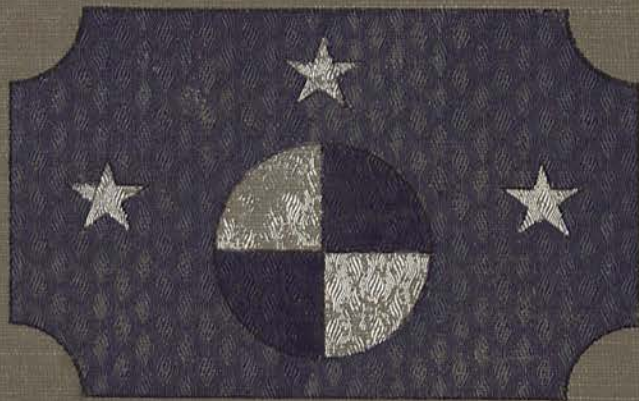


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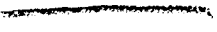
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PRE-COMBAT DAYS

A. ACTIVATION AND TRAINING

1. Camp Blanding and Jacksonville, Florida. (November 1940 - February 1942)

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, IV Corps, was reactivated 23 November 1940, at Camp Blanding, Florida, and placed under the command of Major General Jay L. Benedict. The IV Corps had fought initially in the Civil War. It received Battle Honors in World War I and was inactivated upon its return from overseas. During the interim between world wars, the organization had been activated only for brief maneuver periods, and became inoperative immediately thereafter. However, when the unit again came into existence, some of the Regular Army enlisted men who had served with the organization during maneuver days, asked for and received assignment with the Headquarters.

Shortly after activation, the Headquarters was moved to Jacksonville, Florida, and was housed throughout its stay in that city in the Realty Building, and third and fourth floors of that structure being devoted to the various staff sections of the Corps. Headquarters Company was accommodated in a tent camp which was established on the ground adjacent to the Duval County Armory.

General Benedict and his staff were given supervision over the training of units stationed at Camp Blanding, together with several others that were located at Fort McPherson, Fort Benning and Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. At Blanding, initially Corps had only the activities of the 31st Infantry Division to supervise, but early the following year, the 43d Infantry Division with troops from New England, was inducted into Federal Service.

Both the 31st, inducted in November 1940 at Blanding, and the 43d were National Guard Divisions, the former going under the name of the "Dixie Division", because all of its troops were from the South.

Other major units which were being trained at this time under the supervision of Corps were the 74th Artillery Brigade at Blanding, the 62d Signal Battalion at Fort McPherson, the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Benning and the 6th Cavalry Regiment at Fort Oglethorpe.

The 2d Armored Division at Fort Benning also was under Corps for a brief period of time, and was commanded by the late General George G. Patton, Jr., who was later to distinguish himself by his armored thrusts against the enemy during the European Campaign.

The early days of IV Army Corps World War II history were rather uneventful, inasmuch as the officers and men had quite a bit of adjusting to do in order to become accustomed to their new duties. A Corps Headquarters is something seldom heard of in peacetime, and the officers, as well as the men at the Headquarters in Jacksonville had to find their "grooves", as it were. Some of this early period, of course, was devoted to finding officers and men who were suited for the type of work that normally requires the attention of such an echelon of command. The first G-3 of the Corps was Colonel Charles L. Bolte, who was later to command the 34th Division in Italy while that Division was fighting as a IV Corps unit.

Many of the junior officers came directly from their civilian occupations in Jacksonville to go on active duty as Reservists in the Realty Building.

Captain William Sutton, a Reserve Officer of Jacksonville and a former member of the Police Department of that city, commanded the 204th Military Police Company, a unit closely connected with the Headquarters, and died leading his men in the landing operations of the North African invasion.

Camp Blanding troops, who were Corps responsibility, made one of their first public appearances on the streets of Jacksonville early in April of 1941 for the annual Army Day parade.

IV Army Corps had its first World War II experience as a Headquarters in the field during Command Post Exercises that were conducted for the 31st Division the latter part of May 1941. Two months later, the latter part of July, the entire outfit moved to Louisiana for its first large scale maneuvering training. The movement was made by truck and train and IV Army Corps established its first Command Post for this maneuver period in the vicinity of Pollock, Louisiana, about 15 miles north of Alexandria. During most of the Corps phase of the 1941 maneuvers in Louisiana the Headquarters remained in the vicinity, moving only once or twice.

Participating units on this maneuver were the 31st, 43d and 4th Infantry Divisions, together with the 6th Cavalry Regiment. The 4th Division, commanded by Major General Oscar W. Griswold, who later was to command the Corps, moved back to Fort Benning at the end of the Corps phase of the maneuvers and spent the next month undergoing changes incident to becoming a motorized division.

Immediately thereafter, Corps went into Third Army maneuvers, and

during much of this experience, acted as the "Red" or enemy organization. On at least one occasion, the Headquarters and its troops were pitted against two other Corps, the V and VIII, of Third Army.

Army maneuvers were followed in September and early October by the GHQ war games, during which time Second and Third Armies fought back and forth across Louisiana's famous Red River. At the close of this training, about 10 October, Corps moved from Oberlin, Louisiana, by vehicle back to Jacksonville. Meanwhile, the 31st and 43d Divisions also were on the road to Blanding, with the 43d following the northern route through Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, and the 31st proceeding generally along the Gulf Coast to Florida.

Inasmuch as the Louisiana maneuvers were some of the first that were held during the training days that preceded World War II, the experience was gruelling for everybody concerned. Many lessons were learned and the troops returned to their home stations toughened in mind, spirit and body.

General Griswold, previously mentioned in this chronicle as Commander of the 4th Motorized Division, took command of IV Army Corps upon arrival of the Headquarters in Jacksonville after the Louisiana maneuvers. With General Griswold came Colonel Raymond O. Barton as his Chief of Staff. Later, as Major General Barton, he commanded the 4th Division in Europe. Neither Corps Headquarters nor the units which it commanded had anything more than a brief respite. Winter clothing was collected, and after a pause of only 10 days, Corps was on the road again, headed for the Carolina maneuver area.

In these maneuvers, the staff sections of the Corps operated in converted horse trailers, which were pulled around the maneuver area by prime movers. This gave the Headquarters much more mobility than had been experienced in Louisiana.

For the Corps phase of the maneuvers, the Headquarters had its initial Command Post at Chester, South Carolina. A feature of the maneuver was a public relations camp that was set up by Corps at Chester to handle the growing number of newspaper and radio people who were frequenting the war games. This marked one of the first attempts to establish a system for accommodating this type personnel. Men who later became noted for their work as War Correspondents were accommodated at this installation.

During that part of the Carolina field training for which Corps was responsible, as well as in the GHQ maneuvers which followed, much history was made. Corps exercises were held from about 5 November to 15 November and were directed from Winnsboro, South Carolina. Participating units included: the 31st Infantry Division, 43d Infantry Division, 1st Armored Division, 4th Motorized Division, 2d Armored Division, 74th Field Artillery Brigade, 3d Cavalry Regiment (Horse), 6th Cavalry Regiment (Mechanized), 107th Cavalry Regiment (Horse-Mechanized).

This training period marked the experimentation with cavalry units to determine their success under mechanization. It also saw the making of armored force history, as well as episodes which rang the death knell of the old square division, which heretofore had been noted for their mass utility in combat, as opposed to the triangularization idea that was rapidly gaining greater popularity. The 31st and 43d, the old "square"

type infantry divisions, were matched against the armored might which was represented in the 1st and 2d Armored Divisions, together with the 4th Motorized Division assembled in an armored corps. Driving north from the Columbia, South Carolina area with lightning-like swiftness, the Armored Corps all but overran the IV Army Corps Command Post in only a matter of hours. However, the 3d Cavalry showed that the horse was still to be conjured with in modern warfare, when elements of that famous show outfit of the Regular Army drove deep into the Armored Corps rear, cutting supply lines and raiding fuel dumps. It was significant, however, that following the Carolina maneuvers, the "square" infantry divisions immediately were streamlined, with the dropping of their fourth regiment.

The first maneuver of the GHQ operations which followed the Corps phase was one long to be remembered in pre-World War II training history. By the next morning which followed the jump off for this exercise, General Griswold, with his armored units, had driven 60 miles, and during the early forenoon, a young reconnaissance troop captain of the 2d Armored Division, was able to step from behind a vehicle and say, "Good morning, General", and capture Lieutenant General Hugh A. Drum, Commanding General, First Army. In one phase of the maneuvers, while defending the bridgehead at Camden, South Carolina, Corps Headquarters was the target of an attack by airborne troops who came into the Command Post at night and played havoc with wire communications.

The homeward trek from Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida, began the last of November, with most of the troops closing into Camp Blanding by

Saturday, 6 December, in time to hear the announcement the following day that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese.

From the end of the Carolina maneuvers until the change of station to Camp Beauregard, Louisiana, IV Army Corps Headquarters was going through rather a tense period. Combat teams were dispatched by Corps to various coastal sectors for beach duty, and close liaison was maintained at Jacksonville with Naval Intelligence incident to reported enemy submarine operations that were taking place in the South Atlantic area.

Realizing that interrogation of prisoners of war during the Caroline maneuvers had fallen far short of producing the information that normally could have been expected, Colonel Harry J. Collins, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, who later as a Major General commanded the 42d Infantry Division, inaugurated a Prisoner of War Interrogation School under Corps supervision shortly after return of the Headquarters to Jacksonville. This school was destined to become the beginning of the Prisoner of War Interrogation training which ultimately was taken over by the Military Intelligence Training Center at Camp Ritchie, Maryland. By the time Corps moved to Camp Beauregard in the middle of February 1942, the school was ready to graduate its first Prisoner of War Interrogation class. After that, the school was taken over for a time by Third Army at Camp Bullis, Texas, from where it eventually went on to Camp Ritchie.

During mid-February, IV Army Corps was busy making the shift of command at Jacksonville to the II Army Corps, which, incidentally, was not destined to remain in its new location long. Soon it was to go to North Africa and to distinguish itself in the fighting there. Later, IV

Corps was to take its place beside this famous outfit during much of the campaigning north of Rome, Italy. Abreast at the Arno River and to the north thereof, the American II and IV Corps made history for Fifth Army.

At Camp Beauregard, IV Army Corps fell heir to the training responsibilities of V Army Corps. The Headquarters made the trip involved in the change of station principally by convoy, tailing the movement of the 31st Division, which was also moving at the same time from Camp Blanding to Camp Bowie, Texas. The trip required four days.

Meanwhile, the 43d Division and the 74th Field Artillery Brigade moved from Camp Blanding to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and thereby remained a part of the Corps' training responsibilities.

2. Camp Beauregard, Louisiana (February 1942-March 1943)

After the movement of the Corps Headquarters from Jacksonville, Florida, and the shake-down and orientation, always accompanying such movements, the Headquarters became a smooth-working team of the vast Third Army, with the base of its operations a cool brick building at Camp Beauregard. The majority of the combat troops at Camp Beauregard, Camp Livingston, and Camp Clairborne, Louisiana, and at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, were placed under command of the IV Army Corps. They consisted of the following major units: The 28th Infantry Division and the 46th Field Artillery Brigade, located at Camp Livingston; the 82d Infantry Division, activated March 1942 at Camp Clairborne; the 38th and 43d Infantry Divisions and the 74th Field Artillery Brigade, all located at Camp Shelby.

The usual training problems were encountered during the spring and summer months. Battalion field exercise tests were supervised for the

38th and 43d Divisions at Camp Shelby. Shortages in most types of necessary equipment were still prevalent and caused some substitution and simulation. The shortage of officers also created a great problem. Many of the units which had supplied cadres were way below strength in officer personnel, some having only one officer per company.

The 85th Infantry Division was activated at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in May 1942. The 82d Infantry Division, activated in March 1942, was redesignated the 82d Airborne Division in August. At this same time, the 101st Airborne Division was activated at Camp Claiborne. These two divisions were made up of personnel of the 82d, augmented by additional parachute infantry regiments. They moved to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in October.

In September and October, Third Army Maneuvers were conducted in Louisiana. IV Army Corps played a major part in these. Major General Griswold directed the maneuvers, and the Commanding General of the participating divisions, the 28th, 38th and 43d Infantry Divisions, and the 7th Armored Division, each had an opportunity to command the Corps. The maneuvers were successful, in that they gave the staff officers of Corps Headquarters, as well as of the Divisions, an opportunity to see armor used and to work out the problems involved in coordination and supply.

During this time, the 31st Infantry Division, an old friend of the Corps, having been under command when stationed at Camp Blanding, Florida, while the Corps was located at Jacksonville, returned to the fold and was stationed at Camp Shelby.

It was at this time that the official name of the Corps was changed from "IV Army Corps" to "IV Corps", the use of the word "Army" in the

title being dropped after many years of usage. After the completion of the Third Army Maneuvers in November, the 38th Infantry Division moved to Carabelle, Florida, later known as Camp Gordon Johnston, for amphibious training. In October another new division was activated, the 103d Infantry Division. This was accomplished at Camp Clairborne, where it was placed in the area recently vacated by the 82d.

During the summer, a new camp had been built in lower Mississippi and named Camp Van Dorn. Here the 99th Infantry Division was activated in November 1942, and became yet another unit to have served with IV Corps in its training phase.

The winter months were marked with continued training problems and the absence, at the various service schools, of all officer personnel who could be spared. Some of these officers were to be returned to their units after their courses were completed, but many were to receive new assignments.

The 28th Infantry Division left Camp Livingston in the latter part of January 1943, for amphibious training at Camp Gordon Johnston. It was replaced by the return of the 38th in the early part of February. However, the 38th Division, instead of moving back to Camp Shelby, its former home, was now located at Camp Livingston.

During February of 1943, the Corps Headquarters was busily engaged in preparation of the "D" series division problems for the 85th Division. An area was located in the DeSoto National Forest and the maneuvers were started. However, at this time, IV Corps was ordered to Fort Lewis, Washington. After turning over all its activities in the Louisiana -

Mississippi area to the newly-activated XV Corps on 1 March 1943, an immediate move was made by train and motor to Fort Lewis, Washington.

3. Fort Lewis, Washington (March 1943-November 1943)

Upon the arrival of the IV Corps Headquarters at Fort Lewis, the mission was not changed from the one that it had operated under at Camp Beauregard. One change, however, in the Command set-up was apparent. It was now a separate corps, no longer under the command of an army, but rather receiving instructions direct from the Army Ground Forces and the War Department.

It was still a training corps and with regard to training, four installations were placed under its jurisdiction. They were Fort Lewis, Washington, Camp Adair and Camp White, Oregon, and the Artillery Firing Range at Yakima, Washington. At this time, four infantry divisions and many separate units were placed under Corps command. They included the 44th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General James T. Muir, at Fort Lewis; the 96th, commanded by Major General James L. Bradley, and 104th commanded by Major General Gilbert R. Cook, Infantry Divisions at Camp Adair; and the 91st Infantry Division commanded by Major General Charles H. Gerhardt at Camp White.

All the divisions were well manned with practically their full complement of officers, men and equipment, and all were well along in their training, although none were at exactly the same phase. The 91st, 96th and 104th had all been activated at their present locations and were going through their first cycle of training as scheduled by Army Ground Forces. The 44th Division was an exception to this, having been an old National Guard Division, inducted early in 1941. It had completed

maneuvers and training before, but owing to excessive cadres being withdrawn for new divisions and the new replacements therefor, it was necessary that it also start over again and go through the entire training cycle.

First came the infantry battalion field exercise and combat firing tests for all infantry battalions. At approximately the same time the field artillery battalions were being tested at Yakima Firing Center. These tests were all under Corps control and supervision, and for the infantry, were conducted at the various home camps of the divisions. This was accomplished by a representative of the G-3 Section, IV Corps, writing the various problems and then, assisted by a group of officers from other than the division being tested, conducting the tests and grading the battalion.

During this time other officers from IV Corps had been trying to find an area large enough and suitable in other characteristics, for the Corps maneuvers that were scheduled for the fall. The possibilities of many areas were explored and rejected before it was finally decided to try to obtain the area lying generally east of the town of Bend and west of the town of Burns in Oregon. This was a vast area, very sparsely populated, used mostly for grazing cattle and sheep and located on what was locally known as the "High Desert". It was an ideal location, however, some apprehension by the medical personnel was expressed, due to the possible danger of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Nevertheless, the maneuvers were held in August and September, when conditions were best for the control of this disease, and as far as is known by this writer, no cases developed.

As soon as the final decision was made as to the exact area needed, representatives of the Corps went immediately to the area for the purpose of obtaining leases and maneuver rights. Others of the G-2 and G-3 Sections, went for the purpose of writing the maneuver problems.

During the time that the above preparations were in progress, in April of 1943, Major General Oscar W. Griswold, who had commanded the IV Corps since October 1941, was relieved of the command and ordered to the Pacific, there to command the XIV Corps. He was to be succeeded by Major General Alexander M. Patch, who had formerly commanded the XIV, but had been returned to the continent for hospitalization. During General Patch's temporary absence, the Corps was commanded by Major General James T. Muir, the Commanding General of the 44th Infantry Division.

After the battalion tests for the 91st, 96th and 104th Divisions were completed, the division test, or "D" series of problems were initiated for the 91st Division. They were held in the area of Camp White proper and in the surrounding areas. Due to insufficient space and restrictions imposed by the rights of property owners, the area to the west of the Cascade Range being highly cultivated, it was decided to conduct the "D" series of problems for the 96th and 104th Divisions in the Bend Maneuver area. The 44th Division would not be ready for its Division problems for some time, and therefore, could not be employed in the coming Corps maneuver. The 96th and 104th Divisions were given their "D" series in the Bend area, and for the purpose of coordinating and supervising, a small Director Headquarters was established by IV Corps, at the little village of Tumalo. When these tests were completed, the two divisions were ready for the Corps maneuvers.

The Director Headquarters of the IV Corps for the Corps maneuvers was established at Camp Abbott, Oregon. This was an Engineer Training Center and not under the jurisdiction of IV Corps, but sufficient space and facilities were made available. Leaving just enough personnel at Fort Lewis to operate administratively, the balance of the Corps Headquarters moved to Camp Abbott. The troops were moved in by train and motor vehicle. The one single track railroad was overburdened, both by the movement of part of the troops and equipment and later by the amount of supply needed to maintain three infantry divisions and attached cavalry, tanks and other supporting troops. Much of the gasoline was trucked in, likewise a great percentage of the rations were brought to the area by refrigerator trucks from Portland, a long haul.

A small Director Headquarters was established in the field for actual conduct of each maneuver. This consisted of the Commanding General, G-2 and G-3 representatives, and a small mess. In each maneuver, the Corps was commanded in the field by one of the participating Division Commanders. Considered as an aid to the training of both large and small unit staffs, the IV Corps maneuvers in eastern Oregon were a great success. Many problems of tactics, supply, air support, logistics, and communications were brought to light and solved, and with the ending of the maneuvers during the first few days of November, no one, even if remotely concerned, could say that he had not benefited by this experience.

Fourth Army was to take over the Oregon and Washington area, upon the completion of the maneuvers, as IV Corps had been ordered to the California-Arizona Maneuver area. A headquarters, Special Troops, Fourth Army, was established at Fort Lewis for this purpose. During the time of the maneuvers, the Corps still had its training problems with units that were

not in the field. The 44th Infantry Division at Fort Lewis was now ready for their Division "D" Series Maneuver. IV Corps prepared these problems and loaned to Fourth Army officer personnel to conduct them. As this was accomplished and the maneuvers in Central Oregon completed, the Corps Headquarters began its movement to the California-Arizona Maneuver area.

4. California-Arizona Maneuver Area (November 1943-February 1944)

On 13 November 1943, Headquarters IV Corps took command of the California-Arizona Maneuver area. This area, a barren stretch of wasteland, sand, rock and cactus, was roughly oval-shaped and, considering both the Communications Zone and the Combat Zone, was approximately 350 miles wide from Pomona, California, eastward almost to Phoenix, Arizona, and 250 miles deep from Yuma, Arizona, northward to Boulder City, Nevada. In this area at the time of IV Corps Command were located at Camp Young, Camp Coxcomb, Camp Iron Mountain, Camp Granite, Camp Clipper, Camp Ibis, Camp Hyder, Camp Horn, Camp Laguna and Camp Pilot Knob. There were all temporary tent camps, with a division being located at some of them, and at others, cavalry, anti-aircraft and field artillery units.

The Corps Headquarters was now called Headquarters, California-Arizona Maneuver Area, and was located at Camp Young. This camp was in the best location and of the most permanent type of any of the various camps. Tents were placed on frames with wooden floors and there were some wooden buildings to contain the offices of the Headquarters. Two station hospitals were also located there and served the outlying camps.

All training in the California-Arizona Maneuver Area was scheduled on

a thirteen-week cycle. Units large and small, would move in and get settled, then start this training cycle. The first four weeks were devoted to individual and small unit training, with particular stress placed on battle conditioning. During the fifth and sixth weeks of the cycle, the training was concentrated at battalion level. This included combat firing of all weapons and working with attached units. In the seventh and eighth weeks the training level was raised to the combat team. During the ninth and tenth weeks, the division received attention. This included two four-day field exercises. Then during the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth weeks, the cycle of training culminated in maneuvers. Separate units were usually attached to divisions during their last six or seven weeks of training.

Seven days after the arrival of the Corps Headquarters, on 20 November, the maneuvers started and lasted until 11 December. They involved the 90th and 93d Infantry Divisions, the 11th Cavalry Group, the 22d and 33d Anti-Aircraft Groups, the 12th Tank Destroyer Group and the 711th Tank Battalion.

During the time IV Corps commanded the California-Arizona Maneuver Area, many divisions, including the 79th, 81st, 90th, 93d, 95th, and 104th Infantry Divisions, and the 11th Armored Division, along with separate groups and battalions of cavalry, tanks, tank destroyers, anti-aircraft and field artillery, were in training there. All in different stages of their training, some moving out and others just arriving, it was a continuous problem to the training the troop movement personnel of the Headquarters.

Preparation for combat duty was the primary purpose of the area. Mental and physical conditioning were stressed continuously. Long marches, water discipline, night operations and battle conditioning exercises were a part of every unit's training. The ration was even placed on a combat basis - no fresh foods or meats. It was here that many were first initiated to Army Spread, Spam and powdered eggs. The Corps Headquarters was also given a work-out in the problems involved in a theatre of operations, for this area was operated as near as possible to an actual theatre, with all supplies coming through a zone of communications to the rear.

In December 1943, the Corps Headquarters was alerted for overseas duty and many last leaves were taken by the personnel. On 17 January 1944, in the midst of maneuvers between the 11th Armored Division and the 104th Infantry Division, Major General Patch released command of the California-Arizona Maneuver area to Major General Jonathan W. Anderson and his X Corps.

5. Enroute to Combat (February 1944 - April 1944)

On 15 February 1944, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, IV Corps, and Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, IV Corps Artillery, entrained at Indio, California and headed east for Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. It was a rather uneventful trip, marked only by the scheduled exercise stops, the continual card games and the never-ending talk of "Where are we headed for?" Rumors were thick, but none seemed to know the correct answer.

After arrival at Camp Patrick Henry, a little over two weeks were spent in final preparation for an overseas trip. All "shots" were completed, last physicals taken, duffle bags packed and repacked. Abandon ship training, and the reams of required paper work were eventually finished. Some of the luckier individuals were able to get to Richmond, Virginia and Washington, D. C., but they were exceptions. Two of the officers of Corps Headquarters were injured in the abandon ship training and when the Corps finally boarded ship, they went on crutches!

Major General Patch and some of his senior staff officers left us here, going to New York and from there by air for Europe. We hated to see them pull out, but in their departure we gained some satisfaction, for we knew that we were soon to follow.

It was a welcome day, the 7th of March, when the word finally came, "We load up this morning." The actual journey was starting; we were really headed overseas. That which all had been training for during these past months and years, was about to become an actuality. The heat and dust, rain and cold, tired bodies and sore feet, experienced at the many training camps and during training exercises, were all but forgotten, as everyone looked forward to new horizons.

The USS GENERAL MANN sailed at approximately 1100 on 7 March 1944, and a full load of over 5,000 troops was on board, including IV Corps and IV Corps Artillery. Some speculation was made as to when the GENERAL MANN would join the rest of the convoy. However, this didn't happen; the ship sailed south, off the coast, until approximately opposite Bermuda and then directly east for Casablanca, alone. It was a pleasant trip, marked only

by the blacked-out nights, the continuous zig-zag course, and the boat and gun drill. Many rumors were still floating, but by this time almost everyone knew he was headed for Casablanca. After that - no one knew.

The GENERAL MANN docked at Casablanca on 16 March, after a fast voyage, disrupted by only one real storm somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic. For many on board, it was their first glimpse of a foreign land. The different language, the costumes of the Arabs, the distinctive uniform of the various Allied soldiers, the strange architecture and street construction - all these factors were proof indeed, that their first step toward the field of battle had been at last completed.

The personnel of the two headquarters was moved by truck, after embarking, to Camp Don B. Passage, a transient tent camp on the outskirts of Casablanca. Some of the fundamental comforts of even the temporary camps back in the states were lacking. However, everyone was in good spirits, for he knew this was but a temporary stop. On 18 March entrainment was completed for a two-day and two-night trip by railroad to Oran. This was the first experience with the 40 and 8 of American Legion fame. No place to sleep, no way of preparing food, not even room enough to walk around; the stops at the various villages were welcome indeed. Even if only for a few minutes, it was an opportunity to stretch.

The native children were always present at every stop. This had apparently not been the first troop train through the area, for the kids had a surprising command of certain type phrases of the English language. Cigarettes and candy were always in demand, however, biscuits from "C" and "K" rations were warmly received. The names of some of the towns that the

train rattled through, brought memories of some of the adventure stories that had been read and heard, about the French Foreign Legion. This area had been their habitat.

Arriving at Oran on 20 March, the Headquarters was entrucked and moved out to another transient camp. Camp Lion Mountain, it was called, and it was a decided improvement over Camp Don B. Passage. Everyone was quartered as well as circumstances would permit, and settled down again to wonder, "what happens next".

It was at Lion Mountain that Major General Alexander M. Patch arrived to tell the assembled officers that he had been relieved from his assignment as Commanding General, IV Corps, on 1 March and had been assigned to command Seventh Army. He introduced Major General Willis D. Crittenberger to the assembled staff as the new Corps Commander. General Crittenberger had been assigned as Commanding General, IV Corps, by Special Order Number 74, Headquarters North Africa Theatre of Operations, effective 6 March 1944. It was here also that the Corps Staff split up, twenty-seven officers and twelve enlisted men going with General Patch to Seventh Army and the remainder staying with General Crittenberger and IV Corps. Brigadier General James F. Brittingham, Commanding General of the IV Corps Artillery, also left at this time, later to be replaced by Brigadier General William C. Crane.

After six days at Camp Lion Mountain, the Corps Headquarters, on 24 March, embarked for a sea voyage. This time on a Belgian ship that was being operated by the British, the LEOPOLDVILLE. At one time in her career, the LEOPOLDVILLE had been quite a passenger liner, and some of the same

crew and mess personnel were still on board. The usual assignment to life boats and the usual life boat drill were all that marked the voyage, and on 27 March the LEOPOLDVILLE steamed into the harbor at Naples.

Far out in the Mediterranean, smoke from erupting Mt. Vesuvius could be seen, sometimes just rolling out as though from a peaceful smoke stack, but sometimes belching out great clouds, as though in anger. As the ship drew closer and passed the Isle of Capri, famed in song and legend, some flames could be seen beneath the smoke cloud, and the first vision of it at night proved that it could be seen for miles just the same as by day. A very good landmark for the enemy navigators to guide on when coming in to bomb the harbor of Naples, as we were later to learn.

Debarking from the LEOPOLDVILLE, the Corps was moved to the staging area in the "Collegio Castanzo Giano" at Bagnoli, just outside Naples. This school was built immediately before the war and was intended to be used as a school for crippled and under-privileged children, but the Germans in their search for quarters for their army, had taken it over for the use of a German Army Headquarters. It suited the Allied purposes as well. Many days had been spent, reportedly by the Germans, in extensive camouflage painting. The outside walls were painted to represent a country landscape with trees and all. To the uninitiated, it was really a symbol of war.

During the stay at Bagnoli, sufficient time was had to look over the shattered city of Naples. The bombed harbor, smashed industry, crumbled walls, and shattered homes gave mute testimony of the force of Allied, as well as enemy air power. Recreation trips were arranged, so that everyone that desired could see and be told by an English-speaking guide, of the

ancient and interesting spots in and around Naples. Pompeii was visited and the wonders of a civilization long since destroyed were relived in the minds of many. It was here at Bagnoli that combat boots were first discovered to be in vogue. In order to be in fashion and be able to discard the old canvas leggings, outrageous prices were paid to Italian would-be shoemakers to have tops sewn on the regular GI shoes.

On various occasions while quartered in the old school, everyone would be routed out of his warm bunk to stumble through the darkness, down the stairs, outside and into the shelter, while the bursting of enemy bombs and the sound of the allied anti-aircraft artillery filled the night. Our first experience with enemy bombers. Most would stay in the shelter, but some of the more foolhardy just had to see the anti-aircraft fire, which burst overhead in a much greater display than any Fourth of July celebration back home. However, the novelty soon wore off and it became just another air raid.

Here at Bagnoli the Corps Headquarters was augmented by the arrival of personnel to fill the depleted ranks, left when part of the personnel was transferred to Seventh Army. Small problems of personnel were straightened out and some manner of routine and procedure was adopted. During this time a search for a suitable location for the Corps Command Post was being carried out and the shore of Lake Averno was finally chosen. After nine days at Bagnoli, on 6 April, the Corps Headquarters moved to Lake Averno and set up a tent camp, the first of many that we were to call home during the Italian Campaign.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

INTRODUCTION

LAKE AVERNO

Spring was everywhere in the air; to the birds chirping noisily about the wooded shores at Lake Averno, the occasional rumble to the north was the brewing of an early May thunderstorm, but to the handful of weary Italian farmers just returned to plow up their rocky fields, it could only be the sound of the same war which had recently passed through the area. The warmth that heralded the approaching summer was at times interspersed with a chilly breeze which had just communed with the lofty Alps to the north, and raced down the peninsula to tinge red the cheeks of friends and foe and finally dissolve itself into the rising heat over the Bay of Naples.

On the shores of Lake Averno, amidst this peaceful setting was encamped the Headquarters of IV Corps. To many of the officers and men it was "just another bivouac area", although succeeding months forced them to accept it as an extremely beautiful one, surprisingly devoid of dust and mud. To the students of history, however, it was recognized as one of the most famous spots in the early history of Italy. To fail to mention its rightful place here would tend to suppress the immortality accorded it by famed Greek and Roman writers. In the environs of the ancient and now long extinct City of Cumae, (Greek: Kyme, founded by the Greeks in 1049 BC) and for centuries connected with it by subterranean tunnels, Lake Averno, a former volcanic crater, is the reputed scene of Dante's INFERNO, and is further immortalized in Homer's ODYSSEY

(chiefly in connection with the episode of the Neykia - "The Consultation of the Dead"), as well as in the epic poems of Virgil and Ovid.

"The lake, with its lucid, cold, metallic expanse", observes Ettore Remagnoli, "has an aspect of gloomy calm and suggests thoughts of death and dissolution. The flowers of too flaming a red that glow on its shores seem to be fires of a supernatural world. Strabo tells us of the time when the crater rim surrounding the lake was completely hidden by a wild, inaccessible forest. Fearful tales were told of it. The birds, flying over its surface, were said to fall, asphyxiated by its deadly exhalations. The spot was believed to be connected with the Inferno and no one approached it without having first prayed and sacrificed to the infernal deities. The spring that rose nearby was shunned by all because it was supposed to be the water of the Styx. Around the lake, in ages anterior to the landing of the Greeks, the worship of a subterranean Goddess (afterwards identified with Persephone), who presided over the abode of the dead, was localized in the depths of the extinct volcano. In antiquity, the common house of the dead was imagined as a gloomy spot communicating, by means of passages, with the outside world."

Later, forgetting their former supernatural fears, the people of the entire area from as far north as Rome, the Eternal City, gathered by the thousands upon the shores of the Lago d'Averno to witness the brilliant naval pageants, in many instances Roman triremes (huge ships of three banks with long oars and rowed by captive slaves from all over the Roman Empire) engaged in mortal battle for sport against each other, all of which were generously sponsored by the tyrant Nero, the Caesars, and other

early Italian rulers. In more recent years it has been a mecca for tourists from all over the world, who came to wonder at its beauty, to poke among the ruins of the several temples along its shores, and to penetrate the dark and eerie recesses of the nearby Sybilian grotto, down to the clear, imprisoned spring therein, which to the ancients, represented the Styx - the river which leads to HELL!

To this beautiful and historic spot of Lake Averno, in the vicinity of Pozzouli, in the year of one thousand nine hundred and forty-four, the Goddess of Fate had seen fit to bring from a far away land across the seas, the IV Corps, under the command of Major General Willis D. Crittenberger, an organization of the modern American Army, composed of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company with the accompanying Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, IV Corps Artillery. Here, while in Fifth Army reserve as a troop-less Headquarters, IV Corps was in the midst of last minute preparations to stay abreast of indications that it was soon to shoulder command of a portion of the Fifth Army line. Officers and men were oriented daily to the driving efforts of Fifth Army up ahead, and personnel was shifted about and placed in positions best suited to fill gaps left by officers and men already departed to Headquarters, Seventh Army, secretly garrisoned in the vicinity of Algiers and also making feverish preparations for a not too distant undertaking of its own. Already some key personnel from various staff sections of the Corps Headquarters and Headquarters, IV Corps Artillery had been secretly attached and were on duty with the Headquarters of II and VI Corps for the purpose of obtaining experience and the training of battle not found in the pages of service school manuals, the peach orchards of the Carolinas, or

the swamps of Louisiana.

Those with VI Corps in the Anzio beachhead learned early to use the oft quoted expression "sweated out" while observing that Command Post function under the sporadic pounding of German 88's, or while hugging harder their foxholes in expectancy of the jarring burst of a bomb hastily jettisoned from a raiding Messerschmitt. It was in this small perimeter of earthly hell that they learned the principles of coordinated defense under the most trying conditions where every advantage favored a resolute enemy perched on the surrounding hills; one who was steadfastly determined to cut off this abscess gnawing at his side and hurl it back into the sea. They learned a psychology which they carried back to their parent unit and which is known to have lent heavily to the successful operations of IV Corps in the battles lying ahead; the patience, tact, understanding and deep appreciation required to successfully handle attached Allied troops. Those with II Corps on the southern front had learned with equal conviction the method of attaining successful execution of coordinated offensive action, when supported by the massive weight of centrally controlled artillery fire. It was there the impression of the demoralizing effect wrought on the enemy by the scathing assaults of the XII Tactical Air Force and the growing advantage of air-ground liaison was first stamped on their minds. On their visits to veteran line units they saw their first German dead; interrogated mud-soaked prisoners and smelled the foul odor of the rotting flesh of dead horses along the shell-gutted roads; the horse, as a means of conveyance, was now more evident in use by the Germans. They were smitten with the universal feeling of all soldiers on the first sight

of their own wounded and dead comrades. It was these men who brought back to the quiet shores of Lake Averno a deep appreciation of the hardships and courage of the veteran line troops, a feeling which remained instilled in IV Corps all through the war and with the veterans to this day.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER I - - - - -

WARNING ORDERS

The Goddess of Fate pointed her wand of destiny once more, and the Commanding General, IV Corps, was directed to be prepared to effect the relief of the II Corps by Operations Instructions No. 18, Headquarters Fifth Army, dated 15 May 1944. Indications and rumors which had echoed back and forth against the tented sides of this camp for the past few weeks, were now beginning to crystallize into concrete facts. This forerunner of events to follow called for the Corps to assume control of II Corps zone of action on twenty-four hours' notice on or after 22 May 1944. Immediately upon receipt of these instructions, officers from the General and Special Staff Sections were dispatched to II Corps Headquarters located northeast of Terracina, to initiate liaison with respective staff sections and thereby begin the gathering of information necessary to establish this Headquarters in operation without a break in continuity, much in the same manner as the winded relay runner passing on the torch to his rested successor.

In order to accomplish the anticipated relief of the II Corps in a smooth and orderly manner, and with the least effort, General Crittenberger moved the advanced echelon of his Headquarters to the Command Post area of II Corps on 26 May. The next twenty-four hours were spent in last-minute briefing. The decks were cleared, sails trimmed, the good ship was secure, and a brisk trade wind was blowing northward. With her compass set for Rome, she was ready to cut herself loose and catch the early breeze and sail the stormy

sea of battle on her maiden voyage. For the benefit of the land-lubber not acquainted with the salty argot of the sailor, it means that the untried command was ready to assume its place for its initial battle-indoctrination.

A. SITUATION AND BACKGROUND OF EVENTS

The battle for Cassino was still wet on the pages of history, and Fifth and Eighth Armies were hard in pursuit of a withdrawing enemy when IV Corps was to enter the scene. Let us look at the background of events just freshly painted by the historian who has laid aside his brush and stepped back to view his labors.

In the great offensive against Germany, it was logical for the Allies to strike their first blows from Italy where British and American Armies had fought all through the winter of 1944. Italy was never a "Side Show". The Mediterranean was the only European Theatre in which American and British troops engaged the enemy before the Spring of 1944. Here some fifteen or more Allied divisions pinned down an enemy force estimated at twenty-five divisions, of which five contained the Allied beachhead at Anzio and twelve the southern front. The fighting in Italy was as tough as anywhere else in the world, for it fell largely to the Infantry, slugging their way through fortified enemy lines and storming or by-passing snow-topped mountains. Prior to the commencement of the spring drive on 11 May 1944, Allied progress in southern Italy had been slow because the mountainous terrain protected the enemy and made his delaying actions count heavily.

1. The Allied Spring Drive

After the assault on Cassino failed and the Anzio beachhead troops

were checked in the winter and early spring of 1944, the Allied forces regrouped for their part in the summer offensive. On the southern front, Fifth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, and including the U.S. 85th, 88th and 36th Infantry Divisions, was shifted to the west coast along the Tyrrhenian Sea. The portion of Fifth Army at Anzio, garrisoned by VI Corps and now commanded by Major General Lucian K. Truscott, had just been reinforced, and now comprised the U. S. 3d, 34th and 45th Infantry Divisions; the 1st Armored Division; three Ranger Battalions; a Parachute Battalion of the 82d Airborne Division; the British 1st and 56th Infantry Divisions and two Commando Battalions. The British Eighth Army, with French and Polish units, came over from the Adriatic to take the place of the Fifth around Cassino. With their forces concentrated in the west and center, the Allied could now exert the strongest pressure toward Rome.

2. Enemy Dispositions

Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, in over-all command of Axis troops in Italy, known as Army Group Southwest, also regrouped his divisions in preparation for the expected Allied offensive. His defense consisted of two mountain barriers, strongly fortified; The Gustave Line along the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers with Cassino as the main bastion; and behind it the so-called Hitler Line from Terracina to Aquino, behind which firmly stood the German Tenth and Fourteenth Armies. The latter, commanded by General Erberhard von Mackensen, was responsible for containing our troops in the Anzio beachhead and for guarding the coast north of the Tiber, while the Tenth Army, under General Heinrich von Vietinghoff Genannt Scheel, held the southern front.

Fourteenth Army contained the Allied beachhead with two corps, consisting of eight divisions. Under Tenth Army on the southern front, the LI Mountain Corps was responsible for the Adriatic Coast, while the bulk of the XIV Panzer Corps opposed Fifth Army; from west to east, the 94th Grenadier Division, the 71st Grenadier Division, and part of the 44th Grenadier Division.

In all, Marshal Kesselring had twenty-five divisions, the same number as the Allies had. The equality in number of units, however, did not indicate equality in force, for the bulk of Kesselring's Army Group was showing the telling effects of attrition and was greatly weakened in men and materiel. Favored units such as the Herman Goering Panzer Parachute Division were brought to full strength after each debacle, but the rest were reorganized after the January-March battles, with an average strength of 300-500 men per infantry battalion. The Germans were particularly weak in reserves. Except for the Herman Goering Panzer Parachute Division in the Leghorn area, there were only three other mobile units available, without the need of looking to the forces on the Adriatic. The German High Command had evidently decided that the requirements of other theatres precluded any increase in its Italian investment, and that the German forces in Italy would be adequate at least for an orderly, deliberate withdrawal in the event of a heavy attack. This proved to be costly economy as will be shown in the chapters to follow.

On 3 May 1944, the Germans flooded the Pontine Marshes, which lay between the Allied forces on the Anzio and Cassino fronts.

3. Allied Missions

The Italian winter with its cold rains and high winds was over; the weather was warm and dry, and the ground suitable for military operations. Early in April, General Alexander outlined the purpose of the May offensive as follows: to destroy the right wing of the German Tenth Army; to drive its remnants and the German Fourteenth Army north of Rome; and to pursue the enemy to the Rimini-Pisa line, inflicting the maximum losses on him in the process.

The Eighth Army was to make the main attack. Briefly stated, its mission was to break through the enemy defenses along the Rapido River and advance into the Liri Valley, with Highway 6 as its general axis of advance. The mission of the Fifth Army on the southern front was to break out of the bridgehead across the Garigliano and advance on an axis generally parallel to that of the Eighth Army and south of the Liri and Sacco Rivers. The VI Corps was to break out of its Anzio beachhead and cut Highway 6 in the Valmontone area, thereby preventing the supply and withdrawal of the German divisions on the southern front. A further mission was to pursue the enemy to the north of Rome and capture the Viterbo airfields and the port of Civitavecchia.

4. Preparations

As early as 28 April the Allied Air Force commenced intensive day and night attacks against enemy lines of communication. Its mission, to isolate the battle front and make it impossible for the enemy to reinforce his troops below Rome or to change materially the location of

his divisions along the front. Railroads were extensively bombed, and highway bridges were also given special attention. Since it was found that the enemy was using water transportation from Genoa and other more distant points as a means of supplying his troops below Rome, these ports were bombed regularly. To accomplish the mission which they did most effectively, the Allied Air Force made 21,800 sorties and wreaked havoc on all the enemy railroads below Florence to effectively snarl the enemy supply lines.

5. Fifth Army Attack

Along the main front the Allies had built up a strength of some twenty-two divisions. In view of the superiority in artillery and the overwhelming strength in the air, the offensive had every chance of success, despite a stubborn enemy who held strong defensive positions.

At 2300 hours on 11 May, the Allied attack opened in force. In order to obtain surprise, a lengthy artillery preparation was not fired. Instead, the entire weight of the Allied artillery was brought to bear on the enemy's forward positions at about the time the Infantry began its advance.

From the very beginning of the offensive, the principal Allied gains were scored along the Fifth Army front south of the Liri River, by the French Corps and the American II Corps. General Juin ordered all of his hardy divisions of the French Corps into the attack. They drove forward over rugged Mount Majo, rapidly shattering the German defenses, and on 14 May captured Ausonia on the Cassino-Formia Road. This was on the enemy's main lateral line of communication. The next day, as their attack gained momentum, the French units captured San Giorgio, and armored troops broke through to

clear the Ausonia defile. The Germans positions facing the British 13th Corps in the lower Liri Valley were now seriously threatened with envelopment. Of almost equal importance, the French Corps was in a position to drive west and south behind enemy forces facing the II Corps, which had broken out from the Garigliano bridgehead on the afternoon of the 13th and morning of the 14th, and pushed forward from Minturno along the Gulf of Gaeta. The 85th Infantry Division pushed along the coast and the 88th Infantry Division on the right, kept abreast; leaving behind many dead Germans in and around the broken defenses of S. Maria Infante. Those that managed to escape could only express horror at the latter assailants by referring to them as the "Blue Devils" -- a name that was to remain with the 88th Division throughout the campaign. Activated after 7 December 1941, these two divisions had just arrived from the United States and entered the line in March and April. Composed almost entirely of selectees, they fought as veteran units in their first combat assignment. By the 16th of May, after heavy fighting, the II Corps had reached positions about two and a half miles northeast of Formia.

In the action to date, the successful breach of the Gustave Line defenses south of the Liri appeared to have shaken up a number of German units and to have forced a withdrawal at all points between the Liri Valley and the coast. The enemy fell back to the Hitler Line, which ran from Terracina through Fondi to Pontecorvo and across the Liri Valley to Aquino and Piedmonte on the Adriatic.

Threatened by an envelopment when the French reached the Liri at San Giorgio on 15 May, the Germans opposing 13th Corps began to thin out, and

by the 17th the British had reached the Cassino-Rome Road (Highway 6) at a point about two miles west of Cassino. Polish troops, commanded by General Anders, cut in behind the mountain towering over Cassino and joined British spearheads in the encirclement of the town. Enemy resistance in Cassino was then crushed and at least 1,500 of the defenders were captured.

After the breach of the Gustave Line by the French Corps on the 14th and 15th, the advance of the Fifth Army was quite rapid. By 22 May General Juin's men had captured Pico and had entered Pontecorvo. This action against threatened enemy forces opposing the British XIII Corps and materially assisted its advance toward Aquino. In the meantime, the American troops in the coastal sector kept pace with the French advance. Formia, Itri, and Fondi fell in rapid succession, and by 22 May some of our units were in the mountains north of Terracina, a gain of thirty miles since the start of the offensive.

It was clear that the Hitler Line had been turned from the south by the II Corps and rendered untenable. The German forces remaining in front of the Fifth Army were becoming badly demoralized and could cause no serious delay to a relentless pursuit, swiftly executed.

At long last the opportune time for the VI Corps to break out of the Anzio beachhead had arrived. One hour before dawn on the 23d of May the beachhead forces, straining at the leash, struck, the main attack being directed toward Cisterna and Cori. The Corps objective was Valmontone, on Highway 6, the prompt seizure of which would cut off the German forces in the Liri and Sacco Valleys. Cori fell on the night of the 25th, and units

of VI Corps pushed on to Artena.

The German Tenth Army, withdrawing from the southern front, might now be cut off if the two strong points covering its escape, Velletri and Valmontone, could be taken quickly. The Fourteenth Army, falling back from Cisterna, was reinforced in Valmontone area by the phoenix-like Herman Goering Division, which had earlier felt the sting of Allied arms in Tunisia, Sicily and at Salerno. For six days the progress of VI Corps toward its objective was arrested. It was evident that the enemy intended to hold here at all costs, in order that his forces to the southeast could withdraw toward Rome and the northwest.

In the meantime, on the southern front Terracina fell to units of the II Corps on 24 May, and advance elements poured into the water-soaked Pontine Marshes. Early on the 25th, advance elements of II Corps and the Anzio forces joined hands near Borgo Grappa, south of Cisterna.

The next day, Major General Willis D. Crittenger, as has already been stated, broke camp and moved his advance echelon to the vicinity of II Corps Command Post, and there set up his Headquarters in a terraced orchard on the northwestern slope of the hill mass, just northwest of Terracina.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER II - - - - -

IV CORPS GOES INTO ACTION

In accordance with instructions from the Fifth Army Commander, IV Corps relieved II Corps at 0001, 28 May 1944. A christening in the form of a Top Secret directive, dated April 1944, blessed the unit with its new battle name, "KEYSTONE".

With the breaching of the Anzio beachhead perimeter by VI Corps and the union of the main Fifth Army advance with the beachhead forces south of Littoria, the exposed portion of the Army right flank on the northeast was considerably lengthened and protection was required until such time as the French Expeditionary Corps would advance and, by so doing, automatically provide the necessary safety. Assigned to the IV Corps was the mission of aggressive pursuit in a northeasterly direction toward the French Corps boundary, running approximately SE-NW, and of protecting the right flank until the French should advance and take over. Thus relieved, the more experienced II Corps, out of the lines for the moment, later took over a portion of the front, east of Velletri and south of Valmontone with the VI Corps on its left, for a resumption of the offensive east of the hill mass of Colli Laziali.

IV Corps had the VI Corps to its northwest and on the north and northeast, the French Corps. The convergent boundaries assured a Corps front which would diminish with the advance of General Juin's left flank, until eventually no front would remain and the IV Corps would be pinched out of action.

Although this short operational period was foreseen, IV Corps accepted the mission with zeal and appreciation. It would give the Headquarters the actual experience needed to review and check the accomplishments of all sections during that interim period before it would again be committed to action. Whatever kinks might appear would be remedied and the machinery would be oiled to smoother operation. Above all, it was grateful to take part in the drive for Rome, the seizure of which was acclaimed a major feat throughout the world.

At the hour of relief the forward elements of our forces were slightly south of a line running generally from Roccagorga on the east to Norma on the west. The IV Corps zone of action was roughly in the shape of a triangle having its apex at M. Lupone, with one side running south to Norma and the other side extending southeast along the southern slopes of M. Belvedere and the northern slopes of M. Castellone to Roccagorga.

In addition to miscellaneous Army and Corps troops, the IV Corps inherited the 88th Infantry Division, to be acclaimed as the first infantry division to come under its command in combat. Some of the supporting attachments to come with it were the 752d and 760th Tank Battalions and the 601st Field Artillery Battalion. Another combat unit bequeathed by II Corps was the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized), already screening the left flank of the newly assigned Corps sector.

A. MISSIONS

General Crittenberger, immediately after the relief, issued verbal

orders to the 88th Division and the 117th Cavalry Squadron. These verbal and fragmentary orders were later recorded officially for the sake of posterity and the unit history as Operational Directive No. 1, IV Corps, dated 28 May 1944. (See annex). The mission to the 88th called for the Division to move a battalion of infantry to the northwest between the Sezze-Sermoneta-Norma road and the Sezze-Bassiano-Norma road to clear the area of enemy and occupy the high ground, M. Carbolino; to gain and maintain contact with the hastily withdrawing enemy between the last named road and the Corps' right boundary; to be prepared to clear this defended area of enemy with the concomitant missions of protecting the Corps' right flank and maintaining contact with the French.

The northwest zone of the Corps sector was given to the 117th Cavalry Squadron with the responsibility of screening the Corps' left flank by patrolling the Sezze-Sermoneta-Norma-Bassiano roads; to take and hold the three last named towns, and to establish and maintain contact with the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, pushing northwestward and screening the right flank of VI Corps.

Prior to the relief and until 26 May, the 88th Division had remained in place on the Roccasecca Ridge with the mission from Major General Keyes, commanding II Corps, of protecting his right flank until the French could move up. On the 26th, the 350th Infantry took up positions in Roccasecca itself as 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 Roccasecca 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, and on the night of 27-28 May, it was moved up on the left of the 350th Infantry to relieve the remainder of the 85th Infantry Division.

1. 88th Division Attacks

At 0500B, 28 May, with early streaks of dawn beginning to give shape to the surrounding hills, the 88th Division attacked to the north and northwest. The 349th Infantry Regiment, protecting the extreme right of the Corps, pushed ahead against light organized enemy resistance; in the main, small arms and machine gun fire. As the attack progressed, favored by excellent weather, elements of the 349th reached a line connecting the hills of M. Nero--M. S. Martino-M. Latorre. The 350th Infantry in the center took its objective, M. Della Difesa, only after overcoming enemy rear guard elements using small arms fire based around hastily planted minefields and demolitions. The 1st Battalion reached M. Castellone, bringing that portion of the line furthestmost north in the divisional zone. As escaped English soldier and officer filtered through the lines to report that over 100 Germans who left Roccagorga were moving north toward Carpinete at about 1015, and that Czech service troops had moved ammunition supplies north from Roccagorga to Carsoli. In addition to this report, similar reports by observation pilots made it evident that the enemy was still continuing his hasty withdrawal and attempting to clear out of the Roccagorga-Maenza area as rapidly as possible.

The 3d Battalion, pushing ahead on the left of Roccagorga, received small arms fire from a ravine running NW and SE just north of the town. Patrols rushed into Maenza only to find it already abandoned by the enemy.

The 351st Infantry, in its new sector, on the left, had pushed the 1st Battalion to M. Nero and the 2d to M. Trevi. The 3d was located at M. S. Angelo.

The Corps screening force, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, was driving hastily to accomplish its mission on the left. Sermoneta was taken early, and from there, "B" and "C" Troops moved toward Norma and Bassiano. By dusk of the first day, all three of the towns were reported captured and the troops ranged at liberty over the adjacent road areas, picking off enemy stragglers and patrolling the area on the left of the Corps front.

The Corps Command Post was moved to a cork grove in the vicinity of the historic Abbe di Fossenuova, south of Priverno, where it was destined to be located for the remainder of the action. It was the "first" of many moves to the north to come during future operations. The Headquarters began operations in this new area at the foot of the mountain in mid-afternoon; throughout the remainder of the day the firing of the Corps artillery was heard from the rear.

The enemy had suffered the loss of a Mark IV tank in Roccagorga and the observance of two others moving northward toward Carpineto indicated that some armor was employed on the Corps front. This was confirmed by some of the prisoners taken on the first day, who reported that a few self-propelled guns of the 242d German Assault Gun Battalion were firing from Roccagorga early in the morning. Another confirmation was the falling of light calibre, harassing artillery fire on the forward elements, particularly on the road just south of the town. These reports, coupled with the receipt of small arms and mortar fire just north of Roccagorga, indicated

that while the enemy was steadily withdrawing on the whole Corps front, his main resistance was centered in this area. The Roccagorga-Montelanico Road was the only route of withdrawal for the remaining forces in this sector.

In the past withdrawals of the Italian campaign, when the enemy was pulling his forces back to prepare for another stand, the self-propelled guns appeared in numbers all along the front - then when a stable front was established, they hastened to fade out of the picture. Again the Germans' use of the self-propelled gun to assist the local strongpoints in delaying action was increasingly felt. These self-propelled guns were particularly suitable for their mobility allowed them to be decentralized to the rear guard groups. They were left to deny the use of the roads, bridges and defiles to forward infantry units; thus enabling the enemy infantry to withdraw to new positions. The morning of the 29th ushered in the first bursts of enemy counter-battery fire when approximately 40 rounds flew deep into the Corps rear area and landed just south of Piperno. German gun batteries in the French area on the northeast were identified as the source of most of this shelling.

2. French Advance

The day's fighting brought the left flank of the French advance to a position at the foot of the hill mass formed by Mt. Nero and Colle La Torre, already held firmly by our own 349th Infantry. As no suitable road existed to the north of this mountainous obstacle over which the advance of the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division could be continued along the Corps boundary, permission was requested by the French to move their advancing forces to the south of Mt. Nero into the 88th Division Sector and thence to the

north and northwest toward Carpineto through Priverno and Roccagorga. When permission was not immediately granted by the 88th Division, one battalion of infantry and one tank destroyer battalion of a French task force of the 4th Moroccan Division moved over the road without awaiting further orders. In the midst of tactful telephone calls and exchange of information to ease a misunderstanding, it developed that permission to move through the Corps sector had been granted by Fifth Army prior to the relief of II Corps, but this information had not been received by IV Corps or the 88th Division. With this fact brought to light, the remainder of the French Task Force moved with permission into the Corps sector to a bivouac area in the vicinity of Maenza, in the rear of the 349th Infantry positions. What had once appeared as a trespass was now a lease in proper legal form; a temporary lease of the Priverno-Roccagorga-Carpineto road, with IV Corps the lessor and the 4th Moroccan Division the lessee; the right of way given to the French until its forces had passed over the road to Carpineto and out of the IV Corps zone.

Dawn of the second day of operations for IV Corps opened as the French Task Force, with accompanying armor, proceeded to the northwest over their right-of-way, the Roccagorga-Carpineto road, and early in the day passed from the Corps Sector. This advance was carried out against pockets of resistance, which shifted back to hastily selected sites astride the highway as the pressure of the advance was built up.

Since the supply and evacuation of the French Force was necessarily accomplished over this highway, it was apparent that the French Corps should be allowed to include this road within its area of operations. On the basis

of this logical understanding and the fact that the French would complete the mission of relieving the IV Corps in a matter of days, General Crittenberger, in the mid-afternoon, entered into a conference with Brigadier General Sevez, Commanding General of the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division, at the Command Post of the latter, one mile west of Amaseno.

After a discussion of the situation, the disposition of troops within the IV Corps sector, and the advance of the 4th Moroccan Division on the right of the Corps, it was agreed that the 349th Infantry now occupying Mt. Nero, M. Torre, and San Martino, would be withdrawn without delay and that steps would be taken to effect such changes in this mutual boundary, so as to give the French complete control of the road from Amaseno-Piperno and Carpineto. It was further agreed to assist the French by detaching a liaison officer from the 88th Division to go along with the column that was moving north on the road. He was to serve as forward observer and assist the French advance by calling for artillery fires that they might desire. To further aid the French Task Force in its advance toward Carpineto, close liaison was to be maintained. As it progressed to the northwest, elements of the 88th Division would also move in the same direction along the Lepini mountain range; thus clearing the area of enemy units in the IV Corps zone and materially assisting in the advance of the French. What was once a lease of a right-of-way, was now fully consummated into a deed effecting the passage of title in absolute fee to the French. Request for such change of the IV Corps-French Corps boundary was submitted to Fifth Army for approval the same day, but the actual change was not effected until the next day, 30 May.

This amicable settlement of a small boundary discrepancy was a welcome

opportunity to blend deeper the friendly relationship that was to remain between the IV Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps in the coming operations north of Rome. A clear reflection of the days of 1917-1918 when French and American soldiers fought the same common foe, was mirrored in Amaseno that balmy spring afternoon. What a striking coincidence it was to find the sons of those fathers of both nations who, twenty-seven years ago fought and died in a military alliance against the fathers of the sons now opposed to us on the mountainous Italian terrain. Such can only be the creations of war.

The rapid advance of the French to the northwest along the Corps boundary after Prossedi and Gulliano were captured, rendered the positions held by the 349th Infantry on M. Nero, M. Martino and Colle La Torre no longer necessary, and in the evening it was withdrawn and assembled in the 88th Division area. Located on the northeast spur of the Roccasecca ridge, it was to be committed only on Corps order.

Opposition along the ever-narrowing front was beginning to lessen and light artillery fire of a harassing nature characterized the chief resistance. The Germans succeeded in breaking contact at most points, as they withdrew to the north and northwest. When the 350th and 351st Infantry sent out strong patrols from its positions to seek out and mop up any of the enemy remaining in the area east and northeast of the Sezze-Norma-Bassiano road, only one patrol gained contact with the enemy and after a short fight, 10 prisoners were taken in the vicinity of Hill 1064. Most of the prisoners taken that day were from Maenza-Roccagorga area and represented a smattering of the 715th Light Infantry Division and the 29th and 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, whose battalions were reportedly reduced to

approximately 100 to 200 effectives. In view of the lack of determined opposition in the Corps sector, it was deemed that these elements encountered consisted of small composite groups fighting a delaying action, rather than organized divisional units operating under a coordinated plan. Many of its number came from stragglers or retreating units facing the French corps, and from rear echelon and service troops.

As the half tracks and armored cars of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized) patrolled the area north and northwest along the Sezze-Bassiano-Norma road net, civilian reports confirmed the fact that the enemy was hastily withdrawing all along our front and the bulk of his forces had already pulled back over the boundary into the French sector. An idea of the appearance of a large-scale withdrawal of a fleeing enemy may be gathered from the account of an Italian civilian. His observations were made in the town square of Carpineto. He stated that prior to our attack on 11 May, only one company of Austrian Service troops were garrisoned in Carpineto. Since that day these troops withdrew and from then on there was a continuous flow of troops moving through the town and to the north; this had decreased sharply in the past two days. Between six thirty and nine o'clock on the morning of the 26th, he counted over one thousand vehicles consisting of trucks, armored cars, tanks and horsedrawn vehicles, which moved in column north from Maenza through Carpineto, in the direction of Colle Fero.

However, daylight aerial reconnaissance over the roads in front of IV Corps sector revealed only a slight and scattered motor movement to the north. The enemy already was familiar with the fact that our Air Force mastered the air and was able to bomb and strafe at will. He acted

accordingly by slinking northward under the cover of darkness along the roads and numerous mule trails. As our forward infantry patrols plugged on across country, they continued to encounter small enemy groups attempting to make a furtive withdrawal over these mule trails leading to Carpineto from Bassiano and Norma.

The IV Corps artillery, itching at the lanyard, was extremely limited in its field of fire both by the uncertain location of the advancing French and by the movement of our own troops along the Monte Lepini range into the pocket formed by the converging Corps boundaries. The artillery liaison officer, as he moved along with the French column on the Carpineto-Roccagorga road, succeeded in calling for and directing some artillery fire on targets lying astride the French advance; one of these targets was a group of five enemy tanks observed waiting in positions in the creek bed about a mile south of Montelanico, just west of the Carpineto highway.

During the night the 351st Infantry pushed patrols to the French boundary thus accomplishing part of the Corps mission; in short, to clear the Corps sector of enemy. Two small enemy groups were engaged just south of the apex formed by the Corps boundaries about a mile due south of M. Lupone. These few fire fights marked the northernmost advances of IV Corps to date. The 2d Battalion consolidated its newly gained positions on M. Carbolino while the 3d pushed patrols ahead and over to the French boundary, directly north of Bassiano, where they engaged an enemy group of approximately fifty men from which seven prisoners were taken. The road from Bassiano to Norma was interdicted intermittently by estimated 88-mm fire from the northeast.

The 30th of May, Memorial Day, was ushered in with a message from the

Fifth Army Commander directing the change in the Corps right boundary as had been arranged by General Crittenberger on the previous day. The road to the south of Mt. Nero, over which the French had been moving troops and supplies for the past two days, was now included in the French sector; the alteration of the boundary and a worrisome situation was solved satisfactorily. As already shown, in anticipation of this boundary change, the elements of the 349th Infantry which had originally seized the area in the vicinity of Mt. Nero, had been withdrawn to the Division assembly area on the 29th. For this reason the line of Corps advances, as shown on Annex Number 1, is further to the south in the Mt. Nero area on 30 May than on 28-29 May.

At one-thirty in the morning about thirty planes, believed to be JU 88's, swept over and raided the area of Priverno-Pontecorvo-Terracina-Gaeta. The damage done was very slight, one bomb had fallen on the left side of the Highway one mile north of Terracina, throwing several inches of mud onto the highway. The planes came over in waves and bombed and strafed the Terracina area from altitudes ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 feet.

Of interest was the fact that German planes raided Naples at the same hour. Although the damage was slight, it showed that the Luftwaffe in Italy still had some fight left - enough to risk assaults at night - when our fighters were based at the Foggia bases preparing for their daylight attacks.

Although this was the only notable German air assault on record during this short period of operations for IV Corps, air activity on the neighboring fronts was by no means extinct. In the area to the south of Rimini-Pisa the enemy's fighter effort was maintained at a daily average of about 100 to 120 sorties. The reports of these jabs here and there

naturally called for consequent vigilance against such attacks in our area - camouflage of gun positions and command posts was a definite necessary precaution at all times. The deployment of troops and the use of vehicles and armor over the roads was always attendant with the consideration of a probable enemy bombing or strafing attack. The only support given directly to the enemy ground troops was provided by small numbers of JU 88 bombers operating at night against concentrations of troops and motor vehicles in newly-won allied positions. The Fondi area was attacked during the nights of May 22 and 23, and the Cisterna area during the nights of May 25 and 26. Probably not more than 40 aircraft were engaged in either of these operations and the damage inflicted was not great. The fact that aircraft were over Naples during the last two of these attacks seemed to indicate that the navigational skill and training of the long-range bomber crews was very low indeed, for no bombs were dropped in the Naples area.

Since the heels of the enemy rear guard were constantly being nipped at by our relentless pursuing units, there was no need for the German high command to wonder where our forces were - this he knew. He was primarily interested in whether more Allied reinforcements were pouring into Italy, and whether another "Anzio" was imminent somewhere on the Tyrrhenian Coast. This information was necessary in his long-range planning in order to know how heavily he should defend his next chosen stand and where to place his remaining strategic reserves. Consequently German air reconnaissance was drawn from the front and directed to search for possible Allied convoys in the blue Mediterranean. This drain on his air reconnaissance for missions away from the front was a thankful asset to our freedom of maneuver behind the hill masses and in the defiladed areas, out of direct view of his ground observation posts.

3. German Tactics

To date the Battle of Italy had been for the Germans, primarily an infantry battle, where the chief part had been played by the machine gun, the mortar and the mine; the tank and self-propelled gun had seen themselves completely subordinated to the infantrymen. One of the results of the stress on the infantry arm, combined with the need on many occasions for the use of every available man, had been the cause for his other arms to be ground down to the same level; that is, for engineers and reconnaissance units to be used as ordinary infantry. Also impressed into the infantry role to delay the advancing elements of IV Corps was a hodge-podge mixture of administrative and rear echelon personnel, organized in composite groups and ordered to delay to the utmost, so that a disengagement of the bulk of the forces could take place, for a rapid dash to the north for another determined stand.

The general policy of committing as few troops as possible to the Italian front consistent with a successful blocking of the Allied advance, and the losses suffered in the withdrawal, had obliged the Germans to be sparing with their men and great economy of force had been exercised. After their defeat at Salerno they avoided committing main forces till the Winter and Gustave Lines were reached, and sought to prevent a close allied follow-up by means of rear guards, special battle-groups and strongpoints, all of which were characterized by economy in numerical strength, high automatic fire-power and mobility. The main delaying weapons had been, as mentioned earlier, machine guns, mortars and mines. Tanks and SP guns had only been used in small groups. This same pattern was woven again on the IV Corps front. Small infantry groups, in most cases mobile, equipped with a high

proportion of light machine guns and supported by tanks or self-propelled guns, contacted and opposed our advance infantry patrols.

When pressure became strong and disengagement consequently more difficult, the defending infantry group would withdraw under the fire of the heavy weapons - take up another selected position astride the avenue of approach and support the withdrawal of the other groups to the new position. In most cases this leap-frogging process was continued until the approach of darkness was an almost invariable procedure. These rear guards withdrew by bounds to selected but not to prepared positions. The pressure of our advance was dogging hard at his heels, and he was afforded little opportunity to set up an organized defensive position. In all, his tactics were contributing to a rapid disengagement of the main forces. The rear guards consigned to his mission were in most cases knocked out or pressed too hard for disengagement and surrendered only after having effected some delay, a delay that caused the probing and time-consuming maneuver of a patrol after the first burst of enemy fire.

These strongpoints were generally organized in a hodge-podge manner and were found not to be necessarily mutually supporting. They were located on commanding features astride the roads and mule trails leading to the north. Positions were frequently changed and weapons were not dug in, rendering observation from the air very difficult and thus hindering any counter-battery work.

4. IV Corps Mission Accomplished

The IV Corps advance patrols were biting ever deeper in the Lepini Mountains. A rush from one hill to the base of the other and then the

strenuous climb against the uncertainty of sniper or machine gun fire, followed by a few moments of rest and reorganization at the peak, and then a plunge down the steep reverse slope to the green valley patch below - and then over again, characterized our advance over the hilly terrain. This was only the beginning of a campaign of mountain fighting. To the soldier from the Kansan plains, Italy was nothing but a long peninsula of steep mountains arrayed one behind the other like the ranks of a massed regiment, and to the doughboy from Vermont, his increasing wonder at the enchanting sight of small walled towns and villages, hazardly perched on top of these precipitous mountains, like Sezze and Roccagorga, was cause for comparison to his own open villages nestled on the green carpet floor betwixt gentle sloping green hills.

By dusk of 30 May, the 88th Infantry Division had accomplished its mission and held its troops along the northeast boundary, awaiting the northwestward sweep of the 4th French Moroccan Division and eventual relief. The enemy had been flushed out of the area and except for running down a straggler here and there, the regiments consolidated their position and reorganized in anticipation of further action to come.

The patrol elements of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron pushed their way toward the northwest boundary of the Corps, expecting at any moment to meet the leading patrols of the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, screening the northeast sector of VI Corps. Enemy stragglers, lost from their departed units, favored discretion over valor and surrendered themselves to those relentless troopers. On the 29th, first contact was made with the right flank of VI Corps when a patrol of the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron was contacted in the vicinity of Norma, and by the 30th the 117th straddled

the Corps left boundary and continued their aggressive patrolling in the area north of the Norma-Bassiano line.

The IV Corps engineers were rapidly learning what a wholesale destruction of bridges in the zone of advance meant. Since the early days of the Salerno landings, the Germans had earned the reputation as world masters in the technique of bridge destruction. They executed demolitions whenever and wherever possible to delay our advancing forces. Suffice it to say, that it was a most uncommon sight to roll over a road and find a bridge over a stream standing intact - the only answer for this unusual fact was that the demolition crew was killed before the fuse was ignited or it beat a hasty retreat at the unexpected arrival of an infantry patrol. One or two of the bridges found intact were already prepared for demolitions. A whole serviceable bridge was the exception rather than the rule.

At any rate, a timely and opportune experience was afforded the IV Corps Engineers, because a quick glance through the mists of the future revealed that a huge engineer program of bridge construction was in the offing - hundreds of twisted destroyed bridges of all shapes and sizes were destined to lie across the routes of advance of IV Corps. The Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 1108th Engineer Combat Group immediately dug into the task of bridge and road maintenance, and not long after the advance patrols forded streams in their harassing pursuit of the enemy, a temporary bridge was set up and the rolling mobile support passed over to follow their advance.

The first two bridges that were constructed during the short period of operation for IV Corps were mute reminders to the native Lepini peasants that although this American Army was out to destroy the enemy, it was also

a creator of things essential to their pastoral lives. To this date, some of the bridges built in the heat of battle are cause for the barefooted Italian peasants who drive their cattle over the worn plankings, to reflect back to the days when the American "Soldati" of IV Corps came into their daily lives, and then left as rapidly for the north. An eight-foot, Class 40, Bailey bridge was erected to span the road running north out of the Littorian plain and into the foothills of the Lepini Mountains, just before its zig-zag climb to the town of Sezze, and a forty-foot, Class 40, Bailey bridge was constructed on the highway about a mile southwest of Priverno. As a result of the battle-wise innovation by the enemy to flood the Pontine Marshes and inundate the main roads by the erection of dams across the different canals, another chore of the engineers was to blow them up and in this manner drainage was immediately effected and the roads cleared for the use of heavy vehicles.

The rapid development of the offensive from the Anzio area called for the 88th Division to add impetus to the drive. To expedite the movement of the 88th Division to the more active sector, the Army commander directed the French Expeditionary Corps to assume the responsibilities and mission of the IV Corps with all possible speed. Time of the actual change in command was to be decided upon by the two Corps Commanders concerned.

5. IV Corps Goes Out of Action

With the enemy cleared out of the pocket formed by the VI Corps - IV Corps and the IV Corps-French Corps boundaries, and with the elements of both of these Corps rapidly driving along them to effect eventual junction, the mission of IV Corps was practically accomplished and it was only a matter of hours before it would be pinched out of action.

As the French Armored Task Force reached the extremities of Carpineto on the road to Montelanico, at noon of the 30th, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, continued the mission of aggressive patrolling to protect the maneuvering portion of the Corps sector in the north. An order from General Clark's headquarters directed the movement of the 349th Infantry to the II Corps area. Assembled in the clearing at the spur of the Roccasecca Ridge about a mile northeast of Priverno, the Regiment made preparation for the road trip, and at 1400 of the 30th, with the aid of ninety vehicles from Fifth Army, the regiment closed in the II Corps area, completing the initial stage of the transfer of the 88th Division to II Corps control. This was the first unit to mark the stripping of IV Corps of troops.

In addition to the movement of the 88th Infantry Division, attached Corps and Army troops were to be relieved and shifted rapidly to the II Corps sector where there was an urgent need for additional forces. The Corps artillery battalions, engineer battalions and service units were to be transported as promptly as transportation became available. Other units could be moved only after the roads and transportation were available subsequent to the completion of the 88th Division transfer; priority to this unit was dictated by the urgent necessity existing on the neighboring II Corps front.

The traffic control section of G-4 was realizing for the first time the problems connected with the movement of an infantry division and corps attachments over the road nets in the zone, and was set to the task of effecting a smooth coordinated movement of the troops out of the area. By noon of the 30th, the 340th Quartermaster Truck Company was relieved and attached to II Corps.

After evacuating the Mt. Della Difesa area to be occupied by the French, the 350th Infantry reverted to Division control on authorization of the Corps, and later in the day also proceeded to move to the II Corps area. This movement continued far into the night.

The 351st Regimental Combat Team remained to be relieved the next day. Operations Instructions No. 3, Headquarters IV Corps, directed that plans be prepared by the 88th Division to effect the relief of the regiment on the 31st. Battalion Commanders were made responsible to contact the French liaison officers at Bassiano and there to transfer the responsibility for the sector.

This last day of the month with its high scattered clouds and not too warm sun was an ideal day for the moving of troops. Just as the shadows of the Lepini Mountains were beginning to dissolve into early morning dawn, the 6th Moroccan Infantry of the 4th Mountain Division moved its units to the relief of the remaining American infantrymen. The 351st Regimental Combat Team, having negotiated and effected the transfer of its zone to the French in these early morning hours began its move to the II Corps area, where it closed at 1600. The remainder of the 88th Division cleared the area later in the day, and a heartfelt farewell was expressed by the IV Corps for the good job done. Although the days of the future could not be foreseen, it was generally felt throughout the command that the "Blue Devils" with the blue clover-leaf patch would again be stringing out their signal wires along the roads in the IV Corps zone. The remainder of Corps artillery battalions and miscellaneous service troops had either closed in new sites or were on the move prior to midnight.

The apprehension of a German straggler in the vicinity of Norma by the

117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, which continued its mission of patrolling the Norma-Bassiano road, constituted the only contact with the enemy during the day. Although the 88th Division was entirely relieved in its sector by the 4th Mountain Moroccan Division, the complete relief of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron had yet to be effected. It was expected that the Goums of the French Forces would begin passing through the Reconnaissance Squadron early the next day and then the time of relief of the entire Corps sector by the French would be decided upon by the two Corps Commanders.

The next day, 1 June 1944, at precisely 1400, the responsibility for the IV Corps sector of operations passed to the control of the French Expeditionary Corps. It had been decided during a meeting of the two Corps Commanders that the exact hour for the passing of command would be after each American unit in the line had been relieved of responsibility by the French. With the relinquishing of command by Major General Crittenberger, the boundary separating the IV Corps and the French sector was automatically eliminated, and the IV Corps reverted to Army reserve.

The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was withdrawn from the area where it had been screening the relief of the 88th Division, and even prior to the passing of the sector to the French, was relieved from attachment to the IV Corps and placed under the control of II Corps.

At the end of the day all attached troops, with one or two small exceptions, had been relieved and were enroute to the action in the north. The IV Corps Headquarters made preparation for movement to Sabaudia, along the coast above Terracina, there in Army reserve, to await further commitments to action.

B. CONCLUSION

It appears evident, from the facts and conditions recorded in the foregoing narrative report that the Corps Commander was required to make very few decisions of an important tactical nature during this period, the reason being that the forces had already been properly employed, and were in the process of seizing the final objectives at the time the IV Corps assumed control of the sector. It became only a matter of time until the Corps was literally pinched out of the action by the gradual advance of the French to the northwest along the boundary between the two Corps. The consideration of terrain, methods of accomplishing the mission, and other tactical problems were of minor significance to this headquarters. The mission assigned IV Corps was rapidly accomplished and the troops attached to it were promptly moved to the north in order to participate in the continuation of the Fifth Army drive on Rome.

As previously stated, this short period of operations was a boon to IV Corps. There are two ways in which a unit can be placed into action: One is where an emergency arises and the eyes of the high command are cast about for an immediate stop-gap and they fall upon an unsuspecting reserve unit, newly arrived in the theatre. Still wobbly with sea legs, it is suddenly sucked into the swirling whirlpool and forced to fight as best as its inherent resources will allow; oftentimes heavily engaged for a long period before the pressure of the emergency is eased back to normalcy, at which time the unit is withdrawn for a much-needed period of rest and rehabilitation. In this manner an accelerated course in battle experience, so to speak, is received, but oftentimes it is costly in lives and the resultant loss of morale. The second way is the manner in which IV Corps was eased into combat,

The chain of events offered this unit an opportunity for gradual orientation to both the terrain of this strange, but interesting country, in which it was to fight, and to the action in which it was to partake; and, when it was committed, it was destined to be for only a short period - approximately five full days. During this time the ability to maneuver troops, shift them from one position to another, change fires from one target to another, and effect reliefs was acquired. Every staff section was put to a test from which they were readily prepared to change conventional SOP's when experience presented more practical means.

The supply and evacuation system was the first to be given a scrupulous study. The last five days had brought forth the realization that transportation and movement of supplies to the troops was a serious problem to be coped with, when all units were continually moving. Although the Fifth Army's system of supply, maintained by the establishment of well-advanced truck-heads, with stock levels sufficient to meet all emergencies, so far had proved very satisfactory during the rather slow advance, however, G-4 felt that an alternate system was necessary to meet the contingency of a fast-moving pursuit. This was a problem to be mulled over in the minds of supply personnel for many days to come.

Another concrete point that struck a resounding note during this five-day period of operations originated in the G-1 Section. Although the foregoing narrative report of patrol clashes and enemy harassing artillery fire may lull the reader into believing that it was a bloodless pursuit of a withdrawing foe, desperately intent on avoiding any major clash, it must be remembered that the Corps mission was attained only through untold hardships

and the loss of American lives. The casualties for IV Corps in five days reached 429, of which the 29 killed in action were from the 88th Infantry Division, the remainder being sick, wounded or injured from all units. What few replacements arrived were adequate for the slow advance in this short period but once again, the possibility of a long and rapid chase was cause to question the replacement system now in use. The existent procedure was to request a group of replacements from a replacement pool depot, far to the rear. Upon arrival and after a few days, they were parcelled out by the divisions for absorption into their units; in many cases this happened during an actual operation. There is no doubt that his sharp transition from a relatively peaceful replacement depot into a front line fox hole was cause for mental shock and loss of morale. The real crying need, therefore, was that each division carry along its own replacements. Under this system, they would gradually absorb the frightening sensation of the first introduction to combat, allowing them to arrive at their peak of usefulness as confident, battle-wise soldiers. At any rate, if the division was engaged in a hard, fast pursuit and continually on the move, there was its own replacement pool of seasoned men to choose from without the need of slowing down or halting to await the refilling of depleted ranks with replacements. The Germans who were engaged in the war since 1939 had adopted this system, only after experiences gained from the blitzkriegs across northern Europe.

Approximately 94 Prisoners of War had passed through the Prisoner of War cage, and the G-2 Section was fast building up its files on the enemy order of battle; personality files were beginning to thicken, and the art of interrogation of prisoners was learned by the interrogation teams. Thus

far a motley smattering of prisoners were credited to the Corps; slant-eyes, heavy-set Russians, bewildered at the sight of American industrial ingenuity, unknown in the Siberian Steppes or in the Cascasus; blonde, light-skinned Czechs, melancholy, half-hearted, and awkward in their German field-grey tunics, and Germans, most of whom were still convinced that ultimate victory was their privileged heritage. How beautiful Rome looked to them when their battalions passed through to the south on the way to block the American advance; for consolation, some wondered when the weary war would end and they might again see the world-renowned sights of the Eternal City.

Speaking of Rome, the Italian capitol was only a few days away from the Allies. VI Corps cracked the Lanuvio bastion, and on the evening of 3 June, American G.I.'s moving north along the heights of the Alban Hills, were almost within sight of the dome of St. Peter's Cathedral. Armor and infantry of both II and VI Corps moved swiftly on 4 June against light and scattered resistance and by darkness, Fifth Army troops had seized the line of the Tiber River amidst the enthusiastic welcome of the cheering Roman populace. With tanks guarding the approaches to the bridges, weary troops slept on the streets, their first night in the Roman capitol, while higher headquarters to the rear were awake laying plans to pursue the foe to the north - a mission in which IV Corps was to make a lion's contribution.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER III --- - - - -

INTO THE CHASE NORTH OF ROME

A. SABAUDIA

On 2 June IV Corps found itself again a troop-less headquarters, but this time strengthened with experience and knowledge of actual combat to fill in this emptiness created by lack of command. Once again the tents were taken down, personnel loaded and the road movement to Sabaudia began. The roar of the motors in convoy drowned out the diminishing thunder of artillery to the north as the trucks descended from the foothills of the Lepini Mountains, back onto the dusty roads and the flatness of the Pontine Marshes. In Army reserve at Sabaudia, along the coast above Terracina, IV Corps rested awaiting the next call to combat. The opportunity to swim in the Mediterranean for the first time, was available for many of the men, but the headquarters did not remain idle. Daily conferences, with all sections in attendance, were personally conducted by General Crittenberger; what lessons were brought to the front in the last few days were re-emphasized and an up-to-date follow-up of the pursuing Fifth Army was continually traced on the War Room map. Allied planes in varied formations zoomed overhead through the blue Italian skies to break the steady beat of the waves on the sanded beach at Sabaudia. Along with the constant traffic moving to the north, these signs of the pursuit were daily reminders that the Corps was soon to find its place in the line again.

The front was fast pulling away, closer and closer to the heart of the enemy advanced the only American Army in continental Europe. On the 3d and

4th of June the Fifth Army advanced twenty-two miles and captured the Eternal City, the first Axis capitol to fall. Rome was yielded, its historic monuments saved by the speed of the Allied advance, as the Nazis retreated north without fighting for the city. They had suffered sixty thousand casualties since the Allied offensive began; over twenty thousand prisoners were taken and five divisions were badly chopped up. Field Marshal Kesselring's Tenth and Fourteenth Armies, objective of the Battle of Italy, were not entirely destroyed, but to the contrary were effecting an organized mass withdrawal after incurring heavy losses. The weary troops of VI and II Corps did not stop to celebrate their triumphal entry into Rome. All through a winter of grim fighting at Cassino and Anzio they had struggled to reach this city. Now they were in hot pursuit of the stubborn foe.

When news of this military prize was received at Sabaudia, the joy expressed by the personnel of IV Corps was kindled with a gratifying feeling that some contribution to this eventful day had been made by them. The liberation of the small towns of Sermoneta, Bassiano, Roccasecca, Norma, and the many other villages and hamlets, were primary requisites before the liberation of the large Fascist capitol could be effected; analogous to the rungs of the ladder that must be climbed before the choice plum can be plucked from the tree.

It was not long before their happiness simmered down to passive contentment and idle curiosity as to whether the Roman arches, amphitheatres and famous statues of art were as stately in fact as they appeared in the study books of ancient history. While absorbed with such reveries at Sabaudia, it was not known to any of the troops that at the very moment the

worst June gales in forty years were sweeping over the English Channel and a huge trained army was loaded on thousands of ships, poised and waiting in England ports for General Eisenhower's order to start the great invasion of Western Europe; the supreme test of the combined armies of the United States and the British Empire, the largest and most dangerous military operation ever to be undertaken by these forces. Like a bombshell smashing the reverent silence of a churchyard, the news broke into the tented camp. Six minutes after midnight, 6 June 1944, American airborne troops flew over the enemy coast and parachuted behind enemy defenses ten minutes later. The long-awaited D-Day for the Allied might, long poised in England, was now a concrete fact and no longer a plan - as troops waded and climbed ashore at 0730 on fifty miles of French coastline, Operations "Overlord" was a success. The timing was just right - as Rome was seized the Allied world surged out of the dark days of doubt, and the next day when the great invasion battered its way onto the continent on the west, the scale balanced in our favor and victory, somewhere in the future, was ours. The Russians from the east, the great invasion from the west, and the squeezing pressure from the south, all aimed at the vaunted impregnable fortress of Germany, evermore molded the crazed spirit of the enemy to the die-hard theory of "to the last man".

The warm summer climate of June was a gift bequeathed to fit in with the pursuit of Kesselring's forces. The days were becoming longer and the sunny Italian skies most ideal for the missions of the devastating Allied Air Force. The moonlit clear nights added to the around-the-clock air assaults which allowed no rest to the harried Germans. For once the enemy realized that he was not in a position to dictate his desire to choose his

ground and fight -- he grasped the only alternative that the pressure of circumstances offered him -- to withdraw as best as possible across 175 miles of hilly terrain to the next naturally strong defense belt, the so-called Gothic Line in the high Apennine Mountains protecting the industrialized Po River Valley. Toward the mountain range, far away to the north, he looked as yearningly as the desperate shipwrecked sailor looks toward the speck of land on the distant horizon while floundering in shark-infested waters.

The Fifth Army drive from the Garigliano River line to Rome, across the Tiber River, and then on to the northwest, was so rapid that the German withdrawal became little better than a disorganized retreat. Except for minor delaying tactics by scattered rear-guard elements, the German armies of Kesselring, shaken and mauled as they had been, soon could offer little resistance of consequence. With the exception of the fanatical die-hard Nazis, the success of the great invasion in Normandy was a severe blow to the morale of the Wehrmacht. Large stores of military supplies and much ordnance equipment were left behind intact, and the capture of this materiel in almost countless quantities stamped the character of this hasty retrograde movement of the enemy.

Averaging daily advances of fifteen miles after the fall of Rome, the troops of II and VI Corps slashed northward over roads littered with the wreckage of tanks, trucks, armored cars, horsedrawn artillery pieces and vehicles of all types. The French Expeditionary Corps, which had been pinched out in the convergence of the two American Corps on the city, had been moving up along the right flank of Fifth Army until British troops of the Eighth Army came up abreast of II Corps. The French were beginning to assemble their divisions between Highways 6 and 7, south of Rome.

The Eternal City, a jewelled prize, was now safely under Allied control. The next immediate objective was the seizure of Rome's seaport, Civitavecchia, and the group of enemy airfields lying around Viterbo. Civitavecchia lay some forty miles northwest of the city on Highway 1, while Viterbo was approximately the same distance from Rome and about twenty miles inland from the sea. An excellent road net led to Viterbo, Highway 2 being the major route, but other parallel hard-surfaced roads also ran to this city. Civitavecchia was in the VI Corps zone on the Army left and Viterbo in that of II Corps on the right flank of Fifth Army. On 6 June the chase was continued by all units in their respective zones; however, late that day Fifth Army published Operations Instructions No. 28, which directed that faster, more mobile troops be employed in the pursuit. This order also alerted the French Expeditionary Corps to prepare for relief of II Corps and directed IV Corps to prepare plans immediately to take over the direction of the attack in the VI Corps area.

This order authorized General Crittenberger to place key personnel on duty with Headquarters of VI Corps at once, for the purpose of orientation and additional experience. Details for such arrangements were left with the two Corps Commanders concerned. Simultaneously with the relief of the VI Corps by this Headquarters, II Corps was to be relieved by the French Expeditionary Corps, which would then occupy the right zone of the two Corps front of the Fifth Army, the IV Corps on the left moving forward along the coast.

B. SABAUDIA INTO THE LINE AT TARQUINIA

On the morning of 8 June the excitement of breaking camp was veiled by the stoic expressions of amateur veterans, who on the surface

appeared unperturbed that another routine move to the north was in order. Under their woolen shirts the hearts beat harder with the news that the day's road-march would bring them close to the banks of the Tiber and within sight of Rome. Vivid tales of the bursting joy of the Italian populace in this huge Roman capitol, with its wide thoroughfares and modern white buildings, were carried back a few days earlier by a few fortunate members who rode into the city with the advance troops of Fifth Army. The Army newspaper, "Stars and Stripes", portrayed photos of well-dressed buxom girls in the arms of unshaven GI's, garlanded with flowers and waving wine bottles over the heads of surging, smiling crowds.

Once rolling on the highway, the crowded traffic of trucks and jeeps, all headed for Rome, added to the excitement. It wasn't long before the convoy was slowed down by long columns of returning refugees, stained, dirty and without shoes, plodding on ahead to seek out their hastily-left homes. Old men and women, with babes in their arms, and children tagging at their feet, shuffled along bent by the weight they carried, and as if their dust-covered kerchiefs and hats were intolerably heavy, their heads were bowed. The pallor of long fatigue was on their faces, most noticeable by contrast with their eyes which shone with kindled interest as to what the devastated country would look like around the next corner, ever closer to their homes. With downcast eyes, they took little interest in what was passing, but plodded on behind the heels of the individual in front. Nearly all carried heavy loads and were bent beneath their burdens, but some were remarkably cheerful and waved. They were going home, and few of them yet knew what had happened to their homes. The eagerness for the sight of the great city, from which these refugees were streaming, was

melted down by somer reflections on the destruction of war. On the road passing through a mass of rubble which bespoke a once thriving hamlet or village, were seen some refugees sitting atop their meager belongings and weeping, with never a glance at the dust-coated traffic weaving its noisy way toward Rome.

After a tiresome ride of 58 miles, the lead vehicles pulled into the small town of Cecchignolletta, just south of the famous Tiber River and about seven miles from the Italian capitol. Troops were quartered in an old college building, once the barracks of German troops garrisoned outside of Rome. The paintings of art, in the nude, on the walls of this old engineer school, were conspicuous for their perversity, and were cause to wonder whether the former German occupants signed away their homesickness for beer, pretzels and frauleins in far away Germany, to the melahcholy strains of "Lili Marlene".

The next day the Headquarters left early to pass through Rome. As the loaded vehicles picked their way through the broad streets between the tall white buildings and rolled by the cool green parks, there was no cheering crowd, for the city had returned to its normal modd and to some approximation of its normal conditions. Civilians shuffled along the sidewalks and occasionally glanced to the street to wonder how many more American "Soldati" were to pass. The sight of the nattily-dressed policeman, with his high-crowned blue helmet fastened by a shiny black chin-strap, not unlike that of the British Bobby, was a wondrous one to behold. The shops appeared to be well-stocked and were open for business, a few tram-cars were running, and a great city moving in the throes of daily business life seemed to be the tone. No flowers were thrown nor

was any wine handed forth. The Army of Liberation had become merely the latest of the many armies which, in the long course of history, had entered the city for purposes of their own. The citizens went about their business, intent upon their own affairs, and charming girls in billowing summer frocks rode their bicycles uphill and down with hardly a glance at the passing convoy of trucks and jeeps. Five days after the pompous celebration rendered on the day of liberation, the victors were clearly regarded as heavy-sent customers, who were more likely to pay for wine than did the occupying foreign armies of the past. Thus Rome was entered and passed, only to be again visited when Fifth Army hibernated during the Apennine winter and rest centers were opened in the city for the entertainment of war-weary troops.

The constant whirl of the wheels of the traffic moving north and south on Highway 1, Via Aurelia, raised clouds of dust, which coated white the telephone lines, bushes and trees along the sides of the road as if to mimic the pattern of new fallen snow of early winter, not yet shaken by the breeze. As the road edged toward the coast, about 20 miles out of Rome, the fresh breezes of the Tyrrhenian announced the view of the sea, and from there on to just south of Civitavecchia the dusty convoy of IV Corps Headquarters enjoyed the ride, almost always within sight of the blue sea. Over to the right of the road the terrain was featured by gentle rolling hills, which were not broken until toward the end of the day when the hill mass to the east of the coastal city of Civitavecchia came into view. Bedded down for the night in Italian villas in S. Severa, southeast of Civitavecchia, it was clear that the pursuit was still on and that the fluid front was not distant. Wreckage of all kind burned and smoked on the sides of Via Aurelia, while flashes on the northern horizon spelled the bursts of artillery.

fire. Truck parks and supply installations, sheltered under the clusters of trees were more in evidence. The telephone wires, knotted and intertwined like spaghetti, lay heavier on the branches and poles.

Early in the morning of the next day, 10 June 1944, the Headquarters started its movement toward Tarquinia. It rolled through Civitavecchia, where it was slowed down considerably by engineer and demolition crews, still in the process of removing demolitions and strengthening the temporary bridges and by-passes. Already Fifth Army port engineers were clearing the harbor of destroyed sunken ships and mines, and preparing it for the water-borne traffic carrying supplies for the advancing American Army. Standing forlornly amid twisted rails and smashed cars in the marshalling yards of Civitavecchia, were two big German railroad guns. Those tremendous guns were 280-mm in size, with tubes 65 feet in length. It was believed they were the long-range weapons whose shrieking shells made them famous as the "Anzio Express". Unable to take them along in the retreat, the Germans had spiked them and left the remains behind for study by Allied ordnance experts. Just as "Big Bertha" made her niche in the history of the Great War, so did the "Anzio Express" achieve immortality in this one.

Further along Via Aurelia, approaching Tarquinia, were strewn at irregular intervals, wrecked guns and trucks, smashed, twisted, and burned by the strafing and bombing attacks of Allied planes on the fleeing enemy columns. This scrap pile lengthened with our advance along the coastal route and less and less was Kesselring's army able to move with the mobility it possessed at the time of the Salerno landings.

Even before the Headquarters bivouacked in the olive grove-wheatfield area a couple of miles below Tarquinia, the Corps Commander, General

Crittenberger was already making the necessary last minute arrangements with General Truscott for the relief of VI Corps and the eventual assumption of command of the new zone of operations. Simultaneously with the relief of the VI Corps by this Headquarters, II Corps was to be relieved by the French Expeditionary Corps. When the hour of relief was accomplished, it was planned for IV Corps to have under command the veteran 34th and 36th Division in addition to attached Corps and Army troops. In effect, the Fifth Army was preparing to drive the enemy northward at an even faster pace, giving him no opportunity to regain his balance and regroup his fleeing forces.

With the swift and relentless pursuit of General Joachim Lemelsen's Fourteenth Army in mind, General Crittenberger had initiated a request for the attachment of certain reconnaissance and armored units which could be utilized to augment the speed of maneuver, strength, and hitting power of the command. The coastal plain, never exceeding ten miles in width, offered ideal terrain for the use of such units marked for speed. This narrow corridor along the coast forms one continuous lane of advance and was made to order for reconnaissance and armored units. The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, the 1st Armored Group, and the 6th Armored Field Artillery Group consisting of self-propelled 105-mm Howitzers, were made available for use by the Corps, and plans for accelerating the advance were completed, these to become effective at twelve noon of 11 June.

When VI Corps pulled out of Rome and continued its coastal drive for Civitavecchia, it progressively began to shed its great strength once amassed at Anzio. Seventh Army, on the other hand, was building its strength for the coming invasion of Southern France. Now that Rome was taken and

given to the Allied world, the gradual stripping of Fifth Army was necessitated by this new venture. At the time IV Corps was to relieve VI Corps, the gradual regrouping of Fifth Army units had already been initiated.

The 45th Infantry Division which played a reserve role in the VI Corps advance from Rome was relieved on 8 June and moved east of Rome, to later depart for Naples and to add the saga of the Southern France invasion to its many battle laurels. With it went the 1st Special Force and the 509th Parachute Battalion. The two British Infantry Divisions, the 1st and 56th, were already preparing for other areas; eventually the 1st went to the British 5th Corps, and the 56th Division headed for the hotter climates of the Middle East. The 1st Armored Division, which was given the mission of spearheading the pursuit of the enemy to the north of Rome in the VI Corps zone, was reverted for rest and reorganization to Fifth Army Reserve at Lake Bracciano on 10 June, the day preceding the relief of VI Corps. When IV Corps seized the reins for the continued pursuit of the Fourteenth Army, there were only two divisions and miscellaneous Corps and Army units with which to keep driving the enemy.

II Corps likewise suffered the gradual loss of strength. First to leave was the 3d Division, which was detached on 6 June to perform garrison duty in Rome and later to be assigned to Seventh Army.

In addition to the 36th and 34th Infantry Division, IV Corps was to have the 361st Infantry Regimental Combat Team, which arrived in Italy ahead of its parent organization, the 91st Infantry Division, and the 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team, temporarily assigned to Army on 26 May to obtain 3 weeks' combat experience. The 442d Regimental

Combat Team, composed mostly of Americans of Japanese ancestry, was also made available to IV Corps.

1. Plans for the Pursuit

While General Crittenberger was forming his plans for the rapid pursuit of the enemy, the Headquarters was readying itself for the activity of the following day. The Signal Section supervised the tie-in of communications to the 34th and 36th Infantry Divisions.

Major General Fred L. Walker, commanding the 36th Infantry Division, was fully informed of the plan outlined for his Texan Division, which in short, was for them to advance along the coast in the direction of Pisa, making the main effort of the Corps. At that time he was also advised that the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, less Troop "C", would be attached to his Division to assure strong and rapid reconnaissance on the Division front. As the 34th Division was in Corps Reserve northwest of Civitavecchia, training and resting, it was felt that the addition of the 117th Cavalry to the lone infantry division in the line would aid materially in increasing the impetus of the advance.

The IV Corps Commander proposed to employ his other Reconnaissance Squadron, the 91st, with certain armored reinforcements as a covering force, in the right half of the Corps Zone, with the mission of advancing northwest through the hilly Canino area. The 91st Reconnaissance Squadron (Reinforced) or Task Force Ellis as it was to become known, was to continue the advance previously assigned to the 1st Armored Division before it left VI Corps to become Fifth Army reserve at Lake Bracciano. These intentions and plans were communicated to VI Corps and to the Unit Commanders concerned on 10 June 1944, the day before IV Corps took over command.

With its forward elements approaching the Orbetello defile, the 36th Division had, for the first time, encountered the German 162d Infantry Division, just as IV Corps was about to assume command. The scattered remnants of the 92d German Division had vanished from the scene. Having been relieved of its arduous rear-guard mission by the fresher 162d, it had moved to the northwest to lick its wounds and reorganize. Thus, immediately prior to assumption of command by the new Corps headquarters, the enemy committed a fresh division in an effort to stem the tide of our rapid advance toward the still unfinished Gothic Line which, extending along the Apennines from La Spezia to Rimini, would bar the way to the fertile, verdant valley of the Po.

The next day, 11 June 1944, marked the first day of hard continuous combat for IV Corps that was to continue uninterruptedly until the complete German surrender in Italy. At noon, IV Corps relieved Major General Truscott's VI Corps, and with two infantry divisions assumed the mission and responsibilities of the left zone on the Fifth Army front. The 34th Infantry Division in Corps reserve since 9 June, continued refitting and training in an area northwest of Civitavecchia, while the 36th Infantry Division, in the line, continued its advance along the coast toward Orbetello.

On this same eventful day, the battering invasion forces in Normandy were cutting deeper into France. The landings were everywhere successful, although bitterly contested, and in the first five days of the great invasion, 16 Allied divisions crossed the Channel and stormed ashore to meet the 14 enemy divisions concentrated under General Rommel, the erstwhile sly old fox of North Africa.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER IV - - - - -

THE CHASE IS ON

A. TERRAIN FROM ORBITELLO TO THE ARNO RIVER

When VI Corps left the front to its successor, the IV Corps, the Fifth Army line on the coastal side had been pushed nearly sixty-five miles north of Rome. VI Corps and II Corps had secured two vital objectives north of the city, the port of Civitavecchia, and the air-fields of Viterbo. The terrain covered thus far by the Army was no longer of consequence to the advancing troops of IV Corps, but for the purposes of best illustrating the comparison of the terrain lying in the IV Corps route of advance, to that already traversed, the following general study will treat to some extent the ground over which the soil had been reddened by the still warm blood of troops of VI and II Corps, and in detail, the ground destined to be trodden by the troops of IV Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps in their new drive for the Arno River Line.

It was nearly 175 miles north of Rome to the next naturally strong German defense belt; the so-called Gothic Line in the high Apennine Mountain, protecting the industrialized Po River Valley. On the west this line was anchored in the mountains north of Pisa and stretched eastward to Rimini on the Adriatic Coast. About 20 to 30 miles south of the mountain defenses, the Arno River flows westward through Florence and Pisa to the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Fifth Army's zone of operations from Rome to the Arno thus covered a section of Italy approximately 160 miles long by 45 miles wide. IV Corps was assigned a zone of operations which at all times ran along the Tyrrhenian

coast, and for the first thirty days in combat the width of the Corps front varied from approximately 17 to 21 miles, but later attained a maximum width of 31 miles on the general east-west line of Pomerance and remained roughly the same width to the southern reaches of the meandering Arno River.

Even as Rome was taken, plans were under way for the invasion of southern France, using many troops from Fifth Army. With this anticipated reduction in strength of Fifth Army, Eighth Army took over nearly three-quarters of the widening Italian front. As the two armies worked their way up the peninsula, the under-belly of Italy on the Tyrrhenian Coast expanded in girth, as the coastline slanted northwestward.

The major portion of the 6,000 square miles covered by Fifth Army operations was mountainous; however, there were no natural strong defense lines such as characterized the country between Naples and Rome. The terrain was rough, and in many places hard to negotiate with vehicles, but in mid-summer, without the handicap of bad weather, it could not be said to have been tremendously difficult. In a north-south direction the terrain was naturally divided into two sections, the plain along the Tyrrhenian Sea and the more mountainous part east to the Army boundary. The coastal plain never exceeded ten miles in width, and occasionally, for a short distance, the mountains came down to the sea. The eastern boundary laid out for IV Corps, which at points was inland twenty-five or thirty miles, presented both types of terrain - the whole of the level coastal area, and also a sizeable chunk of the difficult mountains. The narrow corridor along the coast formed one continuous lane of advance, but other natural avenues of northward approach were not found until

within twenty miles of the Arno, where the valleys of the Elsa and Era Rivers begin. North of Grosseto the country was split lengthwise by a ridge running northwest-southeast, averaging in height from 1,200 to 1,500 feet.

Inland from the coast areas east-west, natural phase-lines were hard to find. When the valley of the Tiber was left behind, the country stretched northward in one mass of undulating high ground to the Arno, the mountains varying only in height and slope. The hills in the eastern part of the zone were slightly higher than on the west. The average altitude did not exceed 1,500 feet, though numerous peaks stood out above that elevation. There were no east-west lines of any consequence, for the backbones of the mountains ran more or less in a northeast-southwesterly direction and lesser ridges were jumbled together at all angles with narrow valleys between. Except for a hill mass near the coast around Civitavecchia, the country for fifty miles north of Rome was featured by gentle, rolling hills. From there, the valley of the Ombrone River formed a broad flat area around Grosseto, which extended well inland from the coastal plain. About twenty miles north of Grosseto, the steepest mountains began - they stood glaring southward as though in challenge to the troops of General Crittenberger's IV Corps, soon to plod into and over them. There was rough country for another twenty miles, which culminated in a general summit on an east-west line through Volterra, lying on the right flank of the IV Corps zone of responsibility; from this line northward the hills were less steep and sloped toward the valley of the Arno. Many of these hills were barren.

Only two sizeable rivers cut across the line of the IV Corps area, south of the Arno River. These were the Ombrone, which ran into the Tyrrhenian just south of Grosseto, and the Cecina, which flowed into

the same sea within sight of the church towers of the city of Cecina. Of the two, the Ombrone was much the larger and presented the greater problem, but both rivers were at low water stage during the summer; the Cecina was easily fordable at many points. Neither stream was of great consequence to the forces operating in the eastern half of the Fifth Army zone, since only the headwaters were encountered in that area. But to the IV Corps troops on the western half of the Army zone, there was naturally more difficulty to be experienced owing to the fact that the Ombrone was wide and sluggish as it neared the sea, and its broad valley was cut with canals and drainage ditches to a certain extent. The Cecina was comparatively narrow along its entire course. The Arno River was much larger than either of the others, with a continuous wet gap of between 65 and 600 feet, the average width being from 200 to 250 feet. It was subject to great changes in water level, at flood stage often rising as much as 30 feet. Due to this characteristic, an extensive levee system had been built on both banks. The levees varied in height from 20 to 30 feet and were from 50 to 100 feet wide. The banks of the stream itself were about 10 feet high near its mouth, 40 feet in its central sector, falling off to about 20 feet in the Florence area. Where the Arno entered the coastal plain, it flowed through a flat section which expanded into a valley 10 to 15 miles wide as the river neared the sea.

Two main national highways ran the entire length of the Army zone. Along the coast was Highway 1 (Via Aurelia), almost always within sight of the Tyrrhenian Sea. History tells us that the sandalled feet of Caesar's Legions pounded this same ancient highway on their forced marches to subjugate Gaul or Germania for annexation to the expansive Roman Empire. It was

a most striking coincidence that the combat boots of the veteran troops of IV Corps pounded the same historical route in pursuit of the harried Germans, descendants of these same Huns of ancient Germania. Between Cecina and Leghorn, Via Aurelia twisted through mountains which came down to the sea; the remainder of its route was along comparatively flat ground. Highway 1 was a principal axis of advance leading to Civitavecchia, Grosseto, Piombino, Cecina, Leghorn and into Pisa. Of these main cities Civitavecchia, Piombino and Leghorn were excellent ports, especially the latter, which had extensive harbor facilities and was the site of the former Italian Naval Academy. Highway 2 (Via Cassia) roughly paralleled the coastline about 35 miles inland through the mountains and the hills and was more crooked than the coast road. This road lay roughly in the center of the French Expeditionary Corps zone of operations. Fewer large cities were connected by this highway which, after leaving Rome, travelled through Viterbo, embraced the eastern shore of Lago Di Bolsena, into Siena, Poggibonsi and thence into Florence. At Poggibonsi, the road curved eastward out of the Fifth Army zone, but a good secondary route continued on through Castelfiorentino to the Arno River west of Empoli.

Five improved highways formed an excellent lateral road net. The first of these north of Rome was Highway 1 bis. This road, already passed by the advance elements of VI Corps and used as one of the routes of supply in the communications zone, turned inland from Highway 1 about ten miles north of Civitavecchia and connected with Highway 2 at Vetrella, eight miles west of Viterbo. Highway 74 left the coast eighteen miles south of Grosseto and cut through the hills into the French Expeditionary Corps area, about three miles west of Pitigliano, to meet Highway 2 near Lake Bolsena, twenty miles

north of Viterbo. The next connecting link was Highway 73, which curved northeastward from Highway 1, skirted the north edge of the Ombrone Valley and led to Siena. Highway 68 ran eastward from Cecina, through Volterra, to Poggibonsi. The last main artery, Highway 67, was built along the south bank of the Arno and extended from Pisa to Florence.

In addition to these roads, some of which were metalled and all of which were wide enough for unimpeded two-way traffic, there was an extensive network of small roads. Many of these were narrow but few were hard-surfaced; consequently, when it rained the military traffic was impeded by mud, but lost in dust clouds when the roads were parched by the hot Italian sun. North of Grosseto a north-south secondary road suitable for military use ran through Massa Marittima, Pomerance, and Fossacco, and entered Highway 67 at Pontedera. From Cecina a good road was available to Pisa, parallel to Highway 1, but inland from Leghorn. Another alternate route branched from Highway 73 about ten miles southwest of Siena, by-passed that city to the west and ended at Poggibonsi.

The population within the area of Fifth Army was fairly dense, especially along the coast and in the valleys in the IV Corps zone of operations. Even in the mountainous sections, running along the IV Corps right boundary, the country was well-settled, with many small towns and villages and numerous farms. The farmhouses, villages and towns were almost without exception perched atop hills, some of which were very steep; most of the roads that climbed to them were very crooked, with heavy grades and switchbacks. These towns and farmhouses were invariably constructed of stone, whitewashed, and formed excellent cover for defenders. Although many of these country places showed no transference of the magnificence

of the Roman palaces and villas, with the ampler setting of fountain-cooled terraces and stately walks, they were, nevertheless, white-washed country homes, airy and rustically comfortable. Universally they smacked of rural simplicity and the devices of the farm, particularly accented by clucking or mooing of the ever-present fowl or long-horned cattle, destined to be forever silenced when the retreating line of looting Germans passed them by. The majority of the hundreds of bridges and culverts along the mountain roads were also of stone. Cultivation was widespread, even on the terraced steep slopes, where it consisted mainly of vineyards and olive groves. The valleys were well sprinkled with trees, mostly in scattered clumps. Throughout the southern half of the Corps zone most of the high ground was covered with scrubby trees and brush, not very tall but high enough to afford good concealment. In the central section the trees were taller, sized like our New England maples. At the extreme northern portion, however, many of the summits were denuded and devoid of cover.

B. THE ENEMY SITUATION

It is not known at exactly what point in time the German High Command accepted the fact that for Germany a victorious conclusion of the war, in the best tradition of the 1939 and 1940 "Blitz" campaigns, was no longer possible. Whenever it may have been, there is no doubt that since the middle of 1943, the Germans had been pursuing a policy of holding on tenaciously to Axis territory, with the dual objective of extracting the maximum possible in material resources, and of keeping the war as far away as possible from the Reich and its somewhat unreliable satellites. This strategy had been evidenced in the protracted defense of the great salient in the Southern Ukraine and in the blocking tactics adopted in

Italy. And now Hitler was desperately doing his utmost to stave off the Allied invasion, already successfully intrenched in Normandy.

As the German Fourteenth Army fled north of Rome, it could be considered an army in name only. From 11 May to the 4th of June the German Armies in Italy had lost more than 1,500 vehicles, 110 pieces of field artillery, 125 pieces of self-propelled artillery and anti-tank guns, 122 tanks and over 15,000 Prisoners of War. Casualties in killed and wounded were much greater. The vast majority of this loss had come from Fourteenth Army, and of its field divisions only the Herman Goering Panzer Division still remained an effective fighting unit. This division had been pushed east of the Tiber River by VI Corps' breakthroughs at Valmontone, as had most of the German mobile and armored units. An endless trail of smashed wreckage was abandoned by Fourteenth Army in its disorderly flight; much more was destroyed by far-ranging Allied planes.

In the overall picture of Kesselring's forces in Italy, it was estimated that four German divisions could be written off as virtually destroyed, with five others in serious condition from the poundings they had taken in the last month. Four Grenadier (infantry) divisions came in the first category, the 71st, 305th, 362d and 715th. The 362d Grenadier Division was hit hardest of all, G-2 reports declaring that no more than 2,000 men from this unit escaped being killed, wounded or captured. Those listed as partially destroyed were the 15th, 29th, and 90th Panzer Grenadier (Armored Infantry) Divisions, and the 44th and 92d Grenadier Divisions. The last-named had just left the line in the coastal areas as IV Corps took over from VI Corps, where it was relieved by the second-

class troops of the 162d Turcomen Grenadier Division. Remnants of these mauled grenadier units were merged with other divisions or with independent troops into a large number of Kampfgruppen (battle-groups), varying in size, which were generally attached to operative divisions. The Panzer-Grenadier divisions were hastily reorganized and received most of the available replacements. On 6 June the German High Command relieved General Eberhard von Mackensen of his command and placed Lt. General (General of the Armored Forces) Joachim Lemelsen in charge of what remained of the Fourteenth Army. The Anzio Beach debacle was the apparent cause for the relief.

The Germans' strategy had been based on hoarding reserves but this plan had ultimately cost them dearly. First they tried to hold ground, then gave up ground to hold reserves. Finally reserves and ground both went, and as the fall of Rome grew imminent there was no choice but to bring in additional troops badly needed in other theaters. To save Fourteenth Army from complete destruction, three new divisions were rushed into Italy to plug the holes punched by Fifth Army's drive, and one new division was moved from Northern Italy. The 20th GAF (German Air Force) Field Division, made up of ground force personnel from the Luftwaffe turned into infantrymen, arrived from Denmark and later in the month confronted the neighboring French Expeditionary Corps. The 19th GAF Field Division was sent from Holland and toward the end of June one of its regiments committing a battalion at a time, was contacted on the IV Corps front; the 16 SS Panzer Grenadier Division Reichsfuehrer moved over from Hungary and on the 27th of June, elements were contacted along the coast indicating that the division garrisoned a part of the coastal sector; and the 35th Grenadier Division was ordered south from Genoa.

With all the mobile units, including in addition to the Herman Goering Panzer Parachute Division, the 90th and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and the 26th Panzer Division, cut off east of the Tiber, the enemy could not put up other than light and ineffective resistance along Highways 1 and 2 for the first few days after the fall of Rome. The 20th GAF Field Division arrived in time to be thrown into the line in the vicinity of Civitavecchia on 7 June, and the 162d Turcoman Grenadier Division, which had been guarding the coastline near Cecina against possible waterborne invasion, moved into contact three days later; to stand opposed to IV Corps upon the relief of VI Corps. These two divisions failed to prevent the port from falling into VI Corps' hands or the drive from continuing up the coast.

Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commanding the German Army Group Southwest, relinquished ground to gain time for reformation of his units and put up little serious resistance during the first few days in June. About the time IV Corps took over, his delaying actions, however, both along the coast and in the mountain areas, began to show more evidence of advance planning. Demolitions and more demolitions were the principal weapons used, until he was able to bring together more troops into his order of battle. Four days after IV Corps resumed the drive, increased German resistance, together with our lengthening lines of communication, began to slow down the impetus of our attack. By that time some of his better units had been able to reform, cross over from east of the Tiber River, and re-enter the Battle after short periods of rest and reorganization. In his dire circumstances General Lemelsen flung units as small as

battalions into the fight, not waiting for an entire division to be made ready. Parts of the 3d, 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions; 26th Panzer Division and 4th Parachute Division began to appear in the lines facing IV Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps on the right. The 504th and 508th Heavy Panzer Battalions, mustering nearly 100 Mark VI Tiger tanks between them, bolstered the defense. The first of these battalions was rushed in from France. The 216th Armored Assault Battalion, with 18 self-propelled 150-mm guns, was spread out to provide additional support. From west to east facing Fifth Army five divisions were identified; the 162d Grenadier Division and parts of the 20th GAF Field Division stood opposite IV Corps, and the 90th and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions and 26th Panzer Division slanted eastward across the French Expeditionary Corps front.

On the 12th of June, Allied headquarters made the following announcement: "It is clear that the original Fourteenth Army has been dispersed to the four winds. All that remains is a few scattered remnants who mainly are engaged in stealing one another's transport to get away as far as possible." The coming weeks of increasing organized resistance showed that the statement, in part, was lacking in conviction.

The 162d Grenadier Division, thrown in along the coast as second-class troops to cover reorganization of the better German divisions, was made up primarily of Russian ex-Prisoners of War from the Asiatic Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republics who "volunteered" to fight, amply chaperoned by German officers and non-commissioned officers. This division was typical of several of its type formed by the Germans. Most of the personnel were taken prisoner around Kharkov in May and June 1942. Almost

none could speak German and few could speak good Russian. Various tribal dialects were their only means of expression. They were given a choice of serving with the Germans or starving in prison camps under constant fear of the treatment to be accorded their loved ones back in the Caucasus. Most chose to serve, but remained only as long as necessary and took advantage of every opportunity to desert. In not over two weeks' time after its committal during the first week of June, the 162d Grenadier Division had lost over 2,000 as prisoners, as well as many casualties. It was estimated that 75% of the prisoners either allowed themselves to be captured without a struggle or were outright deserters.

C. INITIAL COMMITMENT OF IV CORPS

At noon on 11 June, Fifth Army pursued the Germans northwestward with two fresh command groups directing operations. IV Corps was on the left and the French Expeditionary Corps on the right after completion of their relief of the VI Corps and II Corps respectively. The boundary initially laid out between these two fresh commands gave IV Corps an area approximately thirty miles in width and all of the level coastal area and a sizeable strip of mountainous terrain. Beginning at Tuscania and running on a gradual northwest course, the boundary brushed the western slope of the hill on which was perched Valentano, given to the French, and continued northwestward across the high mountains to cut Highway 74 square in half between Pitigliano and the small town of Latera. The next road struck in half at Sorano was the Pitigliano-Onano Road, from whence the boundary touched along the high ridge running northwest to S. Fiora.

Comparatively fresh troops were available for the continuance of the chase, especially in the French zone where the two French divisions

initially committed the 1st Motorized Division and the 3d Algerian Infantry Division, had been out of heavy combat nearly two weeks. Only one American division, the 36th, was in action under General Crittenberger at the time of relief. It had been following behind the swift advance of Combat Command "A" of the 1st Armored Division north of Rome until the armor was relieved and moved to Lake Bracciano on the 10th. Although the Texans had been constantly on the move since passing Rome, they had not been engaged in any extensive fighting, its action having been confined largely to mopping up operations. The 361st Regimental Combat Team, vanguard of the soon expected 91st Infantry Division, was attached, giving the 36th Division four regimental combat teams.

The 34th Division was resting in the vicinity of Tarquinia, where it had moved from Civitavecchia to make way for supply depots being set up near the port. The 100th Infantry Battalion (separate) was attached to IV Corps and remained with the 34th Division. The 36th and 39th Engineer Combat Regiments were also turned over to IV Corps by VI Corps.

The left flank of the IV Corps line lay along the coast well to the north of Tarquinia, forward elements of the 141st Infantry being within four miles of the Orbetello Isthmus, along Highway 1. The 142d Infantry and 143d Infantry were inland from the highway, due east of the 141st. The 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, which a couple of weeks earlier had screened the IV Corps advance south of Rome, was again attached to IV Corps and was now working north along small roads near the right boundary of the IV Corps zone and screening the advance of the 36th Division.

Over to the right the French Expeditionary Corps was bringing its line

up to that of IV Corps. The 3d Algerian Division on the French Expeditionary Corps left was swinging around the western shore of Lake Bolsena and within sight of Valentano, and on the right the 1st Motorized Division, advancing up Highway 2 north of Viterbo, was close to the southeastern shore of this apple-shaped lake.

The missions of the IV Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps remained the same as those of their predecessors; IV Corps to continue to drive northward with Highway 1 as the main axis of advance and the French to push along the axis of the Aquapendente-Siena-Poggibonsi road.

The 91st Reconnaissance Squadron which had been screening the right half of the VI Corps zone was now undertaking the formation of Task Force Ellis, as its various reinforcing elements moved into position. It was being reinforced with armor, engineers and artillery, assembling in the Canino area. Preparations were made for it to advance in the zone on the right flank of the Corps zone, from which the 1st Armored Division had been relieved; it was also to maintain contact with French Expeditionary Corps units on the right.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER V - - - - -

ACROSS HIGHWAY 64

A. TACTICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATIONS

Preparations were completed for the continuance of the pursuit as the Headquarters of IV Corps tied in the last loose threads with its subordinate units. Details for continued supply of food and ammunition for the advancing troops were crackling back and forth on the lines between Fifth Army Headquarters to the rear and the 36th Division to the front. Headquarters Battery, IV Corps Artillery, tied in with the Corps Artillery units and directed missions for the heavy fire support of the 36th Division and Task Force Ellis. The 6th Field Artillery Group was assigned the mission of direct support of Task Force Ellis. To cope with the rapid mobility expected of the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, a 105-mm Howitzer (SP) Battalion was attached to the Task Force and one 105-mm Howitzer (SP) Battalion and one 155-Gun Battalion kept under group control. The 77th Field Artillery Group was given the mission of general support, reinforcing fires of the 36th Division Artillery. Even prior to the entry into combat of IV Corps, Brigadier General William C. Crane, Commanding General of IV Corps Artillery was cognizant of the fact that many of the road systems were inconsistent with the standard maps in use, and for this reason they could not be relied upon for the planning of effective harassing fires. Since harassing fire missions were an important function of the Corps Artillery during the enemy's withdrawal, to blanket the rear areas of the enemy, denying him use of the roads and destroying his material, it

was directed at the outset that AOP observers actually fly over and study the terrain and in this way render invaluable aid in the logical planning of harassing fires.

By looking back at the rapid advances of Fifth Army after Rome was taken, the problems of communications already were apparent. All the way from Rome, the heavy twisted telephone lines stretched along the side of the roads; strung out by the advancing divisions, which still in hot pursuit had no time to reclaim them. The pressure of a relentless pursuit found no other alternative but to abandon them and requisition new wire. With this fact brought to light, the 62d Signal Battalion readied itself for this eventuality by accumulating stocks of wire.

The Engineer Section was already planning, through the study of aerial photogtaphic maps, for heavy engineer work in areas far behind the retreating German front line. The dry season had thinned many of the streams to a mere trickle, making the problems of bridge construction not urgent ones for the present. It was felt that rapid construction of short by-passes could cope with the many road and bridge demolitions expected during the advance. The selection of water points to meet with the rapidity of the advance was made and although many of the streams had nearly dried, it was seen that there would be sufficient local water sources to meet the demand of the troops. At the start of operations the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment was attached and made available to IV Corps.

Close coordination between the Fifth Army movement control section and IV Corps Traffic Control Section was already in effect. Bottlenecks on roads up ahead could be foreseen, particularly where one-way bridges

and difficult by-passes were expected. As the numerous Fifth Army supply installations would follow up the continued advance, many traffic problems on Highway 1 along the coast were anticipated. The problem of scheduling the huge number of Army, Corps and Division vehicles expected to use this main highway, was likened to a sore thumb which was expected to become sorer if and when the tactical situation might call for the rapid shifting of units from one point to another. Never had old Via Aurelia expected to see itself burdened so heavily by the modern armies of friend and foe.

B. THE TEXANS ROPE IN ORBETELLO

The previous association south of Rome with the French Corps contributed greatly to the comradeship between both Corps. Lateral communication across the mutual boundary, from one Corps Command Post to the other, was maintained by the use of liaison officers. The daily appearance of the tall, lanky, French liaison Captain Chaudet, coated white with dust from his long road trips, was as much a part of the environment of the War Room conferences as the map over which the staff discussed the previous day's events.

The immediate objective of the 36th Division was Grosseto, a medium-sized city with good airport facilities located just north of the Ombrone River near the junction of Highways 1 and 73. The city was situated almost in the center of the flat valley formed by the Ombrone as it neared the sea. This broad valley was criss-crossed by scores of small canals and drainage ditches. Between Grosseto and the advanced positions of the 141st Infantry on Highway 1 was the town of Orbetello, where causeways linked the steep, rocky peninsula of Mount Argentario and its port of Santo Stefano, to the mainland. Orbetello was approximately six miles beyond the front

line on the morning of 11 June. Four miles north of Orbetello, Highway 74 shot northeastward from Highway 1; Grosseto was about eighteen miles further north. Low hills came almost to the beach line for much of this distance, especially in the Orbetello section, forming a defile through which Highway 1 passed. Highway 74 followed the narrow valley of the Albegna River inland; between this valley and Grosseto were more hills, while the entire eastern portion of the Division zone was a mass of hills from 500 to 1,000 feet in altitude, practically unbroken north to the Ombrone. South of the Albegna Valley the eastern portion of the zone was almost roadless. At Magliano, four miles north of the river, a road net began which led northwest to Grosseto and northeast to Scansano. The main avenue of the Division advance continued to be Highway 1, which ran within a few hundred yards of the sea from south of Orbetello to the little town of Bengodi, five miles north of the mouth of the Albegna River. From that point the road gradually curved inland until at Grosseto it was almost seven miles from the sea.

At 2020 on 10 June, from his Command Post located in the flat coastal area at the foot of the hills into which his infantry troops were climbing, General Walker relayed his plans which were to go into effect the following morning. During the night the 141st Infantry would relieve the 361st Infantry in forward positions along Highway 1, while the 142d Infantry would advance on Capalbio, a small village three miles inland. From Capalbio it was to push northwest parallel to the highway to reach the Magliano-Grosseto road and then advance along that axis. The 143d and 361st Infantry would be initially in reserve. The advance was to be carried out as rapidly as possible, the rate depending somewhat on the ability of artillery to

displace forward to support the advancing foot troops.

The 141st Infantry relieved the 361st Infantry astride Highway 1 at midnight 10-11 June in the vicinity of Nunziatello, six miles southeast of Orbetello. The 361st Infantry had been blocked most of the previous day by heavy German artillery fire coming from the hills south of Orbetello. The relieving regiment, in column of battalions, led by the 1st Battalion, moved out immediately after talking over, and progressed forward two miles without opposition until 0230, when the point walked into a German ambush and road block, heavily defended by artillery and infantry. The 1st Battalion was pinned down along the highway by enemy guns sited down the road, while the 2d and 3d Battalions swung off in an enveloping movement to the right. The 2d Battalion attacked against Mount Capalbiaccio, a 700-foot hill about one mile north of the highway, and several lesser hills. It made some progress until the Germans counter-attacked strongly in mid-morning. Since no friendly artillery was in position to repel this assault, one company of the 2d Battalion was overrun. A force of two companies of Germans infiltrated in the tall wheatfields between the 1st Battalion, still along the road, and the 2d Battalion. The 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, was rushed into this threatening gap and a call for reinforcements was sent back to the 361st Infantry Regiment, just relieved and in division reserve. The 2d Battalion of the 361st was sent forward. By noon some artillery support rolled up into supporting positions, and the lines were restored along this portion of the front by the end of the day, although the 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry, remained stalled in the mountain. The 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry, was then sent to support this unit, which attacked again at 2000. The battle see-sawed

fiercely most of the night until a final push at 0545, 12 June, drove the Germans off Mount Capalbiaccio, which dominated the main portion of the German position. This attack threatened Highway 1 well in the rear of the road block, and the enemy began to withdraw, thereby clearing the way for the advance through the Orbetello defile.

The day before, General Crittenberger was somewhat apprehensive about the more rugged area north of Canino, recently vacated by withdrawal from the line of the 1st Armored Division, and had ordered General Walker to plan the movement of either a battalion or regiment to support Task Force Ellis. He had also ordered General Walker to employ the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron toward Pitigliano to the northeast, until Task Force Ellis could begin active operations on the following day. So on the 12th of June about noon, the 3d Battalion of the 141st Infantry moved eastward through the Corps area, leaving the cooler coastal plain with the Tyrrhenian breezes for the hotter, hilly country on the eastern sector of the Corps zone, and was attached to Task Force Ellis.

The other two battalions of the 141st Infantry kept up pressure along Highway 1. Task Force Dubois, a small tactical combat group formed in the 36th Division, consisting of a reconnaissance platoon from the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, a platoon of tanks, a platoon of tank destroyers, and Company "K", 361st Infantry, finally broke through the Highway 1 road block in the late afternoon. The 143d Infantry then came up, passed through the 141st Infantry, followed the spearheading Task Force Dubois forward, and before the stars in the darkening heaven lost their paleness, reached Highway 74. The enemy put up little resistance after his Nunziatella position was broken, and did not attempt to defend the Orbetello sector.

As this became apparent, the remainder of the 141st Infantry were also alerted for attachment to Task Force Ellis and prepared to move to the new zone on the Corps right flank.

While this stiff battle was raging near the coast, the 142d Infantry was having almost as hard a fight through the rugged hills on the division right flank. Jumping off from an assembly area five miles southeast of Capalbio at dawn on 11 June, the regiment advanced over the rough, hilly country and reached the town before noon without meeting resistance. Such luck was not to remain. Just beyond the town, enemy fire from the high ground to the north was received. After reorganizing, the 2d and 3d Battalions attacked in mid-afternoon against the hills to the north and northeast of Capalbio. The regiment advanced again at dawn on 12 June, with infantry working through the hills and the supporting tanks moving through the small village. The usual enemy tactics were encountered during the night. The enemy, under the cover of darkness, succeeded in disengaging himself, and with practically no enemy contact, our leading elements consolidated on the high ground south of Highway 74. When reconnaissance units encountered a group of German tanks in the Albegna Valley, artillery fire directed on them destroyed two and dispersed the others, in the only real action of the day.

Still further on, the right flank elements of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron entered Manciano without any opposition and continued their vigorous screening action far to the north across Highway 74, to the northwest of Manciano, and was in the vicinity of Monte Merano at the close of the day. This speedy advance had visible effect on the enemy's withdrawal on

the coast, beyond the junction of Highways 1 and 74, because of the threat to his left flank.

C. TASK FORCE ELLIS BECOMES TASK FORCE RAMEY

After being shifted from II Corps to IV Corps, the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, under command of Lt. Colonel Charles A. Ellis, was committed again almost immediately, going into the line on 12 June as Task Force Ellis, to operate through the area between the main forces of IV Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps. This zone was a sizeable gap from five to six miles wide along the right boundary, and contained a large network of minor roads and trails that coursed up and down steep sloping hills. After the Task Force had completed its organization in the vicinity of Canino and pressed forward to clear the enemy from Farnese, it then drove over the mountainous road headed for Pitigliano. By sunset, as reconnaissance elements were driving over the mountain road, grotesquely marked by the shadows of the approaching darkness, plans were drawn up for the attack at dawn on 13 June, on the town of Pitigliano.

The zone assigned was excessive for the strength of the reinforced squadron. That night this situation was remedied in Operations Order No. 5 in which General Crittenberger issued directions for additional troops to join the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron and placed Brigadier General Rufus S. Ramey in command of the augmented force. Thus the tactical grouping on the right became known as Task Force Ramey, but the mission of advancing to the northwest to seize the line Scansana-Triana remained unchanged. This reorganization insured a more rapid advance to the north. The 91st Reconnaissance Squadron was to provide the nucleus for the task force. To form a headquarters for this new organization, General Ramey received Headquarters

and Headquarters Company, 1st Armored Group. Troops attached initially in addition to the Reconnaissance Squadron, were the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, already arrived from the coast; the 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; the 2d Battalion, 39th Engineer Combat Regiment, less Company "F"; and a collecting company of the 52d Medical Battalion, less six ambulances. Here was formed a small, compact mobile group, shaped into a hitting force capable of the speed necessary to push and follow the withdrawing Germans on the right flank. The last detail necessary to shape out the Provisional Headquarters was completed the same day; the Signal Officer of IV Corps directed the 62d Signal Service Battalion to furnish construction, operation and maintenance signal personnel, as the unit had an insufficient number to take care of the demands that would be forthcoming.

D. IN RETROSPECT OF 12 JUNE 1944

When darkness shrouded the coastal area and as the frightened Italian refugees of still-smoking Canino began stealthily working their way down from the hills surrounding the town, the advance patrols of the IV Corps were striking far ahead; in most cases, beyond and over Highway 74. At the end of the second day of combat, troops of IV Corps had advanced ten miles in the eastern mountainous section and eight miles along the coastal sector. Although the rapid advance highlighted this second day of operation for the new Corps, the real accomplishment was the re-organization of Task Force Ramey, in the midst of such a fast-moving situation. The birth of Task Force Ramey was not solemnized in a peaceful rear area, there to be nurtured into one small compact force and committed only after some training; to the contrary, it was literally born on

the move. It called for the attachment of units that moved many miles to operate under this new Provisional Headquarters. Thus by throwing different armored and infantry units together and forming a speedy mobile task force, a substituted quasi-brigade was formed on the right. With the 36th Division on the left dogging hard on the heels of the Turcoman Division, and Task Force Ramey driving on to its right, IV Corps was able to continue the relentless drive - and when respite was needed for either unit, the 34th Division resting and training in the vicinity of Tarquinia was on hand to be brought in for the relief. The rotation of units was much in use in the reinforced 36th Division. While two regiments fought and drove back the enemy rear guards, the two others rested for a day and then returned to the fray. And in order that the enemy be allowed no respite at night, General Walker directed that each of the regiments engaged commit a fresh battalion for action during the hours of darkness. This method of pursuit allowed the enemy no opportunity to pause or to establish any defense stronger than that provided by demolitions, mines and fleeting rear guard actions. Likened to a flail in the deft hands of the farmer, these rotational punches of rested battalions, over and over, cut to shreds the weary rear guards of the demoralized 162d Infantry Division, and whittled down the time so heavily counted upon by the Germans, who were feverishly building defenses on the Gothic Line positions in the high Apennines.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

Chapter VI - - - - -

ACROSS THE OMERONE VALLEY

A. GROSSETO CLEARED BY 36TH DIVISION

After the 3d Battalion of the 141st left the coast to add strength to Task Force Ramey, the two remaining battalions of the Regiment were passed through by the 143d Infantry. The 143d advanced astride Highway 1 with its 3d Battalion on the left and 2d Battalion on the right, and by dusk reached the road junction of Highways 1 and 74 and the southern bank of the Albegna River. On the right of the 143d Infantry, progress was as fast, for the enemy had departed during the night. With practically no enemy contact, leading patrols of the 142d Infantry reached the Albegna River and also awaited orders to cross. Still further on, the right flank elements of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron entered Manciano by nightfall.

Under cover of darkness the patrols of the 143d and 142d Infantry felt their way along the southern banks in quest of bridges to effect the crossing of the river. All had been destroyed, and upon receipt of these reports at Division Headquarters, the plans to cross the Albegna that evening in a night assault were discarded, since the water was too deep in the 143d zone to permit fording, either by infantry or attached armor. Throughout the night, under cover of fire from the infantry and artillery, the Division Engineers worked waist deep in the chilled murky waters of the Albegna, constructing foot bridges. At dawn on 13 June, both regiments

crossed over these bridges and pushed on. The 143d Infantry advanced with its 3d Battalion on the left and 2d Battalion on the right. Except for mines along the highway, little difficulty was encountered, until the smaller but deeper Osa River was reached just south of the small coastal town of Bengodi. The immediate Divisional objective was the town of Magliano, perched atop a hill, commanding the junction of the Bartolini-Magliano-Montiano roads. On the right, the 142d Infantry also had experienced little difficulty in advancing across the valley, and before noon the van of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron and accompanying tanks and tank destroyers, with the 1st and 2d Battalions about two miles behind, had reached the town to find that it was heavily defended. Heavy fire coming from Magliano and from the hills to the north held them off. The 1st Battalion moved to the southeast of the town, and the 2d Battalion attempted to by-pass it on the west, but heavy resistance developed all along the line. Some armor together with elements of the 2d Battalion reached the outskirts by 1500. There squads worked their way into the town by crawling and creeping from the hillside knolls to the first battered walls of the outlying buildings. Sniper and machine gun fire was intense. Many brave Texans fell within the rubble-littered streets but their comrades, with hearts filled with vengeance, moved on. From door to window, house to house, advanced the infiltrating squads of the 2d Battalion, but at nightfall the enemy still held the major portion of the town. The darkness, shattered by the blinding flashes of mortar fire and flares, added to the confusion of the street fighting. Crawling ahead in the inky darkness, these fighters built up sufficient

pressure so that by dawn, still heavily misted with the acrid smoke of gun fire, the enemy resistance was broken. At 0700 on 14 June, the 2d Battalion of the 142d Infantry, climaxed the heavy struggle and stamped out the final pockets of opposition within Magliano and outposted this newly-won position. Many high cheekboned prisoners were taken, and the morning's early light revealed many more grey-clad bodies lying inert across doorways or slumped behind freshly strewn rubble. The division objective had been seized, but only after fierce fighting. Moderately heavy mortar and artillery fire continued to fall on our troops as the enemy began a withdrawal toward Grosseto. The two battalions of the 142d launched an attack at forty-five minutes past noon to seize the high ground on both sides of the Magliano-Montiano-Grosseto road. Working along the heights the attack progressed favorably and by four in the afternoon the objective, generally two miles beyond Magliano had been occupied.

When darkness came, always a welcome relief to the harried Germans as a mantle to shroud their nocturnal attempts at disengagement, a new column of olive drab troops came filing up the road; the 361st Infantry relieved the tired 142d Infantry and prepared to continue the attack astride the road. This relief was consistent with a set policy of almost daily rotation of troops, which provided relatively fresh men in the assault echelons. This did provide a physical rest, but, as one tired soldier remarked, "One day to forget 'up there', just aint enough."

The forward echelon of Headquarters IV Corps moved a distance of 11 miles up Highway 1 and laid out its tent city in an olive grove near

Montalto di Castro, within sight of the Tyrrhenian. The increasing number of mines, laid out by the delaying enemy, necessitated a thorough sweeping of the selected site by the engineers.

Reports filtering into the G-3 Section early on 14 June, indicated that hard fighting was also being experienced by the 143d Infantry along Via Aurelia Etrusca (Highway 1). Again under cover of darkness the Division Engineers established crossing sites over the Osa, and the 2d and 3d Battalions crossed. As the advance patrols proceeded out of Bengodi, heavy battling for the high ground on both sides of the highway developed. The battalions jumped off at 0400 and about five hours later had seized the summits, taking fifth prisoners and five artillery pieces.

The little cubs hovered over Highway 1 like angry bees after a fleeing intruder. Behind the roadblocks the Germans stood motionless, hoping that they might remain undetected by the observers' searching eyes. Experience told them that once discovered, there was sent smashing on their positions salvo after salvo of accurate artillery fire. The usefulness of the artillery liaison pilot was being demonstrated by the locating of enemy elements as well as friendly forward elements, adjustment of fire on lucrative targets, terrain studies, and curtailing of enemy movements by their very presence in the air. During the afternoon, enemy infantry resistance slackened as the push was resumed, allowing the 142d Infantry to advance on the right. Heavy German armor was encountered for the first time when a group of March VI tanks opened fire on the advancing infantry, but they were driven off by well-directed artillery fire. By mid-afternoon, a bridge was completed over the Osa, and the armor of Task Force Dubois rolled on up Highway 1 to a point about two miles north of Bengodi, where.

the entire regiment dug in for the night. The two battalions of the 141st Infantry remaining under General Walker's control were directed to proceed to the Scansano area and bolster the growing strength of Task Force Ramey.

While the Corps reserve division, the 34th, continued its training in an area northwest of Civitavecchia and south of Tarquinia, the Fifth Army Commander had communicated plans to General Grittenberger, of attaching the 1st Armored Division to his Corps, to re-enter the line on or about 18 June. In Fifth Army reserve on the shores of Lake Bracciano, the Armored Division was expecting to undergo the reorganization, already completed by many of the armored divisions on the other fronts of this global war. The state of circumstances dictated the full exploitation of the large scale withdrawal of Kesselring's Wermacht, and for this reason the reorganization was postponed and the division prepared to re-enter battle. That day Army and Division ordnance units hastened their servicing of the tanks in preparation for their movement back to the lines.

Another piece of information enthusiastically received was that more strength was to be added with which to push the Germans. The 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, in Fifth Army reserve, was scheduled to arrive in Civitavecchia on or about 16 June. This unit was ordered attached to the 36th Infantry Division upon arrival and arrangements were made to effect prompt removal of the combat team from the congested port area immediately after debarkation.

As the speedometers on the armored cars of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron clocked mile after mile in the move to the north, the present

Corps Sector began progressively to add width to itself as Italy continued to become wider and wider. In view of this widening front, the Fifth Army Commander directed a new boundary line to be established between the French and IV Corps, to be effective on 16 June. This change would move the IV Corps' right boundary further to the west, but, because of the corresponding bend in the coast line, little change in the width of its zone of action would result. The position of this new boundary would make it necessary to shift the axis of attack more to the northwest, as further progress directly north would carry our effort into the future zone of the Frenchmen.

1. Clearing the Grosseto Area

The 143d Infantry, with the 2d and 3d Battalions straddling Highway 1, continued its advance against heavier enemy mortar and machine gun fire and at the first glimmer of dawn on 15 June, scrambled up and seized the dew-dampened hills on both sides of the road in the vicinity of Collechio, a village six miles south of the river. A steady all-day advance against machine gun and mortar fire carried the regiment forward to the Ombrone. Increased difficulty was encountered by the number of blown bridges, teller mines, and demolitions on an even wider scale. The demolished crossings over a myriad of small streams and canals which cut across the edge of the valley, added to the difficulty. Despite these progress-retarding obstacles, artillery observation pilots, returning to roost at the Cub strip for the night, reported the appearance of forward elements of the 143d Infantry on the south bank of the Ombrone River at 1900. As darkness fell, the regiment began to cross the stream without encountering serious resistance.

On the right of the 36th Division, the attached 361st Infantry

vanguard of its parent 91st Division enroute to the theatre, kept pace with the push up the highway. Screened by the 36th Reconnaissance Troop well out in front, and the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron angling in on the right from captured Scansano, the infantry advanced along the Magliano-Grosseto road after relieving the 142d Infantry, and by 0530 entered Montiano, which was taken by the 1st Battalion. The foot elements then turned off the road and advanced due north cross-country toward the Ombrone east of Grosseto. The nature of the cut-up, rugged country, with twisting and turning trails over the maze of hills, afforded many opportunities for small delaying actions by the Germans. Well-planned demolitions, protected by cleverly located mines, greatly hampered the operations of the forward elements, but by steadily pushing, the foot troops reached the river banks about the same time as the units coming up the main highway. Heavy minefields were encountered and the enemy demolitions program was comprehensive. To the east of the 361st Infantry, the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, against some resistance, forced a crossing over the stream about three miles east of Grosseto and sent mechanized patrols into the town at 2130. They entered the town expecting staunch resistance and were surprised to find that the Germans had left only a few snipers to delay the taking of the objective, an important community, made so chiefly because of the air base facilities close at hand.

Meanwhile, the 143d Infantry was splashing its way across the Ombrone River during the hours of darkness. Before the early dawn mist began to dissipate under the morning sun, all battalions were successfully placed on the north bank. The crossing of these three battalions was made

comparatively simple by means of a shallow ford not more than a mile to the east of the town. From this ford a hard-surfaced road ran directly into Grosseto. Advancing westward along this road, the foot troops were shielded from enemy artillery fire by the high bank of a canal paralleling the road to the north. Soon after daylight of 16 June, Grosseto, immediate objective of 36th Division, was occupied in force and with barely a pause the infantry passed on. Patrols of the 143d advanced north and northwest out of and around Grosseto and fanned out on the flat open country surrounding the town for a radius of approximately four to five miles, but made no contact with the enemy. All roads were heavily mined, and while the patrols advanced slowly by picking their way through the hastily planted mines, their movements in and about Grosseto were easily observed by the enemy from the high ground in the vicinity of Montepescali. From this elevated position they seemed determined that Grosseto was not to be given away so freely. From firing positions located south of Montepescali, a little town on high ground seven miles to the north that covered the junction of Highways 1 and 73, German medium calibre artillery batteries poured a scattered raking fire in and around Grosseto. This harassing artillery fire made movement about the town very risky, and for the rest of that day and the next, the Germans took advantage of their favored artillery positions and fired away to their hearts' content.

Meanwhile four miles east of Grosseto, in the vicinity of the hamlet of Istia the 361st Infantry was having a harder time of it. The country was hilly and generally rougher. In its zone the regiment could find no natural crossing on the Ombrone and was forced to wait until material was brought up and footbridges constructed across the river. The regiment was

unable to get to the north side until after daylight on 16 June, when the crossing was made under enemy fire, but by noon, while the 143d fanning out of Grosseto was being harassed by artillery from the heights of Montepescali, all battalions of the 361st were across and attacking the nearest high ground overlooking the river. By nightfall the hills a mile north of the river were cleared of enemy and firmly held.

In the central zone of IV Corps, where the 143d and 361st Infantries advanced, the 16th of June could be noted for the crossing of the Ombrone, one of the two largest rivers cutting across the Corps zone of advance to the Arno, and for the seizure of Grosseto, the hub of a network of roads stretching out in almost all directions of the compass. The Adjutant General marked up the day by adding to the IV Corps troop list the 1st Armored Division. Receipt of the orders from Fifth Army for the attachment of this division found General Crittenberger already drawing up plans for its active participation in the right half of the Corps zone. It was felt that once the Grosseto-Orvieto line was pierced by our infantry, the 1st Armored Division, reinforced by mechanized reconnaissance, infantry and self-propelled artillery, might be thrust boldly and swiftly forward through the gap with more than a fair chance of forcing the enemy, in his haste, to forego a large part of his mining and demolitions, and that such an advance northward over the hilly roads inland from the coast, with occasional slashes to the west, might even succeed in cutting off considerable enemy forces fighting along the coastal plain.

By the end of the day, Colonel Harrison, the G-3 of IV Corps, was directed to prepare plans for the relief of the 36th Division to take place sometime in the not too distant future. General Walker's Texas Division

had been in the line continuously since battering its assertive way out of the Anzio beachhead 23 May, a total of twenty-five days. Subsequent to the capture of Rome, the Division had advanced more than eighty miles to the north in pursuit of the harried Germans. Although it still retained considerable fight and vigor, General Crittenberger considered it wise to plan for its relief by the veteran 34th Division, the "Red Bull" outfit, which had been undergoing a period of refitting and rehabilitation in the rear areas since 9 June. By committing the refreshed organization to action, the impetus of the northward drive could be maintained and the withdrawing enemy forced back more rapidly, into the yet incomplete Gothic Line position. The exact date of such relief, of course, depended to a great extent upon the situation at the time, and particularly upon the hostile strength which might confront IV Corps. Major General Charles W. Ryder, commanding the 34th Division, was advised that although his division was to be moved up from the vicinity of Tarquinia, closer to the zone of operations, it did not indicate that the division would immediately re-enter combat. On the contrary, refitting and training was to continue after completion of the move, unless an emergency should arise which would call for its immediate employment. This forward movement would not take place until the 1st Armored Division, which was already under orders, had completed the march to its designated assembly area south of Grosseto.

On 16 June, as previously mentioned, the IV Corps boundary was shifted westward approximately ten miles, but under the progressive northwestward bend of the shoreline the width of the Corps front remained almost the same. It was approximately 22 miles across to the new boundary on this day of change, but further north at a point straight across the Corps

zone from the jutting promontory of Piombino, on the coast, straight east to the new American-French boundary, it was thirty-six miles wide.

Though the crossing of the Ombrone had been made by foot troops of both the 143d and 361st Infantry Regiments, as their forward elements edged their way deeper into the flatness of the Ombrone Valley, it was necessary to erect bridges heavy enough to bring across vehicles, armor, and supporting artillery before the pursuit could be continued in force. All though the 17th of June, engineers worked feverishly to construct bridges over the rivers and canals. The distant thumps of enemy artillery from the high ground south of Montepescali were immediately drowned out by the quick following whine and crash of medium calibre shells smashing spasmodically in and around Grosseto. Some splashed on the muddy banks and waters of the Ombrone River, in the vicinity of where it took its northward curving sweep due south of the town, sending geysers of mud and water far and wide.

The 143d Infantry patrols pushed out of Grosseto over the comparatively flat farmland country bordering Highway 1, looking for the enemy who had already withdrawn to the more easily defended high ground south of Montepescali. The forward elements of the 361st Infantry consolidated their newly-gained positions on the high ground three miles north of the Ombrone River and about two miles northeast of Istia, in preparation for the attack on the morrow. IV Corps issued the final plans for the coordinated attack on 18 June. The IV Corps plan of attack called for the 36th Division to move forward and seize the high ground around Montepescali, while Task Force Ramey was to come up on the right flank through Campagnatico and Paganico to cut Highway 73 below the town of Roccastrada. The 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team under Lieutenant

Colonel George R. Walton was attached to the 36th Division and placed on the right flank, solidly filling the gap between the Division and Task Force Ramey. All through the night of 17 June the armor, tank destroyers and artillery rumbled over the newly-constructed bridges across the Ombrone and set themselves in positions best suited to support the front line foot troops. Favorable weather was assured at dawn.

Just at the break of day on the 18th, as the outline of the high ground of Montepescali loomed through the vanishing darkness, the IV Corps assault was launched. The three infantry regiments advanced abreast on a front of only five miles, the 143d Infantry on the left, the 361st Infantry in the center, and the paratroopers on the right. Though enemy resistance was spotty and moderate, the rough country was made more difficult by extensive minefields. The 143d Infantry, operating over the easiest terrain, moved up the road directly against Montepescali; the 361st was pointed toward the secondary road from Grosseto to Batignano, a small village in the center of the hill mass. The village of Montorsaio, further back in the hills to the northeast, was the objective of the 517th Parachute Infantry, which also was charged with maintaining contact with Task Force Ramey. Pushing doggedly over the high ground east of Highway 1, the forward elements of the 36th Division reached a line just north of Popi di Mota and the Grosseto-Batignano road. Foot soldiers slashed through mud and wet brush to a point less than a mile south of the once dreamy pastoral town of Batignano, now a target of the friendly artillery batteries firing from positions close behind the advancing troops. Extremely foul

Weather swept over the area and the scattered showers and drizzle turned the powdery dust on the roads into quagmires of sticky mud which made going hazardous and difficult. The base plates of the pounding mortars sank deeper into muddy soil and the trails of artillery pieces seemed to take a step backward after each bark at the target. Tanks and tank destroyers rumbled slowly over the muddy roads as nature, on this day, had seen fit to appear as an ally to the retreating Germans, and slowed the progress of IV Corps down to the shortest day's advance since its entrance into combat on 11 June. General "MUD" moved into the Command Post of Kesselring to give his harried command a lift along the coastal front. These rains gave the Germans a few more precious hours to make stronger their Apennine defense line. Gains of approximately three miles were made this first day of attack; the greatest advance was accredited in the 143d Infantry zone.

The 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment received its battle indoctrination that day. The first few enemy shells which landed about them were somewhat welcomed for it gave them the opportunity to test themselves and to graduate as battle-scarred veterans all the more quickly, just as the neighboring regiments on the right and left had done before, and which to them seemed a thousand years ago.

The following account, as observed by an officer of the regiment, is quoted to best describe the baptism of fire for the unit assigned to General Crittenberger's Corps for battle experience:

"When Lt. Colonel Boyle of the 1st Battalion started his advance early that rainy morning, it was hard to see more than a few yards to the front. To keep his men from getting lost, and since we had no

contact with the enemy, the standard advance guard formation was used. As Boyle went up over the first hill and reached the reverse slope, we received our baptism of fire. The enemy had hidden himself very cleverly in the brush and trees, and as the party came into close range, the Jerries let them have it.

"As Lieutenant Colonel Cato, the artillery battalion commander, and I came forward, we could hear the b-rr-r-r-p of the German automatic weapons, and could see Captain Sullivan, the battalion surgeon, giving blood plasma to several men who had been hit. When I saw Sully, he had propped up a broken branch of a tree, placed a bottle of the plasma in the crotch and was really going to town. We could see several Jerries running around over on the next hill, and in the absence of anything better to do, Cato directed some fire onto this hill. The 1st Battalion got some of its mortars going and started lobbing shells back into the low ground in front of where they were held up.

"We tried to get Boyle to move forward again, but he had apparently been up with the advance party, and it was some time before he could get anything started. However, they finally started out again after putting some 81-mm mortar fire on a stone building that could be seen down in the next valley, and where one or two Germans had been seen. We found later that this very quiet looking building was not only their Command Post, but housed the aid station, with about a dozen wounded ~~Turkoman~~ soldiers, and also was used as a place of detention for approximately fifty Italian civilians, mostly women, who had been rounded up in that area to prevent them from giving warning to the approaching Americans.

"Several women, apparently murdered for some reason, were also lying in the wooded valley near the building. Perhaps they had decided to escape, or perhaps the Germans had killed them to teach the others a lesson. However, as we reached the building, the German surgeon, a major, was administering hypodermic injections to his wounded. Captain Dearing, Regimental S-2, got the women started back toward Grosseto. They were a pretty scared bunch, and whether they figured they were in worse hands or better, I have never found out. The German surgeon objected very strenuously to the placing in the ambulance of some of the women who had been hurt, as he could not understand why a woman, particularly an Italian woman, should receive priority over a German soldier, even though he was only a Turcoman. However, the surgical instruments left at the aid station were of a very high quality, and deeply appreciated by our own surgeon.

"As the attack moved on, we used the same building for a temporary Command Post and also used a part of it to hold prisoners until they could be questioned and sent back to the rear. Some of the men must have got pretty well worked up over the way the Germans were fighting and against these Asiatics that were being used as a sacrifice troop. Generally these Turcomen would remain under cover until our troops got up pretty close, then they would fire all their ammunition before yelling 'Kamerad!' This method of fighting was very economical of German troops, and yet served the purpose of delaying and inflicting casualties on the Americans."

It is not the intention to mold into this history of IV Corps the details of company or battalion or the heroisms of named individuals, but it is believed that a periodic flashback to take the reader right

to the ground, moving along with a foot-slogging unit, will afford him the opportunity to see the redness of the American blood, so heroically shed, as well as catch the spirit, so to speak, of the action described.

Ending the first day of the coordinated Corps attack, mines and demolitions were more in evidence and resistance increasingly stiffer. Task Force Ramey kept abreast of the elements on the left, although the hilly country made going rougher and the enemy road blocks served to delay rapid progress. The nature of the wooded, hilly terrain made flanking cross-country movements extremely difficult, if not impossible. The gain of approximately three miles brought in many Asiatic Turcoman of the 162d Infantry Division, frightened and with hands high over their heads. So many had learned the strange German language so quickly, at least enough to shout the password to captivity, "Kamerad!"

The following morning, "Keystone" continued its coordinated drive and the 143d Infantry on the left, bent on silencing the enemy artillery batteries which had done so much of the shelling along Highway 1, met with considerable fire from machine guns and mortars, but succeeded in reaching the wooded areas approximately one mile south of Montepescali. As the American doughboys of the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, ascended the road and worked onto the wooded hills, the German artillery batteries hastily removed their damaging medium calibre guns, which had been hidden in the woods. Thus Grosseto, already seven miles behind, was freed of the pounding and a much quieter evening was in store for Fifth Army supply installations, already moving into the still smoking ruins of the liberated town. The other two regiments registered much greater gains in the center and on the way through heavily mined areas and along

country lanes to the north of Batignano. The combined surge of the 361st Infantry in the center and the 517th Parachute Infantry toward Sticciano and Highway 73, the main artery to the northeast, and toward Roccastrada, highlighted the efforts of this day, 19 June. Ever pushing ahead, the advance patrols of the 361st, another regiment rapidly gaining combat experience to be passed on to its parent organization, the 91st Division, swept into the rubble town of Batignano and passed immediately to the north, without time to wonder where the once contented residents of the battered town could have disappeared to. By nightfall, wearied from this day's advance, the forward elements of the regiment were within two miles of Sticciano, a typical hilltop village, commanding a sweeping view of Highway 73. Meanwhile, the 517th Parachute Infantry also advanced up and over the gentle sloping hills to the right of the 361st Infantry and passed to the east of Batignano, maintaining contact with Task Force Ramey. It drove on for six miles that day and before slowing down on account of darkness, the hilltop town of Montersaio and the dominating 1,200-foot ridge to the west of the town were secured and firmly held. This position provided adequate protection for the right flank of the 361st Infantry, which was already a couple of miles north of Batignano.

A German withdrawal was carried out along the entire front during the night of 19-20 June. Before dawn, elements of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, screening out in front, climbed the steep slopes to enter Montepescali at daylight, and from that high position were able to get a good early dawn view of the junction of Highways 1 and 73, located at the northwest base of the hill. One company of the 143d Infantry followed closely behind and completed occupation of the town. From here, there was

a good view up the flat valley stretching to the north, made verdant by the two small streams, the T. Asina and T. Bai, which trickled south from their sources high in the mountains ahead and merged into the Bruna River, then to add depth in its eventual flow into the saltier waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea. As the stubble-chinned infantrymen looked north they saw more mountains, steeper than the ones already trodden by their worn combat shoes. As they looked west the view of the ocean was interrupted by still higher hills, the highest of which was 630 feet and where some enemy might still be lurking, since it was not yet cleared. As they faced east and stared toward the rising bright sun, they also beheld steep sloping hills, over which the troops of 361st Infantry Regiment and 517th Parachute Infantry Regiments were climbing. They wondered whether the mountainous terrain to the right would not have been easier to advance over since less artillery fire was likely to be met. Glancing to the south from this height they could see why the German artillery batteries were unerringly accurate in their harassing fire on the plain below. A good view of Grosseto in the early morning light was had and they thought of how two days ago they had sworn at the German artillery observers located on the heights where they now stood.

From the road junction near Montepescali, Highway 73 led to the northeast as far as Roccastrada and then made its tortuous, winding way through the mountains to the north, eventually arriving at Siena. Highway 1, a smooth macadam surfaced road, turned sharply to the left, or west, and followed a generally westward course to the Gulf of Follonica, where it was dampened by the ocean sprays of the Tyrrhenian as it bent northwest to hug closely the coastline on the way to Cecina. The changed direction of the coastline added frontage to the Corps zone, making it necessary to divert

the direction of the attack of the 36th Division from due north to west and northwest. This jutting hilly portion to the west had yet to be cleared. To cover the additional terrain the 142d Infantry was called up from Division Reserve and sent west, with instructions to seize the high ground south of Highway 1. Pushing into the mountains the 142d Infantry patrols reported no contact with the enemy, which indicated that he had already withdrawn northward across Highway 1. All anxiety concerning this area was thereby removed, the left flank of IV Corps was secured, and the occupation of the important ridge south of Gincarico was made possible without any loss of time. Good progress was also made by Task Force Ramey. The 361st Infantry was sent back into Division Reserve to an assembly area in the vicinity of Batignano. The three Battalions of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment swung into line abreast of Montorsalo in order to occupy Mount Leoni and the area vacated by the 361st. This relief and slight shift of direction to the northwest were accomplished with no interference by the enemy. By nightfall the metallic rumble of the heavy tanks of the Combat Command of the 1st Armored Division quieted down, for these units had completed the road movement into a forward assembly area southwest of Batignano. There the Division staff officers continued their preparation of plans for the return to combat on the right of the 36th Division, in the zone of Task Force Ramey.

The next day, 21 June, upon completion of mopping up activities in the vicinity of Montepescali and the road junction of Highways 1 and 73, the 143d Infantry turned sharp left and proceeded westward over the area north of Highway 1, toward the hamlet of Giuncarico. Little resistance of any description was met during the advance across the open plains where interference by enemy shells had been expected. Giuncarico was by-passed to the

north early in the day. Coming once again to hilly terrain the patrols climbed up the scrubby slopes and pushed on, turning northwest to conform to the temporary deflections of Highway 1. On approaching the ridge running to the northwest from Gavaranno, the advance was slowed by considerable enemy mortar and artillery fire. The lack of resistance experienced earlier in the day stiffened and it was now made certain that although most of the enemy had withdrawn north across Highway 1, rear guards were still on hand to try to accomplish their ever delaying tactics. The Boche fully exploited every opportunity to effect a delay with rear guard troops. Time was precious and it was of little consequence that the Turcoman were so sacrificed. Well sited enemy self-propelled guns worked effectively against our attacking forces. According to a few veterans of this Texan unit, youths already aged, this was in no comparison to their costly drive across the Rapido River, which seemed a long time ago and many, many mountains back. With determined effort, the 1st and 2d Battalions pushed against the source of this fire, and overcoming the resistance to the front, took and held the ridge firmly.

Further to the south of Highway 1, from covered positions in the vicinity of Vetulonia, the more freshened 142d Infantry, just out of division reserve, attacked over the hilly area to the northwest, capturing the small hill towns of Ravi and Gaverrano and forming a continuous line of advance with the 143d Infantry on the right. By nightfall this line ran generally along the prominent ridge extending from Mt. Calvo on the south through Gavorrano to St. di Gavarrano, just north of Highway 1.

Over on the right portion of the 36th Division zone, the 517th Parachute Infantry reached the mountainous ground north of Sticciano and occupied positions overlooking Highway 73 in that area. A reconnaissance

troop patrolled the highway to a point three miles south of Roccastrada.

On the 21st day of June, ten days after IV Corps took over from VI Corps south of Orbetello, the 36th Division, on the left, had driven over the hills and through the coastal plains along Highway 1 for a distance of about 32 miles. The German rear guard of the 162d German Infantry Division, delayed the relentless pursuers by the maximum use of demolitions and small arms, machine gun and mortar fire. With the exception of the medium calibre batteries which had been hidden in the wooded area to the south of Montepescali, artillery fire was of light calibre and negligible in quantity. The terrain in the western zone favored the enemy, for in traversing the coastal plain, our troops were exposed targets to the enemy artillery batteries sited down Highway 1, or covering parallel avenues of approach. During daylight hours the forward patrols were under the constant scrutiny of the enemy observation posts located on the higher hills to the east, west or to the north. New types of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines were introduced by the enemy to assist in his delaying action. They were more expertly laid and the number of minefields and demolitions were increased a hundredfold in comparison to the few encountered shortly after the Cassino and Anzio beachhead debacles.

Our aircraft swept over Highway 1 to lend their touch to the slaughter of the withdrawing forces. The enemy rear guard had more to do than watch closely for the first approach of our vanguard coming around the corner; they also had to keep a constant eye to the skies on the lookout for our strafing and bombing planes. Considerable losses in vehicles, guns, horses, and personnel were suffered by the Germans as a result of both our ground and air attacks. The sun was burning hotter as the days passed

from the middle of June toward the hottest month of the year in Italy - July. Highway 1 and the coastal area to the right and left had been pock-marked and scarred by bomb and shell, making the movement of vehicles hazardous, especially when filled with water, usually from the occasional summer showers. The Germans criss-crossed their machine gun fire from selected positions favored by good defensive terrain. As had been noted before, many times the Asiatics, under constant watch and orders of their German officers and non-coms, would fire all the ammunition on hand at the approaching Americans and when all ammunition was expended, would jump out of their positions shouting "Kamerad!" For these attempts to surrender, some were dispatched to eternity by the frantic German officers. They were a motley bunch of prisoners; outstanding characteristics noted were their high cheek bones and shaven heads.

To the two regiments of the 36th Division, which battled their way over more rugged hilly terrain, there was less enemy artillery fire and better cover afforded by the declivities and reverse hill slopes, but the constant climbing up and rushing down the hills was more fatiguing. During these ascents and descents, their constant precarious movement was often within the sights of concealed machine guns, mortars and rifles. The hills, on the tops of which stood small hamlets or villages, in which were most always entrenched the enemy gun positions, were obstacles in themselves against our attacking foot troops. These were ten hard days that had passed behind. In such country the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment was really learning about combat, for this section of Italy offered them the hardest type of ground fighting.

So far, not much has been said about Task Force Ramey. The reason for failing to do so is because it was felt that to devote the first part of this chapter solely to the troops of the 36th Division and the remainder to Task Force Ramey, a better follow-up of the first ten days of the re-entry into combat for IV Corps could be afforded the reader. Let us now look over to the right of the zone and pick up this unit on the 12th of June, just as it completed the last throes of reorganization and surged forward over the mountains where it was last heard of knocking at the gates of Pitigliano, lying squarely on Highway 74.

B. TASK FORCE RAMEY KEEPS ABREAST ON THE RIGHT

Task Force Ramey's mission was to advance rapidly northwest and seize the line of the road from Scansana to Triana, about 25 miles northwest of the positions held when the force was created. Secondary missions were to seize and hold Pitigliano, ten miles northwest of Valentano, to protect the IV Corps' right flank, and to maintain contact with the French. When we last left this force on the right flank on 12 June, the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron was driving north along the Valentano-Pitigliano road to seize the latter town. Elements of the Squadron moved up to positions on the east and northeast and after having established positions and regrouped, attacked the town the next morning. Sweeping down from the road on the northeast, the attacking elements ran smack into a landslide which blocked the road, thus temporarily preventing entrance into the town in greater than patrol force. Troop "C" remained in position to the east of the town, spread eastward to the Corps' right boundary and there contacted elements of the French Corps advancing on the right. The only infantry unit of Task Force Ramey at that time, the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry,

occupied Fornese, a community in the hills approximately seven miles north of Canino. By darkness that night, forward elements of the reconnaissance troops and infantry were outposting the road from Pitigliano to Manciano, six miles west.

The following day, Task Force Ramey was greatly increased in strength with the addition of the remainder of the 141st Infantry, the 1st and 2d Battalions, which closed in the area at 2330, there to be available to aid the Ramey grouping in its advance on Triana. The dusty, bearded, and tired infantry men of the two battalions, picked out the shapes of the hills in the early darkness and compared them to the flatter region they had just left. Elements of Task Force Ramey attacked Triana, driving into increased and bitter resistance to the south of the town. More reinforcements rolled in to aid and bolster the Task Force on this same day, the 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion and the 752d Tank Battalion increased its size to a junior brigade. To the southwest another column of Task Force Ramey met with resistance along the road to Capanne in the form of heavy minefields and sporadic artillery fire. After Pitigliano was occupied in force by the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, another column of the Task Force was shot northeastward along the road to Sorano, about five miles distant. This tentacle reaching for Sorano was in accord with the mission of protecting the right flank. Most of the few roads available to the Task Force were hardly adequate for vehicular traffic, and the advance was further impeded by mines and demolitions. By 1500, 15 June, the line had been pushed northwest another eight miles to Capanne, with tanks, infantry and reconnaissance moving steadily ahead against sporadic opposition from enemy infantry and self-propelled guns.

Just before dawn on the 16th, Task Force Ramey began to bother the German defenders of Triana, who were determined not to give up that key town without a heavy fight. The 141st Infantry, supported by the 752d Tank Battalion, occupied the village of Vallerona and the town of Roccalbegna, both towns due west along the road from Triana, then turned east to join the other troops at the walls of Triana. With our penetration into Vallerona and Roccalbegna, the enemy's stubborn two-day resistance collapsed, and at 1040 our troops entered rubble-strewn Triana. Meanwhile, elements of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, to the left of Task Force Ramey, had reached Scansana, and the lateral road between these two towns was now opened. With the capture of these key communities, the mission of Task Force Ramey in that area had been completed.

When the change of boundaries between IV Corps and the French Expeditionary Force went into effect on the 16th, further action against the enemy had now to be directed some distance to the west. The Corps Commander directed General Ramey to hold the Triana, San Caterian and the Vallerona area, with one battalion of tanks, some infantry and artillery, until the French Expeditionary Force could take over. At noon the major portion of Task Force Ramey was directed to move westward into its new zone of action and then to resume the advance to the northwest on Campagnatico.

The 91st Reconnaissance Squadron moved rapidly to their new zone, just south of the Ombrone River and west of the Corps' new right boundary, and at the close of the day were approximately four miles directly south of their new objective, Campagnatico. The 141st Infantry followed at a distance of four to five miles. On the 17th of June, Corps issued an order to its units outlining the coordinated attack set for dawn of the next day.

Campagnatico was set as the objective of Task Force Ramey. The main elements of the Task Force, consisting of the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron and 141st Infantry, operating in this new area, continued to push northward across the hilly country toward Campagnatico. Meanwhile, the tank, infantry, and artillery units which had remained in the Triana - Vallerona area were relieved by the French and moved to join the parent force.

Thus far the enemy had relied principally upon small, effectively located groups, employing maximum fire, demolitions and mines, to delay the progress of the Corps. The majority of such enemy activities were confined closely to the roads, which wound and twisted through the wooded hills and narrow valleys. A narrow dirt road or trail, clinging precariously to the side of a rocky cliff, could be easily made impassable by a well-concealed anti-tank gun and a handful of protective infantrymen. Likewise, on such a road or trail a well placed demolition, covered by the fire of a small group from concealed positions, retarded the advance most effectively, until the defending enemy group could be outflanked. In an effort to counteract these serious delaying tactics of the Germans, those of our forces maneuvering in the difficult terrain were now instructed to leave the road and move forward on foot through the woods or across the fields. By passing around these small enemy groups more speed was attained. Such was the type of resistance and terrain which challenged the Task Force.

Finding the hills in the newly-assigned zone to be of much the same ruggedness as in the area already left, the 91st Reconnaissance spearheaded the attack toward Campagnatico and reached the south bank of the Ombrone

River, on the right of the 361st Infantry. This entire advance was subjected to intense fire from enemy artillery and self-propelled guns, but before the completion of this drive the enemy was forced back across the Ombrone.

At daybreak on 18 June, IV Corps moved forward in its coordinated attack and as the 36th Division on the left drove forward to silence the enemy artillery batteries on the heights of Monteposcali, Task Force Ramey aimed its sights at Campagnatico. After a rapid advance during the night of 17-18 June, during which the crossing of the Ombrone River had been made easier by the enemy's failure to attempt a stand along this natural barrier, the 141st Infantry had surrounded the town by 0600. A brisk fire fight in and around Campagnatico developed and lasted for three hours before the enemy finally fell back toward Paganico, seven miles to the north, protecting his retreat with extensive demolitions which slowed down the pursuing efforts of the reconnaissance troops and light tank elements. The same rain that impeded the 36th Division and turned dusty dirt roads and trails into sticky pools of mud that hampered vehicular movement, also assisted the Jerry in his withdrawal. The Asiatic Turcomen fought stubbornly to hold Paganico in order to protect the lateral Highway 73, route of withdrawal for German units in the lower Ombrone River valley and the Grosseto region. Despite the increased resistance, aided by the foul weather, reconnaissance elements cut the Batignano-Paganico road in several places, while the main forces of Task Force Ramey began to regroup just north of Campagnatico. At the close of the day this infantry was still held up just to the north of the town.

The rapid advance to its objective by Task Force Ramey created a gap between IV Corps and the French Corps to the right. It became necessary

therefore, for General Ramey to direct his attention to the area southwest of Cinigliano, until the French should move westward from Arcidosso to occupy that ground. Regrouping his forces, General Ramey established a number of road blocks north and south of Campagnatico along the Corps' right flank, and at the same time maintained vigorous reconnaissance to the north along the Batignano-Paganico road. An infantry company, reinforced by tanks and artillery, maintained the road blocks, with instructions to hold the positions until the French could reach Cinigliano, six miles to the east. On 22 June, elements of the French Expeditionary Force arrived to take over.

Continuing the drive from north of Campagnatico the following morning and plunging ahead into the mountainous mass, the infantry of Task Force Ramey began to meet stiffer resistance, particularly in the form of mines and obstacles. The Germans had selected ideal positions on which to concentrate his means of delay, for the terrain to the right and left of the road was covered with scrubs and was so steep that by the time the foot troops swung off the road to by-pass the obstacle and then crawled through the difficult terrain to sweep behind it, much time was consumed in the maneuver and for this reason the advance was slowed down considerably. Nevertheless, the pace was maintained with the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment on the left and at the close of this day, Monday, 19 June, the distance to Paganico was shortened by almost two miles. Another column of Task Force Ramey, pursuing northward on the Batignano-Paganico road (one of the many roads marked on the Italian maps in thin green as representing a road of likely interest to the pre-war tourists), met with the same type of resistance and was equally slowed, as the rugged terrain on both sides discouraged flanking movements.

Forging on ahead throughout the next morning, always pushing and pressing, Task Force Ramey gave the enemy rear guards scarce time to leap frog their way back toward Paganico and to offer one last exchange of fire and then withdraw through the town. A few enemy snipers made entry into the town somewhat difficult, and when it was entered in force by 1400, the usual blessing of welcome was bestowed upon the new occupants by enemy artillery batteries, firing from behind more hills to the north, as though not wishing to leave this masonry shattered town so unceremoniously to the khaki-clad liberators. Under this occasional fire the 141st Infantry dug in and took time out to consolidate its forces in preparation for more mountain climbing. Some of the hungry and frightened residents came out of the cellars to behold with awe the youthful Americans, who Mussolini and other propagandists had said were a heartless group of gangsters whose special delight was in the murdering of women and children. They learned that day that the "K" rations given by these soldiers were the tastiest food that had passed into their mouths for a long time.

C. 1ST ARMORED DIVISION BACK IN THE FIGHT

Combat Command "A" of the 1st Armored Division rumbled into assembly areas southwest of Batignano the evening of the 20th. In the meantime Task Force Ramey had planned to continue pushing northwest pending its relief by the only American Armored Division in Italy. The last and final attack of the Ramey Force was started up the road running northwest from Paganico at dawn on 21 June. The 141st Infantry and tanks of the 752d Tank Battalion were aided considerably by a low morning fog which restricted enemy observation. Like a boxing match referee, Mother Nature handed out points; first to the Germans she gave the heavy rains and mud of the 18th of June,

which slowed down our attack, and then to Task Force Ramey she gave this mantle of low fog under which more rapid progress could be made with little or no enemy observation. Some artillery fire and infantry opposition were encountered, but by 1400 the troops had advanced to the junction with Highway 73, seven miles above Paganico, while infantry of the 36th Division came up steadily on the left. This advance by the forward elements of Task Force Ramey was followed by leading elements of the 1st Armored Division. The road junction was outposted until the armored troops could come through. Another road block was set up east of Paganico by Task Force Ramey elements to await the arrival of the armored columns. Combat Command "A" treaded its noisy way up in two columns from Paganico; one to the northwest toward Roccastrada; the other feeling its way along the Corps' right boundary. These columns reached the forward outposts of Task Force Ramey and passed through for a short distance beyond. The relief was accomplished.

A strong right fist was clenched and ready to deliver lethal punches at the foe. General Crittenberger now had two full divisions in the line, the 36th Infantry Division on the left and the 1st Armored Division on the right. Also one Infantry Division was in reserve, the 34th. The commitment of the 1st Armored Division and its passage through Task Force Ramey placed the latter also in Corps reserve with the temporary mission of maintaining protective road blocks and reconnaissance along the Corps' right flank, in the vicinity of Campagnatico and Paganico.

Task Force Ramey, only ten days old, had already sown its oats, passed into old age and breathed its last breath of life. In its last will and devise, it bequeathed to its foster parent, IV Corps, the hilled towns of

Farnese, Pitigliano, Sorano, Triana, Campagnatico and Paganico, and the many more unnamed hamlets, taken with the sweat and toil of its battle-scarred hands. It devised to IV Corps a strip of rugged country in which it was born, extending for over thirty miles in length and five miles in width. In this bequest there was a grant to the liberated peoples of the area, a freedom from fear of the Germans. It was the solid wish and desire of Task Force Ramey, partly because it was a bastard child on birth, and partly because it had fought as hard as its step-brothers on the left, that the historian erect a suitable gravestone of print to immortalize this unit, which had reached manhood before its time and was forced to die by the dictates of the dire circumstances of war. However, due to the exigencies of war and circumstances, it was later to be resurrected, though only a skeleton of its former self, to be re-armed and refitted with an entirely new troop list and to fight again.

By 21 June, mopping up operations by the 517th Parachute Infantry and the 141st Infantry, on the right of IV Corps, had completed the clearing of the country south of Highway 73. As a result, a small portion of the upper Ombrone River Valley had been occupied.

D. WAR ROOM ROUTINE

At 0730 on the morning of 21 June, under the sagging canvas roofs of two wall tents, the War Room daily orientation and conference was already in full swing in the IV Corps Command Post, now nestled amid the green foliage of an olive grove just south of Grosseto. The General Staff Officers and certain officers of the Special Staff were seated about Major General Crittenberger, attentively listening to Major Harry Semmes, G-1, present the up-to-date situation of personnel, regarding strength, losses and replacements of IV Corps.

The exact words of that day cannot be recalled but it is remembered that the replacements and return to units of the 34th Division still in Corps Reserve were the highest of all. It meant that the Division was still being strengthened and freshened for its eventual relief of the weary 36th Division. And as naturally expected, it was also shown that the 36th Division suffered the greatest number of casualties, for it was the only complete Division in the line up to that time. When Lieutenant Colonel Semmes concluded with his report on the state of morale of IV Corps troops, it was felt by all Staff Officers present that the personnel picture was exceedingly favorable. Morale throughout all units during the last ten days had been high, mainly because of the warm, summer days of June, and the successes obtained against the enemy in the rapid advance of all Corps troops.

Then as usual, the youthful-looking Chief of Staff, Colonel Laurence K. Ladue, shouted "G-2", and Colonel Thomas J. Wells took his turn and stood by the G-2 Situation Map, heavily marked with the gay colors of blue and red - the upper half always in red symbols and the bottom always in blue, and began pointing out the previous day's enemy activity, using the broken radio aerial that so aptly served as a pointer throughout the war. His presentation started at the coast and worked to the right across the Corps Zone and then over the blue colored right boundary into the French Zone. This day there was more to tell, for a new identification had been made along the coast. The 162d Turcomen Division, now badly chopped up and only a skeleton of its former strength, most of it lost by desertion or voluntary surrender, had to be bolstered. In the line only a little over two weeks after its committal during the first week of June, the Division had lost over 2000 prisoners in addition to its very high casualty

rate. It was estimated that over 75% of the prisoners, either allowed themselves to be captured without a struggle, or were outright deserters. These losses had destroyed the Division's ability. Elements of the 16th SS Reichsfuehrer Panzer Grenadier Division appeared on the left flank on 20 June. This unit was gradually developed as we advanced, for it had a dual mission - one of coastal defense and the other of protection of this German west flank. It was this outfit that was always so accurately identified by Italian civilian reports as "The Tedeschi (German soldiers) with the skull and cross-bones on their helmets or gray caps." The 45th German Air Force Jaeger Regiments had also been contacted. This unit, a part of the 19th German Air Force Division, which had been rushed from Belgium to Italy on 10 June, was being committed - a battalion at a time - as it arrived. A captured order of this Division clearly indicated the German intentions. Part of it read, "this war will not be decided in this theatre. To relieve our forces in the west the mission of our armies in Italy is to keep strong forces of the enemy occupied, to weaken his armies and to inflict heavy losses in men and equipment." Beyond the 162d Turcomen Division was the much weakened 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 20th German Air Force Field Division was known to be straddling the IV Corps - French Expeditionary Force boundary. This imposing list of Divisions did not represent a corresponding strength in combat troops, since most of the units were far below strength.

Placing the pointer on the port of Piombino, the G-2 illustrated that with our further advance northward along the coast and the capture of the island of Elba, the enemy was abandoning the port of Piombino, where demolitions were indicated by photo reconnaissance reports on

on 20 June. Steps were being taken to block Leghorn harbor, still further north along the coast where a new blockship had arrived sometime between 15 and 20 June. However, as far as was then known, the southern entrance to the port was still open and shipping remained active. The G-2 concluded this phase of his report with figures showing the ever-increasing total of German Prisoners of War.

There was a pause to wait for the G-2 draftsman to place another marked map on the board, during which time the constant drone of the gasoline-powered generators for the Corps Command Post hummed in the otherwise early morning's quiet. The new map placed on the rectangular plywood board was also marked up with all kinds of symbols - mostly those of fortifications and gun emplacements. With the pointer the G-2 ran across the length of the map and formally introduced to the staff the "Gothic Line". Although piecemeal reports of the past had filtered in to justify the assumption that some sort of a defense line was being constructed on the Apennine mountain range, its name had just been learned. For the past eight months the German organization TODT, skilled in the construction of heavy fortifications and experienced to perfection on the Siegfried Line, had been building an elaborate defense line from Carrara on the west coast to Pesaro on the Adriatic. Information obtained from escaped allied prisoners, refugee Italians, Partisans, OSS agents, and strategic photo reconnaissance units, bore out the fact that a heavily concentrated defense line of some sort was being scarred into the precipitous slopes of the Apennines by the sweat and toil of forced slave labor, prisoners, German engineers, and willing and unwilling Italian civilians, including some women and children. The first clue that led to the name of this formidable defense was found in documents captured at the Headquarters of Kesselring. May this

serve to illustrate to all G-2's and potential intelligence officers, how a security failure gave to the Allies a very important piece of information. The document in German called it "Goten Stellung", translated "The Gothic Line". A name that was to imbed itself into history as deeply as have the pillars of war fame, such as Anzio, Omaha Beach, Maginot Line, Siegfried Line, The Bulge, Salerno, Iwo Jima, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki.

Latest figures indicated that about 15,000 Italian laborers were engaged in building this final defense line, designed to deny access to the Po Valley and to highly industrialize northern Italy, which was producing vitally needed material for the German War Machine. The mountainous terrain of the steep Apennines constituted a formidable natural barrier of which the designers of the Line had taken full advantage. Aerial photo studies indicated that the defenses were well developed in depth, consisting of steel pill-boxes, concrete emplacements and well-constructed ammunition dugouts. The pill-boxes were blasted into the rocky slopes that commanded the most likely avenues of approach. The majority of the pill-boxes were reported to have an overhead covering about eight feet thick and were equipped with numerous anti-tank and machine guns. Photographic evidence had been collected for the past four months, while some of the emplacements were still under construction and not camouflaged.

Although the line was still distant, this intelligence was attentively taken in by the staff - it meant that from now on, one eye must be kept on the immediate front and the other on the Apennines. All long-range planning was to include that sea-to-sea bastion lying inevitably ahead. Later in the innermost reaches of their minds, flash-backs to this early morning's intelligence came to the force many times, to be mulled over and over.

Whether it was a signal, ordnance, supply or ammunition problem that arose, thought was given to that Line beyond the Arno River. They knew that eventually they would grapple with this Gargantuan menace.

"Any questions, gentlemen?" concluded Colonel Wells - and in the intervening stillness, the drone of the gasoline generator throbbing out its monotonous prattle again invaded the quiet of the War Room, only to be dwarfed out in turn by the roar of a flight of fighter bombers headed for the front, approximately fifteen miles distant.

Colonel Gene Harrison lithely stepped up beside the rectangular map board before the Chief of Staff shouted "G-3", and started working from the coast, eastward over the combined G-2 - G-3 map, but confined his makeshift pointer to the areas occupied by the blue-colored symbols. On this fair Wednesday morning he also had much to tell of the operations of our own troops, and of those of the French to the right.

IV Corps was now strengthened to three full divisions; two infantry and one armored, and two additional regiments; one infantry and the other parachute infantry. The addition to the 1st Armored Division was opportunely timed, for the progressive bend of the coastline toward the northwest necessitated loosening the belt across the Corps Zone another notch; there was much more ground to worry about. The straight air line distance across the front on this day was slightly over 25 miles, and the multiple reports on all sectors gave every indication that the enemy resistance was beginning to stiffen. As G-2 had shown, elements of five enemy divisions were already developed on our front. Up until now the advance of IV Corps had been very rapid through the hill country north of Orbetello and in the

Ombrose Valley around Grosseto. Now more difficult country lay ahead, the Tuscan hill country, where the Germans expected to function better, and consequently the gains were foreseen to be correspondingly slower. At latest report, the 363d Infantry, sister Regiment of the 361st Infantry, was somewhere in the theatre and rumored to be a very likely addition to the IV Corps troop list.

The right boundary of the IV Corps now ran northwest through Paganico, across Highway 73 west of Monticiano, cut just east of Casole d'Elsa, and struck Highway 68 at a point six miles west of Colle di Val d'Elsa. IV Corps had the most important objectives in its left zone, particularly the port of Piombino, which was about fifteen miles beyond the front on this day. Now with his pointer, the G-3 indicated that about thirty miles farther up the coast lay Cecina at the junction of Highway 1 and Highway 68. Inland in the 1st Armored Division zone, the only sizeable city was Volterra on Highway 68.

In the intentions of IV Corps, 36th Division was to continue along the coastline, following the general axis of Highway 1, while the 1st Armored Division was to advance abreast on the right, through more rugged country and over a multitude of small roads and trails. The 36th Division received a zone about twelve miles wide, but the 1st Armored Division covered a wider front, reaching a maximum of nearly twenty miles.

With his pointer shifted further over to the right, the G-3 gave the following brief picture of the French situation:

When his troops went back into the line on 11 June, General Alphonse Juin, the French Expeditionary Force Commander, was granted permission to

set up a special mobile operations headquarters, streamlined and designated the "Pursuit Corps". This Provisional Corps was the one that supervised the actual field operations, while French Expeditionary Force Headquarters in the rear handled the major command and policy functions. It was also allowed time to reorganize itself, in anticipation of its withdrawal from Fifth Army in the future for use in Operation Anvil, the coming amphibious assault against the southern French coast.

The goal of the French Expeditionary Force as it re-entered battle was the same as that of IV Corps - the Arno River - but, in view of its contemplated withdrawal from Fifth Army, it was not expected to reach this line. On 20 June the entire Pursuit Corps was within striking distance of the Orcia River line and prepared to assault this barrier, the most formidable yet encountered north of Rome. Resistance was likewise becoming stiffer all along its front, in the same manner as on the front of the IV Corps. Mines were as heavily laid and demolitions across all avenues of approach were in greater abundance. It was becoming apparent that the next phase of action was to involve more fighting and less pursuing.

Operations for the capture of the Island of Elba were started on 17 June. The northern tip of the island was located about eight miles southwest of the port city of Piombino. Though not carried out by Fifth Army troops, the attack was coordinated by Allied Force Headquarters with the advance on the Italian mainland and was launched when the IV Corps troops, driving up the west coast of Italy, were nearly opposite the island. French troops of the 9th Colonial Infantry Division made up of Senegalese and Tabors, reinforced by the Battalion de Choc, landed at Galpo di Campo

on the southern shores of the island, and in a whirlwind campaign ended all organized resistance two days later. A battery of 155mm guns was installed in position on the northeastern tip of the island, commanding Piombino on the mainland, and the availability of support from these weapons was communicated to IV Corps - however, as will be later shown, Piombino fell without the necessity of their use.

Before the historian introduces the next speaker it might be well to mention in passing that some of the G. I.'s of the 36th Division who slogged their way up along the coast about ten miles northwest of Grosseto, can probably remember looking westward out over the open sea and seeing this large chunk of land mushrooming out of the blue water about eight miles from shore; the Island of Elba, where Napoleon lived in exile. The same Napoleon who led the tattered remnants of his once mighty French Army to freeze to their death on the bleak, snow-covered steppes of Russia. Only ten miles from this conqueror's home of exile, another harried European Army was also desperately withdrawing toward its homeland, and leaving many of its tattered remnants on the sun-parched, denuded slopes of Italy.

Colonel Arthur T. Lacey, G-4, was next to brief the General and the Staff. In his calm and careful manner he picturized the supply situation generally as follows:

Supply was somewhat complicated by the absence of rail facilities and hampered by the demolitions of highway bridges, which, though expeditiously repaired by bypasses, slowed down highway movements because of the "bottle-necks" created by traffic at these critical points. For the distance already advanced, Highway 1 was the only road available as the main

supply routes of the Corps. Already the route was heavily burdened with mounting traffic, mostly due to supply convoys to and from Army supply installations at Grosseto.

Class I, III and V supplies were maintained by Fifth Army from bases established at Naples, Anzio and Civitavecchia (opened on 3 June). Dumps were installed at locations recommended by IV Corps, conveniently situated for the service of front line troops and moved forward at ten to fifteen-mile intervals as the attack progressed. Upon Corps recommendation, stocks were held to a minimum consistent with emergency supply, to save rehandling and transportation. Class II and IV supplies were obtained by the using organizations, direct from Army bases and dumps. In emergencies, transportation available to the Corps and its attached units and stocking forward dumps. Despite some of the difficulties encountered, Colonel Lacey was able to say, that, at no time during this period were the operations of the front line's troops hampered by a failure to provide essential supplies or ammunition.

It was felt that at certain periods transportation was critical. With the lengthening supply lines stretching longer as the rapid advance progressed, it was necessary to supplement the one Quartermaster Truck Company, the 3606th, by trucks borrowed from the 45th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade and front line organizations, in order to motorize units for tactical moves, routine reliefs and to maintain supply. Under the circumstances, it was a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. This proved to be a continuous overload on tactical units, and dependence on such an expedient could well lead to failure to fully exploit a favorable situation by

hampering the operations of tactical subordinate units. This was particularly true, as was the case during the last ten-day period, when the advance was so rapid that the Fifth Army Signal Battalions, at times, weren't able to keep telephone communications to the Corps Command Post, thereby making it difficult to obtain trucks from Fifth Army, which were urgently required by a rapidly moving situation. Experience had already dictated that a Corps should have at least two truck companies when actively engaged.

Let us look at the problems that were greying the hair of the traffic control section. On the IV Corps roads, an average of 1400 vehicles in convoy were scheduled each day. On this very day, 3954 vehicles moved in convoy on Route 1, from the vicinity of Tarquinia to an area southeast of Grosseto. On 19-20 June the 1st Armored Division's 3000 vehicles moved over Route 1 to a bivouac area southeast of Grosseto, preparatory to moving into the line. On 21-22 June the 34th Infantry Division moved over Route 1 from Tarquinia to an area just east of the 1st Armored Division. On 21-22-23 June, the 1st Armored Division moved through Grosseto and into the line on the east. In addition to all of these convoys, Fifth Army road checks showed that for every vehicle cleared to move in convoy on the roads, there were an average of four unscheduled vehicles. These so-called "casual" vehicles were in groups of ten or less, and were not subject to scheduling, but nevertheless created a problem for the IV Corps Provost Marshal: Such vehicles had to be considered when figuring space and time intervals for regular convoy schedules. All day long during these heavy traffic days, gangs of young, haggard, Italian urchins shouted pleas of "Carameli" and "Chocolatta", as these convoys passed through Grosseto - an additional problem for the Corps Provost Marshal.

Colonel D. H. Gillette, Corps Engineer, in his heavy gravel voice bore out the G-2 as to the increasing Jerry resistance. When the front reached Grosseto, the disorganized enemy began to re-establish resistance as the road net now fanned out into some six northbound roads. From this point on, demolitions rapidly increased and mine fields were liberally sown, thus, the Engineer problem assumed serious proportions, particularly so now that the road demands of the 1st Armored Division, entering the line, would be heavier, The density of mines continued to increase. Treacherous dynamite, encased in metal containers the size of one of grandmother's innocent apple pies, was effective in delaying the advance of the Corps, and on the morale of its troops. At no time was it safe to step out of the white-taped roads, inevitably pasted with the signs: "Shoulders Cleared to 4 Feet". "Bouncing Betty", "Schu", and "Teller" mines, were now common names popping in regularly on messages, and they took their toll not only on the advancing American patrols, but also on the troops to the rear, particularly signal men laying out wire lines along the swept road sides. Orthodox patterns of enemy mine fields, once taught at service schools, were no longer existent - criss-crossed patterns were met at one place and cross-crissed at another, with no semblance of order at the next. Lying at a roadside or junction, a jeep, twisted, flattened, and riddled with holes like a sieve, was an obvious sign of its fate and that of its occupants. A large proportion of the wounded at the field hospitals were victims of these concealed and buried, flat, disc-shaped cans loaded with TNT.

Colonel A. W. Meetze, the Chemical Warfare Officer, had been charged with the responsibility for the dispatch of the liaison planes attached

to Corps Headquarters for reconnaissance flights or liaison work, and also for the operation of the War Room and Liaison Section. His young assistant, Major Jimmie Rogers, extremely fluent in the French language, acted as Corps Liaison Officer to the French. It was a customary duty of the Chemical Warfare Section to keep up to date the maps on the operations in the Pacific and on the Western and Eastern fronts. Intelligence, respecting Chemical Warfare operations of the enemy, was nil, except for his report of this day. It appeared that on 13 June, the Chemical Officer of the 34th Infantry Division had found four drums of German mustard gas and had requested disposition instructions for the deadly material. Since none of the mustard was needed for analysis, he was directed by Colonel Meetze to remove the drums to a location safe from possible enemy artillery fire, or air bombardment, and then bury the material very deeply and record the exact location. To date this was the only incident arising in Chemical Warfare channels. Nevertheless, stocks of such deadly materials on hand in the theatre were pin-pointed and the locations known, so that they could be available in the event the Germans sought to break the ban on its use by the rules of "International Warfare". A large map of western France was placed before the staff officers and the following brief account was rendered by Colonel Meetze as to the situation in western Europe.

Shortly after Allied Forces landed in Normandy, the Nazis had attacked southern England with a "secret weapon", by which Hitler hoped to demoralize the civilian population and postpone defeat. This new revelation was a robot or "buzz bomb", better known as V-1 (Vengeance Weapon), a miniature plane with a wingspread of sixteen feet, jet propelled, gyroscopically balanced, guided by a magnetic compass, and which flew a level course.

When its fuel was gone, the plane plunged to earth carrying a ton of high explosives. Because of its great flying speed, only the newest planes, Tempests, Spitfires and Mustangs could cope with it. Most of the robots were launched in salvos, from heavily camouflaged ramps along the channel coast above Calais. Since it was impossible to aim the robots at a specific military target, a large city like London was their only effective destination. The men, women and children of London were in the lines again, withstanding severe hardships in this "Second Battle of Britain".

The invasion of Normandy was progressing favorably. In the third phase of the invasion, United States infantry supported by artillery, fought to positions within five miles of the center of Cherbourg. As the Americans moved forward in jeeps, half tracks, tanks and trucks toward the port, town after town was occupied. The German radio said the Cherbourg garrison was ordered to "fight to the last man". At the same time the Allies made mass air assaults on the robot plane emplacements at Pas-de-Calais.

The great Russian offensive was in full swing. According to reports, Germany and her satellites had over 270 divisions holding this front, of which 200 were German, 28 Rumanian, 20 Hungarian and 15 Finnish. All grouped in nine armies. Rolling them back out of Russia, were Soviet forces of more than 300 divisions, grouped in ten armies from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea. With the capture of Viipuri on 20 June, the Russians came to a region of marshes and lakes, easily defended by the Finns; there Colonel Meetze left them. On all sides Hitler and his once mighty German Army were being pushed back.

Over in the Pacific, from bases in China, the first force of Super-Fortresses flew over Japan and hurled their bombs down on the Yawatia Steel Works, located in Kyusho, the southernmost of Japan's main islands.

Colonel Edmund Cunningham, Signal Officer, concluded the War Room morning's briefing with his dramatic announcement of "Gentlemen - 0800", - - - a crushing pause of silence followed while the staff officers adjusted the stems of their Bulovas, Walthams, Hamiltons, and other makes - - - there with the word, "now", the time was synchronized throughout the staff. Thus ended the War Room conference of the day.

All over the world the Axis forces were on the defensive. In Italy it was a withdrawal where the enemy was being punched from the ground and air. The following entries of a diary, captured from a German lieutenant named Schilling, may perhaps give the reader a pulsating picture of what Kesselring's forces were doing between 13 and 19 June:

13 June 0500 hrs. It is daylight and the trucks still stand in convoy on the road. They will again become victims of the fighter bombers no doubt. A little later they are already there but we got a Volkswagen just in time to get us out of the column. 0900 hrs we arrive last of all in the new area.

14 June A Dr. brings new orders. 1100 hrs we march to Pratta Todena and arrive there in oppressive heat at 1200 hrs. We have got another horse and cart for our kit. The wireless set has been given to Bn. It is supposed to be earmarked for the coy. Pts.----goes down with malaria - further casualties to an already weak unit. The corn is ripe but there is nobody to reap it. The Italians don't bother about anything. Young fellows are wandering about everywhere. The "niggers" have no organization. The German soldier is disgusted with this behaviour. No German can go anywhere alone because of the instances of guerrillas surrounding them are multiplying. 2200 hrs we go in tpt to Montegabbione. Three men bring on the two horses and carts.

- 15 June This evening we take up positions again. During the afternoon a recce is made by the Coy Comd 4 kms SW of Citta Della Pieve. The country is not tank proof; therefore more training for the young fellows in the handling of the Faustpatrone. 2200 hrs we are fwd of Pieve and are given a new sector.
- 16 June 0200 hrs we reach the new sector. It is too dark to recce posns and we stay in the woods, with local protection. 0430 hrs a few shells in the immediate vicinity. Bad luck has it that two men are wounded but thank God only lightly. One remains with the section. We need every man. 0700 hrs posns are occupied. 1330 hrs first observation of enemy. Tanks come on again. 1400 hrs the enemy occupied Monteleone and pushes on towards Pieve. 600 metres from our posns tanks and lorried inf go by. The nerve strain grows and sleep is lacking. The present inferiority both in men and material is hard on morale. Above all our Luftwaffe is lacking. We have to burrow like moles. 2015 hrs it is reported that a tank has approached to within 3 metres of my posns and turned around without being engaged. Cpl _____ who tried to engage it is wounded. I am very depressed for firstly this was no heroic action, secondly I regard Cpl _____ as special friend (his third wound), thirdly I do not feel physically fit myself and fourthly more men have become casualties. A crisis arises; against a proper attack I cannot hold my posn. The oncoming darkness brings quiet again.
- 17 June 0500 hrs the order comes to withdraw 1200 metres NORTH of the road Citta - Piegara into new posns. Today we set a truck on fire after my clear order about the event the day before. A badly wounded English captain is brought in but he dies shortly afterwards. Three days without rations, but we live quite well on the land (chickens, eggs, etc.) How are things in the west? No news.
- 18 June An all day battle. The enemy (from North Africa) attacks company posns. According to orders I conduct a fighting withdrawal from one line to another. A tank is captured intact but it is not brought into coy. Pte Baresch is wounded. 1500 Sgt. _____ arrives with the happy news which hits us like a bombshell. "Reprisals are being taken" (Pilotless planes) we discuss it eagerly. 1600 hours we take up a new posn 2 kms NE of Citta Della Pieve. At nightfall we are to withdraw a greater distance in tpt via Chiusi to Lopi (3590). 2½ North of Lake Chiusi. I'm still short of the ration parties who cannot find Bn Hq ½ mile away. 2230 hrs we pull out again. The coy is complete except for

Pte Erbach. The march to the tpt across country becomes an exceptional hardship. Again it is apparent that the young fellows have missed the hard peace time training. In spite of instruction on march discipline, the men are impossible on a night march. The moral I draw from it is that in training first of all one must accustom oneself to hardships. I myself carry a captured typewriter on this march.

19 June At 0315 hrs we meet up with the tpt and are the first to get there. There Cpl Pik and Cpl Julich reported back to the coy. Early at 0600 hours we take up a posn $3\frac{1}{2}$ kms SE of Lake Chiusi. Our sector has been changed during the last hour. Cpl Kaspar comes up with urgent Orderly Room matters. We caught a couple of geese but nobody enjoys them for the fellows are so exhausted and worn out. Everyone is waiting for mail which we have not had for a long time. Enemy are attacking the bn sector supported by tanks and manage to break through; situation is critical. At 2130 hrs the order comes to withdraw towards Strada 3786.

Author's Note: This extract of Lt. Schelling's diary was copied from a British Intelligence reports which accounts for the unorthodox abbreviations.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER VII - - - - -

THE ADVANCE TO THE CECINA RIVER AND HIGHWAY 68

On 21 June the front line of Fifth Army stretched from a point on the west coast about eight miles north of Grosseto, eastward to the Eighth Army boundary in the vicinity of Sarteano. The troops of IV Corps were entering the Tuscan hill country, with the valleys of the Ombrone and Tiber Rivers now behind them, and the southern banks of the Cecina River approximately thirty miles away. On the right the French were up against the Orcia River. All along the line the most difficult country encountered north of Rome lay just ahead, and evidence of the stiffening German defense was slowly accumulating. Along the coast on the extreme left, where the foot troops of the 36th Division were slogging into the hills bordering the north and northwest side of the Ombrone Valley, the coastline swung sharply northwest, thus increasing the frontage of the IV Corps zone and necessitating the use of another division.

Such was the situation when General Crittenberger broadened the commitment of IV Corps to include two divisions on the line; the 36th Infantry Division and the 1st Armored Division. The former held a line extending from the small hilled town of Caldana, south of Highway 1, to Giuncarico, and thence across the Ombrone Valley to Sticciano on Highway 73. The 142d Infantry Regiment was operating in the hilly Caldana area, the 143d Infantry in the vicinity of Giuncarico and the 517th Parachute Infantry was putting the final touches on mopping up operations

around Sticciano.

Task Force Ramey, already with an epitaph cut into its gravestone as no longer destined to see action with the same units, was entering Corps reserve. It had held road blocks until passed through by the 1st Armored Division, and the bulk of its force had assembled near Campagnatico, including the 141st Infantry (36th Division). The 34th Division remained in Corps reserve, but had been alerted to the probability of relieving the 36th Division about 26 June. On this day it was already moving up Route 1, from its rest area near Tarquinia, to a bivouac area southeast of Grosseto. In order to provide more infantry for the 1st Armored Division, operating in the eastern hilly zone where the tanks were expected to be delayed along the narrow roads, the 361st Regimental Combat Team, less its Artillery and 2d Battalion, was attached.

The 6th Armored Field Artillery Group was also taken from Task Force Ramey and attached to the 1st Armored Division. At the outset the Group was in general support, reinforcing fires of the 1st Armored Division Artillery from initial firing positions. When maximum ranges were reached, it was to move to the 36th Division Sector along the coast. However, as this chapter will show, heavier opposition was met in the 1st Armored Division Sector than had been anticipated, which demanded that the 6th Field Artillery Group remain in its initial role of reinforcing "Warrior" (1st Armored Division). The heaviest cannon that belched out the deepest roar and most devastating damage from the Group was the eight inch Howitzer of the 932d Field Artillery Battalion. The 155mm Howitzers of the 985th Field Artillery Battalion were also able to throw havoc far into the Jerries confronting the Armor, while the smallest of the Group, the 105mm S. P.,

barking their close-in support of the 1st Armored Division, came from the 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

The mission assigned to the balance of the Corps Artillery, the 77th Field Artillery Group, was that of general support with emphasis laid on reinforcing fires of the 36th Division Artillery. To most ideally meet this mission were the two battalions of 155mm guns; the 173d Field Artillery Battalion and the 631st Field Artillery Battalion. These guns were able to reach deep into the German rear area, and with the cooperation of the Cub observers, were able to send to smithers, lucrative targets far to the rear along Route 1.

Reinforcing the artillery of the divisions, these Corps artillery units gave to the Corps a substantial weight of artillery fire power with which to support the advancing foot troops and tanks, of which the latter were potent artillery pieces in themselves.

A. THE LAST DAYS OF THE 36TH DIVISION ON THE ITALIAN FRONT

The 36th Division, less the 141st Infantry, and leaving the attached 517th Parachute Infantry, which was in position on the southern edge of Highway 73 awaiting relief by the 1st Armored Division, pushed into the hills along Highway 1 northwest of Grosseto on 21 June. The 142d and 143d Infantry made steady progress against scattered groups of enemy. The 142d, which had already seized the first hills southwest of the Ombrone Valley, continued to clear the enemy out of the hills south of the main highway, encountering only occasional, unorganized resistance. By the end of the day the Regiment had pushed more than four miles into the rugged country west of Vetulonia and captured the villages of Ravi and Gavorrano, bypassing the extremely mountainous terrain which stretched southwestward

five or six miles to the sea. The few Germans in this sector hurriedly pulled out. The 143d Infantry bypassed the village of Guincarico along Highway 1 and advanced north of it against scattered artillery and small arms fire. In late afternoon the advance units reached the ridge running northwest from Gavorrano, and by nightfall, the 1st and 2d Battalions had seized the entire ridge line. The Division front, held by the two regiments, ran along the ridge anchored on the left by Mount Calvo, extended through Gavoranno to Gavoranno station, and then east along the north side of the Ombrone Valley to where Combat Command "B" of the 1st Armored Division had entered the line.

Heavy rain showers the following day prevented the mobile columns from making any rapid headway over the muddy terrain, and the tempo of advance was slowed. The bulk of the forces of the 36th Division shifted westward to the new zone, after relief by the 1st Armored Division, and changed the direction of its advance from north to northwest. Limited gains were made by the two leading infantry regiments, while the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team left Sticciano, taken over by the 1st Armored Division, for an assembly area near Gavoranno in rear of the 142d. From this position, the 517th might easily be recommitted, after the attack had progressed around and to the north of the Gulf of Follonica. About six miles of hills remained to be traversed before the coastal zone again became a plain along the Gulf of Follonica and Highway 1 once more turned northwest, cutting across the base of the peninsula on which was located the port of Piombino, about eight miles west of the highway.

An interesting translated captured document circulating about in Fifth Army G-2 Periodic Report #290, reached IV Corps on this date. Its

contents bore out the indication that German Wermacht morale was waning on all fronts, due to the squeezing pressures exerted by the Allies. It was issued from Berlin by the Senior Medical Officer of the German High Command on the subject of "Demoralization of the Armed Forces: - Self-Inflicted Wounds". It advised unit doctors to pay more attention to the problem of self-inflicted wounds when examining men reporting for sick call. The ingenious methods thought up by the "Supermen" to get themselves out of the lines were as follows: Picric acid (possibly in conjunction with Digitalin), Atebrin, Guttapercha, or the smoking of cigarettes in which Saffron was mixed, in order to simulate jaundice. In addition, temporary disturbances of the heart were produced by the taking of Quinine, Caffein, or by heavy smoking. A rash similar to scarlet fever resulted from the taking of Potassium Iodine; skin irritation and shingles from the rubbing in of Spanish Fly ointment, Juice of Spurge, Crowsfoot, etc., after the skin had been scratched by a fine needle. The injection of paraffin or turpentine caused self-inflicted wounds. The rubbing in of raw castor oil produced irritation of the eyes. The taking of coffee mixed with ground poppy seeds, produced excruciating cases of diarrhea. The seeds could also be added to flour and used in cooking. Tuberculosis could be simulated by the taking of Dinitrophenol or Thyroid extract. Loss of weight and exhaustion resulted, while blood and smegma bacteria were found in the excreta. An infectious inflammation of the throat was produced by painting the tonsils with silver nitrate stick and subsequent gargling with mustard of ginger and the swallowing of gun powder. This fifth year of combat for the Germans was beginning to show to them the futility of war. The present caliber of the troops, the dregs from the German manpower barrel, necessi-

tated the frequent issuance of such directives, treating with desertions or self-inflicted wounds. It was wondered by the readers at the time, whether the risks of the front were not a far better chance than that of treating one's stomach to a dose of mustard and gun powder (without the hot dogs).

The peninsula and port of Piombino were the next targets in line for General Walker's fighters. The next morning, 23 June, the division resumed the advance aimed at cutting off the peninsula and isolating the important port. The 517th Parachute Infantry took over the left flank position, moving along historic Highway 1, while the 142d Infantry advanced to the northwest. Little resistance was met in clearing out the remaining mountainous territory south of the highway, but as the leading American patrols descended onto the coastal plains, north of the highway, they found strong delaying forces opposing them and resistance increasing considerably. Elements of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, picking their way through the mines to screen the infantry advance, ventured into the coastal town of Follonica during the morning. There they met with stubborn infantry resistance, withering small arms fire, and heavy tank and self-propelled gun fire from a ridge just beyond the town and were forced to pull out. Elements of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division had selected ideal positions from which to retard an advance. The increasing resistance showed that the unit was to fight more stubbornly than did the unwilling Turcomen of the 162d Infantry Division. This opposition limited the advance on the left: better progress was made on the right of Highway 1, for the enemy tanks were not leaving the hard-surfaced road to engage in delaying actions in

the hills. The 142d and 143d Infantry struck for the east-west road connecting Follonica and Massa Marittima and by nightfall reached points just south of the road, with patrols to the north thereof. The 517th Parachute Infantry had joined in this attack, advancing abreast of the other units. At dark the positions reached by all three units formed a continuous line along the Follonica-Massa Marittima from Highway 1 on the south to a point some two miles below Massa Marittima, in the area of Combat Command "B".

The 34th Division, having moved into a training and assembly area south of Grosseto sent forward advance parties that evening to reconnoiter and make preparations to move forward to the vicinity of Giuncarico, directly behind the 36th Division front line elements. It was felt that from this new position the relief of the 36th Division might be effected with greater dispatch.

Even before the first rays of the morning sun cut across the open sea to strike the matin bells, pealing forth the call to morning service, from the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, still far to the north and deep in enemy territory, the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron once more attempted to drive into Follonica. The fanatical and determined resistance encountered there forced it to withdraw eastward again. Stung but not daunted, another attack was made later in the day, this time supported with 517th Parachute Infantry. The Germans, finding their only route of retreat to the north about to be severed by our advance north of Highway 1, withdrew hurriedly, and fled through the small gap that remained open for them. Thus the coast was reached at Follonica and a cordon of troops firmly surrounded some 225 square miles of rugged terrain, south of the town and east

of the main highway. Most of whatever Germans that might have been there, appeared to have withdrawn from the area.

After clearing out the few German snipers that remained behind, a suicidal mission in all respects, the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron continued on from Follonica and drove relentlessly to the north as a screening force for the infantry. Meanwhile, the two regiments on the right drove a deep spearhead beyond the road. Advancing in column of battalions with the 3d Battalion leading, the 142d Infantry made a four-mile push in their zone. The 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, took Hill #129, and advanced six miles beyond the Follonica-Massa Marittima road to a position three miles southeast of Suverto.

This Texas National Guard Division, under the command of Major General Walker, had travelled a long, long way up the Italian boot. There still were many of the original officers and men, who had marched out of their different home towns, still slugging on these Italian hill tops, ever carrying their well-known and respected shield of valor, the famous "T" emblazoned on the blue arrowhead. In the German intelligence order of battle files it had been carried for a long time as a veteran combat division and so respected. There was a sprinkling of some veterans of the old Texan outfit who had fought the "Boche" of World War I in France, and were now fighting the "Jerries" of World War II in Italy.

Ernie Pyle, who had brought the hardships of the infantry to the people at home and had captivated the hearts of the foot-slogging GI's as their "champion", once wrote an article from which the following extracts are made: "Now the Infantry, the 'God-Damned Infantry', as they like to call themselves.

"I like the Infantry because they are the underdog. They are the mud-

rain-frost and wind boys. They have no comforts and they learn to live without the necessities. And in the end they are the guys that wars can't be won without."

--- "For numberless days and nights they have fought hard, eaten little, washed none, and slept hardly at all. Their nights have been sleepless and miserable with the crash of artillery.

"The men are walking. They are 50 feet apart, for dispersal, their walk is slow, for they are dead weary, as you can tell even when you look at them from behind. Every line and sag of their bodies speaks their inhuman exhaustion.

"On their shoulders and backs they carry heavy steel tripods, machine gun barrels, leaden boxes of ammunition. Their feet seem to sink into the ground from the overload they are bearing." (Ernie Pyle)

It is known that these observations of the infantryman in combat, reflected what he saw in the bloody fighting around Cassino and on Anzio. This same 36th Division, now ready to seize its last port in Italy, Piombino, was often the host to this noted war correspondent on both named Italian fronts.

While the 36th Division continued the attack north of Highway 1 in an effort to seal off the Piombino Peninsula and to isolate the enemy in that area, the first stages of actual relief of that Division were initiated. The 34th Division Artillery Battalions moved forward into positions from which they could actively support the current infantry advance. These guns could be worked out and re-familiarized by the crew men and be already warmed and unlimbered to support their own infantrymen when the relief was in effect. One regimental combat team was also

moved to a position where it would be available for entry into the line at a time suitable to the commanders of the two divisions concerned.

From the early morning the 34th Infantry Division was on the move to the north, freshened and strengthened in preparation for the relief. The Division motor columns crossed the Ombrone River over a treadway bridge east of congested Grosseto, constructed to ease the dense rear area supply traffic through and within the city. The column of over 2,000 vehicles, in serials, entered Highway 1, ten miles north of Grosseto, at the point where it joins with Route 149, where a Division traffic control post prevented congestion of traffic by assuring the Division movement schedules without interrupting other scheduled traffic on Route 1. This was one of the smoothest movements made by an infantry division since IV Corps entered the line - there was not one instance reported of any traffic mishap or jam.

That evening the 34th Infantry Division closed in the assembly area in the vicinity of Giuncarico and sent up advance parties to organize and plan the relief.

The next day, 25 June, was to be the final day of combat in Italy for the 36th Infantry Division, which had battled its way up from the bloody beaches of Salerno - up and down steep, rocky slopes - in winter and summer, for a distance of nearly 300 miles. Even though the 34th Infantry Division, another veteran combat unit which had marched a still longer combat route, was in position and waiting to relieve it, on its last day in the lines the 36th Division brought forth the fall of Piombino and advanced the front as much as nine miles beyond.

The 143d Infantry on the right acting as a pivot, made the smallest gain, while the 142d Infantry and 517th Parachute Infantry swept rapidly across the level stretch of ground near the coast. The 517th Parachute Infantry isolated the Piombino area in its push across the base of the peninsula, and the port fell without a struggle about noon when a small jeep patrol composed of a Lieutenant Colonel and three men from the 39th Engineer Combat Regiment, on road reconnaissance, entered the port town. Some Italian Partisans, now becoming more numerous as the advance continued northward, mistook the Engineers for a party of Germans and fired on them. A brisk but short fire fight ensued; however, no American casualties were suffered. When this error was finally brought to light, the Engineers and Partisans together secured the area, but could only round up one German officer and six enlisted men about one mile northwest of Follonica; the rest had fled the peninsula. A company of engineers which entered later in the afternoon, found that although the port facilities were extensively damaged and the harbor blocked, the enemy had failed to plant the usual number of heavy, unpatterned, mine fields or booby traps in the vicinity; in the minds of the attacking troops such inconsistency was difficult to justify; on the roads and trails mines were as thick as the olive buds on the trees - but in the important objective of Piombino the mines, in comparison, were negligible.

Let us take a brief pause on the half sunken wharves of the port and weigh the importance of this prize against the hardships endured to reach it. As soon as the engineers could clear the harbor of rubble and sunken ships, Fifth Army would be given a favorable harbor and port where vitally

needed supplies could be unloaded with ease and transported by land to the advancing Corps. The congestion of Route 1 to the rear could be somewhat alleviated and, better still, the drain on tactical vehicles for long supply hauls to the ever advancing division supply points would be eliminated. Civitavecchia, already functioning smoothly, was beginning to be left far to the rear.

In its last day in combat in Italy, the 36th Infantry Division wrested from the Germans and gave to IV Corps a harbor in which over 2,826 ships unloaded 761,000 tons of materials in the peacetime year of 1937. This harbor was greatly developed by private enterprise and was also the terminal for mail boats serving the Island of Elba. There were plenty of Italian laborers available for loading and unloading of supplies. The population of Piombino commune at the last official census (1936) was 27,504, of whom 23,144 were residents in the city proper. It was presumed that there were at least 5,000 semi-skilled and skilled industrial laborers, most of whom had been employed in the city's steel industry. It was determined at the outset that the landing of men and light stores was possible on all quays, jetties and moles. On other quays, heavy stores and motor transportation could be landed. With the aid of the familiar bulldozer, pick and shovel, and Army Engineer ingenuity, the harbor could be restored to a thriving military business surpassing that of the commercial business of 1937 - and it was.

On the same day as the seizure of Piombino, Fifth Army relieved IV Corps of responsibility for the defense of the Orbetello Airfield and in turn immediately made it responsible for the defense of the newly gained Port of Piombino and the nearby Piombino Airfield. The 45th AA

Brigade of IV Corps began to pack up their anti-aircraft guns in and around Orbetello in preparation for moving to the newly seized port, there to assume the air defenses of the valuable prize, soon to be teeming with the business of unloading military supplies and troops from liberty ships, tankers and landing barges.

The 36th Division made its last spurt for the day when the troops on the right flank cut the road leading from Suvereto to Highway 1, and patrols were close to the village by that evening. In the center of the Division zone, Campaiglia, a town about halfway between Suvereto and the coast highway, was closely invested and along Highway 1 the village of Venturia and the airport, lying near the junction with the Piombino road, were taken.

Preparations for the relief of the 36th Division had been under way for several days; since enemy resistance was still extremely fluid and entirely defensive, transfer of the zone to the 34th Division was carried out with comparative ease. Command was originally scheduled to change at 1200, 26 June, but so smoothly did the troops take over during the night that control passed to the 34th Division at 0700. The relieved Division assembled its units and on 27 June, began movement to a point nine miles north of Rome, from where it continued on south to join Seventh Army for the scheduled invasion of southern France. Disruption of communications between the movement control officer and the Divisional Units made it impossible to learn exactly when and where the units would enter the traffic-burdened main highway. This, to some degree, complicated the movement of other high-priority traffic. The 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team was detached from the 36th Division, reverted to IV Corps control, and

was then relieved from Fifth Army for service outside Italy.

With the loss of the 36th Division, General Crittenberger had now two divisions left with which to drive the enemy back to the Arno River. The 34th Infantry Division, along the coast, and the 1st Armored Division, in the more hilly country on the right. Already Fifth Army was sending up Engineer units and port parties to clear out and open up the Piombino port areas.

B. THE "RED BULL" OUTFIT

The 34th Division, under command of Major General Ryder, was back in the lines, strengthened, trained and refitted. The screech and explosion of artillery and the chat-chat of machine guns was like the drone of the bee to the bull grazing in the meadow. There are all kinds of bulls that graze on different farms throughout the world. In Italy the sight of the long-horned bull was a common one - so was his docility. In the United States the bulls vary in temper and color. There is the familiar Jersey bull, or the Guernsey bull - out west in the land of cowboys and ranges, graze the long-horned bull, and in passing, let us not forget the saintly and privileged Brahma bull of India - and all of these have characteristics that distinguish them from one another in the farmer's almanacs. But the bull that this historian is attempting to describe is unmatched in one trait. The "Red Bull" of the 34th Division was "wicked"! That adjective, as used in Winston's Dictionary means "evil", "sinful", "immoral", as a colloquialism, in a playful sense, mischievous, and as a synonym, "infamous" or "vicious". Then the code name "Wicked" was appended to this combat division, it was not designed to describe the unit as Mr. Winston might see fit, but rather as a name easily under-

stood when dictated over the phone for identification purposes. It is not known whether the defeated Germans of Rommel's North African Corps ever learned the code name of the 34th Division as "Wicked", but it is known that many of those who escaped to the Italian mainland and again met up with the boys from the "Red Bull" outfit and were later captured, referred to them as "those vicious fighters with the Red Bull patch." The feats and reputation of this Division were great and had been accomplished and made during a long series of hardships and combat. In the very sense of the synonym, it was "vicious and infamous" in the eyes of the Wermacht.

In expectation of the relief of the 36th Infantry Division by the 34th Division, General Crittenberger outlined his plan of advance for IV Corps as follows: 1st Armored Division was to continue its advance to the northwest, with emphasis stressed on that part of the IV Corps zone, west of the Cecina River, the general direction of attack being Pomerance-Pontedera, the 34th Infantry Division to continue pushing northwestward in the coastal zone, stressing the thrust along the hilly high ground on its right. The Corps pressure was to be extended generally on the left flank of the 1st Armored Division and on the right flank of the 34th Division, thus leaving the territory east of the Cecina River and the low coastal plains as secondary areas. By following the plan, it was believed that the Cecina River would be crossed at various fords between San Martino and Salina, which were the points where roads led directly north and northwest to the Arno River.

In directing Major General Ryder to relieve the 36th Division in the

western part of the Corps zone, the Corps Commander expressed the desire that the current mission assigned to troops in that area, continue to be developed and carried out by the new Division after its entry into combat. The mission was as follows:

1. Advance rapidly in its zone to the west and northwest.
2. Maintain contact with the 1st Armored Division on the right.
3. Protect the left flank of the Corps.

The Corps scheme of maneuver placed the 1st Armored Division on the right, utilizing all available roads within its zone. Major General Harmon, of the 1st Armored Division, was directed that if his advance should gain momentum he was to turn combat elements toward the coastline in order to assist the advance of the 34th Division on the left. Likewise, if the 34th Division made speedy gains, it might become possible to assist the 1st Armored Division by sending elements to the right against the rear of the withdrawing enemy. To avoid restraint of such hooking movements to right or left, Commanders were authorized to enter the zone of action of the adjacent division when it might be advantageous to do so. The crossing of inter-division boundaries was to be coordinated between the Commanders and through Corps Headquarters.

In his directive, General Crittenberger emphasized the importance of utilizing to the utmost the superiority of our forces and once again repeated that every opportunity be seized for advancing cross country during the hours of darkness. By flanking movements around enemy resistance and obstacles along the highways, thus cutting off and destroying his delaying groups, great holes could be rent in the German plans for retarding our northward progress and enemy losses would be heavy.

"In particular, the cross country mobility of infantry and track vehicles will be stressed in order to avoid confining the advance to highways and roads. Reconnaissance, both ground and vehicular, will be kept well out in front and to the flank, probing not only to locate the enemy, but to develop soft spots through which we will be able to advance rapidly. This reconnaissance will not be confined to the roads. Armored and light mobile detachments will be kept available, to push forward suddenly and boldly, taking advantage of opportunities for quick advance before the enemy can prepare himself adequately. The effectiveness of these armor or light mobile forces should be greatest immediately after we have overcome the enemy resistance in one position and before he is ready to delay us in another." These were the words of the Corps Commander.

To aid General Ryder of the 34th Division in carrying out this mission, the following units were attached to increase the Division power: the 442d Regimental Combat Team, (Less the 1st Battalion) composed of Japanese-Americans; the 100th Infantry Battalion (Separate), a famed Hawaiian National Guard unit of Hawaiian-Japanese fighters; a detachment of the 361st Regimental Combat Team; the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron; and the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion. It was also planned to attach a tank battalion when it became available. The 117th Reconnaissance Squadron was detached on 28 June and left the Italian Zone of Operations within a few days. The missions of the Corps Artillery units originally assigned, remained the same.

Three objectives were set for the Division south of Highway 68, which runs along the north bank of the Cecina River. The first of these was a line just south of Castagneto, ten miles north of the point where

the 34th Division entered the lines. The line of the Bolgheri River, five miles beyond Castagneto, was the second, and the third was the Cecina River and the town of Cecina, six miles beyond the waters of the Bolgheri. The Division's left flank, cut lengthwise by Highway 1 and consisting of the coastal plain and a rough hill mass extending northward from the Cornia Valley, was assigned to the 133d Regimental Combat Team, on a front of approximately seven miles. The center of the zone, a four-mile front, astride the Suverto-Castagneto road, was given to the 442d Regimental Combat Team under Colonel Charles W. Pence, while the four-mile zone of the right went to the 168th Regimental Combat Team, under Colonel Henry C. Hine. Of these troops, the 442d Regimental Combat Team was to see its first action - it was on the threshold of work for which it was trained. Its next step was to be into the field of combat. The veteran 100th Infantry Battalion was attached to this combat team in place of the 1st Battalion which was still in the United States. The 135th Regimental Combat Team of the Division, under Lt. Colonel Ashton H. Manhart, was held out as the Division Reserve.

1. The 168th Infantry Cuts Highway 68.

The 168th Infantry, taking over the mission of protecting the right flank of the Division and of contacting the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron on the left of the 1st Armored Division, reached its blocking positions near the junction of the Cornia and Massera Rivers by dusk of the evening of 6 June, and was there confronted by enemy infantry and tanks, which had pinned down elements of the 442d Infantry during most of the day. The 3d Battalion set up defensive positions for the night on a line of hills extending north and south along the west side of the Massera. At 0730 the next morning, three companies of a full strength

German battalion of the 19th German Air Force Field Division attacked the positions, wading down creek beds and infiltrating through narrow gullies in the rough country. The main attack, flung against the left flank of the battalion, was apparently aimed at cutting through along the Regimental boundary and striking the 442d Infantry in the rear as the latter attacked Suverto and Belvedere, about two miles to the southwest.

The Germans, seemingly sure of a fast breakthrough, attacked without artillery support. Our artillery shells landed on the attackers like a torrential tropical rain and all the infantry weapons joined in to mow down the attackers; however, the advance company of our defending battalion was badly shot up and suffered many casualties. The fighting continued in the broken hills for approximately seven hours before the force of the German attack was spent. The enemy then hurriedly pulled back, leaving 120 of their dead lying on the slopes. Thirty-two prisoners were taken and sent back to the Division's Prisoner of War cage. Our troops quickly followed the enemy withdrawal, occupying the hills from which they had attacked and continued on more than a mile to take Hill 175.

Tactical Reconnaissance planes shooting over the lines, noted continued withdrawals of enemy troops and vehicles to the north. Reports often filtered into the G-2 that along the entire front, tanks or heavy vehicles were spotted towing artillery pieces. Other flights reported horse-drawn artillery pieces in increasing numbers. A horse-drawn artillery battery was taken under fire a mile or so west of Monteverdi, just as it was in the act of displacing. Advancing foot troops came upon four 10.5 cm guns hastily abandoned by enemy artillerymen on the Sasset-Suverto road. The

631st Field Artillery Battalion, firing in support of the 34th Infantry Division, was subjected to about 30 rounds of counter-battery fire for one hour, commencing at eight in the morning. Beyond this, enemy artillery fire in the regimental area was of a harassing nature and slight in quantity. Toward the evening it was even slighter, owing to the fact that the bulk of the enemy batteries were displacing for movement to the north. Mines and demolitions were heavily laid along roads and trails, and bridge and culvert demolitions were on a wholesale scale.

The thwarting of the enemy counter-attack and the occupation of the hills from which the enemy had attacked, were the straws that broke the camel's back - or rather the enemy line on this flank. The following day the Regiment pushed forward as rapidly as it could negotiate the rough hilly country toward the Cecina River.

The 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, outflanked Monteverdi, a village located on a 1100-foot promontory four miles to the north, and during the night of 28-29 June the enemy evacuated it. The steady advance continued without much interference by the enemy, but the troops were still slowed down by the liberal gardens of mines. The Division Engineers worked hard moving their disc shaped detectors over roads and trails and on the warning of the sliding needle, made sensitive by the metal that lay hidden in the ground, they would probe with their bayonets for the mine. This delicate operation, when not attended by enemy small arms fire, was a great enough danger in itself. By now, the Germans in the long course of their experience with mines, had learned to attach booby traps to them so that they would explode when touched or tampered with. As the result of the attachment of such grim ingenious devices, many casualties were suffered - and they helped to delay our advancing forces.

On 30 June, advancing over mule trails, the Regiment outflanked Sassa. By this time the Division advance had struck a serious snag at Cecina on the coast, and it became vitally necessary to secure the right flank against a possible German counterthrust down Highway 68 from the east. Accordingly, the 168th Infantry was entrucked and rushed forward to the Cecina River. With the aid of Italian partisans, mine-free crossings were found, and by midnight leading elements of the 3d Battalion had reached the north bank unopposed by the enemy. The entire Battalion followed before dawn of 1 July, occupied a hill line a mile north of Highway 68, and gained control of approximately two and one-half miles of the road. With the right flank thus secured, the other combat teams of the Division were in a favorable position to secure their bridgeheads over the Cecina.

2. Outflanking Cecina.

To clear the center of the Division Zone, it was necessary to take three dominating hill villages, Suverto and Belvedere, located within one-half mile of each other, and Sassetta, about four miles north. In the paths to these towns stood strong elements of two freshened enemy divisions - the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division and the 19th German Air Force Jaeger Division. With the 34th German Air Force Jaeger Regiment on the left flank working with the 35th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment and the 16th SS Reconnaissance Battalion of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, supported by the bulk of the 19th Artillery Regiment, the 19th German Air Force Division, newly arrived from Belgium, was parcelled out, perhaps, for battle indoctrination. The tendency seemed to be to move elements of a new Division into the coastal sector. Prisoners from the SS Division claimed

that the 35th SS Regiment had four battalions and that the companies were strengthened to 200 men. Although this was viewed as unlikely, owing to the tendency of the German Army to cut down the company size, there had been ample time to refit and expand, and as an SS Division, one of Himmler's own, it was favored with certain priorities which enabled it to be of greater strength than the ordinary run of Panzer Grenadier Divisions. Thus with these bolstered enemy forces behind the naturally strong and well-defended hill positions, the 442d Infantry had a hard nut to crack in its four-mile zone. The terrain ahead of the Regiment consisted of steep ridges, narrow valleys and deep ravines, with one narrow, twisting road connecting the villages.

The 3d Battalion, entering the line less than a mile from Suverto, attacked the village early on the morning of 26 June. Little trouble was encountered here and the town was occupied by 0900. The 100th Battalion advanced around Belvedere at 1130, bypassing it on the east by using small trails and reached the high ground north of the village. From this point it swung left to cut the road from Belvedere to Sassetta, completely enveloping Belvedere. This swift outflanking maneuver was accomplished before the afternoon spent itself, and the brilliant attack by the Battalion resulted in the capture of the Command Post of the 16th SS Reconnaissance Battalion practically intact. Thirty-eight men, one tank, one artillery piece and sixteen vehicles were taken, as well as maps and other documents. Those that fled had tales to tell of the courage of these short-statured American fighters.

The following afternoon the 442d Infantry sent forth its pincer-like columns to use the same outflanking tactics against the town of Sassetta. The 100th Battalion circled the village from the right and the 3d Battalion

from the left. By mid-noon the 100th Battalion had cut the road beyond Sassetta and had entered its southern and eastern approaches. Stubborn and fierce fighting was encountered. The Hawaiian-Americans swept into the town, captured many prisoners and inflicted heavy losses on the fleeing defenders. Heavy shell fire pinned down our troops seeking to advance farther, and there was prolonged resistance from snipers and small infantry groups before the embattled town was completely cleared of enemy. During this hot action, four enemy tanks were destroyed by the infantry. The 3d Battalion had more difficulty but were able to advance slowly.

Italian Partisans had given some help to the action; the fierce appearance of a few could have been taken out of a Gilbert and Sullivan's opera or "The Barber of Seville" - young and old, most were moustached, some even bearded. Some carried the British Sten guns, or had our carbines and sub-machine guns slung over their shoulders, while others carried captured German weapons. Their belts were adorned with American or German grenades and it wasn't an uncommon sight to find a young Partisan girl with dark hair and flashing eyes, swaggering about the band animatedly telling the GI's of her own feats. Many of them preferred to call themselves "Patriots". Months before, Allied liaison officers and our own OSS personnel parachuted down to join and organize them. Food, clothing, arms, and ammunition were dropped to them in their mountain hideouts to supplement what they could steal or capture from the enemy. Their effectiveness at harassing the enemy, cutting his supply line, stealing his equipment, making life hazardous for individuals or small parties foolhardy enough to venture far from base, was being shown as we advanced farther

toward the north. They also lent some color to this grim business of war. Some of them wore plumed hats, reminiscent of the days of the Borgias and the Renaissance, and colored scarfs in bright green or red hung loosely about their necks. Accompanied with their pomp was their effective harassment of the Germans. On first meetings, some greeted the Allies with the clenched, raised fists and carried small flags with the hammer and sickle on a red banner. Some were communists and others were Christian Democrats. G-2 was undertaking more detailed plans for the coordination of these "Patriots".

At the Bolgheri line the 135th Regimental Combat Team relieved the 442d Regimental Combat Team with orders to advance across the Cecina River and seize Collemezano. During the night of 28-29 June, the enemy withdrew all along the Corps front, leaving in his wake extensive demolitions and mine fields. The 135th Infantry crossed the Bolgheri at noon on 29 June and was within 700 yards of the Cecina River by darkness, battling through low hills and vineyards against a stubborn enemy. At 1030 the next morning the 2d Battalion led by Company "E", forced a crossing of the Cecina in the face of heavy artillery and machine gun fire, and sent advance elements to the railroad embankment, 200 yards beyond the river bed.

For the last two days, irregular barrages of Nebelwerfer fire were received by the troops along the coast. These rocket-projected shells were last used south of Rome and had acquired the name of "Screaming Meemie" by the troops on Anzio. This Nebelwerfer, or "Screaming Meemie", as the doughfoot preferred to call it, was a weapon designed more for the shattering of the soldiers' morale than for accurate, actual destruction. In addition to its sound, the appearance of it was about the most unique

feature, particularly in the eyes of an artilleryman. The Nebelwerfer looked as though some one had taken a number of sheet metal stove pipes, wired them together and placed the stack of them on a two-wheeled cart.

The sound of the Nebelwerfer projectiles in flight was the most eerie sound of World War II. Just as the Stuka dive bomber used to dive toward the earth to release its bomb load, increasing its eerie, siren-like scream at every foot, so did the Nebelwerfer shell in its flight. If one can imagine a huge siren, larger than any yet built by man, screaming and growing louder and more eerie with every turn of its blades, and at the same time the siren is moving closer to you, you may then sense a partial description of the Nebelwerfer, but just as many of the combat veterans told the raw, wide-eyed replacements fresh from depots, "a real description of the Nebelwerfer is not possible until you have actually heard the 'Screaming Meemie' with your own ears."

Its effect at night was jarring on the nerves of many soldiers. As for effectiveness in destruction it was a failure. If one exploded in the immediate vicinity the likely danger was from concussion, and nowhere near effective as a 105mm howitzer. Its effectiveness lay in the shattering of morale.

As operations of the past few days had shown that exploitation by armor in the hilly country lying in the advance of the 1st Armored Division was not of maximum effectiveness, and that better progress might be accomplished by the use of infantry in the rugged terrain to the north, it was decided that the main Corps effort should henceforth be carried out on the left by the 34th Infantry Division. The 1st Armored Division on the right

would then regulate its movement to conform to that of the Infantry.

To the north of the Cecina River, the high ground between the roads Cecina-Pisa and Pomerance-Pontedera was the critical terrain feature, seizure of which would assure the rapid success of any advance to the Arno River. All of this high ground was similar in type to that rugged and sometimes well-nigh impassable terrain which had recently been negotiated by our energetic forces. The 133d on the left was having a harder time as it was now up against concentrated enemy forces determined to prevent its entry into the town of Cecina. Upon reaching the Cecina River, the effort of the 135th Infantry was turned to the west and the attack pressed in the direction of the road junction of Highways 1 and 68 north of Cecina. This maneuver had as its objective the relief of the pressure against the 133d Infantry south of the town by forcing the enemy to withdraw before his route of escape was severed.

Late in the afternoon of 30 June, Company "E" of the 135th Infantry, the only unit so far to have crossed the river in execution of this maneuver, reached a group of houses about halfway between the railroad and Highway 68. The nearest friendly troops were Company "F" almost 1000 yards in the rear. The German main line of resistance lay just ahead. The company organized for an all around defense to hold the bridgehead, as the enemy gathered his forces to gobble up this single company.

Desultory fighting continued throughout the night of 30 June-1 July. Shortly after daybreak an enemy force of two tanks and a large number of infantry troops attempted to annihilate the small American outpost, but were scattered by our supporting artillery. Later in the morning, eleven

medium tanks from Company "A", 752d Tank Battalion, forded the stream and came to the aid of the beleaguered garrison, but fire from concealed German tanks and anti-tank guns knocked out nine of our Shermans, and the remaining two withdrew to the south bank of the river. Two more enemy counter-attacks failed to drive out the small force of infantry, who even manned the 75mm guns of the disabled tanks to get more fire power to bear on the attackers.

There was, no doubt, a good reason why the Germans changed their tactics from slow constant withdrawal in the face of pressure, to giving bitter resistance at this point. He was determined not to let us have Cecina, where the 133d was having its most difficult fight since Anzio and Cassino. The seizure of Cecina would open up the southern junction of the two routes of Highway 1 leading to the Arno River. From here on, the road net, once we were on it, favored a rapid advance to the Arno, and the quick seizure of Leghorn. To delay as long as possible at this key position was necessary in the eyes of the enemy in order to allow the bulk of his forces to pull back across the Arno River. Otherwise, a debacle awaited them south of the river, for a congestion of any sort on these roads was not desired in view of the constant allied smashing air attacks. Rather than retire as our main forces appeared before them, the Germans began to assemble every available man, every weapon, and every means for delaying our further advance. With this sudden about face in enemy tactics, it became necessary to fight for each foot of ground, and for each hedge, knoll, and ditch. Even the long-absent Luftwaffe put in an offensive appearance over Cecina as the enemy attempted vainly to hold the town with every means at his disposal. Although the 133d Infantry

on the left bore the brunt of this resistance, since it threatened the town most directly, the 135th Infantry on the right was also faced with tremendous opposition, for this Regiment was a direct threat by its movement to outflank the stronghold and thus possibly entrap the defenders.

At dawn of 2 July, Company "G" of the 135th Infantry, and six tanks, managed to break through to join Company "E", paving the way for the remainder of the Regiment to cross the Cecina River, cut Highway 68 and resume the advance on Collemezzano, lying approximately four miles to the northeast of Cecina. By midafternoon the town of Collemezzano had been captured and cleared.

3. The 133d Infantry Smashes Into Cecina.

The activities of the regiments on the right and center were largely for the long range purpose of protecting and assisting the main avenue of pursuit up Highway 1, where the 133d Regimental Combat Team had taken over from the 142d Infantry (36th Division) and began its advance upon the town of Cecina. The 133d Infantry moved to the attack at dawn on 26 June, with the 1st Battalion astride the highway and 2d Battalion across the trackless hill mass on the right of the road. Although Campiglia was evacuated by the enemy, a number of snipers remained in the vicinity to slow the advance. In most cases, the snipers who were assigned these delaying missions accepted them as suicidal ones. "For the Fuehrer", and, "Defense of the Fatherland", were the words of exhortation passed on to the chosen sharpshooters. One of the snipers was taken prisoner and stated that with each retreating group there were always a couple of soldiers assigned as snipers whose sole mission was to

stay and snipe until ferreted out - in this way there would be more delay forced on our advancing infantry. Somewhere along the front one such sniper and one machine gunner were reportedly found chained to their posts with instructions to shoot to the end. These snipers, trained sharpshooters, armed with long range rifles and powerful telescopic sights, took a heavy toll among our advancing foot troops.

In midafternoon, troublesome small arms and mortar fire was encountered three miles east of San Vincenzo, but the 2d Battalion, with artillery support, wiped out these pockets and continued on. Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion entered the outskirts of San Vincenzo, whose bullet-marked buildings were strung out along Highway 1. Here the hill mass came close to the sea, and looking at the map, one might think that the weight of the mountain mass bent Highway 1 toward the coast. At this point the Germans fiercely defended a strip of flat ground only about 350 yards wide. Bulwarked in the stone houses of the small hamlet and behind barbed wire barricades, the Germans gave a hard battle, so hard, in fact, that the explosions of artillery and mortar reverberating against the mountain sides seemed to spell out, "Battle of Thermopylae". The 1st Battalion attacked at 1600. After about three hours of house-to-house fighting, it cleared the streets but on the northern outskirts, ran into such heavy small arms, mortar and anti-tank fire that it could advance no farther. After a night of incessant fighting, during which two German tanks penetrated to within 300 yards of the Battalion Command Post, a coordinated attack to clear the enemy from the ridge on the east side of the road was started. Behind a rolling barrage laid down by the 151st Field Artillery Battalion and a platoon of the 804th Tank Destroyer Bat-

talion, the 1st Battalion attacked at 0900 with two companies astride the highway and Company "C" attempting to outflank the ridge. By two in the afternoon, Company "C" had reached the east end of the ridge, but the other companies were pinned down and unable to advance. The 3d Battalion was committed at 1600, swerving wide behind the ridge; it cut Highway 1 three miles ahead of the 1st Battalion at 1940. At 0300 of 28 June, the 1st Battalion attacked again up the road and slashed its way through to join the 3d Battalion.

During the day the two battalions pushed ahead to reach the Bolgheri River while the 2d Battalion aided by about 200 Partisans, leaving the high ground at a point southwest of Castagneto, first cut the escape road west of that town, then forced an entry and drove the enemy out at 2130.

Leaving the 2d Battalion to complete the annihilation of small points of resistance in and around Castagneto, the 133d Infantry forced its way northward against what slight resistance a disorganized enemy could offer. All along the route of advance lay the German dead; scores of abandoned and destroyed tanks, vehicles, and guns littered the sides of the roads in mute testimony of the harried withdrawal.

The Bolgheri River presented a problem. It was 55 feet wide with steep banks supplemented by a dike on each side, making the overall width between dikes approximately 110 feet. The blown bridges were covered by enemy fire, forcing the Division Engineers to confine their efforts to the hours of darkness. A by-pass was not completed until the dawn hours of the next day, 29 June, when the 3d and 1st Battalions advancing in that order and following in the wake of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, crossed to the north bank. Cecina was only five miles

away. The fierce fight that developed was carried past olive groves and vineyards, over small canals and ditches, and through heavy pine groves along the sand dunes, to finally come within sight of the church steeples of Cecina.

Having crossed the Bolgheri River successfully, the 34th Division swept forward for Cecina, pressing the small towns of S. Guido, Bolgheri, and Bibbona, which were forced to capitulate. By late afternoon the 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, had advanced three miles before it was halted by heavy fire from small arms and self-propelled guns; at 1725 it repulsed a small enemy counter-attack launched from west of the road. On the right, the 2d Battalion slowly edged forward against heavy resistance until it reached a point about 1500 yards southeast of Cecina, where it was also counter-attacked. The Battalion, supported by four tanks, hurled the enemy back with its last few rounds of ammunition. The 3d Battalion attacked again up the road just before midnight, ran into an ambush and had one company severely cut up before the enemy was beaten off. After the usual reorganization, no more advances were attempted during the night. The enemy had committed strong elements to hold Cecina, and block us from the harbor of Leghorn as long as possible. The Germans had decided to hold this section of the front and were determined to give way only after the heaviest pressure had forced them to do so. The major part of the infantry regiments of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, with some elements of the 19th German Air Force Field Division, were disposed to hold the highway, the area a mile wide between it and the sea, and the ground extending two miles east of the road. The line was generally one to two miles south of the well-defended stronghold of Cecina.

The 3d Battalion, supported by a platoon of tanks, and with engineers to help in clearing the profusely spread mines, attacked again at daybreak of 30 June. Shortly after noon, Company "I" advanced to within 300 yards of the town, but a heavy counter-attack from the west almost cut off the unit and it was forced to withdraw about a mile down the highway. The 3d Battalion had been hard hit, and two of the tanks were out of action. Since the 2d Battalion southeast of Cecina also had been unable to move ahead, the reserve 1st Battalion took up the attack at 1800, pointed northwest between the other two battalions. For three hours the 1st Battalion inched its way forward. Six enemy field guns were knocked out, but the Battalion was unable to crack the German line. At midnight the 133d Infantry, with all battalions in action and pounding away, was still 100 yards east of Cecina and considerably farther away to the south.

For several days now the 133d Infantry Regiment had borne the full weight of the enemy strength before Cecina, repulsing numerous counter-attacks and, at times, losing yards of ground only to regain them at the loss of blood and life. The Regiment launched an all-out attack at 0300, 1 July; the 2d Battalion advancing north and the 1st Battalion moving northwest across the front of the 3d Battalion. The 3d Battalion was ordered to protect the left flank and clear out opposition between the highway and the mine-studded beach line. The 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division fought like fanatics - the Nazi-instilled training was still firm in their minds and to them it was not a lost war but just the beginning of one - they resisted fiercely the pressing 1st and 3d Battalions, but, by 0630, the 2d Battalion had cracked through elements of the

19th German Air Force Field Division and reached the river on the Regiment's right flank. Tanks and infantry of the 2d Battalion then turned west and drove toward the eastern outskirts of the town. Creeping and crawling forward under heavy machine gun fire, taking and cleaning out each trench, or fortified position, as it was reached, the 2d Battalion finally approached the sheltering fringes of Cecina. Then began the contest for each house and each doorway, as the Germans clung tenaciously to all concealing or protective objects within their grasp. By 1700 that part of Cecina east of the highway had been cleared. Much of the town was a mass of flattened shambles - an eyesore to the yonder view of the wide blue sweep of the Mediterranean Sea. The combat soldiers made slow but ever-steady progress over the piles of rubble and debris with little time for drinking in the view of the Mediterranean. Mines had been scattered profusely and clever booby traps lay in wait for the non-cautious soldier, while enemy artillery fired concentration after concentration of medium calibre shells into the attackers, at a rate not experienced since early May. By fighting grimly through each battered house, the 2d Battalion had finally secured the half of the town east of Highway 1 by the close of May.

The 3d Battalion cleared the pine woods and beaches as it advanced toward Cecina Marina, at the mouth of the Cecina River, but south and southwest of Cecina the 1st Battalion had another tough day, being held up by mine fields covered by heavy fire. By 0600 the reserve company was committed, and the battle resolved into fierce, close-in struggles against isolated groups of SS troops who resisted stubbornly throughout the entire day. At darkness the Battalion was still on Highway 1, 500

yards south of the town, but the heaviest fighting was over. Pushing off again at dawn on 2 July, the 1st Battalion cleared its way through the mines and by 0700 it had linked with the 2d Battalion in Cecina and had contacted the 3d Battalion on its left. The 3d Battalion entered Cecina Marina during the morning, capturing a huge coastal gun, and by 0900 the south bank of the river had been cleared.

On the day before, 1 July, Task Force Ramey had been attached to the 34th Division and directed to proceed immediately to an assembly area to be chosen by Major General Ryder. The commitment of Task Force Ramey to the line left IV Corps temporarily without a reserve force, upon which to depend should an emergency arise. To replace this tactical group in Corps Reserve one of two alternatives was available. The 133d Infantry, long in the fight, and having suffered heavy losses when bearing the full weight of the German counter-attacks at Cecina, was one unit that could be relieved and rested in Corps Reserve, or Task Force Howze might be pulled from the center of the 1st Armored Division sector and assembled near Pomerance, where it would be available for use upon short notice. General Crittenberger decided on the former course, to become effective after the enemy had been driven from Cecina and north of the river.

The 135th Infantry, north of the Cecina River, after capturing Collemezano during the afternoon of 3 July, continued its advance to the west and moved into position outside Highway 1, thereby pinching out the 133d. Thus relieved from the action at the Cecina River line, the 133d Infantry returned to the scene of the recently won battle and assembled, in still smoking Cecina, as Division and Corps Reserve.

The struggle for Cecina was the most bitter battle yet fought by the Americans north of Rome. It cost the 133d Infantry 16 officers and 388 men killed, wounded, or missing in action, but enemy losses were fully as great and much materiel was captured or destroyed. With the other regiments of the 34th Division already across Highway 68, the entire Division was now ready for the final drive on the great port of Leghorn, nearly 20 miles farther up the coast.

C. THE ADVANCE OF THE 1ST ARMORED DIVISION

"Warrior" (code name for the 1st Armored Division) was recommitted to combat after a week of rest, and rehabilitation had restored losses in vehicles and personnel, suffered during the push from the beachhead and a week of pursuit action. Fifth Army Ordnance units, as well as organic ordnance service, speeded up the repair work on the tanks at the shores of Lake Bracciano, for the Division was on the threshold of its return to combat under IV Corps. It was sent into the line on the right of IV Corps in the hope that its hitting power would permit a rapid advance and deny the enemy time to set up elaborate delaying positions. The terrain assigned to the armor was the rugged mountainous country of the Tuscan hills and was difficult to negotiate. The redeeming factor was found in the fact that an adequate road net wound through this zone of advance and generally headed toward the north. In addition to these roads there was a maze of trails, some of which were fit for the use of armor.

Since the coastal route, Highway 1, was so heavily defended with concrete pill boxes and fortifications and enemy resistance was bound to be stronger there, it was felt that the use of the 1st Armored Division

on the right, particularly at this time, assured a rapid advance and would relieve pressure against the Infantry Division on the left.

The boundary on the left ran roughly 12 miles inland and parallel to the coast, but the main north-south road, travelled by Combat Command "B" on its axis of advance, was almost six miles farther inland. This road passed through Massa Marittima, Castelnuovo and Pomerance, crossed Highway 68 about six miles southwest of Volterra, and continued on through Capannoli and Ponsacco to the Arno River at Pontedera. A secondary road, running northeast from Grosseto through Paganico and then striking north to meet Highway 73 just below Roccastrada, formed the other main axis and was travelled by Combat Command "A". This route followed Highway 73 for about seven miles through Roccastrada and then wound over secondary roads through Torniella, Chiusdino, Radicondoli and Casole d'Elsa, across Highway 68, and eventually through Palaia to the Arno east of Pontedera.

The Division jumped off through elements of the 36th Division and Task Force Ramey on the summer afternoon of 21 June. The right flank of the 36th Division, held by the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was taken over by Combat Command "B", from where the paratroopers were withdrawn and sent to an assembly area near Gavorrano. The broad objective as outlined by Major General Harmon, commanding the 1st Armored Division, was the seizure of the expansive road net around Pisa. The immediate mission laid down by IV Corps was four-fold:

1. To attack and destroy the enemy in the Division zone of advance.
2. To assist the advance of the 36th Division.
3. To maintain contact with the 36th Division on the left and the French Expeditionary Force on the right.

4. To protect the right flank of the Corps.

Initially the troops of the Division were assigned as follows: Combat Command "A" had the 1st and 3d Battalions, 361st Infantry; the 1st Armored Regiment; Company "B", 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company "D", 16th Armored Engineer Battalion; and the 27th and 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalions.

Combat Command "B" was composed of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 6th Armored Infantry; the 13th Armored Regiment (less the 2d Battalion); Company "C", 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company "A", 16th Armored Engineers; and the 68th and 69th Armored Field Artillery Battalions.

A Division Reserve, commanded by Colonel Howze of the 13th Armored Regiment, was formed which included the 2d Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment, the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry; Company "A", 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company "C", 16th Armored Engineer Battalion; and the 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion. Later the 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry, was also added to this Reserve. The 69th and 93d Field Artillery Battalions were attached to the Division from the 6th Armored Field Artillery Group. In general support were the 936th Field Artillery Battalion and the 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, self-propelled, both also attached, and the remainder of the 16th Armored Engineer and Division Service Unit.

While the two Combat Commands were to exert the main effort, the 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion received the mission of maintaining contact with the French, and throughout the length of the drive performed this assignment. This was a doubly difficult task since the armored cars and light tanks of the Battalion, in many instances, found it

necessary to twist and thread their way along small trails and across country. Though never faced by a major enemy force, elements of the Battalion were often compelled to fight their way forward.

Something new was going to be tried with the re-entrance of the 1st Armored Division into combat. In an olive grove south of Grosseto, where the Command Post of Headquarters IV Corps was located, the G-3 Section worked far into the night putting the final touches to the plan of close-in air support of the 1st Armored Division. There were many problems to be ironed out, but in theory the plan was sound and had all the earmarks of being extremely effective. A conference between Air Corps Officers of the 324th Fighter Group, Commanders and Staff Officers of 1st Armored Division units, and officers of the G-3 Section, was held to determine the feasibility of working up a scheme wherein the fighter planes overhead could literally be given strafing or bombing missions direct from the tanks, so to speak, and thus render close-in air support against whatever obstacles might hold up the foot troops and tanks. The Air Officer of IV Corps played a great role in this scheme, for he was the man that was the chief coordinator between the Ground and Air.

Operations Instructions No. 8, IV Corps, dated 22 June 1944, was the missive which set this scheme in motion, and it may be now said that its mechanism worked like a well-oiled clock. The general idea of the operation of this close air-ground tie-in was as follows:

The 324th Fighter Group was designated to place close air support on the front of the 1st Armored Division; to do this, the group would send up to the 1st Armored Division, air support parties, who would move

forward with the Combat Commands. They were equipped with radios with which to maintain contact with the Air Support Control Officer, at Fifth Army Headquarters, and with the fighter planes overhead. Fighter bomber aircraft of the 324th Fighter Group took off from their airdrome, in flights of four, on the hour from dawn to dusk. These planes, upon arrival in the battle area, would ask for instructions from the Air Support crew on the ground, known in code as "Great Bend". If a target was known, "Great Bend" was to tell the flight commander to proceed to a position, described by geographical reference and ground coordinates, and there contact a cub plane, which would be hovering somewhere in the vicinity of the target. The cub plane, furnished by the 1st Armored Division, was known as "Horse Fly" - the airborne controller. When a target holding up our infantry, was affixed, notice of it was sent to the cub strip of the 1st Armored Division. The cub pilot, "Horse Fly", took off in his small plane and found the described target. After pinpointing the target, he hovered over and around it at an altitude of 6,000 feet, keeping it under observation and waiting for the fighter bombers to arrive. Like a traffic cop on a busy street intersection, the cub plane stood by until the flight of four planes arrived looking for instructions and a description of the target. "Horse Fly" then relayed to the flight commander the location of the target and after identification the fighter bombers moved in for the kill. When a flight of four fighters reached the battle area and were told by the ground control station that there were no known targets, they were instructed to go ahead and bomb or strafe alternate targets, previously assigned for just such contingencies. Thus unnecessary flights were prevented.

This entire operation was known as "RELAY" - its definition being the operation for close air support of the 1st Armored Division. Daily, an armored officer was sent to the fighter Group Headquarters, at MONTALOT, to brief air personnel on the results of the preceding day's operations, and to give them the intentions and scheme of maneuver for the current day.

Let it now be said that the innovation was a huge success, and from then on the system was effectively used right up to the German surrender in North Italy. Many obstacles were blasted away by these fighter bombers hovering overhead and always ready to send toward the ground exploding bolts of lightning, capable of striking the same place twice. The scheme was followed from here on out in support of different divisions as they came and left IVCorps. Code names in such operations brought forth jargon like "ROVER PETE" and "ROVER JOE", and although some small changes were made in the mechanics, the general scheme remained the same.

With this effective system of close air support in effect, the 1st Armored Division was ready to start rolling its tanks toward the Arno River. The enemy was to sense a new type of aerial warfare. He was accustomed to watching the allied planes, from his concealed positions, and when he saw them pass over and away he felt relieved for they were headed on a direct line for some other target, but now, even though the flight passed over and away, they could just as well come zooming back in a few moments strafing and dropping bombs, on his position. Fritz began to realize that the pesky cub plane was hovering over their positions for some better reason than performing its usual role of directing artillery fire. Like sinister bumblebees, meeting at a rendezvous in the sky,

they noted that the larger, louder, fighter planes circled around and around the cub and, after a few moments, swooped down on some supposedly well-concealed enemy road block or tank to strafe and drop bombs with uncanny accuracy. It did not take them long to realize that this Yankee innovation did not help German morale, - daylight moves were particularly risky now.

1. Combat Command "A" Along Right Boundary.

The two Combat Commands moved through elements of the 36th Division on the afternoon of 21 June. Colonel Daniel's Combat Command "A", advancing on the right, went forward at 1330 and met its first action north of the Paganico road - Highway 73 junction. An hour and a half afterward Combat Command "B", under General Allen, went through the Infantry, where the road to Massa Marittima leaves Highway 1, and immediately began running into resistance in the left portion of the Division zone. No great gains were made the first day, and both commands jumped off the following morning at 0530, after halting in place for the night. This hour of attack each morning became standard operating procedure within the Division, unless otherwise directed. The Combat Commanders took advantage of every small road in their respective zones, to divide their units into smaller columns; at one time during the early stages of the advance, elements of the Division were moving northward on seven different roads or trails. This maneuver was necessary, not only to effectively cover the zone allotted, but because the terrain was such that room to maneuver was lacking. Wonders were performed in the manner in which some tankers worked their way over mule trails, where no anti-

tank guns were found for the Germans never realized that a tank could thread its way there. As the days passed one another and the terrain became more rugged, Germans were learning something new in the realm of armored warfare. Kesselring himself must have been surprised when he found out that American tanks were rolling over the Tuscan mountains, and thus, the Germans were taught new ideas as to where American tanks could go.

Combat Command "A" advanced initially in two columns, one striking north toward Roccastrada, the other east toward Civitavella. A third column in mid-morning began operating along a small road between the first two. The Command was thus broken down into three small task forces. By dark, against opposition consisting of small groups of infantry, self-propelled guns and a little artillery, a general advance of five miles had been made. The column moving forward on Highway 73 battled its way to within a mile of the town of Roccastrada. The column operating farther to the east also met fierce opposition in its advance on Civitavella, but by dark the line was extended from south of Roccastrada to the approaches of Civitavella. The highway between the two Italian towns was thus rendered unusable to the Germans. The entire area fought over was sown with a profusion of mines, and progress was greatly hampered by demolitions and artillery fire, as well as by Nature's own sticky mud. Frequent showers with periodic outbursts of hail, tended to transfer the dusty roads of the day before to quagmires of mud, after which the Italian sun would again return it to its original state - powdery dust.

Civitavella was occupied about 1000 and held until the arrival of

French units.

Moving into the attack at the usual dawn hour of 0530, the column of Combat Command "A", at the gates of Roccastrada, was favored with a beautiful sunny day. The bright sunshine just scaled over the horizon to give forth a warmth that quickly hardened and dried the sticky mud left over from the previous day. The visibility was exceptionally clear, even though a flight of long-range strategic bombers, miles high up in the sky could be heard but not seen - the only evidence of the location and general direction was given off by the small silvery vapor trails many miles up in the sky, clearly stamped against the deep cold blue - they were headed for the north. That early morning some of the men wondered, as they looked up at the snow-white vapor trails, how many would not return home that day.

The Armor and Infantry of Combat Command "A", aided by the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, from Task Force Ramey, spurred forward along Highway 73, and after overcoming bitter resistance captured Roccastrada. Leaving the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, to mop up the town, the Armor pressed forward and received the brunt of numerous counter-attacks by enemy tanks and infantry. These sharp thrusts of the enemy, in his efforts to regain Roccastrada, were broken by concentrated artillery fire which immobilized and destroyed a number of enemy tanks. Although the Armor advance was necessarily a slow one, the Infantry was able to forge ahead and cut the lateral road running westward, two miles beyond Roccastrada. From this road junction advance elements moved to the forward slopes of Mt. Alto along Highway 73. The capture of Roccastrada opened Highway 73 as a supply route all the way from Highway 1.

Continuing on 24 June, Combat Command "A" advanced fairly rapidly until mid-afternoon when the little town of Torniella, in a defile, was reached. Most of the difficulty in the morning had come from bad terrain, demolitions, and landslides. Just south of Torniella, each bend in the road was covered by a self-propelled gun, and all efforts to flank these sore spots were impeded both by terrain and by fire of artillery, with which the enemy in that area was well equipped.

The Germans had apparently decided to make a stand two miles north of Torniella. Two bridges had been blown and the demolished crossings were hotly defended. Infantry attempts to cross were met by intense small arms opposition. Both direct and indirect artillery fire was received, and the town, itself, was subjected to a heavy mortar barrage. The advance for the day to the destroyed bridges, some two miles beyond the town of Torniella, another debris-strewn group of smashed buildings no longer qualified to be called a town, was due largely to the vigor and fighting spirit of patrols and small combat groups, which pushed forward relentlessly against the enemy fire.

The weather and visibility of 25 June was not encouraging to the Armor and Infantry attempting to establish a crossing at the site of the blown bridge, two miles north of Torniella. The visibility was limited, and dark, foreboding, scattered clouds hovered overhead and periodically shed their load of heavy hail and rain. Even before dawn, the 3d Battalion, 361st Infantry, attempted to break the deadlock only to be driven back toward Torniella with considerable loss. The Infantry then turned their efforts to a flanking movement to the right, and soon after supper time captured the small village of Scalvaia, on the crest of a high hill, thus

eliminating the heavy small arms fire, which had prevented the engineers from working on the bridge and preparing a crossing for vehicles. A bypass was finally completed during the night of 25-26 June.

The seizure of Piombino along the coast by the 36th Division was an encouraging report to the weary tankers on this day. It meant that a port was opened, much closer to the lines and without the long supply hauls from Naples or Civitavecchia, and therefore, there was a better assurance of Class "B" rations; dehydrated rations were good for an emergency, but if fresh foods could be had it was for the better.

With the bottleneck above Torniella finally broken, fair advances were made on 26 June. Combat Command "A" Infantry scattered German groups from the high ground on both sides of the road, as the force moved slowly over difficult terrain toward Chiusdino. At one point over 100 trees had been blown across the road; mines and blown culverts were as frequent as the green olive groves. The G-2 of the 1st Armored Division reported to Corps Headquarters a new and novel type of obstacle found across a road through a defile with extremely steep, impassable sides. At this ideal point the Germans made use of a large quantity of sack charcoal, piled across the road and set on fire; because of the long duration of the fire and its obvious danger to vehicles, it was impossible for vehicles or bulldozers to clear the road block and it had to be cleared by hand shovels.

He also had another report to make that was of great interest at the time. On this day, elements of five different German divisions were identified through prisoners captured in the 1st Armored Division zone. The 19 GAF Division, fully committed in the center of the Corps front, had some of its elements stretching into the Armored zone. The 162d Infantry

Turcoman Division, greatly weakened, but now bolstered on all sides by the others, was also fully employed to the right of the 19th GAF, with one of its regiments in the 1st Armored Division zone. The 361st Regiment of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was identified. It was believed to be operating in battle groups or "Kampfgruppen" and attached to one of the other divisions. Over on the extreme right, in the zone of Combat Command "A", elements of the 20th Division were met, although the bulk of the Division was in the French sector. Lastly, prisoners of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division were taken in the 1st Armored Division area. This seemed to bear out the fact that they were also hastily organized and fighting in battle groups. In addition, there were separate regiments, such as the Lehr, operating with the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 956th Infantry Regiment of the 362d Infantry Division, also fighting with the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division.

To date the 1st Armored Division claimed the destruction of 25 German tanks. The presence of enemy armor to oppose our armor was increasingly noted, and the appearance of anti-tank guns all across the front of the 1st Armored Division increased tenfold. Once the Germans learned that an American Armored Division was in the lines they began to bring into that area their anti-tank guns from other sectors; just as though the 1st Armored Division tanks were powerfully magnetized, and drew toward them these enemy anti-tanks guns from all across the front.

On the 27th of June, the left column of Combat Command "A" continued to push on without respite, and after little resistance entered and occupied Chiusdino, only 17 miles southwest of Siena. Many buildings in the town had been carefully dynamited, in such a way that the debris would

block passage of our vehicles to the north - Delay! - Delay! - and Delay! - that was the enemy password. The Combat Command advanced about five miles beyond the town before the light of the day gave way to the dark of the night, while the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion moved to Monticiano, where they received heavy enemy artillery fire. One armored column swung into the small valley to the east of Chiusdino and cut Highway 73 in front of the French, remaining to cover the road until the following day. The road block was then taken over by the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion, which held it pending the arrival of the dark-skinned Goums of the French Corps. During the day the Division and attached artillery had good hunting, destroying among other vehicles, four Mark VI and two Mark IV tanks. Most of these were knocked out in the left of the Division zone.

The G-2 reports were now beginning to show that the average daily Prisoner of War count was increasing. This gave sound indication that the Corps advance was beginning to gain momentum. The 34th Division was now in the line on the left, having just relieved the 36th Division. "Wicked" and "Warrior" were now pushing ahead and despite the more rugged and less maneuverable area of the Armored Division zone, the tanks were able to keep up with the foot troops along the coast.

On 28 June, the main effort of the Armored Division swung more to the westward, in the general direction of Pomerance-Pontedera, making the main effort west of the Cecina River. Its advance was slow due to the rugged nature of this terrain, which was not adapted to armored warfare and rapid movement. The favorite road block, now extensively used by the Germans, consisted of one or two Mark VI tanks, with their 88mm guns trained on a curve in the twisting road or on some other kind of defile.

Since only one or two medium tanks could be used to attack the road block, (the terrain limited movement to the narrow roads) the German Tigers usually had to be neutralized by artillery. Combat Command "A" advanced until met by heavy opposition at Montingegnoli, where enemy anti-tank and small arms fire halted the armor and pinned down the infantry. Plans were made for a coordinated attack at 1500, but just before the jump-off, the former Division Reserve, which had been committed as Task Force Howze on 22 June, came in from the southwest and the enemy hurriedly withdrew from the town.

Under the protective shroud of darkness the enemy withdrew all along the corps front, leaving in his wake extensive demolitions and mine fields, which made it extremely difficult for our forces to maintain contact with him. Combat Command "A" drew the brunt of the enemy reaction when armored elements reached Radicondoli, after negotiating a long, difficult bypass. Immediate and heavy fire came from the high ground in the vicinity of Mensano, across a small valley to the east. Five vehicles were knocked out and our forward progress was effectively stopped. The enemy, despite the elements of five Divisions, already opposing the 1st Armored Division, rushed in more help to stop the relentless advance of the armor. Elements of the 26th Panzer Division were identified on the 1st Armored Division front.

This Panzer Division was formed in France in the summer of 1942, from remnants of a regular army motorized division. It saw service at Salerno, Anzio, and on the Adriatic coast. In March the greater part of the Division was finally withdrawn to refit behind Cisterna, and was later reported

building defenses in the Velletri-Cori area. It was summoned from reserve, in the middle of May, to oppose the French Corps' breakthrough toward Pico and S. Giovanni and to cover the German withdrawal from the Liri Valley. The Division fought heavily, covering the northeastern route of withdrawal and putting up bitter resistance in the defense of Perugia. It then shifted over toward the IV Corps front and parts of it now opposed the Armored Division. It was a veteran unit with a long record of combat. Although designated an Armored division, no more than one battalion of its tank regiment had ever been with it in Italy.

IV Corps totaled up the day's losses suffered by the enemy in materiel. There were ten tanks destroyed, never to be replaced by German industry for those vapor trails noted earlier that day, high in the sky, represented only a fraction of the Allied aerial onslaught, which had already levelled most of the armament industry in Germany. The same can be said for the four armored cars, six self-propelled guns, seven anti-tank guns, seven towed guns, and four miscellaneous artillery pieces, which were destroyed. Ten vehicles and four 81mm mortars were captured intact. If we lost a tank, there were five being manufactured at home to replace it. A machine is only good when it is working efficiently - the German war machine was very much worn down, and it was only a matter of time before its eventual breakdown.

On the night of 29-30 June, our infantry secured some of the high ground around Mensano. In the morning, tanks managed to make their way across country against considerable fire, and by noon they had cut the road east of the town which the infantry then attacked and occupied at 1600. While this battle was in progress, the left column made its way into the

village of Monteguidi by 1800, and then secured the triangle of hilltop towns, Radicondi, Mensano and Monteguidi. And so we leave Combat Command "A" for the present to see what its brother, Combat Command "B" was doing on the left of the 1st Armored Division zone. Combat Command "A" had threaded its way over twenty-seven airline miles of mountains and hills, and many more road miles, since it re-entered combat. It had shown to the Germans that if need be, American tanks could climb over mountains and up trails, envisioned by the enemy as almost impassable and barring anything but a persistent mule.

2. Combat Command "B"

While Combat Command "A" was making its way along the eastern flank, Combat Command "B" was having trouble with the enemy on the western side, for it was bucking up against the bulk of the enemy armor in the Division zone. On the morning of 22 June, the armor began its northward attack on Massa Marittima, from the high ground occupied by the 143d Infantry of the 36th Division. It was necessary to outflank numerous obstacles protected by determined anti-tank fire in the area north of Highway 1. Combined with the wet weather which muddied the roads, these points of resistance held its advance for the day to a distance of less than two miles. That night at about 2300, Major General Harmon committed the Division Reserve as Task Force Howze, between the two Combat Commands. The 2d Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, came under Division control as a mobile reserve.

A taste of the kind of fighting the Division might be called on to do for the next few weeks was encountered by Combat Command "B" as it turned off Route 1 toward Massa Marittima. One of the greatest single losses of the drive to the Arno was suffered by the Combat Command on this second

afternoon of battle. After Task Force Howze was committed, but before it could move into action in the center of the Division zone, Company "B", 13th Armored Regiment, with a platoon of tank destroyers attached, moved out on the right flank of the Command on a reconnaissance-diversion. This force ran directly into a German trap along a small road three miles east of the main body. It was suddenly attacked from the flank and rear by four Mark VI and six Mark IV tanks, supported by infantry. The light tanks were hopelessly outgunned, and before the force could extricate itself, nine light tanks and three of the tank destroyers were lost.

Along the main axis of Combat Command "B" - the Massa Marittima road - the main body pushed toward the town. About six miles south of the town, the lead tanks passed through a saddle commanding the road and found nine Mark VI Tiger tanks supported by enemy infantry awaiting them. A fierce fight developed, and the Germans were able to stop anything the Command tried to send through. There was no road to the west over which the German position could be flanked, but there was a trail that led to the ridge not far from the saddle. It was no place to be sending tanks, but tanks were sent. One engineer reconnaissance lieutenant crept close enough to disable one of the heavy tanks with a bazooka, and killed or wounded the crew with a carbine, as they climbed from the damaged vehicle. He diverted the attention of another Tiger until a tank destroyer could move in and smash it with three direct hits by three-inch shells. Artillery accounted for another Mark VI, and the Germans withdrew. The German losses at this saddle, in part, compensated for the losses suffered by the diversionary force. This saddle flanking action was typical of the fighting throughout the mountains.

While Combat Command "A" was able to make a fairly rapid advance on 23 June, the other forces of the Division continued to meet even heavier resistance from enemy tanks and infantry. They advanced more slowly, but steadily. Task Force Howze, the center column, moved rapidly through Melani and into Montemassi. The enemy seemed to be withdrawing from this area and had left behind only scattered points of resistance, which were easily flanked or destroyed by artillery fire. From Montemassi, which clings to the steep sides and crest of a mountain, Task Force Howze moved on to Roccederighi, crossing and securing another portion of the lateral road, the eastern terminus of which was, at the same time, being secured by Combat Command "A" on the right. The main effort of this force was then turned to the northeast along that same road, for the capture of Meleta, at the junction with the road to Monemassi. It then became possible to communicate with Combat Command "A" over a well forward lateral road, and to move from Montemassi to Highway 73 without travelling to the rear. On the left of the Division zone, Combat Command "B" turned north toward Massa Marittima and, repulsing minor local counter-attacks in the vicinity of the small lake to the left of the road, reached the area of Guardini. Advancing in two columns over twin north-south roads toward their objective, the gains made during the day placed the Combat Command in position along the mountain line just to the east of the main highway from Follonica to Massa Marittima. Although the road wasn't actually breached by our forces, artillery fire along its length denied its use to the enemy as an escape route from the front of the 36th Division. Well-directed artillery fire, cost the Germans three more Mark VI tanks. Leading elements of Combat Command "B" were within sight of Massa Marittima by darkness.

of Task Force Howze captured the small hilltop town of Ciciano, where the tanks rumbled noisily over cobble stones in the town square; then passing west of Chiusdino, headed for Mt. Gabbro, which was passed late in the day. The left column, meanwhile, captured Travale, 621 feet above sea level, and then also advanced in the direction of Mt. Gabbro.

The mailed left fist of the 1st Armored Division, Combat Command "B", encountered the most obstinate resistance of the day. Just west of Monterotondo, the Command lost three tanks to the fire of enemy anti-tank guns, which were well concealed behind sharp curves in the winding road. Another resourceful method of setting out road blocks was adapted by the Germans. Since a disabled tank could be put to better use than marring up the surrounding landscape, the Germans now pulled them across the road and built their rear guard defense team of anti-tank guns and infantry about them. This method was effective in causing considerable delay, for though the enemy rear guard was forced back or annihilated, there was considerable delay in removing the heavy, disabled German tank. The day's advance put the Combat Command roughly halfway between Massa Marittima and the next objective, Castelnuovo. The left column drove the enemy infantry out of Monterotondo by noon of the next day; however, the armor was unable to advance beyond the town due to road difficulties. A similar situation faced the right column, whose infantry cleared the village of Posini by 1735, but found the road beyond, leading to Castelnuovo, blocked with rubble. The advance was temporarily halted until a method could be found to get armored support forward to follow the infantry. The engineers worked hard during the night to clear a path for the armor. On the afternoon of 29 June, Combat Command "B" units, driving toward Pomerance, bypassed

Castelnuovo and seized their objective about two miles northwest of the town. Other elements, following to the rear, entered Castelnuovo and accounted for the few German snipers who had been left behind. To the west, the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, which had been committed to maintain contact between the two divisions, reached a line north of Serrazzano, situated on a lateral road running from the zone of the 34th Infantry Division into that of the 1st Armored's. With Castelnuovo taken and added to the growing list of towns and cities liberated by IV Corps, the enemy dropped back but left the usual demolitions in his wake, again preventing a rapid vehicular pursuit.

Following another night of work by the Division Engineers in clearing the streets of Castelnuovo, a large gain was made on 30 June. A column spearheaded by Company "G", 13th Armored Regiment, carrying infantry on its tanks, bypassed Pomerance to the west and dashed ahead more than eight miles to secure the high ground just south of and dominating Highway 68. The remainder of the Command advanced on Pomerance, which was captured without much trouble at 1230; at darkness infantry made an assault crossing of the Cecina River three miles north of the city. Enemy infantry was quickly driven from the river banks and our tanks followed across. Colonel Howze's units, in between Combat Commands "A" and "B", after struggling more against terrain than Germans during the past two days, secured San Dalmazio village, four miles southeast of Pomerance about noon time and then split into two columns. By nightfall the two columns had crossed the river, and were operating on minor routes and trails leading due north toward Volterra. All along the IV Corps front advance combat units had either crossed the Cecina River or were at its south bank. At this same time, the 133d Infantry, hammering at the gates or rubble-strewn Cecina on the coast, was having

its stiffest fight since Cassino and Anzio days.

3. Advance to Highway 68

At the beginning of July the left flank of the 1st Armored Division was the most advanced, with the left column of Combat Command "B" looking down on Highway 68, about seven miles southwest of Volterra. The right column was just across the Cecina River, four miles south of Volterra but still three miles from Highway 68 and about eight miles from Volterra by road. Task Force Howze also had two columns across the river, echeloned east and south of Combat Command "B" by about four miles. Still farther east Combat Command "A" was almost on a line with Task Force Howze and some distance south of Combat Command "B". Its advance units were six miles north of Radicondoli in the vicinity of Mensano, and almost ten miles short of Highway 68. In the past nine days the Division had advanced the Corps line a total of thirty-three airline miles, or if measured by the devious routes travelled through the rough terrain, nearly three times that far. In the next nine days only six airline miles were gained.

Combat Command "B" which had cleared Pomerance and Montegnoli and then crossed the Cecina River against strong opposition, consolidated the newly won positions and prepared to seize Saline, less than one mile to the east on Highway 68. The enemy defended heavily along the line of Highway 68 all day on 1 July. About a mile north of the Cecina, Combat Command "B" tried to capture additional high ground but made little progress against infantry and roving tanks, mostly Mark VI Tigers. The center column of the Division, Task Force Howze, reached the outskirts of the small village of Mazzola, three miles southeast of Volterra, without any opposition, but on the north edge of the village ran into heavy direct fire which knocked out

three tanks. When the column then drew back south of the town, approximately one company of German infantry, with surprising aggressiveness, attempted to follow up the withdrawal. Well-aimed artillery fire broke up this abortive counter-attack, and Mazzola remained in No Man's Land - belonging neither to the Germans nor to the Americans, or even to the Italian natives who had already fled into the hills for safety; it still belonged to God.

As the next day, 2 July, dawned, Task Force Howze renewed its drive for Mazzola. After a stiff fire fight in which three of our tanks were destroyed, our troops finally reached the heart of the town and eliminated all opposition.

For the next two days, both Combat Command "B" and Task Force Howze held generally the same positions, though Combat Command "B" improved its left flank by securing more ground and establishing strong points on the north side of Highway 68. Troop "C", 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, made a sortie which struck to the north across the road into Montecatini Val di Cecina.

The first three days of July were not easy ones for Combat Command "A". After a limited advance on 1 July, hindered by enemy resistance, mines, and terrain, the Command drew close to Casole d'Elsa, lying on the French-IV Corps boundary. This was a small town, surrounded by a 15-foot wall, and located atop a dominating hill. It covered three possible roads for an advance to the north. Before the first streaks of the early dawn on this Sunday morning, 2 July, just about the time when the church bells were pealing out their calls for worship to other still-sleeping cities, strong patrols from Companies "B" and "C", 361st Infantry, were wide awake and moving

into the southeastern outskirts of Casole d'Elsa. It was just another day to the combat troops - for the war was fought on Sundays and holidays as well. Tanks crept up behind them in the pre-dawn darkness, ready to follow into the town. A brisk fire fight developed between the infantry patrols and the defenders. When dawn broke and the dark silhouettes of the tanks loomed against the light of the morning sky, the tankers found themselves without dismounted support in an exposed position just below the town, where it was almost impossible to get off the road. The balance of the two infantry companies were sent forward. At least five anti-tank guns and three Mark VI tanks opened fire on the American tanks at about 600 yards, from behind the wall of the town, smashing six medium tanks, three light tanks, and two tank destroyers.

This action almost wiped out what remained of the already depleted armor of the task force attempting to take the town; the two infantry companies lost nearly 50% of their effectiveness. Throughout the day, Combat Command "A" remained in a defensive position, but the enemy did not press his advantage. Company "E", 1st Armored Regiment, came up from reserve to supply its tanks as replacement for the last ones, and Companies "K" and "L", 361st Infantry, took over the assault job on 3 July. After an artillery preparation lasting twenty minutes, the two rifle companies attempted to take the town but were driven off. Artillery again blasted at the strong walls and stone houses, and again our infantry attacked but were forced to withdraw. That same night, at home in the United States, there were also explosions, flares, and skyrockets, breaking the silence of many normally quiet main streets. It was the night before the Fourth of July, and children ran about the streets, firing cap guns at one another in mimic

warfare - some of them had fathers, brothers, or neighbors, who were shooting real machine guns, mortars, and artillery, at an enemy in the rugged hills of Italy.

Finally, after six previous tries during the day and evening had failed, at about 0300 on 4 July, the infantry succeeded in getting into the town. Company "L" covered the south and west sides of the town, while Company "K" stormed in from the northeast and scaled the wall. Tanks and infantry pushed a short distance beyond Casole d'Elsa and then took up a defensive position. The 4th of July of 1944 was Independence Day to the liberated peoples of Casole d'Elsa.

The 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry, replaced the 361st Infantry, which was then relieved from attachment to the 1st Armored Division and ordered to assemble with its parent unit, the 91st Division, newly arrived in the IV Corps area.

The fight at Casole d'Elsa was the last major engagement by the 1st Armored Division before it was relieved by the 88th Division and Task Force Ramey, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The Division had not made the spectacular gains that featured its earlier pursuit action above Rome, but in slightly less than three weeks in the line after Grosseto, operating through the most difficult type of terrain for armor, it had advanced approximately forty air-line miles against constant, stiff opposition. How well the enemy demolition crews used the terrain possibilities is shown by the work required of the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion. Men of this Battalion constructed thirty-seven steel treadway bridges, repaired twelve bridges, improved eight fords, constructed or graded one hundred and fifty miles of bypasses,

bulldozed routes through the rubble eleven towns, and swept more than five hundred miles of road for mines. The use of the recently developed armored bulldozers, which had been issued to the division about a month before the operations took place, proved a great help. These machines were M-4 Medium tanks equipped with large bulldozer blades which could wade into the face of enemy small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire. They were more unwieldly than regular bulldozers, but the armor made up for this handicap.

Eighty-one German armored vehicles were destroyed or captured during this phase. These included three Mark IV tanks, thirty-one Mark VI Tiger tanks, sixteen tanks of unknown type, and fourteen self-propelled guns. Scores of towed anti-tank guns were knocked out. Losses inflicted on the Division included thirty-six M-4 Medium tanks, thirty-five M-5 Light tanks and M-8 assault guns, ten M-10 tank destroyers, and fourteen armored cars. (The Division, less certain elements which were attached to Task Force Ramey, moved to the vicinity of Bolgheri for reorganization.)

D. SUMMARY

Since its re-entrance into combat on 11 June 1944, IV Corps had fought a distance of more than seventy-five air-line miles over rugged mountainous terrain on the east flank, and approximately the same distance along the coast, where there was a combination of both rugged and flat terrain. The mathematician would perhaps sit down and divide twenty-three days of combat into the number of air miles covered, and arrive at the cold figure of a little over three miles advance per day. The historian, being a mathematician as well, would add the fact that IV Corps had under its command, two infantry divisions, one armored division, and a hastily-formed

Task Force during the period. The Chief of the Ordnance Section could give, to the last bullet, the amount of ammunition expended - just as the Chief of Supply could tell you how many rations were consumed. G-1, in turn, knew the number of wounded and killed. Points like these are necessary to make up a factual history of a tactical operation, but just why someone didn't sit down and count one by one, the number of hills that protruded skyward and which were ascended and descended by the foot soldier, is difficult to ascertain. To write of the difficult terrain over which troops fight cannot, in justice to the combat soldier, be summed up in descriptive words such as, "rugged terrain", "mountainous", "jagged precipitous slopes", and others. Probably no one bothered counting these hills in Italy because there were too many of them. They can probably be best described as being as numerous as the white-capped waves of a choppy sea. At any rate, it was a matter of climbing hills and going down the other side, over and over again. When doing this with tanks and vehicles, under the snouts of enemy artillery or anti-tank guns, one perhaps can realize that an average of three miles per day is remarkably good progress.

Colonel Harry Semmes, the G-1 of IV Corps, reported to the General, in his monthly report, that IV Corps had sustained a total of 2,709 casualties; of these 416 were killed. The 36th Infantry Division lost 132 men; the 1st Armored Division suffered the next highest, 78 killed; the Red Bull outfit, the 34th, lost 32, and the remainder 174, were from other Corps troops. By the end of the month, replacements and returns to units reached a total of 5,184. It was during this period that the IV Corps Headquarters had its first experience with the automatic replacement system inaugurated by Fifth Army. This new system provided a constant over-strength of five percent to

all front-line divisions. It functioned smoothly and was a decided improvement over the old system, and also a step forward in the conception of the necessity of prompt and adequate replacements for units engaged in combat. Each of the front line divisions maintained in the service company bivouac area, a replacement pool for each regiment, of men who had been partially trained by the units during periods of inactivity. These men were forwarded as needed to the front line companies with which they had been trained, and were replaced in the regimental pools by replacements forwarded automatically from the rear. Each combat commander was thus assured a Table of Organization strength at all times and a constant flow of replacements.

The return of personnel to units from hospitals and other rear installations also operated under a system designed to be automatic. Personnel were sent to forward replacement battalions and from that point delivered to the proper unit - in most all cases the soldier ended up in his old outfit with his old buddies. It was an added morale factor. However, there was one "bug" which remained; due to changing conditions and the rapid advance of front line units, some difficulty was encountered in keeping the replacement centers informed where the men returning from the rear should be delivered.

Morale throughout all units was high, due to both the successes obtained against the enemy in the rapid advance and the pleasant summer weather. The seizure of the port of Piombino, into which funnelled fresh food supplies for the advancing Fifth Army, also contributed to the high state of morale. American Red Cross services coordinated through the Field Director, and the Clubmobile units assigned to the IV Corps

Headquarters added a touch of home to the troops - the sight of young American Red Cross girls, serving fresh brown doughnuts to a front line battalion headquarters was a familiar one.

Unit Post Exchanges were rolled up to the combat troops as close as safety would allow at this early stage of operations for IV Corps, there was only one howl of protest or discontentment noted in this phase - it was rooted to the fact that for a while the quota of cigarettes for Fifth Army included some unpopular brands. Although they were far superior to the best Italian cigarettes, which gave off an odor of something betwixt burning hay and garlic, they were not too acceptable to the troops.

Colonel Thomas J. Wells, (then Lt. Col.), G-2, in his summary of the enemy picture for the month, reported that many of the enemy tanks destroyed in the 1st Armored Division zone were identified as belonging to the 504th Tiger Tank Battalion and 216th Sturm Tank Battalion, elements of which were used singly or in small groups to reinforce local counter-attacks, or as anti-tank guns covering demolitions and minefields or narrow mountain roads and trails.

The German units opposing IV Corps, with the exception of the 20th GAF Division, were identified as being under the 14th Panzer Corps. The 1st Parachute Corps had the sector to the east, mostly in front of the French Corps. Both these German Corps were under the 14th Army, whose commander, General Joachim Lemelsen, had by Hitler's order, relieved General Von Mackensen after the Anzio beachhead debacle.

This German 14th Panzer Corps, pitted against General Crittenberger's IV Corps, had been part of the peacetime standing army stationed in Magdebur (Province of Saxony). As the 14th Mountain Corps, it fought through the

Polish and Western Campaigns, and later as an Armored corps in the Balkans and Russia. Destroyed at Stalingrad, the Corps was reformed in the summer of 1943, and directed the Sicilian Campaign. When Fifth Army landed at Salerno, the 14th Panzer Corps was defending the northern sector of the beachhead. The Corps remained on the west flank with a sector extending roughly from the Abruzzi Mountains to the Tyrrhenian Sea. It commanded the defense of the Gustave and Adolf Hitler Lines. After a brief period of confusion following the Allied breakout from the beachhead, the 14th Corps took over the coastal sector during the withdrawal to the Arno. The present Commander, General Hartman, who took over from General Hube early in the year, was previously a division commander on the Russian front. This unit, standing opposed to IV Corps, was most certainly a veteran combat unit.

The Germans paid a heavy price for the time gained during the month. The 162d Turcomen Division was reduced by at least one-half, and had to be withdrawn for overhaul about 2 July. The 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, on our extreme right flank and fighting chiefly as hastily organized "Kampfgruppen", was likewise battered. At least thirty Tiger tanks had been destroyed, as well as numerous smaller tanks and self-propelled guns. Many enemy artillery pieces and crews were caught on the roads by our artillery and aircraft, which in addition caused considerable losses to the enemy, in vehicles, guns, horses, and personnel. Much ammunition and other supplies had to be abandoned. 4,652 prisoners were taken by the IV Corps and numerous reports, particularly from Prisoners of War, indicated that many units had been decimated.

Colonel Wells also mentioned that the 6799th CIC Detachment was screening the few civilians and refugees, periodically caught crossing the lines

into our zone. Close scrutiny and detailed interrogation of these people were stressed for counter-intelligence purposes. The method of sending through paid natives to learn of our movements and identifications, and sometimes to perform acts of sabotage, was used by the Germans in North Africa and Southern Italy with some success and, no doubt, once they were back on their feet and somewhat better organized, we could most assuredly expect an influx of trained, paid, Italian agents. The Partisans were helpful in aiding the Counter-Intelligence Corps Detachment and Allied Military Government officers, in helping to round up German soldiers hiding behind our lines, and in the apprehension of Italian Fascists and other active or potential trouble-makers.

At this time it would seem to be appropriate to take an inside view of the G-2 Section and see how the wheels of Intelligence turned. The Section operated on a 24-hour schedule with a duty officer beside the phone at all times. During the hours of darkness, the night shift, in most cases consisting of a duty officer, clerk, and draftsman, received and sent out Intelligence information and made up the G-2 Periodic Report. The report covered the period from 2000 of one day to 2000 of the next, and was in the hands and plotted on the situation maps of subordinate and adjacent G-2's by early morning of the following day. The bulk of the consolidated Intelligence reports was carried to the units by their respective liaison officers to IV Corps, who picked them up at the Adjutant General Section immediately after attendance at the daily War Room Conference. The drafting section worked throughout the night in a pyramidal tent adjoining the G-2 trailer, and made the overlays, showing enemy unit dispositions, to accompany the G-2 Periodic Report. The bulk of the personnel of the

section worked throughout the daylight hours - receiving and sending out the periodic situation Isum reports, visiting daily the Intelligence Sections of the front line units; and generally receiving and sending forth Intelligence to the units concerned. It was the daily procedure to send out one officer for a flight over the lines in one of the liaison planes to pick up any possible road movements as well as to familiarize himself with the nature of the terrain.

Of interest is the rolling office in which the Situation Map was located and where the heart of the section throbbed out its daily existence. Once upon a time when the Italian Fascist Army was still in the fight and before the Italian Armistice, allied planes swooped over on a strafing mission and poured bullets onto an Italian column of troops. In this column there was a rubber-wheeled trailer, the size of half a box car; that was used for a rolling kitchen for the Italian unit. The tracer bullets from the strafing planes tore some holes into this spaghetti and pasta-cuata dispenser - a little later the wagon was captured by our ground troops and through various and sundry means came into the hands of IV Corps. With much cleaning, painting, and wiring, it was rigged out to be a veritable rolling office, with sliding panels and map-boards, switchboard, lights, and cabinets, it made a compact, ingenious, travelling office. A tarpaulin, lean-to type, roof, stretched from the rear end, made additional space for the office. When the call came to move to the north - and now they were almost daily - the section personnel, with the aid of a couple of Italian youths who worked for food and the ride, worked as fast as a circus crew breaking tents for the next show. Like a machine's parts hitting with precision, each man performed a small assigned task - either rolling the canvas, sliding the map-board, etc., and in three shakes, it was on the road

behind a 2½-ton truck and rolling toward the next command post. Sometimes the Headquarters Commandant, young, bemoustached Major Brewster Perry, in the selection of the command post areas, was alarmingly confident as to the maneuverability of the former Italian rolling kitchen and had it placed on the side of a hill, or gully, where even the M-4 tanks would fear to tread. In these cases it took more than three shakes to get it off the precipitous slope or gully - it took luck. Over narrow trails, through fields and across mountains, the huge trailer creaked and groaned, likened to one of Hannibal's elephants crossing the Alps, it lumbered on slowly but surely.

Located around this huge trailer were the tents and trailers of the section attachments. A British captain, tall, lean and built along the lines of Neville Chamberlain, worked and drank his tea in a trailer alongside. He was the Photo-Intelligence Officer loaned from British 8th Army and attached to G-2 Section IV Corps - almost as elaborately furnished as the bulky box car on wheels was his trailer. It was always chockful of air photos, swinging lights, stereoscopes, and in a special built-in corner a big can of Orange Pekoe tea, a Coleman gasoline stove and milk to mix with tea for his erstwhile American visitors. Captain Roy Russell was a crack photo interpreter. Often-times he located a huge camouflaged artillery piece which shelled our troops liberally during the hours of darkness and could not be spotted by air in the day. Some flattened grass or other slight clue often bore out his report to G-2 that "the blimey gun is at point X" - these reports were always corroborated when our troops reached the point. Much of his work now was picking out the defenses noted

on the air photos snapped over the Arno River. His uncanny accuracy in reading detail off of aerial photographs earned him the reputation of being able to tell whether the conductor of a street car on some street in Bologna had shaved that day.

Another very important attachment to the section was the Order of Battle Team. Under two side-wall tents put up near the former show wagon, the Order of Battle Team built up its files and information of the make-up of the German units opposed to us. Consisting of one officer, Captain Richard W. Senie, and three enlisted men, all fluent in the German language and familiar with the customs of the German peoples, for they all had lived in Germany for many years, the section performed a very important mission. Coordinating closely with the Corps Prisoner of War Interrogation Team, the Order of Battle Team was able to give us a practical Table of Organization breakdown of a German division opposing us, soon after its committal. This section contributed much to the G-2 periodic report which made its way to the division G-2's daily. With the bigger picture gained at the Corps level, the Order of Battle Section was able to give to the divisions a comprehensive account of the type of unit opposed to them, its general reputation, many of the key personalities and any other information on that subject that only they could give. There was a daily study that went far into the night. If, on some occasion you had cause to pass their section's tent, you would swear that there was a squad of Germans in there, quaffing a few steins of beer and engaged in a regular bull-session in true German style.

The historian did not digress from the war in relating about the

functioning of the G-2 Section of IV Corps. This history is of IV Corps and G-2 is one part of it. The other sections will also be brought to the fore. One is just as important as the other. Without the head, the trunk, arms and legs cannot exist, and conversely, without the trunk, arms and legs, the head cannot exist. A corps, just like an army, is a unit made up of both troops and a headquarters. The bulk of this history naturally deals with the combat troops and the branches and services supporting them. Part of it will touch with the headquarters as in the past few pages, so that the IV Corps history may be rounded out in all respects.

From 11 June to 2 July the IV Corps Headquarters had moved seven times - almost one move every three days. At Tarquinia it broke camp and rolled into an olive grove near Montalto di Castro. On the morning of 16 June the tents, already beginning to bleach and fray, were knocked down, packed and the command post convoyed to an olive grove-wheatfield area north of Orbetello, where it remained for three days. No sooner had the routine in the area begun to regulate itself when the Headquarters was on the move again. On 19 June the dusty Headquarters put up camp in an olive grove south of Grosseto. Uncomfortably crowded by Fifth Army supply installations in the area, IV Corps Headquarters pulled out on the 23d and established itself in an olive grove near Montepescali. In the next nine days it left its emptied "C" ration cans buried in a fruit orchard six miles southeast of Massa Marittima, in an orchard-wheatfield area in the town itself, and next in a patch of green woods south of Castelnuovo, where it was located on 2 July.

When the IV Corps Command Post moved forward in order to follow the line troops at an average distance of 8 to 12 miles, it was the procedure to leave the rear echelon at the old location to continue functioning until the forward echelon was encamped and communications established. The forward echelon consisted primarily of the Commanding General, Chief of Staff and the entire G-2 and G-3 Sections, some mess personnel, a detachment from the Military Police Platoon and signal personnel for switchboard maintenance. Part of the G-1 and G-4 Sections and certain officers of the special staff were also on hand. Most always the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of IV Corps Artillery, followed and were located in the vicinity of the forward echelon. Cajoling was ever present when the rear echelon finally joined the forward. Remarks such as "rear echelon commandos", "did you have to leave the flush toilets and bath tubs?", "look at the rear come up to join the war", etc., were flung back and forth within the tented camp area.

The Corps Quartermaster, Colonel F. E. Sweeney, revealed an interesting point heretofore unmentioned.

Since re-entrance into the line, over 855,051 Class "B" rations were issued and consumed by the troops of IV Corps. Only 47,883 of the less tasty Class "C" rations were issued, and only 12,760 Class "D" were issued. It is not known whether the latter were fully consumed. It was SOP that each division quartermaster be visited daily. The S-4's of all Corps troops and battalions, including the Corps artillery and Task Force S-4's were visited at least once a week. This gave the quartermaster officer first-hand knowledge of the problems

which required the promptest action and formed a basis for making recommendations to Army. Army supply points serving Corps were also visited daily, their status determined and operating difficulties ironed out. The line was moving too fast for Fifth Army Communications to keep up with Corps. For this reason wire communications were often lacking when the situation was changing most rapidly, and the long distance to any headquarters made road travel long and slow. For a few days Fifth Army had a quartermaster representative who personally visited IV Corps daily.

In the northward moves of the headquarters, the G-4 Section was split into two echelons. Colonel Lacey, the G-4, and his Traffic Control Section under Major James O. Eaton, functioned in the forward echelon. The G-4 Executive, Lieutenant Colonel "Barney" Daughtry, and other assistants functioned in the rear. Policies and plans were formulated in the forward echelon and transmitted to the rear for publication into administrative orders and instruction memoranda. The biggest problem encountered thus far was the road distances to advanced supply points. For this reason the early seizure of the Port of Leghorn was of prime importance to the supply personnel. Supplies could be poured in by ship at a faster rate with less use of gasoline and trucks. The astronomical figure of gasoline consumption by IV Corps for the period will give an idea as to how much of this could have been saved if a port had been close at hand. Over 1,644,892 gallons of V-80 gasoline and 35,030 gallons of Diesel fuel had been consumed.

Some of the battle losses in the ordnance field suffered during

this period were as follows: 26 M-4 Medium Tanks, 24 M-5 Light Tanks, 84 - 2½-ton 6 x 6 cargo trucks and 159 ¼-ton jeeps. Over 139,649 rounds of 105mm high explosive shells were thrown at the enemy, figured to average 7,350 rounds fired per day, and the dough-
feet fired over 1,935,854 rounds of 30 caliber rifle and machine gun ammunition, including ball, tracer and armor-piercing. Only this small fraction of the ammunition expended may give to the reader an idea as to the number of trucks necessary to keep the combat units constantly supplied.

Some of the key points mentioned in the report of the Corps Field Artillery Officer, Brigadier William C. Crane, are briefly outlined as follows: The action during the period ranged from very fluid to stubborn resistance. Frequently it was found necessary to regroup, attach and detach artillery to meet the situation. The fast moving advance necessitated continuous displacement of Corps Artillery units. In order to have this artillery, with its range and striking power, reach out and damage the enemy as he withdrew, Corps Artillery positions were moved well forward, not far behind the leading infantry elements. Forty-five percent of all Corps artillery missions fired during this period were observed. This comparatively high percentage was attributed to forced withdrawal of the enemy in daylight, continuous dawn to dusk patrol by air observation planes throughout the Corps sector, and the cooperation between the pilot and the forward observer. The IV Corps Artillery Command Post and Forward Direction Center moved nine times during the period, covering a distance of 115 miles. It was placed well forward in the vicinity of field

artillery groups and as centrally located as terrain conditions would permit. As soon as one position was occupied, reconnaissance was initiated for new positions farther forward. The firing of harassing missions was an important function of Corps artillery; blanketing rear areas of the enemy and denying him the use of roads, hampering his escape and destroying his materiel. Harassing fires were pre-arranged on maps that were supplemented by photos when available. Harassing missions were habitually fired during the hours of darkness.

Colonel Edmund Cunningham, Signal Officer, reported that over 30 miles of open wire were laid and the same amount had been abandoned. A total of 19 switchboard installations were made. Wire installed by Corps artillery consisted of 262 miles of open field wire, while divisions installed up to 2000 miles each and abandoned about 50%. The message center logged 125,000 outgoing and 69,934 incoming radio messages.

The Engineer Officer, Colonel D. H. Gillette, reported that 16 Bailey bridges had been built and if placed end to end would measure 1,620 feet. In addition, 28 Treadway bridges totaling 1,443 feet and 11 timber bridges averaging over 15 feet, were constructed. Many rumors of poisoned water supply were received from Italians, but laboratory tests in each suspected case proved them to be uniformly false. The spreading of such rumors was probably part of the German propaganda. The number of maps issued to troops was astronomically high, for over 200,000 maps of a scale of 1:50,000 were issued and 40,000 of the scale of 1:100,000 were passed out to requesting units.

The Air Force's Weather Station, in its daily almanac to the G-2 Section for the month of July, predicted the sun to rise and peer over the horizon of the Adriatic Sea at 0536 and to sink into the depths of the Tyrrhenian at 2103 on the first day, and by the last day of July, to rise at 0602 and set at 2042, almost fourteen full hours of daylight per day for the month. These long days were to favor our advance, for much more progress could be made during daylight. As for rain, there was not to be much more than we had in June. Thunderstorms were to be more frequent and the temperature was to vary from 80° on the coast to 95° in the Corps right flank - in all, the weather forecast favored military operations.

The terrain lying ahead between the present IV Corps line and the Arno was less rugged. The hills were less steep and the terrain began to generally slope off toward the valley of the Arno. Many of these hills were barren and denuded of any cover. The Arno River, approximately 20 miles away, which entered the coastal plain and flowed into the sea through a valley 10 to 15 miles wide, was the next objective. With the Arno line in our hands, we would hold the important Tyrrhenian Port of Leghorn, where the Germans had already sunk some blockships and demolished a few of the facilities.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER VIII -----

IV CORPS REACHES THE ARNO

At the beginning of July the left flank of IV Corps was across the Cecina River and Highway 68, the final lateral geographical features before the Arno. The strongly reinforced 34th Division had finished cleaning out Cecina and was north of the river and the highway all along the front. The Corps line ran almost due east with the center and right, approaching Highway 68 as it ran its northeastern course toward Poggibonsi in the French Expeditionary Corps zone. East of the 34th Division the 1st Armored Division was generally along the line of the highway and was scheduled for early relief by the 86th Infantry Division, then enroute from its long rest period near Rome. Two combat teams of the 91st Division were already either on or near the front and the remainder of the division was due to arrive soon to further reinforce IV Corps for the final lap of the drive to the Arno River. Beyond IV Corps to the east the French were engaged in heavy battles for Colle di Val D'Elsa, Highway 68, and Poggibonsi.

The 34th Division expanded to more than twice its normal size by various attachments, was to make the main IV Corps effort beyond Highway 68. The division planned to drive straight north to the Arno, by-passing and isolating the Port of Leghorn. The 34th Division zone was divided into three natural avenues of advance. (See Map No.). Highway 1, which had been the principal axis north of Rome, entered mountainous terrain a few miles north of Cecina, winding along the

edge of cliffs which came down to the sea for almost the entire 20 miles to Leghorn. It connected several small coastal towns including Rosignano Solvay, site of a large chemical plant, before it reached Leghorn. The alternate road from Cecina to Pisa ran through a valley flanked on the left by the mountains along the coast and on its right by another ridge. The valley road links numerous small towns and villages, passing through the largest community, Colle Salvetti, just before it enters the Arno River Plain about 10 miles south and slightly east of Pisa. At the foot of the mountains on the east of the valley runs a road connecting Riparbella, Castellina, Marittima, Pastina, Lorenzana and Colle Salvetti. East of the 34th Division zone laid the valley of the Era River, which was to be the main route north for the 88th Division when it relieved the 1st Armored.

The past two weeks had seen stiffening enemy resistance across the entire front, resulting in the hardest fighting since the fall of Rome. Progress, though slow, had been remarkably steady. The fanatical 16 SS Panzer Grenadier Troops whose uniforms bore the distinctive skull and crossbones mark of death, appearing opposite the 34th Division, had caused a hard battle for Cecina. In the center, the 1st Armored Division slugged it out with infantry and tanks of the 26th Panzer Division, newly arrived, in a give and take struggle through the Tuscan hills. Meanwhile, it had taken the French on the right nearly a week, at the cost of almost 1000 casualties, to crack the defense along the mountains north of the Orcia River.

More mountains remained between IV Corps and the Arno River, but the worst ground had been covered. Ahead the mountains would soon

give way to lower hills sloping toward the Arno Valley. The 34th Infantry Division was almost within striking distance of the great Port of Leghorn.

A. ADVANCE OF THE 34TH DIVISION.

There were two divisions in the IV Corps line on 2 July 1944; the 34th Division on the left and the 1st Armored Division on the right. This phase will deal with the advance of the 34th Division, making the main effort of the Corps, which led to the capture of Leghorn and the arrival at the objective, the Arno River.

1. The Enemy Bastion of Rosignano.

While the 133d Infantry was completing the final phase of its rough battle for Cecina on 2 July, other units of the 34th Division began maneuvering into their new positions for the drive north of Highway 68. The 135th Infantry, which had fully consolidated and expanded its bridgehead over the Cecina River east of Cecina, shifted the direction of its drive so that it was following Highway 68 toward the sea. With the 2d Battalion leading, the regiment attacked at dawn. By midafternoon it cleared Collemezzano, turned to the northwest, entered the division's left zone and pinched out the 133d Infantry which reorganized around Cecina in division and corps reserve. The 442d Infantry in the center of the division zone, attacking due north with the 100th Battalion on the left and the 2d Battalion on the right, moved into the valley to push up the center. The 168th Infantry attacked along the division right, through the mountains. The 100th Battalion engaged in a brisk fire fight just east of Collemezzano, but in a swift, hard attack, overran the enemy positions, inflicting

heavy casualties. An hour before midnight, against increasing resistance, both the 135th and 442d Infantry had reached the line of the La Preselle lateral road, about four miles northwest of Highway 68. On the right the 3d Battalion, 168th Infantry, attacked west and took Riparbella. At noon of 2 June the 2d Battalion sent patrols north to Hills 571 and 573, and the 1st Battalion occupied Hill 457, three miles north of Riparbella. The Reconnaissance Company of the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was given the mission of screening the advance on the extreme right and maintaining contact with the 1st Armored Division.

On the extreme left flank of the division, the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 34th Reconnaissance Troop formed an armored force advancing up Highway 1. By the end of the day all units were in their assigned zones in position to launch the main attack.

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

valley the 442d Infantry drew heavy fire from the right ridge, and was pinned down on about the same line as the battalions of the 135th Infantry.

Having fought to within 13 airline miles of the big Italian west coast Port of Leghorn (Livorne), it became apparent that the troops of IV Corps had contacted enemy positions dug in on high ground running about 35 miles inland from Castiglioncello on the Italian shore, through Rosignano and Volterra to Casole D'Elsa, which was situated about 15 miles west of Siena, just captured by the French. The determined character of the resistance along this line indicated clearly that the enemy intended to hold doggedly to Rosignano and Volterra in his endeavor to delay our advance on Leghorn.

Heavy Nazi guns emplaced on the heights dominating Rosignano threw deadly fire into the advancing infantry, south and east of the town. The 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, had a hard fight since the enemy in Rosignano defended the town stubbornly and had to be routed out in house to house battling. Rosignano, garrisoned by the same tough 16 SS Panzer Grenadier Division units which had resisted so fiercely at Cecina, was the main western strong point of the German defense line before Leghorn. The town was built on a hilltop and afforded an excellent view of the coastal plain for many miles, almost as far as Cecina. It was built compactly, containing many three and four story stone houses. A stone castle, whose walls were lightly chipped and pock-marked from the arrows, spears and bullets of besiegers, stood out on the summit of the hill. From the top floors of the houses the defenders threw hand grenades, from the lower floors

and cellars they poured out heavy fire from automatic weapons. An attempt to reach high ground east of the town failed, but in fierce fighting through the streets, the foe was driven from the southern third of the town by the afternoon of 4 July. An attack by four Mark IV tanks and infantry was beaten off at 1830 with three of the tanks destroyed by bazooka teams. The 3d Battalion, 442d Infantry, relieved the 100th Battalion and with the 2d Battalion, slightly improved the division center.

In Rosignano an enemy infiltration attempt at 0200, 5 July, was beaten back by artillery defensive fires. The enemy hung on desperately and launched three more fierce counterattacks supported with tanks, against the 135th Infantry. Each effort was repulsed and the house to house battle continued throughout the day. From well-concealed positions behind the long ridge northeast of Rosignano, severe artillery fire of many calibres, including some 170mm shells, fell upon our attacking infantry. Roads and highways in rear of the infantry were subjected to constant hammering by artillery, as the Nazis showed particular nervousness over the possible movement of reinforcements. Before dawn of this same day, the 2d Battalion, 442d Infantry, in the center of the division zone, attacked a small east-west ridge covering the entrance to flatter valley land ahead. It was repulsed. Reforming, it tried again at 0600 but again failed. A third assault before dark was successful and by nightfall of that evening the ridge about two miles east and a mile north of Rosignano was severed.

The slow clearance of Rosignano continued. Just as the rays of the setting sun were kissing goodnight to the peaks of the Tuscan hills, on 7 July, the 3d Battalion had reached the northern edge of the

rubble and semi-flattened town, though the enemy still held houses in the country immediately beyond the town. The other battalions of the 135th attacked by day to the north for a slight gain, and the following day, both the 135th and 442d Infantry made some advances. By darkness on 9 July, both regiments succeeded in reaching positions about four miles northeast of Rosignano, and were engaged in cleaning up remaining pockets of resistance. The advance of the 442d Infantry in the center was aided by the gains on the east ridge, which had eliminated most of the heavy fire coming from the flank. Along the coastline over Highway 1, the Armor of the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 34th Reconnaissance Troop, after slow going for a week because of mined roads and demolished bridges, has passed Rosignano Solvay and had dismounted elements approximately on a line with Rosignano.

While the fierce street fight raged in Rosignano, the 168th Infantry had equally tough going in the rugged hills on the east. The regiment got off to a good start on 3 July, surrounding and virtually wiping out two enemy infantry companies caught midway between Riparbella and Castellina Marittima. By darkness the 1st and 2d Battalions were less than a mile from Castellina Marittima. The next day, Tuesday, the 4th of July, the 363d Infantry, under Colonel W. Fulton Magill, Jr., was committed on the fight of the 168th Infantry, thus providing the main effort with two full infantry regiments on a front of less than four miles. The 168th Infantry attacked toward Castellina and high ground to the east. The 2d Battalion captured Mount Vitalba (Hill 675) and held it against three counterattacks,

but the Castellina defense proved too difficult to crack immediately. Attacking in column of battalions, led by the 3d Battalion, the 363d Infantry advanced about a mile into high ground east of Hill 675. Then both regiments consolidated their gains and fought off German counter-pressure in the form of numerous parties of 50 to 75 men who attempted to infiltrate ravines and gullies.

It was over these mountain roads connecting the small hill top villages and hamlets, where the many road side shrines were noted. The crosses, with extended arms of stone or metal were mostly found at road junctions for the spiritual benefit of the wayfarer. Some were cushioned against a background of variously colored wild flowers, picked and reverently placed there by the local inhabitants. The battle rolling over the area like a tidal wave left some of the shrines etched out in ironic surroundings. The German dead were many and so were these road side shrines. It was not an uncommon sight to find a dead German soldier sprawled out on the ground, just as he fell, with his face upturned, and with his eyes staring towards the shrine. The small square cemeteries of stone, usually on the fringe of the village were also worthy of interest and comment. The cemetery was usually a square piece of land completely enclosed by a high white stone wall. The graves were marked with headstones of various sizes and shapes, much akin to those in the United States. Sometimes the graves of families lay together in one corner, with headstone epitaphs dating back to the 17th Century. In a cemetery one might find a statue or facial bust carved by some famous Italian sculptor, but these were most likely found at the graves of the wealthy, and along

those mountain roads they were rare. The wall surrounding the cemetery was the feature that distinguished it most in the minds of the soldiers marching by. It was usually very thick and about 6 to 8 feet high. These high thick walls provided the Germans with favorable defensive positions. For this reason, it was often necessary to blast out the German defenders, and resulted in pieces of wall and grave stone littering the scene of many local cemetery battles.

On the morning of 6 July the attack was resumed. By noon the 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, had entered Castellina from the east and south and finally cleared it after heavy fighting in the town. The 2d Battalion pushed up abreast on the east, and the 3d Battalion then attacked through the 2d Battalion, cutting the road which ran from Castellina northeast 7 miles to Chianni. Heavy artillery fire was concentrated on the 34th Division right flank from guns located near Chianni. In mid-morning, the 363d Infantry advanced across the heavily mined eastern slopes of Hill 675 and just before dark seized dominating Mount Vase (Hill 634) two and one-half miles northeast of Castellina. The key mountain was heavily shelled by the enemy, and at noontime the next day, after an especially heavy artillery and mortar barrage, the 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division), which reportedly had been brought from the area around Siena for this operation, counterattacked. It drove the 3d Battalion, 363d Infantry, off the hill and forced our men back one-half mile to Hill 553, where our troops reformed and held the line. Until Hill 634 could again be brought under our control, progress was stopped.

On 8 July all along the front, progress of the Corps remained slow as the Germans continued to mass guns and all available troops and to fight desperately from every vantage point. Time gained by delay was a valuable asset to the enemy for many miles to the north across the Arno and past Lucca, the TODT Organization was digging, building and clearing areas for the last stand in defense of the Po Valley.

On the right in the 1st Armored Division zone, the 88th Infantry Division finished the last stages of relief and was prepared to jump off the next morning. In the face of the still unyielding opposition the enemy had managed to offer, the 34th Infantry Division now girded itself to attack in its right zone and seize the high ground of Chianni, the attack to be coordinated with that of the 88th Division the next day.

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

2. The Capture of Leghorn.

With the resumption of the northward push, the 34th Division

could continue as originally planned. The main drive was to continue on the right of the division, the 135th Infantry, now that Rosignano was secured, would advance northwest toward the Leghorn; the other regiments would continue north until Leghorn was outflanked and then cut west, trapping the enemy in the port area.

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

IV Corps now had three divisions in the line. The 34th on the left flank battering its way along the coast toward Leghorn. The 91st Infantry Division, committed to combat for the first time, working its way through the center, and the "Blue Devils" of the 88th striking ahead on the right flank. This added strength compensated, in part, for the heavy concentration of enemy troops and arms rushed in to hold the area. With the 91st and 88th Divisions driving the enemy

out of the mountains and pushing him toward the Arno, it was visualized that he would have no alternative but to ease up on his resistance south of Leghorn and then pull out completely or else find himself hopelessly trapped. Some of the hardest fighting participated in by IV Corps was experienced during the next few days. For sometime the enemy had been withdrawing while effecting considerable delay and it was a matter of constant but slow pursuit. A change became evident for the enemy turned to fight, counterattacking every time a few yards were gained by our troops.

All through 12 July, the 133d Infantry on the right flank of the 34th Division remained locked in heavy fighting for Hill 529, about a mile east of Pastina. During the night 12-13 July, the enemy began a sudden withdrawal along the hilly front and by 0900 the 1st Battalion advanced to Hill 529. By nightfall advance elements of the regiment, after repelling a counterattack, moved along the ridge lying east of the north - south road, and occupied Mt. Alto, the northernmost position that had been taken on the 34th Division front. At times during the following day, contact was lost, as the regiment pushed forward to within sight of Lorenzana, approximately 12 miles due south of the Arno River. On 15 July the 168th Infantry came back into action, assumed responsibility for the right half of the 442d Infantry zone, and with the 133d Infantry, continued the main attack toward Pisa. All infantry elements of the four regiments of the 34th Division ran into increasingly heavy mortar and artillery fire from German batteries located slightly south of the Arno River.

The 100th Battalion was committed to fill the gap between the

442d and 168th Infantry. The 133d Infantry, passing east of Lorenzana advanced nearly two miles north of the town. The 168th Infantry Regiment on the left of the 133d, now in more level country, threw back a counterattack launched from Lorenzana and continued ahead during the night. At 0300 the 2d Battalion, 168th Infantry, also by-passed Lorenzana to the east, continued on to capture the villages of Colle Alberti and Treinoletto by noon, and was near the town of Fauglia by darkness. The 3d Battalion entered Lorenzana from the south during early morning and cleared it of the enemy before noon and continued to advance abreast of the 2d Battalion. The 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, after seizing the village of Usigliano at 0700, was within 3 miles of the flat Arno valley by nightfall. Through the 3 miles of ridges the following day, the fight continued against relatively stiff resistance until the enemy gave way. At about 1800 all battalions of the 133d Infantry emerged into the flat valley. Like stepping out of a dark forest into an open clearing, the GI's saw the broad, expansive valley made fertile by one of the largest rivers in Italy. To the reader it might be of interest to know that somewhere along the circuitous course of the 155 mile long waterway, archeologists have dug up fossil bones of deer, elephant, rhinoceros, mastadon, hippopotomus, bear and tiger. It is interesting to know that many many centuries ago animals of jungle types drank water from this ancient Italian river. On this day IV Corps was $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Arno River.

The 168th Infantry had a harder time reaching the southern edge of the valley because of a fierce battle at Fauglia. The 2d Battalion

attacked the town at 0400, and there met heavy fire from defending infantry supported by self-propelled guns. The last German effort was a strong counterattack at 1800 supported by 7 Tiger tanks, but the massed fire of all our available artillery broke up this threat and after regrouping, the 2d Battalion finally captured the town at 2200. The 100th Battalion had been blocking roads leading east from Leghorn in order to protect the left flank of this main thrust, so that with the last of the hills clear and level country ahead, IV Corps was prepared to pivot to the left and seize the Port of Leghorn.

While the main forces were working along the east flank, the 135th Infantry and 442d Infantry made slow but steady gains to the northwest toward Leghorn to set the stage for the final assault, which when finally launched, achieved ^{its} objective with comparative ease. The 135th Infantry, beating off a final enemy attempt to re-take Rosignano on the morning of 10 July, attacked with all battalions in the afternoon, but gained ground slowly. The 442d also only made slow progress up the valley toward more undulating ground where tanks could be employed. Slight gains were made the next day, but resulted in the 442d Infantry with its attached tanks moving forward to within 600 yards of Pastina. Neither regiment made any headway during 12 July because the stiff opposition, which included the fire of self-propelled guns and Mark VI tanks. However, Japanese-Americans of the 442d Infantry entered the outskirts of Pastina at 2200; almost simultaneously the 135th Infantry beat off a heavy counterattack in the hills.

The coordinated eastern drive of the 91st and 88th Infantry Divisions

resulted in a general withdrawal of the enemy on the west as well. On 13 July the 135th Infantry moved forward without making contact with the Germans until mid-afternoon about 5 miles northwest of Rosignano, after advancing 3 miles. The villages of Castelvecchio, Villetti and Macello were seized by the end of the day. The 100th Battalion entered Pastina shortly after midnight and with the aid of the 3d Battalion, 442d Infantry mopped up. At 0830 the 2d Battalion advanced about a mile north of Pastina and both the 442d and 135th Infantry halted to re-supply themselves before resuming the attack.

Along Highway 1, the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion inched its way forward, reaching Castiglioncello, a small town jutting out into the sea due west of Rosignano and gained some ground beyond it.

In the most significant gains of two weeks of heavy fighting, IV Corps pushed forward all along the 25 mile front in the wake of stiffening and then suddenly melting German resistance. To increase the punch of Corps artillery, 4 additional battalions arrived during 14-15 July. These included two battalions of 240-mm Howitzers, one of which had a battery of 8-inch guns attached.

On 14 July and during most of the 15th, the 135th Infantry pushed ahead against light opposition, making a gain of about 5 miles through rough country. Increasingly heavy mortar and artillery fire from German batteries south of the Arno was received just before dark. While looking down at Leghorn from the hills to the southeast, the 3d Battalion was experiencing a severe counterattack at its left flank, supported by tanks concealed on the slopes of Mt Maggiore, which had been left exposed by the inability of the armor on Highway 1

to maintain the pace which had been set inland. This attack was broken up only after hard fighting and the use of all available artillery, including 36 guns of the British 66th Anti-Aircraft Brigade. On the 14th, the 442d Infantry, heading north while the 135th Infantry moved northwest, took the village of Pieve di San Luce and during the next day, advanced, following the left rear of the 168th Infantry.

At 0100, 16 July, the 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, followed up the repulse of the German counterattack of the previous evening with an attack against Hill 232, seizing it at 0400. The 1st Battalion then passed through the 3d Battalion and drove off the armored resistance on the slopes of Mt Maggiore, and occupied that high ground, from which Leghorn harbor was in easy artillery range. After taking that dominating terrain the infantrymen pushed on up the coast to the outer limits of Montenero which lay 4 miles from the heart of the big port. On Route 1, dismounted tank destroyer personnel completed capture of Quercianella and continued advancing along the beach roads toward Leghorn.

The next day, 17 July, they advanced rapidly but cautiously over ground littered with mines, booby-traps and heavily concentrated demolitions. Only 300 yards further north along the road lay the small resort town of Antignano, where balustraded villas belonging to some of the key Fascists, looked out to sea. From here on our troops were on the level plain, part of the Arno Valley, wherein the prize port was located. The 135th Infantry, about 3 miles inland, using the 1st and 2d Battalions in a northwesterly direction, beat off small counterattacks and made slight gains. Further to the right the 442d

Infantry encountered resistance all day but its Battalion entered Luciana about supper-time and by midnight had fought through the town and cleared it. All along the 34th Division front the advance elements improved their positions prior to beginning on all out effort to capture Leghorn.

This same evening the 363d Regimental Combat Team of the 91st Infantry Division was enroute to an area south of Mt Maggiore in the 34th Division zone, for the purpose of strengthening the attack on Leghorn. Combined with tank support and attached tank destroyers, the 363d Regimental Combat Team became a task force capable of cracking the enemy's resistance at the proper moment and then, having cleared him from the path, attacking and seizing the port, ever so important for the supply of IV Corps and Fifth Army in their eventual drive over the Arno. Brigadier General Raymond Williamson was placed in command and the organization became known as Task Force Williamson.

Before we punch on with the 34th Division already at the gates of Leghorn, let us take a look at the inside of this peacetime thriving port city. Its interesting history dates back to a time when the world was still flat in the minds of the most learned men, and long before Columbus sailed on his venture looking for Asia, eventually to find America.

The earliest mention of Leghorn occurs in a document of 891 AD, relating to the first church there, and in a later document dated 1017 AD, the same church is referred to as a castla. In the 13th century the Pisans tried to attract a population to the spot and

built a lighthouse on the coast between 1303-05. As time swung on into the 14th century, Leghorn became a rival of Porto Pisano, which was nestled at the mouth of the Arno and which it was destined ultimately to supplant. When the Americans refer to the Dutch purchase of Manhattan Island from the Indians for twenty-five dollars as a bargain, so do the Italian students refer to the purchase in 1407 of Leghorn by the Genoese from Charles VI of France for 2600 ducats. Fourteen years later the Florentines bought it as an access to the sea. In 1496 the city made a successful defense against Maximilian and his allies, but was still small. History tells us that in 1551 there were only 749 inhabitants, not to speak of the traders who came and went. It was in the next 100 years that the seed was planted which has caused the city to grow into the third largest port of Italy. With the rise of Medici, there came a rapid increase of prosperity; Cosmo, Francis and Ferdinand erected fortifications and harbor works, warehouses and churches with equal liberality and the last especially gave a stimulus to trade by inviting "men of the East and the West, Spainards and Portuguese, Greeks, Germans, Italians, Hebrews, Turks, Moors, Armenians, Persians and others, to settle and traffic in the city. Declared free and neutral in 1691, Leghorn was permanently invested with these privileges by the Quadruple Alliance in 1718; but in 1796 Napoleon, who called it Livorne, seized all the hostile vessels in the port. It ceased to be a free city by the law of 1868.

The thunder of the division and corps artillery reverberating over the Arno Valley on July 1944, also echoed through the halls and

corridors of Villa Valsovano, where Shelley wrote the greater part of the "Cenci" in 1819. On the range of hills to the south of the town, over which tramped the GI's from the 135th Infantry, Montenero stood out conspicuously. It was crowned by a church to which the inhabitants of Leghorn frequented in pilgrimages before the war. There the soldiers passed villas and hotels, many of them smashed by shells and bombs. Up the slope to the range of hills ran a funicular railway.

Leghorn is the chief city of Tuscany Province and was the seat of a large naval academy - the only one in Italy. This third largest port of Italy was situated 12 miles southeast of Pisa on the seashore, embodying a healthy and fertile tract of land. The Fortezza Vecchia (Old Fort), built in 1524-34, guarding the harbor, was a picturesque sight, pictures of which lie in the many photo albums of tourists from all over the world. As a matter of interest to the veterans who might have helped capture the port, they might like to know that the Chamber of Commerce and the oldest clearing house in the world dating from 1764, were united under one roof in the Palazzo del Commercio.

It was in the best season of the year that the 34th Division was ready to seize this historical port, the principal sea bathing resort in this part of Italy. Of course, on the eve of capture, mines and demolitions along the beaches discouraged such pre-war enjoyment. Its deep and wide harbor was protected by a breakwater nearly three quarters of a mile long. In 1926 over 3,184 vessels of 2,824,548 tons

entered the port and disembarked 7,049 passengers and 1,479,874 tons of merchandise. Shipbuilding was carried on, especially by the Orlando yard, which built large ships for the Italian navy. Other industries, glass factories, copper and brass foundrys, electric power works, a cement factory, soap works, flour mills, oil mills, and a motor boat yard, had been established and developed. To the Allied Military Government, once such facilities could be cleared and repaired, these industries offered a partial solution to the feeding of the war ravaged civilian inhabitants of the area.

On 18 July, IV Corps was strengthened to four infantry divisions with the attachment of the 85th Infantry Division, minus the 339th Regimental Combat Team, which began movement to an assembly area at Rosignano in the rear of the 34th Division attack in Leghorn.

The plan of the 34th Division called for the 135th Infantry to continue the attack toward the southeastern part of the city while the 363d Infantry came in from the east. The 135th Infantry committed all 3 battalions in the final assault. The 1st Battalion attacked due west and the 2d and 3d Battalions to the northwest to cut off the escaping enemy. The only serious encounter was met by the 3d Battalion, which ran onto an enemy force estimated at a battalion. White phosphorus shells set fire to the woods and brush where the Germans were concealed and they fled. Despite the lack of serious resistance, the country was so difficult that the regiment could not advance fast enough to prevent the main body of Germans from making good their escape.

The 363d Infantry, aiming at Leghorn from the east, attacked at

0340 on the 18th, through the gap between the 135th and 442d Infantry Regiment. After artillery had heavily shelled the village of Casone, the leading battalions entered it at 1445, uncovering a small lateral road leading west toward Leghorn. The 1st Battalion of the 363d, with elements of the 752d Tank Battalion, made its way into the eastern outskirts of the city at 2045, while the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion broke thru to Montenero, 3 miles southeast of Leghorn and cleared out that coastal section. The two infantry regiments, the 135th and 363d, continued to converge on the city as the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, after passing the familiar city limits' sign, "Livorne", entered at 0220, 19 July. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 363 Infantry, arrived a little more than two hours later. There was but little opposition in the form of sniping in the city, however, it was found to be heavily mined and booby-trapped. Much the same as in Civitavecchia, the enemy had destroyed almost all of the port facilities and the harbor was partially blocked by sunken ships. The Germans, with plenty of time to accomplish their destruction, had done a thorough job.

The 100th Battalion came into Leghorn at 0800 on the 19th, and was assigned the job of policing the city. The 135th Infantry pulled back out of the town proper and assembled to the southwest. Thus fell to IV Corps the important port of Leghorn. As the 91st and 88th Divisions reached the high ground to the east of Leghorn overlooking the Arno River at Punteдера, it was apparent that the enemy had decided that to defend the town in force was most impracticable and had pulled out, leaving small groups of infantry and snipers to delay as best they could.

On the very same day the 2d Polish Corps of 8th Army, which had battered its way up the Adriatic coast, matched the American success by the timely seizure of the port of Ancona. Fifth and 8th Armies each now held a port for use as a forward supply base for operations against the Gothic Line, eliminating the necessity for the long over-land hauls from Civitavecchia and Bari respectively.

3. On To Pisa.

Approximately 12 miles northeast of Leghorn lay the famous town of Pisa, striking forth from the port city, the 363d Combat Team, attached to the 34th Division, surged ahead to capture it. Pisa was the quiet provincial capital of Tuscany, being the seat of an archbishop and having a university. It lies on both banks of the Arno River. Many years ago it laid within 2 miles of the coast, but river deposits have gradually increased this distance to 6 miles. Northeast of Pisa were the Pisani mountains, about 7 miles away, standing out in the Arno Plain like a lone sentinel of the Apennines. The altitudes of the higher peaks overlooking the town, average from 2600 feet to 2900 feet, the highest peak being Mt. Serra, 3011 feet. After an abrupt change of direction from the town, the Arno River flows southwest to the sea, the line of the river on the east side of Pisa being to the southeast. The altitude of the town is 13 feet, for it lies in the open Pisan Plain which was at one time a coastal lagoon.

The town is divided in almost equal parts by the Arno River, the area to the north being perhaps the larger and more important. In the northern part of the town stands the Leaning Tower of Pisa, about which

many of the troops had read in their history books during school days. To these IV Corps troopers, a personal look at this phenomenal tower was a must, else the tales of their travels through Italy would sound empty to families and friends at home. Classed in the World Almanac as one of the 18 distinctive wonders on earth, the tower is worthy of mention in some detail in this history, for two reasons. One, to credit the troops who fought their way into the southern part of the town with patience and respect for art and culture for not destroying the world famous spectacle, even though it was suspected of being used as an artillery observation post by the enemy. The other, to show how closely IV Corps brushed shoulders with the spirits of the ancient past while fighting in Italy.

The history of Pisa embodies a series of wars with many different states of Italy and Europe. The Genoese for a long period of years were the traditional enemies of the Pisans. One of the wars between them lasted for 14 years and was never officially ended by a truce or an armistice. Reverses were suffered on both sides, but most always the old citizens of Pisa came out on top.

The Campanile, or Leaning Tower of Pisa, which renders to the town its principal tourist attraction, was begun in 1173 AD by Bonnano and Williams Innsbruck, to be finished in 1350. There is no reason to suppose that the architects intended that the Campanile should lean. It would appear from the historical records (if they speak the truth) that not daunted by the shift from the perpendicular, they continued on to its completion. Many a GI in jest indicated that perhaps the architects imbibed in some of the Italian Grappa during its construction.

The better historians claim that it commenced to tip during construction, owing to clay in the soil which gradually gave way to one side, until its marble structure was 16 feet out of the perpendicular; 181 feet high on the north side and 179 feet on the south side. It is still sinking at a slow rate according to a scientist from Yale University who is a research associate in soil mechanics.

In accordance with an order by Premier Mussolini issued in 1932, more than 1000 tons of high strength cement have been injected into the foundation through 361 holes, each 2 inches in diameter. From September 1934 to April 1935 the movement of the top of the tower was studied with an inclinometer. The results were almost incredible. The scientific operator indicated that during September 1934, the tower moved north, but by the end of that month, it had reversed its movement which continued to the south until the end of January when again it insisted on inclining toward the north. At the same time the scientist said the tower was persistently moving eastward. Of course, all these movements were microscopically small.

The walls at the base were 13 feet thick, and at the top about half that, and were constructed throughout of marble. The GI who visited the famous town can probably recall that the tower had 8 stories and that in the 8th story were the bells which he probably struck with his helmet or the barrel of his rifle, in order to hear, with his own ears, their reverberant tones.

On 18 July the residents of Pisa heard the rumble of artillery to the south in the direction of Leghorn. They were almost certain that the Americans were pushing the Germans back and would soon be

fighting in the streets. Many must have looked up at the splendor of the famous Campanile and wondered whether this was the war that would at last send it tumbling to the ground. It had leaned through the centuries, to see the dozens of wars fought at its base, so to speak. If that tower could have talked, what stories would have been told of the ages gone by. The bows, arrows and lances of long ago, it never feared, but the muttering noise of artillery, coming closer at every hour, figuratively speaking, was just cause for its bells to ring with a slight tremor of fear, as if confessing ancient sins prior to certain death.

Let us pick up the troops at Leghorn where we left them and follow their advance. As the Hawaiian-American 100th Infantry Battalion undertook the task of policing Leghorn, Task Force Williamson turned toward the north for, its important mission in the capture of Leghorn had been completed. On 19 July its patrols reached the canals situated between Leghorn and the Arno River where small enemy outposts were encountered for the main body of the enemy had already withdrawn across the river; but before the advance was resumed, several changes in our troop dispositions had been made. On 19 July the 168th Infantry extended its zone to include the area previously occupied by the 133d Infantry, while on the following day the 442d Infantry moved its outpost line forward to Highway 67 and the 363d Infantry took over the entire left zone of the division and pushed its leading elements to the north of the canal.

Meanwhile, Fifth Army Engineers rushed into Leghorn to begin the arduous task of clearing and repairing the harbor facilities, the first

step in preparation for the receipt of ships and supplies.

These days of troop shuffling were utilized by the engineers to bridge the numerous canals north of Leghorn for the Germans had not departed from their usual pattern of wholesale bridge destruction. Before any further advance in strength could be attempted, it was necessary to repair bridges, make by-passes and even construct bridges in order to enable tanks and supply vehicles to move forward. The Canal Navigabile, with a wet gap of 100 feet, was the most serious obstacle, although on a 1000 feet stretch of Highway No. 1, it had been necessary to construct 5 bridges. Much of this work was under shell fire for the open terrain offered little cover or concealment from enemy observers located in buildings and towers in Pisa.

Early in July orders had been issued to the IV Corps Commander to capture Leghorn and occupy the high ground south of the Arno River. With this mission already accomplished, IV Corps was ordered to seize the Arno River line, at which objective the 363d Infantry was then driving. The 91st and 88th Infantry Divisions to the east were even pushing patrols down the northern slopes toward the southern banks of the Arno.

In compliance with the Corps order to advance its entire line to the Arno River, the 34th Division attacked at 2200, 22 July. The bulk of the fighting fell to the 363d Infantry, even though the 1st Battalion swept ahead to the south bank of the Arno River where it established its positions that night. At 0530, 23 July, just as the faint light of the new day began to brighten and give shape to the famous leaning Campanile, patrols picked their way into the southern part of the city

through mines, booby traps and demolitions. Schu mines were in abundance. This anti-personnel device was used extensively by the enemy here. About half the size of an ordinary cigar box and filled with half a pound of TNT, the Schu mine was armed with a non-metallic fuze which made detection almost impossible. When stepped on, the hinged cover released the detonator which in turn set off the main charge.

By noon a company had taken over the work of the patrols. The 3d Battalion by infiltrating small groups across the mined fields, so disguised its movement that the few remaining Germans did not realize that a battalion was actually in the city. The 2d Battalion joined the 3d Battalion and by late afternoon these two battalions held positions in South Pisa. That night, however, mortar and artillery fire was so heavy that General Williamson ordered one of the battalions to withdraw to the south of the city.

In the meantime, the 2d Battalion, 91st Reconnaissance Troop, with the mission of screening the left flank of Task Force Williamson, improvised a bridge across a canal south of Mariana Di Pisa during the night of 21 July, and succeeded in crossing it, and with the assistance of two platoons from Company A, 363d Infantry, cleared the town of all hostile resistance. Since the enemy had destroyed all bridges over the Arno, the troops of 363d Infantry, who had taken South Pisa, were exposed to heavy fire from the northern part of the town. The southern half of the town was as heavily mined and booby-trapped as Leghorn had been, and German artillery and mortars from the north side of the Arno battered down many of the houses. The enemy's heavy artillery even

placed concentrated fire on the port of Leghorn. From 23 July until its relief on the 28th, Task Force Williamson was under constant artillery, mortar and small arms fire from the German positions north of the river.

Perhaps it would be of interest to the reader to know that the Leaning Tower of Pisa was unofficially accused of aiding and abetting the Germans entrenched on the north side of the river, by serving as an artillery observation post. Its fate was balanced on the scales of justice, there on trial to determine the guilt or innocence of such a charge. The artillery shells landing in the southern half of Pisa were smashing the city to bits and taking American lives. The proximity of the Tower, with its good view of the area, rendered it an ideal observation post for the enemy, but it was never conclusively proven, beyond a reasonable doubt that it was so used. A long-standing order of Fifth Army prohibited the destruction of works of art unless it was definitely known that they were being used by the enemy for defensive or offensive purposes.

On 26 July a news correspondent from the Stars and Stripes came to the headquarters of the 34th Division to interview some of the personnel on the local military operation. In the process of the interview, he sought to determine whether our artillery and mortars would fire into North Pisa, despite the fact it had been declared a "no fire zone" by Fifth Army order. The town was to be accorded the same immunity as Cassino, unless proof could be established that it was being used as a strong enemy position. Prior to the visit by the press, unsubstantiated reports had been received that figures of individuals which

had been seen on the top of the tower were enemy observers. An investigation was promptly initiated to determine the truth of such presumptions. The following is the telephone conversation verbatim between a lieutenant, Field Artillery Observer, and an investigating officer, a part of the investigation. As the juror, the reader can himself determine whether the Leaning Tower of Pisa was guilty. Here is one of the witnesses being cross-examined on his observations.

QUESTION

I want to know what you saw at that tower because that's very important.

Could you tell from where you were whether they were "boche" or civilians?

Did they have observing instruments?

How long were they on the tower?

Did you observe any other activities around there - any other personnel around that area?

Do you think that artillery piece is in the city of Pisa or north of it?

I want you to keep that tower under very close observation and report to us immediately what you see - understand?

We want to know if the Tower is being used for military purposes.

You were observing with field glasses were you not?

Have your relief bring a B.C. scope for better observation - have him bring a 20 power scope.

ANSWER

At 0830 hours I saw personnel observing on top of Leaning Tower - 3 (three) of them.

I could not tell who they were.

I could not tell.

At 0900 hours they were not in it.

No. I did not see any personnel around that area. I could hear an artillery piece 105MM left of the Tower at a greater range.

I could not tell - I don't know.

Yes, sir.

Yes, sir.

Yes, sir.

Reports such as these were taken by the reporter and narrated into a dramatic headline story in the Stars and Stripes to the effect that the Germans were using the Leaning Tower of Pisa as an observation post. Much debate ensued as to whether the world-famous tower should be shelled and sent smashing to the ground.

General Crittenberger initiated an intensive investigation which ultimately revealed that the personnel of the 34th Division, who were the subjects of the interview, had been grossly misquoted; that with field glasses, figures had been seen on the tower; however, since then a close watch had revealed no other individuals. This left the possibility that the two persons originally seen might have been Pisan natives enjoying a first-hand view of the war from this famed vantage point.

A Partisan patrol sent across the Arno into North Pisa reported that about 40 or 50 Germans were still in the northern part of the town. The IV Corps artillery officer, Brigadier General William C. Crane, investigated the observations of the 77th Field Artillery Group, 34th Division Artillery, 91st Division Artillery, air observations posts and 15th Field Observation Battalion, and found from them no definite indication that the tower was being used as an enemy observation post. It was also determined that the tower was in no sense an essential artillery observation post, for there were many points both within and without the city from which better results could have been obtained. From the 25th to the 28th of July there was no unusual shelling of the southern part of Pisa to indicate that the tower was an enemy observation post. General Crittenberger, in a report to the Army Commander,

summarized the investigation with the statement that there had not been sufficient facts to justify the shelling of the Tower of Pisa, and in the three days mentioned, only three soldiers were killed by artillery fire, which could have occurred from sporadic, unobserved harassing shelling.

In all, it appeared that the controversial subject arose over a reporter searching for material with which to cushion a human interest story of the Tower of Pisa. At any rate this lengthy saga of the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa is included in detail in this history to show the reader that the advancing troops of IV Corps fought with a keen respect for the preservation of works of art, as much as the circumstances of war could possibly allow. This historian also found it a digestible piece of material to show how the continued existence of the Leaning Tower of Pisa hung in the balance, to be weighed by General Crittenberger. Today it continues to lean in sunny Italy, feeling the marks of war, but now knowing how close to its doom it came, and close by, still stands the famous cathedral, over which the shadow of the tower passes daily with the movement of the sun.

B. THE 91ST DIVISION IN THE CENTER.

1. The Powder River Outfit Reaches the Arno.

Thus far we have devoted most of our time in this chapter to the advance of the 34th Division. We followed their sweep up the Tyrrhenian Coast and witnessed the seizure of Leghorn, South Pisa and the reaching of the waters of the Arno River. At the same time the 88th Infantry Division on the right flank of Corps, was striking for the high ground south of the Arno. While this was going on a new infantry division,

the 91st, was also rolling ahead in the center of the IV Corps zone and was the first unit to reach the Corps objective, the Arno River.

On 9 July General Crittenberger ordered Major General William C. Livesay, commanding the 91st Infantry Division, to move forward to assembly areas behind the front lines, in preparation for a coordinated attack to secure the south bank of the Arno River, northeast of Leghorn. The purpose of the drive was to outflank Leghorn, where heavy resistance was being met, thereby isolating it and providing a more favorable direction of attack against the heavily defended port city.

The 361st and 363d Regimental Combat Teams had seen action previously, but the 91st Division, as a complete unit, was to be employed in combat for the first time. The 361st Regimental Combat Team, the first unit of the division to enter combat, was returned from the 1st Armored Division, and the 363d Regimental Combat Team was brought back from the 34th Division. As support, the division had the medium tanks of Companies "D" and "E", 1st Armored Regiment (less Company "A"). The zone through which the division was to drive to the Arno River was 4 miles wide at its base, but gradually increased in width until it stretched for approximately 10 miles along the south bank of the river, from 4 miles west of Pontedera to the 88th Division boundary, 6 miles east of the town.

For 6 miles north of the jumping-off line, the terrain was rough but leveled off for the remaining 6 or 7 miles to the Arno. (See Map No. 8). The Era River valley, running northwest through the zone, formed the main avenue of approach to the Arno Valley. At low stage and with its gentle banks, it was no obstacle. Paralleling the Arno

River was the highway from Laiatico to Pontedera, passing through Capannoli and Ponsacco. In addition to these towns, three other moderate-sized towns existed. Near the left boundary were Chianni and Bagni di Casciana, both in the hills, and in the center due east of the latter, was Terricciola, built on a hill affording good observation for many miles.

Because the enemy had the advantage of prepared positions in a country that was ideal for defense, heavy opposition was expected. He had even regrouped his forces for the defense of Leghorn and the area south of the Arno River. His dispositions were made so that the 16 SS Panzer Grenadier Division still held the coastal sector. The 26th Panzer Grenadier Division had moved west, assuming the former sector of the 91st German Air Force Division. This meant that the bulk of the 26th Panzer Division lay astride the route of advance of the 91st. This veteran enemy combat division, with many days of combat behind it, stood opposite this new American Division, composed almost entirely of selectees, many of whom were to taste combat for the first time.

The 363d Regimental Combat Team in reverting to division control retained its 4 mile front south of Chianni and west of the little town of Paiatico, there giving it the left flank of the division. The 362d Infantry, which had not been previously committed to action, was deployed on the right flank, north of the Catest Hills, with the Sterza River and the Casaclian-Capannoli Highway as its main axis of advance. The 91st Reconnaissance Troop was given the mission of screening the right flank of the division and maintaining contact with the 88th Division. The 361st Infantry, which had been in combat almost continually

since Civitavecchia, was in division reserve. The 77th Field Artillery Group was assigned the mission of general support for the Corps, reinforcing the fires of the 91st and 34th Infantry Divisions. The 178th Field Artillery Group, also in general support, was to reinforce the fires of the 91st.

For the first time the full weight of the "Powder River Boys" was to be thrown against the enemy. It was on the eve of a brilliant combat record, which was only to end with the complete and overwhelming allied defeat of the German forces in Italy.

Before we jump off for the attack, it might be interesting to read a line or two, explaining the history of the nickname "Powder River". It began in World War I when the division was formed with personnel almost entirely from the states of the northwest. A group of Montanans, in answer to a sergeant who asked them where they hailed from, shouted: "Powder River - let 'er buck!" Powder River is a stream in Montana around which much of the early western romance is built. This retort swept through the division faster than a Latrine rumor and gained enough popularity to be adopted as the division nickname and battle cry.

Late at night on 11 July, the 362d Infantry, under the command of Colonel John W. Cotton, moved to forward assembly positions. The movement was delayed slightly by 4 blown bridges and several mined roads along the route. The bridges were soon repaired by the Engineers, or by-passed, but the last mines encountered delayed the forward elements of the 362d short of the line of departure, forcing the troops to leave the road and move across country.

At 0300, on the morning of 12 July, after a 45 minute artillery preparation, the 91st launched its first coordinated attack in conjunction with the 34th on the left and the 88th on the right. Although general mission was to advance to the Arno, the initial objective was Chianni and the lateral road running along the high ground to the east; and the secondary objectives were Bagni di Casciana and Terricciola. Advance was slow against stubborn German resistance that did not include armor.

Mines, demolitions and the rough terrain prevented the armored support, in the early stages of the action, from following close enough behind the foot troops to be used other than as supporting artillery. The 362d Infantry, before noon, drove to a line north of the lateral road, thus severing the enemy's communications between Chianni and Laiatico. The 1st Battalion, 362d Infantry, had advanced almost to its first objective when it was subjected to a heavy counter-attack, and suffering several casualties, was forced to fall back about 500 yards. The 2d Battalion was brought forward from regimental reserve, succeeded in restoring the position, but was unable to make further progress.

12 July 1944 was a momentous day in the history of the "Powder River" Division. To the men of the 362d, it was their first day in the lines of actual combat. The first day was a sight of violent death, which struck the men hard with the realization of the brutality of warfare. To the division as a whole, untried in combat the day before, it meant that they could advance with the steadiness of veterans. Their first day proved it, for it was counter-attacked and subjected to heavy artillery and mortar fire but continued forward.

In retrospect, certain members of IV Corps Headquarters felt a tinge of personal elation as a result of the success of the 91st Division. Lieutenant Colonel Leon C. Pond, Executive Officer of the G-3 Section, and Lieutenant Colonel "Speedy" King, Executive Officer of the G-2 Section, recalled how they had worked on the maneuver problems for the divisions participating in the Oregon maneuvers during 1943. The 91st was one of the divisions at that time, which was undergoing an elementary course of simulated combat under IV Corps guidance in preparation for actual combat.

The leading elements of the 363d Infantry moved on Chianni, which the 3d Battalion occupied without resistance early in the morning of 14 July, after the Germans had withdrawn during the night. The same day the 362d Infantry succeeded in by-passing to the east of Terricciola and later when patrols were sent into the town they found only a few stragglers for the enemy had also abandoned this position.

On this same day, General Livesay ordered the 361st Infantry, which had been in reserve, to move northwest from Poggio Ginistra on the left of the 363d to the high ground overlooking Ponsacco. It was deployed with the 1st Battalion on the left, the 2d Battalion on the right and the 3d Battalion in regimental reserve.

Before the break of day, the 361st began its attack with the 1st Battalion pushing rapidly forward through Morrone, 2 miles northwest of Terricciola. There it was temporarily halted by heavy concentrations of German artillery fire. The sudden increase in German shelling was attributed to the fact that the German units, which were already beginning to withdraw across the Arno River in this section, had left

their artillery in position in order to reinforce the rear guard delaying forces. This artillery, emplaced north of the Arno, now had our troops within range.

The 2d Battalion, seized the small town of Sojana and just as the advance elements cleared the town, all hell broke loose. Heavy concentrations of artillery fire also rained down on the town and the 2d Battalion was forced to halt. Lack of cover and concealment on this denuded hill forced the battalion to move back or into the cellars of the buildings in the town itself. This heavy artillery fire extended across the 361st's entire front and reached back to some of the rear installations as well.

While this limited gain was made in the center, the 363d Infantry by-passed to the north by the 361st and continued its advance through difficult hill country north of Chianni. Many combat patrols were sent out as protection for the left flank of the division, which moved into and occupied Bagni de Casciana without a fight. The town was noted for its mineral baths, and it is presumed that some of the weary GI's availed themselves of a few moments of relaxation in the mineral spring waters, made tepid by Mother Nature.

The 362d Infantry was then pulled back into reserve, preparatory to becoming part of the special combat group, known as "Task Force Williamson", which was to be attached to the 34th Division to aid in the final assault against the port of Leghorn. The 361st Infantry spread out to the left to fully cover the area vacated by the 363d, while the 362d Infantry continued advancing on the right.

Late on 16 July, after a steady all day advance against bitter resistance by an enemy determined to retain control of the last high ground south of the Arno River, the 361st Infantry lashed out in a rapid drive against the Pontedera-Ponsacco area. Despite the small arms and automatic weapons fire, leading elements reached the last high ground and by dusk the foot troops looked down upon the shadowing green floor of the Arno Valley, stretching out about 6 miles ahead to the river. That night, the Regimental Commander, Colonel Broedlow, issued a field order for the continuation of the attack next morning. The 3d Battalion, with Companies "D" and "E" of the 1st Armored Regiment (1st Armored Division) preceeding and 916th Field Artillery Battalion in close support, was to pass through the right flank positions of the 2d Battalion, attack north along the main road leading into Ponsacco, and drive the enemy to the north bank of the Arno. The 2d Battalion was to continue its attack northward, echeloned to the left rear of the 3d Battalion. The 1st Battalion was to capture Le Selve and Orceto, reorganize and be prepared to follow the forward elements of the regiment to the river.

At 0500, 17 July, the attack jumped off. In addition to heavy artillery and automatic weapons fire, the Germans employed armor in an attempt to slow the advance, but after friendly tanks and tank destroyers, attached to the 361st Infantry, knocked out two Mark VI Tigers and a Mark II tank, the others withdrew.

The Regiment continued its advance the next day, and in stiff fighting pushed ahead to within a mile of Ponsacco, where heavy artillery and self-propelled gun fire, in support of a counter-thrust by 300 enemy

infantry, momentarily stopped it. Our supporting artillery laid down a heavy counter-battery program, and at 2030, the 3d Battalion entered the town. The 3d Battalion rapidly occupied Ponsacco in force, while the 2d Battalion consolidated its positions along the high ground a mile and a half to the southwest. With the Germans cleared out and the town occupied, the 3 mile expanse of flat farmland between Ponsacco and the Arno lay exposed to the onrush of our forces.

After only a brief rest the regiment took up the pursuit of the enemy again. The 1st Battalion attack at 0500 on 18 July and found Orceto an easy objective. By 0715 the 1st Battalion had moved forward through Orceto and was now prepared to follow the advance of the forward elements to the river.

At the same time, the 3d Battalion, together with the 2d Battalion of the 1st Armored Regiment (minus one company) and one company of the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, drove rapidly north. Less than 3 hours after the attack opened, the 1st Platoon of Company "K" and tanks from Company "D", 1st Armored Regiment, entered Pontedera at 0800, 18 July. Some scattered snipers were still present and had to be mopped up, but the main force of the Germans had retired across the river from where they placed Pontedera under sporadic mortar and artillery fire. Some Americans became casualties when they set off ingeniously concealed booby traps, which the Germans left concealed in the rubble of the buildings. Never had the word "rubble" been truer to its definition than in Pontedera. Not a full building stood. Walls with square openings as excuses for windows stood out in the sea of rubble as if forlornly looking about for support to rest on. The town was literally flattened except for

the skeleton masonry of former buildings. To say that one could stand at the north end and look straight across to the south end of the town with an unobstructed view is not an exaggeration. If the Germans had stopped long enough to sow some salt over the rubble area, the historian might be justified in calling it another "Lidice".

The 3d Battalion dashed on from Pontedera and an hour later at 0900, 18 July, reached the south bank of the Arno River, to be hailed as the first element of Fifth Army to reach the river. The 91st Infantry Division, committed into combat for the first time on 12 July, was the first unit to reach the Corps objective, the south bank of the Arno River. Company "K" was ordered to outpost and hold Pontedera while the remainder of the 361st Infantry quickly consolidated and organized positions south of the Arno.

Although the Germans had managed to get most of their artillery across the Arno, many tanks and armored vehicles were found abandoned south of the river. On the morning of 19 July, tankers of the 1st Armored Division startled the troops by driving to the rear several undamaged German tanks, draped with white sheets and preceded by an officer in a jeep who shouted to all units along the road to hold their fire.

While the 361st Infantry thrust ahead to the river and became the first Americans to reach the Arno, the 362d Infantry continued its push on the division's right. During the night of 16 July this regiment advanced to within a few hundred yards of Capannoli and the following morning passed through the town. Crossing the Era River into comparatively flat country, the infantry moved about 2 miles farther north

before the Germans launched a heavy counter-attack which was broken up by our artillery. Our troops then continued across the valley and plunged into the hills once more, fighting through them for a distance of about 3 miles during the 18th, before coming to the last ridge overlooking the river. Here they were ordered to halt and consolidate their positions. Our main line at this point was established about 2 miles south of the river which veered in a great horseshoe bend to the north.

Although the division had taken Pontedera, the city did not immediately become a part of our consolidated line. Company "K", 361st Infantry, remained in the city as an outpost, while the regiment's main line ran through Ponsacco and parallel to the river at about the same distance south of it as the line of the 362d Infantry. Aggressive patrolling was conducted for the next two days but developed little action; however, there were exchanges of artillery fire with the foe across the river. Few contacts were made on our side of the river, but attempts to cross met with difficulty.

A patrol of the 91st Reconnaissance Troops waded the Arno on 19 July, engaged in a fire fight and then withdrew. Most patrols were driven back before they could cross. The patrols of "K" Company ranging along the south bank of the Arno received machine gun and small arms fire from the entrenched enemy across the river. The division sector was widened on 20 July; the left boundary being moved 2 miles to the west in order to relieve units of the 34th Division, and the right boundary was shifted a mile and a half farther to the east to take in part of the old 88th Division Sector. On 21 July a concerted effort

was started by both infantry regiments to clear the last enemy groups from the south side of the river and in two days' action this mission was accomplished.

Thus after seven and a half days of bitter fighting the "Powder River" men had accomplished their mission by removing the enemy from the south side of the Arno River. Over 2,678 tons of ammunition had been fired by the division artillery, with a peak of 323 tons in the one 24-hour period of 16-17 July. The division had suffered 904 casualties, 12 officers and 131 enlisted men killed, 37 officers and 724 enlisted men wounded or injured. On 18 July, the day that the 91st reached the Arno, General Crittenberger, in recognition of this remarkable feat, dispatched a congratulatory message to General Livesay reading, "Well done, 91st Division."

C. "WARRIOR" PULLS OUT FOR A FACE LIFTING.

We have followed the advance of two of the divisions of IV Corps up to the Arno River line; the 34th and the 91st. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the right half of the Corps zone. The last time we heard of this area was when the 1st Armored Division treaded its tanks over the mountain roads and trails to seize Casole d' Elsa, lying astride the IV Corps right boundary. The town was seized on Independence Day, the 4th of July. At that time only two divisions were in the line, the 34th on the left, battering its way along the coast toward Resignano and the 1st Armored on the right. There was talk circulating about the headquarters that the 88th Infantry Division was soon to relieve the Armored Division, so that it could undergo a complete reorganization, already completed by most of the American

Armored Divisions in other theaters. These rumors soon hardened into a concrete fact. The imperative need for greater infantry strength in this difficult terrain, demonstrated by the 6 unsuccessful attacks by the 1st Armored Division upon Casole D' Elsa, prompted an Army order which attached the "Blue Devils" to IV Corps.

On 4 July, Combat Command "B", on the left flank of the division zone, across the Cecina River, had succeeded in establishing strong points beyond Highway 68. Task Force Howze, in the center of the division zone, was at the gate of Mazzola, 3 miles southeast of Volterra, lying astride Highway 68 and Combat Command "A" on the right flank, was in the town of Casole D' Elsa.

On 5 July stiffening German resistance centered about Volterra and brought the 1st Armored Division to a virtual standstill. Only in the vicinity of newly-captured Casole d' Elsa was any appreciable gain made during the day. Combat Command "A", jumping off in the early morning, encountered mines, demolitions and intense artillery fire, but no physical contact was made with the enemy. Hampered as they were by many obstacles, the columns forged ahead to record gains of 3 miles. Further to the west, Task Force Howze and Combat Command "B" maintained contact with the Germans by strong patrol action. Their main elements continued to consolidate the newly-won positions north of the Cecina River.

Volterra, the east anchor of the enemy's determined stand for Leghorn, was now under heavy pressure from the southwest, for all lateral roads leading into the town had been cut. As 6 July spent itself, the pressure of Combat Command "B" placed an advance element 4 miles

due west of Volterra, but progress was hampered by direct anti-tank fire and effectively destroyed mountain roads and trails.

While Volterra was thus threatened by a flanking movement from the west, Task Force Howze probed the strongly coordinated German defenses along the ridge immediately north of the railway running eastward. Little actual ground was gained but by these efforts the menace to Volterra grew.

On 7 July, strong patrols pushed ahead to maintain contact with the enemy, but save for these contacts, the zone of the 1st Armored Division was quiet; mainly for the reason that preparations were being made for relief by the 88th Infantry Division. The passage of command to the "Blue Devils" was to take effect as its forward elements passed through the 1st Armored at some time prior to 0530 of 8 July.

That night there was much movement behind the lines. Men with blue cloverleaf patches on their left shoulders were moving into positions held by tankers with the familiar red-blue-yellow triangular-shaped shoulder patches. Battalion commanders of both units briefed each other, the tankers talked about the resistance of Volterra and the "Blue Devils" mentioned about the sights seen in Rome and of the comfortable rest center there. Companies of the relieving unit were guided into their positions very quietly. It was dark and the occasional flare of exploding shells were to the aerial "Night Fighters", the only indications of the location of the front lines. Because of the dark, the freshened doughboys of the 88th were not able to discern the shape of the mountain bastion ahead. As they rode up in convoy earlier that night, they spoke of hearing that Volterra was a hot spot where the armor had encountered much trouble. At the same moment the officers

and men of Headquarters IV corps, located in a patch of wood south of Castel Nueve, recalled that the first infantry division to come under the command of the IV Corps had been this same "Blue Devil" outfit.

D. "BLUE DEVILS" FIGHT THROUGH HELL TO THE ARNO.

The city of Volterra was part of the Province of Pisa. It was approximately 51 miles from Pisa and about 35 miles from Siena. It stood on a commanding olive-groved eminence 1,785 feet above sea level, with a magnificent view over mountains and sea (the latter some 20 miles distant). It was surrounded by the remains of ancient stone walls some four and a half miles in perimeter, inclosing an area larger than actually needed for habitation. From a distance could be seen fresh deposits of earth on the side of the hill. It was later determined that this was caused by the clay slopes which gradually gave way, causing landslides, and sometimes caused the collapse of buildings. A real blessing of nature, however, was the alabaster which abounded in the vicinity, giving the city its chief occupation - the manufacture of vases and other ornaments, many of which are still the cherished souvenirs of our veterans.

Just as the 34th Division had in its sights world famous targets such as Leghorn and Pisa, so did the 88th Division have one of the most ancient and picturesque cities of Italy. When the "Blue Devils" looked across the open Cecina Valley at hill-top Volterra, they perhaps did not realize that from this same town and probably from behind those same walls, the ancient inhabitants withstood the Roman troops of Sulla for 2 years in 82-80 BC; nor did they realize that over that distant height, waves of Florentine soldiers with pikes and halberds swept to

rape, murder and pillage, in suppression of a rebellion in 1472. Its ideal commanding position made it into an almost impregnable fortress in days of old, but on 8 July 1944, with bombs and shells heading the list of lethal weapons of modern armies, its impregnability was only a matter of historical interest. Nevertheless, history leaves us with the impression that its commanding view was one of the chief aids in its defense. From its position atop a high hill, Volterra dominated the country for many miles. The valley of the Cecina Rivver stretched to the southwest and that of the Era River to the northwest. As a matter of fact, from its observation points the Jerries commanded a 15-mile view in all directions.

The zone of advance for the 88th Division ran due north, initially 18 miles in width along Highway 68. The left boundary followed a secondary road running north from Highway 68, about 8 miles inland east of Cecina. After reaching the village of Peccioli it then veered north-east to strike the Arno 1 mile west of the town of San Romano. The right boundary, as far as Poggibonsi, was a line parallel to Highway 2 and about 3 miles west thereof; from thereon it cut northwest to strike the river 3 miles west of Empoli.

A frontal attack on Volterra was discarded as too costly. Instead, the plan was for one regiment to by-pass the city to the west, while another would encircle it from the east and seize the high ground to the north, thereby rendering the German positions in the town untenable. The 6th Field Artillery Group in general support of IV Corps, was given an additional mission of reinforcing the fires of the 88th Infantry Division. The attack, heavily supported by artillery, jumped off at 0530, 8 July. The 350th Infantry under Colonel James C. Fry, had been

selected to advance in the left of the division zone, by-passing Volterra. It was to drive toward Laiatico, a town smaller than Volterra, but also built on a hill top and situated about 8 miles northwest of Volterra. The regiment moved northward, shielded from German observers in Volterra by a heavy smoke screen laid down by artillery and chemical mortars. Progress was slow because of enemy resistance which consisted mainly of artillery fire. While the 350th Infantry pushed to some 4 miles northwest of Volterra, the 349th Infantry, on the right, reached positions 2 miles northeast of the city and captured the village of Roncella. By 2200 both regiments had reached and consolidated their objectives on high ground northeast and northwest of Volterra. The town on the skyline, after days of dominating the field, now lay helplessly trapped. Patrols entered the city the next morning and discovered the enemy had evacuated it during the night, undoubtedly because he had been cleverly outflanked. The capture of the city was a definite setback to the enemy's intention of imposing the maximum delay on our advance to the Arno River.

The fall of Volterra freed the reserve regiment, the 351st, for employment on the division left, in the drive north from Montecatani. It was brought up to assist in the advance on 9 June. This regiment stabbed northward some 7 miles against slight resistance to reach positions to the east and abreast of Laiatico, an important communications center. Upon reaching this well-advanced line it was noted that the resistance began to stiffen again, when heavy fire was received from the left flank. The other two regiments were delayed by numerous mine fields, demolitions and stubborn infantry groups supported by artillery and mortar fire, only to make limited advances during the day.

On the 10th, as the troops of the 351st edged closer toward Laiatico, the tempo of resistance by the enemy further increased. Artillery fire was heavier, to say nothing of the mines and demolitions that literally covered the landscape. As the 88th Division pushed its assertive way toward the Arno, the enemy threw everything available into the area to check the advance. If the surge of the 88th toward the Arno could not be stopped, the enemy knew that Leghorn could not be held, and that many of his units would be helplessly trapped before they could cross the river, for this was their last stronghold south of the Arno. Local counter-attacks to regain lost positions were the only means left to slow down the American advance. This means, the enemy fully employed. The gains for the day by the 351st Infantry amounted to only 1,000 yards.

The doughboys worked their way around to the west of Laiatico where extremely heavy small arms and artillery fire was received. At 0300, 11 July, the 1st Battalion attempted to come into the town from the west, while the other battalions held in place on the high ground to the south. The 1st Battalion moved very slowly during darkness, but when daylight came, the defenders' withering fire halted forward movement. However, the assault companies had gained about 500 yards up the west slopes, where they remained pinned down all day under fire from the left rear, as well as from their front. Enemy artillery observers in Laiatico had a clear view of the country to the southeast over which the 350th Infantry was operating, but the accurate fire they directed onto this comparatively flat terrain virtually halted this unit also, even though it might be said that under the cover of heavy artillery

concentrations and counter-battery fire, directed all day against the Germans, some light gains were made on the right.

A double envelopment attack was planned for 0300, 12 July, by the 351st Infantry, as its second assault against the fortress town. While the battered 1st Battalion held in place, the 2d Battalion was to attack from the west and the 3d Battalion from the east. At H-hour heavy artillery and mortar fire was directed on the enemy positions. The doughboys, tired of being used as sitting ducks by the enemy artillery, rushed forward with anger in their hearts. Following closely behind a rolling barrage, the assault battalions reached the German defenses as soon as the artillery lifted, catching the foe before he had a chance to reorganize.

The 3d Battalion, following 100 yards behind the artillery barrage, knifed into enemy defensive positions along the ridge running east from Laiatico, penetrating as far as the command post of the 1060th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. The German Commander was killed by grenades tossed into his headquarters, and the men of the 3d rounded up more than 420 prisoners after killing an estimated 250 in assault. Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion had taken Hills 212 and 166 and by daylight had reached the northern part of the town, but with the break of day, both units were caught in fierce artillery barrages. Despite the enemy shells which rained down like hail, the 2d Battalion managed to push on about 800 yards beyond Laiatico before digging in.

The bulk of the Germans had withdrawn during the night but their rear guards fought bitter delaying action across the entire division front during the following day, holding our advances to local gains.

Anti-personnel mine fields and anti-tank mines were everywhere on the roads and over the landscape, causing many casualties. After several jeeps were destroyed when they hit mines, killing 4 officers and wounding others, the various Regimental Command Groups left their vehicles and advanced on foot, and at midnight resumed the attack and occupied the ridge running north and south from Laiatico by 0300 hours on the 13th, with the 2d and 3d Battalions.

For its outstanding performance at Laiatico, the 3d Battalion, 351st Infantry, received the Distinguished Unit Citation, the first unit of the 88th Division to win such award. This was also the first unit serving under command of IV Corps, to be singled out for such honor and recognition.

GENERAL ORDERS
NO. 6

WAR DEPARTMENT
Washington 25, D. C. 24 January 1945

As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (Sec I, Bul 22, WD 1943) superseding Executive Order No. 9075, (sec III, Bul 11, WD, 1942), citations of the following units in General Orders No. 188, Headquarters Fifth Army, 20 December 1944, as approved by the Commanding General, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, are confirmed under the provisions of section IV, Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction. The citation reads as follows:

The 3d Battalion, 351st Infantry Regiment, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action during the period 9 to 13 July 1944 in the vicinity of Laiatico, Italy. During the attack on strongly fortified German positions in the vicinity of Laiatico, the 3d Battalion occupied an advanced position devoid of cover and with both flanks exposed, and for 3 days withstood heavy enemy artillery and mortar bombardments as well as three vicious enemy counterattacks supported by tanks. Displaying courage, skill, and determined fighting spirit, the battalion frustrated all enemy efforts to defend the town and surrounding strategic positions. On the fourth day, the 3d Battalion launched a night attack and penetrated the German stronghold from the flanks and rear. Aggressively exploiting its breakthrough, the battalion seized a German regimental command post after a savage hand-to-hand struggle in the darkness and cut the main escape route from the Laiatico hill mass. As a result of the 3d Battalion's prodigious efforts, 425 prisoners were taken, 250 Germans were killed or wounded, and a large quantity of enemy weapons were captured which were promptly employed with telling effect against the battered German forces. The timely capture of this key enemy defensive position compelled the Germans to abandon a carefully prepared, strongly defended line and opened the route of advance to the Arno River. The fearlessness, heroic determination, and aggressive fighting spirit of the officers and men of the 3d Battalion, 351st Infantry Regiment, resulted in a performance which brings honor to the armed forces of the United States.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

OFFICIAL:

J. A. ULIO
Major General
The Adjutant General

G. C. MARSHALL
Chief of Staff

Resistance slackened on 13 July and although bitter fighting for small strong points took place, the line moved ahead more than on the previous day. The advance continued again during the night, starting at 0300, 14 July. To aid the infantry in finding its objectives in the dark, smoke shells were fired by the artillery, and the troops guided on the flow of the exploding phosphorous.

The village of Belvedere fell without a struggle to the 351st at 0505 and the 88th Reconnaissance Troop occupied Villamagna at daylight, collapsing the intermediate defense line which the enemy attempted to hold and which had been anchored on these two strong points. After the infantry had cleaned the snipers out of both towns, an overall gain during the day of nearly four miles was recorded.

For the next three days the slow, methodical advance continued against resistance which varied in intensity, but became suddenly weak on the afternoon of 16 July. The infantry pushed on through the night and the following morning made contact with strong enemy positions. A stiff, all day fight developed across the front, but at 1900, 17 July, the 3d Battalion, 349th Infantry, took Palaia, the division was then ordered to seize and secure the high ground 3 or 4 miles north of the town overlooking the Arno, a comparatively easy mission which was accomplished by nightfall of 18 July. Reaching their objectives, all units halted and sent strong patrols to the river, only to discover that the enemy had succeeded in getting his main body across.

E. OPERATIONS ON THE RIGHT FLANK.

On 9 July, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Armored Group, was again designated as Headquarters for Task Force Ramey. The troops

under this reactivated Task Force consisted mainly of 1st Armored Division units: Company "F", 1st Armored Regiment; the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion; the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; and Company "B", 16th Armored Engineers. Company "A", 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, rounded out the list. The Task Force relieved Combat Command "A" of the 1st Armored Division on the right flank and along the line of Highway 68. Its missions were to advance and contact the enemy in its zone, protect the right flank and rear of the 88th Division, and maintain contact with the French.

With no infantry, the Task Force was very mobile. Its zone of advance contained many road-nets, most of which were narrow, and many came to a dead end. The few good roads followed the exposed ridge line and were crooked with many sharp turns. The Germans had apparently expected the 1st Armored Division to continue the advance in this zone, and had mined and booby-trapped almost every road, including small trails which led to individual houses or to nowhere. Consequently, the engineers and reconnaissance elements of the force were required to sweep practically every foot of the advance. Little close contact was made with enemy infantry. The Task Force Artillery provided most of the offensive punch as the vehicle crews strove to get them forward. Whenever it was possible to outflank an enemy position, the German usually retired rapidly.

Launching the attack on 9 July, the force moved toward its first objective, the road-net east of Villamagna, and its second objective, the road-net in the vicinity of Montaione, a town due east of Peccioli. Progress was slow along this axis until the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry,

was attached on 17 July. These foot troops provided a screen which could move across country, giving the engineers some protection so that they could work with greater speed to clear the roads for the armor. At 1715, 17 July, the infantry advanced against Montaione, met no great opposition and occupied the town by midnight. This position was maintained on 18 July with the 2d Battalion, 350th Infantry, relieving the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, at 2200 that night. For the next two days the Task Force advanced on the right of the 88th Division units against decreasing opposition, and by 20 July had advanced five miles and occupied the high ground along the Orlo River, 6 miles due east of Palaia. These positions were maintained because 8th Army was in the process of relieving the French Expeditionary Corps, and the line on the right of IV Corps had not yet come abreast of the 88th Division. On 21 July the 1st Armored Division elements were relieved from the Task Force and the 338th Field Artillery Battalion moved into the zone to provide artillery support.

Activity along the entire 88th Division front was limited to patrolling for several days. Some patrols penetrated all the way to the Arno without contacting the enemy, others engaged in fire fights with small groups of the foe. Although the main German forces had fallen back across the river, numerous points of resistance remained on the south side. On 23 July orders were issued to clear out the enemy troops south of the river. This was accomplished in 2 days but resulted in some isolated fights around the villages of San Miniato and San Romano on Highway 67. Enemy infantry in well defended positions put up quite a struggle before they fell back. On the edge of San Miniato one force

of about 800 counter-attacking Germans, surrounded a house in which 40 men from Company "G", 349th Infantry, were trapped. This fight raged all day. Several times the Germans attempted to blow up the structure with explosives. Artillery support was called for, and more than 5000 rounds were expended against the enemy. They finally gave up and retired when our tanks and infantry reinforcements arrived. Twenty-five prisoners were captured and about 75 additional Germans were casualties. The 2d Battalion, 351st Infantry, successfully beat off an attack by a company of Germans in the village of Ponte a Evola, while the 3d Battalion occupied Angelica and San Romano. The Germans infiltrated back into San Romano on the 24th of July but on the following day they were forced to get out. On the same day, Task Force Ramey was relieved by the 88th Division.

F. CONSOLIDATION.

The next job was to clear the enemy from the south bank of the Arno and to organize our own defenses in order to guard against any frantic attempts on the part of the enemy to recross the river in force. Night patrolling to, and along the river banks became a routine measure of precaution by all units. A lull settled all along the front as the pursuit halted at the Arno. IV Corps, which had rolled up the coast of the Italian Peninsula for a distance of almost 150 miles, was anticipating a reorganization for Fifth Army had drawn up plans for its participation in a coordinated drive across the Arno to the Gothic Line.

Major changes along the Italian front in both the British 8th and American Fifth Army sectors were necessary due to the coming invasion of southern France. The 13th British Corps of the 8th Army was relieving

the French Expeditionary Corps. In doing so, 8th Army had to thin out its forces in order to absorb the French zone, thereby weakening its offensive strength. As a matter of fact, the allied strength in Italy was greatly reduced by the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps.

In 43 days of pursuit action from Valentano to Castel Fiorentine, the French Corps had performed a valuable service and had maintained the reputation all the French units had achieved since coming to Italy. Although the right flank of Fifth Army had repeatedly been ahead of 8th Army's most forward positions, there was no slackening of the pace for the French pursuit was always progressing. The French Corps had been relieved about 10 miles short of the Arno River goal, but it had fought valiantly and had inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy during its drive in Italy. By 30 July all French units had reported at Naples to General de Larminat of the 1st French Corps and were proceeding with staging operations under Seventh Army control. The next time we were to hear of this valiant unit was in the Seventh Army G-2 periodic reports, circulated from the battle fields of southern France.

It was necessary that Fifth Army wait for the 8th Army's advance to the Arno and the seizure of Florence before operations to drive the enemy back to the Gothic Line could be continued. On 15 July the first British unit, the 6th Armored Division of 13 Corps, reached the Arno, and that night its elements crossed the river approximately 30 miles southeast of Florence. General Crittenberger dispatched a message offering his congratulations on the occasion to the 13th Corps Commander, and he answered, "Many thanks for your wire stop we look forward to fighting along side of your Corps and hope that together we may

succeed in striking a decisive blow against the enemy." A few days later, after the French had been relieved, the 13th Corps left boundary was moved westward to the IV Corps boundary and, for a short period, IV Corps and the 13th Corps patrolled the Arno River line, side by side.

Other units of the 8th Army were moved up to the Arno and further clinched the advance of the Allied armies. During the night of 3-4 August, the Germans evacuated the area south of Florence, leaving only a few snipers to contest the last few miles of advance, and on 4 August, the British 4th Infantry Division reached the Arno just east of the city. Hitler had already declared Florence an open city, presumably for the purpose of preserving the works of art and culture in that famed Italian art center. Forward troops moved through the southern part of the city and reached the banks of the Arno in Florence on 4 August, found all the bridges destroyed except the Ponte Vecchio, but demolished buildings had blocked its approaches and rendered it useless. The enemy continued to occupy the main part of the city north of the river, and 8th Army paused while its positions along the river line in its zone were consolidated.

"ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER IX - - - - -

REST, REHABILITATION AND STABILIZATION

The halt of the Fifth Army was necessary for tactical and administrative reasons. Past experience at Salerno, the Volturno, the Garigliano and at Anzio had shown that for an assault against prepared German positions to succeed, it must be well planned and executed with overwhelming superiority at places where the terrain and the element of surprise would most aid the attacker. In view of the formidable obstacles lying ahead in the Gothic Line, such planning and accumulation of supplies would necessitate a considerable period of relative inactivity on the front line coupled with intensified activity in the rear. Supply in particular presented problems which could not be solved over night. Though Leghorn was in our hands, the port was not yet open. Our lines of communication stretched far to the rear, to Piombino, Civitavecchia and even farther south. During the pursuit these lines had suffered, but a coordinated all-out attack required more certain and speedy delivery of the greatly increased supply load.

As always, the troops could use the rest period resulting from the delay. The push from Garigliano had been a long one; our troops had been on the move northward more than 200 miles. The short periods of relaxation along the way allowed units a refreshing change but had not been sufficient. Clothing and equipment of all kinds required replacement or repair. Extensive temporary repairs during the

course of battle had carried the troops to the Arno. Now, overhauling by 3d and 4th echelon maintenance units was needed by almost all the mechanical equipment.

As the troops were relieved from the line, Special Services Units appeared to provide motion pictures for entertainment and a number of stage shows, first from the United States. Many organizations were able to obtain sections of beaches where troops could swim and bask in the warm summer sun. Frequent mail delivery was made by air, much of it being flown from America to forward airfields. A liberal pass system was set up and thousands of officers and men were allowed to attend rest centers organized by Fifth Army in Rome. American beer arrived for distribution. From both the material and morale side, everything possible was done to rest and rehabilitate the troops from the previous campaign and to prepare them for the coming battles.

A. REGROUPING OF TROOPS

The intention of Allied headquarters as reflected in Operations Orders No. 2, was to destroy the German forces. This mission was to be accomplished in three phases. The first was to drive the enemy back to the Gothic Line, inflicting the maximum losses in the process; the second called for the penetration of the Gothic Line between Pistoia and Dicomano, and the last was a full exploitation over the Apennines to the line of the Po, to include establishment of bridgeheads.

When the French were relieved and the 13th British Corps took over, the Fifth Army zone was reduced to the section held by IV Corps.

In Operations Instructions No. 29, Headquarters Fifth Army, dated 21 July 1944, the immediate relief of IV Corps by the rested II Corps was ordered. Three days later, however, the order was amended to divide the Fifth Army sector between II Corps and IV Corps, effective on or about 25 July. The new boundary gave to II Corps a small section in the right of the original IV Corps zone, leaving approximately 25 miles under the responsibility of the latter. Paragraph 2 of this amended order, Operations Instructions No. 30, dated 24 July 1944, ordered IV Corps to retain the responsibility for the western portion of the Fifth Army zone of action, and to adjust the disposition of troops so as to relieve all infantry divisions as soon as possible. The relief of the 34th Division was begun at once. Two regimental combat teams of the 91st Division were to be relieved as soon as practicable and the third not later than 1 August. The first combat team of the 91st to come out of the line was to be utilized to effect relief of forward elements of the 88th Division. By virtue of Army plans to use the rested II Corps Headquarters to direct the main thrust against Pistoia in conjunction with the British 13th Corps, IV Corps was destined to lose its strength amassed during the pursuit.

Until additional troops arrived in the theater, General Crittenberger was ordered to take over approximately 25 miles of the Arno line with two hastily formed units, neither of which was equal to a division in strength.

To garrison this sector now occupied by infantry, IV Corps was to have two task forces: The first, Task Force 45, consisting

of headquarters 45th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade, two anti-aircraft artillery group headquarters and their anti-aircraft gun and automatic weapons battalions organized as an infantry force, was to relieve the 34th Division. The second, Task Force Ramey, consisting of reconnaissance units, tank and tank destroyer units and some elements of the 1st Armored Division, was to relieve the 91st Division. These two task forces were to be later augmented as further units became available; one of these units, the 10th Army Group Royal Artillery, was the first British Field Artillery unit to come under IV Corps. The composition and activities of these two task forces will be covered in greater detail within the next few pages.

The mission planned for IV Corps was a defensive one. In its zone, Corps was to conduct active patrolling in selected areas, hold its forward position along the Arno with minimum forces, conserving the small infantry strength wherever possible and to site as field artillery pieces, tanks, tank destroyers and anti-aircraft guns as far as was consistent with their primary missions.

IV Corps was also to protect the left flank of Army, maintain contact with II Corps and to be prepared to follow up any enemy withdrawal. In view of the main thrust by II Corps, General Crittenberger was also instructed to prepare plans for a demonstration in the Pontedera-Angelica area, designed to deceive the enemy as to where the main punch was to be struck.

On 25 July, the 34th Division held the seaward flank with its lines extending inland almost 15 miles from the mouth of the river to the town of Casciana; its outposts in the southern portion of Pisa were the most advanced units of the Corps. The 91st Division held the remainder of the Corps front. Its sector was about 12 miles wide, running between Casciana and Angelica, a small village just west of San Romano. The 88th Division, just passed to II Corps, held the right sector from Angelica to the new Army boundary, a short distance east of San Miniato. The width of this sector was about 6 miles, but the right of the 88th Division was echeloned to the rear, inasmuch as 13th Corps had not pushed forward as far as the American units. The 34th and 91st Divisions fully covered the wide zone of IV Corps and the 88th Division crowded into its 6 mile zone under II Corps, which took over this narrow area the same day.

General Crittenberger's immediate task was to affect relief of the 85th, 34th and 91st Infantry Divisions as rapidly as possible, in order that they could be rested for the coming operations in which Fifth Army would supplement the main Allied attack by 8th Army on the eastern flank by pushing into the mountains around Pistoia. Although IV Corps role was stamped as a defensive one, it was still a man-sized job, considering the small number of mixed troops at its disposal.

The 85th Division, less one combat team, since its attachment to IV Corps on 18 July, had been held in Corps Reserve in the Rosignano area. When the original intention to employ the Division on the left side of the IV Corps was altered, the Division was directed to utilize the period for training purposes. At the same time, it constituted

a reserve force available to IV Corps, should it be needed. This unit and the 88th Division were attached to II Corps on 25 July.

The 34th Division began the relief of its units from the line and as each was relieved, it moved to the Division assembly area in Rosignano. The river front was then patrolled by Task Force Williamson, and the Reconnaissance Troop of the 34th Division. In order to affect the complete relief of the "Red Bull" Division, Task Force 45 moved up and its anti-aircraft battalions had relieved the remaining units of the 34th by 0600, 29 July.

Task Force Ramey, which had occupied a portion of the 88th Division zone of action during the last few days of the pursuit, was moved from that area and assembled in the vicinity of Ponsacco in the rear of the 91st Division. Its units immediately began relieving the 91st and by 0600, 31 July, the task force had taken over the command on the Corps right from the 91st Division.

On the same day the 91st Division was attached to II Corps, but remained under the operational control of IV Corps for the purpose of relieving the 88th Division from the line. The front of the 91st Division was widened as its units moved eastward to relieve those of the 88th Division in the II Corps area until upon completion of the relief the Division was spread over what had been a two division front.

As the month of July came to an end, IV Corps had two task forces, with which to carry out its assigned mission. These two groupments known as Task Force 45 on the Corps left and Task Force Ramey on the right, had 25 miles of river line to hold - purely an

infantry job. Let us study the pedigree of the two Task Forces, one by one and then the reorganization of the 1st Armored Division, soon to return to the line.

1. Task Force 45

During the early part of the campaign and up to 24 July when plans for its employment as infantry were made known, the 45th Anti-Aircraft Brigade and attached units had been furnishing anti-aircraft defense for Fifth Army. The necessity for such defense declined with the virtual disappearance of the German Air Force. The few enemy planes venturing forth were usually out of range or too fleeting in their operations to be engaged by our anti-aircraft artillery. It therefore became feasible when forced by necessity, to use the 7000 officers and men comprising Task Force 45 to relieve the infantry.

To aid Brigadier General Paul W. Rutledge in converting his anti-aircraft units to provisional infantry, IV Corps provided 13 field and company grade infantry officers from veteran units. The Brigade Headquarters, each of the two Group Headquarters, each of the four Battalion Headquarters and each of the 16 Provisional Infantry Companies received one experienced infantry officer as an adviser. Seventeen infantry officers were further procured from the replacement depot for permanent assignment to fill vacancies in the ranks. The Brigade Anti-Aircraft Gunnery Officer was designated Task Force Artillery Officer and the Commanding Officer of the Anti-Aircraft Operations Detachment was named Provost Marshal, while Photo Interpretation Officer, a Surgeon, an AMG Officer, an Engineer Officer, and a Prisoner of War Interrogating Officer, were provided by Corps.

Meanwhile the Brigade S-2, S-3 and S-4 and Communication Officer, were dispatched to Headquarters of the 34th Infantry Division to be indoctrinated by the infantry.

Created on 26 July by IV Corps Field Order No. 6, Task Force 45 consisted of the following headquarters: 91st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group, 107th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group and 2d Armored Group. The 91st Group was made up of the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion; the 439th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion; the Reconnaissance Company, 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 673d Medical Collecting Company. Troops in the 107th Group were the 536th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Weapons Battalion; the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, minus Troop "B", and the 671st Medical Collection Company. The 2d Armored Group, initially in task force reserve, consisted of the British 39th Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment, minus one battery, the 751st Tank Battalion, less its assault guns; Company "B", 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion; the 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, minus a detachment; and the 34th Division Artillery. Corps artillery units later relieved the 34th Division Artillery.

The time available for infantry training of the anti-aircraft troops was very limited. With the exception of the 439th the battalions had been performing anti-aircraft missions until 24 July when they were ordered into bivouac to begin intensive infantry instruction. The 439th Battalion had been relieved of its assignment on an anti-aircraft mission on 9 July and during 11-23 July, had been engaged in anti-

aircraft artillery firing and training at Santa Marinella near Rome. On 24 July, after completing only half its scheduled training, this Battalion was moved north to go into the line as infantry. The anti-aircraft artillery equipment of all battalions was stored and in its stead was issued the necessary infantry equipment, borrowed from the 34th Division. Each battery was reorganized as an infantry company; three of the batteries of a battalion were converted into three rifle companies of four platoons each with each platoon composed of two former gun sections of fifteen men each. One battery in each battalion became an infantry heavy-weapons company. Training was directed by the infantry officers attached for that purpose. Initial training before going into the line was short, only two days for the 898th Battalion, but after going into the line, training continued throughout August. Troops in reserve received infantry instruction until their turn to re-enter the lines again came around. Members of the armored reconnaissance units, making up part of the task force, had been fairly well trained in fighting on foot before they took over this assignment. The tanks and tank destroyers were used chiefly in an artillery role.

The same night that the Task Force was created, the 898th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion went into the line to relieve the 168th Infantry on the right flank of the Task Force Sector. On the following night, 27-28 July, the 536th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion went into the line to relieve the 133d Infantry on the left of the 898th, and the 107th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group assumed responsibility for the entire right sector. The veteran 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance

Squadron, less one troop was sent to patrol south of the river and to the flanks and was available as Group Reserve. On the second night in the lines, this group suffered its first casualties and captured two prisoners from an enemy patrol.

On the night of 28-29 July, the 91st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group, with the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, and the 439th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion moved into the area below Pisa and took over the left sector of the Task Force, thus relieving elements of the 135th and 363d Infantry Regiments. The 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion was assigned to patrol the coast behind the line and was available as Group Reserve.

General Rutledge of Task Force 45 assumed command of the 34th Infantry Division Sector as of 0600, 29 July, only three days after his "infantry" command had been formed from the conglomeration of American and British non-infantry units.

2. Task Force Ramey

The often changed troop list of Task Force Ramey had been altered again on 31 July when it took over the sector occupied by the 91st Division. Most of its troops were veterans and no difficulty, such as had to be overcome in the conversion of the anti-aircraft men in Task Force 45, was encountered by the components of this Force. The reader will probably recall the epitaph ceremoniously rendered Task Force Ramey when it was pulled out of the line after only ten days of action; except for the name, there was no resemblance between the old and the new. Headquarters, 1st Armored Group, which was General Ramey's Task Force Headquarters, assumed the command functions in this sector and

initially held it with the following troops: Headquarters Combat Command "B"; the 11th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalion (1st Armored Division); the Reconnaissance Company, 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion; the 757th Tank Battalion, less Assault Guns; Troop "B", 91st Reconnaissance Squadron (reinforced) and the 91st Division Artillery. The 1st Armored Division Artillery subsequently relieved the 91st Division Artillery. As can be noted, the main elements forming the Task Force were from the 1st Armored Division.

3. 1st Armored Division

"Warrior", less units attached to Task Force Ramey, had been bivouacked southeast of Cecina completing its reorganization. The 1st Armored Division was to return to the lines along the Arno River with quite a different organization than it had when relieved in the Volterra vicinity about three weeks previously. On 20 July, General Harmon had turned over command of the Division to Major General Vernon E. Prichard, and orders to adopt the new Table of Organization for the Armored Division had been published the same day. The new 1st Armored Division came out of this reorganization a streamlined unit, about two-thirds the size of its former self, with radical changes in all its components. Even though the new organization had been worked out by armored force experts in the United States over a year previously, and armored divisions had been reorganized accordingly, this was the first armored division to be reorganized in the field.

Chief among the changes was the elimination of the regiments, two armored and one armored infantry, and the substitution of battalions, separate tank and armored infantry. The 1st Battalion,

6th Armored Infantry, was inactivated and became the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, the 2d became the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, and the 3d, the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion. Three tank battalions replaced the two armored regiments. The 1st Armored Regiment was inactivated and shrank to the 1st Tank Battalion and by the same procedure, the 13th Armored Regiment became the 13th Tank Battalion, while surplus personnel from the two former regiments formed the 4th Tank Battalion. The 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion was increased by the troops and became the 81st Squadron Mechanized. The 16th Armored Engineer Battalion was reduced by two companies. A change in designation saw the Maintenance Battalion renamed the 123d Ordnance Maintenance Battalion. The Supply Battalion was disbanded, and most of its vehicles and personnel were incorporated into quartermaster truck companies.

Armored strength of the division was sharply reduced by the changes. In the old armored regiments there were two battalions of medium tanks and one battalion of light tanks, each battalion having three line companies of seventeen tanks each. The new tank battalion consisted of three medium and one light company, thus reducing by three medium and three light companies, the total division tank strength. At the same time, new types of equipment were introduced. First shipments of the latest model of the medium tank, which carried a high velocity 76-mm gun in place of the 75-mm gun, were received. Assault guns of the battalion headquarters companies became 105-mm Howitzers mounted in medium tanks, replacing the M-7 or self-propelled 105-mm Howitzer, a turretless vehicle. The latter weapons were retained in the armored

field artillery battalions, which were not altered in number of guns, though their personnel was reduced.

Because reorganization resulted in a reduction of total personnel, the division secured permission to rotate 600 men to the United States during the month. The remainder of the "jobless" men were sent to replacement depots; some later rejoined the 1st Armored Division but a large number, most of those with more than two years' service, were sent home.

The 1st Armored Division remained in the vicinity of Bolgheri about five miles from the coast and seven and a half miles due south of Cecina, until 13 August. Between stages of the reorganization, the men swam in the warm waters of the Tyrrhenian and generally rested for the return to combat. On 13 August it moved forward to take over a defense sector along the Arno River in the vicinity of Pontedera. General Crittenberger, former Chief of Staff of the 1st Armored Division, marveled at the overnight change of the old "Warrior".

B. WITH THE ENEMY DURING JULY.

For the past number of pages we have discussed the operations in the light of pursuit of the enemy by our forces. This phase is devoted to the withdrawal to the Arno by the enemy. To better understand the eventual reorganization of the German army on the north side of the Arno and the reasons therefor, the following account is rendered:

Field Marshal Kesselring effected an orderly and coordinated withdrawal of his forces to the Arno River. It was not a rout, but part of a well conceived plan to oppose stubbornly, making maximum use of demolitions and to contest stiffly the possession of all dominant

terrain features. In summation, it meant that the enemy was to withdraw only when forced to do so. His battle-cry was "Fight and then withdraw"; in other words, delay to the utmost. The more time he could give Organization TODT to build the Gothic Line, the easier it would be for his troops to defend the Po Valley.

At the beginning of the month, the enemy dispositions were as follows: the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, holding a front extending from its coast through Cecina eastward to Casaglia, operated under command of the 75th Army Corps which was believed to have been charged with the coastal defense strip along the Ligurian Sea. The 14th Panzer Corps was responsible for the remainder of the Sector opposing IV Corps. From Casaglia the 19th German Air Force Field Division, less the 45th German Air Force Regiment, held a front of five and one-half miles. Its eastern neighbor was the 162d Infantry (Turcomen) which, due to its weakened condition from heavy losses inflicted by the IV Corps in June, was barely able to defend a three mile front. The 26th Panzer Division, further enforced by the 1027th Infantry Regiment (Independent). The 45th German Air Force Regiment and the 504th Tiger Tank Battalion (GHQ) was able to garrison a ten-mile section. The Sector opposing the junction of the IV Corps with its neighbor, the French Expeditionary Corps, was held by the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, to which had been attached the 956th Infantry Regiment, part of the 362d Infantry Division, and the 508th Tiger Tank Battalion (GHQ).

When our forces smashed forward, the enemy withdrew in a northwesterly direction paralleling the coast. At the same time, he was able to disengage some of his divisions from the central portion of the Eighth Army front, and move them to the west, where our more rapid advance was

jeopardizing the orderly withdrawal which was essential to the safety of his battered army. By the 4th of July, Field Marshal Kesselring had been forced to withdraw the 162d Turcomen Infantry Division from the lines for a complete reorganization and the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division temporarily, to receive much needed replacements. This left the 16th SS Division in its coastal sector flanked by the 19th German Air Force Division, which in turn, had as its left neighbor the 26th Panzer Division, while in the eastern sector, the 20th German Air Force Division opposed our troops.

During the month it became evident that the enemy's new troops fell into two definite categories, the 16th SS Division, which was better experienced and disciplined, and the type as the two German Air Force Divisions. The latter demonstrated that once the initial period of commitment had passed, the troops who survived became battle hardened, experienced soldiers, capable of presenting maximum resistance to our troops. The great difficulty seemed to be in not giving the troops battle experience without killing so many of them that the Division found itself to consist only of a few experienced remnants who, because of their weakened numbers, were incapable of performing a divisional role. The inferior 162d Turcomen Division must have greatly demonstrated to the Germans the extravagance of training and equipping troops, the commitment of which could only serve as a further source of anxiety, rather than additional military strength.

Captured maps indicated that the enemy was conscientiously preparing delaying lines and falling back to them successfully. Artillery which had been comparatively light at the beginning of the month

increased. The line Rosignano-Montecatini-Volterra-Casole d' Elsa, was particularly strongly organized and manned with determination. It was penetrated only after our forces regrouped and made a coordinated attack. By the careful coordinate of small arms fire, demolitions, mine fields, self-propelled guns and tanks, it was possible the enemy was able to withdraw the bulk of his forces to successive positions after requiring the maximum effort of our troops to dislodge him.

By the middle of July, the enemy had further regrouped his forces so that his dispositions from the sea to the east shaped up as follows: The 26th Panzer Division had moved west, assuming the former sector of the 19th German Air Force Division. The 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, after having had a brief period for rest and refitting while enroute from the French Zone, had assumed responsibility for the area to the east of Laiatico. Subordinated to the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division were the remnants of the 362d and the 92d Infantry Divisions, consisting of three infantry regiments. With these additional troops the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division would withdraw in a highly organized manner. By committing half or less of his infantry to the line, it was possible for the enemy to employ the rest of his troops in the preparation of new delaying positions to the rear, so that when he was seriously pressed or threatened from a flank, he was able to hastily step back into a prepared delaying position. He pursued a similar policy further to the east where the troops of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, which had returned to the line in the 20th German Air Force Division Zone, were grouped in a narrow sector that they defended stubbornly. By the 20th of the month, our forces were able to occupy the Port of Leghorn. Our appraisal of the extent of mines and demolitions which the enemy had prepared in this

final port had been correct, as had been our assumption that once we occupied the high ground, extending east of Leghorn on the Arno River, the enemy would not find the defense of the town practicable. This of course was proven by the fact that our final entry into the city was unopposed. The city was found to be heavily booby-trapped and the port installation systematically demolished. The port entrance had been blocked by sunken ships and every possible precaution had been taken to prevent the speedy employment of the excellent shipping facilities formerly offered by this seaport.

The enemy withdrew across the Arno River and sensing that our pursuit had been temporarily halted, he moved the bulk of his troops from the river edge, leaving only small forces to occupy machine gun positions along the Arno and to patrol actively on its northern bank.

Increased pressure on the part of the British Eighth Army in the Florence Area made it necessary for the enemy to narrow the sectors of the divisions in that area, so that a general eastward trend extending the divisional sectors opposing us, became evident. On 22 July, we identified the 65th Infantry Division in position between the 16th SS Division and the 26th Panzer Division. This unit had been formed in the Lucca area after having been badly beaten during the breakthrough from the Anzio beachhead in June. During the latter part of the month the 26th Panzer Division gradually moved eastward and took over the former sector of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, permitting the 65th Infantry Division to move back into its old sector adjacent to the 16th SS Division. The 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, having withdrawn from the line, assembled in the Pistoia-Prato areas.

During the month the solution which the enemy had to the difficult problem of obtaining replacements for his depleted units became evident. It was discovered that the fresh units reportedly entering northern Italy were two divisions which had been formed from troops of questionable merit, who, in the main, had formerly been hospitalized personnel from the Russian front and rear echelon cast-offs. These divisions, the "Ost-Preussen" and the "Wildflecken", were cannibalized and their troops used to reform the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, the 65th Infantry Division and the 715th Infantry Division. The remnants of the 92d Infantry Division were reportedly allotted to the 362d Infantry Division, the original regiments of which had been merged into the 956th Infantry Regiment. This gave the 362d Infantry Division the 956th, 1059th and 1060th Infantry Regiments, all of which were farmed out to other divisions for operations. The divisional units were also combined. The 1027th Grenadier Regiment Motorized, which operated for a time with the 26th Panzer Division, was finally absorbed by the 9th and 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiments. Normal replacements continued to arrive at an uncertain rate. These permitted the enemy to maintain his remaining divisions at a combat strength, admittedly low but capable of commitment.

Enemy activity at the close of the period was confined to patrolling along the Arno River. Artillery fire was received in the Livorno area along the line of our forward elements. Some damage to the civilian hospital was reported and the reconstruction of the Livorno harbor was impaired by this activity, but no major damage was reported. The enemy, although hard-pressed and suffering heavy losses of men and materiel, had accomplished an orderly withdrawal during the entire period, and had made

the maximum possible use of his available troops and fire power to resist our advance. At no time was the enemy able to stop our troops or hold a defensive line.

The IV Corps at the end of July was facing the Arno River east of Pisa, which was no serious obstacle at this dry season of the year. With their marvelous field of fire and dominant overlooking heights, it was believed the Germans would organize a strong position here to delay us for sufficient time to enable the Gothic position north of Lucca to be completed. This development of the Arno position did not proceed, however, beyond the field type of defenses, probably because all available building materials were needed for the Gothic Line.

Statistics show that 2861 Prisoners of War were captured by IV Corps during the month of July. The 362d Infantry Division suffered the most of these losses.

There were two outstanding events that marked the month of July. The first was the reaching of the Arno River line by IV Corps troops on 18 July and the second was the attempted assassination of the "Fuehrer". On 20 July, Adolph Hitler was "slightly burned and bruised" at his Berlin headquarters by a bomb which an assassin, one of a group of German Military officers, placed near him at a short range. Hitler told the nation that the attack was due to a "very small clique of criminal elements which will now be exterminated quite mercilessly", adding, "To create order at last, I have appointed Reich Minister Himmler to be Commander of the Army at home". "Axis Sally", in her nightly broadcasts of German propaganda between the strains of American jazz and boogie-woogie music, was lacking in her customary vim and vigor that evening.

ROME TO THE ARNO CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER X -----

THE AUGUST LULL

After reaching the south bank of the Arno River along the entire width of its zone, IV Corps maintained this defensive position in anticipation of a later coordinated attack by the Fifth and Eighth Armies in order to cross the river and move into the mountains north of Florence. This projected assault against the Gothic Line defenses by II Corps of the Fifth Army and by 13th Corps of the British Eighth Army, was not to begin until such time as the British Forces should secure the high ground north and northwest of Florence, thereby coming abreast of the American troops along the Arno. Once the right flank of the forces west of Florence was thus protected, the date of the Gothic Line assault could be definitely chosen.

While waiting in their positions south of the Arno, the troops of IV Corps patrolled actively and made preparations for their part in the expected offensive. The patrol clashes on the banks of the 155-mile long river and the thunder of artillery rolling over the valley, were fused into terse press releases as "quiet front", "dead front", "no action today", "lull prevails over most of Italian Theater of War." The one that most irked the Fifth Army troops was the constant caption reading, "The Forgotten Front."

Task Force Ramey on the right and Task Force 45 on the left - this was the IV Corps line-up in the first days of August.

A. ACTION ALONG THE RIVER FRONT.

For the first twenty days of August, the IV Corps front extended from

the coast at the mouth of the Arno, along the river to the village of Capanne, a few miles east of Pontedera on Highway 67. Every night our combat and reconnaissance patrols were out along the river. Some times there were clashes with probing enemy patrols which had crossed the river, and occasionally a flare shattered the darkness, silhouetting the shell-stripped tree trunks along the river, and at other times, a minute of noisy hell broke loose when an alerted gun battery fired a concentration on some reported enemy movement. Part of the time, the nights were so quiet that the probing patrols heard nothing but the beating of their hearts, their breathing and foot steps mixed with the bubbling gurgle and splashes of the river waters. One would have thought that all of the Arno Valley was asleep, but that was not so. It was during these lengthening hours of darkness that our troops laid awake behind defense positions. Crews were tense and alert with fingers on triggers of the machine guns sited along the river bank. The enemy did likewise. During the days, friend and foe slept and rested.

As our troops continued to maintain their positions on the south bank, the foe built up his defenses considerably, using the river levees as a first line; he also adopted the American plan of using a minimum number of troops on that line. German defenses consisted of a series of strong points and machine gun positions on or near the north bank of the river, with liberal use of mines, particularly in areas in which crossings might be attempted. Where houses stood close to the river, the Germans installed machine guns behind the window casemates backed up with light anti-aircraft guns. The Pisa area particularly was organized for defense; advance machine gun posts were supported by mortars situated fairly close to the

front, and by some artillery. The Germans made frequent use of self-propelled artillery pieces which, after firing harassing missions, would then move to new positions. Motor and horse-drawn artillery also moved frequently and made considerable use of alternate positions. These tactics increased the difficulty of accurately determining the location and amount of enemy artillery north of the Arno. The Germans had also built coastal defenses along the shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea, where aerial reconnaissance indicated machine gun positions, barbed wire, pill boxes, and mined areas. As the month of August advanced, there was increased evidence of enemy activity around these installations, which were echeloned to the north and evidently designed to permit a slow and orderly retreat when the Allied troops resumed the offensive.

IV Corps troops used generally the same system as the Germans, with forward machine gun and listening posts backed up by mortars and artillery. Main bodies of the troops were bivouacked at some distance from the river. Approximately one man out of four was in the front line and the other three were in the rear. German artillerymen used their ammunition sparingly, even though harassing fire was placed on roads in the front line areas, and long-range shelling was received occasionally in the rear areas.

About two miles east of Pisa the river formed two large horseshoe bends to the north; here the IV Corps lines ran across the open ends, leaving the Germans on both banks of the river inside the bends. The main American outpost lines for about two weeks were located an average of a mile or more south of the river, but between 7-10 August the forward outposts were pushed generally to the embankment of the railroad line

which paralleled the river, the Highway 67 and was located on an average of about one-half mile south of the Arno. The ground between these posts and the river formed a no-man's land where frequent patrol clashes took place. In Pisa, Pontedera and at scattered other spots, our forward lines were located on the banks of the river.

The front settled down to nothing more than exchanges, and to routine but aggressive patrolling. Since the river was shallow, (not over waist-deep in many places) it was comparatively easy for patrols of both sides to cross under cover of darkness on raiding or reconnaissance missions. The German patrols were very aggressive and remained sensitive to any increased activity on the American side of the Arno. Allied artillery was greatly superior to that of the Germans, and Fifth Army also had several hundred tanks and tank destroyers available, the guns of which were used extensively in destructive or harassing fires. Ammunition for 75mm and 3-inch guns was more plentiful than standard artillery ammunition and was used whenever possible. The Germans heavily shelled that part of Pisa lying on the south side of the Arno but little IV Corps fire was sent directly into the northern portion of the city. American artillery carried out an organized program of counter-battery fire and systematically destroyed enemy occupied houses and observation posts.

Mortars and artillery destroyed a large number of small boats the Germans were using on the river and knocked out foot bridges which the foe had installed in the horse-shoe bend sectors. Enemy rear areas received both day and night batterings. American daylight movements were kept to a minimum except when ordered as demonstrations. On their side, the Germans kept under cover during the day for roving patrols of Allied

aircraft and keen-eyed artillery forward observers made large-scale movements on the north bank extremely dangerous.

1. Deception by Camouflage and Demonstrations.

In order to heighten the deception of the enemy as to where and when the next blow was to fall, the 1st Armored Division was directed to move into the Ponsacco area beginning 7 August, where it was scheduled to relieve Task Force Ramey from the line. With mufflers opened up the tanks rumbled noisily into the Ponsacco area and by 13 August an apparent build-up in strength of the left flank of Fifth Army was effected. The 1st Armored Division assumed control of the right half of the IV Corps Sector and most of the units which had thus far composed Task Force Ramey were attached to it as added support. The 1st Armored Group which had supplied the necessary staff for Task Force Ramey since its organization on 12 June, was withdrawn from the line, and with the assignment of Brigadier General Ramey to another organization, Task Force Ramey ceased to exist.

Since the main effort against the Gothic Line was planned to come from II Corps on the right, it was necessary for the Army Commander to shift into that zone the forces ear-marked for the attack. It was, therefore, essential that IV Corps conceal the movement of all such troops from its sector and at the same time by using every means possible, attempt to make the enemy believe that our intentions were to attack in some other area. Consequently IV Corps had the mission of concealing friendly movements in its area and also the job of creating a fictional build up of strength throughout the coastal sector.

Throughout the month there were staged over the width of the Corps Sector, numerous demonstrations of offensive power designed to indicate to the enemy an increasing tempo of preparation for an attack.

Particular attention was directed to areas near suitable bridge sites and fords, where the enemy could logically anticipate our crossing in force. On this allied stage, against the back-drop of the Arno River and the serrated peaks of the Apennines, just a blue smear on the northern horizon, IV Corps at this time had the leading role.

Movement of trucks, tanks and tank destroyers was routed and controlled by the IV Corps Traffic Control Section in a manner which undoubtedly succeeded in confusing the enemy's estimate of the Corps strength. These tactics must have indicated to the Italian natives that there was going to be a strong attack against the river line in this zone, for many of them packed up their meager belongings and traveled southward to escape the bloody battle. Convoys without lights and with as little noise as possible, moved eastward during the hours of darkness; every precaution was taken to maintain the security of these movements and to conceal them from the German observers along the north bank. During the hours of daylight, when the August sun shone bright, convoys traveled westward under full enemy observation. The dust churned by the wheels of the trucks rose high in the still summer air and left the German observers with an impression that long American convoys were moving into the IV Corps zone. Such deceptive traffic was repeated day after day. The appearance of these columns of armor and supplies openly pouring into the Corps zone, with no compensating movements eastward, must have effectively aided in accomplishing our mission of deception.

Security measures were applied vigorously during this period of deceptive maneuvering. Major Jack Crystal, Commander of the 204th

Counter-Intelligence Corps Detachment, attached to the G-2 Section of IV Corps, placed his agents at crossroads and likely avenues of approach used by Italian refugees to and from the river front. Civilians were prevented from approaching the river from the south and those crossing from the north were apprehended and carefully screened. Only those military individuals to whom the information was necessary were told of these deceptive scheduled movements and of the reasons for the various demonstrations.

The staff of IV Corps prepared a camouflage plan that is worthy of detailed comment. Not only the enemy, but also our own troops were led to believe that the increase of huge ammunition dumps along the roadsides meant a large scale attack; they were deceived by the innumerable gun positions all over the landscape. The dumps were huge piles of empty shell cases and empty boxes, and the artillery guns were ingenious contrivances made of burlap bags and other salvage material. The sight of some of this formidable looking but harmless artillery was reminiscent of the mimic warfare days in the North Carolina Maneuvers of 1941. Even plywood tanks were placed behind poorly camouflaged positions to indicate a strength of armor in the Corps Sector.

The leading actor of the Corps who romped about on this stage of deception was the Corps Engineer Officer, Colonel Gillette. In conjunction with G-4 the construction of real and dummy dumps began. The 2d and 4th Platoons of Company "D", 84th Engineer Camouflage Battalion were attached as Corps Engineer Troops to execute this camouflage mission. Construction of dumps was started when a bulldozer and a grader from the 1108th Engineer Combat Group began to build a network

of roads. Italian laborers from the 23d Italian Artieri Battalion, a Fifth Army unit, assisted in the construction of the dumps.

A huge dummy dump was installed just north of Colle Salvetti, purposely within view of the enemy ground observers posted on Monte Pisano across the Arno. Another large dummy dump was set up in the hills about 6 miles south of S. Miniato. This one was laid out so as not to be under direct observation of the enemy for then the ruse might become apparent, but it was easily within artillery range. Empty ammunition crates, boxes and shell cases were hauled from the active ammunition depots and placed as decoys. Trucks circulated throughout the dumps at night to indicate activity and make fresh tracks. Both of these dumps had signs posted, indicating ASP numbers, "bays" and "no smoking". Salvage tentage drawn from Quartermaster was set up in the immediate vicinity of each dump.. The tentage was used to simulate office and living quarters supposedly for personnel stationed in the dump areas as loading and unloading parties. Stacks of ammunition and sometime entire bays of it were removed at night to show activity. Fifteen hundred tons of ammunition were simulated in the dump at Colle Salvetti and a thousand tons in the dump to the east. Dummy bridges spanned the streams where the roads that came into being had to cross. Finally when the camouflage artists were through, a check was made of all the dummy installations by Cub planes and the experts stamped the work a success.

The dummy bridges attracted the German artillery observers who, in turn, put their artillery to work. A dummy bridge 120 feet long was constructed in the vicinity of Grecciano just south of Highway 67. It

had just been completed when German shells screamed in to destroy it. Enemy reaction had been so instantaneous that the success of the ruse was unquestionable. Four days later the dummy bridge was reconstructed across the navigable canal about 2 miles due south of Pisa. Since the enemy was trying to conserve ammunition, this bait nibbling ate into his stocks. At its new location, the dummy bridge was knocked down by enemy artillery and replaced four times. At the site of this dummy bridge, a smoke pot was set up in the hope that the enemy would believe that important traffic was in progress over it. No sooner had the smoke begun to rise than enemy shells came flying in, some landing within 50 yards. The hostile reaction was again so instantaneous that the personnel who had installed the smoke equipment were pinned to the ground; obviously the German artillery had previously registered on the bridge. During the next 2 hours while the smoke continued, enemy guns kept up this harassing fire in a most determined way and over 140 rounds were fired at this decoy. Other dummy bridges were erected on sites where destroyed ones had once existed and were likewise subjected to enemy artillery fire.

Fake artillery positions were established at locations agreed upon by the Corps artillery officer and the Platoon camouflage officer. Eleven dummy batteries of 105-mm Howitzers were constructed and connected by phone to a Fire Direction Center. The guns, partially camouflaged were made of a few strands of wire, empty fiber shell cases, 105 and 155-mm metal shell cases, burlap and a few sand bags. The net result of this ingenious assembly, painted olive drab and with harmless muzzles poking through bushes and camouflaged netting, looked like

veritable artillery pieces. Tentage was erected and fox holes were dug just as though the actual personnel were bivouacked near their guns. Normal activity of the crew of a battery in firing positions was carried out by having men move about the decoy guns, stack and move ammunition and drive trucks through the areas. At the dummy positions flash simulators were fired at night as directed by the Fire Direction Center. Real artillery pieces, some in the vicinity of the dummy batteries, would fire shells at the enemy simultaneously with the firing of its flash simulators. A total of 508 simulations were flashed from these positions. In addition to the above program, all artillery units were notified that upon moving from an old position, the camouflage nets were to be left up and dummy guns installed in the old pits. These were guarded from prying eyes by artillery personnel and inspected at least once weekly by camouflage personnel. The Germans reacted sharply to these dummy guns and fired many counterbattery missions against them.

The enemy undoubtedly was impressed by the character and scope of these demonstrations and other deceptive measures carried out by the units of the Corps. The Germans became nervous and were on the alert for any suspicious event on the south bank of the Arno, and when one was detected, the response was immediate, usually in the form of artillery fire. Because of the promptness and ferocity with which the enemy attempted to nullify our supposedly offensive plans, the successes of our various ruses and dummy installations could be judged by the number of shells which each elicited.

2. IV Corps Mans 55-Mile Front.

Throughout August the enemy continued his attempt to infiltrate

our lines. No doubt the patrols were sent to determine the meaning of this apparent build up of strength in the IV Corps zone. In the Pontedera sector and immediately east and west of Pisa, the Germans were constantly trying to cross the river to the south bank. Normally the hostile parties performing this task were small and only on a few occasions could they have been classed as combat patrols. This probing on the part of the enemy was usually frustrated by our artillery or by our mortars and machine guns which were tied in with the close surveillance exercised over all fords. With the constant activity in the IV Corps Sector, it was not difficult for the enemy to deduce that an offensive was shaping up somewhere along our front. It was difficult, however, to determine where the attack would develop for enemy air reconnaissance was limited and the occasional prisoners captured by his patrols could offer little information, even if forced to talk. Similarly the number of civilians living along the Arno was too great to make complete evacuation practical, and many were undoubtedly in contact with the Germans, but their information was probably of doubtful value. The lack of knowledge concerning our plans made the period of waiting for the attack, a trying ordeal for German outposts along the Arno and the enemy reflected his nervousness by an increased sensitivity to any move made by our patrols.

At mid-month the need for greater concealment of those forces scheduled to initiate the main effort of the Fifth Army became apparent, and plans were put into operation to remove units destined for action with II Corps from the line for rest and training in river crossing techniques until time for the attack. To accomplish this, the right

boundary of IV Corps was shifted some 25 miles farther to the east along the Arno; and thus General Crittenberger was made responsible for the whole of the front from the mouth of the Arno to a point just 5 miles west of Florence. On 20 August, the date the new boundary became effective, with only Task Force 45 and the 1st Armored Division under his command, General Crittenberger lacked the necessary troops to hold a line 55 miles in length. Along the former Corps front, our forces had been spread thinly with frontages of approximately 7,000 to 8,000 yards per battalion, but with the drastic increase of frontage now ordered, it was imperative that additional units be attached in order to establish even a light river screen, and to have available a mobile reserve which was essential. The 85th Division was transferred to IV Corps control along with the additional frontage, but since this Division was to take part in the coming operation of II Corps, it was to be withdrawn from the line as soon as possible.

In order to supply the focus required to replace the 85th Division, it was planned to transfer the 6th South African Armored Division from 13 Corps by 27 August. Until this move was completed, the 85th Division continued under control of IV Corps, to hold the old sector. General Crittenberger estimated that when the 6th South African Armored Division came into the line, he would have 14 infantry battalions, each holding a front of from 7,000 to 8,000 yards. Behind this thin screen of forward troops, the tank battalions of the two armored divisions would provide a close mobile reserve.

With the increase in the Corps front and the relief of most of the 85th Division by the 6th South African Armored Division, it was

necessary to widen the sector of the 1st Armored Division by shifting its right boundary eastward. Additional reserve support came from 350th Infantry Regiment of the 88th Division, which was sent to Leghorn on 21 August to be under Army control, and from a second regiment held at Montaione to support the right flank if necessary. The movement of the South Africans and the relief of the 85th Division was actually accomplished by 0500, 26 July. For the first time, IV Corps had under its command an entire division of British Commonwealth troops. As additional reinforcements for the Corps, the newly landed 370th Regimental Combat Team, the first increment of the Negro 92d Infantry Division, had been attached on 18 August, although not yet fully equipped for action.

Because of the limited strength of the Armored Infantry, the 370th Regimental Combat Team was attached to the 1st Armored Division. After receiving full equipment, the first of the new battalions reached an assembly area on the night of 24 August while the remaining infantry and artillery units were scheduled to close by daylight, 27 August. On the night of 25 August, the 3d Battalion, 370th Infantry, entered the line, relieving the Infantry of Combat Command "A", which was then free to move to the right and take over from the remaining elements of the 85th Division. Before night another battalion became available for reserve. With its artillery in immediate support, the 370th Regimental Combat Team began its battle indoctrination under the Operational Control of the veteran Combat Command "A".

It was an ideal opportunity for the combat training of the Negro troops as Pontedera was a hot spot. The town was packed to the rafters

N O T E

There is no page missing. On review and after all pages were numbered, it was discovered that page 288 was not entered here. Rather than re-number all pages of this draft, it was deemed wiser to insert this blank page as number 288 and at a later date when the history is completed, with illustrations and maps, the error can be rectified.

with mines and booby traps and it bordered the Arno River, which marked the foremost American positions. German machine guns were less than 200 yards away. The new troops were taught to exercise the greatest caution in movement about the town, as a precaution against setting off mines and booby traps, as well as a precaution against calling down the enemy's observed artillery fire.

It was in this area that the Americans demonstrated to the Italian natives that their Army was possessed of a regard for the safety of the inhabitants in the area. When the 47th Armored Medical Battalion of the 1st Armored Division learned that the freshly shell-smashed main hospital in the town was still occupied with sick and injured Italians, the Ambulance Platoon of "B" Company was ordered to evacuate the 300 aged and invalided patients. For 3 days and nights the ambulance drivers and stretcher bearers worked steadily to remove the hapless civilians. Although the Germans frequently shelled the vehicles as they went to and from the town, only one ambulance was hit, but no one was hurt.

Aggressive patrolling on our part resulted in several successful penetrations into hostile territory on the north bank, but the prompt and warm reception which the Germans always gave to these nocturnal visits was sufficient proof that his outposts were still there. Around the clock the artillery on both sides was active. The apprehensive enemy was quick to deliver accurate fire, well adjusted, by observers, at our slightest movement on the Arno flats. After our aerial photos and reports from Cub and ground observers had gradually developed the enemy's battery positions, the guns of IV Corps opened deadly effective

counterbattery fire against every German gun that spoke. It was unhealthy in the extreme to move about on either bank of the river within range of the opposing mortars and to sleep by night in the open flats was to court capture.

For the remaining few days of August the activities of the tense and watchful enemy on our front continued to be characterized by the probing of aggressive patrols and by his constant attempts at infiltration, doubtless to learn of our plans and dispositions. Certainly the shifting order of battle and thinly veiled movements which paraded on the south bank would have confused the most experienced G-2 of the enemy.

In a few instances, well trained enemy groups supported by artillery fire, were successful in capturing some of our outposts. These assault groups had been specially trained and organized in each regiment in accordance with Kesselring's orders. The 65th Infantry Division was particularly active and successful in its employment of these groups. The enemy used two general types of patrols along the Corps front, most of which were sent across the Arno River during darkness. The first was the Reconnaissance Patrol, comprised of from 3 to 5 men with a mission of reconnoitering our front lines to ascertain dispositions, locations, sizes and probable intentions of our units. The other type was the combat control, consisting of from 8 to 15 men with a mission of capturing prisoners, apparently by any ruse, for in a few instances these combat patrols employed ambushes with considerable success. A very clever method was to cut a telephone wire and lie in wait for our repair details, but this ruse worked effectively only

until our wire parties were increased in size, giving them the means for self-defense. A captured noncommissioned officer told how their patrols would frequently remain in one spot for hours to observe a locality that was under suspicion.

Disposed with Task Force 45, the 1st Armored Division and the 6th South African Armored Division, in order from left to right, IV Corps held nearly 60 miles of defensive positions south of the Arno River, and awaited the scheduled advance of the Allied armies to cross the Arno and assault the Gothic Line. Plans were ready for the moment when the Corps might be directed to force a river crossing, follow up an enemy withdrawal or perform further missions of deception. Although prepared to meet any eventuality, it saw the month of August exhaust itself with no change in the Corps mission. There was a faint consolation for its comparative inactivity, because IV Corps could point to ample evidence that the Germans grew more worried on account of what might happen at any hour of any day along the meandering Arno.

It is true that there were no full scale tactical operations during the period, but the troops that held the line were as subjected to enemy artillery fire as they would have been during an advance. A count of active enemy gun locations yielded a total of some 200 artillery pieces in front of the Corps. The bulk of this artillery was grouped generally north of Pisa between the coast and the M. Pisano hill mass; a second grouping was located east of the hill mass in the vicinity of Bientina-Montecavoli. The 764th Heavy Artillery Battalions (170-mm and 150-mm Howitzers) was included in the grouping north of Pisa, but the last reported 170-mm shelling of Leghorn was on 30 July. It was

believed that the heavy pieces not damaged by our counterbattery fire were moved to the east and out of the IV Corps zone. This group north of Pisa concentrated its fire on the area just south of that town and to the west thereof. For many days medium shelling had been greatly exceeded by light caliber shelling. His fire appeared to be mostly harassing in nature on road junctions at night and on forward elements during daylight hours, but many of the concentrations consisted of only a few rounds. The enemy's ammunition expenditure averaged about 600 rounds daily. Although of a sporadic and harassing nature, it was nevertheless observed fire and accounted for most of the 84 American casualties suffered by IV Corps during the month.

B. THE STAFF IN REVIEW.

Since 20 July the Headquarters of IV Corps had been encamped in the small town of Casciana Alta. The tents and trailers were spread out under the ripened olive groves and plum orchards and surrounded by the rustic evidences of a weary small farm. Here in this command post area the headquarters troops rested while the staff worked on plans for the inevitable river crossing. It was a welcome pause and an opportunity to resume a somewhat regulated life, unbroken by any daily moves. The sun shown brightly through clear skies, making the days pleasant and quite warm - not the type heat that could not be broken by the occasional thunder showers that came out of the Apennines to the north. The comparative lull along the entire front was reflected in the life of the headquarters during the first half of August. The same as for the combat troops on the front, it was cleaning up time for the headquarters personnel. Native women were deluged with OD laundry and on heavy wash days the green, fertile landscape was marred with brown splotches where

the shirts and trousers belonging to the troops, were being dried in the sun. Not only was this a period of prosperity for the Italian wash-women, but the families who were fortunate to have had some chickens after the German deluge swept by, profited from the sale of fresh eggs. The wines of this Tuscany country were of better taste than the sourer vintages from the vicinity of Grosseto or Lake Averno. The town of Bagni di Casciana was a favorite rendezvous for the men and officers who delighted in the mineral baths for which the town was noted. For a lira or two, one could soak himself all day in the mineral baths made luke warm by Mother Nature. For more effective means of scrubbing off the dust which had for a month penetrated the top layers of skin and scalp, the Corps bath units were resorted to. Volterra, famous for its alabaster works was constantly visited by many troops whose successful price haggling was evidenced by jeeps full of alabaster products. Today many alabaster vases, dishes, pitchers and urns adorn parlors and living rooms of veterans of IV Corps.

The lull provided opportunities to concentrate on other activities intended to produce a high state of morale. Unit rest centers were established within a short distance of unit bivouacs and whenever possible, large groups were sent to the Army rest centers in Rome. For the first time since passing through in pursuit of the enemy, many of the troops had an opportunity to visit the Eternal City. It was determined that the news of the successful advances of American and Allied armies on other fronts had been another powerfully favorable morale factor. The interest of all the troops in the news of the war was markedly keen. Through the activities of the Corps Special Services Section, radios

were provided for many units of the command. A daily news bulletin, "The IV Corps Rambler", containing up to the minute press and radio releases, was published and distributed so as to reach the troops in the late afternoon. As the demand for the "Stars and Stripes" increased, additional copies were secured and distributed.

Scheduled entertainment for the month included 11 USO Troupes shows, 78 motion pictures and a two-week run of the all soldier stage show, "By Pass to Berlin", produced by the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, with the assistance of the Corps Special Services Section and the IV Corps Band. The American Red Cross Mobile Club Units cooperated by providing refreshments and other Red Cross service to personnel attending such performances. This was in addition to their normal service to troops in the field. During this period many were held, during which decorations were awarded to deserving heroes.

During August, 91% of the food ration was the fresher, tastier "B" ration, the highest percentage of issue of the Italian Campaign up to that time. 727,907 "B" rations were consumed by the IV Corps troops as compared to the 14,702 "C" rations issued during the same period. This period of inactivity with opportunities for continuous food supply was further reflected by the fact that only, 1,414 "D" rations were handed out to the troops - more likely stored with units for possible emergency rather than for immediate consumption. Throughout the hot summer months, mobile refrigerator trucks and trailers were used extensively for the delivery of fresh meat to the troops. Since refrigeration supply at Piombino was very limited, most of this ration component had to be trucked from Civitavecchia; many of the

trucks covering 225 miles per day, but later when the Port of Leghorn was opened, supply of food was more convenient.

The various patching-up details necessary for deteriorated clothing and equipment kept Colonel F. E. Sweeney, Quartermaster Officer, constantly on the move during August. Arduous climbing and marching over many miles of rugged terrain called for shoe repairs. Napoleon may have once stated that, "An army marches on its stomach", but the Quartermaster Officer opined that to move, it must also march with good shoes. Arrangements were made with Army to locate a shoe repair section or a salvage repair company at the Class I truck-head established on the west side of the Corps zone of action. This relieved the Corps units of long hauls of shoes for repair and insured prompt shoe repair service. Thick dust from the Italian roads ate deep into woolen materials, therefore, blankets were the first items to receive attention when a laundry was established.

Although the balmy August days were warm, the nights were becoming chilly and soon the September nights were to be still colder; these were constant reminders of the approaching winter. With this in mind and the fact that the coming winter months might be spent atop the rugged Apennine Mountains, a representative of the Quartermaster General's office was available to exhibit to the officers of the headquarters and nearby units, samples of the new winter clothing soon to be issued. The winter of '43 - '44 spent by Fifth Army on the Winter Line had been a cold and excruciating one and its memory made the Quartermaster apprehensive lest supply plans were not completed for a possible encampment during the coming winter on the mountains to the north. They were much

higher than the mountains of the Winter Line and since they lay farther to the north, would naturally be much colder. An officers' sales store was set up near the Corps command post for the convenience of all officers of Corps units desiring to purchase clothing, shoes and accessories.

Colonel Ame Vennena, Ordnance Officer of IV Corps, was immersed in ammunition problems during the month. The inactivity in the front lines and the quiet of the entire sector was caused in part by the fact that Army had ordered a conservation of ammunition in order that the limited reserve of ammunition could be built up for the impending attack. Fifth Army put into effect a system of ammunition allocation for certain critical items which included practically all artillery and mortar shells. Delay in receiving the reduced ammunition allocations from Army caused overdrawing and over expenditure during the first ten day period, but with some juggling here and there, the error was rectified. It is needless to say that ammunition expenditures for the month of August was light, averaging only 130 tons per day.

New equipment and foreign weapons were issued to Corps troops, but no maintenance instructions or firing tables were included. The Corps Ordnance Officer, being a "Jack of all trades", had to work out and create his own instructions. For example, three German Howitzers and two German Anti-Aircraft guns were issued to the 1st Armored Division without firing tables or technical data. The Corps Ordnance Section secured some information but requested Army Ordnance to send technical personnel to assist them in familiarizing the using unit with these foreign weapons. When the new Medium Tanks, M4A3 were issued to the 1st Armored Division, no technical information or

spare parts were available within the theater. It was necessary for Army to request technical data by cable from the United States. When the infantry units were issued the Tube Extension T-1 81-mm mortars without any technical data or firing instructions, it was necessary for the Ordnance Section to extract the mounting instructions and firing tables from old firing data manuals. As a result, Colonel Vennena strongly recommended that every effort be made by higher echelon of Ordnance service to supply technical data and firing tables concurrently with the issues of any new or foreign types of ordnance materiel so that such weapons could promptly be employed. Efforts were also made to have the IV Corps Ordnance Section advised in advance of the issues, so that the required technical data could be assembled and the Commanding General and Staff could be informed of new Ordnance developments within the Corps.

Brigadier General W. C. Crane, Artillery Officer of IV Corps, experienced a change in artillery tactics when compared to the months past during which his guns fired, picked up and chased on to suddenly pull off the road and fire again. On this static front during August the infantry participation was modest when compared to the artillery duelling, during which IV Corps artillery belled forth in order to make up for the lack of voice of its mock-up batteries. To accomplish this, fifteen types of weapons were used, including those of the British artillery units. Variation in methods, technique and organization, and the unfamiliar weapons, presented a problem to which was solved by close liaison with the British and by accumulative experience. At first the British had no radics which could contact our observation planes.

Telephone relays from our ground sets were attempted but were time consuming and interfered with other needs for telephone communication, so our SCR 608 radios, with operators, were placed at British Fire Direction Centers in order to successfully solve the problem.

The combined Tank and Tank Destroyer Artillery Group employed as direct support artillery for Task Force 45, required considerable coordination by Headquarters IV Corps Artillery because of peculiarities of weapons, inadequate sighting equipment and limited training in indirect fire procedures, and fire direction methods. The flat trajectory of these weapons made fire adjustment difficult in hilly country and in heavy vegetation, and was further impaired by range dispersion. Positions from which the weapons could be utilized for defensive fire were difficult to obtain and again due to the flat trajectory, fire could not be placed as close to friendly troops as was desired. The two units, 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion and 751st Tank Battalion were grouped under the commanding officer of the first mentioned battalion, whose headquarters functioned similar to a field artillery group headquarters. Each Tank Destroyer Company of the 894th operated a Fire Direction Center and had attached to it ten medium tanks of the tank battalion. In spite of such limitations, this organization functioned very efficiently and performed its mission well. However, such an organization was not a satisfactory substitute for divisional artillery units.

In addition to its component artillery, the 1st Armored Division Artillery employed 24 medium tanks to supplement its fires. In an attempt to measure the assistance, perusal of records shows that these tanks

expended an average of 1400 rounds daily. Other tanks were moved close to the Arno River under cover of darkness and from many alternate positions harassed pre-arranged targets.

At the beginning of the period, forty-eight 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns were available to IV Corps Artillery fire, and by the end of the period, had been augmented by thirty-two. For the same reasons as enumerated for tanks and tank destroyers, the anti-aircraft artillery was initially used chiefly on unobserved missions. The height of bursts was difficult to sense over wooded areas because the black smoke was lost in the dark background. They had a 16,000-yard range, and were therefore able to reach beyond the light artillery; furthermore, the time-shell which they normally employed was well adapted for harassing. Therefore, as soon as provision could be made for the employment of forward observers the British "Ack-Ack" contributed to the effectiveness of the IV Corps Artillery. Most harassing missions were fired by using corrected map data which was checked by air observers; the corrected data thus obtained being used to transfer fire to a designated target.

The 8-inch Howitzers and 240-mm Howitzers, noted for their accuracy, were used primarily in precision adjustments on hostile batteries and fixed installations. Observation was furnished by both Cubs and Spitfires. Photographs, taken after fire missions were completed, showed that the enemy battery positions fired upon were well covered by craters which encompassed gun pits. The observation planes carried the brunt of the observed missions with equal success. Our devoted attention to the enemy artillery resulted in no shelling of Leghorn during August, and a marked decrease in enemy shelling throughout the Corps Sector.

Second to counter-battery in importance was the destruction of the bridges which spanned the numerous canals along the coast and in the Biéntina area. Destruction of these bridges meant the interruption of the supply lines so vital to the German front line elements. The heavy artillery carried out systematic destruction of key bridges, disrupting, yet canalizing and blocking traffic so that the harassing missions could be concentrated on with greater effect. One can plainly see that the variety of artillery scattered over such a wide front, its movements and regroupings and the restrictions placed on ammunition presented problems calling for an unusual amount of detailed planning and coordination. The comprehensive defensive fire plans prepared by each unit's artillery were coordinated by Corps Artillery Headquarters only to be changed because of the regrouping of artillery and changes of forward friendly elements. Then too there was a coast to guard and this required a plan involving the shifting of artillery.

Artillery men were not the only members of the cast that took part in this deceptive show, for the Signal Officer and the members of his section also have a hand in the IV Corps deception plan. A radio cover scheme to disguise the movement of troops to the east was placed into effect on 7 August when the 1st Armored Division moved into the line. At first radio communication was held to a minimum, but was gradually being built up by use of dummy radio traffic to a point where much more traffic was handled than had been normal for current tactical situation. The 6th South African Armored Division had commenced radio communication during their movement into the Corps zone on 23 August. This activity also was designed to indicate that a large scale attack

might be expected from the vicinity of Pontedera-Fucecchio, therefore there can be no doubt that when the German radio intercept picked up these messages, the enemy was in possession of another indication that strength was pouring into the IV Corps zone and spelled out a main attack from that area.

The shifting of the Corps boundary to the east caused wire communications to become over extended and made maintenance a difficult problem. Maintenance crews were assigned to each major command in order to decrease the time required to repair circuits. Construction crews were also assigned to Task Force 45 and IV Corps artillery, to assist them in their installations over the widely extended front.

Since the activities of the Engineer Section, pertaining to the deception plan have already been covered, comment here is confined to the normal engineering problems concerning bridge building and road maintenance. Even though the situation had assumed a static nature, the engineer work was by no means reduced. It increased drastically on the 20th of the month when the Corps zone was widened to include the 6th South African Armored Division, adding some 500 miles of road which had to be maintained. Many of these roads were narrow and winding with badly deteriorated surfaces that had suffered numerous enemy demolitions. When the fall rains commenced, several of the minor lateral roads became useless and had to be abandoned. However, it was possible to maintain the main forward and lateral roads and thereby prevent any interruption of the tremendous amount of motor traffic. At the same time the Engineer Section was occupied with the production of plans for the bridging of the Arno, come time for the crossing of that wet obstacle.

The Engineer troops available were definitely inadequate and had the rains continued, our difficulties would have increased. Furthermore, it was necessary to maintain at least one Engineer Company in close support of Task Force 45, which unlike a division combat team, had no organic Engineer units. It was astounding to find in the records at the end of the period that over 1,262 miles of roads had been maintained; 18 mine fields had been neutralized, with over 703 mines recovered. In accordance with defensive mission, 16 mine fields were laid along the south bank of the Arno, accomplished under direct enemy observation and artillery fire. Another incidental meriting comment was that 56,833 maps of the scale 1:25000 and 31,741 of scale 1:50000 were issued to the attached troops.

Although the month of August was a quiet one for Fifth Army, it was not so for the Seventh Army. On 15 August, the Seventh Army, composed of American and French troops, some of which fought recently under or along side of IV Corps, embarked at Naples and made an invasion landing on the southern coast of France on a 125 mile coastal strip between Marseille and Nice. Parachute and transport plane troops, including the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment which received its battle indoctrination under IV Corps, landed deep beyond the coast at 0430. Protected by warships, the first seaborne troops were ashore before 0800. A former commander of IV Corps, General Alexander M. Patch, successfully landed his Seventh Army on the southern French coast to add another barb into the under belly of Nazi Germany.



"APENNINE CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XI - - - - -

PLANS FOR THE ASSAULT

General Crittenberger's IV Corps was ready for any eventuality by the end of August. Rumor buzzed about that the attack across the Arno was to begin on 1 September, another had it scheduled for 12 September and while still another was to the effect that the Allies were to remain along the Arno during the coming winter. Wilder tales indicated that the Germans were going to pull back to Germany. As rumors do, they disappeared with the breeze when the final plans became known. IV Corps was now a full-fledged veteran of over three months continuous combat; it learned much about hard, fast pursuits and in the last months about maintaining a defensive position on a static front. Its next lesson was coming up - a major river crossing followed with a final examination on mountain warfare. Although the last three months had been eventful ones, full of learning, ahead lay greater accomplishments which were to ring true to the code name of "Keystone". With the kind permission of the reader, may the historian mention Mr. Winston's definition of the word "Keystone". "The stone at the topmost point of an arch which holds the whole structure in place." When the Apennine Campaign is concluded, it will be of interest to note whether there is a coincidental similarity between the accomplishments of IV Corps and the definition of this chance code name. Now let us look at the plans which the Allied High Command had drawn up on this supposedly "Forgotten Front"; forgotten by the world, perhaps, but not by the troops in Italy.

Until 16 August, Fifth Army planning was based on the assumption that the Allied armies would launch the main attack on the Gothic Line from positions north of Florence. On that date General Alexander ordered a change in strategy embodied in AAI Operation Order No. 3. Accumulating evidence of the strength of the Futa Pass defenses and the concentration of enemy divisions in the area made the success of the attack from Florence appear doubtful or at best, a slow and costly assault. North of Florence the enemy had the crack 4th Parachute Division, flanked on the west by the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, and on the east by the 356th Grenadier Division. The 26th Panzer Division in reserve, could be moved quickly to provide armored support, while the heavy tanks of the 508th Heavy Panzer Battalion were available in the Florence area.

General Alexander's new plan was to throw the enemy off balance and to gain surprise by unexpectedly and swiftly shifting his main attack to the Adriatic coast. When this thrust had gained sufficient momentum to endanger the enemy's flank, Kesselring would be forced to throw in additional troops to meet that threat, for he could meet a major attack on any one part of the front only by robbing another sector of the line. As soon as he weakened the central sector, Fifth Army was to be prepared to strike north along the original Florence-Bologna axis to Bologna while Eighth Army broke into the Po Valley, exploiting to a line from Bologna to Ferrara. If the attack succeeded, the German Tenth Army would be caught in a trap between the two Allied armies. Once in the Po Valley, Eighth Army was to be prepared to secure a bridgehead over the Po river north of Ferrara; Fifth Army

to take Modena and then exploit to the north and northwest. The plan was a bold one designed not only to crack the Gothic Line defenses and reach the lower Po, but also to destroy a large part of Kesselring's forces.

The success of General Alexander's plan depended to a great extent on the degree of surprise and achievement of complete coordination and timing. If Fifth Army was to attack from Florence, more troops would be needed, but since there were no American reserves in Italy, reinforcements had to come from the British. Consequently, 13th Corps was transferred to Fifth Army, thereby reducing Eighth Army's long front, making its attack more of a flank attack and extending the zone through which Fifth Army would execute its frontal attack. The new boundary between the two armies left Siena within the Eighth Army sector, ran east along Highway 73, to Monte San Savino, and then almost due north approximately 20 miles east of Florence. D-Day for the Eighth Army was to be determined by General McCreery, but General Alexander, after consultation with General Clark, was to decide when Fifth Army would launch its effort. In order not to be poised for too long, it was decided that Fifth Army would not attack prior to D plus 5. Choosing the proper time for the commitment of Fifth Army was essential, - if too soon, the attack might prove abortive, if too late, the plan for trapping the enemy might fail. Surprise was to be gained by concealing the build-up of Eighth Army on the Adriatic coast and by emphasizing preparations for an attack by Fifth Army. Fifth Army was to make every effort to convey the impression that both corps were attacking on a front extending from Pontassieve to Pontedera, and the activities necessary to create this

illusion were to be continued in full until Fifth Army's actual attack was launched.

This change in Allied strategy resulted in scrapping the preliminary plans worked out by Fifth Army, and the publication on 17 August, of Operations Instructions No. 32. The main effort of Fifth Army's offensive was now shifted to the east between Florence and Pontassieve. The attack was to be in two phases; in the first phase, II Corps, making the main effort, was to attack through the British troops holding Florence, capture and secure Mounts Morello, Semario and Calvana, while 13 Corps was to take Mount Giovi. The 13 Corps troops west of Florence were to be relieved by II Corps by 20 August; those within the II Corps zone of attack were to remain in position acting as a screening force until passed through. Once these objectives were captured, the way would be open to the Sieve Valley and to the approaches of the Gothic Line, so that in the second phase, II Corps would be able to continue the attack on Army Order along the axis Highway 65 with 13 Corps following the axis of the San Pietro-Imola Road.

In order to permit the concentration of II Corps troops in the Florence Area, General Crittenberger's troops had been holding the front from the mouth of the Arno to a point five miles east of Florence. During the first phase of the Army attack, IV Corps was to simulate a crossing of the Arno between Mount Pisano and Mount Albano, with the emphasis in the vicinity of Fucecchio which was near the center of its fifty-five mile zone. It was also to be prepared to follow up any enemy withdrawal.

A. THE APENNINES.

Facing our troops the mountain barrier known as the Northern Apennines, extended from the Ligurian Alps southeast across the Italian peninsula nearly to Rimini on the Adriatic. Then they run southward close to the coast for a short distance before gradually swinging inland to become the Central Apennines which forms the backbone of the long Italian boot. The north side of the Northern Apennines meets the broad fertile plain of the Po River in a slightly curved line; to the south they drop away abruptly to the narrow coastal plain along the Ligurian Sea and irregularly to the plain along the Arno. At its narrowest point, between Florence and Bologna, the range is approximately 50 miles wide, and scattered throughout, individual mountains rise to over 7,000 feet, making the Northern Apennines at all points a deep and formidable obstacle to an advance into the Po Valley.

Although the alignment of the Northern Apennines is southeast-northwest, erosion caused by numerous transverse streams has cut out numerous irregular spurs projecting northeast and southwest. The ill-defined summit line averaging 3000-4000 feet, lies toward the southwest edge of the range so that the slopes which faced our troops were generally steep while those facing northeast were relatively long and moderate. The principal streams follow relatively direct, parallel courses northeast to the Po Valley and southwest to the Arno and the Ligurian coast; a few, such as the Sieve River, which flows almost due east to form a valley 15 miles north of Florence, violate this pattern. There is also considerable interlocking of headwaters of streams flowing in opposite directions so that the watershed fails to correspond to the summit line. The Reno River, which flows into the Adriatic on a course parallel to the Po, rises only

6 miles north of Pistoia which is situated at the foot of the southwest slope; Lima Creek, a tributary to the Arno, rises 12 miles northwest of the source of the Reno. The eroding effect of the mountain streams together with the irregular geologic formation of the Northern Apennines has served to divide the range into a number of compartments marked by broken ridges, spurs, and deep gorges; the whole offering to the enemy an excellent series of defensive positions.

Through the principal river valleys run roads which in most cases, cross the mountains by taking of natural passes. In line with the dominant pattern of spurs and stream lines, these roads run northeast-southwest, a single exception being the Florence - Bologna road, which follows a south-north axis. Seven state roads connect the Arno and Po Valleys. From La Spezia on the west coast Highway 62 goes to Parma and Highway 63 to Reggio; Highway 12 connects Lucca and Modena; Highway 64, Pistoia and Bologna; and three roads cross the mountains from Florence. Highway 65 to Bologna, Highway 67 to Forli and Highway 71 to Cesena. The passes by which these roads surmount the ridges vary from 2,962 feet, the height of Futa Pass on Highway 65, to 4,553 feet, the height of Abetone Pass on Highway 12. Few lateral roads connect the main highways, and secondary roads are limited in number. All roads are marked by twisting curves, sharp gradients, and narrow defiles; bridges over the mountain streams are often hard to bypass; and landslides are frequent even without the assistance of German demolition experts. The few railways through the mountains were easily blocked by destroying the bridges and blowing in the entrances to the numerous tunnels.

In contrast to the rolling, extensively cultivated hill country of central Italy, the mountains of the Northern Apennines are so rugged that movement of wheeled or tracked vehicles off the roads is seldom possible.

In large areas cart tracks or mule trails offer the only local routes of communication. Villages are small and are generally confined to the valleys or to the main roads. The valleys, low hills, and lower slopes of the mountains are cultivated with grain fields, vineyards, and olive groves. Upper slopes are covered with chestnut trees, scrub oak, and pine forests wherever there the soil is deep enough, but many of the mountains have precipitous, bare rock slopes, razorback ridges, and sheer cliffs.

Late in September the fall rains begin. Mountain streams which virtually dry up in the summer months change to raging torrents in a few hours' time, and fog and mist, accompanying the cloudy days, often reduced visibility to nearly zero. By late October snow begins to fall on the higher peaks, and in midwinter the passes through the mountains are sometimes blocked to traffic for short periods. The problems of conducting offensive operations in the mountains, difficult at best, are greatly increased once the fall rains and cold weather set in.

Before reaching the Northern Apennines it would be necessary for our troops to cross the Arno River and the broad plains lying between the river and the mountains. The Arno flows north from Arezzo to join the Sieve River at Pontassieve, 10 miles east of Florence, and then proceeds almost due west for 65 miles to enter the Ligurian Sea at Marina de Pisa. The river averages 200-250 feet in width; its depth shows great seasonal variation, accentuated by a system of 20 to 30 foot levees on both banks which serve to hold the river in flood stages from spreading over the low, reclaimed land on each side. In late summer, before the September rains, the river can be forded at several points by vehicles, and foot troops can wade across almost at will. At Florence the foothills of the Northern Apennines reach nearly to

the river, west of Florence the mountains curve back to the northwest, leaving a broad, level plain approximately 15 miles wide on the north side of the river. Two spurs extending southeast from the Northern Apennines divide this plain into three parts. Fifteen miles west of Florence the Mount Albano ridge, which reaches a peak elevation of 2,014 feet high, provides observation over the western half.

Numerous roads cross the plain. A four-lane superhighway, the Autostrada, describes an arc through the northern portion of the plain, connecting Florence with Pistoia, Lucca and the coastal road north just of Pisa; and a good network of secondary roads branches out from these large towns to the numerous rural villages which dot the fertile farmland. Much of this farmland consists of reclaimed swamps and is crisscrossed with drainage canals. In the dry summer months armor can operate almost at will through the valley, but the complex system of canals with their built-up banks offer excellent antitank ditches and delaying positions.

On either coast the Northern Apennines give way to narrow coastal plains. The coastal lowland along the Ligurian Sea extends from the mouth of the Arno to the Magra River below La Spezia, diminishing in width from 9 miles at Pisa to 3 miles at Massa. From Pisa north to the resort center of Viareggio large areas consist of reclaimed bogland covered with planted pine woods or small cultivated fields and traversed by numerous canals. From the Arno to the Magra River the beaches are sandy and favorable for amphibious operations; north of the Magra the mountains border the sea, and the coastline is too rocky to permit a large-scale landing.

In addition to the tremendous advantage given the enemy by the natural strength of the mountain barrier facing the Allied Armies in Italy, the road

not available for the movement of troops and supplies in the Po Valley is more extensive and better integrated than the corresponding facilities south of the mountains. Close to and paralleling the clean-cut northern edge of the Apennines is Highway 9, running from Rimini northwest to Milan, Italy's largest industrial city. Along Highway 9 are Cesena, Forli, Bologna, Modena, Reggio, and Parma, all termini of highways crossing the Northern Apennines. Until our troops could cut the "Key-way", Highway 9, it would be easy for the Germans to switch troops rapidly from one part of the front to another and to keep supplies moving up the roads into the mountains. Bologna, terminus to Highway 65, the best route across the mountains, is both an important rail and road center and provided an excellent nerve-center for the enemy's supply system.

Florence, at the southern end of Highway 65, is the main center for communications south of the mountains. Two roads connect it with the Ligurian coast: the autostrada following the northern edge of the Arno Plain and Highway 67 paralleling the south bank of the Arno. In mid-August the former road was in enemy territory, and the latter was too close to the enemy lines to be used. Supplies reached Fifth Army through the ports of Civitavecchia and Piombino where they were transferred to trucks and carried forward on Highway 1 along the coast and over secondary roads leading north from Highway 68, the first good lateral road south of Highway 67. Past experience indicated that the railroads in the Arno Valley which parallel the Autostrada and Highway 67 would be rendered useless for months as a result of the work of the German demolition experts; but once the almost demolished port of Leghorn could be repaired and the enemy cleared from the north bank of the Arno thereby permitting work on the blown bridges and demolished houses blocking Highway 67, the supply lines of Fifth Army would be shortened.

B. ENEMY DEFENSES.

The Germans began to construct defenses in the Northern Apennines when Fifth Army was still engaged in breaking through the Winter Line 200 miles to the south. Under the direction of the Todt Organization, which had built Germany's West Wall and eastern defense lines, approximately 15,000 Italian farmers and laborers were herded into labor camps and forced to manually dig antitank ditches, gun replacements, machine gun pits, trenches, and personnel shelters. Work continued at an increasing tempo during the summer months as the Allied armies drove past Rome and drew closer to northern Italy. The stiff resistance our troops met as they approached the Arno was in part due to enemy efforts to gain time in order to complete his defenses before falling back to the mountains.

The main line of defense, named by the Germans the "Goten Stellung" or Gothic Line, was sited to take maximum advantage of the rugged Apennines and the limited number of roads across them. In general it followed the south side of the water divide rather than the crest line, which, though higher, is more irregular and is pierced at several points by streams flowing northeast into the Po Valley. In the IV Corps zone, starting from the west coast near the town of Massa, the Gothic Line swung southeast through the heights overlooking the Ligurian coast, then east across the narrow valley of the Serchio River, and through the mountains north of Lucca, Pescia and Pistoia. Above Pistoia the line crossed the headwaters of the north-flowing Reno River and curved northeast toward the zone of II Corps length of the line from coast to coast was approximately 170 miles, too great a distance to permit the construction of continuous defenses, characteristic of the West Wall, with the limited time and resources available to the Todt Organization in Italy. On the other hand, the paucity of

good roads and passes through the mountains made it possible for the Germans to concentrate their defensive works at a few key points, and these were equal to anything met at Cassino.

Topographically the weakest point in the Gothic Line was at Futa Pass where Highway 65 crossed. With an elevation of 2,962 feet, one of the lowest of the Apennine passes, the terrain was less precipitous than in other portions of the range. Highway 65, connecting Florence and Bologna, was by no means void of curves, but was one of the best and most direct roads through the mountains. Highway 65, being the logical route for an attacking force to follow, the Germans made the Futa Pass Area the strongest section of the Gothic Line defenses.

Similar defenses extended west of Highway 65 as far as the hills covering the Prato-Bologna road above Vernio and on to the west in the mountains north of Montasatini giving strong flank protection for approximately 7 miles on each side of Futa Pass. For the remaining 150 miles of the Gothic Line the Germans relied heavily on the natural defenses provided by the more rugged mountains, concentrating their pillboxes, minefields, and tank obstacles to cover the river valleys and passes. The Serchio Valley was heavily fortified in this manner.

In portions the IV Corps zone lying between the Arno River and the Gothic Line there were few fixed defenses. Italian civilians who filtered through the enemy lines and German prisoners captured by IV Corps reported that in the Arno Plain there existed a Gisela, a Gudrun and an Edith Line, all successive delaying positions in the Lucca - Pistoia area. The Ligurian coastal plain north of Marina de Pisa was more strongly fortified. Fear of amphibious operations had led the Germans to construct coast defenses at such points as Viareggio and Marina de Carrara long before our

troops reached the Arno. During July and August these defenses were improved, and lateral lines of defense from the sea to the mountains were constructed to oppose any landing in that area. Along the Arno itself the enemy had only machine gun nests, minefields, and road blocks built by the troops holding the river line. The character of these defenses indicated that the enemy intended to use them only to delay our troops while covering his withdrawal to the mountains if necessary.

Information concerning the location and strength of the Gothic Line defenses was obtained primarily through the study of air photographs. First reports of the existence of such a line and of the activities of the Todt Organization in the area were checked on photographs by Base Section Mediterranean Army Interpretation Unit (West) as early as December 1943. During the spring months reconnaissance planes photographed the area at regular intervals, and in June 1944, on the basis of information then available, a set of 1:50000 scale overprints of the entire Gothic Line were issued to Fifth and Eighth Armies. After that the IV Corps Photo Intelligence Officer, Captain Roy Russel (British) assumed responsibility for the interpretation of photos of the portion of the line within the Corps zone. Defense overprints and mosaics were issued periodically when changes and additions to the defenses were revealed in new photographs. By the time IV Corps was prepared to attack, photo interpretation, yielded very detailed information, particularly of the Serchio Valley and Highway 64. Accurate information concerning many individual works was obtained from escaped Italian engineers who had assisted in their design and from escaped Italian laborers who had been engaged in their construction.

C. STRENGTH AND DISPOSITION OF ENEMY FORCES.

In mid-August the enemy forces facing the Allied Armies in Italy and in immediate reserve totaled 21 divisions; 6 divisions opposite Fifth Army, 14 opposite Eighth Army, and 1 division, the 90th Panzer Grenadier (Armored Infantry) Division, in the Bologna area. Beginning at the west coast the units facing IV Corps consisted of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Reichsfuehrer SS," the 65th Grenadier (Infantry) Division, the 26th Panzer (Armored) Division, and the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, with the infantry regiments of the 362d Grenadier Division attached to the latter two units and the 20th GAF (German Air Force) Field Division guarding the coast at Viareggio. The Fourteenth Army under Lt. Gen (General of the Armored Forces) Joachim Lemelsen held the western sector of the Gothic Line opposite Fifth Army and 13 Corps.

The units of Fourteenth Army holding the Arno River line were the same ones which had fought the delaying action against IV Corps north of Rome, while the mobile units such as the 3d, 15th, 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier and the 26th Panzer Divisions had been in action almost constantly since the beginning of the May offensive. All were tired and understrength and many were in the process of reorganization. The 20th GAF Field Division had recently absorbed the 19th GAF Field Division, and the 65th Grenadier Division, after being nearly annihilated at Anzio, had been withdrawn and rebuilt with Volkadeutsche from the Ost Preussen Division. The 26th Panzer Division made up its losses by absorption of the 1027th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and by the attachment of the Infantry Lehr Brigade the 1059th and 1060th Grenadier Regiments (originally part of the disbanded 92d Grenadier Division) from the 362d Grenadier Division. Similarly the depleted 3d Panzer Grenadier Division was strengthened by the

attachment of the 956th Grenadier Regiment, also from the 362d Grenadier Division.

While IV Corps sat along the Arno, Lemelsen took advantage of the opportunity to give his troops a much needed rest while the Todt Organization rushed work on the Gothic Line. The practice of attaching infantry regiments to divisions facilitated the withdrawal of the organic bulk of these divisions from the line for rest and made possible the formation of a much needed mobile reserve. During August only a shell of enemy troops were kept along the Arno, all the rest being withdrawn to positions within the Gothic Line.

The enemy's front line was supported by a number of general headquarters artillery units including the 764th Heavy Artillery Battalion (170-mm guns and 150-mm howitzers) which was reputed to have shelled Leghorn the 451st Artillery Battalion (150-mm howitzers and 105-mm guns), and the 51st Light Artillery Battalion (105-mm gun/howitzers). Two Nebelwerfer regiments were also identified in the Arno Plain, the 56th and 71st, equipped with 6-barreled 150-mm and 5-barreled 210mm Nebelwerfers. Toward the end of August the enemy began moving his artillery back to prepared positions in the Gothic Line, placing the burden of artillery support on his self-propelled artillery. The 216th Assault Gun Battalion (150-mm howitzers mounted on Mark IV chassis) which had been met previously in the Tyrrhenian coastal area, the 907th Assault Gun Battalion (105-mm howitzers mounted on Mark IV chassis) was located in the Florence area. Two other assault gun battalions, the 914th and 242d, were in operation on the Adriatic coast. Although there were shortages in some types of ammunition, it could be expected that the Gothic Line positions would be well stocked. Enemy tanks, which could be employed as roving artillery, totaled

approximately 350, of which half were heavy Mark V Panthers, the other half Mark VI Tigers, both organized into independent units.

The enemy's air strength in Italy had declined steadily until it had reached a point verging on impotence. This was due to our constant air offensive, and the necessity of withdrawing planes from Italy to meet the increasing allied pressure from both the eastern and western fronts. In August there were approximately 40 single-engine fighters and 25 long-range and 20 tactical reconnaissance planes as well as 50 Italian fighter planes operating from fields in northern Italy, that could be expected to operate in defense of Italian targets. The offensive strength of the German Air Force in Italy was even weaker, amounting only to 35 obsolete Junkers 87 (Stukas) belonging to second-line night ground attack units. Bombers based in Yugoslavia also were second-rate planes, and the threat of raids from fields in southern France was eliminated when these fields were captured by Seventh Army. With the exception of occasional night-harassing raids by one or two bombers, our troops were hardly aware of the existence of the once formidable Luftwaffe.

Before the invasion of southern France the German forces north of the Apennines were located to protect either coast against amphibious attacks. After the invasion, which brought with it the possibility of an Allied attack across the Franco - Italian border, Kesselring was forced to concentrate his reserves in position to defend this exposed flank. Most of the 5th Mountain Division was transferred from the eighth Army front, and the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division left its reserve position behind the Gothic Line to join the none too strong 148th and 157th Reserve Divisions and the 42d Light and 34th Grenadier Divisions in guarding the frontier. Protection

of the coasts was left to the 94th, 232d and 237th Grenadier Divisions on the east, and to an Italian "Ligurian Army" under the command of Marshal Rodolfo Graziani on the west. By September six Italian divisions had been identified in the "Ligurian Army": The San Marco, Monte Rosa, Prince Borghese, Italia, Littoria, and Milizia Armata. These divisions were still in the process of formation with few troops who had undergone battle experience. Although some units had been sent to Germany for training and indoctrination, it was unlikely that they would be employed in the Gothic Line. The bulk of the Italians were still organized as labor troops in small independent battalions or were serving within German units in supply and service functions.

At the end of August Kesselring had 27 German divisions and elements of six Italian divisions in Italy. By the removal of two divisions from the theater, the shift of two others to the Franco - Italian border and the addition of the 98th Grenadier Division to the front opposite Eighth Army, the force immediately available to defend the Gothic Line was thus reduced from 21 to 18 divisions. Many of the units were still so far below strength that the 27 German divisions in Italy were probably equivalent to not over 15 full divisions. The process of reorganizing and strengthening the older and more experienced divisions and a period of rest had, however, improved them considerably when compared to their condition on 18 July when IV Corps first reached the Arno River. Furthermore, the task of supplying these troops, although rendered difficult by the continuous activity of Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force, was being successfully accomplished. In a 3-day period beginning 12 July, all road and rail bridges across the Po River used to carry supplies to the Gothic

Line were knocked out by medium bombers of the 57th and 42d Bombardment Wings. The Germans met this crisis by the use of ferries, pipelines, and ingeniously designed ponton bridges which were thrown across the river early each night and disassembled before daylight. Within a few days after the loss of the permanent bridge supplies were again moving across the Po Valley to the Northern Apennines. Until the Allied troops could break through the Gothic Line and reach the Po Valley, the German position in Italy was as strong as at any previous time in the Italian campaign.

"APENNINE CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XII - - - - -

IV CORPS APPROACHES THE GOTHIC LINE

The efforts made by the enemy to meet the threat of the powerful Eighth Army offensive on the Adriatic coast brought a radical change in the situation on the Fifth Army front. Once the main Eighth Army attack was launched on 25 August, Marshall Kesselring was forced to strain his resources to the utmost in order to provide the troops necessary to prevent the collapse of his left flank. Any plans he might have entertained of fighting a slow delaying action from the Arno to the Gothic Line were abandoned when he was forced to transfer both reserve and front line troops to the Adriatic, thereby critically thinning his forces opposite Fifth Army. Rather than risk the danger of having troops, still holding along the Arno west of Florence, cut off by a Fifth Army attack, the enemy began a planned withdrawal toward the Gothic Line. That the German 14th Army was pulling back on the IV Corps front became evident on 31 August. On that day the Army Commander forwarded a message to his Corps Commanders ordering them to initiate the instructions contained in Fifth Army Operations Instructions No. 32. Although the extent of the enemy withdrawal was not immediately known, it appeared possible that the preliminary phase of the Fifth Army plan could be accomplished before the main attack was ordered.

The message to General Crittenberger called for a reconnaissance in force of the Mount Albano and Mount Pisano areas. Not less than

one company of infantry was to be used in each area, and if the situation proved favorable, IV Corps was to follow up at once with sufficient strength to occupy the two objectives. For the task of crossing the Arno, additional bridging equipment and engineer support was to be provided by Army Engineers. On the night of 31 August, floating bridge equipment arrived and was set across the river. Although IV Corps patrols had encountered enemy fire at numerous points along the Arno on 30-31 August, the sound of enemy demolitions and the reports from Italian Partisans that the Germans were blowing up bridges and ammunition supplies, indicated that the withdrawal was under way. The Corps G-2, Colonel Wells, estimated that the enemy had left only small rear guard groups along the Arno, which would consist of not over a reinforced company, liberally supplied with automatic weapons, self-propelled guns and a few tanks, in each battalion sector. Once this thin line was broken through, only isolated enemy groups, mines and demolitions would hold up the advance until the delaying positions in front of the Gothic Line were reached. Acting on this estimate, and in accordance with the instructions from the Army Commander, General Crittenger ordered reinforced company patrols to cross the Arno on the night of 31 August - 1 September, and that preparations be made for a large scale crossing the following night.

During the night, 31 August - 1 September, Task Force 45 on the left, the 1st Armored Division in the center, and the 6th South African Armored Division on the right, each sent reinforced patrols across the river at a number of points. In the zone of the South

Africans most of the patrols reported no contact, however, they did encounter numerous enemy mines. The 1st Armored Division, with the 370th Combat Team attached, crossed reinforced companies at four different places. One company was from the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion and one from each of the 1st, 2d and 3d Battalions, 370th Infantry. Nowhere was the enemy encountered in any force, but abandoned positions, information from scattered civilians, fresh demolitions along the highways, all made up the now familiar pattern of Germans withdrawal. The rumors of an enemy withdrawal were now confirmed and it was decided that instead of waiting for nightfall, the time for crossing would be advanced to 1000, 1 September. The previous weeks of patrolling the river banks and the preparation of plans for an attack made the task of locating favorable crossing sites quite easy.

A. ACROSS THE ARNO

1. 1st Armored Division

The mission of taking Mount Pisano was assigned by Major General Vernon E. Prichard to the commander of Combat Command "A", Colonel Hamilton H. Howze. Company Command "A" consisted of the attached 370th Infantry, (less Company "C"); the 1st Tank Battalion; Troop "B", 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron; and Company "C", 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion. All three battalions of the 370th Infantry, commanded by Colonel Raymond C. Sherman, crossed the river on Friday morning, the 1st of September. The 1st and 2d Battalions advanced to the east of Mount Pisano and the 3d Battalion to the west. Sniper fire and mines caused the only casualties along the river,

but as the troops pushed inland no opposition was encountered. On the fifth anniversary of the beginning of World War II, elements of IV Corps were across the Arno River and had entered into what was later to be called the Apennine Campaign.

Engineers cleared away the mines, improved fords, and by 0300, 2 September, had a Class 30 Armored Force Treadway bridge in operation near Pontedera. Crossings were also made over fords at La Rotta, Cascine and Bucche. On 2 September the 3d Battalion, 370th Infantry, skirted the west side of Mount Pisano and reached the banks of the Serchio River 5 miles north of Pisa; the 1st Battalion, with one company riding on the tanks of the 1st Tank Battalion, swept forward along the east side of the mountain and advanced 6 miles to reach positions on the northern slopes; the 2d Battalion, leaving behind much of its equipment, followed mule trails directly onto the hill mass. Their progress was so rapid that the 4th Tank Battalion, which had moved three medium tank companies into positions south of the river to offer indirect fire support, found that by the time the guns had been registered in, it was unsafe to fire. Control of Mount Pisano was virtually assured by nightfall and numerous towns and villages north of the river had been occupied. These included Bientina, Calci, Buti and Cascione.

In the open plain to the east of Mount Pisano, Combat Command "B" under the command of Colonel Laurence R. Dewey, crossed the Arno with the 11th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions; Company "C", 370th Infantry; the 13th Tank Battalion, and the 701st Tank Battalion (less Companies "A" and "C"). By early afternoon of 1 September,

each of the two armored infantry battalions had two companies across the river between Castelfranco and Santa Croce, and tank destroyers were moving across. Two miles north of the river, tanks and other vehicles were unable to cross a large drainage canal. However, early the next morning, by employing Yankee ingenuity, it was possible to cross them in time to break up a concentration of enemy tank and small arms fire which was delaying the advance of the infantry. Advancing on a broad front across the open plain, and meeting only scattered resistance, Combat Command "B" moved to within 5 miles of the important road center of Altopascio. On the right the division reconnaissance force, made up of the bulk of the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and a company of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion skirted the edge of the Padule di Fucecchio, an extensive swamp area interspersed with canals, and reached positions less than 3 miles southeast of Altopascio.

2 - The 6th South African Armored Division

On 1 September the 6th South African Armored Division under command of Major General W. H. M. Poole, was holding a 20 mile sector of the Arno, extending from near Fucecchio to within 5 miles of the outskirts of Florence. Patrols from the 24th Guards Brigade which crossed the river the previous night had encountered an enemy patrol south of the river near Empoli and had wiped out an enemy pocket of resistance nearby. As late as 0900, 1 September, General Poole held a conference to discuss how best to conduct an opposed river crossing. Shortly thereafter, all the South African patrols

were reporting from all along the front that the enemy had pulled out, and by mid-afternoon, the 24th Guards Brigade had troops across the river, just west of Empoli. Three bulldozers constructing fords were disabled by mines, but by dark it was possible to start moving armor across. Driving north the next day between Mount Albano and the marshes on their left boundary, the Guards advanced 7 miles to match the progress of the 81st Reconnaissance Squadron on their left. Civilians and Partisans reported that Mount Albano on the Brigade's right flank was clear of the enemy. Partisans proved extensively useful in supplying information and on 2 September, they contributed 7 of the 21 prisoners taken in the 24th Guards Brigade area.

On the Division's right flank, during the afternoon of 1 September, the 12th South African Motorized Brigade, reinforced by the 74th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment, the 4/13 Battalion of the Frontier Force Rifle Regiment, and a squadron of the Natal Mounted Rifles from the Division Reconnaissance Regiment, also began crossing with the objective of clearing Mount Albano. One battalion, the Witwaterstrand Rifles De La Rey, suffered 17 casualties from mines and concentrated artillery fire near the railroad town of Montelupo, otherwise, enemy resistance was negligible. By 2 September the bulk of this reinforced Brigade had crossed the river and occupied the lower slopes of Mount Albano. The rough country made initial progress slow but by 3 September, Hill 614, the crest of Mount Albano had been reached and contact had been made with II Corps troops near Highway 66. To the South Africans, the mountain range on the other side of

the Arno Plain toward which they were heading, was a reminder of their own Kimberly Mountains.

3. Task Force 45

Task Force 45, which held the area from Mount Pisano west to the Ligurian Sea, initially was ordered to hold its positions south of the Arno. The time had come for this polyglot force to prove that it could fight and advance as infantrymen, and this was to be its first major attempt. Before noon on 1 September, General Crittenberger ordered Brigadier General Paul W. Rutledge, the Task Force Commander, to cross the 100th Infantry Battalion with six tanks in support, east of Pisa. Meeting only sporadic opposition, it was able to keep pace with the 3rd Battalion, 370th Infantry, advancing southwest of Mount Pisano and push patrols as far as the south bank of the Serchio River on the following day. During the morning of 2 September, the 435th Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion, using assault boats and what remained of the demolished bridge, crossed the Arno just to the east of Pisa, while tanks and tank destroyers crossed at a ford which the Engineers were able to improve. The armor then swung west to assist in the occupation of the northern portion of the city. Numerous mines and booby traps and moderate artillery fire from one particularly troublesome self-propelled gun constituted the only opposition. It did not take long, however, for the self-propelled gun to be blasted to eternal silence by our tank destroyers which had moved up to support the front line.

Following up the advance, the 434th Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion took over control of Pisa, while the 435th pushed north

to the Serchio River and during the evening, the British 34th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment crossed the Arno west of Pisa. Its progress was slow, for near Cascine Nuovo it was necessary to clean out one enemy strongpoint where 7 Germans were captured, and besides dense thickets and extensive mine fields temporarily barred the way. Although the enemy was bent on pulling back, he was still capable of snatching prisoners; one enemy rear guard group laid in wait and captured 12 British soldiers, part of a mine-clearing group.

In the Pisa area, stretching for several thousand yards on either side of the Arno was the vast canal system with its many bridges. Due to the heavy rains which filled the canals, the enemy's destruction of the bridges proved most effective in opposing our advance. Although the Germans resorted only to routine rear guard action, the area proved to be no exception as far as concerned the intricate and extensive mine fields and demolitions left behind by the Germans. Moving up the road to their last position before crossing the river, the 194th Field Artillery Battalion (8" Howitzers) encountered one mine that had been overlooked. The pressure of heavy traffic had finally brought the mine up to the detonation point, and No. 4 piece of "B" Battery caught the effects of the blast. Luckily no damage was done aside from blasting two of the "bogey" wheels loose from the gun carriage. A few minutes later and a quarter of a mile further up the road, "B" Battery again was the victim, this time a trailer with a water tank aboard was blown sky-high.

4. Consolidation

By nightfall on 2 September, the bulk of IV Corps' combat elements were across the Arno and its leading units had established a new front

2 to 7 miles north of the river. As the troops cleared road blocks and bull-dozed crossings over the canals and ditches in the Arno Plain, or worked up the steep slopes of Mount Pisano and Mount Albano, there was as yet no evidence that the enemy was ready to offer more than local rear guard opposition. In some areas, division and corps artillery still in position south of the river, fired on a few targets but the troops had advanced beyond supporting artillery range because necessary bridges were not yet completed.

For the next three days the advance, spear-headed by the 1st Armored Division, continued. On 3 September the 2nd Battalion, 370th Infantry, striking northwest across Mount Pisano reached the village of Vorno on the north slope, reorganized and attacked toward Lucca on the afternoon of the 4th. Heavy artillery fire and some machine gun and sniper fire from rear guards of the 65th Grenadier Division hardly slowed the attacking troops. By early evening the battalions had crossed the Autostrada, less than one mile south of the ancient walled city, and a platoon of Company "F" with tank support, had reached and held the west and south gates which had once barred and defended against ancient enemies of the past.

The fortifications of Lucca, broken only by 4 gates, were begun in 1504 AD and completed in 1645 AD. They were still well preserved and picturesque, with projecting bastions out of which trees grew. It was here in Lucca that Julius Caesar in 56 BC held his famous conference with Pompeii and Crassus. It was early in the morning of the 5th that the inhabitants of this picturesque city, which was steeped

deep with the history of medieval Italy and the Renaissance, came out of their homes to watch the troops of the 2nd Battalion as they marched into the town. When the American troops pounded their heavy combat shoes over the streets in the center of the town, they may or may not have been aware that the rectangular lay-out of the streets centered at the square, was a survival of Roman times.

One company was immediately sent north to occupy the crossing over the Serchio River. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion cleared the section of Highway (Pisa-Lucca) on the west side of Mount Pisano and the 1st Battalion reached positions north of the Autostrada, 2 1/2 miles east of Lucca. With Task Force 45 moving less rapidly, the area south of the Serchio River from Lucca to within 2 miles of the Ligurian Sea, had been cleared by 5 September.

To the east of Lucca, Combat Command "B" pushed forward to establish positions along and the north of the Autostrada on 3 September. Altopascio, a key road center in the zone, was entered by the Reconnaissance Company of the 71st Tank Destroyer Battalion on the afternoon of 4 September but stiff resistance from a German rear guard detachment forced a withdrawal. But late in the afternoon the enemy, following his customary harassing tactics, in turn pulled back and the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion moved up to occupy the town and sent outposts forward one mile beyond the Autostrada. Northwest of Altopascio two assault forces each made up of a company of infantry from the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, a section of medium tanks and a section of tank destroyers, reached the Autostrada. The 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron matched this progress along the division's eastern

boundary. On 4 September there was a general increase in enemy shelling from a few tanks and at isolated points from anti-aircraft guns, emplaced in pill boxes and firing direct fire until knocked out. In no instance did the enemy attempt to hold a position for more than a few hours. Our casualties were very few but included among them was Colonel Dewey, Commander of Combat Command "B" who was temporarily replaced by Brigadier General Maurice W. Daniel.

To the east of the 1st Armored Division in the zone of the South Africans, the advance continued throughout 3 September, meeting practically no resistance except mines, demolitions and artillery fire. One squadron of the Natal Mounted Rifles was designated to furnish right flank protection and to maintain contact with II Corps in the vicinity of La Querce. The 24th Guards Brigade advancing in the left half of the Division zone, occupied Monsummano and a portion of Mount Albano to the east of it on 5 September, thereby bringing the left flank of the 6th South African Armored Division to within five miles of Pistoia and abreast of the 1st Armored Division. The forward line of the 12th South African Motorized Brigade followed the eastern slopes of Mount Albano to reach highway 66, north of the village of Tizzana. Italian Partisans, one band of which brought in 28 prisoners from the 362nd Grenadier Division, could not understand the leisurely pace at which our troops were continuing the almost unopposed advance. General Poole, however, was operating on instructions received on 1 September from General Crittenberger, that the Army Commander expected IV Corps to gain

control of Mount Albano and Mount Pisano, but while reconnaissance beyond these points would be carried out for security purposes, the orders would not include capture or occupation of Pistoia. It was particularly important that the advance of the 6th South African Armored Division should not jeopardize the elements of surprise hoped for in connection with the main Fifth Army attack north from Florence. These instructions were supplemented on 5 September when General Crittenberger, in compliance with an Army directive ordered a general regrouping along the line, Serchio River - Mount Pisano - Autostrada - Mount Albano. This line, which represented the forward position of IV Corps units on the 5th, was to be held with a minimum of troops. Patrols were to maintain contact with the enemy and plans were to be ready for follow-up action, in case the enemy continued his withdrawal to the north.

5. Initial Engineer and Supply Problems

The crossing sites having been wisely chosen, within three days, the bulk of the combat troops had passed over in pursuit of the withdrawing foe but the supply and communication problems were many, due to the 55 mile front and to nature herself.

Shortly after the initial crossings were made, it was thought that these problems had been overcome permanently for vehicular bridges had been constructed at the following points: just west of Pisa a heavy pontoon bridge; at Cascina, a floating Treadway M-1; at Pontedera, two floating Treadways; at Empoli, one Trestle Treadway; and at Signa, one Trestle Treadway and one low level Bailey bridge. Supplies and

supporting units moved over these bridges in an almost unbroken column. However, on the night of 7-8 September, a sudden thunder storm poured out a torrential rain and in the short space of about an hour a flash flood ripped out the low level Bailey bridge at Signa and the two floating Treadways at Pontedera, but the heavy pontoon bridge, being in a wider and deeper section of the river near its mouth, suffered no distress. Fortunately the 6th South African Armored Division area on the north side of the river contained some lateral roads and thus supplies and road communications were not completely shut off. The river rising from 6 to 8 feet at the rate of about 18" an hour, rendered the Treadways at Pontedera in a dangerous position and susceptible to permanent loss when forced downstream past the piles of rubble of a bomb-demolished bridge. After a few days the high level Bailey bridges using existing piers were completed at Castelfranco and Empoli and were opened to traffic.

The rapidly rising waters made the work of the 194th Field Artillery Battalion in the Pisa area far from easy. As one cannoneer put it, "Herculean and heroic tasks were performed in supply at the Arno crossing in an effort to keep the sinews of war furnished with the necessary food, ammunition and miscellany. At times, there was only one crossing in the Arno anywhere in the sector and many times we were on the north side of the river with our guns and our ammunition supply vehicles on the other with no apparent way to get across. That they (supply personnel) kept us going during these trying days is, in itself, a tribute to a group of hard-working men and officers. Many times rations were carried across the swollen stream by hand, but we kept fighting, moving up and kept Jerry on the run."

Another snag which calls for comment was the disappointment connected with the assignment to the 1st Armored Division of a hastily improvised Treadway bridge company and which caused considerable delay and confusion. The company did not arrive until shortly after H-hour and was found not completely ready for action, having hastily prepared for a long move over unknown roads. Some of the bridging equipment was missing and some, such as floats, were of the wrong size. Had the company been a regular unit such might not have happened - with haste there is waste, a lesson learned.

The vanguard of the only South American troops to fight in Europe arrived and were immediately set to the task of bridge building. One company of engineers from the Brazilian Expeditionary Force arrived in IV Corps area on 5 September and was at once given the mission of constructing two Bailey bridges. From an international standpoint, these two completed bridges caused a minor sensation as it was the first contribution in prosecution of the war effort that Brazilian troops had rendered in this theater. The bridge was completed on 7 September, the Brazilian Independence Day. Their eagerness and aptitude augured well for the remainder of the division, soon to arrive.

The loss of the bridges that were washed away by the Arno River floods delayed somewhat the trucks carrying food, ammunition and supplies, but not enough to impede the operation. The rains caused some of the roads to the pontoon bridges to become unserviceable, necessitating long detours when moving to and from the dumps located on the southside of the river. With no truck company available to the Corps and with the additional mileage, it became necessary to form provisional units by taking organic transport from tactical troops.

However, this situation was eased and angry waters of the Arno subsided and dumps were established north of the river. These problems have been enumerated in order to show that had the enemy chosen to fight rather than withdraw, some doubt as to the success of the river crossing venture by the ill-equipped Corps would have been justified.

B. INTO THE APENNINE FOOTHILLS

Many newspapers were telling the world that Fifth Army troops had breached the Gothic Line on 1 September. This was due to an erroneous assumption on the part of reporters and correspondents that the Arno River was a part of the Gothic Line. Some had even gone so far as to call the defenses surrounding Leghorn a part of the line. The people at home were no doubt impressed by such a very deep fortified area for some of the newspapers said that we had been going through the Gothic Line since the day Leghorn was captured. Perhaps if we had gone on through the Apennines, and were sweeping through the fruit orchards in the Po Valley, the papers would still have called it an advance through the Gothic Line - who knows, perhaps they were of the opinion that the Line reached from Rome to Berlin.

But now the enemy resistance was beginning to stiffen for we were approaching his outer defenses of the Gothic Line so it was at this time that the newspapers should have stated that the IV Corps of Fifth Army had reached the outer defenses of the Gothic Line.

The period 6-9 September, when II and 13 Corps were moving into their attack positions, was for IV Corps a period of reorganization, minor forward movements to occupy ground vacated by the enemy and active patrolling to maintain contact. In the succeeding 5 days, while II and 13 Corps were crossing the Sieve River and approaching

the Gothic Line, IV Corps also began the laborious task of surmounting the mountain barrier barring access to the Po Valley. Because the activities of IV Corps were to remain secondary to, and conditioned by, the main Army effort on the right, advances were made only when the enemy elected to withdraw, or when it was necessary to apply pressure to discourage him from transferring units to the more critical area. The enemy, for his part, made no serious effort to hold the southern foothills or the forward slopes of the northern Apennines. It appeared that he was carrying out his withdrawal in accordance with a predetermined timetable, occasionally offering resistance but frequently giving up good defensive positions without a fight. Since the enemy timetable was generally ahead of that prescribed for IV Corps, contact was almost entirely maintained by patrols.

West of Mount Pisano, Task Force 45 had occupied most of the flat coastal plain south of the Serchio prior to 5 September, except where the task of clearing away enemy mines was holding up the advance of the 39th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment. On the 5th, "B" Battery of the 435 Anti-aircraft Battalion was detached and assigned to police duty in Pisa, then relieved the next day by "C" Battery of the 351st Anti-aircraft Searchlight Battalion which had completed its searchlight and radar coastal defense mission. "B" Battery then moved into the line and relieved the 100th Infantry Battalion on the right flank of Task Force 45. The American-Japanese fighters left General Rutledge's command to join the 442nd Infantry Regiment, in southern France. Efforts to send patrols across the Serchio River were repeatedly frustrated by the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division who held its position until the progress of the 1st Armored Division north of Mount Pisano.

threatened its left flank. On 7 September, the 338th Field Artillery Battalion was detached from the Task Force and moved to Leghorn and the British 71st Heavy Anti-aircraft Regiment, consisting of 24 anti-aircraft guns of 3.7 caliber was given the primary mission of providing the Task Force with artillery support.

The suspected enemy withdrawal from the north bank was confirmed on the morning of 8 September, when a patrol from the 435th Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion crossed the river in assault boats and entered the village of Vecchiano. Work was begun immediately on a bridge at Vecchiano by 10 September so that armor could cross as soon as possible. The 107th Anti-aircraft Artillery Group had moved the 434th and the balance of the 435th over the river, had consolidated positions along the Autostrada, and were patrolling the high ground to the north of the highway. The Reconnaissance Company of the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion was assigned the mission of coastal patrol, relieving Troop "A", 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron of that responsibility and allowing it to revert to control of its parent unit.

A special Task Force made up of tanks, tank destroyers, reconnaissance and engineer elements from the 2nd Armored Group crossed at Vecchiano to cover the crossing of the 39th and 37th Light Anti-aircraft Regiments farther down stream. The next day, the 11th, the two British Regiments occupied the wooded area between Lake Massaciuccoli, (often referred to as "Massachusetts" by our troops) and the sea, and sent armored patrols to reconnoiter as far as the outskirts of Viarregio. The 107th Anti-aircraft Group reached positions in the hills east of the lake. With the exception of 3 British trucks being ambushed by an enemy patrol, no opposition was encountered, therefore the extent of the

withdrawal of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division could not yet be determined.

It was also a day for the shifting of some units; "C" Battery of the 450th Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion was brought up to man coastal strongpoints and to patrol the wooded area behind the forward elements. The coast needed watching, for the Germans, although hard pressed and pulling back, were capable of executing a sudden attack along the coast if for no other purpose than to boost morale. General Rutledge continuously bore in mind that the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division was a fanatical outfit, trained under the ruthless doctrines of Herr Himmler. For this reason, and the fact that the zone of the 107th Anti-aircraft Artillery Group was largely masked by Lake Massaciuccoli, importance was given to the coastal zone of the 2nd Armored Group. The 424th Field Artillery replaced the 194th Field Artillery Group for it was leaving to join the Seventh Army in southern France. During the shift and continuing throughout the following day, activity was limited to consolidation of the ground gained in preparation for a continuation of the advance.

Operations Instructions from Army, dated 4 September, directed General Crittenberger to "make every effort to withdraw to Corps Reserve as great a portion of the 1st Armored Division as possible." General Prichard, following these same Army instructions, and with additional information that he was to form a Task Force of armor and infantry for possible employment under II Corps, withdrew the 11th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions to Division Reserve. The former was relieved by the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, northeast of Altopascio at 1830, 6 September; later in the evening of the same day

the latter was relieved by the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, northwest of the same town. Farther to the west of Lucca the 370th Infantry brought up its right flank to positions just short of the Serchio River. The Army Commander ordered that after 6 September aggressive reconnaissance patrols would be pushed well forward to maintain contact and to create the impression that an attack was forming on the fronts of the 1st Armored and 6th South African Armored Division. On 8 September, 12 of the 20 patrols sent out to create this effect, made contact with the enemy and returned with intelligence that extensive demolitions had been carried out by the still withdrawing enemy. Taking advantage of this information, minor gains were made along the division front until 9 September, when the launching of the main Fifth Army attack lifted all restrictions on the advance of IV Corps. During the early morning, a few German planes shot out from behind the Apennines and dropped incendiary and high explosive bombs on Lucca and Montecarlo but no casualties were reported. When the enemy's almost extinct air arm began making an appearance, it was a convincing piece of evidence that he was becoming sensitive to any further approach toward his vaunted Gothic Line. On the morning of 10 September, the 2nd Battalion, 370th Infantry, crossed the Serchio River on a front extending from the walled City of Lucca to Ponte San Pietro and began clearing out the hills on the west side of the river. At the same time the 1st Battalion pushed north over the last few miles of plain on the east side of the river. Clashes with the enemy were reported by forward combat groups during the next three days. On 13 September a general advance was made all along the front of "Warrior" with "A" and "D" troops of the 81st Reconnaissance Squadron advancing in the zone of Combat Command "B", and all battalions

of the 370th Infantry moving forward in that of Combat Command "A". Company "A", 370th Infantry, riding on tanks, fought its way into Ponte a Moriano on the east side of the river, four miles up stream from Lucca. With this advance the regiment had reached the foothills of the northern Apennines on a line forming an arc from Ponte San Pietro to Segro Migno, a hamlet three miles east of the Serchio.

The 1st Armored Division was operating on a twenty mile front without two of its infantry battalions taking part. Combat patrols operated far ahead of the leading units which were handicapped by the paucity of the roads and the skillfully executed demolitions found on those few roads that did exist. Artillery fire and frequent encounters with small groups of the enemy who conducted the practice of defending a town for a few hours and then withdrawing, characterized this advance.

On 10 September, northeast of Segro Migno the 6th Armored Infantry entered the mountain village of Villa Basilica while the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron began to work its way up a narrow gorge north of Pescia. The squadron reached a point about a mile north of Massa Cozzile with "A" and "D" troops entering the village of Pietrabuona. "B" Troop advanced up both sides of the Serchio River north of Lucca until its advance was stopped by strong opposition in the vicinity of Ponte a Mariano, where it suffered a few casualties and lost one medium tank. The town marked the first rung of the ladder in the ascent of the Apennines - to the south of it laid Lucca, nestled in the fertile Arno Valley and just a bit farther south, rose the already overrun Mount Pisano. To the north one had to crane his neck to look toward the top of the mountain forming the skyline. Armor could be used only to a limited extent in the mountains and the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was forced to become, in effect, a mountain infantry unit and

only the enemy's willingness to give up ground permitted the steady advance to continue.

The 6th South African Armored Division, identified by its code name as "Kensington", was stretched over an equally long front; from west of Mount Albano almost to the outskirts of Florence where the 74th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment had taken over the portion of the 88th Division zone south of the Autostrada on 6 September. Plans to move the 11th South African Armored Brigade across the Arno were interrupted by the floods on 7-8 September. All the division's bridges were washed out and supply trucks had to be routed across the 1st Armored Division bridge at Pontedera or through Florence. The projected reinforcement had to be cancelled, leaving the two brigades on the north side of the Arno, spread along an 18 mile arc with no available reserves.

Aggressive patrolling continued all along the division front, but no effort was made to force the retreat of the opposing 362nd Grenadier Division. Partisans, who brought in a captured German officer on 7 September claimed that they held control of both Montecatini and Pistoia. The next day a patrol reached Montemurlo, 6 miles northwest of Prato and another patrol contacted partisans near Highway 66. The partisans reported that a large enemy force had pulled back into the mountains to the north of Montemurlo. These and other reports indicated that the 362nd Grenadier Division had completed the evacuation of the Arno Plain and had left only small rear guards to delay the advance.

Before following up the enemy withdrawal General Poole ordered the 11th South African Armored Brigade to cross the Arno and take over the right half of the division front from the 12th South African Motorized Brigade. The movement was effected by utilizing the bridges

at Florence and the relief was completed on the evening of 10 September, with the 12th South African Motorized Brigade to become the Division Reserve, east of Mount Albano. The message from the Fifth Army establishing D-Day for the 13 and II Corps offensive had included provision for an attack by a reinforced brigade into the mountains northeast of Montale. This attack, which was to take place on Army order after 2000, 11 September, was cancelled, but it was decided that in order to apply greater pressure on the enemy all three brigades should be put into line. The 12th South African Motorized Brigade, with the Natal Mounted Rifles attached, was again committed and given responsibility for the center of the line, north of Pistoia. Its axis of advance was to be along Highway 64. On the left the 24th Guards Brigade was to clear Highway 66 and the mountains to the west of it, and on the right the 11th South African Armored Brigade with the 4/13 FFR and the 74th British Light Anti-aircraft Regiment under its command, was to move into the mountains west of Highway 66.

During 11-12 September, elements of the 11th South African Armored Brigade moved on Migliana, a mountain village 7 miles north of Prato and occupied Mount Pratocavola, 5 miles northeast of Pistoia. Directly north of Pistoia the 12th South African Motorized Brigade reached the V-shaped area of ground where Highway 64 branched off Highway 66; equal advance to positions in the mountains north of Montecatini by the 24th Guards Brigade. The enemy, making no effort to utilize the commanding ground overlooking the Arno Plain to delay our advance had now fallen back to his prepared positions. Harassing fire from enemy artillery was quite heavy on 12 September and patrols began to encounter mine fields and barbed wire as they probed deeper into the mountains.

C. SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

The first 12 days of September had seen Fifth Army register significant gains all along its extensive front, leaving Florence and the Arno River almost 20 miles behind the forward troops of II and 13 Corps and giving possession of the broad Arno plain, as well as the first line of hills overlooking it from the north, to IV Corps.

Although the main show was taking place in the east, General Crittenberger, with his polyglot mixture of troops made up of British South Africans, Americans, both white and negro, and Brazilians crossed the Arno and in 12 days was snapping and snarling at the Hun, entrenched within his famed Gothic Line. With two armored divisions and a task force of former anti-aircraft artillerymen, speedily converted to infantry, IV Corps had constantly nipped at the four overwhelming enemy divisions. While we were still south of the Arno, information from Partisans, agents, prisoners and natives created a picture showing four enemy delaying lines which had to be pierced before our troops could batter at the Gothic Line. They were placed on Intelligence maps as the Emma, Gisela, Godrun and Edith lines, but as far as the delay effected at these lines was concerned, they were nothing more than the colored marks on the map. Some evidence of field defenses in the form of fox-holes, barbed wire and demolitions were found at these locations.

The failure of the Germans to make full use of these defensive positions short of the Gothic Line, could be attributed to the surprise and initial success gained by the 8th Army offensive on the Adriatic coast, and to the threat of an attack by Fifth Army which became a reality on 10 September. The timing of the blows, beginning with the

offensive on the right and followed by the attack north of Florence served to keep the enemy off balance. To meet the first thrust, Kesselring was forced to exhaust his mobile reserves and draw troops from the central front, thereby weakening the forces available for use against Fifth Army. This necessitated a general withdrawal to the more easily defended Gothic Line positions. It was now the intention of Fifth Army that the enemy should be given no opportunity to regain any equilibrium in his order of battle, lost by the transfer of units to the east. On 12 September, while advance elements of II and 13 Corps probed the outer defenses of the Gothic Line, artillery and reinforcements had been moving up. The planning and the follow-up phase of the Fifth Army offensive were completed and now the troops were in position to attack the Gothic Line.

D. FIGHTERS AND COFFEE FROM BRAZIL

On 12 September IV Corps headquarters broke camp at Cumigliano south of Ponsacco, rolled over the Arno and proceeded north to settle for the night in some pine woods near Staffoli. Lieutenant Colonel James Eaton and Major Jack Hamilton of the Traffic Control Section, supervised the settling of their section and commenced to operate. The telephone lines to Army having been installed, it was learned that more units of the Brazilian Division were to move into the Corps area the following day; this meant some fast work if the traffic schedules were to be ready.

On 13 September, the 6th Regimental Combat Team of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force under the command of Brigadier General Euclides Zenabio du Costa, moved from Vada on the coast to Ospedale south of Pisa and on 15 September, crossed the Arno River and moved by motor

to Vecchiano, 4 miles north of Pisa. The only country of South America to commit its sons to battle against the Nazis was represented here. The green-gray uniforms of the Brazilians were at first an unusual sight, but in the space of a month or so, they blended with the olive drab of the American and British; just as did the blood of their casualties. Some difficulty was first encountered because of the language barrier, but screening of personnel on both sides produced the necessary translators and interpreters whereby smooth coordination was established between the Corps and Brazilian Headquarters. This coordination was greatly enhanced for the Brazilians through the able tact and judgment of the liaison officer, Captain Moura. Many of the Brazilians soon learned to speak Italian and thus were able to fit themselves into the Latin background of Italy with considerable ease.

Personnel of the Corps Headquarters learned much about Brazilian coffee. Captain Moura and his orderly were frequent hosts to the headquarters personnel for coffee tete-a-tete in his tent. While we looked forward to our packages of sardines and snacks from home, the Brazilians looked forward to receiving 10-pound cans of coffee from their loved ones in Brazil. In Captain Moura's tent there were more than a half-dozen cans, enough to last the coming winter, so we thought - "No, just a month's supply," he said. As guests we never asked for canned milk to weaken the strong coffee - it just was not the custom, the blacker and stronger it was, the better it tasted - to Captain Moura; but he did use considerable sugar. With tea constantly boiling in the photo trailer of the British Captain, Roy Russell, on one hand and coffee in the making at Captain Moura's tent on the other, a spirit, later to be the United Nations, was wafted through the camp.

APENNINE CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER XIII - - - - -

BREACHING THE GOTHIC LINE

The narrow steep valleys and passes between the jagged peaks of the mountains enabled the Germans to concentrate their forces at strategic strongpoints. Since the decision to hold the Apennines had been made some months before Allied troops attacked the Gothic Line, and considerable time had been spent in preparing defenses, the avenues of approach were protected by strong concrete emplacements dug deep and well placed behind bands of barbed wire, heavily mined areas and extensive demolitions of all sorts. Narrow roads and trails were easily barred by enemy-made landslides of tons of earth and rock, or by large trees fallen across them. After IV Corps elements crossed the Arno River on 1 September, they advanced into broad valleys separated by abrupt hill masses up to 2000 feet in height. These valleys narrowed and the hills rapidly increased in height, some of them reaching as high as 6000 feet above sea level. Further into the mountain range the routes of advance to the north were limited to a few natural corridors containing rugged trails improved for mountain transport.

One of the natural corridors was the flat plain of the Serchio River which narrowed from 2400 feet wide at the mouth of the Serchio River to approximately 1000 feet midway between Galliciano and Bagni di Lucca and disappeared high in the Apennines. Three tributaries to the Serchio were other natural corridors, but did not penetrate the mountain as deeply as did the Serchio Valley. There were no other

important routes of communication other than the ones afforded by these steep and narrow river valleys winding between sheer cliffs in many places. The roads and railroads crossed the rivers frequently, increasing the vulnerability of these man-made routes of advance. The only supplements to the valley road-net were the mountain trails which served only as animal transport routes.

The chief advantages in this mountainous terrain were color and the abundant concealment. Vegetation varied with terrain. In the valleys, vineyards and tree-lined roads provided good concealment, while on the gentle slopes were cultivated fields and olive groves. In less accessible parts, small trees and heavy scrub brush covered the slopes. In general, wherever terrain permitted occupation, there was ample cover for artillery, but if ideal defilade for artillery pieces was desired, difficult movement into the rougher country was required. When the autumn rains fell in the mountains, streams quickly became torrents, washing out bridges and roads and making movement very difficult. In one instance, a heavy artillery vehicle slid off a narrow section of the road and held up vehicular movement for many hours. Also during the wet weather, trail pits were difficult to maintain; the difficulty being in direct proportion to the size of the piece.

A. SCHEME OF ADVANCE.

The mission assigned to IV Corps was that of a holding force, whose principal function was to keep the enemy troops occupied during the period when the main effort of Fifth Army was directed toward the breaching of the Gothic Line at Il Goglio Pass. Orders were received

from Fifth Army on 11 September that the Corps was to continue probing forward by aggressive patrol action until the enemy's main defenses were reached, and by keeping pace with II Corps, protect that unit's left flank. Special attention was to be paid to the right flank adjoining II Corps and to the Serchio Valley north of Lucca. The high ground between Highways 66 and 64 was to be occupied as far north as Castiglione and Porretta, and mobile columns were to operate up Highway 12 in the Serchio Valley. On the remainder of the Corps Front, pressure would be maintained along the axis of the principal roads in order to develop the enemy's defenses, and to occupy all ground from which he might withdraw. Due to the extent of its front and the limited forces at his disposal, IV Corps was not capable of launching a sustained offensive.

1. The South Africans on the Right.

The task of maintaining contact with II Corps and protecting its left flank, fell to the 6th South African Armored Division. After regrouping on 11 September the Division had all three of its brigades in the line: the 24th Guards Brigade north of Montecatini, the 12th South African Motorized Brigade in the center above Pistoia and the 11th South African Armored Brigade on the right to the east of Highway 64. By 12 September the three brigades had entered the mountains and were pushing forward toward the Gothic Line defenses. The heaviest fighting occurred in the zone of the 11th South African Armored Brigade where the Imperial Light Horse-Kimberly Regiment (IL H/KIM R) and the 4/13 Frontier Force Rifles were engaged in seizing a line of 3000 feet mountains approximately 8 miles north of Prato. The most important peaks in the chain were from west to east, Mount Pozzo del Bagno,

Mount Acuto and to the north of it, Alto Hill and Mount Mososco. These mountains were covered with scrub trees and dense underbrush, which favored close-in fighting for the attackers but also aided the enemy in his policy of counter-attacking after losing an important position.

Early on the 16th of September, after seizing Mount Acuto on the 13th of September, the 4/13 Frontier Force Rifle employed grenades and bayonets to drive the enemy off Alto Hill. The struggle continued as the 362d Grenadier Division launched four separate counter-attacks in an effort to regain the height. Artillery fire delayed the mules bringing up supplies and the South Africans were at the end of their ammunition by the time the last counter-attack was repulsed. To the left of Alto Hill the Imperial Light Horse/Kimberly Regiment had an equally hard battle in capturing and holding Mount Pozzo del Bagno, a mountain peak 3,428 feet high. On 15 September, Mount Mososco, at the other end of the chain of hills, was seized by a patrol of the Natal Mounted Rifles, operating along the division boundary and maintaining contact with the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron of II Corps. On 17 September, "A" Company of the Frontier Force Rifles relieved "B" Company and later in the day repulsed a severe counter-attack against its forces. In the Kimberly Rifles zone, "C" Company reinforced "B" Company on Mount Pozzo del Bagno and three counter-attacks were repulsed there during the day. In an effort to give added strength to the right flank, 74th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment was committed in the Mount Mososco area on 20 September, for the refusal of the enemy to give ground on the front of the 11th South African Armored Brigade coupled

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

In the center and left of the Division, limited advances were made by the 12th South African Motorized Brigade and the 24th Guards Brigade behind an active screen of patrols and an extensive program of harassing artillery fire. Leading elements of the 24th reached the road leading northeast from Pescia on 20 September, while on the following day, the mountain village of Serra, north of the road, was occupied by a company of the 3d Coldstream Motorized Guards. Elements of the 12th South African Motorized Brigade pushed up Highway 64 without stopping until 2 miles beyond the junction with Highway 66. Farther up the highway, on 19 September, a patrol made contact with enemy troops who were identified as troops of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. This report confirmed by further identifications the next day, indicated that the 362d Grenadier Division had been relieved. The SS troops adopted a more aggressive attitude than their predecessors, causing the 6th South Africans to ready themselves for the possibility of meeting a German diversionary attack in the Pistoia area. The attack did not materialize, but on the contrary, increased shelling and numerous demolitions on 22 September indicated the enemy intended to stage another withdrawal in preparation for which General Poole issued orders calling for a follow-up action.

2. "Warrior" Tanks Roll Into the Serchio Valley.

In the central zone the 1st Armored Division, with the 370th Regimental Combat Team attached, was responsible for applying pressure to the enemy in the Serchio Valley. It was also under orders to hold at least a portion of its force available for use on the II Corps front,

in case a favorable opportunity for the use of armor should arise. The size of the force to be held in reserve was changed from time to time as the Fifth Army offensive developed. On 13 September, General Crittenger received orders from Fifth Army that the 1st Armored Division was to be employed in such a manner, that on 48 hours' notice, the division, less one combat command, could move to an assembly area near Florence. Plans were to be developed by II Corps for the use of this force in an exploitation role as soon as the leading divisions reached the Po Valley. Since the 1st Armored Division was holding a long front on 12 September, and so long as a large portion of the troops were in reserve, it could do little more than maintain aggressive patrols. On 16 September, IV Corps ordered the Division to initiate a reconnaissance in force with not less than one armored infantry battalion north of Lucca, one infantry battalion toward Mount Liguana, north of Pescia. Since no effort was to be made to launch an attack until it became apparent that II Corps was meeting stiff resistance, this was to be but part of the Corps effort to prevent the enemy from withdrawing troops from the front. In effect this order released the 11th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions for active use, and the Division, further aided when the 6th Combat Team, Brazilian Expeditionary Force assumed responsibility for the portion of the Division front held by the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, could well afford to adopt a more aggressive policy.

In accordance with the Corps order, the 1st Armored Division pushed forward on the morning of 17 September with the 2d and 3d Battalions, 370th Infantry, under Combat Command "A", going through the hills on

the west side of the Serchio Valley. The 3d Battalion advanced to a point about a mile northwest of Ponte Mariano, where it was held up, by mines, barbed wire and some machine gun fire, while elements of the 2d Battalion reached positions approximately a mile north and northwest of Mount Catino. In the meantime, the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion moved up the east side of the river until just south of Gignano, where it was taken under fire by the enemy. The next day found the 3d Battalion, 370th, at Hill 612, where it encountered machine gun fire and the 2d Battalion at Colleto and Coli receiving similar resistance. During the night the 3d Battalion pulled back from Hill 612 to permit our artillery to fire on the forward elements of the enemy. Gaining as much as two miles along the front of the Combat Command until on the 18th, a halt was forced by the strong defenses in the narrow gorge, where the Serchio flows east before turning south to Ponte A. Mariano. North of Pescia in the zone of Combat Command "B", the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, meeting only light resistance, advanced as far as the villages of Castelvecchio and Mount Liguana. As the troops drove deeper into the mountains, supply difficulties steadily increased to the extent that the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was forced, during 17-24 September to convert Troop "A" into a pack unit in order to keep its forward elements supplied. This was mountain fighting with all its attendant hardships, not only in the actual combat on the steep slopes, but also in effecting supply over trails too narrow for vehicles and sometimes even hazardous for four-footed beasts of burden. The enemy had begun to

fight back and consequently gave up his positions only when sheer force made him do so.

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

3. The Corps' Left Flank.

General Rutledge's converted anti-aircraft troops had occupied positions on each side of Lake Massachiuccoli on 11 September and patrols were probing almost to the outskirts of Viareggio. On 12 and 13 September, armored patrols made their way into the heavily mined outskirts. Early on the morning of 14 September, withdrawal of the German garrison became

evident; the canal south of Viareggio was bridged and a special task force of armor and infantry entered the city against light resistance - mainly sniper fire. Later in the day the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion passed through the positions established by the task force on the northern edge of the town as enemy shells came screaming in to give welcome to the new occupants and cause some casualties. On the same day the 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion was relieved by the 6th Combat Team, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, in the mountains overlooking the coastal plain. The introduction of the Brazilian Troops reduced the zone of Task Force 45 to the coastal plain and the foothills of the mountains to the east. After the relief, the 434 Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion was attached to the 2d Armored Group and the 107th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group passed into reserve.

Task Force 45 regrouped on 16 September and on the following day resumed the attack as part of the Corps advance. The enemy resistance along the line began to stiffen with an increased rate of artillery, machine-gun and small arms fire, and with a greater number of daily casualties among our troops. The 435th and 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalions and the 47th Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment were each given a platoon of tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers were placed for direct support and attacked in that order from west to east. During the 19th, enemy opposition being almost negligible, the 435th advanced to the village of Motrone, four miles up the coast from Viareggio, and the 434th reached Pietra-Santa, three miles to the north-east of Motrone. On the right the 47th Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery

pushed forward to occupy Capezzano. From anti-aircraft artillery to field artillery to foot-slogging infantry and then to mountain infantry, such was the order of conversion of Task Force 45. This school of hard knocks had been passed through in the short space of a month, but to add an anticlimax, Battery "C" of the 450th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion now was called upon to perform combat engineer work on roads and bridges. The total strength of the Task Force at this time was approximately 5000 officers and men and to draw the critically-needed combat elements for engineer work left a dent in its fighting efficiency. This was just another case of "Robbing Peter to pay Paul," although some might reverse the expression, for Paul was the Task Force Commander's first name. First was a shortage of transport vehicles and now Corps was smitten with a shortage of engineer personnel, but although this under-strength in both men and materials existed along this unusually wide front, General Crittenberger did manage to keep his line abreast of II Corps on the east.

In the next three days the left flank of Task Force 45 was carried forward an additional four miles up the coast to Forte dei Marmi. However, the right flank, where the 47th Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment was in contact with the Brazilian troops, lagged behind in the mountains above Pietra-Santa.

The 6th Regimental Combat Team of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, under command of Brigadier General Euclides Zenobio da Costa had been attached to IV Corps on 13 September, upon its arrival in Pisa at 1930 the same day. On 15 September the Combat Team, reinforced with "A" and "C" Companies of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion and "C"

Company, 751st Tank Battalion, moved into its zone which had been established in IV Corps Field Order No. 11 and at 2400, General Zenobio assumed responsibility for a five-mile wide zone of mountainous terrain lying between the coastal plain and the Serchio Valley. As the first South American troops to fight on European soil, the commitment of this portion of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force was an event of international significance; for IV Corps it meant the addition of a well-equipped but untried regimental combat team at a time when every available man was needed. After the experience gained in commanding British, South African and Italian troops, no special difficulty was encountered in incorporating the Brazilian troops other than the temporary hitch in finding qualified interpreters. The 6th Combat Team was organized on lines similar to those of the American Infantry Regiment; it was equipped with American weapons and transport, and with minor changes to conform to Brazilian diet and uniform, it drew standard American Army supplies. Practically the only difference in the organization was the fact that the rifle companies in a Brazilian regiment were numbered from 1 to 9; numbers 1 to 3 belonged to the 1st Battalion; 4 to 6 to the 2d Battalion and 7 to 9 to the 3d Battalion. Furthermore, after arriving in Italy in mid-August the Brazilian troops had received a month of training under the supervision of Fifth Army and IV Corps personnel, so that problems of liaison and communication had received attention and training in infantry tactics suited to the Italian Theater had been given. The very next day, 16 September, the 6th Regimental Combat Team, attacking with other elements of the IV Corps, advanced and occupied the village of Massarosa. This was their first of several prizes of World War II

which was to carry them across a goodly portion of northwestern Italy.

On the occasion of the first contact with the enemy, General Crittenberger dispatched a congratulatory note to General Zenobio reading as follows: "I have been informed that a patrol from the 4th Company has just made contact with a German patrol in the vicinity of 104855 (Orbicciano) and that the ensuing fire fight resulted in the withdrawal of the enemy patrol. Congratulations on the outcome of this first contact with the enemy."

The Brazilians continued their advance on 17 September in conjunction with the stepped-up offensive by all IV Corps units. By way of keeping pace with the rapid advance of Task Force 45 along the coast, a special task force made up of the 2d Company, reinforced with a tank platoon and a tank destroyer platoon reached the village of Camiore, five miles northeast of Massarosa on the 18th. The armor, however, was held up temporarily by a blown bridge at the edge of the town, but later in the night, moved into the southern part of the town. With the 2d Company in possession of Massarosa the 3d Battalion started for 4000 foot Mount Prano to the east of Camiore. In the advance toward Mount Prano, the Lieutenant of the Reconnaissance Troop was killed, thus achieving immortality as the first Brazilian Officer to be killed in action on the battlefields of Italy. The Brazilian force was proud of the fact that since it had to happen, its first casualty was in a Reconnaissance Troop - an organization which had to be out in front of the main force if it was to perform its mission.

The 7th and 8th Companies attacked Mount Prano at 1900 but were unsuccessful due to the determined enemy resistance. Farther to the

east the 2d Battalion, meeting steady resistance, advanced as far as Mount Acuto, a hill to the east of Mount Prano, where mortar fire forced a pause. Contact was maintained on the right with Combat Command "B" and on the left with Task Force 45.

B. SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES.

So far it has been most evident that during the first 20 days of September, our armor and infantry had encountered increasing difficulties as they ascended the forward slopes of the mountains. With every mile clocked on our jeeps, the terrain became rougher and yet it was known that this was just the beginning of the steep and rugged mountains. In addition to climbing tortuous mule trails and following winding roads on the sides of steep hills which were already high enough in places to assure death if one should slip from the road. The foot soldiers and armored men had other difficulties. One was found in the denial of normal artillery support forced by the rugged mountainous terrain.

In an effort to create the impression of greater strength on the IV Corps front, ammunition restrictions were lifted and the Corps artillery carried out an extensive program of harassing fire. By using air photos a special study was made of the road net, enemy movements, enemy concentrations and enemy forward positions. As a result of this study a harassing fire chart was prepared and sent to each unit. In one triangular-shaped area northwest of Pistoia, bounded by the towns of Campo Tizzoro, San Marcello and Piastra, 158 missions were fired by the 6th South African Armored Division, the 1st Armored Division and the IV Corps Artillery in a three-day period, 15-17 September. The Corps Artillery employed for these missions consisted of seventy-two 3.7-inch

anti-aircraft artillery guns of the 62d Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade, two 240-mm Howitzers, one 8-inch gun and one 8-inch Howitzer. These were reinforced during 15-21 September by twelve 3-inch and thirty-six 75-mm guns of Company "B", 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion. To cover a front of over 50 miles long with a number of small caliber weapons, not aptly suited for Corps artillery, was an immense problem in itself, even if the front had been on a plain and not in the mountains. Although the heavy artillery weapons consisted of 8-inch Howitzers, 240-mm Howitzers and 8-inch guns, they were few, varying from a maximum of 15 between 4 and 10 September, to 3 at the end of the month - they carried the burden of counter-battery fire. When observation permitted, and at the time unfavorable weather was a growing hindrance, destruction missions by these heavies were fired on several points of the enemy road-net. The enemy was dependent upon the very few major highways which, in running along the cliffs through tunnels and over many bridges, presented countless lucrative destruction targets. Ammunition restrictions, again imposed on 25 September, prevented satisfactory exploitation of the vulnerability of the enemy's communication network. If General Crittenberger could have had a few more heavies and unrestricted ammunition allowance with which to support his front line elements, much more could have been done to soften up the outer defenses of the Gothic Line. However, since II Corps had priority on the heavy artillery of Army. IV Corps artillery had to do as best it could with the equipment available. A natural difficulty, usually attendant in mountain warfare, was encountered in moving and emplacing the heavy guns. The carriage of one gun of "B" Battery, 194th Field Artillery Battalion, was badly

damaged by a mine, and could not be replaced for three days. Movement of "C" Battery, 697th Field Artillery Battalion, was delayed for 24-hours on another occasion while awaiting road repairs. Because of the rain-soaked ground, one of the 240-mm Howitzer positions, the trail space-pit caved in, resulting in an incomplete mission and the loss of the gun for the rest of the day. When every gun in our possession was needed to cover the broad front these periodic losses were discouraging.

Due to the autumn rains, the need for all-weather air strips presented itself, for on a number of occasions the pelting September rains kept cubs on the ground and in some cases they remained grounded with the return of fair weather because the air strips had become a sticky morass. Added to the above difficulty, the mountainous terrain forced the pilots to fly much higher than had previously been necessary. Flights at elevations of 8500 to 11,000 feet found targets difficult to spot. It was also more difficult to locate gun positions when using air photos because of the shadows and the protection afforded by the mountainous terrain. In addition to the ruggedness of the terrain, artillery communications were strained almost to the snapping point, because of the extreme distances, the rain and the unimproved roads. Although communications never failed completely, there were times along the 55-mile front when it would have been unwise to wager that a message could be transmitted. By continuous maintenance, wire communications functioned satisfactorily, making radio rarely necessary for the transmission of messages other than those containing fire missions. Repairs during the wet weather were hampered by poor road conditions and bridge washouts and moisture seeping into the wire and equipment, caused

power leakage with its resultant garbling.

One point of interest in connection with enemy artillery activity during the period was the use of the long range 28 cm rifles. At the first reports of "heavy caliber" shelling, it was thought that a coast defense gun was firing, but identification of shell fragments lent weight to the possibility of locations inland along or close to a railroad. Later, activity, picked up by the photo-intelligence officer, indicated that three railroad turn-tables were being used, and it was presumed that one or possibly two railroad guns were active. The first shells fell into Corps' rear area on 8 September and during the next 20 days these long range guns fired during nine different nights. Lucca and Pisa were the hardest hit, though several other places received a few of the total of 75 confirmed rounds. Except for the eight rounds received on the first day, shelling was always at night. Damage was slight to military personnel and equipment, however, a number of houses were destroyed and some civilians injured and killed.

By way of balancing the many difficulties encountered in the mountains, some satisfaction was found in the fact that the water was again palatable. From the time we had crossed the Arno River, the water had a very disagreeable, musty taste, which the purification plants were unable to eradicate. Troops quenched their thirst with what wine they could get from the natives, or by flavoring the water with cellophane-wrapped concentrates found in the "K" ration.

1. Air Support

By 20 September combat elements of IV Corps were partially through the Gothic Line at several points. In view of the strength of the

vaunted Gothic Line defenses, the smattering of mixed combat elements, their inexperience, and the rugged nature of the terrain over which the Corps had fought, the speed with which these penetrations had been made represented a brilliant achievement.

Air Support, if not a key factor, played an important part in this phase of the operations. During the first 12 days of September, when Fifth Army was following up the enemy's retreat, air support was limited to 777 fighter bomber and 410 medium bomber sorties. All of the medium bomber sorties were flown in the last two days of the period after II Corps had been committed and the needs for secrecy were over. The bulk of the sorties were concentrated on the Futa Pass, Il Gioglio Pass, Firenzuola area, and provided excellent support for the II Corps attack. Since the bulk of this air support was diverted to the II Corps front, General Crittenger's combat elements cracked the line with most of their air support coming from fighter-bombers controlled by "Rover Joe", initially introduced in the Rome to the Arno drive and fully covered in a previous chapter. On 19 September, just as the fighting became hardest, the number of planes in each mission dispatched to "Rover Joe" was reduced from 6 to 4. This reduction was caused primarily by the rainy weather. Although the air support contributed much by striking bivouacs, command posts, troop assembly areas and front line positions, it was not enough to make up for the shortage of effective artillery.

An improvement was made in the air support program of Fifth Army on 20 September when the Headquarters, XXII Tactical Air Command (XXII TAC) was given the mission of coordinating air support activities. The

new organization filled a serious gap created in August when XII TAC, together with a number of fighter bomber squadrons was transferred to France. However, since much of the XII TAC air force activity was integrated with ground activities at the Army level, "Rever Joe" continued to control missions operating in the forward areas of IV Corps.

Along with our advance into the forward hills of the Apennines came confirmation of the strength of the Gothic Line in our sector. When our troops reached it, they were engaged in every case in a fire fight. The enemy did, however, withdraw slowly along his entire front so that our forces in the Serchio Valley and to the east were able to occupy some of the forward positions of the Gothic Line with little or no opposition. Withdrawal along the coast gave us Viareggio (Mussolini's favorite resort) on 14 September, and after some fighting the Germans stopped short of Massa, in what amounted to the western anchor of the Gothic position. Why the Germans gave up their defenses in the Serchio Valley without a determined fight is, indeed, puzzling; but it was believed that Field Marshal Kesselring was following a time-table of withdrawal from the most forward sections of the line which were in most cases the poorest organized in order to prevent a break-through wherever staggered positions existed.

The location and designation of enemy units became obscure during the middle of the month, because of the loss of contact in many cases, and on the other hand from the contradictory statements made by the few prisoners who were taken. However, it was evident that a new Division, the 20th GAF Division, had come in to the line between the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division and the 65th Infantry Division, taking

over in the Serchio Valley. This Division had been reconstituted from remnants of the 19th and 20th GAF Divisions, both of which had received a severe trouncing and many casualties from our forces during the advance from Rome to the Arno. It was now rested and with largely experienced personnel, was in good shape to face IV Corps. However, its stay in the line was extremely short. On 13 September the sector held by the 20th GAF Division was relinquished to the 42d Jaeger Division (light), which had been coast-watching and Partisan-chasing in the Genoa area. Prior to that time it had been in Yugoslavia where it served as a training and anti-Partisan division. By 17 September, the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division held a line from the coast to a point about one mile west of Pescaglia; from there the 42d Jaeger Division, occupied a sector extending to the small hill village of Piazza Ombriglio, from there the 362d Infantry Division took over the area to just west of Cantajillo, which left the 334th Infantry Division on the right flank straddling the IV and II Corps boundaries. The identification of the latter meant that the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division had been relieved; this was verified when the Division was identified opposite Eighth Army.

There were further indications of enemy shiftings on our front, and on 21 September, the departure of the 362d Infantry Division for the II Corps front was confirmed. The 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division was withdrawn from the west flank to take over the sector vacated by the 362d Infantry Division. The 42d Jaeger Division extended its boundary to the west coast and thus filled the gap created by the exodus of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. The 334th Infantry Division also side-slipped to the east to reinforce the enemy defenses south of Bologna. Throughout

this period of change on the German front, the enemy did not relinquish his defensive positions but continued to resist our advance with his artillery, mortar and small-arms from his well-selected and prepared positions, and with more and more demolitions. Throughout the period valuable information was received from Italian Partisans, for these intrepid bands constantly harassed the enemy supply and communication lines. German retaliatory measures were characteristically summary, efficient, extensive and ruthless, and resulted in unnumbered atrocities against individuals, families and whole communities. In part, these sadistic atrocities struck terror into the hearts of the native inhabitants, but also fanned brighter the flame of hatred against the Nazis.

"APENNINE CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XIV - - - - -

IV CORPS PASSES THROUGH THE GOTHIC LINE

During the period that the main thrust of Fifth Army was driving down the Santerno Valley toward Imola and securing Radicosa Pass, IV Corps was engaged in regrouping its forces to release the bulk of the 1st Armored Division; in maintaining contact with the left flank of II Corps; and in relentlessly following up a series of enemy withdrawals. As the enemy was pressed back in the center toward Bologna, he was also forced by our pressure to give ground in order to avoid the possibility of being outflanked. By aggressive action whenever possible along its wide front, IV Corps troops continued to advance and by the end of the month the Gothic Line defenses, with the exception of the coastal strip below Massa, had been left behind.

The relief of the 1st Armored Division for employment on the II Corps front began on 21 September with the move of Combat Command "A" to an assembly area between Prato and Sesto. The 14th Armored Infantry Battalion, part of Combat Command "A", was relieved by elements of the 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry Regiment. Three days later, General Crittenberger issued orders releasing the remainder of the Division, less Combat Command "B". Responsibility for the Division zone passed on 25 September to a composite force under the command of Brigadier General John S. Wood, Assistant Division Commander of the 92d Division. His force became known as Task Force 92 and consisted of the 370th Infantry Regiment and Combat Command "B" from the 1st Armored Division. This versatile, hard-hitting unit consisted of the 13th Tank Battalion; 11th Armored Infantry Battalion; Troop "D", 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron; 68th Armored Field Battalion; Company "A",

16th Armored Engineer Battalion; and Company "B", 47th Armored Medical Battalion. The necessary reliefs were completed on the night of 25-26 September and General Wood prepared to renew the advance up the Serchio Valley and into the mountains north of Pescia.

Beginning slowly on 26 September, the attack gained momentum the next day. The 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry, following Highway 12 along the east side of the Serchio Valley, advanced four miles to within one mile of the junction of Lima Creek with the Serchio River. On the west side of the Serchio, the 3d Battalion, meeting slight opposition, made almost equally substantial gains. The 2d Battalion, in the mountains to the east of the Serchio, captured the high ground overlooking Lima Creek near Bagni di Lucca. Elements of Combat Command "B", by the 28th, had reached the village of Lucchio, and had sealed off seven miles of the east-west portion of Highway 12. This highway had formerly served as the main lateral route of communications for the enemy troops opposite the central portion of the IV Corps front.

In the zone of the 6th South African Armored Division the action shifted increasingly toward Highway 6620 as the Division sought to fulfill its mission of maintaining contact with, and protecting the left flank of, II Corps. The first move was made on 24 September when the 12th South African Motorized Brigade took over the sector held by the 11th South African Armored Brigade. The latter was ordered to concentrate on pushing north along Highway 6620 behind a screen of patrols provided by the Natal Mounted Rifles. The Imperial Light Horse/Kimberley Regiment (Ilh/Kim R) and the 4/13 Frontier Force Rifles (4/13 FFR) reached Sant' Ippolito below Vernio on the 24th, and the next day two companies of the 4/13 FFR marched across country approximately six miles to Mount Casciaio. There they re-

lieved the 34th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop of responsibility for screening the II Corps left flank. Following up this advance as rapidly as the demolished highway would permit, the Ilh/Kim R reached positions, two miles to the north of Mount Casciaio on the 26th.

At this time the main attack of Fifth Army was pressing hard against the enemy formations opposite II Corps. In order to keep as much of the enemy on his front as possible, General Crittenberger issued the following instructions to the units of IV Corps: "At this stage of the situation, it is imperative that we maintain contact with the enemy to keep informed of his activities, and that we press forward vigorously wherever possible. To that end, it is directed that strong detachments be employed to probe the enemy positions on all fronts. During this critical period contact with the enemy must not be lost."

Meanwhile the 24th Guards Brigade and the 12th South African Motorized Brigade continued to follow up enemy withdrawals along Highway 66 and 64 respectively. Here again the enemy was abandoning excellent defensive positions. However, by using rear guards on the steep mountain slopes, mine fields, and demolitions in the numerous cuts and twisting roads, he delayed the advance. The attempt to open up these difficult routes of advance simultaneously was too much for the Division Engineers. Accordingly General Poole halted the 24th Guards Brigade on 26 September. By that time it had reached Piastre, approximately seven miles northwest of Pistoia and only a short distance from the head-waters of the northward flowing Reno River. Elements of the 12th South African Motorized Brigade on Highway 64 were already over the divide and on 27 September reached the village of Collina.

The continual advance of the 34th Division in the II Corps zone and in particular its shift to the northwest toward Mount Bastione, led General Crittenberger to concentrate more and more of the IV Corps strength along the Corps right boundary. On 27 September, he issued the following instructions to General Poole. "The main effort of IV Corps and, therefore, that of the 6th South African Armored Division, is now on our right flank protecting the left flank of the II Corps along the road north of Prado. To give additional strength to this effort, the 24th Guards Brigade will be withdrawn at once to west of Pistoia for immediate employment to support the 11th Brigade on the road north of Prada -- (Castiglione). Simultaneously with the withdrawal of the Guards Brigade for employment north of Prada, the west boundary of the 6th South African Armored Division will be moved eastward to the 45th easting.

With the advance of the 34th Division now directed to the northwest, it is anticipated that the responsibility of the IV Corps, which now includes only the area west of the Prada road, may at any time be extended to include sole responsibility for the Prada road itself. This change in responsibility would be accomplished by moving the boundary between IV Corps and II Corps to the east to include the Prada road. In view of these developments, the efforts north of Pistoia are, of necessity, secondary in importance to those north of Prada. In other words, it is directed that the main weight of the 6th South African Armored Division be employed on the right to protect the left flank of the II Corps."

This mission was to throw the support of the 24th Guards Brigade toward the attack up Highway 6620 and to relieve and II Corps unit in the

Mount Coroncina area. Responsibility for the former zone of the 24th Guards Brigade passed to Task Force 92.

The next day these instructions were implemented by a Corps Field order which shifted the boundary between II and IV Corps to the line of Gambellate Creek and Setta Creek, approximately two miles east of Highway 6620. At the same time the left boundary of the 6th South African Armored Division was shifted to a north-south line six miles east of Pistoia. All forward movement along Highway 64 was halted and the zone of the 12th South African Motorized Brigade passed to the 74th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. As a result of these changes in boundaries the Division zone was reduced to less than one-half of its former width and General Poole could concentrate his efforts on driving north along Highway 6620, where he could give maximum support to II Corps. The 24th Guards Brigade moved to the right of the 11th South African Armored Brigade on the 28th and by the 30th, the I Scots Guards, fighting on the upper slopes of Mount Catarelto, were abreast of the leading elements of the 34th Division.

The drastic reduction in the zone of the 6th South African Armored Division necessitated a redistribution of the other IV Corps units. In execution of Field Order #12, Headquarters IV Corps, Combat Command "B" was detached from Task Force 92. With the 74th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment placed under its operational control, it took over the mission of advancing along Highway 64. Task Force 92, now reduced to the 370th Infantry, was left with a zone sixteen miles wide extending from just east of the Serchio Valley to a line running due north from a point just west Pistoia. Once the east - west portion of Highway 12 had been cleared, there was no need to place

troops along the greater part of the Task Force front. The 3d Battalion moved to positions in the vicinity of Fiteglio, and south of P. Rosso. At the latter position, the leading elements were engaged by enemy from north of the Lima River. The move of the 3d Battalion had to be made by way of the bridge on Highway 1 west of Pisa, due to the heavy rains which washed out all the bridges over the Serchio River. The 1st Battalion moved from the front line position to an assembly area west of Saltocchio. The 2d Battalion, less Company "G", moved from forward position by truck to the vicinity of Prunetta. Company "G" moved forward across the Lima River to the vicinity of Cocolaio. On 30 September, the 3d Battalion, entered La Lima, where Highway 66 joins Highway 12, and the Regiment concentrated its efforts toward continuing the advance up Highway 12.

By the same Field Order, the 6th Combat Team, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, with its eastern boundary shifted six miles to the east in order to include the Serchio Valley, was given the objective of reaching the small village of Castelnuovo, fifteen miles up the Serchio. The 3d Battalion, under Major Silvano, after capturing Mount ²Prano, on 26 September, relieved the 3d Battalion of the 370th Infantry on 29 September and on the 30th reached Fornoli at the junction of the rivers with the 1st and 2d Battalions continued through the mountains north of Mount Prano, and on the 29th elements of the 1st Battalion entered Stazzenia, near the foothills of the 6094-foot peak of the Pania della Croce feature.

Task Force 45 was receiving strong opposition from the enemy in its narrowed zone, now bounded on the right by a line running almost due north through a point just east of Stazzenia. It was now facing the main defenses of the Gothic Line and therefore met increased artillery fire of all caliber

increased. Both enemy and friendly patrols were active, sharp clashes occurring each day. On 28 September, a company of the Italian 23d Artiere Battalion was attached to the Task Force for engineer work and were placed under the direct control of the Task Force Engineer. The steep mountain slopes being ideal for enemy land-slide demolitions and by this effective means, the enemy blocked many of the winding roads. The Engineers were limited by a shortage of bull-dozers, but were frequently aided by the tank-dozers of the 751st Tank Battalion which performed excellent work. To give additional artillery support to the Task Force, twelve truck-drawn 3-inch anti-tank guns, less personnel, were attached. Troops "A" and "C" of the 168th Battery, 56th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, were utilized under the tutelage of an American artillery officer, to man them, and hereby tremendously increased the Task Force fire power. A new innovation was introduced in IV Corps on 30 September when the 34th Quartermaster War Dog Platoon was attached to Task Force 45. However, trial under artillery fire indicated that these trained dogs were too nervous for duty in the forward areas and could be used only in quiet areas.

The sector along the IV Corps front, the mountains were high and, in general, more rugged than anywhere else on the Fifth Army Front. In addition to the high impassable mountains, elaborate concrete reinforced billboxes, dug-outs in the Serchio Valley north of Lucca, massive bungalow-shaped heavy gun emplacements near Viareggio, there existed the seemingly impassable defiles along Highway 64 north of Pistoia. Impassable because the road was interdicted at every turn by the enemy guns, so well placed and hidden, high upon the mountain sides. The near impregnability of the Gothic Line in the IV Corps zone, if only because of natural obstacles, was good reason for the concentration of the Fifth Army's might at the more narrow part of the moun-

tain chain south of Bologna. This fact is emphasized here in order to show that a fifty-five mile front in the most rugged part of the Apennines, held by IV Corps comparatively weak strength, was considered by the enemy when he withdrew two divisions from the line to bolster the defense in the less rugged mountains south of Bologna.

It was evident that the weather worked to the benefit of the enemy for with the fall rains, trails and secondary roads turned into muddy quagmires. This complicated the supply and service functions already made difficult by the distance the Army had moved from base installations and dumps in the Leghorn and Florence areas. Fog and mist accompanied the rains, concealed enemy troop movements and did much to counter-balance the Fifth Army superiority of air power and artillery. Weather conditions promised to deteriorate further as winter approached. The success of the Fifth Army offensive depended in a large part on quickly reaching the Po Valley to avoid bad weather and before the arrival of additional enemy troops nullified the temporary advantage held by II Corps.

A. HEADQUARTERS CLOSE-UPS

General Crittenberger now possessed a staff that was experienced and battle-trained for many lessons had been learned since the initial action in May. Thus far the officers and enlisted men had functioned exceptionally well in this period of fluid combat. The nerve center of this fighting command had become toughened and capable of meeting all situations; anything from tactics to supply or from personnel problems to communications.

Each morning still found the staff officers assembled in the War Room, obtaining the latest picture of the situation and the matters outside the province of their own sections. The War Room tents were already frayed and bleached by the dust and the hot summer sun, and now with the fall rains,

small leaks dripped cold water on the assembled group. If the Commanding General was not on one of his frequent visits to the front, he was always there to attend the conference. In his absence the Artillery Commander of IV Corps conducted the orientation, and if both were not present, the Chief of Staff, Colonel Ladus, headed the meeting. There were now more eagles perched under this familiar tent for promotions had come to many staff officers who for many months had occupied Table of Organization vacancies. It was now, Colonel Thomas J. Wells, G-2; Colonel A. W. Meetze, Chemical Officer; Colonel Edmund D. Cunningham, Signal Officer and Colonel Ame Vennema, Ordnance Officer. In addition, Colonel Raymond W. Curtis had assumed the position of G-3, which had been held by Lt Colonel Wm. E. Kaulsby, Jr. since the departure of Colonel Eugene L. Harrison.

Officers from each section paid daily visits to some of the subordinate units and acquainted themselves with the problems of their respective sections; distances were too great to permit any one individual to visit all units each day. The needs and wants of the combat elements were better learned by personal consultation. Using the liaison planes, some officers made frequent flights over the lines for the purpose of familiarizing themselves with the terrain over which the troops were to fight - on this point, General Crittenberger was exacting, particularly so in that an officer from the G-2 and G-3 sections should fly daily.

Those who regularly worked the night shift suffered mostly from lack of sleep because of the unforeseen situations that occurred almost daily requiring their services. The Table of Organization for a Corps Headquarters had been the outgrowth of experiences in maneuvers when each operation terminated after 72 hours, but this was different for operations were continuous.

When the night-duty officer stumbled into his sack, the others of the headquarters were up to greet the early dawn. Sometimes at about 1000 in the morning, after possibly only three hours of sleep, he was usually awakened by the commotion when his tent fell over him. He then knew that the soldiers and the Italian roustabouts were breaking camp for another move. After forty or so miles of dusty and bumpy roads, the new command post site was reached where he would throw himself under the nearest tree to catch a few winks. Just after he dozed off, so it seemed, he would be rudely awakened by the day duty-officer to remind him it was again time for the graveyard shift. The draftsmen, clerks and typists who pulled this shift suffered much more, for their job could not be accomplished unless the headquarters was operating.

Many of the men at the headquarters were becoming veritable linguists and were pendantic in claiming that the garbled results of their efforts to speak Italian were cultured with the best Florentine or Milanese dialect. As a point of levity it is mentioned that because food of all types was of short supply in Italy when we first heard a native greet us with the remark, "chau", we thought that he or she begged for food and we were chagrined to learn that in Italian it was an expression of greeting as well as a farewell. A popular joke was found in the "Al Ricovero" signs which were plastered or painted on buildings in the towns and cities. They meant in Italian, "To the air-raid shelter". The uninitiated recruit was told that this was the name of a policial candidate whose popularity was thus splattered all over Italy by his campaign manager. Sergeant Al Graham of the G-2 Section agreed that it was much better campaign publicity than put out by the politicking New Yorkers. The historian would be remiss in failing to mention the popular expression, "Tedeschi Portare Tutto Via". This meant that "the Germans

had carried everything away." If a GI asked a farmer for eggs or wine, that was the usual expected retort - except that it was accompanied with the appearance of a man suddenly transformed from a happy, smiling character to a humbled individual with a most pitiful and poverty stricken expression which of course, was aided by the customary, frantic arm-waving. The remarkable results were that the GI paid double the price - half for the eggs or wine and the other half out of the goodness of his heart. But aside from the usual banter and joking found in any unit, the men of the headquarters were hard-working. No complaints - just the usual gripes which were in our Army, a healthy and normal sign. Long hours from early dawn to late night constituted a regular day for them and they realized that the men up front depended on their accurate typing, drawing and drafting, or whatever their regular assigned duties might have been.

The nattily-dressed and equally efficient military police platoon deserves praise for its untiring vigilance over the Corps Headquarters. To pass about the tents in the blacked-out headquarter's area at night without knowledge of the password was to court serious trouble. Impressed with the fact that the Commanding General who directed the operations of the Corps, was under their protection, the Military Police guarded him well. They kept the traffic which flocked toward the headquarters - the liaison officers, visitors of importance with their entourages, subordinate unit commanders, etc., - unsnarled and by dispersed parking eliminated any congestion which might have revealed the Corps headquarters to enemy observers.

Periodically an allied pilot, whose plane had been brought down deep in German territory and who had worked his way back through the mountains to reach our lines, was brought to the headquarters for questioning as to

the enemy's dispositions and movements on our front. Other times our own soldiers, taken prisoner by the Germans, escaped and by patiently creeping and working their way through German infested areas, passed back through the lines with the aid of Partisans and were brought to the headquarters for the same purpose. Many such escapees were haggard, unshaven, with wan expressions in their eyes that told stories of narrow and harrowing experiences met in infiltrating back to our lines. Nevertheless, they were happy, for they had dodged the enemy in northern Italy and were now assured of immediate rotation to the States - this was the policy of the Allied Command.

At the end of the month the Command Post was still in the Arno Plain, nestled in a patch of pine woods at Staffoli. To the north loomed the dark outline of the lofty Apennines - the sight of these distant heights, together with the cold snap in the autumn air caused all sections to view with misgivings the probability of spending a harsh, cold winter in the mountains. The chilly crispness in the air and the occasional morning frost on the tents were the harbingers of the coming winter. Arrangements were made for new type jackets, woolen sweaters, shoepacs, with heavy socks, parkas, wet weather trousers, insulated sleeping bags, ski goggles, field caps with visors, outer overshoes, overcoats and mackinaws, to be made available during the month of October. Other items to be procured were stoves and heavy tentage. It was figured that 6 Sibley stoves per company for use in October were necessary to thwart some of the penetrating winter cold. Ordnance was worried that the supply of the critically needed 6.00 x 16 and 7.50 x 20 Mud and Snow tires would not be sufficient for the month of October. The Quartermaster reported some difficulty in obtaining Class

II and IV supplies. The most serious shortages were woollen OD clothing. However, by the end of the month old man winter was in for defeat for these shortages had been overcome.

The Chemical Officer of IV Corps was concerned with the numerous statements of prisoners of war, that the German Army in Italy was increasing measures for defense against chemical attack. Based on this, he questioned a number of prisoners in order to ascertain just what these measures were whether or not the rumored precautions were for protection against their or our use of gas, and enemy introduction of new offensive or defensive chemical equipment. With his back to the Apennine wall, and in a fit of desperation, the use of poisonous gases by the enemy was a possibility which could not be overlooked. He prepared a questionnaire which was designed for the guidance of interrogators in obtaining pertinent information concerning chemical warfare. When these questionnaires were collected and analyzed they did not indicate anything unusual.

B. IV CORPS DRIVES DEEPER INTO THE MOUNTAINS.

Although by the end of September, IV Corps had penetrated the southern fringe of the great mountain mass there were still many miles of jagged peaks and narrow twisting valleys. With the exception of the narrow coastal plain behind Viareggio, the only routes to the north were along the Serchio, and the Reno Rivers. By controlling these avenues of advance, the enemy could hold his long right flank with a minimum of forces. Similarly Fifth Army maintained only sufficient troops on the IV Corps front to protect the vital supply lines emanating from Leghorn and to prevent, so far as possible, the transfer of enemy troops to the II Corps front.

1. Shifts of Allied and Enemy Units.

Extensive readjustments in command and in the disposition of units were

made on both sides of the line during the first few days of October. During the period 1-3 October, Task Force 45 and the 6th Combat Team, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, were joined as a provisional Task Force Corps and placed under the operational command of Major General Eurico Gaspar Dutra, the Brazilian Minister of War. Thus Major General Dutra, later President of Brazil, became the first South American General to command a corps in combat in World War II. On 6 October, the second Brazilian contingent under General Oswaldo Cordiera arrived in Naples. The major change in command occurred on 5 October when Combat Command "B", (1st Armored Division), and the 6th South African Armored Division reverted to Army control. The Army commander anticipated that the strongly reinforced drive of II Corps would carry it ahead of the considerably weaker IV Corps. To prevent a gap from developing along the inner-Corps boundary and to provide maximum support for the left flank of II Corps, he provided the 6th South Africans with a separate zone of advance and retained them under Army control. To give it additional infantry and tank strength, Combat Command "B" was attached. Thus reinforced, the Division was given the mission of attacking down the Setta Valley keeping pace with the advance of II Corps, and of maintaining contact with IV Corps. At the same time, command of the San Marcello area, just east of the Serchio Valley, was transferred from Task Force 92 to the 107th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group. This group was composed of the British 39 and 47 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments and the British 74 Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment. Task Force 92 now consisted of the 370th Infantry and the 2d Armored Group which had been relieved from Task Force 45. The 2d Armored Group consisted of the 434th and 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalions, supported by elements of the 751st Tank Battalion and the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion. No change was made in the

Serchio Valley zone where the 6th Combat Team continued to operate. This organization temporarily left Task Force 45, Headquarters with no troops under its command. For the time being it supplied the staff for Task Force 92 which was now commanded by Major General Edward M. Almond, the remainder of whose division, the 92nd, was about to arrive in Italy. With the loss of Combat Command "B" and the South African Armored Division, IV Corps was reduced to the strength of no more than a reinforced division.

At the beginning of October, 3 German divisions faced IV Corps on the 50-mile front: the 42d Jaeger (Light) Division was guarding the coastal area below Massa; the 65th SS Panzer Grenadier Division was opposite the 6th South African Armored Division. However, as the threat to Bologna increased during the first days of October, enemy dispositions began to change. On the 3d of October, the 65th Grenadier Division was withdrawn for use east of Highway 65 and was replaced by the 94th Grenadier Division, which had been reforming in the Udine area. By mid-October the 94th Grenadier Division had followed the shift of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division to the east.

The 42d Jaeger Division extended its lines to include the Serchio Valley, but an additional unit was required to defend the central area. This gap was filled by the 232d Grenadier Division. In many cases, the personnel was physically handicapped and desertions had been frequent. In spite of the high average age in all companies, the Division was expected to hold defensive positions well. It was moved to Italy in early September, where, until its commitment in mid-October, it was stationed in the Genoa area.

Late in the month the 42d Jaeger Division was withdrawn with the exception of a few troops left in the Serchio Valley to bolster elements of the Monte Rosa Alpine Division, the first of the reorganized Italian Republic

(Fascists) Division to be used against the Allies. Control of the coastal region passed to the 148th Grenadier Division. This former reserve unit, after being driven across the French-Italian Frontier by the Seventh Army, was converted into a field division in the Genoa area.

2. Renewal of the Advance.

Accompanying the instructions for the shifting of units and commands on 5 October was General Crittenberger's outline of the Corps plan of action. The 107th AAA Group was scheduled to hold a 20-mile front extending from Bagna di Lucca on Highway 12 to the left, boundary of the 6th South African Armored Division near the village of Ponte Petri. The 6th Combat Team, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, was directed to continue its advance in the Serchio Valley toward Castel Nuovo. Task Force 92 would open a coastal drive aimed initially at the capture of Mount Cauala, the first of a series of heights guarding Massa whose capture would, in turn, open the way for an assault on the port of La Spezia.

a. Task Force 92.

The offensive along the coast got under way at 0600 6 October, with the 1st and 2d Battalions, 370th Infantry, attacking abreast against Mount Cauala. They fought on to overcome stiff resistance and to register substantial gains in the advance toward Massa. Slogging through a downpour of rain, the colored infantrymen outflanked German resistance on the hills to their immediate front and established new positions about a mile closer to the Massa objective by the end of the day. In the left of the zone, the 434th and 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalions, after initially suffering local set-backs in the face of bitter German counterthrusts, pushed forward, assisting the attack of the 370th Infantry and bringing up

the left between Highway 1 and the sea. By night-fall despite the heavy rains, new positions had been established by both battalions and they regrouped in preparation for a continuance of the attack. Tanks and tank destroyers attached to the 2d Armored Group were ordered to support the attack along Highway 1 on the morning of the 7th. Little progress was made, for they were blocked by the lack of suitable stream crossings over the rain-swollen creeks as was the case of the 1st and 2d Battalion of the 370th, to the right of the highway, as they ascended the high hills. In order to be ready to quickly reinforce the attacking units the 3d Battalion was moved into reserve in the vicinity of Pietrasanta during the afternoon.

On October 8 the 2d Battalion was driven back by mortar and artillery fire after it reached the upper slopes of Mount Cauala. The battalion regrouped after dark and at 0300, 9 October, moved forward again, scaled the steep rocks below the summit and reached the crest without opposition. During the latter part of the morning and throughout the afternoon, enemy automatic weapons and artillery fire fell with increasing tempo on the newly-gained position and by late afternoon, the Battalion was again forced to withdraw, this time to the vicinity of Seravezza. On the left, in the open plains area between Highway 1 and the coast, the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion aided by two platoons of Sherman tanks reached the cemetery just north of Querceta.

For the next two days, Task Force 92 made preparations to renew the attack on Mount Cauala. Ladders were built in preparation for scaling the cliffs forming the eastern approach. Crossings were sought over Seravezza Creek which was badly swollen by the steady fall rains. The 3d Battalion moved up to Seravezza in order to attack the hotly resisted objective. On the evening of 11 October, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 370th Infantry, crossed

the creek and started up the mountain. The 3d Battalion continued its tortuous climb throughout the night and at 0730 on the 12th, "L" and "K" Companies were on Mount Cauala with "I" Company moving up to join them. During the climb, severe artillery fire was received and four machine gun positions were encountered on top of the objective. Heavy enemy fire continued during the day and in the late afternoon, a counter-attack was received with the enemy trying to infiltrate and cut the trails on the east side of Mount Cauala. By 1830 "L" and "K" Companies began to withdraw; "I" Company remaining behind, pinned to the ground by small arms and machine gun fire. Just after dusk "I" Company also withdrew.

No further effort was made to take the mountain objective until the night of 17-18 October when a patrol fought its way to the crest. Up until then, however, the Regiment held its position, continued reliefs, and sent out night and day patrols. Meanwhile, the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, slowly advanced along the coast, meeting heavy fire all the way. On 13 October an enemy pocket of resistance consisting of from 30 to 70 men was discovered north of Forte dei Marmi and "A" Battery was sent to clean it out. In the process a stiff fire fight ensued during which 6 enemy were killed, 14 captured and the rest were forced to withdraw.

During 16-17 October rain fell in torrents, and the resulting muddy roads and trails contributed to the slow advance in the mountains. The 2d Armored Group, chugging foot by foot along Highway 1 met steady resistance. The enemy launched a small counterattack, but it was repulsed by our artillery and small arms fire. On the 17th, patrols of Task Force 92 reached and outflanked bitterly contested Mount Cauala. The reverses encountered at this objective were accentuated when a 10 man patrol from "F" Company, 370th Infantry, was surrounded while in a house. Five of its members were

killed, four were captured and one wounded soldier escaping to report the incident. That night the 1st Battalion was relieved by the 3d and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Pietrasanta. The boundary between the 370th Infantry and 2d Armored Group was adjusted, giving Highway 1 to the former. Once again patrols of platoon strength from "I" and "K" Companies, 370th Infantry, were pushed up the slopes of the twice ascended and descended Mount Cauala. A patrol, upon reaching the top of the mountain, received heavy fire from 8 emplaced enemy machine guns and was forced to withdraw to the south slopes where it dug in and remained. The following day in the face of artillery and machine gun fire, the company joined its platoon on the south slopes of Mount Cauala and also dug in. The following day, a patrol of "F" Company of the 2d Battalion, reached the crest of the mountain. It was relieved by a reinforced platoon from "I" Company, which dug in and occupied positions at the top. The remainder of the company, however, was unable to reach the crest due to heavy flanking machine gun fire. To protect the elements already on the mountains, a platoon of the 2d Battalion was moved to the eastern slopes and "L" Company of the 3d Battalion moved north and occupied Strettoia. That night the 2d Battalion was relieved by the 1st.

Sensitive about these jabs into his defenses south of Massa, the enemy, on 22 October, launched 5 counterattacks against the positions of "L" Company in Strettoia. However, they were repulsed and later in the afternoon, elements of "C" Company, 1st Battalion, moved forward to reinforce the newly gained position. Despite this added strength on the southern slopes of the mountain, heavy enemy machine gun and mortar fire forced the two units to withdraw on the morning of the 23d. "G" Company, 2d

Battalion, moved up to relieve the two hard-pressed units so as to permit them to reorganize. On the 24th, scattered artillery fire was received throughout the zone of the Task Force, with Pietrasanta again the principal target. Our artillery answered the challenge by raining shells along the strongly held enemy positions south of Massa. Also on the 23d, the 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry, contacted elements of the 47th British Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment in the area west of Stazzema. Meanwhile, the elements of the 3d Battalion perched on Mount Cauala, received enemy machine gun fire but held fast and replied with mortars on the enemy positions. In an effort to expand the hold on Mount Cauala, a platoon from the 1st Battalion occupied the southern slope of nearby Mount Cavalle. On 26 October, the remainder of "C" Company, 370th Infantry joined the lone platoon on the southern slopes of Mount Cavalle and took up defensive positions. From then on to the end of October the 370th Infantry stood its ground on these two mountain features. Cavalle and Cauala, constantly receiving fire on the latter. Patrols were dispatched to Strettoia, to the vicinity of C. Gherardi and to C. del Lago and all made contact with the enemy, while a combat patrol to Porta received enemy machine gun fire. On 31 October, the 1st Battalion of the 371st Infantry Regiment, the second of the three regiments of the 92d Division, moved to an assembly area near Pietrasanta and after darkness began movement forward to relieve the 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry.

In the meantime, the 2d Armored Group advanced against the strong resistance offered in the coastal area to the west of Highway 1. Heavy artillery fire fell constantly on the forward elements. Indications led intelligence to believe that the shells came from well emplaced coastal guns in the vicinity of Massa. On the 27th, the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery

Battalion relieved the 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, with the exception of Battery "C", which was attached to the former. Elements reached the La Foce River and while trying to cross, received machine gun fire. The 2d Armored Group holding fast at its foremost positions, sent out numerous combat patrols, which sent out on the 30th, consisting of an officer, 10 men and 8 Partisans, did not return. The following night, two of its members who had become separated from it, reported that they had last seen it in the vicinity of Massa. It was later learned that this patrol returned to the American lines intact and with valuable information, on the night of 7 November.

b. 6th Combat Team, Brazilian Expeditionary Force.

On the 6th of October the Brazilian advance was hampered more by rain and extensive demolitions than by enemy resistance, and on the following day the towns of Catar Ozzo stopped the advance after Ceregli and Antemin-telli were taken. On 8 October the 1st Battalion moved out toward Camiore while the 2d and 3d held their positions. On 9 October when the 3d Battalion was approaching the village of Barga, General Crittenberger ordered General Zenobio to consolidate the positions he had reached, avoid any large-scale attacks and limit himself to local action. There was a danger that if the Serchio Valley thrust gained too much momentum the enemy might counter-attack and as there were no reserves available to IV Corps, a counter-attack of any size could be disastrous. In compliance with these instructions, the Brazilians kept heavy patrols operating against the enemy and this, combined with small unit attacks, gained some ground. On 11 October the 3d Battalion moved out in the early morning and advanced astride the highway along the Serchio River capturing Barga and surrounding Galliciano. However, heavy mortar and artillery fire fell on the advance elements during the day and the positions north

of Zolento became untenable, but those to the southeast and southwest of the town were held. All the next day was spent in consolidating positions and the patrols sent out to cover the entire front, contacted the enemy near Somocolonia, Treppigiana and Castelvechie. On the 13th, the 7th and 8th Companies of the 3d Battalion began another movement forward up the Valley but soon after the Brazilians moved out, 30 rounds of estimated 280-mm artillery fire fell in the vicinity of the Battalion Command Post at Bolognana. The enemy was extremely sensitive to these local attacks. The 7th Company was unable to make much progress due to heavy machine gun and mortar fire, but the 8th Company advanced approximately one-half mile north of Barga. Continuing the advance the next day, against some opposition, Brazilian troops reached the small town of S. Piero.

Due to the apparent ability of the Brazilians to continue their advance up the Serchio, without meeting a great amount of resistance and or receiving an under number of casualties, it was decided to reinforce their efforts to a small extent and to let their advance continue. To do this the 1st and 2d Field Artillery Battalions began movement from the coastal area to the Serchio Valley in order to support the advance of the 3d Battalion. The 2d Field Artillery Battalion was forced to move its guns over "jeep trails" in order to reach positions from which it could support an eventual attack on Castelnuovo, therefore not until the 18th, after literally dragging and carrying its guns over the muddy trail, did the Battalion establish its positions in the vicinity of Cardoso. The 1st Battalion of the 6th Combat Team, BEF, moved to an assembly area along the river and south of Fornaci in order to reinforce the 3d Battalion for the scheduled attack on the Castelnuovo bastion, and more strength was added when "C" Company, 751st Tank Battalion, moved up to an assembly area near Val d'Ottave.

On 20 October the Brazilians slightly improved their position by a short advance on the right flank, placing some troops in Sommocolonia, which brought the Brazilians a mile closer to the hill mass at Lama. The Fornaci Bridge and the town of Bolegnana received artillery fire, however, no serious damage was incurred. On 21 October the 1st Battalion moved from its assembly area to positions on the east flank of Ceregna Antelminelli. "C" Company, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion also rumbled up to an assembly area south of Fornaci as further armor support. For the next nine days, the Brazilians consolidated their positions, shifted units, effected local reliefs and sent out patrols to their front. Enemy artillery fire began to increase to intensity: in one instance, a heavy concentration fell on the mountain village of Molazzana, driving a portion of the civilian population into our lines; at another time a concentration landed in Albiano so heavily that only a few recognizable buildings remained standing. On the night of 29 October, the 1st Battalion moved up and passed through the 3d in preparation for the attack of the Lama Hill mass, on the east side of the Serchio River. It commanded the avenue of approach up the Serchio Valley and due to its predominate position from which enfilading fire could be directed, was a prerequisite to the capture of Castelnovo.

On 30 October, the 1st Battalion attacked and after a difficult ascent in the face of considerable resistance, the Lama hill mass was taken. Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion had moved out and captured the high ground east of Campio and patrols from the 2d Battalion moving on Molezzana, encountered machine gun and mortar fire. On the whole, a gain of two miles was made by the 1st and 3d Battalions, but on the following day the enemy appeared, determined to stop the Brazilians and retain control of the valley. Beginning at 0230 on the 31st and continuing until after dawn, as late as 0700, the enemy

launched four separate counter-attacks against the Brazilian 3d and 7th Companies on the high ground east of Campio. Unable to withstand these sledge-hammer blows, the two companies were forced to withdraw to positions in the vicinity of Albiano. This seemed to encourage the enemy for at 1600, another counter-attack was launched in the vicinity of Lama against the 1st Company, which expended all of its ammunition in an effort to drive off the attackers, and was forced to withdraw to the vicinity of Catagnana. In order to avoid the danger of having the 2d Company cut off it was then ordered to withdraw to positions at Sommecolonia.

c. The 107th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group.

On 5 October, when Combat Command "B" and the 6th South African Armored Division reverted to Fifth Army Operational Control, the IV Corps zone was considerably reduced in size. The 107th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group, composed of the British 39th and 47th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments, and the British 74th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment had been away from Task Force 45 and moved to the right flank of the Corps in the vicinity of San Marcello. The zone extended roughly from a north-south line through Bagni de Lucca, approximately 10 miles eastward to the Corps right boundary near Pracchia, on the Reno River.

On 6 October the 107th Group completed the relief of the remaining units of the 370th Regimental Combat Team and the 74th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment moved forward from Monsummano and by night fall, had occupied new positions on the right of the zone just west of Pontepetri. The 39th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment moved up into position in the left-half of the zone to be greeted by some light artillery fire on their forward positions. For the next three days, the Group remained in position and dispatched combat patrols to maintain contact with the enemy. At Rivoreta a patrol engaged four or five

enemy in a fire fight and forced them to withdraw while another in the vicinity of Piansinatico engaged an enemy machine gun crew, killing one and forcing the remainder to retire. On the 10th and 47th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment assembled in reserve in the area Borgo a Mozzano - Ponte a Moriano - Ponte S. Pietro. On 12 October the pressing need for Engineers was partially met by having the 240th Battery of the 39th Regiment relieve the 110th Battery, so that the latter unit could perform maintenance work on Highway 12 between La Lima and Cutigliano. Throughout the remainder of the month, the 107th Group held its positions, kept patrol contact with the enemy and otherwise performed its defensive mission. In many instances patrols found enemy positions in the mountains north of Lima Creek undefended, but the almost impossible task of supplying these points precluded their occupation by our troops.

C. SHADES OF HISTORY

An allied army, manned by representatives from all corners of the world, was in these lofty Apennines attempting to drive out an efficient and capable German Army. Over these same valleys and mountains, once swept the barbaric hordes of the Huns, on their way south for the siege of Rome, the capitol of the decadent Roman Empire. With rape and murder left in their wake, there was no doubt that the blood of the natives of the rustic settlements had reddened the waters of the Reno and Serchio Rivers. Some of these stone villages and towns, from which the troops of IV Corps had ejected the entrenched Germans, were probably ancient scenes of the battles which saw-sawed back and forth between the feuding knights of medieval Italy. The stone walls surrounding the mountain villages, which could be approached only over cobbled trails - some even too steep and narrow for our all-purpose jeep - were ample evidence of the conditions of a lesser civilized age.

The crude furnishings found in a village home had been inherited from generations past and the use of the ancient kettle and pot over the charcoal burning fire place made of heavy stone, could just as well have been in one of the Pilgrim homes of old Plymouth. Family names dating back to 1400 could be found inscribed on stone in the walled cemeteries. The GI was impressed with the abundance of chestnut trees dotting the sloping landscape and was more surprised to learn that its fruit was one of the main sources of food enjoyed by these mountain people. At small water-power mills located along turbulent mountain streams, the chestnuts were ground into flour, to be used in making their coarse bread and cake. These products were found to be not too tasty, but when washed down with red wine, their soggyness went unnoticed.

The war was something that did not concern these people for as in the past, the wars belonged to the Caesars, the Kings and the Dukes, and were matters far from their rustic endeavors. If the Germans occupied their village yesterday and the Americans occupied it today, it was only in keeping with the history of their land, which had lived through many ancient battles. They knew that the Americans came from a distant land of wonders to where Guessepe or Maria, from a neighboring village, had sailed a long time ago, and from whence they had sent parcels of food accompanied by glowing accounts of the miracles in the new world. When a jeep rolled through a mountain village street, over which no vehicle more modern than a mule cart had ever lumbered before, it was enough to upset the lives of the people for a day. The children gathered admiringly around it, afraid to touch it as though it was made of gold, and the mothers assembled in groups in the village square to chatter excitedly about this funny looking contraption on rubber wheels.

It was from these mountain settlements that some of the more adventurous Italian lads would throw caution to the winds and attach themselves to American units, as handi-workers in return for food and travel. The daily monotonous existence of these people was torn asunder when new ideas from the outside world came in with the tide of the IV Corps advance. These new ideas washed away some of the ignorance that had been penned in by the ancient walls surrounding the villages, the walls of which Mussolini himself was unable to effectively breach with his ideology. In addition to breaking through the Gothic Line, IV Corps was breaking the grip that the feudal past held over the people of this almost impenetrable Apennine Range.

Although IV Corps launched no major attacks during October, the fall rains and the rough nature of the terrain where the troops found themselves on a more or less static front, made the problems of supply very difficult. In spite of the efforts of the regular engineer troops assisted by provisional engineers drawn from other units, bridges and road-fills washed out almost as fast as they were repaired. With the month of October passed, one need only look back at some of the tasks performed by the engineers to learn of the reasons why the enemy had chosen this rugged mountain range to staunch the flow of the Allied advance. Road maintenance used a larger amount of engineer man-power than all the other jobs the engineers coped with during the month. To cover such a wide front with so few engineer troops necessitated splitting the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion and the 23d Italian Artieri Battalion into separate companies, each with definite road responsibilities for the Germans, on withdrawing back into the mountains, executed demolitions and landslides which effectively delayed the advancing infantrymen elements.

Engineer patrols equipped with radios combed the area and when a wash-

out or a landslide was encountered, they called for "on the spot" emergency crews to make repair or to remove the obstacle; a new innovation credited to the Corps Engineers. On Route 1227 the Germans blew up a tunnel which stopped the advance of the Brazilians moving up the Serchie Valley. Clearing of the mass of rock to open up the tunnel was initially undertaken by the 1st Company, 9th Engineer Battalion of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, but small progress was made because their bull-dozers were deadlined for repairs. To respond to the emergency, engineers of the 1108th Group were rushed to the task and after working 24 hours a day, in 3 shifts, the tunnel was cleared and the advance moved on. The first opportunity for the erection of a suspension bridge occurred when it was determined that some means of communication to the east bank of the Serchie River was necessary. Since there was a shortage of Bailey bridge parts a suspension bridge was the only answer. It was erected and hailed as the first bridge of this type put into use since IV Corps entered combat.

A further handicap to this mountain warfare was caused by the shortage of transportation. All Army transportation was needed for the long hauls from Leghorn to the II Corps units south of Bologna, so again IV Corps had to improvise in order to sustain itself. Since no truck company was available, demands for transportation were met by using the organic transport of the tactical troops. On 15 October a provisional Truck Company was formed by drawing on Corps units and operated during the remainder of the month under the direction of the G-4. This company was able to maintain the stock level and also was used to assist units in evacuating prisoners and moving troops. However, this drain of transportation from subordinate units superimposed a heavy load upon the transportation of organizations which was already over-

taxed by long hauls over muddy roads.

Due to the lack of roads it was necessary to supply the troops operating in the mountains, by pack transport and since only 30 pack mules were available to the Brazilian Expeditionary Force and 25 to Task Force 92, it was necessary to augment them by hand-carry. With the small number of combat troops available to slowly advance the line, this was an additional hardship on units already hard pressed for fighting soldiers. Extra mules could not be obtained for use in the IV Corps zone because they were needed to support the effort of II Corps.

In addition to protecting the left flank of Fifth Army, IV Corps resumed responsibility for the organization and training of two major units. The 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, arrived in Italy during October, and a supervised training program was begun to prepare it for combat. A similar program was worked out for the last two combat teams of the 92d Infantry Division as they arrived. Both the 6th Combat Team, BEF, and the 370th Infantry Regiment, 92d Division, had already undergone actual battle experiences in the line, and before the start of any new offensive by the Army, General Crittenger was pleased by the prospect of having two fully equipped divisions. Although he realized that the bulk of both was to be committed in combat for the first time.

1. Command Post on Outskirts of Lucca.

On 12 October the trucks, trailers and jeeps of Headquarters left the pine woods at Stafolli and moved northward over the Arno Plain, then to the west, crossed the Serchio and ascended the steep hill of Monte S. Quirico. There the Headquarters Commandant, Major Brewster Perry, and his Military Policemen directed the section vehicles to secluded wooded areas in the grounds of a beautiful villa. From the heights of the new command post

location there existed a beautiful panoramic view of the ancient walled battlements ringed about the town of Lucca and the Serchio River following its southeastward course toward the sea. This proved to be a choice location for a command post, for it was on the outskirts of a city which was the road center of this part of the Arno Plain.

A few weeks before the villa had been the site of a German Field hospital and evidence of that establishment was found in the neat rows of German crosses in the vicinity of the G-2 and G-3 tents. The Italian landlord moved about the command post area, wringing his hands in despair at the sight of the linemen chopping the branches of his stately maples or of a 2-1/2 ton truck churning muddy tracks across his grounds in order to move under the protecting foliage of the trees. Nearby lived an old retired Italian Colonel of Cavalry, Attilius Sacconi, with his three comely daughters, Francesca, Louisa, and Lola, who sadly told his new American visitors of the folly of his country in aligning itself with Hitler Germany, and contented himself with the fact that being retired long ago, he had avoided an active part in this war except for the concern for his son who was a British prisoner of war somewhere in India.

"APENNINE CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XV * * * * *

THE WINTER STALEMATE

The cold waters of streams and ponds covered by thin layers of ice, woven during the cold nights of the last days of October, foreboded the arrival of winter in the Apennines. The highest peaks were already snow-capped, the lower line of which descended day by day, and the local citizens predicted that in a matter of weeks the whole countryside would be blanketed with snow. Women, children, and old men spent their days in combing the mountain trails for wood with which to heat their homes, while we placed our G.I. water cans near fires in order to melt the ice formed during the freezing nights or broke the thin layer of ice in our helmets in order to perform the morning's grooming - E'r-ri Frosty vapor trails from mouth and nostrils wafted clear on these cold mornings and the cold snap of the air nipped the exposed ears and fingers. A soldier on patrol with a bare trigger finger, feared that it might lose its sensitivity by numbness. Piercing cold winds moaned thru the scrubby trees on the razor-sharp slopes of the mountains. But to carry out your part of the defensive mission on the jagged peaks under these winter conditions took guts and a hell of a lot of will power for the natural hardships were equal to the enemy's contribution.

With the arrival of November, the Allied troops in Italy knew it was time to dig in for a second winter, but they had the satisfaction of knowing that they had beaten the enemy over many miles of ground during the last year. For nearly two full months they had struggled forward from mountain to mountain in a campaign, which, for intensity during sustained action, matched any effort by the armies elsewhere. Beginning during the

warm clear days of early September, the advance, in proportion to the increase of torrential rains, gradually slowed to a halt at the end of October. The strain of heavy casualties, increasing enemy resistance and mud-clogged supply routes also wore down the offensive strength of the attacking divisions.

It is believed that our troops could have gone on except for the one chief controlling factor, the status of the ammunition stocks available to the Army. Priority in ammunition as well as replacements had gone to General Eisenhower's forces on the western front. It was estimated that if the average daily rate of expenditures continued, the present stock available to Army, including current allocation and theater reserve, would have been completely exhausted by 10 November. It was further determined that the theater allocations for the period 10 November - 10 January would not be sufficient for any mission beyond a defensive role. It would take some time to build up the reserve necessary to support even limited offensive attacks for in some categories, such as ammunition for the 155mm gun, production capacity in the United States was unable to meet the overall demand. Under these conditions, Fifth Army had no choice but to halt operations, and it was not known when a sustained drive could be undertaken then. So on 30 October the Fifth Army Commander issued verbal instructions, confirmed in a written directive which followed on 3 November, outlining the action to be taken by all units under Army control.

A. CHANGES IN TROOP DISPOSITIONS.

At his Command Post overlooking Lucca, General Crittenger received the following instructions from the Fifth Army Commander; they generally outlined the plans for the halt of the Army offensive, but also

called for a major shift of the present zones of responsibility:

The 92d Infantry Division, under Fifth Army control, would assume responsibility for the coastal zone and the Serchio Valley as far east as Bagni di Lucca. IV Corps' new zone would extend from Bagni di Lucca to the II Corps' boundary, which rested on Setta Creek. The 6th South African Armored Division and Combat Command "B", presently engaged in that area, were to return to the control of IV Corps. To prepare for assuming command of the new area to the east, the General was instructed to establish a small command group somewhere toward the east of the zone so as to facilitate the subsequent movements and reliefs and the eventual assumption of command of the new sector. He was also to concentrate the 6th Combat Team, BEF, in the area now held by Combat Command "B". On arrival of the Brazilians, Combat Command "B", less the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, was to be relieved and revert to its parent unit. The 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, was later to be released to control of the 92d Division. The Brazilians, after the relief of the Combat Command "B", were to continue pressing forward along Highway 64 in order to narrow the zone of action of the South African Division. Finally when the command of the new sector was effective and if Mount Sole was still in enemy hands, plans were to be prepared for its capture.

On 3 November, by virtue of Fifth Army radio message, the instructions enumerated above were placed into effect and thus the coast and the Serchio Valley passed to the 92d Division and the remainder of the zone, as far as the II Corps' boundary, came under IV Corps control. The next day in the greatest secrecy a shifting of troops began. To assist in a cover plan, all unit signs were left in the old areas as the troops moved from the western zone to the new Corps area. Organizational signs on vehicles and

equipment were removed. The forward echelon of the IV Corps headquarters was divided and only a minimum of operational personnel moved to the mountain village of Taviano, and established an advance command post. The balance of the forward echelon set up a new command post in a huge square-shaped villa north of Pisteia. To further deceive the enemy, radios and signal installations were left in the old areas northwest of Lucca.

The issuance of these instructions was rightly timed to bring relief to the hard-pressed Combat Command "B" in the Reno River Valley. After weeks of withdrawal up through Italy to the Gothic Line, being forced out of those strong positions and then retreating some more, Hitler had suddenly given orders to hold fast in the Apennines. Immediately the reaction of the Germans was pronounced. All along the line the enemy stepped and was now beginning to exploit local counter-attacks. This about-face was evidenced by the stubborn defense exhibited south of Bologna and to the vicious resistance offered to the east and west of the salient. Combat Command "B", under Colonel Dewey, in its advance up Highway 64 to Torre del Nerone, was hard-pressed by this sudden show of sensitivity. Every hostile effort was executed to drive his little force off the high ground dominating Highway 64 north of Porretta. In one day the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion was counter-attacked seven times near Africa, but it held. Once again the emergency alarm went out to IV Corps to relieve the situation. The unit that could get to Colonel Dewey's support the fastest was the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion, then employed on the coast. At midnight of 2 November, one company of the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion was ordered to extricate itself and move 75 miles to the Porretta area. By daylight next morning it was there. The remaining destroyers of the Battalion and the tanks of the 751st Tank Battalion

followed close behind. The quick arrival of these tank destroyers and tanks probably saved the day. However, supporting infantry was still needed.

As the Brazilian Expeditionary Force under command of General Mascarenhas was to remain with IV Corps, relief of the Brazilian Infantry had already been started in the Serchio Valley by elements of the 92d Infantry Division. The 2d Battalion, 6th Brazilian Infantry Regiment, already relieved, was rushed to the Porretta Terme area on 2 November. The remainder of the Brazilians who had been committed to action, moved to the Reno River Valley as rapidly as they were relieved. The balance of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force was being dispatched from the Pisa area as fast as the issue of equipment and their pre-battle training would allow. On 5 November the 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, assumed command of the zone held by Combat Command "B" astride the Reno River. At this same time, Combat Command "B" and Troop "D", 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, were placed under operational control of the Brazilians. This rapid move of the elements of the 6th Regimental Combat Team to the Reno Valley, followed by the movement of the remainder of the Division from the Pisa area, and the committing of these new troops to action, was a crucial test for the Brazilian Expeditionary Force. It was a sudden test of staff planning, logistics, and leadership - all under the stress of haste. The hurried movement illustrates one of the phenomena of war, for while it is true that war in many instances consists of watching and waiting, on the other hand when an emergency threatens the rush is pell-mell, as troops are hurried forward to threatened areas. This was the case when the Brazilian's center of activity was shifted so rapidly from the Serchio into the Reno Valley, 50 or 60 miles to the east.

The 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry, Brazilian Expeditionary Forces, moved into positions in the vicinity of Africo prior to midnight of 5 November, and the 2d Battalion relieved the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion on position. The same day the 434th Anti-Aircraft Battalion moved from the coast and closed in an assembly area near Ponte Petri and prepared for the relief of the 74th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. The next day, 6 November, Task Force 45 Headquarters, having been relieved in the coastal area, moved to the S. Marcello-Pistoiese area and took over from the 107th Anti-Aircraft Group, the zone which extended from Bagna di Lucca to Camp Tizzoro. At 1800 on 7 November, the 1st Battalion, 6th Combat Team, closed in an assembly area at Graziome and released from attachment to the 92d Infantry Division. With one hand effecting reliefs of elements of Combat Command "B", General Mascarenhas, with the other, kept contact with the enemy by pushing out combat patrols which became engaged north of Palazzo and in the vicinity of Labate and Caselina. On 11 November, the 11th Armored Division control at 1800. The troops that did not leave the area - the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry; 13th Tank Battalion; 68th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and "D" Troop, 81st Reconnaissance Squadron, remained under operational control of the 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force.

The missions assigned General Rutledge's Task Force 45 in its new zone were contained in IV Corps Operation Instructions 65, dated 6 November, and were as follows: "Hold the general line Campo Tizzoro-Cutigliano-Bagni

di Lucca and prevent any enemy movement south thereof; continue active patrolling and prepare plans to follow any enemy withdrawal." This sector was being held by the 107th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group. General Rutledge was also to prepare plans to complete relief of the 47th and 74th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment by 8 November; maintain contact with the Brazilian Expeditionary Force and the 92d Infantry Division (now under Army) and lastly, protect the left flank of IV Corps.

The zone assumed by Task Force 45 was bounded on the right by Route 6629 which led from Ponte Petri to Ponte della Venturina, where it joined Route 64. The 92d Infantry Division was adjacent on the left and the Brazilian Expeditionary Force on the right. This segment of the Apennines was very mountainous and of extremely rough terrain. The enemy had done thorough demolition work on the roads. Route 66, which led from Pistoia through Ponte Petri and to a junction with Route 12 at La Lima, was the principal supply route. Route 12 which led from Lucca to Bagni di Lucca, to Lima, and thence to Sestione, was open only to jeep traffic from Bagni di Lucca to Lima, as was Route 6629. The road from Montecatini to La Lima was impassable due to demolitions. There were no other roads to the north of the Bagni di Lucca-Campo Tizzoro line and only a few difficult mule trails. To the east and west of Route 12 from La Lima to Sestione there were mountains which were practically sheer cliffs.

The initial mission of effecting the relief of the British 47th and 74th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments was begun on 8 November when the latter regiment on the right of the center sector was relieved by the 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion. The 434th garrisoned Spignana, Maresca, Pracchi, and Ponte Petri, and subsequently Orsigna, Vizenetta and La Lima. It also took over the patrol of the roads from Venturina to Campo Tizzoro

and from La Lima to Cocciglia. The anti-aircraft M-16's, four 50 caliber machine guns mounted on an armored half-truck, were used very effectively on these patrols. M-16's were also posted at Orsigna, Maresca and the La Lima bridge, where their formidable fire power provided excellent support for the infantry weapons. Battery "C" of the 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion was in reserve, bivouacked in Campo Tizzoro, ready to go by either road to the vicinity of trouble.

On 9 November the 111th Battery of the 39th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment moved to Bagni di Lucca sector where it relieved the 47th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. The 47th and 74th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments were then moved to rear areas for the purpose of inactivation. The same day the British 71st Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment was placed under the operational control of Task Force 45 to provide artillery support. This unit relieved the 80th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment which was also to be inactivated. The 71st Heavy Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment had 24 anti-aircraft rifles of 3.7" caliber. Eight of them were situated in the Bagni di Lucca area, 12 in the S. Marcello area and 4 in Porretta Terme area.

Shelling of forward areas, particularly in the vicinity of Mount Alcino, was intense, and enemy patrols pushed out from their mountain positions to roam the front. On 7 November four artillery observation planes, parked on the air strip at Porretta Terme, were rendered unserviceable by enemy artillery fire for the air strip was under German observation. As a result, the remaining planes were evacuated to Pistoia and due to the weather conditions over the mountains, as well as limited fuel capacity of the planes, there were few days that the artillery had cub observation. An extensive reconnaissance was made to locate a site for a landing strip somewhere north

of the mountains and out of enemy observation. Due to the rough terrain, the only suitable site was found in a valley just north of Lake Suviana. However, it would take two weeks for approximately one company of engineers to complete it and until completed, our artillery was seriously handicapped by lack of air observation. Coincidentally, the supposedly extinct enemy air arm came out of its grave on the 10th and 12th of November. In the vicinity of Riola on the 10th, enemy aircraft swept over and dropped incendiary bombs, and again on the 12th, strafed the area of the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, inflicting two fatal casualties.

For the first time smoke generators were used in the Reno Valley when one platoon of the 179th Chemical Smoke Generator Company was placed in position in the Brazilian Zone. Beginning on 9 November, a continuous haze was maintained over the bridges in the vicinity of Porretta, Marano, Silla and Riola. Contrary to the enemy's practice, he did not increase his shelling in the smoked areas during the first day's haze, instead it slackened perceptibly and during the remainder of the month enemy artillery fire received on these bridge sites was extremely light when compared to the periods in which the smoke haze had not been employed. Two M-1 mechanical generators were used at every position and were supplemented by smoke pots in order to fill in gaps caused by atmospheric conditions or by the impracticability of emplacing a generator. The seizure of prisoners was not restricted to the infantry alone, as members of this platoon captured three prisoners of war in early November. Also during the month, enemy artillery fire caused four casualties in the Smoke Generator Platoon, one fatal.

In the Task Force 45 area, supply to forward positions was considerably hampered by inadequate roads and trails. For this reason, the reconstruction

of bridges blown and roads destroyed by the enemy was given a high priority. Some 300 to 400 local inhabitants were recruited by the Task Force Engineers and put to work filling in the great blow-outs which had been created at critical points on the mountain side roads. Much of the rebuilding required careful masonry work, involving the construction of stone walls, often to the height of 20 or 30 feet, in order that the level of the canyon road could be re-established. Excellent timbered bridges with carefully laid stone buttresses were also built in a surprisingly short time by these Italian workmen. On Route 6629 where a river crossing near Pracchia was urgently needed to permit the movement of armor, the Task Force Engineers established a crossing by using the railroad bridge. This bypass required tearing up two miles of track and ran through two long tunnels, but it provided an excellent all-weather road for the heaviest traffic.

Closer contact with the organized bands of Partisans on the Task Force right flank was established at this time. General Rutledge travelled to Lizzano Belvedere to interview the Partisan chieftain, self-appointed General Armando, leader of some 400 to 500 Partisans. Major Steve O. Rossetti and his OSS Detachment, attached to Corps, were extremely helpful in organizing these scattered bands into effective groups. These groups were often used to hold quiet sectors of the line and allow our troops to rest. The information gained through the volunteers was extremely beneficial, for they ranged out far ahead of our troops, often behind the enemy lines, and generally were able to give the G-2 an accurate picture of the enemy's dispositions and activities.

The strengthening of the right sector of Task Force 45 became a possibility on 11 November when Headquarters, 2d Armored Group, with the 435th

Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion was released from Task Force 92 and attached to Task Force 45. This veteran group was assigned the mission of developing the right sector. As troops, there were available the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion and a contingent of Partisans whose number varied between 200 and 400 men. Vidiciatico, Lizzano, Castelluccio and Pianaccio were garrisoned. Many strongpoints were established - some manned by Americans, some by Americans and Partisans together, and some by Partisans alone. In this sector also road repair called for a priority and with the aid of the IV Corps G-5, Colonel Walker (AMG Officer), the Italians were again recruited to repair the roads and bridges. Trails once passable only for mules became passable for jeeps, and the roads once only used for jeep were enlarged to accommodate trucks and tanks.

On the IV Corps right flank the 6th South African Armored Division was not affected by the changes in location of the other units. Combat patrols were sent out freely and made contact with the enemy in nearly every instance. Contact was maintained with II Corps and unit reliefs were carried out along its front line positions. General Crittenberger now had in the lines one armored division, one infantry division and a Task Force about the size of a brigade. For the first time since the re-entrance into combat in early June, IV Corps assumed a zone, whose left boundary did not run along the coast.

B. THE MOUNT BELVEDERE-CASTELLO OPERATION IN NOVEMBER

The bulk of the troops were withdrawn from the narrow front of II Corps for rest, re-equipping and training in preparation for the large scale Army offensive scheduled for December. Rest centers were established, the largest being at Montecatani, for the relaxation of the battle-worn soldiers. While the Fifth Army forces to the east of IV Corps embarked on this period of

rehabilitation, General Crittenberger's troops were confronted with more arduous front line operations. The most important of these concerned the seizure of local objectives in order to improve positions in preparation for an eventual offensive. Mount Belvedere and Mount Castello were the objectives to receive primary consideration for the improvement of the Corps front line positions, for they afforded enemy observation over Highway 64, and our positions.

Since Allied troops had first reached Porretta Terme, plans had been under way to seize and hold the Mount Belvedere-Mount Castello Ridge. Mount Belvedere, 3600 feet high, and Mount Castello, slightly to the east, were located approximately 15 miles north of Pistoia and west of Highway 64. From this vantage point, the Germans were able to direct accurate artillery fire on our front line positions and on the highway. The seizure of the dominating ridge was necessary before our troops could push down the Reno Valley with any degree of security and success. The task of capturing the Mount Belvedere-Mount Castello Ridge was given to Task Force 45.

On 18 November IV Corps issued Operations Instructions No. 68, which gave Task Force 45 the following mission: "Deny Mt Belvedere Ridge to the enemy, capture and hold Mt Castello-Mt Della Torraccia-Mount Terminale area." It also attached the following additional troops to Task Force 45: 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry; 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry and Reconnaissance Troop, 1st Brazilian Infantry Division; and the 751st Tank Battalion less "A" and "D" Companies. In order to support the operation the 68th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and two companies of the 1106th Engineer Group were placed in direct support. A boundary change was also made which gave Task Force 45 approximately three more miles to the east in order to include

the eastern slopes of the mountain range.

On 19 and 21 October, IV Corps attached additional units from the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion and 13th Tank Battalion to add impetus to the attack. The 2d Armored Group was to be directly in charge of the attack and it commanded this sector of the Task Force zone. Corps artillery was to participate in the support by putting on a program of sustained neutralization fire, following by harassing fire on selected targets. The 424th Field Artillery Group was assigned the mission of acting as the artillery headquarters of Task Force 45, and by 23 November, the necessary regrouping of forces of the 2d Armored Group for the attack on Mount Belvedere was completed.

At 0600, 24 November, three attacking battalions jumped off. The weather was cloudy and misty, preventing the arrival of the anticipated air support and limiting artillery observation. The 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry, Brazilian Expeditionary Forces, on the right in the Abetaia area, moved forward to seize the high ground in the vicinity of Mount Castello. The 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, in the center and west of Gaggio Montana, aimed at the seizure of the high ground in the vicinity of Mount Della Torracia and Mount Terminale as final objectives, and the 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, based at Vidiciatico and Lizzana, struck north to take Querciola, Corona, and Mount Belvedere. The Brazilians were able to make only limited advances due to the open terrain and heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire. Almost at the outset, the command tank of the supporting armor was disabled by mines. Resistance stiffened to such a point that by noon, the 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry, Brazilian Expeditionary Forces, was forced to drop back to their line of departure for reorganization. The 2d

Battalion, 370th Infantry, made good progress during the morning and at one time was as far north as Morandella. However, by afternoon the enemy, in true obedience to Hitler's call to hold ground, fought back with a fury and forced it to fall back to positions just south and to the west of the town. The attack of the 435th Anti-Aircraft Battalion was more successful. Querciola was taken by early afternoon and Corona by dark. Stiff resistance had been met all the way and many casualties were incurred by German machine gun, mortar and small arms fire. By the end of the day, in the face of this bitter resistance, Battery "B" was on Mount Belvedere with "D" and "C" Batteries in position on either flank.

At midnight the left flank positions of Task Force 45 in Corona were struck by a German counter-attack. The attack was in company strength, and accompanied as it was by blood-curdling yells and screams, was something new in the enemy's bag of tricks. It was later learned that these Huns, members of the 1st Battalion, 1043d Infantry, 232d Infantry Division, were incited to this high-pitched enthusiasm by the well-known Captain Straube, whose ambition for promotion stimulated him to urge his men on from behind with a pistol in one hand and a hand grenade in the other. This Nazi-minded officer's name many times rolled off the tongues of prisoners with a curse or oath of vengeance. His name was also a topic of conversation in our intelligence channels and for curiosity's sake information was eagerly sought as to whether or not this notorious disciplinarian received his desired promotion.

The attack was broken up by concentrated fire from small arms, supporting tanks, and artillery fire. Fourteen Germans were taken prisoners, six were killed and ten wounded. Captain Straube retired with his remnants and when

they withdrew, it appeared that the screaming had died down to whimpering. The next day, 25 November, the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry, Brazilian Expeditionary Forces, jumped off at 0800 in a second attempt to gain the heights of the Belvedere ridge. The Brazilians again met intense fire, but despite this, succeeded in recording some gains. By afternoon they had advanced up the slopes to the small village of Laza, the 3d Platoon of Company "A", 849th Tank Destroyer Battalion, almost gaining the crest of Mount di Bombiana. However, by dusk of the same day, intense mortar fire causing casualties forced all but one company to withdraw from their advanced positions to the ridge line south of Guanella. The 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, also recorded some slight gains in the center in the morning, but by late afternoon heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire halted its advance and it was forced to remain in position in the vicinity of Morandella. Meanwhile, on the left the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion held their newly-won positions with the exception of Battery "C", which moved to the east in preparation for continuing the attack on the morning of the 26th. Despite the bad, misty weather of the day, the supporting artillery dropped over 2,000 rounds on the German forces defending Mount Belvedere.

26 November opened with extremely concentrated enemy mortar and artillery fire on the advance elements which stubbornly clung to their positions on the southern slopes of Mount Belvedere. This pounding continued at an accelerated pace throughout the day. The 2d Armored Group, in the face of this heavy fire, regrouped and reorganized for a continuation of the attack. The 9th Company, 6th Infantry Regiment, Brazilian Expeditionary Forces, which had remained in its newly-won position of the previous day, was forced to

fall back to its original location in the early part of the afternoon. The intensity of mortar and artillery fire on positions in the center also forced the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, to slide back a few hundred yards where it dug in and made no further attempt to advance. Battery "C" of the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion attacked in its zone at 1030, but met intense opposition and made no progress. On the evening of 26 November, IV Corps Operations Instructions No. 70, changed the 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Forces - Task Force boundary, by shifting it west so as to give the Brazilian Division the responsibility of seizing Mount Castello. The same order transferred the 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry, Brazilian Expeditionary Forces, plus a platoon of tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers from Task Force 45. The operations area of 2d Armored Group now covered only the zones of the 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion and the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry. From the afternoon of the 26th to the morning of the 27th, the enemy poured down a concentration of over 500 rounds of mortar fire on the newly seized town of Corona. Partisans reported some enemy massing in the nearby village of Rocca Corneta. Our artillery came to the fore and placed a massed Time on Target (TOT) concentration on the town which appeared to smash all enemy activity there. To replace the loss of tanks and tank destroyers released to the Brazilians, IV Corps provided the Task Force with an additional platoon of medium tanks and a platoon of light tanks.

The enemy was determined not to allow Mount Belvedere to remain in Allied hands for on the evening of 28 November, he launched a battalion-strength counter-attack against the Anti-Aircraft Battalion. It was preceded by light shelling of Corona and Mount Belvedere earlier in the day,

then at 1640 a concentration of 200 rounds was placed on Corona. This collapsed a forward strong-point and wiped out some thirty of our men. The enemy then attacked in two-company strength across the Valpiana Ridge against Corona. At the same time, two companies launched an attack on the positions of Battery "B" on Mount Belvedere. This unit fought off the enemy until the lack of ammunition forced a slow withdrawal to Querciola. Battery "D" at Corona kept fighting back until 2300, when heavy casualties consisting of seventy killed and missing and the destruction of three of their supporting tanks forced their withdrawal to Vidiciatico. In the attack on Corona, the enemy showed remarkable skill in infiltrating infantrymen with bazookas (Faust-Patrone) to within close range of our tanks where damage could be inflicted. Battery "C" stubbornly held on and continued to engage the aggressive Germans until 0130 of the next morning. At that time danger of an enemy out-flanking, made it wise to withdraw this valiant Battery to Querciola. During this action no change occurred in the positions of the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry. Of worthy note is the fact that during the entire Belvedere operation, the Partisans fought side by side with our troops and exhibited equal courage and determination in carrying out their mission. The attack of the 435th Anti-Aircraft Battalion, although ending in reversals, molded a strong respect and admiration for these Italian volunteers.

On the 29th and 30th, the 2d Armored Group improved its positions as well as it possibly could under heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire. The 435th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion consolidated and strengthened its positions in Querciola and Vidiciatico. Among the combat and reconnaissance patrols sent out to gain information of the enemy's intentions,

a patrol from "G" Company of the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry, engaged in a fire fight with Germans in the town of C. Lamma and when the patrol withdrew, our artillery pounded the enemy positions.

During the Belvedere operation, the central and left sectors of Task Force 45 had not been without activity. Since the mission of 107th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group was to hold its positions and keep contact with the enemy, emphasis was laid on patrol activity. On 20 November enemy activity was noted on Cappel d'Orlando, northwest of Sestaione, and an enemy party was engaged there and driven off. The next day the Germans returned to snipe at our Sestaione positions, but a quick reply by our mortars silenced them. Between 24 and 29 November, patrols ranged far ahead and contacted the enemy at Ontoni, Pian Di Novello, and other positions in the vicinity. On 30 November a small German patrol enroute to Cutigliano was intercepted and withdrew with one casualty. The British anti-aircraft supporting artillery fired an average of 500 rounds a day in the left and center sectors to which the enemy replied sporadically. Seventy rounds of enemy light artillery crashed down in the town of Cutigliano during the noon hour of 23 November, but no casualties were inflicted. On the last day of the month, "B" Troop of the 209th Battery of 73d Heavy Anti-Aircraft Artillery, with its four 3.7" anti-aircraft rifles was rushed to the right sector to supplement the fires of the 68th Armored Field Artillery Battalion in the Mount Belvedere area.

On 1 December a major change of command took place. Brigadier General Paul W. Rutledge, who had organized Task Force 45 from anti-aircraft Artillery battalions into the effective infantry unit it had proved itself to be, was relieved to return to the United States to assume a new command, and his Executive Officer, Colonel Gerald G. Gibbs, succeeded him in command of

Task Force 45.

1. Brazilian Expeditionary Force Attacks Mount Castello.

When the boundary between Task Force 45 and the Brazilian Expeditionary Force was shifted westward, in order to include Mount Castello in the Brazilian zone, General Mascarenhas immediately regrouped his forces in preparation for its seizure. Activity on 27 November was confined to the movement of units into the line. The 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, remained in its positions awaiting the order to attack. The 2d Battalion began movement to the area of Gaggio-Montano, while the 3d Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment, as yet uninitiated in combat, closed in the vicinity of Silla. Throughout the day patrols received machine gun fire from enemy positions in Villiana, and light mortar fire of a harassing nature fell on La Serra. The next day, 28 November, fifteen minutes after the enemy launched a counter-attack on the positions at Mount Belvedere, a strong enemy attack against both the 2d and 3d Battalions, 1st Infantry Regiment, developed. The enemy reached the forward positions of the two battalions, but was forced to withdraw. At the same time a sixteen-man enemy patrol attempted to penetrate our lines along the Brazilian South African boundary. It was driven across the river into the South African zone, where it was later encountered and dispersed. Enemy activity for the remainder of the day consisted of one enemy plane strafing the Brazilian zone and the shelling of our front lines with artillery and mortar fire. At 0800, 29 November, after thirty minutes of artillery preparation, the Brazilian Infantry Division attacked Mount Castello with three battalions abreast. The attack progressed initially against only light mortar fire and advance elements reached Abetaia at 1045. However, later in the morning enemy resistance stiffened and the advancing troops were subjected to concentrations of heavy

mortar fire. By late afternoon, the units had reached midway to the crest, where they encountered heavy fire from permanently fixed concrete emplacements. Heavy casualties were suffered forcing the 1st Battalion and the 9th Company of the 3d Battalion to withdraw to the lower slopes of Mount Castello. No further attempts were made to attack and throughout 30 November the Brazilians reported little activity other than patrolling. At 1925, however, another enemy attack developed against the positions of the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment. Using their artillery to support the attack, the Germans were able to reach the forward positions of the Brazilian Battalion where they were again repulsed by small arms fire.

The Brazilians had suffered their first reverses, but like all units, who first enter combat, they had learned many lessons and gained valuable experience. The road to ultimate victory was thorny and painful, but the Brazilians who fought at Mount Castello, had started down the trail that would eventually lead to success. The climate of November with biting winds, fog, and cold rains, was an additional foe that had to be endured by the Brazilians. It was a painfully sharp contrast to the warm breezes of the warmer climate of South America. Time was taking care of this problem, for immunity to the cold was being gradually acquired along with the experiences of combat. After these determined but repeatedly unsuccessful attempts to drive the enemy from his dominating observations, further offensive effort against the Belvedere and Castello heights was deferred, and the Corps front remained quiet for several days, broken only by patrol clashes as the battle of nerves continued.

2. 6th South African Armored Division on the Right.

During the attacks on Mounts Belvedere and Castello by Task Force

45 and the Brazilians, the South Africans held their positions on the right flank of the Corps. Contact was maintained with the Germans by the continual use of combat patrols, both day and night. General Poole carried out unit reliefs within his Division as often as possible, in order that the troops would be properly rested and equipped for any eventuality. A few casualties were suffered from mines, artillery fire and patrol clashes, but on the whole, the sector remained quiet. When the early winter weather of November arrived, the attack on Mount Sole was abandoned for the time being and measures were taken to consolidate and hold the ground already taken. Constant probing of the enemy's positions by patrols kept the Germans in a nervous state of mind between 21 and 30 November.

On the 24th, while venturing toward Casigno, a 12th Motorized Brigade patrol encountered a group of enemy, well established behind the thick walls of a cemetery. The area was ringed with booby traps and mines which kept the South Africans from closing in. A call for artillery support was sent to the rear and in a short time, shells came smashing down to neutralize the area and dispersed the enemy. On the same day, an outpost in the vicinity of Fonte was attacked by an enemy patrol which was repulsed with no losses to the South Africans. Other patrols engaged the enemy at Vergato, C. Creda, Casigno, Caprara, and Carbona. On 29 November a patrol of the 11th Brigade moving on Forte, a hamlet just south of Vergato, was ambushed and three South African soldiers were wounded in the action. Machine pistol fire from a church yard in Corviano was received by a patrol from the 12th Brigade. Enemy artillery fire was harassing in nature all along the division front during the last ten days of the month, with careful

attention to key points such as bridges, defiles and cross roads within range of the enemy artillery.

3. Enemy Activity in November.

There was some consolation in the fact that the same biting cold November winds were also hard on the enemy. Many poorly-clad Prisoners of War and deserters came shuffling into the Prisoner of War cages. They told woeful tales of night-long vigils in the snow-capped mountains which were producing in their units a growing casualty rate of trench foot, frosted ears and fingers, colds and pneumonia. Our forces were more warmly clad and were better able to withstand the severity of the winter. The German supply lines were long and the bottle-neck at the Brenner Pass in the Alps was a constant target to our bombers. What supplies they managed to get through were inadequate to supply the German forces. Just as our troops were doing, the Germans dug caves and underground shelters on the reverse slopes of the mountains. They were elaborately built and of all sizes, some even large enough to house a platoon. Toward spring, when they were finally overrun by our forces, these underground shelters were found surprisingly comfortable, warmed by wood stoves, and with calendars, pictures, and pin-ups on walls. Much of the furnishings for these shelters had been pilfered from nearby Italian homes. Sometimes the Italians were forced out of their homes to make room for troops, other times the troops moved in with the already crowded families.

German Intelligence officers were badly handicapped in securing information of our intentions and dispositions, due to the serious lack of air reconnaissance. There were only a few German planes left in Italy, as the bulk of them had long ago been decimated by the superiority of our fighters and bombers. The industrial ability of Germany to produce planes

and spare parts was being seriously hampered by our long-range bombers. The few factories that were still able to maintain some production were incapable of restoring the heavy losses. The few planes that were left in Italy were ordered to the European Theater in a desperate effort to stave off the Allied armies already encircling the Saar Basin. In view of this fact, the enemy was forced to use large numbers of trained agents to meet his demands for Intelligence. During this period there was a marked increase in the number of agents of the German Intelligence Service. Counter-Intelligence Corps Detachments in the Corps apprehended enemy agents at an average of more than one per day. The intentions of the enemy in this espionage offensive were discovered when the first enemy agents to come through the lines were apprehended and interrogated. A tighter control of civilian movement was immediately instituted in the entire Corps zone. All troops were alerted and Military Police under Counter-Intelligence Corps supervision were placed on all roads, trails and other avenues of approach likely to be used by enemy agents. In addition to the spies and provocateurs apprehended at these control points, a number of paid saboteurs, the bulk of whom were Italians, were captured in the Corps rear and Army forward area. All civilians seen attempting to cross the front line in either direction were apprehended.

The IV Corps Allied Military Government Section, in conjunction with the Provost Marshal and the Counter-Intelligence Detachment, established a series of road blocks or check points. These were manned by blue-coated Italian State Police, the Carabinieri, and were for the purpose of controlling the circulation of civilians within restricted areas.

The Civilian Affairs Police Officer constantly supervised these check points, not only to see that instructions were carried out, but also to test their efficiency. The fact that most of the enemy agents who had infiltrated into the Corps area were later apprehended at these road blocks, was proof of their value. It was learned that soon after the Allied invasion at Salerno, the enemy began training spies and saboteurs in German schools in northern Italy. Activity of this type steadily increased and by November of 1944 this full scale espionage offensive was in full swing. Nearly all of the agents were Italians whose missions varied from obtaining short-range tactical information to bringing back long-range political and economic intelligence. Most of these attempted to enter our territory in the guise of civilian refugees. Ten of these agents, one a blonde woman of noteworthy beauty, were taken in one brief period in November while attempting to enter our lines along Highway 65. It was later learned that nearly a score were executed after trials before Allied Military Governments Courts. Others, against whom insufficient evidence was obtained to warrant death, were given long prison terms. 150 road blocks were maintained by Military Police or the Carabinieri to control the movement of civilians. The total number of Carabinieri employed at this work varied from 101 to 253.

During the period there were many rumors of a German Alpine unit moving from the Franco-Italian border. Statements and information available made it seem unlikely that this unit was larger than a regiment. The 5th Mountain Division was being shifted on the western Italian border, but it was evident that it was only relieving the 157th Mountain Division for border duty. This deduction left the 3d and 4th Hohebirgs Mountain Battalions as the only possible candidates. On 25 November, three prisoners from the latter unit

were taken in the Cutigliano area, and this established the arrival of the "Edelweiss" bearers in the area. These well trained mountain troops garrisoned the sector lightly and were able to contribute a company to the Belvedere counter-attack. This 4th Battalion was to prove an effective little unit which staunchly took care of its sector opposite IV Corps. During the month over 426 prisoners of war were taken, half of which were deserters.

4. Supporting Activities in November.

It was a simple task for expert German demolition crews to block a road with tons of rock and earth by blowing up a section of the mountain. The Corps Engineers, confronted with the tasks of road clearance and maintenance, were great users of man-power. The old theory of "water off and rock on" was holding true to form in November. Keeping the ditches open required a large number of trucks. IV Corps had neither of the two to spare. No lateral road existed between Route 64 and 6620 other than a jeep trail from Taviano through Suviana, Bargi, Bagno and Castiglione. Route 64 was under enemy observation north of Porretta Terme, which generally limited the use of this section of road to night traffic. The only routes open to Task Force 45 were Highway 12 east of Bagni di Lucca (for jeeps only) and Highway 66 north of Pistoia, which had many bad one-way fills and bypasses. Traffic at the junction between Route 12 and 66 was limited to jeeps.

The 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, reinforced with approximately 300 civilian laborers and the 23d Italian Artieri Battalion, was assigned the mission of opening and maintaining a class 30 lateral road from Highway 64 to Highway 6620. A north and south road from Suviana to Riola, and a connecting lateral route from Porretta Terme to Castel di Casio. Also the

route, Castiglione-Camugnano-Ponde Di Verguno, was to be kept open for Class 30 traffic. The assigned work was more than enough to keep the reinforced battalion constantly working.

Another chore which was tackled by the engineers was in the camouflage and deception field. Artillery officers believed that the cub air strip at Porretta, which had been successfully shelled by the enemy due to his dominating observation, would be an excellent place to try some deception. It was thought that by placing dummy aircraft on the field, the enemy would continue shelling the air strip and thus enable our observation to locate the damaging batteries. The air strip at Porretta had been constructed in an old river basin. Dirt bunkers were built for plane protection, but despite these, the enemy shells had damaged four real planes. The engineers constructed dummy planes to full-scale, complete in detail, so that from a distance the similarity was striking. A frame work of wood, covered with chicken wire and then burlap were the construction materials. Wings were built separately and in two sections to facilitate movement to the erection site. The dummy planes were painted olive drab and identification markers added, and windshields were made from aluminum to heighten reflectivity. Upon completion of two planes they were carried at night to the air strip and set up in the bunkers. To simulate natural activity at the field, the Corps artillery S-2 had observation planes make several passes over the field. In addition to this, although unscheduled, two planes were forced down for repairs, but when completed, wasted no time in taking off from the target area. The 84th Engineer Camouflage Platoon did a realistic job, and the artillery personnel tensely waited to spot the enemy batteries when they would speak out

again. It was disappointing, however, in that only a few rounds of artillery fire were received in the vicinity of the air strip, and these could well have been from miscalculating the data for targets on Highway 64, the Silla ridge, or in Poretta. It was believed that agents may have informed the enemy of the fact that dummy planes had been placed as decoys on the landing field.

From a tactical viewpoint our position with respect to terrestrial observation remained unchanged. The enemy held the command terrain, while our observation was restricted in most cases to a limited area in front of the forward defense positions. The German artillery with the excellent observation afforded by such hill masses as Mount Belvedere, Mount Castello and Mount Sole, was at all times able to direct fire on our forward elements and to harass our lines of communication. Our own observation posts were pushed forward constantly in an effort to secure advantageous ground; however, many had to be located on secondary ridges, too far to the rear to be really effective. On many days, rain, mist, or fog greatly curtailed artillery registration, and observed fire missions. Similarly friendly smoke screens, maintained in the area of bridges, and vital areas, occasionally interfered with the observation. However, the advantageous location of the enemy observation posts, previously mentioned, necessitated such measures and, in general, the smoke was well coordinated with ground observation. When the latter became absolutely essential, the offending smoke generators were stopped.

Extreme care in picking only the most lucrative artillery targets for harassing fire was dictated by the shortage of ammunition. When there was considerable firing during daylight, night harassing fire and counter-battery missions had to be cut accordingly. All unobserved missions were

based upon information gleaned from intelligence reports and all harassing was carried out under a carefully coordinated program. Two German 88mm guns were operated by IV Corps artillery during the month, but never more than one was in action at a time. Manned by a crew from the 894 Tank Destroyer Battalion, they were registered in from a ground observation post and proved to be quite accurate. There was a large amount of ammunition available, so they were used regularly on harassing and counter-battery missions. Sometimes the gun fired as much as 400 rounds during a 24-hour period. For once it felt comforting to the troops in the area to know that the familiar sound of an incoming German 88 was being heard on the enemy's side of the line.

As for enemy artillery, there was little movement of known gun locations; however, new positions kept appearing. By the end of the period the number of located guns in front of the Brazilians had nearly doubled, and the number in front of the South Africans had more than doubled. This increase in enemy positions, however, was not substantiated by shelling reports, but by other sources of information. The most active day, 7 November, produced only 1,000 rounds. There was, however, a 25% increase in shelling during the latter half of the period. An average of 370 rounds per day fell during the first half and 460 rounds per day during the second half of the month. Enemy artillery was generally more active during November hours of darkness than it had been in October. The principal targets shelled by the enemy were forward elements, roads and bridges. Although several of our batteries were hit by hostile fire, there appeared to be no organized attempt at counter-battery.

Of interest in the signal operations during the period was the use of

pigeons as an alternate means of communication. Two lofts of pigeons were located at Command Post of Task Force 45 and one loft was located at Porretta. Task Force 45 used pigeons to deliver approximately 100 messages during the month. For the first time during the combat, the symbolic birds of peace were effectively used in the prosecution of the war effort by IV Corps.

This chapter must end with a somber note to show that in addition to the sufferings caused by the cold winds and bad weather of November, some of our troops also died on the craggy slopes of the Apennines in this Allied effort to smash the declining Nazi power that had so bloodied all of Europe. Although the main offensive was halted for the winter, the local attacks to obtain dominating hill positions in the Corps zone brought casualties. Seventy-two soldiers died in November of 1944, some on Mount Belvedere, others on Mount Castello, and a few in other areas. The Brazilians alone lost forty-eight men, most of whom fell under the withering fire of the German defenders on Mount Castello. Four hundred and forty-eight sick, wounded, and injured showed the telling effect of the severity of an Italian-Apennine winter, as well as the existent effectiveness of enemy artillery. The critical replacement problem caused the bulk of the units to fight with under-strength personnel. Because of the variety of troops which included colored United States soldiers, Brazilians, and anti-aircraft personnel employed in an infantry role, the problem was more difficult than ever. The most critical situation existed in the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, for no large pool of replacement personnel had yet arrived in the theater, and further, the small numbers which had recently arrived were undergoing battle training and orientation courses and were being equipped, all under Corps supervision.

Despite the bitterness of winter warfare on the high mountain range and the slowing down to a halt of the once rolling offensive, morale was maintained at a satisfactory high level. The maximum use of the early winter inactivity for rest and relaxation of troops was an important factor. As small units were withdrawn from the line, the battle-weary soldiers were sent off to Army rest centers to forget, as best they could, those weary days and nights of constant battering the foe. Some were sent as far south as Rome, others to Montecantini and some to unit villas along the coast. The bleary-eyed soldiers, many of whom left with the haunted stares of men on the brink of complete exhaustion, returned to their units with freshened, brighter looks and with new leases on life. They had visited where the regularity of hot cooked meals and long deep sleep between clean white sheets was an every day affair. They brushed with the civilization that they had known since birth and which the mole-like living of the soldier in the line had almost dimmed from their minds. In all, it was the proper dose of a healing medicine at the right time.

"APENNINE CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XVI - - - - -

DECEMBER IN THE APENNINES

The first snow fall of the season had covered the higher mountains on 11 November. On 15 November two inches of snow together with rain deluged the Apennines, and by December real winter had arrived. The use of chains on vehicles, constant work by snow plows and almost never-ending hard labor by thousands of soldiers and civilians kept the roads open. The month of December opened with IV Corps primarily engaged in winterizing itself while holding a 30 mile line. Long before the decision was made to postpone large scale offensive operations until spring, extensive steps had been taken to prepare the Army for winter in the Apennines. As far back as the sweltering hot month of July, heavy-laden ships steamed into the crowded and busy harbor of Naples to unload tons of winter clothing, shoepacs, skis, fur-lined caps, ice creepers, stoves and other winter items. The lessons learned on the Winter Line, where the bitter cold and inadequate winter supplies created unbearable hardships, were not forgotten. The Winter campaign of 1943-44 was fought by Allied troops in a mixture of cold, rain and snow; this winter's battles were occurring in much the same type of terrain and in colder weather. These Apennine peaks reached higher into the sky and were much colder, but, in contrast to the situation of the previous year, the Army was incomparably better prepared. The winter condition caused little suffering and sickness as compared to that which handicapped the troops along the Mignano and the Garigliano. The improved conditions were borne out by medical reports of the health of the command during the winter of 1944-45. Infectious hepatitis, or

jaundice, proved to be the most persistent and difficult disease to combat. The rate increased in the fall months, reaching 88 per 1000 men per year in November, and later hitting a high of 161 in December.

New and improved types of clothing were largely responsible for the better health conditions. A substantial portion of the required clothing was on hand at the beginning of winter. The first issues were made on 2 November, although it was not until almost three months later that all units were completely equipped with shoepacs, the most critical item in the prevention of the trench foot epidemic which caused thousands of non-battle casualties in the Winter Line. Troops in the line were provided with regular exchanges of clean socks, "issued with the rations", and this program resulted in a constant decrease in the casualty rate.

Improved outer clothing and sleeping bags, based on the newly adopted principle of using layers of loose cloth rather than something heavy and tight, were also distributed. Fur-lined caps were available for frontline troops, though not in sufficient quantities to make a complete issue. Combat trousers and new cold-weather trousers, which were heavily lined with wool, completed the winter issue. All these new outer garments were water repellent, while at the same time allowing damp perspiration to pass through to the outside. The standard Army blankets were augmented by sleeping bags made of similar wool material, which could be inserted into a heavy canvas outer cover.

The winterization of living quarters was carried out on a large scale. Wherever possible buildings were utilized, although the men

, in extreme forward positions usually were forced to remain in ground-frozen foxholes which they protected from the elements as best they could. Troops in support and reserve positions, however, dug themselves in, constructing walls and roofs from empty shell cases, food containers and other materials. Here the ingenuity of the Allied soldier came to the fore; windows, furniture and of course the usual shapely pin-ups were in almost every shelter. Pyramidal tents equipped with stoves were set up for use of reserve elements. Procurement of fuel for stoves became a major enterprise. Many stoves were equipped to burn gasoline or fuel oil but with them it was often difficult to strike a happy medium of comfort. Sometimes the winter gales fanned the stoves red hot, making the quarters unbearably hot and often scorching the sides of the tent or driving out its occupants; other times rain trickled down the stovepipe and drowned out the fire. Wood was used less frequently because of its scarcity. The winterization of jeeps brought about the most ingenious ideas - some were covered entirely with plywood frames, having doors and windows covered over with canvas and glass. It was during this period that the work of the Quartermaster personnel reached its height in importance.

A. LIMITED OPERATIONS IN EARLY DECEMBER

By 1 December, gaily wrapped Christmas parcels and greeting cards were beginning to fill the Army and Peninsula base sector postoffice warehouses. The more cautious people at home were guaranteeing the arrival of gifts and greetings to the friends and loved ones by Christmas. Artillery exchanges and patrol clashes with occasional small enemy counter-attacks provided the pre-Xmas activity. The

soldiers of IV Corps spent much of their time in improvising their individual living quarters and their defensive positions for beyond patrol activities, both sides were generally content to let things stand as they were. In several instances, however, both the Germans and our troops attempted to improve their tactical situations with limited local attacks, aimed at the seizure of valuable defensive features and observation points. However, in most cases, the net results, after the sharp fighting had ended, was a return to the positions previously held.

On 6 December, for the first time in our area, artificial moonlight was produced by the 1st Platoon, "C" Battery, 360th Antiaircraft Artillery Searchlight Battalion. One of the war correspondents described the debut and use of artificial moonlight as follows: "A new weapon - artificial moonlight - was employed by the United States troops. At exactly 7 PM when blackness settled fully in these northern hills of the Etruscan Apennines, artificial moonlight made its bow. Suddenly the whole sector leaped into view as great light - 8 million candle-power searchlights . . . several yards behind the front were switched on, their beams fixed so that parallel light shafts passed a few hundred feet over the heads of troops actually on the front line. Other lights, thousands of yards behind the first row, added their illumination a few minutes later. In the glow provided by the diffusion of light from the huge beams, attacking infantrymen were able to see enemy strong-points as clearly as on a bright moonlight night. Previously spotted mine fields, impassable deep ravines, swampy, low ground - all such terrain hazards which bogged down infantrymen in the usual blind and stumbling night probing could be spotted and avoided."

Artificial moonlight did more than aid the actual combat troops, however. At one spot on the front an engineer unit worked vainly for three hours trying to construct a bridge in a pitch dark ravine. Then its commander called for a searchlight beam against a nearby cliff and the unit quickly finished the bridge by the illumination reflected into the ravine.

Transportation of supplies to frontal area was also speeded up. Commanders of ammunition truck convoys formerly forced to feel their way at never more than 5 miles an hour, were now able to travel up to 25 miles an hour with the aid of the artificial moonlight. One of the officers who helped in laying out the location of the searchlights explained that artificial moonlight had been developed many months before during maneuvers in England and was given its first combat test by the British Eighth Army on the western Italian front near Rimini, and more recently by II Corps in October. "It's so simple it's a wonder no one thought of it sooner. The searchlights are regular anti-aircraft beams but it never occurred to anyone to use them to provide light for ground troops."

Failure of the Eighth Army to meet the expected time schedule for the second Fifth Army offensive on or about 1 December, resulted in a change of plans on 28 November. At that time British troops were engaged in combat near Faenza and were making slow, costly progress in the face of adverse weather conditions and stiff enemy resistance. It was considered essential that the Allied Armies, whose primary mission was the destruction of the enemy forces in Italy continue to press forward so that the enemy would be unable to transfer any combat troops from Italy. Fifth Army Operations Instructions No. 36, dated 29

November, gave IV Corps the mission of seizing the Marzabotto area, a village on Highway 64, six miles west of Livergriano and clearing of the ground west of Setta Creek. Mount Sole, in German hands, stood out like a formidable guard barring the path of advance up to the Reno River Valley to Morzabotto. The seizure of this mountain was a prerequisite for from the east it dominated not only the Reno River Valley, but also the Setta Creek corridor. Mount Sole lay in the zone of the 6th South African Armored Division and to this organization fell the mission of its capture.

1. 6th South African Armored Division

As you already know, this was an experienced division with a proud record, competently commanded and staffed, which did its work methodically after careful planning and which could be counted on for successful performance of any reasonable combat mission. Its organic infantry was supplemented by the equivalent in strength of more than three American battalions. Thus far, its armor had been of little value in the rugged Apennines, but its capability for a sudden rush into the Po Valley was recognized.

The artillery of the 6th South African Armored Division was capable of furnishing its own direct support with some counter-battery experience, and functioned vigorously and aggressively, using British Material and technique. One failing was found in the unwarranted reliance placed on unobserved fire which resulted in the expenditure of much ammunition.

The Division occupied a diagonal and winding front, totalling about thirteen miles, whereas the Division zone extended east and west about nine and a half miles. The advance of the Division was contested

by an equally proven force, the German 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, and to a lesser degree by the 94th Infantry Division. Unfavorable terrain which faced the Division had to be crossed in any future advance.

On 5 December IV Corps Operations Instructions No. 72 contained instructions to capture Mount Sole and the Castelnuovo - Pietra-Colora Ridge in conjunction with the attack of II Corps and the offensive of Fifth Army - D Day was to be announced later. In order to improve their positions for a later attack on Mount Sole, the South Africans continued limited objective operations on the night of 8-9 December. During the night elements of the 4/13 FFR attacked Hill 445 and 476, two hills on the southeastern slope of the mountains. Stiff enemy resistance was encountered and although one platoon gained its objective at Hill 476, it was later forced to withdraw. The two platoons which attacked Hill 445 were more successful, but were still engaged in cleaning out pockets of enemy resistance at dawn. The Germans, following their pattern of determination to hold dominating positions, as had been demonstrated at Belvedere and Castello, counter-attacked the South African troops on Hill 445, with a superior force. The two platoons were forced to fall back to prepared positions on the southern slopes of the hill. That evening, other elements of the 4/13 FFR, which had established positions on nearby Hill 431, were also forced to withdraw under the withering small arms fire of the enemy. During these two days the enemy artillery kept up a steady harassing program across the entire zone with emphasis laid on the Gabbiano and Cavaliera areas.

At 0445 on the freezing cold morning of 11 December, the 4/13 FFR again attacked to recapture Hill 431, and by dawn had secured the

feature. That night a terrific heavy mortar and artillery concentration was received in the Murazze village area at about 2000. On 12 December, without much surprise to the South Africans on Hill 431, they saw waves of German infantry coming at them through the morning mist in another counter-attack. With every gun firing away at the approaching Germans, the elements of 4/13 FFR succeeded in driving them back. Realizing now that the Germans were determined to retake this hill, reinforcements were rushed to positions south of Hill 431 for supporting action. All that day a considerable amount of enemy artillery fire pounded the forward positions. For the next two days inter-company reliefs were carried out in the South African zone and the sudden and surprising arrival of increased visibility gave the first opportunity to the South African artillery to fire many rounds at observed enemy targets. The enemy replied in kind. Two prisoners of war from 7th Company, 35th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division were captured and stated that an attack on Hill 431 was scheduled for the night of 14-15 December.

Early in the morning of 15 December, the enemy made a strong demonstration accompanied by artillery and mortar fire against the South African positions slightly north of the Village of Murazzo. It was designed to throw our troops on Hill 431 off guard, for a little later the enemy launched a strong attack against this feature, and the elements of 4/13 FFR holding it were forced to withdraw. Luck was again with the enemy in this local action. His preliminary mortar barrage destroyed our radio and wire communications and our troops on the hill were unable to request the prearranged defensive fire.

The balance of the battalion held firmly and all other positions were maintained. Late that night, under the haze of the artificial moonlight, the Imperial Lighthorse Kimberly Regiment, relieved the 4/13 FFR in position; the next day the latter pulled back into an assembly area in the vicinity of Cumagnano. Enemy artillery fire continued its nightly harassing program, firing unobserved missions along the entire front line area. On 18 December an ammunition dump just north of Cozzo, a small village on the highway just south of Setta Creek was hit by enemy artillery fire. Approximately 2500 rounds of mortar ammunition, the entire dump, went off in an unending series of explosions which reverberated against the mountain sides far into the night.

From 16 to 24 December, the 6th South African Armored Division remained in position carrying out inter-company reliefs and keeping contact with the enemy. Operations against strongly held Mount Sole were temporarily deferred until a stronger build-up of strength could be effected and an increased allocation of ammunition would be available, but planning continued and the South Africans remained alert.

2. 1st Infantry Division, BEF

On the first day of the last month of 1944, the last elements of the 11th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, BEF, moved in convoy over the autostrada from their training area near Pisa, and joined the Division in the Bagni della Porretta area. General Mascarenhas now had all of his command together in the Porretta area, and he immediately initiated a program of reliefs so as to give the new battalions a taste of the front line as well as a rest for the older ones. That night, the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry, in position in the area just northeast of Gaggio Montano, was relieved by the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry,

and moved in an assembly area in the vicinity of Lustrola. The next night, just as the shroud of darkness enveloped the surrounding mountains, an enemy patrol attempted to infiltrate the positions of the untried 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry. A brief fire fight ensued during which parachute flares were used and the enemy was forced to withdraw. At 2310 the 9th Company, 11th Infantry, received a small enemy attack and in the fire fight which resulted, the enemy suffered some casualties and at 0300 were forced to withdraw. An hour later, they renewed the attack in the same area and also against the right flank of the 1st Battalion. This time the attack was supported by an unusually heavy artillery and mortar barrage, under which an undetermined number of Germans penetrated between the positions of the 1st and 3rd Battalions. This caused the right flank of the 1st Battalion and the left flank of the 9th Company to slightly withdraw. In the morning, however, the Brazilians reoccupied the positions for as the enemy had withdrawn before dawn. On 3 December the 3rd Battalion, 11th Infantry, was relieved by the 3rd Battalion, 6th Infantry and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Bagni della Porretta.

At the Command Post of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in Bagni della Porretta, IV Corps Operations Instructions 72 was received on 5 December. These instructions called for the capture of Mt. Sole by the South Africans and the Castelnuovo-Pietra Colara ridge by the Brazilians when the Fifth Army offensive began. Planning was initiated immediately but before too many ideas were on paper, the attack was postponed.

The Brazilians prepared again to attack Mt. Castello and with the entire Division available, their hopes were now high. A rearrangement of troops was initiated on 6 December, the 1st Battalion relieved the 2nd Battalion in the 1st Infantry sector. The Division Reconnaissance Troop operating in the Bombiano area was augmented by a platoon of Partisans. On 9 December the enemy evidently sensed activity of some sort behind the lines, and poured down heavy concentrations of artillery fire in the Porretta-Silla-Riola area, and sent out strong patrols to learn the intentions in the Brazilian sector. During the past month the enemy had shown increasing concern as to our dispositions and intentions along the entire front. Now, however, his attention was particularly directed toward the Brazilian sector. Of the numerous enemy patrols in action, some raided our outposts. Prisoners of War stated that their instructions were to take prisoners every three days and that furloughs were the reward for those who succeeded - punishment for those who failed. The only enemy air activity in some time occurred when an undetermined number of planes bombed Ponte Venturiana and Porretta. One bomb shattered a building in Porretta, killing a few civilians.

Concurrent with the accelerated patrol activity was the marked increase in enemy propaganda warfare. On 9 December the forward elements of the 11th Infantry were shelled with projectiles which contained propaganda leaflets addressed to the 1st and 11th Infantry Regiments. A Prisoner of War taken from the 94th Infantry Division stated that an SS Propaganda Company appeared on or about 1 December and had since been firing propaganda leaflets into our zone. The general tone of the leaflets sounded the usual subtle attempt at the disparagement of Allied relations (Stalin's big stick guiding Churchill and Roosevelt dressed

as children) and more pointedly that the European conflict was no concern of the Brazilians who were dying far away from their homes for the benefit of American capitalists.

On 10 December plans were completed by the Brazilians for an attack on the Mount Torraccia-Mount Castello Ridge. The 2d Armored Group which commanded the right sector of Task Force 45 was to assist with the aid of a diversionary effort on the Brazilian left flank on the southern slopes of Mount Belvedere. A small infantry and armored group known as Task Force Nelson, together with elements of the 13th Tank Battalion, operating under the Brazilian Division, also was to create diversionary activity in the Castelnuovo area. The 2d and 3d Battalions, 1st Infantry, designated to lead the assault, were moved to the Casellina area and closed at 2300 in readiness for the attack in the morning. Enemy artillery swept back and forth across the zone and reached out to harass movements or road junctions. During the night General Mascarenhas requested, and was granted, a 24-hour delay in the launching of the attack on the Mount Torraccio-Mount Castello Ridge. The delay was to allow time for further reconnaissance and to build up supplies which had been slowed by the heavy rains and badly-sleeted roads. The attack was re-scheduled to start at 0600, 12 December. During the night of 11 December, the 3d Battalion, 11th Infantry, moved to a forward assembly area and the 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry, moved to Silla in Division reserve. The Brazilian troops were tense and alerted for they were again to attempt to scale the heights standing before them. They knew that the enemy had worked desperately on that ridge since the last assault. Reports from prisoners and Partisans indicated that trenches, mines and defensive positions behind strands of barbed wire had been

constructed since then. It was also known at the Brazilian Headquarters that there had been a build-up of enemy artillery positions in the Mount Belvedere sector.

At 0600 on 12 December, after a thirty minute artillery preparation by the Division Artillery and the 424th Field Artillery Group, the Brazilians attacked. The 1st Infantry Regiment delivered the main effort with the 2d and 3d Battalions attacking abreast, the 3d Battalion on the right moving in the general direction of Casellina-Mount Torraccia. Initially the attack made good progress with the enemy resistance centered mainly against the right battalion. By noon the attacking Brazilian infantrymen had advanced to a general line about midway on the slopes of Mount Torraccia, and the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry advancing on the extreme right flank of the attack had elements not far from the creast of the ridge. However, during the afternoon, the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 1st Infantry were forced to slide back to their original positions on the slopes due to the heavily increased small arms and mortar fire. It not being wise to remain out in front alone, the 11th Infantry pulled back also. On the Brazilian right flank, the diversionary effort of Task Force Nelson was more successful and tanks of the 13th Tank Battalion, supported by infantry, moved along Highway 64 to Malpasso. No resistance was encountered but because its advance was threatened by possible encirclement on each side, it also withdrew to its original position. The next day the 11th Infantry relieved the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 1st Infantry in the positions to which they had withdrawn. The latter two battalions, badly in need of reorganization, moved to Bagni della Porretta and Silla respectively.

The Division attack had been carefully planned by the Division Staff, and at the outset it appeared to have every chance for success, but enemy resistance had been too great for some of the green troops and, after suffering several casualties, the Brazilian Infantry was forced to withdraw. The enemy was determined to keep, as long as possible, the high ground that gave him observation over Highway 64. For the next two days there was no activity on either side with the exception of harassing artillery and mortar fire by the enemy. No man's land was generally quiet, which silence was broken by the continual pounding of enemy mortars in the Riola area.

On 16 December the boundary between the 1st Infantry Division, BEF, and Task Force 45 was moved a few miles to the west so that the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry could be returned to the 92nd Division. The relief of this Battalion was accomplished that night by the 3d Battalion, 11th Infantry. At the same time the 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry relieved the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry in the vicinity of Affrico. The enemy was apparently well stocked with artillery ammunition for he continued his harassing program both day and night. In the Riola and Morano areas, 190 rounds of artillery and mortar fire were received in one day. A harassing mission on Goggio-Montana area destroyed a Brazilian mortar section and at dawn on 20 December the Riola bridge was damaged by suspected sabotage. However, the attempt was only partially successful and the bridge remained open for Class 7 traffic; by noon it was fully repaired. On 23 December, a patrol from the 1st Battalion of the 6th Infantry Regiment reached the enemy defenses on Castelnuovo and engaged a German patrol. That night over 30 rounds of

heavy caliber artillery fire pounded at Porretta, but the Brazilians stubbornly refused to move their headquarters and chose to remain in the repeatedly shelled town. The next day an enemy patrol of 7 men from the vicinity of Gambiana, clashed with elements of the 5th Company, 11th Infantry, and was repulsed. One captured wounded German sergeant, upon interrogation, revealed that he was from 2d Company, 1st Battalion of the 1044th Regiment, 232nd Infantry Division.

3. Task Force 45 on The Left

Activity in the Task Force 45 sector for the first three weeks of December was largely confined to patrolling and the harassing of the enemy positions by sporadic artillery and mortar fire. The enemy spent his pre-Christmas days doing likewise. Local reliefs were conducted by both sides and no material change in positions was made. Relative quiet prevailed in the Bagni di Lucca and Cutigliano-Sestaione sectors. Our patrols increased the depth of their penetrations into enemy area but few contacts were made. Ten enemy deserters were picked up on 7 December and others were taken from time to time. It appeared that the mountain troops of the 4th Battalion of the Meer Alpine Regiment had now been replaced by the lower quality troops of the 232d Fusilier Battalion, 232nd Infantry Division. This was later confirmed by two captured enemy agents who traveled from Favullo westward to Abetone, on 19 December. They reported that a company of German troops, wearing white coats and believed to be Alpine, were resting beside the road, with two carts carrying their baggage and headed north. Farther south at La Causuma the agents stopped at a company command post where they asked their whereabouts from a German soldier. This soldier, who was neither

SS nor Alpine, pleaded ignorance of his surroundings as he had arrived only on 17 December. This confirmed the moving away of elements of the 5th Mountain Battalion and the arrival of the 232d Infantry Division but where the former had gone was still obscure.

On 3 December the 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion closed in the Leghorn area and was attached to IV Corps. The newly arrived unit immediately began turning in all antiaircraft equipment in preparation for assuming an infantry role in the zone of Task Force 45. It was a much needed reinforcement and was ready for action, having received several weeks of infantry training in the II Corps sector, and in addition, was a fresh and rested unit. On 6 December it was attached to the Task Force and during the night of 8-9 December, relieved the 435th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion in the Vidiciatico-Lizzano area. The latter unit, weary with constant front line duty, reverted to Fifth Army control and left for a rest area.

The 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion manned positions at Querciola, Vidiciatico, Lizzano and Pianaccio, established new outposts to provide maximum crossfire and set up an elaborate system of communication permitting an instant call for supporting mortar and artillery fire. Maximum use was made of Partisans and with their aid confident reconnaissance patrols slipped through enemy mine fields and wire entanglements and located Hun outposts. Snow had fallen and blanketed the countryside with a white mantle, making it necessary that patrols move cautiously over the snow-covered trails and paths. The crunching of snow underneath combat shoes and shoepacs could be heard for long distances during the cold, silent nights.

Slightly farther to the east the right flank of the Task Force was held by the colored troops of the 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry. In this zone the German artilleryman laid stress on Gaggia-Montano and shelled the area liberally day and night. On 11 December, two patrols engaged enemy groups slightly north of the small village of Morandella and killed two of the enemy. German attempts to infiltrate positions about Cutigliano the same day were discovered by one of the Partisan outposts and the ensuing fight was carried on throughout the night. At 0620, the enemy party fired two flares into the sky which called for artillery and in a few moments an enemy TOT of 80 rounds fell on Cutigliano. The Germans then withdrew under the confusion and noise caused by the simultaneous shell blasts.

The next day in order to support the Brazilian attack on Mount Casella, Task Force 45 conducted a strong diversionary effort in an attempt to confuse the Jerries. General Rutledge had designated the 2nd Armored Group to accomplish this diversionary action. On the left of the 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, tanks and tank destroyers had noisily rumbled up the night before and at first light of 12 December, began shelling German-held Rocca Corneta as well as the road leading to it from the north. At the same time a patrol of one officer, 30 enlisted men and 15 Partisans, followed by a reserve force of one officer and 15 men, moved forward and stealthily deployed about the southern end of the town. When our troops had advanced close enough to actively use their weapons, they simultaneously opened up with everything they had. The enemy replied with small arms and machine guns and at 1030, after he brought up mortars, our troops withdrew under cover of our own mortar and tank destroyer fire. On the right of the 900th

antiaircraft Artillery Battalion front, a patrol of similar strength was sent to Corona. This attack was preceded by little artillery preparation and the Germans were caught napping. By 1000, our patrols had penetrated to the northern edge of the town and had taken three of the enemy prisoner, killed nine and wounded two. Two German 81mm mortars were also destroyed by throwing grenades into the tubes. By 1130 the Germans recovered from their surprise and began a flanking movement supported by artillery, mortar and machine gun fire. Our own artillery began throwing shells and smoke at the approaching enemy group and under this cover our troops withdrew. In this engagement, two American soldiers and three Italian Partisans were killed.

As part of the same diversionary action, the 2nd Battalion, 370th Infantry, sent a patrol of platoon strength against the entrenched enemy on the slope of Mount Belvedere Ridge to the east of Gaggio-Montano. The colored Troops engaged the enemy from nine in the morning until seven in the evening, at which time, after suffering one casualty, they withdrew.

The enemy's continued interest in the Sestainone-Cutigliano section was evidenced by his mortar and artillery fire and patrolling and sniping from the vicinity of Cappel D'Orlando, a small mountain village slightly northeast of Tiggliano. On 16 December a 70-man Partisan patrol under an American officer and enlisted men proceeded to the vicinity of Mello where, by radio, it directed friendly artillery fire on enemy targets in the mountain settlements of Piansinatico and Rivoretta. On its return the next day, this Partisan patrol engaged a German party, killed one, wounded two and captured two.

On 17 December when the boundary change between Task Force 45 and the 1st Infantry Division BEF became effective and the 2nd Battalion, 370th Infantry elements of the 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion lying on the BEF side of the new boundary were relieved by the Brazilians. At the same time Battery "C" of the 434th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion was relieved of attachment to the 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion and assembled at Campo Tizzoro as Task Force Reserve.

All during the period the right section of Task Force 45 remained fairly active. Sharp-shooting with a tank destroyer from a high hill north of Vidiciatico was developed at this time. With a 20-power scope constantly trained on known points of enemy activity, at the first sign of movement, the tank destroyer would let go with direct fire. This kept the Germans jittery and forced them under cover during the daylight hours for a depth of five miles behind his lines. On 20 December the armor was relieved of direct attachment to Task Force 45, but the 751st Tank Battalion with attached elements of 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion, remained in direct support. Two armored cars of the Reconnaissance Company, 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion, were attached to the 107th Antiaircraft Artillery Group to maintain the road patrol from Camp Tizzoro to Venturina. The 2nd Armored Group was relieved from Task Force 45 on 21 December and moved from the sector to supervise the infantry training of antiaircraft battalions that were now to become full-fledged infantry. Responsibility for the right sector of the Task Force was taken over by the 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion.

B. THE GERMAN THREAT IN THE SERCHIO VALLEY

In Italy the spirit of the coming Christmas holidays was in the air. Unit mail orderlies were busily engaged in sorting out gift packages and hundreds of Christmas greetings. The American Red Cross personnel was busy bringing what holiday cheer it could to the front line troops, with books, stationery, cigaretts, etc. Mess sergeants were planning the menus for the big day. How and with what were they going to make the Christmas feast attractive? The gift packages containing sweets, cookies and cakes, some of which were crushed during ocean and rail transit, were opened and shared with friends. In the rear areas, units with better opportunity to lend the Christmas touch to their surroundings, set up and decorated Christmas trees. It was reported that men from units bivouacked in the Italian towns and villages were making preparations to don homemade outfits and play Santa Claus for the impoverished local children. Of course these plans depended to a large extent upon a sort of an informal truce between friend and foe in order that the day of the birth of Christ could be celebrated by the locked armies, along with the rest of the Christian world. Even Axis Sally in her nightly broadcasts to the Allied troops, thoughtfully devoted much of her propaganda programs to Christmas carols and American holiday songs, one of the most popular being, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas". However, her intentions were not so much to contribute to the coming festive occasion but rather to lower the morale of our troops through her subtle method of carrying home-sickness to the hearts of the war-weary. She was also devoting much of her time hailing as the beginning of our doom, the German Ardennes counter-offensive, the news of which had reached the advance Command Post of Headquarters, IV Corps, at Taviano on 17 December.

On 16 December, Von Rundstedt, under direct orders from Hitler, had made the last desperate effort to stave off disaster and attack the advancing Allied armies with a force of 24 divisions. He had been able, because of heavy fog which had continued for days, to assemble his forces in secrecy in the forested areas of Monshau and Trier. When the blow came, eight Panzer divisions broke through on a 40-mile front and having gained an initial tactical success, imposed a delay of about six weeks on the main Allied offensive. It was about this Allied reversal that Axis Sally crowed over the German propaganda radio.

1. Suspicion and Alarm on IV Corps Front

News of the surprise offensive blow was received with some apprehension in the Allied Forces Headquarters at Caserta, Italy. It was estimated that if the Germans wished, they could concentrate five German divisions and three Italian Fascists divisions for an attack down the Tyrrhenian coast or down the Serchio Valley to capture the supply base at Leghorn. This was a lucrative target for it could cut the Allied Army supply line from Leghorn east through Pistoia, Florence and on into Eighth Army area. Considering the fact that the Serchio Valley and the coastal zone were weakly defended, with no immediate reserve of any consequence available, the apprehension of such a German capability was justified. While the Battle of the Bulge raged on the western front, a suspicious quiet prevailed in the IV Corps area. Intelligence officers were directed to make an all-out effort to determine any indications which might show a probability that Marshall Kesselring would use his forces on the Italian front for an offensive, coordinated with that of the Bulge.

Evidences of a general build-up of German forces opposite the thinly-held western sectors of the Fifth Army front, were detected and confirmed by 17 December. On 22 December indications were received of an enemy shift in the Abetone Valley and of the relief of the veteran 4th Mountain Battalion by some other unit. At the same time indications were noted of the arrival of new troops in the sector formerly occupied by the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. This was confirmed when prisoners from the 10th Parachute Regiment of the 4th Parachute Division were taken in a locality that had previously been the responsibility of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. Partisan Prisoners of War and our own agents reported that the enemy was feverishly repairing and rebuilding bridges and roads in the upper Serchio Valley and coastal areas; bridges which he had permitted to remain useless for the past few months. These reports were substantiated by aerial photographs. Enemy troop movements were reported in the towns of Castelnuovo and Piazza in the Serchio Valley area where Italian Alpine units and an increasing number of Germans were said to be concentrating. Prisoners spoke of a "program" being planned for 28 December, other sources set 26 December as the date.

These reports were viewed with increased concern by the higher commanders when weighed in the light of the new German counter-offensive then underway in Belgium, the success of which might conceivably inspire counter-offensives on other fronts. This enemy capability, which had already been studied and evaluated, was again reviewed. The five enemy divisions, which could be concentrated in the La Spezia area were

as follows; the 148th Grenadier Division and elements of the Monte Rosa and San Marco, Italian divisions, were already in the western sector; there were some indications that the 157th Mountain Division might be moved to that vicinity; the Italia Division (Italian Fascists Republic) was also said to be enroute south. Reliefs effected by the enemy in other parts of the Fifth Army sector and on the 8th Army front, might have made it possible to free three other divisions; to back up such an attack, the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, the 26th Panzer Division and possibly the 5th Mountain Division. However, the limited capabilities of the enemy to effect rapidly any large scale movements were well known. As an objective for a push down the coast, the Germans would have the Port of Leghorn, the main base of the American forces. The great harbor and its installations were at the time protected by one division, the 92nd, under the command of Major General Edward M. Almond, which was rather widely extended over a broad front. Therefore, constant attention was being accorded that western sector and although the 92nd Division was directly under Fifth Army, General Crittenberger and his staff were in frequent communication with the Division Headquarters.

2. Christmas Interlude

The setting for "Christmas Interlude" was in Taviano, a small village of probably 20 stone buildings, which was nestled in a narrow gorge hardly wide enough for the highway and the creek. Mountains rose to sheer heights on either side and on the very tip of one of them, almost overhead, was perched a typical mountain village of 200 to 300 inhabitants, (inaccessible by road and built in days of old for

security against prowling invaders). Overhead the town loomed as if ready to fall on Taviano; the latter all the while, seemed likely to be crushed by the huge mountains on each side. The inhabitants of this mountain village descended the winding cobbled trail to bring the roasted chestnuts to the millery in Taviano and, after grinding, ascended the same trail, carrying on their backs and heads the heavy bags of chestnut flour. Too high and difficult to ascent, it was not damaged by the passing armies except for a chance shell which smashed the stairway of the old church. It was a quiet, restful Shangri-la, too high in the sky to bother with the war that raged far below. From General Crittenberger's van by the stone inn in Taviano, one had to throw his head back and look almost straight up to see the secluded village in the sky. Captain Fred Case, Aide de Camp to General Crittenberger remarked one day, "If these were less modern days, a small band of warriors in that eerie mountain town upon the crags above us could annihilate us and stop up the gorge, by the simple expedient of rolling rocks down the mountain side onto us here in the chasm below." Taviano itself was contrastingly quaint, for compared to the village in the sky, it was at the bottom of the earth. The gorge itself was not more than 500 yards across from the top of the mountain on one side to the top of the mountain on the other. The Headquarters personnel occupied the few buildings and the G-2 and G-3 sections were located in the main stone structure at the edge of the road. In the chasm, the roar of nearby Limentra Di Sambucca stream drowned out some of the less assertive noises of the war. Across this stream were located the flour mill and homes of some of the

natives. (Madame Fosca endeared herself to the officers who billeted in her home through the medium of her culinary abilities. Her sister, Madame Tosca, as equally affable, lived nearby). The unique location was like a stage setting. The inhabitants of the village went their way; washed their clothes as well as the soldiers' in the freezing cold waters of the stream, and only looked up from their labors at an occasional gun convoy going by to the front. The days were short here at Taviano, for about three every afternoon the sun would disappear behind the mountains and the cold, along with the night, would rush into the gorge to envelop the command post.

If the radio broadcasts, telephones, newspapers and messages of the war could have been disregarded, it would not have been difficult to imagine oneself rather effectively cut off from the rest of the world. The roaring mountain stream nearby had been drowning out distracting noises for thousands of years and on 24 December, it was no exception for the snows on the mountain sides melted by the day's sun, sent gushing rivulets into the churning waters of the stream. Around the corner from the Headquarters building, Sergeant Patla was excitedly prodding his Italian KP's to a faster pace in preparation for the Christmas meal on the morrow. He had turkey, stuffing and all the fixings to prepare. Closer to the stream, in fact about 25 feet from it, the roaring sound handicapped telephone conversations in the G-2 and G-3 sections. Reports of alarming enemy movements in the La Spezia area were coming in. Colonel Wells, G-2, kept the General informed every hour. The beginning of the so-called Christmas "Flap" was on.

Army reported that the 157th Mountain Division, which was last known to be enroute to northeastern Italy from the Franco-Italian Frontier, had been deflected southward. It was believed possible that this could be either for the purpose of relieving the 148th Infantry Division, or to augment the force known to be available for an attack in the coastal sector or Serchio River Valley. The first step of precaution was taken by Fifth Army when it attached the 339th Regimental Combat Team (85th Division) to IV Corps. The convoy of infantry rushed over Route 65 to the Prato area, closed at noon of the 24th and was designated as the Corps reserve.

It was the night before Christmas, and the many Headquarters personnel at Taviano were on the alert and somewhat prepared for the Christmas present they were about to receive. The G-2 and G-3 sections were busy receiving messages, poring over maps and drawing up probable emergency plans. The telephone lines to Fifth Army as well as to lower units, had been kept busy with messages and reports, both coming and going.

In view of the alarming reports of the build-up of enemy strength in the Serchio and coastal areas, it was not much of a surprise to General Crittenberger when he was awakened in his van alongside the little stone mountain inn at three o'clock Christmas morning by a courier with an urgent message from the Army Commander. This message contained instructions from General Truscott which directed General Crittenberger to proceed at once to the western sector of the Allied front, assume command of the 92d Division zone and move his Headquarters to Lucca and prepare to meet a possible German offensive in that area. At this same time the 6th South African Armored Division would revert to Army control and the right boundary of the Corps would then become the old Brazilian-South

African Inter-Division boundary. Once again the emergency alarm had rung and it called for IV Corps to relieve the situation. Within twenty minutes the General was on his way over the mountain roads toward Pistoia and Lucca. Prior to his departure he gave instructions that the Battle Command Post would follow and be established in Lucca as soon as possible. He also directed Brigadier General W. C. Crane, IV Corps Artillery Commander, and Colonel L. K. LaDue, IV Corps Chief of Staff, to make a personal survey of the situation, confer with General Almond of the 92d Division and to meet him Christmas afternoon in the Lucca area. The General's party in two jeeps careened dangerously on some of the icy curves, but on the whole it was not too difficult getting out of the Apennines. Although the weather was freezing cold, the roads were opened and were cleaned of snow and the 70 or 80 winding miles from Taviano to Lucca were covered in a short time. Arriving in Lucca, General Crittenberger turned north and sped up the Serchio Valley. At Bagni di Lucca he conferred with Brigadier General Wood, Assistant Division Commander of the 92d Division and checked the positions of the colored regiments of infantry that were occupying our front lines there, one east and one west of the Serchio River. General Wood felt that his front line troops could be expected to make a determined stand if the Germans attacked down the valley. Such did not prove to be the case east of the Serchio as later evidence will indicate.

The General checked the dispositions of the supporting artillery and armor and found them excellently disposed and ready for any consequence. General Crane had assured the Corps Commander on previous occasions that the supporting artillery would measure up to requirements.

The following personal account as rendered by General Crittenberger himself may picture a more accurate and detailed version of the Serchio Valley enemy attack than could ever be presented by the historian.

"During the day (25 December) I consulted by radio and telephone with General Almond, who had spent the night of 24-25 December at his Command Post in Viaraggio on the coast. Later in the day, General Almond came over the mountain and into the Serchio Valley for a conference with me and certain members of my staff who had arrived in the area by that time. General Almond was in touch with the situation and had given careful study to the possible German threat. Although he had seen the front line troops of his division frequently falter and withdraw in the face of German attacks, on this occasion he did not betray the pessimism which he was justified in feeling over the hostile offensive that appeared coming.

A personal reconnaissance of the Serchio Valley area and a trip through the mountain pass to the coastal area about noon on Christmas day, confirmed the danger to our position in the face of an attempt by the Germans to overrun us in force. This danger was well known throughout the IV Corps and was nothing more than the calculated risk we were compelled to assume, spread as we were over the wide front of 80 or 90 miles with the 92d American Negro Division, the 1st Infantry Division, BFF and Task Force 45, about the size of an under-strengthened brigade, in the front line. It was perfectly apparent on Christmas day, as it had been for the past several months, that at no place along our front would these troops, thinly spread, be able to withstand without reinforcements, a concentrated German effort. However, with the potentialities of the

hostile threat made somewhat specific as to strength, location and mission, the job of the IV Corps in meeting the threat likewise became more specific. It was immediately evident as had long been visualized and planned, that we would be able to stop the German offensive dependent entirely upon the speed with which we could get effective reinforcements into that area.

On Christmas afternoon, after a personal reconnaissance of the Serchio Valley, I arrived at the decision to hold the defensive line astride the Serchio River and just south of Bagni di Lucca, if our front line troops were overrun by the Germans. Lacking available reserves due to our extended front and scarcity of troops, it was evident that any troops which could possibly stem the hostile tide would have to be sent in from the outside. Looking around for the nearest available troops, I recalled that a Brigadier of the 8th British Indian Division had visited my Battle Command Post at Taviano the day before to secure road clearance for the march of his Division across the IV Corps rear to the Pisa area. Investigation disclosed that two of the three brigades of this 8th British Indian Division were enroute westward on the Pistoia-Lucca road this same Christmas afternoon. The veteran Division had just been relieved from front line duty with the British 8th Army and was scheduled for a month or two in the rest area between Lucca and Pisa. I immediately commandeered the Division and sent for the Division Commander. In the meantime, by three o'clock Christmas afternoon, my Battle Command Post had arrived at Lucca and was set up and operating before dark, having withdrawn from Taviano in the Apennines, moved some 80 miles and set up anew inside the walled city, which was directly astride the direction of any German offensive down the Serchio Valley, and in the path of any

German effort directed at the capture of Leghorn. The Commanding General of the 8th British Indian Division, a Major General Russell, was spending Christmas in Florence and was, therefore, not immediately available. Instead the two Brigade Commanders of the 19th and 21st Indian Brigades were located in their lorry columns on the road and were brought to my Battle Command Post in Lucca. There, Christmas night, I indicated on the map the defense position shown earlier in the afternoon and ordered the 8th British Indian Division to be diverted from its march to the rest area, northward up the Serchio Valley and into the planned positions behind the elements of the 92d Division. I estimated the Division could reach the position and be ready to defend it early on the 26th of December.

In communication with the Army Commander Christmas afternoon, I outlined my estimate of the situation, emphasizing the need for dispatching reinforcements westward to the Serchio Valley with all haste. At eleven o'clock Christmas night, I called the Army Commander and told him I had commandeered the 8th British Indian Division which I had ordered into the defensive position astride the Serchio. He advised me that the 1st Armored Division, the 85th Infantry Division and one Combat Team of the 34th Division were all starting to our support. Assuming that the leading elements of these reinforcing troops would start to arrive in the Serchio Valley within 24 hours, along the single Florence-Pistoia-Lucca road (Autostrada) available, I assured the Army Commander that if the German attack did not materialize until 27 December, I would be ready for it. However, such was not to be the case. The Germans were not following my time schedule, but one of their own instead, and at daylight the next morning, 26 December the attack down the Serchio was launched."

The personal narrative of General Crittenberger's is broken here, to be later resumed in order that a detailed report of the action can be inserted, for the benefit of the reader.

Following thrusts by his patrols on the night of 25 December, the enemy at 0800 on the 26th launched several local attacks over a six mile front astride the Serchio River. These valley attacks were accomplished by a marked increase in artillery fire along the coast which must have been of diversionary character, for no additional action developed in that area. West of the river, Italian and German troops hit the 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry, near Molazzano, and Company "G", 370th Infantry, at the Village of Calomini, south and east of Molazzano. During the morning, the enemy occupied part of Calomini and by 1400 Company "G" had been driven from the village. The 1st Battalion was also forced to give ground although by mid-afternoon the fighting on the west side of the river had slackened.

East of the river larger units, identified as belonging to the 285th and 286th Grenadier Regiments, attacked the villages of Sommocolonia, Tiglio, and Bebbio, held and outposted by the 2d Battalion, 366th Infantry. Enemy pressure increased in this area when German Mountain Troops from the Mittenwald Mountain Battalion joined in the battle and Sommocolonia, Tiglio and Bebbio were all occupied by the Germans before darkness. Led by Italian guides, the enemy had outflanked these villages by climbing the ridges to the east and attacking southwest down the slopes. Austrian and Italian Alpine troops, some of them dressed as Partisans, spearheaded the assault. Two platoons of Company "E", 366th Infantry, were practically surrounded at Sommocolonia and only 17 of the 60 men managed to escape. A platoon of the 92d Reconnaissance

Troop was overrun at Bebbio; however, the Troop managed to collect most of the men together and retired in good order, falling back to positions near Coreglia. The 2d Battalion, 366th Infantry, retreated slightly more than two miles to positions along the line, Gallicano-Barea-Coreglia. Shortly before noon, Company "G", 366th Infantry became badly disorganized and fell back, leaving a gap 500 yards wide along the west bank of the river. The 370th Infantry Headquarters was threatened and forced to withdraw.

Civilians by the hundreds clogged the southbound roads in an attempt to reach Lucca before the advancing Germans. Confusion and alarm were beginning to hold sway over the Serchio front. But here let us continue with the report of General Crittenberger who was in the vicinity at the time.

"In the late afternoon, accompanied by Colonel Harry Semmes and my aides, I visited Colonel Raymond G. Sherman's Regimental Command Post at Fornaci. The town was being shelled at the time and our American tanks were standing off the enemy astride the road several hundred yards to the north thereof. It was plainly evident that the command position was soon to be overrun. Colonel Sherman's stand there at his Regimental Command Post was as good a piece of business as I saw during the entire fight. Fifteen or twenty minutes after I left to work my way to the Command Post of the British 8th Indian Division, the Germans overran the town, but did not succeed in capturing Colonel Sherman and his Command Post, which escaped down the river just in time, setting up again three or four miles to the south."

"The advance Command Post of the 92d Division also took new positions further to the rear. The 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry, after losing the

Calomini outpost was generally in position northwest of Galliciano, but relinquished Galliciano on its right flank and fell back to conform to the new line established by the 366th Infantry units. Company "F", 370th Infantry, which had been engaged in preparing secondary defense positions west of the Serchio, was hurriedly moved across the stream to fill the gap created by the collapse of Company "G", 366th Infantry.

"To prevent the enemy's attack from developing into any formidable threat to our supply lines, the 1st Armored Division, commanded by Major General Vernon E. Prichard, was detached from II Corps and on its way over the IV Corps zone. The 135th Regimental Combat Team (34th Division) was also attached to IV Corps and rushing westward for Viareggio.

"Enroute in my jeep south down the west bank of the river just about dark," continued General Crittenberger, "I was approached by another jeep coming up from the direction of Lucca and carrying in the front seat an imposing figure, almost completely encased in a British great coat and carrying what appeared to be a shepherd's staff in his right hand. I stopped and so did he. I soon recognized a British Major General whom I guessed to be General Russell, the Division Commander of the 8th British Indian Division, just arrived on the scene from Florence. With a fiery-red mustache and a florid face to match, he advanced on me majestically with his shepherd's crook - a figure that might have been taken out of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. Our meeting was short and to the point. After he identified himself, I told him I was the Commanding General of the IV Corps, that I had arrived on the scene the night before and that because of the urgency of the emergency, I had commandeered his division enroute to a rest area and

directed it to a defensive position astride the Serchio River, which position I pointed out to him on the map. I informed him that I was perfectly aware of the conventionalities usually involved in taking over a new division and committing it to battle, but that there had been no time for such conventionalities and had there been, I could not have gone through with them since he was absent from his division in Florence. I directed him to join his division, find out where it was, inform himself of the situation and that I would see him later that night. His only part of the conversation was one word - typically British - as he saluted and strode off - 'Quite'. Although this was a first meeting of considerable strain and an occasion on which he could have gladly killed me, and did with his looks, it turned out to be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

"About 9 o'clock on the night of 26 December I again conferred with the Commanding General of the 8th British Indian Division. At that time I was encouraged over his report that his division was in position and that the advance of the Germans had been stopped. At that time it appeared that the quick commitment of the 8th British Indian Division to this defensive position had saved the day - at least temporarily. In discussing his plan, General Russell informed me he would reconnoiter for delaying positions in rear of the defensive line he then held, and would be prepared to fall back on them, delaying the enemy as he withdrew. I told him such was not my plan at all. Instead, he would counter-attack at once to restore the line and I would take care of the delaying positions in his rear with the stalwart American troops that were enroute to reinforce us. He took my instructions without any indication whatsoever of chagrin and I withdrew for the night.

"On the morning of the 27th, General Russell called to inform me he had reconnoitered the front and was prepared to restore our front line in conformance with my orders of the night before. However, he almost floored me with the request: "Can I have four or five hours to tidy up the battlefield?" Meaning, before counter-attacking, he would like to take time to clear his area of the stragglers, many of whom by this time were running in all directions at a gallop. Once before I had heard the expression and I had always remembered it as typically British. In Africa, Field Marshal Alexander, several months previously had spoken of "tidying up the battlefield." Needless to say, I was very glad to give General Russell a chance to "tidy up the battlefield."

The Germans renewed the attack at dawn on 27 December, the weight of their effort centered in the area between Gallicano and Coreglia. Smaller thrusts were made west of the river around Molazzano, where additional slight withdrawals were made by our troops. The attack on the east, however, continued to make steady progress against the 366th Infantry elements and Company "F" of the 370th Infantry. Barga was evacuated in the morning. The enemy captured two undamaged 57mm guns and turned them against the 366th Infantry, which had also lost most of its heavy machine guns in its withdrawal. By 1300 our troops had fallen back from the second defense line and the Germans had penetrated the center of the area as far as the village of Pedona on the Serchio River, two miles due south of Barga.

The 19th Indian Brigade, moving northwest from Bagna di Lucca, established a line stretching northeast - southwest from Coreglia across the Serchio to San Romano, a village slightly more than one

mile south of Pedona. By darkness, the 2d Battalion, 366th Infantry, passed through the Indians and were moved across the river into new positions behind the 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry. At this time the 8th Indian Division assumed command of the Serchio Valley sector and all the troops therein. During the night the 19th Brigade held its positions and by the use of automatic weapons and mortar fire repulsed several enemy patrols. Units of the 21st Brigade moved forward and took up positions on the Division right flank, further strengthening the Serchio Valley defense. On the west side of the river, the 370th Infantry readjusted and improved its position. A sharp decrease in enemy activity was evident; however, patrols to the recently lost village of Gallicano were repulsed by small arms fire.

Meanwhile the reserve forces which Fifth Army had been pouring in since 26 December to assist in containing the German threat, were assembled in tactical locations as close as possible to where they might be employed. The 85th Division had completed its concentration in the area and were disposed as follows: The 377th Infantry has moved into the 92d Division sector, the 338th Infantry was in an assembly area near Lucca and the 339th Infantry moved to the S. Marcello Pistoiese area to reinforce the troops in Task Force 45. The 85th Division, less the latter regiment, was designated as Corps reserve. On 28 December the 135th Regimental Combat Team (34th Division) completed its move to an area northwest of Viareggio and was attached to the 92d Infantry Division. To the west of Lucca, the 1st Armored Division, an old standby, was rapidly closing in an area from which it would be available to attack either on the coastal plain or in the Serchio Valley.

Now that the arrival of all the reinforcing elements was completed, the situation took on a more optimistic aspect. Leghorn was safe, it was a matter now of regaining the ground that had been lost, and the 8th British Indian Division readily took over that task.

On 28 December, the 6th Lancers (Punjab Mechanized Squadron) the Reconnaissance unit of the 8th Indian Division, pushed aggressively forward to the Barga ridge against only slight opposition. The 6/13 RRF Rifles of the 19th Brigade moved one company to Barga to reinforce the 6th Lancers and had another company following close behind. Elements of the other regiment of the 19th Brigade, the 3/8 Punjabs, reoccupied Coreglia and the ridge to the southwest. The 1st Mahrattas Regiment of the 21st Brigade established standing patrols for the night on the right flank, just south of the same town. The 370th Infantry, west of Serchio, readjusted positions and sent out strong combat patrols. Enemy resistance was sporadic against our patrols, which led to the belief that he was retiring on both sides of the Serchio. A corpse found in the vicinity of Molazzana was identified as belonging to the 2d Battalion of the 285th Infantry Regiment of 148th Infantry Division. This was the first indication that this unit had entered the line on the west side of the Serchio River.

The XXII Tactical Air Command had hit the enemy on the 27th with more than 200 sorties and had followed up on the 28th with 228 fighter-bomber and 24 bomber sorties to assist our counter-attack. In the next two days, 878 additional sorties were flown over the Serchio Valley and areas behind it while the 19th and 21st Indian Brigades continued to push the enemy back. Barga was clear on the 29th, Sammocolonia was

reoccupied on the 30th, and on the last day of the year patrols penetrated into Gallicano, Bebbio and Molazzana against only feeble small arms resistance. At the end of the action on 31 December, all the lost positions had been regained by the 8th British Indian Division.

The objective of the German attack was not clear, although one officer prisoner said it was a reconnaissance in force which might have been exploited had not our reinforcements been encountered. The faces of the enemy must have been paled with surprise on contacting the turbaned, brown-skinned Gurkas who were most adept in the use of the knife in night fighting. By accurate intelligence estimates, prompt planning and the speedy movements of many troops a distance of 60 miles over one road, an enemy thrust which could have developed into a major disaster, was halted and thrown back.

On 31 December in the War Room conference, General Crittenberger and his staff reviewed the situation and what had been accomplished during the previous six days. The G-1, Colonel Harry Semmes, reported that the military population in the present IV Corps Sector increased from 31,762 to 88,934. The G-3, Colonel Raymond W. Curtis, reported that by the end of the fourth day, the equivalent of three divisions and an extra combat team, with supporting troops including artillery, engineers and tank destroyers, had moved over 60 miles of road, had been placed in tactical positions and assigned missions. Colonel Arthur T. Lacey, G-4 reported that a Class II and IV Depot capable of supporting 50,000 men had been established in the vicinity of Lucca. With reference to troop movements, the 5,840 vehicles included in the operation, traveled 422,670 truck miles, which was the equivalent of approximately 4,000,000 tire miles.

At a 20,000 mile life, this meant that the equivalent of 2,000 tires were worn out.

Colonel Gillette, Corps Engineer who later wrote an entertaining light comedy version of the Serchio attack entitled "Christmas Interlude" reported that the average of one and a quarter engineer battalions available to Corps had maintained 199 miles of road, of which over half was subject to snow; constructed 200 feet of foot bridge, 450 feet of tread-way bridge and 320 feet of Bailey bridge; prepared a total of 130 bridges and culverts for demolition; laid 36 mine fields; drew 372 tons of fortification material and issued 250 tons; and provided 1,000,000 gallons of potable water in addition to that furnished by Division Water Points.

The Corps Artillery Officer, Brigadier General William C. Crane, stated that by the night of 27 December two battalions of 155mm Howitzers and three battalions of 105mm Howitzers were in position, registered and ready to fire. By the night of 28 December this had been increased by the arrival of one battalion of 155mm guns, one battalion of 155mm Howitzers and the 10th Army Group Royal Artillery, consisting of two regiments of 5.5 gun-howitzers. For anti-aircraft protection the re-distribution of the 62d Antiaircraft Brigade resulted in a ring of heavy guns around Lucca and light gun protection for bridges on the Serchio, troop concentrations and Army Supply Points.

Lt. Colonel Walker, G-5 (Allied Military Government) stated that 50,000,000 lire had been deposited in the local banks at Lucca in order to avoid a panic and that twenty road blocks in the Serchio Valley were operated by the Carabinieri on the 26th and 27th to handle some 10,000 refugees, which would have otherwise completely clogged the roads to military traffic.

Colonel Edmund Cunningham, Signal Officer, reported that during the first day, 200 miles of spiral four-cable were hurriedly laid out and within the next two days 100 miles of W-110 had also been laid and four pigeon lofts moved into positions. The IV Corps Command Post, in its present dispersed condition required 80 trunks, 100 phones and an additional switchboard.

At the close of the meeting, General Crittenberger congratulated his staff for their efficient performance in accomplishing so much in such a short time and paid special tribute to higher and subordinate headquarters for their full and instant cooperation.

As the year 1944 passed away, IV Corps found its strength greatly increased over that of a week before. The 92d Infantry Division and the 8th Indian Division now held the coastal sector and the Serchio Valley. East of the valley the position of Task Force 45 had been reinforced by the Infantry Regiment of the 85th Division. The 1st Brazilian Division remained in the Reno River Valley. The 85th Division, less the regiment in the Task Force area, was in Corps reserve and the 1st Armored Division remained just west of Lucca under Army control. However, it was available to IV Corps for planning and would be used if needed. The first elements of the 10th Mountain Division, further reinforcements destined for IV Corps, arrived at Leghorn on 27 December while the remainder of the division was scheduled to reach Italy in January.

From a security standpoint the month of December was somewhat quieter than the preceding period. The enemy was still infiltrating agents through the Corps sector and although many were apprehended, it was possible that some were able to get through. Despite the deep snows which made traveling in the mountains difficult, fifteen agents were

apprehended during the month. Seven were captured by the Counter-Intelligence Section, 1st Infantry Division, BEF; four were taken by the South African Armored Division, and the remaining four were captured by the IV Corps, CIC Detachment. A total of 104 prisoners were taken during the month. An item of importance that reached the ears of the intelligence officers was the report that Marshal Kesselring had been wounded when strafed by an Allied plane about the middle of December. General Heinrich von Vietinghoff, Commander of the German 10th Army, and considered one of the most able enemy commanders, took Kesselring's place and Lt. General Joachim Lemelsen of 14th Army replaced Vietinghoff in directing the more active 10th Army which was opposing the advance of the British. Eighty soldiers of IV Corps were killed during the month of December and 374 sick, wounded and injured were evacuated through medical channels. Two hundred and fifty three were reported missing or captured. To replace these, 424 replacements were received and sent forward to the under-strengthened units. A shortage of replacements for the colored 92d Division remained a problem. The assignment of an additional colored infantry regiment, the 366th Infantry, a separate regiment composed of men from other branches converted into infantry landed at Leghorn on 21 November, to the division, had offset this immediate shortage to some degree; however, the low caliber of the colored replacements served to lower the battle efficiency of the division. This factor was expected to become of higher importance as the troops were employed on missions of greater risk and hardship.

Once again the shortage of truck transportation had harassed the supply personnel with many problems. At the beginning of the month all supply dumps used by Corps troops were maintained by Army.

This simplified the supply problem for the Corps: however, the transportation requirements for troop movements were greater than the Corps Provisional Truck Company could handle. This was especially so after 8 December when the 435th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, to which a goodly share of the trucks constituting the Provisional Truck Company belonged, was relieved from Corps control. Army agreed to make available on Corps call, 32 trucks from the 70th Quartermaster Truck Battalion to augment Corps transportation. On 29 December, with the increased number of troops and a resumption by Corps of the responsibility for maintaining the stock levels of the dumps in the western sector, Army attached the 3644th Quartermaster Truck Company to Corps. However, at the same time, the use of the 32 trucks from the 70th Quartermaster Truck Battalion was withdrawn.

1,242,127 "B" rations and 79,791 "C" rations were issued to the troops. The terrain over which the troops were operating was such that in some instances supplies and rations could not be moved by motor transportation the entire distance to using units. This made it necessary to use pack mules and hand-carry. To assist in this problem, additional mules from the 10th Pack Mule Company (Italian) were attached to IV Corps. Ammunition supplies continued to be critical and were only allotted by Fifth Army for each ten-day period. On Christmas Day, with the movement of Corps to the coastal sector, Army authorized Corps to draw any amounts of ammunition required to repel the expected German offensive, and substantial stocks were dumped in rear areas.

When the threat developed on the coast and IV Corps Headquarters shifted west on Christmas Day, there was a regrouping and reorganization

of artillery within the Corps. The 424th Field Artillery Group remained in the eastern sector as Corps artillery to render general support in the Task Force 45 and 1st Infantry Division, BEF sectors. The 10th Army Group Royal Artillery with two medium regiments, one battalion of 155mm howitzers and one battalion of 155mm guns moved to the IV Corps sector and with the exception of the 155's, went into positions in the Serchio Valley. The 155mm Howitzers and guns were moved further westward and took up positions along the coast. These units were under IV Corps Artillery for the remainder of the month and during that short time gave a fine performance. The long-range weapons were used primarily in precision adjustments and counter-battery fire. An unfortunate accident occurred in the 633d Field Artillery Battalion when two 155mm guns blew up on 30 December while firing harassing missions. Nine casualties occurred but the exact cause of these mishaps was not determined. One 155mm gun of Battery "C", 633d Field Artillery Battalion, was moved forward within 2,500 yards of the front line under cover of darkness on the night of 31 December and from there fired three harassing missions on dumps and supply points, and then returned to its original position before daylight.

The adverse weather conditions made snow removal one of the worst problems confronting the Corps Engineers. Half of the Corps roadnet was subjected to heavy snowfall and only one piece of snow removal equipment was available through normal supply channels. This was a "V" blade fitted on a road grader. The balance of equipment had to be picked up from civilian sources and usually it had to be completely overhauled and altered before it could be used. We also had the old reliable

bulldozer to fall back on, although it was not entirely suitable for this type of work. With this limited amount of equipment and the few engineers available, IV Corps could not afford to set up permanent snow stations, as did other corps and armies. Corps' plan was on the same order as the road repair assignment; teams with the available snow removal equipment were distributed to the units. When snow started falling the units dropped what road rebuilding work they were doing and began clearing snow. At least the Corps Engineer can boast that no road in the Corps sector had been blocked with snow long enough to prevent the movement of essential supplies or troops.

The largest Bailey bridge ever constructed by IV Corps was set up across the Serchio River at Borgo Mozzano. In the hasty preparation to meet the expected enemy attack, it was vital that we have a bridge in the vicinity of Bagni di Lucca so that reserves could be shifted from one bank of the Serchio to the other with a minimum loss of time. The narrowest place in the Serchio River was near Borgo Mozzano and here on the night of 25 December the bridge was started. The engineers worked night and day and by the 27th of December, had constructed a 180' double-triple Bailey bridge.

The hard bitter year of 1944 passed into history and at its end, Germany was defending desperately on all European fronts. On the western front, Rundstedt retained only a small fraction of the gains won in the costly Ardennes counter-offensive. In the east the Russians had held firmly to captured Budapest, and later were to launch a massive offensive from the Vistula that was destined to carry them to the Oder River. Pressed from three sides, Germany was near the end of her rope. On all fronts in Europe the final chapter was about to be written.

"APENNINE CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XVII - - - - -

THE WINTER FRONT

When the year 1945 dawned on the IV Corps front there was little visible change in the situation which had prevailed for the last two months of 1944. In the eastern part of the Corps sector positions were approximately the same as those held on the first of November. In the western half of the Corps sector the abortive attack of the combined German and Fascist Italian elements in the Serchio Valley had come to an end, and our lines had been restored to the positions held before the drive had begun. Winter had been with us for some time and much of the front lines was buried under a blanket of snow, in some places to a depth of 18 to 24 inches. Patrol activity was limited; artillery fire by both the Germans and ourselves was at a minimum.

On 1 January the Germans were estimated to be capable of defending their positions and launching counterattacks to restore any losses of ground; fighting delaying actions in successive positions back to the strong defensive line of the Adige River on the northern edge of the Po Valley in the foothills of the Alps; or launching a large-scale attack. Although the enemy had built up his strength on the coast to a total of nine German and twelve Italian battalions, which still constituted a threat in that sector, it was considered most likely that he would be content to adopt the first capability and hold his present line. A regrouping of Fifth Army in preparation for future operations was directed in its first operations instruction of the new year on 5 January.

A. THE DECISION TO WAIT.

At the end of the first week of January, active offensive operations by Eighth Army were brought to a halt northwest of Faenza, when 15th Army Group decided to postpone further major offensive action by the two Allied armies until the arrival of spring.

Numerous factors were considered in arriving at this decision. Whatever the enemy's intent had been in his Serchio Valley attack, it influenced to some degree the decision to further postpone any large-scale attack. By 1 April it was expected that fresh British and American divisions would be available and that several well-trained British-equipped units of the new Italian army would be ready for combat. An adequate stock of ammunition reserves would be built up by that date; major combat elements would be refitted and rested; and the difficulty in predicting weather conditions during the winter would be eliminated. An active defense for the remainder of the winter was the mission assigned to Fifth Army. On 9 January, a number of limited objective attacks were planned by Army to improve our defensive positions; to keep the enemy guessing as to our final intentions; and to provide a better jumping-off line from which to launch the spring offensive, then planned for some time in early April. The extensive regrouping of the Army which had begun on 5 January was continued during the remainder of the month which passed relatively quiet along the entire front. Only a few small-scale raids, mostly designed to obtain enemy prisoners, were carried out by our troops and by the enemy. Several sharp clashes occurred along the IV Corps front in the Serchio Valley, and in the Strettoia hill mass near the coast when the opposing forces attempted to secure local vantage points.

Most of the units which were detached from II Corps and rushed to the IV Corps sector during the Christmas attack in the Serchio Valley, were moved back to II Corps. On 5 January the 135th Regimental Combat Team returned from Viareggio to its former sector on Highway 65, where it reverted to control of the 34th Division; the following day the 365th Regimental Combat Team (92d Division) which had been previously attached to II Corps, moved into the IV Corps zone to join its parent unit; and on 8 January the 85th Division began movement eastward to rejoin II Corps. To compensate IV Corps for these withdrawals, fresh, untried troops of the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment, the first elements of Major General George P. Hays' 10th Mountain Division to be ready for combat, were attached to IV Corps on 5 January. These specialists in mountain fighting were placed under command of Task Force 45 the following day, and on 9 January, relieved the 434th and 900th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalions and the British 39th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment in the mountain area in the center of Corps' sector. The two relieved American battalions were moved from the area to later become part of the new 473d Infantry. On 10 January, following the return of the 365th Infantry to its area, the 92d Division assumed control of the Serchio Valley sector, allowing the 8th Indian Division to move to a rest camp near Pisa. Ten days later the second regiment of the 10th Mountain Division, the 85th Mountain Infantry, was attached to Task Force 45, and on 28 January, the remainder of the Division was moved to the area. The entire Division was now available; however, for counter-intelligence purposes it remained known as Task Force 45.

By the end of January, IV Corps positions were held by the 92d Division, Task Force 45, (10th Mountain Division) and the 1st Infantry Division,

Brazilian Expeditionary Force. Throughout the month our troops had improved and consolidated their positions, building a series of secondary defense lines and at the same time were preparing for the spring offensive. A supply of snow shoes, sleds and skis were allocated by Army and these were given to units to assist in negotiating the heavy snow in the mountains. Approximately 60 Weasels (M-29) were issued to Corps; the greater share of these was sub-allocated to Task Force 45 to be used by units of the 10th Mountain Division. Ammunition allocations were strictly adhered to and even the allocated amounts were not fully expended in order that a substantial reserve could be accumulated.

B. THE 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION MOVED INTO LINE.

Early on the morning of 23 December, the 86th Mountain Infantry stepped ashore in the Port of Naples. With doughnuts and hot coffee under their belts, the men piled into trucks and rode out to the staging area at Bagnoli, just north of Naples. They had no sooner settled down with the thought of spending Christmas day in Naples, when they received orders to prepare for a movement to the combat area of IV Corps. On 31 December the Regiment moved to Quercianella for some last-minute training. It was here that the first tragedy of the Division occurred when an S-mine exploded in the training area. The casualties, eight dead and four wounded, occurred the day before the Regiment was attached to IV Corps for immediate use in the line. On 8 January the 86th left Quercianella by truck and moved to the Task Force 45 sector where it was to be committed. As the personnel moved up to relieve the Anti-Aircraft battalions holding the line, movement of troops and equipment by truck became increasingly difficult. In many cases movement by truck was out of the question, so for many snow-covered miles the trip was

made by foot. The mountain-trained infantry troops realized for the first time that the terrain was just as rugged and the weather just as cold as in the austere Rockies which surrounded Camp Hale.

On 9 January, Brigadier General Robinson E. Duff, Assistant Division Commander of the 10th Mountain Division, was placed in command of Task Force 45, and the 86th Infantry came directly under his control. The 2d Battalion, 86th Infantry, completed the relief of units of the 39th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment and the 434th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, in the vicinity of Cutigliano, Ontoni and Vizzanetta. The 3d Battalion also moved immediately into position and relieved elements of the same units in the areas near Bagni di Lucca, La Lima, San Marcello, Maresca and Corsigna. The 1st Battalion completed the final stages of relief when they moved into the positions held by the 900th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion on the right. Thus the first regiment of the 10th Mountain Division, fresh and eager to learn of actual combat, moved into battle positions to form their first impressions of what it was like to be "over there". The first day of combat ended with patrols establishing contact with adjacent units. From a ship's hammock to a snow-rimmed fox-hole high in the Apennines in seventeen days was most certainly a sharp transition for the mountain soldier. After relief, the 39th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment moved to Pistoia for disbandment. Because of the continued absence of the German air-force, Fifth Army was able to carry out official reconversion of the numerous anti-aircraft organizations into other branches. The 434th and 900th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalions moved to Montecatini for conversion to infantry and became part of the new 473d Infantry Regiment.

About noon on 10 January the mountaineers experienced the sensation

caused by hearing the whine and crash of enemy artillery fire for the first time. Many things were learned by these troops in a very short period of time. For instance, patrols dispatched to reconnoiter the front returned with reports that movement was extremely slow and fatiguing, due to the heavy snows and that snow shoes and skis were essential. As a result, patrols sent out on the 13th of January were so equipped. On 16 January the first major fire fight experienced by the Regiment occurred slightly north of Ontoni. Just before dawn a patrol was halted in a bend of the road by an enemy group which opened fire but after lighting up the scene with flares and a short exchange of shots, the enemy withdrew.

On 21 January, the 85th Mountain Infantry of the 10th Mountain Division arrived in the zone to further augment the strength of General Crittenberger's command. The same day it was attached to Task Force 45 and the 1st Battalion relieved elements of the 86th Infantry in the Bagni di Lucca sector. The 2d Battalion moved into the vicinity of Prunetta to engage in further training and conditioning and the 3d Battalion moved to the vicinity of San Marcello as Task Force Reserve. The movement of these units was smoothly coordinated, and their arrival was received with deep satisfaction at the IV Corps Command Post at Lucca, for the Corps was being materially strengthened.

On the 20th of January, the 87th Infantry, the Third Regiment of the 10th Mountain Division, closed in an assembly area at Villa Colli, northwest of Lucca. Here it trained and made preparations for the relief of the 86th Mountain Infantry which was to be accomplished within the next two weeks. While in the area it was designated as Corps Reserve. That night, because of the reports of the possibility of another German reconnaissance in force in the Serchio Valley, the Regiment was ordered to stand by on an alert status

for possible employment. Five plans for counter-attacks were hurriedly drawn up in order that the unit would be ready for any eventuality - but nothing happened. The movement of the unit was credited with being equally as smooth as the other two, and further impressed IV Corps staff with the high caliber of the Division

During the period at Villa Colli, stress was placed upon company training and the adaption of that size unit to reconnaissance purposes. Of special value was the combat training received by the mortar men, snipers and 75mm gunners. On 27 January, the 81mm mortars were joined with the 92d for practical experience in firing missions on the line. In one case an emergency call for mortar fire was received and the crew immediately responded, went into action and registered accurate fire on a chance German patrol. The 75mm gunners received similar training, one section almost getting too much of it, for it received heavy counter-battery fire from the enemy. One noteworthy accomplishment of this training period for the 87th Mountain Infantry was the ironing out of individual responsibilities from the highest to the lowest elements.

By 28 January the final stages of the movement of the last units of the division to the front line were completed. Major General George P. Hays, Division Commander, with the full representation of all his staff, assumed command of Task Force 45, relieving General Duff. The establishment of the Division Command Post at Campo Tizzaro on that day completed the movement phase of the 10th Mountain Division into combat. The Division was the only one in the United States Army organized primarily for mountain fighting, and about a fourth of its personnel had already seen service in the Aleutian Islands. The principal distinction between the Mountain Division and a

Standard Infantry Division lay in its transport, which consisted almost entirely of horse and pack mule trains; in its artillery, which was composed of only three battalions of 75mm pack-Howitzers; and it contained an anti-tank battalion and a quartermaster battalion. The personnel were specifically trained for operations in the mountains; instruction in mountain climbing and in the use of skis and snowshoes had been included in its training.

The principal activity of the 10th Mountain Division in Task Force 45 sector consisted of maintaining a heavy patrol screen across as much of the front as possible. By way of mentioning additional lessons learned, the snow that blanketed this portion of the Apennines proved many things to the mountain troops: for one, that the crust beneath the layer of powdery snow easily broke through under their weight with a crunching sound that revealed their presence to enemy listening posts and standing patrols; and that at times heavy fog and low hanging clouds limited observation to very short distances. To give a picture of the elements that had to be fought, here is printed a direct quote from a message of a patrol leader: "Very high wind. Visibility poor in early morning. Crampons and ice axes needed badly. Cleaning and clearing weapons of ice and snow necessary quite often. Need protection of scabbards.---Carbine of doubtful use." There was more to this message than met the eye, for actually the cold snows in the mountains had, at times, frozen M-1 rifles and sub-machine guns. Acting on these reports, the Ordnance Section of IV Corps investigated to find that members of patrols, so equipped, had often thrust their weapons into snow during the steep mountain ascents, causing the snow to pack around the bolt and breach mechanism, thus making the weapons inoperative. The

86th Infantry was first to improve the method of hauling supplies over the snowbound mountain trails. They converted hand sleds to mule-drawn sleds and thereby doubled the ability of a pack mule. By the end of the month the newly arrived unit had its feet on the ground, was fully oriented to its new environment, and was ready for operations of division size.

C. TASK FORCE 45 DISBANDED - "A JOB WELL DONE"

When the 10th Mountain Division was ushered into IV Corps with the first month of the new year, Task Force 45 bowed out of the campaign. When General Hays assumed command of Task Force 45 at 0600, 28 January, his headquarters took over the duties of Headquarters, Task Force 45, and thus relieved the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 45th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade, which was moved to Limestone for disbandment.

Task Force 45 had been a mixture of American and British Anti-Aircraft gunners converted to infantry and at times, also contained Italian Partisans, Brazilians, and other American infantry and armor. Its artillery was their anti-aircraft guns, the guns of attached tanks and tank destroyers, and captured German weapons. Its engineers were mostly Italian civilians who were not afraid to work within the sound of guns and who built well. It accomplished much with little. British anti-aircraft soldiers who rode forward on American tanks, under cover of American mortar fire from behind and American mine clearing engineers ahead, and the Yanks who climbed out of their fox-holes with British artillery blasting protection from the rear, with Italian Partisans at their side and with Brazilians on their flanks, learned that different peoples can fight well together for a mutual cause.

During its operation from July of 1944 to January of 1945, Task Force 45 had, at various times, 3,000 to 8,000 men attached from over 56 different

kinds of mixed units. It covered a front of from 12 to 25 miles, both in the mountains and on the coastal plain, and it advanced its initial front a distance of 20 miles from the line of the Arno River to the Gothic Line and the Cinquale Canal. It suffered 650 casualties, of which 87 were killed, 452 wounded and 111 missing.

On 12 February, General Crittenberger decorated Colonel Gerald G. Gibbs, Commanding Officer of the 45th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade, with the Legion of Merit, and after commending the unit, announced its disbandment as directed by General Orders No. 15, Headquarters Fifth Army, dated 11 February 1945. The task force that it commanded had been held in high esteem by General Crittenberger and his staff, for the reason that it was, in reality, a IV Corps unit, having been formed by IV Corps when infantry troops were scarce. Molded into a fighting unit that loyally filled a huge gap of the line, its work had been completed. Its services and the scope of its operations were best epitomized in the Corps Commander's official commendation of 10 February 1945:

HEADQUARTERS IV CORPS
THE COMMANDING GENERAL

10 February 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer, 45th AAA Brigade, APO 464, U. S. Army.

1. Upon the occasion of the inactivation of the 45th AAA Brigade, I consider it a duty as well as a privilege to enter upon the records my official commendations for the distinguished contribution it has made to the Allied war effort in Italy. During the eight months' period in which the 45th AAA Brigade has been a part of the IV Corps, it has successfully executed a wide variety of missions over varied terrain and under all conditions of weather.

2. Although not organized, trained and equipped to do so, it has nevertheless functioned in a role similar to that of combat division in

battle. The changes and improvising necessary to facilitate the use of an Anti-aircraft Artillery Brigade Headquarters in the capacity of a division headquarters were accomplished with efficiency and dispatch while in constant contact with the enemy.

3. During the time the 45th AAA Brigade Headquarters fought as a part of the IV Corps, it operated not only as an Anti-aircraft Artillery Brigade Headquarters in a fast-moving situation, but also assumed the duties of a Task Force Headquarters which through meritorious performance has established an enviable reputation among the allied troops in Italy.

4. The wide scope of its effectiveness is best indicated by the success of its distinguished commander, Brigadier General Paul W. Rutledge, and able executive Colonel Gibbs, in directing operations involving technical employment as antiaircraft; and command of ground troops engaged in the pursuit of the German Army north along the Tyrrhenian coast, the occupation of a defensive line along the Arno River, the subsequent crossing of that river, the capture of Pisa, Viareggio and other Italian cities, and the more recent winter operations in the Apennine Mountains.

5. The flexibility and commendable performance of this headquarters is also indicated by the fact that the troops available to it constantly changed, and included both British and American antiaircraft units operating initially in their characteristic role and later as infantry; tanks, tank destroyers, infantry, engineers and all types of artillery.

6. The conversion of American and British antiaircraft units from their antiaircraft duties to the role of infantry and artillery in support of ground troops, which conversion was accomplished while in contact with the enemy along the front lines and without any preliminary preparations, can be recorded as a noteworthy example of American ingenuity and improvisation.

7. In every way this organization has lived up to the high traditions and standards of the United States Army. It is therefore with considerable gratification that I look back on this successful and very satisfactory association of the IV Corps with 45 AAA Brigade Headquarters in the campaign of Allied armies in Italy in 1944-1945.

8. As they go forward to other duties, all personnel, enlisted and commissioned, who have been on duty with the 45th AAA Brigade Headquarters during its participation in the IV Corps pursuit of the enemy from North of Rome into the Apennines, can have a justifiable pride in the part they have played in the success of the Allied Arms in Italy.

WILLIS D. CRITTENBERGER
Major General, U. S. Army
Commanding

D. GERMAN GOOSE-PIMPLES IN JANUARY.

If it was cold and uncomfortable to the troops of IV Corps, the weather was, no doubt, twice as uncomfortable to the enemy. Prisoners picked up in the vicinity of Molazzana said that the Christmas attack had resulted in the capture of much American clothing, which German and Italian troops were forced to wear to supplement their own. It was reported, but never confirmed, that some of these uniforms were used to outfit agents who could then circulate freely behind our lines in the guise of American soldiers.

Early in the month civilian and Italian prisoners from the Italian Fascist Republic units confirmed the suspicion that the German troops in the Serchio Valley pushed their expendable allies, the Italians, into forward positions while they luxuriated in the comparative safety of the rear areas. Until 9 January there was much speculation on the location of the efficient 4th Mountain Battalion and the discovery of two dead bodies from this unit slightly northeast of Mount Belvedere indicated that elements had been in the line there. However, later information proved that this unit was now in the more mountainous area in the vicinity of Abetone, much further to the west. The disposition of enemy troops throughout the month of January varied only to a slight degree. On the coastal flank, south of Massa, German troops of the 281st Regiment (148 Infantry Division) anchored that end of the line. East of there, snow covered Mount Altissimo and Grottorotundo were occupied by Italian troops of the Monte Rosa and San Marco Divisions, who bore the rigors of the cold while the German troops of the rest of the 148th Infantry Division sat in the more comfortable Serchio Valley. East of the valley where the mountains rose to storm-swept heights of almost 6,000 feet, the enemy thinned out his troops and held this section

with the 232d Fusilier Battalion. On the remainder of the front extending eastward as far as Highway 64, the three regiments of the 232d Infantry Division and the 267th Regiment of the 94th Infantry Division, alternating frequently from fox holes to rest areas, kept a frosty vigil.

The enemy had also adopted the scheme of converting to infantry other branches, whose missions had become relatively unimportant in this phase of the campaign. A German deserter who came through the line in the coastal sector told of the transfer of the 700 to 800 men of an anti-submarine unit, the 22d Torpedo Boat Flotilla, to infantry training in La Spezia and port guarding in Genoa. The caliber of the coast watching troops was not lifted by such wholesale methods, but on the other hand, the enemy was not particularly apprehensive of our having offensive intentions which would entail a landing operation.

About 20 January, statements of deserters from the Italia Division, of the Italian Fascists Republic, which had been in northwest Italy as part of the guard of the French-Italian border, indicated the possibility of German intention to employ that division in the west section of the line. The prisoners who had deserted to Partisans in the vicinity of Aulla, while the Italia Division was still far behind the lines, foreshadowed a steady stream of deserters. The Corps G-2 had gathered sufficient information to put out a comprehensive biographical sketch of these Fascists Italian Republic units in the appendix of the Daily Periodic Report and this information was furnished to all subordinate units.

These were the only Fascist formations that Benito Mussolini could muster to defend his newly organized Italian Republic. Most of the men were not volunteers by any means, but conscripted with little choice of

any other alternative. To justify his spectacular paratroop rescue in Rome, at the time Italy capitulated to the Allies, and as some measure of appreciation for the benevolent protection at the hands of Hitler, Mussolini worked feverishly and hard to scrape together these inexperienced units which manifested, at any rate, a modest contribution to the Axis war effort. Deserters from these Italian divisions spoke of harsh and insulting treatment at the hands of their German co-belligerents. Most battalions were staffed by supervisory German officers and non-commissioned officers, who threatened that in the case of desertions, drastic measures would be dealt out to the deserters' families. This factor was a powerful weapon in the hands of the Germans, for the Italian soldiers whose homes were in north Italy feared Nazi reprisals on their loved ones. However, those that had no families or just held distant ties with relatives, did not hesitate to take advantage of the proximity of our front line positions to drop their rifles in the snow and surrender themselves under the conditions stipulated on the Fifth Army "Safe Conduct" passes. They told of seeing posters on bulletin boards which threatened death to the remainder of a squad if one of its companions should see fit to desert. It was never known whether this ruthless but persuasive method was carried out - at any rate, the Italian soldiers kept appearing before our outposts for surrender, or joining up with the Partisans in the hills. Out of the 92 Italian prisoners taken from the Italia, Monte Rosa and San Marco Divisions, and other Italian militia units in January, 74 of them were outright deserters.

1. German Rear Areas.

The Germans were forced to contend with a considerable amount of turmoil far behind their front lines. The Italian Partisans were well

organized for engaging in extensive sabotage operations against the enemy supply system. Activities of these Partisans were encouraged by special Allied units set up specifically to contact the Partisans, to direct their campaign against German installations, and to provide them with trained military advisors. British and American agents were either smuggled through the lines or dropped by parachute into Partisan-held areas. Large amounts of small arms, ammunition, and explosives were dropped from Allied transport planes into remote valleys. British and American uniforms were sent to the patriot bands for use on the day when an organized uprising against the Germans was to be ordered.

By December these activities had reached such proportions that the enemy was obliged to begin a determined attempt to clean up the situation. Elements of several divisions, including the whole of the 162d Turcoman Grenadier Division, which could not be trusted in battle, were engaged in this program. Carefully planned attacks were made against Partisan strongholds. The general pattern followed was the institution of a blockade, followed by a policy of starving out and cutting up the various bands. Severe measures were taken. The Germans refused to recognize the Partisans as soldiers under international law and executed many of those captured. People who had befriended or supported the guerrillas were sometimes executed, but more often were sent as forced labor to Germany. Some of the Italian units employed in the Partisan hunts were of little value due to the high rate of desertions; for example, the Monte Rosa Alpine Division had lost more than 6,000 deserters by the end of November. Many of these fugitives joined the Partisans; others donned civilian clothes and went into hiding.

E. THE PAPER CAMPAIGN.

It is fitting to mention here the propaganda leaflet-filled shells of friend and foe which shrieked across the lines; a new method to attempt the depletion of the other's strength without the shedding of blood. It was better known as psychological warfare. It may be safely stated that our leaflets were the most persuasive and as already mentioned, the Italian soldiers took ready advantage of the "Safe Conduct" passes. When the identifications of the Italian Fascist units in the line opposite IV Corps were confirmed, the artillery was promptly issued a quota of propaganda shells with which to shower the Italian units. It was known that the war was now of no interest to the conscripted Italian soldiers and it was believed that they would seize the first offer available to desert their insulting German allies, who looked upon the Italian soldier with scorn and ridicule. However, the Germans did not hesitate to saturate the Italians with their own stream of propaganda, by stating that the colored American troops would kill them on sight, or that they would be shipped to America for hard labor never to return, or that they would be turned over to the Russians as slaves for work in the mines of Siberia. Thousands of "Safe Conduct" passes printed in Italian were heaved over the lines in artillery shells or disseminated by plane on the positions of the Italian San Marco and Monte Rosa Divisions. The front-line observers noted that when the shells burst and the leaflets showered the landscape, the Italian troops would come running out of their fox-holes and positions, pick them up and dash back as quickly. There were orders on our side not to fire at them lest our subtle offers of desertion be negated by our own bullets. The Italians also knew that we would not fire, for this was standard practice

now. Italian deserters told how the soldiers fought for, and jealously guarded these passes, even though it was almost certain death at the hands of the Germans if one was found in their possession. The results were surprising. Not long after the paper cannonading or bombardment ceased, our outposts were alerted by movement to its front - only to learn it was an Italian deserter or a group of Italians, calling for surrender under the terms of the "Safe Conduct" pass. There follows a sample of the "Safe Conduct" pass which many Italians used to surrender:

(TRANSLATION)

SAFE CONDUCT

(In English)

BY PRESENTING THIS PASS, THE BEARER OR BEARERS INDICATE THAT THEY ARE ABANDONING THE FIGHT AGAINST THE ALLIES. TAKE HIM OR THEM TO SAFETY.

(In Italian)

THIS SAFE CONDUCT ASSURES YOU A SAFE PASSAGE THROUGH OUR LINES. AGREE AMONGST YOURSELVES. GET HOLD OF A LEAFLET. ONE IS ENOUGH FOR THE WHOLE GROUP. COME IN GROUPS OF NOT MORE THAN 5 OR 6. CARRY YOUR ARMS SLUNG AND NOT AS IF YOU INTENDED TO USE THEM. LEAVE DURING THE NIGHT. THE TERRAIN IS FAVORABLE. THE DARKNESS GIVES COVER. REACH OUR LINES AT DAWN OR AFTERWARDS, NOT BEFORE. APPROACH OUR LINES OPENLY, CARRYING A WHITE CLOTH OR HANDKERCHIEF OR LEAFLET. WHOEVER HAS THE LEAFLET SHOULD LEAD THE PARTY. OUR TROOPS ARE AWAITING YOU AND WILL LEAD YOU TO SAFETY. YOU WILL BE WELL TREATED. BE QUICK. THE GERMANS HAVE ALREADY DECIDED TO WITHDRAW YOU AND INTERN YOU IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS. COME AT ONCE. AT ONCE.

L A S C I A P A S S A R E

The Germans through many years of practice, were adept in the use of Psychological Warfare, but for some reason their many leaflets, sexy, humorous, and otherwise, failed to impress our troops. Many angles were tried. At the Brazilians they threw colored leaflets aimed at fomenting discontentment with her allied ties. One of the brightly painted cartoons depicted President Roosevelt as a vicious eagle, with his sharp talons seizing the minerals, coffee and patroleum out of the country of Brazil; on the reverse side was written in Portugese:

" B R A Z I L I A N S

Your marvelous country is the richest in the world.

Why is it that you don't drill for oil?

The Americans don't want you to.

Why is it that you can't sell coffee?

The Americans don't want you to.

Why is it that in Brazil you produce so little rubber?

The Americans don't want you to.

Why is it that the exploitation of minerals has not been more progressive?

The Americans don't want you to.

The Americans want to take care of Brazil in order that their capitalists can exploit the richness of your land.

For this, you, the best soldier of Brazil, was sent out of Brazil to die in Europe and never return to you country."

These were used by the Brazilian soldiers for either fuel for the makeshift stoves in their winterized shelters or for other purposes that cannot be mentioned here. At the Americans was thrown a stream of all kinds of leaflets. One type pictured a beautiful blue-eyed blonde with ruby lips, smiling contentedly in the arms of her handsome G. I. sweetheart, beneath it was printed: "TO LIVE FOR HER." - - On the other side was the grinning face of moustached Stalin, looking at a mound of dirt on top of which was laid a twisted American helmet and beneath the pile of rubble, protruded the combat shoes of an American soldier. On this side was printed: "OR TO DIE FOR HIM." Others were steeped with subtle propaganda smacking

of anti-semitism, with the claim that the soldier at the front was dying for the Jews at home. To the 92d Division troops was addressed a leaflet on discrimination, showing two colored civilians being forcibly ushered from a white church in New York because of their color. The general tone of these castigated our government for allowing discrimination and informed the colored soldiers that in Germany there was no such thing.

Our best piece of propaganda was found in the "Frontpost" newspaper dropped to the Germans by our planes. It was a weekly newspaper printed especially for the information of the German troops. Its effectiveness was found in the truthful accounts of the progress of the war. The German soldier from Berlin, who had not heard from his family in months and who furtively picked up one of the "Frontpost" papers and read that the Russians were at the gates of Berlin, must have winced, for news of such German reverses were not circulated freely by the German High Command. (It was learned that the price fetched by "Frontpost" in the German lines in Italy was known to have been one mark, pre-war value about thirty cents).

In addition to this paper campaign, the German, through the air waves dished out a continual stream of propaganda by such enlightening English speaking characters as the British Lord Haw-Haw, Ezra Pound, American, or Axis Sally from Milan station. The most enjoyable was Axis Sally, for her modern American music, jazz and quips were in true American style. Our troops were free to listen to this entertainment, for that is what it was. We all wondered what Axis Sally looked like - her voice was teasingly feminine and the way she purred over the air waves bespoke an attractive and shapely lass.

F. COMMAND POST AT LUCCA.

When the headquarters personnel of IV Corps piled into trucks and jeeps

to move out of the mountains from Taviano and set up in Lucca, for some the preparations of a turkey dinner were in vain, and for those unlucky ones "C" rations were their Christmas feast. The "G" Sections were moved into the spacious banquet rooms and chambers of the huge palace of Massarosa in the center of the city of Lucca. The wings of this palace rambled about a large courtyard, where the trailers and vans of the Commanding General and some of the staff were parked. In the room where the G-3 Section was operated, were large golden-framed paintings. On one side of the room, a warm fire crackled in an unusually large stone fireplace and cast red, flickering shadows on the map boards on the opposite side of the room. Logs were piled nearby. Modern telephone wires hastily strung about the room and map boards leaning against the walls, detracted from the ancient, musty atmosphere that had permeated the palace before the IV Corps moved in. On that hectic Christmas day and night, Colonel Curtis, Lt. Colonel Maulsby, Lt. Colonel Pond and Major Hamilton, were too busy to take much note of their new surroundings. One was always at the phone taking messages - the phones rang incessantly; others pored over maps and worked on various plans to meet the Serchio threat. Packs and sleeping gear were strewn about the different parts of the room, for there had been no time for M/Sgt. Luther, Chief Clerk, to "set the house in order". Sgt. Alan Mitchell, Section Draftsman, was busily engaged in sketching out the overlay to accompany the G-3 situation report for the next morning. Every one was busy on this first day in Lucca. The tensivity of the Serchio situation was reflected in that room. Finally when the German surge was gapped by the 8th Indian Division on 27 December, the wan expressions on these haggard faces of the officers and men was a warning that sleep was now a necessity. When the situation was again in hand and the line re-established, the work slacked off.

It was a close call and the pressure was heavy, but Leghorn was not lost. Now, M/Sgt. Luther had an opportunity to establish some order in the section. He rearranged the layout of the makeshift tables, map boards, and telephones, and the section operated normally, 16 to 18 hours a day with an officer and clerk on duty the rest of the time.

After the mountain line became quiet again in January, both sides were content to return to doze and to await the arrival of warmer weather and spring. The personnel of IV Corps took advantage of the lull and looked about the city of Lucca during their spare time. Lucca was an old and picturesque town. In the city the weather was never really cold and any amount of snow was a great novelty. The warmth of the sun's ray in mid-winter was explained by the fact that this capitol of Lucca Province, sheltered in the Arno Valley, was only 62 feet above sea level. When the soldiers walked about the narrow streets, they realized that these ancient thoroughfares, wide enough for a jeep, but scarcely more, spoke to them from the deep past. The Military Policemen stationed at the four gates of the high wall that protected the town, performed the same duties as did the town's sentries back in 1645. At early morning and during different times throughout the day, the bells of its many churches pealed loudly throughout the town and echoes out over the surrounding countryside. The town had very many churches, mainly of well-marked basilican type, with richly decorated exteriors, fine apsidal ends and quadrangular campanile, in some cases with battlemented summits and with windows increasing in number as the height increased. They followed the Pisan style. Daily the soldiers and officers walked back and forth across the stone square in front of the cathedral of Saint Martin on their way to chow. As they trooped by

this ancient relic few realized that this tall church was begun long before Columbus discovered America. This huge cathedral of Saint Martin was begun in 1060 AD by Bishop Alsemm who later became Pope Alexander II.

For almost two months IV Corps lived in a town that had elbowed its way into history as far back as 218 BC. At that time one of the Roman emperors, Sempronius, with his battered army retired to the town after his defeat at the hands of Hannibal at Trebia. History also tells us that Julius Caesar, in 56 BC, here held his famous conference with Pompeii and Crassus. He was then unaware that fate had already earmarked his doom in the Roman Senate. Into Lucca and over the same narrow streets over which rolled the jeeps of IV Corps, once rumbled the Roman two-wheeled chariots. Over these same streets marched the sandaled feet of the Roman Legion, for Lucca was then, as now, the meeting point of roads to the ancient Roman settlements of Florentia (Florence), Parma, Luna, and Pisa. Ancient Lucca has known its share of plundering and was deprived of part of its territory, but nevertheless appeared as an important city and fortress at the time of Narses, who besieged it for three months in 553 AD.

Lucca was steeped with a history of turmoil that presented to researchers of ancient history a never-ending wealth of subject matter. Under the Lombards it was the residence of a Duke or Marquis and had the privilege of a mint. A coin minted at Lucca is today of inestimable value to world-wide coin collectors. The Dukes gradually extended their power over all Tuscany, but after the death of the famous Matilda, the city in about 1160 constituted itself an independent community. Here is an inkling of how often Lucca changed hands. "Occupied by the troops of Louis of Bavaria, sold to rich Genoese, seized by John, King of Bohemia, pawned to the Rossi of

Parma, then ceded to Martino della Scala of Verona, sold to the Florentines, surrendered to the Pisans, nominally liberated by the Emperor, Charles IV, and governed by his Vicar." In 1546, Francesco Burl Amochi made a number of attempts to give political cohesion to Italy, but perished on the scaffold. Napoleon also came into the picture as he here formed in 1805 a principality in favor of his sister, Elisa, and her husband, Felice Bachdiocchi. Let us not fail to mention that in 1944 the Germans held it until seized by the American troops of IV Corps and in whose hands it was at the time of this history.

As once planned the military leaders of ancient Lucca for the defense of the city, so did General Crittenberger and his staff plan in 1944; but not for the defense of Lucca, for it was in no real danger, but for the preliminary operation to take place on the mountains which formed the horizon to the north. This planning was being done in accordance with hints from Fifth Army that February was scheduled for limited objective attacks by IV Corps.

1. Plans and Operation Section.

The operational nerve center of the Corps operated in the G-3 Section. Into this section flowed reports from all units of the Corps and from adjacent and higher headquarters. Locations of friendly and enemy troops, reports of operations, future plans and intentions were collected and maintained up to date on maps, charts, and in files. Reports from divisions were received every six hours and more often during periods of intensive action. This Situation Reports (SITREPS) followed a standardized three-paragraph form. The first part pictured the actual development of operations; the second listed the commander's intentions, the third indicated changes in the location of command posts or changes in the attachment

of troops. Twice daily at 1200 and 2400, the G-3 Section compiled SITREPS for submission to Fifth Army; also at the hours of 0600 and 1800, informal SITREPS were forwarded, giving the information on the activity up to those hours. In addition, a daily periodic report containing a summary of operations for the 24-hour period was prepared.

Various types of information maps were kept in the G-3 Section. These maps included not only information compiled in the G-3 Section, but also obtained from other sections in order to have a complete understanding of the situation at any time. A complete duplicate set of the G-3 maps was kept in the War Room, also known as the Liaison Room, from which liaison officers from the various units could obtain the complete Corps picture for their respective commanders.

Thus came to an end another month of winter operations. Although no advances were chalked up along the wide IV Corps front, the mission of maintaining contact with the enemy by patrolling and raiding had been assiduously accomplished. Harassed by our artillery and over alert to our probing, the Germans shivered in the icy winds as they waited tensely for the next move by the Allied forces in Italy. Among enemy forces facing IV Corps, the losses in personnel and materiel were a constant drain at a time when they could ill-afford to have their strength depleted. Stress was still laid on rest and recreation for our troops. Divisions were assisted in the establishment of rest facilities in their respective areas and normal allotments of Army rest center quotas were continued. Replacements were beginning to pour into IV Corps, bringing the depleted units up to strength. A total of 2530 recruits arrived, to shiver and be buffeted about by the icy gales of the Apennines; however, after being absorbed by needy units, they quickly learned the "know-how" of finding warmth and comfort where they best could.

"APENNINE CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XVIII - - - - -

LIMITED OBJECTIVE ATTACKS IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH

February was an extremely cold month but the fact that in a few weeks the snows would begin to melt into icy streams cascading down the mountain slopes, offered some form of consolation to thwart the icy, biting winds which moaned through the crags and swept around the mountain tops like a slattern's fury. After a month-long period of rest, reorganization and routine duties following the Serchio Valley incident in December, IV Corps was prepared to launch limited objective attacks, particularly in the 92d Division sector. This was in keeping with the instructions contained in Fifth Army Operations Instructions No. 2, dated 9 January 1945. In addition to seizing critically needed terrain features that would provide better positions from which to launch the spring offensive, the local attacks were designed to keep the enemy confused as to our intentions and to keep him off balance during the months of February and March.

A. ATTACKS OF THE 92D DIVISION.

The 92d Infantry Division with the attached 366th Infantry Regiment and various supporting troops, undertook two separate offensive operations. One of these was designed to improve positions in the Serchio Valley and the other to achieve similar success in the coastal sector along Highway 1.

1. Serchio Valley.

The attack in the Serchio Valley was launched first, beginning on 4 February and initially encountering little opposition. The 366th

less its 3d Battalion, which was holding a sector on the coast, was assigned an attack zone on the west side of the Serchio River, and the 365th Infantry a zone on the east side. The first day's attack met only scattered enemy resistance, consisting principally of long-range small-arms fire when Company "C", 366th Infantry, occupied Gallicano in strength and pushed out patrols. The 2d Battalion, 365th Infantry, entered the village of Castelvecchio and Albiano at the foot of the dominating 3000 foot Lama Di Sotta ridge on the east side of the river. From these positions the main offensive jumped off at dawn the following day.

The 366th Infantry made advances of approximately one-half mile, occupying the village of Calomini. Scattered enemy resistance and numerous mine fields were overcome, but stiffer opposition was encountered when attacks were directed against Mount Faeto, a peak which lay between Calomini and Gallicano. Company "B" twice advanced nearly to the summit of this feature, only to be driven back by small-arms and mortar fire each time. During the afternoon there followed intense enemy artillery fire which forced the troops to move back to the base of the hill for protection; however, objectives were reached along other sections of the regimental line. On 6 February the Regiment consolidated and strengthened its positions. Elements again almost reached the summit of the bitterly-contested hill under intermittent artillery fire, which also liberally spattered the remainder of the regimental front line position. In the next two days some slight progress was made further up the slopes of the mountain and the enemy, apparently resigned to permitting these gains, made no counter-attacks.

On the east of the Serchio on 5 February, it was not easy. The defender could ill afford to lose the Lama Di Sotto terrain which afforded excellent observation toward the German-held town of Castelnuovo, about two miles due west of the ridge. The first assaults by the 365th Infantry appeared to take the enemy by surprise, and objectives were speedily reached. Some Fascist elements of the 1st Bersaglieri Regiment of the Italia Division, which were interspersed among the German troops of the 148th Grenadier Division, gave way, and in less than an hour after the 3d Battalion began the attack, important gains had been made. Company "I" occupied the village of Lima Di Sotto at 0710; at 0750 Company "L" passed through Sommocolonia and seized the high ground on the ridge southwest of Lama. Company "K" reached the ridge northeast of Lama at Mount della Stella, and all three units dug in, registering a gain of more than a mile from the line of departure. The small villages of Monte Bono and Renaio to the east of the ridge were also seized early in the day. That night at 2000 an enemy party came crunching over the snow for a raiding action against the troops at Lama Di Sotto. This was the only enemy reaction of seizable strength during the day and it was successfully repulsed.

Why did the enemy fail to offer the usual resistance when our troops seized such an important objective? Was it that they were taken by complete surprise and could not respond quickly enough to meet the attack, or was it that the German policy of entrusting a segment of the line to the inexperienced Fascist troops began to boomerang? The latter surmise was apparently the one, for enemy

resistance became stiffer the following day, when the 2d Battalion, 365th Infantry, began moving north from Castelvecchio across the southwest slopes of the ridge. Despite increased enemy fire, the colored troops occupied the Treppignana ridge and a small village to the west. The enemy was evidently in position now to offer increased resistance. A twenty-man counter-attack against the small town of Treppignana was repulsed during the afternoon. No sooner was that over than a second counter-attack was launched on the hill east of Treppignana by an estimated thirty-man force and was also repulsed. Still a third attack of slightly greater strength was launched at our positions on Lama di Sotto; it was thrown back but only after hand-to-hand fighting. The enemy had fully awakened now and fought hard to recapture the dominate terrain feature.

The 1st Battalion, 365th Infantry, relieved the 3d Battalion during the night of 7-8 February, but had hardly established itself in position when the 2d Battalion, 286th Grenadier Regiment, which had been rushed back into line to take over from the 1st Bersaglieri Regiment, began a series of fierce counter-attacks to retake the ridge. The first, launched before daylight in company strength, was successfully beaten off by our supporting artillery fire. Another, in which the entire German Battalion participated overran Lama at 1725, recaptured Mount della Stella and forced our troops back about 500 yards. The German struck the outposts on Mount della Stella from three sides and from there worked down the ridge toward the rest of the battalion. Small counter-attacks continued on 9 February but no additional gains were made.

At 0630, 10 February, the 365th Infantry attacked to regain the ridge, committing three battalions; the 3d on the right, the 2d in the center and the attached 2d Battalion, 366th Infantry, on the left. Heavy machine gun and mortar fire was put down by the enemy, but the Italians of the 1st Bersaglieri Regiment collapsed, giving up 55 prisoners and enabling our troops to get back into Lama Di Sotto and onto parts of the ridge southwest of the village. This success proved to be only temporary. The Germans counter-attacked again and before dark the enemy was once more in Lama itself, forcing the 1st Battalion to withdraw slightly south of the hotly-contested town. By nightfall, the 2d Battalion, 366th Infantry, to the left, dug in at a point just below and to the southwest of the town. The 3d Battalion dug in for the night on the ridge northeast of the town, but in the face of intense machine gun and small arms fire, was forced to withdraw to a lower feature. The next day, 11 February, the reverses were more pronounced. Three additional counter-attacks were hurled at the three battalions and were beaten off, but a fourth, estimated to include 200 Germans, forced us to make further withdrawals. Activity then died down in the valley with the important ridge, which had changed hands five times, remaining in enemy control; our advance positions were about three-fourths of a mile forward of our original positions.

2. Attack on the Coast - The Cinquale Canal.

The attack in the coastal region was designed to move our positions forward about two miles on both sides of Highway 1. On the west of the highway were a series of canals which cut across the narrow plain to the sea. The Strettoia hill mass which dominated Highway 1

from the east was the principal inland objectives. The 371st Infantry operated in the right zone entirely through rugged terrain, and the 370th Infantry moved up on the left of the 371st Infantry with its left flank on Highway 1 and its right flank at the edge of the mountains. On the left of the division, in the coastal plain, the 3d Battalion, 366th Infantry, was formed into Task Force 1. This Task Force also included Company "C", 760th Tank Battalion, a platoon of tank destroyers from the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (1st Armored Division). Armor from the 760th Tank Battalion and the 758th Light Tank Battalion was also attached to the forces on the west of the highway.

The Corps artillery units designated in general support of the coastal attack were: 248th Field Artillery Battalion (155-mm Howitzers); 633d Field Artillery Battalion (155-mm Gun); and the 55th Observation Battery, 8th Survey Regiment (British). In preparation for the attack, Corps and Division artillery worked in close harmony perfecting fire plans. Plans for defensive fires to protect our troops after taking their assigned objectives were prepared. A counter-battery program against five groups of known enemy batteries with a total of 20 positions, was prepared and assigned to units for firing on call. A harassing program to be fired in the event weather hindered observation or in the event our attack should provoke unusual enemy movement, was prepared and distributed to artillery units. Enemy observation points on which smoke might be needed were determined and plans made for firing such missions on call from the infantry. The 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion was assigned the mission of close support to the 92d

Division, and for the attack over the Cinquale Canal, all three companies were placed in positions close behind the front line troops. In addition, fighter-bombers of XXII TAC directed by "Rover Joe" were available to support the coastal operation. Task Force 1 was to advance along the beach until it had crossed the Cinquale Canal and then turn inland toward Highway 1.

At 0600, on 8 February, the 370th and 371st Infantry Regiments and the 3d Battalion, 366th Infantry, attacked. Along the entire front the initial advance across the relatively wide no-man's land, which separated the opposing forces was rapid. By mid-morning, however, stiff infantry resistance and intense artillery fire was encountered in all three areas. Initially some progress was made on the east of the highway, but the 371st, advancing with two battalions abreast, was pinned down after a 800 yard gain. The 370th Infantry, attacking in column of battalions with the 3d leading, ran into bitter resistance. However, by late afternoon Company "I" had reached the top of Mount Strettoia. It was immediately counter-attacked, but was able to beat off the enemy, only to be later forced from the hill by intense mortar fire. Soon thereafter the company again advanced and retook the crest of the hill.

Meanwhile Company "A" of the 760th Tank Battalion, with elements of the 758th Tank Battalion and the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, after firing barrages on Strettoia, Porta and Porta Ridge moved forward up Highway 1 with engineers and infantry. The infantry and engineers encountered a great deal of difficulty in their attempt to clear Highway 1 of mines and were finally pinned down by intense small arms fire from the high ground to the right of the road. A platoon

of tanks of Company "A" weaved its way up the highway through a newly-made by-pass to reach the hard-pressed foot troops. From this position they fired directly into enemy strong-points at close range.

The tank platoon was followed by tank destroyers which took up positions to the left of Highway 1 and gave similar assistance. The concentrated enemy small arms and mortar fire made it impossible for the engineers to clear the mines and thus the armor was unable to proceed. Company "A", 758th Tank Battalion (Light) and a platoon of "B" Company, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, were then ordered to move from the Highway 1 sector through Querceta to assist Task Force 1 in crossing the Cinquale Canal. At Querceta, Company "B" of the 370th Infantry, mounted on tanks and rode to Forte del Marmi. There they dismounted and went forward on foot to reinforce the hard-pressed troops of Task Force 1. The tank and tank destroyers remained on the south side of the Cinquale the night of 8-9, ready to cross and exploit any success that Task Force 1 might have.

The most severe opposition to our attack developed on the left flank, where Task Force 1 was forced to operate in flat terrain, exposed not only to the fire of the 148th Fuselier Battalion and their supporting mortars and field artillery, but also to the big coastal guns firing from the La Spezia area. Four hundred and ninety heavy shells rained down on the beach area during the daylight hours of the first day of the attack. Most of these came from the heavy caliber coastal defense guns located on Punta Bianca, a promontory a few miles northwest of Marina di Carrara. They fired defiantly the first day of the Cinquale attack although under counter-battery fire from our 155's and attacks from our bombers.

The 3d Battalion, 366th Infantry, mounted on the tanks of Company "C", 760th Tank Battalion, commanded by Captain John L. Barrett, who had just left the G-2 Section of IV Corps to serve with the armored unit, was to make the initial effort. To avoid the high banks of the canal the tanks moved into the sea and then crossed the mouth of the canal to reach the north side. Although the water was only about 30 inches deep and 90 feet wide at the point, the beach was heavily sown with mines, and two tanks were disabled at the outset. After it had advanced 500 yards north of the canal the Task Force encountered a dense enemy mine field. The Engineers immediately set to work to clear a path through which the tanks could move inland, but the intensity of the enemy fire slowed down their efforts. The commander of the tanks thought it best not to wait for the accuracy of the enemy artillery gunners to reach a state of perfection, and decided to attempt a passage through the mine field in order to assist the infantry which had already begun to move inland. In the first attempt two of the tanks were disabled. Captain Barrett made a second attempt but two more tanks were lost to the efficiency of the enemy mines. However, two tank destroyers succeeded in getting through the mine field and the remainder followed up the coast road. The tanks that reached the beach on the far side of the canal were subjected to intense artillery and mortar fire, but from their beach positions they were used to fire on enemy strong-points that were holding up our infantry.

Despite the heavy opposition the entire force managed to reach the north side of the Canal by 1700; at dusk, Company "B", 370th Infantry, came across to reinforce the 3d Battalion which had already suffered

heavy casualties. The Task Force Command Post was established across the Canal for the night and the tanks on the beach took up defensive positions and prepared to repel any counter-attacks by either foot troops or armor. The tanks and tank destroyers which succeeded in reaching the junction of the innercoast road and the Montignoso road assumed positions to repel any counter-attack either from the north or the east and any patrols or raiding parties which might by-pass our troops and come from the south. Twice during the night enemy patrols attacked the Command Post, but were driven off by the intense machine gun and cannon fire delivered by the armor.

On 9 February both the 370th and 371st Infantry continued the attack and made limited gains with elements of the former reaching the summit of Mount Strettoia. The Germans hurriedly brought up elements of the 285th Grenadier Regiment from reserve and these troops immediately stiffened the defense. Prisoners taken from the 2d Battalion stated that their battalion had been rushed from La Spezia and committed piecemeal in a counter-attack and that the remainder of the Regiment was still in the La Spezia area fighting Partisans. Mine fields well covered by fire, prevented the armored vehicles from advancing up Highway 1, and they could, therefore, only support the attack by fire. The leading battalion of the 371st Infantry had suffered such high losses because of straggling that it was unable to take advantage of any lull in the enemy fire.

In the coastal area Task Force 1 continued to suffer heavily. The bridgehead north of the Canal extended about 1000 yards along the beach and 500 yards inland, however, many of the tanks were forced to remain on the beach itself since maneuver was so restricted by mines.

In an attempt to move the tanks from the beach to the Montesigno road, two more were disabled. The tanks protecting the Task Force Command Post fought off a couple of small enemy attacks in the course of which most of their ammunition was expended. Enemy counter-attacks at 0600 and 1100 were beaten off; a heavier thrust at 1730 pushed back the perimeter of the bridgehead. The balance of the 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry, was ordered to move westward to help hold the beachhead and was to be carried across on tanks. Shortly before noon, three medium tanks and ten light tanks from the 758th Light Tank Battalion picked up the infantry troops and started for the mouth of the Canal. As the three mediums prepared to move into the sea, the column came under intense artillery and mortar fire, and the infantry quickly dismounted and sought cover. When a lull in the shelling occurred, the tanks succeeded in crossing and deposited the infantry on the north side. Several more trips were made during the day by all the tanks, however three light tanks drowned-out in craters at the mouth of the Canal and had to be abandoned. That night tanks of Company "A", 760th Tank Battalion, crossed the Cinquale Canal to relieve the tanks and tank destroyers which had been in the initial attack and had expended almost all of their ammunition and consumed most of their gasoline.

The next day the 370th Infantry held its positions and the 371st Infantry struggled to maintain a foothold east of the Strettoia hill mass against further attacks by the 285th Grenadier Regiment and reinforcing elements of the newly-arrived Kesselring Machine Gun Battalion. Prisoners taken from this battalion stated that on 9 February their unit had been loaded on trucks at Montova and rushed across Italy to the

Marine di Massa area. The sensitivity of the enemy to our attack, as well as his reaction was demonstrated by this move.

Task Force 1 in a further attempt to break through to Highway 1 and join forces with the 370th, lost more armor and personnel in the thick mine fields. At 1600 the enemy launched a counter-attack supported by anti-tank weapons. The infantry and engineers were immediately pinned down and eventually were forced to withdraw, and in the course of the action, the enemy almost overran the Task Force Headquarters. The tanks assumed defensive positions around the Command Post and fired upon the approaching troops at ranges sometimes as close as 30 yards and were able to repulse the attack. More tanks were being lost; an artillery observer's tank from the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion had hit a mine on the beach and was disabled; in the afternoon a tank of Company "C" slid into a crater at the mouth of the Cinquale and was drowned out.

At 1930 the Task Force Commander received the following message from General Almond, Commanding General, 92 Division: "Evacuate damaged tanks north of the canal. Destroy those which cannot be evacuated by 110400 Feb. Undamaged tanks now north of the canal will remain attached 1st Battalion, 370th and will cover withdrawal of that unit. Withdrawal to be completed by 110500 Feb. Coordinate this action with CO 1st Battalion 370th Infantry." By the morning of the 11th, the Task Force had withdrawn to a point a mile south of the canal, after crews had burned the three stalled light tanks and destroyed the crippled mediums with point-blank gun fire from the remaining operational tanks. The 70 hour stand north of the Cinquale Canal cost the 760th

Tank Battalion 16 medium tanks, the 758th Light Tank Battalion four light tanks and forward observers from the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion lost two medium tanks. The 3d Battalion, 366th Infantry, lost 329 men killed, wounded or missing.

On 11 February defensive operations further inland also ceased. A counter-attack against the 3d Battalion, 370th Infantry, disorganized that unit and recaptured most of the ground that had been taken. The 2d Battalion stopped the German attack and together with the 371st Infantry, consolidated the position and held approximately the same ground as that occupied before the offensive was undertaken. Within the next few days regrouping of supporting units took place as several artillery units and the 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion were shifted to the eastern part of the IV Corps sector, where further operations were soon to be started. The 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry, took over the extreme coastal sector and the 3d Battalion, 366th Infantry, withdrew to Viareggio for reorganization.

B. MOUNT BELVEDERE - MOUNT TORRACIA - CASTELNUOVO OPERATIONS.

While the 92d Division was attacking in the Serchie Valley and on the coast, Task Force 45 (10th Mountain Division) and the 1st Infantry Division, BEF, were sending out patrols and otherwise worrying and confusing the enemy as much as possible. It was also an opportune time to effect frequent unit reliefs, giving all a chance to become accustomed to the sound of battle and the feel of the front line; particularly so for the mountaineers. A few times the Brazilian headquarters in Bagni della Porretta was subjected to the fire of enemy 170's. One such barrage destroyed four vehicles and wounded four men. The mountain

troops were becoming skilled in patrolling as exemplified on 5 February when a rifle platoon from the 85th Mountain Infantry reinforced with a light machine gun section and a 60-mm mortar squad, conducted a raid against enemy-held Mount Spigolino. The force reached the top of the mountain and captured an enemy machine gun position and two prisoners after killing four of the enemy. On 9 February a raiding patrol from "B" Company, 85th Infantry, consisting of two officers and eighty-one men, was sent to raid enemy positions at Alpe Tre Potenze. The results were one enemy killed and eleven captured, and two machine guns seized along with 15,000 rounds of ammunition. By actions like these, the patrols of the new division were fast becoming experienced, and the enemy's ranks were slowly being depleted.

The third limited objective attack planned for February as a preliminary move to improve positions before beginning the more extensive spring offensive was aimed at securing the high ground dominating a ten-mile section of Highway 64. The objectives of the attack outlined in Fifth Army Operations Instructions No. 4, dated 16 February, were a series of mountain peaks and ridges roughly five miles west of the road and extending from a point opposite Porretta north to a point south and west of Vergato, a distance of approximately eight miles. In German hands these peaks at a general elevation of 3500 feet, afforded complete observation over most of the highway in this area and our positions east of the Reno River. If occupied by our forces, the Germans would not only be denied the use of these valuable observation points, but we would be provided with good positions from

which to command the future offensive. The ground north of the objectives, although still very rugged, gradually sloped toward the Po Valley.

The planned operations were much more ambitious than those recently staged in the Serchio Valley and on the Ligurian coastal plain. The 1st Infantry Division, BEF, and the fresher 10th Mountain Division, for whom it was to be the first major engagement, were to be employed in the attack. The first phase of the attack involved seizure of the long disputed Mount Belvedere, and its two companion peaks, Mount Della Torraccia and Mount Castello. The second phase which was to begin after ground captured in the first phase was completely consolidated, required capture of additional ridges northeast of Mount Torraccia and Mount Castello, including Grande d'Aiano, Mount della Croce, Mount Castellana and territory surrounding the town of Castelnuovo. Occupation of these objectives would push our lines as far as 7 miles west of Highway 64 and place the ground dominating the highway leading to the bastion of Vergato in our hands, and thereby put us in position to neutralize this strongpoint.

The most critical terrain feature included in Phase I of the projected attack was Mount Belvedere, its twin crest called Mount Gorgolesco and the high ground along the saddle which connected it with Mount della Torraccia. This saddle was formed by a ridge 3 miles long, only slightly lower than the 3736 foot Mount Belvedere and the 3549 foot summit of Mount della Torraccia. These peaks and the ridge dominated not only the ground to the southeast, but also

the basin of the Panaro River, which extended to the northwest. One mile south of Mount della Torroccia lay Mount Castello, the third critical height in the immediate area. Since little major action had occurred in the Mount Belvedere region since November, it was expected that an intricate system of mine fields would have been developed by the enemy. An increased number of pill boxes, dugouts and barbed wire, neatly camouflaged by the snow, were found in aerial photos and confirmed the fact that the enemy had been busy improving his positions.

West of our positions below Mount Belvedere and extending about 4 miles from northeast to southwest, lay the even more rugged Serrasiccia - Cappel Buso Ridge. From Mount Serrasiccia which rose to the height of 4526 feet, the ridge sloped slightly toward both extremities; the outstanding feature of it being an almost sheer 1500 foot rock cliff on the northwestern side. Pizzo di Campiano on the northern end was nearly 100 feet higher than Mount Belvedere and would provide excellent observation on the reverse slopes of the Belvedere-Torroccia ridge. It was therefore considered essential that this ridge be taken and the left flank thus secured before the main assault was launched. Surprise would be extremely difficult to obtain and in this respect, good camouflage and the careful movement of troops under cover of nightfall became much more important.

Over the entire mountain system, concealment was possible only in scattered clumps of stunted scrub growth. The routes of communication were to prove most difficult in that they would have to follow steep trails where deep snows had to be taken into account. The few

roads in this sector were narrow, many of them not suitable for two-way traffic. The burden of supply would fall on the pack mule, the full-tracked Weasel and the jeep. By very careful and slow driving, armored vehicles could be pushed forward in limited numbers; in previous operations in the vicinity, tanks had chugged up as far as the village of Querciola to the ridge a little more than a mile southwest of the Mount Belvedere summit.

Photo Intelligence indicated that the Germans also realized the tactical importance of this ridge and had massed a large number of artillery pieces in the Campiano-Belvedere-Castello area; in all, 97 guns were spotted. This enemy artillery was rather evenly disposed across the front from the Corps east boundary to Mount Belvedere with a slight tendency to mass in the vicinity of Mount Terminale; from Mount Belvedere west, very little artillery was in evidence. The sector was defended by the German 232d Grenadier Division, which was thinly spread along an 18-mile front with the 1045th Grenadier Regiment holding most of the Belvedere-Torroccia ridge. The 1043d Grenadier Regiment was in the Mount Castello area and the 1044th Regiment was scattered along the Serrasiccia-Cappel Buso Ridge and the mountains to the southwest of it. In reserve were the 232d Fusilier Battalion and elements of the 4th Independent Mountain Battalion.

1. IV Corps Artillery Coordinates Fire Support.

From 12 February to 19 February, IV Corps Artillery was engaged in preparation for the attack of the 10th Mountain Division and 1st Infantry Division, BEF. Corps Artillery units employed in the 92d Division effort were moved to the Bagni della Porretta area.

Additional medium artillery was allotted to IV Corps by Fifth Army and also moved to the same area. An advance echelon of the IV Corps Artillery staff moved to the new attack area on 15 February and prepared detailed plans for the attack in collaboration with the artillery staffs of the two divisions. The contemplated maneuvers scheduled for the two units required a thorough integration of the first plans of the artillery of both division and the Corps. Many conferences and much detailed and coordinated planning were necessary in order to perfect the plan and to build the supporting pieces into the smashing machine it later proved to be in the attack. "No fire" lines in each zone of action had to be carefully fixed and rigidly adhered to. A maximum range-line had to be prescribed for the 1st Infantry Division, BEF, and each division artillery had to be ready to support the other in certain critical areas. The Corps artillery units marshalled together for this attack consisted of 424th Field Artillery Group which was assigned the mission of general support of the Corps and of reinforcing the fires of the 10th Mountain Division Artillery. This group was composed of the 633rd Field Artillery Battalion, which had 155-mm guns and 8-inch Howitzers; the 185th Field Artillery Battalion of 155-mm Howitzers. The 248th Field Artillery Battalion, (155-mm Howitzers), not part of the group, was placed in general support, reinforcing fires of the 1st Infantry Division, BEF. The final Corps Artillery plan called for no artillery preparation prior to the attack, as the initial success of the attack was dependent upon the element of surprise. The counter-battery phase of this plan was polished to perfection. Nine groups of enemy artillery

were plotted on the maps, each group containing three to five known enemy batteries. With firing data pre-arranged, Corps artillery was prepared to concentrate its fire on any one group that became active. In addition, an overall counter-battery program covering all known enemy batteries, was prepared for immediate firing if enemy artillery became generally active. Each enemy battery was to be barraged with at least four battery volleys initially, followed by the smashing fire of 12 platoon volleys per hour for sustained neutralization. As for harassing fires, critical points on the road nets and possible assembly areas were determined after a thorough map study and perusal of the intelligence summation, and a harassing program prepared for use in the event the air observation planes could not operate. The artillery of each division prepared a defensive fire plan to protect assigned objectives. Defensive and reinforcing fires were determined by map study and aerial reconnaissance. An effective counter-mortar fire program was also planned since the enemy had employed mortar fire effectively against our infantry in the past in this sector. Counter-mortar plans were prepared by the divisions against 67 known enemy mortar positions located in eleven groups. Corps artillery was prepared to fire on any one of these groups on call from the division artillery. The flexibility of this artillery plan was credited with a great deal of the eventual success of the offensive. Every detail was covered and if a contingency arose to negate the effects of one of the plans, an alternate one was made in its stead.

2. The Attack

By 1 February the entire 10th Mountain Division was concentrated

in the Task Force 45 sector, extending east from Bagni di Lucca through Cutigliano Valley to the southern slopes of Mount Belvedere. On 15 February the newly organized 473d Infantry was attached to IV Corps and relieved elements of the 10th Mountain Division in the Bagni di Lucca and Cutigliano areas. Two days later the Division assumed command of only the eastern portion of the Task Force sector and the 473d Infantry took charge of the western half. On 17 February the 10th Mountain Division was detached from Task Force 45 and assumed command of the new sector in its own name. The boundary between the 10th Mountain Division and the Brazilians remained unchanged - the former Task Force 45 - BEF boundary. The new boundary between the 10th Mountain Division and the skeletonized Task Force 45 was the line S. Felice - Pontepetri-Praccia- M. Spigolino-Fanano. By the end of the day the 10th Mountain Division was assembled in its new sector with the bulk of the units in the Lizzano area of the Setta River Valley southwest of Porretta. That night patrol activity was somewhat curtailed as a result of the poor weather. Rain and fog made observation practically impossible during the early part of the evening but the temperature at this time was not below freezing. All supporting units shuffled up quietly into pre-arranged positions. By nightfall of 18 February the 10th Mountain Division was ready for its first major engagement with the enemy. There was a tenseness of expectation throughout the entire Division.

Corps artillery commenced the delivery of normal harassing fires for the night attack so as not to indicate anything unusual to the enemy. At 1930 the preliminary attack to secure the flanking

Serrasiccia-Campiano ridge was launched. The 1st Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry had been selected to seize the key terrain feature. Expert rock climbers of the battalion clambered up the rocks for 1500 feet and laid out ropes after them for the use of other personnel not so well trained. This experienced mountain battalion, negotiating the steep rock wall in the darkness, caught the 2d Battalion, 1044th Grenadier Regiment by surprise just as it was in the initial stages of relief by elements of the 232d Fusilier Battalion. The enemy, thus hit while he was off balance, gave up the strategic heights after making comparatively little resistance, and by 0600 the ridge line was firmly secured. Not until 0655, 19 February, did the enemy artillery become active. Corps artillery readily responded with its counter-battery program which proved very effective, for the infantry received no artillery shelling for the next two hours and only slight shelling until late in the afternoon.

In detail, this is how the Mountain Battalion attacked. It aimed at the ridge frontally with Company "A" moving against Mount Mancinello, Company "B" against Mount Cappel Buso and Company "C" against Mount Serrasiccia. Company "F", attached to the 1st Battalion, advanced against positions south of Mount Mancinello to provide left flank protection, and one platoon of Company "A" operated independently on the right flank to take the Pizzo di Campiano spur. The attack over this seemingly impassable terrain, so steep that the troops found it necessary to use ropes in order to haul themselves up, caught the enemy completely unaware. Company "A" reached the ridge at Mount Mancinello at 0045, closely supported by Company "F". At 0300,

19 February, Company "B" reached the lower slopes of its objective where the first opposition was met in the form of small arms fire. After a one-hour skirmish, the objective was seized and the garrison was mostly killed or captured. At 0505, Company "C" attacked its objective, which it secured after a brisk fire fight. The detached platoon of Company "A" reached the summit of Pizzo di Campiano after a hard nine-hour climb and successfully occupied the ridge in that area. Before the light of dawn broke over the embattled area, the 1st Battalion of the 86th Mountain Infantry had secured all of its objectives.

The first enemy counter-attacks were directed against the detached platoon of Company "A"; three such assaults varying in strength from platoon to company were repulsed during the day. As darkness came, the Germans renewed their attacks and continued to hammer at this thin line of defense all night of 19-20 February. Prior to losing communications with the Battalion, the platoon called for artillery fire which was immediately forth-coming in the nature of close-in fires which blasted the Germans off the slopes. By morning of the 20th, the platoon had killed twenty-six Germans, captured seven, but never knew how many were wounded. Isolated and low in ammunition, the platoons held on until reinforcements finally arrived on the 21st. Between the time it arrived on the ridge and its relief at 0800, 21 February, the platoon successfully beat off seven enemy attempts to recover the position.

Counter-attacks were received at other points along the ridge, but these were also successfully repelled. Two companies of the German

4th Independent Mountain Battalion were virtually wiped out in these battles. The supply and evacuation problem to the battalion was overcome by the Division Engineers who constructed a tramway which reached two-thirds of the way up the cliff; from there on the supplies were hauled up by ropes or packed up by hand. Seven .50 caliber machine-guns and two 75-mm pack Howitzers were emplaced on the newly seized ridge to support the main attack on Mount Belvedere. The 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry, held and improved its positions until early morning of 22 February, when it was relieved by the 10th Mountain Anti-Tank Battalion and the 10th Mountain Reconnaissance Troop.

With the left flank protected by the capture of the ridge, the Division secretly moved up its other units into attack positions. Reinforcing the fire power of the Division were the 185th Field Artillery Battalion; Company "A", 1125th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; Company "A", 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and 4.2-inch mortars of the 84th Chemical Battalion. The 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 751st Tank Battalion provided the armored strength and extensive arrangements were completed for air support by "Rover Joe" and the XXII Tactical Air Command. The Division plan of attack called for the 87th Mountain Infantry to move northeast up the western slope of Mount Belvedere while on its right the 85th Mountain Infantry was committed to a frontal attack directly against the Belvedere and Gorgolesco summits. The 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, was established on the right flank of the Division and had the mission of protecting this flank by seizing the village of Mazzancana. When the 10th Mountain Division had reached Hill 1053, in the saddle

approximately half-way between Gorgolesco and Mount della Torraccia, the Brazilian Expeditionary Force was to attack Mount Castello. It was essential that the launching of this phase of the attack be timed correctly.

Since the enemy on Mount Belvedere had complete observation over our position in the Silla Valley, assault troops marched eight miles during the night of 18-19 February into forward assembly areas at the base of the Belvedere-Gorgolesco ridge. That attack jumped off at 2300, 19 February without any artillery preparation, in the hope of securing initial tactical surprise by the night assault. On the left, the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 87th Mountain Infantry crossed the line of departure along the road net near Querciola. Near the villages of Polla and Rocca Corneta, while the 1st Battalion pressed northeast up the slope toward Mount Belvedere and north to the village of Valpiana, leading troops of Company "B" advanced approximately 800 yards before reaching the first enemy outpost where sporadic resistance was offered by groups of entrenched Germans dug in along a line of bunkers, machine-gun positions and fortified houses which extended from the summit of Mount Belvedere west to Rocca Corneta.

Extensive anti-personnel and anti-tank mine fields that caused some casualties among the Partisans who acted as guides, were encountered on the western slope near Corona. An hour and a half after by-passing Corona at 0300, the 1st Battalion reached Mount Belvedere against moderate resistance and immediately began clearing a spur of the main ridge running north toward Valpiana. The 2d Battalion meanwhile hopped up around Corona after pushing through mine fields which

fortunately had been uncovered by the melting snow, and swung a half mile west toward Polla. This strong-point, taken at 1035, knocked another hole in the enemy's main line and rendered Rocca Corneta, between Polla and elements of the Division on Pizzo di Campiano untenable. The 3d Battalion moved into the center of the 87th Mountain Infantry zone north of Corona during the morning and throughout the day positions on the regimental front were improved and organized. Two companies of the 1st Battalion, 1044th Grenadier Regiment, were badly cut up in the course of our initial advance and during an abortive counter-attack which they launched at 0400.

Further to the east similar successes were achieved when the 85th Mountain Infantry sent its 3d Battalion against Mount Belvedere and the 1st Battalion against Mount Gorgolesco. At 0100, 20 February, the 3d Battalion first encountered resistance 300 yards below the summit. Three hours later leading elements had fought their way to the very top and at 0615 the entire Battalion was on the ridge where it was caught in an extremely heavy mortar and artillery fire barrage. On Mount Gorgolesco the 1st Battalion experienced almost identical enemy reaction, but by 0610 cleared the summit and advanced along the ridge toward Mount della Torraccia, meeting increased small-arms and mortar fire. However, enemy artillery was partially neutralized by the previously planned counter-battery fire.

The 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, experiencing little opposition to its supporting attack on the right of the 85th Mountain Infantry, occupied the village of Mazzancana and established defensive positions about half-way up the southeastern slope of the saddle on the

morning of the 20th. Company strength counter-attacks were received east of Mount Gorgolesco at 1115 and several other smaller thrusts were repulsed later in the day. These were ineffective in stopping our advance, and about half the saddle had been cleared by 1800 when the 2d Battalion, 85th Infantry, passed through the 1st Battalion to continue the attack, knocking the enemy off Capella di Ronchidos in spite of stubborn resistance. During the night it experienced five German counter-attacks, causing heavy casualties on both sides.

Activity of friendly aircraft which began operating at first light played a big part in reducing the enemy shelling and provided close support for all parts of the Division front during the day by bombing, strafing and firing rockets at gun positions and other enemy installations. "Rover Joe" directed 53 missions in support of the advance of the 85th Mountain Infantry alone. These aerial attacks against enemy mortars and artillery positions immediately behind the German lines were most effective.

The 87th Infantry beat off local counter-attacks along most of its front during 21 February, inflicting severe casualties on the attackers while artillery fire and aerial bombardment broke up a powerful concentration of troops north of Valpiana before an attack could be launched against us. At 0700, Company "C" was struck by one of these enemy assaults staged by about eighty Germans. It was successfully beaten off without incurring one friendly casualty, and when the morning mists cleared, 25 enemy dead were found in the area. The 87th Mountain Infantry was now ranged along the reverse slopes of Mount Belvedere through Polla to a point at Valpiana and on to the

peak at Belvedere. On these positions German mortar fire was extremely accurate during the day and alone accounted for 8 casualties. Artillery support was limited because of the poor communications which resulted from the German mortar fire that tore out the lines.

A battalion-strength counter-attack against the 85th Mountain Infantry was launched by elements of the 741st Light Regiment, the first unit of the 114th Jaeger (Light) Division to be committed against us in this sector. This counter-attack, reinforced by elements of the 1st Battalion, 1043d Grenadier Regiment, temporarily halted our forward progress, although it failed to recapture any of the ground the 85th Mountain Infantry had already taken. The 2d Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, inched ahead again late in the afternoon and at darkness reached points just below the summit of Mount della Toraccia. Prisoners from the 741st Jaeger Regiment stated that they had been marching from the Lake Comaccio area on the Adriatic for 7 days when some of them were suddenly entrucked and rushed to oppose this IV Corps attack. Later, General Crittenberger, questioning one of the Nazi prisoners from another unit of the Division asked: "And how did you get here?" "Zu fuss" (on foot). "All the way? You did not ride at all?" "Nien, zu fuss." (No, on foot). This indicated that the 114th Jaeger Division had been enroute to accomplish a normal relief of the 232d Infantry Division, and when our attack developed, elements were hurriedly committed in an attempt to stop our rolling advance.

The 1st Brazilian Division in its attack against Mount Castello followed tactics similar to those used by the 10th Mountain Division. The 1st Brazilian Infantry attacked from the west and south while the 11th Brazilian Infantry pushed north across the lower eastern slopes

with the bulk of its weight directed east of the mountain. Coordinating their attack very closely with the advance of the Mountaineers, the 1st and 3d Battalions, 1st Brazilian Infantry, jumped off from positions north and east of Mazzancana at 0530, 21 February, and within two hours took the hills below the main mountain. The Germans, whose right flank was threatened by our advance along the Belvedere-Torraccia saddle, withdrew from some of their positions and were blasted out of others by a 15-minute preparatory artillery barrage before the Brazilians began their main assault on Mount Castello at noon. The two battalions converged on the objective, the 1st Battalion attacking to the northeast and the 3d Battalion to the north. Leading elements of the 1st Battalion reached the summit at 1745, and an hour later the 3d Battalion came up the southern slopes; by 2040 scattered pockets of resistance on the mountain had been mopped up. The 11th Brazilian Infantry advanced in its zone to capture the village of Abetaia.

On the 22d, positions throughout the Mountain Division were virtually unchanged. While the 87th Infantry held to the positions reached on the 21st, the 85th, pumelled by artillery and mortar concentration, was unable to reach the summit of Mount della Torraccia. The Brazilians made slight gains north of Mount Castello, but were unable to make any progress of consequence. During all this time the 6th Brazilian Infantry, holding the right flank of the 1st Brazilian Division, had taken no part in the attack.

Efforts were begun early in the attack to move tank and tank destroyers into positions on the ridge when taken, principally as a defensive measure, since it was expected that very heavy counter-attacks

would be received. Tanks advanced as far as Querciola on 20 February, but several were disabled by mines and others threw their tracks in attempting to negotiate this rugged terrain on the way to Corona and Valpiana. One tank finally reached Valpiana on the morning of 21 February, and the next day additional tanks and tank destroyers reached the ridge northeast of Mount Belvedere after engineers had cleared the roads of deeply laid mines.

On the morning of the 23d, Mount della Casellina, one mile east of Mount Castello, was occupied by the 1st Brazilian Infantry and the village of Bella Vista fell late in the afternoon. The 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, relieved the 2d Battalion, 85th Infantry, during the night of 23-24 February, and after a heavy artillery preparation, attacked and by 0730 seized the summit of bitterly-contested Mount della Torraccia. It did not stop there, but advanced slightly beyond the crest, where extensive trench systems were overrun. The Brazilians continued their advance on the 24th and by midnight La Serra, slightly more than one mile due east of Mount della Torraccia, was outflanked and captured in the face of heavy machine-gun fire. With all objectives in our hands, Phase One of the two-division attack had been completed.

On 25 February, against the northwestern slopes of Mount della Torraccia, the enemy launched the strongest counter-attack that he had made during this operation. The Mittenwald Mountain Training Battalion, which had been wandering elusively behind the enemy lines facing IV Corps for several months, and the 114th Reconnaissance Battalion, were the troops used in this attack. Unusually heavy

artillery fire from three light field Howitzers battalions preceded this counter-attack, but it was repulsed just as those preceding it had been, our troops withstanding the initial intense artillery and then when the enemy came close, opening up with everything. Members of the 741st Light Regiment and the 114th Reconnaissance Battalion (114th Light Division) continued to offer resistance on the northeastern slopes of Mount della Torraccia for the next few days, but the counter-attack on the 26th marked the last enemy effort to dispute the possession of the ridge.

During the operation thus far the 10th Mountain Division had suffered a total of 350 casualties, of which 195 were killed, 10 missing and the remainder wounded. The enemy had suffered a much greater number of casualties and almost 400 of his troops had been captured. Achieving at least tactical surprise, the Mountaineers, in their first major engagement, had concluded the operation in less time than had been anticipated. The 1st Infantry Division, BIF, suffered 246 casualties, of which 32 were killed, 205 wounded and 9 missing. Most of these were suffered in the attack on Mount Castello; its success endowed the Brazilians with pride for the mountain had dominated their positions for many months and their previous attempts to capture it had been fruitless and costly.

The resistance which the Germans had offered was less than expected, although the counter-attacks were launched in strength. During the Belvedere-Torraccia action, the artillery supported the advancing troops by continually pounding the enemy with time-fuse, Time on Target,

and variable-time firing. In respect to VT, the division artillery for the first time employed this American innovation. The air burst of these plastic-nosed shells, the magnetic ignition mechanism of which was activated by a certain proximity to any mass of material, knocked the enemy out of his emplacements. With this type of fire, there was no safety in uncovered fox holes. In this extremely steep terrain where the angle of slope in respect to the angle of flight became less acute, the effect of the burst, forty-five feet in the air, shattered the inside of dugouts which ranged along the contours. Night firing of VT barrages caught the Germans whenever they tried to move materials and men above the ground. The constant combination of three types of fire littered the slopes with unnumbered enemy casualties.

The reliefs effected between the 10th Mountain Division and the 1st Brazilian Division resulted in splitting the Brazilian zone of operations after the first phase of the attack was concluded on 25 February. All objectives included in this phase had been captured and consolidated; the two divisions adjusted positions in preparation for the second phase. On 28 February, after the 87th Mountain Infantry and the 1st Brazilian Infantry had completed mutual reliefs, the BEF took command of the western part of the 10th Mountain Division zone, the 10th Mountain Anti-tank Battalion and the 10th Mountain Reconnaissance Troop on the Serrasiccia-Campiano ridge were placed under operational control of the Brazilians. These changes left the 10th Mountain Division holding a sector running northeast with its left boundary along the eastern slopes of Mount Gorgolesco and the right

boundary one-half mile east of Mount Castello. From this point eastward the BEF again held territory extending to the Reno River, where its sector adjoined that of the 1st Armored Division of II Corps.

Meanwhile on the left flank, of the IV Corps some adjustments took place. At 0600, 24 February, the Commanding General, 92d Infantry Division, assumed command of the Task Force 45 Sector, thus extending the 92d Infantry Division to the east of the old Task Force - 10th Mountain Division boundary. At the same time the 473d Infantry Regiment was detached from Task Force 45 and attached to the 92d Infantry Division. Upon relief by the 365th Infantry, the 473d shifted westward to assume front line positions on the west of the Serchio River.

3. The Second Phase of the Attack.

The second phase of the Corps attack which was designed to push our positions forward as far as a general east-west line slightly south of Vergato, was originally planned to begin on 1 March, but poor weather forced two postponements. The date was at last established for 0800, 3 March. On the left of the zone of attack between our forward positions and the final phase line of the operation, laid more than four miles of high ridges and peaks, through which the main burden of the attack rested on the shoulders of the 10th Mountain Division. The Brazilians were given the task of continuing ahead in a northeasterly direction parallel to Highway 64 with the Castelnuovo ridge as the principal objective. General Hays planned to commit two regiments abreast, the 86th Mountain Infantry on the left or west flank, directed chiefly against Mount Terminale, Mount della Vedetta and Mount Grande d'Aiano, and the 87th Mountain

Infantry on the right against Mount della Croce, Mount della Castellana, and ultimately against Castel d'Aiano and Mount della Spe. Tanks of the 751st Tank Battalion and self-propelled 3-inch guns of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion were assigned the mission of providing armored support.

At 0800 on 3 March, preceded by an intense, twenty-minute artillery preparation, the 86th Mountain Infantry crossed the line of departure from positions just north of Mount Torraccia, advancing with two battalions abreast, the 1st Battalion across the western slopes of Mount Terminale and the 2d Battalion across the eastern side of the mountain. The 1st Battalion advanced rapidly through enemy artillery, mortar and small-arms fire, and successfully passed through German mine fields. After the entire western section of the mountain had been cleared at 1100, the 3d Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, was moved forward from division reserve to take over these positions and provide protection for the left flank. The relieved battalion was assembled ready to relieve in turn, another of the attack formations.

The 2d Battalion rapidly overran the eastern portion of Mount Terminale, clearing it by 0840, but ran into stiff resistance an hour later in the village of Iola, just north of the mountain. Supported by the direct fire of tank destroyers, the battalion battled through the streets and cleared houses which had been turned into strong-points by the Germans; the village was finally cleared about noon. Among the prisoners taken at Iola were the commanding officers and most of the staff of the 2d Battalion, 721st Light Regiment. The action of the 86th Mountain Infantry in the first five hours of the

attack virtually destroyed this enemy battalion and inflicted heavy losses on other elements of the 721st Light Regiment. Following the fall of Iola, the 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry passed through the 2d Battalion and continued on ahead to take Campo del Sole at 1745. This advance placed the forward troops about two miles north of the line of departure and there the regiment dug in for the night.

Similar success was achieved in the zone of the 87th Mountain Infantry which had attacked at the same time. With only the 3d Battalion committed, the Regiment advanced in columns of battalions against varying resistance and by noon, Mount della Vedetta, one mile southeast of Campo del Sole, was cleared and a road block was established at Pietra Colora. Here, as elsewhere across the Division front, the enemy fell back from ridge line to ridge line, never counter-attacking as had been expected, and gave up large numbers of prisoners from units of both the 114th Light Division and the 232d Grenadier Division. It developed that again our attack had caught the enemy in the midst of a relief, this time while the 721st Light Regiment was relieving the elements of the 1043d Grenadier Regiment. Extensive air support by fighter-bombers directed by "Rover Joe" again pinned down German units behind the immediate front, thus preventing shifting of enemy strength. The planes also contributed greatly to the effective counter-battery program against enemy artillery and mortars.

Both attacking regiments resumed their advance at 0800, 4 March, following artillery barrages. In the zone of the 86th Mountain Infantry the 1st Battalion moved toward the town of Sassomolare,

cleared it by noon, and continued pushing north against Mount Grande d'Aiano, the last regimental objective. The final assault against this height was begun at 1315, and in little more than two hours organized opposition had been overcome. Immediate organization for defense was undertaken on Mount Grande, since no further advances for the present were planned in this sector. The 3d Battalion, which had passed through the 2d Battalion the day before, moved forward on the right of the 1st Battalion, while the 3d Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, occupied additional defensive positions along the extended flank on the west.

Progress was not quite so rapid in the 87th Mountain Infantry zone. The 1st Battalion attacked Mount Acidola, due north of Pietra Colora, while the 2d Battalion branched off to the northwest and then swung in ahead of the 1st Battalion against Madonna di Brasa, northeast of Sassomolare. Mount Acidola fell by midday and shortly after 1600 Madonna di Brasa was occupied. At 1000 the 3d Battalion was committed for the first time, striking east from Pietra Colora against Mount della Croce. This brilliant flanking attack speedily wrested the important feature from the Germans, who were cleared from it soon after 1500; the mountain troops were subsequently relieved by the 3d Battalion, 6th Brazilian Infantry.

The capture of Mount Grande on 4 March paved the way for the completion of the Phase II operations the following day in the territory between this mountain and Highway 64. While the 86th Mountain Infantry continued to mop up in the northwestern portion of the Division zone, the 87th Mountain Infantry pushed through in the

center, and elements of the 85th Mountain Infantry were committed to clear out the mountains on the right. Both the 1st and 2d Battalions, 87th Mountain Infantry, were concentrated in a narrow zone less than one mile wide and directed their attack against the town of Castel d'Aiano. The 2d Battalion maneuvered to the left to take the high ground and block the roads running northwest from Castel d'Aiano, while the 1st Battalion smashed into the town. By the late afternoon of 5 March the 2d Battalion fought its way into the covering positions and by 1940 the 1st Battalion, spearheaded by tanks, moved into Castel d'Aiano itself. In this area elements of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, which had been rushed up from reserve to block our advance, were encountered but their fierce fighting did not prevent our capture of the town.

Previous advances had made it possible to commit the fresh 85th Mountain Infantry on the right of the 87th Mountain Infantry. At 0800, 5 March, the 1st Battalion attacked north against Mount della Spe, which lies slightly northeast of Castel d'Aiano, and the 2d Battalion struck northeast in a flanking attack against the Mount della Castellana hill mass. Shortly before noon the 1st Battalion reached a wide draw below the southern slopes of its objective, crossed it under heavy enemy fire that inflicted severe casualties, and started up the mountainside. Despite stiff enemy resistance the battalion reached the top of Mount della Spe at 1800. As the 2d Battalion attacked up the southside of the Mount della Castellana ridge, it found the approaches covered by fire so heavy that the leading companies were forced to fall back. Circling around to the west,

while our artillery covered the objective with the concentrated fire of all available weapons, it then launched a new attack up the western slopes. By 1500, after overrunning extensive trench systems, the leading elements reached the summit. The by-passed enemy on the southern slopes were speedily rounded up while Company "E", moving northwest along the ridge line, captured the northern peak - Mount Spicchione - before dark.

The long-expected counter-attacks finally materialized during the night of 5-6 March, directed against our most forward positions on Mount della Spe. Elements of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment launched one attack before midnight, followed with others at 0030, 0130 and 0440, but failed to drive the 1st Battalion, 85th Infantry, off the peak, although one German group penetrated to such close range that bayonets came into play. After the fourth attempt failed, the enemy ceased this effort to re-take the position and relied on heavy artillery fire to harass the American positions. The three-day effort of the 10th Mountain Division resulted in the capture of approximately 1200 prisoners and the occupation of more than 35 square miles of enemy territory.

The Brazilian effort on the extreme right of IV Corps was closely coordinated with the advance of the 10th Mountain Division, although the attack initially was delivered in widely scattered areas. On 3 March the 2d Battalion, 11th Brazilian Infantry, pushed forward on the right flank of the 87th Mountain Infantry. The same day the 3d Battalion, 6th Brazilian Infantry, captured the area around Rocca Pitigliana, mopped up several small hamlets between there and

Pietra Colora to the west, and on 4 March took over all 10th Mountain Division positions east of Pietra Colora.

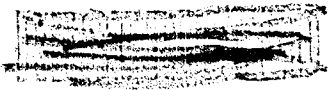
In conjunction with the attack of the 85th Mountain Infantry the following day the 1st and 2d Battalions, 6th Brazilian Infantry, moved northeast to outflank the town of Castelnuovo from the west, finally penetrating into the village at 1910, after an intense shelling of German positions in the vicinity. On the right of the 6th Brazilian Infantry and just west of Highway 64, the 11th Brazilian Infantry advanced east of Castelnuovo and pushed forward nearly one mile beyond two positions which overlooked Vergato.

In the next few days after 5 March further adjustments of troop positions took place to complete the operation. The 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was detached from the 1st Armored Division on 6 March, was attached to IV Corps and began relief of the 11th Brazilian Infantry. The Squadron first relieved this unit then moved elements ahead of the 6th Brazilian Infantry, pinching out that organization and established contact with the 10th Mountain Division. On 9 March the 10th Mountain Anti-tank Battalion and the 10th Mountain Reconnaissance Troop occupied Mount Valbura and another Mount Belvedere, just west of the Reconnaissance Squadron positions. The occupation of these positions completed the establishment of a solid American front, and all elements of the BEF were moved to what had been the Brazilian west subsector, thereby concentrating the entire 1st Brazilian Division on the left of the 10th Mountain Division.

The successes achieved by the 10th Mountain Division and the Brazilians pushed the right flank of IV Corps forward almost abreast

of that of II Corps which considerably widened the Fifth Army salient into the mountain wall. This additional gash into his defense caused such anxiety to the enemy that he brought one of his last remaining units, the 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, out of tactical reserve. Our troops had gained all the ground included in the list of limited objectives and could have pierced the enemy line farther under the momentum created, but General Truscott was forced to pull back on the reins and stop the advance of the IV Corps. The reason was that since at least another month must pass before the main attack could begin, further advances could over-extend the exposed flank of IV Corps and would only serve to center additional enemy attention on this sector, possibly causing the Germans to increase the amount of prepared defense west of Highway 64. Our positions were consolidated along a series of peaks and ridges which provided an excellent line of departure for the spring offensive.

IV Corps stood on the reverse slopes of the Apennine range which gradually leveled off into flatter Po Valley to the north. Our limited objectives had all been taken and there now remained a period of shifting of troops for rest and reorganization in order to be ready for the all-out blow in the spring.



"PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XIX

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPRING OFFENSIVE

The once hard-packed snows on the mountain roads and trails turned into slush during the afternoons of late February and early March when the sun's rays were at their strongest, but on toward dusk the melted waters and slush would begin to freeze and by dark the Apennines were gripped again by the icy cold air that had reigned in the mountain heights for the last few months. Occasionally during the last part of February a night would pass with the temperature unable to reach low enough to transform the slush and water back to its freezing state of the night before. As the month of March swung in, the mountain streams grew twice their size in the daytime and the snow line on the mountains crept toward the sky. On the lower slopes the patches of ground broke forth through the snow and from a Cub plane the artillery observer looked down on a landscape that resembled a crazily patterned quilt of brown and white. By the Ides of March old man Winter had slowly lost his grip in the mountains, particularly on the lower slopes, but on the highest peaks, he was still King.

Farther to the south, out of the mountains, in the flat Arno Plain, the arrival of warm breezes of spring was more apparent. The Italians who in most cases had withstood the cold of winter with a scarcity of heat in their homes, were glad to venture out and absorb the warm rays of the sun. In towns such as Pistoia, Montecatini and Lucca, the town squares (Piazzas) were crowded with chattering groups that gathered to talk of the prospects of the war this spring and to express the hope that the hated Tedeschi would soon be driven from

their land. Children, just as they did all over the world, ran about the streets playing games, and buxom girls in short dresses and high heels walked down the streets, casting furtive, smiling glances at passing G.I.'s. Yes - spring was in the air.

In the small mountain town of Castelluccio about eight miles due west of Bagni della Forretta, the warm breaths of spring had melted the snow from the slated roof tops and from the steep, cobbled streets. The IV Corps Command Post was situated in a rough-hewn stone building which had been a children's tubercular hospital but prior to the arrival of the American troops had served as an enemy hospital. Due to the lack of billeting space, the Headquarters Commandant was forced to move some of the Corps Headquarters personnel into the homes of the town's people. This they did not resent, but rather hoped for, because it meant cigarettes, a can or two of "C" rations or perhaps some candy for the children. The Battle Command Post, with key officers from the G-2 and G-3 sections, had been established in this building when it was still the Command Post of the 751st Tank Battalion. The remainder of the Headquarters had arrived on 20 February after leaving the fair city of Lucca, the day before.

The Headquarters was so close to the front that during the month of February when the Mt. Belvedere operations were on, the shells of friend and foe could be seen bursting on the crest of Mount Belvedere and our troops could be plainly seen storming the heights. Having in our hands the vantage points from which to launch our spring offensive, General Crittenberger and his staff sat down to some extensive planning. March, in addition to being the harbinger of spring, was also the month of planning.

A. PLANNING FOR SPRING OFFENSIVE

On 12 February 1945, 15th Army Group issued its Operations Instructions No. 3. This directive stated the objectives of the offensive to be undertaken and outlined its fundamental strategy. The strategy governing the operations was essentially the same as it had been the previous fall, when a drive had been conceived for the bisection of northern Italy, followed by a debouchment from the Apennines into the Po Valley.

Operations Instructions No. 4, issued by 15th Army Group on 24 March, was the outgrowth of extensive preliminary planning on the part of the two armies and covered plans for the offensive in detail. It set 10 April as D-Day (later changed to 9 April) and prescribed that Fifth Army should make the main attack, following a preliminary attack to be made by Eighth Army which was to clear the plain east of Bologna. Wide enveloping movements on the part of both armies were to be made in an effort to cut off and destroy the bulk of the enemy forces south of the Po, the Eighth operating east of Bologna and the Fifth to the west, with their spearheads meeting somewhere on the south bank of the Po.

The three phases of the attack were described in detail. In Phase I, Eighth Army was to break through the Santerno River defense, while Fifth Army debouched from the mountains into the valley and captured or isolated Bologna. Phase II contemplated a break through by either or both armies to encircle the enemy forces south of the Po, while Phase III called for the actual crossing of the river and the capture of Verona which guarded the gateway to the Brenner.

This final blow had to be successful lest the enemy in Italy succeed in prolonging the war through to another year. All the eggs

would be in one basket, so to speak, or better put, "the wad would be shot". With such a realization staring Fifth Army in the face, there was good reason why a half dozen plans were submitted to include all likely possibilities of this final attack. At the planning conferences emphasis was placed on Highway 65 and Highway 64, either one of which could serve as a main supply route for the Army once our troops reached the valley. Furthermore, both roads led directly to Bologna. Consideration was given to other possible avenues of approach, but all were ruled out as impracticable. Highway 12, farther to the west, and the only other major Trans-Apennine road in the central zone, was ruled out. Its chief disadvantage was only one division could be successfully supported by it. Other minor roads through the mountains could not be considered due to their failure to provide facilities for two-way traffic. All planning, therefore, was directed at the two highways on which we had already advanced, the main decisions were, therefore, whether to attack down one or both and whether to concentrate west of Highway 65 or entirely west of Highway 64.

Highway 65 offered the most direct approach. Along this road our lines were already within 12 miles of Bologna, while on Highway 64 our most advanced elements were more than 20 miles from the city. In the light of Phase I of the Fifteenth Army Group Plan, which called for the capture or isolation of Bologna, the shorter distance offered by Highway 65 seemed best and the terrain seemed most favorable for an advance in this area. Although Mount Sole and Mount Adone, two rugged peaks set in ridge lines bordering the Setta Valley would have to be cleared,

The road net was the best in the Army sector and was capable of supporting at least five divisions. The greatest disadvantage was in the bristling array of defenses which the Germans had prepared and which covered the entire area to Bologna.

The Highway 64 route, located on the IV Corps right flank, provided another good approach to the objective through an area which was not as heavily fortified. It held out the possibility for a close envelopment of Bologna from the northwest and also afforded the means of supplying five divisions. This road, following the course of the Reno River and being partially defiladed from the west much of the distance, was the more protected of the two. This long ridge, which formed the defilade and extended for approximately 15 miles parallel to the highway, had already been three-fourths cleared by the IV Corps limited objective attack which had been completed in order to improve the zone for just such an offensive. The remainder of the ridge would have also been cleared of enemy had not higher headquarters called a halt to the operations in order to avoid focusing too much attention on this section of the line and forcing us to commit additional troops. At any rate, with three-fourths of the ridge now cleared of enemy, the Highway 64 route shaped up as the most likely of all suggested at the Planning Board of Fifth Army. Those opposing the plan countered with the argument that, just as on Highway 64, the strongly defended Mount Sole area would have to be seized if an advance was to be made down this road.

A third possibility was also thoroughly discussed. This was that our forces strike northwest after Vergato had been taken, move into the Valley of the Panaro River and attack down this corridor to capture Modena, thus cutting Highway 9 and enveloping Bologna from the west. Such an

operation, also feasible for five divisions from the standpoint of supply, contained several drawbacks and these were considered as extremely weighty. An attack this way would necessitate a crossing over the Panaro and would strike the Po Valley almost 20 miles west of Bologna. It was hazardous in that it would create a salient extending far to the northwest of the main body of the Army, inviting an enemy counter-attack which might nip off the forward elements. After much discussion it was decided that all future planning would be restricted to the area west of Highway 65 and immediately west of Highway 64. The limited offensive put on by IV Corps during the early part of March, when our success caused several good divisions to be rushed to the threatened front, may also have had its influence in causing this scheme of maneuver to be considered.

1. "Operations Craftsman"

By mid-March the final spring plan, "Operations Craftsman", had been almost completely shaped; there remained only a few details to be decided. Fifth Army making the main effort of the Fifteenth Army Group was to attack with both Corps abreast. The main effort of Fifth Army was initially to be astride Highway 64 until the Valley of the Setta Creek had been cleared and the road junction at Praduro, 15 miles north of Vergato had been captured, at which time the bulk of the troops would be concentrated west of Highway 65, for the final breach through the lines. A secondary effort by II Corps would be made along Highway 65, generally parallel to Highway 64, while the units with IV Corps reduced the dominating positions in their zone and came up abreast. Operations, after the main enemy line had been broken, were to be decided according to the situation existing at that time and were not included in the instructions.

On the west coast the 92d Division, less two of its organic regiments, but reinforced with the 442d and 473d Infantry Regiments and under Fifth Army control, was to carry out the diversionary attack ordered by Fifteenth Army Group, beginning on D-4, D-Day having been established as the day that the Eighth Army jumped off. It was hoped that this effort might draw in the local reserves in the area; at the very least, it was expected that the attack would engage the bulk of the 148th Grenadier Division holding the opposing front line. The 442d Regimental Combat Team, back from France, would be ready to take part in this action by 1 April and it was to be launched very shortly thereafter.

The broad plan of the Fifth Army attack called for IV Corps to hold its long left flank as lightly as possible and to concentrate its forces in an attack through the hills on the west side of Highway 64. IV Corps was to begin its attack on 12 April. II Corps was not to attack until the first phase line or "Green Line" as it was named, had been gained west of the Reno. This Green Line enclosed three wooded mountains over 2,000 feet high, Mounta Pigna, Mantino and Pero, which formed a wide arc open to the south and commanding the entry into the Samoggia Valley. A northern extension of the Belvedere ridges, these hills constituted the first line of enemy defenses before IV Corps. Arrival of our troops at the Green Line would bring them abreast of II Corps and would assist its attack on Mount Sole. After seizure of the Green Line and as II Corps joined the attack, the drive was to continue northeast to gain the next line of hills barring the route to the Po. This second line of hills, Mounts Ferra, Mosca and Milano, was designated as the Brown Line. The final or Black Line extended east and west through Praduro and marked the real end of the hills.

After reaching the objectives in the Brown Line, IV Corps was to be prepared to pass the 85th Division through the 1st Armored Division and relinquish the right portion of its zone to II Corps, which would thus be operating astride the Reno River. The 1st Armored Division would go into Army reserve in the vicinity of the Village of Africa, near Vergato, ready to move to the west down the Samoggia or Panaro valleys and exploit the Po plain; the 10th Mountain Division at this time was to turn due north and drive over the dwindling hills, with the 85th Division under II Corps on its right. While the main IV Corps attack was progressing northeast with two divisions abreast, the Brazilians were to hold their defensive positions, reconnoiter, and prepare on Corps order to follow up any enemy withdrawals. The 365th Infantry and the 371st Infantry on the extreme left were to protect the flank and be prepared to follow up enemy withdrawals in the mountains and along Highway 12. If the spring offensive was successful it was hoped that the pressure on both sides of the Reno River would so threaten the enemy's Apennine communications that he would begin withdrawal of his forces in the neighborhood of Abetone, Pavullo and along Highway 12 before becoming too over-extended.

Since its arrival at the Arno River, IV Corps had looked forward to the day when it might be designated as the main effort of Fifth Army but after reading the Army plan it was apparent that again this was not to be the case. Despite the secondary part which IV Corps was to play, there was, however, the strong possibility that the situation might develop that would allow the 10th Mountain Division to stop its mountain hopping and strike due north for a break-through into the Po

Valley. If this occasion should arise, perhaps the Army Commander might see fit to exploit this advantage and tear wider the gap by directing his main effort there.

Based upon this and Fifth Army's plan, IV Corps plans provided for the main effort to be made by the 10th Mountain Division attacking along the high ground to the west of Highway 64 with the 1st Armored Division on the right attacking between the 10th Mountain and the Corps' right boundary. The 1st Infantry Division, BFF, would be on the left of the 10th Mountain Division protecting the exposed flank and prepared to move north through the Panaro Valley on Corps order. The 371st and 365th Infantry Regiments were assigned the defensive mission of protecting the left flank of the Brazilians and following up any enemy withdrawal in the Mount Belvedera and Cutigliano areas. Following the Monte della Spe-Castelnuovo operation, as was explained in the previous chapter, the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, which had not been necessary to the 1st Armored Division, in the purely defensive role in the II Corps area, was attached to IV Corps. This unit took over a gradually increased frontage on the right of the Corps zone until, with a corresponding movement to the east of the 10th Mountain elements, the Brazilian units that had been holding between the two were entirely pinched out. This permitted the regrouping of the BFF in one part of the left flank instead of having the Division responsible for two different non-adjacent portions of the line. The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was also attached to the IV Corps and gave to the Corps a mobile unit in reserve which might move quickly to assist in repelling any emergency counter-measure that endangered Highway 64.

For non-divisional tank and tank destroyer units, there was attached the 701st and 894th Tank Destroyer Battalions (the latter less

one company), and the 751st Tank Battalion and two companies (less one platoon) of the 760th Tank Battalion. Some of this armor was attached to the 10th Mountain Division for the attack; the remainder would remain under Corps control available in direct support when needed. The artillery of IV Corps, as attached before the attack, was adequate for the assigned mission. It comprised the 424th Field Artillery Group Headquarters with the 766th Field Artillery Battalion (12x155H) and the 633d Field Artillery Battalion (12x155G), and the 85th Division Artillery with the 328th and 910th Field Artillery Battalions (36x105H) and the 403d Field Artillery Battalion (12x155H). In addition, there remained attached the British 7th Army Group Royal Artillery, made up of the 2d Medium Regiment (16x4.5G), the 253d Battery of the 17th Medium Regiment (8x5.5H), and the 178th Medium Regiment (16x5.5H). The 84th Chemical Battalion remained available and, less one company, was attached to the 10th Mountain Division; the detached company was held in corps reserve. The 179th Chemical Smoke Generator Company (less one platoon) and "C" Battery, 360th AAA Searchlight Battalion (less one platoon) were also in corps reserve. The Corps Engineers consisted of the 1108th Engineer Combat Group with the 235th, 255th and 337th Engineer Combat Battalions, the 23d Engineer Combat Battalion (Italian), and the 1029th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company.

2. Clearing the Decks for Action

After consolidating positions following the capture of its final objectives on 5 March, a comprehensive schedule of reliefs was undertaken by the 10th Mountain Division. In order for more units, which were going to bear the brunt of the IV Corps attack, to obtain rest and training, the 1st Battalion of the 365th Infantry had been attached to the Division to hold a portion of the line. It was desirable that

the 10th have available its entire strength for the coming operation and that all battalions have a few days of combined rest and training in a rear area, followed by a period in reserve. Its activities in the month that elapsed before the jump-off may well be likened to the conditioning of a race horse.

The 371st Infantry arrived in the Lizzano area around midnight on 8-9 April and during that same night the battalion of the 365th Infantry attached to the 10th Mountain Division was relieved by a Brazilian battalion. On the night of 8-10 April, the 371st Infantry completed relief of the left three battalions of the BEF and the 1st Battalion, 365th Infantry moved to join the 371st Infantry.

Units of the 1st Armored Division had begun to close in the vicinity of Riola and on the night of 10-11 April relieved the battalions of the 10th Mountain Division which were on the Division right. Further west on the left flank of the 10th Mountain, another battalion was relieved on 11-12 April. This completed inter-division adjustments preparatory to the attack and left the line-up as follows: The 1st Armored Division, with its right flank on the Reno River, extended to the left across the Castelnuovo Ridge to the eastern flank of Mt. della Spe. The 10th Mountain Division extended west from the left boundary of the Armored Division to about one mile west of Montese where it joined the Brazilians. The 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, extended from the 10th Mountain left boundary to the southwest along the Mounã della Torraccia-Mount Belvedere Ridge, almost to Mt. Belvedere. The 371st Infantry Regiment, reinforced by the 1st Battalion, 365th Infantry, held Cappel Buso and Mt. Belvedere proper, on the left of the BEF. The 365th Infantry, less one battalion, held the Cutigliano area and extended almost to the Serchio Valley.

The last elements of the 1st Armored Division, including ordnance and medical units, closed on the night of 12-13 April. The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron closed on the morning of the 13th in the vicinity of Silla and became a part of Corps reserve. Active patrolling was carried on all along the IV Corps front, every effort being made to indicate that normal activities were being continued exactly as they had for the past several months.

Evidence of the impending attack began to appear a few days before the scheduled D-Day. Camouflaged supply dumps and medical installations were moved up along the main axis (Highway 64) and an enemy POW cage was established between Morano and Silla. The railroad yard in Porretta was cleared of all debris and protective bunkers were built for the establishment of an ASP to support the planned offensive while other locations south of Vergato were designated for future ASP locations. Special ammunition allocations were received from Army to provide increased artillery fires for the 10th Mountain Division and the BEF. Ordnance personnel worked in shifts to repair all ordnance equipment of the battalions of the 10th Mountain Division while they were in rest areas. Vehicles were inspected and those found to be in bad need of repair were replaced. The IV Corps Engineers worked hard constructing and clearing sites for supply dumps and hospital locations. More roads had to be constructed and existing ones improved to accommodate the troops in the coming attack. In March, 2870 replacements had been received. Each infantry unit was filled above Table of Organization strength in anticipation of future requirements. Everything was being made shipshape.

All winter long the war correspondents had written dolefully about the "Forgotten Front". All winter long the artillery observers up front

had cursed at their inability to register on the choice targets, because the big guns had been pulled out of Italy. However, with the coming of spring, equipment began to move up Highways 64 and 65. The huge supply dumps began to fill, vast stocks of ammunition piled up, heart-warming convoys of tanks and tank destroyers rumbled steadily up the roads toward the front. Officers and enlisted men broke into spontaneous cheers when they saw 8-inch Howitzers go rumbling by. It was a great boost to morale as time approached to move down out of the mountains.

An elaborate program of deception designed to create the illusion that II Corps, composed of the 85th and 88th Divisions and supporting units, had moved to join Eighth Army, and that the entire Fifth Army front had been taken over by IV Corps. Most of the "movement" was simulated, but to add reality, some actual shifts did take place. All divisional markers and insignia were removed from vehicles and personnel involved. The secrecy was further highlighted by establishment of dummy radio nets for some units, and imposition of radio silence on others. A dummy II Corps Command Post was set up at Forli, and Army Headquarters stepped up its liaison with the British. Meanwhile, a IV Corps dummy Command Post was set up in the II Corps area. This deception worked well if the response of American troops not in the know was a criterion. Certain divisions had been elaborately blocked out. The 85th and 88th Divisions had spent some time in the extreme left of the IV Corps sector with identifying markers removed, busy practicing amphibious operations in coordination with the naval diversionary effort planned to lead the enemy to believe that amphibious landings were about to be

made behind his right and left flank. A "Stars and Stripes" correspondent with Fifth Army Headquarters, learning of this, protested vigorously against his paper not being invited to send a correspondent along on the landing he assumed the 85th was to make. An officer driving to the 85th Headquarters asked an MP for direction. "Are you an 85th Division MP?" "No, sir". "Is this the way to the 85th Division Command Post?" "I would not know sir". "Do you know where the 85th Division is?" "Never heard of it, sir". Two hundred yards down the road he found it.

All knew that something big was about to happen, but the details of a full scale campaign had to be kept as secret as possible: only the essential minimum number must know of the plan in all of its details. However, the convoys of supply and equipment rolling day and night up the two main highways could not be misunderstood and the vast dumps just behind the front lines were their own eloquent evidence. Preparations for the attack were made easier by the inability of the enemy to dispatch observation or attack planes. Nevertheless, no chances were taken. To support the action in the IV Corps Sector, it was necessary to establish dumps far up the valley along Highway 64. The sites for these were spotted but not stocked until the last night before the attack, however, by evening of D-Day, regular issues were being made from the new dumps. Engineers, augmented by native laborers, worked without a stop, patching, watering, and oiling roads, but despite their toiling, the thin mountain soil dried by the spring sun and winds quickly resolved itself into clouds of choking dust which rose high above the highways. It could not be hoped that the enemy would not be alert to the preparations for the attack. The cover plan was to keep him guessing as to just where and when it might strike.

B. THE ENEMY SITUATION

The once powerful German army was being battered on all European fronts. The great war machine that rolled across Europe was now fighting desperately for its own survival; it was purely on the defensive. However, while it still breathed with life it was determined to fight on. In Italy the German armies had fought long and hard in attempting to hold the Italian Peninsula, withdrawing slowly to reach the Apennines. Now that they were perched on rugged mountains, there was only one other place to go and that was across the Po Valley, to his next defense line at the foot of the Alps. The enemy knew that once he let go of the Apennines and raced back across the valley floor, a most terrific aerial attack would splatter his columns all over the orchard-studded landscape. He also knew that in the level valley of the Po our armor would go tearing through his ranks like a stampede of wild elephants through a Pigmy village. He could not afford the risk involved in a quiet withdrawal from the mountains. These rugged peaks offered him some protection and delaying positions, neither of which he would have when he hit the valley and he was determined to hold on as long as possible.

Rumors were current at various times during the winter months that the Germans meant to evacuate all of Italy; that they would evacuate only the western half; or that they would retire north and northeast to the line of the Po and Ticino Rivers. No evidence was uncovered to substantiate these reports, and as the spring drew near, increased vigilance by the enemy along the entire front indicated that he was not likely to move at all unless forced to do so. The value of northern Italy to the German war effort was indicated by the fact that the enemy

retained so many first-class divisions and so much equipment in the country at a time when they were sorely needed both on the eastern and western European fronts. Northern Italy produced great quantities of agricultural and industrial products which made a direct contribution to the German war effort. Apart from supplying almost all the food consumed by the German armies in Italy, the country annually supplied more than 140,000 tons of rice, 160,000 tons of fruit, 200,000 tons of wine and other products to Germany itself. A great deal of the equipment for the German forces in Italy was manufactured in the Po Valley. Figures on ammunition and armament production ran into high totals. Achievements of the automobile industry, which manufactured 6,400 trucks in the first five months of 1944, and of the heavy weapons industry were also favorable to the foe. Although consistent strategic bombing by heavy Allied planes cut these figures as time went by, production continued.

The following figures, discovered in captured German orders, give an excellent idea of Italy's worth to the enemy: in May 1944 steel production reached 139,000 tons per month, 40,000 tons of which were Bessemer steel. From October 1943 to May 1944 the armaments industry produced a total of 321,800 tons of iron and steel for shipment to Germany. From January to May 1944, 3,800 tons of zinc were delivered, as well as 9,000 tons of aluminum, 80,000 bottles of mercury, 38,500 tons of sulfur and textiles amounting to 23 percent of the entire German home production. To May 1944 Italy had supplied Germany with 1,500,000 military boots, 400,000 working shoes, 5,000,000 summer shoes, and 8,000,000 straw shoes for civilians in Germany. The enemy also used northern Italy as a reservoir of manpower, drafting thousands of civilians for labor in German factories and employing many thousands more on construction of various

military installations and defense lines in Italy and along the Italo-Austrian frontier. Since northern Italy was rapidly becoming the only sizeable manufacturing area outside Germany still remaining occupied by the advancing Allied armies, it became evident that the enemy would hold us away from this industrial region as long as possible.

Cutting across northern Italy from the Adriatic Sea, the Po Valley was also important because of its many roads and railroads. Nearly half of Italy's 40,000,000 people lived in the manufacturing cities of the valley and on the prosperous farms throughout the area. This was the part of Italy that had tempted conquerors throughout the ages and was the the part that Germany desired to hold above all others. When continued bombing by Allied aircraft destroyed much of the industrial areas, many manufacturing plants were moved under ground into huge caves where they continued to produce relatively large quantities of munitions. Another possible factor governing the German decision to remain in Italy was the mere difficulty of getting out. The first enemy unit to leave Italy, the 256th Grenadier Division departed in December and early January without much apparent trouble, but the continued rail and road interdiction by our air force and the destruction of large quantities of enemy rolling stock, created a situation whereby between three and four weeks were required to move the 16 SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Reichsfuehrer SS" through the Brenner Pass into Germany in February and an equally long period was needed to pull the 715th Grenadier Division out of the country in March.

1. Enemy Forces on the IV Corps Front

The enemy forces on the IV Corps front were generally concentrated in the attack areas of the 1st Armored and 10th Mountain Division from

Vergato to Montese. The 232d Grenadier Division guarded the area to the west of Montese; to the east of Montese were the 114th Light Division, the 334th Grenadier Division and finally the 94th Grenadier Division astride the Reno River. These units combined the sixteen infantry battalions in line and nine in reserve. Outside of local reserves, the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, south of Bologna, was capable of reinforcing the units within eighteen hours and could probably close the entire Division in the area within thirty-six hours. The 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was north of Modena with elements estimated as more than half of the Division across the Po. The likelihood of this Division returning to the south front could not be predicted, however, if returned it could not start to influence the action before forty-eight hours. The 5th Mountain Division and 34th Infantry Division were still on the Franco-Italian frontier and it was estimated that these divisions would take about eight days to reach the southern front unless elements were enroute to the east at the time of our attack.

The 162d Infantry Division was considered very unreliable and unlikely to appear in any serious combat role. It was believed only partly in position north of the Valli Di Comacchio. Parts of this Division were as far west as Piacenza and elements had been reported as far north as Milan. It was estimated that the 710th Infantry Division and the 188th Reserve Mountain Division could be sent to the southern front, but this was considered unlikely because of the difficulty of movement and the "touchy" situation in Yugo-Slavia and Austria. The 135th Fortress Brigade with about 1300 men of varying qualities was in the Genoa area and could appear on the southern front in about three days.

Of the Italian divisions, the one Italian SS Division just recently confirmed as existing, was reported closing in the Piacenza area and could influence the battle most quickly. The Littoria, Monte Rosa and San Marco Divisions would have their hands full where they were.

2. Enemy Defense Line

Although the enemy had not provided himself in front of IV Corps with defenses as complex as those in front of II Corps, a strong belt of emplacements, machine gun nests and bunkers were to be found. Our February-March attacks had wiped out the German main line of defenses on the ridge just west of Highway 64, but after falling back to the neighborhood of Vergate, the enemy had set to work to build up another line as rapidly as possible. Vergate itself was strongly fortified. Recent aerial photographs had shown a steady increase of enemy defenses from the Corps eastern boundary to an area north of Cutigliano. No strong developments were noted but daily aerial reconnaissance revealed a gradual thickening of defenses along the enemy's main line of resistance from the vicinity of Montese-Villa D'Aiano to Rocca Di Roffeno-Mount Pigna-Cereglio-Mount Mantino-Rodiano and Mount Mosca. In the main, defenses were located on commanding heights and consisted of mutually supporting strongpoints featuring automatic weapons and anti-tank guns. Machine guns were liberally distributed to cover all possible approaches to the summits of the mountains; anti-personnel mine fields were laid along the paths, ravines and creek beds. Dug-cuts had been constructed to shelter the garrisons of the various strongpoints which were connected by communication trenches and further protected by bands of barbed wire. All roads and cross-country avenues of advance were strengthened with mixed anti-tank and anti-personnel mine fields. Many stone farm houses were

fortified and incorporated into the line, while many of the small villages were also organized for defenses and surrounded by firing positions. West of Montese the enemy appeared to be paying particular attention to the high ground along the line of Montese-Martino-Ranocchio, where additional, but scattered machine gun positions and weapon pits had been reported.

In rear of his forward positions, the enemy constructed defenses covering the natural corridors running northward which seemed to indicate that the possibility of an Allied left-hook had been appreciated. Photographs showed a long anti-tank ditch and anti-tank obstacle south of Pavullo with infantry positions sited on the high ground. North of Zocca, minor defenses had been located on the high ground of the line of Zocchetta-Monte Ombraro-Mount Del Terminale. Further east in the Samoggia Valley the defenses south of Monte Veglio had increased and new infantry positions were pin-pointed on the western side of the river in the vicinity of Savigno. New infantry positions were also picked up along the high ground north and south of Monte Pastore. These defenses in rear of the enemy's main line of resistance, did not present a continuous line but rather defended localities which, coupled with the difficult terrain, would help the enemy to contain any Allied thrust while deploying his reserves to counter the main effort.

The Germans massed hundreds of mortars and an estimated total of 285 artillery weapons including tanks, to back up their infantry defense in the area opposite IV Corps; 130 light pieces (under 149-mm); 36 anti-tank guns; 18 medium pieces (149-mm, two 170-mm); 2 heavy guns (over

170-mm); 54 self-propelled guns; and 45 tanks (Mark III and Mark IV, belonging to the 129th Tank Battalion).

In the whole Fifth Army area, the enemy was perched on the Genghis Kahn Line; On the Eighth Army front he was on the Imgard Line, with the Laura and Paula Lines to pass through before reaching the Genghis Kahn Line, the last continuous defenses port of Bologna. If forced out of his present positions by our attack, it was evident that he would fall back to his Ticino-Po defenses, on the north side of the Po River. To provide positions for delaying action and to act as outposts for the Po Line, most of the cities and towns along Highway 9 were prepared for defense. Road blocks made of steel, railroad rails, brick and rubble were constructed at key highway intersections and across the main streets of the town; windows of buildings were bricked up and provided with loop-holes; cellars became machine gun and anti-tank gun emplacements; concrete pill boxes commanded long straight sections of the highway; canals and ditches which already formed minor anti-tank barriers were widened and deepened, and additional deep ditches were dug.

The Po defense line ran along the river from Ferrara west to its junction with the Ticino, from which point the enemy apparently planned to defend along the Ticino rather than farther west along the Po. To hold this line meant giving up Turin but retaining Milan in the defended area. It was estimated that 20 divisions could man this defense system, which extended about 50 miles along the Ticino and three times that distance along the Po. The latter river ran through such marshy country in the final 25 miles section before it reached the sea that it was scarcely necessary even to cover this natural obstacle. Along the Po line work progressed rapidly and by mid-January photo coverage had showed the defenses were well under way, containing many prepared positions for mortars,

anti-tank guns and artillery. The high, thick levees along the river banks were utilized to the maximum, trenches and pits for riflemen and machine-gunners, protected by barbed wire and well camouflaged, were dug into these flood barriers. Anti-tank ditches were constructed near Ferrara, Cremona and Parma. The depth of the line extended far north of the river, even Mantua being provided with perimeter defenses by widening several canals around the city until they became major tank obstacles.

The third and final defense line, based on the Adige River and the foothills of the Alps, had been under construction since July 1944. Designed to cover the southern and southeastern approaches to the Brenner Pass, it was anchored on the right flank by Lake Garda, extended east through Verona and followed the foothills as far as Vicenza. Low hills which stood up from the valley floor around Padua were included in the system, and strong defenses were also prepared in the area around Venice. The Adige line was formed on the same principles as other enemy defense belts, consisting primarily of firing points located on high ground covering all approaches from the south. It was reminiscent of World War I in its intricate system of trenches, profusion of dugouts and machine gun emplacements and varied in depth from 1000 to 5000 yards.

Natural obstacles in the lower ground eastward toward the Adriatic Sea were turned into anti-tank ditches. In general, the strength of the Adige Line was sufficiently great that in the hands of a determined enemy, such as the Germans had proved to be in the past, it might well have been a most difficult position to crack.

3. Enemy Rear Areas

Activities of the Italian Partisans contributed to a gradual deterioration of the German strength in rear areas. On 1 April Allied Intelligence

officers estimated that a minimum of 50,000 well-organized patriots were already engaged in sabotaging and harassing the enemy or were ready to spring into action on a given signal. Aided by Allied liaison officers who were parachuted into the country or smuggled through the German lines, the Partisans had formed themselves into battalions, brigades and even divisions. They were armed with weapons stolen or captured from the Germans or dropped to them from Allied aircraft, that delivered more than 500 tons of supplies to these behind-the line fighters during March. The constant threat of Partisan attack forced the Germans to employ thousands of their own troops and considerable numbers of the Fascist forces in a campaign against the guerrillas. The Partisans also were active in escorting escaped Allied prisoners of war and agents across the lines. Patriots whose homes were in the mountains often accompanied IV Corps patrols and participated in actual operations with our forces.

The following report which reached the headquarters may indicate how effective the Partisans were in the enemy's rear areas; "Three Partisans fired on German truck convoy between Verceto and Mount Cassio on Route 62. The convoy stopped and returned fire. Another convoy approaching from the opposite direction was also fired on by the Partisans who, after the initial volley, stealthily departed for the nearby hills. Both convoys, thinking each other were Partisan raiders, battled for over two hours with one another before they realized what had happened. By that time, 39 were dead and 43 wounded."

The local Gestapo units worked hard to catch Partisans and deserters. Some Italian men and women had been employed to pose as Partisans among the Italian Fascist Republic units in rear areas where deserters were most frequent. These "partisans" approached Italian soldiers with offers to

help them desert. If the soldier showed a willingness to desert, he was reported to his unit headquarters and the would-be deserter was sentenced to death. This ruse had discouraged many Italian soldiers from accepting help from real partisans who approached them.

Despite the troublesome partisans, the main worry of the German High Command was the rapidly worsening condition of its transportation system, the lack of vehicles and motor fuel and the bombing of Italian railroads by Allied air power. Furthermore, the bombing of factories and railroads in Germany made it almost impossible to obtain new motor vehicles from the homeland, while the reduction of the Italian automobile output, coupled with incessant bombing and strafing attacks by our tactical aircraft, reduced enemy military transport to a progressively lower level. To augment his scanty supply the enemy commandeered hundreds of civilian passenger cars, trucks and buses and substituted horse and ox drawn carts for motorized equipment.

Even more serious was the fact that the enemy supply of gasoline was rapidly being reduced to a mere trickle, limiting the use of the available vehicles. In many cases animals were used to tow vehicles which started their motors only while passing over steep grades; even in the so-called "Fast" convoys one truck operating its motor, towed two others. The enemy made use of gasoline substitutes such as methane which was available in considerable quantities in certain areas of the Po Valley. Methane did not provide sufficient power for use in combat vehicles but was adequate for administrative transport, thus affording some saving of both gasoline and diesel oil. Other substitute fuels used were alcohol and benzol which could be mixed with gasoline in proportion of one unit of substitution to three units of regular fuel. The lengths to which the enemy was willing

to go to obtain fuel were indicated in a captured order issued by one of the divisions, offering a reward of 1,000 cigarettes to any man returning from patrol with a 5-gallon can of captured gasoline.

4. Enemy Air

German aircraft based in northern Italy had been relatively inactive during the past few months. Fighter and reconnaissance planes had operated on a very modest scale, for the enemy had too limited a supply of planes at his disposal for concentrated action in the Italian theater. With the approach of the front line to Germany proper, greater reserves would become available, but it was believed that there was more pressing need elsewhere for their services. It was not probable that the depleted Luftwaffe would indulge in large scale operations against ground forces in Italy at a time when the defense of the Reich itself had over-taxed all available resources. Attacks by JU-37's on moonlight nights and even during daylight hours and some occasional forays by ground attack aircraft were to be expected. It was estimated that the enemy had no more than 150 planes left in Italy.

5. Enemy Morale and Replacements

Recent happenings on the eastern-western and German home fronts had contributed to the decline of enemy morale. This had been borne out by the recent experience of the 10th Mountain Division, which after a very skillful attack aggressively pressed, found an enemy that was largely demoralized and less inspired to a last ditch scrap than had been customary on the Italian front. Nevertheless, the air and artillery support, as well as the "entire works" from infantry weapons, were needed to attack their positions. The reports from some demoralized deserters to the effect that the enemy was only waiting for us to attack to enable him to throw in the

sponge, was not accepted as an indication that the Germans would not still require a lot of powerful walloping. It was known that there were plenty of Gestapo about to furnish the necessary fillip to the waning courage of the Wehrmacht.

Reports indicated that the Italian Theatre was receiving only a trickle of replacements. There were, however, numerous installations which were to be broken up from time to time to furnish manpower for the front line units, such as Luftwaffe ground installations, coast defense units and fortress battalions, sailors without ships, etc. Particularly favored for being strengthened by the few replacements were the Panzer Grenadier, Paratroop, Mountain and Jaeger Divisions.

"THE PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XX - - - - -

THE LAST ATTACK

Although the main thrust of Eighth Army did not begin until 9 April, and that of the Fifth Army until 14 April, minor attacks had been launched in the zones of both Armies well before in order to confuse the enemy as to the time and place of our main attack. Along the Adriatic coast, the 2d Commando Brigade launched an amphibious operation on 2 April against enemy positions on the Comacchio, a barren, sandy stretch of waste land between Lake Comacchio and the Adriatic Sea. This operation was successful and the spot was cleared of hostile forces within two days. Three days later on 5 April, the 92d Infantry Division began its diversionary attack with the objective of taking Massa, Carrara and the La Spezia Naval Base and eventually the great port of Genoa. Bitter opposition was encountered from the start. The tough battle-wise warriors of the 442d Infantry moved slowly but steadily, fighting every step of the way and taking their losses without faltering. On their left the 473d, seasoned by winter months in the wildest most rugged part of the line, found the going difficult. By 9 April the troops of the 92d Division were well on their way to Massa and the Frigido River. Opposition had been stiff and losses heavy, but the mission was being accomplished.

Preceded by a stupendous air-artillery preparation, the British Eighth Army attacked late in the evening of 9 April. All day long hundreds of heavy and medium bombers operated just ahead of the line, their attacks alternating with massed artillery barrages across the flat, marshy lands of the coastal plains. This terrific air "carpet

attack" covered an area about one and one-half miles deep and seven and one-half miles wide. Following this preparation, the Eighth Army attacked down the bombed swath. This spring offensive had started.

The Eighth crossed the Senio in a surge of power and advanced steadily for the first few days. As cosmopolitan an Army had not been seen in more than a century was headed toward the greater Reich. The Eighth Army had delivered a long right to the enemy's midriff; IV Corps was now ready to deliver a sharp left to his "glass jaw".

The IV Corps liaison officer, upon his return from the II Corps Headquarters on the east, reported that all evening of the 9th of April there could be heard the sustained thunder of artillery on the British sector. An undercurrent of excitement flowed throughout the Army. All felt that this was the beginning of the end, but were aware of the magnitude of the operation in which they were destined to play a part.

A. IV CORPS JUMPS OFF

The air support plan for IV Corps attack was an elaborate program: On 12 April, D + 3 (d-Day to be 9 April when Eighth Army jumped off) the day originally set for opening its attack, fighter bomber support would include concentration on some eleven medium and light gun positions, a fire bomb "blitz" in the Pigna area, attacks on designated enemy command posts and other vital areas, constant daylight reconnaissance by two aircraft in the Zocca-Bazzano area four aircraft every half hour during daylight for "Rover Pete" activities and finally night bombing on Zocca near Bazzano by radar control and by star shells pointing out the targets; a total of 600 sorties contained in 150 missions were planned.

The Pigna blitz was to precede the opening artillery preparation, to allow the pilots unimpaired visibility. These blitz attacks, which had been developed and employed successfully before, would be carried out by fighter bomber on enemy positions very close to our troops.

On D+4, IV Corps was to receive approximately the same day and night air effort as on the preceding day, however, some decrease would be expected during the afternoon due to the diverting of some aircraft to the air operation scheduled to precede the attack on Monte Sole. On D+5, our "Rover Pete" missions were to be reduced by half; this was necessary in order to supply aircraft for "Rover Joe" who would become active in the II Corps zone. On the same day, the Fifth Army attack was to be augmented by approximately 800 heavy and 400 medium bombers attacking targets along Highways 64 and 65, generally south of Bologna. As the flights were to pass over IV Corps zone in returning to their bases, no air activity would be undertaken while they were overhead. During the succeeding days of the attack the same pattern of fighter bomber aircraft on pre-planned and "Rover Pete" missions, augmented by heavy and medium attacks, was to be followed, the detailed schedules naturally being dependent upon the progress of the offensive.

Throughout the spring, weather in the Apennines had been all that could be desired; the snow had melted early, there were practically no rains, and save for occasional ground haze, visibility was excellent. This fine weather was extremely favorable for movement of troops and supplies, living conditions of troops in the line, conduct of artillery fire, and air attacks on enemy targets. Day after day the weather prediction for the IV Corps zone continued to be good. There was, however, one uncertain factor; the weather south of the mountains and

on the western coast where the air bases were located, was on a given day very apt to be different from that prevailing in the Apennines. In particular, the visibility on the coast was frequently very poor in the early morning and prevented aircraft from taking off on schedule.

This situation made itself felt when the weather forecasts for 12 April were first received. While over the Apennines some scattered clouds and poor visibility were predicted, visibility over the air bases would be restricted to two to four miles in the early morning. This caused a postponement of twenty-four hours in the attack. Again on 13 April, while at the bases visibility would be fair in the morning and good by noon, we could expect broken clouds over the western slopes in our zone. Another twenty-four hour delay ensued.

On the morning of 14 April, after some worry over the probable fog and clouds in the area of the air bases, the weather cleared and the 57th Fighter Group was able to get into the air. When this news was received at Fifth Army Headquarters, General Truscott immediately informed General Crittenger that, "The show is on. We attack at 0830." The last great attack of Fifth Army in World War II was about to begin.

Precisely at 0830 wave after wave of bombers came over the mountains from the south. Men of the 10th Mountain Division looked up from their jump-off positions as they made final preparations; they too, knew that the show was on. Over to their right, on Highway 64, the veteran 1st Armored was ready. For forty minutes the sky was filled with planes, high explosive and fire bombs rained down accompanied by strafing from .50 caliber machine guns. At 0910 the artillery opened

up, laying down an intense 35-minute barrage, driving the enemy into his dugouts, blasting his eardrums with the explosive power of the big shells and shattering his nerves with the knowledge of what was to come.

1. The 10th Mountain Division Spearheads the Attack

At 0945, 14 April, the 10th Mountain Division under Major General George P. Hays led off with the first blow. When the artillery preparation abruptly ceased, the first wave of infantry pushed off toward the dust and smoke which merged to form an artificial twilight over the German area. From their positions at Castel D'Aiano and to the east, the 85th and 87th Mountain Infantry, the latter on the right, attacked abreast and moved across the Pra del Bianco basin to seize the enemy defenses on the north side and as far to the east as Rocca di Roffeno. The area under attack was a mountain mass extending eastward through Mount Pigna in two narrow ridge lines which terminated at Mount Mantino and Mount Mosca. The 85th Mountain Infantry under Colonel Raymond C. Barlow was to advance through the hills just north of Pra del Bianco, seize the dominating mass of Righetti and take up defensive positions facing northwest until the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, which was to guard the left flank of the 10th Mountain Division, could relieve them in that area. The 87th Mountain Infantry, under Colonel David M. Fowler, was to attack just west of Rocca di Roffeno through the village of Torre Iussi in an effort to capture Mount Pigna and the ridges extending to the east. The 86th Mountain Infantry, under Colonel Clarence Tomlinson, was to follow behind the 87th Mountain Infantry, initially to protect the right flank of the Division, later it was to cross the ridges north to Tole along the main north-south road and attack northeast over the rolling hills toward Mososco and the Black Phase Line.

Opposite the 10th Mountain Division from west to east were the 754th Grenadier Regiment, the 755th Grenadier Regiment and the 756th Grenadier Regiment; all of the 334th Division. Farther east, in front of the 1st Armored Division, the 94th Grenadier Division was in position on the ridges along which the 10th Mountain Division was scheduled to drive as it swept to the northeast. The enemy had constructed an intricate system of bunkers and gun emplacements controlled from observation posts on key features overlooking the entire Pra del Bianco basin. Forward posts on the basin itself were manned by the enemy only at night, but, wide-spread anti-personnel and anti-tank mine fields provided additional protection on the north side of the basin for the German defenses.

Despite the tremendous number of high explosive and fire bombs from our artillery and planes which sent up geysers of flame and heavy black smoke, the enemy defenses, though badly battered, were still intact when the infantry assault began. On the left, in the 85th Mountain Infantry zone, the 2d and 3d Battalions moved out abreast, supported by the 1st Battalion from hills to the rear. The men advanced slowly, but by 1300 were on the first hills to the north of the basin. Resistance was intense, though limited largely to mortar and machine gun fire. During the early afternoon, enemy fire became heavier and the advance on the left was brought to a halt short of the crest overlooking Torre Iussi. German snipers, hiding in deep bunkers and in buildings, were bypassed in order that the advance could continue. They inflicted many casualties on our troops until finally cleared out two days later.

On the right the 87th Mountain Infantry, in a column of battalions with the 1st Battalion leading, moved across the basin in the face of heavy machine gun and mortar fire. By 1000, forward elements had entered

the village of Serra Sarzana where they waited while our artillery fired an intense barrage; as it lifted they surged ahead. A short while later deadly enemy machine gun and small arms fire from Hills 909 and 913 pinned down elements of the 85th and also interrupted the advance of the 87th Infantry. After these two dominating points were taken, the 1st Battalion again took up the advance. Bitter house-to-house fighting broke out in Torre Iussi and continued until the 2d Battalion was dispatched around the village and the hill above it. The 1st Battalion cleared Torre Iussi and relieved the Battalion which immediately set off for Mount Pigna. However, the long thrust was begun too late in the day and the 2d Battalion was recalled at darkness due to the possibility of serious enemy counter-measures.

On the extreme right flank of the zone, the 2d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry moved into the Pra del Bianco at 1030, following the right rear of the 87th Mountain Infantry. It was promptly pinned down by fire from the hills north of Torre Iussi. After clearance of that area by the 87th, the advance was resumed and Rocci di Roffeno occupied at 1648. The enemy retaliated with a heavy artillery barrage but failed to dislodge the men of the 86th from the rocky promontory. Contact was established on the right with the 1st Armored Division, which had begun to move forward in the afternoon.

Resistance had been strong all day and casualties, particularly on the left flank, were heavy; 553 were killed, wounded or missing in action during 14 April. The delaying action offered by the enemy had been thorough, with heavy artillery concentrations covering the routes of approach. The roads had been heavily mined with both anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. The 85th Mountain Infantry suffered the bulk of the

casualties, as the most determined German resistance was met in their sector. Its advance had been costly, but the success of the attack had hinged on taking Hills 913, 909 and 898. The large mine fields prevented close armored support from the 751st Tank Battalion and the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion. Instead of advancing in the attack with the leading infantry units, they were forced to fire supporting missions from the valley floor. All that night our troops awaited the inevitable counter-attack, but this time it did not come. Artillery and flares constituted the enemy's sole answer to the first day of the 10th Mountain Division attack.

The second day of the offensive opened with a twenty-minute artillery preparation at 0640, following which the 2d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry attacked toward the village of Amore, northeast of Rocca di Roffeno. The village was occupied about 1000 and the Regiment then began to drive along the ridge to the northeast to capture Mount Mantino. A slow and difficult advance through mountainous country against almost constant sniper and machine gun fire was culminated at 2000 when Mount Mantino, over two and one half miles northeast of Rocca di Roffeno, was seized and occupied. The 2d Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, attacking in conjunction with the 86th had seized Mount Pigna at 0810, continued eastward along the ridge running to Mount Mantino and was midway between Mounts Pero and Mantino by 1300 in spite of heavy enemy artillery fire. The 3d Battalion pushed farther north and occupied the hills just north of Mount Pigna in preparation for a drive northward over the last ridge and into the village of Tole. The main objectives of the Brown Phase Line had been reached.

The progress made in the right and center sectors of the division zone on the 15th was in sharp contrast to the action on the left. There the 85th Mountain Infantry jumped off at 0700 with the intention of driving north of Mount Righetti, then swinging southwest onto the hills overlooking the Panaro River. Heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire together with infantry resistance stopped the 85th Mountain Infantry almost on its line of departure. Counter-battery fire laid down on the enemy artillery installations and emplacements seemed to have little effect on the German ability to resist. The men inched forward slowly until 1200 when General Hays ordered the 85th Infantry to discontinue the advance and organize for defense. The 10th Anti-Tank Battalion was moved up from reserve to tie the Division left flank in with the Brazilian Expeditionary Force and plans were made to shift the entire weight of the Division more to the northeast.

At 0620 on the 16th the 87th Mountain Infantry jumped off following a twenty-minute artillery barrage. At 0900, the enemy laid down a smoke screen to conceal the withdrawal of artillery and other elements from the Mount Mantino-Mount Mosca area. The 764th Grenadier Regiment had cracked and the rear areas of the entire 94th Grenadier Division were in imminent danger of being overrun. With his supply lines out and American troops smashing into his rear areas, the enemy began a fierce delaying action to cover a mass withdrawal to his positions along the Panaro River. In the face of this bitter delaying resistance the hills just north of Mount Mantino were occupied at 1305 by the 2nd Battalion. The more rested 3d Battalion was passed through quickly to continue the drive to Mount Mosca, the last high point along the eastern ridge line. The enemy carried out a stubborn defense in front of the 3d

Battalion all the way. Enemy mortar and artillery fire pounded the advancing troops and after a successful assault on Mount Mosca at 1415 almost two hours were needed to mop up the crest of the hill. Early in the evening the Germans launched ten separate counter-attacks against the newly won positions but the gain was securely held. These attacks consisted mostly of small infiltrating units who attempted to work in behind our lines. Even before Mount Mosca was firmly in our possession, the 2d Battalion launched an attack from Mount Croce down into the village of Tole and swept into the town against sniper and machine gun fire. The place was a shambles from bombing and heavy artillery fire and was occupied quickly against relatively light opposition. During the day the 85th Mountain Infantry, as it was relieved by the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, began to maneuver to the northeast, relieving in turn elements of the 87th Mountain Infantry as fast as possible. The attack to the north by the 86th Infantry was now free to advance without fear of being fired on from the rear.

On the right the 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry jumped off at 1115, attacking generally to the north in the direction of Mount Moscosco. By mid-afternoon as Tole fell to the 87th, the battalion moved northward for almost a mile. Finally heavy artillery fire stopped their advance, but the 1st Battalion came up on the right flank and together the two battalions forged ahead. By 1750 they had advanced another two miles and were within a few hundred yards of the hamlet of Manzuno. The tanks of the 751st Tank Battalion were able to assist in the final thrust by giving direct fire support and the cluster of houses was seized by 1800. A hasty defense was set up on the bare, rolling hills and the advance halted for the night.

With the enemy off balance and reeling backward, the 10th Mountain Division smashed northward on the 17th to open the way into Samoggia Valley. In the morning, the 2d Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry pushed forward on the left of the ground gained by the 86th Mountain Infantry the preceding day and attacked Mount Ferra about two miles north of Tole. The advance progressed against light opposition until at 1555 the leading elements were stopped when exceptionally heavy, direct artillery fire from the northwest caused many casualties before the advancing troops were able to find enough cover. The 1st Battalion was sent around the east side of the hill to attack San Prospero about three-quarters of a mile beyond Mount Ferra, and gained its objective at 2105 after a cautious advance. The few enemy left were found to be well dug in, but they came jumping out of their holes shouting "Kamerad"! as our troops assaulted their positions. Mount Ferra was finally cleared at 1905 after counter-battery fire was placed on the enemy guns west of the Panaro River. The enemy artillery supporting the infantry on Mount Ferra had been very accurate and the securing of that objective by our troops had been costly.

The 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry renewed its drive straight north at 0630 of 17 April and advanced 800 yards in the first twenty-four minutes. "Rover Pete" caused the air support for the Regiment to rocket, bomb and strafe all roads leading north, catching fleeing Germans in their trucks and wagons and scattering wrecked vehicles all along the roads. By 0845 the 3d Battalion was on Mount Musosco, one and a half miles west of San Prospero, The 2d Battalion jumped off at 0730 and advanced on the right of the 3d Battalion toward the village of Monte Pastore, east of Mount Musosco. The Germans began

to flee the town on the approach of our infantry and in the process our planes swooped down to strafe them. Company "G" was the first unit into the town and took many prisoners. The men were tired and one of the mountaineers described the occupation of the village as follows:

"An hour after our troops entered Monte Pastors, the first civilians returned, greeting the Americans warmly and looking for the medics if they had wounds, but before they did all this, they searched for their homes to estimate the damage by bomb and shell. Our troops were incredibly weary. Our 2d Battalion had been continually in motion for four days without rest. Wherever the men dropped their packs, they fell asleep. They slept in barns, cowstalls, bedrooms - any place they could find. After a rest we looked for food and found chickens, onions, some captured German cheese and balogna. Fires sprung up all over town and soon we were eating our first food other than "K" rations in four days". Nevertheless, the 2d Battalion, once again pushed north and at the same time dispatched some troops eastward to clear Mount Vignola and the other hills which dominated the low ridge line along which the Battalion's advance was proceeding. These hills were finally cleared at 1800 after sporadic but vigorous resistance was overcome.

Prisoners by the droves were streaming back to the regimental cage and it was not an uncommon sight to see a column of forty or fifty gray-clad German soldiers marching south attended by only one tired G.I. guard. By the end of the day the Regiment had counted 400 prisoners with more still coming back from the front. Some of these yielded new and surprising identifications. For the past two days reports had been received of the movement of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division toward the IV Corps front. On 17 April the Battalion Commander of the 2d Battalion,

361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, together with his staff were taken prisoner. Also on this same day the 190th Reconnaissance Battalion and elements of the 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment were identified on our front. The enemy's last GHQ Reserve unit had been committed in an effort to stop the advance of our troops. About all the enemy could do in the future was to gather together provisional "battle groups" and rush them to the most threatened parts of his line. For four days the German 334th and 94th Infantry Division had resisted doggedly: all of the enemy's local and strategic reserves were now committed, but he continued to employ his counter-attacks and severe artillery and mortar concentrations against our slow but steady advance. German losses in men and equipment were heavy; not only did the number of enemy killed and wounded remaining on the field testify to the horrible destruction he was undergoing, but the steadily increasing stream of Prisoners of War flowing into the 10th Mountain Division Prisoner of War cage became so great as to make evacuation a problem that had to take care of itself.

The speed of the advance of the two leading regiments was made possible in large part on 17 April by the shifting of the 85th Mountain Infantry and the displacement forward of the artillery. The 85th continued its movement to the northeast, relieving elements of the 87th Mountain Infantry as rapidly as it in turn was freed on the left rear by the Brazilian Expeditionary Force and the 85th covered as fast as the attacking regiments moved northward. The artillery units displacing often in order to support the rapidly advancing troops, occupied new positions just south of the Mount Mosca ridge during the day.

Heavy support could now be supplied by the armored units, for the terrain was rolling rather than rugged and the roads from Tole to the north were in good condition. After four days of swift, slashing attacks, driving to the northeast across the enemy lines of communication, the 10th Mountain Division now held its Black Line objectives.

The 10th Mountain Division had not made this deep penetration without paying the price. The casualty rate of killed, wounded and captured for the four days amounted to 1,429 and many thanks were owed to over-strengthening of all units with replacements beforehand, which enabled the infantry to run so hard for so long. Despite this, and the rotation of battalions, men were beginning to be physically tired from their efforts, but any weariness the body of the Division might have felt had not in the least been communicated to its soul. As time demonstrated, the offensive spirit, the will to close with the enemy, still surged in every mountain soldier's breast.

2. "Warrior" Clears Highway 64

Although the attack by the 10th Mountain Division on 14 April constituted the IV Corps main effort, units on both the right and left flanks were all performing their assigned parts according to schedule. On the right the 1st Armored Division under Major General Vernon E. Prichard moved on Vergato. Highway 64, once considered of little importance, was now destined to be the main route for the supply of Fifth Army, once it reached the Po Valley. The mission of clearing Highway 64 on the west of the Reno River was assigned the 1st Armored Division. Its units had been infiltrated into assembly areas in the vicinity of Riola during the several nights prior to the originally scheduled time for the IV Corps attack. Except for the narrow valley of the Reno, the

terrain in its assigned zone was far from suitable for armor; but tedious experience up the length of the Italian boot had accustomed the Division to mountain warfare and its three armored infantry battalions had long since become reconciled to fighting over the crags and chasms of the Apennines alongside any other foot troops.

Following the Castelnuovo operation, the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had been gradually driving in the enemy's outposts in the Reno Valley, reaching the southern edge of the town of Vergato where his defenses were strong and from which he was evidently not ready to withdraw without a struggle. Further west, armored infantry units had taken over part of the front held by the 10th Mountain Division and on the night of 13-14 April a platoon of medium tanks suitably protected by an infantry covering party moved to positions in front of these units. A small fire fight that followed this movement was indicative of the uneasiness of the enemy along our front.

During the morning of the 14th the tankers could see the black smoke from the fire bombs, mounting high in the sky in front of them and in front of the 10th Mountain Division.

The sound of the terrific artillery barrage to the west was carried eastward with the breeze. The 14th Armored Infantry Battalion sent out small feeler elements, but its attack was not launched in force until afternoon. At 1700 the infantry, supported by tanks of the 13th Tank Battalion, passed through the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion and began moving north toward positions from which to attack the hilltop village of Suzzano the following morning. The approach march was covered on the left by the 10th Mountain Division's capture of the commanding

Rocca di Roffeno. Meeting little opposition, advance units took up positions for the night on the rising ground one mile south of the village; the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, which was following, halted in position 1000 yards to the southwest.

On the Division's right along Highway 64 the dismounted cavalrymen of Troop "A", 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, supported by the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, attacked toward the rubble town of Vergato at 1750. The jump-off was preceded first by a TOT; thereafter, the supporting artillery fired one round per gun per minute upon Vergato until 1845, when the forward observers lifted the fire as the troops prepared to assault the town. By 2000 Troop "A" had penetrated into the southern outskirts and had seized the railroad station, but determined resistance with small arms and mortar fire stopped further advance. Mines prevented the approach of tanks for close support the first night during which Americans and Germans at times occupied adjoining rooms in the same buildings. Troop "C" sent up to reinforce Troop "A" had taken up positions by 0230. On the 15th the 81st was occupied all day in the dangerous and ticklish task of fighting from house to house while Germans poured mortar fire into the southern part of the town. After midnight, 15-16 April, three tanks and a bull-dozer were able to move up; the objective, with the exception of one house, was reported clear after daylight on the 16th.

Pushing on from Vergato during the day, the 81st Cavalry found the village of Africa and the road junction one mile west of Vergato clear of enemy. Troop "D" and a platoon of tanks from Company "F" advanced throughout the 16th and 17th along Highway 64, in conjunction

with Troop "C" and a platoon of tanks from the 13th Tank Battalion advancing on the east side of the Réno followed by Troop "B" (mounted). By the end of the 17th the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had advanced nearly five miles from Vergato northeast down the winding Reno Valley.

While Vergato was being cleared and Highway 64 opened, the Division main effort was concentrated on its left in a drive along the hills above the highway. The plan of action for the 15th was to seize positions on the transverse ridge across the front and then to swing east along that ridge to clear the strongpoint of Mount Pero, one mile northwest of and dominating Vergato. The 14th Armored Infantry Battalion pushed toward Suzzano in a column of companies. By 1445 Company C and a platoon of tanks from the 13th Tank Battalion reached Suzzano. Opposition encountered was at first that of scattered artillery fire and mines; heavy mortar fire was added later in the afternoon. The infantry turned east toward Mount Pero from Suzzano and by 2200 had elements just west of the objective. The push continued the next morning, hindered only by scattered snipers and rough terrain and by 0900, 16 April, Mount Pero was occupied.

At 0615 on the 16th the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion moved off from positions immediately south of Suzzano, continued two miles northeast, passed through elements of the 10th Mountain Division on Mount Mosca, which had just fallen, and at 1635 attacked toward the high ground one mile to the east. Initially opposition was determined, but by the end of the day it slackened and the battalion objective was taken. The 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, which had assembled at Suzzano during the morning, followed the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion to Mount Mosca

and occupied positions on that ridge from which the following day it was to launch an attack on the left and parallel to the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion drive. The 14th Armored Infantry Battalion which had held on Mount Pero, moved northwest during the evening in order to support the attack of the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion.

At 0730, 17 April, the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion began moving from Mount Mosca toward the next objective, Mount d'Avigo, three miles to the northeast and across a valley. The approach march covered ground previously taken by the 10th Mountain Division, so the actual attack started in the early afternoon. The first attempts were thrown back, but after a thirty-minute artillery barrage Company "B" had taken the hill by 1900 along with 250 prisoners. Company "C" continued eastward another mile to seize hills overlooking the Reno one mile north of the positions reached by the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in the valley below. At dawn on the same day the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, pushing eastward about one mile south of the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, continued its drive and advanced two miles to reach Mount Milano by 0930, likewise overlooking the Reno.

By the end of 17 April the armored infantry and the reconnaissance squadron of the 1st Armored Division had advanced as much as eight miles from their original front-line positions and held objectives on the Brown Phase Line. Two armored infantry battalions occupied the high ground of Mounts d'Avigo and Milano which dominated the Reno Valley from the west, and the 81st Cavalry was at a point on Highway 64 just east of Mount Milano. The attack of the 1st Armored Division had moved northeast, paralleling the Reno, against light to intense opposition

and sharp infantry actions, such as the laborious clearing of Vergato, had not been infrequent.

The original mission of the 1st Armored Division had provided for a continuation of the advance until it arrived at approximately the 370 Northing; except that it might, at any time, be passed through by another division. Monte d'Avigo was, however, destined to be the point farthest north in this zone that the armored infantry would reach; the general situation on IV Corps front had unfolded sufficiently by that time to permit the Army plans for further advance to assume a definite form.

3. The Snake Begins to Smoke

A green snake in deadly coil, emitting wisps of smoke through its dilated nostrils and with anger in its eyes, as depicted on the shoulder insignia of the Brazilians, was on the move. The 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, commanded by Major General Joao Batista Mascarenhas de Moraes, in line on the left of the 10th Mountain Division, was to be gradually relieved on the left flank by the 371st Infantry and on the right was, in turn, to successively relieve elements of the 10th Mountain Division. At the outset the Brazilians were to hold defensive positions, reconnoiter and, on General Crittenberger's order, follow up any enemy withdrawal along either the road Zocca-Guiglia-Bazzano or the alternate route through Monte Ombraro and Zappolino. Detailed plans for a limited advance to the northwest to occupy Montese and the high ground in the vicinity had been made by the staffs concerned. In the Division the hope ran high that the opportunity might soon come to take a more active part in the offensive. They had not long to wait, for at 1215, 14 April, General Crittenberger notified the Division Commander that he could start to move whenever he liked. Of the numerous reconnaissance

patrols that had gone out into the Montese area during the morning, none had made any contact. Over this same area the 3d Battalion, 11th Infantry, moved out with Montese and the high ground in the vicinity as its objective. There was only scattered opposition until the cemetery east of town was reached; at that point resistance stiffened considerably and Montese was finally taken after a very sharp fire fight. Several other small villages in the area were also occupied.

The enemy, very sensitive to any pressure northwest, proceeded to deliver one artillery concentration after another on the newly-won positions. That night and almost continuously for several days, the enemy artillery along the upper Panaro Valley rained down heavy fire on the Brazilians. During the first 24 hours of the IV Corps attack this area received over 1800 of the 2800 rounds of enemy shell fire reported in the entire IV Corps zone.

At 0945 on 15 April the attack was continued in three battalion strength. At the outset heavy mortar and artillery fire pounded the advancing infantrymen. The 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 11th Infantry, made some advances slightly north of Montese and strengthened and consolidated the positions taken in time to repulse an enemy counter-attack of platoon strength. On the 16th more artillery and mortar fire pummelled the front line elements, especially in the Montese area. An attack was planned for 1200, but the enemy discovered the preparation and dropped severe and timely mortar fire on the line of departure, which disorganized one company, disrupted all communications, and resulted in a postponement of the operation. On 17 April another battalion of the 10th Mountain Division was relieved by the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, resulting in a new inner-division boundary and the

assumption of additional responsibility on the Brazilian right. Two battalion reliefs within the Division were also effected, while the enemy kept up a steady program of harassing fire, both mortar and artillery.

The efforts of the 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, during the first phase of the spring drive had been effective and the Brazilians had made their distinct contribution to the IV Corps attack. Their aggressiveness had undoubtedly held in place both infantry and artillery which the German, had he dared to move them, could well have used elsewhere. The continued Brazilian activity in the Montese area had attracted a large amount of artillery and mortar fire which would otherwise have been directed at the flank of the 10th Mountain Division and would have complicated its problems of supply and security.

While the heavy shelling received in the Montese area had for the time being prevented a further Brazilian advance, the Division Commander had by no means abandoned his resolve to have a full share of the honors fall to Brazil in what might well be the final campaign in Italy. Casualties had not been light; they had amounted to an even 400 for the first four days. But while the Brazilian Division was temporarily at a standstill, it had no intention of abandoning the offensive, and eager eyes were watching for the enemy's first sign of weakness which would be the signal for a renewal of the advance.

4. IV Corps' Left Flank

The 371st Infantry, reinforced in the sector of IV Corps' long front to the left of the Brazilians, was to hold defensive positions, reconnoiter and, on Corps order, follow up any enemy withdrawal as far

as the Panaro River. For this purpose there were initially available the three organic battalions of the Regiment, plus one from the 365th Infantry. Three company-strength combat patrols pushed out on 14 April toward the enemy positions, moving from two to four kilometers before contact was made. All engaged the enemy and all received small arms, mortar and artillery fire. During the afternoon all three disengaged and, under cover of darkness, withdrew to former positions. On the following day no enemy activity whatever was observed although our patrolling was continued. On 16 April three company-strength patrols again moved out, all receiving severe artillery and mortar fire, but only one actually engaged the enemy. In that fight one enemy was killed, five wounded and two taken prisoners. No aggressive action was attempted on 17 April although a battalion relief was carried out.

On the left of IV Corps, where the 365th Infantry was guarding the Lima Valley corridor from positions about Cutigliano, a quiet day was spent on 14 April, activity being limited to driving off a too-inquisitive hostile patrol. Similar quiet prevailed on the following day although our reconnaissance was active. Scattered enemy artillery fire was received on 16 April and another enemy party approaching our lines was forced to withdraw. On 17 April another battalion was detached and moved to join the 371st Infantry; this left the Cutigliano garrison with only a token force and restricted activities from then on.

The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron held in corps reserve in the vicinity of Silla, carried out reconnaissance and made plans for moving promptly to intercept any enemy attempt to penetrate toward Porretta through the vulnerable saddle between Monte Belvedere and Rocca Corneta.

B. THE PICTURE CHANGES

By the end of the 17th the enemy situation on the IV Corps front had become critical. The divisions facing II Corps had given ground very slowly and had thus far yielded only Mount Sole and Monterumici. The devastating attack of IV Corps had smashed the enemy's shield to the ground and had driven a deep salient into his Apennine defensive positions. The 10th Mountain Division was moving into the last foothills prior to debouching into the level Po Valley and meeting only disorganized groups of enemy. The crushing weight of the assault had split the 94th Grenadier Division, the major portion was to the east of the 10th Mountain Division spearhead, while the remainder of the Division lay to the west with the 334th Grenadier Division. The 334th and 94th Grenadier Divisions had each lost over 1,000 combat infantrymen as prisoners to IV Corps and since the reserve of both divisions had for the most part been committed as early as the 15th, the only major enemy force available south of Bologna to throw into the breach was the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division. On the 17th this unit was hurriedly hurled in to fill the widening gap west of Bologna and was likewise being flailed by the Mountaineers. This last known reserve unit was not thrown in directly before the 10th Mountain Division but more to the left flank, between the 334th and 94th Grenadier Divisions; the intention probably having been to hold the west side of the gap and slow down the momentum of the attack. Further reinforcement was gained by shifting the 754th Grenadier Division west of Samoggia.

As his defenses crumbled between the Reno and Samoggia, the enemy was forced from the comparative safety of prepared positions to fall back to other lines. Therefore, in order to strengthen the penetration and press home the attack before the enemy could again get set, a number

of changes in the troop disposition of IV Corps were in order. The comparatively rapid progress made west of the Reno River had brought about many changes in the capabilities of IV Corps. In accordance with previous plans, the first move was in the commitment of the 85th Infantry Division in the zone of the 1st Armored Division, which had already reached the Brown Phase Line. The noteworthy change from previous plans was the attachment of the 85th Division to IV Corps, as the original plan of the Army attack order, Operations Instructions No. 7, called for the 85th Division to operate under II Corps and the Inter-Corps boundary to be shifted accordingly. This change was due primarily to the fact that the increasing momentum of the IV Corps advance could best be maintained by the attachment of another division without any change in boundaries and also to the fact that II Corps was fully occupied in the stiff fight on Highway 65. Immediately upon the attachment, General Crittenberger ordered the Division Commander, Major General John B. Coulter to relieve the 1st Armored Division and the eastern elements of the 10th Mountain Division without delay. The 85th would attack north on the morning of the 18th, clear Highway 64 and assist the advance of units in the adjoining zone. The 339th Regimental Combat Team of the 85th was to be held in Corps reserve and could be employed only upon Army order. Employing the 85th Division in this fashion would enable General Crittenberger to shift the 1st Armored to the more favorable tank terrain between the Panaro River and the 10th Mountain Division, where it would further widen the spearhead. The broadened attack of IV Corps as envisaged, was to continue the advance to the north, generally between the Reno and Samoggia Rivers, secure an exit into the Po Valley and assist the II Corps in capturing its objectives in the Black Phase Line.

With the 85th Division on the right, the 10th Mountain Division in the center and the 1st Armored Division on the left between the Brazilians and the Mountaineers, IV Corps was prepared to smash its assertive way into the Po Valley.

On 12 April, the day of the attachment of the 85th Division, its first regiment moved up from the Arno Valley along the twisted curves of Highway 64 to the vicinity of Africa. The division artillery, less one battalion, had been attached to IV Corps previously and was participating in the attack by reinforcing the fires of the 10th Mountain Artillery. The remainder of the Division came forward on 17 April and by 1830 had closed in an assembly area near Vergato and south of Castel d'Aiano. Relief of the 1st Armored Division by the 338th Infantry under Colonel William H. Mikkelson, and 337th Infantry under Colonel Oliver W. Hughes, began at once. The 3d Battalion, 338th Infantry completed the relief of the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and other right flank elements of the 1st Armored Division by 0610 on the 18th. By 1415, the 2d Battalion, 338th Infantry, after a dusty march across the hills from four miles southwest of Vergato, had relieved the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion one mile northwest of Mount Milano. The 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, followed along Highway 64 as regimental reserve. The 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry relieved the 1st Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry shortly after the capture of Mount Vignola and on its right the 2d Battalion advanced during the night of 17-18 April to positions south of Mount Luminasio, its first objective. The 85th Division was ready and in position to continue the attack.

Immediately upon relief the 1st Armored Division, in accordance with previous plans, moved across the rear of the 10th Mountain Division and for employment in the new area. Most of the armored vehicles of

the Division were still concentrated in the Africa area, as opportunities for their employment in the right zone had been very few. At 1600, 17 April, General Prichard ordered the movement of the division units to the area around Tole, behind the 10th Mountain Division and six miles due west of Mount Milano. The armored infantry battalions committed in the mountains had a slow and precarious march back to their half-tracks, for in addition to the terrain itself, there were mine fields and by-passed enemy forces that continued to offer resistance. It was almost as much a fight to come back as it had been to go forward. The first units to shift westward were the elements of the Combat Command "A"; the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion, the 1st Tank Battalion, the 91st Field Artillery Battalion, the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (less three troops) and Company "A", 16th Armored Engineer Battalion. Combat Command "B" composed of the 4th Tank Battalion, the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, the 27th Armored Field Battalion and two troops of the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, was to follow Combat Command "A" to the Tole area on the 18th.

During the afternoon and night of the 17th, Combat Command "A" rumbled over the Vergato-Suzzano road toward an assembly area near Tole. This highway had been badly demolished at a vulnerable turn beyond Suzzano, but Corps Engineers had succeeded in opening up a by-pass around the blown portion, utilizing for the purpose a very poor mountain road that would permit painfully slow one-way traffic. Despite the inadequacy of the road net, Combat Command "A" had assembled and was regrouping by early morning of the 18th; movement westward of the balance of the Division was undertaken as soon as the way was clear.

There was a certain amount of delay and confusion south of Tole and in the town itself, due to interdictory fire from enemy guns and the use of the same road by two divisions and part of a third; the 10th Mountain, the 1st Armored and one Regimental Combat Team of the 85th Division. Corps artillery was also displacing forward over the same road at the same time. Traffic control was a real problem and was aggravated by the presence of many individual vehicles that were trying to get forward by infiltration at the earliest possible moment. These conditions were unavoidable in view of the scarcity of roads and the urgency for the movement of the Armored Division and the Regimental Combat Team of the 85th Division, which from their respective starting points, were bound to create cross traffic. However, by the morning of the 18th, the road was somewhat cleared and while still heavily burdened with traffic, was approaching normal conditions. The combined efforts of the 1st Armored and the IV Corps Engineers resulted in the opening of a second route from Suzano which rejoined the main road at a point about one and three-quarters miles beyond Tole. This was devoted exclusively to the passage of armored vehicles until the movement westward had been completed and by its use much congestion that otherwise would have prevailed was avoided.

Tribute should be paid here to the omnipresent but generally unsung 2 1/2 ton 6x6 cargo truck, and to the man who drove it. From the standpoint of dependability for delivery of essential combat supplies through difficult country such as now confronted IV Corps, the vehicle was invaluable. The driver, who knew no hours and frequently drove the clock around with only an occasional cat-nap and another cup of coffee, made

his contribution to the success of the campaign just as sure as the combat soldier, whose groceries and bullets made up the load.

No story of this operation could pretend to be complete without also mentioning the lowly pack-mule, and the important part he played in IV Corps transportation. At the opening of the drive there were five Italian pack companies attached to our divisions; in addition, the 10th Mountain had received some 600 mules, which were used by the artillery and the Quartermaster Battalion, both of which were pack outfits but had been motorized when they reached Italy. These animals and the Americans or Italians who led them, did an indescribable piece of work in getting, food, ammunition and medical supplies to advance elements in the most inaccessible parts of the zone. At times, unorthodox as it may seem, gasoline and oil were actually delivered by these beasts of burden to some of the armored units.

C. OUT OF THE FOOTHILLS INTO THE VALLEY

1. The 10th Mountain Severs Highway 9

The IV Corps attack was hardly slowed down while a new division was committed and another shifted its entire axis of attack from the right to the left flank. On the morning of the 18th, the 10th Mountain Division continued smashing ahead. Eleven miles ahead of the most advanced elements lay Highway 9, the main east-west artery behind the German lines. On the left the 85th Mountain Infantry was still guarding the left flank of the Division and maintaining contact with the Brazilian Expeditionary Force. The 87th Mountain Infantry held Mout Ferra and San Prospero, overlooking the Samoggia and on its right the 86th Mountain Infantry had reached positions one-half mile north of Montepostore.

At 0930, 18 April, the 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry began a swift northward advance which led to the capture of the hamlet of Sulmonte, two and a half miles north of Montepastore. Light resistance composed mainly of small arms and machine gun fire, was encountered along the way but did not appreciably slow the advance. However, the Battalion ran into heavy going about 1300 when an attempt was made to move northwest about 1,000 yards from Sulmonte to Mongiorgio. Such a nasty battle developed that at 1900 it was decided to pull back the leading elements of the Battalion toward Sulmonte and hold for the night. On its right the 2d Battalion moved to the northeast from Montepastore toward the village of San Chierlo against considerable machine gun and small arms fire. Even with armored support the Battalion was held up to the extent that at 1300 it was still 900 yards west of San Chierlo; however, by evening the village was taken. Despite this resistance the enemy was withdrawing as rapidly as possible; his horse-drawn columns making excellent targets for the many air missions flown by our planes on the 18th. By evening the 10th Mountain Division had counted 2,918 prisoners and small, scattered groups all along the front were still surrendering.

During the day the Brazilians had completed the relief of the 85th Mountain Infantry and during the night the Regiment moved into an assembly area at San Chierlo. The next morning found the 85th passing through the 86th Infantry and into the lead of the attack, which was now directed toward Mount San Michele, about three miles north of San Chierlo. At 1135, after overcoming several pockets of resistance with the aid of tanks and tank destroyers, the 1st Battalion occupied Mount

San Michele and prepared to continue the advance. Before long the enemy withdrawal broke into a rout and a request was sent back for all available armor, for the enemy was beginning to flee in complete disorganization. By 1630 the 1st Battalion held a road junction fully three miles northeast of Mount San Michele and had stopped there only to allow the supporting elements and reserves to catch up.

To the left the 87th Mountain Infantry took up the battle of Mongiorgio on the morning of 19 April and after bitter house-to-house fighting finally controlled the village at 1015. The advance was quickly resumed with all three battalions abreast and moving to the northeast parallel to the Samoggia River. Enemy delaying actions necessitated flanking operations on two occasions, but by nightfall the Regiment held a line extending from Mongiorgio through Monte San Pietro almost to Mount Avezzano.

The 86th Mountain Infantry after being passed through by the 85th, started forward at 0700 and by nightfall the Regiment had crossed into the center of the Division zone and was in position just north of Mount San Michele. From the final forward line on the evening of 19 April all three regiments of the Division could look northward over the last few rolling hills into the Po Valley. The enemy was completely disorganized everywhere east of the Samoggia and was in no position to offer any further defense before our forces debouched onto the Po plain. West of the Samoggia, however, the enemy was still resisting the efforts of the 1st Armored Division.

On 20 April, the seventh day of continuous attack, the 10th Mountain Division increased the speed of advance by putting the infantry aboard tanks, jeeps and trucks as it debouched into the Po Valley, the first

American unit to fight its way out of the rugged Apennines. The three regiments descended abreast from the hills and swept out onto the floor of the Po Valley, their objective set at Ponte Samoggia where Highway 9 crossed the Samoggia River. The 86th Mountain Infantry in the center moved across the line of departure at 0700 and during the morning hours did not encounter any small arms or machine gun fire, but were constantly harassed by enemy artillery and mortar fire falling accurately on the various routes of advance. Elements of Companies "A" and "B" drove down into the valley ahead of the tanks to establish road blocks at important road junctions within the sector. As soon as the supporting tanks and tank destroyers joined them a half hour later, the infantry again moved out, to attack toward Highway 9 in the direction of Ponte Samoggia.

What an inspiring sight it was to the Mountaineers to be able to look for miles ahead over broad, green, flat valley land; on the north could be seen the blue haze of the towering Alps. There was no time for the advance elements to drink in this blessed sight - the land of milk and honey - the Germans were on the run and this was the terrain on which to "chop'em up". During the advance across the valley floor, the 86th Infantry met very little organized resistance. Whenever they did meet small pockets of resistance, they immediately wiped out the Germans with the aid of the supporting armor. At 1500 the 1st Battalion cut Highway 9, severing the main supply route running from Bologna. By 1900 all three battalions had advanced into the valley and were moving toward this main highway. The 3d Battalion pushed on to the northwest and at 2055 reached Ponte Samoggia where defensive positions were set up for the night. The remainder of the Regiment held a three mile section of Highway 9, running southeast from the Samoggia River crossing.

During the 20th, the 87th Mountain Infantry continued to advance along the left flank with the intention of covering and guarding the advance of the 86th Mountain Infantry. Enemy resistance supported by artillery fire from the northwest slowed the advance during the morning and was particularly strong around the village of Pradalbino. However, the advance was not to be delayed but continued through the numerous pockets of resistance and by 2310, reached the valley floor. The Regiment set up a defense with all three battalions on line facing north toward Highway 9, about three miles away. The 85th Mountain Infantry, after a steady advance against delaying action on the right of the 86th, reached the valley at 1500, and before midnight was also along Highway 9. In seven days the 10th Mountain Division had broken through the enemy's defense in the Apennines and had advanced a distance of sixteen miles, from Castel d'Aiano to Fnote Samoggia.

At his forward command post located in a fruit orchard west of Cereglio, General Crittenberger was overly pleased with the report that Highway 9 was severed by his forward elements. He had laid a wager with General Keyes of II Corps that his forces would be the first to reach the valley highway. The wager was a case of Scotch and General Crittenberger had won. The toast to the success of the valiant mountaineers was to be made later.

2. The 85th Division Committed

On the morning of 18 April there still lay ahead of the forward elements on the right of the IV Corps zone, some ten miles of rough territory from which the Kraut had to be driven before the 85th Division could reach the flat Po Valley west of Bologna. The enemy was moving back, but very reluctantly, apparently not yet convinced of his desperate situation.

General Coulter's plan of maneuver was to seize Mount Luminasio and the hills immediately to the north and then to continue on to the Po Valley. Enemy defenses in this region proved to be limited and consisted of hastily thrown-up strong points centered about farms and small villages. The first and also highest range of hills to be attacked dropped off to the east in barren, steep walls to the valley of the Reno; in the western part of the division zone the hills were less rugged and, therefore, less difficult. The terrain steadily improved with each mile of the advance to become an area of rolling fields, scattered farm houses and tiny villages.

At 0930 on the 18th, following a fifteen minute artillery preparation, the 85th Division attacked with two regiments abreast. Practically no opposition was met because the enemy had been disorganized and found it difficult to establish a defensive line. On the division right along the Reno the 338th Infantry pushed forward steadily and before nightfall the 2d and 3d Battalions after being delayed by mines had reached positions about two miles north of Piano di Venola. On the left the 337th Infantry, also having very little difficulty, stopped the 1st Battalion for the night north and northeast of Mount Bonsara, prepared to seize the Rasiglio ridge the next day. Without a shot the 2d Battalion took Mount Luminasio two miles north of Mount Milano and although slowed by rough ground advanced another one and one-half miles by late afternoon. From that point on, resistance stiffened, particularly from the Lagune Ridge one mile to the northeast. In view of the enemy stand, the 3d Battalion, 337th Infantry, was ordered to move up to assist in clearing the ridge and then to continue to the north while the

2d Battalion continued eastward. At 0200, 19 April, Companies "I" and "G", assisted by Company "E", made a coordinated attack which was stopped by grenades and intense rifle and machine gun fire.

The series of boundary changes which were to plague the 85th Division from this time on now began. At 0340, 19 April, before the objective was taken, orders were received changing boundaries and shifting the 85th Division farther west in order to make room for troops of the II Corps, which were being shifted westward. All 85th Division troops outside the new boundary had to be moved west before daylight. The 338th Infantry along Highway 64 was relieved by units from the II Corps which had been sent across the Reno River in preparation for the shift.

The only 85th Division unit unaffected by the change was the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, on the extreme left flank, and it was ordered to keep pushing to the north. At 0500 on the 19th the Battalion, in column of companies, started down a ridge-road leading to Rasiglio. By 0735 the leading company, still one mile short of the objective, was hit by heavy flanking fire from the wide-open right. One company was sent over to quiet this opposition while two companies pushed on north. When the advance was halted for the night, the leading elements were almost one mile north of Basiglio and slightly to the right rear of the 10th Mountain Division.

At 0600, 20 April, the 1st and 3d Battalions, 337th Infantry, supported by a company of tanks and tank destroyers, resumed the attack with the object of clearing two parallel ridges east of Lavina Creek as far as the road junction at Cesso. The Regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, by-passing the enemy resistance, made a quick thrust around the left along the Lavina Creek road to seize the village

itself and head off any enemy trying to escape into the Po Valley. The Division left flank was secured by the advance of the 10th Mountain Division which had cut Highway 9 at 1500; the right, though open, was not considered too dangerous in view of the confusion existing in the enemy ranks west of the Reno. Because the 10th Mountain Division had not completed its shift toward Mount Avezzano the 85th was not yet in possession of its narrow zone. Moreover, the 88th Division on the right was behind and therefore had not been able to relieve the 85th Division troops now in the II Corps zone.

The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, 337th Infantry, moving by road was at Gesso in the valley by 0825 on the 20th. The two battalions in the hills on the right advanced more slowly for each had to knock out knots of resistance which fought violently before capitulating. At noon, while the fight was still going on in the hills, the 85th Division was ordered to send forces to the right in a wide sweep across the front of elements of two divisions of II Corps. The objective was the capture of the Bologna suburb and road center of Casalecchio and later the outposting of the road northwest of Casalecchio in order to cut off the retreat of the disorganized enemy up Highway 64. The 2d Battalion, assisted by Company "C", the anti-tank company, the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon and attached tanks and tank destroyers was assigned the job.

The leading company of the Battalion, after a sharp clash with enemy infantry, took a village on the outpost line one mile west of Casalecchio at 1800. Before darkness the Battalion held positions all along the

projected outpost line between Casalecchio and Lavina Creek bridge. Reaching that objective had not been unopposed, even the town was not entered until late in the day after both II and IV Corps units had heavily shelled it. Many Germans cut off by this quick thrust from the left continued to fight and tried to move throughout the evening. Early in the night the 2d Battalion beat off three counter-attacks and about midnight the 3d Battalion was able to clear the last high ground south of Gesso. That night men of the 337th Infantry received their first rest since entering the line on the 18th. After midnight troops of II Corps on the right and 538th Infantry on the left passed through to continue without let-up the drive to smash the German forces before them. Casualties in the Division for the period 18-20 April had been very light, totaling only 88 in all.

3. 1st Armored Division in New Zone

By comparison, the valleys of the Panaro and Samoggia Rivers in the new zone assigned to the 1st Armored Division were much more suitable for armor than the mountains just west of Highway 64. There was a good road net, the streams were fordable in many spots and the country, although still rugged and broken, would soon fall away gently to the north. As soon as the plains began, there would be a multitude of roads, not many of which could be blocked effectively by demolitions. All in all, if enemy resistance was not too determined, it looked as though the tanks might quickly reach the valley and roll northwest to comb the Germans from their crossing sites along the south bank of the Po. With the 10th Mountain Division pushing north in the center and the 85th keeping up the pressure along Highway 64, an armored thrust in the general direction of Castelfranco dell 'Emilia would broaden the front of the IV Corps effort and might well hasten the break-through into the valley.

While units of Combat Command "B" under Brigadier General Maurice W. Daniel were still moving into position at Tole on 18 April, Combat Command "A" under Colonel William H. Howze, operating in three columns, attacked north at 1220 astride the Samoggia Valley. At first progress was slow because of road conditions and intense artillery fire on forward elements, but steady advance was being made by the end of the day. The right column, consisting of a platoon of medium tanks, a platoon of infantry, and a squad of engineers, was opposed chiefly by artillery and small groups of infantry. The two columns on the left, however, one going down the valley and one west thereof, struck much harder going. The center force, with the same composition as the right column, captured the valley town of Savigno, five miles north of Tole by 1830, and attained a point off the west side of the Samoggia nearly four miles beyond the village by dark. During the night three counter-attacks employing armor-piercing shells and bazookas knocked out five tanks and forced a withdrawal of two miles. The western column, composed of a company of medium tanks and a company of infantry, pushed north two miles from Tole and then swung east for a thrust toward Mount Ombraro, a hilltop road junction and strong-point three and one-half miles west and a little south of Savigno. This threatened the enemy's escape route through Zocca. Although delayed by demolitions and mines, the forces continued northwest until stopped 1,000 yards east of Mount Ombraro. Here the enemy resisted strongly with many well-handled self-propelled guns, in addition to artillery and mortar fire. The enemy garrison of some eighty men supported by a few tanks and anti-tank weapons beat off our repeated efforts to dislodge them during the night. In addition, the 1st Armored Division thrust down the left was bearing the brunt of

enemy efforts to strike into the flank of the 10th Mountain Division spearhead. On the 18th the chief source of opposition had been infantry and anti-tank weapons; however, late in the day the Germans brought up the armor of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division.

At 0630, 19 April, the 1st Armored Division attacked in five columns of armor and infantry. Combat Command "B", freshly committed, was using two columns on the left of Combat Command "A". These two columns found strong resistance and made little progress. The left column, replacing Combat Command "A" elements just east of Monte Ombraro, was unable to take the stronghold due to heavy anti-tank and small-arms fire. The right column reached a small village about 1000 yards due west of Savigno. On the division right Combat Command "A" continued its three-column push on a narrower front astride the Samoggia Valley. Heavy shelling from enemy tanks and self-propelled artillery fell chiefly on the central column, which regained only about one-half the ground lost in the German counter-attack of the night before. The enemy fought tank with tank in a desperate effort to stop or slow the break-through which was by then assuming disastrous proportions. While the center column reached a point in the valley nearly three miles north of Savigno, the flanking columns made much smaller gains and were forced to stop about two miles behind the elements in the center.

On the 20th stubborn resistance was encountered all day. Our surprise attack against Monte Ombraro made no headway during the morning but during the evening the efforts of the infantry of Combat Command "B" were successful. At 1300 the 13th Tank Battalion, the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, and Company "C", 16th Armored Engineer Battalion, were added to Combat Command "A", still moving in three columns down the valley. The necessary regrouping took place during the afternoon without

slowing the advance. The 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron relieved and passed through the central column at 1615. At 1900 a coordinated attack was launched by the 6th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions and the 13th Tank Battalion. Three tanks were lost to self-propelled gunfire, but at 0320, 21 April, the 13th Tank Battalion had reached Crespellano in the Po Valley, due south of Ponte Samoggia.

Thus the 1st Armored Division, moving through broken country and against a stubborn enemy that was trying his best to delay the broadened shoulder of our advance had, after three days of heartbreaking effort, hammered its way forward so that its main forces were very close to the plains of the Po Valley. By midnight reconnaissance elements were out into the valley and at points beyond Highway 9; but enemy forces in Bazzano, an important road center that could not very well be by-passed, still were offering determined resistance. Except for 20 April, when the fight had been toughest, personnel casualties had been light. A considerable number of tanks were out due to enemy action and the narrow mountain roads and mule paths.

Armor in Italy had been persevering, to say the least, for some of the mountainous country successfully crossed by our tanks and tank destroyers had most certainly put both drivers and maintenance crews to the acid test of ability and patience. Throughout the dark winter days when specialists had parked their vehicles and gone into the line as infantrymen, the hope had nevertheless survived that some way, some time, the Division would come out upon favorable ground where armor could really roll as it was meant to roll. There must have been many an expectant smile, for from the last foothills of the Apennines, men looked out over the flat stretches of the Po Valley knowing that the dash was about to start.

At dark on the 20th, IV Corps had three divisions coming out of the hills and onto the plain; the 85th Division just west of Bologna, the 10th Mountain Division about Ponte Samoggia and the ^{1st} last Armored Division south thereof. The advance so far had been speedy for hill fighting; ahead lay possibilities of seven swifter maneuver. Through the gap which had been opened up by the 10th Mountain Division and kept open by the Divisions on its flanks, our troops were ready to dash to the Po.

" PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN "

CHAPTER XXI * - - - - -

THE CHASE ACROSS THE VALLEY

The enemy had been dislodged and he was partially disorganized, but only by our unrelenting pursuit could his withdrawal be turned into a rout. At 1110, 21 April, the Army commander sent a directive to Corps and Division Commanders stating that a strong pursuit was indicated and a maximum use of transportation would be made; artillery and tanks were to carry infantry, and organic transportation on good roads would be loaded to capacity. When any opportunities came to pursue or cut off the enemy, unit commanders would utilize every possible means of getting fighting personnel, guns, and ammunition forward. The emphasis was placed on speed and more speed; for the first time in the Italian campaign we had an enemy falling back over terrain suitable for swift pursuit. The Germans were short of vehicles and gasoline and as a result they were retreating slowly across an open valley with a superb network of roads and they had to cross the unfordable Po River. The slow, persistent tempo of mountain fighting was to be transformed into a headlong dash to reach the Po in order to pick off the Heinies as they tried to cross.

In preparation for this, even while the objectives of the Black Phase Line were being cleared on the 19th of April, Fifth Army Operations Instructions No. 9 dated 19 April, had ordered a continuation of the attack with the aim of capturing or isolating Bologna, and destroying the enemy south of the Po River. More specifically, IV Corps was to secure the line of the Panaro River west of Camposanto, and be prepared to continue to the Po and seize the line Ostiglia-Borgoforte. One infantry regiment was still to be held in army reserve.

A. "KEYSTONE" SLASHES TO THE PO.

On 20 April, as IV Corps drove out of the low Apennine hills, General Crittenberger issued orders for the debouchment into the valley and for the continuation of the attack to seize the line of the unfordable Panaro River, the major obstacle between the mountains and the Po. He also included instructions to the effect that units be held in readiness to press on from there to seize crossing sites on the Po between the towns of Ostiglia and Borgoforte. The main drive was to be made by three divisions; the 1st Armored Division on the left, the 10th Mountain Division (reinforced) in the center, and the 85th Division (less the 539th Infantry) on the right. The 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, immediately west of the 1st Armored Division, was to reconnoiter aggressively and to follow enemy withdrawals; the 365th and 371st Infantry on the lightly-held extreme left, were also to continue following the enemy.

The only concrete information on the enemy situation in Corps Headquarters at this time was that the 8th Mountain Division and the 65th and 305th Infantry Division had all been forced to withdraw beyond Bologna, in an effort to contain our right flank, while the 334th and 94th Infantry Divisions and the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, reportedly joined by the 114th Division, were doing what they could on our left flank. The enemy seemed to be falling back behind the Panaro on a wide front.

1. The 10th Mountain Reaches the Po.

At 0630 on 21 April the attack was continued by the 10th Mountain Division. Preparation was made for the rapid exploitation of the enemy's

disorganization by the organization of elements of the division into a hard-hitting fast-moving group. A task force, consisting of the 3d Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry; Company "C", 751st Tank Battalion; one platoon, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; one company, 126th Mountain Engineer Battalion; and the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, was formed under the command of the Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Robinson E. Duff. Its mission was to move by motor to the town of Bomporto and to secure the bridge crossing the Panaro River 13 miles north-northwest from Ponte Samoggia. The 1st Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, was delegated as Task Force reserve. This would be an advance over routes the condition of which were unknown, and the successful completion of the mission depended upon the speed which the force could travel. Speed was of the essence. The bridge had to be taken, otherwise the advance to the Po River would be greatly hampered.

At 0630, 21 April, Task Force Duff crossed the initial point at Ponte Samoggia and raced north. The armored column moved with lightning speed across the pre-planned route, wiping out small pockets of enemy resistance as they were met. Resistance was not strong but the column was constantly harassed by the much-surprised enemy who had been left to offer some delaying action. Captured prisoners were sent back without guards, as every man was essential to the success of the operation. The Task Force devised the plan whereby the prisoners were sent marching south along the roads parallel to the one it was using so that they would be picked up later in the day by the other advancing infantry units. The rapid advance along the narrow roads, bypassing all towns, continued all day. The Task Force was out of communication much of the time; however, the balance of the Division advanced

as fast as possible in the wake of the spearhead. By 1600, the Bomporto Bridge was securely held by Task Force Duff. The bridge was found prepared for demolition and the engineers immediately set to work removing this hazard. Over sixty prisoners were taken in the short fight for the bridge and were started on their way to the rear. Shortly after this key objective was secured the enemy somehow regained his wits and in defiance to Task Force Duff, shelled the area for well over a half an hour.

Before midnight the rest of the Division was assembled just south of the newly seized bridge. Acting on information from General Crittenger, the Division Commander ordered Task Force Duff to once again make a lightning stab deep into enemy territory. This time the force was to continue north on 22 April and secure the town of San Benedetto Po on the south bank of the Po River, twenty-five miles north of Bomporto.

At dawn on the 22d of April, the Task Force once again moved out, with tanks and tank destroyers leading the column. Shortly after leaving Bomporto the column became divided because of a German bazooka team which had waited in hiding and allowed half of the column to pass before it fired on one of the tanks in the center of the Force. This disorganized the column to some extent, but the infantry wasted no time in detrucking and wiping out the pocket after which the rapid chase continued. The advance was astoundingly swift; save for this one halt mentioned, the column sped almost straight to its objective without interruption. By 1800 the town of San Benedetto Po was secured, and by 2300 the remainder of the Division began to assemble along the south bank of the river. The enemy was completely confused by this lightning stab and surrendered willingly. Italian

Partisans operating in small bands mopped up the scattered groups of enemy troops from fields and farm houses and turned them over to the Americans. A grim note went along with the seizure of the important river town, for about an hour before the objective had been reached, the commander of the "blitz" force, General Duff, had been seriously wounded by fragments from an anti-tank mine.

The rest of the Division continued to shuttle forward by trucks and captured enemy vehicles. Occasionally determined pockets of resistance were uncovered, but these were left for small detachments to control and clean up. About 35 road miles had been covered during the day and that night all three regiments were on the south banks of the Po. Preparations were begun at once to force a crossing of this formidable river barrier on the following day. Crossing material was sent for at 1800, 22 April, and the 87th Mountain Infantry was designated as the first Regiment to cross the river which was 300 yards wide at this point.

2. The 85th Division Pulls up Alongside.

The 85th Division had secured the Samoggia line for 4-1/2 miles northeast from Ponte Samoggia with three battalions of the 338th Infantry during the morning of 21 April. Operating in two battalion columns, each with a platoon of tanks and tank destroyers and led by the 85th Reconnaissance Troop, the 338th Infantry started for the Panaro shortly after noon with the intention of seizing the bridge at Camposanto six miles northeast of Bomporto. The lead company in each column was loaded on the armored vehicles and the remainder of the infantry moved forward by truck. By 0610, 22 April, the leading elements reached the Panaro west of Camposanto. The 337th Infantry, which had been organized into two motorized task forces, took up the attack to seize the Camposanto bridge and press on to the Po.

The town of Camposanto proved to be held in some strength by anti-aircraft troops who, it was learned later, had been reinforced by the 1097th Security Battalion from Bologna. The bridge, already mined for demolition, was saved by the heroic work of an engineer sergeant who crawled across the span to cut the detonation wires. Clearing the town itself proved an all-day job even with the aid of the 6th South African Armored Division operating on the right, and not until nightfall were the 1st and 3d Battalions, 337th Infantry, able to cross the river. The 2d Battalion meanwhile had crossed at Bomporto, through the 10th Mountain Division, and was already on its way north.

All night the 337th Infantry pushed on, and by 1045, 23 April, the 3d Battalion Task Force reached the Po at Quingentole, about halfway between the crossing site of the 10th Mountain Division and the Revere-Ostiglia bridge on the Division and Corps right boundary. A line was established along the river to head off any escaping Germans, and the 85th Reconnaissance Troop moved on to Revere and partially cleared the town; the bridge was found to have been wrecked several days before. The region, however, was by no means clear; enemy forces, ignorant of the fact that they had been beaten to the river, were still streaming north to Revere-Ostiglia. During the night one group tried to force a crossing but was driven away, and the next day the 88th Division also had some trouble with Germans who had infiltrated back into the town after the 85th Division units had moved out to assemble for the crossing at Quingentole.

During the dash from the Panaro to the Po the 1st and 3d Battalion, 337th Infantry, picked up over 1,000 prisoners each. The Division left had been well covered by the 10th Mountain, but a wide gap existed along

the 85th-88th Division boundary throughout the movement. The 339th Infantry under Lt. Colonel John T. English, which had reverted to Division control at 1200, 21 April, was mopping up behind the advance elements and later took over the right side of the river line. At 1900, 23 April, a westward shift in the corps boundary gave to the 88th Division Highway 12 and the river bank as far west as Quingentole; the relief was completed on the morning of the 24th.

By early morning of 23 April IV Corps had its two right divisions on the south bank of the mighty Po, over which once the Legions of Caesar had crossed on their forced marches to Gaul. General Crittenberger's IV Corps was the northernmost Allied force in Italy and was ready to loose its divisions across the river in order to continue the relentless pursuit of the disorganized Hun.

3. The 1st Armored Picks up Speed.

The 1st Armored Division, handicapped by an open and troublesome left flank, was somewhat slower in getting underway. It will be recalled that the 1st Armored ended the day of 20 April with its leading elements at the 500 Northing, and that Bazzano was still offering stiff opposition to the breakthrough into the valley.

As the 10th Mountain and 85th Infantry Division were leaving Highway 9, leading elements of the 1st Armored's right column (Combat Command "A") were just emerging into the plain at the town of Crespellano, previously passed through by the 10th Mountain Division. From Crespellano Combat Command "A", operating in two columns of infantry and armor, moved to Highway 9 and thence northwest to converge on Castelfranco, four and one-half miles beyond Ponte Samoggia. Going was slow because of scattered groups of enemy, demolitions, and canals, but at 1918, a tank battalion had

reached the southern outskirts of Castelfranco with other elements echeloned to its rear. The city of Modena, a Fascist center, reportedly strongly held, was bypassed and cleared later with the assistance of the organized Partisans in the area. In the Roman days, Modena was known as Motina and was the scene where Mark Antony was defeated by Octavius and the Roman Senate in 43 B. C.

The Panaro was crossed four miles north of Highway 9 over a bridge captured after a brief fire fight. The river crossing constituted the last major obstacle encountered on the road to the Po, and Combat Command "A", with the 1st Tank Battalion and the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion on the left and the 13th Tank Battalion and the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion on the right, raced practically unhindered to its objective. By 0420, 23 April, the left column was at the town of Guastalla on the Po. Six hours later the right column, after some delay at a blown bridge, reached the river at the village of Luzzara.

On the Division's left, Combat Command "B" came along more slowly and did not emerge into the broad-sweeping valley of the Po until 1420, 21 April, at the town of Bazzano. From there the columns swung north and northwest to reach the Panaro south of Castelfranco. Considerable difficulty was encountered in making the river crossing on the 22d. The 4th Tank Battalion had to move north of Highway 9 into the zone of Combat Command "A" in order to cross. Skirting back to the east and south of Modena in order to return to their zone, the tanks had a sharp fight outside the city; one tank was damaged, several enemy self-propelled guns were knocked out, but the city was not entered. The 11th Armored Infantry Battalion forded the Panaro three miles south of Castelfranco and ran into a sharp fire fight which lasted until tanks were brought up. The 81st Cavalry

Reconnaissance Squadron, protecting the left and, until 1800, maintaining contact with the Brazilians, also had some trouble crossing the Panaro south of Castelfranco. Modena, in which Partisans had been street fighting with the Hun for about twelve hours, was reported clear by General Prichard, who rode through the city at 1730.

That night the exploitation by armor went on unabated, with the destruction and dislocation of the enemy abundant enough to meet the wildest dreams of any tanker. Rear echelon troops, such as construction units, field bakeries, etc., were overrun; although the enemy was badly disorganized, his resistance was not entirely lacking. Prisoners stated that battle groups had been formed from elements of the 90th Panzer Grenadier and the 94th and 334th Infantry Divisions, and the opposition of these makeshift organizations was not to be disregarded.

The drive to the Po and Secchia Rivers, swift as it was, by-passed many German troops which had to be handled by extensive mopping-up operations conducted by special task forces organized for the purpose during and after 23 April while the 1st Armored Division guarded the crossing sites of the Po farther to the east. By midnight the 13th Tank Battalion, ordered attached to the 10th Mountain Division by IV Corps to aid the mountaineers in the initial river crossing, was enroute from south of Guastalla to the San Benedetto-Po bridge site.

The 1st Armored Division took 1,171, 1,400, and 2,500 prisoners on the 21st, 22d, and 23d of April respectively. Three hundred vehicles, including ten tanks, were claimed on the 23d; the next day 450 vehicles and ten anti-tank guns were captured and nearly that much material destroyed. In IV Corps, between noon of 23 April and noon of 24 April,

over 6,000 prisoners sat on their haunches in Corps cages, no small portion of which represented enemy personnel originally by-passed in our advance.

4. The Brazilians Scent Game.

On 19 April, aggressive patrolling was carried out in the direction of the Panaro River, extending to Ranocchio and Bertocchi. The last remaining unit of the 10th Mountain was relieved by the Brazilians at 2225. This relief shifted Brazilian responsibility farther to the east, the boundary between it and the 1st Armored Division becoming roughly the 640 Easting. Before the Brazilian troops there now lay the twisting road to Zocca, an important town and road junction which the Germans had always considered one of their key points. Its defenders were growing a little jittery on 20 April, because the armored thrust that had penetrated to within five kilometers of them two days previously, was now apparently by-passing Monte Ombraro and threatened to cut them off. Brazilian reconnaissance patrols that pushed out across the entire zone during the morning were followed by all front line units. No opposition was met except in front of Zocca where a determined fight developed. The average Brazilian advance for the day was from five to six kilometers; on the right, two battalions supported by TD's wound up within about two kilometers of Zocca, while on the left flank and echeloned slightly forward, the Division Reconnaissance Troop was astride the road a little short of the town.

A platoon of the Reconnaissance Troop entered Zocca at 0710B on 21 April in spite of the delay in launching the main attack, because the high winds prevented the artillery planes from taking off. However, the advance did get started at 0930, and by 1700, two battalions had established a three-mile front along the high ground about a mile north of Zocca. The

Reconnaissance Troop moved well out and arrived on the east bank of the Panaro, opposite Marano. It could not cross, however, due to determined resistance from the high ground north of the river. On 23 April, the left battalion, holding defensive positions, was relieved by elements of the 371st Infantry, giving additional manpower to the forward effort. A IV Corps order issued during the day directed the Brazilians to advance in the northeastern part of their zone to a line Formigine-Maranello-Denzano, which would effectively block Highway 12 leading out of the Apennines, as well as stop any attempted exit from the Panaro Valley. Enemy forces to the south would in the future have to go farther west to look for escape routes to the north. By the evening of 23 April the Panaro had been crossed at Marano and Vignola, and columns were continuing on toward Castelvetro and Rola. An infantry battalion was motorized and began movement forward to Formigine. The rapid advance was continued in the Brazilian zone on 24 April against only slight opposition. Task Force Nelson, reactivated for this operation, consisting of Infantry and Armor, had reached Formigine the previous day, and was now joined by the motorized battalion. Pushing aggressively on westward, other Brazilian elements passed Sassuolo and occupied Scandiano, thus blocking two other avenues of enemy escape from the mountains.

Somewhere below the Brazilians, the enemy forces that had been holding the westernmost part of the line must be marching northward, hoping to reach the valley and gain the safety of the north bank of the Po before the IV Corps thrust up Highway 9 could cut them off. Parts of the Brazilian Division had begun their combat service facing some of these same Germans, and remembered them not too pleasantly. It was, therefore, only

natural that the task of contesting this march back to "die Heimat" was one which the whole Division could definitely relish.

5. The Western Barriers Vanish.

Abetone, Monte Cimone and Fanano are names that will long be remembered by IV Corps men who went through the long winter in the rugged central part of our long Appennine defense line. They represented hostile barriers to their further progress - places they would have liked to go, but could not, without fighting. When it came time for the spring offensive, none of these enemy-held localities lay in front of the main effort and consequently the troops that held our own lines in that area had only the mission of following as the enemy withdrew. More and more Partisans were used on this front as good weather came. The members of these bands knew every mile of the lofty peaks and narrow valleys of the region. Their services were of great value and their presence strengthened our lines at a time when every man was needed for the main effort.

Patrols probed ahead of our positions in the central sector, and, as the main attack progressed northward, found fewer and fewer signs of the enemy force. The 365th Infantry pushed up Highway 12 to Abetone on 20 April and sent patrols on toward Pievepelago. The highway was in bad condition from demolitions, but mine-sweeping and repair work were immediately started with the scant means at hand. The next day the Partisans took possession of Alpe Tre Potenze and Monte Gomigo. Two other peaks, Libro Aperto and Monte Cimone, were also found to be clear of the enemy.

Also on 21 April, farther east, the 371st Infantry moved out in points along the Leo River, more than three miles ahead of former positions, and there established a new defensive line. That same afternoon a Partisan group occupied Fanano. Pievepelago was occupied by a company of the 365th

Infantry on 22 April, and patrols began reconnaissance north on Highway 12. Meanwhile on the right, the 371st Infantry had pushed patrols out to the east bank of the Panaro without encountering resistance and found the roads passable. On 24 April, IV Corps Operations Instructions ordered the 371st to advance and occupy that portion of Highway 12 in its zone. Motorized patrols reconnoitered the Sestola-Fanano road, from Fanano westward to Lama, and also pushed up the road all the way to Modena. No enemy was encountered and the Highway was found to be in fair condition.

The two battalions of the 365th Infantry serving with the 371st Infantry, reverted to their parent unit and the 365th Infantry was detached from IV Corps at 1420, 24 April, and passed to Fifth Army control. On 25 April, the 371st Infantry was ordered to the Modena area where it closed at 1800, 26 April, and was also detached from IV Corps. The enemy left in the mountains had neither the desire nor the power to push through the thin crust of our Apennine defense and there was accordingly no further need for these two regiments to remain in the area. The hordes of prisoners that were being rounded up in the Po Valley were becoming a great hindrance to the combat troops, so the 365th and 371st Infantry Regiments were to take over the Prisoner of War Camps.

6. "Shell and Bomb Splinters".

On 13 April, the day before the 10th Mountain jumped off for its final assault, IV Corps Headquarters left Castelluccio and moved about eleven miles north to pitch camp in a wheat field northwest of Marano. The following day the 10th Mountain jumped off and from then on at Marano the staff worked night and day to keep up with the rolling advance. On one of these days, the precise date is forgotten, the

headquarters personnel worked hard and far into the night, but by one o'clock in the morning, most were asleep with the exception of the section duty officers. All of a sudden a blinding explosion covered the command post and everyone was suddenly groping in the dark for slit trenches that should have been dug. Some long-range enemy artillery battery, searching with 170mm shells for the Marano bridge and road junction, was short on its calculation and unknowingly was smashing air bursts over the Corps Command Post. After the first brilliant flash shattered the darkness, followed by hot metal splinters ripping through the tent roofs, it was obvious that the Command Post of a Corps Commander was closer to the enemy front line than it should have been. One after another, with exasperating regularity, the shells whined over and exploding, scattered their splinters over the area. It was a case of torturesome waiting and hoping that the enemy gunners would soon run out of ammunition. After about 30 to 40 rounds, the firing ceased. Officers and men looked about, wondering if one another had been hit, but fortunately there were no casualties. Many of the tents had been slashed, a shell fragment had embedded itself in a map board in the G-3 Section, another pierced the wash-basin belonging to the Headquarters Commandant, and still another was found lying in an open sleeping bag, placed there by the German gunners right after its occupant hastily departed to search for a hole to hide in. The following night we were visited by German night fighters that circled low in the dark inky skies and dropped bombs and strafed in order to knock out the searchlight positions on the ridge in rear of us.

On 20 April, the Headquarters was glad to leave the accursed place and moved fifteen miles further north to a fruit orchard east of Cereglio. It was a heartening sight and feeling to roll down the low Apennine foothills toward the open valley. Two days later, on 22 April, the Headquarters broke camp again and moved twenty-five miles to an orchard-wheat field east of Crespellano; the move on to the Po Valley. The 85th Division Headquarters was encamped in this flat stretch and pulled out just as we arrived. The reality of the broad, flat expanse of the fertile Po Valley was a welcome sight - no mountains, just flat green land covered with orchard after orchard or deep rows of fruit trees of all sorts. The oft-heard reference to the Po Valley as the "Land of Milk and Honey" described it well. The buildings were better appearing and there was very little rubble to be seen anywhere, because the war was moving too fast to blight this verdant countryside. The people were better clothed and smiled more often than their brethren in the Apennines or that part of Italy south thereof. As one soldier remarked, "Coming out of these rugged mountains onto this green carpet was just like emerging out of a dark tunnel into the sunny open again."

Here in Crespellano it was not long before a new type of splinter spattered about the area - enemy bombs and our own anti-aircraft shell splinters. That night a brace of Jerry planes, evidently hoping to effectively get rid of their last bomb load before certain captivity, circled the command post, loosed their bombs and strafed the speeding American columns on nearby Highway 9 which was, in effect, our very front door. When the whistling sound of a dropping bomb came out of the night sky, goose pimples popped out on many hides - but fortunately the explosions were always to the right or to the left of our tented camp. It was

not long before our anti-aircraft guns began popping away at the dark heavens in the hopes of dropping a raider or two. It so happened that these shells burst over the Corps Command Post and once again officers and men scrambled to seek places of safety beneath trucks, tables, or helmets - the shell splinters knifed through already torn tentage and again everyone came out of the ordeal unscathed. For an hour or two the drone of the plane motors and the bursts of anti-aircraft fire drowned out the sound of our convoys racing along Highway 9 to reach the Po River.

At Crespellano, while the G-2 was trying to make sense out of a mixed-up enemy situation, Colonel Gillette, the Corps Engineer, was frantically busy arranging for the necessary river-crossing equipment with Army.

B. IV CORPS FIRST TO CROSS THE PO.

1. Crossing Equipment.

As late as 20 April, the day the Mountaineers were debouching into the Po Valley, no decision had been reached as to whether or not IV Corps would cross the river. All the long-range planning by higher headquarters had foreseen that the breakout would occur farther to the east and reasoned that the main attack, speeding on toward Verona, would take the Po in stride. IV Corps, destined to carry out the minor task of reestablishing law and order in northwest Italy, was expected to reach that area by routes south of the Po; its eventual crossing, at a later date and supposedly under peaceable conditions, would be provided for somewhere near Piacenza.

The troops in the main effort were therefore scheduled to receive the priority for the limited equipment and specially trained personnel available for combat river crossings. No allocation of bridging equipment was made to IV Corps, although the speed of its advance across the valley did result on the evening of 20 April in ordering one hundred assault boats forward to Anzola, where they might be available, just in case. This equipment arrived on 21 April and fifty of the assault boats with paddles (there were no motors) were turned over to a 10th Mountain Division guide at 2000, 22 April, just about the time when the mountain soldiers were reaching the river bank sixty-four road miles away.

Inquiry at Fifth Army on the evening of 22 April revealed the fact that the Po operation was to be a "scramble" crossing on a broad front and that IV Corps, having reached the southern banks, would have any equipment it needed that was available. But as matters worked out, many unexpected difficulties presented themselves, both in the availability and in the delivery of the equipment.

The same night request was made for enough assault equipment for two regimental combat teams, on the basis that both the 10th Mountain and 85th Infantry Divisions had reached the river and were ready to cross. Next morning Army notified IV Corps that two sets of assault equipment, one for each Division, were moving to Anzola. Included in each set were storm boats with motors, assault boats with one motor to every two craft, infantry support rafts, quonset barges and Dukws. The first convoy began arriving piecemeal about noon. Because no assault boats were included, the fifty remaining on wheels at Anzola were added to the convoy, and, less the sixty Dukws, it was turned over to an 85th Division guide.

The second convoy, which was supposed to contain the second set of assault equipment, did not appear. Most of the Dukws that had arrived with the first convoy were full of Bailey bridge parts; these had to be unloaded by hand and more useful cargoes of gas and ammunition substituted. All of these factors combined to put the 10th Mountain at a disadvantage in the final stages of its crossing.

It should also be mentioned that it had been pointed out on 22 April that an M-1 Treadway would not be suitable for the Armored Division, being too narrow to carry the M-24 light tank and too light to carry the medium. On the following day when 1200 feet of M-1 was to be turned over to IV Corps this fact was again stressed and the reply was received that the M-2 Treadway bridge was to be built farther east. Further delay was occasioned by another unexpected difficulty - it became necessary to send back to Florence to obtain the anchor cable and Manila rope for the floating Treadway equipment.

The Heavy Ponton Battalion, with another bridge, was moving forward from Pisa to Bologna on 23 April. As late as 1600 of the next day, twelve trucks of this train were reported lost and waiting in Modena for a guide. Some of the ponton equipment actually did not arrive at the site until after that bridge was completed.

To add to the difficulties, telephonic communication was sporadic and frequently did not exist at all. This applied not only forward through the divisions, but also back to Army echelons. The surest way of getting information through was by courier, but this method was also uncertain because the rapid advance had left behind so many enemy groups that it was not always possible to tell which roads were open and which were still in enemy hands.

Such was the back-drop of confusion when the stage was finally set for IV Corps units to force the crossing of the Po River. The fact that, in spite of all this, the crossing was so successful as to become an epoch-making event in the Italian campaign, must be attributed to the courage and stamina of the well-trained American combat infantrymen, coupled with the natural ability of the American combat engineer to contrive his ends with the materials at hand.

2. The 10th Mountain Establishes a Bridgehead.

If the enemy was given sufficient time he could and no doubt would move his reserves to prepared positions in order to oppose the threatened crossing of the Po. It therefore behooved us to get across the 300-yard wide river as soon as possible and establish a bridgehead. After arrival in the San Benedetto Po area, two regiments of the 10th Mountain were put to work mopping up hostile elements on its flanks and protecting its rear, but both tactical and technical preparations were begun the night of 22-23 April to cross the remaining regiment in assault boats at the earliest practicable moment.

Forward assembly areas were picked in the lee of the southern levee and other necessary reconnaissance was completed as soon as daylight permitted. Fragmentary orders for the operation were issued during the night; the final order was issued verbally and provided that while one regiment was making the crossing, another would guard the two flanks, and the third would protect the rear of the division area. It will be seen that, due to the speed of the advance to the river, all was not yet exactly peaceful south of the River.

The fifty assault boats with paddles reached the banks of the river at

0800, 23 April. Everything was now ready for the actual crossing. Our artillery had displaced forward and was in positions ready to support the crossing with a large volume of fire. The heavy weapons along the south bank were ready to do what they could to keep down enemy activity on the north bank, and a group of tank and tank destroyers in partial defilade on the south levee, also were ready to contribute their fire support. But this was the first time that the Division had attempted a major river crossing, and the training of the Division for this type of an operation had been limited. The first assault units to shove off from the south bank of the river at 1200 were Companies "A" and "B" of the 87th Infantry.

The appearance of the first wave on the south levee was the signal for the enemy to open up with every weapon available. Projectiles from 88's, apparently fired without observation, arrived in considerable volume, but for the most part, went over the river and levee, causing some damage in the forward assembly area. Well-aimed, air-bursting flak coming from the left flank broke over the river itself in vicious clusters of 30 or more rounds; frequent changes in deflection allowed for coverage of the whole width of the crossing. From carefully prepared and well-concealed positions along the northern levee, mortars and machine-guns with deadly coordination, swept the surface of the water across which the boats had to be paddled.

Unshaken, the men of the Mountain Division, infantrymen and engineers alike, picked up their boats, carried them into the churning cauldron of the enemy's malice, launched them unhurriedly, and coolly paddled for the northern bank. It might have been a training maneuver. A five-mile current caused a certain amount of drift so that succeeding waves landed gradually farther and farther downstream. Supporting artillery lent what aid it could

by shelling the enemy's rear area, but the mobile guns the enemy was using made this help of only passing value.

The heavy enemy fire caused some casualties but did not slow the crossing; Kraut machine-gunners and mortar crews on the northern levee, when confronted with grenade and bayonet, came forth from their holes and meekly surrendered. In mid-afternoon, with the crossing still in progress, the Germans opened up with heavier artillery, and for a time his 170's caused trouble in the approach areas. The 85th Mountain Infantry followed the 87th in crossing and by 1800, 23 April, both regiments were across the Po and had secured an area roughly a mile and a quarter deep by four miles wide, of which the Mincio River formed most of the far boundary. It was in this area that Virgil, the famed Roman poet, was born in 70 B. C.

The required reconnaissance for bridging operations could now be undertaken, but without waiting for the bridges, the ferrying of supplies and vehicles was started at once. Rafts were formed with the assault boats, and later on the arrival of some Dukws made it possible to execute a most commendable job. Italian residents of the northern bank turned out to help handle supplies. Many boxes of ammunition and rations had to be man-handled forward, but gradually the dumps beyond the river grew to respectable proportions. The remaining regiment completed its work of clearing the enemy that was left on the south bank, and some of its elements crossed over in the course of the evening.

On 24 April, while some of the division artillery was being ferried across, the bridge over the Mincio at Governolo was captured. It was in fair condition and permitted all three regiments to expand the bridgehead, which by noon became a rough semi-circle with a two-mile radius. Night

operations on 22-23 and 23-24 April were subjected to bombing and strafing by enemy planes and even on the 24th his artillery and self-propelled guns were still active, shelling both north and south of the river.

Some few pieces of supporting armor reached the north bank by ferry, but the radius of action there was limited due to the doubtful strength of the Governolo bridge. The next requirement for the pursuit northward was for adequate bridges over both the Po and Mincio Rivers, in order that armor and artillery could cross and essential combat supplies go forward in quantities sufficient to supply all units engaged in continuing the case.

3. Bridging the Mighty Po.

The M-1 Treadway equipment, less essential cables and manila rope, was sent forward to Quingentole on 23 April. As the inter-corps boundary was shifted to the west that same evening, IV Corps succeeded in stopping the leading trucks carrying the M-1 materiel at the command post of the 85th and arranged for a motorcycle escort to the vicinity of San Benedetto Po. At this inopportune moment it was found that the trucks did not have sufficient gasoline for the trip and further delay ensued while they were being refueled.

In the early morning, advance parties reported and a site about one and one-half miles down the river from the assault boat crossing was chosen and organization of the work vigorously begun. The missing cables and ropes arrived at 1900, six hours after construction had been started. The personnel of the original combat engineer unit were tired out and, as they had no previous experience building in swift water, they were relieved by a fresh battalion at midnight. The bridge was officially opened at 1230, 25 April, but it should be remembered that neither M-24 light tanks nor mediums could use it.

The site chosen for the heavy ponton bridge was north of San Benedetto Po where the assault boat crossing was made and up the river from the Treadway. Little work on the approaches was necessary as, before its destruction by our air, an Italian floating bridge had been located at the same place. The southern approach was littered with destroyed and abandoned enemy vehicles which had to be pushed into the ditch, and the northern approach needed only to be widened at a turn. The essential dirt-moving equipment, enroute from Pisa, did not arrive until 1600, whereupon raft and crane sites were prepared. The first ponton was launched at 2100, but raft construction did not begin until after 2300. At noon on 25 April an additional company of engineers was attached, and at 1500, the last raft was placed. The first tank rolled across the bridge at 1730, and in the first ten hours thereafter over five hundred vehicles, mostly tanks, crossed the bridge. These were tank-support elements of the 10th Mountain and 85th Infantry Divisions, and leading units of the 1st Armored Division. This bridge carried the bulk of the armored traffic, the high day being 27 April when over 3400 vehicles crossed in twenty-four hours; most of these were from the 1st Armored and 34th Infantry Divisions.

Enemy action on the heavy ponton bridge began with shelling by 88's during the reconnaissance, the guns responsible being silenced by our own counter-battery fire with AOP fire direction. No further enemy fire was received during construction, but just before dark on 25 April, he again shelled the site with 88-mm air bursts and later on that night tried to bomb the bridge. A terrific volume of fire from our own anti-aircraft defenses prevented any damage from his half-hearted attempts.

Bridging the Po had been so engrossing a subject that perhaps too scant attention had been paid to crossing the Mincio River just beyond. There had been three bridges over this stream in the vicinity of Governolo, two of which were permanent stone structures which had been destroyed either by the enemy or by friendly air. The third was a wood and steel trestle bridge about 120 feet in length with a height above water of some 30 feet. The Germans in their haste had attempted its destruction by putting charges on the caps of the trestles; these, in addition to being badly placed, were too light to do the work. The result was the destruction to the flooring in one span and a general lateral displacement of girders and loosening of those parts which give rigidity to the structure. There was, in consequence, an amount of vibration and side-sway which was alarming to the onlooker, although careful examination and observation led to the technical conclusion that the bridge was strong enough to Class 40 traffic moving at slow speeds, and that it would safely take the heaviest loads that our combat units would have to offer. It was the opinion of the engineers that any real strengthening would take several days, and that rather than delay, the pursuit should go forward over the bridge as it was.

There were many arguments until a command decision finally prohibited tanks from using the bridge for about four hours on the afternoon of 25 April. Jeeps and weapon carriers were allowed to cross, but what threatened to be a traffic jam was gradually building up from the vehicles that had already been ferried across the river or those that had crossed on the Treadway after its opening. As the M-1 Treadway would not take most of our tanks, not much armor could have been included in this accumulation

of traffic. The flood of armor on the north bank of the Po did not begin until shortly after 251730, when these vehicles began to cross the completed heavy ponton bridge. At that hour another command decision was made to allow a light tank to cross the Mincio bridge as a test; if the structure held, the rest of the armor would be pushed across.

The bridge did hold, and eventually passed most of the 10th Mountain Division, parts of the 85th Infantry Division, and many elements of the 1st Armored Division without failure. There was no doubt a delay of a few hours in starting the drive on Verona, due to the fact that armored vehicles belonging to the task force spearheading this movement could not cross during the four-hour-long command interdiction to tank traffic; but this delay probably had little effect on the outcome of the campaign. The whole incident of the Mincio bridge, while worthy of record here, can best be considered as a case of frayed nerves, produced by eleven days of strenuous combat and aggravated by the vicissitudes just experienced in bridging the Po.

"PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XXII -----

IV CORPS SNAPS THE TRAP

The 10th Mountain Division was enlarging the bridgehead across the Po at San Benedetto and the 85th Infantry Division was preparing to cross on 24 April when the Army Commander, in a message to his Corps Commanders, outlined the next stage in the offensive. IV Corps, employing initially three divisions north of the river, was to drive north on the axis San Benedetto - Mantova - Verona with the important Villafranca Airfield and the city of Verona, the Fascist capitol of Italy, as the main objectives. At the same time, IV Corps was to dispatch strong, fast detachments straight north to the Alpine foothills where they would turn west to drive along the northern edge of the Po Valley, through the cities of Brescia and Bergamo to block the routes of egress from Italy between Lake Garda and Lake Como. The 34th Division, attached to IV Corps on 23 April, would likewise drive northwest along the southern edge of the valley to block the Apennine passes. Full achievement of the objectives would block escape routes to the north between Verona and Lake Como and would place Fifth Army in position to assault in strength the Adige River Line, the last major defensive system left to the Germans in Italy. Of great importance for future air operations in north Italy was the seizure of the Villafranca Airfield, ten miles southwest of Verona.

The 85th Infantry Division was to complete its crossing of the Po with all possible speed and attack due north, toward Verona, and contact the Adige Line. The 10th Mountain Division, screened on the left by the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, was to by-pass Mantova, capture the Villafranca Airport and advance on Verona; Highway 11 west of the city was to

be cut and the escape routes between Verona and Lake Garda were to be blocked. The 1st Armored Division, still south of the Po protecting the Corps left and blocking as far west as the Taro River, was to continue its left flank protection with one combat command and move the other across the river for possible future deployment to the north or east. The 34th Infantry Division, which on the 23d had been relieved of the occupation of Bologna and assigned to IV Corps, was ordered to move northwest along the axis of Highway 9 to seize Parma, Fidenza and Piacenza. The 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, was to move northwest, relieving 34th Division as it advanced, and protect the left rear of the Corps while blocking the northern exits from the Apennines. By the use of the 34th and Brazilian Divisions in this manner, it was hoped to trap the several thousand enemy known to be in the Apennines as a result of being bypassed by the main attack.

A. OUT OF THE BRIDGEHEAD.

1. "Harpoon" Crosses the Po and the Vacant Adige Line.

On the IV Corps right the 85th Division crossed the Po at Quingentole on the 24th and 25th. With the exception of the medium artillery, the supporting armor and supplies which later crossed on the San Benedetto bridges, all the combat elements of the Division crossed on four infantry support-rafts, three rafts improvised by the 310th Engineer Battalion, Dukws, and assault boats. The 337th Infantry started across at 0830, 24 April, behind a smoke barrage placed on the north bank by mortar and a fifteen-minute artillery preparation by 96 guns. At 0844, the first wave of assault boats hit the north bank to find the river defenses completely unmanned and secured the bridgehead without firing a shot. The 338th

Infantry moved up and crossed during the afternoon, to be followed by the 339th Infantry before daybreak the following day.

Before noon on the 25th, the 338th and 339th Infantry, moving abreast, passed through the 337th Infantry two miles beyond the river and began their northward advance. Few demolitions and road blocks were encountered and the lack of enemy resistance was almost unbelievable. Although in smaller numbers than south of the Po, many Germans surrendered rather than fall into the hands of the Partisans, who were busy everywhere ferreting out the common enemy. After an uneventful advance, the two attacking regiments took up defensive positions for the night about five miles southeast of Villafranca. They continued the attack at 0600 the following morning and at 0815, 26 April, advance elements of the 339th Infantry entered Verona. After crossing the Adige - 339th on a footbridge west of Verona and the 338th on the railroad bridge south of the city - the 85th Division advanced north during the afternoon and night into the undefended hills and the defenses of the Adige Line. On 27 April the Division established road blocks to the east and northeast of Verona. There had been no material change in troop dispositions, but units were on hand to promptly support either flank, should any resistance be encountered. At 0800, 28 April, the 85th Division was detached from IV Corps and reverted to Fifth Army control.

2. The Mountaineers Close the Gate to the Brenner Pass.

All three regiments and the Division Artillery of the 10th Mountain Division had crossed over the Po River during the 23d and 24th. In preparation for the forthcoming thrust a task force to spearhead the drive to the north was formed under the command of Colonel William O. Darby, former commander of the Rangers, who had succeeded General Duff as Assistant Division

Commander. The force was composed of the 13th Tank Battalion, attached from the 1st Armored Division, the 86th Mountain Infantry; Company "B", 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company "B", 751st Tank Battalion; the 1125th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; the 605th and 616th Field Artillery Battalions; and elements of the 126th Engineer Battalion. The force did not get under way, however, until completion of the Corps bridges at San Benedetto on 25 April permitted the crossing of heavy vehicles. Meanwhile on the 24th the beachhead was expanded, and small though troublesome delaying forces in stone houses in the vicinity were cleaned out by the 85th Mountain Infantry. During the night of 24-25 April many reports of enemy withdrawals were received from patrols and Partisans; therefore, at approximately 0100, 25 April, the 85th Mountain Infantry began movement northward toward Villafranca Airport. At 0945 the 1st Battalion of the Regiment radioed that it was on the airport and in a fight with a small detachment on the field. An interesting and humorous incident interjected itself into the situation to reflect the rapidity of the drive of the 85th Division in its seizure of the important airfield. A German aviator circled the airfield and landed his Messerschmitt at the Villafranca airfield, thinking it was still in German hands, only to be greeted by the snub nose of a Tommy Gun staring him in the face, held by an American GI who drawled, "Step down, brother - this is old home week!" The field, although damaged, was not beyond repair. With no assurance of immediate support, these men had marched almost twenty miles, most of that during darkness, through strange country. The daring of this advance was the climax of the entire drive by the Division.

At dusk Task Force Darby joined the 1st Battalion, 85th Infantry, at

Villafranca Airport. From there the Task Force moved cautiously toward Verona during the night of 25-26 April to find upon arrival at 0600 that advance elements of the 88th Division had entered it some seven hours before. During the day Task Force Darby started from Verona to follow the road along the east side of Lake Garda. With the 85th Mountain Infantry at Villafranca, Task Force Darby moving along the east side of Lake Garda, and the 86th Mountain Infantry resting at Verona, the escape routes to the Brenner between Verona and Lake Garda were tightly closed; the same Brenner route, lowest Alpine pass, which the Teutonic hordes used to pass into Italy centuries ago.

Having regrouped and in accordance with new orders from IV Corps, the 10th Mountain Division, acting with great speed, jumped off at 0800, 27 April and went rapidly north along the road skirting the east shore of Lake Garda. There were two sharp fire fights during the day, in both of which the enemy, although he employed the direct fire of artillery and self-propelled guns, was driven back. In the late afternoon a fresh regiment, motorized for the trip forward, passed through the leading elements and carried on the pursuit. The arrangement was for each regiment to have eight hours in the line and sixteen hours out, thus allowing the Hun no respite and no chance to get his heels into the ground.

During 28 April, enemy rear-guard actions and demolitions slowed the advance somewhat, but by 1800, when it was detached from IV Corps and reverted to Fifth Army control, the Division had reached Malcesine, a good three-quarters of the way up the eastern shore. In the fifteen days since the jump-off at Monte della Spe, the Mountaineers had covered 105 airline miles.

B. STRATEGIC ENVELOPMENT.

Our estimate of enemy capabilities for defending the southern approaches to the Bavarian "redoubt" had for months included his making a stand upon the plains north of the Po River. Most likely he would contest to begin with any crossing of that obstacle with all his strength, and if his defense of the river line failed, then, on the flat lands leading up to the foothills of the Alps, he could still make our further advance a slow and costly proceeding.

Whatever his original intentions may have been with regard to making the most of the great river barrier at his disposal, IV Corps' swift crossing at San Benedetto Po and its rapid advance northward thereafter had torn a gaping hole in any proposed defense line on the north bank of the Po, and had created a salient which by the evening of 25 April was over six miles broad and twenty-two miles deep. This was no ordinary salient; its western boundary was the wide-open door to the famous "quadrilatero" of Italian military history, that four-sided figure of which the corners are the old fortified cities of Verona, Brescia, Cremona and Mantova, and of which it has been said, "Who holds the quadrilateral controls northwest Italy".

We had by 25 April driven west along the south bank of the Po as far as the Taro River. Hostile elements retreating northward toward the escape routes were therefore denied any crossing sites east of that stream, and Germans still striving to reach the other side and continue their retreat to the north would have to use the three main roads, Cremona-Brescia, Piacenza-Bergamo, and Pavia-Milan, or else follow roughly parallel routes along the many unimproved, but still passable, roads that were to be found in the area. It was known that there were retreating enemy numbering in the thousands who had crossed and were crossing the wide river, and while many had suffered

severe destruction of their equipment or had abandoned it on the south bank, many more still had artillery, SP guns and even tanks, sufficient to put up a serious fight. The destruction of enemy forces that would ensue if we, by moving quickly west, could manage to intercept or cut off these desperate fleeing columns was apparent. But, most interesting of all, we knew that somewhere in the neighborhood of Turin was the entire German LXXV Corps, at long last withdrawing from the French border. And we also knew that it was in first-class condition and ready to fight. Our greatest concern was that it should not escape from the trap; to that end we must put ourselves in strength between it and the Swiss and Austrian borders as soon as possible and as far to the west as we could go. The Ticino River was probably the best defense line on which we could deploy our forces, could we but reach it in time.

To best accomplish this envelopment, we must strike west for the Swiss border from the vicinity of Mantova with all possible speed and as much power as we could gather. Any hindrances to a rapid advance were probably few for the terrain was generally flat for the greater part of the way, and an abundance of good roads existed. Since the enemy had expected to use these same roads himself in quitting northwest Italy, destroying them behind him as he left, there was every likelihood that the destruction of bridges would be limited to whatever damage had been inflicted by Allied air in the long campaign to cut as many as possible of the enemy main arteries of supply. The enemy opposition that might be encountered was questionable, but any planned resistance was improbable, due to his disorganized condition. Even his ability to assemble an organized force and get it into favorable positions to stop us was extremely doubtful. However, there existed the possibility that a deep thrust on a narrow front might be cut off by a sudden and determined attack on either flank. But the danger of this was remote, because the

LXXV Corps was the only organized power left in the area and it would hardly waste its strength in trying to pinch off a comparatively small force. It would prudently save all its energy for defense or, if it was still on the move northeastward, for the purpose of fighting its way through to the Alps. From the north there was little probability that any German troops that had reached the mountains would venture south of them again, even with such a raid in view; manpower in the German Army had suddenly become at a premium and still competent combat forces must be sparingly used.

1. Ghedi Airport Seized.

By the 26th many reports had filtered into Corps concerning small bands of enemy in the area to the west of Mantova and the bridgehead. Enemy in estimated strength of 150 had been reported near Rivalta and 1,000 more were supposed to be at Castelluchio. Four or five small tanks and 20 enemy were rumored to be near Goito. These reports were received from civilian sources and were considered only reasonably accurate. Later in the afternoon Partisans reported that Volta was surrounded by enemy tanks and an estimated 100 enemy. Probably most of the tanks that were being reported in this area were in reality SP guns or other tracked vehicles moving as far as they could while their fuel held out. The Partisans in the area north of the Po were out in force with the usual variety of weapons and colored scarves. They were avid in their harrying of the retreating Hun and gave invaluable aid in supplying information concerning the whereabouts of these enemy groups as well as on the condition of roads and bridges. Where the Germans were without artillery, the Partisans were frequently able to engage and defeat them, and many prisoners of war fell into their hands and later reached our cages. On the other hand, where the enemy party was strong,

about all the Partisans could do was to keep contact with them and call on the Americans for help in rounding them up.

Crossing its vehicles over the Po ferries and bridges as opportunity permitted during 24-25 April, the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, once more under Corps control, fanned out on 26 April to protect the flank of the salient and to gain information on the situation to the west. Acting on orders of the Corps Commander to seize the important airport at Ghedi, the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron had elements in Roverbella and Goito during the morning of 26 April, and by 1700 the objective was captured. The German troops were taken by complete surprise, but were able to recover and a lively fire fight resulted. The Cavalry won out, however, and many prisoners were captured. Other elements of the Squadron seized intact the Mincio River bridges at Peschiera and Paradiso, and captured more than 450 additional prisoners of war.

The enemy encountered in this area was of one of two categories; there were well-armed columns which were willing and able to fight if anyone impeded their northward flight, and there were just casual groups of disorganized stragglers who, having already been engaged and defeated somewhere to the south, were only looking for American troops to which they might surrender. Of the latter type, whole units sat down and waited for someone to capture them. Passing American units simply pointed the way to the rear and hurried on. Some tried to surrender to chaplains, some to war correspondents.

On 27 April the 91st Cavalry, with the exception of one Troop which continued to guard the Ghedi Airport in the absence of other friendly troops to take over that duty, moved on to the Brescia area. The situation at the time in Brescia was not very clear; according to most reports, the

Germans there were in considerable strength and prepared to give battle to anyone that tried to turn them out before they were prepared to go. The City was the center of an important road net and the hostile forces there may also well have been influenced in their stand by the presence of a good-sized SS Detachment, which had been using Brescia as its headquarters.

2. "Warrior" Blocks the Swiss Border.

After Combat Command "A" reached the Po at Guastalla on 22 April, the newly-organized Task Force Howze was pushed forward to the south bank at Brescello. No organized resistance was offered, but many isolated fire fights developed, and severe casualties were inflicted on the stubbornly contesting Hun. A great number of prisoners fell into our hands, as well as much destroyed and abandoned enemy equipment. Combat Command "B", fighting south of Highway 9 on 23 April, had little success in advancing westward, its way being barred by a determined enemy.

On 24 April units of the 34th Infantry Division, newly assigned to IV Corps, had begun arriving in the area, and their presence along Highway 9 relieved some of the elements of the Armored Division. Combat Command "A" began assembly near Guastalla and Combat Command "B" received orders for later assembly near Moglia. Some changes in the composition of each combat command were to take place.

Task Force Howze and the 81st Reconnaissance continued to thrust on westward and establish important road blocks, engaging in several sharp bouts with the enemy, which resulted in extensive destruction in his ranks and the taking of a large number of prisoners. There was a great deal to be done in the pockets south of the Po, where the enemy was doing his utmost to defend his crossings. Extensive mopping up was necessary. Prisoners were

taken during this stage of the action from the 90th Panzer Grenadier and the 114th, 232d, and 334th Infantry Divisions, indicating the confusion that existed in the hostile situation. Large numbers of enemy were holding out fanatically, and the Partisans, although out in force in the area, could not hope to cope with them. During the day, four German ambulances and a half-track, all loaded with enemy wounded, drove into one of our Command Posts by mistake.

Combat Command "A", as reconstituted, moved on 25 April to the vicinity of San Benedetto Po, where it had to wait some hours before being able to use the bridges. All its vehicles were crossed during the night and the Command was closed on the north bank by 0630, 26 April, in readiness for movement to the west, over the ground that was already being reconnoitered by the 91st Cavalry Squadron. Combat Command "A", as it assembled north of the Po River in the early morning hours of 26 April, was made up of the 4th Tank Battalion, the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, the 68th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and Company "A" of the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion. It was commanded by Brigadier General Maurice W. Daniel. To assist in the supply problem, which was already becoming difficult, IV Corps had attached to the 1st Armored Division a mobile gas platoon, which maintained a rolling reserve of about 30,000 gallons of gasoline. This provisional unit was to prove itself indispensable in the next few days.

On the 26th, acting upon orders of the Corps Commander to attack vigorously to the northwest along the Verona-Brescia-Bergamo-Como highway to cut off and destroy the enemy, Combat Command "A" began its advance from the bridgehead area and moved rapidly forward over the good roads and flat country, meeting little organized opposition. So rapid was the movement and

so scattered were the elements of the Division, that not much was reported on the progress being made until at 1550 a column believed to be Combat Command "A" was seen entering Montichiari by an air observer. A few minutes later it was confirmed that other elements of Combat Command "A" were passing through Castiglione della Stiviere at 1600. Another air observer placed leading elements at Castenedolo at 1815. As darkness closed in, the advance continued more slowly and when elements reached the southeastern outskirts of Brescia during the night, a halt was made for the purpose of determining the situation in the town.

While this reconnaissance was being made, a German convoy was discovered approaching from the west. Warned by this discovery, our column remained silent and in the darkness watched with interest the approach of this unsuspecting body of enemy vehicles down an almost parallel road, only about 70 yards away. As the hostile column turned left, toward the north and home, and its flank was strung out opposite our own tanks, the party began. A 76mm gun scored a direct hit on a personnel carrier at point blank range with its first shot, and from then on the carnage was general all up and down the German column. When firing ceased a few minutes later for want of further targets, the road was so strewn with the debris of the fight that a tank-dozer had to be used to clear it. This engagement somewhat delayed the advance from Brescia the following morning and, when it did begin, the city was by-passed in order to avoid the enemy garrison.

The balance of the 1st Armored Division was being put on the way as rapidly as they could be disengaged south of the Po. Combat Command "B" had its hands full on its own front on the 24th, and on the 25th was called upon to pass through the 81st Reconnaissance Squadron, which had seized

crossings of the Taro River northwest of Parma. After it had relieved the Cavalry on the morning of 26 April, it was then relieved by the 34th Division and could finally move toward its assembly area. The 81st Reconnaissance Squadron and Task Force Howze, the latter having meanwhile enjoyed a sanguinary encounter with several converging enemy groups in the town square at Parma, were similarly free by afternoon and moved toward the Po bridges. The crossing of remaining elements of the 1st Armored Division was completed by 0600, 27 April, and Combat Command "B"'s approximately 2,000 vehicles were assembled near Mantova, prepared to broaden the salient established by Combat Command "A". It had moved as far westward as the Ghedi airport by nightfall. The fertile plains of Lombardy were beginning to resound to the clatter of the various tracked vehicles as some 4,000 of them rolled inexorably westward in a swift move that was spelling the doom of all German forces to the south.

Driving northwest from Brescia against still negligible resistance, Combat Command "A" by-passed Bergamo during the day of 27 April, and leading elements (4th Tank Battalion) pressed on into the night toward Como. They were leaving the flat country again, getting into the rolling foothills of the Alps. As they looked at the dim outlines of mountains ahead, the tankers may well have told each other, "The Lombardy plains are flat - weren't they?" Well, after all, they had covered close to 125 miles through enemy country in 42 hours.

The risks of by-passing enemy groups was well-illustrated by an incident at the Bergamo Airfield on the afternoon and evening of 27 April. The 1st Armored Artillery air observers moved in at that point and established their cub strip. First of all, two fairly small detachments of the enemy appeared

from the south and were one after the other induced to surrender to the strip personnel, on the theory that many additional armored reinforcements were close at hand. However, about 1800 a third column of troops numbering close to 1,000 men and having with them some armored vehicles came up the same road from the south. They were less gullible and refused to surrender, opening fire with machine guns and using grenades on the much weaker force of mechanics and other specialists and upon their vehicles. Only a few of our men escaped to report the incident, although, strangely enough, several liaison planes on the field escaped undamaged.

The town of Como, situated, as it was, so close to the Swiss border, had witnessed from first to last a lot of political activity connected with the war in Italy, but from experience its people knew little about armed forces in action and nothing at all about armor. The ebb and flow of political refugees had washed through Como during the war, going to and coming from neutral Switzerland. However, the city had undergone very little damage, its buildings were intact - there were no piles of rubble, no stacks of brick cleaned and ready for putting together again. Business conditions were fairly regular, shops were well-stocked and factories operated whenever coal and raw materials could be procured. Perhaps the most noticeable discomfort was the nightly blackout, a necessary precaution against prowling Allied planes.

In the little town the night of 27 April there was an expectancy in the air. The people knew vaguely that the Po had been crossed and that the long-planned German evacuation of northwest Italy was at last being carried out without schedules. There could not be much longer to wait until they were gone - two weeks perhaps . . . a month . . . The Americans would surely

come before too long. Then, along after midnight there came a sudden rumor that the Americans were very near . . . And within an hour it was a certainty! Every light in the town blazed on, no one slept . . . Officials met the head of the column on the southern outskirts and at 0200, 28 April, the narrow streets were echoing to the rumble of armor. Many of the vehicles moved on through the city and out the road to Chiasso and the frontier; another column started toward Varese.

Fascists suddenly disappeared from the scene; German military and civilian staffs that had sought refuge in the neighborhood were all under Partisan guard in their many different hotels and villas. A great change had come to Como. Of interest to the record and to further indicate the confusion that existed at this time, the following is a frank expression of opinion by Phantom with the 1st Armored Division to Phantom Keystone (IV Corps) at 0820, 28 April, more than six hours after the entry into Como. Said he: "Div Headquarters at Bergamo. I doubt if God knows where forward elements are."

Having sealed off northwest Italy, the 1st Armored Division faced south toward Milan and consolidated its positions on 28 and 29 April. Combat Command "A" was on the right, Combat Command "B" on the left, and Task Force Howze in the center, with the 81st Cavalry on the left flank. Scattered resistance continued to be met, and road blocks were established and active patrolling maintained on all routes running north and south.

C. THE ENEMY THAT NEVER CROSSED THE PO.

While the right arm of IV Corps was swinging wide to seal off the escape routes, in north and northwest Italy, the left arm was busily engaged in trapping the Germans who could not work their way out of the Apennines

fast enough to reach and cross the Po. The mission south of the Po fell to the Red Bull outfit (34th Division), and the Brazilians. Let us first follow the 34th Division in its spectacular dash to cut off the Germans south of Highway 9.

1. The "Red Bull" Bellows:

The 34th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Charles E. Bolte, was attached to IV Corps at 1600, 23 April, at which hour the 133d Infantry Regiment Combat Team closed in an initial assembly area southeast of Modena. The 168th and 135th Infantry Regiments shortly followed and also assembled near Modena. The Division had previously taken part in the Fifth Army main attack and had entered Bologna on 21 April. Before the start for the Modena area was made the order had gone out that units would take along with them "only Kraut-killing equipment", and this was faithfully carried out even to the point of leaving behind the kitchens, all in the interest of getting there quickly, with as many men and bullets as was possible. The 34th Division appeared on the scene with every available combat soldier and fighting tool and with one day's rations. Every other bit of space on its organic transportation, which was all it had for the move, was packed to capacity with ammunition.

The 34th moved in between the 1st Armored Division and the Brazilians with the mission of advancing and destroying any enemy encountered. The 133d Infantry, joined later by the 168th Infantry on its right, attacked on the axis of Highway 9 with the town of Reggio, fifteen miles away, as the first objective. It took some fighting to drive the German delaying forces, elements of the 114th Light Division, and the 94th and 334th Grenadier Divisions, out of the town of Rubiera at the Secchia River crossing west of Modena, but early on the 24th the outskirts of Reggio were reached.

The 168th Infantry continued its advance north of the city, and the 133d Infantry moved in to attack. The garrison, an estimated 400 men from an infantry training school, resisted strongly and held out until evening when they were forced to abandon their positions.

Parma, at the junction of Highways 9 and 62, fifteen miles northwest of Reggio, was next on the list. On the 25th, the 168th Infantry took over the lead and drove swiftly up Highway 9 toward the city where another garrison, mainly administrative troops reinforced by a few self-propelled guns, held up the occupation of the town until 2100 when our armor, the attached 755th Tank Battalion, outflanked the town from the south. As the advance continued, additional road blocks were established to the south in order to contain the increasing number of German units which, realizing they had been outflanked, were attempting to come out of the Apennines and reach the Po crossings. (All principal roads from the south were kept blocked to prevent escape from the mountains.)

Fierce battling continued along Highway 9 on 26 April as the Germans, trapped to the south, made try after try to break out. The units still south of the Po River realized that they were being cut off; exhausted and with little or no ammunition left, they began to surrender in large numbers. Organized units still with transportation were moving north on secondary roads with orders to cross the river as best they could and to occupy the prepared defenses on the north bank and prevent our crossings at all costs. This situation resulted in odd incidents.

The highways were relatively safe in daylight and in the vicinity of troops, but one division staff officer strayed a few hundred yards off Highway 9 and was captured by a wandering band of Germans. Many a party of the

enemy sneaked across that road under cover of darkness, thinking it was the farthest north the Americans had progressed, only to run head on into another spearhead. One German, fearing the Partisans but desiring to surrender, changed to civilian clothes, walked into an American camp, and asked, in his best Italian, "Dove M. P.?" A group of others, likewise disguised, were walking gingerly along when an M. P. spoke to them. Instantly six pairs of hands shot skyward. The 135th Infantry, under Colonel John M. Breit, raced for Piacenza, 45 miles away at the junction of Highways 9 and 10 on the banks of the Po, while on the right of the Highway, elements reached a point just south of Busseto, a vital road junction.

In the thrust up the main highway, it has been said that the zone of the 34th was "forty miles long and forty feet wide". There were enemy on both sides of the Division and frequently behind it, all milling about trying to reach the Po, and all still fighting. The night the Division Command Post was in Fidenza, the Germans came to within 400 yards and stopped, when they might just as well have come on in. Some of the non-combatants were inquiring that night about their right under the Geneva Convention to carry arms.

From morning to noon of 26 April the 135th Infantry was delayed by a desperate enemy force on the Nure River, just four miles short of the objective. Thereafter the 135th Infantry moved up to block off the city where a garrison of 1st Italian SS Police Troops and German troops was attempting to hold open the Highway 9 Po River crossing for the 148th Grenadier Division and the Italia Bersaglieri Divisions. The enemy was doing his best to defend the remaining crossings of the river, but they were becoming fewer and fewer.

Not until the 28th did our troops enter Piacenza in force. On that day patrols found Partisans in control; the SS had melted away during the preceding night. History gives us an interesting incident which took place slightly west of Piacenza. In 218 B. C., at the small town of Trebia, the Roman legions under Scipio waited for the invading elephant-borne army of Hannibal to cross the Po. When it did, a bloody clash followed in which Scipio was defeated and 20,000 Romans were killed, the blood of which reddened the south banks of the Po River.

Never was the enemy situation so confused as it was during these last stirring days of the Po Valley Campaign. The enemy was not only to the front, the right or the left, he was also to the rear. This can be well brought out by an incident that happened during the night of 27-28 April, when two battalions of the 133d Infantry started a forced march north, under orders to initially use separate routes, and later in the night, the same road. There seemed to be some miscalculation in the time element at the point where the two separate routes joined, and therefore the battalion scheduled for the rear of the column had to wait some time until the tail of the other cleared. However, it eventually got under way again. Both battalions felt that the march had been well worked out, for the leading one could hear the other coming along just behind it, and the one at the tail of the column knew the other was just ahead. But when dawn broke, it was somewhat startling to find that between the two American battalions a regiment of the German 232d Infantry Division had also been high-tailing it during the night, making for the Po crossings. There was a furious fire fight between the surprised Germans and the equally surprised Americans ahead of and behind them. Heavy losses were sustained in the German column and the survivors finally surrendered. Only then was the

march continued with the American units properly arranged.

In less than three days the 34th Division had pushed its force eighty miles from Modena to the Po crossings at Piacenza. This maneuver, one of the boldest in the entire drive across the Po Valley, stretched the Division in a thin line from Reggio to Piacenza, across the front of the 148th Grenadier and the Italia Bersaglieri Division, which were caught at the edge of the Apennines south of Highway 9. One enemy division, however, the 232d Grenadier, managed to cross the highway west of Parma ahead of the 34th and assembled to defend itself in a loop of the Po south of Cremona, while slowly negotiating the river by ferry. The 34th Division, strung out as it was between three relatively intact divisions, was in no enviable position, yet the very fact that we could get away with such a maneuver illustrates well enough that the German Army had ended as an organized fighting force. The lack of communications between the three enemy divisions and their low state of morale at this juncture enabled the 34th Division during 26-28 April to block off the Piacenza escape route on the northwest and at the same time employ the 133d and the 168th Infantry in the systematic destruction of the 232d Grenadier Division south of Cremona. By the end of 27 April, after two days of attack from three sides and with its back to the river, the 232d Grenadier Division expired as a fighting force when a regimental commander surrendered with his whole command. General Gablenz, Commanding General of the 232d Division, when later captured, said that he had managed to move about two-thirds of his division minus their heavy equipment, across the Po.

The dangerous situation on the left was eased considerably by the arrival of the Brazilian force at Collecchio, south of Parma, on the 26th.

The road blocks which had been established to the south were being successively taken over by the Brazilians as they advanced south of Highway 9. On 28 April they also occupied Piacenza in which resistance had ceased, and moved up into the pockets south of Cremona, taking over there from the 34th Division. Thus freed, the 34th began to move to its new zone north of the Po River. Its new mission was to strengthen the long thin line of the 1st Armored Division which had been drawn across the top of the valley and to assist in mopping up the large enemy forces west of Milan. This move involved shuttling because of the limited transportation available, but was nevertheless very expeditiously carried out.

One regiment had moved to Bozzolla on the morning of 28 April and went on from there toward Bergamo; another was enroute to Bergamo by the end of the day; the third had assembled and was only waiting for the necessary trucks to follow the other two. The business-like manner in which this veteran combat division moved into the picture in the important Highway 9 area and proceeded rapidly to shove the enemy back beyond Piacenza, had been most gratifying; its subsequent abandonment of that mission and swift move to the Lombardy plains were undertaken with an equally keen appreciation for the need for speed. Neither area was a pleasant one, both being filled with snarling and desperately fighting enemy, but the 34th realized that an opportunity was at hand for destroying a great many of the enemy, and did not fail to get down to its work. It boasted that in the nine days it fought under IV Corps, it covered, using only its own organic transportation, a total of 420 road miles, a good performance for any infantry division, and in that same period it captured roughly 16,000 prisoners of war.

2. The Brazilian Triumph.

Moving swiftly, units of the 1st Infantry Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, advanced northwest on 25 April on the left of the 34th Infantry Division. Only slight opposition was met and advance elements reached the line Montecchio - San Polo. The following day further advances were made and the Division Reconnaissance Troop reported it was holding half the town of Collecchio, assisted by a band of Partisans, but was having trouble and needed help. Tank destroyers and infantry were immediately sent in support and a serious fire fight developed. On 27 April the fight at Collecchio terminated, with 300 prisoners being taken. Brazilian units were already moving to the south into the Fornovo area, where a strong enemy pocket was beginning to take shape as the German 148th Division attempted to move down the Taro Valley and out of the mountains. Heavy fighting was in progress and the Corps Commander instructed both Division Commanders concerned (Brazilian and 34th) to make every possible effort to prevent the escape of this enemy unit to the north.

In the Fornovo area on 28 April there was continuous fighting as the Brazilians continued to mop up elements of the still recalcitrant 148th German Division. These unfortunates, who had just cleared the Partisan-infested hills south of Parma, now found themselves confronted by the very determined Brazilians, whose supporting artillery and armor were wreaking havoc on their every attempt to break through. It may be added that the Brazilians also found troops to send to Piacenza and to the pocket north of Cremona; they did not require all their strength for this job of blocking Highway 62.

The end came on 29 April when a representative of the 148th Division accepted the unconditional surrender terms of General Mascarenhas. The

battalions of the 148th were to surrender formally and successively during the night and their Commander, General-Lieutenant Fretter-Pico would himself surrender last of all. The Commander of the Italia Bersaglieri Division, which had started through the mountains ahead of the 148th, was already a prisoner of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force. His troops had evaporated during the movement. This capitulation was duly carried through and by it alone the Brazilians took 6,000 prisoners of war, 4,000 horses, and 1,000 trucks. It was a historic moment, and one filled with much satisfaction for the Brazilian soldiers. This once formidable German division had first faced the Brazilians in the Serchio Valley and had, in the end, been compelled to lay down its arms to them in one of the most bitter battles waged in the final phases of the campaign in Italy. The mopping up operations were completed in the Fornovo area on 30 April. The bag of prisoners for the next 24 hours after 0600, 29 April, amounted to a total of 13,579.

"PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XXIII - - - - -

THE GERMAN COLLAPSE

When it became known to the enemy that our forces had occupied Como he realized that his chances of evacuating northwest Italy were lost. All of the troops which had been west and south of our spearhead were caught in an area from which there was no possible escape. Allied air activity during the pursuit across the Po Valley had been incessant and our air continued slashing the enemy daily. Although the once-dreaded, but now defunct, Luftwaffe was more active than it had been for months as the Germans made their last desperate efforts to slow the chase, their attacks were scattered, pitifully weak, and had very little influence upon the outcome of the campaign. On 27 April only 100 enemy planes of all types were estimated to be left in Italy. Allied planes ranged up and down the Po Valley, strafing columns, increasing the disorganization of an already confused enemy, and acting as the eyes of the ground forces. The Germans furnished targets such as seldom appeared; in their hurry to get to the Alps they threw caution and discipline to the winds and took to the roads in daylight; their columns crowded the roads, bumper to bumper, as they converged upon stream crossings and main highways.

Once the mountain defense line south of the Po was broken, the Germans were never able to stabilize again. The already substantial number of prisoners taken in the mountains was increased tremendously as our forces raced across the Po. On 26 April the first of an impressive list of general officers, General-Lieutenant Helmuth Boehlke of the 334th Infantry

Division, unable to swim across the Po, was taken and processed as a Prisoner of War.

Although by the 25th, IV Corps could reasonably estimate that four divisions, the 65th Grenadier, 305th Grenadier, 94th Grenadier, and the 8th Mountain, had been virtually destroyed, no mass surrenders of any major units had yet occurred. Not until the 29th, as the escape routes from Italy were blocked by our forces driving along the top of the Po Valley, did the avalanche begin with the surrender of the 148th Grenadier and Italia Bersaglieri Divisions caught south of the Po by the Brazilians and the 34th Division.

A. GENERAL PEMSEL TURNS IN HIS SUIT.

The Army of Liguria, consisting of the German LXXV Corps and the Lombardy Corps, had been under command of Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, one-time conqueror of Ethiopia and later commander of Italian forces in North Africa. The staff of the Army was composed mostly of Germans and for about three weeks before the opening of the Allied offensive, its Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander had been Lieutenant General Max Joseph Pemsel.

For several days prior to the arrival of the American forces, in the Como region, this staff had been split into two parts by Partisans. They were without communication, either with each other or with Marshal Graziani, who, with a few Italian staff officers accompanying him, had been in Milan. There, through the Archbishop, negotiations were being carried on with the Partisans in regard to surrender.

1. Act I.

On 28 April, General Pemsel, feeling that the jig was up so far

as he was concerned, drove to Como and surrendered himself and his staff to the 1st Armored Division. Arrangements were promptly made for an interview with the Corps Commander with the object of the capitulation of the other Ligurian Army elements. On Sunday morning, 29 April, General Pemsel, accompanied by his Aide, Major Kniep, was brought by Captain Walter Fruedenberg of the 1st Armored Division to Castiglione della Stiviere, where the Corps Command Post was located. There, in the presence of General Crittengerger, Colonel Ladue, Chief of Staff, Colonel Thomas J. Wells, G-2, Captain Richard M. Senie, German interrogator, Captain Walter Fruedenberg and Chief Warrant Officer George J. Sage, the German general was interviewed. The interview which led to General Pemsel's accepting unconditional surrender for the Ligurian Army follows verbatim:

General Crittengerger: Who are you?

General Pemsel : Lieutenant General Max Joseph Pemsel, Chief of Staff, Army Ligurian.

General Crittengerger: How do you spell your name?

General Pemsel : P - e - m - s - e - l.

General Crittengerger: I am General Crittengerger, Commanding General, IV Corps. What brings you here?

General Pemsel : I am here to explain the surrender terms for my staff.

General Crittengerger: As Chief of Staff of the Ligurian Army, whom do you represent? Do you represent the Commanding General of the Ligurian Army?

General Pemsel : Graziani is a prisoner and I am speaking for my staff.

General Crittengerger: What organization do you speak for?

General Pemsel : I am speaking for my staff and would like to know more about the situation of the rest of the troops. I have had no communications with the Army Group for several days.

General Crittenberger: If the General is here to surrender, I will read the surrender terms. (CG reads surrender terms, copy attached.) General, you may study these terms.

General Pemsel : What is meant by "any further orders and instructions issued by the United Nations Commander will be carried out"?

General Crittenberger: They pertain to where you will disassemble your troops and disarm them.

General Pemsel : I can only sign this for my staff.

General Crittenberger: What contact has your staff with units under your command which would notify them that you report the Ligurian Army has capitulated?

General Pemsel : I had no connection with them for the last three days. The Partisans have cut our lines. We have no communications with higher headquarters. I would rather surrender to the Americans than to the Partisans.

General Crittenberger: How much of a staff have you and where is it?

General Pemsel : About 300 men, and they are in Como.

General Crittenberger: Is the staff with the 1st Armored Division?

General Pemsel : They are to be moved at 0800 to Como in possession of the 1st Armored Division.

General Crittenberger: If you sign the terms of this capitulation, will it not in any way effect the capitulation of the Ligurian Army?

General Pemsel : I have the authority to make a decision for the Ligurian Army, but I am not aware of the tactical situation and would like to be brought up to date with the current situation. If I feel the surrender should be made I will do so, but as Chief of Staff I must have more information.

General Crittenberger: That is a point I want to make. In other words, if your decision is based on the predicament the Ligurian Army finds itself in, do you wish to negotiate the terms?

General Pemsel : In my experience as Chief of Staff of the Ligurian Army, my present position was partly one of advisor to Graziani and partly liaison officer, and representative of the German General Staff. As Chief of Staff of the Ligurian Army in Marshal Graziani's absence I am acting head of the army.

General Crittenberger: You consider that the situation of the Ligurian Army is so that you can negotiate for surrender, don't you?

General Pemsel : It is still a question of not knowing what the situation is. When I do know I can make some further decision.

General Crittenberger: Will your decision be binding on the Ligurian Army?

General Pemsel : I cannot say, but I believe the Generals commanding the Corps will comply with our recommendations.

General Crittenberger: Col. Ladue, you and I will withdraw and let Col. Wells speak with the General about matters and we will return to talk further with him.

General Pemsel : The Army Group Commander and I were in agreement that the position of the Ligurian Army was difficult even before the attack was launched.

General Crittenberger: As professional soldiers, we sometimes have difficult duties to perform. Wells, don't say anything about the situation.

Corps Commander departs with Chief of Staff. Returns in about ten minutes. (During his absence the Corps Commander ordered a flight of fighter planes to buzz the Command Post a few times during the interview so as to furnish the proper sound effects to offset the bargaining efforts of General Pemsel.)

General Crittenberger: I feel that you should know the following facts. The American Army is between the German troops and all exits. Como, Bergamo, Brescia, Trento, Balzano. Within the last few days this corps captured 50,000 PW's and within the last two days I personally have seen the Commanding Generals of the 232d, 334th Divisions, and we also have the 90th Division Commander. This Corps made the main Army effort. The entire Allied Armies in Italy are advancing, and

there is no opposition any place along the line except locally. We penetrated the Adige line three days ago. It wasn't occupied. The 148th Division which is trying to escape from the mountains is cut off by a division at mountain exits on highway 9. There is an American division in Genoa. You are completely cut off on all sides. You can't possibly get any German troops out of Italy in the western half. Not only are American troops north of the Po, but we are at the foothills of the Alps. The situation at the eastern half of the Allied lines is comparable. It is my professional opinion that any German elements in northwest Italy cannot possibly escape annihilation or capture. We have troops not only covering the exits in the mountains to the north, we have troops to the south along Highway 9 at Parma, Reggio, Modena, and Piacenza, and the IV Corps is now moving westward to engage what is left of the German Army. If it is worth while for the remnants of the German Army in northwest Italy to fight, we welcome it. We could not be better placed and disposed, and I doubt if the Germans could be any worse disposed. I can't go into any details as to our dispositions other than to tell you the general picture. You have the French on the west and the Americans on three sides. I wonder if the General knows that Himmler yesterday proposed unconditional surrender terms to the Americans and British.

- General Pemsel : I heard that over the radio yesterday, as well as reports of the conditions in Germany; that is why I am here.
- General Crittenberger: In Germany the Russians and Americans are together along the entire front except in the south, and the American Third and Seventh Armies are now pushing into Austria. It is difficult for me as a professional soldier to understand how the Germans in the homeland are holding out as long as they are.
- General Pemsel : They are accustomed (General Pemsel paused to look up at the ceiling just when the first flight of fighter bombers buzzed low and loudly over the command post) - to fight to the last.
- General Crittenberger: In my opinion, that time has come in Italy.

Z O O O O M M ! ! (another flight buzzed over the school house - and General Pemsel paused again before answering)

General Pemsel : That is whay I am here.

General Crittenberger: When the IV Corps launches the attack, which it is ready to do now, I don't see how the Germans could possibly last longer than 24 hours.

General Pemsel : The whole thing that is happening in Italy is what they were afraid would happen the way it did. The whole thing developed the way the Army Group Commander and I thought it would. It is a very difficult situation, and I request what I say not be published in the press.

General Crittenberger: What we are saying here will not go in the press.

General Pemsel : I want to know if there is any report that the Army Group has appeared anywhere to try to make arrangements.

General Crittenberger: I am not in touch with our Army Group yet this morning, but my conference with General Clark has not yet been held, and I don't know. We have captured elements of the 41th Corps a week ago. Yesterday in Cremona-Piacenza area we captured elements of the 148th Division Headquarters.

General Pemsel : General Lemnitz?

General Crittenberger: I don't know, I have not seen him. The last we heard of the General, he was riding out on a bike. He may be in some of our many PW cages. The evacuation of the captured Germans to the rear is a greater problem to us than the supply of our fighting forces.

General Pemsel : Are the Partisans operating in the Turin area?

General Crittenberger: How about that, Wells?

Colonel Wells : Yes sir, Partisans have risen up.

General Crittenberger: Partisans report control of Milano.

Colonel Wells : Partisans have risen up and are working against German troops in northwest Italy.

General Crittenberger: Does the General mean the Partisans are in force and show force in northwest Italy, as one can see thousands of them along the roads. I talked to one of the senior officers of the Guards Battalion of the Commander in Chief of the SW in a PW cage a week ago. We captured elements of the Brigade of the SW as long as a week ago. I personally talked to the officer north of Verona. Yesterday a battalion of the 5th Mountain Division surrendered all officers and men.

General Pensel : In order to get in touch with my divisions, I must know where they are.

General Crittenberger: That will be easy. (Once again the roaring sound of planes overhead drowned out the General's voice.) These airplanes are getting in touch with these divisions now, what is left of them. I appreciate your being a professional soldier and your difficulty at this time. Because of that I am telling you things that will give you the picture, but, of course, you appreciate that I cannot tell you the exact location of the American and German elements at this time. Except for the Italia Division of the Ligurian Army, there is only one German division that I know of that is untouched by the IV Corps. The Commanding General and Chief of Staff of the Monte Rosa Division are negotiating for surrender terms for the entire division in the Milan area.

General Pensel : The 34th Division was the best of the lot that I had in the Ligurian Army. If the 34th Division were committed, it would put up a brave fight and that would cost both of us a lot of blood.

General Crittenberger: It is a good division. The 34th Division is what we are closing in on now.

General Crittenberger: Has the General any children?

General Pensel : Yes, three.

General Crittenberger: My son, a corporal, has just been killed as a tank gunner in Germany; my other son, a Lt. Colonel of armored artillery, stood at Bastogne. There is no further need for loss of blood, and you should do something about it. The IV Corps is in position ready to attack. It is up to you. The IV Corps has engaged and defeated eleven German divisions and has split in half, captured and completely defeated the 232d, 114th, 90th, 334th, and 94th

Divisions. Elements of the 148th, 65th, and some of the 5th and 8th Mountain Divisions, and we are ready to move up again today. We are all around them.

- General Pemsel : The situation is quite clear.
- General Crittenberger: I believe I am not exaggerating a thing when I say that your situation is hopeless.
- General Pemsel : I would like to know if it is possible that we try to get in communication with the German Army Group.
- General Crittenberger: Have Colonel Nance get in touch with the 15th Army Group and see if the German Army Group is still in existence; if so, where. We will see if we can get in touch with the German Army Group, but I doubt if it is possible, because they have withdrawn so fast that, except for the air, we are not in touch with them. Fighter bombers have been the chief means of combating the Army Group.
- Colonel Ladue : We are using Villafranca for fighter bombers and will be using Ghedi soon.
- General Crittenberger: The IV Corps is the main effort of the Fifth Army and is prepared to use any strength necessary, or any amount of air necessary, to defeat the German 34th Division now, once and for all. The Germans can save the 34th Division an untimely death, if you so choose.
- General Pemsel : If I cannot get in communication with the Army Group, I must get in communication with the 75th Corps and the Corps Lombardy. (A flight of planes roared over the old school house again.)
- General Crittenberger: I think that if the General were in one of these airplanes he would be in communication with the 75th Corps soon. We are working west of Genoa now and the French are coming in from the west. Do you understand that we were in Genoa three days ago?
- General Pemsel : Yes, we have withdrawn to Alessandria.
- General Crittenberger: If there are any German troops in Alessandria, I don't know it.
- General Pemsel : I suggest the possibility of flying to Turin with an American escort to try to contact my corps, but it is uncertain that the plane would not be shot down.

General Crittenberger: If the General desires to save the 34th Division, a disastrous fight with the IV Corps, and the other elements of the Fifth Army, and issue directives to that effect, we will assist you every way possible to get those orders to your organizations.

General Pemsel : I would like to know if it is possible to have a cessation of hostilities for some length of time so that we can issue orders.

General Crittenberger: That will be difficult as our air is on the 34th Division right now. If there is any more to be taken up, I am ready to do so, if not, we will assist you in the dissemination of any instructions or terms of surrender that you wish to get out to your troops. We will take the necessary steps to reach them. I don't believe it is possible to count on the air in disseminating any instructions that you initially referred to in unconditional surrender terms. We shall use your offices here in this headquarters, Army and Army Group Headquarters to facilitate this dissemination. In other words, you will be valuable in these offices and we would make use of these offices.

General Pemsel : Would it be possible to call back the Allied attack because it is an uneven fight and the 34th Division cannot defeat the American armor?

General Crittenberger: That depends entirely upon you. If you accept these terms of surrender, then will we get word to the Army Commander, and all I have to do is to call him. I cannot agree to any truce, except an unconditional surrender basis. In other words, we will close in for the kill, and I can't stop that unless for unconditional surrender.

General Pemsel : Is it possible to hold the Air Corps while these negotiations are under way? I believe that if I can get hold of the division commanders that my recommendations will have effect.

General Crittenberger: There can't be any negotiations. You represent the senior German officer of the Ligurian Army. Are you senior to the 34th Division Commander?

General Pemsel : No.

General Crittenberger: If you issue orders in the name of the Army Commander, would the 34th Division commander conform?

General Pemsel : It is probable, but I cannot be sure because I have no connections.

General Crittenberger: I am empowered by my Government to accept unconditional surrender, then I shall take steps to get these terms out, and, of course, I can stop our attack and air. Today is the day we expect to finish any German columns on the roads by air as this is the first good day we have had in several days. They can't get out as our troops block these roads, and you can understand that I can't stop the wholesale air attack of any German troops on the roads until you accept these terms for your headquarters and the Ligurian Army. If you don't, the fight goes on. Do you want to be left alone to discuss this?

General Pemsel : I understand, in surrendering this army as Chief of the German Staff, I would have to enter into this.

General Crittenberger: If you are willing to sign only for your headquarters which we already have, I shall use your office to notify the elements of the Ligurian Army that you have surrendered in their name by radio, air, and telephone and any other means possible.

General Pemsel : My name would be disgraced by that, but it can't be helped. I request some kind of connection with my superior headquarters. I am only Chief of the General Staff, and I am sure that you will understand my position.

General Crittenberger: You are the senior officer at headquarters of the Ligurian Army, and, as such, it is your responsibility to enter into any terms of surrender.

General Pemsel : I wish to call your attention to the fact that the CG of the 75th Corps is senior to me.

General Crittenberger: (After returning from telephone conversation with Army Commander) I have just talked to my Army Commander, and he has directed me to inform you that, if and when you sign terms of unconditional surrender for the elements of the Ligurian Army, he will assist you in getting out such instructions to the elements of your command, and when that is done, we will call off the air.

General Pemsel : My main worry is the 34th Division; that is what I want to save.

General Crittenberger: That is also my objective and the whole American Fifth Army for today. That is the remaining formed unit of the German Army in front of the IV Corps.

General Pemsel : It is not very good. It is especially bad as the division is in a mountain defense and they have never fought in such a situation.

General Crittenberger: Will it stand up with our 10th Mountain Division which has spearheaded this drive from Belvedere?

General Pemsel : The 10th Mountain Division is certainly much more better. I was General of the Mountain troops myself, and I am sure of this.

General Crittenberger: The 34th Division will have to meet the 10th Mountain before it gets out of Italy.

General Pemsel : I realize that as far as the fighting goes in the south, it is over.

General Crittenberger: You are in a difficult position for a soldier. General Wainwright surrendered the American forces on Corregidor. I am appreciative of your difficulty. My suggestion for your consideration is this: If you feel that it is time to sign an unconditional surrender for the Ligurian Army, we will then get in touch with any elements of the Ligurian Army that you desire and convey your instructions to them. If that is not considered, then there is nothing further to do but to continue the annihilation of the 34th Division and these small elements along the roads. In making such a suggestion, we are aware of the fact that as C/S your instructions might not be carried out by the Corps Commanders. I too, have been a Chief of the General Staff, and therefore know the sphere of the Chief of Staff's responsibility. Even though there might be hesitation on the part of Corps or division commanders to accept your orders, that is the first step. There can be no other way insofar as you are concerned, because your sphere is on the Ligurian Army level. Once the surrender of the Ligurian Army for the Army is negotiated and announced to the Corps and Division Commanders, we will then start working on these commanders' using you as Commanding General. While absent from the van, I attempted to obtain the location of General Vietinghoff. We do not know where he is; we cannot locate him. Therefore, it would be impossible to communicate with him. We have our air reconnaissance looking for him since yesterday noon. So, if you are willing to sign the unconditional surrender for the Ligurian Army, which we will transmit to your troops, and if there is any hesitancy on the part of the Corps Commander to accept it, we will get in

touch with the Corps Commanders through Ligurian Army. My point is, that you are the senior officer of the Ligurian Army headquarters, and, as such, it is your responsibility to act for the Ligurian Army headquarters. I don't think you can avoid it. Certainly, the Corps Commanders who don't know this situation can't act with the same intelligence and appreciation of the situation as Army headquarters can. I am telling the Corps Commanders what the situation is; they will find out themselves today. One of them, General Schlemmer, will find out what the situation is all around him. I have only told you because I feel you should know it in order that you may act intelligently for the good of the Army. If you don't wish to accept unconditional surrender, there is only one thing left for to do, and that is to continue the annihilation of the German forces.

- General Pemsel : Are we in communication with the chief of the Partisan forces in the Turin area?
- General Crittenberger: We are in touch with the Partisan chiefs in all areas of northwest Italy.
- General Pemsel : I would like to know more about the situation around Turin so I could know if my divisions can get supplies into that area.
- General Crittenberger: The 34th Division today is without any supply except its basic ammunition. We are in contact with the 34th Division right now. Colonel Wells, get the General the report of the Partisan situation in Turin at present. The Partisans have risen all over northwest Italy. I have been in Modena, Parma, Reggio on the south flank and cities on the north flank within the last 24 hours have risen everywhere and they are the ones who are assisting in bringing in the German prisoners.
- General Pemsel : I give myself as an example as a prisoner taken by the Partisans.
- General Crittenberger: No, you were taken by the 1st Armored Division.
- General Pemsel : I came just at the right time; otherwise it might have been too late. I was the C/S of the 7th Army before the landing was made. At that time, we thought the landing would come in areas where there were great Partisan set-ups. I feel that I surmised the situation there as well as here in Italy. I believe that in the region of Turin, the danger of the Partisans is great.

General Crittenberger: General Pemsel, off the record, the IV Corps is the Allied Command that has been ordered to occupy northwest Italy after the war, and we are the ones who organized the Partisans in Turin, Alessandria, Milan, and we have American and British officers in all of the towns for maintenance of the organization of the Partisans. They are very strong. They were directed three days ago to start, and I cannot tell you more than to say in the towns I have gone into so far, the Partisans had the town and everything connected with it before our troops entered the towns. It is a plan we have been working on for more than six months. Partisans in Turin work for the IV Corps.

General Pemsel : How dangerous are the Partisans?

General Crittenberger: I think you can answer that as well as anybody.

Colonel Wells : It was reported that there was an uprising by the Partisans in Milan, Turin and Genoa three days ago.

General Crittenberger: Hasn't the General seen the Partisans between your Command Post and here?

General Pemsel : Yes, I have. When my troops come, the Partisans disappear. They are dangerous because they eat up our supplies and steal our ammunition.

Colonel Wells : The Partisans have taken a lot of German prisoners.

General Crittenberger: Would the General care to tell me how he was captured?

General Pemsel : Actually I was never taken prisoner, but I went to the Americans for negotiation.

General Crittenberger: Then it is made of record that the General did not have to negotiate with the Partisans in order to get to the IV Corps; only troops of the 1st Armored Division. I understand that you said that the Partisans had been the one that had directed you to the 1st Armored Division. Is that true?

General Pemsel : No, it was the 1st Armored Division, Task Force Howze.

General Crittenberger: I am glad to get that clear.

Captain Senie : Two American Officers came with him, no Partisans were there.

General Crittenberger: Good. I told the Army Commander that I would have a report for him at 1100R. Do you wish me to tell him

that you are still considering this matter, or are you willing to announce the terms of unconditional surrender, and would you like me to leave for 10 or 15 minutes so that you could discuss this and I shall return at 1100B.

General Pemsel : I shall sign and mark cessation of hostilities in the Ligurian Army and contact the Corps to see what they will do.

General Crittenberger: That depends on the Ligurian Army, you understand that. When you sign, we shall immediately attempt to get in touch with whomever you wish and transmit your orders, and direct them to announce the terms and when we accomplish that, we will stop the air.

General Pemsel : I will let you know in a quarter of an hour. (In the meantime, a couple more passes by the fighters were made.)

Party returns at 1100B.

General Pemsel : I am ready to surrender the Ligurian Army.
(Note-1105B)

General Crittenberger: A pen, please. Call the photographers.

NOTE: Colonel Wells fills out surrender form as directed by General Crittenberger. C/S signs at 1110B.

General Crittenberger: General Pemsel, sign here, your name, organization, and units you represent.

General Pemsel signs at 1114B.

General Crittenberger: Colonel Ladue, please sign that as a witness, and also Major Kniep.

(EDITOR'S NOTE AT BOTTOM OF PAGE)

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END OF ACT I

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While the negotiations were going on in the old schoolhouse, it had also been arranged that the platoon of tanks of the 751st Tank Battalion,

(This conversation in the General's van was inserted into this history in the same form that it was found in the files. The misspelling and inaccuracies caused by rapid shorthand dictation at the time of the interview are apparent and included for the benefit of the reader.)

which furnished protection to the Command Post during the race across the Po Valley, circle the Command Post area a few times. The roar of the tracked vehicles must have impressed General Pemsel with the strength of our passing armor. They rumbled around the area about an hour and, when the space and time factor for a passing convoy of tanks is considered, it could have been a full-strength combat command racing by in hot pursuit of the foe.

With the planes buzzing over the Command Post, which made Pemsel look up at the ceiling as though Damocles' sword dangled over his head, combined with the rumble of the passing armor, he found himself confronted with the prospect of complete annihilation of the remaining Ligurian forces, should they attempt to fight their way through in the direction in which they had been ordered to withdraw. Thus, on Sunday morning at 1114, 29 April, the scene closed with General Max Pemsel signing the unconditional surrender of the entire Ligurian Army.

After signing the surrender terms, General Pemsel issued an Army order to put them into effect in the Ligurian Army. That order read as follows:

"HEADQUARTERS LIGURIAN ARMY

29 April 1945

ARMY ORDER

With full knowledge of the futility of a breakthrough by the Army in the previously ordered direction, and with consideration of the general conditions in Germany, I command, in the absence of the Supreme Commander, Marshal Graziani:

1. All troops which are under command of the Army will surrender in accordance with international conventions. For details see attached.
2. Surrender to the Partisans will not be considered. In cases where this has already occurred the German troops will be taken over by the Allied Armies.

3. Units will assemble with all of their weapons and equipment in the most compact groups possible, and await the arrival of Allied troops.

4. Until the arrival of Allied officers, both sides will cease hostilities with ground and air weapons. It will be definitely established that Allied troops will not be fired upon.

5. Supply will be extended to the greatest possible extent, until such time as further provisions are made.

6. The delivery of this order will be made by dropping from American airplanes and through Major I. G. Kniep accompanied by the American Captain R. H. Senie.

7. This order applies only to the Ligurian Army. All other troops will comply with orders of Army Group.

MAX JOSEPH PEMSEL
Lieutenant General
Chief of Staff
Ligurian Army"

To bring a prompt end to the fighting around Milan, General Pemsel was directed to order enemy troops there to surrender. He complied in issuing this order:

"HEADQUARTERS
LIGURIAN ARMY

29 April 1945

ORDER

Having this day formerly surrendered unconditionally the Ligurian Army to the IV American Corps, I command all forces in and about the city of Milan to cease fighting and give themselves up to the first Allied troops to enter the city.

PEMSEL"

General Crittenberger, soon after the signing, sent representatives of the IV Corps to Milan to effect the release of Marshal Graziani from the Partisans. Later that same night, he was brought into the IV Corps Command Post at Ghedi Airport and having been advised of Pemsel's surrender, confirmed the action of his Chief of Staff by indorsement on the surrender document. He thus ordered his two Corps Commanders to lay down

their arms.

It is believed that because of lack of communications this action by Pemsel and Graziani was entirely independent of the negotiations then under way in Caserta between AFHQ and the German High Command in Italy.

After the signing of the surrender terms by General Pemsel and the issuance of the Army order putting them into effect in the Ligurian Army, a copy of this order was taken by the German Staff Officer and an American Staff Officer to the Headquarters of the LXXV German Corps. Travel by night in the area was difficult because the Partisans shot at any vehicles running blackout, while the Germans fired on any displaying lights. Contact was finally made with elements of the 5th Mountain Division of Schlemmer's Corps and they agreed to escort the German Staff Officer to General Schlemmer's Headquarters under the condition that he be blindfolded for the trip. The German Staff Officer stated that when he got to see General Schlemmer only a short time was spent with him and after the General read Pemsel's order to surrender, he gave the following letter in reply:

Commanding General
LXXV Army Corps

Piemont, 30 April 1945

1. The arrangements made by Major General Pemsel are not recognized by me as Commanding General of the LXXV Army Corp, inasmuch as I consider myself bound by my oath until the death of the Fuehrer.

2. As long as I am neither attacked in the air nor on the ground, I will stand fast, until the death of the Fuehrer permits the capitulation. Until such time I will defend myself against every enemy attack.

s/ Schlemmer
General of Mountain Troops"

There was nothing else to do but to make preparations to smash him - these preparations we shall follow in the subsequent chapter.

However, the effect of this surrender order on the Lombardy Corps was

more positive. On the evening of 30 April, Major General Curt Jahn, its Commander, surrendered his forces in the vicinity of Abbiategrasso, southwest of Milan. The Corps had been composed of Germans and Italians, and the majority of the latter had already deserted to the Partisans. The Germans who were left numbered about 2000, with approximately 280 vehicles and 12 88mm guns. They were allowed to keep their arms overnight for protection against Partisans; the next day the entire group was evacuated to the Army Prisoner of War enclosure.

B. THE CLEAN-UP

While the drama of Pemsel's surrender was being played, the advanced elements of IV Corps were rapidly cleaning up northwest Italy. After Combat Command "A" reached the Swiss border, and completed the envelopment of the enemy in northwest Italy, other IV Corps units north of the Po faced south and southwest to confront the foe, ready for any attempt at a breakthrough. In order from right to left on 28 April were the 1st Armored Division, The Legnano Gruppo, a British-trained and equipped Italian unit roughly equivalent to a half of a division, had been attached to IV Corps, and, at the time, was closing in the Brescia area as rapidly as its transportation would permit.

1. Long Road Home.

There was no concerted breakthrough effort on the part of the Germans, but for several days the plains of Lombardy were full of every variety of small enemy groups, all headed toward the Lake Garda region. These columns, scattered and without cohesion, were met at practically every turn in the road. Some few still were electing to fight it out, probably being without news of just how badly the fight had gone for the German Army. The vast majority of them were disillusioned and disheartened,

nasty to the last in their treatment of the Partisans, but only seeking Allied forces to whom they might with safety surrender themselves.

Where the enemy columns and groups were intercepted by properly equipped combat units, there was no particular novelty about the situation. Either they fought for a while and then surrendered, or they surrendered immediately without any resistance. In either case, thousands of them streamed back down the roads to the Prisoner of War inclosures. But not infrequently these hostile groups had to be taken care of by whatever troops were at hand, and the circumstances in several cases, involving Corps troops as they did, are worth recording. They are only representative incidents of those several days that the harried Hun spent in that doubtful state of freedom that preceded his captivity.

During the late evening of 27 April the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron was working southwest from Brescia. One troop spotted an enemy convoy traveling from southeast to northwest near Caravaggio at about 2200B, and opened fire when about half the column had passed the road junction at that town. In the darkness they estimated that fifteen enemy vehicles were knocked out. The number of enemy dead and wounded were unknown but six prisoners were taken who stated that the convoy consisted of about forty vehicles, including four SP guns, two to four 20mm guns, and 150 to 200 enemy personnel. Another troop farther south collided with a hostile column at Soncino at 2255 and a fire fight resulted, during which about thirty prisoners of war were taken.

On the morning of 28 April, when the 34th Infantry Division was moving in north of the Po, the AMG officer in Mantova reported 250 enemy, three 88mm guns, one smaller gun, and two American trucks at San Lorenzo and Grazie. The enemy was reported to have 52 hostages with them. A corps

artillery reconnaissance officer reported about noon that 100 enemy with women hostages were surrounded by Partisans in the vicinity of Vasto. This later turned out to be the same group and the Partisans needed help to capture them. A mixed force from the IV Corps Command Post security guard was sent during the afternoon to mop up this pocket, the Command Post being on the move at the time from Governolo to Castiglione delle Stiviere. The enemy guns lay in wait for our tanks and at the proper moment pinned them down with their fire. The Corps Artillery possessed one 8-inch Howitzer which was on the road in the vicinity; this went into action in a neighboring field and sent some twenty rounds of unobserved fire toward the hostile force. It was unfortunately not effective in discouraging the enemy from further resistance. Later, a 155mm gun from another battalion of Corps Artillery which was passing went into action just north of Goito and destroyed the two hostile guns that had held up our tanks. Next day an authentic source reported enemy casualties and losses to have been three 88's, two 20mm guns, two trucks, and one car destroyed; five killed, eleven wounded, and twenty-nine German and thirty-two Fascist prisoners. About thirty survivors with small arms, automatic weapons and bazookas were still at large next day near Castelgrimaldo, and as they constituted a definite menace to our supply lines, they were finally mopped up by a company of Corps Engineers.

In the afternoon of 28 April a call for help was received by IV Corps Headquarters from the Partisan Commander north of Desenzano, who claimed that his men were unable to continue the fight with some 10,000 SS personnel in the vicinity of Salo, and that American troops were needed. The nearest and only available unit was the specially formed engineer assault

company of the 1st Armored Division, then bivouacked south of Castiglione and about to move forward. A task force of two jeep loads of men with sub-machine guns was gathered together, a tank-dozer dropped its blade and joined up at the last moment, and the party set out on reconnaissance. Upon its return several hours later, the officer in charge reported that he had seen the Partisan Commander, a former Italian resident of Cincinnati, who explained that he could get along well enough by himself, but that it greatly improved the morale of his force just to feel that their chief could summon aid from the Americans if he had to!

A Partisan report stated that at 2330, 28 April, a large force of enemy, estimated at 4,000, with eighty motor transport and twenty towed artillery pieces had been seen by civilians going north up Highway 45 in the Bagnolo Mella area. A previous report had also mentioned a force of about this same size in the same general area, and as they might cause trouble if they came on in strength, IV Corps instructed its Corps Artillery, which had its Headquarters and some units assembled at Ghedi Airport, to deal with the situation. A battalion of 155mm Howitzers went into action and fired several hundred rounds of interdictory fire between midnight and 0300. The personnel of a British survey regiment were hastily formed into a provisional infantry battalion and set out road blocks to the south and west and prepared to undertake the close-in protection of the field. A group of Partisans at the field were also pressed into service and machine guns dismounted from artillery vehicles were used to reinforce the road blocks. A strange part of these proceedings was that Partisans and civilians to the south and west sent in frequent reports on the effectiveness of our artillery fire. Toward dawn, a battalion from the 34th Infantry Division arrived as

reinforcements. This enemy column was never fully accounted for; it did not put in an appearance along Highway 45, and the chances are that it broke up into a number of small groups which took separate routes along the back roads and were eventually taken prisoner.

Units of Corps Engineer Troops, whose primary work was to repair and maintain the supply roads, were given the additional duty of apprehending any enemy individuals or parties that attempted to cross the road, or were reported in the vicinity. During these few days, not only was all organic transportation taxed to the limit trying to haul prisoners of war to the nearest cage, but trucks of the supply convoys returning from forward dumps were required to carry prisoners. To reduce the number of guards required, it became quite usual to stand prisoners up in the body of a cargo truck, packed in so tightly that they could not raise their arms above their heads nor move about until someone opened the tail-gate at the end of the journey. There were many cases where a convoy of German vehicles would come down the road filled with German personnel and driven by German drivers, with perhaps one American jeep heading the column and a half-track, armored car, or tank bringing up the rear.

2. Partisans at Milan.

Elements of the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron entered Milan in the morning of 29 April with no molestation whatever and proceeded on southwest with the mission of seizing crossings of the Ticino River. Also, a IV Corps Artillery air observer flew over Milan that same afternoon and reported that the people were crowding in the streets, street cars were running, and a large procession was passing down a main avenue. All bridges appeared to be intact. The Partisans had wrested control from the Germans some days previously and apparently the city of Milan was getting back to normal. The plan for the up-

rising in Milan had been worked out by the Partisan City Command in February. The town had been divided into sectors, with responsible commanders for each, and each had twenty to thirty vital objectives designated for capture. Included were plans for groups of Partisans from outside of the city to give aid if required.

On 25 April, negotiations for the surrender of the Republican forces failed at a meeting attended by General Raffaello Cadorna, commanding the Partisan forces in northwest Italy. That same night Mussolini and his cohorts fled from the Provincial Governor's Palace to Como, whereupon the finance guards at the Palace who were secretly Partisans, took control of the building. This was the first step of the insurrection. On 26 April, Partisan patrols began to disarm Germans and Fascists patrolling the streets, and called on all Fascist barracks and German installations to surrender forthwith. By 28 April all German groups save two had complied but remained in their quarters, waiting to surrender to the Allies. There were about 4,000 German troops in Milan at this time, but the majority of the 20,000 Italian Fascist troops, on the evening of the uprising, had deserted their barracks and disappeared.

About 25,000 small arms as well as a large number of vehicles were taken by the Partisans. Fifteen German and Fascist warehouses were seized. About 30,000 Partisans took part in the uprising, suffering some forty killed and sixty wounded during the fight. The German groups that held out in Milan were the SS Headquarters for Northwest Italy and a party of about seventy others. They were well armed and possessed four tanks. Their fates are described elsewhere.

The seizure of control in Milan by the Partisans, while primarily carried out for their own ends, was a great help to IV Corps in its occupation

of Northwest Italy. Here was the largest city, destined to be the headquarters of IV Corps activities, left in almost complete running order. All public services continued uninterrupted during the uprising and thereafter, except the street cars, which were idle for two days while their operating personnel took part in the fighting. General civil administration went right on, for the officials appointed by CLN (Committee of National Liberation) stepping in immediately. In most cases those incumbents who were tainted with Fascist tendencies eliminated themselves from the scene by fleeing.

3. SS at Milan, Monza and Brescia.

In those last three days of April, the most glum of all the glum Germans enroute under guard to the Army Prisoner of War enclosures were those in the three columns of SS personnel from Milan, Monza and Brescia. As distinguished from the Wehrmacht, the Waffen SS had been employed in Northwest Italy to mop up Partisans, to counter insurrectionary activities and to track down Allied agents. Remaining at their posts by order of the High Command until it was too late for them to escape, these much hated and feared troops had been forced to protect themselves behind the barricades and pillboxes of their headquarters and await the coming of the American forces. To have surrendered to the Partisans would have for most of them meant death.

The SS troops in Milan were commanded by a Colonel Rauff, whose headquarters was located at the Hotel Regina. The two other principal groups in the area overrun by the IV Corps were located at Monza and at Brescia. The Milan district had originally a total garrison of about 12,000 German troops of which 3,000 were SS, but only some 200 were actually holding out

at the Regina. In the Monza area there was an SS brigade numbering 4,000, of which the most part was other than German in nationality. They made one unsuccessful attempt to combine forces with other SS personnel in Novara, but the Partisans resisted their march by such good efforts that the idea was abandoned and they returned to Monza and surrendered to 1st Armored Division units at the first opportunity. At Brescia was situated the Headquarters of about 3,000 SS troops of Ukrainian and Croatian origin who worked in the mountains to the north. The bulk of this force undertook to retreat by the northern routes and were among those that eventually had to be combed out of the mountains a few at a time; the Headquarters started to move north from Brescia on 29 April. A destroyed bridge at Nozza held up their convoy and a fight ensued in the vicinity of Sabbio between their right flank guard and local Partisans who in the meantime had requested help from the IV Corps. Major Steve O. Rosetti, of OSS, a captain, a sergeant, a jeep, and a radio truck responded. They persuaded the group at Sabbio, numbering eighty-five men, to surrender, and sent them to the rear under Partisan guard. The commander of the main body, which was on the road between Barghe and Nozza, was more obdurate and a long argument, into which considerable bluff was injected, was necessary before he too agreed to surrender. The convoy turned its vehicles around and, led by the jeep and radio truck, sadly proceeded back to Brescia where they were turned over to the 34th Infantry Division. The total bag amounted to 1,275 personnel, eighty-five trucks, four Volkswagen, twelve civilian cars, eight AA guns, and four AT guns.

The capitulation at Milan was perhaps the most spectacular of all three. A staff officer from IV Corps with a sergeant interpreter took the formal surrender in the lobby of the Regina, upon the walls of which

were hung a swastika flag and a large portrait of der Fuehrer. The terms were unconditional, and after they had been explained to the assembled personnel by the SS commander, he gave a guttural command and all sidearms clattered to the floor. There were thirty female camp followers with the group. The entire force, females included, were loaded into their own motley array of vehicles for evacuation. Some difficulty was experienced in leaving the premises with these prisoners, as the local inhabitants were in an ugly mood, many of them having personal scores to settle. But with the help of a few tanks and armored cars the way was cleared and the long column of German vehicles, occupied and driven by their own personnel, wound out of town and was safely headed down the autostrada toward captivity. The prospect of being screened was what caused the dour expressions; many of these people faced trial for the crimes which they had committed in the heyday of German strength, when to be a part of the Waffen SS in an occupied country was to be sitting on top of the world.

4. Italian Republican Forces.

At the time of the Spring offensive the Italian Republican Army had some four divisions in Northwest Italy - the Littorio, Monte Rosa, San Marco, and Italia. When the rapid advance of the IV Corps severed their only possible route of withdrawal, the desertion rate in these units, already high, soared to practically 100 percent. As the Allied forces approached, the personnel of these Italian organizations were quick to realize that the best way to avoid captivity was to return to civilian life, and this they proceeded to do, evaporating into the very countryside from which most of them had come. The Partisans captured some of them in combat and later turned them over as prisoners of war, but in general a desertion meant the

possession of a weapon and in many instances the deserter himself joined up with the Partisans. There was little concerted effort to apprehend these individuals, the large majority of whom had been forced into the service to begin with and had no very strong political or patriotic convictions one way or another. Exceptions were made in the case of those, mostly officers, who were on the lists as war criminals; these were usually executed promptly.

It was a different story too for the personnel of the special Fascist organizations, such as the Guardia Nazionale Repubblicana and the Brigata Nera. These people, being notorious in their communities, stood no chance of escape by donning civilian clothes and returning to the land as simple farmers. Knowing the hatred of the Partisans for them and the summary justice that they might expect at their hands, these units usually held together, resisted capture and fought on until they could surrender to the Allies. The cases where members of Republican units captured in combat by the Partisans were turned over as prisoners of war, stirred up some contention among the families of northwest Italy, who could not understand why their sons should remain prisoners while so many other men of the same forces returned to their homes and were allowed to circulate freely in the community. This problem was only one of the many anomalies in a country, which only years of peace under a good government can finally solve.

5. Mussolini and Friends.

Benito Mussolini spent the last few days of the existence of the Italian Socialist Republic in a turmoil of unpreparedness and indecision. Faced with imminent crises, realizing that the sand in the hourglass of Destiny was perilously near to running out, his frantic efforts to save

the situation, politically and personally, were futile in the extreme. On the afternoon of 25 April at the very hour that IV Corps elements were already consolidating their bridgehead north of the Po and others of its troops were hammering at the gates of Parma, a meeting was called at the home of Cardinal Schuster in Milan to discuss the surrender of the Republican forces in Milan. Among those present were Mussolini, Cadorna, Graziani and representatives of the CNL. A German general, who was also to have been there, failed to arrive. Cadorna and the members of CNL insisted upon unconditional surrender but Mussolini refused; the meeting finally broke up with an agreement being reached.

Mussolini and his companions, including Graziani, went back to the Provincial Governor's Palace and later decided to go to Como to further discuss matters. The party left Milan at 2000 and spent the night in Como planning to escape to Switzerland. That night Mussolini's mind was too disturbed to remember that one of his famous Roman ancestors was born there in Como - then known as Comum. It was the birthplace of the Plinys whose name has been carried through history much longer than Mussolini's ever shall. With the idea that the entire government should cross the frontier with the Duce, they continued on on 26 April as far as Menaggio where more indecision and uncertainty developed. At this point Marshal Graziani declared that he still commanded the Ligurian Army and refused to leave his troops; accordingly, he left the group and returned to Como where he tried to contact his Headquarters which had just been moved to Lecco. Later on in the day he joined the German SS Headquarters at Cernobbio, without having accomplished much.

Mussolini and the remaining group abandoned the idea of crossing the

border at Porlezza as originally intended and set to work on another plan of escape. On the following day a Partisan road block at the village of Dongo, well up the western shore of Lake Como, stopped a large German convoy that was proceeding to the Italo-Swiss frontier. They were searching for Fascists whom they knew were trying to get out of the country under German protection. After hours of argument they bluffed the convoy commander into permitting his vehicles to be searched, and hidden in one of the trucks, with a German military overcoat over his own regular Italian uniform, was Il Duce. When he was found, the other Fascists in the group were also quickly apprehended, including Benito's girl friend, Clara Petacci, who had elected to share the fate of her lover. Subsequent events in the lives of Benito Mussolini and his companions during this excursion remain far from clear. They were returned part way to Como by the Partisans, where Mussolini was separated from the others, and no one save Clara was allowed to see him. The executions were probably carried out at Azzano and it is known that after a few hours the bodies were taken back to Milan where they were publicly exhibited on April 29. Great secrecy surrounded the whole affair, as American troops were already in the area.

Graziani telephoned on the afternoon of 27 April from Cernobbio to Milan offering to surrender to General Cadorna under guarantee of personal safety for himself and the two officers accompanying him. The reply came two hours later that he must give himself up with his staff to the Partisans at Como. After some further parleys with the local SS Commander and an officer of the Partisans, Graziani and his companions accompanied the latter back to Como where they surrendered and during the evening were taken to Milan. While enroute to the SS Headquarters in Milan, where peculiarly

enough he was permitted to spend the night, Graziani narrowly escaped death when his car was fired upon by Partisans manning a road block. On the morning of 28 April he and his companions were transferred to the ,Hotel Milano where they remained under Partisan guard until they were evacuated from Milan under American protection on the night of 29-30 April.

"THE PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XXIV - - - - -

THE CLOSING SCENE - ACT II

Just as an opera or play comes to an end with the dropping of the curtain at the last act, so did the war in Italy. However, the war in Italy was neither a play nor an opera, but a series of everyday events that grimly happened in real life. It could not even be called a horrible dream, because a dream lies in the workings of the subconscious mind - the war was an actuality. There are many white crosses in Allied cemeteries that bear mute testimony to the fighting that raged in Italy during 1943-44 and 45. The one outstanding difference between an opera and a war is that the actors of a successful opera would like to re-enact the scenes again, but the men and women who were engaged in the fighting shudder at the thought of going through it again. However, one similarity that lies in both is the end - the opera after the closing act, the war after a surrender. This chapter is devoted to the eventual surrender of the enemy forces that opposed IV Corps and the problems that arose during the occupation of northwest Italy.

A. THE LXXV THINKS TWICE.

1. Withdrawal to the Border.

The German plan for withdrawal from northwest Italy was influenced by tactical considerations as well as economic and political factors. The Franco-Italian frontier was held by the LXXV Corps, which had the 5th Mountain Division on the right and the 34th Infantry Division on the left. The 5th Mountain extended from the Franco-Swiss border to a point west of Turin, and the 34th held the remainder of the line

to Ventimiglia. The Lombardy Corps was spread out in the rear areas behind the LXXV Corps, occupied principally with maintaining order and keeping the supply routes open. There had been rumors in Allied intelligence of preparations for withdrawal of the LXXV Corps for several months, but no confirmation was ever obtained and any movements that did take place were probably only local changes in troop dispositions. The plan for the withdrawal provided first for the retirement of the 34th Division to the line Asti-Chivasso. When this move had been completed, the 5th Mountain was to fall back behind (northeast of) the Ticino River.

The Germans began their withdrawal, but Partisan activities in the region were so effective that the original plans had to be abandoned. Alba and Bra were captured by the patriots and the way to Asti thus barred to the 34th; it was accordingly decided to route the whole Division down the upper Po Valley and through the 5th Mountain, which at the same time, would concentrate in the Chivasso-Rivoli area. A broadcast order to Partisans to make an all-out effort in northwest Italy was made on 26 April and at dawn the next day their forces moved on Turin, capturing a bridge over the upper Po and seizing the eastern part of the city. By 1200 on 28 April, Turin was completely in Partisan hands, the German garrison having retired to the western hills.

To further hinder the 34th in its retirement, the Partisans east of Turin withdrew north of the Po and blew the bridge behind them. This forced the Germans to take a route north and west of Turin in any further movement to the northeast. The LXXV Corps

started moving from its concentration area generally west of Turin on 29 April, headed toward Lombardy.

2. The French on the West.

In addition to the difficulties that the Partisans were causing the German in his withdrawal, there was to his rear another source of annoyance which he could not overlook. The French frontier had been defended by the French Army Detachment of the Alps. This French force with headquarters in Grenoble was directly under the Allied Sixth Army Group.

It had been decided late in March to drive the Germans from French territory and several schemes to achieve this objective had been launched. One attack had been undertaken at the northernmost end of the French sector in the vicinity of the Little St. Bernard Pass. Another attack, this time in the southern sector, achieved real success when a concentration of all available artillery working with a somewhat limited ammunition supply, resulted in the expulsion of the Germans from France and the actual invasion of Italy at Cima di Diavolo. Then shortly after the start of the Spring offensive in Italy, the Sixth Army Group ordered the French Army Detachment to advance as it could to a stipulated line, which on the average was some ten miles east of the Franco-Italian border. The evident purpose of this movement was to keep the LXXV Corps occupied so that no part of it could be spared to reinforce the battered divisions trying to hold out south of the Po. Later the French Army Detachment received somewhat broader orders, indicating a follow-up of the withdrawal of the Germans. However, on 29 April the French were instructed to stop

any further advance.

This so-called invasion of Italy by the French had been carried out in three principal sectors through the mountain passes, the two northern of which were still snowed-in and caused considerable supply trouble. Before their advance ceased, the penetration had reached to Pont San Martin in the north, to Ceres and Avigliana in the center, and to the line Borgo San Dalmazzo-Ventimiglia in the south. The follow-up of the German withdrawal by the French Army Detachment undoubtedly made a significant contribution toward causing the evacuation of northwest Italy by the German LXXV Corps. It unquestionably exerted its influence in completing the encirclement of the Hun, who found himself with the IV Corps bearing down on him from the northeast and east, and the south, with the Partisans making his life a burden in a small way wherever he tried to move, and with the French behind him, ready and anxious to close with either German or Italian to the extent that their strength and armament permitted. In the French line to the north were chasseurs alpins, still smarting from the invasion of France from Italy in 1940; to the south were Senegalese, who liked to fight on general principles, no matter who, when or where.

3. Hesitation.

The German LXXV Corps, groping its way northeast with Partisans swarming around it, had entered Lombardy. Before it stretched mile after mile of open country, affording scant protection from air observation, and presenting several appreciable river barriers to be crossed before the Garda region could be reached. The scant information

which it was able to receive indicated that the situation to the north was growing worse from day to day and certainly gave no encouragement, either to its command and staff or to the mountaineer or grenadier within the ranks. Somewhere ahead lay the American IV Corps, while to the right Japanese-Americans were also not far distant. There were still rations sufficient for a few days which could be augmented by food taken from the country, while the basic loads of ammunition were intact and could be supplemented by what remained in the numerous German dumps in the area. The personnel of the Corps, although somewhat footsore from marching, had suffered few casualties and were still fresh enough for combat. It was quite possible for LXXV Corps to offer battle.

However, it remained to determine if anything was to be gained by an effort to break through to the Brenner Pass, and what fate waited the survivors that might get there. If the LXXV Corps took up the defense to fight it out in place, such tactics would probably be fruitless because the war in Europe was in its last stages. Some further casualties would be inflicted on the Allied forces, yes, but heavy German losses would also be suffered in the process, for its artillery and scant armor could be no match for those of IV Corps. These were just some of the problems that perplexed General of Mountain Troops Schlemmer as he endeavored to carry out the long-overdue instructions to fall back to the Garda area. His LXXV Corps still possessed the strength to fight and was undefeated on the field of battle, but the prospects confronting him were far from reassuring, no matter what might be his final decision.

4. The Modern Cannae.

On 30 April American elements had reached Turin and the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron took over the maintenance of law and order in the city; an important task in view of the large industrial plants situated there. The next day the advance of main bodies of IV Corps continued with the exception of Task Force Dewey which remained in control in Milan and the 81st Reconnaissance Squadron which moved west as far as the Sesia River, the 1st Armored Division remained in its far-flung positions. A regiment of the Brazilian Division closed in Alessandria during the day, placing its battalions at strategic points about the town. Another Brazilian regiment in Piacenza had thrown one battalion north of the Po River, to cover the main roads in that area. The 34th Division closed one regiment in the Cuggiono area and another in the vicinity of Gallarate during the morning. The third regiment was enroute to join the others. In the afternoon, elements of the Division entered Novara, taking more than 1000 prisoners in the town.

About sunset the Reconnaissance Troop of the 34th Infantry Division, which had continued on to the west after passing through Novara, was approaching Santhia on the lookout for any signs of the German LXXV Corps, which must by now be somewhere very near. Suddenly a German sentinel challenged the point of the American advance guard. Before fire could be opened another voice cried out in English, "Do not shoot! Do you not know an armistice is declared?"

The American Commander replied in due time that he was aware of no armistice and would continue to advance, but an officer from the

German side came out and explained that they had orders to remain in place and not fire unless to defend themselves; an evident reference to General Schlemmer's reply of the previous day to the Pemsel surrender order. This was an outpost on the edge of the area occupied by the German LXXV Corps, he explained; any American effort to advance further would be resisted. The Reconnaissance Troop Commander considered the situation in which he found himself and decided to report back and request further orders; meanwhile he settled down for the night.

5. Schlemmer Signs on the Dotted Line.

The LXXV Corps had concentrated in the triangle Chivasso-Santhesia-Ivrea by the afternoon of 1 May. Allied representatives working with the Partisans in the region had made several attempts to contact the Corps Commander, in order to convince him of the futility of further resistance. A report of these attempts to negotiate had duly reached IV Corps Headquarters at Brugherio.

One outpost of the LXXV Corps having been located the previous evening by the American 34th Infantry Division, IV Corps on the morning of 2 May pushed out other reconnaissance to develop the location of the German units. At the same time the 1st Armored and 34th Infantry Divisions began to assemble in forward areas in preparation for continuing the attack. The Corps mission to destroy the enemy in Italy had not been changed and here before it were enemy who could not make up their minds. The impending attack did not materialize for, before it could be launched, notification was received that the German armies in Italy had surrendered, effective at 1400.

A staff officer had been dispatched by General Crittenberger the same morning to contact the Commander of the German Corps and to conduct him or his representative to the IV Corps Command Post. A request for such a meeting had been made from the German side. General Schlemmer arrived at Headquarters during the evening and was informed of the cessation of hostilities. He explained that his force amounted to some 40,000, consisting of the two German divisions, various corps troops and, to quote him, "indeterminate number of Italians". The LXXV Corps was not particularly offensively-minded at the moment, and the death of Hitler, the news of which had been broadcast the day before, served as sufficient excuse to Schlemmer for surrendering his command. This he did by signing the same text that General Pemsel had previously accepted. This brought to an end all organized resistance in the area, and thus ended active combat in Italy for the IV Corps. After nearly a year of continuous combat, after playing a leading role in the famous pursuit from Rome to the Arno River and after crushing all enemy forces before it in the final campaign, the end came so quickly that it was difficult to believe that hostilities had ceased.

B. FRUITS OF VICTORY.

The feel of victory came slowly to the men who had spent a winter in cold, muddy foxholes, straining their eyes from wind-swept peaks, watching for enemy patrols, ducking enemy mortar shells and patiently sweating out the pounding of enemy artillery. The reaction was curious, but characteristic. The campaign in the Mediterranean Theater was over; the first theater-wide surrender of the Germans had occurred, but the war was not finished, not even in

Europe and there was little jubilation - only a sensation of profound relief. The IV Corps offensive had moved with such unbelievable rapidity in the nineteen days which had just ended that there had hardly been time to think. Officers and men, having geared themselves to tremendous efforts, to sleepless days and nights, to exertion seemingly beyond human endurance, felt momentarily lost, as if an intolerable silence had fallen, as if, indeed, they had suddenly been precipitated into a vacuum. "You knew the end was coming, you expected it any time, but now that it is actually here, you almost can't believe it", said one infantry lieutenant. "You feel sort of let down, as if the bottom had fallen out of everything."

1. Entry into Milan.

Formal entry into the city of Milan was made by General Crittenberger about 1400 on the afternoon of 30 April. A task force was formed for the event, the elements of which, in the order of march, were as follows: Headquarters, Combat Command "B", 1st Armored Division; 2d Battalion, 135th Infantry, 34th Infantry Division; Company "A", 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Armored Division; One Platoon, Speciale Regiment, Legnano Gruppo; One Battery Field Artillery, 7 AGRA (British); One Platoon Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, BEF; and one Section 26th LAA Regiment (British); 2 Platoons Company "A", 751st Tank Battalion. The column, commanded by Colonel Lawrence R. Dewey, entered Milan from the north on the autostrada and moved down the Corso Sempione and Via Dante to the Piazza del Duomo, where it broke up into elements and established road blocks and patrols over the entire metropolitan area. The Task Force remained

in occupation of the city for several days, during which time there were no untoward incidents reported and our troops were everywhere greeted as liberators, the platoon of Bersaglieri from the Legnano Group in particular receiving acclaim.

The Commanding General, IV Corps, accompanied by motorcycle police including Bersaglieri, and with an escort of tanks and armored cars, followed shortly after the Task Force, taking the same route into the city. At the toll barrier at the north end of town he was officially greeted by General Raffaello Cadorna, leader of the Partisans, who joined the column when it moved on. The Corps Commander continued on past the Duomo to the Prefettura on Via Monforte. No further halt was made enroute and no one addressed the public. General Crittenberger was greeted at the Prefettura by representatives of the Committee on National Liberation and by the local officials, and the usual amenities were exchanged.

The Corps Command Post, which was located at Brugherio some miles out of town, remained there until 4 May, on which date it began movement to a large office building on Foro Bonaparte, Milan. Brigadier General William C. Crane, Artillery Officer, IV Corps, was appointed Military Commander of the Milano Military Area and assumed control of all troops in the Metropolitan area of the city of Milan.

From the day of arrival in Milan, every effort was made to make up for the discomforts of the winter in the Apennines and the rigors of the Spring Campaign. Hotels and restaurants were requisitioned for convenience of living; ample office space was found for all sections of the Corps Headquarters and everyone concerned set out to enjoy life to the fullest extent compatible with getting on with the job.

of establishing law and order.

2. Military Government Begins.

Allied Military Government closely followed the IV Corps advance, having started in Modena on 24 April to the accompaniment of small-arms fire as the Partisans mopped up. The capital cities of Parma, Piacenza, Cremona and Brescia were taken over as the tide of battle rolled swiftly on. These locations were all important enough, but the real goal was Milan, the heart of northwest Italy. The Civil Affairs Officer of IV Corps entered Milan on the morning of 30 April to meet the Committee of National Liberation, which had set up a well-organized series of commissions to deal with every phase of government, down to a complete military billeting office in anticipation of the arrival of the Allies. The Provincial Commissioner of the Milan Province and his team and the City Commissioner of Milan accompanied the IV Corps representative. Externally everything was in good order; the Partisans had seen to this, but food supplies and transportation were short and were to prove problems for days to come. Except for these difficulties and some shooting of alleged Fascists, the city in a very short time became reasonably calm and orderly.

Despite frequent frantic pleas for reinforcement, a shortage of trained personnel threatened to prevent the establishment of Military Government in Piemonte and Liguria, near the Franco-Italian border. Every commune had to be manned with Civil Affairs officers, and none were available from the usual sources. The Corps Commander took a hand and a call to the Army Commander brought all officers on detached service from combat divisions, to be employed as CAO's under

the supervision of those more experienced in civilian affairs; these people performed their duties with great credit. Their problem was also the shortage of transportation which prevented the delivery of supplies to the communities. It was all well enough to assure the population that sufficient food was available, but delivering it was something else again. The destroyed port of Genoa was useless and the food that could be landed by LST's on the beaches only sufficed for Genoa and famished Liguria. The long line of communications from Forli could not be of much value until the rail lines were reopened and not fully then, because for days the lack of coal kept locomotives stalled and freight trains motionless.

The Public Health officers had a field day in northwest Italy. After months of struggling to get together bits and pieces in order to put civilian hospitals in operation, they had arrived in an area where the hospitals were fully equipped and public health staffs organized and functioning, leaving as their only problem the supply of drugs. Since the tonnage of these was not large, this did not present too difficult a problem. The Engineer likewise had surcease from his usual worries. While Allied air had done its best to destroy power houses and dams, the damage had been temporarily repaired and two-thirds of the potential electrical power was available when IV Corps reached the region. Bridges and roads were a different matter, but the military urgency was gone and more time could be taken for road and bridge repair.

Public safety was a big problem. Everyone had firearms; rifles, Sten guns, automatic rifles and literally bushels of pistols and

and hand grenades. These they used on each other, to shoot into the air, or just generally to assert themselves as the occasion demanded. A strict curfew in all major population centers and the use of the Carabinieri in conjunction with military roving patrols, quickly restored some semblance of order. Lawless elements among the Partisans and lingering Fascist groups continued to give some trouble in outlying areas, and police officers of the Allied Military Government were frequently hard put to keep pace with their duties.

When prisoners were taken the problem of where to put them came up. The jails were full. The ordinary criminal represented only a small proportion of the inmates. German soldiers, Brigata Nera, Republican militia, Fascists of both low and high degree, victims of personal grudges and the man who couldn't be persuaded to part with his car - all were there. Three weeks after our entry the Special Courts of Assize set up to judge political offenders began to grind out sentences, and eventually the prison population began to wane. The number of innocent persons who were jailed by zealous Partisans is still unknown because the mills of Italian justice, even in the light of a new-found freedom, ground exceedingly slow.

• IV Corps for the greater part of its combat experience in Italy was, as it should have been, blissfully unaware of Civil Affairs; in northwest Italy, because of the size and importance of the problems, it became completely AMG conscious. Civilian situations arose which occasioned midnight calls to the Chief of Staff and, on some occasions, even to the Commanding General, and kept everyone awake for hours. Crisis after crisis was overcome - the killers who laid their victims

in the streets to be found next morning - the over-zealous arrest of a political leader - a border fist-fight between an Italian civilian and a French corporal - an annexation rally thwarted by quick thinking on the part of Corps Headquarters, or the local commander - all these situations were passed through successfully and IV Corps established Military Government in its area of responsibility.

3. Primary Disarmament of LXXV Corps.

With the cessation of hostilities on 2 May, the 1st Armored and 34th Infantry Divisions moved back from their forward assembly areas into bivouac, established road blocks and local security, and awaited the concentration of the German LXXV Corps in the triangle Azeglio-Ivrea-Calusa, in accordance with IV Corps instructions. After movement of the Germans was completed and the necessary road blocks and screens had been established around the perimeter of the designated area, the 1st Armored Division was assigned the mission of disarming the 5th Mountain Division. The 34th Infantry Division was given the same responsibility with respect to the German 34th Division. It was a happy coincidence that the veteran 34th should wind up its European combat service by disarming and evacuating the German division bearing the same designations. The disarmament followed a general pattern prescribed by higher echelons of the command; from start to finish, so far as IV Corps was concerned, it was never forgotten that the German units were surrendered forces. No relaxation of discipline was permitted and the German units, through their own chain of command, were required to carry out their instructions promptly and to the letter.

The first evacuation of enemy personnel and materiel took place on 5 May when certain Fascist units and the artillery of the German 34th Division were moved out of the concentration area. The movement of artillery and tracked vehicles of the 5th Mountain was also started that afternoon. Due to the possibility of Partisan reprisals within the German area, all individuals within the surrendered forces were permitted to retain their individual weapons. The disarmament and movement to the rear of other personnel was delayed until suitable facilities could be established, nearer the main supply lines. The deluge of prisoners in north Italy had rendered all previous plans incapable of coping with the situation. Our job was so immense that enemy engineer units, with necessary tools and transportation, were evacuated first in order to assist in the preparation of sites.

The surrendered forces had rations with the exception of fats, flour, meat and salt, for about ten days. After their own supplies were exhausted, they began drawing from our dumps on the reduced scale established for prisoners. Grain and hay for their animals had to be supplied from the beginning. There were about 9000 horses in the LXXV Corps, the disposition of which was a problem for some days. It was finally decided to evacuate a considerable number of animals and suitable vehicles to the Ghedi area which had been chosen as the site for a huge prisoner of war enclosure. There they would be used for the necessary local hauling of supplies. Horsedrawn convoys of this nature, carrying their own rations and forage and headed for Ghedi, were spread over the back roads for days. Their marching took place by night, and the trip required about nine days.

Some 3000 horses were thus taken care of. The balance of the animals were taken over gradually by AMG and distributed to the local population in connection with the agricultural rehabilitation programs for Lombardy, Piemonte and Liguria.

The evacuation of surrendered personnel was accelerated with the opening of the facilities at Ghedi on 18 May, and, except for detachments remaining to care for horses and vehicles, the 1st Armored Division completed its work on 20 May and the 34th Division on the following day. The last of the horses for AMG were not turned over until 2 June, after which caretaking detachments made final police of the triangle, and the last members of LXXV Corps went on their way to Ghedi, fatter and quite possibly happier than when they entered captivity.

The handling of more than 35,000 men and 9,000 animals, together with all arms and equipment was a great task in itself. Probably none of the enemy made any serious attempt to leave the concentration area, for it was a long way back to Germany, through an area where Germans were not liked. Discipline was well enforced in the LXXV Corps to the very end, and health records were excellent. The IV Corps troops designated to carry out this mission of disarmament and evacuation can take just pride in its effective accomplishment.

4. Partisans Go Home.

Steps to bring about the demobilization of the Volunteer Corps of Liberty (CVL) comprising all of the Partisans in north Italy were initiated on 2 May when IV Corps officers met with General Cadorna and Signor Ferruccio Parri, Vice-Commander, later to become Prime Minister of Italy. It was found that plans had already been made

for a patriot Victory Parade in Milan for all of Lombardia on 6 May. At the meeting it was determined that General Cadorna and his staff would direct the demobilization and disarmament of the Partisans through already well-established channels of command. General Cadorna was in favor of a long period for demobilization and held that it was absolutely necessary in order to ferret out secluded Fascists, but it was decided that demobilization and disarmament in the city of Milan would take place almost immediately after the victory parade, and that complete demobilization in the balance of the IV Corps area would be completed during the next few weeks.

On Sunday, 6 May, under an early summer sun, the victory parade was held with about 15,000 participants from the city of Milan and the mountain bands of Lombardia. A guard of honor made up of American, British, Brazilian and Italian troops flanked the reviewing stand in front of the Castello Sforzesco. Though the bulk of the patriots paraded with arms, order was excellent and only two shots were fired, these into the air by exuberant members. General Cadorna pinned Italy's highest military medal to the flag of the Corps of Liberty and General Crittenberger made a speech of congratulation and thanks to the assembled Partisans.

Subsequent discussions established specific dates for demobilization, which were 13 May for the city of Milan, 19 May for the Province of Milan and 7 June for all other Partisans in the IV Corps area. Orders to this effect were sent out from General Cadorna's Headquarters to the regional commands in Lombardia, Piemonte and

Liguria and from these commands to the lower echelons, including individual bands. In the city of Milan, General Faldella, commander of the city and province groups, issued similar orders. There were obstacles encountered due to the difficulty of communications, the degrees of autonomy enjoyed by certain local chiefs and the attempted interference of CNL in several localities, but, despite these difficulties, the order for demobilization by 7 June was in the end universally accepted.

The month of May saw much unrest among the Partisans. Almost all were willing to demobilize, if certain guarantees were made. It was insisted that enough Partisans be made members of the police to insure the new democratic order, and the fact was bemoaned that no instructions were forthcoming from the Italian Government for the enrollment of Partisans in the Army. The thousand lira bonus was considered insufficient. In some cases, this expressed dissatisfaction was only subterfuge for them to keep their arms. In Piemonte it was said that little could be hoped for until a strong national government was set up, until all Germans in the area were collected, and until the French troops withdrew from Italy.

Nevertheless, by the middle of the month, concrete results were beginning to appear. General Cadorna spoke over the radio, broadcasting a plea for complete disarmament by 7 June. The Italian government increased the bonus to 5000 lira, and a certain number of Partisans were enrolled in the Army. In all three regions some Partisans were taken into the police, collection of German prisoners was completed and the French situation improved. Six Partisan

demobilization centers were established in Piemonte and four in Liguria. In Lombardia the demobilization centers were established where the Partisan bands were located in accordance with Partisan wishes. By 20 May, the Partisans of the cities of Milan and Turin were disarmed. Disarmament had also taken place in Brescia, Bergamo, Alessandria, Vercelli and Cuneo provinces. Partial disarmament had been effected in the province of Biella. Theoretically at least, all the patriots of the Liguria region had been disarmed and very few remained in the centers to be demobilized.

In and about Milan, always the center of greatest unrest throughout the demobilization, trouble with the Partisans persisted. There were illegal possession of arms, abuse of police powers, continuing illegal executions, considerable extortion and hairclipping to young women who had associated with the Nazis. On 19 May the Milan Area Command disbanded the Partisan police as such and ordered a complete evacuation and closing of Partisan barracks by 30 May. This order was satisfactorily executed. In a final appeal, a message from General Crittenberger went out over the radio on 5 June, reminding Partisans of the 7 June deadline.

Partisans in Lombardia, Piemonte and Liguria had handed in by the deadline date a grand total of 124,254 arms of all types, including mortars and cannon and even a few tanks. The use of about 7000 Partisans was continued as special police and about 12,000 still awaited demobilization in centers. Although strict enforcement of the disarmament ban was carried out by all police and troops, only 47 arrests for illegal possession of arms were made.

The demobilization of the Partisans required the distribution of 220,000 Italian military rations, 2,400,000 cigarettes and 80 tons of clothing. Returning to peacetime pursuits by the Partisans was best carried out in the city and province of Milan, where about 30,000 returned to former jobs in industry and business and another 3,000 were found employment by the CNL. About 4,000 patriots were employed by the Fiat plant in Turin. Unemployment was worse in Liguria, where the delay in reopening the port of Genoa and the comparatively few large industrial plants made the absorption of the disbanded Partisans in this area a particular problem.

5. Political Problem.

The IV Corps had one touchy political problem in its occupation in northwest Italy which necessitated the wide scale use of troops. On the west, the French, at the time of the German surrender, had moved down into the Aosta and Susa Valleys, largely inhabited by French-speaking people. They attempted to prevent our AMG personnel from establishing their offices in this area, and indication appeared that the local inhabitants were being encouraged to join their territory to France.

The discussion and the settlement of this issue laid with higher headquarters. The 34th Division, which had established road blocks along the French-Italian border, and the French garrison maintained amicable relations with each other throughout the touchy situations that arose. An agreement was finally reached in echelons higher than IV Corps or Fifth Army in which the French were to evacuate the area in Italy, beginning 20 June. By 10 July the last French troops had been officially relieved by the 34th Division.

C. THE SCORE FOR IV CORPS

As participants in the campaign that had such a whirlwind finish we are apt to remember only that we won a great victory and contributed a goodly share to ending the war in Europe without much concrete appreciation of just what did take place. While it was in progress, the campaign as a whole was too large in scope for any one man to know about all that was happening. Therefore, a summary of the most important details making up the victory of IV Corps will not be out of place.

The last seventeen days of April and the first two days of May witnessed the complete disintegration of the enemy forces in northwest Italy under the violence of our assault. Exclusive of the LXXV Corps of the Wehrmacht, which when it was surrendered in mass, tallied up to a total strength of 35,485 officers and men, IV Corps took 83,000 prisoners, among them 21 general officers. Of the Ligurian Army the entire army and corps headquarters, as well as divisional staffs were apprehended, including Marshal Graziani, Generalleutnant Pemsel and Generalleutnant Jahn, all of whom have been mentioned heretofore. In the Fourteenth Army, the Division Commanders of the 148th Infantry Division, Italia Division, 354th Infantry Division, 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and 232d Infantry Division were captured. This meant that every division commander opposing IV Corps at the beginning of the period was taken prisoner with the exception of the Commander of the 114th Jaeger Division, who was reported killed in action. Among the regional commanders taken were those of the Milan, Como and Genoa areas. The SS Commander of northwest Italy became a prisoner also.

along with the general officers in charge of production and transportation and the generalleutnant who headed the Liaison Mission. When the LXXV Corps surrendered, in addition to General of Mountain Troops Schlemmer, already named herein, three additional division commanders and two more generals with liaison duties were taken.

The most accurate information available indicates that approximately 1500 dumps of enemy material were captured, comprising ordnance, engineer, signal, quartermaster, medical, chemical and air corps equipment. The dumps held weapons, vehicles, horses, aircraft, wagons, ammunition, rations, gasoline, torpedo boats, razor blades, toothbrushes, cigarette cases, skis, snowshoes, beds, clothing, shoes, swords, chinaware, gas masks, radio equipment, sound detectors, completely equipped hospitals, etc., ad infinitum.

No information as to the quantities of small-arm captured is available, but as a minimum the enemy heavy ordnance materiel captured or destroyed by IV Corps from 14 April to 2 May, 1945 is estimated as more than 120 tanks and armored vehicles, 175 self-propelled guns, 650 artillery pieces, 3750 general purpose vehicles and 10,000 horsedrawn vehicles. 50,550 square kilometers were liberated, including over 550 major towns and cities. Political and economic frameworks of the entire region were taken over. Industrial facilities were seized and held by the Partisans and were relatively undamaged. Because of the rapidity with which we came to their assistance, the Partisans were likewise able to preserve the cities of the industrial and agricultural heart of Italy from serious damage.

It had been learned from the statements of officer prisoners of

war that the speed of our advance came as a complete surprise to the enemy. They believed that we would halt south of the Po River to await the movement of dump areas north of the Apennines, thus giving them time to organize the Po and Adige defense lines. Prisoners taken in the Verona area said that the arrival of our troops there in less than three weeks time had been considered impossible.

The Ligurian Army feared that we would achieve a break-through and had repeatedly requested permission from the High Command to withdraw from northwest Italy. This permission was consistently refused, and it appeared that the reasons for holding combat forces in that sector until it was too late to withdraw, fell into the political and economic spheres rather than the military.

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the whole IV Corps campaign in the Po Valley is to be found in these factors. First, we employed our armor and infantry in wide sweeping drives to the northwest, instead of wearing the troops out in bloody, short-range, head-on attacks; second, the cooperation which was achieved between troops of so many different military origins was phenomenal. Working, fighting, sacrificing together for a common cause, they provided an example of brotherhood in arms which will be a luminous memory through life for all who fought the war in IV Corps.

D. COMMENTS ON THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN.

General George C. Marshall, in his war report to the President and the people in the account of the Italian campaign, stated, "The entire campaign was slow and bitter. The Allied troops did not have the superiority they enjoyed in western Europe, where geography had

compelled us to make the great effort. Nonetheless, the Italian campaign made a heavy contribution to the successes on the western front, pinning down German forces which Hitler needed badly to reinforce his weakened armies, both in the east and west. The troops participating in the Italian campaign should feel as great a satisfaction in the defeat of the Axis enemy as those of the large forces which drove into the heart of Germany from the west and made contact with the Red Armies."

Opposed to our armies in Italy was a crafty, experienced enemy who fell back reluctantly from one well fortified line to another. Barely did we out-number him enough to exploit temporary tactical advantages. Yet almost always we were on the offensive. When beaten, the determined enemy would rally and face us anew in previously prepared defensive positions to which the terrain lent great natural strength.

The German high command in Italy made a grievous mistake in their estimate of the time it would take the Allies to break out of the Apennines, cross the Po and drive on into the Alps. In planning their withdrawal under pressure, the Germans estimated that they would have time as follows: to affect their withdrawal - all based on their ability to delay the Allied advance; two weeks for the Allies to break out of the Apennines; one week for them to reach the Po; one week to cross the Po and two weeks to reach the Alps where the German High Command expected to hold indefinitely on the shortened Adige Line. They thought they could delay us for a total of six weeks before getting into the Alps. Instead IV Corps troops were through

the Adige Line and into the Alps in fifteen days.

The war in Italy involved all types of combat. This included landing on hostile shores, river crossings, fighting in the mountains and fighting on the open plain. The most decisive and gratifying to the winner - the Allies - was the very last phase. This phase was decisive because it was boldly and quickly executed. The Germans had been thrown off balance, and in the Po Valley were never given a chance to recover. The effectiveness of our mobility and striking power applied at the appropriate moment was well proven by the capture within a few days of 150,000 prisoners.

The decisive employment of the 1st Armored Division, to strike boldly across northwest Italy, advancing 154 miles in the two days to seize the exits out of Italy and thus cutting off the Germans, was the most decisive use of armor in the Italian campaign. This veteran armored division, which was one of the first two American armored divisions to be employed in World War II, having participated in the initial invasion of north Africa in November 1942, ended its long combat record with a fitting climax.

There has been criticism of the slowness of the operations in Italy by some who, either through lack of information or military knowledge, have failed to appreciate the difficulties of advancing up a mountainous peninsula against a determined foe, when the attacker had but limited combat power. Instead of trench warfare or mass charges, the battle of the Italian campaign consisted of individuals crawling up hill sides, warily evading mines and booby traps, ducking the German mortar shells and closing with the enemy in order to drive

him from his bunkers. The Infantry was aided by all the modern developments of the machine age, by tanks, artillery, aircraft, trucks and jeeps, but the battle was still won by the individual soldier. On his morale, training and endurance depended the success of the local action and of the campaign. Though our advance was usually slow, the American soldier had what it took. By 2 May our forces had driven up the length of the Italian boot and had smashed the German foe to pieces.

It has been said that for the Allied Ground Forces in Italy to fulfill their mission it was required only that the effort be persistent, even if slow, but that it be strong enough to force the employment of important enemy forces that otherwise would be available for use on the Russian front, or, later in western Europe. Hence assuming the mission as stated, the Allied forces in Italy were at all times successful. Whether the Allies should have gone into Italy at all is another and a broader question, and one that will be much discussed in the years to come. But, be that as it may, nothing can detract from the glory due the leaders for their intelligent directions, and the troops for their hard fighting, both characteristic of the successful campaign.

"PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN"

CHAPTER XXV - - - - -

POST COMBAT DAYS

When the IV Corps Headquarters was encamped in a field skirted by a patch of woods near Monza, approximately twelve miles outside of Milan, all wondered how the capital of northern Italy compared to the cities of the south, like Rome or Naples. Those who had gone in with General Crittenberger in the formal entry of the city returned to tell about the wide avenues, green parks, streamlined street cars, the high percentage of blond women on the streets and, particularly, how very little damage was apparent. On the morning of 4 May, with a feeling of relief, the headquarters personnel loaded up the trucks with tents that were never to be used again, and kitchen equipment which was to share a like fate, as well as map boards, water cans and gear of like nature. The truck convoy rolled out onto the main highway (the autostrada) which led to the city. Of interest was the long, suburban district that stretched out for many miles from Milan before the city proper was reached. This was a city that had not stopped growing since its founding in the 5th century. As the convoy rumbled toward the business center of the city where the tallest office buildings, stores and hotels clustered about the famous Piazza del Duomo, above which towered the spires of the great cathedral, the life of a modern city in the throes of daily activity were apparent. Street cars clanged, shoe-shine boys shouted at the passing G.I.'s and the sidewalks were thronged with well-dressed citizens who had already acclimated themselves to the presence of

the olive-drab clad liberators. These were fortunate peoples when compared with their brethren and sisters who survived the ravages of war further south in towns and cities like Vergato, Leghorn and Naples. Only a few Allied bombs had smashed out a part of the railroad station and that was not too noticeable from the outside; in fact, the natives felt the bombing of its Teatra La Scala, where the world-famous operas were held, more keenly than the smashing of their essential railroad transportation. There were no mines or booby traps to worry about. The water system was not damaged by the war, and the sidewalk cafes were crowded with the curious who sat under the morning sunshine to sip apertifs and watch the troops roll into the city, as though it were an opera. Partisans with red scarfs and clenched fists, in imitation of the Communist salute, stood in groups on the street corners dismayed to find that the clenched fist salute was not returned by our troops - just the American wave of the hand in greeting. It was apparent that Communist agents had long been at work in northern Italy under the very noses of the German who occupied it; hammer and sickle signs were plastered on walls of buildings throughout the city. However, there were many who wore green scarfs and did not raise their fists in salute - these carried the colors of the Italian flag. One could feel on this first day of entry into Milan that a political cauldron was boiling underneath it and the danger of an open clash was more apparent since both factions were heavily armed.

A. HEADQUARTERS IN MILAN.

The Headquarters was set up in a huge office building on Foro

Bonoparte. The SS Headquarters from which were issued the orders that held the populace clamped in a vice-like grip had been established in this building before our arrival. Elevators and marble stairways joined the five floors of this modern office building, the rooms of which were elaborate and could favorably compare with the offices in some of our better office buildings in New York.

The telephone jangled busily for many days as the Headquarters administered to the various details that arose with the occupation phase of northwestern Italy. As the days passed into June and order was being molded from the shreds of chaos, the section telephones began to ring less frequently. An all-out emphasis was now placed upon the immediate comfort of the personnel, for the war in Japan still raged and rumors already whizzed about that the luxuriant Po Valley would soon be swapped for the dank and smelly jungles of the south Pacific. The men were housed in a tall apartment building across the street from the Command Post and the efforts toward rest, relaxation and general comfort, resulted in obtaining an Italian restaurant, including cooks and waiters, for the messing place for the enlisted men. White table clothes, painted chinaware and waiter service of the best were a far cry from eating under white clouds of choking dust raised by trucks whizzing by somewhere in the Apennines, or drinking coffee diluted by the pelting mountain rains during the late fall. For entertainment the men wandered about the famous city of Milan, drinking in its many sights and gradually getting the feel of the regularity of normal living again, with shined shoes, and pressed clothes. Many became regular patrons of the sidewalk

cafes, and if the author's memory serves him right, one of those most commonly frequented was Bifi's, which was located next to the bomb-shattered door of the La Scala Opera House and which looked out upon the broad expanse of Piazza del Duomo. It was not an uncommon sight to find the more popular sidewalk cafes crowded by G.I.'s drinking toasts with grateful natives to the strains of music from a wandering violinist. There was also excitement to be found at the racetrack on the outskirts of Milan where a few dollars were won, but more were lost.

The officers were quartered in two hotels which were fully staffed by the original hotel personnel. The junior officers lived at the Hotel Excelsior, within the shadow of the huge railroad station. The senior officers were quartered at the best hotel in Milan, the Hotel Continental, just a few hundred yards from the Cathedral of Milan, a world-famous Gothic structure.

Just as Rome was a rest center for the Allied troops in the grim days of 1944, so was Milan in 1945. In addition to the Americans, troops of all nationalities wandered through the streets; South Africans, French, Polish, who still called the city by its old Roman name, "Mediolanum", Indians, Australians, Brazilians, Canadians, and even Russian officers, who poured into Italy after the surrender to repatriate their Nationals, the bulk of whom were unwilling to return to their native land. There were displaced persons from France, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Czecho-Slovakia, and Yugoslavia, now liberated, who wandered the streets until camps were established to house them. One officer of the Headquarters stated that while

sitting at a sidewalk cafe under the glass roof of the Galeria he heard around his table five different languages being spoken at one time.

During the first few nights after the Headquarters moved into the city, the ominous clatter of a machine gun or the occasional explosion of a rifle shattered the stillness of the night. Mute evidence of these nocturnal disturbances were found lying in pools of blood on the streets the next morning. Men, women, and even children, stamped as enemy collaborators, or dyed-in-the-wool Fascists were executed by Partisan bands or those who pretended to be so. Those who sought revenge on their neighbors worked under the guise of this patriotic front during these first chaotic days, but when military law and order was stamped down hard, such murders ceased. The Allied Military Government machinery was put in motion and after an example or two was made of the culprits seized in such attempts, incidents of like nature ceased occurring.

The size of the city may be realized from the official censorship of 1936 which gave the city a population of 921,515 within the city limits proper. No doubt Mussolini's demand for an increase in the birth rate, plus the use of the city for a haven of refuge, caused the figures to swell to over a million.

With restrictions on taking photographs lifted, the troops did not waste time in snapping photos of world-famous sights for their scrapbooks. Today in many photograph albums of IV Corps veterans there are pictures of the famous cathedral which is known as one of the most unique pieces of architecture in the world. This beautiful

edifice was built of brick cased in marble from quarries which Gian Galeazzo Visconti gave in perpetuity to the Cathedral Chapter. Begun in 1386, it was then the largest church in existence, and even after St. Peter's was built at Rome and the huge cathedral at Seville, it was still the largest church in Europe. It covered an area of 14,000 square yards and could hold 40,000 people. The style was a very elaborate Gothic, but the work was continued over several centuries and, after many designs by many masters, it was completed in 1838. The immense roof was supported by 52 pillars. Another notable fact was that in a crypt under the choir laid the body of the Cardinal Saint Carlo Borromeo, who consecrated the cathedral in 1577. The body was remarkably well preserved and the face and right hand were of wax colored appearance. It was contained in a rock crystal shrine, encased in silver and was vested in magnificent robes which blazed with jewels. Many officers of the Headquarters attended the wedding of Captain Jack Sullivan, Aide de Camp to General Crittenger, which was held in this famous cathedral.

On 3 June 1945, there was great rejoicing in the Headquarters of IV Corps when official word was received that General Crittenger had been promoted to Lieutenant General. For a long time the men had been expecting this merited recognition and, when it finally came through, many remembered the day when he took command of IV Corps and carried it through the hard, long days of the campaign which led to the ultimate surrender of the German forces in northwest Italy. Six days later official word came through that his Chief of Staff,

Laurence K. Ladue had been promoted to Brigadier General. Congratulations were in order once again, and these promotions were accepted by the men and officers of IV Corps as stamps of approval on the success of IV Corps in its long fight up the Peninsula.

B. BEAUTIFUL BELLAGIO.

On 15 July, IV Corps ceased being operational and the Headquarters packed up once more, this time to move north into the Alpine foothills, to the Shangri-La of northwest Italy, Bellagio. The small town was nestled at the spot where Lake Como is split into two parts with one leg running to Como and the other to Lecco. Never had such beautiful scenery passed before the rubble-weary eyes of the personnel of IV Corps as the trucks climbed over the winding route along the lake. One G.I. on the back of a two and a half-ton truck, when he looked out over the blue lake dotted with white sailboats, remarked, "I wonder what the poor people are doing at home?" For most certainly this was the garden spot of Europe as far as tourists were concerned. With the waters of the lake slightly ruffled by a cool mountain breeze, and tall, steep mountains rising to the sky on each side, on the precipitous slopes of which were nestled small quaint hamlets and whitewashed cottages, the troops could not help but stare at the splendor of this famed summer resort area. They had not seen such scenic landscape south of the Po River. There had been no war here.

Great artists have said that to appreciate the beauty of a painting one had to step back a distance, but here, while the convoy skirted along the shores of Lake Como, it seemed that the more we

rode into the picture, the more beautiful it became. Believe it or not, the local residents were vacationing, the war was over, and on bicycles they pedalled up and down the steep roads with smiles on their faces. Others were dressed in shorts and bathing suits and hiked along the road, apparently without a care in the world. A most striking contrast to the Italy further south. The horrible battles that raged in the other part of the country were a long way from the idyllic existence here in the Alpine foothills. Their only concern seemed to be that now it was the Americans who came to choke the narrow roads with their big trucks instead of the Germans. Beautiful villas were scattered all over the area - it was the play-ground of the wealthy Europeans. To think back on the sudden change from bombed and shell-blasted homes to the beautiful villas surrounded with heavy garden growth, was like looking at the Peninsula of Italy as a leg - from the knee down it was covered with sores and rashes, from the knee up, it was clean, white and healthy.

When the convoy pulled into the village of Bellagio, the prevailing quiet of the former British resort was invaded. The officers were housed in the Gran Bretagne Hotel, which was fronted by the shore of the lake. The town had been built with the thought of tourists in mind, for the hotels, inns, pensions and restaurants made up the bulk of the buildings. The men were quartered in a requisitioned hotel not far from the Gran Bretagne and were later moved across the lake to a spacious hotel at Menaggio. This gave them ample opportunity to get away from the military for a change. No one wanted to think of the

war that was still going on in the south Pacific; now they wanted to take advantage as long as they could of this splendor that was unfolded before them.

Movies, dances and shows sandwiched in between swimming and fishing on the lake was the life for the next couple of weeks. The food served at the hotels on both sides of the lake was prepared by select chefs that catered to well-paying tourists before the war. The June sun was hot and in no time all were sporting tanned torsos. Motor boats, sailboats and rowboats ran up and down the lake. The more adventurous soon yearned to see more of Europe and took advantage of the Swiss tours - others managed to get to Venice and Nice and some as far north as Austria and Germany. Soldiers who had relatives in Italy or in the neighboring countries were allowed furloughs or leaves to visit them. This was a blessed reward for the days of sweat, cold and toil that was associated with the Allied advance up the Peninsula.

After a few weeks of complete relaxation when everyone sported a tan or sunburn and a refreshed look in his eyes, some preparations were begun for the possibility of moving to the Pacific Theatre. The atomic bomb had not made its debut as yet, and it looked like Hirohito was going to drag out the war a little longer, for there were still a few islands ringed about Japan that had to be taken. Lectures on combat in the jungles, as well as lessons that had been learned by troops already there, were presented. A rifle range was set up on each side of Lake Como for the convenience of those living on either side, and everyone was put through a course on familiarization

firing. The pistol, carbine, submachine-gun, and M-1 rifle were fired by all, for it was realized that even a corps headquarters in the jungles was not invulnerable to Japanese infiltrating parties. In the course of the training they all hoped that on the way to the Pacific, if that was the destination, they would be routed through the States - or better still, that they be sent to a training area in the States, with opportunities to visit their people. Most of the men had been overseas since March 1944, and many much longer, and were at the point where the thought of cold, fresh milk, ice cream, and real eggs was becoming a dream. About the beginning of August the point system began to take away the men who had 85 accumulated points or more for quick rotation to the States; many of the fathers leaned heavily on the 12 points accredited for each child. However, all plans toward a possible movement to the Pacific ceased when news of the atomic blasts at Nagasaki and Hiroshima, followed by the unconditional surrender of Japan reached Bellagio. V-J Day was just as quiet as was the announcement of V-E Day. No wild rejoicing by the troops, just a resigned thankfulness that it was all over.

On 19 September it came time to say goodbye to beautiful Lake Como and its charming inhabitants. The Headquarters was ordered to move to the Redeployment Training Area near Pisa. As the trucks rolled down the mountainous grade and skirted the shores of the lake, many of the men looked out over the blue waters and up at the high mountains with a feeling that some day they would travel this way again - perhaps years later, when their financial means would present

them with the opportunity. The convoy weaved its way south into Pavia, skirting the shore of the blue Tyrrhenian into Genoa, past the resort splendor of Rapallo, into bomb-shattered La Spezia and last into Pisa.

While getting ship-shape for the ultimate Atlantic crossing to the good old U.S.A., Lieutenant General Crittenberger, on 23 September, received orders transferring him from his old command of IV Corps to take command of the forces in the Caribbean Defense Command and Panama Canal Department. Colonel Arthur T. Lacey was placed in command of Headquarters, IV Corps, and Colonel Raymond W. Curtis was made Chief of Staff. That night a farewell dinner was prepared for the General in the huge mess hall at the Redeployment Center. It was a touching picture when he strode into the mess hall garlanded with streamers and bright decorations tacked up by the German prisoner detail who performed kitchen police duties. The German mess sergeant lined up the German soldiers along one side, and, as the General arrived at the door, he commanded: "Achtung". On one side of the room the Germans stood at attention to the man who smashed their forces in northwest Italy, and on the other side stood the staff of IV Corps who had assisted the General in accomplishing that feat. There was little fanfare or ceremony with the departure of the Corps Commander, but when he had gone there was a feeling by many of the men that they would hear of him quite often in the future.

C. THE BOAT RIDE.

On 26 September the troops embarked on the USS THOMAS W. BICKETT at Leghorn. It was a Liberty ship, and even at anchor, she rode mighty

high out of the water - no one thought much of the lack of ballast at the time, they were more interested in standing on the deck to watch the receding short line of Italy fade out into the horizon. There was an understandable silence aboard ship when the shore line began losing its detail, for the men along the rail knew that there were many Americans who were being left behind in Italy forever. A mental review of eighteen months of hardships and pleasures encountered in this foreign land flashed through their minds as they watched the shore line of Italy disappear.

Inching its way out deeper into the Mediterranean the Liberty ship began to bobble back and forth in the sea like a cork. Without ballast the ship pitched and rolled as though it were being beckoned back to the Italian mainland. Some wished it had returned to port and started anew a few days later when the seas were calmer. In a few hours the sea became so stormy that only the hardy few dared leave their bunks - anything that was unlashd slithered back and forth across the deck and the smashing sound of china and pots in the galley resounded throughout the ship. The bow would drop suddenly into the ocean and the stern would rise out of the sea so that the screw which sent quivers from bow to stern could be seen spinning in the air. The captain of the ship stated it was one of the worst storms he had weathered and more than once it seemed that the ship would roll over on its side, but the gods were with us and no one swam home.

One morning when we went on deck we found that the ship was anchored in the harbor at Gibraltar. We had pulled in during the

night and the next morning there was the sentinel of the Gibraltar Strait, which we had all heard of but few had seen. The ship laid at anchor for about twelve hours, and the reason for its stop-over there is not known by the author, but once again it moved out, passed through the Straits into the Atlantic and headed for home. The next land to be sighted was the Azores, but only little detail could be made out due to the blinding rain that lashed the ship as we passed.

D. HOME AT LAST.

On the cloudy morning of 11 October, New York harbor unfolded itself to the joyful eyes of the passengers. Home at last! Tugboats swung by and tooted their whistles in salute. There was joy in every heart. The ship was finally docked at Staten Island and no time was wasted in getting off of it to board a ferry bound for Jersey City. The Statue of Liberty, the Lady whose beacon shines out to liberty-loving peoples all over the world, still had the torch raised high into the sky and as she looked upon the ferry which swept by, you could almost imagine her saying, "Welcome home, boys." The famous Manhattan skyline was silhouetted against the hazy sky and was a convincing piece of evidence that we were back in the USA.

From Jersey City we went by train to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, one of the largest Replacement and Separation Centers. There was a rush for the telephone and telegraph offices and calls hummed over the wires to Alabama, Mississippi, California, Kansas, Florida, the Carolinas, Massachusettes and therest of the forty-eight states. There were many farewells and officers and men who had lived and

shared experiences that they will always remember, bid each other goodbye, and with barracks bags slung over their shoulders, strode off, to board trains for the eastern points of separation, and to planes bound for the western areas. Those intending to remain in the service left for forty-five days of recuperation leave, while some took their next assignment without the benefit of such.

On 13 October 1945, IV Corps was inactivated and ceased to exist as a unit, but in the hearts of the men who had been a part of it, it will always remain with their memories of "over there".

"TUTTO FINITO"

(SUGGESTED APPENDIX)

MOVES OF THE FORWARD ELEMENT FROM LAKE AVERNO
TO MILANO

(Distances are say miles -- do not include many detours)

MOVEMENT		TRIP DISTANCE		SUB-TOTAL	
		Miles	Kms.	Miles	Kms.
1944					
May	18 <u>Lake Averno</u> to olive grove in <u>Piedimonte Rivoli</u>	41.5	67	41.5	67
	24 <u>Piedimonte Rivoli</u> to olive grove just north of <u>Terracina</u>	48	76.5	89.5	143.5
	28 <u>Terracina</u> to cork grove near <u>Piverno</u>	12.5	20	102	163.5
June	2 <u>Piverno</u> to woods north of <u>Sabaudia</u>	12	19	114	182.5
	5 <u>Sabaudia</u> to college building near <u>Cecchignolletta</u>	53.5	93.5	172.5	276
	9 <u>Cecchignolletta</u> to villas in <u>S. Severa</u> (southeast of <u>Civitavecchia</u>)	48.5	77.5	221	353.5
	10 <u>S. Severa</u> to olive grove-wheatfield below <u>Tarquinia</u>	19.5	31	240.5	384.5
	13 <u>Tarquinia</u> to olive grove near <u>Montalto di Castro</u>	11	18	251.5	402.5
	16 <u>Montalto di Castro</u> to olive grove-wheatfield north of <u>Orbetello</u>	25	40	276.5	442.5
	19 <u>Orbetello</u> to olive grove south of <u>Grosseto</u>	19.5	31	296	473.5
	23 <u>Grosseto</u> to olive grove near <u>Montepescali</u>	13	20	309	493.5
	27 <u>Montepescali</u> to fruit orchard 6 miles southeast of <u>Massa Maritima</u>	15.5	25	324.5	518.5
	29 <u>Massa Maritima</u> to orchard-wheatfield at <u>Massa Maritima</u>	6	9.5	330.5	528
July	2 <u>Massa Maritima</u> to woods south of <u>Castelnuovo</u>	18.5	29.5	349	557.5
	7 <u>Castelnuovo</u> to olive grove south of Pomerance	11.5	18.5	360.5	576
	12 <u>Pomerance</u> to orchard near <u>Montecatini</u> (west of <u>Volterra</u>)	15	24	375.5	600
	16 <u>Montecatini</u> to woods and orchard north of <u>Laiatico</u>	13	20	388.5	620
	20 <u>Laiatico</u> to olive grove-fruit orchard at <u>Casciana</u> <u>Alta</u>	17	27	405.5	647
	4 <u>Casciana Alta</u> to villa grounds <u>Casugliano</u> (south of <u>Ponsacco</u>)	10	16	415.5	663

MOVEMENT		TRIP DISTANCE		SUB-TOTAL	
		Miles	Hrs	Miles	Hrs
Sept 12	<u>Camugliano</u> to pine woods near <u>Staffoli</u> (across Arno River)	13.5	21	429	684
12	<u>Staffoli</u> to villa area north of <u>Lucca</u>	24.5	39	453.5	723
Nov 3	<u>Lucca</u> , into town of <u>Taviano</u>	47	75	500.5	798
Dec 25	<u>Taviano</u> into Palazzo Massarosa in <u>Lucca</u>	47	75	547.5	873
1945					
Feb 19	<u>Lucca</u> into town of <u>Taviano</u>	47	75	594.5	948
20	<u>Taviano</u> into town of <u>Castelluccio</u>	7.5	12	602	960
Apr 15	<u>Castelluccio</u> to wheatfield northwest of <u>Marano</u>	11.5	18.5	613.5	978.5
20	<u>Marano</u> to fruit orchard east of <u>Cereglio</u>	15	24	628	1002.5
22	<u>Cereglio</u> to fruit orchard-wheatfield east of <u>Crespellano</u>	25.5	40	653.5	1042.5
24	<u>Crespellano</u> to alfalfa fields near <u>Novi di Modena</u>	44.5	71	698	1113.5
26	<u>Novi di Modena</u> to fruit orchard northeast of <u>Governola</u> (across Po River)	22	35	720	1148.5
28	<u>Governola</u> into school building in <u>Castiglione de Stiviere</u>	30	48	750	1196.5
29	<u>Castiglione de Stiviere</u> to wheatfield east of <u>Ghedi</u>	11.5	18	761.5	1214.5
30	<u>Ghedi</u> to meadow south of <u>Monza</u> (16 Km. from Milano)	61.5	98	823	1312.5
May 5	<u>Monza</u> to 16 Foro Bonoparte <u>Milano</u>	12.5	20	835.5	1332.

SECRET
HEADQUARTERS IV CORPS
APO 304 U S Army

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 54

30 August 1945

1. 15 July 1945 marked the termination of operations of IV Corps after 401 days of continuous operations in Italy. The accomplishments of IV Corps in the Italian Campaign stand as a memorial to a great organization and are in keeping with the heritage it received from former wars.

2. IV Corps entered combat in Italy on 11 June 1944 with the same tenacity of purpose and the same grim determination that led to distinction and battle honors during World War I. On 11 June 1944, north of Rome, IV Corps began a rapid and systematic pursuit and destruction of the German Wehrmacht in western Italy and did not cease its efforts until all German forces in northwest Italy had been destroyed or had surrendered in hopeless confusion.

3. From 11 June to 9 September 1944 the Rome Arno Campaign provided a test of quick, accurate decisions, speed and maneuverability. German forces were routed from their prepared positions and withdrew in disorder to temporary refuge in the well-prepared and naturally strong Gothic line defensive positions in the Apennines. IV Corps had liberated 11,600 square miles of Italian soil. Enemy casualties and the mass of destroyed and abandoned German equipment were mute evidence of the power and determination of this offensive.

4. From 10 September 1944 to 4 April 1945 the North Apennines Campaign was a test of strength and power of IV Corps against the German Gothic line defenses, naturally strong on dominating terrain and made stronger by concrete and wire, and against the rigors of winter in the Apennine Mountains. IV Corps breached the Gothic Line, pushed through the Apennines to the north fringe of the mountains, and prepared for the final blow which would silence the German Wehrmacht in Italy for all time.

5. On 5 April 1945 IV Corps opened the Po Valley Campaign, which was its last and which ended on 2 May 1945 with the surrender of all German and Italian Republican forces in northwest Italy. From the jump-off positions which had been systematically occupied during the winter IV Corps breached the German defenses, debouched into the Po Valley, and rendered the entire German defenses opposite Fifth Army untenable. The German forces dazed by IV Corps speed, retreated in hopeless confusion to the north. IV Corps troops raced to the Po River, forced a crossing, and continued rapidly to the north and west. Possible escape routes for the trapped German forces were quickly cut and secured and a methodical cleaning up of all the German forces remaining

in northwest Italy was begun. On 29 April the 1st Ligurian Army surrendered to IV Corps, and on 2 May the surrender of the 75th German Corps accounted for the destruction or surrender of all German and Italian Republic armies in northwest Italy. Remnants of 23 German Divisions were captured. 170,000 Prisoners of War, including 21 General Officers passed through IV Corps Prisoner of War cages.

6. During the 401 days of continuous operations 246,366 troops, including American, British, South African, Indian, Brazilian, and Italian served with IV Corps, and liberated 24,580 square miles of Italian soil, including more than 600 cities and towns. IV Corps was the first American Corps to enter the Po Valley, first to cross the Po River and first to receive the surrender of a German Army.

7. The history of IV Corps is a history of determined men who fought with a unity of purpose and with great mutual understanding to secure a peace which, God willing, will endure.

/s/ Willis D. Crittenberger
/t/ WILLIS D. CRITTENBERGER
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

(SUGGESTED APPENDIX)

HEADQUARTERS IV CORPS
APO 304 U S ARMY

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 60

23 September 1945

1. More than eighteen months ago when I assumed command of the IV Corps we were in North Africa. The preliminary phase of the war, while showing that eventual victory was certain, made it clear that we, who were part of the main national effort, faced a desperate and determined enemy - an enemy still strong, still well equipped, well trained and inured to the hardships of war.
2. In April, 1944, IV Corps arrived in Italy, and in June, in accordance with its mission, began its drive northwest along the west coast of the Italian peninsula. This course over rough and accidented terrain was to be our high road to Victory. Pursuing the enemy without respite from Rome north to the Arno, we then crossed that river, breached the Gothic Line, debouched into the valley of the Po, where we forced the unconditional surrender of an enemy whom we had cut to ribbons.
3. During these 325 days of continuous combat the IV Corps experienced the intense heat of the Italian summer, the snow, mud and cold of the Apennines, and the constant difficulties presented by a mountainous terrain which greatly favored the enemy.
4. During its operations in Italy IV Corps had under its command seven American divisions as well as units which were of British, South African, Indian, Brazilian and Italian nationality. The results achieved by this highly variegated command showed how readily men of good will, animated by a common ideal, can overcome the problems which diversity of language and equipment creates and transform them into sources of strength.
5. The memory of my association as an individual with the commissioned and enlisted personnel of the IV Corps will always endure in my heart and mind. The cheerful acceptance of the hardships of combat, the capable handling of the manifold and disconcerting problems which war creates, and the eager willingness to undertake any task regardless of its hazards - all these things, which bespoke such unyielding loyalty to the command which I held, will be unforgettable. As we, having fulfilled our mission, bring to an end this brotherhood in arms, forged on the anvil of many battles and cemented by long days and nights of close association, I hope that these friendships and our mutual regard may continue through the years. To all of you I repeat my heartfelt thanks. It is my sincere wish that during your lifetime you may enjoy happiness and the best of health. May you all, each in his own way, find new fields of service to the Nation - whose undying gratitude and devotion you have already richly earned. Farewell and Godspeed.

/s/ Willis D. Crittenger
/t/ WILLIS D. CRITTENBERGER
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

On 29 April General Crittenberger ordered Colonel Norman E. Fisko and Lieutenant Colonel John J. Davis to proceed into Milan and there to secure Marshall Graziani and bring him to the IV Corps command post, which had moved to Ghedi late that day. Marshall Graziani upon arrival at the IV Corps command post at 0100 the night 29-30 April immediately indorsed the unconditional terms signed by his Chief of Staff. In compliance with Fifth Army orders Marshall Graziani was kept at the IV Corps command post throughout the night and taken to Fifth Army Headquarters the next morning.

Upon the arrival of Captain Senie and Major Knip at the 75th German Corps Headquarters, General Schlemmer the Corps Commander, refused to accept General Pempel's surrender terms and notified General Crittenberger in writing to that effect. He stated that his oath of allegiance to the Fuhrer prevented his acceptance of the surrender terms as long as the Fuhrer lived, but that upon the death of the Fuhrer he would capitulate. In the meantime, he stated that he would halt in place and defend himself if attacked. In reply General Crittenberger notified General Schlemmer that the death of the Fuhrer did not figure in any way in the combat operations of the IV Corps, and that accordingly, IV Corps troops now surrounding the 75th German Corps, would attack the next morning to annihilate the German troops. The attack of the IV Corps troops in the area - 34th Infantry Division, 1st Armored Division, 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and supporting troops - was launched the next morning, engaging the German troops at several places along the front line. As a result German officers requested negotiations and conversations took place between subordinate American commanders and German staff officers. At this juncture the Corps Commander, General Crittenberger, ordered Colonel Waldemar Falck to go to General Schlemmer's headquarters and bring the latter into the IV Corps command post to sign unconditional surrender terms. General Schlemmer arrived at IV Corps Headquarters late the night of 2 May and immediately signed the unconditional surrender of the 75th German Corps, thus completing the negotiations for the surrender of all units of the Ligurian Army.

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23 Sept

"SURRENDER OF THE LIGURIAN ARMY"

By 23 April 1945, just two weeks to a day after the IV Corps attacked in the Apennines as part of the Allied spring offensive, troops had broken the last semblance of enemy resistance in Northwest Italy and had so effectively disorganized enemy communications that it was opportune to press unconditional surrender on the Ligurian Army. IV Corps troops had occupied Como that day after having cut the enemy routes of escape out of Italy to the north at Verona, Mantova, Brescia, Bergamo and Lecco. By this time the enemy realized that he had lost all chances of evacuating Northwest Italy. All his troops to the west of the IV Corps spearhead at Verona were in an area from which there was no avenue that offered escape from annihilation or capture.

Appreciating the hopelessness of this situation Lieutenant General Max Joseph Pemsel, Chief of Staff of the Ligurian Army, acting in the absence of Marshall Graziani, the Army Commander who had been captured by the Partisans, surrendered his staff to the 1st Armored Division at Como. IV Corps Headquarters was immediately notified and General Pemsel was ordered into the Corps command post at Castiglione, Italy, there to report to the Corps Commander, Major General Willis D. Crittbenberger.

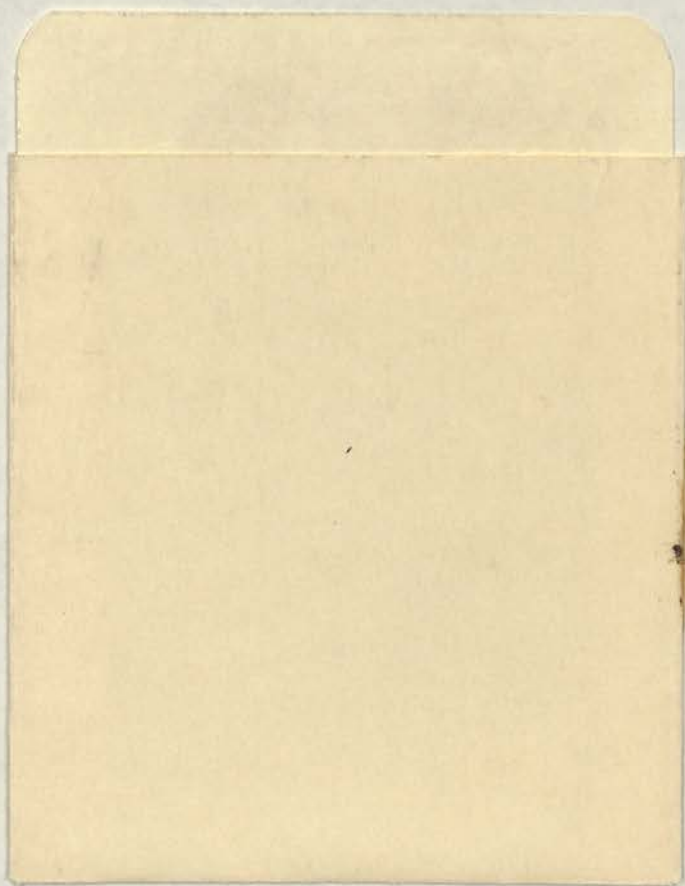
The negotiations which brought about an orderly surrender and disarmament of the hostile troops opposing the IV Corps and resulting in the surrender of the first German army in World War II began on 29 April. On that date General Pemsel, accompanied by his aide Major Kniep, was brought by Captain Walter Fruedenberg of the 1st Armored Division from Como to the Corps command post. There in the presence of Major General Willis D. Crittbenberger, Colonel L. K. Ladue, Chief of Staff, Colonel Thomas J. Wells, AC of S G-2, Captain Richard H. Senie, interpreter, Captain Walter Fruedenberg, 1st Armored Division and Chief Warrant Officer George J. Sage, General Pemsel surrendered unconditionally the Ligurian Army. His Army was made up of the 75th German Corps (5th Mountain Division and the 34th Infantry Division), the Lombardy Corps (Italian) (San Marco Division and elements of the Monte Rosa and Italia Divisions) and other Army troops. The 75th German Corps had been stationed on the Italian-French border and was at full strength and fully equipped. The Lombardy Corps had been along the Ligurian Coast but at that time was withdrawing from the coast through the mountains to the Po Valley. Its strength was greatly depleted by desertion and capture.

General Pemsel was then ordered by the Corps Commander to prepare orders for issuance to the various elements of the Ligurian Army notifying them of the surrender and directing them to halt in place and lay down their arms. This order and a copy of the signed surrender were distributed immediately by leaflets dropped to the German troops. General Pemsel was then taken to Fifth Army Headquarters near Verona. At the same time, Captain Richard H. Senie, accompanied by Major Kniep, went to the headquarters of General Schlemmer, commanding the 75th German Corps, with copies of General Pemsel's order for the surrender and the surrender terms.

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