beach in the dark is not easy. "You don't see very much," Darby later explained. "Your compasses, no matter how many times you swing them, in a small craft are practically worthless after 35 soldiers with helmets and rifles and everything else that contains metal get into the boat." Because the destroyer had a relatively firm base and a good compass and had made sightings and corrections, Darby had arranged to have it guide the flotilla to the beach, agreeing beforehand that no matter which way his own compass was pointing he would not change course. "There was one little beach we had to hit, and we just had to be right if our landing was going to be successful."

So the destroyer paced the boats until they were about a mile offshore. Then the destroyer captain shouted down: "Continue on your course." The landing craft went in and hit the correct beach at 0310, the appointed time, twenty minutes before the main assault of 10 Corps was scheduled to go ashore.

Five minutes after the Rangers touched down, naval groups in the northern area opened an intensive 15-minute preparation of gun and rocket fire in support of the major assault at H-hour, 0330, landings that would, as could be seen from the flashes of fire coming from shore, be opposed.

In the American rendezvous area the boats had ceased circling. Assuming a V–formation, they followed a control vessel to the line of departure a mile and a half offshore. Four scout boats, one for each battalion landing beach, had taken a radar fix on Monte Soprano, the most conspicuous landmark, and had preceded the assault boats shoreward. Each had located his area, had determined the exact center of it, and had anchored there about 1,000 yards offshore. At 0310, H-hour minus 20 minutes, each began to show seaward a steady directional light colored red, green, yellow, or blue to correspond with the designated beach. Ten minutes later each scout boat began to blink seaward every five seconds in order to guide the waves of assault boats toward land. The assault waves of each

[3] This quotation and the following are from a lecture by Col. William O. Darby at the Army and Navy Staff College, Washington, D.C., 27 October 1944 (hereafter cited as Darby Lecture), copy in the National War College Library.

beach were to pass the scout boat by splitting equally on the two sides of it. After the assault waves were on shore, the scouts were to locate and mark suitable landing points for LST's and LCT's.

Rocket boats — LCT's converted to mount rocket projectors—had preceded the assault waves, passed the scout boats, and gone in closer to shore. Deployed abreast, fifty yards apart, the rocket boats, equipped with barrage rockets, smoke floats, smoke generators, and .30- and .50-caliber machine guns, were to hold their fires before daylight unless they were discovered and fired upon. In that case, they were to fire until the first wave was 100 yards from the shore line.

In the 36th Division zone, where two reinforced regiments were landing abreast, each regiment employed two reinforced battalions abreast. The 141st Infantry on the right (south) had two rifle companies from each assault battalion and engineer obstacle-removing teams in the first wave, going ashore in 24 LCVP's (12 on Yellow Beach and 12 on Blue Beach). The second wave, scheduled to land seven minutes later, had the reserve rifle companies, mine detector personnel, shore engineers, and a reconnaissance party in 12 LCVP's (6 to a beach). Eight minutes later a third wave was to land the heavy weapons companies, battalion headquarters, medical personnel, and a Navy beach party in 18 LCVP's. Fifty minutes after H-hour, bulldozers, 40-mm. guns, .50-caliber machine guns, 75-mm. self-propelled guns, and several jeeps were to go ashore in 18 LCM's. Sixty-five minutes after H-hour, the reserve battalion was to start landing in waves. At H plus 140 minutes, or on call, depending on the situation, antitank weapons, tanks, and field and antiaircraft artillery were to go ashore in LCVP's and LCM's. As soon as mines and obstacles were cleared, estimated to be around H plus 100 minutes, DUKW's carrying artillery pieces and ammunition were to land. LST's, the planners estimated, could probably beach five or six hours after the initial landings.

Each assault battalion of the 141st Infantry had attached platoons of the Cannon Company, the Antitank Company, and the 111th Engineer Battalion, as well as a detachment of the 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion was in direct support. The 3d Battalion, 351st Engineer Shore Regiment, with attachments, was to open and stock Yellow and Blue Beaches so that supplies could be drawn by daylight; it was to have roadways ready for vehicular traffic two hours after H-hour.[4]

The 142d Infantry was landing special beach-clearing detachments in 6 LCVP's (3 on Red Beach and 3 on Green) along with the first wave of assault rifle companies. Reserve and heavy weapons companies and shore engineers, in that order, were then to land in LCVP's and LCM's. The reserve battalion was to start landing an hour later. Twenty DUKW's carrying field artillery and antitank pieces were to land in the fifth wave an hour and a half after H-hour. Reconnaissance troops, tanks, and more artillery pieces were then to go ashore.

The 143d Infantry, initially in reserve, was to land two battalions in the following sequence: assault infantry troops, reserve rifle companies, heavy weapons and command, supporting and antitank weapons, and vehicles; the reserve battalion was to debark on call in waves

[4] 141st Inf FO 3, 31 Aug 43.

similarly organized and in whatever boats became available.[5]

Command posts were located aboard various ships, the VI Corps headquarters having provided men to operate message centers and radio sets in conjunction with naval personnel. There was to be radio silence until H-hour. Ten minutes later, company commanders would land. At the same time, a Navy beach signals team was to establish a radio station on shore. Five minutes later a communications team was to set up a radio station in the naval gunfire control net, an engineer shore company communications team was to establish another radio station, and infantry battalion headquarters were to set up their radio nets. Regimental communications, the engineer shore battalion radio operators, and Navy beach signals personnel were to be ashore completely an hour and a half after H-hour. Two hours after the initial landings the air support party was to go ashore.[6]

Coxswains and crews of the landing boats had been thoroughly briefed on the appearance of the beaches and the locations of the landing sites. Having studied beach sketches, models, aerial mosaics, oblique photographs, and information obtained from submarine reconnaissance, they knew the silhouette of the shore line and its conspicuous landmarks—Monte Soprano and Monte Soltano, the heights around Agropoli, the flat plain of Paestum, houses and towers, and the mouths of streams flowing into the gulf, all of which helped to identify the beaches on which they would try to place the troops confided to their care.[7]

The beaches on which the 36th Division was to land were near the ancient town of Paestum, originally a Greek colony settled in the 6th century B.C. Twenty-five hundred years later only the ruins of several Doric-columned temples still stood, hauntingly graceful and aloof. In striking architectural contrast, blunt ramparts or what remained of a city wall, 5,000 yards long and in some places 50 feet high, constructed of large stone blocks, probably Etruscan in origin, would offer cover and concealment to defenders armed with machine guns. A medieval stone tower nearby would give good observation of the beaches and the plain. (*See panorama of the landing area, inside back cover.*)

Very close to H-hour, 0330, 9 September, the LCVP's comprising the first waves of the assault regiments grounded on the dark and silent beaches south of the Sele River. As the troops stepped into the shallow water along the shore line, the portents for success seemed good—the weather was excellent, the sea was calm, and, in contrast with the rumble and flash of gun and rocket fire on the beaches to the north, the shore was quiet. But the hope that jubilant Italians would welcome the Americans with open arms quickly vanished. Flares suddenly illuminated the beaches and enemy fire from machine guns and mortars began to rain down on the invaders.

The Initial American Waves

Exactly what happened on the Salerno beaches during the hour and a half of

[5] Annex 6 to 36th Div FO 33, Boat Employment Plans, 21 Aug 43.

[6] Annex 7 to 36th Div FO 33, 21 Aug 43.

[7] James Rpt, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

darkness between H-hour and daybreak is confused and obscure. Yet one thing is clear—the troops met more resistance than did the soldiers who had invaded North Africa and Sicily. Not all the initial waves of the American assault south of the Sele River hit their assigned beaches on schedule.[8] Enemy fire disarranged the assault waves and prevented an inland advance in the orderly manner prescribed by the plans.

On the extreme right of the landings the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, came ashore about 500 yards south of its designated Blue Beach. The first two boat waves moved across the beach without interference and eventually worked their way slowly about a mile to the railroad near the Solofrone River. The third wave met German fire so intense that it and subsequent waves were immobilized on or near the beach.

The 3d Battalion on Yellow Beach ran into German fire from the beginning. Despite the bullets and shells, small groups of men moved inland. Approximately 400 yards from the shore they met enemy defenders.

In the 142d Infantry zone the 2d Battalion on the right on Green Beach and the 3d Battalion on Red encountered enemy flares and machine gun fire immediately upon landing. A rocket boat off Green moved to within 80 yards of the shore line and fired salvos of three to four rockets in the pattern of an arc at a range of about 750 yards. After the boat fired 34 rockets over the heads of troops pinned down on the shore, all enemy fire in that sector ceased for a brief interval, then resumed in noticeably less volume and intensity. During the lull infantrymen began to move inland.

On all the beaches, as enemy guns fired and boats grounded, men stumbled ashore in the darkness. Scared, tense, excited, some soldiers blundered across the loose sand. Others ran for cover across the open ground to the dunes. Some threw themselves into shallow irrigation ditches or huddled behind rock walls in the fields. Still others sought the scant protection afforded by scattered patches of scrub.

From the massive heights that loomed over all the beaches, and from Monte Soprano in particular, came the flashes and sounds of the enemy fire. Flares of all colors illuminated the sky, while the crisscrossing tracers of machine guns flashed over the beaches, the heaviest concentrations coming from the right near Agropoli. Some boat pilots who judged the fire too strong for them to land their troops turned around and headed back toward the ships until intercepted by control vessels and sent again to shore.

Landing craft struck by enemy fire burned near shore or drifted helplessly. Equipment floated in the water. Radios were lost in the surf. Men swam for shore as boats sank under them. As a 60-mm. mortar squad debarked, the gunner tripped on the ramp and dropped the piece into the water; machine gun fire scattered the men in the darkness; individuals joined whatever unit happened to be near them. An 81-mm. mortar platoon came ashore intact but without ammunition; the boat carrying its shells had sunk.

[8] Letter from Brig. Gen. Clayton P. Kerr to Rear Adm. Samuel E. Morison, 8 November 1955, copy in possession of General Walker, who made it available to the author. The following is taken from the official records of the 36th Division.

Somehow in the melee of boats and men and weapons, soldiers found their wits, exercised self-discipline, manhandled ammunition, set up mortars, fired their pieces, got on with their jobs. Some began to clear the beaches of mines and wire; others, their rifles blazing, headed inland to root out the German defenders.

Staff Sgt. Quillian H. McMichen, hit in the chest and shoulder by machine gun bullets before his assault boat grounded on the beach, found the ramp stuck. Despite his wounds, McMichen kicked and pounded the ramp till it fell. Then he led his men to a firing position on the beach where he received a third and fatal wound.

In the sand dunes, Sgt. Manuel S. Gonzales crept under machine gun fire toward an enemy weapon. A tracer bullet creased the pack on his back and set it afire. Slipping out of his pack, he continued to crawl even after grenade fragments wounded him. At last he was close enough to toss hand grenades into a German machine gun position and destroy the crew.

Pvt. J. C. Jones gathered a few disorganized men around him, led them against several enemy machine guns, and took them inland to his unit's objective. Sgt. Glen O. Hiller, though painfully wounded, refused medical treatment in order to lead his squad across the sand.

Most infantrymen worked their way in small groups toward a railroad running parallel to the beach a mile and a half inland. It was a good landmark, one that could not be mistaken even in darkness, and there men found and rejoined their units and leaders counted and organized their troops. To get to the railroad across the sand, the dunes, small swamps, irrigation ditches, rock walls, and patches of trees proved an individual adventure for each soldier, a hazardous journey under the fire of enemy machine guns, mortars, and artillery pieces.

Lt. Col. Samuel S. Graham, a battalion commander who arrived on the beach ahead of his troops because they were delayed by disrupted boat schedules, organized about seventy men and led them inland to clear enemy machine gun and mortar positions. Sgt. James M. Logan, lying on the bank of an irrigation canal, killed several Germans coming through a gap in a rock wall 200 yards away. He then dashed across open ground, seized a machine gun position after destroying the crew, swung the gun around, and opened fire on the enemy.[9]

Meeting the Americans, and the British as well, on the beaches of Salerno were troops of the reconstituted *16th Panzer Division,* the only fully equipped armored division in southern Italy. Not quite at full strength, the division had 17,000 men, more than 100 tanks, and 36 assault guns organized into four infantry battalions, one equipped with half-tracks for better support of tank attacks, and three artillery battalions. Morale was good. Shortcomings were lack of combat experience, a shortage of gasoline, which restricted training of tank crews, and a long front of more than twenty miles.

The *16th Panzer Division* had deployed its strength in four combat teams,

[9] McMichen, Gonzales, Hiller, and Graham were awarded the DSC; Logan was awarded the Medal of Honor.

each composed of an infantry battalion augmented by tanks and artillery; three were in position two or three miles from the coast and ready to launch counterattacks; one was in division reserve. Nearer the shore line, the division had constructed eight strongpoints between Salerno and Agropoli, each manned by a platoon of infantry supported by heavy machine guns, mortars, and antitank and antiaircraft pieces, all designed to bolster the coastal defenses earlier manned by Italian troops. When the Italian coastal units left their positions upon news of the surrender, German troops came up to take over six Italian coastal batteries, but no continuous defensive system existed along the beaches. Deprived of Italian support and guarding an excessive length of coast line, the division was at a disadvantage.

The defenses in the immediate landing areas were not well organized. There were no mine fields in the surf and the few mines along the beaches were scattered. Barbed wire obstacles were scanty, most of them single-concertina double-apron type. Some trip wires existed. A few machine guns covered the most likely landing spots. Italians or Germans had felled a grove of small pine trees near the tower of Paestum to create a field of fire. Several artillery pieces inland covered the plain, the beaches, and the water approaches.

About two companies of infantry occupied the VI Corps beaches. They withdrew soon after the landings and offered little resistance at close range. They saw the mass movement of American troops from beach to railroad as a skillful maneuver, a deliberate bypass of the strongpoints near the shore. Unable to muster enough strength to block the landings, the *16th Panzer Division* sought to delay the Allies and disrupt the schedules of the amphibious operation.

German tanks got into action only after daylight. They worked in small groups, supported by infantry units usually no larger than platoon size. A lone tank, reaching the shore line shortly after dawn, fired on approaching craft. Antiaircraft guns on LST's, machine guns on landing craft, and men on the beaches took the tank under fire and soon drove it off. Other tanks spotted on the road behind the dunes were also fired upon.

It was the individual American infantryman who kept the German tanks at bay during the early morning hours of 9 September. Cpl. Royce C. Davis destroyed a tank after crawling under machine gun bursts to a place where he could use his rocket launcher effectively. He pierced the armor, then crept beside the disabled and immobile vehicle to thrust a hand grenade through the hole and destroy the crew. Sgt. John Y. McGill jumped on a tank and dropped a hand grenade into the open turret. Pfc. Harry C. Harpel kept at least one group of tanks from reaching the beach when, under enemy fire, he removed loose planking of a bridge across an irrigation canal and rendered it impassable.[10]

The reserve battalions of the assault regiments came in after daylight—the 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry, around 0530, fifty minutes behind schedule, on Yellow Beach; the 1st Battalion, 142d, an hour later in some disorganization on Red. Two battalions of the reserve

[10] Davis and Harpel were awarded the DSC, posthumously.

regiment, the 143d, landed on Red Beach between 0640 and 0800, the third battalion coming ashore later that morning. While infantrymen fought off tanks at close range with bazookas, grenades, machine guns, and a few pieces of regimental cannon, American tanks and artillery were trying to get ashore.

Tanks and artillery were scheduled to be on the beaches before daylight, but they had difficulty landing because work to open the beaches was delayed. Enemy fire had scattered the landing craft carrying reconnaissance parties of the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment (Lt. Col. Russel S. Lieurance) that had accompanied the early assault waves, and as a result, mine-clearing teams, road construction crews, and equipment did not land as units. It was necessary to round up the men and organize them, in some cases to keep them from joining infantrymen in search of the enemy, before the beaches could be cleared to receive the heavier weapons and equipment.

This, plus enemy fire on boat lanes, prevented tanks and artillery from landing as early as had been hoped. A group of about sixty DUKW's carrying artillery pieces, ammunition, and troops arrived off Green Beach around 0500, but because enemy fire on the beach and on the nearby water area made landings impractical, the DUKW's stood offshore out of range. Thirty minutes later, naval control vessels signaled them to go in anyway. About thirty DUKW's went in under smoke laid by support boats and troops ashore, but the smoke also obscured landmarks and hampered the visibility of the crews.

About sixty DUKW's scheduled to land at Yellow and Blue Beaches remained offshore for the same reasons. When the beachmaster on Red noticed these craft, he called to occupants of a small boat, who delivered a message to divert the DUKW's to Red. By this time, around 0530, approximately 125 DUKW's were circling or lying off Red Beach. These came ashore sporadically and in small groups. Some delays occurred because many DUKW's were low in gasoline and had to refuel.

The result was a piecemeal landing of artillery. Some howitzers and crews were ashore two and a half hours after the first wave, but not until afternoon was most of the division artillery on land. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion landed at various times during the day on Yellow Beach and supported the 141st Infantry. The 132d Field Artillery Battalion went ashore on Green, starting at 0730, and took up positions on Yellow Beach until noon, when it moved to positions north of Paestum in support of the 142d Infantry. The 133d Field Artillery Battalion began to move ashore on Red around noon and went into positions with mixed equipment, then moved north of Paestum in the early afternoon, leaving three pieces detached for antitank protection of the division headquarters. The 155th Field Artillery Battalion (155-mm. howitzers) landed on Green during the afternoon and went into position 2,000 yards north of Paestum for general support.[11]

The tank landings were also disorganized. A company of the 751st Tank Battalion (Lt. Col. Louis A. Hammack), which was to have landed a platoon before daybreak to support a flying column movement to Agropoli, saw the LCM's

[11] 36th Div AAR, Sep 43.

carrying the platoon make two unsuccessful efforts to land on Blue Beach. At 1500 the first tank of this contingent got ashore on Red Beach and four more came ashore around 1730. Another platoon had better luck—one tank landed on Red at 0830, another on Blue at 0930, three on Red between 1000 and 1330, and three more after nightfall.

Six LCT's carrying tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion and moving toward Blue Beach about 0630 were struck by enemy shells, four receiving direct hits. The LCT's turned back to sea. One tank was burning; fortunately it was next to the ramp, and the tank behind it pushed it over the ramp and into the gulf. This damaged the ramp, and several feet of water flooded the boat. For almost five hours the six LCT's circled aimlessly. Finally, at 1100, they approached the shore and beached their cargoes.

With neither division artillery nor tanks in support, the infantry during the first four hours of the landing depended to a large extent on a few 40-mm. antiaircraft guns, which came ashore about daylight, and on the regimental cannon companies. Antiaircraft units coming ashore on D-day were the 630th and 354th Coast Artillery Battalions, a battalion of the 213th Coast Artillery Regiment, and a battery of the 505th Coast Artillery Regiment. A detachment of the 102d Barrage Balloon Battery raised its balloons against low-level strafing; enemy artillery destroyed at least one balloon while it was being inflated shortly after dawn.[12]

Three 75-mm. self-propelled howitzers of the 141st Infantry had started ashore as part of the third boat wave. Naval control vessels turned back the landing craft carrying one cannon, but two grounded on the beach. One howitzer immediately struck a mine and was disabled. The other pulled into a defile on the dunes. Enemy machine gun fire that swept the defile from both flanks put the gun sight out of commission. 1st Lt. Clair F. Carpenter ran across the beach, took the gun sight from the disabled cannon, and brought it back under fire to his own weapon. As Cpl. Edgar L. Blackburn tried to fix the new sight in place, machine gun fire cut him down. Carpenter then tried to adjust the sight but was severely wounded. The piece remained out of commission for the rest of the day.

Fortunately, other howitzers of the regimental cannon companies managed to get ashore in operational condition. At least one crew found itself not far from some enemy tanks. Unloading the piece and setting it in position without cover or concealment, the men opened fire at once.

The 151st Field Artillery Battalion lost a 105-mm. howitzer and forty rounds of ammunition when a DUKW was accidentally rammed at the rendezvous area and sunk. The men clambered aboard other DUKW's, and the battalion headed for shore, making its first landing at 0725. As the pieces were unloaded, they went to positions; no attempt was made to organize them according to battery. Since the infantry was requesting immediate supporting fires, an improvised battery, reinforced by three pieces of another battalion already ashore and equally unorganized, went into firing positions just forward of the dune line, in a grove of trees near the south wall of Paestum. Around 0930, this battery

[12] 36th Div Annex 3 to FO 33, 21 Aug 43; O'Daniel Rpt, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

fired on enemy tanks and helped repel a counterattack.

By this time the commanders of the assault regiments were ashore, having arrived about daylight, after a two-to-three-hour voyage from transport to beach. On Yellow and Blue Beaches Col. Richard J. Werner, commanding the 141st Infantry, found his 1st Battalion pinned down and isolated on the right, his 3d Battalion on the left several hundred yards inland, and his reserve battalion advancing along the regimental left flank against heavy enemy fire. Estimating that he lacked the firepower to eliminate the Germans on his front, Werner requested the naval gun observer on the beach to call in naval fires. The officer could not make radio contact with the ships, either because they were too far out at sea or because his set failed to operate effectively.

The regiment was still without naval fire support or even naval contact at 0730, when German troops and about eight tanks attacked into the gap that separated the 1st Battalion from the rest of the regiment. About five Mark IV tanks overran a rifle company of the 1st Battalion. Men who took cover in ditches were unharmed as the tanks rolled over them; those caught in the open fields were run over or shot.

Infantrymen with bazookas and the crew of a 40-mm. antiaircraft gun depressed for ground fire fought the Germans effectively. A group of soldiers nearby who had very early captured three Italian railway guns and who planned to use them had to destroy the weapons because they could not defend them. In the midst of the action an hour later, two 105-mm. howitzers of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion came ashore and gave the regiment its first artillery support.[13] The 3d Battalion S–3, Capt. Hersel R. Adams, assumed leadership of a scattered rifle company, organized an attack against the tanks, and helped beat off the Germans.[14] Finally, around 0900 the naval gun observer made radio contact with the ships. The first naval shells arrived about fifteen minutes later. The naval gunfire, artillery shelling, and infantry rockets began to take effect. Two of their tanks destroyed, the Germans withdrew to the hills east and south of the landing beaches. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 141st Infantry then advanced to the railroad in strength.

Despite the advance, German artillery fire continued to fall on Blue and Yellow Beaches so intensively that later landings there were halted and the boats were diverted north to Green and Red. Efforts to restore communication with the isolated 1st Battalion on the right still proved unavailing. Enemy machine gun and artillery fire formed a barrier in the gap that prevented patrols from getting through. Naval observation planes dispatched at 1430 to locate the German gun positions were unsuccessful.

Pinned down in flat terrain cut by shallow irrigation ditches bordered by bushes and trees, reduced to crawling and creeping, the men of the 1st Battalion through a long day awaited the coming of darkness and the protection of night. Only small groups could maneuver, and the most they could do was

[13] Pvt. Richard Ferris, who remained at his artillery piece though wounded and who was killed when struck by a second shell fragment, was posthumously awarded the DSC.

[14] Adams was posthumously awarded the DSC.

to try to get within grenade range of machine gun positions. Hills a mile away dominated the ground to the immediate front and on the right, and at least a battery of four guns and two 75-mm. mortars covered the area. Cut off, the beach behind them closed, the men of the battalion fought inland in groups of two and three, trying to knock out about eight German tanks that seemed to be running up and down the front most of the day.

In the 142d Infantry zone, where enemy fire was somewhat less intense though constantly a problem, Col. John D. Forsythe, the regimental commander, found a more encouraging situation. The 3d Battalion on the left had advanced to the railroad, then beyond it to the highway, and still farther to its initial objective, Hill 140, where around 0730 the men began to dig defensive positions. The 2d Battalion, after partially clearing resistance in Paestum, moved beyond the railroad and established hasty defensive positions along La Cosa Creek.

German machine gun crews remaining in and around Paestum later harassed troops coming ashore to such an extent that Col. William H. Martin, commander of the reserve regiment, the 143d Infantry, dispatched a rifle company to clear the town while the regiment assembled and organized at the railroad. Paestum was clear by midmorning, the regiment organized by noon. But Martin held up an immediate move inland because of reports that German tanks were concentrating nearby for an attack.

Prompt action by the 151st Field Artillery Battalion dispersed this tank attack. A battery recently arrived on shore sited a piece on a beach exit road to obtain an emergency field of fire. Because trail spades could get no purchase in the hard surface of the road, each round fired drove the gun into the ditch. The piece then had to be manhandled back to its firing position. Brig. Gen. Miles A. Cowles, the division artillery commander, helped the gun crew. "He shifted trails with the efficiency of a finished cannoneer," the sergeant later remarked, "the highest priced number five man" the sergeant had ever commanded and also one of the most dexterous and cooperative.[15]

By this time the division commander, General Walker, had established his command post ashore. He had arrived on Red Beach about 0700 and had been rather disappointed—no roadway had yet been prepared, his two personal vehicles had been destroyed by mines while being driven over the sand, and he had no way to get word to LCM's, still loaded and moving aimlessly offshore, to come in and land.[16] A little after 0700 Walker reported to General Dawley, the corps commander, that heavy enemy gunfire was preventing not only the landing of vehicles but also the clearing of beaches.

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[15] 151st FA Bn AAR's, Sep, Oct 43.

[16] Near the beach General Walker passed several abandoned German radio sets from which emerged the sound of voices. These sets may have given rise to the fanciful story that Germans on the beaches greeted the initial assault waves with the words carried over loudspeakers: "Come on in, we have you covered." (AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION, *Salerno: American Operations from the Beaches to the Volturno* (Washington, 1944), p. 19; *Fifth Army History*, Part I, p. 32.) Or perhaps the story originated from the sight of American beach personnel using loudspeakers to direct incoming landing ships and boats. (See photo in *Salerno: American Operations from the Beaches to the Volturno*, p. 24.) See also Interv, Westover with Walker, and General Walker's Comments Relating to Salerno.

Concerned by this unfavorable report, the first direct word he had received, Dawley urgently requested naval fire support.

The beach engineers were also having a difficult time: they were shorthanded because special attached units were not ashore until late afternoon and in some cases after dark; and they lacked sufficient equipment, for example, the first bulldozer on the beach took a direct hit and was put out of commission, and enemy fire had destroyed three bulldozers by 1000.[17] Yet the engineers had Red Beach open by midmorning, and landing craft were disgorging men and matériel in a steady stream.

At his headquarters in a group of buildings called Casa Vannula and located north of Paestum, General Walker emphasized to his subordinate commanders that it was essential for the units to seize and secure their initial objectives. He was also concerned about antitank defense. Battalions were moving toward and in some cases had reached their initial objectives, and General Cowles's central antitank warning system, which tied in the reconnaissance troop, the artillery battalions, and the tank units with the division artillery headquarters, was working well. In midmorning, for example, when headquarters personnel spotted a small group of German tanks on the north flank and flashed the warning, artillery elements that had recently landed and were moving up from the beaches immediately positioned their pieces and opened fire, dispersing the tanks.[18]

Naval gunfire was by then adding its power. Destroyers had come a few miles closer to shore and were firing in response to requests from combined Army-Navy artillery observer-spotter parties on the beach. Other spotters in the air co-ordinated the shelling.

By noon the development of the beachhead in the VI Corps area was progressing well. German artillery continued to fire on the beaches, and a few German planes appeared from time to time to bomb and strafe the beaches and shipping in the gulf. The 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, on the right was still isolated, and two of the four landing beaches could not be opened. Yet men and matériel were coming ashore in substantial quantities, and control and discipline were bringing order to the amphibious landing.

Despite the satisfactory progress, the commanders aboard ships in the gulf knew little of the situation ashore. Communications between shore and ship were poor, and few details reached Generals Clark and Dawley. Receiving a distorted picture from fragmentary reports and from what the returning wounded told them, their concern intensified by their inactivity, their impatience heightened by their inability to influence the action directly, Clark and Dawley came to believe that the situation ashore was much worse than it actually was. "Hewitt and I on bridge," General Clark wrote in his diary, "—helpless feeling—all out of my hands until we get reports." [19] The enemy seemed to be opposing the landings on all beaches, enemy tanks were active, and hill-emplaced artillery was firing into boat lanes. As late as noon Dawley received word that beach mines

[17] Rpt by Col Blakely, 2 Oct 43, AGF Bd Rpt 62, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

[18] See Maj. Gen. W. H. Morris, Jr., "Salerno," *Military Review*, vol. XXIII, No. 12 (March, 1944), p. 12.

[19] Clark Diary, 9 Sep 43.

and enemy artillery were still preventing vehicles from coming ashore in sufficient numbers and that shore fire control parties had still not established adequate communications. So far as Dawley could tell, conditions in the beachhead were precarious.

The American Beaches

Like most military forces, who have a tendency to overestimate the numbers, experience, and weapons of the enemy, the Germans at Salerno first felt overwhelmed by the invasion. They were also shaken by the Italian surrender.[20] At the same time, they were beset by other difficulties.

The Allied invasion, occurring as it did entirely in the *16th Panzer Division* sector, came as a surprise to the Germans, and the absence of effective communications among the command echelons handicapped their reaction to the landings. German commanders were often out of touch with each other. When using the Italian civilian telephone system, they were uncertain whether the lines were altogether secure. Furthermore, saboteurs cut a few cables. When the Germans turned to radio transmission, they found that atmospheric disturbances, especially at night, frequently interrupted their messages.[21]

At *Tenth Army* headquarters, Vietinghoff had yet to receive his full complement of signal personnel because his command had been activated so recently; he lacked the signal regiment normally assigned to an army headquarters, and his communications troops were poorly trained, without experience, and overworked. Kesselring was wholly occupied by developments in the Rome area resulting from the Italian surrender and had little time to guide Vietinghoff. Vietinghoff realized as early as 0800, 9 September—four and a half hours after the initial landings at Salerno—that the extent of the Allied effort made another major invasion farther north unlikely, but in the absence of word from Kesselring he had to make a hard choice in terms of conflicting orders: was he to withdraw to Rome or repel the invasion? Deciding for the latter, he ordered the *XIV Panzer Corps* to make a "ruthless concentration of all forces at Salerno" and drive the Allies into the sea. At noon *OB SUED* approved his course of action.[22]

The *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, Generalleutnant Hermann Balck, was acting for General der Panzertruppen Hans-Valentine Hube, who was on leave. Balck had telephone contact with neither *Tenth Army* nor *OB SUED,* and only tenuous radio contact with either. Consequently, several hours usually elapsed before he could receive instructions or approval of an action, and most of his decisions were independent. What concerned him most of all was the absence of reliable intelligence. Without information on the location and movement of Allied convoys, without knowledge of other actual or potential landings, he felt too insecure, despite Vietinghoff's clarion call, to denude some sectors of his large defensive area in order to reinforce his troops at Salerno.[23] Thus he

[20] Alexander *Despatch,* p. 2892.

[21] See *Tenth A KTB,* 11 Sep 43.

[22] *Tenth A Absicht der Armee,* 9 Sep 43, and Telecon, Westphal and Wentzell, 9 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[23] See Telegram, Balck to Kesselring, 10 Sep 43, *XIV Pz C KTB Anl.*

ordered the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* to assemble a regimental combat team containing most of the division's tanks and an artillery battalion, concentrate the troops along the two sides of the Volturno River, and be ready for possible commitment against landings at the mouth of the Volturno or in the *Hermann Goering Division*'s sector immediately to the south. When the *16th Panzer Division* commander, Generalmajor Rudolf Sickenius, became alarmed at 0800 of D-day by the rumor of landings near Castellammare, on the northern shore of the Sorrento peninsula, and sent an urgent call for help, Balck reacted cautiously. Unsure of the scope of the Allied landing, he hesitated to change his dispositions. All he felt he could do was order the *Hermann Goering Division* to send its reconnaissance battalion at once to Nocera, ten miles north of Salerno, and to prepare to dispatch a reinforced regiment later if necessary. This order had no immediate effect on the action.

The *16th Panzer Division* thus fought alone, taking the full force of the invasion. The six Italian coastal batteries it had manned were soon silenced by naval gunfire. Spread thin over a large area, the division launched small counterthrusts by tank-infantry teams. In many instances groups of five to seven tanks worked without supporting infantry and, so it seemed to the Americans, without reference to an over-all plan or a single co-ordinating agency. Such piecemeal efforts were ineffective. Had the Germans been able to use their armor in mass very early in the day, they could have caused the Allies serious trouble.

The terrain, crisscrossed by irrigation and drainage canals and obstructed by fences and walls, imposed caution on the German tankers, who were generally inexperienced, and increased tank dispersal, as did the Allied artillery fire, the high-velocity fire from tanks in hull-defiladed positions, the infantry rocket launchers, naval shelling, and air bombardment.[24] Although the higher terrain gave the Germans observation of much of the beachhead, it also forced them to counterattack downhill in full view of Allied observers. Even the weather was a problem—the first shot fired at a German tank usually raised a great cloud of dust that enveloped the tank and blinded driver and gunner. Their eyes, in effect, shot out, the tanks were easily destroyed or dispersed. By the end of the first day of action, only thirty-five tanks of the *16th Panzer Division,* about one-third of those in operation at the beginning of the day, were still in condition to fight.[25]

The German predicament was far from apparent to the Allied commanders aboard ships in the gulf, where destroyers dashed about laying smoke, small boats darted about delivering messages, and landing craft nosed up to shore, opened their mouths, and threw down their ramps "like the lower lip of a giant Ubangi."[26] To the observers who had no military responsibilities, "D Day was beautiful. The air was soft and the skies were clear, except when the [German air] raiders came, and then the sky was pockmarked with ugly black

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[24] See 36th Div G–2 Rpt, 1230, 11 Sep 43 (covering operations 0330, 9 Sep, to 1200, 11 Sep 43); Werner Remarks, Wood Lecture.

[25] *Tenth A Rueckblick auf die ersten drei Tage der Schlacht beim Salerno,* 12 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[26] Hussa, "Action at Salerno," *Infantry Journal* (December, 1948), p. 28.

bursts where shells from our anti-aircraft guns exploded." [27] But to General Dawley, who was still without adequate reports from the beachhead, the situation was full of frustration. Unable to restrain his concern and impatience, he departed his ship at 1300 to make a personal inspection of the beach in the company of his G–3.

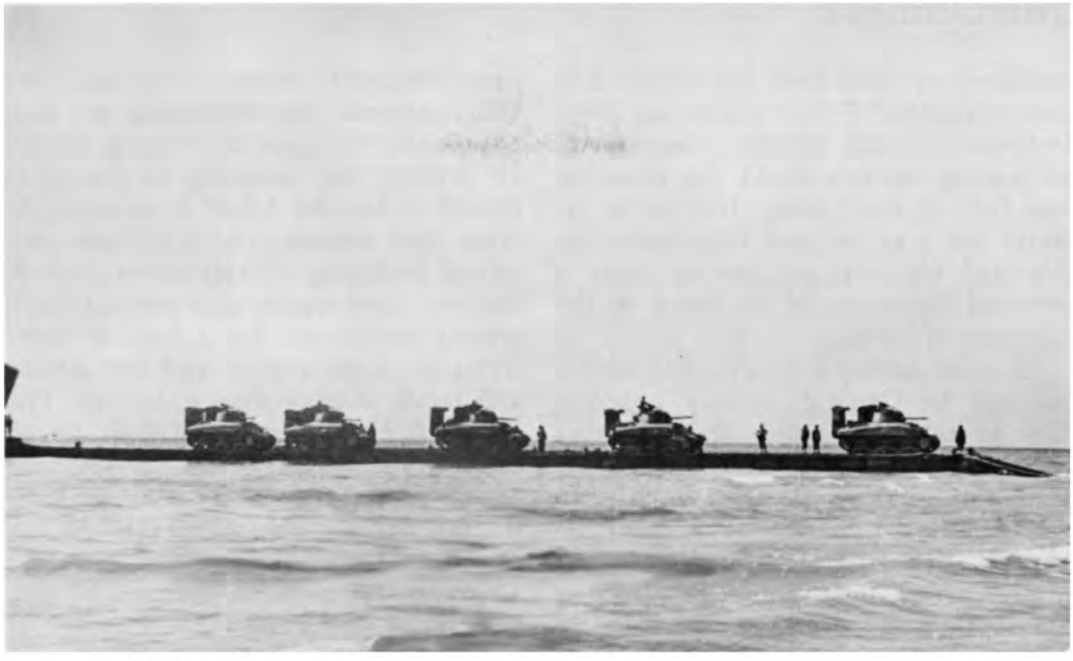
At 1000 Admiral Hewitt had sent a message to General Dawley ordering him to take command of the troops ashore because seaward communication from the 36th Division was unsatisfactory. Dawley went ashore without receiving the message. Around noon Hewitt sent another message directing Dawley to remain aboard ship in order to confer with General Middleton, commander of the 45th Division, on the early commitment of one of Middleton's follow-up regiments. This second message arrived at the corps command post aboard ship before the first one, around 1500, but Dawley was by then on the beach. When Hewitt's 1000 message arrived at 1520, Dawley's G–2 carried the messages ashore. Dawley then began an immediate inquiry to determine front-line and flank locations of his own troops and identifications of hostile forces with a view to assuming command.

Despite General Dawley's efforts to get information back to General Clark, Admiral Hewitt, and his own headquarters that afternoon, those aboard the ships in the gulf continued to have only the vaguest notion of what was happening ashore. Most of the unloadings seemed to be taking place over Red Beach. The enemy continued to shell all beaches. German tanks seemed to appear frequently around Paestum. The USS *Savannah* was furnishing fire support to the forces on Blue Beach. Enemy air activity was harassing in nature as though to test the Allied cover strength. Since clear weather at high altitudes permitted incoming aircraft to be spotted, Spitfires intercepted and turned back several formations; but a haze at lower levels aided the enemy, and low attacks and beach strafing were nuisances. The Germans directed much of their air effort against vessels at anchor—fourteen attacks recorded in one 8-hour period—though damage was slight. Hewitt appealed to General House for increased air raids on airfields around Naples, Benevento, and Foggia.

On shore, the operation in the VI Corps area went well during the afternoon of D-day. Along the water's edge, Brig. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, attached from the Fifth Army to the 36th Division, had been supervising landing operations on Red and Green Beaches since about 0430, and had done much to bring about order. Although Blue Beach remained closed most of the afternoon, Yellow Beach, closed during the morning because of enemy fire, was opened soon after noon, and about 1300 two LST's pushed up to shore under cover of smoke and began to discharge matériel.

Enough supplies were getting ashore, but boxed ammunition and baled rations lined Red and Green Beaches. Landing craft sometimes found it difficult to locate space on which to let down their ramps. A few destroyed craft blocked boat lanes. Many crews had to clear the boats of cargo themselves, thereby delaying their return to the transports for additional loads. Stocks placed

[27] Reynolds, *The Curtain Rises*, p. 304.



TANKS MOVING ASHORE OVER A RAMP ON D-DAY, *above; an LST equipped with an improvised flight deck, below.*





TROOPS OF THE 36TH DIVISION ADVANCING ON RED BEACH

on the beaches could not be moved inland quickly because of a shortage of DUKW's and trucks.[28]

Tanks, coming in piecemeal throughout the afternoon, were on hand in sufficient numbers to be organized and employed as units. Around 1430 the 751st Tank Battalion began to exercise central control over the armored elements; most of the tanks were being used for antitank protection, many in hull-defiladed positions on the north flank. Dewaterproofing was difficult in many cases; shrouds on many tanks had to be pulled off by other tanks or cut with an axe.

Vehicles of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion began to land on Red Beach around 1630. After dewaterproofing, some moved south to support the 141st Infantry, others moved north to the Sele River. The 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion disembarked in the early evening, then moved north to take positions astride Highway 18 to help cover the gap between the VI and 10 Corps.

Liaison parties controlling naval gunfire were operating with the battalions of the 36th Division Artillery, the artillery headquarters, and a few light planes that had managed that afternoon to get off the improvised flight decks ingeniously constructed on several LST's.

Tactical aircraft patrolled the assault area throughout D-day and forayed inland to intercept enemy planes, bomb airfields, and attempt to disrupt communications. Admiral Willis' cover force alone maintained an umbrella of eight planes constantly aloft over the beach-

[28] See O'Daniel Rpt, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

head from 0550 to 1915.[29] There were no missions undertaken in direct close support of the ground troops, though an air support party at the 36th Division command post was in contact with General House's XII Air Support Command headquarters aboard Admiral Hewitt's flagship.

The first detailed report of conditions ashore reached shipboard headquarters a little after 1700. The news was good. Intelligence officers had expected the Germans to destroy the bridges across the drainage canals and streams, to place mines along bypass sites and fords, and to block the roads.[30] Instead, beach engineers reported no wire obstructions hindering unloadings, exit roads generally in good condition and usable, drainage ditch bridges for the most part intact. Steel matting was in place for roadways and supply dumps.

Soon afterward, Dawley sent word to Clark that supply operations over Green Beach, like those over Red and Yellow, were going well. More important, the 36th Division was holding positions along the line set as the objective for daylight, 10 September. At 1800 the corps G–2 reported that the 36th Division had no contact with German troops.

The division had made good progress that afternoon. The 143d Infantry, in the center, advanced to Monte Soprano and took the western slope of the nose, part of Monte Soltano, and the village of Capaccio. The 142d Infantry on the left was in the foothills below Albanella. Only on the right the 141st Infantry was still virtually immobilized, but after darkness it too would push forward and find evidence—in burned and wrecked vehicles, in supplies hastily abandoned—of a precipitous German withdrawal. If there was any cause for concern, it was on the left, where the division had not established its flank firmly on the Sele River—a gap of seven miles remained between American and British forces.

More than satisfied by the developments, General Walker made a formal request at 1740 for a regiment of the 45th Division—part of the floating reserve—to land during the night on Red Beach. Its general area of operations, he suggested, should be on the 36th Division left, specifically between the Calore and Sele Rivers.[31] Generals Dawley and Clark approved at once and Clark decided soon after to send the 179th Infantry ashore.[32]

At 2045, General Clark informed General Alexander that the entire 36th Division, including its attachments, was ashore.[33]

The Results of the First Day

North of the Sele River the 10 Corps had had very little difficulty landing and had secured the beaches by 0445. But as the troops began to move inland they met bitter resistance from German tanks and infantry. On the right flank, the 56th Division (Maj. Gen. G. W. R. Templer) received a strong tank attack, which naval gunfire helped to break up. Patrols then advanced into Battipaglia, but German troops soon drove them out. An attempt to take the Montecorvino airfield failed. Yet the British threat in the

[29] Willis Despatch.

[30] See 36th Div G–2 Estimate, Appendix 1 to Annex 2 to FO 33, 20 Aug 43.

[31] 36th Div G–3 Jnl, 9 Sep 43.

[32] Clark Diary, 9 Sep 43.

[33] Clark to Alexander, 2045, 9 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl.

Battipaglia area affected other parts of the beachhead. It prompted Sickenius to divert units of his *16th Panzer Division* from both north and south flanks to hold the town. Loss of Battipaglia and its commanding ground would give the Allies good access to the interior and deny the Germans control of the road net immediately behind the front. In the left portion of the 10 Corps area, the 46th Division (Maj. Gen. J. L. T. Hawkesworth) beat back recurring counterattacks, partially surrounded the Montecorvino airfield, and moved toward Salerno under heavy fire.

By the end of the first day the main forces of 10 Corps had secured a shallow beachhead, but, like VI Corps, had been unable to establish a flank on the Sele River. The gap between British and Americans was sharply defined on the evening of 9 September, when the Germans destroyed the bridge across the Sele on Highway 18, the coastal route.

A gap also separated the two divisions of 10 Corps from the Commandos operating on the left in the Sorrento peninsula. The Commandos had landed unopposed at Vietri sul Mare, but German troops quickly infiltrated the town and placed mortar fire on the beach, thereby delaying the landing of several subsequent assault and support waves. Against determined opposition, the Commandos, aided by Rangers, expanded their beachhead, fought into Salerno, and established a tenuous hold over the city.

On the left of the Commandos, the 4th Ranger Battalion had landed on the Maiori beach without opposition. After crossing the small beach and scaling a high sea wall, the men found Maiori empty of Germans. While one company formed a perimeter defense, two companies moved off to probe the winding coastal road toward Salerno to the east and Amalfi to the west. Resistance along the road was slight—a German officer courier on a motorcycle, a concrete pillbox protecting a small roadblock force on a sharp bend, a naval observation post near a hairpin turn, and an undefended roadblock at Minori.

The 1st and 3d Ranger Battalions came ashore and pushed inland up the narrow mountain road to Monte di Chiunzi. After destroying two German armored cars with bazooka fire, Rangers seized the ground commanding the Chiunzi pass at the top of the mountain without further opposition. By dawn of D-day, 9 September, they held firmly the peaks on both sides of the pass, with a breathtaking view of the Bay of Salerno behind them and excellent observation of Highway 18, the main artery leading north to Naples. These positions, as well as others plugging the coastal road to Amalfi, secured the left flank of the Fifth Army.[34]

The invasion, from most indications at the end of the day, was a success. Despite the more or less normal confusion of an amphibious operation, troops had scrambled ashore and gained lodgment. Intelligence officers judged the initial resistance to have been heavy though of brief duration. The enemy had soon withdrawn from the beaches. Though some beaches still remained under direct artillery fire, the greater part of the shore line was usable for landing additional troops and supplies.[35]

How difficult were the landings? For any man coming ashore on a hostile beach under fire, particularly during the

[34] Altieri, *Darby's Rangers*, p. 57.
[35] Fifth Army G–2 Rpt 3, 1600, 9 Sep 43.

hours of darkness, a landing is difficult. News of the Italian surrender had relaxed tensions among the troops on the convoys and, despite warnings from commanders, the general belief had persisted among the soldiers that the landings would be purely routine. Thus any opposition was disconcerting.[36]

Perhaps the best way of judging the actual difficulty of the invasion is by the number of casualties sustained. The 36th Division incurred approximately 500 casualties, relatively few for an opposed amphibious assault, particularly since the infantry components were overstrength and the division was augmented by the attachment of numerous units. The dead accounted for about 20 percent of the casualties. Very few men drowned.[37]

It was the lack of communications between shore and ship and the resulting absence of precise information for most of the day that made the higher echelons of command uneasy, and this contributed to shipboard impressions that the Salerno invasion was inordinately difficult. With the shore obscured first by darkness and later by smoke, rumors were rife, and the sketchy reports did little to dissipate the natural concern of those who could do little to help.

The most critical moments on shore for the Americans probably occurred during two serious German tank attacks. One came at 1120 and employed 16 Mark IV tanks, of which 6 were destroyed, and another was launched somewhat earlier with 13 Mark IV's. The rest seemed to be small probing attacks, hastily conceived and poorly executed.[38] Antitank weapons and naval gunfire had arrived in time, and a co-ordinated antitank defense was functioning in the VI Corps area by midmorning. The bazooka turned out to be, as one regiment reported, "a really great defensive weapon," accounting for at least seven tanks, even though a majority of the operators had fired only a few rounds in training and even though some men became excited and forgot to arm the bazooka shells. The rifle grenade was not particularly effective against tanks but was used with good effect against machine guns and strongpoints.[39]

The naval arrangements for debarking and assembling the boat waves and getting them away from the transports had been well carried out. True, many waves did not arrive at the proper places or on schedule; landing craft and DUKW pilots were often cautious to the point of milling around aimlessly offshore; and naval shore fire control parties, landed very early to observe and direct gunfire before artillery and tanks arrived in large numbers, did not get into operation immediately; but these were unfortunate and not disastrous circumstances.

Sea mines, both actual and suspected, had at first hampered naval operations and delayed gunfire support—it was necessary to sweep areas in the gulf before cruisers and destroyers could approach close enough to shore to fire effectively. Mines also inhibited the movements of landing craft and LST's and prevented the transports from coming close in to

[36] See Lucas Diary, 24 Sep 43; Walker to author, Aug 57.

[37] According to regimental records, the 141st Infantry lost 51 killed, 121 wounded, 31 missing; the 142d Infantry had 32 killed, 109 wounded, 8 missing. Regimental AAR's, Sep 43.

[38] See 36th Div G-2 Rpt, 1230, 11 Sep 43; Werner Remarks, Wood Lecture.

[39] 142d Inf AAR, Sep 43; Wood Lecture.

reduce the length of boat voyages from ship to shore. The distance between transports and shore, in some instances about ten miles, led to long trips by DUKW's and boats and retarded the build-up. At the end of D-day the transports of the Southern Attack Force were only partially unloaded.[40]

Late in the afternoon of 9 September Allied reconnaissance pilots reported an ominous development. They had observed enemy units moving north from the toe of Italy toward Salerno. German reinforcements could be expected at the beachhead during the night. These were the troops of the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* from Calabria.

To Vietinghoff it seemed that his *16th Panzer Division* had contained the Allied troops in a constricted beachhead. If the reinforcements arrived quickly the invasion might yet be repelled.[41]

The battle at Salerno was still to come. Taking place on the extensively cultivated but thinly settled plain, an area devoted to truck gardening and the raising of cereals on the low ground and to the growing of grapes in the foothills of the mountains, the battle would decide whether the Allies had come to southern Italy to stay.

In North Africa on the first day of the AVALANCHE landings, General Eisenhower had only the most meager reports from the beachhead. He knew by noon there was sharp fighting on the 10 Corps front; he had no news at all from the VI Corps. Confident of the eventual success of the operation, he was nevertheless concerned by the movement of German troops north from Calabria. General Montgomery had promised to advance up the peninsula as fast as he could. But extensive demolitions by German rear guards, it was apparent to Eisenhower, would prevent Montgomery from helping Clark "for some days." During those days, in Eisenhower's opinion, would come the critical period of AVALANCHE.[42]

Seeing his major task as the need to match the German reinforcement by accelerating Clark's build-up, Eisenhower offered Clark the 82d Airborne Division at noon of D-day, provided a feasible plan could be devised to use it. Eisenhower would have available the next morning, 10 September, some LCI (L)'s from Malta; the craft had a lift capacity of 1,800 troops with light equipment and could be used to send reinforcements to Clark. Perhaps some of the 82d paratroopers could be transferred from Sicily to the beachhead. The main problem, in Eisenhower's eyes, was assault shipping; if he had enough lift to put one more division into the beachhead immediately, he believed he could almost guarantee success at Salerno. But if the enemy appreciated correctly the slowness of the immediate Allied follow-up, "we are in," he informed the CCS, "for some very tough fighting." He could expect no help from the Italian Army. AVALANCHE would be "a matter of touch and go for the next few days." [43]

"While I do not discount the possibility of a very bad time in the AVALANCHE area," Eisenhower reported to his superiors, he remained optimistic.

[40] Cunningham *Despatch*, p. 2173; Morison, *Sicily—Salerno—Anzio*, p. 260; Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September, 1953).

[41] *XIV Pz C KTB*, 9 Sep 43.

[42] Eisenhower to CCS, 2015, 9 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5 (also in AFHQ G-3 Div Ops 46/5, Italian Military Mission 1, photostats, OCMH).

[43] *Ibid.*

My belief is that the enemy is sufficiently confused by the events of the past twenty-four hours that it will be difficult for him to make up a defensive plan and that by exploiting to the full our sea and air power, we will control the Southern end of the Boot to include the line Naples-Foggia within a reasonable time. Our greatest asset now is confusion and uncertainty which we must take advantage of in every possible way.[44]

Slapstick

General Eisenhower hoped that Operation SLAPSTICK, the quick movement of British paratroopers in cruisers to Taranto, would promote additional confusion and uncertainty among the Germans. The decision to execute SLAPSTICK, made in the early days of September, was in the nature of an afterthought, and, as General Alexander later remarked, the code name well illustrated the *ex tempore* nature of the planning. Despite the suddenness of the decision to launch the operation, the reasoning behind it was complex and the action exerted a considerable influence on the development of the campaign in southern Italy.

Suggested by the Italians during the surrender negotiations, SLAPSTICK was planned to take advantage of the fact that few German troops were in the heel, though the Allied commanders had expected the area to be well defended because of its strategic proximity to Yugoslavia.[45] If the Allies could quickly seize the major port of Taranto, together with the excellent harbors of Brindisi and Bari on the east coast, with little expenditure of men and equipment, they would gain another complex of entry points to the Italian peninsula that would facilitate the general build-up. They would then have two independent lines of communication in Italy, one based on Salerno and Naples for the Fifth U.S. Army, a second based on the other side of the Italian peninsula for the British Eighth Army. Supporting General Montgomery's Eighth Army from Taranto and east coast harbors would eliminate the problems of relying on the minor Calabrian ports, which had limited unloading capacity and would necessitate long overland truck hauls from the toe.[46]

The resources for SLAPSTICK were fortunately at hand. First, the Italian armistice, which included the surrender of the Italian Fleet, made it possible on 7 September to divert four cruisers from guarding the Italian warships to transporting the paratroopers.[47] Second, since the shortage of air carriers in the theater made it impossible to use the 1st British Airborne Division in AVALANCHE, its troops were available, and General Alexander alerted Maj. Gen. G. F. Hopkinson, the division commander, to be ready to make what was hoped would be an administrative rather than an assault landing. Third, a reservoir of additional strength could be drawn upon to build up the forces in the heel: the British 78th Division was in Sicily and free for commitment; the 8th Indian Division was in the Middle East and already loading on ships for a scheduled movement to Italy on 25 September; and other divisions in the Middle East and in North Africa could be sent to the heel if the Allies controlled a complex of ports capable of receiving them. Fourth, a headquarters was available to com-

[44] *Ibid.*
[45] See AFHQ G-2 Paper, 12 Jul 43.
[46] Alexander *Despatch*, pp. 2893–94.
[47] Cunningham *Despatch*, p. 2172.

mand a large number of troops. When Montgomery's Eighth Army secured easy lodgment in the toe after crossing the Strait of Messina on 3 September, 10 Corps was definitely committed to participate in the AVALANCHE landings. At that time the amphibious operation at Crotone was canceled. This left the British 5 Corps headquarters unemployed and, consequently, free to exercise control over the Allied combat troops that might be committed in the province of Apulia. Eventually, after advancing beyond the toe, Montgomery's Eighth Army would be established in Apulia, but until then Lt. Gen. Sir Charles Allfrey's 5 Corps headquarters would be ready to take responsibility for whatever operations developed in the area remote from both Salerno and Calabria.

For these reasons, 3,600 troops of the 1st British Airborne Division sailed in light cruisers and mine layers, preceded by mine sweepers, to Taranto and entered the harbor on 9 September, the day of the Salerno landings. No German forces were in the city, and the Italians manning the port defenses gave the arrivals a friendly welcome. The only untoward incident was the tragic sinking, with heavy loss of life, of the British mine layer *Abdiel,* which struck a mine while waiting to be unloaded.

The port of Taranto was in excellent condition, and British troops immediately began to organize its facilities. The 1st Airborne Division moved off in search of Germans and two days later occupied the port of Brindisi without opposition.[48]

Unfortunately for General Eisenhower's hope, SLAPSTICK created little confusion and uncertainty for the Germans. The lack of opposition in the heel and along the east coast had resulted from an independent decision made by the commander of the *1st Parachute Division,* the only German unit in Apulia. With Kesselring busy putting down the Italian show of force at Rome and Vietinghoff occupied by meeting the Allied landings at Salerno, the division commander, Generalmajor Richard Heidrich, acted on his own initiative. Since his forces were dispersed over a wide area and there were several points of entry vulnerable to Allied invasion, and since two of the division's infantry battalions were detached from his control, he concluded he would be unable to offer effective resistance anywhere against what would obviously be superior invading forces. He assembled his troops and insured their security by withdrawing, though he maintained light contact with the British troops and delayed them where he could.[49]

To those engaged at Salerno, SLAPSTICK was far less important than the progress of General Montgomery's Eighth Army, which was moving slowly up the toe, retarded by demolitions, skillful German delaying action, and the nature of the country itself. If, as seemed likely, the Germans escaped the Eighth Army advance, moved quickly out of the toe, and reached the Salerno area in time to reinforce the defenders, the Fifth Army was in for real trouble.

[48] Alexander *Despatch,* pp. 2893–94; Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 119, 125; Morison, *Sicily—Salerno—Anzio,* pp. 235–36.

[49] Kesselring, *A Soldier's Record,* p. 225.

CHAPTER VII

The Beachhead

German Build-up

How to reinforce the *16th Panzer Division,* which alone was meeting the Allied invasion at the Salerno beaches, was one of Vietinghoff's immediate tasks. At hand were two divisions north of Salerno, two divisions to the south.

In the south the *29th Panzer Grenadier* and *26th Panzer Divisions,* in that order and under the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* headquarters, were withdrawing from Calabria. They had been on the move since 3 September, when the Eighth Army had landed near Reggio. The *26th Panzer Division* was to hold long enough at Catanzaro, about 75 miles from Reggio, to permit the evacuation of heavy matériel. The *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* was to go about 75 miles beyond Catanzaro and assemble near Castrovillari. The British Eighth Army had exerted little pressure against German rear guard units and had thus interfered little with the withdrawal. Then on 8 September, the day before the invasion at Salerno, British troops had made a surprise landing near Pizzo, about 50 miles up the coast from Reggio, and almost caught the rear guard division, the *26th Panzer.* A swift German reaction might have defeated the landing forces, but because of poor communications and consequent lack of co-ordination among its subordinate units, the *26th Panzer Division* missed the opportunity. Making excuses about the unwillingness of the Italians to fight, the division disengaged and withdrew at once to Catanzaro, the movement probably at least partially prompted by the observation that day of the Allied convoy on its way to Salerno.[1] British pressure again slackened, and while the *26th Panzer Division* demolished communications and set up roadblocks, the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* hastened northward.

Expecting the first of the panzer grenadiers to arrive in the Salerno area by the evening of 9 September and the remainder early the following day, Vietinghoff hoped to have at least parts of the *26th Panzer Division* soon afterward. Then he planned to divide the battlefield into two corps sectors, the *XIV* in the north, the *LXXVI* in the south. On the basis of his projections, Vietinghoff permitted the *16th Panzer Division* on the evening of 9 September to withdraw its elements opposing the U.S. VI Corps in order to concentrate against the British 10 Corps. Not only the expected arrivals but the terrain and the objectives dictated this move. Of greatest importance to the Germans were the heights surrounding the Salerno plain; those in the north, barring access to Naples, were the most vital. As a consequence, few German troops faced the Americans on the 10th.

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[1] *26th Pz Div KTB Nr. 1,* 8 Sep 43.

The German units just north of the Salerno beaches upon which Vietinghoff could draw were two divisions in the Naples and Gaeta areas, the *15th Panzer Grenadier* and *Hermann Goering Divisions,* which, together with the *16th Panzer Division,* were under the *XIV Panzer Corps* headquarters. Both had fought in Sicily, where they had taken severe losses, and both were in the process of rehabilitation. The *Hermann Goering Division,* with an effective strength of more than 15,000 men, had only 25 to 30 operational tanks and 21 assault guns but was strong in artillery. Because its panzer grenadier regiment was not yet organized, the division was weak in infantry. As compensation, Vietinghoff attached to it two infantry battalions of the *1st Parachute Division,* which was in Apulia and directly under *Tenth Army* control. The *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* had an effective strength of about 12,000 and a total of 7 tanks, 18 assault guns, and 31 antitank guns of 75-mm. and 88-mm. caliber.

Apart from the question of whether the divisions were sufficiently rested and retrained for commitment to battle, the German commanders had to be ready for additional invasions on the west coast after the Salerno landings. Kesselring still looked for other amphibious operations north of Salerno, and on 10 September ordered a regiment of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* shifted from the vicinity of Rome to strengthen the forces around the Gulf of Gaeta.[2] This eased the problem of coastal defense at Gaeta for the *XIV Panzer Corps* and made it possible for the corps to utilize the *15th Panzer Grenadier* and *Hermann Goering Divisions* more freely in the defense of Salerno. Reserve elements of the two divisions moved against the 10 Corps on 10 September, and as the possibility of other Allied landings declined during the succeeding days, other increments followed.

The concentration of the *XIV Panzer Corps* thus put into motion against 10 Corps had its effects. On 10 September German patrols probed and small units engaged the Rangers in sharp skirmishes on Monte di Chiunzi on the extreme left of the Allied beachhead. Strengthened German opposition made it difficult for units of the 46th Division and the Commandos to clear the town of Salerno and advance about two miles inland to the Vietri pass on the main route to Naples. Stubborn German resistance denied the 56th Division the high ground east of Battipaglia, necessary to control not only the village but also the Montecorvino airfield, and though British patrols managed to get into Battipaglia for a second time, German counterattacks drove them out again at nightfall.[3]

In striking contrast were the events on the VI Corps front, where contact with the enemy on the evening of D-day diminished almost to the vanishing point. At 0830, 10 September, the situation in the VI Corps area, according to General Clark, was "well in hand." [4] By 1100, American troops were no longer in touch with the Germans. Only forty prisoners had been taken, including a few captured on 9 September. The Germans seemed to be withdrawing from the battlefield. "The worst is over," an enthusiastic regimental commander announced,

[2] Kesselring to Vietinghoff, 10 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[3] Liaison Rpt, 10 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[4] Clark Diary, 10 Sep 43.

"we are more than a match for all that can meet us." [5]

There were few German forces because the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* failed to arrive from the south as expected. The division had been immobilized most of 9 September not far from the Gulf of Policastro for lack of fuel, but Vietinghoff did not know it. Instead of the troops arriving near Salerno, the division commander, Generalmajor Walter Fries, showed up at army headquarters with the bad news.

Part of the trouble over fuel came from the fact that the recently organized *Tenth Army* headquarters had no organic quartermaster section. *OB SUED* was still handling logistical matters for the army, and the arrangement was not working out satisfactorily. *Tenth Army* was not fully informed on the location of the fuel and supply depots in the army area, just one aspect of a generally uncoordinated logistical situation.[6]

More to the point, a panicky officer had destroyed a coastal tanker and a fuel depot at Sapri, at the head of the Gulf of Policastro, without proper authority. The depot commander, apparently a naval officer, had been under the mistaken impression that he was about to be attacked. By blowing up the storage facilities to prevent them from falling, so he thought, into Allied hands, he seriously depleted the *Tenth Army* supplies.[7]

Emergency measures were necessary, not only to get the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* in motion again but also to prevent the *26th Panzer Division* from bogging down in Calabria. While gasoline from Italian dumps and small amounts from the rather meager stocks of the *16th Panzer Division* were rushed south, Vietinghoff urgently requested Kesselring to ship him fuel by air.[8]

Strenuous efforts got the panzer grenadiers rolling again, but instead of arriving near Salerno on the night of 9 September as a strong striking force, the division came into the battle area piecemeal during the next three days. Units were committed as they arrived, but the entire division was not on hand until the 12th.

Doing his utmost to concentrate forces around Salerno for a major counterattack, Vietinghoff carried out his plan to divide the battle area into two zones on 11 September. He had the *XIV Panzer Corps* in the north, operating in an area that included the Sorrento peninsula and Salerno, with the *15th Panzer Grenadier* and the *Hermann Goering Divisions*; in the south, the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* took control of the *16th Panzer* and *29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions*. To a certain extent the reorganization was a paper change. Though most of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* had arrived, the division was not able to take responsibility for its zone because of continuing fuel shortages. Late on the afternoon of the 11th, a member of Vietinghoff's staff flew to Kesselring's headquarters to try to iron out this and other problems. The lack of an army quartermaster was particularly unsettling—no one, for example, co-ordinated fuel transfers between the corps—and delays and confusion inevitably resulted. But com-

[5] 142d Inf AAR, Sep 43; Fifth Army G-2 Rpt 4, 1600, 10 Sep 43. See also 151st FA Bn AAR, Sep 43.

[6] Vietinghoff, in MS # T-1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

[7] *Tenth A Rueckblick auf die ersten drei Tage der Schlacht bei Salerno,* 12 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[8] Vietinghoff to Kesselring, 9 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

munications also still troubled and dismayed the Germans. The *Tenth Army* staff officer visiting Kesselring's headquarters carried with him copies of most of the radio messages sent that day to *OB SUED,* and he discovered that most of the originals had not yet been received.[9] While Kesselring tried to straighten out the various difficulties, he confirmed his approval of Vietinghoff's intention to employ all available forces at Salerno. Political and military considerations, he advised Vietinghoff, made victory at Salerno imperative, and "every man must know this." [10]

Hampered by internal difficulties and the necessity to commit units piecemeal and intermingled, Vietinghoff could do no more than go through the motions of planning a counterattack at Salerno. Meanwhile, regimental and smaller sized units could and would exert pressure on the Fifth Army by local attacks directed for the most part against 10 Corps. The success they were to achieve by these less than all-out means would demonstrate how correct the Allies had been to characterize the invasion as a risky venture.

The Beachhead Developed

After absorbing the first shock of the landing, the 36th Division pushed east and south on 10 September toward the high ground that forms an arc between Agropoli, five miles south of the landing beaches, and Albanella, seven miles to the east. The 141st Infantry on the right moved steadily to the south toward Agropoli and Ogliastro, while the 143d in the center sent patrols onto the imposing bulk of Monte Soprano. The 142d took Albanella and with it control of the ridge line and country road to the village of Rocca d'Aspide. By the end of the second day of the invasion, the 36th Division had fulfilled the immediate requirement imposed on VI Corps—protecting the right flank of the Fifth Army.

To a division expecting to meet strong resistance climaxed by an armored counterattack at daylight of 10 September, the absence of opposition came as a welcome surprise. Aside from the obvious tactical advantages, the 36th gained an opportunity to bring order to the many activities that had, as a natural consequence of the amphibious landing, become somewhat disorganized. The units had come ashore "badly mixed due to sea mines," according to General Clark, and General Walker bent his efforts "to disentangle the units as much as possible." [11]

To reinforce the 36th Division, a portion of the floating reserve—part of the 45th Division—had come ashore. Having departed Sicily in a convoy of LCT's and LCI's forty-eight hours earlier, the division headquarters, the 179th Infantry, and most of the 157th Infantry had arrived in the Gulf of Salerno with the invasion assault forces about midnight of 8 September; the troops had remained in the cramped quarters of their landing craft.[12] Early on 10 September, the 179th Infantry debarked, moved into an assembly area along the coastal highway north of Paestum, and, together with the rest of the division, passed from army reserve to corps control. The division command-

[9] *Tenth A Besprechung beim OB SUED,* 11 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[10] Kesselring to Vietinghoff, 11 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[11] Clark to Alexander, 2045, 9 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl; 36th Div AAR, Sep 43.

[12] 45th Div AAR, Sep 43.

er, General Middleton, set up a command post and received as attachments the 645th Tank Destroyer and 191st Tank Battalions, both of which were already in position near the Sele River.

By this time General Dawley had opened his VI Corps command post with a skeleton staff. That afternoon, after communications were established, he assumed responsibility from General Walker for the tactical operations on the beachhead south of the Sele River. The next day Dawley took control of unloading on the beaches, operating the supply dumps, and constructing and maintaining roads.[13]

Visiting the beachhead on 10 September, General Clark found conditions in the VI Corps area satisfactory, morale high. In the 10 Corps area, where morale was equally high, he learned firsthand from General McCreery of the resistance the British were meeting. The German concentration of strength in the northern part of the beachhead, General McCreery estimated, made it doubtful that the corps, at its current strength, could advance eastward the fourteen miles through Battipaglia and Eboli to Ponte Sele, the projected meeting place with VI Corps. The 10 Corps needed assistance, and Clark promised to give it. Two areas were particularly sensitive: the extreme left flank on the Sorrento peninsula, where the Rangers were holding the Chiunzi pass, and the gap on the right flank of the 10 Corps, the low ground between Battipaglia and the Sele River.

Assistance for 10 Corps could come only at the expense of VI Corps, but in view of the differing strengths of the opposition, it was justifiable. To insure the integrity of the Fifth Army left, General Clark told General Dawley to send a battalion task force to support the Rangers. He was specific on the composition of the force and the time of its movement—a battalion of infantry, supported by artillery, engineers, tanks, and 4.2-inch mortars, was to be ready to embark from a VI Corps beach the next day, 11 September. Dawley, who was concerned over his relatively long front and comparatively few troops, protested. But Clark insisted, and on the following afternoon the troops, with three units of fire, three days of Class I and Class III supplies, and organic loads, began embarking on fifteen LCT's and three LCI (L)'s for the trip across the gulf to Maiori and attachment to Darby's Rangers.[14]

To close the gap on the 10 Corps right, Clark shifted the VI Corps boundary north of the Sele River, thereby giving the task of filling the hole to Dawley. The VI Corps commander was to use the 179th Infantry, already in the beachhead, and the 157th Infantry, which Clark decided to bring ashore on the afternoon of 10 September. Only the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 157th were present because of the shortage of shipping; the 1st Battalion would not arrive from Sicily until 15 September. After ordering the two battalions placed ashore on the British right flank just north of the Sele River, Clark was surprised to discover that the troops were already being unloaded just south of the river. Admiral Hewitt, he later learned, had issued

[13] VI Corps G–3 Jnl, 10 Sep 43, and AAR, Sep 43.

[14] VI Corps AAR, Sep 43; Brann to Dawley, 10 Sep 43, and Dawley to Walker, 11 Sep 43, both in VI Corps G–3 Jnl.



GENERAL MCCREERY *(right)* IN A JEEP WITH GENERALS EISENHOWER AND CLARK

his order earlier because AFHQ had instructed him to release vessels for return to North Africa and Sicily, where they would be reloaded and sent back to augment the build-up in Italy.[15] Fortunately, the regimental landing site was near the place Clark had chosen. The difficulty for the regiment was that the Germans had destroyed the bridge across the Sele. At Clark's direction engineers, working through the night, put in a new bridge and on the following morning, 11 September, the 157th was able to cross the river into what had been the 10 Corps zone.[16]

Having taken care of the two sensitive areas in the beachhead, the Fifth Army commander assured General Alexander that he would soon be ready to attack north through the Vietri pass toward Naples. Part of his optimism came from the progress of unloading operations. Small convoys departed the Northern Attack Force area at intervals throughout the 10th as soon as the ships were emptied. By 2210 the larger APA's and AKA's of the Southern Attack Force had been unloaded and were on their way back to North Africa. Shortly before

[15] Clark, *Calculated Risk*, p. 195. According to General Gruenther, the British commander of the vessels transporting the 157th Infantry was "darned if he was going to stay out there any longer and take this shelling and the air attacks. . . . He just decided to land them and he put the whole regimental combat team ashore. It caused an untold amount of irritation. . . . [but] It turned out later that he had landed them in a pretty good place, so it worked out satisfactorily." Wood Lecture (discussion period). According to the 45th Division records, the 157th was sent ashore because of a misunderstanding on the part of the convoy commander. 45th Div AAR, Sep 43.

[16] VI Corps AAR, Sep 43; Fifth Army G-3 Jnl, 10 Sep 43.

midnight, the contents of 80 percent of the D-day convoy were ashore.[17] Though the beaches were still congested, partly because of the rapid pace of the unloading, partly because not enough troops were on hand to clear the supplies, this seemed relatively unimportant, for a naval party had visited Salerno to see about opening the port facilities.

So favorable did the situation appear that the Northwest African Tactical Air Force headquarters proposed to reduce the fighter cover over the assault area. Admiral Hewitt and General House protested. The planes allotted to AVALANCHE, they felt, were meeting no more than minimum requirements. Since Allied troops had not taken Montecorvino airfield, a change in the air assignments seemed unwise until fighter planes were actually based in the beachhead. The VI Corps was constructing a provisional airstrip near Paestum, but this strip would hardly insure the Allies a firm base for all-weather air support.

About the time that Hewitt and House were protesting the proposed reduction of fighter cover, the Germans were deciding to step up their air attacks. Several weeks earlier Kesselring had given *Luftflotte 2,* the air force headquarters in Italy, a dual mission: to attack Allied shipping and protect Italian cities against air raids; and, in the event of an Allied landing on the Italian mainland, to give close support to the *Tenth Army* and cover the projected evacuation of troops from Sardinia.[18] When the British invaded Calabria, Kesselring had correctly judged it a subsidiary operation and ordered the air force to conserve its meager resources for the more decisive action sure to come.[19] By the evening of 10 September, there was no doubt that Salerno was the decisive action, and *Luftflotte 2* began to employ all its available aircraft against the Fifth Army. Enemy air activity increased noticeably that night.

German aircraft were far from equal to Allied planes, either in numbers or in performance. Of the 625 German planes based in southern France, Sardinia, Corsica, and the Italian mainland, no more than 120 single-engine fighters and 50 fighter-bombers were immediately available at bases in central and southern Italy. Yet their short distance from the Allied beachhead made it possible for a plane to fly several sorties each day. Thus, on 11 September Allied observers reported no less than 120 hostile aircraft over the landing beaches. Barrage balloons, antiaircraft artillery, and Allied fighter planes markedly reduced the effect of the German air raids, but the threat could not be ignored—even though the lack of mass air attacks seemed to indicate that the Germans were not holding a large air fleet in reserve to repel the invasion.

Despite the request of Hewitt and House to maintain the level of the Allied air effort, there were fewer Allied fighter planes in the air over Salerno on 11 September to oppose the increased German effort. "Admiral Hewitt protesting reduction of coverage," General House radioed to the Tactical Air Force headquarters. "Suffering losses that cannot be replaced. Urgently recommend original

[17] Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September, 1953); VI Corps AAR, Sep 43.

[18] *OB SUED* 1a Order, *Befehl fuer die weitere Kampffuehrung,* 20 Aug 43, *Tenth A KTB Chefsachen.*

[19] *OB SUED* Msg Nr. 5938/43, 3 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

plan until further instructions." To the Tactical Air Force headquarters, this message was incomprehensible. "Our information from you," the headquarters replied, "indicates light enemy air attack which has been well handled by patrolling fighters." Yet the headquarters agreed "very reluctantly," according to Hewitt, to return a P–38 squadron to patrol duty over Salerno.[20] From Admiral Vian, who commanded the carrier force, came a more positive response. Hewitt had radioed to him: "Air situation here critical. Status air field ashore uncertain." Could Vian remain on station and furnish early morning cover on 12 September? Vian's reply was prompt: "Yes, certainly." [21]

Although Vian's naval aircraft, along with those of Willis, maintained umbrellas of fighter cover over the invasion area, both commanders were becoming concerned about their diminishing supplies of fuel. The Montecorvino airfield provided the solution to the problem of air support, but the Germans hardly seemed disposed to oblige.[22]

With at least the reconnaissance battalion of the *Hermann Goering Division* and probably additional units strengthening the *16th Panzer Division*'s concentration of force against 10 Corps, the fighting in the British zone on 11 September, the third day of the invasion, became more intense, particularly in the Battipaglia area. Supported by effective naval fire, British troops finally captured the Montecorvino airfield at the end of the day, but German infantry on nearby hills and German artillery within range denied its use.

On that day VI Corps began its effort to bolster the 10 Corps right flank. While the two regiments of Middleton's 45th Division moved to close the gap between British and Americans, a regiment of Walker's 36th Division was to provide an assist.

The terrain in question was the flood plain of the Sele and Calore Rivers, a corridor of low ground. Starting about twelve miles inland near the village of Serre, at the edge of rugged hills, the corridor descends gently as it carries the Sele and Calore Rivers to their juncture five miles from the shore.

The planners in defining initial objectives had bypassed this low ground, focusing their attention instead on the high ground dominating the plain. If 10 Corps seized the heights first around Battipaglia, then around Eboli on the northern rim of the plain, and if VI Corps captured high ground near Altavilla, specifically Hill 424, on the southern edge, British and Americans could move quickly to a meeting at Ponte Sele, and the Sele-Calore plain would be pinched off in the process.

Events had developed differently. The Germans stubbornly denied Battipaglia to the British, while the Americans erected a defensive barrier facing southeast to protect the beachhead against the German forces moving up the boot. Since the Germans possessed the dominating ground, particularly Battipaglia and Hill 424, they could, it became apparent, strike through the relatively open ground of the Sele-Calore corridor and split the beachhead forces. The VI Corps, having rather easily established the barrier on

[20] Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September, 1953), p. 969. Reprinted from *Proceedings* by permission: Copyright © 1953 U.S. Naval Institute.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 970; Msg, Hewitt to Vian, 1611, 11 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[22] Willis Despatch.

the right, could now turn to the left and help 10 Corps.

The VI Corps plan for 11 September envisaged three separate but related attacks. On the left, the 157th Infantry was to cross the Sele River downstream from its junction with the Calore and attack north to Eboli. Seizure of Eboli, about eight miles from the Sele, would strike the German flank and rear and perhaps pry loose the German hold on Battipaglia; it would also facilitate 10 Corps' capture of the heights immediately overlooking the Montecorvino airfield. In the center, the 179th Infantry was to enter the Sele-Calore corridor near the juncture of the two rivers. Covering the right flank of the 157th, the 179th was to drive seven miles northeast across the flood plain to seize a bridge, Ponte Sele, and cut Highway 19, a good lateral route still open to the Germans. On the right of the low ground, a regiment of the 36th Division was to secure Hill 424 near Altavilla and deprive the Germans of a commanding view over much of the beachhead, as well as the flood plain, the valleys of the upper Sele and Calore Rivers, and portions of Highways 19 and 91.

The attacks met with varying success. In the left of the VI Corps zone, a company of the attached 191st Tank Battalion led the two battalions of the 157th Infantry across the Sele River toward Eboli and moved into an area of undulating ground with small patches of woods. About four miles north of the river crossing site, having advanced without incident but somewhat suspicious because of the heavy fire in the Battipaglia area, the tankers cautiously approached a tobacco factory—five large buildings constructed in a circle. On the flat top of a gently sloping hill, the factory controlled access not only to Eboli and Ponte Sele but also to the Battipaglia-Eboli road, a German supply route.

Just that morning, 11 September, as a result of the increased strength available, the *16th Panzer Division* had moved a battalion from Battipaglia to outpost positions in and around the factory. Letting the American tank company come close, the Germans struck with machine guns and antitank weapons and knocked out seven tanks. From positions dug along the railroad paralleling the coastal highway and from strongpoints in the factory buildings, as well as in the farmhouses nearby, German troops halted the advance of the 157th Infantry.

By evening the Americans were digging in. The factory remained in German hands, as did Eboli, four miles away.[23]

For its effort in the Sele-Calore corridor, the 179th Infantry divided its attack. Two battalions were to drive directly to Ponte Sele, while the third protected the regimental right flank in the shadow of Hill 424 and Altavilla.

The main regimental body, the 3d and 1st Battalions, in that order, followed by tanks and tank destroyers advancing by bounds, crossed the Calore River near its juncture with the Sele and entered the corridor against no opposition. By midmorning the infantry battalions had bypassed the village of Persano and were seemingly well on their way to Ponte Sele when machine gun fire suddenly erupted from Persano and artillery fire began to fall from the direction of Eboli. The fire cut communications between the

[23] A detailed account of the small unit action here and elsewhere may be found in *Salerno: American Operations from the Beaches to the Volturno,* pp. 37ff.



THE TOBACCO FACTORY

infantry and its armored support. Tanks and tank destroyers tried to push to Persano, but German fire halted them. Remaining where they were, the armored troops protected the Calore River crossing site to prevent the entire force in the corridor from being cut off and isolated.

With neither communications nor fire support, the 1st Battalion turned back to mop up the Persano area, where it became heavily engaged for the rest of the day. The 3d Battalion pushed on against increasing resistance to within a mile of Ponte Sele before coming to a halt. Wary of being isolated by German troops, the 3d Battalion commander, upon the approach of darkness, withdrew to join forces with the 1st Battalion near Persano. Both battalions set up defensive positions a few miles east of the village. Four miles to the northeast, Ponte Sele remained in German hands.

Meanwhile, protecting the regimental right flank, the 2d Battalion advanced over the low ground between the Calore River and the Altavilla heights. With a platoon of the 191st Tank Battalion at the head and the 160th Field Artillery Battalion in support, the battalion combat team crossed La Cosa Creek and moved toward that part of Highway 19 between Ponte Sele and Serre. By midmorning the battalion had reached a destroyed bridge across the Calore. Building a ford in the shallow stream was not difficult, and tanks and vehicles soon crossed, only to run into concerted fire from German tanks and artillery that forced the troops to take cover. There

they remained until dark. Since the positions on the low ground seemed far too advanced and much too exposed, the battalion withdrew during the night almost three miles and dug defensive positions along La Cosa Creek.

In contrast with the opposition met by the two regiments of the 45th Division, a battalion of the 142d Infantry took Altavilla and the nearby hills with no trouble at all. Troops entered the village during the morning and occupied dispersed positions on the heights without resistance. That afternoon, when patrols reconnoitered eastward as far as the Calore River, they found no German forces. American domination of the Sele-Calore corridor from the south now seemed established.

Ashore again on 11 September, General Clark was concerned by the manifestation of German strength against the British. Not only were the Germans exerting pressure in the Battipaglia area, they had pushed into the outskirts of Vietri and had come within twelve miles of Salerno. In the process they were inflicting heavy casualties. On that day alone, *Tenth Army* captured almost 1,500 prisoners, most of them British.[24]

General Clark was also impressed by the resistance the 45th Division met. To counter the German strength in the northern portion of the beachhead, Clark talked with General Dawley about shifting troops from the south. Although reconnaissance pilots ranging east of Eboli had only negative reports on German troop movements that evening, Clark advised Dawley to be alert to the danger of counterattack along his north flank. Use plenty of mines, Clark urged.[25]

Late on the evening of 11 September when General McCreery requested General Clark to move the intercorps boundary again to narrow still further the 10 Corps area, Clark responded.[26] Reluctant to adjust his front-line dispositions, Dawley moved a battalion of the 36th Engineer Regiment into the line during the night. On the left of the 157th Infantry, the engineers occupied defensive positions around Bivio Cioffi, a few miles north of the mouth of the Sele, and there established tenuous patrol contact with British units at daylight.

Paralleling the disturbing developments on the ground were conditions offshore. As *Luftflotte 2* continued its all-out effort, launching a total of more than 450 sorties by fighters and fighter-bombers and almost 100 by heavy bombers during the first three days of the invasion, German planes menaced the invasion fleet. The aircraft were responding to urgent pleas passed up the chain of command from the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, Balck, to concentrate the planes not against the Allied air forces or ground troops but against the ships. According to Balck, who was supported by Vietinghoff, eliminating the devastating Allied naval gunfires was the prime prerequisite for success in repelling the invasion.[27]

German pilots sank 4 transports, 1 heavy cruiser, and 7 landing craft, and scored a total of 85 hits on the Allied fleet. They had particular success with two new radio-controlled glider and rocket bombs. Introduced at Salerno, the

[24] *Tenth A Erfolgsmeldung*, 12 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[25] VI Corps AAR, Sep 43.

[26] McCreery to Clark, 2245, 11 Sep 43, Fifth Army G-3 Jnl.

[27] Balck to Vietinghoff, 10 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

bombs were carried by specially equipped DO–217 bombers and perhaps also by HE–111 bombers. The planes averaged one hit per fifteen sorties. Though the bombs had been available since July, shortly after the invasion of Sicily, Hitler had prevented their use "lest we give away our secret." [28]

On 11 September a near miss by a glider or rocket bomb damaged the cruiser *Philadelphia,* another severely damaged a Dutch gunboat, and a direct hit on the cruiser *Savannah* put it out of action. These losses, Admiral Hewitt judged, made his situation critical. He requested assistance from Admiral Cunningham, who promptly dispatched two cruisers, the *Aurora* and the *Penelope,* from Malta.

The most conspicuous target immediately offshore was Admiral Hewitt's flagship, the *Ancon.* It had to be in the gulf because it was the center of naval, air, and ground command communications. Apprehensive over its safety during the night, Hewitt decided that defending the *Ancon* with the usual measures of smoke and massed antiaircraft fire would be too risky. He put out to sea for the night. At daylight, 12 September, the *Ancon* was back on station to resume not only fighter direction control but also its place in the command network.

Against the beachhead itself, the Germans continued to augment their strength and pressure. Enough of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* from Calabria was on hand to make its presence felt, and on 12 September troops of the *29th* appeared in the American sector. Their first action took place at Altavilla.

The 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, had moved into Altavilla and had established positions on Hill 424 without any trouble, but the American troops were not so firmly in place as they might have seemed. Not only were they spread thin over a large area, but the broken ground around Altavilla—terraced slopes covered with scrub growth and cut by ravines—restricted fields of fire and sharply limited visibility. Central control was a problem, and each rifle company had difficulty finding suitable ground for adequate defensive positions. In addition, the consolidation of the 179th Infantry on the left near Persano and along La Cosa Creek placed the infantry battalion around Altavilla in the most advanced position along the VI Corps front.

German troops infiltrated the battalion positions during the night, and soon after daylight, 12 September, they opened fire on the dispersed American units. Although the broken terrain gave many Americans the impression they were fighting alone and unaided, they resisted stubbornly. Yet their situation soon became critical. The regimental commander, Colonel Forsythe, tried to get trucks from division and corps to rush another battalion to Altavilla as reinforcement, but vehicles were not available. As the battalion commander headed forward to direct the most hard-pressed of his companies, he was cut down by German fire. Shortly thereafter, German troops

[28] British Air Ministry Pamphlet No. 248, *The Rise and Fall of the German Air Force* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948), p. 262; Fuehrer Conferences, 1943, p. 95 (17 Jul 43). Fitted with wings, the bombs were assisted by rockets. Radio control or a homing device directed them. Nineteen inches in diameter, the bombs had low velocity, were armor piercing, had a delayed fuze, and weighed 1,400 kilograms. AFHQ Ltr, 22 Sep 43, AG 471.

pushed into the village and split the battalion in two. In splinters and with Germans apparently on all sides, the men fell back from Altavilla and the neighboring hills.

Loss of the Altavilla heights jeopardized the American positions in the Sele-Calore corridor, where the 179th Infantry had tried again on 12 September to advance to Ponte Sele and Highway 19. Though tanks and tank destroyers forced a passage to Persano and re-established contact and communications with the two battalions of infantry, no further advance was possible.[29] The 2d Battalion, protecting the regimental right flank, guarded the area between the Calore River and Altavilla against German incursion from the heights.

The loss of Altavilla exposed the 179th Infantry right flank. However, the regimental left flank became somewhat more secure after the 157th Infantry attacked the tobacco factory. Men of the 157th took the buildings and the commanding ground on which they stood, then fought a seesaw battle against a series of fierce German counterattacks. At the end of the day, the regiment was holding firm, blocking the Sele River crossing site immediately west of Persano and thus denying the Germans at least this access to the corridor.

The battalion of the 36th Engineer Regiment in the line on the left of the 157th Infantry helped sustain the corps' left flank. With the help of excellent naval gunfire, the fire of a few tank destroyers that had just come ashore, and the support of a battery of artillery, the engineers held at Bivio Cioffi against a German probe.[30]

The defensive success on the VI Corps left could not obscure the seriousness of the loss of Altavilla. Without the high ground around Altavilla the 45th Division could make little progress toward Ponte Sele and Eboli and could give little assistance to 10 Corps. When General Dawley conferred with General Middleton around noon on 12 September, the division commander made this point. Agreeing, Dawley instructed General Walker to retake Altavilla. As Walker started to plan an attack, General Clark set into motion a reorganization of the front.

To General Clark, who came ashore again on 12 September and who found the 45th Division "badly bruised," the German strength near Persano seemed to be a spear pointing toward the center of the beachhead. If the Germans pushed to the sea, they could turn the inner flank of either or both of the corps. Uneasy over the threat, Clark began to question Dawley's ability to handle the operations. Enemy pressure that had for the most part been exerted against 10 Corps had obviously spread now to include part of the VI Corps sector, yet Dawley seemed unaware of the German concentration on his left flank. Dawley, Clark believed, had either misinterpreted the failure of the 45th Division's thrusts toward Ponte Sele and Eboli or was oblivious to its meaning. To Clark, it was clearly evident that the enemy intended to launch a major attack in that area, and that ade-

[29] Capt. Richard M. Strong, who was largely responsible for regaining contact, was awarded the DSC.

[30] Capt. John T. Kershner, the artillery battery commander who lost his life after exposing himself to enemy fire for three hours in order to adjust his battalion's fires effectively, was posthumously awarded the DSC.

quate measures had to be taken to meet it. Dawley had already committed all his troops in a cordon defense that left none in reserve to meet an emergency, though it is perhaps difficult to see what he might have otherwise done. Concerned because there had been no contingency planning for the possibility that Fifth Army might be driven into the sea, Clark thought of alerting the troops to the need of destroying equipment and supplies in the event of a German breakthrough to the beach. He did not issue the order for fear of the effect it might have on morale.[31]

General Clark made known his concern to General Dawley, and during the afternoon of 12 September Dawley started what was to be a considerable shift of forces into the gap on his left. Middleton was to move all his 45th Division troops north of the Sele to gain and maintain firm contact with the British troops still trying to take Battipaglia. When the 179th Infantry moved from the Sele-Calore plain to join the 157th Infantry north of the river, Walker's 36th Division would therefore have to extend its left flank as far north as the Sele.

This extension gave General Walker a front of about thirty-five miles, an inordinate length for a division, particularly since the 36th, like the 45th, which had only five infantry battalions ashore, was well understrength. The 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, after Altavilla, had only 260 men, and they were badly shaken; and the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, had been sent to the Sorrento peninsula to bolster the Rangers.

With only seven effective infantry battalions and a mission to recapture Altavilla, General Walker could spare few troops to replace the 179th Infantry in the Sele-Calore corridor. General Dawley assured him that an infantry battalion would be enough. Middleton's forces would provide strong protection on the left, and the recapture of Altavilla would secure the right.

Because the 142d Infantry was stretched thin around Albanella in the center of the 36th Division zone and the 141st was stretched equally thin in the Agropoli area in the south, General Walker gave the task of retaking Altavilla to the 143d Infantry. Colonel Martin, the regimental commander, had been moving a battalion into defensive positions to cover the Altavilla area when he was called to the division command post to receive his instructions. He learned that Walker was planning to send his division reserve, the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, to the Sele-Calore corridor to replace the 179th Infantry. Since the 1st Battalion was operating with the Rangers, Martin had only the 3d Battalion with which to retake the Altavilla heights. Because a single battalion had been unable to hold the high ground that morning, Walker borrowed a battalion of the 142d Infantry to augment Martin's attack force. He directed Martin to employ the two battalions in a pincer movement. While one battalion ascended the northern edge of the Altavilla hill mass and moved on the village, the other was to advance along the ridge line from Albanella and attack Hill 424. The depleted 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, might, if necessary, also be used.

Colonel Martin's preparations for the attack on Altavilla consumed most of the afternoon of 12 September. Bridges had to be repaired before trucks could

[31] Clark, *Calculated Risk*, pp. 198–202.

be moved to assembly areas, and a shortage of trucks in the beachhead slowed supply movements. By the time Martin had set up a new command post and conferred with artillery and tank commanders to co-ordinate the fire support, it was too late for daylight reconnaissance. That evening Walker ordered Martin to launch his attack anyway, but Martin, still not ready, did not issue his field order until midnight.

By then the battle that had raged over Battipaglia had turned definitely in favor of the Germans. Enemy troops drove contingents of the 56th Division out of the edge of the village, inflicting heavy casualties and exposing the north flank of VI Corps.

This reverse emphasized what was already apparent. After four days the beachhead was still dangerously shallow, and the number of troops available to man the long front was dangerously small. Despite Vietinghoff's difficulties in building up the German troops in the Salerno area, his force seemed to be growing at a faster rate than that of the Allies.

The instability of the beachhead undoubtedly contributed to General Clark's decision on 12 September to establish his army headquarters ashore. It would indicate to the troops, as no amount of exhortation could, that the commander had no intention of quitting. There were other reasons, of course. A command post on the ground was more convenient than a headquarters aboard ship, and Clark was impatient to get ashore where he could see things for himself and where he could be available to his subordinates at all times.[32] In addition, Admiral Hewitt's flagship, the *Ancon,* which accommodated General House's air staff as well as Clark's headquarters, was conspicuous in the Gulf of Salerno, an inviting and tempting target. When the ground and air staffs moved ashore, Hewitt could transfer his flag to a smaller ship and release the *Ancon* for return to more tranquil waters.

Though Admiral Hewitt had been charged with exercising over-all command of the operation until the ground troops established a secure beachhead, the security of the beachhead was not the controlling criterion when the command shift took place. The beachhead was far from secure on 12 September when General Clark disembarked his headquarters, yet at that time Admiral Hewitt's role became strictly one of support. "The Army having been established on shore and Clark having succeeded to the overall command," Admiral Hewitt later wrote, "it became my duty . . . to comply as best I could with his wishes." [33] Reverting to the command of the naval forces only, Hewitt moved to a smaller ship after dark on 12 September and dispatched the *Ancon* to Algiers. He also released Admiral Vian's carrier force, even though the Montecorvino airfield was still under German fire and unusable for air operations. Some of Vian's Seafire fighters flew to a fighter strip constructed near Paestum and became the first land-based planes available for direct support of the ground operations.

Finding a suitable location for the Fifth Army headquarters was no easy

[32] See Reynolds, *The Curtain Rises,* pp. 282–83.

[33] Ltr, Adm Hewitt to Capt S. W. Roskill, RN, 21 Feb 55, OCMH. See also Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September, 1953); Morris, "Salerno," *Military Review* (March, 1944).



THE ANCIENT TEMPLE OF NEPTUNE, PAESTUM, USED AS A HEADQUARTERS

matter. An obviously good place centrally located was not to be found; indeed, adequate space anywhere in the constricted beachhead was hard to come by. The town of Salerno was receiving increasing numbers of German artillery shells and was too close to the front, while Paestum, the other most likely site, was full of administrative headquarters and supply dumps and was also some distance from the 10 Corps headquarters.

General Clark finally chose Bellelli Palace, a mansion in a large grove of pine trees not far from the intercorps boundary. Here, about a mile southwest of the juncture of the Sele and Calore Rivers, near the Albanella Station—where the railroad and coastal highway come together—the Fifth Army headquarters opened.

To some observers it seemed that General Clark chose to establish his headquarters in the VI Corps area rather than with the 10 Corps because he had less confidence in Dawley than in McCreery.[34] True or not, Clark's choice was natural on other grounds. It was more convenient for an American headquarters with American personnel to be in an American area simply in terms of staff procedures, food habits, and human relations. Also, Clark's command relationship with McCreery could not be the same as it was with Dawley. National

[34] Ltr, Hewitt to Roskill, 21 Feb 55, OCMH.

considerations and the subtleties of coalition warfare dictated that Clark be much more directly concerned with Dawley's operations than with McCreery's. With Dawley he could, if necessary, be brutally frank; with McCreery he had to be tactful and discreet.

The site of the Fifth Army command post proved unfortunate. Telephone communications were difficult to establish and, once installed, not particularly good. Control of both corps thus remained less than satisfactory and always a problem, and partly for this reason the army temporarily left administrative responsibility for the beachhead in the hands of the corps. Only one good lateral road connected the VI and 10 Corps, and that road ran through Battipaglia. Although it was possible to travel from one corps to the other along a series of trails and tracks near the shore, the quickest route was by speedboat.

The main reason why the army headquarters was not well placed was its proximity to the front. Not only was it within range of German artillery, it was menaced by German infantry shortly after setting up. During one of the counterattacks launched against the tobacco factory during the afternoon of 12 September, eight German tanks and about a battalion of infantry temporarily forced the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, out of its positions. For an hour or so, until the Americans counterattacked and regained their positions, the army command post was in the unenviable position of sitting in the direct path of the German attack.

That evening General Clark decided that the location was unsatisfactory—the baronial mansion was too small for the headquarters personnel and too conspicuous a target for air attack. Together with a few of his closest staff members, he drove south on Highway 18 toward Paestum. Just north of the VI Corps headquarters, in a house surrounded by a thick growth of underbrush, General Clark set up his personal command post.[35]

The events of the day were somewhat unnerving to most members of the headquarters.

The German Attack

Still gathering forces to launch a massive attack, Vietinghoff on the morning of 13 September believed he would have enough troops by the following day. He informed General der Panzertruppen Traugott Herr, the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* commander, that he wished to discuss with him on the evening of the 13th how they might go about overwhelming the Allies and destroying the beachhead.

Shortly after his conversation with Herr, sometime during the morning of the 13th, Vietinghoff suddenly discovered the gap between the two Allied corps. With some astonishment he inferred that the Allies had voluntarily "split themselves into two sections." [36]

To Vietinghoff this meant that the Allies were planning to evacuate their beachhead, and he seized eagerly upon that conclusion. The arrival of additional ships off the Salerno beaches he construed as those necessary for the evacuation. The Allied use of smoke near Battipaglia he regarded as a measure designed to cover a retreat. The translation

[35] Clark Diary, 11, 12 Sep 43.

[36] *Tenth A Taetigkeitsbericht, 1c, Tenth A KTB Anl.*

of an intercepted radio message, which seemed to indicate an Allied intention to withdraw, made him certain that the Allies had been unable to withstand the heavy and constant German pressure and were in fact about to abandon their beachhead. He interpreted German propaganda broadcasts claiming another Dunkerque as support for his conviction.

Sensing victory, Vietinghoff wanted all the more to launch a massive attack, no longer to drive the Allies from the beaches but now to prevent their escape. More and more pressure, he urged his subordinates.

Shortly after midday on 13 September, *LXXVI Panzer Corps* complied. Elements of the *29th Panzer Grenadier* and *16th Panzer Divisions* struck from Battipaglia, Eboli, and Altavilla. Not long afterward the corps commander, Herr, reported his troops in pursuit of the enemy.[37]

From the American point of view, the German efforts that day were at first less a concentrated attack than a sharp increase in resistance. Early that morning, when Colonel Martin finally launched his attack to recapture Altavilla with an artillery preparation beginning at 0545, the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, moving northwest along the ridge from Albanella, ran into fierce opposition. The battalion fought all day long, trying vainly to reach the village. The 3d Battalion, 143d, advancing up the other side of the Altavilla heights, had better success and was able to send a company into the village of Altavilla to protect the battalion flank. But when the battalion started toward Hill 424, the men were stopped by German infantrymen effectively using small arms and machine guns and calling in accurate artillery fire.

With the assault battalions bogged down, General Walker released the depleted 1st Battalion, 142d, to Colonel Martin, who tried all afternoon to move the battalion to assault positions. Transportation difficulties and German artillery fire imposed delays. Not until late afternoon was the battalion ready to attack, and then, as the men were passing through a defile, a rain of German artillery shells cut the already battered unit to pieces.

This marked the change in the German tactics from those of defense to a more active response. While the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, still in possession of Altavilla, was making ready to attack Hill 424 without its reinforcements, it received a counterattack at 1700, fifteen minutes before the scheduled jump-off. German troops who had bolstered the defenders of Hill 424 drove the Americans from their line of departure.

As darkness approached, Germans infiltrating around the flanks of both battalions on the high ground threatened to encircle and isolate them. Allied artillery fire might have nullified the threat, but German shelling thwarted all efforts to maintain wire communications to the artillery, and radio reception proved too poor to enable forward observers to obtain accurate artillery support.

His attack collapsing, Martin instructed both battalions to withdraw. This the 3d Battalion, 142d, did without difficulty. The 3d Battalion, 143d, had to wait until darkness, and even then Company K could not make it. Encircled in Altavilla, the company set up a perimeter defense. Not until the following night

[37] Herr to Vietinghoff, 13 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

were the men able to break away and infiltrate by small groups back to American lines.[38]

There was failure at Altavilla, but in the Sele-Calore corridor the situation came close to disaster. Here the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, had arrived during the night of 12 September and relieved the 179th Infantry. Assuming defensive positions two and a half miles northeast of Persano, the battalion set up antitank guns and laid a few hasty mine fields. Any uneasy feelings the men on the low ground of the Sele-Calore flood plain might have had were heightened when reconnaissance patrols reported no contact with friendly units on either flank. On the right the nearest American units were three miles away and engaged at Altavilla. On the left the 157th Infantry on the north bank of the Sele was protecting the Persano crossing two and a half miles to the rear. Though Middleton had informed Dawley that the 157th Infantry covered the positions in the Sele-Calore corridor, he was mistaken, and Walker had accepted Middleton's word without checking. But during the morning of 13 September and through most of the afternoon nothing happened in the corridor except the arrival of an occasional incoming round of artillery.

At the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* command post, Herr's chief of staff was reaching the firm conclusion at 1430 that the Allies were in the process of evacuating the beachhead. German troops, he reported to Vietinghoff, were in close pursuit of the retreating Allied forces. This optimism prompted Vietinghoff to instruct the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* to cease destroying supplies that for the moment could not be moved out of Calabria; the movements of *Tenth Army,* not only out of Calabria but north to the Rome area, were no longer, according to Vietinghoff, subject to the pressure of time. As for the more immediate situation at the beachhead, Vietinghoff ordered the *XIV Panzer Corps* to assemble all available forces for an attack south of Eboli to hasten and disrupt the Allied withdrawal.[39]

About an hour later, more than twenty German tanks, a battalion of infantry, and several towed artillery pieces moved from the Eboli area toward the tobacco factory just north of the Sele River, where the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, occupied defensive positions. As artillery shells began to fall in ever-increasing numbers among the Americans, about half a dozen German tanks struck the American left flank and some fifteen hit the right.

Counteraction was immediate. Tanks and tank destroyers, Cannon Company howtizers and 37-mm. antitank guns rushed forward and opened fire. Division artillery, directed not only by forward observers but by two aerial observers, fired almost continuously.

The German attack rolled on. When two Mark IV tanks and several scout cars suddenly appeared within 150 yards of the battalion positions, some American infantrymen gave way. Not long afterward, when German tanks temporarily

[38] During these attacks and withdrawals, three men in particular distinguished themselves. Cpl. Charles E. Kelly was instrumental in the success of a small group of men who eliminated numerous enemy machine gun positions. Pvt. William J. Crawford knocked out three machine guns after crawling under enemy fire to positions close enough to throw hand grenades. 1st Lt. Arnold L. Bjorklund similarly destroyed several machine gun and mortar positions. All three were later awarded the Medal of Honor.

[39] *Tenth A KTB,* 13 Sep 43.

encircled the battalion headquarters, control vanished. As men of the 1st Battalion straggled back into the positions of the 3d Battalion, 157th, which by then was also engaged, the Germans pushed to the Persano crossing and drove the 1st Battalion from the tobacco factory.

Having uncovered the crossing over the Sele River, the Germans entered the Sele-Calore corridor and struck the left rear of the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry. Other German tanks and infantry had by this time come into the corridor near Ponte Sele and cut around the battalion right. Both German thrusts outflanked the battalion. Improperly deployed, holding poor positions on the low ground, told by the battalion commander to remain under cover, the men stayed hidden while requests went out for artillery fire. Because calls were coming in from Altavilla at the same time and because the artillery was not altogether sure of the battalion's location, the volume of fire did not arrive in the amount necessary to break up the attack. Nor was there much, if any, small arms fire from the men of the battalion.

Continuing to push from both flanks, the Germans overran the American positions. More than 500 officers and men were lost, most of them captured. Only 9 officers and 325 men eventually made their way back to American lines.

By 1715 a sizable force of German tanks and infantry was in the corridor unopposed, and by 1800 enemy artillery was emplaced around Persano. Soon afterward, fifteen German tanks headed straight toward the juncture of the Sele and Calore Rivers. Their advance was accompanied by a display of fireworks—an extensive use of Very pistols, pyrotechnics, and smoke—intended either to create the appearance of larger numbers or to denote the attainment of local objectives.[40] By 1830 German tanks and infantry were at the north bank of the Calore.

Between them and the sea stood only a few Americans, mainly the 189th and 158th Field Artillery Battalions. In positions on a gentle slope overlooking the base of the corridor, the batteries of these battalions opened fire at point-blank range across the Calore and into heavy growth along the north bank of the river.[41] At General Walker's command, a few tank destroyers of the 636th Battalion coming ashore that afternoon hastened to the juncture of the rivers to augment the artillery. Howitzers of other battalions and tanks in the area added their fires where possible.

Immediately behind the artillery pieces, only a few hundred yards away, was the Fifth Army command post. While miscellaneous headquarters troops —cooks, clerks, and drivers—hastily built up a firing line on the south bank of the Calore, others hurriedly moved parts of the command post to the rear. The spear that General Clark had visualized poised at the center of the beachhead had struck.

Finding the situation "extremely critical," facing squarely the possibility "that the American forces may sustain a severe defeat in this area," General Clark arranged to evacuate his headquarters on ten minutes' notice and take a PT boat to the 10 Corps zone, where the condi-

[40] See Morris, "Salerno," *Military Review* (March, 1944).

[41] For a detailed account of the action of the 189th, see Maj. Edward A. Raymond, "As Skirmishers," *Field Artillery Journal*, XXXIV, No. 8 (August, 1944), 507–10.

tions were better for maintaining what he called a "clawhold" on Italian soil.[42]

Events elsewhere intensified everyone's concern. Offshore, a glider bomb severely damaged the British cruiser *Uganda* that afternoon, while two near misses damaged the cruiser *Philadelphia.* Enemy planes bombed and struck two hospital ships, setting one on fire and causing its abandonment.[43]

The port of Salerno, opened on 11 September to receive supplies, had come under increasingly heavy artillery fire on the evening of the next day, and by the afternoon of 13 September, the waterfront installations were so extensively damaged and the enemy shelling was so continuous that it was no longer practical to continue unloading operations. The harbor was closed at 1500 and the men operating the unloading facilities were withdrawn. Almost two weeks would go by before the port could be reopened.

In the 10 Corps area, where units were much extended, the situation around Vietri became critical as contingents of the *Hermann Goering Division* entering the town threatened to split the main body of British troops from the Rangers. Without reserves, General McCreery could only make a hopeful request: could a Ranger battalion counterattack from Maiori to clear small groups of Germans who had infiltrated through Vietri as far forward as the coastal road?[44]

The VI Corps situation near the juncture of the Sele and Calore Rivers, tense throughout the evening of 13 September, was the worst in the beachhead. At 1930 came word from the tank destroyers that a withdrawal might soon be unavoidable. At that moment, General Clark called Generals Dawley, Walker, and Middleton to the VI Corps command post.

As the senior American commanders met, Fifth Army staff officers were preparing plans to evacuate the beachhead should it become necessary. They drew two plans, code-named SEALION and SEATRAIN, one for each corps. Whether the planners were thinking of withdrawing one corps to reinforce the other, as was later claimed, or whether this was the ostensible rather than the real purpose of the planning, General Clark had, in General Dawley's presence and despite Dawley's protest, directed his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, "to take up with the Navy" the task of evacuating the beachhead.[45]

In North Africa, General Eisenhower remained determined if not altogether optimistic. Generals Clark and McCreery had reported the situation as being "unfavorable," he informed the CCS, "tense but not unexpected." The next few days would probably be "critical," but "if the job can be done," he promised, "we will do it."[46]

To Vietinghoff, German success seemed to be within grasp. He was so sure of victory by 1730 that he sent a triumphant telegram to Kesselring. "After a defensive battle lasting four days," he announced, "enemy resistance is collapsing. Tenth Army pursuing on wide front. Heavy

[42] Clark Diary, 13 Sep 43.

[43] Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September, 1953).

[44] Fifth Army (Rear) Msg, 1308, 13 Sep 43, AG 373.

[45] Wood Lecture. (The copy in ABC 384, Post-HUSKY, Section 2, is more specific on this matter.) The quotation is from Ltr, Maj Gen Dawley to Brig Gen Hal C. Pattison, 15 Dec 64, OCMH.

[46] Eisenhower to CCS, 13 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

fighting still in progress near Salerno and Altavilla. Maneuver in process to cut off the retreating enemy from Paestum." [47]

Thirty minutes later, in conference with Herr, the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* commander, Vietinghoff was surprised to hear Herr express doubt over the collapse of the Allied beachhead. Resistance, Herr pointed out, had stiffened, and Allied tanks were countering the German attacks.

Vietinghoff refused to be shaken. It was obvious, he thought, that the Allies would guard their retreat with all possible strength; they might even essay a counterattack. But if they had voluntarily split their forces into two halves, he repeated, it was a sure sign of defeat. Again he urged both corps to throw everything into the battle to insure the complete annihilation of the Fifth Army.

The *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, Balck, meanwhile had received news of the impending Allied collapse with considerable skepticism. He could make out no signs of Allied withdrawal. Though he had orders from Vietinghoff to attack at once with two newly arrived regimental groups from the *15th Panzer* and *3d Panzer Grenadier Divisions,* Balck did not see how he could commit them before the following night, 14 September, at the earliest.[48]

Despite the skepticism of his corps commanders, Vietinghoff remained persuaded of Allied defeat. A message from Kesselring that day reinforced his belief. Radio intercepts at *OB SUED,* Kesselring reported, seemed to confirm that the Allies were in the process of evacuating the beachhead.

"The battle of Salerno," the *Tenth Army* war diarist wrote that evening, "appears to be over." [49]

[47] Vietinghoff to Kesselring, 13 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[48] *XIV Pz C KTB Nr. 5,* 13 Sep 43.

[49] *Tenth A KTB,* 13 Sep 43.

CHAPTER VIII

The Crisis

Allied Build-up

The Fifth Army found itself at the edge of defeat on the evening of 13 September for one basic reason: the army could not build up the beachhead by water transport as fast as the Germans, for all their difficulties, could reinforce their defenders by land. A lack of lift for the immediate follow-up, attributable to the shortage of vessels and landing craft in the Mediterranean, had been recognized well before the event. Now the German threat to split the beachhead made the implications of the shortage a sharp reality.

Although the German thrust into the Sele-Calore corridor brought the crisis to a head, the problem of the build-up was an old concern. On 13 September, the major planning revolved around the question of how to move more troops into the beachhead fast.[1] The 45th Division's 180th Infantry and the initial increments of the British 7th Armoured Division were on their way to the beachhead, but this small number of men promised no real solution of the deficiency and, besides, might arrive too late to have any effect at all.

Three possible solutions were discussed: (1) If General Montgomery's Eighth Army could either tie down the German forces in Calabria or reach the Salerno area early enough, the balance might be redressed. (2) If naval and air support at Salerno could be increased, the growing advantage of the German ground forces might be counterbalanced. (3) If any of the four divisions available to the Fifth Army—the 82d Airborne and 3d Infantry Divisions in Sicily, the 1st Armored and 34th Infantry Divisions in North Africa—could be brought to Salerno quickly by readjusting craft allocations or rescheduling loadings to substitute combat troops for service elements, the German build-up might be offset.

Given the distance of Salerno from Sicily and North Africa and the time required for sea voyages, the most direct action was to spur on the Eighth Army. As early as the second day of the AVALANCHE invasion, the afternoon of 10 September, General Alexander had sent a radio message to General Montgomery, advising him that it was absolutely essential to tie down the Germans in Calabria and prevent them from reaching Salerno; to do so, Alexander made explicit, Montgomery had to maintain firm contact and exert great pressure. In order to emphasize the urgency of the need, Alexander sent his chief of staff to Montgomery's headquarters to explain the situation personally.[2]

[1] Eisenhower to War Dept, 13 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

[2] Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2896.

Before Alexander's message arrived, Montgomery had halted his troops. He had found it necessary, shortly after his amphibious hook to Pizzo on 8 September, to "have a short pause" near Catanzaro because his army was "getting very strung out."[3] The heavily damaged roads were wearing out his vehicles after comparatively brief periods of service, and the rate of build-up in Calabria was too low to provide him with the service and transportation units required to maintain a faster rate of advance. He was stopping, he informed General Clark, and giving his men two days' rest while he built up supplies and replaced his exhausted stocks of Bailey bridging.[4]

Early on 11 September, Alexander's radio message urging a quickened advance finally got through to Montgomery. About the same time, Alexander's chief of staff arrived. Not only did he emphasize Alexander's instruction but he gave Montgomery additional news that provided even greater impetus for Montgomery to move forward rapidly. The news was that the landing of the British 1st Airborne Division at Taranto two days earlier had made it logical to assign Montgomery to take control of that division and any other forces that might be sent to the heel. Though Montgomery still felt that his army "was administratively very stretched," he planned to push ahead out of Calabria at once. But since he was already engaged in securing and opening the port of Crotone, 100 air miles from Reggio, in order to ease his logistical problems, he decided to continue his operations at Crotone. He rationalized his decision by the thought that opening the airfields around Crotone would help the situation at Salerno.

When British troops took Crotone on the 11th, Montomery designated Castrovillari, seventy miles up the peninsula, as his next objective, not only to cover the Crotone area but also as a preliminary for mounting a threat against the Germans at Salerno. By taking what he saw as "considerable administrative risks," he thought he could have troops at Castrovillari in four days, by 15 September. From Castrovillari, it was about seventy-five miles to Paestum; it was the same distance to Taranto.

General Montgomery accepted responsibility for Taranto on 13 September, though he was still far from it. By controlling Taranto, he could and did make adjustments in ship allocations to accelerate the movement of badly needed supplies to Crotone. This would, he thought, help speed an advance toward Salerno.

These activities did nothing to ease the critical situation in the Salerno beachhead on 13 September. Though leading elements of the Eighth Army were operating in advance of Montgomery's main body of troops, they were too far from Salerno to have any effect on the battle during the crucial days. Timely Eighth Army help for Fifth Army had to be written off.

To increase naval support in the hope of offsetting the German build-up at the beachhead, Admiral Cunningham had already on the 11th dispatched from Malta two cruisers, the *Aurora* and the *Penelope,* to replace damaged ships. When Admiral Hewitt asked whether heavier naval forces could be made avail-

[3] Except as otherwise noted, this and the following paragraphs are based on Montgomery, *El Alamein to the River Sangro,* pp. 123ff.

[4] Thrasher Monograph. See also Reynolds, *The Curtain Rises,* pp. 339–40.

able, Cunningham ordered the battleships *Valiant* and *Warspite* from Malta to Salerno and informed Hewitt he would send the battleships *Nelson* and *Rodney* to the Gulf of Salerno later if Hewitt wished them. Cunningham also ordered three cruisers to sail at top speed to Tripoli to pick up British replacements and rush them to the beachhead. But no immediate results could be expected from these efforts either. It would take the *Valiant* and *Warspite* two days to arrive in the Gulf of Salerno and not until then, 15 September, would they get improvised gunfire observation parties ashore and add the fire of their guns to the shore bombardment.[5]

More air support was possible, but not immediately. General Eisenhower requested permission from the Combined Chiefs of Staff to retain temporarily three squadrons of Wellington bombers because of the "critical nature of the AVALANCHE situation." [6] He also ordered the strategic air force to cease for the moment its long-range hammering of railroads, dumps, and communications in the distant rear of the enemy and concentrate instead on targets closer to the ground forces.

Eisenhower's instructions to the heavy bombers were necessary not only because of the German threat to the beachhead but also because the air cover arrangements at Salerno had worked out less satisfactorily than had been hoped. By retaining control of the high ground near Battipaglia and keeping the Montecorvino airfield under artillery fire, the Germans had thwarted Allied plans to have land-based fighters operating from the beachhead by 10 September. Since the airfield was unusable, the escort carriers, which were prepared to provide naval air support for only two days, had remained in the Gulf of Salerno. The stopgap landing strip that General Clark had ordered Dawley to construct near Paestum was ready at dawn of the 12th, but no aircraft arrived until twenty-six naval planes flew ashore late that afternoon and set up shop.[7] By order of General House's XII Air Support Command, two planes of the 111th Reconnaissance Squadron landed at the Paestum airstrip on the morning of 13 September. But after executing one air tactical mission, the pilots were dispatched on a vital errand to Sicily.[8] Thus, except for the few naval planes based ashore, no land-based aircraft were immediately available on beachhead airfields to help counter the German threat.

The third possible solution to increase the build-up lay with the commanders and logisticians who were continuing their efforts to get more vessels to transport available men and matériel to Salerno. The CCS granted General Eisenhower permission to retain and employ in support of the beachhead for one month eighteen LST's that were en route to India and happened to be at Oran. Eisenhower thought of using these ships to move at least part of the 34th Division from North Africa or as much of the 3d Division as possible from Sicily

[5] See Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, ch. 1.

[6] Memo, Reps of COS for CCS, 13 Sep 43, ABC 384, Sec 2.

[7] Clark to Alexander, 14 Sep 43, AG 270.2; VI Corps AAR, Sep 43; Cunningham *Despatch*, p. 2187.

[8] 10 Corps Invasion of the Italian Mainland, Summary of Operations Carried Out by British Troops Under Command, Fifth U.S. Army, n.d. (draft copy), OCMH. See also AFHQ G–3 Div Opns 46/5, Italian Military Mission 1, photostats, OCMH.



U.S. EQUIPMENT BURNING ON THE BEACH AT SALERNO

to Salerno.[9] But neither course of action promised an immediate remedy because of the time required for the sea voyage. Moving the 1st Armored Division from North Africa would be even more complicated and time consuming because of the equipment involved.

General Alexander found a quicker way of getting the 3d Division to Italy. He seized upon some of the ships and landing craft that had moved the 10 Corps in the invasion. Loadings on these vessels had generally been heavier than expected, and ship losses to enemy action lighter. Instead of using these bottoms as originally intended to carry service troops to Salerno, Alexander diverted them to the task of transporting the 3d Division. He sent word to General Patton in Sicily during the evening of 13 September to alert the 3d Division, and General Truscott, the division commander, began to move his troops to a staging area. The transfer of equipment and about 2,000 men from the 1st and 9th Divisions, which were scheduled to sail for England, brought the 3d Division to full strength. After instructing his staff on the final details of the move and talking briefly with General Patton, Truscott boarded a vessel for Salerno to confer with General Clark on how best to employ the division in the beachhead.[10]

Even the movement of the 3d Division was no immediate solution to the prob-

[9] CinC Mtgs, Salmon Files, OCMH. See also Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2896.

[10] Alexander to Clark, 13 Sep 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI; Lucian K. Truscott, *Command Missions* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1954), p. 249.

lem of the Fifth Army build-up. It would take several days to get the division to Italy, and the crisis at Salerno required immediate action.

The only hope for quick help appeared to rest with the 82d Airborne Division. Because it had prepared to drop near Rome on the day before the invasion, the division was primed for combat. When the Rome operation was scratched and Eisenhower made the division available for AVALANCHE, Alexander had notified Clark—the night before the Salerno landings—and requested information on how Clark wished to use the airborne troops.[11]

Clark was still thinking regretfully of the early plan to drop the 82d near Capua in order to block the Volturno River bridges, the plan canceled by the contemplated operation at Rome. But by the second day of the invasion, Clark deemed a drop near Capua inadvisable until the situation at the beachhead became clearer. More interesting was the possibility of using the division to help capture the port of Naples. Since the 10 Corps would have to attack through the passes north of Salerno, Clark discussed using airborne troops to help secure passage through the Sorrento barrier, perhaps by an amphibious hook around Sorrento and a landing over the beaches near Torre Annunziata and Castellammare on the northern shore of the peninsula. He asked General Ridgway to prepare plans for possible operations in this context. Clark's visit to the 10 Corps area on the afternoon of the 10th apparently strengthened his idea, for he sent Ridgway some of the British standing operating procedures.[12]

Communications difficulties—because of the distances involved and the dispersal of headquarters—were hampering the dialogue between Alexander and Clark. Still without a reply on the evening of 10 September to his question of how Clark wanted to use the 82d, Alexander sent another message. This time he suggested transporting the airborne troops to Salerno by water. Unfortunately, Alexander added, since only nine LCI (L)'s were available, they could carry but part of the division and they could transport men only, no heavy equipment.[13] These craft, having come from Montgomery's BAYTOWN operation, were already at Licata, Sicily, where they had arrived on the evening of 9 September.[14]

The landing craft remained there unused until 11 September, when General Clark requested that they bring as much of the airborne division to Salerno as possible.[15] Although the 325th Glider Infantry began embarking at once, the regiment would not sail until 15 September—probably because of a continuing possibility that the troops might be moved into the beachhead or elsewhere

[11] Alexander to Clark, 2215, 8 Sep 43 (received 0520, 10 Sep 43), and 1330, 9 Sep 43 (received 2039, 9 Sep 43), both in Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[12] Clark to Alexander, 1000, 10 Sep 43, and Clark to Ridgway, 1630, 10 Sep 43, both in Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[13] Alexander to Clark, 1825, 10 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[14] Alexander to Patton, 9 Sep 43, and 15th AGp Msg, 10 Sep 43, both in 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

[15] Clark to Alexander, 0108, 11 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl. General Clark later said (*Calculated Risk*, page 196) that he learned suddenly on the afternoon of 11 September that the 82d Airborne Division was available to him. Either his memory was faulty or his staff officers failed to inform him of the messages exchanged on the subject.

by glider—and would not arrive at the beachhead until late that night.[16]

But on the afternoon of 11 September Alexander, who still had received no definite word from Clark, tried again to find out how Clark wished to employ the 82d Airborne Division. "I want to make it clear," he informed Clark, "that you may use [it] . . . in any manner you deem advisable"—as infantry reinforcement of the ground troops, moving by sea or air or in a combined airborne-seaborne operation.[17] Shortly thereafter Alexander received a message from Clark that Clark had dispatched thirteen hours before Alexander had sent his. Clark wanted two airborne operations executed: a battalion dropped near Avellino, north of Salerno, to block roads along which German reinforcements might move against the 10 Corps; and a regiment dropped somewhere northeast of Naples to disorganize enemy movements and communications and later to assist the 10 Corps advance to the north. General Clark requested that both missions be launched as early as possible. If arrangements could not be completed in time to get the troops off by the night of 11 September, the following night would be acceptable.[18]

Clark's message to Alexander arrived so late on the 11th that the suggested operations were impractical for the 11th and doubtful for the following night, even though the 82d Airborne Division prepared at once to execute them.[19] On the morning of the 12th, General Clark requested postponement of the operations. Since the 10 Corps, he reasoned, would be unable to break out of the Salerno beachhead as early as he had previously hoped, the night of either 13 or 14 September might be better for the airborne drops.[20]

Later on 12 September, the Fifth Army staff analyzed the feasibility of reinforcement by airborne troops dropped into the beachhead behind friendly lines. Although a glider strip near Paestum was scheduled for completion by the night of 13 September, the chance that it might not be finished in time—even if sufficient gliders could be assembled, which was far from certain—made a parachute drop the only possibility.[21]

General Clark made his final decision on airborne reinforcement during the morning of 13 September. Whether it was his own idea or whether he took the suggestion of a subordinate, he acted even before the dramatic German thrust down the Sele-Calore corridor late in the day.[22] To General Alexander, General Clark sent a message of information and to the 82d Airborne Division commander, General Ridgway, an order.

The fighting had taken a turn for the worse, Clark told Ridgway. "I want you to accept this letter as an order," he went on. "I realize the time normally needed

[16] 325th Glider Inf AAR, Sep 43; Alexander to Clark, 2325, 11 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[17] Alexander to Clark, 1438, 11 Sep 43 (received morning, 12 Sep 43), Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[18] Clark to Alexander, 0108, 11 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[19] Alexander to Clark, 2325, 11 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[20] Clark to Alexander, 1202, 12 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[21] Warren, Airborne Missions in the Mediterranean (USAF Historical Studies, 74); Fifth Army (Rear) Msg, 1308, 13 Sep 43, AG 373.

[22] Disturbed over thinning his right flank to strengthen the left flank of the VI Corps, General Walker had suggested to General Dawley, the corps commander, that a regiment of the 82d Airborne Division be dropped into the beachhead south of Paestum on the evening of 13 September. 36th Div AAR, Sep 43.

to prepare for a drop, but . . . I want you to make a drop within our lines on the beachhead and I want you to make it tonight. This is a must." He entrusted the letter to the pilot of a reconnaissance plane that had landed at the Paestum airstrip, and the pilot flew it to Ridgway in Sicily. Not long afterward Ridgway replied that he could make the drop, and by evening the 504th Parachute Infantry (less its 3d Battalion, which went to Licata for attachment to the 325th Glider Infantry and eventual water movement to Salerno) was embarking on planes at various airfields in Sicily for flight to the beachhead.[23]

While the parachute troops were boarding their planes, Admiral Hewitt was making preparations, in compliance with General Clark's request, to withdraw the ground troops from the beachhead if Clark should give the order. Regarding Clark's request as a firm warning order for a course of action already decided upon rather than as an alert for a possible contingency, Hewitt voiced his objection to the Fifth Army headquarters. He opposed the withdrawal on the ground that it was technically impractical. Beaching a loaded landing craft and retracting it after it was unloaded and lightened, he pointed out, was quite different from beaching an empty craft and retracting it when it was full.

Hewitt nevertheless proceeded with plans to meet Clark's request. Since he would need the *Ancon,* which he had already released for return to Algiers, he radioed the ship to reverse course for Palermo, Sicily, there to await a possible recall to the Salerno assault area. But because it might be necessary to re-embark the Fifth Army staff before the *Ancon* returned, Hewitt called Admiral G. N. Oliver to a conference. Oliver's flagship, the *Hilary,* he reasoned, might take at least part of the army headquarters aboard.[24]

Admiral Oliver went by barge to Hewitt's flagship, the *Biscayne,* where he found, as he remembered later, an atmosphere of "intense gloom." Hewitt informed him that Clark wanted two emergency plans prepared immediately, one to withdraw 10 Corps and disembark it again across the VI Corps beaches; the other, the more likely, to withdraw VI Corps for disembarkation across the 10 Corps beaches. Could Oliver find room on the *Hilary* for Clark and his staff should the evacuation be ordered?

Oliver protested. Re-embarking heavily engaged troops from a rather shallow beachhead, he said, followed by disembarkation was "simply not on, quite apart from other considerations." He thought it would be "suicidal" to shorten the front and allow enemy artillery "to rake the beaches" and destroy the immense amount of ammunition and supplies ashore. Had General McCreery been consulted, he wanted to know. No one could say for sure.

Returning to his ship, Oliver personally got in touch with McCreery and informed him of the possibility of evacuation. McCreery, according to Oliver's recollection, was furious. He knew nothing of the plan, but he would go to army headquarters and protest it. Oliver passed this word along to Admiral

[23] Clark, *Calculated Risk,* pp. 198–99; 504th Prcht Inf AAR, Sep 43.

[24] Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September, 1953).

Cunningham in the hope of enlisting additional support for his position.[25]

Admiral Hewitt recalled no gloom on the *Biscayne*—"except for our thorough dissatisfaction with the withdrawal idea" —and although he took note of Oliver's bitter opposition, he began the preliminary arrangements necessary for a possible withdrawal from the VI Corps beaches. Halting unloading operations in that area, he placed ships and landing craft on a half-hour alert for movement seaward beyond the range of shore artillery. Meanwhile, until General Clark actually ordered the evacuation, the guns on the ships continued to pound German installations and troop concentrations.[26]

Stand-off

On the evening of 13 September, near the juncture of the Sele and Calore Rivers, less than five miles from the shore line and a stone's throw from coastal Highway 18 and the Fifth Army headquarters, men of the 158th and 189th Field Artillery Battalions, supported by several tanks and tank destroyers and a few miscellaneous troops, were trying to hold the most critical portion of the VI Corps front. Against the company of German tanks and the battalion of German infantry that had come roaring down the Sele-Calore corridor, the Americans fired a total of 3,650 artillery rounds in about four hours. Arriving during the height of the action, a battery of the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion added 300 rounds to the fire. This, together with the shells of the tanks and tank destroyers and the resistance of the improvised infantry firing line built up at the base of the corridor, stopped the German attack. With no immediate reinforcement available, the Germans pulled back toward Persano at nightfall.

The situation remained tense, however, as the senior American commanders assembled at the VI Corps command post. It was the dearth of ground troops to counter the German threat as much as the threat itself that disturbed them. The 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, almost destroyed at Altavilla, had now been reduced to sixty men. The 2d Battalion, 143d, which had been placed in the Sele-Calore corridor, had ceased to exist as a unit. The 3d Battalions of both the 142d Infantry and the 143d Infantry had incurred heavy losses around Altavilla. The 1st Battalion, 157th, had been hard hit at the tobacco factory. The commanders had little choice but to try to shorten the front by pulling their troops back to a line where they might hope to make a last-ditch stand.

General Dawley issued the orders, and units began to shift. The 45th Division refused its right flank by moving parts of the 157th and 179th Infantry Regiments back along the Sele. The 1st Battalion, 179th, moved to the base of the Sele-Calore corridor to strengthen the line of artillery and miscellaneous troops holding at the juncture of the rivers. In the center of the corps zone the 36th Division withdrew about two miles to the La Cosa Creek, the 1st Battalion, 141st, coming up from the right flank to Monte Soprano and the 2d Battalion, 141st, moving from the corps left flank to bolster the area immediately south of the Sele River and east of Highway 18. The

[25] Admiral Oliver, Some Notes on the Project to Shorten the Front at Salerno, September 1943, for Captain Roskill, RN, 20 Jan 55, OCMH.

[26] Ltr, Hewitt to Roskill, 20 Jan 55, OCMH; Hewitt, "The Allied Navies at Salerno," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September, 1953).

extreme right flank, virtually stripped of infantry, was entrusted to a battalion of the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment. The left flank of the corps, on mosquito-ridden, swampy ground, was held by the 3d Battalion of the 141st, alongside the engineer battalion still at Bivio Cioffi. The natural features of the positions selected for all-out defense were not particularly strong, but nothing better was available.

Because the infantry battalions had been shuffled and intermingled, because the front was inordinately long for the number of troops manning it, and perhaps partially because his regimental commanders were tired, General Walker divided his division area into three defensive sectors and placed a brigadier general in command of each. Brig. Gen. William H. Wilbur, attached from Fifth Army headquarters, took command of the forces on the left—part of the 143d Infantry, a battalion of engineers, and a company each of tank destroyers and tanks. General O'Daniel, also attached from Fifth Army, took command of the center—the 2d Battalion and two rifle companies of the 141st, plus elements of the 3d Battalion, 142d. Brig. Gen. Otto F. Lange, the assistant division commander, took command of the forces on the right—mostly tank, tank destroyer, and engineer units.[27] General Walker kept the remaining elements of the three infantry battalions withdrawn from Altavilla in division reserve. The new defensive line, he directed, was to be dug in, wired in, mined, and held at all costs. The division was to "fight it out on this position."[28]

Desperate as the situation seemed, help was on the way. When General Ridgway had received General Clark's request for parachute troops to be sent into the beachhead, his first thought was to prevent a recurrence of the tragic incident at Sicily two months earlier, when antiaircraft guns of the invasion fleet and of the ground troops had shot down air transports.[29] "Vitally important," Ridgway had replied to Clark's message, "that all ground and naval forces . . . be directed to hold fire tonight. Rigid control of antiaircraft fire is absolutely essential for success."[30] Calling Hewitt and Dawley to inform them of the airborne operation, Clark directed that from 2100 on 13 September until further notice all antiaircraft guns in the Salerno area were to be silenced, all barrage balloons lowered to the ground. To make doubly sure of safety for the paratroopers, Clark sent staff officers to antiaircraft batteries in the beachhead to make certain that the order had been transmitted and was understood.

Only by using the staging and loading plans prepared for the drop at Capua could the airborne troops depart Sicily on such short notice. Because there was no time even to establish a safety corridor for the transport planes, the aircraft followed the Italian coast line to a drop zone about five miles north of Agropoli, an area of flat land about 1,200 yards long and 800 yards wide lying between the sea and the coastal highway.[31]

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[27] When General Lange was relieved on the following day because of physical exhaustion, no one replaced him as sector commander on the right. General Wilbur replaced Lange as the assistant division commander.

[28] 36th Div AAR, Sep 43.

[29] See Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, ch. IX.

[30] Clark, *Calculated Risk*, p. 203.

[31] Warren, Airborne Missions in the Mediterranean (USAF Historical Studies, 74).

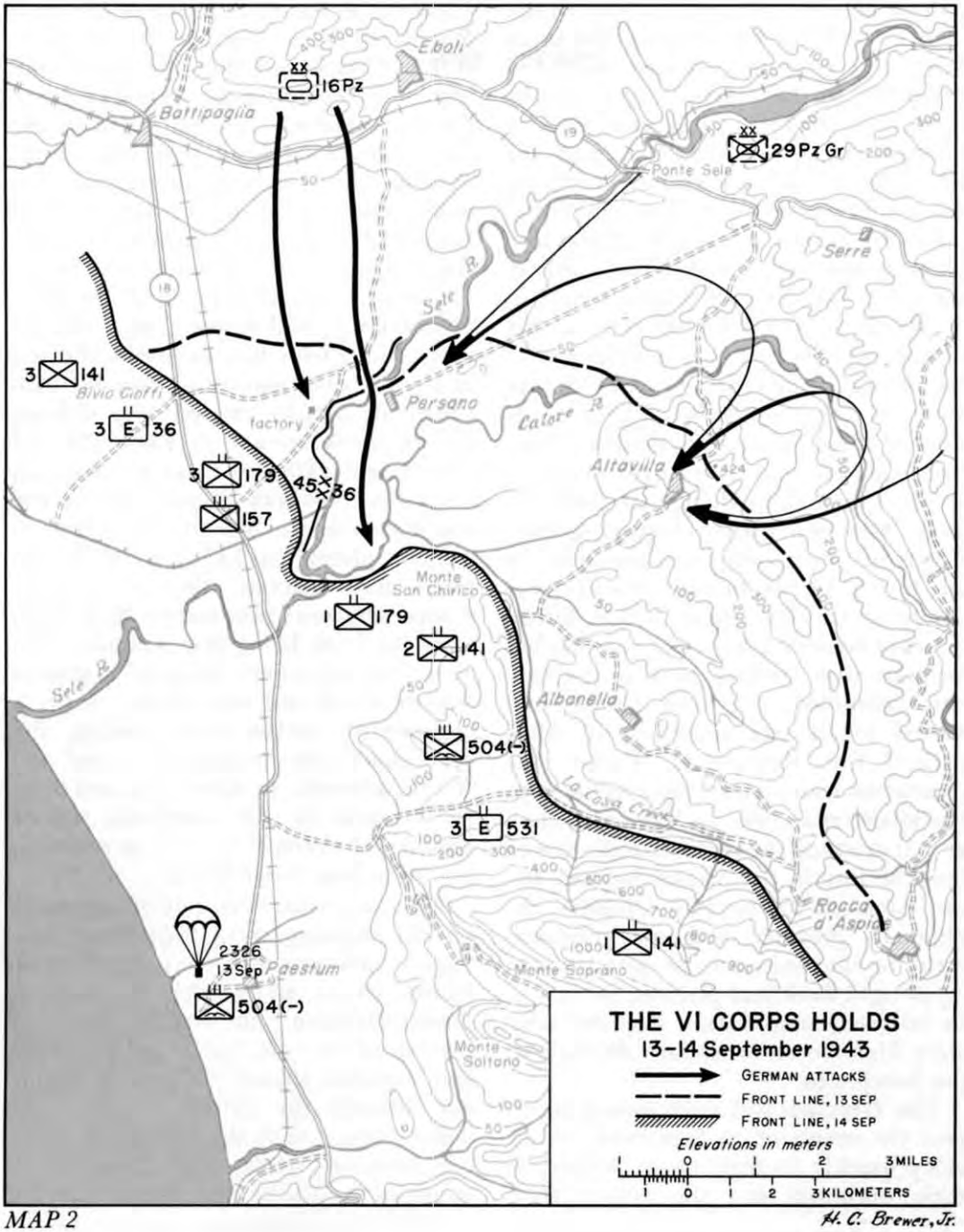
A pathfinder group set up radar equipment to lead the flights toward the jump field, where ground troops furnished flares for further identification of the drop zone. At 2326, 13 September, four minutes ahead of schedule, men of the 2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, led the regiment in by jumping from thirty-five planes at a height of 800 feet. Most troops landed within 200 yards of the jump zone and all within a mile of it. (*Map 2*) Forty-one aircraft starting from Sicily several hours late because of mechanical difficulties dropped troops about 0130, 14 September. The pilots of some of these planes were unable to find the drop zone, and one company of paratroopers came to earth eight to ten miles away. Fourteen planes disgorging their troops still later completed the drop. In all, ninety planes brought about 1,300 troops to the beachhead within fifteen hours of General Clark's request. Within an hour after landing, most of the men had assembled, got into trucks, and moved to an area southwest of Albanella.[32] Col. Reuben H. Tucker, the regimental commander, reported to corps headquarters at 0300, 14 September. Later that morning the two battalions moved into the line in the Monte Soprano sector. Attached to the 36th Division, the regiment provided welcome reinforcement to the units on the division and corps right flank and perhaps, in view of its relatively small size, a disproportionately high boost to morale throughout the beachhead.

The Germans had every reason to expect the events of 13 September to develop quickly in their favor. Adding to their optimism was the arrival from Calabria of the main body of the *26th Panzer Division*. Because British pressure had slackened after the Pizzo landings on 8 September to the point where contact vanished, the rear guard of the *26th Panzer Division* had had ample time to destroy culverts along the roads and to demolish all the bridges south of Castrovillari by 12 September. While the rear guard set up roadblocks in the Lagonegro area near Sapri, at the head of the Gulf of Policastro, and awaited new contact with British troops, the rest of the division, hampered only by occasional air attacks, moved over difficult mountainous terrain to Eboli. In the process, the *26th* had incurred only 113 casualties, of whom 30 were killed, and was not obliged to destroy any of its antiaircraft pieces, trucks, or other equipment and weapons. Yet the arriving troops that went into reserve near Eboli were far from being the complete division. The division's armored regiment was detached and near Rome, while a regimental combat team forming the rear guard was waiting to retard the British advance. In effect, the *26th Panzer Division* at the beachhead was of regimental strength, but it was available for immediate commitment.

This was what Vietinghoff suggested on the morning of 14 September, during a conference with Herr, the *LXXIV Panzer Corps* commander. If the *26th Panzer Division* took over the northern portion of the *16th Panzer Division* area and attacked toward Salerno, it might cut through the British defenses and make contact with the *Hermann Goering Division,* which was scheduled to attack in the Vietri area toward Salerno.

While the conference was in session, a message from the *XIV Panzer Corps*

[32] 504th Prcht Inf AAR, Sep 43. Seventy-three men were injured in the jump.



MAP 2

H. C. Brewer, Jr.

arrived. Balck, the corps commander, reported that the British were fighting desperately to regain the heights immediately west of Salerno in the Vietri area. He could discern no indications of a withdrawal on the part of the Allies. It was the same in the area south of Salerno, between Salerno and Battipaglia, where no large-scale German attack would be feasible unless the troops made more progress and caused more confusion among the Allied defenses in the Sele area.

Despite the pessimistic but more realistic views of his subordinate commanders, Vietinghoff urged both Balck and Herr to attack with all their resources.[33]

The German pressure in the 10 Corps area that day concentrated at first against the town of Salerno. German artillery firing at an increased tempo opened an attack from the Vietri area, which gave General McCreery, as he later said, several anxious moments. The 46th Division, dug in on the hills around Salerno, had committed every unit in defense. When the Germans then shifted their attack to the Battipaglia area, the 56th Division fought tenaciously on open ground in full view of the enemy. At the end of the day, the situation remained about the same. The British had held. With perhaps some studied nonchalance, McCreery summed up the activities: "Nothing of interest to report during daylight." [34]

In the VI Corps sector on 14 September, the Germans attacked at 0800, when eight tanks and a battalion of infantry, elements of the *16th Panzer* and *29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions,* moved out of the mist covering the Sele River south of the tobacco factory. Because of the American reorganization the night before, the German advance unwittingly paralleled the front of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry. Supported by effective fires from artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers, the infantry blasted the Germans with flanking fire. Seven German tanks were destroyed almost at once, the eighth was immobilized. Not long afterward, the German infantry pulled back.

In midmorning, closer to the river, a German company probed toward the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, while at least six tanks and a small infantry unit struck the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, protecting the coastal highway. The Americans refused to budge. Effective supporting fires, including the power of naval guns, helped stop the attack.

Though the Germans launched at least two other attacks against the 45th Division in the early afternoon, the steam had gone. Nothing more than sporadic German artillery fire fell in the area during the remainder of the day.

Against the 36th Division the pattern was similar. When a company of German infantry and tanks tried to cross the Calore River, American fires repelled the attack. A heavy volume of artillery and naval fire discouraged probes during the early afternoon. By the end of the day, the VI Corps was in firm command of its front and could claim to have knocked out almost thirty German tanks.[35]

[33] *Besprechung mit General Herr,* 0800, 14 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[34] 10 Corps Sitrep, 1700, 14 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[35] See VI Corps G–3 Rpt 6, 1700, 15 Sep 43.

On the beaches that day all unloading had ceased. Men working the supply system joined combat troops and helped them improve their defenses, wiring in and mining likely approach routes, digging for cover, erecting rock parapets for shelter. From offshore, naval guns blasted the Germans with particularly good results along the Battipaglia-Eboli road. While naval vessels placed 100 rounds on Altavilla alone, heavy bombers, diverted to work with the tactical planes, struck Battipaglia and Eboli and damaged the road network around the beachhead perimeter. A total of 187 B–25's, 166 B–26's, and 170 B–17's operated over the Salerno plain that day, and the liberal use the Germans made of smoke to screen their positions and movements indicated the effectiveness of the bombings. Six planes of the 111th Reconnaissance Squadron landed at the Paestum airstrip and performed several missions before returning to Sicily just before nightfall. The air cover for the whole area was more effective, even though German planes continued to harass the vessels in the gulf; one bomb struck a Liberty ship, the *Bushrod Washington,* and an LCT alongside it and destroyed both.[36]

General Clark toured the front on 14 September to encourage the troops to hold, taking particular pains to show himself in the Sele-Calore sector.[37] General Alexander made his first visit to the beachhead that day and found the Allied defense impressive. Though he requested that an additional 1,500 British infantry replacements be rushed to 10 Corps from North Africa, he felt that the crisis had passed.[38]

By the evening of 14 September, plans to evacuate the beachhead were no longer even being considered. The line would be held at all costs. There would be no retreat.[39]

There was no doubt that the situation was much improved. The seam between 10 and VI Corps southeast of Battipaglia was solidly knit. Perhaps more important, the British 7th Armoured Division started to come ashore in the 10 Corps area. The 180th Infantry, the last regiment of the 45th Division, arrived in the beachhead and assembled in army reserve near Monte Soprano, indicating that General Clark could at last afford the luxury of an army reserve. The night of the 14th when 125 planes dropped about 2,100 men of the 505th Parachute Infantry into the beachhead south of Paestum, the men jumped successfully, assembled quickly, and moved by truck to positions on the southern flank near Agropoli. "I have every confidence that we will come out all right," General Eisenhower informed the CCS that night, even though he cautiously admitted the possibility of a setback.[40]

Vietinghoff, despite all the indications to the contrary on 14 September, was loath to abandon his belief that Fifth Army was evacuating the beachhead. Yet as reports from the *LXXVI* and *XIV Panzer Corps* related the difficulties their troops were having in deploying under

[36] WNTF Daily Rpt 4, 15 Sep 43, AG 540; Clark to Alexander, 14 Sep 43, AG 373.

[37] Thrasher Monograph, pp. 18–19; Truscott, *Command Missions,* p. 250. General Clark was later awarded the DSC for his conspicuous bravery.

[38] Alexander *Despatch,* pp. 2896–97.

[39] See 45th Div AAR, Sep 43.

[40] Eisenhower to CCS, 14 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

naval and air bombardment, he had to recognize the growing doubt of success.[41]

Kesselring on 14 September outlined the course he wished the *Tenth Army* to pursue. Regardless of whether Vietinghoff dislodged the Fifth Army, he was to withdraw gradually to the vicinity of Rome in accordance with previous plans. But because of the political and military advantages to be gained, he urged Vietinghoff first to make a final effort to drive Fifth Army into the sea. As reinforcement, Kesselring directed the *1st Parachute Division,* still near Foggia in Apulia, to release a regiment to the Salerno forces.[42]

The Avellino Mission

While a regiment of the *1st Parachute Division* rushed overland toward Salerno during the night of 14 September, the Allies were launching a daring airborne operation designed to assist the 10 Corps, which had been bearing the brunt of the German attacks. American paratroopers of the 2d Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry, were to drop far behind the German front to harass lines of communication and disrupt the movement of reinforcements from the north, thus helping to stabilize the British sector of the beachhead.[43]

Members of the Fifth Army staff had long been searching for an appropriate mission for this separate unit, commanded by Lt. Col. Doyle R. Yardley and sometimes called the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion. A drop near Avellino, twenty miles north of Salerno, seemed suitable. General Clark had originally requested the operation for the night of 12 September, but insufficient time for preparation had prevented its execution. On the morning of 13 September, when General Clark had informed General Alexander of his request to General Ridgway for an airborne drop into the beachhead near Paestum, he had also asked for the Avellino operation. If not enough paratroopers or planes were available for both operations, he asked Alexander to "please give priority to Avellino." [44] The mission was scheduled for the following night.

The drop zone selected was a crossroads about three miles southeast of Avellino. After harrying the Germans for five days, the paratroopers were to withdraw to Allied lines by infiltration unless Fifth Army troops had by then made contact with them. If possible, the battalion was to attack Avellino in order to disrupt traffic on the roads through the town.[45]

Despite the postponement of the operation, haste marked the preparations.[46] The battalion headquarters could obtain no intelligence information of the area. Even aerial photographs and maps became available only in midafternoon of 14 September. About that time, each officer received one map of 1/50,000 scale, too large for company and platoon leaders, showing only Avellino and its immediate environs. Since the battalion had to leave Licata, Sicily, where it was stationed, for Comiso, Sicily, where it was to emplane at 1700, commanders

[41] See *LXXVI Pz C* Rpt to *Tenth A,* 15 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[42] Kesselring Order, 14 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*; MS # R-85 (Mavrogordato), OCMH.

[43] For the motivation involved, see Truscott, *Command Missions,* p. 252.

[44] Clark to Alexander, 13 Sep 43, Fifth Army G-3 Jnl.

[45] 509th Prcht Inf Bn AAR, Sep 43.

[46] Wood Lecture.

had less than two hours to study their maps, draw detailed plans, and move their troops to the airfield. The dispersal of aircraft at Comiso made it impossible to have even a short meeting of key personnel.

About forty planes carried the 600 men of the battalion. Navigational errors and ineffectiveness of radar and Aldis lamps carried by the pathfinder group scattered the air transports, while the high jump altitude of 2,000 feet further dispersed the parachutists. Jumping around midnight, the troops in eleven planes came to earth ten miles from the drop zone; those in twelve other aircraft landed between eight and twenty-five miles away; and two planeloads were still unaccounted for a month later. Only fifteen air transports placed troops within four or five miles of the target.

The broken terrain in the Avellino area made it impossible for the scattered troops to concentrate. Thick woods and vineyards made it difficult even for those who landed in the same valley to get together. Most of the equipment, including mortars and bazookas, was lost or became hopelessly entangled in treetops.

Briefed to expect the speedy arrival of the Fifth Army, the paratroopers generally coalesced into small groups of five to twenty men and tried to avoid detection. Lurking in the hills, they mounted small raids on supply trains, truck convoys, and isolated outposts.[47]

No word of the paratroopers reached Fifth Army headquarters for several days and the battalion was presumed lost. But eventually, in small groups, more than 400 men trickled back.[48] Too small a force and too dispersed to be more than a minor nuisance to the Germans, the battalion had no effect on the battle of the beachhead.[49]

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[47] 509th Prcht Inf Bn AAR, Sep 43.

[48] 1st Lt. William C. Kellogg was awarded the DSC for extraordinary heroism during the period 14–28 September.

[49] The battalion listed the following reasons for the ineffectiveness of the operation: (1) insufficient time was allowed for briefing and equipping the troops; (2) ordered to carry five days of rations and five days of ammunition, the troops were physically overburdened; (3) no radio procedures or schedules were worked out to insure communication, nor was there an opportunity to secure special radio equipment to maintain contact with the Fifth Army. 509th Prcht Inf Bn AAR, Sep 43.

CHAPTER IX

The End of the Battle

The Crisis Resolved

Early on 15 September, Vietinghoff described to Kesselring, who was visiting the *Tenth Army* headquarters, how he still hoped to destroy the Allied beachhead: the *26th Panzer Division* would attack northwestward from Battipaglia to Salerno while the *Hermann Goering Division* attacked from the vicinity of Vietri south to Salerno; the juncture of the divisions would mark the first step toward annihilation of the Allied troops. After approving the plan, Kesselring remarked that the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* seemed to be exhibiting a tendency to revert to positional warfare. "This must not happen," he said. If attacks on the level ground of the Salerno plain were impractical because of Allied naval fire and air bombardment, perhaps the corps could attack in the hills around Albanella or even farther south. Vietinghoff was embarrassed. His engineers had carried out extensive demolitions in the Albanella area for defensive purposes and this made offensive operations virtually impossible.[1]

Immediately afterward, Vietinghoff conferred with Herr on the possible chance that the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* could nevertheless attack near Albanella. Could the parachute regiment en route from Apulia be used? Herr thought not. He was discouraged. Troop and supply movements during daylight hours, he pointed out, were becoming more difficult because of Allied air operations. And the Allied naval fire made Herr doubt that he could ever reach the coast.[2]

The strong pressure that the Germans continued to exert during much of 15 September diminished by the end of the day to the point where the VI Corps G–3 could describe the action as "minor contacts and engagements." [3] That evening General Clark congratulated his troops: ". . . our beachhead is secure. . . . and we are here to stay."[4] In North Africa, General Eisenhower had decided that morning to send a regiment of the 34th Division to Salerno, but had changed his mind that afternoon upon the encouraging news from the beachhead. There was some talk of sending all or part of the division to Bari or Brindisi on the Italian east coast to work with the British Eighth Army, but his final decision was to move the entire division to the Fifth Army beaches, as originally scheduled.[5] (*Map II*)

So much better was the Allied situation on the evening of 15 September

[1] *Tenth A KTB*, 15 Sep 43.

[2] *Tenth A Besprechung*, 15 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[3] VI Corps G–3 Rpt 7, 15 Sep 43.

[4] Quoted from *Salerno, American Operations from the Beaches to the Volturno*, p. 75.

[5] CinC Mtgs, Salmon Files, OCMH.

that the Americans took the initiative, though cautiously. To re-establish contact with the Germans who had pulled back from the juncture of the Sele and Calore Rivers, a battalion of the 179th Infantry entered the corridor and moved forward several miles with ease. The advance eliminated a good part of the German salient between the rivers, straightened the line, and made the Fifth Army command post more secure.

It was not long before Allied commanders began to suspect an impending German retirement from the battlefield. As reconnaissance pilots reported finding no German troops massed around the beachhead perimeter in offensive strength or formation, intelligence officers estimated that the Germans might be ready to withdraw in response to both the growing Allied build-up in the beachhead and the implicit threat posed in the south by the British Eighth Army.[6]

Was it, then, time to think of recapturing Altavilla? When Colonel Forsythe, the commander of the southern sector in the 36th Division area, reported an absence of German activity along his outpost line on the morning of 16 September, General Walker suggested to General Dawley that VI Corps go over to the offense. Walker proposed to attack Altavilla that evening with the two battalions of the 504th Parachute Infantry, supported by a company of tank destroyers. When Dawley agreed, Walker directed Colonel Tucker, commander of the parachute regiment, to jump off from the vicinity of Albanella and seize the dominating hills in the Altavilla area, Hill 424 in particular.

While the paratroopers made their preparations, which included a difficult cross-country movement to an assembly area, the Germans on 16 September were launching what was to be their last major effort against the beachhead. Vietinghoff modified his plan, and early that morning the *26th Panzer Division* attacked from Battipaglia northwest toward Salerno, while the *16th Panzer Division* gave aid by driving southwest from Battipaglia. Both efforts were soon contained, the first by the 56th Division, which though close to exhaustion fought valiantly with the assistance of contingents of the 7th Armoured Division, the second by the 45th Division, which was hardly aware that it was turning back a German effort. When the *Hermann Goering Division* finally attacked in the Vietri area that afternoon with parts of the *3d* and *15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions* in support, it too made little progress against the 46th Division, which was now bolstered by armored elements.[7]

Late that afternoon Vietinghoff came to the conclusion that he could no longer hope to destroy the Allied beachhead. Word from the rear guards of the *26th Panzer Division* that the advance guards of the British Eighth Army had at last made contact with roadblocks near Lagonegro, fifty miles south of Paestum, confirmed his judgment. The delaying units had repulsed early British probes, but they could not hold back the British army indefinitely. Vietinghoff ordered the rear guards to withdraw, thus opening the way to a British advance in force.

Next Vietinghoff sent a message to Kesselring requesting permission to break off the battle at the beachhead.

[6] Fifth Army FO 2, 16 Sep 43; 15th AGp Msg, 0001, 17 Sep 43, Fifth Army G-2 Jnl.

[7] *Tenth A KTB*, 16 Sep 43.

"The fact," he reported, "that the attacks (which had been prepared fully and carried out with spirit, especially by the XIV [Panzer] Corps) were unable to reach their objective owing to the fire from naval guns and low-flying aircraft, as well as the slow but steady approach of the Eighth Army" made it essential that he occupy good defensive positions before the British troops came north in strength. Vietinghoff recommended a general withdrawal starting no later than the night of 18 September.[8]

Before giving his approval, Kesselring asked Vietinghoff to send a staff officer to *OB SUED* to explain the situation in detail. The briefing by a *Tenth Army* staff officer on 17 September coincided with continuing deterioration of the German situation. On the heights around Salerno *XIV Panzer Corps* made little progress. Around Altavilla *LXXVI Panzer Corps* had to go over to the defense.

The change at Altavilla resulted from the attack by the 504th Parachute Infantry, which started during the night of 16 September on a somewhat dubious note. The Germans had noticed the movement of the Americans and had brought intensive and accurate artillery fire down on the regimental avenues of approach. Small units temporarily lost touch with one another, and Colonel Tucker was driven from his observation post. But against dogged German resistance, the men continued to climb the slopes toward Altavilla. Soon after Tucker established his command post just below Altavilla on the following morning, German troops surrounded his command group.



GENERAL RIDGWAY

Throughout much of 17 September the situation at Altavilla remained confused and obscure not only to the American and German troops who were fighting for the high ground but also to the headquarters on both sides that were trying to decide whether to commit additional forces.[9] On the American side, Colonel Tucker's messages were alternately optimistic and pessimistic according to the turn of events and Generals Ridgway and Walker discussed the predicament of the paratroopers. General Ridgway had just been appointed deputy commander of VI Corps, in part a reflection of General Clark's growing dissatisfaction with General Dawley, in part a practical matter designed to give Ridgway a "home" on the beachhead. With his division headquarters still in Sicily,

[8] *Ibid.* Quote is from Steiger MS.

[9] An excellent description of the details of the combat may be found in Tregaskis, *Invasion Diary*, pp. 113ff. Col. Reuben H. Tucker, Maj. Robert B. Acheson, and Maj. Don B. Dunham were later awarded the DSC, Major Dunham posthumously.

Ridgway as assistant corps commander could exercise some measure of control over his units committed under the command of other headquarters. After Ridgway and Walker talked of using a battalion or more of the 180th Infantry to reinforce the paratroopers, they decided instead to move the 3d Battalion of the 504th to Albanella as a backup force and to have artillery and naval guns shell the Altavilla area heavily. Naval guns alone placed 350 rounds in the village that day.

On the German side, the rear guard regiment of the *26th Panzer Division* that had withdrawn from Calabria during the previous night arrived near Eboli; about the same time the regiment of the *1st Parachute Division* dispatched from Apulia was arriving at the beachhead. Vietinghoff might have used these troops to help hold Altavilla. Kesselring had just given his reluctant consent to break off the battle, asking only that Vietinghoff make a last attack with the paratroopers. If this final effort failed to dislodge the beachhead forces, Vietinghoff was to pivot his *Tenth Army* and withdraw to a temporary line across the Italian peninsula from Salerno to Foggia, the first of a series of defensive lines to be worked out by Kesselring's headquarters, *OB SUED*. Kesselring cautioned Vietinghoff to pay particular attention to his right flank around Salerno and Amalfi in order to insure the success of the withdrawal, for he wanted the first defensive line to be held at least until the end of the month.[10]

Since withdrawal was now Vietinghoff's principal mission, he decided, despite Kesselring's request, to commit no additional troops at Altavilla. Instead of attacking, the Germans began withdrawing. By late afternoon, as Allied reconnaissance pilots were reporting heavy traffic moving north, the American ground troops at Altavilla became aware of the withdrawal. Although the men of the 504th Parachute Infantry waited until the following day in order to enter the village unopposed, the resistance in the VI Corps sector obviously diminished. When General Eisenhower visited the beachhead on the afternoon of 17 September, he had reason to be cheerful. The battle seemed won.

In the 10 Corps area General McCreery began to feel easier about the 56th Division on the right but was "still anxious" about some of the "very tired" battalions of the 46th Division around Salerno and Vietri, where the German opposition continued strong. Expecting a German attack to cover the withdrawal and wishing to keep the 7th Armoured Division fresh for the subsequent advance to Naples, McCreery asked for the 180th Infantry, the regiment of the 45th Division Clark was keeping in army reserve. Even as he asked, however, he admitted it would be awkward to move the regiment over the poor and congested roads in the beachhead. Actually, he used part of his armored division to relieve troops in the Battipaglia sector, informed Clark that an attack by the 45th Division to clear the tobacco factory would be of inestimable help in cleaning up the Battipaglia area, and alerted Colonel Darby to be ready to buttress the Vietri defenses.[11]

[10] *OB SUED* Order, 17 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl., Chefsachen.*

[11] Memo, Lt Col G. V. Britton, Rpt on Visit to 10 Corps, 17 Sep 43, and Msg, McCreery to Darby, 17 Sep 43, both in Fifth Army G-2 Jnl.

Despite General McCreery's concern, the Germans launched no covering attack. When they pulled back from the British right flank on 18 September, British armor entered Battipaglia without opposition.

As Allied intelligence reported a general German withdrawal, General Dawley looked toward pursuit. He instructed General Walker to advance in the Altavilla area during the night of 18 September and General Middleton to clear the Sele-Calore corridor. Awaiting nightfall turned out to be unnecessary. With little contact on the ground American troops pushed beyond Altavilla and Persano on the afternoon of 18 September without incident. When darkness came, the Americans at Ponte Sele were no longer in touch with the enemy.

Elsewhere on 18 September, the 3d Division started to come ashore and move to an assembly area north of the Sele River. The 82d Airborne Division headquarters air-landed at Paestum. A liaison party from the British 5th Division, part of General Montgomery's Eighth Army, arrived at the 36th Division command post to arrange a meeting at Vallo, some twenty miles south of Paestum, between Eighth and Fifth Army staff officers. That evening an LCI transported a company of the 325th Glider Infantry to the island of Ischia, just outside the Bay of Naples, and the troops went ashore without trouble. As supplies and equipment came across the Salerno beaches in ever-increasing amounts, Clark and Dawley began to plan an advance to the north.[12]

On the same day, 18 September, Vietinghoff was praising his troops. Claiming to have taken 5,000 prisoners and to have inflicted a large number of casualties on the Allies, Vietinghoff declared: "Success has been ours. Once again German soldiers have proved their superiority over the enemy." [13] In agreement with this observation and satisfied with the successful defense, Hitler promoted Vietinghoff to generaloberst and placed him in temporary command of *Army Group B* in northern Italy to replace Rommel, who was hospitalized with appendicitis. Hube, returning to Italy from leave, assumed temporary command of the *Tenth Army*.

Of the Fifth Army units on the front, only Darby's Rangers on the Sorrento peninsula and the 46th Division north of Salerno remained on the defensive on 19 September. The 56th Division extended its lines into the interior to eliminate German artillery fire on the Montecorvino airfield, and American units entered Eboli and outposted Highway 19 as far as Serre without finding Germans. On the following day, service troops of the XII Air Support Command began to rehabilitate the Montecorvino airfield and set up refueling facilities. Several planes landed that day for gasoline, precursors of the planes eventually to be based at the field. As the roads in the beachhead, particularly the coastal highway between Paestum and Battipaglia, became jammed with traffic, the vehicles moving bumper to bumper, the 10 Corps took possession of all its initial

[12] Msg, Hewitt to Clark, 2151, 18 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl; Msgs, Larkin to Eisenhower, 18, 19 Sep 43, and Alexander to Clark, 18 Sep 43, both in 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI; Dawley Directive, 1420, 18 Sep 43, and VI Corps FO 3, 1700, 18 Sep 43, both in VI Corps G–3 Jnl; Fifth Army FO 3, 18 Sep 43.

[13] *Tenth A Armeetagesbefehl*, 18 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

invasion objectives and the VI Corps, handing over control of beach operations and base dumps to army, started a new operation. The battle of Salerno, and with it the first phase of the invasion, had come to an end.[14]

The Eighth Army Role

In the Eighth Army area, advance elements of General Montgomery's troops reached Potenza, fifty miles east of Salerno, and cut the lateral highway between Salerno and Bari late on 20 September. At Auletta, twenty miles east of Eboli, American reconnaissance units met British contingents coming up the road from Castrovillari and Lagonegro toward Serre. These events, which might have been heralded with the blowing of trumpets several days earlier when the forces in the beachhead were in distress, now came as anticlimax. It was good, of course, to have the Eighth Army close by, but for Fifth Army the arrival of Eighth Army had no particular significance. The troops at Salerno had fought it out alone, and they had won.

The slow movement of Eighth Army from Calabria was disappointing to many Allied commanders who had hoped that General Montgomery would advance rapidly to Salerno and reduce the German threat to the beachhead.[15] Because the Germans had given way in Calabria without fighting, leaving only mines and demolitions in their wake, Clark, for one, believed that Montgomery could have done more to help the Fifth Army.[16] He later described the progress of Eighth Army as "a slow advance toward Salerno, despite Alexander's almost daily efforts to prod it into greater speed." [17]

From the beginning of Operation AVALANCHE, General Clark had counted on Eighth Army to help the Fifth. "BAYTOWN is proceeding with little or no resistance from the Italians," he remarked in his diary on 6 September, three days before the Fifth Army landings, "and presumably they are ready to help us." A day later he noted that Montgomery was making good progress against opposition "varying from light to none at all." The demolitions holding up Montgomery, Clark was told, were not as serious as had been anticipated. Late on 9 September, D-day of the Salerno landings, when Clark learned that two German divisions were reported coming toward Salerno from the south, he saw the movement as ominous, but believed that it would "help bring the Eighth Army north."[18]

On 10 September, one of General Montgomery's aides brought a penciled note to General Clark. "I send herewith Capt. Chavasce, my A.D.C.," Montgomery wrote, "to bring you my greetings and best wishes for future successes. Will you give him all details as to your present situation, to bring back to me. Good luck to you." [19] Whether the favorable prospects of that day's developments

[14] 504th Prcht Inf S–2 Msg to VI Corps G–2, 1015, 19 Sep 43; VI Corps G–3 Sitrep 11, 1700, 20 Sep 43; VI Corps G–2 Msg, 0640, 19 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl; VI Corps, 45th Div, and 36th Div AAR's, Sep 43; Clark to McCreery, 20 Sep 43, AG 373; Fifth Army G–4 Biweekly Rpt, 6 Oct 43, Activities Rpts.

[15] See, for example, Truscott, *Command Missions*, p. 252.

[16] Intervs, Mathews with Clark, 10–21 May 48, OCMH.

[17] Clark, *Calculated Risk*, p. 200.

[18] Clark Diary, 6, 7, 9 Sep 43.

[19] *Ibid.*, 10 Sep 43.



CIVILIANS CLEARING THE RUINS OF EBOLI

prompted General Clark to return an optimistic message is not recorded. But two days later, when the Germans threatened the beachhead, Clark turned to Alexander. "I hope that Eighth Army," he wrote, "will attack with all possible vigor in order to contain 26th and 29th Panzer Divisions to maximum." [20]

A message arriving at the Fifth Army headquarters on 13 September, when the army was fighting for its life at the height of the German attack, created some resentment. The 15th Army Group, in passing along guidance on press censorship problems, established a policy to "play up Eighth Army and particularly Taranto advances. Fifth Army having tough time. Likely continue till Eighth Army can relieve pressure by nearness." [21]

During a conference at Fifth Army headquarters on the morning of 15 September, before the commander and his staff realized that the crisis was in fact past, a message from General Alexander announced that he was placing all the facilities of Eighth Army at the disposal of the Fifth. There was no comment at the conference beyond the observation that the nearest British troops were then

[20] *Ibid.*, 12 Sep 43.

[21] *Ibid.*, 13 Sep 43.

approximately sixty miles south of the beachhead.[22]

On that day, General Montgomery's aide brought another letter to the beachhead. "It looks as if you may be having not too good a time," Montgomery wrote General Clark, "and I do hope that all will go well with you." Declaring that he hoped to have the 5th Division in the Sapri-Lagonegro area, about fifty miles south of Paestum, in two days, with the 1st Canadian Division echeloned behind, Montgomery also informed Clark that he had directed the 5th Division to send detachments out beyond Sapri. "We are on the way to lend a hand."

"Please accept my deep appreciation," Clark replied, "for assistance your Eighth Army has provided Fifth Army by your skillful and rapid advance." He added: "Situation here well in hand." [23] Actually, though Clark was not altogether confident about the security of the beachhead until the following day, he had to let Montgomery know that the Fifth Army had won without help. Yet he also had to keep in mind Eisenhower's order that the Americans were to get along with the British. And as Clark informed Eisenhower, his relations with the British were excellent.[24] The fact that Montgomery's reputation and prestige far overshadowed his own made Clark swallow his resentment, and three days later, after he had won his first real battle as an army commander, he wrote Montgomery once more: "Again I want to tell you of our deep appreciation for the skillful and expeditious manner by which you moved your Eighth Army to the north. . . . we feel it a great privilege to operate alongside of your army." [25] To write this note, Clark had to overlook the annoying periodic emanations from Alexander's public information office. According to at least one BBC broadcast, which had its origin in an army group press release, Montgomery's army was dashing up the Italian boot to rescue the Fifth Army, which was preparing to evacuate the beachhead. The correction issued a few days later failed to dissipate entirely the incorrect impression. "South flank Fifth Army no full dress withdrawal yet," this curious message read. "BBC overdid it in bulletins Saturday." [26]

On 20 September a letter from General Montgomery alerted General Clark to look for British troops in the Potenza-Auletta area that evening, but General Walker, whom Clark had asked to fly over the area in a Cub plane, could find no signs of the British.[27]

When the usual censorship guidance cable arrived from 15th Army Group headquarters on 22 September and expressed again the policy, "play up Eighth Army, mention Americans," General Clark gave way to irritation. He had expected some support from Eighth Army and some glory for his Fifth, but instead, it seemed as if Fifth Army would have to go on fighting alone.[28]

Yet when Montgomery visited Clark two days later, he found a warm welcome. "The Fifth Army," Clark told Montgomery, "is just a young Army trying hard to get along, while the Eighth

[22] Notes on Fifth Army G–3 Conference, 0900, 15 Sep 43, VI Corps G–3 Jnl.
[23] Clark Diary, 15 Sep 43.
[24] *Ibid.*, 16 Sep 43.
[25] *Ibid.*, 19 Sep 43.
[26] 15th AGp Msg, 0655, 19 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl.
[27] Clark Diary, 20 Sep 43.
[28] *Ibid.*, 22 Sep 43.

Army is a battle-tried veteran. We would appreciate your teaching us some of your tricks." The words had the desired effect. Montgomery beamed, and, in Clark's words, the ice was broken.[29]

A month later, when General Clark felt that he had won his spurs, he received another annoying censorship guidance message to play up the British. This time he was angry enough to protest the guidance and turn down the Eighth Army commander, who wanted to visit him. He wrote Montgomery a courteous note to express his regret that he saw "no great urgency for a personal meeting." [30]

"Some would like to think—I did at the time—," Montgomery's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Francis de Guingand, wrote several years later, "that we helped, if not saved, the situation at Salerno. But now I doubt whether we influenced matters to any great extent. General Clark had everything under control *before* Eighth Army appeared on the scene." [31]

General Alexander saw the battle at Salerno as won before the British Eighth Army arrived. In considering the question whether Montgomery might have provided direct assistance to Clark, he concluded that the Eighth Army, given its logistical problems, could have moved no faster.[32]

The fact was that the mere presence of the Eighth Army in Italy weighed heavily on the Germans. No matter how slowly the army moved, the British would eventually reach the Salerno area. Because Hitler was unwilling to expend more troops to reinforce the units fighting at Salerno and because those committed could not dislodge Fifth Army from the beachhead, the Germans had to give way. With Eighth Army giving them a good excuse to do so, they implemented their original strategy of withdrawing from southern Italy. General Montgomery thus exerted an influence on the German decision to withdraw even though his troops took no direct part in the battle at the beachhead.

Could the Eighth Army have done more? Despite Montgomery's problems—distance, difficult terrain, poor roads, inadequate equipment, and insufficient supplies—and despite his need to push northeastward from the toe to link up with British troops in Apulia while at the same time moving north toward the Fifth Army, could the Eighth Army have reached the Salerno area more quickly?

An unequivocal answer is impossible. It was no mean achievement for the British 5th Division to advance over 200 miles of extremely rough ground and manage to send a patrol ahead to make contact with American troops on the evening of 16 September, thirteen days after the crossing from Messina.[33]

Some indication of the kind of opposition the 5th Division faced can be discerned in the experiences of the public relations officer of the Eighth Army and three British war correspondents. At 1030, 13 September, with several drivers in two reconnaissance cars and a jeep, this party set out from Nicastro, not far from Catanzaro and about 150 miles south of Paestum, with the intention of driving overland to the Fifth Army. Taking the coastal road, the men traveled

[29] *Ibid.*, 24 Sep 43.

[30] *Ibid.*, 15, 26 Oct 43.

[31] De Guingand, *Operation Victory*, p. 312.

[32] Interv, Mathews with Alexander, 10–15 Jan 49, OCMH.

[33] Ltr, Maj Gen Gerard C. Bucknall, Comdr 5th Div, to Gen Walker, 16 Sep 43, 36th Div G–3 Jnl.

to Diamante, 65 miles south of Paestum, where they passed the leading reconnaissance unit of Eighth Army. Twenty-five miles beyond Diamante, at Praia, they met several Italian soldiers. The Italians were friendly. They said they had seen no British vehicles along the road ahead of the party; they knew of no Germans in the area as far north as the Salerno beachhead; and they were sure Italian troops had cleared all the mines along the coastal road. Continuing to drive another 25 miles, the men then spent the night near Sapri. When a destroyed bridge across a river blocked their progress, civilians guided them to a ford. After the chief of police at Vallo gave them gasoline and a guide, they spent a second night in a nearby village. On the following morning, at 1030, 15 September, forty-eight hours after leaving Eighth Army, without having encountered a single German, the public relations officer and his party met an American scout car about seven miles south of Ogliastro. From there a lieutenant of the 111th Engineer Battalion in charge of a reconnaissance group shepherded the British through channels to the VI Corps headquarters.[34]

By this time, British patrols in front of the army were moving beyond Diamante to a point about 40 miles south of Paestum. Not until the following evening, 16 September, thirty-six hours after the British newspapermen had reached the Fifth Army, did the first patrol of the 5th Division, probably a platoon, make contact with the 36th Division right flank—and this at a point 35 miles south of Paestum. Not until three days later, on 19 September, did a British reconnaissance patrol in some strength, probably a company, reach Rocca d'Aspide and establish more meaningful contact with the Americans. By then, the head of General Montgomery's main column had reached Scalea, about 75 miles south of Paestum.

The movement of small groups of men lightly armed is, of course, quite different from the advance of an army, or even a battalion. Yet the absence of Germans in the area between Eighth and Fifth Armies, and the difficult time Fifth Army was having on 13 and 14 September indicate that a greater effort to get at least some Eighth Army troops to the beachhead might have been made. A token force, a battalion of infantry, even a company, arriving at the beachhead on 14 September would have given the troops battling with their backs to the sea a tremendous lift in morale.

If the rough country and other adverse conditions had, in fact, made a quicker advance impossible, thereby nullifying much of the intent of the landing in Calabria, then there was fault in delaying for several days, at General Montgomery's insistence, the crossing of the Strait of Messina. Had he not held stubbornly to his desire for a full-scale amphibious operation, despite General Eisenhower's declaration that the crossing could be made in rowboats, an observation later borne out by the lack of opposition, the Eighth Army could have entered the Italian mainland several days sooner. Not only would this have made more shipping available to the Fifth Army, it would also have enabled General Montgomery, assuming the same rate of overland advance, to get some

[34] Rpt by Capt I. S. K. Sobeloff, Eighth Army Public Relations Officer, 15 Sep 43, VI Corps G–3 Jnl.

units to the Salerno battlefield several days earlier.

Perhaps the ultimate comment was made by the enemy. As early as 10 September the Germans noted the pattern that characterized General Montgomery's advance. "The withdrawal of our troops from Calabria continues according to plan," they reported. "The enemy is not crowding after us." [35]

Some Miscellaneous Matters

The Germans failed to dislodge the Fifth Army primarily because their strategic planning projected a withdrawal from southern Italy regardless of the outcome at the beachhead. The Germans would have liked to repel the invasion for political as well as military reasons, and a total victory would no doubt have changed the strategic plans, but resistance at the Salerno beachhead was postulated on assuring withdrawal. Thus, the Germans denied themselves the advantage of committing additional strength, for example from northern Italy, that might have turned the balance.

Hitler, Kesselring, and Vietinghoff were all satisfied with the results of the operations, which they regarded as a German triumph. They had denied the Allies quick access to Naples. They had inflicted severe losses on the Allied troops. Avoiding the dangers implicit in the simultaneous occurrences of the Italian surrender announcement and the Allied invasion, they had extricated their forces from southern Italy. By preventing the Allies from breaking out of the beachhead, a feat the Germans accomplished despite shortages of fuel and lengthy lines of communication, they had prohibited the Allies from fully exploiting the Italian surrender. That the Germans were able to disarm the Italian forces and take control of Italy north of Salerno reflected in large measure the promptness and vigor of the German resistance around Salerno. German troops would now be able to pivot on the mountains northwest of Salerno and create a continuous front across Italy from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic. "The Germans may claim with some justification," General Alexander admitted, "to have won if not a victory at least an important success over us." [36]

They might have gained more. "I still can't understand," General Clark wrote several years later, "why such an able general as Kesselring . . . used his plentiful armor . . . in piecemeal fashion at critical stages of the battle." [37] The inexperience of the troops who guarded the beaches and the long front they manned prevented the *16th Panzer Division* from launching anything more than dispersed thrusts by small groups—ten or fifteen tanks supported by a platoon or a company, in rare instances a battalion, of infantry. These small counterattacks precluded decisive success.[38]

The Italian surrender had had its effect on the Salerno landings. General Clark later felt that the armistice had actually hindered the Allied troops coming ashore, for Italians on the beaches would not have resisted as effectively as

[35] War Diary, German Naval Command—Italy, 10 Sep 43, OCMH.

[36] 15th AGp Intel Summary 19, 25 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl.

[37] Clark, *Calculated Risk*, p. 205.

[38] *Tenth A Rueckblick auf die ersten drei Tage der Schlacht bei Salerno*, 12 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.* See also 36th Div G–2 Rpt, 1230, 15 Sep 43.

did the Germans.[39] On the other hand, some Italians would undoubtedly have manned the coastal defenses and the Germans might have had time to mass the *16th Panzer Division* for an effective counterattack.

Yet the surrender, followed by the dissolution of Italian military forces, had been advantageous for the Germans. They were able to deal with Italian "traitors" in a way impossible to treat Italian "allies." Having previously fought on Italian soil ostensibly to help the Italians defend their homeland, they were now freed of the necessity of catering to their former allies. They could act decisively and expect the swift execution of their orders. And according to Kesselring's chief of staff, they were liberated "from the nightmare necessity of using their weapons against their former allies." [40]

Fighting with limited forces for a limited objective, the Germans suffered fewer losses during the battle of the beachhead than the Allies. The *Hermann Goering Division* sustained 1,000 casualties, the *16th Panzer Grenadier Division* approximately 1,300. The *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* probably incurred similar losses, while the *26th Panzer Division,* controlling only one regiment and in action only two days, could not have been greatly affected. All together, casualties probably totaled about 3,500 men.[41] In contrast, the American losses totaled about 3,500 men, British casualties somewhere around 5,500.[42]

The Allies were vulnerable to heavy losses, according to the commander of the *16th Panzer Division,* Sickenius, not only because they were on the offensive but also because of what he considered to be the poor combat value of the British and American troops. The Allied soldier, Sickenius believed, lacked aggressiveness and was afraid of combat at close quarters. Although he knew how to make skillful use of terrain features and would usually try to penetrate German lines by infiltration, he normally depended on extensive artillery preparations, which precluded daring thrusts.[43]

If Sickenius' observation was true, it might be explained by a concern on the part of the Allied soldiers for their security. The knowledge of how few follow-up troops were available to bolster the first units ashore made the Americans, despite the paucity of opposition in the VI Corps zone, less than aggressive during the first days on the beachhead. The critical period of the invasion had occurred on the fourth and fifth days, when the troops ashore were tired, when they held as long a front as could be expected of them, and when the enemy had deduced their plan and was concentrating strength against the beachhead. That was when more ships on the horizon were necessary, when more men, more artillery, more supplies in follow-up convoys were required.[44]

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[39] Intervs. Mathews with Clark, 10–21 May 48, OCMH.

[40] MS # T–1a (Westphal), OCMH.

[41] *Tenth A la/ld* Rpt, 17 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.; XIV Pz C* Rpt, 22 Sep 43, *XIV Pz C KTB Anl. Tenth Army* reported that it was 6,000 men below strength on 17 September, but the army had been understrength at the beginning of the operations.

[42] *Fifth Army History,* Part I, pp. 97–98; 9th Machine Records Unit, Fifth Army American Battle Casualties, 10 Jun 45, OCMH. American losses were approximately 500 killed, 1,800 wounded, 1,200 missing.

[43] *16th Pz Div Erfahrungsbericht ueber den Feindlandung,* 16 Sep 43, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[44] Wood Lecture.

The presence of the 82d Airborne Division in Sicily and its readiness for commitment had been the fortunate result of the cancellation of its mission to seize the airfields around Rome; the use of the 82d to reinforce the beachhead by drops behind friendly lines was a brilliant expedient. The value of the reinforcement stemmed less from the actual number of troops than from its psychological lift to the commanders and men in the beachhead who were beginning to feel uneasy; they had no way of knowing that the worst had passed. The two battalions of the 504th Parachute Infantry, nevertheless, provided valuable security to the beachhead perimeter, and their pressure around Altavilla on 17 September had hastened the German withdrawal.

How bad was the worst hour? Given the small size of the beachhead, which made almost every part vulnerable to enemy observation and fire, deeper penetrations in the areas where the Germans mounted their strongest attacks—Salerno, Battipaglia, the Sele-Calore corridor, and Altavilla—might well have proved fatal to the Fifth Army. That the Germans were unable to crack the Allied defenses is a tribute to troops who demonstrated their ability to take punishment. With the support of artillery, tanks, tank destroyers, naval gunfire, and air attacks, they held the defensive line established during the critical night of 13 September against German pressure for five days.[45] Some participants felt that the Fifth Army had come close to defeat. Yet others depreciated the extent of the German threat. One qualified observer stated categorically that the enemy attacks never seriously endangered the beachhead.[46] General Walker himself later asserted that he never doubted the ability of his troops to hold.[47]

The small size of the beachhead made supply operations easier. The Allied forces lacked enough transportation facilities, particularly Quartermaster truck units, and therefore the short hauling distances were a boon. In control of logistics, the VI Corps headquarters established supply dumps about one mile inland and along the main roads to enable the divisions to draw their supplies directly from them. On 25 September, with more trucks ashore, truckheads were established and the Fifth Army took charge of unloading supplies over the beaches, moving them to the dumps, and transporting them forward to the divisions.[48]

Naval gunfire played an obvious role in the battle of the beachhead, but some observers had serious reservations as to its usefulness. "The moral effect is, of course, terrific," one officer noted, "as the shell is large and the muzzle velocity astonishing."[49] Though naval gunfire gave great psychological support to the Allied troops and adversely affected the Germans, the relatively flat trajectory

[45] Between 9 and 17 September, the 151st Field Artillery Battalion expended 10,500 rounds, over 2,500 shells more than the total fired by the battalion during the entire Tunisia Campaign. 151st FA Bn AAR, Sep 43. See also 645th and 601st Tank Destroyer Bn AAR's, Sep 43, and 751st Tank Bn History, 1943. Engineers performing as infantrymen were from the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment; the 2d Battalion, 337th Engineer General Service Regiment; the 111th and 120th Engineer Combat Battalions; and the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment. Engr History, Fifth Army, I, 12–13, 19, 20, 22ff.

[46] Morris, "Salerno," *Military Review* (March, 1944).

[47] Walker to author, Aug 57.

[48] Fifth Army Answers to Questions by Lt Gen Courtney Hodges, 16 Dec 43, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

[49] Lucas Diary, 16 Jul 43.

of the shells limited their effectiveness in close support because of the larger safety distance required between shell-burst and friendly troop locations.[50] And except in the case of masonry buildings, the usefulness of naval shells against ground targets was questionable. The fire was particularly satisfying when directed against towns because any fire direction center could hit a town every time, and the flying debris and dust, which proved the accuracy of the flight of the missile, gave observers and spotters a feeling of accomplishment and pride. Unfortunately, the resulting destruction, which brought misery and loss to noncombatants, usually had little effect on enemy military personnel, who were usually well dug in away from the obvious targets.[51]

The destroyed village of Altavilla, shelled by artillery and naval guns and bombed by planes, appalled General Walker. "I doubt very much," he wrote in his diary, "if this bombardment of a village full of helpless civilian families, many of whom were killed or injured, contributed any real help in capturing the dominating ground in that vicinity." [52] When he visited Battipaglia, he was

> greatly depressed at the complete destruction of this old town by our Navy and Air Force. Not a single building was intact. The town will have to be rebuilt—it cannot be repaired. One could smell the odor of dead bodies, not yet recovered from the rubble. Such destruction of towns and civilians is brutal and quite unnecessary and does not assist in furthering the tactical program. . . . Italian people stood about looking at their destroyed homes in bewilderment. In the midst of their destruction and grief they tried to be cheerful.[53]

American and British planners had, before the invasion, discussed and studied the possibility of using planes to spot naval gunfire, that is, to observe and direct the shells on target. They concluded that the technique was impractical. In areas where enemy fighter aircraft were active, naval planes would be too vulnerable. To give naval spotting planes fighter protection was hardly worthwhile—fighters were unsuitable for prolonged escort missions at low altitudes, they had more important missions, and over Salerno they would be far from their land bases.

But the attractiveness of getting accurate naval shelling on distant ground targets outside the range of artillery prompted the Americans to try. The plane judged best for the task was the P–51, but there was not enough time before the invasion to train naval observation pilots to fly this aircraft. Consequently, the pilots of an Army Air Forces squadron earmarked for tactical reconnaissance received some training in how to use the communications and codes involved in directing American naval gunfire. Two flights of two P–51's each came over the assault area to spot for the naval gunners between 0800 and 1000 on D-day, but the planes could remain in the target area only thirty minutes. A pilot needed this amount of time to become oriented. By the time he obtained some impression of the ground situation, he had to fly back to Sicily. Not until 16 September did P–51 pilots first successfully spot naval gunfire; by

[50] See Terrell Monograph.

[51] See General Walker's Comments Relating to Salerno, 4 Feb 58, OCMH.

[52] Walker Diary, 19, 24 Sep 43.

[53] *Ibid.*, 1 Oct 43.

then the battle for the beachhead was about over and few opportunities remained for further application of the technique.[54]

The difficulty of ground observation during the early days of the invasion had limited the ability of observers to adjust artillery fire at medium and long ranges, and the Fifth Army artillery officer consequently arranged with the 111th Reconnaissance Squadron to have P–51 pilots work with the 155-mm. howitzers of the 36th Field Artillery Regiment. Two planes were to operate together, one pilot to observe and direct, the other to guard against the approach of enemy aircraft. This method was first used successfully on 18 September. Still later in the month, after reconnaissance aircraft were based in the Salerno area, P–51 artillery spotting missions became more frequent, yet they were never regularly used, even though the P–51 planes were better than either Cub planes or forward ground observers for directing artillery at extreme ranges with a reasonable degree of accuracy. During the next eight months of the Italian campaign, Allied planners would discuss whether they might secure special equipment and give special training to improve the P–51 method of artillery spotting. The reluctance of air commanders to divert planes from what they considered their more important missions inhibited planning to this end.[55]

Two of these more important missions, providing fighter cover and close air support to the ground troops, together constituted, according to General Eisenhower, a serious problem of the invasion.[56] Since a fighter plane based in Sicily needed about thirty minutes to reach the Salerno area, and since a fighter pilot engaging an enemy plane over the beachhead had to jettison his long-range gasoline tanks, thereby reducing his effective operational capability from thirty to ten minutes, the burden of meeting enemy aircraft attacking in quick successive waves fell on the naval fighters. Even though Seafires operating from naval carriers flew more than 700 sorties during the first four days of the invasion to supplement the more than 2,400 sorties by aircraft based in Sicily, and even though naval and land-based planes prevented effective German air reconnaissance—*Tenth Army* complained on 13 September that no air reports had been received for more than twenty-four hours—they failed to stop the bombers. Bombing the Allied anchorage in the Gulf of Salerno nightly and raiding the beachhead three or four times every day with low-flying fighter-bombers, the Germans, despite relatively few operational planes and comparatively antiquated equipment, flew more missions against targets in a given area than at any time since their attacks against Malta in 1942.

The construction of improvised landing fields in the beachhead, begun soon after the landings, did little to solve the

[54] Eisenhower to War Dept, 8 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5; OPD Info Bulletin, vol. I, 14 Feb 44, AG 370.2–1944; Fifth Army Incoming Msg, 1827, 16 Sep 13, AG 373.

[55] VI Corps Artillery Ltr, Adjustment of Artillery Fire by P–51 Airplanes, 26 Sep 43, and Inds, AG 465.1.

[56] Sources for this and the paragraphs immediately following are: Eisenhower Dispatch, p. 128; Willis Despatch; Opns Summary, 17 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl; Memo, House for Clark, 15 Sep 43, and Msg, Clark to Larkin, 15 Sep 43, both in Fifth Army G–3 Jnl; Interv, Mathews with Maj Gen Lyman L. Lemnitzer, 16 Jan 48, OCMH; Eisenhower to War Dept, 14 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3; Fifth Army Incoming Msg, 1943, 14 Sep 43, AG 373.

problem of providing effective land-based fighter cover. A strip opened near Paestum on 13 September received two Army Air Forces reconnaissance planes, which remained only briefly. A second strip was opened near the Sele River two days later to receive twelve planes (half the aircraft strength of the 111th Reconnaissance Squadron), and a third strip was ready in the 10 Corps area to take eight RAF planes the same day. All three were used only for emergency landings. Except for the twenty-six naval aircraft based near Paestum, no land-based planes landed in the beachhead until 16 September, and those were fighter-bombers rather than fighter-interceptors.

The deficiency in Allied air cover permitted German planes to damage, by means of radio-controlled bombs, the British battleship *Warspite* and cruiser *Uganda* and the American cruiser *Savannah* in the Gulf of Salerno. In addition to the Liberty ship *Bushrod Washington,* destroyed on 14 September, the Liberty ship *James Marshall* was seriously damaged on the following day by a rocket bomb. Other losses were sustained among lesser vessels in the gulf.

In giving close support to the ground forces, tactical air force planes flew more than 9,000 sorties during the first nine days of the invasion. Over 5,000 of these occurred on three days, 14, 15, and 16 September. During this period, more than 1,000 tons of bombs were dropped daily on an area within a radius of fifteen miles from Salerno, Battipaglia and Eboli receiving the bulk of the loads. All these flights originated in Sicily and North Africa, except for a squadron of fighter-bombers, which started to operate from the Paestum airfield on 16 September. On that day alone, this squadron flew 46 missions and 301 sorties for reconnaissance and bombardment—bombing road intersections, railroad tracks and stations, towns, enemy vehicles, and suspected strongpoints—before returning to Sicily before nightfall. Air commanders were reluctant to base aircraft in the beachhead chiefly because the improvised airfields could not be used in bad weather. Not until pierced steel planks could be requisitioned from North Africa late in September to make possible all-weather fields would substantial numbers of planes be based in the area.

During the critical days at the beachhead, strategic bombers added their tonnages to the bombings even though Air Marshal Tedder disliked diverting them from their normal long-range missions. What concerned Tedder and other air commanders was not only the scale of the air effort at the beachhead, which exceeded planners' estimates and seriously taxed crews and equipment, but also the violation of the precepts of air doctrine, which stipulated that air bombardment should be used only against those targets beyond the range of artillery. Not until late in the campaign, after the turn of the year, would Allied commanders gain the benefits of using air power, both strategic and tactical, together with artillery, and only then would the ground troops obtain what is now considered normal close air support.

Command

Some Allied problems at the beachhead derived from the command. Like all successful commanders of coalition forces, General Clark exercised his au-

thority over General McCreery and the British 10 Corps with discretion and tact. He tended to supervise and inspect rather than to direct, even though the operations on the 10 Corps front were the more critical. He gave his major attention to VI Corps and General Dawley. What complicated his position in American quarters was that his senior American subordinates, Generals Dawley, Walker, and Middleton, were older than Clark and had seniority in the Regular Army.

Sensitive of his prerogatives and understandably anxious to make good in this, his first command of combat operations in World War II, General Clark placed between himself and his American subordinates a distance that was perhaps more than the normal reserve consciously adopted for command purposes. He rarely, if ever, requested advice from his subordinate commanders or talked things over with them. His habit was to stride into command posts, receive reports, and issue instructions. While this may have conformed to the stereotype model of how a commander should act, it seemed to some to be an overdrawn portrait, and those who may have expected him to seek their guidance were disappointed that he did not.[57]

When General Alexander visited the beachhead, he was impressed by General Clark's calmness. Clark, he judged, was steady. General Eisenhower came to the beachhead a week after D-day and although he thought Clark not so good as Bradley at winning the confidence of everyone around him, including the British, and not so good as Patton in refusing to see anything but victory, he found Clark, as he said, "carrying weight." [58]

In contrast to the Fifth Army commander, General Dawley relied to a much larger extent on his division commanders. He had great confidence in Walker and Middleton, both of whom had commanded troops in combat during World War I, and he welcomed their suggestions. But as Clark devoted increasing attention to VI Corps affairs and in the process indicated dissatisfaction with Dawley's exercise of control, Dawley became harassed and nervous.

Always concerned about the lack of reserves, Clark was disturbed by Dawley's seeming indifference to the threat to the corps' left flank. It was Clark who instructed Dawley to lighten his forces on the right in order to strengthen those on the left, and it was Dawley who later suffered because his troop dispositions resembled a hodgepodge of units.[59]

On 20 September, after the battle of the beachhead had come to an end, General Clark relieved General Dawley from command of the VI Corps. The reasons since given for the relief have been various.

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[57] See Interv, Mathews with Brig Gen Charles E. Saltzman, former Fifth Army DCofS, 26 Mar 48, OCMH.

[58] Eisenhower to Marshall, 20 Sep 43, OCMH; Intervs, Mathews with Alexander, 10–15 Jan 49, OCMH.

[59] At 0600, 18 September, the units on the VI Corps front were deployed from left to right as follows: 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry; 3d Battalion, 36th Engineers; 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry; 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry; 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry; 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry; 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry; the 142d Infantry; 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry; 1st Battalion, 39th Engineers; Company A, 751st Tank Battalion; 504th Parachute Infantry; 505th Parachute Infantry. VI Corps G–3 Sitrep, 0600, 18 Sep 43.

According to General Clark's recollections after the war, General Dawley had been an impressive commander during training; he had caught the attention of Generals Marshall and McNair, and Clark himself had thought him vigorous and aggressive. General Eisenhower, who was skeptical about Dawley's ability, asked Clark more than once whether Dawley would measure up, and Clark assured him that the corps commander was doing a good job in North Africa. Shortly before the Salerno invasion Clark saw the first sign that gave him pause and made him doubt Dawley's capacity: Dawley told Clark that the VI Corps might not be able to carry out its mission.[60] As General Dawley remembered the incident, he had, during a planning conference, quoted Brig. Gen. Fox Conner, General John J. Pershing's G–3, as having once said, "Don't bite off more than you can chew and chew damn little." [61]

Under the stress of the battle at the beachhead Dawley appeared to Clark to grow increasingly nervous and shaky, and seemed unable to take decisive action. One night, Dawley reported his situation to Clark over the telephone.

"Well, Mike," Clark said, "what are you doing about it?"

"I'm praying," Dawley said.

"That's OK," Clark said, "but you better do something else besides."

Clark reached his decision to relieve the corps commander with difficulty, for he and Dawley had both been protégés of General McNair, and Clark felt uncomfortable about recommending the relief of a man who was in some respects his senior.[62]

During General Alexander's visit to the beachhead, the army group commander received the impression that General Dawley was not meeting the required standard of performance. Dawley's briefing of the situation confirmed Alexander's feeling, for, unlike McCreery, who seemed to Alexander to have his corps under control and to know what he was doing, Dawley was nervous; his voice shook, and his hands trembled. To Eisenhower, Alexander recommended that Dawley be relieved but suggested that Eisenhower see for himself first.[63]

General Alexander's American deputy, General Lemnitzer, who had accompanied the army group commander to the beachhead, later remembered that "General Clark was worried, especially about the VI Corps set-up." In Lemnitzer's presence, Clark informed Alexander that he had personally had to place some infantry battalions in the line because Dawley seemed unable to handle the matter. At the VI Corps command post, when Alexander asked Dawley what his future plans were, the response was embarrassing. "Obviously under great strain," Lemnitzer recalled, "with his hands shaking like a leaf, General Dawley made a pitiful effort to explain the disposition of his troops and what he planned to do." The explanation confirmed the impression that Alexander and Lemnitzer had sensed around the corps headquarters—the staff lacked con-

[60] Intervs, Mathews with Clark, 10–21 May 48, OCMH.

[61] Ltr, Dawley to Pattison, 15 Dec 64, OCMH.

[62] Intervs, Mathews with Clark, 10–21 May 48, OCMH.

[63] Intervs, Mathews with Alexander, 10–15 Jan 49, OCMH.

fidence in the corps commander's ability.[64]

Not long afterward General Lemnitzer saw General Eisenhower in Algiers. When Eisenhower asked about the beachhead, Lemnitzer told him of Clark's difficulty with the VI Corps. Eisenhower exploded. "Well, why doesn't he relieve Dawley?" Lemnitzer supported Alexander's recommendation that Eisenhower visit the beachhead to judge for himself.[65]

During his visit, Eisenhower concurred in what by then was a unanimous opinion among the senior commanders. Eisenhower assured Clark he would arrange for someone to replace the corps commander.[66] There is evidence that Dawley's relief had been decided several days earlier, before Eisenhower's visit.[67]

The relief came as a surprise to General Walker, who had worked closely with the corps commander and who had heard Clark express no disappointment over Dawley's conduct of operations. As he looked back after the war, Walker thought that two incidents might have contributed to the decision. When Eisenhower, Clark, Dawley, and Admiral Hewitt visited his 36th Division command post and received a briefing from Walker, the division commander had the feeling that Eisenhower was paying little attention to his words. At the end of Walker's presentation, Eisenhower turned to Dawley and said, "How did you ever get your troops into such a mess?" Instead of explaining that there was no mess at all, Dawley replied in a manner that gave Eisenhower no inkling of the pains Dawley and Walker had taken to insure proper tactical control and co-ordination. Walker was about to add his explanation when Eisenhower changed the subject. Another time, when Walker accompanied Dawley, Clark, and Ridgway to Albanella, the generals drove in two jeeps, Walker riding with Ridgway. For their return trip, Clark asked Walker to ride with him and Dawley. On the way, Clark and Dawley engaged in what soon became an unfriendly discussion over a trivial matter. When Dawley intimated his disapproval of certain measures taken by Eisenhower and Clark, the army commander became ominously silent.[68]

General Marshall was also surprised to learn of Dawley's relief, but he backed Eisenhower and Clark even before he had full knowledge of the facts. When Dawley returned to the United States, he visited the Army Chief of Staff and explained what had happened. General Marshall had the impression that Dawley should have been relieved even sooner.[69]

There is something to be said in General Dawley's defense. The VI Corps commander had not expected to assume command of operations ashore until after the beachhead was securely established. Clark had told Dawley before the landings to stay aboard ship and not to take command until D plus 2 or thereabouts, since Clark thought that the single American division in the assault was already overloaded with command-

[64] Interv, Mathews with Lemnitzer, 16 Jan 48, OCMH.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Clark, *Calculated Risk*, p. 208.

[67] Eisenhower to Marshall, 20 Sep 43, OCMH.

[68] Walker to author, Aug 57.

[69] Interv, Mathews, Lamson, Hamilton, and Smyth with Marshall, 26 Jul 49, OCMH.

ers.[70] Furthermore, the 36th Division carried three days' supplies, and the end of that 3-day period, Walker and Dawley estimated, would be the logical moment for the corps to take command of the operation. Thus, Dawley was not entirely prepared when ordered on D-day to take command—his staff was scattered and his headquarters and communications were scheduled for a later unloading. Trying to make do with what he had, he used the 36th Division facilities and strained them. "Neither Dawley nor Walker were very happy about the situation," General Truscott later wrote, "and both attributed much of the early confusion to the disorganization of Command." [71] Finally, lacking an organized and fully staffed headquarters, General Dawley found it difficult to delegate authority to subordinates and equally difficult to get enough rest himself.

The inevitable confusion of the beachhead, the intermingling of units and the consequent lack of neat dispositions on a situation map, Dawley's failure to impress visiting officers of high rank, his fatigue after several days and nights of strenuous activity and little sleep—these raised doubts in the minds of his superiors. On 16 September, Clark informed Eisenhower that Dawley "should not be continued in his present job. He appears to go to pieces in the emergencies." [72] On 17 September, when Clark appointed Ridgway deputy corps commander, Dawley's relief was as good as accomplished, and three days later a replacement arrived from Sicily to take over.

Summary

Despite deficiencies and misfortunes, the Fifth Army had secured lodgment on the Italian mainland by 20 September and began to marshal its strength for the concluding episode of AVALANCHE, the capture of Naples. By that date, British units were occupying the east coast of southern Italy—several British naval officers had entered Brindisi on 16 September and found it empty of German troops—and were increasing their strength in that area. While General Montgomery sought to concentrate his widely dispersed forces for an attack to Foggia to secure the airfield complex there, General Clark prepared to drive to Naples to secure the port.

Additional gains of the three-pronged invasion of southern Italy were Sardinia and Corsica, which the Germans abandoned.[73] The *90th Panzer Grenadier Division* began to leave Sardinia on 11 September, moving to Corsica first. This movement was completed by the morning of 18 September. Italian troops on Sardinia did little to impede the German forces, but Corsican patriots, armed with submachine guns and aided by a small Allied contingent, both dropped to them from Allied planes, harassed the Germans.

Concerned even before the German evacuation that the Corsican irregulars would be too weak to cope with the Germans, General Giraud, commander of the French troops in North Africa, pressed General Eisenhower to dispatch French units to the island. Eisenhower

[70] Intervs, Mathews with Clark, 10–21 May 48, OCMH.

[71] Truscott, *Command Missions*, p. 253.

[72] Clark Diary, 16 Sep 43.

[73] See Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 132–33; AFHQ Msg, 2008, 18 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl; Eisenhower to War Dept, 13 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

favored encouraging the local resistance forces in Corsica by sending French troops, but he had no vessels to transport them. The requirements of the battle of the beachhead were overriding. He nevertheless approved establishing an improvised ferry service. On 11 September, a French submarine sailed from Algiers for Corsica with 100 French soldiers aboard. Two days later two French destroyers, the *Terrible* and the *Fantastique,* loaded several hundred men, somewhere between 500 and 800 according to estimates, and about 50 tons of supplies and sailed for Ajaccio, principal port of Corsica. Two French cruisers, the *Jeanne d'Arc* and the *Montcalm,* recalled from duty in the Atlantic, two Corsican schooners pressed into service, and later two Italian cruisers formed a fleet that, for the next two weeks, nightly ferried men to the island. The underground fighters and the French troops failed to halt the German movement to the mainland, which was completed on 4 October.

Two small British ships had entered the harbor of Cagliari on 18 September, bringing General Eisenhower's representative, Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., and a small staff to assume Allied control over Sardinia. General Eisenhower placed Corsica under the control of French military authorities and later sent a small liaison staff to represent him at the office of the military governor appointed by General Giraud.

Sardinia and Corsica, by virtue of their strategic location, represented a great prize won at slight cost. Allied possession of the islands made the Mediterranean still more secure for shipping. More important, the airfields, particularly those on Corsica, would bring Allied bombers close to enemy targets along the southern approaches to the Continent, especially those in southern France and northern Italy.

CHAPTER X

Beyond Salerno

Problems and Plans

With the Fifth Army in firm possession of lodgment, Operation AVALANCHE moved into its second phase: the capture of Naples. Once captured and transformed into a logistical base, Naples would have to be made secure. This the Fifth Army would do by advancing twenty-five miles beyond Naples to the Volturno River, which was far enough beyond the city to provide protection against hostile attack, infiltration, artillery fire, and raids.[1] Before the invasion, Allied planners had given some thought to the idea of capturing Naples by driving across the Italian peninsula from the heel, a maneuver the road net would have facilitated.[2] But now the Fifth and Eighth Armies, co-ordinated by the 15th Army Group, would move up the boot of Italy abreast, their first objectives, respectively, Naples and the airfields around Foggia.

As early as 17 September, when General Alexander suspected the impending German withdrawal from the Salerno beachhead, he passed along some thoughts to guide his subordinate commanders on future operations. His ideas differed from those advanced by Allied planners a month before the invasion. Then, the Allies had expected the Germans to hold tenaciously to Naples and Foggia. But now Alexander guessed that they would be unable to retain Naples for long because of their need to withdraw to the north to shorten their lines of communication. Nor would they, he estimated, be able to preserve control over Foggia because of their lack of strength in Apulia. Thus, General Clark and General Montgomery could start immediately toward their objectives, even though a pause would probably occur somewhere in the process to allow bringing up additional supplies and troops necessary to complete the advances.[3]

While Fifth Army was bringing the battle of Salerno to a close, Eighth Army was consolidating its forces along the eastern shore of the peninsula. When the 1st British Airborne Division, ashore at Taranto on 9 September and beyond Bari two days later, made contact on its left with the 1st Canadian Division coming up from Calabria, the meeting represented the first step in bringing together the SLAPSTICK and BAYTOWN

[1] See AFHQ Memo, Rooks for Smith, Establishment of a Defensive Plan Northeast of Naples, 31 Aug 43.

[2] See AFHQ Notes on the Logistical Aspect of the Occupation of Italy, 2 Jun 43.

[3] Eisenhower to CCS, 5, 31 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5; Clark to Eisenhower, 14 Sep 43, AG 540; 15th AGp Msg, 0001, 17 Sep 43, and Alexander to Clark and Montgomery, 17 Sep 43, both in Fifth Army G–2 Jnl.

troops. The 5 Corps headquarters came ashore at Taranto on 18 September and made ready to receive at Bari both the 78th British Division, expected from Sicily in the next few days, and the 8th Indian Division, due to arrive from Egypt in the next few weeks. By 19 September, the 13 Corps had the 1st Canadian and 5th Divisions moving into the Auletta and Potenza areas and coming abreast of the Fifth U.S. Army.

Although only about 8,000 men of the *1st Parachute Division* opposed Eighth Army on the approaches to Foggia, Montgomery was unable to advance rapidly. The distance of his units from the Calabrian ports of Reggio and Crotone caused him serious logistical problems, and the tasks of switching his logistical base from Calabria to the Adriatic ports and of regrouping his forces required time.

General Montgomery organized his immediate operations into two parts. He would capture the Foggia airfields, then cover them by seizing ground about forty miles beyond—the hills north and west of the Foggia plain and the lateral Vinchiaturo-Termoli road running along the Biferno River. These operations would get under way in the last days of September.[4]

The Germans, for their part, were reexamining their original strategy of delaying the Allies in southern and central Italy until they could construct a strong defensive line in the Northern Apennines. In consonance with the original concept, Kesselring, on the day after the Salerno landings, had drawn on a map a series of successive lines across the Italian peninsula suitable as delaying positions. A few days later, having mastered his temporary difficulties with the Italians around Rome, he began to consider the possibility of going over to the defensive altogether somewhere south of Rome. One of the lines he had drawn was through Mignano, about fifty miles north of Naples and ninety miles south of Rome; this line, sometimes called the Reinhard Line, more often referred to as the Bernhard Line, offered excellent ground for defensive works. A dozen miles north of Mignano, the terrain around Cassino, to be known as the Gustav Line, provided an even better prospect for prolonged defense. If *Tenth Army* could gain enough time for Kesselring to construct fortifications along these lines, Kesselring might be able to halt the Allies far below the Northern Apennine position. Fighting the Allied forces below Rome had certain obvious strategic and tactical advantages. In addition, it would preserve the integrity and independence of Kesselring's command, for otherwise his forces would go under Rommel. The final decision on whether to defend below Rome rested, of course, with Hitler. Until he made his decision, the original plan of withdrawal remained in effect. Instructing Vietinghoff to retire slowly to the Volturno River, Kesselring directed him to hold there until at least 15 October in order to allow time to construct defensive positions on the next line farther to the north.[5]

Withdrawing to any defensive line across the entire Italian mainland meant that Vietinghoff had to bring the *1st Parachute Division* north to align it with

[4] Montgomery, *El Alamein to the River Sangro,* pp. 133–36; De Guingand, *Operation Victory,* pp. 323–24.

[5] See Kesselring, *A Soldier's Record,* p. 226.

the troops on the west coast. Since OKW refused to release troops from northern Italy to reinforce the paratroopers in the Foggia area, he instructed Heidrich, the division commander, to fight a nominal delaying action as he withdrew. The first good line on which to anchor a withdrawal even temporarily was the Biferno River, just north of Foggia.

More ticklish was the job of withdrawing from close contact with the Allied divisions in the Salerno beachhead. Not only did Vietinghoff have to break off operations without exposing himself to immediate pursuit, but in accordance with Kesselring's order he had to withdraw very slowly. At the same time, he had to extend his front across the Italian mainland to link up with the *1st Parachute Division.*

Vietinghoff settled the conduct of these operations on 17 September. Estimating that the dispersal of the Eighth Army had left Montgomery incapable of exerting strong pressure for several days, he decided to retain the bulk of his strength on the right (west) opposite the Fifth Army. These right flank forces, holding the Sorrento peninsula as pivot for a wheeling withdrawal, would enable him to evacuate the large supply dumps in and around Naples and to destroy the harbor and supply installations useful to the Allies.[6]

As Vietinghoff planned to deploy his units under the *XIV Panzer Corps* to the west and the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* to the east, the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* began to disengage on 17 September for withdrawal northeast and north behind strong rear guards. The *26th Panzer Division* broke contact with the Allies two days later and fell back to the north from the Battipaglia area, also leaving strong rear guard forces. By the end of September, these two divisions, along with the *1st Parachute Division,* would be under the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* in the eastern part of the Italian peninsula.

The task of defending the pivot area devolved upon the *XIV Panzer Corps,* more specifically on the *Hermann Goering Division,* which controlled units of the *3d* and *15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions* and two battalions of the *1st Parachute Division.* Vietinghoff transferred the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* to the western portion of the Volturno line, not only to start constructing defensive positions but also to guard against Allied amphibious operations along the coast. He assembled the *16th Panzer Division,* whose units were mixed with all the other divisions in the Salerno area, and sent it to the Volturno to prepare defenses in the difficult hill terrain near Capua.

For the conduct of operations between the Salerno beachhead and the Volturno River, Vietinghoff designated intermediate defensive lines and dates to denote the minimum time they were to be held by rear guard forces. Since the major task was to begin building field fortifications along the Volturno, he ordered that the Allied advance be delayed by a methodical destruction of all the lines of communication leading to the river.

Kesselring was more than specific on the destruction he wanted. He directed *Tenth Army* to evacuate all rolling stock, trucks, buses, automobiles, and cables, and to dismantle and evacuate the Alfa Romeo plant near Naples, and all other

[6] Vietinghoff, The Campaign in Italy, 1947, mimeographed document translated by the British Air Ministry, OCMH.

war industry installations, including those manufacturing tools, typewriters, and accounting machines. The troops were to spare historic buildings, museums, churches, monasteries, and hospitals. They were to demolish railroad sections, power plants, bridges, switch points, and water lines; to mine bridge approaches and roads; to destroy all transportation and communications facilities that could not be moved—harbor installations, docks and moles, radio and meteorological stations—water supplies and reservoirs, food supplies and storage centers, canning plants, breweries, and distilleries. Kesselring promised to send some demolition experts to help in the destruction, but if there were not enough to do the entire job, the army was to do the best it could.[7]

The German intention to withdraw was apparent to Fifth Army intelligence officers, who noted the enemy "intrenching north of River Volturno and west of Capua." The Allies expected the Germans to withdraw by pivoting on Salerno; to hold firm in the areas north of Salerno and Vietri; and to be well dug in near Nocera in order to block the road to Avellino and Foggia. Although strong opposition had been anticipated on the direct approaches to Naples, air reconnaissance reports indicated extremely heavy traffic going north into the interior. Of the different courses the enemy might adopt, it seemed most likely that he would choose to delay the Allied advance by what was termed "offensive-defensive tactics" at various locations. The pattern of motor movements, the German dislike of giving up ground, and a critical need for troops in other areas, which made reinforcement of southern Italy seem impractical, bolstered the Allied estimate.[8]

Hoping for an opportunity to seize Naples quickly—for example, should the enemy front collapse suddenly, or the Allies make a decisive breakthrough—General Clark had held a regimental task force of the 36th Division in readiness for a swift thrust on the right flank to Benevento, thirty miles north of Salerno. This giant step was designed to outflank Naples and cut the communications east of the city while avoiding a fight through the narrow, readily defended passes of the Sorrento ridge.[9] But almost from the first it became all too apparent that the Fifth Army drive north from Salerno was destined to be slow.

General Clark called a conference of major commanders and key staff officers on 18 September to discuss future plans. All were soon agreed that the few available roads dictated in large measure what Fifth Army could do. The 10 Corps would have to fight through the two major mountain passes to the Naples plain, where General McCreery might commit armor to capture Naples and drive north to the Volturno. The VI Corps would have to make a flanking movement through the mountains on the right, use the two roads in its zone to cut the east-west highway, Route 7, from Naples through Avellino to Teora, and keep contact with Eighth Army on the right.

This was what General Clark ordered. Placing the 82d Airborne and 36th Divisions in army reserve, the 36th prepared for commitment, if necessary, against

[7] Kesselring to Vietinghoff, 20 Sep 43, and Appendix to Order, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[8] Fifth Army G–2 Rpt 13, 19 Sep 43.

[9] Fifth Army FO 2, 16 Sep 43.



GENERAL LUCAS

Naples, he instructed the 10 Corps to make the main effort to secure the Vietri-Nocera and Salerno—San Severino passes and push on to the plain for a drive on Naples, while the VI Corps plunged into the interior with two divisions to seize the Avellino-Montemarano-Teora line. General Alexander imposed one restriction: Fifth Army was to keep its right flank in close touch with the Eighth Army. The rate of the British army advance would thus determine in part the speed of American progress.[10]

The Flanking March

The new VI Corps operation started on 20 September, when General Middleton's 45th Division on the right, already through Eboli, moved toward Oliveto, ten miles away, and General Truscott's 3d Division began to move through Battipaglia toward Acerno, a dozen miles distant.[11]

On that day Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas took command of the VI Corps. He had commanded the 3d Division at Fort Lewis, Washington, had been a War Department observer in North Africa early in 1943, and had commanded III Corps at Fort McPherson, Georgia. In May 1943, sent by General Marshall to North Africa again, this time to help General Eisenhower keep in touch with the combat troops, General Lucas became in Eisenhower's words, his "American Deputy." Characterized by Marshall as having "military stature, prestige, and experience," Lucas in early September replaced General Bradley as commander of II Corps in Sicily. From there he went to the Salerno beachhead.[12]

General Lucas was a firm believer in making maximum use of artillery to speed his advance and reduce American casualties.[13] But artillery could not solve his problems north of Salerno. The German delaying forces proved elusive in the mountainous terrain of the VI Corps zone, ground penetrated only by secondary roads with steep grades, innumerable switchbacks, and bridges difficult to bypass. Although resistance was not always strong or stubborn, the German delaying action was exceptionally well organized. Machine guns and small artillery emplacements were cleverly concealed, and units in the rear and on higher ground protected them by small arms fire. To advance, American infantry had to work slowly up the slopes and outflank the rear guard detachments.

[10] Fifth Army FO 4, 1500, 19 Sep 43; Fifth Army OI's 1 and 2, 1700, 20 Sep 43. See also Truscott, *Command Missions*, pp. 254ff.

[11] Fifth Army FO 5, 18 Sep 43.

[12] See Lucas Diary, 21 May, 3, 12 Jun, 4 Sep 43.

[13] Lucas to Middleton, 2000, 21 Sep 43, VI Corps G-3 Jnl.

By then the Germans had usually broken contact and withdrawn to the next prepared delaying position.

The 3d and 45th Divisions on 21 September ran into opposition that held up their advance guards for a day. A destroyed bridge covered by riflemen and machine gunners stationed on the opposite side of a gorge stopped the 3d Division just south of Acerno, and it took cross-country marches through the mountains for the leading regiment to disperse the enemy and occupy the town. Similarly, before the advance regiment of the 45th Division could take Oliveto, it had to outflank positions defending the town and mount an organized assault.[14]

Relying heavily on demolitions to delay the Americans, the Germans destroyed more than twenty-five bridges between Paestum and Oliveto. To repair the bridges or construct bypasses was time consuming, even with the invaluable Bailey bridge—"a knock-down steel bridge which is put together like a boy's Erector Set and is then pushed out across the span to be bridged." Any hope for a rapid advance soon faded, although the engineers, on whom a great part of the burden of the advance fell, performed epic feats. "There was no weapon more valuable than the engineer bulldozer," General Truscott later wrote, "no soldiers more effective than the engineers who moved us forward." [15]

The American mechanized forces for the most part fought the terrain rather than the enemy. The high, steep banks along the narrow roads prevented proper deployment of vehicles; canals, irrigation ditches, and streams hindered movement; thick foliage impeded visibility; and debris from shelled buildings blocked the narrow streets in the villages. As a result, the artillery, tank destroyers, and tanks were often a liability rather than an asset.[16]

Battle became a matter of infantry maneuver by small units operating with a minimum of support. The normal method of advance was by regiment, along a road, with a small advance party on foot accompanied by a few vehicles transporting weapons, ammunition, and communications. The troops brushed aside light resistance. When halted by larger forces, usually defending at an obstruction, for example a demolished bridge, the regiment kept one battalion on the axis of advance to maintain contact and protect the deployment of artillery, while the other battalions took to the hills to outflank the enemy position. When the enemy was dispersed and the site was clear of small arms fire, engineers removed any other obstacles and built a bypass or repaired the bridge. The advance then began again, gener-

[14] 2d Lt. Ernest Childers, though he had fractured his instep, led eight men up a hill near Oliveto toward two German machine gun positions; while his men covered his advance, he crawled to one and destroyed it with a grenade, then crawled to the other, where he threw rocks until the gunners raised their heads, whereupon he killed them with rifle fire. Cpl. James D. Slaton, lead scout of an infantry squad, eliminated three machine gun positions with bayonet, rifle fire, and a grenade, thereby making it possible for two assault platoons to advance to objectives near Oliveto. Both Childers and Slaton were awarded the Medal of Honor.

[15] Truscott, *Command Missions*, pp. 255–59. Quotes are from page 259. See also Msgs, Clark to Alexander, 19, 20 Sep 43, AG 370.2; Blanche D. Coll, Jean E. Keith, and Herbert H. Rosenthal, *The Corps of Engineers: Troops and Equipment*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1958), pp. 50–51.

[16] See 191st Tank Bn AAR, Aug–Sep 43; 151st FA Bn AAR's, Sep, Oct 43; 645th Tank Destroyer Bn AAR, Sep 43.



ENGINEERS REPAIRING A BRIDGE NEAR ACERNO

ally with another regiment taking the lead.

It was difficult for some to understand why progress was so slow. Air force commanders, for example, were impatient because they wanted to establish air units on the fields in the Naples area.[17] General Clark also showed impatience, for he looked to VI Corps to outflank Naples and loosen the German hold on the port area. "Absolutely essential," he told General Lucas on 24 September, "that they [Middleton and Truscott] continue full speed ahead in order to influence decisively our attack on Naples." [18]

Not much could be done. The same problems hampered progress beyond Acerno and Oliveto on the roads, respectively, to Montemarano and Teora. The terrain channeled mechanized movements to the few narrow roads. Bridging material became critically short. The delaying actions of only a few German detachments slowed the advance out of all proportion to the number of German troops actually involved. The additional requirement imposed on the 45th Division, to keep contact on the right with the Eighth Army, also retarded the advance by making necessary extensive patrolling on the flank.

Keeping supplies flowing to the front became a nightmare. For example, in advancing beyond Acerno, the 3d Division had two regiments in column, the leading one attacking along the road, while the men of the third regiment moved on foot across trackless mountains. To keep the third regiment supplied with food and ammunition, General Truscott had his engineers cut a trail for pack animals, no mean achievement. Fortunately, the division had formed a provisional pack train in Sicily and had brought its mules and drivers to the mainland.

When it was apparent that mules would be necessary to insure supply movements, General Clark began to look into the possibility of obtaining pack animals for the other Fifth Army divisions, which required a minimum of 1,300 animals. Only a few were available from local sources and from Sicily and North Africa. As divisions scoured the countryside for enough animals to organize pack train units of 300 to 500 beasts per division, corps and army headquarters requested overseas shipments from the United States. Equipment and feed for the animals were additional requirements hard to come by. Within a

[17] See Lemnitzer, DCofS 15th AGp, to Gruenther, CofS Fifth Army, 22 Sep 43, 15th AGp Master Cables File, VI.

[18] VI Corps AAR, Sep 43.

month, however, even though the Germans had slaughtered mules they could not take with them, each Fifth Army division had acquired a collection of nondescript beasts of burden, as well as gear of all descriptions—shoes, nails, halters, and saddles. Soldiers who knew how to take care of the animals became precious assets.[19]

From the vantage point of the corps headquarters, General Lucas thought operations were going well—so well that he looked forward to fighting in more open country where he could use tanks. He found the dust on the roads a "terrible problem," but probably, he philosophized, no worse than rain and mud. Part of the 34th Division was becoming available for commitment between the 3d and 45th Divisions, but Lucas was unable to see how he could possibly employ additional troops—how could he supply two divisions over one available road? [20]

General Lucas' outlook suddenly changed on 26 September—"everything has gone to hell," he wrote in his diary. The road in front of the 3d Division was blocked by three destroyed bridges, one 90 feet long, one 85 feet long, the third 125 feet long. Yet here too Lucas could see the silver lining—at least the infantry would get some rest while engineers repaired the damage.[21]

General Clark visited General Lucas on the morning of 26 September to tell him he wanted Avellino. About twenty miles north of Salerno and twenty-five miles east of Naples, Avellino was on the main Foggia-Naples road. Seizure of Avellino, which Lucas called "the key to the situation," would threaten to outflank the German defenders of Naples. Since the 3d Division would have to fight across roadless mountains to get to Avellino, Lucas tried to get part of the 34th Division forward. If the 133d Infantry, which was ashore in its entirety, could reach the front that night, perhaps it could get within immediate striking distance of Avellino. And that, as Lucas understood the situation, would take the pressure off the British who were attacking through the Sorrento ridge and "seem rather badly stuck." [22]

The 34th Division commander, General Ryder, had lunch with General Lucas on the 26th and they discussed the complicated arrangements required to move the 133d Infantry forward. The regiment, using only blackout lights, would have to travel over a narrow mountain road on a dark night, through thick dust, while supply trucks were using the same road to go in the opposite direction; it would then have to pass through the 45th Division. If the 133d Infantry could reach Montemarano, the regiment could drive west along the main road toward Avellino and not only help the 3d Division but also begin to threaten Naples from the east. What made the attempt particularly worthwhile was the fact that the 3d and 45th Divisions had that day temporarily lost contact with the withdrawing Germans.

On the night of the 26th, despite a heavy rain that washed out several of the mountain bridges engineers had so laboriously constructed and also carried dirt and rocks down the mountains and

[19] See VI Corps G–3 Jnl, 1055, 24 Sep 43.

[20] Lucas Diary, 25 Sep 43; VI Corps G–3 Jnl, 21 Sep 43.

[21] Lucas Diary, 26 Sep 43.

[22] *Ibid.*

across the roads in many places, the 133d Infantry moved in seventy 2 1/2-ton trucks to an assembly area not far from Montemarano. One of the units in the regiment was the 100th Infantry Battalion, composed originally of Japanese Americans from Hawaii; it had replaced the 2d Battalion of the 133d Infantry, which remained in Algiers as AFHQ security guard.[23]

While the regiment prepared on 27 September for commitment, the 45th and 3d Divisions inched painfully forward over difficult ground to get into position for a converging attack on Avellino. To help the engineers, who were nearing exhaustion, General Lucas dispatched corps engineers to the division area. And to insure a flow of supply to the combat troops because he feared that more rain might wash out more bridges, he moved supply dumps well forward, far closer to the front than normal.

On the immediate approaches to Avellino, the VI Corps re-established contact with the Germans on 28 September. The 3d Division and 133d Infantry prepared to assault the German defenses blocking entrance into the town. But when "it rained like hell all night," the plans went awry. The roads became impassable. "Am running this thing on a shoestring," General Lucas wrote in his diary, "and a thin little shoestring at that." [24]

When on 29 September General Alexander removed the restriction that had held the advance of the Fifth Army right flank to the progress of Montgomery's Eighth Army, he gave General Clark another objective. "You should get Benevento early," the army group commander directed.[25] This objective, about fifteen miles north of Avellino, changed General Lucas' plans. Sending the 3d Division alone against Avellino, Lucas ordered the 133d Infantry to cut the Avellino-Benevento highway and sent the 45th Division directly against Benevento itself.

While the 133d Infantry and the 45th Division drove generally north, the 3d Division on 30 September took Avellino, then turned westward toward 10 Corps. Truscott's troops had just come through sixty miles of mountainous terrain and the men were tired, "but there can be no stopping to rest now." German opposition was extremely light, sometimes nonexistent, evidence that the Germans were again retiring. Their hold on Naples had been loosened, and before they could dig in on new defenses, they had to be driven to the Volturno River.[26]

The Main Effort

The main effort against Naples was carried by the British 10 Corps, which made a 2-day shift of forces to the left to mark the transition from the battle of the Salerno beachhead to the drive on Naples. By moving the 46th Division to Vietri and the 56th Division to Salerno, General McCreery relinquished the Battipaglia-Eboli area to the VI Corps and permitted the Americans to come abreast and start their flanking march through the mountains. He also placed

[23] History of the 100th Inf Bn, 2 Sep 43–11 Jun 44.
[24] Lucas Diary, 29 Sep 43.
[25] Alexander to Clark, 0820, 29 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl.
[26] Lucas Diary, 30 Sep 43; Fifth Army OI 4, 1800, 29 Sep 43; Gen Lucas to Brig Gen Benjamin F. Caffey, 0800, 29 Sep 43, and Lucas to Ryder, 1030, 29 Sep 43, both in VI Corps G–3 Jnl; Interv, Mathews with Lucas, 24 May 48, OCMH.

his infantry divisions in position to attack through the two major passes of the Sorrento hill mass—the Vietri-Nocera and Salerno—San Severino roads. Once the infantry divisions were through the Sorrento barrier and on the Naples plain, he hoped to pass the 7th Armoured Division through the 46th at Nocera for the final strike toward Naples. The U.S. Rangers on the left were to assist.

General McCreery had looked for a quick way of getting through the high ground of the Sorrento peninsula when the Germans retired from the Battipaglia area on 18 September and air reconnaissance showed definite German movement to the north. He thought he might be able to send the Rangers through a third and smaller pass, the Maiori-Pagani road through the Chiunzi pass. If the Rangers could secure Pagani, a suburb of Nocera, and could hold dominating ground nearby, they might open the Vietri pass for the 46th Division. With this in mind, McCreery attached to Darby's command a mobile regimental force, the 23d Armoured Brigade, which was to debouch on the plain of Naples for operations in conjunction with the troops emerging from the Nocera defile.[27]

The Rangers had been considerably reinforced even before the attachment of the armored brigade. To the three Ranger battalions had been added a battalion of the 143d Infantry, a battalion (less a company) of the 325th Glider Infantry, and tank, tank destroyer, artillery, and 4.2-inch mortar elements. On 20 September General Clark further attached to Darby's command the rest of the glider regiment, a battalion (less a company) of the 504th Parachute Infantry, and additional artillery and signal troops. Darby thus had about 8,500 troops under his command.[28]

Even with these reinforcements, Colonel Darby could only hold the ground he had already seized. Operating from positions over 4,000 feet high, where a good part of the command could do little more than carry rations and ammunition for the others, the Rangers were thinly spread over a large area on the precipitous slopes high above the Gulf of Salerno. Darby's troops were less than three miles from Castellammare on the Gulf of Naples—on the northern shore of the Sorrento peninsula—but plans to attack and capture this port were shelved because of German strength.[29]

Abandoning his hope for a quick penetration through the Chiunzi pass, General McCreery relied instead on power. The 46th Division would make the main effort on the Vietri-Nocera axis while the 56th Division launched a subsidiary attack along the Salerno—San Severino road and the reinforced Rangers engaged the Germans in the Nocera-Scafati area and reconnoitered river crossings near Scafati. The 7th Armoured Division was to pass through the 46th Division at Nocera and capture high ground near Pagani, earlier designated as a Ranger objective. When Clark talked to McCreery about continuing his advance to the Volturno even as he drove to Naples, he suggested that the Rangers, after helping to seize Naples, could police the city until relieved by

[27] 10 Corps Instruction 4, 18 Sep 43.

[28] Ltr, Brann to Darby, 20 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[29] Altieri, *Darby's Rangers*, pp. 58ff.; Darby Lecture.

the 82d Airborne Division, which would then be responsible for restoring and maintaining order.[30]

The 10 Corps attack jumped off at first light, 23 September. What happened in one pass had little effect on the action in the others. Only a few miles interposed between lines of departure and emergence onto the plain of Naples, but in the narrow defiles, flanked by steep hillsides, the Germans defended stubbornly. The 56th Division made hardly any progress. The 46th Division, with very heavy artillery support, gained less than a mile. The Rangers moved forward very little.

After several days of attack, it became obvious that the 10 Corps would need reinforcement, and General Clark began to move units of the 82d Airborne Division by truck and by landing craft to the Sorrento peninsula. Except for Company G, 325th Glider Infantry, which was occupying the island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples, the units of General Ridgway's division in Italy were assembled on 26 September. Ridgway took control of the Rangers and all units attached to them; his forces totaled about 13,000 troops—including 600 Rangers, 1,700 men of the 23d Armoured Brigade, and supporting personnel. He placed the forces in the eastern part of his division zone under Colonel Darby, the forces in the western part under Col. James M. Gavin, who commanded the 505th Parachute Infantry. Ridgway's first report indicated "no substantial contact" with the enemy.[31]

With the mission of helping the 46th Division by seizing dominating ground in the Egidio-Sala area to permit the 23d Armoured Brigade to debouch on the plain, Ridgway planned to attack on 27 September at dusk. This would give his troops all night to secure a bridgehead across a small mountain stream between Sala and Egidio, prepare bridges and fords, and get out on the plain around Pagani before daylight.[32] If the attack started to move and needed additional impetus, a regiment of the 36th Division, which was being readied by General O'Daniel, was prepared to land at Torre Annunziata, a dozen miles south of Naples.[33]

The amphibious hook proved unnecessary. Vietinghoff, who had established his first line across the Italian mainland, was pulling back to it according to schedule.

On the night of 27 September, the 82d Airborne Division jumped off, making its main effort through the Chiunzi pass. The troops met only light opposition and reached the Naples plain by morning. Their progress helped the 46th Division move three miles. Although the 46th was still several miles short of Nocera, the terrain was such that McCreery could commit the 7th Armoured Division through the infantry. With British tanks then approaching Nocera and

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[30] 10 Corps Opn Order 2, 21 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl; Fifth Army OI 3, 2100, 22 Sep 43.

[31] 82d Abn Div Sitrep 18, 1600, 26 Sep 43; G–3 Periodic Rpt 18, 2400, 26 Sep 43, and Troop List, 1700, 26 Sep 43; Clark to McCreery, 2027, 27 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl; 505th Prcht Inf Bn AAR, Sep 43. The 82d Airborne Division also had 1,150 men en route to Italy, the same number still in Sicily, and 650 in North Africa. The glider company on Ischia totaled 110 men.

[32] Ltr, Gruenther to McCreery, 26 Sep 43, and Gruenther Memo, 26 Sep 43, both in Fifth Army G–2 Jnl; Ltr, Ridgway to McCreery, Opns, 26 Sep 43, and Ridgway Memo, Opns, 1630, 26 Sep 43, both in 505th Prcht Inf AAR Sep 43.

[33] Gruenther Memo, 26 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl.

American infantry of the VI Corps at this point threatening Avellino, the Germans fell back from San Severino and permitted the 56th Division to advance north from Salerno. On 28 September, the 23d Armoured Brigade came through the Chiunzi pass and made contact with the advance units of the armored division.[34]

General McCreery directed the 7th Armoured Division to drive west and secure bridgeheads across the Sarno River at Scafati. Once across the river, the main body of the armored division was to skirt Mount Vesuvius on the east and north and drive to the Volturno at Capua while the other elements and the 23d Armoured Brigade took the coastal road to Naples. If the Germans had left Naples, the smaller force was to skirt the city on the east and drive north along the coast to the Volturno, leaving the occupation of Naples to the 82d Airborne Division.

Opposition was scattered, but the westward drive toward Scafati and the Sarno River across the Naples plain, which was covered with fruit trees and had many villages, posed its problems. Confined to a single road, the 7th Armoured Division was extended over fifty-five miles. Unable to deploy satisfactorily, the tankers found it difficult to clear the villages and the thickly wooded country. When foliage covered tank turrets, the tankers became virtually blind. Concerned about traffic congestion, particularly at bridges, McCreery warned his commanders to keep their troops well in hand.[35]

Early on 29 September the 7th Armoured Division seized the bridge at Scafati intact, although the other bridges across the Sarno had been destroyed. That day heavy rain and demolitions rather than active enemy opposition held back the armor. In order to bring up the tail of some 7,000 vehicles still in the Salerno area, the division constructed three bridges across the river. The roads, in the words of one report, became "literally packed" with traffic as the corps moved beyond the restricting barrier of the Sorrento hill mass. That evening patrols of the 23d Armoured Brigade and American paratroopers swept past the ruins of Pompeii and entered Torre Annunziata.[36]

General McCreery had planned to protect his right flank by holding back the 56th Division, once it was through the San Severino pass. But when the VI Corps took Avellino on 30 September and thereby cut the Salerno-Avellino highway, McCreery dispatched the entire division to the north.

A German rear guard held up the advance along the coastal road to Naples on the evening of 30 September but not for long. On the following day, as opposition melted away, British troops went through the eastern outskirts of Naples and continued up the coastal road to the Volturno. The 82d Airborne Division moved into Naples on 1 October, followed next day by the Rangers.[37]

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[34] 82d Abn Div AAR, Sep 43; 10 Corps Invasion of the Italian Mainland, Summary of Operations Carried Out by British Troops Under Command, Fifth U.S. Army, n.d. (draft mimeograph copy), OCMH. See Altieri, *Darby's Rangers*, p. 62.

[35] See McCreery to Ridgway, 1940, 28 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[36] See 7th Armd Div Opns, Part II, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

[37] Ridgway to Clark, 1228, 29 Sep 43, and 23d Armd Brigade Opns Order 36, 29 Sep 43, both in Fifth Army G–2 Jnl.

After meeting the U.S. 3d Division on 2 October, the 56th Division swung northwest and together with the 7th Armoured Division, against decreasing resistance, marched through Caserta toward the Volturno River in the Capua area. Tanks and vehicles moved in closely packed columns. Three days later patrols were at the Volturno, and by 7 October the 10 Corps had closed to the river in strength.

By then the VI Corps was also at the Volturno. The 3d Division had moved through Cancello and Maddaloni and patrols arrived at the river above Capua by 6 October. The 45th Division on 2 October had captured Benevento, which was by then no more than a mass of rubble smelling of the bodies buried under the masonry. Crossing the damaged but usable Benevento bridge that had been seized by the 133d Infantry, the 45th moved during the next few days toward the river. The 34th Division, having arrived in Italy in entirety, marched to Montesarchio in the rear of the 3d Division; Lucas hoped to keep its presence hidden for the moment from the Germans.

By the end of the first week of October, the Fifth Army stood at the Volturno, with Naples and its satellite ports captured, the airfields of Capodichino and Pomigliano in hand. Holding a firm base "for further offensive operations," General Clark hoped to get across the Volturno at once and continue into the next phase of the Italian campaign. When he talked with General Lucas on 3 October about future operations, he expected the 10 Corps to be pulled out soon for assignment to the Eighth Army, while the U.S. II Corps headquarters came from Sicily to operate in the coastal area. Clark decided that the VI Corps would remain in the mountainous interior of Italy: "You know how to fight in the mountains," he told Lucas. Maybe he did, Lucas observed, but he had had all of it he wanted already.[38]

Naples

Like Garibaldi, the Allies had needed three weeks to get to Naples; one more week and they were at the Volturno, bringing Operation AVALANCHE to an end. The cost of establishing a beachhead at Salerno, which had taken eleven days, of capturing Naples, which had required ten more days, and of advancing to the Volturno was more than 12,000 British and American casualties, of whom approximately 2,000 were killed, 7,000 wounded, and 3,500 missing.[39]

The prize of the operation, the city of Naples, was utterly destroyed. Allied bombing had flattened industrial Naples into a mass of rubble and twisted girders. More systematically, the Germans, too, had taken their toll. They had destroyed or removed all transportation facilities, blasted communications installations, knocked out water and power systems, and broken open sewer mains. They had demolished bridges, mined buildings, fired stockpiles of coal, burned hotels and university buildings, looted the city, ripped up the port railroads, and choked the harbor with sunken ships and the wreckage of port installations.

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[38] Lucas Diary, 3 Oct 43.

[39] Casualties are tabulated in *Fifth Army History*, Part I, pp. 97–98. Principal sources for this section are Cunningham *Despatch*, pp. 2171ff.; Wood Lecture; History of Peninsular Base Section, vol. I, 9 July to 28 August 1943, and vol. II, 28 August 1943 to 31 January 1944, MS, OCMH.



WRECKAGE IN THE DOCKYARDS, NAPLES

It would be no easy task to establish a military base in a shattered city inhabited by hungry, unemployed people. German artillery continued to shell Naples for several days after its capture: half the population of 800,000 had fled into the countryside and those remaining had had little food for nearly ten days. The Allies would need three months to restore city life to conditions approaching normal, somewhat less time to set up a military base.

The task of restoration belonged to the Fifth Army Base Section, which was redesignated at the end of October as the Peninsular Base Section. A logistical command formed to support Fifth Army operations, the base section moved into Naples on 2 October and functioned as an advance communications zone. Although the headquarters had somewhat fewer than 600 men, it eventually directed the administration and operations of more than 33,000 assigned and attached personnel.[40]

AFHQ had provided shipments of food for the civilian population, but in order to get the ships unloaded and the supplies distributed, the city and port had first to be cleaned up. Two engineer regiments, the 540th and 343d, assisted by Italian laborers, cleared the streets of obstructions at more than two hundred separate locations, mended breaks in the sewers at some fifty places, and repaired the Napoleonic aqueduct, the

[40] See Interv, Mathews with Brig Gen Ralph H. Tate, Fifth Army G–1, May 45, OCMH.

major source of water for the city. In mid-October three Italian submarines put in and anchored at Naples to give power for pumping water in an ingenious scheme that used a trolley substation as another part of the improvised system.

In the midst of the work, a delayed-fuze bomb exploded in the post office around noon, 7 October, killing and injuring about 35 soldiers and an equal number of civilians. Four days later an exploding bomb or mine in an Italian Army barracks occupied by members of the 82d Airborne Division killed 18 men and injured 56. Beginning on 21 October, a series of German air raids struck the city. Although the air attacks were neither frequent nor particularly severe, they inflicted casualties on both troops and civilians.[41]

By far the largest task was rehabilitating the port, which had sustained the worst destruction. Thirty major wrecks were visible in the Naples harbor, but beneath the surface the hulls of more than a hundred scuttled and sunken ships ranging in size from small harbor craft to large ocean-going liners blocked the waterways—destroyers, tankers, tugs, sloops, corvettes, trawlers, floating cranes, tank barges. Most of the vessels had been reduced to junk before sinking. On top of them the Germans had piled lighters, cranes, locomotives, trucks, loads of ammunition, oxygen bottles, and small arms. Of seventy-three electric cranes at dockside, only one remained standing and that was badly damaged. Charges exploded under the pier cranes had blown them into the harbor and smashed the quay walls. The piers and wharves had been turned into a mass of twisted steel and debris. Harbor warehouses, grain elevators, office buildings, and railroad facilities had been dynamited into piles of ruin. Huge mountains of coal were burning.

It took three days just to extinguish the fires burning in the piles of coal. Meanwhile, Army engineers cleared passages from the city to the piers, bulldozing alleys to gain access to the port. They repaired railroads and opened truck routes. With dynamite, bulldozer, crane, and shovel, they filled craters, hacked roads through debris, cleared docks, and leveled buildings for storage space. On the fifth day of work, the first engine ran from the railroad yard along the main line of the port to Pier A.

During the same period of time, American and British naval groups were dragging mines and wreckage from the waterways and cleaning the piers to make them accessible from the ocean side. Divers, hampered by thick fuel oil covering the water, floating wreckage, and submerged cranes, worked on the underwater obstacles, while naval salvage crews removed the smaller sunken craft in order to open passageways to berthing spaces for ships waiting outside the harbor to be discharged. Larger vessels that had been scuttled adjacent to piers were left in place, and the piers were extended across the wrecks with steel and wooden bridging to provide eventual berthing for 26 Liberty ships, 6 coasters, and 11 LST's.

While rehabilitation and restoration continued, a fleet of DUKW's brought supplies from transports anchored offshore. As early as 3 October, landing craft were docking at berths scattered throughout the port. On 4 October a Liberty ship pulled bow-to against a

[41] See Engr History, Fifth Army, vol. I, p. 30.



PIER BUILT ACROSS THE HULL OF A SUNKEN SHIP, NAPLES

pier and unloaded front hatches, then backed out, turned, and came in stern first to complete unloading. Not long afterward, 5 berths for Liberty ships, 6 for coasters, and 8 holding berths were opened.[42]

Two weeks after the capture of Naples, the Allies were unloading 3,500 tons of cargo daily at the port, not quite half of the average 8,000 tons discharged per day before the war. By the end of October, with about 600 DUKW's being used in port operations, Naples was receiving 7,000 tons daily. All American and some British supplies were coming into Naples, while additional items for 10 Corps were being unloaded at the satellite ports of Salerno, Torre Annunziata, and Castellammare.

Discharging operations across the Salerno beaches were also providing cargo tonnages. Between 9 September and 1 October, more than 190,000 troops came ashore, around 30,000 vehicles were landed, and about 120,000 tons of supplies were unloaded by an average daily employment of 60 LCT's, 30 LCM's, and 150 DUKW's.[43] This success was achieved despite a violent, 2-day wind and rain storm starting during the night of 27 September, which stopped all un-

[42] See Eisenhower to War Dept, 8 Oct 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

[43] Summary of tonnage and personnel unloading figures, Peninsular Base Sec Activities Rpts.

loading. During the storm all the LCM's and LCVP's in use, a total of 56, plus 24 LCT's, 3 LST's, and a merchant ship were driven ashore; 4 British LCT's, seeking shelter in uncleared offshore waters were badly damaged by mines; and all 6 of the double ponton bridge unloading ramps were swamped.

Despite the remarkable and somewhat surprising tonnages unloaded over the beaches, in the satellite ports, and in the restored harbor of Naples, supply levels in the army dumps diminished. Ships at Naples, for example, were bursting with rations, but on 6 October the Fifth Army had only four days' supply. Millions of cigarettes were awaiting discharge, but troops received only an occasional issue of tobacco. By 12 October, gasoline levels had sunk to three days' supply on hand.

This condition came about because of the difficulty of transporting supplies to the forward areas. Demolitions at bridges and culverts, an inadequate road network, and the limited usefulness of the railroads clogged the roads with traffic and overworked the limited number of trucks ashore.[44] Repairing the railroad from Naples to Caserta took longer than anticipated, and not until mid-November was the line opened for traffic along the entire route.

The Germans had also destroyed at Naples the petroleum storage tanks that had a capacity of 1.5 million barrels. They had ripped up pipelines and turned unloading machinery into a mass of scrap iron. Thus, it was the end of October, after storage tanks capable of holding 600,000 barrels had been repaired, before tankers could unload directly into the storage facilities. Only then could work start on a pipeline from the port to the front.

By the end of October the Peninsular Base Section had rehabilitated the facilities in the Naples area to the extent that Fifth Army could anticipate with confidence firm logistical support for further operations.

Foggia

On the other side of the Italian peninsula, Eighth Army had sent advance elements, with almost no enemy contact, to Foggia, which the Germans had abandoned on 27 September. By 1 October British troops were occupying Foggia and the nearby airfields.

To clear the Germans from the hills north and west of the Foggia plain and to reach the lateral Vinchiaturo-Termoli road near the Biferno River, General Montgomery sent 13 Corps beyond Foggia on a 2-division drive, the 78th Division moving on the coastal road to Termoli, the 1st Canadian Division striking inland through the mountains along the road to Vinchiaturo. The 5 Corps followed, protecting the west flank and the rear.

Since the *1st Parachute Division* had withdrawn to the Biferno River, where the paratroopers dug in, elements of the 78th Division had no trouble until they approached the river and reached the outskirts of Termoli. There they met serious resistance. Launching a quick amphibious strike to secure the small port of Termoli, General Montgomery dispatched Commando forces, which were ferried by LCI(L)'s from Sicily, to the town. The Commandos gained surprise by landing during the night of 2

[44] Fifth Army Base Sec Daily G–4 Rpts, Port of Naples, 7–31 Oct 43.

October and soon captured and cleared Termoli. However, their hold on the beachhead remained somewhat precarious until a brigade of the 78th Division came by water to Termoli on the following night.

The capture of Termoli invalidated the Biferno defensive line, and the enemy reaction was swift. The *16th Panzer Division,* rushed from the west coast, arrived at Termoli on 4 October, and counterattacked on the 4th, 5th, and 6th, striking not only the Termoli beachhead defenders but also the main British forces coming up the coastal road.

Flood waters of the river interfered with British bridging operations and prevented tanks and heavy supporting weapons from making firm contact with the beachhead. But on 7 October, when an additional brigade of the 78th Division was transported to Termoli by sea, the Germans disengaged and fell back to positions covering the Trigno River, the next natural line of defense. Logistical difficulties prevented an immediate British pursuit.

Meanwhile, after hard fighting in the mountains, the Canadians took Vinchiaturo. A paucity of supplies, particularly of gasoline, prevented further progress.

Because the two divisions had advanced on divergent lines, General Montgomery reorganized his front on 9 October. The 5 Corps took over the coastal area and assumed control not only of the 78th Division but also of the 8th Indian Division, which was assembling in the rear. The 13 Corps operated inland with the 1st Canadian Division and the 5th Division in column. The 2d New Zealand Division, due to arrive in Taranto by mid-October, Montgomery decided to hold initially in army reserve.

By 11 October, with Eighth Army at Termoli and Vinchiaturo, the Foggia airfields were secure. As the air forces made ready to base heavy bombers on the fields for attacks against targets in Austria, southern Germany, and the Balkans, the invasion of southern Italy came to an end. With the Fifth Army standing at the Volturno River and the Eighth Army able to move beyond the Biferno toward the Trigno River, the Allies were on the Italian mainland to stay. The question of how far to go up the Italian peninsula was under debate.

PART THREE

THE WINTER CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER XI

The Strategy

Several alternatives faced the Allied command after Naples. Should the Allied forces continue to move up the mainland of Italy? If so, how far and specifically where? The answer hinged on whether the Allied forces in the Mediterranean theater could better contribute to the cross-Channel attack scheduled for the spring of 1944 by threatening the Germans in the Balkans or by menacing southern France. And this in turn depended on the forces assigned: what units were available in the theater, how many should be committed in Italy to attain whatever goals were set for the campaign, and the extent of the additional resources that could be obtained from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. These choices were affected by estimates of German capabilities and intentions, decisions on global strategy, and worldwide allocations of shipping, matériel, and troops.

A major confusion in reaching a decision for Italy was the CCS directive that governed the operations. In exploiting the conquest of Sicily, the Combined Chiefs had stated, General Eisenhower was to eliminate Italy from the war and contain the maximum number of German divisions. The first was accomplished. But the second was so vague as to defy definition. The CCS had set no geographical objectives, and as a result the Italian campaign became, in retrospect, according to General Alexander, "a great holding attack." [1]

Yet the fact was that objectives had to be selected. They would determine not only how far north the Allied forces would go but also how much in terms of resources they would require. A vigorous campaign waged up the entire length of the Italian peninsula would obviously necessitate more troops, equipment, and supplies than an effort to secure, for example, Rome. In the debate that preceded decisions, a debate that stretched over the summer and fall of 1943, the matter of resources was ever present. Quite apart from the logisticians' calculations of requirements, those who directed the operations sought to obtain all they could get, the better to assure success.

Allied Intentions

Before the invasion of Sicily, Allied Force Headquarters planners had believed that an Allied occupation of all or most of Italy was possible. At that time they had thought it unlikely that the Germans would reinforce a collapsing Italy. In the event of an Allied landing on the Italian mainland, the Germans would withdraw to the Alps or, more probably, to a line just south of the Alps, delaying an Allied advance by de-

[1] Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2879.

stroying communications, perhaps even by concentrating five or six divisions south of Rome. But the Allied forces, the planners believed, could build up enough ground and air strength in southern Italy to push rapidly north. Beyond Naples, Rome, for its airfields and political advantages, was obviously the next important objective. Beyond Rome, the ports of Leghorn and Genoa beckoned, but were hardly essential. The heel of Italy was far more important—it would give Allied naval and air forces control of the south Adriatic and Ionian Seas, make it possible for these forces to interfere with the movement of enemy supplies to Greece and Albania, facilitate support to the Yugoslav Partisans, and threaten the Balkans sufficiently to contain German forces there. Similarly, Sardinia and Corsica would give the Allies control of the Tyrrhenian Sea and pose the threat of a landing in southern France. Ten French divisions, expected to be ready in North Africa for operational use early in 1944, plus heavy bomber attacks and the threat of amphibious and airborne operations launched from Italy and North Africa, would constitute a real and grave danger to the Germans in southern France and in the Balkans. Thus, the Allied theater command would comply with the CCS requirement of containing the maximum number of Germans if Allied troops occupied southern Italy as far north as Rome and the islands of Sardinia and Corsica. Given the current estimates of German strength, a total of ten Allied divisions would be necessary to accomplish this goal, and the commitment of such a force was reasonable in terms of the available resources.[2]

After the invasion of Sicily, Allied theater planners, with mounting optimism, began to see an occupation of Italy as far north as the Alps as both desirable and possible. From northern Italy, overland and amphibious operations against southern France and the Balkans would be feasible. The only limiting factors would be shipping, landing craft, and German strength, but these hardly seemed serious obstacles to success.[3] General Eisenhower looked to the Po Valley, from where he could move east or west and from where he could provide ironclad security for air bases established anywhere in Italy. The ten divisions that the Combined Chiefs at the TRIDENT Conference in May had made available to the theater would be sufficient—provided, of course, the German troop commitment in Italy did not increase appreciably over expectations. Was it necessary, planners in Washington asked, to go as far north as the Po Valley to insure effective bombardment of southern Germany? The reply was affirmative—the security of airfields in the Rome and Naples areas required control of the ground at least as far north as the Pisa-Ancona line. By inference, the theater planners seemed to be saying the Po Valley was not much farther north and the Alps were not far beyond that. As for operations to be developed out of a successful Italian campaign, an invasion of southern France was feasible, the principal problem being air cover; an offensive in the Balkans, which had been discussed, though no plans had been drawn, would be difficult—if undertaken, it was generally agreed in the theater, a

[2] AFHQ G–3 Memo, Occupation of Italy, 1 Jul 43.

[3] AFHQ G–3 Memo, Opns Against Mainland of Italy, n.d. (probably Aug 43).

Balkan invasion should go across the Adriatic and through a beachhead in the Durazzo area.[4]

American planners at the Joint Chiefs of Staff level believed that operations beyond southern Italy would be justified if the Allied forces gained air bases near Ancona from which to intensify the bombardment of German-held areas in Europe, if the Allies drove toward an invasion of southern France in support of the projected cross-Channel attack, and if they secured bases—perhaps even in Albania and Greece—from which to supply Balkan underground fighters. The Allied ground forces, in the opinion of these planners, should move overland to Rome in order to cover strategic and tactical air bases in southern Italy, then maintain "unremitting pressure" against the Germans with the possible aim of seizing and establishing air bases in the Ancona area. No major land operations, they believed, should be launched in the Balkans. Economic aid, they also recommended, should be provided to insure tolerable living standards among the Italian people.[5]

Early in August, General Marshall informed General Eisenhower that he could expect to have for future operations at least twenty-four American, British, and French divisions. These were more than enough, Marshall thought, for occupying Italy up to a line somewhere north of Rome, seizing Sardinia and Corsica, and making an amphibious landing in southern France—the ends Marshall believed desirable for an Italian campaign. Ten divisions could contain the German forces in Italy, the others could execute the invasion of southern France. A secure position in Italy north of Rome, occupation of Sardinia and Corsica, nothing in the Balkans—these were President Roosevelt's immediate aims. So far as the Americans were concerned, there was to be no march all the way up the Italian peninsula.[6]

If the Germans intended to reinforce their troops in Italy, and there were some indications to that effect in mid-August, General Eisenhower believed that a firm grasp on the Naples area would be a respectable accomplishment. Yet it would be impractical, in his view, to limit the occupation of Italy to a line just north of Rome. A balanced equation—with an Allied army in central Italy, German forces in northern Italy, and a no man's land between—was inconceivable. Either the Allies would have to drive the Germans out of Italy or be driven out themselves. The comparative weights of the resources employed by the opponents would decide the issue. His own capabilities, Eisenhower informed Marshall, were limited more by the shortage of personnel and matériel replacements, particularly of shipping and landing craft, than by actual strength in terms of divisions.[7]

The Allied leaders meeting in Quebec in August for the QUADRANT Conference received a warning from General Eisenhower that the immediate build-up in Italy was likely to be slow and that the Allied forces might face prolonged and

[4] Extract, Min, JPS Mtg, 7 Aug 43, dated 9 Aug 43, ABC 384, Post-HUSKY, Sec 1.

[5] JPS, Plans for Occupation of Italy and Her Possessions, 7 Aug 43, ABC 384, Post-HUSKY, Sec 2.

[6] Marshall to Eisenhower, n.d. (about 7 Aug 43), OPD Exec 3, Item 4; Memos, Marshall for Handy and Handy for Marshall, 9 Aug 43, ABC 384; Interv, Mathews, Lamson, Hamilton, and Smyth with Marshall, 25 Jul 49, OCMH.

[7] Eisenhower to Marshall, 13 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

bitter fighting. A firm hold on Naples might be the practical limit of the invasion at Salerno. Beyond Naples, Allied troops might have to fight their way "slowly and painfully" up the peninsula. Early exploitation to the Alps was a "delightful thought but . . . not to be counted upon with any certainty." [8]

General Eisenhower's planners nevertheless continued to believe that the Germans would withdraw at least as far north as Pisa to shorten their lines of communication rather than reinforce their troops in Italy. Since the Allied troops after the amphibious landing at Salerno would probably be in no condition to organize an effective pursuit, a small force, the planners thought, should be ready to proceed at once to Rome, while the rest of the Allied troops consolidated and then moved north to attack in the Pisa area.[9]

Within this optimistic frame of reference and encouraged by the willingness of the Italian Government to surrender, the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 27 August instructed General Eisenhower to draw plans for invading southern France. The operation was to take place at some unspecified time during or after the Italian campaign. Despite the uncertainty generated by the forthcoming invasion at Salerno, planners at all echelons banked on a rapid advance up the Italian peninsula and an amphibious operation against southern France mounted from northern Italy. By the spring of 1944, according to AFHQ plannners, the Allied forces would certainly have forced the Germans back to the foothills of the Alps and to the Piave River.[10]

Not so General Eisenhower. Just before the Salerno invasion, he informed the Combined Chiefs that the strength amassed by the Germans in Italy would probably force the Allies into a methodical advance up the Italian peninsula during the coming winter months.[11] A week later during the critical phase of the battle at Salerno, he began to think that a painstaking advance through the mountains of southern Italy might be too difficult to be worthwhile. Meeting the Germans on other ground might bring quicker results at less cost. To him, long-range planning for the conquest of all of Italy was debatable.[12] Yet at the end of the battle of the Salerno beachhead, a cheerful General Eisenhower informed General Marshall that the Germans might be too nervous to make a stand and fight a real battle south of Rome.[13]

British intelligence officers agreed. The Germans appeared to have no intention of getting involved in a decisive battle in southern or central Italy and were pulling their ground and air units out, probably to the Pisa-Rimini area. The first stage of their retirement would probably be to a line through Cassino in order to cover Rome and its lateral communications and to deny the Allies use of the airfields near Rome. But because their evacuation of Sardinia and Corsica

[8] Smith to Whiteley, 15 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[9] AFHQ G–3 Paper, Opns in Italy After a Bridgehead Has Been Established in Naples Area, 21 Aug 43.

[10] AFHQ G–3 Paper, Availability of Forces in Spring of 1944 After Occupation of Italy, 5 Sep 43.

[11] Eisenhower to CCS, 8 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[12] Eisenhower to War Dept, 15 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3. See also AFHQ G–3 Paper, Possible Opns in 1944, 17 Sep 43.

[13] Eisenhower to Marshall, 20 Sep 43, Mathews File, OCMH.

had exposed their mainland flank, the Germans were likely to make a rapid withdrawal. Confined to comparatively few roads and railways that were vulnerable to air and sea attack and to Italian sabotage, facing the risk of having a famished Italian population riot and attack their supply dumps and columns, the Germans would probably move quickly to the north.[14]

Signs early in October supported the view that the Germans intended to withdraw to a Pisa-Rimini line. But now it appeared that they would pace their withdrawal to gain time to complete fortifications along their main defensive line in the north, stabilize internal security in the country, inflict losses on the Allies while conserving their own strength, and delay as long as possible an Allied approach to vital German areas, perhaps even the airfields around Rome. The Germans would probably employ the bulk of six to nine divisions then in southern Italy in the region west of the Apennines. They might hold temporarily south of Rome along a general line from Anzio to Pescara. But above Rome, the terrain nowhere afforded good defensive positions short of the Pisa-Rimini line.

In driving the Germans toward the Pisa-Rimini area, the Allied ground troops would enjoy certain advantages. They would have close air support from tactical air units soon to be based in southern Italy, Sardinia, and Corsica. Part of the Northwest African Coastal Air Force was to operate from bases in the Foggia area and in the heel to protect shipping and military installations; strategic air forces based in the same areas, and later near Rome, would be available not only for attacking targets in northern Italy and southeastern Germany but also for disrupting German reinforcement and supply movements. With more than adequate naval support, the Allied ground forces would also be able to make amphibious flanking attacks on the east and west coasts of Italy.

Where then should the Allied command make the main effort? If strong forces moved up the east coast, they could cross the Apennines at any of several lateral roads and get behind the German positions along the western part of the peninsula. Yet the road net on the east coast would limit the size of any enveloping force to two or three divisions, and numerous rivers and deep gorges would enable relatively light German forces to delay the maneuver long enough for the enemy west of the Apennines to escape. Although the ground of the western coastal plain allowed the commitment of considerable troops, including a certain amount of armor, attacks in that region were bound to be slow and laborious frontal efforts. Even so, the western portion of the Italian peninsula seemed better for a main effort beyond the line of the Volturno and Biferno Rivers, attained at the end of the Salerno invasion, and air bases near Rome appeared to be the next logical objective. While bases were opened for heavy bombers, the ground troops, after securing the nearby port of Civitavecchia, would maintain pressure on the Germans, forcing them back to the Pisa-Rimini line. A strong attack would be necessary to breach this line, and the attack would be followed by a drive farther north. From there, the Allied command would be able either to undertake

[14] Memo, German Intentions in Italy, 27 Sep 43, ABC 384, Post-HUSKY, Sec 2.

operations against southern France or to maintain a strong threat against southern France for an indefinite period. The forces on the east coast, meanwhile, would advance to protect and assist the forces in the west, heading toward the port of Ancona, an attractive objective.

What was ominous was the relative inferiority of Allied ground strength. Because some units were leaving the theater while others were arriving, total forces in Italy were expected to number the equivalent of 15 divisions by mid-October, 17 a month later, and only 16 by mid-December. In contrast the Germans, according to estimates, could bring 26 divisions into the fight. Regardless of where the major effort was made, the Allied command would have to rely on air superiority to offset not only German ground strength but also the enemy's ability to choose the terrain on which to defend. Unfortunately, winter weather would reduce the effect of Allied air supremacy.[15]

General Eisenhower's personal belief in the efficacy of waging a vigorous campaign during the fall and winter months to capture the Po Valley underwent a startling change about 7 October. Expectations that the Germans would fight only delaying actions in central Italy vanished, along with optimistic hopes of driving quickly into northern Italy. German divisions were coming from northern Italy to reinforce the troops fighting in the south below Rome. If the Germans had decided to stand fast, they had a good chance of barring the Allied forces from the Rome airfields. General Alexander's 15th Army Group, with eleven divisions, was preparing an all-out offensive, "but clearly," General Eisenhower informed the CCS, "there will be very hard and bitter fighting before we can hope to reach Rome." Was it possible and would it be better to cancel the offensive and keep the troops along the Volturno and Biferno Rivers? Apart from the obvious renunciation of Rome and the airfields, Eisenhower thought not. The Volturno-Biferno line, in his opinion, provided insufficient depth in front of Naples and Foggia to contemplate even a temporary stabilization of forces there. The minimum acceptable position was a secure line well north of Rome. And this, it appeared, was going to be difficult to attain.[16]

General Alexander could well understand what he believed to be the new German decision. As he judged the situation, the Germans had recovered from the gloom occasioned by the Italian surrender. The country was quiet, the internal security problem seemed slight, and better knowledge of Allied strength showed the Germans that they held a numerical advantage in ground troops that was likely to continue. The terrain south of Rome was admirably suited for defensive warfare. Autumn and winter weather would hamper Allied offensive operations on the ground and ease the impact of Allied air superiority. Since November 1942, starting from El 'Alamein in Egypt, the Germans had been retreating, and Alexander could see why they might feel it was time to stop. Troop morale alone would justify the decision. But there was now also a political reason. The Germans had rescued Mussolini from his Italian captors and had established under his nominal authority a

[15] AFHQ G–3 Paper, Advance to Pisa-Rimini Line, 2 Oct 43, ABC 384, Post-HUSKY, Sec 2.

[16] Eisenhower to Marshall, 2 Oct 43, and Eisenhower to CCS, 9 Oct 43, both in OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

republican fascist government. Giving this government as much territory as possible to administer under German supervision and retaining Rome as its capital would strengthen the semblance of Mussolini's restored status.[17]

Whatever the reasons that motivated the Germans, the Allied command was convinced by mid-October that operations beyond the Volturno and Biferno Rivers would encounter progressively stronger resistance. Yet General Eisenhower believed, and his senior commanders agreed with him, that nothing would help OVERLORD, the projected cross-Channel invasion in the spring of 1944, so much as the early establishment of Allied forces in the Po Valley. He asked the CCS to approve the allocation of additional resources to the theater to make possible small amphibious and airborne operations in the enemy rear that would hasten the Allied advance up the peninsula.[18]

The planners in Washington were unmoved. The Germans, they estimated, could resist in strength at only three places: the Pisa-Rimini line, the Po River line, and the Alps.[19] Expecting the Germans to offer relatively little opposition south of Rome, they saw no reason to increase the resources previously allotted to the Allied command for Italy.

The QUADRANT decisions of August and September thus remained in force, and with respect to the Mediterranean theater, changed no decisions made at the TRIDENT Conference in May. The theater command was to withdraw seven divisions and send them to England for the cross-Channel attack, and to replace these in part by French divisions as they became ready for action after being equipped and trained; the theater was to lose by transfer about 170 bombers by December and a considerable amount of troop-carrying aircraft, assault shipping, and landing craft.

The planners at the QUADRANT Conference had allocated to the four chief theaters of operations all available landing craft and all expected from production. The priorities established gave precedence, within the European theater, to build-up in England for OVERLORD. Definite schedules were established for movement, during the fall of 1943, of a major proportion of the Mediterranean landing craft to the United Kingdom. The Pacific, with its vast water distances, was to absorb better than half of the craft coming from American production. In addition, some craft were scheduled to move to India for an amphibious operation in the Bay of Bengal. What was to be left in the Mediterranean theater was likely to be insufficient for more than a one-division lift.

In short, the Mediterranean theater was to be restricted in its resources, and consequently so was the Allied build-up on the Italian mainland. The principal effort was to go to the cross-Channel attack.[20]

Whether the Allied forces, against increased German opposition, had enough troops, equipment, and supplies to drive north in Italy fast enough to make the campaign worthwhile was a moot question. But they were going to try.

[17] See Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2900.

[18] Memo, Smith for JCS, 13 Oct 43, ABC 384, Post-HUSKY, Sec 2.

[19] War Dept G–2 Memo, 19 Oct 43, ABC 384, Post-HUSKY, Sec 2.

[20] See Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2897.

The German Decision

Hitler's early strategy in Italy was concerned with insuring the security of the German forces in southern Italy.[21] Kesselring was to withdraw from Calabria, hold at Salerno and Naples long enough to safeguard the routes of retirement to the north, then make a well-organized movement to central Italy, and finally fall back to the Northern Apennines where his forces would come under Rommel's *Army Group B*. When Kesselring's forces came within close proximity of the army group boundary, roughly the Pisa-Ancona line, Hitler himself would make the command change. Since Kesselring was in no danger of having his forces trapped as a result of the Allied invasion and the Italian surrender, Hitler saw no reason to reinforce him. Kesselring asked for no additional troops. And Rommel offered none.

In compliance with Hitler's policy, Kesselring ordered his *Tenth Army* commander, Vietinghoff, to "fall back upon the Rome area" through a succession of defensive lines, one of them the "B" Line, later called the Bernhard Line, which crossed the Italian peninsula at its narrowest place between Gaeta and Ortona. If Hitler changed his mind and decided to defend in southern Italy, the ground along the Bernhard Line would serve admirably for a protracted defensive effort. Kesselring therefore instructed Vietinghoff to withdraw slowly in order to gain time for fortifying this line.

Kesselring advocated defending Italy at least as far south as Rome, and his argument gained considerable point after the Italian Army ceased to be dangerous and the Allies failed to land near Rome. A prolonged defense in southern Italy would delay an Allied invasion of the Balkans, which he, along with OKW, believed was the Allied strategic goal. Defending south of Rome would keep Allied bombers farther from southern Germany and the Po Valley and give Germany the obvious political advantages of retaining Rome. Kesselring estimated that he could defend in southern Italy with 11 divisions, even if he kept 2 mobile divisions in reserve for action against amphibious landings on his flanks; Rommel, in contrast, would need 13 to 20 divisions to defend a line in the Northern Apennines. Two defensive stands, at the Bernhard Line and in the Northern Apennines, were better than one, particularly since an Allied breach of the Apennines line would immediately threaten the Po Valley. Finally, a strong defense south of Rome would enable the Germans to mount a counteroffensive if the Allies should withdraw units from that front to launch a Balkan invasion. The only advantage offered by a quick withdrawal to the Northern Apennines, in Kesselring's opinion, was an immediate saving of three or four divisions, which could be sent at once to the Balkans.

Rommel, on the other hand, saw a defensive line in southern Italy as too easily outflanked by Allied amphibious operations, its supply lines too vulnerable to sabotage and Allied air attacks. Favoring a concentration of forces, he recommended withdrawal from southern Italy and a simultaneous retirement from Greece.

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[21] This section is based on Ralph S. Mavrogordato, "Hitler's Decision on the Defense of Italy," *Command Decisions*, edited by Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, 1960), pp. 303–22.

To Hitler, Rommel seemed pessimistic, even defeatist. Kesselring's optimism, earlier a source of irritation to Hitler, began to count in his favor. Kesselring's resourcefulness and his unexpected success in coping with the defecting Italians and with the two Allied armies in Italy raised his stock in Hitler's eyes. On 17 September he instructed Kesselring to make a slow withdrawal to the north, holding at the Bernhard Line "for a longer period of time."

A few days later Hitler suddenly became aware of the importance of Apulia, the Italian heel. If the Allied command regarded southern Italy as a springboard for the Balkans, the Germans ought to deny it, and particularly the Foggia airfields. When Foggia fell into Allied hands before Hitler could act, he began to consider a counterattack, a maneuver that seemed particularly attractive if launched to coincide with the expected Allied invasion of the Balkans. This idea gave immediate relevance to Kesselring's concept of conducting the campaign, not in the north of Italy but in the south.

To resolve the conflicting strategies personified by the two commanders, Hitler called Kesselring and Rommel to a conference on the last day of September and listened to their views. He was particularly interested in their assessments of the prospect of regaining the Foggia airfields. Rommel expressed doubt. Kesselring was positive and optimistic.

Hitler was still unable to make up his mind. On 4 October he came to a tentative decision. He notified Kesselring to defend the Bernhard Line in strength. While Kesselring built up the Bernhard Line, Rommel was to construct a line of fortifications in the Northern Apennines. Although Hitler was not entirely convinced that Kesselring could carry out his promise to keep the Allies away from the Northern Apennines for six to nine months, he ordered Rommel to send Kesselring two infantry divisions and some artillery. It was the movement of these troops that Allied intelligence noted around 7 October.

On 9 October Hitler referred to the "decisive importance" of defending the Bernhard Line, but he continued to vacillate between the opposing strategies urged by Rommel and Kesselring. The strategy he selected would determine who would wield the over-all command in Italy.

Uninvolved in the strategic decision, the *Tenth Army* was making a fighting withdrawal toward the Bernhard Line, which Vietinghoff announced was to be the place for "a decisive stand." Placing an engineer officer, Generalmajor Hans Bessel, in charge of constructing the Bernhard field fortifications, Vietinghoff specified that he wanted command posts underground and the main battle line located on the rear slopes of hills in order to escape the devastating effects of Allied artillery fire. Advance outposts were to occupy the crests and forward slopes of the hills, and fields of fire were to be "ruthlessly cleared." [22]

After the reinforcing divisions arrived from northern Italy, Vietinghoff had nine divisions under two corps headquarters, a respectable force with which to oppose the Allies. Although he would have little air support—OKW considered Italy a secondary theater and not worth the risk of heavy air losses—Vietinghoff would enjoy the advantages offered by the terrain. Unless Hitler changed his

[22] *Tenth A* Order 6, 4 Oct 43, Steiger MS.

mind, the German withdrawal was to come to an end in the mountains south of Rome.

Allied Problems

While Hitler was making his tentative decision to defend in southern Italy, the Allied command was grappling with a variety of matters related to the Italian campaign. A prospective drain on forces came from a request made of General Eisenhower by General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, the commander of the British Middle East theater, who had become involved in the Dodecanese Islands in the eastern Mediterranean. Garrisoned largely by Italian troops, the islands in the Dodecanese chain had seemed ripe for invasion after the Italian surrender and Wilson had seized Cos, Samos, and Leros with small forces. Rhodes now attracted Wilson because he believed that a strong Allied naval and air base established there might force the Germans to withdraw from Greece. Unfortunately, Wilson not only lacked the resources to take Rhodes but also, in his judgment, to retain, against menacing German movements, the three smaller islands he had already captured. He asked AFHQ for help.

Instructed by the Combined Chiefs to furnish whatever assistance he could, General Eisenhower conferred on 9 October with his senior commanders. They quickly decided that the available resources in the Mediterranean theater were insufficient, particularly in view of the indications of a stiffened German defense in Italy, to seize objectives in Italy and at the same time contribute toward operations in the Aegean area.

General Wilson's estimate proved to be correct. The Germans soon retook the islands he had seized, then strengthened their hold over the Dodecanese.[23]

About the same time General Eisenhower and his principal subordinates were discussing possible ground action in the Balkans. Though convinced of the desirability of diversionary operations, they agreed that they had barely enough ground troops, base units, and assault shipping for the Italian campaign. The most they could do in the Balkans was to employ air and naval forces to help the guerrillas by furnishing them arms and ammunition to harass and contain the Germans.[24]

Another problem that needed resolution was how Italy might contribute to the war. The Italian Fleet and Air Force had surrendered in accordance with the terms of the armistice, and the army had largely disbanded itself. The government, headed by Badoglio under the King, was established in the Brindisi area, but seemed apathetic, unable to unify the Italian people against Germany or to stimulate sabotage and passive resistance in the areas still under German occupation.[25]

General Eisenhower believed that the participation of Italian troops in the ground campaign would be politically expedient and advantageous to the mo-

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[23] Eisenhower to CCS, 9 Oct 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3. For fuller accounts, see *Grand Strategy*, vol. V, ch. II, and Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*, ch. IX.

[24] See AFHQ Ltr to Air CinC Mediterranean, Action in the Balkans Subsequent to the Capture of South Italy, 11 Oct 43.

[25] Eisenhower to CCS, 10 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5; AFHQ Msg 1746, 14 Sep 43, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl; Eisenhower to War Dept, 16 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3; Rpt on Activities of Special Opns Exec in Fifth Army Area, 9–27 Sep, dated 28 Sep 43, and 1st Ind, AG 336.2; Fifth Army Ltr, 2 Oct 43, AG 336.

rale of the Italian people. But because Italian equipment was antiquated and supplies were lacking, and because AFHQ could equip and supply Italian units only at the expense of the Allied build-up on the Italian mainland, he decided to use only a token Italian combat force, a division at most. Much more valuable would be assistance in the form of service units—labor troops and military police to improve and guard Allied lines of communication and airfields and mechanics and repairmen for vehicles and other equipment.[26]

When the Italian Government declared war against Germany on 13 October, Italy became an Allied cobelligerent, though not an ally. Army units capable of contributing to the war were rehabilitated, and service forces were reconstituted. A regiment of combat troops would soon join the Allied forces in their winter campaign.

The most important problem facing the Allies was the need to define the future course of the operations to be undertaken beyond Naples. The immediate objective was—by general understanding rather than by directive—the city of Rome. As early as July, Mr. Churchill had made evident his "very strong desire" for the capital. "Nothing less than Rome," he had written, "could satisfy the requirements of this year's campaign." [27] Behind the Salerno invasion, despite the immediate orientation on Naples, was the hope for Rome, a hope echoed by the AFHQ planning.[28] During the QUADRANT Conference in Quebec, the Allied leaders "appreciated that our progress in Italy is likely to be slow" but stressed "the importance of securing the Rome aerodromes." [29] In early September, before the Salerno invasion, Rome, according to one qualified observer, "was already looming large as an objective with General Clark and others," while even General Marshall, who had reservations on the value of an Italian campaign, agreed that Rome ought to be seized as quickly as possible.[30] On 1 October General Eisenhower expressed the hope of being north of Rome in six or eight weeks; three days later he believed, and General Alexander agreed with him, that Allied troops would march into Rome within the month. Although General Eisenhower had thought of moving his headquarters from Algiers to Naples, he now decided to wait until he could "make the jump straight into Rome." [31] Hitler's decision to defend Italy south of Rome and the movement of German troops from northern Italy to the south dissipated the optimism but did little to blur the focus. With eyes fixed on Rome as the next goal, the Allied command was "pushing hard to get the necessary force into Italy to bring about

[26] AFHQ G–3 Paper, Employment of Italian Forces, 3 Oct 43; Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 217–28.

[27] Msg to Gen Jan Christian Smuts, 16 Jul 43, quoted in Winston S. Churchill, "The Second World War," *Closing the Ring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), p. 36. See Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*, ch. VI.

[28] See Memo, Brigadier C. S. Sugden, AFHQ Acting G–3, for Gen Smith, Assault in Rome Area, 14 Aug 43, and AFHQ G–3 Memo, Assault in Rome Area, 14 Aug 43.

[29] Whiteley and Rooks to Smith, 23 Aug 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5.

[30] Truscott, *Command Missions*, p. 247; *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff . . . July 1, 1941 to June 30, 1943 . . .*, p. 20.

[31] Eisenhower to Marshall, 4 Oct 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

the major engagement as early in winter as possible." [32]

Getting a large force into Italy was no easy matter. Logisticians who sought to advance the build-up in Italy had to jockey a variety of conflicting claims from commanders who clamored for additional combat units, for components needed to complete formations already in Italy, for tactical and strategic air forces, and for support troops. The need for combat troops competed with urgent requests for equipment and supplies, particularly Bailey bridges and bulldozers. The requirements for air and ground elements were not always compatible in the light of available shipping, and priorities changed constantly as logisticians and planners tried to remain flexible in meeting the demands of the campaign.[33] The limited number of available landing craft and ships and the restricted capacities of Naples and the nearby minor ports imposed curtailments. With logistical facilities overburdened, certain desirable movements became impractical. For example, the transfer of the British 10 Corps to the British Eighth Army presupposed the arrival in Italy of the U.S. II Corps headquarters and additional American divisions. The II Corps in Sicily was ready to move late in September but had no transportation. Consequently, the withdrawal of 10 Corps into reserve and its movement by degrees to the Eighth Army as General Montgomery could accept logistical responsibility for it, actions earlier planned to take place at the Volturno River, had to be deferred.[34] The need for more landing craft was of particular concern to General Alexander —"to maintain rate of build-up, to allow flexibility in build up programme, for coastwise maintenance traffic, for further seaborne landings on either Coast" —and he repeatedly requested General Eisenhower to "press most strongly for retention all craft" in the theater.[35]

An immediate partial solution to the problem of building up the combat units would be to retain the 82d Airborne Division in the theater instead of sending it to the United Kingdom as scheduled. But the opportunities for using airborne troops in Italy seemed to the planners to be too limited to warrant keeping the entire division. Only the 504th Parachute Infantry remained.[36]

Finally, the command structure in Italy took permanent form in early October as General Alexander's 15th Army Group headquarters released the Seventh Army headquarters in Sicily to AFHQ control, opened the army group command post near Bari on the east coast of Italy, and took direct control of the ground operations and command of the Fifth and Eighth Armies. Separated by the Central Apennine mountain range, a barrier of summits more than 6,000 feet high that even early in October were tipped with snow, the two armies were compartmented. The achievements of one would have little effect on the other. Given the difficult

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] See Oct Msgs, 15th AGp, Master Cable File, VI.

[34] Eisenhower to CCS, 18 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3; 15th AGp Msgs, 1810, 16 Sep 43, and 2230, 29 Sep 43, Fifth Army G-2 Jnl; Msg, Fifth Army to Eighth Army, 11 Oct 43, and Msg, Alexander to Richardson, 13 Oct 43, both in 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.

[35] See, for example, Alexander to Eisenhower, 25 Sep 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File VI.

[36] Fifth Army to AFHQ, 14 Oct 43, and AFHQ to 15th AGp, 15 Oct 43, both in Master Cable File, VI.

terrain in Italy and the coming of winter, General Alexander defined the objective of the campaign about to get under way as "certain vital areas which contain groups of all-weather airfields, ports and centres of communications"—bases from which to launch and support strong attacks. Specifically, he directed operations to take place in two phases, the armies to take two steps. The first, to make the Foggia airfields and the port of Naples secure by advancing to the Biferno and Volturno Rivers, was already in the process of being completed. The second was to be an advance to a general line well above Rome, a line from Civitavecchia, about fifty miles north of Rome on the west coast, to San Benedetto del Trente, about the same distance south of Ancona on the east coast.[37]

Significantly, Alexander made no mention of Rome. Perhaps its importance was so all-pervading that the city as an objective was implicit in the campaign. More probably, he had issued his directive to the army commanders on the basis of the early intelligence estimates that had promised a quick advance into central and northern Italy.[38] The new indications of a stiffening German attitude in southern Italy required no change in the Allied plans. The Allied forces in Italy were to drive northward, to Rome and beyond.

How long this would take, no one, of course, was prepared to say. Garibaldi's campaign eighty-three years earlier offered certain parallels. Garibaldi had entered Naples unopposed on 7 September 1860, and then fought near Capua and Caserta, not far from the Volturno River. When he defeated the Bourbon troops, the entire Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, except for the towns of Capua and Gaeta, fell to him. It took him a month to capture Capua and cross the Volturno. On 21 November he was at Gaeta, where he besieged his enemy, Francis II. Not until 12 February of the next year did Garibaldi triumph.

In 1943 and 1944, it would take the Allied forces somewhat longer to take Gaeta, to say nothing of Rome.

[37] Alexander *Despatch,* p. 2897; Alexander to Clark and Montgomery, 2330, 29 Sep 43, Fifth Army G-2 Jnl; *Fifth Army History,* Part II, pp. 75ff.

[38] See 15th AGp Intel Summary 19, 25 Sep 43, and 10 Corps Intel Summary 165, 28 Sep 43, both in Fifth Army G-2 Jnl.

CHAPTER XII

The Volturno Crossing

The Immediate Situation

In early October the U.S. Fifth Army had its left flank on the Italian west coast. Its right was anchored on the Matese Mountains of the Apennine range, a virtually impenetrable barrier along the boundary between Fifth Army and the British Eighth Army. The two armies were to advance abreast in their zones, each independently of the other, but their movements were to be co-ordinated because occasional lateral breaks in the barrier provided the enemy with access routes for attacks against the armies' inner flanks. (*Map 3*)

Ahead of the Fifth Army's front, which touched the Volturno River, was terrain difficult for offensive maneuver. North of the river for about forty miles was a mountainous region that separated the Volturno valley from the next low ground, the valleys of the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers. Narrow winding roads, steep hills, and swift streams characterized the divide, which favored defense. Sharply defined corridors would impose frontal attack on offensive forces. Allied planners constantly sought opportunities for amphibious flanking attacks and airborne operations, but the shortage of men and matériel, as well as the difficulty of the terrain and the weather, kept them from making definite plans.[1]

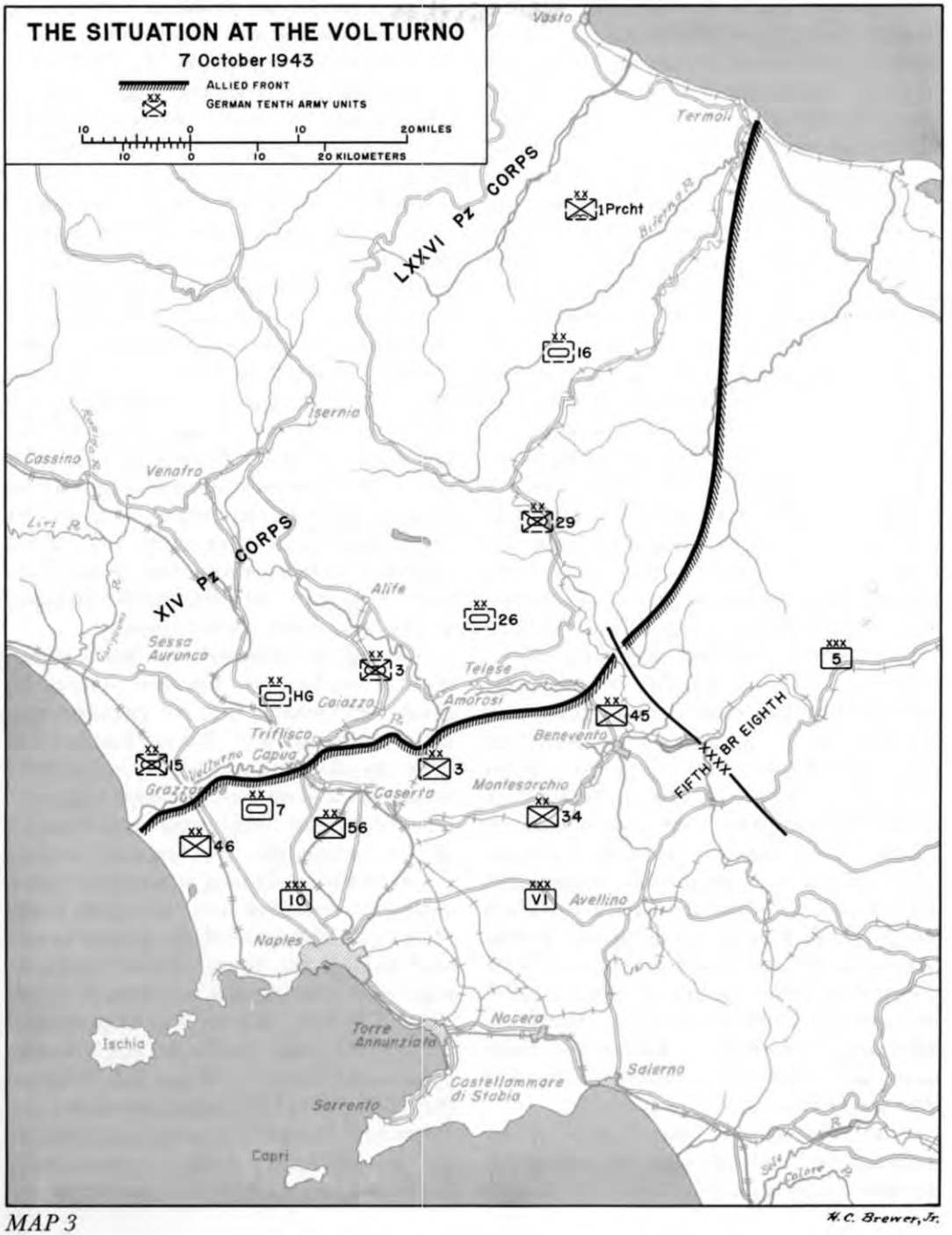
In the coastal zone, where 10 Corps held a front of about twenty miles, the Campanian plain north of Naples peters out a few miles north of the Volturno River, and the relatively level area of fertile farmland, vineyards, and olive groves gives way to hills covered with olive trees and terraced plots. Inland, where VI Corps held a front of about thirty-five miles, the terrain consists of barren and rocky peaks several thousand feet high, with deep gorges, jagged ridges, and overhanging cliffs.

Traversing the area ahead of the Fifth Army were two excellent roads, both leading to Rome. Highway 7 runs from Benevento westward through Caserta and Capua to Sessa Aurunca and follows the coast. Highway 6, starting some miles above Capua, runs north for several miles before forking; the left fork goes to and beyond Cassino, the right becomes Highway 85 and passes through the upper Volturno valley to Venafro and Isernia.

The objectives that General Alexander had assigned to General Clark were

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[1] See for example Fifth Army OI 6, 7 Oct 43. Principal sources for this chapter are *Fifth Army History*, Part II, and AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION, *From the Volturno to the Winter Line* (Washington, 1944).



MAP 3

H. C. Brewer, Jr.

the heights generally between Sessa Aurunca and Venafro, the high ground overlooking from the south the Garigliano and Rapido River valleys. Crossing the mountain divide and reaching the objectives meant first crossing the defended river line of the Volturno.

Blocking the Fifth Army as well as the Eighth, the *Tenth Army* had an assigned strength on 1 October of about 60,000 men. Facing the Fifth Army were about 35,000 troops of the *XIV Panzer Corps,* which occupied the north bank of the Volturno. From the mouth of the river to a point just east of Grazzanise, the rested and highly efficient *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* held a front of about twelve miles with one regiment in line and the remainder of the division guarding the coast against invasion as far north as the mouth of the Garigliano. In the center of the corps sector, on a front of about sixteen miles, almost to Caiazzo, the *Hermann Goering Division,* with four infantry battalions, a small armored group, and a large number of motorized assault guns and antiaircraft guns, possessed considerably more firepower than was normal. On the corps left, from Caiazzo to Monte Acero, a distance of about ten air miles, were portions of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division,* a reasonably effective organization augmented by the attached reconnaissance battalion of the *26th Panzer Division* on Monte Acero. In the Adriatic sector the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* controlled the understrength *26th Panzer Division,* the highly effective *29th Panzer Grenadier Division,* and the *1st Parachute* and *16th Panzer Divisions.*

Had Vietinghoff, the *Tenth Army* commander, had his way, the strong defensive forces along the Volturno would have been even stronger, but General Montgomery's amphibious landing at Termoli during the night of 2 October had disrupted his plans. When he had broken off the battle at Salerno, he had dispatched the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* to reinforce the *1st Parachute Division* in the Adriatic sector and to cover the gap between the paratroopers and the forces engaged at the Salerno beachhead; he had sent the *16th Panzer Division* to construct fortifications along the Volturno. Montgomery's amphibious operation at Termoli forced commitment of the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* reserve against the British bridgehead, but the reserve force, a single infantry battalion, was obviously too small for decisive effect. Kesselring, who was visiting *Tenth Army* headquarters early on the morning of 3 October when news of the British landing arrived, instructed Vietinghoff to shift the *16th Panzer Division* to the east coast immediately.

Vietinghoff objected. He knew that a tactical success at Termoli would be good for morale, but he thought that whether the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* withdrew its left flank from Termoli at once or in a few days would make little difference in the long-range development of the campaign. He favored sending reserves with sufficient strength to block a British breakout and to insure a methodical withdrawal of the panzer corps, and to achieve these limited ends he suggested moving the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division,* which was experienced in combat and available for transfer upon short notice. Vietinghoff believed the *16th Panzer Division* important for defending at the Volturno, particularly in the difficult terrain immediately north of Capua, which he considered the

bulwark of his defensive line. Expecting the Allied forces to make their main effort toward Rome via the main highway leading from Capua through Cassino and Valmontone, he saw Allied success elsewhere as having no direct influence on operations in the main area. Consequently, Vietinghoff was constructing a series of positions south of the Bernhard Line and placing his major defensive strength along the road from Capua to Cassino, and he counted heavily on the armored division. Sending the division on a long march across the peninsula through the mountains to Termoli would be wearing on the tanks, and even if the tanks arrived in reasonably good condition, the support of the division's small infantry component of four battalions was hardly strong enough to eradicate the British bridgehead. Disturbed by Kesselring's instructions, Vietinghoff started neither the *16th Panzer Division* nor the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* off to Termoli.

The night of 3 October, around 2230, Kesselring learned from his chief of staff, Generalmajor Siegfried Westphal, that the *16th Panzer Division* was not racing across the Italian peninsula as he had directed. Kesselring ordered Vietinghoff to comply with instructions immediately. Vietinghoff had no choice but to relay the orders, and on the morning of 4 October the *16th Panzer Division* started to move to the east coast.

Making a forced march of more than seventy-five miles over the mountains, the division got some elements to Termoli late that morning; the bulk of the division reached the Italian east coast twenty-four hours later. Subsequent counterattacks failed to eliminate the British bridgehead. Two days later Vietinghoff approved the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* proposal to retire to the next defensive line, the Trigno River, and the withdrawal began that evening.

To Kesselring, it appeared that the *16th Panzer Division* had arrived at Termoli belatedly and had entered the battle piecemeal. Vietinghoff, Kesselring was convinced, had bungled the operation. To Vietinghoff the commitment of the armored division had not only failed to halt the British but had deprived him of troops who were constructing and were therefore familiar with the key defenses behind the Volturno.

The *3d Panzer Grenadier Division,* not so good a unit in Vietinghoff's judgment as the *16th Panzer Division,* replaced the latter along the Volturno. A reinforced regiment came in first, the remainder of the division arriving in separate groups over a period of several days starting about 10 October. The bulk of the division would reach the area only after the Allied assault crossing jumped off.[2]

Two infantry divisions, the *305th* and *65th,* were moving south from northern Italy to strengthen Kesselring's forces, but they were scheduled to be in Vietinghoff's Bernhard positions in mid-October; they would have no influence on the battle at the Volturno. Later the *94th Division* would become available to Vietinghoff. The *16th Panzer Division* would eventually be dispatched to the Eastern Front in the USSR.

Since Hitler had stressed the need to gain time along the approaches to the Bernhard Line to permit fortification of that line, Kesselring ordered Vietinghoff to contest every foot of territory. He

[2] MS # T–1a K1 (Kesselring) and Vietinghoff MSS, OCMH.

asked Vietinghoff to hold at the Volturno until 15 October at the least, and the *Tenth Army* commander promised to do so.

Having consolidated the *Tenth Army* front and having closed the gap between Benevento and the *1st Parachute Division,* Vietinghoff built up his front as solidly as possible, but retained mobile units in ready reserve to seal off penetrations and guard his open flanks on the seacoasts. He accelerated the work of the construction units, the engineers, and special division detachments that were trying to get the positions forward of the Garigliano ready for defense by 1 November.

Aside from the absence of air support, Vietinghoff's primary weakness, as he saw it, was his inability to replace troop and matériel losses. He was receiving replacement troops for only a small percentage of his casualties, no artillery, and few serviceable tanks. Unless a drastic change in policy occurred, he could look for no improvement.

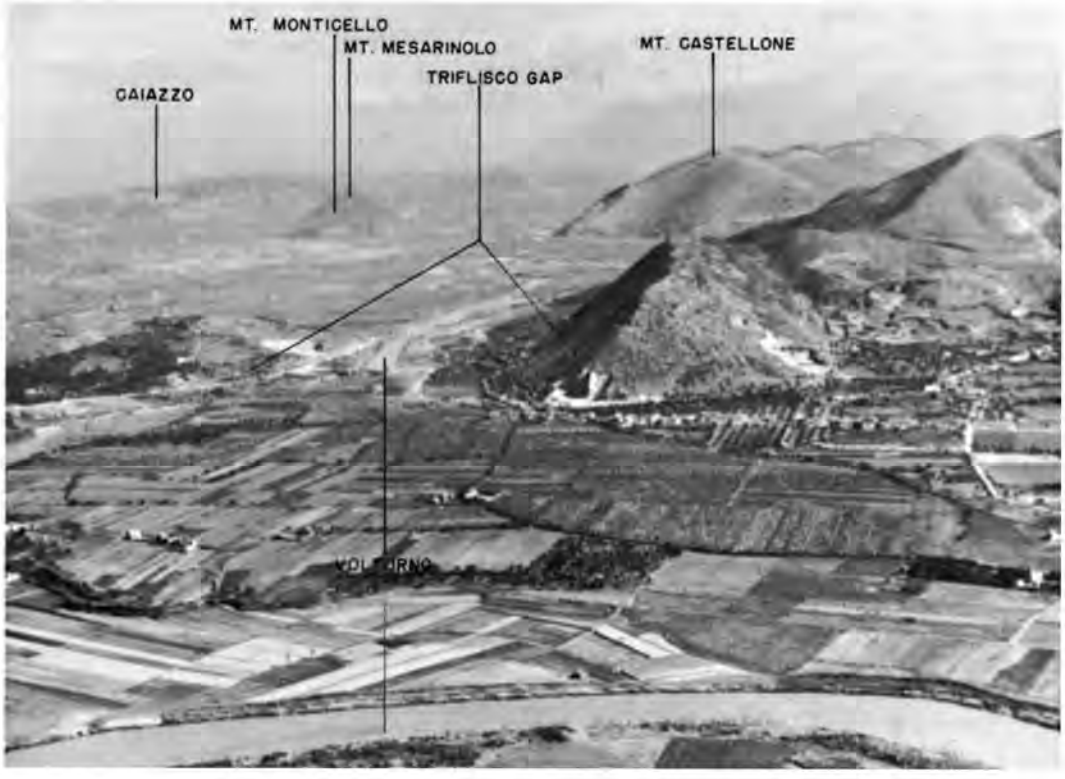
The Volturno River itself provided an excellent obstacle to defend, particularly in early October when heavy rains put the river in flood condition. Rising in the mountains near Isernia and descending southwestward to the vicinity of Venafro, the Volturno turns to the southeast and parallels the coast about thirty miles inland for a distance of some twenty-five miles. Near the village of Amorosi it receives the waters of the Calore River, which has flowed westward and northward for almost fifty miles. The Volturno then bends to the southwest, going for twelve miles through an intensely cultivated farm valley flanked by scrub-covered hills and barren mountains to the Triflisco gap; from there, at the beginning of the coastal belt, it meanders in large loops through olive groves to the sea at Castel Volturno.

While acknowledging the value of the river—from Amorosi to the coast—for defense, Vietinghoff was conscious of several disadvantages. The river bed was deeply cut in some places, and this would mean dead ground for some German weapons. The south bank, occupied by Allied soldiers, was higher than the north at some points. Hilly terrain near Capua and north of the river would hamper German observation and limit the effectiveness of German artillery. While the mountainous area north of the river favored delaying operations, it offered no natural barriers on which to anchor a defense.[3]

From the Allied point of view, the lower reaches of the Volturno formed a serious obstacle along almost sixty miles of the Italian peninsula. Once across the river, the Fifth Army would have no assurance of easy progress. Hills could be covered by cross fires from mutually supporting positions. Demolitions and mines would certainly be used effectively. Destroyed bridges and culverts could be expected. Ambush was always possible, and crew-served weapons could easily cover the few natural avenues of advance.

For the Fifth Army, speed was essential for movement to the north. The autumn rains had swelled the rivers and turned the valleys into mud. But the approach of winter and worsening weather served as both carrot and stick to entice and drive the Allied forces on

[3] Vietinghoff MSS.



TRIFLISCO GAP

in the hope of denying the Germans time to fortify the ground beyond the Volturno that the Allied command was already calling the Winter Line.

To maintain the momentum of the advance north from Naples, General Clark instructed General McCreery, whose 10 Corps seemed to be making faster progress toward the Volturno than VI Corps, to cross the river without waiting for General Lucas' forces to come abreast. But rains, enemy demolitions, and determined rear guard action delayed the 10 Corps approach to the river. Then swampy ground prevented a quick concentration of troops and supplies. A rapid and improvised assault crossing proved to be out of the question. McCreery estimated 9 October as the earliest date he could be ready to attack.[4]

Still hoping to get across the Volturno before the Germans could fully organize their defenses along the river, General Clark told General Lucas to go ahead. The 3d Division was in place and ready to make a crossing, and these troops alone, Lucas thought, gave him a superiority of three to one in men, tanks, and guns over the German defenders. But two divisions, he felt, were

[4] Fifth Army OI 5, 2 Oct 43; 10 Corps Invasion of the Italian Mainland, Summary of Operations Carried Out by British Troops Under Command, Fifth U.S. Army, n.d., draft copy, OCMH. See also Lucas Diary, 8 Oct 43.

necessary in order to insure sustained progress on the other side of the river. Confident that the 45th Division would advance from the Benevento area down the Calore River valley fast enough to protect the corps right flank near Montesarchio, thus making it possible to move the 34th Division from Montesarchio in time to accompany the 3d Division in the assault crossing, Lucas planned to sideslip the 3d Division to the left to make room along the front for the 34th. Thereupon, the 3d and 34th were to cross the river abreast, both employing the tactics of stealth and surprise. These preparatory movements would take time, and despite General Clark's hope for an earlier crossing, General Lucas, like McCreery, estimated he could attack no sooner than 9 October.

The prospect of a simultaneous assault crossing by 10 and VI Corps on that date soon vanished. Neither McCreery nor Lucas was ready. When McCreery suggested he could attack on 11 October, General Clark instructed Lucas to attack on the preceding night. If American troops seized the ridges north and northwest of the Triflisco gap, they would hold the ground that dominates the plain as far as the sea and thus facilitate the British attack.

But this operation had to be postponed too. "Rain, rain, rain," General Lucas wrote in his diary. "The roads are so deep in mud that moving troops and supplies forward is a terrific job. Enemy resistance is not nearly as great as that of Mother Nature." [5] It was more than rain and muddy roads that caused delay. The paucity of roads in the VI Corps area and German artillery fire hampered and slowed the movement of the 34th Division from Montesarchio to the Volturno.

On 9 October General Clark ordered the two corps to make a co-ordinated attack during the night of 12 October. An assault along the entire length of the river would disperse and stretch the enemy forces and facilitate crossings at many places. Once across, the troops were to continue toward and into the Winter Line.

One point drew Clark's particular attention. Unless the 45th Division drove swiftly north and west from Benevento for twenty-two miles down the Calore valley to the juncture of the Calore and Volturno Rivers and then advanced into the valley of the upper Volturno, the forces on the right of the assault crossings would have an exposed flank. The nearer the 45th Division was to the Volturno by 12 October, the less uneasy the 34th Division would have to be about its right. And if the 45th Division could drive into the upper Volturno valley before the river crossings, it would threaten the left flank of the German forces defending the river line.

The Attack Down the Calore Valley

General Middleton's 45th Division was in control of the Benevento area on 9 October. Assigning a reinforced battalion of the 180th Infantry to guard his right flank and placing the 157th Infantry in reserve, Middleton sent the remainder of the division westward down the Calore valley toward the confluence of the Calore and the Volturno. His only path of advance was a corridor four to five miles wide, obstructed by rough

[5] Lucas Diary, 8 Oct 43.

hills, deep ravines, and narrow roads, which gave German delaying forces ample opportunity for ambush, demolition, and harassment.[6]

When General Lucas visited General Middleton on 9 October to press for speed, Middleton said frankly he could not guarantee it. His men had been in continuous action for a month and were tired. Lucas did not "believe they are as tired as he thinks," but he promised Middleton he would try to give the division a rest once VI Corps was across the Volturno. This apparently had the desired result, for Lucas found the division's progress on the succeeding days excellent.[7]

With the 179th Infantry clearing the northern part of the Calore valley and the 180th the southern part, the division fought the terrain more than the enemy for three days. On 12 October, as the division approached Monte Acero, it began to appear that the 45th would reach the valley of the upper Volturno without setback and secure the right flank of the two divisions that were scheduled to cross the river downstream that night. Sudden resistance developed during the afternoon and dashed that hope. (*Map III*)

To the Germans, Monte Acero was a sensitive point. Defended by the reconnaissance battalion of the *26th Panzer Division,* the height provided observation over the entire east-west Volturno valley. In the opinion of Hube, the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, Monte Acero was essential if Vietinghoff was to make good his promise to Kesselring to hold the Volturno line at least until 15 October.

Machine gun and mortar fire from Monte Acero halted the lead elements of both American regiments, but the reconnaissance battalion in defense could not for long block the determined division. Advancing through the fire, the 180th Infantry took the village of Telese on the division left, while contingents of the 179th Infantry pushed onto the southern nose of Monte Acero itself.

Fighting continued throughout the night. The turning point in the action came when Company K of the 179th Infantry penetrated German positions on the southeast slope, then withdrew because it was unable to clear the slope of defenders. Unaware of the withdrawal, the Germans counterattacked before daybreak against the spot where the company had been. They were caught in an artillery firetrap and took heavy losses.

Shortly after daylight, Company K, reinforced by another company, cleared the eastern slope of Monte Acero. General Middleton then committed the 157th Infantry in the center, and elements of this regiment fought their way around the western side of the hill. By nightfall, 13 October, it was apparent that the Germans were withdrawing from Monte Acero, the eastern anchor of their Volturno defensive line.

It still took Middleton's men another day to clear the Germans from the Calore valley. Thus, despite the withdrawal of the reconnaissance battalion from Monte Acero, Vietinghoff made good his pledge to hold at least until 15 October—not until that day was the 45th Division ready to drive into the entrance of the upper Volturno valley.

[6] See 45th Div AAR, Oct 43.
[7] Lucas Diary, 10, 11 Oct 43.

The Main Crossings

As it finally evolved, General Lucas' plan to put VI Corps across the Volturno called for two divisions to force crossings over a 15-mile stretch of the river between Triflisco on the left flank and the Calore confluence on the right. The 3d Division was to make the main effort between Triflisco and Caiazzo and assist British troops who were to advance along Highway 6 from Capua to Teano. The 34th Division, crossing on an 8-mile front, was to help the 45th Division get into the upper Volturno valley, then be ready to swing westward and laterally, also toward Teano.

The Volturno in front of VI Corps varied from 150 to 220 feet in width and from 3 to 5 feet in depth. Although the river was fordable at most points, the current, made swift by the rains, dictated some crossings by boat. The banks, from 5 to 15 feet high, were steep, and the rainfall that had made them muddy and slick would hamper boat launchings. Brush and olive groves on the hill slopes on the far shore would provide some concealment for troops, but the open fields on the south side of the river gave no covered approaches to crossing sites. The road net at the Volturno was poor, inadequate for the quick movement of large bodies of men and their equipment and supplies. Despite these disadvantages, VI Corps headquarters was optimistic over the prospect of successful crossings.[8]

In General Truscott's plan of attack, two hill complexes immediately beyond the Volturno were vital for the success of the 3d Division effort: the Triflisco ridge and Monte Caruso.[9] Directly across the river from the American-held Monte Tifata on the division left, the Triflisco ridge is actually an extension of Monte Tifata, the two heights separated only by the bed of the Volturno. Here the river is so narrow that troops dug in on the northern slope of Monte Tifata regularly exchanged small arms fire with German soldiers hidden among stone quarries and olive orchards across the Volturno. Seizing the Triflisco ridge would facilitate a 10 Corps advance to Teano; eliminate dominant observation of the 3d Division's main axis of advance, a narrow valley leading northwest along the east side of the ridge; and remove commanding observation over the best bridge site in the 3d Division zone, the narrow banks between the ridge and Monte Tifata. Although aerial photographs showed strong defenses on the southern nose of the Triflisco ridge, General Truscott expected the 10 Corps crossing near Capua to help the 3d Division assault.

The other vital terrain feature on the north bank was Monte Caruso, opposite American-held Monte Castellone. About four miles north of the river, Monte Caruso commands both the valley of the Volturno and the narrow valley leading northwest. Standing in front of Monte Caruso and rising from the valley floor like mounds are two solitary hills, Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo. All three heights appeared to be strongly defended.

Figuring that the Germans expected an attack at or near Triflisco, General

[8] Fifth Army Rpt of Volturno in VI Corps Zone, 10 Oct 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[9] See 3d Div AAR, Oct 43; Donald G. Taggart, ed., *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), pp. 88ff.

Truscott planned to feint there on his left while making his main effort in the center directly toward Monte Caruso, the troops to bypass Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo and leave them for the forces on the division right. Once he held Monte Caruso, he assumed he could place such heavy enfilade fire on the Triflisco ridge that this fire, in concert with the British attack outflanking the ridge to the west, would force the Germans to abandon the ground.

Specifically, General Truscott would have the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, and the heavy weapons companies of the 30th Infantry make the feint by concentrating fire against the Triflisco ridge. If the Germans showed signs of withdrawing, the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, was to cross. Through it all the Germans on the ridge were to be cheated of their observation advantage by a blanket of smoke.

With the enemy thus diverted on the left, the 7th Infantry was to cross the river and drive directly to the westernmost tip of Monte Caruso. On the right two battalions of the 15th Infantry were to take Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo, then move to capture the easternmost tip of Monte Caruso. At daylight of 13 October, a company each of the 751st Tank and 601st Tank Destroyer Battalions, their vehicles waterproofed, were to ford the river.

Since surprise was an integral part of his plan, Truscott took special precautions to preserve it. He kept his artillery strength hidden by ordering half the pieces to be silent during the few days preceding the attack. He held the 7th Infantry in a concealed bivouac area near Caserta while the 15th Infantry alone manned the 3d Division front. After the 34th Division came into the line, relieving the 30th Infantry of the 3d Division, which shifted quietly out of the area, he arranged with General Ryder to have any 34th Division men captured while on patrol give a 3d Division identification to deceive the enemy.

Coupled with surprise was Truscott's trust in punch. Once started, he told his subordinate commanders, the attack must be kept moving without pause.

On the evening of 12 October, as darkness settled over the Volturno valley and a full moon rose, customary night patrols worked their way to the river, drawing an occasional burst of fire or flare, while artillery units were careful to continue seemingly normal fire patterns. In the rear areas, infantrymen of the assault battalions checked and assembled special equipment—rope for guidelines across the river, kapok life preserver jackets (luckily, a thousand had been found in a nearby Italian warehouse), rubber life rafts borrowed from the Navy, and improvised log and ponton rafts. Engineers were busy with assault boats and rubber pneumatic floats. Artillerymen studied their fire plans. As H-hour approached, engineers loaded rubber pontons on trucks, truck drivers warmed their motors, and long lines of infantrymen began to move to forward assembly areas.

At midnight the 3d Division began its demonstration on the left against the Triflisco ridge. An hour later corps and division artillery opened fire all along the front with high explosive. At 0155, 13 October, the gunners mixed smoke shells with the high explosive for the last five minutes of fire to screen the crossing sites. A few minutes before the artillery was scheduled to lift, men of the 7t'

Infantry slogged across muddy fields to the river. At 0200 they started to cross.

The Germans by now were well aware that this would be no ordinary and uneventful night. Alerted by the suddenly heavy Allied artillery fires, they expected a major assault. They could anticipate attacks at some obvious crossing sites, but where the main weight would be thrown would probably become apparent only after daybreak.[10]

While carrying parties of American soldiers on the near shore were struggling to get boats and rafts down the slippery bank to the water's edge, advance groups of the 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, waded the river to anchor guide ropes on the far side. Even with guide ropes it was hard to control the frail assault craft in the swift current. Weakened by days of rain, the roots of some of the trees to which the ropes were tied gave way. Improvised rafts sometimes broke up. Through it all, long-range German machine gun fire whipped the crossing sites. Fortunately, a high cliff-like north bank created one of the dead spots Vietinghoff had been concerned with and prevented most of the fire from striking the men on the river itself. Darkness and smoke also affected the accuracy of the enemy gunners. The crossing went more slowly than expected and dawn was breaking before the last man of the 1st Battalion reached the far bank. The accuracy of the German fire began to improve, and the last boat to pull away from the south bank took a direct hit from an artillery shell.

On the far shore, men of the 1st Battalion assembled along a sandbar under cover of the steep bank. They moved upstream in column, clinging to the bank for protection against the enemy machine gun fire and for support against the current. A few mines exploded, most of them throwing up spectacular geysers of water and mud that caused little damage. Several artillery shells splashed harmlessly into the river. After walking up the bed of a small tributary of the Volturno, the men deployed across the fields just south of Highway 87, which parallels the Volturno. Here they dug in to protect the regimental left flank and to form a base of fire for the other two battalions that were to head directly for Monte Caruso.

The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 7th Infantry, in that order, had crossed the river in column, some of the men in assault boats, others wading through the icy water holding their rifles over their heads with one hand, clinging to guide ropes with the other. Scrambling up the muddy bank of the north shore, they struck out for the dark and massive bulk of Monte Caruso.

Machine gun nests and individual enemy soldiers fighting from irrigation ditches were quickly eliminated, and by 0800 the foremost elements of the lead battalion were at the foot of the hill objective. With good observation of German positions in the valley and on the hill, the infantry called for fire from artillery and tank destroyers. Against slackening resistance, the troops moved up the slope. By noon the advance elements were digging in on the western tip of Monte Caruso, and the rest of the 2d and 3d Battalions were moving up to secure the ground.

Waterproofed tanks and tank destroyers had been trying to cross the river since daylight, but each time a bull-

[10] See Vietinghoff MSS.

dozer approached the river to break down the bank and give the heavy vehicles access to crossing sites, enemy fire drove it back. Around 1000, after learning from an intercepted German message that a counterattack was imminent, General Truscott ordered the armored vehicles to cross at once, no matter what the obstacles. Pick and shovel work by engineers finally tore down enough of the bank to allow the tanks to get to the water's edge, and shortly after 1100 the first tank climbed the low sandbank on the far side of the river. By early afternoon, 15 tanks and 3 tank destroyers were across. The German counterattack never came, apparently having been broken up by artillery fire before it could begin.

By the end of the day the entire 7th Infantry was across the Volturno, and infantrymen held the western part of Monte Caruso.

On the division right, men of the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 15th Infantry had climbed down the rocky slopes of Monte Castellone and headed for Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo, the isolated hills on the valley floor. After wading the river, the troops immediately found themselves in close contact with Germans along the river bank. Battle raged at short range until the weight of the increasing numbers of troops coming across the river broke the opposition.[11] The troops then swept up their hill objectives, where they organized the ground. Rafts and rubber boats carried machine guns, mortars, and ammunition across the river and bolstered the positions.

Strong concentrations of German artillery and tank fire pounded the two hills occupied by the 15th Infantry, but American counterbattery fire gradually forced the Germans to desist. During the afternoon, with enemy pieces virtually silenced, the two assault battalions pushed on to their next objective, the high ground on the eastern part of Monte Caruso, the Germans giving way before them.

On the division left, where the key ridge above Triflisco remained to be taken, the 30th Infantry, assisted by the 1st Battalion of the 15th, had made a demonstration and kept the Triflisco ridge covered with smoke. With five infantry battalions of the division well on their way to securing their objectives during the afternoon of 13 October, General Truscott told the 30th Infantry to cross the Volturno. The 2d Battalion made two attempts to cross the water and storm the ridge. Both failed against stubborn resistance. Although the crossings of the 7th Infantry east of the Triflisco ridge threatened to make the ridge itself untenable for the Germans, the British assault on the immediate left had stalled. The Germans remained in possession of the Triflisco ridge until nightfall. Under the cover of darkness, they began to withdraw. When troops of the 30th Infantry crossed the river during the night, they found that they could march up the ridge and take it with little trouble.

To Vietinghoff, the "very cleverly planned and forcefully executed attack" of the 3d Division, which had feinted defenders away from the main crossing sites, was the key action at the Volturno.

[11] Capt. Arlo L. Olson spearheaded the regimental advance and knocked out at least two enemy machine gun emplacements. For these and similar actions during the next thirteen days, Captain Olson was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

In his opinion, the 3d Division had avoided the mistake made by Allied troops at Salerno: without waiting until pockets of resistance were cleared, it had advanced regardless of the threats on its flanks. Having won the dominating slopes of Monte Caruso and strengthened its positions with a rush of reinforcements, the 3d Division could not be denied. The left flank of the *Hermann Goering Division,* holding the major positions in the center of the *XIV Panzer Corps* line, had been crushed on the first day's fighting, and the 3d Division bridgehead, four miles deep by the morning of 14 October, was too large to be destroyed.[12]

Helping to give the bridgehead stability was the work of the engineers, who had moved their bridging equipment to the river during the early morning hours of 13 October. Working under fire, the engineer bridge construction parties incurred casualties. Shells damaged rubber floats. Mines blew up several trucks. Although forced to take cover frequently, the engineers by the end of the day had built two bridges, a light one primarily for jeeps and an 8-ton structure capable of carrying trucks. Both required frequent patching and repair as a consequence of enemy shell fragments. Early the next morning several German planes bombed and strafed the bridges, damaging them slightly.

Engineers were to have constructed a 30-ton bridge for tanks on 13 October, but they could not start work until the following day, after the Germans had relinquished their hold over the Triflisco ridge. Even then the cover of smoke was necessary. Six hours after work began, the bridge was ready. Not long thereafter approaches across muddy fields connected the bridge with Highway 87, and the ferry service that had operated continuously to bring equipment and supplies forward was no longer necessary.

With three bridges assuring the continuous flow of men and matériel into the forward area, the 3d Division was ready on 14 October to exploit its bridgehead on the north bank of the Volturno. Surprise and aggressiveness had contributed handsomely to the division's achievement. Casualties during the crossing had not been excessive for an assault against a defended river line. The division had lost about 300 men on 13 October, the first day of the attack. (*Map IV*)

The Crossing on the Right Flank

The objective of General Ryder's 34th Division was a triangular area defined on the south and east by the Volturno and on the northwest by Highway 87, about four miles from the bend of the river. Outside the objective area but dominating the ground was Monte Acero, which General Middleton's 45th Division was to take before the river assault crossings.

General Ryder divided his front into two regimental zones. He instructed the 168th Infantry on the left to take Caiazzo at the westernmost point of the objective triangle, the 135th to take the high ground on the right. One battalion of the 133d Infantry was to be ready to reinforce the attack wherever needed. His attached tank battalion General Ryder kept in its assembly area because he judged the steeply sloping ground of a jumbled mass of hills on the far

[12] Vietinghoff MSS.

side of the Volturno to be unsuitable for armor.[13]

A total of 96 guns and howitzers in support of the 34th Division opened general preparatory fires at 0145, 13 October. Fifteen minutes later, as infantrymen slid down the muddy banks of the Volturno, some to wade through the water, others to paddle across in assault boats, the artillery covered the crossing points with high explosive and smoke.

The first men of the 168th Infantry crossed the river without difficulty, but succeeding troops had a harder time. The swift current swept assault boats out of crossing lines. Men wading in shoulder-deep water lost radios and mine detectors. Enemy machine gun fire from the flat fields close to the river bank and from olive groves on the hill slopes added its hazard. It took almost five hours for the assault battalion to get completely across the river.

Once across, the troops found surprisingly little resistance until they moved into the brush-covered hills. Caiazzo, a fortified village on the brow of a steep slope, was a German strongpoint, and it was difficult to root out the defenders. Heavy and sustained artillery shelling seemed to have little effect, and not until the following morning, 14 October, when four tank destroyers forded the stream and gave direct fire support did the Germans evacuate the village.

Assault troops of the 135th Infantry had also crossed the river, all of them wading over during the early morning hours of 13 October. There was no serious resistance. The Germans withdrew at once. The Americans moved rapidly, and less than an hour after the initial crossings they were sending prisoners to the rear. A flurry of tank fire from Amorosi on the right flank briefly slowed the advance, and a pocket of bypassed Germans held up movement for a short time. But as the 45th Division reduced the defenses on Monte Acero off to the 34th Division's right, the 135th Infantry easily took its objectives three miles from the abrupt bend of the Volturno River.

What explained the relative ease of crossing was the fact that only part of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* had arrived at the Volturno, and that but recently. The units had hardly settled into their defensive positions when the attack struck.[14]

Despite the quick crossing by the 34th Division, the operation almost came to a halt because all good bridging sites in the division zone remained under German observation. Whenever engineers tried to put in a bridge, German artillery dispersed them. In an effort to speed their bridging operations, engineers who had been assigned to span the river with a light vehicular bridge had inflated their rubber floats before loading them on trucks. When the head of the truck column reached the river several hours after daybreak on 13 October, enemy artillery fire disabled 3 trucks at once and shell fragments punctured many floats, some beyond repair. Unloading 12 trucks, the engineers launched three floats. Almost immediately, an artillery shell destroyed all 3, inflicted casualties on the troops, and brought activities to a halt.

[13] 34th Div AAR, Oct 43.

[14] Vietinghoff MSS.



SELF-PROPELLED 105-MM. HOWITZER CROSSING THE VOLTURNO *on a ponton treadway bridge.*

That afternoon the engineers pulled their equipment back to a concealed assembly area, where they patched their salvageable floats. In the evening, after smoke pots had been moved to the river to screen the site, another bridging effort was made. To no avail. The German artillery fire continued to be heavy and accurate.

An engineer reconnaissance party finally located another bridge site. This one was defiladed, but the approach roads were poor and the river was seventy feet wider than at the original place. Because of the additional width of the river and the loss of nearly half the floats, the engineers had to borrow equipment. Moving to the new site at 0300, 14 October, the engineers completed a bridge by 1030. Not long afterward, as soon as the muddy approach routes could be improved and the far bank swept of mines, trucks began to cross into the bridgehead.

During the afternoon of 14 October, with the Germans no longer in possession of observation from Caiazzo, engineers began to construct a 30-ton treadway bridge, which they completed shortly after midnight. German planes made several unsuccessful passes at the bridge the next morning. By then traffic was rolling steadily across both bridges, including artillery.[15]

Having cleared a substantial bridgehead almost four miles deep by the

[15] See 151st FA Bn AAR, Oct 43.

afternoon of 14 October, the 34th Division was ready to take up pursuit operations. The division had lost about 130 men during the crossing on the first day, 13 October.

The Crossings on the Left

Facing the Volturno River in the coastal area, 10 Corps had a difficult assignment. Between Monte Tifata above Capua and Castel Volturno on the coast, a distance of more than 15 miles, the ground is relatively flat on both sides of the river. Numerous canals drain the area, the most important being the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal, which parallels the Volturno from Capua to the sea about 4 miles north of the river. There were few trees on the south side of the river, but a belt of olive groves, vineyards, and scattered timber on the north bank offered the Germans excellent cover, while Monte Massico, about 8 miles north of the Volturno, gave them superior observation.

High river banks and flood levees obstructed British fields of fire. Recent rains had filled the river and canal beds to the point where no fords were available and had turned all approaches to the river, except the few main roads, into mud. In the right of the 10 Corps area, the 56th Division had only one road in its zone, the major route that crossed the Volturno at Capua. The 7th Armoured Division in the center had only a single country road crossing the river at Grazzanise. The 46th Division had two, a highway crossing the river at Cancello ed Arnone and a narrow unimproved road at Castel Volturno. In many places these roads resembled causeways, built several feet above the adjacent fields. With their usual thoroughness, the Germans had destroyed all the culverts along these roads and had demolished the bridges across the Volturno. They had sited their guns to harass movements along the highways leading to the north. A hard-surface road paralleling the river on the south bank of the Volturno was directly under hostile observation and would be useless until the Germans were driven back beyond Monte Massico.

Because all possible bridge sites in the corps zone were within short range of German mortars and small arms, and because all reconnaissance movements during daylight hours drew immediate fire, British patrols were unable to cross the river. Thus, there was no way of measuring the width or depth of the Volturno with accuracy. Running through marshland, normally canalized between steep banks, the river had overflowed. Much of the coastal plain, which is at sea level or just below, was wet, for a drainage system of canals emptying water into the sea by means of pumps had not been in operation for about ten days and British troops had little success getting the pumps working.

The depth of the river, normally 6 feet, was estimated at 1 to 5 feet above normal, and could conceivably rise 15 feet above normal. At possible bridge sites, the river was thought to be from 250 to 300 feet wide, with steep banks from 10 to 25 feet high. To visiting Fifth Army staff members, the 10 Corps headquarters seemed pessimistic about a crossing. The lack of ground reconnaissance, the difficulty of launching assault boats, the time required to construct bridge approaches, the limitations on bridge sites imposed by the few and in-

adequate approach roads, and the shortage of bridge equipment that would allow little or no losses during the operation were problems that appeared to be well-nigh insoluble.[16]

General McCreery first thought of making his main effort on the right in order to use the superior road network around Capua and to assist the 3d Division. But the strong defenses on the Triflisco ridge dissuaded the corps commander and made him look to the coast. Hoping to spread the German defenses, he decided to attack on a wide front, putting his major weight on the left. He directed the 56th Division to make a demonstration from the hills immediately east of Capua and a crossing in battalion size just to the west. He instructed the 7th Armoured Division to launch a holding attack at Grazzanise, with an infiltration across the river if possible. He ordered the 46th Division to make a major crossing on a 2-brigade front between Cancello ed Arnone and the coast. To compensate for the increased difficulty of assaulting near the coast line, General McCreery secured naval assistance. Warships would fire in support of the 46th Division and provide several LCT's to ferry a tank company around the mouth of the Volturno for a landing on the north bank of the river.

Supported by massive artillery fire augmented by naval gunfire, the 46th Division attacked in the early morning hours of 13 October. In the right of the division zone, after overcoming extraordinary difficulties, a battalion crossed the Volturno in assault boats and took precarious and exposed positions on the north bank of the river northeast of Cancello ed Arnone. The men beat back two counterattacks launched during the day but could not resist a third that came at the last light. Their positions overrun, the men made their way back across the river as best they could.

On the division left, two battalions paddled across the river. After turning back a counterattack, the men dug in along a small canal. There they remained, waiting for daylight when LCT's were to ferry seventeen tanks around the mouth of the river and land them to give direct support to the infantry. The amphibious operation went as planned, but except for a psychological lift, the tanks proved to be of little immediate use. Boggy ground near the coast immobilized most of the tanks. Mines planted in dry ground just off the beach knocked out several others. Not until engineer troops removed the German nonmetallic mines, a slow process that took most of the day, did some of the tanks become mobile.

Despite lack of help from the tanks, the infantry battalions held where they were. On the following day, 14 October, they advanced about 600 yards to make room for substantial reinforcements. Into the bridgehead came four more infantry battalions and some artillery, all of which crossed the Volturno on two ferries that operated without harassment from enemy guns—British artillery and naval gunfire had proved to be highly effective. Although more tanks were loaded in LCT's for a landing on the north bank, they were not needed. The Germans were withdrawing. By the evening of 15 October, the 46th Division had forward elements four miles beyond

[16] Rpt on Condition of Volturno in 10 Corps Zone, 10 Oct 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

the Volturno and on the bank of the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal.

The 7th Armoured Division had launched a demonstration after nightfall on 12 October in order to feint the German defenders away from the other crossing sites. Assault troops at the river's edge had managed to get a cable across the river as well and a platoon of men crossed, though heavy fire forced them to return. Since the cable was still anchored, another effort was made shortly after midnight. Crossing in boats pulled along the cable, a small contingent reached the far shore, but it, too, had to come back. A third attempt succeeded, and when dawn came on 13 October the division was holding a small bridgehead in the Grazzanise area. On the following day, the 7th Armoured Division reinforced the men on the far bank and expanded the bridgehead about 1,000 yards.

Near Capua, the 56th Division opened a deception demonstration designed to make the Germans expect a strong crossing in the Triflisco area. Shortly after midnight, 12 October, a company crossed the river in assault boats to strengthen the feint. Fire from strongpoints on the Triflisco ridge dislodged the men, who withdrew before daylight.

This small crossing failed to secure surprise for the main attack launched near a destroyed railroad bridge at Capua. The site was an obvious one and under good observation by the Germans, but no other suitable place existed in the division zone. The leading elements crossing in assault boats met heavy opposition at once, and some of the boats were sunk. From the volume of German fire coming from the Triflisco ridge, the 56th Division commander judged that a crossing in that immediate area was impractical.

Learning on the morning of 14 October that the 56th Division had decided that no crossing in its zone was feasible, General Clark changed the corps boundary, shifting it to the right to give the 56th Division one of the three bridges erected by the 3d Division. Although this change deprived the 3d Division of its 30-ton bridge and some of its roads, the 56th Division now had the means of getting across the river to protect the increasingly exposed left flank of the 3d Division. The boundary change also placed the Triflisco ridge entirely within the 10 Corps zone.

By the afternoon of 14 October—as 56th Division troops and vehicles crossed the bridge above Triflisco to the far bank, the 7th Armoured Division expanded its bridgehead, and the 46th Division substantially bolstered its forces north of the river—the issue at the Volturno was no longer in doubt. The 10 Corps would soon be ready to exploit its crossing and drive toward the Garigliano valley.

In making the crossing, 10 Corps had sustained severe casualties. The *15th Panzer Grenadier Division,* which had taken the brunt of the British main effort, had captured more than 200 prisoners and had counted more than 400 British dead and wounded. To Hube, the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, it seemed unlikely that Fifth Army could continue attacking along the lower Volturno because of the extremely heavy British losses on 13 October. He expected the Americans to press their attacks to enlarge their bridgeheads east of Triflisco and to attempt to enter the upper Volturno. Little concerned then with his

sector between Triflisco and the sea, Hube decided to hold there while withdrawing his left flank to Monte Acero, which would give him an anchor for his defenses and continued observation over much of the Volturno valley.

While the British built up their strength north of the river on 14 October, the Americans seized important heights, in particular Monte Acero. Hube then asked permission to withdraw to positions behind the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal and on the heights behind Caiazzo and Monte Caruso.

Since Kesselring had stipulated that he was to hold the Volturno line only until 15 October, Vietinghoff approved Hube's request to withdraw. As he became aware of the threat posed by the 34th and 45th Divisions on the inner flanks of the *XIV* and *LXXVI Panzer Corps,* he directed the withdrawal to be made along the entire front in Italy.[17]

While the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* backed off from the British Eighth Army in the Adriatic sector and withdrew toward the Sangro River, where the *65th Infantry Division* was constructing field fortifications, the *XIV Panzer Corps* withdrew slowly and grudgingly into the mountainous terrain between the Fifth Army and the valleys of the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers.

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[17] Vietinghoff MSS.

CHAPTER XIII

Into the Winter Line

By changing the corps boundary on 14 October to expedite the 10 Corps crossing of the Volturno, General Clark gave the British the 3d Division objective, the long ridge running northwest from Triflisco for about twelve miles to Teano, and thereby freed the 3d Division for a drive to the northeast. The modification delighted General Lucas. It narrowed his VI Corps zone and directed his elements along converging rather than diverging lines of advance. Now, a swift movement by the 3d Division would assist the 34th Division, which was having some difficulty building bridges across the Volturno. That 10 and VI Corps would be drawing apart was not Lucas' immediate concern, and in any event adjustments could be made later.

While General Clark informed General McCreery of his decision, General Lucas, who had been apprised first, instructed General Truscott to shift from a northwesterly to a northeasterly orientation. Thus, when Clark told Lucas, "Start it at once, Johnny," Lucas could answer, "It is already on the way." [1]

The VI Corps temporarily continued to regulate traffic across the bridge ceded to the British. When a tank destroyer fell off the bridge during the night, drowning four men and fouling the structure, the corps halted movements for several hours until the wreckage could be cleared. However, enough British troops had crossed the river by then to relieve the Americans on the Triflisco ridge.

The drive beyond the Volturno would take the Fifth Army into what was then somewhat vaguely called the German Winter Line south of Cassino. Capturing the objectives assigned by the 15th Army Group headquarters, a line through the villages of Sessa Aurunca, Venafro, and Isernia, roughly twenty-five to forty miles distant, would put the army into a position for a crossing of the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers and subsequent entrance, near Cassino, into the valley of the Liri and Sacco Rivers, the most direct route to Rome.

Blocking the Fifth Army was the *XIV Panzer Corps,* which had prepared a series of three fortified lines of defense. The forward wall was the Barbara Line, an ill-defined and hastily constructed position resembling a strong outpost line of resistance; it ran from Monte Massico near the west coast through the villages of Teano and Presenzano and into the Matese Mountains. The Bernhard Line —far more formidable—was a wide belt of defensive positions anchored on the mouth of the Garigliano River, on the

[1] Quote from Lucas Diary, 14 Oct 43; Truscott, *Command Missions,* p. 274; Fifth Army OI, 14 Oct 43 (confirming verbal orders issued 1530, 14 Oct 43); VI Corps FO 8, 2100, 14 Oct 43.

forbidding masses of Monte Camino, Monte la Difensa, Monte Maggiore, and on the hulking height of Monte Sammucro.[2] Behind the Bernhard Line stood the Gustav Line—the strongest of the three—based securely on the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers and the natural fortress of Monte Cassino. The Gustav Line ran across the Matese range and into the Adriatic sector, where the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* was strengthening its defenses along the Sangro River. The Germans would defend the Barbara and Bernhard Lines stubbornly enough, but they would try to hold the Gustav position.[3]

The principal object of the *Tenth Army* was to gain time—to fight cheaply, to use troops and matériel economically, to inflict maximum casualties on Allied forces while withdrawing slowly enough to permit construction of fortifications on all three lines, particularly the Bernhard and Gustav positions. The major purpose of the Fifth Army was to reach the German defensive positions before they could be organized and consolidated. The fighting would take place in desolate mountains, creased by narrow valleys and deep gorges; on brush-covered heights, bald slopes, and high tablelands; along unpaved roads and mule tracks hugging mountain ledges. Late autumn weather would add fog, rain, and mud to the difficulties of the terrain.[4]

After a few days of operations in this area the Fifth Army would characterize the enemy opposition as stubborn delaying action. Strong rear guard units were barring progress by well-executed demolitions, usually covered by long-range automatic and artillery fire, by frequent small-scale but intense counterattacks, and by tenacious possession of ground until threatened or attacked by superior forces.[5]

Mountain Warfare

In the VI Corps zone immediately beyond the Volturno River, the existence of three roads in large part determined the corps maneuver. Each division was assigned a road: the 3d, a dirt track winding for about ten miles through defiles and around craggy crests to Dragoni; the 34th, a secondary road running about seven miles up the western side of the upper Volturno valley to Dragoni; the 45th, an indifferent road on the eastern side of the upper Volturno leading to Piedimonte d'Alife. These poor roads, obstructed by demolished bridges, mines, booby traps, and roadblocks, would slow the corps.

When General Truscott received news on the afternoon of 14 October that the direction of advance for his 3d Division had been changed, he immediately informed the 7th Infantry, which had occupied the western part of Monte Caruso and which had already started some troops northwest to Teano.[6] Suddenly ordered to turn to the northeast, the regimental commander, Col. Harry B. Sherman, at 1645 sent his 3d Battalion to capture the hamlet of Liberi before dark. Four miles away, Liberi would be

[2] Although the Board of Geographic names prefers the spelling *Monte Sambucaro*, the more familiar *Monte Sammucro*, which appears on Fifth Army maps, will be used in this volume.

[3] Vietinghoff MSS; 15th AGp Intel Summary 22, 27 Oct 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[4] Vietinghoff MSS; Steiger MS.

[5] Fifth Army G–2 Rpt 41, 2200, 17 Oct 43.

[6] 3d Div AAR, Oct 43. This section is based on the official records of the 3d Division.

a good jump-off point for Dragoni, his eventual objective. Supported by tanks and tank destroyers, the battalion moved less than a mile before striking resistance at the village of Cisterna. Although it fought all night to crack the defense, the German troops held their ground.

Hoping to bypass the resistance at Cisterna, Colonel Sherman committed his 2d Battalion on the left at midnight. Despite long-range enemy fire in the broken tableland north of Cisterna, the 2d was a mile beyond the village by daylight, 15 October. Since the battalion could move but slowly in the mountains. Sherman committed his 1st Battalion on the right at 0830. This battalion drove through the hamlet of Strangolagalli, then attacked directly across a series of small washboard ridges toward Liberi.

The Germans at Cisterna, having delayed the American advance for one day and now about to be outflanked on both sides, withdrew. When the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, moved into Cisterna at 1500, 15 October, the Germans were gone.

The 3d Battalion reverted to regimental reserve and the 1st Battalion on the right went on to secure a foothold on the high point of a ridge running through the village of Villa. About a mile short of Liberi, the battalion received such intense enemy fire that it was forced to halt. On the left, the 2d Battalion, making steady if slow progress across broken ground, continued its advance after darkness, inching its way toward Villa. Shortly after midnight, machine gun fire brought this 2d Battalion to a sudden standstill.

To get the attack moving again, Colonel Sherman recommitted his 3d Battalion at 0330, 16 October, on the left of the 2d Battalion. Twice repulsed by artillery and mortar fire in its efforts to storm a vital hill between Villa and Liberi, the 3d Battalion was then hard put to beat off a sharp counterattack in approximate platoon size. The 1st and 2d also fought off counterattacks.

At an impasse, Sherman scheduled a co-ordinated attack for the following morning. He sent his Cannon Company up the road to support the 2d Battalion in the middle. General Truscott helped out by temporarily attaching to the 7th Infantry the 3d Battalion of the 15th Infantry, which was clearing the division left.

While Colonel Sherman prepared his reinforced regiment for the attack, the Germans withdrew from Liberi during the night and retired to another defensive position. When the 7th Infantry launched its attack at 0615, 17 October, there was no opposition. At 1000, the 2d Battalion marched into Liberi. Sherman released the battalion of the 15th Infantry.

The advance toward Dragoni continued until shortly before noon, when the leading troops of the 1st Battalion reached the next German delaying position. Enemy rifle, machine gun, tank, and artillery fire pinned down the battalion and kept it immobile for the rest of the day. Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion, followed by the 3d, moved into the hills to bypass the German position. This accomplished, the troops returned to the road and moved forward until they struck resistance again. Once more the 2d Battalion took to the hills, trying to envelop a German roadblock. Late that afternoon, as the Germans seemed ready to withdraw from Dragoni, General Truscott informed Colonel Sherman that

he expected American troops to be in Dragoni by daylight, 18 October. To comply with this instruction, Sherman ordered the 3d Battalion to blast through the opposition along the winding road.

The 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, attacked just before nightfall, apparently catching the Germans on the point of abandoning their positions. Shortly after midnight American troops were on high ground just south of and overlooking Dragoni, and during the hours of darkness patrols descended into the village. When daylight came on 18 October, the battalion moved across and cut the Liberi-Dragoni road, securing in the process another and more advantageous hill. The 2d Battalion, having taken high ground west of Dragoni, sent patrols to the northwest to cut the lateral road running from Dragoni westward to Highway 6. The 1st Battalion and the rest of the regiment came forward during the day and organized the high ground dominating Dragoni, and from there the regiment used mortar fire to interdict the road leading eastward across the upper Volturno.

Over General Truscott's protest, General Lucas instructed the division commander to halt and wait for General Ryder's 34th Division to come abreast. Truscott told Sherman to rest his regiment. "You have done a damn good job with those battalions. . . ." he said.[7]

In the left of the 3d Division zone the 15th Infantry had overcome much the same conditions and the same sort of resistance in advancing about ten miles to the villages of Roccaromana and Pietramelara. The regiment had jockeyed its units to outflank resistance as men climbed hills, reconnoitered for passes and trails, and sought to grapple with an elusive enemy. Many attacks made during darkness over steep, brush-covered hills had exhausted and scattered troops and intensified the problems of unit control. In each case, the Americans had dislodged small groups of Germans who had skillfully placed their few weapons so as to deny movement along the natural avenues of advance, forcing the small American units to make tortuous outflanking movements. By the time the Americans established fields of fire and ranges for mortars and artillery, the Germans, having accomplished their mission of delaying the advance, had retired to the next position, where the same dreary and wearisome process had to be repeated.

In making this short advance during the five days from 14 through 18 October, the 3d Division had sustained 500 battle casualties.

The Second Volturno Crossing

General Ryder had hoped to hold off the advance of his 34th Division for a day or two after crossing the Volturno and taking Caiazzo, because he wanted bridges installed to insure getting his heavy weapons and artillery, as well as an adequate flow of supplies, across the river. He secured permission from General Lucas the night of the 14th to confine his activity on 15 October to patrolling. But when General Clark phoned the corps commander a little later to tell him that the Germans seemed to be retiring and that he wanted VI Corps to pursue at once, Lucas called Ryder to tell him that he "must not lose contact and must push on as hard and vigor-

[7] *From the Volturno to the Winter Line,* p. 65. See also Lucas Diary, 19 Oct 43.

ously as possible." [8] In compliance, Ryder ordered the 135th Infantry, in the right of the division zone, to drive ahead to Dragoni.

The 135th Infantry had captured the village of Ruviano on the morning of 15 October, but in the rolling grainfields, vineyards, and olive groves immediately beyond the regiment met stiff resistance that slowed progress. Trying to get his troops moving, General Ryder on the morning of 16 October instructed the 168th Infantry on the left to attack along the road from Caiazzo to Alvignano, a village about halfway between the Volturno River and Dragoni. He hoped thus to loosen the resistance beyond Ruviano. The 168th Infantry also struck firm opposition; it took a day of hard fighting to move about two miles to Alvignano.

The stubborn defense reflected the local importance to the Germans of the road network around Alvignano and Dragoni. At both villages, roads run northeastward to bridges, about two miles apart, across the upper Volturno. German units withdrawing from the pressure exerted by the 34th and 3d Divisions needed these routes, and about three battalions of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* fought skillfully to keep the roads open.

While the 135th Infantry pushed doggedly beyond Ruviano along a ridge line for three miles to a height overlooking Dragoni, reaching that objective on the morning of 18 October, the 168th Infantry was moving with difficulty toward Dragoni. General Ryder had thought of passing the 133d Infantry through the 168th to take Dragoni, but the advance of 3d Division troops to ground dominating the village from the west and across the road west of Dragoni made it desirable for the 34th Division to block German movements eastward across the upper Volturno. The German use of smoke in the area around Dragoni indicated that heavy equipment and large caliber weapons were still being evacuated across the bridge. A swift crossing by the 34th Division might disrupt that withdrawal and perhaps trap some German rear guards pulling back from the 45th Division, which was advancing along the eastern side of the upper Volturno valley from Monte Acero. To take the highway and the railroad bridge that was still intact a little more than a mile northeast of Dragoni became the task of the 133d Infantry. Ryder had intended to reinforce the 133d with contingents of the 135th, but a savage counterattack against the 168th Infantry, apparently a last German effort to mask the final withdrawal from Dragoni on 18 October, prompted him to hold back the 135th to insure his security. Arranging with General Truscott to have the 3d Division keep Dragoni and the river crossing interdicted by fire, General Ryder directed his 168th Infantry to seize the town, the 133d to take the bridge. Later during 18 October, he would send the 135th Infantry to seize the crossing site at the destroyed bridge near Alvignano.

As the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 133d Infantry attacked on the afternoon of 18 October up the west bank of the upper Volturno toward the Dragoni bridge, the 1st Battalion followed on the right rear, covering the regimental flank along the river. When the sound of heavy firing from the direction of

[8] Quote from *Fifth Army History*, Part II, p. 31. See also 34th Div AAR, Oct 43. This section is based on the official records of the 34th Division.

Dragoni indicated that the two assault battalions were about to become involved in a fire fight for the bridge, the 1st Battalion commander came to an independent decision. Departing from the exact letter of his instructions, he sent a reconnaissance patrol to find a ford across the river. By crossing to the east bank, the battalion might bypass the resistance and drive rapidly to the regimental objective.

The lieutenant at the head of the patrol, which consisted of a rifle platoon and several members of the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon, located a place that looked fordable. He started infiltrating men across the river. Unfortunately, the river was too deep; every man wading into the water soon had to swim. Persisting in his search, the lieutenant around dusk discovered a shallow bottom not far upstream from the destroyed Alvignano bridge. By this time half his force was across the river and manning a rather thin and somewhat precarious defensive line. The lieutenant informed the battalion commander of his success in finding a ford, and the battalion commander received permission from regiment to cross.

Since it would be dark before the battalion could get across the Volturno, the lieutenant put his entire platoon on the far side of the river as a covering force. He marked the ford with willow sticks cut from bushes along the river and pushed into the mud of the river bed. Since he had no tape, he had his men tie toilet paper to the sticks to make them visible in the darkness. He placed guides on the near bank and instructed them to tell every man of the battalion to keep just to the left of the line of sticks when crossing.

German artillery fire was by then falling on the crossing site, but all the foot elements of the 1st Battalion waded the Volturno at a cost of one casualty. Pushing rapidly up the east bank, the battalion approached the Dragoni bridge around midnight, 18 October. At that point, German troops set off prepared charges and destroyed the structure, leaving only the low gray stone abutments and one arch still standing.

Fortunately, the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon had been working at the ford, improving the crossing site with rocks pulled from the river bed to establish a roadway of sorts. At daylight all the antitank guns and prime movers, the communication jeeps, and a 3/4-ton truck loaded with ammunition moved safely across and joined the infantry near the destroyed Dragoni bridge.

Coming up on the west side of the river, the other two battalions of the 133d Infantry reached Dragoni during the morning of 19 October and forded the stream. The relatively swift movement of the regiment, however, had trapped no German rear guards.

That night the 135th Infantry forded the Volturno near the Alvignano bridge, moving during the hours of darkness to avoid enemy artillery fire. Hampered by swampy ground, sporadic German artillery fire, and occasional mine fields, the regiment moved north for four miles along the Alvignano-Alife road during the dark and foggy morning of 20 October. That afternoon troops entered the old walled village of Alife. Bombed by B–25's a week earlier, Alife was a mass of rubble, its bridge destroyed, its ruins full of mines and booby traps left by the Germans.

There the 34th Division prepared to

take over what had formerly been the zone of the 45th Division.

The Upper Volturno Valley

The 45th Division, after taking Monte Acero near the confluence of the Volturno and Calore Rivers, had driven up the eastern part of the upper Volturno valley, its advance obstructed by determined German rear guards bolstered by artillery and tank fire and occasional air attacks. Had General Middleton been able to secure close air support for his ground troops, he might have accelerated his progress. Between 11 and 17 October, he requested on six different occasions bombings of targets of opportunity spotted by forward observers—artillery positions, road traffic, and in one instance a column of German vehicles moving bumper to bumper. He was refused for a variety of reasons: "all fighter-bomber aerodromes unserviceable"; "targets received too late for aircraft to take off"; "weather in area reported impossible." Six prearranged missions laid on between 14 and 18 October to provide direct support to 45th Division forward elements were far from satisfactory—the weather had "interfered with the detailed execution of the above programme." [9]

A bombing and strafing attack by twenty German planes on 14 October and tank fire bolstered by strafing on the following day prevented the 45th Division from taking Faicchio, a village stronghold on dominating ground just beyond Monte Acero. Not until the Germans abandoned Faicchio during the night of 15 October did the division advance.

For four more days the 45th Division shouldered its way into the valley, covering the eight miles from Faicchio to Piedimonte d'Alife by dogged persistence. Late on 19 October, when leading elements entered the village, the attack came to an end. On the following day the 45th Division went into corps reserve, leaving to the 34th Division the task of continuing the drive up the east side of the valley.

Placing his 135th Infantry in division reserve at Alife, General Ryder extended the control of his 168th Infantry over Dragoni to free the 3d Division for an advance to the northwest, and sent the 133d Infantry into the narrowing Volturno valley toward Sant'Angelo d'Alife, five miles away.

The advance of the 133d Infantry had scarcely got under way when the Germans caught the 100th Infantry Battalion in open flats not far from Alife. From positions in the foothills of the Matese Mountains the Germans delivered rifle, machine gun, artillery, and *Nebelwerfer* fire on the Americans. The sound from the *Nebelwerfer* rockets, called "screaming meemies," probably terrified the Americans more than the fire itself. The men scattered in panic. With the battalion disorganized, the regimental advance came to a halt before it really began.

Hoping to demolish the German defenses by firepower, the regiment saturated the area with mortar and artillery shells. But the enemy positions on the mountain slopes were difficult to pinpoint, and the fires were apparently ineffective. Two artillery battalions, the 125th and 151st, crossed the Volturno

[9] No. 7 Air Support Control Ltr, Requests for Air Support by 45th Div, 18 Oct 43, G-3 Jnl.

into the regimental area, but their fires, including a concentrated expenditure of 1,134 rounds delivered in a 20-minute period on the morning of 21 October, failed to stop the German guns. When a Cub artillery observation plane discovered several German tanks in a willow grove near the river, the 125th Field Artillery Battalion fired 736 shells with little result; the resistance remained firm.

For three days the 133d Infantry tried to move forward without success. Then the Germans broke contact and withdrew. On the fourth day, the morning of 24 October, troops walked into the vacuum and took not only Sant'Angelo d'Alife but also Raviscanina unopposed.

The advance of seven miles in the upper valley of the Volturno during four days cost the 133d Infantry a total of 59 men killed and 148 wounded. The entire 34th Division had suffered more than 350 casualties in the period of a week.

The week had not been easy for the Germans either. "We withdraw 5 kilometers," a German noncommissioned officer wrote in his diary. "Are under heavy artillery fire. Had several wounded. M/Sgt Bregenz killed. . . . My morale is gone." [10]

The Coastal Zone

Headed toward the lower part of the Garigliano River, 10 Corps was fighting in the coastal area—a countryside of grainfields, vineyards, orchards, and olive groves, cut by drainage canals, tree-lined streams, deep ravines, and sunken roads, and rimmed by sand dunes and marshes. A dozen miles north of the Volturno, a hill mass heaves up from the coastal plain; topped by Monte Massico and Monte Santa Croce, this high ground commanded the corps approach routes from the south as well as the Garigliano valley to the northwest. To the northeast stand still greater heights—Monte Camino, Monte la Difensa, and Monte Maggiore.[11]

The 46th Division, working along the coast, had reached the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal, four miles north of the Volturno, by 15 October; there, strong opposition halted the division for three days. Late on the evening of 18 October, the 46th forced a crossing and secured a bridgehead, which was subsequently enlarged and reinforced. Three ferries operating continuously brought enough men, equipment, and supplies to the far side to make feasible a movement in force to Monte Massico and Monte Santa Croce.

Meanwhile the 7th Armoured Division, after bridging the Volturno at Grazzanise on 16 October, advanced slowly across low, wet ground, its progress obstructed by demolitions and rear guard resistance. At the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal the division made an assault crossing and fought through grainfields and olive groves for three miles to Sparanise on 25 October. Highway 7, leading through the Cascano pass between Monte Santa Croce and Monte Massico, was at hand.

In the right of the 10 Corps zone, the 56th Division had been fighting along the Triflisco ridge to open Highway 6 and gain access to Teano. The terrain was extremely rugged. Some ridge crests

[10] Incl 2 to VI Corps G–2 Rpt 44, 1530, 22 Oct 43.

[11] The following is taken from the *Fifth Army History*, Part II, pp. 36ff.

were so narrow that only a single platoon could be deployed. Supplies often had to be carried by hand. Furnishing fire support was frequently impossible. Yet the division moved forward and by 22 October was ready to concentrate for an attack into the Teano valley.

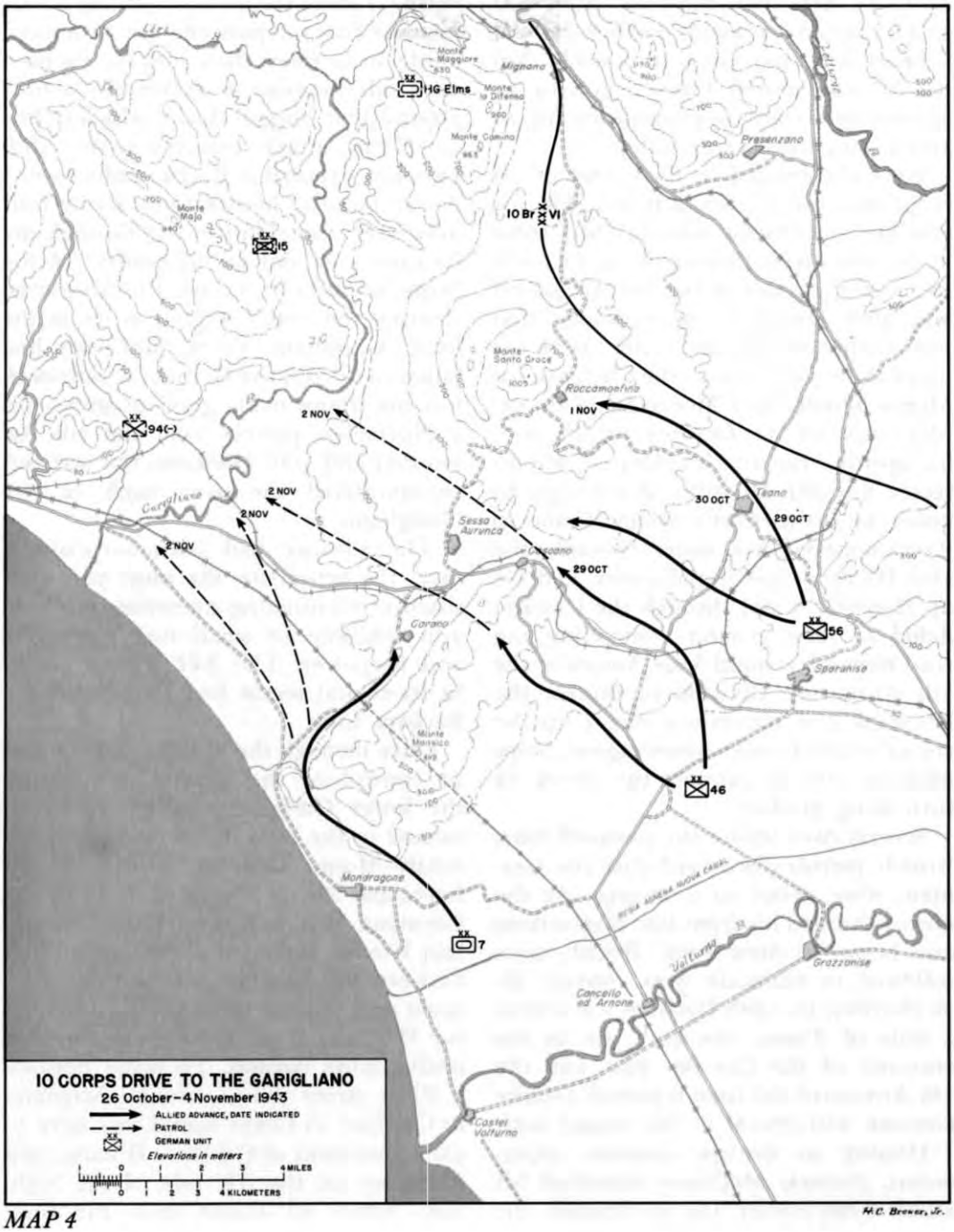
Since the ground in the center of his corps was not particularly suitable for armored operations, General McCreery halted his divisions and on 24 October switched the zones of the 7th Armoured and 46th Divisions, an exchange that was completed four days later. With his immediate objectives the heights of Monte Massico and Monte Santa Croce, McCreery set 31 October as the date for opening the attack. (*Map 4*) He directed the 56th Division on the right to make the main effort through Teano to Roccamonfina, five miles beyond; the 46th Division, now in the center, to drive up Highway 7 and through the Cascano defile to seize ground controlling the road network around Sessa Aurunca; the 7th Armoured Division to protect the left flank and simulate a threat up the coastal route through Mondragone. Ships offshore were to support the attack by furnishing gunfire.

Several days before the jump-off date, British patrols discovered that the Germans were about to disengage. As the enemy thinned his front-line dispositions and began to draw back, British units followed to maintain firm contact. By 29 October, the 56th Division was within a mile of Teano, the 46th was at the entrance of the Cascano pass, and the 7th Armoured Division reported definite German withdrawal in the coastal area.

Hoping to disrupt German movements, General McCreery launched his attack a day earlier. On 30 October, the three divisions pushed forward, the 56th taking Teano, the 46th advancing a mile into the Cascano pass, the 7th Armoured doing little more than making its presence felt because of extremely muddy ground that bogged down vehicles. The 10 Corps attack continued—the 56th Division capturing Roccamonfina on 1 November and Monte Santa Croce four days later; the 46th moving through the Cascano pass and taking control of the Sessa Aurunca area; the 7th Armoured clearing the coastal region as far as the lower Garigliano River. McCreery had failed to disrupt the German withdrawal, but his troops made good progress. On 2 November patrols from the 7th Armoured and 46th Divisions reached and reconnoitered the near bank of the Garigliano.

The advance had been surprisingly easy; the action for the most part consisted of eliminating numerous machine gun positions by small unit maneuver and firepower. The *XIV Panzer Corps* in its coastal sector had abandoned the Barbara Line.

Once through the Massico barrier and in control of the ground dominating the lower Garigliano valley, 10 Corps turned to the hills that stretched to the north—Monte Camino, Monte la Difensa, and Monte Maggiore. Held by the Germans, this unbroken lateral mountain barrier extended about eight miles between the Cascano pass and the Mignano gap, which provided an opening for Highway 6 on the way to Cassino, twelve miles beyond. To make possible a Fifth Army drive through Mignano to Cassino, 10 Corps would first have to gain possession of Camino, Difensa, and Maggiore on the left side of the highway, while VI Corps took the high


10 CORPS DRIVE TO THE GARIGLIANO
26 October–4 November 1943
ALLIED ADVANCE, DATE INDICATED
PATROL
GERMAN UNIT
Elevations in meters
4 MILES
4 KILOMETERS
HG Elms
10 Br XXX VI
15
94(-)
7
46
56
2 NOV
1 NOV
30 OCT
29 OCT
Mignano
Presenzano
Roccamonfina
Teano
Sessa Aurunca
Garigliano
Sparanise
Mondragone
Grazzanise
Cancello ed Arnone
Castel Volturno
Volturno
M.C. Brewer, Jr.

MAP 4

ground on the right. In this area the Barbara Line was still intact.

More Mountain Warfare

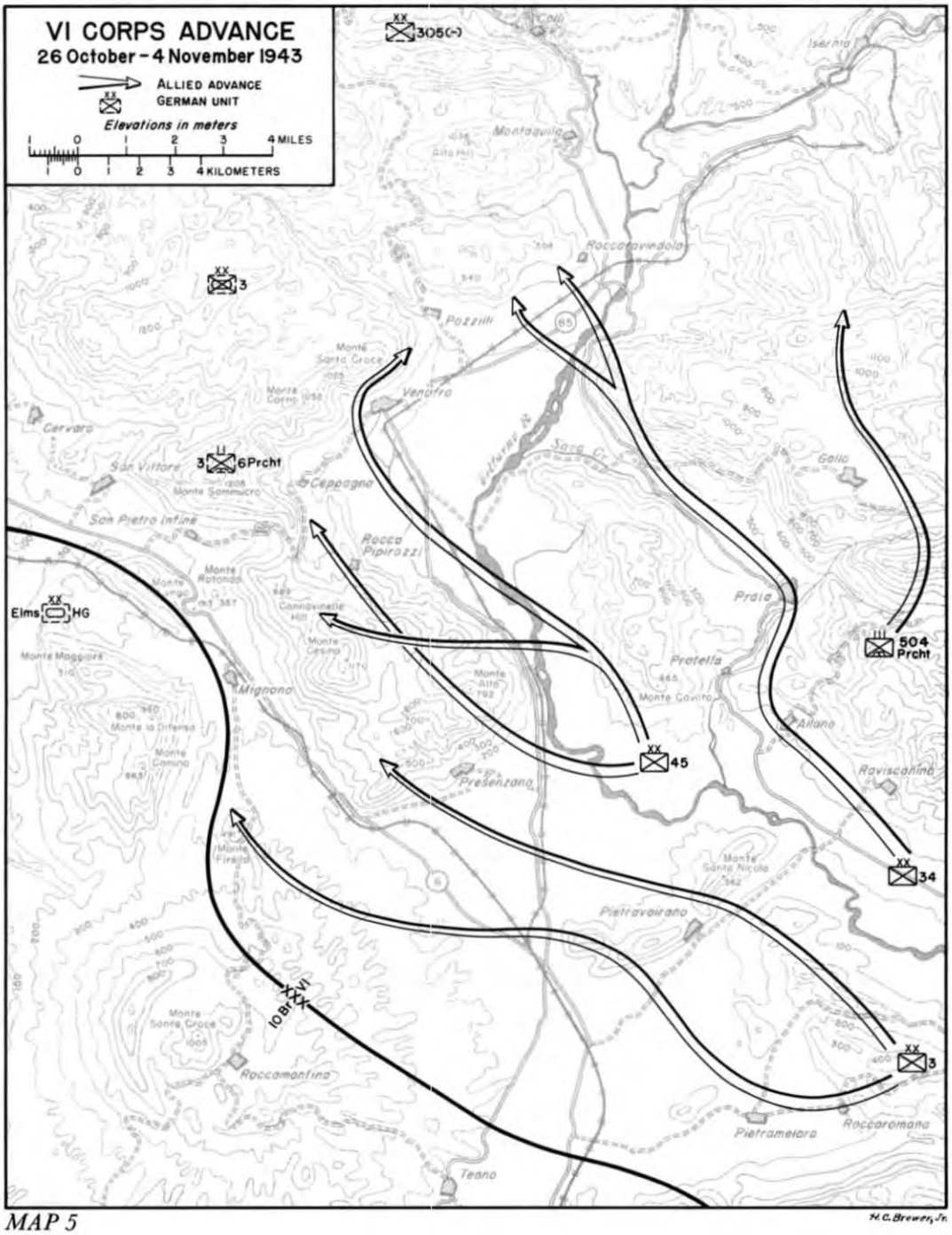
In the VI Corps zone the 3d Division was consolidating positions in the high ground immediately west of Dragoni, the 34th Division trying to advance in the upper Volturno valley, and the 45th Division was in corps reserve. When the 34th Division reached the head of the upper Volturno valley, General Lucas would have to shift his corps dispositions in order to draw closer to 10 Corps. At that time, he would have to send the 3d Division to the northwest to attack toward the high ground dominating the Mignano gap, get the 34th Division and perhaps the 45th across the upper Volturno River to seize Venafro, and make provision for protecting his right flank in the virtually impassable foothills of the Matese mountain range. (*Map 5*)

The immediate task was to clear the upper Volturno valley, and this entailed a continuation of the 34th Division attack. General Ryder passed the 135th Infantry through the 133d to continue the advance beyond Raviscanina. In support of the regimental attack scheduled for the morning of 26 October, the 34th Division Artillery began to fire successive concentrations at 0530, moving the fire ahead of the assault units 100 yards every six minutes. Whether the preparation was effective soon became academic. Early morning darkness and a heavy morning mist obscured terrain features and the line of departure; combat units and supply parties soon became confused and lost their sense of direction. The attack deteriorated as the men became disorganized. Fortunately, there was almost no opposition on a side road to Ailano, and a battalion of infantry moved forward two miles and took the hamlet that afternoon. But resistance on the main road in the regimental zone prevented an advance to Pratella. For two days the Germans held. When General Ryder passed the 168th Infantry through the 135th on the morning of 28 October, the Germans were withdrawing — even before the heavy artillery preparation and a fighter-bomber attack struck Pratella. American patrols entering the village on 30 October found the Germans had gone. With long-range artillery fire harassing the advance elements and contact with the enemy confined to scattered small arms and machine gun fire, the 34th Division reached the bank of the Volturno River on 3 November.[12]

Meanwhile, General Clark had given General Lucas the 504th Parachute Infantry to protect the VI Corps right flank. This experienced unit, equipped with light weapons and trained to operate independently, had a reputation for skillful patrolling and infiltration, valuable for a task that would involve scouting virtually impassable mountainsides and maintaining contact with the Eighth Army on the other side of the Matese range.

General Lucas dispatched Colonel Tucker's paratroopers on 27 October five miles beyond Raviscanina to Gallo. After setting up a base there, Tucker extended patrol operations toward Isernia, about fifteen miles distant and just across the Fifth Army boundary in the British army zone of advance. Two days later Colonel Tucker reported that his

[12] See Rpt 90, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.



MAP 5

H. C. Brewer, Jr.

troops were meeting only small and isolated German detachments and observing only very light enemy vehicular movements along the Venafro-Isernia road.[13]

The corps commander had called his division commanders together on 27 October to talk over plans, and the discussion had been, he remarked, "hot and heavy." Not a council of war, because Lucas was determined to make his own decisions, the conference was wholesome, he believed. "These primadonnas feel," Lucas wrote, "that they had their day in court and I get the ideas of men of great combat experience." [14]

From the conference and his own thinking emerged General Lucas' instructions for the next phase of operations. On 29 October he ordered the 504th Parachute Infantry to cut the Venafro-Isernia road; the 34th and 45th Divisions to cross the upper Volturno River; and the 3d Division to be ready to seize Presenzano, a village that would give the division a foothold on the high ground overlooking the Mignano gap from the east.[15]

The 3d Division jumped off on 31 October. Attacking northwest from the Roccaromana area immediately west of Dragoni, two regiments moving abreast crossed the small valley carrying the lateral road that connects Raviscanina and Highway 6. Having cut the road, the 15th Infantry and the 30th Infantry took two hill masses dominating the hamlet of Pietravairano.

Because this advance had been relatively easy, General Truscott secured permission to advance on both sides of Highway 6 to the Mignano gap.[16] Against a surprising absence of opposition, the 7th Infantry crossed Highway 6 and cut the Roccamonfina-Mignano road. By 3 November the regiment had gained the wooded height of Friello Hill west of Highway 6, where the troops found many mines and booby traps but few Germans. The 15th Infantry, also moving quickly, attacked up Highway 6, sending a battalion to seize the high ground above Presenzano. By 3 November, the 15th Infantry was at the southern edge of Mignano on the east side of Highway 6.

With 10 Corps holding Monte Massico near the coast and the 3d Division beyond Presenzano, it became obvious that the German troops defending the Barbara Line had pulled back. They had gained time with little expenditure of men and matériel. They had used the terrain to good advantage, careful to employ defiladed ground for shelter and dense woods for concealment. Their artillery fires had been effective—having registered and adjusted artillery on the likely approach routes, they were able to fire without direct observation. Small mobile infantry units supported by long-range artillery fire had conducted a skillful rear guard action.

The final surge by 10 Corps to the lower Garigliano, Monte Massico, and Teano had been made possible by intentional German withdrawal; the lower Garigliano provided the Germans with a better obstacle and the high ground immediately behind the river better positions than those they had abandoned. The final drive by the 3d Division to the high ground around the Mignano gap

[13] 504th Prcht Inf AAR, Oct 43.
[14] Lucas Diary, 27 Oct 43.
[15] VI Corps FO 12, 29 Oct 43.
[16] VI Corps FO 13, 31 Oct 43.

had been made possible by anything but an intentional German withdrawal. Two inexperienced German infantry divisions, the *94th* and *305th*, had come from Rommel's *Army Group B* area into Kesselring's *OB SUED* command for assignment to *Tenth Army*. The *94th* was to come under the *XIV Panzer Corps*, the *305th* under the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* on the east coast. When Kesselring, concerned about the possibility of Allied amphibious hooks, ordered Vietinghoff to speed the construction of coastal defenses to protect the deep flank, particularly between Gaeta and Terracina, Vietinghoff assigned this task to the *94th Division*. To help the *94th*, he withdrew several engineer battalions from the Mignano sector. The transfer of the engineers delayed completion of a strongpoint under construction at Mignano and prevented work on the massif holding Presenzano, projected as an advanced bastion of defense, from being carried out as extensively as planned. There had been little to stop or slow down the 3d Division.[17]

Except for these swift advances, Allied progress had been slow and costly. General Clark was irritated. "So am I," General Lucas wrote in his diary. But he could see no other way. The troops could not be pushed beyond their capabilities. "Things are going slowly," he admitted, but as long as the Germans were effective and dangerous, there was no alternative to patience.[18]

In twenty days the Fifth Army had advanced between 15 and 20 miles along a 40-mile front. The troops had not succeeded in engaging the main body of the enemy forces. The senior commanders could only hope that the Allies had forced the Germans to withdraw faster than they had intended.

Rome was still a long way off. Nor was there evidence of an imminent enemy collapse, or the prospect of a decisive Allied strike toward the Eternal City. The discouraging frontal advance would have to continue. Unless, of course, the breakthrough of the Barbara Line meant that the Germans were about to give up southern Italy. The third crossing of the Volturno River might tell.

The Third Volturno Crossing

Getting the 34th and 45th Divisions westward across the upper Volturno River was designed to help the 3d Division take the Mignano gap and open the way for an advance to Cassino and beyond. While the 3d Division fought in the immediate vicinity of Mignano, the 34th Division was to cross the river and attack into broken ground around Colli, about five miles away, in order to anchor securely the right flank of the corps. The 504th Parachute Infantry—operating still on the right flank in terrain so difficult that it was necessary often to communicate by carrier pigeon and sometimes to send food and ammunition by overhead trolley strung across deep mountain gorges—would lend assistance by cutting the Venefro-Isernia road. The 45th Division was to push up Highway 85 for about eight miles to Venafro, then turn west and, assisted by a Ranger battalion, seize Monte Sammucro, which blocked Highway 6 north of Mignano.[19]

General Lucas was concerned about the river crossing. The operation would

[17] Vietinghoff MSS.

[18] Lucas Diary, 29, 30 Oct, 1 Nov 43.

[19] VI Corps FO 13, 31 Oct 43.



REMOVING A GERMAN S MINE, *called "Bouncing Betty" by American troops because it jumped into the air before exploding.*

be complicated, he believed, particularly since the defenders held commanding ground across the river. Both assault divisions would have to be supplied over a single road under enemy observation and fire. Yet there was no avoiding it. "I must cross the river," Lucas wrote in his diary, "if I am ever to get to Rome." [20]

Pushed continually by General Clark, who insisted that there were few enemy troops on the far side of the river, General Lucas just as frequently requested more time to prepare. He saw no point in incurring unnecessary casualties. Reluctantly, Lucas set the night of 2 November for the crossing, though he later had to postpone the 34th Division operation for a day to give Ryder additional time to reconnoiter and get more artillery into supporting positions.

To the troops taking cover among the olive groves on the slopes overlooking the flat valley of the upper Volturno, the view to the west was far from comforting. Just beyond the river in the foreground lay Highway 85 and a parallel railroad to Venafro. Beyond these rose rugged and towering mountains. There the Germans, who had destroyed bridges and spread mines behind them, had to be waiting for those who would cross.

The first troops to ford the upper Volturno in this third crossing of the Vol-

[20] Lucas Diary, 29 Oct 43.

turno by VI Corps were from the 45th Division. During the night of 2 November, concealed by darkness, the men of Company F, 180th Infantry, moved through clumps of willows to the water, waded the shallow stream, and took up positions high on a terraced hillside to form a covering force. During the afternoon and evening of 3 November troops of the 4th Ranger Battalion crossed the river with little trouble. Following a steep and rocky trail in single file, the men climbed into the hills, moving west toward Highway 6. About the same time the rest of the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, crossed the gravel bed of the river downstream, struggled up steep ridges, and advanced northwest toward the village of Ceppagna, there to cut a mountain road connecting Venafro and Highway 6. There was no opposition until morning, when the battalion met German troops on a narrow ridge near Rocca Pipirozzi, a little stone village clustered about a castle on a peak. The battalion sideslipped to the Ceppagna area to block the road and sent patrols southwest to make contact with the Rangers, who had marched all night over jagged heights for 12 tortuous miles. In the morning they too had met Germans, and they dug in on Cannavinelle Hill, 2 to 3 miles east of Highway 6.[21]

Upstream from the crossing sites of the 180th Infantry, the 179th Infantry had sent its 3d Battalion across the Volturno very early on 4 November. Advancing toward Venafro through the grainfields and vineyards of the valley, the men made good progress against virtually no opposition. By midmorning the battalion was at the outskirts of Venafro, but there machine gun fire halted the troops. One rifle company fought its way through the town to the safety of a small hill immediately to the north, but the remainder of the battalion could not move from the flat and exposed ground until after dark. The 1st and 2d Battalions had meanwhile crossed the river and come forward. On the following morning the regiment attacked into the high ground to eliminate the few defenders who had temporarily delayed the capture of Venafro.

The 34th Division crossed the Volturno with two regiments abreast, the troops moving through the farmland of the muddy valley to positions along the low near river bank shortly before midnight, 3 November.[22] After an artillery preparation of thirty minutes, the troops waded the swift and icy stream. Some hostile mortar and artillery fire came from the hills, but the worst obstacle was the large number of mines and booby traps planted in the valley, their trip wires seemingly attached to every grapevine, fruit tree, and haystack. Commanders and staffs of the higher headquarters could follow the progress of the advancing troops by the explosions.

The assault regiments crossed Highway 85 and moved into the hills against stiffening opposition. By about noon of 4 November the leading units were on the initial objectives of the division. The heavy casualties caused by mines made it impossible to continue the attack without reinforcement, and General Ryder therefore brought over the rest of his division.

With VI Corps across the upper Volturno and hammering on the Bernhard

[21] See Altieri, *Darby's Rangers*, pp. 63–64.

[22] 34th Div, Volturno Crossing, 3–4 Nov 43, OCMH.



RESCUE AT THE VOLTURNO; COLLAPSED PONTON BRIDGE IN THE BACKGROUND

Line, General Lucas' concern vanished. "All is well tonight," he wrote in his diary on 4 November.[23] Good news, too, was the fact that the 504th Parachute Infantry had managed to get a patrol over the mountains and into Isernia; the village was clear of enemy troops—no German troops were being assembled there for a strike against the VI Corps right flank.

The Germans at the Bernhard Line

The crossings of the upper Volturno River during the nights of 2 and 3 November had taken the Germans somewhat by surprise. They had expected crossings, since the river was fordable all along its upper reaches and the valley was difficult to defend, but not so soon. The Germans had come to anticipate that American attacks, especially across rivers, would be carefully prepared. Consequently, the unit that had been defending the area, the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* (reinforced by small elements of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division*) had planted a profusion of mines and left merely outposts to cover its movement into the Bernhard Line positions.

Kesselring had asked Vietinghoff to hold the Allied forces away from the Bernhard Line until 1 November, when the fortifications were expected to be completed, and Vietinghoff had performed this ticklish operation with skill,

[23] Lucas Diary, 4 Nov 43.

avoiding the loss of fighting strength and enabling enough forces to withdraw to the fortifications to insure a strong defense. In the process his troops had destroyed bridges, culverts, tunnels, railroad tracks, engines, and wagons in the area they had evacuated; they had laid some 45,000 mines forward of the Bernhard Line and an additional 30,000 on its immediate approaches. Although Vietinghoff would have preferred to concentrate forces for a counterattack against either Fifth or Eighth Army, he was well aware of how useless this would be without air support. Fighting from the excellent defensive positions of the Bernhard Line would be almost as satisfying. Not a single line, it was rather a system of mutually supporting positions organized in depth to permit penetrations to be sealed off quickly.[24]

A special engineer headquarters under General Bessell had planned the Winter Line with foresight and directed the construction work with great competence. Italian civilians, who were paid good wages plus a bonus of tobacco and food, performed much of the labor. Mussolini's puppet government had also made available several quasi-military construction battalions.

Kesselring issued his "order for the conduct of the campaign" on 1 November. He now told Vietinghoff to be unconcerned about Allied amphibious landings in the deep flanks—*OB SUED* would take responsibility for repelling them; Vietinghoff was to give his full attention to a strong defense at the Bernhard Line while the construction along the Gustav Line was being completed.

A few days later, despite Vietinghoff's skillful withdrawal, Kesselring showed dissatisfaction with what he considered to be the quick crumbling of the Barbara Line. He questioned Vietinghoff's conduct of operations. Taking umbrage, Vietinghoff immediately requested sick leave. Kesselring approved the request and took temporary command of the *Tenth Army* until the arrival on the following day, 5 November, of Generalleutnant Joachim Lemelsen, who would command the army until 28 December, when Vietinghoff returned. Also in November, Hube was given command of an army on the Eastern Front and Generalleutnant Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin replaced him as *XIV Panzer Corps* commander.[25]

German troops in contact with the Allied armies consisted of about seven and a half divisions. The *XIV Panzer Corps* controlled the *94th Infantry* and the *15th* and *3d Panzer Grenadier Divisions,* as well as a battle group of the *Hermann Goering Division.* Under the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* headquarters were the *26th Panzer, 1st Parachute, 305th Infantry,* and *65th Infantry Divisions.*

The order of battle was not an altogether accurate measure of troop strength. For example, the *94th Division* was neither experienced nor well trained.

"It is completely illogical to send us this division," the *Tenth Army* chief of staff had protested in a telephone conversation with *OB SUED.*

"It is not illogical," Kesselring's chief of staff replied. "Hitler has ordered it."[26]

Logical or not, the division soon took responsibility for part of the front, but

[24] Vietinghoff MSS.

[25] Steiger MS.

[26] *Tenth A KTB,* 21 Oct 43.

as it turned out the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division,* which it was supposed to replace, would remain as well.

More important in measuring the strength of the German divisions was the reorganization that had taken place generally in October 1943. Until that time, the standard German infantry division had an antitank battalion; a reconnaissance battalion; three infantry regiments, each controlling three rifle battalions; a regiment of medium (150-mm. howitzers) artillery and three battalions of light (105-mm. howitzers or guns) artillery (for a total of 48 pieces, roughly the same number as in an American division). The division at full strength thus had a little more than 17,000 men. Dwindling supplies of manpower in the fall of 1943 prompted a drastic overhaul to reduce the size of the standard division while retaining its firepower. By giving each of the three regiments only two battalions of infantry, the Germans reduced the division to about 13,500 men. Although Hitler in January 1944 would try to trim personnel to about 11,000 troops, OKH planners would compromise and slice off only 1,000 men, making reductions chiefly in supply and overhead units. A cut in the basic unit, reducing the rifle company to 140 enlisted men and 2 officers, gave the German division about 1,200 fewer riflemen than the American division.[27]

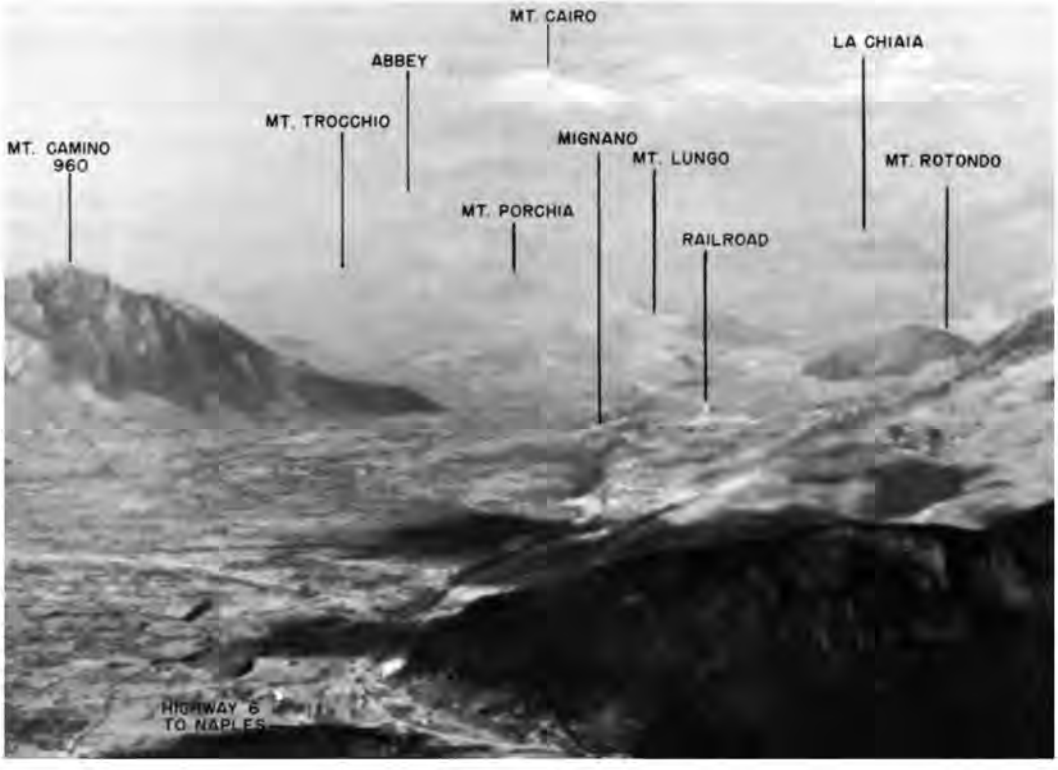
Added to the reduction in the size of the infantry division, there was the difficulty of replacing losses, not only in personnel but in equipment. A battle strength of three to four hundred men in a battalion was considered good, though seldom attained. Artillery could not match Allied firepower because of limited ammunition stocks. The ground troops were denied consistent air support. There were no separate tank battalions to bolster the infantry units. Reserves were scarce.[28]

But all the deficiencies that plagued the Germans were more than compensated by the superior defensive positions the terrain of southern Italy offered. On the Bernhard Line the German divisions would use all their infantry battalions at the front, usually keeping the reconnaissance battalion in immediate reserve. Corps headquarters would try to have one battalion in reserve. Army would have no reserves at all, but would depend on withdrawing forces (normally an entire division) from quiet sectors to strengthen and give depth to threatened points along the front. At the beginning of November, Kesselring permitted *Tenth Army* to retain a battle group of the *Hermann Goering Division* in the line, while the rest of the division went into reserve in the Frosinone area at the head of the Liri valley. Kesselring also positioned the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* in reserve at Velletri, on the southern approaches to Rome, particularly for use against coastal invasion.

A major question troubled the German command. Would the troops in the line actually hold after a year of constant retreat in North Africa, Sicily, and southern Italy? For the troops to take seriously the order to stand fast on the Bernhard Line, the commanders at all echelons would have to have their units well in hand. Otherwise the defense would collapse.

[27] Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack,* pp. 236–37.

[28] MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.



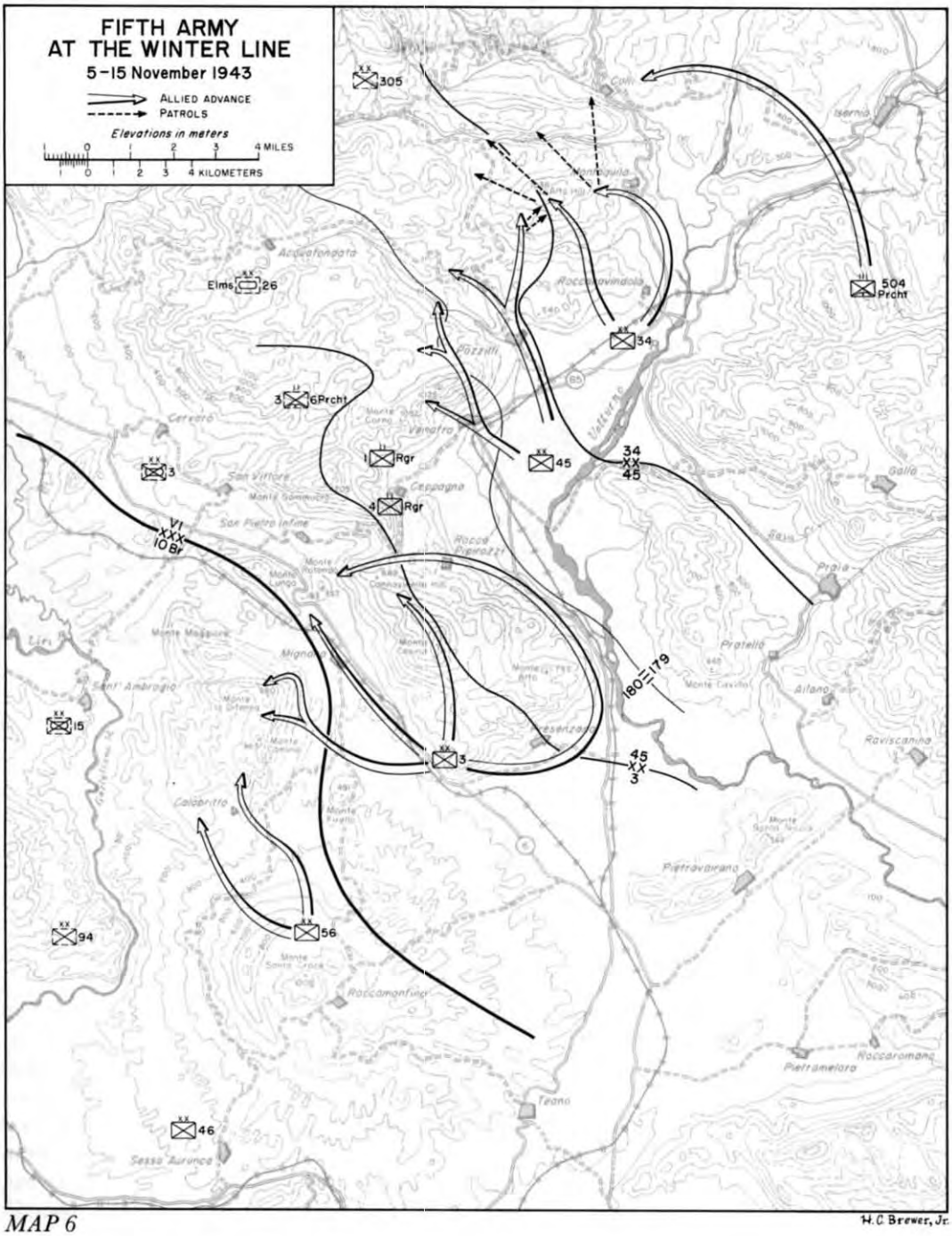
MIGNANO GAP

Into the Bernhard Line

The immediate objective of the Fifth Army offensive was some twelve miles ahead—the entrance to the Liri valley, the gateway to Rome. To reach the Liri valley, the army had first to clear the shoulders of the Mignano gap, then take Cassino, and finally cross the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers. If the troops could crack the defenses at Mignano, they might be able to rush across the intervening ground to the Liri valley. (*Map 6*)

At Mignano, Highway 6 and the railroad to Rome come together and run side by side, overlooked on the left by the Camino-Difensa-Maggiore mountain mass, on the right by the terrain around Presenzano, the Cannavinelle Hill, and Monte Rotondo. Just beyond Mignano the highway and railroad separate, the railroad tracks going around the western edge of Monte Lungo, the road running around the eastern edge. Passing between Monte Lungo on the left and Monte Rotondo on the right, the road heads for the village of San Pietro Infine, which is set like a jewel on the forbidding height of Monte Sammucro. Before reaching the mountain, Highway 6 swings left around the high ground, bypasses San Pietro, and runs straight to Cassino.

In early November 10 Corps was at the foot of the Camino-Difensa-Maggiore mass, with the 56th Division in position to attack Camino, a mountain of steep and rocky slopes and razorback main



MAP 6

H. C. Brewer, Jr.



BRITISH SOLDIERS HUGGING SIDE OF HILL, MONTE CAMINO

spurs with very little cover, looming some 3,000 feet above the Garigliano valley. Attacking on 5 November with two brigades, the 56th Division found the few natural approaches to the top carefully mined, booby-trapped, and wired, and covered by crew-served weapons in pits blasted out of solid rock.

After overcoming German outpost positions in several hamlets at the foot of the mountain, the troops started to fight up the slope on the afternoon of 6 November, a slow and backbreaking process. Units of the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* defending the hill launched three counterattacks on 8 November and almost drove the British from the slope, but they held on doggedly, retaining a precarious position about halfway up.

Two days later, as the weather became colder and wetter, the British began to show signs of complete exhaustion. Losses sustained by continuous action since the invasion of Salerno had by this time so reduced combat efficiency that it became doubtful whether the troops could hold Monte Camino even if they captured all of it. An entire battalion was doing little more than carrying rations, water, and ammunition to men who were hanging to the steep slopes; evacuation of casualties was a long and wearying haul. When two rifle companies were surrounded by Germans, they held out for five days, even though

they had only one day's supply of rations and water, until a sharp local attack finally opened a path to them and made possible the withdrawal of the few soldiers who remained.

General Templer, the division commander, was ready to commit his third brigade on 12 November in a last attempt to secure the mountain when General Clark gave approval for the 56th Division to withdraw. During the night of 14 November the troops started to pull out. The hazardous job of breaking contact was completed without enemy interference, thanks for the most part to bad weather. But this could not disguise the fact that the troops of the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division,* wearing thin, summer uniforms for service in "sunny Italy," had won a defensive victory.[29]

Much the same happened on Monte la Difensa, where the 3d Division had committed the 7th Infantry across the corps boundary on the left of Highway 6. Attacking into a high ridge between the jagged peaks of Camino on the south and the perpendicular cliffs of Difensa on the north, the regiment employed all its battalions in the attack, hoping not only to take Difensa but also to help the British take Camino.

For ten days the regiment fought, trying in vain to scale the heights against strong resistance anchored on commanding ground—deadly rifle, machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. It was difficult enough simply to exist on the narrow ledges above deep gorges. When a man needed both hands for climbing, he could carry little in the way of weapons and ammunition. Efforts to drop supplies from light planes proved unsuccessful—the material came to rest at the bottom of inaccessible ravines or fell into enemy territory. It took six hours to bring a wounded man down the mountain. Exposed to rain and cold, increasingly fatigued by the unceasing combat, the troops were unable to conquer Monte la Difensa.

The rest of the 3d Division had meanwhile been trying to take the two mountains dominating the gap just above the village of Mignano: Monte Lungo on the left of Highway 6, and Monte Rotondo on the right. Patrols reported mine fields, tank traps, and machine gun positions on both mountains, and the assault troops found units of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* and the battle group of the *Hermann Goering Division* in stout defense, despite their losses.

General Truscott had been resting the 30th Infantry, holding it in readiness for a final and decisive thrust in the area of the Mignano gap—an attack he intended to order when he judged the defenses on the point of crumbling. Instead, after General McCreery asked General Clark for more pressure from VI Corps to help the 56th Division on Monte Camino, and after General Clark relayed the request to General Lucas, the VI Corps commander directed Truscott to employ the 30th Infantry in a wide enveloping maneuver. Truscott protested that this would waste the regiment, but of course complied.

He sent the 30th Infantry by truck around Presenzano to the vicinity of Rocca Pipirozzi, in the upper Volturno valley. There the regiment was to pass through the troops of the 45th Division and attack westward across Cannavinelle Hill, where a Ranger battalion was dug in, to take Monte Rotondo from the east. In the meantime, a battalion of the

[29] See Vietinghoff MSS.



TROOPS OF THE 30TH INFANTRY REGIMENT MOVING OUT TO ATTACK, 6 NOVEMBER

15th Infantry attacked beyond Presenzano and headed northeastward to bolster the Rangers on Cannavinelle.[30]

After passing through the 180th Infantry during the night of 5 November, the 30th Infantry attacked the following morning. The regiment made little progress. Both the battalion of the 15th Infantry striving toward Cannavinelle and the battalion of the 15th sent to seize the southeast nose of Monte Lungo failed to reach their objectives.

It took another attack on the foggy morning of 8 November, this one supported by eight battalions of closly coordinated artillery, for the 3d Division to seize its goals. The 30th Infantry broke through the defenses of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division,* smashed its way through the dense brush covering Monte Rotondo, and reached the crest. The battalion of the 15th Infantry captured the southeast nose of barren Monte Lungo, while another battalion moved up Highway 6 between Lungo and Rotondo to secure the horseshoe curve a mile north of Mignano. During the next few days the troops of both regiments repelled counterattacks, dug more deeply into the ground for protection against hostile mortar and artillery fire, and tried to keep alive and reasonably warm and dry.[31]

30 Truscott, *Command Missions,* pp. 384ff.; Lucas Diary, 6 Nov 43; Truscott to author, Sep 64.

31 Capt. Maurice L. Britt of the 3d Division was largely responsible, despite wounds from bullets and grenades, for repelling a bitter counterattack; for his action on 10 November, he was later awarded the Medal of Honor. Pfc. Floyd K. Lindstrom, a machine gunner in the 3d Division, was awarded the Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism on 11 November.

The counterattacks against those units of the 3d Division east of Highway 6 were launched for the most part by a paratrooper battalion that Kesselring had made available to *Tenth Army* specifically to regain Monte Rotondo. The battalion was to have formed the cadre of a new parachute division, but Kesselring judged the danger to the defensive positions below Cassino sufficiently great to justify the unit's expenditure. Taking heavy losses, the battalion soon became ineffective.[32]

Near the hamlet of Ceppagna, the paratroopers had also engaged Rangers who were blocking the lateral mountain road between Venafro and Highway 6. The 1st Ranger Battalion had joined the 4th during the night of 8 November to bolster the blocking positions and permit the 180th Infantry to rejoin the 45th Division attack into the mountains behind Venafro. After a Ranger reconnaissance patrol reported a fortified German observation post on a ridge of Monte Sammucro overlooking Venafro to the east and San Pietro Infine to the west, a Ranger company set out at dawn on 11 November to eliminate the position. The Rangers drove the Germans down the ridge toward San Pietro, but more Germans soon returned to initiate two days of fierce, close-in fighting. Before it was over, two more Ranger companies had become involved. Another German counterattack on 13 November drove the Rangers out of Ceppagna and threatened to pierce the VI Corps front at Mignano, but the commitment of two more Ranger companies and heavy expenditures of 4.2-inch mortar shells restored the line. Understrength by this time, with cooks and drivers serving as litter bearers and supply porters, the Rangers held on, controlling an area of peaks on the eastern portion of Monte Sammucro and awaiting the arrival of the 3d Ranger Battalion, promised as further reinforcement in the next few days.

In the 45th Division zone troops cleared jagged cliffs and precipitous peaks as they drove slowly forward. Supply was arduous and hazardous; even the pack mules were unable to negotiate the steep trails in many places. German positions blasted and dug into solid rock had to be taken one by one. Maps were of little value, positions difficult to report.

In similar terrain, perhaps even worse, where pack mules no longer solved transportation problems, the 34th Division struggled over a series of scrub-covered hills, clearing routes through mined areas by driving sheep and goats ahead of troops, engaging in extensive patrolling, and incurring heavy casualties from exposure to the rain and cold. The only action of consequence was the spurt of a task force under the assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Benjamin F. Caffey, Jr., who sped up a mountain road for five miles with a composite force of infantry, tanks, tank destroyers, and engineers to seize the village of Montaquila and make contact with the 504th Parachute Infantry, which had pushed through equally rugged terrain west of Isernia.

The sudden if limited breakthrough by the 34th Division stemmed from the exhaustion of the widely dispersed units of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division.* Although Lemelsen called in parts of the *26th Panzer Division* to bolster the

[32] Vietinghoff MSS.



PACK TRAIN ON A MOUNTAIN TRAIL

grenadiers, the 34th Division's advance did not particularly worry him. "Enemy gains," as Vietinghoff later remarked, "constituted no great threat and every step forward into the mountainous terrain merely increased his difficulties." [33]

Nor was there much concern over developments on the east coast, where General Montgomery's Eighth Army had secured the Termoli-Vinchiaturo line by mid-October to cover the Foggia airfields.[34] When patrols met stiffening German resistance and air reconnaissance revealed considerable defensive preparations along the Trigno River, the next likely area for the Germans to make a stand, General Montgomery decided to consolidate his front, readjust his unit dispositions, bring up his rear elements, and establish a firm base before continuing his advance.[35] However, events disrupted his plan to have 13 Corps attack toward Isernia near the army boundary in the mountains to cover a 5 Corps assault crossing of the Trigno on 28 October. Instead, his troops were in close contact with the withdrawing *LXXVI Panzer Corps* a week earlier, and the 78th Division seized a bridgehead over the Trigno on the night of 22 October.

[33] Vietinghoff MSS.

[34] The following is based on Montgomery, *El Alamein to the River Sangro*, pp. 133–39; Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 134ff.; De Guingand, *Operation Victory*, pp. 327ff.; *Fifth Army History*, Part II, pp. 38–59; Vietinghoff MSS.

[35] See Eighth Army Msg, 1355, 17 Oct 43, and Liaison Rpts 68 and 72, 15, 17 Oct 43, all in Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

This compelled the Germans to move quickly behind the river along the entire front. Blustery rain and thick mud foiled British efforts to expand the bridgehead and also forced a postponement of the 13 Corps attack toward Isernia.

During the rainy night of 29 October, 13 Corps' 5th Division jumped off toward Isernia, meeting increasing resistance in difficult mountainous terrain. The 5 Corps, assisted by powerful artillery and naval gunfire support, launched a heavy attack across the Trigno on 2 November. Two days later, as troops of the 13 Corps entered Isernia unopposed, meeting there a patrol from the 504th Parachute Infantry, the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* began to fall back toward the Sangro River. On 8 November 78th Division troops were holding high ground overlooking the Sangro, and the 8th Indian Division was coming up on the left. A week later the near bank of the Sangro was entirely cleared of Germans.

Hampered by demolitions, swollen streams, bad weather, and stiff opposition, Eighth Army in five weeks had pushed its 35-mile front forward approximately thirty miles along the coast, fifty in the interior. At the Sangro River General Montgomery faced a major defensive system, the eastern portion of the formidable Gustav Line, and there he paused to regroup and resupply his forces and to plan a co-ordinated effort for the next phase of his campaign.

Since the east coast offered few decisive objectives, the Germans remained relatively unconcerned. It was the other side of the Matese range and the Allied pressure around Mignano on the road to Rome—the 56th Division on Monte Camino and the 3d Division at the gap—that caused the Germans anxiety. Not only was the Bernhard Line being threatened but the very route to Rome might suddenly be uncovered. Lemelsen regrouped his *Tenth Army* about 10 November. Leaving the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* only three divisions, the *1st Parachute,* the *16th Panzer,* and the *65th Infantry*—although the armored division was already earmarked for early transfer to the Russian front—Lemelsen gave the *XIV Panzer Corps* five divisions, the *26th Panzer,* the *3d* and *15th Panzer Grenadier,* and the *94th* and *305th Infantry.* In army reserve he had most of the *Hermann Goering Division.* Near Rome Kesselring retained control of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* as *OB SUED* reserve.[36]

The reorganization promised little relief. The combat troops were reaching the point of utter exhaustion. Expecting an immediate breakthrough, Senger, the new commander of the *XIV Panzer Corps,* was of the opinion that all units in reserve ought to be committed at once to insure the integrity of the front.[37] Then, suddenly, the Fifth Army attack came to a halt.

On 13 November General Clark told General Alexander that a continuation of the frontal attacks would exhaust the divisions, particularly the 56th and 3d, to a dangerous degree. With Alexander's approval, Clark halted offensive operations on 15 November. For two weeks the troops would rest and prepare for another attempt to smash through the Winter Line and reach the heights overlooking the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers and the entrance into the Liri valley.

[36] Steiger MS.
[37] MS # C-095b (Senger), OCMH.

General Lucas later believed that a fresh division on the Allied side would have turned what had come close to a stalemate into a decisive Allied victory. Unfortunately, none had been immediately available. "Wars," Lucas remarked, "should be fought in better country than this." [38]

[38] Lucas Diary, 6, 10 Nov 43.

CHAPTER XIV

The Shape of Things To Come

Allied Reappraisal

The month-long battle fought by the Fifth Army between the Volturno River and the Mignano gap, which drove the *XIV Panzer Corps* to the Bernhard Line, and the advance of the Eighth Army, which sent the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* to the Gustav defenses along the Sangro River, had succeeded in containing considerable German forces. Yet the Germans at the same time were denying the Allies their geographic objective—Rome.

Whether the two aims of pinning down the Germans and gaining Rome were mutually compatible or not, there seemed to be little alternative for the Allied forces except to continue the offensive. The Allies needed to retain the initiative to keep the Germans off balance, to prevent them from constructing fortifications that would allow them to hold indefinitely in southern Italy with fewer troops than the number already committed. Otherwise, the German command might transfer forces to bolster hard-pressed units on the active Russian front or to reinforce defenses in France against the forthcoming cross-Channel attack.

The Allied command therefore insisted, despite worsening winter weather, on trying to breach the strong fortifications on the naturally defensive terrain of the Winter Line, which promised the Germans the prospect of successful, long-term defense. In this context, Rome was incidental. But if the Allies could reach Rome, the Germans would be forced to withdraw to northern Italy. The Germans would then have to commit additional troops to halt further Allied advances.

Whether the Allied forces could drive the Germans out of southern Italy was still a moot point. Adding to the difficulties of the terrain and weather was the condition of Allied units, which had been seriously depleted and fatigued by the grueling warfare. Four of the seven separate American tank battalions, for example, had suffered heavy casualties. The 45th, 3d, and 34th Divisions were close to exhaustion, as were the 46th and 56th. "That division is tired," an observer noted of the 34th, "but higher headquarters is pushing them on regardless." [1] Higher headquarters had no choice. Not enough divisions were on hand to permit rotation of battle-worn units to give them regular periods of rest and reorganization. Even the 36th Division, which had been in army reserve since the end of the battle of Salerno, was still judged, after six weeks of rest and retraining, to be only about 75 percent combat effective. Conditions were much the same in the Eighth Army.

[1] Walker Diary, 4 Nov 43.

More units were on the way to Italy, in addition to individual replacement troops, but their arrival promised little improvement. The 1st Armored Division, entering Italy in late October and early November, would have to await commitment until a suitable area became available. "Harmon [the division commander]," General Lucas noted in his diary, "is around hoping to find a place for the division. Not so sanguine . . . now that he has seen the ground." [2] The 1st Italian Motorized Group, a unit of about regimental strength coming under 15th Army Group's control on 31 October, was below Allied standards in training, weapons, and equipment. French units due to arrive from North Africa were late because of transportation problems—shipping, as always, was in short supply. The 1st Special Service Force, composed of mixed American and Canadian troops, was expected with particular relish, for the men had been specially trained for mountain warfare, but the unit was relatively small.

Despite incoming forces, the theater was losing strength, for the divisions previously designated for transfer to the United Kingdom for OVERLORD were leaving. Of these seven divisions, Allied Force Headquarters was able to retain only one parachute regiment, the 504th —and this only because the troops were essential for a special operation then under consideration. With merely this regiment and a separate parachute battalion remaining in the theater, major airborne operations to aid the ground advance were out of the question.

Was it possible to launch amphibious operations to assist the ground troops? The idea had received much thought. Speaking for the Combined Chiefs of Staff soon after the Salerno landings, General Marshall and Field Marshal Sir John Dill, the British representative in Washington to the CCS, expressed the hope that the Italian campaign would be imaginative and show bold initiative in the use of amphibious techniques. Replying, General Eisenhower explained why amphibious ventures, though constantly under consideration, were considered impractical. "If we landed a small force," he wrote, "it would be quickly eliminated, while a force large enough to sustain itself cannot possibly be mounted for a very considerable period." A small Commando force, Eisenhower added, "would not last twenty-four hours because there is no place on the west coast where a full enemy division cannot be concentrated against us in twelve hours." [3]

Still, an amphibious attack was attractive as the only feasible method to break away from the slow and costly frontal battle in southern Italy that was bound to have an adverse effect on morale and, furthermore, "a damping effect," as intelligence agents put it, "on the hard core of Italian [Partisan] resistance in the north." Only by amphibious landings behind the German front could the Allied forces hope to loosen quickly the coastal anchors of successive lines of defense.[4]

Early in October General Clark established as part of his Fifth Army staff a special Amphibious Operations Section

[2] Lucas Diary, 2 Nov 43.

[3] Howard McGaw Smyth, Notes on Eisenhower Diary filed with supporting documents for Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, entry of 24 Sep 43, OCMH.

[4] Appendix A to Fifth Army Intel Summary 53, 29 Oct 43.

under General O'Daniel to study and plan waterborne landings. Meeting on 21 October with O'Daniel, General Gruenther, his chief of staff, Brig. Gen. Donald W. Brann, his G–3, and Colonel Howard, his G–2, General Clark declared that he had given "the most serious thought to the best means of hastening victory in the next phase of Fifth Army operations" and had concluded that an amphibious landing, despite the many difficulties involved, was necessary. When General Eisenhower arrived later that day for a visit, Clark discussed the matter with him.[5]

On the following day, Eisenhower and Clark found themselves in agreement on the desirability of executing an amphibious operation early in November. Since naval authorities would need a week to assemble the required landing ships and craft and would request another five to seven days to prepare them, a quick decision was urgent.[6]

Accompanied by Gruenther, Brann, and O'Daniel, Clark met with and informed naval planners on 23 October that a major amphibious operation had been tentatively scheduled for execution in nine days. A regimental combat team, plus a battalion or two of Rangers, was to be landed on the west coast, possibly assisted by an airborne drop of a battalion of paratroopers; a second regiment was to go ashore twenty-four hours later to reinforce the beachhead. Very quickly the naval planners estimated that an operation of this size would require 7 LST's, 2 LSI's, 20 LCT's, and 2 rocket vessels, a reasonable requirement in terms of theater resources. The target area, Clark revealed, was the Gulf of Gaeta. He preferred to land on the beaches below the town of Gaeta, near Formia, about thirty miles beyond the mouth of the Volturno and about twelve miles beyond the Garigliano; if landings there were impractical, he would accept the beaches north of Gaeta.[7]

General Alexander was in general agreement with the concept, and when General Eisenhower brought up the subject at a commanders' conference in Carthage on 24 October, there was no objection to the idea of amphibious landings on the west and east coasts to help propel both Fifth and Eighth Armies forward. Yet the practical obstacles seemed insuperable—among others, the existence of mine fields offshore, the strength of coastal defenses, and, most important, the distance of the land forces from the projected landing areas, which would make their quick linkup with a beachhead impossible.[8]

Reporting to General Clark on 25 October, the naval planners had bad news: they considered the beaches near Formia, the target area of first priority, impractical for landings. The beaches north of Gaeta were suitable. But General Clark was quick to realize that these beaches were at the moment completely beyond supporting distance. He told the planners to hold off until the Fifth Army moved farther up the Italian peninsula.[9] When General Walker learned that his 36th Division, which was in reserve, might be used in "an amphibious operation planned to envelop the German

[5] Clark Diary, 21 Oct 43.

[6] *Ibid.*, 22 Oct 43.

[7] *Ibid.*, 23 Oct 43.

[8] Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2881; *Report by the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Italian Campaign, 8 January 1944 to 10 May 1944* (Washington, 1946) (hereafter referred to as Wilson *Despatch*), p. 1.

[9] Clark Diary, 25 Oct 43.

west flank by sea," he was disturbed. "The lack of proper shipping, difficult terrain, poor road net together with possible isolation of the force by German demolitions," he wrote in his diary, "make the project most difficult and I hope he [Clark] does not order it to be done until more favorable conditions exist." [10]

At the end of the month, talk revived of landing a small force at the mouth of the Garigliano in a limited end run, but the advance of 10 Corps to Monte Massico and beyond made the operation unnecessary.[11]

Study and planning for amphibious operations continued. Gradually the feeling grew that the best place to make a landing was the area around Anzio, some thirty miles below Rome. But Anzio was seventy-five miles beyond the mouth of the Garigliano, too far from the Fifth Army line to afford much hope for a reasonably quick linkup between the forces on the front and the forces in a beachhead.[12] There was a faint possibility of increasing the beachhead forces to 2-division strength by juggling the shipping requirements and accepting a low ratio of LCT's to LST's. But this would mean employing every LST in the theater for the landing, including those engaged in the vital task of ferrying additional resources to Italy. Even an assault force of two divisions would be too weak unless the troops were within very close supporting range of the main front. If a nearby port could be captured intact to avoid reliance on over-the-beach maintenance—a doubtful means of supply in winter weather—and if a third division could be landed immediately through that port to reinforce the 2-division assault landing, an amphibious operation might be feasible. But experience indicated that the Germans were likely to demolish any harbor facilities before giving them up. Thus, about all that seemed possible was to launch small forces in an end run relatively close to the front, and a shallow envelopment promised no quick or decisive victory.[13]

Affecting the prospect of amphibious assault was the shipping problem, which would probably get progressively worse rather than better. The theater had a low priority in the developing global strategy and along with some of its veteran divisions was losing most of its amphibious equipment. Eventually, more than three-quarters of the LST's and LSI's and two-thirds of the assault craft were to be released to other theaters. Of a minimum of 58 LST's deemed essential for the Mediterranean theater, only 9 would eventually remain.

There were many competing demands on this dwindling supply of shipping. The destruction of road and rail facilities and quays and other port installations had created a need for a large fleet of small vessels for coastal shipping, for use in overside discharge of ships, and for unloading over beaches. Vessels were needed for the continuing build-up—to complete the shipment of units already in Italy, to transport support and service units, to bring personnel and equipment replacements. They were required to move air force squadrons and

[10] Walker Diary, 28 Oct 43.

[11] Clark Diary, 28, 30, 31 Oct 43; Fifth Army Memo, Gen Brann to Rear Adm John A. V. Morse, RN, 26 Oct 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[12] AFHQ G–3 Paper, Amphibious Opns on the Coast of Italy, 1 Nov 43.

[13] AFHQ G–3 Memo, 2 Nov 43.

airfield construction and service units into Italy. And they were also, of course, counted on for an amphibious assault behind enemy lines.[14]

The movement of air force units to the Italian mainland was particularly troublesome and complicated. Originally, theater planners had intended to move the Northwest African Strategic Air Force directly to bases in the Rome area. When the Germans opposed the Salerno invasion instead of withdrawing as the Allied planners had hoped, the decision was made to bring the heavy bombers to the Foggia airfields as soon as possible; the remaining air forces were scheduled to be in Italy no later than the end of 1943—the entire strategic air force and the tactical air force, certain elements of the North African Coastal Air Force, a photographic reconnaissance wing, a troop carrier command, and most of the service and supporting units. But this program of movements conflicted with the requirements of the ground build-up.

Although the ground forces were anxious to have tactical, coastal, reconnaissance, and troop carrier units, the general European strategy, viewed within a framework larger than the Italian campaign, dictated priority to the heavy bombers. They were needed to further the bombardment of strategic targets deep in Germany and already under attack by planes based in the United Kingdom. The Combined Bomber Offensive, the long-range bombardments preliminary to OVERLORD, had underscored the importance of capturing the Foggia airfields. Yet bringing the heavy bombers to Foggia involved the same amount of shipping needed to move two divisions to the Italian mainland; once established, the heavy bombers would require an amount of shipping for maintenance equal to that needed by the entire Eighth Army.

The requirements for additional ground force strength and for large shipments of steel plank and special equipment to construct all-weather airfields later prompted the theater commanders to slow down the air force movements. They would shift only six heavy bombardment groups — totaling about 250 four-engine planes—to Italy by the end of 1943 and spread out the transfer of the remainder of the heavy bombers until March 1944. Since medium bombers working out of Tunisia against targets in Italy were already operating at extreme ranges, three groups of B–26's and a group of P–38's were shifted to airfields on Sardinia.

The establishment of a new strategic air force, the Fifteenth, under General Eisenhower's command on 1 November added to the complications. This force was to be used primarily against targets of the Combined Bomber Offensive, and its initial components were 6 heavy bomber groups and 2 long-range fighter groups taken from the Twelfth Air Force, already in the theater. By the end of March 1944, the strength of the Fifteenth was to mount to 21 heavy bomber groups, 7 long-range fighter groups, and a reconnaissance group.

If landing ships and craft were released from the theater and returned to the United Kingdom as programed, the build-up in Italy of ground units could be completed by 15 December, with sufficient lift remaining for an amphibious operation in the strength of

[14] See Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943–1945*, ch. IX.

one regiment; but no air force units could be moved. If the theater could keep until 15 December all the British LCT's, which numbered around 50, and 12 American LCT's, the build-up could be completed and an amphibious assault mounted in division strength; in this case, only about one-third of the strategic air forces scheduled for Italian bases could be brought into the country. If these vessels could be held for three more weeks, until 5 January 1944, the entire program could be completed—the ground build-up, the transfer of strategic bombers to Italy, and an amphibious assault in at least division strength.[15]

Unless the release of shipping from the theater could be postponed, theater planners estimated that 9 December was the latest date on which an amphibious operation could be launched. Setting a target date of 1 December, which would give about a month for planning, mounting, and executing an assault, AFHQ concluded that the most likely operation to achieve success was one on the west coast. As AFHQ pictured the operation, the 15th Army Group would be the responsible headquarters, the Fifth Army would carry out the actual preparations, a corps headquarters would be in immediate control of the combat units, and the 36th and 1st British Divisions, the latter currently in North Africa, would make the landings. To mount the two divisions, all thirty-six LST's now transporting troops and supplies to Italy and almost all the LCT's working the ports in Italy would have to be diverted. Removing the ships and craft from their build-up and maintenance functions would mean writing off for the Italian build-up as a whole 10,000 vehicles, or the equivalent amount of tonnage, for each division in the assault. To continue to use shipping to supply and reinforce the amphibious assault would mean further losses in the general build-up. Since beach operations, according to past experience, could be carried out at best only two days out of every three because of weather conditions, and since winter weather made any beach maintenance after the assault uncertain, the amphibious forces would have to capture a port or some sheltered anchorage at the very beginning of the operation. Even the seizure of a port would not guarantee the release of enough ships from the operation to satisfy the build-up requirements. Yet the slow advance of the Allied forces in southern Italy made a seaborne envelopment of the defenses imperative.[16]

With these thoughts in mind, General Eisenhower and his principal subordinates met at Carthage on 3 November and confirmed plans to which they had tentatively agreed several days earlier.[17] Hoping that the Fifth Army had attracted the bulk of the German forces to its front by early November, General Eisenhower wanted the Eighth Army to mount an offensive to the city of Pescara

[15] Eisenhower Dispatch, p. 149. Instructed by the CCS on 26 October to bomb military objectives in Bulgaria to help divert Bulgarian divisions from Yugoslavia and Greece, thereby adding to German difficulties and indirectly helping the Italian campaign, General Eisenhower ordered the Northwest African Strategic Air Force to prepare plans for the operation. The first attack was made on 14 November, when ninety-one medium bombers took off from Italian bases. Two similar attacks were made in December.

[16] AFHQ Paper, Limiting Factors on Mounting an Amphibious Opn of More Than One Division on East or West Coast of Italy, 2 Nov 43.

[17] Alexander *Despatch*, pp. 2881ff.; Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 149ff.

and the Pescara River, about 25 miles beyond the Sangro. General Montgomery was then to swing his army to a lateral axis, Highway 5, and thrust up the Pescara valley to Avezzano, 50 miles east of Rome. This movement would threaten Rome from the east. The Fifth Army, meanwhile, was to press its frontal attack toward the city, driving up Highway 6 through Cassino and the Liri valley to the Frosinone area, about 30 miles beyond Cassino. There, with Fifth Army in reasonably close supporting distance, an amphibious assault was to be launched in the Rome area. To strengthen Fifth Army for its overland drive through the Bernhard and Gustav Lines and beyond, General Eisenhower would accelerate the movement from North Africa of two French divisions, plus necessary service and other nondivisional units to support them, as well as 2,500 vehicles still in Bizerte awaiting transportation across the Mediterranean to Naples.

At the conclusion of the conference, General Eisenhower asked the Combined Chiefs of Staff for permission to retain in the theater until 15 December all 56 British and 12 of the American LST's scheduled to be transferred to the United Kingdom before that date. If he could keep them, he explained, he could launch an amphibious operation to speed the ground advance, facilitate the capture of Rome and its neighboring airfields, and help seize the port of Ancona on the east coast. Without the landing craft and ships, he would have but one method of driving the Germans into northern Italy—a series of costly and time-consuming frontal attacks in territory greatly favoring the defense; with the assault shipping, he could fully employ to advantage his sea and air superiority, continue the build-up in Italy and bring ground units to full strength, move the scheduled components of the strategic air force to bases on the Italian mainland, and at the same time launch an amphibious assault in one- or two-division strength.

Replying three days later, the CCS gave General Eisenhower the permission he sought. General Alexander was somewhat concerned by the shortage of trucks and other vehicles in southern Italy and the impossibility of remedying the deficiency if the assault shipping was diverted to a landing, but the postponement on releasing the landing ships and craft until 15 December brought an amphibious operation into the realm of possibility.

General Eisenhower acted on 8 November by reaffirming the objectives he had set on 25 September: the Allied armies were to maintain maximum pressure on the enemy and capture Rome. Implicit in this instruction was the prospect of an amphibious operation. In recognition of the enemy intention to resist in southern Italy to a degree greater than formerly expected, he gave priority to the build-up of land forces and such air forces as were needed to support ground operations. In addition to the six heavy bombardment groups scheduled to be in Italy and operational by the end of the year, tactical air force units were to be established on the Italian mainland as quickly as the available shipping permitted. In contrast with the Germans, who were basing their air units far to the rear to avoid losing planes on the ground to air attack, and whose principal consideration was to conserve planes and crews for protecting

German industrial areas, the Allied command was hoping to make maximum use of tactical air despite the worsening weather that would limit close ground support.[18]

General Alexander issued a directive on the same day, 8 November. He instructed General Montgomery to use Highway 5 to attack laterally toward Avezzano to threaten Rome from the east. Fifth Army was to attack up the valley of the Liri and Sacco Rivers to threaten Rome from the south. Since Alexander judged the coastal route to Rome, Highway 7, the Appian Way, too difficult for a sustained advance because of the Aurunci Mountains and the Pontine Marshes, he saw Highway 6 through the Liri valley as offering the best gateway to Rome. When the Fifth Army reached Frosinone, about fifty miles below Rome, General Clark was to execute a seaborne landing south of Rome aimed at the Alban Hills, about twenty miles short of the Eternal City.[19]

This was the basic directive for what was later to be the Anzio landing, the amphibious assault designed to facilitate the capture of Rome. But first the Fifth Army had to advance about fifty miles from the Mignano area to Frosinone, and it was clear by November that progress would not be easy.

In response to a request from the CCS, General Eisenhower gave an opinion on the feasibility of invading southern France and indicated that the invasion would be General Clark's responsibility. Meeting in the QUADRANT Conference at Quebec during September, the Combined Chiefs had looked upon an invasion of southern France as a means of diverting the German forces from OVERLORD, and they had then asked Eisenhower to submit an outline plan for the operation.[20] Replying in the latter part of October, Eisenhower expressed doubts on the advisability of carrying out the operation. Shortages of assault shipping would probably restrict an amphibious assault to a one-division force; subsequent build-up would be very slow until a port could be seized and put into operation; amphibious landings now contemplated in Italy would conflict with a landing in southern France; and perhaps the Allied armies would be far from northern Italy by the spring of 1944 and in no position to invade the Mediterranean coast of France.

A landing in southern France, Eisenhower continued, was but one part and, because of its size, a very small part of the entire scheme of operations being developed in the Mediterranean theater to produce by May 1944 the conditions desired for assisting the OVERLORD cross-Channel attack. The OVERLORD planners wanted German air effectiveness reduced and sufficient pressure exerted in Italy to prevent the Germans from moving divisions to France against the invasion in Normandy. Because of these requirements, Eisenhower considered it "strategically unsound to decide now that this projected diversionary amphibious assault [against southern France] is certain to be the best contribution this [Mediterranean] theater can make at, or near, the time of OVERLORD."

[18] See AFHQ G-3 Paper and Appendixes, Pescara-Rome Line, 28 Oct 43.

[19] 15th AGp OI 31, 8 Nov 43.

[20] See Robert Ross Smith and Charles F. Romanus, The Riviera to the Rhine, a forthcoming volume in the series UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II, ch. II.

Other alternatives were, in his opinion, worth considering. More valuable than a small and isolated landing in southern France might be an amphibious turning movement in conjunction with a frontal assault in northern Italy to defeat the Germans at the Pisa-Rimini line; or, if the Allied armies in Italy were at the Alps by the spring of 1944, a major thrust to the east, including an amphibious attack to tie down German forces in the Balkans; or perhaps a westward strike from the Po Valley by both amphibious and overland routes. Or it might be best to make no invasion of southern France lest an amphibious assault draw additional Germans into France instead of pulling them away from the OVERLORD assault area.

In the final analysis, the Allied commander estimated, an operation against southern France would depend to a large extent on progress in Italy. If the Allied armies were south of or at the Pisa-Rimini line in northern Italy when the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided to invade southern France, the operation would have to be entirely amphibious. And the limited shipping in the Mediterranean would seriously curtail the size of such a landing.[21]

Progress up the Italian peninsula thus remained the principal concern. "A stabilized front south of Rome cannot be accepted," the AFHQ G–3, General Rooks, declared, "for the capital has a significance far greater than its strategic location." If the Allied armies could be far enough north of Rome by February 1944 to cover the ports of Civitavecchia and possibly Ancona, the winter campaign would be a success. The next step would be to complete the build-up of the strategic air forces in Italy and to base them on airfields around Rome in order to enable the theater to contribute most effectively to the Combined Bomber Offensive. The best way to achieve these goals was to launch an amphibious operation to loosen the German defenses in southern Italy and facilitate the capture of Rome.[22]

The prerequisite for an amphibious operation was an overland advance to Frosinone. To make this advance speedily became General Clark's overriding concern. On the slim chance that the ground advance would suddenly, inexplicably, pick up and make possible an amphibious effort in the next few weeks, he continued to hold the 36th Division in reserve through the first two weeks of November and to keep the II Corps headquarters, which had arrived from Sicily in October, ready for the landing.[23] Perhaps sheer determination would move the army forward.

Hitler's Decision

Hitler was still far from being convinced that a strong defense in southern Italy was his best strategy. Persuaded by Kesselring on 4 October to reverse his earlier decisions and order a stand south of Rome, Hitler continued to think of withdrawing unequivocally to the north. Ten days later, when the operations group of OKW, in compliance with his

[21] AFHQ Rpt by CinC to CCS, Opns To Assist OVERLORD, 27 Oct 43.

[22] AFHQ G–3 Paper, Future Opns in Mediterranean Area, 20 Nov 43.

[23] See Teleconv, Capt Tomasik with Col Wood, 1150, 22 Oct 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl. See also Walker Diary, 4 Nov 43.

instructions, sent him a draft order naming Rommel supreme commander in Italy at a date to be determined later, Hitler decided first to confer with Rommel.[24] Summoned to Hitler's command post on 17 October and asked for his opinion on the feasibility of holding south of Rome, Rommel, according to those who were present, "expressed himself negatively." He had no wish, he said, to assume that responsibility.[25]

Despite Rommel's candor, or perhaps because of it, Hitler was apparently still willing to appoint him supreme commander. Later that day, the *Army Group B* intelligence officer who had accompanied Rommel to Hitler's *Wolfschanze* telephoned Rommel's chief of staff in northern Italy and informed him of the new mission the *Army Group B* headquarters would soon undertake—command of all the forces in Italy. Since Hitler wished to have from the headquarters some suggestions on future operations, Rommel wanted his chief of staff to write a memo of recommendations. Still later that day the OKW operations group drafted another order appointing Rommel to the over-all command in Italy.[26]

Rommel apparently learned of the draft order because on his way back to Italy the following day he phoned his chief of staff to inquire whether the order had reached the army group headquarters. The answer was no.[27] In fact, the paper had just reached Hitler's desk for signature.

On the following day, 19 October, the army group headquarters received informal word from the OKW operations group that Hitler had approved Rommel's appointment; an order announcing the fact would soon be dispatched. But a later phone call from Jodl, the head of the operations group, advised the headquarters that the Fuehrer was still delaying his decision. As an afterthought, Jodl added, "It is possible that the Fuehrer's view with regard to the assumption of the supreme command in Italy has undergone a fundamental change."[28]

Several days later, when Rommel's chief of staff telephoned OKW to ask whether the army group headquarters could expect to receive the order in the near future, he received a negative reply.[29]

Before signing the order Hitler had decided to call Kesselring for consultation on the conduct of the Italian campaign and on the question of the supreme command. When Kesselring appeared, he was, as always, optimistic, and he impressed Hitler favorably with his vigor. He was sure he could maintain a long-term defense south of Rome. He estimated he could keep the Allied armies from reaching the Northern Apennines for at least six to nine months, and to support his contention, he pointed to the military situation in southern Italy, which contrasted markedly with pessimistic OKW forecasts.[30]

A few days after Hitler's conversation with Kesselring, the Fuehrer instructed the OKW operations group to submit to him an order appointing Kesselring to

[24] *OKW/WFSt KTB*, 4, 14 Oct 43. See also *KTB*, 6 Nov 43.
[25] MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.
[26] *AGp B KTB*, 17 Oct 43; *OKW/WFSt KTB*, 6 Nov 43.
[27] *AGp B KTB*, 18 Oct 43.
[28] *AGp B KTB*, 19 Oct 43.
[29] *AGp B KTB*, 23 Oct 43.
[30] *OKW/WFSt KTB*, 25 Oct 43; MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

the supreme command in Italy.[31] Hitler thus had before him the drafts of two orders. The commander he chose would determine his strategy. The decision would determine the course of the campaign.

Once more Hitler summoned Rommel for an interview, seeing him on 5 November. That evening a telephone call to Rommel's army group headquarters disclosed the result of the meeting. Rommel, the headquarters learned, had been assigned to a special mission in France. "It is definite," the officer stated, "that he will give up command of the northern Italian theater, and probably the Commander in Chief, South [Kesselring] will receive the supreme command over all of Italy."[32] Rommel and his *Army Group B* headquarters would go to Normandy to inspect the Atlantic Wall and prepare to repel the Allied cross-Channel invasion that was anticipated for the spring of 1944.

On 6 November, the day following his meeting with Rommel, Hitler named Kesselring supreme commander in Italy. The appointment was to become effective at the Bernhard Line, which was, in Hitler's words, to "mark the end of withdrawals." Along with the appointment went Hitler's detailed and somewhat superfluous instructions on how best to hold that line.[33]

As Commander in Chief, Southwest, a joint command, and as commander of *Army Group C,* a ground command, Kesselring assumed control of all the German forces in Italy on 21 November. The strategy of holding indefinitely in southern Italy had become firm. Secure in his position, enjoying full backing from the highest command echelon, Kesselring was ready to do his utmost to be worthy of his Fuehrer's confidence.

Some observers believed that Hitler's consideration for Mussolini had played a major role in his final decision to defend south of Rome. Others thought that Rommel, who had been certain of receiving the command, had incurred Hitler's displeasure by interfering prematurely with Kesselring on matters pertaining to Kesselring's jurisdiction.[34]

A more plausible explanation is Hitler's changing personal regard for the two commanders.[35] Because Rommel's predictions of Italian "treachery" had been accurate, Hitler originally tended to accept his concept of strategy. But when the German military situation in Italy improved beyond Hitler's expectations, he came to admire Kesselring's ability as a commander, as well as his strategic concept. "I had always blamed Kesselring," Hitler said nine months later, "for looking at things too optimistically." Rommel, in contrast, Hitler continued, was more realistic. Yet Rommel's forecast of German collapse in southern Italy turned out to be inaccurate. Thus, Hitler concluded,

> . . . the events have proven him [Rommel] totally wrong, and I have been justified in my decision to leave Field Marshal Kesselring there, whom I had seen as an incredible political idealist, but also as a military

[31] *OKW/WFSt KTB,* 25 Oct, 6 Nov 43.
[32] *AGp B KTB,* 5 Nov 43.
[33] *OKW/WFSt KTB,* 6 Nov 43.

[34] MS # o69d (Zimmermann), OCMH; MS # C–069e (Warlimont), OCMH; *The Goebbels Diaries, 1942–1943,* edited, translated, and with an introduction by Louis P. Lochner (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1948), pp. 469–81.
[35] See Lucian Heichler, Kesselring's Appointment as Commander in Chief, Southwest, MS # R–3, OCMH.

optimist, and it is my opinion that military leadership without optimism is not possible.[36]

Hitler's decision had some elements of a gamble. Holding in southern Italy meant long lines of communication vulnerable to air attack and a front vulnerable to amphibious attack. Hitler's primary motive seems to have been the hope of preventing an Allied invasion of the Balkans. The Allies had no real intention of invading the Balkans, "although," as one historian has pointed out, "rapid conquest of southern and central Italy might have tempted them into such a venture." [37]

The decision that Hitler reached two months after the Salerno landings made inevitable the battles of the Rapido River, Cassino, and Anzio on the long, hard road to Rome—places that might otherwise have fallen to the Fifth Army after light skirmishes or perhaps with no opposition at all.

The Cairo and Tehran Conferences

Toward the end of the last two weeks of November, when the Fifth Army offensive was at a temporary halt, General Roosevelt, former assistant commander of the 1st Division and now liaison officer to the French command that would soon take part in the Italian campaign, whispered some news to General Lucas at lunch. A big Allied conference, he said, was in session in Cairo. A corporal in the Military Police, he added, had told him so.[38]

American and British leaders were indeed meeting at Cairo to discuss, among other matters, the problem of how to retain OVERLORD "in all its integrity" and at the same time keep the Mediterranean theater "ablaze" with activity. They had informed Marshal Joseph Stalin of the Anglo-American decisions reached at Quebec during the QUADRANT Conference in September, and they knew that Stalin favored an invasion of southern France to complement the forthcoming cross-Channel attack. They suspected that Stalin would demand continued action in Italy.[39]

There was already evidence of Soviet dissatisfaction with what the Russians considered to be insufficient Allied pressure against the Germans in the Mediterranean theater. According to Soviet intelligence, the Germans were transferring divisions out of Italy and the Balkans for action on the Eastern Front.[40] If this were true, the Allied forces were failing to comply with the Combined Chiefs of Staff directive to pin down maximum German strength in Italy.

To determine the truth of the Soviet assertion, the CCS made a full-scale survey and estimate of the enemy situation in mid-November. Intelligence sources indicated that the Germans had committed about 185,000 men, including

[36] Min of Hitler Conferences, Fragment No. 46, 31 Aug 44, pp. 3–5, OCMH. This statement may have been influenced by the fact that Rommel had been implicated in the attempted assassination of Hitler on 20 July 1944. See also Siegfried Westphal, *The German Army in the West* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1951), p. 237.

[37] Mavrogordato, "Hitler's Decision on the Defense of Italy," *Command Decisions*, p. 322.

[38] Lucas Diary, 26 Nov 43.

[39] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*, ch. XVI; Richard M. Leighton, "OVERLORD Versus the Mediterranean at the Cairo-Tehran Conferences," *Command Decisions*, edited by Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, 1960), pp. 255–85.

[40] Paraphrased Msg from Maj Gen John R. Deane (in Moscow) to Marshall, about 9 Nov 43, ABC, Sec 2.

17,000 antiaircraft and 30,000 miscellaneous and service troops, in southern Italy; a total of 11 divisions were in contact with the Allied armies or in immediate reserve. In northern Italy were perhaps 235,000 men, including 38,000 antiaircraft and 30,000 miscellaneous troops—a force of about 12 divisions. Of these 12 divisions, only half were fully effective combat organizations; the other half were in various stages of formation and training. All participated in occupation duties and in guarding the coasts. Although the Germans had probably moved two divisions from northern Italy to the Russian front since the beginning of the Italian campaign, they had brought 2 divisions from France to Italy; they had also transferred 3 and were moving a fourth from northern Italy to the south. As they perfected their occupation and coastal defenses, as they developed Mussolini's militia units for internal police duties, and as they brought additional units to combat effectiveness, the Germans might eventually release between 3 and 6 divisions for employment elsewhere. Since the terrain between Cassino and the Pisa-Rimini line was well suited for delaying action, the German command would probably hold successive positions as long as possible, employing a minimum strength consistent with that purpose. Yet because the German flanks were open to amphibious attack on both coasts, the Allied command hoped to force the commitment of additional enemy units.[41]

To oppose the Germans, the Allied command expected to have in southern Italy by early December the equivalent of fourteen divisions, by the end of 1943 perhaps two more.[42]

The prospect was hardly encouraging. To Mr. Churchill in particular, the Italian campaign was disappointing. Lamenting the loss of the Dodecanese Islands, still wanting Rhodes, and hoping to bring Turkey into the war on the Allied side, he believed that the Allied forces might have taken better advantage of the open Adriatic coast to render more assistance to the Yugoslav Partisans in the interest of promoting chaos in the German-held Balkans. More positively, Churchill renounced a wish earlier expressed for an Allied march into the Po Valley. Instead, he concentrated on Rome. To him, Rome now became the main and immediate objective of the Italian campaign. With Rome in Allied hands, he saw the Allied armies moving only as far as the Pisa-Rimini line. There, he felt, the Allied leadership would have to decide whether to go eastward into the Balkans or westward to southern France. OVERLORD, he maintained, should not rule out every activity in the Mediterranean theater. Until the decision at the Pisa-Rimini line became necessary, he favored increasing General Eisenhower's resources to facilitate an advance to that area. The most important action in this regard, he believed, was to defer for at least two weeks beyond the already postponed date of 15 December the transfer from the Mediterranean theater of landing ships and craft needed for OVERLORD. With this shipping retained in the theater until the end of 1943, the Allied forces could launch an amphibious operation de-

[41] Combined Intel Committee Rpt on Enemy Situation and Strength in Italy, 17 Nov 43, ABC 384, Sec 2.

[42] AFHQ G–3 Paper, Pescara-Rome Line, 28 Oct 43, Appendix II; Eisenhower to War Dept, 4, 5 Nov 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

signed to capture Rome and send the German troops reeling back to the Pisa-Rimini line.[43]

When the Anglo-American leaders traveled from Cairo to Tehran to meet with their Soviet allies, they learned that Stalin preferred a campaign in western Europe, with OVERLORD as the main effort and an invasion of southern France as a subsidiary and complementary operation, over a continued offensive in Italy. If Allied resources were insufficient to sustain offensive operations in all three areas, he believed that the troops in Italy should go over to the defense.

Churchill objected. Failure to take Rome he would consider a crushing defeat. Arguing for the retention in the Mediterranean of enough assault shipping to enable at least two divisions to move up the Italian peninsula by amphibious turning movements, he was prepared to accept an invasion of southern France in conjunction with OVERLORD. Yet he recognized that maintaining the tempo of attack in Italy and launching amphibious operations would require either a postponement of OVERLORD for several weeks or a withdrawal of landing ships and craft from the Indian Ocean. Neither alternative was attractive.

The American position was close to Churchill's, although somewhat less intense. Because an invasion of southern France presupposed the establishment of Allied forces in Italy somewhere north of Rome, the American military advisers favored concentrating the limited resources of the Mediterranean theater in Italy to gain the Pisa-Rimini line.

Satisfying Mr. Churchill on Rome and Marshal Stalin on southern France, the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed to let General Eisenhower retain until 15 January 1944 a total of sixty-eight LST's scheduled for transfer to England.

After leaving Tehran, the British and American leaders met again in Cairo. They gave the projected invasion of southern France the code name ANVIL and instructed General Eisenhower to prepare a plan for the operation. For planning purposes, they assumed that at the time of the invasion of southern France, the Allied armies in Italy would be at the Pisa-Rimini line and maintaining constant pressure there against the Germans; ANVIL would probably be nearly simultaneous with OVERLORD; and no other offensive operations would be taking place in the Mediterranean theater.

In order to reach the Pisa-Rimini line by the spring of 1944, Fifth Army would have to make an amphibious landing in the Rome area. But first, the army would have to secure a line within supporting distance of a beachhead near Rome. To batter through the Bernhard and Gustav Lines and reach an area within reasonably close supporting range of a beachhead motivated the desperate combat in southern Italy during the months of December 1943 and January 1944.

The Lull

General Clark's halt of offensive operations in mid-November, as it turned out, was fortunate. A heavy rainstorm swept over the bleak Italian countryside on 15 November to begin fourteen days

[43] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*, ch. XIII. See also Leighton, "OVERLORD Versus the Mediterranean at the Cairo-Tehran Conferences," *Command Decisions*, pp. 255–85.

of miserably wet weather. All VI Corps bridges across the Volturno except the one at Dragoni were washed out. Travel by road became virtually impossible. Along the shoulders of the roads, the mud was usually a foot deep, sometimes more. Off the roads everything was "a particularly sticky kind of mud." [44]

"It has rained for two days and is due to rain for two more, so say the meteorologists," General Lucas wrote in his diary. "In addition, it is cold as hell. I think too often of my men out in the mountains. I am far too tender-hearted ever to be a success at my chosen profession." A day later it was still "rain, rain, and more rain. . . . I don't see how our men stand what they do."

> They are the finest soldiers in the world and none but an humble man should command them. My constant prayer to Almighty God is that I may have the wisdom to bring them through this ordeal with the maximum of success and the minimum loss of life. Hence my use of artillery ammunition. If the lives of American boys are of value, the ravenous appetite of the guns of the VI Corps is not in vain in spite of the tremendous cost in money and vital transport.[45]

A week later, after more rain and nights that were freezing cold, the sick rate soared. At the 15th Evacuation Hospital, doctors and nurses were working in six inches of mud "the consistency of good, thick bean soup and about the same color." [46] Attempting to make the troops more comfortable, Fifth Army authorized each man in the field an additional shelter half as a ground cloth for individual tents. When the army headquarters requested 15,000 individual cook stoves, SOS NATOUSA approved the issue of 50,000.[47]

Thanksgiving Day came, and every man had a pound of turkey allotted to him—if "we can get it to them," General Lucas wrote. The difficulty of getting supplies to men in the mountains was but one indication, Lucas believed, of how the campaign was being fought "on a shoestring." The command needed troops trained for mountain warfare, more bridging equipment, and pack trains. Certainly, Lucas felt, mule trains should have been organized before the campaign started instead of having to be improvised by the divisions. Lucas called General Truscott, who had pioneered in the development, the man most responsible for the eventual success of pack train organization.[48]

Fifth Army headquarters had begun in October to make intensive efforts to obtain pack mules, horses, and forage, and to negotiate local contracts for harnesses and packsaddle equipment. Early in November the army headquarters established a remount installation for procuring and training animals, opening a second facility later that month and a third in December. The headquarters made its first purchase of animals on 20 November—43 horses and 3 mules. About the same time a group of staff officers, accompanied by several Italian Army officers, started off on a 15-day reconnaissance to locate available animals. By December the army was procuring from local sources an average of 20 mules a day. About 150 mules purchased by British officers were shipped from Sardinia. Even though French units arriv-

[44] Rpt 90, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.
[45] Lucas Diary, 13, 14, 15, 16 Nov 43.
[46] *Ibid.*, 18, 23 Nov 43.
[47] History of Peninsular Base Sec, vol. II.
[48] Lucas Diary, 22, 25 Nov 43.



VEHICLES STRANDED IN THE RISING WATERS OF THE VOLTURNO, *above. War against mud, below.*



ing in Italy brought animals with them from North Africa, they soon needed replacements. Early in 1944 Fifth Army would receive 300 mules from Sicily, the beginning of irregular shipments from that island. By that time, the army would be buying an average of 200 mules per week. It was then that the headquarters would unite all remount functions at a single installation and open a hospital for wounded animals.

Despite these measures, pack animals remained a chronic shortage. Because no other solution was apparent, increasing numbers of troops served regularly as supply carriers, using packboards to advantage. The army ordered 500 packboards in November through regular supply channels and 1,500 from local manufacturers. By January the army would be procuring a total of 5,000 from local sources.[49]

The lull in operations permitted the troops in the field a well-earned rest. Of the seven divisions in the Fifth Army, five had been in the line almost constantly since the battle of Salerno—the 46th and 56th of 10 Corps and the 3d, 34th, and 45th of VI Corps. The 36th Division, in army reserve immediately behind the front, was ready for recommitment, and the 1st Armored Division, arriving through the port of Naples and assembling, came under Fifth Army control on 15 November, replacing the 7th Armoured Division, which was withdrawn from the army troop list.[50]

The plan to shift 10 Corps and its British divisions to the Eighth Army to



GENERAL KEYES

simplify supply and administration, though long under consideration, was still not feasible because of the lack of strength available to Fifth Army to replace the corps in the line and the shortage of vehicles to move the corps to the east coast zone. Only two divisions remained under 10 Corps control but two more British infantry divisions, the 1st and the 5th, would soon become available.

The 36th Division began to relieve the 3d on 16 November, and at noon of the following day assumed responsibility for the Mignano area. On 18 November the II Corps headquarters, commanded by Maj. Gen. Geoffrey T. Keyes, came into the same area and took control of the 36th and 3d Divisions, the latter in bivouac to rest and receive personnel and equipment replacements.

"Keyes just called to express his joy at being on the team," General Lucas recorded in his diary. "I predicted he would hit a home run the first time up,

[49] History of Peninsular Base Sec, vol. II.

[50] On the requirements to re-equip and retrain the 1st Armored Division after the North African campaign, see 1st Armd Div Ltr, 23 Jul 43, AG 400.

but he said he would be satisfied with a base on balls." [51] A graduate of the Military Academy who had participated in the Punitive Expedition into Mexico in 1916, General Keyes was originally a cavalry officer. During the 1941 maneuvers he served as 2d Armored Division chief of staff under General Patton. After commanding a combat command of the 3d Armored Division, he activated and commanded the 9th Armored Division. Appointed Patton's deputy commander for the invasion of North Africa, Keyes later became the I Armored Corps commander. Responsible for the preliminary planning of that part of the invasion of Sicily to be executed by American troops, he was deputy commander of the Seventh Army during the Sicily Campaign and also commander of the Provisional Corps that swept the western half of the island and captured Palermo. In September 1943, he had assumed command of the II Corps headquarters.

With a fresh corps headquarters and a rested division inserted into the line between 10 and VI Corps, thus narrowing General Lucas' zone and span of control, VI Corps retained control of the 34th and 45th Divisions. For some time the 45th Division commander, General Middleton, had suffered from an old, painful knee injury. Now he underwent medical treatment and was eventually hospitalized and returned to the United States. He would return to active operations the following year as a corps commander in northwest Europe, where his leadership would have broader scope.

[51] Lucas Diary, 18 Nov 43.

Middleton's replacement as 45th Division commander was a quiet, determined soldier, with broad tactical experience, Maj. Gen. William W. Eagles, a West Point graduate who had been the assistant division commander of the 3d through the campaigns of North Africa and Sicily, and in southern Italy. He was to become, according to General Lucas, "one of our most accomplished division commanders." [52]

Retaining the 1st Armored Division in army reserve until a moment favorable for employing tanks presented itself, General Clark urgently requested at least one more American infantry division for use in Italy. General Eisenhower concurred and relayed the request to Washington. The 88th Division was selected for movement to the theater. It would arrive in Italy in February and March 1944.[53]

Assured of one additional division, General Eisenhower pressed for another in order to provide regular periods of relief and rest for the divisions in the line and to increase the feasibility of an invasion of southern France. Even if the division were not used in Italy or southern France, General Eisenhower believed that an American division stationed in North Africa would be politically advantageous.[54] To meet this request, the 85th Infantry Division was chosen for transfer to the theater. It would arrive in Italy soon after the 88th.

The Italian Army was providing service companies and pack train units for use in the mountains, but since the King

[52] *Ibid.*, 24 Nov 43.

[53] Eisenhower to Marshall, 4 Dec 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

[54] Eisenhower to War Dept, 5 Dec 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3.

and Premier Badoglio had "offered to help the Allies drive the Germans out of Italy," the theater command believed it desirable for "reasons of policy" to have Italian troops participate in the entry into Rome. It would thus be fitting that they take part in the battles leading to the city. General Alexander, after conferring with Badoglio, accepted the 1. Raggruppamento Italiano Motorizzato (1st Motorized Group), commanded by Comandante di Brigata Vincenzo Dapino, and placed it under General Clark's control. After intensive training, this regiment of about 5,500 men moved to bivouac near Capua on 22 November. Early in December, the regiment was attached to II Corps and committed in the Mignano area.[55]

A greater source of troop strength existed in the French units being re-equipped and trained in North Africa, where four divisions had been preparing for combat since January. The United States had agreed to rearm a maximum of 10, later 11 divisions in North Africa, and the Allied leaders understood that they were to play an active role in the war. Although the French commanders were primarily interested in liberating France, they were also eager to have French units in combat. Just before the invasion of Salerno, General Giraud had concurred in employing French divisions in Italy, and General Eisenhower made two available to General Clark—the 2d Moroccan and 3d Algerian, plus the necessary supporting troops. General Clark wanted to use the divisions as quickly as possible, but the scarcity of shipping made their arrival in Italy unlikely before 1 November. Clark was confident that the French combat units would perform well but was somewhat concerned by the shortage of French service units. He hoped the deficiency would be corrected before the French contingents departed North Africa, since hardly enough service units were on hand to support the troops already in Italy, and no additional ones were expected.[56]



GENERAL EAGLES

Continuing shortages of shipping compelled General Alexander to postpone the arrival of the first French units until the latter part of December. Yet General

[55] *Fifth Army History*, Part III, p. 9; Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2881.

[56] Ltr, Gen Clark to Gen Alphonse Juin, Employment of French Units, Opn AVALANCHE, 1 Sep 43, SHINGLE Corresp. French units in Italy were to be maintained on the same scale as American troops, with the five classes of supply, plus Moslem rations, but not cigarettes and other free-issue items normally part of the rations in combat areas; French troops were to receive post exchange and Special Service items from French sources. Fifth Army Ltr, Supplies for French, 4 Sep 43, AG 400.



GENERAL JUIN

Clark's need for more troops prompted him to confer on 1 October with General Alphonse Juin, who was visiting Italy, on the possibility of getting at least one division to provide relief for the battle-weary units in the line. Since the French troops were said to be particularly skillful in mountain warfare, their employment would be exceptionally welcome. With Juin agreeable to an earlier commitment and with his assurance that both divisions were in an excellent state of battle readiness, Clark persuaded Alexander to schedule the 2d Moroccan Division for arrival in Naples on 1 December, the 3d Algerian Division for the end of the month.

General Juin, who would lead the French troops in Italy, commanded a headquarters named Detachment of Army A, the forerunner of what the French hoped would eventually become an army headquarters. But since Juin was to serve under Fifth Army as a corps commander, and since he was older than Clark and of higher grade, he tried to ease what he considered would be a natural embarrassment on Clark's part by calling his headquarters the French Expeditionary Corps—"to show his desire," his chief of staff later wrote, "to serve in the Fifth U.S. Army and under the orders of its chief, General Clark." [57]

Designed to operate as a general staff section at the Fifth Army level, a group known as the French Increment reached Naples on 18 November. A logistical headquarters, Base 901, instructed to function in close co-ordination with the Peninsular Base Section as the supply and reception unit for the French troops, began to arrive the following day. On 20 November, the 2d Moroccan Division, under Maj. Gen. André W. Dody, started to debark in Naples, ten days ahead of schedule. Five days later the French Expeditionary Corps headquarters arrived by air.

Until the second French division reached Italy, the 2d Moroccan Division was scheduled to go into the VI Corps. When General Lucas invited General Dody to lunch late in November to size up the commander, he was surprised to find Generals Juin and Roosevelt accompanying Dody. "I am afraid I have a problem on my hands," he wrote in his diary, unaware of Juin's eventual place in the command structure. "Juin aspires to command a corps and will certainly be in my hair, but diplomacy must be used." It was not long before Lucas admitted he had been wrong about Juin, "who turned out to be not only a splendid soldier but a fine and courteous

[57] Général Marcel Carpentier, *Les Forces Alliées en Italie; la Campagne d'Italie* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1949), p. 55.

gentleman as well." Dody, too, impressed Lucas after he came to know him—"a most capable officer, and in every way highly loyal and cooperative." [58]

The 2d Moroccan Division consisted for the most part of native North Africans led by French officers. According to American standards, the training of the division was somewhat deficient, particularly at the lower echelons. The tactical handling of battalions, for example, left something to be desired. The division, Lucas remarked, would have to learn many lessons from the enemy, "and he is a tough drillmaster." [59]

The ambulance drivers were women. Because the roads were in poor condition and under fire in many places, Lucas suggested that Dody use the ambulance units in rear areas and replace them with corps units at the front.

Dody exploded at the suggestion. "The women of France, like the men," he exclaimed, "are proud to die for their country!"

"Surely," Lucas commented in his diary, "France still lives." [60]

The 1st Special Service Force, commanded by Col. Robert T. Frederick, also arrived in Italy in November. Composed of specially selected Americans and Canadians in about equal proportions, the unit had initially been trained for long-range sabotage operations in snow-covered country. When air bombardment and Office of Strategic Services saboteurs proved to be effective against targets deep in the enemy rear, the mission of the 1st Special Service Force was changed. Already trained to fight on skis, the members now received intensive training in demolitions and became parachutists.[61]

The 1st Special Service Force had been first employed in the unopposed landings at Kiska in the Aleutians during the late summer of 1943. Because the troops were versatile and had extraordinarily high morale, the Combined Chiefs of Staff thought they might be useful in the mountain warfare of Italy. Alerted to their availability, General Eisenhower requested their shipment for special reconnaissance and raiding operations during the methodical winter advance up the Italian peninsula.[62]

Reaching Naples in the latter half of November, the 1st Special Service Force was attached on 23 November to II Corps and further attached to the 36th Division. The unit consisted of a headquarters, air and communications detachments, a base echelon service battalion of about 600 men, and three "regiments," each authorized 417 men but containing closer to 600. Each regiment had two battalions, each battalion three companies, each company three platoons. Armed like infantrymen, with rifles, carbines, rocket launchers, light machine guns, and 60-mm. mortars, but lacking organic artillery, the troops had parachutes, winter equipment, and flame throwers. They had 1,190 trucks and cars and were authorized 600 T–24 carriers, tracked amphibious vehicles ca-

[58] Lucas Diary, 29 Nov 43.
[59] *Ibid.*, 1 Dec 43.
[60] *Ibid.*

[61] A good account of the activation and early training of what was at first called the PLOUGH Force appears in Lt. Col. Robert D. Burhans, *The First Special Service Force* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947).

[62] CCS to Eisenhower, 24 Aug 43. OPD Exec 3, Item 5; Ltr, Whiteley to Eisenhower, 27 Aug 43, Salmon Files, OCMH; Eisenhower to CCS, 8 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 5; CCS to Eisenhower, 17 Sep 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 4; Eisenhower to Alexander, 4 Sep 43. 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI.



COLONEL FREDERICK. *(Photograph taken after his promotion to brigadier general.)*

pable of moderate speeds over hilly and snow-covered terrain. To give the unit support firepower, the Fifth Army headquarters attached to it a battalion of airborne artillery.[63]

While the newly arrived units were getting oriented and the old ones were resting during the last two weeks of November, Allied artillery fired almost incessantly. The 36th Division Artillery, for example, reinforced by seven battalions of corps artillery, fired nearly 95,000 shells during the period. Two battalions equipped with the 8-inch howitzer, a recently developed weapon shipped to Italy for its first combat employment, fired a total of fifty-eight rounds.

As bad as the weather was during the month of November, it was to be even worse in December. The final month of 1943 was the most unfavorable time of the year for military operations since it was the culmination of the rainy autumnal season in Italy, the climax of three months of humidity. The combination of precipitation, cloudiness, and cold would produce a surface soil unsuitable for maneuvering mechanical equipment, flood conditions for rivers and marshes, and the kind of temperatures requiring bulky clothing that restricted the men's mobility.[64] Under these conditions and in mountainous terrain, Fifth Army was going to try to reach and penetrate into the Liri valley, a prerequisite for capturing Rome.

[63] FSSF Narrative Rpt, 17 Nov 43–1 Feb 44; Alexander to Clark, 11 Oct 43, 15th AGp Master Cable File, VI; Eisenhower to War Dept, 1 Nov 43, OPD Exec 3, Item 3; FSSF Organization, 21 Oct 43, and Memo, Wood for Brann, 2 Nov 43, both in Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[64] Summary of the Meteorological Conditions in the Area South of Rome for the Month of December, n.d., Fifth Army G–3 Jnl, Nov 43.

CHAPTER XV

In the Winter Line

The Sangro Front

To tie down the Germans until the spring of 1944 at least—in order to contain the maximum number of German troops in Italy and, if possible, draw additional men and supplies from the Russian front and from the forthcoming cross-Channel invasion area in Normandy—the Allied armies had to continue on the offense in Italy. Even though offensive operations would be costly, perhaps unrewarding, there was no alternative. Ahead lay Rome, and in the eyes of the world, whoever held Rome had won the campaign in southern Italy.

General Alexander planned a coordinated effort to gain Rome by outlining early in November an ambitious operation to take place in three phases. First, he would have the Eighth Army attack across the Sangro River to the Pescara River, take Pescara on the east coast, and then turn on Highway 5 toward Rome. Pescara was 150 miles from Rome, but a substantial thrust, he thought, might so threaten the German forces on the west side of the Italian peninsula as to compel them to withdraw to positions north of Rome. Second, he would have the Fifth Army attack through Cassino and into the Liri-Sacco valley to Frosinone, within tactical distance of Rome. Third, the Fifth Army would then launch an amphibious operation in the vicinity of Rome to facilitate entry into the capital. All available air support would go to the Eighth Army during the first phase and shift to the Fifth Army for the second and third phases.[1]

The Eighth Army had closed to the lower Sangro River by mid-November, and in compliance with General Alexander's directive, General Montgomery planned a large, well-prepared assault.[2] The 5 Corps, controlling the 2d New Zealand Division, which had come forward from Foggia, and the 8th Indian and 78th Divisions, was to send the 78th across the river near its mouth to seize a bridgehead. The Indian division was to pass through the 78th and smash the Sangro defenses. Then the 78th was to pass through the 8th and drive all the way to Pescara. On the immediate left, the 2d New Zealand Division was to cross the Sangro and advance through Orsogna to Chieti. There the New Zealanders were to swing southwest on Highway 5 and move toward Avezzano to knock on the "back door" to Rome. General Montgomery deemed air and

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1 15th AGp OI 31, 8 Nov 43.

2 The following is based on: MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH; Vietinghoff MSS; MS # T–1a K1 (Kesselring), OCMH; Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 149–50; Montgomery, *El Alamein to the River Sangro*, pp. 141ff.; De Guingand, *Operation Victory*, pp. 328ff.

armor support essential to crack the Sangro defenses, and he had General Alexander's promise of all the available air support.

Kesselring, accompanied by his chief of staff, Westphal, visited the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* sector in mid-November and found the strength of the defenses on the Adriatic front satisfactory. The ranging fires of what seemed to be reinforced British artillery and exceptionally lively fighter-bomber activity clearly indicated an imminent attack. Facing the Eighth Army, the newly arrived and inexperienced *65th Division* in the coastal sector was very confident; the capable *16th Panzer Division,* awaiting orders for transfer to the Russian front, was in close support; and the superior *1st Parachute Division* occupied good mountain positions.

Although weather conditions in November were execrable, General Alexander was impatient to get the offensive under way. General Montgomery therefore launched his strong attack on the 20th. Despite the rain and cold, the 78th Division crossed the Sangro River and established a small bridgehead, too small to permit the 8th Indian Division to pass through. When continued rain had raised the river to flood level and washed out all the bridges the British had placed across the stream, Montgomery had to postpone further attacks despite the jeopardy of the 78th Division elements on the far bank.

For the Germans, the postponements were fortunate. The *65th Division,* which had borne the brunt of the attack, had taken severe losses, the commander himself losing an arm. Concentrated British artillery fire and an air bombardment that occurred in barely suitable weather took so heavy a toll of several infantry battalions that by evening of the second day of Montgomery's effort, Westphal judged that the *65th Division* "to all intents and purposes no longer existed." [3]

Kesselring and Lemelsen had already acted to reinforce the front. Early in November, Kesselring had sent the *44th Division,* which had become available from northern Italy, to *Tenth Army.* When the British struck the Sangro defenses, Lemelsen was moving the *44th* into the Mignano area to relieve the *26th Panzer Division.* He had shifted the *26th Panzer Division* early that month from the *LXXVI* to the *XIV Panzer Corps* to prevent a Fifth Army breakthrough at the Mignano gap. Now, though the *44th Division* was somewhat late in arriving near Mignano, the lull over the Fifth Army front permitted the *Tenth Army* commander to commit the *26th Panzer Division* in the Adriatic sector. Hurrying across the peninsula, the *26th Panzer Division* settled into defensive positions and made ready to bolster the *65th Division* and preserve the *16th Panzer Division* from further depletion before its transfer out of the theater.

In direct reaction to the British attack across the Sangro, Kesselring gave Lemelsen another unit, the *90th Panzer Grenadier Division* which, after being evacuated from Sardinia, had been reequipped and partially retrained. On the second day of the British offensive, 21 November, Kesselring ordered this division to the Adriatic sector. During its march from northern to southern Italy, the *90th* exhibited an inefficiency

[3] MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

that was attributed to incompetence on the part of the division commander. Thrown precipitously into battle while command changes were being made, the division launched several ineffectual counterattacks.

For an uncomfortable moment, Westphal later recalled, the way to Pescara had been "completely open" to a British advance, and the *90th Panzer Grenadier Division* could have been completely destroyed. The Eighth Army, he wrote, "did not use this chance."[4]

Weather conditions improved sufficiently to permit General Montgomery to resume his attack on 27 November. As more than 1,000 medium bombers, 2,000 fighter-bombers, and 1,600 fighters arrived over the battlefield to lend support, the 78th Division renewed its attack. The 8th Indian and 2d New Zealand Divisions made their assault crossings of the Sangro, the 8th to help expand the 78th Division bridgehead, the New Zealanders to initiate a drive toward Orsogna. After three days of fierce fighting, the 8th Indian Division captured a key point in the Sangro defensive system. Three days later, on 3 December, after boldly employing tanks in snow-covered ground considered impassable by the Germans, the Indian division captured the ridge on which the Sangro defenses had been anchored. The 78th Division, attacking along the coastal road, gained ten miles and was near Ortona by 5 December. But then, having suffered 10,000 casualties during the past six months, having fought a bitter and wearying 8-day battle in miserable weather to come within fifteen miles of Pescara, the 78th Division was thrown back as it tried to take Ortona. General Montgomery judged that the division was at the point of utter exhaustion.

On 7 December the 2d New Zealand Division attacked a strong German garrison at Orsogna without success. After having failed to storm the town a second time on the 14th, the New Zealanders bypassed the defenses, threatened to outflank the garrison, and forced the Germans to depart.

Montgomery brought up the 1st Canadian Division to replace the exhausted 78th, and on 10 December the Canadians launched an attack toward the coastal town of Ortona. The fighting went on for more than two weeks, with a week of bloody fighting in the streets of Ortona that ended with Canadian troops in possession of the town on 28 December. Westphal later claimed that the Germans evacuated Ortona not because they were compelled to leave but because they wished to spare themselves unnecessary losses.

With his units seriously depleted and his troops extremely tired, with mountains deep in snow and roads impassable, General Montgomery brought his attack to a halt. He had driven the Germans from strong positions and had inflicted heavy casualties, but he had failed to make a strategic breakthrough. Pescara remained in German hands, and the back door to Rome was still closed.

General Montgomery's chief of staff, General de Guingand, later questioned the costly fighting. Although the Eighth Army attack had pulled some German units over from the Fifth Army sector and had manhandled them, the considerable casualties incurred in the process brought to his mind thoughts of Pas-

[4] *Ibid.*

schendaele. "Had we gone too long?" de Guingand asked. "Were the troops being driven too hard?" In his opinion, pressing the Sangro offensive as far as the British had was a mistake. But the motivation had been compulsive: the hope that the Allies would take Rome by the end of the year.[5]

Plans To Breach the Mignano Barrier

Between 20 October and 24 November, General Clark issued four different operations instructions, each formulated to gain access for the Fifth Army to the Liri valley, the gateway to Frosinone and Rome.

His first gave II Corps part of the 10 Corps zone. While 10 Corps feinted a crossing of the lower Garigliano, II Corps would actually cross the river and clear a hill mass dominating the Liri valley from the south. This would permit VI Corps to enter the valley and advance generally along Highway 6, the major inland road to Rome.[6]

The difficulty of clearing the shoulders of the Mignano gap led Clark to issue his second directive early in November. This one assigned the main effort to VI Corps on the right—to cross the Rapido River and outflank the high ground behind Cassino on the north. At the same time, II Corps, after crossing the Rapido, would seize that high ground, and 10 Corps would cross the lower Garigliano to protect the left flank of a drive subsequently developed along Highway 6 in the Liri valley.[7]

The slow progress in the Mignano area prompted Clark's third directive during the period of the lull in operations. In this he placed the II Corps in the center to make the main effort directly along the axis of Highway 6 into the Liri valley, with the adjacent corps assisting.[8]

The full realization of the strength of the German defenses brought General Clark to his fourth directive, concerned with more immediate objectives. Instead of looking optimistically beyond the Mignano barrier to the Liri valley, he prescribed an attack in three phases—first a thrust on the left of the Mignano gap, followed by a thrust on the right, and finally an attack through the center to gain entrance into the Liri valley.

This last directive, which would determine Fifth Army action during the following month and a half, specifically instructed the 10 and II Corps to co-operate in the first phase to secure the Camino-Difensa-Maggiore mountain mass on the left of the Mignano gap, while VI Corps harassed the enemy and tried to disperse his reserves. After 10 Corps had seized Monte Camino and II Corps had captured Monte la Difensa and Monte Maggiore, 10 Corps was to extend its positions to relieve II Corps and free it for the next phase of operations. In this phase II Corps would capture Monte Sammucro, while 10 Corps carried out diversionary activities along the lower Garigliano and VI Corps pushed toward the mountains immediately north and northwest of Cassino. Finally, with both shoulders of the Mignano gap secured, VI Corps was to seize the high ground behind Cassino, II

[5] De Guingand, *Operation Victory*, pp. 333–35. Quote is from page 333.

[6] Fifth Army OI 8, 20 Oct 43.

[7] Fifth Army OI 9, 4 Nov 43.

[8] Fifth Army OI 10, 16 Nov 43.

Corps was to attack along Highway 6 to Cassino, ready to move into the Liri valley to create an opportunity for an armored breakthrough and exploitation, and 10 Corps was to protect the left flank by forcing a crossing of the Garigliano and continuing to advance in the coastal zone.[9]

Allied intelligence officers had no illusions about the German intention to resist. "To judge by the violence of the enemy counterattacks" in early November, one estimate read, Fifth Army appeared to have broken into the forward areas of the Winter Line. If the hills overlooking the Mignano defile in fact comprised the forward line of a wide belt of defenses stretching to the Rapido River in the Cassino area, the stubborn resistance around Mignano was likely to continue to block Allied entrance into the Liri valley.[10]

For more than a month Allied observers had been watching with growing concern the German activities in the Cassino area and along the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers. The Garigliano, one report stated, "a distinct obstacle and natural defense line, particularly on its lower reaches," though not quite so wide as the Volturno, had practically the same discharge rate and was therefore "unquestionably the deeper and faster flowing." Since all bridges would probably be demolished by the time Allied troops got there, ponton bridging would be required in quantity for initial crossings. If the Germans manipulated several power dams to flood the valleys of the Liri, Rapido, and Garigliano Rivers, they could impede bridging operations, wash out temporary bridges, and make "all roads adjacent to the river . . . impassable." [11]

Prisoners of war, civilians, and reconnaissance flights brought word that the Germans were placing extensive supply installations around Cassino, maintaining dumps forward of Cassino merely on a day-to-day basis. Supplementing this information were reports of persistent motor movements that showed a large-scale concentration of German troops taking place behind the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers. Along the river line, estimated by Allied intelligence to be one of the strongest natural defensive positions south of Rome, German units were blasting gun pits and other positions out of solid rock.[12] They were clearing both sides of the Rapido of trees and shrubbery to create fields of fire. They were digging and camouflaging rifle pits, erecting small wooden forts reinforced by concrete, building pillboxes, preparing antitank ditches, sowing mines, and putting up wire entanglements.[13]

In the hope that General Montgomery's attack across the Sangro would pull German troops over to the Adriatic front and thin the Bernhard and Gustav defenses in the Mignano and Cassino areas, General Alexander scheduled the Fifth Army effort for 12 December. General Clark was too impatient to wait. The 15th Army Group directive that was sending the Eighth Army to knock on the back door to Rome gave the Fifth

[9] Fifth Army OI 11, 24 Nov 43.

[10] 15th AGp Intel Summary 24, 10 Nov 43; Fifth Army G–2 Rpt 65, 2200, 10 Nov 43; VI Corps G–2 Sitrep, 1200, 10 Nov 43.

[11] Fifth Army Engr Rpt 14, Fiume Garigliano, 17 Oct 43.

[12] Fifth Army G–2 Rpts 53, 54, 56, 57, and 58, 29 Oct through 3 Nov 43; VI Corps G–2 Rpts 44 and 51, 22 and 29 Oct 43.

[13] Fifth Army G–2 Rpt 79, 24 Nov 43.

Army commander disquieting thoughts. To General Clark the order had intimations of the irritating policy enunciated by the army group headquarters at the time of Salerno to enhance the prestige and reputation of the Eighth Army. General Clark wanted Rome for the Fifth Army, and if he was going to get it, he would, it seemed, have to hurry.[14]

There were other reasons for haste.[15] The amphibious operation being planned to facilitate the capture of Rome had to be launched and completed before the date when the landing ships and craft destined for use in the cross-Channel attack had to be released. If Fifth Army reached Frosinone in time, the 3d Division would probably make the amphibious landing in the Rome area. To this end, General Clark persuaded General Alexander to advance the date of the Fifth Army attack to the beginning of December.[16]

The Camino-Difensa-Maggiore Complex

General Clark would open his December operations with an attack on Monte Camino, Monte la Difensa, and Monte Maggiore, a group of peaks and ridges about 3,000 feet above sea level that were traversed only by primitive trails. Monte Camino (Hill 963) is marked by a rocky line of jagged cliffs and crowned by a monastery. Two miles away is Monte Maggiore, a jumbled mass with three distinct peaks. The 10 Corps was to capture Monte Camino; the left flank elements of II Corps were to seize Monte la Difensa and Monte Maggiore.

To cover the movement of troops to assembly areas and possibly to draw enemy forces from Monte Camino, General McCreery directed the 46th Division to launch a diversionary attack during the night of 1 December. On the following night the 56th Division, which had already fought one exhausting battle for Monte Camino, was to drive to the highest point of the mountain. There the division would have commanding observation over much of Monte la Difensa and Monte Maggiore.

The XII Air Support Command scheduled an extensive program of assistance: on 1 December, in 720 sorties, aircraft were to drop nearly 400 tons of bombs; on 2 December, in 816 sorties, they were to release 502 tons. Each division of 10 Corps was to have one light and one medium regiment of corps artillery in direct support, three British regiments and two American battalions in general support.

Preliminary operations, starting a week before the major effort, attempted to deceive the Germans on the location of the attack. Along the lower Garigliano River, British troops patrolled aggressively, established false supply dumps, set up dummy gun positions, and conspicuously moved men and vehicles to suggest the intention of an assault river crossing. On 24 and 27 November and again on 1 December, the British cruiser *Orion* and four destroyers shelled the coast line between Minturno and Gaeta. LCI's and LCT's feinted close to shore near the mouth of the Garigliano on 30 November. From the increased German vehicular movements and artillery activity noted during

[14] Clark Diary, 4, 9, 17, 22 Nov 43.

[15] See Notes by General Gruenther in folder marked Rapido Plans, probably drawn in November and December 1943.

[16] Rooks to Smith, 18 Nov 43, Eisenhower Diary. See also Eisenhower Diary, 4 Dec 43.

the last few days of the month, General McCreery was satisfied that he had attracted enemy forces to the coastal sector. When a patrol tried to cross the river during the night of 1 December to test the German reaction, it met extremely alert and strong opposition.

On the slopes of Monte Camino, despite bad weather on 26 November, 36 Allied fighter-bombers attacked German positions, while 24 B–26's dropped 38 tons of bombs on the town of Cassino. During the next two days 24 P–40's worked over Monte Maggiore. On the afternoon of 1 December, the XII Air Support Command furnished an immediate preparation for the ground attack by sending 72 B–25's, 24 A–20's, 130 A–36's, and 48 P–40's to bomb the German lines immediately ahead of the Fifth Army front—the 274 sorties were far from the promised 720, but the planes gave an impressive performance. On the following day, the air command completed a total of 612 sorties on targets close to the army front, more than 200 short of the 816 earlier promised in direct support. Prisoners of war gave conflicting testimony on the effectiveness of the air action.

Starting at dusk, 1 December, the 10 Corps ground attack got under way as the 46th Division jumped off in a diversionary effort to secure objectives near the village of Calabritto on the lower slopes of Monte Camino. The troops were so hampered by mine fields, wire, and machine gun fire that it took them all night to get through the forward line of resistance. After daybreak on 2 December, infantrymen reached to within 200 yards of Calabritto. Although tanks placed fire on stone houses in the village sheltering German strongpoints, the attack stalled. The commitment of reserves after dark had no effect. Until the 56th Division cleared the dominating slopes of Monte Camino, the 46th had little hope of taking and clearing the Calabritto area.

As scheduled in order to co-ordinate with the II Corps attack, the 56th Division jumped off during the night of 2 December, attempting to seize at least the southern half of Monte Camino, which was deemed essential for the success of the American effort.[17] Making excellent progress during the hours of darkness, British troops reached the monastery on Hill 963, topping Monte Camino by morning. Enemy fire forced the lead battalion back, but an attack launched the morning of 4 December regained the crest. Again the British were pushed off, and again they tried on the following day. This time an infantry company occupied the monastery briefly. Final success came on the evening of 6 December when British troops occupied and made secure the highest point of Monte Camino. The 46th Division then took Calabritto. After three days of mopping-up operations, the Camino hill mass was cleared of enemy troops.

Like the 10 Corps, II Corps initiated operations to deceive the Germans. To make the main effort of the corps against Monte la Difensa and Monte Maggiore, to prevent the Germans from employing their reserves promptly, to keep them from being able to shift their artillery fire quickly, and to soften the defenses in areas scheduled for the next phase of operations, General Keyes increased patrol activities, scheduled special artil-

[17] See Ltr, Walker to Keyes, Visit to CG 56th Div, 27 Nov 43, 36th Div Opns Binder.



BRITISH TROOPS ON MONTE CAMINO

lery shoots and bombing missions, and permitted the 3d Ranger Battalion, which he moved to the corps right flank, to be identified and observed making conspicuous preparations for attack.[18]

The 36th Division, which would carry out the attack on the Difensa-Maggiore complex, had entered the line during a continuous rain. The troops soon became soaked and covered with mud, and the freezing cold weather added to their discomfort. There was little opportunity to dry out clothing or to have hot meals. With jeeps and trucks bogging down on the roads in the division area, particularly in newly constructed bypasses which quickly turned into mire, supplies could be motored forward only so far, then had to be hand-carried by soldiers up the mountainsides to the troop locations. Inspecting the front to be certain that the men had properly camouflaged their positions, General Walker became concerned with the state of their health: "going day and night—they surely take a beating," he wrote in his diary.[19] He requisitioned 12,000 combat suits, 6,000 pairs of leather gloves, and 2,000 gasoline heaters to try to improve their living conditions.

General Alexander had cautioned General Clark to avoid heavy losses in the Winter Line. The Germans, he warned, had been fighting rear guard actions since Salerno, but they would probably make a strong defensive stand south of Rome. "Don't worry," the army

[18] Ltrs, Keyes to Lucas, and Keyes to Walker, 26 Nov 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[19] Walker Diary, 18 Nov 43.

commander said. "I'll get through the Winter Line all right and push the Germans out." [20]

Indications of this attitude became apparent when Clark and Keyes visited General Walker's command post in November. "They want to get going," the division commander noted, "now that they have a 'fresh' division in line." But contrary to Clark's optimistic forecasts, Walker thought that progress would be difficult.[21]

According to intelligence estimates, the Germans had organized three battalion-size centers of resistance on the 36th Division front, one on the Difensa-Maggiore mountain mass, another on Monte Lungo, and a third in the San Pietro area. At least one and possibly two battalions were in local reserve in the Mignano area, and an additional battalion was in reserve on each flank. These forces were supported by two regiments of medium artillery, an indeterminate amount of heavy artillery, and some *Nebelwerfer*. Having organized their defenses in depth to take full advantage of the terrain, the Germans had sited their units for mutual support.[22]

Against the anticipated strength of these defenses, General Walker planned his attack in great detail. In general, the 1st Special Service Force, attached to his division, was to advance to the top of Monte la Difensa during the night of 2 December; the 142d Infantry, following the 1st Special Service Force, was to turn north to take Monte Maggiore. Supporting the attack by firing on targets in the valley between Monte Maggiore and Monte Lungo, the 141st Infantry was to be ready to capture Monte Lungo. If the attack overpowered the Germans quickly, the 143d Infantry was to be prepared to move into the next phase of operations and seize San Pietro.[23]

The II Corps opened its attack at 1630, 2 December, when 925 artillery pieces of all calibers began to pour high explosive, white phosphorus, and smoke on enemy positions, 820 of these weapons concentrating on the Camino-Difensa-Maggiore complex. In a one-hour "serenade" of massed fire, 346 pieces expended more than 22,000 rounds on Monte la Difensa. During the first forty-eight hours of the attack, the corps artillery, which had placed fourteen battalions in support of the 36th Division Artillery, would alone fire almost 75,000 shells in support, among them the shells of the new 8-inch howitzers, the first sustained combat use of the weapon.[24]

To the Germans, the artillery preparation, following the earlier air bombings, appeared to be of "unprecedented violence." The troops, protected by foxholes, were largely immune to the shells. But "they were completely cut off from the rest of the world by this bombardment," Vietinghoff later wrote, "and left entirely to their resources; small tactical reserves could not be moved and even irregular supply was no longer possible." [25]

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20 Intervs, Mathews with Alexander, 10–15 Jan 49.
21 Walker Diary, 18 Nov 43.
22 36th Div Annex 2 to FO 38, 30 Nov 43.
23 36th Div FO 38, Opn RAINCOAT, 30 Nov 43. See also 36th Div Plan for the Capture of Monte Camino–Monte Maggiore Mountain Mass, 21 Nov 43, II Corps G–3 Jnl.
24 See 36th Div Artillery Annex to FO 38, and Appendix A, 30 Nov 43; Fifth Army Sitrep 86, 3 Dec 43.
25 Vietinghoff MSS.

The artillery preparation ended as darkness fell, and the 1st Special Service Force advanced against Hill 960 of Difensa, with one "regiment" in assault, another assigned supply and evacuation duties, and the third held in 36th Division reserve. Monte la Difensa was extremely precipitous and lacked man-made trails. Movement along the ridges of the mountain mass was hazardous not only because of the danger of slipping and falling into deep ravines but also because the troops were frequently silhouetted to German observation. Climbing all night up the treacherous slope of Monte la Difensa, dispersing and eliminating small enemy groups that tried to bar their progress, men of the 1st Special Service Force reached the top by dawn. During the day, the leading regiment continued beyond Hill 960 toward a high and broken ridge, Monte la Remetanea, which overlooks part of Monte Maggiore.

The advance had been surprisingly rapid, but the large area held by the 1st Special Service Force prompted General Wilbur, the 36th Division assistant commander, who had been delegated by General Walker to remain in close touch with the attack, to use the reserve regiment. As this unit ascended the slope of Monte la Difensa, it came under severe artillery and mortar fire and suffered heavy casualties. The Germans, having recovered from the artillery preparation and the swift movement of the 1st Special Service Force, were beginning to react. By the end of 3 December, Colonel Frederick, the 1st Special Service Force commander, estimated that he had at least 20 men killed, about 80 walking wounded, and the same number of litter cases. He recommended that his unit be relieved of the task of defending the high ground and suggested that relief be instituted at once. It would take at least twenty-four hours to replace a single regiment in that difficult terrain and an additional two or three hours for his men to come down the mountain.[26]

Relieving, even reinforcing, the 1st Special Service Force on Monte la Difensa was impossible in view of the corps commitment and the few available units. There was nothing for the men to do but hang on and fight the cold and rain, the limited visibility, the virtually impossible supply and evacuation problems, and the suddenly active German defense. When a reconnaissance patrol was pushed back from Monte la Remetanea to Hill 960 on 4 December, a battalion of the reserve regiment was too depleted to take back the ground. "Every man in unit exhausted," Frederick reported. "Needs minimum three days rest after he gets down from Hill," he added, before there could be thought of further assignment for the force.[27]

A biting wind, cold, clammy fog, virtually incessant rain, rocky ground, no shelter, insufficient blankets, cold food, and accurate German mortar and artillery fire made life miserable on Monte la Difensa. When a sudden gust of wind occasionally lifted the fog, opposing patrols sometimes found themselves only a few feet apart on the same narrow ledge and hand-to-hand combat the only alternative. "Men getting in bad shape," Colonel Frederick reported. The Germans were well hidden, and the state of communications was "heartbreaking"—

[26] Memo, G–3 for CofS, 4 Dec 43, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

[27] Teleconvs with FSSF, II Corps G–3 Jnl, 5 Dec 43; Ltr, Maj Gen Robert T. Frederick to Gen Pattison, 22 Mar 65, OCMH.

enemy mortar fire knocked out lines faster than they could be repaired.[28]

The 1st Special Service Force repulsed a German counterattack in battalion strength against Hill 960 just before dawn on 5 December; this turned out to be the last serious attempt to push the Canadian-American unit off the hill. As British troops secured neighboring Monte Camino, the Germans on Monte la Difensa began to withdraw, and the 1st Special Service Force advanced and cleared the few remaining enemy troops on Monte la Remetanea. Organized resistance ceased on the afternoon of 8 December. For "six cold, bloody days" the 1st Special Service Force had remained atop Monte la Difensa, incurring 511 casualties—73 dead, 9 missing, 313 wounded or injured, and 116 hospitalized for exhaustion.[29]

Two battalions of the 142d Infantry had followed the 1st Special Service Force up the lower slopes of Monte la Difensa during the night of 2 December before turning toward Monte Maggiore. While artillery laid smoke on Monte Lungo to the north to mask the attack, the battalions moved quickly to the high ground in a steady rain, and against surprisingly little opposition took control of the Maggiore mass. The swift success came as the result of aggressive movement and excellent artillery support. Subsequent ground action was limited to patrolling, though enemy artillery kept inflicting casualties and breaking telephone wires.

Like Monte la Difensa, Monte Maggiore has extremely broken terrain. Because the trails were too steep for mules, the men carried all their ammunition, took only a few mortars, and stuffed D ration chocolate bars into their pockets. Once the ground was secure, the reserve battalion of the 142d Infantry and two companies of the 141st took on the duties of supply carriers, while II Corps headquarters made available extra litter squads. The muddy trails were so steep in places that the men had to crawl, dragging packs by rope. The carriers had three miles to go to reach the troops on Monte Maggiore, and a round trip required twelve hours. Attempts on 5, 6, and 7 December to drop rations from A–36 fighter bombers failed, mainly because of bad weather.

As miserable as the conditions were for the 1st Special Service Force and the 142d Infantry, the Germans were having a more difficult time. The advances of these Allied units and of the British 56th Division on Monte Camino had virtually cut off a depleted regiment and the weakened armored reconnaissance battalion of the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division*. Outnumbered, burned by white phosphorus shells, without supplies or reinforcement, the units held out until exhausted. One messenger returned to the division headquarters to report that he was the sole survivor.[30]

On 8 December, the 142d Infantry relieved the 1st Special Service Force on Monte la Difensa. Two days later troops of the 56th Division extended their lines from Monte Camino and relieved the Americans on Monte la Difensa and Monte Maggiore. The Camino-Difensa-Maggiore complex, a key obstacle on the road to Rome, was in Allied hands. But no continuing attack beyond to Monte

[28] Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, p. 119. Good and detailed descriptions of small unit action may be found in this source.

[29] Burhans, *The First Special Service Force*, p. 119; FSSF AAR, 17 Nov 43–1 Feb 44.

[30] Vietinghoff MSS.



2D MOROCCAN INFANTRY DIVISION TROOPS AROUND A CAMPFIRE

Lungo and San Pietro was immediately possible. The Germans were giving way grudgingly.

In the right of the Fifth Army zone, VI Corps had been advancing slowly along the two available roads, one leading from Colli to Atina, the other from Filignano to San Elia, both narrow and winding and dominated everywhere by hills. So well interlocked were the defensive positions of the *44th* and *305th Divisions* that capture of any height required operations against several others. The Germans regarded the attack with respect, for they assumed, incorrectly, that the two committed American divisions were trying to bypass the mountains on the northern shoulder of the Mignano pass in order to get into the Rapido valley from the rear. Actually, the 34th and 45th Divisions had been attacking abreast since 29 November to draw enemy attention and reserves from the main effort in the Mignano area. Progress was slow. Air support was always a problem because of the weather, and artillery fire was difficult to obtain not only because targets were hard to spot but also because pieces often had to be manhandled into firing positions.

Hampered by the terrain, bad weather, poor visibility, a stubborn defense, and increasing fatigue, the two American divisions struggled by small unit maneuver over knolls, knobs, and hills in search of objectives that were neither decisive

nor symbolic. Having moved little more than a mile by 4 December at a cost of nearly 800 casualties, the 34th Division halted, exhausted and depleted. Similarly, the 45th Division had advanced only a few miles by 9 December, when it too approached exhaustion. On 8 December General Lucas took the 34th Division out of the line, replacing it with the newly arrived 2d Moroccan Infantry Division.[31]

Despite some disappointment over the results of the VI Corps attack, General Clark believed that the pressure exerted by General Lucas had weakened the enemy. The insertion of the fresh French division, he hoped, would make more rapid progress possible. Meanwhile, the second phase of the Fifth Army operation, that part designed to follow the reduction of the Camino-Difensa-Maggiore complex, had started on the II Corps front.

[31] VI Corps FO 16, 6 Dec 43. See also Lucas Diary, 4, 7, 8, 12 Dec 43.

CHAPTER XVI

San Pietro

The Conditions

The village of San Pietro Infine was a cluster of gray stone houses huddled in medieval fashion part way up the dark and forbidding slope of Monte Sammucro. Facing south, San Pietro dominated the main approach route of the Fifth Army as it headed up the axis of Highway 6 toward Cassino. Allied troops had fought through the Mignano gap. They had secured Monte Maggiore on the left of Highway 6 and Monte Rotondo on the right. Now they had to take Monte Lungo on the left, just beyond Monte Maggiore, and San Pietro, just beyond Monte Rotondo. These objectives seemed ready to fall, almost for the asking.

Monte Lungo is a chunk of ground that seems to have broken off Monte Maggiore. It is a steep-sloped, rather smooth-sided mound separated from the larger mountain complex by an abrupt and narrow valley. Along the western edge of Monte Lungo flows a creek and beside it runs the railroad north to Cassino and beyond to Rome. Along the eastern edge of Monte Lungo, a distance of two miles, runs Highway 6 on its way to Cassino. To the east looms Monte Rotondo, and beyond it the Cannavinelle Hill, fading into the thick obscurity of the Matese Mountains crowding the horizon.

Highway 6 passes through a deep depression between Monte Lungo and Monte Rotondo. It makes a horseshoe bend, then straightens and moves directly toward San Pietro. Just when it appears that the road will strike the wall of Monte Sammucro, it turns to the left and scurries around the end of the mountain. Highway 6 has now gone beyond the point—a traveler hardly notices it—where it is joined by the narrow, winding road that has come westward from Dragoni—through Ceppagna and past San Pietro. About a mile beyond the San Pietro road junction, Highway 6 goes past another country road leading off to the right, this one to the village of San Vittore, perched on a hill on the north slope of Monte Sammucro. *(Map 7)*

Allied staff officers believed that a stubborn defense of Monte Lungo and of San Pietro was unlikely. Monte Lungo seemed completely dominated by the adjacent higher ground of Monte Maggiore and outflanked by the troops holding Monte Rotondo. San Pietro, indeed all of Monte Sammucro, appeared clear of German troops. Therefore, a swift thrust from Ceppagna—westward across the southern face of Monte Sammucro—would sweep through San Pietro; and if carried to the western end of the mountain to Highway 6, would isolate Monte Lungo. Capture of the crest of Monte Sammucro would in turn make San Vittore untenable to the Germans. Since



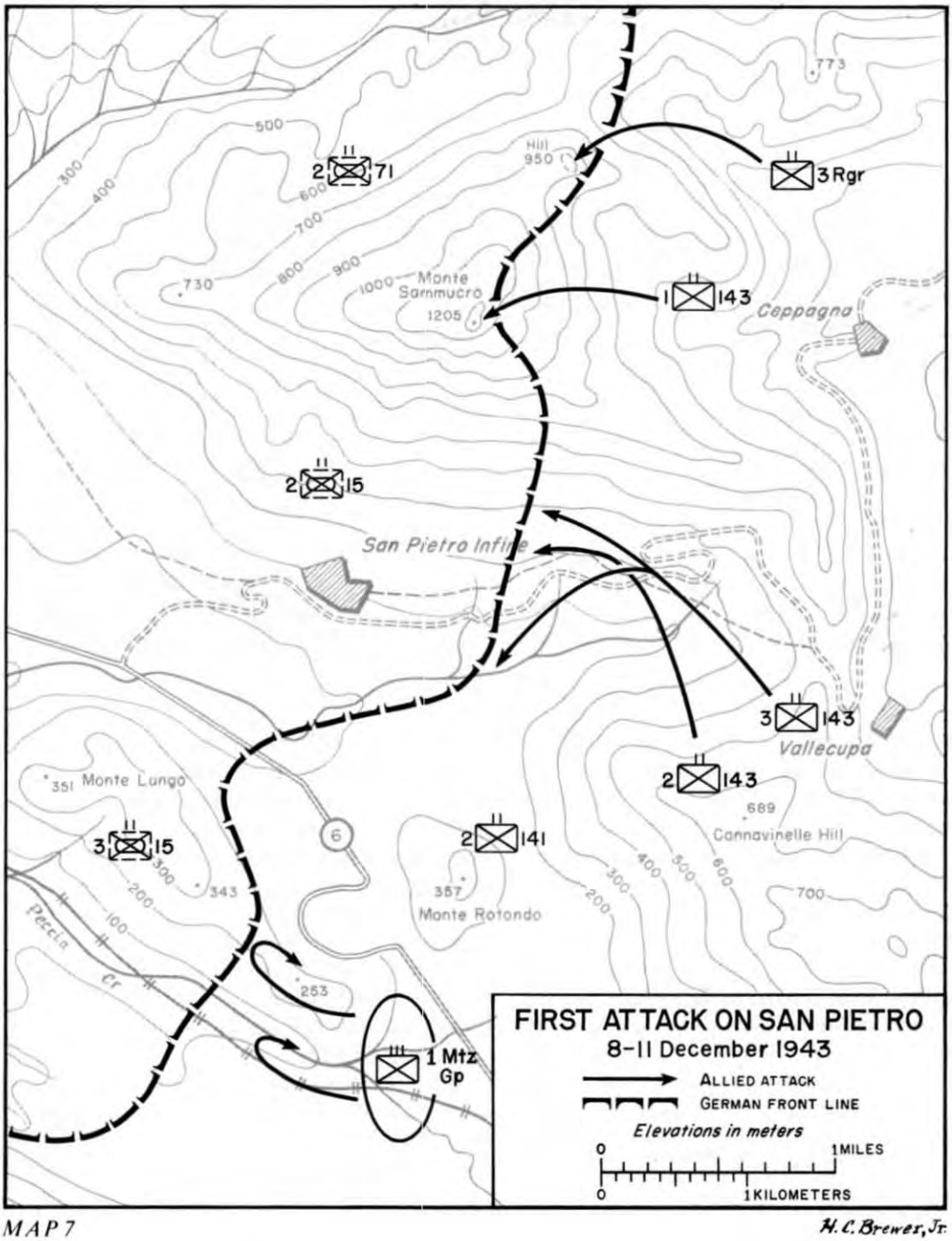
MONTE SAMMUCRO, WITH SAN PIETRO ON THE RIGHT

the Rapido and Garigliano Rivers were at flood stage and made withdrawals by assault boat hazardous, the Germans were probably already pulling back by increments the troops who were forward of the river line and in danger of being cut off by a swift Allied advance.[1]

Expecting Monte Lungo to come into Allied possession easily, Allied commanders looked toward San Pietro. What had escaped their intelligence officers was how inaccessible San Pietro really was. There were simply no good approaches to the village, where houses provided stout stone walls for weapons emplacement. Separated from Monte Rotondo and the Cannavinelle Hill by a deep gully and sitting above the Ceppagna road, San Pietro could be entered only by way of cart tracks and trails across the ravine-scarred face of Monte Sammucro. Nor was it evident to Allied intelligence how important San Pietro was for the observation it gave of Monte Lungo and the trough that carried Highway 6 to Cassino.

The Germans had, in fact, decided to hold San Pietro, though the decision was almost accidental. When an exhausted regiment of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* was reeling back on 13

[1] See 10 Corps Intel Summary 218, 5 Dec 43, Fifth Army G-2 Jnl; II Corps Planning Group Paper, 2 Dec 43, II Corps G-3 Jnl.



MAP 7

H. C. Brewer, Jr.

November from heavy American pressure in the Mignano area, the *Tenth Army* commander, Lemelsen, concluded that further defense near San Pietro was useless. He telephoned Kesselring, who agreed that the "regiment must be taken back." But Kesselring first decided to check with OKW, for he did "not know yet whether the Fuehrer will give his permission." Until he received definite word, Kesselring told Lemelsen: "I will permit you to do anything that you convince me to be right." A few hours later, Kesselring informed Lemelsen: "The Fuehrer has given us a free hand concerning San Pietro." Shortly after midnight, Lemelsen instructed the regiment to withdraw.

The movement had hardly started when Lemelsen received a phone call from Kesselring's chief of staff, Westphal. "The order giving us a free hand," Westphal said, "has been cancelled, apparently for political reasons." Hitler was reserving for himself the decision on further withdrawals in the San Pietro area. The regiment had to be kept in the line, a course of action Kesselring characterized on 15 November as "most unpleasant."

"I do not like to do this either," Lemelsen said.[2]

The Germans' determination to hold San Pietro made inevitable one of the most bitter fights in southern Italy. By early December, two regiments of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division,* one on Monte Lungo, the other on Monte Sammucro, were reinforcing the depleted regiment of the *3d.* One battalion of the *29th* held San Pietro.

General Clark had been interested in San Pietro since late October. In early November and again in the middle of the month, he pointed to San Pietro and Monte Sammucro as critical objectives. His basic concept for seizing them was to launch not a frontal attack up Highway 6 but rather an outflanking attack westward from Ceppagna past San Pietro to Highway 6. A successful thrust would pinch off Monte Lungo, bring San Vittore within reach, and open up the last few miles on the direct approach to Cassino.[3]

Late in November, toward the end of the lull in operations, General Keyes acted on General Clark's idea. He instructed General Walker, to whose 36th Division the 3d Ranger Battalion was attached, to send the Rangers to San Pietro during the night of 29 November. They were to determine whether the Germans had strong defenses or only a thin screen across the San Pietro front. If the Rangers took San Pietro easily, Keyes continued, Walker was to dispatch them around the western end of Monte Sammucro to San Vittore. Avoid heavy casualties, Keyes emphasized. If the Rangers met superior forces, they were to withdraw under cover to be provided by the 36th Division. But if they had quick success, the division was to be ready to reinforce them.[4]

During the night of 29 November, in rain and mist, the Ranger battalion moved westward through Ceppagna toward San Pietro. Just before daylight, as they neared the eastern edge of the village, heavy artillery and mortar fire immobilized the Rangers and they remained pinned down throughout the

[2] Steiger MS.

[3] Clark Diary, 26 Oct, 5, 11 Nov 43.

[4] Ltr, Keyes to Walker, 28 Nov 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

day. Feeling that immediate maneuver would have got the Rangers into San Pietro and attributing the failure of the battalion to a lack of determination on the part of the commander, General Walker ordered the men to withdraw after nightfall, 30 November. The Rangers had lost 10 killed and 14 wounded, and had acquired little information on enemy strength and dispositions, except that the defenders had access to good supporting fires and that no mines or wire barred entrance on the eastern approaches to the village.[5]

On the night of 2 December when a Ranger company took the same route, the men reached a point about a mile east of San Pietro without finding either enemy troops or obstacles. General Keyes then assumed that the Germans were ready to evacuate San Pietro after a show of force. He informed General Walker that he expected the next attack launched by the 36th Division to go through San Pietro to San Vittore without pause.[6]

A Ranger patrol managed to get even closer to San Pietro during the night of 4 December without stirring up enemy reaction. Yet a patrol dispatched toward the village by the 143d Infantry the same night reported it full of enemy troops.

The strength of the German defenses was still unclear when Keyes and Walker planned the next phase of operations. General Keyes attached the 1st Italian Motorized Group to the 36th Division and indicated his desire to have the unit capture Monte Lungo. He thought that two battalions of the 36th Division could work their way westward along the southern face of Monte Sammucro, one to seize Hill 1205, the highest peak, the other to descend the slope and take San Pietro from the rear. If the 3d Ranger Battalion occupied Hill 950, a peak in the eastern portion of Monte Sammucro, sufficient contact to protect the corps flank could be maintained with the 45th Division operating on the immediate right.

In his detailed plan of attack, General Walker had the 143d Infantry attacking with two battalions during the night of 7 December to capture San Pietro and the high ground immediately north and west of the village. The Ranger battalion would advance from the Ceppagna area to Hill 950 on the division right. The Italian unit would relieve a battalion of the 141st Infantry on the southern nose of Monte Lungo on the morning of 8 December and move up the slope to capture the hill. In support, the 141st Infantry would place fire on the low ground between Monte Lungo and Monte Sammucro. With these heights and San Pietro captured, Walker would continue the attack to San Vittore.[7]

The First Attack

Just before dark on 7 December, the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, moved out from the destroyed village of Ceppagna.[8] The men picked their way quietly up the slope of Monte Sammucro, angling to the left as they climbed. As the first

[5] Teleconv, Lt Duke to Col Goodwin, 0750, 1 Dec 43, II Corps G–3 Jnl; Walker Diary, 1 Dec 43.

[6] II Corps CofS (Lt Col Ralph J. Butchers) Memo, 2 Dec 43, II Corps Memo, 3 Dec 43, and II Corps Ltr, 3 Dec 43, all in II Corps G–3 Jnl.

[7] 36th Div FO 39 (amended), 6 Dec 43.

[8] The rest of this chapter is from the official records of the corps, division, and regiments involved except where otherwise indicated.

pink edges of dawn began to show in the sky, they reached the top of Monte Sammucro, then swarmed over the crest of the mountain, threw grenades to blast a few Germans out of weapons emplacements, and took possession of Hill 1205.

Following the 1st Battalion, 143d, through Ceppagna, the 3d Ranger Battalion turned right at the foot of Monte Sammucro and climbed a ridge leading to Hill 950. Less than a thousand yards from their objective, the Rangers in the lead received machine gun fire from two alert German outposts. Rushing and overcoming the outposts, the Rangers reached and took the hill at daybreak, 8 December.

The 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, descended Cannavinelle Hill during the night of 7 December. With San Pietro its objective, the battalion moved to a line of departure, about a mile east of San Pietro, and there awaited daybreak, hopeful that the battalions ascending Monte Sammucro would seize their objectives and compel the Germans to withdraw from San Pietro. At daylight the battalion advanced, only to meet fire from mortars, machine guns, and artillery. The leading troops moved no farther than 400 yards before taking cover. The rest of the battalion followed suit.

The regimental commander committed the 3d Battalion, instructing one rifle company to move around the 2d Battalion left, the others around the right. The troops made no headway against the continuing German fire.

Meanwhile, the Germans had gathered forces to launch a counterattack on the morning of 8 December against the battalion occupying Hill 1205. The assault almost dislodged the Americans before breaking up. At about the same time, several volleys of concentrated artillery fire forced the Ranger battalion to retire from Hill 950 to a lesser hill nearby. There the Rangers dug in and awaited the arrival of 4.2-inch mortars to help retake the objective.

If the three attacks on Monte Sammucro were achieving less than the desired success, the advance against Monte Lungo showed clearly how important the Germans regarded the direct approach to Cassino. Late in November General Keyes had alerted General Dapino, commander of the 1st Italian Motorized Group, of plans to employ his regimental-size unit and had informed Dapino that he was "somewhat concerned" about the group's ammunition requirements. Would Dapino make a detailed report of what he needed so that Keyes could be sure to give him adequate supplies? While Dapino studied his ammunition requirements, Keyes told Walker he wanted the Italian unit to succeed in its first combat assignment and therefore wanted Dapino to have a mission he could easily fulfill. Monte Lungo seemed appropriate. Overshadowed by Monte Maggiore, which was expected to be in American hands before the Italian attack, Monte Lungo appeared lightly defended. Walker's confidence in the outcome of the attack suffered when Dapino visited Walker's command post to discuss the operation. The Italian commander impressed him less than favorably.[9]

Relieving a battalion of the 141st Infantry on the southeastern nose of Monte

[9] Ltr, Keyes to Damiano [sic], 29 Nov 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl, 1–2 Dec 43; Walker Diary, 1 Dec 43; Walker to author, Jul 60.

Lungo on 7 December, the Italian unit prepared to jump off the next morning. Unfortunately, the troops made no ground reconnaissance. Nor were combat patrols dispatched. A single security patrol sent to the flank during the night failed to return.

After a 30-minute artillery preparation on the morning of 8 December, the Italian troops, with good morale and high expectations of success, moved out with two battalions abreast into a heavy mist that had settled like a smoke screen over the small rocky knobs of the hill. Believing that the artillery preparation had neutralized all resistance, the Italians marched up the hill in compact formation. Despite little attack discipline, they made good progress until the assault battalions began to receive machine gun and mortar fire. The men faltered, then stopped. In the next three hours they became completely demoralized. Despite Dapino's earlier estimate of his ammunition needs, the artillery unit in direct support soon ran out of shells. Missions requested from other artillery units were beyond the range of the pieces. Co-ordination and liaison between infantry and artillery and all other communications were poor, and American artillery in general support hesitated to bring fire into close support because of lack of knowledge of the exact locations of the infantry. By midmorning, personnel losses and disorganization had reduced the strength of the Italian infantry group to about one battalion of effectives.

It was apparent by noon that the attack of the 1st Italian Motorized Group had failed. General Walker permitted General Dapino to withdraw his men to the southeastern nose of Monte Lungo, and there the regimental commander of the 141st Infantry helped restore order and set up defensive positions against a counterattack that everyone expected. When a company of the 141st Infantry took firing positions on Monte Rotondo to back up the Italian unit, and when 8-inch howitzers swept the crest of Monte Lungo to discourage the Germans from following up their success, the situation once more came under control.

Immediate estimates indicated that little more than 700 Italian troops remained of the original strength of 1,600 men. Unaccounted for were 800 men, and of these, 300 to 400 were presumed killed, wounded, and missing. The figures verified later were less discouraging: 84 killed, 122 wounded, and 170 missing. But because the unit had been "so severely handled," General Dapino asked the Italian high command, *Comando Supremo,* to bolster his organization with an additional battalion of infantry.[10]

To what extent another factor influenced the situation can only be a matter of conjecture. During the morning of 8 December, while the battalion of American infantrymen was repelling a counterattack on Hill 1205, while the Ranger battalion was being pushed off Hill 950, and while the Italian attack on Monte Lungo was meeting disaster, a group of dignitaries was visiting General Walker's division command post—Generals Alexander, Clark, Keyes, McCreery, Templer, and Rooks, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, Crown Prince Humberto—accompanied by a

[10] Rpt by Capt N. W. Malitch, 8 Dec 43; II Corps Memo, 8 Dec 43; 1st Motorized Italian Brigade Ltr, Action on Monte Lungo, 10 Dec 43; and Telephone Msg, 9 Dec 43, all in II Corps G-3 Jnl.

host of newspaper reporters and photographers. "I had a difficult time," General Walker wrote in his diary, "to attend to the tactical demands with all these visitors coming and going." [11]

More important in explaining the lack of success was that Monte Lungo was not an easy assignment. Under observation from San Pietro and other points on Monte Sammucro, the steep sides of Monte Lungo made difficult any access to the top, particularly the one along the approaches from the southeastern nose of the hill. Monte Lungo had been an inappropriate objective for a unit undertaking its initial combat action.

On the other side of Highway 6, on Monte Sammucro, the infantrymen on Hill 1205 who had taken their objective were hard pressed to hold it. The Germans launched numerous counterattacks during the next four days. The Rangers who had been pushed off Hill 950, supported now by 4.2-inch mortars that had been painfully lugged up the slope of Monte Sammucro, attacked again on 9 December and recaptured the hill. They too were subjected to severe pressure from the Germans, who sought to regain the two most important heights on Monte Sammucro and who were denied by stubborn resistance and a telling use of white phosphorus shells. Yet the constant fighting and exposure to the elements depleted both American battalions. By 10 December, the 1st Battalion, 143d, was down to half strength, a total of 340 men, with the battalion commander wounded and two company commanders killed.

To bolster the units on the high ground of Monte Sammucro, General Clark sent General Keyes the 504th Parachute Infantry, which had earlier operated on the Fifth Army right flank. Keyes attached the paratroopers to General Walker, who committed them on Monte Sammucro to insure its retention.[12]

The failure to take San Pietro and Monte Lungo, to say nothing of San Vittore, disappointed General Walker, but only momentarily; he was soon immersed in plans for a new attack.

The Second Attack

The second attempt to take San Pietro was shaped in large part by a visit General Walker received around 9 December from General Brann, the Fifth Army G–3. Brann brought word that General Clark was interested in making greater use of armor. Clark had asked for the 1st Armored Division, Brann explained, had received it, and was somewhat embarrassed because so few opportunities existed for employing the division, which was still uncommitted. Was there any possibility of using some tanks of Walker's attached tank battalion to help capture San Pietro? *(Map 8)*

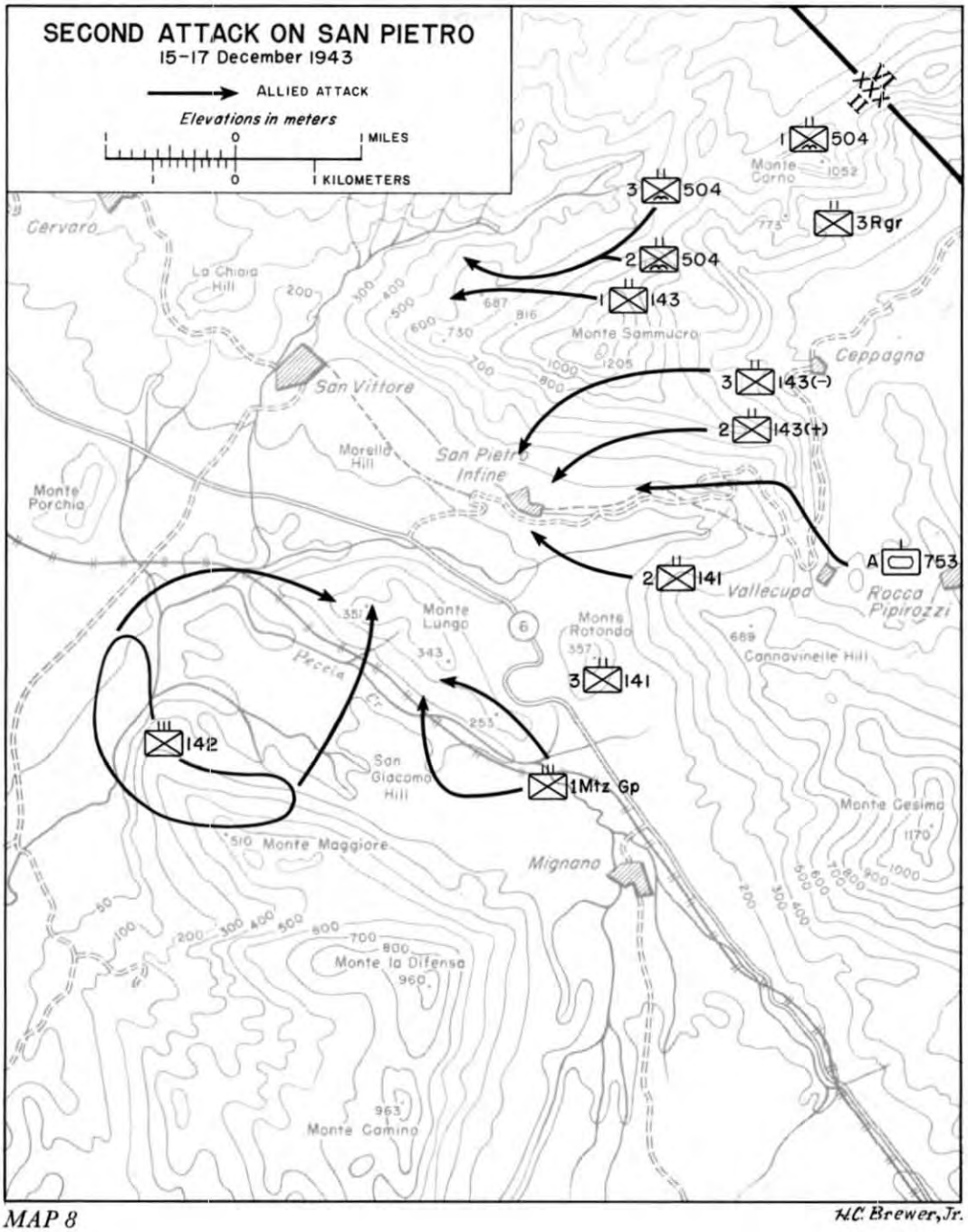
Walker thought not. The ground was anything but favorable for tank warfare. But since the army commander was interested in employing armor, and since General Keyes had also indicated his desire for tank action, Walker said he would try.[13]

He asked his tank battalion, the 753d, to make a company available for an attack on San Pietro scheduled for 12

[11] Walker Diary, 9 Dec 43.

[12] See 504th Regimental Combat Team Staff Jnl, Dec 43.

[13] Walker to author, Jul 60.



MAP 8

H.C. Brewer, Jr.

December. The tanks, he informed Lt. Col. Joseph G. Felber, the battalion commander, would operate with the two battalions of the 143d Infantry that had been halted in their earlier effort against San Pietro a thousand yards or so east of the village.

The tank battalion staff began at once to study maps and aerial photos and to make ground and aerial reconnaissance. The results were discouraging. The southern face of Monte Sammucro had numerous stream beds and gullies that would serve the Germans as antitank traps and ditches. The road from Ceppagna was barely wide enough for two-way traffic, and between Ceppagna and San Pietro were four highly sensitive points: a small 3-span bridge, a 10-foot culvert, a 15-foot culvert, and a 35-foot single-span bridge, all of which the Germans could easily destroy. Above the road, terraces of olive trees and patches of scrub vegetation covered the foothills, obscuring visibility from the road and offering concealment to German defenders. Rain had saturated and softened the earth. Worst of all were the terraces, for each was elevated 3 to 7 feet above the next by rock walls. The few donkey trails that led from the road to San Pietro were too rough and narrow in most places for tanks. One trail was somewhat better—3 to 4 feet wide, it led to the first terrace beside the road, then broadened into a cart track 6 to 8 feet wide on the second terrace. A brick retaining wall would perhaps give sufficient tank footing, and engineer support might help tanks work their way precariously over the terraces along the trail to the village.

Brought into the problem, the engineers suggested another tactic. If tanks could get far enough above the road and high enough into the foothills, they might be able to make their way to the village by dropping down successive terraces. To this end, engineer troops worked through the night of 11 December. They broke down several terrace walls and cut a trail to a starting point high above the road.

When the tank company tried to get into position before daybreak, the tankers found the route impossible. The leading tank bogged down in soft earth and could get no higher than the second terrace above the road. Attempts to go beyond that point only churned up mud. When the lead tank finally threw a track and blocked the way, the attempt was abandoned. Dawn arrived, bringing with it accurate German artillery fire aimed at the unusual sounds of tank activity.[14]

For his next effort, General Walker planned a large-scale, co-ordinated, and progressive attack against all three of his immediate objectives, San Pietro, Monte Lungo, and San Vittore. In the first stage he would secure more of Monte Sammucro. If he could take three lesser peaks about a mile west of Hill 1205, he would definitely control the western portion of the hill mass. He would then have conclusively outflanked San Pietro and could threaten to cut the German escape route from Monte Lungo by dominating the trough between Monte Sammucro and Monte Lungo through which Highway 6 runs. He would also have troops in good jump-off positions for an advance to San Vittore. The 504th Parachute Infantry and the 143d Infantry during the night of 14 December were

[14] 753d Tank Bn Rpt, Attack on San Pietro, 25 Dec 43.

to attack the three hill objectives and gain them by daybreak. Walker would then move into his second stage by launching the main effort at noon, 15 December, a pincer movement exerted against San Pietro by tankers approaching, as before, from the east but now supported by the 141st Infantry advancing from Monte Rotondo on the south. With the defenders of San Pietro eliminated or at least engaged and unable to take the slopes of Monte Lungo under fire, Walker would send the 142d Infantry during the evening hours to capture Monte Lungo from the west, an approach that would give the assault troops some defilade. Finally, after daylight on 16 December, he would send the Italian troops up the southeastern nose of Monte Lungo once again, this time to mop up. By the 16th he also hoped to be moving against San Vittore.[15]

In the bright moonlight of the very early hours of 15 December, the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, advanced toward two of the three hills west of Hill 1205 in what was essentially a preliminary operation. Unfortunately, Monte Sammucro was virtually bare of vegetation at that height, and though the moonlight gave both the Germans and the Americans good visibility, their defensive positions gave the Germans concealment. About two-thirds of the way to the first hill objective, the battalion came under machine gun and mortar fire. Unable to maneuver on the incline and to bring effective supporting fire against the well dug-in Germans, the men suffered casualties while trying to dig holes for cover. Long after daybreak, the time that General Walker had expected to have the three hills on the western part of Monte Sammucro, the infantry battalion had not only failed to reach its objective but was reduced to 155 effectives, and they were almost out of ammunition. To replenish supplies and evacuate casualties, pack trains made hazardous trips up the mountain slope during the afternoon.

Nearby, the 504th Parachute Infantry was undergoing similar difficulties. Paratroopers reached a point less than 500 yards from their hill objective, and beyond that were unable to move. As German fire swept the path of advance, the paratroopers pulled back and dug in on Hill 1205.

It was more than plain that the Germans were fighting to keep open the route of withdrawal from Monte Lungo and San Pietro. But they were ready to give up neither. This became evident as the second stage of General Walker's operation got under way.

During a conference two days earlier, when the division commander had discussed his plans with his subordinate commanders, he had accepted and refined an idea presented by the commander of the 753d Tank Battalion. Colonel Felber recommended that Company A, which was to make the attack, remain on the road from Ceppagna and strike swiftly toward San Pietro. The infantry would then move across the terraces and over the cart trails into the village proper, while the tanks, in addition to thrusting down the road, would lend the support of their guns. General Walker suggested that the tank column split where the well-defined trail leading directly to San Pietro branched from the road. Could one platoon of tanks move up the trail into San Pietro too?

[15] 36th Div FO, 2000, 13 Dec 43.

Acting on this suggestion, the tankers complicated the scheme. They decided to have the leading platoon move to the trail junction. The first section of that platoon would turn up the trail, take what was called an "overwatching" position on a terrace above the road, and search the northeastern slope of Monte Lungo with fire. The second section of the lead platoon would continue along the road, pass below San Pietro, and block the western exits of the village. The second platoon would take the trail, deploy one section in overwatching positions, and continue as far as necessary with the other section to block the village exits on the north. If it became feasible, the tanks would finally converge on San Pietro from the north and from the west.

The tankers requested smoke to be placed on Monte Lungo and on the western tip of Monte Sammucro, an intense artillery preparation to be laid on San Pietro, direct fire support from Monte Rotondo, and accompanying infantry to protect the tanks. Because the road was undoubtedly mined and the culverts and bridges were probably prepared for demolition, the tankers also asked for two Valentine treadway-bridge tanks specially designed by the British for bridge-laying operations.

Walker approved these requests. A company of tank destroyers on Cannavinelle Hill would give direct fire support. A company of infantry would protect the tanks from close-in fire. He obtained from 10 Corps two Valentine tanks, but unfortunately only one arrived in operating condition. The crew furnished by Company C, 753d Tank Battalion, to operate the tank had less than twenty-four hours to learn how it worked.

While the tankers would drive against San Pietro from the east, a battalion of the 141st Infantry would descend Monte Rotondo into the large gully between that height and Monte Sammucro, then climb the steep and rather open slope to the Ceppagna road and attack San Pietro from the south. Trying to get still more pressure against San Pietro, General Walker instructed the battalion of the 143d Infantry, which by that time was to have secured the western part of Monte Sammucro, to send whatever elements could be spared down the slope to squeeze San Pietro from the north.

Although the preliminary operation in the western part of Monte Sammucro had failed to gain the three hills General Walker wished, he opened the second stage of his attack as scheduled. At 1100, 15 December, as the morning mist was lifting from the ground, the 1st and 3d Platoons of Company A, 753d Tank Battalion, departed their assembly area. The tanks of the two platoons were interlaced in column to facilitate the subsequent turnoff from the road. At the line of departure, a bend in the Ceppagna road, the column halted while tanks and tank destroyers fired for fifteen minutes on San Pietro. At noon, the lead tank crossed the line of departure, followed in order by a second tank, the one British Valentine, and then the fourteen other mediums.

Beyond the bend, the road was cut into the side of Monte Sammucro, with hardly a straight stretch, the road curving first one way, then the other. On the right, a stone retaining wall that propped up the terraces was an obstacle against movement off the road. On the left, a sheer embankment dropped off precipitously.

Without even receiving German artillery fire, the lead tank in the column crossed the small bridge, then the 10-foot culvert, and reached the trail junction. Turning right, the tank inched up the narrow trail, finding barely enough room to move. After traveling about 100 yards, the tank commander reported over his radio that the trail was no longer passable. The company commander ordered him to leave the trail and open a path to San Pietro across the terraces. Using his tank to break down and crush part of a retaining wall on his left, the tank commander moved onto a terrace above and not far from the road. For more than three hours, the tank crew worked slowly and painfully toward the village, in the process destroying several machine gun nests, disrupting a command post manned by five German officers, and finally coming to within sight of San Pietro. There, at the end of the afternoon, the tank commander received word to return.

The second tank in column had remained on the road and gone beyond the trail junction to the 15-foot culvert, which was still, somewhat surprisingly, intact. The tank crossed, but soon afterward struck a mine that put it out of action. The crew remained inside, manning guns against targets of opportunity that appeared occasionally on the terraces above the road.

The Valentine was next in line. When the crew discovered the culvert still standing, the driver, in conformance with plans, pulled over to the side of the road on the right to let the following tanks cross.

By this time, German artillery shells had begun to fall.

The next three tanks in column passed the Valentine, crossed the culvert, and maneuvered past the tank that had been disabled by the mine. As the first of these three tanks started to turn up another trail, the tank commander saw that a destroyed German tank blocked the trail. He radioed the information to his company commander, and this news, adding to the earlier report that the terraces were too steep for the tanks to negotiate, prompted the company commander to direct all his tanks to continue along the road to positions below San Pietro, the tankers there to support with fire the infantry attack coming from the south.

The three tanks remained on the road and rolled to the 35-foot single-span bridge, which was also intact. With San Pietro only 1,000 yards beyond, the first of the three crossed. Just beyond the structure, it received a direct hit from an antitank shell and exploded. The next tank crossed, received two direct hits in close succession, and burst into flame. The third tank was struck by three shells and set on fire before reaching the bridge.

At the culvert, the next two tanks in the column struck mines as they tried to bypass the Valentine. The tank immediately following tried to push one of the disabled tanks off the road, and itself struck a mine. The next one, after attempting to push the two tanks off the embankment without success, tried to climb the terrace and failed.

Having learned from the lead tank that had worked across the terraces that it was closing in on San Pietro, the company commander ordered the remaining tanks in the column to follow that route. The first to try turned over on its side and blocked the way. Another threw a track. A third slipped off the embank-

ment on the left side of the road, dropped five feet, and turned over. A fourth collided with one of the disabled tanks.

The last three tanks backed to a path leading off the side of the road, their intention being to work their separate ways over the terraces to San Pietro. Two threw their tracks. The third found its progress blocked by an impassable ravine.

With darkness approaching, the company commander, upon battalion order, withdrew his operating tanks. Of the 16 Shermans committed, 4 returned. They carried with them the crews of nine others and several men of the Valentine crew. The Valentine was undamaged, but it had been boxed in by disabled tanks and was unable to move. Several damaged tanks were salvageable, and the tankers hoped to retrieve them the next day.

The terrain, road mines, and effective fire had stopped not only the armored thrust but also the infantry company working with the tanks. The infantry had hardly advanced beyond the line of departure when a shower of small arms and automatic weapons fire arrested movement. As for the battalion of the 143d Infantry, which General Walker had instructed to descend the Monte Sammucro slope and take San Pietro from the rear, the troops remained engaged near the western tip of the mountain and were unable to move.

South of San Pietro, the 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry, had jumped off shortly after 1200. An hour and a half later, after crossing the deep gully separating Monte Rotondo and Monte Sammucro, the two assault companies climbed the steep slope below San Pietro, rushed across the Ceppagna road, and approached the southern edge of the village. Along a stone wall three to four feet high, which gave protection against a large volume of machine gun fire coming from houses in the village, the companies built up a firing line. A few intrepid soldiers crawled toward the village and tried without success to neutralize enemy machine guns by grenades. Mortar shells dropped into the village seemed to have little effect on the German fire. Because crew members of several of the destroyed and disabled Shermans had escaped the burning tanks and taken refuge in San Pietro, the troops hesitated to call in artillery support. Besides, the infantry was gunshy of close-support fire—earlier that afternoon several shells had fallen short and landed among the assault troops.

The battalion on the southern edge of San Pietro estimated that about 100 Germans defended the village. The troops identified, without precisely locating, at least one tank or assault gun firing from a position in or near San Pietro, at least four more from a distance. Despite the relatively few defenders, the small arms, automatic weapons, mortar, and antitank fire that spewed forth were devastating. By evening, each assault rifle company had a strength of less than 100 men.

Pressed by regimental headquarters to take San Pietro at all costs, the battalion mounted an assault about midnight, 15 December. Although all wire communications had by then been destroyed, making it difficult to co-ordinate supporting fires, a few men stormed into the village, fighting their way past the first houses by grenade and bayonet. They were unable to remain without imme-



EVACUATING THE WOUNDED

diate reinforcement. Those who could returned to the stone wall.

With a total effective strength of not more than 130 men, the 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry, renewed the attack at dawn on 16 December, at the same time that the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, at the top of Monte Sammucro, tried once more to take its two hill objectives near the western tip of the mountain. Neither battalion made progress. That afternoon the battered 2d Battalion, 141st, returned to Monte Rotondo. On the following morning, 17 December, the exhausted 1st Battalion, 143d, was replaced by the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, and the weary men descended Monte Sammucro and entered a bivouac area for rest.[16]

The defenders of San Pietro, a battalion of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division,* had conducted a skillful and tenacious defense of a strongpoint that had, by Hitler's order, become symbolic of the German effort in southern Italy. Ready to continue their fierce struggle, they would find the battle of San Pietro decided elsewhere.

During the night of 15 December, the 2d Battalion, 142d Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, moved westward across Highway 6 and around the southern nose of Monte Lungo. Working their way up the valley separating Monte Lungo from Monte Maggiore, the battalions then climbed Monte Lun-

[16] Rpt, by Capt Flower, Comdr Co A 753d Tank Bn, to Maj Lohr, G–3 1st Tank Gp, 0930, 16 Dec 43; Memo, Capt Malitch, 15 Dec 43; Memo, Lt Col Fred L. Walker, Jr., 36th Div G–3, for Gen Keyes, 19 Dec 43, all in II Corps G–3 Jnl.



GERMAN PILLBOX, MONTE LUNGO

go's western slope. They took the enemy by surprise, rooted the reconnaissance battalion of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* out of foxholes, and reached the top of the mountain by dawn. By midmorning of 16 December, the battalions possessed the greater part of Monte Lungo and were mopping up. To reduce the last remaining ridge in the southeastern portion of the mountain, the 1st Italian Motorized Group jumped off on the morning of 16 December, moved swiftly, and completed the capture of Monte Lungo that afternoon.

With Monte Lungo lost and the trough between it and Monte Sammucro threatened, the Germans in San Pietro were in danger of being cut off. An outburst of fire on the afternoon of 16 December masked their withdrawal. The battalion of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* retired, leaving a village completely ruined, no longer habitable, not even worth rebuilding.[17]

On the morning of 17 December, the silence in San Pietro was almost eerie. Suspecting a trap, American troops moved cautiously into the ruins. Only the dead were present. Later that day the tankers recovered five of the twelve tanks they had lost; these were eventually repaired and returned to service.[18]

The fight for San Pietro had cost the 36th Division 1,200 casualties—about 150 killed, more than 800 wounded, and almost 250 missing. The 504th Parachute Infantry lost 50 killed, 225 wounded, and 2 missing. Casualties incurred by the other units engaged—the 3d Ranger Battalion, the artillery battalions, the 753d Tank Battalion, the 111th Engineer Combat Battalion, and the Italian group—must be added to these figures.[19]

What was not immediately apparent was the extent of the withdrawal. Were the Germans now ready to give up San Vittore, a scant two miles away?

The Aftermath

The assistant commander of the 36th Division, General Wilbur, had formulated a plan to gain San Vittore by infiltration during the hours of darkness.[20]

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17 Twenty years later, only a few families, about forty persons, were living in the ghost town of San Pietro. The rest of the inhabitants had moved into the completely new village of Campobasso, located on the Ceppagna road not far from its junction with Highway 6. Of the thousand or so people of San Pietro who had lived in caves and cellars during the battle, about 300 were killed.

18 See Memos, Col Walker for Gen Keyes, 19 Dec 43, G-3 Jnl.

19 OCMH File Geog L 370.2 (San Pietro).

20 Wilbur Plan for the San Vittore Operation, 20 Dec 43 [the date is incorrect; the plan was made earlier], II Corps G-3 Jnl.

Following the plan on the night of 19 December, the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, tried to go around the western tip of Monte Sammucro by advancing along the lower slopes of the mountain mass. Skillful German resistance blocked the attempt. On the following night, the 3d Battalion, 141st, and two depleted battalions of the 143d Infantry tried again, this time on higher ground. The Germans refused to be dislodged.

Walker and Keyes then returned to the earlier idea of seizing the top of Monte Sammucro at its western tip. The mission went to the 1st Special Service Force, now recovered after its hard fighting on Monte la Difensa, reinforced with the 504th Parachute Infantry and a battalion of the 141st Infantry. Possession of the western spur of Monte Sammucro would give the 36th Division an advantageous line of departure for a direct attack on San Vittore.

Despite continuing bad weather that produced high rates of sickness and trench foot among his troops, Colonel Frederick co-ordinated a successful attack that opened on Christmas Eve. By the next morning, after stiff fighting, his troops possessed some of the high ground. One more day was required to win all the high ground overlooking San Vittore, and on that day two battalions of the 141st Infantry cleared the lower western slope of Monte Sammucro adjacent to Highway 6.

Although American troops dominated San Vittore, the Germans did not withdraw. Having prepared excellent positions in the hills immediately beyond San Vittore, the Germans commanded both the village and the logical avenues of American approach. A patrol entered San Vittore on 29 December, and a reinforced rifle company followed quickly to gain control over the village, but intense German fire forced the troops to pull out.

It became evident that the Germans who had retired from San Pietro had established and consolidated defensive positions along a new line from Monte Porchia through San Vittore to the heights east of Cassino. There they apparently intended to stay until forced out.

The 36th Division was now close to exhaustion. The combat and the weather had had their effects. General Walker wrote in his diary about his troops:

> I regret the hardships they must suffer tonight . . . wet, cold, muddy, hungry, going into camp in the mud and rain, no sleep, no rest. . . . How they endure their hardships I do not understand. . . . they are still cheerful. All honor to them for they deserve the best the nation has to offer. . . . I do not understand how the men continue to keep going under their existing conditions of hardship.[21]

What made the situation worse was the discouraging fact that there was no change in prospect—the Italian campaign would be over neither "this week nor next," Walker wrote, ". . . taking one mountain mass after another gains no tactical advantage. There is always another mountain mass beyond with Germans on it."[22] General Lucas felt the same way. "Rome seems a long way off," he wrote. But there was "no brilliant maneuver possible in this terrain."[23]

Neither commander knew of plans then being discussed on the higher eche-

[21] Walker Diary, 22, 26 Dec 43.
[22] *Ibid.*, 22 Dec 43.
[23] Lucas Diary, 16, 17 Dec 43.



PARATROOPERS PASS WRECKED GERMAN EQUIPMENT *on cratered road as they approach abandoned San Pietro, above. Medical corpsmen enter the village, below.*



lons for the amphibious maneuver designed to help seize Rome quickly. Until that operation became feasible, the painful winter campaign in southern Italy and the difficult attacks in the mountains would have to continue.

To replace the fatigued 36th Division, General Keyes brought up the 34th Division at the end of December. One regiment of the 36th remained in line to garrison Monte Sammucro. One regiment of the 3d Division, which had occupied Monte Lungo after its capture, was replaced by an armored infantry regiment of the 1st Armored Division.[24]

At the same time the Germans were substituting units on the other side of the front. The *29th Panzer Grenadier Division,* which had fought valiantly at San Pietro and San Vittore, came out of the line. In its place went a somewhat depleted *44th Division,* which had received a battering early in December from VI Corps. It was not altogether ready for recommitment, but it had at least had a few days' rest.

The Other Fronts

Elsewhere along the Fifth Army front, the Allies had jostled the Germans. In the 10 Corps area, while his troops held the Camino-Difensa-Maggiore complex, General McCreery launched a diversionary operation during the night of 29 December in part to cover the relief of the 36th Division by the 34th. A seaborne raid executed by a Commando unit, which was carried around the mouth of the Garigliano River, together with a river crossing by Scots and Coldstream Guards, the operation was also designed to gain prisoners and information and to keep the Germans on edge over the possibility of Allied amphibious landings.

The seaborne part of the operation had been discussed for more than a month. "Unofficially," a member of the army G–3 section noted, "the Navy is not keen on the job." A mine field six to seven miles offshore had to be swept, two sandbars obstructed most of the beach, and the beach itself was believed heavily mined.[25] Despite these anticipated difficulties, Commando troops embarked in landing ships at Pozzuoli and went ashore 600 yards north of the Garigliano in the early hours of 30 December. They achieved complete surprise. Supported by heavy artillery and naval shelling, they ranged at will over the north bank of the Garigliano before withdrawing at dawn with twenty prisoners and precious information on enemy defenses.[26] Units of the Scots and Coldstream Guards crossed the Garigliano River near its mouth and executed their foray into enemy territory with similar results.

In contrast with these dramatic thrusts, VI Corps on the Fifth Army right inched along parallel mountain roads toward Atina and San Elia with two divisions abreast. Neither the 45th Division nor the 2d Moroccan Division made much progress until II Corps forced the Germans out of San Pietro. Then the Germans opposing VI Corps withdrew hastily to readjust their defenses. The two Allied divisions pushed forward about seven miles before they

[24] See 36th Div FO 41, 27 Dec 43.

[25] Memo, Wood for Brann, 19 Nov 43, Fifth Army and G–3 Jnl entries, 21, 23 Nov 43.

[26] Rpt on Opn PARTRIDGE, 3 Jan 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

regained contact on 21 December at the next German defensive line.

By this time the 45th Division was in need of rest. Fortunately, a new unit had become available, the 3d Algerian Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Aimé de Goislard de Monsabert, and it replaced the 45th. With two French divisions in the line, General Juin's French Expeditionary Corps headquarters became operational and relieved the VI Corps headquarters. General Lucas' new task would be to prepare an amphibious operation designed to get the Fifth Army to Rome.

For all practical purposes, the second phase of General Clark's operation, which had been conceived in November, closed at the end of the year. Monte Lungo, San Pietro, and Monte Sammucro had been taken at heavy cost, but the absence of reserves to follow up initial successes made impossible an immediate exploitation of the hard-won gains.

The units of the Fifth Army that had fought in December were tired and discouraged. There was a tendency in some quarters to downgrade the German opposition. For example, one intelligence report made much of the "remarkable background" of the divisions in the *Tenth Army*—the *44th, 94th,* and *305th* remade after Stalingrad, the *15th Panzer Grenadier* and *Hermann Goering* reconstituted after Tunisia, the *3d Panzer Grenadier,* renumbered but the same mediocre *386th,* the *29th Panzer Grenadier,* a milking of the *345th,* the *1st Parachute* drawn from the *7th,* the *26th Panzer* from the *23d Infantry*—"Only [the] 65[th] is an original invention, and it may hardly be regarded as a success." [27] Yet the fact was that the Germans had fought resourcefully and well.

The German soldiers acknowledged their respect for their opponents. An article in *Die Suedfront,* a newspaper published for German soldiers in southern Italy, described the tactics in the Monte Camino and Monte Rotondo area:

> The Americans use quasi Indian tactics: They search for the boundary lines between battalions or regiments, they look for gaps between our strongpoints, they look for the steepest mountain passages (guided by treacherous civilians . . . . They infiltrate through these passages with a patrol, a platoon at first, mostly at dusk. At night they reinforce the infiltrated units, and in the morning they are often in the rear of a German unit, which is being attacked from behind, or also from the flanks simultaneously.[28]

How dissipate the stagnation that seemed to have fallen over the opposing forces in Italy at the end of 1943? The Allied command was about to try something new.

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[27] 10 Corps Intel Summary 216, 3 Dec 43.

[28] Article in *Die Suedfront,* in Fifth Army G–2 Jnl, Dec 43.

PART FOUR
ANZIO AND CASSINO

CHAPTER XVII

The Decision for Anzio

The decision for Anzio gestated for two months, a period of time marked by false labor. General Eisenhower learned on 8 November that the Combined Chiefs of Staff had approved his request to retain in the Mediterranean theater until 15 December sixty-eight LST's scheduled for immediate release to England. The same day he authorized General Alexander to set in motion plans for landing in the Rome area. Because an amphibious operation—assuming continued German opposition—could hardly be prepared, executed, and brought to triumphant conclusion in five weeks, Eisenhower at the same time asked the CCS for permission to retain the LST's for another month, until 15 January 1944.

General Alexander issued his instructions to the Fifth Army on the same day, 8 November. He specified the place for the amphibious landing: Anzio, thirty-five miles below Rome. The beaches were suitable for an assault, the port of Anzio offered sheltered anchorage, the open terrain of the low coastal plain favored maneuver, and good roads led to the Alban Hills, about twenty miles inland. Lying between Highways 6 and 7, at that time the two major roads to Rome, the Alban Hills dominate the southern approaches to the city. They were the last natural barrier the Germans could use to bar an Allied entry into Rome. General Clark's army, after breaking through the Gustav Line and penetrating into the Liri valley to Frosinone, was to launch the seaborne operation, land troops at Anzio, and direct them on the Alban Hills. The advance through Cassino to Frosinone, followed by a thrust from Anzio to the Alban Hills, General Alexander believed, would so disrupt the German defenses that the Fifth Army could move quickly into Rome.[1]

The Fifth Army staff drew a detailed plan for the operation and code-named it SHINGLE. A relatively small amphibious force going ashore at Anzio was expected to dislocate the German defenses and enable the army to move quickly beyond Frosinone and make contact with the beachhead no later than seven days after the landing. But the Fifth Army plan made a fundamental change in Alexander's concept. Whereas General Alexander saw the amphibious forces driving to the Alban Hills, General Clark envisaged the beachhead forces as contributing to an advance by the units on the main army front, moving from Frosinone to capture the Alban Hills.[2]

Reconciling the different concepts had little importance in late November and

[1] 15th AGp OI 31, 8 Nov 43.
[2] Fifth Army OI, Opn SHINGLE, 25 Nov 43.

early December, for the Anzio operation appeared doomed to indefinite postponement. Enemy resistance in the mountainous terrain forward of the Gustav Line so slowed the Fifth Army that there seemed no immediate hope of its getting to Frosinone and within supporting distance of Anzio.

Although the Fifth Army was still battling to get to Cassino, and although Cassino was twenty-five miles short of Frosinone, General Clark on 10 December suggested that the amphibious assault nevertheless be executed. The Combined Chiefs had just approved General Eisenhower's request to retain the LST's until 15 January 1944 and an amphibious operation was therefore in order. In view of the release date, it had to be launched quickly or not at all. If the Anzio force could be strengthened to the extent that the troops could gain and hold a beachhead for more than a week, the mere presence of Allied units deep behind the German lines might be enough to dislocate the defenses in the Cassino area. In other words, the threat to the German lines of communication at Anzio might compel the Germans to weaken their main front in order to deal with the danger in the rear. And this, of course, would facilitate the advance of the main Fifth Army forces to the Alban Hills and Rome.

The thought was interesting but impractical. The Fifth Army front was much too far from Anzio for a landing to succeed. By the time the Fifth Army reached Frosinone General Eisenhower would probably have to release the landing ships. In addition, the heavy fighting along the approaches to Cassino made it questionable whether the troops would be strong enough, after getting to Cassino and through the German defenses along the Rapido and Garigliano Rivers, to go on to Frosinone, much less to Anzio.

Alerted on 12 December by Generals Smith and Rooks, the chief of staff and G–3 of AFHQ, that the release date of 15 January for the assault shipping required a decision on SHINGLE within a week, General Clark on 18 December reluctantly recommended canceling the Anzio operation.[3] Alexander agreed. With the landing at Anzio ruled out, the prospect of quickly capturing Rome vanished.

Two events led to the restoration of the operation. The first was a series of Allied command changes that came about as a result of the resolve, confirmed at the Cairo and Tehran Conferences, to execute OVERLORD in the spring of 1944. For the invasion of northwest Europe, General Eisenhower was appointed the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force. Although the CCS were willing for him to remain in the Mediterranean theater until the capture of Rome, General Eisenhower saw no hope for an immediate realization of this aim—the static battle, the winter weather, the firm enemy defenses, the dearth of Allied troops and other resources, and the lack of assault shipping argued against it.[4] On 8 January 1944, he would pass his responsibilities to General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, commander of the British Middle East theater, who would become the Supreme Allied Commander of the Mediterranean theater. Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers

[3] Clark Diary, 12, 18 Dec 43; *Fifth Army History*, Part IV, pp. 10ff.

[4] Smyth, Notes on Eisenhower Diary, 23 Jan 44.

would relinquish his post as commanding general of the European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army (ETOUSA), and leave England to serve as General Wilson's deputy and also as commander of the North African Theater of Operations, U.S. Army (NATOUSA), heading the American forces in the Mediterranean.

General Montgomery would go to England to command the 21 Army Group after transferring command of the Eighth Army to Lt. Gen. Sir Oliver Leese, who headed the 30 Corps. Air Chief Marshal Tedder would also go to England to become General Eisenhower's deputy, and upon his departure the Mediterranean Air Command would be renamed the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, with the subordinate "North-West African" commands—strategic, tactical, and coastal—becoming "Mediterranean Allied" commands. Lt. Gen. Carl Spaatz would be transferred to England to command the U.S. Strategic Air Force in Europe. Maj. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton's Ninth U.S. Air Force, a tactical air force, would go to England also. Maj. Gen. James Doolittle would leave the Mediterranean to take command in England of the Eighth U.S. Air Force, a strategic air force, replacing Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker, who would become the Allied air commander in the Mediterranean in place of Tedder. The American units under General Eaker were the Twelfth Air Force, a tactical force commanded by Maj. Gen. John K. Cannon, and the Fifteenth Air Force, a strategic air command headed by Maj. Gen. Nathan F. Twining. Air Marshal Sir John Slessor was named Eaker's deputy and commander of the British air forces. The Allied Mediterranean and British Levant naval commands would be merged under Admiral Sir John Cunningham, Commander in Chief, Mediterranean.[5]



GENERAL WILSON

Neither General Alexander nor General Clark was affected by the command changes. President Roosevelt, returning home in early December from the Cairo and Tehran Conferences, encouraged General Clark to get to Rome, and General Marshall, who accompanied the President, told Clark it would be desirable to have Rome before the cross-Channel attack began. General Clark learned that he would leave Fifth Army after securing Rome and replace General Patton in command of the Seventh Army, which had its headquarters in Sicily. Patton would be transferred to England to take command of the Third Army for the invasion of northwest

[5] Eisenhower Dispatch, pp. 153–55. See also *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1945, to the Secretary of War* (Washington, 1945), p. 20.



GENERAL LEESE



GENERAL DEVERS

Europe, and Clark would assume command of the Seventh Army to prepare an invasion of southern France. The preparations for southern France required that planning be started on 1 February. By that time, it was assumed, Rome would be in Allied hands and Clark would leave Italy.

With General Wilson the Allied commander in chief in the Mediterranean, the Combined Chiefs would pass the executive direction of the theater to the British Chiefs of Staff. The primacy that President Roosevelt and General Marshall had exercised in the Combined Chiefs for determining Mediterranean strategy when General Eisenhower had commanded the theater would now pass to Prime Minister Churchill and General Brooke, who would, as a result, play a more direct role in the conduct of the Italian campaign.[6]

The shift from American to British leadership in Mediterranean affairs was the first occurrence leading to a restored Anzio operation. The second was the illness of Mr. Churchill. Tired by the conferences at Cairo and Tehran, the Prime Minister had left Egypt by plane on 11 December, planning to spend a night at Eisenhower's headquarters in Tunis, then several days with Alexander and Montgomery in Italy. He arrived in Tunis, feeling, he said, "at the end of my tether." He went to bed, and the doctors discovered that he had pneumonia.[7]

The Prime Minister recovered sufficiently after a week to begin placing his personal imprint on the Italian campaign. Interested as always in capturing Rome, he sent a telegram from Tunis to his Chiefs of Staff on 19 December, complaining that "the stagnation of the whole campaign on the Italian Front is

[6] Interv, Mathews, Lamson, Hamilton, and Smyth with Marshall, 25 Jul 49, OCMH.

[7] Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 421.

becoming scandalous" and that the theater command had failed to make combat use of the assault shipping for at least three months, ever since the invasion of Salerno. The British Chiefs of Staff understood his point, and three days later they agreed that the amphibious equipment in the Mediterranean ought to be employed to promote a rapid advance on Rome. The major difficulty, as they saw it, was the small number of vessels in the theater. Only one division could be transported amphibiously, but at least two were needed for a proper descent on Anzio.[8]

On 23 December the Prime Minister came to a decision. Resigning himself to the impossibility of luring Turkey into an active war role on the Allied side, admitting his inability to persuade the Americans to extend operations into the eastern Mediterranean, and seeing the improbability of forestalling an invasion of southern France, Mr. Churchill became all the more determined to have Rome. "We must have the big Rome amphibious operation," he wrote. "In no case can we sacrifice Rome for the Riviera."[9] To get to Rome, the theater command would have to retain for an additional month the LST's now permitted by the CCS to remain in the Mediterranean until 15 January.[10]

Mr. Churchill spent much of Christmas Eve talking with the leading British officers in the theater—Generals Wilson, Alexander, and Tedder, among others—about the possibility of launching an Anzio operation. All were convinced that at least two divisions would be needed for the initial landing in order to give the operation a good chance of success. All favored a target date around 20 January. These conditions would require the theater to hold the fifty-six LST's scheduled for release on 15 January for at least three more weeks. "On this," Churchill telegraphed the British Chiefs of Staff, "depends the success or ruin of our Italian campaign."[11]

The discussion continued on Christmas morning, this time with several additional officers—Admiral Cunningham, Generals Eisenhower and Smith, and others. Again, all agreed on the desirability of executing a 2-division amphibious landing about 20 January.[12] Actually, General Eisenhower and his chief of staff, General Smith, who would also leave the theater to continue the same function in Eisenhower's new OVERLORD assignment, refrained from active participation in the conversation. They had no wish to influence an operation with which they would have no association. They were already looking toward the invasion of northwest Europe, and their practical interest in the Mediterranean was limited to their desire for an invasion of southern France in order to assist the landings in Normandy. General Wilson too had little effect on the talks. He felt keenly his lack of intimate knowledge of the campaign in southern Italy, and he said merely "that it sounded like a good idea to go around them [the Germans] rather than be bogged down in the mountains."[13] In contrast, General Alexander actively supported the idea of an amphibious landing.

The result of the conference on Christ-

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 429.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 431.
[10] See Wilson *Despatch*, pp. 7–8.
[11] Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 434.
[12] Wilson *Despatch*, p. 6
[13] Interv, Smyth with Field Marshal Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, 3 Apr 47, OCMH.

mas Day was a telegram from Mr. Churchill to President Roosevelt. He asked the President's approval to retain in the Mediterranean theater the required LST's until 5 February. Otherwise, Mr. Churchill said, "the Italian battle [will] stagnate and fester on for another three months." He had already, he confessed to the President, instructed General Alexander to prepare the Anzio operation. He felt very strongly that "If this opportunity is not grasped, we must expect the ruin of the Mediterranean campaign of 1944." [14]

On the same day, 25 December, General Alexander informed General Clark that a high-level conference had decided to launch a strong Anzio operation some time during the last week in January.[15] It was essentially Churchill's decision. He believed sincerely in the Mediterranean theater as an area for active campaigning. He wished the troops engaged to have a strong sense of purpose and the opportunity to attain the single objective of any consequence, Rome. And he hoped to deal the Germans a damaging blow in order to soften them for the cross-Channel attack.

Yet the problems involved in an amphibious operation at Anzio were grave. Continuing shortages of shipping, the weakened forces that would remain on the main front in southern Italy after the Anzio force was withdrawn for the landing, the distance separating Anzio from the main Fifth Army front, and the considerable German strength in Italy made the venture hazardous.

Mr. Churchill was sufficiently recovered from his illness shortly after Christmas to fly from Tunis to Marrakech, Morocco, for convalescence. There on 28 December, he received Mr. Roosevelt's reply to his telegram. After having consulted his Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President was agreeable to delaying the departure of the 56 LST's scheduled for the OVERLORD operation if the postponement would have no effect on the date for executing OVERLORD. He further insisted that 12 other LST's designated for OVERLORD depart as scheduled and that 15 LST's due to arrive in the Mediterranean in mid-January from the Indian Ocean area proceed directly to the United Kingdom.[16]

The Americans were warning Churchill of a promise made at Cairo-Tehran: nothing was to interfere with the invasions of Normandy and southern France. But if Anzio turned out to be, as expected, a short operation promoting a quick Allied entrance into Rome, it would have no adverse effect on the cross-Channel and southern France invasions. Anzio was thus feasible.

General Clark was so delighted with the possibility of gaining Rome quickly that he asked to be absolved of the responsibility for planning the invasion of southern France. His request was disapproved.[17] On 1 January 1944, while retaining command of the Fifth Army, he replaced General Patton as commander of the Seventh. General Clark formed a special planning staff headed by Maj. Gen. Garrison Davidson and gave him the task of starting to plan the invasion of southern France, the op-

[14] Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 437.
[15] Clark Diary, 25 Dec 43.
[16] See Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944*, ch. XIV; Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943–1945*, ch. VII.
[17] Clark Diary, 31 Dec 43.



CHRISTMAS DINNER ON A HAYSTACK, SOMEWHERE IN ITALY

eration known first as ANVIL and later as DRAGOON.[18]

Not only the timing of OVERLORD, but also the interrelationship of the ANVIL and Anzio operations and the conflict between them—both were to be mounted from resources in the Mediterranean theater—now threatened to eliminate one or the other.

When General Gruenther, the Fifth Army chief of staff, went to Algiers at the end of the year to participate in discussions because General Clark had a severe cold, he found much doubt at the AFHQ headquarters that Anzio was practicable. "Consensus here," he reported "is that SHINGLE will be cancelled unless Alexander and Clark can show that there will be no interference with ANVIL." Since Admiral Cunningham indicated that nearly all the LST's would have to be released on 3 February at the latest to conform with the revised release date, the Anzio force would have to land with supplies for eight days and with no prospect of resupply by water. Because no craft could be furnished beyond that date, there could be no subsequent build-up of the beachhead forces. The initial landing force would therefore be left to its own resources unless the forces of the main Fifth Army front could make a swift advance to link up. Thus, the risks involved in an Anzio operation were so

[18] *Seventh Army Report of Operations*, I, 1–3.

great that some operational planners and logisticians seriously questioned its feasibility. Upon learning that General Rooks and General J. F. M. Whiteley of AFHQ had informed Gruenther that they felt Alexander was "badly off base in this instance," General Clark began to doubt the practicability of the operation. "My guess," he wrote in his diary, "is that SHINGLE will be cancelled." [19]

General Clark's feeling was reinforced on 2 January, when General Gruenther returned from Algiers and met with him and General Brann, the Fifth Army G–3, to relay the information he had gathered at AFHQ. The central factor around which much of their discussion turned was a cable from General Eisenhower to General Alexander, the contents of which was sent to the Fifth Army that morning for information. According to the army commander's aide who entered the notation in the diary, this message, "completely to General Clark's surprise, radically altered the number of craft available for SHINGLE and so limited the time when they were available as to render resupply and reinforcement of the SHINGLE force impossible." [20]

General Eisenhower's cable to General Alexander specified and detailed the agreement that had been reached during the conference in Tunis on 25 December. According to that agreement, SHINGLE could be undertaken only if (1) it interfered in no way with the target dates tentatively set for OVERLORD and ANVIL; (2) it hampered in no manner the build-up in process, largely of air forces, in Corsica; (3) it could be sustained without over-the-beach maintenance; and (4) it was feasible without a subsequent build-up of the initial landing force. According to estimates made at the conference, a total of 88 LST's was the maximum number that could be provided for the operation. Since then, doubt had arisen as to whether 8 of these would be available—they might have to be sent to the United Kingdom at once—but 3 fast LST's ordered to move from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean might arrive in time for the Anzio operation. Thus, either 91 at maximum or 80 LST's would be available for Anzio, and of these the planners could count on no more than 95 percent as being serviceable. To the LST's could be added 60 available LCT's and about 90 LCI (L)'s. Regardless of the D-day for SHINGLE, the LST's promised for OVERLORD had to be released to the United Kingdom no later than 3 February, and 16 additional ships would have to be released for the build-up in Corsica two days later. More would have to be withdrawn for repair and overhaul. Thus, the greatest number of ships and craft that could be reckoned on with any certainty to maintain the beachhead force after the initial landings was a total of 6 serviceable LST's and about 24 serviceable LCT's, hardly enough to make the operation even a reasonable gamble.[21]

Learning on 2 January that General Eisenhower was holding a conference in Tunis that day and that General Alexander would be in attendance, General Clark sent a cable to the army group commander. He wished, he said, to help Alexander convince the skeptics who questioned the feasibility of executing the Anzio landing that the operation was

[19] Clark Diary, 1 Jan 44.
[20] Clark Diary, 2 Jan 44.
[21] *Ibid.*

worth doing. "As I stated to you when you were here several days ago," he wrote, "I am enthusiastic over outline for Operation SHINGLE provided that necessary means are made available." Since the necessity to release all but 6 LST's by 3 February would make the operation extremely hazardous, "I urgently request that you make every effort to hold adequate number of craft for SHINGLE until such time as success of the operation is assured." Even with the optimum number of LST's, the 2 divisions placed ashore would lack vehicular strength—each would have 1,200 vehicles less than the assault scales normally specified. Furthermore, the small number of assault craft provided would permit only 5 infantry battalions and 1 Ranger battalion to be assault loaded for the landing. Not even the reserve battalions would be able to go ashore in assault craft.

In spite of the difficulties, General Clark was willing to go ahead and plan to land a corps at reduced strength on the assumption that a reasonable number of LST's could be retained for resupply purposes and subsequently for transporting the vehicles needed by the assault forces. Since the location and the current rate of progress of the main Fifth Army front made junction with the beachhead forces highly improbable before fifteen days, it was necessary to count on being able to supply the Anzio force at least for that period of time. To keep the length of time between the landing and the junction of forces to a minimum, Clark wrote:

> I intend to attack in greatest possible strength in Liri valley several days in advance of SHINGLE with the object of drawing maximum number of enemy reserves to that front and fixing them there. In that way and in that way only can the SHINGLE force exercise a decisive influence in the operation to capture Rome.[22]

The note dictated for General Clark's diary that day summarized his position. He was

> genuinely eager to engage in SHINGLE, to the point of committing in it units which he would subsequently have to utilize in ANVIL, but that, in effect, a pistol was being held at his head because he was told, totally to his surprise, that if he was to engage in SHINGLE it must be done with inadequate landing craft, that the craft would be available for only two days after the landing, and that no resupply or reinforcement thereafter would be available. In effect, therefore, he was asked to land two divisions at a point where a juncture with the balance of Fifth Army was impossible for a long period, thereby leaving the two divisions in question out on a very long limb.[23]

Whether General Clark's cable to General Alexander was efficacious or not, the army group commander issued a new instruction as a result of the commanders' conference held in Tunis on 2 January, even though a firm decision on Anzio had still to be made. General Lemnitzer brought the directive to General Clark's headquarters on the following day. The Fifth Army, Alexander had said, was "to carry out an assault landing . . . vicinity of Rome with the object of cutting the enemy lines of communication and threatening the rear of the German 14 Corps."[24] With Generals Gruenther, Keyes, Brann, Lemnitzer, and Lucas, General Clark discussed plans for executing the operation.[25] By this time, it was

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[22] *Ibid.*; Clark to Alexander, 2 Jan 44, quoted in *Fifth Army History*, Part IV, p. 17.

[23] Clark Diary, 2 Jan 44.

[24] 15th AGp OI 32, 2 Jan 44.

[25] Clark Diary, 3 Jan 44.

generally understood that one American division—probably General Truscott's 3d Division—and one British division, plus the 504th Parachute Infantry and Commandos, all under General Lucas' VI Corps headquarters, would make the initial landing, tentatively on 22 January. General Clark intended to launch a large and co-ordinated attack ten days before the landing in order to pin down the German forces along the Cassino front, perhaps even to divert others from the Rome area, thereby helping to assure the success of the landing.

Discussion at the Fifth Army headquarters continued on 4 January, Clark, Lucas, Gruenther, Truscott, and Brann, along with various staff members and naval officers, participating. A major topic of conversation was how to overcome the limitations on the craft available for SHINGLE, which made it impossible to guarantee adequate resupply and reinforcement of the beachhead force. Clark summarized,

> We are supposed to go up there, dump two divisions ashore with what corps troops we can get in, and wait for the rest of the Army to join up. I am trying to find ways to do it, not ways in which we can not do it. I am convinced that we are going to do it, and that it is going to be a success.[26]

General Alexander arrived around noon with his chief of staff and operations officer to discuss the operation with Clark, Gruenther, and Brann. Clark was most emphatic in detailing the shipping requirements. According to an aide who was present,

> General Clark stated to General Alexander's surprise that he, General Clark, had known for three weeks that he had been selected to command ANVIL, and nevertheless, despite his natural interest in conserving force for that blow, he had enthusiastically entered into SHINGLE planning and had proposed to put his VI Corps staff and his 3d Infantry Division, two of his finest and most useful organizations, into the SHINGLE operation which was one of considerable hazard in which their usefulness for ANVIL might be considerably impaired.

Although General Clark was putting forth every effort to make SHINGLE a success, he told General Alexander, he could not do it without more assault shipping. Unfortunately, Clark said, "none of those who thus [in Tunis on Christmas Day] lightheartedly decided on the SHINGLE operation understood the details of shipping and of loading necessary to put ashore the requisite force and maintain it when once ashore." [27]

That afternoon General Alexander cabled Mr. Churchill for "help and assistance" in securing additional LST's. According to General Clark's calculations, Alexander told the Prime Minister, 14 more LST's were required to keep the Anzio beachhead supplied until the forces on the main front could join with those at Anzio. In addition, another 10 LST's, even if retained for only fifteen days beyond 5 February, would make it possible to strengthen the two assault divisions with artillery, tanks, and other weapons that would otherwise have to be left behind. Both he and Clark, Alexander explained, were "willing to accept any risks to achieve our object," but they needed the additional resources. Realizing that using these vessels in the operation would interfere "to some extent" with the other amphibi-

[26] *Ibid.*, 4 Jan 44.

[27] *Ibid.*

ous expeditions being contemplated, Alexander concluded, "surely, the prize is worth it." [28]

The prize, in Mr. Churchill's estimation, was well worth it, and he agreed to try to secure the necessary compliance from President Roosevelt and General Marshall. With this assurance, Alexander radioed Clark at once that the additional ships would probably be obtained. Would Clark therefore send a small planning staff to Algiers for a preliminary conference on 7 January and a main conference to be held at Marrakech with Mr. Churchill on the following day? Clark selected two Army officers, both from the VI Corps staff, and one Navy officer to attend the meetings.[29]

On the morning of 6 January, General Clark called together the three officers who were about to depart for North Africa for the conference on Anzio: Rear Adm. Spencer S. Lewis, the naval planner; Col. William H. Hill, the VI Corps G–3; and Col. Edward J. O'Neill, the VI Corps G–4. General Gruenther, Rear Adm. Frank J. Lowry, who would command the naval elements in the invasion, and Col. Ralph H. Tate, the army G–4, were also present. Clark impressed upon the conferees the need of securing for the post-assault functions of nourishing and increasing the beachhead forces a minimum of 24 LST's, 14 to be available for an indefinite period of time, and 10 to be provided for at least fifteen days. The officers due to meet with Mr. Churchill, he said, must "not be cajoled into retreating" from those figures. The trouble was, he went on, "The President and the Combined Chiefs of Staff were hesitant to take any step which might imperil ANVIL and OVERLORD, while the Prime Minister felt that it was desirable to take Rome at almost any cost." Finally, he repeated, without 24 LST's the operation was not feasible. If the Anzio operation was indeed impractical, he would try to execute a landing just north of Gaeta, a shallower envelopment, with one division.[30]

A preliminary conference took place that evening in the office of the AFHQ G–3 in Algiers. Afterward, Colonel Hill sent a message to Gruenther and Lucas. According to General Rooks, the AFHQ G–3, and Colonel Hill's own "best estimate, SHINGLE is off as additional LSTs are not available." [31]

Despite the apparent impracticality of the Anzio operation, a conference was held at Marrakech on 7 January, with Churchill, Cunningham, Wilson, Alexander, Smith, Devers, and others in attendance. To General Devers, who had recently arrived from England to take up his duties as General Wilson's deputy, the meeting was a "unique experience." He wondered why the conference was necessary, for what to him seemed to be a simple military decision could have been reached, he believed, without the eloquent and lengthy discussion that went on. Nevertheless, General Devers noted in his diary: "the answers that came out of [the conference] were correct." The individuals present all favored an amphibious operation at Anzio.[32]

Another conference was held on the following day, 8 January. This one made final the decision to undertake an am-

[28] Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, pp. 446ff.

[29] *Ibid.*; Clark Diary, 4 Jan 44.

[30] Clark Diary, 6 Jan 44.

[31] *Ibid.*; Rpt by Hill and O'Neill on Conference Held in Marrakech, French Morocco on 7–8 Jan 44, dated 10 Mar 44, Lucas Diary, Part III, Appendix 4.

[32] Devers Diary, 7 Jan 44, OCMH.

phibious operation at Anzio. But now, instead of being conceived as merely supplementary to the advance of the main forces on the Fifth Army front, the landing was regarded as a major project.[33] At the conclusion of the meeting, Churchill telegraphed Roosevelt that "unanimous agreement for action as proposed was reached by the responsible officers of both countries and of all services."[34] All the problems were far from solved and the risks remained great, but Churchill had obtained at least 25 LST's for the Anzio follow-up, he wanted the operation to be executed on 20 January, and there was high hope that the landing would get the Fifth Army to Rome in a hurry. When word from Marrakech reached the Fifth Army headquarters, the atmosphere became jubilant: "Operation SHINGLE is on!"[35]

[33] Wilson *Despatch*, p. 10.
[34] Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 447.
[35] Clark Diary, 8 Jan 44; Rpt by Hill and O'Neill, Lucas Diary, Part III, Appendix 4.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Preliminaries for Anzio

The decision had been made to execute an amphibious landing at Anzio without first getting the Fifth Army up the Liri valley to Frosinone. Although immediate attainment of the town, miles away, was out of the question, the closer to Frosinone General Clark could get his army before the Anzio operation was launched, the quicker he could reach what would, until then, be an isolated beachhead at Anzio. For this reason, the entrance to the Liri valley was far and above the most important objective of the Fifth Army.

The way into the Liri valley, which extended in the direction of the Fifth Army advance, was barred by the lateral water line of the Rapido and Garigliano Rivers. Beyond the single line of these rivers, Monte Cassino on the north and the heights around Sant'Ambrogio on the south form the walls of the Liri valley. The Fifth Army would have to cross the Rapido and Garigliano Rivers to get into the valley, and here too, along the river line, was the best place for General Clark to try to pin down the German forces and thus assist the Anzio landing. If Clark could attract additional German forces to the defense of the river line, he would facilitate the Anzio operation even more. If he could at the same time break through those defenses and gain entrance into the Liri valley, he would assure relatively quick linkup with the Allied troops in the Anzio beachhead.

In early January 1944, the Fifth Army was still about eight miles away from the river line. Before General Clark could launch the massive attack he planned there, his forces had to eliminate several positions held by German defenders.

Two miles beyond San Pietro, which the Fifth Army had taken late in December, was the strongpoint of San Vittore. Near San Vittore and north of Highway 6 were La Chiaia, Monte Majo, and the fortified village of Cervaro. South of Highway 6, beyond Monte Lungo, were Cedro Hill, Monte Porchia, and Monte Trocchio. Not until the German defenses at these points were reduced would the Fifth Army be in position to batter at the gate of the Liri valley.

The fight for these places during the first ten days of January was a continuation of the operations begun in December. According to General Clark's instructions, and with respect to the objectives yet to be attained, the British 10 Corps was to take Cedro Hill and then cross the Garigliano River and establish a bridgehead near Sant'Ambrogio, with the ultimate objective of securing the high ground dominating the Liri valley from the south. The French Expeditionary Corps, which had

replaced VI Corps, was to cross the high ground near the headwaters of the Rapido and attack across the mountains near Cassino that overlook the Liri valley from the north. The II Corps, making the main effort in the center, was to capture the strongpoints obstructing the direct approaches to Cassino along Highway 6—the villages of San Vittore and Cervaro, and the heights of La Chiaia, Monte Majo, Monte Porchia, and Monte Trocchio. When the British and French attacks gave the Fifth Army the walls of the Liri valley, II Corps was to cross the Rapido River and commit the 1st Armored Division for a drive up the valley toward Frosinone and eventually to Rome.[1] The discussions early in January leading to the decision to launch the Anzio operation imparted a sense of urgency to the attempts to reach the river line of the Rapido and Garigliano.[2]

As it turned out, the operations during the first days of January were carried largely by the II Corps. The 10 Corps, which had reached the Garigliano River along its lower reaches, patrolled extensively and prepared plans to cross the river when II Corps on its right came closer to the water line. The single attack launched by the 10 Corps was an unsuccessful attempt to take the 500-foot height of Cedro Hill during the night of 4 January. Rather than try again while under observation by German troops on nearby Monte Porchia, which is 200 feet higher than Cedro Hill, General McCreery waited for the II Corps to take the dominating ground.

In the zone of the French Expeditionary Corps the relief of the 45th Division by the 3d Algerian Division and the transfer of corps control from the VI to the French Expeditionary Corps headquarters required a period of settling in. The 2d Moroccan and 3d Algerian Divisions patrolled and reconnoitered, and General Juin studied the best way of advancing in the almost trackless mountains that constituted his area.

Toward the Rapido-Garigliano River Line

Trying to open up the direct approach to the Rapido-Garigliano river line, Cassino, and the entrance to the Liri valley, General Keyes planned a pincer movement on Cervaro and a frontal assault on Monte Porchia. He instructed Colonel Frederick's 1st Special Service Force to make a wide end run to Monte Majo on the corps right, after which Frederick would be holding high ground overlooking Cervaro. His advance would assist the attack of General Ryder's 34th Division, which would make the main effort of the corps by thrusting through San Vittore and across La Chiaia to Cervaro. On the left of Highway 6, the 6th Armored Infantry—fleshed out with other units of the 1st Armored Division to form Task Force Allen under Brig. Gen. Frank A. Allen, Jr., who commanded Combat Command B (CCB)—would move off Monte Lungo to capture Monte Porchia.[3]

Opposing II Corps was the *44th Division*, reinforced by elements of the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division*. These German troops were in place primarily to

[1] Fifth Army OI's, 12, 16 Dec 43.
[2] See 15th AGp OI 32, 2 Jan 44.
[3] TF Allen Brief Operational Rpt, 20 Mar 44; II Corps FO 18, 28 Dec 43; Ltr, Keyes to Allen, 27 Dec 43; Conference, 2 Jan 44; Directive, 4 Jan 44; and Schedule, 5 Jan 44, all in Fifth Army G-3 Jnl.

delay the Americans in order to permit improvements in the Gustav Line defenses along the Rapido-Garigliano river line. Vietinghoff, who had returned to the *Tenth Army* command at the end of December, and Senger, the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, warned the units to avoid heavy losses. Both were concerned about having enough troops to man the strong positions of the river line. On 11 January, Vietinghoff enunciated the policy that had, in reality, determined for some time the activities of the troops forward of the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers—"In the event of attacks by far superior enemy forces, a step by step withdrawal to the Gustav position will be carried out." [4]

The II Corps attack opened on the evening of 3 January, as the 1st Special Service Force departed its bivouac area near Ceppagna. In freezing temperatures, the troops climbed Monte Sammucro and moved through a maze of ridges and peaks to reach Monte Majo. Trained for mountain warfare, the men fought the terrain as well as the enemy. Artillery forward observers packing heavy radios through snow-covered gullies and over slippery slopes had trouble keeping pace with the infantrymen. After a day and a night of advance, having eradicated several German machine gun and mortar positions, the 1st Special Service Force on 5 January reached positions from which an assault could be mounted against Monte Majo proper.

To add strength to the attack, General Keyes moved the 142d Infantry forward that night to hold the ground gained by the 1st Special Service Force and to free Colonel Frederick's troops for the assault. He also gave Frederick two battalions of the 34th Division's 133d Infantry with which to form a composite and provisional unit called Task Force B.

Frederick moved his force out during the night of 6 January, and by dawn his troops were high on the slopes of Monte Majo. When an attack directed toward Hill 1109, a prominent spur directly overlooking Cervaro, struck resistance during the morning of 7 January, Frederick pulled back. Denied the most direct approach to the peak, he made a wide encirclement and took Hill 1270. From there the troops easily descended a ridge to Hill 1109.

The relatively light resistance encountered during the final advance proved deceptive. Counterattacks developed quickly and continued for two days. With the full force of the 36th Division artillery in direct support, Colonel Frederick's Task Force B held its ground. By 9 January, the Germans had pulled out. Monte Majo was firmly in hand.[5]

Twenty-four hours after the 1st Special Service Force had jumped off, the 34th Division launched its attack with two regiments abreast.[6] The 168th Infantry on the right advanced on the evening of 4 January toward broken ground capped by La Chiaia hill. Not far from the line of departure, the lead company of the assault battalion was taken in ambush. Part of the company had moved through a gorge when German troops closed in, captured sixty-nine men, and brought the attack to a halt.

[4] Steiger MS.

[5] FSSF Rpt of Opns.

[6] 34th Div Plan for the Attack on S. Vittore and La Chiaia, 1 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

The regiment tried again early on 5 January and made better progress. When two assault companies were pinned down along a creek by machine gun fire, two other rifle companies outflanked the German defenders and moved to a major peak in the La Chiaia hill mass. Renewal of the attack on 6 January produced no gain, but an attack that night broke the resistance. On 7 and 8 January the regiment secured and consolidated positions high on the slopes of La Chiaia overlooking Cervaro.

The 135th Infantry, meanwhile, had sent the 1st Battalion toward La Chiaia and the 3d Battalion toward San Vittore. When day broke on 5 January the 1st Battalion was still at its line of departure, held there by machine gun and artillery fire. So devastating were the defensive fires that the battalion made no progress that day or the next.

The thrust of the 3d Battalion to San Vittore got the regiment moving. Dispensing with an artillery preparation in the hope of achieving surprise, the battalion advanced during the night of 4 January. The troops found the Germans alert, and bitter fighting took place in the stone houses along the narrow streets of the village. By the end of the day, 5 January, the Americans controlled only half the town. Twenty-four hours later, as night fell, the 3d Battalion had the rest of the village, along with 170 prisoners.

With San Vittore lost and La Chiaia under attack, the Germans withdrew. The 2d Battalion of the 135th Infantry, committed on 7 January, overran La Chiaia and continued for a mile beyond to take the few remaining knobs overlooking Highway 6. Sixteen A–36's and an equal number of P–40's bombed and strafed a German troop concentration west of La Chiaia at noon, dispersing elements the airmen later reported as preparing to counterattack; more probably the Germans were trying to fall back.[7]

South of Highway 6, Task Force Allen, built around the 6th Armored Infantry, had to clear two small hills on the northwest portion of Monte Lungo before an attack on Monte Porchia was feasible.[8] The clearing action started on the afternoon of 4 January and continued for almost twenty-four hours. Bitter fighting and a large expenditure of artillery, tank, and tank destroyer shells finally forced the Germans to give way. As a result of the combat, the 6th Armored Infantry incurred what General Allen judged to be "heavy losses of 35 or 40 percent."[9]

The attack on Monte Porchia began at once. After a 30-minute artillery preparation on the afternoon of 5 January, a battalion of the 6th Armored Infantry started across a mile of low and level ground between Monte Lungo and Monte Porchia. The troops were halfway across by nightfall, and during the hours of darkness the other two battalions moved up to join the troops in the lead. On the following morning, all three battalions jumped off. Despite the effective fires of supporting tanks, which destroyed several machine gun nests located in stone farmhouses, the attack made little progress.

Calling a temporary halt, General Allen ordered another artillery preparation, this one employing smoke as well

[7] 34th Div AAR, Jan 44.

[8] TF Allen Plan RESOLUTION, 3 Dec 43; TF Allen FO's 1–6, 3–9 Jan 44.

[9] CCB (TF Allen) S–3 Jnl, Jan 44.



MEN ON MONTE PORCHIA

as high explosive. When the battalions assaulted again, one succeeded in going all the way to the crest of Monte Porchia. The position was precarious, for the battalion's losses had been so severe that only about 150 effectives remained. Because the other battalions had also taken heavy casualties, Allen sent 350 men of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion to the top of Monte Porchia to fight as infantry. With this reinforcement, plus large amounts of artillery, tank, and tank destroyer fire, Task Force Allen extended its hold over the objective.[10]

A German counterattack during the evening of 5 January almost pushed the task force off Monte Porchia, but despite considerable confusion on the high ground, the troops held. The following day the Germans fought only to cover the withdrawal of their troops from Monte Porchia and San Vittore.

Some of the units making up Task Force Allen had been in the line a total of ten days and task force casualties were high: 66 men killed, 379 wounded, and an unknown number missing. The 6th Armored Infantry alone reported 480 men missing in action, though most of these troops would return to their units after a few days. In addition, the task force lost 516 men to nonbattle causes—trench foot and exposure to the wea-

[10] The heroism of Sgt. Joe C. Specker of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, who fired his machine gun so effectively despite fatal wounds, proved instrumental in the success. Sergeant Specker was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

ther.[11] The severe battle casualties were blamed partly on the failure of the radios to operate in mountain country. But most of the losses, both battle and nonbattle, came from the inexperience of the task force units, which were in combat for the first time.[12]

With Monte Porchia in American possession, Cedro Hill became untenable for the Germans and they withdrew. British troops, having unsuccessfully tried to take the hill during the night of 4 January, marched up the slope and occupied the high ground on 8 and 9 January.[13]

Now the Germans forward of the Rapido-Garigliano river line were occupying only the small mountain village of Cervaro and Monte Trocchio. Since the depleted 6th Armored Infantry seemed incapable for the moment of further combat, General Keyes instructed General Ryder to seize Cervaro with the 34th Division, then sweep south across Highway 6 to Monte Trocchio.[14]

Unexpected difficulties undermined the 168th Infantry's attack that started on 10 January—resistance on nearby heights presumed clear of enemy forces, enemy artillery fire from flanks believed no longer occupied, and terrain features incorrectly judged as being relatively favorable. It took an air strike on Cervaro on the morning of the 11th and an artillery pounding to give the infantry sufficient impetus for a thrust into the village, which by then had been reduced to rubble and shattered masonry. In the cellars of the wrecked stone houses in Cervaro the Germans found excellent defensive positions and held out until the next day, when the 168th rooted them out. Continuing beyond Cervaro, the regiment advanced toward Monte Trocchio. On the morning of 13 January, troops of the 168th were a mile from the hill.

By then the battle had entered a new phase. The water line had come within General Clark's reach, and with it the entrance into the Liri valley.

The German Situation

The single water line ahead of the Fifth Army was composed of three rivers: the Rapido, which rises near Monte Santa Croce and flows southwest for about 15 miles past the eastern edge of Cassino and across Highway 6; the Gari, which starts 4 miles south of Highway 6 at the point where a creek joins the Rapido and which meanders across the flood plain for no more than 3 miles before it joins the Liri River; and the Garigliano, which is born at the meeting of the Gari and Liri waters, and sweeps south and southwest for more than 15 miles to the sea.

The Rapido valley, cut by many streams and canals, varies in width from 2 to 3 miles. It opens into the Liri valley, which extends to the northwest and merges with the valley of the Garigliano, which quickly fans out from a width of 2 miles to more than 12 near the coast.

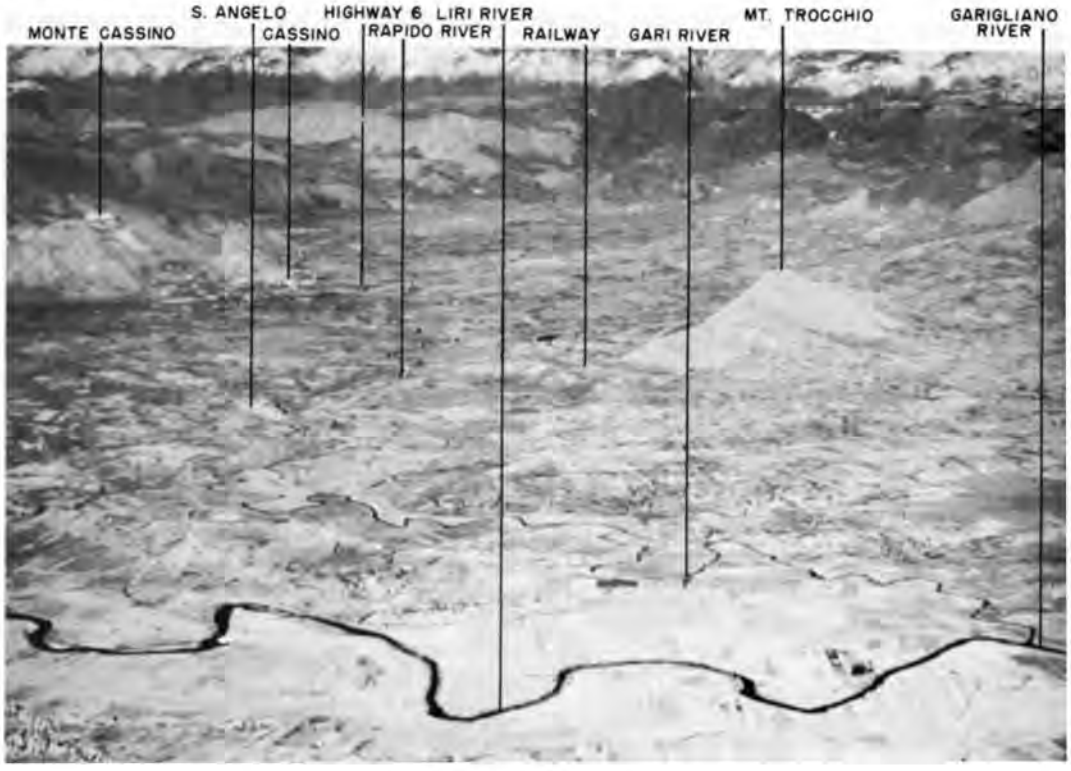
Extremely heavy rains and melting snow in the mountains had turned the rivers into torrents running at high flood stage during the month of January. All the rivers had overflowed their banks, inundating much of the lowland, and the Germans had worsened this condi-

[11] TF Allen Casualties, 1–11 Jan 44, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

[12] See Ltr, Allen to Keyes, 11 Jan 44, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

[13] See Memo, Keyes for Allen, 9 Jan 44, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

[14] II Corps FO 19, 9 Jan 44.



THE LIRI VALLEY

tion by diverting the Rapido to create an artificial marsh, a bog too soft in many places for vehicles and other mechanical equipment of modern armies to operate.[15]

The main line of resistance in the belt of defenses called the Gustav Line was on the far side of the water.[16] Started early in November, the field fortifications along the west bank of the Garigliano, Gari, and Rapido Rivers were designated the "final" line of defense south of Rome.

The line was rooted in the high ground backing the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers. In the hills behind the Garigliano in the Sant'Ambrogio area, on the steep and barren slopes of Monte Cassino, and among the jumbled mountain peaks near the source of the Rapido, the Germans had blasted and dug weapons pits, built concrete bunkers and steel-turreted machine gun emplacements, strung bands of barbed wire and planted mine fields—making lavish use of the box mine, which was difficult to detect because it had almost no metallic parts—to block the few natural avenues of advance. They had sited mortars on

[15] See Photo Reconnaissance Wing Rpt, 5 Dec 43, and Photo Reconnaissance Unit Msg, 1355, 5 Dec 43, Fifth Army G-2 Jnl.

[16] Ralph S. Mavrogordato, *XIV Panzer Corps* Defensive Operations Along the Garigliano, Gari, and Rapido Rivers, 17–31 January 1944, MS # R-78, OCMH.



MUD AND THE 36TH DIVISION SUPPLY DUMP, MIGNANO AREA

reverse slopes and placed automatic weapons to cover the forward slopes. In the town of Cassino they had strengthened the walls of the stone buildings with sandbags to protect weapons crews.

The heights above Cassino gave the Germans well-nigh perfect observation of the approaching Allied forces. Symbolizing the strength of the Gustav Line was the Benedictine abbey on the top of Monte Cassino, which looked to the south with hypnotic gaze, all-seeing, like the eyes in a painting that follow the spectator wherever he moves. To the Allied soldiers on the plain below, the glistening white abbey on the peak watched them with German eyes from which there was no concealment.

Occupying these formidable positions by 15 January were troops under the control of the *XIV Panzer Corps,* which had more than half, about 90,000, of the 150,000 men allocated to the *Tenth Army*. In the Rome area, the *I Parachute Corps* headquarters controlled 24,000 men, a reserve force for use by *OB SUED* against an Allied amphibious operation or against a threatened rupture of the main front. In northern Italy the *Fourteenth Army* had about 70,000 troops who were engaged in occupation duties and training and were also available for combat operations. An additional 25,000 men were in hospitals or on other assignments in Italy.[17]

Kesselring estimated his requirements

[17] Steiger MS.

in January as 19 divisions—8 for employment on the front, 2 in operational reserve immediately behind the front, 2 in the Rome area, 3 in the Genoa area, 2 for security and pacification duties in northern Italy, and 2 to be formed in northern Italy for eventual dispatch to the Adriatic front. After the expected departures of the *90th Panzer Grenadier* and *Hermann Goering Divisions* from Italy and the arrival of the *114th Jaeger Division* some time in February, Kesselring would actually have 17 divisions. He asked for and received OKW's promise to delay the departure of the *90th Panzer Grenadier Division* at least until 1 March and to permit the retention for use in Italy of the recently activated *16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division,* which was being brought up to strength and effectiveness in the north.[18]

With these forces available for use against the approximately equal Allied forces, Kesselring had good reason to believe, despite his lack of air and naval support, that the strong defensive terrain in southern Italy gave him an advantage far beyond the resources available to his opponents. He could look forward with confidence to keeping the Allied armies bogged down throughout the remaining winter months and probably well into the summer.

Closing to the River Line

On the Allied side, the winter weather and the absence of decisive objectives on the east coast had virtually extinguished activity on the Adriatic front. The decision to land at Anzio on the Italian west coast and General Clark's forthcoming attack to penetrate into the Liri valley had led General Alexander to consider drawing on General Leese's Eighth Army. If Clark breached the Gustav Line, Alexander would probably transfer the 2d New Zealand Division from the Eighth Army for commitment under the Fifth to help the 1st Armored Division exploit the breakthrough.[19]

To assist the amphibious landing at Anzio, General Clark planned a massive attack against the Gustav Line in the Cassino area. He hoped to pin down the Germans and prevent them from transferring troops to Anzio; to attract additional German forces to the Gustav Line, particularly those stationed in the Rome area; and to break through the Gustav Line and speed up the Liri valley to a quick juncture with the Anzio forces. Toward these ends, Clark ordered an attack by three corps in four phases. On the right, the French Expeditionary Corps, with the 2d Moroccan and 3d Algerian Divisions, was to lead off on 12 January by attacking along its two axes of advance—toward the villages of Atina and San Elia—and seize the high ground immediately north and northwest of Cassino. Three days later II Corps, with the 1st Armored, 34th, and 36th Divisions, was to secure Monte Trocchio, the last high ground on the near side of the Rapido River. When the French corps got to the upper reaches of the Rapido and II Corps took Monte Trocchio, 10 Corps on the left, with the 5th, 46th, and 56th Divisions, plus the 23d Armoured Brigade, was to make the initial thrust to breach the German defenses. Starting on 17 January, the British corps was to cross the Garigliano

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] 15th AGp OI 34, 12 Jan 44.



GERMAN BOX MINE



FORWARD OBSERVER ON LA CHIAIA

River and seize two bridgeheads, one near Sant'Ambrogio, the other near the coast around Minturno. The 10 Corps was then to attack to the north and northwest to take the high ground dominating the Liri valley from the south. On 20 January II Corps would deliver the culminating blow of the attack, crossing the Rapido River south of Highway 6 to establish a bridgehead near Sant'Angelo. The corps was then to employ the maximum amount of armor for an exploitation up the Liri valley toward Frosinone.[20] By then, it was hoped, VI Corps would be ashore at Anzio, its initial landings scheduled for 22 January.

General Clark's attack began in the French zone on schedule at 0630, 12 January. General Dody's 2d Moroccan Division on the right jumped off without artillery preparation and achieved surprise in the capture of the height of Monna Casale. The 3d Algerian Division, commanded by General de Monsabert, was "less sure of itself," and prefaced its attack with a short artillery preparation, then seized an important peak dominating the route to San Elia. The German reaction was violent, and both French divisions found themselves engaged in a battle at short range where the grenade and the bayonet were the principal weapons. Beating off German counterattacks, the two divisions pressed forward. By the end of 15 January, the French had gained almost four miles, a respectable advance. Having pushed to the upper reaches of the Rapido River and moved up the slopes of Monte Santa Croce, the French were in close contact with the main defenses of the Gustav Line. There they had to pause. The 4-day

[20] Fifth Army OI 13, 10 Jan 44.

battle had exhausted General Juin's troops.[21]

On the direct approach to Cassino and the entrance to the Liri valley, II Corps had prepared a strong attack against Monte Trocchio, the last German stronghold before the Rapido River. Aerial photographs and statements by prisoners of war indicated many prepared emplacements on the hill, with automatic weapons pits, "no doubt," as the corps G–2 put it, protected by mine fields and wire.[22] A regiment of the 34th Division and a regiment of the 36th Division moved against Monte Trocchio on the morning of 16 January, and to everyone's surprise, the troops found that the Germans had abandoned this isolated hill a mile east of the Rapido that guarded the main approach to Cassino. Three hours after the assault began American troops were neutralizing mines and booby traps on the crest of the hill. Forty-eight P–40's assigned the mission of attacking Monte Trocchio were diverted to bomb and strafe German positions along the west bank of the Rapido. By nightfall, there were practically no Germans east of the river.[23]

The voluntary desertion of the positions on Monte Trocchio was part of a rather extensive regrouping being carried out in the center of the *XIV Panzer Corps* sector. "At the moment," the *Tenth Army* chief of staff informed Kesselring's chief of staff on 15 January, "things here look wild; everything is on the move—the 15th, 44th, 71st, Hermann Goering, 5th, 3d, and 305th Divisions." [24] Vietinghoff had ordered Senger to conduct a strong defense at Monte Porchia, and this had been done. When Monte Porchia was lost, Vietinghoff decided that Monte Trocchio was too isolated and the defensive positions were too weak to bar the entrance into the Liri valley, the obvious objective of the Fifth Army. The fortifications along the west bank of the Rapido and in the heights immediately dominating the river line were far better. He therefore set into motion a series of troop movements, including the withdrawal from Monte Trocchio, to assure, first, a strong defense at the river line and, second, a pool of locally available reserves.[25]

With the Fifth Army firmly up against the main defenses of the Gustav Line, with French, American, and British patrols operating to the river line and beyond, the British 10 Corps made ready to attempt the first breach of the defensive belt.

Crossing the Garigliano

General McCreery's 10 Corps was to make two river crossings, one in the alluvial plain near the mouth of the Garigliano in the Minturno area, the other closer to the Liri valley at Sant'Ambrogio. Because both bridges in the corps zone, the Minturno bridge on Highway 7 and the railroad bridge nearby, were destroyed and because the water was too deep to ford, the corps would have to use boats. There were no illusions that the crossings would be easy. The natural

[21] Carpentier, *Les Forces Alliées en Italie,* pp. 68–69; *La Troisième Division d'Infanterie Algerienne en Italie, Rapports d'Operations,* photostat copy, OCMH.

[22] II Corps Annex 1 to FO 19, 9 Jan 44.

[23] Fifth Army Weekly Summary of Opns for Period Ending 2400, 20 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[24] Teleconv, Maj Gen Fritz Wentzell with Gen Westphal, quoted in Steiger MS.

[25] Vietinghoff MSS. See also II Corps Annex 1 to FO 19, 9 Jan 44.

barrier of the river was reinforced by excellent defensive positions in the foothills of the high ground immediately beyond; all likely approaches to the near bank of the river and exits on the far bank had been heavily mined; and numerous German patrols were operating vigorously during the hours of darkness on both sides of the river.

Convinced that he could gain no surprise in his attack, General McCreery decided to power his way across the river, using relatively large forces and strong naval, air, and artillery support. To take the Minturno bridgehead, two reinforced divisions would attack on a 4-brigade front during the night of 17 January. Specifically, the 5th Division on the left, reinforced by a brigade, and the 56th Division on the right, reinforced by Commandos, were to attack abreast. With a bridgehead 4 miles wide and 2 or 3 miles deep gained across the lower Garigliano, the 5th Division was to turn to the north toward the high ground overlooking the Liri valley. This thrust, McCreery hoped, would assist and in turn be assisted by the second crossing, which was to be launched on 19 January by the 46th Division across the upper Garigliano in the Sant'Ambrogio area. The bridgehead established by the 46th Division would protect the right flank of the forces near Minturno and, more important, guard the left flank of II Corps, which, on the following night, the 20th, was to make its assault across the Rapido.[26]

The 10 Corps faced the *94th Division*, which had a double responsibility. Not only did it defend most of the Garigliano, it also guarded the coast as far north as Terracina, thirty miles beyond the mouth of the river, against Allied amphibious invasion. Dispersed over a tremendous defensive area, its resources stretched, the division was untested in combat. Vietinghoff and Senger judged it none too reliable. They counted on the width and depth of the river, as well as its swift current, to discourage Allied crossings. They also saw to it that 24,000 mines, an enormous number, were laid along the banks of the Garigliano in the division area.[27]

Despite indications of an imminent Allied attack—extensive bombing and strafing on 16 and 17 January, heavy naval shelling by two cruisers and five destroyers firing to give support as well as to gain deception, and a build-up of ground forces in the 10 Corps zone—Vietinghoff anticipated no immediate developments. Although he was well aware of the shortcomings of German intelligence, he assured Kesselring over the telephone on 17 January that nothing extraordinary was in the offing—"We are having moonless nights which he [the enemy] has been avoiding so far." [28]

Contrary to General McCreery's expectation, the 10 Corps ground attack that jumped off at 2100, 17 January, achieved surprise. While artillery crashed into German defensive positions ahead, the initial assault units had little difficulty crossing the river and encountered little opposition on the far bank.

Near the mouth of the river, the 5th Division had committed three battalions. Two were crossing the river in assault boats. The third had been loaded into

[26] 10 Corps OI, 11 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[27] MS # R–78 (Mavrogordato), OCMH.

[28] *Tenth A KTB Anl.*, 17 Jan 44.



BRITISH 10 CORPS TROOPS SHUTTLING AMBULANCES ACROSS THE GARIGLIANO *on a Bailey ponton raft.*

DUKW's and LCT's in the corps rear area for transportation around the mouth of the Garigliano and a landing about 2,000 yards beyond the far bank. Only the DUKW's arrived at the correct beach on the far bank, and the debarking troops found themselves at once in the midst of thickly planted mine fields. They needed engineers to sweep, clear, and tape exit lanes off the beach. But these troops—two platoons of engineers—along with their equipment, including dump trucks, as well as crews of tanks and supporting weapons, together with their equipment, were on the LCT's, which accidently had gone ashore on the near bank before passing the mouth of the river. It was noon of 18 January before ferries and rafts could be gathered and dispatched to the unexpected landing site on the near bank of the river in order to carry the needed men and equipment across the river mouth to where the DUKW's had landed. In the process, several vehicles moving rafts downstream along the near bank struck mines and were lost. Once ferried across, the equipment remained immobile a good part of the afternoon until mine fields were cleared. Meanwhile, the troops that had landed on the far bank in DUKW's had left the beach through a single lane they had swept and taped themselves.

Engineers were unable to construct bridges across the Garigliano because of the mines and enemy artillery fire. A truck carrying a floating treadway bay to a projected bridge site struck a mine 100 yards short of its unloading point and was disabled. Another truck trying to tow the damaged vehicle out of the

way struck another mine and was destroyed, completely blocking the route. German artillery shells falling accurately and in large volume on the near bank dispersed work parties. Calling for smoke to conceal the bridging area, the engineers tried to continue. The wind was blowing the wrong way, and work had to be abandoned.

During the first twenty-four hours of the attack only ferries and rafts could be used to reinforce the assault elements and evacuate casualties. During this period, despite mishaps, mines, enemy artillery fire, and the lack of bridges, 10 Corps got a total of ten battalions across the river.[29]

From the beginning of the British attack, Vietinghoff and Senger watched reports carefully to see whether 10 Corps was making a major effort or a diversion. Visiting the *94th Division* area early on the morning of 18 January, Senger quickly realized the importance of the British attack and the impossibility of containing it with the *94th Division* and local reserves alone. From the division command post, he phoned Kesselring, bypassing Vietinghoff in the interest of speed, and recommended that the two divisions being held in reserve in the Rome area be committed if Kesselring wished to prevent a complete breakthrough of the Gustav Line along the Garigliano.[30]

Always concerned over his long sea flanks in Italy and their exposure to Allied amphibious attack, Kesselring had constantly tried to keep at least two divisions under his direct control near Rome to counter any invasion in that area. In January he had two veteran organizations, the *29th* and *90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions,* in rest and rehabilitation centers. He was also forming and training near Rome the *4th Parachute Division,* a new unit. In addition, he had the *I Parachute Corps* headquarters. These elements composed his central mobile reserve.

The danger posed by the British crossing of the Garigliano compelled Kesselring to consider seriously the possibility of committing his reserve. If the British enlarged their bridgehead and broke through to the Liri valley behind Cassino, they would outflank the defensive line anchored on Monte Cassino, make the Gustav Line untenable, and force *Tenth Army* to withdraw toward Rome.

Before acting, Kesselring phoned Vietinghoff. He learned that the *Tenth Army* commander had accepted the accuracy of Senger's estimate. Vietinghoff asked for the two veteran divisions for several days until the defenses along the Garigliano were re-established.

Kesselring firmly believed in the need to stabilize the Gustav Line, and by 0900, 18 January, he was sure that the British effort was a major attack soon to be followed by an American attempt to get into the Liri valley. "I am convinced," he told Vietinghoff, "that we are now facing the greatest crisis yet encountered [in the Italian campaign]." What worsened the situation was the failure of the abundant mines to stop the British. Having counted on the efficacy of the mine fields and chiefly concerned with blocking a direct entrance into the Liri valley, Vietinghoff and Sen-

[29] Special Engr Rpt Based on Extracts From Chief Engr, 10 Corps Rpt on Garigliano Crossing, 15 Apr 44, Misc Rpts on Opns, Fifth Army, 1944–45. See also 15th AGp Narrative, Jan 44; and *Fifth Army History,* Part IV, pp. 30–34.

[30] MS # C–095b (Senger), OCMH.

ger had placed thirteen of the fifteen battalions in immediate corps and army reserve—most of them belonging to the *Hermann Goering Division*—north of the Liri River. It was difficult to move them to the threatened area. It would be dangerous to move them away from the Liri valley entrance. And it would be relatively easy to bring the two divisions down from Rome. Not only did the effect of the mines above the Garigliano seem to be "nil," Kesselring remarked, but "all our reserves are located on the wrong side" of the Liri River.[31]

According to the recollections of Kesselring's chief of staff, Westphal, "A bitter tussle now began over the disposition of the two divisions" in the Rome area. Was the situation along the Garigliano really as critical as Vietinghoff and Senger described it to be? If so, was that reason enough to endanger the Rome area by transferring the two divisions to the *Tenth Army* front?[32]

Several days earlier, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, chief of the Office of Intelligence in Berlin, had visited Kesselring's headquarters. During his visit, the interception of an Allied radio message in the Italian theater seemed to indicate the possibility of an imminent Allied amphibious operation. Asked his opinion, Admiral Canaris confidently replied, "There is not the slightest sign that a new landing will be undertaken in the near future." Reassured, Westphal had categorically announced to the commanders of the *Tenth* and *Fourteenth Armies* on 15 January: "I consider a large-scale [Allied] landing operation as being out of the question for the next four to six weeks."[33]

Since there appeared to be no prospect of an Allied invasion, since the expansion of the British bridgehead across the Garigliano into a breakthrough to the Liri valley would make "the damage [to the Gustav Line] irreparable," and since the fate of the *Tenth Army* seemed to be hanging "by a slender thread," Kesselring decided to send his reserve to the *Tenth Army* front.[34]

Years later, Senger expressed doubt that Kesselring had reached the correct decision. Since Senger was no advocate of holding ground for the sake of holding ground, "In Kesselring's place," he said, "I do not believe I would have made the divisions available."[35] Senger had forgotten Hitler's first rule of tactical conduct—hold every foot of ground wherever possible.

Thus, on 18 January, Kesselring dispatched the two veteran divisions from the Rome area, along with the *I Parachute Corps* headquarters to facilitate command and control, and on the following day, Hitler approved Kesselring's action. The Gustav Line, Hitler insisted, must be held under all circumstances and at all costs. This Kesselring set out to accomplish. The arrival in increasing numbers on 19 and 20 January of the troops sent from Rome impeded British efforts to expand the bridgehead.[36]

Despite trouble installing bridges—a German artillery shell had struck a small

[31] Teleconv, Kesselring with Vietinghoff, 0920, 18 Jan 44, *Tenth A KTB Anl.*

[32] MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

[33] Quoted in Steiger MS.

[34] MS # T–1a K1 (Kesselring); MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*). Both in OCMH.

[35] Interv, Philip A. Crowl with Senger, 22 Sep 55, OCMH.

[36] MS # R–78 (Mavrogordato), OCMH.

bridge soon after its construction 2 miles above Highway 7 on the morning of 19 January and put it out of commission — and despite counterattacks launched by the *94th Division* and its immediate reserves—at least three were mounted on 18 January—the British forces secured a substantial bridgehead. On 19 January, the 5th Division seized Minturno, 3 miles beyond the Garigliano, and the 56th Division, which crossed the Garigliano at four points, had consolidated its units and held a bridgehead almost 2 miles deep in the hills immediately overlooking the river. By the first light of 20 January, 287 prisoners of war had been sent to the 10 Corps rear.

The 10 Corps, however, was about to receive a sharp setback. On the corps right flank, the 46th Division committed a brigade during the night of 19 January to seize a bridgehead near Sant'Angelo. Operating near the junction of the Liri and Gari Rivers, the assault troops made three attempts to establish a bridgehead that night. The swift river current, which broke raft and ferry cables, and the strong German resistance, which benefited from the units arriving from Rome, defeated their efforts. Early on 20 January, only a handful of British troops were on the far side of the river. As the coming of daylight increased the accuracy of German fire, a successful crossing became increasingly doubtful. The men across the river were ordered to withdraw to the near bank, and the attempt to force a crossing was abandoned.[37]

To what extent the preparations for the Anzio landing contributed to the 46th Division's failure can be only a matter of conjecture. During the final rehearsal of the Anzio forces on 18 January, a large amount of equipment was lost in the sea near Naples. Among the losses were more than 40 DUKW's. Since they were vital for the success of the amphibious operation, they had to be replaced. "The replacement of equipment," General Clark wrote, "has embarrassed me greatly. It was necessary for me to take these dukws from the 10 Corps, who needed them badly in the Garigliano River crossing."[38]

The sensitivity of the Germans to the 46th Division crossing attempt and their increased opposition not only prevented 10 Corps from protecting the flank of the II Corps, which was to cross the Rapido River that evening, 20 January, but also gave evidence of the German intention to recover the ground lost on the west bank of the Garigliano.

To General Clark, the failure of the 46th Division to secure its objectives in the Sant'Ambrogio area

> was quite a blow. I was fearful that General Hawkesworth [the division commander] had a mental reservation as to the possibilities of success of his operation. . . . I flew to II Corps, feeling that it was necessary to discuss with General Keyes the results of this failure, for although the 46th effort would not entirely have protected his left flank, its failure would leave it entirely uncovered during his crossing of the Rapido River. . . . I sent General Gruenther by plane to see McCreery, who feels that the [projected] attack of the 36th Division has little chance of success on account of the heavy defensive position of the enemy west of the Rapido. I maintain that it is essential that I make that attack fully expecting heavy losses in order to hold all the troops on my front and

[37] Fifth Army Weekly Summary of Opns for Period Ending 2400, 20 Jan 44 (dated 21 Jan 44), Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[38] Clark Diary, 19 Jan 44.

draw more to it, thereby clearing the way for SHINGLE. The attack [of the 36th Division across the Rapido River] is on.[39]

What General Clark did not know was that his attack had already succeeded. The British crossing of the Garigliano River alone had not only tied down German troops but had also drawn German forces away from the Anzio landing beaches. Two of the purposes of the massive 3-corps attack at the entrance to the Liri valley had been fulfilled. Yet the chances are that even if General Clark had been aware of this, he would still have directed II Corps to carry out the next part of the operation. Despite the heavy losses he foresaw for the 36th Division at the Rapido, he still needed to get into the Liri valley to begin his drive to Frosinone and eventual linkup with the Anzio troops who were scheduled to come ashore on 22 January.

[39] Clark Diary, 20 Jan 44.

CHAPTER XIX

The Rapido River Crossings

The culminating effort of the Fifth Army's massive attack was to be the assault crossing of the Rapido by II Corps. If the 36th Division could establish a bridgehead two and a half miles deep at Sant'Angelo, it could open the Liri valley. Combat Command B of the 1st Armored Division was then, on corps order, to pass through the infantry and drive into the valley for at least six miles, its left flank screened by the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. The 34th Division was, meanwhile, to demonstrate on the corps right to tie down the German defenders in Cassino; it was to be ready to attack Cassino directly from the east, or pass through the Sant'Angelo bridgehead and attack Cassino from the south, or pass through the bridgehead to reinforce CCB in the Liri valley. The 45th Division, held in reserve, might be committed to reinforce CCB; but because it might instead be sent by water to Anzio to bolster the landing force, the 36th Division was to hold one regimental combat team for use in the Liri valley if necessary. The Rapido crossing would be supported by the organic artillery battalions and attached tanks and tank destroyers of the 34th and 36th Divisions, the artillery and tanks of CCB, and three groupments of corps artillery consisting of twelve firing battalions. To these ground forces, the XII Air Support Command promised to add the weight of its bombs and machine gun fire.[1] (*Map 9*)

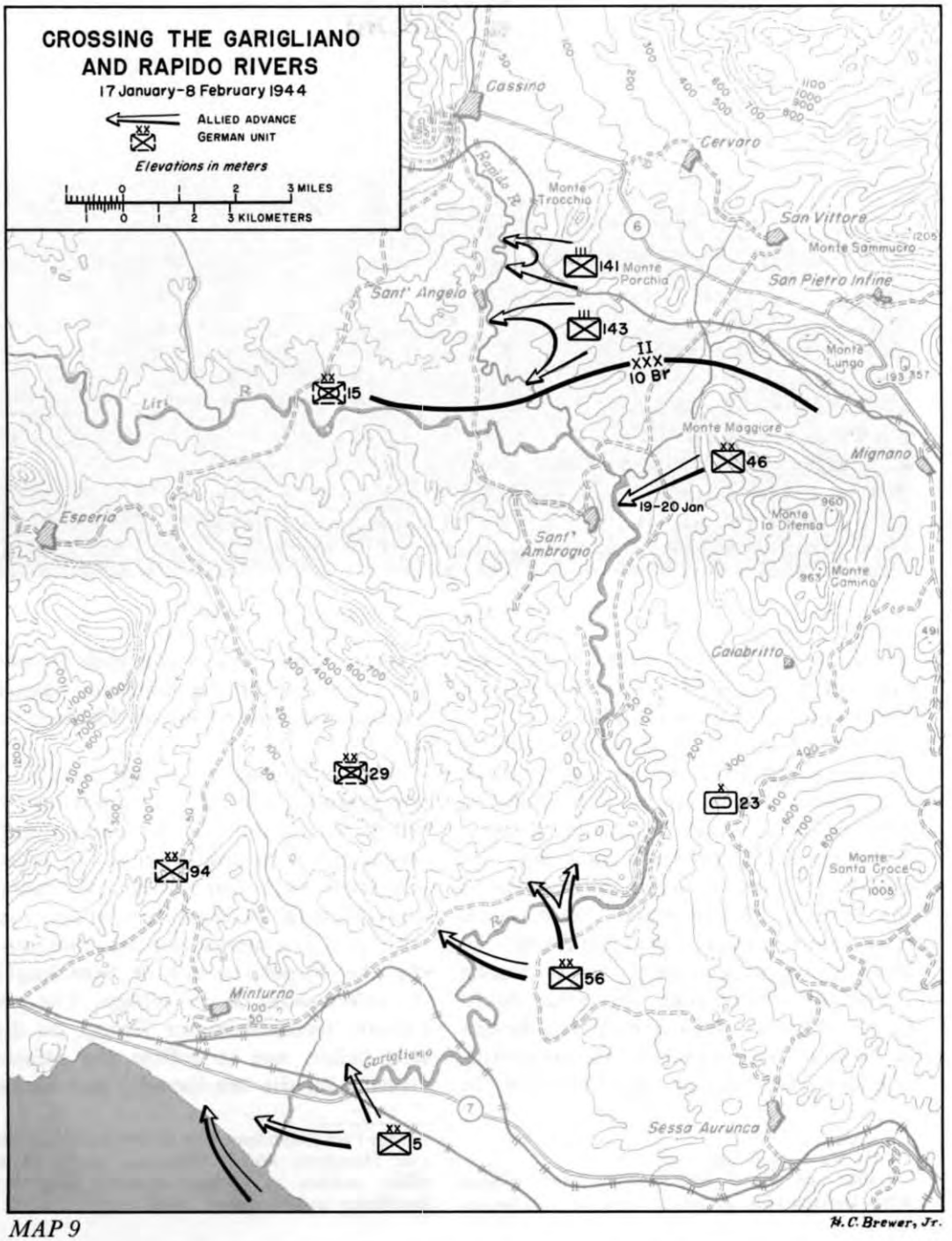
In the zone of the 36th Division—south of Highway 6—the Rapido River, even at flood stage, was small and unimpressive. Yet it flowed swiftly between nearly vertical banks 3 and 6 feet high and anywhere from 25 to 50 feet apart. The depth of the water in the river bed varied between 9 and 12 feet.

On the west bank, midway between the town of Cassino and the junction of the Liri and the Gari Rivers, was the battered village of Sant'Angelo. It occupied the slight eminence of a 40-foot bluff, but this was enough to give the Germans observation over much of the river and the flats east of the stream. The shattered masonry walls of the houses in the village provided cover for crew-served weapons.

Sant'Angelo was but one strongpoint in a carefully prepared system of local defenses that included a belt of dugouts, machine gun positions, slit trenches, and concrete bunkers on the west bank, all protected by double-apron wire fences, booby traps, and trip-wired mines, and by a lavish use on the east bank of mines concealed among the reeds and brush of the flat, marshy ground.

Manning these positions were troops of the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division,*

[1] II Corps FO 20, 16 Jan 44.



MAP 9

H. C. Brewer, Jr.



THE RAPIDO, VIEWED FROM MONTE TROCCHIO

which, according to Senger, who commanded the *XIV Panzer Corps*, was the finest combat organization he had.[2]

Viewed from the 36th Division side of the river, the fixed defenses on the rising ground of the far bank seemed numerous but hardly elaborate. What bothered the Americans most was the absence of good covered approaches to the river.[3] The German observation from Sant'Angelo could probably be blocked by an extensive use of smoke shells and smoke pots. But what could be done about the commanding height of Monte Cassino and its all-encompassing view? On the flat valley floor of the Rapido, the troops of the 36th Division felt crushed by the immense psychological weight of enemy-held Monte Cassino.[4]

The only way to escape at all the observation and the devastating fire bound to follow was to make a night attack. Keeping one regiment in reserve to comply with General Keyes's instructions, General Walker planned an assault with two regiments abreast, one crossing the Rapido north of Sant'Angelo, the other south of the village. The 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, on division order, was to follow the infantry crossing on the left (south) and outpost

[2] MS # C-095b (Senger), OCMH.

[3] 36th Div Photo Interpretation Rpt, Rapido River Defense Line, 14 Jan 44, 143d Inf Jnl, Jan 44.

[4] See Fred Majdalany, *The Battle of Cassino* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957); Harold Bond, *Return to Cassino* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1964).



MONTE CASSINO AND THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY, *commanding a view of the Rapido valley and the entrance to the Liri valley.*

the flank, making contact with the 46th Division, which, Walker assumed, would have by then crossed the Garigliano. H-hour was to be 2000, 20 January, and it was to be preceded by an intense artillery preparation lasting thirty minutes.[5]

The simplicity of General Walker's field order climaxed a long period of concern among senior commanders. The natural defensive strength alone of the barriers blocking entrance into the Liri valley—the river line and the dominating heights—disturbed them How could they penetrate directly into the valley without first taking the high ground north and south of the Liri?

As early as mid-November, when the 36th Division seemed destined to have this mission, General Walker had concluded that a frontal attack across the Rapido would end in disaster. He had then recommended outflanking the valley entrance from the north by a deep enveloping movement across the high ground that would take the troops into the Liri valley far behind—six to twelve miles behind the Gustav Line.[6] During much of December, when it appeared that the 3d Division would make the attack to secure a Rapido bridgehead, General Truscott also had serious doubts about undertaking the operation "until the mountain masses opposite the junction of the Liri and Garigliano Rivers

[5] 36th Div FO 42, 18 Jan 44.

[6] Ltr, Keyes to Clark, 19 Nov 43, CG Opns; 36th Div Plan for the Capture of Monte Camino–Monte Maggiore Mountain Mass, 21 Nov 43, II Corps G–3 Jnl

and the heights above Cassino were in friendly hands."[7]

General Keyes pointed out in December that "a bridgehead at S. Angelo would be under close observation of the enemy at Cassino. In addition, armor would be committed over poor roads in a direction which will quickly put them beyond support of either Infantry or Corps Artillery."[8] At a conference attended by Generals McCreery and Gruenther, when the idea of crossing the Rapido was discussed, Keyes proposed an alternative plan. Instead of an attack by II Corps across the Rapido directly into the Liri valley, he suggested an attack by both 10 and II Corps across the Garigliano River and movement into the Liri valley from the south. McCreery objected—his British troops, he said, were neither well equipped nor particularly well trained for the mountain fighting that would be involved in this maneuver. Gruenther accepted McCreery's contention, and Clark later agreed. Keyes's proposal was dropped. Much later in the campaign, McCreery would confess to Keyes that the II Corps plan had had merit and probably should have been followed.[9]

When circumstances at the end of December pointed to the 36th Division as the prime candidate for the assignment of crossing the Rapido and opening the Liri valley, General Walker again looked upon the prospect with reservations. But the protests and misgivings he voiced to his superiors were far from being strong objections.[10]

General Keyes had no need to be reminded of the difficulties of getting directly into the Liri valley. Nor did General Clark. Yet Clark seemed intent on getting into the valley quickly instead of going across the mountains as both Keyes and Walker preferred. He rejected the slower mountainous routes probably because he wished to make use of the 1st Armored Division. The Liri valley was one of the few places in southern Italy where armor could conceivably be used. Having insisted that he needed the division, Clark seized upon the opportunity presented by the Liri valley. General Harmon, the division commander, was confident he could roll right up the valley once a bridgehead across the Rapido had been established, and his enthusiasm caught Clark's fancy.[11] Why not? The Liri valley was the most direct way of reaching the beachhead to be established at Anzio.

While General Clark looked beyond the Rapido all the way to Anzio, General Walker was concentrating on the obstacle of the river itself. By January, the projected attack filled him with foreboding. The terrain and the maneuver reminded him of a situation in World War I, when, as a battalion commander, he had defended a portion of the Marne River. The Germans had attempted an assault crossing that failed, and Walker's troops had heavily punished the attack-

[7] Quote is from comment on draft MS, enclosed with Ltr, Truscott to Pattison, 28 Sep 64, OCMH; Truscott, *Command Missions*, pp. 294–95. See also Ltr, Keyes to Clark, 11 Dec 43, CG Opns; Ltrs, Willems to Truscott and Harmon *et al.*, 18 Dec 43, CofS Opns, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

[8] Ltr, Keyes to Clark, 11 Dec 43, CG Opns.

[9] Interv, Crowl with Keyes, 22 Sep 55, OCMH. See also Interv, Mathews with Col Robert W. Porter, II Corps DCofS for Tactical Opns, 30 Jun 50, OCMH.

[10] See Ltr, Keyes to Clark, 28 Dec 43, CG Opns; Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker, "My Story of the Rapido River Crossing," *Army*, vol. XIII, No. 2 (September, 1952), pp. 52–62.

[11] Interv, Crowl with Keyes, 22 Sep 55; Fifth Army Memo, Appreciation of Terrain for Use of Armor, 8 Oct 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

ing units. At the Rapido, the situation would be reversed. The Germans held excellent defensive positions, and they would, it seemed clear to Walker, inflict severe losses on his division. "Have been giving lot of thought," he wrote in his diary, "to plan for crossing Rapido River some time soon. I'll swear I do not see how we can possibly succeed in crossing the river near Angelo when that stream is the MLR [main line of resistance] of the main German position." [12]

The extent of General Walker's opposition to a crossing of the Rapido was never apparent to his superiors. At a meeting of division commanders held at the II Corps command post on 18 January, two days before the attack, Walker characterized the German positions near Sant'Angelo as well organized, wired in, and supported by automatic weapons, small arms, and the prepared fires of mortars and artillery. The difficulty of the task facing the 36th Division, Walker said, ought not to be minimized. The German defenses would be tough to crack. But he felt confident, he said—or at least the people at the command post understood him to say—that his division would accomplish its mission and be in Sant'Angelo by the morning of 21 January.[13]

Keyes, who was well aware of Walker's earlier protests against the Rapido crossing, was cheered by the division commander's attitude at the meeting. When Keyes heard Walker say that he was sure his 36th Division could do the job, Keyes believed that Walker's misgivings over the ability of the division to establish the bridgehead had been dissipated.[14]

The failure of the 46th Division, on the immediate left of II Corps, to cross the Garigliano on the following night, 19 January, brought new concern.[15] General Keyes had for some time been disturbed by the assistance to be rendered by 10 Corps. According to Keyes's original understanding, the 46th Division was to cross the Garigliano at least forty-eight hours before II Corps crossed the Rapido. At virtually the last minute, Keyes learned that the British had postponed their effort—the 46th Division would launch its attack only twenty-four hours before the II Corps attempt. Keyes protested vigorously to General Clark, requesting a day's delay for his own assault. But the army commander held to the schedule, probably because of the timing of the Anzio landing.[16]

General Keyes wanted the 46th Division to attack two days ahead of the II Corps because he believed the British division would need more time to secure the ground Keyes considered essential for his own attack to succeed. A specific ridge that he designated above Sant'Ambrogio, if in British possession, would deny the Germans important observation over the Rapido flats. Unless the British gained this height, they could hardly cover the II Corps and 36th Division flank. Yet the 46th Division plan made no mention of the ridge as an objective. Thus, in Keyes's view, the plan was defective, for it assigned a bridgehead that would be too shallow

[12] Walker Diary, 8 Jan 44; Maj Gen Fred L. Walker (Ret.), Comments on the Rapido River Crossing, Jun 60, OCMH; Walker, "My Story," *Army* (September, 1952), pp. 52–60.

[13] Statement of Col Butchers, II Corps G–3, 24 Jan 44, AG 333.5.

[14] Interv, Crowl with Keyes, 22 Sep 55.

[15] See above, p. 320.

[16] Interv, Crowl with Keyes, 22 Sep 55.

to give the British a good foothold in the hills above Sant'Ambrogio. And this stemmed from what Keyes called "British unwillingness to launch attacks in force." Employing a tactical doctrine that he labeled "gradualism," the British would commit a platoon to probe an enemy position; if the platoon succeeded, a company would follow; and so on. To be of real help to the 36th Division, General Keyes believed, the 46th Division had to make a strong crossing with most of its strength committed. Only a large-scale effort would attract and engage German reserves, and this, plus capture of the ridge, would make feasible the Rapido crossing. Unless the 46th Division gave the real assistance that II Corps needed, Keyes informed Clark, "the effort of the II Corps risks becoming scarcely more than a demonstration or a holding attack." [17]

The failure of the 46th Division to cross the Garigliano, which General Clark characterized as "quite a blow" to his hopes, threatened to make General Keyes's prophecy come true.[18] The Germans, according to Keyes, had had little difficulty turning back what in his opinion had been less than a forceful effort.[19] General Walker's disappointment in the British attack intensified his doubts of his own chances, already weighing heavily on his mind. "General Hawkesworth, the 46th British Division Commander, now on my south flank, came to my Command Post this afternoon," Walker wrote in his diary shortly before his division was scheduled to attack, "to apologize for failure of his Division to cross the River last night. His failure makes it tough for my men who now have none of the advantages that his crossing would have provided." [20]

In partial compensation for the lack of a bridgehead in the Sant'Ambrogio area to protect the American left flank, a battalion of the 46th Division was attached to the 36th Division. After the Rapido crossings, the British battalion was to follow and hold the American flank on the south.

Other conditions besides the terrain, the enemy defenses, and the 46th Division failure contributed to General Walker's anxiety over his forthcoming attack. Despite his essentially simple plan, the co-ordination required was complex.

As early as 4 January, General Walker had directed his division engineer, Lt. Col. Oran Stovall, to make a topographical survey of the assault area in order to determine the engineer tasks and equipment needed for the operation. Gathering information from map study, aerial photographs, observation from forward positions, interrogation of Italian civilians, and intelligence reports, Colonel Stovall prepared his estimate. After spending three days trying to locate the equipment he thought would be needed, he "was surprised to find," Walker later remembered, "that there was an appalling lack of basic engineer supplies available." The standard footbridge was nowhere to be found, and all other items were scarce. Meeting with the corps engineer, Col. Leonard B. Gallagher, Stovall pointed out the difficulties. An attack through a muddy val-

[17] The last quote is from Memo, Keyes for Clark, 13 Jan 44, CG Opns (also in AG 333.5). The other quotes are from Interv, Crowl with Keyes, 22 Sep 55.

[18] See above, p. 320.

[19] Interv, Crowl with Keyes, 22 Sep 55.

[20] Walker Diary, 20 Jan 44.

ley that was without suitable approach routes and exit roads and that was blocked by organized defenses behind an unfordable river "would create an impossible situation and end in failure and great loss of life," Colonel Gallagher agreed. Yet the attack was scheduled, and to help make it successful, Gallagher promised to do his utmost to secure adequate equipment and furnish corps engineer troops to assist.[21]

The arrangements for engineer assistance were extensive. The 111th Engineer Combat Battalion, reinforced by two companies of the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion, was to have all crossing sites cleared of mines by 20 January, the day of the attack; to construct and maintain bridge approaches and exits before, during, and after the operation; to clear mines and maintain the roads in the bridgehead; and, as soon as the river banks were no longer under enemy fire, to build two Class 40 Bailey bridges or armored treadway bridges, large structures capable of supporting tanks and other heavy equipment. The 19th Engineer Combat Regiment was to attach a battalion to each assault infantry regiment. Each battalion was to provide at least 30 pneumatic reconnaissance boats, 20 assault boats, and 4 improvised footbridges for the infantry assault elements; to place this equipment during the night of 19 January where the infantrymen could use it; to construct a 6- or 8-ton pneumatic treadway infantry support bridge for vehicles; and, after the capture of Sant'Angelo, to install a Class 40 Bailey bridge.[22]

In compliance with the plan, the 111th Engineer Combat Battalion procured 100 wooden assault craft and 100 pneumatic reconnaissance boats, adding these to the organic stocks of 19 plywood and 13 pneumatic boats normally carried by the battalion. No footbridge equipment was available, but the battalion obtained fifty sections of catwalk and planned to improvise floating footbridges by laying the catwalk on pneumatic floats.

Besides supporting footbridges, pneumatic floats would be used to carry assault troops across the river. Each would hold 24 men, 14 of whom would have to paddle. In addition, 4 men were needed on shore to pull and guide the craft across the stream by rope. The pneumatic craft, which presented large and attractive targets to enemy fire and were easily punctured by shell fragments and bullets, were hard to beach and difficult to paddle, particularly if the paddlers were inexperienced and the current was swift.

The M–2 assault boat, a scow-type plywood boat with square stern and flat bottom, was about 13 feet long and more than 5 feet wide. It weighed 410 pounds. It would hold 12 men and a crew of 2. Designed to be transported in a nest of 7 per 2½-ton truck, the boats were bulky, heavy, and awkward to carry.

To save the assault infantrymen unnecessary exertion, the planners wanted the trucks to be unloaded at the water's edge. But there were no roads to the crossing sites that could support the weight of 2½-ton trucks. Even though Engineer troops spread inordinate amounts of gravel on the paths, trails, and wagon roads in the area, the fill had little effect. Despite the absence of rain during the ten days before the operation,

[21] Walker, Comments on the Rapido River Crossing, OCMH.

[22] 36th Div FO 42, 18 Jan 44, and Annex 3.

previous rainfalls had so soaked the Rapido River flats that the soggy ground was impassable to most track-laying and wheeled vehicles. Because German observation over the area and the lack of cover made it suicidal to try to negotiate the flats during daylight hours, the engineers placed the equipment in two dumps, one for each assault regiment, near the base of Monte Trocchio, several miles from the Rapido. The equipment would have to be carried from there to the crossing sites by the troops making the assault.[23]

The improvised footbridges—pneumatic floats and Bailey bridge catwalks—were to be constructed in advance of the operation. Infantrymen were to carry the bridges to the river and place them in the water. They were to work under the supervision of engineers, an engineer crew of about ten men assigned to each bridge to handle the guy lines, fasten end walks to the river banks, and maintain the bridge after installation.

The division was to receive a dozen amphibious trucks, but the loss of equipment during the rehearsal on 18 January for the Anzio landing deprived it of these vehicles. "I can not furnish the 36th Division with the 12 dukws," General Clark wrote in his diary with regret, "which they need so badly in their crossing of the Rapido." [24] Actually, the river was too narrow and the approaches were too muddy for these awkward wheeled vehicles to have much practical value.

To give the assault infantrymen practice in handling the river crossing equipment, two regiments of the 36th Division conducted rehearsals at the Volturno. The 143d Infantry reported that the "dry run" crossings "turned out to be very successful and gave confidence to unit commanders." [25] In contrast, General Walker found the training, which was conducted and supervised by Fifth Army staff members, "of little or no value because of the different characteristics of the two rivers" and because "little was taught besides methods of carrying, launching, and rowing the boats on a placid stream which had low banks." [26] Thus he had no compunction about changing his assault regiments. Having originally selected the 142d and 143d Infantry for the assault and having sent these regiments to the rehearsals at the Volturno, he later substituted the 141st for the 142d in order to equalize the amount of combat among his three regiments. The 142d Infantry had seen more action in previous battles, and it would remain in reserve at the Rapido.[27] The Fifth Army engineer, Brig. Gen. Frank O. Bowman, would later state his belief that the change of regiments broke up a trained infantry-engineer team.[28]

Also disappointed in the rehearsals at the Volturno was the commander of the 1st Battalion, 19th Engineer Combat Group, Maj. Jack S. Berry. The technical problems of a river crossing, he later said, "were hardly discussed" during the critique that followed the practice run. "Nor was I called upon," he added, "to

[23] Ltr, Narrative of Opns of the 141st Inf in the Crossing of the Rapido River on Jan 20 to 23, n.d. (about 27 Jan 44), 36th Div G-3 File; 111th Engr Combat Bn AAR, Jan 44.

[24] Clark Diary, 19 Jan 44.

[25] 143d Inf AAR, Jan 44.

[26] Walker, Comments on the Rapido River Crossing, OCMH.

[27] Comments, Walker to author, 1963.

[28] 2d Ind, 19th Engr Combat Regt Rpt of Engr Functions in Crossing of Rapido River, 18–22 January 1944, dated 29 May 44, II Corps G-3 Jnl.

offer observations or suggestions on the infantry participation." [29]

To Major Berry, the failure to request his views was a lack of courtesy that should have been extended to the engineers. He later felt that this denoted an absence of co-operation which became even more evident during the days immediately preceding the action. When he visited the 143d Infantry command post on 17 January to discuss the operation, "The infantry greeted me warmly," he said, "but when it came to business treated me casually." On the following day, during a conference held at the division command post, he was surprised to hear Colonel Martin, the 143d Infantry commander, outline the regimental plan. He learned for the first time that Martin's crossing points were different from the ones Berry was counting on. Trying to arrange a meeting with Martin after the conference, he was told that the regimental commander was too busy to see him. Berry settled for the lesser satisfaction of straightening out the differences with Martin's S–3. But what troubled Berry was that the infantry and engineers had failed to develop the close co-ordination which marks the well-trained team. This was especially necessary, he said, for an operation that everyone expected to be difficult.[30]

If close teamwork was indeed lacking among the elements of the 36th Division, it could in part be attributed to the severe losses the division had taken in its combat operations during December. The battles of Monte Maggiore and Monte Sammucro, Monte Lungo and San Pietro had depleted each regiment by almost 1,000 men. During early January, replacements arrived for about half of the losses. Not only would the assault regiments at the Rapido be understrength, the new men, who would constitute a high proportion of the assault units, would be inexperienced. They would hardly know their immediate leaders, who, in turn, would be unfamiliar with the replacements and their capacities.[31] If initiation into combat was fearsome in itself, it would be worse if it came in a night attack—and at the Rapido it would be awful.

The 141st Infantry planned to cross the Rapido at a single site upstream from Sant'Angelo. While the 2d Battalion in regimental reserve demonstrated by fire and feinted a crossing elsewhere, the 1st Battalion with three rifle companies abreast was to cross the water in boats and seize an area 1,100 to 1,500 yards deep. As supporting engineers started to install five footbridges across the river, the 3d Battalion was to cross, initially in boats, later on the bridges.[32]

Below Sant'Angelo, the 143d Infantry planned its assault crossing at two sites. About 1,000 yards downstream from Sant'Angelo, the 1st Battalion was to cross the river with companies in column. About 500 yards farther south, the 3d Battalion, also in a column of companies, was to cross. The 2d Battalion was to be ready to reinforce the attack at either site. One company in each assault battalion was expected to use boats, the other companies footbridges, two of which were to be laid at each site.[33]

Extensive night patrolling from 17 January on disclosed the strength of the

[29] Statement of Maj Berry, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] 143d Inf AAR, Jan 44.
[32] 141st Inf FO 16, 19 Jan 44.
[33] 143d Inf FO, 19 Jan 44.

enemy defenses. Patrols discovered numerous mines on both banks of the river, booby-trapped and mined barbed wire on the far bank, and an enemy "who is thoroughly alert."[34] Some patrols were unable to cross the river because of the immediate opposition they stirred up; most drew at least machine gun fire.

Engineers who reconnoitered the near bank of the Rapido to locate suitable crossing sites had difficulty with roving enemy groups. Having swept and taped lanes through mine fields to the crossing sites on the river bank during the last few nights immediately preceding the assault, the engineers had no certainty that the ground would remain cleared. German patrols were active on the near bank of the river, and it seemed possible, even probable, that they had relaid some mines.

During the night of 19 January, the assault battalions of both regiments moved off Monte Trocchio into assembly areas near the base of the mountain —flat marshland that forms the floor of the Rapido River valley. In the sparse clumps of trees and along the few hedges of the plain, the men tried to find and maintain concealment against the superb observation enjoyed by the enemy. To bolster the reserves immediately available to him, General Walker moved one battalion of the 142d Infantry from Mignano to Monte Trocchio.

On 20 January, the XII Air Support Command flew 124 sorties in support of the impending Rapido effort—64 P–40's bombed strongpoints near Sant'-Angelo, and 36 A–20's and 24 P–40's struck roads and gun positions around Cassino. A heavier effort was impossible because 10 Corps was calling for air in defense of its Garigliano bridgehead, and the imminent landing at Anzio had its air requirements too.

As darkness approached, General Walker's impression of impending disaster intensified. He wrote in his diary:

> Tonight the 36th Division will attempt to cross the Rapido River opposite San Angelo. Everything has been done that can be done to insure success. We might succeed but I do not see how we can. The mission assigned is poorly timed. The crossing is dominated by heights on both sides of the valley where German artillery observers are ready to bring down heavy artillery concentrations on our men. The river is the principal obstacle of the German main line of resistance. I do not know of a single case in military history where an attempt to cross a river that is incorporated into the main line of resistance has succeeded. So I am prepared for defeat. The mission should never have been assigned to any troops with flanks exposed. Clark sent me his best wishes; said he has worried about our success. I think he is worried over the fact that he made an unwise decision when he gave us the job of crossing the river under such adverse tactical conditions. However, if we get some breaks we may succeed.[35]

Darkness came early on the evening of 20 January, and with it came a heavy fog.[36] In the 141st Infantry area north of Sant'Angelo, men of the 1st Battalion left their assembly areas shortly before 1800. Each man carried at least one extra bandoleer of ammunition. Each rifle was loaded but, to prevent promiscuous or accidental firing carried no rounds in the chamber—a normal pro-

[34] 36th Div AAR, Jan 44.

[35] Walker Diary, 20 Jan 44.

[36] The following, unless otherwise noted, is based on the official records of the 36th Division and its assault regiments.

cedure for night operations. Bayonets were fixed.[37]

Moving to the dump where the boats for their crossing had been placed, the men quickly discovered that several boats had already been damaged beyond use or completely destroyed by enemy shells. Carrying the serviceable assault craft, the men of Company C left the dump around 1905, moving toward the river in a column of boat teams. Companies A and B followed around 1930.

About the same time sixteen battalions of American artillery, some in close support and others firing in general support, began a half-hour preparation, their volleys augmented by 4.2-inch mortar shells. The rounds were aimed to hit just beyond the river at first, then move westward according to a time schedule designed to keep them 150 to 200 yards ahead of the assault troops.

Soon after the preparatory fires started and long before the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, reached the river bank, German weapons retaliated. Fire struck the flats east of the stream. As the troops approached the bank, increasing numbers of enemy mortar and artillery shells fell among them. Company B lost thirty men, including the company commander and the executive officer, in a single volley.

As troops scattered for cover, dropping the boats they were carrying and in many instances their individual weapons, they got into mine fields, taking casualties and damaging boats.

The lanes had been swept and cleared of mines, then marked with tape. But the tapes soon became almost invisible and the lanes hard to find and follow. The engineers had originally used flat white tape, but they had changed to the round, brown marline cord because it was stronger and less likely to be detected by enemy observers. In the darkness, a man had to grope for a marker, then keep holding it while he followed the path. Because tape and cord had been destroyed by enemy fire in some places and trampled into the mud in others, guides often lost their way and sometimes became separated from the units they were leading; inevitably men walked into undetected or uncleared mine fields.

Realizing that his troops would still be on their way to the crossing site by H-hour, 2000, the regimental commander, Lt. Col. Aaron A. Wyatt, Jr., requested and obtained a continuation of the artillery preparation.

By H-hour, as men struggled to get to the crossing site, at least 25 percent of the engineer assault equipment was lost. As fast as they could be brought to the river's edge, boats and bridges in the 141st Infantry area were being damaged and destroyed by enemy fire; in some cases they were abandoned by the troops carrying them. Along with the enemy fire, the clumsiness of the infantry carrying parties and the lack of forceful leadership among them, according to Engineer reports, slowed the process of transporting the equipment to the river. Approximately half the bridges the troops were carrying had been damaged beyond use before they reached the stream. Once installed, the bridges would be quite stable, though all would eventually be destroyed by enemy fire.[38]

To Lt. Col. D. S. Nero, the command-

[37] NATOUSA Ltr, Allegations . . . , 1 Mar 44, AG 333. See also 141st Inf FO 17, 1200, 21 Jan 44.

[38] 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44; 2d Bn AAR included in the Gp AAR.

er of the 19th Engineers, everything seemed to be going wrong. It was a mistake to have substituted companies from the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion for organic companies of the 19th, which were used to working with the 36th Division. It was a mistake to expect troops to carry boats and bridges so far from dump to crossing site—no more than 200 or 300 yards at most was practical—and troops other than those in the assault units should have been detailed to carry the equipment. It was a mistake to depend on so few crossing sites and approach routes to the river—too many troops were concentrated and vulnerable to enemy fire. Intensifying the normal confusion incident to river assault crossings were other unfortunate conditions, according to Colonel Nero. The thick fog that had drifted in with the fall of night caused men to get lost and aided stragglers who strayed from duty. Bodies of men killed by mines and by fire and the destroyed and abandoned boats blocked traffic lanes. Some boats were placed in the river despite holes in them and went down quickly, sometimes carrying with them men loaded with combat equipment. Other boats sank because they were improperly launched or incorrectly paddled. Some boats in perfectly good condition were completely deserted because of the heavy incoming fire. And, finally, the engineers could not put the infantry across the river if the infantry had no will to go. It would have been better to have infantrymen in charge of boats and bridges, Colonel Nero believed, because many infantrymen resented taking orders from engineers.[39]

[39] Statement of Col Nero, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

Many factors worked against an orderly development of the operation. Inadequate mine clearance; lack of joint training of engineers and infantrymen, both of whom as a result "had their share of foul-ups"; frequent misunderstanding of oral orders; the problem of reporting troop locations accurately on maps; the prevalence of rumors and false reports; an absence of control over troop movements toward the river because of casualties among small unit leaders; ignorance of how to paddle a boat or how to install a footbridge; the failure of some guides to know the routes to the crossing sites; the heavy enemy fire; and the swift Rapido current—all contributed to the confusion and terror at the river.[40]

By 2100 a handful of brave men from Company C and a few boatloads of equally courageous men from Companies A and B, 141st Infantry, had survived the devastating fire and managed to make their way across the river. They encountered strong resistance. Numbering less than 100 men at most, they dug in and took cover, waiting for more troops to come across the stream. Their wait would be long; the build-up slow.

Behind them, on the near bank, engineers were trying to install four footbridges. One was destroyed by mines while it was being transported to the river. Another was found to be defective after it had been carried to the water. Two were knocked out by enemy artillery fire as they were being laid.

Using parts of all four bridges, engineer troops collected enough material to put together a single bridge, and this

[40] Statements of Capt Thomas J. Campbell, Lt Raymond C. Pownall, Capt Harold G. Zier, Capt Edgar F. Pohlmann, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

they set into place at 0400, 21 January, seven hours after the initial crossings. An hour later this footbridge was damaged by shellfire. Only enough of the bridge remained intact to support careful crossings by individual soldiers.

Using this slippery bridge and the few operational boats, most of the rifle companies of the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, had crossed the river by 0630. As for the infantry support bridge that was to have been constructed in the regimental area, the approach routes to the river were so poor and the volume of enemy fire was so heavy that trucks bearing bridge equipment were unable to reach the river. Engineer construction parties remained in their foxholes.[41]

Shortly before daybreak, enemy shells knocked out the telephone wires linking the companies on the far bank with the battalion headquarters on the near bank. All radios had by this time been lost or damaged during the crossings and the subsequent combat on the far bank. Signal communications across the river ceased. The noise of American rifles and machine guns firing gave the only indication of progress beyond the river, and the sounds indicated that the rifle companies were still very close to the bank.

With daylight coming and with it the certainty of even more accurate German fire, with the single damaged footbridge and a few boats the only means of crossing the water, and this much too slow a method of reinforcement, the assistant division commander, General Wilbur, decided there was little point in committing the 3d Battalion. He ordered all elements on the near bank of the river to retire to the previous assembly areas and take cover before daylight exposed them completely to German observation and fire. He sent a messenger to the far bank to instruct the troops to dig in and hold until reinforcements reached them.[42]

Either just before or just after General Wilbur dispatched his message to the troops across the river, Colonel Wyatt, the regimental commander, ordered the troops to return. Only a few were able to get across.[43]

The men remaining on the far bank dug foxholes 200 yards or so from the river's edge and prepared to withstand the continuing fire of small arms, machine guns, mortars, and artillery. To these weapons was soon added the noise of German tank motors, notice that the coming of daybreak would bring these engines of destruction into the battle. Without radio or telephone communication across the river, without prospect of immediate reinforcement, the troops on the far bank prepared to fight with the means at their disposal—their rifles and the few machine guns, grenades, and light mortars they had been able to carry across the river.

As early as 0715, 21 January, Colonel Wyatt began to plan another attack to reinforce the shallow bridgehead. A daylight crossing in the face of the strong German opposition seemed out of the question. Not enough smoke-generating equipment was immediately available to screen an attack. The division G–3 had notified each assault regiment the previous evening that 600 smoke pots per regiment were available at an army dump

[41] 2d Bn, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

[42] 36th Div AAR, Jan 44. See also 141st Inf AAR, Jan 44.

[43] Ltr, Wyatt to Walker, Opns on Rapido River, 23 Jan 44, 36th Div G–3 Jnl.

in the rear; the smoke pots were to be picked up and used if necessary to conceal the river in the morning "to get stuff across," meaning reinforcements and equipment.[44] But the regimental S–3's had received the information shortly after H-hour, when a host of messages dealing with the jump-off had vied for their attention. Whether trucks were dispatched to the army dump for the smoke pots in time to have them at the river by daylight is dubious. Had artificial concealment been available, the rifle companies might have pulled back from the far bank or been reinforced by the 3d Battalion.

For the regimental commander, the major factors that had prevented a successful crossing were the swiftness of the river current and the heavy enemy artillery, mortar, and small arms fire that destroyed assault boats and footbridges, separated guides from units, scattered infantrymen into uncleared mine fields, and generally spread confusion. Artillery forward observers with the assault companies had become casualties very early in the operation, and the dense fog had rendered artillery observation posts on Monte Trocchio useless. The German artillery fire that continued in slow cadence through the night was surprisingly effective.[45]

To the men across the river, 21 January was a long and ugly day. "Their whereabouts were never determined," the regimental commander wrote two days later, "since all attempts to establish communications during 21 January were unsuccessful." [46]

Below Sant'Angelo, in the 143d Infantry area, despite the pitch-black night and the heavy fog, engineer guides successfully led infantrymen of the 1st Battalion through lanes cleared of mines to the northern crossing site. A platoon of Company C launched its few assault boats at H-hour, 2000, 20 January, and crossed the river with little difficulty.

As the boats were returning to the near bank, enemy fire suddenly descended, destroying all the boats and inflicting casualties among Companies B and C on both sides of the river. A footbridge completed twenty minutes after H-hour was quickly knocked out, and the volume of the continuing shelling prevented repairs.

Only the first platoon of Company C —and this unit was by now reduced by casualties—was across the river by 2145. Engineers carried additional boats from the dump to the water and engineer work parties tried to install footbridges despite the enemy fire and the mines. Enough boats were placed in operation to get the remainder of casualty-ridden Company C over the river during the next hour.

At 2255, the regimental commander, Colonel Martin, went to the river accompanied by Brig. Gen. Paul W. Kendall, the assistant commander of the 88th Division, which was in the process of arriving in Italy. Kendall wanted to see combat in Italy at firsthand, and General Walker had asked him to help out in the 143d Infantry area. Martin and Kendall found Maj. David M. Frazior,

[44] Msg from G–3, 2050, 20 Jan 44, 143d Inf AAR, Jan 44.

[45] Ltr, Wyatt to Walker, Opns on the Rapido River, 23 Jan 44, 36th Div G–3 Jnl; Ltr, Narrative of Opns of the 141st Inf in the Crossing of the Rapido River on Jan 20 to 23, n.d. (about 27 Jan 44), 36th Div G–3 Jnl.

[46] Ltr, Wyatt to Walker, Opns on Rapido River, 23 Jan 44.

the 1st Battalion commander, trying vainly to get more boats forward. Since no available engineer troops seemed to be in the vicinity, Martin took part of Company B to the boat dump. There he found an engineer lieutenant and twenty-eight men in foxholes. Routing the men out of their holes, Martin had them help the infantrymen carry five boats to the stream. In these boats and over two footbridges that engineers had by then installed despite enemy fire, the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, completed its crossing of the Rapido. By this time it was 0500, 21 January. Not long afterward, German fire destroyed one footbridge and so badly damaged the other that troops could only cross one at a time.

On the far bank of the river, all efforts to move forward against the German lines failed. By 0700, the infantrymen had been forced into a pocket with the Rapido at their backs. Fifteen minutes later, the battalion commander, Major Frazior, asked Colonel Martin for permission to withdraw. The regimental commander transmitted the request to General Walker, who sent word that the battalion was to remain on the far bank and await reinforcement. By the time the order reached the battalion, Frazior himself had decided to pull back to avoid what, in his judgment, would be certain annihilation. By 0740, the men had been further compressed into a small position beside the river. Daylight revealed their location to German observers, and the troops were unable to maneuver. When German tanks joined the other weapons pulverizing the crossing site, Frazior estimated that his position had become altogether untenable. By 1000, all the men who were able to do so had returned to the near bank.

Had some of the deficiencies noted afterward by engineers been corrected at the outset, the assault might have gone better. Duckboards would have made it easier for troops to walk across the footbridges. Handrails and rope would have prevented many men from falling off the slippery walks. More competent engineer guides and better communications, orders changing less frequently, and infantrymen better trained to handle boats in the swift current would have improved the operation. But the incredibly difficult terrain on the near bank could not be remedied. One approach to the crossing site was a sunken trail four to seven feet deep, with six inches of water along the bottom; to walk in this narrow ditch, particularly while carrying boats, was virtually impossible yet altogether necessary to escape the enemy fire that swept the area.[47]

Major Berry noticed a basic deficiency that was summed up in a remark he overheard during the night. An infantry captain, Berry said, "indicated in no uncertain terms that the infantry needed no help from the engineers." While this was probably nothing more than exasperation, the comment emphasized to Berry the failure of infantry and engineers to establish close-knit teamwork for the operation.[48]

At the southern crossing site of the 143d Infantry, the engineer guides lead-

[47] Statements of Capt Wesley G. Moulton, Lt Jack K. Shurley, Sgt Epifanie Gonzales, and Sgt Donald W. Smith, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

[48] Statement of Maj Berry, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

ing the men of the 3d Battalion who were carrying boats to the river became lost in the darkness and fog. They wandered into a mine field, where exploding mines and shells took their toll of men and boats. Both infantrymen and engineers became disorganized, and several hours passed before a semblance of order could be restored. By 2250, all the rubber boats assigned to the battalion had been destroyed. Under the false impression that engineers were bringing wooden boats forward, the infantry waited for their arrival, while engineers at the crossing point waited for the hostile fire to lift so they could install footbridges.

Shortly after midnight, the regimental commander phoned the battalion commander, Maj. Louis H. Ressijac. "What is the situation?" Colonel Martin demanded.

"We have a few boats and one footbridge," Major Ressijac replied, "but we don't know the way through the mine field. Am looking for an engineer guide."

"When will your Battalion get boats in the water and start crossing?" Martin asked.

In an hour, Ressijac promised.

An hour later Ressijac reported over the telephone that he had lost four more boats. This left him five operational boats and a single footbridge.

At 0255, 21 January, Martin phoned again. Had any boats got to the crossing site?

"Yes," Ressijac said, "truck with five boats went by here about 45 minutes ago."

But the fire was too heavy, the confusion too rampant. No one managed to get across the river.

Losing all patience at 0500, Martin relieved Ressijac of command, replacing him with Lt. Col. Paul D. Carter.[49]

The command change had no effect or came too late. The approach of daylight promised only more accurate and devastating German fire. Without a single person having crossed the Rapido, the assault companies moved back to their original assembly areas shortly before daybreak.

Had the 46th Division on the immediate left of the regiment made its crossing successfully and taken the ridge General Keyes had designated as a vital point to cover the 36th Division, the men of the 143d Infantry at the southern crossing site might have at least done as well as the troops at the other crossing points. Had the engineer guides proved to be less bumbling, they would have got the infantry to the river. Had the infantry had more stomach for the operation, some men would have crossed the stream. According to an engineer soldier, "The infantrymen I talked with didn't like night fighting and lacked confidence in their ability to knock out the enemy in a night engagement." [50] According to the executive officer of the 143d Infantry, it was common knowledge in the battalions and at regimental headquarters that the units would fail in the crossing operation because the defenses on the far side of the river were too strong for infantrymen to attack and live.[51]

The *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, Senger, was surprised to learn that the

[49] 143d Inf AAR, Jan 44.

[50] Statement of Tech 5 Clayton H. Nelson, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

[51] Statement of Lt Col Henry H. Cardon, NATOUSA Ltr, Allegations . . . , 1 Mar 44, AG 333.

Americans had chosen to launch an attack across the Rapido. Besides considering the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* his best unit, he thought its defenses along the Rapido were among the strongest on the corps front. The natural strength of these positions and the fortifications that had been added required few troops to man the line. Yet, as it turned out, the division was concentrated in the Sant'Angelo area, not because Senger expected an important Allied attempt there but because he could from there shift troops easily to other points along the Gustav Line that he judged to be more critical.

If the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* was surprised by the 36th Division attack, the staff gave no indication of apprehension to higher headquarters. Nor was there even a flurry of consternation. "Strong enemy assault detachments, which have crossed the river," the division reported to the corps in the midmorning of 21 January, "are annihilated." [52]

To Vietinghoff, the *Tenth Army* commander, the effort of the 36th Division seemed to be nothing more than a reconnaissance in force. Not even the commitment of local reserves was necessary to turn it back.[53]

Early on 21 January, General Walker was in touch with his regimental commanders to see how best to reinforce the few men of the 141st Infantry on the far bank of the Rapido. Another attack across the river was necessary, but how soon could it be mounted? Colonel Wyatt, the regimental commander, judging a daylight crossing to be impossible, recommended another night operation. Walker approved and set 2100 as the hour for the attack. At 0820 he instructed Colonel Martin, the 143d Infantry commander, to make another assault at the same hour.

Not long afterward, at 0945, Colonel Martin was meeting with key personnel to discuss the new effort. He opened the conference by placing some of the blame for the failure of the preceding night on the engineers. "It appears that last night," Martin said, "they did not lead the troops through the lanes." Nor had they furnished an adequate supply of boats.

Turning to Major Berry, commander of the 1st Battalion, 19th Engineers, Colonel Martin asked whether the engineers were going to do better that evening. What, precisely, did they have available in the way of boats for the attack?

"I think," Berry replied somewhat vaguely, "there are 10 boats in the 3d Battalion [143d Infantry] area. There are actually two M–10 boats in the 1st Battalion area. There will be 17 more boats available."

Since this was not a large number, Berry added: "We have 72 pneumatic boats which can be pumped up and can be carried. They can be organized some way."

The vagueness of Berry's reply impelled Colonel Martin to another question. "How many of the 72 will you use as footbridges?"

If Berry answered, his reply went unrecorded.

Martin did not press the point. Instead, he concluded the conference with a pep talk. "You gentlemen must realize," he said, "this operation is a vital

[52] MS # C–095b (Senger), OCMH.
[53] Vietinghoff MSS.

operation and I trust that you have been in the army long enough [to know] that you can accomplish any mission assigned to you. It should have been proven last night." Among the various factors contributing to the failure, Martin declared, was the large number of men "who complain and try to return to the rear under pretense of illness." [54]

Some time earlier that morning, General Clark had received a report on the Rapido operation. According to information that came from his G–2, Colonel Howard, "The Germans are still reinforcing down in the Cassino-Rapido-Garigliano region, and this is an indication that the Germans are falling for this move to draw troops from the area where the SHINGLE [Anzio] force will invade." Without being at all clear as to what was actually happening—and he could not at that time have known specifically—Colonel Howard was referring to the movement of German reserves from the Rome area to block the British from expanding their bridgehead across the Garigliano. Whatever the reason for the arrival of additional troops to defend the Gustav Line, the Fifth Army attack that was designed to help the amphibious landing at Anzio seemed to be succeeding. General Clark immediately "talked with Keyes and . . . directed him to bend every effort to get tanks and tank destroyers across [the Rapido] promptly." [55]

Visiting the 36th Division command post around 1000 on 21 January to carry out this order, General Keyes directed General Walker to attack across the Rapido again as soon as he could. If bridges capable of supporting tanks and tank destroyers were installed just after the initial assault boats were launched, the operation, Keyes thought, might have a better chance of success. The division commander explained that since there was no possibility, in his opinion, of executing in daylight and with reduced forces an operation that had failed the previous night, he had already ordered the attack renewed at 2100. To the corps commander, this seemed much too long to wait, particularly in view of the army commander's instructions. The attack, Keyes informed Walker, would have to go at once or as soon as possible, in any event earlier than 2100. Although Walker pointed out that the disorganization of the assault elements and the destruction of engineer equipment made an immediate attack impossible, Keyes was adamant. With no choice but to comply, Walker, after consulting with his staff, his regimental commanders, and the engineer officers, set 1400 as the time for resuming the crossing attempt. "I expect this attack to be a fizzle just as was the one last night," General Walker wrote in his diary.[56]

General Walker had selected the hour of 1400 after the engineers promised to have 50 assault boats and 50 rubber boats in the division area and moved to forward assembly areas by 1230. Informed at 1120 of the 1400 H-hour, Colonel Wyatt began immediately to search for the arriving boats. Advised at 1310 of the 1400 H-hour, Martin protested—no boats had arrived. Walker postponed Martin's attack to 1500. Checking with Wyatt at 1340, and learning that none of Wyatt's boats had ar-

[54] 143d Inf AAR, Jan 44.
[55] Clark Diary, 21 Jan 44.
[56] Walker Diary, 21 Jan 44.

rived either, Walker gave Wyatt the same hour's delay. Not long afterward, Martin telephoned the division commander—his battalion commanders had objected to the 1500 attack hour; it was too early to launch the attack because no boats were yet forward; an H-hour of 1600, Martin's battalion commanders proposed, would be more realistic. Walker accepted the suggestion. At 1420, with boats finally reported on the way though still not at hand, Walker notified Wyatt to delay his attack until 1600. At 1545, Wyatt located boats that had been in his regimental area since 1430, but because it was by then much too late to organize and launch an attack to meet the 1600 deadline, Wyatt ordered his assault for 2100. In contrast, although Martin remonstrated that all his promised boats had still not arrived, Walker insisted that Martin's attack go at 1600 with whatever boats were on hand.

It was more than the matter of boats that held up a renewal of the attack. The assault units were dispersed. Morale had been fundamentally shaken. And the large amounts of smoke put out during the day confused the American troops more than the Germans, handicapping forward observers and preventing observed artillery fire. General Keyes later admitted his error in having ordered too much artificial haze.[57]

Below Sant'Angelo, the 143d Infantry jumped off at 1600, 21 January, as the 3d Battalion, concealed by a liberal use of smoke, ferried its rifle companies across the Rapido in rubber boats. By 1830 all the rifle companies were on the west bank, and shortly thereafter the heavy weapons, with the exception of the mortar sections, joined the rifle units. The engineers began to construct a footbridge, which was completed shortly after midnight. Using both footbridge and boats, the remaining elements of the battalion, including the headquarters, moved across the river. All of the 3d Battalion was now on the far side.

Colonel Martin ordered his 2d Battalion to follow the 3d across the river. While Company G remained in defensive positions around the crossing site on the near bank to guard the rear and keep the footbridge and an exit from the bridgehead open, Companies E and F crossed the river.

On the far bank, the troops advanced about 500 yards beyond the river. There they were pinned down by what they later described as heavy resistance. Staff Sgt. Thomas E. McCall of Company F, who virtually spearheaded his company attack, was last seen advancing on German emplacements while firing his machine gun from the hip.[58]

What the troops in the bridgehead needed was the close support of tanks and tank destroyers, and Colonel Martin on the near bank kept pressing the engineers to start work on more substantial bridges. If they could not install 6- or 8-ton ponton bridges, let them erect Bailey bridges. The engineers tried to get Bailey bridge equipment forward, but the trucks bearing the matériel were still not unloaded by 0400, 22 January.

Colonel Martin's requests for Bailey bridges surprised the corps engineer, Colonel Gallagher, for the normal sequence was to construct ponton bridges first, then Bailey bridges. Furthermore,

[57] Interv, Crowl with Keyes, 22 Sep 55, OCMH. See also Intervs, Mathews with Keyes, 18–20 Dec 52, OCMH.

[58] Sergeant McCall was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

no work on bridges was supposed to be undertaken until enemy small arms fire was no longer being received at the crossing site. Since an insufficient number of troops had crossed the river on the first night to clear any of the crossing points, no ponton infantry-support bridges had been built. And consequently, no Bailey bridge equipment had been brought forward. But during the second night of operations, 21 January, someone at division headquarters, according to Gallagher, changed the corps plan and directed that Bailey bridges be installed immediately on the heels of the assault crossings by boat.[59] This made little sense because it took engineers anywhere from six to eight hours to put in a Bailey bridge but only forty-five minutes to an hour to put in a 6- or 8-ton ponton bridge—under normal circumstances, of course.[60]

What neither Colonel Gallagher nor his deputy knew was that the change had been made at corps headquarters. According to Lt. Col. Ralph J. Butchers, the II Corps G–3, delay in establishing bridgeheads during the first night of operations had prevented work from starting on 6- or 8-ton ponton support bridges. Rather than waste time during the second night building the lighter bridges that would have to be replaced once the bridgeheads were firmly established, the corps commander decided to start erecting Bailey bridges at once. Furthermore, Bailey bridges seemed more practical than ponton treadways because of the high dikes along both banks of the Rapido. To install the water-level ponton bridges would necessitate considerable work to cut down the dikes for approaches, and cutting down the dikes might flood the bridge approaches. Installing Bailey span-type bridges on the tops of the dikes appeared to be far more practicable.[61] With these structures in place, the 36th Division could get the tanks and tank destroyers across the river.

To the engineer battalion responsible for supporting the 143d Infantry, Colonel Martin's insistence on calling for Bailey bridges was somewhat incomprehensible. With enemy small arms fire far from being neutralized, construction of a Bailey bridge was manifestly impossible.[62] To the Fifth Army engineer, attempts to use Bailey bridging as assault bridging were completely "unjustified." [63]

Despite the consternation provoked by Colonel Martin's calls to start erecting a Bailey bridge in the area of the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, the engineers in support tried to comply. Engineer mine parties swept the approaches to the bridge site, completing the task by midnight of the 21st. Trucks from the 175th Engineer Battalion hauling the bridge equipment to the river were then ordered forward. When broken culverts on the approach routes and sticky mud bogged down the trucks, engineer troops unloaded the vehicles and carried the Bailey bridge equipment to the site by hand. There, German small arms fire compelled them to wait for the banks to be cleared. But the banks were not

[59] Statement of Col Gallagher, II Corps Engr, 24 Jan 44, AG 333.5.

[60] Statement of Capt Leon F. Morand, Asst II Corps Engr, 24 Jan 44, AG 333.5.

[61] Statement of Col Butchers, 25 Jan 44, AG 333.5.

[62] 1st Bn AAR, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

[63] 2d Ind, 19th Engr Combat Regt, Rpt of Engr Functions in Crossing of Rapido River, 18–22 Jan 44, dated 29 May 44, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

cleared that night and the engineers failed to construct the bridge.[64]

At the other crossing site in the 143d Infantry area, the 1st Battalion had also moved toward the river at 1600, 21 January. By 1835 Companies A and B were across in boats. Unable to follow immediately because of heavy German fire, Company C started across the stream at 2225. An hour and a half later, part of the company had joined the other rifle elements on the far bank. About this time engineers completed a footbridge.

When the battalion commander, Major Frazior, received word that his forward units were bogged down about 200 yards beyond the river, he crossed the Rapido to get them moving. His efforts were unavailing. The resistance was too strong.

At 0135, 22 January, Frazior radioed the regimental commander, Colonel Martin, that he was wounded—"I had a couple of fingers shot off" was his nonchalant report. Martin sent a new commander, Lt. Col. Michael A. Meath, to take over. By the time Meath reached Frazior and relieved him, almost three and a half hours had passed.

By then, at 0500, all three rifle company commanders had become casualties. The single footbridge and all the boats used by the battalion had been destroyed. An hour and a half later, engineers had put in two more footbridges. But these served for the most part only to permit infantrymen to straggle back across the river to the near bank on one pretext or another. Colonel Meath estimated around daybreak that his battalion combat strength on the far bank was down to 250 enlisted men.

Efforts to get more substantial bridges across the stream in this area were also unavailing. At 0655, 22 January, Major Berry, commander of the 1st Battalion, 19th Engineers, informed Colonel Martin that bridging equipment was too far from the bridge sites for work to continue. Several trucks loaded with bridge equipment had tumbled into ditches. Work that had been started on a Bailey bridge at 0300 was only 5 percent completed four hours later. According to Berry's estimate, the bridge could be finished by 1500 "if no enemy interference is encountered."[65]

At 0715, Colonel Martin told Berry that the bridge had to be built regardless of enemy fire. Why didn't Berry use smoke?

Berry said he was already using smoke pots.

Martin said he would get more.

While the regimental commander tried to obtain more smoke screening equipment, the units in the bridgehead suffered incredible punishment. About 1000 the 1st Battalion had a shallow bridgehead wih Companies A and B and part of Company C at the southern crossing site; at the northern site, the 3d Battalion had a bridgehead about 500 yards deep with Companies I and K effectively holding the perimeter—Company L was badly disorganized as the result of heavy casualties; the 2d Battalion, reinforcing the 3d, had Companies E and F no more than 300 yards beyond the river, while Company G on the near bank protected a footbridge

[64] Statement of Col Gallagher, 24 Jan 44, AG 333.5.

[65] 143d Inf AAR, Jan 44.



BRINGING CASUALTIES BACK FROM THE RAPIDO

which had by then been struck by artillery fire and rendered unserviceable. Resistance against the forces in both bridgeheads continued to be strong.

All work to erect Bailey bridges had by then come to a halt. General Kendall found one group of engineers in foxholes about one and a half miles from the bridge site. "They are dug in and scared," Kendall radioed Colonel Martin. "Work has not begun on Bailey bridge. [I] got them out of their holes and started them on their way to bridge site." But the engineers were moving toward the river most reluctantly. He did "not anticipate," Kendall added, "they would accomplish a thing." [66]

With no hope that a vehicular bridge would be established soon, with his troops in open flats across the river at the mercy of the Germans, and with casualties mounting, the positions on the far bank became untenable. Colonel Martin ordered his units to withdraw. By early afternoon, all three battalions were back. Only a few isolated groups remained in enemy territory.

Asked several days later to explain what had been responsible for the failure of the 143d Infantry to gain and secure a bridgehead, the regimental commander listed the fog that made engineer guides lose their way and lead men into mine fields, the enemy mines and fire that destroyed boats and bridges, the dispersal and disorganization of both

[66] *Ibid.*

engineers and infantrymen that resulted from the thoroughgoing confusion. But the major cause, in his opinion, was one that he could express only indignantly and somewhat incoherently:

> Losses from attacks of this kind are tremendous in man power and materiel, and in addition have a devastating demoralizing effect upon those few troops who survive them . . . As long as leaders . . . have the guts to plunge into hopeless odds such as this operation, [and men] are sacrificed like cannon fodder, our success in battle will suffer in proportion and disaster will eventually come.[67]

North of Sant'Angelo, the 141st Infantry had launched its attack at 2100, 21 January. The troops found most of the assembled boats defective. The few undamaged boats on hand were enough to carry only a small part of Company F across the Rapido.[68] Five hours later these men had eliminated German riflemen and machine gunners who had been firing directly on the crossing site. At that time, 0200, 22 January, engineers installed two improvised footbridges. Two hours later, the rest of the 2d Battalion was across. Over these footbridges and a third installed later, the rifle companies of the 3d Battalion crossed single file. By dawn all these troops were on the far side.

The troops who established and built up a slender bridgehead on the far side of the Rapido found no survivors of the 1st Battalion, which had crossed the river the first night. Reinforcement had come too late.

The two battalions advanced about 1,000 yards beyond the river, and there, having suffered severe casualties, the men dug in.[69]

Meanwhile, engineers on the near bank were trying to get more substantial bridges installed. At 0055, after frantic search, engineers located the equipment for a Bailey bridge and started the trucks with the equipment toward the bridge site. Eight hours later, despite heroic exertions by engineer troops in this area, the soggy ground and the continuing enemy fire were still preventing the actual work from getting under way. At 0945, 22 January, work was temporarily suspended; it was never resumed. The footbridges that had sustained the crossings were, in the meantime, washed away by the current or destroyed by enemy fire, although engineers were able to keep one footbridge in place and open for traffic much of the time.

The coming of light brought morning mist and fog that limited visibility to fifty yards and helped the assault and supporting troops. When the sun began to dissipate the haze, smoke pots were used to screen the crossing site. Despite the concealment, enemy fire continued to be heavy and, though largely unobserved, effective. Between 0400 and 0630, an estimated 300 rounds of artillery fell in the division command post area, inflicting several casualties. And at 0900, an alarming, though incorrect, report circulated and spread that the Germans had made their own crossing on the 141st Infantry front. In the bridgehead, the continuing German opposition made it impossible to reorganize the units for a resumption of the attack.

[67] Ltr, 143d Inf Narrative of Rapido Crossing, 27 Jan 44, 36th Div G–3 Jnl.

[68] Ltr, Wyatt to Walker, Opns on Rapido River, 23 Jan 44, 36th Div G–3 Jnl.

[69] *Ibid.*

Early in the afternoon of 22 January, as the three battalions of the 143d Infantry south of Sant'Angelo were withdrawing to the safety of the near side of the river, the situation in the 141st Infantry area north of Sant'Angelo began to deteriorate. The first indication came around 1300 as the telephone lines across the Rapido started to go out. Radio signals soon faded. By 1500 all officers in the headquarters of the two battalions across the river were casualties. By 1600 every commander on the far side of the river, except one, had been killed or wounded. About this time a shell landed squarely on the single footbridge still spanning the stream, knocking it out of commission.

With all boats by then destroyed, the infantrymen on the far side of the river were isolated. With no leaders, combat effectiveness disintegrated. The volume of German fire increased significantly, while the sound of American weapons appreciably declined. Between 1800 and 1900, about forty men returned to the near bank, swimming across the river or paddling across while they held onto logs or pieces of debris. The situation they reported was hopeless. At 2000 the sound of American weapons died. A few more men made it back across the river. The others were killed or captured.

Although General Keyes directed and General Walker in compliance alerted the 142d Infantry in division reserve to be ready to pass through the 141st Infantry and resume the attack, the movement was canceled. Further offensive efforts by the 36th Division ceased. The corps and division commanders would continue to plan to renew the assault across the Rapido, but the attempts to cross [the river] had seriously depleted the participating regiments and profoundly shaken morale.

General Walker wrote in his diary:

> January 22 will long stand out in my memory as definitely as December 25 or July 4. Yesterday two regiments of this Division were wrecked on the west bank of the Rapido. Thank the Lord, General Keyes finally changed his mind and authorized me to call off the attack of the 142d Infantry which he directed me to make at 2:30 this morning. I had advised against the 142d making such an attack at the same place where the 141st Infantry had failed and had suffered so many losses. But he insisted that the attack go on. Later after thinking it over, he called on the phone and authorized me to cancel the attack which I did in a hurry. Thus many lives and a regiment were saved.[70]

When the survivors of the 141st Infantry were counted on the morning of 23 January, there were pitifully few—the 1st Battalion had 398 men, the 2d Battalion 309, and the 3d 283.[71] The loss figures that were later totaled, after stragglers and others returned to their units, showed that the 36th Division had incurred 1,681 casualties in its organic organizations—143 killed, 663 wounded, and 875 missing during the 48-hour operation. To these must be added the casualties in the attached units.

The *15th Panzer Grenadier Division,* operating on a plain behind the Gari River and fighting from well dug-in positions, had caught the 36th Division in a firetrap. According to its figures, the division had captured 500 Americans during the 2-day battle. German losses were negligible. The division report of the operation was a laconic statement that

[70] Walker Diary, 23 Jan 44.

[71] Ltr, Wyatt to Walker, Opns on Rapido River, 23 Jan 44, 36th Div G–3 Jnl.

the *15th* had "prevented enemy troops from crossing S. Angelo." [72]

Not until some time after the attack did Senger, the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, realize the significance of the American effort and the importance of the defensive success. Generalmajor Eberhardt Rodt, the *15th Panzer Grenadier Division* commander, was a modest man, and his reports minimized the tactical victory he had won. Only after Senger's staff began to make a systematic accounting of the American dead and prisoners of war did Senger understand what Rodt's troops had achieved.[73]

On the evening of 21 January, twenty-four hours after the 36th Division had launched its first attack, General Clark learned that, "as was anticipated, heavy resistance was encountered in the 36th Division crossing of the Rapido River." [74] His attention almost completely occupied on 22 January with the amphibious landings at Anzio, the army commander visited his corps commanders along the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers on the morning of the 23d to stress the necessity of continuing strong pressure against the enemy "at all costs." After conferring with General Keyes, then with General Juin, General Clark returned to the II Corps headquarters; accompanied by Keyes, he then set out for the 36th Division command post. There he discussed with Generals Keyes, Walker, and Wilbur the situation along the 36th Division front. Clark had lunch at the division mess, then departed for visits with the 34th Division commander, General Ryder, and the 10 Corps commander, General McCreery.[75]

General Clark impressed upon all three corps commanders the necessity for giving the Germans no rest, for preventing them from making an orderly withdrawal toward Anzio, and for advancing to the Anzio beachhead at the earliest possible moment. Since the weariness of the 36th Division prevented II Corps from making a massive effort, and since the terrain in the area of the French Expeditionary Corps seemed to preclude a decisive thrust there, Clark looked to 10 Corps to exert additional pressure. "In view of . . . Operation SHINGLE," he cabled McCreery that evening, "absolutely essential 10 Corps continue attack to secure objectives previously designated." [76]

As for what had happened at the Rapido, General Clark set down his thoughts:

> In deciding upon that attack some time ago, I knew it would be costly but was impelled to go ahead with the attack in order that I could draw to this front all possible German reserves in order to clear the way for SHINGLE. This was accomplished in a magnificent manner. Some blood had to be spilled on either the land or the SHINGLE front, and I greatly preferred that it be on the Rapido, where we were secure, rather than at Anzio with the sea at our back.

But the failure of that attack had not changed the conditions that had made it necessary. "We must [still] get a bridgehead over the Rapido in order to permit the debouchment of our tank forces into the Liri valley.[77] To that end, new plans were being prepared.

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72 MS # C-095b (Senger), OCMH. See also Vietinghoff MSS.

73 Interv, Crowl with Senger, 22 Sep 55, OCMH.

74 Clark Diary, 21 Jan 44.

75 *Ibid.*, 23 Jan 44.

76 *Ibid.*

77 *Ibid.*

Having put down his thoughts on the Rapido crossing, General Clark never again referred to it in his diary during the course of the war. He regretted the losses and the failure. But the condition that had prompted the attack, the need to assist the Anzio landings, was, as he reiterated after the war, "more than sufficient justification" in his opinion for the assault.[78]

In contrast, General Walker brooded. The division had been badly hurt, just as he had feared. And to no justifiable end, in his opinion. Soon after his conference with his two superior commanders on the morning of 23 January, he wrote:

> I fully expected Clark and Keyes to "can" me to cover their own stupidity. They came to my headquarters today but were not in a bad mood. Clark admitted the failure of the 36th Division to cross the Rapido was as much his fault as any one's because he knew how difficult the operation would be. He has now decided to attack over the high ground to the north of Cassino. . . . This is what he should have done in the first place.[79]

The army commander's attitude and words that morning appeared to General Walker to exonerate his division from fault, and he hastened to document the conversation by asking his assistant division commander, General Wilbur, to give him a typed and signed statement of corroboration. Wilbur's report of the visit, dated the same day, which Walker pasted into his diary, described the talk that had taken place among Generals Clark, Keyes, Walker, Wilbur, and Brig. Gen. Walter W. Hess, Jr., the division artillery commander. Clark had opened the meeting with the remark: "Tell me what happened up here." And the commanders had discussed the operation of the previous forty-eight hours. There was no attempt to blame anyone for the serious losses inflicted on the division. At one point, Keyes said that according to the information available to him beforehand the assault crossing had seemed to be a most worthwhile effort. "It was as much my fault," Clark said to Keyes, "as yours." [80]

Seeking an explanation for the disaster and the tragedy, which affected him deeply, General Walker saw in General Clark's words an admission of error. "The great losses of fine young men during the attempts to cross the Rapido to no purpose and in violation of good infantry tactics," Walker wrote a few days later, "are very depressing. All chargeable to the stupidity of the higher command." [81]

This to him became the reason for the failure: the incompetence of his superiors. Because Walker was unaware of the larger situation, in particular the close relationship between the projected OVERLORD operation and the Anzio landing, he could understand neither the need for haste nor the requirement to get tanks into the Liri valley quickly. He suspected that Clark's impatience to get into the Liri valley and to Rome stemmed altogether from an exaggerated personal ambition.[82]

Seeing the German positions in the Cassino area as the end of the enemy's delaying actions in southern Italy, Walk-

78 Clark, *Calculated Risk*, pp. 277–78.

79 Walker Diary, 23 Jan 44.

80 Statement of Gen Wilbur, Walker Diary, 23 Jan 44.

81 Walker Diary, 25 Jan 44.

82 Walker, "My Story," *Army* (September, 1952), pp. 52–60.

er felt, from his conversations with Clark and Keyes, "that my ideas did not receive logical consideration." Neither superior, in his opinion, "fully realized that piece-meal attacks and bold and venturesome movements, suitable against rear guard and delaying operations, would no longer be suitable against the prepared defensive positions [of the Gustav Line]." [83]

Yet it was obvious to the Allied command early in January that the Gustav positions were designed for indefinite defense. "Even if we penetrate soon to the Pescara line [on the east coast of Italy]," an intelligence report stated, "this need in no way jeopardize the Cassino positions." [84] And despite General Walker's belief that his superiors paid little attention to the technical details that determine the eventual success or failure of a tactical operation, Clark and Keyes had discussed over a long period of time the advantages and disadvantages of all sorts of possible and alternative maneuvers, and their staffs had worked long and hard to prepare detailed plans for a variety of operations.[85]

Although General Clark recalled that the decision to cross the Rapido originated with General Alexander, General Keyes was under the "firm impression" that crossing the Rapido was "General Clark's baby." [86] In mid-December, Clark had ordered Keyes to prepare to secure a bridgehead across the Rapido. General Clark was aware of the strength of the Gustav defenses. The terrain, German improvements of the natural defensive features, and the quality of the defending troops all led to the correct estimate that the heaviest German defenses were between Cassino and the mouth of the Liri River.[87] He expected the 36th Division to "be badly worn down by their crossing of the Rapido."[88] But he was convinced that the attack was necessary.

Kesselring later said he believed that "the frontal attack across the Rapido should never have been made." [89] But Kesselring, unlike the Allied commanders, knew what the earlier thrust across the Garigliano River by the 10 Corps had accomplished in the way of disrupting the Gustav Line defenses and drawing to them the reserves Kesselring had collected near Rome. From his point of view, obviously, the attack across the Rapido was unnecessary—Kesselring had already dispatched his reserves to the Garigliano. But this the Allied commanders could hardly have been expected to know.[90] Yet even had the Allied commanders appreciated fully what the Garigliano crossing had achieved, there was still need to join quickly with the amphibious elements coming ashore at Anzio. An armored strike up the Liri valley was without question the quickest method along the best avenue to junction with the Anzio beachhead. And this required a bridgehead over the Rapido.

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83 Walker, Comments on the Rapido River Crossing, OCMH.

84 Middle East Force Weekly Intel Summary, 11 Jan 44, OCMH File Geog L, 370.2.

85 See, for example, Ltrs, Keyes to Clark, 11, 28 Dec 43, CG Opns.

86 Philip A. Crowl, Command Decision: The Rapido River Crossing, 20–22 January 1944, Lecture before the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 30 Sep 55, copy in OCMH.

87 Fifth Army G–2 Rpt, 9 Jan 44. See also Opn LIGHTNING, p. 67, and French Expeditionary Corps G–2 Rpts, 10–20 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–2 Jnl.

88 Clark Diary, 9 Jan 44.

89 *U.S. News and World Report* (September 2, 1955), p. 66.

90 See Effect of Rapido Operation on German Plans and Dispositions, OCMH File Geog M Germany 381 (Plans).

According to Senger, the Americans should have made their main attack across the lower Garigliano River and moved from there into the Liri valley from the south. This was what Keyes had suggested. But if Senger appreciated the vulnerability of that route of approach to the Liri valley, why had he put his weakest division, the *94th,* in this most likely path of attack? Because, Senger explained, the *94th Division* was an infantry division and had nine battalions instead of the six organic to panzer grenadier divisions. Since the Garigliano River below the confluence of the Liri was the longest in terms of distance assigned to any division, and since the division also had responsibility for guarding against landings on the coast, Senger had placed the *94th* there simply because it had more men.[91]

If war is regarded as a chess game, with the rules of logic the only determining factor, the best move would probably have been to exploit the success achieved on the British 10 Corps front by committing the 36th Division or part of it, not across the Rapido but through the bridgehead already established across the lower Garigliano. Had both 10 and II Corps been either British or American, this commitment, despite the difficulty of sideslipping a division or regiment in the line, would have been feasible. But the practical exigencies of coalition warfare, specifically the complications arising from committing an American division in a British zone without prior arrangements, made this course of action difficult if not altogether impossible.

[91] Interv, Crowl with Senger, 22 Sep 55, OCMH.

What had brought disaster to the Rapido River crossings was a series of mishaps, a host of failures, a train of misfortune. Because the near bank of the river was never completely under American control, reconnaissance, mine clearance, and the preparation of approaches to crossing points and bridge sites were incomplete.[92] The great weight and awkwardness of the assault boats, the vulnerability to fire of the pneumatic floats, the absence of standard footbridge equipment, and the reduced effectiveness of artillery support because of the overuse of smoke were contributing factors.[93] Supplies were insufficient and had been stored where they could not immediately be obtained when needed; there was a "lack of co-operation from higher headquarters" and an absence of confident infantry-engineer co-ordination; infantry reports "dribbled in from time to time, keeping us [engineers] thoroughly confused on progress of attack"; darkness, fog, and smoke made it impossible to see the enemy troops, and the men had little opportunity to fire; engineers lost their way and troops accidentally entered mine fields.[94] The result was a mounting confusion that led to near hysteria and panic. "Most boats got to the river or near there. Some Infantry crossed the river. Others refused to enter the boats. Machine Gun fire caused footbridge to be abandoned. The

[92] 2d Ind, 19th Engr Combat Regt, Rpt of Engr Functions in Crossing of Rapido River, 18–22 Jan 44, dated 29 May 44, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

[93] 19th Engr Combat Regt, Rpt of Engr Functions in Crossing of Rapido River, 18–22 Jan 44, 29 May 44, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

[94] Statements of Capt Charles T. Mewshaw and Maj Arthur J. Lazenby, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44; NATOUSA Ltr, Allegations . . . , 1 Mar 44, AG 333; Ltr, 143d Inf Narrative of Rapido Crossing, 27 Jan 44, 36th Div G–3 Jnl.

Engineers took shelter in a nearby ditch; the Infantry retreated back. Everything became disorganized." [95]

To a chaplain who observed the operation at close range, "confusion reigned" because of the dense fog, the "maze of roads and pathways through vineyards and other uneven terrain," and the disrupted telephone communications. Many men became lost, "nervous uncertainty prevailed—the situation was no longer in a firm grasp—but out-of-hand, unhandled." Quite a few infantrymen tried in all sincerity to get across the river, some refused to cross, and others fell into the water deliberately to avoid crossing. Too many troops, it seemed to him, were taking part in their first action under fire.[96]

Perhaps most important, the "men were not keen for this attack." The troops had no confidence in the eventual success of the operation, and the second attempt had no better chance of succeeding than the first.[97]

A strange epilogue took place soon after the end of World War II. The 36th Division had been a National Guard unit before entering federal service, and its members had originally come from Texas. The Thirty-sixth Division Association, in convention at Brownwood, Texas, on 19 January 1946, adopted a resolution calling for a congressional investigation into the Rapido River attack —"to investigate the Rapido River fiasco and take the necessary steps to correct a military system that will permit an inefficient and inexperienced officer, such as Gen. Mark W. Clark, in a high command to destroy the young manhood of this country and to prevent future soldiers from being sacrificed wastefully and uselessly." [98]

The senate of the state of Texas endorsed and approved the resolution of the Thirty-sixth Division Association, and the Committees on Military Affairs of both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate held hearings to determine whether an investigation was warranted. The hearings turned out to be farcical, for with one exception, General Walker, who stated his position with dignity, the witnesses proved to be ill informed of the facts.

There the matter died. An investigation of the operation was, obviously, unjustified. As Mr. Robert P. Patterson, Secretary of War, stated, he had found after careful examination "that the action to which the Thirty-Sixth Division was committed was a necessary one and that General Clark exercised sound judgment in planning it and in ordering it." [99]

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95 Co A Diary, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

96 Statement of Chaplain (Capt) James T. Fish, 19th Engr Combat Gp AAR, Jan 44.

97 Rpt 126, Artillery Lessons from the Attempted Rapido River Crossing, 2 Mar 44, AGF Bd Rpts.

98 House Committee on Military Affairs, *Hearings, The Rapido Crossing*, 79th Cong., 2d sess., February 20, March 18, 1946, p. 14. By the time of the Rapido operation, men from many states had entered the division. Of the battle casualties incurred by the 36th Division during the month of January 1944, a total of 295 men were from the state of New York, 288 were from Texas, and 229 were from Pennsylvania. See 143d Inf AAR, Jan 44.

99 House Committee on Military Affairs, *Hearings, The Rapido River Crossing*, 79th Cong., 2d sess., p. iv. See also Senate Committee on Military Affairs, *Hearings, Keyes Materials*, June 11, 1946, OCMH.

CHAPTER XX

The Anzio Landing

The jubilation that the decision for Anzio had brought to the Fifth Army headquarters on 8 January was part of a general surge of optimism that spread throughout the higher levels of the theater command. The deadlock in southern Italy seemed about to be split wide open. A successful landing at Anzio would dissolve the Gustav Line defenses and enable General Clark to move quickly into Rome and pursue the Germans into northern Italy and beyond. General Eisenhower would ensure victory with the cross-Channel attack that was then scheduled for May. ANVIL, the invasion of southern France, would be unnecessary. The war would be over by autumn at the latest.

This imaginative picture appeared reasonable. No one had realized during the summer of 1918 how near the Allied forces were to victory in World War I. Why should there not be a swift and sudden triumph in 1944?

There seemed no reason in the world as the commanders and planners involved in the Anzio landing buckled down to solve the complex problems attending the launching of an amphibious operation. As the probability of an invasion of southern France receded into the mist of speculation, General Clark expressed his desire to remain in command of his Fifth Army rather than take command of the Seventh Army. He had no wish, his aide recorded, to be in command of a planning headquarters when the war ended "and thereby miss a chance to march into Germany at the head of this Army." [1]

When General Alexander arrived at the Fifth Army command post on 9 January to confer with General Clark on the Anzio operation, he brought a letter from Prime Minister Churchill urging the speedy capture of Rome. Without Rome, Mr. Churchill had written to Clark, the campaign in Italy will have "petered out ingloriously." In reply, Clark assured Churchill: "I am delighted with the opportunity of launching SHINGLE Operation, . . . I have felt for a long time that it was the decisive way to approach Rome." [2]

The meetings in North Africa with Churchill on 7 and 8 January, Alexander informed Clark, had provided answers to all the questions on the availability of assault shipping. The Fifth Army was to get even more landing craft than Clark had asked for. But because the Anzio operation would affect ANVIL by diverting resources marked for southern France, President Roosevelt still had to be consulted, even though his approval of the Anzio landing was a foregone conclusion. The success of the German defense south of Rome was prejudicing and

[1] Clark Diary, 9 Jan 44.
[2] *Ibid.*, 11 Jan 44.

embarrassing the entire Allied position in the European area of the war, and the Anzio landing promised to improve the situation immeasurably.

Alexander announced that D-day for the Anzio landing had been moved up from 25 to 22 January. If bad weather postponed the execution of the landing beyond 25 January, the operation would have to be canceled since after that date it would interfere with the preparations for the cross-Channel attack—and according to the agreement reached by the President, the Prime Minister, and Marshal Stalin nothing was to interfere with OVERLORD.[3] (*Map V*)

Preparations

How the Germans would react to a landing at Anzio was, of course, impossible to foretell. All the probable responses seemed favorable to the Allied command. But the Anzio force would have to be strong enough to cut or to threaten the German communications as well as to sustain itself as an independent entity until the main forces followed up the expected German withdrawal from the Gustav Line and made contact with the beachhead.

The Allied force that was to go ashore at Anzio was to be headed by the VI Corps headquarters. The American units initially scheduled for the landings were the 3d Division, the 504th Parachute Infantry, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, and the Ranger Force of three battalions; the British units were the 1st Division and two Commando battalions formed into a special service brigade. As additional vessels became available, General Clark added part of the 1st Armored Division and a regiment of the 45th Division in immediate follow-up roles. If more strength proved necessary, he would send the rest of the 1st Armored and 45th Divisions to the beachhead.[4]

From a subsidiary operation on the left flank of a nearby Fifth Army, the Anzio venture had developed into a major landing deep in the German rear. The original Anzio force had grown from a tentative figure of about 24,000 men to an eventual strength of more than 110,000.[5]

General Alexander's intelligence officers judged correctly that the Germans had about two divisions in reserve near Rome and able to move at once against the VI Corps landings. Counting on Allied air attacks to hinder the movement of these divisions, as well as of reinforcements, to the beachhead, they believed that the Germans would be unsuccessful in opposing the landings.

As Alexander saw the operation, the Anzio force was "to cut the enemy's main communications in the Colli Laziali [Alban Hills] area Southeast of Rome, and to threaten the [German] rear." The landing would compel the Germans to weaken their Gustav Line defenses, and this would enable General Clark to break through these defenses and make quick contact with the beachhead.[6]

Clark's intelligence officers were not quite so optimistic. They too estimated that the Germans had a corps headquarters and two divisions, plus contingents of paratroopers and armored forces, near Rome. But they believed

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] See Clark Diary, 9 Jan 44.

[5] VI Corps FO 19, 15 Jan 44; Wilson *Despatch*, p. 10.

[6] 15th AGp OI 34, The Battle for Rome, 12 Jan 44.

that a landing would constitute so serious a threat that the Germans would have to react violently. The Anzio operation, they felt, would be "an emergency to be met by all the resources and strength available to the German High Command in Italy." As soon as the Germans appreciated the magnitude of the landing and realized the impossibility of other attacks elsewhere along the coast, they would bring a ruthless concentration of forces against the beachhead to prevent movement to the Alban Hills. Otherwise, a withdrawal from southern Italy would become necessary. They could move an additional division from the Adriatic front and have it near Rome by the third day of the operation, and they could call upon two more divisions in northern Italy and expect their arrival during the following two weeks.[7]

Unwilling to commit the Anzio forces to a single and unalterable line of action because he was unable to predict the German reaction, and uncertain that he could get through the Gustav Line and up the Liri valley to a junction with the Anzio forces as quickly as Alexander seemed to think he could, General Clark issued an order that was deliberately ambiguous. He directed VI Corps: "a) To seize and secure a beachhead in the vicinity of Anzio. b) Advance on Colli Laziali." [8] What seemed perfectly clear on the surface as a mission to be executed in two logically consecutive phases was, in reality, vague on the second part. After establishing a beachhead, was the VI Corps to advance *toward* the Alban Hills or *to* them?

Expecting from his estimate of the strength of the German forces that the Anzio landing force would meet strong resistance at the beaches, and assuming from his experience at Salerno that the same pattern of heavy opposition would develop at Anzio, General Clark recommended that VI Corps make immediate defensive preparations upon landing, the troops to dig in as soon as they secured a beachhead; a strong reserve was to be kept in readiness to meet anticipated counterattacks.

If, contrary to every expectation, VI Corps met slight opposition, it was to advance "on" the Alban Hills by one of two routes—up the Albano road to cut Highway 7, or through Cisterna to cut Highway 7 there and Highway 6 at Valmontone, at the head of the Liri valley.

Whether VI Corps went on the defense or the offense after landing would depend on how the corps commander, General Lucas, sized up the situation.

General Lucas was at first flattered by the opportunity to lead a vital and spectacular operation but he soon became concerned over the risks involved. Despite his soldierly resolve to carry out his orders, he had little enthusiasm for the landing because, in his view, sufficient ships, men, and time for preparation were lacking. "Unless we can get what we want," he wrote in his diary, "the operation becomes such a desperate undertaking that it should not, in my opinion, be attempted." [9]

[7] Fifth Army Intel Summaries, Dec 43, and 3, 4, 11 Jan 44.

[8] Fifth Army FO 5, 12 Jan 44. See also Annex 1, G–2 Plan, Outline Plan, Opn SHINGLE.

[9] Lucas Diary, 4 Jan 44. General Lucas' state of mind has been discussed in detail in the author's "General Lucas at Anzio," *Command Decisions*, edited by Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, 1960), and *Anzio: the Gamble that Failed* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963).

"We have every confidence in you," General Alexander told Lucas. "That is why you were picked." Lucas was not reassured. To him, "this whole affair had a strong odor of Gallipoli and apparently the same amateur was still on the coach's bench." [10]

More than six months earlier, General Patton had said and General Lucas had recorded in his diary that a landing operation required little training. The troops had only to move straight inland after being put ashore. A great many losses would result, Patton admitted, but there was no way to avoid severe casualties in an amphibious assault.[11]

On 18 January, the Anzio forces rehearsed their landings on beaches near Naples. Late that evening, as reports began to reach General Clark of losses of DUKW's and 105-mm. howitzers, he became "greatly concerned." [12] About 2200 he received a copy of a personal note that General Truscott, commander of the 3d Division, had sent to General Gruenther, the Fifth Army chief of staff.

> I believe that you know me well enough, to know that I would not make such a point unless I actually felt *strongly* about it. If this [Anzio operation] is to be a "forlorn hope" or a "suicide sashay" then all I want to know is that fact—If so, I'm positive that there is no outfit in the world that can do it better than me—even though I reserve right (personally) to believe we might deserve a better fate.[13]

To General Clark, the trouble was the "overwhelming mismanagement by the Navy," which "appalled" him. During the rehearsal, "the losses in equipment and material which the 3d Division had suffered . . . amounted roughly to 43 dukws, 19 105's including fire control equipment, 7 57mm antitank guns and 2 37's. . . . I have just talked on the telephone with Admiral Lowry and informed him that I am astonished at such mismanagement." The losses—matériel vital to the landing—had to be replaced, and Clark had no choice but to take from the 10 Corps, the 36th Division, and the 45th Division equipment "which will be hard to replace." [14] Naval authorities promised corrective measures, but little could be expected in the short time remaining before the landings.

The rehearsal seemed to bear out General Lucas' pessimism. Admiral Sir John Cunningham had assured him he would have little trouble at Anzio—"The chances are seventy to thirty," Cunningham had said, "that, by the time you reach Anzio, the Germans will be north of Rome." But Lucas had remained unconvinced. "Apparently," he had written in his diary, "everyone was in on the secret of the German intentions except me." [15]

General Lucas wondered whether higher headquarters had intelligence information unavailable to him. Were there indications that the Germans intended to pull out of the Gustav Line and move north of Rome? If the Germans intended to retire, all the more reason, he thought, for making a strong end run with well-trained and well-equipped forces able to intercept and destroy the withdrawing troops. And for this, he believed, he lacked the means.

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[10] Lucas Diary, 10 Jan 44.
[11] *Ibid.*, 2 Jul 44.
[12] Clark Diary, 18 Jan 44.
[13] *Ibid.*, 19 Jan 44.
[14] *Ibid.*, 19 Jan 44. See also Clark, *Calculated Risk*, pp. 268–69.
[15] Lucas Diary, 16 Jan 44.

Increasingly, General Lucas found himself out of sympathy and out of touch with the thinking at higher echelons. He wrote in his diary on 14 January:

> Army has gone nuts again. . . . The general idea seems to be that the Germans are licked and are fleeing in disorder and nothing remains but to mop up. . . . The Hun has pulled back a bit but I haven't seen the desperate fighting I have during the last four months without learning something. We are not (repeat not) in Rome yet. They will end up by putting me ashore with inadequate forces and get me in a serious jam. Then, who will take the blame?

On 20 January, in an ambivalent frame of mind, General Lucas boarded the USS *Biscayne* for the voyage to Anzio. "I have many misgivings," he wrote in his diary, "but am also optimistic." If good weather continued for several days, "I should be all right." The amphibious preparations seemed undetected by the Germans. "I think we have a good chance to make a killing." Yet he wished "the higher levels were not so overoptimistic."

Lucas' uncertainty was underscored by two events that had occurred shortly before his embarkation for Anzio. The first was a visit from the Fifth Army G–3, General Brann. On 12 January Brann delivered personally to Lucas the final Fifth Army order for the Anzio operation. The reason for the visit, Brann explained, was to discuss the vague wording of the order with respect to the advance "on" the Alban Hills. Brann made it clear that Lucas' primary mission was to seize and secure a beachhead. This was the extent of General Clark's expectations. Clark did not want to force Lucas into a risky advance that might lose the corps. If, of course, the conditions at Anzio warranted a move to the hills, Lucas was free to do so. But Clark and the Fifth Army staff believed this to be a slim possibility. Given the strength of the forces in the landing, they thought Lucas could not hold the beachhead to protect the port of Anzio and the beaches and at the same time reach the hill mass. Since loss of the port and the landing beaches would place VI Corps at the mercy of the Germans, Clark was interested primarily in holding a beachhead.[16]

The second event, a change in the mission of the airborne troops, reinforced this point of view. An early plan for the landing, projecting an airborne drop by the 504th Parachute Infantry on the Anzio-Albano road about ten miles north of Anzio, clearly reflected an intention to reach and take the Alban Hills.[17] Later plans left out an airborne operation for a variety of reasons—some British commanders thought their troops might mistake the American paratroopers for Germans and take them under fire; naval officers pointed out that the paratroopers would be within range of naval gunfire supporting the landing and that the relatively flat Anzio coastal plain offered little cover; air authorities cited their inability to spare planes for a rehearsal, noted that the parachute infantry had not practiced a landing for several months, objected to the feeling of improvisation about the airborne operation, expected the paratroopers to be widely dispersed and ineffective after a drop, and deplored the absence of moon-

[16] *Ibid.*, 12 Jan 44.

[17] SUN Force (504th Prcht Inf) Outline Plan for Opn SHINGLE, n.d., and 504th Combat Team Artillery Outline Plan, 8 Jan 44, both in SHINGLE Corresp File. See also Clark Diary, 9 Jan 44.

light at the time of the landing. The final plan had the parachute regiment coming into Anzio across the beaches immediately after the infantry assault divisions.[18]

The removal of a powerful incentive to push the VI Corps out from the landing beaches in order to make contact with the paratroopers thus coincided with doubts expressed by Brann and Clark that Lucas could do anything more than seize and secure a beachhead. Since Lucas himself had reservations on what was possible, he was sure that a successful landing and capture of a beachhead would be considered in itself a successful operation.

The earlier concept had been quite different. In November, when the Fifth Army was drawing its original plan to comply with Alexander's directive of 8 November, G–2 and G–3 had agreed on the vital need to capture quickly the port of Anzio to handle supplies and the Alban Hills for their "commanding position" over the Anzio area.[19]

Though Lucas would be cautious or bold depending on how he himself saw the situation at Anzio, he had every indication that Clark expected him to be prudent.

The Landing

The ships of the assault convoy put to sea from Naples early on 21 January. The assault force consisted of about 40,000 men and 5,200 vehicles—the equivalent of about twenty-seven infantry battalions.

The responsibility of embarking, landing, and supporting the Anzio force lay with Admiral Lowry.[20] He had 2 command ships, 5 cruisers, 24 destroyers, 2 antiaircraft ships, 2 gunboats, 23 mine sweepers, 32 submarine chasers, 6 repair ships, 16 landing craft equipped with guns, antiaircraft weapons, and rockets, 4 Liberty ships, 8 LSI's, 84 LST's, 96 LCI's, and 50 LCT's—American, British, Dutch, Greek, Polish, and French vessels.[21] These were divided into two task forces, one to carry and protect the American troops, the other, under Rear Adm. Thomas H. Troubridge, the British. Small naval parties were to precede the ground force assault waves to locate the beaches and mark them with colored lights. After daybreak, a naval salvage group was to lay ponton causeways to facilitate unloading.

Reinforced by elements of the British Desert Air Force, General House's U.S. XII Air Support Command would give direct support to the amphibious operation.

The supply arrangements were meticulously made. "I am satisfied," the Fifth Army G–4 wrote several days before the landing, "that the force will be amply supplied if we get an average break in the weather. . . ." [22]

The ships of the convoy swung south around Capri to avoid German mine fields and to deceive German agents and reconnaissance planes as to their destination. After nightfall, 21 January, the ves-

[18] Wilson *Despatch*, p. 12; Clark Diary, 18 Jan 44.
[19] Fifth Army Outline Plan, SHINGLE, 22 Nov 43.
[20] See Msg, Adm John Cunningham to Gen Clark, 1720, 10 Nov 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl; Directive, Adm John Cunningham to Adm Lowry, SHINGLE, 29 Dec 43, SHINGLE Corresp File.
[21] The Navies at Anzio and Formia, 23 Apr 44, OCMH.
[22] Col Tate, Memo, 18 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

sels turned sharply toward Anzio. Five minutes after midnight they dropped anchor off the Anzio shore. Assault craft were lowered into the water, and patrol vessels herded them into formation. Shortly before 0200, 22 January, the boats of the first assault wave were heading toward the beaches. At 0150, two British landing craft equipped with rockets launched a 5-minute barrage on the landing beaches.

There was no reply. The shore line was dark and silent.

Everyone had expected the landing to be bitterly opposed. Colonel Darby, the Ranger Force commander, for example, was concerned not only about the resistance he anticipated but also by the shallowness of the beach at Anzio and the nearby rocks. His immediate objective was a big white casino on the beach. "When I run out of that landing craft," he had told naval planners, "I don't want to have to look to right or left. I'll be moving so fast that I want to make sure that . . . I will run right through the front door of the casino." He missed his target by only ten or twenty yards. But best of all, nobody was shooting at him.[23]

What everyone had overlooked, while bending every effort toward achieving surprise, was the possibility that the Germans might actually be taken unawares. No one had expected to gain total surprise in the landing. Yet as the initial assault waves swarmed ashore at 0200, no Germans opposed them.

"We achieved what is certainly one of the most complete surprises in history," General Lucas wrote in his diary. "The Biscayne was anchored 3½ miles off shore, and I could not believe my eyes when I stood on the bridge and saw no machine gun or other fire on the beach." [24]

Allied planes flew more than 1,200 sorties on 22 January in support of the landing, but the only fire against the ground troops came from a few small coast artillery and antiaircraft units.[25] Two batteries fired wildly for a few minutes before daylight until silenced by naval guns. A few other miscellaneous artillery pieces near the beaches had no chance even to open fire.

Small and scattered mine fields, mostly in the port of Anzio, proved to be the greatest hazard to the troops coming ashore. The only opposition immediately inland came from two depleted coast-watching battalions recently relieved from the Gustav Line for rest and rehabilitation; they were quickly overrun.

The 3d Division landed on beaches south of Anzio and was three miles inland by midmorning, with all its artillery and tanks ashore. After destroying four bridges along the Mussolini Canal to protect the right flank, the men dug in to repel a German counterattack that did not come.

The three battalions of Rangers seized the port of Anzio, while the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion swung down the coastal road and occupied Nettuno, two miles away. Behind them came the 504th Parachute Infantry. "The day was sunny and warm," a paratrooper later remembered, "making it very hard to

[23] Darby Lecture, 27 Oct 44.

[24] Lucas Diary, 24 Jan 44. For an excellent account of the extent of the surprise achieved, see Interrogation Rpt on 2d Lt Siegmund Seiler, 25 Jan 44, Current Rpts Investigations 1944.

[25] Air Programme, n.d., SHINGLE Corresp File.



SHIPS OFF ANZIO AWAITING SIGNALS TO MOVE TO SHORE

believe that a war was going on and that we were in the middle of it." [26]

The British 1st Division landed on beaches north of Anzio, where mines and shallow water imposed short delays. By midday, the troops were more than two miles inland, and British Commandos had swung over to cut the road leading to Albano, establishing a roadblock just north of Anzio.

Behind the assault troops, engineers cleared the mine fields, bulldozed exit roads across the dunes, and handled streams of men and supplies coming ashore. Despite some sporadic long-range shelling from German guns and despite three hit-and-run raids by German planes, the beachhead was quickly organized. A mine damaged a mine sweeper, and bombs sank an LCI, but engineers cleared debris from the harbor, naval personnel hauled away sunken vessels and swept the harbor, and by early afternoon the port of Anzio was opened. Because the British beaches were too shallow for effective unloading operations, General Lucas switched the British to the newly opened port. By midnight of 22 January, VI Corps had some 36,000 men, 3,200 vehicles, and large quantities of supplies ashore—about 90 percent of the personnel and equipment of the assault convoys.

Casualties were extremely light: 13 killed, 97 wounded, and 44 missing. The VI Corps had taken 227 prisoners.

Intermittent bombing by German aircraft was the only harassment. The first planes had appeared over the beaches about 0815, and raids continued every

[26] 504th Prcht Inf History.



MEN AND EQUIPMENT MOVE ASHORE SOUTH OF ANZIO ON D-DAY

three or four hours.[27] This tactic stemmed from Hitler, who believed that the decisive act to take against Allied troops going ashore was to drop bombs "on their heads the moment they land." The bombs would force the debarking troops to take cover and thereby waste precious time. During that period of enforced delay German reserves would start to arrive and prepare for the eventual attack designed to throw the beachhead forces into the sea.[28]

Despite the nuisance raids, VI Corps had a beachhead firmly in hand and a port captured virtually intact. Thus far, the amphibious operation was a resounding success.

German Reaction

The Allied landing at Anzio had taken the Germans by surprise because the British 10 Corps attack across the Garigliano had attracted Kesselring's attention and his two reserve divisions to the Gustav Line.[29] The Rome area was practically denuded of German troops, and Kesselring had no forces available to counter the Allied landings, no headquarters to organize even an emergency defense. According to the immediate *Tenth Army* intelligence esti-

[27] Fifth Army Engr Rpt on Port and Beach Opns at Anzio, Apr 44.

[28] Felix Gilbert, ed., *Hitler Directs His War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 78.

[29] The following is taken largely from Ralph S. Mavrogordato, The Battle for the Anzio Beachhead, MS # R-124, OCMH. See also Magna E. Bauer, Shifting of German Units Before and During Nettuno Landing and Effects of American Rapido River Attack of 21 January 1944 on the Movement of German Reserves, MS # R-75, OCMH; MS # R-78 (Mavrogordato), OCMH.

mates, the Allied landing had a good chance of major success. If Allied troops quickly reached Valmontone at the head of the Liri valley and cut the lines of communication to the *Tenth Army,* if they turned from Anzio and directly threatened the *Tenth Army* rear, or if they established a base for a later offensive, they would force the Germans to withdraw from the Gustav Line.[30]

Kesselring learned of the invasion about an hour after the troops began to land. Three hours later, from reports coming into his headquarters, Kesselring estimated that the landing was a full-scale operation. His immediate judgment was that the Allied troops would probably try to seize the Alban Hills. If they rapidly exploited their unopposed landing and moved to these heights, they would jeopardize the entire German strategy in Italy. Holding the Gustav Line would probably beome impossible.[31]

At 0500, Kesselring ordered the *4th Parachute Division,* which was in the process of being activated in the area immediately north of Rome, and several nearby replacement units of the *Hermann Goering Division* to block the roads leading from Anzio to the Alban Hills. An hour later, reporting the landing to OKW, he requested reinforcements. OKW responded later in the day by ordering the *715th Division* to move from southern France to Italy, the *114th Division* from the Balkans, and miscellaneous units in about division strength from Germany. OKW also authorized Kesselring to activate a new division, the *92d,* from several replacement battalions in northern Italy.

Not long after 0710, Kesselring directed the *Fourteenth Army* headquarters in northern Italy to make forces available for employment against the landing. The army headquarters ordered the *65th Division* (less one regiment), which was stationed at Genoa, the *362d Division* less one regiment), stationed at Rimini, and elements of the *16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division,* newly formed at Leghorn, to proceed immediately to Anzio. By evening these units were moving.

At 0830, Kesselring reluctantly telephoned Vietinghoff and instructed him to transfer from the Gustav Line area a corps headquarters and all the combat troops he could spare. Vietinghoff selected the *I Parachute Corps* headquarters, which had arrived only a day or two before from the Rome area, the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* (less one regiment), the *71st Division,* and parts of the *Hermann Goering Division.* Most of these troops began to march toward Anzio during the day. Their withdrawal from the Gustav Line would insure the retention by the British of the important bridgehead they had secured across the Garigliano. Later that day, Vietinghoff would pull the *26th Panzer Division* and parts of the *1st Parachute Division* out of the Adriatic front and send them to Anzio.

Not long after his conversation with Vietinghoff on the morning of 22 January, Kesselring ordered the Commandant of Rome, the only general officer in the Rome area who was available for the assignment, to improvise a staff and take command of the Anzio front until

30 CSDIC/CMF/M296, Detailed Interrogation Rpt of Thirteen German Intel Officers, n.d. (about Aug 45). Intel Activities, AG 383.4.

31 See The German Operation at Anzio (German Military Documents Section, Military Intelligence Division, Camp Ritchie, Md., 1946), pp. 9ff.



THE ANZIO-NETTUNO AREA

the *I Parachute Corps* headquarters arrived later in the day.

Despite the far-ranging sorties of Allied aircraft that were active over much of southern Italy, German units moved quickly toward Anzio. At 1700, the *I Parachute Corps* headquarters reached the Anzio area and took command of defenses hastily being erected by a variety of battalions. By nightfall, a thin defensive line had been set up around the Allied beachhead.

Kesselring was now beginning to feel more optimistic. He might very well, he believed, be able to contain the beachhead. According to a report written after the war:

> The Allies on the beachhead on the first day of the landing did not conform to the German High Command's expectations. Instead of moving northward with the first wave to seize the Alban Mountains . . . the landing forces limited their objective. Their initial action was to occupy a small beachhead. . . . As the Allied forces made no preparations for a large-scale attack on the first day of the landings, the German Command estimated that the Allies would improve their positions, and bring up more troops. . . . During this time sufficient German troops would arrive to prevent an Allied breakthrough.[32]

Despite the "state of acute continuous tension" that Westphal, Kesselring's chief of staff, noticed at the headquarters, Kesselring remained unshaken. When Vietinghoff telephoned in the

[32] The German Opn at Anzio, pp. 12–13.

evening to advocate an immediate withdrawal from the Gustav Line in order to eradicate the threat at Anzio—particularly since he doubted his ability to hold after having dispatched such strong forces to the beachhead—he was surprised to hear Kesselring tell him to stand fast. Even though an Allied attack during the next two days would, in Kesselring's opinion, probably succeed in getting to the Alban Hills, he told Vietinghoff there would be no withdrawal from the Gustav Line.[33]

Since the first strong German contingents could not arrive at Anzio for two more days, an Allied attack launched before then would, Kesselring estimated, overrun the few units in opposition. In effect the road to the Alban Hills was open. Beyond the Alban Hills, Rome lay virtually undefended.[34]

To Kesselring's vast relief, the Allied landing force on 23 January did little more than slightly increase the size of the beachhead as more troops came ashore and more equipment and supplies were unloaded. That evening Kesselring told Vietinghoff he "believed that the danger of a large-scale expansion of the beachhead was no longer imminent." [35]

On 24 January, the Germans watched the 1st British Division move a few miles forward to the Moletta River and anchor the Allied left flank there, while the 3d U.S. Division, plus Rangers and the 504th Parachute Infantry, took several more bridges along the Mussolini Canal to secure the right flank. The beachhead was seven miles deep, the front was sixteen miles long, but there seemed to be no preparations for a full-scale attack. "The Allied landing forces," the Germans noted, "limited themselves to reconnaissance and patrol. . . . By this time, the German defenses had been strongly reinforced, and the German Command considered the danger of an Allied breakthrough to be removed." [36] Westphal later wrote, "On January 22 and even the following day, an audacious and enterprising formation of enemy troops . . . could have penetrated into the city of Rome itself without having to overcome any serious opposition. . . . But the landed enemy forces lost time and hesitated." [37]

During that period of hesitation, German forces raced toward Anzio. From northern and southern Italy, Germany, France, and Yugoslavia, units moved steadily toward the beachhead despite Allied air attacks against roads and railways. Traveling for the most part at night, more troops arrived in less time than the Allied command had believed possible.

The first reinforcements came from southern Italy as early as 22 January, parts and pieces of the *3d* and *29th Panzer Grenadier,* the *71st,* and the *Hermann Goering Divisions.* Four days later the first units from northern Italy began to reach the Rome area, advance elements of the *65th* and *362d Divisions.*

It took time to erect and organize a defensive line, as Kesselring later wrote, from the "jumble of multifarious troops, which streamed in from all directions,"

[33] MS # X-113; MS # T-1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

[34] MS # R-78 (Mavrogordato), OCMH. See also MS # R-75 (Bauer), OCMH.

[35] The German Opn at Anzio, p. 14.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Westphal, *German Army in the West,* p. 158. See also Generalmajor Wolf-Ruedijer Hauser, chs. 9, 11, in MS # T-1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.



MEN OF THE 504TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY AT THE MUSSOLINI CANAL

and "oddly assorted groups succeeded in combining together to organize the first significant defense against the enemy landing." Since "no attack aimed at gaining possession of the Alban Mountains had been launched by the enemy on 23 or 24 January, the first and greatest crisis had been overcome." [38]

Because his forces were rapidly increasing in strength, Kesselring on 24 January ordered the *Fourteenth Army* headquarters to move from Verona to take command of the beachhead defenses from the *I Parachute Corps* headquarters. When the army commander, Generaloberst Eberhard von Mackensen, assumed control on the following day, he had parts of eight divisions deployed around the beachhead, elements of five more on the way.

Kesselring informed Mackensen that his primary mission was to launch a decisive counterattack as quickly as possible. The beachhead had to be eliminated without delay so that Vietinghoff could regain forces for his *Tenth Army* to hold the Gustav Line. Hitler had also made it clear by then that the reinforcements Kesselring was receiving were to be only temporary. When the beachhead was destroyed, the forces would have to return to France to prepare to meet the Allied cross-Channel attack that was expected in the spring.

Mackensen divided his defensive line into three sectors, the *Hermann Goering Division* defending Cisterna in the eastern portion, the *3d Panzer Grena-*

[38] Quoted from Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, *Kesselring: A Soldier's Record* (copyright 1953, 1954 by William Morrow and Company, Inc.), p. 233; Fifth Army G–2 History, Feb 44.

dier Division defending Albano in the center, and the *65th Division* behind the Moletta River in the west. By 28 January, Mackensen had submitted a plan for an attack to be launched on 1 February. Kesselring had to postpone the attack one day, for OKW reported "reliable information" of a projected Allied landing at Civitavecchia, fifty miles above Rome. The continuing battle was raging along the Gustav Line and the size of the Allied beachhead force argued against a second Allied landing, but Kesselring had to divert some troops to Civitavecchia just in case the invasion actually took place.

For the attack scheduled 2 February, Mackensen would strike along the entire front, his main forces thrusting down the road from Albano to Anzio. Before the attack jumped off, the Germans had to go over on the defensive—the Allied command had launched its own attack to break out of the beachhead.

CHAPTER XXI

The Attacks on Cassino

The SHINGLE forces safely ashore at Anzio, General Clark on 23 January visited his three corps commanders on the main Fifth Army front to urge all possible speed in breeching the Gustav Line, opening up the Liri valley, and joining the forces at Anzio.[1] Since II Corps had failed to gain entrance into the Liri valley by the frontal attack across the Rapido, Clark looked to the flanks. If General McCreery could expand his 10 Corps bridgehead across the Garigliano northward into the Liri valley, and if General Juin could turn his French Expeditionary Corps to the southwest in a wide envelopment also toward the Liri valley, both would break the defenses of the Gustav Line and outflank the Rapido entrance. General Keyes was to attack in the center of the army zone, his object to make a shallower envelopment of the Rapido defenses just north of the town of Cassino.[2]

South of the Liri valley, General McCreery was unable to do much. His Garigliano bridgehead had received strong counterattacks on 21 and 22 January, and the troops had barely held. When the Anzio invasion drew German strength away from the Garigliano, thereby weakening the forces opposite the British, the 10 Corps was too close to exhaustion to take up the offensive. Both sides settled into temporary inaction.

In the north, General Juin would need a day to shift the bulk of his French forces to the southern part of his zone. He prepared to attack on the morning of 25 January, his initial objective Monte Belvedere, about five miles north of Cassino.

Thus it remained for II Corps to apply whatever immediate pressure was possible. Since the 36th Division had expended itself at the Rapido, the task fell to General Ryder's 34th Division.

Keyes directed Ryder to cross the Rapido River north of Cassino, where the stream could be forded, and open a two-pronged drive. One thrust was to carry down the bank of the river into the town of Cassino. The other was to strike directly across the Cassino massif, a jumble of mountain peaks containing Monte Cassino, which juts out over the valleys of the Rapido and the Liri. Once across the high ground, Ryder would be in the Liri valley three or four miles behind the Rapido River and Monte Cassino.

To support the 34th Division, General Keyes instructed General Walker to have the 36th Division feint a renewed attempt to cross the Rapido River at the sites where it had failed. Walker was also to be ready on order to use the

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1 Clark Diary, 23 Jan 44. See also Chapter XIX, above.

2 Ltr, Clark to Alexander, 29 Jan 44, Weekly Summary of Opns, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.



THE CASSINO AREA

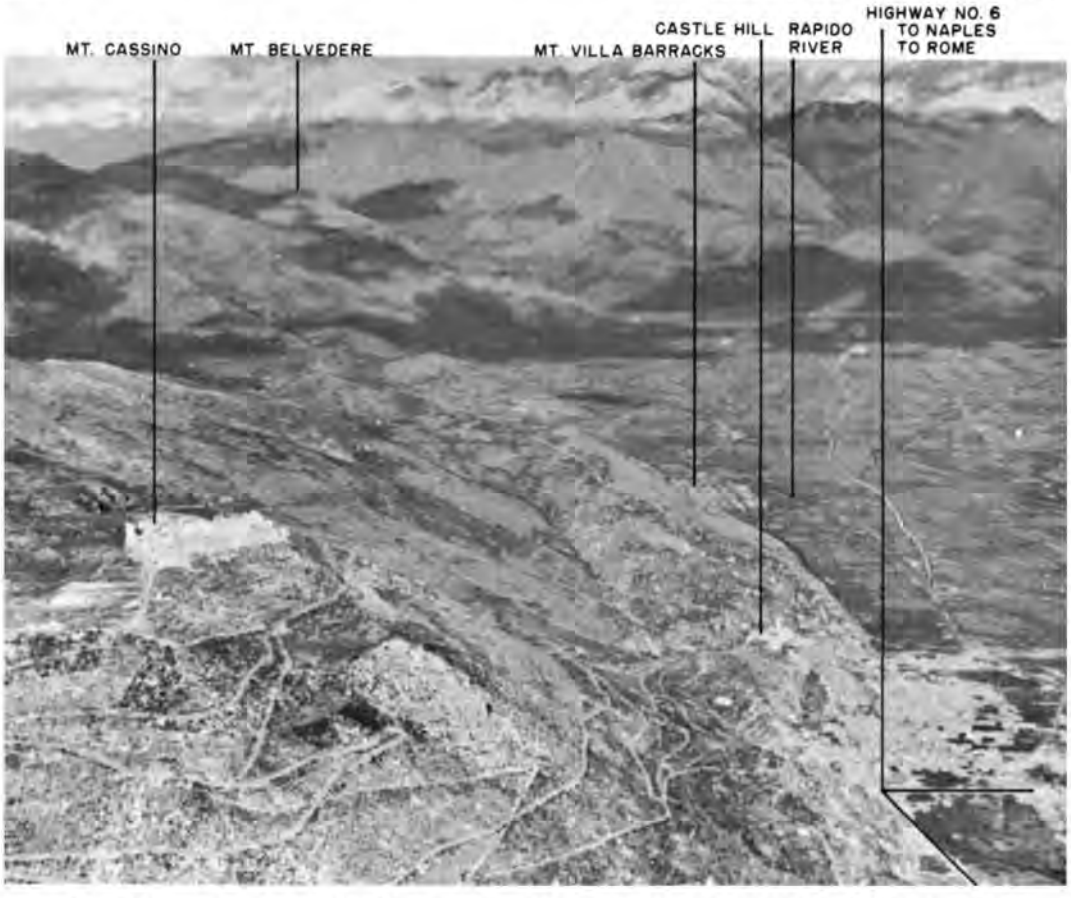
142d Infantry, which had not participated in the earlier attack and was intact, to force a crossing north of Sant'Angelo. Through this bridgehead, CCB of the 1st Armored Division—detached from its parent organization, which was on its way to Anzio by water—was to pass into the Liri valley to exploit toward eventual linkup with the Anzio forces.[3]

General Ryder selected as the first 34th Division objective an Italian military barracks area scarcely two miles north of Cassino.[4] There, on a slight eminence of ground sometimes called Monte Villa, a group of some twenty rectangular one-story buildings, now reduced to ruins by artillery fire, stood on a field about 400 by 500 yards. From the barracks area south to Cassino, the bank of the Rapido was a narrow shelf, no more than 300 to 400 yards wide, overshadowed by the steep-walled Cassino massif. On this shelf, troops advancing along the road toward the town would have some protection from enemy artillery. North of the barracks area, the high ground was farther from the Rapido and at the village of Cairo, not quite two miles away, a flat plain stretched for more than a mile between the river and Hills 56 and 213.

To launch his two-pronged drive from positions on the far side of the Rapido, General Ryder planned to send one force south into the town of Cassino,

[3] II Corps OI, 23 Jan 44.

[4] Except as otherwise noted, the following is taken from the official division and regimental records.



THE MONASTERY AND ITS ENVIRONS, *with the Rapido River and the Italian barracks.*

which lay at the base of Monte Cassino. The other force was to strike west across the mountainous terrain, its first objective Monte Castellone, a rugged peak about three miles from the barracks area. From there the troops were to turn to the southwest and south and advance another four or five miles to the slope overlooking the Liri valley—several miles west of Monte Cassino.

But first the 34th Division would have to take the barracks area, no easy task. Inside the damaged buildings, German troops had built concrete pillboxes that were concealed by the debris. The positions covered the approaches not only to Monte Villa but also to Cassino from the north and east. Along these avenues of approach, the defenders had liberally planted mines. Supporting artillery fire could also be directed from Monte Castellone and other peaks. But the 34th Division would mainly have to face the fire of German weapons across open fields east and southeast of the barracks area, fields that had been flooded by diverting the course of the Rapido. The waterlogged ground would make mechanized operations difficult if not impossible for Allied troops but General



BOGGED-DOWN AMERICAN TANK NEAR THE RAPIDO

Ryder considered possession of the barracks an essential preliminary for his attack, particularly the thrust to the strongly fortified town of Cassino.[5]

General Ryder ordered the 133d Infantry to secure the barracks, and the regiment planned to send the 1st and 3d Battalions across the Rapido to the northern and southern sides of Monte Villa in order to contain the defenders; the 100th Battalion was then to cross and turn south on the road leading directly into Cassino. The 756th Tank Battalion, attached to the regiment, was to follow the infantry across the river with its 54 medium and 17 light tanks and give close supporting fire, while the 753d and 760th Tank Battalions, made available to the division by the corps commander, were to add general support fire and be ready to cross.[6]

To escape German observation, the 133d Infantry jumped off at 2200, 24 January. The attack bogged down almost at once. Exploding mines disorganized the men, the mud of the flooded plain gripped tanks with sticky fingers, and strong fire from the barracks area discouraged any advance.[7] At 0430, 25 January, General Ryder extended his attack to the right, where the ground seemed firmer. The 3d Battalion sideslipped to the right flank of the 1st Battalion, and the 100th Battalion moved still farther north. With all three battalions in assault, an artillery prepara-

[5] See 15th AGp Narrative, 29 Jan 44.

[6] 133d Inf FO, 23 Jan 44.

[7] Rpt 139 (Col H. J. P. Harding), AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

tion at 0900 helped the 100th Battalion get a few riflemen across the river. There, a barbed wire entanglement covered by machine gun fire blocked progress. Four and a half hours later, after clearing a lane through a mine field, the 1st Battalion succeeded in getting several platoons of infantry across the Rapido. In another four hours the 3d Battalion had established a small bridgehead. All three battalions built up their forces on the bank after darkness, and by midnight the 133d Infantry held a consolidated toehold.

In the hope of keeping the attack going, General Ryder ordered the regiment to expand its area before daybreak on 26 January. With an enlarged bridgehead, Ryder could get tanks across the river and commit the 168th Infantry for an advance to Cassino. But the 133d Infantry could do little more under the German fire than take cover. Holding grimly, the troops were unable to advance beyond the river's edge and toward the mountain mass, less than a mile away. By night on 26 January, the 133d Infantry was still close to the river, the 168th uncommitted.

Now seeing his problem as the need to eliminate the German fire coming from the high ground, particularly from Hill 213, northwest of the barracks area, General Ryder committed the 135th Infantry on the left, just below the area where the 133d Infantry had crossed. The 135th Infantry, after crossing the Rapido, was to climb the wall of the massif and strike toward Hill 213 from the south. Seizure of Hill 213 would eliminate enemy fire on the assault troops on the valley floor and open the way for an advance westward to Monte Castellone and beyond to the Liri valley.

During the night of 26 January, the 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, managed to get a rifle company across the river. By 0330, 27 January, the company was struggling unsuccessfully to move through flooded ditches, wire entanglements, mines, and enemy fire. Tanks were unable to ford the stream because of the soggy approaches—six tanks were stuck on the most likely route, blocking further progress until engineers had substantially improved the crossing site.

With parts of two regiments holding small bridgeheads across the Rapido, it was imperative that additional forces cross the stream and get into the hills immediately behind. General Keyes, who still hoped "to launch armor northwest in the Liri valley," prodded General Ryder, who ordered the 168th Infantry to pass through the 133d Infantry on the morning of 27 January.[8]

Committing the 168th Infantry through the 133d Infantry and to the north of the barracks area represented a shift in emphasis. It showed an increasing awareness of several vital factors in the situation: the need for better ground for river crossing operations; the strength of the German defenses in Cassino; the necessity for depriving the Germans of the high ground; the urgency of reaching the flank of the Liri valley; and the course of developments taking place still farther north in the French zone.

General Ryder was quite specific in committing the 168th Infantry. He wanted two battalions to attack abreast, each preceded by a platoon of tanks. The tanks were to break down wire obstacles, overrun antipersonnel mines, and destroy enemy strongpoints. The attack was

[8] See II Corps Ltr, Opns, 26 Jan 44, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

to have an artillery preparation lasting an hour and then turning into a rolling barrage beyond the Rapido.[9] If the tanks could make their way along the narrow and extremely muddy trails and tracks leading to the river, and if they could get across, Ryder believed the attack would have a good chance of success.

Just before daybreak on 27 January, as the artillery preparation started, the tanks preceding the infantry assault troops moved toward the Rapido. Some tanks slipped off the narrow routes that were under water in many places, but two were across the Rapido by 0830, two more by 0915. These had so churned up the ground that the tanks immediately behind bogged down and blocked further traffic. As engineer troops began at once to construct corduroy roads to the river, a process that would take most of the day, infantrymen followed in lanes cleared by the tanks. Despite enemy fire, each assault battalion of the 168th Infantry got two rifle companies across the Rapido. All four tanks that had reached the far bank were out of action by 1300 —two destroyed by antitank fire, one with a damaged track from a mine, the fourth hit by an artillery shell while returning to the crossing site for more ammunition. Nevertheless, the rifle companies worked their way across the level terrain beyond the river and, despite heavy losses, were at the base of Hill 213 by nightfall. A fifth rifle company came across the Rapido after dark, climbed Hill 213, and reached the top undetected.

Instead of remaining on top of Hill 213, the company commander, deciding that his position would become untenable after daybreak, started to move his troops back. As he did so, the withdrawal turned into an uncontrollable rout. The troops fled across the river. Believing that a retirement was taking place, two of the other companies on the far bank became nervous, panicked, and then followed. Not until they were on the near bank were they stopped. By then they were disorganized. To leave the two remaining companies on the far bank, where their positions had been well marked by the Germans, was to expose them needlessly. They, too, were withdrawn across the river, then led north for 500 yards on the near bank to another crossing site. Picking their way through mine fields, the men recrossed the river and moved about a mile beyond toward the village of Cairo. Midway between the Rapido and the village, under the towering snow-capped peak of Monte Cairo, two platoons prepared and occupied defensive positions. The rest of the companies dug positions to protect the route from the crossing site. If, as seemed possible, a trail could be fixed for tanks, the division might complete its Rapido crossing.

The envelopment of the direct entrance into the Liri valley was proving to be deeper than originally contemplated, but the strength of the German defenses around Cassino required it. At the same time, action by the French Expeditionary Corps on the immediate right promised more conclusive results even though the corps required help.

Having shifted the bulk of his two-division strength to his left flank, General Juin attacked on the morning of

[9] See Capt James A. Luttrell, The Operations of the 168th Infantry (34th Division) in the Rapido River Crossing, 28 January–10 February 1944, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, Ft. Benning, Ga., 1948–49.

25 January to capture Monte Belvedere. By going on to take Monte Abate, an even more rugged peak about a mile to the west, the French forces would secure the flank of General Ryder's envelopment of Cassino. The struggle for Monte Belvedere consumed two full days of fierce fighting. At the end of the second day, the 3d Algerian Division held the mountain, which represented an important threat to the Gustav Line. But the French troops were stretched thin across a long front and were close to exhaustion. Further effort to take Monte Abate was out of the question for the moment.[10]

General Juin would write to General Clark on 29 January to clarify his situation. "At the cost of unbelievable efforts and great losses," Juin wrote, the 3d Algerian Division had committed all its reserves and had "accomplished the mission which you gave them." Although morale remained high, the Algerian division would be in an "extremely precarious" state until the 34th Division took the heights southwest of Monte Cairo, specifically Monte Castellone. Because Juin had no corps reserves available and because he could not risk leaving the Algerian division in virtual isolation on Monte Belvedere, he needed help. Otherwise, he would be forced to pull back from his hard-won mountain positions.[11]

General Clark had already acted. He had directed General Keyes to move an American unit into the area between the 3d Algerian and 34th Divisions in order to drive westward to Monte Castellone. Since the attacks north of Cassino seemed to be promising to crack the Gustav Line, General Keyes decided that a renewal of the attempt to cross the Rapido near Sant'Angelo would be unnecessary. Because a drive across the mountain wall would unhinge the Rapido defenses and open the Liri valley from the flank, he retained CCB for the exploiting thrust and attached the 36th Division's 142d Infantry to the 34th. He wanted the assistant division commander of the 34th Division, Brig. Gen. Frederic B. Butler, to add tanks and tank destroyers to the infantry regiment and to lead the task force in an attack designed to assist the French and at the same time to capitalize on the French success at Monte Belvedere.[12]

While the 142d Infantry was moving by truck and by foot from the Monte Trocchio area to the vicinity of Monte Belvedere, General Ryder was continuing his attack. Now he directed the 168th Infantry to commit all three of its infantry battalions across the Rapido for an advance across the Cairo plain directly against Hill 213 and a smaller neighboring height, Hill 56. With both pieces of high ground in American possession, an attack to Monte Castellone would become feasible and the 133d Infantry might finally take the Italian barracks area for later movement to Cassino.

General Keyes had given General Ryder all his available corps engineers—the 235th Engineer Battalion and the 1108th Engineer Group—to maintain the crossing sites at the Rapido and the approaches and exits in serviceable condition for use by tanks. Ryder placed all the engineers in immediate support of

[10] Ltr, Clark to Alexander, 29 Jan 44, Weekly Summary of Opns, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl. See also Carpentier, *Les Forces Alliées en Italie*, p. 74.

[11] Ltr, Juin to Clark, 29 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[12] See II Corps Ltr, Opns, 26 Jan 44, II Corps G–3 Jnl.

the 168th Infantry. He also attached to the regiment the 760th Tank Battalion and the 175th Field Artillery Battalion.

With a heavy expenditure of artillery shells opening the attack, the 168th Infantry jumped off early on 29 January, the assault spearheaded by tanks. Against intense German resistance, seven tanks crossed the Rapido by 0700. Although two were quickly knocked out by enemy fire and two others rapidly used all their ammunition, the presence of the armored vehicles gave the infantry good impetus. All three battalions were fighting on the far bank of the Rapido, making relatively steady, if somewhat slow, progress toward the hills a mile and a half across the plain.

During the afternoon General Ryder committed the 756th Tank Battalion, which found a new, incredibly good approach to the Rapido. When twenty-three tanks of the battalion suddenly appeared at 1600, crossed the river, and blasted away at the numerous German machine gun positions at the base of the heights, the infantry attack picked up speed. While the tankers fired more than a thousand 75-mm. rounds at virtually point-blank range, the rifle companies advanced across the plain. By 1845 all three infantry battalions had reached the base of the hills. Moving through barbed wire entanglements ripped apart by tank shells, the troops climbed the slopes. By dawn on 30 January, the hills were in American hands, though mopping-up operations would continue until noon.

On the night of 29 January, near the II Corps—French Expeditionary Corps boundary, the 142d Infantry launched what would turn into a 2-day attack in the rough terrain between Monte Castellone and Monte Belvedere, thus covering the left flank of General Juin's French Expeditionary Corps and improving the Algerian positions. A further improvement came as the result of a foray by one of the two platoons of the 168th Infantry that had been blocking the Cassino-Cairo road. Together with a platoon of tanks, the troops struck to the north on 30 January and captured the village of Cairo, enabling French units to consolidate their positions in the Monte Belvedere area.

To the men of the 168th Infantry who held Hills 213 and 56 on the morning of 30 January, the situation was far from reassuring. They repelled two counterattacks that day, and another on the following day, with less than adequate communications to the support elements. Radios, soaked in the river crossing, failed to function. At least two radios brought across the river by artillery forward observers lay on the plain together with the bodies of their operators. For several hours during the afternoon of 30 January, the only signals tying together the forward and support units in the 2d Battalion area were those sent and received by the platoon leader of the 81-mm. mortars.

The tanks that had been so effective when the 168th units first crossed the river were unable to give direct assistance after the infantry took Hills 213 and 56 because of the steep walls of the massif. They huddled at the base of the hills, seeking shelter from German artillery and mortar shells dropping on the plain, apparently aimed at the disabled tanks. Antitank shells sought out the light tanks recrossing the river to bring up gasoline and ammunition for the mediums. After two of the tanks went

up in flames, chemical mortars came forward and effectively screened the crossing site with smoke.[13]

The advance north of Cassino by the II Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps had bent the Gustav Line but had not broken it. During the entire month of January, the 3d Algerian Division took approximately 500 prisoners—among them an officer who said, "I see that the French Army is not dead." [14] The 34th Division had captured only 147 Germans during the last week of January. There were no signs of an impending enemy collapse or withdrawal.

South of Cassino General McCreery's 10 Corps went over to the offense on 27 January, but expanded its Garigliano bridgehead only slightly. Although the British took 1,035 prisoners between 17 and 31 January at a cost of 4,152 casualties, their inability to gain substantial ground indicated that no immediate breakthrough into the Liri valley from the south could be expected.

The number of II Corps' casualties during January showed plainly how severe the fighting had been. The 54th Medical Battalion (Motorized), which served the 34th and 36th Divisions and the 1st Special Service Force, had transported 11,670 patients in ambulances during the month and had treated 2,537 patients at the clearing station it operated. It had managed to care for so many men only because 300 casuals and replacements had been attached to the battalion as litter bearers.[15]

The 34th Division met bitter resistance in the silted valley bottom of the Rapido, now a quagmire because the Germans had diverted the river, and on the ravine-scarred slopes of the Cassino massif, thoroughly organized with wire, mines, felled trees, concrete bunkers, and steel-turreted machine gun emplacements. Difficulties of supply, evacuation, and support were acute. At one time the division employed more than 1,100 mules and 700 litter bearers above normal transportation and medical resources; the engineer companies could not perform all the tasks required—for example, approximately twenty tanks were bogged down so hopelessly that they could not be recovered.[16]

Despite its advance across the Rapido River north of Cassino, the 34th Division had made no decisive thrust. The Germans still held the first key objective, the Italian military barracks area. The advance across the Cassino massif had hardly got under way, and debouchment into the Liri valley from the flank was still nothing more than a hope. General Clark wrote in his diary:

> The original estimate that he [the enemy] would weaken the Garigliano-Rapido front to meet the amphibious landing, to an extent which would permit the advance of the Fifth Army to the Frosinone area, has not yet materialized. . . . [We are] like two boxers in the ring, both about to collapse. I have committed my last reserve, and I am sure the Boche has done the same.[17]

[13] See Lt Col John L. Powers, Battle Around Cassino (2d Bn, 168th Inf), OCMH; Lt. Col. John L. Powers, "Crossing the Rapido," *Infantry Journal*, LVI, No. 5 (May, 1945), 51–53. See also 1st Lt Belford H. Gray, The Crossing of the Rapido and Occupation of Positions Above Cassino by Company I, 168th Infantry (34th Division), 27 January–15 February 1944 (hereafter cited as Gray, Crossing of the Rapido), Advanced Infantry Officers Course, Ft. Benning, Ga., 1947–48.

[14] 3d Algerian Inf Div Opns.

[15] II Corps Surgeon Ltr, 5 Feb 44, Corresp, Surgeon II Corps.

[16] 34th Div AAR, Jan 44.

[17] Clark Diary, 30 Jan 44.

General Gruenther, the Fifth Army chief of staff, was of the same mind. "Enemy has everything committed," he cabled General Clark who was at the Anzio beachhead on the last day of the month, "and I believe we will take Cassino. However, no blitz is indicated. Keyes will give no estimate [as to when he expects to capture Cassino]. Mine is February 6th—I hope." [18]

To the individual combat soldier, the bitter cold weather of January had added to the discomfort of fighting in mud and water. Wet foxholes were the rule, freezing nights the norm, and trench foot and illness the result.[19] A sharp rise in artillery expenditure rates during the last ten days of the month seemed to have little effect, and, added to other causes for concern, gave "every evidence that the enemy intends to prevent, at all costs, the occupation of Rome and juncture of the main Fifth Army with the Anzio forces." [20]

The estimate was correct. On 31 January, when Vietinghoff informed Kesselring that he intended to continue to hold his ground, he indicated that the focal point of his defense was the Cassino massif. If he needed to reinforce the *XIV Panzer Corps* to prevent the Fifth Army from breaking through, he would weaken the *LXXVI Panzer Corps* by taking troops from the Adriatic front.

Kesselring was satisfied. "In full agreement with intentions as reported," he said.[21]

At the beginning of February, the Germans had a dual task: eliminate the Anzio beachhead and hold the Gustav Line. The Allied lodgment, if expanded sufficiently to threaten the major lines of communication running south from Rome, would compel the Germans to abandon the Gustav Line and give up southern Italy. Yet the Allied pressure around Cassino to gain entrance into the Liri valley made it impossible for the Germans to divert forces to Anzio from the Gustav Line. In fact, the attacks against the Gustav Line required that more strength be concentrated along the Rapido-Garigliano line than had ever before been committed against the Fifth Army, so much more that Kesselring would have to draw on his strength at Anzio to bolster the Gustav defenses early in February. If the Gustav Line could be held until enough units were gathered at Anzio to eliminate the beachhead, the situation in southern Italy would remain the same as it was before the amphibious operation. The Allied forces would have suffered a crushing defeat and would still be a considerable distance from Rome.

The four German divisions that had been fully committed along the Gustav Line early in January had been increased by the beginning of February to an equivalent of about six divisions, and additional units would appear almost daily despite the requirements of Anzio. Opposite 10 Corps, the *94th Division* occupied the coastal area, its eastern flank bolstered by part of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division*. Against II Corps were parts of the *15th Panzer Grenadier*, the *71st Infantry*, and the *3d Panzer Grenadier Divisions*, all of which also had units at Anzio, and the entire *44th*

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18 *Ibid.*, 31 Jan 44.

19 Gray, Crossing of the Rapido.

20 Peninsular Base Sec to NATOUSA, 31 Jan 44, AG 470.

21 Vietinghoff to Kesselring, 1300, 31 Jan 44, and Kesselring to Vietinghoff, 1900, 31 Jan 44, both in Steiger MS.

Infantry Division. Facing the French were part of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* and the entire *5th Mountain Division.*

All these organizations except the *29th Panzer Grenadier* and *71st Divisions* had been in the line continuously for at least a month and most of them for longer. All were seriously depleted, the *71st* in particular, and not enough replacements were coming in to return the units to full strength. The *44th Division,* for example, had received approximately 1,000 replacements in January but had lost the same number as prisoners.

In the critical sector, the area immediately around Cassino, the *44th* and *71st Divisions,* as well as a few units of the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division,* had received a battering as they held tenaciously in the hills north and west of the town. To augment these troops and at the same time permit the relatively strong *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* to move to Anzio, Vietinghoff would transfer the *90th Panzer Grenadier Division* to the Cassino area from the Adriatic coast; units would begin arriving piecemeal around 7 February. A day or so later the *1st Parachute Division* would come from the Adriatic front, to be joined at the Gustav Line by units of the division that had earlier been rushed to Anzio. The veteran paratroopers would take positions in the hills behind Cassino. Monte Cassino would become their fortress.[22]

Like the Germans, the Allied command augmented its strength in the decisive battleground west of the Apennines. Following the 1st British Division, which had moved from the Eighth Army area early in January to become part of the initial Anzio landing force, the 5th British Division had shifted from the Adriatic to increase the 10 Corps resources along the Garigliano. In order to constitute an army group reserve quickly available for use in the Fifth Army zone, General Alexander transferred the 2d New Zealand Division from Eighth Army control to the Cassino area. Hoping to maintain more than a pretense of offensive activity, General Leese, the Eighth Army commander, then brought forward from his reserve the I Canadian Corps headquarters and the 4th Indian Division. But by 30 January, when Alexander called for the 4th Indian Division to cross the peninsula, General Leese realized that the loss of four divisions from his forces, plus the difficult terrain and the miserable weather, would compel him to forego any thought of major offensive operations at least until spring. With two divisions now forming his army group reserve, Alexander began to think of using them in combination—he regarded the New Zealand division as particularly capable of long-range exploiting operations, while the Indian division was especially well trained for mountain warfare.[23]

Before committing all or part of his reserve force, General Alexander waited for a breakthrough of the Gustav Line. For a while, in the early days of February, the 34th Division seemed about to achieve it.

Still trying to get his two-pronged attack under way on 1 February, General Ryder sent the 133d Infantry against the Italian military barracks area at

[22] See Fifth Army G–2 History, Feb 44.

[23] Wilson *Despatch,* pp. 15, 22, 24; Alexander *Despatch,* p. 2914.



REMAINS OF THE BARRACKS

Monte Villa, where fierce fighting took place at close range. He passed the 135th Infantry through the 168th Infantry on Hill 213 for a push toward Monte Castellone, while the 36th Division's 142d Infantry on the right flank attacked westward toward a piece of rugged high ground, Mass Manna, about two miles northwest of Monte Castellone and the same distance southwest of French-held Monte Belvedere. A heavy fog helped the assault units operating in the mountains, and both regiments moved to their objectives virtually unseen by the Germans.

On the following day, as troops of the 135th Infantry and 142d Infantry consolidated their positions on Monte Castellone and Mass Manna, the 133d Infantry finally took the barracks area. An infantry battalion, supported by the 756th Tank Battalion, immediately set out from the barracks for an advance down the shelf toward the town of Cassino. The troops had hardly started when German machine gun and antitank fire brought their movement to a halt.

Despite this check, the presence of troops less than two miles from Cassino and the substantial advances to Monte Castellone and Mass Manna cheered General Clark. "Present indications," he informed General Alexander, "are that the Cassino heights will be captured very soon." Since the capture of the Cassino massif meant entry into the Liri valley and the opportunity to exploit, Clark asked for instructions, specifically how Alexander wished him to employ the New Zealand division.[24]

[24] Alexander *Despatch*, p. 2914. See also Clark Diary, 1 Feb 44.

Hoping that the way was at last about to be opened for exploitation, General Alexander decided to combine the New Zealand and Indian divisions into a provisional corps. On 3 February, he established an *ad hoc* corps headquarters under Lt. Gen. Sir Bernard Freyberg, the New Zealand division commander, put both divisions under the corps command, and attached what was called the New Zealand Corps to the Fifth Army. Once II Corps took the hills around Cassino and opened the Liri valley, the New Zealand Corps and CCB of the 1st Armored Division were to launch a long-range drive to make contact with the Anzio beachhead. To facilitate the maneuver, General Clark placed the 2d New Zealand Division in the area immediately south of Highway 6, near Sant'Angelo, and relieved the 36th Division for commitment elsewhere. Wishing to have some troops in reserve under his own control, Alexander directed General Leese to be ready to release the 78th British Division from the Eighth Army within seven to ten days for movement to the Fifth Army zone.

While these shifts took place, the 34th Division continued its attack, trying to complete the breakthrough that would make possible the long-range exploiting thrust. To that end, the division began to turn definitely to the south. The 135th Infantry took one of the innumerable peaks of the Majola Hill mass; the 142d Infantry, after turning over its high ground to French troops, slipped from Mass Manna to Monte Castellone. The 133d Infantry again moved along the shelf toward Cassino, reached the northern edge of the town, but was unable to remain because of strong German fire.

Combat in the northern outskirts of Cassino was street fighting of the most vicious sort. On the afternoon of 3 February, for example, Company I, 133d Infantry, supported by a composite platoon of riflemen from Company K and by a platoon of five tanks, attacked toward the northern edge of Cassino, which was blanketed with smoke. A few riflemen of Company I preceded the lead tank. The rest of the company was divided into three groups, each following one of the three leading tanks. The company headquarters followed the third tank, while the attached platoon of Company K, split into two groups, followed the fourth and fifth tanks.

As soon as the troops reached the outlying buildings, most of which were of two-story construction, they started to clear each house individually, five or six men working together against a single building. Three men would creep close to the house under cover of fire from the others, throw one or two hand grenades into the lower rooms, and then rush the doors or windows as soon as the grenades exploded. Surviving Germans would have to be upstairs, so the covering group fired rifle grenades through the upper windows to drive the Germans downstairs where they were killed or captured.[25]

This technique carried the troops into the town to the first crossroad. There they came under machine gun and antitank fire, which knocked out the third tank in file. Blocking the road to the rear, the destroyed tank prevented the first

[25] Pfc. Leo J. Powers of the 133d Infantry was awarded the Medal of Honor for acts of extraordinary heroism that permitted his unit to enter Cassino briefly.



MORTAR SQUAD FIRING INTO CASSINO

two from pulling out. As these two tanks put out a heavy volume of fire, the infantry pushed forward and seized two large buildings joined together on the north side of a small square.

Because the flanks of the approach that the company had used to enter the town were open, at least two men had to be posted in each cleared building to prevent the Germans from reoccupying the houses and cutting the route. By the time the men were deployed in the houses along the avenue of entry, only six men were available to hold the double building on the square. This they did throughout the night. But when the two leading tanks found a way of getting around the destroyed tank during the night and when no reinforcement seemed to be in sight by morning, the company withdrew from the town.[26]

The combat on the Cassino massif during the early days of February was no less savage. Small groups of men picked their way carefully across ridges, up slopes, and through ravines, avoiding shell-swept avenues, shunning open approaches, and measuring their advances in yards. Always the assault against the advantageous German positions required careful preparation, patient maneuver, and overwhelming firepower. The artillery rendered the American troops virtually unceasing assistance—8-inch howitzers fired more than 12,000 rounds in direct infantry support during the first two weeks of February,

[26] AGF Board Rpt 139 (Col H. J. P. Harding), OCMH.



240-MM. HOWITZER

240-mm. howitzers put out nearly 900 rounds, and 105-mm. howitzers expended nearly 100,000 shells. Artillery of all calibers would fire almost 200,000 shells during this period. The Cannon Company of the 135th Infantry would alone fire 22,200 rounds.

The rocky ground of the massif made it impossible to dig foxholes, and the soldiers piled rocks around themselves for protection. The weather stayed cold and wet. Snow and ice made mountain trails treacherous. Trench foot and respiratory diseases were common hazards. The only replacements were men from motor pools, kitchens, and headquarters companies. Unable to move from their individual positions during the day because of enemy observation, loath to budge during the night because of enemy shelling, many men were reluctant to leave because of sniper fire even when relief arrived.[27]

Yet so close did the 34th Division seem to a breakthrough, so evident did it appear that the artillery and tank fire was about to smash the Gustav Line positions, that the attack continued on 4 February without respite. A battalion of the 135th Infantry found an opening and made a sudden advance to Monte Albaneta, little more than a mile northwest of the abbey on top of Monte Cassino. Another, attacking along the ridges immediately west of the town of Cassino, came to within several hundred yards of the abbey, engaged in a day of confused fighting at close range, with hand grenades exchanged across stone

[27] Gray, Crossing of the Rapido.

walls, then was driven back. At the northeastern corner of Cassino, the 133d Infantry again tried to penetrate into the town. Although the 151st Field Artillery Battalion fired 4,568 rounds in direct support of the regiment, the shells of the 105-mm. howitzers proved ineffective against the concrete and steel bunkers constructed among the massive stone buildings. When six German tanks suddenly appeared and opened fire, the American infantrymen turned back.

By the end of 4 February, the 34th Division was seriously depleted, the survivors hopelessly weary. A halt was necessary. For three days riflemen rested while artillery pieces and mortars exchanged fire with the enemy. Meanwhile, General Ryder prepared an all-out effort to take Cassino and the massif west of the town.

This attack was to be part of a larger action planned by General Keyes. Moving the 36th Division to the right of the 34th Division, he extended the envelopment around Monte Cassino and strengthened the enveloping force. If the 34th Division captured Cassino and, together with the 36th Division, crossed the massif to the flank of the Liri valley, the way would finally be open for exploitation.

General Clark asked General McCreery to attack on 7 February from the south toward the Liri valley. He also asked General Juin to attack. General Juin agreed that a simultaneous effort by the three corps in line was necessary to gain a decisive victory. But he believed that his French troops were too exhausted to participate.[28] The 10 Corps



TROOP POSITION NEAR CASSINO

attacked during the night of 7 February, but the troops failed to make a decisive gain. At the break of dawn, 8 February, the II Corps launched its attack.

Moving directly from the north into Cassino, the 133d Infantry, with a battalion of tanks accompanying the assault companies and several 8-inch howitzers firing in direct support, penetrated 200 yards into the northern outskirts.[29] There the shattered houses and heaps of rubble that filled the narrow streets and courtyards, and the enemy fire that swept the few open areas, brought progress to a quick end.

The assault troops used a new technique of firing bazookas through the walls of buildings, but the stone walls

[28] See Ltr, Juin to Clark, 7 Feb 44, Fifth Army G-3 Jnl; Carpentier, *Les Forces Alliées en Italie*, p. 78.

[29] 2d Lt. Paul F. Riorden was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism during the fighting in Cassino.



34TH DIVISION MP DIRECTING TRAFFIC FROM A ROADSIDE DUGOUT *north of Cassino.*

of the houses were so thick that as many as nine rockets were needed to blow a hole three feet in diameter. The concrete walls of the German pillboxes were somewhat less formidable—only six or seven shots created a hole of the same size. Armor-piercing ammunition used in direct fire was effective, particularly when fired by 155-mm., 90-mm., and 3-inch guns. All the projectiles, even those fired from 75-mm. tank guns and 57-mm. and 37-mm. antitank guns, created sufficient concrete dust and smoke to neutralize German return fire from embrasures. Indirect fire at long ranges proved ineffective.[30]

For six more days the 133d Infantry would try to blast its way into Cassino. At the end of 14 February, the regiment would still be confined to its small foothold in the northeastern corner of the town. On the high ground of the Cassino massif, the 135th Infantry and the 168th Infantry tried to pinch out Monte Cassino. There, too, success eluded the troops. And on the right, on the rugged mass of Majola Hill, General Walker committed increasing numbers of his 36th Division who tried, to no avail, to advance the mile and a half from Monte Albaneta to the northern edge of the Liri valley.

The enemy defenses, the stubborn resistance, the ground, the weather, and the constant attrition of the 34th and 36th Divisions brought all attempts to nothing. Violent rains and heavy snow-

[30] Fifth Army Memo, 10 Feb 44, sub: Artillery Ammunition Against Reinforced Concrete Pillboxes, AG 475.1.

storms reduced visibility and aggravated discomfort. Drivers, clerks, and antitank troops formed provisional units to act as reserves for the rifle companies. During the second week of February, the infantry units were too exhausted, too numb from the cold, too battered by the German fire to do more than await relief.[31]

General Alexander had sent his American deputy, General Lemnitzer, to talk with unit commanders and troops in order to determine whether the constant fighting was eroding morale. After visiting the front, Lemnitzer reported that the troops were so disheartened as to be almost mutinous. They would soon have to be pulled out of the line for rest.

Yet since General Alexander was reluctant to commit the balanced forces of the New Zealand Corps in anything less than an exploiting role, he continued to hope for a breakthrough. After conferring with General Clark, Alexander agreed that if II Corps failed to crack the Gustav Line, he would give the task to the New Zealand Corps. Perhaps the fresh troops could break through and exploit on the momentum of their attack. The limit beyond which the II Corps should not go, both commanders concluded, was 12 February.[32]

By that date, the offensive efforts of the two divisions of the II Corps had run out. In a single day, 11 February, the 141st Infantry had expended more than 1,500 hand grenades in a vain attempt to break through the German defenders of the Albaneta Farm who were fighting virtually with their backs to the northern edge of the Cassino massif overlooking the Liri valley. At the end of that day, the 1st and 3d Battalions of the regiment had a total of 22 officers and 160 men. Two days later, it was estimated that all the infantry regiments of the 36th Division averaged less than 25 percent of effective combat strength.

The 34th Division had suffered equally. In the three weeks between the first attack to take the Italian barracks area and the final effort in the northeastern corner of Cassino, the 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, had captured 122 prisoners but had lost 52 killed, 174 wounded, and 23 missing in the rifle companies—30 men remained in Company I, 70 in Company K, and 40 in Company L. The 100th Battalion, 133d Infantry, was in even worse condition. By the night of 7 February, the total strength of the three rifle companies numbered 7 officers and 78 men.[33] The 168th Infantry was hardly stronger. On 10 February, the 1st Battalion had a total of 154 effective troops, the 2d Battalion had 393, and the 3d Battalion had 246; a provisional rifle company created to form a regimental reserve had a single officer, the antitank company commander, 7 men from the regimental headquarters company, 8 from the antitank company, and 15 just returned from the hospital. In the 135th Infantry, the average number of men in each rifle company was 30.

The fighting that had brought these casualties had also brought II Corps to within a mile of Highway 6 in the Liri valley. A breakthrough was within reach. But now it would be up to the New Zea-

[31] See Fifth Army Rpt of Cassino Operations.

[32] Intervs, Mathews with Alexander, 10–15 Jan 49, OCMH.

[33] See Ltr, Pfc Powers to Capt Nathan Kessler, 7 Apr 45, OCMH.



AIMING A BAZOOKA AGAINST A STONE HOUSE

land Corps—the 2d New Zealand and 4th Indian Divisions—under General Freyberg to force an opening through the Cassino defenses into the Liri valley.

CHAPTER XXII

The Opening Battles at Anzio

The Allied Attack

The VI Corps had come ashore on a large coastal plain between the Anzio beaches and the Alban Hills. Formerly the malarial Pontine Marshes, the land had been partially reclaimed by Mussolini's government and transformed into a fertile farming region through a system of drainage canals and ditches. Almost in the center of the plain was the largest waterway, the Mussolini Canal, "a prime tank trap," which General Lucas used to protect his right flank.[1] South of the canal the Germans had flooded the ground as a precaution against invasion, and there, except for a few exposed roads that were virtual causeways, the land had reverted to its primitive state.

Ahead of the Allied troops was an expanse of slightly rolling farmland dotted with stone and masonry houses. The main road from the beachhead ran north up a gradual slope most of the 20 miles between Anzio and Albano, then climbed steeply up the southern face of the Alban Hills to the town perched at the top. There the Anzio-Albano road joined Highway 7, which led to Rome, 15 miles away. From the height of Albano, the Anzio plain stretched in open panorama to the sea. West of the Albano road, deep, brush-covered ravines offered obstacles to tank maneuver but presented excellent hidden assembly points for infantry. East of the road, where the country was relatively clear, several large railroad embankments gave concealment and defilade against ground observation and fire. Eastward from the twin towns of Anzio and Nettuno, secondary roads led to Cisterna, a dozen miles away on Highway 7 and about 15 miles below Albano. Fifteen miles east of Cisterna lay Valmontone, at the upper end of the Liri valley and astride Highway 6, the inland route to Rome, 25 miles away.

Almost due north from Anzio, Highways 6 and 7 skirted the northern and southern edges of the Alban Hills, which were formed by a great volcano long since extinct. The rim of the crater, which has a diameter of eight miles, encloses two large lakes, fertile fields, and wooded hills, some of which rise hundreds of feet. Possession of this natural barrier standing between the Allies and Rome gave the Germans unrestricted observation over the Anzio beachhead.[2]

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[1] Burhans, *The First Special Service Force,* p. 162. The major secondary sources for the Anzio beachhead are: *Fifth Army History,* Part IV; AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION, *Anzio Beachhead* (Washington, 1947); Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, *Anzio* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961); Clark, *Calculated Risk,* pp. 283ff.; Truscott, *Command Missions,* pp. 309ff.; Martin Blumenson, *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963).

[2] See Fifth Army Ltr, 14 Nov 43, and Incls, Hq Fifth Army File; Fifth Army Tactical Studies of the Terrain, 10, 22, 29 Mar 44.

If General Lucas could take both Albano and Valmontone, he would cut the two main highways linking the German *Tenth Army* in southern Italy with Rome. He would also be at the gates of the Eternal City. But General Lucas at the outset was more interested in building up his beachhead than in expanding it. He devoted his attention to putting the Anzio harbor, which he had captured intact, into operation at once to handle incoming troops and supplies and to keep his supply line open. He personally supervised the establishment of an antiaircraft warning system, construction of an airfield, and clearance of the supplies that jammed the beaches behind the first row of dunes.

Lucas' concern with logistics came not only from General Clark's and General Brann's suggestions of caution but also from his own natural prudence. "My days are filled with excitement and anxiety," Lucas wrote in his diary on the fourth day of the invasion, "although I feel now that the beachhead is safe and I can plan for the future with some assurance." While a regiment of the 45th Division was coming ashore that day, the 1st British and 3d U.S. Divisions were advancing "to extend the beachhead a little." [3]

General Clark had visited the beachhead on the morning of D-day. He spent two hours ashore, then conferred with General Lucas and Admiral Lowry aboard the *Biscayne* before returning to his command post at Caserta. He was well satisfied with the landings, and on 22 January his sense of achievement increased as reports reaching him during the day confirmed the success of the invasion.[4] By the next day, however, he was becoming impatient. He wrote Lucas:

> Little is known of your situation due to poor communications. Please answer the following questions at once. How far have your patrols worked? What are your intentions for immediate operations? What is your estimate of enemy situation? Present and predicted unloading capacity of port of Anzio? Can LSTs unload dryshod at Anzio? Is unloading being affected by weather? [5]

"Lucas must be aggressive," Clark wrote in his diary. "He must take some chances. He must use the 3d Division to push out." [6] Already Clark had decided to reinforce the beachhead to the maximum extent permitted by its supply installations and facilities. He planned to send the entire 45th Division and the bulk of the 1st Armored Division to Anzio; to alert the 1st Special Service Force for immediate movement there; and to shift his own tactical headquarters so that he would be on hand "when our build-up in that area is sufficient to take the offensive." [7] Like General Lucas, General Clark was well aware of the importance of keeping the "newly-won bridgehead area" well supplied. "The extent to which the new positions can be exploited," he wrote, "depends on maintenance which must be attended to with every diligence." [8]

General Alexander, who had visited the Anzio beachhead on the first day of the landings, returned on 25 January and showed much optimism about fu-

[3] Lucas Diary, 25 Jan 44.

[4] Clark Diary, 22 Jan 44.

[5] *Ibid.*, 23 Jan 44; Clark to Lucas, 24 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[6] Clark Diary, 23 Jan 44.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*, 24 Jan 44.

ture prospects. "What a splendid piece of work," he said to Lucas. Although Lucas reminded him that the task was hardly complete, he himself thought that his accomplishment to date, a beachhead nearly ten miles deep, was not bad.[9]

General Clark, also at the beachhead on 25 January, was impressed by Lucas' logistical arrangements. But he suggested that Lucas push out at once to take Campoleone on the road to Albano and Cisterna on the road to Valmontone—not because of the value of these places for offensive action but because they were important anchors for a defensive line. In response to intelligence estimates that the Germans had about three full divisions at Anzio and a fourth possibly on the way, Clark cautioned Lucas, "Alertness for counterattack is indicated," and promised him more troops.[10]

To General Clark, securing the beachhead against counterattack was important, but at the same time he was looking ahead to offensive operations. Within a week, he believed, Lucas would have sufficient strength at the beachhead to shift from defense to offense. "I will then strike out," he wrote in his diary, "and cut the German lines of communication, forcing his withdrawal out of the Cassino area. Then, I will turn my attention to Rome." [11]

If Lucas took Albano, the Allied forces would have direct access to Rome by way of Highway 7. But judging Lucas too cautious to aim for the moon, Kesselring concentrated his troop strength at Cisterna.

The 3d Division had moved to within four miles of Cisterna, but the closer it got the more resistance it encountered. In contrast, the British 1st Division had gone steadily ahead on the Albano road and by 25 January had taken Aprilia, a cluster of brick buildings designed as a model farm settlement and called by the troops the "Factory." Located on a slight rise of ground, Aprilia controlled a network of roads that had become vital because rain had turned the fields on the Anzio plain into a vast bog. Four miles beyond Aprilia was Campoleone, which was still only lightly defended. But Lucas was not yet ready to launch a co-ordinated offensive. "I must keep my feet on the ground and my forces in hand," he wrote in his diary, "and do nothing foolish." [12]

Rain, hail, and sleet on 26 January disrupted supply operations at the beachhead, and two heavy air raids that night inflicted casualties, destroyed trucks and ammunition dumps, started fires, and gouged big craters in the roads. Fortunately, with only a short interruption, the port continued in operation. General Lucas cabled General Clark about the "heavy rain, sleet, lightning and strong winds [that made] unloading of Liberties and over beaches impossible. . . . Anzio harbor shelled by hostile long range artillery. . . . Plan to continue aggressive reconnaissance and local attacks to enlarge beachhead." [13]

General Clark's reaction was calm: "I feel perfectly safe in the bridgehead with the number of troops in there. . . . If the German buildup is not too strong we will succeed in pushing out." [14]

[9] Lucas Diary, 25 Jan 44.
[10] Clark to Lucas, 25 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–2 Intel Summaries, AG 370.2.
[11] Clark Diary, 25 Jan 44.
[12] Lucas Diary, 25 Jan 44.
[13] Clark Diary, 26 Jan 44.
[14] *Ibid.*



RUINS OF THE "FACTORY"

General Lucas called his division commanders to a meeting on 27 January to discuss plans for taking the offensive some time soon. The prospects for enlarging the beachhead appeared excellent to the corps commander—he expected thirty LST's to unload at Anzio that day; the 3d Division was within three miles of Cisterna; and the 1st British Division had repulsed a counterattack at Aprilia.[15]

In light of an army intelligence estimate that day, Lucas appeared dilatory. The enemy strength on the VI Corps front, Clark informed him, "does not exceed three full divisions" and there "are indications that he [the enemy] is having difficulties reinforcing your front."[16]

Thus, when General Alexander expressed dissatisfaction with the progress being made at Anzio and voiced specifically his feeling that Lucas was pushing neither rapidly nor hard enough, General Clark was not surprised. Alexander, Clark recorded in his diary,

> is worried about the slowness of the attack . . . by the VI Corps. I am too, and have been for at least 48 hours. . . . When I told Alex that I was going up personally tomorrow and would stay up for several days, he was completely satisfied for I told him it was my idea to lay on an all-out coordinated corps attack supported by tanks.[17]

[15] Lucas Diary, 27 Jan 44.

[16] Clark to Lucas, 27 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–2 Intel Summaries, AG 370.2.

[17] Clark Diary, 27 Jan 44.

To Lucas, Clark sent a cable asking when the corps commander was going to take Cisterna.[18]

Before General Clark left for the beachhead on 28 January, his aide made the Fifth Army commander's thoughts a matter of record. Clark had

> felt for some time that the force at Anzio is not being pushed forward with sufficient aggressiveness and that opportunities to make progress northward while the German troops were as yet disorganized at the time are being lost. Accordingly, he determined to go at once to the Anzio front and urge General Lucas to initiate aggressive action at once.[19]

At the beachhead, after approving Lucas' thoroughness in preparing his attack, Clark urged him to launch it immediately—"full advantage of the landing could only be taken by bold and aggressive action and . . . delay now would permit the enemy to build up forces opposite."[20] The time seemed especially ripe for boldness. According to intelligence estimates, "No definite enemy line of resistance [was] encountered" that day in the VI Corps area.[21]

Although Clark had in mind taking the two key points of Cisterna and Campoleone, Lucas understood Clark to mean that he was disappointed because VI Corps had not rushed immediately to the Alban Hills. And this, Lucas was certain, required more troops than he had. Until reinforcements arrived, his offensive effort would have to be less than all out.[22]

The Fifth Army staff understood the mission assigned to the corps as being "to establish a suitably defended beachhead and then to cut the enemy's line of communications and force his entire withdrawal along the main Fifth Army front or to cut his forces off and defeat them." The second part of the mission, to attack toward the Alban Hills, seemed overdue.[23]

To the Germans also, General Lucas appeared hesitant to move, reluctant to attack. According to Mackensen's *Fourteenth Army* chief of staff:

> Every minute was precious for the Germans and Allies alike. What would have happened if the enemy had advanced boldly immediately after landing, if he had occupied the Alban Mountains and thrust on to Valmontone, thereby cutting off the vital supply roads of . . . the Tenth Army? But the enemy did not make this advance, he did not feel strong enough; thus he threw away his great chance. This neglect was an error. . . . The enemy's methodical, playing-for-safety manner of waging war was revealed again in the first days of the fighting for the beachhead. He felt his way forward cautiously to the northeast towards Cisterna, and northwards in the direction of Aprilia-Campoleone. . . . it was already too late.[24]

On 29 January, the eighth day of the invasion, reporting "no definite [enemy] line of resistance," Lucas at last felt strong enough to launch a full-scale attack.[25] Planning to attack on the following day, he requested extensive naval and air support and directed heavy artillery support. He projected a two-pronged

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*, 28 Jan 44.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Fifth Army Intel Summary 142, 28 Jan 44.

[22] See Blumenson, "General Lucas at Anzio," *Command Decisions.*

[23] Fifth Army Rpt of G–3 Opns, Jan 44.

[24] Hauser in MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH. The Hauser manuscript is one of the best accounts of the operations at the beachhead from the German point of view.

[25] Fifth Army Intel Summary 143, 29 Jan 44.

advance. The British 1st Division was to make the main effort toward Albano. He wanted the 1st U.S. Armored Division—less CCB, which had remained in the Cassino area—to exploit British gains in the direction of Rome. To obtain room for the armor, Lucas directed the British to carry out a preliminary operation during the night of the 29th to secure the line of the Rome-Cisterna railroad. In the right of the corps zone, the 3d Division, with the 504th Parachute Infantry and the Ranger Force attached, was to take Cisterna, thereby cutting Highway 7, and be ready to drive on Valmontone.[26] "Will go all out tomorrow or at once," Lucas assured General Clark, but added with his customary caution, "if conditions warrant."[27] While preparing his all-out attack, General Lucas indicated his continuing concern with the logistical aspects of his situation by requesting additional truck companies, Quartermaster service companies, and an Ordnance ammunition company for the beachhead.[28] To those who were unaware of VI Corps plans, no changes seemed to be taking place at the beachhead. "Except for reliefs and patrols," General Alexander's army group headquarters noted, "there was little other action."[29]

The attack of the 1st British Division achieved success. Troops won the railroad embankment and continued steadily to Campoleone, which they captured and made secure by the end of 31 January. The 1st Armored Division, on the other hand, could get nowhere—muddy fields, impassable gullies, and lack of cover prevented the tankers from even starting to exploit the British gain.

On the other side of the beachhead, General Truscott used Rangers to spearhead his 3d Division attack to Cisterna. He instructed Colonel Darby to infiltrate two of his three Ranger battalions into the town during the night of 29 January, the third battalion to clear the road for tanks and infantry that were to rush forward the next morning to block Highway 7 in strength. The 7th Infantry on the left and the 15th Infantry on the right, also attacking by infiltration, were to cut the highway above and below the town.[30]

Slipping across a branch of the Mussolini Canal at 0130, 30 January, two Ranger battalions in a long column moved silently along a half-dry irrigation waterway called the Pantano ditch. At dawn the head of the 1st Battalion, leading the column, was at the outskirts of Cisterna; the rear of the 3d Battalion was about a mile and a half away.

As the Rangers emerged from the ditch to enter Cisterna, they walked into an ambush. German tanks and self-propelled guns tore the Ranger battalion apart, while infantrymen encircled the small groups into which the Americans had dispersed. The Rangers fought valiantly all morning, but their light weapons were no match for the heavier German arms. The regiments operating on the flanks could not make enough progress to remove the German pressure, nor could tanks and infantry break

[26] VI Corps FO, 29 Jan 44.

[27] Lucas to Clark, 1150, 29 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl; Clark Diary, 29 Jan 44.

[28] Lucas to Clark, 2326, 29 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[29] 15th AGp Narrative, 29 Jan 44.

[30] See Taggert, ed., *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, pages 114–15, for a detailed account of the action.

through the German opposition to come up and relieve the Rangers from the rear. Of the 767 Rangers who had started toward Cisterna, only 6 returned; the rest were either dead or captured.[31] According to General Truscott, the fighting around Cisterna was the "most severe his division has encountered." [32]

The resistance came from units of the *Hermann Goering Division* fighting from dug-in and well-organized positions heavily supported by artillery and tanks. They might possibly have been defeated and overrun, but the first elements of the *715th Division*, coming from southern France, arrived near Cisterna on the morning of 30 January, and Mackensen fed these troops into the defenses as soon as they became available.

On 30 January General Clark inspected the new Fifth Army advance command post laid out in a pine grove on Prince Borghese' palace grounds just north of Nettuno, conferred with various commanders and staff members at the headquarters of the VI Corps and the 1st Armored Division, and observed the course of the attack. At the end of the day he summed up his reactions:

> I have been disappointed for several days by the lack of aggressiveness on the part of the VI Corps, although it would have been wrong, in my opinion, to attack and capture our final objective on this front [the Alban Hills]. Reconnaissance in force with tanks should have been more aggressive to capture Cisterna and Campoleone. Repeatedly I have told Lucas to push vigorously to get those local objectives. He has not insisted upon this with the Division Commanders. Upon my arrival here today, I was disappointed to find that about half of our available armor of the 1st Armored Division had been committed to the protection of the 1st British Division's left flank. I hope to extricate these commitments in order to launch a full-out armored attack to the northwest from Campoleone tomorrow. I was likewise distressed to find that the 3d Division had led with the Ranger force in its attack on Cisterna. This was a definite error in judgment, for the Rangers do not have the support weapons to overcome the resistance indicated. . . . I have been harsh with Lucas today, much to my regret, but in an effort to energize him to greater effort.[33]

Clark was not only disappointed in the attack but he was surprised to find the opposition stronger than intelligence reports had indicated. General Alexander had said "a couple of days ago" that he "considers some risks can be taken" at Anzio and "suggests that all efforts should now be urgently concentrated on full scale coordinated attacks to capture Cisterna and Campoleone followed by a rapid advance on Velletri," seven miles above Cisterna on Highway 7. But Clark

[31] VI Corps Ltr, Battle Casualties 6615 Ranger Force in the Action of 29–30 January 1944, 16 Feb 44, AG 333; Altieri, *Darby's Rangers*, pp. 72–78, 80–82. See Capt. Nicholas J. Grunzweig, The Operations of the 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry (3d Division), at the Mole Creek near Cisterna, 30 January–1 February 1944, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1949–50, Ft. Benning, Ga.

[32] Clark to Gruenther, 1520, 31 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl; Clark Diary, 31 Jan 44. Technician 5 Eric G. Gibson, a cook in the 3d Division, led a squad of replacements through enemy fire, destroyed four German positions, and was instrumental in securing the flank of his company; killed during the attack, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Pfc. Lloyd C. Hawks of the Medical Detachment, 30th Infantry, who administered first aid despite having suffered severe and painful wounds, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his extraordinary heroism. Sgt. Truman O. Olson of the 7th Infantry, who sacrificed his life to save his company from annihilation, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Pfc. Alton W. Knappenberger of the 3d Division was awarded the Medal of Honor for his extraordinary heroism during the attack.

[33] Clark Diary, 30 Jan 44.

now doubted that the comparative strengths of the opponents at Anzio permitted this sort of decisive action. By 30 January the German forces, he estimated, were roughly equivalent to somewhat more than three divisions, with about 175 tanks, and three additional divisions would probably be at the beachhead by 5 February. The Allied forces at the end of 30 January totaled almost four divisions, with approximately 240 tanks. There had "been an unavoidable delay in attacking the Colli-Laziali feature [the Alban Hills] caused by unfavorable weather which resulted in a delay in the VI Corps build-up." And consequently, the enemy forces in the Alban Hills area now appeared substantial enough to slow the progress of the beachhead forces. To counter the increasing number of German units, Clark planned to reinforce the 1st British Division with a British brigade taken from the 10 Corps Garigliano front and perhaps, if it proved logistically feasible, with an American regiment from II Corps—which would bring VI Corps to the maximum strength that could be supplied. If the Germans brought in enough reinforcements to prevent VI Corps from cutting Highway 7, which seemed more than likely, it would probably be necessary for the Allied forces to assume the defensive in the Anzio area until a breakthrough could be made on the Rapido-Garigliano front.[34]

By the 31st, the VI Corps had made so little progress General Clark was convinced that reaching Cisterna and Campoleone would be the extent of the offensive effort. For the moment there was no chance of moving to the Alban Hills against the forces the Germans had brought to Anzio.[35]

When General Lucas' attack came to an end on 1 February, none of the Allied commanders appreciated how close VI Corps had come to success. The German forces had been compelled to go over entirely to the defense, putting aside all thought of offensive action of their own. Employing all their reserves, suffering casualties of about 5,500 men, approximately the same number as the Allied forces, Kesselring and Mackensen desperately juggled their troop units and just managed to hold.

What appeared to the Allied command to be formidable strength was what Kesselring called "a higgledy-piggledy jumble—units of numerous divisions fighting confusedly side by side." [36] Allied intelligence, having identified many different units, assumed that each was present in entirety. Total troops, then, like total units, intelligence officers guessed, far outnumbered those of the VI Corps.[37] At least one estimate warned against the practice: "It is clear now that the enemy, probably for deception purposes is insuring that each front [at the Gustav Line and at Anzio] has representation of the same units." [38] But the tendency was inescapable. Actually, about 100,000 Allied troops at Anzio fought less than 90,000 Germans. The Allied forces had the additional advantage of being balanced, for the amphibious operation had been carefully planned and prepared. In contrast, German countermeasures were improvised. For the most part, fragments,

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*, 31 Jan 44.

36 Kesselring, *A Soldier's Record*, p. 233.

37 See 3d Div AAR's, Jan, Feb 44.

38 Clark to Lucas, 27 Jan 44, Fifth Army G-2 Intel Summaries, AG 370.2.

remnants, and splinters of divisions, depleted units, recently organized formations, provisional commands, and barely trained troops manned the German line. To the Germans, the defensive stand bordered on the miraculous.[39]

On the afternoon of 1 February, General Alexander joined General Clark at the beachhead. They discussed what Clark termed Alexander's "supposition that SHINGLE had not been exploited as rapidly as might have been the case." Pointing out the serious opposition encountered, Clark found "no valid ground for dissatisfaction with progress made."

He then presented an idea for another landing, this one to be made at Civitavecchia, sixty-five miles north of Anzio, forty miles above Rome, by two divisions no later than 15 February. General Clark was aware that the naval authorities would probably be reluctant to underwrite an operation of this sort, and he knew how marginal the shipping resources would be. But the landings, in his opinion, would certainly be unopposed and would threaten Rome. Together with the forces at Anzio, the units put ashore at Civitavecchia would fashion a pincer movement against the capital city.

General Alexander and his chief of staff, who had accompanied him to the beachhead, were, as Clark judged their reaction, "taken aback by the suggestion." They said that it presented logistical difficulties. "Overcome them," Clark said. But the notion seemed too wild, too daring—another landing would further disperse the Allied forces and put additional strains on the logistical structure, particularly the ships that would be involved.[40]

Instead, the two commanders decided to concentrate on winning the battle of the Anzio beachhead. Concluding that little could be gained in the immediate future by continued offensive action there, they preferred to have General Lucas prepare for a German counterattack, which they believed to be imminent.[41] On the following day, 2 February, they directed Lucas to set up strong defensive positions, using mines and wire, and holding substantial forces in reserve. The VI Corps received reinforcements—the 1st Special Service Force arrived at the beachhead on 2 February and went into positions along the Mussolini Canal, and a brigade of the 56th British Division arrived on the following day to back up the British 1st Division.[42]

Although General Clark felt it foolish "to waste our strength" in continuing to attack, General Lucas was regretful. "I hate to stop attacking," he wrote in his diary. "We must keep him [the enemy] off balance all we can."[43]

By then, the initiative had passed to Kesselring. The Germans were about to try to push the Allies into the sea.

The day before the German offensive started, General Gruenther visited Gen-

[39] See Fifth Army G–2 History, Jan, Feb 44.

[40] Clark Diary, 31 Jan, 1 Feb 44.

[41] Intelligence from Rome seems to have played an important part in this belief. See collection of messages from Clandestine Radio Rome received by VI Corps, OCMH; Peter Tompkins, *A Spy in Rome* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962).

[42] Allied Central Mediterranean Forces (renamed from 15th AGp) OI 37, 2 Feb 44; Burhans, *The First Special Service Force,* pp. 162ff.; Clark to Lucas, 31 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–2 Intel Summaries, AG 370.2; Clark to Gruenther, 1520, 31 Jan 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

[43] Clark Diary, 4 Feb 44; Lucas Diary, 3 Feb 44.

eral Lucas, who felt, Gruenther reported, "fairly comfortable about present situation." Lucas saw "No indications yet of major attack." [44]

The First German Counterattack

The *Fourteenth Army* commander, Mackensen, planned a frontal attack down both sides of the Albano road to Anzio. He preferred to outflank the Allied forces, but saw enveloping efforts west of the road as being vulnerable to Allied naval guns and those to the east as requiring bridging operations to get the troops across several major canals. Hoping to strike swiftly into the most vital sector of the beachhead, Mackensen decided to send tanks over the ground immediately adjacent to the main road. But before he launched his decisive attack, he wanted the network of roads controlled by Aprilia. He determined to launch a preliminary operation to capture this first objective. And to gain Aprilia, he turned to the finger-shaped Allied salient at Campoleone, "positively demanding," in the words of Mackensen's chief of staff, Generalmajor Wolf-Ruediger Hauser, to be counterattacked.[45]

Mackensen's preliminary attack jumped off in the very early hours of 4 February. A regiment of the *65th Division* west of the road and portions of the *3d Panzer* and *715th Divisions* on the east struck both sides of the salient. Although muddy ground hampered supporting tanks and fierce British resistance slowed the German infantrymen, the attack cut through the defenses, and German troops joined on the main road to Anzio.

Isolated British units fought magnificently throughout the day under leaden skies and drizzling rain that kept Allied planes grounded, and by the end of the day the British had restored their positions. The Campoleone salient remained intact, but General Lucas considered the forward units dangerously exposed. He ordered withdrawal to a more defensible line. The British withdrew skillfully during the night and gave up two and a half miles of ground. They had suffered nearly 1,500 casualties, but they had reestablished a cohesive defensive line.

Lucas instructed his subordinate commanders to hold where they were, but at Clark's instigation he began to set up behind the front what he called a final beachhead line. Less than three miles behind the British front, about five miles behind the Americans, strongly fortified with barbed wire and mines, Lucas' final beachhead line coincided with the initial beachhead line occupied on 24 January, two days after the invasion. Leeward of these positions there could be no withdrawal. To bolster his final defenses, Lucas placed one regiment of the 45th Division on the left, along the Moletta River, reduced the frontage of the 1st British Division in the center, giving the British responsibility for most of the area west of the Anzio-Albano road, and reinforced the British with the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion and part of the 504th Parachute Infantry.[46] In corps reserve he retained the 1st U.S. Armored Divi-

[44] Gruenther to Clark, Clark Diary, 3 Feb 44.

[45] Hauser in MS # T-1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH. See also Mackensen's Commentary, Supplement to Chapter XII.

[46] See Capt William J. Sweet, Jr., Operations of the 2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment (82d Airborne Division), on the Anzio Beachhead, 22 January–23 March 1944, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, Ft. Benning, Ga., 1947–48.

sion—less CCB, still in the Cassino area—and two regiments of the 45th Division.

When General Clark inspected the beachhead on 6 February, he was particularly interested in the defensive works and dispositions, which he checked in detail. He was struck by the reduced strength of the British division, which had lost many combat troops and antitank guns, and by the losses in the 3d Division. Clark would make every effort to send replacements to the beachhead to bring all units to authorized levels, but the problem would remain chronic throughout February.[47]

Approving General Lucas' defensive preparations, General Clark told the corps commander again that he was to be ready to go over to the offense when the German pressure slackened.[48] To help Lucas give his undivided attention to the tactical problems, Clark established at the beachhead a small logistical group, staffed with officers from the Fifth Army headquarters, to take charge of the supply operations.

Supply operations in the American part of the beachhead had been handled since H plus 15 minutes of D-day, when the initial beach parties arrived ashore, by the 540th Engineer Combat Regiment. With attachments—men to work the supply dumps, military police, Signal Corps units, and Navy personnel—the regiment numbered approximately 4,200 men. At first bringing matériel ashore over three beaches, the regiment opened supply depots inland late on the afternoon of 23 January, the second day of the invasion, and eliminated the necessity for large dumps on the beaches. Then the 540th Engineers consolidated supply operations, limiting them to two beaches. Cargo from Liberty ships began to come ashore, and by the morning of the third day, all the D-day convoys of LCT's and LST's were completely unloaded. The 36th Engineer Combat Regiment operated the Anzio harbor and British naval detachments handled over-the-beach unloading for the British units until 6 February, when the 540th Engineers, released from attachment to VI Corps, went under the control of the Fifth Army engineer with responsibility for all the unloading operations at the beachhead. A detachment of the 10th Port Battalion operated the harbor. Stormy weather during the month of February would cause operations to be curtailed and even temporarily halted from time to time, and an insufficient number of LCT's would make it necessary to press LCI's and LCM's into service to unload Liberty ships. But unloading continued through air raid and artillery bombardment, in bad weather and good, nourishing the Allied forces that crowded the beachhead in increasing numbers.[49]

If supply operations gave little cause for concern, the situation along the front was quite otherwise. Mackensen, trying to seize Aprilia as a springboard for a final crushing attack to the sea, sent troops forward again at 2100, 7 February. German troops infiltrated British flanks and organized small pockets of

[47] On 3 February, Clark sent a message to Devers to inform him how extremely serious the infantry replacement situation was. Shortages in the divisions of the Fifth Army exceeded 6,000 men, and separate artillery, medical, and engineer components required replacements. Two days later Clark reported to Devers that the 3d Division was short 1,340 enlisted infantrymen, the 45th Division, 506, and the Rangers, 900.

[48] Fifth Army OI 15, 7 Feb 44.

[49] Fifth Army Engr Rpt on Port and Beach Opns at Anzio, Apr 44.

resistance within British lines as a prelude to the main effort by units of the *715th Division*. The British battled staunchly throughout the night and the following day, supported by heavy artillery fire and the naval guns of three cruisers, and prevented the Germans from taking Aprilia.

But Mackensen persisted. On the 9th, using the same pattern of artillery preparation, infantry infiltration, and concentrated assault, he pushed the British out of the Factory.

While American paratroopers and tankers entered the battle to give the British time to organize and consolidate new positions, while eighty-four medium bombers dropped their loads on German troop assembly areas near Campoleone, General Lucas asked for help. Could General Clark send him an additional infantry division? Clark's reaction was negative and irritated. "He should know better," he wrote in his diary, "than to demand another infantry division, realizing full well that I do not have the division, except those that are tired and committed to battle; nor do I have the shipping, nor could it [the division] be maintained logistically in the beachhead." [50]

When the Germans resumed their attack on the morning of 10 February, Mackensen gained the ground around Aprilia that he deemed necessary for his decisive offensive. But by that time, the combat had been so wearing he needed fresh units.

The British also needed fresh troops. A brigade of the 56th Division was reinforcing the 1st Division, but Alexander and Clark decided to send the rest of the 56th to the beachhead.[51] To bolster the front immediately, Lucas committed in the area just west of the main road the two regiments of the 45th Division he had been holding in reserve. The regiments tried to retake Aprilia, but two attacks on successive days had no success.

A message arrived at this time telling General Lucas that because General Alexander "considers it essential to the achievement of our objective which is to drive the enemy North of Rome, the 6 Corps should resume the offensive immediately the tactical situation permits." [52] The message had little meaning for Lucas, who remarked in his diary, "This is becoming a war of attrition. Until I am considerably reinforced I can't do much about it."[53]

He was unaware that Mackensen was about to launch his decisive attack to eliminate the beachhead and that VI Corps would soon be fighting for its life. At the same time, Fifth Army was about to execute an operation in the Cassino area designed to get troops up the Liri valley to make swift contact with the beachhead.

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50 Clark Diary, 9 Feb 44.

51 *Ibid.*, 10 Feb 44.

52 ACMF OI 42, 11 Feb 44.

53 Lucas Diary, 13 Feb 44.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Bombardment of the Abbey of Monte Cassino

Before the invasion of Sicily the Combined Chiefs of Staff had reminded General Eisenhower of a special responsibility: "Consistent with military necessity, the position of the church and of all religious institutions shall be respected and all efforts made to preserve the local archives, historical and classical monuments and objects of art." [1] When AFHQ received permission to bomb military targets in the Rome area, the same warning was repeated.[2] Soon after the Fifth Army crossed the Volturno River, General Clark reiterated the policy for the benefit of his troop commanders: "It is desired that every precaution will be taken to protect these [church] properties, and international attacks will therefore be carefully avoided. . . . If, however, military necessity should so dictate, there should be no hesitation in taking whatever action the situation warrants." [3] As the Fifth Army seemed about to approach within striking distance of Rome in November, General Eisenhower assured the War Department that instructions were being followed: "Consistent with military necessity, all precautions to safeguard works of art and monuments are being taken. Naval ground, and air commanders have been so instructed and understand fully importance of preventing unnecessary or avoidable damage." [4]

Specifically with respect to the abbey of Monte Cassino, Italian museum authorities in southern Italy had pointed out its historical importance, and Fifth Army headquarters had stressed the urgent necessity of preserving the building from bombardment.[5] In compliance, the Mediterranean Air Command had so instructed its subordinate units: "All possible precautions to be taken to avoid bombing abbey abbeazia on Monte Cassino due West of Cassino." On the copy of the message arriving at Fifth Army headquarters, General Gruenther had penned a note: "Let me see pictures of this place. Will our ground troops have occasion to demolish it by artillery fire?" [6]

The question was academic until early January. At that time, AFHQ queried

[1] CCS to Eisenhower, 10 Jun 43, 345 AFHQ files.
[2] CCS to Eisenhower, 15, 19 Jun 43, Exec 3, Item 6.
[3] Fifth Army Ltr, Protection of Pontifical Villas at Castelgandolfo, 23 Oct 43, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.
[4] Eisenhower to War Dept, 5 Nov 43, AFHQ Master Cables.
[5] Msg, Fifth Army to CinC Mediterranean Air Comd, 25 Oct 43, Fifth Army Rpt of Monte Cassino Bombing.
[6] Msg, Mediterranean Air Comd Post, 27 Oct 43, Fifth Army Rpt of Monte Cassino Bombing.



CIVILIAN REFUGEES IN THE CASSINO AREA

Fifth Army on word received through diplomatic channels from the Vatican that the abbey of Monte Cassino "has been seriously damaged by artillery fire." [7] The Fifth Army artillery officer investigated the report and replied at once. The town of Cassino, he admitted, had been heavily bombed and shelled for some time and would continue to be taken under fire as long as it was occupied by enemy troops.

There are many gun positions and enemy installations in the vicinity of the town, and it is possible that during an adjustment, dispersion or an erratic round hit the Abbey. Any damage caused by our artillery fire would be purely unintentional as our artillery commanders understand that neither churches nor houses of worship are to be fired on.[8]

Further instructions were nevertheless issued to appropriate commanders to respect the abbey of Monte Cassino. They were informed that damage already inflicted had been unavoidable. They were to make every effort in the future to avoid damaging the abbey even though the building occupied commanding terrain that "might well serve as an excellent observation post for the enemy." Artistic, historical, and ecclesiastical centers in Italy, among them the "ancient Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino in Province of Frosinone near Cassino," were to be immune from attack. Despite the prohibition, General

[7] Msg, AFHQ to Fifth Army, 1 Jan 44, Fifth Army Rpt of Monte Cassino Bombing.

[8] Memo, Lt Col Robert Raymond, Fifth Army Asst Artillery Officer, to Fifth Army G-3, 3 Jan 44, Fifth Army Rpt of Monte Cassino Bombing.

Alexander's headquarters specified: "Consideration for the safety of such areas will not be allowed to interfere with military necessity." [9]

In September 1943, when the Germans began to fortify the Bernhard Line as a series of defensive strongpoints in the Cassino area, the Gustav Line was merely one of several switch positions. Soon after work started in earnest on the defenses around Cassino in mid-November, Hitler ordered the hill, Monte Cassino, incorporated into that defensive complex.[10] In early December, when the Gustav Line became the established name of the formidable German main line of resistance, Monte Cassino was included in the positions.

The seventy monks in the abbey had, as early as October, been joined by several hundred civilians who had taken refuge in the monastery and whose numbers would soon increase to a thousand or more. Already the war had had a tangible effect on Monte Cassino, for a German pilot had inadvertently flown his plane into the wires that manipulated a funicular between the abbey and the town, destroying both his aircraft and the cable railway. The winding 6-mile road connecting the abbey and the town became the only link, and communications gradually diminished and then ceased. Water was soon in short supply on top of the hill.

On 10 October the abbey received some minor and unintentional damage when Allied planes bombed the town of Cassino. The monks remained steadfast and calm, confident that both the Allied and the German forces would respect the monastery and its immediate grounds.

Four days later two German officers arrived at the monastery and asked to see the abbot, Archbishop Don Gregorio Diamare. They said that the Ministry of National Education in Mussolini's government had become concerned over the possible destruction of the works of art in the abbey. The ministry had agreed with the German command that evacuation of these treasures would be desirable. The officers were offering their services in connection with the removal.

The abbot found the idea somewhat ridiculous. Since both adversaries had proclaimed their intention to conserve cultural and religious treasures, what harm could come to this holy place?

The German officers bowed and withdrew.

They returned on 16 October. This time they insisted that the abbey was in danger because of its strategic military location. It was unfortunate that the Germans had to fight there, the officers admitted, but they had no choice. The hilltop had too much military value to be excluded from the fortifications they were constructing. In the battle sure to be fought in that area, the abbey would certainly suffer some damage.

The abbot acquiesced.

On the following day, a German military truck arrived at the abbey and hauled a load of art treasures to Rome, the first of several such trips. Nearly all the monks left the abbey for Rome, as did the nuns, orphans, and school children normally housed at the abbey, and most of the civilian refugees. Remaining at the abbey were the abbot, five monks, five lay brothers, and about 150 civilians.

[9] Msg, 15th AGp to Fifth Army, 9 Jan 44, Fifth Army Rpt of Monte Cassino Bombing.

[10] *OKW WFSt* Diary, 29 Nov 43.



CASSINO: THE MONASTERY, THE CASTLE, AND THE TOWN

On 7 December, Vietinghoff, the *Tenth Army* commander, requested clarification on how he might use the hill and the abbey in his defensive works, for "the preservation of the extraterritoriality of the monastery," he warned, "is not possible: of necessity it lies directly in the main line of resistance." Loss of Monte Cassino would definitely impair the usefulness of the Gustav Line. What was particularly troublesome was that "along with renunciation of good observation posts and good positions of concealment on our part, the Anglo-Americans almost certainly would not bother about any sort of agreement at the decisive moment but would without scruple place themselves in occupation of this point which in certain circumstances might be decisive." [11]

The reply came on the 11th. Kesselring had assured representatives of the Roman Catholic Church simply that German troops would refrain from entering the abbey. Notified of this development, Vietinghoff informed Senger, the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, that no German troops were to occupy the monastery. "This means," he added, "only that the building alone is to be spared." [12]

[11] Telegram, Vietinghoff to Kesselring, 1230, 7 Dec 43, *Tenth A KTB, Anl.*

[12] Telegram, Vietinghoff to Senger, 1705, 11 Dec 43, *Tenth A KTB, Anl.*

In compliance, the German forces placed the abbey off limits. Tracing a circle around the monastery at a distance of two yards from the walls, the local unit forbade troops to cross the line and stationed military policemen at the gate to prevent soldiers from entering. The abbot was assured that no military installations of any sort would be constructed within the confines of the abbey.[13]

But nothing outside the walls was sacred, and according to plan, since the slopes of the hill were not off limits, German troops soon demolished all the outlying buildings of the abbey to create fields of fire, set up observation posts and crew-served weapons emplacements nearby, and established at least one ammunition supply dump in a cave very close to the monastery wall.

Early in January, German troops evacuated all the refugees still in the monastery except two or three families and several people too infirm or sick to be moved. Promising to continue to respect the abbey and to prevent its use for military purposes, they asked the abbot to leave. He refused.

Several Allied artillery shells accidentally damaged the monastery in January. A stray round falling inside the walls on 5 February killed a civilian. A violent artillery bombardment striking nearby German positions on the same day led about forty women in the neighboring farmhouses to decide to seek sanctuary in the monastery, and they were admitted during the night. Not long afterward, more civilians, men and women from the surrounding countryside, made their way to the abbey for refuge. By 8 February, about 100 shells had fallen within the walls of the abbey by accident. There had been no systematic bombardment or shelling.

An enormous structure covering the top of Monte Cassino, sometimes called Monastery Hill, the abbey was one of the most venerable in Christendom. Its construction had begun under Saint Benedict around 529 A.D. Destroyed by Lombards later in the sixth century and again by Saracens in the ninth century, the abbey was restored each time but went into a decline after 1071 because the "unsettled condition of Italy and the great strategical value of Montecassino involved the Abbey in the constant political struggles of the period."[14] An earthquake damaged the monastery in the fourteenth century, and again it was rebuilt. It was completed in the eighteenth century, only to be sacked in 1799 by French troops invading the Kingdom of Naples. Once more the building was patiently reconstructed and thus it stood in early February of 1944, complete and beautiful.

The German pressure in February against the Anzio beachhead compelled the Allied forces at the Gustav Line to redouble their efforts to pry open an entrance to the Liri valley. The II Corps was exhausted, and the provisional New Zealand Corps, commanded by General

[13] Jacques Mordal, *Cassino* (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1952), pp. 60–63; Kesselring, *A Soldier's Record*, p. 234. See "Montecassino," *Enciclopedia italiana* (Supplement, 1938–1948), I, 345–46.

[14] Quoted from *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913), X, 527, by Howard McG. Smyth, in German Use of the Abbey Montecassino Prior to Allied Aerial Bombardment of 15 February 1944, n.d., OCMH. See also Baedeker's *Southern Italy and Sicily* (1930), pp. 18–20; Mordal, *Cassino*, pp. 55–65; Majdalany, *The Battle of Cassino*, pp. 3–13.

Freyberg, with the 2d New Zealand and 4th Indian Divisions under its control, entered the line to take up the task.

The ground operations of the New Zealand Corps would follow much the same pattern laid down by the II Corps. The 4th Indian Division, relieving the 34th Division, was to clear the high ground immediately behind the town of Cassino and debouch into the Liri valley from the north flank several miles behind the Rapido River. The 2d New Zealand Division, larger than the normal Allied division and equipped with many vehicles, took positions on the flats east of Cassino and directly in front of the Liri valley entrance; it was to support the Indian division and be ready to cross the Rapido just north of Sant'Angelo to help take Cassino and open up the Liri valley for a thrust by CCB, 1st Armored Division. General Freyberg scheduled his attack for 13 February, but he needed clear skies to permit effective air support and dry ground to allow effective armored action. To bolster the left flank of the corps in the Sant'Angelo area, General Alexander moved the 78th Division from the Eighth Army to the Fifth. Deep snow in the Adriatic area and in the Apennines slowed the movement of the division, and it did not arrive in the Cassino area until the 17th.[15]

General Freyberg asked General Keyes to hold the 36th Division, under II Corps command, on Monte Castellone until the New Zealand Corps broke through the Cassino defenses. He also wanted to keep the 133d Infantry of the 34th Division in the northeastern corner of Cassino until the Indian division took the high ground. Keyes agreed. In addition, the II Corps Artillery would support the New Zealand Corps attack—surely the number of American pieces bolstering the three light and five medium regiments of New Zealand Corps Artillery and the organic artillery of the New Zealand and Indian divisions would seriously damage the German defenses.

Freyberg was an imposing figure with the reputation and prestige of a World War I hero who in World War II had commanded the troops on Crete and who had fought magnificently in the desert campaign of North Africa. Meeting with General Clark on 4 February to discuss the forthcoming commitment of his corps, he impressed Clark with his strong-mindedness, energy, aggressiveness, and optimism, which led the army commander to a wry observation—Freyberg was sure he was going to win the war, but Clark wondered whether he was going to clutter up the Liri valley with the 15,000 vehicles of the New Zealand division. In any event, General Clark had intimations of future discomfort—"these are dominion troops who are very jealous of their prerogatives. The British have found them difficult to handle. They have always been given special considerations which we would not give to our own troops."[16]

On 9 February, Clark conferred again with Freyberg. The corps commander "expressed some apprehension that the monastery buildings [the abbey of Monte Cassino] would be used by the Germans and stated that in his opinion, if necessary, they should be blown down by artillery fire or bombardment." Clark decided to give Freyberg a written direc-

[15] 15th AGp OI 42, 11 Feb 44; New Zealand Corps OI 4, 9 Feb 44; Clark Diary, 8 Feb 44.

[16] Clark Diary, 4 Feb 44.

tive authorizing him to fire against the monastery if in Freyberg's judgment military necessity dictated this action.[17]

The commander of the 4th Indian Division, Maj. Gen. F. S. Tuker, after studying the problem of how to break the Gustav Line in the Cassino area, had no doubt that the monastery was a real obstacle to progress. The condition of the American troops relieved by his division impressed him with the difficulty of his assignment. American units, in their effort to take the Cassino massif, had been in many cases reduced to 80 percent of combat effectiveness. Handfuls of isolated, frozen, battered, indomitable men were clinging to positions they had torn from the grip of the enemy. The German strength, the hostile terrain, and the winter weather conspired to make the enemy defenses seem impregnable. Symbolizing the superiority of the German line in startlingly bold symmetry was the Benedictine monastery, 1,703 feet above sea level atop Monte Cassino. Since the monastery commanded all the approaches to the Liri valley, Tuker decided it had to be destroyed before he could attack. He requested his corps commander, General Freyberg, to arrange for an air bombardment.[18]

In compliance with Tuker's request, Freyberg telephoned Fifth Army headquarters. Since Clark was visiting the Anzio beachhead, Gruenther, his chief of staff, took the call. Gruenther recorded the events immediately afterward.

General Freyberg's call came at 1900, 12 February. "I desire that I be given air support tomorrow," Freyberg said, "in order to soften the enemy position in the Cassino area. I want three missions of 12 planes each; the planes to be Kitty Bombers carrying 1,000 pound bombs."



GENERAL FREYBERG

This was not much of an air bombardment—thirty-six planes to drop eighteen tons of high explosives. But because Clark had requested a concentrated air force effort on 13 February at the beachhead, Gruenther doubted that Freyberg could get the air support he wanted. Yet he assured Freyberg that Clark would try to obtain aircraft to support the Indian division, which was now to attack one day later than originally scheduled, on 14 February.

Freyberg replied that he would like to have all the air "he could get" on the

[17] *Ibid.*, 9 Feb 44.

[18] *The Tiger Triumphs: the Story of Three Great Divisions in Italy* (His Majesty's Stationery Office for the Government of India, 1946), pp. 48ff.; Majdalany, *The Battle of Cassino*, p. 131.

13th in order to soften the enemy. Three missions, he said, would be his minimum requirement and, in his opinion, not an outrageous request.

Gruenther said he would "go into the matter at once."

He checked with the Fifth Army G–3, General Brann, and with the Fifth Army air officer, Lt. Col. John W. Hansborough, to determine what bombardment targets the New Zealand Corps headquarters had requested through normal air support channels and to see what air units were available for the Cassino front for the following morning. He found it possible to secure a fighter-bomber squadron.

Phoning Freyberg, Gruenther told him he could have a squadron of A–36's carrying 500-pound bombs for one mission. Which target, Gruenther asked, would Freyberg prefer to have attacked?

"I want the Convent attacked," Freyberg replied.

Gruenther said he presumed Freyberg referred to the monastery, the abbey on Monte Cassino. But this was not on the list of targets Freyberg's headquarters had submitted earlier.

"I am quite sure it was on my list of targets," General Freyberg said, "but in any case I want it bombed. The other targets are unimportant, but this one is vital. The division commander who is making the attack feels that it is an essential target and I thoroughly agree with him."

Current restrictions with respect to that target, Gruenther informed Freyberg, made it impossible for Gruenther to come to a firm decision himself. He promised he would take up Freyberg's request with General Clark.

Unable to reach General Clark at once, Gruenther called General Alexander's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Sir John Harding, and laid the situation before him:

> General Freyberg has asked that the Abbey of Monte Cassino be bombed tomorrow. General Clark will not be available for about an hour, so he does not know of this request. General Clark has spoken to General Freyberg on at least two occasions concerning the advisability of bombing the Monastery. He told General Freyberg that after consulting General Keyes, the [II] Corps Commander, and General Ryder, the Commander of the 34th Division, he considered that no military necessity existed for its destruction. General Freyberg expressed to General Clark his considered opinion that the destruction of the Monastery was a military necessity, and that it was unfair to assign to any military commander the mission of taking the hill, and at the same time not grant permission to bomb the Monastery. I am quite sure that General Clark still feels that it is unnecessary to bomb the Monastery. However, in view of the nature of the target, and the international and religious implications involved, I should like to get an expression of opinion from ACMF [Alexander's Allied Central Mediterranean Forces headquarters] as to the advisability of authorizing the bombing.

Harding said he would talk with Alexander and let Gruenther know.

Before Harding called him back, Gruenther got in touch with General Clark, who said that he did not consider the destruction of the monastery a military necessity. He asked Gruenther to tell Harding his feeling when Harding called later to give Alexander's view. Recording the conversation, Gruenther added:

> General Clark also stated that this was a matter which caused him some embarrassment in view of the extremely strong views of General Freyberg. . . . General Clark felt that unless General Freyberg receded from

this position it would place General Clark in a very difficult position in the event that the attack should fail.

Attempting to marshal support for General Clark's position, General Gruenther phoned General Keyes at 2115. Asked whether he believed the destruction of the monastery to be a military necessity, Keyes said no. He said further that bombing the monastery would "probably enhance its value as a military obstacle, because the Germans would then feel free to use it as a barricade." Keyes volunteered the information that General Ryder, along with Col. Mark M. Boatner, an Engineer officer, also thought that destroying the monastery was unwarranted.

General Keyes then switched the call to his corps G–2, Col. Mercer C. Walter, who told Gruenther that information received from two civilian sources indicated as many as 2,000 civilians had probably taken refuge in the monastery. Although several artillery battalions had reported that the Germans were using the monastery as an observation post, there were no reports of actual fire coming from the building. "The evidence pointed to the fact," Walter added, "that there were [several] enemy strongpoints [located] very close to the walls of the building."

A few minutes later, at 2130, Gruenther heard from Harding. General Alexander had decided, Harding said, that the monastery should be bombed if Freyberg considered its destruction a military necessity. Alexander regretted, Harding continued, "that the building should be destroyed, but he has faith in General Freyberg's judgment. If there is any reasonable probability that the building is being used for military purposes, General Alexander believes that its destruction is warranted."



GENERAL GRUENTHER

Gruenther then told Harding he had talked with Clark since his earlier conversation with Harding. Clark's position was clear—he was against bombing the building; if the commander of the New Zealand Corps were American, Clark would refuse his request for the bombardment. However, "in view of General Freyberg's position in the British Empire forces,"—he was commander of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and he was also the representative of the New Zealand Government in the theater—"the situation was a delicate one and General Clark hesitated to give him such an order without first referring the matter to General Alexander." Clark believed that no military necessity existed, that a bombardment would endanger the

lives of civilian refugees in the building, and that bombardment would probably fail to destroy the abbey and would be more than likely to enhance its value as a fortification.

General Harding's reply was cold. "General Alexander," he said, "has made his position quite clear. . . . He regrets very much that the Monastery should be destroyed, but he sees no other choice."

Gruenther then phoned Clark and told him what had taken place. Clark asked him to tell Freyberg "that while he [Clark] did not consider that it was a military necessity to bomb the monastery, he was willing to defer to General Freyberg's judgment if General Freyberg had evidence that indicated that the monastery should be bombed." Clark also asked Gruenther to call Harding and tell him that Clark wanted to talk with Alexander in the morning because Clark still felt it would be an error to bomb the monastery. He believed there was insufficient evidence to warrant its destruction. Meanwhile, Gruenther was to order the bombardment but avoid launching it before 1000, 13 February, so that the order could be canceled if Alexander changed his mind after talking with Clark.

Telephoning Harding, Gruenther told him what Clark had said. "If it were an American commander," Gruenther added, "his [Clark's] decision would be an easy one and he would not bother General Alexander about it, but he will talk to him in the morning."

Gruenther telephoned Freyberg immediately thereafter, at 2200, and informed him that General Clark believed there was no military necessity to destroy the monastery and that he was "reluctant to authorize its bombing unless you are certain that its destruction is necessary."

General Freyberg said he had gone into the matter thoroughly with the 4th Indian Division commander, who was quite convinced that bombing the monastery was necessary. Freyberg added that he thought it was not "sound to give an order to capture Monastery Hill and at the same time deny the commander the right to remove an important obstacle to the success of this mission." A higher commander who refused to authorize the bombing, Freyberg warned, would have to take the responsibility if the attack failed.

Gruenther said that Clark was ready to authorize the bombing if Freyberg considered it a military necessity.

According to Gruenther's record, General Freyberg then said that "it was his considered opinion that it is a military necessity."

The magic formula having been categorically uttered, Gruenther told Freyberg that the air mission was authorized. Would he arrange directly with General Keyes to have any II Corps troops that might be endangered by the bombing moved to safety?

General Freyberg agreed. He would let General Gruenther know when the area was safe for bombardment.

General Gruenther then phoned General Brann and told him to arrange with the air liaison officer to have the monastery bombed on the following morning, 13 February, no earlier than 1000, the exact time to be determined later.[19]

[19] Fifth Army [Memo for Record, signed "Gruenther"], Monte Cassino Abbey Bombing, 12 Feb 44, Fifth Army Rpt of Monte Cassino Bombing. See also Clark, *Calculated Risk*, pp. 315–18; Clark Diary, 13 Feb 44.

Not long afterward, Freyberg called to request that the bombardment be postponed. There was insufficient time to move the II Corps troops who would be endangered by the bombing.

Clark continued to be "greatly concerned over the problem of bombing the Abbey at Cassino. General Freyberg is convinced that the Germans are using the Abbey for military purposes." [20]

On the morning of 13 February, about 0915, Alexander telephoned Clark. Was it true that Clark looked with disfavor on a bombardment of the monastery?

It was. Clark summed up the reasons for his stand. American commanders attacking in the Cassino area had found it unnecessary to bomb the monastery. There was no positive indication that the Germans were using the monastery. Even if they were, previous efforts to bomb a building or a town to prevent its use by the Germans had always failed. For religious and sentimental reasons, it would be shameful to destroy the abbey and its art treasures. Besides, women and children were taking shelter in the building. Finally, the extent of the air effort that could be brought against the monastery was insufficient to destroy the building but would be enough to give the Germans an excuse to use it. The monastery in ruins would be a better defensive installation.

All this was so, Alexander admitted. But if Freyberg wanted the monastery bombed, he said, the monastery would have to be bombed.[21]

Despite General Alexander's apparent assurance, the delicate considerations involved prompted him to bring the matter to the attention of his immediate superior, the theater commander. General Wilson concurred in the decision.

Generals Clark, Keyes, and Ryder felt that bombing the abbey would be unwise for several reasons. They believed that no German troops were actually inside the building. They were sure the Germans would be glad to use Allied air bombing of the abbey for propaganda purposes. Most important, the Germans had no need of the monastery for observation; the hill itself offered excellent observation posts and the Germans held nearby hills that gave them even better ones.[22]

Ten years after the war, Senger, the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, confirmed their belief when he stated categorically that no German troops were inside the abbey before the bombardment. Observation posts outside the abbey, he admitted, were "as close as 200 yards." But there was no reason to use the abbey itself as an observation post because other sites on the mountain offered better positions. Anxious to keep from alienating the Vatican and Catholics all over the world, the German command was scrupulous in respecting the neutrality of the monastery, so scrupulous in fact that when Senger visited the abbey on Christmas Eve of 1943 and dined with the abbot, he refrained from looking out of the windows when he was inside.[23]

Although the abbey was actually unoccupied by German troops, a fact verified by the Fifth Army Counter Intelligence Corps on 26 February, the German

[20] Clark Diary, 13 Feb 44.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Interv, Smyth with Keyes, 14 Feb 50, OCMH.

[23] Interv, Crowl with Senger, 22 Sep 55, OCMH. See also Ltr, Maj Gen Orlando Ward, Chief, Historical Division, 21 Feb 50, OCMH.

positions were so close to the walls that it was impossible to fire on one without hitting the other.[24] Yet American infantrymen as well as artillerymen were under strict orders not to fire upon the abbey building.

The fact that dug-in tanks and bunkers covered the approaches to the abbey and that gunfire came from carefully placed positions and pillboxes very close to the monastery, when added to some evidence that German troops were indeed inside the walls—this provided the military necessity for justifying the bombardment.[25]

Some Allied commanders and soldiers were sincerely convinced that the Germans were using the building for military purposes. A regimental commander in the 34th Division thought he saw the flash of field glasses in the monastery. An Italian civilian, who came into the American lines on 9 February and said he had left the abbey two days earlier, declared that he had seen 30 machine guns and about 80 German soldiers in the building. An artillery battalion reported on 12 February that "our observers had noted a great deal of enemy activity in the vicinity of the famous monastery, and it became ever clearer that they were using the Abbey as an observation post and also had gun emplacements installed." A member of the battalion had been seriously wounded "by a sniper hiding in the monastery." And on the following day, the same battalion reported "much small arms fire seen and heard coming from the vicinity of the abbey." [26]

[24] Clark Diary, 26 Feb 44; Fifth Army G-3 Jnl, 26 Feb 44.

[25] The Bombing of Monte Cassino Abbey, MS, OCMH File Geog L Italy 373.11 (Cassino).

[26] 131st FA Bn AAR, Feb 44.

In order to try to determine whether German troops were actually using the abbey, General Eaker, commander of the Mediterranean Air Command, flew over Monte Cassino with General Devers in a Piper Cub plane, probably on 13 February. Because the Germans ignored small planes to avoid drawing attacks by fighter-bombers, Devers and Eaker were able to fly above the abbey walls at less than 200 feet. Both officers believed they saw at least one military radio aerial inside the monastery and enemy soldiers moving in and out of the building. Since this seemed to confirm the "military necessity" of the bombing, General Wilson approved on that day or the next the order for Eaker to destroy the abbey from the air. In a cable he later sent to explain his action, Wilson said that he had "irrefutable evidence" that the abbey was part of the German main line of defense, that observers were using the building from which to direct artillery fire, that snipers fired from the structure, and that gun emplacements, pillboxes, and ammunition dumps were located within the shadow of the walls. Thus, when General Freyberg insisted that the destruction of the abbey was a necessary preliminary for the ground attack designed to storm the height of Monte Cassino, his argument outweighed "historical and sentimental considerations." [27]

[27] Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., "The Army Air Forces in World War II," vol. III, *Europe: ARGUMENT to V-E Day, January 1944 to May 1945* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 362–63; Interv, Smyth with Keyes, 14 Feb 50, OCMH; The Bombing of Monte Cassino Abbey, OCMH File Geog L Italy 373.11 (Cassino); Msg, AFHQ to British Air Ministry for COS and to the British in Washington for U.S. JCS, 9 Mar 44.

Curiously enough, there was a great difference between General Freyberg's original request for thirty-six planes to bomb the monastery and the air strike now planned. No longer was Freyberg talking simply about an air attack on the abbey. By 14 February he was saying that the abbey would have to be flattened before the Indian division could take the hill. General Juin made a special trip on that day to urge General Clark to prevent the destruction of the abbey, but the decision was irrevocable.[28]

What had caused a pronounced escalation in the bombardment, now scheduled for 15 February, is nowhere alluded to in the official records or in the personal papers of the participants. What seems likely is that air force planners seized upon the opportunity to demonstrate the power of the bomber, which had never before been used in concentrated mass directly in support of ground troops attempting to take a tactical objective. If Freyberg wanted the building flattened, the building would be flattened. Probably General Eaker, and perhaps General Devers, persuaded General Wilson to let the air forces try the experiment.

During the night of 14 February, to lessen the danger of short or stray bombs, Indian troops withdrew from positions close to the slopes of Monte Cassino. After the air bombardment, the Indian division was to return to its positions, a process that was expected to be completed by morning, 16 February. The main effort would then jump off, the objective the abbey. Some time later, on corps order, the New Zealand division was to attack along the railroad to the Cassino railway station in the southern part of the town, there to be ready to force its way into the Liri valley.[29]

Shortly before the Indian troops withdrew to safety, Allied planes dropped leaflets on Monte Cassino to warn the civilians of the imminent destruction. The leaflets read:

> Italian friends:
>
> Until this day we have done everything to avoid bombing the abbey. But the Germans have taken advantage. Now that the battle has come close to your sacred walls we shall, despite our wish, have to direct our arms against the monastery. Abandon it at once. Put yourselves in a safe place. Our warning is urgent.
>
> FIFTH ARMY.[30]

No leaflet fell within the walls of the abbey, but a civilian refugee, at some danger to himself, picked one up from the hill and brought it to the abbot. The abbot sent his secretary to meet with a German officer in order to arrange for the occupants to leave. The battle raging around the environs prevented immediate plans for departure. Agreement was reached for everyone to quit the abbey by a mule path at 0500, 16 February.

At 0945, 15 February—nineteen hours before the abbey was to be evacuated, according to the agreement between the abbot and the Germans—the first of about 250 bombers attacked the monastery. The planes went over in waves, and

[28] Clark Diary, 14 Feb 44.

[29] An excellent short account may be found in Commandant P. D. Hogan, "On the Way to Rome," *An Cosantoir*, the Irish Defence Journal, XVII, No. 12 (December, 1957), 551–68.

[30] Quoted in Mordal, *Cassino*, p. 64.



Monastery Under Attack



"soon reduced the entire top of Monte Cassino to a smoking mass of rubble." The major part of the bombing occurred during the morning, but aircraft reappeared throughout the day. Almost 600 tons of high explosive virtually demolished the monastery. The men of a field artillery battalion who watched the bombardment from the slopes of Monte Cairo "stood rooted" at the sight of the largest concentrated high explosive destruction that anyone had ever seen.[31]

Between the waves of bombers, artillery added to the destruction. One of the largest concentrations occurred at 1030, when the II Corps Artillery fired a time-on-target volley of 266 rounds from 240-mm. and 8-inch howitzers, and from 4.5-inch and 155-mm. guns.

The bombardment and shelling seemed to bear out those who believed that the Germans had used the abbey. "Over 150 enemy were seen wildly trying to get away from the Abbey as the first planes dropped their loads," one regiment reported. "Artillery and small arms fire took a heavy toll of these men as they exposed themselves across the open terrain."[32] Other witnesses reported that as the bombing temporarily lifted and artillery fire came in on the target, German troops made repeated attempts to run from the abbey to safer positions—"conclusive proof that the Germans had used the monastery for military purposes."[33] During the bombing the enemy, "some carrying weapons and equipment, were reported by our observers to be leaving the ruined buildings and running south." The bombs blasted and burned off most of the vegetation on Monte Cassino and revealed many dugouts and trenches, "confirming the extensive organization of the [hill] feature by the enemy."[34] News reports of that date indicated that about 200 persons, some of them wearing German uniforms, had fled from the monastery during the air attack.[35] The 15th Army Group headquarters declared that approximately 200 Germans left the building after the bombing.[36]

One observer of the bombing, General Allen, commander of CCB of the 1st Armored Division, found the sight inspiring. "Our air," he wrote, "which has been conspicuous by its absence for several weeks, came back into being yesterday and thoroughly demolished the monastery above Cassino. Reports indicate that a great number of Germans were driven out of the building and surrounding area. It was a tremendous spectacle to see all the Flying Fortresses come over and drop their bombs."[37]

[31] 131st FA Bn AAR, Feb 44. The figures of the planes involved and the tonnages dropped vary. See Craven and Cate, eds., *Europe: ARGUMENT to V–E Day*, page 363, which notes 229 heavy and medium bombers attacking during the morning, 27 medium bombers attacking in the afternoon. A detailed breakdown of the morning bombardment shows the Twelfth Air Force contributing 87 medium bombers (40 B–26's of the 319th Bomber Group, 35 B–25's of the 340th Bomber Group, and 12 B–25's of the 321st Bomber Group), and the Fifteenth Air Force contributing 142 heavy bombers (37 B–17's of the 2d Bomber Group, 35 B–17's of the 97th Bomber Group, 38 B–17's of the 99th Bomber Group, and 32 B–17's of the 301st Bomber Group). OCMH File Geog L Italy 373.11 (Cassino). See also *Fifth Army History*, Part IV, pp. 98–99; *The Tiger Triumphs*, p. 45.

[32] 141st Inf AAR, Feb 44.

[33] 151st FA Bn AAR, Feb 44.

[34] 34th Div G–2 Rpt, Feb 44.

[35] The Bombing of Monte Cassino Abbey, OCMH File Geog L Italy 373.11 (Cassino).

[36] 15th AGp Narrative, 15 Feb 44.

[37] Ltr, Allen to Harmon, Comdr 1st Armd Div, 16 Feb 44, CG File (CCB 1st Armd Div), 14 Aug 43–1 Jun 44.



ARTILLERY AIMED AT THE MONASTERY, *above. Monastery in ruins, below.*



Another observer, General Walker, the 36th Division commander, watched the bombardment from his command post in Cervaro and had another reaction. He described the air attack, how bombers struck the hilltop four times, some bombs of the first wave falling on the monastery, other bombs tumbling on positions of the Indian division about 1,500 yards from the target and inflicting, he later learned, about forty casualties; how great clouds of smoke completely concealed the monastery for about ten minutes; how a bomb group approached in the afternoon and made an almost perfect hit on the monastery. About 2,500 civilians, Walker was told, had been in the monastery, though no German soldiers were there. No weapons had been placed within the monastery, he was informed, but some were as close as 200 yards away.

General Walker wrote in his diary:

> This was a valuable historical monument, which should have been preserved. The Germans were not using it and I can see no advantage in destroying it. No tactical advantage will result since the Germans can make as much use of the rubble for observation posts and gun positions as of the building itself. Whether the Germans used the building for an observation post or for emplacements makes little difference since the mountain top on which the building stands can serve the same purpose. If I had had the decision to make I would have prevented its destruction. I have directed my artillery not to fire on it to date.[38]

To many men in the 34th Division, the immediate reaction to the bombardment was one of resentment and bitterness. Why had the Allied commanders waited until after *their* battle for Cassino, after their relief by the New Zealanders and the Indians, to bomb the abbey? Why had *they* been denied this assistance?[39]

Around noon, 15 February, Senger sent the following telegram to Vietinghoff:

> The 90th Panzer Grenadier Division reports that the Abbey Montecassino was bombed on 15 February at 0930 by 31, at 0940 by 34, and at 1000 by 18 four-motor bombers. Damage still to be determined.
>
> There are numerous civilian refugees in the monastery.
>
> Notice of the attack was given by dropping leaflets with the justification that German machine guns were in the Abbey.
>
> Commander Cassino, Colonel Schulz, Commanding Officer 1st Parachute Regiment, reports in this regard that the troops had not installed arms in the monastery. The divisional order, that in case of extreme danger the severely wounded were to be brought into the monastery, has not been used up to now. Field police have maintained steady watch that no German soldier entered the building. The enemy measures therefore lack any legal basis.[40]

A civilian who had been in the abbey during the bombardment came into the American lines and gave a report of what had happened. About six monks and approximately 2,500 civilians, no Germans, he said, had been in the monastery. The Germans had never had weapons inside the abbey, had never used the abbey as an observation post. The nearest German position was about fifty yards from the outside wall, though most positions were at least 200 yards away.[41]

[38] Walker Diary, 16 Feb 44.

[39] Luttrell, Opns of 168th Inf (34th Div) in Rapido River Crossing; Gray, Crossing of the Rapido.

[40] Telegram, *XIV Pz C* to *10 A*, 1215, 15 Feb 44, *XIV Pz C KTB, Anl.*

[41] Phone Msg from Lt Roberts, 36th Div, 0300, 16 Feb 44, Cassino Study.

Even the guards placed at the entrance to enforce the abbey's neutrality had been withdrawn about three weeks before the bombardment.[42]

On the day after the bombardment, German military photographers took moving pictures of the monastery. That evening, an officer, accompanied by the abbot's secretary, flew the film to Berlin for use as propaganda. OKW directed Kesselring to have the *90th Panzer Grenadier Division* search the abbey for survivors and take the abbot to the *XIV Panzer Corps* headquarters for an interview.[43]

The abbot, who was seventy-eight years old, left the ruined monastery at dawn of 17 February, along with those who could leave. They wended their way along a mule path down the mountain. Senger, the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, sent a car to pick up the abbot and bring him to the corps command post.

On the morning of 18 February, Senger interviewed the abbot in front of movie cameras that recorded the event. A lieutenant read the introduction:

> The Abbey Montecassino is completely destroyed. A senseless act of force of the Anglo-American Air Force has robbed civilized mankind of one of its most valued cultural monuments. Abbot Bishop Gregorio Diamare has been brought out of the ruins of his abbey under the protection of the German Armed Forces. He voluntarily placed himself in their protection and by them was brought through a ring of fire of Allied artillery which has been laid around the monastery without interruption since the aerial bombardment, and into the Command Post of the Commanding General. The old Abbot, who today is 80 years old, found here a place of refuge and recovery after the days of horror which he, his monks, and numerous refugees, women, children, old men, crippled, sick, and wounded civilians had to undergo because of the order of the Allied Supreme Commander. We find the General . . . and the Abbot . . . in a voluntary discussion in which we now cut in:
>
> *Commanding General* [Senger]: . . . everything was done on the part of the German Armed Forces, definitely everything, in order to give the opponent no military ground for attacking the monastery.
>
> *Abbot:* General, I . . . can only confirm this. You declared the Abbey Montecassino a protected zone, you forbade German soldiers to step within the area of the abbey, you ordered that within a specified perimeter around the abbey there be neither weapons, no observation post nor billeting of troops. You have tirelessly taken care that these orders were most strictly observed. . . . Until the moment of the destruction of the Montecassino Abbey there was within the area of the abbey neither a German soldier, nor any German weapon, nor any German military installation.
>
> *Commanding General*: It came to my attention much too late that leaflets which gave notice of the bombing were dropped over the area of the monastery. I first learned this after the bombing. No leaflets were dropped over our German positions.
>
> *Abbot*: I have the feeling that the leaflets were intentionally dropped so late in order to give us no possibility to notify the German commanders, or, on the other hand to bring the some 800 guests of the monastery out of the danger zone. . . . We simply did not believe that the English and Americans would attack the abbey. And when they came with their bombs, we laid out white cloths in order to say to them, do nothing to us, we are certainly without arms, we are no military objective, here is a holy place. It did not help, they have destroyed the monastery and killed hundreds of innocent people.
>
> *Commanding General*: Can I do anything more?

[42] Modral, *Cassino*, p. 123.

[43] *XIV Pz C Gen Kdo, Ic Tatigkeitsbericht*, 17 Feb 44, File 58200/I, GMDS.



ARCHBISHOP DIAMARE WITH GENERAL VON SENGER *after the abbot left the monastery.*

Abbot: No, General, you have done everything—even today the German Armed Forces provides for us and for the refugees in model fashion. But I have something still to do, namely to thank you and the German Armed Forces for all the consideration given to the original abode of the Benedictine Order both before and after the bombardment. I thank you.[44]

Ten years after the war, Senger had forgotten the interview. He remembered having received a short, signed statement from the abbot, who declared that no Germans had been stationed in the abbey at any time before the bombardment. According to his recollection, Senger then sent the abbot under escort to Rome. En route, Senger learned later, some SS troops kidnapped the abbot and extorted from him a more elaborate statement, which though true was couched in propagandistic and inflammatory language. Still later, Senger was informed, envoys from Goebbel's office tried to pressure the abbot into making a still stronger statement. Exhausted and by this time angry, the abbot refused to comply. When the Vatican learned of the treatment the abbot had received, the papal authorities turned against the Germans.[45]

The bombing of the abbey provoked a protest from the Vatican. In response, President Roosevelt stated that he had issued instructions to prevent the destruction of historic monuments except in cases of military necessity. The bom-

[44] *XIV Pz C Gen Kdo, Ic Anlageheft 2 zum Tatisbeitsbericht,* File 58200/3, GMDS.

[45] Interv, Crowl with Senger, 22 Sep 55, OCMH.



GERMAN TROOPS INSIDE THE RUINED ABBEY, *from a sketch made by Agricola, a German artist. (OCMH, captured German war art.)*

bardment, he said, had been unfortunate but necessary.[46]

When the planes that had attacked Monte Cassino on the morning of 15 February had gone, German troops emerged from their shelters and occupied the ground abandoned by the Indian units when they sought safety before the bombardment. Two days later, on 17 February, shortly after the abbot had left, other German troops installed themselves and their weapons in the ruins, which provided excellent defensive positions. Five days later, the German paratroopers who occupied the abbey ruins held a virtually impregnable strongpoint.[47]

Despite the withdrawal of Indian troops from positions close to the abbey, the bombardment inflicted twenty-four casualties among Indian units. More important, their pulling back permitted the Germans to regain without effort key positions that American troops had fought bitterly to win.

The 4th Indian Division, commanded temporarily by Brigadier Harry K. Dimoline, who replaced an ailing General Tuker, attacked after nightfall, 15 February. A single company tried to recap-

[46] The Bombing of Monte Cassino Abbey, OCMH File Geog L Italy 373.11 (Cassino).

[47] Interv, Smyth with Keyes, 14 Feb 50, OCMH.

ture the ground that had been given up and made no progress. Two battalions attacked on the following day after more than 100 P–40's and P–51's had dropped more bombs on Monte Cassino and nearby hills, but they made no progress either. In the afternoon, 48 fighter-bombers dropped 24 tons of bombs on positions around the abbey, and that night five Indian battalions attacked and this time regained the ground. Counterattacks forced the battalions to withdraw at daybreak, 17 February. On that day, 59 fighter-bombers dropped 23 tons in the Monte Cassino area. Again Indian units attacked. The troops reached their objective, but the Germans forced them to withdraw in the early hours of 18 February. Another attack that morning finally succeeded. After repelling four counterattacks, the troops at last attacked directly toward Monte Cassino, no more than 1,000 yards distant. But the two battalions committed hardly moved ahead.[48]

As General Clark had foreseen, the bombardment of the abbey had failed to break the Gustav Line at its critical point. Not only the major bombing on 15 February, but the relatively heavy bombings on successive days, which had further reduced the monastery, failed to dislodge the stubborn and skillful troops in well-nigh perfect defensive positions. The ground and air commands in the theater were profoundly disappointed. Had the ground forces been unable to take advantage of the bombardment? Or were bombers incapable of eradicating tactical positions and therefore useless for direct support of ground attack? No one seemed to know. General Eaker's report to General Henry H. Arnold, Commanding General, U.S. Army Air Forces, skirted the basic questions. According to Eaker, General Clark

> did not want a single bomb on Cassino Abbey, but . . . General Freyberg . . . went over his head or around him and asked the Army Group commander to have it bombed. We bomb it and it causes an uproar from the churchmen. You ask us then why we bombed; we make an investigation and discover a difference of view between the Ground Commanders . . . .[49]

In the final analysis, no one had been altogether certain what the bombardment was supposed to accomplish except to flatten the abbey. The escalation of the air effort from a relatively modest attack to an overwhelming strike had achieved nothing beyond destruction, indignation, sorrow, and regret.

The 2d New Zealand Division, commanded by Brigadier Howard Kippenberger, attacked at 2130, 17 February, to capture the Cassino railroad station just short of Highway 6 at the base of Monte Cassino. New Zealand troops drove the Germans from the station, but could not withstand a counterattack. By midafternoon of the following day, the Germans had regained the station.[50]

The positions in the Cassino area thus remained unchanged. The Allied forces had been defeated. The German troops had scored an impressive victory.

As the weather deteriorated, continued offensive operations became impos-

[48] *The Tiger Triumphs*, pp. 45–49. See also Majdalany, *The Battle of Cassino*, pp. 164ff.

[49] Eaker to Arnold, 21 Mar 44, Mathews File, OCMH.

[50] See Maj. Gen. Sir Howard Kippenberger, *Infantry Brigadier* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 348ff.

sible. A new attack planned for 24 February was postponed because of freezing rain, snow, and high winds. The lines became static, the remainder of the month was spent in consolidating positions, exchanging artillery fire, and patrolling. In the paralyzing grip of winter, the battle subsided all along the Gustav Line on both Fifth and Eighth Army fronts.

New Zealanders on 22 February relieved the last units of the 34th Division still holding the northeastern corner of the town of Cassino. Two days later the British 78th Division took over the part of the 2d New Zealand Division sector that was in the Sant'Angelo area. On 26 February, French troops and a battalion of the newly arrived 88th U.S. Division relieved the 36th Division on Monte Castellone. An Italian combat team, consisting of a battalion of *Bersaglieri,* a battalion of paratroopers, two antitank companies, and a regiment of artillery, was attached to the 2d Moroccan Division and placed in the line in the difficult terrain along the northern boundary of the Fifth Army. A third division, the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division, joined the French Expeditionary Corps.

The arrival of the new troops in southern Italy, to be followed soon by the 85th U.S. Division, gave the Allied command hope that increased strength would finally crack the Gustav Line and get troops into the Liri valley. For this renewed effort, the command awaited better weather.

The disappointment that the bombardment of Monte Cassino had failed to open the Liri valley was deepened by events at the Anzio beachhead. As it became evident that no swift linkup could be managed, the situation at Anzio took a turn for the worse.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Test at Anzio

The Major German Attack

Ever since he had recaptured Aprilia, the *Fourteenth Army* commander, Mackensen, had been preparing for his decisive attack to push the Allied forces from the Anzio beachhead. The prospect of success seemed good, for reinforcements had arrived. The veteran *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* came from the *Tenth Army* front, the *114th Division* from Yugoslavia, the *362d Division* from northern Italy, and a special demonstration unit from Germany, the *Berlin-Spandau Infantry Lehr Regiment,* used to show troops in training how to execute an assault. The *Lehr Regiment* was Hitler's contribution to the attack.

Believing that destruction of the beachhead would compel the Allies to postpone their invasion of northwest Europe, which he expected sometime during the spring or summer of 1944, Hitler gave his close attention to the Anzio planning. He instructed Kesselring to have Mackensen attack on a very narrow front. He wanted a creeping barrage "reminiscent of those used in World War I." And he "categorically ordered" the *Lehr Regiment,* "which he valued particularly highly," Mackensen later recalled, to be used to make the main effort despite its lack of combat experience.[1] (*Map VI*)

Kesselring and Mackensen were far from happy with Hitler's orders. Massed forces on a narrow front presented a good target for Allied guns and planes, whereas an attack on a broader front would pin down greater numbers of Allied troops, increase the power of the German thrust at the vital point, and give the Germans a better chance of coming to grips with the main Allied defenses. But the commanders in the field felt unable to take issue with the Fuehrer. Nor could they object to employing the *Infantry Lehr.* The creeping barrage, however, was impossible; they simply lacked enough ammunition for this kind of artillery expenditure.

Setting D-day for 16 February, Mackensen directed the *I Parachute Corps,* with the *4th Parachute* and *65th Divisions,* to make the secondary effort west of the Albano-Anzio road. The *LXXVI Panzer Corps* headquarters, which had been pulled out of the Adriatic front a week earlier, with the *Infantry Lehr Regiment* and parts of the *3d Panzer Grenadier, 114th,* and *715th Divisions* in the first wave, was to make the breakthrough just east of the Albano-Anzio road; the *29th Panzer Grenadier* and *26th Panzer Divisions* in the second wave would exploit the penetration and drive to the coast. Weakening his other sectors, Mackensen ordered continual small-scale assaults along the entire front to conceal the point of his major blow.

[1] MS # C-061 (Mackensen), OCMH. See also Hauser in MS # T-1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

The *Fourteenth Army* now controlled about 125,000 troops at Anzio as compared to the 100,000 under VI Corps. In a ringing order of the day to the German forces, Hitler exhorted them to remove the beachhead "abscess" from the Italian coast. He thought they could do it in three days.[2]

On the morning of 16 February, the *Hermann Goering Division* launched a feint attack in the Cisterna area against the 3d Division, which turned back the assault, largely with artillery fire. Against the British, the diversionary attack of the *4th Parachute Division* had greater success, breaking through the 56th Division front and plunging forward for nearly two miles until it was stopped by British reserves. The main attack, opening with heavy artillery preparations on both sides of the Albano-Anzio road, struck the 45th Division, which had all three regiments together along a 6-mile front in the center of the beachhead perimeter. The first infantry blow came directly down the road, which marked the boundary between the 157th and 179th Infantry regiments, and both units gave way. Commitment of the reserve battalions stopped the German advance.[3]

Fierce fighting in the vicinity of the road continued throughout the day, but the German troops made no further gains.[4] The German infantrymen, who had counted on the firepower and shock effect of supporting tanks, found themselves deprived almost at once of this close support. A frost during the previous night had hardened the ground and permitted tanks to move to battle stations, but a rise in temperature during the morning made the Anzio plain soft and sticky. Tank maneuver off the roads became impossible.

The performance of the *Infantry Lehr Regiment* was disappointing. Mackensen remarked that the regiment was made up of excellent human material, but the men had never before been in combat. Meeting strong opposition, taking heavy casualties, and losing many officers, the inexperienced troops broke and fled, robbing the assault of momentum. According to Kesselring, who later accepted the blame for having committed an untried unit in a major assignment, the regiment had performed "disgracefully." [5]

More important than the small advance achieved or even the high losses incurred, the German attack had failed to compel the Allies to commit the 1st Armored Division, the considerable troops General Lucas held in reserve. To force this commitment would be Mackensen's prime purpose on the second day of the attack. The uncommitted units of his first wave constituted a strong force, and his second wave was entirely intact.

That evening, 16 February, Mackensen emphasized the importance of allowing the Allied troops no rest during the night. He wanted strong assault parties

[2] Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, pp. 489–90.

[3] See Maj James H. Cook, Jr., The Operations of Company L, 179th Infantry (45th Division) in the Vicinity of the Factory, Anzio Beachhead, 16–18 February 1944, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, Ft. Benning, Ga., 1949–50.

[4] See Capt Ralph L. Niffenegger, The Operations of the 3d Platoon, Company G, 157th Infantry (45th Division), 15–16 February 1944, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, Ft. Benning, Ga., 1949–50.

[5] MS # T–1a K1 (Kesselring), OCMH. See also MS # C–061 (Mackensen), OCMH.

to exert pressure, supported wherever possible by tanks, all along the front.

The night operations attained a measure of success, one attack in particular. About half a battalion of the *715th Division* worked around both flanks of Company E, 157th Infantry, astride the Albano-Anzio road, while the other half struck directly at the company positions. The Germans wiped out the American forward defenses and forced the remainder of the company into a tight perimeter around the command post. Although three tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion helped the company hold out, only fourteen riflemen were left at dawn. As four German tanks closed in for the kill, the company commander finally received permission to withdraw. The men fought their way to safety, but a dangerous gap was opened between two of the 45th Division's regiments, the 157th and the 179th.

Soon after 0740, 17 February, when about thirty-five German planes bombed and strafed the 45th Division area, troops from the *715th, 65th,* and *114th Divisions,* supported by about sixty tanks, struck through the gap and hit the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry. The German attack quickly destroyed one rifle company and forced the other battalion units to fall back about a mile to positions barely in front of General Lucas' final beachhead line.

At 1040, when about forty-five German planes bombed and strafed 45th Division positions again, one bomb fell on the command post of the 3d Battalion, 179th, and knocked out all communications. German infantry and tanks again drove into the gap, spreading and deepening the penetration. By noon, German troops had driven a wedge two miles wide and more than a mile deep into the center of the 45th Division front.[6]

To shorten his front and tie in his flanks, the regimental commander of the 179th Infantry pulled his two forward battalions back 1,000 yards. The withdrawal was made in daylight and in full view of the Germans, who took advantage of the targets of opportunity and tore the battalions to shreds. Small groups of men scattered and made their way back to the final beachhead line as best they could.[7]

With the final beachhead line hardly manned in that sector, General Lucas put additional resources at the disposal of General Eagles and the 45th Division. He quickly moved artillery and tanks, as well as four batteries of 90-mm. antiaircraft guns, into direct support positions. He secured the fires of two cruisers offshore. And he requested that all available planes be sent to blast the attacking formations. As all types of Allied bombers flew more than 700 sorties over the threatened area, General Lucas brought the 1st British Division out of reserve and into positions backing the final beachhead line between the 56th British and 45th U.S. Divisions. He also made available to the defenders a tank battalion of the 1st Armored Division.

Mackensen broadened his attack that afternoon, the 17th, by committing the reserves of his first assault wave into the salient the morning attack had created.

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[6] See Maj Robert A. Guenthner, The Operations of Company F, 180th Infantry (45th Division), 16–20 February 1944, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, Ft. Benning, Ga., 1948–49.

[7] See CSDIC/CMF/M296, Detailed Interrogation Rpt of Thirteen German Intel Officers, n.d. (about Aug 45), Intel Activities, AG 383.4.



M7 SELF-PROPELLED 105-MM. HOWITZERS IN THE 45TH DIVISION AREA

As fourteen battalions of infantry and tanks tried to widen the gap that separated the 157th and 179th regiments and split open the Allied defenses, Mackensen awaited the moment for sending the exploiting forces of his second wave to ram home the attack and destroy the beachhead.

The defenders refused to break. The line was dangerously stretched and the defenses were close to disintegration, but a great expenditure of artillery, tank, tank destroyer, and mortar ammunition helped the infantry to hold. At the end of the day, General Lucas' final beachhead line was still unbroken.

On the evening of the second day of attack, Mackensen debated whether to cancel the offensive or to commit his second wave. The first wave had taken serious losses—the average number of men in most infantry battalions was somewhere between 120 and 150. Yet if the Germans were on the verge of winning the battle, "it would be folly," as Mackensen's chief of staff said, "to break off now." [8]

Hoping that the third day would be decisive, Mackensen instructed the weary first wave forces to fight throughout the night while both divisions of the second wave moved into position to jump off at 0400, 18 February. He had hoped to use the two fresh divisions to exploit a breakthrough. But now he had to commit them to gain a penetration.

The continual assaults that Mackensen tried to get from the tired and depleted troops of the first wave amounted

[8] Hauser in MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

only to night infiltration by small parties too weak to do more than harass the front lines.

The thrust at dawn by the divisions in the second wave was something else. Troops of the *29th Panzer Grenadier* and *26th Panzer Divisions* virtually destroyed a battalion of the 179th Infantry before noon, made a serious penetration of the front, and were on the point of pushing forward across the final few miles to Anzio.

The 179th Infantry was almost finished—one battalion was seriously understrength, another was at less than half strength and exhausted, and the third was shattered; almost no communications linked the regimental headquarters and the battalions; and the regimental commander was about to collapse from overwork and lack of sleep. General Lucas sent Colonel Darby, who had commanded the now virtually extinct Ranger Force, to General Eagles, the 45th Division commander. Darby was to take command of the 179th Infantry on the final beachhead line.

Darby arrived at the regimental command post early in the afternoon and found the headquarters personnel dispirited. His contagious confidence, energy, and enthusiasm invigorated the headquarters.[9] But the reduced numbers of the regiment and the fractional effectiveness of the battalions led him to request permission to withdraw from the final beachhead line into the concealment of the nearby Padiglione woods.

General Eagles refused. There would be no withdrawal. The final beachhead line was to be held at all costs.

While Darby did what he could, the Germans, for some inexplicable reason, shifted their attack to the right. They struck the relatively untouched 180th Infantry, which gave as good as it got. During a confused and desperate four hours of fighting, the Allied troops held the threatened line. When the noise ceased and the smoke lifted, it was obvious that the Germans had failed to achieve their breakthrough.[10]

Allied riflemen, machine gunners, mortarmen, and tankers had fought at close range and refused to budge from their positions. Artillery forward observers had brought crashing volleys of shells on enemy units. Artillery observers in small Cub planes had directed heavy punishment on targets of opportunity — an observer in one instance massed the shells of more than 200 British and American pieces on a target of German infantry and a column of tanks twelve minutes after they were detected.

By evening Kesselring and Mackensen had to conclude that the attack to eliminate the beachhead had failed. Small German thrusts on the following day, 19 February, tried to consolidate the gains of the previous days' action, but Allied counterattacks launched that afternoon drove the German units back a mile from the final beachhead line and gathered in 400 prisoners. A final German effort on 20 February had no effect whatsoever.

The 5-day attack that had pushed the Allied forces to their final defensive positions had failed to break them. But the Germans had inflicted heavy casualties,

[9] See Cook, Opns of Co L, 179th Inf (45th Div).

[10] For extraordinary heroism and gallantry in the defense, Pfc. William J. Johnston and 1st Lt. Jack C. Montgomery, both of the 45th Division, were later awarded the Medal of Honor.



SMOKE SCREEN AND OBSERVATION PLANE NEAR AMMUNITION DUMP, ANZIO

approximately 5,000 men. The 45th Division alone suffered 400 killed, 2,000 wounded, and 1,000 missing; and 2,500 additional troops had sustained nonbattle injuries from exposure, exhaustion, and trench foot – the result of living through freezing nights in foxholes half-filled with slush and water. Total German casualties were about the same, 5,000 men, most of them wounded by shell fragments. According to the report of one prisoner and the translation of his interrogator, artillery had been the worst "demoralizive agent." The salient that Mackensen had driven into the 45th Division had become a deathtrap for his own tanks and infantry.

After the first month of battle at the beachhead, German and Allied casualties each numbered almost 19,000 men—for the Allied forces, 2,000 killed, 8,500 wounded, and 8,500 missing. Losses totaling almost 40,000 casualties from forces numbering 200,000 men meant that the combat units on both sides of the front were close to impotence. A temporary stalemate had been reached.

Change of Command

General Alexander had visited the beachhead on 14 February, two days before the major German attack. His attitude struck General Lucas as being close to nonchalant, almost patronizing. How in the midst of so desperate a situation could anyone in Alexander's position appear to be so unconcerned?[11] There was something else about Alexander that troubled the corps commander. Almost

[11] Lucas Diary, 14 Feb 44.

intuitively Lucas wrote in his diary on the following day:

> I am afraid the top side is not completely satisfied with my work. . . . They are naturally disappointed that I failed to chase the Hun out of Italy but there was no military reason why I should have been able to do so. In fact, there is no military reason for SHINGLE.[12]

He could not have known that General Alexander, at almost that precise moment, was sending a message to London—to General Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff—about Lucas' leadership. Alexander was disappointed, he informed Brooke, by the negative quality of command in the beachhead and the absence of drive and enthusiasm. The VI Corps commander lacked initiative, and the staff was depressed. The problem, Alexander believed, required discussion, and he had requested Generals Wilson, Devers, and Clark to meet with him to see if they could get someone at the beachhead who was "a thruster like George Patton." [13]

Part of Alexander's dissatisfaction with the command at Anzio, a feeling shared by Clark, was undoubtedly the result of Alexander's disappointment over the failure that day of the bombardment of Monte Cassino to break the Gustav Line. When the two commanders conferred on 16 February, they freely exchanged views. According to Clark's notations, General Alexander first expressed

> his disappointment in the way Lucas was handling the Corps Commander's job in the Anzio bridgehead. I knew this was coming, for he had discussed it with me previously and, to be perfectly frank, I am not 100% satisfied with the hold Lucas has taken on that situation. When Alex told me he was dissatisfied, I asked him to tell me why, and from what sources he obtained his information. He told me that Lucas was older than his age, he was old physically and mentally, was tired, had no flash and was not at all familiar with the details of the situation. I had found Lucas, on my many trips there, unfamiliar with many details, and I had urged him to send out members of his staff and to go out himself and satisfy himself with conditions as they were.

General Clark agreed that he

> did believe that a change in Lucas would be advisable but under no circumstances would I hurt Lucas, for he had performed well. . . . He lacked some aggressiveness after the landing, although allegations that he could have gone to his objective or to Rome were ridiculous, for had he done so with any force he would have been cut off from his bridgehead.

As a result of the discussion, the commanders decided to appoint two deputy corps commanders at the beachhead, an American, who would eventually take over the corps command, and a British officer to help direct the British components of the beachhead forces.[14]

On the same day, 16 February, General Devers was visiting Anzio. His recollection was of General Lucas' logistical arrangements, which he found impressive—Lucas said he could unload forty vessels a day and could more than adequately support the 498 guns and 350 tanks he had in the beachhead.[15] Gen-

[12] *Ibid.*, 15 Feb 44.

[13] Clark Diary, 16 Feb 44; Eisenhower to Marshall, W–11279, 16 Feb 44; Eisenhower Diary, 17 Feb 44; Ltr, Eisenhower to Marshall, 20 Feb 44, in Eisenhower Diary.

[14] Clark Diary, 16 Feb 44; Intervs, Mathews with Alexander, 10–15 Jan 49, OCMH.

[15] Devers Diary, 16 Feb 44.



GERMAN PRISONERS MARCHING TO THE REAR

eral Lucas remembered General Devers' implication that Lucas should have gone as fast as possible to the Alban Hills in order to disrupt the German communications in the Rome area. "Had I done so," Lucas wrote, "I would have lost my Corps and nothing would have been accomplished except to raise the prestige and morale of the enemy. Besides," he added, "my orders didn't read that way." [16]

Returning to General Clark's headquarters on 17 February, General Devers had a long conversation with the army commander on several matters, among them, what to do about General Lucas. As Clark recorded the conversation, Devers

> feels as Alex does—that General Lucas should be relieved. His estimate of Lucas is that he is extremely tired, mentally and physically, and should be taken out. . . . I will assign Lucas as my Deputy, but Devers will attempt to have him returned to the United States without in any way hurting him.

But they would wait to remove Lucas from command until after the battle that was then raging at the beachhead came to an end.[17]

On the same day General Lucas learned of the appointment of the two

[16] Lucas Diary, 16 Feb 44.

[17] Devers Diary, 17 Feb 44; Clark Diary, 17, 18 Feb 44.

deputy corps commanders. He wrote in his diary:

> I think this means my relief. . . . I hope I am not to be relieved from command. I knew when I came in here that I was jeopardizing my career because I knew the Germans would not fold up because of two divisions landing on their flank . . . . I do not feel that I should have sacrificed my command, [by driving to the Alban Hills].[18]

Clark visited the beachhead on 18 February. He found Lucas "tired — very tired." [19] As a result of his visit, he told General Wilson on the following day he believed it was futile to try to take the Alban Hills. The Germans had too much strength massed against the beachhead for the Allied command to have any hope of overcoming the resistance.[20]

Three days later, on 22 February, General Clark again went to the beachhead. At that time, one month to the day after the amphibious landing, he relieved General Lucas from command of the VI Corps. He told Lucas he was doing so not because Lucas had failed to take the Alban Hills but because Alexander thought him defeated, Devers believed him tired, and Clark saw him as worn out.[21] Explaining that he "could no longer resist the pressure . . . from Alexander and Devers," Clark removed Lucas without prejudice. He had not lost confidence in Lucas, for he felt that Lucas had done all that could reasonably have been expected. Though shocked, Lucas was not entirely surprised. What bothered him most of all, "I thought I was winning something of a victory." [22]

Clark thought so too. He felt that Lucas could have taken the Alban Hills but could not have held them. Moving at once to the high ground would have so extended the corps that the Germans could have annihilated his forces. That was why he had given Lucas his so carefully phrased and ambiguous original order—to keep VI Corps from embarking on a "foolhardy mission." [23] He had always believed that the relatively few forces sent to Anzio had given the operation little chance of complete success. Several years later, General Clark concluded he might have done better by keeping his forces concentrated at the Gustav Line rather than splitting off part of them on a "dangerous and unorganized beachhead," where a powerful German counterattack might have wrecked the entire Allied campaign in Italy. If Lucas had made a serious error, Clark felt, it was his failure to capture Cisterna and Campoleone at once, before the Germans were able to concentrate. A secure hold on these key places could have given VI Corps so firm an anchor on the beachhead that the Germans might have decided not to contest the landing.[24]

Almost everyone felt much the same way about Lucas' chances of getting to the Alban Hills. General Marshall believed that Lucas could have got there but had acted wisely in refraining from doing so. "For every mile of advance," Marshall later said, "there were seven

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18 Lucas Diary, 17 Feb 44.
19 Clark Diary, 18 Feb 44.
20 *Ibid.*, 19 Feb 44.
21 Interv, Mathews with Gen Saltzman, 26 Mar 48, OCMH.
22 Lucas Diary, 22 Feb 44. See also Intervs, Mathews with Alexander, 10–15 Jan 49, OCMH.
23 Interv, Mathews with Clark, 20 May 48, OCMH.
24 *Ibid.* Quote is from Mathews interview. See also Clark, *Calculated Risk*, p. 296.

or more miles added to the perimeter," and Lucas did not have enough strength to get to the high ground, hold it, and make secure the beachhead and the port.[25]

What General Alexander had expected was, as Clark had specified, an advance *toward* the Alban Hills not a helter-skelter rush *to* the heights. For to Alexander the Anzio landing had had validity by virtue of the threat it posed. That threat, together with the strong attacks being launched against the Gustav Line, he thought, might prompt the Germans to withdraw. What inclined Alexander toward relieving Lucas was his feeling that Lucas had become unequal to the physical demands of the job. He believed that Lucas, "harried looking and under tremendous strain, would not be able to stand up physically to the hard, long struggle which by that time it was clear the Anzio operation would involve." [26]

Lucas' opportunity to exploit the surprise he had gained in the landing vanished after the first few days. Consequently, from that point on, he no longer had a choice. And that was how he finally saw the situation.

> The only thing that ever really disturbed me at Anzio, except, of course, my inability to make speedier headway against the weight opposing me, was the necessity to safeguard the port. At any cost this must be preserved as, without it, the swift destruction of the Corps was inevitable. . . . My orders were, to me, very clear and did not include any rash, piece-meal effort. These orders were never changed although the Army and the Army Group Commanders were constantly on the ground and could have changed them had they seen fit to do so.[27]

Yet the thought came back to nag him: he might have sent a small force on a sudden raid to the Alban Hills. But he would thereby have courted disaster. "As it turned out," Lucas wrote, "the proper decision was made and we were able to reach and establish ourselves in positions from which the enemy was unable to drive us in spite of his great advantage in strength." [28]

What was wrong, Lucas kept insisting, was the whole idea of the Anzio operation. The Allies lacked sufficient forces for a bold push out from the beachhead. According to his own interpretation of his mission, he had to take the port and sufficient ground to protect it.

Part of Lucas' preoccupation with the Anzio port came from naval advice. "No reliance," naval planners had made perfectly clear, "can be placed on maintenance over beaches, owing to the probability of unfavorable weather." [29] As for the idea of taking Rome, Clark had told him frankly, "you can forget this goddam Rome business." [30]

Yet according to early Fifth Army estimates, made as far back as November 1943, a landing at Anzio had to be followed by immediate capture of the port and by early occupation of the Alban Hills.[31] And according to Westphal,

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[25] Interv, Mathews, Lamson, Hamilton, and Smyth with Marshall, 25 Jul 49, OCMH.

[26] Interv, Mathews with Lemnitzer, 16 Jan 48, OCMH.

[27] Lucas Diary, later addition to entry of 27 Jan 44.

[28] *Ibid.*, later addition to entry of 29 Jan 44.

[29] Directive, Adm John Cunningham to Adm Lowry, SHINGLE, 29 Dec 43, SHINGLE Corresp File.

[30] Interv, Mathews with Lucas, 24 May 48, OCMH.

[31] Fifth Army Tactical Study of the Terrain, 17 Nov 43, Fifth Army G–2 Estimate, Appendix 1 to Annex 1 to Outline Plan SHINGLE, 22 Nov 43.

Kesselring's chief of staff, "The road to Rome was open, and an audacious flying column could have penetrated to the city. . . . The enemy remained astonishingly passive." [32]

Perhaps then a bluff carried out with imagination and daring might have worked. A "thruster like George Patton," as Alexander had said, might have produced a decisive result.[33]

General Lucas served as General Clark's deputy for three weeks before leaving Italy to command an army in the United States. On his way home, he stopped in England, where he called on General Eisenhower. When he talked about Anzio, he criticized neither his superiors, Alexander and Clark, nor their conduct of the campaign, though he told Eisenhower that he had frequently not been informed of their intentions. He pictured himself as "simply a soldier" who had carried out orders with which he had not been in sympathy.[34]

General Truscott, the 3d Division commander, replaced General Lucas as commander of VI Corps. He had led his division in the campaigns of North Africa, Sicily, and southern Italy, and everywhere he had earned the admiration of his subordinates and superiors. Like General Lucas, everyone had "the greatest regard" for him, his British colleagues respecting him for his balance and judgment.[35]

Taking the reins of the corps at a



GENERAL TRUSCOTT

time of crisis, General Truscott set about altering the intangible feeling of depression, even of desperation, that pervaded the beachhead.[36] He moved the corps command post out of the gloomy wine cellars and tunnels under Nettuno and above ground. He made positive contributions to co-ordinating all the weapons, particularly the artillery, at the beachhead. And he frequently visited the troops. All in all he somehow gave the impression that the situation would now improve.

The command change was beneficial, how beneficial would soon become obvious when the Germans struck again.

The Last German Attack

The German forces had to strike again, if for no other reason than that

[32] Westphal, *German Army in the West*, p. 158. See also CSDIC/CMF/M296, Detailed Interrogation Rpt of Thirteen German Intel Officers, n.d. (about Aug 45). Intel Activities, AG 383.4.

[33] Intervs, Mathews with Alexander, 10–15 Jan 49, OCMH.

[34] Eisenhower Diary, 24 Mar 44.

[35] Quote is from Lucas Diary, 12 Jun 43.

[36] See letter from Walker to author, August 1957, on the similar effect that Truscott's arrival at Salerno had had on the beachhead forces there. OCMH.



WINE CELLAR THAT SERVED AS VI CORPS HEADQUARTERS

Hitler attached great political and propaganda value to the elimination of the beachhead. Thus, on 22 February Mackensen proposed another attack, this time on the other side of the beachhead, to drive from Cisterna to Nettuno and on a considerably wider front than the last effort. He would employ the *Hermann Goering, 26th Panzer,* and *362d Divisions* in the first wave and hold the *29th Panzer Grenadier Division* in reserve to exploit and mop up. He would simulate attack preparations near the Albano road, place dummy tanks there, stage widespread raids, and make conspicuous vehicular movements to deceive the Allied command. Although he wished to start his attack at once in order to gain surprise and give the Allied forces little chance to recover from the previous offensive, he needed time to regroup his units and to stock ammunition. (*See Map VI.*)

With Kesselring's approval, Mackensen set his attack for daylight, 28 February. Twenty-four hours before, he requested a postponement of one day. His troops were not quite ready. But the main reason for delaying the attack was bad weather, which prevented tanks and self-propelled guns from getting off the roads and up forward close to the line of departure.

Kesselring agreed to the postpone-

ment. A torrential rain fell on 28 February, the day before the jump-off, and he and Mackensen both believed that it would help the Germans attain local surprise and deny the Allied forces the benefits of tank, air, and naval support.

During the afternoon of 28 February, a smoke screen along the 3d Division front in the Cisterna area concealed last-minute troop movements. Around midnight, German artillery shifted fire from the British sector and laid down preparatory volleys in the 3d Division area.

The 3d Division, exhausted and depleted by six weeks of fighting, had developed a forward line of defense into a well-integrated barrier of strongpoints. Suspecting the imminence of an attack in the early hours of 29 February, General O'Daniel, who had assumed command of the division on 17 February, had a heavy volume of artillery fire placed on the logical avenues of German approach.

The shelling failed to disrupt the German attack. On the 3d Division left, German troops overran a company of the 509th Parachute Battalion. A single officer and twenty-two men managed to make their way 700 yards to the rear to the battalion main line of resistance. There a backup company of ninety-six men, supported by an abundance of mortar and artillery fire, stopped the German thrust. In the main effort, the *362d Division,* reinforced by tanks of the *26th Panzer* and *Hermann Goering Divisions,* struck the 3d Division frontally. The impact dented the American forward defenses but failed to break them. To the east, the *715th Division* and two battalions of the *16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division* drove against the 504th Parachute Infantry and made a small penetration that was quickly sealed and contained. A German task force striking the 1st Special Service Force positioned along the Mussolini Canal made no progress at all.

Heavy fighting continued throughout the day. Dense clouds and frequent rain squalls grounded Allied planes during the morning, but in the afternoon 247 fighter-bombers and 24 light bombers carried out close-support attacks, hitting German tanks and infantry. At the end of the day, despite its heavy losses, the 3d Division launched a counterattack and regained the few hundred yards earlier relinquished.

Although Mackensen's assault units had incurred high casualties in men and tanks, he continued his attack on 1 March. The effort was noticeably weaker, and no progress was made. That evening, as Mackensen admitted his inability to eradicate the beachhead, Kesselring instructed him to bring his offensive operations to a halt and restrict his activity to local counterattacks.[37]

The weather suddenly turned clear on 2 March and Allied planes came out in earnest— 241 B–24's and 100 B–17's, escorted by 113 P–38's and 63 P–47's, dropped tons of bombs immediately behind the German line; medium, light, and fighter bombers struck at German tanks, gun positions, and troop assembly areas. This impressive display of air power came at the end of the German attack, which had cost the Germans more than 3,000 casualties and at least thirty tanks, and which would be the last major German offensive against the beachhead. Hurried preparations, confused orders, faulty communications,

[37] Hauser in MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH.

poor tank and artillery support, as well as a firm Allied defense, were the reasons for German failure. The slight gains, as one Allied report stated, were "hardly worth an outlay which had included [loss of] 500 prisoners of war." [38] Another report concluded: "The enemy's efforts to win a victory which would bolster flagging morale at home and restore the reputation of the German Army abroad . . . had brought him only a further depletion of his already strained resources in equipment and manpower." [39]

As Kesselring viewed the situation early in March, he concluded that a lull of some duration would probably take place, for both sides had sustained heavy casualties. During this time of respite, Kesselring would have to assemble substantial reserves to withstand an impending attack, for the Allied command was sure to try again to link up the forces still fighting at Cassino with those at the beachhead.

To make sure that Hitler understood his situation, Kesselring sent his chief of staff, Westphal, to explain in person how limited were the alternatives in southern Italy. The fighting at Anzio had clearly ended in a draw. Since the political and strategic problems remained unchanged, Kesselring could do little more than husband his resources in order to be ready to meet the Allied offensive that had to be anticipated in the spring.

Westphal's mission was successful. He convinced Hitler that another major German attack at Anzio was out of the question for the time being. He returned to Rome on 8 March, "elated with the praise received and the understanding reached." [40]

Kesselring had counted on Hitler's understanding. For already he had ordered a new defensive line constructed across the Italian peninsula—from the mouth of the Tiber River through Cisterna, Valmontone, and Avezzano to Pescara—a series of positions called the "C" or Caesar Line. Should the beachhead forces somehow break out of their containment, they would force the *Tenth Army*, fighting at Cassino, to withdraw from the Gustav Line. Kesselring would then try to have the *Tenth* and *Fourteenth Armies* fight side by side along the Caesar Line to delay, possibly prevent, the fall of Rome. Even if he lost Rome, he would try to preserve the integrity of his forces by retiring to the north. Somewhere in northern Italy, Kesselring could halt the Allies again. Even if he lost Rome, he could, he promised Hitler, continue to make possible the prosecution of the war in Italy for at least another year.[41]

The situation at the Anzio beachhead became relatively quiet in March. But at Cassino, an explosive event took place in the middle of the month.

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[38] Fifth Army G–2 History, Mar 44.

[39] *Anzio Beachhead*, p. 104.

[40] Hauser, Chapter 12, and Westphal, Comments on Chapter 12, in MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*); Steiger MS.

[41] Fifth Army G–2 History, Mar 44.

CHAPTER XXV

The Bombing of Cassino

To the Allied forces, the Anzio beachhead toward the end of February was a defensive liability that placed great strain on naval and air resources. Yet it threatened the enemy's major supply routes south of Rome; a comparatively short Allied advance from the beachhead would imperil all the German troops on the *Tenth Army* front. The strength of the barrier erected at Anzio by the Germans ruled out such an advance for the moment. Was it then possible that the strong German effort at Anzio had been made at the expense of weakening the Gustav Line? If so, it was time for the Allies to make another effort to get into the Liri valley.

After the bombardment of Monte Cassino on 15 February and the subsequent ground attack, General Alexander considered the New Zealand Corps capable of making one more attempt to break through. But if the corps failed again, and Alexander was hardly optimistic, offensive operations would have to be brought to a halt—"after the New Zealand Corps has shot its bolt, a certain pause in land operations will be essential to enable troops to be reorganized and prepared to continue the battle." [1]

While the New Zealand Corps prepared to renew its attack, Alexander continued to regroup his forces to provide the overwhelming strength needed to break the Gustav Line. Since the troops of Fifth Army were divided between Anzio and Cassino, they were too weak to exert decisive pressure at either place. The Eighth Army, already stripped of units, could do little more than maintain the Adriatic front.

How to find fresh reserves was settled during a series of conferences at General Alexander's headquarters in late February, which set into motion a large-scale shift of forces to the area west of the Apennines. Eventually the Fifth Army zone would be narrowed to the coastal area, where the II Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps would be located under Fifth Army control, along with the VI Corps at Anzio. The Eighth Army, after moving across the Apennines to the Cassino area, would take control of two British corps, the 10 and the 13, as well as of the 2 Polish Corps and 1st Canadian Corps—the provisional New Zealand Corps would be disbanded. The 5 Corps operating directly under Alexander's 15th Army Group headquarters would remain on the Adriatic front.[2]

Before these new arrangements were

[1] ACMF Appreciation 1, 22 Feb 44.

[2] ACMF Min of CofS Mtg, 1430, 28 Feb 44, dated 4 Mar 44, AG 337; Ltr, Alexander to Clark, 18 Feb 44, sub: Regrouping; Ltrs, Alexander to Clark and to Leese, 22 Feb 44. Last three in AAI 17/3/44–10/10/44.

completed, Fifth Army would try once more to break the Gustav Line in the Cassino area. The attempt would be made by General Freyberg's New Zealand Corps in mid-March.

To General Freyberg, there were several reasons for the failure of the experienced mountain fighters of the 4th Indian Division to capture Monte Cassino in February: the Indians could not attack on a broad front and the Germans were therefore able to shift reinforcements quickly to threatened areas; the Germans could concentrate defensive fires quickly and effectively because they had the advantage of observation; the Allies had found it virtually impossible to conduct effective supply operations on the Cassino massif. Believing that a major attack across the high ground was impractical, General Freyberg looked to the town of Cassino. Possession of the town, he felt, would allow an easier approach to Monte Cassino and access to the Liri valley. By putting the 78th Division into the left portion of the New Zealand Corps zone, south of Highway 6, Freyberg could concentrate the 2d New Zealand Division in depth on a narrow front directly before Cassino. The New Zealand division, attacking from the east in the main effort, was to take the town, while the 4th Indian Division assisted by striking into Cassino from the north. Then, while these two divisions advanced to seize Monte Cassino, the 78th Division and CCB of the 1st Armored Division were to enter the Liri valley and begin a drive toward Valmontone. As in the earlier attack of the New Zealand Corps, air power was to come into play—the ground troops were to attack Cassino immediately after a heavy bombing of the town.

General Clark was "really shocked" by General Freyberg's idea of starting the exploitation before the reduction of the Cassino massif, and particularly Monte Cassino. "It is absolutely impossible," he wrote, "to mass for an attack down the Liri Valley without first securing the commanding elevation on one flank or the other." Since 10 Corps had too few troops to seize the heights dominating the Liri valley from the south, Clark felt strongly that the Cassino spur had to be in Allied possession before troops could enter the Liri valley. This seemed to be the principal lesson of the failure to cross the Rapido River at Sant'Angelo in January. General Wilson agreed that it was necessary to secure the high ground before, as he put it, sticking one's head into what otherwise would be a Liri valley trap.[3]

What explained Freyberg's interest in Cassino and his proposal to bomb the town, Clark believed, was Freyberg's deepening conviction that Monte Cassino was impregnable. "He has weakened from day to day," Clark wrote in his diary, "in his [belief in his] ability to take the monastery." But as a result of discussion between Clark and Freyberg, the corps commander altered his plan. Although he retained Cassino as his primary target, he now included a simultaneous attack to secure Monte Cassino.[4]

Issuing his order on 21 February, General Freyberg outlined his attack in four phases: (1) the 4th Indian Division was to capture a hill 500 yards due north of the abbey of Monte Cassino and from there cover with fire the western edge of Cassino and the eastern slope of Monte

[3] Clark Diary, 19 Feb 44.
[4] *Ibid.*, 21 Feb 44.

Cassino; (2) aircraft were then to strike the town of Cassino in a heavy bombardment; (3) the 2d New Zealand Division, with CCB of the 1st Armored Division attached, was to capture the town of Cassino and seize a bridgehead over the Rapido at Highway 6, while the Indian division captured Monte Cassino and cut Highway 6 several miles west of the Rapido River; (4) while New Zealand tanks under 78th Division control passed through the Rapido bridgehead and captured Sant'Angelo from the north, CCB was to exploit westward along Highway 6 in the Liri valley, the 78th Division was to cross the Rapido near Sant'-Angelo, and the 36th Division was to keep one regiment in readiness to support the exploitation.[5]

The air forces were to set D-day and H-hour any time after 24 February, but General Freyberg insisted that a weather forecast of three successive days without rain be a prerequisite. This would give the planes good visibility for the bombardment and for subsequent supporting attacks and the tanks dry ground and good traction for the exploitation. Air and ground commanders decided to execute the large-scale bombing in the morning. The ground attack would follow at noon. The date would be announced when the weather conditions were suitable for air and ground forces alike.[6]

At a meeting held at the New Zealand Corps headquarters on 21 February, General Freyberg discussed his plan of attack, with special attention to the role of the air forces. In attendance were General Brann, the Fifth Army G–3, Brig. Gen. Thomas E. Lewis, the Fifth Army artillery officer, Colonel Hansborough, the Fifth Army air support control officer, Col. Stephen B. Mack of the XII Air Support Command, and several New Zealand officers. At the outset of the conference, Freyberg declared that he would not attack "unless a large scale air effort was made." He wanted at least 750 tons of bombs to be dropped to level the town of Cassino and permit his infantry and tanks "to walk through." Colonel Mack assured him that planes could destroy the town. They could drop that amount of bombs on a single target in about three hours, but no less, for the bomber groups would have to wait for the dust and smoke to clear between attacks. As for what General Freyberg hoped the result would be, Mack stated his conviction that the infantry "could advance [only] with difficulty" after the bombardment and that it would be impossible "to get tanks through the town for two days" because the streets would be blocked with debris. Freyberg impatiently "brushed aside" Mack's statement. He expected his tanks to be through the town in six to twelve hours.[7]

Like General Freyberg, the commander of the U.S. Army Air Forces, General Arnold, hoped for a great victory through the use of air power. Early in March, he wrote from Washington to suggest to General Eaker, who commanded the Mediterranean Allied Air

[5] New Zealand Corps OI 5, 21 Feb 44; 36th Div Ltr, 9 Mar 44, sub: OI, 36th Div File; 4th New Zealand Armd Brigade OI 4, 16 Feb 44, Amendment 1, 18 Feb 44, Amendment 2, 23 Feb 44, and OI 5, 9 Mar 44. Last two in 4th New Zealand Armd Brigade File.

[6] Fifth Army Ltr, Air Support, 7 Apr 44, Cassino Study.

[7] Memo, Hansborough to Brann, 31 Mar 44, Cassino Study.

Forces, that a massive air attack be launched:

> We are all very greatly disturbed here at the apparent "bogging down" of the Italian campaign. I admit that I am looking at this from a great distance away from the actual scene of battle. . . .
>
> The Ground Forces are at almost the exact position in which they found themselves during my last visit. The hill overlooking Cassino is still in German hands. That hill apparently dominates the military situation in that it must be taken before we can hope to effect a juncture between the main army and the beachhead force. With different terrain, the desert force found itself in similar positions during its fight across the top of Africa. They solved the problem, I believe, by convincing the Ground Forces that they could and would blow a hole through the opposition providing those Ground Forces were ready and set to take advantage of the opportunity. . . .

What he recommended was gathering together all the aircraft of the Coastal Air Force, all the heavy bombers, medium bombers, and fighters of the strategic and tactical air forces — including crews in rest camps, those not yet quite ready for battle, and those in Africa— to establish a force "which, for one day, could really make air history." Withdraw the ground forces temporarily, General Arnold continued, and use all the available air power to "break up every stone in the town behind which a German soldier might be hiding. When the smoke of the last bombers and fighters begins to die down, have the ground troops rapidly take the entire town of Cassino." [8]

General Eaker was somewhat dubious. He thought this was easier said than done, and he wrote to General Arnold:

> It was clearly demonstrated in the bombing of the Abbey that little useful purpose is served by our blasting the opposition unless the army does follow through.
>
> I am anxious that you do not set your heart on a great victory as a result of this operation. Personally, I do not feel it will throw the German out of his present position completely and entirely, or compel him to abandon the defensive role, if he decides and determines to hold on to the last man as he now has orders to do. It may, however, and I hope will permit the present line [at Cassino] and bridgehead [Anzio] to join up. From our [air] point of view that is the first and major consideration. The bridgehead [at Anzio] is so limited that we are forced to abandon our landing strip in the bridgehead. We lost twenty-four airplanes before we gave up. . . .
>
> . . . It apparently is difficult for anyone not here to understand the full effect of the combination of terrain and rainfall on the battle. The streams are swollen; there are no bridges, these have all been destroyed; the land is a complete quagmire —it will not support foot troops let alone heavy equipment. Everything must move on the few important roads and these, of course, are in the battle zone and completely enfiladed by heavy artillery fire.
>
> . . . we must remember that the terrain and the weather conspired to bring about an entirely different situation than that which pertained in the desert. In the desert campaign flanking movements were always possible. The weather and the terrain made that possible. Here, both the weather and the terrain have forced any advances to be made through mined defiles with heavy artillery concentrations on the high ground on either side. That makes a different picture out of it entirely. . . .
>
> The picture with respect to the future is this and you can rely on it. . . . We shall go forward and capture Rome when the

[8] Ltr, Arnold to Eaker, undated (early Mar 44), Mathews File, OCMH.

weather permits . . . and not before; we shall be able, with Spring and Summer weather, to contain the German divisions now in Italy.[9]

If General Eaker was far from optimistic about the effect of a heavy air attack at Cassino, he had high hopes for the efficacy of a sustained bomber program directed against enemy coastal shipping and the road and rail nets used by the Germans. Operation STRANGLE, as it was called, was designed to cut German supply routes to the divisions located south of the Pisa-Rimini line. Eaker had sufficient aircraft to carry out the plan over a period of six weeks to two months. All he needed was good weather. With this operation he was sure he could help the Allied ground forces take Rome and compel the Germans to withdraw into northern Italy.[10]

The details of Operation STRANGLE were worked out as early as the first days of March; the operational directive was issued later in the month. The XII Air Support Command, charged with the primary responsibility for this large-scale interdiction program, would be unable to throw its full weight into the task until after the breakthrough attack at Cassino, which required top priority for close support missions.[11]

Despite General Eaker's conviction that a bombardment of Cassino would be of little practical help to the ground troops; he tried to make the operation a success. After studying photographs of a B–24 attack on marshaling yards and airfields, he reminded Maj. Gen. Nathan E. Twining, the Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force commander, early in March, that he "was again disappointed at the scattered bombing and poor results obtained. . . . we need to press very hard to improve accuracy, formation flying and leadership." [12]

As finally ordered, General Freyberg's attack would have the 2d New Zealand Division capture the town of Cassino and break out into the Liri valley near Highway 6, while the 4th Indian Division assisted by neutralizing enemy positions on the eastern slopes of Monte Cassino, maintaining pressure to prevent the enemy from moving reserve forces against the main effort, and capturing Monte Cassino. The daytime attack by infantry and tanks was to follow a heavy air bombardment of four hours' duration and an artillery preparation in maximum strength. The bombing was to increase in intensity and reach a climax at H-hour of the ground attack. A total of 360 heavy and 200 medium bombers was expected to level Cassino, and fighter-bombers would be on hand to support the developing ground operation.[13]

Hoping to avoid getting his tanks bogged down in street fighting, General Freyberg directed maximum use of fire and movement, not only by his tanks but also by his self-propelled artillery. To prevent tanks from being hit by friendly fire, those vehicles moving from the direction of the enemy were to elevate their guns to maximum height. These instructions applied to the New

[9] Ltr, Eaker to Arnold, 6 Mar 44, Mathews File, OCMH.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] XII Tactical Air Command Operational History, 1 January–30 June 1944, pp. 14–43. See below, p. 451.

[12] Ltr, Eaker to Twining, 10 Mar 44, Mathews File, OCMH. See Craven and Cate, eds., *Europe: ARGUMENT to V–E Day*, p. 326.

[13] 2d New Zealand Div Opn Order 41, 23 Feb 44.

Zealand elements and also to two predominantly American task forces that were to exploit the breakthrough of the Gustav Line. Both task forces were composed mainly of units from CCB of the 1st Armored Division.[14]

CCB had been ready to exploit an opening into the Liri valley as early as January. The terrain had been thoroughly studied and preparations carefully made—radio-equipped control posts established, routes of advance delineated, wreckers and recovery vehicles stationed at appropriate points.[15] For a week in mid-February, CCB had remained on a 6-hour alert near San Pietro, Ceppagna, and Monte Trocchio, awaiting word for commitment across the Rapido River.[16] Now once again the troops were ready. "We are scheduled to go around the corner from Cassino," General Allen, the CCB commander, wrote to General Harmon, who was at Anzio with the bulk of the 1st Armored Division, "with the First Tank Group leading, followed by some armor of the New Zealand Division, after which CC 'B' proper pushes on." He had conferred with New Zealand officers on the plan of attack, and he had conducted command post exercises, though he had been unable to have demonstrations or field exercises. Allen was not entirely optimistic about the prospects of the new attack. His letter to Harmon continued:

> The weather here has been terrible and the valley is a sea of mud. I don't believe that any medium tank will be able to venture far from firm standing under the conditions that now exist, and operations [will be] restricted to roads, only a few of which exist in that valley. . . .
>
> . . . nor can I give you any dope on when this planned operation will go into effect. We sit at the end of a telephone on a two hour alert with the engineers . . . ready with materiel for the bridging. Our artillery is in position firing some missions as are the T. D. battalions. . . . everyone is anxious for the attack to start the push up and rejoin the Division for the march into Rome.[17]

The weather continued to be miserable, and Freyberg continued to wait for a forecast of three clear days. Impatient after the first week in March had gone by, General Clark urged the New Zealand Corps commander to go ahead, to stop waiting for ideal weather. "I fully realize that we are not going to completely break through," the army commander wrote, "and the tanks will

[14] See 4th New Zealand Brigade OI 4, 16 Feb 44. 4th New Zealand Armd Brigade File. Task Force A consisted of the 13th Armored Regiment, with the 1st, 2d, and 3d Battalions and the Reconnaissance Company, the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion (Provisional), the 434th Antiaircraft Battalion (Provisional), the 6617th Mine Clearance Company, and a platoon of the 1st Armored Division Military Police Company. Task Force B was composed of the 1st Tank Group, with the 753d Tank Battalion, the 760th Tank Battalion (less two companies), the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, a company of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, a troop of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and the 21st New Zealand Infantry Battalion. In support of the two task forces were four battalions of 155-mm. howitzers under the control of the 6th Field Artillery Group headquarters. 1st Armd Div CCB FO 1, 2100, 14 Mar 44.

[15] See CCB Paper, Movement of Assault Elements to the Rapido, 22 Jan 44, CCB S–3 Jnl File.

[16] 1st Tank Group (later 1st Armd Group) AAR, 13 Feb–26 Mar 44. During part of this time, CCB was also alerted to the possibility of going to the Anzio beachhead. See Keyes to Allen, 1130, 25 Jan 44, CCB S–3 Jnl File. See also CCB Liri Valley Plan (Cassino Phase), 30 Jan 44, revised plan, 4 Feb 44 and CCB S–3 Msg, 4 Feb 44, CCB S–3 Jnl File; 36th Div Artillery Annex 3 to FO 45, 1200, 4 Feb 44.

[17] Ltr, Allen to Harmon, 4 Mar 44, CCB S–3 Jnl File.

play only a small part in this attack."[18] But General Freyberg was immovable. More time passed. One of the difficulties was the variation in weather within the theater. When it was clear at Cassino, it might be zero visibility at the airfields — foggy in Naples, raining in Foggia, and cloudy over Corsica, Sardinia, and North Africa.[19]

The meteorologists finally produced the proper forecast. At 1800, 14 March, the Mediterranean Air Force headquarters announced D-day for the following day. During the night, New Zealand and Indian troops withdrew 1,500 yards from their most advanced positions for safety during the bombardment of Cassino that would start the next morning.[20]

To drop a minimum of 750 tons of bombs on Cassino in the shortest possible time, and to have the most destructive effect on the stone houses and concrete pillboxes in the town, the aircraft would use nothing less than 1,000-pound bombs, with fusings adjusted to penetrate the buildings to basement depth. Bombers would attack in waves, striking every fifteen minutes from 0830 to noon. The artillery, which would fire between the bombing waves, would deliver at noon a final concentration lasting forty minutes. When the infantrymen jumped off, a creeping artillery barrage would precede them, the fires moving through Cassino 100 to 200 yards ahead of the assault troops. Fighter-bombers would assist by attacking selected targets, especially the railway station, the ancient coliseum at the base of Monte Cassino, and Monte Cassino itself.[21]

On the morning of 15 March, General Clark drove to Cervaro to witness what would be, up to that time, the greatest massed air onslaught in direct tactical support of ground forces. Together with Devers, Alexander, Eaker, Freyberg, and others, he watched Cassino, plainly visible a little less than three miles away. Like all the troops in the Cassino area, he heard what someone later would call a "locust-like drone [that] came from afar." The "uncertain murmur swelled gradually; a steady, pulsing throb." Then "the specks began to appear, high and small against the sky."

First to arrive at 0830 were the medium bombers, B–25's and B–26's, in flights of a dozen or more, escorted by fighters flying high above them and marking the sky with vapor trails. The bombers approached the target, almost passed, then turned left. The bellies of the planes opened, and the bombs tumbled out. Then the planes wheeled again, this time to fly home.

About 80 percent of the bombs dropped by the aircraft in the first wave fell into the heart of Cassino. The others landed nearby, a few short ones coming to earth on the Allied side of the Rapido River. As the bombs struck, "stabbing flashes of orange flame" shot through a holocaust of erupting smoke and debris.

Next, at 0845, came the heavy bombers, the Flying Fortresses, along with the dive bombers. As the pilots roared over the town, already obliterated from

[18] Clark Diary, 8 Mar 44.

[19] *Ibid.*, 10, 11 Mar 44.

[20] Fifth Army Ltr, Air Support, 7 Apr 44, Cassino Study.

[21] Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force Report, Attack on Cassino, 15 March 1944, dated 11 Jul 44, AFHQ G (Ops), Lessons from Opns, vol. II.



BOMBING OF THE TOWN OF CASSINO

view by smoke and dust, the bombardiers let go their loads. Bright orange bursts appeared over Cassino, Monte Cassino, and the Rapido valley. Only the impact of the first bombs was visible. The bombs of the later strikes were lost in a billowing ocean of gray and white dust and smoke.

The ground for at least five miles around Cassino shook violently as though in an earthquake. How could any human being in the town "survive such punishment and retain his sanity"?

Almost without interruption, the bombs fell until noon. Between the waves of planes, artillery pounded the target.

Finally came the 40-minute cannonade, joined by every field piece in the area—American, British, New Zealand, Indian, and French. An artilleryman's dream, the target was in plain sight, the range was virtually point-blank, the calibration was exact, the registration perfect. The artillery thundered, the gunners perspiring in the chill winter air.

Monte Cassino seemed to jump and writhe under the detonations. Great holes appeared in the few walls of the abbey still standing. Huge chunks of masonry flew through the air.

When the artillery barrage ceased and the ground troops moved out in the attack, "Surely, there were no defenders

left with any fight in them. Surely it would be but a question of bodies and prisoners, perhaps very few of either." [22]

Between 0830 and 1200, 15 March, 72 B–25's, 101 B–26's, 262 B–17's and B–24's—a total of 435 aircraft—bombed the Cassino area. The planes dropped more than 2,000 bombs, a total weight of almost 1,000 tons, in an unprecedented bombardment of awesome proportions.[23] There was little flak at Cassino, and no German planes appeared to oppose the bombing. The Allied aircraft suffered no losses.

The medium bomber attacks were generally punctual, their bombing concentrated and accurate. The heavy bombers were often at fault on all three counts. Thus, the target received less than the full weight of the bombs dropped. Only about 300 tons fell into the town of Cassino. The remainder landed on the slopes of Monte Cassino and elsewhere. Only half in all found the target area. In addition, there were frequent and long pauses between the attacking waves.

Even this imperfect bombardment demolished Cassino, toppling walls, crushing buildings, and covering the streets with debris.

Some heavy bomber pilots were unable to identify the target, and twenty-three returned to their bases with their bombs intact; two jettisoned their loads in the sea. Rack failure on the leading plane of one formation sent forty bombs into Allied-held areas, killing and wounding civilians and troops. These short bombs and others inflicted about 142 casualties—28 were killed—among the Allied units in the Cassino area. Ten air miles away, several planes bombed Venafro by mistake, killing 17 soldiers and 40 civilians, and wounding 79 soldiers and 100 civilians. The bombing errors were an "appalling" tragedy that General Clark attributed to "poor training and inadequate briefing of crews." [24]

The artillery firing went as planned. A total of 746 guns and howitzers delivered 2,500 tons of high explosive immediately ahead of the assault troops and an additional 1,500 tons on hostile batteries and other preselected targets. Between 1220 and 2000 that day, artillery pieces in the Cassino area fired almost 200,000 rounds.

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[22] Fifth Army Engr History, I, 28; Clark Diary, 15 Mar 44.

[23] Four months later in Normandy, on two different occasions, more than three times as many strategic bombers in direct support of tactical operations would drop much more than three times as many tons of high explosive. (See Martin Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1961), pp. 191, 234.) And in November 1944 the largest operation of this sort in World War II would take place. (See Charles B. MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1963), pp. 403ff.)

[24] Quotation from Clark Diary, 17 Mar 44; figures from New Zealand Rpt, Bombing of Cassino, 23 Mar 44, Cassino Study; Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force Rpt, Attack on Cassino, dated 11 Jul 44, AFHQ G (Ops), Lessons from Opns, vol. II; Fifth Army Ltr, Air Support, 7 Apr 44, Cassino Study. The Fifth Army Report of Operations for March gives the figure as 1,400 tons of bombs dropped on Cassino. General Clark recorded in his diary on 15 March that 334 heavy bombers, 255 fighter-bombers and light bombers, and some medium bombers had dropped a total of 1,320 tons of bombs. According to figures received by Clark and recorded in his diary on 15 and 16 March, there were 138 Allied casualties lost to short bombs in the Cassino area—3 Polish, 7 British, 64 French, and 42 New Zealand soldiers were wounded, 8 French and 14 New Zealand soldiers were killed. On 17 March, he recorded totals of about 75 Allied troops killed and 250 wounded by the bombing.

General Freyberg and other commanders expected the air bombardment and artillery shelling to pulverize Cassino, destroy enemy strongpoints, disrupt German communications, neutralize hostile artillery, and inflict heavy casualties on the Germans—in short, to so stupefy, daze, and demoralize the Cassino defenders that the ground troops would attain their objectives and occupy the town quickly with hardly any losses.[25] Contrary to their anticipations, "plenty of defenders remained; plenty of fight, plenty of guns, ammunition, observation points, and plenty of perseverance." [26]

The air attack had come as a surprise to the Germans and had tossed men about "like scraps of paper." But the demoralizing effect of the bombing lasted only a short time. The stone houses in Cassino gave excellent protection against all but psychological strain. The men of the *1st Parachute Division,* who had moved into Cassino on 26 February, were exceptionally well trained and conditioned, and did not panic.

At 1040 that morning, in the midst of the bombardment, Vietinghoff phoned Senger to instruct him to stand fast. "The Cassino massif," he said, "must be held at all costs by the 1st Parachute Division." Senger had every intention of doing just that. Although prisoners taken by the Allies would later report that the bombing had inflicted a considerable number of casualties, the defenders at Cassino actually sustained comparatively few losses. Their heavy weapons and artillery fire were only partially neutralized. Against the New Zealand and Indian infantrymen in the first assault, the German paratroopers put out extremely heavy mortar and machine gun fire. The paratroopers also found that the bombing had its compensations —toppled walls formed effective bulwarks for defense.[27]

Not only the hostile fire but the immense destruction wrought in Cassino impeded the Allied attack. When tankers in immediate support of the assaulting infantry advanced, they found their routes blocked by debris and craters. Some commanders and staff members had realized that progress through Cassino would be slowed by the bomb holes and the wreckage of the buildings, but the actual conditions were far worse than they had expected. Rubble choked the narrow streets, and some craters were so large—forty to fifty feet in diameter in a few instances—that they had to be bridged before the tanks could pass. Since the New Zealand Corps headquarters was a provisional entity, it lacked organic corps engineers, and the improvised engineer units were inadequate for the tremendous task of clearing avenues of advance. Germans concealed in ruined houses picked off engineers trying to do their work.[28]

More aircraft — 120 B–17's and 140 B–24's—arrived over Cassino early on the afternoon of 15 March to help the ground troops, but heavy cloud formations covered the area and prevented the pilots from finding their targets. They returned to their bases without

[25] Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force Rpt, Attack on Cassino, 15 Mar 44, AFHQ G (Ops), Lessons from Opns, vol. II.

[26] Fifth Army Engr History, I, 28.

[27] Vietinghoff to Senger, 1040, 15 Mar 44, quoted in Steiger MS; Vietinghoff MSS; New Zealand Rpt, Bombing of Cassino, 23 Mar 44, Cassino Study.

[28] *Ibid.;* Fifth Army Engr History, I, 31ff.; Clark Diary, 16 Mar 44.

releasing their loads. Lighter planes had better success. Between 1300 and 1500, 49 fighter-bombers dropped 18 tons of bombs on the railroad station in Cassino. Between 1345 and 1630, 96 P–47's, A–36's, and P–40's struck the base of Monte Cassino with 44 tons. Between 1500 and 1700, 32 P–40's and A–36's hit the forward slopes of Monte Cassino with 10 tons. And 66 A–20's and P–40's loosed 34 tons on various targets at different times during the afternoon.

The massive support from the air had little result. New Zealand infantrymen fought a bitter house-to-house battle in Cassino and came close to reaching Highway 6 along the base of Monte Cassino, but they were unable to break through to the Liri valley. Other New Zealand troops on the massif won a hill quite close to the abbey of Monte Cassino, but could go no farther. Indian troops trying to fight their way into Cassino from the north made little progress.

As dusk fell on the afternoon of 15 March, the clouds that had moved over Cassino became dark and menacing, the weather broke and the rain came. Contrary to the forecaster's predictions of three days of clear weather, a torrential downpour beat upon the battered town. The bomb craters and exposed cellars soon filled with water. As the rain continued throughout the night, it became obvious that tanks would be unable to pass through Cassino for at least thirty-six hours. And General Freyberg was depending to a large extent on the power of tanks.[29]

During the night the tankers could hardly form up to renew the attack. New Zealand infantrymen stumbled through mud-filled craters and crumbling debris, their communications deteriorating because water had damaged their radio sets and enemy fire had cut down wire teams.



RUINS OF THE CONTINENTAL HOTEL

There was no progress in Cassino on 16 March, as confused fighting took place around the Continental Hotel and the railway station. Indian troops advanced toward Monte Cassino but could get no closer to the abbey than a half mile. Planes dropped 266 tons of high explosive to help the ground troops, but with no effect on the situation.

It was the artillery fire that the Germans found devastating. Of the ninety-four gun barrels that the *71st Projector Regiment* had started with on 16 March, only five were left at the end of the day —the rest had been knocked out by counterbattery fire. To the defenders, the Allied forces seemed to be employing "the tactics of El Alamein; namely,

[29] New Zealand Rpt, Bombing of Cassino, 23 Mar 44, Cassino Study.

concentrated fire from planes and guns, and infantry attacks on a narrow front." But the Allied strength massed at Cassino failed to overwhelm the Gustav Line.[30]

The pattern was much the same on 17 March. New Zealand troops, fighting at close range, sought to clear the southwestern corner of Cassino. Indian troops attempted to gain the slope of Monte Cassino. Planes dropped about 200 tons of bombs in direct support of ground operations without noticeable effect. General Clark noted that day:

> The battle of Cassino is progressing slowly. Freyberg's enthusiastic plans are not keeping up to his time schedule. . . .
>
> I have repeatedly told Freyberg from his inception of this plan that aerial bombardment alone never has and never will drive a determined enemy from his position. Cassino has again proven this theory, for, although no doubt heavy casualties were inflicted upon the enemy in Cassino, sufficient have remained to hold up our advance and cause severe fighting in the town for the past two days. . . .
>
> Due to General Alexander's direct dealing with Freyberg and the fact that this is an all-British show, I am reluctant to give a direct order to Freyberg. . . .[31]

By the night of 17 March, the situation at Cassino was thoroughly confused. The difficulty of locating and reporting forward positions made effective artillery support impossible. Tanks still could not maneuver. Highway 6 was still blocked.

Yet the attack continued in this grim and desperate battle in the weird ghost town of Cassino and on the slopes of the Cassino massif surrealistically decorated by ravaged trees and the debris of combat. The forces remained deadlocked. The Germans held two principal centers of resistance in Cassino, one in the northwest, the other in the southwest corner of the town, immobilizing and grinding down six battalions of New Zealand infantry. The Germans also held the principal ridges protecting the approaches to Monte Cassino and had completely isolated New Zealand and Indian forces on two hills.

By 21 March, as the battle of Cassino entered its seventh day, some commanders, General Juin for one, believed that the attack was proving too costly and should be stopped. General Freyberg was unwilling to call it off. At a conference during the afternoon General Alexander supported Freyberg—if the New Zealand Corps could keep up the pressure for twenty-four or forty-eight hours more, the German defense might collapse. General Clark admitted he had been discouraged about continuing the attack until he had talked with some of Freyberg's subordinate commanders, who were determined to fight until the objective was gained. General Leese agreed with Freyberg. Alexander decided to review the situation each day to see when to call a halt.[32]

Although no one wanted to admit defeat—"I hate to see the Cassino show flop" was the way General Clark put it—it was apparent two days later, on 23 March, that the New Zealand and Indian divisions were exhausted. Freyberg agreed with Clark, and recommended that the attack be halted. At a meeting with Leese and Clark, Alexander gave the order.[33]

[30] Steiger MS.
[31] Clark Diary, 17 Mar 44.
[32] Clark Diary, 21 Mar 44.
[33] Clark Diary, 23 Mar 44.

There was no other choice. Despite the unprecedented air bombardment of Cassino, the expenditure of almost 600,000 artillery shells and the loss of 2,000 New Zealand and Indian troops in nine days—almost 300 killed, nearly 250 missing, and more than 1,500 wounded—the latest attempt to break the Gustav Line and gain entrance to the Liri valley had failed.[34]

General Alexander's chief of staff explained the reasons for failure. There had been too much optimism about the effect of the air bombardment on the German defenders, and this in turn had led to employing too few Allied troops in the attack. The heavy rain had bogged down the assault elements, particularly the tanks. And the enemy resistance had been stubborn.[35]

General Allen, together with his troops of CCB, was waiting to enter the Liri valley when word came on 16 March that the New Zealanders would probably not be able to provide him with a bridgehead. He decided that if CCB were now committed, he would try to gain a bridgehead himself. CCB continued in alert status until the morning of 18 March, when Allen was informed that the exploitation "planned for months" had become impossible. Although in reserve, CCB had nevertheless suffered casualties —several German dive bombers attacked and destroyed the tactical command post of the 1st Tank Group, completely demolishing a small building housing the headquarters and all the vehicles around it, killing six men and badly wounding five, all of them key noncommissioned officers. On 24 March orders arrived for CCB to withdraw from the Cassino area for movement to Anzio.[36]

One company of American tanks had participated in the battle for Cassino. Before the battle General Freyberg had asked whether General Allen could provide an armored force to help the Indian division and whether he could do so without weakening CCB to the point of hindering the projected exploitation. Allen made available a company of light tanks. In the hope that the "appearance of tanks, and the fire we could deliver, would cause chaos and panic among the Germans," 1st Lt. Herman R. Crowder, Jr., commanding Company D, 760th Tank Battalion, received the mission of spearheading an infantry attack in the Cassino massif and providing impetus for a final thrust to the abbey of Monte Cassino. The attack was first delayed, then changed to an assault on one of the spurs of Monte Castellone.

In rough terrain that caused four tanks to throw tracks at once and against heavy German mortar fire, the tank company jumped off on 19 March, but soon had to retire. The tankers then gave supporting fire to Indian infantrymen. Early in the afternoon the company moved forward again, the tankers firing as they advanced. Despite shell holes, bomb craters, and enemy artillery and small arms fire, the company had started to move along a trail directly toward Monte Cassino when the lead tank ran over a mine and was disabled, blocking the column. Although the appearance of tanks

[34] The 4th Indian Division lost 4,000 men in the fighting around Cassino during the months of February and March. *The Tiger Triumphs*, pp. 62–64.

[35] General Harding's Press Conference, 25 Mar 44, Cassino Study.

[36] 1st Tank Group (later 1st Armd Group) AAR, 13 Feb–26 Mar 44; Fifth Army Msg, 24 Mar 44, Fifth Army G–3 Jnl.

in such difficult ground seemed to surprise and disconcert the Germans, no Indian infantrymen moved up to consolidate the gain. Crowder ordered his tanks to pull back slowly. During the withdrawal, his company lost four more tanks—one was destroyed by a mine, another by antitank fire, and two bogged down in mudholes.

All together, ten tanks were lost that day. Hoping to recover some of them, Crowder tried to get a small force of infantry and engineers to accompany the tankers. The G–3 of the Indian division refused to make the infantry and engineers available — the Germans, he said, had probably already mined and booby-trapped the tanks. Crowder estimated that the tanks were no more than 150 yards ahead of the front, but an advance of this distance, he later reported, the Indians "considered a major operation." Crowder's tank company, in the opinion of the division staff, had nevertheless given valuable assistance.[37]

The failure to break the Cassino defenses disappointed ground force commanders but positively shocked the air forces commanders. General Eaker, who had watched the bombardment, had returned to his headquarters that afternoon and had at once conferred by radio teletype with Maj. Gen. Barney Giles, General Arnold's chief of staff in Washington.[38] The conversation was apparently amplified in a letter Eaker sent several days later to General Arnold to describe and explain what had happened.

The air phases of the Cassino battle, General Eaker wrote, went according to plan until about 1500, when an abrupt break in the weather prevented most of the remaining missions. Despite the rain, low clouds, poor visibility, and the cancellation of some missions, the air bombardment, according to ground force commanders, had provided the destruction desired. Prisoners of war indicated that the bombing had come as a great shock and surprise to the Germans and "really knocked their ears off." Yet about 300 troops living or taking shelter in a long tunnel deep under Cassino and other Germans equally well protected had survived the bombing and had resisted the ground advance, continuing to fight even though some infantry companies numbered less than thirty men. Significantly, Eaker stated, the defenders received no reinforcements during the battle.

"I think," General Eaker continued, "if I had been sitting in Washington and had been unfamiliar with the terrain at Cassino, I would have wondered what this Cassino battle was all about." Since the map showed Cassino to be a compact town at the foot of a mountain and astride the main highway into the Liri valley behind the mountain, why had the Allied command not bypassed Cassino in the broad valley to the left? This would have perhaps been possible in dry weather. But the ground during much of the first three months of 1944 had been a morass of mud that bogged down not only tanks and motor vehicles but also foot troops. That was why Cassino was a roadblock and why it had to be taken before any large-scale

[37] Rpt by Crowder, 24 Mar 44; Memo dictated by Gen Allen at 1130, 11 Mar 44; Ltr, Galloway to Crowder, 21 Mar 44; Allen Memos, 12, 21 Mar 44. All in CCB S–3 Jnl. See also Rpt (Col Devore), The Attack on Albanete House, AGF Bd Rpts, NATO.

[38] Eaker Diary, 15 Mar 44, Mathews File, OCMH.

offensive could be made through the valley. Furthermore, the ground commanders felt that they had to have the high ground north of Cassino before striking through the valley in order to prevent the Germans from placing fire on the rear of the exploiting forces, from launching counterattacks, and from using the heights as observation posts.

General Eaker had watched the tanks and infantry move into the eastern edge of Cassino and come to a stop. The bombs had created tremendous craters that soon filled with water. These had to be bridged or filled before the tanks could proceed, for cliffs and impassably wet ground prevented the tanks from going around the holes. "You will remember," Eaker wrote, "that I warned you in a letter written before the battle of Cassino not to expect a large-scale breakthrough as a result of this operation. That estimate of the situation has proved correct." Nor was it possible, with the forces available, with troops who were weary and depressed, to anticipate a large-scale advance in the Cassino area until the ground dried. Even as he wrote, Eaker commented, it was "raining buckets full."

General Eaker was aware that some persons outside the theater might attribute the ground force failure to poor performance by the air forces. Inside the theater, there was no such feeling. Considering the weather, Wilson, Devers, Alexander, and Clark all felt that the air forces had done everything possible.[39]

Air officers in Washington were sympathetic. General Giles sent congratulations and assurance that General Arnold and everyone else in the Army Air Forces headquarters were pleased with the "very fine showing you made with the air power at Cassino." Their displeasure was directed against the ground boys, as Giles called them, who did not follow through. Air commanders, he said, had "never guaranteed [the ability] to land on top of the rubble and occupy the ground." The air forces people felt that the ground follow-up of the bombing was "puny" in comparison to

> the greatest concentration of air power in the world. It is too bad that our ground forces did not build up strength in depth consisting of three or four divisions in column and push on through Cassino or go around it. I believe that if we could find a few jugs of corn liquor of the same brand that General Grant did so well with, that situation could be cleared up in a few days.[40]

There was, nevertheless, a persistent feeling that something, somewhere, had gone wrong. And someone was going to be blamed. To repudiate comment appearing in the press that the unsuccessful outcome of the Cassino battle was due to air force failure, General Clark sent General Eaker a letter stating categorically, "I do not share that view." The tendency to blame the air forces, he wrote, "has not been inspired by my headquarters." No bombardment, in his opinion, could eliminate determined infantrymen occupying good defensive positions in a fortified area.[41] Bombing could be demoralizing for a short time, but it had no lasting results when prepared positions protected men from con-

[39] Ltr, Eaker to Arnold, The Cassino Battle, 21 Mar 44, Mathews File, OCMH.

[40] Giles to Eaker, 29 Mar 44, Mathews File, OCMH.

[41] Clark to Eaker, 5 Apr 44, Mathews File, OCMH. See Ltr, Gruenther to Alexander, Preliminary Rpt of Bombing of Cassino, 31 Mar 44, Cassino Study; Fifth Army Rpt on Cassino Opn, 5 Jun 44.

cussion and gave them a sense of security. The effect of the bombardment of Cassino, "though potent, was of relatively short duration and intermittent." [42]

General Twining wrote:

> Cassino is not an indictment of the value of heavy bombs in close support of the Army. Their ability to land a knock-out blow, without warning is still an advantage which no other form of attack enjoys, but . . . there are limiting and controlling factors for this as with all other types of fire support.[43]

The outstanding performance at Cassino was that of the German paratroopers. To Senger, the *XIV Panzer Corps* commander, their "iron tenacity and unswerving resolution of true soldiers had overcome a concentration of materiel on a narrow front which probably had no precedent in this war." Their constant optimism, during even the most critical phases of the battle, was a source of amazement and inspiration to corps and army headquarters. "No troops but the 1st Parachute Division," declared Vietinghoff, the *Tenth Army* commander, "could have held Cassino." [44]

Three times the Allied forces had tried to break the Gustav Line and get into the Liri valley, and three times they had failed—in January the frontal attack across the Rapido, in February the attempt to outflank the Cassino spur, and in March the effort to drive between the abbey and the town. They would try again, but only after the weather cleared and the ground was firm, after the troops had rested. Only then, in May, would they again take up the struggle.

[42] Fifth Army Rpt of Cassino Opn, 5 Jun 44; Fifth Army Rpt on Effect of Bombing and Shelling of Cassino, 27 Apr 44, AFHQ G (Ops), Lessons from Opns, vol. II. See also AFHQ Lessons from Opns, vol. I.

[43] Twining Memo 5, 4 Jun 44, AFHQ Files. See also Memo, Hansborough for Brann, 31 Mar 44, Cassino Study.

[44] MS # C–095b (Senger), OCMH; Vietinghoff MSS; MS # T–1a (Westphal *et al.*), OCMH; Vietinghoff to Kesselring, quoted in Steiger MS.

CHAPTER XXVI

Results and Prospects

As the battlefields at Cassino and Anzio became quiet at the end of March, the major Allied problem was how to get enough strength into Italy to break what had become a stalemate. Cassino and Anzio both posed their requirements. In addition, another projected operation exerted pressure for still more resources — the invasion of southern France, which was designed to complement the cross-Channel attack in June 1944 and which was to be executed with forces drawn from the Mediterranean theater.[1] (*Map VII*)

Code-named ANVIL, the landings in southern France would require several American divisions from Italy, as well as French divisions from North Africa. Despite the arrival of new units in the theater and the shift of the Eighth Army to the west of the Apennines, troops withdrawn from Italy for ANVIL would deprive General Alexander of the strength to capture Rome.

The American Joint Chiefs of Staff had long favored launching ANVIL even if it left Rome in German hands. The British Chiefs of Staff vehemently opposed weakening the forces in Italy until Rome was captured. As commander of both the Fifth Army in Italy and the Seventh Army preparing for ANVIL in Sicily, General Clark was in the middle of these opposing points of view.

His inclinations lay with the Fifth Army. When General Wilson, the theater commander, asked General Clark late in January when the Fifth Army commander thought he could leave Italy to devote full attention to ANVIL, Clark said 15 March, perhaps later. Wilson "told me," Clark wrote in his diary, "he was anxious for me to remain [in command of the Fifth Army] as long as possible, which fits in exactly with my ideas." For the landings in southern France, Wilson and Clark earmarked the 3d and 45th Divisions.[2]

As the intensity of the Italian campaign mounted in February with the battles of Cassino and Anzio, it became increasingly apparent that General Clark should remain with the Fifth Army, "which, of course," Clark noted, "suits me."[3] And when it became obvious that the campaign had bogged down — the Anzio operation had failed to get the Allied forces to Rome and there was no immediate prospect that the Fifth Army at Cassino would be able to make a juncture with the Anzio forces—it also became apparent that the lack of success in southern Italy might rule out southern France altogether and that in any case it would be unfair to General

[1] See Smith and Romanus, Riviera to the Rhine.

[2] Clark Diary, 27 Jan 44.

[3] *Ibid.*, 17 Feb 44.

Clark to take him out of Italy until the battle there was won.[4]

On the last day of February, General Clark was released from responsibility for ANVIL. A rather formal letter of instructions brought him the news. General Wilson wrote:

> The Italian campaign has assumed such importance that the Commander-in-Chief [Wilson] is loath to risk a change in Commanders of Fifth Army either now or in the near future. Firm directives concerning Operation ANVIL have now been received from the Combined Chiefs of Staff which require immediate implementation. Your responsibilities on the Italian mainland are too grave to burden you with the added responsibility for continued ANVIL planning which must be closely supervised from now on. For these reasons, decision has been reached by General Wilson and concurred in by General Devers, that you shall remain in command of Fifth Army and be relieved of responsibility for the Seventh Army and ANVIL planning effective this date.[5]

"This is a great relief to me," General Clark wrote, "for I have no time to give any thought to any other subject except the battle [in Italy]." [6]

In March, when the strategic debate over ANVIL arose anew, the British Chiefs of Staff felt so strongly that it was necessary to gain Rome before the forces in Italy were reduced that they recommended canceling the invasion of southern France. It was unwise, they believed, to withdraw troops from Italy and thus deprive the commanders of the strength to take Rome or to pull out landing craft that were being employed for vital supply movements to the Anzio beachhead forces. Recognizing that the beachhead defenders could hardly be denied the shipping needed to sustain them, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff abandoned their earlier position that ANVIL should be launched whether Rome was captured or not.

The outcome of the discussion was a decision by the Combined Chiefs of Staff to invade southern France only after the situation in Italy improved—specifically, after the Allies joined the Cassino and Anzio fronts and took Rome.

Asked by General Devers for an estimate on when the main forces would join with the beachhead forces and therefore when he would have to release the 3d and 45th Divisions for ANVIL, General Clark replied that the weather would prevent a co-ordinated attack until early May. He believed it would then take three weeks for the forces on the main front to advance to Anzio. More time would be needed to get VI Corps out of the line and to give the troops a period of rest and reorganization before driving to Rome. It would perhaps be too late by that time "to contribute much to OVERLORD," but that was "a matter beyond my scope." [7]

As it turned out, the landings in southern France, originally conceived as a simultaneous development with OVERLORD, would come two months later. The Allied forces would make no further effort to crack the Gustav Line until early May. Until the Cassino positions were taken no favorable change could be expected at Anzio. And until the separate fronts in Italy were joined, no drive on Rome could be made.[8] In April,

[4] *Ibid.*, 28 Feb 44.
[5] *Ibid.*, 29 Feb 44.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*, 22 Mar 44.
[8] See Ernest F. Fisher, Jr., Cassino to the Alps, a forthcoming volume in the series UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II.

while the Allied command prepared its spring offensive, the war in Italy became a series of un-co-ordinated, small unit actions, raids, ambushes, patrols, and forays, with an occasional sharp skirmish.

Beginning in March, the XII Air Support Command executed Operation STRANGLE, the bombing program for which General Eaker had such high hopes. Medium bombers of the 42d and 57th Bombardment Wings, which had principal responsibility for the sustained interdiction operation, directed their attacks against German lines of communication, primarily railways. They tried to cut large sections of the rail lines in central Italy in order to disrupt traffic between the Pisa-Rimini area and the battlefronts in southern Italy. Attacks concentrated on bridges, tunnels, defiles, and open stretches of track rather than on marshaling yards.

Operation STRANGLE included 601 sorties in 52 missions in March. During April and the first four days of May, the tempo stepped up—271 missions totaling 2,982 sorties. The climax came between 5 and 10 May, when aircraft flew 1,307 sorties in 115 missions. All together, from 15 March to 10 May, the sorties totaled 4,807. Of the 11,805 sorties flown during the month between 10 April and 10 May by the XII Tactical Air Command, as the XII Air Support Command was redesignated on 15 April, 38 percent were devoted to STRANGLE.[9]

Despite high hopes and a heavy expenditure of planes and explosives, Operation STRANGLE achieved nothing more than nuisance value. The Germans quickly repaired breaks in the lines and rerouted traffic. Contrary to the expectations of Allied airmen, the combat effectiveness of the Germans suffered little.[10]

At Anzio, the beachhead forces remained under tension. It was easy enough for a visitor arriving in April to gain a false impression of safety and calm. Despite the visible destruction around the tiny harbor, the men appeared cheerful, even insouciant. Except for 750 Italian civilian laborers, the population was entirely military; 22,000 men, women, and children had been evacuated to Naples soon after the landings and more than 100,000 troops had taken their places. In apparent unconcern over the danger that struck periodically, men unloaded vessels, trucked supplies to inland dumps, and performed the duties normal in all military installations. The occasional white plume of water that rose as an enemy shell plunged into the bay had an impersonal air. Yet the next shell to whistle over the beachhead might land in the hold of a ship or blow to pieces a jeep driving through Nettuno. At any moment one or a dozen German planes might swoop out of the sun to lay a deadly trail of bombs and bullets.

The horror of the beachhead was the constant, yet hidden presence of death. Casualties were never numerous at any one time. But the continual waiting and expectancy produced strain, for every part of the beachhead was vulnerable to enemy guns and planes. To reduce the accuracy of incoming shells and bombs, a host of smoke generators created artificial fog—smoke pots were placed in a semicircle paralleling the beachhead perimeter and on boats screening the port. During the day the smoke pro-

[9] XII Tactical Air Comd Opnl History, 1 Jan–30 Jun 44, pp. 14–43.

[10] Fisher, Cassino to the Alps.

duced a light haze, at night a dense low-hanging cloud.[11] Yet the smoke could neither obstruct nor deflect the random shell, the lucky bomb.

German shells and bombs struck ammunition dumps, Quartermaster depots, and medical installations. Casualties among medical personnel alone totaled 92 killed (including 6 nurses), 367 wounded, and 79 missing or captured for the four months that the beachhead existed.

Trenches, foxholes, dugouts, and pits throughout the beachhead protected men and matériel. Tons of earth pushed up by bulldozers made walls to shelter the neatly stacked piles of gasoline cans and ammunition. Dirt and sandbag revetments ringed the hospital tents, reinforced with planking for added protection to shock wards and operating rooms.

That the port of Anzio continued to operate at all was a testimonial to the quiet courage it took to work under the hazardous conditions. On 29 March, when 7,828 tons of supplies were brought ashore, Anzio in terms of unloading operations was the fourth largest port in the world.

The logistical lifeline, which made possible the continued existence of the beachhead, was a substantial supply effort. Despite the hope of a relatively quick linkup between the beachhead and main front forces, the planners had from the first established supply runs from North African ports and from Naples. Liberty ships, LST's, and LCT's, some carrying preloaded trucks and DUKW's, brought the means of waging war and the necessities of life, plus some luxuries, to the men in the beachhead.

From 28 January on, weather permitting, a convoy of six LST's departed Naples daily for the 100-mile trip to Anzio. Each vessel carried fifty trucks, a total of 300 per convoy. Each truck was loaded to maximum 5-ton capacity, then backed on a ship for the voyage so that it could be driven off quickly at the destination. The 1,500 tons of cargo carried generally consisted of 60 percent ammunition, 20 percent fuel, and 20 percent rations—for sustaining the beachhead forces and stockpiling items for the coming spring offensive. At Anzio, empty trucks were ready to be driven aboard the unloaded LST's for return to Naples.[12]

Other vessels supplemented the daily LST shuttle. Each week fifteen LCT's made a round trip between Naples and Anzio. Every ten days four Liberty ships, usually loaded at North African ports, arrived at the beachhead.

LST's and LCT's docked in the harbor of Anzio, Liberty ships unloaded offshore, their cargoes brought into the harbor or over the beaches by a fleet of 20 LCT's, almost 500 DUKW's, and a few LCI's. By 1 February the port was handling 8 LST's, 8 LCT's, and 15 LCI's simultaneously. The volume of supplies, for example, enabled the 450 artillery pieces in the beachhead by mid-February to fire an average of 20,000 rounds per day.

[11] Fifth Army to AFHQ, 2 Mar 44, Master Cables; Interv, Mathews with Tate, May 45, OCMH. See also Brooks E. Kleber and Dale Birdsell, *The Chemical Warfare Service: Chemicals in Combat*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1966), pp. 336–40.

[12] Fifth Army G–4 Memo, 26 Jan 44, Supply Memos; Interv, Mathews with Tate, May 45, OCMH; Col Charles S. D'Orsa, The Trials and Tribulations of an Army G–4, undated, OCMH.



GERMAN LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY SHELL HITS A NETTUNO HOTEL

Because hospital ships were unable to dock at the Anzio wharf, LCT's ferried patients to the ships standing offshore. Air evacuation was impossible because the dust raised by the planes landing and taking off brought immediate artillery fire from the enemy.

Despite bad weather, relatively poor unloading facilities, and enemy bombardment and shelling, more than half a million tons of supplies were discharged at Anzio during four months, a daily average of about 4,000 tons. No serious supply shortages ever developed at the beachhead.

Anzio became the epic stand on a lonely beachhead. But the dogged courage of the men on that isolated front could not dispel the general disappointment—the amphibious operation had not led to the quick capture of Rome. Furthermore, the expedition had approached disaster, averted only by the grim determination of the troops to hold. What made it possible for the forces at Anzio to endure a situation fraught with defeat was the logistical support they received. Without Allied command of the sea, the very concept of Anzio would have been out of the question. And in the end it was support across the water, tied to courage on the battlefield, that turned near tragedy into a victory of sorts.

The operations at Anzio taught two immediate lessons: an amphibious assault needed more strength in the initial landing and an immediate drive to key points inland. These were heeded by the planners who prepared OVERLORD.

For the Germans, too, Anzio was a failure. They were unable to eliminate



REVETTED HOSPITAL TENTS, ANZIO

the beachhead. And the battle was expensive in men and material that were increasingly difficult to replace. Yet they had won a victory of sorts, also. They had prevented the Allies from taking Rome and from cutting the line of communications, thereby making possible German success at the Gustav Line.

Before the Anzio landing, Hitler had assumed that the Allies would invade northwest Europe in a single main effort, and all signs pointed to a cross-Channel attack. Yet the concentration of Allied forces in the Mediterranean led him to wonder whether other major thrusts, perhaps in Portugal or in the Balkans, might precede or accompany the main blow. Believing it hardly likely that the Allied forces would try to push all the way up the Italian peninsula, he viewed the accumulated strength in the Mediterranean and the relative stalemate in Italy as producing a strategic imbalance that the Allied command might try to resolve by a sudden amphibious assault. Anzio seemed to confirm Hitler's theory. Since the beachhead appeared to have only remote tactical connection with the main front, it was possible the venture was an independent, self-sustaining operation, the first of a series of attacks on the continental periphery designed to disperse German reserves. The surprising fact that the troops coming ashore failed to push inland at once but paused instead to consolidate their beachhead gave validity to this interpretation. The purpose of the operation appeared to be to attract German forces rather than to gain tactical objectives. Seeing the Allied forces executing what he took to be a peripheral strategy, Hitler expected

attacks elsewhere before the main assault struck the beaches of northwest France.[13]

Despite his estimate, Hitler had reacted to Anzio in force and fury, not so much because it might represent the first of a series of major amphibious assaults but because he saw the possibility of obtaining political prestige by eliminating at least this beachhead.

Of the whole campaign in southern Italy from the Allied point of view, the question has often been asked: was the expenditure of lives in the dreadful conditions of terrain and weather justified? The alternative was to concentrate Allied forces elsewhere. But within the context of the strategic thinking of the time, it is difficult to see where else Allied forces, practically and realistically, could have fought the Germans. Transferring men and matériel from the Mediterranean area was uneconomical, particularly in 1943, when shipping was in such short supply. To have moved all or most of the resources to the United Kingdom for OVERLORD would have showed the Axis categorically where the next Allied blow would be struck—and would, of course, have permitted the Germans to displace their own forces to defend against a cross-Channel attack. More important, a wholesale movement out of the theater would have relaxed considerable pressure on the enemy.

And there could be no question of relaxing pressure. The enemy could be permitted no respite, no rest, no opportunity to shift forces to the Russian front. Conversely, neither could the Allied forces assembled in the Mediterranean theater afford to remain idle.

To have used these forces elsewhere in the theater would have made little sense. The soft underbelly of Europe is a fiction. Italy fulfilled the image as the weaker partner of Germany; but in terms of terrain, the soft underbelly does not exist—the Rhône Valley, the Italian mainland, and the Balkan wilderness were equally unappetizing to ground forces.

The Allies entered the Italian mainland, among other reasons, to permit Italy to surrender. They were also attracted there by the desire for airfields and perhaps an exaggerated idea of what air power would accomplish. Once involved, they were to a large extent carried along by the momentum generated by events. The Allied strategy was largely predetermined by what had gone before, and the successive campaigns of North Africa, Sicily, and Italy reflected the influence that events impose on the will of man.

For the Allied forces, the Italian campaign was a vast holding action undertaken to pin down superior German forces and prevent their employment elsewhere. General Alexander has questioned who was holding whom. But the fact is that the Allied command employed relatively little strength in Italy. Perhaps the commanders tried to do too much with and expected far too much from what turned out to be too little. But given the global requirements of World War II, there were insufficient resources to provide the men and matériel needed to achieve speedy victory in Italy. And though the Allied forces inflicted about the same number of casualties on the Germans as they themselves received, the German losses were proportionately more severe.

The cruel, grim campaign of the Al-

[13] Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, pp. 231–33.

lied forces in Italy accomplished much more than the soldiers there imagined. They saw only the slow and painful advance. But they had made a substantial contribution to victory. Although still denied the obvious prize of the campaign in southern Italy — Rome — the Allied forces secured the Mediterranean to Allied shipping and naval operations and captured airfields that permitted round-the-clock bombardment of vital military targets. Most important, the Allied forces in southern Italy helped to grind down and wear out the German fighting machine, a fact not always apparent in what was essentially a secondary front.

As the invasion of northwest Europe in June 1944 would make more than clear, the campaign in southern Italy was a peripheral venture in the task of winning the war. OVERLORD delivered the mortal blow. Yet the Allied armies in Italy had made Germany more vulnerable to the cross-Channel attack and the subsequent operations. Without the heartbreaking experience in southern Italy, the decisive action in Europe might very well have brought the same anguish and frustration that characterized the battlefield at Anzio and the fighting in the mud and mountains between Salerno and Cassino.

Appendix A

Table of Equivalent Ranks

U.S. Army	*German Army and Air Force*	*German Waffen-SS*
None	Reichsmarschall	None
General of the Army	Generalfeldmarschall	Reichsfuehrer-SS
General	Generaloberst	Oberstgruppenfuehrer
Lieutenant General	General der Infanterie Artillerie Gebirgstruppen Kavallerie Nachrichtentruppen Panzertruppen Pioniere Luftwaffe Flieger Fallschirmtruppen Flakartillerie Luftnachrichtentruppen	Obergruppenfuehrer
Major General	Generalleutnant	Gruppenfuehrer
Brigadier General	Generalmajor	Brigadefuehrer
None	None	Oberfuehrer
Colonel	Oberst	Standartenfuehrer
Lieutenant Colonel	Oberstleutnant	Obersturmbannfuehrer
Major	Major	Sturmbannfuehrer
Captain	Hauptmann	Haupsturmfuehrer
Captain (Cavalry)	Rittmeister	
First Lieutenant	Oberleutnant	Obersturmfuehrer
Second Lieutenant	Leutnant	Untersturmfuehrer

Appendix B

Recipients of the Distinguished Service Cross

All pertinent Army records have been scrutinized in an effort to include in the following list the name of every soldier who received the Distinguished Service Cross for his part in the operations recounted in this volume. Inasmuch as no complete listing of DSC awards is maintained in any single Army file, it is possible that some names may inadvertently have been omitted.

Note: (P) indicates a posthumous award; * indicates a member of the French Expeditionary Corps; # indicates a member of the Canadian Army.

Maj. Robert B. Acheson
Capt. Hersel R. Adams (P)
Maj. John E. Adams (Missing)
Capt. Carlos C. Alden, Jr.
Tech. Sgt. Robert O. Alexander
Tech. Sgt. Rudolph F. Alexander
2d Lt. George A. Allen (P)
Sgt. James H. Archer
Pfc. Robert L. Arnett (P)
Capt. William P. Athas
1st Lt. Frederick Blake Atto #
Pvt. Masao Awakuni
Sgt. Mike Baranek
Pfc. Edward F. Barker (Missing)
1st Lt. William R. Barker
Capt. Charles M. Beacham
Pvt. Miles R. Beckstrom
2d Lt. Alfred Belander (P)
Capt. Henri de Belsunce *
Sgt. Jack G. Berry
2d Lt. Thomas F. Berteau
2d Lt. Herbert E. Billman
S/Sgt. Oliver R. Birkner (Missing)
2d Lt. Arnold L. Bjorklund
S/Sgt. Jack W. Bloomer
1st Lt. Wayne E. Boyce (P)
2d Lt. Randolph Bracey (P)
Cpl. Roy A. Braden
Pfc. Marvin H. Broach
Sgt. Harry L. Bromley
T/Sgt. Charles H. Bussey
Capt. Benjamin J. Butler
Col. Frederic B. Butler
S/Sgt. Robert A. Campagna
Pvt. Arthur C. Cato
Sgt. Robert L. Chudej
Tech. 5 Carl R. Clegg
Cpl. Boggs G. Collins
Cpl. Thomas W. Corcoran
Pvt. William J. Crawford
Pvt. Melvin E. Danhaus
1st Lt. Jesse L. Davis
Pfc. Leslie B. Davis (Missing)
S/Sgt. Royce C. Davis
Lt. Col. Lyle J. Deffenbaugh
Maj. Don B. Dunham (P)
Lt. Col. Ray J. Ericksen (P)
Capt. James G. Evans
Sgt. Carroll E. Fairclo
Pvt. Richard Ferris (P)
Sgt. Edgar S. Fines # (P)
Capt. Ralph C. Fisher (P)
Pfc. Chester W. Floyd
Sgt. William J. Fox
Pfc. Orlin A. Franklin
Brig. Gen. Robert T. Frederick
Pfc. Walter A. Galary
Sgt. Fortunate Garcia (Missing)
Pvt. Paul C. Gerlich (P)
Pvt. Francis H. Gisborne
Pfc. Joe P. Gomez
Sgt. Manuel S. Gonzales
2d Lt. David O. Gorgol
2d Lt. Edwin F. Gould
Lt. Col. Samuel S. Graham
Sgt. Charles I. Grant

Pfc. William Green
Pfc. Lloyd C. Greer (Missing)
Sgt. Bennie L. Guffey
Pvt. Thomas S. Gugliuzza (P)
Pvt. Fred Guttilla
Sgt. Arlie J. Haines
Pvt. Charles R. Hanes (P)
1st Lt. Roy M. Hanna
2d Lt. Herbert A. Hansen (P)
Pfc. Harry C. Harpel (P)
2d Lt. Vernon C. Harris (P)
Capt. Leroy A. Haselwood (P)
Pvt. Mikio Hasemoto (P)
Capt. Richard B. Hawk
Pvt. Shizuya Hayashi
T/Sgt. Robert H. Healer
1st Lt. Paul F. Heath
1st Lt. Robert T. Heflin
Sgt. Robert F. Heiser (P)
2d Lt. Max R. Hendon
Pvt. Edwin C. Hicks
1st Lt. William Higgins, Jr.
Sgt. Glen O. Hiller
Chaplain (Capt.) Albert J. Hoffman
1st Lt. George E. Hodgdon
Cpl. Jesse D. Hollemon, Jr. (P)
Sgt. Burk B. Hunt (P)
1st Lt. Sylvester J. Hunter
Capt. Milton Jarrold
S/Sgt. Charles R. Johnson
Sgt. Steward R. Johnson
2d Lt. Delmer C. Keck (Missing)
1st Lt. William C. Kellogg
Capt. John T. Kershner (P)
S/Sgt. Charles W. Keyser
Capt. Joe H. Kimble
1st Lt. Donald E. Knowlton
Pfc. Henry C. Kranz
2d Lt. John T. Lamb
Capt. Alden S. Lance
1st Lt. William J. Langston (P)
1st Lt. Stanley S. Lemon (P)
Sgt. George Lenkalis (P)
2d Lt. John A. Liebenstein (Missing)
2d Lt. Howard R. Lieurance (P)
2d Lt. Michael Ligus, Jr. (P)
Tech. 5 Marvin B. Lindley
1st Lt. Martin Luke
Pvt. Clement S. Mackowiak
Capt. Jack L. Marinelli
Capt. Carl P. Matney
S/Sgt. Richard E. McCaffrey
Capt. George N. McCall
Capt. Clifton A. McClain, Jr. (P)
Sgt. John H. McInnis #
1st Lt. James F. McMahon
S/Sgt. Quillian H. McMichen (P)
Sgt. Hugh H. Merritt (P)
Pvt. Andrew J. Mileham
Pvt. William F. Miller
S/Sgt. Daniel W. Minton (P)
Maj. Merle M. Mitchell
2d Lt. Orva F. Morris
Cpl. Burt G. Moulton
1st Lt. Orville O. Munson
Pfc. Max L. Nebus, Jr. (P)
S/Sgt. Carroll T. O'Donald (P)
1st Lt. Howard W. O'Donnell (P)
S/Sgt. Allan M. Ohata
Pfc. Omar Page (P)
Pfc. William Page
Pfc. Howard E. Palmer
S/Sgt. William F. Parrott
Sgt. George S. Paudel
Pfc. Dallas D. Prather (P)
Sgt. John A. Rich
S/Sgt. John C. Ritso (P)
2d Lt. George T. Robinson (P)
Lt. Col. William B. Rosson
1st Lt. Henry F. G. Rouse
T/Sgt. James A. Rutledge
Tech. 5 Ben Santjer (P)
1st Lt. Bernard T. Schaefer
S/Sgt. Harold L. Schorg
Pfc. Leonard J. Schneider (P)
Sgt. Martin N. Schreck
Capt. Emile G. Schuster
Col. Harry B. Sherman
1st Lt. James N. Sherrick (Missing)
T/Sgt. Sylvester D. Singlestad
Maj. James F. Skells
Cpl. James D. Slaton
Sgt. Willie B. Slaughter
T/Sgt. Walter G. Sleezer
Capt. Walker B. Sorrell
T/Sgt. Rolfe A. Spahr

2d Lt. William O. Sporbert
Capt. Harry J. Stone
Capt. Richard M. Strong
Cpl. Masaru Suehiro
Pfc. Richard M. Swanson
Sgt. Ralph W. Swisher
Sgt-Chef Dominique Taddei *
Sgt. Shigeo J. Takata (P)
2d Lt. Harry M. Thames
Pvt. Merwin A. Tobias
Capt. Charles D. Tool
Sgt. Fred Trotter (P)
Sgt. Anthony D. Trumpaitis
Col. Reuben H. Tucker
Sgt. Leslie Van Dine
Pvt. Carson L. Varner
Sgt. Gaither W. Vaughn
2d Lt. Thomas E. Vierheller (P)
Sgt. Fred Vincent (P)
Pfc. John A. Wakefield
Pfc. Robert E. Watson
Pfc. Charles E. Wheeler (P)
2d Lt. Melvin F. Wiggins
S/Sgt. Harold D. Wilson (Missing)
Capt. James W. Wilson
Pfc. Thomas I. Yamanaga (P)
Pfc. Theodore Yuhasz
1st Lt. Thomas Zabski

Bibliographical Note

The main source of documentation for *Salerno to Cassino* is the body of official records of the U.S. Army in the Mediterranean theater, the files of reports, letters, and messages contained at the time of the volume's preparation for the most part in the General Services Administration's National Archives and Records Service in Washington, D.C., and in the Federal Records Centers at Suitland, Maryland, and Kansas City, Missouri. Incidental files maintained by the General Reference Branch of OCMH were also helpful. Because the bulk and extent of the official records impose the problem of selection on the historian, it is necessary to add that the major research was carried out in the files of the Operations (G–3) Sections of the pertinent headquarters.

Compared to the records maintained later in the war and particularly by those engaged in the European theater, the official records of the Mediterranean theater are impersonal even though they are copious. Telephone journals, which reveal not only the personalities of commanders but their methods of operation, for example, are entirely lacking. In their place are found occasional memorandums of record, which may or may not disclose the significant details that permit human characterization to be added to a narrative. All the major headquarters and units in the theater prepared monthly after action reports supported by journals and journal files, in which are found directives, operations instructions, periodic reports, messages, and the like. The narrative reports vary in quality, that is, in the perception they offer. The after action reports of the 3d, 34th, and 45th Divisions concentrate on the movements of regiments and battalions and are lacking in exposing commanders' observations, estimates of the situation, and reasons for decisions; the monthly reports of the 36th Division are somewhat better, but they are not as good as the best ones prepared by units later in the war. It would seem that as the war continued, the participants improved their reporting techniques and learned increasingly how to present significant accounts of their experience.

The best secondary source on the American operations in the Italian campaign is the *Fifth Army History,* written by members of the Fifth Army Historical Section and published shortly after the war in Italy. An after action report in concept, the *History* gives a straightforward account of operations, including material not only on the command problems but also on the tactical details of the subordinate units. The appendixes contain personnel and ammunition figures and lists, operations orders and directives, and other useful information; maps, charts, and statistics are included. Volumes I through IV are relevant for the period under consideration.

Unit histories are few in number. Excellent for local color and tactical detail are: Donald G. Taggart, ed., *The History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947); James J. Altieri,

Darby's Rangers (Durham, N.C.: Seaman Printery, 1945); Robert D. Burhans, *The First Special Service Force* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947); and George F. Howe, *The Battle History of the 1st Armored Division* (Washington: Combat Forces Press, 1954). Unfortunately, published histories of the 34th, 36th, and 45th Infantry Divisions do not seem to exist; nor are there published accounts of the II and VI Corps operations.

Four pamphlets—*Salerno: American Operations from the Beaches to the Volturno* (Washington, 1944); *From the Volturno to the Winter Line* (Washington, 1944); *Fifth Army at the Winter Line* (Washington, 1945); and *Anzio Beachhead* (Washington, 1947)—in the AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION series give excellent accounts of particular segments of the Italian campaign. They emphasize small unit action. Their clear maps and vivid illustrations make them particularly valuable. No similar study was made of the fighting around Cassino.

For operations of the British Eighth Army in Italy, I have relied largely on Field Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery's *El Alamein to the River Sangro* (Germany: British Army of the Rhine, 1946); on the more personal account of his chief of staff, Major-General Sir Francis de Guingand, *Operation Victory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947); and on Lt.-Col. G. W. L. Nicholson's *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*, Volume II of the "Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War" (Ottawa: E. Cloutier, Queen's Printer, 1956). The operations of the French Expeditionary Corps have been ably presented by General Marcel Carpentier, who was General Alphonse Juin's chief of staff, in his *Les Forces Alliées en Italie: la Campagne d'Italie* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1949).

The memoir literature for the period is extensive. Particularly important are: Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950); Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., *Command Missions* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1954); Winston S. Churchill, *Closing the Ring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951); Albert Kesselring, *A Soldier's Record* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1954); and Siegfried Westphal, *The German Army in the West* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1951).

Not quite in the category of memoir literature because they are less personal in their views are the published dispatches of General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, General Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander, and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, and the unpublished dispatch of General Eisenhower on Mediterranean operations. All are interesting for the analyses of the operations that these commanders directed.

Official histories relevant for the period include: Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1943–1944*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1959); two volumes of "The Army Air Forces in World War II," edited by Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, Volume II, *Europe: TORCH to POINTBLANK* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), and Volume III, *Europe: ARGUMENT to V–E Day* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951); *The Tiger Triumphs: The Story of Three Great Divisions in Italy* (His

Majesty's Stationery Office for the Government of India, 1946); John Ehrman, "History of the Second World War," *Grand Strategy, Volume V, August 1943–September 1944* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956); and Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1943–1945,* UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1968), which I was privileged to see in manuscript.

The General Reference Branch of OCMH has collected personal accounts written shortly after the war as student theses by officers attending the Advanced Courses at Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Knox, Kentucky. These studies detail the experience of junior officers in the combat arms during the Italian campaign and give valuable impressions of men under fire.

The Mathews file in OCMH consists of miscellaneous materials gathered by Dr. Sidney T. Mathews during the war, when he was a combat historian in Italy, and afterwards. The Salmon file, also in OCMH, consists of documents and records collected by Dr. Dwight Salmon during the course of his service as a senior historian in the Mediterranean theater.

I have had the privilege of consulting the wartime diaries of General Jacob Devers, General Mark W. Clark, Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas, and Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker. I have also had access to notes made by Dr. Howard McGaw Smyth from General Eisenhower's office diary. Generals Clark and Walker have been most gracious in their help not only by giving me their personal impressions of incidents and events but also by answering questions on the conduct of operations. In addition, I have used notes of interviews by Dr. Mathews, Dr. Smyth, Dr. Philip A. Crowl, and others with some of the principal commanders in the campaign.

The best short account of the Italian campaign is Chester G. Starr's *From Salerno to the Alps* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948). Jacques Mordal's *Cassino* (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1952) is a superb rendering of the battles in that area. Fred Majdalany's *Cassino* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1952) is a beautifully written account of the same subject, though somewhat unfair to certain American commanders and units. Wynford Vaughan-Thomas gives a British point of view in his *Anzio* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961). My version, *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963), might be said to have an American viewpoint. Two essays in Kent Roberts Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions* (Washington, 1960) are relevant: Ralph S. Mavrogordato's brilliant account, "Hitler's Decision on the Defense of Italy," and my study, "General Lucas at Anzio."

The German side of the story has been drawn largely from seven manuscripts prepared by Mr. Mavrogordato for this volume, manuscripts that are filed in OCMH. The documentary basis of Mr. Mavrogordato's work is the body of official German records. He made particular use of the diary and diary appendixes of the German *Tenth Army,* which reflect events occurring below, at the corps level, and above, at army group level. He found corps documents generally too detailed and somewhat unbalanced. Most records of the army group have been lost. The journal of telephone

conversations between commanders and between chiefs of staff on army group and army echelons—not kept until the middle of October 1943—reveals personal attitudes and reactions, as well as facts.

The war diary of the OKW Armed Forces Operations Staff is the most valuable source for strategic background and high-level policy. It shows how decisions were reached and details the differences of opinion between Hitler and his Operations Staff (in particular Jodl and Warlimont). Comments on the diary, written by Warlimont after the war (in OCMH files), form an important supplement that cannot be separated from the diary itself.

Among the postwar narratives written by German officers, the best ones for the period under study are Kesselring's (less an apology than his published book) and Westphal's (less tendentious than his book); these accounts in *Der Feldzug in Italien,* a manuscript collection in OCMH files, are interesting for their revelations of attitudes and opinions rather than beneficial for accuracy and completeness. Vietinghoff's and Senger's comments, in the same manuscript collection, are also useful for insights into German operations, though the former is rather concerned with defending the honor of the German soldier and the latter turns strongly around critical evaluations of commanders holding Nazi political beliefs. Hauser's manuscript and Mackensen's comments are important for the period of the Anzio beachhead.

The Steiger manuscript, written by Mr. Alfred G. Steiger, a member of the Canadian Army Historical Section, has been most helpful.

Since the research for and writing of *Salerno to Cassino* were completed in 1965, other materials have become available in the form of histories and memoirs.

Glossary

AAR	After action report
Abn	Airborne
ACMF	Allied Central Mediterranean Forces
ACofS	Assistant Chief of Staff
Admin	Administrative
AFHQ	Allied Force Headquarters
AG	Adjutant General
AGF	Army Ground Forces
AGp	Army group
AKA	Cargo ship, attack
APA	Transport, attack
Armd	Armored; armoured
Bd	Board
CCB	Combat Command B
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
CG	Commanding general
CinC	Commander in Chief
CofS	Chief of Staff
Comando Supremo	Italian Armed Forces High Command
Comd	Command
Comdr	Commander
Corresp	Correspondence
COS	(British) Chiefs of Staff
DCofS	Deputy Chief of Staff
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross
DUKW	2½-ton amphibious truck
Engr	Engineer
ETOUSA	European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army
Exec	Executive
ExecO	Executive officer
FA	Field Artillery
FO	Field Order
G–2	Intelligence section of division or higher staff
G–3	Operations section of division or higher staff
G–4	Logistics and supply section of division or higher staff

Incl	Inclosure
Inf	Infantry
Instr	Instruction
Intel	Intelligence
Interv	Interview
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JPS	Joint Staff Planners
KCRC	Kansas City Records Center
LCA	Landing craft, assault
LCI (L)	Landing craft, infantry, large
LCM	Landing craft, mechanized
LCT	Landing craft, tank
LCVP	Landing craft, vehicle and personnel
LSI	Landing ship, infantry
LST	Landing ship, tank
Maint	Maintenance
Min	Minutes
Msg	Message
Mtg	Meeting
NATOUSA	North African Theater of Operations, U.S. Army
OB SUED	*Oberbefehlshaber Suedost* (Headquarters, Commander in Chief, South [southern Germany and several army groups on the Eastern Front])
OI	Operations instruction
OKH	*Oberkommando des Heeres* (Army High Command
OKL	*Oberkommando der Luftwaffe* (Luftwaffe High Command
OKM	*Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine* (Navy High Command
OKW	*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (Armed Forces High Command
OPD	Operations Division, War Department General Staff
Opn	Operation
Prcht	Parachute
PT	Patrol vessel, motor torpedo boat
RAF	Royal Air Force
Regt	Regiment
Reps	Representative
RN	Royal Navy

S–2	Military intelligence section of a staff below division level
S–3	Operations and training section of a staff below division level
Sec	Section
Sitrep	Situation report
SOS	Services of Supply
Teleconv	Telephone conversation
TF	Task force
WFSt	*Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab* (Armed Forces Operations Staff)
WNTF	Western Naval Task Force

Code Names

ANVIL	Early plan for invasion of southern France.
AVALANCHE	Allied amphibious assault near Salerno to capture Naples, 9 September 1943.
BAYTOWN	British Eighth Army invasion of southern Italy at Reggio di Calabria, mounted from Sicily, 3 September 1943.
BRIMSTONE	Allied invasion of Sardinia. Canceled.
BUTTRESS	British invasion of toe of Italy at Gioja, mounted from North Africa. Canceled.
DRAGOON	Allied invasion of southeastern Mediterranean coast of France, 15 August 1944; name changed on 27 July 1944 from ANVIL.
GANGWAY	One of a variety of operations involving a swift descent on Naples in the event of sudden Italian collapse.
HUSKY	Invasion of southeastern Sicily, 10 July 1943.
OVERLORD	Allied cross-Channel invasion of continent of Europe on the Normandy coast of France, D-day, 6 June 1944.
QUADRANT	U.S.-British conference at Quebec, August 1943.
SHINGLE	Amphibious operation at Anzio, 22 January 1944.
SLAPSTICK	British landings at Taranto, southern Italy, mounted from Bizerte, Tunisia, 9 September 1943.
STRANGLE	Allied air operation to interrupt and destroy enemy road, rail, and sea communications in Italy, March–May 1944.
TRIDENT	U.S.-British conference at Washington, May 1943.
VULCAN	Final Allied ground offensive to clear Tunisia, 6 May 1943.

Basic Military Map Symbols*

Symbols within a rectangle indicate a military unit, within a triangle an observation post, and within a circle a supply point.

Military Units—Identification

Antiaircraft Artillery 

Armored Command 

Army Air Forces 

Artillery, except Antiaircraft and Coast Artillery 

Cavalry, Horse 

Cavalry, Mechanized 

Chemical Warfare Service 

Coast Artillery 

Engineers 

Infantry 

Medical Corps 

Ordnance Department 

Quartermaster Corps 

Signal Corps 

Tank Destroyer 

Transportation Corps 

Veterinary Corps 

Airborne units are designated by combining a gull wing symbol with the arm or service symbol:

Airborne Artillery 

Airborne Infantry 

*For complete listing of symbols in use during the World War II period, see FM 21-30, dated October 1943, from which these are taken.

Size Symbols

The following symbols placed either in boundary lines or above the rectangle, triangle, or circle inclosing the identifying arm or service symbol indicate the size of military organization:

Squad ..... •

Section ..... ••

Platoon ..... •••

Company, troop, battery, Air Force flight I

Battalion, cavalry squadron, or Air Force squadron II

Regiment or group; combat team (with abbreviation CT following identifying numeral) III

Brigade, Combat Command of Armored Division, or Air Force Wing X

Division or Command of an Air Force XX

Corps or Air Force XXX

Army XXXX

Group of Armies XXXXX

EXAMPLES

The letter or number to the left of the symbol indicates the unit designation; that to the right, the designation of the parent unit to which it belongs. Letters or numbers above or below boundary lines designate the units separated by the lines:

Company A, 137th Infantry ..... A 137

8th Field Artillery Battalion 8

Combat Command A, 1st Armored Division ..... A 1

Observation Post, 23d Infantry 23

Command Post, 5th Infantry Division 5

Boundary between 137th and 138th Infantry ..... 137 / 138

Weapons

Machine gun .....

Gun .....

Gun battery .....

Howitzer or Mortar .....

Tank .....

Self-propelled gun .....

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The following volumes have been published or are in press:

The War Department
- *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*
- *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*
- *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1941–1942*
- *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1943–1944*
- *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940–1943*
- *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1943–1945*
- *The Army and Economic Mobilization*
- *The Army and Industrial Manpower*

The Army Ground Forces
- *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops*
- *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*

The Army Service Forces
- *The Organization and Role of the Army Service Forces*

The Western Hemisphere
- *The Framework of Hemisphere Defense*
- *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts*

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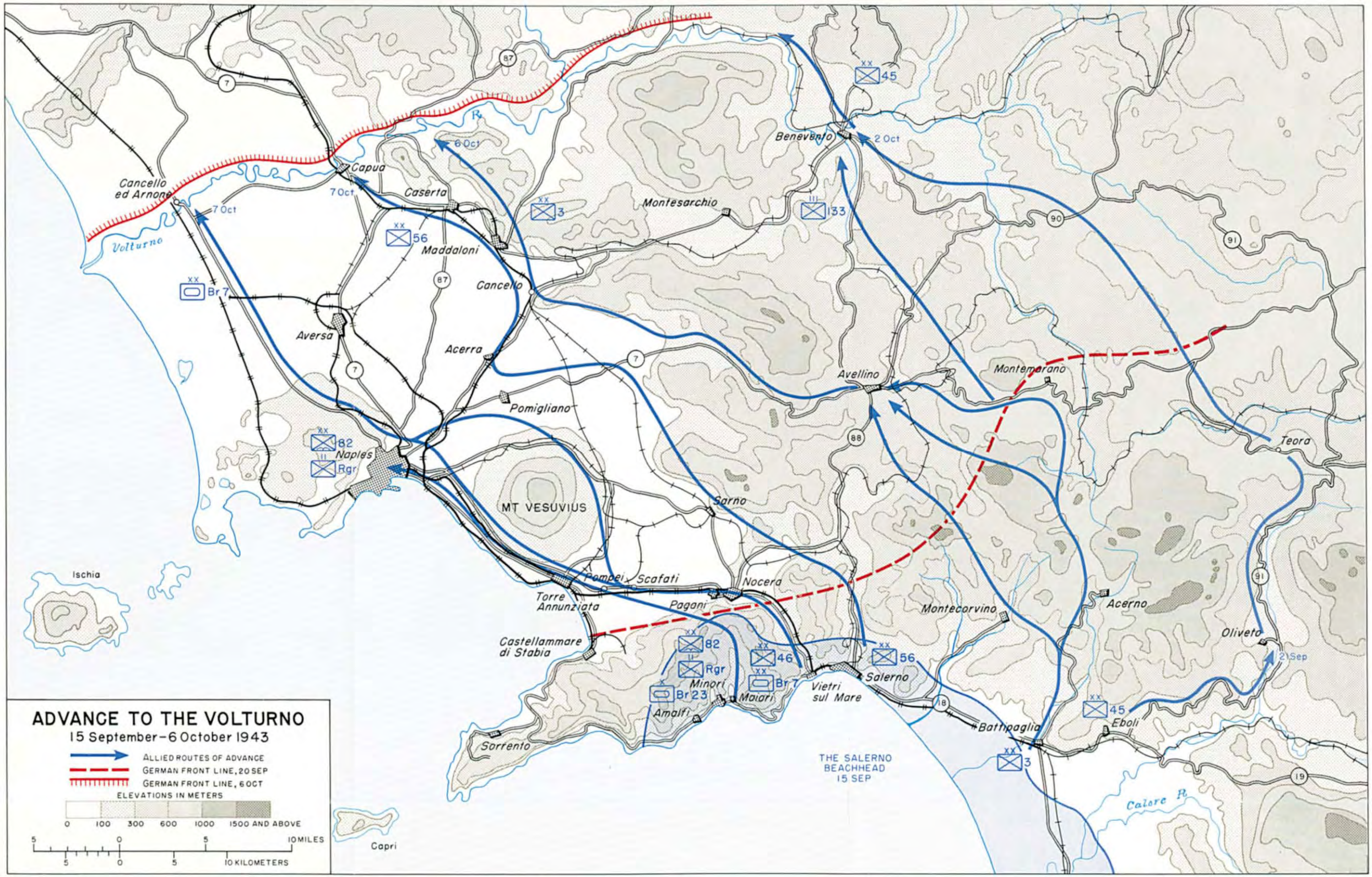
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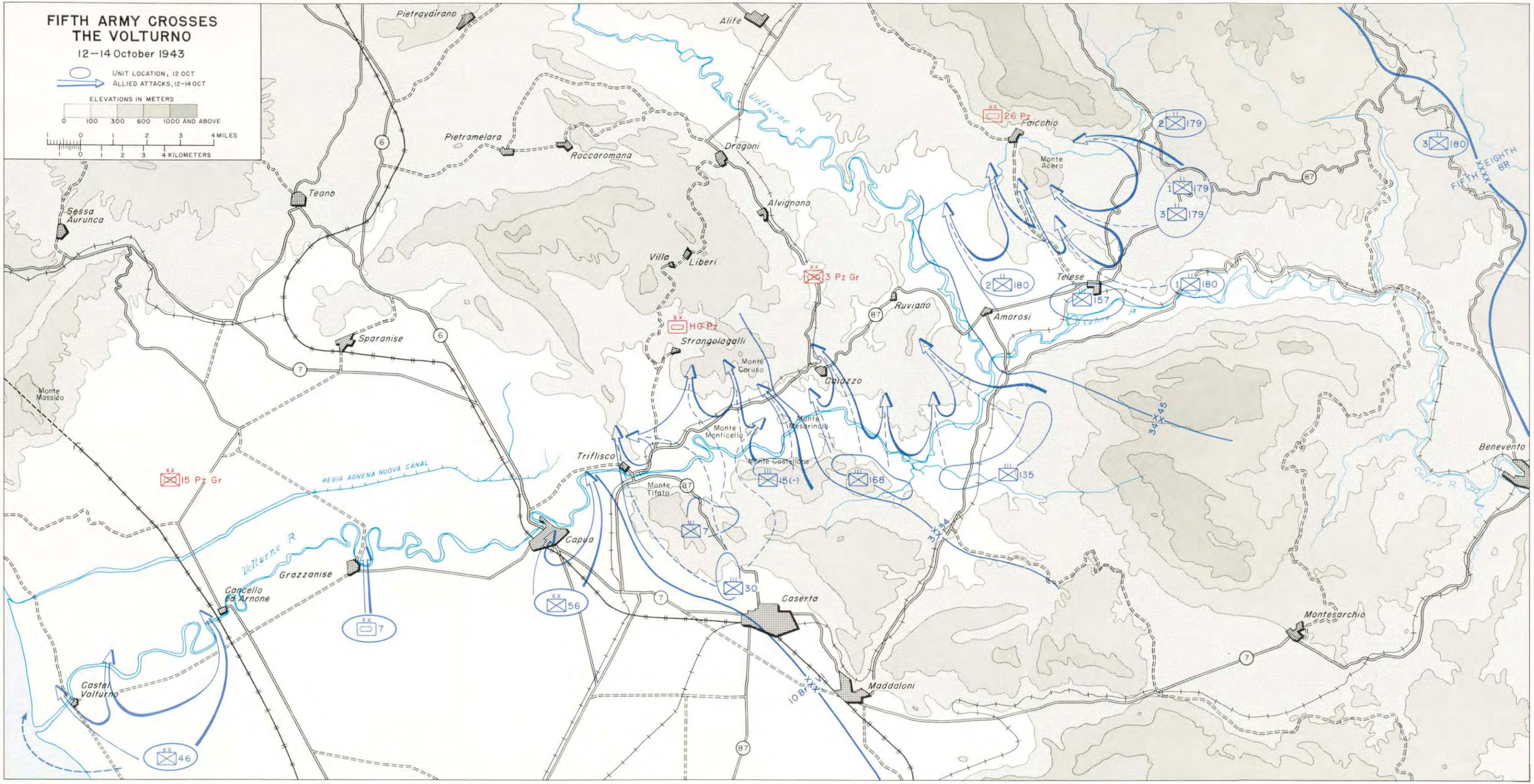
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MAP I



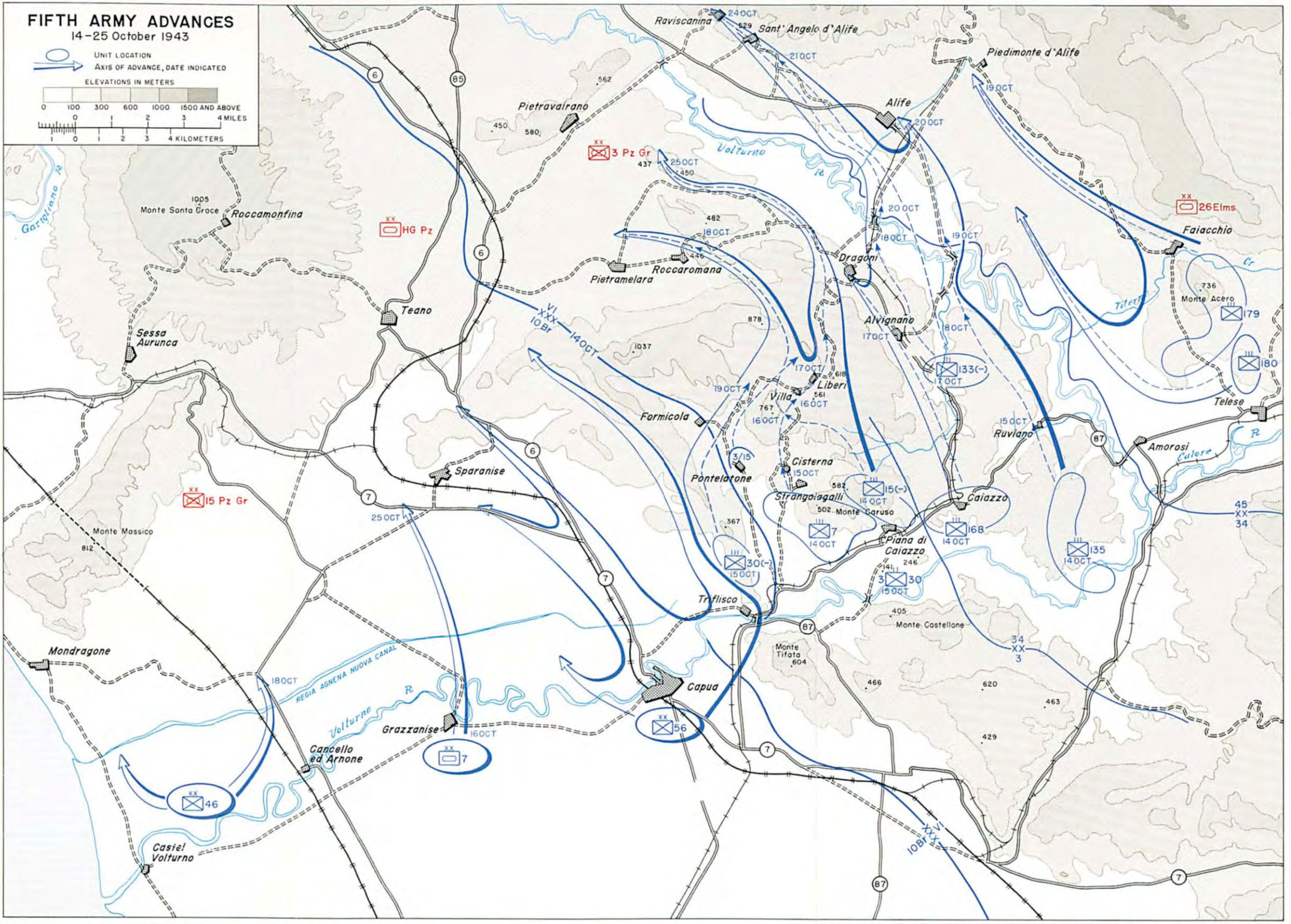
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MAP II



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MAP III



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MAP IV

ADVANCES AT ANZIO

22–31 January 1944

- ALLIED LANDING, 22 JAN
- ALLIED FRONT LINE, 22 JAN
- ALLIED FRONT LINE, 23 JAN
- ALLIED FRONT LINE, 28 JAN
- ALLIED FRONT LINE, 31 JAN
- GERMAN UNIT

Elevations in meters

1 0 1 MILE

1 0 1 KILOMETER

Campoleone
Ardea
Aprilia
(The Factory)
Carroceta
Carano
Cisterna
Isola Bella
Padiglione
Campomorto
Le Ferriere
Conca
Sessano
Borgo Piave
Littoria
Borgo Sabotino
Valmontorio
Nettuno
Rocca
Anzio
Padiglione Woods
(As of 24 Jan)
Forte R.
Incastro R.
Moletto R.
Prefetti Cr.
Carano Cr.
Fiumicino Cr.
Loricina R.
Astura R.
Cisterna Cr.
CANAL
MUSSOLINI
1Br(Armd) XX 1Br
1Br XX 3 Crocetta
1Br XX 3
XX 3
XX 45
XX 1Br
XX 3Br
XX Cdo
XX Rgrs
XX 509
XX 504
XX 3
XX 4
XX 65
XX 3
XX 71
XX 26(–)
XX HG

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MAP V

ENEMY OFFENSIVE
16 February–3 March 1944

ALLIED FRONT LINE, 16 FEB
ALLIED FRONT LINE, 3 MAR
45TH DIVISION BOUNDARY PRIOR TO 22 FEB
ENEMY ADVANCES 16 FEB–3 MAR
GERMAN UNIT
Elevations in meters

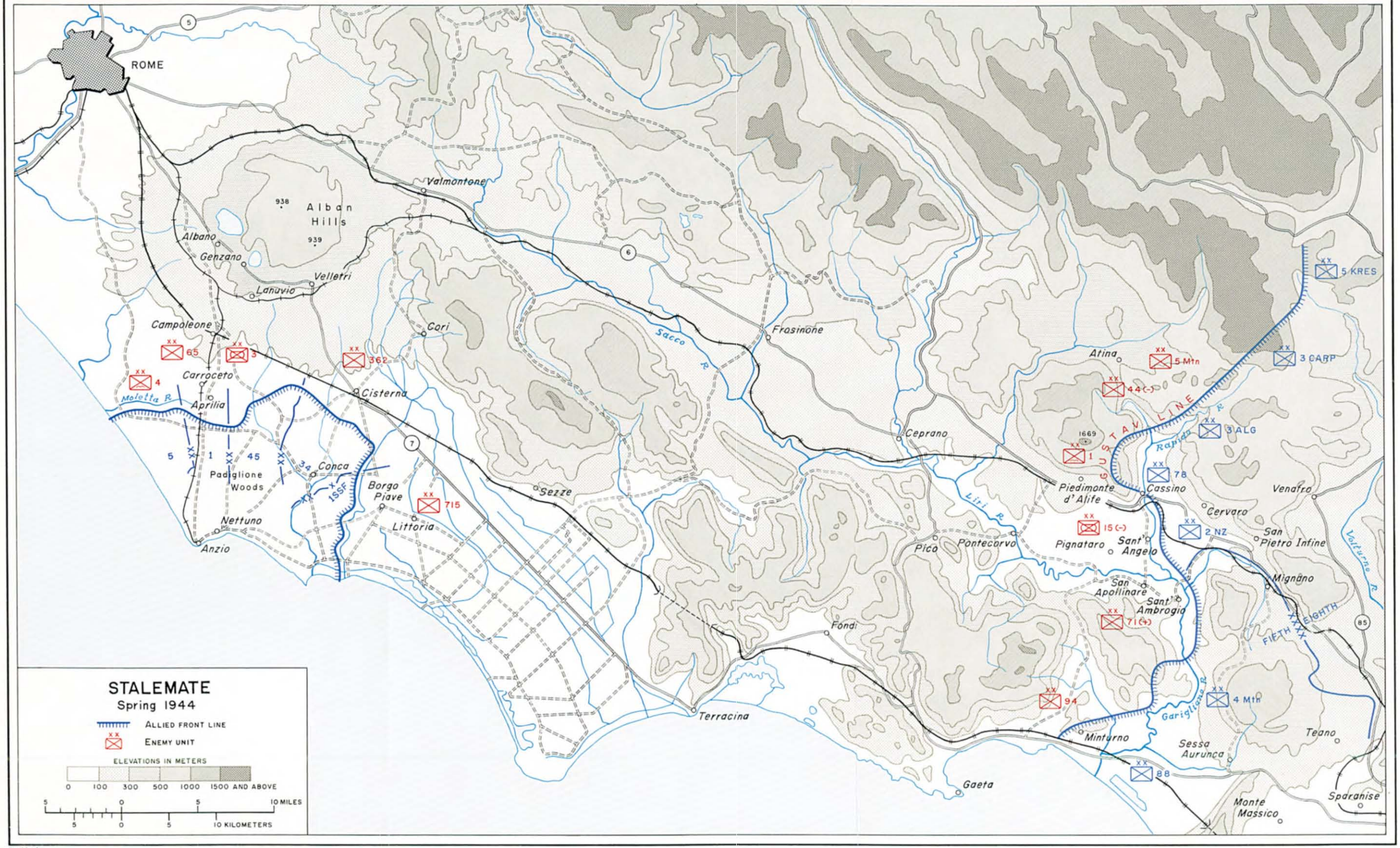
1 0 1 MILE
1 0 1 KILOMETER

Campoleone
Ardea
Aprilia (The Factory)
Carroceta
Cisterna
Carano
509 Prcht (22 Feb)
Crocetta
Padiglione
Isola Bella
Campomorto
Padiglione Woods
Le Ferriere
Conca
Sessano
Borgo Piave
Littoria
Nettuno
Rocca
Anzio
Valmontorio
Borgo Sabotino
Torre R.
Incastro R.
Moletta R.
Fiumicino R.
Loricina R.
Astura R.
Prefetti Cr.
Carano Cr.
Fiumicino Cr.
Cisterna Cr.
Mussolini Canal

29 Inf Div
715 Inf Div (16 Feb)
65 Inf Div
3 Inf Div
4 Inf Div
114 Inf Div
1028 Inf Regt
741 Inf Regt
362 Inf Div
26(-) Inf Div
715 Inf Div
HG 90 Pz Gren Div
56 Inf Div 1 Bn
157 Inf Bde 179
179 Inf Bde 180
45 Inf Div 3
45 Inf Div 3
1 Bn 45 Inf Div
36 Inf Div 67
36 Inf Div 156
56 Inf Div 45
7 Inf Bde 15
15 Inf Bde 504 Prcht
SSF
3 Inf Div

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MAP VI



R. Clinton

MAP VII