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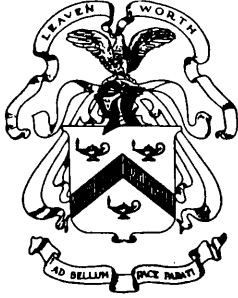


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FIFTH ARMY HISTORY



PART VIII

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The Second Winter

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Lt. Gen. L. K. Truscott, Jr., Army Commander (16 December 1944 on)

Lieutenant General

LUCIAN K. TRUSCOTT, JR.

* . * * *commanding*

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CHAPTER I * * * * *

Into the Winter Positions

ON 16 December 1944, while it was in the process of resting and refitting its forces for the final, all-out drive to liberate the Po Valley and to free all of northern Italy, Fifth Army was assigned a new commanding general, Lieutenant General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr. (See Annex No. 3A.) General Truscott was well acquainted with Fifth Army, having for many months been a part of it, first as commander of the 3d Infantry Division and later as commanding general of VI Corps. With his 3d Division General Truscott had fought across Sicily, through lower Italy, in the mountains of southern Italy in the Winter Line battles of 1943-44, and at the Anzio beachhead. During the most critical period at the beachhead General Truscott assumed command of VI Corps on 23 February. Under his direction the Corps hurled back the last of the fanatical German attempts to drive our forces into the sea and built up strength for the final breakout attack, which began 23 May and culminated in the capture of Rome. He continued to lead VI Corps in the pursuit of the fleeing enemy as far north as Piombino where on 25 June the Corps was relieved to join Seventh Army for the invasion of southern France. It was from successful operations there that General Truscott was recalled to take his new post as commander of Fifth Army.

The shift in high commands in Italy was the last in a series of changes in the control of American and Allied operations in the Mediterranean area which had begun on 1 November when the North African Theater of Operations (NATOUSA) was redesignated the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTOUSA). Control and supply of Seventh Army in southern France were taken over by the European Theater of Operations. This shift altered administrative and operational functions of high American headquarters in the theater. The next step was the change in command of all the Allied forces when Field Marshal Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander

took charge of Allied Force Headquarters, and Field Marshal Sir Henry Maitland Wilson relinquished command of it to become head of the British military mission in the United States. At 1200, 16 December, when General Truscott assumed command of Fifth Army, Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, previous Army commander, stepped in as head of Allied Armies in Italy (AAI). At the same hour AAI, which embraced both Fifth and Eighth Armies, was redesignated 15th Army Group, a title which had previously been in effect until changed in the spring of 1944.

Numerous changes in the staff of Fifth Army were made coincident with the assumption of command by General Truscott. Brig. Gen. Don E. Carleton became the chief of staff, and three new heads of general staff sections were appointed. (See *Annexes No. 3B and 3C.*) Col. Edward M. Daniels became assistant chief of staff, G-1; Col. Ben Harrell became assistant chief of staff, G-3; and Col. Edward J. O'Neill took over as assistant chief of staff, G-4.

A. GEOGRAPHY OF THE APENNINE REGION

See Map No. 1

On 16 December Fifth Army units were spread along the Apennine Mountains, mostly north of the divide, with IV Corps on the left, II Corps in the center, and the British 13 Corps on the right. This mountain barrier, 50 miles wide, stretches across Italy, separating the continental Po Valley from the comparatively narrow peninsula up which we had battled from the south. From the Ligurian Sea on the west to the Adriatic Sea on the east, with only narrow coastal plains on each extremity, extends the almost unbroken line of ridges and peaks, some of which reach well over 6,000 feet in elevation. The mountain mass is pierced by only a few roads sufficiently improved to provide passage for a modern mechanized army. The Fifth Army battles to enter the valley were fought largely along these roads: Highway 1, Highway 12, Highway 64, Highway 65, and Highway 67, and three other less improved routes angling across the ridges generally in a slightly northeastward direction. Most of these roads follow the line of streams, varying in size but almost all at high water stage during the greater part of the winter months.

The great port of Leghorn acted as the funnel through which men and matériel poured in to feed the Army. Three Arno Valley cities, Lucca, Pistoia, and Florence, contained the dumps from which the principal mountain advances were supplied. Bases and depots in the vicinity of Pisa serviced the drive up the narrow west coast. Highway 1, traversing the coastal plain, continues on up the Ligurian coast line from Pisa toward the town of Massa and the former Italian naval base at

La Spezia. Both these places were in German hands. Well north of the battle lines, in German-held territory, two highways branch northeastward from Highway 1 to form possible approaches to the Po Valley. A short distance southeast of La Spezia Highway 63 begins to thread its way across the mountains toward the city of Reggio Emilia; just north of La Spezia Highway 62 turns inland to lead eventually to Parma.

Pistoia, about 30 miles inland, was the hub of the road net feeding the eastern part of the IV Corps sector. From this city Highway 64 winds its crooked way across the Apennines to Bologna, passing through the mountain towns of Porretta and Vergato. Highway 66 runs northwest to connect with Highway 12 at San Marcello. The latter road, originating at Pisa, enters the mountains at Lucca, 20 miles west of Pistoia, and runs through rough country; the villages of Pievepelago and Pavullo are the only sizable communities encountered until it breaks out onto the valley floor again at the city of Modena.

Roads serving II and 13 Corps and forming the axes of advance for the main Fifth Army effort radiated out of the Florence area. Running north through Futa and Radicosa passes to Bologna, nearly 70 road miles from Florence, was Highway 65 in the II Corps zone. This main route passes through numerous small villages, none of which is a community of any great size. It is paved but, like all the other Apennine roads, contains many heavy grades and sharp curves. The principal highway serving 13 Corps was Highway 67, which runs in a more northeasterly direction than Highway 65. It leaves the Arno Valley at Pontassieve, 10 miles east of Florence, immediately climbs into the mountains, then passes through Dicomano and Rocca, and finally enters the northern valley at the town of Forli. Three other less improved roads served II Corps. Paralleling Highway 65 about 6 miles to the west is the Prato—Castiglione—Bologna (Highway 6620) route, which connects with Highway 64 about 10 miles south of Bologna. East of Highway 65 is the road which formed the principal attack route through the Gothic Line, the Firenzuola—Imola (Highway 6528) road. This road leaves Highway 65 about 15 miles north of Florence, strikes northeast through Firenzuola down the rocky gorge of the Santerno River, and reaches level country again north of the mountains at Imola. Yet another northeast-southwest usable road runs from Florence through Borgo San Lorenzo to Faenza (Highway 6521).

Although this road net afforded a number of routes over the mountains, it failed utterly to provide adequate lateral communications. Except for one secondary road running west from Firenzuola to Highway 65, the country is devoid of east-west roads. As a result Allied units were forced to utilize poor trails and to construct many routes themselves. Many of these hastily hacked out or improved trails became practically impassable in rainy weather, and mule pack trains and

human carrying parties were necessary to reach the troops in otherwise inaccessible mountain positions.

Forming the principal route through the southeastern part of the Po Valley and connecting most of the large towns and cities south of the river is Highway 9. This road, on level ground and with many long straight stretches of pavement, skirts the valley along the northern foot of the Apennines. Between the Adriatic seacoast, where it leaves Highway 16, and Bologna, it passes through Forli, Faenza, and Imola. From Bologna Highway 9 continues northwest through Modena, Reggio Emilia, Parma, and Piacenza. Bologna's population of over 260,000 people made it the largest city south of the Po River in the zone of the Allied Armies. North of Piacenza and the river lies the great manufacturing city of Milan. Twenty-five miles northeast of Bologna is the city of Ferrara on Highway 64 4 miles south of the river.

Italy's largest river, the Po, flows in a series of great bends across its broad alluvial plain 10 to 30 miles north of the mountains. From its source in the Alps to its mouth on the Adriatic Sea the rambling stream forms a natural obstacle for approximately 420 miles across almost all of northern Italy. For much of the distance it flows between high, thick levees, which in some instances raise the bed of the river as much as 60 feet above the level of the surrounding land. Between Piacenza and Ferrara the river was spanned by 12 bridges, which for many months had been the target of Allied bombers and were almost entirely destroyed. The length of these bridges ranged from 1,000 to 3,700 feet, and the majority were over 2,000 feet long.

Numerous small rivers and streams course down the northern side of the Apennines toward the Po and the Adriatic Sea, and virtually every road through the mountains follows a small valley or canyon cut out by these streams. The largest of these water courses in the area of the main Army effort were the Montone, paralleling Highway 67; the Lamone, which flows alongside the Florence—Faenza road; the Senio, 6 miles west of the Lamone; the Santerno, along the Florence—Imola road; the Reno, along whose banks Highway 64 is built; and the Panaro. Similarly, numerous unimportant creeks and rivers tumble down the southern slopes toward the Arno Valley; but the only large stream in the Fifth Army area was the Serchio River, which bisected the IV Corps zone. Rising in the mountains northwest of Lucca, it runs a rocky course past Castelnuovo, Barga, Bagni di Lucca, and Lucca before it enters the valley and turns west to reach the sea 6 miles north of the mouth of the Arno.

B. *ALLIED DISPOSITIONS*

Fifth Army troops had stormed decisively through the heavy defenses of the German Gothic Line in the Apennine Mountains before a combination of bad weather, heavy losses, and increasingly stiff enemy opposition had forced a suspension of the offensive late in the previous October. Battering their way north from the Arno Valley, our forces had smashed through prepared mountain defenses officially described as the strongest German works ever encountered in Italy up to that time. The campaign to break the Gothic Line continued until lack of sufficient fresh troops to continue exploitation of the break-through, difficulty of supply, and the unexpectedly swift massing of enemy reserves before Bologna forced us to desist from the attack at a time when the Allies appeared to be on the verge of reaching the level Po Valley. The stalemate in the mountains occurred slightly more than 13 months after the beginning of the Italian campaign on 9 September 1943. From the first landings at the Salerno beachhead the Army had battled northward through the valleys and mountains forming the rough terrain of the peninsula.

When Fifth Army swung from the attack to the defense, American and Allied troops which composed the Army were holding the longest front they had ever maintained in Italy. The positions were practically unchanged during November; on 1 December the line ran from a point on the Ligurian coast about 6 miles south of Massa east and northeast for nearly 130 tortuous miles through the mountains to the boundary with Eighth Army near Highway 67, 15 miles to the southwest of the Po Valley town of Forli. On the extreme left, operating under direct Army control, the 92d Infantry Division was thinly spread along a front of over 20 miles. It extended inland from the sea, across the narrow strip of coastal plain about 4 miles wide, and almost due east into the mountains and across the Serchio River valley. Here the front bulged northward as far as the town of Barga on the east side of the river and then swung sharply south almost to Bagni di Lucca on Highway 12.

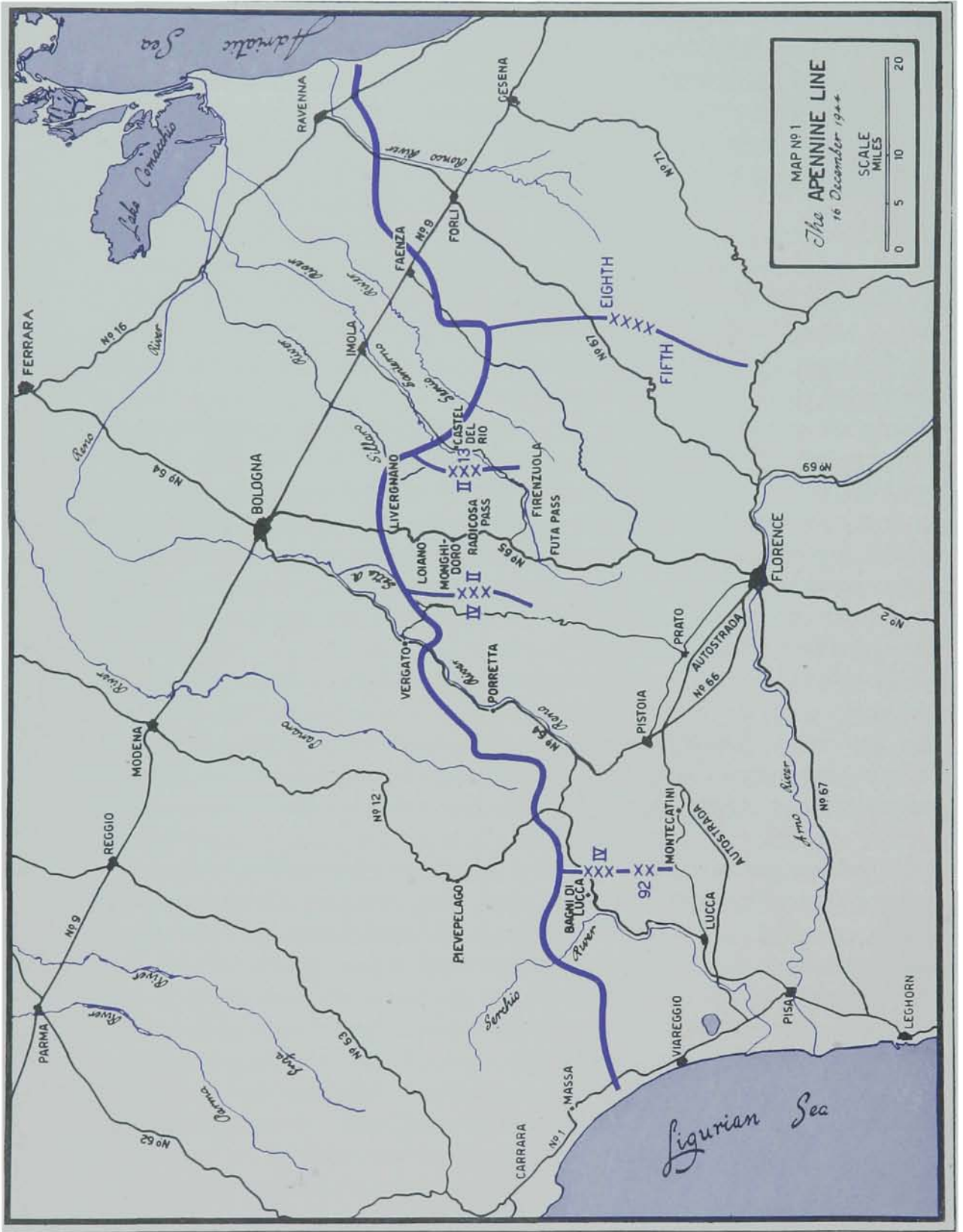
The main Fifth Army push to the north had been made in the center; on the left flank the line had been advanced only about 12 miles into the mountains and roughly 25 miles north of the Arno River. Under command of Maj. Gen. Willis D. Crittenger, IV Corps, composed of Task Force 45, the 1st Brazilian Infantry Division, and the 6 South African Armoured Division, occupied the left center portion of the Army front. The Corps line threaded its way through the mountains, running sharply northward on the west of the II Corps penetration toward Bologna. The left boundary, between IV Corps and the 92d Division, was a short distance east of Bagni di Lucca; the Corps right flank rested on Setta Creek, which marked the beginning of the II Corps sector. Task Force 45 occupied the left of the IV Corps

front. This force, under command of the 45th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade, was made up principally of former antiaircraft troops functioning as infantry, including the American 434th, 435th, and 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalions and the British 39 Light Antiaircraft Regiment (battalion). The 2d Battalion, 370th Infantry (92d Division), was also attached. Elements of the British unit were stationed in the Cutigliano Valley; the bulk of the force was concentrated in the area northwest of Pistoia. Much of the almost trackless mountain mass in the western part of the task force sector was ungarrisoned.

The 1st Brazilian Division held a triangular-shaped sector north of Pistoia, guarding Highway 64. Its elements faced the Germans along 15 miles of rough terrain paralleling the general line of the highway from 3 to 5 miles west of it and reaching to a point on the road about 6 miles north of Porretta. The division was deeply echeloned from northeast to southwest, facing northwest. North and east of Pistoia the 6 South African Armoured Division on the right of the Corps held a sector extending northeast from Highway 64 to the Corps boundary on Setta Creek.

Four American divisions were crammed in Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes' narrow II Corps sector astride Highway 65 in the Army center. On the left of this Corps front dismounted elements of the 1st Armored Division held a short section of the line adjoining the South Africans. East of the armored infantry the 91st Infantry Division occupied an even narrower front, with only two battalions in defensive positions. The center sector, which included Highway 65, was occupied by the 34th Infantry Division; east to the 13 Corps boundary the 88th Infantry Division covered the Idice River valley and the Mount Belmonte front. The most northerly point reached by Fifth Army was in this right sector where troops atop Mount delle Formiche and Mount Belmonte could look down into the Po Valley. At the foot of the mountains in the valley Highway 9 could be clearly seen from Mount Grande on the left of 13 Corps; here the Army had advanced slightly more than 60 miles from Florence.

13 Corps held the right flank of Fifth Army with three British and one Indian divisions on the line. On the Corps left the 1 Infantry Division occupied the Mount Grande and Mount Cerere positions on a narrow sector. The 78 Infantry Division garrisoned the next 4 miles of mountainous front, while the 6 Armoured Division held the Firenzuola—Imola road axis and ground about 3 miles on either side of this supply artery. The 8 Indian Infantry Division covered the longest portion of the 13 Corps line, a distance of about 12 miles into which a long salient of German-occupied ground reached toward the Senio River. The division stretched across the Lamone River to a point just west of Highway 67. Eighth Army forward elements had been slowly advancing westward from the Adriatic side, gradually pinching out portions of the division.



Although withdrawal of Fifth Army troops for rest had begun by 1 November and one division at a time was being placed in reserve during the early part of December, the major part of each of the other divisions was concentrated on the line. Reassignment of heavy artillery pieces to service in France had stripped the Army of all American artillery heavier than 155-mm guns. The majority of the available artillery other than divisional battalions was in position in the II Corps sector on both sides of Highway 65.

C. *ENEMY ACTIVITIES*

1. *German Commitments.* About the middle of October, when our threat to break through to Bologna was strongest, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, the supreme German commander of Army Group Southwest in Italy, committed more than half of the available enemy front-line strength against Fifth Army. On 15 December, 13 of the 28 German divisions in Italy were still blocking us, 9 of them massed against II Corps south and southeast of Bologna. Since these divisions were not up to full strength, the numerical total of the opposing forces was about equal. Six German divisions were delaying the advance of Eighth Army along the Adriatic coast and westward up Highway 9 toward Bologna, basing their defense on the various river lines. Four others were spread along the upper Ligurian coast and in the Maritime Alps, guarding against possible sea-borne invasion of the Genoa area and penetration of northern Italy from France. The 162d Turcoman Grenadier (Infantry) Division was engaged in operations against Italian partisans in the northern part of the country, where action by these well organized guerrilla bands had assumed such proportions that the enemy was obliged to begin a full-scale campaign against them. Three German divisions and one Cossack cavalry division were in the Udine—Trieste region of northeast Italy. In addition to the German divisions, two Fascist Republican Italian divisions were partially committed in the lines facing our troops and were also engaged in running down the partisans. Italian units equivalent to three more divisions were stationed around Turin and Milan.

The boundary between the two German armies apparently ran past the right of the II Corps sector. Fourteenth Army's I Parachute Corps opposed the left and center of II Corps, while XIV Panzer (Armored) Corps held the sector opposite IV Corps. 13 Corps and II Corps were each confronted by LI Mountain Corps of the German Tenth Army. LXXVI Panzer Corps was opposing Eighth Army. A third enemy army, composed largely of Fascist troops and known as the Ligurian Army, was under command of the Italian Marshal Rodolfo Graziani. This force,

which included the Italian Littorio, Prince Borghese, and 1st SS Divisions and the German 34th Grenadier Division, 5th Mountain Division, and 157th Reserve Mountain Division, was spread along the Ligurian coast, around Genoa, and in the mountains on the Italo-French frontier.

The Germans, apparently appreciating that there was now no immediate threat to Bologna, had taken advantage of the November lull to accumulate a reserve for future contingencies and to relieve tired divisions, some of which had rested little since the beginning of the Allied offensive in May against the Gustav Line south of Rome. The nine divisions which Marshal Kesselring had assembled protecting the southern approaches to Bologna had built up a heavy defense belt in this area. He thinned this line, leaving the divisions committed in narrow sectors while at the same time resting a large percentage of the personnel. Local reserves had consisted of the greater part of the 1st and 4th Parachute Divisions; each enemy division began creation of its own reserve soon after the beginning of the month of November.

To oppose the western flank of Fifth Army, where our mission had never been more than to follow up enemy withdrawals and maintain pressure all along the line, Kesselring used some Italian troops. The sector between the Ligurian Sea and the Serchio River was assigned to the German 148th Grenadier Division reinforced by elements of two Italian units, the Monte Rosa Alpine Division and the San Marco Marine Division. The 232d Grenadier Division was spread from the Serchio River east to Highway 64, but in the rough high ground east of the Serchio it was reinforced by the 4th Independent Mountain Battalion. Containing our Bologna spearhead in the center between Highway 64 and the Firenzuola—Imola road were the 94th Grenadier Division, the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier (Armored Infantry) Division “Reichsfuehrer SS,” the 4th Parachute Division, the 65th Grenadier Division, the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, the 42d Light Division, the 1st Parachute Division, the 98th Grenadier Division, and the 334th Grenadier Division in a series of narrow sectors from west to east. The 65th Grenadier Division was astride Highway 65. 13 Corps was being blocked by a smaller array of force. The 715th Grenadier Division was in position from the Firenzuola—Imola road east across the Senio River, and overlapping the eastern extremity of the Fifth Army boundary was the 305th Grenadier Division. The enemy had the largest concentration of artillery massed against Fifth Army that had been encountered in Italy. He outnumbered our forces in large-caliber heavy artillery and from all indications had plenty of ammunition available. The Germans were estimated to have a minimum of 370 light guns, 125 medium guns, 17 heavy guns, 160 heavy antiaircraft guns, and 20 Nebelwerfers capable of firing on Fifth Army positions.

2. *German Defensive Lines.* Evidences of the enemy’s determination to hold as long as possible were not long in appearing. The Germans maintained a tight

counterreconnaissance screen, and our patrols usually met defensive fires shortly after leaving our own lines. Reports of our patrols indicated the enemy was busily engaged in constructing better defenses. This information was borne out by photo reconnaissance cover, which showed a constantly expanding belt of prepared positions in depth between the front and Bologna. Diggings were protected by wire and mines and had become increasingly obvious as November passed.

Throughout December the Germans continued to work on their defensive system both south and east of the city. On the south side the numerous ridge lines and mountain peaks were organized. Pillboxes were reported under construction in enemy strongpoints, and a heavy build-up of gun emplacements 3 miles south of Bologna was shown. The bulk of the German artillery was now concentrated between Highway 64 and the Firenzuola—Imola road. Heavy guns on the enemy left were sited where they could fire on both the Fifth and Eighth Army fronts. The towns of Pianoro, 3 miles north of Livernano on Highway 65, and Vergato, on Highway 64, became the nerve centers of the defensive system. High, rock-sloped Mount Adone, midway between the two highways, served as an excellent observation point from which much of the activity behind our lines could be seen.

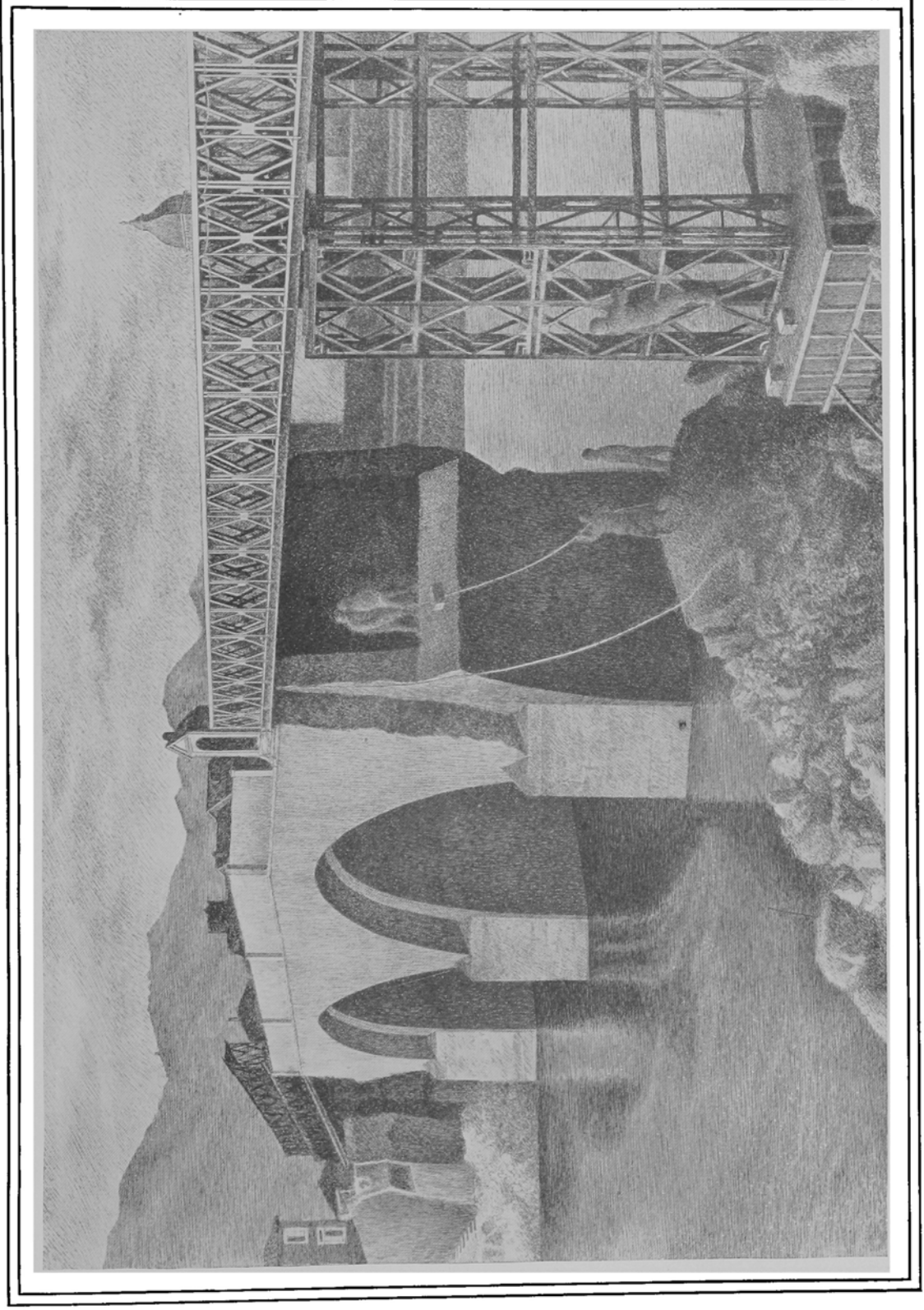
Several belts of field fortifications blocked the road to Bologna from the east; by the end of the year the entire area around the city had been transformed into one of the most formidable barriers the enemy had ever occupied in Italy. Three distinct belts of defenses were identified southeast of the city, based on the numerous river lines. The Irmgard Line ran along the Senio River, the Laura Line on the Santerno, and the Paula Line on the Sillaro River. Most of these streams had high flood banks into which the enemy dug machine guns, rifle pits, and antitank gun positions. Both here and in the more mountainous region to the south their system consisted of numerous mutually supporting strongpoints or centers of resistance. Large dugouts which could house a squad or even a platoon were dug into the hillsides, and the bulk of the enemy troops remained in such shelters until outguards warned of danger; then they would emerge and rush to man the positions close by.

The main defenses facing Fifth and Eighth Armies ran south and east of Bologna along a line which included parts of the Mount Grande hill mass, Mount Bello, and Imola and then continued along the Santerno River. Discounting the aid offered by the terrain in other instances, this Bologna defense line appeared stronger than the Gustav, Adolf Hitler, and the Velletri—Valmontone Lines, stronger even than the Gothic Line itself. By the end of December Eighth Army, slowly advancing up Highway 9, had come up generally against the Irmgard Line on its left flank adjoining Fifth Army. The strength of this line quickly became apparent when attempts of the British to push across the Senio River ran into intense resistance which ultimately brought the advance to a standstill.

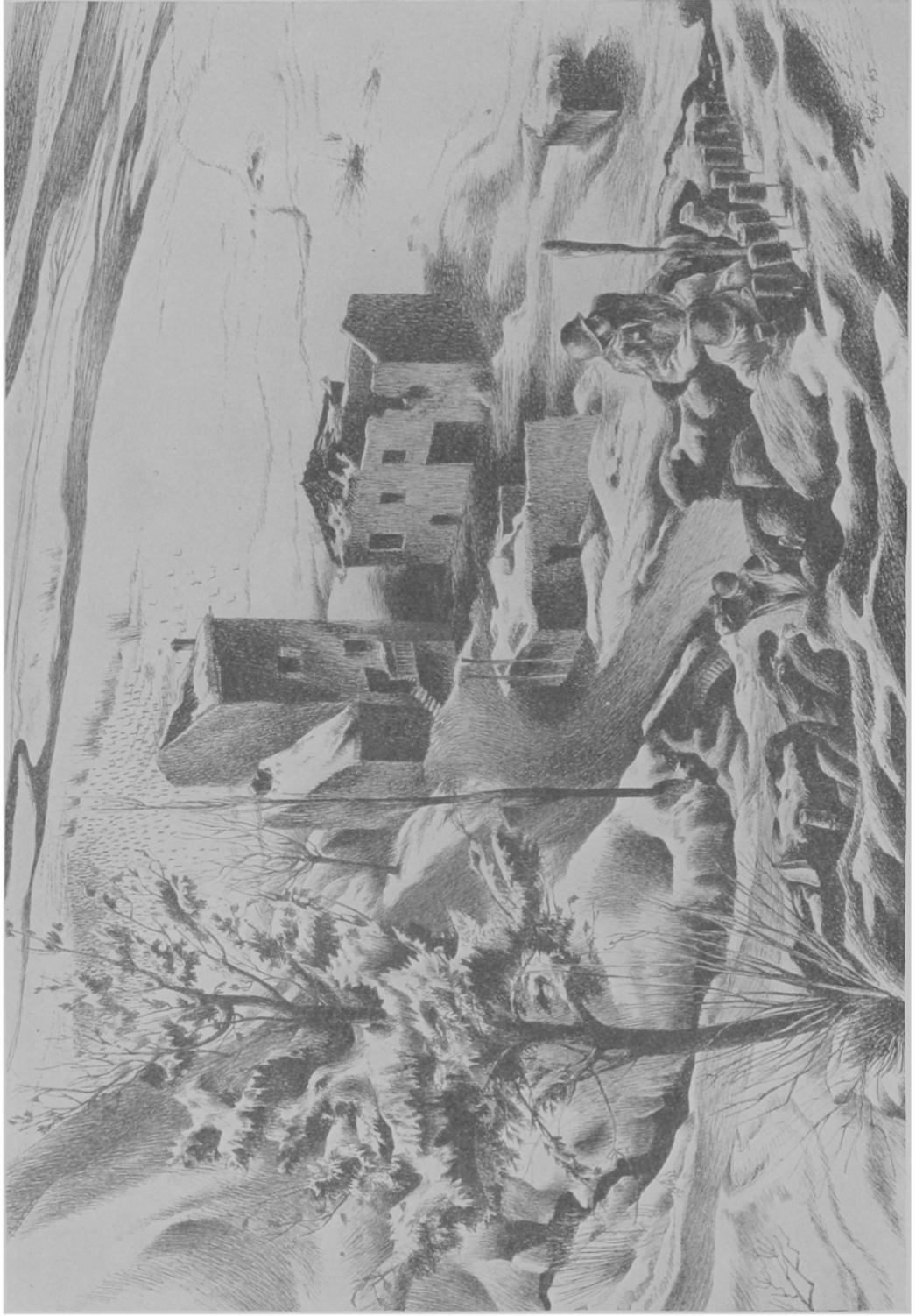
3. *Enemy Rear Areas.* The Germans were forced to contend with a not inconsiderable amount of turmoil far behind their front lines caused by the Italian partisans, well organized and engaged in extensive sabotage operations against the enemy supply system. Activities of these partisans were encouraged 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 advisers. 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 uncertain 162d Turcoman Grenadier Division—which could not be trusted in battle—were engaged in this program, in which the Germans made considerable headway. 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 also were executed, but less frequently, and 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. The Monte Rosa Alpine Division, formed in Germany in March 1944 and sent to Italy in the late summer, 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. Only a comparatively small number of the deserters came to the Allied lines even though between 20 and 30 a day were apprehended by Counterintelligence Corps men and our troops, mostly along the west coast.

Taking advantage of the static lines, the Germans also greatly increased their espionage activities. Soon after our invasion at Salerno they began training spies and saboteurs in German schools. Activity of this type steadily increased, and by the fall of 1944 the enemy began a full-scale espionage offensive, although most of the apprehended agents were low-grade. Nearly all were Italians, whose missions varied from obtaining short-range tactical information to bringing back long-range political and economic intelligence. Most of them attempted to enter our territory in the guise of civilian refugees. Ten of these agents, one a woman, were taken during November while infiltrating our lines, generally along Highway 65. This activity began to diminish later in the winter when an increasingly large percentage



Preparing a Serchio bridge for demolition . . . painted by Master Sergeant Mitchell Siporin



A mortar crew on the slopes above the Idice River Valley . . . painted by Captain Edward A. Reep

of enemy agents were apprehended. Nearly a score were executed after trials before Allied Military Government general courts martial. Others, against whom insufficient evidence was obtained to warrant death, were given long prison terms or interned. One hundred and fifty road blocks were maintained by military police or carabinieri to control the movement of civilians.

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 Germans. Apart from supplying almost all the food consumed by the German armies in Italy, the country annually exported more than 140,000 tons of rice, 160,000 tons of fruit, 200,000 tons of wine, and other products to Germany itself. Much of the equipment for German forces in Italy was produced 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 5 months of 1944, and heavy weapons production were also favorable to the foe. Although consistent strategic bombing by heavy Allied planes cut these figures as time went by, production continued at a relatively high rate.

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 sizable manufacturing area outside Germany still remaining unoccupied by the advancing Allied armies, it became evident that the enemy would hold us away from this industrial region as long as it was possible.

D. ACTION IN DECEMBER

1. *Plans for Attack.* All along the front offensive action, except for minor efforts to improve positions, had been halted by Fifth Army by 1 November. Troops of all divisions dug themselves in for the rest period which it was believed would last about 1 month, after which offensive operations would be resumed in conjunction with Eighth Army. Maximum efforts were made to rest all units, with emphasis on improvement of supply and communication systems preparatory to the new offensive. Activities of the Army continued to be directed by provisions of AAI Operations Order No. 3,⁽¹⁾ but failure of Eighth Army to meet the expected time schedule resulted in a change of plans on 28 November when AAI issued Operations Order No. 4. (*See Annex No. 1A.*) At that time British troops were engaged in heavy battles around Faenza, 10 miles southeast of the line of the Santerno River at Imola, and were making slow, costly progress in the face of severe rain storms, flooded, ditch- and canal-cut country, and stiff enemy resistance. It was, however, considered essential that the Allied Armies—whose primary mission yet remained the destruction of enemy forces in Italy—immediately undertake to continue such pressure against the Germans that the enemy would be unable to transfer any troops from Italy to either the western or eastern European fronts.

As a result of this directive Fifth Army issued Operations Instruction No. 36 on 29 November when it was estimated that Eighth Army would reach the Santerno River about 7 December. (*See Annex No. 1B.*) After the river was reached the two armies were to launch a coordinated major offensive against Bologna. The necessity for better weather was another contingency which would help determine the exact date for the new attack, and the ammunition supply was a possible limiting factor. Shortly before 1 December an analysis of ammunition stocks indicated sufficient supplies were on hand to support a 13-day attack during December but that such consumption would result in inability to carry out further offensive action until after 28 January 1945, by this time receipt of scheduled allocations would again boost the dump supply to a point which would allow full artillery support to any operation. Allotments of ammunition to the corps were greatly reduced, and restrictions of 15 rounds per day for each 105-mm howitzer, 18 rounds per day per 155-mm howitzer, and 11 rounds per day per 155-mm gun were imposed initially. Later in the winter the allocations were further reduced.

Operations Instruction No. 36 envisioned a three-phase attack by Fifth Army, the first two aimed at securing key enemy-held positions in the mountains protecting

⁽¹⁾ For text see Fifth Army History, Part VII.

the approaches to Bologna and the third phase the capture of the city itself. The main effort of Fifth Army again was to be made by II Corps while IV Corps assisted on the left and 13 Corps devoted most of its power to providing assistance for Eighth Army. The first phase objectives for IV Corps were the seizure of the area around Marzabotto, a village on Highway 64, 6 miles west of Livergnano, and clearance of ground west of Setta Creek. II Corps was to occupy high ground on both sides of Highway 65 in the vicinity of Pianoro. In its role of supporting Eighth Army 13 Corps was ordered to attack as soon as possible down the Castel del Rio—Imola road.

It was estimated that the 28 German divisions in Italy were at approximately 60 percent of their normal strength, which would make them the numerical equal of about 16 to 17 American divisions. Elements of the six Fascist Italian divisions, drastically weakened by a high rate of desertions, were believed to reach the equivalent of not more than two American divisions. On the line facing the Fifth Army penetration zone the Germans now had in forward positions 21 battalions of infantry with 8 more in local reserve, a total force of slightly less than 10,000 front-line effectives. IV Corps was opposed by about 4,800, 13 Corps by 8,700, and the 92d Division by some 1,900 front-line combat troops. Reserves capable of fairly rapid intervention, coming from the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, the 4th Parachute Division, and the 362d Grenadier Division, were estimated at an additional 7,000 front-line infantry. The lull during November had also provided opportunity for the enemy to rest his troops, and the German morale was considered to be good. Despite constant efforts by the air force to block supply routes, the extensive road net of the Po Valley afforded opportunity to bring in supplies, and the enemy matériel situation was satisfactory except for a severe shortage of motor transport and gasoline. Positions of the opposing armies were relatively the same as they had been at the beginning of the rest period.

On 7 December the ground situation had not yet changed materially. Although Eighth Army had made some progress, particularly northward toward Ravenna near the Adriatic coast, the northwestward movement along Highway 9 continued at a slow pace against tenacious German delaying actions. The line of the Santerno River had not been reached, and the enemy remained in Imola. The weather continued to deteriorate; ground conditions in the mountains, already bad, became such that mechanized movement off the roads was almost impossible. With our forces and those of the enemy so nearly equal in number, it was considered essential that a minimum of 3 days of good flying weather must be assured to enable the use of our great air superiority in support of the ground attack. Weather forecasters were unable to foresee such a period with any degree of certainty; as a result the signal to begin the assault was again delayed. The majority of Fifth Army troops were

placed on 72-hour alert, and efforts were bent toward improving defensive positions and getting ready for the winter. Snow had already fallen several times and was shortly due in increasing frequency.

2. *Clashes in the Center.* Both Fifth Army and its German opponents took advantage of the November and early December stalemate to rest, regroup, and build up supplies. Rest centers for American and Allied troops were opened in the Arno Valley, the largest of them at the city of Montecatini west of Florence, where entire divisions were rotated through for 10-day periods of rest. II Corps units principally were assigned to this location, while IV and 13 Corps made smaller scale reliefs of their troops. Fifth Army assimilated more than 5,000 replacements into its combat units; despite this increase the Army remained approximately 7,000 men below authorized strength at the beginning of December. The Germans also received thousands of replacements, many of them surprisingly high-grade, to bring their divisions closer to normal size.

November passed, and December came with little change in the pattern of life in the deadlocked mountain lines. Artillery exchanges and patrol clashes provided the principal action during much of the first 3 weeks of the month. The Italian winter held the front in its grip, heavy snows covering all the higher mountains and often blanketing the lower hills as well. Soldiers spent much of their time in improving their individual living quarters and their defensive positions. For the greater part of the month both sides were content to let things stand more or less as they were.

In several instances, however, both the Germans and the Allies attempted to improve their tactical situation with local attacks aimed at valuable defensive features, but in all cases the net result, after sharp fighting had ended, was a return to the positions previously held. The bulk of what little fighting occurred in the first 3 weeks of the month involved units holding the flanks of the mountain salient where each side was sensitive to action by the other. On the main II Corps front itself there was little activity beyond local fire fights between patrols. On 3 December the 91st Division, under command of Maj. Gen. William G. Livesay, returned to the lines, thereby placing four divisions abreast on the Corps front, the 1st Armored, 91st, 34th, and 88th Divisions from left to right. The 85th Infantry Division, under command of Maj. Gen. John B. Coulter, remained in reserve at Gagliano. This grouping placed the four divisions in their proper zones for the attack; all artillery and supporting elements were in position; and infantry assault units remained in rear areas training for the big push. But conditions deemed necessary prerequisites for the attack did not develop. The enemy at last reinforced his defense against Eighth Army. The muddy ground froze, although not hard enough to support tanks. When the decision was made and D Day set, developments on the western flank again forced postponement.