

CHAPTER V * * * * *

Approach to the Liri Valley

A. PLANS FOR THE THIRD PHASE

See Map No. 8

GENERAL Clark anticipated on 16 December the early conclusion of Phase II and issued Operations Instruction No. 12. (See Annex No. 2F.) At that time San Pietro was still under attack, but there were indications that the enemy was preparing to withdraw to new positions. San Vittore might be held in some strength, but by clearing the slopes of Sammucro II Corps would cause that village to be untenable. The next barriers to the Liri Valley were Cedro Hill and Mount Porchia south of Highway 6; Cicerelli Hill, Mount La Chiaia, and the hills to the northeast on the north side of the highway; and the mountains centering around Mount Majo (Hill 1259). Once through the Porchia-La Chiaia defenses, the chief obstacle south of the highway was Mount Trocchio; north of the highway was the town of Cervaro, ringed by low hills and dominated on the north by mountains.

II Corps was again to make the main effort in the center along the axis of Highway 6. The first objectives were Mounts Porchia and Trocchio. It was to be prepared to assist VI Corps in the capture of the high ground northwest of Cassino, and was to secure a bridgehead over the Rapido River. After the bridgehead was secured, II Corps was to use the maximum amount of armor to drive northwest through the Liri Valley to the Melfa River. The 1st Armored Division was attached to II Corps for that purpose. The mission of VI Corps was to continue the attack begun on 15 December and seize the high ground northwest of Cassino. In conjunction with the II Corps attack on Mount Porchia 10 Corps was to occupy Cedro Hill. Then, when the advance of II Corps had progressed sufficiently to permit bridging materials to be brought forward, 10 Corps was to cross the Garigliano River and establish a bridgehead in the vicinity of Sant'Ambrogio. This operation was to be co-ordinated with the II Corps attack on Mount Trocchio. During these

operations the Corps would continue offensive activity along the Gari-gliano River.

Phase III, as thus announced, would end the Winter Line campaign and begin the attack on the Gustav Line. Plans for an amphibious operation south of Rome were then in a tentative form and remained so until there was some prospect of a breakthrough in the Liri Valley. Although the Winter Line campaign may be said to have ended on 15 January, Phase III was to continue for several weeks thereafter.

B. REGROUPING FOR THE NEW ATTACK

The operations by II and VI Corps during 17-31 December, described in the previous chapter, were undertaken for the purpose of securing favorable positions for resuming the offensive planned for Phase III. By the end of the month plans were completed for withdrawing VI Corps and replacing it with the French Expeditionary Corps. On 2 January 15th Army Group issued Operations Instruction No. 32 (1), assigning VI Corps to Operation Shingle (the Anzio landing); on 3-9 January the 3d Algerian Division relieved the 45th Division, which passed to Fifth Army reserve. Offensive activity was at a standstill on the Army north flank while these changes were taking place.

In the center, likewise, there was a short period of apparent inactivity at the close of the year while II Corps regrouped its forces and brought up relatively fresh troops. By 1 January the 6th Armored Infantry (1st Armored Division) had relieved the 15th Infantry on Mount Lungo and the 3d Division passed to VI Corps for Operation Shingle; the 34th Division had relieved the 36th Division; and the 142d Infantry relieved the 504th Parachute Infantry in the Sammucro area.

D Day for renewing the assault was set as 5 January. The 1st Special Service Force (reinforced) was ordered to capture the high peaks on the north flank, moving out to attack on the night of 4-5 January. The 168th Infantry was to cross San Vittore Creek north of San Vittore and attack Hill 396. At the same time the 135th Infantry was to capture San Vittore and push on toward Mount La Chiaia. On the left flank of II Corps Task Force A (6th Armored Infantry, reinforced) was to capture Mount Porchia. An attempt was made to time the attack so that the 135th Infantry would have San Vit-

(1) Text of this operations instruction is given in Fifth Army History, Part IV.



Shelling the valley beyond Mount Trocchio..... painted by Lieutenant Edward A. Reep

tore and the 1st Special Service Force would hold Mount Majo when the 168th Infantry jumped off to make the main effort. Artillery, air, and armored support was available on a large scale. The 6th Field Artillery Group of five battalions supported the 1st Special Service Force; the 34th Division Artillery and Corps units supported the 168th Infantry; the 1st Armored Division Artillery, three tank battalions, and one tank destroyer battalion supported Task Force A. XII Air Support Command was prepared to resume offensive activity when the year-end storms ceased.

The enemy made no offensive ground movements beyond the usual patrolling and also took advantage of the lull to regroup his forces to meet our attack. In the north sector the 5th Mountain Division remained in the line. Shifting southward, the 44th Grenadier Division began to take over parts of the front from the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division at the end of December. The enemy outpost line north of Highway 6 ran from San Vittore northeast to Mount Capezzate and was manned by the 2d Battalion, 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, on the right flank of II Corps in front of the 142d Infantry. The 132d Grenadier Regiment (44th Division) held the main line from Mount La Chiaia north to Mount Majo. Units of the 71st and 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiments (29th Division) were mixed in with units of the 132d Grenadier Regiment south of San Vittore. The 134th Grenadier Regiment (44th Division) held Mount Porchia with two battalions.

One of the memorable events preceding the drive for Mount Trocchio was the artillery greeting to the New Year. A bitterly cold gale swept across the snow-capped peaks and down the Liri Valley on 31 December. Riflemen on Mount Lungo and Mount Sammucro, on the hills before Mount Raimo, huddled behind rocky parapets and in hasty shelters, their hands and feet numb from exposure. At midnight the artillery of the entire II Corps saluted the New Year with three rounds per gun fired on definite targets. The enemy had prepared a similar celebration and returned the greeting in lesser volume.

C. *THE DRIVE FOR MOUNT TROCCHIO*

1-15 JANUARY

1. *The Battle for Mount Majo.* One of the highest peaks in the II Corps zone was Mount Majo (Hill 1259). The 1st Special Service Force, especially trained and equipped for mountain fighting, was assigned the task of moving north from Hill 610 through more than two miles of mountains held by the

enemy to attack this strategic mass. In its larger aspects this maneuver was a wide end run around the right flank to capture the highest peaks and then to turn southwest toward Mount Trocchio. Supplies for this operation were carried by pack trains which numbered nearly 700 mules by 11 January. The speed at which the 1st Special Service Force moved made great demands upon artillery forward observers packing radios through snow-covered gullies and up the trackless, rocky slopes.

On the night of 3-4 January the 1st Special Service Force was in position to strike. The three regiments, organized as combat battalions, had moved out of bivouac near Ceppagna to assembly areas some three miles northwest. Patrols of the 157th Infantry protected the right flank and made limited attacks to keep the enemy occupied. The 1st and 2d Regiments began the attack to capture the ridge running north of Hill 610. By 2000, 4 January, three hills (670, 724, and 775) were taken against light resistance. At the same time the 3d Regiment drove enemy outposts from Mount Arcalone (Hill 950). Units of the 142d Infantry relieved the 1st and 2d Regiments during the night of 5-6 January. Two battalions of the 133d Infantry together with additional artillery were placed under Colonel Frederick's command on 6 January. These units, combined with the 1st Special Service Force, formed Task Force B, the specific mission of which was to penetrate the enemy lines, establish a base near Hill 1109 to further the attack against Trocchio, and protect the right flank of II Corps.

Three high mountains remained to be captured during this end run on the right: Mount Majo (Hill 1259), Vischiataro Hill (Hill 1109), and Hill 1270. During the night of 6-7 January Task Force B launched a two-pronged attack from Mount Arcalone, with the 1st Regiment driving west across Pietracquara Ridge to Hill 1109 and the 3d Regiment thrusting northwest toward Mount Majo. The assaulting troops moved out two hours before midnight. The 3d Regiment on the right, followed by a company of the 133d Infantry, drove the 1st Battalion, 132d Grenadier Regiment, from Mount Majo by 0520. A strong counterattack was broken up at 0800, but the Germans rushed reserves forward in an attempt to take the hill. For the next three days the enemy threw attack after attack against this strategic position, and gave forward observers of the 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion excellent shooting. Nearly 8,500 rounds, fired by this battalion on 7-10 January, greatly weakened the engaged elements of the 132d Grenadier Regiment.

The bulk of the 2d Battalion, 132d Grenadier Regiment, held Hill 1109 when the 1st Regiment attacked. By 0415, 7 January, our troops were on the lower slopes of the hill, but counterattacks from three sides forced a withdrawal to Pietracquara Ridge. That night the 1st Regiment executed a wide

flanking movement which caught the enemy completely by surprise. Moving north from Pietracquara Ridge to Mount Majo, the regiment attacked west across Hill 1190, captured Hill 1270, and turned southwest against Hill 1109. This time the objective was taken with practically no resistance, partly because many enemy troops had been pulled out to counterattack Mount Majo.

2. *The 34th Division Takes San Vittore and Mount La Chiaia.* These spectacular victories of the 1st Special Service Force took place while the 34th Division smashed at San Vittore and Mount La Chiaia. On the right of the division zone the 168th Infantry made its main effort through the hills northeast of Mount La Chiaia. Principal objectives of this drive were Hill 396, the key to La Chiaia, and Hill 552 which commanded Cervaro. Their capture would allow the 135th Infantry to mop up German positions paralleling Highway 6 and enable II Corps to strike hard at Mount Trocchio from the northeast.

The 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, assembled northeast of Hill 687 during the night of 3-4 January to spearhead the attack. One company, which moved out at 1820, 4 January, lost 69 officers and men in an ambush while attempting to secure the line of departure at the gorge of San Vittore Creek, which was believed to be free of enemy troops. Thus weakened, the 3d Battalion attacked toward Hill 396 at 0550, 5 January, behind a rolling barrage fired by the 185th Field Artillery Battalion; but after a short gain the assault companies were pinned down by machine-gun fire. Resuming the offensive at 1330, 5 January, Companies C and L secured Hill 425 near the line of departure.

Following a rolling barrage laid by the 175th and 185th Field Artillery Battalions, the 168th Infantry made another thrust at 0900, 6 January. The 3d Battalion was unable to make much progress against Hill 396; but on the right the 1st Battalion reached the crest of a ridge about 1000 yards east of its objectives, Hills 456 and 511. In the afternoon the 2d Battalion passed through the 3d Battalion and captured Hill 396 before dawn on 7 January. A resumption of the attack by the 1st Battalion bogged down 500 yards east of Hills 456 and 511 under heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, and it was apparent that the 168th Infantry was faced by a strong line running from the vicinity of Hill 396 northeast two miles to Hill 820. The latter hill gave the enemy splendid observation over our routes of advance and had been by-passed by the 1st Special Service Force. One company of the 1st Battalion captured Hill 820 by 1815, 7 January, after a remarkable fight in which the enemy was driven from rock pillboxes. Two days later the 1st Battalion attacked Hill 552 and took it before dawn on 10 January.

During the first week of the drive for Mount Trocchio the chief objective on the left flank of the 34th Division was Mount La Chiaia. The stone houses

of San Vittore, southeast of the hill, were used by the enemy as defensive positions. These obstacles to the advance on Mount Trocchio fell in the zone of the 135th Infantry, and the attack upon them was co-ordinated with the 168th Infantry's effort against Hill 396. On the left flank of the regimental zone the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, jumped off to attack San Vittore shortly before midnight on 4 January. Before dawn the leading elements had won several houses in the village. The street and house-to-house fighting that continued until 1700, 6 January, netted 170 prisoners from the 44th Grenadier Division. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion met even more opposition on the right flank. Its mission was to capture Hill 346, the northeast shoulder of La Chiaia, while the 168th Infantry was capturing Hill 396. In its attack on 5 January the battalion was held at the San Vittore gulch by heavy fire from stone houses at Santa Giusta, just across the gulch. When a second attempt failed on 6 January, the regimental commander ordered the 2d Battalion to attack from its reserve position on Morello Hill. By 7 January Hill 346 and Mount La Chiaia were captured and pockets of resistance were being mopped up. On the same day the 3d Battalion moved out of San Vittore and captured Hill 224 to the northwest of the village and Cicerelli Hill to the west. A German troop concentration west of La Chiaia was dispersed by 16 A-36's and 16 P-40's at noon. As a result of the combined efforts of the infantry, artillery, and air force, the remnants of the 134th Grenadier Regiment withdrew westward in confusion.

3. *Task Force A Captures Mount Porchia.* While the 34th Division and the 1st Special Service Force were capturing hill after hill north of Highway 6, Task Force A drove the enemy from Mount Porchia. Rising abruptly from the valley floor, Mount Porchia is an isolated hill which commands the low ground between the Camino hill mass to the south and Mount Trocchio to the northwest. There is very little vegetation on the hill, but its extremely rocky surface provides good defensive positions. Cedro Hill, a companion feature lying one mile to the southwest, was suitable for a delaying action but could not be held by the enemy after the fall of Mount Porchia. These two hills were the last major obstacles south of Highway 6 and east of Mount Trocchio.

Shortly after noon on 4 January the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, moved out to secure the line of departure west of Mount Lungo. Due north of the western tip of the mountain are two small hills which flank the highway, and the 5th Company, 134th Grenadier Regiment, defended these hills vigorously. By 1930 they were reported held by our troops, but the enemy counterattacked and poured heavy mortar fire on the 2d Battalion trying to move up astride the railroad. All through the night and until nearly noon on

5 January the Germans attempted to break through, especially along the highway; but our artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers mauled the enemy severely and forced him to withdraw to Mount Porchia.

The 3d Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, then led the attack on the left at 1515 after an artillery preparation of 30 minutes. By dawn on 6 January the 1st and 3d Battalions held the lateral road from Taverna to Rocca d'Evandro Station and were ready to resume the offensive. Little progress was made in the assault that began at 0700 until tanks destroyed enemy machine-gun nests. Early in the afternoon our advance elements reached the crest of Mount Porchia, only to be driven back by a counterattack launched by three infantry companies of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division which had been rushed from Aquino. The hill was recovered by our troops early on 7 January. The enemy counterattacked until the morning of 8 January; but by that time he had also lost Cicerelli Hill and Mount La Chiaia north of the highway and was forced to abandon his efforts to recover Porchia.

4. *10 Corps Captures Cedro Hill.* 10 Corps had the mission of taking the area between Peccia Creek and Rione Querceto, including Cedro Hill, to guard the left flank of II Corps. Success in this action was dependent upon the occupation of Mount Porchia by II Corps, for this point dominated the 10 Corps line of advance. The 138 Brigade (46 Division) crossed the Peccia during the night of 4-5 January to lead the attack. A bridgehead was established against strong opposition by the 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment; but, with Mount Porchia still uncaptured and their supporting tanks unable to cross the Peccia, the British troops fell back to the east bank at dusk. During the following night, 6-7 January, the 139 Brigade came in to take over the attack and captured Cedro Hill by dawn on 8 January. Heavy mortar fire forced the infantry to fall back. Task Force A, however, had taken Porchia by this time and the enemy withdrew from Cedro Hill during the night of 8-9 January. After consolidating its gains 10 Corps remained inactive until after 15 January.

5. *The Fall of Cervaro and Mount Trocchio.* During the last six days of the drive on Mount Trocchio the enemy stabbed viciously at various points along the line. But no matter how he shifted his forces, II Corps defeated him at every point. The Winter Line was crumbling rapidly and the last hard fighting took place in the hills north of Highway 6. On the right flank Task Force B continued the wide end run begun by the 1st Special Service Force at the start of the month. The 133d Infantry, attacking from Hills 1270 and 1109 on 9 January, captured Capraro Hill three days later. Then the 2d Regiment, 1st Special Service Force, took Point 298 north of Cervaro on 13 January. Meanwhile the 168th Infantry continued its advance north of the

San Vittore-Cervaro road. During the night of 10-11 January elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division came up to reinforce the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment near Cervaro. Following air and artillery attacks on 11 January, the 168th Infantry closed in on the town. The 3d Battalion drove for the hills just north of Cervaro while the 2d Battalion assaulted the town itself. Both battalions had their objectives by noon on 12 January and went on to mop up several low hills west of the town. South of the San Vittore-Cervaro road the 135th Infantry captured Point 189 on 13 January. The enemy then withdrew and the way was clear for the attack on Trocchio.

Mount Trocchio is a huge, isolated hill lying about a mile east of the Rapido River. At its southwestern tip is a small hill, La Pieta. Together these hills guard the southern and eastern approaches to Cassino. More important as a site for observation posts than as a terrain fortress, Trocchio had little value once the hills to the north had been captured. For this reason the success of Task Force B and the 34th Division north of Highway 6 made the German evacuation of Mount Trocchio almost certain. With the enemy definitely driven from his best delaying positions by 13 January, II Corps pressed its advantage vigorously. In the assault on Trocchio the 135th Regimental Combat Team was to attack the center and northwest while the 141st Regimental Combat Team made its main effort against La Pieta. The 135th Infantry attacked at 0900, 15 January, and three hours later had reached the crest of Mount Trocchio. No enemy opposition was encountered. The 141st Infantry, which had relieved the 6th Armored Infantry on Mount Porchia, met some resistance in its zone; but by dark there was practically no enemy opposition left east of the Rapido River. For American troops the Winter Line campaign was over.

D. *ADVANCE OF THE FRENCH EXPEDITIONARY CORPS*

12 15 JANUARY

The II Corps attack against Mount Trocchio was co-ordinated with action by the FEC on the right. Carrying on the mission of VI Corps, the French had the task of reaching the Sant'Elia-Atina line. (*See Map No. 7.*) An attack was planned for 12 January to secure the hills running from Mount Majo to Mount Monna Acquafondata and San Pietro Ridge. On the right flank the 2d Moroccan Division was to capture San Pietro Ridge and Hills 1025 and 1029, all north of the Atina road. On the left the 3d Algerian Di-

vision was to drive the enemy from Mount Monna Casale, Mount Passero, and Mount Monna Acquafondata.

After a short artillery preparation the attack jumped off at 0630, 12 January. The 2d Moroccan Division occupied Hills 1025 and 1029 with little opposition, and secured a foothold on San Pietro Ridge. The enemy lost heavily in three attempts to recover the lost ground. After throwing back strong counterattacks on 13 January the division pressed forward, captured Cardito, sent patrols across the Rapido River, and established outposts on the slopes of Mount Santa Croce and L'Arena Hill.

The attack of the 3d Algerian Division met with considerable success. The 7th Algerian Infantry (7^e Régiment de Tirailleurs Algériens) gained the eastern slopes of Mount Monna Casale on 12 January, and by 14 January had gone on to take Mount Passero. The 3d Algerian Infantry (3^e Régiment de Tirailleurs Algériens) captured Mount Molino on 12 January, while the Bonjour Group took Mount Pile. The advance of the 3d Algerian Division continued on 13-14 January toward Sant'Elia. By 15 January the French, in their first Corps action, had reached the Gustav Line after an average advance of almost four miles along their entire front.

E. AIR SUPPORT

1-15 JANUARY

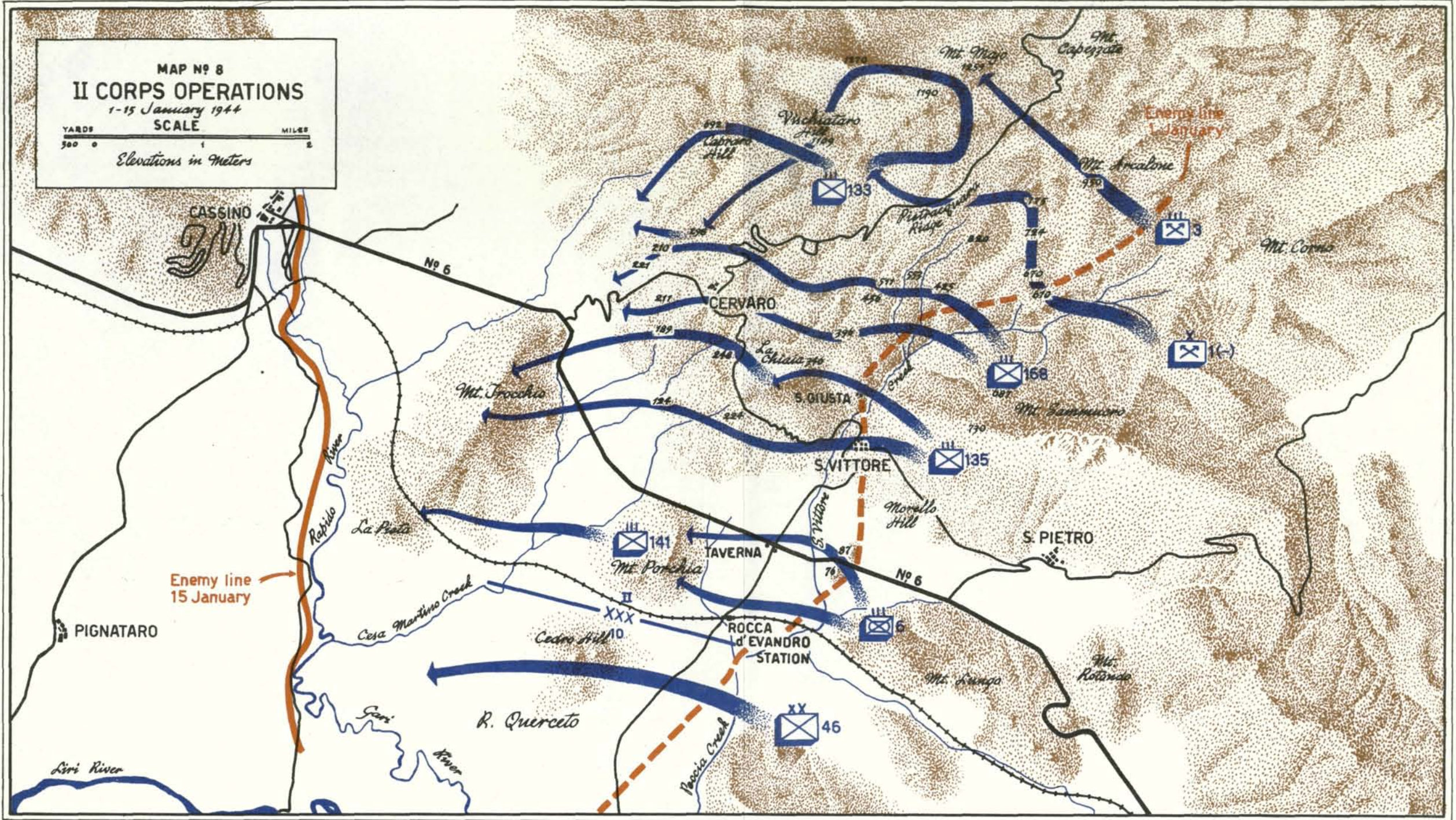
After a complete cancellation of missions during the blizzard on New Year's Day aerial activity began to build up again. During 2-15 January XII Air Support Command pounded enemy positions on the north side of the Mignano Gap. Eighty-four sorties were briefed during this period for Mount La Chiaia, 61 for Mount Porchia, 152 for Cervaro, 56 for Cedro Hill, 152 for Sant'Angelo and vicinity, and 152 for Mount Trocchio. The heavy attacks planned against Mount Trocchio on 15 January were unnecessary because of the enemy's withdrawal, but 48 P-40's attacked enemy positions on the west bank of the Rapido. To the immediate rear of the enemy lines Aquino was visited by 52 sorties, the area near Piedimonte by 56, and enemy guns southwest of Mount Castellone by 52. Considerable success was enjoyed in attacks on targets of opportunity west of San Vittore. On 7 January 16 A-36's and 16 P-40's hit a troop concentration west of Mount La Chiaia. The following day 64 P-40's pounded another concentration northeast of Mount Trocchio, and 12 P-40's bombed and strafed enemy troops southeast of that mountain. Again on 9 January enemy troops forming for a counterattack just northeast of Trocchio were hit hard by eight P-40's.

MAP No 8 II CORPS OPERATIONS

1-15 January 1944

SCALE
YARDS 300 0 MILES 1 2

Elevations in Meters



CHAPTER VI * * * * *

The Winter Line Drive

A. *ADVANCE OF FIFTH ARMY*

See Map No. 9

THE Fifth Army front moved forward from five to seven miles in the Winter Line campaign. On the south flank the enemy was expelled from positions east of the Garigliano River in a drive by 10 Corps and II Corps against the Camino hill mass. Except for its participation in the capture of the Cedro Hill-Mount Porchia area 10 Corps engaged in no further major operations during the period. The greatest advance was made in the center by II Corps along Highway 6 and through the mountains north of the highway. Gains by VI Corps on the right flank were approximately equal to those on the left, but there was no advance at the extreme limit of each flank.

This progress seems small when measured on the map, but the Winter Line campaign cannot be judged solely in terms of square miles captured. The operations were undertaken in the dead of winter, through terrain which imposed every natural obstacle in the path of our troops, against an enemy strongly entrenched in carefully prepared positions. Overcoming all of these obstacles, Fifth Army won the most difficult mountain campaign thus far undertaken by troops of the United Nations. The territory liberated from German arms represents no mean achievement when judged, as it must be, in terms of the terrain, weather, and problems of supply.

The effective strength of Fifth Army on 15 November 1943 was 243,827; on 15 January 1944 it had risen to 326,857. Battle casualties totaled 15,802 during the period. Of this number there were 11,645 wounded, 2,359 killed, and 1,798 missing in action. American units suffered 8,779 battle casualties, or more than 55% of the total, and 49,792 non-battle casualties. No accurate estimate can be made of enemy losses during the same period. As of 15 January 1944 Axis prisoners of war captured by Fifth Army during the Italian campaign numbered 5551, of whom 2036 were taken during the Winter Line

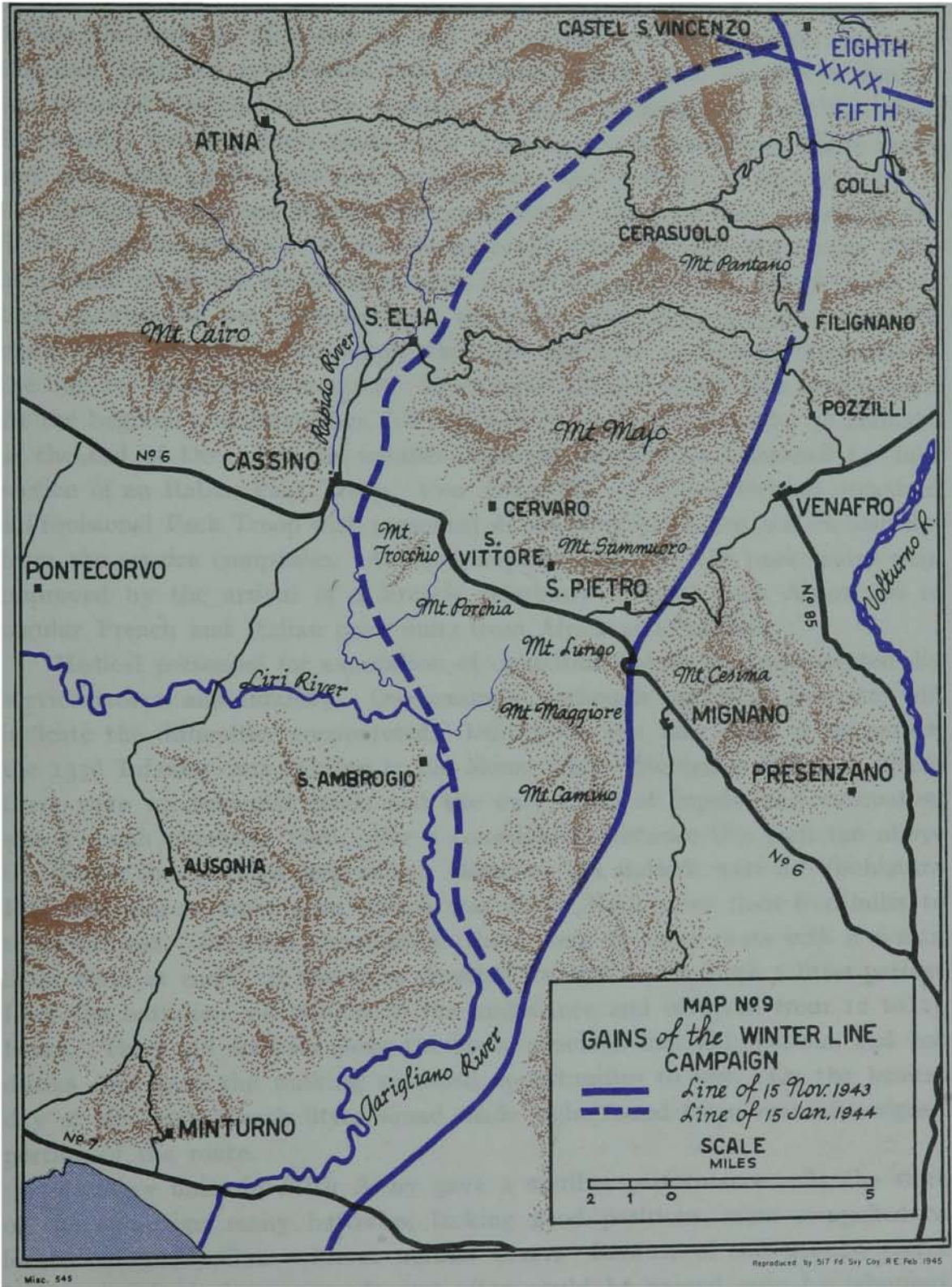
campaign. Interrogation of prisoners revealed that all German divisions opposing our troops suffered heavily, and this information was partly confirmed by the confusion known to exist in the enemy order of battle in mid-January.

B. *PROBLEMS OF MOUNTAIN WARFARE*

Warfare in the Italian mountains placed a premium upon the ingenuity, stamina, and perseverance of Allied troops. The infantry soldier, crouched in a water-filled foxhole or huddled behind some rocky crag in the snow, bore the greatest burden. Non-battle casualties from trench foot, respiratory diseases, and exhaustion were inevitably high. Under such conditions morale could be expected to decline. Rest camps in rear areas did much to alleviate the situation, but unfortunately the rate of venereal disease increased among soldiers at the camps. Shortage of troops necessary to provide adequate relief of front-line units also contributed to the morale problem. One division, for example, spent 115 days in combat out of a total of 122 days since its arrival on Italian soil.

Installation and maintenance of communications was especially difficult throughout the period. During the last two weeks of November, when there was intense activity behind the lines in preparation for renewing the offensive, the most reliable method of communication was by messenger. Telephone lines in forward areas were broken frequently by enemy shelling and on numerous occasions by our own vehicles, the drivers of which could not see the mud-covered wires. Rain falling day after day caused shorts in the lines, interfered with radios, and ruined batteries. Personnel often worked for more than 24 hours without rest to keep communications functioning. When the offensive began, these problems were intensified. Lines had to be laid along rocky trails where enemy mortar and artillery fire tore gaps in the wire.

Engineers were generally able to build footpaths and jeep trails to forward positions to supplement the limited road net. Rain, traffic, and enemy artillery combined to keep roads and bridges in a condition that required constant work. Heavy traffic moving over the roads turned them into streams of mud and seemingly bottomless pits. Ton after ton of gravel and rock, spread in the worst places, kept the roads open. At other impassable spots the engineers laid corduroy. Craters from enemy artillery shells were sometimes so large that culverts were installed for drainage after they had been filled. A very large part of VI Corps traffic had to pass through Venafro, and an average



of 4000 vehicles moved past this bottleneck every 24 hours in December. To lighten the load on Highway 85 and the narrow road to Pozzilli the 120th Engineer Battalion constructed two additional roads from Venafro to Pozzilli and followed close behind the combat troops in repairing the Sant'Elia road. Eventually, however, these roads came to an end in the mountains where mules and men with packboards had to take over the problem of supply.

Without mules our Winter Line campaign would have been extremely difficult if not impossible. Motor vehicles could churn through the muddy flats, men could climb the steep slopes with a case of rations or a can of water on their packboards, but between these extremes were the long trails where the mule was a necessity. To supply the basic needs of an infantry regiment in the line 250 mules were required. The supply did not satisfy this requirement. At the beginning of November, for example, the 45th Division had 32 animals; at the end of December the number exceeded 400 with an additional 140 in a section of an Italian Pack Troop. (*See Annex No. 1.*) Each division organized a Provisional Pack Troop with personnel drawn principally, but not exclusively, from the service companies. As the campaign wore on, the pack trains were improved by the arrival of a French veterinary hospital from Africa and of regular French and Italian pack units from Africa and Sardinia.

Medical personnel for evacuation of casualties had to be supplemented by service troops and infantry. One example, although somewhat extreme, will indicate the difficulties encountered. During the last nine days of the period, the 133d Infantry was fighting in the Mount Majo-Vischiataro Hill area where there were no vehicular roads and the only route of supply and evacuation was a rough mountain trail. For a considerable distance this trail ran above the timber line through deep snow. Battalion aid stations were on Vischiataro Hill; the nearest ambulance station was at Le Noci, more than five miles to the southeast. Between these points there were 12 relay posts with a 6-man litter team at each. It therefore required 72 men to evacuate 1 litter patient from the battalion aid station to the ambulance and involved from 12 to 15 hours. Three aid stations along the route provided first aid, plasma, and hot drinks, and gave the walking wounded opportunities to rest. On the busiest day of this period each litter squad made eight round trips over its assigned portion of the route.

Artillery units in Fifth Army gave a sterling performance. At the start of the campaign many batteries, lacking good positions, were compelled to locate on muddy flats without normal cover. Because of soft ground pieces had to be sited close to roads and often could be moved only by laborious winching. Ammunition, occasionally limited because of transport difficulties,

frequently had to be hand-carried much farther than normal conditions would have required. New firing data had to be computed in many instances where necessary elevation could be obtained only by sinking the trails. The Air Observation Post proved extremely valuable in directing fire, and the enemy made frequent attempts, nearly all of which failed, to destroy the cub planes used in the work. The artillery delivered effective and heavy fire at all times in support of the infantry, in addition to its customary counterbattery and long-range firing. To supplement the artillery tank destroyer units were used for interdictory and harassing fires with good effect. The 90-mm anti-aircraft artillery pieces were also used for long-range counterbattery, interdictory, and harassing missions. The high velocity, high elevation, and 32,000-yard range of this piece proved especially valuable in mountain warfare.

Summing up the aerial operations during the Winter Line campaign, one may say definitely that the air arm fulfilled its primary mission as defined in Training Memorandum No. 7, Headquarters Fifth Army (9 March 1944):

The primary value of the Air Force to the immediate ground situation is to prevent the enemy Air Force from interfering materially with our land operations.

German aircraft did appear over our front, especially in the middle of November when the enemy was attempting to stall our drive on the Winter Line; at this time the artillery battalions of the 45th Division suffered losses in men and materiel. Thereafter enemy air activity diminished drastically, and at no time during the subsequent operations did enemy planes seriously threaten either front-line troops or supply routes. Attempts by our air force, however, to deny the enemy use of his main lines of communication were not uniformly successful, inasmuch as only one of the four bridges attacked in force was badly damaged. The mountainous terrain on the north flank of Fifth Army rendered abortive many missions against such points as Vitucoso, Acquafondata, Sant'Elia, and Atina. More success was scored in attacks on the area targets offered by enemy artillery and assembly positions in the vicinity of the Mignano Gap. The relative effect of the heavy air support in this area on 1-2 December, 15-18 December, and again on 3-15 January cannot be determined accurately, but the occasional failure of an entire flight to hit the target was more than balanced by ground reports of very successful missions. Again it must be emphasized that bad flying weather often grounded the planes, low ceilings made operations over the mountains extremely hazardous, and poor visibility frequently prevailed.

C. *ADVANCE OF EIGHTH ARMY*

See Map No. 2

During the period 1-15 November the British forces of Eighth Army advanced across the Trigno River and held a line from Isernia through Agnone to the Adriatic. By 13 November advance elements reached the Sangro River and patrols went across the stream at several places. In preparation for forcing the Sangro the weight of Eighth Army was shifted to the right. In the attack which began on the night of 19-20 November the 78 Infantry Division and the 1 Canadian Division established bridgeheads, held them against counterattacks, and passed the remainder of the month in consolidating and extending their gains. The November advance of Eighth Army averaged 25 miles against strong enemy opposition in which the German 65th Grenadier Division was virtually destroyed.

In December Eighth Army pushed on to establish a bridgehead across the Moro River and to develop the Orsogna and Ortona areas. The river line was reached on 5 December and a crossing was successful during the night of 8-9 December. Four days later the 1 Canadian Division was engaged on the outskirts of Ortona, which continued to hold out for two weeks. The capture of Ortona ended the advance of Eighth Army for the period.

