

II Corps Takes Itri

ON the left flank of Fifth Army our attack of 11 May was launched by II Corps, composed of the 85th and 88th Divisions. On the extreme left, by the sea, our activity was minor. The initial push met immediate success on the right flank; in the center the Americans encountered stiff resistance on the gentle slopes above Minturno, where the enemy automatic weapons had superb fields of fire. For three days the battle swirled in indecision about Santa Maria Infante, San Martino Hill, and the S Ridge. Then the enemy began a hasty retreat along the sea, followed closely by II Corps. By 19 May our rapid pursuit had pushed through Formia and Gaeta into Itri and was still in full swing.

A. *THE PLANS OF II CORPS*

See Map No. 7

I. *The Attack Order.* On 1 May General Keyes issued his attack order. The Corps order dealt only with Phases I and II of the general plan, and divided these into three phases on the Corps level. Both divisions of the Corps were to attack simultaneously, the 85th Division on the left and the 88th Division on the right. Since our left flank was farther forward than our right, the 85th Division would be active in only two of the three Corps phases, while the 88th Division, wheeling westward, had objectives assigned in all three. The main effort of the Corps was thus entrusted to the 88th Division as the more experienced of the two units in the line.

The plan of maneuver consisted essentially of local turning attacks to slug through the defenses of the Gustav Line, with the main weight being exerted in the wedge of hills running north from Minturno to Mount dei Bracchi. If these hills

could be secured, the enemy positions in the lower Ausonia Valley would collapse. In the low, thickly settled ground on our left flank action would be limited; but on the right flank II Corps was to give aid to the FEC by opening up the hills on the south side of the Castelforte road.

In Phase 1 of the Corps order the 85th Division on the left drove for San Martino Hill and for that part of the S Ridge in its zone. It was then to cut the Ausonia—Formia road and organize for defense against counterattacks. On its right the 88th Division was to take the rest of the S Ridge, which entailed the capture of Santa Maria Infante; elements of the division would also capture Hill 413 (Mount Cianelli) to aid the French. The reserve of this division would not be committed without prior approval of II Corps, and would be ready to operate in the zone of the 85th Division to repel counterattacks.

During Phase 2 the 85th Division remained in position and aided the 88th Division by fire. The 88th Division would drive up to Mount dei Bracchi and swing its right flank west through Mount I Cerri and Mount Rotondo, aiming at Spigno. This point, together with Mount La Civita, formed its objective in Phase 3. In addition the 88th Division in the third phase would assist the 85th Division in taking Castellonorato, facilitate the advance of the French into the Petrella massif, and send forces west toward Mount Sant'Angelo. The 85th Division became active again in Phase 3 with the mission of taking Castellonorato and Mount Scauri and continuing the advance west.

In the first two phases armor utilized by the 88th Division would not exceed the equivalent of one battalion; the third phase would begin with a large-scale armored attack in the 85th Division zone. The 36th Division, in reserve south of Mondragone, was to be ready to pass through the 88th Division after the latter had taken Spigno and Mount La Civita, with the mission of capturing Mount Sant'Angelo and advancing west in the mountains to cut the Itri—Pico road. The Corps attack order directed that one regimental combat team of the 36th Division (less its artillery) would be on a six-hour alert after D Day to move to forward assembly areas by motor.

2. *The Plan of Supporting Fires.* Annexes to the Corps field order laid down the plans for artillery and naval support. The artillery available to II Corps, apart from that of the two front-line divisions, consisted of the 77th Field Artillery Group with four battalions, the 36th Field Artillery Group with three battalions, the 36th Division Artillery, and the 6th Field Artillery Group with two battalions. In all, II Corps artillery had directly under its control one battalion of 240-mm howitzers with one 8-inch gun, one battalion of 8-inch howitzers, one battalion of 155-mm guns, one battalion of 4.5-inch guns, four battalions of 155-mm howitzers, and five battalions of 105-mm howitzers.

The 36th Division Artillery was brought up and placed in direct support of the 85th Division and the 6th Field Artillery Group in direct support of the 88th Division. The 631st Field Artillery Battalion (155-mm howitzers) also supported the 88th Division, while the other two 155-mm howitzer battalions in the 77th Field Artillery Group gave general support to the divisional artillery. The long-range weapons were assigned counterbattery missions and harassing and interdiction fire. Additional fire was available from the two pack artillery battalions, three tank destroyer battalions, and the 90-mm guns of the Corps antiaircraft artillery.

As in the FEC, the initial fires of all artillery within II Corps were carefully co-ordinated and their direction closely centralized. A maximum weight and volume of fire at a high rate began at H Hour to secure prompt neutralization of German artillery and to maintain this advantage during the hours of darkness. The counterbattery program, lasting from H Hour to H plus 80, was split into 2 sections. In the first each enemy artillery position was hit by the equivalent of 2 battalion volleys from each of 2 medium battalions—2 24-round volleys, in other words, fired at the maximum practicable rate. This section lasted from H Hour to H plus 50. Then, from H plus 60 to H plus 80, each of the enemy targets received 10 rounds fired at irregular intervals by 1 gun. Missions fired by the 240-mm howitzers against coastal defense guns at Gaeta and also against the 170-mm guns in the vicinity of Itri were scheduled at three rounds each. The entire program could be repeated on call.

The light artillery—16 battalions in all—fired on enemy front-line positions from H Hour to not more than H plus 45 or until our assault troops reached the German lines. Then it shifted to enemy command posts, reserves, and routes of supply. This fire was supported from H plus 60 to H plus 380 by a harassing and interdiction program for Corps artillery as a whole, at a schedule of 40 rounds per hour for the 155-mm howitzers and 10 rounds per hour for the 240-mm howitzers. The latter reached out as far as Highway 7 at Itri and west of Formia. In keeping with the more open terrain in front of II Corps and the lesser weight of Corps artillery the artillery program on the south flank of Fifth Army presented a more scattered picture than that of the FEC.

Further support could be gained for II Corps by naval gunfire. Targets were plotted on the dumps, reserves, and command post of the 94th Grenadier Division at Itri, and a cruiser was available from D Day to D plus 5. Except for 13 May this naval fire was delivered every day on Highway 7 east of Terracina, on heavy gun positions, and on Itri proper. During 15 May, for example, 1119 rounds were fired at 10 naval targets.

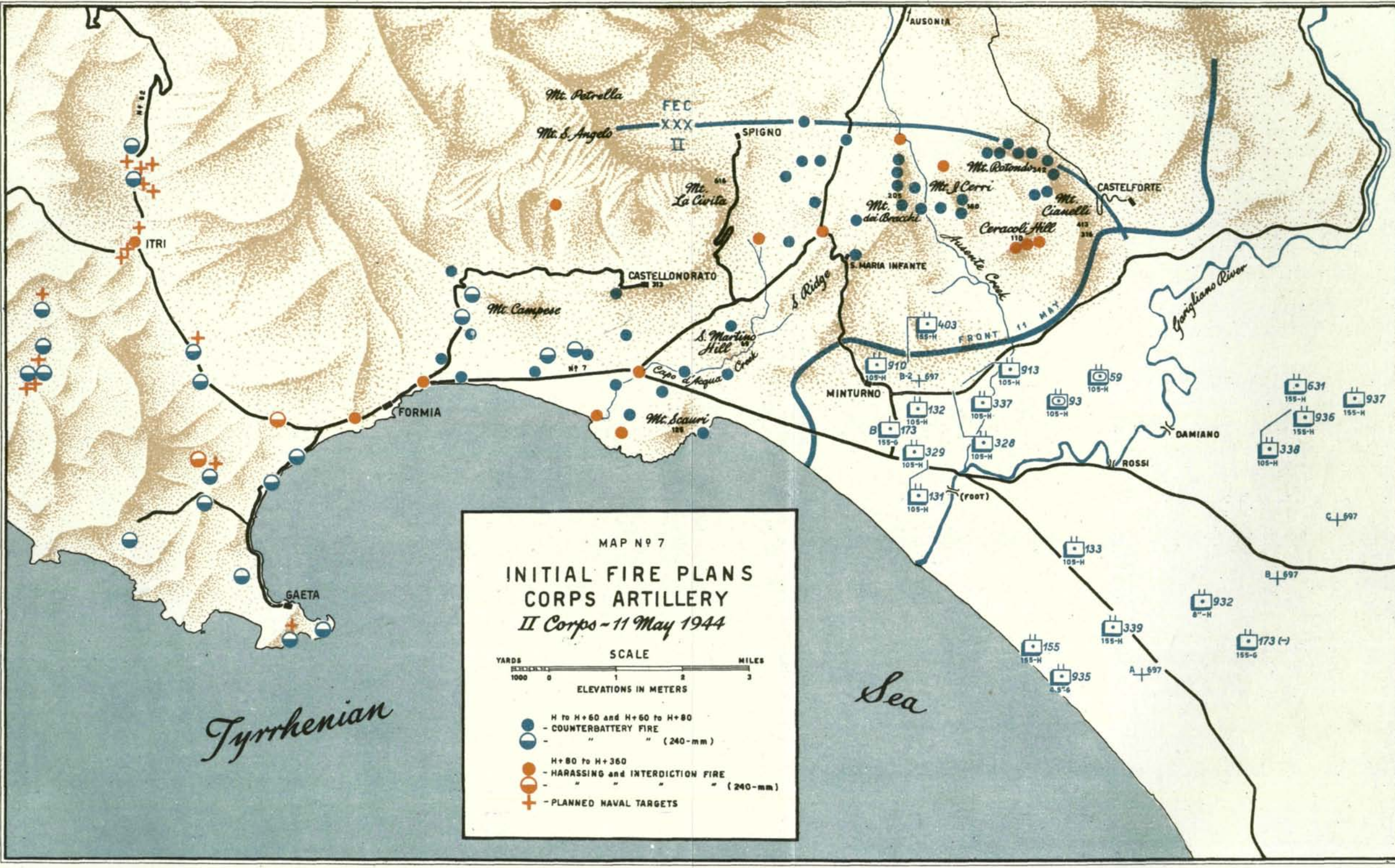
B. THE 88th DIVISION AT SANTA MARIA INFANTE

11-14 MAY

The attack order of the 88th Division assigned the principal missions of the first phase to its two flank regiments. The 350th Infantry, commanded by Col. J. C. Fry, was ordered to break German resistance on the right in the hills southwest of Castelforte. (See Map No. 8.) On the left the 351st Infantry, commanded by Col. Arthur S. Champeny, had the mission of driving the enemy from the village of Santa Maria Infante. In the center of the 88th Division line the 349th Infantry under Lt. Col. Joseph B. Crawford established forward positions on the hills northeast of Tufo to support the attack of the 351st Infantry, but was not to take active part in the attack until its neighboring units on either flank had gained their first objectives. The 631st Field Artillery Battalion and the 6th Field Artillery Group, with the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion attached, were placed in direct support of the divisional artillery. Units attached comprised the 1st Armored Group (less one battalion), the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 601st Field Artillery Battalion (Pack), and the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

1. *Success of the 350th Infantry.* As the artillery barrage began at 2300, 11 May, a Bofors gun started its red tracers ricocheting up the mountain sides in the zone of the 350th Infantry to mark the boundary between the two assault battalions. In the 1st Battalion on the right two companies moved up through the olive groves on the terraced southern slopes of Hill 413, while the third rifle company maneuvered around the north side to strike the village of Ventosa. Forty-six minutes later the height was taken from the 1st Battalion, 194th Grenadier Regiment, in one fierce charge. The opposition was not as stiff as had been expected, but the enemy resisted stubbornly from his concrete pillboxes and rock-lined foxholes until overrun and destroyed. During the night the battalion consolidated its possession. At noon on the following day one platoon occupied the village of Ventosa and took 25 prisoners without a casualty.

The 2d Battalion on the left attacked Hill 316 to the northwest of Hill 413. Despite difficult terrain and enemy artillery, machine-gun, and mortar fire the battalion held its objective and had dug in by daylight against an anticipated counterattack. Just before dawn a strong German force struck the western slopes of the hill. Our artillery and mortars answered the calls for aid, the 2d Battalion covered the enemy with rifle and machine-gun fire, and the Germans were soon fleeing in confusion. Meanwhile Company C, 753d Tank Battalion, attacked through the 3d Battalion along Ausente Creek and overran Ceracoli Hill. Our infantry followed up to consolidate the gain.



MAP N° 7
INITIAL FIRE PLANS
CORPS ARTILLERY
II Corps - 11 May 1944

SCALE
 YARDS 1000 0 1 2 3 MILES
 ELEVATIONS IN METERS

- H to H+60 and H+60 to H+80
- COUNTERBATTERY FIRE
- ◐ " " (240-mm)
- H+80 to H+360
- HARASSING and INTERDICTION FIRE
- ◐ " " (240-mm)
- + - PLANNED NAVAL TARGETS

The 350th Infantry had secured its initial objectives from the Ausente around to Castelforte, and waited until the French had cleared the north side of the Castelforte road. The regiment then launched an attack on 13 May for its second objective, Mount Rotondo. At 1700 the 1st Battalion jumped off under the cover of intense artillery, tank, and small-arms fire. Opposition was scant, and our troops occupied the hill soon after dark. This acquisition completed the aid which had been requested by the FEC.

2. *The 351st Infantry Battles at Santa Maria.* On the night of 11 May the 351st Infantry attacked north along the ridge which carries the Minturno—Santa Maria road. This ridge falls away on each side in numerous draws and terraced slopes, but to the west it is commanded by the S Ridge, a series of 7 hills extending 1200 yards from Solacciano to Tame. The entire area had an air of desolation even before our attack. The fields were covered with grain, weeds, and wild poppies; the vineyards were unkempt; and the olive trees were broken and shattered by mortar and artillery fire. Every terrain feature and stone house had been utilized by the Germans to establish interlocking bands of fire covering all avenues of approach. On the S Ridge the German garrison consisted of the 1st Battalion, 267th Grenadier Regiment; Santa Maria, which dominated the ridge road from the north, was defended by the 194th Fusilier Battalion.

Since the land east of the road was cut by a wide draw and did not favor attack, the main effort of the 351st Infantry was made by the 2d Battalion up the road itself. On the hills east of the ridge, overlooking the draw, the 1st and 3d Battalions supported the attack by fire; farther east the 349th Infantry moved up and lent further assistance. The Cannon Company, 351st Infantry, fired from positions near Tufo, and a platoon of Company C, 760th Tank Battalion, was on hand to back the thrust. The 2d Battalion itself jumped off from the Minturno cemetery as soon as our artillery concentrations began, with Company F on the west side of the road and Company E on the right.

After some difficulty initially with enemy machine-gun fire, the attacking units moved on to Hills 146 and 150, which our men had aptly named the Tits. Part of Company F advanced rapidly past the Left Tit along the western slopes of the ridge with little opposition except for occasional mortar or artillery fire. At 0300, 12 May, this group reached a culvert on the Santa Maria—Tame road, where it was soon exposed to machine-gun and rifle fire from all sides. Company F by this time had penetrated a mile and one-half into the enemy's defenses. Since both flanks and rear were wide open, the men could only dig in about the culvert and wait until dark for help to come or for a withdrawal to the rest of the regiment.

While Company F was moving toward Tame, Company E had met stiff resistance on the slopes east of the road. Forward elements initially by-passed the first

enemy machine guns and drove across the slopes of the Right Tit to the Spur (Hills 157 and 146). Machine guns in houses on the crest of the Spur stopped our men; the company commander was evacuated for wounds; and several platoon commanders fell before the sweeping machine-gun fire on the south side of the Spur. The attack then stalled until the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Raymond E. Kendall, came up. This officer soon discovered that about 12 machine guns in 3 houses and a bunker on the Spur commanded every approach with overlapping fields of fire. After he had been killed in the attempt to knock out the resistance, the disorganized company dug in at dawn on the south side of the Spur. So far it had had 89 casualties. Company G, which had followed the other two companies of the battalion to deal with by-passed machine guns along the road, came up at this time and joined Company E.

Before daybreak it was clear that the attack of the 2d Battalion had failed, and the 3d Battalion was committed on the west side of the road to operate with Companies E and G in a pincers movement on Santa Maria. For several hours machine-gun fire from Hill 103, just left of the road, held the battalion up, but after daybreak our troops pushed forward toward the hill. The enemy opposition proved to be intense. Eight machine guns in houses and dugouts on the upper slopes of Hill 103 swept every ripple of the ground; even worse, the Germans still held the S Ridge, which had been reported taken by the 338th Infantry, and their machine guns raked our troops from the left flank. The 3rd Battalion pushed forward doggedly but was finally halted just before noon on the west and south slopes of Hill 103. Below it the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, was also pinned by the same opposition. Renewal of the attack by the 3d Battalion was planned for 1830 but was postponed until the 338th Infantry could take part.

On the crest and other side of the Santa Maria ridge there was no progress throughout 12 May. The infantry, consisting of Companies E and G, were unable to cross the Spur. Three of the five tanks with the 351st Infantry had been immobilized by mines and artillery fire in the night while mopping up enemy machine guns; another five tanks came up the road during the hazy morning, but within an hour three of them were knocked out between the Tits and the Spur. Later another force of tanks advanced beyond the cemetery and eliminated 20 machine-gun and sniper positions with the aid of the infantry. This attack was halted after an enemy antitank gun in a building along the road had scored direct hits on three tanks. Still another armored attack north from Tufo early in the morning of the 12th failed when the leading tanks were bogged in the muddy terrain.

Supporting fires were heavy on either side. Our tanks, tank destroyers, cannon company howitzers, and artillery blasted the enemy lines hour after hour. During the first day of the attack the 913th Field Artillery Battalion alone expended

4268 rounds on Santa Maria, reducing it to a little Cassino. Meanwhile the enemy battered the 351st Infantry with machine-gun, mortar, and artillery fire. Self-propelled guns from Spigno and heavier caliber guns from Ausonia kept up a deadly fire. Tanks came up to Tame and harassed both the 351st Infantry and the 338th Infantry on the S Ridge; enemy mortars fired unceasingly; and snipers made it worth a man's life to move.

The enemy lines about Company F, still isolated near Tame, grew ever tighter. The supply of ammunition dwindled, and the batteries of the SCR-300, the only means of communication with the regiment, threatened to go dead at any minute. After sunset the Germans finally tried one of their old ruses. Several of the enemy rose up and came forward yelling «Kamerad». When the men of Company F scrambled out of their positions to take the prisoners, the Germans closed in from all sides and wiped out the company. The company commander and over 50 men were captured; a few men escaped by hiding.

Replacements had been brought up after dark for the 351st Infantry, which met a fierce counterattack during the night of 12-13 May. At 1330, 13 May, over 22 FW-190's raided the Minturno—Tremensuoli area. Our attack on the 13th, postponed from dawn, finally jumped off in the afternoon in conjunction with the renewed drive by the 338th Infantry on the S Ridge. The plan of maneuver directed Companies E and G to push up on the right side of the Santa Maria road and the 3d Battalion on the left side. The 1st Battalion, in the draw between the S Ridge and the Santa Maria road, would advance toward Hill 109 on the S Ridge with the further plan of taking Hill 126 and eliminating the enemy resistance in that area.

Though the attack was postponed until 1830, the 2d Battalion did not receive the message and jumped off at 1630. Fighting its way to the top of the Spur, part of the unit was there pinned by machine-gun fire. When the 3d Battalion attacked, it found that the enemy had apparently intercepted a message giving the time of our attack, for a concentration of 300 to 400 rounds of 88-mm fire fell in its zone precisely at 1830. The battalion suffered heavy casualties and made little progress. The 1st Battalion moved in single file up the creek bed below the S Ridge and completed occupation of Hill 109, already partly held by the 338th Infantry, after a battle of several hours to silence the enemy machine guns.

Renewed attack by the 351st Infantry at daylight on 14 May finally gained the regimental objective. The 1st Battalion cleaned up the north end of the S Ridge; assault elements of the 3d Battalion, followed by tanks, reached Santa Maria about 0900 and spent the next two hours rooting the snipers out of the rubble. The main body of the enemy had slipped away during the night, leaving suicide rear guard elements. Santa Maria was ours after 60 hours of fierce fighting.

The battle of the 85th Division for its Phase I objectives had been equally protracted and bloody. Immediately to the left of the 351st Infantry the 338th Infantry under Col. Alfred A. Safay attacked for the S Ridge. (*See Map No. 8.*) In the center of the 85th Division zone the 339th Infantry under Lt. Col. Brookner W. Brady had as its objectives San Martino Hill across Capo d'Acqua Creek and dominating terrain east and north of Scauri. Since all three battalions of the 339th Infantry were to take part in the attack, the 3d Battalion, 337th Infantry, was attached to the regiment as reserve. The remainder of the 337th Infantry, commanded by Col. Oliver W. Hughes, held its lines on the left flank and prepared to assist the other regiments of the division. The initial attack and subsequent advance were to be supported by the 756th Tank Battalion, the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 2d Chemical Battalion, the 602d Field Artillery Battalion (Pack), and the 5th Mule Group (Italian).

1. *The 338th Infantry on the S Ridge.* The S Ridge, as defined in the fighting of our May drive, is essentially a long nose running in sinuous form southwest from the main hill mass at Tame down to the village of Solacciano. Along its course seven knobs or crests can be distinguished, the highest of which, Hill 131, forms a hilltop about halfway between the two villages. On the east, beyond a narrow creek valley, lies the ridge along which the Minturno—Santa Maria road runs. On the west side is the farm valley of Capo d'Acqua Creek. The entire S Ridge is covered with terraced grain fields, olive groves, vineyards and scattered stone farmhouses. The capture of the ridge was necessary if the 351st Infantry was to reach Santa Maria, for enemy machine guns and riflemen on its slopes could rake any force advancing along the axis of the road. Our possession of the ridge would eliminate this danger and also place our forces in command of the Ausonia—Formia road in the valley to the west.

The only method of attack open to the 338th Infantry was a frontal assault to the north from our positions above Tremensuoli in conjunction with the drive of the 351st Infantry on Santa Maria. The 1st Battalion was directed against Hill 131 and the three points to the north, while the 3d Battalion was sent to take the ridge south of Hill 131 as far as Solacciano. A combat group was organized to operate on the left flank of the regiment and to push across Capo d'Acqua Creek for Cave d'Argilla.

The 1st Battalion attacked promptly at 2300 up the draw between the S Ridge and the Santa Maria ridge, a dangerous route commanded by machine-gun and rifle

positions on both ridges and in houses in Tame and Santa Maria. Initially our artillery kept the enemy under cover, but when the concentrations lifted the Germans scrambled out and manned their machine guns and mortars. The draw became an inferno of flying bullets and shell fragments. One company drove up to Hill 126 just south of Tame, but by daylight it had been pushed back to Hills 103 and 109. Another company fought its way across the crest of Hill 131 after midnight. The enemy rallied from strong positions on the reverse slope and drove the unit back to the foot of the hill, where it dug in and held. As later fighting proved, Hills 126 and 131 were the chief enemy strongpoints on the S Ridge.

The 351st Infantry called for help on its left flank on the morning of the 12th. At 1030 the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, again attacked up the draw. The Germans immediately plastered the whole area with mortar shells, and the effort failed. Tanks and tank destroyers came up during the day as far as Hill 109 to hammer 12 enemy tanks in Tame and the enemy defenses on Hill 126; but the enemy machine guns continued to chatter down the draw and across the crests of the hills. Before midnight the assault companies were pulled back from the hilltops and consolidated on the southeast slopes of Hill 131, the south side of Hill 109, and Hill 103—the latter in conjunction with the 3d Battalion, 351st Infantry. The 24 hours of fighting had reduced the 1st Battalion to 350 effectives.

The 3d Battalion, 338th Infantry, likewise had been able to gain only an unsteady footing on the S Ridge. During the night of the initial attack the enemy drove out the one platoon of the battalion which had reached Solacciano; morning found the two assault companies dug in below the village and on the slopes to the south. The 3d Battalion renewed the attack at 1400, 12 May, in co-ordination with an attack by the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, on San Martino Hill in the 339th Infantry zone. A 10-minute concentration by 60 howitzers pinned the 2d Company, 267th Grenadier Regiment, at the outset; then the enemy in Solacciano rose up and fought with fanatical stubbornness. Pillbox after pillbox had to be knocked out with grenades and bazookas, but by 1800 we held two houses in the village. The Germans were then systematically ferreted out of their holes and killed or captured. Shortly after dark a company of the 2d Battalion relieved Company L, reduced to a strength of 20 men. The 3d Battalion, hardly able to muster 200 effectives, dug in at Solacciano.

As the 351st Infantry slowly blasted its way toward Santa Maria, the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, attacked Hill 126 before daylight on 13 May. Again the German defenses proved too strong, and the draw deadly. Further plans for an attack in the afternoon called for a drive through Solacciano northeast along the reverse slopes of the S Ridge. At the same time the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, assaulted Hill 126 from the south. A small task force of 12 tanks and accompanying infantry jumped off from Solacciano at 1630 and within 2 hours drove to Hill

85. Some of the tanks then bogged down in the muddy valley west of the S Ridge; the infantry were stopped; and just before dark an enemy counterattack pushed them back to the south slopes of Hill 85. Reinforcements were immediately rushed up, and our troops held. The attack of the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, continued after dark but was stopped on Hill 109 by machine-gun fire from Hills 126 and 131.

The 2d Battalion, 338th Infantry, also attacked Cave d'Argilla across Capo d'Acqua Creek on 13 May, for the small connecting force sent out on the night of 11 May had never had a chance to reach its objective. On the morning of the 13th two companies of the 2d Battalion moved down to the creek, but machine-gun fire from the front and from the S Ridge prevented a crossing. The infantry then withdrew under cover of a 45-minute artillery concentration and crossed at San Martino Hill, held by the 339th Infantry. After a fierce battle our men captured Cave d'Argilla and Hill 60 to the south, thus gaining partial control over the Spigno road junction. Both companies had to use every available man and weapon to beat off the immediate counterattacks by an alarmed enemy. Once the Germans fought their way within 25 yards of our positions, but the infantry clung grimly to their foxholes through the sleepless night.

At dark on 13 May the position in the zone of the 338th Infantry was little better than in front of Santa Maria. We held Cave d'Argilla, Solacciano, part of Hill 85, and Hill 109; but the machine guns in the enemy strongpoints on Hills 131 and 126 still laid down their deadly belts of crossfire on the draw and the Santa Maria road. Since the 338th Infantry was nearly exhausted the 351st Infantry took over its positions on the upper part of the S Ridge with the task of clearing Hill 126, and the 338th Infantry concentrated on taking Hill 131.

A co-ordinated attack launched at 0510, 14 May, proved completely successful. The 351st Infantry captured Hill 126 and Santa Maria, and the 338th Infantry cleared the crest of Hill 131. Most of the enemy had pulled out during the night, leaving the reverse slopes of the S Ridge littered with dead. Before noon the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, had pushed outposts to the Formia—Ausonia road. Casualties for the entire regiment during the action totalled 55 killed, 365 wounded, and 29 missing.

2. *The Battle of San Martino Hill.* San Martino Hill, the initial objective of the 3d Battalion, 339th Infantry, consists of two gentle swells in the farmland south of Cave d'Argilla. The western swell is Hill 66; the eastern one, Hill 69, drops 120 feet on its east slope to Capo d'Acqua Creek, a swift little stream about 15 feet wide and 3 feet deep. The seizure of these outwardly insignificant points would thrust a dangerous salient into the enemy's defensive line. Success here, moreover, might bring us command of the Spigno road junction and so sever the only lateral supply route between the German forces on the left and right flanks of II Corps.

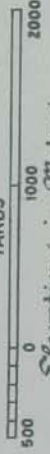
MAP Nº 8

S. MARIA, the S RIDGE and S. MARTINO HILL

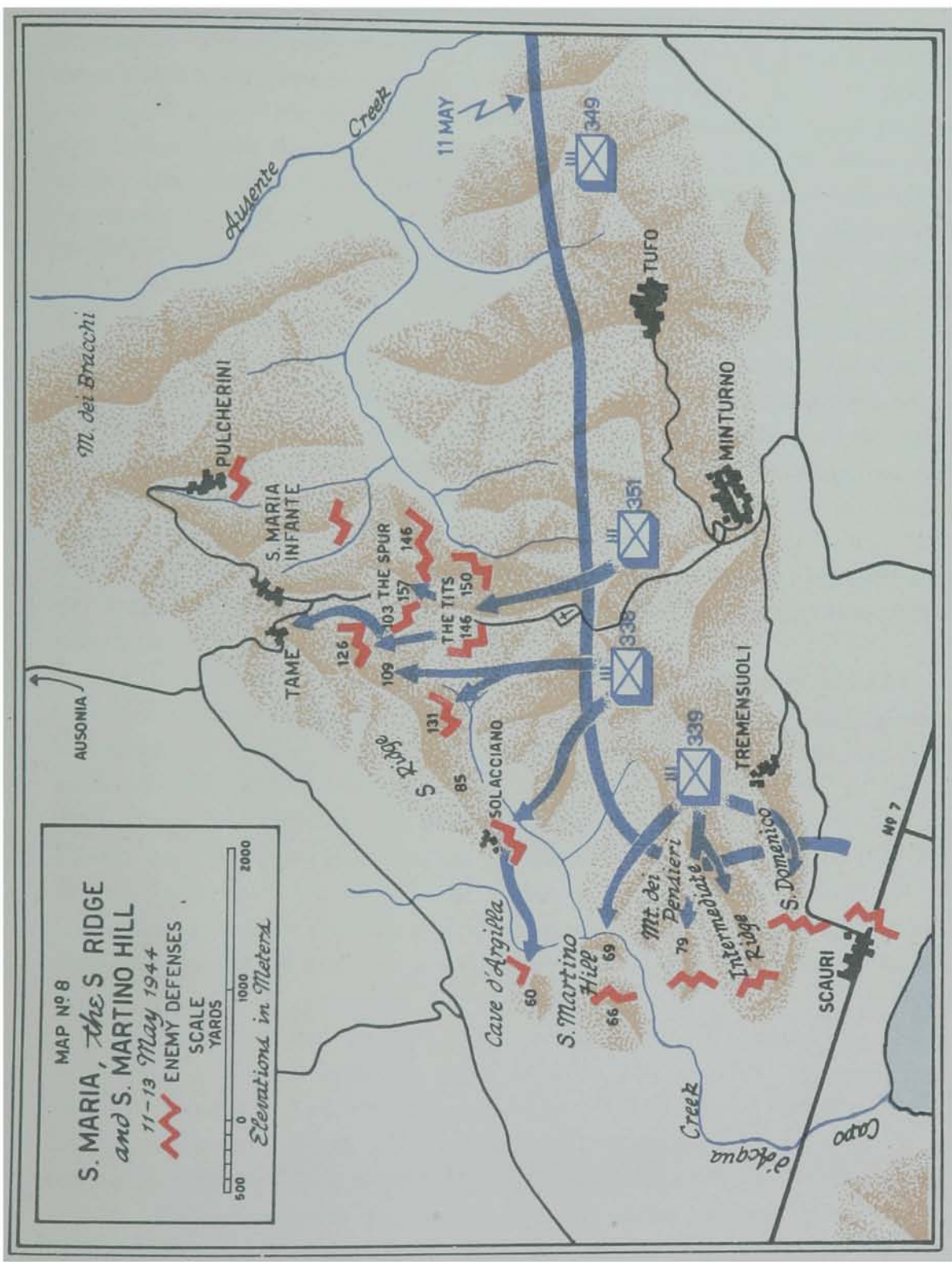
11-13 May 1944

ENEMY DEFENSES

SCALE
YARDS



Elevations in Meters



The artillery concentrations of H Hour were thickened in this area by the mortars of the 2d Chemical Battalion, which poured 1200 rounds on Hill 66 in the first 5 minutes. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion then placed a five-minute concentration on Hill 69 and switched its fire to Hill 66 for ten minutes. Under this cover the assault elements of the 3d Battalion threw their temporary bridge across the creek and dashed up the slopes of Hill 69. The enemy, though surprised, reacted immediately and violently, but within three hours the last German had been killed or captured. Part of our forces then attacked Hill 66 at 0250, 12 May, but here the enemy was too strongly entrenched in bunkers, pillboxes, and fortified houses.

Before daylight the 3d Battalion reorganized on Hill 69 and prepared for enemy counterattacks, which began to come at dawn on the 12th, one after another. Our depleted forces, aided by artillery fire, beat off the first, which was launched from behind Hill 66. Another, supported by a tank, began to form along the river south of Hill 66, but our artillery scored a direct hit on the tank and dispersed the infantry. Rifle and machine-gun fire was exchanged steadily during the morning, but neither side could muster sufficient strength to attack. One company of the 337th Infantry moved up shortly after daylight to reinforce our troops and fought its way into positions on the north side of Hill 69. The 3d Battalion called periodically for artillery support until finally four battalions of artillery poured concentration after concentration on Hill 66 to neutralize enemy bunkers and pillboxes.

In the afternoon of the 12th the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, moved forward to attack through the 3d Battalion. Our artillery opened up at 1400, driving the enemy into the shelter of his defenses; under this cover the new unit was fighting up the slopes of Hill 66 within an hour. Enemy resistance from the 2d Battalion, 267th Grenadier Regiment, was firm, and German artillery fire from Mount Scauri, Formia, and Castellonorato drove our 1st Battalion back to the foot of Hill 66. A second attack, launched late in the afternoon and continued through the dark, finally put our men on the crest of Hill 66 after midnight. They fought off an immediate counterattack and then organized reverse-slope defenses for the inevitable enemy thrusts.

Enemy artillery and mortar fire fell on San Martino Hill during the remainder of the night. The 3d Battalion, 339th Infantry, able to muster no more than 200 effectives, reorganized as one company and held Hill 69; the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, garrisoned Hill 66. The enemy counterattack came at dawn on the 13th, but our co-ordinated fires mowed down the enemy infantry on the west slopes of Hill 66. After this attack was broken, the rest of the day was quiet. Again at midnight on 13-14 May the enemy counterattacked, and again elements reached the crest of Hill 66; but at dawn on 14 May the Germans withdrew.

3. *The Left Flank of II Corps.* The remainder of the 339th Infantry was less fortunate in its operations against the enemy-held hills immediately above Highway 7. The Germans had been engaged in fortifying this area for months, and had developed a strong system of mutually supporting defenses of the usual type. Much of the section is open and relatively level.

The 1st Battalion, 339th Infantry, moved out promptly at 2300 on its mission to contain Scauri and to capture San Domenico Ridge, a low rise southwest of Tremensuoli. Advancing astride the railroad, the forward elements soon encountered intense machine-gun and rifle fire from the ridge and artillery fire from Mount Scauri. The enemy pillboxes on San Domenico were too strong for a frontal attack, and the battalion dug in east of Scauri. During the next three days our troops maintained constant pressure on the enemy with patrols and beat back several enemy attacks, particularly a determined one just before midnight on 12 May.

To the right the 2d Battalion attacked at 2305 for three knobs on the southeast slopes of Mount dei Pensieri. One platoon of Company G gained the crest of Hill 79 before the artillery preparation ceased and fought the next 3 days to eliminate the 15 bunkers on the hill, defended by 2 companies of the 274th Grenadier Regiment. By the morning of 14 May this hill was firmly in our hands. The rest of the battalion drove for the other two knobs farther to the south but was pinned before reaching its objectives. During the 12th our men held their positions, but at 2100 an enemy counterattack in force drove one company back to its original line of departure southwest of Tremensuoli and cut off Company F on the Intermediate Ridge east of Hill 79.

A smoke screen was laid toward daylight of the 13th to aid the withdrawal of this company, but the men were unable to breakthrough the German circle. Reserves were not available for a strong effort to relieve the company, for all three battalions of the 339th Infantry and its reserve battalion from the 337th Infantry were committed elsewhere. Plans were made to send a combat patrol forward the next night with food, water, and ammunition, and some consideration was given to dropping supplies from the air. By evening of the 13th, however, the ammunition of the trapped company was exhausted; just before sunset an observer saw the commanding officer, followed by his men in single file, taken toward Scauri by the Germans. During the night the enemy withdrew in this area also, and many of our wounded were picked up on the 14th on the Intermediate Ridge.

D. *MOPPING UP THE GUSTAV LINE*

14-15 MAY

1. *The Enemy Withdrawal.* (See Map No. 9.) At dusk on 13 May the two-day battle by II Corps had produced mixed results. On the far right the 350th Infantry had been completely successful. In the center the 351st Infantry and the 338th Infantry still lay before the main German strongpoints at Santa Maria and on the S Ridge. Part of the 339th Infantry had gained San Martino Hill; the rest of the regiment had advanced but little beyond its original line of departure. All units had suffered heavy casualties. During the night the commander of the 94th Grenadier Division issued an order of the day claiming that «in spite of several enemy penetrations into our advance positions, the main field of battle remained in our hands».

This claim, however, was not entirely correct. The belt of fortifications in front of II Corps had made our attack a slow, nibbling process, but by dusk of 13 May we had achieved important gains. The Spigno road junction was threatened. The Germans had suffered heavy losses, and the pressure of the wide-scale Allied attack prevented any reinforcements to the enemy in front of II Corps. The entry of the French into the Ausonia Valley imposed an added strain on enemy resources which was clearly too great. Before dawn of 14 May the enemy to the front of II Corps withdrew from all his positions in accordance with an order from the German command to retreat to the Dora Line. Even this position became only a temporary halt after the further penetration of the French to Mount Revole and of the 88th Division to the Itri—Pico road; during the period 14-21 May the enemy made no extensive stand in force in the II Corps zone.

2. *The Capture of Spigno and Castellonorato.* On the morning of 14 May Santa Maria Infante fell to the 351st Infantry, and the 88th Division began its advance toward the objectives of Corps Phase 3. The original plans which called for the 349th Infantry to attack up Ausente Creek and then west to Spigno were changed so that the 350th Infantry received the mission of clearing the east bank of the stream. The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron relieved the 1st Battalion of this regiment on Mount Rotondo during the night, and the 1st and 3d Battalions attacked for Mount I Cerri at 0430, 14 May. A patrol from the 88th Reconnaissance Troop found the height evacuated, so the assault companies drove on across Ausente Creek to San Pietro on the north slopes of Mount dei Bracchi.

This hill was occupied in the morning by the 1st Battalion, 349th Infantry, moving up the hills on the west side of the Ausente. After Santa Maria fell, the battalion turned west from Mount dei Bracchi and advanced to the lower slopes of the north peak of Mount La Civita before dark. In the meantime the 2d and 3d

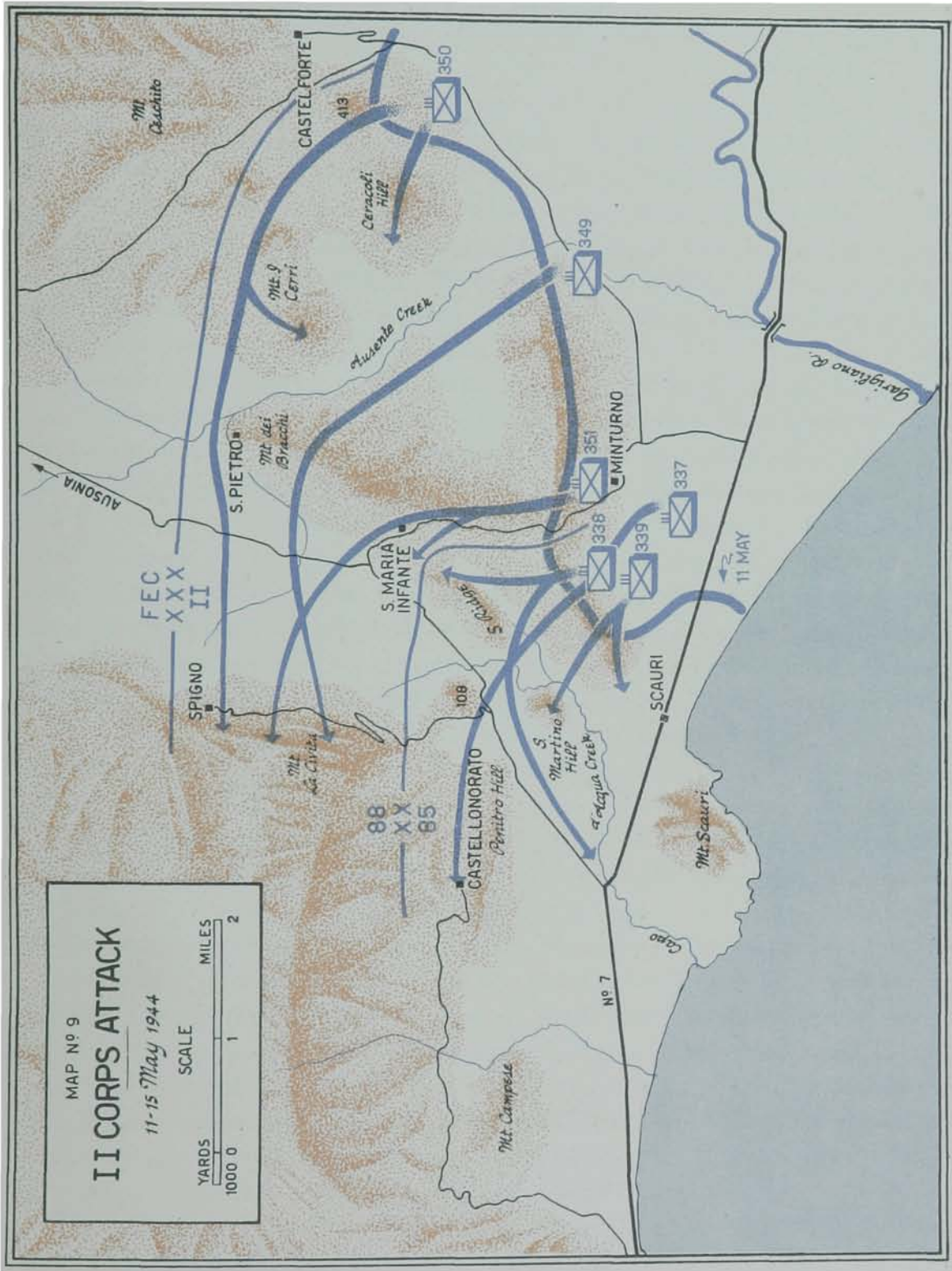
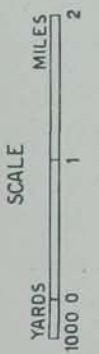
Battalions moved around by Minturno and up the road to Santa Maria to take over the mission of the 351st Infantry. Both battalions attacked west at noon from the S Ridge, with little opposition except for artillery and mortar fire. After dark the 3d Battalion climbed the bare rocky slopes of the south peak of Mount La Civita, caught the enemy off guard, and drove the defenders from the height in confusion. So complete was the disruption of enemy communications that 1 officer and 22 artillerymen from the 194th Artillery Regiment were captured while still firing on our reported positions in the valley. The north peak of the cliff was taken by the 1st and 3d Battalions, 351st Infantry, which had reorganized and attacked across the valley from Santa Maria at 1500.

The next morning, 15 May, both the 349th and 351st Infantry drove on into the mountains. The latter overran a pack artillery battery and killed or captured approximately 100 startled artillerymen. A patrol of the regiment, which went into the rubble pile that had once been Spigno, found that its garrison had fled. By 0730 the 1st Battalion, 350th Infantry, had also reached the town but was relieved at 1800 by the 3d Battalion, 351st Infantry. II Corps thus had firm control of the south shoulder of the Spigno gap, through which the French Mountain Corps poured in the afternoon of the 15th.

Advance in the 85th Division zone was initially entrusted to the 337th Infantry while the 339th Infantry held its positions along the coast and the 338th Infantry reorganized on the S Ridge. At 1500, 14 May, the 2d Battalion, 337th Infantry, attacked through the 338th Infantry toward Hill 108 north of the Spigno road junction. Within two hours the battalion overran part of the enemy positions on the hill, held by the 194th Engineer Battalion fighting as infantry. Patrols were started immediately toward Castellonorato, a village perched around an old hilltop castle to the west.

A local counterattack was repelled during the night, and on the next morning the 3d Battalion came across Capo d'Acqua Creek to join the 2d Battalion in an attack on Castellonorato. The two battalions jumped off at 1500, 15 May, under cover of artillery and tank fire, beat back enemy rear guards around the town and on Penitro Hill to the southeast, and were 400 yards beyond Castellonorato by midnight. Some of our large bag of prisoners reported receiving no supplies for the past two days. The 3d Battalion, 338th Infantry, advanced on the left flank of the 337th Infantry, mopping up the last bunkers of the main German defenses, and reached the junction of Highway 7 and the Ausonia road.

MAP No 9
II CORPS ATTACK
 11-15 May 1944



E. ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS TO ITRI

15-19 MAY

1. *Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 18.* (See Annex No. 1D.) In reviewing the situation on 15 May it was clear that our troops had broken the back of the immediate German resistance in the Ausonia Valley. From prisoner-of-war reports and the abundance of German bodies and equipment strewn across the hills, our command could deduce that the 71st Grenadier Division had almost ceased to exist and that the 94th Grenadier Division was badly crippled. Already the French and American units in Fifth Army had taken over 2200 prisoners. Further opposition in our zone, accordingly, would be much reduced.

General Clark issued verbal orders to the Commanding General, II Corps, on 15 May (confirmed the same day by Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 18) to exploit the success by taking Castellonorato without delay and pushing west to Itri. This latter drive was to be executed by the 88th Division, employed rapidly through the Petrella massif to outflank the German positions of the Dora Line. The 85th Division would not be used west of Mount Campese without Fifth Army approval, and it was contemplated that both this division and II Corps Headquarters might move to the Anzio front by water in the near future. Effective 1200, 16 May, the 85th Division was alerted on 72 hours' notice to begin withdrawal to Naples Staging Area, a movement to be completed in 72 hours. General Keyes was to be ready to turn over to Commanding General, IV Corps, his present zone of action and to move his Corps troops and command elements to Anzio on 24 hours' notice on or after 22 May.

The transfer of II Corps was executed in the next two weeks, although the junction of the southern and beachhead forces on 25 May permitted movement by land instead of water. The strategy behind this plan is clear: to strengthen the forthcoming blow at Anzio by shifting troops no longer needed on the southern front. Other steps in the same direction were also about to be taken with the 36th Division, released from its prospective commitment in the II Corps zone by our overwhelming success, for on the 18th the division received orders to move to Anzio by water beginning the night of 18-19 May. The timing of the transfer of the 85th Division and II Corps remained an important problem for the next few days; the units in question could not be released from the southern front until a clear-cut victory had been achieved, and yet they might be essential to a breakout at Anzio.

2. *Mopping up the Formia Corridor.* (See Map No. 10.) The men of II Corps, having broken the Gustav Line, pressed their advantage against the retreating 94th Grenadier Division and took up the pursuit in earnest on 16 May. Victory

was in the air, and everywhere behind the lines was feverish activity. The trails and roads began to fill up with streams of men, mule trains, trucks, tanks, and tank destroyers moving west. Corps artillery, which had begun displacing forward as early as the night of 13-14 May, was now all in advanced positions and kept leaping battalions and even batteries within battalions to keep its pieces within range of the enemy. Everywhere dust churned up by moving vehicles and marching men rose in clouds of white.

During the night of 15-16 May a directive from II Corps gave first priority on artillery and tank support to the 85th Division, and additional orders attached to the division the 760th Tank Battalion and the 349th Infantry. Our men drove westward along the coast before daylight on 16 May. The 339th Infantry, aided by the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, sent its 1st Battalion into Scauri, while the 3d Battalion passed on through to occupy Mount Scauri. To its right the 1st and 2d Battalions, 338th Infantry, pushed down the Ausonia road to Highway 7 and moved forward to Acquatraversa Creek, thus pinching out the 339th Infantry.

The 337th Infantry, with the 349th Infantry advancing along the mountain slopes to its right, drove west from Castellonorato toward Mount Campese and Maranola. Little resistance was encountered until the 3d Battalion, 337th Infantry, crossed Acquatraversa Creek. As it started up the slopes of Mount Campese without waiting for an artillery preparation, the Germans, who had chosen this elevation for a short delaying action, met our men with intense artillery, machine-gun, and rifle fire. For the night we were forced to take up positions in the valley below.

After dark General Keyes issued his orders for the next day's pursuit. At 0450, 17 May, the 85th Division continued its drive through the Formia corridor against opposition from long-range artillery, snipers, and pockets of rearguard elements. The 338th Infantry, with the 1st Battalion on the left and the 3d Battalion on the right, crossed Acquatraversa Creek on Highway 7 and reached the outskirts of Formia by noon. Strong patrols penetrated the heavily booby-trapped and mined town; other patrols attempted to keep contact with the enemy and covered our engineers, already at work on Highway 7. Occupation of Formia itself was delayed by fire from the enemy coastal defense guns at Gaeta. On the right the 337th Infantry pulverized enemy positions on Mount Campese with an artillery concentration lasting an hour and then drove westwards across the hill to the village of Maranola. By this movement it complied with the Corps order to open the trails leading northwest from Maranola for passage of the 350th Infantry over the mountains to the 88th Division forward elements.

The chase to regain contact continued on 18 May, but we met only small units left behind by the enemy to slow our forces on Highway 7. The 2d Battalion, 338th Infantry, cleared Mount di Mola above Formia, as the 1st Battalion mopped

up the town and advanced onto Mount Conca. From Maranola the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, moved southwest across the mountains and late in the afternoon took up positions on Highway 7 between Formia and Itri to protect the right flank of the 338th Infantry. During the night of 18-19 May the 339th Infantry came up Highway 7. After dawn on the 19th it pushed west in the hills south of the highway and sent its 2d Battalion toward Itri to assist the 349th Infantry in occupying the town. As the 338th Infantry moved on southwest in the hills about Gaeta, its reconnaissance elements entered Gaeta and found the town evacuated.

3. *The Capture of Itri.* The 1st and 3d Battalions, 351st Infantry, were on the slopes above Spigno on the afternoon of 15 May, when the regimental commander received orders to continue the advance to the west. Two native guides were secured, and the regiment set out along the ten miles of steep and rocky mountain slopes between Spigno and its goal at Itri. The 2d Battalion, in reserve at Santa Maria, was alerted and ordered to follow the assault battalions. At 0800, 16 May, the 3d Battalion reached Mount Sant'Angelo, a vast dome 1404 meters high. The men were given a few hours rest, but orders were received by radio at noon to continue on to Mount Ruazzo five miles farther west. The 3d Battalion, followed by the 1st Battalion, moved out immediately over difficult terrain and reached its objective at 1810. Natives of the wild uplands informed the leading elements that 400 Germans had evacuated the area the night before; the handful that remained on the west slopes of the mountain were quickly dispersed by the regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon. The 1st Battalion came up later and occupied Mount Mesole, a mass northeast of Mount Ruazzo.

Our troops had completely outrun their communications, pack trains, and artillery, but were ready to continue the drive on the 17th. At 1300 they moved down the draw on the west slopes of Mount Ruazzo to capture Mount Grande across the Itri—Pico road, but a strong delaying force on the hills west of the Itri valley blocked our attempt to cut off the German withdrawal up Highway 7. Fire from self-propelled guns, tanks, mortars, and snipers was extremely heavy and inflicted severe casualties in the 3d Battalion. Though without artillery support, the battalions of the 351st Infantry reorganized and attacked again after dark, but were stopped by tanks along the Itri—Pico road.

Throughout the 18th the battalions were forced to remain on the defensive under intense artillery fire. The pack trains struggling across the mountains had not yet reached the regiment, and supplies of ammunition, rations, and water were critically low. Welcome relief came at 1700 in the form of fire from the 240-mm howitzers of the 697th Field Artillery Battalion, which effectively silenced the German tanks. The 601st Field Artillery Battalion (Pack) arrived and added its close support, and the 2d Battalion finally caught up with the regiment.

The 350th Infantry (less one battalion) had moved in two convoys to Trivio in the late afternoon of the 17th, advanced to Maranola on foot by 1815, and then trudged across the hills to positions south of the 351st Infantry. On the morning of the 19th the 351st Infantry launched a final attack on Mount Grande under the fire of the 350th Infantry. The 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, moved out at 0200 to make a wide swing to the right and strike Mount Grande from the northeast. Reaching the Itri—Pico road at daybreak, advance elements wiped out one machine-gun nest and speedily occupied the north half of the regimental objective. The 3d Battalion drove straight across the highway at daylight and took the south half of the mountain. Opposition was slight, for the Germans had withdrawn.

During the morning a pack train arrived after a 14-hour trip from Spigno, and the men of the 351st Infantry received their first supplies of food, water, and ammunition since they entered the mountains. To their south the 349th Infantry, which had reverted to control of the 88th Division on the afternoon of the 18th, made a forced march in column of battalions across the wild and rugged mountains. Shortly after a patrol of the 351st Infantry had taken the last German stragglers in Itri the 349th Infantry entered the town.

The brief German stand for Itri had been carried out by a miscellaneous group of units. West of Maranola our troops had met the 620th Ost Battalion, a mixture of Russian ex-prisoners and German non-commissioned and commissioned officers. This unit had failed to stand up under our drive. Elements of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, were also encountered in the Itri area, and on the 19th we crushed a company formed from the supply personnel of the 94th Grenadier Division. With Itri and Mount Grande in our hands, the Germans were forced to fall back on Fondi. In eight days II Corps had completed the mission assigned to it by the Fifth Army field order for the attack.

F. *EIGHTH ARMY IN THE LIRI VALLEY*

11-19 MAY

By 19 May the general line of the Allied forces in Italy had assumed the shape which it retained for the next two months: a slanting front with the left flank always forward of the center, and this in turn ahead of the right flank. Our troops on the Adriatic and in the central mountains were so weak that they could only follow up the enemy whenever he retreated. The main bulk of Eighth Army, fighting across the streams in the Liri Valley, was slowed considerably. As a result the right flank of Fifth Army was exposed after the first few days of the attack and remained exposed during the subsequent push past Rome.

Eighth Army, which completed its regrouping well before 11 May, received substantial reinforcements in the form of the 8 Indian Infantry Division, the 6 South African Armoured Division, and miscellaneous armored and motorized brigades. On D Day the front from the Liri River to the Adriatic was held by four corps. One of these, 5¹ Corps on the right flank, was an independent formation under AAI and consisted only of the 4 and 10 Indian Infantry Divisions. The other three were under Eighth Army. 10 Corps, with the 2 New Zealand Infantry Division and the 1 Italian Motorized Group, held the hills above Atina. 2 Polish Corps had the 3 Carpathian Infantry Division and the 5 Kresowa Infantry Division just north of Cassino. 13 Corps held the remainder of the front along the Rapido River with the British 4 Infantry Division and the 8 Indian Infantry Division on the line and the British 78 Infantry Division and the British 6 Armoured Division in reserve. 1 Canadian Corps, composed of the 5 Canadian Armoured Division and the 1 Canadian Infantry Division, lay to the rear. Army reserve consisted of the 6 South African Armoured Division.

Most of the units which were to take part in the attack moved into the lines as late and as secretly as possible, for here too the intention was to overwhelm the enemy with unexpected concentrations. The plan of Eighth Army called for 10 Corps to demonstrate in order to lead the enemy to think that it would attack toward Atina. (*See Map No. 16.*) The Polish Corps initially would commit both divisions to outflank the Abbey, cut Highway 6, and after seizure of the Abbey drive in the direction of Piedimonte. This maneuver was designed to assist 13 Corps, which would force a crossing of the Rapido with two divisions and move swiftly up the Liri Valley. 1 Canadian Corps was to be used either to assist or to pass through 13 Corps, depending on the situation. Our forces in Cassino proper were to remain on the defensive. The strategy remained essentially the same as in the initial Fifth Army attack of January 1944, but exactly twice the force was employed at the outset and five more divisions were available to reinforce the thrusts.

The attacks by the Polish Corps were brave and costly. The first rush secured Phantom Ridge, the spur of Mount Castellone running southeast from Hill 706 to Albaneta Farm, and also Points 569 and 593. Repeated German counterattacks finally drove the Poles back in the afternoon of 12 May, and on the following day our units reorganized in their initial positions. For the next three days the Polish Corps, weakened by extremely heavy casualties, remained quiet. During the night of 16-17 May it moved forward and reoccupied Phantom Ridge, and took Point 593 in the general Eighth Army attack on 17 May. By this time the last flickers of German resistance above Cassino were spent. On 18 May the 5 Kresowa Division continued to mop up the high ground north of Highway 6, and the 3 Carpathian Division took the Abbey. Cassino fell to the British on this day, and the Poles

turned west along the hills. Patrols reached Santa Lucia and Piedimonte on the 19th but were unable to hold the latter point, which formed the northern anchor of the Hitler Line.

The crossing of the Rapido River by 13 Corps was more successful than the first Polish drive. During the initial attack elements of two divisions planted themselves firmly on the west bank of the stream, the British 4 Division on the north and the 8 Indian Division on the south. Bridging immediately south of Cassino was delayed by enemy machine-gun and artillery fire, but the Indians had erected two Class 30 bridges below Cesa Martino Creek by the afternoon of 12 May. At this time units of the division were in the outskirts of Sant'Angelo in Teodice, and three squadrons of tanks had made a sortie a mile to the west.

Casualties of 13 Corps were light on the first day but mounted heavily thereafter as the enemy fought desperately to limit our bridgehead. By the morning of 14 May over 500 prisoners had passed through the Corps cages. Sant'Angelo was cleared in the night of 13-14 May; on the following day the 78 Division began crossing the Rapido. Progress improved on 15 May with seven bridges in operation and strong elements west of the river. A brigade of the 78 Division passed through the left flank of the 4 Division and cut the Pignataro road by noon. During the night the 8 Indian Division took Pignataro itself, and on the following day its left flank proceeded along the Liri to a point opposite Cantalupo Hill. By now the van of the French 1st Motorized Division south of the river had passed San Giorgio.

By the evening of 16 May 13 Corps held a bridgehead about 2 miles deep at a cost of 4056 killed, wounded, and missing. A general attack was launched along the Eighth Army front after daybreak on 17 May. The 1 Canadian Infantry Division passed through the Indians on the left flank and advanced to a point north of San Giorgio; the 78 Division pushed west below Highway 6; and the 4 Division swung north to cut the highway below the Abbey. With the Poles on the high ground to the north, the German position in Cassino was hopeless, and the majority of the garrison evacuated its pillboxes. Troops of the 4 Division took the mine-studded rubble of Cassino at 1300, 18 May.

The fall of Cassino marked the end of the Gustav Line in the Liri Valley. 13 Corps had pushed through its main bastions in the fighting of the previous week, and the enemy had also to reckon with the fact that the French held the high ground south of the Liri River as far as Pontecorvo. Six miles of the German flank along the river thus lay exposed to the French fire. Accordingly the German High Command ordered a general retreat in the Liri Valley to the Hitler Line from Pontecorvo to Piedimonte. Reconnaissance elements of the 78 Division darted into the outskirts of Aquino on 18 May, and the Canadians kept pace on the left flank. Throughout the 18th and 19th the infantry of Eighth Army moved up to the front

of the Hitler Line; behind them the British 6 Armoured Division concentrated north of Pignataro and the 5 Canadian Armoured Division finished crossing the Rapido. Allied troops now stood everywhere before the second German defensive line.

G. *THE ENEMY REACTION TO OUR ATTACK*

1. *Tactical Surprise.* Though the individual German soldiers fought bravely against our onslaught, the enemy reaction as a whole was one of complete surprise. [The Allied plan of deception had been successful in every aspect, and the noise of heavy motor movements behind our lines during the week prior to our attack was misinterpreted by enemy observers as the relief of front-line units by reserves. Fate itself seemed to delude the Germans: one Moroccan rifleman deserted to the enemy the night of 10-11 May and revealed that we would launch a big attack the following night; but his statements were not credited. The commander of XIV Panzer Corps had for some reason picked 2400, 24 May, as the earliest possible date for our offensive and so informed his troops in an order urging every man to be a « Cassino fighter ».

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The initial surprise due to the timing of our attack was increased by the violence and accuracy of our artillery fire. Prisoners agreed that their command knew only the locations of our artillery which had previously fired. The continuous daylight smoke screen masked final movements of our guns into position, and our customary mortar fire on enemy artillery observation posts forced the observers to remain under cover. The effectiveness of our H Hour concentrations was increased by our exact knowledge of German positions, by the accurate, massive, and speedy shelling, and by the wider bursting radius of shells hitting on the rocky terrain. Round-the-clock firing on our part further heightened German demoralization.

The initial bombardment and subsequent fire were devastating to the enemy. Intercepted messages and prisoner reports indicated that the German communications were disrupted. Telephone lines were knocked out, and wiremen could not repair the gaps in the continuous shelling; command posts themselves were neutralized in many instances. The relative lightness of German counterbattery and harassing fires was due partly to the heavy damage to the enemy artillery, partly to the shortage in artillery ammunition and to fear of our retaliation. Since the guns of the two infantry divisions were largely horse-drawn, their mobility was reduced, and the curtain of fire on enemy rear routes impeded the withdrawal of the artillery after our breakthrough. As a result the Germans were forced to rely largely on self-propelled guns and tanks for artillery support.

The evaluation by Marshal Kesselring of the first week of our attack furnishes clear illumination of the German difficulties as our drive progressed. (*See Annex No. 2D.*) Time and time again these remarks stress the fact that movement by day and by night behind the German lines was close to impossible. Antitank weapons must be emplaced, it is stated, in their final positions before the attack takes place, for « mobile reserves, which proved so effective on the eastern front, result in heavy losses and cannot be used in combat against the Anglo-Americans with their great superiority in artillery ». Even when emplaced, guns could not open fire until the target was very close on penalty of being put out of commission immediately by our concentrated fire.

Likewise, infantry reserves were necessarily kept very close to endangered sectors, for our aerial artillery observation and general aerial superiority made troop movements in the day very costly. If such movements were absolutely necessary, it was recommended that the troops be split into small groups. The supply of front-line units was hampered by our interdiction of the narrow passes and bridges behind the lines; at some points the last five to six miles were covered by mules and carriers, with consequent loss of time.

Most surprising of all is the confession that the German High Command, which had scored so many of its successes in the past by attacking in « impassable terrain », was caught in the same trap by our drive. Kesselring noted that German strongpoints were by-passed as widely as possible. « On these occasions the enemy penetrated often through mountainous terrain, which had previously been considered impassable ». The performance of our tanks and vehicles in such terrain was astoundingly good, and the fact that they frequently surprised the enemy brought the recommendation that close antitank weapons be kept ready even in sectors where the employment of German tanks seemed impossible.

2. *Strategic Surprise.* Early in June our troops captured the greater part of the intelligence files of the German Fourteenth Army. Among the items was the intelligence map for 12 May, which indicated the German knowledge of our positions and thus part of the basis for the enemy dispositions. The well-nigh incredible misinformation of the German intelligence staff helps to show why the German High Command in Italy was caught flatfooted on the higher levels of planning.

The enemy underestimated our strength in the area of the main attack by no less than seven divisions. The 85th and 88th Divisions were correctly placed, but their command (II Corps) was unknown. Only one of the four French divisions had been identified in the line. In the British sector the 4 and 78 Divisions were indicated, though 13 Corps Headquarters was still listed at Termoli on the Adriatic coast; the presence of the 8 Indian Division and the 6 Armoured Division was not suspected. Only the 5 Kresowa Division of the Polish Corps was placed forward,

but to make up for this error the 3 and 7 Polish Infantry Divisions and the 2 Polish Armoured Division were given in reserve. In addition to the creation of two Polish units not even in Italy, the German intelligence had also manufactured a British 18 Division in our rear areas. 5 and 10 Corps were located correctly, but their headquarters were misplaced. German methods of radio location put the headquarters of Eighth Army on the wrong (east) side of the Matese Mountains and AAI Headquarters at Naples instead of Caserta.

As a result of faulty locations and undervaluation of our front-line strength, the Germans believed we had much larger reserves in the rear. The 3d Algerian Division was put at Salerno, and the 36th Division was reported to have practiced landing exercises at Pozzuoli on 7 May with armored formations. The German High Command seems to have drawn the obvious conclusion that our drive on the southern front was a diversion and that we intended again to land in his rear. This fear had exercised the German generals ever since our Salerno landings, and had certainly been reinforced by our thrust at Anzio in January.

To meet this threat the minimum number of enemy divisions was in the line on 11 May, and the reserve divisions were disposed largely along the west coast around Anzio and to the north of the Tiber. By the time the Germans decided that their fears of a landing were groundless, our attack had progressed so far that the reserves were drawn in and destroyed piecemeal. As an intelligence summary by AAI remarked:

The evidence made available by the capture of the intelligence documents of the German Fourteenth Army shows that the Allies went into battle on 11 May against an enemy almost entirely blinded by the fog of war. Misled as to where the main weight of our attack was to fall, he had placed his reserves where we wanted them, far away from the points of attack. From these mistakes he was never to recover and from then on he always found himself a move behind his opponent.

3. *Enemy Activity, 11-19 May.* The intelligence files just mentioned reveal that all four French divisions had been identified by 17 May through prisoners and radio intercepts. By 23 May all units on the Allied front were known, though German intelligence was still manufacturing new divisions. Even before their information was complete, however, the Germans had taken steps to remedy the situation to the best of their ability.

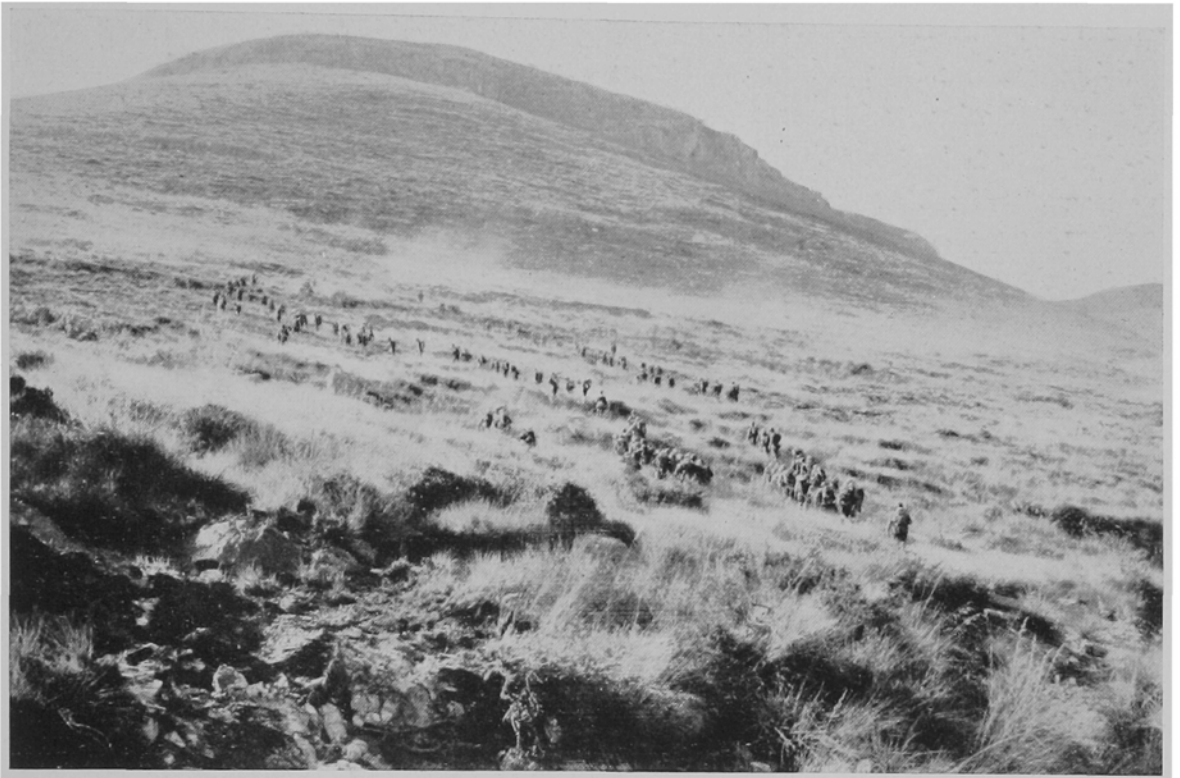
The Gustav Line had been broken by the FEC within 24 hours of the opening of the offensive, and within another day the 71st Grenadier Division was eliminated as an organized fighting force. The important north-south road from San Giorgio

to Highway 7 was irrevocably cut on the 15th. This penetration, coupled with the collapse of the 71st Grenadier Division, seriously compromised the position of the 94th Grenadier Division, which had put up a stiff fight for Santa Maria Infante. The division had to withdraw as the far element in a vast line pivoting back from Cassino, and withdrawal at the end of the whip was a mission which the 94th Grenadier Division, with its horse-drawn equipment, was ill qualified to fulfill. The 276th Grenadier Regiment was committed to cover the disengagement, and both the 1st and 4d Battalions, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, played brief supporting parts about Itri; but the 94th Grenadier Division was steadily disintegrating as it relinquished Formia, Gaeta, and Itri.

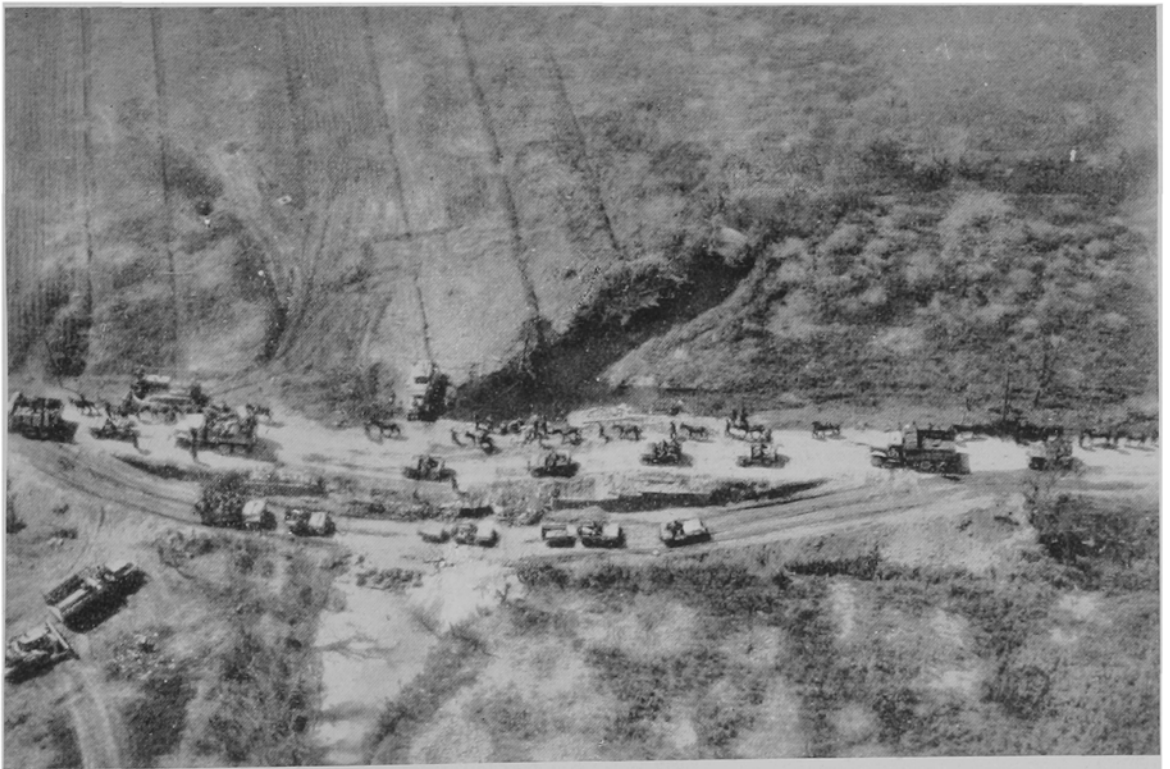
Meanwhile the gap left by the 71st Grenadier Division had to be filled if the Adolf Hitler Line were to be of any use to the forces in the Liri Valley, already backing to this second defensive line under stern pressure from Eighth Army. Various reconnaissance battalions, engineer troops, and the like were tossed into the line in front of the French from 13 May on, but the small increments fell swiftly to our onrush. The 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, the only reserve of Tenth Army, was required in the valley to help the formations in front of Eighth Army.

In the face of this combination of emergencies the enemy command detached the 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment from the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and threw it in south of the Liri to counterattack from the hills dominating the approaches to Esperia. The regiment was committed piecemeal, without opportunity for orientation or preparation of positions, and was easily overpowered. After the fall of Esperia on 17 May the French pressed on toward the southern anchor of the Hitler Line and threatened to cut off the retreat of the enemy forces in the Liri Valley. With so much at stake, the German High Command had no alternative but to summon the 26th Panzer Division from Sezze to stop the French. On 18 May our troops met its 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and on the following day the veteran German division began the defense of Pico.

From the German point of view the situation was not yet lost on 19 May, but it was gravely critical. The right flank by the sea was reeling back under the pressure of two strong American divisions; the French penetration had not been stopped; and the German ability to hold the Hitler Line from Pico to Piedimonte was certainly in question. The feeble Luftwaffe had done its best by attacking the Rapido bridges on the night of the 13th, Naples on the morning of the 14th, and the bridges over the Garigliano and Rapido on the nights of the 15th and 17th; but the attacking planes were too few—varying from 10 to 30 per night—to do any serious damage. Our communications were unimpaired, and the enemy could not stop our preparations to attack the Hitler Line.



Infantry of the 88th Division climb the slopes of Mount La Civita.



As the Germans fell back, our vehicles filled the roads in pursuit.



Enemy rearguard action delayed us briefly in the hills above Terracina.



After the fall of Terracina II Corps drove on toward the beachhead.