

# CHAPTER IV \* \* \* \* \*

## *Slugging Toward Bologna*

### A. *THE II CORPS PLAN OF ATTACK*

*See Map No. 5*

FROM the planning stage on, the attack of II Corps astride and west of Highway 65 had been visualized as a slow, grinding push. Though the terrain was not more difficult than that facing IV Corps, the enemy had had ample time to prepare his defenses; and inasmuch as he expected our main push to come straight down Highway 65 to Bologna, he had concentrated his attention on that area since the previous November. The G-2 defense overprints, issued from time to time through the winter and early spring, revealed an ever heavier concentration of bunkers, machine-gun nests, communication trenches, weapons emplacements, and the like; by April the German defenses before Bologna were as thick as in any area of the Fifth Army campaign thus far.

During the winter our forces had tested these defenses by minor attacks, which had been uniformly unsuccessful, and photo reconnaissance together with patrol reports had pinpointed the locations of many of the German installations. Key localities in the enemy system of defenses were Mount Sole on the east bank of the Reno, Monterumici and the barren, steep-sided Mount Adone commanding the west side of Highway 65, Pianoro on the highway itself, and to the east the hills north of Mount Belmonte. Except for Mount Sole, which lay off by itself, all of these points were interconnected. The fall of any specific hill did not guarantee penetration of the enemy line; rather it was necessary to attack all along the line to pin down the enemy reserves and grind our way through the entire set of defenses. A repetition, in other words, was called for of the tactics which had been required throughout the Italian campaign, of generally frontal attacks with local envelopments, of hammering again and again at the enemy until his strength was worn down and his bunkers destroyed.

In the Reno Plan of 17 March, General Keyes outlined the details of the II Corps role in the Fifth Army spring offensive. The broad scheme of maneuver was to

breach the German defense system based on Pianoro, Mount Adone, and Mount Sole and then to continue northwest, bypassing enemy points of resistance if necessary, so as to capture the Praduro road junction on Highway 64. Beyond the Praduro line II Corps was to be prepared, depending on the situation, to make its main effort either east or west of the Reno; in either event the intention was partially to flank the west side of the strong German defense lines immediately south of Bologna.

In the initial break-through attack II Corps would strike chiefly west of Highway 65, that is, between that road and Highway 64. Operations were to begin after IV Corps had reached its Green Phase Line objectives. In the first phase of the II Corps attack (Brown Phase) the Legnano Group on the extreme right would demonstrate vigorously without launching an assault. The 34th Division was to seize Dei Mori Hill and Hill 356, two strong positions northeast of Mount Belmonte. Upon completion of the Brown Phase the 34th Division was to be ready upon Corps order to relieve the 91st Division east of Highway 65 and assist the advance of that division, which was then to shift its weight to the left. The 91st Division astride Highway 65 at the beginning of the offensive was to capture the Mount Adone and Mount dei Frati features on its left; in the center and on the division right it would take the two heights flanking the town of Pianoro, Mounts Arnigo and Posigliano. The division was then to continue to the Black Phase Line after turning over the Mount Adone ridge on the left to the 88th Division and the area east of Highway 65 to the 34th Division. The 88th Division, west of the 91st Division, was to capture Monterumici just south of Mount Adone and then, after relieving the 91st Division on Adone and dei Frati, continue to the Black Phase Line. The 6 South African Armoured Division on the Corps left was to take Mount Sole and Mount Santa Barbara, the high ground between the Reno and Setta Creek.

After seizing in the Brown Phase the high ground held by the enemy since the preceding October II Corps was to go on in the Black Phase to make a strong effort toward Bologna. The Legnano Group, which at the beginning of the attack had only demonstrated, was to be prepared on Corps order to move forward to capture the high ground directly north of its positions. The 34th Division would be ready to seize two more heights, one on the extreme right and one immediately northeast of Pianoro. The 91st Division was to continue on to clear the ridge extending beyond Mount dei Frati and on Corps order to relieve the 88th Division east of Setta Creek. That division was to swing left to seize Mount Mario, dominating the road center town of Praduro at the confluence of Setta Creek and the Reno, and thereafter be prepared to relinquish its zone to the 91st Division in order to assume the zone left vacant west of the Reno by the pinching out of the 6 South African Armoured Division. The South Africans were to clear the high ground between the

Reno and Setta Creek north to Praduro, establish a bridgehead across the Reno south of Praduro, and assist the 88th Division to pass through it. The 6 South African Armoured Division would then revert to Army reserve to regroup and exploit a break-through to the Po plain. In addition to the four and one-half divisions assigned to it, II Corps was to be prepared to employ the 85th Division west of the Reno after passing through IV Corps units or east of the Reno to press the attack on the Black Phase Line and beyond.

As spring advanced and the imminent campaign drew near, the Germans had shown increasing sensitivity to American activities. Yet, although they made several strong raids to seize prisoners and gain information, they apparently never became fully aware of the significance of the shifting of units behind our lines. On the other hand, the trickle of deserters and a few prisoners enabled II Corps to keep well abreast of enemy dispositions. The early part of April found the enemy line-up little changed from what it had been the month before. Beginning with the 1st Parachute Division just east of the II Corps eastern boundary, the enemy had in line from east to west the 305th Grenadier Division, the 65th Grenadier Division, the 8th Mountain Division, and the 94th Grenadier Division. During the early part of the month the boundaries of the three easternmost units were moved east to compensate for the weakening of the 1st Parachute Division, which lost three battalions as cadres of new parachute units. A change on the west occurred when the broad sector held by the 94th Grenadier Division astride the II Corps-IV Corps boundary was narrowed and the 8th Mountain Division took over the Mount Sole positions. All of our major objectives were defended by the mediocre 65th Grenadier Division astride Highway 65 and the first-class 8th Mountain Division on the major terrain features between the highway and the Reno River. Each division was believed to have local reserves of about two understrength battalions; the only general reserves known to be available for use against II Corps consisted of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division west and southwest of Bologna.

## B. *THE ATTACK ON MONTERUMICI AND MOUNT SOLE*

15-18 APRIL

During the first 2 weeks of April II Corps prepared for its attack. On 1 April the Corps front was held from left to right by the 1st Armored Division, the 34th Division, the 91st Division, and the Legnano Group. By the 5th the 6 South African Armoured Division had relieved the 1st Armored Division on the left; the 34th and 91st Divisions had exchanged zones, placing the 91st Division astride Highway 65; and the 88th Division had assumed command of a zone west of the highway which

was actually held by troops of the 91st and 34th Divisions. This regrouping and concentration was handled very carefully in order to obtain the maximum rest just prior to D Day for the assault units; in addition, movements were carefully controlled in furtherance of the secrecy requirements prescribed in the deception plan. On the 7th the 88th Division Artillery began moving into position; on the 10th the first infantry elements of the division came forward; and on 13-14 April they relieved the screening elements in their zone.

1. *Air and Artillery Support.* Thirty-seven hours after IV Corps opened the spring offensive of Fifth Army, II Corps struck a double blow east of the Reno. At 2230, 15 April, the 6 South African Armoured Division and the 88th Division jumped off abreast toward Mount Sole and Monterumici. Four and one-half hours later (0300, 16 April) the 91st and 34th Divisions launched the second blow on the east toward Mount Adone, Pianoro, and the Sevizzano ridge.

The infantry assault was preceded by an intensive air and artillery program. During the afternoon of 15 April 765 heavy bombers attacked targets along Highways 64 and 65 between our front lines and Bologna. At the same time 200 medium bombers concentrated on enemy installations and areas around Praduro. From 1630 to 1945 120 fighter-bombers in waves of four to eight planes pounded Mount Sole, the first objective of the 6 South African Armoured Division. The next day the heavy bombers repeated their attacks while the medium bombers shifted to lines of communication in the Bologna area; the fighter-bombers worked on Mounts Adone, Posigliano, and Arnigo, all objectives of the 91st Division. Close-in support missions were also flown on targets of opportunity. The 90-mm antiaircraft artillery units guided the heavy and medium bombers during 15-18 April by firing a Flak Burst Line; behind our lines elaborate directional panels were employed to direct the bombers to their proper targets beyond our troops.

The artillery followed the bombers in pounding the enemy positions. Beginning at H Hour (2230), 15 April, the Corps artillery, plus the medium battalions of the divisional artillery and the 401st and 403d Antiaircraft Artillery Gun Battalions, fired a counterbattery and enemy command post program on 53 locations. Following this, a series of TOT's was laid on hostile batteries and targets requested by the 6 South African Armoured Division and the 88th Division; all available artillery was massed on each location. The attack by the 34th and 91st Divisions at 0300, 16 April, was supported by a similar pattern of fires, which kept II Corps artillery busy until daylight. Between 1800, 15 April, and 1800, 16 April, Corps artillery fired 17,882 rounds.

Despite the weight of bombs and shells dumped on the German positions the attacking units of II Corps met stubborn opposition. The positions, taking every advantage of the rugged terrain, were well-nigh impregnable; and enemy troops,

as long as they stayed in their holes, suffered comparatively light casualties. Enemy minefields also were a potent factor in making initial progress of the attack slow and torturous. On the other hand, although enemy artillery fire increased substantially compared to that of the previous static period, it never reached the proportions expected in view of the large number of artillery installations reported to be behind the enemy lines; during each of the first 2 days of the attack only about 1,050 rounds were received on the II Corps front. Prisoners stated that the air and artillery program preceding the attack so interdicted the supply routes and weakened the transportation system that ammunition could not be brought up to the guns. The appearance of Flying Fortresses and Liberators over the front lines also had a terrific effect on the enemy morale.

2. *The 88th Division Attacks Monterumici.* The infantry of the 88th Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Paul W. Kendall, were faced with strong defenses based on the boot-shaped Monterumici—Mount Adone ridge. This ridge rises from Setta Creek, extends  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile east to Furcoli, there veers north to the southern main feature, Monterumici (678), drops off to a broad saddle, and rises  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles beyond Monterumici to the jagged crag of Mount Adone. The Furcoli—Monterumici ridge, formidable in itself, formed a bar across the zone of the 88th Division. Exploitation of any break-through at Monterumici was dependent upon success by the 91st Division on the high Mount Adone ridge along the right flank, for the route to Mount Mario, the next objective of the 88th Division, lay across the transverse secondary ridges and stream gullies on the western slopes of the ridge extending north from Mount Adone.

The enemy in building up his defense positions during the preceding 6 months had honeycombed with caves salient features such as the ridge behind Furcoli and had utilized a cemetery as well as several rubble villages and isolated houses on Monterumici. The 8th Mountain Division, which also defended Mount Sole on the left and Mount Adone on the right, opposed the entire 88th Division thrust. One battalion of the 296th Mountain Regiment was on the extreme enemy right; three battalions of the 297th Mountain Regiment plus two companies of the 296th Mountain Regiment in reserve were charged with the defense of the Furcoli and Monterumici areas.

To execute the assigned mission General Kendall planned to attack with two regiments abreast. The left attack zone was given to the 349th Infantry under Col. Percy Le Sturgeon; the right zone, to the 350th Infantry under Lt. Col. Avery M. Cochran. Each regiment had attached one reinforced platoon (six mortars) of Company A, 100th Chemical Mortar Battalion, and in support one platoon of Battery A, 432d Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion. The 349th Infantry had Company C (less one platoon), 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and one

platoon of Company C, 757th Tank Battalion; the remaining platoon of tank destroyers and the rest of Company C, 757th Tank Battalion, were attached to the 350th Infantry. The 351st Infantry under Lt. Col. Franklin P. Miller remained in reserve.

The effort on the left was to be directed first toward the Furcoli strongpoint and the high ground to the west and then approximately 1 mile beyond to clear the western slopes of Monterumici. Upon division order, after the 88th Division had taken over Mount Adone from the 91st Division, the 349th Infantry was to continue clearing the slopes east of the Setta until pinched out by the 350th Infantry veering left to Mount Mario. The latter was to take Monterumici and the saddle in the connecting ridge between that feature and Mount Adone to the north. Every effort was to be made to help the 91st Division on Mount Adone. After the ridge was cleared, the regiment was to be ready on division order to turn over the western portion of the old attack zone to the 349th Infantry, relieve the 91st Division on Mounts Adone and dei Frati on the right, and press the attack north, swinging westward over the rough ground north of dei Frati to seize deeply eroded Mount Mario commanding the Praduro road junction.

On the morning of 15 April the 88th Division took over its front-line attack positions from the screening troops of the 362d Infantry and the 135th Infantry. At 2230 that night the 349th Infantry and the 350th Infantry pushed off with powerful artillery support. The 3d Battalion, 349th Infantry, made a wide feint on the west with one company along the left boundary; the 1st Battalion attacked straight north for Furcoli and the honeycombed ridge behind it. The well-sheltered enemy illuminated the attacking troops with flares and opened fire with machine guns and mortars. Although Company B, following a ridge road, got through the defensive fires and into the rubble of Furcoli village by 0200, fire from the caves in the ridge above made the place untenable, and the advance elements had to fall back. Another attempt, begun at 0420 and supported by two tanks, was more successful; by 0700 Company B was in Furcoli and had started to move eastward. About the same time Company C was able to get a foothold on a hump 700 yards to the west on the same ridge. During daylight hours on the 16th the 349th Infantry succeeded in getting troops up on the crest of the ridge west of Furcoli, but it proved too hot to hold. The 3d Battalion diversionary thrust along the western boundary made little progress beyond the original front lines.

On the division right the 350th Infantry struck at Monterumici from the east with the 3d Battalion and sent the 2d Battalion around the right into the saddle toward Mount Adone. Attacking elements crossed Savena Creek, which parallels the ridge, without any difficulty, but when they started up the slopes the Germans began wickedly accurate machine-gun and mortar fire. Friendly artillery was not able

to quiet all the mortars; booby-trapped foxholes and Schu-mines also took their toll. Daylight found the leading elements of the regiment in exposed positions. Although some troops were on the ridge north of the main peak of Monterumici, none of the enemy strongpoints had been reduced. In addition the right flank was seriously in danger as long as Mount Adone remained in enemy hands; so far the 91st Division had made no progress in that quarter.

During the morning of the 16th fighter-bombers blitzed Mount Adone, and the 350th Infantry smoked the south side of that height. The 2d and 3d Battalions regrouped and, supported by machine guns and mortars, resumed the attack. Company K, after reaching the north-south ridge which culminates in the peak of Monterumici, worked to the south along the ridge through two rubble village strongpoints which appeared to have been abandoned. Three platoons had safely passed through the second group of houses when the Germans rose out of their holes and opened fire on three sides. For 5 hours our ambushed troops fought to extricate themselves from a desperate position. Companies I and L, supported by tank fire, were able to relieve the pressure somewhat, and the 1st Battalion was committed to move straight up the slopes to the summit by attacking from the east but from a point farther to the south.

At 1800 Company K had been completely disorganized and was pulled back to the creek bed below the mountain. Four hours later Company I pushed south along the eastern slopes of the ridge to bypass the entrenched areas from which Company K had been ambushed and took up positions farther south and nearer to the summit. According to new plans the 1st Battalion, which had just been committed, was to pass through the advanced positions of Company I to press home the final attack on the peak. As fighting died down on the night of the 16th the 1st and 3d Battalions had taken up positions from which to execute the plan of attack the next day. Enemy artillery fire had been surprisingly light, but the shortage of artillery was more than compensated for by the intensity of mortar shelling and automatic-weapons fire. By 1000, 16 April, over 1,000 rounds of mortar ammunition had fallen on the 350th Infantry; the firing on the left was comparable.

At the end of the 16th the 88th Division had succeeded in getting some hold in the German main line of resistance to its front. The 349th Infantry held Furcoli and positions on the ridge 700 yards to the west; on the left boundary no progress had been made. The 350th Infantry had four companies up against the enemy positions on the northern and eastern slopes of Monterumici and had succeeded in getting elements of the 2d Battalion some distance up the eastern slopes of the saddle just below Mount Adone. Although several devastated villages on the slopes of Monterumici were partly in American hands the peak was by no means cleared of the enemy, who still retained the summit and many of his major positions as well as

commanding observation and control of the ridge line. Between the most advanced positions held by us there were wide gaps occupied by enemy troops. The right flank was not secure either; the 91st Division was getting nowhere on Mount Adone. On the left only was the generally dark picture relieved by substantial successes. Here the 6 South African Armoured Division had won a spectacular victory in the capture of the formidable Mount Sole—Mount Caprara—Mount Abelle triangle.

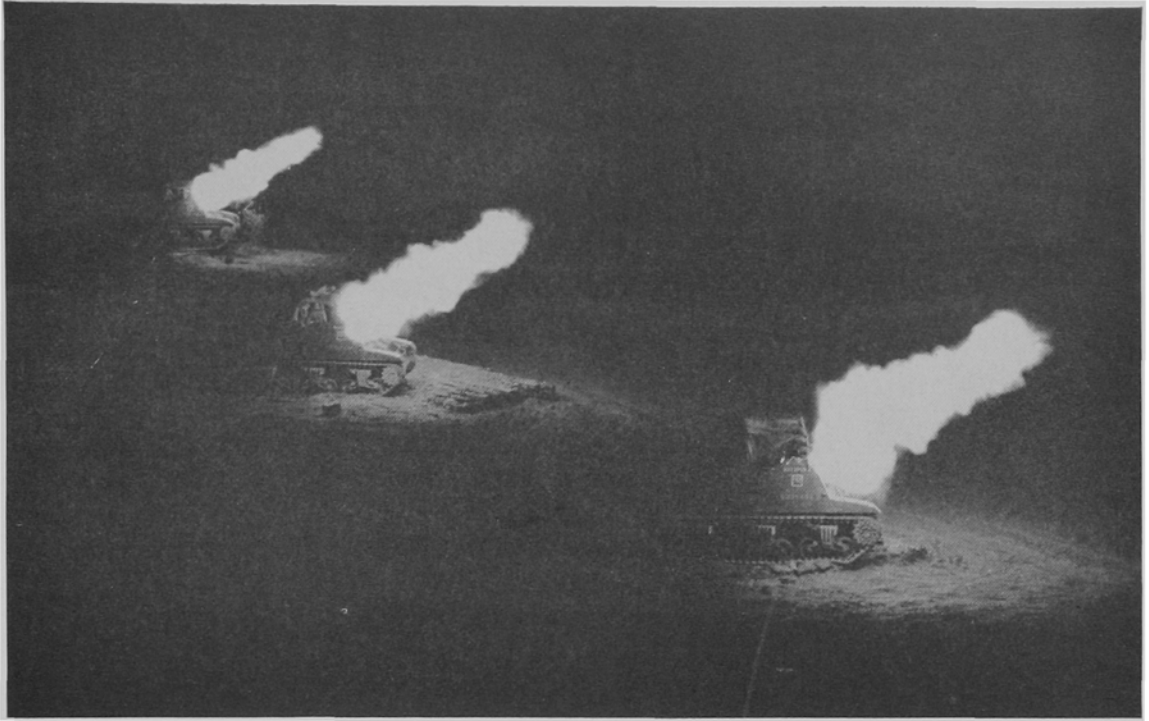
The fighting for Monterumici reached its greatest intensity on 17 April. On the right the 350th Infantry had a partial success as the 1st Battalion, passing through elements of the 3d Battalion, attacked south and west up the slopes. After a stiff fight in which Company C alone lost 10 killed and 31 wounded, a cemetery which the enemy had converted into a major strongpoint on the peak was taken, yielding 45 prisoners. By 1000 the summit was reached and turned over to the 3d Battalion to organize for defense. The 1st Battalion moved north down into the saddle. Although Company B suffered approximately 40 casualties in an ambush, the battalion was making some progress by the close of the day astride a ridge which runs northwest to the Setta behind Monterumici.

The 2d Battalion on the other hand made very slight progress in its efforts to knock out the strongpoints under the steep southern slopes of Mount Adone. Difficult terrain and the suicidal aspects of attacking under enemy observation from that mountain prevented any daylight efforts, and the battalion was ordered to hold until darkness. At 2130 two companies moved toward two strongpoints on the ridge, the most northerly of which was right up under the slopes of Adone. The ground was rough and the enemy was intrenched on ledges above the attacking troops, who had also to pick their way through minefields. Some 50 casualties were sustained, and it was decided to discontinue the drive until it became lighter.

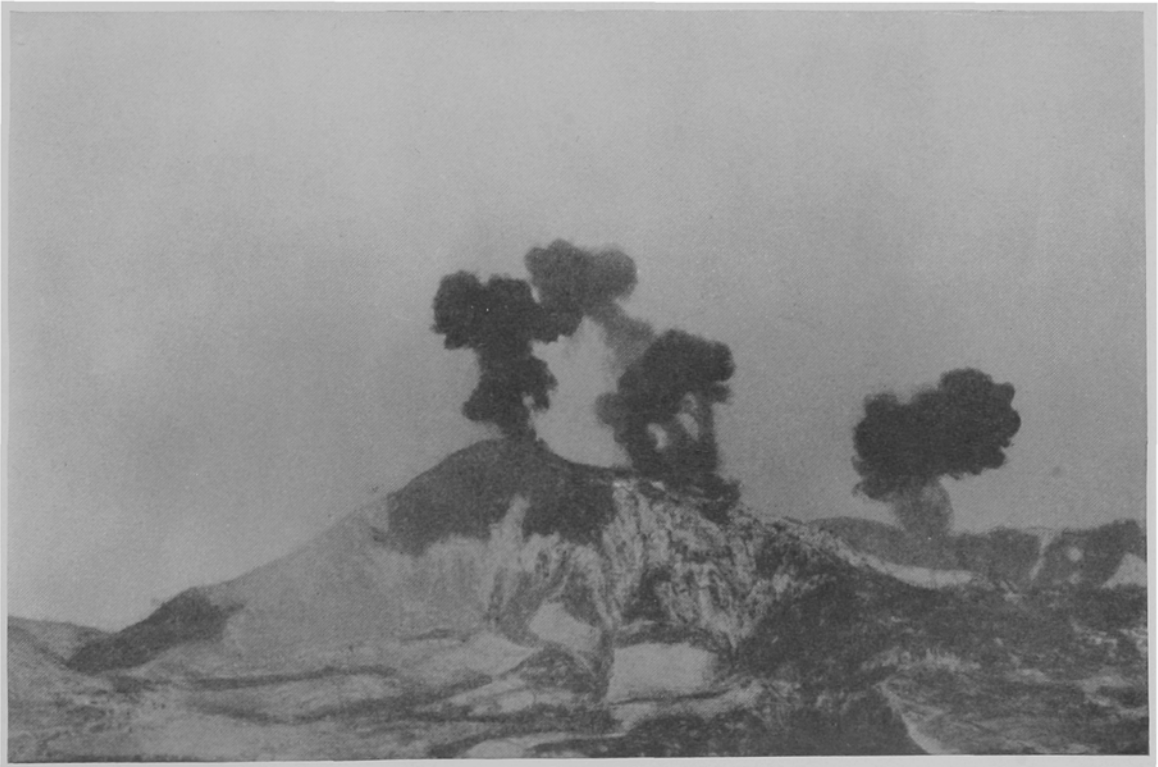
On the left the 349th Infantry continued its two-pronged drive, the 3d Battalion still trying to bend back the west flank as well as divert the enemy by its attack up the Setta Valley while the main regimental attack battered at the ridge west of Furcoli. At 2200, 16 April, the attempt to penetrate beyond Furcoli was renewed. The 2d Battalion, hitherto in reserve, was to attack two companies abreast through the 1st Battalion in an effort to reach the north side of the Furcoli ridge and strike at the rear of the caves and dugouts, which had proved practically invulnerable to heavy caliber artillery and high-velocity direct fire. It was planned to have one company go through Furcoli and the other drive halfway between that point and our positions on the west end of the ridge. In the attack the right company could not get beyond Furcoli; Company G on the left penetrated the enemy line only to have one platoon surrounded by the enemy and forced to surrender on the night of the 17th.

Darkness of 17 April found the 349th Infantry not much farther advanced than





*Self-propelled guns of the South Africans open up in the Mount Sole attack*



*P-47's drop their fire bombs on enemy-held Mount Sole, 15 April 1945*



*A wounded South African is evacuated to the rear in the Sole area*



*From the Monterumici caves (in the background) come enemy prisoners*

it had been at daybreak. The deep salient of Company G had been cut off, and the 1st and 3d Battalions had been unable to clear all the high ground between Furcoli and the left end of the ridge. On the right the 350th Infantry had captured and secured the summit of Monterumici. Although the enemy continued to fight stubbornly — over 3,200 mortar shells fell on the 88th Division between 1000, 17 April, and 1000, 18 April — he was gradually being forced from his key positions. Furthermore, the power and persistence of the attack were inflicting losses which the Germans with their few reserves could ill afford.

On the night of 17 April the weight of the 349th Infantry attack, which had made no notable progress during the day, was concentrated in the center. The 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was attached to the regiment to take over the Setta Valley zone, and the 3d Battalion placed its effort on the left side of the Furcoli ridge, parts of which were in the hands of the 1st Battalion. Shortly after dark the 2d and 3d Battalions jumped off and made steady progress through the night. The fall of Hill 427, a stubborn position in the middle taken with tank support, marked the collapse of the enemy defenses; by 0930, 18 April, the 349th Infantry held the ridge west from Furcoli.

The 3-day grind was ended, and subsequent advances were rapid. By noon one company of the 2d Battalion, following a ridge extending northwest from Furcoli, had advanced  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles to Setta Creek, and during the afternoon the 349th Infantry cleared the triangular area between Furcoli ridge and Setta Creek. Advances on the right and the left by the 350th Infantry and the 6 South African Armoured Division pinched out the 349th Infantry at this point. The enemy defeat became more apparent throughout the day. After the 361st Infantry finally won the top of Mount Adone at 1000, 18 April, the 350th Infantry, which had seized the top of Monterumici the day before, was secure on both flanks and began rapid progress to the northwest. The 1st Battalion on the left followed a ridge northwest from Monterumici to the Setta and thence moved up the creek bottom; the 2d Battalion skirted around the lower slopes of Mount Adone and followed a road leading northwest from that height. By midnight, after an advance of 3 miles, the 350th Infantry held an east-west line extending east of Setta Creek 1 mile south of Mount Mario, the 88th Division's Black Line objective. Resistance had been scattered and consisted chiefly of small rearguard detachments and bypassed elements.

3. *The 6 South African Armoured Division at Mount Sole.* Simultaneously with the 88th Division attack at 2230, 15 April, the 6 South African Armoured Division, under Maj. Gen. W. H. E. Poole, jumped off on the extreme left of II Corps in a zone south of the confluence of the Reno River and Setta Creek. In the center of the zone, less than 1 mile north of the Allied positions, lay the prominent terrain features forming the first objective, the Mount Sole—Mount Caprara—Mount Abelle tri-

angle. From the northernmost of the three hills, Mount Abelle, a sharp narrow ridge, deeply cut on both sides, ran northeast through the center of the zone to Mount Santa Barbara. The ridge bent north there and continued on to the junction of the Reno and Setta Creek; in this area its sides became considerably gentler.

Enemy defenses on the triangle of hills in the center of the division zone and on the Santa Barbara ridge were flanked on the east by the Monterumici and Furcoli positions before the 88th Division and west of the Reno by the high ground before the 1st Armored Division. The enemy positions in front of the South Africans were manned by the 3d Battalion, 296th Mountain Regiment, on Mount Sole and by the 1st Battalion, 276th Grenadier Regiment, in the area west of the main feature to the Reno. The bulk of the 94th Grenadier Division lay before IV Corps west of the Reno.

According to General Poole's plan of attack the 12 South African Motorised Brigade was to make the main effort against the Mount Sole triangle and was then to exploit northeast along the ridge to Mount Santa Barbara. The 13 South African Motorised Brigade, maintaining contact with the 88th Division on the right, was to continue the attack from Santa Barbara to seize the high ground overlooking the Reno south of Praduro and then establish a bridgehead across the river. The 11 South African Armoured Brigade was to protect the left flank, maintain contact with the 1st Armored Division, and support by fire the attacks of the units on either flank.

The 6 South African Armoured Division had also engaged in the series of deceptive artillery fires prior to the attack; and, as had been the case along the entire Army front, enemy reaction had been negligible with the exception of flares and some small-arms and mortar fire. Twenty-four hours before the attack the 4/13 Frontier Force Rifles (FFR), protecting the left flank of the 12 South African Motorised Brigade, moved up on the left with 2 platoons and seized Ca Poggiolo 1,000 yards southwest of Mount Caprara in order to provide flank protection for the main attack. Five enemy counterattacks were beaten off before dawn, and the advanced positions were held successfully throughout the 15th.

At 2230 the 6 South African Armoured Division jumped off behind intense artillery support. Despite heavy resistance and many mines the first part of the operation was a spectacular success. An hour and a quarter after the jump-off advanced elements had reached a minefield 500-600 yards from the summit of Mount Sole. Without waiting for a gap to be cleared a platoon leader and a handful of men rushed the field and caught the enemy still hiding in his shelters from the artillery. Other troops came up to reinforce the first small group, and by 0530 Mount Sole was firmly held. Three counterattacks and heavy shell fire within the next 1½ hours failed to regain the hill for the Germans.

On the left the attack by the Witwatersrand Rifles/De La Rey (WR/DLR) of the 12 South African Motorised Brigade met more difficulty on Mount Caprara. The first casualties were sustained from shell fire on the line of departure, and thereafter progress was slowed by mines; at 0520 troops were still only halfway up the hill. As friendly artillery broke up a prospective counterattack the infantry rushed the summit, and shortly after daybreak two companies were in control of the crest. A third company was brought up by noon; in addition, three tanks came up to the saddle between Mount Sole and Mount Caprara after considerable difficulty and the loss of three tanks on mines. At 1730 the WR/DLR attacked the third feature in the triangle, Mount Abelle, and took it by 1950; here also the enemy counterattacked, again without success in the face of our artillery and chemical mortars. Darkness of 16 April found the 6 South African Armoured Division in full control of the Mount Sole—Mount Caprara—Mount Abelle triangle, the first major objective taken on the II Corps front. Tremendous artillery fire had done much to pave the way for the infantry. Exclusive of the counterbattery fires by Corps artillery the 141 artillery weapons of the division had thrown over 35,000 rounds into the German positions.

Difficult terrain and stiffened enemy resistance nullified all efforts to extend the initial success on the night of 16–17 April or on the following day. The Royal Durban Light Infantry (RDLI), which had been holding Mount Sole all through the 16th and had beaten off one company-strength counterattack, began at 2330 to move northeast along the Santa Barbara ridge. The battalion reached 2 points about 600 yards from Mount Sole, but that was as far as it could go. The ridge, a 4-foot wide razorback which forced troops to move single file, was covered by enemy mortars and by machine guns dug in on the ridge crest. Flanking movements were impossible because of steep slopes on either side. No ground was gained the next day, and a coordinated effort at 2040, 17 April, was knocked back. The stalemate on the division front was paralleled by a similar situation before the entire II Corps. On the left flank, however, the 1st Armored Division was making steady progress clearing the high ground west of the Reno and had occupied the Mount Mosca—Mount Milano ridge west and north of Mount Sole. In view of the situation one squadron of tanks from the Pretoria Regiment (Princess Alice's Own), PR(PAO), and one platoon of infantry were started around the left up the Reno Valley in an attempt to threaten the Germans' rear, but the effort was discontinued before accomplished because of subsequent developments.

Since the situation was still frozen in the early morning of 18 April, it was decided to send the 13 South African Motorised Brigade in a wide flanking move around the right to seize a feature on the Santa Barbara ridge 1 mile northeast of the troops operating from Mount Sole. Before the attack could be made deserters reported an

enemy withdrawal was in progress. The report was correct, and by 1240 the ridge was cleared. During the day a whole company, comprising 65 men from the 296th Mountain Regiment, surrendered to the RDLI. In the early afternoon the 12 South African Motorised Brigade reverted to a holding role on the ridge; the 4/13 FFR passed to the 13 South African Motorised Brigade, which continued the exploitation in the Black Phase. On the extreme left flank the protection by the 11 South African Armoured Brigade had dissolved in view of the advance of IV Corps, and the 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry (34th Division), which had been attached, reverted to its parent unit. The advance of the 13 South African Motorised Brigade was rapid, and by darkness patrols had reached the Black Line objectives at the Setta—Reno confluence without opposition.

### C. *THE DRIVE UP HIGHWAY 65*

16-18 APRIL

At 0300, 16 April, 4½ hours after the 6 South African Armoured Division and the 88th Division had attacked astride Setta Creek, the 91st and 34th Divisions jumped off east of the Mount Adone ridge on the axis of Highway 65. The second punch of the II Corps assault, which had previously benefited from the air bombardment on the Corps front during the afternoon and evening of the 15th, was immediately preceded by intense artillery fires. Support by all available weapons within the divisions themselves was augmented by a Corps artillery counterbattery and command post program, followed by a series of TOT concentrations. Action in this area proved to be even more protracted and German resistance even more stubborn than on the left flank of II Corps.

1. *The 91st Division before Mount Adone.* At the time of the attack the 91st Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. William G. Livesay, occupied a front line running northeast-southwest approximately 2½ miles. This line began at the 34th Division boundary 1 mile east of Highway 65, crossed the highway 1½ miles south of the town of Pianoro, and paralleled for the final distance the course of the Monterumici—Mount Adone ridge on the west side of the dry stream bed of Savena Creek. The creek itself lay in no-man's land. The left portion of the attack zone was dominated by the long ridge which began at Monterumici in the 88th Division territory and extended for 4 miles in the zone of the 91st Division from the 2,163-foot Mount Adone on the extreme southwest through Mount dei Frati to Mount della Capanna on the Black Phase Line. The approaches to Mount Adone were protected by an escarpment 1,200 yards long, Mount Castellazzo, which extends eastward from

Adone to the Savena. On the right of the division zone was another north-south ridge which angled off to the northeast. Highway 65 followed the top of this ridge across the American lines and then cut down the western slopes through the town of Pianoro on the western side of Mount Arnigo. Between Mount dei Frati on the left and Pianoro lay Mount Posigliano. The capture of Mount Adone, a point which had already successfully resisted several attacks during the winter, was essential to the success of units attempting to advance toward Bologna through the defenses between Setta Creek and Highway 65.

Enemy troops facing the 91st Division were the 3d Battalion, 297th Mountain Regiment, and the 1057th Mountain Reconnaissance Battalion of the 8th Mountain Division on the west before the 361st Infantry; the 363d Infantry zone on Highway 65 was held by the 65th Fusilier Battalion and the 2d Battalion, 145th Grenadier Regiment (65th Grenadier Division). One company of Italian Arditi had been included in the garrison before the 363d Infantry on 12 April. The enemy defenses in the area of Highway 65 were believed to consist of three lines: the first paralleling the American front lines at a distance of 500–600 yards; the second not quite 2 miles to the rear; and the third laid across Highway 65 just east of Mount della Capanna.

As General Livesay outlined his plan of attack, the 91st Division was initially to attack two regiments abreast, with the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion (less one company); Battery D, 432d Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion; Company B, 100th Chemical Mortar Battalion; and the 1st Battalion, 133d Infantry, attached. On the right the 363d Infantry under Col. W. Fulton Magill, Jr., with the 757th Tank Battalion (less two medium companies), a company of tank destroyers, a platoon of chemical mortars, and the battalion from the 133d Infantry, was to seize Pianoro and the hill east of the town, Mount Arnigo. After the Brown Phase objectives were gained the battalion of the 133d Infantry was to take over the zone east of Highway 65 while the 363d Infantry captured the hill joining Mount Arnigo on the north. After that the 363d Infantry was to shift completely to the west of Highway 65.

On the division left the 361st Infantry's westernmost elements under Col. Rudolph W. Broedlow were to seize the Mount Castellazzo escarpment and then swing west against Mount Adone. At the same time elements on the right were to push north to seize first Mount Posigliano, due west of Pianoro, then Mount dei Frati, and finally move south to capture Mount Adone. The proposed scheme of maneuver, coordinated with the 88th Division attack west of the ridge, was calculated to isolate the garrison of Mount Adone by seizing the ground on all sides of the position. After the Brown Phase had been completed, the attack was to proceed west of Highway 65 with Mount della Capanna as the major objective. In order to secure maximum support for the attack General Livesay ordered that the fires of the

division artillery were to be augmented by the attached tanks, tank destroyers, antiaircraft weapons, and chemical mortars. In addition, at the time of the jump-off the Cannon Company and all mortars and machine guns of the 362d Infantry were to be emplaced for maximum assistance to the assault troops. The 362d Infantry under Col. John W. Cotton remained in division reserve.

On the night of 13 April the 361st and 363d Infantry occupied positions in advance of the old front lines from which to launch the imminent offensive. Elements of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 361st Infantry, crossed the Savena flats to occupy two groups of houses vacated by the Germans. The following night these advanced groups were increased to platoon strength. On the right the 363d Infantry, planning to use tanks in the attack on Mount Arnigo, was faced with the problem of moving the vehicles either up Highway 65 under enemy observation or east of the highway along a safer transverse route which had a bad blow some distance ahead of our front lines. The latter route was chosen; accordingly, beginning on the night of 13-14 April, a company of infantry and several squads of engineers went forward to make the repairs. Fortunately the immediate area was unoccupied, but the enemy was suspicious and the job was too big for hand labor. A bulldozer and culvert equipment had to be brought forward. During the next two nights, covered by darkness and the din of friendly artillery, the engineers labored to build a bypass. Interrupted by frequent and heavy enemy shelling and mortaring, they were unable to complete the job before daylight of 16 April but under cover of smoke continued the hazardous job in broad day. By noon they had completed a passable crossing, and the tanks were able to move up.

The infantry jumped off on schedule at 0300, 16 April. During the whole hour before the attack the artillery had been busy softening up the enemy with special emphasis laid on mortar positions. The first 15 minutes of firing was a regular preparation; the next  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour was all countermortar; and the final 15 minutes was again devoted to preparation fires. Corps artillery, including a battalion of 8-inch howitzers, thickened the fires as well as laying down an additional counterbattery program. Selected targets received in the first hour 30 rounds each. In the 24-hour period 0800, 15 April-0800, 16 April, the 91st Division Artillery alone fired 15,159 rounds of ammunition.

On the left the 361st Infantry pushed off two battalions abreast. The 2d Battalion on the regimental left moved westward to Mount Adone, the approaches to which were protected by positions on the Mount Castellazzo ridge and at the crossroads village of Brento on the eastern slopes of Mount Adone. The 2d Battalion made little progress that first night; mines and intense small-arms and mortar fire stopped the attackers on the lower slopes of Mount Castellazzo. The slightest move brought a quick enemy reaction; infantry advance was impossible. A blitz at 0700





*Steep-sided Mount Adone (on the right) dominates the area west of Highway 65*



*Bombing and shelling the town of Pianoro and vicinity, 16 April 1945*



*A bulldozer in Pianoro clears away the debris to open up Highway 65*



*Four weary soldiers take a brief rest after a hard night of patrolling*

on Mount Adone and incessant pounding of Brento by tanks, tank destroyers, and artillery failed to loosen the situation. Enemy positions—caves and concrete pill-boxes — could withstand anything except the 8-inch howitzers. On the regimental right the 3d Battalion, moving straight north, was stopped in the valley something over 1 mile short of Mount Posigliano, its objective. Artillery fire on both battalions was relatively light; the chief enemy fire came from small arms, machine guns, and mortars.

The 363d Infantry had more success on the division right. The 2d Battalion on the left, supported by heavy artillery and mortar fire, advanced nearly 1,000 yards along Highway 65 by daylight, until stopped by minefields and by flanking fire from the exposed left; the right elements of the 361st Infantry had been halted 500 yards to the rear. Progress was hampered also by the necessity of carefully searching each tunnel and cave along the highway. The 3d Battalion on the right, although delayed by extensive minefields as well as mortar, artillery, and small-arms fire, moved slowly toward Mount Arnigo. At 0723 a counterattack of unknown strength was thrown back. Two of the tanks operating in close support of the infantry were put out of action before noon, and another was hit in the afternoon. Stiffly contested though the advance was, progress was steady; by 1435 Company L, supported by tanks, nearly reached the crest of Hill 407, a southern spur of Mount Arnigo, but friendly artillery concentrations forced the infantry back some distance. Nightfall of the 16th found the 91st Division in possession of none of its major objectives. The 361st Infantry on the left had made little progress against Mount Adone, which was also holding up the 2d Battalion, 350th Infantry, in the saddle between Adone and Monterumici; the most advanced elements of the 363d Infantry were still nearly 1,000 yards short of Mount Arnigo.

With the exception of a 100-round mortar concentration on the 3d Battalion about midnight the 363d Infantry enjoyed a reasonably quiet night. The 2d Battalion cleared some hills west of Highway 65 in order to bring up the sagging left flank, preparatory to continuation of the attack the following day, and the 1st Battalion moved forward to take up attack positions between the 2d and 3d Battalions. At 0600 the 3d Battalion on the right and the 1st Battalion in the center moved off toward Mount Arnigo. Resistance was stiff, but by midmorning two of the southern heights on the ridge were taken. The advanced elements dug in and four times during the following day and night beat off German counterattacks; 88-mm and mortar fire from Pianoro came down steadily. The worst attack occurred at 2140 when the enemy, after first smoking the Company K positions, attacked through the smoke with grenades and machine pistols. The positions on the Arnigo ridge were particularly vulnerable since the enemy still held the reverse slopes. The 2d Battalion on the left, which had jumped off toward Pianoro at 0730, had likewise pro-

gressed steadily against stiff opposition over the high ground west of the highway, reaching by darkness positions a little less than 1 mile short of Pianoro.

On the division left the 361st Infantry had attacked at 0200, 17 April, in an attempt to breach the enemy defenses before daybreak; a similar effort was made by the 350th Infantry to the southwest. The 2d Battalion, 361st Infantry, aiming for Brento, gained some ground; although 1 small force reached a house 150 yards from the objective, main elements dug in about 400 yards short of the goal. Practically no progress could be made in daylight, and the battalion was subjected to a constant pounding from high-explosive and phosphorus mortar shells. Only the company on the right was able to creep forward a short distance during the day along the Mount Castellazzo ridge.

The 3d Battalion on the right was also to attack at 0200. Two companies on the left, aiming at two houses on the high ground west of the Savena, could not even move out on time because of the intensity of the shellfire; when they finally started after daybreak, they made little progress. Company I, coming up on the right, got off on time and advanced a short distance toward a strongpoint built in another house. An artillery preparation to loosen up the defense at noon enabled our infantry to make about 60 yards. Close-in Rover Joe support with 37-mm, tank, and artillery fire was used on the centers of resistance and quieted enough of the enemy mortars to enable the two companies on the left to start moving again at 1825; by 2100 they had reached positions on rising ground west of the Savena flats, from which to assault their strongpoint objectives. The 3d Battalion shift to clear the centers of opposition barring the route to Mount Posigliano from the left necessitated the commitment of the 1st Battalion on the right during the night to take over the Posigliano mission.

The end of the 17th found the 91st Division achieving slow but costly gains. The 363d Infantry had been most successful and was within striking distance of the crest of Mount Arnigo and the town of Pianoro. The 361st Infantry had made little substantial progress either toward Mount Adone or toward Mount Posigliano. The 18th, however, saw a significant break in enemy resistance; constant pressure on the whole Army front had already resulted in a penetration by IV Corps which was followed by an enemy withdrawal all along the line. On the left Monterumici had already fallen to the 88th Division; on the right the 34th Division took the Sevizzano ridge during the night.

The 361st Infantry attacked with three battalions abreast at 0400, 18 April. The 2d Battalion took Brento at 0600, cleared the Mount Castellazzo ridge, and fanned out northwest. Mount Adone, the main division objective, fell at 1000. The advance then accelerated against scattered resistance. Prisoners in groups as large as 30 and 40 began to be gathered, and at 1445 Mount dei Frati was taken.

Positions were consolidated for the night 1,000 yards north of the mountain. On the regimental right, meanwhile, the 1st Battalion moved up prior to the attack through the zone of the 363d Infantry. Just before 0400 one company occupied without opposition a strongpoint 1 mile south of Mount Posigliano, which had put up furious resistance the previous day. The battalion continued on and 2 hours later after a short fire fight took another strongpoint cluster of houses with some prisoners; by 1030 Company C was only 300 yards short of the summit of Mount Posigliano.

Here a small counterattack, mortar fire, and direct fire from a tank in Pianoro halted the advance. The counterattack was repulsed, artillery and mortars silenced the Pianoro tank and reduced the mortar fire, but Posigliano was not occupied until 2130. In the center the 3d Battalion cleared against only small-arms opposition the strongpoints north of the Castellazzo ridge and west of the Savena which had caused so much trouble the day before. The battalion moved forward steadily all day and by nightfall had advanced over 1 mile against considerably reduced opposition to the southwestern slopes of Mount Posigliano.

The break on the left was paralleled by substantial successes in the zone of the 363d Infantry, although opposition in that area remained relatively stiff. Along Highway 65 the 2d Battalion, supported by two companies of the 1st Battalion, jumped off at 0400 in coordination with the 361st Infantry attack toward Mount Posigliano. Tanks and tank destroyers, supporting the infantry from positions on the ridge south of Mount Arnigo, poured shells into Pianoro. Progress all day was steady though slow because of the necessity of painstakingly investigating and clearing the caves and dugouts, and at dusk the most advanced elements were still 200 yards from the town. The push continued after darkness with two companies enveloping the town from either side; one company on the west, after a brisk fire fight in which two enemy tanks were knocked out, reduced a strongpoint on its side of the town while the second company went around to the east side. American troops entered Pianoro at 2100 to find it heavily mined and booby-trapped.

On the right the 3d Battalion, holding only the eastern and southern part of the southern spur of Mount Arnigo, jumped off at 0600. Opposition was stubborn, and one assault to the top of the hill was thrown back in the late afternoon. Then at dusk, with support from four tanks well up on the southern part of the Arnigo ridge and six tank destroyers on Mount Belmonte to the southeast, Company A, attached to the 3d Battalion, attacked under smoke after a 30-minute preparation by chemical mortars, 90-mm guns, and 155-mm guns. The enemy was literally blasted from Mount Arnigo; Company A had the first peak at 2000 and the second a short time later.

With this acquisition the 91st Division had taken all its Brown Phase objectives from Mount Adone around through Mount Posigliano, Pianoro, and Mount Arnigo.