

# CHAPTER V \* \* \* \* \*

## *Junction with the Beachhead*

### A. *NEW PLANS*

FIFTH Army had by 19 May essentially completed the mission which General Clark assigned it in Field Order No. 6. Our front lay along the Itri--Pico road as far north as Campodimele; the right flank had pushed through the Ausonia Defile and was so far ahead of Eighth Army that it threatened the enemy in the Liri Valley from the rear. II Corps still had the 85th and 88th Divisions in the line but had not been forced to request the commitment of the 36th Division. The FEC had employed all four of its divisions; on 19 May the tabors, the 4th Mountain Division, the 3d Algerian Division, and the 1st Motorized Division were engaged, and the 2d Moroccan Division was resting in Corps reserve. To our front the badly disorganized German forces were withdrawing into the Hitler Line, but the German High Command had indicated its opinion of that defensive belt by hastily removing the name « Hitler ».

Now that our forces were pressing beyond the objectives of Field Order No. 6, fresh instructions were necessary and were given on 18 May in Operations Instruction No. 19 (*See Annex No. 1E*), together with supplementary oral orders to the corps commanders. These orders carried Fifth Army forward for the next few days, while a major decision in strategy was being made by General Alexander in conference with General Clark. The problem in question was that of the direction in which the Fifth Army forces on the southern front should attack after breaching the Hitler Line: northwest toward the beachhead, or more northward toward Ceprano and Frosinone.

In his initial plans General Alexander had considered directing Fifth Army on the latter objectives. A radio message was received from AAI on 18 May, ordering Fifth Army to be prepared to change the axis of its advance to the north toward Ceprano and cut off the withdrawal on Highway 6 of the enemy in front of Eighth Army. This change was to take place if Eighth Army were not able to draw

abreast of us by the time we had reached and taken Pico. If Eighth Army continued to meet the stubborn resistance it had encountered through 16 May, assistance from Fifth Army would be necessary. Furthermore, the stubbornness of German opposition in the Liri Valley, if continued, offered a possibility of trapping considerable bodies of the enemy before Eighth Army.

Operations Instruction No. 19 of 18 May accordingly ordered both the FEC and II Corps to gain their final objectives and consolidate on the Mount Grande--Pico line. (*See Map No. 11.*) The FEC would take Pico and then be prepared to advance to the northwest to cut Highway 6 in the vicinity of Ceprano or to advance west to secure the Siserno hill mass. II Corps would take Fondi and thereafter be ready to swing northwest on the Fondi—Lenola—Castro dei Volsci axis, or to continue west toward Terracina and the Ausoni Mountains. Use of the 85th Division by II Corps was still restricted in view of its probable movement by water to the beachhead, and the main bulk of the division was not to be employed west of Formia without Fifth Army approval. One regimental combat team might be used to mop up the Itri—Gaeta—Sperlonga triangle.

Further paragraphs of the operations instruction directed the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion to prepare plans for a drop in the Ausoni Mountains to facilitate the advance of II Corps toward Terracina. The 36th Division was also alerted to move to the beachhead on eight hours' notice. This shift was actually ordered on the 18th, but too late for all the first lift, the division artillery, to close in the Posuoli staging area in time. Only two LST's, accordingly, left on the 18th, rather than six; but the delay was made up by the loading of ten LST's on the 19th. All combat elements of the division closed at Anzio by the morning of 22 May. Separate orders on 19-21 May alerted much of the corps artillery in Fifth Army and other units to follow by water, but these movements were first delayed and then finally cancelled.

Operations Instruction No. 19 thus left uncertain the eventual employment of Fifth Army forces on the southern front. A decision on this point was reached in the next few days. Further consideration of the general strategic picture indicated that Eighth Army probably would be successful in breaking the Hitler Line without the assistance of both II Corps and the FEC. As late as 23 May the FEC was still prepared to strike toward Ceprano if the Eighth Army attack of that date did not smash the Hitler Line, but II Corps had begun by 21 May to devote its energies to opening up Highway 7 through Terracina. The success of the attack by Eighth Army on 23 May released the full strength of the FEC for a drive west toward the Siserno hill mass.

The decision to direct II Corps on Terracina was largely motivated by reasons of logistics. Ever since issuing Operations Instruction No. 18 on 15 May, General

Clark had planned to transfer part or all of II Corps to the beachhead to reinforce the attack of VI Corps. That order had contemplated movement by water, but the shortage of landing craft interposed serious difficulties. The transfer of the 36th Division had required four days. The shift of the 85th Division would take anywhere up to a week, and in addition transport would have to be provided for a number of battalions of corps artillery, hospitals, and other service units. To assemble a considerable part of II Corps at Anzio by water might require until the early days of June. The supply needs of the enlarged beachhead force would task our water transport even further.

The alternative was to continue the attack of II Corps up Highway 7 to open a land route to the beachhead, and so move troops and supplies by land. The disintegration of the German forces in front of Fifth Army, which had permitted the original plan to shift II Corps to Anzio, had proceeded at an increased rate after 15 May. By the 20th it was certain that the enemy could not make a stand short of Terracina; without substantial reinforcements, the Germans could hardly stop even there. Accordingly General Clark released the 85th Division to II Corps for full employment with the instructions that II Corps drive through Terracina and open up Highway 7 to the beachhead with the utmost rapidity.

## B. *II CORPS FULFILLS ITS MISSION*

20-25 MAY

I. *Plans and Terrain.* (See Map No. II.) As soon as II Corps had reached Itri, General Keyes set a fresh objective at the line running south from Mount Passignano through Fondi and along the western end of the Gaeta hill mass to Sperlonga. Before this order could be executed, another directive was issued for a more ambitious project: to cut the Sezze—Frosinone road with the maximum speed. The 88th Division was to drive across the hills northwest of Fondi toward Rocca-gorga while the 85th Division moved on its left flank through Monte San Biagio, Sonnino, and Priverno toward Sezze. The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and elements of the 85th Division were to smash through the Terracina bottleneck and push without delay into the Pontine Marshes beyond the town.

On 19 May General Clark issued Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 20. (See Annex No. 1F) to the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion. This implemented the directive in Operations Instruction No. 19 by ordering the battalion to be ready to drop on 24 hours' notice at any time after 0500, 22 May, in the vicinity of the railroad tunnel (Galleria di Monte Orso) north of Terracina. The mission of the battalion, after establishing a firm base and gaining communication with II

Corps, was to carry out Corps orders to secure the hills above Terracina and to operate against the rear of any enemy forces delaying our capture of Terracina.

The area facing II Corps was a series of high mountains, deep gorges, river valleys, and flooded coastal plains. The sector varied in width from 10 to 20 miles between the irregular coast line and the Corps boundary; from Itri to Sezze the distance across the mountains was 30 miles. To the south of Itri a hilly area about four miles wide and ten miles long runs northwest along the sea to Sperlonga. These hills fall away to the west into a triangle of coastal marshes stretching eight miles to Terracina, a town situated at the end of a high spur that extends down to the sea. Beyond Terracina are the broad Pontine Marshes stretching 30 miles to Cisterna. The area on the north of Highway 7 is a mass of high and precipitous mountains, practically devoid of useful trails or roads, extending to Roccagorga and beyond toward Rome. The only road of any consequence along the axis of advance was Highway 7, from which several lateral routes led across the mountains to the Liri Valley.

The defensive line which II Corps would hit in this drive was the much-publicized Adolf Hitler Line, prepared by the Germans to serve as a second defense if the Gustav Line were breached. This series of fortified positions, somewhat similar to the Gustav and Winter Lines, started on the coast at Terracina, swung northeast along the mountain slopes to Fondi, and continued across the mountains to Pico and the Liri Valley. Labor battalions and impressed Italian civilians had been working for months on the pillboxes, bunkers, gun positions, road blocks, minefields, and tank traps in this sector. All evidence indicated that the Germans would try to make a stand on this line.

2. *The 88th Division on the Right Flank.* At dark on 19 May the 351st Infantry held Mount Grande north of Itri; the 349th Infantry lay in the town proper; and the 350th Infantry was just to the east. At 0100, 20 May, the 349th Infantry moved northwest from Itri in column of battalions with the mission of driving rapidly up Highway 7 to strike the main body of the retreating German forces and to capture Fondi. The exact location and strength of the enemy were unknown, but prisoners had indicated that two battalions each of the 267th Grenadier Regiment and 276th Grenadier Regiment had fallen back to Fondi. Both regiments had been badly battered in the fierce fighting of the past 8 days, and 1 battalion of the 267th Grenadier Regiment was reported to have been reduced to 40 men.

The advance of the 349th Infantry continued rapidly throughout the early morning without incident, except for intermittent artillery fire. The leading battalion stopped every two hours and was passed through by the succeeding battalions in order to give the men brief periods of rest. Behind the regiment came the 350th Infantry, and on each side other troops held the hills covering the first stage

of the advance. Ahead of the infantry the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron under Lt. Col. Charles A. Ellis ranged out over the Fondi plain, but one troop which entered Fondi was forced out by the enemy.

After daylight the 1st Battalion, 349th Infantry, turned right into the hills along the north side of Highway 7 while the rest of the regiment continued up the road. The 3d Battalion in the lead began to encounter intense artillery fire and opposition from snipers and machine guns just before noon about two miles east of Fondi. The advance guard pushed on aggressively but soon met stiffer resistance, and the leading company was forced to deploy in the face of fire from 88-mm guns, tanks, and self-propelled artillery. The battalion commander decided to attack immediately, though his supporting armor was held up by demolitions and tank obstacles. One company moved to the left and charged from the flank as the advance guard made a frontal assault; the two companies then closed in on the town with a rush, destroying a light tank and a self-propelled gun. By 1600 the 3d Battalion had knocked out the machine-gun nests and had routed the snipers in Fondi; the remainder of the enemy rear guard, the 3d Battalion, 274th Grenadier Regiment, withdrew north toward Lenola after the main German forces.

Our reinforcements now began to stream up Highway 7, so that late in the afternoon the road from Itri to Fondi was filled with trucks, armor, and artillery and both sides were lined with marching troops. While the 85th Division moved forward in preparation for the attack on Terracina, the 88th Division drove northwest across the mountains. The 349th Infantry scaled the heights of Mount Passignano behind Fondi late on the 20th, left it to the 351st Infantry on the 21st, and pushed on to capture Cima del Monte after a sharp engagement with German machine gunners and riflemen. The 2d Battalion then went around the south side of this height and occupied Mount Monsicardi on the 22d. To its west the 350th Infantry came up from Fondi and broke through stiff resistance to occupy Mount Calvo on the 21st, netting 110 prisoners in the attack. On the following day the 350th Infantry pushed on northwest toward Roccasecca.

While the other two regiments of the division had been gaining Fondi and then the heights commanding the south side of the Lenola—Vallecorsa road, the 351st Infantry moved forward from Mount Grande. On the 20th the 2d Battalion started up Highway 82 for Mount Vele but found the French already in the area, so it turned west and joined the 3d Battalion on Mount Passignano on the 21st. The 1st Battalion marched north during the night of 20-21 May and occupied Mount Valletonda after a brisk battle with a German force guarding the Fondi—Lenola road. On the 22d the 3d Battalion drove from Mount Passignano to Mount Chia-vino on the north side of the Lenola—Vallecorsa road.

Significant gains had been made on 20-22 May by the 88th Division. Its dash and aggressiveness prevented the enemy from getting set in the Hitler Line, and did not give him time to bring up sufficient reinforcements to stem the tide. The mountain positions which our troops had gained north and northwest of Fondi protected the displacement forward of Corps artillery and also the attack by the 85th Division on the stubborn enemy garrison at Terracina. By this time II Corps and the FEC were again in contact; indeed, the 88th Division had drawn well ahead of the French left flank, which was driving toward Vallecorsa against heavy rearguard action. II Corps accordingly ordered the division to hold and improve its gains, while pushing an advance guard northwest to Roccasecca dei Volsci. The 350th Infantry reached this point on 23 May.

3. *Approach to Terracina.* On 20 May the 85th Division continued to clear the hills south of Highway 7 between Sperlonga and Gaeta. The following day the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, turned itself on Corps order into nautical infantry by embarking at Gaeta in Dukws and sailing 11 miles along the coast to Sperlonga. The landing was unopposed, and the battalion captured much enemy equipment. To the north the 337th Infantry drove on 21 May across the Fondi plain to the hills above Terracina. The 2d Battalion took the hamlet of Monte San Biagio and continued on to Mount Copiccio; the 3d Battalion accompanied it on the right; and the 1st Battalion struck directly at Terracina.

This first attempt to take the Corps objective followed Highway 7, which turns southwest from Fondi along the foot of the mountains. The land on the left is low and marshy, and the road runs for several miles through a narrow corridor between the hills and Lake Fondi. The mountains come down to the sea at Terracina in a high, finger-like ridge, on the slopes of which the older part of the town is built; the road itself runs on a narrow strip less than 100 yards wide between the cliffs and the sea. Every avenue of approach to the town is dominated by the mountains, but our recent experience offered some hope that one rush might seize the point.

The 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, preceded by elements of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and reinforced with a company each of tanks and tank destroyers, drove down Highway 7 during 21 May. The battalion was slowed as it approached Mount Giusto by mortar and machine-gun fire from the right flank, but it pressed on toward Terracina. Patrols of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron which reached the town were driven back; by 0230 on the next morning advance elements of the infantry had fought their way to points within a mile of the town, but were forced to retreat to Mount Croce under deadly German automatic-weapon fire.

The stiff enemy resistance was quickly explained when the first prisoners revealed that the 15th and 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiments of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division had been brought down from north of Rome and were now facing the 85th Division. The German High Command had thus committed one more of its few veteran reserve divisions. Unlike the 26th Panzer Division, which had been able to reach the Pico battle in time to slow the FEC materially, the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division arrived too late after its long march to prevent us from getting a foothold in the hills north of Terracina. As a result its stand was hopeless from the beginning, though the struggle to oust it from Terracina town was to last another two days.

4. *The Fall of Terracina.* The news of enemy reinforcements clearly necessitated a heavier attack on our part, for which preparations were made through the night of 21-22 May and on the following morning. The bulk of the Corps artillery had moved forward on the 21st to positions south of Fondi; on the 22d the other battalions displaced to the same area, and some pieces were advanced even closer to the front lines. The 240-mm howitzers of Battery A, 698th Field Artillery Battalion, thus went into position directly below Monte San Biagio, together with the 8-inch gun attached to the battalion. From this location the 8-inch gun could fire on Sezze, which was also reached by the 8-inch guns at the Anzio beachhead. The 105-mm howitzers of the 6th Field Artillery Group fired from positions below Mount Giusto and thus gave close support to the 85th Division Artillery.

At daylight on the 22d the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, discovered that German troops had infiltrated into its positions on Mount Croce. Withdrawal was immediately necessary, and the mountain was soon bristling with enemy machine guns. The 3d Battalion rushed up and together with the 1st Battalion on the left jumped off at 1530 to drive over Mount Croce and down the south slopes into Terracina. This battle went on throughout the afternoon with the 1st Battalion bearing the brunt of the effort. Our men had to fight for every inch of the rocky terrain, pressing forward in short rushes or crawling from boulder to boulder to wipe out snipers and machine-gun nests one by one. Mortar and artillery fire from behind Terracina was intense, and the enemy resisted fanatically, often holding out until his positions were overrun and he was killed manning his gun. By dark our advance elements were over the mountain and were forcing their way down the slopes toward the cemetery a mile north of the town. The 1st Battalion, having fought for 36 hours without rest, was too exhausted to continue.

Some consideration had been given to sending one or three battalions of the 338th Infantry in Dukws from Sperlonga to attack Terracina from the east, but the strength of the enemy and the opening of Highway 7 almost to the town made this operation impracticable. Instead, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 338th Infantry,

were directed to attack across Mount Santo Stefano with the mission of seizing Mount Leano and blocking Highway 7 behind Terracina. This flanking movement, if successful, would cut the main escape route of the German garrison in the town.

The 3d Battalion, however, was forced to make a detour as a result of events at the railroad tunnel to the north. A company of the 337th Infantry had been sent to block the east end of the tunnel and had arrived just in time to catch elements of the 1st Battalion, 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, debouching from its mouth. Accurate rifle and machine-gun fire scattered the enemy in confusion, and the company rounded up about 50 prisoners. The 3d Battalion, 338th Infantry, came up to reinforce our guard; bombers were dispatched to smash the western entrance; and tank destroyers came up to fire more than 50 rounds point-blank into the mouth of the tunnel.

At 1330, 22 May, General Keyes requested the prearranged drop by the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion before dark to block the west end of the tunnel, but the mission could not be executed until the morning of the 23d. Progress of the 337th Infantry on Mount Croce during the rest of the 22d made the drop unnecessary, and a new plan for the employment of the paratroopers, Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 22 (*See Annex No. 1H*), was issued at that time. This plan contemplated either of two drops in the mountains above the Pontine Marshes; again, as it turned out, neither drop was necessary.

The action of the railroad tunnel prevented the 338th Infantry from launching its attack until 0600, 23 May. Two hours later the 2d Battalion, 337th Infantry, which had relieved the 1st Battalion, attacked with the 3d Battalion and the 760th Tank Battalion down the slopes of Mount Croce toward Terracina. The enemy resistance was as fierce as ever; mortar and artillery fire, rockets, machine-gun and rifle fire from stone houses and pillboxes swept the slopes constantly. Extremely rugged terrain and mud from the recent rains impeded the progress of both infantry and armor. By the middle of the morning, nevertheless, the 2d Battalion was almost to the cemetery; in another 4 hours it was 100 yards beyond. Crawling and infiltrating forward, the men of the 2d and 3d Battalions were at the outskirts of Terracina by midnight.

The enemy stand for Terracina was almost over. The 337 Infantry was at the entrance to the town, and the 338th Infantry was making good progress toward Mount Leano. Farther away, other movements of our troops were drawing a noose about not only the garrison of Terracina but also all the German troops in the Pontine Marshes. The 339th Infantry had moved along Highway 7 from Fondi in the night of 21-22 May, halted for the 22d at the edge of the mountains, and on the 23d advanced over extremely rugged terrain to capture Sonnino. The 1st Battalion seized the hills to the left, and the 2d Battalion those to the right of



the objective; then the 3d Battalion passed through the center and assailed the town at 1830. In 45 minutes the surprised garrison from the 3d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, was in full rout with its commander in our hands, and our troops stood at a point threatening the enemy escape route through Priverno. Even more dangerous was the beginning of the beachhead offensive on 23 May, aimed at cutting Highway 7 near Cisterna and then Highway 6 near Valmontone. Our initial successes in this push forced the enemy before II Corps into a race to clear out of the Lepini Mountains before his escape route was barred at Valmontone. During the night of 23-24 May the 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and the 103d Reconnaissance Battalion evacuated Terracina; thereafter II Corps action again became the pursuit of a fleeing enemy.

5. *Driving up the Pontine Marshes.* Our attack on Terracina had been pressed relentlessly, for much depended on its successful and speedy conclusion. If II Corps were held up before the town beyond a certain point, its subsequent transfer to the Anzio beachhead would be delayed, and the success of our drive on Rome might thereby be imperiled. Spurred on by imperative orders, the 85th Division had smashed through the bottleneck in good time; before dawn on the 24th patrols of the 337th Infantry entered the town and reported the enemy withdrawal. The three battalions of the regiment closed in speedily while the 338th Infantry advanced to Mount Leano. By 0800, 24 May, Terracina was completely in our hands.

Orders from General Keyes had already directed the Corps to seize the line of the Amaseno River, covering itself on the right on the ridge running down to Roccasecca; units were then to reorganize and prepare for farther advance about 26 May, except for those reconnaissance elements which were to open up the road to the beachhead. Engineers entered Terracina with the infantry and hastily bulldozed a path. The first units pushed through were some artillery batteries to protect farther advance; then about 1000 the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, with the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron attached, cleared the town to fan out on all roads in the Pontine Marshes in the race to Anzio. Delay was caused chiefly by heavy demolitions, for the enemy had already evacuated this sector. Our engineers worked feverishly to by-pass all obstacles, and cub planes which reconnoitered the routes of advance reported that Italian civilians were assisting us by filling craters ahead of our troops.

As the van of II Corps pushed north throughout the night, other forces were preparing to move south from the beachhead. By Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 23, 24 May (*See Annex No. 1J*), General Clark relieved the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment, with its present attachments, from VI Corps and ordered it to be ready to break out via Littoria. At 2145, 24 May, the 36th Engineers under Col. Thomas H. Stanley received orders to put its plans into execution. The Brett

Force, composed of the 1st Battalion, 36th Engineers, tank destroyers, and elements of the reconnaissance unit of the British 1 Division, moved out at 0305, 25 May. After daylight on the 25th the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron made contact at a number of points below Borgo Grappa with the Brett Force, beginning at 0731 and culminating at 1020 when a party under General Clark officially met the southern forces.

Two weeks after D Day on the southern front the two sections of Fifth Army had joined. The isolated Anzio beachhead, the maintenance of which had been one of the most heroic stories of the Fifth Army campaign in Italy, had existed 125 days. Highway 7 was opened immediately, and supplies began to flow from the southern dumps to support the drive on Rome. The shift of II Corps, however, was delayed until the FEC could pull up on its right flank. For the next few days the 85th Division continued to garrison the area about Sonnino, while the 88th Division held the long ridge from Mount Monsicardi northwest to Roccasecca.

### C. *THE FEC DRIVE THROUGH PICO*

20-25 MAY

1. *Plans for the Pico Operation.* (See Map No. 11.) A main objective of Fifth Army from the beginning of the offensive was the town of Pico, at the junction of roads from Pontecorvo, Ceprano, and Itri. By the afternoon of 19 May the FEC front formed a quarter circle around the Pico area, extending from Mounts della Comune and del Mandrone on the east of Pico to Serra del Lago and Campodimele on the south. Three divisions were in the line: the 1st Motorized Division on the right below Pontecorvo; the 3d Algerian Division in the center, west of Sant'Oliva; and the 4th Mountain Division in the hills to the left. The tabors of the Mountain Corps held the extreme left about Campodimele.

The FEC was thus in position to launch concentric drives on the objective from east and south. Plans had been laid as early as 17 May, and much of the French operations during 17-19 May had been executed in accordance with these plans. The Pico drive was so directed by General Juin as to keep his forces striking at several objectives, but also to permit the concentration of all his forces on the Pico area if necessary. The operations of the FEC were further complicated by the provision of Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 19 that the French would be prepared to drive after the capture of Pico either north on Ceprano or west toward the Siserno hill mass, depending on the progress of Eighth Army.

Primary responsibility for taking Pico was assigned to the 3d Algerian Division, already pushing west on the Esperia—Sant'Oliva axis, but the division was

warned that it might also have Ceprano as its next objective. Accordingly the division commander, General de Monsabert, divided his forces into three groups with appropriate missions. The first, composed of the 3d Algerian Infantry and attached units, already held Mounts della Comune and del Mandrone. This Linares Group was to block the eastern approaches to Pico by cutting the Pico—Pontecorvo road and taking Mount Leucio; its attached tanks and tank destroyers were to prevent any movement of enemy armor into the area.

The second group under Colonel Chappuis consisted of the 7th Algerian Infantry, a company of chemical mortars, and a battalion of 105-mm howitzers, with the mission of taking Pico and the hills to the east and west thereof as speedily as possible. The third force, the Bonjour Group, was composed of the 755th Tank Battalion (less one company of medium tanks), six self-propelled 105-mm howitzers, an engineer company, and those elements of the 4th Spahi Reconnaissance Battalion not assigned to Colonel Linares. This group was to pass through Pico after the 7th Algerian Infantry had taken the town and move rapidly to San Giovanni Incarico and Ceprano; it would then be ready to push on toward Frosinone and Arce. In the event that Pico did not fall at the first attack, Colonel Bonjour was directed to aid Colonel Chappuis in securing that point.

While the 3d Algerian Division blocked the east, secured Pico, and pressed on toward Ceprano, the 1st Motorized Division would provide protection to the right flank by advancing along the Liri River until such time as Eighth Army came abreast of the 3d Algerian Division. Then the 1st Motorized Division would pass to Corps reserve. On the left flank the 4th Mountain Division and the groups of tabors would guard the 3d Algerian Division attack on Pico; this Mountain Corps was also assigned the mission of gaining an initial foothold on the Pastena and Lenola roads in preparation for a possible advance westward to the Siserno hill mass. Elements of the 756th Tank Battalion, which was attached to the FEC on 19 May, moved up through Itri and set to work with tank destroyers, reconnaissance troops, and engineers attached to clear the enemy self-propelled guns on the Itri—Pico road and to spearhead the drive along the road from Campodimele to Pico.

The bulk of the Corps artillery had moved on 17-18 May to positions in the vicinity of San Giorgio and Ausonia. During 19-21 May a number of battalions again displaced forward to the Sant'Oliva—Monticelli area and the open ground east of Mount d'Oro. One 240-mm howitzer was advanced to the northeast slopes of this peak on the 20th. From these positions the 13th Field Artillery Brigade was able to render efficient support to the Pico attack, but movement forward thereafter became difficult as the roads grew clogged with supply columns.

The plans of the FEC were carefully made, for the operation against Pico was a major one. With the Gustav Line broken and the FEC threatening the Hitler

Line, the enemy had issued an order at 1800, 19 May, to all his troops remaining in the area south of the Liri and east of Pico to fall back to the Pico—Pontecorvo line. To back up these scattered remnants the bulk of the veteran 26th Panzer Division was already in position under stringent orders to hold on to Pico as long as possible. The enemy's only hope now was to salvage the remnants of the German Tenth Army in the south for a stand on the Velletri—Avezzano line, but to gain time for such a withdrawal the main enemy forces in the Liri Valley had to make a temporary stand on the Hitler Line. If they were to hold at all, it was vital to delay the French below the Liri River. German opposition accordingly proved much more severe before the FEC than before II Corps.

2. *Smashing the Outer Defenses of Pico.* During the afternoon of 19 May elements of the 7th Algerian Infantry eliminated two pockets of enemy resistance in the hills south of Sant'Oliva which commanded the mouth of the valley between Mount del Mandrone and Mount Cozonella. The garrison of these posts retreated west in fairly good order and attempted to blast their way out by attacking the 4th Mountain Division troops on Serra del Lago. This attack was crushed, and the enemy was wiped out. The Mountain Corps, however, made no advance, for the enemy self-propelled guns on the road just north of Campodimele prevented the tabors which had seized the village in the morning from pushing on to the northwest. Off on the right flank of the FEC attempts by the 1st Motorized Division during the afternoon of the 19th to advance beyond Forma Quesa Creek were met by heavy fire from enemy tanks in the Mount Leucio area as soon as our armor and infantry moved around the shoulder of Mount della Comune. Air missions were requested against this opposition, but poor flying conditions prevented the desired support.

On the morning of the 20th the 7th Algerian Infantry tried to cross the valley of Forma di Sant'Oliva Creek from Mount della Comune with the objective of seizing the crest of Mount Pota above Pico. When intense fire from the enemy positions on Mount Leucio plastered the valley and prevented our advance, this effort was temporarily halted until Mount Leucio was taken. The 3d Algerian Infantry made considerable progress against very heavy opposition in the morning and by mid-afternoon held Mount Leucio together with the Pico—Pontecorvo road at a point due north of Mount della Comune. A battalion of the 4th Tunisian Infantry on its left cut the road at the base of Mount Leucio.

The 7th Algerian Infantry then surged west across the valley of Forma di Sant'Oliva Creek and battered down stubborn enemy resistance from the 334th Fusilier Battalion to gain the crest of Mounts Cozonella and Pota before dark. Heavy fire from Pico halted this push, but patrols were sent down the west slopes of

Mount Pota toward the town. Under cover of darkness the first French troops to reach Pico began to feel out the enemy defenses in the town.

To their left the Guillaume Group of the Mountain Corps, composed of the 4th Group of Tabors (plus one tabor of the 1st Group), the 1st Moroccan Infantry (less one battalion), and a battalion of the 69th Algerian Artillery Regiment, drove north on the 20th from Campodimele. The route chosen followed the hills, for enemy opposition on the road was still too strong for the lightly equipped mountain troops. The attack went well though the enemy infantry in the hills fought hard, and by dusk the group held Mount Croce and Mount Fontanino. The Bondis Group, still composed of the 3d Group of Tabors, the 2d Moroccan Infantry (less one battalion), one battalion of the 1st Moroccan Infantry, and one battalion of the 69th Algerian Artillery Regiment, moved north from Serra del Lago to speed the drive; a patrol from this group was reported just south of Pico shortly after dark. The Cherière Group, formed from the 1st Group of Tabors (less one tabor), the 6th Moroccan Infantry (less one battalion), and a battalion of artillery, crossed the Itri—Pico road and made preliminary demonstrations toward Lenola.

The net had been closed tightly around Pico from east and south on 20 May, and the outer defenses to this communications center were broken. The main aim of the Pico operation had been accomplished, for the enemy had been deprived of the use of the Pico—Pontecorvo road. The German forces in the Liri Valley had lost another escape route; furthermore, the French now held Mount Leucio, the only dominant terrain feature along the river between San Giovanni and Pontecorvo. For our further advance, however, it was necessary to drive the enemy completely out of Pico itself.

3. *The First Battle for Pico.* At 0640, 21 May, the 1st Motorized Division occupied Mount Marrone, a small hill a few hundred yards west of Pontecorvo. Other elements of the division moved north past Mount Leucio almost to San Giovanni Incarico by noon. On the left of the FEC front the Guillaume Group turned west from Mount Croce and crossed the Itri—Pico road under support from the armored group, which had made its way north from Itri. A force was sent toward Lenola, and the hills which dominated the town from the east and south were seized against relatively light opposition. This advance was aided both by the simultaneous drive of the 88th Division into the hills above Fondi and by the previous activities of the Cherière Group east of Lenola.

In the center the 3d Algerian Division was poised on Mounts Pota, Cozonella, and Leucio for the drive into Pico. Before the patrols which had been sent to investigate the Pico defenses had all reported back, the 7th Algerian Infantry raced down the north slopes of Mount Pota, crossed the Pico—Pontecorvo road under fire from enemy guns in the eastern outskirts of the town, and entered the orchards

on Campo dei Morti east of Pico. By noon these slopes were mopped up despite heavy enemy fire. Other troops attempted to descend into Pico itself against fierce enemy resistance which threatened to produce a counterattack with artillery and armored support. One infantry company continued on through the heavy fire and gained the first houses in the town by 1635, but lost contact to the rear. . Another company pushed on behind it and regained touch with the leading elements at 1830.

Though the French forces had seemingly gained a foothold in the outskirts of Pico at the approach of dusk, the enemy resistance had not slackened, and the battle was far from over on the front of the FEC. Off to the northeast an enemy force of 50 tanks moving along the north bank of the Liri toward Pontecorvo opened fire at 1430 on the 1st Brigade, 1st Motorized Division, as it fanned out over the valley floor. The artillery of the division and of the Canadian Corps put down heavy concentrations which forced the tanks to withdraw; fighter-bombers summoned to the scene continued the attack and inflicted some damage. The enemy, however, was not daunted. Under cover of dusk ten enemy tanks and a battalion of infantry moved southeast along the Liri and at 1830 struck the extended point of the 1st Brigade, which had reached the area just south of San Giovanni. The fierceness of the assault forced our troops to give way, and the battle rolled slowly south in the gathering darkness. The French troops, spread out between Mount Leucio and Pontecorvo, fought bravely, as the enemy tanks stabbed relentlessly at their loose formations on the gently rolling floor of the Liri Valley. Four times the leading companies of the 1st Brigade counterattacked in an effort to stabilize the line; three times they failed, but finally about midnight a line was established between Mount Leucio and Mount Marrone and was held firmly under nebelwerfer and 88-mm fire.

Another force of 20 enemy tanks supported by infantry appeared at 2330 just west of Mount Leucio, attacked the 7th Algerian Infantry elements on Campo dei Morti, and pushed them back toward Mount Pota. At Pico a force of 22 tanks, including at least 2 Tiger tanks, attacked the 2 infantry companies in the outskirts of the town. All these thrusts, aimed at blunting the FEC drive, were determined; and everywhere the French had to yield ground. Nevertheless, we still held Mount Leucio and thus a grasp on the Pico—Pontecorvo road. At Pico the infantry fought vigorously to maintain the foothold established in the afternoon; finally about midnight the tanks of the Bonjour Group drove in to the south of Pico and forced the enemy armor to stop its attack.

4. *The Second Battle for Pico.* After the enemy tanks had been driven back, the two companies of the 7th Algerian Infantry in the outskirts of the town were withdrawn under threat of encirclement. Early the next morning, 22 May, the regiment reported indications of an enemy withdrawal and again pressed forward

to Campo dei Morti and the south side of Pico. At 1130 the regiment broke into the town from the east. The Chèrrière Group of the Mountain Corps, freed from its holding mission east of Lenola by the advance of the Guillaume Group, moved north along the Itri—Pico road and entered the western edge of Pico about noon. Together the two units proceeded to mop up the remainder of the German garrison, which had been greatly weakened by the withdrawal of the enemy tanks. The Bonjour Group of armor, which had taken part in beating off the counterattack during the night, did not participate in the street fighting, but gave supporting fire from the hills to the south. By 1540 Pico was definitely in the hands of the FEC.

On the left the Mountain Corps had continued its attack on Lenola during the day against mounting resistance. The Guillaume Group already controlled the heights to the east and south of the village and gained contact with II Corps at the road junction just south of Lenola, thus linking up the Fifth Army front in this area for the first time. The armored group operating on the Itri—Pico road with the Mountain Corps destroyed the enemy self-propelled guns at the Lenola—Pico road junction during the morning. When his flanks had been secured by these actions, General Guillaume began his attack in the early afternoon. Before dusk the heights north of Lenola had been taken; by 1900 the village itself was in our hands with 250 prisoners. The majority of the garrison from the 2d Battalion, 276th Grenadier Regiment, and other units, had surrendered after a bitter fight, for the 88th Division had cut its escape route to Vallecorsa by occupying Mount Chia-vino and Cima del Monte.

5. *Exploitation to the West and North.* The battle for Pico was essentially completed by dark of 22 May. Though the area had not yet been entirely cleared of its stubborn defenders, the key points were in our hands, and the FEC line ran from Lenola northeast through the hills west of Pico to Mount Leucio. This advance placed French troops behind the Hitler Line and marked the collapse of that defensive position; the 26th Panzer Division had withdrawn to the northwest, and the forces before Eighth Army in the Liri Valley were already beginning to pull out.

At a conference on 22 May between General Clark and General Juin, the plans for the opening of the next phase of the Allied offensive were discussed. VI Corps was to begin its attack to break out of the beachhead at 0630 on the following day. Eighth Army would launch its drive through the Hitler Line at the same time. In order to prevent the enemy from withdrawing forces from the southern front and to maintain pressure on the enemy in the Liri Valley, the FEC was directed to attack toward Ceprano and Castro dei Volsci at 0600, 23 May. The full striking power of the French forces was to be used to gain the objectives as quickly as possible.

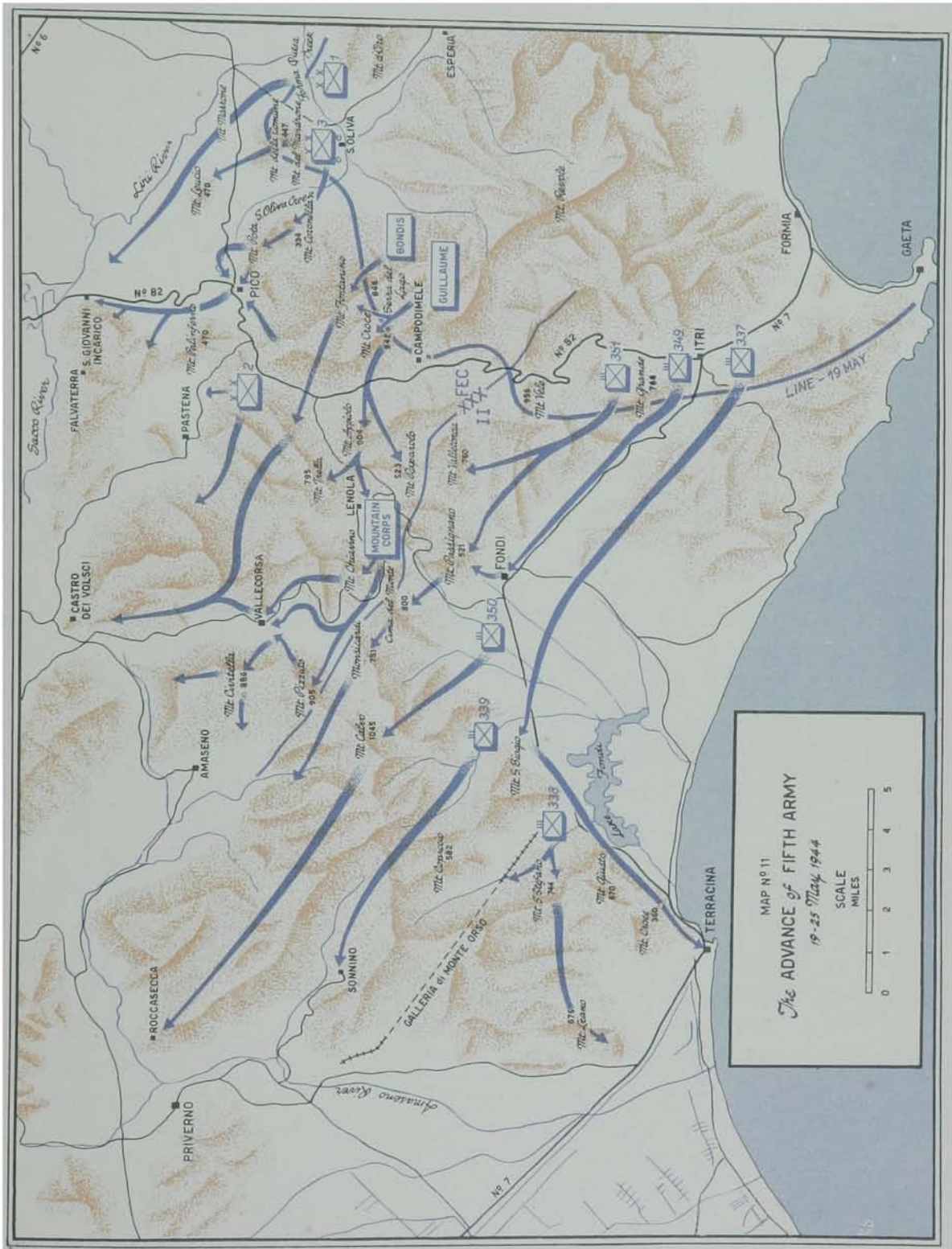
Detailed plans for the FEC ordered the Mountain Corps to continue on the left flank, driving in a northwesterly direction toward Castro dei Volsci from the Lenola area. The armored group would move up the road, supported by an infantry group in the mountains on either side. The Bondis Group would push west through the mountains from its positions near Pico, covering the right flank of the Mountain Corps and the left flank of the 2d Moroccan Division. The latter division had been moved to the Sant' Oliva area on 21-22 May, and was committed in the attack of the 23d to take up the drive on the Pastena road. The 3d Algerian Division remained in the line to its right to advance frontally on San Giovanni, Falvaterra, and Ceprano. This operation would pinch out the 1st Motorized Division, which was to guard the right flank of the FEC along the Liri River until Eighth Army drew abreast of the 3d Algerian Division. The guard of Mount Leucio and the hills east of Pico was also turned over to the 1st Motorized Division, which finally passed into Corps reserve on 25 May.

Because the breakout from Anzio required all available air support, the Corps artillery was the only means available to back up the FEC attack. Concentrated fire on the road net in the area San Giovanni—Ceprano—Pastena—Castro dei Volsci—Vallecorsa was to be supplied by the Corps battalions already in the Sant'Oliva—Monticelli region, and those units which were still in the rear were brought up to reinforce the fires. Since some aid was also to be given the Canadians on our right flank, the 17th Field Artillery Group and the 995th Field Artillery Battalion swung their guns north to place concentrations on the Hitler Line above Pontecorvo.

Our advance on the first day of the new attack was very scant. On the left the Mountain Corps relieved the 88th Division on Mount Chiavino and gained Mount Pizzuto to the southwest of Vallecorsa, but the armored group was held south of the village by enemy demolitions. Though the 8th Moroccan Infantry of the 2d Moroccan Division secured a foothold in the heights south of Pastena after heavy fighting, other elements of the division moving up from Sant'Oliva to Pico were stopped by a small pocket of enemy troops well emplaced at the southeastern entrance to Pico. A Tiger tank came to the assistance of the enemy troops from somewhere in the rubble of the town, and it was almost noon before the opposition was liquidated. Then the group pushed west on the Pastena road, but was halted west of Mount Palinferno by enemy fire from Pastena.

Before any considerable progress had been made by the 3d Algerian Division in its drive on Ceprano, a heavy enemy counterattack coming from the north pinned the advance guard in the northeastern outskirts of Pico and kept it there until dark. Another counterattack forced the 7th Algerian Infantry off Mount Palinferno. Fresh enemy troops, consisting this time of the 755th and 756th Grenadier Regiments from the Adriatic, had again appeared on our front and had apparently





MAP No 11  
**The Advance of Fifth Army**  
 19-25 May 1944

SCALE  
 MILES

0 1 2 3 4 5

received the sacrifice mission of holding the FEC until the Hitler Line in the Liri Valley could be evacuated.

Failure to break through on the first day did not deter the French, and our forces continued the attack on the 24th. The offensive was now split more definitely into two drives, one north toward Ceprano and the other northwest into the area between Castro dei Volsci and Amaseno. Since the success of Eighth Army in the first day of its attack against the Hitler Line permitted the FEC to swing more of its forces to the northwest, our progress improved markedly. The 1st Group of Tabors on Mount Pizzuto was counterattacked at noon on the 24th and lost the crest, but the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, pushed northwest from Mount Monsicardi and helped the goumiers regain the summit.

The main center of resistance in this area now became Vallecorsa, from which the enemy launched small counterattacks in profusion. To eliminate this irritating activity the armored group and goumiers from the east pushed into the village by 1720. During the night an armor and infantry battle raged inside the village, and our troops were expelled several times. Since the bulk of the FEC artillery was out of range, the 77th Field Artillery Group of the II Corps artillery in positions about Fondi put down heavy concentrations on the morning of the 25th, and the FEC gained final possession of the point. From Vallecorsa the Mountain Corps turned west across the mountains to Amaseno and north to Castro dei Volsci. On the right the 3d Algerian Division had not fared so well on 24 May, for strong enemy forces centered at San Giovanni repeatedly counterattacked the French infantry and armor. Pastena likewise held out, but Mount Palinferno was retaken by the 7th Algerian Infantry. On the 25th our progress improved, and as darkness fell advance elements of the 3d Algerian Division entered San Giovanni.

Thereafter the German battle became only a delaying action in front of the FEC, designed to hold open the routes of escape for the enemy in front of II Corps on the west and Eighth Army on the east. During the Pico battle the German High Command had made vigorous efforts to prevent the French from advancing through the Hitler Line and the hills beyond, and had by its reinforcements indicated its view of the importance of the French drive. The 26th Panzer Division had made the Pico stand, and had been completely defeated. Two regiments of the 334th Grenadier Division had been brought from the Adriatic to San Giovanni Incarico, and now too were retreating. Again the FEC had fulfilled the mission assigned to it. Though its success this time had little influence on the actual progress of II Corps except insofar as the American divisions could not be transferred to the beachhead until the French were up, the French penetration was of marked importance in facilitating the advance of Eighth Army in the Liri Valley.

## D. THE EIGHTH ARMY ATTACK ON THE HITLER LINE

19-25 MAY

The activity of Eighth Army during the period 19-25 May consisted of preparing and then delivering an attack against that part of the Hitler Line which lay between Pontecorvo and Piedimonte. (*See Map No. 16.*) In the previous week 13 Corps had broken the Gustav Line and had taken Cassino while the Polish Corps on the right had occupied Monastery Hill. By the 19th 1 Canadian Corps had come into the line on the left just east of Pontecorvo, 13 Corps held the north side of the Liri Valley east of Aquino, and the Polish Corps lay at the outskirts of Piedimonte.

The next three days were spent in preparation for the attack on the steel and concrete fortifications of the Hitler Line, which were almost continuous across the rolling, stream-cut Liri Valley. At first it appeared that the Germans intended to put up a stout battle. Enemy armored units which had lost their tanks became infantry, service and other rear elements were pressed into the line, and reinforcements were brought up. The movements of Eighth Army were delayed by heavy rains on 19-21 May; during this period minor attacks were launched along the line to explore the enemy defenses, and the Poles fought an indecisive battle to take Piedimonte, the northern anchor of the Hitler Line.

When Eighth Army was finally ready to launch its attack, it discovered that the enemy was retreating. On the 21st the Germans had failed to retake the vital point of Mount Leucio, and on the 22d the French capture of Pico threatened to trap all the enemy forces; accordingly the German High Command issued orders for a withdrawal all along the front to the Valmontone—Avezzano line. The Eighth Army attack jumped off at 0630, 23 May, and made rapid progress. During the morning the Canadians cut the Pontecorvo—Aquino road midway between the two towns, and fresh troops widened the breach that evening against heavy rearguard action.

On the following morning the 5 Canadian Armoured Division passed through the infantry to exploit the success. The leading tanks were at the Melfa River by 1600, 24 May, and other elements were fanning out to the north in an effort to cut off the enemy in Aquino and Piedimonte. These rearguards, however, slipped out in the night of 24-25 May. On the 25th the Canadians crossed the Melfa, the Poles entered Piedimonte, and Eighth Army swung into the pursuit of a retreating enemy. The price of its success to 0600, 25 May, had been for 13 Corps 791 killed, 3910 wounded, and 523 missing; for I Canadian Corps 172 killed, 729 wounded, and 57 missing: a total for both corps of 6182 casualties since D Day.

## E. SUPPLY OF THE FIFTH ARMY ATTACK

By 25 May the ever increasing speed of the Fifth Army advance was imposing its natural burdens on the supply system. These strains had largely been foreseen, and steps taken to counteract them; at no time were the operations of Fifth Army or its subordinate units seriously hampered by difficulties in supply. The most critical problem, that of supporting the French Mountain Corps in its drive across the Petrella massif, was partly solved by the aerial drop.

During the first phase of the attack the existing installations of Fifth Army situated to the east of Mount Massico proved sufficient to meet all demands. After 16 May the more rapid advance began to entail long hauls from the Army dumps, and new facilities were opened along Highway 7, the main supply route. Ordnance led the way with two new ammunition supply points west of Mount Massico on the 16th; on the 20th two more were opened, one south of Ausonia for the FEC and the other west of San Martino Hill for II Corps. On the 22d, when our troops were still battling for Terracina, a forward ammunition point was established along Highway 7 halfway between Itri and Fondi.

This district, together with the area immediately about Itri, was utilized by several other services. Truckheads for Class I and Class III supplies were opened west of Itri on the 22d; the following day a subdepot for quartermaster Class II and IV issue was established in the same region. The 95th Evacuation Hospital, together with an Army dump for medical Class II and IV supplies, moved north of Itri on 24 May. In the western outskirts of the town the 3005th Quartermaster Bakery Company set up on 27 May.

Supply bases for the FEC were pushed up more slowly, for the terrain and roads were less favorable. Class I truckheads were set up at Sant'Andrea and below Castelforte on the 20th; three days later another opened at the Esperia—Ausonia road junction. Two of the French hospitals moved to the vicinity of Castelforte, one on either side of the Garigliano, on the 20th, and the third shifted to a position north of Ausonia on the 24th. Throughout the drive the area for which the FEC was responsible remained much larger than that of II Corps, for the north flank of the French was always open. On 20 May Fifth Army took over all areas east of and including, the Garigliano River from both corps. The following day the boundary between II Corps and Army was advanced to a line running from the junction of Highway 7 and the Ausonia road north to Spigno; on the 24th the Army boundary was again moved forward to the line Sperlonga—Itri—Mount Vele—Spigno. These shifts still left the FEC in charge of all the area from Mount Majo west.

The junction with the beachhead and the opening of Highway 7 all the way from the Garigliano to Cisterna obviated the establishment of further supply points

in any great numbers, for II Corps troops could draw on the extensive dumps which had already been built up at Anzio. The junction, however, together with the subsequent shift of II Corps to the Anzio area placed new burdens on the engineers and on the quartermaster truck companies. The supply lines of the FEC grew ever longer along the mediocre roads south of the Liri; moreover, II Corps and VI Corps both could not be sustained indefinitely from the Anzio dumps. As a result the engineers repaired and kept in operation as many land routes from the south as possible, and all transportation available was pressed into the task of moving units and supplies from the southern front over these routes.

The work of the engineers after D Day had consisted initially of throwing additional bridges across the Garigliano, one Class 40 bridge in the II Corps zone and two Class 40 bridges in the FEC zone. In addition, Tiger Bridge had been strengthened to Class 30, and three assault bridges were constructed for the movement of men and mules. Thereafter a good deal of by-passing and some improvement of trails into roads for jeeps, tanks, and 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-ton trucks were required at the lower end of the Ausonia Valley, but from 16 May on the efforts of the engineers were thrown primarily into opening up Highway 7 and the Ausonia—Esperia—Pico route.

On Highway 7 the 337th Engineer General Service Regiment constructed a permanent bridge over the Garigliano. The 19th Engineer Combat Regiment and then the 343d Engineer General Service Regiment carried out most of the work as far as the Bailey bridge south of Itri, which involved chiefly some by-passing in Formia and the filling of craters. The Itri bridge and the road beyond to Terracina were initially the responsibility of the 310th Engineer Combat Battalion of the 85th Division, which then turned them over to the 19th Engineers. To reduce the load on Highway 7 the 48th and 235th Engineer Combat Battalions opened an additional route which cut off Highway 7 east of Fondi and ran down to the sea. At Terracina the Corps engineers worked so close to the infantry that a sudden reversal of the battle on 22 May forced the crews of two D-7 dozers to abandon their vehicles temporarily. On the morning of the 24th the 85th Division engineers and Company D, 19th Engineers, drove through the town and up Highway 7. Beyond the town all engineer units available were pressed into the work of repairing three routes up the Pontine Marshes; these troops labored night and day to open the roads and keep them in shape under the heavy traffic. The streams and canals fortunately were low, and the German attempts to flood the marshes had been only partially successful. Some by-passing, a little bridging, and a good deal of filling were necessary.

As soon as Highway 7 and the supplementary routes were opened to the beach-head, a constant stream of units and supplies began to move up from the south front to Anzio. With some aid from the water route, the bulk of the Fifth Army units had shifted north by the first days of June, and long motor columns brought

up the supplies in the southern dumps. Regularly 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-ton trucks were loaded to 4 tons, and convoys rolled night and day in a 24-hour turnaround. Strict road supervision was necessary, and movement through the bottleneck at Terracina was severely controlled. Even after our entry into Rome the hauling went on, but eventually the supplies which remained in the south were turned over to PBS. The base moved them back to Naples and shipped them up by water to Anzio Port, operation of which was turned over by the Army to PBS at midnight on 31 May.

This long-distance transportation and most of the supply within Fifth Army after D Day was carried out by trucks. The railroad was extended north only slowly from Sessa, for Eighth Army had priority on repair of the line in the Liri Valley. After the gasoline pipeline had been extended to Terracina, well behind our advance, it was taken up and used for our drive north from Rome. In addition to trucks, aerial resupply was used on a few occasions. Various units of Fifth Army also had recourse once more to their friends of the winter campaign, the mule companies. The French Mountain Corps relied heavily on its animals, and the divisions of II Corps were forced to use mule trains extensively during their drive over the mountains northwest of Fondi.





*Opening the vital routes to Anzio across the flooded Pontine Marshes.*



*General Clark greets an officer from the southern front, 25 May 1944.*



*Our armor gathers to spearhead the breakout from the Anzio beachhead.*



*An M-4 tank of the 1st Armored Division slid off the road into a crater.*



## *VI Corps Breaks Through at Cisterna*

THE rapid success of the Fifth Army troops on the southern front had made the junction with the beachhead inevitable several days before the actual meeting on the morning of 25 May. The time had come for the forces at Anzio to begin their part of the operation, and on 23 May VI Corps on Army order initiated the second major phase of the Fifth Army drive on Rome. This new offensive, which was aimed first at breaking the German defenses before Cisterna, rapidly became the main effort of Fifth Army.

### A. *THE ANZIO BEACHHEAD*

*See Map No. 12*

1. *Our Situation.* By the beginning of March our troops had halted the fierce enemy counterattacks on the Anzio beachhead, and our positions were stabilized along the general line which they retained for the next two and one-half months. Minor fluctuations in the actual front were produced by successful small-unit actions on the part of our troops or the enemy, but each side had a main line of resistance which it defended strongly. On 22 May our front ran from the sea on the west along the ridge south of the Moletta River to the Albano road. Then it curved northeast about the Factory to Carano, followed Carano Creek a short distance and cut southeast parallel to the Campoleone—Cisterna railroad. At the Mussolini Canal our line turned southwest and followed the canal to the sea. This beachhead perimeter was garrisoned from left to right by the 5, 1, 45th, and 34th Divisions and the 36th Engineers.

Reserves and supplies at the Anzio beachhead were steadily built up during the first half of May. The 3d Division, which had been relieved in the line by the 45th Division at the beginning of the month, lay in reserve on the eastern flank.

With the arrival of Combat Command B at the beachhead by small increments during 26 April-7 May the 1st Armored Division was complete. The success of the drive on the southern front released the 36th Division, which moved up in large convoys on four nights, closing east of Nettuno the morning of 22 May. To meet the additional demands on transportation if the beachhead situation again became fluid, several truck companies were transferred to Anzio before the attack, and the balance of divisional transportation also arrived before or during the early stages of the drive. Stocks of ammunition at Anzio, always large to safeguard against a spell of bad weather, were further increased; by the end of the first few days of May a 30-day reserve in all supplies had been placed on the beachhead, in addition to the regular 10-day operating level.

For almost two weeks after the jump-off on the southern front activity at the beachhead remained much the same as it had been throughout all of April. By day our troops remained in their dugouts, asleep or resting, while sentries stood guard. At night the regular routine of trench life began anew, and a usual number of patrols went out to explore enemy positions. Our artillery harassed the enemy; in return enemy artillery continued to search out our rear areas, though on a reduced scale. Enemy air activity also decreased, as the Germans diverted their weak air force to the Garigliano River bridges. Despite the outwardly normal tenor of life the troops and commanders at the beachhead were making their final preparations. Training of units in tank-infantry co-operation was intensified. Tank crews received instruction in the techniques of artillery support. Artillery battalions dug new positions and dumped initial supplies of ammunition. Further reconnaissance and aeral photography flights continued to improve our knowledge of German positions and compensated in large part for our lack of good terrestrial observation.

Along with the training and planning went an inculcation of the offensive spirit in soldiers who had long been on the defensive. Our commanders realized that it is not easy to lead men accustomed to the shelter of a foxhole forward through enemy fires, and the beachhead attack illustrated several difficulties in the switch from defense to offense. Nonetheless, the attention paid to the psychological problem involved in the attack was highly successful, and our troops displayed an aggressive attitude throughout the bitter fighting that followed.

2. *The Enemy Situation.* During the first three weeks in May the enemy remained even more quiet than during the previous month, presumably hoarding his men and ammunition for the impending attack. His corps artillery shifted to the northwest section of the beachhead, but his front-line garrison remained much the same as previously. On 22 May five divisions held the enemy perimeter. The 4th Parachute Division garrisoned the coastal sector north of the Moletta, with the 65th Grenadier Division on its east astride the Albano road. The 3d Panzer

Grenadier Division with the Infantry Lehr Regiment under its command held the sector to Carano Creek. Before Cisterna lay the 362d Grenadier Division; the eastern flank was still the responsibility of the 715th Light Division with the 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the 7th GAF Battalion, and Italian troops under its command.

None of these units was up to strength, for the losses of the German divisions in the February attacks had never been fully repaired. Our G-2 estimates indicated that 8 enemy battalions with a total strength of 1800 men were in front of our main attack at Cisterna. In local reserve were 6 battalions, totalling about 1400 men. Enemy armor around the beachhead was assessed at about 220 tanks.

Behind the five German divisions in the front lines lay almost nothing. Confronted by our breakthrough in the south, the German High Command had had no recourse but to strip its beachhead lines of its reserves and in two cases actually to remove units from the front-line divisions. The 26th Panzer Division had moved from the Sezze area by 18 May to oppose the French at Pico; two days later the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division from Lake Bracciano had gone into the line at Terracina. In addition, the 1027th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and two battalions of the 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (3d Panzer Grenadier Division) were withdrawn directly from the beachhead garrison to fill the gap in the Lepini Mountains. The nearest strategic reserves were the 92d Grenadier Division, forming at Civitavecchia, and the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division near Leghorn.

Nevertheless, the forces remaining in front of VI Corps held a strong position, for the enemy had devoted much attention to the construction of defensive fortifications. Near Cisterna the forward enemy line, which was 300 to 1000 yards distant from our positions, consisted of a series of platoon defenses about 300 yards apart. Each contained four to eight machine guns laid to fire a few inches above the ground, and each was covered by the adjacent strongpoints. Between the platoon positions were small outposts for a squad or less. The system of wiring was fairly complete, especially in the vicinity of the strongpoints; tank approaches were mined; and antipersonnel mines covered the avenues of infantry attack. Behind the forward line at a distance of 500 to 1000 yards lay the reserve companies, protected in dugouts along wadis or ditches. As far back as the railroad embankment a dense system of weapons pits and gun positions covered the ground. In this area some trenches ran at right angles to Highway 7 and cut across it to protect the southeastern approaches to Cisterna in the event that the enemy decided to swing back his east flank out of Littoria.

When defenses of this type, drawn in depth about our perimeter, had taken their toll of the attackers, the enemy could fall back to other defensive works,

particularly on the line Lanuvio—Velletri—Valmontone. Nevertheless, our troops found, as they advanced through the German positions, that though the enemy had done enough work to make our progress costly he had nowhere finished his labors. Near Cisterna communication trenches often proved to be dummies one to two feet deep, intended merely to make us think that the positions were stronger than they actually were. Similarly the defensive lines to the rear of the front usually consisted of nothing more than dugouts, command posts, and occasionally trenches, with the result that the enemy troops retreating before our drive had hastily to dig their own foxholes and weapons emplacements on each line. Steel fortifications of the Cassino type did not make their appearance anywhere in the beachhead, and only a few concrete works were found in the Lanuvio line.

3. *The Terrain of the Beachhead Attack.* Wherever our troops attacked at Anzio, they attacked uphill. The resulting advantages to the enemy in supply, observation, and siting of weapons need scarcely be stated. Though the slopes were gentler in the beachhead than in the areas of previous Fifth Army operations, our troops still met the universal characteristics of Italian geography: ravines, valleys, and commanding hills held by the enemy.

Two principal hill masses, each seven miles from the beachhead perimeter, dominated the scene of the Anzio offensive. One of these extends from Mount Arrestino south of Cori up to the hills at Artena and forms the northwestern end of the Lepini Mountains, through which the FEC and II Corps were fighting. The other lies to the west and comprises Colli Laziali. Between the two is a valley over three miles wide, running north from Cisterna to the upper end of the Liri—Sacco Valley at Valmontone. At Cisterna the ground is fairly open and level, favoring tank employment; then as one moves north below Cori and Velletri scattered patches of trees appear amid vineyards, and wide but steep-sided ravines have been cut by the streams running generally south. North of the road junction at Giulianello are again long open swells covered with wheat, but between Artena and Valmontone the ravines reappear.

The hills which bound this valley are entirely different in character. Those to the east, by Cori, have a fair growth of trees, chiefly olive, on their lower slopes but at the top are bare or covered with scrub brush. Though these last fringes of the Lepini Mountains are lower than Colli Laziali, they are steeper, especially in the vicinity of Mount Arrestino; and no roads lead through them. The eastern slopes of Colli Laziali on the other hand are covered in general by heavy timber. Within the rim of the ancient volcano are open fields and other forest-covered hills, while the whole district is well served by a good network of roads.

From the southern slopes of Colli Laziali ridges which represent old lava streams run down past Velletri, Lanuvio, and Albano into the Anzio plain. Just

south of the Albano—Velletri railroad these ridges are slightly over 200 meters in elevation. Their sides are sometimes steep and scrub-covered while the crests are given over to wheat fields. Most of the houses in this area lie by the railroad and Highway 7, where settlement is almost continuous.

Below the hills and ridges stretch the rolling, open wheat fields of the Anzio plain, an area well suited to tank action. West of the Albano road the plain gives way to a series of twisted wadis through which the streams from Ariccia, Campoleone Station, and the Factory make their way in a southwesterly direction to the sea. Over on the eastern flank of the beachhead the rolling country sinks into the Pontine Marshes; here the ground is flat and intersected by a lacework of canals.

The area over which our troops fought in the Anzio offensive is very well covered by roads. Two of the great routes of Italy lead through the area to Rome: Highway 6 at the north end of the district through Valmontone; and Highway 7 running northeast through Cisterna to Velletri and along the southern slopes of Colli Laziali past Albano. Of the other roads, which connect the towns of the area, the most important in our operations were the network between Cisterna and the Albano road, and the routes branching off the Cisterna—Cori—Giulianello—Artena—Valmontone crosstie between Highways 6 and 7. The extensive network of roads facilitated the supply of our troops and largely made possible the swift shifts of entire divisions during the Anzio attack.

## B. *PLANS FOR THE ATTACK*

*See Map No. 12*

When the Allied forces on the south broke through the Gustav Line and the German Tenth Army began to retreat, the time for the beachhead offensive drew close. Two of the chief problems involved in launching that thrust were its direction and the best timing for its initiation. As to the former problem, three possibilities presented themselves. VI Corps could attack: 1) southeast toward Sezze and Terracina to join up with II Corps; 2) north toward Cisterna and Valmontone to cut Highway 6 behind the enemy; 3) northwest toward Albano to break the Lanuvio—Velletri—Valmontone line at its left extremity.

Each of these possibilities was attended by advantages and disadvantages. Junction with II Corps was desirable, but the May drive proved that action by VI Corps was not necessary to secure that junction. Even in the planning stage, the fact that the beachhead garrison might be capable of only one attack made this objective appear of limited value. Driving through to Valmontone might cut off the enemy retreat but would produce a dangerous salient, dominated by enemy positions

in the vicinity of Velletri. Moreover, the enemy would still have escape routes north of Valmontone through Palestrina and Subiaco. A push northwest through the Factory and Lanuvio had the great merit of breaking the main enemy defense line but the concomitant disadvantage of attacking the enemy at his strongest point.

The decision reached by General Alexander in consultation with General Clark and embodied in AAI Operation Order No. 1 of 5 May was to direct the VI Corps attack on Valmontone. This drive would present a positive threat to the enemy in the Liri Valley and should thus encourage his withdrawal. Penetration toward Valmontone would also open up the Velletri—Valmontone line to our assault all along its course; in the fighting to follow, this broadening of the base of attack on Colli Laziali actually proved very valuable.

To provide flexibility and to conceal our real intentions until the very last, the staff of VI Corps prepared detailed plans for all three possibilities. The titles of these plans indicated in brief the character of each operation. Plan Grasshopper, the easiest of the three, called for an attack to seize and hold the high ground in the vicinity of Sezze, with farther advance toward Frosinone or Terracina dependent upon the situation. In Plan Turtle the attack would be launched on the left to reduce the Factory salient and continue north and northwest to breach the right flank of the enemy main defensive line. The third plan, which was actually carried out, was that of the Cisterna drive of Plan Buffalo, embodied in VI Corps Field Order No. 26, issued on 6 May and revised on 19 May (See Annex No. 11). This plan called for VI Corps to establish a firm base on the X—Y line, a line curving about Cisterna on the north and east about two miles distant from the town. Then our troops were to seize the high ground in the vicinity of Cori and be prepared to continue the attack toward Artena with the final objective of cutting Highway 6 near Valmontone. Operations to seize the first objectives were divided into two separate phases.

In Phase 1 the 34th Division held its lines below Cisterna and prepared gaps in the minefields through which the 1st Armored Division, the 3d Division, and the 1st Special Service Force would attack. The 1st Armored Division, with the 135th Infantry attached, would secure the X—Y line in its sector and thereby cut Highway 7 north of Cisterna. It would assist the 3d Division and push aggressive armored reconnaissance toward Giulianello, Velletri, and Campoleone. The 3d Division objectives were La Villa, Cisterna, and the X—Y line beyond the latter town. On the right flank the 1st Special Service Force was to reach the X—Y line just east of Highway 7 and hold the enemy southeast of the Mussolini Canal. These three main attacks were thus designed to cut Highway 7 north and south of Cisterna while the 3d Division took Cisterna itself. The 45th Division was ordered to expand the left flank of the penetration by pushing its line up Carano Creek to the railroad.



Together with the British 1 and 5 Divisions, it would patrol vigorously to prevent the withdrawal of enemy reserves on the west side of the beachhead.

In Phase 2 the 36th Division was to pass through the 3d Division beyond Cisterna and continue the attack through Cori. The 1st Special Service Force on the right would advance to Mount Arrestina, and the 1st Armored Division would swing north to gain the O—B line running across the valley below Velletri. The armor was then to hold the enemy north of this line and prepare with the 3d and 36th Divisions to continue the attack on Artena. The 1st Special Service Force might also continue the advance from Mount Arrestino in the direction of Montelanico—Segni to cut Highway 6 while the 34th Division held the enemy southeast of the Mussolini Canal.

Annexes to the field order dealt with support by air, artillery, and naval gunfire; and lower units prepared very detailed plans of infantry action, artillery support, and tank operations. This was to be the final attack at the Anzio beachhead, and every effort was taken to ensure its success. Enemy opposition was expected to be severe; in particular, an armored counterattack by the 26th Panzer Division was expected from the direction of Velletri, and precautions were taken by our units on the left flank of the proposed penetration to meet the enemy tank thrust.

The VI Corps attack was to be exclusively American, at least in the beginning, for the British had only a holding role. On 24 April AAI had informed us that the two British divisions were not to be used north of the Tiber by Fifth Army and would revert to AAI after the capture of Rome. These directions were the result of difficulty in replacements. By Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 21, 22 May (*See Annex No. 1G*), both units were placed under Army control effective at 1800 the same day. Just before the attack General Clark moved to the beachhead and established his advanced command post at Anzio in order personally to direct Fifth Army's attack on Rome.

## C. *BREAKING OUT OF THE BEACHHEAD*

23-25 MAY

1. *The Last Preparations for the Attack.* Beginning on 13 May, the artillery of VI Corps embarked on a schedule of firing intended to uncover enemy defensive fires and to mislead the enemy as to the time of our attack. For 15 minutes of each 24 hours the artillery of all units, reinforced by the supporting weapons of infantry units, fired heavy concentrations on the German lines and gun positions. Some of the first shoots tricked the enemy into laying down all his final defensive fires, and our observers thus gained valuable information. The time of our barrage was



changed daily and brought to light the interesting information that the enemy was most alarmed during the night and at dawn.

On 19 May General Truscott, the Corps commander, ordered concentrations for the attack. Preliminary moves were carried out during the night, as part of the Corps and divisional artillery shifted forward to previously prepared positions. In front of the 34th Division the 109th Engineer Battalion began to construct by-passes and to gap the minefields. On the morning of the 20th the 1st Battalion, 133d Infantry, made a successful surprise raid to secure a bridgehead across Cisterna Creek as the line of departure for the 1st Special Service Force.

That afternoon VI Corps ordered a delay of 24 hours in D Day, thereby putting it off to the 22d, and cancelled all moves for the night of 20-21 May. This order followed a decision by higher authority that the attacks on the southern front had not yet progressed to the desired point. Terracina still remained in enemy hands, and Eighth Army was preparing for its attack on the Hitler Line. Final concentrations at the beachhead accordingly took place on the night of 21-22 May. The tanks of the 1st Armored Division rumbled up to their initial defilade positions, and the infantry gathered in their assembly areas behind the 34th Division. The 36th Division Artillery displaced forward, and the rest of the artillery completed its movements. Again, however, the attack had been postponed a day for complete co-ordination with the FEC attack toward Ceprano and the Eighth Army assault on the Hitler Line. All through the 22d the assault elements remained in concealment, but in the evening H Hour was definitely set at 0630, 23 May.

While the engineers completed the gapping of the minefields below Cisterna, the British divisions engaged in deceptive measures on the left flank to divert enemy attention. In the 1 Division sector elements of the 3 Brigade launched a small attack at 2030, 22 May, on the west side of the Albano road. Enemy machine-gun fire was heavy, and our troops made only a slight gain. At 0215, 23 May, the 5 Division Artillery began extensive preparations on the lower Moletta. Two hours later units of the 17 Brigade attacked toward L'Americano, supported by tanks after daylight. The enemy reacted so strongly that the British withdrew to their previous positions during the following night.

2. *The First Day of the Attack.* (See Map No. 13.) At daybreak on 23 May (0538) the front of the 45th and 34th Divisions remained quiet. A light drizzle began, and the enemy relaxed after another vigilant night. Posting their sentries, the Germans huddled in dugouts for a morning nap. At 0545 our artillery began what appeared at first to be another of its irritating, but usual shoots. This time, however, both duration and intensity were far beyond previous experience. At 0625 light bombers bombed in the vicinity of Cisterna, while three groups of fighter-bombers strafed the wadi area south of the town. Five minutes later the artillery

stopped. Immediately thereafter our tanks loomed up in the smoke all along the front, and behind them came swarms of infantry.

Complete surprise had been achieved. Men of the 180th Infantry had to pry their opponents, often partially clothed, out of the dugouts; below Cisterna the enemy at first thought we were launching another small daytime sortie. Our artillery preparation, the most intensive thus far at the beachhead, had searched out the command posts, assembly areas, and dumps which we had carefully located in the previous weeks, with the result that enemy communications and supply lines were severely damaged. Enemy artillery fire was slow to start and was hampered by a day-long haze limiting German observation from the dominating hill masses. Though the enemy recovered quickly and put up a strong fight, he never could make up for the initial disorganization, and counterattacks remained local in character.

The 45th Division under Maj. Gen. William W. Eagles attacked on the left for limited objectives, to hold the shoulder of the main penetration. While the 179th Infantry under Lt. Col. Preston J. Murphy made a demonstration on the extreme left, the 180th Infantry under Col. Robert L. Dulaney proceeded to neutralize 2 houses 1500 yards northwest of Carano and to organize the ground in the vicinity. The 2d Battalion moved up through the artillery preparation and secured its initial objectives quickly. One company was then held up by small-arms and machine-gun fire from an enemy strongpoint situated in four houses along the Carano road. Tanks of Company C, 191st Tank Battalion, came up and fired point-blank at the houses, knocking out the resistance so the infantry could proceed. The value of the intensive tank-infantry training of the previous weeks showed itself in this small action, for the infantry often ran up to the tanks and pointed out a target or indicated it by tracers. By the middle of the afternoon the battalion held its final objectives and dug in. It had taken prisoners or killed a large part of the 3d Battalion, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and had captured the battalion command post with radios and documents.

To the right of the 180th Infantry the 157th Infantry under Col. John H. Church attacked with two battalions abreast for deeper objectives. The 1st Battalion on the left jumped off at 0625 and held a line north of the Carano road by dark. The 3d Battalion, moving up the west bank of Carano Creek, occupied Hill 94 just short of the railroad about noon, with its three rifle companies strung out along the creek. At 1420 the forward artillery observer reported six to eight tanks moving in on the center of the line. Fifteen minutes later the number had grown to 24 Mark VI's, and in the next few minutes the tanks, unsupported by infantry, had driven our northernmost company back into the creek bed. The tanks pushed through almost to the creek, cutting the battalion in two and firing on the rear of the 1st Battalion. Tank destroyers hurried to the scene of action; the 3d Battalion,

13th Armored Regiment, moved up from 1st Armored Division reserve to stem a breakthrough; and heavy artillery fire, including that of 8-inch howitzers, was placed on the enemy tanks. Nine were claimed destroyed, and the rest retreated. By dark the 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, had reformed its lines and dug in up to the railroad.

Having gained its objectives, the 45th Division held its new lines for the next two days. At dusk on 24 May a reinforced enemy battalion supported by tanks moved south along the west bank of Carano Creek and attacked the right flank of the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, on the Carano road. Under the cover of heavy mortar and artillery fire the enemy infantry crawled through the tall wheat and were within 100 yards of our position before being discovered. The Germans then showered our men with grenades and rushed the front lines. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued here and on the left flank of the battalion, where an enemy company also attacked. Eight battalions of artillery placed their fire on the enemy, and our machine guns and mortars fired so rapidly that several barrels and tubes were burned out. At the end of the attack the enemy had made a slight penetration on the left flank, but our infantry regained their positions after midnight. Patrols found that the enemy had withdrawn from the immediate front of the division.

While the 45th Division was winning and holding its objectives, the main bulk of VI Corps hammered on the Cisterna line, held by the 362d Grenadier Division and the 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. On the morning of 23 May three distinct thrusts passed through the 34th Division in this area: the 1st Armored Division to the north, the 1st Special Service Force to the south, and the 3d Division in the middle. The objective, Cisterna, lay about two miles from our line of departure.

The 1st Armored Division under Maj. Gen. Ernest N. Harmon attacked with Combat Command A (1st Armored Regiment and 135th Infantry) on the left and Combat Command B (13th Armored Regiment and 6th Armored Infantry) on the right. The division reserve under Col. Hamilton H. Howze comprised the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry; the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry; and the 3d Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment. Snakes, each consisting of a metal casing 400 feet long heavily charged with explosive, had been previously constructed at night in wadis of the area and camouflaged until use. Though the light rain on the morning of the 23d caused some trouble in getting the assembled snakes out of the ditches onto level ground, six of the snakes were pushed into the minefields in the Combat Command A zone near three enemy strongpoints. Here they blew gaps which threw the enemy into panic and permitted the rapid advance of our tanks.

Columns of medium tanks led the way, followed by waves of infantry from the 135th Infantry and by light tanks. When the enemy recovered, single soldiers tried to run up and throw hand grenades into the open turrets, but the machine guns

of the tanks stopped them and Combat Command A under Col. Maurice W. Daniel made rapid progress. By the middle of the afternoon it had gained the railroad; by dark the line of the infantry was 500 yards beyond the railroad, where the tanks and infantry halted for the night. The 135th Infantry alone had taken over 300 prisoners. Combat Command B under Brig. Gen. Frank A. Allen, Jr., on the right was held up by minefields until the engineers had cleared gaps in the late morning; then it too advanced to the railroad at some points, with its right on Femminamorta Creek. The infantry outposted the tanks during the night, and hasty repairs were made on damaged armor. Our losses had been 11 M4's knocked out, 44 M4's damaged, and 8 M10's damaged. The antitank opposition had consisted mostly of mines, though some enemy tanks were encountered.

The 1st Special Service Force, under Brig. Gen. Robert T. Frederick on the far right of the penetration, attacked on the morning of the 23d with its 1st Regiment (1st Battalion, 2d Regiment, attached) in the lead, and the 1st Battalion, 133d Infantry, following in close support. The 3d Regiment protected the rear and east flank along the Mussolini Canal, while the 2d Regiment remained in reserve. The spearhead of this attack broke through enemy resistance of small arms and machine guns and reached the railroad beyond Highway 7 at noon. Here it met a counterattack by enemy infantry and 12 Mark VI's of the 508th Panzer Battalion from the southeast. The tanks moved across the canal and knocked out the few tank destroyers and tanks in our forward waves; then they pushed our infantry, which was short of ammunition, some 800 yards back to the southwest of Highway 7. One company of the 1st Regiment was cut off and destroyed. During the night the 1st Battalion, 133d Infantry, relieved the 1st Special Service Force and outposted as far north as the highway itself. The 100th Battalion also moved up and took over the guard of the right flank along the Mussolini Canal.

Opposition in front of the 3d Division under Maj. Gen. John W. O'Daniel, attacking between the 1st Armored Division and the 1st Special Service Force, was the most stubborn met by any of our troops on the 23d. Artillery support for the division was particularly intense; and our 8-inch and 240-mm howitzers shelled Cisterna for two hours. At the beginning of the attack the 751st Tank Battalion and the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion passed from the 34th Division to the 3d Division, one company each of tanks and tank destroyers being attached to each infantry regiment.

All three regiments attacked with two battalions abreast, the 7th Infantry under Col. Wiley H. Omohundro in the center, the 15th Infantry under Col. Richard G. Thomas, Jr., on the south, and the 30th Infantry under Col. Lionel C. McGarr on the north, with the Ponte Rotto and Isola Bella roads as the axes of advance. The 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, took Ponte Rotto, while the 2d Battalion advances on

its left began. In the 7th Infantry zone the 3d Battalion pushed forward on the left of the Isola Bella road, and men of the 2d Battalion crept and crawled behind rolling artillery fire up the road itself under heavy small-arms and machine-gun fire from the houses on either side. By midnight the 2d Battalion had advanced 1500 yards and reorganized to continue the attack on the following day. The 3d Battalion swung north after dark and gained the Ponte Rotto road against stiff resistance from seven enemy tanks and infantry. Company A, 751st Tank Battalion, which supported this regiment, lost six tanks on mines, one to antitank fire, and one through mechanical difficulties. On the right of the division the 15th Infantry had by dark gained half the distance between its line of departure and Highway 7. The attack here also continued after dark to secure the maximum gains before the enemy could reorganize, and during the night the 3d and 2d Battalions both reached Highway 7 south of Cisterna.

The first day of the Anzio attack had been extremely successful. Units everywhere had gained their first objectives, though on the extreme right flank our troops had not been able to hold their gains. Extraordinarily large numbers of the 362d Grenadier Division were willing to surrender when encircled or seriously threatened. Our total of prisoners for the day ran almost 1500, half of them taken in the aggressive drive by the 3d Division. This unit had the heaviest casualties on our side with a total of 950 killed, wounded, and missing. Losses of our armor and tank destroyers ran about 100, most of them easily repairable; 22 enemy tanks and self-propelled guns were claimed destroyed. German artillery fire had been relatively light, and enemy aircraft had presented no problem at all. During the day our air force put 110 fighters, 300 fighter-bombers, 60 light bombers, and 216 heavy bombers over the beachhead and vicinity. Despite poor weather enemy artillery positions and bivouac areas were well covered.

3. *Encircling Cisterna.* The attack began again at 0530, 24 May, after a 30-minute artillery preparation. The 1st Armored Division Artillery had been pushed well forward during the night and gave good support to the armor, which jumped off at H Hour. Though the enemy had rushed a large part of his scanty supply of antitank guns to the area, both combat commands broke through the German positions and crossed Highway 7 north of Cisterna before noon. Combat Command B then drove across the valley toward Cori against steadily weakening opposition. Confirming the prediction made by prisoners before the attack, the Germans surrendered in large numbers to our tanks when the mine and antitank gun barriers had been smashed. By dark the leading elements of Combat Command B had reached the Cisterna—Cori road, but the main body halted for the night short of this objective.

Combat Command A turned northwest upon reaching the highway to expand the left side of the penetration. As it moved up toward Velletri, German resistance steadily stiffened. The enemy infantry operated as snipers to delay the tanks and infantry; and vineyards and high cornstalks impeded the tankers' observation. The medium tanks started out in the lead but found the going difficult. The light tanks then passed through with the infantry and struggled forward against small enemy counterattacks all along the line. The 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, acting as pivot on the left flank with Company C, 1st Armored Regiment, made only a small gain; on the right flank the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, and Company A, 1st Armored Regiment, pushed up about a mile under heavy artillery and mortar fire.

While Combat Command B had swept on as the north arm of the wide pincers about Cisterna, the 133d Infantry advanced as the south arm. This regiment completed its relief of the 1st Special Service Force at 0300, 24 May, and attacked at 1715 in column of battalions. Companies B and C moved forward as ordered and secured the railroad beyond Highway 7 at dark. The enemy was bent on holding open his route of withdrawal from the Littoria sector, but the two enemy infantry companies which counterattacked up the railroad from the southeast were stopped by our artillery and chemical mortars of the 84th Chemical Battalion. During the night the 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, passed through the 1st Battalion, and took up positions along the Mussolini Canal for two miles beyond the railroad to protect the renewed drive by the 1st Special Service Force on 25 May.

In the immediate vicinity of Cisterna the enemy garrison held out more stubbornly on the 24th, but it could not prevent the arms of the small pincers from closing about it. On the left the 30th Infantry attacked north past La Villa up Femminamorta Creek and then swung east to place its 2d Battalion on Highway 7. The 3d Battalion passed through and advanced after dark on the south flank of Combat Command B almost to the Cori—Cisterna road. The 15th Infantry had consolidated its hold on Highway 7 below Cisterna by the morning of the 24th and used its 1st Battalion to attack on the right of the regiment toward the patch of woods a mile northeast of the highway. Against heavy resistance the 1st Battalion gained its objective by dusk; on its left the 2d Battalion had moved to the railroad just south of Cisterna. While the other two regiments of the division were drawing the noose tighter, the 7th Infantry attacked to gain positions for the final assault on Cisterna. The 1st Battalion passed through the 3d Battalion and took La Villa. Then it cut Highway 7 in its zone, while the 2d Battalion advanced to the southwest side of the town. The 3d Battalion thereupon moved up behind the 1st Battalion to the northwest side of Cisterna and prepared to storm the objective. Evening of the 24th thus saw two regiments of the 3d Division on either side

of and past the division objective while the third had closed in on the west side. On the flanks of the division Combat Command B had driven its spearhead well toward Cori, and the 133d Infantry had moved on up the Mussolini Canal. Combat Command A, pivoting on its left, was developing a strong enemy position at Velletri but had pushed its right flank far enough up Highway 7 to check any enemy counterattack from this direction. The enemy actually could not muster strength enough for such a thrust, and German counterattacks on the 24th were generally weaker than on the 23d. The whole Cisterna position was doomed.

Through the night of 24-25 May movements were heavy behind our front. The 1st Special Service Force moved up on the south behind the 133d Infantry, ready to pass through it at dawn and strike for Mount Arrestino. On the north of Cisterna a gap between Combat Command A and Combat Command B was developing as each unit continued on its own axis of advance. The 168th Infantry, which had assembled in Corps reserve on the evening of the 23d, relieved the 6th Armored Infantry east of Highway 7 during the night on a line extending east of the 135th Infantry. At 0630, 25 May, the 34th Division under Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder took command of a five-mile front north of Cisterna behind the 1st Armored Division with the 135th Infantry under Lt. Col. Harry W. Sweeting, Jr., on the left of Highway 7 and the 168th Infantry under Col. Mark M. Boatner, Jr., on the right. The presence of this solid block protected the forces about Cisterna from the threat of an armored counterattack on the north and permitted the armor to move more freely in exploiting the German collapse below Cori. The 133d Infantry under Col. William Schildroth passed at 0530, 25 May, to Corps control until the situation southeast of Cisterna had been cleared up.

On the extreme right flank of VI Corps the 36th Engineers had remained quiet during 23 May. On the following day General Clark relieved VI Corps of the task of establishing contact with the southern front, and on Army order the engineers prepared task forces to assist in that junction. These forces moved out during the night of 24-25 May. Considerable parts of Corps artillery also displaced forward during the night to areas south and west of Isola Bella to support the continuation of the main attack.

4. *The Fall of Cisterna and Cori.* By the morning of 25 May the enemy situation in the Cisterna area was chaotic. In the rubble of Cisterna itself some remnants of the 362d Grenadier Division held tenaciously; below Velletri paratroopers put up a good fight; but everywhere else on the German left flank the scene was one of hurried retreat, partly toward Velletri, partly toward Valmontone, with some elements of the 715th Light Division assembling at Norma. At the same time the German command was throwing in the 1060th Grenadier Regiment (92d Grenadier Division) and the Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalion to stop our

thrust toward Valmontone, and vehicles of these units were moving past Giulianello toward Cori against the heavy current in the other direction. So dangerous was the situation that the enemy motor movements continued in daylight of the 25th.

Our air force reported heavy traffic on the Cori—Giulianello and Giulianello—Valmontone roads early in the morning. By afternoon this movement was estimated at over 600 vehicles, and our fighters and fighter-bombers went to work on the tempting opportunity. All through the afternoon the forward ground controller of XII Tactical Air Command at the beachhead diverted flights from their missions against enemy artillery and sent them over the enemy motor columns. By dusk the air force had scored one of its most resounding triumphs in direct support of ground operations thus far in the Italian campaign. First our pilots jammed traffic by bombing; then they strafed the resulting concentrations of up to 200 vehicles. The 324th Fighter Group (P-40) in 128 sorties claimed 188 M/T destroyed and 77 damaged. The 27th Fighter Bomber Group (P-40 and P-47) in 103 sorties reported 58 destroyed and 66 damaged. In 86 sorties by the 86th Fighter Bomber Group (P-40 and A-36) 233 M/T were claimed destroyed and 276 damaged. The Kittyhawks and Mustangs of 239 Wing, which also operated against choice road targets in the Avezzano area, listed a total of 67 destroyed and 39 damaged. These four groups had dropped bombs above Cisterna and at Avezzano as follows: 31 260-pounders; 60 20-pounders; 30 100-pounders; 751 500-pounders; 22 1000-pounders. Four of our aircraft had been lost to flak, and 23 were damaged. The total reported by VI Corps for the activities of the air force on 25 May was 645 M/T destroyed and 446 damaged. The essential accuracy of these figures was proved in the next week as our troops moved up to Valmontone, for the roads were littered with the burned, twisted wrecks of tanks, self-propelled guns, trucks, command cars, personnel carriers—a vast graveyard of all types of German transport. One company alone of the 10th Engineer Battalion pushed 150 wrecks off the road from a point 1½ miles southwest of Cori around through Cori to Giulianello.

Smitten by our air force from above and smashed by our artillery, armor, and infantry on front and flanks, the enemy broke in the Cisterna area on 25 May. In the zone of Combat Command B the 13th Armored Regiment (less Company D) under Colonel Howze was given the mission of exploiting the collapse. The tanks moved forward rapidly with the self-propelled artillery in close support, leaving a battalion of infantry to follow up as closely as it could. By early afternoon the 3d Battalion had reached the Cori—Giulianello road below Giulianello. The armor then halted and waited for the infantry. Company A, 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, rushed on north to cut the Giulianello—Velletri road just west of Giulianello; the 1st Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment, with infantry behind, pressed after it up the wooded draws. Over on the right flank the 3d Regiment, 1st Special



Service Force, jumped off at 0530 for Mount Arrestino and secured its goal before dusk. In the center the 30th Infantry and 15th Infantry completed their encirclement of Cisterna; then each regiment left a battalion behind to guard the eastern exits of the town and moved on toward Cori. Elements of the 3d Reconnaissance Troop entered Cori in the afternoon, and the infantry pulled up onto the slopes east and south of the town by dark. Here they met the 1060th Grenadier Regiment and the Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalion. These units had been heavily hit by our air force before they reached the scene of action and were committed hastily in the evening below Cori without reconnaissance or liaison. Neither delayed us for long, and the survivors reeled back in complete defeat with the rest of the fleeing enemy.

At Cisterna and Velletri alone did the enemy resist strongly. The Combat Command A attack on Velletri on the 25th was halted by enemy antitank fire and by Mark V tanks, and several enemy counterattacks forced the command to go on the defensive. At Cisterna the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, pressed into the town on the morning of the 25th, supported by the 2d Battalion on the west and the 1st Battalion on the north. The fight quickly became a house-to-house battle in which the Germans used each battered building and each room as a pillbox. Even after our men had cleared an area, the Germans infiltrated on our rear from the catacombs of the town, and the enemy garrison inflicted heavy casualties on our 3d Battalion in vain efforts to break out of our ring. All through the afternoon the mopping up went on; by 1900 the survivors, including the commanding officer of the 956th Grenadier Regiment, capitulated. Tank dozers of the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion moved in immediately and opened Highway 7 for two-way traffic by dark.

Cisterna, Cori, and Mount Arrestino—the first objectives of Operation Buffalo—were all in our hands by the evening of 25 May. Here as on the southern front our victory had been quicker, less expensive, and more devastating to the enemy than had been hoped. Though the 3d Division and the 1st Armored Division had suffered considerable casualties in men and armor, they yet remained effective fighting forces after taking the objectives of both Phase I and Phase II of the original attack order. It had not even been necessary to commit our reserves as planned.

Enemy resistance in the Cisterna—Valmontone corridor had collapsed. The 362d Grenadier Division had lost the bulk of its front-line troops; the remainder split into two groups withdrawing respectively on Velletri and Artena without contact. The 715th Light Division on the east had pulled out hastily, partly by Norma and partly by Cori. The elements which took the latter road were smashed by our air force, and the rest of the division was so disorganized as to be of little use in the next two weeks. By noon of 25 May 2640 prisoners had passed through the Army cages at Anzio. Thus far our attack was a superb success.