

CHAPTER VII * * * * *

Expansion of the Beachhead Attack

A. PLANS AND MOVEMENTS

25 MAY

EARLY on 26 May General Clark issued Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 24 (*See Annex No. 1K*), which confirmed verbal orders given shortly before midnight on the 25th. This directive began as follows:

The enemy forces opposing the beachhead offensive in the Cisterna—Cori area have been decisively defeated. The beachhead and main Fifth Army forces have joined. The overwhelming success of the current battle makes it possible to continue Operation Buffalo with powerful forces and to launch a new attack along the most direct route to Rome.

VI Corps was therefore ordered to attack not later than 1200, 26 May, to seize initially the line Lanuvio—Campoleone Station. The boundary between VI Corps and the British 1 Division was shifted north so as to place the Factory in the British zone. At about the same time Fifth Army took over the right flank along the Mussolini Canal together with the rear areas about Anzio and Nettuno.

In brief terms VI Corps was thus ordered to attack below Colli Laziali and break the southwestern anchor of the last German defense line before Rome. At the same time it was to continue the drive east of Colli Laziali to cut Highway 6 at Valmontone. The brilliance and daring of this order, which shifted the axis of main attack, are equalled only by the speed in its execution. Early on 25 May members of the Fifth Army staff discussed such a shift with General Truscott, Corps commander, and had decided that the new attack would be feasible on the morning of 27 May. A preparatory order on this basis was issued at 1815, 25 May, by VI Corps. As the day progressed, however, the demoralization of the enemy in the

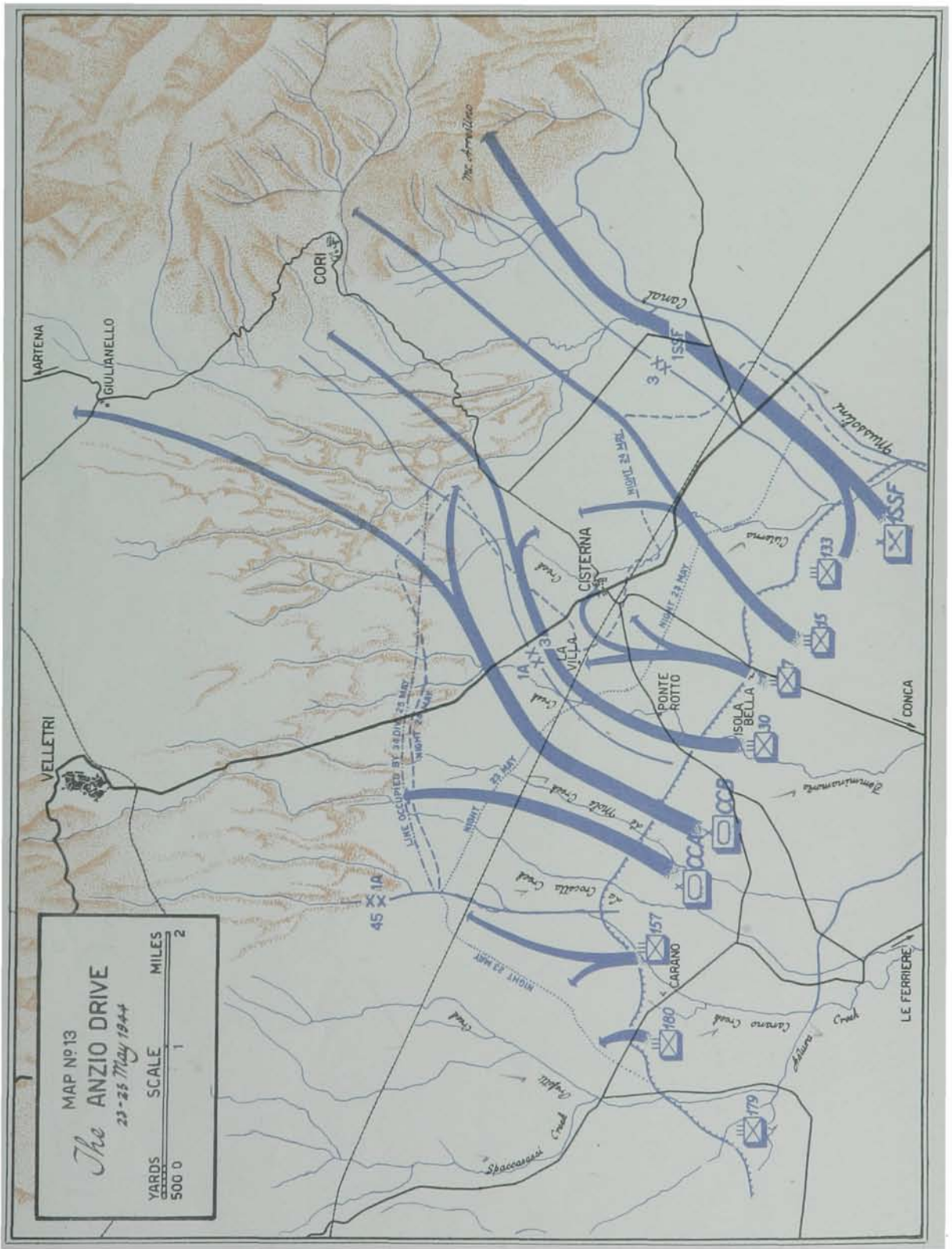
Cisterna—Cori district became ever more apparent, and the 45th Division reported withdrawals on its front. The Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division, the last dependable reserve of the German High Command, was coming up, but preliminary indications suggested that it would be utilized in the Valmontone area. The enemy forces southwest of Velletri could expect no substantial reinforcements.

In the evening General Clark decided to attack toward Lanuvio on 26 May. At 2300 the division commanders met at VI Corps Headquarters to receive the Corps order. Twelve hours later the attack was under way. During that brief period the major elements of 2 divisions were shifted by foot and motor on crossing paths over a distance varying from 4 to 15 miles; Corps artillery displaced to support the new drive; orders and reconnaissance were initiated and completed by all echelons from Corps to battalions. Fifth Army again caught the enemy flatfooted by its swift exploitation of his weaknesses.

The Corps attack order directed the 3d Division to continue on its previous mission of driving north to Valmontone and Highway 6. The 1st Special Service Force and elements of the 1st Armored Division were attached to this unit to protect its right flank in the hills above Cori and its left flank in the open ground north of Giulianello. In the main offensive the 34th and 45th Divisions would push west below Velletri, the 45th Division on the left toward Campoleone Station and the 34th Division toward Lanuvio. Both combat commands of the 1st Armored Division would concentrate on Velletri from south and southeast. The provision of Operation Buffalo which called for the 36th Division to pass through the 3d Division had already been scrapped, and the 36th Division was ordered instead to come up southeast of Velletri to plug the gap between the Lanuvio and Valmontone drives.

This order required extensive shifts in troop dispositions. Some of these movements were already in progress under the plan to attack on 27 May; others were speeded by the new order. Units of the 45th Division, which had held their gains east of the Factory, were essentially in position except for the 179th Infantry, still in line on the south flank. This regiment was relieved at 0510, 26 May, by the 18 Brigade of the 1 Division and moved to divisional reserve. The 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion (less Companies A and B) reverted from the 1st Special Service Force to the 45th Division; tank support consisted of Companies B and C, 191st Tank Battalion.

The 34th Division, which was to attack with two regiments abreast through the lines of the 135th Infantry, was widely scattered at dusk on 25 May. The 135th Infantry, west of Highway 7, was supporting Combat Command A; on the east of the highway the 168th Infantry held positions to block the gap between Combat Command A and Combat Command B. The third regiment of the division, the



133d Infantry, lay along the Mussolini Canal under Corps control, backing the 1st Special Service Force and patrolling in the direction of Littoria. At 1530 this regiment had been relieved by the 100th Battalion and the 34th Reconnaissance Troop and reverted to division control in accordance with prior instructions. After assembling south of Highway 7, it moved by truck to the division area on a circuitous route to avoid the bottleneck of Cisterna. From its detrucking point the regiment marched three miles to an assembly area near the Campoleone—Cisterna railroad, where it closed at 0415, 26 May. It then proceeded immediately to a forward assembly area on the left flank of the 135th Infantry.

The 135th Infantry and the 168th Infantry had been ordered on the afternoon of the 25th to attack at 2100 to secure an east-west line running due west of Cori. Shortly after the attack had begun, the 135th Infantry received further orders to halt its advance and dig in. After midnight the 3d Battalion was attached to the 1st Armored Division for action with Combat Command A, and the remainder of the regiment prepared to regroup in assembly areas after the new drive had passed through its lines.

The order to cease the attack did not reach the 168th Infantry until it had gained its objectives about 0200, 26 May, and the unit was further delayed thereafter in waiting for the 143d Infantry to relieve it. Since this regiment had received new orders, the 168th Infantry left its positions unguarded at 0400 and proceeded to an assembly area on the right flank of the 135th Infantry. Together with the 133d Infantry on its left, the 168th Infantry was ready for the attack at 1100, 26 May. The complete division order for the attack had been issued at 0400, and regimental orders followed shortly after daybreak (0536). Companies A and D, 191st Tank Battalion; the 84th Chemical Battalion; and the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion were attached to the 34th Division, which released the 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion to the 36th Division.

On the right flank of the 34th Division the 1st Armored Division united its efforts in a drive on Velletri. Combat Command A was already in position on Highway 7; during the night Combat Command B moved to its right flank to threaten the town from the east. Inasmuch as two battalions of the 13th Armored Regiment rejoined Combat Command B, armored protection for the 3d Division was achieved by forming Task Force Howze and attaching it to that unit. This task force, consisting of the 3d Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment; the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry; the 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalion; and supporting units, remained a distinct entity throughout the rest of the drive on Rome, though its composition varied from time to time.

The proposed advance of the 34th Division to the northwest and the shift in the 1st Armored Division axis of attack again created a large gap in our lines north

of Cisterna, which was plugged by the 36th Division under the command of Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker. In accordance with orders to relieve the 168th Infantry, the 143d Infantry under Col. Paul D. Adams proceeded by truck north of Cisterna in the evening of 25 May. Then, after receiving new orders to block Highway 7 three miles north of Cisterna, it moved out by foot at 0300, 26 May, and held its new positions by 0630. The 141st Infantry under Col. John W. Harmony came up after dark on the 25th, left its detrucking point at 0230, and fanned out on a north-south line on the right flank of the 143d Infantry by 0900. The 142d Infantry under Col. George C. Lynch marched forward ten miles during daylight of the 26th and went into reserve positions to the right rear of the 141st Infantry. Since the armored threat on the front of the 36th Division was considered especially grave, the division received heavy reinforcements of tanks and tank destroyers. The 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion was obtained from the 34th Division, the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion from the 1st Armored Division and the 1st Special Service Force; and Companies A and D, 751st Tank Battalion, from the 3d Division.

B. *ACTION ON THE RIGHT FLANK OF VI CORPS*

26-30 MAY

1. *The 3d Division Drive to Artena.* (See Map No. 15.) The broadened attack of VI Corps began at 1100, 26 May. While the 34th and 45th Divisions swung west below Colli Laziali, the 3d Division continued its exploitation of the breakthrough at Cisterna. In this operation it was assisted by the 1st Special Service Force on the right and by Task Force Howze on the left.

After a brief rest in the morning the 3d Division moved out promptly at 1100 behind its reconnaissance troop and the armor of Task Force Howze. By evening the advance elements reached the high ground south and west of Artena. The 7th Infantry marched from Cisterna to the railroad below Cori and advanced along the railroad to Giulianello. From that point it proceeded north across the wheat fields and took up positions for the night on the bare hills southwest of Artena. The 30th Infantry wiped out an estimated company of infantry between Cori and Giulianello, then moved astride the Velletri—Giulianello road to ward off any enemy thrust from Velletri. After dark the 1st Battalion of the regiment climbed up to Rocca Massima, where it captured an entire German infantry company. The 15th Infantry advanced to Giulianello and prepared to attack Artena on the following day. In Task Force Howze one company of tanks cut the Velletri—Valmontone road, and the other two companies pushed close to Highway 6 but withdrew on orders from General O'Daniel, division commander. Enemy opposition everywhere

had been scattered and light; our own aircraft had caused some casualties by strafing the marching columns.

Tentative efforts of Task Force Howze on the 27th to reach Highway 6 met heavy fire from self-propelled guns, and the force remained west of Artena with the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, astride the railroad, backed by the armor. The 1st Special Service Force advanced in the morning along the hills to the crest above Artena, and by noon emplaced pack howitzers of the 463d Field Artillery Battalion to fire on enemy traffic to the east and southeast. Capture of the town itself was assigned to the 15th Infantry, which had shuttled up by truck during the night to the near vicinity. The 2d Battalion, aided by tanks and tank destroyers, entered Artena from the northwest shortly after noon and had finished mopping up the considerable enemy resistance by 1520.

The 3d Division then assumed an all-around defensive position to protect its gains. The 1st Special Service Force on the right moved down into the town and held the right flank. To its left the 15th Infantry dug in north of the Artena—Cori road, with the 7th Infantry to its rear on the western slopes of the hills and Task Force Howze to its front along the railroad. The 30th Infantry remained at Giulianello to guard the flank and keep open the division route of supply. The 9th and 10th Field Artillery Battalions and the 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalion displaced north of Giulianello to support the infantry. Together with our 240-mm howitzers and 8-inch guns, the artillery occasionally directed fire at promising targets on Highway 6 in the vicinity of Valmontone.

Having secured a vantage point from which he had essentially cut Highway 6 as a German escape route, General O'Daniel prepared to push on and take actual possession of the highway. This plan, however, could not be executed with the forces at his disposal, for the bulk of the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division had by this time run the gauntlet of our strafing and bombing and had been thrown into the Valmontone sector to check our advance. Since the main enemy forces in the Liri Valley, retreating as rapidly as possible through Subiaco and Palestrina, needed another few days to clear completely out of the threatened trap, the High Command committed its last strong reserve in the Valmontone area. About this block it assembled the scraps of the 715th Light Division and other units retreating before the French.

Though Marshal Kesselring by this action abandoned the Lanuvio sector to its own meager garrison, he was able to stop the 3d Division in the period 27-30 May. At 1930, 27 May, the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division launched two stiff counterattacks with infantry and tanks. The first of these came south along the Valmontone road; the second centered about the road block which Task Force Howze had established at the crossing of the railroad and the Artena—Velletri

road. The latter attack drove our forces back, but on the following morning the armored infantry regained the road block. During the 28th our forces were content to improve their defenses and to patrol vigorously in order to determine the enemy strength. Again at dusk enemy infantry and Mark VI tanks pushed down the Valmontone road. The 1st Special Service Force, which had moved forward from Artena, repelled this attack and also stopped another thrust in the early hours of 30 May.

Late on 28 May the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, followed on the 29th by the 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, withdrew from Task Force Howze and rejoined the 1st Armored Division. The remainder of the task force was placed in 3d Division reserve, and the infantry regiments pushed forward to fill the gap and expand their defensive perimeter. By noon of the 29th our line ran along the railroad from the Valmontone road around to the Giulianello—Velletri road and was held from right to left by the 1st Special Service Force, the 7th Infantry, and the 30th Infantry, with the 15th Infantry in reserve. The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had moved up on the right to patrol the hills between the 3d Division and the FEC.

By this bold action to threaten the enemy's communications in the Liri Valley Fifth Army had risked exposing the right flank of its beachhead front, pending the arrival of the FEC, which was moving at that time northwards over the rugged Lepini Mountains. One enemy division was facing this exposed flank. This risk was calculated very closely in view of the Army's lack of reserves; at this time every infantry battalion was committed to action, either in the line or in local reserve. The prize was worth the gamble, especially in view of the enemy's disorganization and the vulnerability of his vital Liri Valley supply line.

At 1400, 29 May, II Corps assumed command of the zone east of the line Frascati—Lake Giulianello, including the 3d Division with its attached forces. At 2200 the same day the 337th Infantry closed in the Rocca Massima—Giulianello area. The following day the 338th Infantry and the 760th Tank Battalion came up from the south, and the 85th Division Artillery closed in the new II Corps zone. The shift of II Corps Headquarters and part of its troops from the south presaged the imminent resumption of the offensive east of Colli Laziali.

2. *The 36th Division Holds Below Velletri.* Well to the left of the 3d Division the 1st Armored Division had on 26 May driven toward Velletri across close, broken country ill suited for armor. Enemy resistance here had been heavy and had stopped our attack south and east of the town on a heavy, hasty minefield backed by antitank guns and by the fanatical defense of the German paratroopers. During the night of 26-27 May the 1st Armored Division went into reserve for maintenance.

The 36th Division, which relieved the armor, took over the mission of guarding the area between the 3d and 34th Divisions and keeping pressure on Velletri without becoming too heavily engaged. The 143d Infantry advanced its lines to consolidate the gains of the 26th, and the 36th Reconnaissance Troop initially patrolled the three-mile gap between the 143d Infantry and the 30th Infantry. On the afternoon of 27 May the 141st Infantry was committed northeast of Velletri to close this gap.

For the next few days this regiment advanced slowly behind strong combat patrols. During 28 May it reached the railroad embankment and laid plans to attack toward Velletri; after a stiff counterattack on the left flank these plans were abandoned, and the regiment continued northwest on the path of least resistance. On the 29th the 1st Battalion pushed to the Velletri—Artena road; the next day the 3d Battalion expanded the salient toward Velletri. Opposition in this area was light, for the main line of the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division reached from Valmontone only as far as Lariano. The paratroopers at Velletri were content to maintain their control of the area immediately about that town, and were primarily interested in the struggle about Lanuvio.

C. THE FIRST TWO DAYS OF THE DRIVE TOWARD LANUVIO

26-27 MAY

1. *The Action of 26 May.* (See Map No. 15.) The VI Corps order for the new attack on 26 May set H Hour at 1000. Shortly before this time the attack was delayed one hour to permit completion of last details by all units, and the 34th and 45th Divisions actually jumped off at 1100 in their drive toward Lanuvio and Campoleone Station. The British units below the Factory held firm on the 26th; the 1st Armored Division on the right flank of the attack put pressure on the Velletri positions to assist the 34th Division. Heavy artillery support, comprising 228 pieces in addition to division artillery, laid down heavy fires in the 30-minute preparation. The 240-mm howitzers and 155-mm guns were directed by Air Observation Posts on stone structures concealing enemy guns and installations; 64 90-mm guns of 4 battalions in the 35th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade massed their fire on area targets; even 2 40-mm Bofors of the 106th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion fired on terrestrial targets for the first time since the beachhead was established.

The first day of the attack met only spotty resistance from enemy infantry rear guards in scattered strongpoints, coupled with long-range machine-gun fire and some opposition from tanks and self-propelled guns. The character of the enemy resistance indicated that he was falling back to the Lanuvio line, and our

progress was rapid. In the left half of the 34th Division zone the 133d Infantry advanced with the 3d and 2d Battalions abreast, the left flank of the 3d Battalion guiding about 1200 yards north of the railroad. At 1550 the regiment was halted after a gain of a mile and one-half until the 168th Infantry could clean up opposition on the right flank.

The 168th Infantry advanced in column of battalions, maintaining depth and antitank protection on its exposed right flank. The 1st Battalion in the lead ran into some opposition at Hill 158 west of the east fork of Carano Creek. Enemy machine guns in the houses to the west also caused some trouble, but by late afternoon the regiment had removed the opposition and continued the advance to the main course of Carano Creek where it halted for the night. The 133d Infantry, while waiting for the 168th Infantry and for tanks from the 191st Tank Battalion, fed and rested its men, and jumped off again at 2100 for its second objective, the stream junction on Prefetti Creek. Advance elements reached this point after midnight, but the bulk of the regiment halted for a brief rest on the ridge line just to the east.

To the left of the 133d Infantry the 157th Infantry had made even greater progress, with the result that both of its flanks remained open throughout the day and night of the 26th. This regiment, on the right of the 45th Division, attacked south of the railroad with the 2d Battalion in the lead, followed by the other two battalions in column. Enemy opposition consisted chiefly of harassing artillery fire. Scattered machine-gun and mortar fire on the right flank of the regiment was partially eliminated by the night attack of the 133d Infantry.

The 180th Infantry on the left flank of the 45th Division met the most stubborn resistance encountered by our infantry on 26 May. Attacking over the rolling wheat fields east of the Factory, the 2d and 3d Battalions found the enemy entrenched in the prepared defenses of the Factory area. Machine-gun crossfire harassed our advance, and heavy artillery concentrations were combined with direct tank fire on the infantry. The 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, on the left followed our artillery preparation closely and jumped into Spaccasassi Creek, its limited objective, before the enemy could get organized. Here the 2d Company, Infantry Lehr Regiment, was captured intact. The 2d and 3d Battalions on the north, however, were pinned down on the flat ground for two hours until tanks of Company C, 191st Tank Battalion, could be pushed forward. Then the enemy resistance finally broke, and our troops captured 171 prisoners from the 2d Battalion, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, including the battalion commander and 3 of his staff. Except for the 8th Company this battalion was wiped out, and the 180th Infantry advanced across Prefetti Creek before dark.

On the first day of the attack our troops had advanced about a mile and one-half along the entire front. Co-ordination between units had not been completely successful, but this was to be expected when troops were committed on unfamiliar terrain after rapid night movements. The 133d Infantry and the 168th Infantry, for instance, had poor liaison throughout the 26th and did not establish firm contact until almost midnight. As a result of the fact that the boundary between the 34th and 45th Division, set at the railroad in the Corps order, was not the same as that agreed upon by the two divisional commanders, there was a gap of almost a mile north of the railroad. For the next two days scattered enemy forces in this gap harassed the right flank of the 45th Division. The 45th Reconnaissance Troop and then the 34th Reconnaissance Troop were placed in the area but did not succeed in controlling it thoroughly. On the right flank of the 34th Division the Reconnaissance Company, 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was employed to maintain contact with an aggressive task force from the 143d Infantry below Velletri; here less trouble was met.

2. *The Action of 27 May.* After a quiet night the 34th and 45th Divisions renewed the attack on the morning of 27 May. The enemy had again withdrawn, leaving a screen of automatic weapons backed by roving tanks. On the right of the 34th Division zone the 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, passed through the 1st Battalion and continued the attack at 0530 with the 2d Battalion on its right. After an uninterrupted advance of 1500 yards the battalion reached the ridge beyond the east fork of Prefetti Creek, where it halted temporarily. The 133d Infantry renewed its drive at 0930 and met little opposition until afternoon. Four enemy tanks and a platoon of enemy infantry on Hill 173 just east of Presciano Creek then slowed our advance, and it became apparent that this position was part of a strong outpost line running south from Gennaro Hill across the entire front of the 34th Division. (*See Map No. 14.*)

Bounded on the west by Presciano Creek and on the east by Prefetti Creek, the ridge was too narrow for an extended defense, but it afforded a good delaying position and had the further advantage of running at an abrupt angle to the enemy main line of resistance. The 133d Infantry placed the 1st Battalion in the center of its line, and at 1900 the two forward regiments of the 34th Division began a co-ordinated attack against the enemy line. By dark they had advanced to the lower slopes of the ridge where they dug in and held through the night. An enemy counterattack of 200 men and 6 tanks, which hit the right flank of the 133d Infantry at 2020, was repelled by our artillery. Two enemy tanks were burned, and one direct hit smashed an enemy truck filled with infantry.

The attack of the 45th Division on the 27th met spotty resistance from the Infantry Lehr Regiment. (*See Map No. 15.*) The 157th Infantry and the 180th Infantry both attacked at 0615 after a 15-minute artillery preparation and progressed

easily throughout the morning. At noon direct tank and machine-gun fire from a knoll north of the railroad pinned the right flank of the 157th Infantry. The 2d Battalion swung north to clear out this opposition in co-operation with tank destroyers from the 34th Division and occupied the knoll in the afternoon. The 3d Battalion moved up from reserve and took its place in the advance, crossing Pre-sciano Creek before dark.

The 2d and 3d Battalions, 180th Infantry, were likewise pinned at noon by fire from enemy tanks, located in the woods northeast of the Factory. Our own tanks and tank destroyers had been held up by blown bridges during the night, but at noon on the 27th a bridge was thrown across Spaccasassi Creek on the Carano road. Company C, 191st Tank Battalion, then moved up west of the creek and made a thrust into the woods which had sheltered the enemy tanks. Since the German armor had discreetly vanished, our infantry were able to work their way forward through the antipersonnel minefields to Spaccasassi Creek by dark.

Thus far the 34th and 45th Divisions had met chiefly long-range fire covering the enemy withdrawal. We were now less than two miles from our objectives at Lanuvio and Campoleone Station. Though the enemy could not afford to yield more ground on his left flank at Lanuvio, his ability to hold his main line of resistance appeared dubious; for the forces available to the German command consisted only of the 65th Grenadier Division with elements of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division and 4th Parachute Division and scattered remnants of the 362d Grenadier Division. The 1st Armored Division accordingly was alerted to be ready to attack through the 45th Division on 28 May. The 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, was attached to the armor, and the 142d Infantry in 36th Division reserve was also ordered to be ready to move by truck behind the tanks, in the event that the 1st Armored Division secured a breakthrough.

D. *ENEMY RESISTANCE STIFFENS*

28-30 MAY

During the next three days that breakthrough was not achieved. Though the Germans had no solid, organized block of troops on which to base their resistance, they combined the broken units available into battle groups, patched the gaps with Alarm Companies hastily formed from rear echelon personnel, and stiffened weak spots with a dash of paratroopers from their less threatened right flank in front of the British. The ingenuity and craft of the Germans in defense were rarely better demonstrated than in the battle of Lanuvio. Since our right flank was already pressed up against the main German defensive line, our progress on 28-30 May con-

sisted of a great wheeling movement with the 34th Division as pivot. As each unit to the left in turn came up against the German defenses, it was stopped, with the result that the forward motion of our drive kept shifting farther and farther to the left. Here the 45th Division, aided from the 29th by the 1st Armored Division, pushed first west, then slowly northwest toward Albano; on the right the infantry battalions of the 34th Division surged up vainly day after day against the enemy strongpoints east of Lanuvio.

1. *Attacks by the 34th Division.* (See Map No. 14.) In the 34th Division zone the enemy main line of resistance ran immediately south of the railroad and was based on the defensive works which had been prepared in the previous months. For the most part these works were limited to deep connecting trenches, dugouts in the sides of banks, and command post installations; all else was added by the troops as they fought. Under such conditions barbed wire and mines were rare, but the German skill in siting automatic weapons remained as great as ever. Self-propelled guns and tanks roamed the good road network leading south from Highway 7, firing sometimes from south of the railroad, sometimes from the slopes above the tracks. The commanding nose on which the town of Lanuvio is situated was a favorite spot for these weapons and also for machine guns delivering long-range fire.

On the right the 168th Infantry faced two particularly nasty strongpoints: Gennaro Hill and Villa Crocetta on the crest of Hill 209. As our troops approached either point, they had to cross open wheat fields on the neighboring hills, then make their way across the draws formed by the tributaries of Presciano Creek, and finally attack up steep slopes to their objectives. The German line was marked by a trench five to six feet deep which ran across Hill 209 and on past the southern slopes of Gennaro Hill. Based on this trench and its accompanying dugouts, machine guns were emplaced to command the draws, and mortars were located in close support. At Hill 209 the enemy also had wire nooses, trip wire, and single-strand barbed wire to break the impact of our charge.

During the night of 27-28 May the Germans abandoned the lower reaches of their outpost line, on which they had delayed us the previous day, and retreated to their final positions. On our right flank the 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry, advanced on the 28th to the draw on the upper reaches of Prefetti Creek and turned north toward Gennaro Hill. In the middle of the morning its attack was disorganized by artillery fire, but in the afternoon the battalion regrouped and pushed through grazing fire from enemy machine guns, sited along the railroad, up to the south slopes of Gennaro Hill. Here it held for the night.

The 1st Battalion swung west through the 3d Battalion and across Prefetti Creek below Gennaro Hill. Company A on the left secured Hill 203 southeast of Villa Crocetta under heavy machine-gun, sniper, and mortar fire, and Company C

on the right put elements on Hill 209, only to have them driven off by friendly artillery fire. The enemy garrison of the hill at this time was estimated at 12 to 15 men. After reorganizing in the afternoon the 1st Battalion moved down the northwest slopes of Hill 203 at 1800 in skirmish line. The enemy now had been reinforced and was waiting. Company A was pinned immediately on the forward, open slopes of the hill. One platoon of Company C was stopped in the draw short of Hill 209 by machine-gun and mortar fire from the head of the ravine. Another platoon, led by a Browning automatic rifleman firing from his hip, made its way across the draw and advanced up Hill 209 through a curtain of machine-gun fire, which halted it temporarily south and east of the Villa. Since higher headquarters, unaware of this success, placed a five-minute artillery preparation on the hill, the platoon withdrew, and the 1st Battalion reorganized for the night on Hill 203.

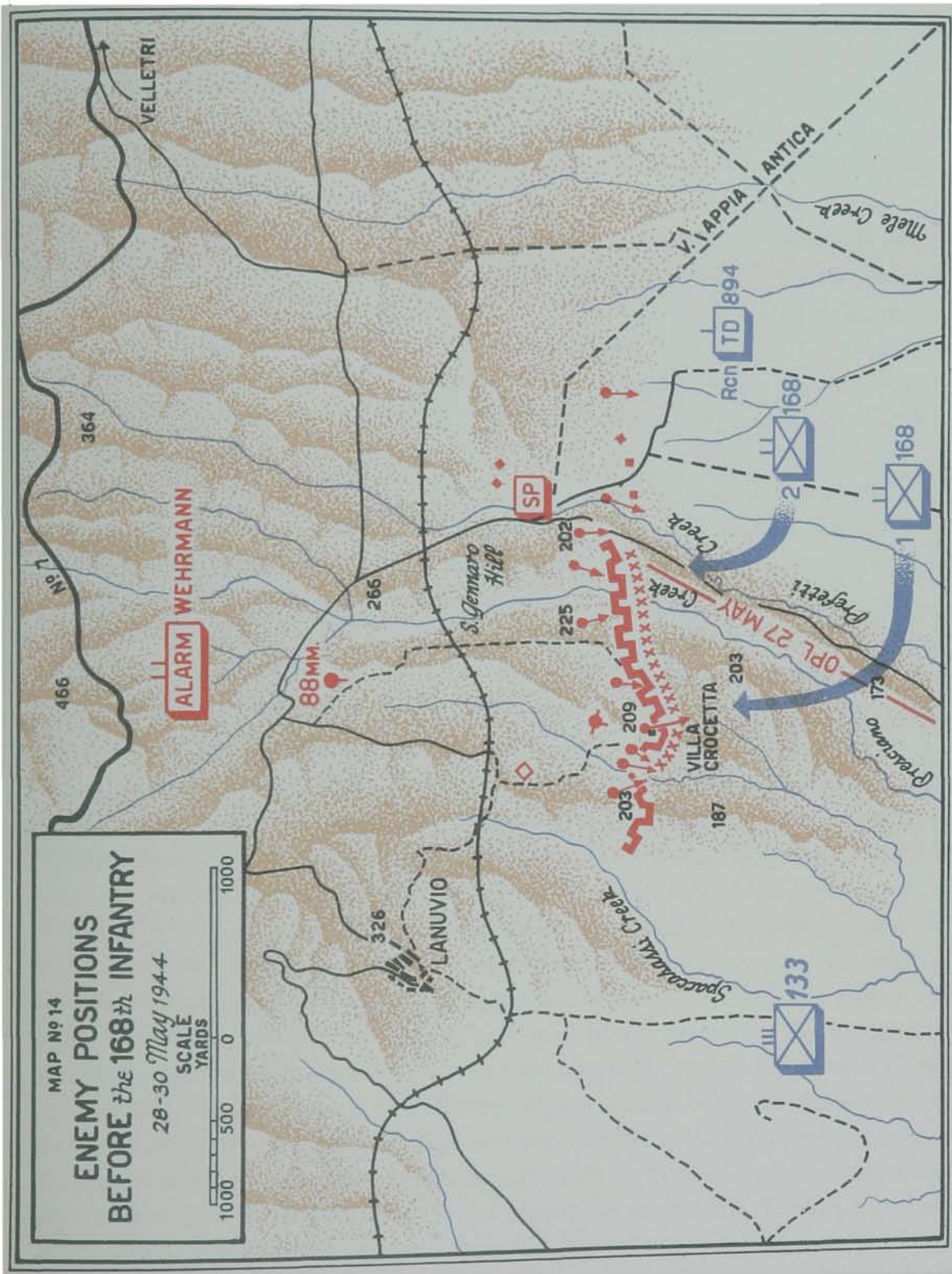
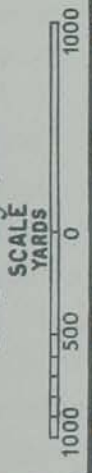
On 29 May the two battalions of the 168th Infantry attacked again for their respective objectives after a 30-minute artillery preparation. In the 2d Battalion all three rifle companies advanced abreast at 0530. Company E on the right was held up southeast of Gennaro Hill by the fire of three tanks and one self-propelled gun on the road east of the hill, but the other two companies pushed on despite their open flanks. Company F clambered up the wadi west of the hill almost to the railroad, then cut east to take the crest of Gennaro Hill; Company G moved up the road to the west of the wadi. At 1445 a small group from Company F fell back on Company G, reporting that the enemy had counterattacked through the grapevines on the east side of the hill. At the same time another part of the enemy moved south around the end of the hill and cut off both companies. Company G first counterattacked Gennaro Hill through enemy grenades and small-arms fire, but a mortar barrage forced it back from the crest. Then both companies broke through the enemy and retreated down the ravine where they met the 3d Battalion, moving up to rescue them. Further attack by the 3d Battalion was called off, and both battalions consolidated positions below the hill.

The story of the 1st Battalion at Villa Crocetta on the 29th was the same record of a near-success. In the morning our men started off at 0600, crawling through the wheat fields on the forward slopes of Hills 203 and 216 while enemy machine-gun fire clipped the stalks above their heads. At the draw south and east of the Villa they were stopped by deadly belts of machine-gun fire, coupled with accurate mortar concentrations. For the new attack in the afternoon four tank destroyers and three light tanks were procured. The scheme of maneuver called for the tanks with Company B of the infantry to move up left of the Villa across a second Hill 203 and then take the Villa from the west side; when the armor appeared on Hill 209, Companies A and C would attack from their present positions to the southeast of the Villa.

MAP No 14

ENEMY POSITIONS BEFORE the 168th INFANTRY

28-30 May 1944



Company B secured Hill 203 as planned, left a garrison of six men with a Browning automatic rifle, and followed the armor east down the slopes and across the draw toward the objective. The enemy then counterattacked our small holding force and regained the commanding ground, from which he set up machine guns to fire into the rear of Company B. Nevertheless, the company reached the Villa with 3 tank destroyers and 2 tanks and cleared the houses of about 100 Germans, who ran off to the northeast, some dropping their weapons in their haste. Before the 20 men from Company B who had gained the hill could organize their positions, an estimated enemy company with fixed bayonets, supported by 4 tanks, counterattacked up the east side of the hill, and our troops hastily retreated from the Villa. Companies A and C had not seen the armor until late and did not then move.

At dark on 29 May the lines of the 168th Infantry were approximately the same as on the morning of 28 May. Both battalions had gained their objectives and then had lost them to superior forces of the enemy; after the two days' fighting both units were exhausted. On the morning of the 30th one more attempt was made on the Villa by a task force composed of Company L and six tank destroyers. The tank destroyers worked their way very slowly up the draw southwest of the Villa while the infantry took and lost the forward slopes of the second Hill 203. The two leading tank destroyers attacked Hill 209 by themselves. One M10 was immediately immobilized, but the other advanced so close to the enemy trench that it was showered with potato masher grenades. It then withdrew down the hill, and the attack on the Villa ended for the time being.

To the left of the 168th Infantry the 133d Infantry had been able to push forward a little more before it ran up against the main German defenses, but thereafter neither it nor the 135th Infantry was able to make any headway. On 28 May the 133d Infantry moved forward at 0530, all three battalions abreast. The 3d Battalion on the left and the 1st Battalion in the center proceeded without much difficulty across Presciano Creek and swung west toward Lanuvio. The 2d Battalion on the right was held up by opposition to the front and from the right flank at Villa Crocetta. After directing tank and tank destroyer fire on the Villa, the battalion was able to move on in the late evening to take Hill 187 southwest of the Villa.

During the 29th the 133d Infantry made repeated efforts to reach the railroad southeast of Lanuvio. The 2d Battalion advanced to within 200 yards of the objective in the morning under enemy machine-gun fire from the Lanuvio ridge; armored cars of the 34th Reconnaissance Troop, operating on the left flank in front of the 3d Battalion, made some progress through heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, but the infantry were unable to follow. The 2d Battalion on the right was hit by a counterattack; then, as it pulled back to guard its exposed right flank, the enemy

also counterattacked the 3d Battalion. The whole regiment formed a new defensive line running northeast-southwest 1500 yards below Lanuvio.

At 1900, 29 May, our men attacked again after a 15-minute artillery preparation to secure the railroad as a line of departure for the 135th Infantry on the following day. Once more the 2d Battalion made the greatest gain, but the regiment could not reach its goal. After the 2d Battalion had pulled back 400 yards, the regiment dug in. Casualties and missing in the 34th Division during 29 May were 270, almost twice the total for the previous day; Company A, 191st Tank Battalion, supporting the 133d Infantry, had only 5 tanks left in operation. During the night of 29-30 May the bitter defense by the remnants of the 362d Grenadier Division in the Villa Crocetta—Gennaro area and by the paratroopers from the 12th Parachute Regiment at Lanuvio received some air support when nine scattered enemy aircraft strafed the roads in rear of the 34th and 45th Divisions.

General Ryder, division commander, committed the 135th Infantry (less the 2d Battalion) on the 30th to attack on a narrow front west of the 133d Infantry. The 1st and 3d Battalions, moving out abreast at 0630, pushed slowly over open terrain covered by well sited machine guns, mortars, and self-propelled guns. Heavy smoke screens were laid on the Lanuvio ridge to aid the attack, and the 133d Infantry supported the advance by fire. By noon the 3d Battalion on the left had captured a small enemy strongpoint. Farther progress was impossible, and the regiment dug in southwest of the town.

2. *Attacks by the 45th Division and the 1st Armored Division.* (See Map No. 15.) While the 34th Division had been battering at the railroad line, the troops on its left had followed up the enemy withdrawal to his main line of resistance. On 28 May the 1st Battalion, 11th Parachute Regiment, covered the German retreat from a well organized position at Campoleone Station. The 3d Battalion, 157th Infantry, on the north advanced at 0705 from its positions on the west bank of Presciano Creek. By the middle of the morning the battalion was pinned on the west bank of Spaccasassi Creek, the next stream to the west, by heavy machine-gun, mortar, and artillery fire from the vicinity of Campoleone Station and from an enemy strongpoint north of the railroad. The six tanks remaining in Company B, 191st Tank Battalion, were unable to cross the creek under direct antitank fire.

Four tank destroyers, followed by the tanks, were then sent around through the 180th Infantry zone to the Carano road and moved up the road west of Spaccasassi Creek. Assisted by their fire and also by a company of the 1st Battalion thrown in on its left flank, the 3d Battalion renewed its push and reached the railroad west of the Albano road in the late afternoon. Here it received fire from 170-mm guns and self-propelled guns, then at 2000 a heavy artillery preparation preceding an enemy attack from the north down Spaccasassi Creek. The tanks

supporting the 3d Battalion were short of ammunition, and the infantry were threatened by small enemy groups infiltrating to their rear, so our men fell back to the creek and dug in for the night. The battalion had suffered heavy casualties.

The constant threats to the right flank of the 45th Division on 27-28 May had shown that the gap along the railroad between the 34th and 45th Divisions must be plugged. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, reverted from 157th Infantry reserve to its parent unit on the afternoon of the 28th and moved up on the right of the division to fill the gap by attacking toward the Albano road north of Campoleone Station. By dusk it had reached its line of departure on Spaccasassi Creek against stiff opposition. The other two battalions of the 179th Infantry followed the 2d Battalion.

Southwest of the 157th Infantry the attack of the 1st and 3d Battalions, 180th Infantry, jumped off at 0615, 28 May, and advance elements reached the railroad west of the Albano road by 1000. Opposition in this area fortunately was limited to long-range direct fire from 20-mm flak wagons, for Company C, 191st Tank Battalion, was in no condition to support the attack. Six of its tanks were without crews at nightfall on 27 May, and the replacements borrowed from the 1st Armored Division and tank destroyer units consisted largely of rear echelon personnel ill acquainted with the operation of an M4 tank; tanker replacements were so scarce that nothing else was available. At 1830 the 180th Infantry moved out again for its next objective but this time met heavy resistance both from machine guns and mortars. For the night the regiment consolidated its gains along the railroad track.

The British divisions on the far left flank were moving forward by this time under orders to conform to the advance on their right. Patrols of the 1 Division reported on the 27th that the 146th Grenadier Regiment had withdrawn two miles to the northwest the previous night, and the division began to advance on a narrow front through the heavy mine-fields south of the Factory. On the 28th it occupied the Factory without opposition. The 5 Division on the 27th relieved the left brigade of the 1 Division astride the Albano road and on the 28th swung ahead west of the road. By the evening of 28 May the old perimeter of the Anzio beachhead had everywhere been left behind except at the mouth of the Moletta.

All evidence indicated that the Germans below Lanuvio were badly disorganized, and our air force and artillery increased that disorder daily. Save at Lanuvio itself the enemy troops were poorly co-ordinated; in their retreat from position to position there was no time to organize each new line, and our attacks had driven them out of one after another. Still the enemy did not break, even though we had taken 5156 prisoners by the evening of the 28th. Greater pressure was necessary if we were to achieve a breakthrough below Lanuvio.

During the night of 28-29 May General Truscott committed the last major reserve of VI Corps by ordering the 1st Armored Division to move through the 45th Division and attack up the Albano road on the morning of the 29th. To give the armor a wider road net the boundary between VI Corps and the 1 Division was shifted to the left. The 34th Division was to continue its attack toward Lake Albano, screened on the right by the 36th Division; the 45th Division was to regroup and follow the armor. Both the 34th and the 45th Divisions turned more toward the north as a result of these orders, and both units committed their division reserves to reinforce the attack. The 179th Infantry had already entered the line east of the Albano road on the evening of the 28th; to its right the 135th Infantry attacked toward Lanuvio on the morning of 30 May. Naval support was also forthcoming, and a French cruiser shelled targets in the Albano area on the 29th with good results.

The attacks of the 34th Division on 29-30 May have already been noted. In the zone of the 45th Division the 1st Armored Division moved up during the night and left its line of departure at 0530, 29 May, Combat Command B on the left supported by the 180th Infantry and Combat Command A on the right. The 157th Infantry reverted to 45th Division reserve after Combat Command A had passed through it. In the morning the advance met light resistance. Tanks of Combat Command B had cleared the enemy rear guard out of Campoleone Station by noon and pressed north across the scrub-covered wadis of the area; Combat Command A crossed the Albano road and likewise wheeled north. By afternoon the tanks had pulled well ahead of the infantry.

As our armor began to reach the lines on which the enemy intended to hold, opposition mounted sharply both for the infantry and the tanks. Since the enemy strongpoints which our tanks had by-passed now pinned the infantry to the ground, mutual tank-infantry support could not be gained during the afternoon. The 180th Infantry, which had moved in column of battalions to Campoleone Station in the morning, was halted there by tanks, self-propelled guns, 20-mm flak wagons, and infantry fire. The 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, in the Combat Command A zone was first stopped, then driven back by an enemy tank-infantry counterattack on its right flank. The armor of Combat Command A, well to the front, met enemy artillery fire of heavy caliber and encountered antitank guns, self-propelled 88-mm guns, and tanks in small groups on the front and right flank. Our tanks, also harassed by close-range infantry opposition, suffered severely during the afternoon.

By evening 21 M-4's and 16 M-5's had been knocked out. In contrast with the initial attacks above Cisterna, where damage was due largely to mines and was easily reparable, most of the casualties on 29 May were caused by antitank guns and resulted in complete losses. For the night the 3d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment,

pulled back two miles to the line of the infantry, a mile north of Campoleone Station. On its right, east of the Albano road, was the 179th Infantry in column of battalions; on the left Combat Command B held positions northwest of the Station. Though the attack had been only partially successful, Campoleone Station was now firmly in our hands.

During the night the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, was attached to Combat Command B. The 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, and the 2d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, reinforced Combat Command A and moved out with the 2d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, on the morning of 30 May. The infantry had to fight their way to the line of departure, while the tanks could move forward only about 1000 yards. A second attack in the Combat Command A zone in the afternoon merely produced further losses, for the enemy laid heavy fire from antitank guns, tanks, and self-propelled guns on any of our tanks that moved. In addition he launched several counterattacks of tanks and infantry; elements of the latter acting on the defensive knocked out several of our tanks with bazookas and other close-support weapons.

Gains on either side of Combat Command A were equally scant. East of the Albano road the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, passed through the left flank of the 2d Battalion and pushed on slowly under intense mortar and small-arms fire coupled with heavy artillery concentrations. Though supported by Companies B and C, 191st Tank Battalion, the infantry made slight progress in the morning and none in the afternoon, when the 3d Battalion was committed on the left. As so often before, the enemy had excellent observation, and accurate shelling met every effort of the infantry to advance. Here again we were running up against the main enemy defense line south of the railroad.

On the left of Combat Command A the armor of Combat Command B once more thrust its spearhead northwest along the Campoleone railroad. This time the tanks kept in closer touch with the infantry, and the two reached Campoleone Creek. At dark Combat Command B stabilized its lines in this area, with the 180th Infantry to its rear by Campoleone Station. The 157th Infantry was attached to the 1st Armored Division and further attached to Combat Command B at 1630 to relieve the 3d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, which passed to Combat Command A. During the night the troops rested and prepared to attack again on the morning of 31 May.

During 29-30 May the British divisions had continued to follow up the enemy. The 1 Division pushed well beyond the Albano road on the 29th, and the 5 Division crossed the Moletta. Though enemy troops in this area had withdrawn the previous night, our advance elements got behind a body of Germans just north of the coast road; to extricate this group the enemy launched a strong counterattack

which pushed the British back to the bank of the river. Thereafter the German continued their retreat, yielding Ardea on the 30th without a fight. The defense line Lanuvio—Campoleone Station—Ardea had already been so cracked at its upper end that the Germans by the sea continued to pull back toward Pratica di Mare.

E. FIFTH ARMY ADVANCE IN THE LEPINI MOUNTAINS

25-31 MAY

When the beachhead offensive started, the continuing drive from the south fell into the background. The issue here had been decided: the enemy had been routed, had patched together his broken line, and was retreating as rapidly as possible. The sole important point remaining was the speed with which the American and French columns could sweep through the Lepini Mountains and join up with the beachhead forces at Valmontone. For his part, the enemy was interested in slowing down our advance only so far as to permit his troops to clear the Liri—Sacco Valley. Action accordingly consisted of the pursuit of a rear guard retreating rapidly on the west and more slowly on the east.

The outlying unit in the German retreat was the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division with attached units, which lay in the hills above the Pontine Marshes. (*See Map No. 16.*) This division had suffered rather heavily in the defense of Terracina and was now withdrawing through Carpineto (15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment) and Prossedi (71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment). A speedy withdrawal was indicated, for the launching of the beachhead offensive toward Highway 6 made its position extremely dangerous. The division finally got out without suffering a major encirclement, thanks to the successful resistance of the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division at Valmontone, but its losses were heavy and its disorganization considerable. On the right the French were held up by a motley group of units comprising the remnants of the 94th Grenadier Division, the better part of the 334th Grenadier Division from the Adriatic, the 1027th Panzer Grenadier Regiment from the beachhead, the 3d Mountain Battalion and a battalion of the 134th Grenadier Regiment from north of Cassino, the 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and the 400th Reconnaissance Battalion. These units appear to have functioned under the command of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division. The 26th Panzer Division and 305th Grenadier Division, which had opposed the French at Pico and Mount Leucio, had by this time sideslipped to the enemy left to join the retreat up the Liri Valley.

On the morning of 25 May the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had joined the task force from the beachhead southwest of Littoria. Throughout the

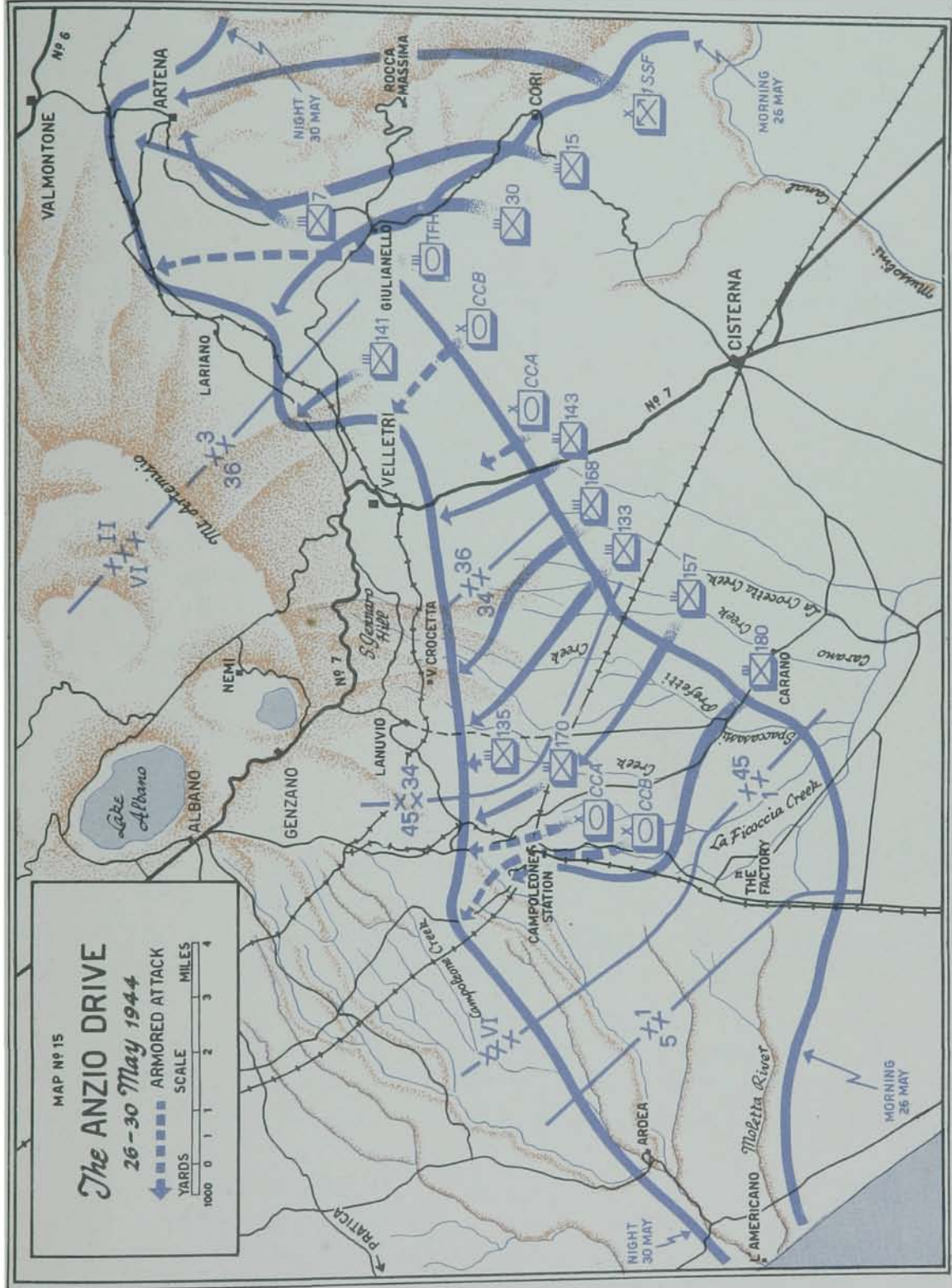
MAP No 15

The ANZIO DRIVE

26-30 May 1944

ARMORED ATTACK

YARDS 1000 0 1 1 2 3 4
MILES



next few days reconnaissance elements of this squadron and then, from the 26th, of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron ranged at liberty over the good road net in the Pontine Marshes, picking off a few stragglers occasionally and putting pressure on the enemy in the hills at the eastern edge of the plain. The line of II Corps proper began on the 25th at the point where the Amaseno River breaks out into the plain, curved north on the Roccasecca ridge, and then ran almost straight east toward Amaseno, which lay just over the Corps boundary. In the II Corps zone the 85th Division on the left held Terracina and the hills above that town as far as Sonnino; on the right lay the 88th Division, protecting the Corps right flank about Mount Pizzuto. The front of the FEC running on eastward to the Liri was composed of three divisions: the 4th Mountain Division in the mountain mass between Amaseno and Vallecorsa and also in the hills just east of the Vallecorsa valley, then the 2d Moroccan Division ringed about Pastena, and the 3d Algerian Division in the low ground near San Giovanni.

The advance of the American units on the left during the period 25-31 May was directed chiefly at cleaning up the hills immediately overlooking the Pontine Marshes and cutting the roads leading into the mountains. On 25 May the 339th Infantry crossed the Amaseno River into the hills west of Priverno, flushing out a rear guard from the 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. The regiment consolidated its hold on the following day and on the 27th moved under mortar and artillery fire into the hills south of Roccasecca. The 338th Infantry came into action on the 26th to the left of the 339th Infantry and pushed one company into Sezze on the 27th, after Troop B, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, had mopped up the town the previous night. The third regiment of the 85th Division, advancing at the edge of the plain, cleared out low-lying areas by-passed in the main advance.

The capture of Sezze was the signal for the relief of II Corps by IV Corps. Warning orders for this relief had been issued at 2215, 25 May, and were carried out at 0001, 28 May. II Corps turned over all its troops to IV Corps except organic Corps units and the 85th Division. During the night of 27-28 May this division was relieved by the 351st Infantry and assembled in Army reserve below Sabaudia, preliminary to moving to the beachhead. II Corps itself came directly to the Anzio area and prepared to take over command of the 3d Division at Artena. The appearance of IV Corps in our line was detected by the enemy on 30 May as a result of radio intercept.

Until 26 May the 88th Division had remained in place on the Roccasecca ridge with the mission from General Keyes of protecting his right flank until the French could move up. On the 26th the 350th Infantry took up positions in Roccasecca itself, and the 3d Battalion, 349th Infantry, moved to the northeast spur of the ridge. At 2300, 26 May, both regiments plunged down into the Amaseno Valley and up the

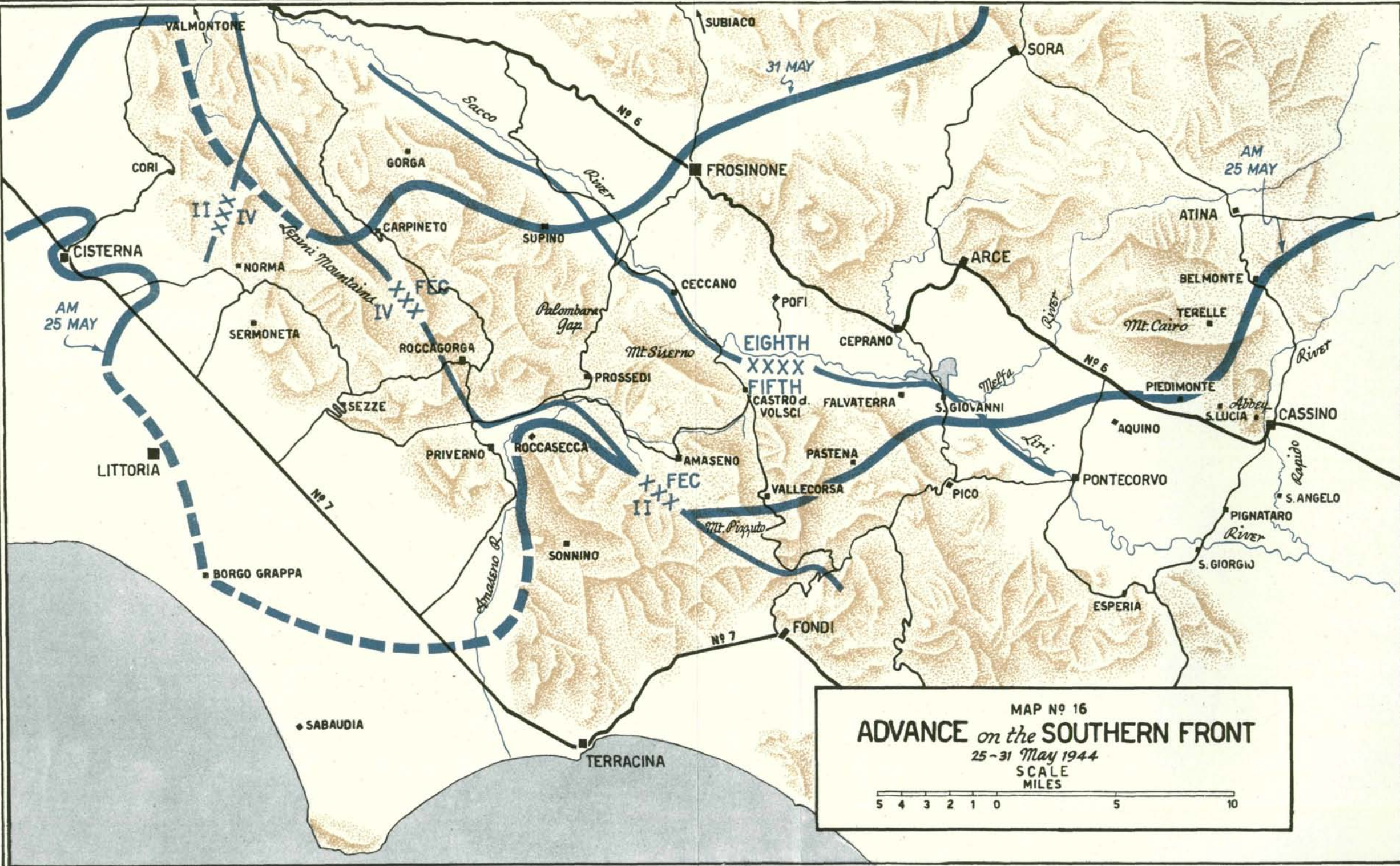
slopes on the other side. The 350th Infantry held Roccagorga by the 27th, with the 349th Infantry on its right. The capture of Vallecorsa by the French relieved the 351st Infantry from its guard at Mount Pizzuto, though the regiment was not moved until the night of 27-28 May. It then relieved the 85th Division on the left of the 350th Infantry.

Under IV Corps control the 88th Division spent the next three days in mopping up the hills as far as Sermoneta, while waiting for the FEC to advance sufficiently to relieve it. The 349th Infantry turned over its zone to the French on the 29th and departed for the beachhead; on the morning of 30 May Fifth Army issued orders for the rest of the division to move up to Colli Laziali as rapidly as possible. On the following day the 6th Moroccan Infantry of the 4th Mountain Division took over the Corps zone; IV Corps officially went out of the line at 1400, 1 June.

During the week 25-31 May the FEC advanced on two main axes, the 4th Mountain Division pushing up the Amaseno—Carpineto road to clear the Lepini Mountains and the 2d Moroccan Division guiding on the south bank of the Sacco River. The ultimate aim of these drives was junction with the beachhead forces in the vicinity of Valmontone. The right flank of the beachhead front had been exposed by the bold advance of the 3d Division and the 1st Special Service Force, which had advanced quickly to Artena to threaten the enemy's Liri Valley communications; it was essential that the FEC close as quickly as possible the gap between its front and the exposed right flank of VI Corps.

On the right flank the French met stiff delaying action, but they pushed ahead relentlessly and by 31 May had succeeded in bringing their right well up. San Giovanni Incarico fell to the 3d Algerian Division on 25 May, and Falvaterra on the 26th. This was the last gain of the division, for the 2d Moroccan Division had taken Pastena by this time and pushed on into the hills east of Castro dei Volsci, thereby pinching out the Algerians. By midnight of the 27th the 2d Moroccan Division held the important point of Castro dei Volsci, and the following day put it close to Ceccano. On the 29th, however, the division was engaged in taking over the Siserno hill mass from the 4th Mountain Division, which was shifting to the west, and also had to cope with an enemy counterattack of armor and infantry bent on holding open the Palombara Gap for the retreat of the last German forces in the area. After beating off this attack, the 5th Moroccan Infantry moved down into the pass on the 30th, while the 8th Moroccan Infantry on its right pushed through Ceccano and on to Supino on the 31st.

The advance of the 4th Mountain Division on the left proceeded as methodically and as swiftly. Vallecorsa and the hills to the west fell early on the 25th, and the division proceeded to its next objective, the wide valley running from Amaseno past Prossedi to the Palombara Gap. While the 349th Infantry took the hills south of



MAP NO 16
ADVANCE on the SOUTHERN FRONT
 25-31 May 1944
 SCALE
 MILES
 5 4 3 2 1 0 5 10

Amaseno, the French moved down the valley floor and along the hills to the north. The right flank swung north to the hill below Castro dei Volsci on the 25th and 26th, then dashed west on 27 May to Mount Siserno. Goumiers and armor mopped up Amaseno and on the 28th occupied the whole valley, abandoned by the enemy.

The impending withdrawal of the two American divisions on the left forced the mountain troops to shift northwest during the next few days. After the armored group attached to the division had moved through the IV Corps zone on the 28th to get on the Carpineto road, the boundary between the two corps was changed to give the entire Priverno—Carpineto road to the 4th Mountain Division. By the 31st the French infantry had taken over the entire zone of IV Corps. The armored group released the 756th Tank Battalion to the beachhead and received from the FEC the 755th Tank Battalion in its place.

Supported by infantry on both sides of the road, the armor pushed into Carpineto on 31 May, and the 2d Tabor advanced on through the hills toward Gorga. Since the Germans thought that our troops were confined to the valley near Carpineto, this move had possibilities of upsetting the German withdrawal northwest of Carpineto and also threatened the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division headquarters just below the hills in the Sacco Valley. Unfortunately a French message was intercepted by the Germans and allowed them to throw sufficient troops into Gorga to check our advance and to extricate their headquarters and troops. Opposition in the Lepini Mountains, however, was almost ended, and the 4th Mountain Division prepared to go into reserve as the 3d Algerian Division passed through it.

F. *EIGHTH ARMY*

25-31 MAY

On the morning of 23 May Eighth Army had launched its attack on the Hitler Line, the Polish Corps at Piedimonte, 13 Corps on Highway 6, and 1 Canadian Corps east of Pontecorvo. (*See Map No. 16.*) The attack had gone so well that the enemy abandoned Piedimonte and the Hitler Line on the night of 24-25 May. The Poles took Piedimonte on the 25th, and troops in the valley rushed up to the Melfa River. While the 78 Division pushed through Aquino and across the Melfa on the right, the Canadian armor and infantry each secured a bridgehead over the lower course of the stream.

The main battle was over. Though Eighth Army continued to meet stiff delaying action, the enemy henceforth was primarily engaged in drawing out of the upper Liri Valley as fast as possible, partly into the mountains by Arce and Subiaco, partly through the road network below Palestrina. The mission of Eighth

Army, therefore, was essentially to drive up speedily to co-operate with Fifth Army in cracking the Velletri—Valmontone—Avezzano line.

Elements of the 5 Canadian Armoured Division reached the north side of the lake at San Giovanni on 26 May and pushed into Ceprano on the 27th. To its left the 1 Canadian Infantry Division was stopped on the 26th at the lower end of the lake by a blown bridge. The French, however, had already taken San Giovanni, and the Canadian infantry went into reserve pending the completion of a new bridge. To the right 13 Corps moved forward more slowly, with the 8 Indian Division and the 6 Armoured Division forward and the 78 Division in support. At the two hills south of Arce the German rear guard put up a considerable battle to protect the withdrawal through that town. The British armor took the hills on the 27th but lost them again in the night; on the 28th our troops gained final control of the position after desperate fighting. This acquisition cut the Arce road, and the Indians, moving along the hills, occupied Arce itself on 29 May without opposition.

The battle for this point, together with bad weather in the valley, had delayed Eighth Army by at least a day. On the left flank the Canadian infantry was held up on bridge construction, and the armor at Ceprano was unable to advance farther until more bridges had been thrown across the Liri to its rear. These bridging operations were hindered by heavy fire from mortars and self-propelled guns in the German rear guard. A sudden rain on the 26th, typical of May thunderstorms in the Liri Valley, also made the roads muddy. For the first few days after the penetration of the Hitler Line progress accordingly became in large part an engineers' battle against the deeply laid minefields and the numerous streams cutting across the path of the Army's advance.

On 28 May the 78 Division was barred from crossing the Liri in its zone by the massed fire of enemy self-propelled guns. Part of the division passed through the Canadian Corps bridgehead at Ceprano and cleared the west bank of the river so that the remainder of the 78 Division could cross the Liri at its original sites on the 29th and take over the advance from the 6 Armoured Division. Advance elements pushed halfway to Frosinone during the day, while the Canadian armor reached the vicinity of Pofi; contact with the enemy had generally been lost along the entire line. For the next two days the advance continued with less interruption, the 8 Indian Division still in the hills to the north, the 78 Division above Highway 6, and the 5 Canadian Armoured Division south of the highway, which was heavily mined and cut at almost every bridge. Nevertheless, the Canadians entered Frosinone on 31 May and pushed up along the right flank of the FEC past Ceccano. As the troops to the south approached the beachhead, their line in the Liri Valley was gradually straightening out.

The Eighth Army advance in the valley proper had also forced the enemy to evacuate the area above Cassino. Before the Polish Corps went out of the line for a much needed rest it occupied Mount Cairo on 26 May, and on the same day the 2 New Zealand Division began to follow the enemy withdrawal on Sora. Terelle was occupied without opposition on the 26th, then Belmonte on the 27th, and Atina on the 28th. The New Zealanders crossed the Melfa at the latter town and continued their pressure on the enemy while an Italian force mopped up toward the Abruzzi National Park. At 1800, 31 May, one company of the 2 New Zealand Division entered Sora.



The engineers have completed a bridge which will further the advance.



A group of the German garrison in Cisterna surrenders after being surrounded.



Men of the 100th Battalion move up to support the drive on Lanuvio.



On 2 June 1944 the 3d Division entered Valmontone and cut Highway 6.