

CHAPTER V * * * * *

The Anzio Beachhead

A. *FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR OPERATION SHINGLE*

AFTER the major strategic decisions had been made, the work of mounting Operation Shingle began. Troops from the Fifth and Eighth Armies and craft and supplies from all over the Mediterranean converged on the Naples area. Detailed planning was completed; amphibious rehearsals were held; units were oriented and briefed on their specific roles. The air force began its planned offensive to knock out the German air force and cut the long communication routes of the enemy. Fifth Army opened its major assault against the Gustav Line. Finally came the movement to the docks, loading of supplies and men, getting last-minute details on enemy and weather, and preparing to put out to sea. The stage was being set for the new amphibious landing.

1. *Troop Movements and Training.* In the course of an extensive regrouping of forces in early January the units scheduled for Shingle were moved to their new training area near Naples. On 3 January VI Corps passed control of its sector to the newly arrived FEC and moved to Maddaloni to begin preparations for the new operation. The 3d Division concentrated on New Year's Day near Pozzuoli, and the other American units followed shortly. The longest moves were made from Eighth Army as part of a major shift to reinforce Fifth Army for the coming offensive. No less than three divisions plus attached units were moved to the Fifth Army front. During 1-5 January the 1 Division moved from Foggia to the Salerno area, followed by the 2 Special Service Brigade. The 5 Division was shifted to reinforce 10 Corps for the attack across the Gargliano, and later the 2 New Zealand Division moved over in Army Group reserve as a probable striking force for exploitation up the Liri Valley. Every precaution was exercised in these movements to prevent any leakage of plans. Units were allowed to move by day owing to the absence of enemy air, but complete wireless silence was imposed and all divisional insignia were removed.

Although only a short time was available, VI Corps embarked upon an extensive amphibious training program with Brig. Gen. H. C. Wolfe as Problem Director. In the period 4-19 January the assault units carried out intensive training, culminating in a large-scale practice landing. Emphasis was placed first on small-unit problems, then on battalion and regimental landing exercises. Assault battalions studied craft landings and special beach assault tactics, such as the reduction of pillboxes and beach obstacles. Physical conditioning and night operations were stressed. Engineers gave instruction in mines and obstacles. The artillery practiced loading and unloading Dukws, using A-frames, and day and night landings by Dukw from LST's. Tanks and tank destroyers participated in infantry-tank problems and made practice landings from LCT's.

As a dress rehearsal VI Corps and the navy conducted Landing Exercise Webfoot during 17-19 January on the beaches below Salerno. It was not a full-scale rehearsal but did include all assault units, all Dukw-borne weapons, and token support weapons and vehicles. Wherever possible using exact assault formation and the prescribed naval beach markings, the troops cleared the beach of "enemy" resistance and dug in to resist counterattack. Mistakes revealed in the exercise were corrected, and the actual landing was smoothly carried out.

2. *Preliminary Air Program.* During the period prior to D Day the air force had two missions: first, to destroy the German air force in Italy so as to eliminate this menace to our landing; and second, to cut all communications routes by which reinforcements might reach the beachhead area.

Ever since the end of the Tunisian campaign Allied bombers had rained steadily mounting blows on the bottlenecks of the Italian communications system. The German armies in Italy relied mostly on railroads which ran through mountainous terrain and over numerous key bridges particularly vulnerable to aerial attack. Three main routes led down the peninsula, one on each coast and a third from Florence to Rome. At one time or another these routes had been cut in several places, but in January the staggered raids by heavy and medium bombers were stepped up to a new high in an effort to cut all routes by the time Shingle was launched. Switching their weight from one main line to another, our bombers hammered constantly at strategic bridges and key marshalling yards. Fortresses, Liberators, and Wellingtons of the Strategic Air Force, and Mitchells and Marauders of the Tactical Bomber Force blasted the vital complex of rail yards around Florence; the Pisa, Arezzo, and Terni yards between Florence and Rome; and the Orte, Orvieto, and Cecina bridges on the central and west coast routes. Closer to the front light and fighter-bombers and night intruders roamed the highway nets attacking motor transport targets.

The other major effort of the air force was to neutralize the Luftwaffe by intensive bombing of its fields. Staggered day-and-night strategic bomber raids dropped high explosive and fragmentation bombs on the four Rome fighter fields; then three raids shook Perugia, the enemy reconnaissance base. The north Italian bomber bases, especially Villaorba, were also attacked. On D minus 1 our B-17's roared into southern France to give a last-minute pasting to the Montpellier, Salon, and Istres airdromes, from which torpedo and glider bomb attacks might be launched at the assault convoys.

Although a great weight of bombs was dropped, it is difficult to assess the results of the air program on the enemy reaction to Shingle. The Germans did succeed in reinforcing their armies heavily from the north, and the German air force put on its biggest effort since the Sicilian campaign. The enemy's build-up was undoubtedly delayed, however, and his air strength cut down by our bombing. One concrete accomplishment of major significance was the surprise gained when we grounded the enemy long-range reconnaissance force by heavy raids on the Perugia airdrome. As a result, it is believed that the enemy flew no long-range reconnaissance missions for the three crucial days 19-21 January. The first aerial warning of our landing the enemy had was probably from a Messerschmitt pilot at 0820, 22 January, six hours after the assault troops had touched the shore.

3. *Mounting the Operation.* Naples and satellite ports became a scene of feverish activity on 19-20 January as troops, supplies, and all the gear of a major amphibious expedition were assembled and loaded under the direction of PBS aboard a convoy of over 250 ships and craft. A joint loading board of PBS, Fifth Army, VI Corps, and division members prepared and co-ordinated loading schedules. The divisions themselves assumed responsibility for organization of loading areas, movement to the docks, and actual loading. Everything was accomplished smoothly. Vehicles were waterproofed in division areas and loaded on 19 January. The troops followed the next day, each formation leaving behind a rear link of administrative personnel and all unnecessary vehicles.

VI Corps was about to embark on its second amphibious landing, a water movement of 120 miles by an assault force of almost 50,000 men and 5,200 vehicles; its total of 27 infantry battalions was comparable in size to the force that landed at Salerno. General Lucas, task force commander, opened his command post aboard the U.S.S. *Biscayne* on the afternoon of 20 January. The latest air reconnaissance revealed that the enemy apparently knew nothing of our plans. The weather forecast predicted negligible swell and a thick morning haze to cover the landing. At 0500, 21 January, after a last-minute check, the ships put out to sea.

After leaving Naples the convoy swung south around Capri on a long round-about course to avoid German minefields and to deceive the enemy as to our destination. Minesweepers preceded the craft to clear a channel through the coastal minefields. Cruisers and destroyers clung to the flanks to ward off enemy E-boats and submarines. An air umbrella of fighters crisscrossed constantly overhead. The enemy, however, seemed totally unaware of our coming. As night fell and darkness cloaked the convoy's movements, it swung sharply in toward Anzio. After over two months of planning, training, and mounting, Fifth Army was on the verge of landing below Rome.

B. SEIZING THE BEACHHEAD

22-24 JANUARY

1. *The Landing.* At 0005, 22 January, concealed beneath a moonless night, the Allied assault convoy dropped anchor off Anzio. Davits swung out and lowered the assault craft, patrol vessels herded the boats into formation, and soon the first waves headed away into the darkness. Naval scouts preceded them to locate and mark the beaches accurately. As yet there was no enemy reaction; the only sound was the hum of motors as the long lines of craft moved in toward shore. In order to gain surprise there was no preliminary long-range naval bombardment. Instead, just before the landing, at H minus 10 to H minus 5, 2 British LCT(R)'s launched a short, terrific rocket barrage, which burst with a deafening roar upon the beaches. The LCT(R) assigned to Ranger Beach did not fire, for one of our craft crossed its path and so made firing unsafe. These newly developed rocket craft, each carrying 798 5-inch rockets, were designed for employment just before landing, after the sound of our motors was presumed to have given us away. Their mission was to make certain the enemy was not withholding his fire and to knock out defenses and minefields along the beach. The Naval Commander Shingle reported that the rockets were very effective. Our fire, however, brought forth no enemy reply; the shore loomed dark and silent ahead.

Promptly at H Hour, 0200, the first waves of craft nosed onto the beach, and the assault troops swarmed ashore. To their astonishment there was no enemy to greet them. The highly unexpected had happened. We had caught the enemy completely by surprise. Except for a few small coast artillery and anti-aircraft detachments, the only resistance to our push inland from the beaches was from elements of two depleted coast watching battalions of the 29th Panzer

Grenadier Division. These units, the 2d Battalion, 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and the 129th Reconnaissance Battalion, had just been relieved from the hard fighting along the Gustav Line and assigned to coast watching between the Tiber River and Nettuno for what was expected to be a long rest. The coast defenses were also extremely weak, indicating that the enemy had never seriously expected a landing over the shallow beach at Anzio. A few scattered minefields, found mostly in the port and on Peter Beach, were the greatest hazard. There were a few 88-mm guns and several pieces of French, Italian, and even one of Yugoslav manufacture, most of which had no chance to fire. Two batteries fired a few wild shells off Peter Beach before daylight but were quickly silenced by naval guns.

Owing to thorough planning, good weather, and the almost complete absence of enemy opposition, all assault landings were smoothly effected according to plan. On the right the 3d Division swept in three regiments abreast over X-Ray Red and Green beaches east of Nettuno. (*See Map No. 6.*) Brushing aside a few enemy patrols, the troops pushed rapidly inland and dug in on initial objectives to repel any counterattack. All organic division light artillery and a large portion of the 751st Tank Battalion and 441st Antiaircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion were landed by Dukw and LCT before daylight to provide support. The beaches proved no better than anticipated, and Dukws and assault boats had to be used in ferrying men ashore from larger craft. The SCR-300 was employed for the first time for all divisional communications in the landing and proved itself equal to all tasks. General Clark, the Army Commander, accompanied by General Braun, A.C. of S., G-3, and other members of the Fifth Army Staff, arrived at the beachhead in a Navy PT boat, transferred to a Dukw, and landed with the assault waves at 1000.

Three motorized patrols of the 3d Reconnaissance Troop forged ahead to protect the right flank by seizing and blowing the four Mussolini Canal bridges south of the canal junction. Also three radio-equipped infiltration patrols were dispatched to Velletri, Cisterna, and Littoria but did not manage to reach their objectives. By mid-morning General Truscott, commanding the 3d Division, radioed General Lucas that he was established.

The Ranger Force under the command of Col. William O. Darby swept in over the small beach directly adjacent to Anzio harbor, and quickly seized the port, rooting out a few bewildered defenders. The 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion under Lt. Col. William P. Yarborough then thrust east along the coast road and occupied Nettuno. As a new departure 18 chemical mortars of the 84th Chemical Battalion were brought ashore by Dukws to furnish the Rangers with fire support. The Germans had no time to demolish the mole at Anzio.

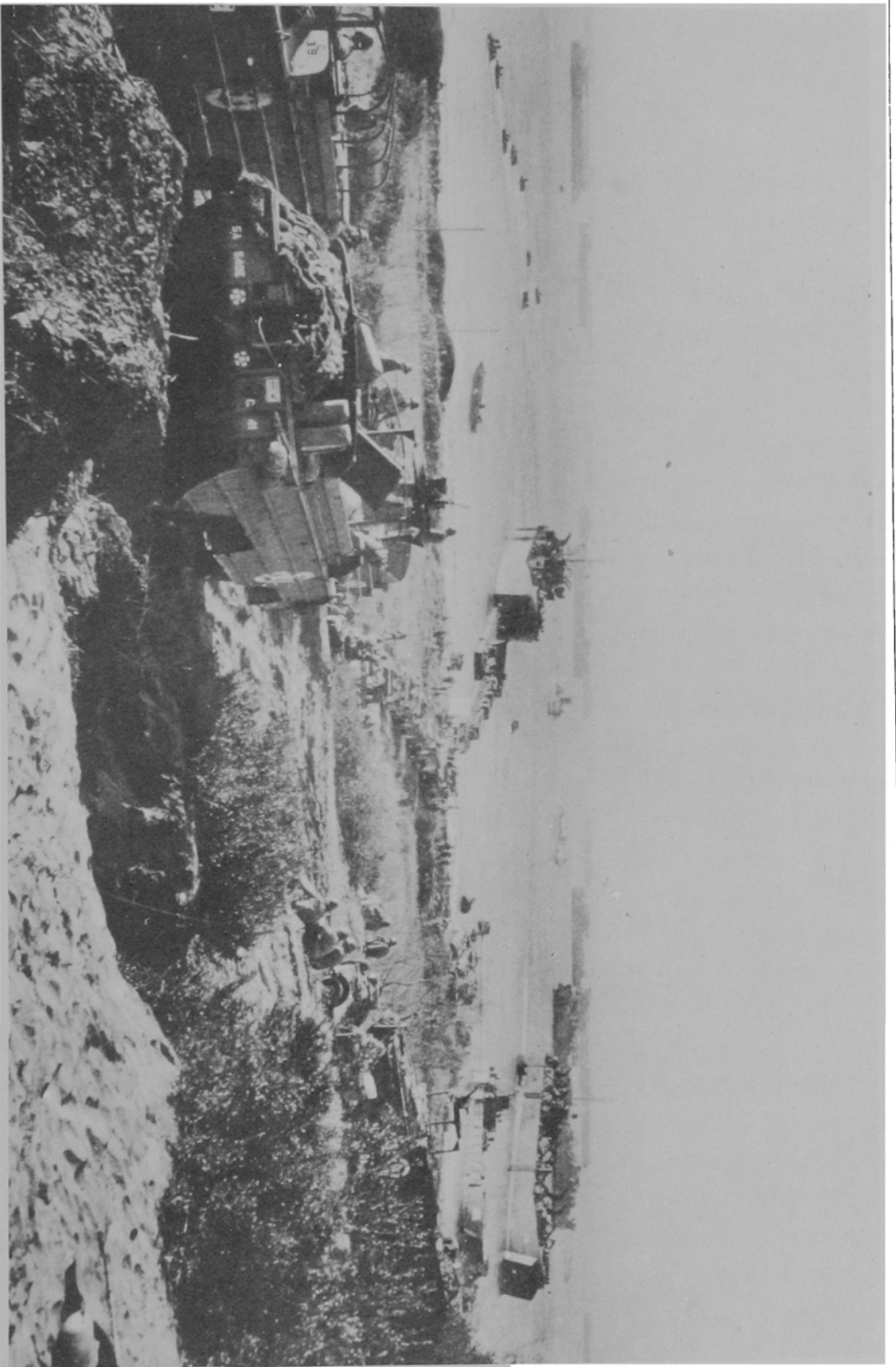
Part of a detachment which had just been sent from Rome with urgent secret orders to blow it was captured on D Day. Except for a gap in the mole and some battered buildings along the waterfront, both caused by Allied bombers, the only obstacles were a few small craft sunk in the harbor.

Six miles northwest of Anzio the British landing was equally unopposed. The 2 Brigade Group (reinforced) was delayed by mines and the shallow water off Peter Beach, but took up its positions two miles inland by 1300. The 9 and 43 Comandos of the 2 Special Service Brigade landed over the south end of Peter Beach and struck south to establish a road block across the Albano road north of Anzio. The remainder of the 1 Division stayed afloat in Corps reserve. By midday all elements of VI Corps had become firmly established on their initial objectives on shore.

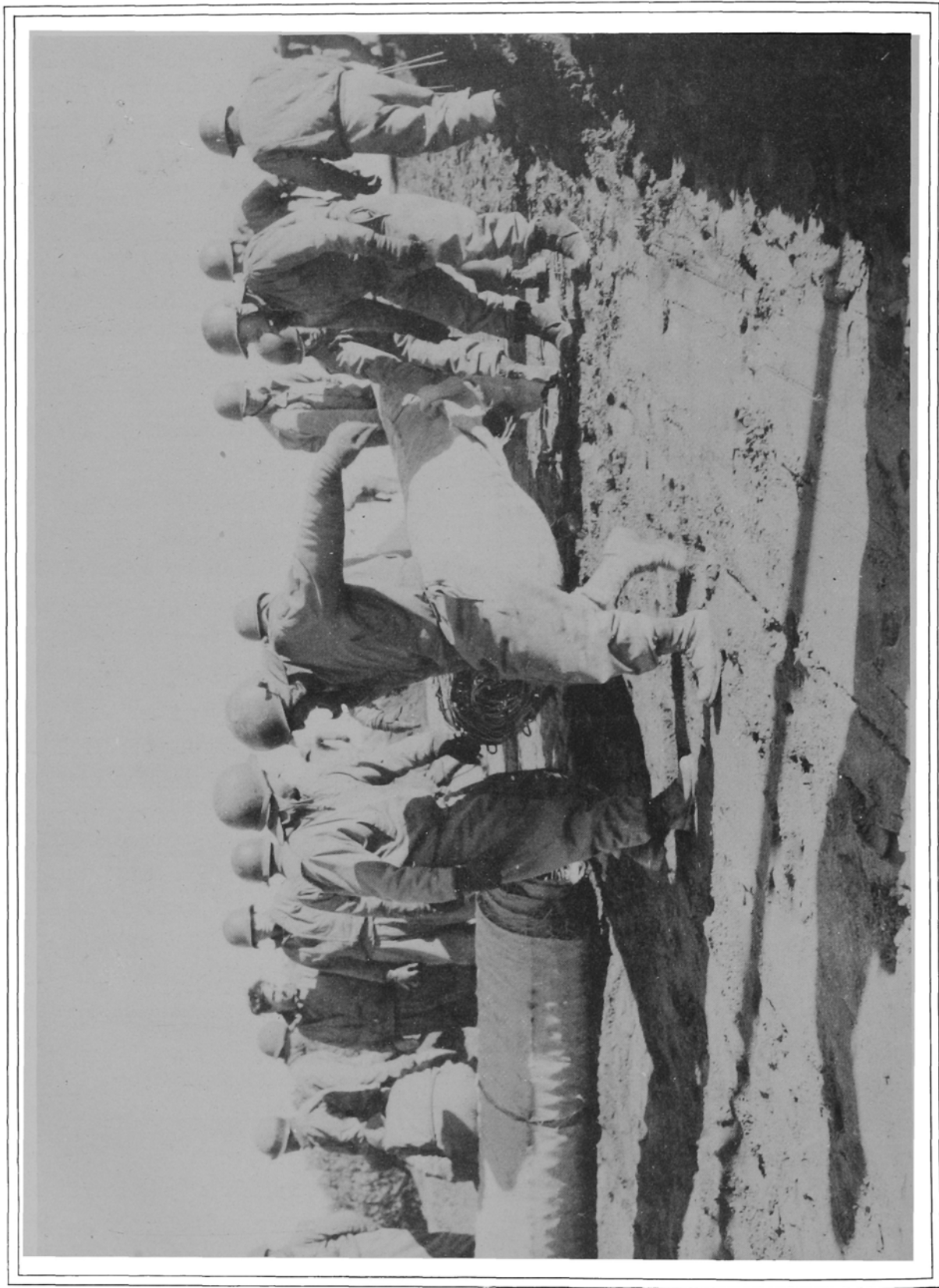
2. *Air Support on D Day.* American and British planes of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces flew over 1200 sorties on D Day in direct support of the Anzio landing. Before D Day communications and airfields north of Rome had been heavily bombed. Now, even heavy bombers concentrated on bottleneck rail and highway junctions between Rome and the beachhead and south to the main front. More than 100 4-engined Fortresses and Liberators dropped 100 tons on a key bridge northwest of Frascati, caused a landslide in the Terracina defile along Highway 7, and tried unsuccessfully to blast the Pontecorvo bridge. Two groups of B-17's attempted on D plus 1 to hit the Pontecorvo and Ceprano bridges, but had no better luck. The Tactical Bomber Force, however, bore the brunt of the bombing effort. One hundred and eighty-two Mitchells and Marauders laid an excellent pattern on Valmontone, Colle Ferro, Velletri, and Frosinone road junctions; 72 B-26's tried in vain to put out the Ceprano bridge.

Fighters, fighter-bombers, light bombers, and night intruders of XII Air Support Command ranged the roads between Rome and the front, bombing road junctions and strafing the heavy motor traffic wherever seen. Assisted by escort fighters of the Strategic Air Force, they shot up 68 vehicles and damaged 15 more. Six hundred and seventy-four fighter sorties gave continuous air cover to the convoy and our force ashore. This air effort undoubtedly hampered the German concentration against the beachhead. In addition, our air force dropped 2,000,000 leaflets over the German lines on the south, announcing "Allierte Landung bei Rom!" Together with 950 leaflet shells this was the largest number of propaganda leaflets yet distributed for one operation; the Psychological Warfare Branch was making certain that the Germans in the Liri Valley would know of our landing in their rear.

3. *At the Beaches.* Aided by good weather and a calm sea, unloading of the assault convoy proceeded at a rapid pace. The 540th Engineer Combat Regiment and the 1st Naval Beach Battalion, operating X-Ray beaches, and



D Day at Anzio—the invasion fleet sends ashore its DUKWs and trucks on X-Ray Beach.



Men of the 540th Engineers lay matting for a temporary road on the beach near Nettuno.

the 3 Beach Group on Peter Beach quickly cleared the scattered minefields and bulldozed exit roads across the dunes. The main problem proved to be the corduroying of exit roads over the soft and boggy ground. Dukws and assault craft scurried back and forth across the calm waters offshore, busily unloading the larger craft which could not approach the shallow beach. Pontons quickly laid three-in-tandem also proved of great aid in unloading larger craft. No dumps were established on the beaches. Instead, supplies were piled up for later transfer to Corps dumps well inland, and by 1500 on D Day shipment was begun directly to Corps dumps. The 36th Engineer Combat Regiment under Col. Thomas H. Stanley swiftly cleared the port and by early afternoon had it ready to receive four LST's and three LCT's simultaneously. At midnight on D Day 36,034 men, 3,069 vehicles, and large quantities of supplies, 90% of the assault convoy load, had been brought ashore.

Peter Beach northwest of Anzio proved to be unsatisfactory. The gradient, averaging 1 : 100, was so shallow that men on LCT's had to wade over 300 feet to shore. Pontons had to be used for LCT's and larger craft, and only one ship could unload at a time. Owing to these conditions and the intermittent shelling of Peter Beach, the 3 Brigade was switched to the newly opened port for unloading. When the last of the 1 Division had landed, the beach was closed.

After daylight four enemy 88-mm batteries deep inland began sporadically shelling the port and Peter Beach. In spite of naval gunfire they could not be silenced all day. Floating mines were also encountered, although far fewer than the navy had expected. The minesweeper *Portent* struck a mine and sank, and another vessel was damaged. The Luftwaffe was not long in reaching the beaches, but, crippled by our attacks before D Day on its bases, its effort was relatively feeble. Beginning at 0850, an estimated 18-28 fighter-bombers made 3 raids on the landing areas. They caused only negligible damage except for 1 LCI sunk with 12 wounded. The craft losses from all causes on D Day were very light for an amphibious operation.

4. *Terrain of the Beachhead Area.* The area over which VI Corps had made its landing is a stretch of the narrow Roman coastal plain extending north from Terracina across the Tiber River. Southeast of Anzio the plain is covered by the famous Pontine Marshes; northwest toward the Tiber it is rolling farm country, often wooded. Twenty miles inland from Anzio the plain is bounded by the volcanic heights of Colli Laziali, a 3100-foot hill mass guarding the southern approaches to Rome. East of Colli Laziali the mountains fall into the valley by Velletri, leading inland toward Highway 6 at Valmontone. On the other side of this valley rise the peaks of the Lepini Mountains, which stretch along the inner edge of the Pontine Marshes southeast toward Terracina.

The stretch of coastal plain around Anzio is roughly divided into three major sections. First is a five-mile belt of low scrub timber interspersed with bare open fields, which encircles the port of Anzio. This waste land proved of marked value to our beachhead because it both screened the port and beach areas from enemy observers inland and afforded concealed dump and bivouac areas for our troops. North of this wooded section the beachhead area is divided into two parts by the main highway leading inland from Anzio, the Albano road. West of the road the plain is cut by a series of stream gullies, the largest of which are the Moletta and Incastro, running southwest from the slopes of Colli Laziali toward the sea. These gullies, though their small streams are easily fordable, are often 50 feet deep and proved difficult obstacles for armor to cross.

East of the Albano road gently rolling cultivated fields stretch east toward Cisterna. Along this region of open country, extending north from the first railroad overpass on the Albano road past Carroceto and Campoleone to Colli Laziali, lies the best avenue of approach in or out of the beachhead, which was to be the scene of major German and Allied attacks. On the east these fields shade into the northern edge of the Pontine Marshes, a low, flat region of irrigated fields interlaced with an intricate network of drainage ditches. Their treeless, level expanse offers scant cover for any troops, and during the rainy season heavy equipment would bog down in the fields.

Most of the beachhead area is a part of the most elaborate reclamation and resettlement project of the Fascist regime, the draining of the Pontine Marshes. Low, swampy bog land, formerly nothing but a breeding ground for malarial mosquitoes, had been converted into an area of cultivated fields, carefully drained and irrigated by an extensive series of canals and pumping stations. Only in the area immediately north of Anzio and Nettuno had the scrub timber, bog, and rolling grazing land been left untouched. The entire project was spotted with new standardized two-storey *poderi*, or farmhouses, standing at frequent intervals along the network of paved and gravel roads crisscrossing the farm lands. Such places as the new community center at Aprilia, called the Factory by our troops, and the provincial capital of Littoria, were modernistic model towns. Anzio and Nettuno along the shore, which date back to Roman times, were popular seaside resorts.

An area of roughly 7 miles deep by 15 miles wide around Anzio was chosen for consolidation as the initial Allied beachhead. Its 26-mile perimeter was considered the maximum which could be held by General Lucas' limited forces and yet include the best natural features for defense. In the British sector, west of the Albano road, the beachhead was bounded by the Moletta River. The rough stream gullies which characterize this region gave protection to the British

flank. In the broad, open central beachhead sector, east of the Albano road, the line ran four miles across the fields to meet the west branch of the Mussolini Canal below the village of Padiglione. From Padiglione east the entire right flank of the beachhead was protected by the west branch of the Mussolini Canal and then, after its junction with the Mussolini Canal proper, by that barrier south to the sea. Although the smaller west branch is not much of an obstacle, the 170-foot main canal, which drains the northern edge of the Pontine Marshes, is built like an antitank ditch, with steeply sloping sides and a shallow, 16-foot wide stream in the middle. The combination of canal and marshes made the right flank of the beachhead a poor avenue of attack and enabled us to hold it with a minimum force.

5. *Advance to the Beachhead Line.* After the initial landings had been successfully made, the 1 and 3d Divisions advanced to occupy their sectors of the beachhead. In the 3d Division sector this advance resolved itself into a series of actions to gain the key bridges across the Mussolini Canal. By the evening of D Day advance guards of the 30th Infantry and the 3d Reconnaissance Troop had seized all of the canal bridges, but they were driven off that night by aggressive tank-supported advance patrols of the newly arriving Hermann Goering Panzer Division. This division, spread from Littoria to Frosinone, was hastily rushed from XIV Panzer Corps reserve with orders to contain the beachhead from the east. The remainder of the 3d Division came up the next day and in brisk fighting threw the enemy back. By the morning of 24 January the 3d Division had firm control over all the Mussolini Canal bridges. On this date the 2 Brigade, under command of Brigadier E. E. J. Moore, moved forward to the Moletta River to occupy its sector of the beachhead. The remainder of the division was held in Corps reserve in anticipation of the enemy counterattack. The 2 Special Service Brigade was detached from VI Corps on 24 January and returned to Naples to take part in operations on the main front. By the 24th VI Corps had everywhere occupied an initial beachhead seven miles deep.

The enemy completely failed to foresee our landing at Anzio. Although he probably knew an amphibious landing was impending, his troop concentrations indicate that he expected it either farther north at Leghorn or on the flank of the Gustav Line at Gaeta. So little did the enemy fear a landing at Anzio that the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and additional artillery had just been moved south from Rome to the vicinity of Gaeta. Most of the two infantry regiments of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, probably charged with coast watching around Rome, also had been rushed south to bolster the Gustav Line. The success of our diversionary naval bombardment of Civitavecchia is attested

to by a Messerschmitt pilot over the beach at 0830, who asked where the landing was. To confuse the enemy further, a cruiser and three destroyers bombarded the coast from Terracina to Formia on D Day and D plus 1.

Our landing had caught the enemy off balance in the act of moving substantial reserves from the Rome area, the Adriatic, and north Italy to bolster the sagging Gustav Line. The Germans, however, quickly recovered from their surprise. By 24 January the pattern of enemy reaction had taken shape. Aggressive tank-supported patrols probed our strength and dispositions, while at the same time screening the enemy's own concentrations and delaying our advance inland as he hastily prepared defensive positions to seal the beachhead. After the Hermann Goering Panzer Division the first unit to arrive was the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, rushed from Pescara to reinforce the weak elements of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division facing the British along the Albano road. The 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, just disengaged in the Liri Valley, appeared in the central beachhead sector above Padiglione. Behind this screen of mobile forces the enemy was assembling his main strength in the Velletri area, not committing it until our intentions became clear. Five thousand paratroopers of the newly formed 4th Parachute Division were concentrating here from the Rome area, and motor transport movements from north, south, and east indicated other substantial reinforcements were on the way. It was anticipated that the enemy would draw still further strength, notably the fresh 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, from the southern front and that this would necessitate his withdrawal from the Gustav Line. To force the enemy to assume this course of action VI Corps prepared to strike inland toward the enemy's communication routes.

C. *PREPARING TO EXPAND THE BEACHHEAD*

25-29 JANUARY

On the southern front the main Fifth Army attack had not as yet pierced the Gustav Line, although the drive was continuing north of Cassino. Instead of showing signs of withdrawal, the Germans had strongly reinforced the XIV Panzer Corps front; as a result there was now no immediate prospect of quickly linking up the south front with the beachhead and forcing a general retreat of the enemy. It was far more likely that the Germans would now move reserves quickly to throw VI Corps into the sea. Indications of unexpectedly heavy troop movements from north of Rome and from the inactive Eighth

Army front, where the expected holding attack had failed to materialize, tended to confirm this view. If VI Corps advanced too far inland toward Colli Laziali with its present limited strength, it might be so extended as to risk being cut off by a sudden German counterthrust. VI Corps consequently consolidated its positions and awaited reinforcements. During the interim our troops probed along the two main axes of advance to seize the intermediate objectives of Cisterna and Campoleone. These thrusts were to secure pivots for the advance on Colli Laziali. On the right the 3d Division thrust up the roads leading across the Mussolini Canal to Cisterna, while on the left the 1 Division pushed up the Albano road on Campoleone.

1. *The 3d Division Advance on Cisterna.* (See Map No. 6.) During 23 and 24 January the 3d Division regrouped for an advance to cut Highway 7 and take the key road junction of Cisterna. The 504th Parachute Infantry, newly attached from Corps reserve, held the right flank along the main Mussolini Canal. The 15th Infantry in the center and the 30th Infantry on its left faced Cisterna along the west branch. In the quiet central beachhead sector adjacent to the 1 Division the Ranger Force and the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, moved forward to keep up with the advance of the 1 and 3d Divisions.

A preliminary reconnaissance in force across the Mussolini Canal on the afternoon of 24 January failed to make much headway against strong mobile elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division. General Truscott then ordered an attack at dawn on 25 January to advance up the two main roads leading across the fields toward Cisterna. The 15th Infantry under Lt. Col. Ashton H. Manhart thrust up the main Conca-Cisterna road while the 30th Infantry under Lt. Col. Lionel C. McGarr advanced to the left along the Campomorto-Cisterna road axis. The 30th Infantry drive was halted about two miles beyond the canal by a company of the Hermann Goering Panzer Regiment intrenched around the road junction halfway to Ponte Rotto. On the right the 15th Infantry gained one and one-half miles up the Conca-Cisterna road before it was stopped by German machine guns emplaced in houses along the road. Enemy infiltration around its right flank then forced the leading battalion to withdraw. To assist the main effort the 504th Parachute Infantry, commanded by Col. Reuben H. Tucker, made a diversionary attack toward Littoria. Advancing behind a heavy curtain of supporting fires, augmented by the cruiser *Brooklyn* and three destroyers, the paratroopers captured the villages of Borgo Sabotino, Borgo Piave, and Sessano across the main canal. Its mission accomplished, the regiment withdrew back across the canal that night, leaving behind strong combat patrols. With unexpected strength the advance elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division had blunted the spearheads of our first attack.

The enemy prepared fixed positions by emplacing automatic weapons inside each farmhouse along the road. These strongpoints had excellent fields of fire over the gently rolling fields and were supported by roving tanks and self-propelled guns. They had to be knocked out one by one by our armor and artillery before we could advance.

The 3d Division resumed its push toward Cisterna on 26 January. On the left the 30th Infantry, assisted by Company K, 7th Infantry, cleared the road between Carano and the road junction below Ponte Rotto, while the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, thrust northeast from the west branch of the canal to establish a road block on the Cisterna-Littoria road. In spite of 70 minutes of massed supporting fire from the 9th, 10th, and 39th Field Artillery Battalions, our troops were unable to drive the Germans from their positions. Behind a similar elaborate artillery preparation the 15th Infantry made a last punch on 27 January toward Cisterna. It gained some ground but was halted well short of its objectives. Rushing new units into the line as fast as they arrived, the Germans were making every effort to hold us from Highway 7 and Cisterna. In the attacks of 25-27 January the 3d Division had gained one to two miles across the Mussolini Canal but was still three miles from the town. Since it was evident a greater effort than was available would be necessary to continue the attack, General Truscott called a halt to regroup for a more concentrated drive.

2. *The 1 Division Seizes the Factory.* Since enemy resistance was considered weaker in the British sector, General Lucas ordered the British 1 Division on 24 January to advance up the Albano road on Campoleone. Its mission was to secure Campoleone as a pivot for further advance and to deny the enemy the use of the roads which fanned out south from that point. With the arrival of the 179th Regimental Combat Team for Corps reserve, VI Corps released the 24 Guards Brigade for this move.

A strong mobile patrol up the road on 24 January surprised an enemy outpost at Carroceto and continued four miles farther inland to north of Campoleone. To exploit this apparent enemy weakness General Penney, division commander, on 25 January dispatched the 24 Guards Brigade, with one squadron of the 46 Royal Tanks and one medium and two field regiments of artillery in support, to take the Factory near Carroceto. The 3d Battalion, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, however, had occupied the Factory the night before. The 1 Scots Guards and 1 Irish Guards pushed through a hasty minefield across the road, and then the 5 Grenadier Guards drove the enemy from the Factory, capturing 111 prisoners.

The enemy, sensitive to the loss of this strongpoint, counterattacked strongly the next morning. Twenty tanks, some of them Tigers, and a battalion of

the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment thrust at the 5 Grenadier Guards in the Factory. Their main assault was repulsed, but they continued to feel around the flanks until they were finally driven off that afternoon. The Germans left behind 4 burning tanks, 1 self-propelled gun, and 46 more prisoners. By the morning of 28 January the 24 Guards Brigade had advanced one and one-half miles north of the Factory. The 1 Division then paused to regroup for an attack on Campoleone.

3. *Building up the Beachhead.* Behind the advance elements pushing inland our service troops worked day and night to consolidate the beachhead and to prepare a firm base for a main attack. By 1 February the 36th Engineers and the navy had so repaired the port that it could handle eight LST's, eight LCT's, and five LCI's simultaneously. Liberty ships, however, were unable to enter the shallow harbor and continued to be unloaded by Dukw and LCT over X-Ray and Yellow beaches. The weather during the first week at Anzio turned out much better than anticipated and greatly facilitated the stockage of supplies. The port was usable in all but the worst weather, and only on two days during the first week, 24 and 26 January, was unloading over the beaches halted by high winds and surf. A gale during the night of 26 January blew ashore all ponton causeways and broached 12 LCT's, 1 LST, and 1 LCI. In spite of these interruptions and enemy interference 201 LST's and 7 Liberty ships had been completely unloaded by 31 January. On the peak day of 29 January 6350 tons were unloaded, 3155 tons through the port, 1935 over X-Ray Beach, and 1260 over Yellow Beach.

Assisted by the good weather and the aid rendered by the use of the port, the assault convoy was quickly unloaded and turned around to bring up the follow-up force. General Clark ordered that the 45th Division and the 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B, which was retained for use at Cassino) be dispatched immediately. By 30 January these divisions had closed in the beachhead. Essential Corps troops, especially artillery, had also arrived. General Lucas now had the equivalent of four divisions under his command and felt strong enough to attack in order to secure Campoleone and Cisterna as a firm base for further action.

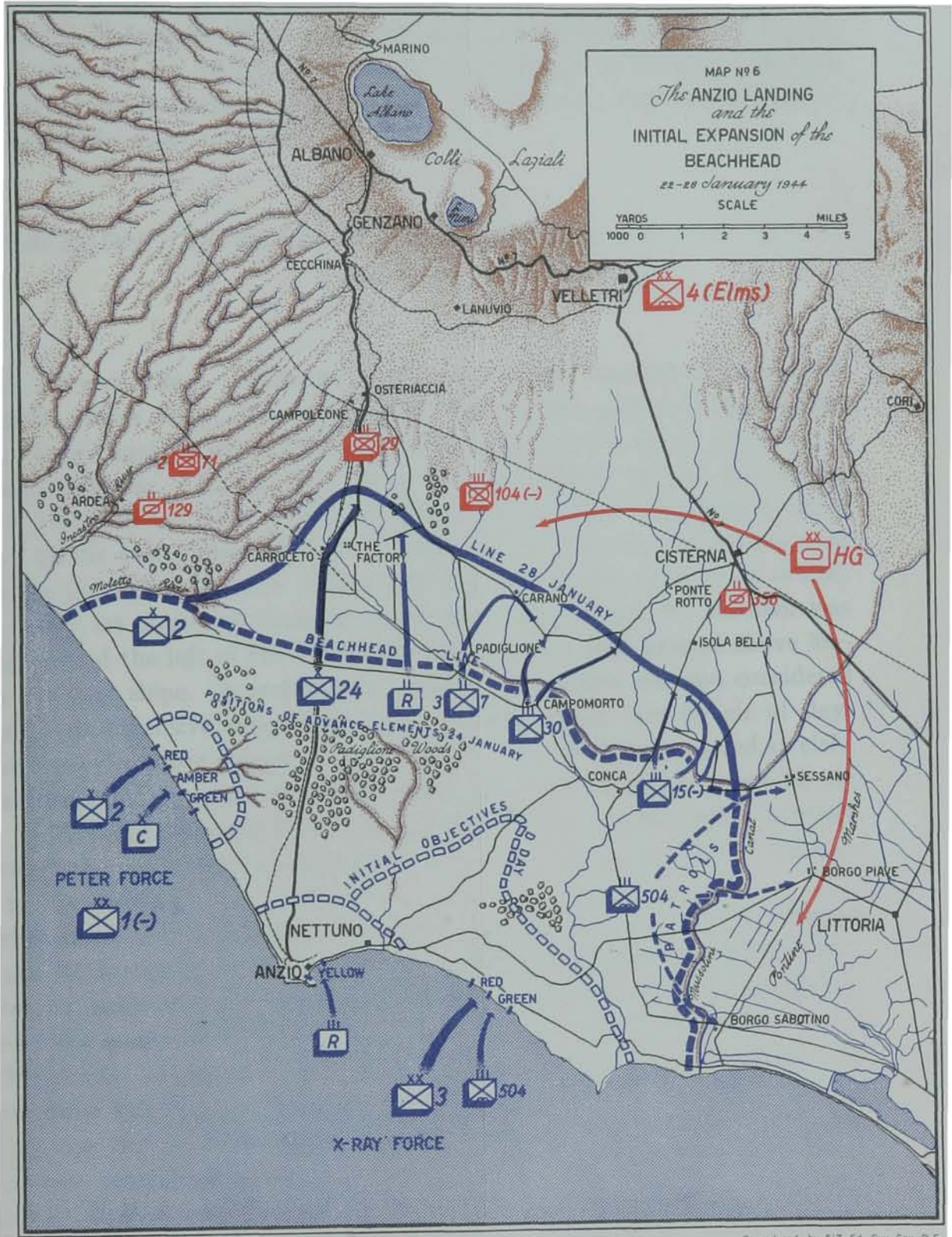
Enemy harassing of our vulnerable beach and port areas continued on a steadily increasing scale. Long-range 88-mm and 170-mm batteries inland kept up sporadic shelling of the port area and ships offshore but caused little material damage in the early days. Floating mines continued to be a menace and damaged a destroyer and a minesweeper. On 24 January an LST carrying Companies C and D, 83d Chemical Battalion, struck a mine. Most of the men were transferred to an LCI alongside, which also hit a mine and sank. Total casualties were 5 officers and 289 men.

Far more dangerous to beach and shipping were the constant, stabbing Luftwaffe raids. The German air force brought back two Junkers 88 groups from Greece and employed torpedo and glider bombers from south France in its biggest air effort since Sicily. Small flights of fighter-bombers strafed and bombed the beach and port areas in hit-and-run raids every few hours. The most serious menace, however, came from the low flying raids at dusk by the antishipping bomber groups from north Italy and south France. In three major raids on 23, 24, and 26 January their torpedoes and radio-controlled glider bombs sank a British destroyer and a hospital ship, damaged another hospital ship, and beached a Liberty ship. The two heaviest raids came at dusk and midnight on 29 January when 110 Dornier 217's, Junkers 88's, and Messerschmitt 210's sank a Liberty ship and the antiaircraft cruiser *Spartan*.

Our stiffening air defense took a heavy toll of the Luftwaffe raiders, claiming 97 destroyed, 45 probables, and 24 damaged in January alone. At the urgent request of VI Corps and the navy, increased antiaircraft and air cover were dispatched to counter the mounting craft losses. Smoke screens and low-altitude balloons were also employed to hamper enemy bombers. To combat sneak raids at dawn and dusk when our air cover was weakest, the engineers renovated the old Italian artillery school airstrip at Nettuno. P-40's of the 307th Fighter Squadron then moved in to furnish cover during these crucial periods.

4. *Situation on the Eve of the Attack.* Having temporarily repulsed Fifth Army in the Liri Valley, Marshal Kesselring made every effort to concentrate against the beachhead threat. By 26 January the enemy build-up totalled an estimated three full divisions, with a possible four more en route. Our constant air attacks on road junctions, bridges, and motor transport on roads leading toward the beachhead delayed but could not prevent these moves. In the next three days advance guards of the 1st Parachute and 26th Panzer Divisions from the Adriatic arrived to stiffen the depleted Hermann Goering Panzer Division before Cisterna and Littoria. The 4th Parachute Division began moving down from Velletri to contain our left flank along the Moletta River. Interspersed were miscellaneous smaller units hastily gathered from wherever available.

By 29 January the enemy defenses around the beachhead, it was believed, had not progressed beyond road blocks, hasty field fortifications, and minefields along likely avenues of approach, for our patrols could still operate freely to Highway 7 and Campoleone. The positions the enemy was constructing along the railroad between Campoleone and Cisterna were believed to be intended merely for delaying action. It was anticipated that his main stand would more likely be back along the high ground around Cori and Velletri. But the enemy strength was growing daily as reinforcements arrived in unexpected numbers



from east and north. On 27 January General Lucas determined to launch his drive toward Colli Laziali. The resumption of the 3d Division push on Cisterna, originally scheduled for 29 January, was delayed one day to let the 1 Division and the 1st Armored Division complete their preparations, and on 30 January all three divisions were to attack.

D. *ATTACK FOR CISTERNA AND CAMPOLEONE*

30 JANUARY-1 FEBRUARY

1. *Plan of Attack.* With the beachhead secured, General Lucas ordered VI Corps to attack on 30 January, advance on the high ground in the vicinity of Colli Laziali, and, if the attack progressed satisfactorily, to be prepared to push toward Rome. On the right flank the 3d Division was to get astride Highway 7 at Cisterna and advance northwest to seize the high ground above Velletri. In the center the British 1 Division was to drive up the Albano road to seize the high ground above Albano and Genzano on the south slope of Colli Laziali. The 1st Armored Division under Maj. Gen. Ernest N. Harmon was to swing around the left of the 1 Division and seize the high ground above Marino on the west slope. A preliminary artillery preparation was not considered necessary, but extensive supporting fires, a smoke screen laid by air at daylight, and naval gunfire support were planned. The air force prepared an elaborate air support program including special air cover for the advance of our armor. If VI Corps could attain the commanding height of Colli Laziali, it would be astride the vital enemy communications routes and so cut off the German forces in the south.

Between 28 and 30 January the 45th Division in Corps reserve relieved the 1 and 3d Divisions along the beachhead flanks so they could employ their full strength in the assault. Elements of the 45th Division and Corps engineers took over the positions of the 2 Brigade along the Moletta River and of the 504th Parachute Infantry on the opposite flank along the Mussolini Canal. At the same time the Ranger Force and the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, were relieved by the British 1 Reconnaissance Regiment (1 Recce Regiment) in the quiet central beachhead sector.

2. *The 3d Division Attack for Cisterna: The Loss of the Rangers.* (See Map No. 7.) The 3d Division planned to attack before dawn on 30 January to get astride Highway 7 at Cisterna. Capture of this key road junction would dislocate the German left flank and pave the way for a further advance up Highway

7 on Colli Laziali. To spearhead the assault General Truscott picked his Ranger Battalions. Jumping off one hour before the main attack, the 1st and 3d Rangers were to infiltrate under cover of darkness four miles across the fields to seize Cisterna by surprise and hold it until the main attack came up. Patrol reports and a careful reconnaissance of approach routes indicated that the enemy had not yet succeeded in consolidating his defenses, and Colonel Darby, force commander, believed his men could sift through. Then at H Hour (0200, 30 January) the 7th and 15th Infantry were to launch the main attack. On the left the fresh 7th Infantry under Col. Harry B. Sherman was to pass through the 30th Infantry and drive northwest to reach Highway 7 above Cisterna, while the 15th Infantry thrust north behind the Rangers to gain Highway 7 below the town. At the same time the 504th Parachute Infantry would make a diversionary attack along the Mussolini Canal to protect the division right flank.

Just after midnight the 1st and 3d Rangers, moving in column of battalions, slipped across the Mussolini Canal on their mission to Cisterna. Concealed beneath a moonless, cloudy sky, the long column crept silently up the narrow Pantatto ditch, which runs northwest across the fields to the right of the Conca-Cisterna road. By dawn the head of the leading battalion had come out of the ditch where it crossed the road and was within 800 yards of Cisterna. As daylight revealed the head of the column moving up the road, it ran into a strong German force led by three assault guns. The Rangers deployed and the three guns were knocked out, but as the light improved German machine guns, mortars, and snipers concealed in houses and haystacks all around them opened up with heavy fire. Our men were caught without cover in the open, treeless fields, their chance for surprise completely lost. The enemy, anticipating a renewal of the attack on Cisterna, had moved in veteran paratroopers from the 1st Parachute Division to stiffen the defense. Evidently the Germans also detected the Rangers' approach through their lines and had prepared an ambush.

The Rangers, pinned down in the open fields, fought desperately through the morning against the entrenched Germans all about them. The 4th Rangers and the 3d Division made every effort to respond to their appeals for help. The 4th Rangers, which had jumped off with the main attack to follow up the Conca-Cisterna road, was stopped by heavy enemy machine-gun fire below Isola Bella. The battalion was held here all day, suffering heavy casualties in exchanging fire with an enemy only 200 yards distant. About noon enemy tanks attacked the 1st and 3d Rangers in the pocket below Cisterna, racing back and forth among the Ranger positions and cutting them up into small groups. Lacking antitank guns or heavy weapons, the Rangers fought back with bazookas and sticky grenades. As the tanks closed in, the shattered battalions attempted

to withdraw. It was too late. The Germans had hemmed them in all around, and our troops were unable to break through. Of 767 men in the 2 Ranger battalions, only 6 escaped. The great majority were taken prisoner.

When the 4th Rangers was stopped along the road below Isola Bella, the 15th Infantry, which was to attack behind it, was unable to jump off. General Truscott then ordered the regiment to swing its 3d Battalion around through the fields east of the road, by-pass the enemy pocket, and envelop Isola Bella from the right rear. Under cover of a heavy concentration of smoke and shells the battalion found a gap in the enemy defenses and drove in on the battered village. By noon all organized resistance had been overcome, but snipers and attempted German infiltrations had to be cleaned up all afternoon. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, drove one and one-half miles up the parallel road to the right of the 3d Battalion. Shattering two companies of the 1st Battalion, 2d Hermann Goering Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the battalion reached its objective and dug in to protect the regimental right flank. Although the 15th Infantry had now pushed to within supporting distance of the Rangers, it was too late. The remnants of the trapped force had already been captured.

On the left of the 3d Division the 7th Infantry attacked north to cut Highway 7 above Cisterna. While the 1st Battalion made a long night march north along Le Mole Creek to cut the highway before daylight, the 2d Battalion attacked up the Carano-Cisterna road. Deep drainage ditches hampered the night advance by the 1st Battalion. Accompanying tanks were unable to cross the ditches and had to be left behind. After moving one and one-half miles through the fields to the right of Le Mole Creek, the infantry were pinned down by heavy enemy machine-gun fire. Daylight revealed our troops in a small pocket formed by low hills on the front, left, and right rear from which the enemy poured down automatic fire. The battalion suffered heavy losses, the battalion commander and 150 others being hit. Under cover of their heavy machine guns the troops rallied and drove the Germans from the knoll to the right rear. All day the 1st Battalion, unable to attack, held its ground and reorganized under the battering of enemy artillery and mortars.

The 2d Battalion attack up the Cisterna road was thrown back just across the line of departure by a unit of the newly arrived 1st Parachute Division, which had come down the night before and dug in around the road junction southwest of Ponte Rotto. To renew the attack that afternoon Colonel Sherman threw in his reserve 3d Battalion. With tank and artillery support it cleared the road junction from the south and pushed on that night to seize the high ground overlooking Ponte Rotto. In the first day's assault the 7th Infantry had gained half the distance to Cisterna.

In a diversionary attack on the 3d Division right flank the 504th Parachute Infantry thrust north along the Mussolini Canal. Its mission was to seize and blow the two bridges north of the canal junction and to cut Highway 7 in order to block these possible avenues of counterattack. After a stiff fight the paratroopers reached both bridges, capturing large numbers of prisoners from the Hermann Goering Panzer Division and the 356th Reconnaissance Battalion. Their advance toward Highway 7 was held up, however, along the ravine known as Cisterna Creek, because the Germans blew the bridges and the supporting armor was unable to cross. That afternoon the Germans counterattacked across the Mussolini Canal near the canal junction to cut off the paratrooper salient. The attack was made by the newly arrived 7th GAF Battalion, made up of hardened disciplinary offenders of the German air force, who had chosen combat service and a clean slate in preference to military prison. Its thrust was thrown back in a hot hour of concentrated fire by the infantry and the 69th Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

In view of the unexpectedly strong German resistance and the failure of the Ranger infiltration, General Truscott ordered a halt on the Ponte Rotto-Isola Bella-Cisterna Creek phase line to reorganize before resuming the assault. Instead of the incomplete defenses and limited forces it expected to find before Cisterna, the 3d Division had run into a strongly manned and well prepared defense. Anticipating a renewal of our drive on Highway 7, the Germans had moved in fresh troops from the 1st Parachute Division and other newly arriving units to reinforce the Hermann Goering Panzer Division. In the face of this resistance the 3d Division had gained over a mile and a half in the first day's attack, but was still almost two miles from its goal.

With less than two miles separating it from Cisterna, the 3d Division resumed its attack the afternoon of 31 January. Instead of cutting Highway 7 above and below Cisterna the 7th and 15th Infantry advanced up the Ponte Rotto and Isola Bella roads to converge on Cisterna itself. This time General Truscott employed the full weight of all support weapons to beat down the German defenses which had held up the previous day's attack. The infantry advance was preceded by successive artillery concentrations. Division and attached artillery fired 1216 missions, 630 of them observed, during 31 January. The air force laid a smoke screen behind Cisterna at daylight to conceal our attack, and the 84th Chemical Battalion put down screening white phosphorus fire. Assault guns, tanks, and tank destroyers accompanied the infantry to knock out German strongpoints. Although extremely heavy air support, including an attack on Cisterna at H Hour by 70 B-26's, was planned, most of it was again cancelled because of menacing clouds.

On the division right the 2d Battalion, 15th Infantry, attacked at 1400 up the Isola Bella-Cisterna road. Advancing behind the massed fires of the 39th and 69th Field Artillery Battalions and the 1st Battalion, 77th Field Artillery, the infantry drove 1500 yards up the road toward Cisterna. Behind them the other two battalions of the 15th Infantry cleared out the pockets of German resistance in the fields between Isola Bella and the Cisterna-Littoria road. Both units were counterattacked by tank-supported German infantry, and the right flank battalion, which had reached the road, was forced back. In spite of the crushing weight of metal pouring down on them the veteran 1st Parachute and Hermann Goering Panzer Divisions clung stubbornly to their positions before Cisterna.

To spearhead the resumption of the 7th Infantry attack, the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, was brought up from division reserve. Before the battalion jumped off from Ponte Rotto, 14 German tanks, some of them Tigers, counterattacked down the road from Cisterna. Unlike the previous day German armor was very active on the 31st in repulsing our attacks. Our own armor and artillery caught the Germans exposed along the road, unable to deploy because of ditches and soggy ground on both sides. In the ensuing tank battle our forces knocked out five to seven of the enemy tanks and forced the remainder to withdraw. At 1620 the infantry jumped off and with the support of the 9th, 10th, and 41st Field Artillery Battalions pushed forward to within a mile of Cisterna before darkness forced them to dig in.

As a feint for this attack the 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, which had reorganized during 30 January, again attacked to cross the railroad and cut Highway 7 above Cisterna. Breaking through the enemy positions, the troops drove rapidly forward to the railroad. Here they were halted by dense, interlocking bands of fire from what was evidently the enemy's main line of resistance. Under cover of the fire of accompanying tanks and tank destroyers the battalion withdrew slightly to a reverse slope and dug in. All night and the next day this exposed salient in the enemy lines was subjected to intense artillery and mortar fire and harassed by infiltrations to the flanks. On the night of 1 February the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry, relieved the battered, depleted 1st Battalion. It was heavily counterattacked twice on 2 February by the fresh 2d Battalion, 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. In repulsing these attacks the 7th Infantry and supporting armor and artillery smashed the entire German battalion, capturing 131 prisoners in the subsequent mopping up.

The night of 31 January, ending the second day of the attack on Cisterna, found the 3d Division battling stubbornly forward but still unable to break through. Many fresh German units, especially mobile reconnaissance battalions,

which were usually the first elements of a new division to arrive, had been committed on the 31st. The enemy's sharply increased use of armor indicated that perhaps the bulk of the 26th Panzer Division had completed the move from the Adriatic front. On the morning of 1 February the 3d Division made a last effort to reach Cisterna. The 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, fought its way 1000 yards further up the road to reach Pantatto Creek, less than 1500 yards west of Cisterna, before a well laid, 10-minute German artillery concentration forced it to halt and dig in. To secure the right flank for a resumption of its attack the 15th Infantry tried for the third time to get astride the Cisterna-Littoria road and to block the bridges across Cisterna Creek; once again our troops were unable to break through the Hermann Goering elements entrenched in the houses across their path.

By noon it was clear that the 3d Division, exhausted by three days of bitter fighting, could not hope to take Cisterna in the face of the ever increasing build-up of enemy troops. Instead, the German concentration opposite the 3d Division and in particular the appearance of the 26th Panzer Division, the enemy's chief mobile reserve, forecast an early German counterattack. General Truscott pulled back the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, from its exposed position to the stream line at Ponte Rotto and ordered all troops to dig in immediately to meet the expected enemy thrust. In 3 days the 3d Division had gained 2 to 3 miles up the roads leading to Cisterna but had been unable to break through the last 1500 yards to seize the town. Since 22 January the division and attachments had lost 3131 casualties and 26 tanks and tank destroyers. Now our men hastily dug in behind their own wire, minefields, and intrenchments to fight for what they had gained. An uneasy lull settled over the 3d Division front as both Americans and Germans girded for the blows to come.

3. *Attack up the Albano Road.* While the 3d Division drove on Cisterna and Velletri, General Lucas made his main effort up the Albano road. The 1st Armored and 1 Divisions were to attack and breach the enemy defense line along the railroad around Campoleone. Then the 1st Armored Division (less Combat Command B) was to pass through this breach and swing wide around Colli Laziali to seize the high ground on the west slope. On its right the British were to continue the attack up the Albano road to assault Colli Laziali from the south.

The plan of General Penney, commanding the 1 Division, was to pass the fresh 3 Brigade through the 24 Guards Brigade to seize Campoleone. At 2300, 29 January, the 1 Scots Guards and the 1 Irish Guards attacked to secure the crossroads 2000 yards south of the Campoleone overpass as a line of departure for the main attack. The 1 Scots Guards on the right struck a mined and wired-in road block south of its objective but pushed through with heavy losses. On

the left of the road, however, the 1 Irish Guards was forced back at dawn by enemy tanks and self-propelled guns. To meet the threat of enemy armor the 3d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, was hastily withdrawn from the 1st Armored Division attack and sent to assist the British. American and British tanks and tank destroyers drove off the enemy armor, and our infantry seized the crossroads. The defending 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was severely handled in this action.

The sharp fighting for the line of departure delayed the 3 Brigade attack until 1510. At this time the 1 Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry (1 KSLI), and 1 Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment (1 DWR), drove forward against scattered opposition and seized their objective on the high ground just south of the overpass at Campoleone. Tanks of the 46 Royal Tanks hotly engaged enemy antitank guns beyond the railway embankment but were unable to cross. Since it was now too dark to continue the attack across the railroad, further advance by the 1 Division was postponed until the next day.

The area west of the Albano road chosen for the armored assault is badly cut up by a series of rough stream gullies, often 50 feet deep, which run in a southwesterly direction down to the sea. These ravines form difficult barriers for armor to cross. Consequently General Harmon planned to seize a line of departure for his division along the old railroad bed which runs northwest from Carroceto across the stream gullies. The armor then could drive northeast along the more favorable ground of the ridges instead of across the gullies.

A reconnaissance force from Combat Command A was dispatched the afternoon of 29 January to clear the area for debouchment along the old railway bed. Because it was necessary to keep the Albano road free for British priority traffic, Col. Kent C. Lambert, commanding Combat Command A, limited his force to Troop B, 81st Reconnaissance Squadron; Companies A and I, 1st Armored Regiment; and the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, supported by the 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalion. To clear the main road the armored column turned off at the first overpass and followed a track leading north to Buonriposo Ridge. As the tanks moved along this rise they were fired on by enemy machine guns and heavy weapons from across the upper Moletta River gully. Unable to cross, our tanks and armored cars skirted the right bank up to the railway bed, where they were halted by a minefield and by intense enemy fire. No sooner had the tanks stopped to regroup than the heavy machines bogged down in the muddy ground. Colonel Lambert decided to hold up for the night south of the railway bed, planning to secure the line of departure in the morning after his tanks had been dug out and suitable route reconnaissance had been made.

The remainder of the 1st Armored Regiment and the 6th Armored Infantry (less the 2d Battalion, which was still on the southern front with Combat Command B) moved up under cover of night to reinforce Combat Command A. The 3d Battalion, 504th Infantry, and the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion were attached as division reserve. Once the tanks were freed the next morning five tank companies moved out across the upper Moletta gully and engaged the enemy along the next ridge. Many of the tanks, however, bogged down again, and the heavy smoke and artillery fire on a cold, cloudy day made it difficult for the tankers to see. Since the armor was unable to get beyond the gravel road along the ridge, General Harmon ordered the 6th Armored Infantry under Col. Paul Steele to attack with the tanks astride the railway bed and clear out enemy resistance to the next stream line. Careful plans were worked out for tank-infantry co-operation to reduce each enemy strongpoint. These plans had to be partly cancelled when a tank battalion was withdrawn just before the attack and sent north to assist the British. Lack of this tank support hampered the assault of the 6th Armored Infantry. The infantry pushed forward that afternoon through a wall of mortar and machine-gun fire and reached the gravel road along the ridge. Here they were held by a 400-yard hasty minefield, well covered by antitank guns, laid at the intersection of road and railway bed and were unable to get beyond it by dark. By the end of the first day of the Corps attack along the Albano road the 1st Armored Division was still struggling for its line of departure, and the British, while scoring a two-mile advance, had still to breach the enemy defenses at Campoleone.

4. *Attack for Campoleone.* In view of the difficulty met by the 1st Armored Division in the muddy country and rough stream gullies west of the Albano road, General Lucas changed his plan of attack. Instead of attacking northeast from the railway bed the armor was to wait until the British had captured Osteriaccia crossroads 1,000 yards above Campoleone. When this strongpoint had been taken, a column of the 1st Armored Regiment (less the 3d Battalion), the 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, and the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was to pass through and attack up the Albano road. The 1 Division would follow up as quickly as possible. Meanwhile Combat Command A, with tank support from the 3d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, was to continue its attack at dawn to seize the two and one-half miles along the railway bed designated as the line of departure in the original order and would be prepared to attack north.

At 1030, 31 January, the 2 Foresters and tanks of the 46 Royal Tanks attacked from their positions south of the overpass to secure Osteriaccia crossroads. They crossed the formidable obstacle of the railway embankment

but then ran into a hornet's nest of enemy resistance. Part of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was firmly entrenched in the houses lining the road from Campoleone Station to Osteriaccia. Tanks and self-propelled guns covered every avenue of approach. Some of them had been driven through the backs of houses and were firing out through the windows. Brigadier J. R. James, commanding the 3 Brigade, withdrew his infantry in order to allow tanks and artillery to soften up the German defenses.

In preparation for the armored assault General Harmon sent the 1st Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, on the morning of 31 January to reconnoiter the more level ground west of the Albano road up around Campoleone. It was to seek suitable stream crossings and approach routes across the railway embankment. The tanks fanned out over the rise southeast of Campo del Fico Creek and drove the enemy from his positions. German infantry counterattacked but were beaten off with an estimated 175 killed. Our tanks then crossed Campo del Fico Creek, engaged several German tanks, and knocked out three before the enemy armor was driven off. Intense enemy artillery fire throughout the action was largely ineffective because of the high percentage of air burst, which had little effect on the buttoned-up tanks. After reaching the railway embankment the battalion was halted by well emplaced enemy antitank guns and other weapons. Unable to cross before dark, it withdrew.

Since the British had not breached the enemy position at Campoleone, an armored assault was no longer practicable. The narrow British salient with enemy positions on either side was a precarious base for an attack. Instead, the 2d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, made a diversionary raid across the railroad on Campoleone. Its objective was to do as much damage as possible as a prelude to another British attack. The tanks plastered the enemy-held houses at 700 yards range but were unable to cross the embankment under savage enemy fire. At the same time the 1 Division Artillery laid down a heavy preparation on the enemy positions. The 2 Foresters then attacked again over the railway, but with no more success. At nightfall VI Corps, in view of the enemy build-up and the strength of his defenses, ordered a halt in the attack.

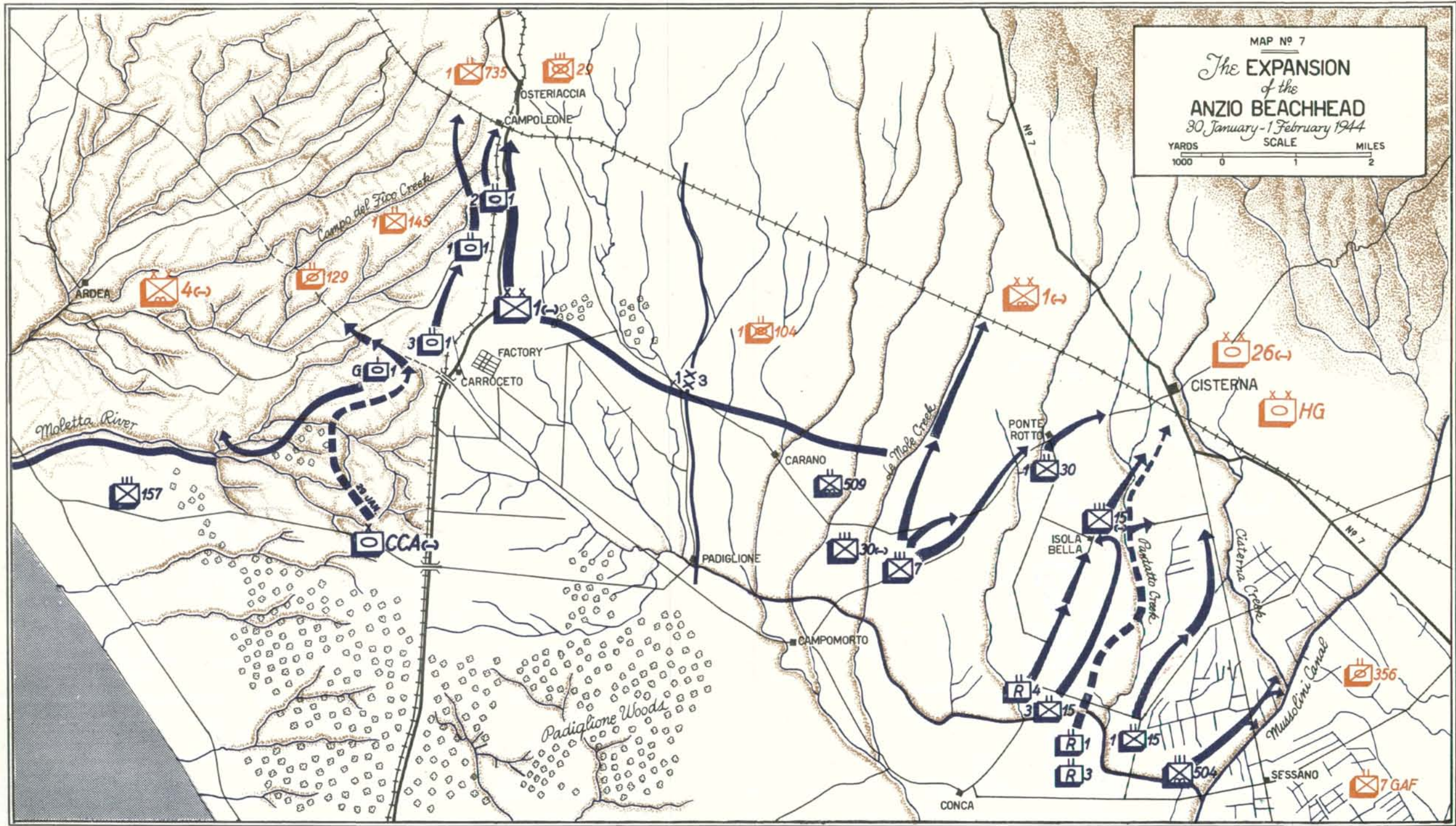
On the left, meanwhile, Combat Command A had resumed its attack astride the railroad bed at dawn on 31 January. The 6th Armored Infantry met heavy fire from enemy strongpoints in houses across the road; essential tank support was delayed in coming up; and our artillery was unable to knock out the anti-tank guns guarding the minefield along the road. New units, the 1st Battalion, 735th Grenadier Regiment, and the 1st Battalion, 145th Grenadier Regiment, were identified in the enemy line. Against this strong opposition the troops were unable to gain more than 500 yards beyond the road. By evening the com-

mander of the 6th Armored Infantry reported that with his flanks unprotected and his center held up where the enemy minefield had not been cleared, advance would be extremely difficult. Since the decision had already been taken to halt the main attack, Combat Command A was relieved by the 24 Brigade that night. The 1st Armored Division withdrew into Corps reserve. In two days of sharp fighting the 1 Division and 1st Armored Division had inflicted heavy losses on the enemy but were unable to break through his defensive positions.

5. *Summary.* The VI Corps attack out of the beachhead had spent itself on the unexpectedly strong German defenses. We had expected the enemy positions before Cisterna and Campoleone to be merely delaying positions while his main line of resistance lay back on the high ground of Colli Laziali and the Lepini Range. Instead, the enemy, appreciating the value of these key road junctions and the limited strength of the forces opposing him, determined to make his stand before Cisterna and Campoleone. Anticipating a renewal of our drive up the two main axes of advance inland, the Germans had moved in reinforcements in wholly unexpected strength. By feverish work the enemy had also succeeded in building up a strong system of defenses barring the approaches to Cisterna and Campoleone. Every house and village was converted into a strongpoint, and these were connected by well camouflaged machine-gun nests and rifle pits. Tanks and roving self-propelled guns supported these positions. Our troops further encountered massed artillery and Nebelwerfer fire in a way seldom employed by the Germans in Italy. American troops again found, as they had all through the Italian campaign, the excellent fortification value of the heavy stone construction of Italian farmhouses. Reducing each house was a separate siege operation that required tanks and tank destroyers to pulverize the building before the infantry could move in. Sniping and infiltration by small enemy groups continued long after we had seized key points, and the infantry continually had to mop up by-passed pockets of Germans, who fired on them from the rear.

Every advantage of terrain, too, lay with the enemy. On the left flank our armor proved incapable of surmounting the natural obstacles presented by rough stream gullies and ground made soggy by repeated rains. On the right flank the route of our advance lay open over muddy fields, offering scant cover to the attacker while providing excellent fields of fire for defending troops. January rains made ground movement difficult, and low clouds during the crucial period of our attack severely hampered air support.

MAP NO 7
The EXPANSION
of the
ANZIO BEACHHEAD
30 January - 1 February 1944
 SCALE
 YARDS 1000 0 1 2 MILES



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