

Equal success met the efforts of the 337th Infantry to seize Mount Pratone. In a night attack Company L, after losing radio contact with the 3d Battalion, penetrated as far as the main divide  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile east of the mountain before friendly mortar fire forced a partial withdrawal. The mountain was taken on the afternoon of 17 September by Company I, which followed a draw up the west side of Signorini Hill to attack from the southeast. Before midnight the entire 3d Battalion was on Mount Pratone, and the 1st Battalion had reached Hill 945 farther to the east. At the close of 17 September the 85th Division held all the major heights on the great divide between the Sieve and Santerno Valleys on a front extending nearly 4 miles from Mount Altuzzo to beyond Mount Pratone. The powerful enemy defenses, which had withstood 4 days of steady pounding, had been smashed, and the dominant terrain east of Il Giogo Pass had been wrested from the enemy. There now remained the task of taking Mount Monticelli to clear Highway 6524 and open the way for a drive to the Santerno Valley.

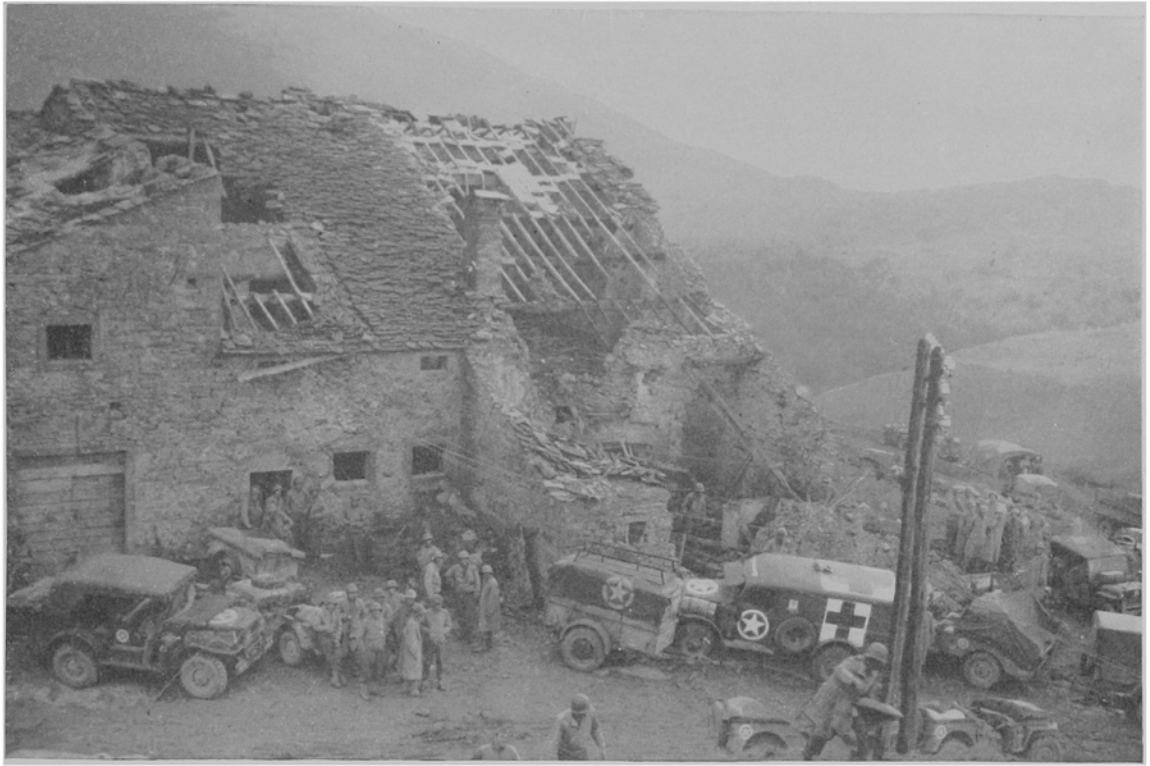
5. *The 91st Division Takes Mount Monticelli.* At the end of 15 September the 1st Battalion, 363d Infantry, had succeeded at great cost in gaining a foothold near the western summit of Mount Monticelli. Before this success could be fully utilized it was first necessary to strengthen the small force on the mountain and to bring up supplies. Accordingly, while the 1st Battalion consolidated and the 2d Battalion concentrated on knocking out the pillboxes which were holding it up below Hill 763, Colonel Magill ordered the 3d Battalion to attack the mountain from the southeast. To provide covering fire for the attack the heavy machine guns of the 2d Battalion were combined with those of the 3d Battalion. These weapons, during the afternoon and night of 16 September, fired 130,000 rounds on the enemy; in addition the 81-mm mortars laid down 3,700 rounds of mortar fire. In spite of the volume of fire on the enemy positions the first attack failed. At 1900, 16 September, another attempt was made in coordination with the attack of the 338th Infantry on Mount Altuzzo. On the left Company L became entangled in a minefield, and Company K was stopped by barbed wire 600 yards short of the summit. Before gaps could be blown in the wire an enemy counterattack drove Company K back down the bare slopes toward the village of L'Uomo Morto. Company L, left in an exposed position, also was forced to withdraw during the night. Farther to the west the 361st Infantry, with all three of its battalions now committed, was unable to clear the central ridge or reach Roncolombello Hill.

While the 3d Battalion, 363d Infantry, was falling back after its unsuccessful attack, the 338th Infantry had broken through on Mount Altuzzo. Exploitation of the victory achieved east of the pass depended on the clearing of Mount Monticelli from which the Germans could still pour flanking fire into the 85th Division zone. General Keyes urged that every effort be made to take the mountain on the 17th,

and plans were immediately prepared for a coordinated attack by the 2d and 3d Battalions to start at 1230. The 1st Battalion was still fighting off enemy counter-attacks and could assist only by pouring flanking fire into the enemy positions. Engaged in trying to knock out the pillboxes blocking its advance, the 2d Battalion was unable to attack at 1230. General Livesay then went up to the 3d Battalion Command Post and ordered that the battalion attack without delay. Following closely behind a rolling barrage laid down by the 347th Field Artillery Battalion, Company K, followed by Company L and Company I, started up the bare rock slope. Company K was disorganized near the summit by flanking machine gun and rifle fire, but the company commander and 11 men reached the objective at 1448, followed later by the battalion commander and 30 more men. Defensive fires laid down on the reverse slope of the mountain broke up an enemy counter-attack before it could get under way, and with the arrival of 80 men of Company I on the crest the 3d Battalion's hold on the summit of the mountain was virtually assured.

At 1530, when the 3d Battalion was reinforcing its small force on the top of Mount Monticelli, the 2d Battalion launched a two-company attack from the west. Three German machine guns caught the men on the open slopes and caused heavy casualties before the attack was halted. This successful but isolated enemy action marked the end of organized resistance on the mountain. During the night of 17-18 September the enemy troops who could extricate themselves pulled back to the north; many others surrendered the next day when the 363d Infantry completed the occupation of the mountain. The 361st Infantry, after a hard day of fighting along the central ridge on 17 September, swept forward the next day to take Hill 844. Benefiting from the enemy's forced withdrawal, it reached the main divide by the end of 18 September. The western defenses of Il Giogo Pass had at last been broken.

6. *Exploiting the Break-through.* (See Map No. 6.) The capture of Mount Aluzzo, Mount Verruca, and Mount Pratone by the 85th Division and the seizing of Mount Monticelli by the 363d Infantry on 17 September, followed by the taking of Hill 844 by the 361st Infantry and the elimination of remaining pockets of enemy resistance the next day, gave II Corps control of a 7-mile stretch of the Gothic Line on each side of Il Giogo Pass. The three regiments of the opposing 4th Parachute Division had fought tenaciously to the end, but they were now seriously depleted and the replacements and reinforcements hastily thrown in to assist them were of little value. Once the main divide and the Gothic Line defenses had been lost, the enemy had no choice but to extricate what he could of his shattered units and withdraw to positions north of the Santerno River. Efforts to effect the retreat in an orderly fashion were hampered by the disorganized state of his forces and the lack of prepared defenses behind the Gothic Line. The enemy had not anticipated a



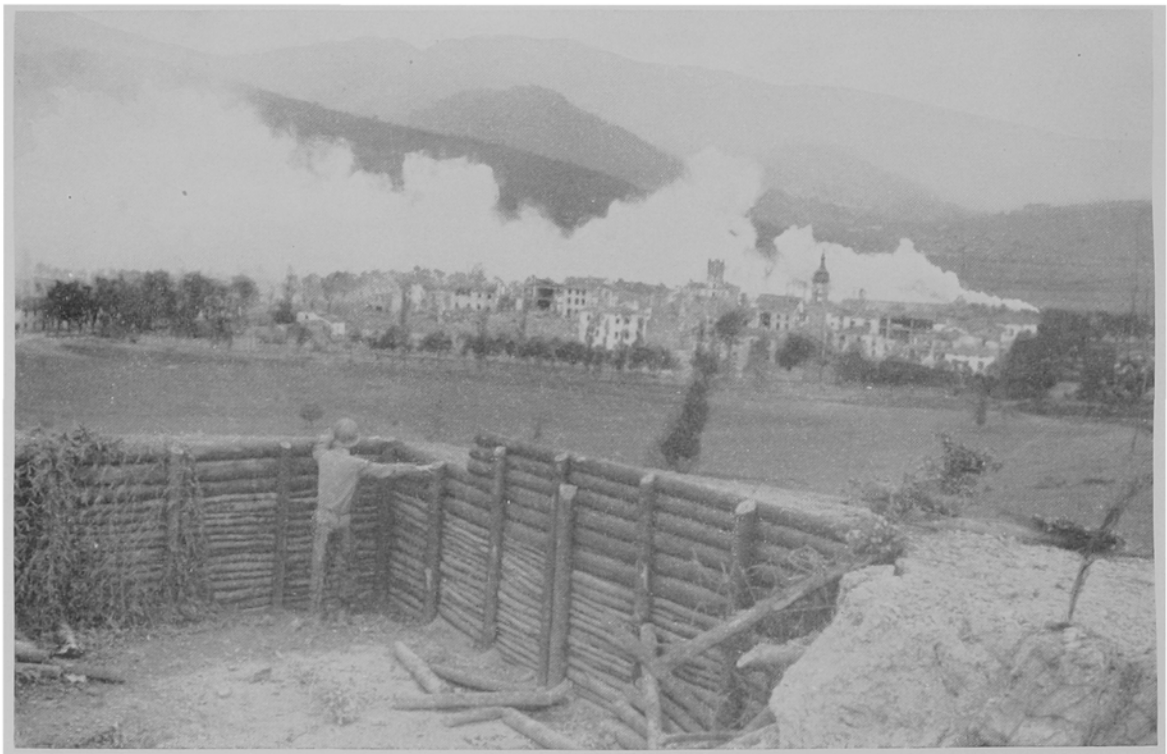
*This Italian farmhouse became a casualty collecting point on Mount Altuzzo*



*Convoy moving up over Highway 6524 after the capture of Il Giogo Pass*



*Jeeps wait for a bulldozer operator to complete a bypass near Firenzuola*



*Smoke screen over Firenzuola viewed from an abandoned enemy gun position*

major attack in the Il Giogo Pass area and had made no provision for the possibility of a break-through. Until additional reinforcements arrived and more defensible ground was reached, he was in no condition to continue the struggle. General Keyes, following his policy of pushing his troops forward as rapidly as possible and giving the enemy no opportunity to regroup, ordered the 85th and 91st Divisions to take up the pursuit at once.

The 85th Division advanced with all three of its regiments in the line in the same order in which they had reached the crest of the main divide. On the left the 338th Infantry drove straight north along the axis of Highway 6524 to Firenzuola, occupying the bomb-shattered road center on 21 September and pushing on 1 mile to the north of the town the next day. The 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was attached to screen the regiment's left flank in the valley. In the center the 339th Infantry drove north from Mount Verruca along the eastern rim of the Viola Creek valley, which slopes down to the Santerno River at Firenzuola. By 21 September Mount Frena and Mount Coloreta, the two peaks guarding the entrance to the gorge through which the Santerno River enters the mountains, were captured, and the next day advance elements reached positions 2 miles north of Mount Coloreta. Farther down the gorge the 337th Infantry crossed the Santerno at the village of San Pellegrino on 20 September after 2 days of traveling through almost trackless mountains. The following day the regiment passed into division reserve when the 88th Division moved up from Corps reserve to take over the right flank of II Corps.

Enemy opposition, negligible on 19 September, increased as the 85th Division approached the Santerno Valley. The 1st Battalion, 1059th Grenadier Regiment, was identified south of Firenzuola on the 19th, indicating that elements of the 362d Grenadier Division were being shifted east against II Corps. A company of the 132d Grenadier Regiment (44th Grenadier Division) together with an improvised Alarm Company consisting of approximately 100 men drawn from headquarters and service personnel of the 715th Grenadier Division was encountered near San Pellegrino. These reinforcements were not yet present in sufficient strength to permit the enemy to do more than fight brief delaying actions. Nor was the Santerno River a major obstacle. In spite of a short rain on 20 September and heavy rains the following day which flooded some of the roads and hindered the forward displacement of artillery units, the river remained fordable. More difficulty was experienced with enemy long-range artillery firing from the vicinity of Radicosa Pass and from self-propelled guns operating in the valley. The artillery fire held up construction of Bailey bridges at Firenzuola for 2 days, and truck movements in and near the town had to be screened with smoke.

West of Highway 6524 the 361st and 363d Infantry were held up less by enemy opposition than by the lack of roads, which multiplied the problems of supplying

the forward units and evacuating the wounded. Division engineers extended the narrow mountain road north of Sant'Agata an additional 2 miles to reach the southern slope of the main divide. From this point it was necessary to use pack mules to cross the hump to the Santerno Valley. Farther to the west a similar mule point was established at the village of Panna. Forward elements of the two regiments reached the Santerno River on 21 September along a front extending from just west of Firenzuola to the village of Castro San Martino, 2 miles east of Futa Pass. Outposts were established across the river the next day, and patrols set up machine guns west of Castro San Martino where they could dominate Highway 65. With control of the Santerno Valley assured, the troops who had broken through the Gothic Line at Il Giogo Pass had effectively outflanked the Futa Pass defenses. They were now prepared to strike north toward Radicosa Pass and northeast toward Imola and the Po Valley.

### C. *THE 362D INFANTRY CAPTURES FUTA PASS*

13-22 SEPTEMBER

In the course of the fighting for Il Giogo Pass the intensity of German resistance on Mount Monticelli forced General Livesay to commit the 361st as well as the 363d Infantry on the right of the division zone. The 362d Infantry was thereby left with responsibility for a zone 4 miles wide extending from west of Highway 65 to Mount Calvi. On the right flank of the regimental zone and extending slightly northeast from Mount Calvi is an ascending, saw-toothed chain of hills which forms the western wing of the natural amphitheater into which the 361st and 363d Infantry attacked. This chain of hills connects with the main divide just to the east of Mount Gazzaro, the dominant peak in the line of mountains overlooking the Futa Pass defenses at Santa Lucia. To the west of Mount Calvi are two broad, ascending north-south ridges. Highway 65 follows the crest of the more western ridge; a secondary road from Gagliano to Santa Lucia follows the more eastern ridge. The open, rolling farmland flanking the two roads and the strength of the Futa Pass defenses led Colonel Cotton to concentrate his main force in the mountains on the right in an effort to accomplish, on a regimental front, the same flanking move which II Corps was carrying out at Il Giogo Pass. One battalion, serving as a holding force, was to advance astride Highway 65; the other two battalions were to drive up the Mount Calvi ridge to the main divide, swing west to take Mount Gazzaro, and strike the Futa Pass defenses from the flank.

At the start of the general II Corps attack on 13 September the 1st Battalion was held in reserve while the 2d Battalion attacked Mount Calvi and the 3d Battalion

drove north along Highway 65. Although Mount Calvi was well fortified with concrete pillboxes, mines, and wire, the 2d Battalion made steady progress up the long gentle slopes, and by nightfall of the first day Companies E and G were within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of the summit. Continuing the assault at 0400 the next morning, the two companies had an advance patrol on the crest of the mountain at 0635 and had completed consolidation of the hill before the end of the day. After 2 days of clearing bypassed pockets of the enemy the 3d Battalion, reinforced by a company each of tanks and tank destroyers, reached parallel positions on Highway 65. The wide gap between the two battalions made it difficult to prevent enemy infiltrations, and in the early evening of 13 September it was necessary to commit the Antitank Company to clear the village of Gagliano, well behind the forward lines.

The 2d and 3d Battalions resumed the attack at 0600, 15 September. The 3d Battalion pushed 1 mile up Highway 65 to just short of the village of Montecarelli where it dug in for the night; the 2d Battalion, in the face of intense artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire, was unable to move forward from Mount Calvi. The mountain drops away sharply on the north side to a deep gully which afforded the enemy troops guarding the approach to the next hill protection from even high-angle fire. The effort to attack from Mount Calvi was abandoned temporarily, and the 1st Battalion was committed at 1230 to make a flanking attack from the west through the village of Marcoiano. Only slight gains were made before dark. A new attack was ordered for 0430, 16 September, with the 2d Battalion striking north to Hill 840 and the 1st Battalion continuing its attack from the west toward Mount Linari. Again the effort to drive the enemy from the ridge failed, and heavy losses were suffered by the 2d Battalion. Meanwhile the 3d Battalion, meeting only light resistance, reached the antitank ditch below Santa Lucia. The advance on the left further exposed the central portion of the regimental front. To fill the gap Company C, 755th Tank Battalion, and two reconnaissance platoons from the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion established a defense line across the central ridge  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Gagliano.

During 17 September the 3d Battalion waited in position below the antitank ditch and the 2d Battalion remained on Mount Calvi while the 1st Battalion renewed its efforts to seize the ridge from the flank. Progress was slow, and it was not until 0345, 18 September, that even the outskirts of Marcoiano were reached. To add strength to the attack Company I, the 3d Battalion's reserve company, was shifted east to take Hill 690 north of Marcoiano. Company I was pinned down near Marcoiano nearly all day; only after three attempts to storm the hill during the night had failed was the objective reached at noon on 19 September. In the meantime the 2d Battalion broke the deadlock north of Mount Calvi by taking Hill 840 at 0730. With his defenses opposite the 361st and 363d Infantry already broken, the enemy

could not hope to continue fighting along the Mount Calvi ridge, and before dark on 20 September the 1st and 2d Battalions in a follow-up action had reached the lower slopes of Mount Gazzaro.

On the left the 3d Battalion was making preparations for the final assault on Futa Pass. Since 16 September Companies L and K had held positions just south of the antitank ditch from which patrols had been sent out to reconnoiter the enemy defenses. Division and Corps artillery, continuing the work of fighter-bombers and medium bombers, had shelled Santa Lucia so effectively that forward enemy troops were virtually cut off from supplies and a number of enemy gun positions were destroyed, including an emplaced Panther tank turret commanding the valley approach. While the 1st and 2d Battalions were following up the enemy withdrawal on the right the 3d Battalion pushed off at 0630, 20 September, over the high ground toward Santa Lucia. By 1230 Company L had crossed the antitank ditch and had elements on Hill 689, 500 yards south of Santa Lucia. The 362d Infantry was now in position for an attack to clear Futa Pass.

The regimental plan called for a pincers movement with the 1st Battalion taking Mount Gazzaro and then moving northwest along the ridge to come in from the east while the 3d Battalion attacked from the southwest. Planned for 0430, 21 September, the attack was slow in getting under way due to difficulties encountered in supplying the 1st Battalion and to mortar and long-range machine gun fire which hampered the 3d Battalion. At 0830 Companies K and L were west of Santa Lucia. Company K then cleared the village while Company L continued on along the pine-covered slopes west of the highway. By nightfall it had outposts in the pass itself. Company I, still attached to the 1st Battalion, moved northwest along the Mount Gazzaro ridge to positions south of the pass, and Company K took up positions in a draw to the left of Company L. Futa Pass had been entered, but it was not until the afternoon of 22 September when Hill 952 west of the highway was captured that the battalion's control of the pass was assured. Throughout the attack enemy opposition was limited to rear guard actions as the Germans covered their retreat to the north.

To the 362d Infantry had fallen the honor of clearing Futa Pass, the objective which more than any other was a symbol of the Gothic Line. It was there that the Todt Organization had constructed its most powerful defenses, combining antitank ditches, barbed-wire entanglements, reinforced pillboxes, and antitank gun emplacements in an elaborate system of mutually supporting strongpoints. It is a tribute to the tactical skill with which the attack on the Gothic Line was carried out that these positions to which the Germans had devoted months of hard labor were taken by the troops of one battalion in one of the least costly of the Gothic Line battles. Once the 85th and 91st Divisions broke through at Il Giogo Pass and swept north to the



Santerno Valley the Futa Pass defenses were untenable. In turn, as soon as Futa Pass was secured, Highway 65 could be utilized to bring up badly needed supplies to the troops who had spearheaded the attack through the mountains, and the way was prepared for a thrust due north to Bologna.

#### D. *THE 34TH DIVISION ATTACKS ON THE LEFT*

13-22 SEPTEMBER

While the 85th and 91st Divisions were making the main effort of II Corps against the Il Giogo Pass defenses the 34th Division delivered a two-regiment containing attack against the portion of the Gothic Line lying between Highways 65 and 6620. Although not crowned with such spectacular successes as the capture of the key passes to its right, the action of the 34th Division played a vital part in the II Corps offensive. By exerting constant pressure on the enemy positions to its front, it succeeded in protecting the Corps left flank, in pinning down enemy forces which might otherwise have been shifted east to the Il Giogo Pass area, and in gaining possession of ground essential to the carrying out of the next phase of the Army attack. In the course of the fighting the enemy did reduce the long front held by the 4th Parachute Division by withdrawing the 10th Parachute Regiment from the Mount Frassino area. He accomplished the shift, however, only by replacing the paratroopers with elements of the 334th Grenadier Division which had been located west of Highway 6620. There was no reduction in the size of the enemy force opposite the 34th Division except that occasioned by the losses suffered by the enemy in the course of the battle.

By the night of 12 September the pursuit action of the 34th Division, which had begun with the II Corps attack on 10 September, had slowed to a halt before the outpost positions of the Gothic Line. The 133d Infantry, on the left, was stopped before strong defenses on Torricella Hill, approximately 5 miles due south of the division's major objective, Mount Coroncina, a great 3,500-foot, ridge-topped mountain. Control of Mount Coroncina was essential to block effectively the possibility of an enemy counterattack from the west. On the division right the 135th Infantry, after relieving the 168th Infantry on the night of 12 September, prepared to attack Mount Frassino. Three miles to the north across steadily rising ground lay the next major objective, Mount Citerna. Between the forward elements of the 34th Division and the objectives to the north lay the defenses of the Gothic Line. These defenses, 1 mile behind the outpost line, were located on the forward slope of the main divide, which presented to the attacking troops a corrugated face of knobs and ridges alternating with deep clefts formed by streams draining south and east to the Sieve River.

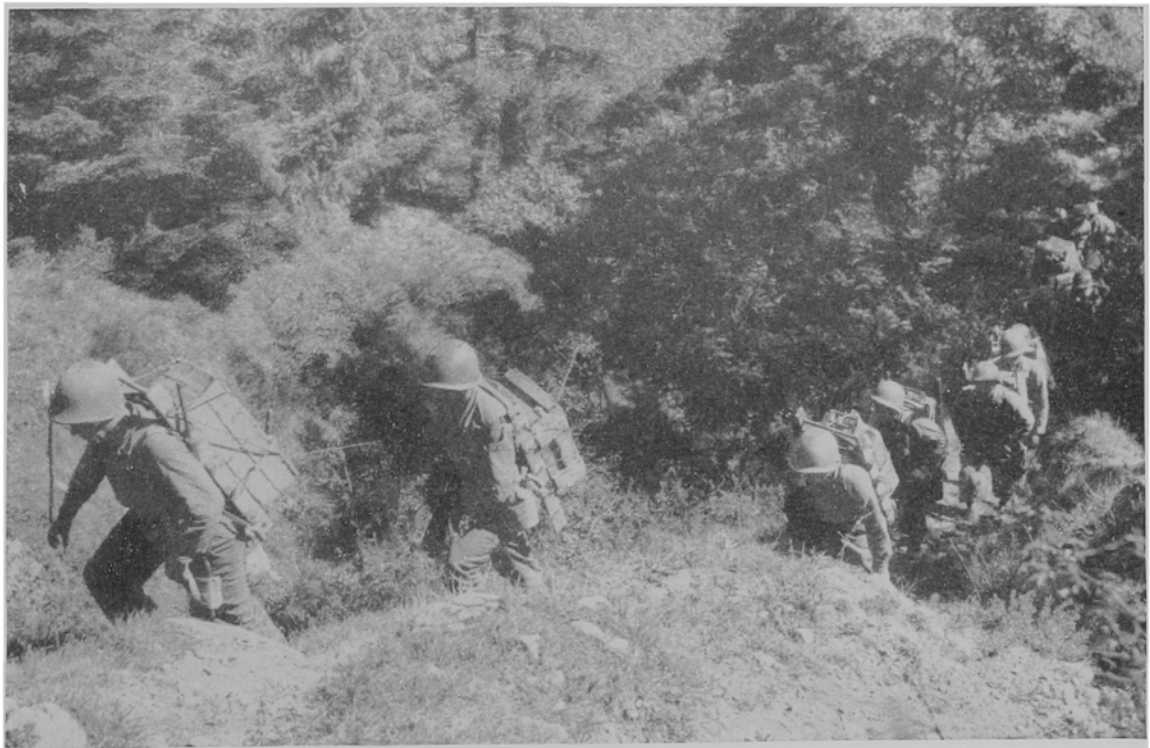
During 13-21 September the 133d Infantry was engaged in a slow, almost yard-

by-yard struggle to break through the defenses on Torricella Hill. Each high point on the many-knobbed mountain was stoutly defended by the troops of the 334th Grenadier Division, who repeatedly counterattacked in an effort to retake each lost feature. As the leading elements of the 133d Infantry drove forward they were constantly harassed by fire from a ridge to the left of Torricella Hill until the attack to the north was halted temporarily on the night of 18–19 September and full attention devoted to driving the Germans from their flanking positions. Enemy shelling also was unusually heavy on the left flank of the 34th Division, where the troops were within easy range of a large concentration of enemy artillery located in the vicinity of the village of Montepiano on Highway 6620. The extremely rough terrain and the lack of roads to the rear multiplied the problems of evacuation and supply. Long litter hauls absorbed the energies of men needed for the attack, and all supplies had to be carried into the mountains on mules. Lack of roads also prevented extensive use of tanks or tank destroyers during the first days of the attack. Division engineers, working night and day, finally improved the dirt road north of Barberino so that armored vehicles could move up to lay direct fire on the Torricella Hill defenses. The high-velocity shells knocked out numerous pillboxes which for days had withstood the steady pounding of division artillery fire. Aided by the armor, the 133d Infantry took Torricella Hill on 21 September. Resistance dwindled the next day as the enemy prepared to fall back, and Montepiano was entered on 23 September, placing the 133d Infantry through the Gothic Line and less than 2 miles from Mount Coroncina.

On the right the 135th Infantry met equally stubborn resistance, and the problems of supply and evacuation, if somewhat easier than in the zone of the 133d Infantry, were still difficult. The road system did not disappear completely until the main divide was reached, but beyond Mount Frassino mules and hand packing were necessary, and assistance was needed from the engineers to get armored vehicles forward. Two days of bitter fighting were required to take Mount Frassino; then the regiment made rapid gains of over 1 mile. The sector of the Gothic Line directly north of Mount Frassino was on the boundary between the 334th Grenadier and the 4th Parachute Divisions. It proved to be a weak point in the enemy line, which was only partly filled on 17 September by the shift of the 1st Battalion, 756th Grenadier Regiment, from west of Highway 6620. Costly counterattacks in the first days of the offensive wore down the strength of the 334th Grenadier Division until it was forced to adopt an increasingly passive defense while pressing rear-echelon personnel into the line in an effort to maintain its front. By 22 September enemy resistance was breaking down opposite the 135th Infantry as well as before the 133d Infantry. Mount Citerna was taken that day by the 3d Battalion, and the 1st Battalion reached positions to the northeast of it.



*German tank turret emplaced to command Highway 65 south of Santa Lucia*



*Troops of the 91st Division pack supplies over slopes near Futa Pass*



*Italian soldiers lead mules over muddy trails in the 13 Corps zone*



*Artillery firing a concentration in support of the 13 Corps attack*

As soon as the enemy showed evidence of weakening, General Bolte seized the opportunity to add to the enemy's confusion by throwing fresh troops into the attack. The 168th Infantry, which had remained in reserve since 12 September and was now rested, was ordered to enter the line between the 133d and the 135th Infantry with the mission of seizing Mount Coroncina and pinching out the 133d Infantry. The regiment was committed on 21 September; the following day it drove north to take Hill 1134, the high point on the ridge running east from Montepiano, thereby placing all three regiments of the 34th Division through the Gothic Line and in position to attack north toward Mount Coroncina and northeast toward Radicosa Pass.

Throughout the period of the attack on the Gothic Line the left flank of the 34th Division was screened by the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. The squadron operated under II Corps control during 12-19 September and then passed back to 34th Division control. Troop C and one platoon of Troop B had to be held out in squadron reserve for possible employment under the II Corps plan for exploiting any swift break-through to the Po Valley. Under the plan one reconnaissance platoon was to be attached on Corps order to each division for use in keeping Corps Headquarters informed of the location of the most advanced elements. With these units inactive the squadron had only Troop A and two platoons of Troop B to carry out the tasks of clearing Highway 6620 and maintaining contact with the 6 South African Armoured Division, which remained consistently several miles behind the 34th Division. Hampered by the mountainous terrain, which forced the troops to fight dismounted, and lacking infantry support, the squadron was hard pressed to maintain its long front. Even with the addition of two dismounted platoons of Company F (light tanks) to reinforce Troop B, the force was too small to attack the Gothic Line defenses below Vernio. Once these defenses were contacted on 12 September the squadron confined its activities to extensive patrolling until 22 September, when the enemy withdrawal from the Gothic Line left Vernio unoccupied.

## E. 13 CORPS BREAKS THROUGH

13-22 SEPTEMBER

In the zone allotted to 13 Corps there were two possible routes of advance over the mountains: Highway 6521, the road from Borgo San Lorenzo to Faenza, and Highway 67 to Forli. Between the two roads is an area 10 miles wide of almost trackless mountains so wild that the Germans had made little effort to build fixed defenses anywhere except near the passes where the highways cross the mountains. Nor did the enemy hold the mountains in strength. After the 356th Grenadier

Division was shifted to the Adriatic coast, only the 715th Grenadier Division and the 1028th Grenadier Regiment (attached to the 305th Grenadier Division) opposed 13 Corps. The former was deployed so that the 735th Grenadier Regiment was astride Highway 6521 opposite the 1 Division and the 725th Grenadier Regiment was responsible for most of the central area between the highways allotted to the 8 Indian Division. The 1028th Grenadier Regiment opposed the 6 Armoured Division north of Highway 67 with the rest of the 305th Grenadier Division stretched out into the 10 Corps area. Unless these units were reinforced, 13 Corps had a clear superiority in strength.

In accordance with the Army plan to make the main thrust in the Il Giogo Pass area, General Kirkman prepared to concentrate the efforts of 13 Corps along Highway 6521 where it would be in position to assist the advance of II Corps and protect its right flank. Division tasks were laid down as follows: the 1 Division on the left would attack up Highway 6521 to seize Casaglia Pass with the objective of debouching into the Po Valley; the 8 Indian Division in the center would attack through the mountains north of Vicchio to assist the 1 Division by outflanking the enemy forces astride Highway 6521 and thereby preventing widespread demolition of the road; and the 6 Armoured Division would operate astride Highway 67 with the main effort on the left to assist the 8 Indian Division while on the right it was to maintain contact with Eighth Army. To assist the 8 Indian Division through the mountains one brigade was organized on a mule basis with animals drawn from the other two divisions and from local civilian sources. The success of the 13 Corps plan depended to a large degree on the ability of the 8 Indian Division to negotiate the mountainous central sector and get in behind the enemy forces opposite the 1 Division.

1. *The 1 Division on the Left.* At the end of 12 September the 3 Brigade of the 1 Division had crossed the Sieve River and had reached positions astride Highway 6521 in the vicinity of Ronta, slightly over 4 miles northeast of Borgo San Lorenzo. To the right of the 3 Brigade the 21 Brigade of the 8 Indian Division also had crossed the river and had established a line northeast of Vicchio. Behind this protective screen the 66 Brigade and all the 1 Division artillery crossed the river on the night of 12-13 September in preparation for an attack the next morning in which the 66 Brigade was to take over the left flank of the division zone and drive north to capture Prefetto Hill and Mount Pratone. An enemy counterattack from Prefetto Hill had to be beaten off before the 66 Brigade could get under way; the hill was not taken until the 15th. Responsibility for the capture of Mount Pratone was assumed by the 337th Infantry the next day, and it passed through the 2 Royal Scots, which then swung east toward Mount Paganino in order to protect the II Corps right flank. The enemy continued to resist on Mount Pratone until the 18th, and since

the 66 Brigade was under fire from its left flank as well as from its front it made no appreciable gains.

On the right of the 66 Brigade the 3 Brigade continued to apply pressure against the enemy positions around Ronta and the high ground east of Highway 6521 while the 1 Reconnaissance Regiment maintained contact with the 8 Indian Division troops seeking to clear the Alpe di Vitigliano feature. Just east of the highway the 2 Foresters reached the southern slopes of Mount Giuvigliana on 15 September. Although the advance left Ronta partially outflanked from the east, the enemy clung to the town and even reinforced the defenders with the 305th Fusilier Battalion. It was only when the loss of Prefetto Hill resulted in the outflanking of the town from the west that the enemy withdrew. Heavy fighting continued on Mount Giuvigliana as the enemy counterattacked repeatedly in an effort to hold the high ground east of the highway. On the 17th the 2 Brigade came out of division reserve; the next day it took over the zone of the 3 Brigade.

After the 85th Division had taken Mount Pratone and had started driving north to the Santerno Valley the 715th Grenadier Division withdrew steadily along the 1 Division front. The 66 Brigade found Mount Paganino unoccupied on the morning of 20 September, and the brigade was generally out of contact except for a hill north of Mount Paganino where prisoners were taken from the 132d Grenadier Regiment (44th Grenadier Division). This unit had been moved into the gap between the 4th Parachute and the 715th Grenadier Divisions in an effort to slow the drive toward Firenzuola. Astride the highway, the 2 Brigade seized Mount La Faggeta, the dominant hill overlooking Casaglia Pass, on the 21st, and the next day both brigades made substantial gains while trying to regain contact with the main force of the retreating Germans. North of the highway the 66 Brigade occupied Mount Carzolano; 3 miles east of Casaglia Pass the 2 Brigade had patrols beyond Mount Carnealone. The 1 Division was now over the divide and working its way through the mountains on each side of the gorge through which the Lamone River flows northeast to the Po Valley.

2. *The Corps Right Flank.* The flanking operation planned for the 8 Indian Division called for an attack to secure the Femmina Morta feature, a mountain 3,683 feet high southeast of Casaglia Pass, and then a drive north behind the pass to attack the enemy from the rear. Three heights guarded the approaches to the Femmina Morta feature: Mount Verruca, Mount Stelleto, and the Alpe di Vitigliano feature. The 21 Brigade opened the attack on 13 September by taking Mount Veruca against only light opposition. Prepared enemy positions on the hill were found to be poorly constructed with dugouts covered with only a 4-inch roof of lumber topped by a light layer of dirt. Prisoners claimed that these positions were part of the main belt of defenses and were disappointed that the vaunted Gothic Line was not as elabo-

rate, at least in their sector, as they had been led to believe. The advance of the 21 Brigade continued on the 14th to the western approaches of the Alpe di Vitigliano feature. Forward elements were shelled, and night patrols toward Mount Stelletto encountered machine gun and mortar fire. The next day the 21 Brigade improved its positions north of Mount Verruca and overcame enemy resistance on the Alpe di Vitigliano feature while the 17 Brigade on the right moved up to attack Mount Stelletto. Opposition was unexpectedly light. The objective was secured on the morning of 16 September, and the next day a hill to the north of it was occupied after a short skirmish with an enemy rear guard. Prisoners taken in the area were from the 715th Fusilier Battalion and from the 1028th Grenadier Regiment. With the 6 Armoured Division protecting its right flank in the vicinity of Mount Peschiena the 8 Indian Division was prepared to direct its effort toward the Femmina Morta feature.

The attack on the Femmina Morta feature was launched by the 1/5 Royal Gurkha Rifles (17 Brigade) from the hill north of Mount Stelletto on 18 September. By noon the battalion had reached the lower slopes of the mountain; after 5 hours of steady fighting the height was taken. The 19 Brigade was then committed on the right. It reached Mount Giogo di Villore, to the north of Mount Peschiena, on the 19th while the 6 Armoured Division maintained steady pressure against the enemy from the south. The 17 and 21 Brigades meanwhile had been consolidating their positions and maintaining an aggressive screen of patrols. The enemy withdrawal on the 20th, which had permitted the 1 Division to enter Casaglia Pass without opposition, affected the 8 Indian Division as well. Patrols reported few contacts, and reconnaissance planes spotted an increase in enemy traffic to the northeast. Since the possibility of a flanking attack to trap the enemy forces guarding Casaglia Pass had ended with their voluntary withdrawal, the 8 Indian Division continued to the northeast in its zone. The plan had depended on speed and surprise which had not been achieved. The enemy withdrew in good order whenever he was threatened, and the extremely rough nature of the mountains through which the division was forced to operate limited follow-up actions to a cautious investigation of each terrain feature to guard against the possibility of an ambush.

The 6 Armoured Division had reached Dicomano, the road junction where Highway 67 leaves the Sieve Valley, on 10 September, and in the next 2 days advance elements of the 1 Guards Brigade had begun clearing the highway and the hills to the north of it. The division's role in the 13 Corps plan of attack was primarily one of seizing Mount Peschiena, to the north of San Godenzo Pass, in order to assist the advance of the 8 Indian Division. Due to the inability of armor to operate in the mountains, the burden of the fighting fell to the 1 Guards Brigade. Patrols operating along Highway 67 reached as far as San Godenzo Pass on 14 Sep-



tember but reported that the road was so badly demolished that it was doubtful if it could be restored to use in less than 2 weeks. Meanwhile the 2 Coldstream Guards, north of the highway, were feeling out enemy defenses on Mount Campogranni. The enemy retired during the night of 14-15 September to Mount Peschiena, where a prisoner taken from the 1028th Grenadier Regiment reported the enemy had a battalion holding the mountain. The 3 Grenadier Guards and the 3 Welsh Guards moved up to assist the 2 Coldstream Guards, giving the 1 Guards Brigade its full strength for the attack.

The attack on Mount Peschiena began on the 15th with the 3 Welsh Guards advancing west of the feature while the 2 Coldstream Guards protected its left flank by an advance toward the southern slopes of the Giogo di Villore feature and the 3 Grenadier Guards provided security on the right. Following an air attack on the southern slopes of Mount Peschiena, the 3 Grenadier Guards reached the summit late in the afternoon of 16 September, although the enemy was not completely cleared from the mountain until the 18th. The capture of Mount Peschiena and its surrounding high ground together with the advance of the 8 Indian Division, which occupied the Giogo di Villore feature on the 19th, freed Highway 67 from the threat of enemy observed fire and permitted the engineers to proceed with the work of restoring the highway. The 61 Brigade placed troops in San Godenzo Pass and in the period 19-21 September relieved the 1 Guards Brigade. Patrols probing south of the highway picked up a deserter from the 578th Grenadier Regiment (305th Grenadier Division) who claimed that Mount Falterona, a lofty peak marking the boundary with Eighth Army, had been evacuated on the 20th and that the troops were under orders to withdraw 8 miles. The report was confirmed on the 22d when patrols found the area south and east of San Godenzo Pass clear of enemy troops. At the end of the period of the Gothic Line fighting the 6 Armoured Division, as well as the other units of 13 Corps, was probing forward in an effort to maintain contact with the retreating enemy.

## F. *ADVANCE OF IV CORPS*

13-22 SEPTEMBER

The mission assigned to IV Corps during the period when the main effort of Fifth Army was directed toward breaching the Gothic Line at Il Giogo Pass remained that of a holding force whose principal function was to keep as many enemy troops immobilized as possible. Orders were received from Fifth Army on 11 September that the Corps was to continue probing forward by aggressive patrol action until the

enemy's main defenses were reached and that the left flank of II Corps was to be protected by keeping pace with the advances made on the II Corps front. Special attention was to be paid to the right flank adjoining II Corps and to the Serchio Valley north of Lucca. The high ground between Highway 6620 and Highway 64 was to be occupied as far north as Castiglione and Porretta as a base for further patrol action on the right, and mobile columns were to operate up Highway 12 in the Serchio Valley to keep the enemy engaged in that area. On the remainder of the Corps front pressure would be maintained along the axes of the principal roads to develop the enemy's defenses and occupy all ground from which he should withdraw. Due to the extent of its front and the limited forces at its disposal IV Corps was not capable of launching a sustained offensive.

1. *The 6 South African Armoured Division on the Right.* The task of maintaining contact with II Corps and protecting its left flank fell to the 6 South African Armoured Division. After regrouping on 11 September the division had all three of its brigades in the line: the 24 Guards Brigade north of Montecatini, the 12 South African Motorised Brigade in the center above Pistoia, and the 11 South African Armoured Brigade on the right to the east of Highway 64. By 12 September the three brigades had entered the mountains and were probing forward toward the Gothic Line defenses. The heaviest fighting occurred in the zone of the 11 South African Armoured Brigade where the Imperial Light Horse/Kimberly Regiment (ILH/Kim R) and the 4/13 FFR were engaged in seizing a line of 3,000-foot mountains approximately 8 miles north of Prato. The most prominent peaks in the chain were from west to east Mount Pozzo del Bagno, Mount Acuto and to the north of it Alto Hill, and Mount Moscoso. These mountains were covered with scrub trees and dense underbrush which favored close-in fighting and aided the enemy in his policy of counterattacking whenever he lost an important position.

After taking Mount Acuto on 13 September, the 4/13 FFR had to employ grenades and bayonets to drive the enemy off Alto Hill on the 16th. The struggle continued as the 362d Grenadier Division launched four separate counterattacks in an effort to retake the height. Artillery fire delayed the mules bringing up supplies, and the Indian troops of the battalion were at the end of their ammunition by the time the last counterattack was repulsed. To the left of Alto Hill the ILH/Kim R had an equally hard battle to take and hold Mount Pozzo del Bagno, a peak 3,428 feet high. Mount Moscoso, at the other end of the chain of hills, was seized by a patrol of the NMR on 15 September. The NMR operated along the division boundary and maintained contact with the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. In an effort to give added strength to the right flank the 74 Light Antiaircraft Regiment was committed in the Mount Moscoso area on 20 September. The refusal of the enemy to give ground on the front of the 11 South African Armoured Brigade,

coupled with the advances made by the 34th Division, resulted in a growing gap between the two divisions.

In the center and left of the division limited advances were made by the 12 South African Motorised Brigade and the 24 Guards Brigade behind an active screen of patrols and an extensive program of harassing artillery fire. Leading elements of the 24 Guards Brigade reached the road leading northeast from Pescia on 20 September, and the mountain village of Serra north of the road was occupied by a company of the 3 Coldstream Guards the next day. Elements of the 12 South African Motorised Brigade pushed up Highway 64 2 miles beyond the junction with Highway 66. Farther up the highway a patrol made contact with enemy troops on 19 September who were identified as from the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. This first report was confirmed by further identifications the next day indicating that the 362d Grenadier Division had been relieved. The SS troops adopted a more aggressive attitude than their predecessors, and the 6 South African Armoured Division prepared to meet the possibility of a German diversionary attack in the Pistoia area. The attack did not materialize. On the contrary, increased shelling and numerous demolitions on 22 September indicated the enemy intended to stage another withdrawal. Orders were then issued by General Poole calling for a follow-up action.

2. *The 1st Armored Division in the Serchio Valley.* In the central zone the 1st Armored Division, with the 370th Regimental Combat Team attached, was responsible for applying pressure on the enemy in the Serchio Valley. It was also under orders to hold at least a portion of its force available for use on the II Corps front in case a favorable opportunity for the use of armor should arise. The size of the force to be held in reserve was changed from time to time as the Fifth Army offensive developed. On 13 September General Crittenberger received orders from Fifth Army that the 1st Armored Division was to be so employed as to permit the movement of the division less one combat command on 48 hours' notice to an assembly area near Florence. Plans were to be developed by II Corps for the use of this force in an exploitation role as soon as the leading divisions reached the Po Valley. Since the 1st Armored Division was holding a long front on 12 September, it could do little more than maintain an aggressive policy of patrolling so long as a large portion of the troops were in reserve, and no effort was made to launch an attack until it became apparent that II Corps was meeting stiff resistance. On 16 September, IV Corps ordered the division to initiate a reconnaissance in force of not less than one armored infantry battalion north of Lucca, one infantry battalion west of the Serchio River, and one armored infantry battalion toward Mount Liguarda north of Pescia as part of a general Corps effort to prevent the enemy from withdrawing troops from the front. In effect this order released the 11th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions

for active use, and the division was further aided when the 6th Combat Team, BEF, assumed responsibility for the portion of the division front held by the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry. Thus strengthened, the division was in position to adopt a more aggressive policy.

In accordance with the Corps order the 1st Armored Division pushed forward on the morning of 17 September. In the zone of CCA the 2d and 3d Battalions, 370th Infantry, attacked through the hills on the west side of the Serchio River while the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion attacked on the east side of the river. In the next 2 days gains of up to 2 miles were made all along the combat command front until strong defenses in the narrow gorge where the Serchio flows east before turning south to Ponte a Moriana forced a halt. North of Pescia in the zone of CCB the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, meeting only light resistance, advanced as far as the village of Castelvechio and Mount Liguana, the objective set by the Corps order. As the troops drove deeper into the mountains supply difficulties increased steadily. The 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, which had no mules attached, was forced during 17-24 September to convert Troop A into pack troops to keep its forward elements supplied.

With the break-through at Il Giogo Pass on 18 September the possibility of a swift thrust to the Po Valley was again open, and plans were again made for the use of the 1st Armored Division by II Corps. Orders were issued on 20 September that an armored task force, consisting essentially of one tank battalion and one armored infantry battalion with necessary supporting troops, should be alerted to move on 4 hours' notice at any time after 1900, 21 September, to an area to be designated by II Corps. General Prichard immediately prepared to release CCA. The 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry, relieved the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion on 20 September, and Colonel Sherman, commanding the 370th Infantry, assumed control of the former CCA zone. On the morning of 21 September CCA, consisting of the 1st Tank Battalion; the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion; Company C, 16th Armored Engineer Battalion; Company B, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; and Troop B, 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, began moving to the area between Prato and Sesto. The removal of these troops forced the division to regroup and brought a halt temporarily to further advances.

3. *The Corps Left Flank.* Along the coast Task Force 45 had occupied positions on each side of Massaciuccoli Lake on 11 September and had patrols as far north as the outskirts of Viareggio. No effort was made to occupy the resort city until the morning of the 15th when a special task force of armor and infantry entered it. Later in the day the 435th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion passed through and established positions on the northern edge of the town. On the same day the 434th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion was relieved by the 6th Combat Team, BEF,

in the mountains overlooking the coastal plain. The introduction of the Brazilian troops reduced the zone of Task Force 45 to the plain and a narrow strip of mountains to the east of it corresponding to the zone of the 2d Armored Group. After the relief the 434th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion was attached to the 2d Armored Group, and the 107th Antiaircraft Group passed into reserve.

Task Force 45 regrouped on 16 September and then resumed the attack the next day in conjunction with the general Corps advance. A platoon of tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers were placed in direct support of each of the 435th and 434th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalions and the 47 Light Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment, which attacked in that order from west to east. Enemy opposition was almost negligible until the 435th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion reached the village of Motrone, 4 miles up the coast from Viareggio, and the 434th reached Pietrasanta, 3 miles to the northeast of Motrone on the 19th. In the next 3 days the left flank of Task Force 45 was carried forward an additional 4 miles up the coast to Forte dei Marmi, but the right flank, where the 47 Light Antiaircraft Regiment was in contact with the Brazilian troops, lagged behind in the mountains above Pietrasanta.

The 6th Combat Team, BEF, reinforced by Companies A and C, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Company C, 751st Tank Battalion, entered the line on 15 September. At 2400, Brig. Gen. Euclides Zenobio Da Costa, commander of the 6th Combat Team, assumed responsibility for a 5-mile wide zone of mountainous terrain lying between the coastal plain and the Serchio Valley. As the first Brazilian troops to fight on European soil the commitment of this portion of the BEF was an event of international significance. For Fifth Army it represented the addition of a well-equipped and trained regimental combat team at a time when the Army needed every available man to back up the attack on the Gothic Line. After many months' experience in commanding British, French, and Italian troops the Army encountered no special difficulty in incorporating the Brazilian troops other than that imposed by the scarcity of personnel capable of speaking Portuguese. The 6th Combat Team was organized on lines similar to those of the American infantry regiment; it was equipped with American weapons and transport; and, with minor changes resulting from a different diet, it drew standard American Army rations. Furthermore, after arriving in Italy in mid-August the Brazilian troops had received a month of training under the supervision of Fifth Army personnel so that problems of liaison and communication had been solved and valuable experience gained in infantry tactics suited to the Italian theater.

After taking the town of Massarosa, north of Lake Massaciuccoli, on its first day in action the 6th Combat Team initiated a general advance on 17 September in conjunction with the stepped-up offensive by all IV Corps units. In an effort to keep pace with the rapid advance of Task Force 45 along the coast a special task force made

up of the 2d Company,<sup>(1)</sup> reinforced with a tank platoon and a tank destroyer platoon, reached the village of Camaiore, 5 miles northeast of Massarosa, on the 18th. The 2d Company then held in place while the 3d Battalion attempted to take Mount Prano, a 4,000-foot peak east of Camaiore which blocked the path of the Brazilian troops. The 7th Company, attacking from the west, reached within less than 1 mile of the summit, and the 8th and 9th Companies gained positions on the southern and eastern slopes on 20 September. Efforts to take the mountain the next day failed. Farther to the east the 2d Battalion, meeting steady resistance, advanced as far as Mount Acuto, a hill to the east of Mount Prano, where mortar fire forced a pause. Contact was maintained on the right with CCB and on the left with Task Force 45.

4. *Corps Artillery.* In an effort to create the impression of greater strength on the IV Corps front ammunition restrictions were lifted, and the Corps artillery carried out an extensive program of harassing fires until 25 September when restrictions were again imposed. A special study was made of the road net, enemy movements, enemy concentrations, and air photos covering the enemy forward elements. As a result of this study a harassing fire chart was prepared and sent to each unit. In one triangular-shaped area northwest of Pistoia bounded by the towns of Campo Tizzoro, San Marcello, and Piastre 158 missions were fired by the 6 South African Armoured Division, the 1st Armored Division, and the IV Corps artillery in a 3-day period 15-17 September. The Corps artillery employed for these missions consisted of 72 3.7-inch antiaircraft artillery guns of the 62 Antiaircraft Brigade, 2 240-mm howitzers, and 1 8-inch gun, reinforced during 15-25 September by 24 105-mm howitzers of the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and 15 75-mm guns of the 4th Tank Battalion, and during 15-21 September by 12 3-inch guns and 36 75-mm guns of Company B, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion. The Corps was considerably hampered by the fact that the bulk of its artillery consisted of 3.7-inch antiaircraft artillery guns, the low-angle trajectory of which was ill-suited to mountainous terrain.

5. *Changes in Enemy Dispositions.* The disposition of enemy forces opposite IV Corps changed frequently with a general trend toward introducing reserve units while shifting experienced troops east to the II Corps front. For a few days the 20th GAF Field Division took over the Serchio Valley sector, only to be relieved by the 42d Light Division from the Genoa area on the 13th. At the height of the Il Giogo Pass fighting the 334th Grenadier Division shifted farther to the east against the 34th Division; by 20 September, when the situation was becoming critical for the enemy, he moved the 362d Grenadier Division from the area north of Pistoia.

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(1) The rifle companies in a Brazilian regiment are numbered 1 through 9; numbers 1-3 belong to the 1st Battalion, 4-6 to the 2d Battalion, and 7-9 to the 3d Battalion.

To fill the resulting gap the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division was moved from the coast to the former sector held by the 362d Grenadier Division, and the 42d Light Division extended its lines from the Serchio Valley to the coast. Thus the efforts of IV Corps to hold the enemy forces on its front had been only partially successful. One first-class division and a portion of another had left for the II Corps front while a second-class reserve division had been drawn into the line.

## G. AIR SUPPORT

1-22 SEPTEMBER

Air bombardment, if not a key factor, played an important part in the breaching of the Gothic Line. Preliminary bombing was limited by the necessity of concealing the point of the main attack. During the first 12 days of September, when the Army was following up the enemy retreat, air support was limited to 777 fighter-bomber and 410 medium bomber sorties. All of the medium bomber sorties were flown in the last 2 days of the period after II Corps had been committed and the need for secrecy was over. The majority of the fighter-bomber sorties was directed against enemy installations and lines of communication in and immediately north of the Gothic Line. Bivouac areas, command posts, troop assembly areas, and supply depots in the Futa and Il Giogo passes were struck repeatedly, resulting in considerable damage. Few gun positions were attacked and only one gun was claimed destroyed. Medium bombers concentrated on the passes on 11 September and the next day loosed all their bombs on Firenzuola, the supply and communications center for troops in the Il Giogo Pass area. Fighter-bomber attacks farther west against rail installations and tunnels on the Bologna—Pistoia line in the vicinity of Vergato and Vernio resulted in complete disruption of traffic on that line, and vehicular traffic was strafed along the roads south of Bologna.

The stepped-up air offensive which had begun on 11-12 September continued without let-up for the next 2 days. Fighter-bombers on the 13th flew 240 sorties against buildings in Firenzuola and field installations at several points in the Gothic Line while 216 medium bombers struck at gun positions and defenses in Futa Pass. The following day 180 medium bombers attacked Sasso di Castro, just north of Futa Pass, and fighter-bombers carried out 280 sorties against targets scattered between Castiglione on Highway 6620 east to Casaglia Pass in the 13 Corps zone. Poor visibility limited flying on the 15th, and the scale of the air support gradually diminished until bad weather on 20 September interrupted all air activity. In the 7 days 13-19 September 1,333 fighter-bomber and 552 medium bomber sorties had been flown. Although the total number of sorties was not unusually large for a major ground oper-

ation, the concentration of the majority of the missions on the Futa Pass and II Giogo Pass—Firenzuola areas provided excellent support for the II Corps attack.

Coincident with the opening of the infantry assault on the Gothic Line on 13 September measures were taken to increase the effectiveness of the fighter-bomber support for forward ground units. A system known as "Rover Joe," which had been used effectively by the Eighth Army in the African campaign, was set up within the existing framework of the air support control. Its function was to deal with targets which required swift action either by virtue of the fact that neutralization of the target would have an immediate effect on the tactical situation or because the target was of a fleeting nature. Forward observation posts established with front-line divisions were manned by experienced air and ground personnel who were given the responsibility of securing the exact location of appropriate targets within visual range of the observation post, of screening targets for priority, and of guiding the fighter-bombers to the target by means of radio contact with the planes in the air. Direct communication between Rover Joe and the Tactical Air Command made it possible to cut the time lapse between a call for an air attack by a front-line unit and the actual bombing or strafing of the target to an average of less than 2 hours and in some instances to less than 20 minutes. The system had the added advantage of permitting air attacks well within the bomb safety line.

The number of missions and the time of the arrival of the planes over the target area was arranged for each day's operations at a daily air meeting between the operations sections of Fifth Army and of the Tactical Air Force and the Air-Ground Liaison Section. When the system was first set up British Spitfires were employed in flights of six planes which left the fields at 30-minute intervals throughout the period of operations. Pilots were briefed before taking off; when they entered the forward area Rover Joe directed them to the target. On 19 September the number of planes in each mission was reduced from six to four. The resulting loss in fire power was more than compensated by the decision on 27 September to substitute P-47 Thunderbolts for the more lightly armed Spitfires. The P-47 carried 2 500-pound bombs, was equipped with 8 machine guns, and in some cases carried 6 rockets. A further modification was introduced when an air-borne controller known as "Horsefly" was added. Horsefly was a cub observation plane which was kept in the air during the period of operations for the primary function of giving the pilots a final briefing when they entered the target area and with a secondary function of tactical reconnaissance. Target reports from Horsefly were evaluated by Rover Joe in the same manner as reports from the ground observation posts.

Clear weather, good observation posts, and assistance from trained British personnel contributed to a successful debut for Rover Joe. On 13 September, the first day of operations, 18 missions of 108 sorties were directed by Rover Joe with an



additional mission directed against a prebriefed alternate target. The next day 17 missions of 102 sorties and 2 missions against alternate targets were flown. Later in the month when periods of good visibility were infrequent the number of missions was reduced, but Rover Joe continued to play an important part in the air support program.

A further addition to the air support program was made on 20 September when XXII Tactical Air Command (XXII TAC) assumed control of coordinating air support activities of Fifth Army. The new organization filled a serious gap created in August when XII TAC, together with a number of fighter-bomber squadrons, was transferred to France. Through XXII TAC ground force and air force activities were integrated at the Army level much as Rover Joe operated in forward areas. In practice it permitted the establishment of a more definite policy in regard to use of aircraft, choice of targets, and coordination of air and ground attack plans.

#### H. *THE BALANCE SHEET OF VICTORY*

The capture of Futa Pass on 22 September, following less than 2 weeks after the beginning of the Fifth Army offensive and 5 days after the initial breach in the enemy defenses at Il Giogo Pass, brought an end to the Gothic Line phase of the Fifth Army drive to the Po Valley. In the last 5-day period units on the right of II Corps had reached Firenzuola and were already pushing on down the Santerno Valley toward Imola. At Mount Faggiola, the most advanced position of the freshly committed 88th Division, the II Corps forward line was over 10 miles beyond the shattered defenses of Il Giogo Pass and 30 miles northeast of the Arno River. Although the right flank had outstripped the left flank of II Corps, as well as 13 Corps to the east, all units of the two corps had passed through the Gothic Line on a 30-mile front extending from Vernio on Highway 6620 to San Godenzo Pass on Highway 67, and IV Corps was partially through the line at several points. In view of the strength of the vaunted Gothic Line defenses and the nature of the terrain over which Fifth Army had fought the speed with which the breach had been made represented a brilliant achievement.

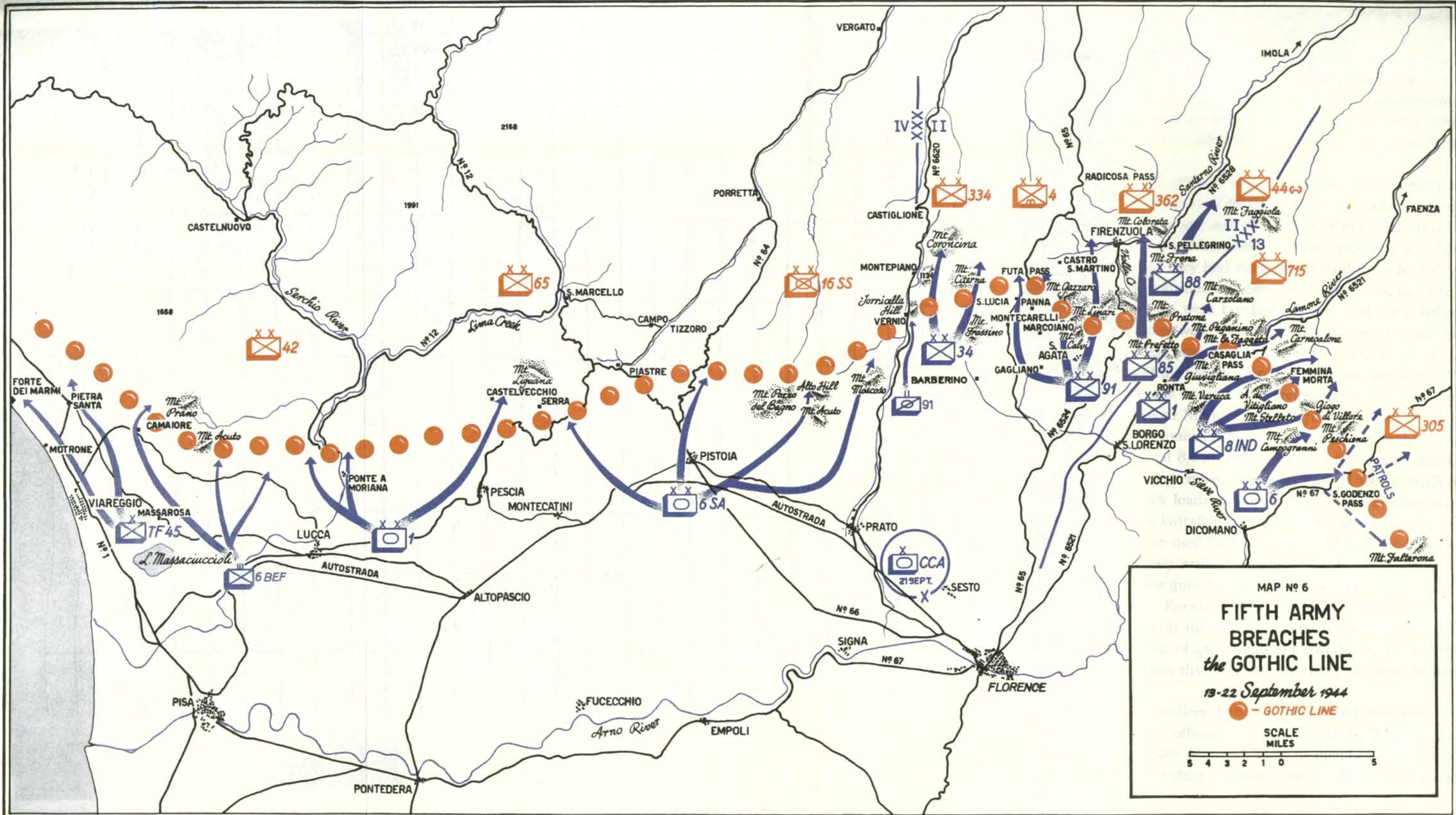
The inability of the enemy to make a sustained defense of the Gothic Line may be ascribed largely to the skillful execution of the over-all Allied plan of attack which induced the enemy to concentrate his strength along the Adriatic coast to meet the threat of Eighth Army and left him weakened at the point where Fifth Army struck. In turn the careful timing, coordination of effort, and concentration of power of the Fifth Army attack afforded the enemy no opportunity to recover his equilibrium. The blow was so timed that it caught the enemy just when the bulk

of his available forces had moved or were in the process of moving to the Adriatic to stabilize his broken line along the coast; it was so coordinated that pressure was maintained along the whole of the Fifth Army front, giving the enemy no indication of where the main effort would be made until the attack was well under way and it was impossible to shift troops to the threatened area in time to prevent a breakthrough; and at the point of the main attack at Il Giogo Pass the Army had so disposed its forces that it was able to strike with fresh troops and in overwhelming strength. To an unusual degree the carrying out of the attack on the Gothic Line followed the pattern and achieved the results called for in the original plan formulated by the Army commander.

Prisoners captured during the break-through at Il Giogo Pass, as frequently in the past, paid tribute to the demoralizing effect of Allied artillery. To a large extent II Corps artillery, assisted by fighter-bombers and medium bombers, succeeded in isolating the battlefield from supplies and reinforcements. Many prisoners who had fought throughout the battle stated that they had received no food for 2 to 3 days and that communications were almost continuously disrupted; others who had been sent up as replacements or reinforcements were bombed, strafed, and then shelled until those that reached the forward lines were too disorganized to be of much assistance. Corps artillery, particularly the heavy 240-mm howitzers and 8-inch guns, which knocked out even the strongest of the enemy prepared positions, together with division artillery, subjected the area under attack to a merciless pounding. In support of the 363d Infantry attack on Mount Monticelli the 347th Field Artillery Battalion alone fired approximately 20,000 rounds in the period 12-19 September, and the Cannon Company fired an additional 8,000 rounds. Other regimental attacks were on a comparable scale. On 17 September, a normal day, II Corps artillery fired 12,718 rounds or 329 2½-ton truck loads of ammunition. The artillery support was supplemented by the fire of a battalion of 4.2-inch chemical mortars and by tanks and tank destroyers which were used both for direct and indirect fire missions. By contrast the volume of enemy artillery fire was small. Practically no attempt was made to counterbattery our guns because, as a prisoner explained, retaliatory fire was too swift and too sure. Enemy artillery fire of all calibers and types was concentrated on assault elements with the bulk of it directed against the 34th Division. The latter reported an average of 450 rounds per day during 11-22 September, a figure considerably higher than that reported by either the 85th or 91st Divisions.

Inadequately manned, pounded by artillery shells and bombs, and even maligned by its defenders, one of whom, a German officer, complained that the Todt Organization would learn to improve its defensive constructions if its members ever had to fight from them, the Gothic Line and the chain of mountains on which it was based





MAP No 6  
**FIFTH ARMY  
 BREACHES  
 the GOTHIC LINE**  
*13-22 September 1944*  
 ● - GOTHIC LINE  
 SCALE  
 MILES  
 5 4 3 2 1 0 5

proved still a formidable obstacle, and the enemy, particularly the 4th Parachute Division, fought a skillful and determined battle. An indication of the intensity of the fighting during the period when II Corps was attacking the II Giogo Pass area may be gained from the casualties suffered by the three assault divisions during 13-18 September inclusive:

	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>Total</i>
34th Division	118	465	28	611
85th Division	171	642	60	873
91st Division	<u>235</u>	<u>987</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>1,247</u>
	524	2,094	113	2,731

From the beginning of the attack on-10 September to the fall of Futa Pass on the 22d the three divisions suffered 3,903 casualties, of whom 688 were killed. Heaviest casualties were sustained by the 91st Division. The division had all three of its regiments committed through most of the period of action, and at times all nine of its infantry battalions were engaged. Losses in company grade officers in each of the three divisions were unusually high; one regimental commander, Colonel Schildroth commanding the 133d Infantry, was killed by an exploding mine. He was replaced by Col. Gustav J. Braun. Considering the strength of the enemy defenses and the tactical importance of the Gothic Line, the price of the victory was not excessive. Furthermore, General Keyes had succeeded in withholding the 88th Division until after the break-through had been achieved. Fifth Army could now capitalize on the disorganization of the enemy forces by introducing a fresh division; at the end of the Gothic Line fighting the drive toward the Po Valley was already under way.