

# CHAPTER VIII \* \* \* \* \*

## *Holding the Beachhead*

NO one at the beachhead believed that the enemy would be content with the capture of the Factory and Carroceto. The Factory area provided an excellent springboard from which to launch further attacks. The network of roads leading south and southeast offered the enemy the opportunity for at least limited employment of tanks; there was no natural obstacle, such as the Mussolini Canal, to impede his advance; and, once the three miles of open country lying between the Factory area and the final beachhead line of defense had been crossed, the enemy could employ his favorite tactics of infiltration in the tangled underbrush and scrub forest of the Padiglione Woods, which stretch south almost to Anzio. The enemy was in a favorable position; it was merely a question of concentrating sufficient forces to effect a breakthrough.

Having lost heavily in the previous two weeks of fighting and lacking adequate replacements, Mackensen was forced to pause for reorganization. Once he had grouped his forces, it was believed that he would attack down the Albano road while making diversionary infiltrations along the whole front. By the 12th there were indications that he was moving antiaircraft guns forward for use as field artillery, and reconnaissance planes spotted an increase in rail movements and heavy traffic on all the secondary roads leading from the Rome area to the beachhead. D Day of the enemy's all-out effort to destroy the beachhead was apparently not far off.

### A. BEFORE THE ATTACK

1. *VI Corps Prepares for the Attack.* General Clark for some time had been aware of the necessity of reinforcing VI Corps if it was to hold the beachhead and also maintain sufficient reserves to resume the offensive. The inten-

tion that VI Corps should be in position to attack as soon as the force of the enemy counterattacks was spent or a breakthrough achieved in the south had not been forgotten. Accordingly the 56 Division was moved to the beachhead. On 12 February instructions were issued outlining measures to be taken to conceal from the enemy this shift. One brigade, the 168, had already arrived on 3 February and had been committed to support the 1 Division. The remainder of the division landed over a period of several days, with the 167 Brigade coming in on the 13th and the 169 Brigade on the 18th.

The arrival of the 167 Brigade permitted VI Corps to complete the relief of the 1 Division, which then passed into Corps reserve. On the night of 14-15 February the 167 Brigade took over the short sector of the Moletta River line held by the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry. The following night, on the eve of the German attack, the sector held by the 1 Division was divided between the 56 and the 45th Divisions. The left position was taken over by the 56 Division, giving it a unified front extending from the positions of the 36th Engineers along the Moletta River to the point of contact with the 45th Division west of the Albano road. All three battalions of the 167 Brigade were committed: the 9 Royal Fusiliers on the left, the 8 Royal Fusiliers in the center, and the 7 Oxford Bucks on the right. Two companies of Royal Engineers, fighting as infantry, were employed to bolster the line, and the 46 Royal Tanks and 1 Division Artillery were left in support. The right portion of the former 1 Division sector was taken over by the 157th Infantry under Col. John H. Church, thus putting all three regiments of the 45th Division in line. By the morning of 16 February General Lucas had fresh troops holding the whole of the critical area lying on each side of the Albano road.

Corps artillery was strengthened by the arrival of the 977th Field Artillery Battalion, and antiaircraft units were built up steadily to aid in combatting the enemy's raids on the harbor area. In air power and artillery VI Corps far surpassed the enemy. There were 432 artillery pieces on the Corps front, not including the weapons of the infantry cannon companies. Even with limitations imposed on some types of ammunition, our artillery was firing about 25,000 rounds per day before the arrival of the 3 field regiments of the 56 Division. Allied destroyers and cruisers thickened the artillery fire almost daily. The enemy artillery fire falling in the harbor and beachhead areas was estimated by the VI Corps fire control center at not more than 1500 rounds daily.

VI Corps took advantage of a period of good weather 12-16 February to request as much air support as possible against the enemy's heavy-caliber and railroad guns. Locating and knocking out the guns was a difficult task. The enemy was adept at camouflaging his positions, and the railroad guns in par-

ticular could be moved frequently. On the 13th P-40's scored hits at the entrance to the railroad tunnel near Lake Albano and on a bridge along the railroad from Campoleone to Rome. The next day two railroad guns near the bombed bridge were attacked by P-40's and shelled by VI Corps artillery, adjusted by P-51 observers. This was one of the more successful aerial attacks on the enemy guns, for one gun car was derailed and the other destroyed. Other bombers concentrated on the Rome marshalling yards, on traffic moving south from Rome, and on concentration areas near the beachhead. The enemy also showed evidence of increasing the tempo of his air effort. On the 15th there were eight raids in the Anzio area. One LCT, loaded with gasoline, was destroyed, and a Liberty ship was damaged.

2. *Enemy Build-up.* Even while the fighting in the Factory area was in progress Mackensen was engaged in building up his forces and regrouping them for the all-out effort to drive VI Corps into the sea. To the units hitherto in action at the beachhead were now added the Infantry Lehr Regiment, a special demonstration unit dispatched from Doberitz, Germany, about 9 February to spearhead the new drive; all of the 721st and 741st Grenadier Regiments, completing the movement of the 114th Light Division from Yugoslavia; the 956th Grenadier Regiment and the 362d Reconnaissance Battalion, first elements of the newly formed 362d Grenadier Division to arrive from the Venice area; the 1027th and 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiments, training units sent from Germany; and all of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, which was transferred from the Gustav Line to be reinforced and held in reserve for the final stages of the offensive.

The arrival of the new troops, together with the shifting of units which had been worn down during the battle for the Factory area, necessitated a considerable amount of regrouping. The disposition of I Parachute Corps on the west remained, save for the arrival of additional units of the 4th Parachute Division and the 65th Grenadier Division, substantially unchanged, as did the positions of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division and the elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division on the east. Along the center of the line west of Cisterna, there was a complete reshuffle. The badly depleted 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the 194th Grenadier Regiment and 171st Reconnaissance Battalion, and the 356th Reconnaissance Battalion all departed for the southern front. Their sectors were taken over by the 362d Grenadier Division, the 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and the Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalion. With the threat to Cisterna no longer acute, these units were distributed along the enemy's main line of resistance south of the Cisterna-Campoleone railroad in such a way as to make possible

the removal of the 26th Panzer Division from this sector for employment in the offensive.

The result of the regrouping and reinforcing of the German Fourteenth Army 10-16 February gave the enemy a more homogeneous battle order than he had had at any time in the beachhead area. The 4th Parachute, 26th Panzer, 29th Panzer Grenadier, 65th Grenadier, 114th Light, and 715th Light Divisions were all present in a more or less intact condition, although the 65th Grenadier Division lacked the 146th Grenadier Regiment and hardly any of the enemy units were at full strength. With the addition of the Infantry Lehr Regiment and the remnants of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment the enemy had the equivalent of six divisions available for the offensive. Although no new tank units were positively identified during the fighting, the presence of the 305th Panzer Regiment, a general headquarters unit from the training center at Ohrdruf, Germany, was indicated. Another unconfirmed identification was the 508th Panzer Battalion, reported to have come from France. The presence of one or the other tank unit was not unlikely as the 26th Panzer Division appeared to have only one battalion in Italy, while the Hermann Goering Panzer Division had no more than two.

3. *Enemy Plan of Attack.* The diary of a captured German officer gives a brief outline of the enemy's plan of attack. The first phase was to be a thrust down the axis of the Albano road by the 114th Light Division on the east, the 715th Light Division in the center, and the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division with troops of the 4th Parachute Division under command on the west. The second phase was to be an exploitation of the breakthrough by the 26th Panzer and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. There was also mention of a tank attack, after the initial penetration, by 20 Mark VI Tigers and 80 Mark V Panthers, assault guns, and self-propelled howitzers. The enemy was sparing neither men nor equipment for the attack. He even introduced a secret weapon, a squat miniature tank loaded with explosive and designed to breach obstacles such as minefields, barbed wire, and concrete walls. The tanks, called Goliaths, were controlled and exploded by electrical impulses transmitted through a long cable. A special engineer unit, the 813th Engineer Company, was sent from Ohrdruf to operate the secret weapons, which, although previously used in Russia, were making their first appearance in western Europe.

The mission and scope of the impending attack were a secret to no one. Prisoners subsequently taken from the Infantry Lehr Regiment said their mission was to drive through to Anzio, wipe out the beachhead, and return with English and American prisoners to parade through the streets of Berlin. Marshal Kesselring, commander of all German forces in Italy, reviewed the 29th Panzer

Grenadier Division before it was committed. German troops were fed exaggerated stories about the size of the attacking force and particularly the mass of tanks available to support them. The enemy was staking everything on the opportunity to win a crushing victory. Allied troops at the beachhead were equally aware that a big attack was forming up. Even the date became known on the afternoon of 15 February, when a prisoner from the 10th Parachute Regiment taken by the 1 DWR reported that the big push would start the next morning.

## B. *THE ALL-OUT DRIVE TO DESTROY THE BEACHHEAD*

16-19 FEBRUARY

The drive against the Campoleone salient and the battle for the Factory area had each been initiated by a night attack with small groups of the enemy infiltrating deep into the positions of the 1 Division forward units. For what was to be his major effort, the enemy changed his tactics. Through the night of 15-16 February enemy artillery was unusually quiet, and the enemy units which were to lead the assault remained in their assembly areas. Before dawn there was no visible evidence of the impending attack. Then at 0600 enemy guns opened up all along the central beachhead front. Half an hour later enemy infantry with tank support were striking at a dozen different points within the area held by the 56, 45th, and 3d Divisions. Although the practice of making diversionary attacks on a broad front to conceal the main point of pressure and to pin down reserves had been retained, this time the enemy attacked in daylight, relying only on smoke to conceal the assault waves.

1. *The First Day.* (See Map No. 13.) In the 3d Division sector the enemy attacked at no less than six different points with forces ranging from single platoons to two companies. The principal attack came northwest of Ponte Rotto between the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry, which had relieved the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, during the night, and the 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry. The first assault was launched by the 1st and 2d Companies, Parachute Lehr Regiment, preceded by 12 Mark IV tanks of the Hermann Goering Panzer Regiment. Prisoners reported that the combined strength of the two companies was not over 100 men and that men sick with dysentery had been forced into line for the attack. Accurate artillery fire drove back this first assault force with heavy losses. Battle Group Berger in command of the attack then committed its second wave, the Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Bat-

talion. At one point the enemy penetrated 300 yards between Company K, 30th Infantry, and Company E, 7th Infantry. Company K was fighting from its command post when at 1145 it called for an emergency barrage. The advance was stopped. The enemy kept up the pressure until mid-afternoon; then heavy losses forced him to call a halt. The 751st Tank Battalion had knocked out five enemy tanks and a half-track; artillery and mortar fire accounted for scores of the infantry. By evening a counterattack had restored the original line of the 30th Infantry.

Platoon and company-strength attacks launched against the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion on the 3d Division left flank were also repulsed without difficulty. On the division right flank the 504th Parachute Infantry was attacked by two companies which worked their way down Cisterna Creek from the north and another company which attacked from the southeast against the Mussolini Canal. The latter force was tied in with enemy units attacking the left flank of the 1st Special Service Force at the bridges near the junction of the west branch with the main Mussolini Canal. Although two outposts beyond the canal were wiped out, the enemy failed to cross the canal or to penetrate any part of the line, and again his losses were heavy. Company C, 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion, supporting the 1st Special Service Force, assisted the artillery in knocking out three tanks and a self-propelled gun. In front of Company D, 504th Parachute Infantry, losses were so heavy that in the afternoon the enemy requested an armistice to remove his casualties. One of Company D's medics counted 38 dead and estimated there were at least as many wounded. The enemy was paying a high price for what apparently were intended to be diversionary attacks.

On the 56 Division front the enemy's initial attacks had more success. The 3d Battalion, 12th (Sturm) Regiment, attacked across the Moletta River between the 9 and the 8 Royal Fusiliers. Two companies penetrated all the way to the lateral road along the final beachhead line before they were mopped up by tanks of the 46 Royal Tanks. The enemy then shifted the emphasis farther to the east, striking from Buonriposo Ridge with elements of the 10th Parachute Regiment. The forward companies of the 8 Royal Fusiliers and the 7 Oxford Bucks were overrun, leaving the enemy holding a wedge in the center of the 167 Brigade line. No effort was made to exploit the penetration, and the 56 Division was given time to move up the 168 Brigade for a counterattack. By noon it was apparent that the attack on the 56 Division was intended to do no more than support the major offensive down the Albano road.

In the 45th Division sector, where the enemy planned to effect his breakthrough to the sea, the attacks on the first day followed the same pattern as

those directed against the 3d and 56 Divisions. At approximately 0630 the 715th Light Division with tank support struck simultaneous blows at points all along the division front. The lightest of these blows was borne by the 180th Infantry, which was holding the division right flank along the Carano road. A force of approximately two companies, following the numerous stream beds and ditches which drain to the south, attempted to infiltrate between Companies E and F. The regiment called for prearranged artillery defensive fires, and the artillery together with the machine guns of the forward companies mowed down the attacking troops. At nightfall, when the remnants of the two enemy companies were pulled back, they appeared to be completely disorganized.

The tactical importance of holding the Factory and the overpass at Carroceto became immediately apparent in the attacks launched against the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, located respectively south and southeast of the Factory, and the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, astride the Albano road. With the observation provided by the Factory buildings the enemy could practically look down the throats of the 179th Infantry, and both the Factory and Carroceto provided concealed assembly areas for enemy infantry and tanks. Taking advantage of the network of roads in the area, groups of from four to eight tanks would issue forth from the Factory to pour fire at point-blank range into the foxholes of our troops. When out of ammunition they would withdraw to the Factory, replenish their supply, and return to the attack before our artillery could register on them. Enemy infantry, co-ordinating their movements with the tanks, worked down La Ficoccia Creek against the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, and down Carroceto Creek against the 2d Battalion.

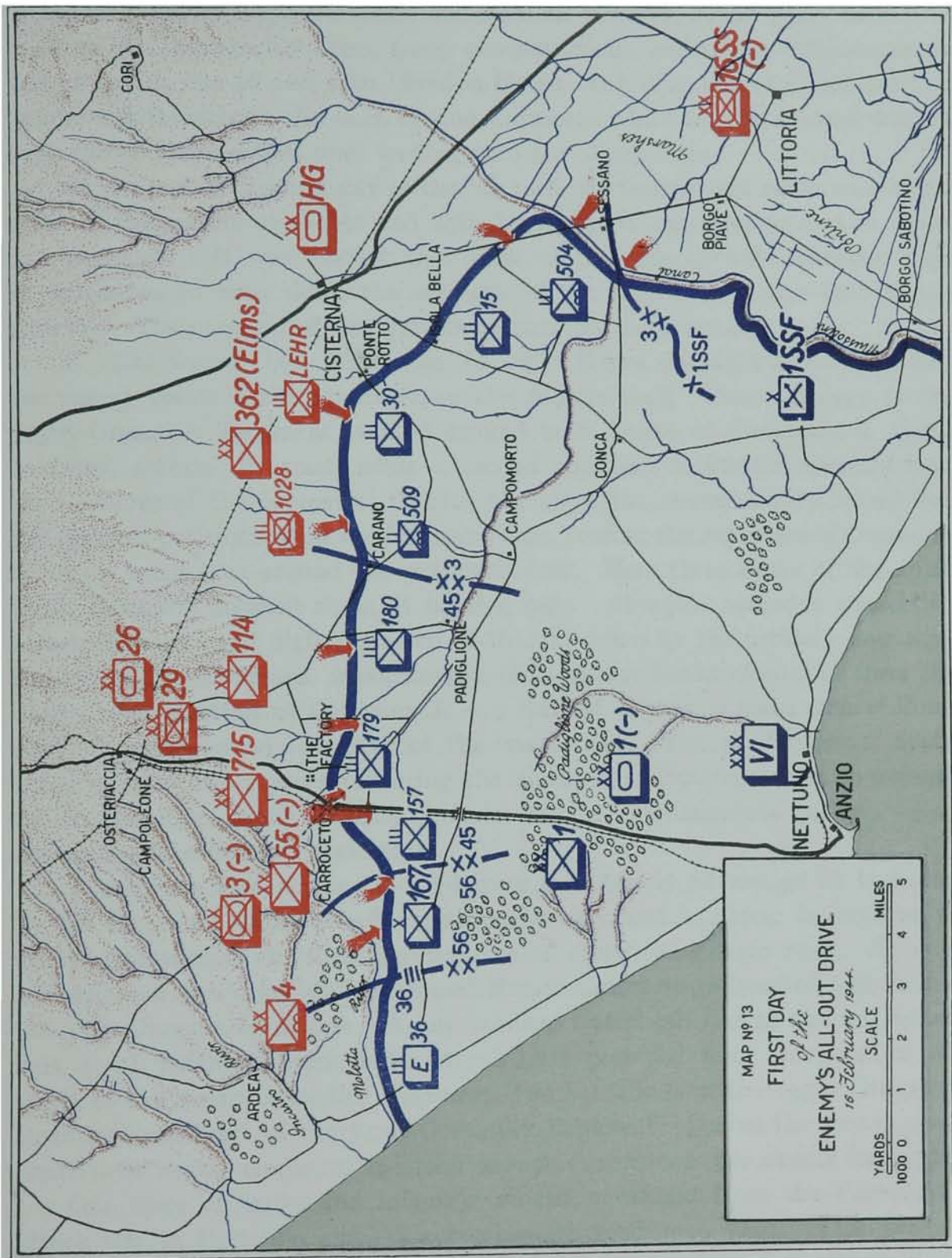
During the morning all attacks on the 179th Infantry were beaten off with heavy losses to the enemy, but the pressure was kept up throughout the day. Companies F and G astride Carroceto Creek were forced to pull back slightly, and a platoon of Company L was sent forward to assist Company I in fighting its way out of an enemy encirclement. Company F, reorganizing under the protection of Carroceto Creek reported that it was down to 30 men and had lost all its machine guns. Late in the afternoon the pressure on the 179th Infantry eased, and the troops were given an opportunity to reorganize. Enemy tanks as well as infantry suffered heavy losses during these attacks. At noon the 160th Field Artillery Battalion massed the fire of 144 guns on a concentration of infantry near the Factory; at 1545, firing with observation by the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, it knocked out 3 tanks in the same area; and at 1725 it set fire to 4 tanks and damaged another near a water tower northeast of the Factory. The 191st Tank Battalion reported it had destroyed 15 tanks against a loss of 7 of its own. Several others were destroyed by antitank guns.

The artillery fire preceding the enemy attacks reached its greatest intensity along the front of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, astride the Albano road. At 0730 the fire lifted, and enemy tanks and infantry struck the left flank of Company E along the railroad and Company G, which was in contact with the 167 Brigade. Four tanks supporting the enemy infantry attacking Company G were knocked out by artillery fire; with the exception of the 3d Platoon, which was nearly wiped out, the company beat off every enemy attempt to infiltrate its positions. Along the highway and railroad three enemy tanks and infantry broke through Company E's left platoon. One of the company's supporting tank destroyers was knocked out immediately; the other destroyed two of the enemy tanks and forced the third to retreat. Then it stopped the enemy infantry with its caliber .50 machine guns. All morning the company held. In the afternoon a squad of the right platoon was wiped out by tanks which destroyed the two supporting antitank guns and then moved directly into the platoon's positions. The enemy failed to press his advantage and the fighting died away toward evening. No deep penetrations had been made anywhere along the front held by the troops under General Eagles.

In addition to laying down preparatory fire for the infantry attacks, the enemy artillery delivered the heaviest counterbattery fire experienced at the beachhead to that date. In the early morning hours the fire was concentrated on the 45th Division Artillery; then it shifted to the positions of the Corps artillery. At the same time a concerted effort was made to keep the highly respected cub observation planes on the ground. Messerschmidt 109's added to their task of strafing our forward troops the role of pursuing the vulnerable cubs. At 1000 the 3d Division reported that its observation plane had been shot down and that fighter protection was needed. VI Corps could guarantee no immediate aid. Enemy artillery had ranged in on the Nettuno airstrip and destroyed four planes as they were about to take off. The field had to be abandoned for use even during the daylight hours, and all fighter protection was provided from fields in the Naples area.

Enemy long-range guns and planes concentrated on preventing supplies from entering the port. Bombers attacking at dusk on 15 February sank an LCT and damaged a Liberty ship. On the 16th the air effort reached its peak with 19 missions and approximately 172 sorties. The results achieved were not commensurate with the effort expended. An ammunition dump north of Anzio was hit, but otherwise damage was slight. In contrast XII Air Support Command reported 34 missions and 468 sorties flown in support of VI Corps. The main air effort, which had been planned for the Cassino front, was shifted on short notice to the beachhead. From late morning to dark wave after wave





MAP NO 13  
**FIRST DAY**  
*of the*  
**ENEMY'S ALL-OUT DRIVE**  
*16 February 1944.*  
 SCALE  
 YARDS 0 1 2 3 4 5  
 MILES

of fighter-bombers, light bombers, and medium bombers swept over the beach-head to attack assembly areas, troop concentrations, and tanks. The emphasis was placed on the 56 and 45th Division fronts, with dive bombers and medium bombers striking both the Factory and Carroceto while heavy bombers worked over the communication lines feeding into the Rome area.

At the end of the first day of the big push the enemy had made only slight gains in the sectors of the 56 and 45th Divisions at considerable cost in tanks and personnel. It was evident that most of the attacks were intended only as diversions to wear down the strength of the defending troops and to pin reserves. The enemy had not yet committed his main force.

2. *The Second Day.* (See Map No. 14.) Before midnight on 16 February the enemy resumed the attack down the Albano road. One company of the 725th Grenadier Regiment worked around both flanks of Company E, 157th Infantry, astride the road, while a second company infiltrated directly into the positions of the company. During the night the enemy slowly wiped out the forward positions from the front and rear, forcing the remnants of Company E into a small area around the command post. Here three tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion assisted them in holding out. At 0500, behind a protective screen of smoke and high explosive shells laid down by the artillery and with the aid of the Shermans, which fought off 4 enemy tanks closing in from the flanks, what was left of Company E — a total of 14 men — and 4 men of Company H withdrew to the west of the main road. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, also under pressure during the night, sent a platoon west to contact the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, without success. A dangerous gap was opening up between the two regiments.

The enemy lost no time in exploiting the tactical advantage he had won by his successful night attack. Striking swiftly and in force, he worked to deepen and widen the salient he had created along the Albano road. At 0740 an estimated 35 Focke-Wulf 190's and Messerschmitt 109's bombed and strafed the 45th Division front line. A few minutes later both the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, were under attack by a powerful force composed of the whole of the 725th Grenadier Regiment, two battalions of the 145th Grenadier Regiment, and part of the 741st Grenadier Regiment. During the day approximately 60 tanks, employed in small groups, supported the enemy infantry.

One force of tanks and infantry moved southeast from the Factory to attack the 3d Battalion along the north-south road 2000 yards to the east of the Albano road, while a second force, after driving south from Carroceto along the highway, swung east through the former positions of Company E, 157th Infantry, to strike the 2d Battalion in the flank. Company G, which had been

under attack most of the night, was virtually isolated by this thrust. Its left flank exposed, the regiment at 0855 ordered the 2d and 3d Battalions to withdraw 1000 yards to the west branch of Carroceto Creek. Under cover of a smoke screen the 2d Battalion attempted to extricate itself from its untenable position. Company G was virtually destroyed; Companies E and F, supported by Company A, were unable to form a line until they had fallen back to the dead-end road hardly 1500 yards north of the final beachhead line. At 1040 35 Focke-Wulf 190's and 8 Messerschmitt 109's were over again bombing and strafing. One bomb struck the 3d Battalion command post, knocking out all communication lines. Tank destroyers and infantry fought desperately to hold off the Mark IV and heavy Mark VI Tiger tanks and to prevent the enemy infantry from infiltrating through their positions. At noon, when the 3d Battalion was ordered to drop back to tie in with the 2d Battalion north of the lateral road, the enemy had succeeded in driving a wedge two and one-half miles wide and over a mile deep in the center of the 45th Division front.

To aid the hard-pressed infantry VI Corps brought to bear all the resources of its greatly superior artillery and air power. In addition to the 432 guns, representing Corps and divisional artillery, and 3 companies of tanks from the 1st Armored Division, 4 batteries of 90-mm antiaircraft guns were employed on ground targets, and 2 cruisers assisted with fire on the flanks of the beachhead. All the resources of XII Air Support Command were put at the disposal of VI Corps. Counting only bombers, 198 fighter-bomber, 176 medium-bomber, 69 light-bomber, and 288 heavy-bomber sorties were flown in direct support of VI Corps. The heavy B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators and the Mitchell and Marauder medium bombers concentrated on Campoleone and on targets up the Albano road; striking closer to the front lines, fighter-bombers blasted the already battered Factory, Carroceto, and the overpass; and during the hours of darkness armed reconnaissance planes and Wellington bombers patrolled all roads leading into the beachhead. The total weight of bombs dropped and the number of heavy bombers employed was the greatest up to that date ever allotted in direct support of an army.

During the afternoon the enemy attempted to broaden and deepen the salient he had won. Fresh troops, consisting of the Infantry Lehr Regiment, reinforced by the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, were committed to bring the total force involved to approximately 14 infantry battalions. In most instances the attacks were made by small battle groups of battalion strength which were rotated frequently to keep fresh troops in the attack while units battered by the intense artillery fire were withdrawn to be reorganized. The main pressure continued to be exerted down the Albano road and to the east

of it against the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry. Tanks and infantry penetrated as far as the junction with the dead-end road, where they proceeded to dig in. Two tanks broke through to the overpass along the Albano road before they were stopped. On the west side of the highway the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was almost surrounded by small groups of enemy infantry infiltrating through the deep ravines lying between the battalion and the 167 Brigade to the left. In the afternoon communication with the battalion was lost when the regimental command post was bombed. When communications were restored, the battalion reported that it was still intact. On the right shoulder of the salient Company G, 180th Infantry, extended its left flank to maintain contact with Company K, 179th Infantry. Although it was in an exposed position and under constant pressure, Company G held its ground. The enemy's efforts to widen the salient so far had failed.

Late in the morning General Harmon was ordered to employ one battalion of medium tanks in a counterattack to support the 179th Infantry. Moving out shortly after noon, Company H, 1st Armored Regiment, at 1410 reached the overpass where the east-west road crosses the main highway. One platoon advanced another 500 yards up the road and assisted in holding off the enemy tanks attacking toward the overpass. Company I followed the diagonal road from Padiglione to support the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry. Roadbound and under fire from enemy antitank guns it made little progress. At dusk both companies were withdrawn. They had assisted in holding off the enemy armor, but, unable to maneuver off the roads and lacking infantry support, the tanks were able to do little toward regaining the lost ground.

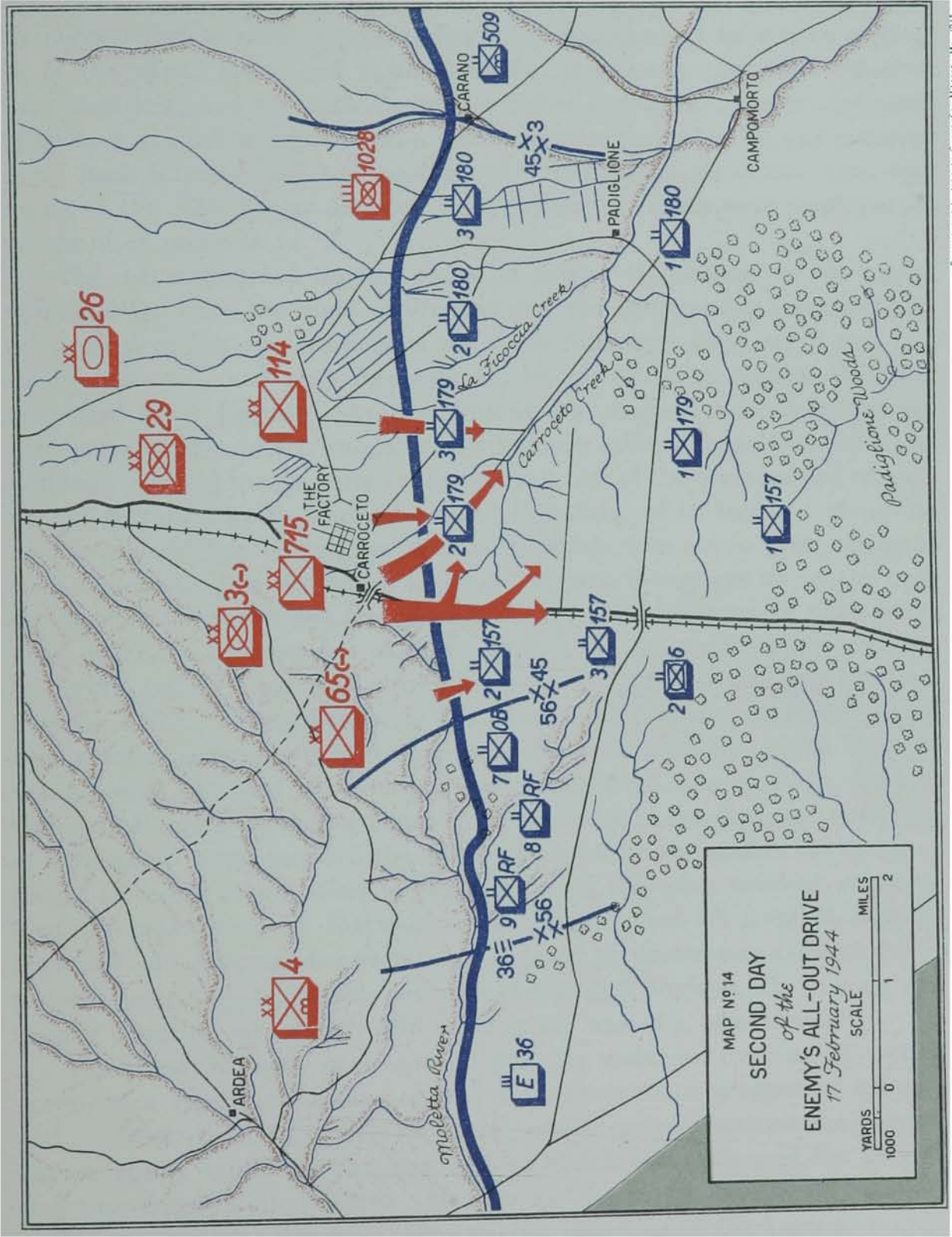
3. *Shifts and a Counterattack.* The enemy penetration down the Albano road had brought him dangerously near the final beachhead line of defense. In order to relieve some of the pressure on the 45th Division and to add depth to the defense, General Lucas assigned to the 1 Division (less the 3 Brigade which remained in Corps reserve) the task of holding a two-mile sector of the final beachhead line of defense extending east and west from the overpass on the Albano road. The 1 Division was tied in with the 56 Division on its left and the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, on its right. Corps also attached the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, to the 45th Division. The battalion was placed under the control of the 157th Infantry and moved up to the overpass in position to relieve the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry. The 56 Division strengthened its 167 Brigade with elements of the 168 Brigade which had been employed successfully that morning to wipe out the wedge the enemy had driven in the division line the previous day. These shifts of units were accompanied by changes in personnel. General Templer, commander of the 56 Division, took command

of both the 56 and 1 Divisions when General Penney was wounded by a shell fragment. General Truscott left the 3d Division to become Deputy Commander of VI Corps, his former position being filled by Brig. Gen. John W. O'Daniel.

In an effort to lessen the depth of the enemy penetration and to obtain a more defensible line, General Eagles ordered the 2d and 3d Battalions, 179th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, to launch a counterattack on the night of 17-18 February. The 179th Infantry was to reach the west branch of Carroceto Creek, an advance of 1000 yards, while the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was to reach a parallel position on the Albano road where it would be in position to tie in with the beleaguered 2d Battalion west of the highway. The 191st Tank Battalion was to support the attack. At that time the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, had been reduced to 274 men, and the 2d Battalion, even with Company A attached, was in hardly better condition. The two depleted battalions jumped off on schedule at 2300; the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, was delayed. Hampered by lack of communication between units and pressure from the enemy, the attack by the 3d Battalion did not get under way until 0030. The enemy had already succeeded in bringing up machine guns and consolidating his gains along the Albano road. The battalion encountered such heavy fire that it got no farther up the highway than the junction with the dead-end road, almost 1000 yards short of its objective. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, found its left flank exposed to attack from the west. Momentarily on the defensive, the enemy returned to the attack. Company E was partly cut off by enemy tanks and was forced to begin a withdrawal. To the right Companies K and L reached their objectives, only to find that Company K was in a trap. The situation became confused. Enemy artillery fire knocked out all communication between the 179th Infantry and its battalions, forcing the regiment to rely almost entirely on runners to keep abreast of the situation. The counterattack had failed. It lacked sufficient strength to throw the enemy off balance, and it left the troops of the 179th Infantry in an exposed position.

4. *The Day of Crisis.* (See Map No. 15.) All through the night the enemy moved up units in preparation for a resumption of the offensive while employing his customary tactics of infiltrating small groups under cover of darkness. Special attention was paid to the shoulders of the salient. On the left enemy units, infiltrating up the ravines which drain into the Moletta River, got between the 167 Brigade and the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, and cut the battalion's supply route. On the right Companies G and F, holding the left flank of the 180th Infantry, were harassed by enemy tanks operating along the north-south road and by enemy infantry infiltrating into their posi-





tions. Hostile artillery fire worked over the units holding the final beachhead line. Behind this screen of activity the enemy prepared for what was to be his major effort to effect a breakthrough. During the day he was to employ all of the 721st, 741st, and 735th Grenadier Regiments, the crack Infantry Lehr Regiment, and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. Armor continued to be used in small groups but on a more extensive scale than on any previous day. Each infantry unit had tank support, and in the afternoon, when elements of the 26th Panzer Division were committed, tanks were employed in groups of as many as 12.

The enemy launched his first thrust at dawn. Capitalizing on the confusion resulting from the night infiltration and the unsuccessful counterattack, he thrust deep into the positions of the 179th Infantry. Company K was virtually destroyed, and only remnants of the 3d Battalion reached the final beachhead line. Enemy tanks moved down the diagonal road to Padiglione until stopped by a blown bridge; enemy infantry infiltrating to the south and southeast reached the positions of the 1 Loyals east of the overpass and of both the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, along the final beachhead line. These initial attacks, which were not in great strength, were beaten off. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, almost cut off by the tank penetrations on its left and the collapse of the 3d Battalion on its right, withdrew under the covering fire of Company A. By the middle of the morning the 179th Infantry had been driven back to the positions covering the final beachhead line. To its right the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, was under attack from three sides by enemy tanks operating along the roads east of the Factory. Companies F and G at 0625 were ordered to withdraw 1000 yards to the east. Company F and a platoon of Company G extricated themselves; the remainder of Company G never received the order. Completely surrounded, the company fought off every enemy effort to overrun it. On the other shoulder of the salient the beleaguered 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, cut off from all support, likewise held. Although the enemy had widened his penetration and had driven it 1000 yards deeper into the positions of the 45th Division, the courage and staying power of our infantry still stood in the way of a breakthrough.

The bloody struggle continued all morning under an overcast sky which prevented a repetition of the previous day's tremendous program of air support. Fighter-bombers, which flew 120 sorties, gave effective close support against enemy tanks and infantry, and 24 light bombers covered the Factory area with fragmentation bombs. Medium and heavy bombers were unable to get off the ground. However, there was no reduction in the amount of artillery fire which fell on the attacking troops. Many of the artillery ground ob-

servers became casualties or had their radios and telephones shot out, but the enemy's efforts to keep down the cub observation planes failed. At 1110 a cub plane observing for the 45th Division Artillery reported 2500 Germans moving south from Carroceto along the Albano road. Within 12 minutes the Corps fire control center had massed on the target all available Corps artillery, representing 20 155-mm guns, 20 155-mm howitzers, 8 4.5-inch guns, and 8 5.5-inch howitzers, together with the 120 25-pounder gun-howitzers of the 5 field regiments supporting the 1 and 56 Divisions, and 4 battalions of the 45th Division Artillery, to make a total of 224 guns. In the next 50 minutes the massed fire of these guns was shifted to 4 other locations by the cub pilot. Many enemy units were decimated and disorganized before they were even in position to attack, yet there appeared to be no end to the waves of enemy infantry thrown against the 45th Division.

At 1400, when Colonel Darby took command of the 179th Infantry, the situation appeared desperate. The shattered 3d Battalion had been withdrawn for reorganization; the 2d Battalion was at less than half strength and nearly exhausted. Only the 1st Battalion was capable of organized resistance. All communication lines between the regiment and its battalions were out, further complicating the task of creating a co-ordinated defense. The 180th Infantry on the right flank was still largely intact, but its units were holding a long front exposed to enemy tank attacks, and Company G was completely cut off. The enemy's Mark VI tanks could operate almost at will down the Albano road and the diagonal road to Padiglione. A large percentage of the division's anti-tank guns had been knocked out or overrun during the fighting of the past three days; the tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion and the tank destroyers of the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion had suffered heavy losses while beating off the never-ending succession of enemy attacks. The 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion alone lost 14 M-10's on 17 February. In order to obtain hull defilade it was necessary to dig the M-10's into the marshy ground. Once in place they were difficult to move, and in some cases they had to be abandoned when the infantry withdrew. In the late afternoon of 18 February, as the enemy prepared to make his heaviest attack of the day, it was questionable whether the final beachhead line could hold.

The enemy attack started with a thrust by 12 tanks down the diagonal road. Only a blown bridge where the road crosses Carroceto Creek kept the tanks from breaking through. Strung out along the road, the tanks were able to fire point-blank into the foxholes of Company A, 180th Infantry. Under the cover of this fire the German infantry attacked. By 1750 the fighting was general along the whole front of the salient as far west as the overpass. Both



Company A, 180th Infantry, and the 1st and 2d Battalions, 179th Infantry, held their ground. Small enemy units managed to infiltrate through the area of heavy brush lying along the regimental boundary north of the road; but the penetration was not exploited, and the infiltrating units were wiped out during the night. Farther to the west the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and the 1 Loyals were attacked by enemy troops who came in across the open fields south of the dead-end road. For four hours the Germans fought to break through east of the overpass. At one time they penetrated all the way to the lateral road before they were driven back in hand-to-hand fighting. Our tanks, patrolling the lateral road, helped the infantry hold off the enemy until the force of the attacks was spent. Compelled to advance across open country, the enemy was taking terrific casualties from artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire. Even the highly trained Infantry Lehr Regiment proved unable to achieve a breakthrough. At 2130 there was evidence that the enemy was pulling back to reorganize. Never again was he to come so close to rolling up the final beachhead line.

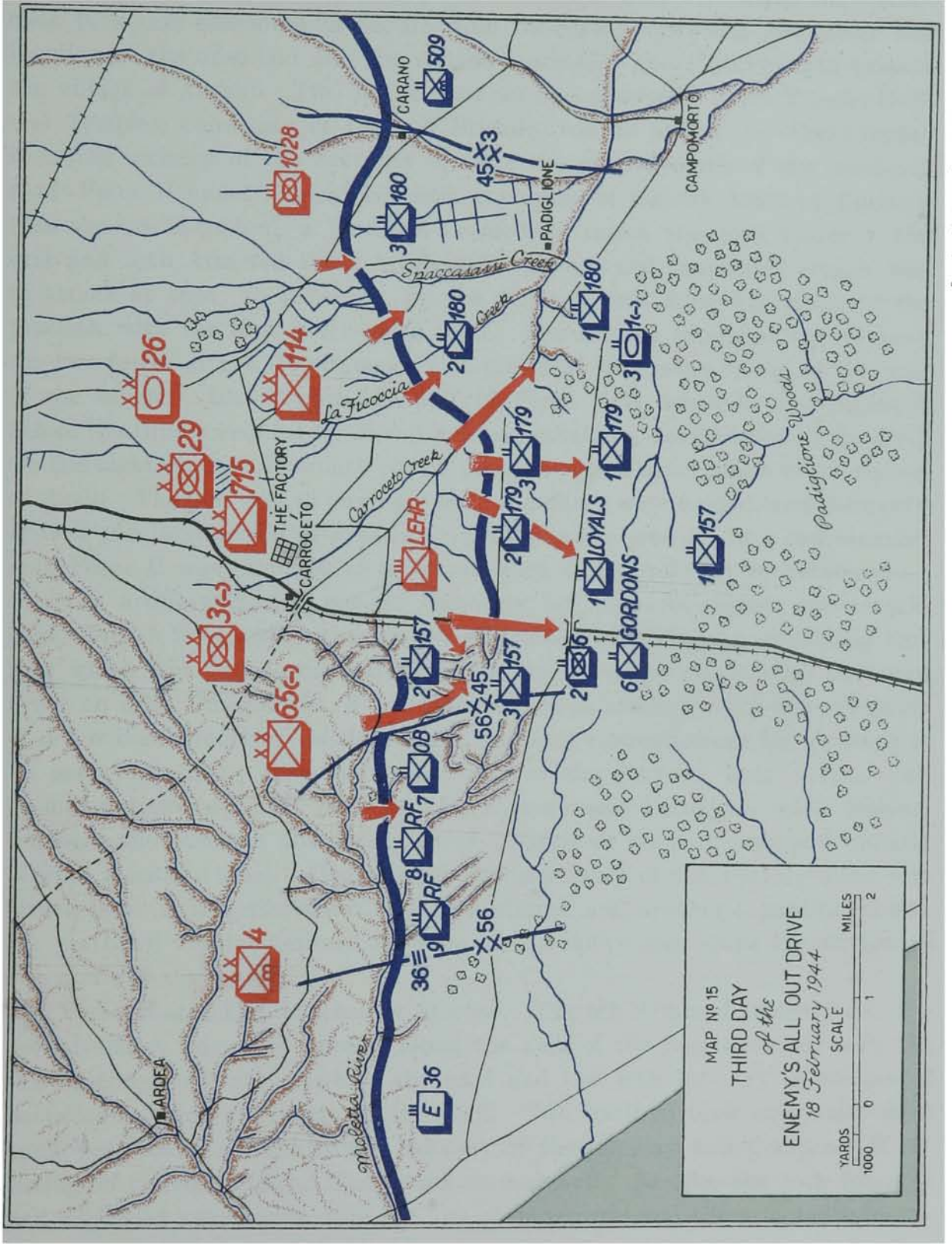
5. *The Tide Turns.* During the night of 18-19 February the 45th Division took advantage of the temporary lull in the enemy attacks to strengthen its positions while VI Corps assembled a counterattack force. West of the Albano road the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, managed to break through to the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, making it possible to send supplies and ammunition forward to the beleaguered troops. The 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, was released from division reserve and attached to the 179th Infantry. It was employed to relieve the depleted 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, along the lateral road, thereby strengthening the final beachhead line at a critical point. Behind the line the remnants of the 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry, in the process of reorganization, were reinforced by 250 men made up of stragglers and rear echelon troops. Combat groups organized within the 2d and 3d Battalions were prepared for use in bolstering the 1st Battalion. On the left of the 179th Infantry the 1 Loyals adopted the same policy of pressing rear echelon troops into service to replace its casualties, and to give more armored support Company F, 1st Armored Regiment, moved into position along the lateral road where it could assist the infantry. The 180th Infantry, holding the right shoulder of the salient, also took advantage of the night hours to readjust its line. The forward companies were drawn back from the north and west to a shorter line extending from just north of the lateral road to the village of Carano. Although the regiment had been under constant artillery fire and local tank and infantry attacks, its losses had been comparatively light. Even the troops of Company G fought their way out of the trap where they had

been held throughout the daylight hours of 18 February. Wading down La Ficocchia Creek, they rejoined the regiment on its new line of defense. The atmosphere of confusion and desperation which had marked the fighting during the late afternoon hours of 18 February changed to a spirit of confidence as an integrated line of defense was reestablished and communication between units restored.

In view of the possibility that Mackensen might employ airborne troops in conjunction with a continuation of his infantry and tank attacks, VI Corps, on the afternoon of 18 February, issued an order dividing the beachhead area into zones of defense against airborne attacks. Forward zones were made the responsibility of the units holding the beachhead line of defense; responsibility for the rear areas was divided among the 35th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade, the 18th Field Artillery Brigade, the 39th Engineers, and the 1st Special Service Force. Within each zone a mobile force of at least one company was to be held on the alert, and all roads were to be patrolled constantly during the hours of darkness. By employing reconnaissance units and rear echelon troops for the antiparachutist patrols, the drain on the critically short supply of infantry units was kept to a minimum.

Before dawn on 19 February the enemy made his last serious effort to break through the final beachhead line of defense. At 0400 enemy medium and heavy-caliber artillery fire was laid down along the forward edge of the salient, followed ten minutes later by an infantry attack. The 45th Division Artillery replied with prepared defensive fires, concentrating on the front of the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and the 1 Loyals. Two battalions of the enemy's reserve 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, supported by three tanks, overran the right flank company of the 1 Loyals and penetrated to the lateral road. The 1 Loyals and 179th Infantry stood firm. By 0800, with the help of Company F, 1st Armored Regiment, and a tremendous artillery concentration, the enemy was forced to withdraw, leaving only a pocket of resistance around a group of houses on the lateral road. During the morning enemy tanks tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to operate down the Albano road. Destroyers of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion knocked out two Mark VI Tigers and five Mark IV's. At noon the enemy tried a final infantry attack down the same axis only to have it effectively broken up by artillery fire before any contact had been made. Although there was an increase in the enemy air effort over the previous day, marked by repeated dive-bombing and strafing raids over the forward lines, it was becoming evident that the peak of the enemy offensive had been passed.

6. *VI Corps Counterattacks.* While the enemy was regrouping for his last effort to crack the final beachhead line of defense, VI Corps completed prepara-



tions for a counterattack. The plan called for an attack to drive the enemy back to a line extending in an arc from the stream crossing just above the junction of the dead-end and the Albano roads east and slightly north toward the village of Carano. Two forces were to be employed: Force T under General Templer, consisting of the 169 Brigade, was to attack on Corps order from the vicinity of the overpass to seize the ground north of the dead-end road; Force H under General Harmon, consisting of the 6th Armored Infantry (less the 2d Battalion), a battalion of medium tanks, the 30th Infantry, the 91st and 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalions, and supporting troops, was to attack at 0630, 19 February, up the diagonal road from Padiglione to the junction with the first north-south road. The original intention was to have the two forces attack simultaneously to pinch off the enemy troops in the nose of the salient. Inability on the part of Force T to assemble its equipment before the time scheduled for the attack necessitated a modification of the plan. On the night of 17-18 February enemy planes dropped naval mines in the harbor at Anzio. The port had to be closed until the mines were cleared, and the newly arrived 169 Brigade was delayed in unloading its equipment. As a consequence, only Force H was prepared to jump off when dawn broke on 19 February.

The artillery carried out an elaborate fire plan to support the attack. Eight British field artillery regiments were co-ordinated into a supporting barrage which was laid down in front of the line of departure at 0600 and then lifted on call. In addition, 8 battalions of Corps artillery, with the exception of a few counterbattery missions, fired prepared concentrations for 45 minutes on enemy assembly areas north and east of the Factory area. Naval and 90-mm antiaircraft guns fired on the Factory and Carroceto, while fighter-bombers and medium bombers, part of a large air support program, likewise blasted assembly areas. One wooded area northeast of the Factory alone was struck by 132 fighter-bombers and 48 mediums, and another 48 medium bombers scattered fragmentation bombs on an assembly area along the stream to the north of the woods.

Force H attacked on schedule at 0630. The 6th Armored Infantry and the 30th Infantry advanced abreast along the axis of the diagonal road with the 6th Armored Infantry south of the road and the 30th Infantry in column of battalions astride and north of the road. Two medium tank companies were employed: Company G in direct support of the infantry and Company H assisting on the right flank. The attack started well. At 0820 the 30th Infantry had advanced 1500 yards from the line of departure, and the armored infantry on its left was meeting only slight resistance. Then the advance slowed. The 2d Battalion, leading the 30th Infantry, was under fire from enemy Mark VI

tanks as well as from troops concealed along the banks of La Ficocchia Creek and in the brush on the north side of the road. The tanks of Company G, 1st Armored Regiment, could offer little assistance, as they were held up until the engineers completed work on a bridge. At 1330 the attack was resumed. Company G's tanks crossed the repaired bridge and drove up the diagonal road spreading panic among the already disorganized enemy troops. At 1620, when General Harmon called a halt to the advance, the 30th Infantry had reached the objective called for in the VI Corps order, and had captured 75 prisoners representing elements of the 741st, 721st, and 735th Grenadier Regiments and a company of the 114th Engineer Battalion. The tanks of Company H also were successful. After advancing 2000 yards up the road leading north from Padiglione, they turned west to cover the bridge across Spaccasassi Creek. Blasting the enemy infantry from the stream bed and from houses along the road, they took so many prisoners that they had to call on the 180th Infantry to dispose of them.

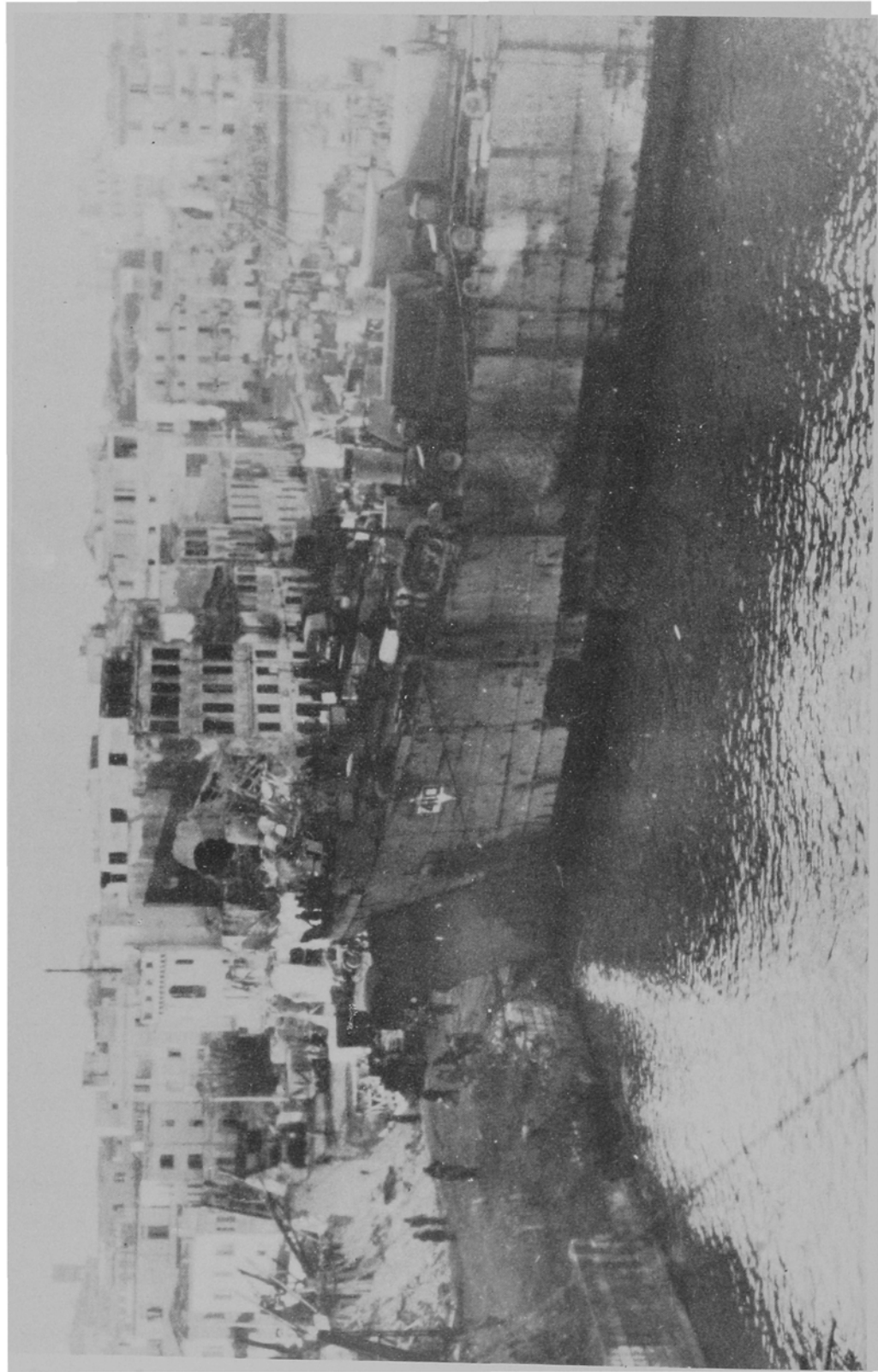
During the afternoon the 1 Loyals and a company of the 2 North Staffs, supported by tanks of the 46 Royal Tanks, attacked to wipe out the pocket of resistance along the lateral road left by the enemy's penetration in the morning. At 1600 the houses in which the enemy troops had barricaded themselves were retaken. An hour earlier a platoon of Company D, 1st Armored Regiment, drove up the Albano road almost to the junction with the dead-end road. Its mission was to cause as much confusion and damage as possible. Three of the tanks were knocked out by enemy antitank guns, and the remaining tanks were forced to withdraw under cover of a smoke screen. Before pulling back, the platoon assisted the British counterattack by driving a large force of the enemy from cover. The British took over 200 prisoners, which, together with the prisoners taken by Force H, brought the total for the day to 412.

7. *The Battle Is Won.* The decline in the size of the forces, both in infantry and in tanks, which the enemy employed in his attacks on the morning of 19 February, the large number and the variety of units represented by the prisoners taken during the counterattacks, and above all the picture of disorganization within units and the spirit of disillusionment exhibited by the enemy prisoners indicated that VI Corps by the evening of 19 February had won its battle for the defense of the beachhead. It was anticipated that the enemy would keep up the pressure, for the prestige of the German army was at stake; and it was considered possible that Mackensen would attempt another major effort to break through to the sea. Still, all the evidence on 19 February pointed to the conclusion that the German Fourteenth Army was too near the point of exhaustion to continue the battle on the scale of the past three days



*German prisoners pass our infantry on a small road near Carrocto. 19 February 1944.*





*LST's discharge vehicles and men in Anzio harbor, later pulverized by shelling and bombing.*

without either bringing up additional fresh troops or pausing for a period of rest and reorganization. Since the enemy had already committed elements of the 26th Panzer and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, which he had intended to hold in reserve to exploit a breakthrough, it was unlikely that he had any fresh troops left.

The fighting on 20 February only served to buttress the conclusion that VI Corps had broken the back of the enemy offensive. At 0430 an enemy force estimated to be a company attacked the 1 Loyals east of the overpass. The attack was easily repulsed. Prisoners taken from the 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment reported that the attack had started with a battalion but that artillery fire had broken it up and only a company had reached our lines. Prisoners taken later in the morning by the 179th Infantry revealed a condition of even greater confusion in the ranks of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. According to the prisoners from the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, both the 71st and 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiments were to have attacked at 0400, 19 February. Disrupted communications had caused such confusion in the transmission of orders that the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment failed to attack until the morning of the 20th. Leaving its assembly area north of the Factory in the early morning hours, the 1st Battalion of the regiment had advanced into the no-man's land in the center of the salient. Under fire from all directions, the companies became confused, lost their bearings, and became hopelessly mixed up. The battalion commander called a halt to reconnoiter. He found that the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which was supposed to be on his right, was to his rear; the two connecting companies had been destroyed; and the 3d Battalion of his own regiment had failed to follow up. Left isolated and under terrific artillery fire, the battalion disintegrated. Although the enemy thereafter continued to apply pressure on the shoulders of the salient, the debacle on the morning of 20 February marked a bloody end to his efforts to achieve a breakthrough.

8. *Reasons for the Enemy Failure.* The enemy had started his all-out drive to destroy the beachhead with many advantages. With less than 5 divisions of troops, many of whom had been in the line continuously for nearly a month, VI Corps was forced to defend a front of nearly 35 miles and at the same time maintain an adequate reserve. Mackensen, with nearly ten divisions under his command, had the larger force, his troops were fresher, and he could move his reserves at will to exploit any weak point he discovered in the beachhead defenses. Nor were the enemy's artillery and air power negligible factors. By concentrating his artillery fire on the area around the salient he was able to subject the troops under attack to a merciless pounding, and the congested



area of the beachhead offered an excellent target for his bombers. In spite of these advantages he had failed. The reasons were several: Allied superiority in artillery and air power, the inability of the enemy to employ his tanks in masses, the failure of his secret weapon, the breakdown of enemy morale, and finally the stubborn resistance of the Allied troops holding the beachhead.

Prisoners taken during the battle almost invariably commented on the "terrific" and "continuous" artillery fire, which caused heavy casualties, shattered nerves, ruined morale, and brought some units to the verge of panic. In many cases attacking troops were completely cut off from their support; communication between units was dependent almost entirely on radio and on runners, many of whom never lived to deliver their messages; and in some cases, as a result of the breakdown of supply services, units went for days without food. For every shell the enemy artillery fired, VI Corps threw back from 20 to 30. The salient the enemy had driven into the 45th Division front became a veritable death trap for his tanks and infantry.

The Allied air bombing and artillery fire served to complement each other. An appreciable share of the responsibility for the breakdown of communications and the failure of supplies to reach forward units was due to the weight of bombs dropped along the axis of the Albano road from the Factory and Carroceto back to the Alban hills. Straining his reserves to the utmost, the enemy was able to fly an estimated total of 172 sorties on 16 February, the peak day of his performance. The next day 288 Allied heavy bombers alone were over the beachhead, and whereas the number of enemy sorties steadily declined the Allied air effort was curtailed only by bad weather and lack of targets.

Many prisoners attributed their failure to lack of tank support. This was due partly to losses suffered during the fighting, but largely to unfavorable tank terrain. Enemy tanks, as well as ours, were roadbound and consequently could be employed only in small groups. In some cases the lead tank and rear tank of a column were knocked out, blocking the escape of the remainder, and wherever tanks were used in groups of more than two or three they made excellent targets for our artillery. At no time did tanks prove a crucial factor in the final result of the battle, although the prisoners paid tribute to the effectiveness with which the 1st Armored Division tanks were employed in the counterattacks on 19 February.

The enemy's touted secret weapon proved to be a dud. But for the capture of prisoners VI Corps troops during the period of the offensive would not have been aware of the midget tank's presence at the beachhead. According to an engineer of the 813th Engineer Company, which was sent to the beachhead expressly for the offensive, the famous Goliaths were employed only on the

first day of the attack, when 13 of them bogged down; of these 3 were blown up by our artillery fire and the other 10 were dragged away. The German engineers were not surprised when their intricate toy, already proved a failure in Russia, failed to live up to the expectations of enemy propaganda.

The morale of the enemy troops declined rapidly as the attack bogged down. They had been promised an easy victory. The 29th Panzer Grenadier Division went into battle in high spirits. The troops had heard rumors that large numbers of Allied prisoners had been taken, that the attack was progressing favorably, that for once the German air force would not be busy on another front, and that they would be able to fight with tanks again. When they were subjected to our bombing and arrived on the front in the midst of what a prisoner called "carnage," they lost all desire to continue the attack. They felt they had been deceived and their morale suffered accordingly. Conversely, the fighting spirit of the individual Allied soldier played an important part in the successful defense of the beachhead. During the dark hours of 18 February when the enemy infantry seemed to be infiltrating everywhere, when communications broke down, and when whole companies and battalions were cut off, it was the will to win of the Allied troops which gave them the strength to hold and at the critical moment to counterattack.

9. *The Losses.* An accurate estimate of the losses suffered by the enemy is not possible. Unquestionably they were extremely high both in personnel and equipment. The German High Command has never hesitated to sacrifice troops to achieve an important objective, and the wiping out of the Anzio beachhead had become as much a question of prestige as of military strategy. It was only after his reserves had been committed and his troops too exhausted and disorganized to continue a co-ordinated drive that Mackensen paused.

VI Corps took few prisoners in the first days of the attack, but by 21 February the total had risen to 579. The toll of enemy dead and wounded was many times higher. On 21 February the 179th Infantry counted 500 bodies lying in front of its sector. An escaped American prisoner reported that while being marched up the Albano road he had seen enemy dead stacked up like cordwood, in piles of 150 each. Bulldozers were being employed to dig mass graves for what he estimated to be over 1500 bodies. Most of the German units which entered the bloody corridor along the Albano road had to be withdrawn for a period of rest and rehabilitation. The 715th Light Division, for example, was withdrawn on 22 February, given four days of rest near Albano, and then moved to the Cisterna area where it played only a minor role in the final drive. The 735th Grenadier Regiment of this division had suffered such heavy casualties around the Factory that it had to be reorganized into two battalions. The

former 1st and 3d Battalions were consolidated into one, while the 2d Battalion scraped together remnants of the 5th, 6th, and 7th Companies to form one company of 75 to 90 men and two other companies with a total strength of 150 to 200 men. The division's other regiment, the 725th Grenadier, was in no better condition.

The successful battle fought by the Allied troops to hold their beachhead was won at a price which was almost certainly lower than that paid by the enemy for his failure. It was still high enough to strain the already depleted units of VI Corps to the utmost. On 20 February, in spite of a steady flow of replacements, the effective strength of the units at the beachhead was 20,000 less than authorized strength. Battle casualties for the period 16-20 February totalled 404 killed, 1982 wounded, and 1025 missing or captured. Exposure, exhaustion, and particularly trench foot resulting from days spent in water-logged foxholes resulted in a total of 1637 non-battle casualties. Although high, the losses suffered by VI Corps would not have been serious had it been possible to draw the troops out of line for a period of recuperation. During February there were no quiet periods at the beachhead. Every man was needed, and the steady drain on the lives and energy of the defending troops never ceased. In the next 5 days, 21-25 February, the beachhead force suffered the loss of an additional 231 killed, 1304 wounded, and 1517 missing. In some cases the casualties reported for this last period were directly related to the big attack, but they are also an indication that the enemy, if badly mauled, was still capable of offensive action.

### C. THE FINAL ENEMY DRIVE

20 FEBRUARY-4 MARCH

1. *VI Corps Improves its Defenses.* Mackensen waited until the night of 28 February to launch what was to be his last serious effort to crack the final beachhead line of defense. In the intervening period, while he rested and regrouped his forces for the new offensive, he continued to apply pressure to both shoulders of the salient he had driven into the 45th Division line. VI Corps was kept busy fighting off these small but costly attacks, reorganizing the units which had suffered most heavily during the main offensive, and strengthening its defenses.

In a message to General Lucas on 20 February General Clark emphasized the necessity of strengthening the VI Corps defenses, particularly on the shoulders of the salient, which had played an important part in containing the enemy's

drive. In the two days after the successful counterattack launched by Force H on the morning of 19 February, the 6th Armored Infantry (less the 2d Battalion) and the 30th Infantry were withdrawn to positions near Padiglione and Campomorto and placed in Corps reserve. Here they were in position to support the 180th Infantry on the right shoulder of the salient. On 22 February one battalion of the 30th Infantry reverted to the 3d Division; the boundary between the 45th and 3d Divisions was moved 1500 yards west from Carano, and the 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, took over this new sector, thereby shortening the front of the 180th Infantry and adding strength to the critical shoulder. Responsibility for the left shoulder of the salient passed to the 1 and 56 Divisions. The 1 Division relieved the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, in position north of the overpass and west of the Albano road; the 56 Division was given responsibility for relieving the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, which had succeeded in beating off every enemy attempt to destroy its hold on the anchor position of the left shoulder.

The effect of the shift of boundaries was to reduce the front of the 45th Division by nearly one-half. The division took steps immediately to reorganize its units and strengthen the final beachhead line with a new reserve line, 2000 yards south of the lateral road. A series of battalion positions was laid out and the work of preparing them for defense divided among the units in reserve. On 19 February VI Corps ordered the 35th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade to assemble a force of 30 officers and 650 enlisted men to work on defenses, on 2-hour alert for use as Corps reserve. Under the direction of the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion the antiaircraft troops assisted the 45th Division in constructing the new defense line. At the same time, by rotating the units in the line, the 45th Division was able to rehabilitate its depleted and tired troops, absorb new replacements, and rebuild its efficiency as a fighting unit.

The 1 and 56 Divisions, which were now responsible for the left shoulder of the salient, also adopted a policy of rotating the forward troops in line. Lack of adequate replacements made it difficult to build up units depleted during the fighting for Campoleone and the Factory area as well as by the big attack. All three brigades of the 1 Division were far below strength, and the 56 Division had only one brigade, the 169, which was fresh. Heavy fighting during the period 20-25 February further reduced the effective strength of the two divisions, and only the arrival of the 18 Brigade on 25 February prevented the situation from becoming critical. With the aid of the additional troops work was rushed on new defenses to tie in with the 45th Division, while every effort was made to improve the old positions in the forward areas. The latter task was complicated by almost continuous pressure from the enemy.

2. *A Period of Local Attacks.* When the all-out effort to reach the sea broke down on 19 February, Mackensen was forced to withdraw many units for a period of recuperation. He still had sufficient troops available to launch a series of local attacks aimed to wear down the shoulders of the salient and disorganize the weary troops defending the beachhead. He began by applying pressure against the positions of the 180th Infantry on the right shoulder. Late in the afternoon of 20 February enemy infantry attempted to infiltrate the positions of the 3d Battalion covering the road north of Padiglione and of Company F astride La Ficoccia Creek. The attacks were accompanied by artillery fire which covered the whole of the regimental area. Although enemy infantry and tank action was on a minor scale, the artillery fire on the 20th and 21st was the heaviest experienced at the beachhead. Three tanks of Company H, 1st Armored Regiment, protecting the bridge across Spaccasassi Creek, were damaged, and additional losses were suffered by Companies H and I in a tank battle with enemy armor. To protect the infantry against a possible armored breakthrough, the engineers on the night of the 20th destroyed the bridge across Spaccasassi Creek.

On the morning of 21 February and again late in the afternoon the enemy repeated his attacks against the 3d Battalion, 180th Infantry. The afternoon attack was preceded by dive bombers and a 30-minute concentration of airburst anti-aircraft fire. In each case the 180th Infantry, supported by Corps and division artillery, succeeded in holding off the enemy tanks and infantry without loss of ground. The next morning the enemy assembled a force of approximately four battalions, believed to have included the 1st and 2d Battalions, 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, elements of the 741st Grenadier Regiment, and elements of the 114th and Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalions. The variety of units involved and the relatively small size of the total force — estimated to be 400 men — offered further proof that the enemy was being forced to pull together elements of diverse units to form even a small offensive force. The attack itself was a complete failure. The 180th Infantry called for defensive fires which so effectively covered all stream beds and avenues of approach that the enemy withdrew without making contact. The effort to gnaw away the right shoulder of the salient was given up.

Despite the enemy's repeated efforts the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, had held its positions on the left side of the Albano road throughout the days of the big offensive. At the beginning of the action it was covering a front of over 2000 yards extending from a point 500 yards east of the highway into the maze of deep ravines which spread everywhere through the country west of the highway. Enemy tanks, driving down the Albano road, rolled up the battal-

ion's right flank; enemy infantry, infiltrating up the ravines, overran the left flank and repeatedly cut the battalion's supply route to the south. As squads and platoons were cut off one by one, the battalion was finally reduced to a small area 600 yards west of the highway where a series of caves provided a natural fortress. On the night of 18-19 February the enemy got close enough to throw hand grenades into the battalion command post. Friendly artillery fire was called down on the caves and the draws around them, effectively breaking up the attack. That night, following the successful attack by the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, supplies were brought up. The next night 100 wounded were evacuated. From then on the battalion was virtually cut off. By preventing the enemy from widening the salient the battalion had aided materially in saving the beachhead, but fresh troops were needed if the position was to be held.

General Lucas assigned the task of relieving the 2d Battalion to the 56 Division. It was important to VI Corps that control be retained of the left shoulder and particularly of the network of dirt roads leading south to the final beachhead line. Once the enemy broke through to the lateral road west of the overpass he would be in position to cut the main supply route for the troops holding the Moletta River line. Unfortunately the attempt of General Templer to relieve the trapped battalion coincided with the enemy's decision to continue the offensive in an area where rough terrain favored infiltration.

On the night of 21 February the 2/7 Queens reached the caves. Under artillery fire and hampered by mud the carrying parties failed to get through with ammunition or automatic weapons. An effort to send tanks and anti-tank guns up the main highway also failed with the loss of three tanks and one gun. The decision was made to put the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, under control of the 56 Division with the provision that the battalion be relieved the next night. After dark on the 22d a company of the 2/6 Queens made an unsuccessful attempt to get supplies through, and the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, had to fight its way out. Only 225 men escaped and of this number 90 were hospital cases. After a week of almost continuous artillery fire, some men had lost their hearing; others were barely able to walk. For seven days and nights the battalion had fought off defeat. That any men returned is a tribute to the courage and stamina of the infantry soldiers who have made the battle of the caves an epic of defensive fighting.

The relief of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, left the 2/7 Queens holding the caves and the rolling farmland immediately to the south. Efforts to get supplies through had failed. Even supply by air was rendered impossible by a period of rain and overcast skies. On 23 February enemy infantry supported

by tanks completed the work of sealing off the weary troops. Two companies were overrun, and the third was forced to withdraw to the caves where it joined the battalion headquarters. After dark the remaining troops were divided into groups of 12 to 15, and an attempt was made to infiltrate back to the positions of the 2/6 Queens. Few succeeded. The effort to hold the former positions of the 2d Battalion, 157th Infantry, had to be abandoned.

The battle of the caves did not end the fighting on the left shoulder of the salient. It was merely the most important and most costly action in a bloody war of attrition in which whole squads and platoons disappeared without leaving a trace. The deep ravines and rough nature of the country west of the Albano road made it impossible to develop a continuous line of defense or to employ artillery effectively against the enemy groups which infiltrated between and into the positions of the defending troops. The units of the 1 and 56 Divisions holding the forward areas were all tired and understrength; the units which were sent up to relieve them were in the same condition. The 56 Division reported on 25 February that its 167 Brigade was only at 35 % of effective strength, the 168 Brigade at 50 %, and the 169 Brigade, which had seen no action before 20 February, was down to 45 %, not counting the 2/7 Queens, which had been reduced to 15 % during the battle of the caves. Although the enemy's tactics of nibbling away at the left shoulder of the salient failed to carry him as far south as the vital lateral road, the drain on the strength of the British divisions was becoming daily more serious.

3. *The Enemy Prepares to Attack.* The enemy used the period 20-28 February to reinforce and regroup his units in preparation for his final effort to destroy the beachhead. Three regiments were moved from the Adriatic front: the 146th Grenadier Regiment to complete the 65th Grenadier Division, and the 954th and 955th Grenadier Regiments to complete the 362d Grenadier Division. The 26th Panzer Division received 1000 replacements, and, although the heavy losses suffered during the drive of 16-19 February were not made up, it is probable that other units also received replacements. The result of the arrival of reinforcements and replacements was to strengthen the enemy's available forces by the equivalent of at least one division.

The regrouping of units for the attack generally favored the eastern flank at the expense of the central area. To spearhead the attack the 26th Panzer Division was moved back to its old positions near Cisterna, and the depleted 715th Light Division, after being drawn out of line on 22 February for a period of rest, also was shifted to the Cisterna area. In addition to these two divisions the enemy had available for an attack along the Cisterna-Anzio axis the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, the 362d Grenadier Division, and the 1028th

Panzer Grenadier Regiment. The transfer of units to the eastern flank was accompanied by a movement of artillery in the same direction. The shift of units to the east caused no diminution of the force holding the sector west of the Albano road. Here the enemy had available for use against the British 1 and 56 Divisions the 65th Grenadier Division, the 4th Parachute Division, the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division reinforced by the Infantry Lehr Regiment, and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. None of these units was up to strength, but the total force was sufficient to permit a continuation of the drive against the left shoulder of the salient. The disposition of the enemy units suggested that the enemy, contrary to his usual tactics, had split his forces for a dual offensive with the major attack to be launched from Cisterna against the 3d Division and a secondary attack on the west side of the Albano road against the 56 and 1 Divisions.

4. *Action on the British Front on 28 February.* The expected attack on the front of the 1 and 56 Divisions began at dawn on 28 February. An enemy force attempting to break through the positions of the 10 Royal Berks and the 1 London Scottish a mile and one-half west of the highway succeeded in overrunning one company of the 1 London Scottish. Then the British troops held, and after bitter fighting drove the enemy back. While this action was in progress, to the right of the 1 London Scottish the 2 Foresters was completing the relief of the 2/6 Queens. After the relief was accomplished, no contact could be made with one company of the 2 Foresters. Patrols sent to the company area found it occupied by the enemy. At 1000 the rest of the battalion was under attack. Again the enemy was beaten back with heavy losses and the fighting gradually died away. Reverting to his practice of infiltration and small-scale attacks, the enemy gave up the attempt to achieve a breakthrough on the west flank of the beachhead.

5. *The Attack Against the 3d Division on 29 February.* (See Map No. 16.) On the afternoon of 28 February the enemy laid down a smoke screen along General O' Daniel's front, apparently to conceal last-minute troop movements in preparation for the attack. After midnight enemy artillery, which had been concentrating on the British sector, shifted its fire to the east, paying special attention to the area around the village of Carano. VI Corps, anticipating an attack on the 3d Division, had matched the shift of enemy guns to the east flank by moving the 27th and 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalions to the vicinity of Conca, where they could thicken the fire of the 3d Division Artillery. At 0430 Corps and division artillery responded to the enemy fire with a counter-preparation lasting for an hour and covering the whole of the beachhead line. Before dawn enemy infantry began infiltrating the positions of Company B.



509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, northeast of Carano and Company G, 15th Infantry, near Isola Bella. Then the action spread to points all along the eastern half of the beachhead. Instead of concentrating his forces the enemy attacked with battalion and company-size units at as many as six different points within the 3d Division sector. His intention appeared to be to drive the 3d Division back to the Mussolini Canal and then reorganize for a breakthrough. If such was his plan, it failed.

Of the enemy's initial attacks only the one directed against the sector of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion achieved any success. For this attack he employed the 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the mission of which was to take the village of Carano, and elements of the 362d Grenadier Division, which were to reach the road junction a mile and one-half southeast of Carano. Engineer troops equipped with wire cutters and bangalore torpedoes were to assist the assault waves in opening gaps through the outer defenses.

Supported by heavy concentrations of artillery fire and a smoke screen, the enemy attacked just before dawn. The first assault wave quickly overran Company B, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, northeast of Carano, and drove the remnants of the company back 700 yards to the battalion's main line of resistance. Here the enemy was stopped by mortar and machine-gun fire. Simultaneous attacks on the 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, covering the village of Carano, and the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry, east of Formal del Bove Creek were unsuccessful. West of Carano the assault parties of the 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment became tangled in the wire and 39 prisoners were taken. A second attack down the road to Carano at 0900 was turned back by artillery fire with three of the supporting tanks knocked out. East of Carano the enemy tried repeatedly to deepen and widen the salient he had won between Carano Creek and Formal del Bove Creek. In each case massed Corps and division artillery fire broke up the infantry attacks while supporting tanks and tank destroyers held off the enemy armor. Allied air support was nullified by heavy clouds during the morning, but beginning at 1500 247 fighter-bombers and 24 light bombers bombed and strafed enemy tanks and infantry close behind the lines. At 1930, when the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, and a platoon of Company C, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, launched a counterattack to regain the lost ground, the danger of an enemy breakthrough on the 3d Division left flank had ended.

In conjunction with the attack against the sector of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion the 362d Grenadier Division attempted to penetrate between the positions of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 7th Infantry, along the axis of Le Mole Creek. Tanks, probably from the 26th Panzer Division, supported the

infantry in groups of three to six. The tanks overran one platoon of Company G, but the enemy failed to achieve a deep penetration at any point. During the afternoon the 26th Panzer Division, employing elements of both the 9th and 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiments, as well as Mark IV and Mark VI tanks, attacked the positions of the 3d Battalion west of Ponte Rotto. Driving down the road from Cisterna, the tanks captured a bridge 1000 yards southwest of Ponte Rotto. Our 3d Battalion committed its reserve company, and the enemy advance in this sector also was stopped.

For the attack on the 15th Infantry, which held the ground on the east side of the Conca-Cisterna road, the enemy employed elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division. Before dawn a patrol of 40 to 50 men infiltrated to the east of Isola Bella. It was isolated during the day and mopped up. The principal threat came from enemy tanks operating on the roads from Cisterna and Ponte Rotto. One platoon of Company G, north of Isola Bella, was driven out of its positions by tanks attacking down the main road from Cisterna. By the end of the day the company had been reduced to 38 men, although others found their way back during the night. Company F was sent up to assist it, and the key position at Isola Bella was held. Tank destroyers disposed of at least seven of the attacking tanks.

On the right flank of the beachhead the enemy launched only diversionary assaults. In the sector of the 504th Parachute Infantry a composite company made up of elements drawn from the 715th Engineer Battalion and the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division attacked at dawn to capture a bridge across Cisterna Creek. The 4th Ranger Battalion broke up the attack. Farther to the south Battle Group Schindler, made up of odds and ends of the 715th Light Division and the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, attempted to cross the Mussolini Canal south of the village of Borgo Sabatino. The 1st Special Service Force caught the assault troops in a trap and then concentrated artillery fire on them. The enemy force became completely disorganized. By mid-afternoon patrols operating in the open country east of the canal had rounded up 4 officers and 107 enlisted men.

At the end of the first day of his offensive the enemy had hardly dented the outer line of defense of the 3d Division. His tactics of attacking with company and battalion-size units on a wide front, probably dictated by the open nature of the terrain and respect for the VI Corps superiority in artillery, had broken down against the well organized positions of the 3d Division troops. He had lost 361 prisoners and many more dead and wounded. His armor, although more successful than the infantry, was hampered by minefields and by its inability to operate off the roads. Employed in small groups, the enemy

tanks and self-propelled guns lacked the power necessary to achieve a breakthrough, and they made good targets for the emplaced tanks and tank destroyers of VI Corps. In the course of the day 21 enemy tanks were reported knocked out.

In holding off the enemy attacks the forward battalions of the 3d Division suffered losses. They were forced to commit their reserve companies to back up the line, and individual companies from regimental reserves were drawn upon for local counterattacks. However, with the exception of the commitment of the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, to regain the ground lost northeast of Carano, the drain on division and Corps reserves was slight. Since it was estimated that the enemy still had available a considerable reserve of tanks, General Truscott, who had assumed command of VI Corps on 23 February, attached to the 3d Division an additional company of tank destroyers and the 3d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment. Orders also were issued that all roads leading into the beachhead should be cratered and new minefields laid. With a large air support program promised, the 3d Division faced the second day of the enemy's offensive in a spirit of confidence.

6. *Continuation of the Attack.* The pattern of the enemy attacks on 1 March followed closely that of the preceding day, but on a reduced scale; their effectiveness was lessened by the vigorous countermeasures which General O'Daniel had taken to strengthen his positions. The counterattack launched by the 2d Battalion, 30th Infantry, late in the afternoon of 29 February, made good progress until the early morning hours of 1 March, when it was held up by enemy troops dug in around a house east of Carano. The battalion stopped to reorganize and then continued the attack at dawn, by-passing the point of resistance and pushing on to reach its objective, the former outpost line of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, by 0830. Seventy-six prisoners were taken and an enemy counterattack repulsed during the morning. Before the enemy could launch a large-scale attack early in the afternoon, the battalion had consolidated its positions. Eighteen battalions of artillery were concentrated on the enemy force and the attack broke down. By dawn of 2 March the 30th Infantry had relieved all elements of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, which then passed into division reserve. The enemy's hard-won gains on the 3d Division left flank had been erased.

The principal enemy attacks on 1 March were directed against the 7th Infantry west of Ponte Rotto. Efforts made by the 7th Infantry during the night of 29 February-1 March to destroy the enemy tanks at the bridge southwest of Ponte Rotto failed when pouring rain ruined most of the flares which were to illuminate the target for the tank destroyers. At 0345 enemy tanks and infantry attacked Company K north of the road that runs from Cisterna

through Ponte Rotto. Artillery fire and sticky grenades broke up the attack only after one platoon of Company K had been virtually destroyed. At dawn the attack had spread to the positions of Company L, near the bridge. The steady rain, which kept Allied planes on the ground, hampered the movement of the enemy armor, already hemmed in by road craters and minefields, and the attacks against the 7th Infantry, as well as similar armored and infantry attacks against the 15th Infantry near Isola Bella, failed to gain any ground. At the end of the day the enemy had lost an additional 165 prisoners and 10 tanks. It appeared likely that he would require a pause to reorganize before continuing the attack on a large scale.

Clear weather on 2 March permitted the Mediterranean Allied Air Force to carry out the extensive air program planned for the previous day. A force of 241 B-24 Liberators and 110 B-17 Fortresses, with 113 P-38 Lightnings and 63 P-47 Thunderbolts providing top cover, bombed the areas around Carroceto, Velletri, and Cisterna. The total of 351 heavy bombers was even greater than that flown on 17 February, the peak day in the air support given to VI Corps during Mackensen's all-out drive to destroy the beachhead. Medium, light, and fighter-bombers concentrated on enemy gun positions and assembly areas, particularly along the railroad running through Cisterna and Campoleone, which served the enemy both as a final defense line and as an assembly area from which to launch his attacks. The combined effect of the tremendous weight of bombs dropped during the daylight hours of 2 March and the night bombing of the roads in the vicinity of Cisterna aided materially in disorganizing the enemy's efforts to continue the offensive.

Ground action on 2 March was on a limited scale. The enemy resumed his tactics of infiltration on the front of the 1 and 56 Divisions and launched one tank and infantry attack down the road to Isola Bella. In each case the attacks were beaten off. At Ponte Rotto enemy engineers were busy constructing a bridge across Femminamorta Creek in an effort to salvage the German tanks which had been damaged or stuck in the mud and to open the way for a continuation of the attack on the 7th Infantry. The expected attack struck the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, southwest of Ponte Rotto at dawn on 3 March. Tanks of the 26th Panzer Division overran one platoon, but the battalion held. In the afternoon the 3d Division switched to the offensive. Colonel Sherman sent two companies of the 1st Battalion up the road toward Ponte Rotto to regain control of the contested bridge and restore the original positions of the 3d Battalion. Company A, attacking on the south side of the road, suffered heavy losses when it was caught in an enemy artillery barrage; Company B, attacking on the north side of the road, reached its objectives without difficulty.

At Isola Bella one company of the 15th Infantry regained without opposition the ground which had been lost on the first day of the enemy attack. It was evident that the enemy's offensive strength, which had dwindled rapidly after the costly attack on 29 February, was now exhausted.

#### D. *THE ENEMY ATTACK FAILS*

The counterattacks launched by General O' Daniel on the afternoon of 3 March marked the end of the enemy's third and last attempt to destroy the Fifth Army beachhead. The results for the enemy had been entirely negative. He had suffered heavy losses both in personnel and equipment, including over 500 prisoners and at least 30 tanks; he had made no progress in reducing the size of the beachhead. By the end of the period the slight penetration he had made in the 3d Division outpost line of defense had been wiped out by counterattacks. His units, including the two fresh regiments of the 362d Grenadier Division which had been moved to the beachhead for the attack, had been reduced by losses and lack of adequate replacements to a point where they were unable to launch an effective attack. Until large numbers of fresh troops could be brought to the beachhead to reinforce Fourteenth Army, it was in no condition to continue the offensive.

VI Corps troops also had approached the point of exhaustion. Six weeks of almost continuous bombing, shelling, and fighting, first to extend the beachhead and then to hold off the enemy attacks, had depleted all of the units; however, the troops of the 3d Division, which had borne the brunt of the enemy's last offensive, had been given an opportunity to prepare for the attack. They had used the weeks when the enemy was concentrating his attacks along the axis of the Albano road to absorb and train replacements and to strengthen their defenses. As the enemy learned to his cost, the beachhead forward line of defense had been developed into a well integrated and formidable barrier. When the enemy attack lost its momentum, the 3d Division, although weakened, was still capable of sustained fighting and its positions were intact.

The situation in the British sector of the beachhead improved as the enemy weakened. The arrival on 2 March of the 9 and 40 Royal Marine Commandos with a total strength of 660 men provided a force of fresh and highly trained troops. Assigned to the 56 Division, the Commandos were employed in raids along the fluid front west of the Albano road. The tactics of guerrilla warfare, which the enemy employed so successfully while he retained the initiative, were

now turned against him. The situation was further improved when the British 5 Division moved to the beachhead during the second week of March and relieved the weakened 56 Division. On 4 March the German Fourteenth Army issued an order to its units instructing them to hold their present positions and to develop them defensively as quickly as possible. The German High Command was giving official recognition to a situation already apparent to the troops; the attempt to destroy the Fifth Army beachhead had failed. The gradual disintegration of the enemy's last drive to push VI Corps into the sea served as a fitting epilogue to a month of fighting as bitterly contested and costly in lives as any experienced in the Italian campaign. The enemy had started his offensive in a spirit of confidence and with the determination to make any sacrifice necessary to victory. He had drawn upon his dwindling reserves in north Italy, France, Yugoslavia, and Germany to build up an effective striking force. Then he attacked. His first drive, designed to pave the way for the breakthrough, was launched with skill and aggressiveness, and he won his objectives. In the period 3-10 February the Campoleone salient was wiped out, and the Factory and Carroceto were taken. Only the time required and the expenditure of troops were greater than he anticipated. Still confident, he had massed his forces for the blow which he expected would carry his armor and infantry through to the sea. For four days, 16-19 February, he threw wave after wave of infantry into the battle in a desperate effort to achieve success. The beachhead line of defense bent, but it failed to break. Although the enemy attempted to continue the pressure and to pour more troops into the battle, he was unable to make up his losses or restore the confidence of his troops. His attacks during the last drive 29 February-4 March showed both timidity and lack of co-ordination. The enemy's efforts to win a victory which would bolster flagging morale at home and restore the reputation of the German army abroad had broken down against the stubborn resistance of the Allied troops holding the beachhead; they had brought him only a further depletion of his already strained resources in equipment and manpower.