

The Advance to Highway 68

ON 21 June the front line of Fifth Army stretched from a point about eight miles north of Grosseto near the west coast eastward to the Eighth Army boundary in the vicinity of Sarteano. The troops were entering the Tuscan hill country with the valleys of the Ombrone and Tiber Rivers now behind them. On the right the French were up against the Orcia River; all along the line the most difficult country yet encountered north of Rome lay just ahead, and evidences of the stiffening German defense were slowly accumulating. On the extreme left, where troops of the 36th Division were pressing into the hills bordering the north and northwest side of the Ombrone Valley, the coastline swings sharply northwest, thus increasing the frontage of the IV Corps zone and necessitating the use of another division.

The plan of IV Corps was to continue the 36th Division along the coastline, following the general axis of Highway 1, while the 1st Armored Division advanced abreast on the right flank, through rugged mountains and over a multitude of small roads and trails. The 36th Division received a zone about 12 miles wide; the 1st Armored Division front covered a slightly wider area, at places reaching a width of nearly 20 miles. The French front, now divided between the 3d Algerian Infantry Division on the left and the 2d Moroccan Infantry Division on the right, following relief of the 1st Motorized Division, was approximately 25 miles wide, split nearly evenly between the two divisions. The 1st Group of Tabors was operating to the west of the 3d Algerian Division along the FEC left boundary. The boundary between the two corps ran northwest through Paganico across Highway 73 just west of Monticiano, cut just east of Casole d'Elsa, and struck Highway 68 at a point six miles west of Colle di Val d'Elsa. The Army right boundary ran parallel to and approximately six miles east of Highway 2. IV Corps had the most significant objectives in its left zone, particularly the port of Piombino, which was about 15 miles beyond the front on 21 June; nearly 30 miles farther up the coast lay Cecina,

at the junction of Highway 1 and Highway 68. Inland in the 1st Armored Division zone the only sizeable city was Volterra, on Highway 68. Siena and Poggibonsi on Highway 2 were the major goals of the French. The line of the Arno River remained the final objective of both corps.

Along the coast elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division were being identified opposite IV Corps while slightly farther inland were battered remnants of the 19th GAF Field Division and the 162d Turcoman Grenadier Division. Beyond the latter was the much-weakened 3d Panzer Grenadier Division; the 20th GAF Field Division straddled the IV Corps-FEC boundary. Opposing the French were the 356th Grenadier Division and the 4th Parachute Division with elements of the 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. This imposing list of divisions did not represent a corresponding strength in combat troops since most of the units were far below strength. The 162d Grenadier Division, in particular, had lost more than half its forces in the past two weeks. The paratroopers subsequently slipped entirely out of Fifth Army's zone as Eighth Army shifted its boundary to the west. More changes made before the end of July saw the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division take over from the 20th GAF Field Division and eventually pinch out the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division also. The 65th Grenadier Division relieved the 26th Panzer Division. The 65th Grenadier Division had not been identified since the fall of Rome, but it apparently had been resting at Lucca, on the edge of the Gothic Line.

By 1 July the enemy, if not capable of making a prolonged stand, could within certain limits determine the circumstances of his withdrawal. From that time he had to be persistently routed out of his delaying positions and never withdrew until he was certain our assaults were backed with sufficient strength to make it wiser for him to retire rather than fight. He was constantly playing for time to rush work on his still unfinished Gothic Line defenses. His tanks were well distributed to back up his infantry units, which were without much standard field artillery support. That he realized the value of these tanks and other self-propelled guns and his inability to replace them, was shown by captured documents. These indicated that the tanks, which generally operated in groups of four or more and with never less than two working together, had preferred treatment. The tank commanders picked the position, and the infantry were placed to protect the tanks. Nominally the infantry commanders were in charge of the situation, but even the low ranking tank unit officers were given power to decide how long a position should be held and they could order higher echelons of foot troops to remain behind to cover the tanks' escape. Only the infantry division commander could overrule the tankers.

The Germans fought for time especially along the coast to prevent us from occupying the great port of Leghorn and to allow time for systematic destruction of the dock facilities there, fully realizing the value to Fifth Army of a large port

so far up the Italian boot. Inland they fought to cover the coastal delaying actions and to protect the lateral routes of retreat. All along the front the foe was not adverse to sacrificing lives to gain additional time. At many points, especially on the far inland part of the Army line where he had first-rate units in action, his troops remained to fight it out even in positions already badly outflanked. Despite the enemy's tenacious resistance, Leghorn fell on 18 July, and soon evidences of voluntary withdrawal could be found, particularly opposite the western portion of Fifth Army. Extensive regrouping of his forces was undertaken, apparently to spot his units in positions from which they could back directly into assigned sectors along the Gothic Line.

A. *IV CORPS ALONG THE COAST*

21 JUNE-2 JULY

Such was the situation when General Crittenberger broadened the commitment of IV Corps to include two divisions on the line, the 36th Division and the 1st Armored Division. The former held a line extending from Caldana, south of Highway 1, to Giuncarico, north of the road, and across the Ombrone Valley to Sticciano on Highway 73. (*See Map No. 6.*) The 142d Infantry was operating in the Caldana area, the 143d Infantry lay around Giuncarico, and the 517th Parachute Infantry was putting the final touches on mopping-up operations around Sticciano.

Task Force Ramey was entering Corps reserve. It held road blocks until passed through by the 1st Armored Division, and the bulk of its force already had assembled near Campagnatico, including the 141st Infantry (36th Division). The 34th Division remained in Corps reserve, but had been alerted to be prepared to relieve the 36th Division about 26 June; it was already moving up from its rest area near Tarquinia. In order to provide more infantry for the 1st Armored Division, the 361st Regimental Combat Team, less its artillery and the 2d Battalion, was attached to the armor. The 6th Armored Field Artillery Group was also taken from Task Force Ramey and attached to the 1st Armored Division.

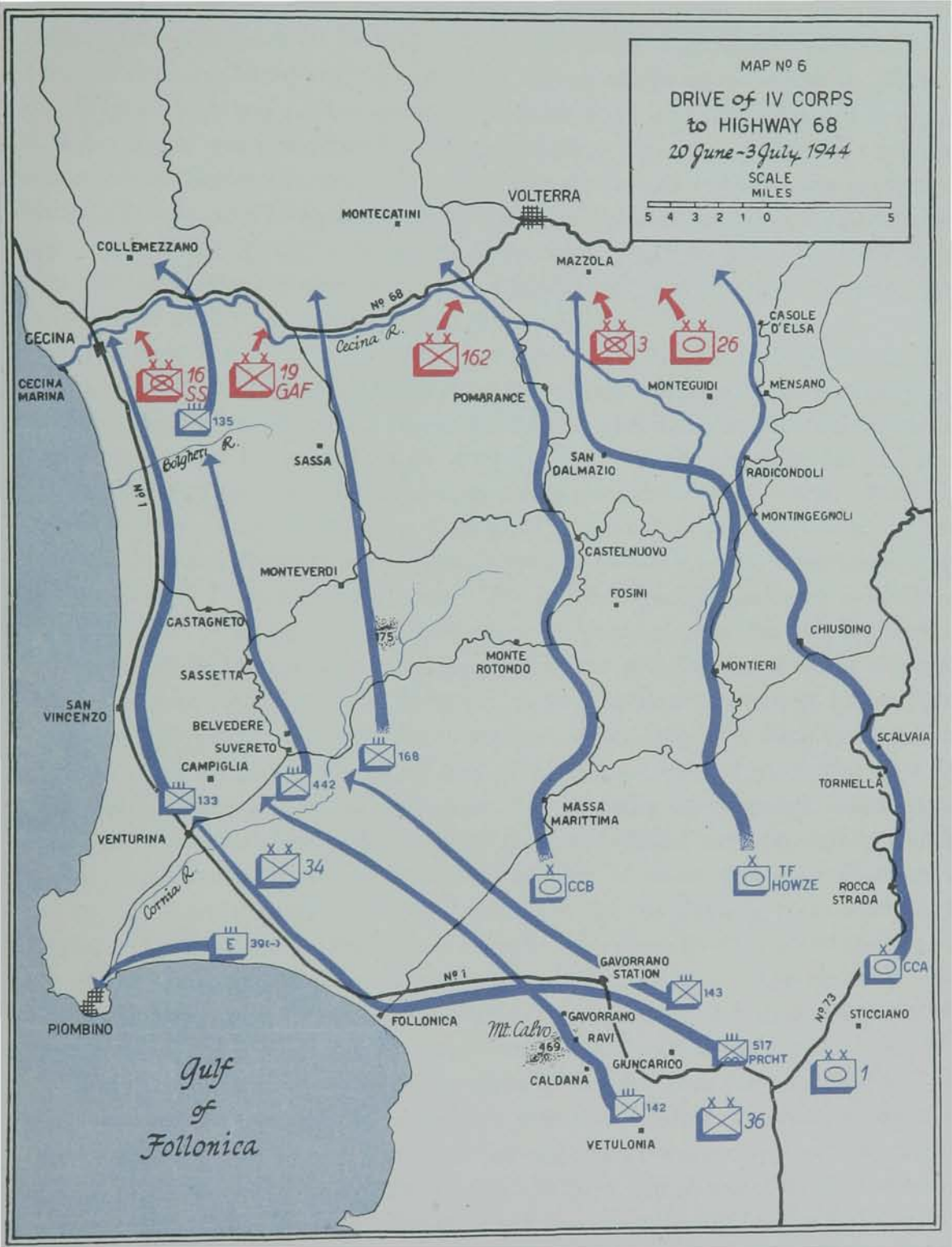
1. *Last Action of the 36th Division.* The 36th Division, less the attached 517th Parachute Infantry which was in position on the southern edge of Highway 73 awaiting relief by the 1st Armored Division and the 141st Infantry which was still with Task Force Ramey, pushed into the hills along Highway 1 northwest of Grosseto on 21 June. The 142d and 143d Infantry made steady progress against scattered groups of enemy. The 142d Infantry, which had already seized the first hills southwest of the Ombrone Valley, continued in a zone south of the main highway, encountering only occasional, unorganized resistance. By the end of the day the

regiment had pushed more than four miles into the rugged country west of Vetulonia and captured the villages of Ravi and Gavorrano, by-passing the extremely mountainous terrain which stretched southwestward five or six miles farther to the sea. The few Germans in this sector were hurriedly pulling out. The 143d Infantry by-passed the village of Giuncarico along Highway 1 and advanced north of it against scattered artillery and small-arms fire. In late afternoon the advance units reached the ridge running northwest from Gavorrano, and by nightfall the 1st and 2d Battalions had seized the entire ridge line. The division front held by the two regiments ran along the ridge anchored on the left by Mount Calvo, extended through Gavorrano to Gavorrano Station north of the highway, and then east along the north side of the Ombrone Valley to the boundary where Combat Command B of the 1st Armored Division had entered the line.

Heavy rains on the following day slowed the tempo of the advance. The rest of the 36th Division moved into the new zone after relief by the 1st Armored Division and changed its direction of advance from north to northwest. Limited gains were made by the two leading infantry regiments while the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team left Sticciano and assembled near Giuncarico ready to exploit any gain which might be made up the highway. About six miles of hills remained to be traversed before the coastal zone again became a plain along the Gulf of Follonica and Highway 1 once more turned northwest, cutting across the base of the peninsula on which was located the port of Piombino, about eight miles west of the highway.

The division resumed the advance, aimed at cutting off the peninsula and isolating the important port, on 23 June. The 517th Parachute Infantry took over the left flank position, moving along Highway 1 while the 142d Infantry cut north across the road and with the 143d Infantry continued the slow advance to the northwest. Little resistance was met in clearing out the remaining mountainous territory south of the highway, but as the Americans came out onto the coastal plain again they found strong delaying forces opposing them and resistance increased considerably to the north of the highway. Elements of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, screening the infantry advance, penetrated into the town of Follonica during the morning, but were forced out under pressure of infantry resistance in the town itself and by heavy self-propelled gun and tank fire from a ridge just beyond the town. This opposition limited advance on the left; better progress was made on the right of Highway 1, for the enemy tanks apparently were not leaving this hard-surfaced road to engage in delaying actions in the hills. The 142d and 143d Infantry struck against the east-west road connecting Follonica and Massa Marittima and by nightfall reached points just south of the road, while some patrols crossed the road.

MAP NO 6
 DRIVE of IV CORPS
 to HIGHWAY 68
 20 June - 3 July 1944
 SCALE
 MILES
 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5



The two regiments drove a deep spearhead beyond the road on 24 June. Advancing in column of battalions with the 3d Battalion leading, the 142d Infantry made a four-mile push in its zone. The 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, took Hill 129 and, followed by the 2d and 1st Battalions, advanced six miles beyond the Follonica—Massa Marittima road to points three miles southeast of the village of Suvereto. Rougher going was experienced along the coastline. In the morning the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron once more tried to get through Follonica but again was beaten off. By afternoon, however, our advance north of the highway was threatening to cut off the retreat of the enemy in the town. With the aid of the 517th Parachute Infantry the reconnaissance troops made their way through Follonica, and by nightfall pushed two miles beyond the town.

The next day, 25 June, was to be the final day of combat in Italy for the 36th Division, which had fought its way from the bloody beaches of Salerno nearly 300 miles up the Italian peninsula. Even though the 34th Division was waiting to relieve it, on its last day in the lines the 36th Division brought about the fall of Piombino and pushed the front forward as much as nine miles on the left. With the 143d Infantry on the right acting as a pivot, the smallest gain was made in that zone as the 142d Infantry and 517th Parachute Infantry swept rapidly across the level stretch of ground near the coast. The 517th Parachute Infantry isolated the Piombino area in its push across the base of the peninsula, and the port fell without a struggle about 1500 when a small patrol from the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment on road reconnaissance entered the port. A short battle occurred with Italian partisans who mistook the engineers for Germans. After this error was corrected the engineers and partisans rounded up one officer and six enlisted men, who were the only real Germans left in the entire area. A company of engineers entered later in the afternoon and found that although the port facilities were extensively damaged the enemy had failed to plant the usual number of mines and other obstacles in the vicinity. On the right flank of the division the road leading from Suvereto to Highway 1 was cut, and troops were close to the village by the end of the day; in the center Campiglia, a town about halfway between Suvereto and the coast highway, was closely invested; and along Highway 1 the village of Venturia and the airport lying near the junction with the Piombino road were taken.

Preparations for the relief of the 36th Division had been made for several days; since enemy resistance was still extremely fluid and entirely defensive, transfer of the zone to the 34th Division was carried out with comparative ease. Command was originally scheduled to change at 1200, 26 June, but so smoothly did the troops take over the actual ground during the night that control passed to the 34th Division at 0700. The relieved division assembled its units and on 27 June began movement to the Rome area from where it continued on south to join Seventh Army. The

517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team was detached from the 36th Division, reverted to IV Corps control, and was then relieved from Fifth Army for service outside Italy.

2. *The 34th Division Takes Over.* The 34th Division took over the same mission as that of its predecessor, to advance rapidly in its zone to the west and northwest, to maintain contact with the 1st Armored Division on the right, and to protect the left flank of the Corps. The scheme of the Corps maneuver had placed the 1st Armored Division on the right; should its progress gather great momentum, General Harmon was directed to turn combat elements toward the coastline to assist the advance of the 34th Division. Likewise, if the 34th Division made speedy gains it might become possible to assist the 1st Armored Division by sending elements to the right against the rear of the enemy. To avoid restraint in such hooking movements to right or left the division commanders were authorized to enter the zone of action of the adjacent division when it might be advantageous to do so. The crossing of inter-division boundaries was to be co-ordinated between the commanders through Corps headquarters.

General Crittenberger also emphasized the importance of utilizing our superiority in all arms over the foe. He directed that every opportunity be seized for advancing across country during the night, that flanking movements around obstacles be utilized to the utmost, and that armored and light, mobile detachments be kept available to push forward suddenly and boldly to take advantage of opportunities for quick advance before the enemy could prepare himself adequately.

To aid General Ryder of the 34th Division in carrying out this mission the following units were attached to increase the division power: the 442d Regimental Combat Team, minus the 1st Battalion; the 100th Infantry Battalion (Separate); the 361st Regimental Combat Team, less the 361st Infantry; the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron; and the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion. A tank battalion was promised as soon as one became available; before the division reached the Arno River other attachments made it virtually a small corps in itself. Company A, 752d Tank Battalion, was attached on 29 June, and later the remainder of the battalion was added. The 117th Reconnaissance Squadron was detached on 28 June and shortly left the Italian zone of operations.

Three objectives were set for the division south of Highway 68, which runs along the north bank of the Cecina River. The first of these was a line just south of Castagneto, ten miles north of the point where the 34th Division entered the lines. The line of the Bolgheri River, five miles beyond Castagneto, was the second, and the third was the Cecina River and the town of Cecina, six miles beyond the Bolgheri. The division left flank, traversed by Highway 1 and consisting of the coastal plain and a rough hill mass extending northward from the Cornia Valley, was assigned

to the 133d Regimental Combat Team, on a front of approximately seven miles. The center of the zone, a four-mile front, was given to the 442d Regimental Combat Team under Col. Charles W. Pence, astride the Suvereto—Castagneto road, while the four-mile zone on the right went to the 168th Regimental Combat Team under Col. Henry C. Hine. Of these troops, the 442d Regimental Combat Team was seeing its first action. The veteran 100th Infantry Battalion was attached to this combat team in place of the 1st Battalion, 442d Infantry, which was still in the United States. The 135th Regimental Combat Team under Lt. Col. Ashton H. Manhart was held out as the division reserve.

The 168th Infantry, taking over the right flank protection of the division and the mission of contacting the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron on the left of the 1st Armored Division, reached its blocking positions near the junction of the Cornia and Massera rivers at 2100, 26 June, and was confronted by enemy infantry and tanks which had pinned down elements of the 442d Infantry during most of the day. The 3d Battalion set up defensive positions for the night on a line of hills extending north and south along the west side of the Massera. At 0730 the next morning three companies of a full-strength German battalion of the 19th GAF Field Division attacked the positions, wading down creek beds and infiltrating through narrow gullies in the rough country. The main attack, flung against the left flank of the battalion, was apparently aimed at cutting through along the regimental boundary and striking the 442d Infantry in the rear as the latter attacked Suvereto and Belvedere, about two miles to the southwest.

The enemy, seemingly sure of a fast breakthrough, attacked without artillery support. Our artillery and all the infantry weapons mowed down the attackers, but the advance company of our defending battalion was badly shot up. The fighting continued in the broken hills for approximately seven hours before the force of the German attack was spent. The foe then hurriedly withdrew, leaving 120 dead and 32 prisoners behind. Our troops quickly followed, occupying the hills from which the enemy had attacked, and continued more than a mile north to take Hill 175.

This action broke the back of the enemy line on this flank; the following day the regiment pushed forward as rapidly as it could negotiate the rough country toward the Cecina. The 1st Battalion outflanked Monteverdi, a village located on a 1100-foot promontory 4 miles to the north, and during the night of 28-29 June the enemy evacuated it. The steady advance continued without much interference by the enemy. On 30 June, advancing over mule trails, the regiment outflanked Sassa. By this time the division advance had struck a serious snag at Cecina on the coast, and it became vitally necessary to secure the right flank against a possible German counterthrust down Highway 68 from the east. Accordingly the 168th Infantry was entrucked and rushed forward to the Cecina River. With the aid of Italian

partisans, mine-free crossings were found, and by midnight leading elements of the 3d Battalion had reached the north bank unopposed by the enemy. The entire battalion followed before dawn of 1 July, occupied a hill line a mile north of Highway 68, and blocked out approximately two and one-half miles of the road. With the right flank thus secured, the other combat teams of the division could now proceed to secure their bridgeheads over the Cecina.

3. *Outflanking Cecina.* To clear the center of the division zone it was necessary to take a trio of small villages situated on dominating hills, Suvereto and Belvedere, located within one-half mile of each other, and Sassetta, about four miles north. Strong elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division had been inserted in the German line here to bolster the weakening 19th GAF Field Division, and it was against these naturally strong and well-defended hill positions that the 442d Infantry launched its attack. The terrain ahead of the regiment consisted of steep ridges, narrow valleys, and deep ravines with one narrow, twisting road connecting the villages.

The 3d Battalion, entering the line less than a mile from Suvereto, attacked the village early on the morning of 26 June. Little trouble was encountered here, and the town was occupied by 0900. The 100th Battalion advanced around Belvedere at 1130, by-passing it on the east over small trails and reaching the high ground north of the village. From this point it swung left to cut the road from Belvedere to Sassetta, completely enveloping Belvedere. This swift outflanking maneuver was accomplished by 1515, and the brilliant attack by the battalion resulted in capture of the battalion command post of the 16th SS Reconnaissance Battalion practically intact. Thirty-eight men, 1 tank, 1 artillery piece, and 16 vehicles were taken as well as maps and other documents.

The same outflanking tactics were carried out against Sassetta the following afternoon, with the 100th Battalion circling the village from the right and the 3d Battalion from the left. By 1500 the 100th Battalion had cut the road beyond Sassetta and entered its southern and eastern approaches, capturing more prisoners and inflicting heavy casualties on the fleeing defenders. Heavy shellfire pinned down our troops seeking to advance farther, and there was prolonged resistance from snipers and small infantry groups before Sassetta was completely cleared. The 3d Battalion had more difficulty but made some advances. The 2d Battalion relieved the 3d Battalion on 28 June, and the regiment pushed on through the mountains, reaching the Bolgheri River by darkness.

At the Bolgheri line the 135th Regimental Combat Team relieved the 442d Regimental Combat Team under orders to advance across the Cecina River, seize Collemezzano, and pinch out the 133d Infantry after that regiment had taken Cecina. The 135th Infantry crossed the Bolgheri at noon on 29 June and was within 700

yards of the Cecina by darkness, battling through low hills and vineyards against a stubborn enemy. At 1030 the next morning the 2d Battalion, led by Company E, forced a crossing of the Cecina in the face of heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, with advance elements reaching the railroad embankment 200 yards beyond the river bed. Later in the afternoon Company E reached a group of houses about halfway between the railroad and Highway 68. The nearest friendly troops were Company F, almost 1000 yards in the rear. The German main line of resistance lay just ahead. The company organized for all-around defense to hold the bridge-head as the enemy gathered his forces to gobble up this single company.

Desultory fighting continued throughout the night of 30 June-1 July. Shortly after daybreak an enemy force of two tanks and a large number of infantry attempted to liquidate the American outpost, but were scattered by our artillery. Later in the morning 11 medium tanks from Company A, 752d Tank Battalion, forded the stream and came to the aid of the beleaguered garrison, but fire from concealed German tanks and antitank guns knocked out 9 of our Shermans and the remaining 2 withdrew to the south bank of the river. Two more enemy counterattacks failed to drive out the small force of infantry, who even manned the 75-mm guns of the disabled tanks to get more fire power to bear on the attackers. At dawn on 2 July Company G, 135th Infantry, and six tanks managed to break through to join Company E, paving the way for the remainder of the regiment to cross the Cecina, cut Highway 68, and resume the advance on Collemezzano.

4. *The Drive up Highway 1 to Cecina.* The activities on the right and center were largely for the long-range purpose of protecting the main avenue of pursuit up Highway 1, where the 133d Regimental Combat Team took over from the 142d Infantry (36th Division) and began its advance upon the town of Cecina. The 133d Infantry moved to the attack at 0600, 26 June, with the 1st Battalion astride the highway and the 2d Battalion across the trackless hill mass on the right of the road. Although Campiglia was evacuated by the enemy, a number of snipers remained in the vicinity to slow the advance. In mid-afternoon troublesome small-arms and mortar fire was encountered three miles east of San Vincenzo, but the 2d Battalion with artillery support wiped out these pockets and continued on. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion entered the outskirts of San Vincenzo, which was strung out along Highway 1. Here the hill mass came close to the sea, leaving a strip of flat ground only about 350 yards wide which the Germans defended fiercely, bulwarked in the stone houses of the hamlet and behind barbed wire barricades. The 1st Battalion attacked at 1600. After about three hours of house-to-house fighting it cleared the streets but on the northern outskirts ran into such heavy small-arms, mortar, and antitank fire that it could advance no farther.

After a night of incessant fighting, during which 2 German tanks penetrated to within 300 yards of the battalion command post, a co-ordinated attack to clear the enemy from the ridge on the east side of the road was started. Behind a rolling barrage laid down by a platoon of the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 151st Field Artillery Battalion, the 1st Battalion attacked at 0900 with two companies abreast astride the highway and Company C attempting to outflank the ridge. By 1400 Company C had reached the east end of the ridge, but the others were pinned down and unable to advance. The 3d Battalion was committed at 1600, swung wide behind the ridge, and cut Highway 1 three miles ahead of the 1st Battalion at 1940. At 0315, 28 June, the 1st Battalion attacked again up the road and slashed its way through to join the 3d Battalion. During the day the two battalions pushed ahead to reach the Bolgheri River while the 2d Battalion occupied the evacuated village of Castagneto at 2130.

The Bolgheri River presented a problem. It was 55 feet wide with steep banks reinforced by a dike on each side, making the overall width between dikes 110 feet. The bridges had all been blown and the gaps were covered by enemy fire, forcing the engineers to confine their repair efforts to the hours of darkness. A by-pass was not completed until 0600, 29 June, when the 3d Battalion crossed to the north bank followed by the 1st Battalion. Cecina was only five miles away. It was necessary to fight past olive groves and vineyards, over small canals and ditches, and through heavy pine groves along the sand dunes to reach the town.

By late afternoon the 3d Battalion had advanced three miles before it was halted by heavy fire from small arms and self-propelled guns; at 1725 it repulsed a small counterattack launched from west of the road. On the right the 2d Battalion slowly edged forward against heavy resistance until it reached a point about a mile southeast of Cecina where it also was counterattacked. The battalion hurled back the enemy with its last few rounds of ammunition. The 3d Battalion attacked again up the road just before midnight, ran into an ambush, and had one company severely cut up before the enemy was beaten off. There were no more advances that night. The enemy had committed strong elements to hold Cecina and block us from the harbor of Leghorn as long as possible. The major part of the infantry regiments of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division with some elements of the 19th GAF Field Division were disposed to hold the highway, the area a mile wide between it and the sea, and ground extending two miles east of the road. The line was generally two to three miles south of Cecina.

The 3d Battalion attacked again at daybreak on 30 June supported by a platoon of tanks and engineers to help clear mines, which were spread profusely. Shortly after noon Company I advanced to within 300 yards of the town, but a heavy counterattack from the west almost cut it off; the company was forced to withdraw about



The 36th Division crosses a ponton bridge over the Albegna River.



Infantry of the 1st Armored Division ride tanks in pursuit of the enemy.



At Cecina the engineers sweep for mines which the enemy sowed profusely.



Our troops move out in the rolling country north of the Cecina River.

a mile back down the highway. The 3d Battalion had been hard-hit, and two of the tanks were out of action. Since the 2d Battalion also had been unable to move ahead southeast of Cecina, the reserve 1st Battalion took up the attack at 1800, pointed northwest between the other two battalions. For three hours the 1st Battalion inched its way forward. Six enemy field guns were knocked out, but the battalion was unable to crack the German line. At midnight the 133d Infantry with all battalions in action was still 1000 yards east of Cecina and considerably farther to the south.

The regiment launched an all-out attack at 0300, 1 July, the 2d Battalion advancing north and the 1st Battalion moving northwest across the front of the 3d Battalion. The 3d Battalion was ordered to protect the left flank and clear out opposition between the highway and the beach line. The SS troops again put up fierce resistance against the 1st and 3d Battalions, but by 0630 the 2d Battalion had cracked through elements of the 19th GAF Field Division and reached the river on the regiment's right flank. Tanks and infantry of the 2d Battalion then turned west and entered the eastern outskirts of the town. By 1700 the part of Cecina east of the highway had been cleared; three hours later most of the west portion was occupied. Much of the town was reduced to a shambles. A counterattack by 5 Mark VI tanks and about 100 infantry was beaten off with a loss to the enemy of 2 Tigers destroyed, and at the end of the day the town was securely in our hands.

The 3d Battalion cleared the pine woods and beaches as it advanced toward Cecina Marina at the mouth of the Cecina River, but south and southwest of Cecina the 1st Battalion had another tough day, running into minefields covered by heavy fire. By 0600 the reserve company was committed, and the battle resolved into fierce, close-in struggles against isolated groups of SS troops who resisted stubbornly throughout the entire day. At darkness the battalion was still 500 yards south of the town on Highway 1, but the heaviest fighting was over. Pushing off again at dawn on 2 July, the 1st Battalion cleared its way through the mines; by 0700 it had linked up with the 2d Battalion in Cecina and had made contact on its left with the 3d Battalion. The 3d Battalion entered Cecina Marina during the morning, capturing a huge coastal gun, and by 0900 the south bank of the river had been cleared.

The struggle for Cecina was the most bitter battle yet fought by the Americans north of Rome. It cost the 133d Infantry 16 officers and 388 men killed, wounded, or missing in action, but enemy losses were fully as great and much materiel was captured or destroyed. With the other regiments of the 34th Division already across Highway 68, the entire division was now ready for the final drive on the great port of Leghorn, nearly 20 miles farther up the coast.

B. *THE ADVANCE OF THE 1st ARMORED DIVISION*

21 JUNE - 8 JULY

The 1st Armored Division was recommitted to combat after a week of rest and rehabilitation had restored losses in vehicles and personnel suffered during the push from the beachhead and a week of pursuit action. It was sent into the line on the right of IV Corps in the hope that its hitting power would permit a rapid advance and deny the enemy time to set up elaborate delaying positions. The zone given the division covered the rugged, mountainous country of the Tuscan hills and from the standpoint of terrain was one of the most difficult sections ever assigned to an American armored unit the size of a division.

Roads became very important to the division since the rugged nature of the countryside limited cross-country movement. Not one first-class road existed within the division zone along its main axes, but small trails, many of them unsuited for vehicles, were numerous. The boundary on the left ran roughly 12 miles inland and parallel to the coast, but the main north-south road traveled by Combat Command B on its axis of advance was almost six miles farther inland. This road passed through Massa Marittima, Castelnuovo, and Pomarance, crossed Highway 68 about six miles southwest of Volterra, and continued on through Capannoli and Ponsacco to the Arno River at Pontedera. A secondary road, running northeast from Grosseto through Paganico and then striking north to meet Highway 73 just below Roccastrada, formed the other main axis traveled by Combat Command A. The route followed Highway 73 for about seven miles through Roccastrada and then wound over secondary roads through Torniella, Chiusdino, Radicondoli, and Casole d'Elsa, across Highway 68, and eventually through Palaia to the Arno east of Pontedera. Such country was admirably suited to the Germans' delaying actions and use of demolitions, and they took full advantage of the natural aid offered by the rough terrain.

The division jumped off through elements of the 36th Division and Task Force Ramey on the afternoon of 21 June. The broad objective as outlined by General Harmon was the seizure of the road net around Pisa. The immediate mission laid down by IV Corps was four-fold: 1) to attack and destroy the enemy in the division zone of advance; 2) to assist the advance of the 36th Division; 3) to maintain contact with the 36th Division on the left and the FEC on the right; 4) to protect the right flank of the Corps. Initially the troops of the division were assigned as follows: Combat Command A had the 1st and 3d Battalions, 361st Infantry; the 1st Armored Regiment; Company B, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company D, 16th Armored Engineer Battalion; and the 27th and 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalions. Combat Command B was composed of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 6th Armored Infantry; the 13th Armored Regiment, less the 2d Battalion; Company C, 701st Tank

Destroyer Battalion; Company A, 16th Armored Engineers; and the 68th and 69th Armored Field Artillery Battalions. A division reserve, commanded by Colonel Howze of the 13th Armored Regiment, was formed which included the 2d Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment; the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, and later the 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry; Company A, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company C, 16th Armored Engineers; and the 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion. The 69th and 93d Field Artillery Battalions were attached from the 6th Armored Field Artillery Group. In general support were the 936th Field Artillery Battalion (155-mm guns) and the 434th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, self-propelled, both attached, and the remainder of the 16th Armored Engineers and division service units.

While the two combat commands were to exert the main effort, the 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion received the mission of maintaining contact with the French and throughout the length of the drive performed this job. This was a doubly difficult task since the armored cars and light tanks of the battalion in many instances found it necessary to twist and thread their way along small trails and cross-country. Though never faced by a major enemy force, elements of the battalion were often forced to fight their way forward.

1. *Combat Command A.* The two combat commands moved through elements of the 36th Division on the afternoon of 21 June. Colonel Daniel's Combat Command A, advancing on the right, went forward at 1330 and met its first action north of the Paganico road-Highway 73 junction. An hour and one half afterward Combat Command B under General Allen went through the infantry where the road to Massa Marittima leaves Highway 1 and immediately began running into resistance in the left portion of the division zone. No great gains were made the first day, and both commands jumped off the following morning at 0530, after halting in place for the night. This hour of attack each morning became standard operating procedure within the division unless otherwise ordered. The combat commanders took advantage of every small road in their zones to divide their units into smaller columns; at one time during the early stages of the advance elements of the division were moving northward on seven different roads or trails. This was necessary not only to cover the zone allotted but because the terrain was such that room to maneuver was lacking. Almost always only the leading elements of the columns were able to do much fighting. Seldom could more than the two lead tanks in each column find firing positions off the roads at any given time.

Combat Command A advanced initially in two columns, one striking north toward Roccastrada, the other east toward Civitella. A third column in mid-morning began operating along a small road between the first two. The command was thus broken down into three small task forces similar to those previously employed. By

dark, against opposition consisting of small groups of infantry, self-propelled guns, and a little artillery, a general advance of five miles had been made. During the night of 22-23 June the enemy fell back somewhat from his defensive positions, leaving behind mines and demolitions. Civitella was occupied about 1000 and held until arrival of French units. When heavier resistance was met at Roccastrada, the armored units by-passed the town, leaving it to be mopped up by the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, dispatched from Task Force Ramey to do this job. Capture of Roccastrada opened Highway 73 as a supply route all the way from Highway 1.

Continuing on 24 June, Combat Command A advanced fairly rapidly until mid-afternoon when the little town of Torniella, in a defile formed by a narrow valley, was reached. Most of the difficulty in the morning had come from bad terrain and demolitions, but at Torniella the Germans apparently had decided to make a stand. On the north edge of the town two bridges had been blown, and the demolished crossings were hotly defended. Infantry attempts to cross were met by intense small-arms opposition. Both direct and indirect artillery fire was received, and the town was subjected to a heavy mortar barrage. The command did not advance beyond this point during the day. Before dawn on 25 June the 3d Battalion, 361st Infantry, attempted to break the deadlock only to be driven back into Torniella with considerable loss. The infantry then turned their efforts to a flanking movement to the right and at 1930 captured the village of Scalvaia, on the crest of a high hill, eliminating the heavy small-arms fire which had prevented the engineers from working on the bridge and preparing a crossing for vehicles. A by-pass was completed during the night of 25-26 June.

With this bottleneck finally broken, 26 June saw fair advances made. Combat Command A's infantry cleared scattered German groups from high ground on both sides of the road as the force moved slowly over difficult terrain toward Chiusdino. At one point over 100 trees had been blown across the road; mines and blown culverts were frequent. At 0730 the next morning leading units entered Chiusdino without opposition and advanced about five miles beyond the town by darkness, while the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion moved to Monticiano. One armored column swung into the small valley to the east of Chiusdino and cut Highway 73 in front of the French, remaining to cover the road until the following day. The road block was then taken over by the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion, which held it pending the arrival of goumiers of the FEC. During this day the division and attached artillery had good hunting, destroying among other vehicles four Mark VI and two Mark IV tanks. Most of these were knocked out in the left of the division zone.

On 28 June the main effort of the division swung more to the westward. Combat Command A advanced until met by heavy opposition at Montingegnoli, where enemy antitank and small-arms fire pinned down the infantry and halted the

armor. Plans were made for a co-ordinated attack at 1500, but just before it was ready to start the former division reserve, which had been committed as Task Force Howze on 22 June, came in from the southwest and the enemy hurriedly withdrew from the town. Advancing beyond this point the next day, Combat Command A drew the brunt of the enemy reaction when armored elements reached Radicondoli after negotiating a long, difficult by-pass. Immediate and heavy fire came from the high ground in the vicinity of Mensano, across a small valley to the east. Five vehicles were knocked out and forward progress was effectively stopped. The enemy had injected elements of the 26th Panzer Division into the fight in this area.

On the night of 29-30 June our infantry secured some of the high ground around Mensano. In the morning tanks managed to make their way across country against considerable fire, and at noon they cut the road east of the town, which the infantry then attacked and occupied at 1600. While this battle was in progress, the left column made its way into the village of Monteguidi by 1800 and thus secured the triangle of hilltop towns, Radicondoli, Mensano, and Monteguidi.

2. *Combat Command B.* While Combat Command A was making its way along the eastern flank, Combat Command B was having trouble with the enemy on the western side, for it was bucking up against the bulk of the enemy armor in the division zone. Progress on the second day of the push was slow against heavy resistance, consisting mainly of tanks with protecting infantry. At 1300, 22 June, General Harmon committed the division reserve as Task Force Howze between the two combat commands. The 2d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, came under division control as a mobile reserve.

One of the greatest single losses of the drive to the Arno was suffered by Combat Command B on this second afternoon of battle. After Task Force Howze was committed but before it could move into action, Company B, 13th Armored Regiment, with a platoon of tank destroyers attached, moved out on the right flank on a reconnaissance-diversion. This force «diverted» itself into a German trap along a small road three miles east of the main body where it was suddenly attacked from the flanks and rear by four Mark IV and six Mark VI tanks supported by infantry. The light tanks were hopelessly outgunned, and before the force could extricate itself it lost nine light tanks and three of the tank destroyers. The main body of Combat Command B also was fighting savagely against a group of Tiger tanks some six miles south of Massa Marittima. One engineer reconnaissance lieutenant crept close enough to disable one of the heavy tanks with a bazooka and killed or wounded the crew with a carbine as they climbed from the stricken vehicle. He diverted the attention of another Tiger until a tank destroyer could move in and smash it with three direct hits by 3-inch shells. Artillery accounted

for another Mark VI, which compensated in part for the losses suffered by the diversionary force.

While Combat Command A made fairly rapid advances on 23 June, the other forces of the division continued to meet heavy resistance from enemy tanks and infantry. They advanced slowly but steadily. Well directed artillery fire cost the Germans three more Mark VI tanks in action against Combat Command B, leading elements of which were within sight of Massa Marittima by darkness. Early in the morning of 24 June heavy resistance was encountered by the right column at Perolla, a hamlet three miles southeast of Massa Marittima. After a long search a by-pass was found, making it possible for armor to go around the town. With tanks coming from the east flank and infantry circling the town from the west side, ten enemy tanks and a large number of infantry gave up the position and retired. The enemy tanks apparently continued to retreat, but a short distance north of the town the German infantry turned about and became involved in a six-hour fire fight with Combat Command B's foot troops. This fight was finally broken up when light tanks managed to maneuver off the road and overrun the German positions. While this column was having trouble, the center and left columns made their way into Massa Marittima, which they occupied just before 1800. This knocked out the center of the Nazi defense line; for the next two days Combat Command B was concerned primarily with difficult terrain and demolished roads. The command continued to move slowly north on its established axis, battling a stubborn rear guard of two Mark VI tanks and infantry all day on 26 June. The 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry, secured Montieri for the Howze force.

On the night of 26-27 June the 34th Division relieved the 36th Division on the coastal flank of IV Corps, and the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron was attached to the 1st Armored Division. The squadron in turn was attached to Combat Command B and operated to fill the gap between it and the 34th Division. The combat command pushed on against varying resistance on 27 June and took the village of Gerfalco, east of Monterotundo, by 1130 with forward elements nearing the latter town by nightfall. This put them roughly halfway between Massa Marittima and the next objective, Castelnuovo. The left column drove enemy infantry out of Monterotundo by noon on 28 June, but armor was unable to advance beyond the town due to road difficulties. A similar situation faced the right column, whose infantry cleared the village of Fosini by 1735, for the road beyond, leading to Castelnuovo, was blocked with rubble. The advance was temporarily halted here until a method could be found to get armored support ahead to follow the infantry. The hard-working engineers broke a path through the rubble during the night, and on the afternoon of 29 June Combat Command B's units rolled into Castelnuovo

unopposed. As usual the enemy had dropped back but left demolitions which here again prevented any rapid vehicular pursuit.

Following another night of work by the engineers in clearing the streets of Castelnuovo, a large gain was made on 30 June. A column, spearheaded by Company G, 13th Armored Regiment, carrying infantry on its tanks, by-passed Pomarance to the west and dashed ahead more than eight miles to secure high ground just south of and dominating Highway 68. The remainder of the command advanced on Pomarance, which was captured without much trouble at 1230; at darkness infantry made an assault crossing of the Cecina River three miles north of the city. Enemy infantry were rapidly driven from the river banks and our tanks followed across. Colonel Howze's units, after struggling more against terrain than Germans during the past two days, secured San Dalmazio village, four miles southeast of Pomarance, at 1115 and split into two columns there. By nightfall each column had crossed the river, operating on minor routes and trails leading due north toward Volterra.

3. *Advance to the Highway.* At the beginning of July the left flank of the division was the most advanced with Combat Command B's left column looking down on Highway 68 about seven miles southwest of Volterra. The right column was just across the Cecina River, four miles due south of Volterra as the crow flies, but still three miles from Highway 68 and about eight road miles from Volterra. Task Force Howze also had two columns across the river, echeloned east and south of Combat Command B by about four miles. Still farther east Combat Command A was almost on a line with Task Force Howze and some distance south of Combat Command B. Its advance units were six miles north of Radicondoli, in the vicinity of Mensano, and almost ten miles short of Highway 68. In the past 9 days the division had advanced the Corps line a total of 33 air-line miles or measured by the devious routes traveled through the rough terrain nearly 3 times that far. In the next nine days only six air-line miles were gained.

The enemy defended heavily along the line of Highway 68 all day on 1 July. About a mile north of the Cecina Combat Command B tried to capture additional high ground but made little progress against infantry and roving tanks, mostly Mark VI Tigers. Task Force Howze advanced unopposed into the village of Mazzola, three miles southeast of Volterra, but on its north edge ran into heavy direct fire which cost three tanks. When the column then drew back south of the town, approximately one company of German infantry, operating aggressively, attempted to follow up the withdrawal. Artillery fire dispersed this abortive counterattack, and Mazzola remained in no-man's land. For the next three days both Combat Command B and Task Force Howze held generally the same positions, though Combat Command B improved its left flank by securing more ground and

establishing strongpoints on the north side of Highway 68. Troop C, 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, made a sortie which struck to the north across the road into Montecatini di Val di Cecina.

The first three days of July were not easy for Combat Command A. After a limited advance on 1 July, hindered by enemy resistance, mines and terrain, the command drew close to Casole d'Elsa. This was a small town, surrounded by a 15-foot wall, located atop a dominating hill covering 3 possible roads for advance north. Before first light on 2 July strong patrols from Companies B and C, 361st Infantry, moved into the southeastern outskirts of the town. Tanks crept up behind them in the pre-dawn darkness ready to follow into the town. A brisk fire fight developed between the infantry and the defenders. When dawn broke the tanks found themselves without dismounted support in an exposed position just below the town where it was almost impossible to get off the road. The two infantry companies had been shot up and were completely disorganized. At least 5 antitank guns and 3 Mark VI tanks opened fire on the American tanks at about 600 yards' range from behind the wall of the town, smashing 6 medium tanks, 3 light tanks, and 2 tank destroyers.

This action almost wiped out what remained of the already depleted armor of the task force; the two infantry companies lost nearly 50% of their effectives. Throughout the day Combat Command A hung on in a defensive position, although the enemy did not press his advantage. Company E, 1st Armored Regiment, came up from reserve as replacement for the lost tanks while Companies K and L, 361st Infantry, took over the assault job on 3 July. After an artillery preparation lasting 20 minutes the 2 companies attempted to take the town but were driven off. Artillery again blasted at the strong walls and stone houses, and again an infantry attack was repulsed. Finally, after six previous tries during the day and evening had failed, at about 0300, 4 July, the infantry succeeded in getting into the town, from which most of the defenders had departed. Company L covered the south and west sides of the town while Company K stormed in from the northeast and scaled the wall. Tanks and infantry pushed a short distance beyond Casole d'Elsa and then took up a defensive position. The 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, replaced the 361st Infantry, which was then relieved from attachment to the 1st Armored Division and ordered to assemble with other units of the 91st Division, newly arrived in the IV Corps area.

The fight at Casole d'Elsa was the last major engagement by the 1st Armored Division before it was relieved piecemeal by the 88th Division and Task Force Ramey, final relief coming on 11 July. With only three infantry battalions available and the armor far below normal strength, all commands made slight advances to more favorable positions. The 81st Reconnaissance Battalion was attached to

Combat Command A and pushed across Highway 68 after Companies A and B, 6th Armored Infantry, had secured high ground dominating the road at 0200, 7 July. On 8 July the 350th Infantry (88th Division) passed through Combat Command B and Task Force Howze, attacked, and captured Volterra. On the following day Combat Command A was relieved by the Ramey force.

The division had not made the spectacular gains that featured its earlier pursuit action above Rome, but in slightly less than 3 weeks in the line beyond Grosseto, operating through the most difficult type of terrain for armor, it had advanced approximately 40 air-line miles against constant stiff opposition. How well the enemy demolition crews used the terrain possibilities is shown by the work required of the 16th Armored Engineers. Men of this battalion constructed 37 steel tread-way bridges, repaired 12 enemy bridges, improved 8 fords, constructed or graded 150 miles of by-passes, bulldozed routes through the rubble of 11 towns, and swept more than 500 miles of road for mines. Development of the armored bulldozers, which had been issued to the division about a month before the operations took place, proved a great help. These machines were M-4 medium tanks equipped with large bulldozer blades which could wade into the face of enemy small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire to do necessary work. They were more unwieldy than regular bulldozers, but the armor made up for this deficiency.

Eighty-one German armored vehicles were destroyed or captured during this phase. These included 3 Mark IV tanks, 31 Mark VI Tiger tanks, 16 tanks of unknown type, and 14 self-propelled guns. Scores of towed antitank guns were knocked out. Losses inflicted on the division included 36 M-4 medium tanks, 35 M-5 light tanks and M-8 assault guns, 10 M-10 tank destroyers, and 14 armored cars. The division, less certain elements attached to Task Force Ramey, moved to the vicinity of Bolgheri for reorganization.

C. *THE FEC ON THE RIGHT*

20 JUNE-7 JULY

The Americans on the coast had broken across the Ombrone River with little difficulty, but farther inland the French were faced with much stronger defenses along the Orcia River, a tributary of the Ombrone. (*See Map No. 7.*) Here the Germans had a naturally strong position and had bulwarked it with prepared pits for machine guns and riflemen backed with a larger concentration of artillery than they had used before. The line, as described in a document captured on 17 June, ran from Lake Trasimeno westward along the hills north of Sarteano, then along the high ground on the north bank of the Orcia River to the junction of the Ombrone,

and southwest five miles to Paganico. The center was the strongest point, the flanks were weaker. On the east the river line gave way to hills which could be bypassed; to the west the upper Ombrone River valley running toward Siena formed a path around and behind that end of the line. The Orcia itself, with low banks and solid bottom, was easily fordable in the summer. Should the American armor of IV Corps advance along the west side of the upper Ombrone Valley, the French Guillaume Group would be in position to cross the Ombrone near Paganico and turn the right flank of the German line.

1. *Crossing the Orcia.* By midnight of 21 June the French forces were concentrated from west to east in the following order: the 1st Group of Tabors near the Ombrone along the Cinigiano—Paganico road; the 1st Moroccan Infantry three miles south of the Sant'Angelo bridge; the 3d Algerian Infantry at Poggio Uccello; the 8th Moroccan Infantry south of the Orcia along Highway 2; the 5th Moroccan Infantry just north of Castelvecchio; and the 4th Moroccan Infantry south of Sarteano in flank guard capacity. Heavy German artillery fire was received during the night as the enemy began defense of the Sant'Angelo Station bridge and Hill 615, two miles north of Poggio Uccello.

The 2d Moroccan Division on the right of the FEC front immediately pressed into the enemy line. On the right flank the 4th Moroccan Infantry advanced just northwest of Sarteano on the morning of 22 June and met heavy opposition all along its front. In the early hours of the morning the 5th Moroccan Infantry moved north and east along the road from Castelvecchio and by 1100 controlled the road as far as Le Checche, about three miles northwest of Castelvecchio. The 8th Moroccan Infantry continued along the highway during the night and in the morning fanned out north along the Orcia and toward Castiglione d'Orcia, three miles north of Poggio Uccello. By noon the entire area was aflame with infantry battles while artillery and Nebelwerfer fire assisted the German foot soldiers in covering the extensive minefields around the town and along Highway 2.

Hill 615, less than a mile southwest of Castiglione, was attacked by the 3d Algerian Division before dawn on 22 June against heavy German infantry concentrations well supported by artillery. In the fighting for the bridge four miles west of Poggio Uccello the 7th Algerian Infantry advanced to the river bank but could not get across. The next bridge to the west at the Sant'Angelo Station was the one which General Guillebaud had tried and failed to secure before the river line was fully engaged. The 1st Moroccan Infantry, supported by several detachments of goumiers, approached this bridge again early on 22 June; heavy fire coming from the Station stopped them several hundred yards to the east along the river bank. Further attempts to advance were futile. To the west the outlook was brighter by the end of the day. Elements of the 1st Group of Tabors made contact with IV

Corps at Cinigiano and continued northwest five miles along the south bank of the Ombrone River, meeting less resistance than was being encountered to the east. With good gains reported by the Americans, General Guillaume was ordered to capture Mount Acuto, eight miles farther north, as soon as the 4th Moroccan Spahis arrived to reinforce his goumiers.

Two full divisions and elements of three others were identified as contesting the advance of the FEC across the front. Opposite the 2d Moroccan Division was the entire 356th Grenadier Division, ranged from Sarteano to Montepulciano, six miles north of Castelvecchio, while all three regiments of the tough 4th Parachute Division were directly ahead of the 5th Moroccan Infantry five miles northeast of Castiglione. The 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 26th Panzer Division was along Highway 2 to the north of the river; elements of the 20th GAF Field Division and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (29th Panzer Grenadier Division) were defending the river line itself. Although the total number of infantry in position near the river did not appear to be large, cross fire from well-sited automatic weapons raked the stream and fire was augmented by artillery.

The 4th Moroccan Infantry succeeded in advancing during the morning of 23 June, but about noon heavy concentrations of accurate artillery fire blanketed the entire 2d Moroccan Division and several enemy aircraft, the first seen in many days, strafed Highway 2 as far south as Radicofani. On the left the 3d Algerian Division made no advance during the day, pending the outcome of the projected outflanking drive by the Guillaume Group on the extreme left. This attack subsequently forced the enemy to fall back in the center.

During the night of 23-24 June the 4th Moroccan Spahis joined the 1st Group of Tabors, and the Guillaume Group, thus reinforced and led by the Spahi armor, forded the Ombrone River in the first hours of 24 June. The advance was rapid, for the enemy artillery, disposed to the northeast, could not reach this flat area; by 1200 five miles of the road net to the north were clear. Keeping abreast of the American 1st Armored Division on its left, the Guillaume Group swept north to Mount Acuto, armored elements seizing the village of Casale on its western slopes at 1800. The 1st Group of Tabors advanced along the north bank of the Ombrone and reached points two miles southeast of Mount Acuto about the same time as Casale fell. Continuing across the hills to the northwest toward Monticiano, nine miles from Mount Acuto, the tabors established the most northerly point on the FEC line of advance.

Along the center of the front the 1st Moroccan and 7th Algerian Infantry maintained close contact with the enemy throughout the day. Resistance continued strong as the French made preparations for an attack across the Orcia River at widely dispersed points. Their mission was to clear the hill mass on the north

side of the Orcia extending from the Ombrone through Montalcino and San Quirico. The 8th Moroccan Infantry spent 24 June working its way across the flat, mine-strewn ground around Castiglione to relieve elements of the 3d Algerian Infantry at Hill 615 so that unit could throw its weight farther west with the 7th Algerian Infantry. Across the Orcia River to the northeast the 5th Moroccan Infantry in the vicinity of Le Checche continued to struggle against enemy pressure, which was too strong for the one regiment to push through. The 4th Moroccan Infantry on the right flank was in much the same position. To the east of the FEC zone the 6 South African Armoured Division was completely stopped, as were all the British units, from Sarteano east to Lake Trasimeno. Some evidence, however, of an enemy withdrawal in the west was noted when the gains of IV Corps on the left threatened to outflank the line blocking the FEC.

On 25 June the Guillaume Group cleared the area west of the Ombrone and south of Farma Creek, a tributary of the Ombrone which flows from west to east on a line about a mile north of Mount Acuto. In the center the 8th Moroccan Infantry moved against Castiglione at dawn, occupying it at 0630 without encountering much resistance. Forward positions were moved up to the banks of the Orcia along the entire zone during the morning. At noon enemy opposition fell off sharply. The 8th Moroccan Infantry made two crossings of the Orcia, one north of Hill 615 and another north of Castiglione. These initial bridgeheads were made in the center just west of Highway 2; the flanks were still on the south bank of the stream. On the right of the 2d Moroccan Division the 4th and 5th Moroccan Infantry did not advance, and the enemy showed no intention of withdrawing from the Pienza—Montepulciano sector.

Late in the evening of 25 June the 3d Algerian Division on the Corps left was ordered to cross the Orcia and attack north into the Montalcino area. The enemy withdrew slowly as the 3d and 7th Algerian Infantry and the 4th Tunisian Infantry crossed the river near the two bridges in their zone. By 0930, 26 June, the Algerian regiments, advancing along the road toward Montalcino, were two miles north of the river and in contact with the 8th Moroccan Infantry at Ripa d'Orcia. An hour later the advance was stopped by mines and a brief counterattack in which the enemy made a futile effort to drive the French back to the Orcia. By 1700 forward elements of the 4th Tunisian Infantry had captured Poggio al Convento, almost five miles beyond the river. On the extreme left the Guillaume Group crossed Farma Creek and advanced about a mile farther against more resistance than on the previous day. It then halted to permit the 3d Group of Tabors to come up as reinforcements for the 1st Group of Tabors northwest of Mount Acuto.

For 5 days, 22-26 June, the 2 French divisions and the groups of tabors had been held up by the enemy along a 29-mile front. The ten-mile advance made by the

Guillaume Group on the left flank had failed to cause any large-scale withdrawal in the center or right, but a general Corps advance of about two miles had been made by the end of the period against the stiffest resistance. In addition to gaining time for regrouping his forces, the enemy had inflicted 972 casualties. From west to east our line followed the hills north of Farma Creek to the Ombrone, south to Poggio al Convento, then east to Ripa d'Orcia, and along a slightly southeastern arc toward Sarteano. General de Larminat now co-ordinated his attack with action of the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion and Combat Command A (1st Armored Division) in the Monticiano area on the left flank in an effort to shake the enemy infantry from the Monticiano—Montepulciano line of hills. The 2d Moroccan Division was to spearhead an attack during the night of 26-27 June along Highway 2 toward San Quirico; at the same time the 3d Algerian Division and the Guillaume Group were ordered to exploit the weakest points in their zone with the intention of clearing the Montalcino hill mass.

Before dark on 26 June the American armor outflanked Monticiano on the west and forced the enemy out of the valley northwest of the town. The Guillaume Group launched its attack after dark and made good progress. The 3d Group of Tabors, which had entered the line on the extreme left flank, seized Mount Quojo, three miles south of Monticiano, and advanced almost into the town. Together with the 1st Group of Tabors it cleared the road from Monticiano five miles east to the west bank of the Ombrone by midnight on 27 June. The 4th Tunisian Infantry on the east of the Ombrone had reached a curving line from the river almost to Montalcino by the same time.

The 3d and 7th Algerian Infantry opened their push by driving to within two miles of Montalcino, and during the night of 27-28 June the 7th Algerian Infantry advanced into the town and began to battle for it. Other elements by-passed the center of the fighting and reached points four miles to the northwest. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 8th Moroccan Infantry, advanced slowly along the road from Ripa d'Orcia to San Quirico, fighting the 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment for every hill. Half of this road was in French hands by morning of the 27th, and the enemy was driven from Hill 502 in mid-afternoon. By midnight advance elements were within a mile of San Quirico. The 5th Moroccan Infantry, hampered by mines and demolitions, drove out of its positions along the north banks of the Orcia in three directions on 27 June. Violent resistance was met at first, but by 1500 villages two miles beyond Le Checche had been taken; everywhere along the FEC front the stubborn German line was yielding.

2. *The Siena Operation.* During the night of 27-28 June the enemy began a hasty withdrawal confined largely to the maze of roads leading northeast from

Highway 2. Delaying parties were left behind to cover road blocks and demolitions so as to slow the advance on the city of Siena. The pursuit was resumed on two axes, Highway 2 for the 2d Moroccan Division and the Casale—Siena road for the 3d Algerian Division. The Guillaume Group was directed to take Simignano, 11 miles north of Monticiano, providing a line of departure from which the 3d Algerian Division could attack Siena from the southwest. The 2d Moroccan Division was to approach the city from the southeast in a wide pincers movement.

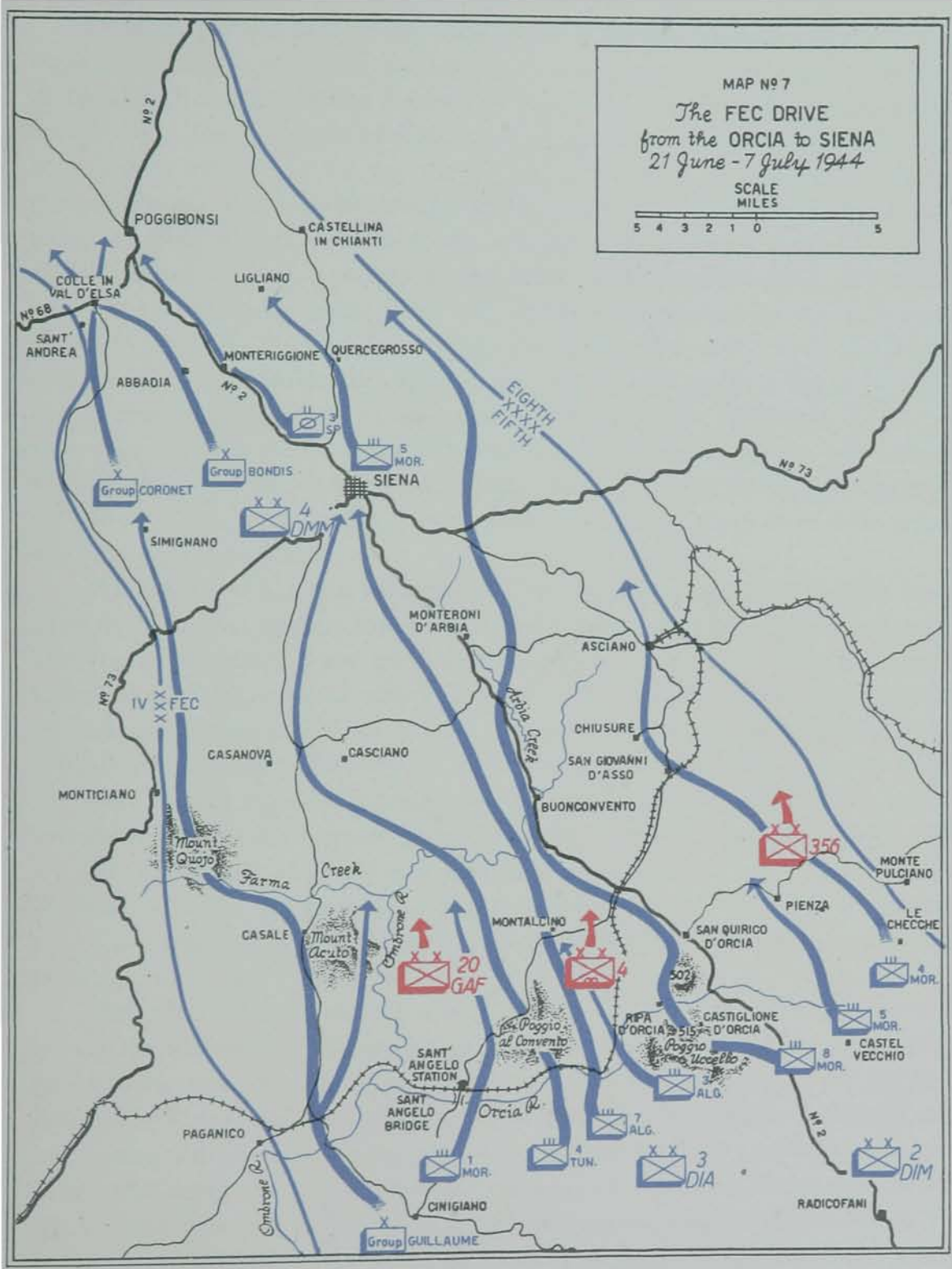
On the right Pienza fell to the 5th Moroccan Infantry during the morning of 28 June, while the 8th Moroccan Infantry seized San Quirico, then moved north along Highway 2 and a circuitous road which led to Siena from the southeast by way of San Giovanni d'Asso and Asciano. Contact was regained on the right flank early in the morning of 29 June when the 4th Moroccan Infantry approached San Giovanni d'Asso. At the end of the day the town was surrounded. The 8th Moroccan Infantry swept forward after hard fighting in the morning and by evening drove six miles north on Highway 2 to the outskirts of Buonconvento. After mopping up this place the regiment advanced another two miles up the main highway.

The enemy rear guard was stronger all along the front at the end of 29 June. The 4th Moroccan Infantry liquidated the enemy positions in San Giovanni d'Asso on the morning of 30 June and at noon engaged another pocket of resistance two miles northwest at Chiusure. By nightfall the village was clear, and reconnaissance elements continued toward Asciano, four miles farther north. In the darkness this force made rapid progress until it encountered a strong infantry defense just north of Asciano. The 8th Moroccan Infantry met stubborn but not heavy resistance along Highway 2 on the morning of 30 June; by noon the next town, Monteroni d'Arbia, was only four miles away. Cutting off to the right of the road with the three battalions echeloned to the right, the regiment advanced north of the Monteroni d'Arbia lateral road to a point about one mile east of the town before dark.

The 4th and 8th Moroccan Infantry gained control of the entire lateral road on 1 July, but heavy artillery and infantry resistance prevented any further appreciable gains. Security contact was made with the British on the right, and on 2 July the 2d Moroccan Infantry swept across the Monteroni d'Arbia—Asciano road toward Siena. Asciano itself was defended by a strong infantry force which the 4th Moroccan Infantry did not succeed in dislodging from the town during a day of bitter fighting. The 8th Moroccan Infantry was more successful. By noon Monteroni d'Orcia was cleared and the advance resumed. In the afternoon the 5th Moroccan Infantry was ordered into position along Highway 2 in order to free the 8th Moroccan Infantry for the outflanking of Siena from the east. Late in the afternoon long enemy convoys were reported going north from Siena; the enemy was abandoning the city with little more than token resistance at various crossroads. The 8th

MAP N° 7
*The FEC DRIVE
 from the ORCIA to SIENA
 21 June - 7 July 1944*

SCALE
 MILES
 5 4 3 2 1 0 5



Moroccan Infantry raced forward across Highway 73 and halted for the night three miles east of Siena.

Forming the left arm of the FEC pincers, the 3d Algerian Division pushed northwest along the west side of Highway 2 on 28 June, the 7th Algerian Infantry on the right, the 4th Tunisian Infantry in the center, and the 1st Moroccan Infantry on the left. The 1st Group of Tabors was relieved by the 4th Group early on the 28th, and by the end of the day the 3d and 4th Groups of Tabors had made a general advance of four miles through the hills north of Monticiano. In many places along the front contact with the enemy was lost. On 29 June the 7th Algerian Infantry cleaned out minor pockets of resistance; about evening contact was regained with the retreating Germans. The only strong resistance met on that day was engaged by the 4th Tunisian Infantry at Casanova, three miles west of Cacciano. The all-day battle subsided at nightfall with the French troops holding the village and several hundred yards of the road northward. The Guillaume Group was slowed by frequent mines, numerous small pockets of enemy snipers, and scattered artillery fire, while the 1st Moroccan Infantry advanced about two miles. The groups of tabors, which were driving toward Simignano, gained about three miles through mine-strewn wheat fields.

While the 7th Algerian Infantry was working its way through the hills toward Monteroni d'Arbia against isolated resistance points in the morning of 30 June, the 4th Tunisian Infantry drove north from Casanova three miles to cut an unpaved lateral road which connects with Highway 2. On the left of the Corps zone the 3d and 4th Groups of Tabors smashed ahead against heavy self-propelled gun and artillery fire, reaching Highway 73 six miles north of Monticiano. By the evening of 1 July the 7th Algerian Infantry held hill points less than three miles south of Monteroni d'Arbia but was meeting considerable resistance; the 4th Tunisian Infantry, driving straight north along a secondary road, was at a point five miles south of Siena. On the left flank the goumiers pushed into the hills north of Highway 73 toward Simignano, and forward elements secured the left flank for the operations against Siena.

The 7th Algerian Infantry and 4th Tunisian Infantry made good progress during the afternoon of 2 July as resistance continued to weaken. Forward elements of these two regiments were near the crossroads just south of the city before midnight. The 3d and 4th Groups of Tabors, meeting fierce enemy resistance covering a mass withdrawal from the Siena area, pushed forward and seized Simignano in the hills southwest of the city before the end of the day. Under this cover the 3d Algerian Infantry, which had been held in reserve along the Casale—Siena road, began the drive on Siena itself and reached Highway 73 during the early hours of the night. At 0630, 3 July, Siena was in the hands of French troops, and General

de Monsabert, commander of the 3d Algerian Division, raised the Tricolor above the city hall later in the morning.

3. *On to Highway 68.* Capture of the city did not slow the pursuit. The French troops drove on north the same day with a reconnaissance battalion, the 3d Moroccan Spahis, advancing three miles northwest along Highway 2. The 3d and 4th Groups of Tabors came abreast of Siena, forming an almost straight front from Siena west for 13 miles to the FEC-IV Corps boundary. The 2d Moroccan Infantry, moving along Highway 73 north of Monticiano, prepared to enter the lines on the right of the 4th Group of Tabors while the 6th Moroccan Infantry relieved the 3d Group of Tabors on the left flank on 4 July. All units of the 3d Algerian Division were by this time relieved by the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division under Maj. Gen. François Sevez, and the Algerians moved to Naples, where they came under control of Seventh Army. The Pursuit Corps was disbanded in order to permit General de Larminat and his staff to take over the 1st French Corps, a new organization to be comprised of French troops released from Fifth Army for duty with Seventh Army. General Juin and the FEC once more took over direct supervision of operations to continue the pursuit until it was necessary to withdraw the remaining French forces from Fifth Army and the Italian front.

On Highway 2 north of Siena are two main towns, Monteriggioni and Poggibonsi. At Poggibonsi the road veers northeastward out of the FEC zone, but the main axis of advance continued on the road leading through Certaldo and Castelfiorentino to a junction with Highway 67 along the Arno River. Observation of enemy movements pointed to Poggibonsi as the most likely spot for the next major enemy stand. To the east, in front of Eighth Army, the enemy was already stubbornly defending the Chianti mountains south of Florence and had stopped 13 Corps short of that hill mass.

The French advance proceeded rapidly on the left flank on 4 July as the 2d and 6th Moroccan Infantry and the 4th Group of Tabors drove forward along the intricate road net which feeds into Highway 2. For most of the day the enemy retreated faster than the French could pursue, but he turned to defend the lateral Highway 68, which enters Highway 2 a short distance south of Poggibonsi. At 1930 a stiff battle broke out at Abbadia, four miles south of the junction. Along Highway 68 west of Poggibonsi the enemy committed the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (29th Panzer Grenadier Division) and the 314th Grenadier Regiment (162d Turcoman Grenadier Division). In addition to guarding the road, these units blocked the head of the valley of the Elsa River at Colle di Val d'Elsa, three miles southwest of Poggibonsi. Here the valley of the Elsa River forms a narrow path through the hills for 25 miles from Colle di Val d'Elsa to the Arno.

In the eastern part of the FEC zone on 4 July the 2d Moroccan Division was still plagued by its exposed right flank, which 13 Corps was unable to cover. The division advanced cautiously along Highway 2 toward Monteriggioni and Poggibonsi and the road net leading from the main road toward Castellina in Chianti, seven miles east of Poggibonsi. The 3d Moroccan Spahis gained Monteriggioni without difficulty at 1530 while the 5th Moroccan Infantry occupied Quercegrosso, four miles east of Monteriggioni. Since this advance extended the unprotected flank even more dangerously, the entire 8th Moroccan Infantry, reinforced, was sent six miles north-east from Siena to San Giovanni, where it spread along the north-south banks of Arbia Creek and set up a defense line.

The major share of the battle for Highway 68 fell on the 4th Mountain Division, which organized two combat commands for the operations. The Bondis Group contained the 6th Moroccan Infantry and the 4th Group of Tabors; the Coronet Group had the 2d Moroccan Infantry. Both groups were reinforced by armored elements. Early on 5 July the Bondis Group seized Abbadia, but Highway 68 could not be reached despite hard fighting. About a mile south of Colle di Val d'Elsa the Coronet Group engaged in a heavy fight at Sant'Andrea about 0700. At least six enemy tanks in three groups of two each reinforced violent enemy resistance, and no progress was made during the morning.

The 3d Moroccan Spahis cleared almost three miles of Highway 2 north of Monteriggioni, but the armor was finally stopped by the increasing frequency of enemy demolitions. The same situation confronted the 5th Moroccan Infantry, which nevertheless gained three of the four miles from Quercegrosso to Ligliano. After meeting heavy resistance at noon, an attack by the Coronet Group in the Sant'Andrea area was scheduled for 1600. The attack jumped off on time, but by dark the forward elements were little nearer the village than they had been at noon. The armor on Highway 2 took advantage of this action to launch a push aimed at outflanking the objective from the east. Despite demolitions some success was achieved and enemy tanks were engaged in front of the Coronet Group. By midnight the French armor had advanced 2500 yards to form a salient which pointed at Poggibonsi and extended north of Colle di Val d'Elsa. Aided by this diversion on its left, the 5th Moroccan Infantry inched forward late in the afternoon and a few hours after dark reached the outskirts of Ligliano. The right flank situation improved as 13 Corps moved up nearly abreast of the 2d Moroccan Division, enabling the 8th Moroccan Infantry to gain two miles of ground north of San Giovanni.

After its failure at Sant'Andrea, the 4th Mountain Division arranged a feint designed to draw the enemy tanks away from Colle di Val d'Elsa and permit the Coronet Group to jab through to the town. The Bondis Group hammered at the enemy during the morning of 6 July. Then the Coronet Group thrust against the

town, but the strategy failed. Not only did the enemy prevent an advance, but a counterattack on Highway 2 pushed back the 3d Moroccan Spahis 1500 yards. After dark the Coronet Group kept up its pressure, however, and just before midnight the enemy, wearying of the battle and badly mauled by the past two days' action, began a slow withdrawal. Colle di Val d'Elsa was in French hands by 0330, 7 July, and before evening all Highway 68 was behind the forward elements.

D. *SUMMARY OF GAINS*

By 7 July Fifth Army was attacking north of the line of Highway 68 all along the front. On the left the 34th Division was already engaged in heavy battling north of the road. Reliefs were planned to increase strength on the right of IV Corps and the Army center. On the right the French were now ready to exploit the fall of Colle di Val d'Elsa, which had cleared Highway 68. The past two weeks had seen stiffening enemy resistance across the entire front, resulting in the hardest fighting since the fall of Rome. Progress, though slow, had been steady. Appearance of the fanatical SS troops opposite the 34th Division had culminated in the hard battle at Cecina; it had taken the FEC nearly a week at the cost of almost 1000 casualties to crack the defense along the mountains north of the Orcia River. In the center the 1st Armored Division had slugged it out with infantry and tanks of the 26th Panzer Division in a give-and-take struggle through the Tuscan hills.

More mountains remained between Fifth Army and the Arno River, but the worst ground had been covered. Siena, an ancient art center and the largest city yet liberated north of Rome, was safely in Allied hands. Ahead the mountains would soon give way to lower hills sloping toward the Arno Valley. On the left the Army was almost within striking distance of the great port of Leghorn; along the remainder of the line final steps in the push to the Arno River were being planned.