

*Capture of Leghorn and Pisa*

AT the beginning of July the left flank of IV Corps was across the Cecina River and Highway 68, the final lateral geographical features before the Arno. The strongly reinforced 34th Division had finished cleaning out Cecina and was north of the stream and highway all along its front. The Corps and Army line ran almost due east with the center and right approaching Highway 68 as it ran its northeastern course toward Poggibonsi in the FEC zone. East of the 34th Division the 1st Armored Division was generally along the line of the road, scheduled for early relief by the 88th Division, then enroute from its long rest period near Rome. Two combat teams of the 91st Division were already either on or near the front, and the remainder of the division was due to arrive soon, further to reinforce IV Corps for the final lap of the drive to the Arno River. Beyond IV Corps to the east the French were engaged in heavy battles for Colle di Val d'Elsa, Highway 68, and Poggibonsi.

The 34th Division, expanded to more than twice its normal size by various attachments, was to make the main IV Corps effort beyond Highway 68. The division planned to drive straight north to the Arno, by-passing and isolating the port of Leghorn. The 34th Division zone ahead was divided into three natural avenues of advance. (*See Map No. 8.*) Highway 1, which had been the principal axis north of Rome, enters mountainous terrain a few miles beyond Cecina, winding along the edge of cliffs which come down to the sea almost the entire 20 miles to Leghorn. It connects several small coastal towns including Rosignano Solvay, site of a large chemical plant, before it reaches Leghorn. The alternate road from Cecina to Pisa runs through a valley flanked by the mountains along the coast on the left and by another ridge line along its right edge. The valley road links numerous small towns and villages, passing through the largest community, Colle Salvetti, just before it enters the Arno River plain about ten miles south and slightly

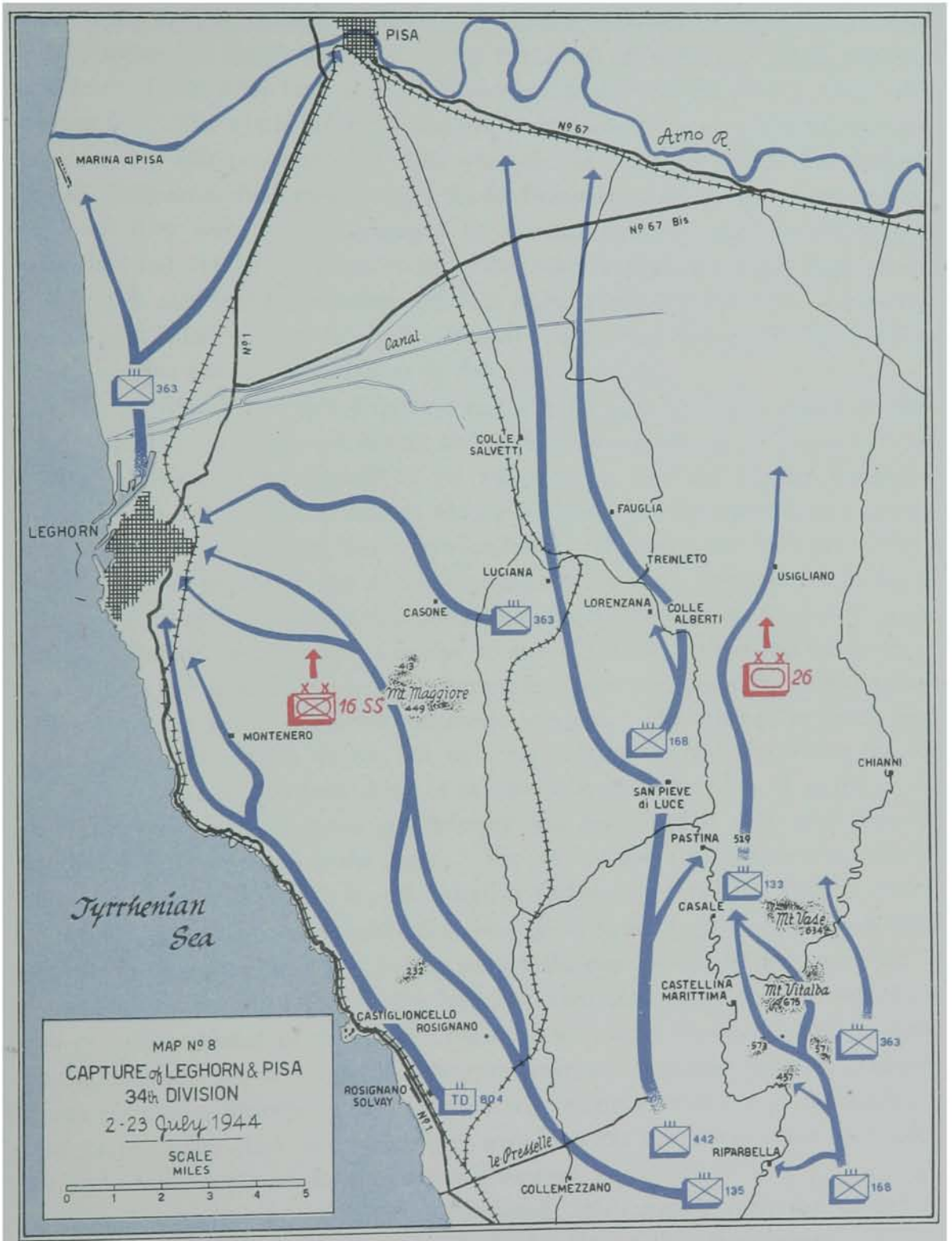
east of Pisa. At the foot of the mountains on the east of the valley runs a road connecting Riparbella, Castellina Marittima, Pastina, Lorenzana, and Colle Salvetti. East of the 34th Division zone lay the valley of the Era River, which was the main route north for the 88th Division and later the 91st Division. The FEC on the Army right was using roads leading north through the Elsa Valley.

The main effort of IV Corps was to be made on the left in the 34th Division zone with the bulk of the division strength concentrated along its right, through the mountains on the east of the valley. On 3 July the division was further strengthened by the addition of Task Force Ramey, whose combat troops now consisted of the 363d Regimental Combat Team (91st Division); the Reconnaissance Company, 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Company A, 752d Tank Battalion.

#### A. *ADVANCE OF THE 34th DIVISION*

2-26 JULY

1. *Rosignano and Hill 634.* While the 133d Infantry was completing the final phase of its rough battle for Cecina on 2 July, other units of the 34th Division began maneuvering into their new positions for the drive north of Highway 68. The 135th Infantry, which had fully consolidated and expanded its bridgehead over the Cecina River east of Cecina, turned down Highway 68 toward the sea. With the 2d Battalion leading, the regiment attacked at dawn. By mid-afternoon it cleared Collemezzano, turned to the northwest, entered the division's left zone, and pinched out the 133d Infantry, which reorganized around Cecina in division reserve. The 442d Infantry, attacking due north with the 100th Battalion on its left and the 2d Battalion on the right, moved into the valley to push up the center while the 168th Infantry attacked along the division right through the mountains. The 100th Battalion engaged in a brisk fight just east of Collemezzano but in a swift, hard attack overran the enemy positions, inflicting heavy casualties. By 2300 both the 135th and 442d Infantry had reached the line of the Le Presselle lateral road, about four miles northwest of Highway 68, against increasing resistance. On the right the 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, attacked west and took Riparbella at 1130, the 2d Battalion sent patrols north to Hills 571 and 573, and the 1st Battalion occupied Hill 457, three miles north of Riparbella. The Reconnaissance Company, 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was given the mission of screening the advance on the extreme right and maintaining contact with the 1st Armored Division. The 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 34th Reconnaissance Troop formed an almost entirely armored force advancing up Highway 1. By the end of the day all units were in their assigned zones in position to launch the main attack.



The enemy again had the advantage of terrain. The ridge lines on either side of the valley are rugged and contain peaks reaching 1500 feet or higher. The right ridge is somewhat higher than that on the left, some of its highest points rising to 2000 feet. From these high peaks the Germans could rake the central valley with flanking fire. The 135th Infantry advanced early the morning of 3 July into the west ridge, making fair progress until dusk when the 3d Battalion entered the southern edge of Rosignano, three miles beyond the Le Presselle road. As the troops reached the town they were heavily engaged by German infantry and were subjected to mortar and artillery concentrations. The other battalions on the right of the 3d Battalion also found themselves unable to make appreciable headway. In the valley the 442d Infantry drew heavy fire from the right ridge and was pinned down on about the same line as the battalions of the 135th Infantry.

The 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, had a hard fight since the enemy in Rosignano defended the town stubbornly and had to be rooted out in house-to-house battling. Rosignano, garrisoned by the same tough 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division units which had resisted so fiercely at Cecina, was the main western strong-point of the German defense line before Leghorn. The town was built on a hilltop and afforded an excellent view of the coastal plain for many miles, almost as far as Cecina. It was built compactly, containing many three- and four-story stone houses. A stone castle stood out on the summit of the hill. From the top floors of these houses the defenders threw hand grenades; from the lower floors and cellars they poured out heavy fire from automatic weapons. An attempt to reach high ground east of the town failed, but in fierce fighting through the streets the foe was driven from the southern third of the town by the afternoon of 4 July. An attack by four Mark IV tanks and infantry was beaten off at 1830 with three of the tanks destroyed by bazooka teams. The 3d Battalion, 442d Infantry, relieved the 100th Battalion and with the 2d Battalion slightly improved the division center.

In Rosignano an enemy infiltration attempt at 0200, 5 July, was beaten back by artillery defensive fires, and by the end of the day about half the town was in our hands; the 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry, succeeded in getting a foothold on high ground northeast of the town. Before dawn the 2d Battalion, 442d Infantry, attacked a small east-west ridge covering the entrance to flatter valley land ahead. It was repulsed. Reforming, the battalion tried again at 0600 but again failed. A third assault after dark was successful, and by 2300 the ridge, about two miles east and a mile north of Rosignano, was secured.

The slow clearance of Rosignano continued. By 2030, 7 July, the 3d Battalion had reached the northern edge of the battered town though the enemy still held houses in the country immediately beyond the town. The other battalions of the

135th Infantry tried a day attack to the north and made only slight headway, but the following day both the 135th and 442d Infantry made some advances. By darkness on 9 July both regiments succeeded in reaching positions about four miles northeast of Rosignano and were engaged in cleaning up remaining pockets of resistance. Along the coastline the armor, after slow going for a week because of mined roads and demolished bridges, had passed Rosignano Solvay and had dismounted elements approximately on a line with Rosignano. The advance of the 442d Infantry in the center was aided by gains on the east ridge which had eliminated most of the heavy fire coming from the flank.

While the street battle raged in Rosignano, the 168th Infantry had equally tough going in the rugged hills on the east. The regiment got off to a good start on 3 July, surrounding and virtually wiping out two enemy infantry companies caught midway between Riparbella and Castellina Marittima. At darkness the 1st and 2d Battalions were less than a mile from Castellina. On 4 July the 363d Infantry under Col. W. Fulton Magill, Jr., was committed on the right of the 168th Infantry, thus providing the main effort with two full infantry combat teams on a front of less than four miles. The 168th Infantry attacked toward Castellina and high ground to the east. The 2d Battalion captured Mount Vitalba (Hill 675) and held it against three counterattacks, but the Castellina defense proved too difficult to crack immediately. Attacking in column of battalions led by the 3d Battalion, the 363d Infantry achieved a gain of about a mile into high ground east of Hill 675. Then both regiments consolidated their gains and fought off German counterpressure in the form of numerous parties of 50 to 75 men who attempted to infiltrate down ravines and gullies.

On the morning of 6 July the attack was resumed. By noon the 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, had entered Castellina from the east and the south and finally cleared it after heavy fighting in the town. The 2d Battalion pushed up abreast on the east, and the 3d Battalion then attacked through the 2d Battalion, cutting the road which ran from Castellina northeast seven miles to Chianni. Heavy artillery fire was concentrated on the 34th Division right flank from guns located near Chianni. In midmorning the 363d Infantry advanced across the heavily mined eastern slopes of Hill 675 and just before dark seized dominating Mount Vase (Hill 634), two and one-half miles northeast of Castellina. This key mountain was heavily shelled by the enemy, and at 1130 the next morning after an especially heavy artillery and mortar barrage the 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division), which reportedly had been brought from the area around Siena for this operation, counterattacked. It drove the 3d Battalion, 363d Infantry, off the hill and forced our men back one-half mile to Hill 553, where our troops reformed and held the line. Until Hill 634 could again be brought under our control, progress was stopped.

Both the 363d and 168th Infantry took up the offensive again on 9 July, and in heavy fighting the 1st Battalion, 363d Infantry, finally won back Hill 634 early in the morning. With this stumbling block removed, the advance of the 168th Infantry was greatly facilitated. By 1900 the village of Casale, three miles north of Castellina, was entered by the 1st Battalion from the east and the 3d Battalion from the south. Heavy fighting ensued in the village; not until 0200 the following morning was the last resistance crushed. The guns in this area which had been delivering flanking fire against the 442d Infantry in the valley to the west were silenced.

2. *The Drive into Leghorn.* Capture of the key mountains on the east and Rosignano on the west removed two of the strongest points from the enemy defense line, now manned by the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division on the west and the 26th Panzer Division on the east. For the next few days troops of IV Corps in this zone slowly picked up speed, then crashed through to capture Leghorn, moved into Pisa, and completed this phase of Fifth Army's campaign. With the northward push again resumed, the 34th Division could continue as originally planned. The main drive would remain on the right; the 135th Infantry, now that Rosignano was secured, would advance northwest toward the port; the other regiments would continue north until Leghorn was outflanked and could then cut west, trapping the enemy in the port area.

After the 168th Infantry finished mopping up Casale during the early hours of 10 July, it was passed through by the 133d Infantry. During the day the 363d Infantry reached points abreast of this fresh regiment. The 133d Infantry attacked at dawn on 11 July with the 1st and 3d Battalions abreast, passing east of Pastina and leaving that town to be taken by the 442d Infantry coming up the valley. Northeast of the village heavy resistance slowed, then stopped the two battalions. The 2d Battalion attacked around the right flank of the 3d Battalion in an attempt to outflank the enemy holding Hill 529. This hill was the last of the high peaks on the eastern ridge; in enemy hands it blocked the eastern valley road. On the right the 363d Infantry also made slight advances and at 0200, 12 July passed to the control of its parent 91st Division, which was committed in the center of the IV Corps zone east of the 34th Division. Task Force Ramey headquarters was placed in Corps reserve.

The 133d Infantry remained locked in heavy fighting for Hill 529 all through 12 July. During the night of 12-13 July the enemy began a sudden withdrawal along the mountain front and at 0900 on the 13th the 1st Battalion took Hill 529. By nightfall advance elements of the regiment were three miles farther north. At times contact was lost the following day as the regiment pushed forward to within sight of Lorenzana. On 15 July the 168th Infantry came back into action, assumed command of the right half of the 442d Infantry zone, and with the 133d Infantry

continued the main attack toward Pisa. The 100th Battalion was committed to fill the gap between the 442d and 168th Infantry. The 133d Infantry, passing east of Lorenzana, moved nearly two miles north of the town; the 168th Infantry, now in the more level country to the west, threw back a counterattack coming out of Lorenzana and continued ahead during the night. The 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry, also by-passed Lorenzana to the east at 0300, 16 July, continued on to capture the villages of Colle Alberti and Treinoletto by noon, and was near the town of Fauglia by darkness. The 3d Battalion entered Lorenzana from the south during early morning and cleared it of enemy before noon. It then continued on abreast of the 2d Battalion. The 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, after seizing the village of Usigliano at 0700, was within three miles of the flat Arno Valley by nightfall. The three miles of ridges were fought through the following day against relatively stiff resistance until the enemy gave way about 1800 and all battalions of the 133d Infantry emerged onto the valley plains. The 168th Infantry had a harder time reaching the southern edge of the valley, engaging in a fierce battle at Fauglia. The 2d Battalion attacked the town at 0400 where it met heavy fire from defending infantry and self-propelled guns. The last German effort was a strong counterattack at 1800 supported by seven Tiger tanks, but the massed fire of all available artillery broke this threat; after regrouping the 2d Battalion finally captured the town at 2200. The 100th Battalion had been blocking roads leading east from Leghorn to protect the left flank of this main thrust; now, with the last of the hills clear and level country ahead, the Corps was ready to pivot to the left and take the port.

While the main forces were working along the east flank, the 135th Infantry and 442d Infantry made slow but steady gains to the northwest toward Leghorn to set the stage for the final assault, which, when finally launched, achieved its objective with comparative ease. The 135th Infantry, beating off a final enemy attempt to retake Rosignano on the morning of 10 July, attacked with all battalions in the afternoon but gained ground slowly. The 442d Infantry also made slow progress up the valley toward more undulating ground where tanks could be employed. Slight gains were made the next day with the 442d Infantry and its tanks moving forward to within 600 yards of Pastina. Neither regiment made any headway on 12 July against stiff opposition which included self-propelled guns and Mark VI tanks. The 442d Infantry entered the outskirts of Pastina at 2200; at about the same time the 135th Infantry beat off a heavy counterattack in the hills. Along Highway 1 the armored troops inched their way forward, reaching Castiglioncello and gaining some ground beyond it.

Cracking of the enemy defense on the east resulted in a general withdrawal on the west as well, and on 13 July the 135th Infantry moved forward without making contact until 1545 when the line was generally five miles northwest of Rosignano,



*Over such roads as this contact was maintained between our columns.*



*British antiaircraft guns supported the later stages of our drive.*





*Outflanked on the east, Leghorn fell easily to men of the 34th Division.*



*Leghorn harbor was mined and ships sunk everywhere to prevent its use.*

a gain of three miles. The 100th Battalion entered Pastina shortly after midnight and with the aid of the 3d Battalion, 442d Infantry, mopped it up. At 0830 the 2d Battalion advanced about a mile north of Pastina, and both the 442d and 135th Infantry halted to resupply themselves before resuming the attack.

On 14 July and during most of the 15th the 135th Infantry pushed ahead with little opposition, making a gain of about five miles through rough country. At last light of 15 July near the high ground overlooking Leghorn from the southeast, the 3d Battalion received a severe counterattack on its left flank, which had been left exposed by the inability of the armor on Highway 1 to maintain the pace set inland. This attack was broken up only after hard fighting and the use of all available artillery, including 36 guns of the British 66 Antiaircraft Brigade. The 442d Infantry, heading north while the 135th Infantry moved northwest, took the village of Pieve di San Luce on the 14th and advanced to the left rear of the 168th Infantry the next day.

At 0100, 16 July, the 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, followed the repulse of the German counterattack on the previous evening with an attack against Hill 232, seizing it at 0400. This 1st Battalion passed through the 3d Battalion and by 0530 had Mount Maggiore (Hill 449). At 1145 Hill 413, a mile to the north, was taken. The 442d Infantry encountered resistance all day with the 3d Battalion entering Luciana at 1730, 17 July, and finally clearing it before midnight. During the 17th the 135th Infantry, using the 1st and 2d Battalions in a northwesterly direction, beat off small counterattacks and made slight gains. Armored cars and tank destroyers along the coast had great difficulty with bad road and terrain conditions in attempting to cover the regiment's left flank.

The 363d Regimental Combat Team returned to the 34th Division zone on 18 July as Task Force Williamson under Brig. Gen. Raymond Williamson to execute a double thrust at Leghorn with the 135th Infantry. The plan called for the 135th Infantry to continue its attack toward the southeastern part of the city while the 363d Infantry came in from the east. The 135th Infantry committed all three battalions to the final assault. The 1st Battalion attacked due west and the 2d and 3d Battalions to the northwest to cut off the escaping enemy. The only serious encounter was met by the 2d Battalion, which ran onto an enemy force estimated at a battalion. White phosphorus shells set fire to the woods and brush where the Germans were concealed and they fled. Despite the lack of serious resistance, the country was so difficult that the regiment could not advance fast enough to prevent the main body of the Germans from making good its escape.

The 363d Infantry passed through the 100th Battalion west of Luciana and with the 1st and 2d Battalions abreast attacked at 0500 an enemy strongpoint at Casone. After artillery had heavily shelled this village, the lead battalions entered

it at 1445, uncovering a small lateral road leading west toward Leghorn. The 1st Battalion with elements of the 752d Tank Battalion made its way into the eastern outskirts of the city at 2045 while the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion broke through to Montenero, three miles northeast of Leghorn, and cleared out the coastal sector. The two infantry regiments continued to converge on the city, which the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, entered at 0200, 19 July. The 2d Battalion and the 1st and 2d Battalions, 363d Infantry, arrived a little more than two hours later. There was little fighting in the city, but it was found to be heavily mined and booby-trapped. Almost all of the port facilities were destroyed and the harbor partially blocked by sunken ships. The Germans had had plenty of time to accomplish their destruction and had done a thorough job. The 100th Battalion came into Leghorn at 0800 and was assigned the job of policing the city, while the 135th Infantry assembled to the southwest.

3. *On to Pisa.* The 363d Infantry sent patrols north of Leghorn on 19 July to the canals situated between Leghorn and the Arno River. Only small enemy outposts were encountered; the main body of the enemy apparently had already withdrawn across the river. Before the advance was resumed several changes in our troop dispositions were made. On 19 July the 168th Infantry extended its zone to include that previously occupied by the 133d Infantry, and the following day the 442d Infantry in the center moved its outpost line forward to Highway 67. The 363d Infantry took over the entire left zone of the division and pushed its leading elements north of the canal. On 21 July General Ryder turned over command of the 34th Division to Maj. Gen. Charles L. Bolte.

These days of troop shuffling were utilized by the engineers in throwing bridges over the numerous canals north of Leghorn. The Germans had blown all crossings, and before any further advance in strength could be attempted it was necessary to repair bridges and make by-passes to enable tanks and supply vehicles to move forward. The Canale Navigabile, with a wet gap of 100 feet, was the most serious obstacle, although on a 1000-foot stretch of Highway 1 it was necessary to construct 5 bridges. Many of these were built under fire since the open terrain offered little cover or concealment from enemy observers located in buildings and towers in Pisa.

In compliance with a Corps order to all units to advance the line completely to the Arno River, the 34th Division attacked at 2200, 22 July. The bulk of the fighting fell on the 363d Infantry. Both the 442d and 168th Infantry moved up with little trouble, the 168th Infantry turning over the east part of its zone to the 91st Division. The 1st Battalion, 363d Infantry, reached Marina di Pisa at the mouth of the Arno at 0330, 23 July, and outposted the position, while the 2d Battalion advanced up Highway 1 and reached south Pisa at 1330. The 3d Battalion followed three hours later.

The enemy had destroyed all bridges over the Arno and when the 363d Infantry arrived in the part of Pisa lying south of the river, heavy fire was opened on the town. The southern half of the city was found as heavily mined and booby-trapped as Leghorn, and German artillery and mortars battered down many of the houses. The enemy also took the harbor of Leghorn under fire with long-range artillery, 280-mm shells being identified.

In accordance with orders from General Clark for relief of the infantry units, IV Corps rushed plans for introduction of antiaircraft and other support units into the lines as infantry, and by 26 July all reliefs had been completed. The 363d Infantry went back to the 91st Division, and the 34th Division assembled near Rosignano in rest camp. Casualties were not particularly high in the 34th Division after the heavy losses suffered at Cecina despite the protracted resistance offered by the enemy in some places. The division with its attachments had reached a total ration strength of 36,034 on 6 July and had some difficulty with supply as few additional trucks were available to take care of the greatly increased personnel. Pack mules were necessary at times to supply the regiments operating in the extremely rough country along the east division boundary. During the first 10 days of July the ammunition situation in some types, particularly 155-mm shells, caused worry. Ammunition expenditure of the division reached a new high for the Italian campaign, the greatest single expenditure in any one day being 715 tons. The division fired a total of 202,874 rounds of 105-mm ammunition, an average of 117 rounds per gun per day, while 7,960 rounds of 155-mm howitzer were consumed.

## B. ACTION IN THE CENTER

8-26 JULY

1. *The 91st Division to the Arno.* The 361st and 363d Regimental Combat Teams had seen action previously, but the 91st Division as a combat entity, under the command of Maj. Gen. William G. Livesay, received its initial assignment on 13 July when it was committed in the center of the IV Corps front, between the 88th Division on the right and the 34th Division on the left. The 361st Regimental Combat Team was returned from the 1st Armored Division, and the 363d Regimental Combat Team was relieved of attachment to the 34th Division. As supporting arms the division had medium tanks of Companies D and E, 1st Armored Regiment (1st Armored Division), and the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion (less Company A) attached. The zone in which the division was to drive to the Arno River was only four miles wide at its base but gradually increased in width until

it stretched approximately ten miles along the south bank of the river from a point four miles west of Pontedera to the 88th Division boundary, approximately six miles east of that river city.

For six miles north of the jump-off line the terrain was rough, then leveled off the next six or seven miles to the Arno River. (*See Map No. 9.*) The Era River valley, running northwest through the zone, formed the main avenue of approach to the Arno Valley. The river itself, at low stage and with gentle banks, was only a minor obstacle. The area was well covered with a network of minor roads. Paralleling the river was the highway from Laiatico to Pontedera, passing through Capannoli and Ponsacco. In addition to these places three other moderate-sized towns existed. Almost on the left boundary were Chianni and Bagni di Casciana, both in the hills, and in the center due east of Bagni was Terricciola, built on a hill which afforded good observation for many miles.

The division launched its attack at 0300, 13 July, leaving assembly areas about three miles south of a line through Chianni—Laiatico. The general mission was to advance to the Arno. The initial objectives were Chianni and the high ground to its east; second objectives were Bagni di Casciana and Terricciola. The division began the attack with its two most rested regiments in the assault, the 362d Infantry under Col. John W. Cotton was on the right and the 363d Infantry on the left. The 361st Infantry, which had been in combat almost steadily since Civitavecchia, was in division reserve.

Advance was slow against stubborn German resistance, consisting of artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire. No hostile armor was encountered but minefields were frequent. Mines, demolitions, and the rough terrain prevented the armored support from following close enough behind the foot troops to be used other than as additional supporting artillery in the early stages of the action. The 1st Battalion, 362d Infantry, advanced almost to its first objective on the high ground before it was subjected to a heavy counterattack and forced to fall back about 500 yards, suffering considerable casualties. The 2d Battalion was brought up from regimental reserve and succeeded in restoring the position although it was unable to make much more progress. The leading elements of the 363d Infantry moved close to Chianni, which the 3d Battalion occupied without resistance early in the morning of 14 July after the Germans had withdrawn during the night. The same day the 362d Infantry succeeded in by-passing Terricciola on the east. When patrols were sent on reconnaissance into the town they found only a few stragglers, for the enemy had also abandoned this position.

On 15 July the 361st Infantry took over from the 362d Infantry and continued to push north on the right of the division zone, taking the village of Morrona, two

miles northwest of Terricciola. There it was temporarily halted by heavy concentrations of German artillery fire. The sudden increase in German shelling was attributed to the fact that German infantry units, which were already beginning to withdraw across the Arno River in this sector, had left their artillery in position to reinforce the rearguard delaying forces and that artillery emplaced north of the Arno now had our troops within range. While this limited gain was made on the right, the 363d Infantry continued to advance on the left through difficult hill country north of Chianni and occupied Bagni di Casciana without a fight. The first enemy armor was seen when five tanks moved up to threaten the boundary between the two regiments. They were dispersed by our artillery and tanks. The 363d Infantry was then pulled back into reserve, preparatory to becoming part of a special task force attached to the 34th Division to aid that division in its assault against the port of Leghorn. The 361st Infantry swung into the left of the division zone, and the 362d Infantry returned to action on the right.

After a steady all-day advance against much reduced resistance, the 361st Infantry lashed out in a rapid drive against the Pontedera—Ponsacco area late on 16 July. By dark leading elements had reached the last high ground and could look down on the flat floor of the Arno Valley, stretching out about six miles ahead to the river. The Germans at last threw in more armor in an attempt to slow the advance, but after friendly tanks and tank destroyers attached to the 361st Infantry knocked out two Mark VI Tigers and a Mark II tank the others withdrew. The regiment continued its advance the next day and in stiff fighting pushed ahead to within a mile of Ponsacco when heavy artillery and self-propelled gun fire momentarily stopped it. Supporting artillery laid down a heavy counterbattery program, and at 2030 the 2d Battalion entered the town, in which the enemy put up no fight. Leaving one company in Ponsacco, the battalion pushed on toward Pontedera. Company K and tanks from Company D, 1st Armored Regiment, entered this sizeable river city at 0800, 18 July. Some scattered snipers were still present and had to be mopped up, but the main force of the Germans had retired across the river. From the north bank the enemy placed Pontedera under sporadic mortar and artillery fire; some Americans became casualties when they set off booby traps left behind in the rubble and in buildings.

While troops forming the long spearhead of the 361st Infantry thrust ahead to the river and became the first Americans to reach the Arno, the 362d Infantry continued its push on the division right. On 16 July this regiment advanced to within a few hundred yards of Capannoli by darkness; the next morning it passed through the town. Crossing the Era River into comparatively flat country, the infantry moved about two miles farther north before the Germans launched a heavy counterattack which was broken up by our artillery. The troops continued across

the valley and plunged into the hills once more, fighting through them for a distance of about three miles on 18 July before coming to the last ridge overlooking the river. Here they were ordered to halt and consolidate their positions. Our main line of resistance at this point was established about two miles south of the river, which veered in a great horseshoe bend to the north.

Although the division had taken Pontedera, the city was not completely consolidated immediately. Company K, 361st Infantry, remained in the city as an outpost, while the regiment's main line ran through Ponsacco and parallel to the river about the same distance south of it as the line of the 362d Infantry. Aggressive patrolling occupied the next two days with little action other than exchange of artillery fire with the foe across the river. Few contacts were made on our side of the river although attempts to cross ran into difficulty. A patrol of the 91st Reconnaissance Troop waded the Arno on 19 July, engaged in a fire fight, and then withdrew. Most patrols were driven back before they could cross. The division sector was widened on 20 July. The left boundary was moved two miles to the west to relieve units of the 34th Division; the right boundary was shifted a mile and one-half farther east to take in part of the old 88th Division sector. On 21 July a concerted effort was made by both infantry regiments to clear the last enemy groups from the south side of the river. Two days' action accomplished this mission without any severe fighting.

2. *Advance of the 88th Division.* The 88th Division had been in rest and reserve for a month when it was sent to attack through and to relieve the 1st Armored Division the morning of 8 July in the vicinity of Volterra. At the time of the relief Combat Command B of the 1st Armored Division had some elements north of Highway 68 and west of Volterra. Combat Command A's main units were east of that enemy-held city and not across the highway in any great strength. The 91st Reconnaissance Squadron held Montecatini in Val di Cecina, located north of the highway.

Volterra dominated the country for many miles from its situation atop an 1800-foot hill with the valley of the Cecina River stretching to the southwest and that of the Era River to the northwest. The zone assigned to the 88th Division on the right of IV Corps ran due north with a base generally along the line of Highway 68 of close to 18 miles. The zone narrowed as it went north, and after part of it was assumed by the 91st Division it measured little more than six miles along the south bank of the Arno River. The left boundary followed a secondary road running north from Highway 68 about eight miles inland from Cecina. It paralleled this road to Peccioli and then veered northeast to strike the Arno one mile west of the town of San Romano. The right boundary was a line parallel to Highway 2

and about three miles west of this road as far as Poggibonsi. From that town the line cut northwest to strike the river three miles west of Empoli.

Volterra with its extensive observation facilities had been causing the armored units much trouble, and a co-ordinated attack by the 88th Division was planned to take it. A frontal attack was discarded as too costly; instead, while one regiment by-passed the city to the west, another would encircle it from the east and seize the high ground to the north, thereby rendering the German position in the town untenable. This attack, heavily supported by artillery, jumped off at 0530, 8 July. The 350th Infantry under Col. James C. Fry was selected to advance in the left half of the division zone and by-pass Volterra. It was to drive against Laiatico, a town smaller than Volterra but also built on a hilltop and situated about eight miles northwest of Volterra. The regiment moved northward, shielded from German observation in Volterra by a heavy barrage of smoke shells laid down by artillery and chemical mortars. Progress was slow against enemy resistance which was featured by a great increase in artillery fire. While the 350th Infantry carried out this mission, the 349th Infantry pushed north on the east side of the city and captured the village of Roncolla. By 2200 on the day of the attack both regiments had reached and consolidated the objectives on high ground north and east of Volterra. Patrols entered the city the next morning and found the enemy had evacuated it during the night. Badly outflanked, he had decided to retire without a fight for this strong position.

Both regiments made only limited advances on 9 July, meeting many minefields and other obstacles in addition to stubborn infantry defense backed by artillery and mortar fire. The 351st Infantry, which had been in division reserve, was brought forward to make the assault against Laiatico and moved at 0300, 11 July, to the foot of the hill on which the town was situated. The 1st Battalion was to outflank the town and come into it from the west, while the other battalions held in place on the high ground to the south. The 1st Battalion moved very slowly during the darkness; when it became light the defenders' withering fire halted forward movement after the assault companies had gained about 500 yards up the west slopes. Here they remained pinned down all day under fire from the left rear as well as the front, suffering heavy casualties. Enemy artillery observers in Laiatico had a clear view of the country to the southeast in which the 350th Infantry was operating, and the accurate fire they directed onto the comparatively flat country there virtually halted that unit also. Under the cover of heavy artillery concentrations and counterbattery fire which was directed all day against the Germans, some slight gains were made on the right.

A double envelopment attack was planned by the 351st Infantry for its second night assault against the fortress town of Laiatico at 0300, 12 July. While the



battered 1st Battalion held in place to protect the regiment's left flank, the 2d Battalion was to attack from the west and the 3d Battalion from the east. At H Hour heavy artillery and mortar fire was directed on the enemy position. Following closely behind the barrage, the assault battalions reached the German defenses as soon as the artillery lifted, catching the foe before he had a chance to reorganize. So demoralizing was the effect of the artillery fire followed closely by the infantry attack that approximately 400 prisoners were taken at little loss to our troops. The remainder of the German forces had withdrawn during the night but fought bitter delaying actions across the entire division front during the day, holding advances to local gains. Antipersonnel minefields and antitank mines were everywhere on the roads and over the landscape, causing fairly high casualties, especially during night operations. After several jeeps had been destroyed when they hit mines, four officers killed, and others wounded, the various regimental command groups left their vehicles and advanced on foot.

Resistance slackened on 13 July, and the line moved ahead more than on the previous day, though bitter fighting for small strongpoints took place. The advance continued during the night, starting at 0030, 14 July. To aid the infantry in finding its objectives in the dark, smoke shells were fired by the artillery, and the troops guided on the glow of the exploding phosphorus rounds. The village of Belvedere fell without a struggle to the 351st Infantry at 0505, and the 88th Reconnaissance Troop occupied Villamagna by daylight. The following infantry cleaned snipers out of both places, and the defense line which the enemy attempted to hold based on these two strongpoints collapsed. A general gain during the day of nearly four miles was recorded.

For the next three days the slow, methodical advance continued against resistance which varied in intensity but became suddenly weak on the afternoon of 16 July. The infantry pushed on through the night and made contact with the enemy again in greater strength the following morning. A stiff, all-day fight developed across the front. At 1900, 17 July, the 3d Battalion, 349th Infantry, took Palaia, and the division was ordered to seize and secure the high ground overlooking the Arno three or four miles north of the town. This mission was accomplished by nightfall of 18 July, and all units halted on their objectives, sending strong patrols forward to the river to reconnoiter.

3. *Operations on the Right Flank.* On 9 July Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Armored Group, was again designated as headquarters for Task Force Ramey, which had been in IV Corps reserve for two days after its combat troops were sent back to the 34th Division. Its troops this time initially consisted mainly of 1st Armored Division units: Company F, 1st Armored Regiment; the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion; the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; and Company B,

16th Armored Engineers. Company A, 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, rounded out the list. The task force relieved Combat Command A of the 1st Armored Division along the line of Highway 68. Its missions were to advance and contact the enemy in its zone, protect the right flank and rear of the 88th Division and maintain contact with the French on the right.

As originally constituted the task force consisted almost entirely of armored units and had no infantry. Its zone of advance contained an extensive road net; but most of the roads were narrow, and many came to a dead end. The few good roads followed the exposed ridge lines and were crooked with sharp turns, making difficult terrain for vehicular operation. The Germans had apparently expected the 1st Armored Division to continue the advance in this zone and had mined and booby-trapped almost every road, including small trails which led nowhere or to individual houses. Consequently the engineers and reconnaissance elements of the force were required to sweep practically every foot of the advance. Little close contact was made with enemy infantry. The task force artillery provided most of the offensive punch as the car crews strove to get their vehicles forward. Whenever it was possible to outflank a suspected enemy position, the Germans usually retired rapidly.

Launching the attack on 9 July, the force moved toward its first objective, the road net east of Villamagna, and its second objective, the road net in the vicinity of Montaione, a town due east of Peccioli near the division right boundary. Progress was slow along this axis until 17 July, when the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, was attached. These foot troops provided a screen which could move across country, giving the engineers some protection while they worked and thus speeding up the labor of clearing the roads for the armor. At 1715, 17 July, the infantry advanced against Montaione, met little opposition, and occupied the town by midnight. This position was maintained on 18 July with the 2d Battalion, 350th Infantry, relieving the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, at 2200 that night. For the next two days the task force advanced with other 88th Division units against decreasing opposition and by 20 July had gained five miles to occupy the high ground along the Orlo River, six miles due east of Palaia. These positions were held while Eighth Army was in the process of relieving the FEC, for the line on the right of IV Corps had not yet come abreast of the 88th Division. On 21 July the 1st Armored Division elements were relieved, and the 338th Field Artillery Battalion moved into the zone to provide artillery support.

Activity all along the 88th Division front was limited to patrolling for several days. Some patrols penetrated all the way to the Arno without contacting the enemy; others engaged in fire fights with groups of the foe. Although the main German forces apparently had fallen back across the river, there were numerous points

of resistance still remaining on the south side. On 23 July orders were issued to clear all the ground to the river bank. This was accomplished in two days but resulted in some hard fighting around the villages of San Miniato and San Romano on Highway 67, which ran along the south bank of the river. Enemy infantry in strongpoints put up a struggle before they fell back, and on the edge of San Miniato one force of about 180 counterattacking Germans surrounded a house in which 40 men from Company G, 349th Infantry, had been trapped. This fight raged all day. Several times the Germans attempted to blow up the structure with explosives. Artillery support was called for, and more than 5000 rounds were expended against the enemy, who finally gave up and retired when our tanks and infantry reinforcements arrived. Twenty-five prisoners were captured and about 75 of the foe were casualties. The 2d Battalion, 351st Infantry, successfully beat off an attack by a company of Germans in the village of Ponte a Evola, while the 3d Battalion occupied Angelica and San Romano, which required much mopping up. San Romano was at last completely cleared of the enemy on 25 July after Germans had infiltrated on the previous day. On the same day Task Force Ramey was relieved in this area, and the 88th Division took over control of its entire sector along the river.

### C. *RELIEF OF THE FEC*

7-22 JULY

Just as the FEC captured Colle di Val d'Elsa and was within 25 miles of the Arno River, orders were received that all remaining French troops were to be in the Naples area not later than 30 July, 23 days later. Plans were begun immediately for relief of the Corps. Service troops were to go first, and line units were to stay on until relief could be provided by the British 13 Corps; then Eighth Army would extend its boundary westward to take in all the French zone. Orders went to the front-line units to maintain close contact with the enemy and to give no indication that the strength of the FEC was being cut down. Efforts were made to convey the impressions to the enemy that it was his defensive efforts that were slowing up the French advance.

Enemy artillery fire increased on the right and center of the French front on 7 July but slackened on the left toward evening. The 4th Group of Tabors prepared to attack toward San Gimignano, the famous city of towers five miles west of Poggibonsi. In co-ordination with the attack on Volterra by the American 88th Division the goumiers jumped off before daylight on 8 July. By noon Hill 380, two miles north of Highway 68, was captured, and a light counterattack at 1530

was beaten off. During the night of 8-9 July resistance increased all along the front, especially in the form of artillery, and at dawn another counterattack which included 20 tanks was launched against the 4th Group of Tabors just north of Hill 380. Heavy fighting continued all morning, and the goumiers, no match for the enemy armor, were forced to withdraw. Hill 380 changed hands three times before the Germans finally regained it at 1600 and drove the goumiers out of the area. The battered goumiers were relieved by one battalion each from the 1st and 6th Moroccan Infantry. The two battalions attacked at night over the path along which the goumiers had withdrawn and recaptured Hill 380 at 0300, 10 July. This time the line was held.

Similar heavy pressure was brought to bear on other parts of the FEC front. On the morning of 9 July, while enemy tanks attacked on the left, panzer grenadiers supported by a few tanks attacked the 3d Moroccan Spahi salient on Highway 2 and drove the Moroccans back about half a mile. During the night of 9-10 July the 5th Moroccan Infantry repulsed counterattacks on its positions east of Highway 2 a mile and one-half southeast of Poggibonsi. Several local counterattacks on the 2d Moroccan Division front the next night were driven off.

Offensive action had been limited since 7 July, but on 11 July plans were completed for offensives on both flanks, in connection with American and British attacks the impetus of which would enable the French to go ahead without scheduling major drives for either of the two divisions. The 4th Mountain Division attacked, at 0600, 12 July, against San Gimignano, and made quick progress. San Donato, three miles north of Highway 68 on the left flank, was occupied early in the morning, and the advance continued toward San Gimignano. Against heavy artillery resistance the line moved close to the town by darkness; the following day both San Gimignano and the hills to the west were cleared as the enemy began a withdrawal behind a screen of artillery fire.

Meanwhile the 2d Moroccan Division had been watching activities of the German 4th Parachute Division on the right. The 2d Battalion, 4th Moroccan Infantry, occupied the village of Ligliano on 13 July. By the end of that day a general enemy withdrawal began on the right flank, and by nightfall elements of the 4th Moroccan Infantry were less than a mile southeast of Poggibonsi. Farther east the enemy withdrawal permitted the 8th Moroccan Infantry, which had passed through the 5th Moroccan Infantry, to advance to the outskirts of Castellina in Chianti.

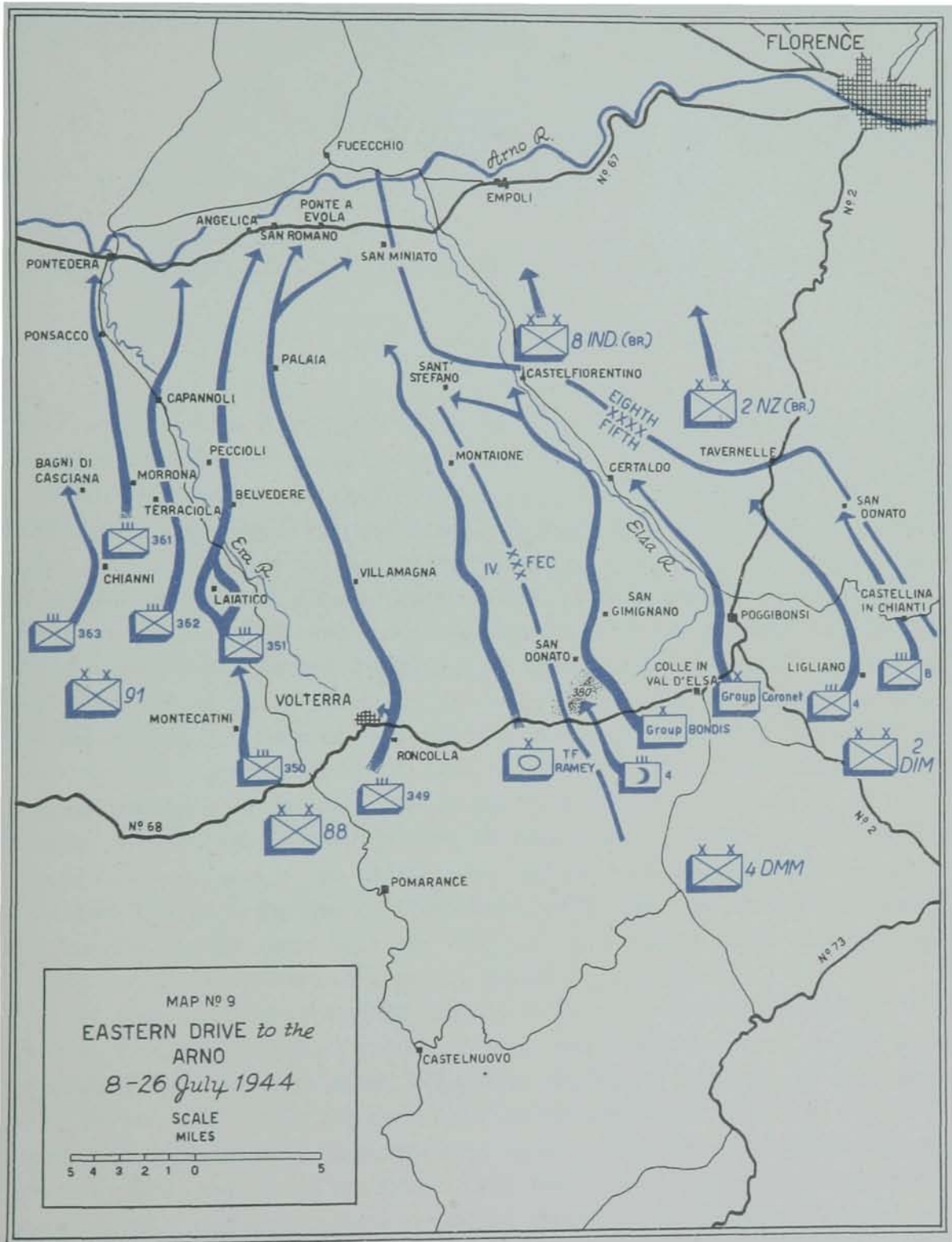
Enemy resistance broke in front of the 4th Mountain Division on 14 July, and armored and infantry elements fanned out from San Gimignano driving toward Certaldo. Poggibonsi was captured at 0930 by the Coronet Group, coming in from the southwest. The Bondis Group was less than three miles south of Certaldo at

the end of the day. To the northwest of Certaldo and in the vicinity of Tavernelle the retreating enemy took up new positions and again turned to oppose the French advance. This new resistance was met on the left flank at the end of the day, while on the right the 2d Moroccan Division was still advancing toward it. Castellina in Chianti was captured by the 8th Moroccan Infantry at 1940, 15 July. The region east of Poggibonsi was mopped up by the 4th Moroccan Infantry during the day, and by nightfall the FEC was again up against a continuous line of enemy resistance. A deep salient of opposition remained along the highway and to the east of the Elsa River south as far as the road junction north of Poggibonsi.

On 16 July final plans for the relief of the FEC were completed. The zone was to be passed to Eighth Army control at 2400, 22 July. The 8 Indian Division and the 2 New Zealand Division were scheduled to relieve the 4th Mountain and 2d Moroccan Divisions, and all French troops were ordered to go on the defensive in positions held at the end of 16 July. No changes occurred the next day, but another enemy withdrawal began the morning of 18 July, apparently caused by the rapid American advance to the west. By noon contact had been lost all along the Castellina—Poggibonsi road; at 1300 resistance in front of the 4th Mountain Division slackened. At 1700 infantry contact was broken all along the front, and both French divisions were forced to abandon their relief preparations and resume the pursuit. Picking their way through heavy minefields, infantry of the 4th Mountain Division advanced toward Certaldo and by mid-morning of 19 July completed its occupation. The 2d Moroccan Division also followed the withdrawal on the right. San Donato, six miles northwest of Castellina, was occupied before dark on the 19th, but further advances were met by heavy artillery fire from the Tavernelle area. The division front then extended from Certaldo on the west through Berberino to the hills just north of San Donato, and forward troops dug in to prepare for the beginning of the relief the next day.

The 4th Mountain Division continued to follow the retreating enemy on 20 July, advancing along the western bank of the Elsa River toward Castelfiorentino without opposition. After moving six miles northwest from Certaldo the Bondis Group finally came up against strong resistance in the afternoon. Castelfiorentino on the west bank of the Elsa was captured at 1530, and the line was stabilized from Santo Stefano on the western Corps boundary northeast for three miles to the Elsa, southwest through Castelfiorentino, and along the west bank of the Elsa six miles to the boundary with the 2d Moroccan Division at Certaldo. During the night of 21-22 July two battalions of the 2 New Zealand Division relieved the 5th and 8th Moroccan Infantry, and elements of the 21 Brigade (8 Indian Division) relieved the 4th Moroccan Infantry. The final stage of the relief was completed before midnight on 22 July, and command passed to the British divisions as scheduled.

In 43 days of pursuit action from Valentano to Castelfiorentino the FEC had performed a valuable service and had maintained the reputation the French troops had achieved since coming to Italy. The right flank of Fifth Army had repeatedly extended far ahead of Eighth Army's most forward positions though this situation had not held up progress of the pursuit. The Corps had been relieved about ten miles short of its Arno River goal but had inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. French troops had taken 2080 prisoners and vast quantities of enemy materiel at a total cost to themselves of 6680 casualties: 1342 killed, 5016 wounded, and 322 missing in action. By 30 July all French units had reported at Naples to General de Larminat of the 1st French Corps and were proceeding with staging operations under Seventh Army control.



MAP NO 9  
 EASTERN DRIVE to the  
 ARNO  
 B-26 July 1944  
 SCALE  
 MILES  
 5 4 3 2 1 0 5