

CHAPTER VI* * * * *

Conclusion

ANNOUNCEMENT of the German surrender on 2 May did not bring an automatic end to hostilities in Italy. The higher headquarters of the enemy were not in touch with all of their subordinate units, notification of our own advance guards was not everywhere accomplished by 1400, and some groups of die-hard fanatics were reluctant to surrender even after being informed of the formal capitulation at Caserta. II Corps had sent out orders to its divisions late on 2 May to halt in place wherever resistance was encountered; on the following day it reported that the 1st Parachute Division west of Borgo was unwilling to give in. Some elements stated they had no orders to surrender and would oppose our advance. During the 3d medium bombers of MATAF dropped leaflets in areas where the terms of surrender were likely to be unknown to the enemy, and a little opportunity for reflection convinced the most stubborn Nazi adherents that the battle was truly ended in Italy. Despite a few skirmishes the great bulk of the enemy engaged in no further fighting after 2 May and was willing, even eager to obey any orders issued by our commanders.

On 3 May the 85th and 88th Divisions sent task forces north over ice and snow 3 feet deep to seal the Austrian frontier and to gain contact with the American Seventh Army, driving southwards from Germany. The 339th Infantry reached Austrian soil east of Dobbiaco at 0415, 4 May; the Reconnaissance Troop, 349th Infantry, met troops from VI Corps of Seventh Army at 1051 at Vipiteno, 9 miles south of Brenner. The 338th Infantry came up Highway 12 later in the day and placed a frontier guard at Brenner on the Austro-Italian frontier. To the west the 10th Mountain Division on the 5th reached Nauders beyond the Resia Pass and made contact with German forces which were being pushed south by Seventh Army; here a status quo was maintained until the enemy headquarters involved had completed their surrender to Seventh Army. On the 6th the 10th Mountain Division met the

44th Infantry Division of Seventh Army. Inasmuch as the British Eighth Army had met Marshal Tito's forces on 1 May at Monfalcone and the 473d Infantry had encountered French troops on 30 April near Savona on the Italian Riviera, our forces in Italy had now made complete contact with friendly forces on the west, north, and eastern frontiers of Italy and controlled all major routes of egress.

A. *AFTER THE SURRENDER*

As combat activities dwindled, new types of duties and problems arose to occupy Fifth Army. A foretaste of these issues was given in Operations Instruction No. 12, 3 May 1945 (*See Annex No. 17*), which directed the Army to enforce the terms of surrender, to place forces astride the enemy lines of communication so as to prevent enemy withdrawal, and to initiate primary disarmament of enemy forces. The Italian frontier as it existed in 1939 was to be closed and guarded; northern Italy within the Army zone was to be occupied and Allied Military Government set up to control the large cities and great industrial machinery of the richest section in Italy. Those persons displaced from their homes by reason of the war, who numbered millions in Europe as a whole, were to be controlled and administered so far as they lay in the Army zone.

Fifth Army quickly swung into action on these new missions. The major routes out of Italy had all been sealed by 5 May, and the enemy was being disarmed with little trouble. The efficient, organized action of the partisans facilitated the establishment of the Allied Military Government; the number of displaced persons within northern Italy was fortunately not great. Nevertheless, the Army had sufficient tasks to keep it busy during the remainder of its stay in Italy. For the next few months the main activities of Fifth Army were concerned with three general issues: 1) the efficient disposition and use of the German prisoners; 2) the problems arising from the occupation of northern Italy; and 3) the redeployment of the Army to the United States and to the war in the Pacific.

1. *Surrendered Enemy Forces.* Up to 2 May captured German soldiers had been turned over to PBS as prisoners of war at stockades close to the Army truckheads; PBS then evacuated them to the rear, although their shipment to the United States had ceased on 4 April. All units and individuals, however, taken after the surrender, except SS troops, became surrendered enemy forces and were kept separate from those classed as prisoners of war; SS troops and recalcitrants were still considered as prisoners. Efforts henceforth were made not to take individuals but to keep the Germans together in units under their own commanders for ease of control and evacu-

ation. The policy in dealing with the enemy forces was laid down in detail in Administrative Directive No. 12, 3 May 1945.

The first steps were the initial concentration and primary disarmament of the surrendered enemy forces. Enemy formations were collected in designated areas within their existing formation areas; enemy personnel not in organized units were grouped into self-sustaining units or attached to those units which still retained some cohesion. Supply and line of communications personnel were in some cases left at their posts during this period, for the enemy was expected to supply himself to the utmost from his own dumps; it was also desired that German signal and railroad personnel continue their work on the Brenner route. Movement, however, was severely restricted; aircraft of XXII TAC and the Desert Air Force patrolled north Italy and southwest Austria to check enemy movements but were under orders not to attack without clearance from their appropriate headquarters.

As the concentration of enemy units took place, primary disarmament was executed, and all weapons except individual small arms or personal weapons were turned in to weapons collecting points. Without their automatic weapons and crew-served pieces the German forces were incapable of effective resistance, but some rifles and pistols had to be left with them at this stage for protection against the partisans and for maintenance of discipline, which remained a function of the German command. In the II Corps zone German officers were permitted to keep their pistols, each division was allowed 50 rifles, and the military police remained armed to a prescribed extent. Small groups were not disarmed until they had been assembled.

These actions were initiated in the IV Corps zone on 3 May by a directive to the commanding general of LXXV Corps. Evacuation of enemy material to Piacenza, except for horses and wagons, began on 5 May and was generally completed in the next few days. Similar activity began later in the II Corps zone inasmuch as the problem was bigger and the combat troops were charged initially with the mission of pushing up to the Austrian frontier. Orders for concentration and primary disarmament were issued to enemy forces on 6 May. By the 8th, 44,000 had been assembled, but the process continued for almost another week to gather in the small detachments of the enemy scattered through the mountains. Higher headquarters and rear echelons had remained fairly intact in this area, but in combat units the organization of the German forces had almost completely broken down. Cubs equipped with loudspeakers were used with success to flush the Germans out of hiding.

As the surrendered enemy forces concentrated, plans for their eventual disposition were completed by higher Allied headquarters. During the German retreat the majority of the enemy formations had withdrawn into the mountains in the II Corps zone; the main German hospitals, with approximately 25,000 patients and

attendants, were in the Bolzano—Merano area; and the line of communications personnel were largely concentrated on the Brenner route. As a result Fifth Army had approximately 250,000 Germans in its zone, the great bulk of the surrendered forces. The final decision was to split the enemy forces evenly between the American and British commands in Italy, with the immobilized hospital personnel and patients to be counted in the American half. The American final concentration area was located at Ghedi; the British share would proceed to Rimini.

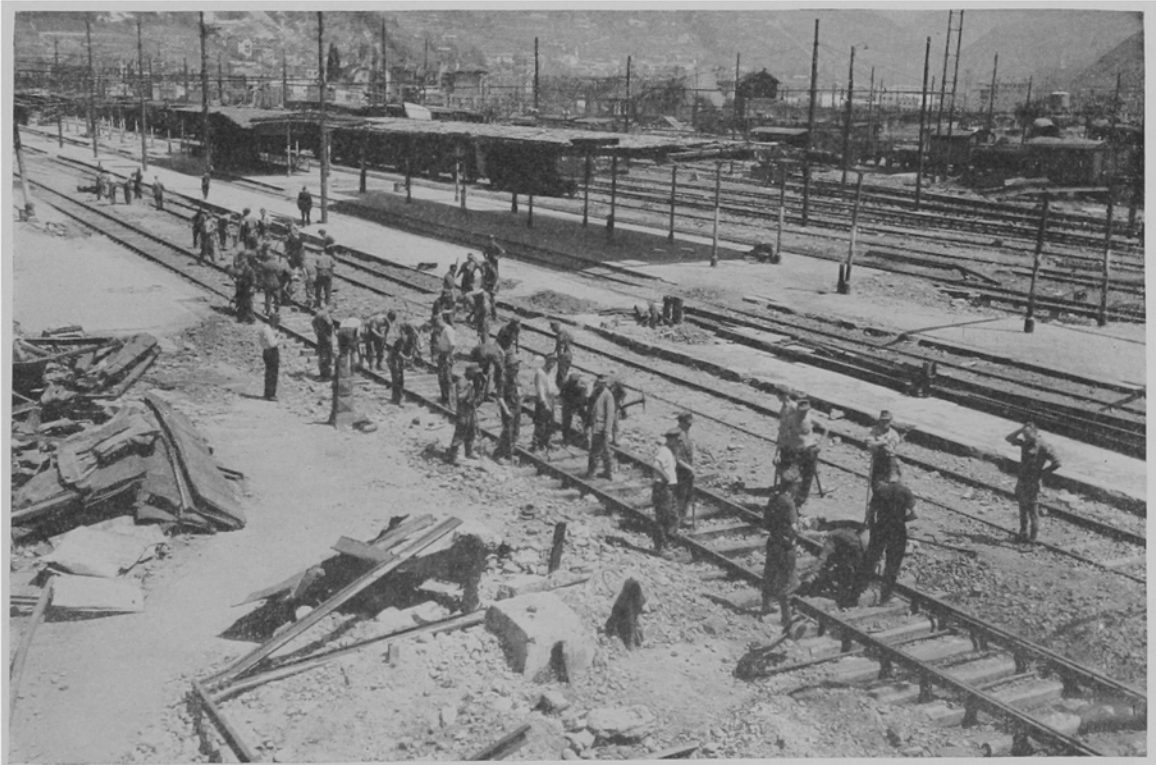
On 18 May the movement of the surrendered enemy forces from initial to final concentration areas began. IV Corps dispatched the German LXXV Corps, comprising about 44,000 persons, to Ghedi; II Corps funneled the bulk of its movement through a Corps Area Command Prisoner of War Staging Area at Bassano. The portion of the enemy forces destined for the Americans, composed of the German Fourteenth Army, went to Ghedi direct; the German Tenth Army with some additions from the Fourteenth Army moved from Bassano to Modena where its elements were turned over to the British for transfer to Rimini. The schedule laid down called for the 85th and 88th Divisions each to move out of the mountains 10,000–20,000 per day beginning 17 May and ending on the 23d. The poor state of the German transportation prevented the shifts from being as orderly as planned, but they were completed essentially by 27 May. At the final concentration areas all arms, military equipment, and obvious loot were removed; the German forces in Italy had now become a mass of labor material still grouped in their original units as far as possible.

Thereafter it was planned to utilize the surrendered enemy forces to the utmost to relieve our troops of supply and maintenance tasks and so facilitate the redeployment of our service units. On 15 June Fifth Army had 147,227 enemy troops, and PBS 151,897, or a total of 299,124; by this date the Army had formed or reorganized on American tables of organization 33 engineer units, 22 ordnance units, and 4 quartermaster units, in addition to transportation companies and battalions. This process continued as American service units were redeployed. By 15 July the Army had lost 19 of the 28 ordnance units which it had on 8 May, and 80 per cent of all ordnance work in the Army was being done by German units under American supervision. At this time only three American quartermaster units remained in the Army; here also the bulk of supply for the Army was being carried out by German units. In early August German service units in the Army included 14 engineer units, 34 ordnance units, 47 quartermaster units, 13 signal units, and 33 transportation units.

Throughout May the 85th and 88th Divisions guarded the surrendered enemy forces and the dumps of captured enemy material in the mountains. At the last of the month two Italian groups, the Folgore and Friuli, were attached to the Army and took over this guard. Initially the 10th Mountain Division manned the Ghedi



Vehicles of the 88th division climb toward the Brenner, 4 May 1945



After their surrender German troops repair the Bolzano railroad yards



The wreck of the German forces, in a II Corps initial concentration area



Tens of thousands of Germans at Ghedi—a vast labor pool for the Army

inclosures but on 18 May was relieved of this mission for movement to Eighth Army. The 71st Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade then took over at Ghedi with the 442d Infantry under command. On 7 June the 88th Division became the MTOUSA Prisoner of War Command, with the duties of administering, organizing, and guarding the enemy personnel, organizing projects for their use, and guarding the work details involved. On this mission the division operated under MTOUSA but was administered by Fifth Army. As drafts of low-score combat replacements were taken from the division for shipment to the Pacific, any available elements in the theater had to be pressed into service to guard the prisoners. In July shipments of prisoners to Germany began; by August 100,000 had been returned, and the bulk of the remaining German prisoners was removed from Italy before the end of the year. The German patients and medical personnel in the Army area were gradually concentrated in the Merano area and from there evacuated to Germany by hospital train.

2. *Political Problems.* The Fifth Army zone of occupation in northern Italy included all of the large cities in continental Italy except Venice and Trieste. Potential trouble could easily be foreseen. The partisans had been extremely active throughout the area and had in many cases set up their own governments; the city populations might tend to be restive in the difficult post-hostilities period; and the country was filled with ex-soldiers of the Fascist army, which had dissolved. Fascist and Nazi sympathizers still existed and were organized in part on the basis of the former secret service units of the enemy.

Actually Fifth Army had very little trouble within its area. In the middle of May victory parades were held in the major cities of the Po plain, at which time the partisans turned in their arms; up to the deadline of 7 June 115,400 weapons had been collected. Though some arms undoubtedly were retained, active mob violence disappeared except for sporadic incidents. The officers of the Allied Military Government and the partisan authorities cooperated well in the turnover of authority to the former. The passage of the war had wreaked relatively little damage to the public utilities in the Po Valley, and the greater agricultural wealth of the area mitigated food problems. When a railroad bridge was completed over the Po at Ostiglia on 7 July, rail connections were open throughout the valley. Full restoration of the Italian economic life remained a hope rather than a fact, but the major difficulties here lay far outside the control of the Army. Occasional strikes occurred in Milan and elsewhere but seemed to be genuine manifestations against economic conditions. The 1st Armored Division and the 6 South African Armoured Division lay near Milan at the beginning and carried out parades from time to time.

Our counterintelligence personnel in May and June carried out an extensive program of picking up members of the German and Italian underground intelligence agencies and felt that by mid-June they had smashed most of the dangerous rings

by securing the upper officials. Throughout the early summer refugees streamed into Italy under careful regulation. Most of this movement came down the Brenner from Germany to Verona, at first by truck, later by train; at Verona the refugees were sorted out by locality and dispatched either east, west, or south as rapidly as possible. For the most part Italian agencies carried out the work of handling the displaced personnel, though Army transportation was called on for assistance. The general situation was sufficiently favorable by 15 July for Fifth Army to be able to turn over responsibility for western Italy, including the area west of the line Brescia—Parma, to Number 2 District; on 4 August responsibility for Allied Military Government in the rest of the Fifth Army area was taken over by the Allied Commission.

Real political problems necessitating wide-scale use of army troops arose only on the eastern and western frontiers of Italy. On the west the French at the German surrender had moved down into the Aosta and Susa valleys, largely inhabited by French-speaking people. Our AMG personnel were not permitted to set up their offices in this area, and indications appeared that the natives might be encouraged in any aspirations to join their territory to France. To the east an even more serious problem arose in our relations with Marshal Tito's Yugoslav forces in the area known as Venezia Giulia. Eighth Army troops were occupying the district jointly with Yugoslav troops, who made it manifest that they considered the territory theirs and that they were willing to back their actions with force.

The discussion and the settlement of these issues lay with higher headquarters. On the French-Italian frontier amicable relations were maintained between the 34th Division and the French garrison until agreement had been reached elsewhere that the French would evacuate the area held in Italy, beginning 20 June. By 10 July the last French troops had been officially relieved by the 34th Division. In Venezia Giulia a firm policy was laid down by Marshal Alexander. In accordance with his orders operational control of the 91st Division passed to Eighth Army at 0800, 5 May; the division moved to the Trieste—Gorizia area beginning 4 May and relieved some British elements in a show of force by both American and British elements. One battalion of American troops was placed in Trieste; elsewhere patrolling, guarding of bridges, and training was conducted.

As the situation grew more tense on the eastern frontier of Italy the 10th Mountain Division was ordered to the area and moved on 19 May. II Corps was placed under Eighth Army effective 1200, 21 May, to control the American divisions, tank battalions, and other units involved. During the week 14–21 May, 5,300 tons of ammunition were placed in the Udine area, enough to support 2 infantry divisions, 2 tank battalions, 2 tank destroyer battalions, 2 155-mm howitzer battalions, and 1 155-mm gun battalion for 5 days. When our general line was advanced to the east on 22–23 May, a flare-up of Yugoslav protests and threats ensued which re-

sulted in an alert for the 85th Division. By mid-June the situation had quieted down, and the 85th Division was relieved from its alert status on 14 June. An agreement had been reached by this time establishing a general line of demarcation along the Isonzo River; joint American and British occupation continued in the area west of the river. At the end of June, II Corps left to become an occupational headquarters in Austria; in July the 10th Mountain Division moved to Florence for shipment to the United States; and in early August the 91st Division departed for a redeployment training area on the Volturno. The 34th Division replaced these troops in the Udine area, moving from the Turin area on 13-19 July and coming under operational control of Eighth Army (later 13 Corps) at 1200, 16 July. The division then settled down to garrison Venezia Giulia through the fall.

3. *Redeployment.* Inasmuch as Italy had been a cobelligerent nation, there were no plans to maintain an army of occupation anywhere in the country except in Venezia Giulia. Accordingly practically all of the American installations, material, and personnel which had been assembled in the course of the Italian campaign were to be shipped out, either to the Pacific or to the United States. Policies on redeployment were laid down by the War Department, and their general execution was mainly a theater problem; Fifth Army supervised the actual reorganization and preparation of units for shipment. This task was in itself a formidable one, complicated by the fact that the Army had to remain operative so as to carry out its post-surrender missions; also the general War Department policy of separating out high-score individuals for eventual discharge involved a great deal of reshuffling of personnel. The service units of Fifth Army, in particular, had been overseas so long that finding sufficient low-score replacements with specialized training for engineer and ordnance units was difficult.

Every effort, however, was made to deal justly with all personnel and at the same time to meet the schedules of redeployment. Extensive training programs for replacements were set up within the units, and redeployment training centers were established where units underwent a month of preparation before shipment. Six such centers were maintained by Fifth Army. Montecatini, which began operating by the third week in May, handled primarily Class II service units (for direct or indirect redeployment to the Pacific); Florence, Class II service and combat units; Cecchignola near Rome, Class II combat units; the Volturno area near Caiazzo, the 85th and 91st Divisions; Francolise, the Brazilians; and Viareggio, the 92d Division.

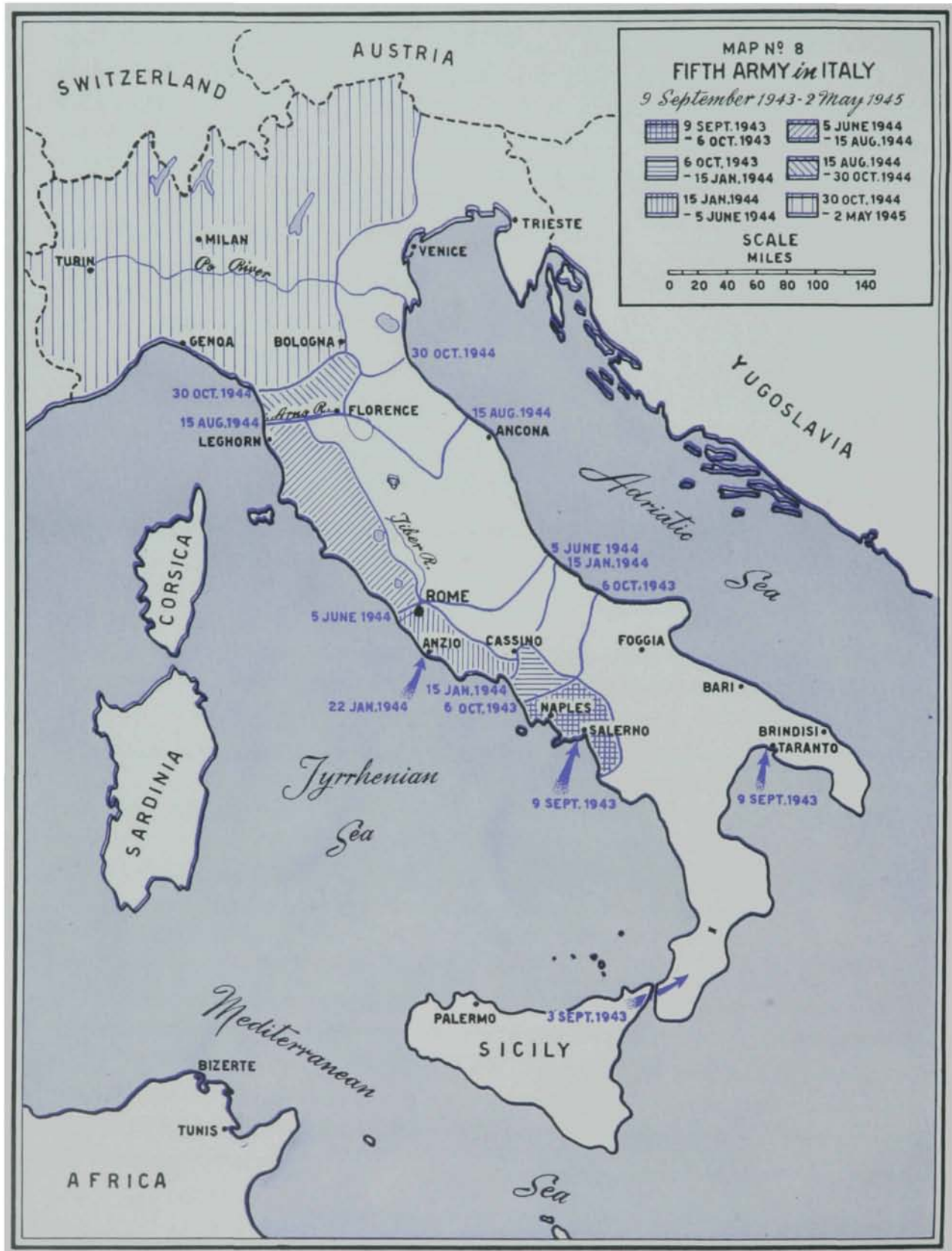
Beginning at the first of June and continuing through July the bulk of the Army service units left Italy; as already noted, German units were organized to take their place. Dumps in the Army area were closed out to base as far as possible; methods of supply were simplified to the utmost. Between the initial Redeployment Fore-

cast, Atlantic Section, issued by the War Department on 20 February 1945, and the generally definitive MTOUSA Redeployment Forecast of 25 May 1945, a reduction occurred in the number of units to be shipped directly to the Pacific; and more units, especially combat troops, were sent back through the United States. Considerable changes took place in the plans as regarded the major units of the Army, and decisions were not firm until early June, when all divisions were informed of their future. In particular it was necessary to determine if a two- or three-division force would have to be supplied to garrison Austria; eventually this garrison came from American forces in the European Theater.

Major units left Army control as follows:

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| June | 23 | British units to administrative control of Numbers 1 and 2 Districts. |
| | 28 | 1st Armored Division to Germany to become part of army of occupation. |
| | 29 | II Corps to Austria. |
| July | 15 | 6 South African Armoured Division, Legnano Group, and Cremona Group to Number 2 District; IV Corps becomes nonoperational. |
| August | 2 | 10th Mountain Division to the United States for movement to Pacific. |
| | 16 | 85th Division to United States for inactivation. |
| | 31 | All units and redeployment training areas remaining under control of Fifth Army turned over to MTOUSA and PBS; territory to District 2 and 13 Corps. |
| September | 1 | 91st Division to United States for movement to Pacific. |
| | 9 | Headquarters Fifth Army becomes nonoperational at 0001, 2 years after landing at Salerno. |
| | 21 | Fifth Army sails from Leghorn for the United States. Before the war with Japan ended on 2 September, Fifth Army was a Class II unit. |
| October | 2 | Fifth Army is inactivated. |

Throughout the summer and fall the speed of redeployment had depended primarily on the shipping available, and the Army had the problem of keeping its troops occupied until such time as shipping space was secured. A University Training Center was established at Florence in June; the first such center to be set up by any army in Europe after the close of hostilities, it offered 1-month courses in a num-



ber of subjects to 3,000 students. In addition schools were established by regiments and other units, on-the-job training was carried out in every type of activity from laundries to automobile mechanic shops, and all Class IV units (for inactivation) carried on a program of education 4 hours per week. Two hours per week were given to orientation in all units, in addition to compulsory showing of films giving in graphic form the job which still lay ahead of the American soldier. A wide program of special service activities was laid out, including numerous rest center facilities and tours through Italy and other countries. Throughout this program the keynote was given by the War Department directive that "instruction properly regarded as harassing" would be eliminated.

B. THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

Definitive pronouncements on the Italian campaign of Fifth Army must await study by military men in the years to come; the purpose of this history is to set down a detailed account of the operations as they actually took place. The lessons learned from the Italian campaign, as far as they can now be seen, have been discussed elsewhere. For almost a year, indeed, Fifth Army in Italy was the field laboratory of the American army in Europe, and much may be found in official records of reports on its activities.

One point stands out above all else—the Italian campaign was a bitter one. Lasting 601 days from 9 September 1943 to 2 May 1945, it cost the 27 divisions and 7 corps at one time or another in Fifth Army a total of 188,546 casualties.¹ American losses were 19,475 killed, 80,530 wounded, and 9,637 missing—109,642 in all. (See *Annex No. 2B*.) Soldiers of the Army spent two cold winters in the line, fighting about Cassino and Anzio in the first and manning the positions of the Apennine front in the second. (See *Map No. 8*.) Before us at all times was a crafty, ex-

¹ American units: II, IV, and VI Corps; the 1st Armored, 3d Infantry, 10th Mountain, 34th Infantry, 36th Infantry, 45th Infantry, 82d Airborne, 85th Infantry, 88th Infantry, 91st Infantry, and 92d Infantry Divisions; 366th, 442d, and 517th Infantry Regiments; 1st, 3d, and 4th Ranger Battalions; 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion.

Brazilian units: 1st Infantry Division.

British units: 10, 13, and New Zealand Corps; 1 Infantry, 5 Infantry, 6 Armoured, 7 Armoured, 46 Infantry, 56 Infantry, 78 Infantry, 2 New Zealand, 4 Indian Infantry, 8 Indian Infantry, 6 South African Armoured Divisions; 23 Armoured Brigade; 2, 9, 10, and 43 Commandos; 40 and 41 Royal Marine Commandos.

French units: French Expeditionary Corps; 1st Motorized, 2d Moroccan Infantry, 3d Algerian Infantry, and 4th Moroccan Mountain Divisions.

Italian units: 1st Motorized Group; Legnano Group.

perienced enemy who fell back reluctantly from one fortified line to another; rarely did we outnumber him greatly, and our victory came time after time in concentrating our efforts and smashing through his defenses at one critical spot. Almost always we were on the offensive, for the Germans, except at Salerno and at Anzio, planned only to hold us. After each defeat, however, the enemy refilled his ranks and faced Fifth Army anew; from D Day at Salerno to 2 May 1945 we took 212,112 prisoners.

Throughout its 20 months in Italy Fifth Army waged a mountain campaign. Except for relatively brief interludes our troops fought in the mountains and rugged hills of the Italian peninsula, where one peak looks down on another in a seemingly endless chain. In the fall of 1943 Fifth Army was the most mechanized army ever to go to war, yet its soldiers fought more as individuals than in any war of recent times. Instead of trench warfare or mass charges the battles of the Italian campaign consisted of individuals crawling up hillsides, warily evading the mines, ducking the German mortar shells, closing with the enemy to drive him from his bunkers. The infantry were aided by all the modern developments of the machine, by tanks, artillery, aircraft, trucks, and jeeps, but the battle was still won by the individual soldier. On his morale, training, and endurance depended the success of the local action and of the campaign. Though our advance was necessarily often slow, the American soldier had what it took. By 2 May we had driven 400 miles up the Italian peninsula and had smashed the German foe to pieces.